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The Body Mandala Debate: Knowing the Body through a Network of Fifteenth-Century Tibetan Buddhist Texts

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The Body Mandala Debate: Knowing the Body through a Network of Fifteenth-Century  
Tibetan Buddhist Texts

by

Rae Erin Dachille

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Buddhist Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California at Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Alexander von Rospatt, Co-chair

Professor Patricia Berger, Co-chair

Professor Jacob P. Dalton

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Abstract

*The Body Mandala Debate: Knowing the Body through a Network of Fifteenth-Century Tibetan Buddhist Texts*

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Professor Alexander von Rospatt, Co-chair

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Buddhist texts perpetually remind readers to realize the pervasive nature of suffering by reflecting upon the impermanent and even putrid nature of the human form. However, they also proclaim birth in a human body to be the ideal condition for liberating oneself from that suffering. How can the body be both a tool for transcendence and an obstacle to be overcome? Within tantric Buddhism, the body mandala is a ritual process of imagining parts of the human body as parts of the mandala, a cosmic palace inhabited by Buddhas and attendant deities. In examining a network of texts by scholar-monks Mkhas grub rje (1385-1438) and Ngorchen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456) concerning body mandala, this dissertation brings to light complex attitudes towards the role of the body in tantric practice and contextualizes esoteric conceptions of the body in terms of larger social, religious, and political dynamics circulating in fifteenth-century Tibet. In bringing the esoteric into conversation with the humanistic, this dissertation demonstrates the value of studying ritual technologies of the body within their historical contexts as well as in relation to discourses on the body across disciplines and cultures.

For my loving mother and father,  
With gratitude for this fortunate birth as your daughter

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1919,0101,0.18

Institute & Copyright: British Museum

Site: Dunhuang Mogao

(Ch.xxii.0015)

Form: mandala, painting

Materials: ink and colours on silk

Size (h x w) cm:

58.5 x 56.3

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Pelliot tibétain 4216

Institute & Copyright:

La Bibliothèque nationale de France

Site: Dunhuang Mogao Materials: ink on paper

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Nineteenth or twentieth century

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## Introduction

Within tantric Buddhism, the body mandala is a ritual process of imagining the human body as a mandala, a cosmic palace inhabited by buddhas and attendant deities. This dissertation examines a network of texts by two Tibetan scholar-monks, Mkhas grub rje (1385-1438), a champion of the Gelukpa tradition, and Ngorchen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456), a hero of the Sakyapa legacy, concerning body mandala. In the process, it brings to light complex attitudes towards the role of the body in tantric practice. It also contextualizes esoteric conceptions of the body in terms of larger social, religious and political dynamics circulating in fifteenth-century Tibet.

The dissertation will consider how Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's respective varieties of polemical, ritual, philosophical, and exegetical expertise inform their approaches to body mandala. It is built upon the conviction that the body mandala texts provide insight into the authorial personas of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen as well as into the polemical and exegetical cultures of fifteenth-century Tibetan Buddhism. These insights include but are not limited to their potential involvement in sectarian formation and "sectarian differentiation."<sup>1</sup> Analyzing the body mandala debate texts and their later interpretations therefore provides an opportunity to work towards a better understanding of how Geluk and Sakya identities came to be regarded as distinct. Therefore, it takes into account how institutional and socio-political relationships of patronage, lineage, and abbatial succession factored in the creation and interpretation of this network of texts. These texts are classified as tantric polemics, a genre that by definition experiments with the boundaries between at least two Buddhist discourses, tantra and of philosophy. Therefore, this project also illuminates the subtleties of how Tibetan scholastics reinforced or recreated relationships to the past as well as relationships between texts, between different modes of Buddhist discourses, and between different varieties of Buddhist practice. Finally, the dissertation creates a space to explore broader questions about the interpretation of ritual and the body's role in both soteriological advancement and exegetical practice.

### I. Writing on the Body: The Body Mandala Debate as History of the Body

Whether regarded as a tool or as an obstacle, the human body is the ultimate framework situating us in time and space, the backdrop against which our stories are woven and the altar upon which our rituals are enacted. It may be the ground for contestation of socio-political tensions as well as a powerful agent for change. Broadly, this dissertation is motivated by questions surrounding the paradoxical status of the human body as limitation and potentiality as reflected in visual and textual representations of Himalayan ritual life.

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<sup>1</sup> Cabezón 2007 creates an important distinction between "sectarian differentiation" and sectarianism; this distinction will be discussed below. Cabezón, José Ignacio and Geshe Lobsang Dargyay. 2007. *Freedom from Extremes: Gorampa's 'Distinguishing the Views' and the Polemics of Emptiness*. Boston: Wisdom Publications. See p.7.

The body mandala is not a monolithic practice, but rather varies across Buddhist tantric cycles and transmissions. Comparing different ways of mapping deities onto or within the body may reveal important transformations, exchanges, and influences that will contribute to a more complex and engaging portrait of the development of the role of the body in tantric ritual. For example, such comparisons may allow us to observe how conceptions of the body changed at the intersection of religious, medical, socio-political and perhaps even artistic domains. This dissertation gestures toward this larger nexus of ideas of the body in which tantric ritual participates. In part, it is an attempt to bring tantric bodies out of the shadows and to demonstrate the larger relevance of tantric conceptions of the body to the history of the body across temporal and geographical boundaries. This project takes a step towards engaging tantric corporeality in a dialogue with other ritual technologies focused upon the body, technologies that form the basis of study for scholars of religious studies, anthropology, and even the history of medicine. In addition, it builds upon a trend in historical studies, the “New Historicism” of the 1980’s and the resultant new “cultural history” whereby:

“history was coming to be seen primarily as a set of changing representations of the past. Situating bodies historically in their appropriate ‘representational regimes’ was part and parcel of the re-thinking of meaning, purpose and shape of history. Increasingly, therefore, history (as in the history of the body) was approached as a text: authored, discursive, and malleable in every respect...Thus did the new cultural history render the body and historical epistemology privileged sites for literary and cultural analysis.”<sup>2</sup>

In engaging with the body mandala debate texts as examples of bodily representations, we must first define what we mean by “representation.” Within philosophy, “representationalism asserts that we know not external things, but the representations, or copies, of external things in our own minds.”<sup>3</sup> While many strands of Buddhist philosophical discourse espouse skepticism towards the relationship between representation and reality, tantric practices embrace representations as soteriological tools. In particular, deity yoga, of which body mandala practice is a form, employs a variety of representations of deities, evoked through ritualized mediums such as sound, recitation, and image, to recreate as the practitioner’s sense of self. Ritual is therefore, in a sense, a creative act that employs categories of representation, imagination, and metaphor to transform the relationship of self and world.

Many definitions of representation suggest a transformation of an “original” through acts of replication, imagination, performance, and re-creation. In her 2008 study of Tibetan embryological narratives, Frances Garrett remarks: “The understanding of metaphoric language puts emphasis on an aesthetic appreciation of the world, which may be experienced in ritual, symbolic and artistic activity, and which serves to help recreate one’s own life-world, a central goal of much religious activity.”<sup>4</sup> The boundaries of the

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Cooter, “The Turn of the Body: History and the Politics of the Corporeal.” *ARBOR* CLXXXVI 743 may-june (2010): 397.

<sup>3</sup> C.E.M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*, I.ii.41 (1936) [OED online]

<sup>4</sup> Garrett, Frances. 2008, *Religion, Medicine and the Human Embryo in Tibet*, New York: Routledge, p.124.

Buddhist “life-world” are fixed within *samsāra*, a cycle of perpetual rebirth impelled by desire, hatred, and ignorance. *Samsāra* is a framework governed by perpetual replication and representation. Replication applies in its sense of repetition; rebirth is a form of replication, therefore, in the earlier musical definition of the word, rather than its later definition as a copy, reproduction, or likeness of an “original.” The infinity of rebirth confounds any attempt to locate such an original. The continuity of karma and subtle mental habits and attachments takes form in different representations or bodies across limitless lifetimes. Only the most realized beings, buddhas and bodhisattvas, have the ability to recognize the connections between these representations, to perceive how they are linked by a chain of cause and effect and a profound level of human inter-relationship. Only these beings can control their rebirth process. Therefore, from a Buddhist cosmological perspective, representation and embodiment are intrinsically linked.

Tantric Buddhism reinforces this link between representation and embodiment through ritual technologies of control. Through controlling the body, one learns to control the mind. In his study of Tibetan ritual, Stephen Beyer defines tantra in terms of control, and specifically, the control of representations of the deity: “Tantra is thus the ‘quick path’ wherein control is synonymous with power; to control the divine appearance, mantra and ego is to act with the deity’s body, speech and mind, and to control the mind and body is to own the world.”<sup>5</sup> Tantric ritual acts of imagination involve the repeated creation and destruction of representations. In identifying with the deity in deity yoga, the practitioner, by analogy creates and destroys the ego, the sense of self that confines them. Therefore, from one perspective, controlling one’s sense of the body through ritual allows one to transform the sense of self. Like a ritual effigy, the body as representation is a substitute for the self, one with which it is deeply connected. It is the exclusive medium and vehicle through which an individual can strive for liberation from the confines of *samsāra*.

Like an image or other variety of representation, the body functions as a support [Tib. *rtan*] for tantric ritual practice. Bodies are a kind of representation linked to notions of being inhabited, derived from an original, or the outcome of a creative process. The relationship between “representation” and body is expressed in the overlap in the semantic range of “image” and “body” in Sanskrit and Tibetan languages as “support [*rtan*],” “reflection [*gzugs brnyan* Skt.*prati-bimba*]” “or something that is fashioned or molded [Skt. *deha*].” The link between representations and bodies is reinforced by ritual practice. Both must be consecrated in order to be suitable to contain a divine presence or “represent” the deity.<sup>6</sup> Bentor 1997 emphasizes this dimension of the concept of *rtan* by

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<sup>5</sup> Beyer 1973, p.94. Stephen Beyer, *The Cult of Tāra: Magic and Ritual in Tibet* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

<sup>6</sup> In his 2014 study of Newar Old Age rituals, Von Rospatt highlights this correlation between the consecration of images and persons, detailing rites in which the two activities even occur side by side.

von Rospatt, Alexander. 2014. “Negotiating the Passage Beyond a Full Span of Life: old Age Rituals Among the Newars.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*. Vol.37. No.1, 104-129.

translating the term as “receptacle.”<sup>7</sup> This translation is favorable in also lending itself to microcosm-macrocosmic correlations of bodies and representations with the world as a container inhabited by sentient beings. Such correlations are certainly relevant to the discussion of body mandala as composed of the abode, the mandala of the support [*rten*] and the supported [*brten pa*], the deities inhabiting it. *rten* may function as containers of divine presence, providing a site for ritualized veneration. Certainly in the case of *mchod rten* [Skt. *stūpa*], reliquaries housing the remains of buddhas and enlightened masters (as well as a variety of other representations), the element of containment is key. Close studies of consecration rites for *stūpas* and images demonstrate the ways in which ritual is used to navigate the complex relationships between container and contained.<sup>8</sup> The interplay of these elements is suggested by the relationship of Tibetan paintings [*thangka*] to the consecratory inscriptions and forms that appear on the reverse side.<sup>9</sup> The reverse provides an essentialized view of the forms from the painting, sometimes marked by the seed syllables and mantras that generate the deities on the front side, making them present in the container of the image. Traditionally the syllables *om*, *ah*, and *hum* are inscribed on the rear at the points corresponding to the crown, throat, and heart of the image of the deity on the front together with the consecration verse. Some paintings even bear the outline of a *stūpa* on their reverse side in the place where the body of the main deity appears on the front. Belonging to the highest class of forms of representation, those of the mind, *stūpa* are embodiments of the *dharmakāya*. Paintings, one the other hand, are *nirmāṇakāya* representations, compassionate emanations for the benefit of beings, but more coarse by nature, and correspond to the body of the buddha. The complex interplay of support and supported, container and contained, brought to light by such ‘double images’ provoke some interesting questions about the status of images or representations both as bodies and as containers.

Tantric practice predicates that the practitioner fashion oneself into the perfect container for receiving powerful teachings. The famous Tibetan tantric master Milarepa explained this metaphor as follows:

“The milk of a white lion must have a special container. It cannot be put in any ordinary one. If it is put in a clay pot for instance, as soon as the milk touches the clay pot, the pot cracks. For these vast and profound teachings of this lineage, there must be a special kind of practitioner. I refuse to teach the tradition to anyone who comes to receive my

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<sup>7</sup> In her 1997 monograph, Bendor provides a detailed look at the connection between tantric *sādhana* practice and the consecration rites of Tibetan reliquary *stūpas*. Bendor, Yael. 1996. *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism*. Leiden: E.J. Brill.

<sup>8</sup> See Bendor 1995 & 1997, von Rospatt 2010, and Owens 1995.

<sup>9</sup> “Flip Side,” an exhibition curated by Christian Luczanits for the Rubin Museum of Art (3/2013-2/2014), displayed a choice selection of paintings together with their ‘flip sides,’ bringing attention to this important and long overlooked aspect of Tibetan art and its links with ritual practice.

teachings who is not ready for them. I will only teach it to persons who are completely developed and suitable, who are ready for this teaching and the practice of it.”<sup>10</sup>

However, in translating *rten* as “support” rather than “container” or “receptacle,” we are emphasizing that *rten* are representations that act as the foundations for a creative process, a process of reimagining and thereby recreating the self.<sup>11</sup>

As a technology of inversion, tantra applies the poisons that obstruct liberation from *samsāra*, particularly desire and violence, as tools for over-coming those self-same poisons. In this light, the violent or sexualized imagery of tantric deities, ‘re-presents’ the very ties that bind; through multiple acts of representation, one moves closer to overcoming these fetters. This logic of inversion governs the principle of representation itself. From a Buddhist perspective, one of the fatal flaws of the mind is its tendency to proliferate [*prapañca*] ideas and images and to falsely ascribe [*vikalpa*] meaning to them. Yet the tantric ritual framework of deity yoga demands that the practitioner generate a host of images and connect them with particular ideas and qualities. The purpose is to acquaint him/her with the divine nature of buddhahood and to habituate him/her in cultivating these divine qualities, in representing the deity. These techniques aid the practitioner in “overcoming the tyranny of ordinary appearances,” and specifically in cutting attachment to a fixed notion of self and world.<sup>12</sup> Tantric ritual acknowledges the deep-rooted nature of the human mind’s tendencies to fixate upon ideas and images, however refined or well-intentioned. This awareness is reflected in practices such as the common preparatory ritual of dissolving ordinary appearances into emptiness before cultivating or consecrating a divine form. Likewise, the images generated by the mind in tantric *sādhana* practice are dissolved into emptiness. Through this repeated process of creating and destroying representations, the practitioner progresses toward the ultimate goal of buddhahood.

The emphasis upon this process of continuously creating and destroying representations suggests that the theory of representation embraced by tantric Buddhism resists a one-to-one correlation between representation and reality. Bruno Latour has provided useful tools for better understanding how representation works in his study of iconoclasm through the lense of science, art, and religion.<sup>13</sup> He has observed the ways in

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<sup>10</sup> Geshe Ngawang Dargyey. Oral translation by Lobsang Gyaltsen. (Dharamsala, India: 1979, edited by Samaya Hart and Alexander Berzin, November 2003).  
www.berzinarchives.com

<sup>11</sup> See Owens’ 1995 study of Newar consecration rites of images for an interesting exploration of the problem of agency in interpreting these rituals. Owens, Bruce McCoy. 1995. “Human Agency and Divine Power: Transforming Images and Recreating Gods Among the Newar.” *History of Religions* 34 (3). University of Chicago Press: 201-40. In translating *rten* as “support,” we are, like Owens, promoting the sense of implied agency of human ritual agents rather than exclusively divine ones.

<sup>12</sup> Thubten Yeshe, and Jonathan Landaw. 2001. *Introduction to Tantra: the transformation of desire*. Boston: Wisdom Publications: p.44.

<sup>13</sup> Latour, Bruno, “How to be Iconophile in Science, Art and Religion” in *Picturing Science, Producing Art*. Ed. Caroline A. Jones & Peter Galison. New York & London: Routledge, 1998. 418-440: 420-421.



which not only have images themselves been fetishized but their denial and destruction has been fetishized as well. We might use Latour’s term, “iconophilia” to better understand the ideal understanding of representations and by extension, even bodies, from the tantric perspective. Latour coined the term to describe the process of privileging paths of transition, “the movement of images,” in the meaning-making process. A vital aspect of this principle is to dispense with the misconception that there is a direct correspondence between meaning and representation. Latour describes the way that meaning flows through form as a process that eliminates the possibility of a one-to-one correspondence between a message and delivered statement. The message is inevitably transformed. The process of continuously generating and destroying images in tantric practice is thereby an iconophilic process. The two-fold structure of tantric *sādhana* practice as composed of a generation and completion or perfection process supports this interpretation. *Sādhana* is the core practice of tantric ritual “accomplishment” whereby a practitioner who has been initiated into the cult of a particular deity intensifies their relationship to that deity and thereby to the ultimate goal of buddhahood through the daily cultivation of those divine forms and qualities. The generation stage focuses upon the creation of divine forms and the initial correlation of self and buddha. To ‘complete’ or ‘perfect’ the representation of self as deity is to let go of it by degrees of increasing subtlety.

The role of the body in this process of creation and destruction is complex. The body is the context, the stage for the ritual drama, the foundation for spiritual practice, and also a reminder of the liminality of the human condition. The body is also the prototype or measure for the generation of divine bodies. It is the point of departure for the correlation of self and buddha. Tantric ritual recognizes additional capacities of the human body, subtle aspects of human potentiality that are central to the completion or perfection process of tantric *sādhana*. The term “subtle body” is often used to describe these more elusive aspects of human potentiality. In his recent edited volume on the “subtle body,” Geoffrey Samuel has traced the Western usage of the term back to a translation of the Vedantic term *sukṣma-śarīra* employed by members of the Theosophical Society.<sup>14</sup> Samuel accounts for the challenges posed by the history of the term while preserving it as a workable category for a complex network of concepts and practices suggested by early Upaniṣadic, late Vedic, and classical Vedantic literature in addition to their more explicit and familiar development in yogic as well as Buddhist and Hindu tantric literature. The specificity and diversity of conceptualization and practical application varied across traditions.

Bodies, like images, also assume both material and non-material forms. The broader Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition describes the Buddha’s own embodiment through a variety of frameworks of corporeal classification by degrees of subtlety. The most widely discussed is the three-fold structure of emanation body [*nirmāṇakāya*], a flesh and blood form, enjoyment body [*sambhogakāya*], a body composed of light as seen in dreams, visions, and other liminal states, and a dharma body [*dharmakāya*], a formless

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<sup>14</sup> Samuel, Geoffrey, and Jay Johnston. 2013. *Religion and the subtle body in Asia and the West: between mind and body*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge: p.2.

body that is the truth of the buddha's teachings themselves. These three types of Buddha body are therefore organized by subtlety of form and of perception. The first is a material body, one that can be touched as well as seen. In the case of the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, this form was ultimately consumed by fire upon the event of his ultimate enlightenment or *paranirvāṇa*. Unlike the event of initial awakening or *nirvāṇa*, this ultimate event is one described as "without remainder," in other words without a body. The second type of body is immaterial and cannot be perceived under ordinary conditions. It is the body of illusions, dreams, visions, or the body teaching to disciples in another dimension, like one of the Buddhist Pure Lands. While the emanation and enjoyment bodies are both identified as "form bodies" [*rūpa-kāyā*], the third type of body is both immaterial and formless; it cannot be seen but only known.

Representations are also often organized along a similar trajectory of gross to more subtle varieties. One familiar framework for classifying representations of the Buddha is according to their expression of the Buddha's body, speech, and mind [*sku, gsung, thugs* Skt. *kāya, vāc, citta*]. Over time, Buddhist scholars have theorized these classifications in different ways, ranking and stratifying representations accordingly. Dargyab describes the framework as follows:

'*rten*' in the religious sense means an aid to memory, an *aide memoire* or reminder of the real thing which the object stands for (hence a 'support'). For example all religious statues portraying a buddha, deity or holy being belong to '*sku-rten*' (physical reminders); all religious written works belong to '*gsung-rten*' (verbal reminders); and all objects directly related to religious practices, such as *mchod-rten*, mandala and attributes, belong to '*thugs-rten*' (spiritual reminders).<sup>15</sup>

Dargyab's emphasis upon the property of recollection in defining *rten* invites the question of what precisely is being recollected. Some of the perspectives discussed within the body mandala debate suggest that the human body functions as a support for recollection of one's own divinity. The ontological implications of this notion of recollection for the body of the tantric practitioner will be examined more deeply within this dissertation.

One of the distinguishing features of tantra is that it provides the practitioner with means for attaining a buddha body, a body of enlightened form.<sup>16</sup> The Tibetan tantric perspective describes many kinds of subtle bodies, like the illusory body [*sgyu lus*], the rainbow body [*'ja lus*], and most importantly for the purposes of this dissertation, the vajra body [*rdo rje'i lus*]. The vajra body is the body of the tantric practitioner characterized by the network of channels, winds, and drops [Tib. *rtsa rlung thig le*]. Although theoretically these elements are present in all human bodies, they are only perceived by accomplished practitioners. Through the completion or perfection stage of *sādhana*, the tantric practitioner comes to see and manipulate these subtle elements as a means of realizing one's own buddhahood. The subtle body is another variety of representation, another kind of body. This dissertation will work with a provisional definition of the subtle body as a body defined by invisible structures and processes

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<sup>15</sup> See DaDargyab, Loden Sherab. 1977. *Tibetan religious art*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz: p.25

<sup>16</sup> See Dargyab 1977, p.15

realized exclusively by the advanced tantric practitioner through sustained ritual practice. Samuel regards the category of subtle body as a particularly useful tool for exploring the space between “materialistic and idealistic extremes.”<sup>17</sup> We might add that the subtle body re-presents corporeality itself, that it is crucial to the practitioner’s iconophilic meaning-making process. As such, it facilitates a transition between different kinds of representations, flesh and blood matter, immaterial mental images, and subtle states that hover somewhere between the mental and the somatic. The key to buddhahood lies not in any one particular representation but rather in the process of continual creation and destruction and the resultant transformation of one’s mind state and one’s relationship to self and world.

In devising a method for interpreting the body mandala debate texts as bodily representations, representations that may be related to a larger history of the body, we might begin with Foucault’s notion of the body as a “cultural text.” In this light, the body may be regarded as a text upon which society maps its norms and desires as well as the ground for regulation through “discipline.”<sup>18</sup> Thus, the body mandala would be one variety of writing on the body, one that might be considered alongside laws regulating bodily conduct, medical prescriptions for diet and behavior, and reproductive politics, to name a few. Of particular interest are ritual technologies that “discipline” the body as well as those that reveal soteriological goals. In all instances, we must be cautious in correlating representations and reality and abandon the notion of a perfect replica. We must strive instead to become iconophiles, to grapple with the transitions between representations in order to make meaning of them.

Like representation, ritual presents us with a means to re-frame our perception of reality, to see it in a new way. Sharf and Bell both suggest ways in which ritual is embodied.<sup>19</sup> Sharf remarks upon the way ritual reshapes the ways in which we experience the world: “Participation in a living ritual tradition reaches beyond the vagaries of the intellect to one’s somatic being; ritual habituation indelibly inscribes the self with a set of perceptual orientations, affective dispositions, and autonomic responses that are, in effect, pre-cognitive.”<sup>20</sup> In proposing we consider the possibility that ritual is a form of play, Sharf has built upon Bateson’s work to suggest an analogy between the manner in which we “re-create” our life worlds through ritual and the nature of “recreation” itself. Bell uses “ritualization,” a term coined by Gluckman, to describe the way in which ritual is “embedded within the dynamics of the body defined within a symbolically structured environment.”<sup>21</sup> Drawing upon Bourdieu’s “dialectic of

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<sup>17</sup> Samuel 2013, 4.

<sup>18</sup> See Susan Hekman, “Material Bodies,” in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Donn Welton (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1998), 61-70. Hekman provides an interesting comparison of Judith Butler and Susan’s Bordo’s approaches to Foucault’s writings on the body.

<sup>19</sup> See Bell, Catherine. 1992. *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford University Press. & Sharf, Robert H. 2005. “Ritual,” in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), pp. 245-269.

<sup>20</sup> Sharf 2005, p.249

<sup>21</sup> Bell 2009, 93. For Gluckman’s introduction of the term, see Gluckman 1962.

objectification and embodiment,” Bell describes the generation of this ritual body as a circular process whereby ritualization sets the conditions for a “restructuring” of human agents through their interaction with a hierarchically crafted environment.<sup>22</sup> Individuals thereby internalize the designations of social and cosmic order laid out in ritual and reproduce them in spontaneous ways. They make them their own by using them as tools for realizing their own vision of how they fit into a wider realm of human relationships. They are thereby both transformed by and transforming the parameters of the world around them, creating shifts in dynamics of power and subordination.

We will return to reexamine some of these larger questions of ritual, representation, and the body in a new light in the conclusion of the dissertation. There, we will explore an anomalous body mandala painting, considering why it appears to be one of the only of its kind. We will observe the solutions the artist produced in response to the challenges of representing the body mandala practice without an identifiable prototype and consider other varieties of representations of the subtle body from India and the Himalayas. If the tantric tradition indeed embraces representation in many different senses, as replication, imagination, performance, and re-creation, if it encourages us to be iconophilic, why not represent body mandala in visual and material form? We will consider this question in dialogue with controversies regarding the fabrication of mental and material images as well as different varieties of bodies, some more subtle than others, that arise within the body mandala debate texts. In the process, we will uncover hidden aspects of the relationship of representations and bodies as ‘supports’ for achieving ritual goals.

We will begin by becoming acquainted with the two authors of our body mandala debate texts, Mkhas grub and Ngor chen, and the broader Tibetan Buddhist context in which they participate. The role of the mandala as a support for tantric practice will also be contextualized within a framework of ritual and institutional associations. These associations will be useful in progressing towards engaging with a particular form of mandala, body mandala, as represented within the body mandala debate texts.

