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The *Zurkhang* (*zur khang*; Adjunct House) in 1950s Kyidrong[1]

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Scope and Purpose

Earlier studies of pre-1959 communities combined with growing attention to those who "escaped the historian's net" have substantially increased scholarly understanding of social life in historical Tibet.[2] Nevertheless, there remain knowledge gaps regarding Tibetan family and household dynamics, especially among commoners. The purpose of this article is to shed further light on historical Tibetan family households by focusing on the *zurkhang* (*zur khang*), a term that literally means 'corner house' or 'side house'. In 1950s Kyidrong it referred to a separate residence within an agrarian household that accommodated family members who held no rights of inheritance. Because of its status and function as a supplementary unit to the main house, it is translated here as 'adjunct house'.[3] By

[1] The research for this article was supported by a Mellon Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Anthropological Demography at the Australian National University, 1999-2002. The author is indebted to Tashi Tsering of Dharamsala for revealing the existence of the 1958 household register upon which this research is based, Lobsang Shastri for locating and facilitating access to the document in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, and Jamyang Tenzin for painstakingly generating an accurate, typeset copy of the handwritten manuscript. The author also extends a special thank you to Melvyn Goldstein for his critical reading of a previous draft of this article and insightful comments that led to substantive revisions.

[2] See, for example, Surkhang 1966, 1986; Goldstein 1971a, 1971b, 1978; Aziz 1978; Dargyay 1982; Schuh 1988; Thargyal 2007; Ramble, Schweiger, and Travers 2013; Bischoff and Mullard 2017. Far more is known about the family life of Tibetan elites through their biographical writings. For a recent and exemplary analysis see Diemberger 2021.

[3] Zurkhang (also transcribed as Surkhang) is a documented family name among Tibet's aristocracy. For example, the influential Surkhang family was prominent in Tibetan politics during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The family got its name after moving into a house in Lhasa at the corner of the Jokhang (https://treasuryoflives.org/institution/Surkhang, accessed June 21, 2021). General Zurkhang Sichö Tseten came from a branch family (*zur du chad pas*) of the rulers of Guge (Travers 2020, 147-148). Another twentieth century aristocrat, Tendong

highlighting the importance of the *zurkhang* as a residence for people born into taxpayer households but who were not in line to inherit, this article builds on a series of studies exploring historical demographic and household processes in Kyidrong.[4]

This study is based on a household register titled "Earth-Dog Year [1958] Household Contract Being a Census [of Land and People] in the Nine Divisions of Kyidrong District" which was completed, witnessed, and sealed in early July 1958. It records the names of 2,845 individuals by village, household, name, age, and relationship within the household.[5] To make better sense of the enumerated families, in 1999 and 2000 the author interviewed as many people as possible who were listed therein. Although denied permission to conduct research in Kyidrong, interviewees were not hard to locate; a large proportion of the population was living in exile in Nepal and India.[6] Most interviewees, aided by the register, retained vivid recollections of their families as they were constituted in 1958, presumably because the document was compiled just before the political upheaval of 1959 that led to their flight into exile.

The Research Setting

Prior to 1959 Kyidrong was a district-level administrative unit (*rdzong*) under Ganden Phodrang. Most of Kyidrong's residents were classified as legally bound subjects (*mi ser*) who were divided into two broad categories. 'Taxpayers' (*khral pa*) held a formal land tenure document

Surpa (Bkras mthong Zur pa, a.k.a. Tesur), acquired his name after separating from the main Tendong family (http://tibet.prm.ox.ac.uk/biography_248.html, accessed June 21, 2021). Thus, among the aristocracy the appellation *zur* connoted a family member who split from their natal house, but unlike commoners in Kyidrong they were considered a separate and independent entity rather than an appendage to the original household. This was pointed out by Melvyn Goldstein, personal communication Nov. 2021.

4 Schuh 1988; Childs 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008, 53-104, and 2021.

5 *Sa khyi lo'i skyid grong rgya dgu'i sgo khra them gan*. The date in the document's heading is the twenty-third day of the sixth month of the Earth-Dog Year. Because there were two twenty-third days of that month and year (see Schuh 1973, 235), it remains unclear whether the document was completed on the eighth or ninth of July 1958. For a full analysis of the document, see Childs (2008). The government was not the only landlord in Kyidrong. Samtenling Monastery also had considerable landholdings and enumerated its taxpaying households in similar documents, two of which from 1939 and 1949 were published and analyzed by Schuh (1988).

6 198 former Kyidrong residents were interviewed for this project in McLeodganj, Forsythganj, and Pandoh in India, and Kathmandu, Shebrubensi, Bridim, Tanje, and Kanjim in Nepal.

referred to as a 'tax basis' (*khral rten*) granting them the heritable right to farm a specified amount of land. Taxpayers could lose that privilege by failing to fulfill tax obligations which included an annual grain payment and corvée labor.[7]

The land tenure system incentivized polyandrous marriage (*bza' gsum*) because taxpayer households could not easily divide their land. Kyidrong's residents, like in many Tibetan societies, preferred to allow multiple sons to remain together rather than favoring one and casting the others out to seek their own livelihoods.[8] Furthermore, taxes were assessed on a household basis regardless of how many family members lived together; the more adults in the household, the more able they were to fulfill tax obligations and engage in diverse economic activities. 'Small householders' (*dud chung ba*, literally, 'small smoke') did not hold a tax basis. They had few tax obligations yet lacked the economic security that comes with land tenure. Small householders generally worked for taxpayers in exchange for food and shelter, and almost always married monogamously.[9]

Through polyandry, taxpayers adhered to what Goldstein termed a 'monomarital norm', meaning one marriage within the household per generation.[10] Polyandry among Kyidrong's taxpayers created large, multi-generational households. A solution to preempt or manage inter-personal conflicts was to move certain individuals into a *zurkhang*. Often *zurkhang* residents were unmarried women who were numerous due in part to the polyandry-generated imbalance between potential brides and the households into which they could marry, but also because some women chose not to marry.[11] Residential options for such women were limited. While some became nuns, the more common solution was to move into a *zurkhang*. Other residents included elderly retirees and men who opted out of polyandrous marriages.

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7 Surkhang 1966, 1986; Goldstein 1971a; Dargyay 1982.

8 That is what happened in the system of primogeniture among much of northern Europe's peasantry, which Das Gupta referred to as a 'lifeboat ethic', whereby "the social and economic position of the farming family was effectively maintained by removing or highly circumscribing the potential claims of other kin to support from the household" (1999, 174-175).

9 Goldstein 1971b, 1978.

10 Goldstein 1978, 209.

11 Female relationship terms in the register clearly signaled a woman's marital status. Those identified as 'girl/daughter' (*bu mo*) had never married. Those listed as wife (*bza' zla*) or bride/wife (*mna' ma*) were currently married, while those categorized as woman (*dman*) had married at some point but in 1958 could have been currently married, divorced, or widowed.

Very few people are labelled as *zurkhang* residents in Kyidrong's household register. A 59-year-old individual is identified as a '*zurkhang* dwelling man' (*zur sdod khyo*). As discussed below, he was the eldest brother in a polyandrous marriage who decided to move into a *zurkhang* with a partner of choice (see Household TD4 in Figure 10). A 61-year-old man is listed as a '*zurkhang* [dwelling] delegate' (*'thus zur*). A grandchild of this man confirmed that he was one of the village delegates (*'thus mi*) who moved into a *zurkhang* with the original wife of he and his two brothers after she did not give birth to a male heir; the younger brothers occupied the main house with the younger second wife. Two women are separately listed as a '*zurkhang* dwelling woman' (*zur sdod dman*). One, aged 71, was a member of a large, multigeneration household and appears to have been the sister of the main house's matriarch. The other, aged 45, may have been a religious practitioner because she is also identified as *mchod pa*. In the list of one village's small householders a 12-year-old boy is identified as a '*zurkhang* dwelling son' (*zur sdod bu*). No information was obtained on his circumstances. Finally, a man is listed as a '*zurkhang* dwelling small householder' (*zur sdod dud chung*). His circumstances are discussed below (see Household KR1 in Figure 11).

Because the register only identified six residents of *zurkhang*, it is clear that social divisions within the household were not important from the perspective of government enumerators. Nevertheless, people interviewed for this project revealed that adjunct houses were very common and allowed family members to hive off from the main house either willingly or by compulsion. They also explained that a *zurkhang* could be a separate room within the main house or a small, detached building. Thus, the term *zurkhang* connoted an independent but not necessarily physically separated dwelling. Kyidrong's residents distinguished an undivided from a divided household by referring to the former as 'one hearth' (*thab gcig*) and the latter as 'two hearth' (*thab gnyis*). The lexical distinction highlights the importance of commensality in describing households with residential sub-units.

The following sections illustrate how *zurkhang* formed through different pathways: elderly people seeking a quiet setting for retirement and/or to avoid conflict with younger family members, unmarried daughters moving out of the main house when a bride arrives for her brother(s), divorced women returning to their natal households, and men leaving polyandrous unions to reside with partners of choice. The socioeconomic and demographic significance of adjunct houses is discussed in the final section.

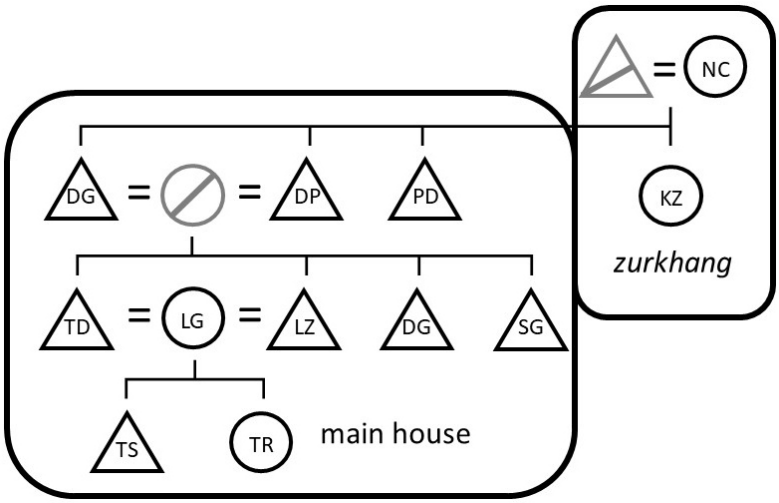
The *Zurkhang* as Retirement Abode

Many former Kyidrong residents expressed a strong sentiment that parents and adult children should co-reside, as encapsulated by one person's comment, "The parents' servants are their son and daughter-in-law" (*pha ma'i g.yog po bu dang mna' ma red*/). Nevertheless, a son's marriage, the bequeathing of patrilineal inheritance (*pha gzhis*), and the subsequent populating of the home with small children could prompt the elderly to seek a quieter environment. In other cases, internal conflicts could provoke the move. As one former Kyidrong resident explained,

> Some [parents of a married son] liked staying together, especially if the *nama* (*mna' ma*; bride/daughter-in-law) served them well. If the *nama* was good, they all remained together with one hearth until death. Sometimes parents preferred to live in the *zurkhang*, especially after children were born and the house become crowded. Such a house was referred to as *genzur* (*rgan zur*; '*zur*[*khang*] for the elderly'). [In other cases], if the *nama* was not good, if she did not treat the parents well, then they moved to the *zurkhang*. The parents would take some of the implements and become a two hearth household. Some of the household's assets remained with the father and mother until they passed away. Afterwards they reverted to the main house.

Aging parents often co-resided in a *zurkhang* with a daughter. For example, all members of Household LP8 in Figure 1 were listed together in the register. The widower brothers DG and DP lived in the main house with their younger brother PD and four sons including two who were polyandrously married (TD and LZ). According to TD who was interviewed for this study, his grandmother NC was an elderly widow. Rather than residing within the crowded main house, she chose the relative quiet of the *zurkhang* where she was cared for by her own daughter KZ, who had married into another household but returned following a divorce.

Figure 1: Household LP8[12]

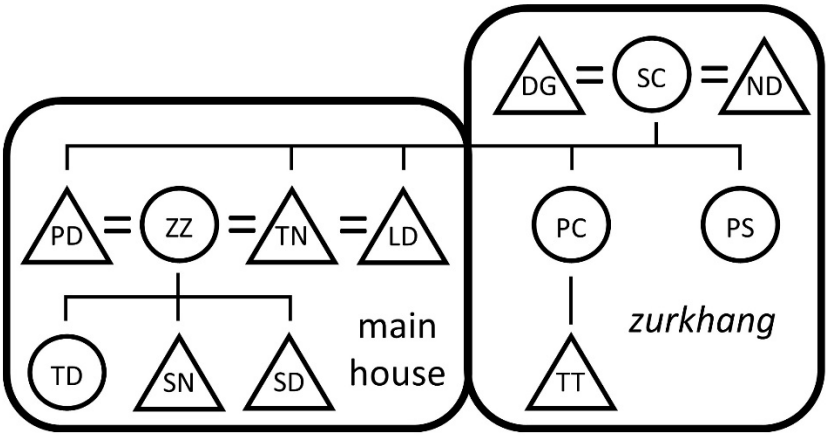


In Household NY3 (Figure 2), the elderly brothers DG and ND lived in the *zurkhang* with their wife (SC), two unmarried daughters (PC and PS), and a granddaughter (TT) born out of wedlock to PC.[13] The parents moved into the *zurkhang* with their daughters after the *nama*, ZZ, arrived as a bride for their sons PD, TN, and LD. The daughters PC and PS were 42 and 37 years old and thus very unlikely to marry. Retaining daughters within the household so they could provide caretaking support for aging parents was common in Kyidrong. However, the child of an unmarried daughter (TT in the case below) was ineligible for inheritance and would be reclassified as a small householder when older. The preference for patrilineal inheritance meant that this households' rightful heirs were SN and SD.

[12] The figures use standard kinship symbols to indicate gender, marital status, and descent. △ is a male; ◯ is a female; a line through either shape indicates the person is deceased. = signifies marriage; ⌐┴¬ signifies descent.

[13] The colloquial term for a child born out of wedlock in Kyidrong is *nyelu* (from *nyal bu*), except in the Lende Valley where the child is called *arken* (spelling uncertain). Interviewees did not hesitate to identify which people listed in the document were *nyelu*/*arken*.

Figure 2: Household NY3

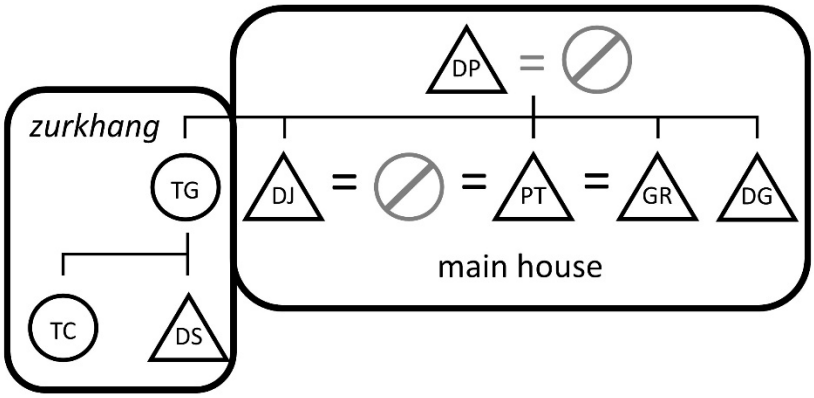


Households LP8 and NY3 illustrate that the retirement *zurkhang* (a.k.a. *genzur*) was a residence for the elderly and other members of the family, most commonly unmarried daughters and their children who, although ineligible to inherit, were valued for their social and economic contributions to the entire household including farm labor and caretaking for aging parents.

Nonmarriage, Informal Marriage, and the Zurkhang

Women living in *zurkhang* were typically unmarried, divorced, or resided with men in long-term unions based on mutual affection. It was customary in Kyidrong for unmarried daughters to move into a *zurkhang* to preempt potential conflicts with their brothers' wife. For example, Household GL5 (Figure 3) was named Tresar (Khral gsar; New Taxpayer). The widower DP was a former small householder who was given the tax basis for this household after the previous holder failed to produce an heir (*mi rgyud ched*; the lineage was severed). TG, DP's eldest child, moved into the *zurkhang* with her two children born out of wedlock when a bride arrived for her brothers DJ, PT, and GR (the young *nama* died shortly before the register was compiled). Although DS (the illegitimate son of TG) was the only male of the next generation, he would not inherit the estate because his uncles, ranging in age from 31 to 16, were the rightful heirs who would no doubt remarry and pass the possessions to their children.

Figure 3: Household GL5



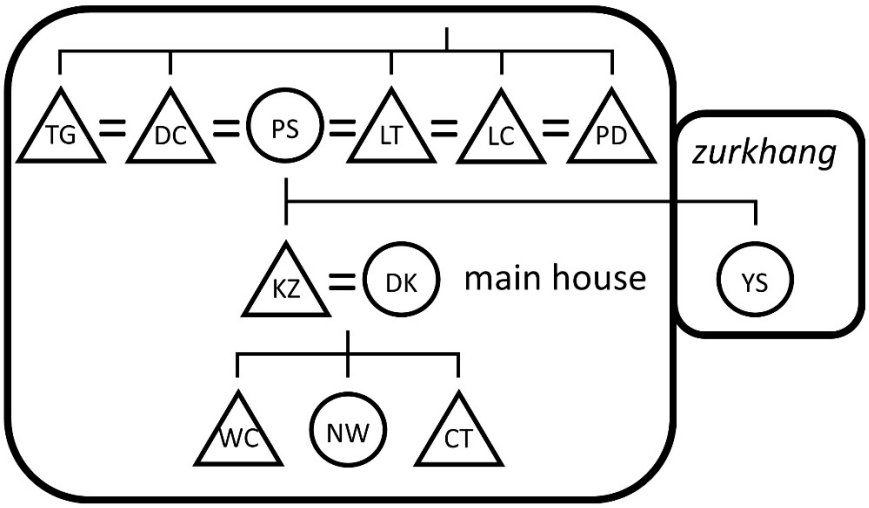
Some women lived in *zurkhang* because they refused to marry. For example, Household KZ46 in Figure 4 was one of the wealthiest in Kyidrong. Five brothers took one wife (PS) who gave birth to 12 children, but only three survived. KZ, a son and the eldest, was the designated heir. The second son was sent to nearby Samtenling Monastery[14] to be a monk and therefore was not listed in the register. The third child, YS, lived in the *zurkhang*. She had been sent to another household to marry a local leader, a man much older than her, but as YS explained,

> I was sent as a bride, but I came back home. My parents told me to go back to my husband, but I did not like him. I never stayed with him. He said he needed me, but I refused to go. They put me in the jail in the *dzong* and beat me. I was in the jail for a week, but I never married him, and I never gave birth to any children.

YS was permitted to occupy a *zurkhang* in her natal household, giving her a viable residential option for life outside of marriage.

[14] Samtenling Monestary (bKra shis bsam gtan gling) was founded in 1756 by Yeshe Gyaltsen, a tutor of the Eight Dalai Lama. See Smith 1969 and Schuh 1988, 17- 29.

Figure 4: Household KZ46

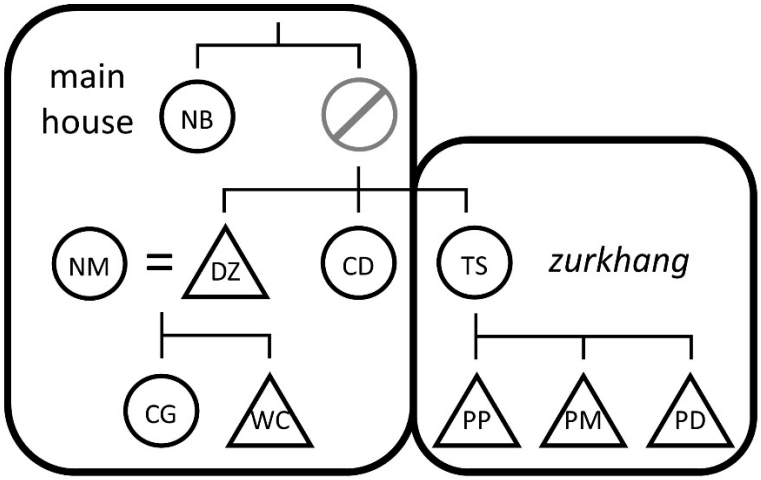


Zurkhang dwelling women who were involved in unions usually partnered with small householders or men who split from polyandrous marriages. Pairings that stemmed from mutual affection were referred to as 'meeting of the mouths' (*kha thugs*) to distinguish them from formal marriages (*chang sa*) that were arranged by kin and involved ceremonies and the exchange of goods to recognize the movement of a bride from her natal to her marital family. Unions based on mutual affection were rarely documented in the household register. In some cases, this is because the partners did not co-reside. For example, the senior generation in Household KZ12 (Figure 5) consisted of two sisters who inherited their parents' household because they had no brothers. Neither married, but the deceased younger sister had three children: DZ, a son and designated heir, a daughter CD who had left in marriage but returned after getting divorced, and a daughter TS who lived in the *zurkhang* with her three sons. According to PP, the eldest of TS's sons,

> My father had come to Kyidrong as a servant (*g.yog po*) of the District Commissioner (*rdzong dpon*). He stayed with the District Commissioner for three years, then left. He and my mother liked each other and had three kids. We stayed in a small house owned by DZ, it was a *zurkhang*. It was not appropriate for my mother to remain in the

house after DZ's wife arrived, so we lived separately. But we were very close, we helped each other.

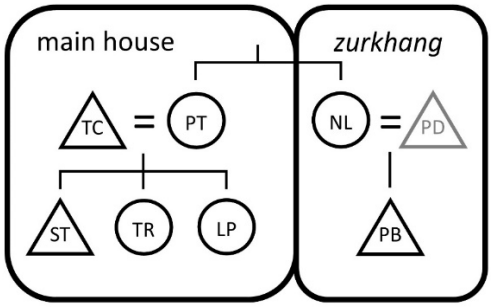
Figure 5: Household KZ12



PP confirmed that neither he nor his brothers PM and PD were eligible to inherit the household's assets because WC, son of the household head DZ, was the rightful heir.

In the case of informal unions co-residence was usually not indicated in the household register because people were listed according to the households in which they belonged for taxation purposes. Thus, a woman and her children living in an adjunct house were enumerated in her parents' household (or her brothers' if her parents were deceased) while her male partner was enumerated in his natal household. Information on informal unions came to light primarily through the interviews. For example, in Household GR22 (Figure 6), the sisters PT and NL did not have any brothers, so they inherited their parents' estate. According to a former resident, the elder sister PT married TC, a *magpa* (*mag pa*; matrilocally-resident husband). The younger sister NL stayed in the *zurkhang* with her partner, PD, who was a subject of Samtenling Monastery. He was listed in Samtenling's register but not in the register of government taxpayers. Only one of the sons in the youngest generation, ST, was eligible to inherit because he was a child of the formally married sister (PT) and *magpa* (TC) living in the main house.

Figure 6: Household GR22



Had PD been formally married to NL, a 'human exchange' (*mi brjes*) would need to be executed which involved a legal document to formalize the exchange of individuals between Samtenling Monastery (*chos gzhis*; a religious estate) and Kyidrong District (*gzhung gzhis*; a government estate). In 1939 PD was listed in Samtenling's register as a 15-year-old man living with two elder brothers in their 30s, their common wife, and two young children. In 1949 he was listed as living only with his considerably older wife and five children. PD's two elder brothers had died in the meantime.[15] It seems reasonable to speculate that, with NL, PD was seeking a relationship with a woman closer in age than his wife, something denied to him as the youngest brother in a polyandrous marriage.

Zurkhang for Divorced Women

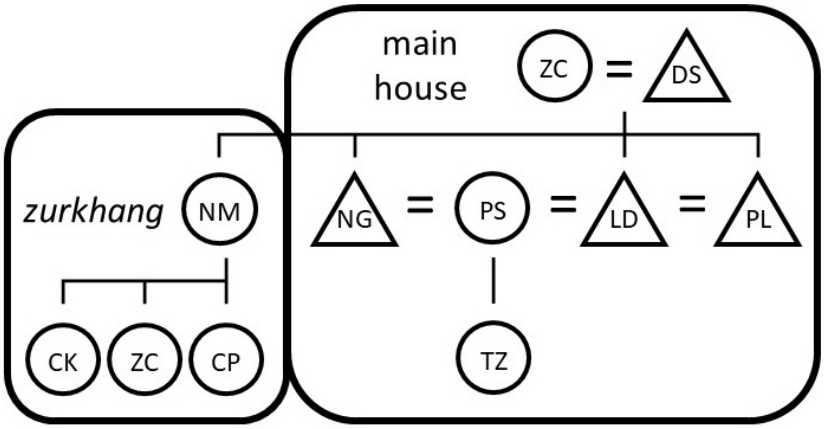
Two of the above households included a divorced woman living in a *zurkhang* attached to her natal household (LP8 in Figure 1 and KZ12 in Figure 5).[16] These were by no means the only cases. For example, in

[15] See Schuh 1988 for examples of human exchange documents from Kyidrong, and for the 1939 and 1949 Samtenling registers that list PD alongside his other household members.

[16] Not much has been written about divorce in Tibetan societies. Aziz comments that divorce in Tingri was common, and that it was most likely to occur in the early stage of a marriage before children were born and in a later stage when the roles of brothers in a polyandrous union changed (1978, 80-85). Levine (1987) found it to be quite common in some Tibetan communities of western Nepal where, by age 30, roughly 20% of women had experienced a divorce or partitioning of a polyandrous household. Du and Mace (2019) identified a variety of factors that influence marital longevity among Amdo pastoralists, including the payment of dowry and brideweath and the presence of children. Tenzin (2008) cites statistics from contemporary Tibet Autonomous Region to show urban-rural differentials in divorce

Household GL2 (Figure 7), NM was the daughter of ZC and DS and the elder sister of the polyandrously married brothers NG, LD, and PL. NM had married into another household but returned after a divorce and lived in the *zurkhang* with her three daughters. Following a divorce, it was customary for sons to remain with their father because they were potential heirs. Daughters (in this case CK, ZC, and CP) stood to inherit nothing from their father and thus went with their mother.

Figure 7: Household GL2



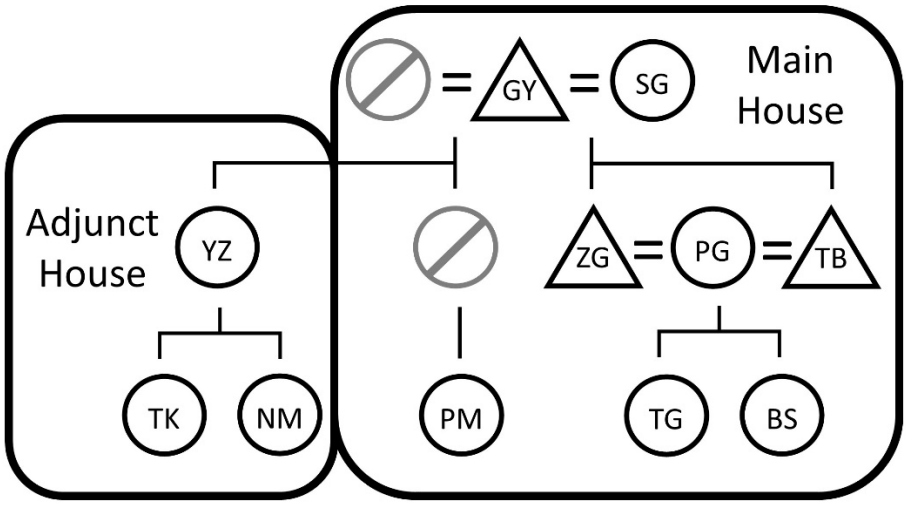
In the main house of Household GP14 (Figure 8) the aging couple GY and SG lived with their two sons ZG and TB, the *nama* PG, and three granddaughters. SG was GY's second wife; the first died after bearing two daughters. The elder daughter passed away before 1958 leaving a daughter born out of wedlock (PM). According to former *zurkhang* resident TK,

> PM was a girl in our house. Her mother died when she was young. Her father was a lama who came to do rituals at our house, and then PM was born a *nyelu*. Because she was born out of wedlock, the father did not take responsibility for her. So, when PM's mother died, she remained within our household, not in the *zurkhang* but within the main house.

rates. Only Aziz's study pertains to pre-1959 Tibetan societies so it remains difficult to determine the past frequency of divorce.

YZ, the other daughter of GY's first wife, had originally married into another household but returned to live in the *zurkhang* after divorce. As per custom, she brought her daughters TK and NM with her. In 1958 the brothers ZG and TB were 34- and 26-years-old, and their wife PG was 30. If a son was subsequently born to them, he would be the household heir. If not, one of their daughters (TG or BS) could be the successor and marry a *magpa*. The other girls in the household (TK, NM, and PM) were ineligible to inherit.

Figure 8: Household GP14



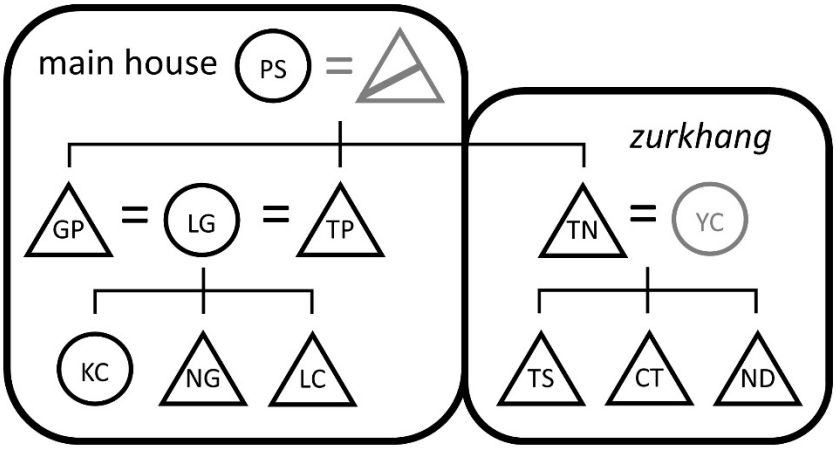
Zurkhang to Escape Polyandry

Polyandrous marriages were difficult to maintain.[17] A former Kyidrong resident explained, "If you are not compatible with the *nama* and take your own wife, then you move out to the *zurkhang*. You are referred to as a *zurpa*." Yet when a man split from his marriage and resided in an adjunct house, he was still counted as a member of the main house for taxation purposes and listed as such in the register. Once again, the interviews were crucial for detecting such divisions. For example, everyone in Household GP21 (Figure 9) is enumerated under one entry; the document provides no evidence that an adjunct house existed. According to LC and TS who were both interviewed for

[17] See Levine and Silk 1997; Haddix 2001; Fjeld 2008.

this project, GP was the eldest of three brothers who married LG. The middle brother TN did not get along with the common wife, so he moved into a *zurkhang* with YC, a woman he fell in love with. Although TN and YC lived together, the household register listed YC as a daughter (*bu mo*) in her natal household.[18] Despite the split, the brothers continued working together and were considered a single unit for taxation purposes. But from the perspective of inheritance and household continuity, only NG and LC were considered the rightful heirs. By moving into the *zurkhang* with a partner of choice, TN relinquished inheritance rights for his three sons.

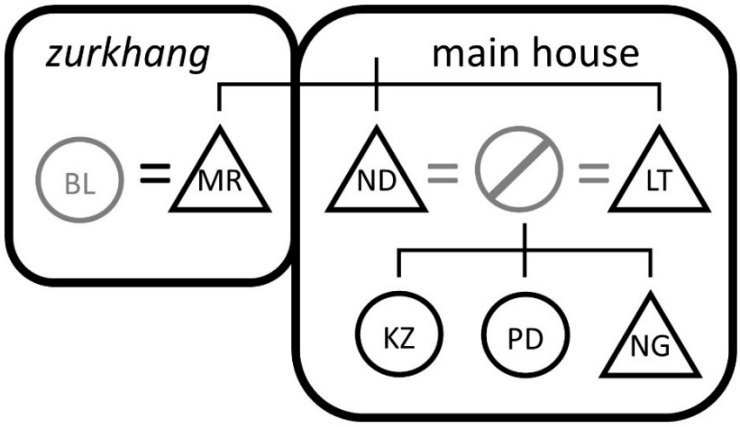
Figure 9: Household GP21



Household TD4 in Figure 10 contains a rare example of a person who is identified in the register as a *zurkhang* resident. Three brothers originally married one wife but the eldest, MR, decided to live separately with a partner of his choice, BL. She is listed in the register with her natal family. A note in the document describes MR as a '*zurkhang* dwelling man' (*zur sdod khyo*). NG was the future heir to this household. MR and BL never had any children.

[18] YC was also listed alongside two more of her children (a son and daughter) who were also fathered by TN. It is unclear why three of her children were enumerated as residents of GP21 and two as residents of her natal household. Perhaps it had something to do with labor needs of the respective households.

Figure 10: Household TD4

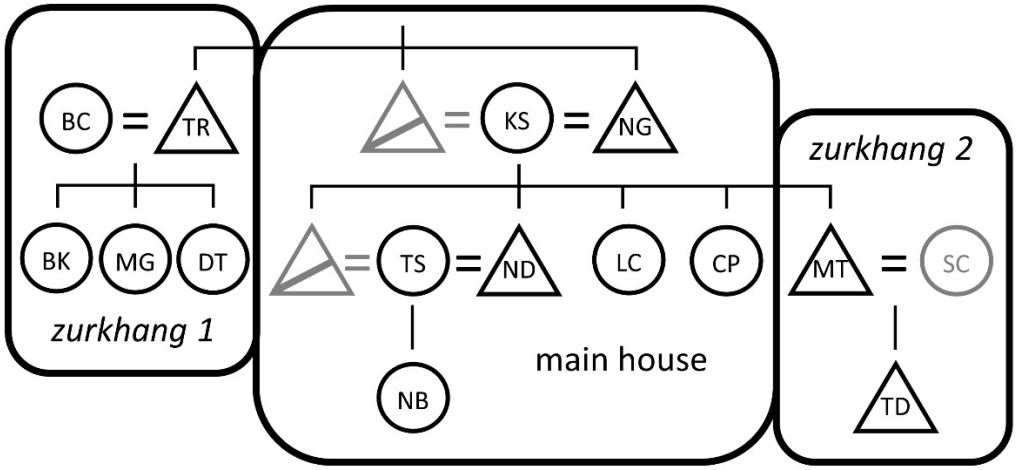


In Household KR1 (Figure 11), residents of the main house and *zurkhang* 2 are listed together in the register. NG and his elder brother (deceased prior to 1958) married KS. They had three sons who married polyandrously with TS (the eldest died prior to 1958). The middle son ND remained in the main house while the youngest, MT, moved into a *zurkhang* with SC, a woman he fell in love with. MT confirmed in an interview that he lived with SC, nevertheless in the register she was listed in her natal household. MT also confirmed that, by moving into the *zurkhang* with a partner of choice, he relinquished any claim on the inheritance. The successor would be any son(s) born to ND and TS, or their daughter NB if no sons were born.

At the end of this village's entry in the register, TR is identified as, "brother of the taxpayer NG, a *zur*-dwelling small householder."[19] TR is enumerated alongside the other small householders in the village, and together with BC who is identified as his wife (*bza' zla*) and three girls who are identified as their daughters (*bu mo*). They occupied *zurkhang* 1 in Figure 11. Household KR1 spawned *zurkhang* in successive generations. Residents of the older adjunct house had already been reclassified as small householders, the same status residents of *zurkhang* 2 would be relegated to in the future.

[19] *khral khongs NG gyi spun zur sdod dud chung chag/*

Figure 11: Household KR1



Socioeconomic and Demographic Significance of the *Zurkhang*

The examples above illustrate that the *zurkhang* in Kyidrong was an abode for elderly retirees, women who were unable or unwilling to marry into taxpayer households, divorced women, and men who were discontent with their polyandrous marriages. The movement of individuals into an adjunct house helped prevent the main house from becoming overcrowded or perhaps unruly due to interpersonal conflicts and did so without diminishing a robust labor force comprised of numerous adults and children. Whether this family management strategy was unique to Kyidrong or existed elsewhere remains to be determined. In a study of pre-1959 villages in Gyantse District Goldstein did not uncover such a practice, whereas Dargyay reports in a study of other villages in the same district that when a *nama* arrived to marry her brothers an unmarried woman could move into a small house constructed specifically for her. Aziz mentions the presence of unmarried women and their children in the households of their married brothers in Tingri but does not provide details on their living arrangements.[20] Perhaps the closest parallel is the 'big house, little house' (*khang chen khang chung*) of Ladakh, Zangskar, and Spiti, a system in which parents

[20] Personal communication with Melvyn Goldstein, November 2021. Dargyay 1982, Aziz 1978.

pass the head of household position to their son(s) and then move into a separate abode (the *khang chung*) with unmarried children.[21] More research across Tibetan societies is needed to better understand the range of strategies families relied on to manage large households.

To gauge the demographic importance of Kyidrong's adjunct houses, consider that the average size of the eleven households analyzed above was 10.4 individuals. The main house had an average of 7.1 residents while the *zurkhang* had an average of 3.3 residents. The main house had a ratio of 1.4 men per woman whereas the *zurkhang* had the inverse ratio of 1.4 women per man. Although this small sample is not representative of all households, the data does suggest that a significant percentage of Kyidrong's population inhabited *zurkhang*, and that the adults were disproportionately women.

Although the exact number of Kyidrong's adjunct houses is unknown because information through interviews could not be obtained on all households, it is possible to estimate prevalence. A study of households with one or more elderly residents found that 43% (66 out of 153) had a *zurkhang*.[22] Those with a *zurkhang* had an average of 10.3 residents while those that did not had an average of 6.0 residents which suggests, not surprisingly, a correlation between household size and the presence of an adjunct house. Because households with elderly residents were on average larger than other households (8.1 vs 5.8 residents), it is reasonable to assume that those lacking elderly members were less likely to have a *zurkhang*. If they were half as likely, then about 30% (112 out of 369) of all taxpayer households in Kyidrong would have had an adjunct house. If they were one quarter as likely, then about 24% (89 out of 369) of all households would have had an adjunct house. These estimates, albeit imperfect, suggest that *zurkhang* were quite common.

A further demographic consideration is the childbearing contribution of women living in *zurkhang*. Women who formally married into taxpayer households gave birth on average to 6.2 children. However, the overall fertility rate was tempered by Kyidrong's high frequency of informal marriage and nonmarriage: roughly half of all women aged 20-49 were not formally married into taxpayer households.[23] The

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21 See, for example, Dollfus 1989; Attenborough 1994; Elford 1994; and Jahoda 2015.

22 Childs 2021.

23 Childs 2003, 2008, 81-83. A high frequency of female nonmarriage in Tibetan polyandrous societies was common. Goldstein reports that 31% of women were unmarried in Limi (1976), and Schuler found the incidence of nonmarriage to be 44% of women aged 20 and above in Chumik (1987).

average of 2.2 births among unmarried and informally married woman, many of whom lived in *zurkhang*, moderated the aggregate total fertility rate to 4.4 births per woman which was sufficient to sustain a modest population growth rate of 0.5% per annum.[24] Had the residents of Kyidrong not been relatively permissive toward informal unions and out of wedlock childbearing – phenomena facilitated by the *zurkhang* – the population may well have stagnated or declined which could have generated pervasive labor shortages.

It is not just the scale of childbearing that matters; the rights and social status of individuals living in or born into the adjunct house must also be considered. *Zurkhang* residents of reproductive age were either ineligible to inherit (unmarried daughters and divorced women who returned home) or had voluntarily relinquished any claim on heritable assets for themselves and their progeny (men who left polyandrous unions). The link between house of residence, parentage, and rights to inheritance is clear from a lexical distinction. 'Insider children' (*nang gi phru gu*) referred to those born to parents in the main house, whereas 'outsider children' (*phyi'i phru gu*) were those born to unmarried or divorced women, and to men who opted out of polyandry. Outsider children usually lived in *zurkhang* and were in many respects appendages to taxpayer households. Their labor was compensated with food and shelter, but they would eventually be consigned to small householder status because they held no claim to heritable assets.[25] As one person explained, "In our village many women were sent as brides to other households. Others just had children [out of wedlock] who became small householders." Another commented, "Many women did not marry; they were spinsters (*mo hrang*). Most spinsters would give birth to one or two children, not many. Their children were considered small householders because they were *nyelu* (born out of wedlock) and did not have [socially recognized] fathers. They did not inherit." Inheritance preferences therefore created a situation in which

[24] The population growth estimate was achieved by comparing fertility parameters of Kyidrong's population with those found in stable population models. For the full demographic methodology and analysis see Childs 2003 and 2008, 83-84. This finding confirmed Goldstein's finding (1976, 1981) that a modicum of nonmarital fertility was essential for preventing population decline in Tibetan polyandrous societies.

[25] In Tingri, Aziz found cases where the illegitimate son of a man's sister married polyandrously with his cousins or could be the first option for adoption as the household heir if his maternal uncle failed to have a son (1978, 126). No such cases were uncovered in Kyidrong although there are no specific rules that would preclude such practices.

zurkhang residents played a role in sustaining a specific segment of Kyidrong's population, namely, small householders.

Kyidrong's taxpayer households often relied on the labor of small householders to fulfill tax obligations so they could retain their status and privileges. As Schuler noted in a study of nonmarriage in Chumik, Nepal, "Single adults are part of a sizeable population that the system defines as economically and socially peripheral, limiting their access to property and to social status, and by extension to marriage and reproduction. It is the peripheral people, the unentitled and unmarried, who provide cheap labor for the entitled."[26] Extending this observation to Kyidrong, the work capacity of *zurkhang* residents along with their ineligibility to inherit must have played a significant role in allowing taxpayer households to remain relatively affluent from one generation to the next. In other words, the peripheral status of *zurkhang* residents should not overshadow their role in helping maintain, through reproduction, the pre-1959 social order of Tibet.

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[26] Schuler 1987, 59.

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The Transmission Lineages of the *Raktayamāri* Tantric Cycles in the Sa skya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism: The *Gshin rje chos 'byung* of A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659)[1]

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Introduction

The tantric cycles of Vajrabhairava (*rdo rje 'jigs byed*) and Raktayamāri (*gshin rje dmar po*), dedicated to the wrathful forms of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in his function as "Death-Destroyer", reached Tibet during the later diffusion (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet, although some minor works could have entered during the first dissemination (*snga dar*).[2] There were five main Vajrabhairava transmissions (*lugs*), named after the Tibetan masters who brought the cycle to Tibet, namely: 1) Zhang, 2) Skyo, 3) Gnyos, 4) Mal, and 5) Rwa. All of them were adopted by the Sa skya pas.[3] In the late 12th century, after the advent of the Vajrabhairava transmission, the cycle of Raktayamāri entered Tibet. The spread of this cycle appears to have been essentially coterminous with the translation activities of the five bilingual lo tsā bas of that period, namely, Dpyal lo tsā ba, Chag lo tsā ba, G.yag sde lo tsā ba, Glo bo lo tsā ba, and Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa. The Sa skya pa masters received different Raktayamāri transmissions stemming from the aforementioned lo tsā bas. Despite the existence of many lineages that provide ample opportunities for research, the topic of transmission of Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet has not received any attention from scholars. This article intends to fulfill this desideratum by providing a preliminary overview of this virtually unknown topic.

The focus of this article will be mainly the transmission lineages

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1 Dedicated to the memory of our Gen-La Tsering Dhundrup Gonkatsang (1951–2018).

2 According to Tāranātha, a small number of Vajrabhairava-*sādhana*s entered Tibet with the advent of Buddhism (*snga dar*) when the cult was adopted by the first *dharma*-king Srong btsan sgam po (6th–7th century).

3 For the five Vajrabhairava transmissions adopted by the Sa skyas, see Wenta (2020) and Cuevas (2021b).

Aleksandra Wenta, "The Transmission Lineages of the *Raktayamāri* Tantric Cycles in the Sa skya Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism: The *Gshin rje chos 'byung* of A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659)", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 65, Octobre 2022, pp. 26-69.

adopted by the Sa skya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Although the Sa skya pas are primarily known as the advocates of the "Path with its Fruit" (*lam 'bras*) and of Hevajra teachings, their involvement in the cult of Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri had continued unrelentingly from the time of the early Sa skya masters. The great significance attached to these tantric cycles can be evinced by the proliferation of *thangka*s commissioned by the Sa skya pas to commemorate various Vajrabhairava-Raktayamāri lineage transmissions received by the *bla ma*s of this school throughout its history.[4] Suffice is to mention the 16th century Raktayamāri *thangka* in the Essen collection recently researched by Heller.[5] The *thangka*, uniquely commissioned on the occasion of Sangs rgyas seng ge's ascendency (1504–1569) to the throne of Ngor, portrays Lha mchog seng ge (1468–1535), the ninth Ngor abbot, and Dkon mchog lhun grub (1497–1557), the tenth Ngor abbot. Both *bla ma*s were deeply involved in the practice of these tantric cycles: Lha mchog seng ge regarded the *thangka* as his *thugs dam* ("object of worship"),[6] while Dkon mchog lhun grub wrote at least four works on the *sādhana* practice focusing on Vajrabhairava.[7]

The analysis of different transmission lineages undertaken here will be primarily based on a textual study of A mes zhabs's *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, which serves as one of the very few comprehensive accounts of the Raktayamāri lineages in Tibet. Even a customary glance at different lineages modeled on a family tree-like genealogy, reveals an extraordinary network of alliances between the Sa skya and the prominent lo tsā bas that played an important role in the rebirth of Tibetan culture during the *phyi dar* period. It may be argued that the Sa skya's rapid rise to power in that period was accomplished to a great extent through their capacity to "forge alliances"[8] with "new trends in Buddhism",[9] and was directly connected to the parameters of the esoteric lineage formation. During the volatile times of the *phyir dar* period, filled with internal conflicts between different clans and mounting pressures of the looming Mongol invasion, many aristocratic houses made efforts to obtain esoteric Buddhist teachings; thus, the rise of lordly families, the proliferation of tantric lineages, and the enhanced status of the lo tsā bas could be seen as mutually

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4 On the 15th century *thangka* featuring Vajrabhairava and commemorating the transmission of the Rwa lineage of Vajrabhairava to the Sa skya pas, see Jackson 1990b:137, 1996:84.

5 Heller 2009.

6 Essen and Thingo 1989: 228.

7 See, for example, *'Jigs byed rwa lugs kyi sgrub thabs*, *'Jigs byed rwa lugs kyi bsgrub thabs dang gtor chog gi zur 'debs bsnyen sgrub rnal rol*, *Dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed rwa lugs kyi sgrub thams bdud 'joms snang ba*.

8 Kapstein 2006:101.

9 Kapstein 2006:101.

inclusive processes.

This article deals with such questions as: who were the key-figures in the transmission and dissemination of Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet, and what was their position in the larger network of Buddhist scholars? Before revealing the identity of some of them, some reflections on the methodology that informs this article are in order. The common methodological approach to the study of lineages as an unbroken chain of guru-disciple initiations, often represented in a straight-line succession diagram, has been challenged by McRae[10]. He argues that such analysis presupposes the risk of committing the "string of pearls" fallacy and effectively simplifies diverse and complex religious and social dynamics involved in the lineage formation. Instead, he proposes an approach based on different phases, which brings to the forefront "qualitative differences along a chronological axis" that, in place of homologizing the individuals as members of a single, continuous confraternity, rather creates "meaningful distinctions".[11] My own approach to the study of lineages differs from that of McRae. I argue that the analysis of masters in the line of succession can be seen as a dynamic process of transmission practice and, therefore, an articulation of mobility that does not flow unimpeded but is channeled through the cracks of specific encounters. This model of analysis places the category of "encounter" at the center of investigation, and implies that religious practice is transmitted through the circulation of audiences. The transmission practice is also in various degrees dependent upon the centers that often, due to their strategic geographical location, enable circulatory traffic movement. The emphasis on the aspect of mobility situates transmission as a form of social practice that simultaneously reveals an emergent process of site making. In this case, the transmission practice that could involve both formal tantric initiation and the translation of a Tantra is linked to certain geographical places that played a pivotal role in the dissemination of tantric teachings. This article will take a closer look at some among the locations that appear to have assumed a wider significance in the circulatory tantric network, and that provided a regular opportunity for the exchange of ideas and spread of Raktayamāri teachings through Tibet.

[10] McRae 2003.
[11] McRae 2003: 11, 12.

1. A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659) and his *Gshin rje chos 'byung*

A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams was in many ways a paradigmatic and particularly successful example of a Sa skya master. He was born into a powerful family: the 'Khon lineage of the Sa skya throne-holders at the Dus mchod bla brang. His grandfather was Sangs 'chang grags pa blo gros (1563–1617), the twenty-sixth patriarch of Sa skya, who granted him numerous empowerments of tantric deities, including Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, Vajrakīlaya, etc.[12] From the early years of his life, A mes zhabs was exposed to rigorous studies of Buddhist scriptures and tantric rituals and had the advantage of being allied with influential figures of his era, who supported him on the ambitious path to clerical success. Following in the glory of his father's footsteps, A mes zhabs eventually became the twenty-seventh patriarch of the Sa skya pas and took up his residence at the Bzhi thog bla brang. He is regarded as one of the most important historians of his lineage, whose impressive body of works consisting of hundreds of texts—including official registers of teachings, genealogies, biographies, tantric cycles, and religious histories—provides an invaluable source of information on the Sa skya pa lineage.[13] Recent scholarship on A mes zhabs has focused on his biography, and includes a detailed overview of various transmissions he received,[14] the mapping of the Hevajra Tantras and the teachings of the "Path with its Fruit" (*lam 'bras*),[15] as well as the analysis of the stylistic features of his *gsan yig*.[16] However, to my knowledge, his work on the religious history (*chos 'byung*) of the Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka tantric cycle has received scant attention to date. A mes zhabs's *Gshin rje chos 'byung* makes use of the historiographical genre of 'religious history' (*chos 'byung*) to consolidate and preserve the histories of particular lineage transmissions for the future generations of the Sa skya practitioners. The choice of the *chos 'byung* genre seems to indicate that Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri were considered formative to the Sa skya identity. In A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung*, the personal lineages of A mes zhabs and Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456) are characteristically interwoven in the general structure of the main transmission lineages related to the Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri cycles in Tibet. In the 17th century, the religious authority and political influence of the Sa skya was long in decline, while

12 Sobisch 2007:13.
13 Sobisch 2008:2.
14 Sobisch 2002; 2007.
15 Sobisch 2008.
16 Kramer 2008.

the power of the long-standing Sa skya opponents, the Dge lugs pas, was rising.[17] By documenting the tantric legacy of Ngor chen, A mes zhabs wanted to preserve the heritage of one of the most important Sa skya masters, who was known for his sectarian debates with the rival followers of Tsong kha pa.[18]

The description of each transmission lineage—which, to a large extent, resembles the linguistic structure[19] of A mes zhabs's "record of teachings received"[20]—usually begins with the name of a single teaching or a group of teachings that was/were transmitted, the name of the lineage-holder, and the names of the master/s from whom the lineage-holder originally received the teachings. The lineage-holder acts as an anchor point of the main lineage, wherefrom the orally transmitted tradition (*bka' bab, bka' khrid*) derives its name. In most cases, a single transmission or a group of transmissions are documented as descending from one master to one disciple in an uninterrupted, sequential line (*rim pas*) handed down through generation after generation of masters that helps to establish a single transmission lineage history. In that case, the transmission is specified as being transmitted in a single line of descent (*babs pa gcig*). Very often, however, the continuity of a single transmission lineage breaks up, establishing parallel transmission lineages.[21] In most cases, this

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17 Sobisch 2007:10.

18 For the debates between Ngor chen and Tshong kha pa's disciple, Mkhas grub rdo rje, see Heimbel 2017a.

19 A transmission-lineage when the teachings are bestowed from one master to one disciple or from one master to several disciples can be distinguished as three specific linguistic models. The first model uses the ergative marker *kyis* and its variants, added either to a proper name or to an indefinite pronoun *des* "by him" or *de nyid kyis* "by himself" that always follows the proper name, to indicate the person who grants the transmission, i.e. the master/lineage-holder. The person who receives the transmission, i.e. the disciple, who automatically becomes the lineage-holder in his own right, is indicated by the oblique particle, *la* "to". E.g. *rwa ye shes seng ge**s** rwa 'bum seng **la** gnang*. The second model uses the phrase *de la* "under that [teacher]" indicating the person whose proper name was given in the preceding line. He is the master under whom the disciple receives the transmission. The disciple is indicated by the ergative marker *kyis.* E.g. *de **la** rgwa lo**s** zhus*. The third model makes use of ablative particle *nas* "from [that teacher]" that simply precedes the proper name of the person who grants transmission. The name of the disciple to whom this transmission is given follows *nas:* "from [that teacher] [to that] disciple". E.g. *rje thar rtse **nas** nam mkha' dpal bzang*. In case these models are employed to document a transmission to several individuals, a continuing particle *dang* "and" is sometimes used. Very often, however, *dang* is dropped altogether, instead the proper names of different recipients following in a single transmission line are listed.

20 See Kramer 2008.

21 The creation of parallel lineages is indicated by the phrase *yang* "also" followed by the proper name of the teacher from whom the main transmission-lineage branched off to initiate a parallel lineage. The proper name of the teacher is fol-

happens when the master bestows the teachings not to one, but to several disciples. These parallel lineages may further evolve into different parallel lineages. Not infrequent are the cases in which the master receives different transmissions from several parallel lineages or from several teachers belonging to the same lineage (*bla ma so so la gsan*). For example, Ngor chen is referred to by A mes zhabs as the one "who was established in many transmission lineages" (*brgyud pa'i bka' babs mang du bzhugs pa*). If the author wishes to document his own 'personal' lineage, the honorific personal pronoun *kho bo cag* "we" is used, followed by the verb indicating transmission.