## **II. Portraits of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen: Guru, Lineage, and Mandala in Tibetan Buddhism**

The mandala is a cosmic palace inhabited by Buddhas and attendant deities. To offer the mandala to one’s teacher, is to offer oneself and the world to them. Several portraits of Mkhas grub rje dge legs dpal bzang po (1385-1438), or Mkhas grub rje, famed fifteenth-century Gelukpa scholar and second abbot of Ganden monastery, depict him making a ritual offering of mandala to his teacher, Tsong kha pa (1357-1419). [Fig. 1]<sup>23</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Bell 2009, 97. See Pierre Bordieu 1977, p.87.

<sup>23</sup> Examples include this one from the Collection of Shelly and Donald Rubin. Himalayan Art Resource [HAR] #56, as well as HAR#23391 from a Private Collection, #71928 from Tibet House, Delhi. I am grateful to Wenshing Chou for bringing an example from the Freer and Sackler Galleries [Acc. #F1905.74] to my attention as well as the example from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco referenced below. Dr. Chou has explored such images in her work on Wutaishan, the Chinese mountain known as the abode of Manjuśrī.

abbacy of Ganden monastery, founded by Tsong kha pa's students for their master, became a central institutional role for the emerging Geluk tradition. In this nineteenth-century portrait from the Collection of Shelly and Donald Rubin, Tsong kha pa appears to Mkhas grub as a vision in the clouds performing the *dharmacakra mudrā* or the gesture of teaching.

Ary 2007 has highlighted the significance of such representations of Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa's encounter in visual and textual sources, linking them to an event from Mkhas grub's hagiography. After his teacher's death, during his time at Mdangs chen, Mkhas grub is alleged by his biographers to have experienced such visions of Tsong kha pa. These visions solidified Mkhas grub's status as heir to Tsong kha pa's spiritual legacy. They also promoted Tsong kha pa's divine identity, an identity understood to have been perfected through tantric practice. For example, Tsong kha pa's identity with the bodhisattva Manjuśrī is expressed in visual form in a painting from the collection of the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco.<sup>24</sup> [Fig.2] In another painting from the same set, also in the collection of the Asian Art Museum, Tsong kha pa appears to Mkhas grub in the guise of the great Indian realized tantric master, Dombhi Heruka.<sup>25</sup> [Fig.3]

In all of these paintings, Mkhas grub makes the mandala offering to his teacher. In a sense, they demonstrate both Tsong kha pa's ability to become a buddha through ritual practice as well as Mkhas grub's ability to regard him as such. In performing any initiation ritual, the guru must first assume this divine status, to act as the deity, what is commonly referred to as "deity yoga." Learning to regard the guru as buddha shapes the disciple into a suitable vessel for receiving the tantric teachings; the process begins in ritual acts of initiation and develops further through daily practice. The ritual practice of adopting this mind frame is termed "guru yoga." Through daily rituals like mandala offering, the disciple cultivates this proximity to the guru and thereby to buddhahood. The act of mandala offering in these portraits evokes these tantric ritual relationships; it provides a context in which the guru acts as the deity, eliciting the student's allegiance and bestowing permission upon the student to also act as the deity. In this way, the portraits reinforce the authority invested in Mkhas grub by Tsong kha pa as well as the intensity of their relationship.

Historically, lineage representations have played an important role in creating and supporting institutional identities for the new schools of Tibetan Buddhism (Sakya, Kagyu, Kadam/Geluk) emerging after the so-called dark age. Such representations emphasized the bond between guru and disciple and connected Tibetan traditions to Indian origins. Luczanits has highlighted the significance of representing the relationship of guru and disciple through lineage portraiture within the larger progression of Tibetan Buddhist history:

"The notion of the direct succession of a certain teaching tradition from person to person has its root in the Tantric tradition, which prescribes initiation into a certain type of teaching. However, the systematic emphasis on such a derivation by means of a teacher's lineage appears to have become prominent in Tibet only during the 12<sup>th</sup> century with the

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<sup>24</sup> Collection of the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco: Avery Brundage Collection B62D33.

<sup>25</sup> Asian Art Museum, Avery Brundage Collection B62D37.

new schools, and became extremely influential. Whatever the social and political circumstances that supported such a move, the need to justify a teaching by its link to the Indian tradition, thus demonstrating its authoritative derivation, is evidenced by the prominent position given to the lineage in the literature and painting of the time.”<sup>26</sup>

The relationship of Tibetan gurus to Indian masters assumed an iconic status symbolizing the legitimacy of the second wave of Tibetan Buddhism; to represent a succession of Tibetan masters perpetuating the teachings of these Indian masters was to affirm the legitimacy of these traditions, an unbroken link between past and present. As somewhat of a latecomer among the new schools, the Geluk tradition was required to innovate in its representations of its teaching lineages. In particular, artists and biographers creatively reworked the relationship of the tradition’s founder, Tsong kha pa, to his own teachers and disciples. Not entirely unlike the trope of reincarnation (another tool for the Gelukpa identity formation well-exemplified in the institution of the Dalai Lamas), the trope of the vision provided a creative framework for reinventing the past in imagining the future. Although Tsong kha pa lived in the fourteenth century, the Geluk tradition was not immediately conceived of as an independent tradition. Over time, the views and initiatives of Tsong kha pa came to be regarded as different from the Sakya and Kagyu traditions of his teachers while consistent with the early teachings of the Kadampa. The Kadampa tradition, associated with the pioneering efforts the Indian teacher Atiṣa (982-1054) in Tibet in the wake of the dark age, projected an aura of monastic reform consistent with Tsong kha pa’s own efforts. Shared emphases upon themes such as the graded approach to Buddhist practice, the necessity of carefully designating the role of tantric practice in monastic life, and an overarching concern with restoring the ethical integrity of monastic institutions allowed for natural parallels between the two masters.

This portrait of Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa’s ritual and visionary relationship shifts the focus from chronological transmission of the teachings from one generation to the next to a moment out of time. Mkhas grub offers mandala as self and world to his teacher, and in exchange, he receives unmediated and renewable access to the teachings. The “symbolic capital” of the mandala offering, laden with homologies of the form of the mandala with that of both the self and the cosmos, is empowered by its potential to be repeated *ad infinitum*.<sup>27</sup> The offering is a ritual action that reinforces the bond between guru and disciple and invests Mkhas grub with the authority to act on Tsong kha pa’s behalf.

All of these portraits of Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub evoke these aspects of tantric practice, of habituating oneself in regarding guru as buddha and reaffirming one’s

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<sup>26</sup> The essay by Luczanits, “Siddhas, Hierarchs, and Lineages: Three Examples for Dating Tibetan Art” appears in Jackson’s 2011 catalogue on Tibetan portraiture. Both authors have made significant contributions to contemporary understandings of the structure of lineage paintings as well as to their role in the evolution of Tibetan Buddhism. Jackson 2005 provides key insights into different modes of representing lineage. I was fortunate to attend a workshop lead by Luczanits and Jackson on the subject at UC Berkeley in Spring 2011.

<sup>27</sup> On the use of the category of “symbolic capital” by Bourdieu, see for example, Bourdieu 1990 pp. 112-121 and Bourdieu 1998 pp. 47-52.

conviction of this attitude through repeated ritual acts such as the mandala offering. However, the painting from the Rubin Collection [Fig. 1] adds another dimension to the nature of the authority Tsong kha pa has invested in Mkhas grub. The inscription reads: “The Venerable Dharmarājā Tsong kha pa offers the empowerment and vows of Vajrabhairava to Mkhas grub dge legs dpal who clarifies interpolations from the scripture, ‘Offering and service of the Six-armed protector.’”<sup>28</sup> The figure of Mkhas grub on the left has been interpreted as expressive of the student’s despair at his teacher’s absence. Mkhas grub turns to the ritual altar seeking answers; his despair is ultimately remedied by the appearance of the vision of Tsong kha pa. However, Mkhas grub appears once again on the lower right, hard at work sifting through piles of ritual texts. From the inscription we know that Mkhas grub is “clarifying interpolations” from the tantric ritual texts for propitiating the featured deities. This figure therefore alerts us to another kind of authority Tsong kha pa has conferred upon Mkhas grub, the power to revise the tantric teachings to perfect their meaning. This involves rooting out spurious incursions and restoring the “original” meaning of the texts. This particular aspect of Mkhas grub’s identity factors prominently in this dissertation; it helps us to make sense of what’s at stake for a scholar like Mkhas grub, renowned for his expertise in philosophical commentary and debate, in a controversy over tantric practice and a special variety of mandala practice at that. The body mandala debate presents tensions surrounding a practice in which the correlation of human being, cosmos, and mandala becomes ritually explicit, bring human being and buddhahood into even closer proximity.

To better understand the qualities that distinguish the mode of representing Mhas grub’s visions from some other conventions of lineage portraiture and to better acquaint ourselves with the other main protagonist of this dissertation, we turn to a fifteenth-century portrait of Ngorchen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456). [Fig. 4] The inscription reads, “Homage to the venerable Great Vajradhara, Kun dga' bzang po,” and the vajra and bell resting atop the lotuses alongside him reinforce his identity as a tantric master.<sup>29</sup> Vajradhara is the blue Buddha pictured above Ngor chen’s head, a figure deeply associated with the source of tantric initiation and, particularly (though not exclusively), with the *Hevajra Tantra*. A common epithet for Ngor chen, “Vajradhara” expresses the network of associations of Buddha, guru, and disciple enacted through the tantric initiation rituals described above. Unlike the visionary portraits of Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub, snapshots of a moment out of time, this painting focuses upon tracing a long chronological succession of gurus that culminate in Ngor chen. These gurus have conferred initiations into particular forms of tantric practices passed down through select lines of disciples together with requisite vows of secrecy and pledges to perfect these

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<sup>28</sup> *rje btsun chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pas/ rdo rje 'jigs byed dbang dang gdams pa gnang/ phyag drug dgon po 'i bsnyen sgrub be bum la/ lhad zhugs gsal mdzad mkhas grub dge legs dpal*

The verso bears an inscription referring to Mkhas grub’s status as a previous incarnation in the line of Panchen Lamas. See Jeff Watt’s description of this painting on [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org). His translation of *lhad zhugs gsal mdzad* as “clarifying the interpolations” conveys the spirit of the inscription nicely.

<sup>29</sup> See Jackson 2010 Figure 8.2 and discussion pp.179-181. For other studies of Sakyapa lineage portraiture in particular, see Jackson 1986 and 1990.

practices. As a record of the unadulterated transmission of tantric teachings, this portrait attests to Ngor chen's status as a tantric master infused with the wisdom of buddhahood as well to his role in preserving the integrity of the Sakya tradition.

Jackson 2010 has identified two lineages depicted in this painting. The first is the *Lam 'bras* or "Path and Fruit" tradition, one of the core signature tantric practices of the Sakya tradition; the ritual practices of the Hevajra cycle that are Ngor chen's main concern in the body mandala debate texts described in this dissertation are part of the *Lam 'bras* tradition. The other lineage is for the initiation into the cult of the Goddess Nairatmya, consort to the tantric deity Hevajra; Nairatmya is famous for transmitting the *Lam 'bras* to the great realized Indian tantric master, the mahāsiddha Virūpa, in a vision. Both lineages begin at the top center with Vajradhara, branching out in both directions; both also present the blue Nairatmya and the dark-skinned Virūpa next in the lineage. The latter's skin color is a marker of his Indian-ness, and thereby a trademark of the authority that lies at the root of the traditions. Both lineages proceed from buddha to divine consort on to Indian masters and further on through a series of Tibetan masters of the Sakya tradition.

To be a Sakya is to have been ordained in the tradition understood to begin with 'Khon dkon mchog rgyal po (1024/34-1102), the eleventh-century founder of Sakya [Sa skya] monastery in Gtsang. The five patriarchs of the Sakya tradition are a standard identifying feature of Sakya lineage portraiture (appearing in rows three through five of this painting). Sa chen kun dga' snying po (1092-1158) is shown with his two sons, Bsod nam rtse mo (1142-1182) and Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216). The white robes these three figures (each depicted twice) wear indicate their status as *sngags pa*, or non-celibate tantric practitioners. The next of the great Sakya patriarchs, Grags pa rgyal mtshan's nephew, the famous scholar monk Sa skya Pan di ta kun dga' rgyal mtshan or Sa pan (1182-1251), is depicted in a very similar fashion to Ngor chen, with a red hat and full monastic garb. The fifth of the five Sakya forefathers, Sa pan's nephew 'Phag pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235-1280), appears here as well. The pattern of spiritual inheritance descending from uncle to nephew was a common one among the Sakya; this pattern allowed the tradition to maintain an inviolate tradition of celibate monasticism together with a clan-based institutional structure. Sakya Pandita and his nephew 'Phag pa are especially significant to the history of the Sakya. They solidified a relationship with the Mongol Yuan (1271-1368) dynasty that became an important political prototype, the *mchod yon* or "patron-priest" relationship. This alliance invested the Sakyapas with authority over all the Buddhist institutions of Tibet until the fall of the Yuan in the mid-fourteenth century. This dissertation focuses upon the fifteenth century, a period in which the political patronage of Sakya institutions was somewhat less secure.

Both of the lineages depicted in this painting end with Ngor chen, whom Jackson 2010 has astutely identified as appearing twice below the main representation, as the two central figures immediately below the throne. The inscriptions marking these figures provide Ngor chen's Sanskrit name, Anantabhadra, perhaps to reinforce his connection to an Indian Buddhist legacy. In both cases, he faces the gurus from whom he received the teachings, Buddhaśrī for the Nairatmya initiation and both Buddhaśrī and Ye shes rgyal mtshan for the *Lam 'bras*. The latter is the guru to whom Ngor chen's body mandala debate text is dedicated.



Jackson has shown how the identity of the final master in a lineage can be used to date a painting; according to this logic, the painting was likely created during Ngor chen's own lifetime, and the patron, shown in the bottom row below Ngor chen was one of his students.<sup>30</sup> It is possible that this student received the *Lam 'bras* and Nairatmya initiations from Ngor chen. If so, this painting is a material representation of a bond created between the student and Ngor chen through ritual; this bond further connects that student to Ngor chen's teachers, to the great Sakya forefathers, to the great Indian masters through whom the tantric teachings came to Tibet, and to the very source of tantric knowledge itself, the buddha Vajradhara. The inscription, together with the attributes of vajra and bell, correlate Ngor chen and Vajradhara. Therefore, like the visionary portraits of Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa, this portrait of Ngor chen reinforces the connection between guru and disciple as well as between guru and Buddha. The portraits also reinforce the role of ritual in the preservation of tradition. Through the mandala offering, Mkhas grub re-establishes the link to the teachings through his deceased master, a link originally instantiated through ritual transmission. However, the elaboration of spiritual ancestry distinguishes Ngor chen's portrait from that of Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa. The latter relies instead upon the power of the ritualized visionary moment to reinvent tradition. Moreover, the reference to "eliminating imperfections in the scripture" implies shortcomings in the transmission of the tantric tradition among their contemporaries and invests Mkhas grub via Tsong kha pa with the unique responsibility of restoring the integrity of the tradition.

As we proceed to examine the network of texts composed by Mkhas grub and Ngor chen referred to as the body mandala debate, we will investigate the subtleties of what precisely it means to "clarify interpolations" or "eliminate imperfections" from tantric ritual texts. What sorts of imperfections might be perceived in the interpretation of particular versions of mandala practice and of the relationship of human body and mandala? Whose integrity is at stake in the challenges posed to these interpretations? The focus upon spiritual succession exemplified by Ngor chen's portrait clearly communicates the message that to question the transmission of a ritual practice is to gnaw at the very thread connecting generations of accomplished masters. As a trope common to the polemical and exegetical genres of Tibetan textuality, "eliminating imperfections" or "clarifying interpolations" is a quintessential Tibetan way of framing innovation; it creates space for modifying practices and institutional identities while simultaneously claiming allegiance to tradition.

In describing the portraits of Mkhas grub, we foregrounded the symbolic capital of the mandala offering and the web of relationships it evokes: of human being and cosmos and of buddha, guru, and disciple. The mandala functions as a key feature of tantric ritual practice, as a signature element in rites of initiation, a pedagogical tool, and a framework for rekindling and enhancing ritual moments in daily practice. This range of associations might be expanded even further to include some of the institutional

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<sup>30</sup> For Jackson's approach to dating Tibetan paintings, see Jackson, David. 2003. "The Dating of Tibetan Paintings is Perfectly Possible though not always perfectly exact." in *Dating Tibetan Art: Essays on the Possibilities and Impossibilities of Chronology from the Lempertz Symposium, Cologne*, edited by Ingrid Kreide-Damani. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag. 91-103.

dimensions of mandala. For example, the mastery and unadulterated transmission of mandala technologies through lineages such as those depicted in Ngor chen’s portrait bestowed prestige upon Tibetan masters and their traditions. To account for these dimensions of mandala, we will consider another painting, one commissioned by Ngor chen as part of a larger set of fourteen.<sup>31</sup> [Fig.5] The series as a whole was executed by Newar painters that had travelled to Tibet and attests to the cosmopolitan nature of Himalayan art and ritual. Ngor chen created the set, according to biographical sources as well as the inscription, to “fulfill the intention” [*dgongs rdzogs*] of his deceased master, Sa bzang ‘phag pa gzhon nu blo gros (1358-1412/24). Therefore, in a sense, the paintings themselves function as a mandala offering to the guru.

The paintings depict mandalas from a series Sa bzang transmitted to Ngor chen, mandalas described in Abhayākāragupta’s *Vajrāvalī* together with Darpanācārya’s *Kriya-samuccaya*.<sup>32</sup> These are Indian tantric ritual compendia dating between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries detailing tantric mandala initiation rites. In order to assure the continued transmission of the *Kriya-samuccaya*, Sa bzang travelled to the Kathmandu valley to receive the initiation. This painting, the fifth in the set, is one of two in the series that fuses the genres of lineage portrait and mandala painting. The lineage gurus appear in the center surrounded by four mandalas. Forms of Hevajra dominate all four, appearing in the center together with a consort and surrounded by attendant deities. The cremation grounds that typically form the periphery of the individual mandala structure are shared by all four mandala.<sup>33</sup> In “fulfilling the intention” of his guru through the patronage of works of art, Ngor chen commemorates

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<sup>31</sup>The location of only seven or eight of these original fourteen paintings is known. In his brief 2008 article, Mori has presented the most detailed research on this mandala set to date. On Ngor chen’s commissions of lineage portraiture as well as of the *Vajrāvalī* mandala set, see Jackson 2010 pp.182-90 and Jackson 1996 pp.77-82.

<sup>32</sup> Abhayākāragupta’s *Vajrāvalī-nāma- maṇḍalopayika* is a cycle of three texts, the *Phreng ba ‘khor gsum*. The *Vajrāvalī* [VA] forms the nucleus. The other two texts in the cycle are the *Niṣpanna-yogāvalī*, a *sādhana* manual listing the iconographic descriptions of the deities of the same mandalas discussed in the *Vajrāvalī* (in the very same order) and a homa text, the *Jyotirmañjarī*. These two accompanying or supplementary texts to the VA are known as *parikaras*. As a cycle, the texts describe complementary processes of consecration, initiation, visualization, and offering which should be contemplated as a holistic system. The texts appear to have been composed in the late eleventh or early twelfth century. For studies of the *Vajrāvalī* cycle, see Lee’s 2003 dissertation and 2004 study. See also Bhattacharya’s 1972 edition and Buhemann and Tachikawa’s 1991 edition. I am grateful to have participated in a seminar on the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* lead by Dr. Tachikawa at UC Berkeley in Fall 2012.

Ian Alsop is currently working on a study of the *Kriya-samuccaya*, a popular text among the Vajrācārya priests of the Kathmandu valley. See Buhemann 1992/3: “Some Remarks on the Text of the Niṣpannayogavali as Found in Jagaddarpana’s *Kriyasamuccaya*.: *Zentralasiatische Studien* 23. 1992/1993. 18-21.

<sup>33</sup> Mori 2008 has identified the central deities of these mandalas as Garbha-Hevajra, Citta-Hevajra, Vāk-Hevajra and Kāya-Hevajra from mandalas five through eight in the *Vajrāvalī* text.

his relationship to Sa bzang as well as to a lineage of masters that preceded him. He also asserts his ritual expertise in continuing to transmit these mandala teachings to the next generation of disciples. Finally, he lays claim to the prestige surrounding artistic patronage, prestige for himself, the Sakya tradition at large, and the monastery he has founded.

Ngor chen is believed to appear at least twice within the set of paintings; these instances reinforce the themes of relationship to the guru and the assertion of ritual expertise and prestige. The first instance is in the eleventh painting in the set, the Kālacakra mandala [Fig. 6]; Ngor chen appears here as the *sādhaka* or ritual specialist in the bottom right together with a host of offerings. Ngor chen appears once again in the same position in the final painting in the series, together with an inscription reinforcing his connection to Sa bzang. [Fig. 7] We might continue to explore further dimensions of Ngor chen's career through his reception and transmission of mandala rites, his composition of texts on mandala, and his patronage and consecration of artistic representations of mandala. For example, Ngor chen was involved in organizing a group of Newar artists to complete the murals for the Byams pa temple at Glo smon thang.<sup>34</sup> [Fig. 8] Ngor chen consecrated this temple, conferring his authority upon its foundation and ensuring the continuation of his Sakya spiritual legacy in Mustang's soil.

The examples discussed above introduce multiple aspects of the mandala's symbolic capital in Himalayan art and ritual. These include, but are not limited to their role in orchestrating relationships between guru, disciple and buddha, introducing tantric teachings and preserving their transmission, and maintaining and modifying institutional and socio-political relationships.

If indeed to offer the mandala is to offer oneself and the world, if the center of the mandala is the center of the Buddhist universe and, as found in some varieties of body mandala practice, the very backbone of the human form, then the perfection of this ritual act is the perfection at the very heart of tantric practice. We have begun to get a sense that Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's endeavors to "eliminate imperfections" in ritual texts or to "fulfill the intentions" of a deceased master are projects deeply imbued with both explicit and implicit levels of meaning. As Mkhas grub and Ngor chen assert their different approaches to this process of perfecting self and world in their writings on body

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<sup>34</sup> The iconographic layout of the temples at Glo remains unresolved in scholarship to date. Much research remains to be done on both the artistic and historical aspects of the creation of the mandala murals. The recent preservation projects undertaken at the site have attracted international attention. Lo Bue's 2010 monograph is the most recent contribution within the field; Luczanits's 2013 review addresses some of the controversies surrounding the restoration of the murals. Kramer 2008, Jackson 1984 and Dhungel 2002 have laid the groundwork for historical study while Matthiesson 1996 and <http://dl.lib.brown.edu/BuddhistTempleArt/history2.html> provide some photographs of the artwork. In my next project, I intend to publish the research I conducted during field work in Nepal in May 2012 with the support of the Fulbright IIE and the UC Berkeley Graduate Division. I am grateful to Luigi Fieni and Samantha Ezeiza, Christian Luczanits and Kimiaki Tanaka for their support in pursuing that research.

mandala, they create a portal into fifteenth-century Tibetan ritual, institutional, and scholastic life. This dissertation is an invitation to explore that portal.

### III. State of Research: Sources for Making Sense of the Body Mandala Debate

An exhaustive study of biographical materials featuring both authors is beyond the scope of the present work. However, we are prepared to acknowledge that particular aspects of their expertise have been emphasized by certain biographers at the expense of others. Mkhas grub and Ngor chen, too, take an active role in constructing their own authorial identities by stressing particular dimensions of the debate and invoking different varieties of Buddhist discourse for support. We begin by contextualizing the body mandala texts within their authors' respective spheres of activity through reference to biographical materials, colophons, and secondary scholarship.

Cabezón, Dreyfus, van der Kuijp, and most recently, Ary have been influential in enhancing understanding of Mkhas grub rje's life and work, with particular attention to his philosophical accomplishments.<sup>35</sup> Lessing and Wayman's 1968 translation of Mkhas grub's *Fundamentals of Buddhist Tantra* has made the Gelukpa scholar's work a fundamental part of the canon of Western scholarship on tantric Buddhism as well. Yael Bentor continues to contribute to our knowledge of Mkhas grub's role in shaping and transmitting the ritual tradition of the Ārya Guhyasamāja system. In her 2006 and 2015 articles, Bentor has engaged in brief but meaningful ways with the relationship of Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa's views on body mandala practice. Her forthcoming translation of the entirety of Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainment of the Guhyasamāja Generation Stage* [*Gsang 'dus bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*] (henceforth referred to as ***Ocean of Attainment***) of which this dissertation engages exclusively with the portion on body mandala, promises to further illuminate the study of Mkhas grub's tantric endeavors.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> See Cabezón 1992, Dreyfus 1997, van der Kuijp 1985b and Ary's 2015 publication based upon his 2007 doctoral dissertation.

Ary, Elijah Sacvan. "Logic and lineage: Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen's Ascension and the Secret Biography of Khedrup Geleg Pelzang." Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 2007.

2015. *Authorized lives: biography and the early formation of Geluk identity* Boston : Wisdom Publications, 2015.

Mkhas-grub Dge-legs-dpal-bzang-po, and José Ignacio Cabezón. 1992. *A dose of emptiness: an annotated translation of the sTong thun chen mo of mKhas-grub dGe-legs-dpal-bzang*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Dreyfus, Georges. 1997. *Recognizing Reality: Dharmakīrti's Philosophy and Its Tibetan Interpretations*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1997.

van der Kuijp, Leonard W. J. "Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje I: Mkhas grub rje's Epistemological Oeuvre and His Philological Remarks on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*," *Berliner Indologische Studien* 1 (1985b), 75-105. (1985b).

<sup>36</sup> Bentor, Yael. 2006. "Identifying the Unnamed Opponents of Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub rje Concerning the Transformation of Ordinary Birth, Death and the Intermediary State into the Three Bodies." *Tibetan Buddhist Literature and Praxis: Studies in its*

For many years, the Sakya tradition has received comparatively sparse attention within the field of Tibetan studies, when considered alongside the proliferation of works on Geluk interpretations of Madhyamaka philosophy and works on Nyingma esotericism. In recent years, the Sakyapas have been receiving more scholarly attention. Tibetology has, for example, been enriched by scholars broadening the view of Tibetan approaches to the Madhyamaka philosophical tradition beyond the Gelukpa. Cabezón and, most recently, Kassor have illuminated important Sakyapa contributions to the study of Madhyamaka with their in-depth analyses of one of Ngor chen's most prolific successors, Go rams pa bsod nams seng ge (1429-89).<sup>37</sup>

The growing interest in ritual within religious studies and Tibetan studies may have attracted attention to the rich Sakya tantric ritual and exegetical tradition, in particular the elaboration upon practices based in the *Hevajra Tantra* such as the *Lam 'bras* or "Path and Fruit" tradition. This tradition is lauded as transmitted from divinely-inspired Indian masters to Tibetan disciples by which the perfected meaning of the *Hevajra Tantra* is brought to life through the teachings of the tantric guru. Cyrus Stearns has made some of the most significant contributions to the cataloguing and translation of Sakya literature together with the documentation of the history of its transmission. Most recently, Stearns has translated key texts of the *Lam 'bras* tradition that provide insight into the mechanics and interpretation of the Hevajra body mandala practice.<sup>38</sup>

Sobisch 2007 and 2008 has furthered the research of the Sakyapa tantric exegetical tradition.<sup>39</sup> Much of the work presented in Chapter Six of this dissertation is

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*Formative Period, 900-1400*. Ed. Ronald M. Davidson and Christian Wedemeyer. Leiden: Brill: 185-200.

2014. "The Body in Buddhist Tantric Meditations" conference paper presented at "The Evolution of Tantric Ritual" held at UC Berkeley in March 2014.

2015. "Interpreting the Body Mandala: Tsongkhapa versus Later Geluk Scholars" *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*. no.31, Feb 2015 pp 63-74.

<sup>37</sup> See: Cabezón, José Ignacio and Geshe Lobsang Dargyay. 2007. *Freedom from Extremes: Gorampa's 'Distinguishing the Views' and the Polemics of Emptiness*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Kassor, Constance. "Thinking the Unthinkable / Unthinking the Thinkable: Conceptual thought, nonconceptuality, and Gorampa Sonam Senge's Synopsis of Madhyamaka." Ph.D. Diss., Emory University, 2014.

<sup>38</sup> Stearns, Cyrus. *Luminous Lives: The Story of the Masters of the Lam 'Bras Tradition in Tibet*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001.

-----, Trans. *Taking the Result as the Path: Core Teachings of the Sakya Lamdré Tradition*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006.

<sup>39</sup> Sobisch, Jan-Ulrich, and A-mes-zhabs. 2007. *Life, transmissions, and works of A-mes-zhabs Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams, the great 17th century Sa-skyapa bibliophile*. Stuttgart: F. Steiner.

Sobisch, Jan-Ulrich. 2008. *Hevajra and Lam 'bras literature of India and Tibet as seen through the eyes of A-mes-zhabs*. Wiesbaden: Reichert.

based upon his study and classification of the *Lam 'bras* literature. In addition to contributing to the study of the early Sakya philosophical tradition, David Jackson has opened up the field of Sakya art history, with his detailed studies of systems for depicting lineage masters within paintings associated with the Sakya tradition.<sup>40</sup> More recently, in 2010, in an exhibition catalogue for the Rubin Museum of Art, Jackson has traced the Newar style of Tibetan painting, devoting significant attention to commissions executed at the behest of Ngor chen and his successors.<sup>41</sup> Ngor chen is among the subjects featured in these paintings; in some cases, he is even the patron or ritual consecrator. These artworks provide an alternative resource for approaching modes of representing Ngor chen as a transmitter of the Sakya tradition. They reinforce his connection to gurus of the past as well as to later disciples and foreground his role as a tantric specialist as well as a vinaya master.

Heimbel 2011 has published a preliminary overview of biographical materials on Ngor chen. Like Ary, he has made valuable methodological suggestions for contextualizing and interpreting biographical sources.<sup>42</sup> Heimbel's forthcoming

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<sup>40</sup> See: Jackson, David P. 1986 "A Painting of Sa skya pa Masters from an Old Ngor pa Series of Lam 'bras Thangkas," in *Berliner Indologische Studien*, (2), pp.181-91.

1989. *The Early Abbots of 'Phan-po Ne-len-dra: The Vicissitudes of a Great Tibetan Monastery in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien.

1986 "The Identification of Individual Teachers in Paintings of Sa skya pa Lineages," in T. Skorupski, ed., *Indo-Tibetan Studies*, Spring, pp. 129-44.

*A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions*. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996. Chapter 2.

2003. "The Dating of Tibetan Paintings is Perfectly Possible ś though not always perfectly exact." in *Dating Tibetan Art: Essays on the Possibilities and Impossibilities of Chronology from the Lempertz Symposium, Cologne*, edited by Ingrid Kreide-Damani. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag. 91-103.

2005. "Lineages and Structure in Tibetan Buddhist Painting: Principles and Practice of an Ancient Sacred Choreography." *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 1: 1-40.

2010. *The Nepalese Legacy in Tibetan Painting*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

<sup>41</sup> Jackson 2010, especially Chapter Eight: "Ngor and Its Beri Paintings," pp.176-215.

<sup>42</sup> Heimbel proposes that "an important approach to biography-based research is the investigation of the background of the biography's author, the author's relation to his biographical subject, the sources he or she employed, and his or her methods of composing and editing." See Heimbel 2011, p. 80. He uses Sangs rgyas phun tshog's (1649-1705) biography of Ngor chen (upon which this dissertation relies as an important source on Ngor chen's life and attitudes towards it) as a rich example for demonstrating the efficacy of this method. He also examines a biography composed by Ngor chen's student, Mus chen sems dpa' chenpo dkon mchog rgyal mtshan (1388-1469). Heimbel

dissertation on Ngor chen promises to bring further depth to the study of the Sakya tradition more broadly together with Ngor chen's unique contributions to it. Studies of later masters of the Sakya tradition such as Kramer's 2008 monograph on A ma dpal (1456-1532) have also provided useful clues to Ngor chen's role within the Sakya tradition as it was transmitted and evolved over time.

Davidson's studies of the ritual and institutional dimensions of the Ngor pa tradition have been crucial to this project from its inception. His 1981 and 1991 articles provide background on Ngor chen's life and activities as well as the intellectual climate in which the Sakyapas participated. In assessing Ngor chen's overall contribution to the Sakya tradition, Davidson emphasizes his institutional role, his "willingness to accept a modification of monastic policy, based on observation and brought about through careful planning."<sup>43</sup> His engagement with sources relevant to the body mandala debate in his 1992 essay on the Hevajra *abhisamaya* tradition has laid the groundwork for the present study.

Davidson's 1981 article appears to contain the first, albeit brief, reference to the body mandala debate in Western scholarship.<sup>44</sup> In 1985, Van der Kuijp, was the next to refer to Ngor chen's polemical writings on body mandala.<sup>45</sup> Van der Kuijp describes the two works by Ngor chen to be evaluated in the present study, *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil by Eliminating Objections to the Hevajra Body Mandala* [*Kye'i rdo rje'i lus kyil dkyil 'khor la rtsod spong smra ba ngan 'joms*] (henceforth referenced as ***Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*** or N1) and *Dispelling Evil Views by Eliminating Objections to the Hevajra Body Mandala* [*Kye rdo rje'i lus kyil dkyil 'khor la rtsod spong lta ba ngan se*] (henceforth referenced as ***Dispelling Evil Views*** or N2), as follows: "Written in the first half of 1426, these are two prints of the same text, with some interesting variant readings. It is a polemical work dealing with the mandala of Hevajra, conceived as a reply to and criticism of Mkhas-grub-rje's aside on the same in his *Gsang 'dus bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*."<sup>46</sup>

Van der Kuijp also mentions Mkhas grub's reply to Ngor chen (not addressed by this dissertation) as well as other relevant polemical texts by Ngor chen and his

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astutely observes Sangs rgyas phun tshog's skillful incorporation of Mus chen's biography of Ngor chen into his own text. See p.69 of this article for an example of Sangs rgyas phun tshog's method.

Heimbel, Jorg. 2011. "Biographical Sources for Researching the Life of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456)." *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 22, pp. 47-91.

<sup>43</sup> Davidson, R.M. "The Ngor-pa Tradition." *Wind Horse*. Vol.1, 1981, pp.79-98. See p.93.

<sup>44</sup> Davidson 1981, p.88.

<sup>45</sup> van der Kuijp, Leonard W. J. "A Text- Historical Note on *Hevajra Tantra* II: v:1-2." *Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1 1985, pp. 83-89. (1985a).

<sup>46</sup> Van der Kuijp 1985a, p.88.

disciples.<sup>47</sup> Standing upon the shoulders of these trailblazers, we proceed to acquaint ourselves with the authors and the evolving climate of creation and interpretation of the body mandala texts.

#### **IV. Challenges and Support**

The greatest technical challenge posed by the body mandala debate, beyond the highly esoteric nature of the materials, is the vast mastery the texts assume of three tantric ritual cycles: Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra. Wayman, Gray, and Snellgrove have laid the groundwork for the study of these three root texts respectively.<sup>48</sup>

Kilty's 2013 translation of Tsong kha pa's *Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages Teachings on the Guhyasamāja Tantra* [*Rgyud kyi rgal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i man ngag rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me*] and Geshe Lobsang Tsephel's translation and commentary on eighteenth-century Gelukpa Yangchen Galo's text, *Paths and Grounds of Guhyasamāja According to Ārya Nāgārjuna*, have been excellent resources for the study of the Guhyasamāja. Kittay's 2011 translation and study of the *Vajramālā*, an explanatory tantra of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition (a tradition claiming Nāgārjuna as its progenitor) has been an important source for interpreting citations from that text within the body mandala debate. Likewise, Wright's 2010 translation of Nāgārjuna's *Piṇḍikṛta-sādhana*, a ritual text designed to develop the generation stage of the

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<sup>47</sup> For Mkhas grub's reply, see Mkhas grub rje dge legs dpal bzang. *Ngor lan gnam lcags 'khor lo. Dgag lan phyogs bsgrigs*. Ch'eng tu: Si khron Mi rigs Dpe skrun khan, 1997. Chinese colophon title: Pien lun wen hsuan pien. pp. 1-68. Van der Kuijp classifies Ngor chen's *Rgyud gsum gnod 'joms* as explicitly polemical and his *dPal kye rdo rje'i sgrub thabs kyi rgya cher bśad pa bskyed rim gnad kyi zla zer* (mentioned below) as "frequently polemical." Both of these texts were also cited in Davidson 1981 and will be discussed briefly below.

<sup>48</sup> Wayman, Alex. 2005 (Reprint of 1977 publication). *Yoga of the Guhyasamāja Tantra: the arcane lore of forty verses : a Buddhist tantric commentary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Gray, David B., and Thomas F. Yarnall. 2007. *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra: the discourse of Sri Heruka (Sri heruka abhidhana)*. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies at Columbia University.

Snellgrove, David L. 1959 (2010 Reprint). *Hevajra Tantra: a critical study*. Hong Kong: Orchid.

Fremantle's 1971 Dissertation on the Guhyasamāja also provides some useful orientation. Gray also attempts to situate body mandala practice within the larger context of religious studies concerns with selfhood. See David B. Gray, "Mandala of the Self: Embodiment, Practice, and Identity Construction in the Cakrasaṃvara Tradition," *The Journal of Religious History* Vol. 30, No. 3 (October 2006): 294-310. I am grateful to David Gray and Yael Bentor for bringing my attention to this article as well as for presenting their own research on body mandala at the "Evolution of Tantra" conference at UC Berkeley in March 2014.



Guhyasamāja-based practice, has been instructive. I am grateful to Jacob Dalton for his guidance in reading the Guhyasamāja *sādhana*s as well as for the opportunity to attend a workshop on this tantra held in March 2014 at UC Berkeley. Khenpo Choying Dorje of Dzongsar Monastery as well as Khenpo Yeshe provided essential feedback in the translation and interpretation of Mkhas grub's body mandala text.

Sugiki's work on the diversity of approaches to the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* exhibited within Indian *sādhana*s has been an excellent resource for engaging with the complexities of that tantric cycle.<sup>49</sup> English's 2002 work on Vajrayoginī has been essential to understanding the body mandala within the Cakrasaṃvara ritual cycle.<sup>50</sup> English's philological and methodological approaches have also served as guides in unpacking the many layers and modifications of body mandala as a ritual practice.

As mentioned above, with the endorsement of His Holiness Sakya Trizin and the guidance of the deceased eminent Chogay Trichen Rinpoche, Cyrus Stearns has pioneered the study of the Sakya "Path and Fruit" tradition elaborating upon the *Hevajra Tantra*. I am grateful to have also participated in a portion of a workshop on the *Hevajra Tantra* with Harunaga Isaacson in February 2013 at UC Berkeley. Finally, the expertise of Drapa Gyatso, my teacher at the Sakya International Buddhist Academy in Kathmandu has deeply informed my interpretation of citations from the Hevajra ritual manuals within Ngor chen's body mandala text. Szanto's and Elder's preliminary studies of the *Samputa Explanatory Tantra*, a tantra shared by both the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra cycles, have further enhanced the approach to the Hevajra tradition.

## V. Chapter Overview

Whether regarded as a tool or as an obstacle, the human body is the ultimate framework situating us in time and space, the backdrop against which our stories are woven and the altar upon which our rituals are enacted. It may be the ground for contestation of socio-political tensions as well as a powerful agent for change. Broadly, this dissertation is motivated by questions surrounding the paradoxical status of the human body as limitation and potentiality as reflected in visual and textual representations of Himalayan ritual life.

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<sup>49</sup> Sugiki, Tsunehiko, and 2003. Five Types of Internal Mandala Described in the Cakrasaṃvara Buddhist Literature: Somatic Representations of One's Innate Sacredness. 144, 2003-12, P. 276-202.

2009. "The Structure and Traditions of the Systems of Holy Sites in the Buddhist Saṃvara Cycle and its Related Scriptural Cycles in Early Medieval South Asia: The Geography of Esoteric Buddhism in the Eyes of the Compilers of the Scriptures," *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*. edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23: 515-562.

Review of *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka): A Study and Annotated Translation*, by David Gray, Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies, Vol. 31 No.1-2 (2010): 505-542.

<sup>50</sup> English, Elizabeth. 2002. *Vajrayoginī: Her Visualizations, Rituals, and Forms*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

Within tantric Buddhism, the body mandala is a ritual process of imagining the human body as a mandala, a cosmic palace inhabited by Buddhas and attendant deities. This dissertation examines a network of texts by two Tibetan scholar-monks, Mkhas grub rje (1385-1438), a champion of the Gelukpa tradition, and Ngorchen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456), a hero of the Sakyapa legacy, concerning body mandala. In the process, it brings to light complex attitudes towards the role of the body in tantric practice. It also contextualizes esoteric conceptions of the body in terms of larger social, religious, and political dynamics circulating in fifteenth-century Tibet.

Why is the body mandala debate important, and how much does it actually have to do with the body? In the process of interpreting the body mandala debate, the body is revealed as site for experimenting with the boundaries of tantric exegesis. Through the technical details of the mechanics of visualization and commentarial method, authorial and institutional identities are concretized, authenticated, and reinvented. The human body provides the arena for this debate.

Focusing upon themes of ritual, embodiment, and representation, the introduction suggests a method for engaging with the body mandala debate within Buddhist, tantric Buddhist, and Western theoretical frameworks. It considers how the body mandala debate texts may be interpreted alongside other corporeal representations to contribute to the study of the history of the body across geographic and disciplinary boundaries. This goal requires an articulation of theories of representation as defined in terms of dynamics of replication, imagination, performance, and re-creation.

The next section introduces the two main proponents in the debate, Mkhas grub rje (1385-1438) and Ngorchen Kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456) through a comparison of lineage paintings. This comparison provides an opportunity to examine these authors' associations with two different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, the Geluk and Sakya, respectively, in a preliminary way. This section also elaborates upon some of the key features of Tibetan tantric Buddhism such as the centrality of lineage, the guru-disciple relationship, and ritual consecration. Most importantly, the introduction prepares us to work with body mandala by demonstrating the symbolic capital of the category of mandala as evident in Tibetan ritual, institutional, and socio-political life. It concludes with literary review of important translations and studies upon which the dissertation builds and to which it responds.

Chapter One situates the body mandala debate within the historical context and intellectual climate of fifteenth-century Tibet. This overview includes an account of biographical sources on Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's lives and activities that inform the interpretation of their writings on body mandala. In addition, it includes an introduction to the scholastic and ritual contexts in which these two scholar monks partake.

Chapter Two explores the contours of body mandala practice through comparison with other Buddhist ritual techniques for knowing the body through acts of mental deconstruction and recollection. The comparison is extended to non-Buddhist tantric practices for purifying and deifying the body; these practices connect visualized forms to the human body through the manipulation of breath and the recitation of mantra. This comparison establishes a shared ritual discourse with body mandala, a means by which human bodies are transformed into divine bodies in accordance with the logic of tantra: to worship a god, one must, in a sense, become a god. The comparison also demonstrates

different approaches to organizing the body and establishing bodily hierarchies. Furthermore, through analyzing a ‘proto-body mandala’ text recovered from the Dunhuang caves, a connection is suggested between the spirit of experimentation found in this early ritual manual and that found in other (non-body) mandala representations. In considering inscribing the body and inscribing the text as parallel technologies, the chapter highlights a parallel between corporeality and textuality informing this dissertation.

Inscribing and mapping the body through ritual practice are themes elaborated in Chapter Three. This chapter considers the role of acts of mapping the body as mandala within the ritual system of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition. It lays the groundwork for approaching Mkhas grub’s chapter on body mandala from the *Ocean of Attainment* [*Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal Gsang ba ‘dus pa’i bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*] with a basic outline for the Ārya Guhyasamāja body mandala. This outline is based upon Geshe Lobsang Tsephel’s contemporary commentary upon an eighteenth-century text by Yangchen Galo. Building upon this foundation, two specific issues from Mkhas grub’s chapter are addressed: mapping the five Buddha families and mapping four associated goddesses onto the body. Conflicts between varying modes of mapping deities onto the body suggest compelling implications for the continued spirit of experimentation beyond early mandala manuals and visual representations into the fifteenth-century scholastic context. In investigating Mkhas grub’s skillful negotiation of competing versions of the practice suggested by different authoritative texts of the Ārya tradition, this chapter introduces the connection between tantric exegesis and polemics framing the body mandala debate.

Chapter Four focuses upon Mkhas grub’s use of the notion of “fabrication” [Tib. *bcos ma* Skt. *kṛtrima*] in establishing the superiority of body mandala over other mandala practices. The term *bcos ma* itself bears connotations of artifice and a substantial lack in authenticity. Within Buddhist philosophical discourse, “fabrication” has a decidedly negative valence, associated with the mind’s problematic tendency to superimpose false structures upon reality; these superimpositions are understood to obstruct our ability to perceive things as they truly are. In bringing both ritual and philosophical perspectives to bear upon tantric acts of imagination, Mkhas grub interrogates the relationship of the soteriological approaches of the *mantranaya* and *pāramitānaya* (roughly defined, respectively, as the tantric method employing mantra and the method of cultivating the perfections [*pāramitā*] which characterizes mainstream Mahāyāna practice outside the tantric fold). The relationship of enlightened and unenlightened bodies, the logic of causality, and questions of “valid cognition” [Tib. *tshad ma* Skt. *pramāṇa*] are among the topics Mkhas grub evaluates in his refutation of the views of his “unnamed opponents.” His engagement with valid cognition, in particular, in the context of mandala ritual raises problems of relating representation to reality that are revisited in the conclusion of the dissertation.

The second part of the chapter continues the investigation of “fabrication” [*bcos ma*] through Mkhas grub’s own views on two aspects of body mandala practice: the mandalas of “support” [*rten*] and “supported” [*bṛten pa*]. The mandala of the support is the body as the celestial palace of the mandala. The mandala of the supported is the collection of deities inhabiting that bodily palace, and in some instances, the psycho-physical elements of the subtle body. In examining Mkhas grub’s creative engagement

with different varieties of Buddhist discourse in the body mandala debate, this chapter adds dimension to his literary persona. It also suggests that tantric ritual uses of imagination and of the body provided a context for challenging the relationship between competing approaches to Buddhist theory and practice current in fifteenth-century Tibet.

In Chapter Five, the explicit encounter of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen in Mkhas grub's chapter from the **Ocean of Attainment** and Ngor chen's reply, ***Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*** [*Kye'i rdo rje'i lus kyi dkyil 'khor la rtsod spong smra ba ngan 'joms*] takes center stage. It is organized according to three main topics introduced by Mkhas grub together with Ngor chen's responses to them: the mandala of the support, the mandala of the supported, and the generation of seed syllables on the body. Building upon the observations on Mkhas grub's method and style made in the previous chapter, Chapter Five further elaborates upon Mkhas grub's authorial identity as expressed in his polemics and develops a portrait of Ngor chen based upon his responses. Particular attention is devoted to Ngor chen's use of *Samputa Tantra*, an explanatory tantra often applied to interpreting both the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra tantras. Its application within the body mandala debate suggests that tantric polemics may have played an instrumental role in setting the bounds of exegetical method. The chapter concludes with an analysis of Ngor chen's views on the soteriological role of the body as grounded within a broader Sakyapa perspective on tantric practice. In the process, corporeality and textuality are revealed to be parallel sites within the meaning-making process.

Chapter Six focuses upon the large portion of Ngor chen's text specifically devoted to defending against charges that a version of body mandala resembling the Hevajra transmission lacks a basis in Indian sources. Here, Ngor chen reformulates the debate in his own terms, exercising his prowess as a tantric commentator to defend the Hevajra body mandala practice, and by extension, the Sakya tradition with which it is intimately associated. The chapter explores the two aspects of his defense. The first is based in the Hevajra commentarial tradition as composed of the three core Hevajra tantras (the Hevajra root, *Samputa* and *Vajrapañjara*), the Indian commentaries, and the oral instructions. The second deals with the *Vajramālā*, an explanatory tantra of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition cited extensively by Mkhas grub and discussed in that context in Chapter Four. Finally, the chapter compares two versions of Ngor chen's text, ***Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*** and ***Dispelling Evil Views*** [*Kye rdo rje'i lus kyi dkyil 'khor la rtsod spong lta ba ngan sel*], examining key differences in citation strategies, polemical tone, and syncretic emphases. This comparison enriches the portrait of Ngor chen and highlights the ways in which his identity as a tantric commentator is harmonized with his polemics.

The conclusion of the dissertation produces a dialogue between textual and visual representations of the body through exploring the modes of representation in an anomalous nineteenth or twentieth-century body mandala painting from Nepal. It calls into question assumptions about the relationship of embodiment to materiality as well as about the use of the body, visualized images, and their material representations as tools for liberation. In doing so, it brings to light significant aspects of Tibetan Buddhist ritual and philosophical understandings of material creation that may enrich art historical approaches. Finally, it suggests questions raised by the body mandala debate regarding the relationship of body, image, and matter relevant to the study of religion and ritual and bodily discourses more broadly.

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## Chapter One: Setting the Stage for the Body Mandala Debate: Polemics, Apologetics, and Expertise in the Lives and Times of Mkhas Grub rje and Ngor chen kun dga' bzang po

The following chapter provides the necessary foundation to prepare us to engage with the body mandala debate texts. It begins by reflecting upon the complexities of framing this network of texts as a “debate.” Next, it presents a context for situating the debate within Mkhas grub and Ngor chen’s respective careers and thereby furnishes a more intimate portrait of their lives and accomplishments. It also introduces some critical tools for evaluating representations of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen and how the body mandala debate may be intertwined with those representations. Finally, it suggests some broader institutional and socio-political dynamics at play in fifteenth-century Tibetan monastic life that may be useful in interpreting the significance of the body mandala debate.

### I. The Virtues and Limitations of ‘Debate’ as a Tool for Interpretation

The “Samye Debate,” the alleged historical encounter between Kamalaśīla and Mohoyen, is a prime example of the iconic status that a debate may hold in constructing a tradition.<sup>1</sup> That debate functions as the origin story of sorts for Tibetan scholasticism; it is Tibetan Buddhism’s testament to its transmission of the Indian “gradualist” vs. the Chinese “subitist” approach to enlightenment. However, the actual contents of the debate and its historical veracity remain unclear. Therefore, the category of “debate” in Tibetan Buddhism may be understood as charged not merely with doctrinal significance but also with the socio-political aspects of the invention, preservation, revision and revival of tradition. Although Mkhas grub and Ngor chen’s encounter in the “body mandala debate” is textual rather than performative, there is a sense in which they are performing their traditions. There are also ways in which their performances were received and reinvented that may have exceeded their intentions. The Tibetan term for polemics, *dgag lan*, translated as “answers to refutations” expresses dialectical and performative aspects of the spirit of intellectual engagement engendered by texts like those of the body mandala debate.<sup>2</sup>

This dissertation focuses only upon what we might call “round one” of the body mandala debate, identified as the charges leveled by Mkhas grub in the chapter of body mandala from his *Ocean of Attainment* and the defense they provoked in Ngor chen’s *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil* and another “version” of the same text, *Dispelling Evil Views*. The relationship between these two “versions” authored by Ngor chen will be addressed in Chapter Six. In them, Ngor chen strategically engages with texts and oral teachings from centuries past; these issues have, moreover, continued to be taken up in debates for generations. For example, a generation later, Ngor chen’s

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<sup>1</sup> The imagined debate between Manjuśrī and Vimalakīrti based on the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* assumes a similar iconic status as attested by its popularity in Chinese art. See Berger 2003’s introduction and Dunhuang cave 103 for some examples.

<sup>2</sup> Lopez 1996 provides this translation of the term in his study of the genre of polemical literature through the Gelukpa scholar Se ra rje tsun pa’s replies to his Sakyapa and Kagyupa contemporaries.

student Go rams pa (1429-1489), was still defending, clarifying, and elaborating upon Ngor chen's views on visualization practice within the Hevajra mandala system.<sup>3</sup>

Although the dissertation acknowledges the reverberations of the issues and dynamics initiated in these texts in other texts by these same authors, their disciples, and later members of their traditions, it focuses on just this limited range. The purpose is to lay the foundation for scholarship of other body mandala debate texts like the chapter from Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainment* and Ngor chen's *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil* and *Dispelling Evil Views*. It does so by familiarizing the reader with the three tantric cycles (Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Hevajra) and the different ritual approaches to body mandala they provide. It also builds upon previous scholarship on Tibetan scholasticism to contextualize Ngor chen and Mkhas grub's writings and to suggest that there is more than just bodies or mandala at stake in their exchange. Moreover, it investigates their individual styles of argumentation and reflects more broadly upon how they connect Tibetan polemics and tantric exegesis. Even to unpack all the details of just "round one" of the debate while satisfying these goals is beyond the boundaries of this dissertation.