A mes zhabs uses two verbs to refer to the methods of transmission: *gsan* 'listen' (sometimes substituted by the passive form *thos* 'heard') and *gnang* 'give'. While the former clearly indicates the oral nature of transmission, the meaning of the latter, highly polysemic verb is far more complex.[22] Its usage in this context can partially be explained when we consider its co-appearance with the verb *zhus*, 'request', e.g. *zhus pa la gnang* (it [the transmission] was given, as he requested). The choice of those two verbs by A mes zhabs seems to suggest that *zhus* signifies the tantric custom of formally petitioning the master for initiation, whereas *gnang* indicates the fact that a given request was granted.

A mes zhabs's reasons for writing the *Gshin rje chos 'byung* probably stemmed from two different factors, one personal and the other political. The personal factor derived from his tantric initiations. A mes zhabs's turn to the Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri tantras came relatively early in his career, when he was twenty-three years old, following his encounter with Mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), who became one of his main preceptors. According to Sobisch,[23] A mes zhabs studied under his guidance from 1619 onwards until Ngag dbang's death in 1641. Ngag dbang features as the master of A mes zhabs's first 'personal' lineage, as the one who bestowed on him the teachings of both the Black and Red cycles.[24] Insofar as the Black cycle is concerned, A mes zhabs

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lowed by ablative particle *nas* "from" that is followed by the list of disciples who belong to this parallel lineage. The whole phrase goes as follows: *yang* PERSON A *nas* PERSON B, PERSON C, etc. E.g: *yang rong pa rgwa lo nas/ rong pa shes rab seng ge/ bla ma dpal ldan seng ge.*

22 Mélac and Tournadre 2021.

23 Sobisch 2007:18.

24 A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung* divides the teachings into the Black cycle and the Red cycle, thus simplifying a rather complex matter of various cults that belonged to these taxonomies (see Wenta 2020; Cuevas 2021b). In general terms, the "Black cycle" includes the cults of Vajrabhairava/*Rdo rje 'jigs byed*, and Kṛṣṇayamāri/*Gshin rje nag po*) and the "Red cycle" includes the cult of Raktayamāri/*Gshin rje dmar po.*

reports the receipt of the teachings from the Eastern Rwa tradition initiated by a younger brother of Rwa Chos rab, namely Rwa Dharma seng ge.[25] Among the teachings he received from Ngag dbang chos grags were empowerments (*dbang*), authorizations (*rjes gnang*), experiential instructions (*nyams khrid*),[26] and the reading transmission (*bka' lung*) of the *Commentary on the Seven Chapters [of the Vajrabhairavatantra*] based on the tantric commentary of Jo gdan nam mkha' lhun bzang (13th-14th c.). [27] The text referred to by A mes zhabs is most probably the *Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi khrid yig sbas pa rab gsal* (*Instruction Manual of Vajrabhairava [Called] "Illuminating the Secret"*), extant in thirty-seven folios.[28] As for the Red cycle, these were the teachings transmitted to A mes zhabs through the lineage of Tshar chen (see pp. 52-53) that Ngag dbang received from Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, one of Tshar chen's outstanding disciples. The transmissions of the Red cycle included the unelaborated instruction on ripening and development (*spros med kyi khrid smin rgyas*), and the so-called "three blessings" (*byin rlabs*): 1) Unelaborated Blessing of the Red Yamāri cycle;

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[25] Rwa Dharma seng ge passed it down to his own son, Dkon mchog seng ge, who transmitted it to Shes rab mtshan (Rwa Shes rab rgyal mtshan), who passed it down to Rgya ston Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan (Dbang phyug brtson 'grus). From him, Kun dga' brtson 'grus a.k.a Rgya ston, who was believed to be the fourth incarnation of Rwa lo tsā ba Rdo rje grags, listened to the entire Rwa tradition without exception. *rwa shar pa ni gcung rwa dha rma seng ge nas gtso bor brgyud pa ste/ de yang rwa chos rab la rwa dha rma seng ges gsan/ des rang gi sras rwa dkon mchog seng ge la gnang/ des rwa shes rab rgyal mtshan la gnang/ des rgya ston dbang phyug rgyal mtshan la gnang/ de nyid la rwa chen lo tsa bar rdo rje grags kyi sku'i skye ba bzhi par grags pa rgya ston kun dga' brtson 'grus kyis rwa lugs kyi chos skor ma lus pa gsan/ Gshin rje,* p.128. According to A mes zhabs, Kun dga' brtson 'grus was a prolific writer. Among his many literary compositions, we find the *Teachers of the Rwa lineage*, *History of India and Nepal* and *Commentary on the Seven Chapters [of the Vajrabhairavatantra]* and Sobisch (2008: 54) confirms that according to Ngag dbang chos grags's *Record* these two texts formed a part of the Vajrabhairava teachings according to the Rwa tradition that were transmitted in the Sa skya pa sect. Recently, Cuevas (2021a: 283) has reported that Kun dga' brtson 'grus was responsible for the spread of the Rwa transmissions to the Khams region in eastern Tibet and as far north as Tangut (Ch. Xixia). See also Cuevas 2021b: 66.

[26] Ngag dbang chos grags bestowed on A mes zhabs several teachings, namely: 1) the "empowerment of the 13-deity Kṛṣṇayamāri according to the Rwa tradition" (*rwa lugs lha bcu gsum gyi dbang*), 2) very secret and profound "authorization [to practice] the death rituals", 3) "experiential instruction on the Ḍakinī Hearing Lineage of the Rwa Instructions" (*rwa khrid mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud nyams khrid*). The last items on A mes zhabs's list of tantric teachings he received are: the "consecration [to practice] the mantra-extraction", and two volumes of the Vajrabhairava cycle, such as the *Complete [volumes] of Rwa's teachings* and a detailed practice manual. *Gshin rje*, p. 129.

[27] Jo gdan nam mkha' lhun bzang was a follower of the Rgya lugs branch of the Eastern Rwa tradition, see Cuevas 2021b: 110.

[28] Sobisch 2008:56 however identifies the text as *Nag 'grel gyi bshad pa*, which is an exposition of the *Rtog bdun gyi nag 'grel* by Rwa lo tsā ba Rdo rje grags.

2) Blessing of the Clear Light, and; 3) Blessing of Ambrosia. The first of the three blessings was based on the collation of two texts: a standard Indian text on the Red Yamāri composed by Virūpa and Śrīdhara, on the one hand, and a Tibetan text composed by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, on the other (see p. 35, fn. 51).[29]

The second 'personal' lineage was associated with Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub from Lo dgon pa in Bya yul (*dbus*) whom A mes zhabs met in 1622,[30] when he was twenty-seven years old. In the course of their initial encounter, Spyan snga received a series of premonitory dreams featuring different forms of Yamāri, which he understood as compelling evidence in favour of A mes zhabs's suitability to receive the Vajrabhairava teachings. A mes zhabs records his meeting with Spyan snga and the dream trope as symptomatic of divine providence in the following words:

> In the year 'endowed with the eye of the profound *dharma*' (i.e. 1622), I thoroughly received the teachings [of Vajrabhairava-Yamāri] at the feet of Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub. Thus, when he was explaining to me the purpose of granting me these cycles of teachings, he said that in his dream the *yab-yum* form of Yamāri emerged from the ground and appeared to be delighted, he thought it was an auspicious sign. The next morning, he said to me: "I have realized that this Karmayama (*las gshin*) transmission will bring enlightened activities to some of you Sa skya people". On the eve of the empowerment preparation, he again dreamt about all sorts of weapons and armors surrounding me, and he said: "This is a sign that if you rely on [Vajra]bhairava, the harm caused to you by other people will be pushed back and whatever injury they try to inflict upon you, you will be protected". Another time, when he was giving the teachings on the "Ḍakinī Hearing Lineage of the Instructions of Rwa", at night, he had a dream, in which a solitary form of [Vajra]bhairava filled up everything in the three realms, and he saw himself filling up [the space] in a similar fashion; that was a very clear indication that he would be able to annihilate all kinds of enemies and hindrances. The next morning, he said with great joy: "Last night, I had the following dream, now I realize that the transmission of the Vajrabhairava tantric cycle is meant for you."[31]

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29 *Gshin rje*, p.137.

30 Sobisch 2007:19.

31 *zab rgyas chos kyi spyan ldan lo nas spyan snga rin po che kun dga' don grub kyi drung du kho bos legs par thob cing/ de ltar chos skor de dag gnang dgos tshul gyi snyan/ gsan phab dus/ rje spyan snga rin po che'i mnal lam du las gshin yab yum sa 'og nas byon byung nas dges pa'i tshul mdzad pa sogs kyi mtshan ltas khyad par can byung ba la brten/ nang par rje'i gsung las/ khyed sa skya pa la las gshin 'di bka' bab cing 'phrin las sgrub pa 'dug gsungs pa dang/ dbang gi sta gon gyi nub mo rje de nyid kyi mnal lam du kho bo cag gi mtha' skor du go cha dang mtshon cha'i rigs sna tshogs 'dug pa rmis pas 'jigs byed la brten nas gzhan gyi byad ka bzlog pa dang bsrung ba grub pa'i rtags yin*

Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub appears in the personal lineage through which A mes zhabs received the Red cycle through the lineage of Ngor in 1622 (see p. 59).[32] The teachings included: 1) the 5-Deity Empowerment (*dbang*) of the Red Yamāri (of Virūpa) and 2) transmissions and instructions (*lung khrid*) of the unelaborated practice of the Red Yamāri based on the text of Thar rtse nam mkha' dpal bzang (1532–1602), the thirteenth abbot of Ngor.[33] Both of these personal lineages of the Red Yamāri transmitted to A mes zhabs through the lineage of Tshar by Ngag dbang chos grags and through the Ngor lineage by Spyan snga Rin po che Kun dga' don grub were the offshoot of the main transmission lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (see p. 59).

The third 'personal' lineage mentioned by A mes zhabs follows a different trajectory since it was not associated with the oral teachings bestowed by flesh and blood masters, but with the textual transmission (*bka' lung*) coming from A mes zhabs's individual study. A mes zhabs says that the Black cycle of the Western Rwa tradition reached him through a serious study of *Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi man ngag phyogs sdeb*, a collection of pith instructions on the nine-deity *maṇḍala* practice of Vajrabhairava, written by Dpal 'dzin grags pa (14th–15th c.), known as 'Bri gung pa Dpal 'dzin.[34] Dpal 'dzin belongs to the Western Rwa lineage coming from the parallel lineages of Rwa lo tsā ba. However, as A mes zhabs reports, the transmission of *Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi man ngag phyogs sdeb* reached him through the line of the fourth abbot of Ngor monastery, Kun dga' dbang phyug (1424–1478). Since Kun dga' dbang phyug was no longer alive at the time when A mes zhabs was born, the transmission of Dpal 'dzin's text that A mes zhabs received from Kun dga' dbang phyug could simply refer to the fact that the text became a part of Ngor's tantric legacy when Kun dga' dbang phyug held his abbatial throne at Ngor monastery.

Over the years that followed A mes zhabs became increasingly engaged in the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri teachings and spent much of

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gsungs/ yang rwa khrid mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud gnang ba'i dus su nub cig mnal lam du/ 'jigs byed dpa' gcig gis khams gsum thams cad gang nas rje rang yang de 'dra'i rnam pa gsal ba dang bcas dgra bgegs thams cad tshar bcad pa'i mtshan ltas gsal bar byung nas/ nang par rje'i gsung las/ mdang nub kho bo la rmi lam 'di bzhin byung bas khyed la rdo rje 'jigs byed 'di bka' bab 'dug ces thugs shin tu dges pa chen po dang bcas gsungs pa yin no/ Gshin rje, pp. 127–128.

[32] Sobisch (2002:167) says that A mes zhabs received from Spyan snga the *lam 'bras* transmission through the Ngor pas and Tshar chen; however, this is not the case in the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri transmission, where Spyan snga is mentioned only in relation to the Ngor transmission lineage.

[33] *Gshin rje,* p.137

[34] For his connection to the Sa skya, see Cuevas 2021b: 110.

his time writing texts related to this cycle, including the *sadhāna* (*sgrub thabs*), practice (*nyams len*), and pith instructions (*man ngag*) of Vajrabhairava, the instruction manual for the unelaborated Red Yamāri (*khrid yig*), and the cycle's religious history (*gshin rje chos 'byung*). The *Gshin rje chos 'byung* contains historiographical material that attempts to reconstruct the lines of transmissions of the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri cycle embodied in various lineages, legacies, textual histories, and practices from the perspective of the Sa skya pas. From the colophon of *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, we learn that A mes zhabs finished the text on the third day of the waning moon in the month of Jyeṣṭha (May) in the female water-bird year, that is in the year 1633, while residing in the 'Od gsal snang ba room at the Gzhi thog bla ma palace (*bla brang*) of Sa skya.[35] He was assisted by a scribe (*yi ge pa*), and one of his closest disciples, a highly learned monk and *vajradhara*, Bsam gtan rgya mtsho.[36] In his dedication of merit, he makes it clear that one of the primary motivations behind writing this treatise was not only to show the manner in which the Vajrabhairava-Yamāri cycle flourished in India and Tibet, but also to seek protection from the enemies. He elaborates on it in the following words:

> Here I declare:
> With the sun of wisdom completely devoid of obscuration
> O Mañjuśrī, dispel the darkness of ignorance of all sentient beings.
> O guru Yamāri, you who have assumed the wrathful form in order to subdue evil
> Once again, protect us from enemies!
> I have explained thoroughly the manner in which these wonderful teachings on the supreme deity, which were not available here before, spread in India and here in Tibet.
> I collated the account in order to benefit the doctrine.
> However, in these exceedingly bad degenerate times, haughty tantric practitioners
> Are good for nothing except for misusing the *dharma* for food.
> Only once in a bloom, you find the *tāntrika* who is interested in practicing the *dharma* that is also profound.
> For that reason, motivated by pure thoughts and deeds
> Even though I have been teaching the supreme *dharma* days and nights,
> The disciples are failing to apply themselves to the teachings.
> [All my efforts] are like ringing the bells to the ears of birds.
> When I see this state of affairs, I too become discouraged.
> Even if it is so, because of the precious Buddha's teachings,

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[35] *chu mo bya'i lo snron gyi zla ba'i dmar cha rdzogs pa gsum pa'i tshes la/ yon tan rin po che du ma'i 'byung gnas dpal sa skya'i chos grwa chen po'i gzhi thog bla brang gi 'od gsal snang bar legs par sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni/... Gshin rje,* p. 141.

[36] *Gshin rje,* p. 141.

> Thinking that my instructions may benefit a few fortunate persons,
> I feel there is no fault in giving this explanation.
> As a result of the merit that we, teachers and disciples, have accumulated through this composition,
> Having purified all impurities amassed in the past, present, and future,
> May we achieve a long life and fulfillment of wishes.
> May we be able to promote the *dharma* both in large and narrow sense.
> Finally, when the light of this life sinks down,
> May I the teacher together with my disciples be reborn in the Pure Land of Bliss.
> Once again, by means of the plethora of magical emanations, may we do whatever is needed to help those who are to be tamed, and thus
> Continue to uphold the teachings until the end of the universe.[37]

The dedication of merit suggests that the second reason for writing the *Gshin rje chos 'byung* was politically motivated. A mes zhabs understood the Yamāri teachings as having a primary apotropaic purpose, which is to ward off the enemies of the Sa skyas. This should come as no surprise considering that the 17th century was one of the most turbulent times in the history of Tibet.[38] The ecclesiastical conflicts of rival Gtsang and Dbus factions, complemented by the constant threat of the looming Mongol invasion, brought the issues of protection to the forefront. In an effort to establish their rule in Tibet, the Gtsang pa Desi government commissioned army-averting rituals against the Mongol armies and their Dge lugs pa/Dbus allegiances. As a result, expertise in wrathful rituals aimed at destroying the enemies became increasingly sought after and *bla ma*s dabbling in such matters were commissioned by the ruling lords to perform large-

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[37] *'dir smras pa/ sgrib gnyis kun bral ye shes nyi ma yis/ 'gro ba'i ma rig mun sel 'jam pa'i dbyangs/ gtug pa 'dul phyir khro bo'i skur bzhengs pa'i bla ma gshin rje dgra yis slar yang skyongs/ lha mchog gang gi bstan pa rin po che/ 'phags pa'i yul dang bod 'dir byung ba'i tshul/ legs par bshad pa'i sngon med ngo mtshar gyi/ gtam 'di gcig tu bstan la phan phyir bshad/ de lta na yang dus ngan cher snyigs pas/ deng sang dus kyi sngags par rlom pa rnams/ lto chos lag len phra mo ma gtogs pa/ zab yang chos tshul don gnyer re re tsam/ rgyu mtshan des na bsam sbyor rnam dag gis/ nyin mtshan kun du dam pa'i chos bshad kyang/ don gnyer med pa'i slob ma'i tshogs rnams la/ 'dab chags rna bar dril bu'i sgra dang mtshungs/ 'di 'dra mthong tshe kho bo sgyid lug kyang/ 'o na kyang sangs rgyas bstan pa rin chen dang/ skal bzang re re tsam la phan rung snyam/ legs sbyar 'di la nyes pa med snyam sems/ 'di brtsams dge bas bdag cag dpon slob kyis/ dus gsum bsags pa'i sgrib pa kun byang nas/ tshe ring nad med bsam don kun'grub ste/ spyi dang bye brag bstan pa rgyas byed shog/ nam zhig tshe 'di'i snang ba nub mthag/ dpon slob lhan cig bde ba can skyes nas/ slar yang gang 'dul sprul pa sna tshogs kyis/ srid mtha'i bar du bstan pa 'dzin gyur cig/ Gshin rje,* pp. 139-140.

[38] Schwieger 2021: 201-216.

scale repelling rituals.[39] The elevation of ritualists trained in wrathful rites had a direct impact on their increased influence on political stage. One of the most important Gtsang pa stalwarts of that period widely reputed for his skill in enemy-destroying rites also through the rituals of Yamāri was Sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624), the "Mongol Repeller" who had an active share in Gtsang pa expansionist polity because of the enormous prestige he enjoyed among his contemporaries.[40] Ames zhabs and his closest family followed in Sog bzlog pa's footsteps and promoted themselves as experts in wrathful rites. This is evident from the type of writings A mes zhabs committed himself to, such as, for example, a *sādhana* dedicated to the destructive use against the enemy through the practice of Mahākāla *Vajrapañjara (*gur gyi mgon po'i man ngag las tshogs skor*) of the Sa skya pa tradition. A mes zhabs had an occasion to prove his ritual prowess when he was commissioned by the Gtsang pas to perform rites for "repelling inimical forces" in 1622 and 1630, when the Mongol army was closing on the Bsam 'grub rtse fortress.[41] Also Ames zhabs's elder brother, Mthu stobs pa (1588–1646), the *bdag chen* of Sa skya, came to Lhasa to "perform rituals for averting Mongols" when the much feared Mongol militia led by Arsalang arrived to Central Tibet in 1633.[42] As FitzHerbert[43] recently pointed out, in the mid-17-century Tibet, expertise in wrathful rituals was used as "war propaganda" that was designed to enhance the political status of the parties involved in conflict, on the one hand, and to influence the popular perceptions, on the other. That efficacy in magic rituals had a great impact of the Mongol perceptions of the Tibetan monks, such as 'Phags pa Chos rgyal, is evident also in Yuan China[44] and it is likely to have continued in the later centuries. By presenting himself as a powerful tantric ritualist, A mes zhabs was creating a certain image that could have influenced the fortunes of the Sa skya on the turbulent world-stage.

2. The Red Cycle

According to A mes zhabs, the Red cycle came to Tibet in the late 12th century, that is some time after the advent of the Black cycle. Especially the period after Sa skya Paṇḍita's death in the year 1251 saw unprecedented flourishing of Raktayamāri. The spread of the

[39] Gentry 2010:145.
[40] Gentry 2010:145-146.
[41] Sobisch 2007:20, cited by Templeman 2016:18, and FitzHerbert 2018:65.
[42] FitzHerbert 2018:92.
[43] FitzHerbert 2018.
[44] Shen Weirong 2004.

Red cycle appears to have been essentially coterminous with the translation activities of the five bilingual lo tsā bas of that period,[45] namely: Dpyal lo tsā ba, Chag lo tsā ba, G.yag sde lo tsā ba, Glo bo lo tsā ba, and Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa. These translators gave rise to the five well known and authentic traditions of the Red cycle in Tibet.[46] Each lineage transmission was, in itself, a confluence of various tantric teachings of the Red cycle that mainly included the 5-Deity Raktayamāri of Virūpa and/or the 13-Deity Raktayamāri of Śrīdhara. A mes zhabs discusses these five traditions individually, mapping out each transmission lineage based solely on a spiritual authority of teachers extending back to India and/or Nepal. His account suggests that the transmission of the Raktayamāri cycle was enacted by a small group of prominent intellectuals, who were in interaction with each other. This egalitarian and supranational community of intellectuals was responsible for cultural transfers that were taking place in spaces that were being constantly shared, shaped, and reproduced through a complex web of relations.

a) The Lineage of Dpyal lo tsā ba

The first tradition of the Red Yamāri originated from the Newar *paṇḍita* Niṣkalaṅka of Vajrāsana (Bodhgayā)[47] who, in a formal initiation ritual (*dngos su byin gyis brlabs pa*), transmitted the teachings to his first Tibetan disciple, Dpyal lo tsā ba Chos kyi bzang po (12th c.).[48] He was succeeded by Rong pa Rgwa lo[49] also known as Rnam rgyal rdo rje (1203–1282) and Rong pa Shes bzang[50] and then gradually, in a series of transmissions, by Bu ston Rin chen 'grub (1290–1364), and

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[45] *phyis bdag nyid chen po sa skya pan chen gyi sku ngo man chad la skad gnyis smra ba'i lo tsa ba rnam pa lnga'i sku drin las kha ba can gyi ljongs 'dir gshin rje gshed dmar po'i skor 'di dar ba yin te/ Gshin rje,* p. 129.

[46] *de yang bod 'dir gshed dmar gyi/ lam srol yongs su grags shing tshad thub pa lnga byon pa las/ Gshin rje,* pp 129-130.

[47] This agrees with Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung* (p. 80), where it is stated that Dpyal lo received the 5-Deity Raktayamāri in the line of Vajrāsana Niṣkalaṅka*: bla ma dpyal lo tsa ba chos kyi dpal bzang pos/ rdo rje gdan pa ni ska lang ka la zhus/ lha lnga'i dbang dang man ngag lag len cha tshang bar yog/*

[48] *dang po ni/ dpyal lo tsa ba chos kyi bzang po zhes bya bas dpal gshin rje gshed dmar pos dngos su byin gyis brlabs pa'i bal po pan di ta ni ska lang ka de bzhes pa la gshed dmar lha lnga'i dbang zhus/ Gshin rje*, p. 130.

[49] He was given the name [Rong pa] Rgwa lo because he came to be identified as the incarnation of Khams pa Rgwa lo (*khams pa rgwa lo'i skye ba yin pas mtshan yang rgwa lor btags/ Gshin rje,* p. 125.) Khams pa Rgwa lo was actually born in Amdo, but since his family was from Mi nyag Gha, he is called Khams in his biographies (Vitali 2009/10: 201).

[50] Rong pa Shes bzang is probably Rong pa Shes rab seng ge. For the overview of his biography, see Vitali 2014: 561-562.

others, and finally by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po[51] himself.[52] The original set of teachings imparted by Niṣkalaṅka to Dpyal lo consisted of the "5-Deity Raktayamāri Empowerment (of Virūpa)" and the "*Sādhana* of the 5-Deity Raktayamāri of (Virūpa)". Dpyal lo was the first Tibetan translator responsible for introducing this new tantric practice into Tibet.[53] Among the five texts on Vajrabhairava and Red Yamāri that he translated,[54] two of them, namely the *Raktayamāri-yantratattvanirdeśa* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'khrul lo'i de kho na nyid kyi gsal byed*, Toh. 2034) and the *Raktayamāntakayantroddyotakā* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'khor lo'i gsal byed*, Toh. 2033), are attributed to *paṇḍita* Niṣkalaṅka. Both texts focus on the ritual implementation of the Raktayamāri *yantra* employed for specific desire-oriented rites, for example, for attraction or subjugating of the enemy. However, by the time Dpyal lo began to spread these new teachings in the 12th century in Tibet, there was no one who could have bestowed on him the teachings of the "abbreviated [form] of the completion stage (*sampannakrama*)" and the "13-Deity Raktayamāri (of Śrīdhara)", constituting a set of practices that became widely popular and thus, in some measure, influential in the later traditions. It is, therefore, significant that beginning with the first tradition initiated by Dpyal lo the practice of the Red Yamāri in Tibet was restricted to the "5-Deity Raktayamāri (of Virūpa)".[55] This fact suggests that the tradition had developed over time, enlarging its range of practices to include the set of teachings that was unavailable at the time of the initial launch.

The fact that Dpyal lo initiated the lineage that was passed on in a direct transmission to Rgwa lo confirms the argument put forward by Vitali[56] about the existence of a close-knit social network between

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[51] Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po is said to have composed the cycle of teachings, i.e. the *sādhana* and *maṇḍala* of the Red Yamāri that became widely disseminated. *ngor chen gyis gshed dmar kyi sgrub dkyil sogs gong du bstan pa'i yig skor rnams kyang mdzad de cher dar bar gyur pa yin zhing/ Gshin rje,* pp. 132-133.

[52] *des rong pa shes bzang la gnang/ de nas rim gyis brgyud kun mkhyen bu ston sogs nas brgyud pa ngor chen kun dga' bzang po la bka' bab/ Gshin rje,* p. 132.

[53] *dpyal lo tsa ba chos kyi bzang po zhes bya bas dpal gshin rje gshed dmar pos dngos su byin gyis brlabs pa'i bal po pan di ta ni ska lang ka de bzhes pa la gshed dmar lha lnga'i dbang zhus/ birwa pa'i lha lnga'i sgrub thabs sogs rgya gzhung mang po yang bsgyur te/ bod du gshed dmar gyi srol 'di dang por btod/ Gshin rje,* p. 130.

[54] Dpyal lo also translated the *Vajrabhairavasādhana* (*Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2607) along with *paṇḍita* Dharmaśrīmitra, a text attributed to Aśoka; and the *Raktayamārisādhananāma* (*Gshin rje dgra dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2035) attributed to Sumatigarbha, a text Dpyal lo translated together with Nyi ma rgyal mtshan; and the *Raktayamāntakayantroddyotakā* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po 'khrul 'khor gsal byed*) attributed to Bodhigarbha.

[55] *de'i rdzogs rim shin tu spros med dang/ lha bcu gsum ma'i dbang bka' ni de dus ma lon la/ 'di nas brgyud pa'i dbang ni lha lnga mar nges shing/ Gshin rje,* p.130.

[56] Vitali 2009/10:178.

the members of the Dpyal clan and the Dben dmar family of Rong. In A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung* this connection is framed in the context of Rgwa lo's journey to Dpyal's monastery, called Dpal Byang chub Thar pa gling, as part of his endeavor to receive the tantric initiation of the Red Yamāri from Dpyal lo himself. The story, which is, in fact, a fragment of Rgwa lo's biography (*Dpal chen rgwa lo'i rnam thar*) that seems to have been inserted by A mes zhabs as a kind of paratext, revolves around the intricate details of the hindrances caused by the *rgyal po* spirits. Perilous ordeals that jeopardize Rgwa lo's efforts on his spiritual journey finally come to an end, and that itself is, as A mes zhabs records, clearly the result of Raktayamāri's blessings. Rgwa lo stays with Dpyal lo for three years and receives from him the empowerment of the Red Yamāri but also other tantric systems of Hevajra and Vajravārāhī.[57]

> Rgwa lo also himself thought that this kind of [*rgyal po*] spirit, even if he appears friendly, can cause a long-lasting harm, and being mindful as an antidote, he did his best to hold himself firmly. Some spirits transformed themselves into kinsmen and claimed: "Oh, for so many lifetimes we were related in this way and that way", displaying [before him] the family tree. Some others transformed themselves into charming *vihāra*s [saying]: "This *vihāra* is mine, you should take care of it", acting as if entrusting the *vihāra* to him. Some of them in the guise of learned scholars [said]: "Because I have studied this text for a long time, I became a scholar skilled in that subject, therefore, you too, should do the same". A few others, displaying magical emanations gave the appearance of having obtained realization. Occasionally, they physically assumed the form of a bird, but they were speaking with a human voice. At dawn, with the sound of flapping wings, they called out: "Zla 'od gzhon nu, Seng ge rgyal mtshan, 'Od kyi snye ma! Get up, check around the *vihāra*, go into meditation, engage in studying the text, etc.!" With these words, as if encouraging them to practice the *dharma*, they were displaying magical emanations that were an obstacle to enlightenment. These kinds of disturbances were happening for a long time. At some point Rgwa lo decided to ask Dpyal lo for a formal initiation of the Red Yamāri. On the road to Thar pa [gling], the spirit again said: "Now, it's time to go home, because mum and dad are ill. You should go to visit them. As for this initiation [of the Red Yamāri], you can ask for it later". Rgwa lo replied: "It will be difficult [to obtain this initiation] in the future, it is better if I go now". The spirit said: "I have been so considerate towards you and you won't do

[57] *de lta bu'i rgwa lo des dpyal lo'i drung du lo gsum bzhugs/ dges rdor dang phag mo sogs kyang gsan/ khyad par gshed dmar gyi dbang gsan pas bshad ma thag ba'i bar chad las grol ba'i byin rlabs kyi rtags mtshan mngon gyur du byung ba de yin la/ Gshin rje,* p. 132.

> even this much for me? Come on, go right now!"; he even lifted the bag. Rgwa lo said: "Even so, I am definitely going to get this initiation". [The spirit] casting the bag, shouted: "I have been betrayed by a long-time friend! Do whatever you want, I am off now. See me off for a short distance". Accordingly, Rgwa lo agreed and escorted him up to the ridge of the place called Thar pa gling Mo yan. On the ridge, there was a horse and the spirit mounted the horse and leaped into the sky. The horse changed into a snowy lion and the spirit transformed into a Sthavira called Guruma who, holding his jaw in his hands, went on singing while crossing every mountain pass. Since then, [Rgwa lo] was free from all the obstacles. You will find [this story] in the *Rgwa lo'i rnam thar*.[58]

The above passage is an interesting example of the way in which transmission practice, combining as it does the interrelated categories of mobility and site making, operates. In this regard, Rgwa lo's journey to meet Dpyal lo tsā ba brings to the forefront the importance of Thar pa gling as a specific geographical location that played a crucial role in the diffusion of the Red cycle. The trips to Thar pa gling in order to obtain the teachings from Dpyal lo continued by other members of Rong pa clan, such as Rong pa Shes rab seng ge,[59] the second

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[58] *rgwa lo rang gi thugs la yang 'di lta bu'i 'byung pos phan pa ltar snang yang/ phugs gnod skyel bar dgongs shing de'i gnyen por thugs dam la brtson par mdzad pas/ de nas kyang res 'ga' gnyen gyi tshul du bsgyur te/ skye ba mang por 'di dang 'dir gyur pa yin zhes skye rgyud sna tshogs ston/ res 'ga' gtsug lag khang yid du 'ong ba sprul nas/ 'di ni bdag gi ste/ khyod kyis 'di'i bdag bya dgos so zer nas gtsug lag khang gi bdag 'chol ba ltar byed/ res 'ga' ni mkhas pa'i tshul bzung nas kho bos gzhung lugs 'di la yun ring du sbyangs pas 'di lta bu'i mkhas par gyur pa yin pas khyed kyang 'di ltar gyis shig zer la la ni rdzu 'phrul cung zad re bstan nas grub pa thob pa'i tshul byed/ skabs 'gar bya'i gzugs la mi skad 'don pas tho rangs 'dab gshog rdebs pa'i sgra dang bcas/ zla 'od gzhon nu/ seng ge rgyal mtshan/ 'od kyi snye ma zhes 'bod cing/ yar la langs shig/ lta rtog mdzod cig/ thugs dam mdzod cig/ gzhung bshor cig ces chos la bskul ba ltar byed pa sogs cho 'phrul sna tshogs ston pa'i byang chub kyi bar chad du 'gyur ba zhig yun ring po'i bar du byung ba na/ re shig gi tshe rgwa los dpyal lo la gshed dmar gyi dbang zhu bar brtsams te/ thar par byon pas lam bar du yang de na re/ da ni yul du 'gro bar rigs so/ yab dang yum la sogs pa na'o/ de dag blta ba dang 'phrad pa la 'gro bar rigs/ dbang bskur phyis zhu ba 'thad ces smra'o/ de la rgwa los phyis thub pa dka' da lta zhu ba rang legs zhes smras pas/ ngas de tsam du khyod la bsams nas khyod kyis 'di ltar byed pa mi rigs/ de bas da lta 'dong zer nas khres po 'ang bteg pa na/ rgwa los de lta na 'ang dbang nges par zhu gsungs nas zhu bar thag bcad pas/ khos khres po bsgyur te yun ring 'grogs pa'i grogs pos bslus so/ khyed ci bder gyis nga ni 'gro'o/ khyed kyis skyel thung gyis zer ba ltar rgwa los thar pa gling gi mo yan sgang khar bskyal bas/ de na rta gcig 'dug pa la zhon nam mkha' la 'phag nas rta de seng ge'i rnam par gyur/ khong rang dpon gu ru ma zhes bya ba'i gnas brtan gyi rnam pas lag pas 'gram pa skyor nas glu len gyin mgo bo se ye re re la brgal nas song nas de nas bar chad las grol ba yin ces kyang rgwa lo'i rnam thar las 'byung ngo/ Gshin rje*, pp. 131-132.

[59] *Gshin rje chos 'byung* by 'Khon ston dpal 'byor rgya mtsho (pp. 71-73) confirms that Rong pa Shes rab seng ge went to Thar pa gling in 1270 and received the Red cycle of Dpyal lineage. See Vitali 2014:561.

son of Rong pa Rgwa lo, and the second in line of the Red cycle of the Dpyal lineage, who had undertaken this journey at the age of twenty.[60]

Since its initial founding by Dpyal lo tsā ba in the beginning of the 13th century, Thar pa gling continued to remain an active centre of fruitful exchanges not only for the members of the Dpyal clan, but also for other prominent intellectuals of that era, such as the great *paṇḍita* of Kashmir, Śākyaśrībhadra (d.1225),[61] who visited the monastery at the invitation of Dpyal lo.[62] The intention to establish Thar pa gling as a prime center of Tibetan Buddhist world is also attested from its architectural design that was shaped with intention to resemble Bodhgayā.[63] Part of Thar pa gling's appeal as a meeting hub was its strategic geographic location on the old route from Zhwa lu to Ngor that crossed the mountains to the south-west of Zhwa lu.[64] It was perhaps its vicinity to Zhwa lu monastery that attracted Bu ston Rin chen 'grub to stay in Thar pa gling for four years studying Sanskrit under the guidance of Thar pa lo tsā ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan (ca.1260–ca.1330).[65] Thar pa lo tsā ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and Dpyal lo were close associates. Not only were they the residents of Thar pa gling, who became the abbots of Bodhgayā for a number of years, but also, more importantly, both engaged in collaborative efforts to disseminate the Red cycle. In this regard, the *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje dgra dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2035) attributed to Sumatigarbha and translated jointly by Dpyal lo and Nyi ma rgyal mtshan is a case in point. Among other works that Nyi ma rgyal mtshan translated in the *vihāra* (*gtsung lag khang*) of Thar pa gling were two works written by Śrīdhara, namely the *Raktayamārimaṇḍalapūjāvidhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po man dal du mchod pa'i chos ga*, Toh. 2027) and the *Raktyamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2026).

Rong pa Rgwa lo was one of the most important figures in the transmission of the Vajrabhairava-Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet and appears to be a member of a powerful family with strong political associations, including a paternal ancestor dating back to the imperial period of the second *dharma* king Khri srong lde btsan (742–797) who happened to serve as the king's officiating priest (*mchod gnas*), name-

60 Roerich 1996: 791.
61 On the two biographies of Śākyaśrībhadra, see Jackson 1990a, and Kuijp 1994a.
62 Stearns 2012: 143.
63 Vitali 2009/2010: 171, fn. 20.
64 Dowman 1999: 272.
65 According to Khyung po Lhas pa, Bu ston became known as "the great translator" after finishing his studies of Sanskrit with Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan in the 1310s. See Kuijp 2016: 226.

ly Gzhon nu snying po.[66] Gzhon nu snying po's son, Gzhon nu seng ge, and grandson, Rig 'dzin snying po moved from Yar 'brog to Rong where Rgwa lo's father, Ye shes rgyal mtshan, the eldest of the four sons of Rig 'dzin snying po's son, Rdo rje seng ge, was born.[67] It is possible that Rgwa lo's heritage and royal connections of his great-great grandfather entitled him to have a close association with the Sa skya patriarchs, that is with Sa skya Paṇḍita and his nephew, 'Phags pa Chos rgyal. A mes zhabs reports that the very 'Phags pa who, according to the historical accounts, served as the imperial preceptor of Kublai Khan's Yuan dynasty and the vice-king of Tibet[68] remained in close educational association with Rgwa lo for about two decades.[69] Rong pa Rgwa lo is an example of a scholar whose intellectual life was shaped by the hierarchies of power centered around a small group of prominent intellectuals. Besides receiving the Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri teachings from his local masters, Rwa 'bum seng, and Dpyal lo, he attended several famous masters, such as Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Śākyaśrībhadra, Sa skya Paṇḍita, the Indian *paṇḍita* Vibhūticandra,[70] and Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa'i dpal (1172–1237).[71]

b) The Lineage of Chag lo tsā ba

The second tradition of the Red cycle that flourished in Tibet was linked to the Tibetan lo tsā ba Chag lo Chos rje dpal (1197–1264), a particularly prominent exponent of the Raktayamāri cycle. Following the footsteps of his elder colleague Dpyal lo, Chag lo tsā ba also travelled to Nepal in search of tantric teachings and initiations from fa-

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66 A mes zhabs (*Gshin rje*, p.125) says that Rgwa lo's great-great grandfather, Gzhon nu snying po belonged to one of the eight lineages of Chinese priests of Mi nyag who seemed to have settled down in Yar 'brog in Central Tibet. He was invited by Sam shi – the minister of the king Khri srong lde btsan – to become the officiating priest (*mchod gnas*) of the king himself. For a slightly different account of Rgwa lo's family history, see Roerich 1996: 789-790.

67 *rgwa lo ni bod kyi rgyal po khri srong lde'u btsan gyi dus su blon po sam shi bya ba spyan 'dren pa'i pho nyar btang bas/ rgyal po'i mchod gnas su gyur pa mi nyag ha shang bya ba des/ brgyud las yar 'brog sgang du mi nyag gzhon nu snying po bya ba byung/ de'i sras gzhon nu seng ge/ de'i sras rigs 'dzin snying po/ de'i rong rgya mkhar byon/ de'i sras rdo rje seng ges rong mkhar phug tu bab/ de'i sras bzhi'i che ba ye shes rgyal mtshan gyi sras yin/ Gshin rje*, p. 125.

68 Franke 1978; Robinson 2008.

69 *'phags pa rin po che sogs bla ma* [*i.e., Rgwa lo*] *bcu phrag gnyis tsam zhig bsten nas/ Gshin rje,* p. 125.

70 Rgwa lo invited Vibhūticandra to his monastery Rong Dben dmar in Gtsang and to Kyog po and Sham bhar monasteries where he requested from him all the empowerments and pith instructions of the Kālacakra (Roerich 1996:780; Stearns 1996:146).

71 *'dis kha che pan chen/ dpyal lo chos bzang/ bdag nyid chen po sa pan/ bi pu ta tsa ndra/ khro phu lo tsa ba byams pa'i dpal/ Gshin rje,* p.125.

mous Newar masters.[72] Vitali[73] shows that the practice of journeying to Nepal (and Bodhgayā) in search of tantric teachings was a type of "unofficial cultural movement" initiated by the members of the Dpyal clan that was adopted and continued in the Chag clan mainly due to their common training in various tantric cycles, the Kālacakra (*dus 'khor*) and *kriyātantra*s (*sbyor rgyud*). To this list, the Red cycle should be added. The reasons for this mobility were a mix of factors. On the one hand, there was the political unrest in central Tibet caused by intercommunal rivalry, as well as the insecurities precipitated by the upcoming Sa skya-Mongol alliance; on the other, there was the "race to become the interlocutors of the upcoming overlords".[74] At the time when Chag lo finally arrived to Nepal, *paṇḍita* Niṣkalaṅka had already passed away and it was Niṣkalaṅka's direct disciple, Newar *Ravīndraprabhā[75] (see below), who bestowed on him the "13-Deity Raktayamāri (of Śrīdhara)" and the "5-Deity Raktayamāri (of Virūpa)".[76] Chag lo, assisted by his teacher *Ravīndraprabhā, set off an extensive translation project of the texts belonging to the Red Yamāri cycle that resulted in the translation of eight scriptures never translated before. He also engaged in a meticulous revision and edition of the texts dealing with the ritual practices of the Red cycle already translated by Dpyal lo.[77] Through his prominent translation work,[78] he quickly gained recognition as a leading

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[72] According to *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (*The Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, Roerich 1959: 105), Chag lo spent eight years in the Kathmandu Valley (1225-1232) and almost eleven years in Magadha (1232-1242), mainly in Nālandā and Bodhgayā (*rdo rje gdan*). See also Vitali 2009/10: 163.

[73] Vitali 2009/2010: 199.

[74] Vitali 2009/2010: 194.

[75] The name reported by Bu ston and A mes zhabs is Ravīndra/Ravendra or Vendra.

[76] *yang srol gnyis pa ni chag lo chos rje dpal bya ba dpyal lo las gzhon pa/ bdag nyid chen po sa pan las cung zad bgres pa zhig gis bal po'i yul du byon pas/ pandi ta ni ska lang ka ni gshegs/ de'i slob ma bal por ve ndra la gshed dmar bcu gsum ma dang/ lnga ma gnyis ka'i dbang gsan/ Gshin rje,* p. 133.

[77] *sngar gyi dpyal gyis bsgyur ba rnams la 'gyur bcos mdzad/ sngar ma 'gyur ba'i gshed dmar gyi gzhung brgyad tsam bsgyur te/ lha lnga ma'i dbang dar rgyas su mdzad cing/ bcu gsum ma'i srol btod/ Gshin rje,* p.133.

[78] Some of the works he translated, often assisted by the Newar *paṇḍita* Nyi ma dbang po'i 'od zer, are: 1) *Śrīraktayamārimaṇḍalopāyika* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga,* Toh. 2024) attributed to Śrīdhara; 2) *Śrīraktayamārisādhana* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2023) attributed to Śrīdhara; 3) *Śrīraktayamāriprabhasodayakrama* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar pa'i byin gyis brlab pa'i man ngag 'od gsal 'char ba'i rim pa,* Toh. 2019) attributed to Virūpa and translated in collaboration with Varendraruci; 4) *Sasvādhiṣṭhānakramopadeśaraktayamāntakabhisāmaya* (*Rang byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa'i man ngag dang bcas pa gshin rje mthar byed dmar po'i mngon par rtogs pa,* Toh. 2032) attributed to Matibhadra; 5) *Raktayamāntakasādhana* (*Gshin rje mthar byed dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2017) attributed to Virūpa; 6) *Yamāntakayantravidhi* (*Gshin rje gshed mthar*

translator and played a special role in launching the 13-Deity Raktayamāri tradition in Tibet.[79]

It is important to note that A mes zhabs's version of Chag lo's biography concerning his meeting with *Ravīndraprabhā is at odds with that of Bu ston, who states that Chag lo studied with Niṣkalaṅka of Vajrāsana for ten years at Bodhgayā, assisting him with the translations of the Saṃvara and Raktayamāri cycles.[80] While the collaborative translation of the Saṃvara cycle is indeed demonstrated by a colophon of the Saṃvara treatise included of the Bstan 'gyur,[81] a proof for Chag lo's training under Niṣkalaṅka in the Red cycle is more difficult to verify. Moreover, neither Chag lo's *rnam thar* nor the *Deb ther sngon po* list Niṣkalaṅka as Chag lo's alleged teacher. On the other hand, the *paṇḍita* who accompanies almost all of Chag lo's translations of the Raktayamāri cycle is a certain Nyi ma'i dbang po'i 'od zer, the name, which can be translated back into Sanskrit as *Ravīndraprabhā (and not Ravīndra/Ravendra). Also Chag lo's *rnam thar*[82] attests to a very close master-disciple relationship that characterized their acquitance, thus corroborating the version of A mes zhabs and not Bu ston. Although Chag lo spent many years in Nepal with *Ravīndraprabhā, his main residence in Tibet was the Rte'u ra monastery (*lte'u ra dgon/gnyal rte'u ra dgon*), the hereditary seat of the Chag clan. Apparently, after returning from his journeys to India and Nepal, Chag lo stayed at Rte'u ra for twenty-three years (from 1241 until his death in 1264).[83] According to the *Deb ther sngon po*, his teacher *Ravīndraprabhā visited him there as well.[84] Chag lo tsā ba established his own transmission of the 5-Deity Raktayamāri of the Chag lineage that not only survived but also continued to flourish in 16th and 17th century Tibet.[85]

The lineage of Chag lo tsā ba continued through G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba (13th c.), who features as a disciple of the Indi-

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byed kyi 'khrul 'khor gyi cho ga, Toh. 2822); 7) *Raktayamāriyantratattvanirdeśanāmasādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'khrul 'khor gyi de nyid bshad pa zhes bya ba'i bsgrub thabs*, Toh. 2820) attributed to Bodhigarbha; 8) *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs,* Toh. 2031) attributed to Vairocanavajra/Vairocanarakṣa; 9) *Raktayamārisādhanavidhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs kyi cho ga*, Toh. 2021) attributed to Virūpa; 10) *Raktayamāribalividhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i gtor ma'i cho ga*, Toh. 2030) attributed to Śrīdhara.

79 *lha lnga ma'i dbang dar rgyas su mdzad cing/ bcu gsum ma'i srol btod/ lugs 'di ni 'gyur legs shing 'gyur byed nyid kyang mkhas par grags/ Gshin rje,* p.133.

80 Bu ston's *History of Buddhism* (Obermiller 1932:222).

81 *Sahajasaṃvarasādhana* (*Bde mchog lhan cig skyes pa'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 1436).

82 Roerich 1959:57.

83 Roerich 1959: ix.

84 Roerich 1996:1056.

85 *de nas brgyud pa'i chag lugs kyi lha lnga ma'i dbang rgyun deng sang gi bar du dar rgyas du bzhugs/ Gshin rje,* p.133.

an *paṇḍita* Vibhūticandra (late 12th c.)[86] in a special practice of *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* (*rnal 'byor yan lag drug pa*) of the *Kālacakratantra* revealed to Vibhūticandra by Śavaripāda, also known as Ri khrod pa Dbang phyug (1181–1225). According to Stearns,[87] Vibhūticandra and G.yug phug pa met at Ding gi glang 'khor, the main residence of the Indian master Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (11th century), where he bestowed the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* of Śavaripa to Ko brag pa and "six other learned men", including G.yung phug pa. Although at present the meeting between G.yug phug pa and Chag lo cannot be verified, nevertheless, they were probably in a disciple-master relationship. We know that Vibhūticandra knew Chag lo personally. The evidence of their collaboration in translating two works preserved in the Tibetan canon[88] confirms their meeting, probably in the Kathmandu valley in Nepal were they both studied under Newar masters.[89]

The Chag lineage of the Red cycle continued through a certain Blo gros brtan pa (13th c.). His identity is, however, difficult to establish, for there have been multiple Blo gros brtan pas in the history of Tibetan Buddhism.[90] Among the possible candidates are Shong Blo gros brtan pa (the second half of the 13th c.) and Dpang Blo gros brtan pa (1276–1342), the famous Sanskrit linguist. At first sight it is more probable to assume that 'our' Blo gros brtan pa is in fact the Shong Blo gros brtan pa, the nephew (*dbon po*) or a younger brother of Shong ston rdo rje rgyal mtshan.[91] Both authors feature prominently in the transmission lineages of the *Kālacakratantra*. Moreover, Shong Blo gros brtan pa is the author of a text on the visualization of the 5-Deity Raktayamāri *maṇḍala* of the Chag lineage (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po lha lnga'i mngon par rtogs pa rnal 'byor gsal*) that belongs to the collection of texts concerned with the ritual practice of Raktayamāri according to the Chag tradition.[92] However, Shong Blo gros belonged to the lineage of Chag lo through the line of Go lung pa Mdo sde dpal

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[86] For the biography of Vibhūticandra, see Stearns 1996.

[87] Stearns 1996: 143.

[88] *A ra pa tsa na'i sgrub thabs* (*Arapacanasādhana*) and *Rmugs 'dzin 'chol ba'i sgrub thabs* (*Ucchuṣmajambhalasādhana*) were translated jointly by Chag lo and Vibhūticandra. See Stearns 1996: 164.

[89] Vibhūticandra studied under Ratnarakṣita in the Kathmandu valley in Nepal who initiated Ko brag pa (1170-1249) into the *Cakrasaṃvara* and was also the guru of Chag lo, where the studied with him at the Swayambhunāth in Kathmandu. See Stearns 1996:136.

[90] Verhagen 2021:267-300.

[91] Smith 2001:315, fn. 602. Dkon mchog lhun grub, *Dam pa'i chos*, fol. 172r. Also in Verhagen 2021: 292.

[92] *Gshed dmar chos skor*. 1 vols. Accessed February 9, 2022. http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW1CZ1146. [BDRC bdr:MW1CZ1146]

(and not through G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba),[93] and this line of transmission features in A mes zhabs's *chos 'byung* as a sub-lineage of Chag lo[94] that branched off from the main lineage. Still, one important fact suggests that Shong might be 'our' Blo gros: the next lineage-holder following Shong Blo gros pa is Mchog ldan leg pa'i blos gros/Mang khar lo tsā ba, and this agrees with the succession of the Chag lugs indicated by A mes zhabs. Nevertheless, this fact could also point to Dpang Blo gros brtan pa. Not only was Dpang blo gros brtan pa closely associated with the Shong tradition of the Kālacakra, but he also played an important role in "the tradition of Sanskrit studies in Sa skya monastery and the Sa skya school".[95] More importantly, he studied Sanskrit and poetics in Mang mkhar khra tshang with Mchog ldan legs pa'i blos gros/Mang khar lo tsā ba,[96] the same *bla ma* who follows Blo gros brtan pa as the next lineage-holder in the Chag lugs of the Red cycle.

Mang mkhar lo tsā ba was an important master who contributed to the dissemination of both Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri teachings in Tibet. He usually features as the teacher of Dpal ldan seng ge from whom Bu ston Rin po che received both the Black and Red cycles as well as the *Guhyasamāja* transmission of the Jñānapāda school.[97] Mang mkhar lo tsā ba took full monastic ordination in the presence of 'Phags pa Chos rgyal, who also granted him his ordination name, as he requested.[98] Mang mkhar lo tsā ba promoted the *dharma* of the Red cycle in Mang mkhar khra tshang and Dkar cog on

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93 *lo tsa ba de nas g.yung phug pa rgyal mtshan dge ba/ lo tsa ba blo brtan/ lo tsa ba mchog ldan/ bla ma dpal ldan seng ge/ kun spangs chos grags/ ma ti pan chen/ sa bzang 'phags pa/ de la rdo rje 'chang kun dga' bzang pos gsan/ Gshin rje,* p.133.

94 A mes zhabs (pp.133-134) reports the existence of many sub-lineages established by different teachers in the lineage of Chag lo tsā ba. Among these sub-lineages were transmissions coming from Go lung pa Mdo sde dpal (13th c.) and Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa; 2) from Shangs pa Tshul shes; 3) from Dpal gyi rgyal mtshan, Klog skya pa and Spangs gang pa; 4) from Ma ti pan chen, and 5) from bla ma Dpal ldan seng ge that continued up to Bu ston Rin po che. Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po is said to have received different transmissions originating from these sub-lineages. For the three lines of transmission through which Ngor chen received initiations of the "13-Deity Raktayamāri [of Chag tradition]", see *Gshin rje*, p. 134.

95 Verhagen 2021: 293.

96 Verhagen 2021: 293. See fn. 98 below.

97 The *Deb ther sngon po* (Roerich 1996: 764) places Mang mkhar lo tsā ba in a *Guhyasāmaja* lineage that entered Tibet through Rin chen bzang po. Just like in the case of the Red Yamāri, he is said to have transmitted the tantric teachings of the *Guhyasamāja* to Dpal ldan seng ge, who then transmitted it to Bu ston.

98 *des mang mkhar lo tsa ba mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros la gdams te/ 'di ni mang mkhar lo tsa bar grags pa mang mkhar khra tshang dang dkar cog la sogs par bstan pa spel/ 'phags pa rin po che'i drung du bsnyen par rdzogs/ de'i tshe mtshan de nyid kyang khong rang gi 'dod zhus ltar btags pa yin par bshad la/ Gshin rje,* p. 136.

the border of Rong and G.yag sde as well as in other places. According to A mes zhabs, Mang mkhar khra tshang, located in the Mang khar valley, known for its many retreat caves as well as important centres of trade, was initially a place of activity of the Lam 'bras master Blo bzang dkar po[99] (alias Mang mkhar Blo bzang dkar po). The 15th century master relocated the place at little distance from the old one and thereafter it was known as the new Bsam 'grub monastery (*bsam 'grub dgon gsar*).[100] This was the place where Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), the teacher who transmitted various transmissions of the Black cycle of the Eastern Rwa tradition and the Red cycle (see p. 27) to A mes zhabs, resided. Indeed, the biography of Ngag dbang chos grags confirms the last piece of A mes zhabs's account saying that Ngag dbang succeeded Blo gros grags pa on the abbatial throne in Bsam 'grub dgon gsar monastery.[101] The Chag lineage of the Red cycle comprised of masters listed above eventually reached Ngor chen through his teacher Sa bzang 'phags pa. As Heimbel[102] already pointed out, the majority of Ngor chen's training under Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros[103] was tantric in nature and together with the Vajrabhairava cycle also included the transmissions of major tantric deities, such as Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Kālacakra.[104]

c) The Lineage of G.yag sde ba (Bsod nams bzang po/seng ge)

After Chag lo tsā ba, the third tradition of the Red Yamāri that originated in Tibet was associated with the 13th century Indian *paṇḍita* Dānaśīla from the East (*shar phyogs*), who handed down the teachings on the 5-Deity Raktayamāri and the 13-Deity Raktayamāri to the Ti-

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99 For the biography and lineage of Blo bzang dkar po, see Kuijp1994b: 184.