Moreover, even within our limited range of texts, there are potentially many more interlocutors or "unnamed opponents" than Mkhas grub, Ngor chen, and their immediate affiliates. Bentor 2006 has provided the most directly relevant insight in this regard, helping us to better understand both Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa's writings on the ritual of the Guhyasamāja tradition. Davidson 1992 has cautioned:

"Modern Tibetan religious folklore often reifies all Saskya-pa critics into dGe-lugs-pa monks, and in the case of Ngor-chen, into Mkhas grub dge-legs dpal-bzang-po (1385-1438)...However, the circumstances were more complex than reification into a single protagonist...Moreover, Tibetan proclivity towards oral exaggeration certainly exacerbated the problem, some members of the clergy assuming that the refutation of a facet of a practice indicates a wholesale condemnation of the tradition."<sup>4</sup>

Bearing these observations in mind, it is important that we adopt a self-conscious attitude in referring to this network of texts as indicative of a 'debate' and remain open to the possibility of multiple simultaneous interlocutors. Scholars of religion such as JZ Smith have given us good reason to question the tendency to reduce the import of such debates to conflicts in philosophical perspectives defined by sectarianism.<sup>5</sup> Cabezón 2007 wisely observes a difference between "sectarian differentiation" and "sectarianism." He distinguishes the two phenomena as follows:

"The former is simply an inevitable historical development that arises out of human beings' desire to create and nurture social and institutional structures of belonging-intellectual and spiritual homes, places where we share common goals and a common language-in a word, traditions. Sectarianism, by contrast, is a pathological outgrowth of

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<sup>3</sup> See Davidson 1981, p88 & fn25. Go rams pa's text, *Illuminating the Pith: Dispelling Objections to the Moonrays of the Pith* [*Gnad gyi zla zer la rtsod pa spong ba gnad kyi gsal byed*], is a response to critiques of Ngor chen's positions in the *Moonrays of the Pith* [*dPal kye rdo rje'i sgrub thabs kyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gnad kyi zla zer*].

<sup>4</sup> Davidson 1992, 20. See the author's note 58.

<sup>5</sup> For one influential example, see J.Z. Smith 1998.



sectarian differentiation wherein traditions become static and reified, and wherein dogmatism prevails.”<sup>6</sup>

We must, therefore, also take into consideration how potentially reductionist views of the subjects and objects of these controversies formulated by later scholars, within both Tibetan scholastic and Western academic frameworks, may have been distorted our current understanding of “sectarian differentiation” in fifteenth-century Tibet.

In reducing the body mandala debate to a sectarian conflict between two opposing factions, we run the risk of missing some of the more exciting dynamics it suggests for describing the fifteenth-century monastic context. These may include dynamics of patronage, prestige, and identity construction as well as previously neglected dimensions of exegetical and polemical practice. At the same time, we must also consider the possibility that tradition formation is one, if not the only, factor motivating Mkhas grub and Ngor chen. So while their engagement is not just about Gelukpas vs. Sakyapas, it may be understood as contributing to the terms that have even suggested that interpretation. Finally, the multiple dimensions of debate itself must be considered. Debate functions as a pedagogical tool for clarifying ideas and attaining convictions through challenging assumptions.<sup>7</sup> This aspect of debate must be evaluated alongside its more antagonistic associations to determine its utility as a framework for understanding the body mandala texts.

## **II. Mkhas grubs rje’s Contributions to the ‘Body Mandala Debate’**

The colophon for Mkhas grub’s *Ocean of Attainment* does not provide a precise date for its composition. The only clue it includes for the circumstances of its creation is that it was written “at the Great Temple of Dpal ‘khor sde chen, the place which is the source of reasoning (in) upper Nyang [*nyang stod*], in Gtsang.”<sup>8</sup> Mkhas grub was involved in the foundation of several monasteries such as Nyang stod lcangs ra monastery in Gtsang [resulting in the epithet *lCang ra bKa’ bcu pa*, “[lCang ra Master of Ten Treatises]”, Mdangs chen, and Dpal ‘khor sde chen in Gyantse [*Rgyal rtse*].<sup>9</sup> His patron for the latter two projects was local ruler, Rab btan kun bzang (1389-1442).<sup>10</sup> Wylie 1980 has identified Mkhas grub’s involvement at Dpal ‘khor sde chen as indicative of a larger pattern of patronage in the early to mid-fifteenth century. This pattern is characterized by

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<sup>6</sup> Cabezón 2007, p.7.

<sup>7</sup> As I was reminded by Phachok Rinpoche, current head of the Taklung Kagyu order of Tibetan Buddhism, the term ‘debate’ implies that there is a residual absence of understanding on the part of the participants. ‘If there were clarity, there would be no need for debate.’ [Personal communication, 8/31/2011]

<sup>8</sup> Mkhas grub rje 380.6: *dge legs dpal bzang pos; gtsang nyang stod rigs pa'i 'byung gnas kyi sa'i cha; chos grwa chen po legs bshad sgrogs pa'i tshul; dpal 'khor sde chen gyi gtsug la 'khang chen por lag par sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni*

<sup>9</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.15. fn36.

<sup>10</sup> For more on Rab btan, see Ary 2007 fn 267 and Nag dbang blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho and Ahmad 1995, p.149 & Wylie 1980 p.484 as referenced there.

patronage of the emerging Gelukpas by “local rulers appointed by the Fifth Lha-tsun of Phag-mo-gru, Gong-ma Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan, who was known for his patronage of Tsong kha pa and his disciples.”<sup>11</sup> None of these monastic founders had occupied monastic seats before, and all of the monasteries were located in close proximity to the “lay patron’s” political stronghold.<sup>12</sup> However, Ehrhard 2000 seems to temper Wylie’s generalization in pointing out that “while the princes of rgyal [mKhar] rtse acted as ministers of the Phag mo gru, by the fifteenth century, they had achieved a quite independent position against the dominance of the Phags-mo-gru dynasty.”<sup>13</sup>

After Tsong kha pa’s death in 1419, Mkhas grub spent time at *Mdangs chen*. In 1424, five years after the death of his master, at age thirty-nine, Mkhas grub founded Dpal ‘khor sde chen in Gyantse.<sup>14</sup> He is alleged to have spent four years there.<sup>15</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that Mkhas grub composed the *Ocean of Attainment* between approximately 1424 and 1428.<sup>16</sup> Jackson posits 1425 as the year in which Mkhas grub composed his “anti-Sakya tantric polemics.”<sup>17</sup>

The conflicting accounts of the circumstances of his departure from Gyantse invite further investigation. Specifically, they raise questions about the nature and potential transformation of Mkhas grub’s relationship to his patron, local ruler, Rab btan kun bzang (1389-1442). They also raise questions about how best to interpret accounts of ‘debates’ within biographical materials. For instance, what role might debate play in forming a very particular vision of an individual and distinguishing them from other individuals and traditions?

While several primary and secondary sources suggest that Mkhas grub rje left his seat at Gyantse as a result of a scheduled debate between himself and the Sakyapa Rong ston Śakya rgyal mtshan (1367-1449), the conditions of the debate and of his departure remain unclear. Cabezón 1992 conducted the initial comparison of biographical accounts of this event.<sup>18</sup> He observed that while many accounts devote minimal attention to Mkhas grub’s activities in establishing a monastery at Gyantse, two biographies, Rje brtsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan’s (1469-1544/46) *Secret Biography* [*Gsang ba’i rnam thar*] (SNT) and Gnas rnying ‘Jam dbyangs kun dga’ dge legs rin chen rgyal mtshan’s (1446-1496) *Rnam mthar mkhas pa’i yid ‘phrog* (KYP), are quite concerned with depicting his

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<sup>11</sup> Wylie 1980, p.485.

<sup>12</sup> Wylie 1980, p.485.

<sup>13</sup> Ehrhard 2000, p.249. Ehrhard goes on to point out that Rab btan kun bzang possessed titles from both Gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan and the Yongle emperor. However, we have reason, based in Wylie’s argument to reconsider the degree of “independence” that a Chinese title might indicate during the Ming (vs. the Yuan).

<sup>14</sup> Wylie, however, dates the founding of *dPal ‘khor sde chen* to 1418. For his sources, see fn10 in Wylie 1980.

<sup>15</sup> These biographical details are gleaned from Cabezón 1992, p.16.

<sup>16</sup> The *Stong thun chen mo* [TTC], the philosophical text that is the focus of Cabezón’s 1992 study, was also composed during this time.

<sup>17</sup> Jackson 2010, p.178. This seems to be a reference to the body mandala debate.

<sup>18</sup> Cabezón 1992 p.6 fn29 suggests that Rong ston is among the scholars whose approaches to Madhyamaka thought Mkhas grub “may have very well found anathema.”

departure, albeit in different ways.<sup>19</sup> Cabezón describes the latter account as emphasizing the conflict between Mkhas grub and his patron:

“According to KYP and an oral tradition of this monastery itself, (fn43) a disagreement arose between mKhas grub rje and the monastery’s sponsor, the local monarch Rab brtan kun bzang, over a debate that the latter wished to organize, one that would pit mKhas grub rje against one of the other great scholars of the day, Rong ston Śākya rgyal mtshan (1367-1449).(fn44) According to KYP, mKhas grub rje agreed to participate in the debate(fn45). Scholars were invited to serve as judges, and the event was scheduled to take place on a specific date...”<sup>20</sup>

It seems that this biographer envisions Mkhas grub’s patron as deliberately attempting to orchestrate an encounter between Mkhas grub and Rong ston. The author claims that Rong ston evaded the encounter, leaving Gyantse together with his patron; Mkhas grub was thus provoked, according to this account, to post a letter to Rong ston on the door to the monastery in retaliation.<sup>21</sup> Cabezón translated the verses of this letter as cited within the KYP itself. Curiously, a few lines of the letter actually suggest that the patron, Rab brtan kun bzang, enabled Rong ston in his cowardice (though the KYP itself credits Rab brtan as initiating the debate):

“...Finding refuge in the words of your benefactor  
Who has said that in this district  
Conferences of scholars are not allowed,  
You tell him what a great kindness he has done you.  
Though many hooded *nāgas*, the scholars,  
Have come together in this place as judges,  
From their respective oceans, the great seats of learning...  
The word has come from him who is your protector  
That, having returned to their respective abodes,  
The oceans, which are the treasuries of water,  
The mandala of disputation will not take place...”<sup>22</sup>

Such disparities in the accounts regarding Rab brtan’s role, in particular, suggest that patronage may have played an important part in the construction of this ‘debate,’ whether it be historical or solely narrative or some combination of the two.

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<sup>19</sup> Both of these biographies appear in Mkhas rgub rje’s *Collected Works*: Rje brtsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan. *Gsang ba’i rnam mthar* (SNT) Collected works, vol. a pp.421-493.  
Gnas rnying ‘Jam dbyangs kun dga’ dge legs rin chen rgyal mtshan. *Rnam mthar mkhas pa’i yid ‘phrog* (KYP), Collected works, Vol.ka, pp.1-22.

<sup>20</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.17.

<sup>21</sup> See Cabezón 1992 p.17.

<sup>22</sup> See Cabezón 1992 , Appendix I which includes a translation of the verses of this letter cited from KYP 6a-7a.

Cabezón describes the *Secret Biography* (SNT) by Rje brtsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan (or Rje tsun pa) as a more “partisan” account than the KYP; in this case Rong ston is painted as an antagonist of Tsong kha pa’s followers who creates schisms within the Sakya tradition:

“The text states that Rong ston declared Tsong kha pa’s enterprise to be one of refuting the Sa skya tradition and that this created an atmosphere of tremendous hostility toward Tsong kha pa and his disciples, to the point where certain Sa skya pas even resorted to black magic (*gtor ma ‘phen pa*) against them.”<sup>23</sup>

Ary translates the relevant section from the biography as follows:

“While at Nyang stod, Rong ston continuously nagged Mkhas grub rje, saying ‘Come, let us debate together.’ At that time, all the fools at Sakya who were skilled in magical incantations, blind to what are dharma activities and what are not, spread the rumor out of competitiveness, attachment and aversion, that Tsong kha pa and his followers had criticized the tenets of the Sakya school. They even performed rituals such as casting out ritual cakes to send evil their way...”<sup>24</sup>

This account suggests that Rong ston as one among many Sakyas internally differentiating their tradition from that of Tsong kha pa and his disciples. It also characterizes the intent of these Sakyapas as malevolent and un-Buddhist. Rje tsun pa thereby frees Mkhas grub of blame, guarding him against charges of the sin of causing schisms in the sangha or of betraying his lineage of Sakyapa ancestors. In absolving Mkhas grub in this way, the biographer justifies Mkhas grub’s polemical activities (and potentially, his own). Rje tsun pa continues with what appears to be a reference to Ngor chen:

“Also, Ngorpa Kunzangpa, who was treated like Vajradhara himself by the Sakyapas, out of attachment to worldly fame and riches and disregarding his precepts and promises, slandered Tsong kha pa despite having received Vajrayāna teachings from Tsong kha pa [himself]. The scathing rejoinders to the self-damaging (*rang tshang ston pa*) argument texts (*rtsod yig*) composed by the so-called Kunting Gushri geshe of Sakya are clearly given in [Tsong kha pa’s] Collected Works.<sup>25</sup> (8a) Thus, indeed, how could the Sakyapas be anything but idiots who had never heard the essence of the teachings?”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.17.

<sup>24</sup> Translation of *Secret Biography* (SNT) by Rje brtsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan (or Rje tsun pa) 7b by Ary 2015, p.128 (2007, p.226).

<sup>25</sup> No work fitting this description has turned up in a preliminary scan of Tsong kha pa’s collected works. The connection between this “Gushri” and the “Kong ting gug shri ba” addressed in the text from Mkhas grub’s *thor bu* will be discussed below.

<sup>26</sup> Translation of *Secret Biography* (SNT) by Rje brtsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan (or Rje tsun pa) 7b-8a by Ary 2015, p.128.

This vehement denunciation of the Sakyapas explicitly names both Rong stong and Ngor chen as culprits in a larger phenomenon of malicious attacks upon Tsong kha pa and his follower by Sakyapas jealous and threatened by their prowess and success.

In his 2007 dissertation, Ary has suggested new ways of approaching Mkhas grub's biographical materials. Ary has demonstrated how Mkhas grub's biographers crafted and augmented his identity as a "defender of the faith." Ary brings attention to the ways in which Rje tsun pa, the author of Mkhas grub's *Secret Biography*, elevates Mkhas grub's persona as a "great debater" and "defender of Tsong kha pa's tradition" (and praises Tsong kha pa as holding similar skills). Some other biographies of Mkhas grub apparently completely neglect this dimension of his persona. Rje tsun pa is the same scholar who Ary argues promoted Mkhas grub's image as one of Tsong kha pa's "main disciples"; he also replaced the current philosophical textbook in use at Sera monastery with one promoting Mkhas grub's interpretations. In fact, Rje tsun pa himself is also famed for some of his intellectual encounters with Sakyapa scholars, including two of Ngor chen's students, Śākya mchog ldan (1428-1507) and Go ram pa.<sup>27</sup> Ary's study presents the possibility that Mkhas grub may not have envisioned himself as a "defender of the faith" to the same degree that his descendents did.

In his translation and study of Rje tsun pa's *Secret Biography* of Mkhas grub, Ary identifies the "debate" between Mkhas grub and Rong ston as the cause for the deterioration of Mkhas grub's relationship with his patron, Rab btan kun bzang.<sup>28</sup> In Rje tsun pa's account, Mkhas grub initiates the debate, and there is an elaborate portrayal of Rong ston's agitation in his various attempts to circumvent the encounter. Mkhas grub responds: "If you truly cannot debate [me], then you must cease denigrating Tsong kha pa and the tenets of Nāgārjuna and his disciples!"<sup>29</sup> None of the content of the debate is even mentioned, only Rong ston's acute humiliation, so profound apparently that he was rumored to have been driven to take a vow of silence. Therefore, the *Secret Biography* paints Mkhas grub as the victor and upholder of the integrity of Tsong kha pa's legacy while Rong ston is made the fool; however, there is no mention of how the encounter impacted Mkhas grub's relationship with his patron. Moreover, the *Secret Biography* implies that Rong ston is creating the schism in his refusal to properly credit Tsong kha

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Although Ary had tentatively identified "Ngor pa Kun zang pa" as Ngor pa dkon mchog seng ge in his 2007 dissertation (p227 fn451), he has emended this identification to Ngor chen in his 2015 publication (p128 fn335).

<sup>27</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.6 fn26. Cabezón adds that: "The two Sakya scholars Go and Śāk, as they were known to the Gelukpas, were also fond of polemics, many of their criticisms being directed against Tsong kha pa's interpretation of the Madhyamaka."

<sup>28</sup> For Ary's discussion of the event, see Ary 2007 pp.120-121 and fn 267. For his translation of the encounter within Rje tsun pa's biography of Mkhas grub, see pp. 226 & 230-3. Cabezón 1992's comment on p.6 fn29 confirms that he too identified this figure with Ngor chen.

<sup>29</sup> Translation of Rje tsun pa's *Secret Biography* of Mkhas grub 11b by Ary 2007, pp.232-3.

pa's contribution to the Sakya legacy as a faithful transmitter of Nāgārjuna's spiritual lineage.

In his own brief description of the encounter, Jackson 2010 presents the patron as the obstructor of the debate:

“...in 1427, Khedrubje tried to engineer a public doctrinal confrontation with Rongton Sheja Kunrik (1367-1449), another preeminent Sakyapa luminary...When at the last minute the Prince of Gyantse stepped in and prevented a planned public debate, the disappointed Khedrubje resigned the abbacy of Gyantse monastery.”<sup>30</sup>

Van der Kuijp even attributes Mkhas grub's departure to his patron's disapproval of Mkhas grub's engagement with Ngor chen and other Sakyapas.<sup>31</sup> Cabezón 1992 makes note of another theory, by which Mkhas grub left Gyantse for different reasons, connected to “the status of the dGe lugs pa colleges at Dpal 'khor sde chen.”<sup>32</sup> Cabezón's theory has the most potential for informing our understanding of Mkhas grub's motives for critiquing the Sakyapas in his writings on body mandala during this time. It is possible that the institutional dynamics at Gyantse and his relationship to his patron did not assure Mkhas grub of a dominant position for Tsong kha pa's tradition among the other traditions represented there. In that case, one way of interpreting his writings on body mandala, and perhaps even his 'debate' with Rong ston, is as an attempt to secure that dominance.

The variety in these accounts of the debate with Rong ston, in terms of how and by whom the debate was initiated and interrupted or completed, suggests that the phenomenon of “debate” served as a platform for both real and imagined encounters in the Tibetan context. These encounters are often framed as instrumental in tradition formation and “sectarian differentiation.” The implications for the relationship of patronage dynamics and polemical exchange in fifteenth-century Tibet will be addressed further below.

After his departure from Gyantse, Mkhas grub returned to Mdangs chen, where he allegedly had encountered visions of his deceased master. In 1431, Mkhas proceeded to Ganden [*dga' ldan*] where he assumed the throne and the responsibilities of the newly formed order.<sup>33</sup> According to its colophon, Mkhas grub composed another body mandala debate text at Ganden. This text is a reply to Ngor chen's rebuttal to the charges leveled by Mkhas grub in the relevant chapter of the *Ocean of Attainment*. This text, *The Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor* [*Ngor lan gnam lcags 'khor lo*], is composed largely of citations from the first round of the debate (including both Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's contributions).<sup>34</sup> As no date is indicated, it must be assumed that it was created

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<sup>30</sup> Jackson 2010, p.178-9

<sup>31</sup> Van der Kuijp 1985b p.98, n.18. Cabezón 1992, p.17 fn44 also refers to Van der Kuijp's theory. As will be discussed below, Ngor chen and Mkhas grub also engaged in another controversy on deity yoga in the four tantric classes.

<sup>32</sup> Cabezón 1992, p. 17 fn 44. Cabezón cites the BE p.122 in this capacity.

<sup>33</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.18. See fn55.

<sup>34</sup> *Phyin ci log gig tam gyi sbyor ba la 'jug pa'i smra ba ngan pa rnam par 'thag pa bstan bcos gnam lcags 'khor lo*. Collected Works [zhol] Vol. 2, pp7-100. Or see modern

between Mkhas grub's arrival at Ganden in 1431 and his death in 1438. Rje tsun pa's *Secret Biography* of Mkhas grub frames this text as a response to Ngor chen's attack against Tsong kha pa's legacy:

Around that time, Ngorpa Kunsang was the bearer of the Sakya tenets, and he sent a letter to both Rongton and Chojé Sonam Lodro saying 'Since Khedrup Jé has criticized the Sakya tenets, I will debate him on Mantra! Rongton, you are known for debating Prajñāpāramitā, and Sonam Lo for debating *pramāṇa*. It is not good that you were ineffective against him!'

Then, relying on the Sakya tenets, Ngorpa composed a critique of the views of Tsong kha pa and his followers and had it delivered to Khedrup Jé. In this text, he misunderstood the teachings, writing that, 'Earth, water, fire, and wind are the *five* types of form'! Furthermore, having misunderstood Jñānagarbha's discussion of the two truths, he [misquoted the texts] saying, 'According to the self-commentary of Śāntarakṣita on the two truths,' and so on. In short, he did not even understand the general language of the texts and succeeded only in shaming himself. Nevertheless, to refute this nonsensical argument, Khedrup Jé composed a rejoinder entitled *Wheel of Thunderbolts* and disproved all his erroneous views.<sup>35</sup>

This passage suggests a few valuable points for contemplation. First, it affirms the portrait of Ngor chen as an expert in the field of tantra, a depiction we find in Ngor chen's own biographies and reinforced by his display of exegetical skill within the body mandala debate texts. Mkhas grub is once again depicted as "defender of the faith," and specifically of Tsong kha pa's tradition. Unlike the passage on Ngor chen from *the Secret Biography* cited above, however, this one at least mentions a perceived attack upon the Sakyapa tradition; the previous passage, on the other hand, painted Ngor chen as merely spiteful, traitorous, and slandering. Furthermore, the present passage creates a more substantial link between Ngor chen's engagement with Mkhas grub on tantric subject matter and the alleged encounter of Mkhas grub and Rong ston at Gyantse; it even presents an additional figure who may have been involved in similar contentious interchanges with Mkhas grub.<sup>36</sup> However, while the passage appears to refer to the circumstances of the body mandala debate, the references to Ngor chen's erroneous statements are not familiar from his body mandala texts. This suggests that there may be further relevant materials within Ngor chen's and Mkhas grubs' collected writings or lost correspondence between the two figures. This dissertation lays the foundation for scholarship of such texts.

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publication: *Dgag lan phyogs bsgrigs*. Ch'eng tu: Si khron Mi rigs Dpe skrun khan, 1997. Chinese colophon title: Pien lun wen hsuan pien. pp. 1-68. Ary 2007 has described this collection as "a compilation of polemical works refuting non-Gelukpa criticisms of Tsong kha pa's views on Madhyamaka philosophy." (p.164)

<sup>35</sup> Translation of *Secret Biography* (SNT) by Rje brtsun chos kyī rgyal mtshan (or Rje tsun pa) 17b-18a in Ary 2015, p. 140.

<sup>36</sup> Further research is needed to determine the identity of Chos rje bsod nam blo gros. Ary 2015 (p.140 fn352) suggests that this may be a "Khewang Sonam Lodro."

For the purposes of this dissertation, the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*, sheds light on how the dynamics of the body mandala continued to evolve. It also, provides an important clue for resolving the relationship between Ngorchen's two texts, *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil* [N1] and the other "version," *Dispelling Evil Views* [N2]. In the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*, Mkhas grub cites selected points from Ngor chen's argument, and upon preliminary investigation, these selections appear to be from the longer "version," *Dispelling Evil Views*. Later in the dissertation, we will have the opportunity to compare the two versions of Ngor chen's text and to consider the implications of this discovery.

There is another text by Mkhas grub deserving of mention in light of the complexity of attitudes it brings to our interpretation of the body mandala debate. This letter from his miscellaneous writings [*thor bu*], may be as close as Mkhas grub comes to a retraction of his polemical statements on body mandala. Davidson 1992 summarizes the import of Mkhas grub's apparent change in attitude as reflected in the letter from the *thor bu* as follows:

"...he had generally refuted the *Lam 'bras* ideas of the physical mandala (*lus-dkyil*) and the reception of consecration during meditation (*lam dus kyi dbang*), without citing the system by name. He complains that everyone jumped to conclusions. Given the inflammatory language mKhas-grub was wont to use, it is easy to see how such an impression developed."<sup>37</sup>

Of course in Mkhas grub's case, his inherently polemical style as expressed by this "inflammatory language" seems to make a true retraction impossible. However even the sense of 'your misunderstood me,' suggests that there were real consequences for his writings on body mandala. These consequences may have impacted his reputation as well as his relationships to his contemporaries (patrons and other superiors as well as peers) and reflected poorly upon the public image of Tsong kha pa's followers. According to its colophon, the text was composed at *Nyang stod*.<sup>38</sup> However, the introduction informs the reader that the text summarizes Mkhas grub's reply to a message from *Kon ting gug shri ba* Mkhas grub received when he was at Gyantse.

To review, Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainment* was composed at Gyantse where Mkhas grub resided between 1424 and 1427/8.<sup>39</sup> Ngor chen's reply was composed in 1426. Mkhas grub's *thor bu* describes an event that also occurred during Mkhas grub's time at Gyantse. It does not specify whether it precedes or follows Ngor chen's response to the *Ocean of Attainment* or Mkhas grub's *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*. Therefore, it is possible that it provides insight into the circumstances that

<sup>37</sup> Davidson 1992, p.21 note 64 refers to this letter included in Mkhas grub's *Thor-bu Collected Works*, Vol. 9, 775-808 esp.776-7. Bentor 2006 also includes this text in her bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> The colophon also describes Mkhas grub as *mkhas pa'i mdun sar mi 'jigs pa'i slob pa thob pa* and *rgyal khams kyi spangs btsun*. Possible translations of these epithets include "Learned and fearless before scholars" and "venerable dispeller," suggesting a potential reference to his skill in debate.