100 *de'i mang mkhar khra tshang ni thog mar lam 'bras pa blo bzang dkar po sogs kyi gnas de nyid de/ de nyid kyang gnas cung zad 'phos pa deng sang bsam 'grub dgon gsar du grags pa kho bo cag gi yongs 'dzin dam pa mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa ngag dbang chos grags kyis skabs kyi bzhugs gnas mdzad pa 'di yin no/ Gshin rje,* p.136.

101 See Tsering Namgyal 2014. https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Ngawang-Chodrak/10548

102 Heimbel 2017:189.

103 According to Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po's biography, Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros, often confused with Ma ti paṇ chen, his predecessor at Sa bzang monastery, was one of the three greatest teachers of Kun dga' bzang po (see Heimbel 2017: 179, fn. 594). For the biography of Sa bzang 'Phags, see Heimbel 2017: 179-186.

104 For the detailed discussion of tantric and other teachings received by Ngor chen from Sa bzang 'Phags pa, see Heimbel 2017: 186-190.

betan lo tsā ba G.yag sde ba (c.1200–c.1299).[105] Dānaśīla was one of the "nine lesser *paṇḍita*s" who accompanied the great Kashmiri master Śākyaśrībhadra, the abbot of Vikramaśīla, to Tibet during the Muslim invasion of Baktyar Khilji.[106] According to A mes zhabs it was the same Dānaśīla who also taught Sa skya Paṇḍita.[107] To prove his point, he turns to the authority of the *Ocean of Received Transmissions* (*Gsan yig rgya mtsho*) written by Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po where this fact is recorded.[108] Despite prolific translation works that came from the pen of Dānaśīla,[109] G.yag sde lo assisted him only with the translation of a single text on mantras related to the *sādhana* of the Red Yamāri entitled **Raktayamārimantroddhāra* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sngags btu ba*, Toh. 2046). According to the texts' colophons, two of Dānaśīla's translations[110] on the Red cycle were completed on the mountain of Drang sron Srin po,[111] located in the upper part of the Yar stod brag pass.[112] The mountain situated between the Skyid chu and Brahmaputra river[113] contained an important Sa skya temple built by Vibhūticandra, where he himself occasionally resided. The temple was famous for the terracotta image of Cakrasaṃvara made

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[105] There seems to be a discrepancy of names. Even though A mes zhabs refers to G.yag sde lo tsā ba as Bsod nams bzang po, the BDRC records his name as Bsod nams seng ge.

[106] Rhoton 2002: 31, fn. 26.

[107] Note that according to the BDRC, the 12th century Dānaśīla who translated the works on the Red Yamāri is different from the 13th century Dānaśīla who appears in the transmission lineage of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and who was also the teacher of Sa skya Paṇḍita.

[108] *lam srol gsum pa ni chag lo'i rjes su bdag nyid chen po sa pan gyi slob dpon rtog ge pa da nA shI la byon pa la g.yag sde lo tsa ba bsod nams bzang pos lha lnga ma'i dbang dang bcu gsum ma'i dbang yang gsan par rdo rje 'chang gi gsan yig rgya mtsho las bshad pas na/ Gshin rje,* p. 134.

[109] Dānaśīla translated numerous works on the ritual practice of the Red Yamāri, including: 1) *Yamāriyantrāvali* (*Gshin rje gshed kyi 'khrul 'khor gyi phreng ba*, Toh. 2022) attributed to Vīrupa; 2) *Raktayamārisādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2018) attributed to Vīrupa; 3) *Raktayamārisamādhividhi* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i ting nge 'dzin gyi cho ga*, Toh. 2029) attributed to Śrīdhara; 4) *Raktayamārikarmasādhanamālācintāmaṇī* (*Gshin rje gshed dmar po'i las kyi phreng ba'i sgrub thabs yid bzhin nor bu*, Toh. 2047); 5) *Yamāricintāmaṇīmālānāmasādhana* (*Gshin rje gshed kyi yid bzhin kyi nor bu'i phreng ba zhes bya ba'i sgrub thabs*, Toh. 2083).

[110] The colophon of the *Gshin rje gshed kyi 'khrul 'khor gyi phreng ba* says: *rgya gar shar phyogs kyi paN Di ta dpal mkhas pa chen po dA na shi la/ yul dbus kyi grub pa thob pa'i gnas drang srong rin po rir bsgyur ba'o.* The colophon of the *Gshin rje gshed kyi yid bzhin kyi nor bu'i phreng ba zhes bya ba'i sgrub thabs* says: *rgya gar shar phyogs bhang ga la'i paN Di ta dA na shi la zhes bya bas gnas gyis brlabs pa drang srong srin po ri rang 'gyur du byas pa'o.*

[111] For the narrative retelling the foundation of Srin po by Vibhūticandra, see Roerich 1996: 600-601 and Stearns 1996: 131-132.

[112] Ferrari 1958: 47.

[113] Dorje 2004: 162.

by Vibhūticandra, which was consecrated by Śākyaśrībhadra. The temple must have been an important place of tantric practice, not only for the Cakrasaṃvara, but also for the cults of Vajrabhairava and Yamāri. According to Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, the *thangka* of Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* at Srin po created by Vibhūticandra portrayed Cakrasaṃvara riding on the buffalo (thus alluding to the buffalo-headed iconography of Vajrabhairava), which was fashioned with an erect *liṅga*. Tāranātha's explanation of this iconographic detail points to its special destructive power. He says that in other *thangka*s designed in India, the depiction of Yamāri with erect *liṅga*, with two feet in the warrior-pose and palms clasped together was specifically meant to overcome the class of barbarians (*klo klo*) through *gtor ma* rituals.[114] Dānaśīla must have come into contact with Vibhūticandra through Śākyaśrībhadra, and given the political context of their escape from India during the Muslim raid, Drang sron Srin po with its Vajrabhairava/Yamāri iconography would have certainly appealed to him as a best place to undertake his translation project.

The two main ritual transmissions, the 5-Deity Raktayamāri and the 13-Deity Raktayamāri, were from Dānaśīla (or G.yag sde lo) onwards passed on in distinct lines of transmission that were received by Ngor chen himself. A mes zhabs records these transmissions as follows:

1) The 5-Deity Raktayamāri transmission was handed down from Dānaśīla to 'Jam gsar Shes rab 'od zer (12th c.),[115] who was succeeded by the members of the Rong clan, i.e., Rgwa lo tsā ba, his son, Rong pa shes bzang po/seng ge, and others.[116] 'Jam gsar ba 'od zer is better known as the master of the 'Bro tradition of the Kālacakra, who ensured its wider diffusion in Tibet,[117] but he was also an ex-

[114] *bi bhu ti tsa ndra'i thugs dam bde mchog dkyil 'khor drang srong srin po rin yod pa de na/ ma he la phyibs (=chibs) shing ling ga g.yen bsgreng can bris 'dug/ rgya gar du bris ba'i thang ka gzhan la gtor mas kla klo'i sde bcom pa'i bkod pa'i tshul du byas zhabs gnyis mnyam par brkyang zhing bzhengs pa/ phyag thal mo brdeb pa/ ling ga g.yen bsgreng/ sku mdun du gtor ma'i man da la yod pa re long gyin 'dug/* Tāranātha, *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, p. 63.

[115] Heimbel 2017: 120 identified 'Jam gsar Shes rab 'od zer (his title name) as 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma, the author of the commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, some of which became part of Shar chen's (one of Ngor chen's main teachers) training. According to Vitali 2014: 564, 'Jam gsar ba 'od zer was a teacher of Chos sku 'od zer who imparted on him the teachings of the Red cycle and the Kālacakra, among others.

[116] *lha lnga ma'i brgyud pa ni/ dA na shI la nas 'jam gsar/ rgwa lo/ rong pa shes bzang sogs chag lugs ltar brgyud pa ngor chen nas brgyud de deng sang gi bar du/ 'phel rgyas su bzhugs pa yin la/ Gshin rje*, p. 134.

[117] Seyfort Ruegg 2010: 301.

ponent of Yamāri. The story narrated in the *Deb ther sngon po* mentions the existence of a strong karmic connection (*las 'brel*) that led the famous Kālacakra master Chos sku 'od zer (b.after 1240-d.before 1290)[118] to meet 'Jam gsar in order to receive the Yamāri initiation from him. [119] What is worth noticing in this particular line of succession is that 'Jam gsar is followed by the members of the competing Kālacakra transmission, the Rwa lugs, which stemmed from the Newar master Samantaśrī.[120] This, somewhat unsual, pairing can, however, be explained through the similar union attested in the Kālacakra tradition itself. According to Hammer, the 'Bro tradition of the Kālacakra was incorporated into the Rwa tradition;[121] further, according to Bu ston,[122] it was none other than Rong pa Rgwa lo who initiated this fusion. Thus, the presence of the members of the Rwa lugs following 'Jam gsar in this particular 5-Deity Raktayamāri lineage may in fact be another point in case for the merging of the two traditions.

2) The 13-Deity Raktayamāri transmission was handed down from Dānaśīla to his successor G.yag sde lo tsā ba, and then to Zhang ze dmar ba (a disciple of Sa skya Paṇḍita),[123] to Bu ston Rin po che, to Bu ston's disciple Rin chen rnam rgyal (1318–1388),[124] and finally to Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros (1358–1412).[125]

d) The Lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen

The fourth lineage of the Red Yamāri that flourished in Tibet was linked to Glo bo lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen, a mid-13th century translator from the Mustang area (*glo bo*), who occupies his lofty place in

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118 Vitali 2014:564.

119 See Roerich 1996: 769-770.

120 Rwa Chos rab allegedly gave 300 golden *srang* to Samantaśrī to obtain the Kālacakra. For the Rwa lugs of the Kālacakra, see Roerich 1996:789.

121 Hammar 2010:65.

122 Hammar 2010:60, following Bu ston's *Dus 'khor chos 'byung,* pp. 61-74.

123 Stearns 2001:26.

124 Hsuan (2009:19) reports that Rin chen rnam rgyal also features as the transmitter of the *'pho ba* teaching that was developed in the Yamāri cycle (*Gshin rje gshed kyi 'pho ba'i man ngag*) and transmitted to Bu ston. For the biography of Rin chen rnam rgyal, see the *Lo rgyus rnam thar* 2 (vol. 51, pp.385-456) and van der Kuijp 2016:222-223. As reported by Heimbel 2017:181, fn. 603, the *Zhwa lu'i gdan rabs* (p.63.5) mentions Rin chen rgyal as a teacher of Sa bzang 'Phags pa and that the register of teachings received (see, the *Thob yig rgyo mtsho*) confirms that the teachings bestowed to Sa bzang by Rin chen rgyal were transmitted to Ngor chen (*ibidem*).

125 *pan di ta de nas brgyud pa'i bcu gsum ma'i dbang ni/ g.yag sde lo tsa ba/ grub chen ze dmar ba/ bu ston rin po che/ lo tsa ba rin chen rnam rgyal nas sa bzang 'phags pa/ Gshin rje,* p.134.

the history of Tibet as the best student of Sa skya Paṇḍita[126] and a religious preceptor of Sa skya Paṇḍita's nephew, 'Phags pa Chos rgyal. Among the five transmission lineages of the Red Yamāri recorded by A mes zhabs, the lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba is certainly one of the longest and most extensively documented within this record and it includes, among other details, some biographical information on Glo bo lo tsā ba himself as well as on his son and successor, 'Gro mgon sa[127] a.k.a. Sa pa and *bla ma* Blo gros dpal. The specific reason for devoting so much space to this particular transmission lineage was to emphasize the role Glo bo lo tsā ba and his illustrious disciples played in the history of the Sa skya pa sect. The famous 'Phags pa, the preceptor (*mchod gnas*) to Kublai Khan and the most powerful *bla ma* in China in the early Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) was initiated into the Red cycle by Glo bo lo tsā ba.

Glo bo lo tsā ba was born in Mustang (*glo bo*) in Western Tibet. He was initially known as "lo tsā ba" in Ladakh because he was acting as an interpreter for market traders. Glo bo's interest in the study of Buddhist scriptures was directly linked to his disapproval of the "lo tsā ba" nickname given to him by his fellow-traders: "Since I am not a fully-fledged lo tsā ba, I should not be called by that name; rather, I should study hard to be worthy of this title". Once this thought took root in his mind, he began his scholarly training.[128] The middle of the 13th century saw a shift in the political fortunes of Glo bo, when it was absorbed by Gung thang. The rise of Gung thang to a position of power in Western Tibet with the help of the Sa skya pas provided an opportunity for the upward mobility of different strata of society.[129] At that time, Glo bo, which formed one of thirteen myriarchies (*khri skor bcu gsum*) governed by the Gung thang kings under the jurisdiction of the Sa skya viceroy selected by the Mongols of the Yuan dynasty, was truly cosmopolitan in nature. It welcomed circulatory traffic between the northern and southern Himalaya that was used not only by the commercial trades but also by the lo tsā bas,[130] who took this route on the journey from the Kathmandu valley to the kingdom of Gu ge-Pu hrangs.

In the beginning of his scholarly training, Glo bo lo studied lin-

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[126] For the high esteem that Glo bo held in the eyes of Sa skya paṇḍita, see Jackson 1976:46.

[127] *srol bzhi pa ni chos rje sa pan kyi slob ma'i mchog lta bu yang yin zhing/ 'phags pa rin po che'i bla ma yang yin pa glo bo lo tsa ba shes rab rin chen gyis/ 'gro mgon sa pa la gnang ba sogs nas 'phel ba yin te/ Gshin rje,* p.134.

[128] *de yang glo bo lo tsa ba 'di 'khrungs sa glo bo yin zhing/ dang po tshong gi lo tsa ba byas pas bla dgas su lo tsa ba zhes grags/ phyis ni/ gsung rab kyi lo tsa yang mkhas par mkhyen la/ Gshin rje,* pp.134-135.

[129] On the mobility of Tibetan society, see Carrasco 1959.

[130] Davidson 2005:132.

guistics under the Newar master Bharendra and became a competent lo tsā ba. He also received from Bharendra an empowerment of the 13-Deity Raktayamāri. Later, he proceeded to the Rgyal po sku mkhar Nyi gzung, the place that was identified by Stearns[131] as the royal citadel of Nyi gzungs (*sku mkhar nyi gzungs*) located at Pu hrangs, where he invited the renowned Indian *paṇḍita* Darpaṇācārya (alias Jagaddarpaṇa, 12th/13th century), known in tantric circles for his *Kriyāsaṃgrahapañjikā*—a compendium of tantric rituals—and properly learnt from him the abbreviated version of the *sampanna-krama*, which none of his predecessors managed to accomplish prior to him.[132] The issue of Glo blo's exact initiatory succession is, however, a matter of dispute. Even though it is true that Darpaṇācārya was the master from whom Glo bo had received the *sampanna-krama*, it is doubtful, says A mes zhabs, that it was Darpaṇācārya and not Bharendra who bestowed on him the empowerment of the Red Yamāri. In A mes zhabs's own words: "Since there is not even a hint mentioning this fact, it seems one has to be cautious in making such statements and investigate further how the lineage of the empowerment of this (Glo bo lo tsā ba) tradition led by Darpaṇācārya came forth".[133] By contrast, the *Deb ther sngon po*[134] is quite explicit that Glo bo lo tsā ba received the teachings on the Red Yamāri of the Virūpa lineage from Darpaṇācārya and Bharendra and spread them in Central Tibet. In another reference mentioned by Vitali,[135] Darpaṇācārya is said to have given the Red cycle to Glo bo at Rgyal po sku mkhar Nyi bzung, the same place that was mentioned by A mes zhabs. Tāranātha, on the other hand, keeps silent on the issue of formal initiation, but complicates the matter further saying that Glo bo met Chag lo's teacher *Ravendrapāla (*ra ven dra pa la*) and was thus the lineage-holder of the Chag lugs in his own right.[136] As for

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131 Stearns 1996: 135.

132 *khong gi thugs la ngas lo tsA shes rgyu med pa'i lo tsa ba'i ming 'di mi rung/ de bas lo tsa don mthun cig bslab par rigs dgongs nas/ thog mar bal po bha re ndra la sgra bslabs nas lo tsa thub par mdzad cing/ de nyid la gshed dmar lha bcu gsum ma'i dbang yang gsan/ de nas phyis pu rang gi sku mkhar nyi [g]zung du pan di ta dar pa na A tsA rya spyan drangs nas rdzogs rim shin tu spros med kyi khrid zab mo 'di legs par gsan/ Gshin rje,* p. 135.

133 *des na glo bo lo tsa ba 'dis gshed dmar gyi dbang dar pa na A tsA rya la gsan pa'i sgros gang du yang ma byung bas/ lugs 'di'i dbang gi brgyud pa la dar pa na A tsA rya 'dren pa 'di ji ltar yin brtag par bya dgos pa tsam du snang la/ bal po bha rendra la bcu gsum ma'i dbang tsam gsan zhes pa lo rgyus kun las 'byung bas/ smin byed bha ren dra la gsan pa des go chod mdzad nas dar pa na la smin byed ma zhus pa yin nam snyam ste dpyad par bya'o/ Gshin rje,* p. 138.

134 Roerich 1996: 379.

135 Vitali 1997: 155, fn. 206.

136 *de las cung zad 'phyi bar glo bo lo tsa ba shes rab rin chen gyis/ chag lo'i bla ma ra bendra pa la yang thug/* Tāranātha, *Gshin rje*, p. 81.

Darpaṇācārya, Tāranātha simply states that Glo bo indeed invited him and translated with him many new texts, such as Virūpa's *Spros pa med pa* and Śrīdhara's *Rnal 'byor bzhi rim*.[137] The former is probably the *Suniṣprapañcatattvopadeśa* (*Shin tu spros pa med pa de kho na nyid kyi man ngag*, Toh. 2020) attributed to Virūpa that was transmitted to the Sa skya.[138] The latter may be the *Caturyogatattvanāmasvādhiṣṭhānopadeśa* (*Rnal 'byor bzhi'i de kho na nyid ces bya ba rang byin gyis brlab pa'i man ngag*, Toh. 2025).

Despite the doubts concerning Darpaṇācārya's role in bestowing on Glo bo tantric initiation, the collaboration between the two in the translation of the Red cycle is well established. According to A mes zhabs, Glo bo translated a total of thirteen works of Śrīdhara[139] dealing with the ritual practices of the Red Yamāri, but only seven of them could be identified. All of these texts were translated in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya.[140] One of the locations where those translations were undertaken was the already mentioned royal citadel of Nyi gzungs,[141] which was built in the beginning of the 10th century by Skyid lde Nyi ma mgon (the son of the Tibetan king Dpal 'khor bstan) with the intention of establishing it as the capital of a new state, which he instituted in Mnga 'ris.[142] This was the same place

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[137] *khyad par du dar pa na tsar ya spyan drangs te birwa pa'i spros med/ dpal 'dzin kyi rnal 'byor bzhi rim sogs gzhung phran gsar pa mang du bsgyur zhing/* Tāranātha, *Gshin rje,* p. 81.

[138] According to Sobisch 2008:49, *Shin tu spros pa med pa de kho na nyid kyi man ngag* by Virūpa was transmitted to the Sa skya sect in the Red Yamāri cycle (the information is given in Ngag dbang chos grags's *Record*).

[139] A mes zhabs (p.135) reports that Glo bo translated Darpaṇācārya's *Jīvatattva* (*'Tsho ba'i de kho na nyid*), which is included in the *Collected Works* of 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje.

[140] *dpal 'dzin gyis mdzad pa'i gzhung bcu gsum po phal cher bsgyur te/ Gshin rje,* p. 135. However, only seven works attributed to Śrīdhara and translated by Glo bo in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya have been identified. These are: 1) *Caturyogatattvanāmasvādhiṣṭhānopadeśa* (*Rnal 'byor bzhi'i de kho na nyid ces bya ba rang byin gyis brlab pa'i man ngag*, Toh. 2025); 2) *Raktayamāryādhiṣṭhānadeśana* (*Gshin rje mthar byed dmar po'i byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa,* Toh. 2038); 3) *Rakṣacakrādhiṣṭhānapriṣṭhyopadeśa* (*Srung ba'i 'khor lo'i byin brlab dang phyir bzlog pa'i man ngag*, Toh. 2045); 4) *Svacittordhvasaṃkrānti-upadeśādhiṣṭhāna-saṃyuktā* (*Rang gi sems gong du 'pho ba'i man ngag byin brlab dang bcas pa*, Toh. 2041); 5) *Agnidevapūjā* (*Me'i lha mchod pa*, Toh. 2043); 6) *Adhiṣṭhānakrama* (*Byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa,* Toh. 2042); 7) *Śrīraktayamārimantrasiddhisādhana* (*Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sngags kyi dngos grub sgrub pa'i thabs*). In collaboration with Darpaṇācārya, he also translated *Amṛtādhiṣṭhāna* (*Bdud rtsi byin gyis brlab pa*, Toh. 2044).

[141] In this location he translated in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya the following texts: 1) *Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i sngags kyi dngos grub sgrub thabs*; 2) *Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po'i 'tsho ba'i de kho na nyid ces bya ba'i man ngag*; 3) *Byin gyis brlab pa'i rim pa*; and 4) *Bdud rtsi byin gyis brlab pa.*

[142] Stearns 1996: 135.

where Glo bo lo translated other tantric works with Vibhūticandra.[143] Another place of Glo bo's activity, where he has completed at least one translation of the Red cycle (i.e., *Me'i lha mchod pa*), was Mang yul (probably referring to Gung thang mang yul). Gung thang mang yul was a border town with its main center at Skyid grong and its capital at Rdzong dkar. It was a crossroad between the Himalayas and the Gangetic plains of India and Nepal where many lo tsā bas proceeding from Tibet to Nepal and India stayed for a period to acclimatize to higher altitudes. According to Heimbel, the seat of Glo bo lo was the Bsam 'grub gling[144] (also referred to as bsam brling), a small monastic center located two thousand cubits south of the Kha khang chen mo.[145] It was established in the 12th century by Sa skya *bla ma* Rong sgom pa, a disciple of Sa chen kun dga' snying po (1092–1158).[146] From the outset, the place played a significant role in establishing cultural and educational links between Glo bo and Sa skya. Several Sa skya masters lived there for an extended period, while the natives of Glo bo completed some important works there.[147] By the year 1261, Glo bo lo had acquired sufficient reputation as the specialist of the Raktayamāri to be requested by 'Phags pa Chos rgyal,[148] the ruler of Tibet, to become his religious preceptor[149] and to bestow on him various tantric initiations, including the Red cycle.[150] This was the highest honour ever conferred on a native of Glo bo.[151]

The Red cycle lineage of Glo bo was transmitted from Glo bo to his own son, 'Gro mgon sa pa, and followed through the line of succession that we already know from other lineage transmissions discussed above, i.e., Mang mkhar lo tsā ba Mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros to Dpal ldan seng ge to Bu ston Rin po che. Bu ston Rin po che transmitted the teachings to the fourteenth abbot of the Sa skya pas at the Bzhi thog bla brang, Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375). Other sources confirm that Bla ma dam pa was ordained by Dpal ldan seng ge, who gave him his initiation name,

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143 Stearns 1996: 135.
144 Heimbel 2017: 327.
145 Heimbel 2017: 255.
146 Kitamura 2010:140-150.
147 For example, Glo bo mkhan chen completed his *Mkhas pa rnams 'jug pa'i sgo'i rnam par bshad pa rig gnas gsal byed* there in the year 1527. See Jackson 1984:136.
148 For the role of Chos rgyal 'Phags pa and his disciples in the spread of tantric teachings at the Yuan court, see Acri and Wenta 2022.
149 Jackson 1976:45.
150 See Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, *Rje btsun thams cad mkhyen pa lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i 'khrung rabs kyi phreng ba gtan tu brjod pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i ljon shing*, vol. II, p. 354, in Jackson 1976: 55, fn. 47. For the list of tantric initiations bestowed by Glo bo to 'Phags pa, see *Bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal rin po che'i rnam par thar pa rin chen phreng ba*, vol. 1, p. 308.
151 Jackson 1976: 45.

and that he was also a disciple of Bu ston, who gave him the Kālacakra initiation.[152] Bla ma dam pa composed treatises, such as the unelaborated instruction of the Red Yamāri (that remains unidentified), and taught them to his two disciples, Theg chen chos kyi rgyal po Kun dga' bkra shis (1349–1425),[153] a nephew and a disciple of Bla ma dam pa, known as one of the ten or eleven polymaths,[154] and Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1306–1386). Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal was a teacher of Ngor chen's most important masters, Shar chen Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1359–1406).[155] According to Ngor chen, Shar chen commissioned the *thangka* of Cakrasaṃvara and Raktayamāri as an inner holy object (*nang rten*) in the memory of Phyogs las rnam rgyal.[156]

A mes zhabs does not elaborate on the lineage that followed the second of Bla ma dam pa's chief disciples, Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal, but he does give more details about the lineage of Theg chen that was followed by 'Jam dbyangs nam mkha' rgyal mtshan (1398–1472) and Mus chen sems dpa' chen Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan[157] (1388–1470). Those two "lineage streams" (*brgyud pa'i chu bo gnyis*) were given to 'Jam dbyangs's son, Bdag chen Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1444–1495). The rest of the Glo bo lineage transmission of the Red cycle follows the masters associated with the *lam 'bras slob bshad* tradition[158] and thus reflects the general pattern of the *lam 'bras* division initiated by Mus chen that brought with itself new lines of transmission.[159] Thus we find such masters as Rdo rings Kun spangs pa (1449–1525) alias Kun spangs rdo ring pa or Kun bzang chos kyi nyi ma, followed by Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho (1502–1568)—the founder of 'Dar grang mo che monastery in Gtsang, and the initiator of the Tshar pa division of Sa skya—, who received the Raktayamāri initiation at the age of twenty-four and spent five months in *dbus* in Vajrabhairava retreat, which eventually resulted in a vision of that deity.[160] A mes zhabs reports that Tshar chen specialized in the teachings

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[152] Townsend 2010. https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Lama-Dampa-Sonam-Gyeltsen-Pelzangpo/2491

[153] For the biographies of Theg chen, see Heimbel 2017: 395.

[154] Heimbel 2017:395.

[155] According to A mes zhabs (p. 136), from the time of Jo nang Phyogs rnam rgyal onwards, the continuity of the Glo bo lineage began to break up, and separate lineages were established. One of those sub-lineages stemmed from Shar chen Ye shes rgyal mtshan.

[156] Heimbel 2997:120.

[157] On Mus chen's biography of Ngor chen, see Heimbel 2007:24.

[158] For the masters associated with the *lam 'bras bshad* tradition, see Stearns 2001:42-46.

[159] For the discussion on the *lam 'bras* division into *lam 'bras slob bshad* and *tshogs bshad*, see Heimbel 2017:405-413.

[160] Stearns 2012:125.

of the Red cycle and as a result of his inspirational teachings he had many learned disciples, including Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1596) and Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba (1524–1568). Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho was an important master of the *lam 'bras slob bshad* and the abbot of the Mnyam yod Bya rgod gshongs monastery in Gtsang, who is especially known as a strong opponent of the Mahāmudrā teachings of 'Brug chen Pad ma dkar po (1527–1592).[161] Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba, on the other hand, served as the fourteenth abbot to the throne of Zhwa lu where he taught the *lam 'bras slob bshad* tradition, which he also received from Tshar chen. He is the author of the generation and completion *sādhana* practice focusing on Vajrabhairava entitled *Tantra of the Ḍākinī Hearing Lineage of the Rwa Command and Instruction on the sampanna-krama of Vajrabhairava* (*Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi bskyed rdzogs man ngag rwa khrid mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud*). According to A mes zhabs, Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho and Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba each completed a set of works, including notes on Tshar chen's *Instructions on the Generation Stage of the Red Yamāri,* which he taught orally, the *Khog phug*,[162] and the *Unelaborated Instruction*.[163] From Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho, the Red cycle of the Glo bo lineage was passed onto Mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), who was known as one of the main preceptors of A mes zhabs.[164]

e) The Reading Transmission (*lung*) Lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba

The fifth lineage of the Red Yamāri that reached Tibet is based on the reading transmission (*lung*) of the *Raktayamāritantra.* A mes zhabs explains the reasons for classifying this transmission as an independent reading transmission saying that Glo bo received the initiation (*dbang*) of Raktayamāri from teachers other than Darpaṇācārya and

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[161] See Krug 2019:113-117.

[162] Sobisch (2008:49) confirms that Mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho wrote notes on Tshar chen's *Instructions on the Generation Stage of the Red Yamāntaka* and *Khog phug* that were transmitted to the Sa skya in the cycle of the Red Yamāri.

[163] *yang theg chen rin po ches bla ma dam pa'i drung du gshed dmar gyi khrid bka' gsan/ rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi rnam bshad sogs yig cha yang mang du mdzad de 'jam dbyangs nam mkha' rgyal mtshan la gnang/ de nyid dang sems dpa' chen po gnyis char la bdag chen rdo rje 'chang gis gsan te/ de ltar brgyud pa'i chu bo gnyis 'dus kyis bdag chen rdo rje 'chang blo gros rgyal mtshan/ rdo rings kun spangs pa/ tshar chen blo gsal rgya mtsho'i bar du brgyud/ tshar chen nyid kyis 'di skor la 'chad nyan rtsal du ston pa mdzad pa'i slob ma yang mkhas pa'i dbang po mang thos klu sgrub rgya mtsho/ bo dong mkhyen brtse ba sogs byon pa las/ 'di gnyis char gyis tshar chen gyi gsung la zin bris mdzad pa'i gshed dmar gyi bskyed rim gyi rnam bshad/ khog phub/ spros med kyi khrid yig sogs cha tshang ba re re yod cing/ Gshin rje,* pp. 136-137.

[164] For the second lineage transmission of the Red Yamāri received by A mes zhabs in the lineage of Ngor, see p. 29 and p. 59.

before he even met Darpaṇācārya. There were two versions of the *Raktayamāritantra*: one in nineteen chapters and one in twenty-two chapters. Both of them formed the basis of Glo bo lo's reading transmission lineage. The earlier version consisted of nineteen chapters. According to A mes zhabs, it was Shong lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan, the younger cousin of Shong lo tsā ba Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (13th c.), who translated the nineteen-chapter *Raktayamāritantra*, which he received from the oral transmission of *paṇḍita* Vimalaśīla.[165] The colophon of the Tantra included in the Stog Palace manuscript of the Bka' 'gyur indicates that he translated it in collaboration with the Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Rahulaśrībhadra at Dpal Sa skya gtsug lag khang at the orders of 'Phags pa Chos rgyal, sponsored by Kun dga' bzang po.[166] This indicates that the translation was completed sometimes in the mid-1270.[167] From the first chapter of the nineteen-chapters *Raktayamāritantra*, Glo bo taught the empowerment of the 5-Deity *maṇḍala*, and from the eighth chapter he explained the teachings on the 13-Deity *maṇḍala*. The second version was the twenty-two-chapters *Raktayamāritantra*. According to Tāranātha, the Sanskrit copy of this version was obtained from *ācārya* Dharmakīrti by the Tibetan Chos grags dpal (Kun spangs chos grags dpal, 1283–1363). The text was offered to Bu ston Rin po che who was requested to translate it from Sanskrit into Tibetan.[168] A mes zhabs specifies that this version of the Tantra contains an elaborated collection of rituals (*las tshogs*) based on the usage of ritual substances that are not to be found in any other Tantras.[169] From this version of the Tantra, Glo bo taught exlusively the

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[165] There was also another translation of the *Raktayamāritantra*, which is not mentioned by A mes zhabs, that is found in the *dge ge* print of the Bstan 'gyur. For the discussion of this particular translation, see Kuijp 2009:26-27.

[166] *yon tan mtha' yas pa mnga' ba'i bla ma dam pa chos kyi rgyal po rin po che'i bka' lung (sic?) gis/ dpon chen kun dga' bzang pos yon bdag byas pa'i dus na/ kha che'i paN Di ta ra hu la shri bha dra dang/ bod kyi lo tsa ba dge slong blo brtan gyis/ dpal sa skya'i gtung lag lhang chen po bsgyur ba'o/ Dpal gshin rje gshed dmar po,* p. 360.

[167] Kuijp 2009:27.

[168] *gshin rje gshed mar po'i rgyud le'u nye gnyis yod pa 'di ni/ slob dpon dhar ma ki rti par grags pa/ kun spangs chos grags dpal bzang gi phyag tu rgya dpe byung nas/ mkhas mchog bu ston rin po che'i phyag tu phul nas bsgyur par zhus/ 'gyur yang mdzad/* Tāranātha's *Gshin rje*, pp. 81-82.

[169] *srol lnga pa ni/ shong rdo rje rgyal mtshan gyi gcung po shong blo brtan gyis paN Di ta vi ma la shi la lung blang ste gshed dmar gyi rgyud le'u bcu dgu pa 'di bsgyur te/ de'i lung da lta yang bzhugs pa yin la/ rgyud 'di'i le'u/ glo bo lo tsa bas gshed dmar gyi dbang bla ma gzhan las thob rjes su dar pan A tsarya dang mjal dus gshed dmar gyi khrid rdo rje'i tshig rkang dang bcas pa gsan/ des na 'di la dbang bka' khrid bka' brgyud pa tha dad du byed/ dang po nas lha lnga'i dkyil 'khor bstan shing brgyad pa nas lha bcu gsum ma'i dkyil 'khor bstan par bshad/ bu ston rin po ches bsgyur ba'i rgyud le'u nyer gnyis pa nas mchog sgrub pa'i dkyil 'khor lha lnga ma kho na ston/ rgyud de na gzhan na med pa'i rdzas kyi sbyor ba la brten pa'i las tshogs shin tu mang ba zhig bzhugs par bshad do/ Gshin rje,* pp. 138-139.

supreme accomplishment of the 5-Deity *maṇḍala.* A mes zhabs concludes his description of the reading transmission lineage of Glo bo lo tsā ba by saying:

> This [reading transmission of Glo bo lo] is the fifth tradition that, except for the continuity of the reading transmission and the explanation of the Tantra, does not have any [other] empowerments, practice instructions, etc. Therefore, among the traditions that have just been explained, since this transmission coming from Glo bo lo tsā ba has been declared to be the most outstanding and reliable by various previous *bla ma*s, this is how it has to be regarded.[170]

Conclusion

There are several conclusions that can be drawn from the documentation of transmission lineages presented above. First, the circulation of audiences operated in both centripetal and centrifugal ways. While scholars have placed much importance on the centripetal aspect, attested for example in the journeys to India and Nepal to obtain tantric teachings—a practice adopted by all the lo tsā bas mentioned above—, the centrifugal tendencies are less frequently accounted for. However, some part of the Red cycle's trajectory of diffusion in Tibet was indirectly linked to the arrival of the great Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Śākyaśrībhadra (and his party of lesser *paṇḍita*s) to Tibet on the invitation of Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa'i dpal. Especially two of those *paṇḍita*s, namely Vibhūticandra and Dānaśīla, appear to have been closely linked to the network of masters associated with the Raktayamāri cycle in Tibet. Chag lo, G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba and Glo bo lo knew Vibhūticandra personally, and in case of Glo bo lo, the translations of the Red cycle undertaken in collaboration with Darpaṇācārya took place at the exact same location where Glo bo lo conducted other translation activities with Vibhūticandra. Also Dānaśīla, the teacher of G.yad sde ba, completed his translation of the *Raktayamāri* in the place built by Vibhūticandra. We also know that Rong pa Rgwa lo invited Vibhūticandra to his monastery of Dben dmar and requested from him tantric initiations. The picture that emerges from the above analysis points to a small group of intellectuals and channels of transmission located initially within the sphere of authority established around the figure of Śākyaśrībhadra.

Second, the transmission of tantric teachings can be also described

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[170] *srol lnga pa 'di la rgyud kyi lung bshad gyi rgyun lung tsam ma gtogs dbang dang khrid sogs med la/ des na de ltar bshad ma thag pa'i lam srol de dag las glo bo lo tsa ba nas brgyud pa 'di khungs btsun zhing khyad par 'phags par bla ma gong ma rnams gsungs pas de ltar du shes par bya'o/ Gshin rje,* p.139.

in terms of cultural geographies that in the initial phase appears to have been based in small, regional centers, creating more or less informal circulation network. Some of the places that played an important role in the transmission of the Raktayamāri cycle, such as the royal citadel of Nyi gzungs in Pu hrangs and the mountain of Drang sron Srin po, were again linked to Vibhūticandra and seem to have assumed a pivotal role in the wider diffusion of tantric scriptures. Other places, such as Thar pa gling, the seat of Dpyal lo and Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, assumed a variety of functions: it was a place where lo tsā bas travelled to receive formal initiation in the Red cycle; where the translations of the Raktayamāri scriptures were undertaken, and; where the prominent scholars trained to become translators.

Third, the statistical frequency of certain names that appear in many different transmission lineages discussed above indicates that some individuals assumed greater roles than others in the history of spread of tantric teachings in Tibet. One of these significant figures is Rong pa Rgwa lo of the Rong clan. More research is needed to understand the circumstances in which the Rong clan rose to the position of power in the *phyi dar* period. Another master that frequently appears in various transmission lineages of both the Black and the Red cycles is Mang khar lo tsā ba, a rather unknown figure, who usually features as a teacher of Dpal ldan seng ge from whom Bu ston Rin po che received both the Black and Red cycles as well as the *Guhyasamāja* transmission of the Jñānapāda school. The role of Mang khar lo tsā in the spread of tantric teachings in Tibet needs to be investigated further. Another important *bla ma* was Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho, who established the Tshar pa division of Sa skya. He does not only feature in the transmission lineages of the Red cycle of Glo bo lo that was transmitted through the masters of both the *lam 'bras bshad* and the Zhwa lu monastery (the same monastery where Tshar chen was enthroned in 1555), but also in the lineage of the Eastern Rwa tradition that stemmed from Rgya ston and was passed on after the 14th century mainly through the abbots of Zhwa lu monastery.[171] Despite the enduring conflict that characterized the relationship between the members of the Tshar pa lineage and the supporters of the 'Khon branch of the Sa skya,[172] the Tshar pa's Vajrabhairava and Raktayamāri legacy was incorporated into the Ngor branch. A mes zhabs, the twenty-seventh patriarch of the Sa skya throne-holders was a recipient of Tshar pa lineage in both the Eastern Rwa tradition and the Red cycle of Glo bo lo.

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[171] Cuevas 2021b: 66.

[172] Smith 2001: 241–242; Stearns 2012: 20–21 n.16.

Red Yamāri
The lineage of Dpyal lo

Niṣkalaṅka
⇩
Dpyal lo tsā ba Chos kyi bzang po
⇩
Rong pa Rgwa lo
⇩
Rong pa Shes rab seng ge/bzang
⇩
Bu ston Rin po che
⇩
Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po

Red Yamāri
The lineage of Chag lo

*Ravīndraprabhā
⇩
Chag lo tsā ba Chos rgyal
⇩
G.yung phug pa Rgyal mtshan dge ba
⇩
Blo gros brtan pa
⇩
Mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros/Mang mkhar lo tsā ba
⇩
Dpal ldan seng ge
⇩
Kun spangs chos grags
⇩
Ma ti pan chen/Blo gros rgyal mtshan
⇩
Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros
⇩
Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po

Red Yamāri
The lineage of G.yag sde ba (Bsod nams bzang po/seng ge)

13-deity Raktayamāri

Dānaśīla
⇩
G.yag sde ba (Bsod nams bzang po)
⇩
[Zhang] ze dmar pa
⇩
Bu ston Rin po che
⇩
Rin chen rnam rgyal
⇩
Sa bzang 'Phags pa gzhon nu blo gros

5-deity Raktayamāri

Dānaśīla
⇩
'Jam gsar Shes rab 'od zer
⇩
Rgwa lo tsā ba
⇩
Rong pa Shes rab seng ge/bzang
⇩
Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po

Red Yamāri — The lineage of Glo bo lo

Bharendra/Darpaṇācārya
⇩
Glo bo shes rab rin chen
⇩ ⇩
'Gro mgon sa pa (Blo gros dpal) 'Phags pa Chos rgyal
⇩
Mang mkhar lo tsā ba/ Mchog ldan legs pa'i blo gros
⇩
Dpal ldan seng ge
⇩
Bu ston Rin po che
⇩
Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan

⇩ ⇩
Theg chen chos kyi rgyal po Kun dga' bkra shis Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal
⇩
'Jam dbyangs nam mkha' rgyal mtshan
⇩
Mus chen sems dpa' chen Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan

⇩ ⇩
Rdo rings Kun spangs pa Kun mkhyen chen po Dkon mchog 'phel ba
⇩ ⇩
Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho Rje Lha mchog seng ge
⇩
Rje Dkon mchog dpal ldan

⇩ ⇩
Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho Bo dong mkhyen brtse ba
⇩
Ngag dbang chos grags
⇩
A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams

⇩
Shar chen Kun dga' bkra shis
⇩
Spyan snga Kun dga' don grub
⇩
A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams

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The salt trips in Tibet and the Himalayas: extraction and trade in pre-modern times[1]

Santiago Lazcano

Nam-ri-Srong-tsan […] arrived at the northern desert plain where he slew a fierce Dong (wild yak) with terrible horns called Thal-Kar-ro-ring. Then, while riding fast, the carcass of the yak, which he had bound with the straps of his saddle, fell down on the ground. In order to take it up, the king alighted from his horse, when he found himself on an extensive salt bank. This was the inexhaustible mine called Chyang-gi-tshva which still supplies the greater portion of Tibet with salt. Before the discovery of this salt mine, there was a very scanty supply of salt in Tibet.[2]

1881 Sarat Chandra Das,
Contributions on the religion, History, &c. of Tibet

Introduction

Salt has always been a fundamental product in the history of mankind. Settlements appeared or died out in relation to their ease or difficulty in accessing it. It also served as currency for commercial transactions, and its vital importance is reflected in the term "salary" (derived from the Latin *salarium*), which makes it possible for millions of people to satisfy their vital needs.

In the Tibetan and Himalayan context this importance is even greater. In Tibet, salt is considered one of the "four pillars of life":

[1] I am very grateful to Alex Mckay for his valuable advice and encouragement and for polishing the English. I am also very grateful to John Bray for his encouragement and good advice.

[2] The importance that Tibetans attach to salt is manifested in the attribution of its discovery to the Yar-lung dynasty emperor Namri Songtsen, father of the great Songtsen Gampo. Das 1882, p. 217; Haarh 1969, pp. 331-332; Ngag-dBang BlobZang rGya-mTSHo (Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet) 2008 (1643), p. 12. Likewise its high status in Tibetan culture is revealed in the embalming with salt of the corpse of the 5th Dalai Lama, and the veneration of that salt by the faithful, since it was considered that the salt that had been in contact with his body could benefit people because it had the characteristic of identifying with him: the salt *was* the body of the Great Fifth. Schaeffer 2004, p. 13. In the Hindu tradition salt also appears in some of its founding legends: a Sanskrit myth tells that Śiva first revealed his identity to a Gaddi shepherd he employed to transport salt, after he himself manifested as a shepherd near Lake Gaurikund. McKay 2015, p. 165.

Santiago Lazcano, "The salt trips in Tibet and the Himalayas: extraction and trade in pre-modern times", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 65, Octobre 2022, pp. 70-103.

tsampa, meat, salt and tea. Tibetans are tireless drinkers of tea, which they mix with salt and yak butter. Its excessive consumption, and the role of salt as a bargaining chip to obtain the so necessary and scarce cereal, made it essential to obtain large quantities of the product. On the other hand, in the southern slopes of the Himalayas the value of salt was even greater, given its great scarcity in these lands. The low intake of salt in the diet of its inhabitants resulted in the common occurrence of endemic goiter due to lack of iodine among its peoples, especially in the eastern Himalayas.

In ancient times, before the collision of tectonic plates originated the Himalayas, the Tibetan plateau was covered by a great sea. The many salty lakes that remain were the main deposits of such a precious commodity for Tibetans.

Three main sources have historically supplied salt to the Tibetan world. From the lakes of the inhospitable Changthang (the high and icy northern region of the plateau), salt was extracted that reached western and central Tibet, as well as Ladakh, Nepal and Bhutan. The northeastern province of Amdo is also home to a large salt expanse: the grassy Tsaidam ("brackish marsh") salt flat. The salt from its lakes was consumed in Amdo and reached the northern part of Kham. Finally, in the southeast, most of Kham and the easternmost part of the Himalayas were supplied by the terraced saltpans at Tsakalho, on the banks of the Dzachu (upper Mekong) river.

The Changthang and the Himalayas

The salt harvesting

The Changtang contains countless salt lakes. The Nam tso or "celestial lake", the Drangyer tso, the La nGa tso (Rakshastal), or the Siling tso are some of the most important. Historically the task of extracting salt from the lakes has fallen exclusively to the nomads or Drokpas. Only they were able to withstand the extreme conditions of the terrain and possessed the mobility and capacity necessary for transportation.

When spring arrived, around April, the Drokpas set out to the lakes in search of salt. It was an exclusively male job. Women were not allowed to go to the salt lake. In each group of saltmen (about 5 - 8 men), family roles were reproduced and each member was assigned a role to play. The "father" was in charge of making offerings to burn, distributing meat in the group and visiting the tents to collect all the opinions if there was something to discuss. The "mother" took care of everyone and cooked and made tea for them. The "son" (*bopu* or *bopsa*) was the trainee and had to learn from the elders how to ex-

tract the salt, handle the tools, place the wool sacks on the animals, etc. The *zopon* or keeper of the animals had to find pasture and water for them, take care of them, and treat them if they got sick.

For the Drokpas salt lakes are considered a divine gift given to humans. It is said that there were 12 salt lakes in the north that had been dug and blessed by Guru Rinpoche. The nomads believe each lake is the heart of a Living Buddha, and they also believe the lakes are the home of other local deities. Because of these beliefs the process of travel to the lake, and the extraction and collection of the salt was a highly ritualised process.

Once the point was reached from where they could no longer see the mountains that were home to their local deities, the saltmen had always to follow the established rules. This was because they were beyond the scope of their local protective deities and, therefore, if they did not comply with the rules or offended the divinities of the territories they passed through and/or of the lake, those deities could get angry and punish them in some way. So as not to irritate the local deities and to protect themselves from the demons that inhabit the north they followed a very strict script. Each member occupied his position within the group and even had his assigned place within the tent, they had to observe good behavior among themselves and respect a series of prohibitions: it was forbidden to have disputes and discussions, contact with women, meet recklessly with the locals, expel flatulences, and even that beggars, women and dogs spent the night near the camp. They had also to speak the "salt language".

Very little is known about this secret "language". It is passed down from father to son and is never spoken in the presence of women. It seems to be used by most traditional saltmen and probably varies with each Tibetan dialect, although in eastern Changthang it could be more uniform. It is primarily made up of specialised jargon or slang, consisting of the local dialect with some systematic changes made to make it incomprehensible to others, and with a lot of vocabulary known only to themselves. The "salt language" contains many vulgarisms and also has a "spicy" or erotic connotation. Speaking this jargon during the expedition could be an excuse for the saltmen to be able to talk about sex and joke about women without their dignity and social status being weakened. This type of slang among people who carry out a trade is not exclusive to the "men of salt" and it occurs in other groups in Tibet such as hunters.[3]

The Drokpas could take up to 20 days to reach the lake. The ani-

[3] Xirab 2006. I thank Ulrike Koch (20 July 2020), John Vincent Bellezza (21 July 2020), Gerald Roche (23 July 2020), and Hiroyuki Suzuki (8 August 2020) for their comments (personal communications via e-mail).

mals they drove to transport the salt on the return trip were usually yaks but they could also be sheep and goats. Yaks can carry about 30 kg. each, about twice as much as sheep and goats. But sheep and goats have the advantage of saving time for nomads, as once loaded with bags of salt they do not need to be unloaded until they reach their destination.

Upon reaching the lake, the nomads began to break the salt into small pieces with yak or sheep horns, and accumulated it in conical piles with wooden scrapers. Later they filled the sacks and sewed them shut. When they had all the salt collected, they took the animals out to graze and load them with the sacks. Next day they started their return trip. The process of collecting salt in the lake usually took about 8 days.

Towards the Himalayas

After a few months of rest, and with the arrival of summer, another caravan started up again. It took at least a month to reach the Himalayan border, where summer trade fairs were held. This time the specific rules governing the extraction of salt did not come into play, nor did their members have to be the same. Nor do they spoke any language other than their local dialect of Tibetan. The aim of the caravan was to exchange salt (and to a lesser extent other goods such as butter or wool) for products that did not exist in the Tibetan highlands: barley, wheat, leather, rice and vegetables.

In pre-modern times (before 1950 and the Chinese administration), many routes left the solitary nomadic camps of the Changthang towards the high mountain passes of the south. Defying the dangers that threatened men and animals (bandits, wild animals, precipices and terrible temperatures) the caravan crossed them, and on the back of mules and yaks, the precious merchandise reached as far away as Baltistan, Ladakh, Zanskar, Spiti, Kinnaur, Garwhal, Kumaon, the middle hills of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Monyul.

Taxes and intermediaries

The Ganden Phodrang government stationed officials at crucial points along the southern routes to collect taxes from these traders, usually in the population centres that they passed through or on the banks of the rivers that were to be crossed. Once they arrived in the last villages before the border, the Drokpas exchanged their merchandise with people who arrived from the other side of the pass bringing the desired products from the south: vegetables, sugar, and especially barley, corn and wheat. These traders were generically

referred to as Bhotias, that is, culturally and linguistically Tibetan groups living on the Indian, Nepalese or Bhutanese side of the border. These Bhotias acted as intermediaries with the peoples further south, and it was they who brought the salt to Kashmir and the Himalayan midlands.[4] Both among the Drokpas and Bhotias, and between them and the peoples further south was the institution known as "commercial friendship" or "fictive kin" (*netsang*, literally "nesting place"): each family had as partners another specific family in the other groups, with whom it traded preferentially over the years and served as a hostess when they were visiting its lands. This relationship went from father to son.

On the routes from the lakes of Ngari (in the western Changthang) to Ladakh, Kinnaur or Humla, the salt tax was paid in Ruthok, or in Purang. Only in one case were those coming from across the border allowed to collect their own salt: the nomads of the Rupshu (western end of the Changthang Plateau entering Ladakh) had an agreement with the Tibetan government that allowed them to collect on Mimdum and Gyaltse lakes. The leave was granted by an official in Ruthok in favor of the *goba* (chief) of Rupshu, and the Changpas or Rupshupas also paid the tax on the collected salt to the Government of Tibet.

Along the banks of the sprawling Yarlung Tsangpo the *tsasho*,[5] or salt tax collecting officials, waited patiently at the ferry crossings that nomads would necessarily have to cross to reach the Himalayan buttresses.[6] The many routes that led to the border markets were required to cross this obstacle.

In Nepal, the income from the salt trade was very high and the Nepalese state also collected a tax through the *subbas* who had a monopoly on the distribution of the salt brought in from the north.[7] The importance of this trade was so great that the poor quality of the imported salt (being mixed with sand) was even one of the excuses of the Gorkhas to declare war on Tibet in the late 18th century.[8]

Himalayan markets

Diverse people from all corners of the southern fringe of the Ti-

[4] Sometimes there was a chain of intermediaries that had to be respected. In Zanskar, for example, the Zanskaris (who received the Tibetan salt from the Rupshu nomads) exchanged it with the Bods of Paldar, and the Bods in turn with the Paharis, with a consequent increase in the price of the product. Riaboff 2008, p. 109.

[5] Sangyay, Thupten and Tsepag Rigzin 1986, p. 45; Tibet Oral History Project 2014, p. 14.

[6] Brauen 2002, p. 40.

[7] Von der Heide 1988, p. 22-23.

[8] Dai 2009, p. 135.

betosphere appeared at these trade fairs, exchanging merchandise, ideas, news, dialects, religious forms, and ways of life. In addition to merchants, lamas, pilgrims, nomads, aristocrats, vagabonds and outlaws would gather in the markets, as well as representatives of princes, monasteries and Tibetan polities, adding vitality and appeal to these fairs.

In Purang under the holy Kailash and next to Lake Manasarovar, people from distant Kinnaur, Bhotias of Garwhal and Kumaon, Limiwas, Humlis and Mugulis, carried the salt to take it through the high steps to their homes, keep some and resell the rest in more distant places. In Tradün, the Lobas of Mustang also loaded the salt to carry it through the narrow canyon of the Kali Gandaki to the Hindu villages of the middle region of Nepal. Further east, in Kyirong and Rongshar the Nubripas, Langtangpas and Sherpas collected the salt that would reach the eastern valleys of Nepal.

In Phari, at the head of the Chumbi Valley, Sikimese[9] and Western Bhutanese bought salt and sold it at the Gangtok and Paro markets. Further east of the Chumbi Valley the salt reaching Bhutan and Monyul was already coming from the easternmost part of the Changthang, from Nakchu and also from nearby Yamdrok tso. Near this lake, in Taklung Tshondu, there was a large seven-day fair attended by central Bhutanese who came loaded with rice, paper, brown sugar, bamboo, fabrics and medicinal herbs, in addition to some Indian goods. These Bumthaps returned with salt, tea, silk, musk, gold dust, dried lamb legs and sheepskins. Northeastern Bhutanese merchants also carried their rice through the icy pass of Me la[10] to barter in Dongkhar or Tsona Dzong, where traders from Assam and especially Monpas from the Monyul corridor also came. Rice was highly prized by the Lhasa aristocracy and in Tibet it was a state monopoly. In Tsona there was a *drekhang* or "rice house", run by a Tibetan government official who was the only person with whom the Monpas and Bhutanese were allowed to exchange their rice. On the south-east route leading to Tawang, and on the south-west route to Bhutan, there were two caravan stations charging tolls to merchants.[11]

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[9] The Lepchas and Lhopos of Sikkim believe that their sacred mountain, the Kangchenjunga, holds in its five peaks five valuable treasures that will be available to humans in times of need. The treasure of the first peak is salt, which confirms once again the high value given to it by the Himalayan peoples. Balikci 2008, p. 91.

[10] I thank Jigme Tshelthrim Wangyal for his comments (personal communication via e-mail, 11 July 2020).

[11] Toni Huber points out that beyond charging these fees, the objective of these stations was to control the rice and salt traffic monopolies between Monyul and Tibet. Huber 2020, vol. 1, p. 33; Lange 2020, p. 239.

Porters were usually traders themselves but sometimes they were peasants subject to *ulag* or forced labor, which was part of the tax burden on them and consisted of providing transportation to officials and political and religious elites (and to their goods).[12]

At times the Tibetans also crossed the border: the Drokpas neighbouring the Dolpopas went sometimes down to the Dolpo valleys and were taken into the homes of their *netsang* or fictive kin (trading partners), where the exchange took place. In Bhutan, Tibetans crossed the border to exchange their products at the Tsampa[13] trading station, which was the main market for the salt trade with Bumthang. Tibetan traders also crossed the border to exchange their goods in Trashiyangtse and Trashigang, especially at the pilgrimage festivals of Chorten Kora and Gomphu Kora.[14] The same was true of neighbouring Gorsam Chorten in Monyul.[15]

Amdo

wu yi tshwa mtsho dkar mo
lha mo stong gi bla mtsho

The soul lake of one thousand goddesses
It is the White salt lake of Wu[16]

Sources of salt in Amdo

In northeastern Tibet, in the Amdo region, the marshy lands of Tsaidam contain a number of salt lakes that have historically supplied salt to the Amdowas, as well as to the northernmost area of Kham.

Surrounded by brackish and marshy sands is the great Tso Ngonpo or "Blue Lake" (better known by its Mongolian name -Koko

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[12] Such was the case of some Bhutanese bringing rice to Tibet through Tawang, as mentioned by Huber in: Lange 2018, p. 120, or of the Ladakhis transporting salt to Kashmir as part of the same tax (called locally here *begar*); Bray 2008, p. 50.

[13] Jigme Namgyal, the father of Bhutan's first king Ugyen Wangchuk, was stationed at this station as a *tsongpon* ("master-trader") or representative of the powerful Trongsa district. During this time, around 1847, at the nearby Lhalung monastery he met his wife, Pema Choki, who would later become the mother of the first king of Bhutan. Pommaret 2010, p. 51. Phuntso 2013, p. 431-432. In those years, the Chumey Naktsang from Bumthang is also recorded as being a long term trader in salt in Tsampa. Pain 2004, p. 172; Pain and Deki Pema 2008, p. 205.

[14] Trade routes were often through pilgrimage centers, as was the case here. Schrempf 2018, p. 343-344.

[15] Gohain 2020, p. 53.

[16] Ancient song of the salt collectors in praise of Lake Tsaka. Wenchanjia 2014, pp. 114-115.

nor- or Chinese -Qinghai hu-) whose salt was distributed by the nomadic groups, reaching eastward to the lands bordering China, and southward to the agricultural valleys of the Upper Dri chu (Yangtse) and of the Upper Nyak chu (Yalong) in Kham, where it was exchanged for grain.[17]

Many other smaller lakes in the Tsaidam were also exploited and their salt transported on yaks or camels[18] to reach its destination. From Dabusun nor, Mongolian and Tibetan nomads carried the salt to the town of Tongkhor, an important trade center in the Amdo-Gansu border area in the early 20th century, from where, along with salt, Amdo wool and lamb skins were also exported to China.[19] Lake Tsaka or Chaka ("Salt Lake") or Wu yi tsa tso ("Bubbling Salt Lake")[20] in Ulan area was also another major supplier of salt consumed in Thrika (now Guide), Kumbum (present-day Huangzhong) and other parts of Amdo.

The trip to the lake

As noted, salt expeditions were carried out exclusively by men. Each man usually took about 15 yaks. Sometimes they borrowed a yak if they did not have enough. According to custom if someone lent yaks, frames or sacks to carry salt that person was then entitled to receive a share of the goods collected. Usually the earnings supplemented the economy of the herders or farmers. But becoming a salt man had other benefits as well: it conferred a reputation of being a 'real man': an added masculinity that facilitated success with women.[21]

Fall and early winter was the best time to leave. At that time of year the swamps and rivers are frozen in the area and animals can pass through. There is also plenty of fuel (dried yak or sheep dung) for heating and cooking. As in central Tibet, the journey began after visiting the monastery, where offerings were made to the gods and a lama chose an auspicious day to depart. Every day, upon rising, the men would offer *bsang* (incense) and prayers to the local deities to gain their favor.[22] The care of the animals was essential at all times to

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17 Van Spengen 2013, p. 495-496.

18 In the sandy northeastern lands (and depending on the routes) it was often necessary to resort to camels, given the difficulty of yaks and mules in this terrain. Wenchangjia 2014, pp. 110-113.

19 Tsybikov 2017, p. 31; Van Spengen 2000, pp. 101-104; Coales 1919, p.242.

20 According to legend, the Mongolian king Bang A ma gave the locals a salt spring, which became this Lake Tsaka. Nyangchakja 2016, pp: 73-75.

21 Sangs rgyas tshe ring 2019, p. 296.

22 In the past many Amdowa tribes had their salt station or *tshwa sgo* on the shores of Lake *Wu yi tshwa mtsho* (Lake Tsaka). There they burned *bsang* and sprinkled water from the lake skyward to venerate the 1,000 female deities believed inhab-

ensure the success of the journey. Finding places where they could feed properly, giving them the necessary rest, protecting them from wolves, recovering them when they escaped at night, or loading them correctly were all arts that had to be mastered if the expedition was to be successful. Experience in salt extraction was also important, although in some cases it was possible to resort to experienced local men who picked it up and sold it in the lake to traders.[23] There were different types of salt and black salt was considered the highest quality in this area.[24] When they returned home with the goods, members of the harvesting team would gather to celebrate the *tsaw bvi nang skyid*[25] feast, which means "happy gathering of salt porters".

The journey of the caravans

Nowadays salt is very easy to get in any Amdo town, but in the past it was very expensive and difficult to obtain. On the other hand, and like in the Changthang, in many parts of Amdo there were no conditions for cereal cultivation, so the only way to obtain it was through exchanges of salt for grain. Salt from the lakes was transported along with other livestock products loaded on yaks, sheep or camels to the agricultural areas, where it was exchanged for the coveted grain. It was transported by the nomads of the lake area themselves, although sometimes it was traders from the agricultural areas who came to the lakes.

South of the Tsaidam ran the great *tsa lam* (salt route) that transported the salt from the three lakes mentioned above and many others to the commercial centers of the Amdo valleys.

Splitting from the main *lam*, various branches went to the southwest, south, east and northeast. Long journeys of twenty days or more were occasionally undertaken, sometimes reaching the distant lands of central Tibet.[26] Other routes ran southwards to Northern Kham, eastwards to the Chinese plain of Sichuan, and northeastwards to Gansu and Inner Mongolia. On these long journeys the merchants also had to watch out for bandits. The traders never strayed far from their rifles and swords and usually slept in their leather shoes and sheepskin robes, just in case it was necessary to get

iting the lake so that they would grant more salt. Wenchanjia 2014, pp. 114.

23 Sangs rgyas tshe ring 2019, p. 298. Sometimes communities living nearby took on such work, but mostly they merely imposed a small tax on the traders for allowing them to do it themselves. Ekvall 1968, p. 55.

24 Sangs rgyas tshe ring 2019, pp: 298, 301. The source does not explain why its quality is superior.

25 De Khar, Wan 2003. p. 76.

26 De Khar 2003, p. 72.

up suddenly.

In southern Amdo, in the vicinity of the sacred Amnye Machen peak, the ferocious Goloks were surely exempt from such concerns, since their reputation as fierce warriors and their own banditry preceded them throughout the Tibetan world. These hardy nomads also extracted salt from Tsam tso Lake (now in the process of disappearing) and traded it for wood, sap and pine resin with traders from northwestern Sichuan. According to Grenard, the Goloks also collected salt from the twin lakes Kyaring tso and Ngoring tso and exercised *"a lucrative trade, for they make sure of a monopoly in it through the terror with which they inspire their neighbours"*.[27]

Pilgrimage routes also served as trade routes here, and caravans heading in search of salt would pass by the sacred mountain. Once loaded, they would camp on the banks of the Kyaring tso and Ngoring tso before leaving the Golok country and heading west to sell their salt in Nakchu and even Lhasa.[28] The Goloks themselves also took their salt annually to the Tsangpo valley and exchanged it for grain near Nang dzong in Kongpo.[29]

The salt trade

At the beginning of the 20th century, the only mineral wealth of the region that was exported to China was salt. The Chinese and Muslims of Amdo acted as intermediaries between the Amdowa Tibetans and the Chinese world of Gansu and northern Sichuan. The salt was accompanied by medicinal herbs, furs, hides, leather, deer antlers, musk and horses, but above all wool, which was the other main commodity Amdo exported to China. Another business as profitable as it was dangerous was that of arms trafficking, which supplied the soldiers of the Chinese feudal lords, those of the Tibetan princes and chiefs, the armories of the monasteries, and the bandit groups that plagued the roads of Amdo and Kham.[30]

Reflecting its multi-ethnic and multi-cultural reality, Amdo's trading centers were bustling with Mongol and Tibetan nomads, Hui and Salar Muslims, Tu peasants and local Han Chinese, Golok warriors and Chinese merchants; and in its many *xiejias*,[31] salt was exchanged

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[27] Grenard 1904. pp. 196, 369-370. The Kyaring tso and Ngoring tso, from which the Goloks obtained salt, are not strictly saltwater lakes, but salt is found along their banks. This is enough to be considered by Tibetans as *tsaka*. Rockhill 1892, p. 778.

[28] Fuchs 2011.

[29] Van Spengen 2000, p. 102.

[30] Ekvall 1939, p. 7.

[31] A *xiejia* in Amdo was an inn where non-Chinese traders, i.e., Tibetans, Mongols or Muslims, stayed. *Xiejia* also meant innkeeper or regent of the inn. These were obliged to keep a record of merchants and transactions in their inns, and to serve

for barley, wheat flour, oil and pears; although it was sometimes also paid for with silver coins,[32] and even with opium in the Sharkog/Zungchu (ch. Songpan) area.[33] Rigmon (ch. Daotanghe), Tongkhor and Thrika were some of the main points of the salt trade. But of them all Thongkor/Tangar (today's Chengguan or Huangyuan) was undoubtedly the most important in Amdo. In 1727 it was recognized as an official frontier market by the Qing dynasty, and by the mid-18th century it had become the main center of the salt trade in the region.

Located at a strategic crossroads of trade routes on the Sino-Tibetan border, its growing importance during the 19th and early 20th centuries made it the seat of a *tshong spyi*, one of the Dalai Lama's commercial agents. This *tshong spyi* would inform Lhasa of the passage of Tsaidam salt and Amdo wool to the Chinese lowlands, and about Sichuan grain and tea passing to the nomadic interior regions, as well as the conditions of transactions and the powers involved in them, in addition to representing Tibetan interests and procuring goods for his government.

Traders also took advantage of the Buddhist pilgrimage routes to do business. Thus the Sangchu and Rushar fairs benefited from the large influx of pilgrims to the large monastic complexes of Labrang and Kumbum respectively, especially when major festivals were held. The monasteries sometimes provided storage facilities for the merchants, always taking a percentage in cash or, more probably, kind, and also received many in-kind donations from the pilgrims, including salt, which they traded in the Gansu and Sichuan markets. Thus, monks and lamas were often involved in commercial transactions, both on behalf of their monasteries and as individuals.[34]

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as interpreters and mediators in disputes. In neighboring Kham the equivalent of this institution bore the name *guozhuang*, and in the Yunnan part *madian*. Horlemann 2012. pp. 109, 117-118.

32 In the 1950s in Kumbum, two silver coins were paid for each bag of black salt. Sangs rgyas tshe ring 2019. p. 301.

33 In Zungchu, far from the Tsaidam lakes, salt was imported from both Tsaidam and China. In their markets the nomadic Amdowas offered it along with their butter, wool and sheep and yak skins. Chinese merchants also brought Chinese salt along with tea, silk, cotton and porcelain. At the end of the Qing dynasty and in the years of the Republic, opium traffickers also came to its streets and those of Zitsa Degu (Ch. Jiuzhaigou, formerly Nanping), Ngaba or Barkham to exchange it for salt, grain, tea, textiles, precious metals and arms. In the southeastern corner of Amdo (bordering Kham and the chinese Sichuan) opium was widely introduced. The business was dominated by Han and Hui businessmen from Sichuan and Gansu but Tibetan businessmen and monastery administrators in the area were also involved in the trade. It thus became a common medium of exchange. Kang and Sutton 2016. pp: 140-142, 156; Hayes 2016. p. 60-62.

34 Horlemann 2012, p. 111-112.

The political control: the Ma clan

The Mongols of the area[35] had dominated the salt trade since the end of the Ming dynasty and continued to do so at least until the early 19th century. During this century Mongol economic power was gradually replaced by the influence of the Hui Muslims and the local Han (Chinese). In 1907-1908 the Qing Empire reestablished the salt bureau.[36] But in 1915 the Hui Muslim warlord Ma Qi became the first of the Qinghai governors of the influential Ma family. From then on the chieftains of this powerful family controlled the province with an iron fist (especially the bloodthirsty Ma Bufang) and taxed the Amdo salt and wool trade.[37] The Ma established a semi-independent government from Peking in Si-ning (now Xining). Their fiscal voracity provoked several rebellions that were quelled with extreme violence, and as a result of their greed many Amdowas experienced misery. When the People's Liberation Army defeated his soldiers and took Lanzhou, Ma fled with his extraordinary fortune to Saudi Arabia.

Kham and the Extended Eastern Himalayas

The man has faith inside; the earth has salt inside
Premi proverb[38]

In southeastern Tibet, on the banks of the Mekong River (known in Tibetan as Dza chu and in Chinese as Lacang jiang) are the salt pans of Tsakalho (Naxi: Yerkalo, Yakalo; Ch. Yanjing), which have historically supplied salt to much of Kham and the nearby Extended East-

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35 Although their presence dates back further, the bulk of the Amdo Mongols appear to be descended from those who arrived with the establishment in the 17th century of a Mongol Oirat polity in Koko nor by Gushri Khan. Today most of them are Tibetanized and inhabit the Mongol Autonomous County of Henan, in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Malho (Huangnan) province of Qinghai.

36 In 1724 the Qing administration had already established a salt bureau in Qinghai but its activity was no more than nominal and it eventually disappeared in 1742. Horlemman 2012, p. 121.

37 Ma Bufang stood out for his cruelty with the Tibetans, especially with the Goloks. *Golok conflicts (1917–1949)* 2022. Faced with his failure to conquer the lands of the nomadic Washul clan due to the resistance encountered, Ma applied a long trade embargo to the nomads that prevented them from selling their products and deprived them of cereal, tea and salt, essential products in their diet. As a result, they were forced to raid the caravans that passed through their territory in order to survive. Gelek 2003. pp. 45-46.

38 Picus Sizhi Ding 2014, p. 227. The Premis (Pumis, Prinmis, Xifans) are a Tibeto-Burman ethno-linguistic group living in Muli and southeastern Kham, as well as other parts of the Yunnan-Sichuan border.

ern Himalayan[39] foothills. Salt was also a highly sought-after commodity in this area, and served as a currency for the exchange of goods.

This salt, unlike that which circulated in other Tibetan and Himalayan regions, did not come from the salt lakes of the plateau but from the wells built along the Dza chu that stored salt water from the subsoil. The water is extracted from the wells and poured into salt pans in the form of terraces that give their name to the town where they are located: Tsaka-lho, or "southern salt pans".

The production of Tsakalho and the extent of the area it supplied were considerably less than those of the Changtang salt lakes, and its salt reached mainly central and southern Kham and its adjacent Himalayan areas. In the north of the province the salt from the wells reached Chamdo along with, as noted above, that extracted from the lakes of Nakchu and Tsaidam. Eastwards it reached Dartsedo and southwards it penetrated into Yunnan as far as Gyalthang and Weixi. Westwards the Tsakalho salt would reach Tsawarong and Zayul, as well as the Mishmi Hills of present-day Arunachal, the Myanmar Himalayas, and Nujiang. The salt pans were thus a meeting point for caravans and traders from all these parts of the southeastern Tibetosphere. These diverse peoples also used to exchange other goods, ideas and beliefs, in addition to bringing and spreading news and rumors and establishing social relationships.

Wells and salt pans

If you look down on Tsakalho from above, the view is breathtaking: along the two banks of the Dzachu, the accumulated brine in its nearly 2700 salt pans shines from the river bed reflecting the sky. These salt pans are arranged in terraces built on the banks with sticks and soil, where the water is left to evaporate in the heat of the sun so that the salt can finally be harvested.

Dozens of tower-like stone wells can be found on both shores, protecting the salt water contained in them from the floods of the river. Desgodins already lists in 1872 fifteen wells on the right bank and thirty on the left bank.[40] Tibet was once covered by an ocean and the underground saltwater lake that supplies these wells is a consequence of that past. Under terraces, and close to wells, are the ponds

[39] The concept "Extended Eastern Himalayas" was coined by Stuart Blackburn and developed by him together with Toni Huber. It adds to Sikkim and Bhutan present-day Arunachal Pradesh, the Burmese region of Hkakabo Razi, northwestern Yunnan province, and the strip of Tibetan territory contiguous to the north to all of them. Huber 2020, p. 2.

[40] Desgodins 1872, p. 294.

in which water drawn from that wells is deposited for three days, so that impurities remain at the bottom and the salinity of the water increases. In these ponds there are also dozens of saltwater springs, which gush through cracks in the rocks. Local Tibetans consider these springs a "gift from the gods".

On the right bank, west of the river, lies the Tibetan settlement of Jada, with its hundred or so white houses scattered among fields of barley and wheat. For about three kilometers, its salt pans follow one another in a fairly wide and open terrain that receives more sunshine than the opposite bank. The soil on this shore is clayey, so the salt that is stored in the salt pans when the water evaporates takes on a pinkish hue. This pinkish salt is "peach blossom salt", colloquially called "red salt".[41] Red salt contains more impurities than white salt, so its price is lower. It is mainly used for livestock consumption.

On the opposite shore, to the east, is the village of Lower Tsakalho whose inhabitants are mostly of Naxi ethnicity, although they are partially Tibetanized. The terrain here is steeper, and its salt pans are covered by a thin layer of sand. The salt collected here is white and purer, and its price is higher than that of red salt. It is intended for human consumption and is used in the preparation of *tsampa* and Tibetan tea (salted and with yak butter). High Tsakalho (the "Yerkalo" of the missionaries and the "Yanjing" of the Chinese), which is the current administrative center, sits on top of the salt flats of Lower Tsakalho.

Women and the salt industry

Unlike the case of the salt lakes, the extraction of salt water from the wells and the collection of salt from the terraces has been an exclusively female task. After the rainy season, which is the only season when salt cannot be produced, Naxi and Tibetan women on both shores prepare for the work. The first task is to fix the terraces and ponds that have been damaged by the river floods. They repair the bottom of the terraces with soil and sticks and rebuild the ponds. Once both are ready, they open the wells again to start drawing salt water again.

The women's work is very hard and strenuous. Using a ladder, they descend to the bottom of the wells (sometimes down to ten meters) to load their buckets with salt water. The Naxi women of Lower Tsakalho go down to the wells, and come back up with wooden tubes or buckets loaded with salt water weighing about 15 kg. In Jada the Tibetan women usually carry two buckets of 10kg each. This opera-

[41] This "red salt" is different from that of Pakistan and the rock salt of Bhutan.

tion is carried out more than 100 times a day. The collected water is first poured into the ponds. The more water that is deposited, the more concentrated the salt water will be, and the higher the quality of the salt it will produce. Once three days have passed, the water is again transported in buckets to the terraces, where it is poured through a wicker basket so as not to bore through the surface of the salt pan. The water is left to evaporate by the wind and the heat of the sun until the salt is ready to be collected.

The first collection provides the highest quality salt intended exclusively for human consumption. The salt collected in the second batch is also edible but is of lower quality and is mainly used for animal consumption. The third was also destined for livestock in the old days but today it is usually poured back into the ponds to increase their salinity. There is a type of salt that is even more highly valued than that of the first collection: under the terraces the water is filtered and the dripping ends up forming salt stalactites that are considered to be of the highest purity and quality.

Tsakalho tradition expressly forbids men from being involved in salt production. For over 1000 years and countless generations the art of salt making has been passed down from mother to daughter. They are the sole stewards of the "gift of the wind and sun" which is their livelihood and even allows them to support their families. In the months of April, May and June, which are the most fruitful for harvesting, salt can be collected up to three times a day. A single person can produce more than 50 kg of salt in one day.

The origin of salt mines

It is not known exactly when salt exploitation began in Tsakalho, but the practise is certainly very old. According to a local Naxi legend the sacred mountain Damyon, which stands in front of the village and is one of the "daughters" of Kawa Karpo and Mianzumu, was on her way to Lhasa when she stopped in Tsakalho to rest. Seeing how poor the people were there she took pity and gave them a golden rooster and a silver hen. With the rising of the Dza chu the banks were flooded and the footsteps of the golden rooster became the saltwater wells of Jada, on the right bank. The footprints of the silver hen became the wells of the Lower Tsakalho. The rooster could roam freely and that is why there are so many wells in Jada. The hen, on the other hand, had more limited mobility because she had to take care of her eggs, so there are considerably fewer wells in the Lower Tsakalho.[42] On the

[42] Mu-gwan 2008; Lee 2006. In Tibetan mythology the sacred mountain par excellence of the area, the Kawa Karpo, is a male deity who is "married" to a female

other hand, according to some sources, the salt pans date back to times before the Tibetan Empire. In the famous battle of Qiangling, the great hero of the Tibetan epic par excellence, Gesar of Ling, defeated the Naxi king Qiangba, and thus took possession of the salt pans of Tsakalho.[43]

It is also worth noting that in the oral tradition of the Rawang people which describe the route of their migration from Tibet to northern Myanmar in ancestral times, there is talk of a stop they made at *shòwá ădăm*. Here *tòn shăwálóng* "second shawalong son", stayed and occupied the place. It is interesting to note that the Tsawarongba of Menkung in the Salween are called by the Rawangs "Shawalong". Tsawarong, Tibetan for "hot valley," lies immediately southwest of the salt flats. An account also appears of a salt source where "the salt, drying naturally, is taken up as coarse sand, continuously, *mà-băt tòngzòm* 'unending-sweet-saltlick', producing the *zipìp shălaq* 'sand-coarse-salt'". Of all the salt springs near the Rawang area, only one spring produces salt that fits this description: that of Tsakalho.[44] With all the necessary reservations, this version would be in line with the hypothesis of the great antiquity of the salt pans.

A disputed territory

Both its strategic location (situated between the territories administered by Tibet, Sichuan and Yunnan) and the important income derived from the salt trade, turned Tsakalho's domain into a coveted target for the various powers deployed on the borderlands. As early as the 8th century it was a notable commercial node connecting the Tibetan Empire with the flourishing kingdom of Nanzhao, and an

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deity who is another neighboring mountain: Mianzumu. This couple has "relatives" who are also other nearby mountains, although depending on the areas vary the versions about which ones they are. In the Markham area three "daughters" are referred to, in other parts two, and in others the couple has "sons", "uncle", "army", etc., instead of "daughters"; these "relatives" always being mountains. To the Tsakalho people the sacred mountain Damyon is itself a female deity. Kingdon-Ward 1924, p. 102; Nakamura 2013, p. 118. The name "Damyon" is not Tibetan but Naxi, which seems to indicate that the origin of the deity is also Naxi. The local version of the legend could have been adapted by the Naxi community for prestige within the wider regional Tibeto-Naxi network of southern Kham. I thank Li-hua Ying, John Studley, Katia Buffetrille, Jan Salick, Bob Moseley, Jim Goodman, and Brendan Galipeau (personal communications March 6-14, 2021) for their comments.

43 I have not been able to find any academic source confirming such a relationship between Tsakalho and Gesar de Ling. All sources are web pages of Chinese travel agencies and similar. Zhao Yuanzhi 2006; *Salt Well Town on the 'Roof of the World'* 2006; *Salt well* 2022; *Yanjing Ancient Salt Fields in Markam County* 201_.

44 Morse 1966, p. 203.

important salt center in the region, as well as an obligatory passage for Yunnan tea on its way to Lhasa. During the 15th century the powerful Naxi kingdom ruled by the Mu family from Jang Sadam (Lijiang) expanded northward to Bathang and Lithang, thus gaining control of the salt pans. In the 17th century, during the transitional period from the Ming to the Qing dynasty in China, Tsakalho came under the jurisdiction of Bathang, which still paid taxes to the Mu of Lijiang. In the military campaign against the Dzunghar Mongols in 1719, the Qing armies occupied Bathang, which passed into the hands of Sichuan. This control was increasingly weakened by the influence of the Bathang khampa chiefs and the powerful Gelukpa monasteries in the area.[45] By the end of the 19th century Tsakalho was included in the territory of the Bathang "principality". Bathang, on the left bank of the Dri chu, was one of the semi-independent political entities of eastern Kham. It was ruled by two *depa* or local chiefs who, in official Chinese discourse, held the title of *tusi*.[46] These *depa* were among the main beneficiaries of the increasing taxes obtained from the tea trade and the salt industry. Along with them, and with the support of Lhasa, the Gelukpa branch monasteries also exercised important political influence over the area; both were involved in commercial transactions that served their own interests.

Despite the "gift" of salt, most of the population did not enjoy a good life and was extremely poor. The two *depa* sent officials to Tsakalho to collect salt. The locals had to provide them with lodging and sustenance for three months a year, buy them tea at the price imposed by them, and transport the salt themselves to Bathang. The revenues from the salt trade were mostly, and depending on the time, in the hands of these Bathang *depa*, of the monasteries of Lhagong and Ba Chode supported by Central Tibet, and of the Qing officials dependent on the "warlords" who ruled Sichuan or Yunnan. Local Khampa and Naxi traders only benefited from a small part of the profits generated by salt production.[47]

In the last quarter of the 19th century a new force had joined the race for influence on the frontier: the French Catholic missionaries of the Missions Étrangères de Paris had settled in Bathang, and later in Tsakalho where after founding a church in 1865, in 1870 they bought

[45] The great monastery of Ba Chode, in Bathang, was the main and most powerful in the region. The one from Lhagong (Lhaweng, Lawok) in Tsakalho administered the affairs of the salt trade. Coleman 2014, pp. 296.

[46] Wang 2011, p. 57. The Qing dynasty granted the title of *tusi* to the hereditary local chiefs of Kham to show nominal control over the area, since theoretically these *tusi* owed obedience to the emperor. But in practice the real power was in the hands of these indigenous "kings"(*gyalpo*) and chiefs (*depa* -literally "in charge"-).

[47] Bray 2019, p. 165.

and leased land and began to build the mission of Yerkalo.[48] The community of converts was growing, nourished by Tibetans and mostly by people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman ethno-linguistic groups of the area: Naxis, Lisus, Nus, Drungs etc.[49] The new converts were thus removed from the orbit of the Buddhist monasteries and their economic dependence. This new situation undermined the influence of the monks and provoked their hostility towards the newly arrived "foreign lamas". The growing tension between the Catholic missionaries (who were joined by Protestants at the turn of the century) and the Buddhist monasteries led to several violent episodes or "mission cases" from 1873 onwards, the last of which in 1905 resulted in several missionaries being killed.[50] The uprising against the missionaries and against the Qing troops broke out in Bathang, and soon spread throughout southern Kham.

Zhao Erfeng and the control of the salt flats

In June 1905 Qing officer Zhao Erfeng was sent from Chengdu to Bathang to restore order. Zhao quickly took control and was characterized by the extreme cruelty of his methods, which earned him the nickname "Zhao the Butcher" among the Khampa. He quickly set in motion his project to exploit the resources of the territory and to sinicize Kham and impose Chinese culture and Confucian values, which he considered superior to the "barbaric" Tibetan customs. To this end, he launched a relentless military campaign against Tibet and promoted the transfer of Chinese settlers to Kham by offering them supposedly virgin land to cultivate.

Zhao knew that if he was to achieve his goals he could not pass up such a substantial source of revenue as that provided by the Tsakalho salt taxes. In late 1905 he established a salt tax office there that met with immediate opposition from the local Lhagong monastery, which had until then managed the benefits from the salt trade. After a year of fruitless negotiations with the monks, Zhao sent a large contingent of troops against the monastery, although he justified his attack by citing the need to stabilize the situation to defend the border and to suppress banditry in the area. The violence deployed by the soldiers led many farmers to abandon their wells and terraces for more than a year. After they returned to the salt pans Zhao was still not satisfied with the taxes obtained, and enacted heavy fines against salt smug-

48 Bray 2019, p. 165.

49 At that time several of these groups were known by other exonyms: the present-day Naxis were known as Mossos, the Nus as Lutzus or Lutzes and the Drungs as Kiutzus or Tarons.

50 Relyea 2010, pp. 184-186.

gling. After a series of battles between his troops and the Lhagong monks allied with the local Khampa, in 1907 his soldiers finally took over the monastery and expelled the monks. In 1910, after trying with little success to implement the *lijin* system (common in Sichuan) that taxed the transportation of salt, Zhao privatized the collection of salt taxes, in addition to increasing the tax burden on grain.[51] With the power of the monasteries weakened and the local chiefs dismissed he fixed his gaze on the missionaries' properties and, contravening Qing tradition up to that time, set out to end their privileges through his man in Tsakalho, Wang Huitong. But the decline of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the revolution that followed brought about his fall from grace. In December 1911 Zhao Erfeng, viceroy of Sichuan, was captured and beheaded by Chinese Republican forces.

The fall of the Qing dynasty ushered in a period of great instability, with constant skirmishes between the Tibetan army and Chinese nationalist troops leading to frequent changes in the border line. These forces were joined by other actors such as the governors of Sichuan and Yunnan (the latter briefly occupying Tsakalho in 1912), the Khampa autonomists, and the powerful monastic elites of the area, who allied with each other depending on the moment and according to their own interests. After two Sino-Tibetan wars in 1918 and 1930 that required the mediations of the British Consul in Dartsedo Sir Eric Teichman and the American missionary Marion Duncan, Tsakalho was in 1932 within the borders of Tibet. In 1939 the Republic of China established the province of Xikang which nominally encompassed the territory of Kham, but Chinese control in practice only reached its eastern half east of the Dri chu. The salt pans therefore remained under the Lhasa government until the arrival of the Communist army in 1950.[52]

The salt trade and caravans

As has been said before, all the activities necessary for the production of salt are exclusively feminine in this region. The men collaborate by collecting firewood and engaging in other small businesses, but above all they have historically been in charge of transporting the salt to places where they can exchange it for a more favorable price for their merchandise. Under the direction of a respected and experienced leader (the *maguotou*) they march in caravans[53] for weeks to

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[51] Coleman 2014, p. 351-352, 296-297; Relyea 2010, pp: 206-207; Wang 2911, pp. 129-133.

[52] Coleman 2014, pp. 424-425, 436-443; Relyea 2010, pp. 266-267, 466; Peng 2002, pp. 55-82

[53] In the Tsakalho area the short- and medium-distance caravans usually consisted

reach towns where the value of the salt is higher due to their distance from the salt pans and the isolation of their location. The roads are arduous and dangerous, so the *maguotou*'s experience and knowledge about the route and animal care are vital. They must cross perennially snow-capped mountain passes of about 5000 m. in altitude and, until not too long ago, cross mighty rivers with their horses and mules by the old and dangerous system of rope bridges (*liusuo*).[54] But their efforts are almost always rewarded and the caravan completes its journey successfully, getting considerably more grain for its salt than they would at home.

In the case of the Khampa herders closest to the village, it is these same herders who continue to come several times a year to Tsakalho in search of the precious red salt of Jada for their yaks and horses. These need much more salt than humans, and their owners come down from the mountains to the salt pans in a hard journey that can take them 4 days, and in which they cross with their animals over 5000 m high passes. This salt is essential for the Drokpas, who live mainly from their yaks. The shepherds buy the salt in exchange for yak butter, and with the surplus obtained they take advantage of their stay in the village to stock up on barley and all kinds of modern goods in their bustling stores. As was the case in Nepal, according the institution known as *netsang* or "fictive kin" each shepherd family has traded for generations with the same Jada family, with whom they stay during their visit to the village.

On the other hand, Tsakalho was an obligatory stop for the long-distance caravans that, from southern Yunnan, traveled along the Tea Horse Road to the holy city of Lhasa in central Tibet. In addition to the Pu-erh tea they carried, they bought salt and other goods here, which they would sell at increasingly higher prices as they approached the Tibetan capital.

As we have seen in other cases also here the trade benefited from the passage of pilgrims who came to the area. Buddhist devotees arrived from all over Tibet ready to perform the *kora* or ritual circumambulation of the sacred Kawa Karpo Mountain, and would take the opportunity to acquire the renowned Tsakalho salt. So would devotees who came to visit a temple in nearby Lhadun famous for hous-

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of horses and mules, although nearby nomads regularly went to the salt pans with their yaks in search of red salt. Long-distance caravans that brought tea from Yunnan and continued on to Lhasa and beyond, substituted their horses for yaks past Tsakalho when the altitude and cold became unbearable for the former.

[54] These zip-line bridges consisted of a rope made of bamboo and bark that was changed every few years. People sat on straps attached to a sliding piece of wood that was mounted on the rope. Animals and packages were transported from one side of the river to the other in the same way. Today the few surviving bridges of this style are made of rolled steel cables.

ing a figure of Vairocana believed to have been carved by the Chinese princess Wengchen, who passed through the place on her way to Lhasa to marry the Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo.[55]

The salt in the hills of the Extended Eastern Himalayas

There is one commodity which all men, of whatever colour, crave. It influences their lives. No hardship is too great to be borne, if only the need be thereby satisfied. This commodity is not bread, nor opium either, but common salt; common, that is, almost anywhere but in the jungle.

1930 Frank Kingdon-Ward, ***"Plant-Hunting on the Edge of the World"***, p. 25
Myanmar Himalayas

In pre-modern times, in the Extended Eastern Himalayas, the extreme scarcity of salt made this product probably the most valuable commodity for trade. The usual diet in these areas was deficient in iodine due to insufficient salt intake, and caused cases of goiter to be very abundant among the southeastern Tibetans and Tibeto-Burman-speaking groups inhabiting the region.

Tsakalho salt reached many areas of southeastern Tibet and the eastern tip of the Himalayas after passing through several hands, increasing its final price. F. K. L. Chit Hlaing writes that "*The communities owning salt wells always held central political positions in the network of inter-group relations, not only with respect to lowland kingdoms but also with regard to neighboring hill peoples*".[56] In the upper valleys of the Drung (Dulong) and Nu (Salween) rivers, Naxi and Tibetan traders exchanged the precious salt from the salt pans for herbs, agricultural products and cloth. Agents of the Naxi *tusi* (local ruler) and representatives of the wealthy independent Tibetan chiefs or of the powerful temples set a high price for the goods and sometimes imposed their exchange -evidently on very favorable terms for them- for medicinal plants, grain, gold and textiles to the tribal communities. The local Drungs and Nus were often forced to accept loans at high interest rates that drove them deeper and deeper into debt until they became virtual slaves. Travelers and Christian missionaries who settled in the area in the late 19th and early 20th centuries testified to this situation of slavery, which was common in this area of northwestern

[55] Trijang Rinpoche 2018, p. 88; Karmay 2009, p. 65. Even closer to Tsakalho, pilgrims visit a cave containing three spontaneously "self-generated" (*rangjyung*) figures on the rock, which are believed to represent precisely Songtsen Gampo and his wives, the Chinese and Nepalese princesses. Duncan 1952, p. 123.

[56] F. K. L. Chit Hlaing, 2007, p. xli.

Yunnan and in the adjoining Tibetan districts of Tsawarong and Zayul.[57]

In the Seinghku and Adung valleys in the Hkakabo Razi region (in the far north of Myanmar) salt was also the central product of trade with the outside world. Because of its great scarcity it was a highly coveted and valuable commodity. The Myanmar's Tibetans, Drungs and Rawangs of the area were totally dependent on salt from Tibet and acquired it in exchange for furs, medicinal plants and animal parts. They usually visited Rima and Jite on the Tibetan side, although Tibetan, Lisu, and Chinese traders from Yunnan sometimes brought the precious commodity to their lands also. Here, too, the locals suffered exploitation by some of these traders, who sometimes took advantage of these incursions to capture slaves among them.[58]

In the Mishmi Hills Tibetan and Chinese traders and small groups of Mishmis crossed the passes of the upper Dibang basin, or the border of the Lohit or Zayul chu valley,[59] exchanging the precious salt, Tibetan swords, coarse woolen cloaks and copper pots for the famous medicinal plant *mishmee-teeta*, musk, bear skins and other jungle products. The Zakhrings/Meyors of Walong also purchased salt from the Tibetan side of the border.[60]

Further west, the salt obtained in Pe (Kongpo) by the Adis who crossed the Doshong la, came from the Nakchu lakes. At the Pe customs house a Tibetan official collected the rice, corn and cane they were carrying and distributed the salt in exchange. A representative of the king of Powo or Kanam Depa also collected the tax set for his lord.[61]

Still further west the Apa Tanis manufactured their own "salt", the *tapyo*,[62] which is obtained from the ashes produced by burning a cane that grows in the rice fields. This *tapyo* greatly reduced their dependence on the Nyishi middlemen who obtained their salt from Tibet, and explains the almost total absence of goiter cases among the Apa Tanis.

The arrival of modernity

In central Tibet the 1950 invasion and subsequent extension of Chinese administration over the Dalai Lama's territory drastically changed the exploitation of salt, and especially its trade with the

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57 Bray 2019, p. 154, 159; Gros 2016; Kingdon-Ward 1937, p. 276; Lazcano 1999.
58 Kaulback 1934, pp. 228-229; Kingdon-Ward 1937, pp. 70, 157; Klieger 2006, p. 248.
59 Blackburn 2004, p. 34; Chouvy 2014, p. 22; Hilaly 2017, p. 78.
60 Dutta Choudhury, p. 163.
61 Kingdon-Ward 1926, pp: 187, 305-308
62 Sarma, 2017.

southern slope of the Himalayas. After the 1959 Tibetan uprising in Lhasa, the Himalayan border was sealed, cutting off the transnational salt trade and eroding the *netsang* trade friendship relations between fictive kin on both sides of the border.[63] In Amdo after the fall of Ma Bufang and the proclamation of the new People's Republic of China in 1949, major changes were also experienced. The new administration began to manage the merchandise of several local producers with personnel transferred from the salt offices of Shanxi and Shaanxi as well as brought in from Xining. In addition, in just the first ten years after the establishment of the Chinese communist regime, the Tsaidam region grew from about 16,000 inhabitants (mostly Mongolian and Tibetan) to about 250,000 (mostly Han Chinese).[64] In Tsakalho, after the invasion of the Maoist troops in 1950, the exploitation of the wells also came under the control of the local administration.

In the 1960s, with the dark period of the Cultural Revolution, the system of "popular communes" was imposed in agricultural, livestock and mining production. Thus, the exploitation of salt by communal teams and the use of trucks for its transportation put an end to artisanal extraction and the rituals of the saltmen and of the women of Tsakalho. Harvesting for individual or family benefit gave way to the exploitation of lakes and salt pans by communes of men and women working for the state.

At the end of the 1970's, after the disastrous results obtained, this unfortunate period came to an end and a new stage of economic reforms began that ended collectivization, allowed the start-up of private companies, and put an end to price controls and regulations. Although it was again possible to extract salt individually or in small family groups, work was almost always done for local governments.

These reforms were accompanied in the 1980s by a certain political opening that allowed greater flexibility at some border crossings, and some Himalayan areas recovered at least part of their old trade. Traditional saltmen, wary of the use of trucks because they offended the deities of the lakes, were also allowed to resume their traditional activity. Likewise, with the opening up, the people of Tsakalho were able to obtain more profit from the salt they worked, when the government approved their right to produce and sell salt autonomously. With liberalized production, the sale of salt flourished again and the streets of Tsakalho regained some of their former dynamism.

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[63] Although exceptionally some areas such as Limi and Upper Humla in northwestern Nepal were allowed to maintain the transnational salt-grain trade. Saxer 2013, p. 39. Others regions like Wallung, in northeastern Nepal, found new trading opportunities after the gradual opening of the Nepal-Tibet border since the mid-1960s. Saxer 2012.

[64] Rohlf 2016, p. 49.

But after this slight resurgence, the industrial exploitation of the salt lakes by Chinese companies with modern machinery spread inexorably until it ended up imposing itself almost entirely. In the southeast, on the other hand, the extractive activity of the salt mines continued (according to a chinese source at the end of the 2000s, about 150,000 kg of salt were produced in Tsakalho),[65] but its economic and commercial importance was also losing weight due to the growing ease of acquiring the product in places where formerly the dependence on salt from wells was absolute.

Caravans and small-scale salt trade subsist today in some parts of the Himalayas. But their great volume and generalization in the region is now a thing of the past. The last caravans are nearing extinction, and with them also disappears the testimony of a way of life and a culture that marked the life of the region for more than a millennium.

Conclusion

For centuries the caravaneers trading salt and their clients established, as a consequence of their commercial alliances, social, cultural and friendship links.

Since the 1960s and because the closing of the border with Tibet, these ties were progressively weakened and the Himalayan peoples had to look for new agents with whom to trade and in whom to find new referents. So they were forced to reorient themselves towards the south, and Tibetan salt was replaced by Indian or Nepalese iodized salt that arrived by helicopters and later by the new roads.[66] This contributed to a loss of a shared social sphere and a weakening of their ancient cultural universe.[67] Also within Tibet, with the generalization of roads on the plateau, products began to arrive from China by truck, and the flow of goods brought by the caravans -and thus of the social and cultural relations they generated- was considerably reduced.

Since the slight opening of the 1980s, the tenuous revitalization of the Himalayan caravans and of the salt production of Tsakalho has generated a new social and cultural impact on these populations that has little to do with what they experienced in the old days:

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65 Penkgyi 2008, pp. 32-33.

66 Some, such as the Rupshu Ladakhi nomads, took advantage of the opportunity of having a nearby salt lake inside the Indian side of the border (the Tso Kar) and reproduced their earlier practices to extract salt from it. Ahmed 1999.

67 Only the Himalayan peoples' taste for Tibetan salt and the properties they attribute to it have made it possible for a small-scale trade to survive where the border is allowed to be crossed, or minor smuggling where the borders are still closed.

Unlike in the past, the most coveted goods brought by the few caravans that still cross the Himalayas are no longer salt, wool, or religious artifacts, but Chinese manufactured goods such as cell phones, TVs, DVDs, electronic devices, modern clothing, and consumables of all kinds.[68] In recent times China's enormous economic strength has placed trans-Himalayan trade in the new Asian economy driven by Beijing's quest for new markets. Its *Great Western Development Strategy* has meant the construction of quality infrastructures in Tibet that facilitates and makes cheaper the arrival of products from China. Currently there are many roads to the Himalayas and a railway from Beijing to Lhasa which already has a branch to the Arunachal border and will soon have another to the Nepalese border. The Himalayan populations near the open passes[69] enjoy now -thanks to the skyrocketing prices of the caterpillar fungus or *yartsa gunbu* they collect[70]- a significant accumulation of capital; and nowadays China has become the provider of all the goods they want and need.

As for the salt pans, due to the decline of the industry, the place is being relocated in the tourist exploitation projects in the area aimed at the increasing Chinese population in the area. In 2009 the salt pans were declared a "site of protected cultural relic" in the Tibet Autonomous Region.[71] The cultural richness of Tsakalho, with its ancient and spectacular traditional salt flats on the Mekong, and with its Catholic population that grows grapes to produce wine, and regularly attends the only Catholic church within the limits of the Autonomous Region of Tibet, fits perfectly in the "Greater Shangrila"[72] tourist circuit pro-

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68 Bauer 2014, p. 163, 167; Harris 2008, pp. 209, 213; Harris 2013, p. 63-64, 67; Murton 2016, p. 105; Saxer 2013, p. 48; Saxer 2017, p. 78; Schrempf 2018, pp. 336, 350; Wangdi 2004; Wong How Man 2020, p. 19.

69 Several border crossings on the frontier with Nepal were joined by others in the Indo-Tibetan border such as Shipki la, Nathu la, etc. Even in many places where border crossings are still closed, Chinese goods find their way to the south through smuggling.

70 Bauer 2014, p. 165-170; Childs and Choedup 2014; Winkler 2017.

71 Asian Alpine E-News 69 2020, p 20.

72 At the beginning of the 21st century the nearby Gyalthang (Chinese: Zhongdian) area was officially renamed "Shangrila County", with the clear intention of turning the region into a powerful tourist destination. This first step was followed by others: the "Three Parallel Rivers and Meili Snow Mountain Area" (alluding to the Salween, Mekong and Yangtze canyons and the sacred Kawa Karpo) was declared a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site; the nearby town of Chatreng (Chinese: Xiangcheng) was also renamed "Shambhala", and new icons, such as the "exoticism" of the Tibetan Catholic villages (with their beautiful churches and vineyards inherited from the French and Swiss missionaries), have been incorporated to sell a broad "Greater Shangrila" tourist circuit including the entire border area between the Tibet Autonomous Region, Yunnan and Sichuan. Galipeau 2018, pp. 354, 364.

ject[73] that includes the entire border area between the Tibet Autonomous Region, Yunnan and Sichuan. The village was also an obligatory crossing point in the "Ancient Tea Horse Road" that is now claimed in the Chinese imaginary as a national cultural heritage.[74] Both circuits are presented by the tourism sector to the new affluent class of Han urbanites as endowed with great attractiveness and exoticism that allow them to know and apprehend the diversity of their country.

In general terms we could conclude that, in the pre-modern period, the trade and distribution of salt extracted in the traditional way and transported by caravans that crossed large tracts of territory exercised a cohesive function in the Tibetan world, especially in the more peripheral areas of the Himalayas that in many cases were not subject to the political control of Lhasa. This continuous flow of relationships fueled (with a few exceptions) their sense of belonging to the same cultural world in which Tibetan Buddhism and the holy city of Lhasa were fundamental poles of reference. The permanent connection with other peoples from different areas of that great Tibetosphere maintained the social, cultural, linguistic and religious ties with them, thus revitalizing the cultural life of Tibetan civilization, which flowed vigorously through the trade routes and nodes. The strength of such links also weakened the importance of the official ascription of some areas to other political entities, whose centers of power were often perceived as very distant, and whose effective power was felt very vaguely at best.

However, if the old caravan trade reinforced the links of the Himalayan peoples with traditional Tibetan society, today on the contrary, the new forms of exchange act as a channel that transmits to the developing populations of the Himalayas the economic power of China and the attraction of its modernity, and which includes them in the new Asian economic sphere dominated by China. Even the current activity in the salt pans is nowadays framed in tourist projects that seem to symbolically reinforce Chinese national pride rather than energize inter-Tibetan and trans-Himalayan relations as the well-salt trade did in pre-modern times.

After the decline of the second half of the 20th century, the trans-Himalayan residual commercial activity that survives today and the current "shangrilazation" of the Tsakalho salt pans act symbolically in a very different sense than in the past: reinforcing the image of China

[73] The Chinese writer Fan Wen warns of the danger of the salt-pans becoming just a stage where locals play a role for tourists, and advocates that they become "part of history gloriously retired from service" Ying 2014, p. 38.

[74] Sigley 2012; Sigley 2021a, pp. 3, 5, 13-14; Sigley 2021b, pp. 163-168.

as a referent of development and modernity, and contributing to the vindication of its national unity through its cultural heritage respectively.

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The Place of Dan 'bag pa sMra ba'i seng ge in the Tibetan Epistemological Tradition

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The corpus of texts collected together and published as part of the *Collected Works of the Kadampas* (*bKa' gdams gsung 'bum*) beginning in 2006 has provided Buddhologists with a wealth of information and has made it possible to piece together an increasingly clearer picture of how Tibetan philosophy developed from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries. Even before the publication of the texts in the *Collected Works of the Kadampas*, scholars were keenly aware of the critical importance of figures like rNgog Lo tsā ba Blo ldan shes rab (1059-1109) and Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109-1169). Access to multiple texts composed by these two Tibetan thinkers has allowed scholars to form a more complete picture of those two philosophers' roles in shaping Tibetan intellectual history.

The texts written by rNgog Lo tsā ba and Phya pa cannot tell the whole story, however. Also crucially important are the works composed by, and views held by, the direct and indirect teachers and disciples of these two figures. With respect to Phya pa's impact on the field of epistemology, for example, it would be incredibly helpful to have access to more of his teachers' and students' works. Of Phya pa's eight principal disciples—referred to as his "Eight Mighty Lions" (*seng (ge) chen brgyad*)—we currently possess just a single epistemology treatise: a commentary on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* composed by gTsang nag pa brTson 'grus seng ge. Yet, multiple sources attest to the fact that at least one of Phya pa's other students, Dan 'bag pa sMra ba'i seng ge, composed an "epistemology summary" text, i.e., a *Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*.

Though no copies of this epistemology summary have yet come to light, a considerable number of the epistemological views held by Dan 'bag pa—views almost certainly espoused in his now lost epistemology summary—can be found referenced in two other epistemology treatises that have been recovered in the past thirty years, namely:[1]

[1] For full references for these two works, see *gSal byed* and *sNying po* in the Bibliography. In addition to the references to Dan 'bag pa in these two texts, there are also eleven references to him in Śākya mchog ldan's *Pham byed*, a text which dates to the second half of the fifteenth century. (Ten of those eleven references are

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i. *The Clarifying Lamp of Pure Reasoning* (*Yang dag rigs pa'i gsal byed sgron ma*; henceforth, *Clarifying Lamp*) authored by gTsang pa drug po rDo rje 'od zer (henceforth, gTsang drug pa), and
ii. *The Ornamental Essence of Logical Reasoning* (*rTog ge rigs pa'i brgyan gyi snying po*; henceforth, *Ornamental Essence*) written by Dharmaratna, a.k.a. Dharma dkon mchog.

These two texts contain a total of fifty-one interlinear citations referencing the views of Dan 'bag pa, thus making it possible to cobble together a clearer picture of the range of epistemological contributions that were made by this important student of Phya pa.

A full accounting of those epistemological contributions cannot be carried out in this brief article. Instead, the principal task of this article is to lay bare the connection between Dan 'bag pa and the authors of the two extant epistemology summaries that reference his views—Dharmaratna and gTsang drug pa. I shall investigate why Dan 'bag pa's views are featured so prominently in the treatises of Dharmaratna and gTsang drug pa and what that might tell us about the development of Buddhist epistemology in twelfth and thirteenth century Tibet.

I shall begin by summarizing what is currently known about the life of Dan 'bag pa. After doing so, I will proceed to lay out in some detail where Dan 'bag pa's epistemology summary text fits within the broader tradition of epistemological theorizing that took hold in central Tibet in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Once I have sketched a rough timeline of early Tibetan epistemology summary texts, we will then be in the position to examine more carefully the texts by Dharmaratna and gTsang drug pa and to determine with more precision where those two works fit within the Tibetan epistemological tradition. I will then proceed to examine the authorship of those two texts and to clarify the connections that the two authors bear to both Dan 'bag pa himself and the broader tradition of epistemological theorizing connected with gSang phu Monastery in central Tibet.

1. A Short Summary of Dan 'bag pa's Place in Tibetan Intellectual History

Relatively few details are known about the life of Dan 'bag pa sMra ba'i seng ge. Much of what is currently known about him stems from

identified in van der Kuijp (1983), p. 96.) Those references within Śākya mchog ldan's work will not be addressed here, as the focus of this article is on references dating to the much earlier period of the late-twelfth to early-thirteenth century.

his connections to two other important Tibetan scholars in the twelfth to thirteenth century: his teacher Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge and his student gNyal zhig 'Jam pa'i rdo rje. We know that Dan 'bag pa was one of the most important students of Phya pa—one of his 'Eight Mighty Lions'—where he is frequently listed second in that group of eight students, immediately after gTsang nag pa brTson 'grus seng ge. What precise topics and what texts he studied directly under Phya pa is not entirely clear from existing historical records. There is, in fact, some reason to believe that, aside from studying under Phya pa, Dan 'bag pa additionally received various teachings from (Phya pa's student) gTsang nag pa. Multiple text lineages suggest that the transmission line went from Phya pa to gTsang nag pa to Dan 'bag pa.[2] Later in life, Dan 'bag pa went on to become one of the two primary teachers of gNyal zhig 'Jam pa'i rdo rje, a figure who played a key role in promoting scholarly learning in early thirteenth century Tibet.[3]

Both Phya pa and gNyal zhig were abbots of gSang phu ne'u thog Monastery in central Tibet—Phya pa from approximately 1151 until his death in 1169, and gNyal zhig from, it is believed, 1199 to 1207.[4] This makes it safe to infer that Dan 'bag pa flourished sometime from the middle to late twelfth century. Given his status as a student of Phya pa and teacher of gNyal zhig, Dan 'bag pa falls squarely within a web of Tibetan scholasticism that goes all the way back to rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab (11th cent.), the founder (and first abbot) of gSang phu Monastery and the uncle of that monastery's second abbot, rNgog Lo tsā ba.