<sup>39</sup> Jackson 2010 dates Mkhas grub's "anti-Sakya tantric polemics" to 1425.



motivated Ngor chen’s reply to Mkhas grub on behalf of the Sakyapas. Alternatively, since it was composed at *Nyang stod* and not specifically at Gyantse (though reporting upon the circumstances of correspondence that occurred during Mkhas grub’s residence there from 1424-8), it may have been written later, perhaps even after his *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*. Mkhas grub describes the circumstances that inspired this text from his miscellaneous writings as follows:

“*Kon ting gug shri ba*, the *kalyāṇamitra* of the great monastic seat, hoarded up a few choice comments I made in the context of body mandala in my commentary on the *Guhyasamāja sādhana*. A request to expand upon them arrived before my eyes at Gyantse.”<sup>40</sup>

It is a challenge to determine the identity of *Kon ting gug shri ba*. Rockhill 1891 translates the phrase *Kon ting gug shri*, a Tibetan transliteration of a Chinese title, as “Holy Anointed Adviser (Preceptor) of the realm.”<sup>41</sup> Roerich 1988 indicates that the title was conferred upon the abbots of ‘Tshur pu in the form of a seal by the Yongle/Ming emperor.<sup>42</sup> Cabezón 1992 does, however, make note of a reference to a Sakyapa “Kan

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<sup>40</sup> *gdan sa chen po'i yongs kyi dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen po kon ting gug shri bas bdag gi gsang pa 'dus pa'i sgrub thabs kyi bshad pa'i lus dkyil gyi skabs su bris pa'i tshig 'ga' zhig zur du bkol ba la lan btab pa'i rtsom ba rgyas par mdzad nas rgyal mkhar rtser bskur ba kho bo'i mig lam du bab par bgyis*

<sup>41</sup> Rockhill 1891, p199 fn1.

<sup>42</sup> The first to receive the title was the Sakypa abbot mkhas btsun Nam mkha’ legs pa’i rgyal mtshan (1305-43) from the Yuan emperor Yesun Temur (r.1323-8). The title was conferred upon laymen as well, for example, the Phag mo gru administrators, by the Ming emperors. See Schweiger 2009/10 p315 together with reference to Petech 1990, p.82 in fn9. Schweiger refers to the work of Shen Weirong 2007 in considering how the conferral of these titles during the Ming may have been less politically significant than during the Yuan. As such, these titles functioned more like gifts offered to visitors to the Chinese court to assure Tibetan allegiance than as an actual political position (as it had in the Yuan). See Schwieger 2009/10, p.314.

It is possible that *Kon ting gug shri ba* was a Kagyupa named Chos gyi rgyal mtshan (1377-1448), a student of the Fifth Karmapa, renowned also for his transmission of the title of *Ta’i Si tu*. See Roerich 1988, p.520, TBRC P3572 and Treasury of Lives entry [treasuryoflives.org] by Thinlay Gyatso, 2014. Gyatso, however, makes no mention of ‘Tshur pu but associates this figure with Karma Gon. While somewhat unlikely, considering a possible Kagyupa identity for *Kon ting gug shri ba* prevents us from automatically reducing the significance of the debate to merely a sectarian conflict between Sakyapas and a lineage of Tsong kha pa’s descendents that eventually became known as Gelukpas.

Knowing that Ngor chen assumed responsibility at Sakya after the passing of Theg chen chos rje (1349-1425), we may consider the possibility that that figure is the very Kunting Gushri we seek. This is a compelling possibility strengthened by the fact that Theg chen chos rje was invited to court and conferred various titles by the Ming

ting gu śrī” as one of Mkhas grub’s “opponents” cited in the *Secret Biography*.<sup>43</sup> The relevant passage from Rje tsun pa’s text, translated by Ary, was cited above: “The scathing rejoinders to the self-damaging (*rang tshang ston pa*) argument texts (*rtsod yig*) composed by the so-called Kunting Gushri geshe of Sakya are clearly given in [Tsong kha pa’s] Collected Works.”<sup>44</sup> Ary 2015 has identified Kunting Guśrī as “Kunting Gushri Namkha Sangpo,” but no additional information is provided.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, no work fitting this description has turned up in a preliminary scan of Tsong kha pa’s collected works. However, even without identifying this figure definitively, this statement suggests a connection between the body mandala debate between Mkhas grub and Ngor chen and an earlier exchange between Tsong kha pa and a Sakyapa Geshe.

In comparing the tone of Mkhas grub’s description of the circumstances of creating the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor* with the one found in this *Reply to the Questions of the Kalyānamītra Kon ting gug śrī ba*, we find the latter to be more extreme. Mkhas grub is reacting to public opinion of his body mandala writings and a general sense that he went too far in his critique of the Sakyapas and their *Lam ‘bras* tradition. Unlike the *Ocean of Attainment* or the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*, Mkhas grub explicitly mentions the Sakyapas in setting the stage for his statements here. In this text, Mkhas grub begins by denying the accusation that he had denounced the *Lam ‘bras* tradition in his writings on body mandala:

“Which *Lam ‘bras* exactly do I refute? How, before whom, and in which text do I refute it? Having carefully sought the answer to these questions, seek the unchanging source resembling the speech of the rainbow in the sky of the ultimate. Remaining faithful [*yid ches kyī gnas su*] to the *Lam ‘bras rdo rje’i tshig rkang* and the three tantras (Hevajra, *Samputa* & *Vajrapañjara*) without distinction, though I’ve already explained this material more than once, I will do it again. There is no reason to think otherwise. The venerable great Sakya fathers and sons, the Dharmarājas and mahāpanditas expand the knowledge of all the Buddha’s scriptures, Sūtra and tantra, without obstacles.”<sup>46</sup>

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emperor. It is not, however, clear that the title of *Kon ting gug shri* was among them. See TBRC P3565.

<sup>43</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.6 fn29. However, he does not provide an exact reference, and I was unable to locate any such reference within the SNT.

<sup>44</sup> Translation of *Secret Biography* (SNT) by Rje brtsun chos kyī rgyal mtshan (or Rje tsun pa) 7b-8a by Ary 2015, p.128.

<sup>45</sup> If we consider the possibility that this figure may have been a contemporary of Tsong kha pa but not of Mkhas grub himself, some additional possibilities present themselves. For example, Kun dga’ rin chen (1339-1399)(TBRC P1862), the sixteenth throne holder of bzhi thog bla brang at Sakya, was also granted the title *Kon ting gug shri ba* by the Ming emperor.

<sup>46</sup> Mkhas grub’s *Thor-bu*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 775-808. See 775-6: *kho bos lam ‘bras gang du bkag; gang gi tshē bkag; tshul ji ltar du bkag; su zhig gi mdun du bkag; yi ger bris pa ji ‘dra ba zhig gi nang du bkag ces zhib tu rnam par dbyad nas; mthar gtugs pa nam kha’i ‘ja’ tshon gsung ba ltar mi ‘gyur ba’i khungs btsal bar gyis shig; lam ‘bras rdo rje’i tshig rkang rgyud gsum dang khyad par med par yid ches kyī gnas su kho bsos rkang tshugs pa nyid du sngon chad kyang lan cig ma yin par dbyangs su*

In “remaining faithful,” he establishes the requisite respect for his Sakya forefathers. Mkhas grub then proceeds to praise the Sakpas as “lords of yoga” with mastery of the generation and completion stages, letting his interlocutor know that his own awareness of the integrity of the Sakya tradition is one of “firm faith, not merely words” [*tshig tsam ma yin pa'i dad pa brtan po thob zin pas*]. [776] He then attempts to correct the mistaken impressions his writings on body mandala have produced: “Some have mistakenly assumed that the little bit of affirming and negating [*dgag sgrub*] I’ve done on body mandala is a refutation [*bkag pa*] of the *Lam ‘bras* and empowerment at the time of the path [*lam dus*].”<sup>47</sup>

In this text, Mkhas grub’s polemical tone seems to have escalated, and his statement that he’s already explained his position on the Hevajra tantras and *Lam ‘bras* materials “more than once” implies that this text may indeed post-date both the *Ocean of Attainment* and the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*. He accuses his interlocutor of being a liar obsessed with his own opinions and also critiques the interlocutor’s method of argumentation:

“You’ve told me lots of things I already know about practicing mantra, like the necessity of empowerment and vows. When it comes to the main issue, you totally lack any proof [*sgrub byed*] regarding body mandala. You work so hard to articulate an attitude while lacking familiarity with (the principles of) affirmation and negation. All scholars can see that you are a fool. Yet with little hope of classifying the general teachings (*sūtra* and tantra), you diminish your own reputation (by writing as your have.)”<sup>48</sup>

Mkhas grub first problematizes the way in which his interlocutor has used the classification of four philosophical schools [*grub mtha' bzhi'i rnam gzhang*]. He also clarifies the goals of the *śrāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas* as inferior to ultimate

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*bsgrags shing; da dung de la gzhan su kyang bsgrub dgos pa mi bdog; rje sa skya pa chen po yab sras dang; chos rje ban chen ; bde bar gshegs [776.1] pa'i gsungs rab mdo rgyud mtha' dag la mkhyen ba thogs med du rgyas shing*

I am grateful to Khenpo Tashi Dorje for his guidance in reading this text in November 2011. I have focused on communicating the tone of the text faithfully. Due to the many colloquialisms it employs, my translation of these excerpts remains somewhat unpolished.

<sup>47</sup>Mkhas grub’s *Thor-bu* , *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 775-808. See 776:

*da lan gyi lus dkyil gyi dgag sgrub zur tsam 'di lam 'bras dang lam dus kyi dbang bkag pa yin snyam pa'i go ba nor brgyud la skyes pa 'ga' zhid gis*

<sup>48</sup>Mkhas grub’s *Thor-bu* , *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 775-808. See 776-7: *sngags la 'jugs pa la dbang dang dam tshig dgos pa sogs grub zin du ma zhid bsgrubs; skabs don lus dkyil bsgrub ba la sgrub byed kyis shin tu phongs shing dgag sgrub kyi brda la ma byang ba'i rnam 'gyur ches gsal bar sgrogs pa lhur byed pa'i [3] bzhad gad kyi gnas su mkhas pa mtha' dag gis go bar nus pa [777.1] zhid bkod gda' na'ang khyed la gsung rab spyi'i rnam gzhang re ba shas chung bas de'i cha nas mtshad chung mchi mod*

buddhahood. His other critiques range from the wrongful denigration of Sa pan's astrological calculations in favor of the Kālacakra<sup>49</sup> to the confusion of *śamatha* with *vipaśyana*. Some of Mkhas grub's concerns with defining the relationship of *sūtra* and tantra also appear here, a concern we will later examine as it emerges in his chapter on body mandala. The articulation of this relationship is a common theme in Mkhas grub's polemics. After describing a few particular points of contention on the consecration within the *Lam 'bras* tradition, about half way into the text Mkhas grub begins to specifically engage with the interpretation of his own writings on body mandala within the *Ocean of Attainment*:

“Now, I must address the main topic. These few things I say below are a response to the distortion of the relevant explanation of Guhyasamāja body mandala. I was afraid of saying too much; I did not arrange an extensive account since it was not the appropriate time to get into the establishment and refutation of the classification of other body mandala. I did not realize there would be any proponent who would probe to the depths, analyzing closely, clinging to what little I've said. Because of the utterance in the courtyard [*gya tshoms su*], first I will ascertain my reply to those objections.”<sup>50</sup>

Mkhas grub's use of the term *gya tshoms su* seems to imply that an actual debate took place in the monastic compound or, at the very least, that his writings on body mandala were a source of controversy. He then begins his assessment of his own positions on the technical details of the practice, beginning with a statement he made in the *Ocean of Attainment*. We will not address the contents of this portion of the text from the *thor bu* here. Rather, we will leave it open as an avenue to potentially return to together with the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor* after working closely through the chapter from the *Ocean of Attainment* and Ngor chen's reply. Whether regarded as a retraction, apologetic, or self-reflection of sorts, this text from Mkhas grub's miscellaneous writings provides a glimpse of how the body mandala debate continued to evolve.

Did Mkhas grub change his mind about some of his more extreme critiques? Is it perhaps that he regarded the genre of polemical writing, like debate in the courtyard, as a liminal zone, a kind of safe space in which stronger, harsher declarations were allowed without long-lasting consequences? What kinds of expectations did readers bring to the their encounters with polemical literature? Were people who read Mkhas grub's writings

<sup>49</sup> The calculations may be those concerning the date of the Buddha's passing, which according to Sa pan, predates Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death in 1216 by 3350 years. See Kramer 2008, p. 148 fn 29 together with her reference to Ruegg 1992, 272f.

<sup>50</sup> Mkhas grub's *Thor-bu*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, 775-808. See 782-3:

*da ni skabs don brjod par bya ste; de kho bos smras pa'i tshig tshan pa 'og ma 'di; gsang 'dus kyi lus dkyil 'chad pa skabs su bab pa'i dkyus yin pas; de'i skabs su lus dkyil gzhan gyi nam gzhag rgyas par dgag sgrub byed pa skabs ma yin zhing yi ge mangs pas 'jigs te rgyas par ma bkod par zur tsam zhig smras pa la; zhib tu dpyad nas gting phyin pa'i 'dod pa gang yin mi 'tshol bar gya tshoms su smra bar snang bas; thog mar 'di'i brgal lan gtan la [783.1] dbab par bya'o*

on body mandala overreacting or was he attempting to produce precisely the response he did? Is it possible, moreover, that changes in the socio-political and economic climate of monastic life inspired Mkhas grub to reformulate his approach?

At the outset, we exercised caution against moving too quickly towards sectarian explanations for framing the body mandala debate. However, even this preliminary engagement with Mkhas grub's writings on body mandala beyond the *Ocean of Attainment*, has demonstrated that Mkhas grub passed the point of no return in his writings on body mandala. Whether he intentionally set out to divorce his tradition from its Sakyapa roots or not, once he had set the wheel in motion, there was no turning back. Mkhas grub's polemics played a formative role in distinguishing the project of defending Tsong kha pa's tradition from "remaining faithful" to its Sakyapa roots. This is a distinction that continued to evolve over time. Ary observes:

"...while Tsong kha pa's followers may have not have necessarily seen themselves in the very beginning as members of a new and distinct religious order, over time they came to distinguish themselves more and more from the Sakyas, with whom they initially shared many common traits. Eventually, Tsong kha pa was perceived as having diverged from the interpretations accepted by the Sakyas, for which he was greatly criticized by some of the latter tradition's foremost scholars, and the Gelukpas' self-identity as a distinct religious order centered upon the acceptance of Tsong kha pa's particular interpretations began to solidify, yielding the new phenomenon of what we can aptly label Geluk textual community."<sup>51</sup>

This dissertation adds to Ary's work with biographical materials. It also makes a stronger claim for Mkhas grub's own agency in authoring his fate. While he may have not 'intended' to burn his bridges with the Sakyapas and their patrons and allies, his actions aggravated already existing tensions to produce irreversible effects, effects demonstrated clearly in his own nebulous departure from Gyantse.

Having considered some of the dynamics informing Mkhas grub's polemics and his relationship to an emerging Gelukpa identity, we now proceed to examine the identity of the monk who chose to reply to his objections, Ngor chen kun dga' bzang po. In the process we will evaluate Ngor chen's role as a Sakyapa, how that role is understood from both an institutional and intellectual perspective, and the ways in which it characterizes his engagement in the debate. We will also revisit the trope of "defender of the faith" to determine how it may impact representations of Ngor chen's accomplishments and in particular, of his polemics.

### **III. Ngor chen's Contributions to the Body Mandala Debate**

During his time as abbot of Ngor E wam chos ldan, Sangs rgyas phun tsogs [1649-1705] composed a biography of the monastery's founder. The biographer contextualizes Ngor chen's contributions to the body mandala debate within a series of polemical writings intended to correct mistaken views:

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<sup>51</sup> Ary 2007, p.162.

“Through debate, he reversed mistaken views. At an earlier time, some said that the great Dharma protector (Virūpa) was a Cittamātrin pandit and that the intention of his three tantras together with oral instructions was to spread the Cittamātrin perspective. (In response,) Ngor chen composed the great treatise that defends through scripture and reasoning, the *Root and Commentary for Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras* [*rgyud gsum gnod 'joms rtsa 'grel*]. Later on, there was a terrible misconception of imagining the Hevajra body mandala not to be explained anywhere in the Indian tantric system. Through scripture and reasoning and the oral instructions, he (Ngor chen) thoroughly refuted that circumstance of the Hevajra initiate admitting wrong [*lam dus blangs pa mthol bshags byed pa'i skabs byung ba*]. He composed the great treatise that establishes the unsurpassable intention of the tantric system called *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil through Eliminating Objections to the Body Mandala and Dispelling Evil View(s)*.<sup>52</sup>

The two latter texts, together with Mkhas grub's chapter on body mandala from the *Ocean of Attainment* form “round one” of the body mandala debate; they are the focus of this dissertation. The colophons of these two texts by Ngor chen identify their date of composition as 1426 [*zil gnol*], three years before he founded Ngor monastery [E wam chos ldan]. Therefore, the period of composition of this network of texts coincides with institution-building activities for both Ngor chen and Mkhas grub at Ngor monastery and Gyantse, respectively.

One particular phrase in Sangs rgyas phun tsogs's overview of Ngor chen's polemical activities is of note: *lam dus blangs pa mthol bshags byed pa'i skabs byung ba*. Roughly translated here as “that circumstance of the Hevajra initiate admitting wrong,” the implications of the phrase are compelling but difficult to pin down. One way of interpreting this remark about Ngor chen's unnamed opponent in the body mandala debate is that he is a Sakyapa who has turned his back on his own tradition. Khenpo Tashi Dorje of the International Buddhist Academy (IBA) in Kathmandu suggested that it refers to Mkhas grub as someone who received the *Lam 'bras* initiation but later critiqued the legitimacy of the transmission.<sup>53</sup> Before ever studying with Tsong kha pa, Mkhas grub indeed received the Hevajra initiation and *Lam 'bras* teachings from Ye shes dpal

<sup>52</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 1688, p.546.2-.5:

*rtsod pa'i sgo nas gzhan gyi log par rtog pa bzlog pa yang; kha cig sngon gyi dus su dpal ldan chos skyong [546.3] sems tsam gyi pan di ta yin pas; bir wa pa'i rgyud gsum man ngag dang bcas pa'i dgongs pa sems tsam du bkral ba yin no zhes pa'i log par rtog pa byung ba; lung rigs kyis sun 'byin par byed pa'i bstan bcos chen po rgyud gsum gnod 'joms rtsa 'grel mdzad; yang phyis kyis kye [546.4] rdo rje'i lus dkyil rgyud rgya gzhung gang nas kyang ma bshad pa'i rtog brtags yin no zhes pa'i log rtog 'jigs su rung ba lam dus blangs pa mthol bshags byed pa'i skabs byung ba de lung rigs man ngag gi sgo nas legs par sun phyung nas; rgyud gzhung gi dgongs pa bla na med pa sgrub par byed [546.5] pa'i bstan bcos chen po'i lus dkyil rtsod spong smra ba mngan 'jom zhes bya ba dang; Ita ba ngan sel zhes bya ba gnyis mdzad do*

<sup>53</sup> Personal communication, Fall 2011.

and studied with esteemed Sakya teachers like Bsod rnam rgyal mtshan and Na bza' ba. Two years after his full ordination, Ren mda' ba sent him to study with Tsong kha pa.<sup>54</sup> This aspect of Mkhas grub's biography reinforces his identity as a Sakyapa, inculcated in the primary tantric ritual tradition of the *lam' bras* including the Hevajra body mandala practice.

In the previous section of this introduction, we investigated the contours of representations of Mkhas grub as a debater and “defender of the faith.” We also observed how his status as defender is construed specifically as a defense of the teachings of Tsong kha pa and his disciples. We encountered a self-consciousness in some excerpts from Mkhas grub's biographical materials to avoid associations of divergence or betrayal in distinguishing Tsong kha pa's views from those of his teachers. One solution was to depict the Sakyapas who chose to challenge his views as ignorant of and therefore themselves divorced from the true tradition. Both Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub possessed strong ties to the Sakya tradition; both were students of great Sakya masters like Ren mda' ba. Locating the precise historical moment when defending Tsong kha pa's views became formally distinguished from defending the Sakya tradition is a challenge. By analyzing the body mandala debate texts and their later interpretations, we may work towards a better understanding of how this distinction was realized.

Sangs rgyas phun tshogs undeniably portrays Ngor chen as a defender of the Sakya tradition. A verse playing upon Ngor chen's name concludes the section on Ngor chen's polemical writings: “The master of scripture and reasoning, the glorious one beloved by all [Kun dga'] expels the demigods' misconceptions with the vajra. The excellent [bzang po] author bestows wonders through increasing the three conditions of the Buddha's teachings.”<sup>55</sup> An earlier section of the biography describes how Ngor chen was obliged to decline the ruler A ma dpal's initial invitation to come to teach in Mustang due to ideological attacks leveled against the Sakyapas at the time.<sup>56</sup> The author of these attacks is not identified: “It was said that ‘the view of the three tantras of the former Sakyapa hierarchs is Cittamātrin’ and the refutation arose saying, ‘the Sakyapa body mandala is not explained from the tantric (textual) system.’”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.15.

<sup>55</sup> *dpal ldan kun dga'i lung rigs lha dbang gis; rdo rje log rtog lha min kun bcil nas; thub bstan skabs gsum rgyas par mdzad [547.1] pa yis; mdzad pa bzang po e ma ngo mtshar phul*

I am grateful to Khenpo Tashi Dorje for his guidance in reading selections from Ngor chen's biography. He suggested that *skabs gsum* may be a reference to the three vows. [Personal communication, Fall 2011] The three vows are the *prātimokṣa* vows of monastic conduct, the bodhisattva vows of altruistic intention, and the samaya vows guarding tantric practice.

<sup>56</sup> Ngor chen ultimately made three journeys to Mustang and was instrumental in establishing and perpetuating the Sakya tradition there through bringing the Tibetan compilation of the Buddha's teachings, the Kanjur, establishing and consecrating monasteries and temples, and conferring teachings, ordinations, and tantric initiations. See Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 536.5-539.2.

<sup>57</sup> *snga ma sa skya pa'i rgyud gsum man ngag dang bcas pa'i lta ba sems tsam yin zer ba dang ; sa skya pa'i lus dkyil gyud gzhung nas ma bshad zer ba'i rtsod pa byung nas*

As we know from exploring the account of Ngor chen’s polemical activities above, Ngor chen composed the *Root and Commentary for Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras* [*rgyud gsum gnod 'joms rtsa 'grel*] in response to the first of these charges. Van der Kuijp dates this text to 1406 and identifies it as: “a polemical text against Ratnākaraśānti and his Tibetan followers, who maintained that the *Hevajra Tantra* was mentalistic (*sems-tsam-pa*) in philosophical persuasion. These Tibetan followers included Ren-mda’-ba Gzhon-ni blo-gos (1348/9-1412) and Bo-dong Paṅ-chen.”<sup>58</sup> As suggested above, the issue of Virūpa, the progenitor of the Sakya Lam’bras tradition, being a Cittamātrin, apparently cast a shadow upon the legitimacy the Sakya tradition at large. However, the notion that the Hevajra literary tradition might itself be tainted with a Cittamātrin approach, a philosophical approach commonly devalued by Tibetan commentators in favor of the Madhyamaka, posed an even greater threat. It implied that the Sakyapa interpretation of the tantric texts was imperfect; further, it suggested that the particular tantric canonical texts upon which the Sakya ritual tradition was based were not necessarily to be regarded as the ultimate means for accessing soteriological truth. Of course this was not a critique so radical as to claim that the *Hevajra Tantra* was not the word of the Buddha. Instead, the critique operated on the basis of established frameworks of Buddhist doxography such as the “three turnings of the wheel.” One version of this framework propounds the Madhyamaka as the pinnacle of all the Buddha’s teachings, as a more profound and accurate teaching than the Cittamātrin view. The subtlety of the critique allowed by this classificatory schema plays upon the assumption that the Buddha taught in accord with the needs and capacities of his disciples. Therefore, according to one version of the “three turnings” embraced by the Tibetans, only the most sophisticated students would be capable of understanding the Madhyamaka perspective. Thus, to claim that the *Hevajra Tantra* itself as well as the Indian master from whom the lineage of ritual transmission of the Sakya interpretation of this tantra emanated were both Cittamātrin, was to say that, in a sense, the Sakyapas (including Tsong kha pa’s own teacher, Ren mda’ ba) were not among the Buddha’s most gifted disciples.

Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism encouraged charismatic individuals (and the institutions they belonged to) to seek prestige (and power) through the skillful performance of the Prasāngika Madhyamaka method. This translated into the composition of polemical texts and the practice of philosophical debate. The polemical claim that the Sakyapa interpretation of the *Hevajra Tantra* was Cittamātra reveals a great

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<sup>58</sup> van der Kuijp 1985, p.87. Khenpo Tashi Dorje of the IBA suggested that Ren mda’ was the one to demand a reply on this count and that Tsong kha pa supported him in this demand. Khenpo Tashi Dorje also referred to a relevant conversation between Khenpo Gyatso of Sakya College and His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama during a conference in Varanasi in 2004. Khenpo Gyatso claimed that the faulty identification of Virūpa as a Cittamātrin was the result of confusing two different historical masters; apparently His Holiness accepted the claim. That this issue would continue to be regarded as relevant in the present age attests to the enduring significance of the tantric polemics that are the focus of this dissertation. [Personal communication, Fall 2011]



deal about what was at stake in the body mandala debate. In the Introduction to this dissertation, we observed the fundamental tension between the mind's tendencies to proliferate and generate ideas and images, and to superimpose false frameworks upon reality, on the one hand, and the tantric approach to harness the mind's faculty of imagining to the soteriological practice of generating oneself (or external objects) as Buddhist deities, on the other hand. That is to say, in a fashion characteristic for tantra, the mind's normally negative compulsion to proliferate is employed as a means (*upāya*) to overcome the limitations of the mind and to liberate it from this very compulsion. This soteriological employment of the mind's faculty of imagining is at odds with the Madhyamaka identification of discursive language-based thinking as the principal source of ignorance that is to be overcome in the quest for liberation and a more accurate experience of reality. By contrast, the Cittamātra position of the Yogācāra school with its emphasis that perceptual data are only mental productions lends itself well to the tantric project. Mental acts of imagining are not in themselves- as in the Madhyamaka- the reason for our state of bondage, but rather our way of engaging them. This means that the Cittamātra stance of the Yogācāras allows more easily for the employment of tantric techniques of visualization and mental fabrications. The Cittamātra stance is also closely associated with the principle of *tathāgatagarbha* or innate Buddhahood, a hotly contested teaching in fourteenth century Tibet. The next chapter will engage with the tensions between natural and fabricated, enlightened and defiled objects-tensions that factor prominently in the treatment of *tathāgatagarbha* and Cittamātra in the Tibetan tradition. As Chapter Four will show, the teachings of *tathāgatagarbha* and Cittamātra, and the bearing they have on the efficacy of tantric ritual action, are subjects that feature prominently in tantric exegetical treatises such as Mkhas grub's writings on the body mandala.

Twenty years after producing the *Root and Commentary for Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras*, Ngor chen composed the body mandala debate texts, *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil* and *Dispelling Evil Views*, in response to the latter charge, that “the Sakyapa body mandala is not explained from the tantric (textual) system.” However, Sangs rgyas phun tshogs provides an interesting if enigmatic detail here. Apparently, a rule [*bca' khrims*] was made preventing Sakyapa Geshe from travelling outside of Sakya as a direct response to the threats.<sup>59</sup> This rule is the reason Ngor chen could not accept his first invitation to Mustang. It is unclear how Ngor chen was elected to rise to the challenge of fending off these charges or, for that matter, if there was any precedent for such rules to be made in response to offensive views. The comment does, however, imply that the critique of Sakyapa body mandala we assume to have been leveled by Mkhas grub, was perceived as a serious threat to the tradition, a threat demanding of a reply. Jackson 2010 points out that the death of one of the most important members of the Sakya Khon family, Theg chen chos rje, in 1425 prompted Ngorchen “to assume much responsibility.”<sup>60</sup> He dates Mkhas grub's “anti-

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<sup>59</sup> [537.4] *sa skya pa'i dge bshes rnam s'thor sa med pa'i bca' khrims byas nas 'byon stabs ma byung*

<sup>60</sup> Jackson 2010, p.178.

Sakya tantric polemics” to the same year, suggesting that Ngor chen’s response was part of this newfound responsibility.<sup>61</sup>

Sangs rgyas phun tshogs refers to additional details surrounding Ngor chen’s invitation to Mustang in Glo bo mkhan chen’s (1456-1532) [*rje mkhan chen pa*] biography.<sup>62</sup> Kramer’s 2008 critical edition and translation of Glo bo’s autobiography features the relevant section.<sup>63</sup> Kramer has noted the interesting way in which the details of Ngor chen’s visits to Mustang assume such a prominent role (approximately forty percent of the text) in this figure’s autobiography, despite the fact that the two masters never met. She describes this prominence as testament to Glo bo’s “strong obligation...to this great master of the Ngor pa tradition.”<sup>64</sup>

Glo bo’s account contradicts Sangs rgyas phun tshog’s in suggesting that the events surrounding the body mandala debate and the consequent delay of Ngor chen’s travels to Mustang concern the second rather than the first visit. It also identifies Mkhas grub as the antagonist, referring to him as lCang ra bKa’ bcu (as he had founded lCang ra monastery):

“Later, [A-med-dpal] thought to invite Ngor chen for a second time. After he had sent one petition [zhu yig] after another, he received [this] reply in a first answering letter: ‘Although I was planning to come this time, due to a letter written by lCang ra bKa’ bcu pa which says that the Hevajra body mandala is not a correct teaching, all the monks of the monastic seat got angry, and therefore an order has been enacted for the religious scholars not to go anywhere as long as this [matter] has not been resolved. So, I too, have no possibility of going.’<sup>65</sup>

He then asks A ma dpal, if he’s intent upon his visit, to send a letter to prevent him from receiving invitations to lots of neighboring monasteries and guaranteeing that his stay will be brief, “for the confidence of those here.”

If we apply the skepticism of the biographer’s intentions we have acquired from Ary’s study of Je tsun pa’s *Secret Biography* of Mkhas grub, we might be inclined to consider the possibility that Sangs rgyas phun tshogs is retroactively investing Ngor chen with a comparable identity of “defender of the faith.” It is possible that the body mandala debate acquired more significance in ensuing generations as the divide between Sakyapas and Gelukpas [or dga’ ldan pas] became more pronounced. Davidson, for example, has

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<sup>61</sup> Heimbel 2012 further enriches our knowledge of Ngor chen’s activities during this period of time. Through recourse to several biographies of Ngor chen’s student and eventual abbatial successor, Mus chen sems dpa’ chen po dkon mkhog rgyal mtshan (1388-1469), Heimbel points out that Ngor chen fell quite ill in 1426. After he recuperated, Ngor chen bestowed the *Lam* ‘bras initiation upon Mus chen. See Hembel 2012 p.54 and fn 23.

<sup>62</sup> See reference in Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 537.5.

<sup>63</sup> For the version translated by Kramer, see Tōyō Bunko 41-683.

<sup>64</sup> Kramer 2008, p.56.

<sup>65</sup> Kramer 2008, p.146-7. Glo bo mkhan chen bsod nams lhun grub. (1456-1532) *Rje btsun bsod nams lhun grub legs pa’i ‘byung gnas rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po’i rnam par mthar pa zhus lan*. Manuscript 6a-b.

also noted a disjuncture between the perceived terms of the ‘debate’ between the two figures and the details of their biographies.<sup>66</sup> Bearing Ary’s assessment of the biographical genre as “at the heart of Tibetan Buddhist sectarian formation itself,” it becomes necessary to consider whether the debate was a sectarian issue or rather was later interpreted one.<sup>67</sup>

Heimbel 2012 interprets descriptions of the founding of Ngor E wam chos ldan in biographical accounts of Ngor chen in a manner suggesting that Ngor chen was partially motivated by sectarian concerns like those commonly understood to characterize the body mandala debate:

“Withdrawing from sectarian conflicts with the Dge lugs school on one hand, and from the worldly distractions of the bustling town of Sa skya on the other hand, Ngor chen founded E wam chos lan in the remote Ngor valley, located around 20 km southwest of Gzhis ka rtse, hoping to go back to traditional Sa skya teaching and practice in a more supportive environment.”<sup>68</sup>

Heimbel’s statement suggests that the atmosphere at Sakya at the time was contentious and not entirely conducive to intense spiritual training and, further, that Sakya-Geluk tensions were responsible, in part, for the situation.<sup>69</sup> It also frames Ngor chen’s project as a return to the roots of the tradition through moving away from the institutional center. Therefore, the body mandala debate might be read as one instance of a broader conflict used and potentially even amplified in textual sources in order to validate Ngor chen’s monastic project.

Jackson 2010 not only affirms the sectarian dimension of Ngor chen’s monastic foundation but also links the conflict between Ngor chen and Mkhas grub to the

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<sup>66</sup> Davidson 1991, 20

<sup>67</sup> Ary 2007, 13.

<sup>68</sup> Heimbel 2012, p.48.

<sup>69</sup> The other biography of Mkhas grub translated in Ary 2007, 30a, uses a similar trope of the degeneration of Sakya. Of course the description is more severe and the intention somewhat different. In that account, Mahākāla of the Tent appears to Mkhas Grub, imploring him to remain at Sakya. Mkhas grub replies, “If there is one person here with pure views and conduct, I may stay. However, the tenets of the spiritual forefathers no longer exist, and their descendants have gone too. The temples are filled with women, donkeys, cows and barmaids...” (Strangely enough, Sangs rgyas phun tshogs also mentions barmaids [*chang ma*] in his description of the distractions at Sakya in Ngor chen’s biography. Although Khenpo Tashi Dorje suggested emending the reading to “bar” or “drinking place” [*chang sa*] in our readings of that text, Heimbel 2012 points out that all versions of the text indeed read *chang ma*. See Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 524.3 and Heimbel 2012 p49 fn 5.) Mahākāla actually commiserates with Mkhas grub as to the state of the place. However, he attempts to order Mkhas grub to stay on the grounds that he too, would have gone to study with Tsong kha pa were it not for the tragic state of affairs. He even confesses: “The Sakyapas definitely don’t like you. They gave me ritual cakes and told me to harm Tsong kha pa and his spiritual heirs, particularly you!” 30a in Chos ldan rab ‘byor’s *Short Biography of Mkhas grub* translated in Ary 2015 p.112.

scheduled “public doctrinal confrontation” between Mkhas grub and Rong ston. As mentioned above, Jackson’s version of the encounter of the latter figures posits the patron’s intervention and the “disappointed” Mkhas grub’s departure from Gyantse. He adds further dimension to the story by explaining Rong ston’s involvement with an institutional project he regards as conflicting with Mkhas grub’s tradition-building initiatives:

“Rongton had recently helped the Rinpung lords found a multisectarian monastic complex at the site of the Rinpung Great Maitreya Statue and Temple where scholarship of the Sakya order was strongly represented (but which also included Geluk and Bodong colleges). Khedrubje, on the other hand, was still exerting himself to achieve doctrinal hegemony for his new Geluk School through conversions, polemics, and other means. He had little patience with prominent representatives of the other schools or broad-minded patrons.”<sup>70</sup>

Davidson’s interpretation frames both Mkhas grub’s encounter with Rong ston (or lack thereof) and the former’s ensuing departure from Gyantse in terms of what Cabezón has termed “sectarian differentiation.” He also suggests that the events at Gyantse built upon tensions that had already escalated in ‘round one’ of the body mandala debate between Mkhas grub and Ngor chen. Furthermore, the situation at Gyantse appears to be embroiled in a dense web of patronage dynamics involving both the Rin spungs and Phags mo gru lords. It may also be connected with diverging views on institutional organization and competing bids for patronage. Decades after round one of the body mandala debate and the events at Gyantse, Ngor chen himself is also alleged, by some accounts, to have resisted multi-sectarian patronage projects. Cabezón 2007 recounts such an instance from Bsod nams grag pa’s (1478-1554) *Deb ther mar po gsar ma*. Ngor chen apparently demanded a more exclusive allegiance from the Rin spungs lord Nor bu bzang po [d.1466], who expressed devotion to both the Sakyapas and Kagyupas but had “also looked kindly upon the dGe ldan pas.”<sup>71</sup> As a precondition for conferring teachings upon the ruler, Ngor chen allegedly unsuccessfully attempted to make the following demands: that “all the dGe ldan pas under his [Nor bzang pa’s] rule were converted to Sa skya pas” and the prevention of “bKa’ bcu pa dGe ‘dun ‘grub from building his monastery.”<sup>72</sup> He also demanded the ruler’s patronage of Ngor monastery. Cabezón uses the account to set the stage for one of Ngor chen’s later disciples, Go ram pa’s (1429-1489), polemical writings challenging Tsong kha pa’s views. He describes the climate of the times as one in which “in the wake of the loss of Sakyapa political hegemony in Tibet, in a period in which rival schools were vying with one another for the support of patrons, and at a time of great political instability... an institution’s affiliation with one political faction could cause retaliation from others.”<sup>73</sup> Cabezón does note that (much like the events at Gyantse involving Mkhas grub and Rong ston and the body mandala polemics of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen) this exchange between Ngor chen and Nor

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<sup>70</sup> Jackson 2010, p. 179

<sup>71</sup> Cabezón 2010, p.44.

<sup>72</sup> Tucci, *Deb ther*, pp.99aa, 239-40 as cited in Cabezón 2007, p.44.

<sup>73</sup> Cabezón 2007, p.44.

bzang pa has been contested.<sup>74</sup> Yet, while the precise circumstances of the encounters are not always clear, a palpable quest for “sectarian differentiation” was indeed part of the world Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s inhabited and participated in.

Another method for situating the body mandala debate texts within Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s larger spheres of activity is by consulting colophons and their compilations of collected works [*gsum ‘bum*]. The next section will employ these resources to determine how the body mandala debate texts may function as an extension or synthesis of or even departure from these authors’ overall literary trajectories.

#### **IV. Additional Resources: Colophons and Collected Works**

Before proceeding to focus upon the fifteenth-century polemical context within Tibetan scholasticism, we will pause to make a few observations based upon reviewing the overall contents of Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s collected works as well as the colophons for individual texts. Many of Ngor chen’s works are dated and were composed either at Sakya between approximately 1405 and 1429 or at E Wam chos ldan between 1429 and 1456. Ngor chen’s tantric ritual expertise is confirmed by the contents of his collected works; the majority are ritual or exegetical texts devoted to tantric subject matter. In addition to his tantric ritual and exegetical texts, he composed a number of praises [*bstod pa*] extolling teachers, gurus of the lineage [*bla brgyud gsol’debs*] and deities, as well as biographies [*rnam mthar*] of Sa pan, masters of the *Lam ‘bras* tradition, and his teacher Buddhaśrī. Several of these seem to have been written earlier in his career, during his time at Sakya (and therefore before the founding of Ngor monastery in 1429). Other genres represented include replies to questions [*dris len*], teachings for students [*gdams ngag*], as well as letters of correspondence [*sprung yig*]. We have a number of letters sent from the hermitage at E Wam chos ldan. Ngor chen also made significant contributions to the cataloguing [*dkar chag*] of canonical texts. He created catalogues of the Kanjur and Tanjur as well as of tantric commentaries and the collected writings of the Sakyapa patriarchs. His cataloguing activities were particularly important to his institution-building activities in the region of Mustang.<sup>75</sup> During his time at Sakya, Ngor chen produced a partial translation of the *Hevajra Tantra*, consulting both Sanskrit manuscripts and previous translations.<sup>76</sup> Ngor chen also catalogued the commentaries upon the *Hevajra Tantra*.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, he had some experience with the translation of the root text as well as with the scope of the commentarial tradition.

In taking stock of Ngor chen’s collected works, we can see how between 1406 and 1419 Ngor chen developed his expertise on the interpretation and ritual application of the *Hevajra Tantra* through ritual, tantric exegetical, and polemical compositions. The latter, in particular, lay the groundwork for his engagement in the body mandala debate in defense of the integrity of the Hevajra tradition as maintained by the Sakyapas. Ngor

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<sup>74</sup> See Cabezón 2007 p44 fn215 for details.

<sup>75</sup> The colophon to his Mustang Tenjur is dated 1447. See Eimer’s 1999 edition of Ngor chen’s Mustang Kanjur catalogue.

<sup>76</sup> *Rtsa rgyud brtag gnyis kyi ‘gyur*. Collected Works Vol.2 pp.445-6. Van der Kuijp’s 1985 article focuses upon Ngor chen’s translation of two Verses [II. V.1-2] not present in several other translations as presented by this short text.

<sup>77</sup> This text immediately follows the translation in the Collected Works, Vol. II pp.446-7.

chen composed his first major polemical text, *Root and Commentary for Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras* at Sakya in 1406.<sup>78</sup> As discussed above, this text was a response to the idea that the Hevajra tantras were expressive of the Cittamātrin perspective. Just a year earlier, Ngor chen composed a work embedding the transmission of the *Hevajra Tantra* within the larger scope of tantric history.<sup>79</sup> In 1407, he completed a Hevajra *sādhana* as well as another Hevajra-based ritual text and in 1412 yet another Hevajra *sādhana*.<sup>80</sup> In 1419, Ngor chen produced another relevant text to the interpretation of the body mandala debate, the *Moonrays of the Pith*.<sup>81</sup> As referenced above, scholars continued to respond to the views Ngor chen articulated in this comprehensive interpretation of the Hevajra *sādhana* practice for generations to come.

Between 1423 and 1425, Ngor chen composed multiple texts on the Guhyasamāja system. The most significant for our interpretation of his writings on body mandala is *The Ocean of Attainment of the Sādhana of the Guhyasamāja Mandala*.<sup>82</sup> Not only does this text bear a very similar title to Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainment*, it likewise appears to focus upon the generation stage phase practice of the Guhyasamāja. The colophon indicates that Ngor chen implemented some of the very same core texts of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition employed by Mkhas grub: the *Mdor byas (Piṇḍī-kṛta)*, *Mdo dang bsres pa*, *Rnam gzhag rim pa* [*Samāja sādhana vyavasthole* [*sthāli* ]], and *Sgron ma gsal ba*.<sup>83</sup> Over the course of this dissertation, the significance of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's choices for citation in the body mandala debate texts will become apparent. These choices are expressive of their command of a vast array of tantric literature and their strategic endorsement of particular lineages of transmission. These choices also contribute to their style of argumentation. Knowing that Ngor chen was equipped to engage with the very same Ārya Guhyasamāja texts chosen by Mkhas grub but chose instead to introduce sources from the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra traditions in the body mandala debate raises questions for further exploration. It also prompts us to look more closely at his choice to isolate the interpretation of one particular Guhyasamāja-related text, the *Vajramālā Explanatory Tantra*. In another text Ngor chen composed on the Guhyasamāja, undated but composed at Sakya and therefore likely before 1429, the colophon specifies that he relied upon the *Vajramālā Explanatory Tantra* in addition to

<sup>78</sup> *rgyud gsum gnod 'joms rtsa 'grel*

<sup>79</sup> *The Extraordinary Ocean of Biographies of Lineage lamas and the Manner of Arising of the Hevajra Tantra* [*k ye rdo rje 'i byung tshul dang brgyad pa 'I bla ma 'I rnam thar ngor mtshar rgya mtsho*] See van der Kuijp 1985, Appendix p.87.

<sup>80</sup> In 1412, Ngor chen also composed several texts on the rituals of the Vajradhātu:  
*Rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor sgrub thabs dngos grub snye ma; Rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor mchod pa'i cho ga tshogs gnyis snye ma; Rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga dbang gi snye ma; Rdo rje dbyings kyi sbyin sreg gi cho ga phrin las snye ma; Rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor gyi bkra shis kyi tshigs bcad dge legs snye ma.*

<sup>81</sup> *Dpal kye rdo rje 'i sgrub pa 'i thabs gyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gnad kyi zla zer.* Davidson 1992 includes this text in his study of the Hevajra abhisamaya.

<sup>82</sup> *Gsang 'dus dkyil 'khor gyi sgrub thabs dngos grub rgya mtsho.*

<sup>83</sup> See Toh 1796, Toh 1797, Toh 1809, and Toh 1785, respectively.

the root tantra.<sup>84</sup> The colophon adds that he consolidated the branches of the Ārya tradition and supplemented them in accord with the views of father tantra, the class of tantra to which the Guhyasamāja belongs. The later chapters of the dissertation will focus more prominently upon the themes of citation, consolidation, and supplementation within the tantric polemics of the body mandala debate.

In 1426, three years before founding Ngor monastery and one year before his first trip to Mustang, Ngor chen composed *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil* and *Dispelling Evil Views*. These two texts or versions of a singular text, form the core of Ngor chen's engagement in the body mandala debate and therefore of this dissertation. Dated texts produced at E Wam chos ldan include three texts from 1434 on the *Dākārṇāva-mahāyoginī-tantra* as well as two texts on the tradition of Saravavid Vairocana from 1442. Rituals propitiating this form of Vairocana are commonly associated with funerary rites.<sup>85</sup> The title of one of these Vairocana texts, *Eliminating Impurities in the Sādhana of Completing the Saravavid-Maṇḍala*, suggests a tantric polemical tone.<sup>86</sup>

Beyond the body mandala debate texts, Ngor chen composed one other text explicitly on the topic of body mandala, his *Commentary on the Ghantapa Body Mandala Practice*.<sup>87</sup> The text is undated; therefore it is hard to say whether it builds upon or lays the foundation for the body mandala debate. Nonetheless, it provides an example of Ngor chen's skill in navigating the relationships between different interpretations of this tantric ritual practice. It also confirms his facility in working within the Cakrasaṃvara materials.

Unfortunately, very few of Mkhas grub's writings are dated. The place of composition tends to be the most specific data available for determining how a particular text fits within the author's career; most of the texts that do include a place of composition were written either at Ri bo mdangs chen or at Ganden. Mkhas grub founded Mdangs chen in 1412 and spent time there after Tsong kha pa's death in 1419.<sup>88</sup> Therefore we can roughly deduce that these texts were composed between 1412/1419 and 1424 when Mkhas grub arrived at Gyantse. We have devoted attention to the contested circumstances surrounding Mkhas grub's departure from Gyantse above and the ambiguous implications they hold for his relationship to his patron as well as to his alleged opponent Rong ston. As referenced above, he was involved in founding Dpal 'khor sde chen under the patronage of Rab brtan kun bzang. During his time in Gyantse, between approximately 1424 and 1428, Mkhas grub composed the text that is the focus of this dissertation, *The Ocean of Attainment*. During this same period, he also composed the polemical work referred to as the "Thousand Topics" [*stong thun chen mo*] (TTC), translated and interpreted in Cabezón's 1992 study, *A Dose of Emptiness*. Cabezón explicitly identifies that work as polemical, as a defense of Tsong ka pa's

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<sup>84</sup> See Gsang 'dus dkyil 'khor gyi lha tshogs rnam mchod pa'i cho ga mchod sprin rgya mtsho.

<sup>85</sup> See Pakhoutova 2014 on Vairocana's role in funerary rituals.

<sup>86</sup> *Kun rig kyi dkyil 'khor yongs rdzogs kyi sgrub thabs sgrub pa rnam sel*

<sup>87</sup> *Dril bu pa'i lus dkyil gyi bshad pa*, collected Works Vol.4, pp. 733-64.

<sup>88</sup> Cabezón 1992 p16 fn38 suggests that Mdangs chen may have served as a home-base for Mkhas grub during his travels in western Tibet.

interpretation of the Madhyamaka philosophical perspective. On this basis, we can deduce that during his time at Gyantse, Mkhas grub composed at least two significant polemical works, based in the tantric and philosophical genres respectively.

Most of the remaining texts whose colophons provide a site of composition were composed at Ganden and therefore between 1431/2 when Mkhas assumed the abbacy and his death in 1438. As referened above, Mkhas grub's reply to Ngor chen's text, the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*, was composed at Ganden.<sup>89</sup> Two other potentially relevant works for the interpretation of Mkhas grub's body mandala debate texts were also produced at Ganden. The first deals with *Some Difficult Points in the Generation Stage of the Ghantapa Body Mandala*.<sup>90</sup> As remarked above, Ngor chen also composed a text based upon this version of the body mandala practice. Mkhas grub's chapter on body mandala from his *Ocean of Attainment* begins with a quotation from Ghantapa's text. This quotation provides Mkhas grub with the opportunity to engage his opponents on the implications of tantric ritual practices like body mandala for the status of the human body in the world. In the process, he experiments with the relationships between multiple varieties of Buddhist discourse. Therefore, his explorations of Ghantapa's transmission of the body mandala practice are part of this larger project. Another text composed at Ganden, *The Illuminating Lamp for Traversing the Paths and Grounds of Mantra(naya) and Pāramitā(naya)*, promises to provide insight into how Mkhas grub articulates these relationships between discourses and more specifically between the tantric and non-tantric approaches to Buddhist practice.<sup>91</sup>

There are a number of texts composed at "Upper Nyang in Gtsang" province [gtsang nyang stod], a somewhat imprecise location that might refer to almost any of the monasteries he spent substantial time at. It is, therefore, more difficult to estimate a date for these materials. Among them is the *Reply to the Questions of the Kalyānamitra Kon ting gug śrī ba*, the text from Mkhas grub's *Miscellaneous Writings [thor bu]* introduced above.<sup>92</sup> This particular text seems to have been composed after the *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor*, and therefore later in the 1431-38 span. Also among his undated compositions from "nyang stod" is one of many texts Mkhas grub authored on the Hevajra system. The title, *Dispelling Delusions regarding the Hevajra Sādhana*, indicates a tantric polemical tone.<sup>93</sup> The colophon pays tribute to his *Lam 'bras* masters, Ye shes dpal and Buddhaśrī, and specifically references the oral instructions of the Sakyapa masters on the generation and completion stages of Hevajra

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<sup>89</sup> *Phyin ci log gig tam gyi sbyor ba la 'jug pa'i smra ba ngan pa rnam par 'thag pa bstan bcos gnam lcags 'khor lo*. Collected Works [zhol] Vol. 2, pp7-100. Or see modern publication: *Dgag lan phyogs bsgrigs*. Ch'eng tu: Si khron Mi rigs Dpe skrun khan, 1997. Chinese colophon title: Pien lun wen hsuan pien. pp. 1-68.

<sup>90</sup> *Dril bu lus dkyil gyi byang du byas pa'i bskyed rim gyi bka' gnas 'ga' zhig*. Collected Works [zhol] Vol. 6, pp.765-787.

<sup>91</sup> *Sngags dang pha rol tu phyin pa'i sa lam bsgrod tshul gsal sgron dang sbyar ba*. Collected Works [zhol] Vol 8, pp.533-554.

<sup>92</sup> *Dge ba'i bshes gnyen kon ting gug shri ba'i dris lan*. Collected Works [zhol] Vol. 9, pp. 775-808.

<sup>93</sup> *Kyai rdo rje'i sgrub thabs 'khrul spong*. Collected Works [zhol] Vol. 8, pp.89-135



practice as well as the three principal versions of the *sādhana* compiled by the Sakyapa patriarchs. It also refers to the *Vanjrapañjara* and *Samputa* tantras, the other two tantras embraced by the Sakyapas as part of the Hevajra cycle. This colophon reminds us of Mkhas grub's Sakyapa roots while also asserting his purpose to fulfill Tsong kha pa's intent.