Just as we find with other Tibetan scholars from that time period, Dan 'bag pa's name is likely an indicator of his birthplace and suggests that he hailed from the area of central Tibet called Dan bag/'bag—i.e., the grasslands located just south of present-day 'Bres spungs Monastery. If this is right, this would put his birthplace only about 25 kilometers from the site of gSang phu Monastery. Though Dan 'bag pa was

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2 To give but two examples, see *mTshan don* 5a5, which traces a lineage of epistemology teachings, and *gSung 'bum*, vol. 4, p. 103, which traces a lineage for the *Gang blo ma*. Both these lineages have the sequence: rGya dmar ba, Cha pa (i.e., Phya pa), gTsang nag pa, and then Dan 'bag pa.

3 Aside from Dan 'bag pa, gNyal zhig's other main teacher was Zhang ye ba sMon lam tshul khrims, who, incidentally, was purported to have authored a commentary on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (see *Tho yig* 23a3).

4 The dates of Phya pa's abbotship are fairly well established, given that his precise death is recorded. There is less certainty regarding the timeline of gNyal zhig's time as abbot of (the Upper College of) gSang phu Monastery. This uncertainty is, in part, due to conflicting information about how long gNyal zhig was abbot (somewhere between eight and twenty-eight years), but also due to a lack of certainty about the dates of some of the earlier abbots of the Upper College of gSang phu. For more on this, see van der Kuijp (1987).

given the name "*smra ba'i seng ge*" in connection with his status as a student of Phya pa, multiple documents attribute various other names to him. He is in some texts referred to as "*dar ma bkra shis*" and in others as "*dar ma seng ge*."[5] There is some reason to believe that Dan 'bag pa sMra ba'i seng ge is in fact the same person as the Dar ma bkra shis who composed a Two Truths text called the *bDen pa gnyis rnam par 'byed kyi bshad pa*, which, as scholarship by Ritsu Akahane has revealed, bears close resemblance to the Two Truths texts composed by Phya pa (viz., the *dBu ma bDen gnyis kyi 'grel ba*) and by (Phya pa's teacher) rGya dmar ba (viz., the *bDen gnyis rnam bshad*).[6]

Dan 'bag pa's (indirect) influence appears to have extended beyond gSang phu Monastery, thanks in large part to his having been a teacher of gNyal zhig. Within the *Blue Annals* and other history chronicles, gNyal zhig is credited with encouraging his own students to found philosophical study centers outside of central Tibet, including within sNar thang, Zhwa lu, and Sa skya Monasteries in gTsang.[7] In this way, these satellite study centers could very well have provided a mechanism for the views—and, perhaps also, texts—of scholars like rNgog Lo tsā ba, Phya pa, and even Dan 'bag pa, to become accessible within these more Western regions of Tibet and within monasteries having sectarian affiliations different from gSang phu.

As mentioned earlier, Dan 'bag pa is credited in the *Blue Annals* with composing, among other works, an epistemology text called the *Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*. It is unlikely that this is the precise or full name of his text. Rather, it is more likely a general term for any "epistemology summary" of the sort that became fairly common among gSang phu

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5 For example, the colophon of Bu ston's epistemology text *Tshad ma rnam par nges pa'i mtshan don* (see *mTshan don* 5a5) contains a lineage of *pramāṇa* scholars, wherein Dan 'bag pa is identified as "*dar ma bkra shis*." Within the Collected Works of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, one text lineage contains the name "*dan phag pa dar ma seng ge*" (see *Ngor gsung*, p. 428). This is clearly a reference to Dan 'bag pa, as the name appears immediately after the names rGya dmar pa, Phya pa, and gTsang nag pa (and immediately before gNyal zhig). Likewise, the name "*dan 'bag pa dar seng*" appears within the same sequence of scholars in the transmission lineage for the *Gang blo ma*, as presented in the Collected Works of Taranatha (*Jo gsung*, vol. 31, p. 281). The Collected Works of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang bLo bzang rgya mtsho, contains various lists of transmission lineages involving these same gSang phu scholars, including (a) one lineage with a reference to "*dan 'bag pa dar ma seng ge*" and (b) another lineage referencing "*dan 'bag pa dar ma bkra shis*" (see *gSung 'bum*, vol. 4, p. 103 and p. 137, respectively).

6 These three texts are the *rGya bden*, the *dBu bden*, and the *bDen bshad*. For more on these texts, see Akahane (2013).

7 See, for example, *Deb sngon*, pp. 407-8.

scholars in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[8] The most famous epistemology summary in Tibet is the one composed by Phya pa—his, *Epistemology: The Dispeller of the Mind's Darkness* (*Tshad ma yid kyi mun sel*; henceforth *Dispeller*). But the tradition of writing epistemology summaries likely did not begin with Phya pa, for there is some evidence that Phya pa's teacher rGya dmar ba also wrote a *Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*.[9] Neither this epistemology summary composed by rGya dmar ba nor the one written by Dan 'bag pa are known to be extant. It is highly probable that the references to the positions held by Dan 'bag pa within Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence* and gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp* are derived from the epistemology summary that was produced by Dan 'bag pa. Before examining the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp*, however, let us first take a step back and examine the historical context for the composition of epistemology summaries in Tibet so that readers can see more clearly where Dan 'bag pa fell within this tradition of writing.

2. Epistemology Summaries from Phya pa to Sa skya Paṇḍita

Scholars now have access to more than a handful of texts falling under the genre of "epistemology summaries" (*tshad ma'i bsdus pa*) that were likely written sometime between the middle of the twelfth and the first quarter of the thirteenth centuries—i.e., within the first (roughly) 75 years following the composition of Phya pa's *Dispeller*. The earliest, presently available, epistemology summary that post-dates Phya pa's *Dispeller* is probably the *Summary of the Essential Nature of Epistemology* (*Tshad ma'i de kho na nyid bsdus pa*; henceforth *Essential Nature*).[10] That text's colophon attributes authorship to Klong chen Rab 'byams (1308-1363), but as has been carefully documented by Leonard van der Kuijp, the *Essential Nature* assuredly dates to a period much earlier than the fourteenth century.[11] Enough evidence has been compiled to support the conclusion that the *Essential Nature* was actually written by a person named 'Jad pa gZhon nu byang chub (*c.* 1150-1210)—a scholar whose primary teacher, Byang chub skyabs, was himself a direct

[8] There is no straightforward English correlate for the Tibetan term "*bsdus pa*"; at least none that adequately captures its application to epistemology texts of the sort that developed in Tibet starting in the eleventh or twelfth century. The most common rendering of the term "*bsdus pa*" is probably "summary." In reality, however, the epistemology texts falling in this genre are rarely summaries at all. For more on how to render the term "*bsdus pa*" in English, see Hugon & Stoltz (2019), ch. I.2, pp. 48-50.

[9] See *Tho yig* 23b4 as well as van der Kuijp (1983), pp. 60-1.

[10] See *Tshad bsdus*, as well as Stoltz (2020).

[11] See van der Kuijp (2003).

student of Phya pa.[12]

There is, within the *Essential Nature*, a large amount of evidence to support the conclusion that the text was written sometime around the last thirty years of the twelfth century. This evidence includes: (1) facts about the organizational structure of the text, which bears extremely close resemblance to Phya pa's *Dispeller*; (2) various peculiarities of technical nomenclature; and (3) information about the identities of the scholars who are referenced in the text.[13] In particular, while the *Essential Nature* references Phya pa's views and the views of earlier Tibetan philosophers, it contains (aside from repeated references to the views of the author's teacher Byang chub skyabs) no other references to Tibetans from generations subsequent to Phya pa. For example, it contains no references to the views of Phya pa's prized students gTsang nag pa and Dan 'bag pa.

Two other known epistemology summaries likely date to a period roughly contemporaneous to that of the *Essential Nature*. One of these is the summary composed by Dan 'bag pa and the other is a text called *The Wisdom Lamp of Epistemology* (*Tshad ma Shes rab sgron ma*; henceforth, *Wisdom Lamp*), which was composed by mTshur ston gZhon nu seng ge. As mentioned above, Dan 'bag pa studied directly under Phya pa, but he also seems to have received teachings on epistemology from gTsang nag pa. mTshur ston was likewise a student of gTsang nag pa, and he went on to become one of the teachers of Sa skya Paṇḍita (henceforth, Sa-paṇ; 1182-1251) in the early years of the thirteenth century (*c*. 1201-1204). It is believed that mTshur ston's epistemology summary was among the texts that Sa-paṇ studied, thus implying that the *Wisdom Lamp* dates to no later than the end of the twelfth century.

Neither the *Essential Nature* nor the *Wisdom Lamp* make any explicit references to the views of Dan 'bag pa. Nor does gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature* make any reference to the epistemological views of mTshur ston (or vice versa). This makes it difficult to determine with any precision the order in which these texts were composed. There are a few pieces of evidence that, when put together, could indicate that Dan 'bag pa and gZhon nu byang chub would have been roughly contemporaneous thinkers, though Dan 'bag pa was probably somewhat senior to gZhon nu byang chub. Consider first that Phya pa was a direct teacher of (among others) both Dan 'bag pa and Byang chub skyabs; and, as mentioned above, Byang chub skyabs was the main teacher of gZhon nu byang chub. This may lead one to suspect that gZhon nu byang chub was about one generation later than

[12] See Stoltz (2020). The approximate dates for gZhon nu byang chub's life come from van der Kuijp (2014), p. 123.

[13] See Stoltz (2020), section 1, for a more detailed discussion of these various pieces of information.

Dan 'bag pa. On the other hand, we must note that within Śākya mchog ldan's short history on the spread of rNgog Lo tsā ba's teachings, it is reported that gZhon nu byang chub was a teacher of Zhang ye ba sMon lam tshul khrims; and Zhang ye ba, along with Dan 'bag pa, was one of the two principal teachers of gNyal zhig.[14] If Śākya mchog ldan's account is right, that could suggest that gZhon nu byang chub may have been somewhat senior to Dan 'bag pa. For our purposes, however, it will suffice to remark that (i) gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature*, (ii) Dan 'bag pa's epistemology summary, and (iii) mTshur ston's *Wisdom Lamp* all were composed after Phya pa's *Dispeller* but before the beginning of the thirteenth century.

Each of the above-mentioned works clearly predate two additional epistemology texts that could be categorized as epistemological summaries. The first of these is the *Treasury of Epistemology* (*Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter (gyi rang 'grel)*; henceforth *Treasury*), which was finished by Sapaṇ in or around the year 1219.[15] A second epistemology summary that dates to the first half of the thirteenth century is *The Conqueror of all other Viewpoints* (*gZhan gyi phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba*; henceforth, *Conqueror*), which was composed by Chu mig pa Seng ge dpal (*c.* 1200-1270). Chu mig pa was the abbot of (the Upper College of) gSang phu Monastery for eighteen years, sometime during the middle of the thirteenth century. He is reported to have been a student of (among others) sKyel nag Grags pa seng ge, who was himself one of the nine principal students of gNyal zhig. Moreover, Chu mig pa's time as abbot of gSang phu came immediately after the abbotship of rGya 'ching ru ba, who was also one of the nine principal students of gNyal zhig. This thus places Chu mig pa three generations after Dan 'bag pa.

I will now proceed to argue that the two texts containing references to Dan 'bag pa's views—Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence* and gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp*—both date to a period *after* the *Essential Nature*, *Wisdom Lamp* and Dan 'bag pa's epistemology summary but *before* Sa-paṇ's *Treasury*. In other words, it will be argued that these two texts were authored sometime roughly between the end of the twelfth century and the second decade of the thirteenth century.

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[14] See *Rol mo*, p. 509. Note that Śākya mchog ldan refers to Zhang ye ba via his title "*byang chub 'bum*." It should also be pointed out that it is quite possible Śākya mchog ldan has, in this text, simply confused gZhon nu byang chub with a different person, gZhon nu tshul khrims (a.k.a. dKar chung ring mo, a.k.a. "*shes rab 'bum*") for whom there is much clearer evidence that he was a teacher of Zhang ye ba.

[15] For more on the dating of the *Rigs gter*, see van der Kuijp (1983), p. 101, and van der Kuijp (2014), p. 114.

3. Dating the *Clarifying Lamp* and *Ornamental Essence*

3.a. Evidence 1: Citations

The first form of evidence relevant to dating the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* relates to the interlinear notes that are provided in the existing manuscripts of the two texts. These interlinear notes mention the persons associated with various philosophical positions—figures who, within the body of the text, are only marked as "someone" (*kha cig*). Starting first with the *Clarifying Lamp*, the three most-cited figures are gTsang nag pa (19 times), Dan 'bag pa (16 times) and Phya pa (16 times). Also referenced prominently are rNgog Lo tsā ba (13 times) and Dharmottara (6 times). Each of the four most-cited figures are scholars affiliated with the tradition of scholasticism coming from gSang phu Monastery and there are no explicit citations to any figures from generations after the time of gTsang nag pa and Dan 'bag pa. Given this information, it lends initial credence to the hypothesis that the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* was someone whose epistemological training was tied (either directly or indirectly) to the gSang phu tradition and that the author thrived somewhat soon after the time of Phya pa's direct students.

Turning to the existing manuscript of the *Ornamental Essence*, the pattern of citations is quite similar to what is observed in the *Clarifying Lamp*—with the main difference being that there are about twice as many explicit references to earlier Tibetan scholars within the interlinear notes. The two most frequently cited figures are Phya pa (36 times) and Dan 'bag pa (36 times). In fact, several of the references to Dan 'bag pa are considerably long (roughly the length of a long English-language paragraph) and reflect a deep acquaintance with the nuances of Dan 'bag pa's arguments. The third most frequently referenced scholar is gTsang nag pa, who is mentioned 21 times. In addition, the *Ornamental Essence* contains five references to a figure called "*myal pa*," which may be a gloss for gNyal zhig 'Jam pa'i rdo rje. Yet, aside from these possible references to gNyal zhig, there are no other explicit references to figures from any generation after that of gTsang nag pa and Dan 'bag pa. This again suggests that the composition of the *Ornamental Essence* dates to a period one or two generations after the time of Dan 'bag pa's epistemology summary.

3.b. Evidence 2: Technical Nomenclature

A second form of evidence internal to the texts that can prove helpful to dating the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* is the precise terminology that is used within the texts. Given the terminological nomenclature found in the two texts, there is good reason to believe that

the texts date to a time period later than that of the *Essential Nature* and the *Wisdom Lamp*. There are various pieces of evidence to support this assertion, but here I shall just point to two observations concerning the technical vocabulary deployed in these texts.[16] First, the term that is used to capture the form of cognition that apprehends an object that is already known—which we could term in English a "post-knowledge cognition"—is systematically rendered as "*bcad pa'i yul can*" within Phya pa's Dispeller and gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature* (not to mention earlier texts like rNgog Lo tsā ba's *dKa' gnas*).[17] Yet, both the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* use the term "*bcad shes*" for the same form of cognition. In mTshur ston's *Wisdom Lamp* we find both of these terms used essentially interchangeably. In later texts from the time of Sa-paṇ's *Treasury* onward, it is this latter term, "*bcad shes*," that becomes standard within Tibetan epistemology treatises. Thus, the fact that we uniformly find the term "*bcad shes*" in both the *Clarifying Lamp* and *Ornamental Essence* strongly argues for the conclusion that these texts date to a period later than gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature*—and likely also later than mTshur ston's *Wisdom Lamp*.

As a second example, the standard term used by Phya pa, mTshur ston, and gZhon nu byang chub to mark an object of non-conceptual erroneous cognition is "*rtog med 'khrul pa'i dmigs pa*." This term is quite long-winded and is abandoned in later epistemology texts. Sa-paṇ's *Treasury*, for example, systematically uses the term "*med pa gsal ba*" to denote these objects of non-conceptual erroneous cognition. Within Chu mig pa's *Conqueror* we find yet a different term. He uses the expression "*dngos med gsal snang*" to denote these objects. Importantly, neither the *Ornamental Essence* nor *Clarifying Lamp* uses the expression "*rtog med 'khrul pa'i dmigs pa*." Instead, within Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence*, we find the systematic use of the expression "*med pa gsal ba*," and within gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp* we find the term "*dngos med gsal snang*." Once again, this supports the conjecture that the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* both date to a period after the composition of the *Essential Nature* and *Wisdom Lamp* (and after Dan 'bag pa's epistemology summary as well).

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[16] Various additional pieces of linguistic evidence, beyond the two given in the main body of this article, could be put forward to show that the *Clarifying Lamp* and *Ornamental Essence* date to a period after gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature* and mTshur ston's *Wisdom Lamp*. For example, the *Clarifying Lamp* and *Ornamental Essence* regularly make use of the term "*rang mtshan*" in their texts, and also make use of the distinction between "*don rang mtshan*" and "*sgra rang mtshan*." The term "*rang mtshan*" is, in fact, incredibly common in epistemological treatises from the thirteenth century onward. Yet, the term "*rang mtshan*" is entirely absent from Phya pa's writings, nor it is found in the *Essential Nature*.

[17] For more on the translation of "*bcad pa'i yul can*," please see Hugon & Stoltz (2019), ch. IV,2,(c).

3.c. Evidence 3: Presentational Similarities

In addition to these terminological peculiarities, there are yet more reasons for thinking that Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence* and gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp* date from roughly the same time period and that their authors share similar philosophical pedigrees. The two texts display, for example, topical structures that are more similar to each other than they are to other (earlier and later) extant epistemology summaries. Likewise, there are several places within the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* where the specific arguments presented are nearly identical, but where those arguments are crucially different from what is attested in earlier extant epistemology summaries. The presence of these similarities lends credence to the conclusion that the authors of the two texts shared similar philosophical influences and were composing their works at roughly the same point in time.

Here is one key example of a structural similarity between the two texts. Both the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* contain prolonged discussions of various sub-divisions of conceptual cognition (*rtog pa*) within their respective presentations of the three-fold typology of cognitions (*gzung yul gsum*). In particular, both texts describe multiple different ways in which conceptual cognition can be divided (*dbye ba*), including: sub-dividing conceptual cognition by way of its essence (*ngo bo*), by way of its operations (*byed ba*), and by way of its being or not being erroneous (*'khrul ba*/*ma 'khrul ba*). Moreover, both these texts contain additional detail concerning even more-finely-grained sub-divisions pertaining to those conceptual cognitions that are erroneous because they "conflate items that are distinct" (*tha dad gcig tu bsre*).[18]

Importantly, no such delineation of sub-divisions of conceptual cognition is found within earlier extant epistemology summaries. There is no comparable accounting within the *Dispeller* (by Phya pa), the *Essential Nature* (by gZhon nu byang chub), or the *Wisdom Lamp* (by mTshur ston). On the other hand, there is a discussion of these sub-divisions of conceptual cognition in Chu mig pa's *Conqueror*, though the presentation by Chu mig pa is far less detailed than what is found in the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp*. (This lack of detail regarding these sub-divisions of conceptual cognition in Chu mig pa's epistemology summary fits a pattern where newly introduced topics are initially discussed at length, only to gradually wane in detail within later generations of texts.) This thereby supports the conjecture that the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* were composed in

[18] The relevant discussions of these sub-divisions are found in *sNying po* 5a5-5b2 and *gSal byed* 7a4-9.

roughly the same time period—a time period later than the *Dispeller*, *Essential Nature*, and *Wisdom Lamp*, but earlier than the composition of Chu mig pa's *Conqueror*—and that these texts were composed by figures who shared similar epistemological influences. Once again, this example is but one of several that could have been provided.

A second form of similarity between the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* that points toward those texts having been composed at roughly the same point in time and under similar philosophical influences involves not structural similarities but argumentative similarities. There are places in the two texts where the arguments provided are (i) incredibly similar to each other but (ii) substantially different from what is attested in earlier extant epistemological works. Once again, I shall provide just a single example of this sort of phenomenon.

After defining the form of cognition known as *doubt* (*the tshom*) within his *Dispeller*, Phya pa addresses the question of whether doubting cognitions have the operation of *excluding what is other* (*gshan sel*). Within the *Essential Nature*, the position that doubt *lacks* the operation of excluding others is attributed to Phya pa's teacher rGya dmar ba. Phya pa disagrees, however, and affirms in his *Dispeller* that episodes of doubt *do* have the operation of excluding others. In particular, he argues that the doubting cognition "Is sound permanent or impermanent?" excludes *the impossibility* of sound being permanent. More generally, the idea is that episodes of doubt have the operation of excluding others insofar as they exclude certain impossibilities. Within gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature* we find an even more detailed discussion of the same issue, with the same line of reasoning provided on behalf of Phya pa.

This issue of whether episodes of doubt contain the operation of excluding others is taken up in both the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp*, with the issue addressed in somewhat more detail within the former text. What both texts share in common, however, is an identical line of argumentation against a position that is attributed to Dan 'bag pa. Both texts begin their discussion of the issue by announcing that some thinkers have held that episodes of doubt do not possess the operation of excluding others; and in both texts there is an interlinear note indicating that it is Dan 'bag pa who held this view. Both the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* then go on to argue in favor of the opposite thesis—that episodes of doubt do have the operation of excluding what is other—and they utilize nearly identical arguments to reach that conclusion. Notably, however, the reasoning deployed in both these texts is quite different from what is attested in Phya pa's *Dispeller*. Phya pa's claim, as noted above, was that episodes of doubt have the operation of exclusion by virtue of the fact that they exclude certain impossibilities. The *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp*, by

contrast, each argue that episodes of doubt must have the operation of exclusion simply because a single cognizer could not have two conceptual cognitions at the same time. For example, when a person has the doubting cognition "Is sound impermanent?" she could not simultaneously form the determinate cognition "Sound is permanent," for no person can simultaneously have two conceptual cognitions. But this then shows that the doubting cognition "Is sound impermanent?" *excludes* the determinate cognition "Sound is permanent."

The point here is not that the authors of the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* both support the conclusion that episodes of doubt have the activity of excluding what is other. Rather, the crucial point is that the lines of reasoning that the two authors provide for their positions are essentially identical and yet fundamentally different from the reasoning for that position that is attested in both Phya pa's *Dispeller* and gZhon nu byang chub's *Essential Nature*. And, once again, this suggests that the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* shared similar philosophical influences. It may be that both texts were influenced by a common source/teacher from which this line of reasoning originated, or it could be the case that one of the authors was influenced by the other.

3.d. Evidence 4: Presentational Differences

While there is a preponderance of evidence that the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp* date to a period after the *Dispeller*, *Essential Nature*, and *Wisdom Lamp* but before Sa-paṇ's *Treasury*, I now want to examine possible evidence that might help us determine the order in which these two texts were composed. It needs to be acknowledged at the outset that the evidence on this issue is comparatively thin. While there is strong evidence that the *Clarifying Lamp* and *Ornamental Essence* were written in roughly the same time period, I can (at this time) only make tentative pronouncements about the temporal relationship between these two texts.

There is no evidence that either of these texts explicitly references the other. But there may be other, admittedly more tenuous, ways by which one might sequence the two texts. One can look for particular views (e.g., claims, arguments, or definitions) that are (i) without precedent in earlier extant epistemology texts, but which are (ii) defended in one of the two texts and (iii) argued against within the other text. In other words, one author's knowledge of a novel definition or argument contained within the other text could suggest that the one author's text postdated the other's. Here is one example of this phenomenon.

When we turn to these two texts' definitions and discussions of the

three kinds of apprehended objects (*gsung yul gsum*)—i.e., (1) *don rang gi mtshan nyid*, (2) *don spyi*, and (3) *dngos med gsal snang*—we find something interesting with respect to the definitions that are entertained in the two texts. First, the definitions of each of these three terms in gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp* are the same as those found in Chu mig pa's *Conqueror* (except for differences in the presentational order of the definitional criteria). In both the *Clarifying Lamp* and the *Conqueror* these different types of apprehended objects are distinguished by two factors:

(a) whether they appear distinctly or not (*thun mong par snang ba* or *thun mong ma yin pa'i rnam par snang ba*) and
(b) whether they are causally efficient (*don byed nus pa* or *mi nus pa*).

Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence*, by contrast, appeals to a subtly different set of criteria. Specifically, Dharmaratna's text makes an appeal to the above factor (a) as well as a new factor:

(c) whether they involve an erroneous or non-erroneous apprehension (*'dzin pa 'khrul pa* or *ma 'khrul pa*).

This last criterion is not found in any of the earlier epistemology summaries composed by Phya pa, mTshur ston, or gZhon nu byang chub. It is also clear that the appeal to erroneous/non-erroneous apprehensions (in these definitions) does not come from Dan 'bag pa, for his definitions are quoted in Dharmaratna's text and are merely slight modifications of Phya pa's definitions for the three types of apprehended objects.

Yet, within gTsang drug pa's discussion of the definitions of the three types of apprehended objects, he presents (and briefly argues against) another scholar's views—someone who is labeled as "*bla ma kha cig*" and as "*blo gros chen po kha cig*"—where this opponent does in fact make use of criterion (c)—viz., the contrast between "*'dzin pa 'khrul ba*" and "*'dzin pa ma 'khrul ba*"—in his definitions. In short, it appears that gTsang drug pa argues against definitions essentially identical to those that are put forward by Dharmaratna in the *Ornamental Essence* but which appear in no earlier (extant) epistemology summaries. This certainly does not guarantee, or even render probable, the conclusion that the "lama" referred to by gTsang drug pa was Dharmaratna. It is just as likely the case that gTsang drug pa is referring to some other, earlier teacher—one who may have had an influence on Dharmaratna (such as, perhaps, gNyal zhig). What is of utmost importance about all this, however, is that Dharmaratna appears to be ignorant of the line of criticism that gTsang drug pa employs against his definitions. As

such, this could indicate that Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence* was composed somewhat earlier than gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp*.

4. The Authorship of the Clarifying Lamp and Ornamental Essence

Let us now turn to examining what is known about the identities of the two men who authored the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp*. This will serve to further support the hypothesis that the texts were likely composed, approximately, in the first twenty years of the thirteenth century, and that they were composed by persons who would have been quite familiar with the views of Dan 'bag pa.

4.a. The Authorship of the Ornamental Essence

According to the *Ornamental Essence*'s colophon, the text was composed by one "*shag kya'i dge' slong rda rma rad na*"—in other words, the monk Dharmaratna. About thirty years ago, shortly after the manuscript surfaced, Leonard van der Kuijp proposed that the name Dharmaratna likely refers to one of the nine principal students of gNyal zhig, a student who, in the *Blue Annals*, is referred to as "*phu thang dar dkon*."[19] The expression "*dar dkon*" is very likely an abbreviation of the longer name "*dar ma dkon mchog*." Given that "*dar ma dkon mchog*" is a plausible Tibetan rendering of the name Dharmaratna, and given that the *Ornamental Essence* contains apparent references to gNyal zhig—as well as a multitude of references to gNyal zhig's teacher Dan 'bag pa—it was plausible to think that the author of this text, Dharmaratna, is in fact the student of gNyal zhig named "*phu thang dar dkon*."

This conjecture is bolstered by the fact that there is an extant *Pramāṇaviniścaya* commentary written by Dar ma bkon mchog. This text, called *The Commentary on the Ascertainment of Knowledge: The Ornamental Essence of Reasoning* (*Tshad ma rnam par nges pa'i Tikka rigs pa'i rgyan gyi snying po*; henceforth *Ascertainment Ornament*), is attributed in its colophon to "*shag kya'i dge' sbyong dar ma dkon mchog*." In fact, attached to this attribution is an interlinear note saying "*dhar ma rad nas*"—i.e., "by Dharmaratna." Moreover, it is undeniably the case that the *Ornamental Essence* and *Ascertainment Ornament* are composed by the same person. Those two works share many parallel passages in common; in some cases whole pages of the two texts are identical.[20] This gives us solid grounds to conclude that the name Dharmaratna in

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[19] *Deb sngon*, p. 407 and van der Kuijp (1993), p. 294.

[20] See, for example, *sNying po* 5a1-5b2 and *rGyan snying po* 17a6-17b9, where the two texts are (for large stretches) identical.

the *Ornamental Essence* does indeed refer to Dar ma bkon mchog and strongly suggests that this person is indeed the student of gNyal zhig who, in the *Blue Annals*, is referred to as "*phu thang dar dkon*."

4.b. The Authorship of the Clarifying Lamp

Determining the authorship of the *Clarifying Lamp* is a more challenging task. According to the text's colophon, the *Clarifying Lamp* is authored by one "*gtsang pa drug po*," who is also called "*rdo rje 'od zer*." The title page of the text names the author as "*gtsang drug pa rdo rje 'od zer*." With respect to the author's identity, little can be said with absolute certainty about this person named gTsang drug pa rDo rje 'od zer. It is more helpful, in my opinion, to approach the question of authorship in terms of how much credence can be attached to various hypotheses about the identity of the author. Here, then, are three hypotheses about who this author may be:

Hypothesis A: The author is a student of the fifth abbot of sNar thang Monastery
Hypothesis B: The author is a direct student of Phya pa (a student named "*rdo rje 'od zer*")
Hypothesis C: The author is a student of gNyal zhig (a student named "*gtsang pa gru gu*" or "*gtsang drug*")

I shall briefly walk through these hypotheses and speak to the merits of each possibility.

The first hypothesis, *Hypothesis A*, is put forward by the editors of the *Collected Works of the Kadampas*. Recognizing that the authorship of the *Clarifying Lamp* is far from certain, they ponder whether the author of the text may be a student of the fifth abbot of sNar thang Monastery, Zhang ston Chos kyi bla ma. Unfortunately, this particular suggestion has little merit. First of all, the fifth abbot of sNar thang was not born until 1184 and is believed to have served as abbot from 1232 to 1241. If the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* was this abbot's student, that would put the composition of the text well into the middle portion of the thirteenth century, which is highly unlikely to be the case given a variety of pieces of information, including the list of authors referenced in the text. Moreover, this link to the fifth abbot of sNar thang appears to be grounded in the erroneous belief that the colophon of the *Clarifying Lamp* contains a reference to a teacher named "*zhang chos*"—whom the editors of the *Collected Works of the Kadampas* take to be *Zhang* ston *Chos* kyi bla ma. This is simply a misreading, however. The colophon of the *Clarifying Lamp* speaks not of "*zhang chos*" but of a person named "*zhang tshes*" (about whom there will be a discussion below). In short,

there is no good reason to believe that the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* is a student of the fifth abbot of sNar thang.[21]

The second main hypothesis, *Hypothesis B*, derives from the claim within the *Blue Annals* that among Phya pa's students was a person named "*rdo rje 'od zer*." In the *Blue Annals* a large number of people are listed as students of Phya pa, most of whom fall into different groups such as the Eight Mighty Lions, the Four Noble Sons, and the Four Wise Ones.[22] rDo rje 'od zer is not listed among any of these groups but is instead mentioned as being among "other" students of Phya pa. If the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* was a direct student of Phya pa, that would cohere quite well with the list of scholars referenced within the text. That is, it would put the author within roughly the same generation as Phya pa's students gTsang nag pa and Dan 'bag pa, and thus could explain why the views of those two students are referenced prominently within the *Clarifying Lamp* whereas no epistemologists from later generations are mentioned at all. Other than this one particular reference to rDo rje 'od zer, however, nothing else is said in the *Blue Annals* that would help to substantiate the hypothesis that he authored the *Clarifying Lamp* or any other epistemology summary. In fact, it is not clear that this same rDo rje 'od zer is mentioned elsewhere within the *Blue Annals*.[23]

In contrast to the first two hypotheses, *Hypothesis C* focuses not on the name "*rdo rje 'od zer*" but on the other name for the author found in the colophon: "*gtsang pa drug po*." Versions of this name can be found among the list of the nine principal students of gNyal zhig. In the *Blue Annals*, for example, this particular student of gNyal zhig is referred to as "*gtsang pa gru gu*." In the *Red Annals* that same list of nine students is provided, and in that text this student of gNyal zhig is called "*gtsang drug*." This student of gNyal zhig is said to have established a study center at Zhwa lu Monastery in gTsang. It is further claimed that this study center propagated gNyal zhig's commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. *Hypotheses C* thus

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[21] Having somewhat more merit is a modified theory, which we could call *Hypothesis A**, that is grounded in the observation that someone with the name "*rdo rje 'od zer*" served as the *third* abbot of sNar thang Monastery. This person, Zhang btsun rDo rje 'od zer (1122-1194) was the abbot of sNar thang from 1185 to 1193. This hypothesis would, however, likely put the composition of the *Clarifying Lamp* at an earlier date than that of the *Essential Nature*, which is highly unlikely. Moreover, there is no evidence to support the idea that this abbot of sNar thang had any connection to gSang phu Monastery or its scholarly tradition of epistemology.

[22] For more on Phya pa's students, please see Hugon (2015-2020).

[23] The *Blue Annals* does contain at least one reference to Zhang btsun rDo rje 'od zer, who was the third abbot of sNar thang Monastery, but there is otherwise no evidence to suggest that this person is the same student of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge named "*rdo rje 'od zer*."

holds that the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* is this student of gNyal zhig. Given that gNyal zhig was himself a student of Dan 'bag pa, this hypothesis would help to explain the clear familiarity that the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* had with the epistemological views of Dan 'bag pa.

It is tempting to endorse *Hypothesis C*, since that would suggest a connection between the *Clarifying Lamp* to the *Ornamental essence*, inferring that both were written by students of gNyal zhig. This would match up with the evidence provided in §3 where it was emphasized that the similarities between the two texts point toward the conclusion that the texts were written in roughly the same time period and that the authors shared similar epistemological pedigrees. Indeed, I believe that the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* is in fact gNyal zhig's student. Yet, before we accept that conclusion, it would be helpful to examine additional clues from the colophon of the *Clarifying Lamp* that have not yet been taken into account, but which may help us strengthen the plausibility of *Hypothesis C*.

The colophon of the *Clarifying Lamp* mentions two figures to whom the author pays his respects. One of these figures is "*dpal ldan rtsang pa 'bre*," and the other is "*bla ma dge ba'i bshes gnyen gnyal pa zhang tshes*." It can be said with high confidence that this latter reference is to Zhang tshes spong pa Chos kyi bla ma.[24] According to some texts, Zhang tshes spong pa originally hailed from the region of gNyal in southern Tibet.[25] Zhang tshes spong pa was the third abbot of gSang phu Monastery, a position that he reportedly held for 32 years, from the time of rNgog Lo tsā ba's death in 1109 until his own death in 1141. Given these dates, it would be very unlikely for the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* to have had Zhang tshes spong pa as one of his teachers. Instead, this reference to Zhang tshes spong pa should be viewed as an expression of endearment—one associated with Zhang tshes spong pa's significance in leading gSang phu Monastery for so many years.[26]

The identity of the other person referenced in the colophon, "*rtsang pa 'bre*," is more difficult to establish. The most plausible candidate would seem to be gTsang pa 'bre sgur, a figure falling within the scholarly lineage extending from rNgog Lo tsā ba's student 'Bre shes rab 'bar. gTsang pa 'bre sgur was purportedly a student of 'Dul 'dzin dkar mo, who had himself studied under both Ar Byang chub ye shes and Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge. (And Ar Byang chub ye shes was the

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[24] Note: In some historical documents we find the spelling "*zhang tshes*" and in other documents the spelling "*zhang tshe*."

[25] See *Thob tshul* 57a5.

[26] It is theoretically possible, though unlikely, that the expression "*gnyal pa zhang tshes*" could be a scribe's misreading of (or, miscopying of) the name "*gnyal pa zhig po*"—i.e., gTsang drug pa's teacher gNyal zhig.

most prominent student of 'Bre shes rab 'bar.) This would indicate that gTsang pa 'bre sgur was roughly contemporaneous with gZhon nu byang chub, the author of the *Essential Nature*, who is estimated to have lived from around 1150 to 1210. Thus, if the author of the *Clarifying Lamp* had some connection to gTsang pa 'bre sgur (such as being his student), that would fit well with the hypothesis that the text dates to the turn of the thirteenth century and is about one generation later than the *Essential Nature*.

Aside from this reference in the colophon of the *Clarifying Lamp*, I have been unable to find any other direct evidence to link gTsang drug pa with gTsang pa 'bre sgur. There is, however, a small amount of evidence that links gTsang pa 'bre sgur to at least one other student of gNyal zhig. To wit, there is at least one text transmission lineage—one proceeding through gNyan Lo tsā ba (c. late 11th to early 12th cent.)—wherein gTsang pa 'bre sgur transmitted a text to 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma.[27] We know that 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma was—like Dharmaratna and probably also gTsang drug pa—one of the nine main students of gNyal zhig. Moreover, within an extant manuscript of a commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* written by 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma, one finds various interlinear notes marking the names of the figures associated with views expressed within the text.[28] While these interlinear notes mention a host of scholars who were followers for rNgog Lo tsā ba, among the most frequently inserted 'name tags' are "*'bre*" and "*rtsang 'bre*." There is little question that these two labels refer to different persons (since, in several places, we find them affirming somewhat different views on the same subject). It is assuredly the case that "*'bre*" refers to rNgog Lo tsā ba's disciple 'Bre shes rab 'bar.

There is, I believe, some reason to think that "*rtsang 'bre*" could be a reference to gTsang pa 'bre sgur. For example, in several places within the text, one finds views by "*rtsang 'bre*" presented immediately after the views held by "*'dul*" or "*'dul dkar*," both of which are likely references to 'Dul 'dzin dkar mo, who, as mentioned above, was the teacher of gTsang pa 'bre sgur. Moreover, within this manuscript of 'Jam dbyangs gsar ma's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary, while in the vast majority of cases the name tags are attached to views that in the text itself are merely attributed to "someone" (viz., "*kha cig*"), there are two places where the name tags are linked to views attributed in the text to (quite possibly) the author's lama. In one place (43a3), for a view ascribed to "*bla ma dag*" we find the (interlinear) tag "*gnyal*." This is very likely a reference to ('Jam dbyangs gsar ma's teacher) gNyal zhig. In the second instance (25b4), below the agentive clause "*bla mas*"

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[27] *gSung 'bum*, vol. 1, p. 78.
[28] See *'Od 'bar*.

we find the (interlinear) tag "*rtsang 'bre*." This could be viewed as supporting the hypothesis that the tag "*rtsang 'bre*" refers to ('Jam dbyangs gsar ma's teacher) gTsang pa 'bre sgur. More generally, this provides some support for the hypothesis that gTsang pa 'bre sgur was a known figure to (at least some of) the nine principal students of gNyal zhig. With all this in mind, and returning now to gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp*, this makes it plausible to think that the reference in the colophon to "*gtsang pa 'bre*" could very well refer to gTsang pa 'bre sgur.

In light of all the foregoing evidence, the most reasonable conclusion to draw is that the author of the *Clarifying Lamp*, gTsang drug pa, is in fact gNyal zhig's student. If that is correct, it means that Dharmaratna's *Ornamental Essence* and gTsang drug pa's *Clarifying Lamp* were both composed by students of gNyal zhig, who was himself a student of Dan 'bag pa. This, in turn, serves to explain the frequent references to Dan 'bag pa's views in the *Ornamental Essence* and *Clarifying Lamp*.

There is no evidence to suggest that Dharmaratna or gTsang drug pa ever studied directly under Dan 'bag pa. And while we do know that Dharmaratna and gTsang drug pa both studied under gNyal zhig, we do not know for sure whether Buddhist epistemology was among the topics on which they received teachings from gNyal zhig. Nevertheless, what Dharmaratna's and gTsang drug pa's epistemological summary texts do show us is that Dan 'bag pa was viewed by them as an important figure in the Tibetan epistemological tradition.

5. Reprise: Epistemology Summaries from Phya pa to Sa skya Paṇḍita

With all the above information in hand, we can put forward the following tentative chronological ordering for the compositions of all the above-mentioned epistemology summary (*Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*) texts:

Period 1: *c.* pre-1150
- A) rGya dmar ba: [*Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*]
- B) Phya pa: *Dispeller*

Period 2: *c.* 1150 to 1200
- C) gZhon nu byang chub: *Essential Nature*
- D) Dan 'bag pa: [*Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*]
- E) mTshur ston: *Wisdom Lamp*

Period 3: *c.* 1200-1220
- F) Dharmaratna: *Ornamental Essence*
- G) gTsang drug pa: *Clarifying Lamp*

Period 4: *c.* 1219
- H) Sa-paṇ: *Treasury*

This list does not include, it must be emphasized, any of the epistemological *commentaries*—principally on Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya*—that were written during this time period. Nor does it include any of the epistemological summaries that were written in the decades after Sa-paṇ's *Treasury*. For example, it does not include Chu mig pa's *Conqueror* (see *rNam rgyal*) or Chos kyi bzhad pa's *Absolutely Essential Nature* (see *Tshad nye bsdus*), both of which appear to date to a period after Sa-paṇ's *Treasury*. Nor does it include any of the commentaries on Sa-paṇ's *Treasury*, nor other epistemology treatises thematically similar to the *Treasury*—such as Rig pa'i ral gri's *Ornamental Flower* (see *Me tog*).[29]

Tibetan history chronicles have not viewed Dharmaratna and gTsang drug pa as particularly important or influential figures in Buddhist philosophy. Yet, their respective epistemology summary texts do provide twenty-first century scholars with helpful portrayals of how Tibetan epistemology developed in the twelfth century. They bear evidence not only of the significance of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge, but also of the important role played by Dan 'bag pa in the maturation of Tibetan epistemology in the generations following Phya pa's death.

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Me tog (Ornamental Flower) – bCom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri. 1991. *Tshad*

[29] Also not included in the list here is the *Common Terminologies* (see *sPyi skad*), a short text that deserves more attention, and for which its dating still needs to be ascertained.

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Against Pilgrimage: Materiality, Place, and Ambivalence in Tibetan Pilgrimage Literature

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There will be great torment during your pilgrimage to meditation regions! Beware your virtuous practice being destroyed by these conditions! You come having awakened a hurricane of bad karma… As soon as you embark on your lengthy path, you will kill beings so you can go, primarily by killing [insects] under your feet. [On the journey,] bandits and battles will blaze with hatred, the armor of patience will be cast to the wind, robbers and hustlers will steal, [and pilgrims] will resort to theft. Your travel companions won't keep their vows, and similarly, they'll commit ethical transgressions. They will adopt the three non-virtuous bodily actions, stop performing prostrations and circumambulations, and tell lies to benefit themselves. They will pull you into divisive speech with dice games. They will spread harsh speech on treacherous paths both wide and narrow and will defile the hardship of the lengthy path with foolish chatter. They will perform "mantra recitation" in the form of the four non-virtuous speech acts. They muddy, chip away at, and break mantra recitation and dharma practice, and they diligently twist [everything] towards perversion. When they see the temple and the three supports, they spread covetous attitude towards the ornamented images and substances offered and spread harm through harsh words about the caretaker. When the hurricane of bad karma arises, in the form of blizzards on the travel path, disputes with enemies, sickness, demons, robbers, and so forth, they walk off into the abyss of wrong view. They are disappointed with the three jewels and dharma protectors. The three non-virtuous mental actions rob them of their thinking, and they arrive at the opposite of concentration and wisdom. Thus, denigrating the six perfections, [those pilgrims are really] on the ten-fold path of non-virtuous action.

— Jigmé Lingpa (1729-1798),
"Letter of Advice Sent to Pilgrims: A Bouquet of Sincere Wishes"[1]

Pilgrimage seems by all accounts to have been widely practiced across Tibet, but that does not mean that Tibetans unanimously approved of it.[2] Throughout the written record, and across a variety of textual genres, writers highlight the dangers of pilgrimage, argue that it is pointless, or suggest that *real* practice does not require travel to faraway places. Critics of pilgrimage justify their skepticism or rejection of pilgrimage with a variety of arguments, which cite concerns that pilgrims will exaggerate the power of holy places, will overly rely on external places, will miss better opportunities for spiritual progress, or will fall into sin while travelling.

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1 'Jigs med gling pa Mkhyen brtse 'od zer, *Gnas bskor ba la spring ba'i gtam*. In *The Collected Works of 'Jigs med gling pa Mkhyen brtse 'od zer*. TBRC W27300. 4: 575-9. Gangtok: No Publisher, 1985, 576.

2 For those seeking more information on the basic structure of Tibetan pilgrimage, see Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

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Little has been written about any of these Tibetan critiques of pilgrimage, and scholars to date have not attempted to gather these various critiques together and understand them as a collective whole. However, understanding these critiques and the concerns motivating them is essential for understanding the broader phenomenon of Tibetan pilgrimage. That is, by understanding these concerns, and the various ways Tibetan authors thought pilgrimage could go *wrong*, we will better understand the constellation of features that must be present for pilgrimage to go *right*. In addition, examining these various critiques can point to attitudes towards place, pilgrimage, and the material world that can illuminate general outlooks structuring Tibetan religious practice. For instance, are practices that engage the external, material landscape worthwhile, or is it better to focus on internally directed practices like meditation or philosophy? Can encountering special places transform people, and if so, do these powers reside in the places themselves, or in the mind of the practitioner?

In this article, I analyze critiques of pilgrimage from across the Tibetan tradition, and draw out several different arguments against pilgrimage that recur across the literature. I argue that many of these critiques are motivated by similar concerns about the qualities of the material world itself. In particular, they demonstrate a fundamental ambivalence towards the material that stems from its uncontrollable nature. Pilgrimage could benefit the pilgrim, but the material and therefore uncontrollable nature of places (and of journeys to those places), can thwart the pilgrim's original intention. This makes pilgrimage pointless or even dangerous. Some skeptics thought that the inherent uncontrollability of the material aspects of pilgrimage could be managed if the pilgrim maintained a proper mindset, but others rejected pilgrimage entirely.

The sources for this article will be eclectic and will include songs and letters of advice written to pilgrims, monastic guidelines advising whether and how monks should go on pilgrimage, tantric texts and commentaries discussing pilgrimage to tantric sites, characterizations of pilgrimage from biographical literature, and eulogies to holy places. It goes without saying that the selections examined here do not represent an exhaustive account of Tibetan critiques of pilgrimage, but they are representative of key themes and arguments that recur across various texts.

It is important to say at the outset that these critiques almost never foreground the categories of place and materiality as such, probably because these categories were not explicit subjects of Buddhist philosophical reflection. Nevertheless, as scholars such as Fabio Rambelli have pointed out, Buddhist thinkers were very frequently concerned with the nature of material objects and the role they play in practice,

and scholars neglect this important strand of Buddhist thinking to their detriment.[3] By attending carefully to the roles place and materiality play in discussions about pilgrimage, for example, we can see that these categories, while not explicitly subjects of discussion, are nonetheless highly influential to Buddhist thought.

It is also worth noting that many of the sources that we will examine do not reject pilgrimage outright—although some certainly do. Rather, they critique certain ways of performing pilgrimage or highlight the potential dangers of pilgrimage before ultimately (if sometimes seemingly reluctantly) endorsing it. Many of these critiques thus reflect anxieties or concerns about pilgrimage, but seem to hold out the possibility that correctly performed pilgrimage can and should be part of successful practice.

The article will be structured thematically, outlining four major arguments against pilgrimage. That is: a rejection of the automatic benefits of pilgrimage, concerns about reification of the external world, concerns about the moral difficulties arising from travel, and an emphasis on mental cultivation rather than physical travel.

From these, I argue that we can see that concern about the dangers of pilgrimage arose from concerns about over-fixation the material world, concerns that the friction inherent in travel over material landscapes would thwart even well-intentioned practitioners, and a recurring desire to emphasize the importance of mental cultivation over external material engagement. I draw out the ways the material dimensions of pilgrimage factor into each of these critiques, and suggest that this recurrent ambivalence about the material world stems from concern that the material world is fundamentally uncontrollable. I then use this account to propose a model for how Tibetans thinkers thought that pilgrimage could go right.

Rejection of Automatic Benefits

> *Emaho! This wondrous holy place!... If you pray there, you'll accomplish all aims. If you circumambulate there, you'll purify bad karma. If you can prostrate there, you'll clear away obstacles. If you offer a scarf there, you'll turn back cloudy skies. If you make a sang offering there, you'll have good crops and if you make a sang (Tib. gsang) offering there, you'll have good crops and cattle!*
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> — Guide to Drak Karpo[4]

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[3] Rambelli, Fabio. *Buddhist Materiality: A Cultural History of Objects in Japanese Buddhism*. Asian Religions & Cultures. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007.

[4] *E ma ho/ ngo mtshar che ba'i gnas/ … (S129, 4a) smon lam btab na ci bsam 'grub/ bskor ba mdzad na las sgrib dag/ phyag 'tshal nus na bar chad sel/ dar mchod phul na mkha' dman bzlog/ bsangs mchod phul na lo phyugs legs*. "Brag dkar po'i gnas yig dkod pa rgya mtsho'i sprin phung," in Tshe ring dpal 'byor, ed., *Bod kyi gnas yig bdams bsgrigs* (Lhasa: bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2012), 381.

The first set of critiques about pilgrimage are directed against claims that pilgrimage will automatically benefit pilgrims. Tibetan pilgrimage guide texts (*gnas yig*) describe the benefits of pilgrimage to certain sites in bold terms: they declare that visitors to the site may clear away obstacles, gain material benefits, obtain good rebirths, or gain large amounts of merit. They sometimes even describe certain features as "liberating upon seeing" (*mthong 'grol*), meaning that whoever sees this object will be immediately and automatically liberated from bad rebirths.[5] Such claims are an important function of the entire genre of pilgrimage guides, which aim both to describe the particular features of a site that pilgrims will encounter, but also to promote the site by describing the benefits of visiting there. According to the picture these guides paint, the site is so powerful that merely seeing it or touching it is enough to offer powerful merit and blessings. The implication is often that pilgrims need only show up to gain benefits, implying that the benefits reside in the site itself, and are independent of the qualities or intentions of the pilgrim themselves.

But while pilgrimage guides may make strong claims about the potency of pilgrimage places, many Tibetan authors explicitly rejected the notion that merely visiting a physical place could *automatically* grant benefits regardless of the intention or qualities of the pilgrim.

Several of these authors make the same *reductio ad absurdum* argument, suggesting that if it *were* the case that pilgrimage places grant automatic benefits, then it would have to be the case that whatever shepherds, nomads, or barbarians that wander there would already be enlightened. Since this is assumed not to be the case, it cannot be true that pilgrimage sites automatically grant benefits to those who encounter them. Jigmé Lingpa (1730-1798), for example, poked fun at those who assumed that certain material places automatically provide benefits, writing that if this were the case, shepherds living near holy places would be close to attaining the rainbow body, a very high level of accomplishment.[6] Drakpa Gyeltsen (1147-1216) notes that Bodhgaya, Kailash, and Tsari are all filled with unsavory people like heretics, nomads, and barbarians.[7] His nephew Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) makes a similar critique by writing that "Uddiyana, Jalandhara, Himavat,

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5 For more on the phenomenon of objects that are attributed liberative powers, see James Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism.* New York: Brill, 2016.

6 *Dur khrod du nyal bas sangs rgya na/ mi tsher ri stongs su nyal byed pa'i rdzi bo rnams 'ja' lus 'grub ba la nye/ de kun glen pa'i brtul zhugs yin*. 'Jigs med gling pa, *Gnas bskor ba la spring ba'i gtam.* In *The Collected Works of 'Jigs med gling pa Mkhyen brtse 'od zer.* TBRC W27300. 4: 575-9. Gangtok: No Publisher, 1985.

7 Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Gnas bstod kyi nyams dbyangs*, In *Sa skya gong ma rnam lnga'i gsung 'bum dpe bsdur ma las grags pa rgyal mtshan gyi gsung*, TBRC W2DB4569, 5: 344-7 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 346.

Devikota, and other sites are filled with Indian non-Buddhist sectarians, barbarians, ignorant people, and nomads, but do they attain realizations?"[8] The implication is clearly barbarians and nomads do *not* attain realizations at such places, and therefore pilgrimage sites do not automatically benefit people who go there.

Tibetan thinkers who reject the notion of automatic blessings are rejecting the notion that a material place can transform a person independent of that person's qualities or mental state. They are not necessarily rejecting the institution of pilgrimage. However, they are claiming that if there are benefits to pilgrimage, they cannot be entirely located in the physical place. Instead, they must be based to some degree on the qualities or mental state of the pilgrim.

In so doing, critics of pilgrimage are expressing clear discomfort with the notion that material objects or places have independent agency or potency, and discomfort with the notion that naïve pilgrims will assume that they do not have to do any work in order to reap the benefits of pilgrimage. They seem to be worried that pilgrims who think that material places are strong enough to grant automatic blessings will be less inclined to focus on what these critics believe to be more important aspects of practice; namely, avoiding sin and cultivating virtue.

These authors are not denying that material places have *any* power, but rather that this power does not work *automatically* or outside the pilgrim's intention. This leaves open the possibility that these places do have benefits, but that the pilgrim must undertake a particular set of practices or mental outlooks in order to access these benefits.

Concerns about Reifying the Material

Another set of critiques of pilgrimage is grounded in the concern that Tibetan pilgrims will be overly focused on or reify the material world. This set of critiques allows for possibility that material places can grant benefits to pilgrims, but is concerned to ensure that pilgrims recognize that practices engaging material places are subordinate to other, higher forms of practice. In other words, these critiques do not entail the wholesale rejection of pilgrimage, but rather placing pilgrimage in a hierarchy of possible practices.

This argument takes two particular forms: one dealing with exoteric

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[8] *UI rgyan dzA lendha ra dang/ gangs can de bI ko Ta sogs/ kla klo blan po mu stengs byed/ 'brogs pa rnams kyis gang mod kyang/ de dag grub pa thob bam ci.* Sakya Pandita, *Sdom gsum rab dbye*. Edition contained in Jared Rhoton, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric Systems: The Sdom Gsum Rab Dbye and Six Letters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 310.

pilgrimage practice, and one dealing with tantric pilgrimage practice. In both forms, the fact that pilgrims are focused on particular physical places is taken as useful for immature practitioners, but ultimately inferior to a mental outlook which recognizes the fundamental equality of all places.

Exoteric Pilgrimage: No One Place is Holier Than Any Other

To begin with the exoteric variety of this argument, some Tibetan authors critiqued pilgrimage on the grounds that no one area is any more sacred than any other.[9] These authors did not reject religious interaction with the external material world, but instead insisted that it is an inferior form of practice insofar as it identifies any one place as more special than other places. They suggested that the notion that some places are inherently special (with other places therefore less special), inadvertently reproduces fundamentally erroneous dualistic thinking, thus undermining the entire Buddhist project.

To these writers, the best form of pilgrimage is aimless wandering across the land rather than visiting specific sites. We might wonder whether such wandering should be called pilgrimage, but several Tibetan authors deliberately connect directionless wandering the landscape with the directed activities of pilgrims insofar as both involve leaving home to engage with the material landscape.

Articulating this point of view in a poem of advice, Kathog Situ (1880-1925)[10] writes:

> Without attachment or desire, without fixed or certain plans,
> Without selfishness, wandering freely through the country
> Without bias, helping all living beings to be trained—
> These are the activities of the best kind of pilgrim.
>
> Following holy masters without bias or fault,
> Requesting holy teachings without preference or contradiction,
> Gathering merit at holy places without partiality or grasping—

[9] There is a parallel debate in Christian discussions of pilgrimage. That is, if God is omnipresent, how can one place be holier than any other? See, for example, R.A. Markus, "How on Earth Could Places Become Holy?: Origins of the Christian Idea of Holy Places." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 2, no. 3 (1994): 257–71. "and Brouria Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred. The Debate on Christian Pilgrimage in Late Antiquity.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

[10] Kathog Situ Chökyi Gyatso is known in contemporary scholarship primarily for his authorship of two accounts of pilgrimages, one to central Tibet and another to Amdo and Kham. So as is the case with many of the authors surveyed here, Kathog Situ is not rejecting the practice pilgrimage wholesale, but is rather lamenting the way in which it is practiced by some pilgrims.

These too are the activities of the best pilgrim.[11]

Kathog Situ goes on to contrast this best sort of pilgrim with lesser pilgrims who fail to follow their example, but for now we will focus on the ideal of the pilgrim who wanders the land without having a fixed itinerary. Kathog Situ ties the lack of fixed plans or set destinations with an admirable lack of selfish grasping or partiality, suggesting that pilgrims who have specific destinations may be motivated by selfishness ego, or attachment. They may be going to a particular place in order to get merit to benefit themselves, rather than thinking of others. They may also harbor biases about one site being better than another or one school as being better than another. All of this, Kathog Situ suggests, only furthers dualistic thinking, which perpetuates all the problems Buddhist practice is trying to address.[12]

Other writers echo the notion that pilgrimage to particular places is connected in some way with dualistic thinking. Jamgön Kongtrül, for example, warns pilgrims against committing this error when he writes, "The thought 'this is a sacred place, this is not a sacred place' is the misconception of an impure mind."[13] In other words, the impure mind imposes these dualities of sacred/not sacred on the landscape even when these dualities are not ultimately justified.

By contrast, the practitioner who has an "eye free of dust," he suggests, recognizes that *wherever he is* is a pure land.[14] On this understanding, the notion that some places are particularly special is not something that helps the pilgrim to see better, but rather dust that further occludes their vision. On this line of thinking, it is a good thing to wander the landscape, but there is no inherent quality of any place that makes it more holy than anywhere else. The extent to which a pilgrim thinks there is a difference, moreover, reflects their own dualistic thinking rather than inherent qualities of the land.

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[11] *Chags med zhen med gtad med nges med gnas/ rang 'khris med pas gdul bya ris med la/ phan byed 'gro don rgyal khams phyogs med byed/ gnas skor rab kyi rnam thar pa'o// dam pa phyogs med sel med bsten pa dang/ dam chos ris med 'gal med zhu ba dang/ sgrub gnas phyogs med 'dzin med tshogs bsags pa/ 'di yang gnas skor rab kyi rnam thar ro*. KaH thog si tu chos kyi rgya mtsho "Gnas skor pa rab 'bring mtha' gsum gyi rnam dbye," in *Gnas yig phyogs bsgrigs*, 1-2.

[12] It is worth mentioning here that Kathog Situ is part of the so-called Non-sectarian (*ris med*, pronounced Rimé) movement, which holds up the ideal that Buddhist practitioners expose themselves to teachings from a variety of schools, and that the language of impartiality in this poem has much to do with the sort of language used by Rimé figures.

[13] *'Di ni gnas yin no/ 'di ni gnas ma yin no snyam pa ni rang blo ma dag pa'i log rtog yin la*. 'Jam mgon kong sprul, *TsA 'dra rin chen brag gi rtog pa brjod pa yid kyi rgya mtsho'i rol mo*, 487.2.

[14] *Su zhig rdul dang bral ba'i mig thob pa/ de yi gang na rgyal ba'i zhing bkod se*. *Ibid.*, 545.

As such while writers like Kathog Situ and Jamgon Kongtul endorse wandering the land, they criticize the idea that any place is any different from any other. They valorize the perspective of the best pilgrim who can see all places as equally holy, and consider pilgrims who focus on particular places to b immature in their practice and understanding.

This is still an endorsement of engaging the external material world as a religious practice. Though we might take the argument that all places are fundamentally the same to mean that there is no need to leave home, that is not what Kathog Situ and Jamgön Kongtrül are saying. Leaving home to wander the land is meaningfully different from staying home. Here, the pilgrim is still giving up the comforts of home to wander in unfamiliar and potentially inhospitable lands. It recalls the classic formula in which the Buddha calls disciples to go forth from home life into homelessness. In abandoning the comforts and predictability of home life, the wandering pilgrim is committing to see something new every day, without the routines or preoccupations of home and family life.

However, this valorization of aimless wandering does seem to invest more significance in the pilgrim's *perspective* than in the material qualities of holy places. That the pilgrim is traversing the landscape matters, because they are extracting themselves from the familiarity of home life to embrace what we might call the wild. Nevertheless, they are not visiting particular places believed to have special transformative powers or blessings external to the pilgrim. They may end up visiting the same special places that the ordinary pilgrim visits, but they regard such sites as fundamentally equal to others.

Kongtrul and Kathog Situ do ultimately endorse pilgrimage to particular places, but they also see the valorization of places as potentially dangerous. Ordinary pilgrimage is acceptable, or even good, but not as good as aimless wandering. Further, it is good only insofar as pilgrims know the dangers of focusing on particular places and try to emulate the aimless pilgrim who regards all places equally.

As such, the question of the power of individual material places drops out of the equation almost entirely. Material places are regarded as useful for immature beings, but irrelevant to more advanced practitioners with the proper mental outlook.

Esoteric Pilgrimage: Only Childish People Consider External Pilgrimage Places Important

Similar concerns about the overreliance on or reification of external, material places also arose in discussions of tantric pilgrimage. Tantric commentators—both Indian authors commentating on Tantric texts

and later Tibetan authors commenting on tantras or on tantric commentaries—often went out of their way to assert that advanced tantric practitioners should regard all external, material places as fundamentally equal rather than regarding certain places as more special than others.

Before elaborating on this argument, however, it is worth giving some background on tantric forms of pilgrimage for those who are unfamiliar. In most scholarship on Tibetan pilgrimage, writers have been primarily concerned with general pilgrimage practices undertaken by people of all levels of society. Such pilgrimage practices took place in a conceptual universe governed by tantric Buddhism, but did not require explicit empowerment in particular tantric lineages. However, pilgrimage was also an important part of lineage-based tantric practice. Many important tantric texts, including the *Kalacakra, Hevajra,* and *Cakrasamvara Tantra*s, include pilgrimage to specific sites as part of the set of practices they prescribe. Some texts list twenty-four sacred places (Skt. *pītha,* Tib. *gnas chen*), whereas others have differing numbers, such as thirty-six, thirty-nine, or forty-eight,[15] but in each case, these external pilgrimage places are also held to correspond with the bodily components of the individual. By going to these pilgrimage places, the tantric initiate can manipulate his own subtle body, speeding along the process of self-transformation and, ultimately, enlightenment.[16] These practices, however, are regarded as potentially dangerous, and thus are limited to those who are working closely with a qualified tantric master and have the appropriate initiations and realizations.[17]

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[15] The exact number of tantric *pīthas* and their precise locations was a source of much controversy. See, for example, David Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, 69-70, note 2. Note, however, that his references to the Narthang Kangyur are slightly incorrect: the *Vajrapādasārasamgraha* is in Volume 18 and not Volume 17. For more information about the tantric *pīthas* and their locations, see David Gray, *The Cakrasamvara Tantra* (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2007), 330-3 and Vesna A. Wallace, *The Inner Kalacakratantra*, 78-9.

[16] These texts outline systems in which places is the external world are categorized and mapped onto locations in the human body. For more information see Vesna Wallace, *The Inner Kalacakra*, 77-86. See also David Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, 68-70, especially 69, no. 2.

[17] Note that Sakya Pandita in particular is concern that pilgrims without the proper qualifications and empowerments will attempt tantric pilgrimage. See Rhoton, *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes,* 136-7. Sakya Pandita wrote that sutras do not describe pilgrimage to the great places, but he also writes that "The Buddha did not teach that the thirty seven major sites are to be visited if one is not performing the meditations of both processes" (*Yul chen sum cu so bdun du/ 'gro ba sangs rgyas kyis ma gsungs. Ibid.*, 310, verse 301.) That is, the exoteric Buddhist tradition as contained in the sutras does not describe rituals of visiting the great places (*yul chen*), and to the extent that the Buddha does recommend visiting those sites in the tan-

While pilgrimage was thus prescribed as part of advanced tantric practice, various scholars seem wary that tantric practitioners might mistakenly over-rely on these external places. For instance, many later tantric commentaries, both Sanskrit and Tibetan, argue that these external pilgrimage places are taught for the sake of childish people (*byis pa rnams*).[18] The implication here is that the wise should recognize that the set of external pilgrimage places is a way of talking about the internal landscape of one's own body.

As one commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* states, "Externally, there are goddesses that chase after blood and flesh and live in towns who dwell in external holy places. [However] it is taught, 'As [it is] externally, so [it is] internally,' and so internal holy places are taught exist in the body in the form of the channels. Do not look elsewhere for them!"[19] On this interpretation, the internal holy places are just as important—if not more important—than the external holy places. The commentator wants to ensure that readers do not mistakenly focus on the external pilgrimage places to the detriment of the internal physiology.[20]

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tras, he does so only if practitioners are doing so after having practiced the generation and completion stage meditations. As such, the general practice of pilgrimage to places like Tsari and Kailash is just "a sham observance of this mantric tradition" (*sngags kyi lugs su 'chos pa mthong, Ibid*., 310, verse 301) and is not a legitimate practice.

18 "These places, Jalendara and so on, are mentioned for the benefit of simple fools who wander about the country": *'Dir thun mong gis byis pa rnams yul du 'khyam pa'i don du dzA landara la sogs pa'i gnas la sogs par gsungs te*. Naropa, *Rdo rje'i tshig gi snying po bsdus pa'i dka' 'grel* (Skt. *Vajrapādasārasaṃgraha*), 979.

19 *De bas na phyi rol du ni sha dang khrag la rgyug par byed pa grong la brten pa'i lha mo rnams ni phyi'i gnas pa yin la/ ji ltar phyi rol de bzhin nang/ zhes gsungs pa'i phyir nang gi gnas ni lus la rtsa'i gzugs kyis gnas par gsungs te de las gzhan du mi bla'o*. Vajragarbha, *Rdo rje snying po'i 'grel pa* (Skt. *Hevajrapiṇḍārthaṭīkā*), 918.

20 We should note that some commentators interpret these same passages about how external pilgrimage places are taught for the sake of foolish or childish people (*byis pa rnams*) in precisely the opposite way: to *justify* pilgrimage practice. Kunkhyen Pema Karpo (1527–92), for example, makes this approach explicit in his *Guidebook to Tsari;* he directly addresses those who reject tantric pilgrimage for non-initiates and refutes them in order to argue that tantric pilgrimage is open to all. Quoting the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary on the *Kalacakra Tantra,* Pema Karpo argues that "Commonly, the holy places such as Jalendra are taught so that childish beings (*byis pa*) may wander to the [24 sacred] areas." (*'Dir thun mong du byis pa rnams yul du khyam pa'i don du dzA landha ra la sogs pa'i gnas rnams gsungs shing/ zhes 'byung la*. 'Brug chen Kun mkhyen Pad+ma dkar po, *Gnas chen tsa ri tra'i ngo mtshar snang ba pad dkar legs bshad*, 271. This quotation can be found in Rigs ldan Pad+ma dkar po (Skt. *Puṇḍarīka*), *Bsdus pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po dus kyi 'khor lo'i 'grel bshad rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi rjes su 'jug pa stong phrag bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa'i 'od* (Skt. *Vimalaprabhā*), in *Bstan 'gyur (dpe bsdur ma),* TBRC W1PD95844, 6: 706 - 1482 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, 1994-2008), 1079.) He also cites Naropa's commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* making the same point. (*Khyam pa zhes*

Tantric texts and commentators also emphasized that the set of external pilgrimage places is a movable framework that can be mapped onto any location. As such, there is not *one physical location* (such as Jalendra, for instance) that is itself inherently important. Rather, they describe "Jalendra" as a relative point in a conceptual schema that can be mapped onto many different locations.[21] The *Vimalaprabhā*, for example, states that the entire set of external pilgrimage sites exists in Tibet, China, and other countries.[22] Naropa's commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra* argues that they are present even in a single city.[23] According to these texts, while the childish practitioner reifies the set of external pilgrimage places and takes them to exist in a particular place, the advanced practitioner recognizes the inherent non-duality of all places, and recognizes the entire world—including the practitioner's own body—as a holy site. These texts and authors seem particularly concerned about the possibility that practitioners will forget this, and treat particular physical locations as inherently special.

Tantric commentators also sometimes try to de-emphasize the importance of pilgrimage by arguing that it is secondary to the important task of attaining stability in meditation. For instance, in the *Clear Differentiation of the Three Vows* (*sdom gsum rab dbye*), Sakya Pandita argues that to correctly perform tantric pilgrimage, the aspiring pilgrim must first obtain the four initiations into the practice and then attain stability in the meditations of the generation and completion stage. Sakya Pandita stresses that this stability must be obtained in one's own home.[24]

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yang/ nA ro 'grel chen du/ spyir btang du/ byis pa rnams kyis bskor ba'i don du dzA landha ra la sogs pa'i gnas gsungs pa zhes 'byung bas so. Pad+ma dkar po, "Pad dkar legs bshad," 271. Original quote from Naropa, *Rdo rje'i tshig gi snying po bsdus pa'i dka' 'grel,* 1079.) In each case, he takes the term "childish beings" (*byis pa*) to refer to ordinary people without high levels of spiritual realization, and thus for these texts to be advocating pilgrimage for precisely those beings. Against those who understood the notion that pilgrimage is "taught for the sake of childish beings" to indicate that it is a lower level of practice to be discarded, Pema Karpo takes "childish beings" to refer to ordinary, non-tantric initiates and thus sees tantric pilgrimage places as open to everyone. Further, he does not take external pilgrimage's association with "childish beings" as a negative mark on external pilgrimage places, but rather a reason that everyone should go to these places.

21 Scholars have noted the way in which, as Buddhism moved to areas outside India, sacred landscapes were re-mapped onto new geographical areas. For a nuanced discussion of the transposition of Buddhist sacred geography into other areas that focuses particularly on China, see James Robson, "Buddhist Sacred Geography," in *Early Chinese Religion, Part Two: The Period of Division (220-589 AD)*, ed. John Lagerwey and Lü Pengzhi, vol. 21/2, Early Chinese Religion (Boston: Brill, 2010), 1353–98.

22 See Vesna A. Wallace. *The Inner Kalacakratantra*, 76-77.

23 *Rnal 'byor ma rnams kyi rigs sum cu rtsa drug ni grong khyer gcig tu yang gnas*. Nāropa, *Rdo rje'i tshig gi snying po bsdus pa'i dka' 'grel,* 979.

24 *Dang por rang gi khyim du bsgom. Ibid.*, 310, verse 297.

The implication is that it is relatively easier to practice these meditations in the comfort of one's own home, and that practice in pilgrimage is a more advanced stage that should only be approached once the basic mental training has been mastered.

None of these tantric sources *reject* pilgrimage to tantric pilgrimage sites. However, they do also seem to reflect some discomfort with the entire notion of external pilgrimage. They express concern that careless tantric practitioners will reify external pilgrimage places while forgetting that they are meant to correspond to an internal system, and ultimately to an internal transformation. The fact of material pilgrimage places represents a potential distraction from this internally-directed work.

It is important not to overstate this discomfort with the material. Tantric practice frequently makes use of material objects and implements, and is certainly not solely internally-focused. Most of these commentators would probably agree that engaging the material world, whether through ritual implements, images, consecrated substances, or physical landscapes, is a valuable means for advancing one's practice. With regard to pilgrimage in particular, many tantric commentators spent a great deal of time and energy writing polemics about the correct list of tantric pilgrimage places, indicating that they did care deeply about getting that right.

However, there is certainly a desire, at least among some commentators to try and limit the position of the material, to domesticate it within a system that recognizes internal transformation as the highest goal. If not properly located and contextualized in this way, material places might become attractions in their own right, and not sites granted legitimacy within the confines of a particular practice lineage.

Concerns about Material Friction

Another set of concerns expressed by critics of pilgrimage focuses less on pilgrimage places themselves and more on the journey associated with visiting these places.

These critics point to the fact that the material world is not smooth or frictionless, particularly for those traveling by foot to distant pilgrimage places. Instead, it introduces difficulties and discomforts that shape the practice of pilgrimage. For instance, going to a place like Kailash or Tsari involves long travel over difficult terrain in desolate conditions, with pilgrims eating only what they could carry or beg. For some writers, this difficulty is integral to the practice of pilgrimage, because that difficult journey facilitates the desired experience. Others, however, regarded the difficulty of pilgrimage practice as a negative that potentially leads to physical and moral harms.

Again, this general theme of concern takes multiple forms. So, in order to illuminate this set of arguments, it is worth delving deeper into some representative sources.

Physical Danger

Some writers, for instance, highlighted the physical dangers of pilgrimage. Whereas staying at home allows for comfort and safety, travel is inherently dangerous. This is bad because of the direct harm potentially caused, and also because it represents a missed opportunity to practice in physical comfort. Arguing that pilgrimage was pointless or even actively harmful, these critics of pilgrimage maintained that Buddhist practice consists in personal transformation cultivated in a relationship with a teacher. They portrayed travel to an external pilgrimage place, on the other hand, as at best irrelevant to that practice and at worst actively harmful to it.

For instance, the Sakya hierarch Drakpa Gyeltsen (1147-1216) wrote an ironically-titled "Song of Experience in Praise of the Holy Place" rejecting pilgrimage as a worthwhile practice. Instead, he exhorted would-be pilgrims to stay at home and cultivate a teacher. Part of this song is as follows:

> Some go to Vajrāsana (Bodhgāya), but there are many heretics there; they have no accomplishment. There are many terrifying bandits on the way—when they cut your throat, you'll repent of having come, dead by a knife.
>
> Others go to the ice field of Tise (Kailāsa), but there are many nomads there. Nomads do all sorts of bad stuff. Having been killed by the glacier of your own perverse views, you'll repent of having come, dead by a knife.
>
> Others go to Tsari Tsagong, but that area is filled with barbarian Lalo Monpas. You won't hear the sound of dharma there are all! Having been killed by your own demons, you'll repent of having come, dead by a knife.
>
> There are so many spots like that, so don't go running to all the "places of accomplishment." But in a secluded retreat of conducive conditions, with the raised [banners of] the two meditative processes, engage your discipline.
>
> Then wherever you are is Akanistha, keeping as company your selected divinity, whatever you eat or drink is nectar. Not to go searching for some external "place of accomplishment" is the vow of the deep secret spells. So don't take up this pilgrimage song, but stay where you

are and plow the field!

— Drakpa Gyeltsen (1147-1216)[25]

This song contains elements of arguments we have already seen. Like Sakya Pandita and Jigme Lingpa, Drakpa Gyeltsen implicitly rejects the idea that a pilgrimage place might grant automatic benefits to those who visit ("there are many heretics there"). Like Kathog Situ, he suggests that pilgrims should consider all places as fundamentally equal ("wherever you are is Akanistha"). And like many tantric commentators, he implicitly criticizes those who search externally for what should be explored internally ("Not to go searching for some external 'place of accomplishment'…"). Each of these plays a role in Drakpa Gyeltsen's overall argument that pilgrimage is a waste of time.

His central argument, however, rests on the dangers of pilgrimage. He points out that travel to distant pilgrimage places may bring the pilgrim into contact with unsavory people such as barbarians, heretics, or bandits. In the process of travelling across the landscape, the pilgrim is by definition leaving the safety and comfort of home, and thereby exposing themselves to the unruly world outside that known space. It is worth pointing out that these dangers are not abstract for Drakpa Gyeltsen, whose older brother died while on pilgrimage to India.[26] Driving the reality of these dangers home for listeners, he thrice repeats the line that Ronald Davidson memorably translates as "having been killed [by dangers particular to each place], you'll regret having come, dead by a knife!"[27] Given all of this, Drakpa Gyeltsen argues that the pilgrim is better off staying at home.

For Drakpa Gyeltsen, his home of Sakya is the perfect place for practice, so why leave it? He contrasts the difficulties of the road with the comforts of his homeland. Proper practice, he suggests, requires favorable conditions (*dal 'byor*, literally meaning leisure and wealth). It is difficult to study the dharma when one is tired from the road, lacking adequate food, and tempted into wrongdoing by the frustrations of travel. Rather, would-be pilgrims should stay where they know they can find all the resources necessary for successful practice. Drakpa

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[25] Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Gnas bstod kyi nyams dbyangs*, In *Sa skya gong ma rnam lnga'i gsung 'bum dpe bsdur ma las grags pa rgyal mtshan gyi gsung*, TBRC W2DB4569, 5: 344-7 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 346. Translation altered from Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 323.

[26] See Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 338.

[27] *Ibid.*, 323. Tib. *La la rdo rje gdan du 'gro/ rdo rje gdan du mu stegs mang/ de dag la yang grub pa med/ lam khar mi rkun 'jigs pa mang/ ol pa bcad nas 'gyod grir 'chi/ la la ti se'i gangs la 'gro/ ti se'i gangs la 'brog pa mang/ 'brog pas mi dge na tshogs byed/ rang gangs log gis bsad nas 'gyod grir 'chi.* Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Gnas bstod kyi nyams dbyangs*, 345-6.

Gyeltsen writes, "Don't go wandering all over the country! Don't throw away favorable conditions for nothing! Don't risk life and limb for nothing! If you have enough realizations, stay in solitude! If you don't have enough realizations, cultivate a lama!"[28] Thus far from understanding difficulty as part of what makes pilgrimage valuable, Drakpa Gyeltsen sees it as pointlessly squandering one's time and resources.

This does underscore one point on which Drakpa Gyeltsen disagrees with authors like Kathog Situ and Jamgön Kongtrül, who valorize aimless wandering across the landscape. He does agree with them the best sort of practitioner is one who is able to regard whatever place they are at as a pure land. Where Drakpa Gyeltsen disagrees with them, however, is that they want pilgrims to leave home in order to wander the landscape, whereas Drakpa Gyeltsen regards one's homeland as the best place to maximize time and resources. The former see wandering the landscape as successfully eliminating attachments to the comforts of home, whereas the latter sees the comforts of home as enabling successful practice.

We should also note that Drakpa Gyeltsen points to solitary retreat practice as having value, as indicated when he says "If you have enough realizations, stay in solitude!"[29] That is, he suggests that if the would-be pilgrim has some experience in practice and some level of spiritual realization, they can benefit from solitary retreat practice. These retreats are often located high in the mountains away from human settlements, and so do represent a particular way of engaging the landscape, but Drakpa Gyeltsen clearly thinks that this sort of practice is distinct from pilgrimage, perhaps because it is still relatively close to home and therefore less subject to the vagaries of travel to unfamiliar places. Even that practice, moreover, is not suitable for those who lack the proper training. In order to be able to engage the landscape fruitfully, the practitioner must first train with a qualified teacher and develop experience in practice.

Moral Danger

In highlighting the material dangers of pilgrimage, Drakpa Gyeltsen makes it clear that pilgrimage can threaten the health and safety of the pilgrim. Other writers, however, describe the physical difficulties of pilgrimage as threatening the ethical discipline of the pilgrim.

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[28] *Yul kun tu 'khyams shing ma 'gro bar/ dal 'byor don med ma btang zhing/ lus srog don med du ma btang bar/ rang rtogs tshad yod na dben par sdod/ rtogs tshad med na bla ma bsten*. *Ibid.*, 347.

[29] *Rang rtogs tshad yod na dben par sdod*. *Ibid.*, 347.

For instance, Jigmé Lingpa (1729-1798), whose warnings about pilgrimage supplied the epigraph for this essay, extensively details the moral hazards of pilgrimage when writing a letter of advice to pilgrims.[30] The karmic perils start from the first step—Jigmé Lingpa notes that travel necessarily involves killing insects under one's feet[31]—and continue over the long and arduous pilgrimage trail. Dealing with these dangers and difficulties leads to the negative emotions of fear and anger, and hungry pilgrims may be tempted to turn to theft themselves. Travel companions, too, can lead the careless pilgrim into idle and foolish chatter or into anger and harsh speech.[32] Jigmé Lingpa mentions what seems to be a dice game[33] that can lead to division among the group of pilgrims.

Even when the pilgrims arrive at their destination and see the images, they may admire the fine work with a covetous rather than a pious eye, and carefully note and exaggerate every fault among the monks and caretaker.[34] Jigmé Lingpa notes that while pilgrims *should* interpret hardships experienced on the pilgrimage trail as the inevitable ripening of negative karma, weary pilgrims instead take such hardships as reasons to be disappointed with and lose faith in the three jewels. In Jigmé Lingpa's telling, the various misdeeds of pilgrims exactly matches the ten non-virtuous actions[35] and pilgrimage contributes to sin rather than to enlightenment.

Some of these are almost comic—the pilgrim becomes a murderer by stepping on bugs along the path!—and seem intended to undermine the naïve notion that pilgrimage automatically generates good karma. But the overall theme seems to be that pilgrims will find that negative emotions such as anger, greed, and disrespect increase as they travel away from home. This increase in the turmoil of negative emotions is what results in the non-virtuous actions that Jigmé Lingpa warns about. Pilgrims are not necessarily *choosing* to act non-virtuously; rather, they allow their guard down and their pure intention to wane, and so end up committing sins they might never have committed had they not left home.

Jigmé Lingpa's point here is echoed by multiple critics of pilgrimage who worry that the difficulties of pilgrimage will lead pilgrims to wrongdoing. Kathog Situ, for instance, notes that even those pilgrims

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30 'Jigs med gling pa Mkhyen brtse 'od zer, *Gnas bskor ba la spring ba'i gtam,* 574-580.
31 *Ibid.*, 576.
32 *Ibid.*, 576. See also Tāranātha, *Las stod kyi gnas skor ba 'dra la gdams pa*, 48. *Zhing gnas chen rnams su 'gro ba na/ tho co dang 'khrug long mi 'tshal zhing/ nyams len gyi rtel 'brel sgrig pa zhu*.
33 *Sho sna sda.*Jigs med gling pa, *Gnas bskor ba la spring ba'i gtam,*576.
34 *Ibid.*, 576.
35 *Ibid.*, 575-6.

who start with good intentions (*dang po khas len steng skor na bsam*) will, once they are tired, will develop wrong view towards the holy place (*dka' chad byung dus gnas la log lta byas*).[36] He specifically mentions the uphill (*gyen*) climbs that pilgrims will have to undertake as leading to laziness and disengagement. In other words, the difficulties of pilgrimage—and the bodily fatigue they engender, are enough to thwart pilgrims' good intentions.

Kathog Situ and Jigmé Lingpa both use this picture of the tired and sinful pilgrim to argue that pilgrims need to cultivate a pure and stable intention. Only then can the pilgrim rightfully place mind over body, and not give in to the weariness of travel. But both seem concerned nonetheless that the physical hardships of pilgrimage can outweigh even the best intentions of many would-be pilgrims. They worry, in effect, that good, ethical behavior is something that requires the comfort and order of regular sleep, warm meals, and a non-exhausted body.

Danger of Disorder

This concern that pilgrimage journeys represent a potential ethical danger is not merely a concern of individual thinkers—it is also institutional policy. Monastic guidelines (*bca' yig* or *bca' khrims*) often prohibit monks from going on pilgrimage. These monastic guidelines, also called monastic charters or monastic constitutions,[37] outline the rules and regulations governing the often-complex life in the monastery and functioned as a kind of extension of the *vinaya* for a particular monastery.[38]

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[36] Kah thog si tu 03 chos kyi rgya mtsho. "gNas skor pa rab 'bring mtha' gsum gyi rnam dbye." *gNas yig phyogs bsgrigs*, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1998, pp. 19–20. *Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC),* purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW20828_CAABC8, 1-2.

[37] As Jansen points out, they have also been written in non-monastic contexts such as hermitages, communities of tantric practitioners, and village communities. See Berthe Jansen, "How to Tame a Wild Monastic Elephant: Drepung Monastery According to the Great Fifth" In *Tibetans Who Escaped the Historian's Net: Studies in the Social History of Tibetan Societies*, edited by Charles Ramble, Peter Schwieger, and Alice Travers (Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2013), 111–139, particularly 112. See also Berthe Jansen, *The Monastery Rules: Buddhist Monastic Organization in Pre-Modern Tibet* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018).

[38] They have been studied first by Ter Ellingson in "Tibetan Monastic Constitutions: The bCa' Yig." In *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, edited by Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne (Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen Press, 1990) 205–29, and more recently by Berthe Jansen, in *The Monastery Rules: Buddhist Monastic Organization in Pre-Modern Tibet*. I am greatly indebted to Berthe Jansen, who first told me that monastic guidelines discouraged pilgrimage for monks.

It is worth noting at the outset that most of the monastic guidelines discouraging pilgrimage are from Gelukpa monasteries; monastic guidelines from Kagyu monasteries generally either mention pilgrimage in a somewhat more favorable light or do not mention it at all.[39] This may be due to the emphasis Gelukpa schools place on monastic discipline and philosophical study, as well as the fact that pilgrimage places that are often predominantly associated with Kagyu figures such as Milarepa.

It is also important to recognize that these monastic guidelines do not necessarily describe what is actually happening in monasteries. Rather, they spell out a set of ideals and fears that can suggest why and how monastic guidelines saw pilgrimage as a potential danger.

These monastic guidelines have multiple concerns about pilgrimage. The first and most basic—which be explored at greater length in a later section—is that pilgrimage takes monks away from their primary goal of intellectual and spiritual development. One monastic guideline for Sera Monastery, for instance, writes, "[Leaving] scholastic monasteries to exert oneself on pilgrimage to the holy places harms the intellect and studies. So, for a monk engaged in monastic study, there is nowhere else to go!"[40] According to the author of this text, the aim of living in a monastery such as Sera is sustained philosophical inquiry aimed at sharpening the mind so as to develop penetrating insight into emptiness. Insofar as pilgrimage takes time away from this project, it is potentially damaging.

However, in addition to hindering the goal of intellectual development, another underlying concern seems to be the loss of order and ethical discipline that could occur as a result of pilgrimage. In other words, monastic guidelines seem to fear that pilgrimage leads to opportunities for monks to break their vows.

These concerns are visible in the regulations monastic guidelines seek to place on pilgrimage. Incidentally, these regulations also suggest that, despite official prohibitions against pilgrimage, monastic guidelines anticipated that monks would go on pilgrimage anyway. The sense one gets from reading these guidelines is that even when pilgrimage is officially discouraged, it is clearly still a part of monks' lives. Monastic guidelines thus implicitly recognize that monks are going on pilgrimage insofar as they give regulations and guidance about *how* to travel.

One such regulation is that monks should never engage in travel

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[39] Many of these are collected in *Bca' yig phyogs bsgrigs,* ed. Bod rang skyong ljongs yig tshangs khang, TBRC W21612 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2001).

[40] *Mtshan nyid grwa sa nas gnas skor la rtsol ba byas na blo lad dang slob gnyer pas chos grwa ba rnams 'gro sa med*. *Bca' yig phyogs bsgrigs,* 89.

with women, unless it becomes necessary while visiting a lama or going on pilgrimage (*gnas mjal*).[41] Even as pilgrimage is recognized as a legitimate reason the monk might need to travel with women, there is still a concern that this interaction with members of the opposite sex can lead to violations of monastic vows of celibacy. Another monastic guideline worries that monks will use "going on pilgrimage" as an excuse to dawdle pointlessly at a pilgrimage place or their home village's monastery.[42] In both cases, pilgrimage is recognized as a legitimate excuse to travel, but one that opens the doors to sexual misconduct, general laziness, or other subversions of monastic discipline.

Monastic guidelines also insist that if monks are leaving the monastery to go on pilgrimage to holy places or travel to charnel grounds, he still must ask the monastic officials for permission and a leave of absence. He will also not receive his daily ration of food and the share of donations until he gives receipts for his travels.[43] Pilgrimage is again cast as a potential disruption to the life of the monastery. The monk is part of a community, and as such leaving raises the question of the monk's standing in the community. In addition, it is an opportunity for monks to step outside of the view of monastic authorities. This regulation attempts to ensure that monks notify monastic authorities of their actions, and thus place the action of pilgrimage within the overall structure of monastic discipline. But because pilgrimage involves the monk leaving the monastery, it involves a certain degree of loss of control.

Pilgrimage also represented a threat to monastic discipline insofar as pilgrimage brought laypeople into the monastery. For instance, on holy days or festival days, monks may go out into villages or lay people may come onto monastery grounds, thus allowing for intermingling between monks and lay pilgrims. This intermingling, particularly with women, seems to have been a source of concern and motivation for additional regulation in monastic guidelines. Multiple guidelines note that female pilgrims who come to the monastery for the day should not be allowed to stay longer than a day, that they

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41 *Gzhan yang bla ma mjal ba/ gnas mjal/ 'u lag lta bu'i dmigs bsal gtong dgos kyi rigs ma gtogs bud med kyi 'grim 'grul gtan nas byed mi 'jug*. From *Rgyal mchos bdun pa chen pos chos sde chen po se ra theg chen gling la bstsal ba'i khrims su bca' ba'i yi ge rab gsal nor bu'i me long*, in *Bca' yig phyogs bsgrigs*, 111.

42 *Yul grwa rigs 'ga' zhig yul dang gnas skor du bskyod pa gzhis dgon gtong las/ tsha chu sogs la khag dkris kyis gzhis dgon yul sogs phyogs mthar don med du yun rung bsdad de*. *Ibid.*, 279:

43 *Gal te dmigs bsal gyi brel ba yod nges dang gzugs gzhi ma bde ba bcas kyis yong ma thub pa sogs nas dgongs zhu ring thung bla ma dang dbu mdzad gnyis cha la zhu zhing sku gnyer la brda spyor/ de min gnas skor dang gnyan khrod 'grim pa sogs don che na'ang/ rgyal dbang kun dga' dpal 'byor kyis/ khyod yang na tshe dang sgrub pa snyoms/ yang na phyogs med kyis ldum bu gyis/ zla 'ga' zas 'tshol gyis gnas skor te*. *Ibid.*, 199.

should get permission from a monastic administrator, and that they are not allowed to stay in the temple or in the monks' quarters.[44] In either case, the function of the monastery as a place to get away from householder life and gender mixing can be undermined by pilgrimage.

Finally, there seems to be a concern about mixing across sectarian lines. The monastic guidelines for Drepung written by the Fifth Dalai Lama follow the admonition against pilgrimage by saying, "For those residents who want to go [on pilgrimage]: there are nearby places which are important sites for us (*rang phyogs*), such as Lhasa and Reting. There are no connections for pilgrimage to other places such as Tsari. So do not go [to them]."[45] The passage seems to anticipate that many monks will want to go on pilgrimage. It further anticipates that it will not be able to dissuade such aspiring pilgrims, and it seems instead to try to steer them to places associated with "us." Places like Lhasa and Reting, which the guideline lists, are strongholds of the Gelukpa school, whereas mountains like Kailash and Tsari are associated with the Kagyu school. So, the "us" (*rang phyogs*, literally our side) in question seems to have something to do with sectarian affiliation. It could also, however, simply indicate the area around the monastery, since *rang phyogs* can mean "our area," and Lhasa and Reting are closer to Drepung than Tsari. These pilgrimage places are not purely sectarian places, and certainly many pilgrims went to places associated with various schools indiscriminately. Nevertheless, we see the monastic guidelines at least making a distinction between different types of places, with some pilgrimage places being less problematic than others, whether by virtue of proximity or sectarian affiliation.

All of this seems to show that pilgrimage held an ambiguous position in the view of monastic institutions (or at least scholastic monasteries) insofar as it represented a potential disruption to the scholastic and communal life of the monastery, and opportunity for monks to skirt the regulations governing monastic life. Inside the monastery, there are certain rules and regulations that govern monks' behavior and ideals focuses their attention on religious practice. However, the physical distance required by pilgrimage involves leaving this well-regulated place for one that is outside the watchful eyes of the monastic community. It therefore represents a prime opportunity for monks

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[44] *Gnas skor ba sogs bud med rnams nyin mo dgon nang du bskyod dgos rigs skabs so sor chos khrims par gnang ba zhu sprod kyis gtong ba las/ dgon nang dang/ grwa zhag la zhabs sdod mi chog*. *Ibid.*, 565-6.

[45] *Gzhi ba 'gro 'dod yod pa rnams kyang lha sa dang ra sgreng sogs rang phyogs kyi skor yul 'gangs can thag nye sar yod bzhin du tsa ri sogs gzhan bskor ba'am [reading 'ang] 'brel chags mdog ma kha bas mi byed*. From *Chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras dkar spungs pa' dgon gyi bca' yig*, in *Bod kyi snga rabs khrims srol yig cha bdams bsgrigs*, 313. Many thanks to Liz Angowski for helping me parse this line.

to give into temptations towards sexual misconduct, laziness, or all variety of bad behavior.

Emphasis on Mental Cultivation over Material

Another theme that emerges from discussions about the value of pilgrimage is that many critics of pilgrimage want practitioners to emphasize mental cultivation over physical travel to pilgrimage places. This line of argument is clearly related to the above concern about reifying external places, but differs insofar as it does not focus on the harm of pilgrimage itself, but rather on the greater importance of mental cultivation. The implication is that pilgrimage is not necessary for such practices, which are better accomplished at home or at the monastery. As such, pilgrimage is a distraction or a missed opportunity because it is not as helpful mental cultivation. We can divide these arguments into a few subtypes based on the particular point of emphasis.

Focus on intellectual development

This concern is evident in the same monastic guidelines discussed above. As we have seen, these guidelines demonstrate fear that pilgrimage will disrupt orderly monastic life, but they also demonstrate fear that it will disrupt monks' intellectual lives as well. In other words, pilgrimage is not just a threat for the general upheaval of order and possibility of mixing with the lay community, but specifically a threat to mental cultivation that is supposed to lead to awakening.

One monastic guideline for Sera Monastery, for instance, writes, "[Leaving] scholastic monasteries to exert oneself on pilgrimage to the holy places harms the intellect and studies. So, for a monk engaged in monastic study, there is nowhere else to go! (i.e. there is no need to go anywhere else)."[46] A similarly worded[47] monastic guideline written by the Fifth Dalai Lama discourages pilgrimage on the grounds that "it seems to cause the blunting of the intellect."[48] Another states that "If one goes from the monastery's philosophical [education] and exerts oneself in pilgrimage, it blunts the intellect (*blo lad*) and harms your

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[46] *Mtshan nyid grwa sa nas gnas skor la rtsol ba byas na blo lad dang slob gnyer pas chos grwa ba rnams 'gro sa med. Bca' yig phyogs bsgrigs,* 89.

[47] Many of these guidelines contain strikingly similar language, suggesting that these guidelines are not entirely independent creations but rather share a general source or have influenced one another over time.

[48] *Mtshan nyid kyi grwa sa nas gnas skor la rtsol 'dod byed pa blo lad kyi rgyu yin 'dug gshis chos grwa ba 'gro sa med cing*. From *Chos sde chen po dpal ldan 'bras dkar spungs pa'i dgon gyi bca' yig tshul 'chal sa srung 'dul ba'i lcags kyo kun sel me long*, in *Bod kyi snga rabs khrims srol yig cha bdams bsgrigs* (Lhasa: bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1989), 313.

studies (*slob gnyer la gnod pa*), so there is no place [other than the monastery] where monks should go."[49] While the guidelines do not elaborate further, the general point is clear: the aim of living in a monastery such as Sera or Drepung—at least according to those who wrote these guidelines—is sustained philosophical inquiry aimed at sharpening the mind so as to develop penetrating insight into emptiness. Insofar as pilgrimage takes time away from this project, it is potentially damaging. But reading between the lines, the suggestion seems to be not merely that pilgrimage takes time away from philosophical study, such that the activity of pilgrimage is itself just an otherwise neutral waste of time, but rather that pilgrimage somehow *blunts* the intellect. Multiple sources use the term *blo lad*, which seems to draw on the term *lad pa*, which can be used as a non-transitive verb or adjective meaning "weak, faint, exhausted, blunt, dull, rotten, decayed." Thus, the *blo*, a term that can be translated as mind but here seems to mean the intellect or conceptual mind in particular, is somehow made weak, dull, or rotten by pilgrimage.

In the eyes of those writing monastic guidelines, pilgrimage may be exciting and emotionally compelling, but it does not help develop the capacity to understand the nature of reality. Worse, it harms the very tools by which one develops that capacity. Pilgrimage may therefore be a perfectly legitimate activity for laypeople, but is superseded in importance by the type of mental cultivation that is supposed to be the purview of scholarly monks. For them, pilgrimage represents a missed opportunity to spend time doing something that *matters*.

Focus on abandoning self and cultivating compassion

While monastic guidelines reject pilgrimage for monks specifically on the grounds that they should be focusing on mental cultivation, other critics of pilgrimage emphasize mental cultivation for practitioners more generally. For these authors, it is not only monks who should be focusing on mental cultivation, but lay people as well. Insofar as they do not see pilgrimage as furthering this goal, they think that pilgrimage is a waste of time.

For example, several Sakya commentators make this point when fleshing out Sakya Pandita's critiques of pilgrimage. In a broader text about the three vows, Sakya Pandita writes, "The sutras explain no rituals of going to the great places (*yul chen*)."[50] Because Sakya Pandita

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[49] *Bca' yig phyogs bsgrigs*, 89.

[50] *Mdo las yul chen de dag tu/ 'gro ba'i cho ga bshad pa med.* Sakya Pandita, *Sdom gsum rab dbye.* Edition contained in Jared Rhoton, A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and

makes this statement in the context of talking about tantric pilgrimage, it is unclear whether he means to say that the sutras do not describe to tantric pilgrimage to the tantric *pīthas* (*gnas*) and great places (*yul chen*) or whether he is saying that the sutras do not prescribe any pilgrimage practices at all. It may very well be the case that Sakya Pandita would feel differently about people visiting pilgrimage sites in India such as Bodhgaya or Kapilavastu. It is difficult to know for sure, because Sakya Pandita neither explicitly makes a distinction of tantric and non-tantric pilgrimage places, nor admits that there are any kinds of pilgrimage that are legitimate.

Most of his commentators, however, both those who agree with him and those who disagree with him, take him to be rejecting pilgrimage more generally.[51] The Sakya scholar Pökhangpa, for example, comments on this verse and elaborates on what he takes to be Sakya Pandita's point. He writes that the exoteric path prescribed in the sutras is simply that of abandoning self and cultivating compassion, and that there is no practice of pilgrimage which is prescribed in addition to that. He allows that the sutras describe practices of solitude (*dben par*) in the forest (*nags khrod*) but argues that this is entirely separate from travel to a specific location.[52] In other words, Buddhist practitioners should focus on the goals of abandoning self and cultivating compassion, and because practices of pilgrimage do not help with that, they should be rejected.

Tantric Systems: The Sdom Gsum Rab Dbye and Six Letters (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 310.

51 Khatag Zamyak (1896-1961), a merchant who traveled across Tibet in the 1940s, says that Sakya Pandita's arguments "have no point beyond refuting the virtues of pilgrimage to holy places." *Sa skya'i rjes 'jug 'ga' res rmongs pa'i zhen tshig gis dgag pa 'o tshod smra bar de gnas skor ba'i dge dgag las don tshan gang yang med cing*. Kha stag 'dzam yag, *Bod dang bal po rgya gar bcas la gnas bskor bskyod pa'i nin deb*, 170. Drikung Chungtsang Chökyi Drakpa (1595-1659), quotes Sakya Pandita's rejection of pilgrimage for those who have not obtained the correct tantric initiations, which he declares "just incorrect. It [pilgrimage to Kailash] is appropriate regardless of whether one has fully obtained the four initiations or not." *Yul chen bgrod pa don med yin/ zhes pa'i bar 'di mi 'thad pa 'ba' zhig ste/ dbang bzhi rdzogs kyang rung la ma rdzogs kyang rung*. Chos kyi grags pa, *Gzhan gyi rgol ngal 'joms pa'i legs bshad lung rigs smra ba'i mgul rgyan*, in *Collected Works of Chos kyi grags pa*, TBRC W22082 (Kulkhan: Drikung Kagyu Institute, 1999), 387.

52 *Des nags khrod du dben par nyams su len pa'i tshul mdo las/ bdag 'dzin spong ba dang snying rje chen po bsgom pa'i 'du shes kyis rkyen lam du slongs tshul gsungs pa bzhin byed na tshul dang mthun cing de las lhag pa'i gnas chen 'grim tshul mtshan nyid theg pa las gsungs pa med do*. Spos khang pa Rin chen rgyal mtshan, *Sdom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i gzhung lugs legs par bshad pa*, in *Dpal sa skya'i sdom gsum phyogs bsgrigs*, ed. Si khron bod yig dpe rnying bsdu sgrig khang TBRC W3CN5910. (Chengdu: Rgyal khab dpe mdzod khang dpe skrun khang, 2015), 322.

Focus on Meditation

Finally, Jigmé Lingpa makes a similar point, but focused on meditation. He argues that Buddhist practice should consist in meditation practice that can be done at home. He writes, "pure dharma consists in the conjunction of the generation stage, which understands the essentials of what is to be purified and the action of purification, and the completion stage which knows what is to be realized and what is to be renounced along the ten stages.[53] If you do that, you'll get enlightened from your own bed, because the buddha exists in oneself."[54] Jigmé Lingpa thus prioritizes the inner work of generation and completion stage meditative practice over the search for any external pilgrimage place. If the pilgrim properly performs Buddhist practice, he suggests, there is no need to go anywhere else.

Ambivalence about the Material

Now that we have reviewed the various types of arguments against pilgrimage, we can ask: what do these various concerns about pilgrimage tell us about the pilgrimage in Tibet?

First, a general point about the status of practices like pilgrimage in religious traditions. These arguments demonstrate the sometimes-overlooked fact that pilgrimage was not an unquestioned practice in Tibet. Scholars have often noted the importance of pilgrimage to Tibetan religious culture, and it would be easy to assume that pilgrimage was universally seen as a beneficial practice. Instead, as we have seen here, Tibetan thinkers disagreed about whether and how to engage the external world on pilgrimage. Indeed, there seem to be different ideas about how pilgrimage "worked," if it worked at all.

While the implicit assumption of much scholarship is that religious practices are undergirded by a stable, coherent, and preexisting set of beliefs, more often, the case seems to be that practices develop, and that these practices prompt thought, reflection, and contestation. Practices such as pilgrimage rarely have a single meaning—instead they are the object of competing claims by various members of the religious community, and are subject to ongoing debate about whether and how they should be performed.

Second, a specific point rising from these materials. I suggest that

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[53] This refers to the ten *bhūmis*, or stages, which describe the progression of the practitioner on the path to enlightenment.

[54] *Chos dag sbyang gzhi spyod byed kyi/ gnad don go ba'i bskyed rim dang/ sa bcu'i spangs rtogs la rig pa'i/ rdzogs rim zung du 'brel 'gyur na/ sangs rgyas rang la yod pa'i phyir/ byang chub mal gyi nang nas thob*. 'Jigs med gling pa Mkhyen brtse 'od zer, *Gnas bskor ba la spring ba'i gtam*, 578.5-6.

each of these critiques relates to the necessarily *material* dimensions of pilgrimage, and conveys a fundamental ambivalence about that materiality. Specifically, I understand critics of pilgrimage to be concerned that pilgrimage's necessary engagement with the material world because it introduces an uncontrollable dynamic to pilgrimage. This uncontrollability threatens the efficacy of the whole endeavor, and made critics wonder if pilgrimage was a worthwhile practice at all.

I am not here suggesting that we should uncritically reproduce a mind-matter distinction. That Tibetans continued to embrace pilgrimage—as well as countless other practices that engage material places and objects—should demonstrate that these worries about pilgrimage could be overcome. Nevertheless, we see a clear thread of anxiety about the material in almost all these critiques about pilgrimage.

For instance, we have seen that critics of pilgrimage were concerned that pilgrims might assume that material places grant benefits automatically, that pilgrims might reify external places, that pilgrims would unwittingly expose themselves to increased danger or opportunities for wrongdoing, or that pilgrims might neglect mental cultivation. I suggest that these different critiques share a fundamental concern about the uncontrollability of the material.

In order to unpack what I mean by this, it will be helpful to introduce Bruno Latour's distinction between mediators and intermediaries. Latour imagines human and non-human actors (actants, in his terminology) connected in networks of inter-relations. In the case of pilgrimage, we might imagine a relatively simple network of a pilgrim connected to a material place connected to a benefit that arises from successful pilgrimage. Latour notes that many people in this situation would think of the material place as an *intermediary*—something which "transports meaning or force without transformation."[55] The pilgrim intends to get a benefit, and so goes to the place, which transmits the benefit to the pilgrim. In this situation, all is well and good. But according to Latour, many of the material things we take to be intermediaries are actually *mediators*.

Mediators, in contrast to intermediaries, do not transmit meaning or force without transformation, but instead "transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning or the elements they are supposed to carry."[56] They may transmit the intended meaning, or they may transform it so that the intended meaning or power is not conveyed in the same way. In the case of the intermediary, the intermediary can easily be ignored, because it introduces no change to the transfer of meaning

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[55] Bruno Latour. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York (Oxford University Press), 39.

[56] *Ibid.*, 39.

or power, but in the case of the meditator, one has to pay attention to the possible changes introduced. And indeed, what seemed like a simple mediator might turn out to involve several possible mediators, all of which *make a difference* to the outcome.

In the case of our example of the pilgrim, the pilgrim intends to go to the material place intending to get a benefit. If the material place were a simple intermediary, this will always go off without a hitch. But if the material place is a mediator, it may introduce transformations or distortions that affect whether the pilgrim gets the benefit. First of all, the pilgrim may mistakenly focus on the place, rather than recognizing that the place is embedded in a network of relations. Or perhaps the difficulty of the material journey wears down the pilgrim's resolve such that they fall into sin and do not gain any benefit from pilgrimage. Or perhaps the pilgrim maintains a devoted attitude and does gain benefit from the pilgrimage. The fact that the material world is the mediator between the pilgrim and their intended goal of gaining some benefit from pilgrimage introduces possible distortions, and renders the situation more complicated than if the pilgrimage place had been a simple intermediary. The pilgrim's intention no longer entirely dictates the outcome of the pilgrimage, because the materiality of the place is always going to introduce possible distortion.

In arguing that critics of pilgrimage have a fundamental ambivalence towards the material, I am suggesting that they see the material dimensions of pilgrimage as introducing possible distortions.

For instance, engaging the material world introduces *friction*. That is, in traveling across the mountainous Tibetan landscape to get to holy places, pilgrims could expect to face cold, hunger, danger from bandits, group squabbles, and all variety of unpleasant circumstances. Moving across the landscape is difficult, these authors asserted, and while we might tend to focus on the destination rather than the journey, they did not want anyone to forget these difficulties. Nor did they necessarily assume that these difficulties redounded to the benefit of the pilgrim. As Drakpa Gyeltsen suggests, dharma practice is already difficult enough, so why make it more so? He echoes the Buddhist idea that to be born a human in a Buddhist country is a rare gift and seems incredulous at the notion that some might throw away that precious gift on a dangerous path with no real benefits.

This friction and difficulty also has moral dimensions, because it can thwart the good intentions of the pilgrim. Jigmé Lingpa also highlights that the travails of the pilgrimage route make it more difficult to behave correctly. He sees the material difficulties of pilgrimage as making it more likely rather than less likely that the pilgrim will engage in sin. Monastic guidelines think that the disorder introduced by pilgrim-

age will disrupt monastic life and study, and possibly lead to wrongdoing on the part of monks.

The material world is also *particular.* While I have been speaking in relatively general terms in this article, each place is different, with a specific history, location, and set of circumstances. This particularity also introduces possible distortions, because each place mediates the pilgrimage encounter in a different way. This thwarts any attempt to standardize pilgrimage. It also threatens to undermine the goal of developing equanimity and equal regard for all places.

These aspects of materiality—and its resulting status as mediator rather than simple intermediary—render the process of pilgrimage complex and vulnerable to distortion. Pilgrims cannot expect benefits to accrue automatically, because the materiality of pilgrimage has a meaningful effect on the process.

This view, I argue, helps us to understand some of the underlying concerns that connect seemingly disparate critiques of pilgrimage that exist in the Tibetan record.