Cabezón 1992 has highlighted Mkhas grub's talent for "synthetic" compositions on the varied topics of valid cognition [*pramāṇa*], Madhyamaka philosophy, and tantra.<sup>94</sup> Mkhas grub's *Fundamentals of Buddhist Tantra*, translated by Lessing and Wayman in 1968, is one example of such a text, one that has played a formative role in shaping Western understandings of Tibetan Buddhist tantra.<sup>95</sup> He was also particularly prolific on the Kālacakra system, with several volumes of commentary on the *Vimālaprabhā*. However, despite the strong representation of tantric subject matter in Mkhas grub's collected writings, they do not serve as the main focus in the way that they do for Ngor chen. Moreover, he appears to have been more concerned with propitiating Tsong kha pa's work than with cataloguing the major works of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.

## **V. The Fifteenth-Century Context: Monastic Patronage, Scholasticism, and Charisma**

For the purpose of establishing a context for the study which follows, the most essential step is to outline the institutional climate of fifteenth-century Tibet together with the scholastic and ritual contexts in which Ngor chen and Mkhas grub participated. The fifteenth century has been somewhat neglected in historical scholarship on Tibet, perhaps in part because it marks a period of intensive growth and change in the relationship of political, monastic, and intellectual institutions.<sup>96</sup> As a result of its transitional nature, the fifteenth century has generally been characterized by the more easily defined periods it follows and precedes. The previous century and a half is understood in terms of the reform of the monastic system, the fall of the Mongol-Yuan dynasty, and the solidification of the Tibetan Buddhist canon.<sup>97</sup> On the other hand, the seventeenth century is regarded as a time in which political power was centralized, the Geluk sect rose to power, and encyclopedic projects in all domains of Tibetan life were initiated by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

In the mid- fourteenth century, the political hegemony of the Sakya sect was disrupted by the ascent of Phag mo grub pa Ta'i sit u to power. "Phag mo gru was one of the altogether thirteen myriarchies of the Yuan times' administrative division of central Tibet. Beginning with Byang chub rgyal mtshan, (1302-64, reign since 1342), its administrator had inherited the power of the Sakyapa in central Tibet."<sup>98</sup> Ehrhard 2004

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<sup>94</sup> Cabezón 1992, p. 4

<sup>95</sup> *Rgyud sde spyi'i nram par bzhag pa rgyas par bshad pa*. Collected Works [zhöl], Vol.8, pp.443-630.

<sup>96</sup> Kapstein 2006 and Davidson 2005 are among the most useful historical references for this period in Tibetan history. Others are Ary 2007/2015, Aris 1989, Wylie 2003 & Jackson 1989.

<sup>97</sup> It was also a time marked by attempts at organizing and standardizing Buddhist iconography to reflect the connection of deities with particular texts in that canon.

<sup>98</sup> Schweiger 2009, p.315. For more on the Phag mo gru, see Petech 1990, p. 85-138.

points out the generous patronage of Tsong kha pa's monasteries by the fifth Phag mo gru ruler, Grags pa rgyal mtshan.<sup>99</sup> We have already discussed the complexities surrounding Mkhas grub's relationship to his Phag mo gru patron, Rab btan kun bzang, ruler of Gyantse and its connection with larger patterns of patronage of emerging Gelukpa institutions by Phag mo gru pa rulers. In 1434, strife arose amongst the successors to the Phag mo gru legacy, destabilizing power relations in Dbus and Gtsang for the next century, with the gradual rise of the Rin spungs family.<sup>100</sup>

Foreign relations continued to impact Tibetan religious life in meaningful ways in the fifteenth century. Indian masters continued to travel to Tibet at this time, although certainly with less regularity than in the early Gsar ma era.<sup>101</sup> Ehrhard 2004 documents the travels of one such master, Vanaratna (1384-1468). He suggests Ngor chen was actually the first master Vanaratna encountered on his first trip to Tibet in 1426. This is the very same year that Ngor chen composed his body mandala texts. It is hard to accept as coincidental that Vanaratna proceeded on to Gyantse where he established a relationship with Rong ston, Mkhas grub's 'opponent' in the elusive debate referenced in Chapter One of this dissertation. Moreover, although the nature of Tibetan-Chinese relations shifted during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), important diplomatic connections between religious masters and the court continued to be forged. For example, the Fifth Karmapa visited the court of the Ming emperor Ch'eng-tsu in 1407-1408 to perform funerary rites for the emperor's parents. Sperling 2003 describes the visit as multi-faceted:

"Political, religious and commercial activities all played a part his mission to the court of Ming Ch'eng-tsu, and all were important in the relationship of Tibet and China during this period. This new Ming-Tibetan relationship accorded with the fresh circumstances of both countries following the collapse of Mongol power. It was also clearly distinct from their previous relations. Thus, although the Ming circles harked back to the T'ang for their theoretical lessons in Sino-Tibetan affairs, and although Ch'eng-tsu attempted to imitate the Yuan dynasty's ties with the Sa-skya-pa, early Ming Tibetan relations existed upon a footing of their own amidst new circumstances for Tibet and China."<sup>102</sup>

This brief outline attests to the complex socio-political circumstances framing the body mandala debate. While the Sakyas retained some influence, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were a period of uncertainty and change for the Sakyas in particular. It was a period in which the internal organization of their institutions transformed and

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<sup>99</sup> Ehrhard 2004, p.247.

<sup>100</sup> Ehrhard 2004, p.249.

<sup>101</sup> See Ehrhard 2004, p.246. For another excellent resource on the visitation of Indian masters to Tibet (and China) in the fifteenth century, see Mckeown's 2010 dissertation on the life of Śariputra (1335-1426).

<sup>102</sup> Sperling in McKay 2003 Vol.2, p.478. See also Sperling 2000, referenced by Dan Martin on Tiblical [ <https://sites.google.com/site/tiblical/home> ], proper name index 1b under "Go shri". See Berger 2001 for a study of the miraculous events surrounding this visit and their representation in visual sources.

expanded and the dynamics of their relationship to other traditions shifted. Jose Cabezón's work on the polemical writings of Ngor chen's student Go rams pa (1429-89) provides a model for contextualizing Ngor chen and Mkhas grub's writings on the body mandala practice within the larger history of Tibetan polemical literature and for understanding its place within the very complex Sakya- Geluk relations of the fifteenth century.<sup>103</sup> For example, Mkhas grub's offensive may be interpreted within the broader context of the Geluk movement's attempts at distinguishing themselves from the Sakyas, to whom they were historically indebted. It was well known that Re mda' ba, one of Tshong kha pa's main teachers, was himself a prominent Sakyapa. Determining the tone of such self-definition will be a guiding theme in approaching the texts of both Mkhas grub and Ngor chen and orienting them within the fifteenth-century monastic climate. Cabezón paints the following picture of this climate:

“In Tibet, as elsewhere, the success of new religious institutions depended upon a variety of factors: spiritual, intellectual, economic, and of course, political. The financial support of patrons was essential, but this, in turn, depended upon other factors: the charisma and vision of the founding figure; the commitment, persistence, and intellectual abilities of his successors; the public perception of the order's monks; their perceived ability to enact rituals that brought about the goals of patrons, and so forth. These were some of the factors that attracted not only patrons but also prospective monks to newly founded monasteries.”<sup>104</sup>

The relevance of these institutional dynamics to the primary texts upon which this dissertation is based is one line of historical inquiry for this study.

As founder of Ngor, one of the main monasteries of the Sakya tradition, Ngor chen certainly qualifies as such a charismatic individual. Through various diplomatic, scholastic, and ritual means, Ngor chen solidified the connection between religious and political institutions. He was also revered for spreading that tradition to Western Tibet [Ngari]. For example, during his time in Mustang [*Glo smon thang*], he allegedly increased the number of monks there from less than four to one thousand.<sup>105</sup> He ordained the ruler of Glo smon thang, A ma dpal, as well as the king of Gu ge.<sup>106</sup> Glob bo mkhan chen's autobiography describes many examples of important institutional relationships forged by Ngor chen at Mustang. For example: “Ngor chen erected the great Cakrasaṃvara palace...and consecrated it extensively. In connection with a ceremony on that occasion, the granting from the great bla brang of the title (*las ka*) of “chief” [*chen*

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<sup>103</sup> Cabezón 2007.

<sup>104</sup> Cabezón 2007, 42

<sup>105</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshog, 540.6. As mentioned above, for a description of Ngor chen's activities at Mustang, see the biography 536.5-539.2. For important background on the region through the lens of oratory see Jackson 1984.

<sup>106</sup> On Ngor chen's ordination of the A ma dpal, see Kramer's 2208 translation of Glo bo mkhan chen's autobiography, pp.145-6 as well as Sangs rgyas phun tshogs' biography of Ngor chen, 538.4-.5. On his ordination of the king of Guge, see Kramer 2008 p.148 together with her reference in fn27 to Vitali 1996, 508f.

po] to the religious king [A ma dpal]...”<sup>107</sup> Historical and biographical sources detail the extensive support the royals of Mustang, A ma dpal and his sons, pledged to the sangha there.<sup>108</sup> This support was understood as mutually beneficial. For example, after conferring a tantric empowerment upon A ma dpal’s sons, Ngor chen declared, “If we all, donors and teachers, manage to remain in this commitment without contradicting it, then [here], in the region of Glob bo, all religious and worldly deeds will be increased.”<sup>109</sup> Ngor chen also ensured the continued political and religious relationship of Mustang and Sakya by instituting a practice of sending monks from Mustang to Sakya and its affiliated monasteries in Dbus and Gtsang for training.

In addition to his role as ambassador of the Sakya tradition, Ngor chen was an accomplished ritual master, tantric commentator, and esteemed interpreter of the vinaya. It is important to consider how polemical writings such as the body mandala debate, executed just three years before he founded Ngor E wam chos ldan, may have further increased Ngor chen’s prestige in the eyes of prospective donors and adherents. Heimbrel 2012 reveals an important source of patronage for Ngor chen within the confusing details of his father’s identity. Although a layman, Dpon tshang Grub pa yon tan, was popularly regarded as his father, Ngor’s true father was known to be the chief lama at Sakya, Ta dben kun dga’ rin chen (1339-1399) of the Gzhi thog blab rang. Heimbrel remarks: “This family relation was of great importance for Ngor chen’s monastic education and future activities, since members of the Gzhi thog blab rang and one of its branches, the masters residing at Chu mig estate, would later patronize his activities and act as the main donors for the first abbots of Ngor.”<sup>110</sup> The land on which Ngor chen built E wam chos ldan was part of the Chu mig estate and virtually gifted to him by his half-brother, though Ngor chen was determined to make the transaction official with a “formal payment.”<sup>111</sup> Even a surface evaluation of the situation suggests that patterns of patronage supporting Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s activities, in particular as monastic founders, differed. For example, while Ngor chen’s main source of patronage stemmed from a familial affiliation, Mkhas grub’s was based in the socio-political network of the Phag mo gru.

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<sup>107</sup> Kramer 2008 translation, p147. Kramer refers the reader to Petech’s explanation of this title, *las ka*, used during the Phag mo gru period, as the translation of a Mongolian term indicating greatness, “eke.” See Kramer 147 fn 22 and Petech 1990, p. 117, fn 131.

<sup>108</sup> See, for example, Kramer 2008 p.151 &153 and Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 539.1.

<sup>109</sup> Kramer 2008 translation of Glo bo mkhan chen, p.153.

<sup>110</sup> Heimbrel 2012, pp.47-8.

<sup>111</sup> Jackson 2010, p.178. See also Sangs rgyas phun tshog, 527.6:

“Although Bdag chen chu mig pa had offered the land, when he (Ngor chen) arrived at Chu mig he requested a letter of permission and offered a crystal bowl and so forth as payment.”

*bdag chen chu mig pas sa thams cad bde spyod du phul ba yin na'ang chu mig tu byon te bka' shog zhus; shel gyi phor pa sogs sa rin du 'bul ba mdzad*

Sangs rgyas phun tshogs [530.6] lists Ngor chen’s half-brother, Bdag chen chu mig pa grags pa blo gros, first in his enumeration of Ngor chen’s disciples and patron.

It's also important to situate Ngor chen's accomplishments within the broader context of diverse charismatic Sakyapas of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. For example, Bu ston [Bu ston rin chen grub] (1290-1364), Ren mda' ba [Ren mda' ba gzhon nu blo gros] (1349-1412), Bo dong pa [Bo dong Pan chen phyogs las rnam rgyal] (1375-1451), Rong ston [Rong ston shes bya kun rig] (1367-1449), and Ngor chen have all been described as maintainers of their own traditions or *rang rkang bzo pa*.<sup>112</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs specifies in his account of A ma dpal's invitation of Ngor chen to Mustang, that initially Bo dong Pan chen had been invited; however, Bo dong pa's teachings were ultimately deemed less efficacious.<sup>113</sup> Such comments may be read as confirming Ngor chen's superior status among the great contemporary masters of the Sakya tradition through illustrating his unique ability to transmit the tradition to a new region and secure its continued flourishing there.<sup>114</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs makes an even more significant effort to explain Rong ston's respect for Ngor chen and to substantiate some kind of relationship between them, a kind of "melding of minds" [*thugs yid gcig tu 'dres pa yin*]. According to the biographer, Rong ston said, "Here in my monastery Nalendra, there is the din and roaring (of ) the explanation of scripture and reasoning. If you strive for the meaning of the mantric perspective, one goes to the new Ngor monastery."<sup>115</sup> This statement both asserts Ngor chen's reputation for tantric mastery and explains his relationship to one of the Sakya masters of the age through a division of areas of expertise.

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<sup>112</sup> I am grateful to Khenpo Tashi Dorje for illuminating this complex background of the Sakya tradition in our readings of Ngor chen's biography in the Fall of 2011 at the IBA.

<sup>113</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs, 537.3.

Bo dong Pan chen phyogs las rnam rgyal is an interesting figure to consider in relation to both Mkhas grub and Ngor chen. Rje tsun pa's *Secret Biography* of Mkhas grub (6a-6b) describes a debate between Mkhas grub and this master held at Ngam ring when the latter was only 16. According to the account, Mkhas grub emerged victorious. See Ary 2007, p. 225. Van der Kuijp 1985a mentions Bo dong together with Mkhas grub in the context of Ngor chen's polemical writings. See van der Kuijp 1985a, p.87. The context will be addressed further below. According to Adams 2007 (treasuryoflives.org) Bo dong was one of Mkhas grub's teachers in Buddhist logic and philosophy. For more on the tradition of Bo dong Pan chen phyogs las rnam rgyal, see Smith and schaeffer 2001 Chapter 14, pp.179-208.

<sup>114</sup> In addition to the spread of the Ngor tradition to Western Tibet during Ngor chen's own time, ties were established between Ngor and the Sde dge royal family in the fifteenth century; by the seventeenth century, these ties flourished. Heimbel 2012, pp.49-50 and fn 9.

<sup>115</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 531.4-.5:

*rong ston thams cad mkhyen pa sha kya rgyal mtshan gyi zhal snga [531.5] nas; nga'i dgon pa na len dra 'dir lung rigs ky'i bshad pa'ur chem chem pa gyis; sngags phyogs don du gnyer na ngor dgon gsar du song*

For more on the Rong ston in Ngor chen's biography, see 531.4-532.1.

Davidson's interprets Ngor chen's more polemical writings within the framework of fifteenth-century "Sakyapa apologetics."<sup>116</sup> This framework of interpretation helps to elucidate the significance of Ngor chen and Mkhas grub's exchanges as public intellectuals within the context of fifteenth-century Tibet. As noted above, the Sakya tradition was on somewhat shaky ground in the fifteenth century relative to its previous flourishing in alliance with the Mongol-Yuan Dynasty (1271-1381). Cabezón, van der Kuijp, Davidson, and Stearns have highlighted instances from as early as the twelfth century in which the validity of the Sakya *Hevajra Tantra*-based teachings was called into question.<sup>117</sup> The long-term oral transmission of the Hevajra-based *Lam 'bras* tradition was often taken as cause to challenge its legitimate basis in Indian sources. One way of combating such claims was to locate references to these teachings within the works of Indian authors.<sup>118</sup> Another was to produce representations verifying an unbroken lineage of transmission of these teachings. Ngor chen produced both textual and visual representations of this nature; he wrote texts documenting the transmission of the *Lam 'bras* teachings and commissioned portraits of the *Lam 'bras* lineage masters for display.<sup>119</sup>

Cabezón places the challenges to Sakya authority within the larger history of tantra in Tibet, backlashes against tantric practice in the later dissemination of Buddhism there and in particular, repeated assaults on Nyingma tantric practices. The author also shows how Ngor chen was not simply a defender of his own tradition, but also a critic of others practices, namely Geluk (referred to in this period as Dga' ldan pa) practices associated with Yamāntaka.<sup>120</sup> Cabezón speculates that in that instance, "what was at stake was not so much the authenticity of texts as their interpretations and ritual enactment."<sup>121</sup> In other words, the controversy was focused upon the actual manner of carrying out the practices described in the texts; the validity of the texts as testified in Indian sources, commonly understood as the ultimate measure of authenticity in the classification of Tibetan texts, was not at issue. This observation provides a model for the kind of issues to be weighed in approaching Ngor chen and Mkhas grub's body mandala texts.

The Sakya tradition itself makes a distinction between the transmission of the *Lam 'bras* according to the "explanatory system" [*'grel lugs*] of scriptural exegesis based in the *Hevajra Tantra* and the "oral instructions system" [*man ngag lugs*] whereby the

<sup>116</sup> Davidson 1991 has used this term most explicitly.

<sup>117</sup> Cabezón 2007, 25; van der Kuijp 1985; Davidson 1991&1992; Stearns 2001.

<sup>118</sup> Darpaṇa Ācārya was, for example, credited as such by Ngor chen for citing the mahāsiddha Virūpa's *Rdo rje tshig rkang*, the core text of the *Lam 'bras*, in his *Kriyāsamuccaya*. Stearns refers both to Ngor chen's *Lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i man ngag gi byung tshul gsung ngag rin po che bstan pa rgyas pa'i nyis 'od*, 110.3 and Mus chen's Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan's *Lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i gnad kyī gsung sgron zin bris*, 448. (Stearns 2001, p 10 & fn15)

<sup>119</sup> On Ngor chen's artistic commissions, see Jackson 2010 pp.179-90.

<sup>120</sup> Cabezón 2007, 25 and note 16. Cabezón cites Gu ru bkra shis's *Ngag dbang blo gros Stag sgang mkhas mchog* in *Gu bkra'ichos 'byung*, p .992

<sup>121</sup> Cabezón 2007, p.25.

practices themselves are explained.<sup>122</sup> Ngor chen's polemical texts on visualization practice seem to potentially bridge the emic gap created by this distinction, bringing discourses on textual authority and on practice into the same textual arena.

Chapter Six of this dissertation focuses specifically upon issues of textual authority. In his defense of the validity of the Hevajra body mandala practice in the second part of his text, Ngor chen demonstrates the complementarity and intrinsic worth of the genre of oral instruction [*man ngag*]. Demonstrating his skill in tantric exegesis, Ngor chen synthesizes the tantras, their Indian commentaries, and the oral instructions of the great Indian realized tantric masters [*mahāsiddhas*]. He depicts the relationship of these genres as composite, forming a total system for interpreting the rites of the Hevajra cycle. In analyzing Ngor chen's defense, we will find that the body mandala debate is, for him, just as much, if not more, concerned with working through such issues of textual authority as it is with the mechanics of ritual practice or the status of the body itself. In his study of Mkhas grub's philosophical treatise, the *Stong thun chen mo* [TTC] Cabezón observes a significant distinction in Mkhas grub's perspective on textual authority:

“Mkhas grub rje is paradigmatic of the dGe lugs pa exegetes in having great disdain for short and pithy teachings known as *man ngag*. The point he makes here he will make again and again throughout the TTC, namely, that the way to a true understanding of Buddhism is not through mystical oral tradition, passed down in secret from master to disciple, but through long and arduous study and analysis of scriptures...”<sup>123</sup>

The genre of oral instructions plays such a definitive role in the *Lam 'bras* tradition, it is not surprising that this aspect of Mkhas grub's perspective may have been construed as a threat to the Sakya tradition at large or even a disavowal of his spiritual heritage.

Davidson suggests that Ngor chen and Mkhas grub were also involved in another 'debate' over tantric materials. This exchange called into question whether the practice of generating oneself as a deity [*bdag bskyed*] had a place in the *kriyā* and *caryā* tantric systems.<sup>124</sup> Davidson contextualizes this controversy within Ngor chen's introductory writings on these two lower classes of tantra. He summarizes the terms of the controversy as a clash of perspectives in which Ngor chen supported the use of the lower tantras for promoting the ethical and devotional qualities conducive to monasticism.<sup>125</sup> Ngor chen did not acknowledge the existence of the practice of generating oneself as the deity within the *kriyā* system; moreover, he regarded its implementation within the next tantric class, the *caryā*, as useful exclusively for its role in promoting monastic discipline. He regarded *kriyā* and *caryā* as suitable for monastic discipline because they lack the

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<sup>122</sup> Davidson 1991, p.12.

<sup>123</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.418 fn53.

<sup>124</sup> Davidson 1981, 86. In Note 17 he directs the reader to points in another edition of the biography of Ngor chen by Sangs rgyas phun tshogs: *Bsod nams rgya mtsho-Complete Works*, Vol 10, pp 149.4.4, 251.1.4, 267.4.6. He also refers to Wayman '68 pp163-71 for more on this debate.

<sup>125</sup> Davidson 1981, 86.

sexualized content of the higher yoga tantras and promote an “emphasis on personal purification, ritual endeavor, and devotion.”<sup>126</sup> This was an important issue for Tsong kha pa and, following his lead, for Mkhas grub.<sup>127</sup> Mkhas grub (in what became the standard Gelukpa position) included meditation upon oneself as a deity within all divisions of tantra, including *kriyā*.<sup>128</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs’s biography of Ngor chen mentions this controversy within the larger context of his polemical writings or “activities aimed at clarifying the Buddha’s teachings through debate which corrects the erroneous views of others”:<sup>129</sup>

He (Ngor chen) disputed the *sādhana* of self-generation in the dharma terminology of *kriyā* tantra itself; thus, he clearly taught the intention of the various manner of commentary, increasing the teaching of the *kriyā* tantras. (Therefore) it is called the *Ocean of Excellent Explanation of the Establishment of Kriyā Tantra*. Likewise, he refuted the entrance of the wisdom beings in the *caryā* tantra, he clarified the teachings of *caryā* tantra.<sup>130</sup>

Ngor chen wrote his treatises on the lower tantras in 1420.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, they post-date Tsong kha pa’s refusal of Ngor chen’s request for teachings during Ngor chen’s visit to Ganden in 1413.<sup>132</sup> Ngor chen wrote these treatises six years before his writings on body mandala.<sup>133</sup>

This controversy over the nature of ritual practice based in the lower classes of tantra highlights the ways in which concerns with the mechanics of visualization practice,

<sup>126</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshog, 547.1-2

<sup>127</sup> Hopkins 2009, pp. 303-318; Wayman 1968, pp.163-171.

<sup>128</sup> See Davidson 1981, p.86.

<sup>129</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshog, 546.2. See 546.2-547.2 on Ngor chen’s polemical writings. Portions of this section have also been translated above.

<sup>130</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshog 547.1-.2: *gzhan yang legs par bshad pa rtsom pa'i skor yang; bla ma yi dam chos skyong rnams kyi bstod pa'i skor dang; bya ba'i rgyud rang rkang gi chos skad la bdag bkyed sgrub pa sogs bkag nas 'grel tshul sna tshogs kyi [547.2] dgongs pa gsal bar ston cing bya rgyud bstan pa rgyas par bya ba'i phyir; bya rgyud spyi'i rnam par gzhas pa legs par bshad pa'i rgya mtsho zhes bya ba dang de bzhin du spyod rgyud la ye shes pa 'jugs pa sogs bkag nas spyod rgyud bstan pa'i gsal byed*

This excerpt is derived from the translations of portions of Ngor chen’s biography I executed under the tutelage of Khenpo Tashi Dorje at the IBA in Kathmandu in the fall of 2011.

<sup>131</sup> See Davidson 1981, 86. Davidson dates the introductory writings to 1420. Although his dates seem more viable, in my own readings of the colophons of the *Lamp of Eloquent Explanation for Classifying the Kriyā Tantras* and the *Ocean of Eloquent Explanation of the Caryā Tantras*, I initially understood them to have been composed in 1396.

<sup>132</sup> I am grateful to Khenpo Tashi Dorje for bringing my attention to this point. [Personal communication, Fall 2011] See also Davidson 1981, p.84.

<sup>133</sup> Davidson 1981, p.86



doctrine, and monastic discipline intermingle in tantric polemics. This controversy is also relevant to this dissertation because it presents another potential example of a “debate” within the careers of these same two authors in which the practice of generating oneself as a deity, a practice so central to definitions of tantra as a fast track to attaining buddhahood in this lifetime, assumes a primary position.

Apparently, both Mkhas grub and Bo dong Pan chen phyogs las rnam rgyal had taken issue with aspects of Ngor chen’s elaborations on the Hevajra *sādhana* practice in his *Moonrays of the Pith of the Generation Stage: The Extensive Explanation of the Hevajra Sādhana* [*Dpal kyai rdo rje’i sgrub pa’i thabs gyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gnad kyī zla zer*], composed in 1419 (seven years before the body mandala texts).<sup>134</sup> The dynamics set in motion by these exchanges may have laid some of the groundwork for the texts of the body mandala debate. Ngor chen’s student Go rams pa later composed a text to dispel these particular objections.<sup>135</sup>

One final potential conflict between Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s tantric orientations is worthy of mention here. This conflict concerns the power of the tantric path itself. Allegedly, while for Ngor chen, the *mantranaya* lead to a more potent experience of buddhahood than the *pāramitānaya*, for Mkhas grub both paths produced the same result.<sup>136</sup> The ramifications of this sort of ideological controversy are treated in Chapter Four of this dissertation, with particular attention to the manner in which they impact Mkhas grub’s strategy of argumentation.

We have evaluated the ways in which the body mandala debate fits within a broader domain of polemical literature in fifteenth-century Tibet, and more specifically polemical literature focused upon tantric subject matter. In the process, we have considered the potential value of categories such as “sectarian differentiation” and “Sakya apologetics” for better understanding the dynamics of the debate. We have also investigated the ways in which this debate and its interpretation may have influenced the patronage and prestige of its authors, Mkhas grub and Ngor chen, two charismatic scholar-monks of their era. Remaining open to the possibility that sectarian conflict is just one among many possible factors informing the body mandala debate, a factor that may have been amplified over time, is one of the great challenges this dissertation grapples with. We now proceed with a key question for approaching Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s texts, namely: “What is a Body Mandala?”