When Pilgrimage Goes Well

This analysis of how pilgrimage can go wrong can also help us to construct a picture of what happens when pilgrimage goes well. That is, by seeing the common concern that the material world might thwart pilgrimage, we can see the ways that Tibetan thinkers sought to ensure successful pilgrimage.

The primary way that Tibetan thinkers try to counteract the potentially disruptive materiality of pilgrimage is to emphasize the pilgrim's *mental state.* By attempting to ensure a particular mental state on the part of the pilgrim, critics of pilgrimage sought to limit the variability and potential harm that the material dimensions of pilgrimage could introduce. These critics tried to undermine any notion that the pilgrimage place itself offers automatic blessings, and instead tried to locate the material place in a broader project of self-cultivation.

For while some critics rejected pilgrimage entirely, most critics who emphasize the importance of mental state seem to admit that there is some use for pilgrimage. For these authors, however, the potential benefits of pilgrimage depend not solely on the material objects or landscape, but on the pilgrim's mental state. They think that the pilgrimage place has power and blessings that can benefit the pilgrim, but that the wrong mental state on the part of the pilgrim can block any access to these power and blessings.

See, for example, Jigme Lingpa, who—after critiquing pilgrimage—somewhat grudgingly admits that the practice has value. He writes: "By all means, if you are settled on your desire [to go on pilgrimage],

do extensive prostrations, circumambulations, and prayers in the three great holy mountains… Even for the beings who do not enter the path, this [practice of pilgrimage], which must be done conscientiously (*bag yod*), purifies the obscurations and collects the accumulations—it is profound."[57]

Ultimately, it seems that what Jigme Lingpa is pointing towards, albeit indirectly, is a situation in which neither the pilgrim nor the pilgrimage place *alone* has the power to grant blessings. To the extent that pilgrimage places are able to *do* something to the pilgrim, it is but only insofar as the pilgrim has the proper mental engagement with place.

This, then seems to be the most broadly representative picture of Tibetan pilgrimage gone well. There are certainly some thinkers and texts that claim that pilgrimage places can be entirely efficacious on their own. And there are thinkers who think that the mental aspect of pilgrimage is *so* important as to render the pilgrimage place—and travel to external places entirely—useless. But for most of the thinkers who write about pilgrimage, the physical pilgrimage place plays some role (how the pilgrimage derives the power to affect pilgrims is outside the scope of the present article). However, to access the power and blessings inherent in the place, the pilgrim must maintain a particular kind of affective engagement with the place.

Such a mental state structures the encounter with the pilgrimage place in such a way that whatever qualities inherent in the pilgrimage site can benefit the pilgrim. It should, ideally, be characterized by devotion (*dad pa*) and a commitment to upholding moral discipline.

Maintaining this mental state also prevents a major concern that appears in critiques of pilgrimage: the danger that the pilgrim will fall into sin on their pilgrimage journey. Critics of pilgrimage seem highly aware that pilgrimage disrupts the everyday life of the pilgrim. It is physically difficult, which reduces mental fortitude, and exposes the pilgrim to new environments that offer opportunities for wrongdoing. In such a variable environment, it is highly important that the pilgrim maintain a steady and devoted mental state.

In effect, pilgrimage goes well when the pilgrim cultivates devotion that keeps body, speech, and mind in alignment. This allows for the pilgrim to establish positive karmic connections with the pilgrimage place, and tap into the blessings held there. This minimizes potential distortions introduced by the materiality of pilgrimage. By contrast, if the pilgrim does not maintain the correct mental state, their body goes on the pilgrimage journey while their mind falls into sin and distraction, rendering the whole effort pointless.

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[57] *Lam ma zhugs kyi skye bo la'ang/ bag yod shugs la brten dgos pa'i/ tshogs gsog sgrib sbyong 'di nyid zab*. 'Jigs med gling pa, *Gnas bskor ba la spring ba'i gtam*, 579.2.

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Empty Iridescent Spheres. Notes on the Metaphysics of Light in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Tantric Sources

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One of the features of the second dissemination of Buddhist teachings in Tibet, after the eleventh century, was the emergence of a new esoteric religious literature with a progressive development of yogic practices and ideas that considered light as an essential principle. Over time, a metaphysics of light took form that strongly characterized yogic theory and praxis. Light was seen as the fundamental structural component of the whole universe, from both a cosmological and ontological point of view. In particular, I refer to the doctrines of the Indian *Kālacakra-tantra* system, to the Tibetan Rnying ma heterodox corpus known as Heart Essence (*Snying thig*) and to the ensuing *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* literature of the Bon tradition.[1]

By using the definition "metaphysics of light", I am aware that this expression was coined in 1916 by the German philosopher Clemens Baeumker (1853–1924), in his analysis of medieval Latin philosophical and religious thought.[2] Robert Grossetest (ca.1168–1253) was the most interesting representative of this philosophy. He was deeply influenced by St. Augustine, whose thought permeates his writings and from whom he drew a Neoplatonic outlook, but he was also one of the first to make extensive use of the Latin translations of Greek and Arabic philosophical and scientific writings, notably by Aristotle, Avicenna and Averroes.[3]

Although I am not launching into a project of comparative study of philosophical and religious experience, I should like to

[1] I shall not deal here with Bon po Rdzogs chen literature, a theme I hope to take up in future studies.

[2] See Baeumker 1908: 358 et seq.

[3] Among the different studies on Robert Grossetest see McEvoy 2000; Panti 2017; Hendrix 2010. See also https://grossetestesociety.org/about/, accessed 15/04/2022.

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draw a line between these two medieval worlds, at least in providing the definition of the religious phenomena we shall be reflecting upon.

The Kālacakratantra tradition

The *Kālacakratantra* (*KCT*) literature, as is well known, represents the last phase of Indian esoteric Buddhism. It emerged in India at the beginning of the 11th century and was transferred straightaway to Tibet by Indian Paṇḍitas, namely Somanātha, Samantaśrī, Srī Bhadrabodhi, Viśvaśrī, etc.[4]

These authors, together with several Tibetan *lo tsā ba*, such as 'Bro dge slong Shes rab grags, Rwa Chos rab, Gyi yo Zla ba'i 'Od zer, etc., translated a vast corpus of *KCT* texts that are now preserved in the *Bka' 'gyur* and *Bstan 'gyur* collections.

The core instruction of the *KCT* system consists in the practice of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* (sixfold yoga), during the *utpattikrama* process, which leads the yogin to attain ultimate reality, the realisation of the *Mahāmudrā:* radiant, blissful and immutable wisdom.

Ṣaḍaṅgayoga is also a widespread practice in many Indian schools, both Hindu and Buddhist. The names of the six auxiliaries are very ancient and have been handed down over several centuries, starting from the *Maitrī Upaniṣad* (VI, 18).[5] In the course of time they have assumed different meanings, according to the different traditions. In India it cannot be considered a unitary coherent doctrine, since each of the six auxiliaries is explained and practised in various ways in the different Indian traditions, such as the Kashmirian Advaita Śaiva tradition, the Vaiṣṇava tradition, the later Gorakṣaśataka yoga traditions and others.[6]

The first Buddhist esoteric text in which we find a detailed analysis of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* is the *Guhyasamājottara,* the 18th chapter of the *Guhyasamājatantra* (*GST*) representing a synthesis of the *GST* doctrines.

Later it was adopted in the *KCT* practice with a different formulation, in which the visionary elements became very important. This new "visionary" formulation was the nucleus of the doctrine of the so-called Transcendent (or Alternative) *KCT*, within a tradition that enacts a threefold division of the *KCT*: Outer, Inner and

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4 On the history of the *KCT* and its diffusion in Tibet see: Newman 1987a; Newman 1987b; Newman 2021; Orofino 1994a: 11-30; Gnoli, Orofino 1995: 13-103; Wallace 2001: 3-30.

5 See Cowell 1935: 129-136.

6 See Grönbold 1996: 3-17; Mallinson, Singleton 2017: 7-11; Sferra 2000: 11-50.

Transcendent.[7]

The earliest and most important text of the *KCT* literary corpus, where we find this new formulation is the *Sekoddeśa* (*SU*), in 174 strophes. According to the tradition, it is the longest fragment of the *Paramādibuddha*, or the *Mūlakālacakratantra*, the root tantra of the Kālacakra school, believed to consist of 12,000 verses that were lost in Sanskrit and were not translated into Tibetan. Although only the first leaf of the *SU* manuscript is preserved in Sanskrit, we have two very different Tibetan translations of the entire text, dating back to the second half of the 11th century: one by the Kashmiri Paṇḍita Somanātha and the Tibetan *lo tsā ba* 'Bro Dge slong Shes rab grags (text A), the other by the Nepalese Paṇḍita Samantaśrī and the Tibetan *lo tsā ba* Rwa Chos rab (text B).[8]

This new formulation also emerges in two other very early treatises of the *KCT* tradition, the *Laghutantraṭīkā* by Vajrapāṇi (commentary to the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra)*[9] and the *Hevajrapiṇḍārthaṭīkā* by Vajragarbha (commentary to the *Hevajratantra*).[10] These two texts, together with Puṇḍarīkā's *Vimalaprabhāṭīkā* (*VP*), the commentary to the *Laghukālacakratantra* (*LKCT*), an abridged version (*laghu)* of the *Paramādibuddha*, traditionally considered to consist of 1030 strophes still extant in Sanskrit and in its Tibetan translation, forming a body of integrated texts, known as the "Bodhisattva cycle" (*byang chub sems dpa'i skor*) or the "Bodhisattva commentaries corpus" (*byang chub se dpa'i 'grel pa rnams*), were fundamental to the spread of the *KCT* doctrines.

The *SU* was commented by Nāropā in his *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* (*SUṬ*) on the basis of the exegetical tradition of the Bodhisattva corpus.[11] It is the major authoritative commentary of the *SU* of the three extant in Sanskrit, the others being the *Sekoddeśaṭippanī* by Sādhuputra Śrīdharānanda [12] and the short anonymous

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[7] See the commentary by the 14th Dalai Lama, Rgyal ba Bstan 'dzin Rgya mtsho, in his *Dpal dus 'khor dbang skor gyi skor*: "Outer *KCT* is comprised of the elements of the universe in which we live. Inner *KCT* consists of the psychological aggregates, the sensory and psychic capacities of the living beings and so forth. Thirdly, alternative *KCT* is the path of the generation and completion stage yogas, the yogic methods that have the power to purify the above two *Kālacakra*." Quoted in Mullin 1991: 99-10.

[8] The two Tibetan translations of the *SU*, together with a reconstruction of the Sanskrit text by Raniero Gnoli, have been edited in Orofino 1994a. See also Gnoli 1999.

[9] Vajrapāni, *Laghutantraṭīkā,* see Cicuzza 2001.

[10] Vajragarbha, *Hevajrapiṇḍārthaṭīkā (Śaṭsāhaśrikā Hevajrapiṇḍārthaṭīkā),* see Shendge 2004.

[11] Nāropā, *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* (*Paramārthasaṃgraha*), see Sferra, Merzagora 2006. Italian translation with commentary in Gnoli, Orofino 1994.

[12] See the critical edition in Gnoli 1997.

Seoddeśapañjikā.[13] There is also another commentary by *Vijayendra*, extant only in its Tibetan translation by Blo gros brtan pa preserved, as all the others, in the Tibetan *bstan 'gyur*.[14]

Other important texts where the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* of the Kālacakra school is fully analysed is Anupamarakṣita's *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga*, a text that precedes Nāropā's *SUṬ*, and the *Guṇabharaṇi*, a later commentary to Anupamarakṣita's *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* written in the 13th century by Raviśrijñāna.[15]

I should like to briefly focus here on the specific innovative elements of these treatises, analysing the description of the experiences and visions of light and their importance in the ultimate wisdom realisation process.[16]

In the *SU* (strophes 24-34) we find a very interesting description of the nature of the visions that appear to the yogin during the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* practice:

> This essential reality has to be attained by the yogin through inconceivable clear visions, like all the signs of smoke, etc., images of wisdom, similar to the sky. (24)
>
> Transcending being or not being, they are experienced[17] by the yogin's own pure mind, completely devoid of material aggregates made of atoms. (25)
>
> These signs are: smoke, mirage, fire-fly, lamp, flame, sun, moon, darkness, lightning, great iridescent sphere (skr. *mahābindu*, tib. *thig le che*): universal image (skr. *viśbabimba*, tib. *sna tshogs gzugs*), luminous radiance. (26)
>
> With eyes half-open, half-closed, the yogin should meditate continually on the undifferentiated image that appears in the emptiness, like a dream. (27)
>
> This meditation on the immaterial image is not a meditation for the yogins. In the mind, there is neither being nor non-being, because in the image an undifferentiated reality appears. (28)

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[13] See the critical edition of the *Sekoddeśapañjikā* in: *Annual of the Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism*, Taishō University, 16, 1994: 354-289.

[14] Vijayendra **Sekoddeśaṭippaṇī* (*Dbang mdor bstan pa'i brjed byang*) in *P*#2014.

[15] See the critical edition in Sferra 2000.

[16] I have already analysed the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* according to the *KCT* tradition in Orofino 1996. Here I will briefly summarise the phases of the yoga in connection with luminous apparitions.

[17] Skr. *Pratyayārthaiḥ svacetasaḥ*, Tibetan text A: *rang gyi sems kyi rkyen gyi don*, Tibetan text B: *sems kyi rkyen gyis don rnams dang*. Nāropā, in his *SUṬ* comments: "because they are the perceived by the yogin's own awareness" (skr: *yogisvasaṃvedanā* tib. *rnal 'byor pas rang rig pa*).

> As a young girl who sees in the divinatory mirror[18] an image not born from any material thing, the yogin sees in the ether the past or future reality. (29)
>
> Of this magic image there is neither being nor non-being, because it is a vision empty of reality. This existence is, in its essence, non-existence, it is like an illusion, a dream, a magic apparition. (30)
>
> In this non-existing reality, a born reality manifests itself and like the wish-fulfilling gem accomplishes the desires of the infinite beings. (31)

As far as the nature of these images is concerned, in his commentary Nāropā explains[19] that they are apparitions (skr. *pratibhāsa,* tib. *rab gsal*) that manifest without a reason, suddenly (tib. *akasmāt,* skr. *blo bur du*), without conceptualisations (skr. *acintita,* tib. *bsam gyis mi khyab pa*), inconceivable. They are signs (skr. *nimitta,* tib. *mtshan ma*), they are images of awareness (skr. *prajñābimba,* tib. *shes rab kyi gzugs brnyan*), i.e. they are the insight (skr. *dhī*, tib. *blo*) of the intrinsic nature of emptiness, that transcends the subject and the object of perception. They are similar to the sky (skr. *nabhaḥsama,* tib. *nam mkha' mnyam pa*), beyond being or not being (skr. *astināstivyatikrānta* tib. *yod dang med las rnam par 'das*). Since they are perceived only by the personal self-awareness of the yogin (skr. *yogisvasaṃvedanā* tib. *rnal 'byor pas rang rig pa*), these images are experienced by the yogin's pure mind: they are completely devoid of material aggregates (made of) atoms (skr. *paramāṇurajaḥsandohaiḥ sarvataḥ parivarjitaiḥ*, tib. *rdul phran las skyes tshogs pa rnams kun nas yongs su dor ba*) since they are forms devoid of any inherent nature, uncreated, marvellous, (endowed) with all aspects.

During the six phases of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* the impure breath, the fruit of dichotomous thought and the generator of saṃsāric vision is stopped. *Prāṇa* is brought into the mystical central channel (skr. *avadhūtī,* tib. *kun 'dar ma*) through particular techniques of breath control. Spiritual awakening is obtained through the ascension of the drop (skr. *bindu*, tib. *thig le*) of semen in the central channel.[20] When it reaches the *cakra* of the head, the semen radiates down-

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[18] On this ritual of divination see Orofino 1994b.

[19] Gnoli, Orofino 1994: 254; Sferra, Merzagora 2006: 136, 314.

[20] In the subtle physiology of the major part of the Yoga systems in India, the body of the yogin, including channels, winds, locations (*cakra*) is conceived as a microcosm of the universe and the life-giving internal liquid semen is known as *bindu*. Cf. Mallinson, Singleton 2017: xxx.

ward pervading the yogin's body in four increasing stages of ecstasy. At the end of the process, immutable wisdom is realized and the impure saṃsāric breath, the aggregates, the organs are definitively purified and transmuted into their immutable condition.

The first auxiliary is the withdrawal (skr. *pratyāhāra,* tib. *so sor sdud pa*). In the *KCT* tradition, withdrawal corresponds to an interiorisation (skr. *svavṛtti ,* tib. *rang la 'jug pa*) of the senses and of the sense objects. Their ordinary activity ceases and they are turned in on themselves. In this way, physiological activity is stopped and the yogin sees everything in emptiness, in a non-differentiated way. While in the *GST* tradition the result of this is the apparition of five luminous epiphanies, in the *KCT* tradition we find and addition of a further five signs.

In the *GST* the five luminous epiphanies are:

1. mirage (skr. *marīcika,* tib. *smig rgyu*), 2. smoke (skr. *dhūma*, tib. *du ba*), 3. flash of firefly (skr. *khadyota,* tib. *mkha' snang*), 4. lamp (skr. *pradīpa,* tib. *sgron ma*), and 5. cloudless sky (skr. *nirabhragagana,* tib. *sprin med pa'i nam mkha'*).

In the *KCT* tradition the first 4 epiphanies correspond to those of the *GST* tradition, while the fifth is similar to a flash of flame (skr. *jvāla,* tib. *'bar ba*) and a further five are added, with lights similar to: 6. the moon (skr. *chandra,* tib. *zla ba*), 7. the sun (skr. *arka,* tib. *nyi ma*), 8. darkness (skr. *tamaḥ,* tib. *mun can*), 9. flash of lightning (skr. *paramakalā,* tib. *cha shas*), 10. an iridescent sphere (skr. *mahābindu*, tib. *thig le che*) or the universal form of clear light (skr. *viśvabimbaṃ prabhāsvara,* tib. *'od gsal sna tshogs gzugs*).

The *LKCT* (V, 115) and *VP*,[21] specify that in order to let the first four signs appear, the yogin has to meditate in a closed dark place, where no light must filter in. This yoga is called night yoga (skr. *rātri yoga,* tib. *mtshan mo'i mal 'byor*) or yoga of space (skr. *akaśayoga* (tib. *nam mkha'i rnal 'byor*). The next six signs will appear by engaging in daylight yoga (skr. *divāyoga,* tib. *nyin mo'i rnal 'byor*) or the yoga of roofless space (skr. *abhyavakaśayoga,* tib. *bla gab med pa rnal 'byor*), that is, a practice performed with one's back to the sun in a space surrounded by four walls but without a roof, whereby the only things the yogin sees is the empty sky. Staring at the empty sky, without any eye movement, the yogin will see a sphere (skr. *bindu*, tib. *thig le*), inside this sphere a black line will appear, emanating rays of shimmering light. In this line will appear the omniscient form (skr. *sarvajñānabimba,* tib. *kun mkhyen gzugs*) like the sun reflected in the water, without hindrance, full of colour, possessing all aspects as one's own mind, without any objective

[21] See Banerjee 1985; Dwivedi, Bahulkar 1994: 53-57.

considerations. This final sign, which embraces the vision of the entire universe, is also described as the Buddha form (skr. *buddhabimba*, tib. *sangs rgyas kyi gzugs*) or, again, as a form of emptimess (skr. *śūnyabimba,* tib. *stong gzugs*). In Nāropā's *SUṬ* it is described as a pure, translucent image, endowed with all aspects (skr. *viśvabimbaprabhāsvaraṃ,* tib. *sna tshogs gzugs brnyan 'od gsal ba*), corresponding to the realisation of the *Saṃbhogakāya*.[22]

The second auxiliary of the yoga consists of contemplation (skr. *dhyāna,* tib. *bsam gtan*) that serves to stabilize the manifestation of the form of emptimess (skr. *śūnyabimba,* tib. *stong gzugs*).

In Nāropā's commentary this empty form, kindled by withdrawal and established by contemplation is not a mental visualisation. It is the result of the cessation (skr. *uparama,* tib. *nye bar zhi ba*) of ordinary perception which enables a spontaneous apparition (skr. *pratibhāsa,* tib. *rab tu snang ba*) that illuminates the three worlds and the three times.[23]

The third auxiliary, breath control, *prāṇāyāma* (tib. *srog rtsol ba*) is the branch of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* most emphasised in the *SU* (strophes 35-76). It consists in stopping the two courses of the solar and lunar breath in the right and left channels and bringing the breath into the central channel by means of a specific breathing exercise called *vajrajāpa* (tib. *rdo rje zlas pa*), adamantine recitation, based on inhalation (skr. *purāka,* tib. *dgang ba*) reciting the syllable *Oṃ*, holding the vital breath (skr. *kumbhaka*, tib. *bum pa can*) reciting the sullable *Hūṃ*, and exalation (skr. *recaka,* tib. *dbyung ba*) reciting the syllable *Āḥ*.

The five aggregates (*rūpa*, *vedanā* etc.) that flow in the left nostrils, and the five elements (earth, water etc.) that flow in the right nostrils, dissolve one into the other and are unified in the central channel, where the *prāṇa* flows into the six *maṇḍala*, the *maṇḍala* of gnosis (skr. *jñāna*, tib. *ye shes*) while the yogin achieves the supreme immutable bliss. The dissolution of the five *maṇḍalas* undergoes an upward process when the breath is in the right channel, with the earth element dissolving into the water element, water into fire, etc. and a downward process when the breath is in the left channel, until the breath enters the *maṇḍala* of gnosis. There it dissolves in emptiness, and thence it reaches the form, endowed with all aspects (skr. *viśvabimba*, tib. *rnam pa thams cad pa'i gzugs*). At this moment the yogin achieves knowledge of supreme immutable bliss, the great perfection of wisdom, the source of all *siddhis,*

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[22] See *SUṬ,* commentary to strophe 26 of *SU* in the edition by Sferra, Merzagora 2006: 137, 314; see also the Italian translation by Gnoli, Orofino 1994: 255.

[23] See Sferra, Merzagora 2006: 143, 321; Gnoli, Orofino 1994: 261.

such as the capacity of flying in the sky, and complete mastery over the three worlds.[24]

Nāropā, in his *SUṬ*, quotes the strophes *LKC*, IV 196-197 and their commentary in *VP*, IV, 119, to introduce an alternative yogin technique, based on a violent method (skr. *haṭhayoga,* tib. *btsan thabs kyi rnal 'byor*) that might be necessary if the realisation of instantaneous immutable wisdom does not arise, if the yogin is unable to control his breath perfectly.[25] The yogin should then force his breath to flow in the central channel through the practice of resonance (skr. *nāda* tib. *nāda goms pa*) and restrain the bodhicitta drops, (skr. *bodhicittabindu,* tib. *byang chub kyi sems kyi thig le*) in the jewel of the vajra (skr. *kuliśamaṇi,* tib. *rdo rje nor bu*), a metaphor for the male sexual organ, while it stays in the lotus of the wisdom (skr. *prajñābja;* tib. *shes rab kyi chu skyes*) the female sexual organ. As a consequence of this practice the yogin, not moving, will achieve the realisation of the immutable instantaneous wisdom.

As Mallinson and Szántó have noticed, the *haṭhayoga* "violent" method was already circulating in the Vajrayāna milieu in the 11th century, as the *LKC* verses demonstrates**.** These techniques of controlling the breath, and thereby semen, were first elaborated in detail in a Vajrayāna work called the *Amṛtasiddhi,* "The Attainment of Immortality" a Buddhist manual of tantric yoga and alchemical teachings written around the second half of the 11th century.[26]

The fourth auxiliary, retention (skr. *dhāraṇā,* tib. *'dzin pa*) represents a stage of progression of the previous yoga. The key point of this stage is the unification of the vital force (tib. *srog*) with the *bindu,* (tib. *thig le*) the subtle energy, into the *avadhūtī* and meditate on the supreme immutable wisdom.[27]

In the fifth auxiliary, mindfulness (skr. *anusmṛti,* tib. *rjes su dran pa*), the *bindu* at the crown is aroused by the heat or fire of desire, engendered by the presence or by the representation of a woman. The energy of lust hypostasised as a feminine power lying in the navel cakra is called *caṇḍalī* (tib. *gtum mo*). This *caṇḍalī* flares up naturally and with its heat it starts to melt the white seed (the moon) of the *bodhicitta* that gradually flows down from the head. The descent of the seed is effected through four stages, each char-

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[24] This passage from *LKCT*, V, 122 and *VP*, is quoted in Nāropā's *SUṬ*, see Sferra, Merzagora 2000: 135-136, 312; Gnoli, Orofino 1994: 251-252.

[25] See Sferra, Merzagora 2006: 133-134; 308-309; Gnoli, Orofino 1994: 246-247.

[26] See Mallinson, Szántó 2021. See also Grimes 2020.

[27] *Srog ni thig ler gzhug par bya/ abadhūti'i zhabs brten nas/ mchog tu mi 'gyur bsgom par bya//* [The yogin] has to combine the vital force into the *bindu,* and, with the *avadhūtī* as his bases, will meditate on the supreme immutable [wisdom]. *SU*, 77, in Orofino 1994a: 80-81.

acterized by different and ever-increasing sensations of joy (skr. *ananda*, tib. *dga' ba*). The yogin experiences a blissful condition, which in the *VP*, IV, 126 is compared to the ten states of *kāma*: fixation, desire, fever, pallor of the face, loss of appetite, trembling, folly, dizziness, mental confusion, complete insensibility, and correspond to the ten visions of smoke etc., which are not limited only to the 'withdrawal' phase and are now repeated. Then the deity visualized by the yogin appears like a reflected image beyond distinct representations, an image (or form) of emptiness (skr. *śūnyabimba*, tib. *stong gzugs*), culminating in a radiant luminous maṇḍala, (skr. *prabhamaṇḍala*, tib. *dri med 'od kyi dkyil 'khor*) that pervades the whole universe.

The sixth auxiliary, the final stage, *samādhi*, is the realisation of *apratiṣṭitanirvāṇa* (tib. *rab tu mi gnas mya ngan 'das*) in which immutable gnosis is accomplished. The yogin attains the pure body (skr. *śuddhakāya,* tib. *dag pa'i sku*) by dissolving the 21,600 impure saṃsāric breaths of one-day-and night cycle.

Thus karmic breathing is completely eliminated and the body becomes filled with 21,600 instants of the supreme immutable wisdom, no longer karmic breathing, but corresponding to the complete purification of the coarse body into its ultimate reality.

At the end of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* process, the thirty-six coarse and impure elements of the physical body are completely purified and transmuted into their immutable condition, corresponding to the thirty-six deities of the six families which coalesce in a single essence (skr. *ekasamarasībhūtanī,* tib. *gcig tu ro mnyam par 'gyur pa*) and manifest through the state of enlightenment accomplished in a single instant (skr. *ekakṣanābhisambodhi,* tib. *skad cig gcig gis mngon par rdzogs par byang chub*) in the condition called "empty iridescent sphere" (skr. *binduśunya,* tib. *thig le stong pa*). According to *LKC* and *VP,* the yogin experiences a condition free from differentiated representations and is completely merged in the great all-pervading ecstasy (skr. *paramākṣarasukha,* tib. *mchod tu mi 'gyur ba'i bde ba*), his physical body transformed into a spiritual body defined as two in one (skr. *yuganaddha*, tib. *zung 'jug*). He is purified by a luminous *maṇḍala*, that shines forth from the image of wisdom (skr. *jñānabimba*, tib. *ye shes gzugs*) or image of emptiness (skr. *śūnyabimba*, tib. *stong pa'i gzugs*) and also radiates from the pores of his own body.[28]

[28] *LKC,* IV, 118-119 and *VP* quoted in SUṬ, see Sferra, Merzagora, 2006: 132-133, 307-308 and Gnoli, Orofino, 1994: 245-246. On the realisation of the immutable wisdom see also Orofino 2009: 27-49.

The Guhyagarbatantra in Klong chen pa's vision

The *KCT* Tantric Buddhist system is not alone in describing ten luminous epiphanies as the mark of spiritual realisation in the *utpattikrama* process. According to the *Gsang snying 'grel pa phyogs bcu mun sel* (*PCMS*), the 14th century commentary by Klong chen Rab 'byams, or Klong chen pa (1308-1364), the **Guhyagarbhatantra* (*GGT*), the fundamental scripture of the Rnying ma tradition, belonging to the *Māyājālatantra* cycle and classified as Mahāyoga tantra,[29] also describes ten of them, with very similar lexicon and meaning.

It is interesting, however, to note that already in the 11th century, Puṇḍarīka, in his *VP*, commenting on *LKCT*, V, 115, observes that the description of the 10 marks of spirital realisation is found, expressed in an intentional language, in the *Nāmasaṃgīti* (*NS*), a short, but very influential scripture which, according to tradition, belongs to the *Māyājālatantra* cycle.[30]

In the *VP*, we read (commentary on *LKC*, V, 115):

> The yogin will gaze a cloudless sky and through the day-light yoga «a great fire of insightful wisdom, arisen from the sky, self-arisen» (*NS*, 6.20 c-d) will appear. From this sky a flame will arise, meaning that the yogin will see a flame in a cloudless sky. Similarly, «a great brilliant light, light of wisdom, shining bright» (*NS*, 6.21 a-b) refers to the apparition of a moon. «Lamp of the world» (*NS*, 6.21 c) refers to the apparition of the sun. «Lamp of wisdom» (*NS*, 6.21 c) refers to the apparition of Rāhu. «Great splendor» (*NS*, 6.21 d) is the flash of lightning. «Radiant light» (*NS*, 6.21 d), «the king of *vidyā*, the tremendous lord of mantra (*NS*, 6.22 a), refers to the iridescent sphere (skr. *bindu*, tib. *thig le*).
> Therefore, the signs are ten, as proclaimed by the Bhagavan: those of the "night yoga", according to the *Guhyasamājatantra* etc. and those of the "day-light yoga", according to the *NS*, [conveyed] in

[29] See Dorje 1987: 37-58; Martin 1987; Eastman 1983; van Schaik, *In search of the Guhyagarbhatantra*, https://earlytibet.com/2007/08/27/in-search-of-the-guhyagarbhatantra, accessed 28/04/2022.

[30] The *Nāmasaṃgīti* (*NS*) also known as *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, appeared in India probably at the beginning of the 8th cent. and assumed a fundamental importance in *KCT* tradition. In its introduction and colophon we find an explicit claim to its scriptural transmission, stating that it was proclaimed in the *Samādhi* chapter of the great *Māyājālatantra*, a tantra believed to have existed in sixteen thousand lines but not more extant. See Mukherji 1963; Davidson 1981; Wayman 1985; Banārasī 1986. As observed by Antony Tribe, a range of *NS* terms and verses were read as legitimating central Kālacakra doctrines. The *VP*, in fact, quotes 65 *NS* verses and describes the *LKC* and *NS* as connected at a fundamental level. See Tribe 2015. See also Wallace 2001: 18–21.

an intentional language.[31]

This interesting mention of the *NS*, and thus of the tradition of the *Māyājālatantra*, induces one to think that Klong chen pa in the *PCMS*, in listing the 10 signs of spiritual realisation, relating them to the tradition of the *Māyājālatantra*, refers to more ancient conceptions that had already been circulating at least since the formation of the *LKC* and the *VP*.[32]

In the *PCMS*, we read:[33]

> The four realities are:
> 1. the reality of non-dual body, free from all the subject-object considerations since there is no attachment to male and female [consort];
> 2. the reality of non-dual speech, free from all conceptual elaborations and desire since it is inexpressible;
> 3. the reality of non-dual mind, that perceives the essence of the nature of the *dharmakāya* since it is free from accumulated thoughts in supreme bliss;
> 4. and the reality of non-dual wisdom, abiding in the great dimension of non-attachment to bliss, which is an interrupted continuous circle of radiant light.
>
> The four clear lights are:
> 1. the clear light of bliss, through which at that time when the three doors (body, speech and mind) are pervaded with delight, all phenomenal existence arises as delightful bliss;
> 2. the clear light of radiance through which, from the state of bliss, the inner radiant essence of mind unceasingly appears as skillful means and wisdom;
> 3. the clear light of not conceptualisation through which sensations of attachment to subtle and gross elements disappear, so that one abides in a non-conceptual state without any [mental] proliferation;
> 4. and the inner radiance of the inconceivable (*bsam gyis mi khyab par 'od gsal*) through which the apparition of ten signs arise from the essential dimension of reality.
>
> The ten signs are the indication of the single flavor of [the unification of] space and wisdom which emerge through the entry of the vital energy and the mind into the central channel.
> [They are]: 1. smoke, 2. mirage, 3. cloud, 4. firefly, 5. sun, 6. moon,

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[31] This passage from *LKCT*, V, 115 and *VP* is quoted in *SUT*. See Sferra, Merzagora 2006: 122, 292; Gnoli, Orofino 1994: 227-228.

[32] As already noted by Germano 1994: 245-249, Klong chen pa, in some of his doxographies, correlates the *KCT* system, of the Gsar ma tradition, with the *GGT* and the *Māyājālatantra* (*Sgyu 'phrul dra ba*) system of the Rnying ma tradition.

[33] *PCMS*: 343-344, see also Dorje 1987: 827-828.

7. blazing gemstones, 8. Rāhu (*sgra gcan*), 9. star, 10. vision of rays of light.
In other categories of tantra, a slightly different list of the ten signs is enumerated.
As to the final result or the attainment of the Buddhahood**:**
The result is that, through [the experiences] rising from the firm stability in the practice of suchness, indicated by the ten signs of the *samādhi* of skillful means and wisdom, [related to] the *Māyājālatantra*, the nature of all *maṇḍala* of the Buddhas, without exceptions, which emerge in the ten directions and four times, and the ultimate, compassionate wisdom become manifest to the beings of the three realms.

Again in the *PCMS,* commenting chapter XII of the *GGT*, Klong chen pa says:

Thus, because Akaniṣṭha is present within oneself from the very beginning, Buddhahood is attained through the clear visualisations of the creation and perfection stages. Indeed, the pure fields of Buddha-body and wisdom are not sought or accomplished in other world-systems of the ten directions:
«From any of the ten directions and four times, the perfect Buddha will not be found. 'Mind as such' is the perfect Buddha. Do not search elsewhere for the Buddha». (*GGT*, XII, 14).
In a pleasant dark house, one should assume the seven postures of Vairocana, without moving.
It is said in the *Sgyu 'phrul lam rim* (**Māyājālapathakrama*):[34]
«Therefore, with blissful joy, in excellent equilibrium, one assumes the position of venerable Vairocana, endowed with seven postures, and sits with a mental attitude, free from grasping and striving».
The seven postures are crossed legs, equipoised hands, the waist straight as a rod of copper coins, the neck gently bent, the eyes focused on the tip of the nose, the tongue meeting the palate, and the lips and teeth finally set in their natural positions. In particular from the space between the eyebrows one should fix one's gaze on space to a distance of twelve fingers, one should not speak, and should abandon oneself into the dimension of the space, without thinking of anything. One who has done this for one, three, seven days will perceive signs of smoke etc. Similarly, one who has done this for fourteen days or for twenty-one or for one month will firstly perceive smoke-like sign and the appearances similar to cloud, mirage, fire-flies, butter lamp, and sun-light.
It is said in the *Sgyu 'phrul lam rim*:

[34] This text is attributed to Buddhaguhya, and is included in the *Bka' ma rgyas pa* (*KG*) collection under the title *Lam rin chen mo*. See *KG.* Vol. 23: 5.1-133.3. It is also called *Lam rnams par bkod pa* and is found under this name in the Peking edition (*P*) of the Tibetan canon (*P*#4736).

«One encounters [signs] which resemble mirage, smoke, clouds, fireflies, butter-lamps, and sun light».
In those times, one should remain [seated] rejecting all outer, inner and secret activities of the body, speech and mind.
In the same text it is said:
«One should abandon all breaks and intervals, based on cause and result, and the conceptual elaborations of the nine kinds of doctrinal conduct. One should not even undertake that which is present in one's own mental continuum, because one would be distracted by dualistic wrong perceptions».
…Having experienced the yoga of darkness in this way, during the day time, one remains in a condition without thoughts, keeping the previous position and folded hands.
From the *Sgyu 'phrul lam rim*:
«Through a sequence, which is non conceptual, very non conceptual, and extremely non-conceptual, without establishing oneself in a fixed position, without thought, without conceited mind, beyond conceptual objects of speech and thought, the wisdom of the dimension of reality as-it-is [manifests itself]: the natural unwavering luminosity of reality, the union of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*».
…..This method applies at the time when the uncorrupted state is accomplished by means of clear light. As for the signs: four visions appear which are similar to the diverse visions of five lights: iridescent sphere (*thig le*), blazing gemstone, Rāhu's *maṇḍala* (the eclipse). In the *NS* it is said:
«He is Śrīvasta, the glorious knot, glowing with bright light, the hand shining with blazing light». (8.26 c-d).[35]
And: «The light of wisdom, shining upon, the lamp of the world, the torch of wisdom brilliant garland, pleasant to behold». (6.21 b-c-d).[36]
From the *Avataṃsakasūtra*:[37]
«Through the union of gemstone and ocean, [appear] splendid maṇḍalas of light, some of which radiate in the center or the sky».
Now: "Śrīvasta" and the "gemstone" refer to the heart. The "ocean" refers to the eyes: and "through their union appear" refers to the forms of emptiness (*stong gzugs*) which appear in the sky.

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35 *Śrīvatsaḥ suprabho dīptirbhābhāsurakaradyutiḥ* (*NS* 8.26, c-d).

36 *Jñājyotir virocanaḥ/jagatpradipadīpo jñānolko mahātejāḥ prabhāsvaraḥ* (*NS* 6.21 b-c-d). Klong chen pa's version of this strophe is slightly different here: he translates the skr. *prabhāsvaraḥ* with the tib. *lta na sdug*, pleasant to behold, for *'od gsal ba,* clear light.

37 The *Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* is one of the most influential Mahāyāna sūtra in East Asia. It has come to us in two Chinese versions, one translated bu Buddhabhadra in 418-420 C.E. and the other by Śikṣānanda in 695-699 C.E. as well as in a Tibetan version translated by Jnamitra, Surendrabodhi and Ye shes sde at the end of the 9th century (tib. *Sang rgyas pal po che zhes bya ba shin tu rgyas pa chen po'i mdo*). The Tibetan version is preserved in all the *Bka' 'gyur* editions. See Ōtake 2007; Cleary 1993.

> Such apparitions are known as "the vision of direct perception of reality" (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*).
> When, [during these apparitions], one' s lifespan comes to an end, in the next life one will be born in a pure Buddha-field, and having obtained power over the lifespan, one will attain perfection. The attainment of this is the [apparition] of the secret iridescent sphere (*gsang ba'i thig le*) etc. Then, through cultivation, the movement of the vital energy of the five elements wanes in wisdom. This all-pervasive natural appearance of the five wisdoms is known as "vision of the increasing contemplative experience" (*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*). Then, cultivating that experience, the five enlightened families of the Buddha-fields are perceived; and this is known as "vision that reaches the limit of awareness" (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*). It is said that one bears aloft all maṇḍalas without exception as ornaments. Then, once the ingress of the vital energy of the five elements into the five wisdoms has ceased to increase, all appearances become like a cloudless sky; and this is known as the "vision of the dissolution into essential reality" (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*).
> At this point the spontaneous, natural presence (*lhun grub*) gets closer.[38]

Here Klong chen pa correlates the 10 epiphanies of light, the signs of spiritual realisation of the *GGT* with the four spontaneous luminous visions of the "direct transcendence" (*thod rgal*) system of Rdzogs chen Atiyoga belonging to the set of Rdzogs chen instructions called *man ngag gi sde* of the tripartite system of the three series *sems sde*, *klong sde* and *man ngag gi sde*.[39]

These four visions are: 1. the vision of direct perception of reality (*chos nyid mngon sum gyi snang ba*), 2. the vision of the increasing of contemplative experience (*nyams gong 'phel gyi snang ba*), 3. the vision of reaching the limit of awareness (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*), 4. the vision of the cessation of phenomenal reality (*chos nyid zad pa'i snang ba*).[40]

This reflects the Rnying ma polymath's strategy, quite evident in all his doxographic writings, of relating the Rdzogs chen tradition with other previous Buddhist traditions, in the wider context of Tibetan Buddhist schools.[41]

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[38] See *PCMS*: 464-467.

[39] On the history of these three classes in the Rdzogs chen tradition see Karmay 1988: 207-215.

[40] On the experiential nature of the four *thod rgal* visions in a non-dual, primordial perspective cf. Laish 2017; see also Hatchell 2014: 60.

[41] Cf. Germano 1994: 242 et seq. In particular, on Klong chen pa's interpretation of the *GGT* in a Rdzogs chen perspective, see Achard 1999: 70-76.

The Seventeen Tantras of the Snying thig tradition

As mentioned above, soon after its apparition in India at the beginning of the 11th cent., the *KCT* literature was transferred to Tibet and translated into Tibetan by various authors.[42]

At the same period and in the centuries immediately following, we can observe the emergence in Tibet of the *Snying thig* tantric scriptures in the Rnying ma Rdzogs chen tradition incorporating new tantric doctrines and practices, radically altering the earliest Rnying ma Mahāyoga and Atiyoga literature and developing a complex series of meditation techniques of its own.[43] In these scriptures, as time passes starting from the 12th cent., we observe an evolving model of visionary yoga based on a various contemplative practices that induce visions of lights, radiant nets, concentric circles of rainbow light, iridescent empty spheres. These practices were performed in dark spaces, or meditating on the empty clear sky during the day, or gazing at the rays of the sun at dawn or at sunset.[44]

The earliest known *Snying thig* scriptures are the collection of tantras known as *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun* (*Seventeen Tantras*), and a collection of miscellaneous texts known as *Bi ma Snying thig*. In these scriptures visions of light play, as in the *KCT* literature, a fundamental role and interesting analogies in defining luminous epiphanies.

In the third chapter of the *Tantra of the Blazing Lamps* (*Sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud*), for example, one of the tantras belonging to the *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun* collection,[45] we find a pseudo-etymological definition of the term *thig le stong pa* (empty iridescent sphere) which appears various times in the *LKC*, in the *VP*, and in all the exegetic literature, as we have seen above.

The lamp of the empty iridescent sphere belongs to the description of the four lamps, i.e. the visions that appear to the yogin in practising the "direct transcendence" (*thod rgal*) system of Rdzogs chen Atiyoga. The other 3 lamps are: the lamp of the essence of

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[42] On the textual transmission of the Tibetan translations see Orofino 1994a: 17-28.

[43] For a thorough discussion of the *Snying thig* tradition see Karmay 1988: 206-215; Germano 1994; Germano 2005; van Shaik 2004: 8-9; Hatchell 2014: 54.

[44] The earliest reference to the dark retreat (*mun mtsams*) in the Rdzogs chen tradition is to be found in the fourth chapter of the *Snying thig Ya bzhi*, in the *Gcud phur gsum gyi rgyab yig gnad bsdus sgron me,* attributed to Lce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug, see Bibliography below. I owe this information to James Duncan Gentry.

[45] *Gser gyi me tog can mdzes par rin po che'i sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud*, in *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun*, see Bibliography below.

awareness (*rig pa dbyings kyi sgron ma*), the lamp of self-originated wisdom (*shes rab rang byung gyi sgron ma*), the lamp of the far-reaching water lasso (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*).[46]

> The lamp of the empty iridescent sphere is the proof of all dharma.
> Those who rely on it, experience the dimension of empty iridescent sphere (*thig le stong pa*), obtain the experiential domain of the practice of those who are familiar with the View.
> Therefore, its essence is unique, subtle, free from thoughts, great inner radiance, free from the darkness of emptiness.
> Its nature is inherently luminous, equal, abiding in a spherical dimension of non-conceptuality and of freedom from elaboration.
> Since the four self-empowerments are perfected without being conferred, it appears as radiant from the origin, naturally luminous, tinged with red.
> Since it is essentially pure and immaculate, it is free from the afflictions of the chains of ego, it is empty of essence, it is one's own inherent luminosity.
> This is proclaimed as the very essence [of this lamp].
> As for [the meaning of] *thig*: it is immutable, straight, since the origin free from conceptualisation.
> As for the meaning of *le*: within the great all-pervading space, visions are complete in their own dimension.
> As for the meaning of *stong pa* (empty): It refers to the interruption of all mental desires and of attachment to material things.
> The lamp causes the five lights to appear, together with the clear awareness of one's own real nature.
> This is the analytical definition of the words.[47]

This passage is commented in the *Necklace of Pearls* (*Mu tig phreng ba*):[48]

> As for the word "*thig*": it refers to the straight, unchanging path, "*le*" [refers to] the universal, all-pervading awareness manifests in all objects. "*Stong pa*" (empty) means that although it manifests in that way, it is not established as a concrete phenomenon. "*Lamp*" means that having cleared away the darkness of saṃsāra, the vi-

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[46] See Achard 1999: 140-142; Laish 2017: 222-225.

[47] *Gser gyi me tog can mdzes par rin po che'i sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud* (A 'dzom edition): 480-481. Cf. Hatchell 2014: 201-264.

[48] *Gser gyi me tog mdzes pa rin po che sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud don gsal bar byed pa mu tig phreng ba brgyus pa*, ascribed to Vimalamitra, deemed lost, has only recently been included in the latest edition of the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* collection, see *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥthog), see Bibliography below. On the legend of Vimalamitra, the "Vimalamitra rdzogs chen lore" and the numerous texts attributed to him in the Tibetan Rnying ma tradition see Gruber 2016. See also Almogi 2016: 7 et seq.

> sion of nirvāṇa is manifested. Since it is not a mental analysis, external conceptual elaboration is eliminated through the general characteristics of phenomena. Having eliminated the internal conceptual elaboration through the intrinsic characteristics [of phenomena], those who recognize themselves, and are devoted to this [lamp], develop confidence.
> Those fortunate people who know, without error, the secret profound instruction of this very lamp, enjoy the experience of the form of the empty single (*nyag gcig*) iridescent sphere, in the dimension of space. Therefore, they are familiar (*goms pa*) with the View (*lta ba*), namely since the vision of the direct perception of reality (*rig pa mngon sum gyi snang ba)*, the vision of the increasing of the contemplative experience (*nyams goms 'phel gyi snang ba*) and the vision of reaching the limit of awareness (*rig pa tshad phebs kyi snang ba*) become certain within the experience of the natural sense organs, the result is obtained in this (life) itself. In this way, in order to obtain it, the empty iridescent sphere (*thig le stong pa*) [manifests itself].[49]

In the *Snying thig* literature, in particular in the *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun,* visions of light, triggered by meditation and appearing as iridescent spheres, or luminous strings (*lu gu rgyud*), become a central element and are described in a detailed fashion.

With increasing clarity, these texts outline the metaphysics of light in the Rdzogs chen tradition. The person's physical body, and in particular the centre of the heart, is considered the vessel that contains pure wisdom, manifest as iridescent and radiant light. This vessel is defined as "a youthful body in a vase" (*gzhon nu bum pa'i sku*). The yogic practice aims at inducing the apparition of luminous forms and visions representing pure awareness, as in his visions the yogin recognises his own innate wisdom and achieves complete awakening. The culmination of the meditation practice consists of a transmutation of the physical body into rainbow light (*'ja' lus*).[50]

While drawing its initial inspiration from *KCT* literature, this tradition differs from it in yoga techniques, in the physiological description of the inner channels and *cakra*, and in philosophical theory. It develops – in an increasingly articulated and radical manner – the theme of light and the visions triggered by it, in a ontological and cosmological perspective that identifies light as the first form of all material reality, connecting together the physi-

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[49] *Gser gyi me tog mdzes pa rin po che sgron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud don gsal bar byed pa mu tig phreng ba brgyus pa*: 247-248.

[50] On a reflection on the phenomenon of the rainbow body in Tibetan culture see Kapstein 2004.

cal and metaphysical level within the dimension of light.

In another of the *Seventeen Tantras*, the *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud,*[51] the *Tantra of the Self Arisen Awareness*, in chapter 29, we read:

> In the continuum of all sentient beings the state of the authentic awakening (*yang dag sang rgyas dgongs pa*) is present in the form of body (*kāya)* and wisdom.
> Moreover, these are present in the centre of the heart (*tsitta*), a small seed, just the size of a mustard seed, in a perfect, not generated mode.
> There are four doors at the centre of the heart that are luminous, unobstructed, causing appearing as a form, causing disappearing as a form, causing the instantaneous moment appearing, causing the instantaneous moment disappearing.
> Further, when reciting their names they are: the major channel of the golden "kati" (*kati gser gyi rtsa chen*), the empty and hollow crystal tube, the subtle and coiled thread of white silk, and the great channel of self-liberated emptiness.
> Then the self-appearing channels of the four doors follow the path and disappear in the *avadhūtī.*
> In the *dhūtī* light radiates, follows the path along the right side of the spine and along the right side of the artery descending from the head, and disappear into the conch palace (the skull). From that place light irradiates and the four lamps manifest.
> In the empty, unobstructed sky, the clear vivid body of light (*'od kyi sku*) abides in the form of luminous strings (*lu gu rgyud*).
> The four lamps are thus:
> The lamp of the empty iridescent sphere (*thig le stong pa'i sgron ma*), the lamp of the essence of awareness (*rig pa dbying kyi sgron ma*), the lamp of self-originated wisdom (*shes rab rang byung gyi sgron ma*), the lamp of the far-reaching water lasso (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*).
> They abide in all sentient beings.[52]

Furthermore, in these texts we find a metaphysical re-elaboration of themes characteristic of tantric literature, such as the description of the maṇḍala which, albeit maintaining the classical outline, well-known from previous Indian Buddhist tantras, is destructured into a pure luminous manifestation.

In the *Tantra of the Mirror of Samantabhadra's Mind* (*Kun tu bzang*

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[51] *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud* in *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun,* see Bibliography below.

[52] *Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud* (A 'dzom edition): 526-527.

po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud),[53] another of the *Seventeen Tantras*, as initial description of the maṇḍala of the Blessed One, we read:

> The Kāya, (the Blessed One), manifestly unconditioned, in the indivisible dimension of Akaniṣṭha, was sitting on the Diamond Throne (*rdo rje gdan*), {the luminous maṇḍala of awareness}[54] which has neither exterior nor an interior, {as the five lights are clear, without blending} and which is always present, {together with the assembly of the five families}.
> When we look at it from the outside, the inside is clear, {in the immaculate maṇḍala of the heart (*tsitta'i dkyil 'khor*)} while when we look at it from the inside, the outside is clear {wisdom manifests as an object}.
> Rays of light beam out in the ten directions {the five lights of wisdom shine without declining}, supreme dimension of encircling rims {in this regard they are connected with lamps}. The five wisdoms shine as stars {through them in the celestial space the mass of five lights shines bright}.
> The five bodies shine without having any front or back {there from the vast expanse of awareness the five Kāyas shine glittering}.
> The five lights shine out without blending {the colours are distinct} as a symbol of the essential meaning, the clear light of the maṇḍala of awareness (*rig pa'i dkyil 'khor*) {the vision of the five lights in oneself} is fully manifest.[55]

These descriptions of luminous epiphanies and, in particular, of empty iridescent spheres are widely described in all the tantras of the *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun*. By way of example, in the *Mu tig rin po che phreng ba rgyud*, three forms of iridescent sphere are described: 1. of the ground (*gzhi'i thig le*), 2. of the path, (*lam kyi thig le*), 3. of the fruition (*'bras bu thig le*). These visions are defined as the beautiful ornamental sphere of the ultimate reality of the dharmadhātu (*chos nyid dbyings kyi rgyan bzang thig le)*.[56]

It is interesting to note that in this same tantra appears for the first time the terms—later used by Klong chen pa—of the twofold practices of "Cutting stiffness "or "Cutting through solidity" (*khregs chod*) and practice of "Direct Transcendence" or "Leap

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[53] *Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud*, in *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun*, see Bibliography below.

[54] The translation between curly braces indicates the marginal annotation found in the Tibetan text.

[55] *Kun tu bzang po thugs kyi me long gi rgyud* (A 'dzom edition): 235-236.

[56] *Mu tig rin po che phreng ba'i rgyud* in *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun,* see Bibliography below. On these three differentiations, also in the tantra *Nyi za kha sbyor gsang ba'i rgyud*, see Achard 1999: 132-136.

over" (*nyams blangs khregs chod thod rgal*).[57]

As we have seen above, the *Snying thig* literature and in particular its initial core of the *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun* began to emerge in Tibet starting from the second half of the 11th century, in a period of great intellectual and religious turmoil, in which the different schools started to form.[58] The history of the formation of the canon of the Ancients and of the nucleus of the *Rnying ma rgyud bcu bdun* has been dealt with in detail elsewhere and is not the subject of this study.[59] It suffices to recall that the collection of the *Seventeen Tantras* is deemed to go back to the mythical and shadowy figure of Vimalamitra, the Indian master who, according to tradition, conferred these teachings on Myang Ting nge 'dzin, who in turn hid the texts in the temple of Zhwa'i lha khang during the imperial period. According to tradition, many years after Vimalamitra's departure for China, Myang conferred the teachings of the *Seventeen Tantras* on 'Brom Rin chen 'bar, who hid them in the temple. At the end of the eleventh century, the monk Ldan ma lhun rgyal found the texts and showed them to Lce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug (12th cent.?), who re-arranged the *Snying thig* teachings. The first historical author was Zhang ston Bkra shis rdo rje (1097–1167) who vouches, for the first time in his *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo*, the transmission of the tantras of the *Snying thig* from Dga' rab rdo rje, to Vimalamitra, to himself.[60] The year 1167 thus marks the *terminus ad quem* for the formation of the *Snying thig* texts.

This *Snying thig* literature presents an earlier Rdzogs chen apophatic, non-conceptual rhetoric interwoven with innovative contemplative methods that absorb and transform the practices of Mahāyoga and the later Indian esoteric Buddhist traditions (in particular the *KCT*) within a metaphysics of light as the frame of reference.

The later exegesis and reorganisation of the system by Rdzogs chen masters of whom Klong chen pa is one of the most important, follow and develop this pattern.[61]

He reorganised the practices and instructions of the Esoteric precepts series (*man ngag gi sde*) into two main categories: that of *khregs chod*, "Cutting through solidity" and of *thod rgal* "Direct transcendence", which are mentioned, as we have seen, in one of

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57 *Mu thig rin po che phreng ba'i rgyud*, Adzom edition: 536.

58 On the dating of the most ancient layers of *Snying thig* literature, cf. Germano 1994: 266-275; Achard 1999: 25-97.

59 See Karmay 1988: 209-211.

60 Ibid.

61 Cf. van Shaik 2004: 9.

the *Seventeen Tantras*, the *Mu tig rin po che phreng ba'i rgyud*. Indeed, we owe to Klong chen pa the first, elaborated, description of the category of the practices of the *thod rgal* which he deemed superior to those of the *khregs chod*.[62]

The practices of *thod rgal*, which take place in a dimension of relaxation, letting go, naturalness and openness also require, however, the use of breathing techniques and specific postures, namely the posture of the lion (*seng ge*), of the elephant (*glang che*) and of the sage (*drang srong*), associated with the three modes of gazing, upward, sideward or downward, each of which in apt to induce particular luminous visions connected to specific experiences linked to the dimensions of the three Kāyas, being the pure essence of awareness, the spontaneous co-emergent self-appearance of luminous awareness, the inherent joyfulness of visionary awareness.[63]

As mentioned above, the apparitions of lights and luminous visions of the *Snying thig* represent an innovation within the previous Rdzogs chen tradition and many scholars have pondered the sources of this visionary practice. Several hypotheses have been advanced, starting from Giuseppe Tucci who remarked the relationship between Rdzogs chen and Kashmir Śaivism.[64] Jean Luc Achard, as well, wondered about contacts with the non-dual Śaiva Trika system, in particular with the practices of the *Vijñānabhairavatantra*.[65] David Germano, as well, reflecting on the sources of this visionary practice, made several hypothesis: «an indigenous shamanistic set of techniques perhaps first incorporated by the Bonpos, contact with Illuminationist Sufis to the West, Daoist yogas to the East, Kashmiri Śaivism to the Southwest, or perhaps even some subcurrents of Indian Buddhist tantra (such as reflected in the *Kālacakratantra)*?»[66]

This last hypothesis seems to me the most fitting. Contacts with the Śaiva and Buddhist tantras have since been properly focused on by scientific studies[67] as well as the strong syncretism with other Indian religious systems of the *KCT* literature.[68] The foreign el-

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62 See Germano 1994: 287.
63 See Laish 2017: 217-222.
64 See Tucci 1970: 214.
65 See Achard 1999: 248-253.
66 See Germano 1994: 288.
67 See Sanderson 1995; Sanderson 2009: 124-243; Isaacson 2010; Wedemeyer 2013.
68 Cf. Wallace 2001: 31-42; Sferra 2005. On the Islamic elements in KCT literature see Orofino 1997; Newman 1998.

ements suggested, whether Śaiva or of other non-Indian provenance, do not, in my opinion, derive from any direct contact, but from influences of the *KCT* literature. The great importance of luminous experience in the *KCT*, already in itself an innovation as compared to previous Buddhist tantras, is developed and broadened by the authors of the first nucleus of *Snying thig* literature in the centuries subsequent to the introduction of the *KCT* in Tibet.

Nevertheless, although it is quite difficult to trace any direct influences and contacts between the Kālacakra yogins and the Tibetan initiators of the *Snying thig* tantras, there is evidence that many ideas, lexicon, yoga techniques and contemplative experiences were circulating among them creating nets of influence during a period of Tibetan history that preceded the later organisation and consolidation of the monastic systems.

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(KG) Bka' ma rgyas pa, edited by Bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje. Dupjung Lama. 58 Vols. Kalinpong 1982–1987. Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC), purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW19229.

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(*LKCT*) *Laghukālacakratantra*: see Banerjee 1985.

Maitri or *Maitrāṇīya Upaniṣad with the Commentary of Rāmatīrtha*: see Cowell 1935.

Mu tig rin po che phreng ba'i rgyud.

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(*NS*) *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*: see Mukherji 1963; Davidson 1981; Wayman 1985; Lāl 1986; Lāl 1994.

(*P*) *The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking Edition.* Edited by Daisetz T. Suzuki. Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute. Tokyo-Kyoto 1955-1961.

(*PCMS*) Klong chen Rab 'byams pa Dri med 'Od zer, *Dpal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi 'grel pa phyogs bcu'i mun pa thams cad rnam par sel ba*. Paro (Bhutan) 1975.

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(*SU*) *Sekoddeśa*: see Orofino 1994a.
(*SUṬ*) Nāropā, *Sekoddeśaṭīkā*: see Sferra, Merzagora 2006.
(VP) Vimalaprabhāṭīkā of Kalkin Śrīpuṇḍarīka on Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja by Śrīmañjuśrīyaśas. See: Upadhyāya 1986 (Vol. 1); Dwivedi, Bahulkar 1994 (Vols. 2-3).
Vajragarbha, *Śaṭsāhaśrikā Hevajra Ṭīkā*: see Shendge 2004.
Vajrapāni, *Laghutantraṭīkā*: see Cicuzza 2001.
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Compte-rendu

Cuevas, J. Bryan. 2021. *The Rwa Pod and Other 'Lost' Works of Rwa Lo tsā ba's Vajrabhairava Tradition: A Catalogue of Recently Acquired Tibetan Manuscripts from Mongolia and Khams and their Significance.* Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, pp. 560. ISBN: 978-3-902501-38-7.

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This book marks a milestone in the research on the Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka cult in Tibet that has been remarkably understudied in academic scholarship, despite some recent contributions (Wenta 2020,[1] Brown 2021[2]) that are, however, not mentioned by the author. In this book, Bryan J. Cuevas introduces a rich collection of over three hundred Tibetan manuscripts recently discovered in Mongolia (Ulaanbaatar) and Khams (Jyekundo, Yushu county) dealing with the cult of Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka, thus opening up a vast opportunity for the future scholars interested in studying this topic. The best part of the book comprises of the collection of personal writings attributed to the famous Vajrabhairava sorcerer, Rwa lo tsā ba Rdo rje grags, the so-called *Rwa pod* ("Rwa Book"), which is catalogued in the book according to the seven different manuscript collections.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one has three main sections. The first section examines a history of Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka cult in Tibet focusing on the Tibetan lineages that were influential in the dissemination of Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka on the Tibetan plateau and were adopted, especially by the Sa skya and Dge lugs traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. It also discusses the *Rwa pod* collection and examines the two 'original' catalogues, i.e., Rwa lo's own index, called the *Thim yig* ("Faded document") or *Them yig* ("Registry"), and its later expansion by Rwa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, called the *Dkar chag*. The former is said to have been written by Rwa

[1] Aleksandra Wenta. 2020. *The Vajramahābhairavatantra. Its Origins, Intertextuality, and Transmission*. DPhil Dissertation, University of Oxford.

[2] Amanda Brown. 2021. *Hail-Casting and Other "Magical" Rites from a Compendium of Nyingma Rituals Invoking Yamāntaka: A Study and Catalogue of the Moon's Mystery Handbook (Zla gsang be'u bum)*. MA Thesis, Florida State University.

Aleksandra Wenta, "Compte-rendu de Cuevas, J. Bryan, *The Rwa Pod and Other 'Lost' Works of Rwa Lo tsā ba's Vajrabhairava Tradition*", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 65, Octobre 2022, pp. 187-193.

lo himself and it contains some fifteen (later sixteen) amalgamated works of Rwa lo's own translations of the Black cycle as well as various transmissions he had received. The author also gives a brief overview of Rwa lo's main textual compositions found in the *Thim yig*. The second section examines all the seven manuscript collections of the *Rwa pod* that have come down from two different locations: the National Library of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar and the Sa skya monastery of Skye rgu Don grub gling in Khams; the latter belonged to a private collection of one of his residents, Mkhan po Phur ba lhun grub. These manuscript collections have been since entered into the BDRC digital database. The third section contains a semi-diplomatic edition of Rwa lo's *Thim yig* and Shes rab rgyal mtshan's *Dkar chag* based on the five principal manuscript witnesses. Part one ends with the lineage charts that serve as useful visual aids to understand various transmission lineages discussed by the author and the order of transmissions. Part two is the *Rwa pod*'s catalogue proper, containing an itemized entry for each manuscript in all the seven manuscript collections. Each manuscript entry is accompanied by a transcription of the opening and closing words, colophon, date and place of composition, name of the authors/compilers, subjects of the work, etc.

This review will concentrate only on the history of Vajrabhairava lineages in Tibet. Cuevas draws on an important set of sources, mostly little investigated religious histories (*chos 'byung*) by Tāranātha, A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams, and 'Khon ston Dpal 'byor lhun grub. The author has done a laudable job of presenting the concise picture of the convoluted history behind the diffusion of Vajrabhairava cult in Tibet through a detailed analysis of the specific line of teachers through which the Vajrabhairava-Yamāntaka texts and ritual methods have been transmitted to Tibet. However, some of the author's analysis could be sometimes improved by investigating further lines of inquiry that I will briefly mention below. These comments should be regarded simply as research directions for the future investigation of the Vajrabhairava lineages in Tibet and are not meant to demerit, in any way, the value of this important book.

The classification of the discrete tantras of Vajrabhairava and Yamāri/Yamāntaka in Tibet into the tripart division as *Nag 'jigs skor gsum* or *Dgra gdong 'jigs gsum* (p. 15) could be more detailed. According to Tāranātha, this tripart division evolved around the time of Ba ri lo tsā ba, who supplemented those three with the **Yamāntaka-krodhavijayatantra* ("Victorious Wrathful Yamāntaka Tantra"), thus the "Triple Black Cycle" became the "Quadruple Black Cycle" (*nag po*

skor bzhi).[3] It would be useful to investigate this topic further and examine the reasons behind Ba ri lo tsā ba's decision to augment the so-called Triple Black cycle, especially since as the author rightly states Ba ri lo tsā played an important role in the transmission of the Vajrabhairava to Sa skya.

The author states that the Zhang lineage established by Cog gru Shes rab bla ma goes back to Dīvākaracandra (p. 37). Actually, Tāranātha gives the name Devākaracandra (ca. 1030–1130), (and not Dīvākaracandra), but the explanation of the author's choice to change the name to Dīvākaracandra is missing, so is the attempt to understand his identity. Tāranātha identifies Devākaracandra as *bla ma* Mgos khub, the Scholar-monk who Had a Consort (*mkhas btsun mo can*). According to Cabézon (2017)[4], however, Devākaracandra was a Bengali *paṇḍita*, the great master of the *Guhyasamāja* and one of the two great disciples of the Indian master Gomiśra in the lineage of Śrīgupta, from whom the 11th century Tibetan translator Mgos khub pa lhas btsas received the teachings of the *Guhyasamāja*. According to the biography of Rwa lo tsā ba, Mgos khub pa lhas btsas was killed by Rwa lo through the magical technology of Vajrabhairava (see Cabézon 2007). According to Tāranātha's *Rgya gar chos 'byung*,[5] Devākaracandra, also known as Za hor kyi mkhas btsun mo can, was a contemporary of Amoghavajra and a direct disciple of Nāropā. Among his other teachers were Sa 'dres pa (Gomiśra), Vāgīśvarakīrti and *Dharmabhadra (Chos kyi bzang po), whose common name was Rong zom *paṇḍita* (1040–1159). The latter figure seems important, especially since as the author himself states (p. 39), "special transmissions [of the Zhang lugs] were absorbed into a few of the other independent traditions, including apparently that of Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po who was purportedly a follower of the Zhang system […]." Lo Bue (1997: 636)[6] argues that Devākaracandra was a Newar *paṇḍita* who gathered around the Indian *paṇḍita* Jinadatta and accompanied him to Bodhgayā along with Virendraruci (Ha mu dkar po/ Punyākarabhadra) and others. Since he studied in Vikramaśīla and stayed in India for a long time, he was called "Indian" (p. 637). In the *Blue Annals* by 'Gos lo (1984: 477),[7] Devākara is called "Indian" in-

[3] See Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung* (p. 20): *ba ri lo tsa ba ni de'i steng du gshin rje gshed rnam par rgyal pa'i rgyud bsnan nas/ nag po skor bzhi zhes tha snyad mdzad.*

[4] See Cabézon 2007, https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Go-Khukpa-Lhetse/5803

[5] Chattopadhyaya 1990: 305.

[6] Lo Bue, Erberto. 1997. 'The Role of the Scholars of the Nepal Valley in the Transmission of the Indian Buddhist Heritage to Tibet.' S. Karmay et M. Sagant (eds.) *Les Habitants du toit du monde. Hommage a Alexander W. Macdonald*. Nanterre: Société d' ethnologie, 629–658.

[7] 'Gos lo Gzhon nu dpal. *Deb ther sngon po*. Khreng tu'u: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun

deed, and is also said to have assisted Rin chen bzang po in the translation of two texts (see Lo Bue, 1997: 638). According to the *Blue Annals*, Devākaracandra's secret name was *Śūnyatāsamādhivajra (*stong nyid ting 'dzin rdo rje*). Man (1998: 91)[8] estimates that Devākaracandra was alive in between 1030–1130. For *Śūnyatāsamādhivajra, who is also called Devākaracandra, see 'Gos lo 1984 :476–477, 985; Roerich 1979: I 392–394, 842; Szerb 1990: 100.[9]

The author is correct that the Zhang lugs's greatest contribution to the development of Vajrabhairava in Tibet was the establishment of a unique tradition of the 49-Deity Vajrabhairava system (p. 39). The tradition of the 49-Deity Vajrabhairava *maṇḍala* was known at the Yuan court as evidenced by the *kesi*-silk tapestry *thangka* (now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), designed in the 14th c. Sa skya style,[10] usually commissioned for imperial initiation rituals. The *kesi* features a nine-headed, thirty-four armed and sixteen-legged Vajrabhairava as the central figure of the *maṇḍala*, surrounded by 48 attendant deities, suggesting the 49-Deity form of Vajrabhairava according to the Zhang lugs. 'Phags pa Chos rgyal, who, according to the historical accounts, served as the imperial preceptor of Kublai Khan's Yuan dynasty and the vice-king of Tibet and whose Vajrabhairava lineage the author rightly traces to Ldong ston Shes rab bla ma (p. 69) was familiar with this transmission. 'Phags pa wrote a *sādhana* dedicated to the 49-Deity Vajrabhairava that was based on the teachings of *ācārya* Lalitavajra. The colophon of *Zhe dgu ma'i sgrub thabs zhi khro rnam rol bzhugs* indicates that he completed the text in Mdo Khams on the 8th day of the month of Āśvin in the year of the Wooden Pig.[11] The fact that Kublai Khan received Vajrabhairava initiation (p. 65) by the teacher of 'Phags pa (misspelled 'Phag pa twice on p.65), Ldong ston Shes rab provides an important evidence highlighting the role played by the Sa skya masters in the transmission of the esoteric Buddhist teachings to the Yuan court.

The Gnyos lineage of Vajrabhairava goes back to the *paṇḍita* Bhalita (alias Balyācārya; Tib. B[h]a ling ta/Ba lim Ācārya) (p. 40). Again, some attempt at identifying this figure would be helpful.

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khang, 1984. See also Roerich 1949-53 (repr. 1996). *The Blue Annals by 'Gos Lotsawa.* Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

8 Man, Naresh Bajracharya. 1998. *Buddhism in Nepal (465 B.C. to 1199 A.D.).* Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers.

9 Szerb, Janos. 1990. Trans. *Bu ston's history of Buddhism in Tibet.* Wien: Verlag Der Ōsterreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

10 The position of Vajrabhairava's first pairs of legs shows him in a dancing pose. The dancing pose appears on some of the Sa skya forms of Vajrabhairava, which distinguishes it from the Dge lugs pa ones, devoid of this feature.

11 *Zhe dgu ma'i sgrub thabs zhi khro rnam rol bzhugs*, Sa skya Bka' 'bum dpe bsdur ma, vol. 21, pp. 88-100, Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007.

Balyācārya or simply Balin *ācārya*, or, according to 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Shes bya kun khyab mdzod* (W5488, p. 324) Baliṅgācārya, may be either Kṛṣṇapāda Junior (Nag po zhabs chung) or Kṛṣnapāda Senior (Nag po zhabs chen po). In this regard, the *Blue Annals* ('Gos lo 1984: 452; Roerich 1979: I 372) says: "Balin *ācārya*, a contemporary of Śrī Nāropā, who was also known as Kṛṣṇāpāda Junior" (Nag po zhabs chung ba). In the *Blue Annals* ('Gos lo 1984: 299; Roerich 1979: I 243), different information is given, namely that Balyācārya is also known as Kṛṣṇapāda Senior (Nag po zhabs chen po). The *Rgya gar chos 'byung* (Chattopadhyaya 1990: 294), however, seems to identify Balyācārya with Kṛṣṇācārya Junior (Nag po spyod pa chung ba), who is the same as Kṛṣṇapāda Junior. Another piece that seems to be missing from Gnyos lo's account are his translation activities undertaken in collaboration with Gayadhara. The author (p. 41) correctly states that the "Gnyos lo tsā ba annotated Nag tsho lo tsā ba's earlier translation of the *Kṛṣṇayamāritantra* and also produced his own original translations of the *Kṛṣṇayamāriṣaṇmukhatantra* and the *Vajrabhairavatantra*, as well as associated works by Śrīdhara". However, Gnyos lo also collaborated with Gayadhara, also known as the Red *paṇḍita* (see Rinpoche 2016: 82-86)[12] and this work comprised of the *Guhyasamāja* teachings and *Kṛṣṇayamāri*: see Cha rgan, lam, 30a, in Stearns (2001: 220)[13]; Sørensen and Hazod (2007: II, 382, f. 32).[14]

The author (p. 45) is right when he states that "Skyo 'od kyi 'byung gnas also requested these [Vajrabhairava] tantras from Zhang Cog gru lo tsā ba, which if true would help to validate the Sa skya pas' assertion that Zhang's tradition was absorbed into the practices of the Skyo and preserved by his followers." Another point that makes this connection between the Zhang and the Skyo even stronger is the fact that according to Skyo 'od byung's biography, reported by Tāranātha, Skyo ston met Dge 'dun bzang po (who also features as a master of the Vajrabhairava Zhang lineage) in 'Brim mtshams, and received from him the complete cycle of Dgra/Gdong/'Jigs as a "backup" of previous teachings (See Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung* pp. 121-122). Further, the author states that the Skyo lugs was very successful and appoints this success to the fact that 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, who received the Skyo transmission from Gnyan

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[12] Dhongthog, Rinpoche. 2016. *The Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism: A History*. Trans. Sam van Schaik. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.

[13] Stearns, Cyrus. 2001. *Luminous Lives: The Story of the Early Masters of the Lam 'Bras Tradition in Tibet*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.

[14] Sørensen, Per and Hazod Guntram. 2007. *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet: a Study of Tshal Gung-thang*, 2 vols. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften.

'od srung, spread it in the Sa skya (p. 48). Tāranātha, however, states that the lineage was not very successful and it lasted only for three or four generations (Tāranātha's *Gshin rje chos 'byung*, p. 124: *rigs brgyud kyang gnyan ston rdo rje grags kyi bar du mi rabs bzhi lnga tsam chos brgyud zin pa*). It would be useful to understand the reasons for these conflicting statements. A plausible explanation is actually given by Tāranātha himself who states that the Skyo lugs flourished under the Rwa lugs (*rwa lugs kyi 'og nas lugs srol*) and perhaps it was due to this absorption that the Skyo lugs was successful in the Sa skya. In this regard, Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan's *Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil gyi gdan rabs lha'i rnga chen* reports the existence of the Rwa Skyo lugs containing the names of the masters associated with the Rwa lugs tradition (See Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan's *Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil gyi gdan rabs lha'i rnga chen*, pp. 198–199).

The author (pp. 52-54) lists two Black cycle transmissions received by Mal lo tsā ba: the transmission of Nāropā that he inherited through Klog Skya Shes rab rtsegs, a direct disciple of Pham 'thing pa and the oral exposition of Black Yamāntaka according to the teachings of the *ācārya* Jñānapāda, which he received in a direct transmission line from the Newar Ha mu dkar po/Varendraruci (whose real name was Bsod nams 'byung gnas bzang po). However, Mal lo is also known as a recipient of a special Mahākāla transmission bestowed upon him by Gyi ljang dbu dkar pa lo tsā ba (10th/11th century) that was passed down to Sa chen (Stearns 2001: 224). This "special" Mahākāla transmission was different from the transmission of the "Lord of the Pavilion" Pañjaranātha Mahākāla in the lineage of *lam 'bras* Virūpa that was received by the Sa skya pas in the transmission of Gayadhara; see Linrothe *et al*. 2004: 124)[15], for it was received by Gyi ljang in India from the *mahāpaṇḍita* Lalitavajra, "who lived in a charnel ground and was also known as Dur khrod Nag po ro 'dzin" (*ibid*.). Stearns (*ibid*.: 224) reports the existence of a *Mahākālatantra,* entitled the *Dpal nag po chen po'i rgyud dur khrod nag po le'u gsum pa*, translated by the Indian *paṇḍita* Nag po ro 'dzin or Nag po ro langs and the Tibetan lo tsā ba Gyi ljang. Although it is not sure whether the 'Mahākāla Lalitavajra' and 'our Vajrabhairava Lalitavajra' are one and the same person, this should be researched further. A piece of evidence in support of such identification is the text entitled *Vajrabhairavasādhana* (*Rdo rje 'jigs byed kyi sgrub thabs*, Toh. 1999) composed by Lalitavajra, which describes Vajrabhairava as the manifestation of time (*kāla*), and correlates Vajrabhairava's iconographic features with

[15] Linrothe, Robert N. and Marylin M. Rhie. 2004. *Demonic Divine: Himalayan Art and Beyond.* New York: Rubin Museum of Art and SerIndia Publications.

different facets of time.

In conclusion, Cuevas's carefully researched study is an immensely valuable contribution to the Vajrabhairava history in Tibet and will become a reference book on this subject for many years to come.

Compte-rendu

Hartmut Walravens, Agnes Stache-Weiske. Der Linguist Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und sein Netzwerk. Briefe an Emil Schlagintweit, Leo Reinisch, Franz v. Miklosich, Vatroslav Jagić, K. S. Veselovskij, Eduard Pabst, Vilhelm Thomsen und andere. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2020. 937 pp., ill. (Philosophisch-historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte, 908. Band; Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens, Nr. 105.) ISBN 978-3-7001-8397-6

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This book continues the series of volumes of letters composed by the well-known Saint Petersburg philologist Franz Anton (Russian: Anton Antonovich) Schiefner (1817–1879) to a broad circle of scholars who studied various fields of Oriental and European philology and history in the second half of the 19th century.[1] A Baltic German, Schiefner left his native Reval (presently, Tallinn, Estonia) for the capital of the Russian Empire to hear law but his interest in languages soon made him travel to Berlin where he mostly

[1] The previously published volumes* are: 1) «Freilich lag in den zu überwindenden Schwierigkeiten ein besonderer Reiz…». Briefwechsel der Sprachwissenschaftler Hans Conon von der Gabelentz, Wilhelm Schott und Anton Schiefner, 1834–1874. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2008. 210 S. (Sinologica Coloniensia 26.); 2) St. Petersburg und Livland — und die Entwicklung der estnischen Literatur. Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882) im Briefwechsel (1853–1879). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2013; 3) Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und seine indologischen Freunde. Seine Briefe an die Indologen Albrecht Weber (1825–1901), Rudolf Roth (1821–1895) und William Dwight Whitney (1827–1894) sowie den Indogermanisten Adalbert Kuhn (1821–1881). Mit Anmerkungen, kleineren Arbeiten Schiefners und Register bearbeitet und herausgegeben von H. Walravens und A. Stache-Weiske. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 2015. 455 S. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Sitzungsberichte 868.); 4) Anton Schiefner: Briefe und Schriftenverzeichnis. Briefe an Bernhard Jülg (1825–1886), Karl Ernst von Baer (1792–1876), Reinhold Köhler (1830–1892), Victor Hehn (1813– 1890), August Friedrich Pott (1802–1887), Ernst Kuhn (1846–1920), Lorenz Diefenbach (1806–1883), Ernst Förstemann (1822–1906) und Karl Dziatzko (1842–1903). Ediert und herausgegeben von H. Walravens und A. Stache-Weiske. Wien: Österr. Akademie der Wissenschaften 2017. 530 S. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Sitzungsberichte 884; Beiträge zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens 94.). * The first two volumes were edited by H. Walravens, the other two by him and A. Stache-Weiske.

Alexander Zorin, "Compte-rendu de Hartmut Walravens, Agnes Stache-Weiske. Der Linguist Anton Schiefner (1817–1879) und sein Netzwerk", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 65, Octobre 2022, pp. 194-199.

studied Sanskrit for two years. After his return to Saint Petersburg and several years of teaching Greek and Latin at the First Saint Petersburg Gymnasium, he started a career at the Imperial Academy of Sciences that proved very successful. He was a prolific author and editor of scholarly works, curated the Tibetan and Mongolian collections of the Asiatic Museum, headed the Second Department of the Academy's Library[2] (1862–1879) and the Museum of Ethnography (1856–1878). The latter was reorganized, by his suggestion, into the Museum of Ethnography and Anthropology in 1878.[3] Schiefner had a lot of contacts in Europe and served as a tireless commutator between Western and Russian scholars (the latter included people of various ethnical backgrounds). This resulted in a large corpus of letters kept mostly in German archives. These materials remained virtually unknown by the beginning of the 21st century. It is a great merit of the German scholars Hartmut Walravens and Agnes Stache-Weiske (1962–2021) that a big part of them has been published, providing a lot of important details about the development of Indian, Tibetan, Finnish, Caucasian, Slavic, Chinese and some other studies in Europe in the 19th century. Sadly, the latest volume turned out to be the last one in Agnes Stache-Weiske's life.[4]

The volume includes letters to eighteen scholars but almost eight hundred pages of it are dedicated to the first six figures listed in the subheading of the book, namely the Tibetologist Emil Schlagintweit (1835–1904), the scholar of Ancient Egypt Leo Reinisch (1832–1919), the Slavicists Franz von Miklosich (1813–1891) and Vatroslav Jagić (1838–1923), the scholar of Estonian history Eduard Pabst (1815–1882) and the economist Konstantin S. Veselovskij (1819–1901) who was the powerful permanent secretary of the Saint Petersburg Academy of Sciences for more than thirty years (1857–1890).[5] Although Schiefner

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2 In 1819, the Library was divided into two departments: the First (Russian) and the Second (Foreign). This basic division existed till the end of the 1910s.

3 It is also known as the Kunstkamera. Although there is a chronological gap between the first Russian museum founded by Peter the Great in 1714 and this 19th century institution the latter can be considered the main inheritor of the former's collections and also its historical building located in the very heart of Saint Petersburg.

4 See her obituary published in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* (by M. Pelz; April 12, 2021): https://www.sueddeutsche.de/muenchen/ebersberg/agnes-stache-weiske-weiske-grafing-1.5262012 (access 05.01.2021).

5 The other correspondents of Schiefner represented with fewer (in certain cases, single) letters in this volume are: J. K. Grot (1812–1893), V. Thomsen (1842–1927), H. Brockhaus (1808–1877), L. Friedländer (1824–1909), K. Halm (1809–1882), R. Harrison (1827–1897), L. Holland (1822–1891), C. Justi (1832–1912), M. J. Müller (1809–1874), R. Rost (1822–1896), F. Zarncke (1825–1891), M. von Goethe (1820–1883). The letter sent to the Munich Iranist and Arabist Marcus Joseph Müller concerns E. Schlagintweit and is mentioned further in my review.

was hired by the Academy to follow Jacob Schmidt's (1779–1847) Tibetan studies and he, indeed, made an outstanding contribution to this field,[6] his epistolary legacy is not particularly rich in this respect. Emil Schlagintweit was the only correspondent with whom he mostly discussed issues related to Tibet, its language and literature.[7] Therefore, albeit the other parts of the present book are interesting in many respects, I will limit my review with the Schlagintweit section.

Emil Schlagintweit was the younger brother of Hermann (1826–1882), Adolf (1829–1857) and Robert Schlagintweit (1833–1885) who made a famous scientific expedition to the Deccan, the Himalayas, Karakorum and Kunlun mountains in 1854–1857. In 1857 Adolf Schlagintweit tried to make a separate expedition to Eastern Turkestan but was beheaded in Kashgar, being mistaken for a Chinese spy. The other two brothers safely returned to Europe and brought a vast collection of various artefacts, including numerous Tibetan books, pieces of Buddhist art, ethnographic objects, etc.

Although Emil did not take part in his brothers' endeavor the consequent arranging and study of the Orientalist materials they collected became his life's work. Regretfully, he failed to make it his profession but it was Anton Schiefner who tried to help him get support from the Bavarian officials. All he could do, however, was to write a letter to M. J. Müller, the secretary of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Sciences, and draw his attention to Schlagintweit as a promising German Tibetologist and Buddhologist. In this letter, dated from August 13, 1863 (see pp. 879–880), Schiefner reported shortly about his younger colleague's book "Buddhism in Tibet" — largely depending on the preceding works by K. F. Köppen (1808–1863) and V. P. Vasilyev (1818–1900), it presented, nevertheless, some new facts about peculiarities of Tibetan Buddhism. Schlagintweit's choice of English as the language of his book was apparently a clever decision because the above-mentioned authors had their books written in or

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[6] Apart from a series of papers on various issues connected with Tibetan book collections, language and lexicography, he published several books, including the first European translation of a Bon text (*Über das Bonpo-Sûtra: «Das weisse Nâga-Hunderttausend»*. St. Petersbourg: Académie Impériale des Sciences, 1880) and the collection *Tibetan tales derived from Indian sources* (first in English, Schiefner's German text being translated by W. R. S. Ralston; London: Trübner, 1880).

[7] Schiefner touched upon some Tibetan lexical issues in his numerous letters to Albrecht Weber and, even more important, shared with him some details on the sad conflict between him and Vasily Vasilyev about the publication of Schiefner's German translation of Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India* (St. Petersburg: Kaiserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1869). See the volume published by H. Walravens and A. Stache-Weiske in 2015; the block of letters on Vasilyev was first published separately by Hartmut Walravens in both German and his English translation: Walravens H. "Letters of A. Schiefner about V. P. Vasil'ev". *Pis'mennye pamiatniki Vostoka*, 1(8), 2008, pp. 251–264.

translated into other main European languages, hence the English reader was a more promising target at that time.[8] The editors of the volume notice that Müller's reaction to Schiefner's letter was obviously positive since, in 1866, Schlagintweit was successfully elected corresponding member of the Royal Bavarian Academy of Sciences (p. 878). However, his hopes to become a professor of Tibetan were futile and he had to start an administrative career in 1867. This certainly obstructed his further Buddhist and Tibetan studies to some extent. Still, about one hundred of his 129 publications (see the list on pp. 43–57) were issued after 1867.

Without doubt, "Buddhism in Tibet" played a very important role in Schlagintweit's biography as an orientalist. An autodidact in regard of Tibetan (and Sanskrit), he needed help in dealing with Tibetan texts he wanted to introduce in his first book. It was his great luck to find, in Schiefner, a person who would not refuse his numerous linguistic and organizational queries. Schlagintweit acknowledged Schiefner's help in the foreword to his book in the following way: "In my studies of Tibetan I have been greatly assisted by Mr. A. Schiefner at St. Petersburg, to whose publications I shall often have occasion to allude. This gentleman also afforded me the welcome opportunity of laying the verbal explanatory details of the priests in loco a second time before a Lama, the Buriat Galsang Gombojew, who is engaged at St. Petersburg as teacher of Mongolian;[9] he made for me, besides, various abstracts from books contained in the imperial oriental libraries having a bearing upon these objects" (p. x). The letters published by H. Walravens and A. Stache-Weiske show that Schiefner's "assistance" *was* great, far exceeding the amount of support that a recognized scholar would usually find appropriate to lend to an almost complete stranger. It suffices to mention that Schiefner had to check rather long lists of Tibetan words and expressions Schlagintweit did not understand or copied with orthographic mistakes and had to

[8] According to F. W. Thomas (1867–1956), who wrote an obituary for Schlagintweit, "The value of the work resided largely in the fact that it was the first account of Tibetan Buddhism to be accompanied by descriptions and representations of the actual objects and implements used in worship", see: Thomas F. W. "Dr Emil Schlagintweit". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Volume 37, Issue 1, pp. 215–218.

[9] Galsan[g] Gomboev (1822–1863) was a learnt Buryat lama who started his teaching career in Kazan University and then moved to Saint Petersburg along with the Faculty of Oriental Languages in the mid-1850s. He published several important papers and was elected corresponding member of the Oriental Department of the Imperial Archaeological Society. Thanks to Schiefner's mediation he rendered contents of some Tibetan texts for Schlagintweit (it was a paid work) but, at least in regard of *Mani Kabum*, Gomboev used its Mongolian version, see: Vostrikov A. *Tibetan Historical Literature*. Tr. by H. Ch. Gupta. Calcutta: R. D. Press, 1970, pp. 52–53.

consult some Tibetan works to find information that could be useful for his correspondent.

It is known that Schiefner was eager to help colleagues but it is also quite clear that Schlagintweit himself was a persistent person, although in a polite way. It was remarked by Schiefner in a long letter about their early contacts sent to his close friend Weber and quoted by the editors in their introduction (pp. 58–63). Writing about the meeting he had with Emil and his brother Hermann in London in July 1863, Schiefner commented on them: "These gentlemen are obliging and complaisant to a very high degree, in spite of their sincerity, which is not often found among the Germans and which is probably borrowed from the English and French, in relation to their plans for the future, so that I could not refuse their request to write to M[arcus] J[oseph] Müller" ("Verbindlich u[nd] gefällig sind diese Herren, trotz ihrer bei den Deutschen nicht oft vorkommenden u[nd] wohl von den Engländern u[nd] Franzosen entlehnten Aufrichtigkeit in Betreff ihrer Zukunftspläne, in einem sehr hohen Grade, so daß ich ihnen die Bitte an M[arcus] J[oseph] Müller zu schreiben, nicht abschlagen konnte").

Schiefner was not always happy to be associated with Schlagintweit's writings. In his letter from April 9, 1865, Schiefner had to reprimand firmly the colleague for the claim that his conclusions expressed in the paper *Der Gottesbegriff des Buddhismus* (in *Sitzungsberichte der k. bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1864, 1, 8) were shaped due to his meeting with Schiefner (p. 88). The critical approach to Schlagintweit's work on Bon religion is also found in Schiefner's letter (1879) to the American Indologist W. D. Whitney (1827–1894), quoted by the editors (p. 66). Nevertheless, Schiefner's attitude to Schlagintweit was benevolent and the editors must be right assuming that, over time, he developed an opinion on Emil as a serious researcher (ibid.). Moreover, Schiefner was certainly interested in the Schlagintweits' collection of Tibetan books and paid a visit to Emil's home, the Jägersburg (near Eggolsheim, Franconia, Germany).

The Schlagintweit section of the book is also supplied with Emil's history of his family (p. 24–42) and some additional documents kept together with Schiefner's letters such as an anonymous account of the Moravian Mission in Tibet (Indian parts of historical Tibet are meant here) and materials concerning the foundation of the monastery of Hemis, in Ladakh. The latter prove that Schlagintweit published Schiefner's preliminary translation of the founding inscription of that monastery; as Schiefner had clearly stated that he did not want this to be printed in this unrevised form Schlagintweit added a footnote: "For the kind information about peculiar expressions I am indebted

to Mr. A. Schiefner, Petersburg" ("Für freundliche Mittheilungen über eigenthümliche Ausdrücke bin ich Herrn A. Schiefner in Petersburg verbunden").[10]

The documents published by H. Walravens and A. Stache-Weiske are very important for the history of the 19th century Tibetology that developed rather quickly even though Paris was the only place in Europe at that time where Tibetan was officially taught at the university level. The scholars who preceded (and, certainly, prepared!) the boom of Tibetology in the second half of the 20th century should not be neglected. In this regard I would like to point out that it is truly weird to read the following passage in the introduction to the otherwise excellent and very important online project "Collecting the memories of the pioneers of Tibetan Studies": "The field of Tibetan Studies is relatively young. Although Tibet has been by limited avenues explored for several centuries, Western academic research has focused on Tibet mainly from the beginning of the 20th century, typically in search of Tibetan translations of Indian and Buddhist treatises. Tibetan Studies emerged as a unique academic discipline only during the 1960s and 1970s, when large numbers of Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama into exile".[11] This attitude seems to be based on the dubious position that an academic discipline must be taught at the universities to be called this way. However, the history of science knows other forms of producing knowledge about the world, first of all academies of sciences, that could (and still can) unite learned people in their striving for scholarly progress.

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[10] See Schlagintweit E. "Tibetische Inschrift aus dem Kloster Hemis in Ladakh". *Sitzungsberichte der kön. bayer. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München*, 1864, II, pp. 305–318.

[11] URL: https://oralhistory.iats.info/ (access 05.01.2021).

Karine Gagné. *Caring for Glaciers, Land, Animals, and Humanity in the Himalayas*. University of Washington Press, 2018, XXV+ 232 pages. ISBN 9780295744025 (ebook). ISBN 9780295744018 (relié). ISBN 9780295744001 (broché)

Compte-rendu par
Patrick Kaplanian

Le Ladakh a été ouvert aux étrangers en septembre 1974. Karine Gagné s'y est rendue pour la première fois en 2011, soit 36 ans plus tard, ce qui représente un double handicap : d'une part la société s'est profondément modifiée en une génération (fin de la polyandrie, partage des terres entre les frères, développement des emplois salariés) d'autre part elle a déjà été étudiée par une pléthore d'ethnologues. De ce double handicap l'auteure s'est remarquablement bien sortie en adoptant un angle original. Il s'agit avant tout d'un récit de voyage : le livre est truffé d'anecdotes vécues. Vécues et racontées par une ethnologue avec un regard d'ethnologue. C'est ainsi qu'on apprend (pp. 103-114) qu'au village de Tingmosgang la fonte des glaces est insuffisante pour alimenter les canaux d'irrigation. Il faudrait procéder à un rituel appelé *skin jug* pour propitier la divinité du monde d'en bas dispensatrice de fertilité, le *zhidak* (*gzhi bdag*). Mais plus personne ne connait ce rituel. Commence alors toute une quête pour trouver quelqu'un qui puisse procéder au *skin jug*. Le moine du village se récuse et c'est finalement un vieux moine du monastère de Likir qui accepte accomplir le rituel.

L'auteure a interrogé avant tout des vieillards, ce qui lui a permis de remonter dans de temps. C'est ainsi qu'elle a rencontré Tsewang Jorgais (p. 32), âgé de 91 ans, qui se rappelait très bien de l'époque d'avant l'indépendance de l'Inde, lorsque le maharadja du Jammou et Cachemire régnait encore. Les paysans étaient alors écrasés de dettes, d'impôts et de corvées (pp. 33-35).

Elle n'a pas interrogé les jeunes et l'évolution de la société est donc vue à travers le regard des anciens qui se désolent de la perte des traditions et de la désertification des campagnes, les plus jeunes allant chercher du travail à la ville (Leh) voire en Inde. Et les vieillards se retrouvent seuls, sans soutien. Ils doivent laisser une partie des champs en friche faute de main-d'œuvre. Toutes ces réflexions constituent le chapitre I : « The Loneliness of Winter ».

Patrick Kaplanian,"Compte-rendu de Karine Gagné. *Caring for Glaciers, Land, Animals, and Humanity in the Himalayas*", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 65, Octobre 2022, pp. 200-202.

Le chapitre II s'intitule « Arthalis » ce qui signifie « 48 » en hindi/ourdou, allusion à l'année 1948 et à la guerre entre l'Inde et le Pakistan tout juste indépendants. Le souvenir de l'arrivée des troupes pakistanaises dans le Bas-Ladakh, c'est-à-dire en aval de Leh sur l'Indus, était encore très vivace en 2011-2012. Les sympathies de ces villageois bouddhistes allaient à l'armée indienne. L'auteure raconte comment certains furent forcés de travailler pour l'armée pakistanaises, comment les soldats pakistanais, gros mangeurs de viande, confisquèrent tout le bétail et le dévorèrent. Elle raconte aussi, et ceci est important, que certains Ladakhi chiites firent cause commune avec les Pakistanais (pp. 55-56), ce qui contredit en partie la thèse d'une identité ladakhi au-delà de la division entre chiites et bouddhistes. « This rhetoric [comme quoi les bouddhistes doivent être solidaires] may have gathered strength as the war played out along communal lines in the occupied villages and, in its emphasis on a Buddhist genealogy, only reinforced communalism, thus ignoring prevailing social and kinship bond between Buddhists and Muslims in Ladakh » (p. 57). Mais tout est relatif : « clearly some Buddhist Ladakhis were reading the conflict as a communal one, though this perception was not shared by all » (p. 59).

Cela tourna parfois au drame. Par exemple au village de Khalatse des agents du fisc et des commerçants venus vendre du sel, tous musulmans, soupçonnés d'être des espions pakistanais, furent noyés dans l'Indus (p. 67).

Le chapitre III montre comment la guerre et la partition ont transformé le Ladakh en zone frontalière. Il met en évidence le rôle considérable de l'armée, premier employeur de Ladakhi biens adaptés au climat et bons connaisseurs du terrain. Cette introduction par les militaires de nombreux emplois salariés devait provoquer un début de délitement de la société traditionnelle.

Le chapitre IV décrit l'évolution de l'économie locale. La création d'emplois salariés induit un manque de main-d'œuvre pour l'agriculture et la contraction des glaciers, dont la fonte produit l'indispensable eau pour l'irrigation, n'arrange pas les choses. Les interlocuteurs de Gagné ne croient pas au réchauffement climatique. Si les glaciers s'amaigrissent c'est parce que l'on néglige le culte des divinités du sous-sol (*lhu* et *zhidak*, *klu* et *bzhi bdag*) dispensatrices de fertilité.

Le chapitre V décrit le rapport entre l'homme et la nature. Le paysage n'est pas fixe, il bouge tout le temps, rempli de signes et d'indices qu'il faut savoir interpréter. L'auteur donne comme exemple la façon de s'y prendre avec les bêtes sauvages.

Le chapitre VI revient aux glaciers et à leur déclin. Ce n'est plus la négligence du culte des *lhu* qui est en cause mais un recul général de

la moralité. Et aussi une forme d'inattention comme le suggère une femme : « Caring for glaciers or listening to what they tell and what they ask of people requires knowing about them ». Il existe pour l'homme deux façons d'entrer en contact avec la nature. L'une est à travers des entités comme ces divinités du sous-sol (*lhu* et *zhidak*, *klu* et *bzhi bdag*), l'autre est un rapport direct avec un environnement qui est comme un être vivant. Il faut savoir interpréter les signes qu'il donne, en prendre soin, l'écouter, le respecter. Gagné parle d'une « ethics of care » (p. 6). Si on prend soin de la nature, si on la respecte, alors on n'a rien à craindre. C'est pourquoi une informatrice, Abi Lobsang, ne comprend pas pourquoi le léopard des neiges s'est attaqué à son bétail alors qu'elle a toujours mené une vie exemplaire. (p. 18).

Un modèle de récit de voyage dont il faut conseiller à lecture à toute personne se rendant au Ladakh pour la première fois. Cela lui permettra de s'imprégner de la culture et de la mentalité ladakhi plus sûrement qu'avec un guide touristique classique.

***Early West Tibetan Buddhist Monuments. Architecture, Art, History and Texts*, sous la direction de Christian Jahoda et Christiane Kalantari, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften, 534 Band.**
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Compte-rendu par
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Il s'agit de 16 textes entièrement consacrés à l'histoire, l'art et l'archéologie du Tibet occidental, Ladakh inclus. L'ouverture est faite par Roberto Vitali : « Territory and Trends in Land Control: The Byang thang "Heartland" and the mNga' ris. "Periphery" ». L'auteur analyse le passage de l'État de Zhang zhung au royaume de Skyid lde Nyi ma mgon. S'il s'agit de conquête, s'il s'agit de conversion du bon au bouddhisme, il s'agit avant tout du passage d'un mode de vie nomade, centré autour du haut plateau du Byang thang, à un mode de vie agricole et sédentaire centré sur les vallées plus chaudes de la périphérie. Ce basculement a eu lieu lors du partage du royaume de Skyid lde Nyi ma mgon entre ses fils : « The passage of mNga' ris skor gsum into the hands of the sTod kyi mgon gsum [les trois fils] marked the abandonment of the higher altitude land » (p. 9).

Dans le second chapitre « Power and Religion in Pre-Modern Western Tibet: The monumental Avalokiteśvara Stela in lCog ro, Purang », Christian Jahoda et Christiane Kalantari, décrivent une stèle située à quelques kilomètres de Purang au lieu-dit lCog ro / Cog ro, portant un bas-relief d'Avalokiteśvara. Les auteurs concluent que cette stèle pourrait faire partie du lien manquant entre le début de l'art bouddhique engagé par le dynastie Yarlung et les plus anciennes œuvres bouddhiques de l'Ouest tibétain, comme celle du monastère de Tabo au Spiti (p. 43). Le trait dominant commun aux deux écoles consiste à montrer que les cours princières bouddhistes sont de pieux et généreux donateurs (p. 43). La stèle daterait de 826 ou de 838 (p. 53).

C'est de trois autres stèles et d'un *mchod rten* que parle Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, traduit et annoté par Christian Jahoda : « Brief Description of the traditions Related to the "Translator's *mchod rten*" in Kyu wang, Western Tibet ». Ces stèles sont situées à Kyu wang, au sud de Radni et de la Sutlej. Il ne s'agit pas d'histoire ou

Patrick Kaplanian,"Compte-rendu de Christian Jahoda et Christiane Kalantari. *Early West Tibetan Buddhist Monuments. Architecture, Art, History and Texts*", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 65, Octobre 2022, pp. 203-206.

d'archéologie, mais de la description des rituels pratiqués autour de ces éléments aujourd'hui. On peut douter que ces rituels éclairent l'histoire. Par contre l'ethnologue, par exemple celui travaillant au Ladakh, y retrouvera bien des choses qui lui sont familières comme le sacrifice de la chèvre (p. 63), le gâteau-offrande appelé *'brang gyas*, etc.

Christian Jahoda nous livre ensuite une paraphrase (c'est son mot en anglais) d'un texte de Pandita Grags pa rgyal mtstan (1415-1498) : « Pandita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Chapter on the History of mNga' ris in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*: Notes on the Author and the Content ». Il s'agit donc d'une tranche d'histoire. On y retrouve le Zhang zhung, Skyid lde Nyi ma mgon et le partage entre ses trois fils. Une étude comparée ferait ressortir les différences d'avec le chapitre I, par exemple en ce qui concerne l'éradication du bon.

Le chapitre V donne le fac-similé du même texte. (« Relating the History of mNga' ris as Set Down in writing in Pandita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu'i cod paṇ nyi zla'i phreng mdzes*. The Tibetan Text (with variants and corrected reading by Tsering Drongshar et Christian Jahoda) »). Le manuscrit en *dbu med* est reproduit tel quel accompagné d'une transcription en *dbu can* par Tsering Drongshar et Christian Jahoda.

Le chapitre VI est le texte en *dbu can* d'un autre manuscrit de Pandita Grags pa rgyal mtshan : « The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Pandita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text » par Tsering Drongshar et Christian Jahoda.

Cinq textes sont alors consacrés au monastère de Nyarma, probablement le plus ancien temple de ce qui deviendra le Ladakh, puisqu'il est attribué à Ye shes 'od et daté de 996 (p. 171). C'est le plus important aussi, les ruines s'égrenant sur 2 km (carte page 203).

Ce pentalogue commence par la publication par Christian Jahoda d'un texte en anglais du célèbre historien ladakhi Joseph Gergan auteur d'une monumentale histoire du Ladakh, *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* (1976) : « Joseph Thsertan Gergan's Report on Nyarma, 1917 ». Jahoda en donne le fac-similé et la réécriture. Il en ressort deux conclusions : la première est que Nyarma serait l'œuvre de Rinchen Zangpo, d'après Gergan s'entend puisque la chose est encore discutée. La seconde est l'importance du culte de rDo rje chen mo.

Quentin Devers reprend tous les composants des bâtiments en particulier les briques, leur taille, leur composition et la façon dont elles s'emboîtent. Son article intitulé « An Archaeological Account of Nyarma and its surroundings » établit un classement chronologique de tous les bâtiments qui composent le complexe. Hubert Feiglstorfer (« The Architecture of the Buddhist Temple Complex of Nyarma ») se

concentre sur la partie centrale qu'il appelle « The temple site » et que Devers appelle « the main complex ». Si Devers étudie surtout les matériaux, Feiglstorfer s'intéresse plus à la disposition, aux orientations, aux espaces, aux mouvements des occupants. Les textes ce de ces deux auteurs se complètent donc parfaitement. La lecture aurait peut-être été plus facile si les auteurs avaient utilisé le même système de référence. Ainsi ce que Devers nomme Temples 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 devient chez Feiglstorfer I, II, IIIa, IIIb, IV, auxquels il ajoute V.

Les deux chapitres suivants (X et XI) se penchent sur le temple principal de Nyarma, le *gtsug lag khang*. Christiane Kalandari (« Note on the spatial Iconography of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang* in context ») cherche à voir si les traits spécifiques et la configuration spatiale des fondations royales vers l'an mil, et tout particulièrement ceux du *gtsug lag khang*, s'intègrent au contexte artistique et culturel de l'époque. Elle conclut que, si la décoration est l'œuvre d'artisans et d'artistes venus de l'Inde, du Cachemire et du Népal, la disposition des salles reflète le programme spirituel des moines tibétains.

Christian Jahoda (« On the Foundation of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang*, Ladakh ») pose la question de l'attribution du *gtsug lag khang* à Rinchen Zangpo. La tradition attribue la fondation des trois monastères de Nyarma (au Maryul = Ladakh), Khorchag (au Purang) et Tholing (au Guge) au même Rinchen Zangpo parfois même avec une inauguration le même jour ! Reste à voir ce qu'il en est réellement. Une analyse serrée des textes conclut qu'il est bien le bâtisseur de Korchag, qu'il a participé à la construction de Tholing, mais rien ne laisse entendre qu'il a joué un rôle à Nyarma.

Ce chapitre est suivi de deux précieux appendices, le premier consacré aux titres des souverains, le second à une chronologie.

Il a été récemment découvert dans le hall d'entrée (*sgo khang*) du monastère de Tabo au Spiti une fresque représentant le couple Hārītī ('Phrog ma) et Pāñcika (lNga[s] rtsen). Christiane Kalantari (« Hārītī and Pāñcika at Tabo. On the Metamorphosis of the Protective Couple in Early West Tibetan Buddhist temples ») s'intéresse au destin de ce couple. Ses conclusions rejoignent celles de son article précédent : Hārītī et Pāñcika renvoient à une première phase de la conversion de l'Ouest tibétain, à une époque où l'influence de l'Inde du Nord se fait toujours sentir.

Vient en 13ème position une réévaluation du destin du roi-lama Yeshe O (Ye shes 'Od) : « A Brief Analysis of the Reputed Passing away of *Lha bla ma* Ye shes 'Od among the Garloq » par Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, traduit et annoté par Christian Jahoda. La tradition attribue la mort de Yeshe O aux Turcs Karluk (ou Qarluq, en tibétain Gar log) parce qu'il n'avait pas pu payer une rançon consistant en

son propre poids en or. L'auteur démontre qu'il ne s'agit pas de Yeshe O mais de son petit-neveu O lde, 4ème successeur de Nyimagon.

Les deux chapitres suivants sont dédiés à des manuscrits et à leurs enluminures. Le premier, situé au Spiti, est étudié par Eva Allinger et Christian Luczanits : « A Vajradhātu Maṇḍala in Prajñāpāramitā manuscript of Tabo Monastery ». On trouve à Tabo 53 enluminures, 28 sont dans un même manuscrit du Prajñāpāramitā et 25 autres sont dispersées dans huit manuscrits. La difficulté est de les dater. Les auteurs proposent de comparer leur style avec celui des fresques plus faciles à dater. En raisonnant ainsi ils proposent le XIIe siècle pour la plupart des enluminures.

Dans son article « Shaping Space, Constructions, Identity: the Illuminated *Yum chen mo* Manuscript at Pooh, Kinnaur » Christiane Kalantari cherche à établir les articulations entre la disposition des textes et des images dans ce manuscrit du Prajñāpāramitā très abondamment illustré et la disposition des inscriptions et des images d'un temple et ce au niveau de l'iconographie, du programme spirituel, de l'ordonnancement dans l'espace, de la place du donateur et peut-être aussi de la division du travail entre les artisans.

Reste enfin un chapitre signé Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po et Christiane Kalandari : « Guge Kingdom Period Murals in the Zhag Grotto in mNga' ris, Western Tibet ». Il s'agit d'une description du temple-grotte de Zhag dans la vallée de Be (ou Bye) à 8 km au nord de Dungkar et 30 km au nord de la Sutlej. Après une description détaillée des fresques, l'auteur conclut que l'on n'a pas affaire à une gonpa traditionnelle qui permet aux moines de se réunir régulièrement mais d'un lieu d'offrandes (*mchod khang*) et de méditation.

Une dernière chose : c'est un très bel objet, entièrement en couleurs, avec de nombreuses cartes. L'impression et le façonnage sont particulièrement bien soignés.

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