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<sup>134</sup> van der Kuijp 1985, p.87. Ngor chen’s *Moonrays of the Pith* is one of Davidson’s key sources for his 1992 study of the Hevajra abhisamaya tradition.

<sup>135</sup> This text is referenced by van der Kuijp 1985, p.87, Davidson 1981, p.88, Davidson 1991 fn60, and Davidson 1992 fn8. Mkhas grub and Go rams pa’s apparent philosophical differences may have informed this round of tantric polemics as well. See Go rams pa’s *Illuminating the Pith: Dispelling Objections to the Moonrays of the Pith. Gnad gyi zla zer la rtsod pa spong ba gnad kyī gsal byed*.

<sup>136</sup> Davidson 1991, p.20 and fn59. Davidson refers the reader to Mkhas grub’s *Secret Treasury of the Vajra-Dākinīs Explanation of the Two Part (Hevajra Tantra)*. *Dpal brtag pa gnyis pa’i rnam par bshad pa rdo rje mkha’ ‘gro ma rnam kyī gsang ba’i mdzod*, especially pp.481-515.

## Chapter Two: What is the Body Mandala?

### I. Parsing and Purifying the Body: the Early Buddhist context

Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification) provides valuable insight into how learning was understood in early Buddhist contexts and, in particular, how information was parsed and recited through enumeration, repetition, association, and re-organization of details. While Buddhaghosa himself lived a millennium after Śākyamuni's passing, his synthesis of sources and practices of the early tradition in his writings provides insight into fundamental Buddhist approaches to knowing. The *Visuddhimagga*, in particular, presents practices that suggest that to know the body is to know the world. It shows how the memorization of details is regarded as producing a spontaneous and radical change in one's view of body and world as well as of their relationship. Comparing these practices from the *Visuddhimagga* with themes found in body mandala practice allows us to consider how such techniques for organizing and internalizing information worked. Through this comparison, we can begin to see how the toolbox of techniques for imaginatively breaking apart and re-assembling the body included powerful tools for achieving the soteriological goal of liberation.

In the *Visuddhimagga*, such practices of parsing the body are regarded as the basis for all of the five paths of purification and therefore fundamental to soteriological progress:

Now, the things classed as aggregates, bases, elements, faculties, truths, dependent origination, etc., are the soil of this understanding, and the [first] two purifications, namely, purification of virtue and purification of consciousness, are its roots, while the five purifications, namely, purification of view, purification by overcoming doubt, purification by knowledge and vision of what is the path and what is not the path, purification by knowledge and vision of the way, and purification by knowledge and vision, are the trunk. Consequently, one who is perfecting these should first fortify his knowledge by learning and questioning about those things that are the "soil" after he has perfected the two purifications that are the "roots," then he can develop the five purifications that are the "trunk."<sup>137</sup>

One key theme linking this text to the body mandala is the correlation of microcosm and macrocosm reinforced through practices of purifying the bodily elements. The trope of construction by, identification with, and dissolution of the elements can be found in early Buddhist literature such as Abhidharmic descriptions of the formation and destruction of the cosmos. For example, Chapter Eleven of the *Visuddhimagga* describes such destruction:

102. (d) Great alteration: the unclung-to and the clung-to are the [basis of] great alterations. Herein, the great alteration of the unclung-to evidences itself in the emergence of an aeon (see XIII.34), and that of the clung-to in the disturbance of the elements [in the body]. For accordingly:

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<sup>137</sup> Nāṇamoli 2010 translation, *Visuddhimagga* 14.32.

The conflagration's flame bursts up  
 Out of the ground and races higher  
 And higher, right to the Brahmā heaven,  
 When the world is burnt up by fire.  
 A whole world system measuring  
 One hundred thousand millions wide  
 Subsides, as with its furious waters  
 The flood dissolves the world beside.  
 One hundred thousand million leagues,  
 A whole world system's broad extent  
 Is rent and scattered, when the world  
 Succumbs to the air element.  
 The bite of wooden-mouths can make  
 The body stiff; to all intent,  
 When roused is its earth element,  
 It might be gripped by such a snake.  
 The bite of rotten-mouths can make  
 The body rot; to all intent,  
 When roused its water element,  
 It might be gripped by such a snake. [368]  
 The bite of fiery-mouths can make  
 The body burn; to all intent,  
 When roused is its fire element,  
 It might be gripped by such a snake.  
 So they are great primaries (*mahābhūta*) because they have become (*bhūta*) [the  
 basis of] great (*mahant*) alteration.<sup>138</sup>

Read in tandem with body mandala practice, we find a parallel between such descriptions of the breakdown of the body in relation to cosmic destruction and tantric descriptions of the dissolution of the body at death. The body mandala practice, in particular its manifestation within the Guhyasamāja cycle, participates in ritual technologies of harnessing the forces of nature present in the human body through an understanding of how they function in relation to birth and death. Through the repeated reenactment of these processes through visualization, the tantric practitioner strives to transcend ordinary birth and death and to attain a Buddha body.

Chapter Eight of the *Visuddhimagga* describes practices of mindfulness of the body; these practices include use techniques of enumerating parts and parsing the body that may be understood in relation to body mandala practice. The goal of these practices is to dis-aggregate one's perception of one's own body and to eliminate attachment both to one's own body and to the bodies of others. The meditator reflects on the thirty-two parts of the human body through the sevenfold skills in learning: verbal recitation, mental recitation, color, shape, direction, location, delimitation (i.e. similarity and difference) and then tenfold skills in attention. The sevenfold skills in learning are of particular interest in that they employ mnemonic techniques of breaking down and organizing information

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<sup>138</sup> Nāṇamoli 2010, *Visuddhimagga* 11.102

in a very similar way to those found in mandala construction.<sup>139</sup> The result of this practice is described as follows:

“Then just as when a man with good sight is observing a garland of flowers of thirty-two colours knotted on a single string and all the flowers become evident to him simultaneously, so too, when the meditator observes the body thus, ‘There are in this body head hairs,’ then all these things become evident to him, as it were, simultaneously.”<sup>140</sup>

These practices use recitation and visualization to enumerate and parse the parts of the human body and thereby alter one’s perception of one’s own body and its relationship to the world. Through repetition of these techniques, one attains a certain kind of mental flexibility by which such parsing of the body can begin to occur automatically and even be applied as a strategy for combating attachment. Similarly, within body mandala practice, the repeated visualization of the individual parts of the body as parts of the celestial palace of the buddhas, of the body itself as a container housing deities whose true nature is understood as that of the aggregates, elements, and so forth, results in the ability to instantaneously generate and dissolve these forms. This ability prepares the practitioner to acquire a Buddha body naturally or even automatically and to ultimately abandon attachment to rebirth within *saṃsāra*. Chapter Eleven of the *Visuddhimagga* enhances the description of the body by introducing the forty-two aspects of the elements used to parse the body, to break up and make it intelligible. Once again, the focus is to reveal the true nature of things:

And just as the great creatures known as female spirits (*yakkhini*) conceal their own fearfulness with a pleasing colour, shape and gesture to deceive beings, so too, these elements conceal each their own characteristic and function classed as hardness, etc., by means of a pleasing skin colour of women’s and men’s bodies, etc., and pleasing shapes of limbs and pleasing gestures of fingers, toes and eyebrows, and they deceive simple people by concealing their own functions and characteristics beginning with hardness and do not allow their individual essences to be seen. Thus they are great primaries (*mahābhūta*) in being equal to

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<sup>139</sup>Nāṇamoli 2010, *Visuddhimagga* 8.60: “When the teacher tells the skill in learning in seven ways thus, he should do so knowing that in certain suttas this meditation subject is expounded from the point of view of repulsiveness and in certain suttas from the point of view of elements. For in the *Mahāsatipattāna Sutta* (DN 22) it is expounded only as repulsiveness. In the *Mahā Hatthipadopama Sutta* (MN 28), in the *Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta* (MN 62), and the *Dhātuvibhaṅga* (MN 140, also Vibh 82), it is expounded as elements. In the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* (MN 119), however, four *jhānas* are expounded with reference to one to whom it has appeared as a colour [*kaṣina*] (see III.107). Herein, it is an insight meditation subject that is expounded as elements and a serenity meditation subject that is expounded as repulsiveness. Consequently, it is only the serenity meditation subject [that is relevant] here.” (Nāṇamoli 2010, pp239-40)

<sup>140</sup> Nāṇamoli 2010, *Visuddhimagga* 8.139.

the great creatures (*mahābhūta*), the female spirits, since they are deceivers.<sup>141</sup>

Therefore, this Buddhist practice allows the practitioner to probe beneath the surface of the body to see how the great elements function within it. In breaking down the nature of an independent self, one also revises one's perception of the relationship of internal and external worlds.<sup>142</sup>

## **II. Purifying and Deifying the Body in Non-Buddhist Tantra**

Non-Buddhist tantric sources provide the most direct correlate for body mandala practice. A key feature of this resemblance occurs in ritual techniques for purifying the elements of the human body known as *bhūtaśuddhi*. In his discussion of the Vaiṣṇava tantric tradition of Pāncarātra, Gavin Flood describes the *bhūtaśuddhi* and its role in forging the microcosm-macrocosm relation, articulating levels of gross and subtle that provide the hierarchy for processes of creation and destruction. He relates these practices of mapping cosmic structures onto the body within the larger domain of tantric practice:

“...cosmology has a primarily ritual function in these traditions. This can be illustrated particularly well in the *bhūtaśuddhi* sequence where the cosmos is mapped on to the body and dissolved, as the lower levels of the cosmos are dissolved into the higher during the cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*). The terminology here is that of the *tattvas* of Sāṃkhya in which the gross elements (*bhūta*) that comprise the physical world are dissolved into the subtle elements (*tanmātra*) that are their source. The purification of the body through dissolving its constituent elements into their cause would seem to be a characteristically tantric practice.”<sup>143</sup>

The correlation of body and cosmos and the parsing and ranking of the qualities of existence we saw within the Abhidharmic genre are present here. However, tantric techniques more explicitly harness the dynamics of creation and destruction, locating them within the human body itself through visualizing the location and dissolution of the elements. Flood looks closely at the structure of ritual practice in the *Jayākhya saṃhita*, a text produced sometime between the seventh and tenth centuries in Kashmir as organized by a fourfold ritual sequence he sees reiterated across tantric systems: purification of the place and body, divinization of the body, inner or mental worship followed by external

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<sup>141</sup> Nāṇamoli 2010, 11.100

<sup>142</sup> It is interesting that the elusive and deceptive nature of the elements is compared to that of the *yakṣīnis* or female spirits. Certainly there are numerous accounts of the deceptive nature of the female form in Buddhist literature. In such instances, the female body often becomes the signifier for embodiment more largely as well as for the lust associated with it. [See Wilson 1996] In some of the accounts of the tantric body mandala practice to be addressed below, the goddesses are correlated with the elements. It is possible that this correlation draws upon such earlier notions of female spirits as concealing the form of the elements.

<sup>143</sup> Flood 2006, p109, see fn 42.

worship.<sup>144</sup> Ideally, this process is part of the daily practice of an initiate who has previously undergone branding with Viṣṇu's symbol, the discus (*cakra*) and received a special ritual name and a mantra. Buddhist tantra shares a similar system of pre-requisite initiations and practices.

Chapter Ten of this text describes the purification of the body, preceded by purification of the ritual space as the prerequisite for worship of the deity:

“Through symbolically destroying the physical or gross body, the adept can create a pure, divinized body (*divyadeha*) with which to offer worship to the deities of his system. He does this first only in imagination and second in the physical world, for as in all tantric systems-only a god can worship a god...”<sup>145</sup>

The tantric ritual logic of becoming a god to worship a god is, likewise, fundamental to understanding interpretations of body mandala practice as a means of breaking down the gross body to access its most subtle potentialities. Themes of purification and protection are instrumental in facilitating this transition. In the Vaiṣṇava tradition presented by Flood, the process of purification involves associating each of the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and space) with a shape, inhaling the element into a particular region of the body, “dissolving it in its mantra, then into its subtle cause, and exhaling it...”<sup>146</sup> The exhalation is accompanied by association with a sense faculty. So in the case of the earth element, one inhales a yellow four-sided shape marked with a thunder emblem and linked with the five sense objects into the space from the knees to the soles of the feet, dissolves it into its mantra, and exhales the sense of smell. After completing a similar practice for the other elements, the practitioner imagines the body burning from the bottom up and the ashes scattering in the four directions. In this way, the practitioner has aligned himself with the subtle body and begins the process of becoming divine.

The main technique for divinizing the body is a process known as *nyāsa*; the practitioner applies mantras to the body through touch and recitation focused on particular bodily locations beginning with the hands. The initial purification of the hands, often identified as *hasta-pūjā-vidhi*, can be found in many tantric rites; for example, tantric Buddhist ritual specialist, the *vajrācārya*, must consecrate his hands as

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<sup>144</sup> Flood 2006, 121.

<sup>145</sup> Flood 2006, 110. Sanderson 1986 fn 30 provides some textual sources for this concept of becoming a god to worship a god: JS 12.1; MTV II (*Mṛgendratāntravṛtti*) 29, 9-10; SvT (*Svacchandratāntra*) 2.55 ab.

This notion of divine transformation is not necessarily exclusive to tantric ritual contexts. The idea of the interpenetration of divine and human bodies in the Vedic context was explored in a paper entitled “Ritual Devices to Become a God in Vedic and Post-Vedic Rituals” presented by Shingo Einoo at the conference on “The Evolution of Tantric Ritual” held at UC Berkeley in March 2014. The *Aiteryopaniṣad* 1.2.4 describes deities entering the body through the mouth, nostrils and eyes. I am grateful to Alexander von Rospatt for this reference.

<sup>146</sup> Flood 2006, 112.

ritual implements before engaging in ritual action.<sup>147</sup> The *Jayākhya* describes how the practitioner then redistributes the same mantras associated with the same deities “on the head, eyes, ears, mouth, shoulders, hands (again), buttocks, heart, back, navel, hips, knees and feet.”<sup>148</sup> The bodily points articulated here seem oriented around external points, with the exception of the heart and perhaps the navel, as well as around the sensory orifices. The process is one of armouring the body with mantra, culminating in the distribution of the mantra of Nārāyaṇa across the entire span of the body. Touch, sound and vision all figure in this process. Below, we will see how such practices of purification and protection as described in these first two phases of the *Jayākhya* appear in early Buddhist tantric literature and are elaborated in the generation stage practices of the body mandala.

In the next phase, that of inner, or, more appropriately, “mental worship” [*manasayāga*], the practitioner visualizes the deities of the universe located in the practitioner’s own body in the region between the genitals and the heart.<sup>149</sup> These levels, with the earth at its basis, located on the penis, and the culmination, the throne of Viṣṇu at the heart, are correlated with the *tattvas* of Sāṃkhya philosophy. This dual process of correlation effected through mapping of structures onto the body and then associating those structures with philosophical ideals or aspects of existence or liberation is a trend we find repeated in Buddhist tantric literature. These dense acts of encoding are what Flood describes as “entextualisation of the body.” Such acts seem to reach their pinnacle in body mandala practice, in which the structures of ritual, cosmos, and even society are inscribed upon the body. Similar acts of encoding can be found even in the literature of *stūpa* construction; each tier and form of the *stūpa* may be correlated with the layers of the cosmos, a portion of the body of the Buddha as well as with a philosophical principal of enlightenment.<sup>150</sup> The final phase of the rite described by Flood is termed “external worship” [Skt. *bāhyayāga*]. Having appropriated the divine and soteriological structure through the medium of the body, and thereby in a sense, ‘become a god’ in the *manasayāga*, the “internal or mental worship,” the practitioner is now truly prepared to worship. Body and environment have been purified or reconstructed, and the practitioner constructs a mandala to house the deity. The repeated navigation and purification of imaginary and real/material environments plays out in different ways in body mandala practice. The body mandala debate, in particular, probes these boundaries between varieties of internal and external mandala, between mandala that are imagined and those that are represented in material form. As the dissertation progresses, we will have the opportunity to think critically about the relationship between representation, reality, and

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<sup>147</sup> On this ritual purification of the hands, see Meisezahl 1985.

<sup>148</sup> Flood 2006, 114.

<sup>149</sup> Flood 2006, 116

<sup>150</sup> For earlier Indian examples, see Snodgrass 1992. For somewhat later examples connected with tantric ritual, see two ninth to eleventh century Tibetan manuscripts from the library cave at Dunhuang, IOL TIB J 338 and IOL TIB J 435, described by Dalton and van Schaik 2006 pp67-68 and 178-179 respectively. In regard to the correlation between stupa and Buddha body, Brauen 1997 (p.127 fn45) refers to Bénisti 1960 & Mus 1933. See also Snodgrass 1992, p.361.

materiality. Like “inner” and “outer,” “real” and “imagined” are not straightforward dualities in the ritual and philosophical contexts this dissertation engages with. Despite the differences with the Vaiṣṇava practice described by Flood, the comparison suggests that body mandala shares an emphasis upon prerequisite deification and purification of the body with non-Buddhist tantric ritual.

Alexis Sanderson describes a similar practice from the Kashmiri Trika tradition as elaborated in the *Trikasadbhāva Tantra*.<sup>151</sup> In this text, the structure imposed upon or realized within the body during the phase of “installation of the mandala in internal sensation (*prāṇaḥ*)” is one of trident as throne extending from the genital region to a site above the top of the head known as the *triśulābjamaṇḍala*. [See Fig.9] All of the structural correlations are focused upon the head and the area just above it. The mapping of the mandala onto the body in this practice emphasizes vertical hierarchy and the primacy of the central channel. The trunk of the body is left virtually vacant in this account, marked only by the axis of the central channel. Most notable, perhaps, is the lack of any demarcation of the heart center; in the Vaiṣṇava tantric practice described by Flood, the heart served as the pinnacle, the throne of Viṣṇu. Moreover, this Trika practice elaborates upon subtle body practices of manipulation of the breath and inner fire that within the Buddhist tantric context would sometimes be classified within the repertory of the completion stage. The mandala is installed within “the level of internal sensation” [*prāṇaḥ*]:

“Internal sensation is reached when this oscillation of the breath has become so faint that its two movements are fused in a subtle, pulsating point of quintessential vitality (*samānaḥ*), in the ‘I’ as it subsists in dreamless but blissful sleep (*savedyam saṣuptam, prāṇasauṣuptam*). If the practice is sustained at this stage, then awareness penetrates the sensationless void (*apavedyam saṣuptam. śūnyasauṣuptam*) in its core and passing through this final barrier enters the pulsation of autonomous consciousness (*śaktaḥ spandaḥ*). The fused breath (*samānaḥ*) is totally fused into the ‘fire’ of the ‘rising breath’ (*agniḥ, udānaḥ*) blazes up from below the navel. Devouring all duality it ascends through a central, vertical channel (*suṣiramārgena*), penetrating the cranial ‘aperture of Brahmā’ (*brahmarandhram, kakham*) to culminate as Śiva consciousness (= *vyānaḥ*) at a point twelve finger spaces (c. 20 to 25 cm) directly above it (*dvādaśāntam, Ūrdhvakuṇḍalini, nādhyādhāraḥ*).”<sup>152</sup>

In beginning to approach the body mandala practices of the Guhyasamāja and in particular the evolution of completion stage practices of higher Buddhist tantra, comparison with such ritual acts of breath manipulation and “penetration of the void” as presented here in the first part of Sanderson’s description is instructive. Such practices resemble Buddhist tantric practices of drawing the winds into the central channel and consequently immersing the subtle body in various degrees of clear light (correlated with the attainment of respective degrees of wisdom). In the Guhyasamāja practices, the site of the heart functions as the key orifice by which emptiness is experienced. Unlike terms

<sup>151</sup> See Sanderson 1986. For another account of Śaivite ritual deification, see Davis 2000, especially pp.83-111.

<sup>152</sup> Sanderson 1986, pp. 177-8.



like “vital point” or “energy center,” terms like “orifice” or “aperture” help to emphasize the heart’s role as a point of exchange in a key ritual moment of emission or dissolution. The overall goal of many Guhyasamāja practices is to untie the karmic knots obstructing the heart, and to ultimately dissolve the bodily winds there. However, in the Śaiva context described here by Sanderson, the crown of the head is the aperture through which liberation is accessed in the manipulation of subtle energies.<sup>153</sup>

In the mapping of structures onto the body in these two examples, one non-Buddhist and one Buddhist, subtle distinctions may be made in perceptions of hierarchy, centrality, and the location of vital points for enacting transformation. Themes of verticality and centrality are hierarchies shared by both examples, however, this particular rendition of Trika leaves the central axis bare, unmarked by any vital point at the heart. Verticality and centrality are two hierarchical standards that the mandala is capable of translating simultaneously. In other words, as a two-dimensional representation of a three dimensional form, zenith, center, and nadir are all positioned along a central axis.<sup>154</sup> While in the case of the mandala palace, one might say centrality is the dominant hierarchical standard, with deities organized according to the relationship of center and periphery, introducing the body into the equation perhaps introduces a vertical standard of purity. Comparison of the *triśulābja-mandala* used in internal worship with that used in external worship supports this as well. [See Fig. 10] In comparing different elaborations of the practice of mapping the mandala onto the body, we will find variations in the way the key points of the body are understood. In looking at different versions of this practice in the tantric Buddhist context, we will make note of different expressions of hierarchy and relationship we find. We will begin with the curious case of a body mandala described in a text from Dunhuang.

### **III. Proto- Body Mandala: Inscribing the body in a text from Dunhuang**

IOL Tib J 576 is a Tibetan tantric text discovered in Cave 17, otherwise known as the “library cave,” at Dunhuang. It dates no later than the eleventh century, the time when the caves were sealed; it is among the manuscripts rediscovered in the twentieth century, procured by Aurel Stein, and eventually transferred to the collection of the British Library. This text maps the deities of the Vajradhātu mandala, a mandala based upon the tantric root text, the *Sarva-tathāgatha-tattva-saṃgraha* [STTS], onto points on the surface of the human body.

As with many Dunhuang texts, the beginning of IOL Tib J 576 is missing, and the order of the folia has been a bit confused. The manuscript is made up of several short texts, most of which Dalton has discerned to be at least marginally related to the Vajradhātu mandala from the STTS.<sup>155</sup> The text described here, IOL Tib J 576/1 is the

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<sup>153</sup> This is not to deny the central symbolic importance of the heart in the Śaivite context, as demonstrated by Muller-Ortega 1989.

<sup>154</sup> I am grateful to Steve Jenkins for reminding me of this aspect of the mandala’s structure.

<sup>155</sup> Dalton and van Schaik, 2006, pp.275-8. Dalton suggests that the five texts that make up this manuscript may be a ritual manual for initiation practices in the yoga tantras. However, one particular detail he mentions in describing the second text in the

first of these. The folia discussed here are to be read in the following order:  
1,3,4,2,5,6,7,8.<sup>156</sup>

Of course, while themes such as armoring and protection provide us with clues as to what the precise ritual context for this text is, several aspects remain ambiguous. It is likely that this text forms a part of a larger mandala initiation rite, in which the ritual specialist empowers the practitioner within mantras and practices of the Vajradhātu mandala. This text presents an opportunity to reflect upon how the envisaged mandala may be understood in relation to the body. As we will see in examining the Guhyasamāja body mandala in the next chapter, the mode of mapping we find in IOL Tib J 576 is far from standardized and therefore suggests an experimental or transitional phase in the evolution of both the body mandala practice specifically and mandala rites more generally. Perhaps most importantly, it presents the question of what makes a body mandala.

In its surviving form, this first text within IOL Tib J 576 can be divided into three parts: folia 1.1-.5 & 3.1-.2, 3.2-.5, devoid of interlinear commentary and mostly providing protective mantras and allusions to emptiness; folia 2.1-.5 & 4.1-.3 folios, our prime focus as it maps different deities of the Vajradhātu mandala (and then some) onto the form of the human body and is filled with interlinear commentary; and finally folia sides 6-8 where the visualization of wrathful deities is described augmented, once again, by interlinear commentary.

In its surviving form, IOL Tib J 576 begins with a description of a particular kind of armor, an armor which “conquers all the armies of signs in battle, resting victorious among all.” [1.1] The Sanskrit mantra which follows, “*va jra ka va ca ka va ca ya man hang*” [1.1-1.2] reminds the reader that this armor is the *vajra kavaca* or “vajra armor.” As we will see throughout this text, the Sanskrit mantra is transliterated into Tibetan script. Mantras in this portion of the text, such as this one, are transliterated but remain untranslated. Yet, we will continue to see ways in which the mantras are connected with the ritual functions of protection the text describes. We can therefore begin to imagine how ritual gestures may have been performed in this context in conjunction with the recitation of mantra and how this mutual performance would trigger the memory of such protective functions in the mind of the practitioner in future. In short, we can imagine how even a ritual practitioner with no knowledge of Sanskrit would hear “*va jra ka va ca*”

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manuscript (not described here), the reference to the “supreme bliss of union” [*sbyor ba'i bde ba mchog rnam*s], together with some of the details from our text suggests some elements associated with higher yoga tantra.

Dalton suggests further comparison of the text with IOL Tib J 495 and Pelliot tibétain 292. (Dalton and van Schaik 2006, p276).

<sup>156</sup> Dalton and van Schaik 2006 [xx] draw attention to the “disordered state” of the manuscripts as one of the major deterrents for scholars wishing to studying the materials from the library cave. Although the catalogue provides helpful insights into where each text begins and ends, I am grateful to Jake Dalton for helping me to make sense of their internal order in our readings together in 2009-2010. The numbers I use here refer to the folia sides for simplicity rather than the recto and verso numbers.

and recall a gesture, context, or accompanying oral explanation of the function of protection or armoring.<sup>157</sup>

The text then continues in this vein to describe the qualities of this vajra armor: “Untouched by marks, not abiding, undivided, unconditioned; because (it is) protected through the *dharmadhātu*, (it is) not even perceived by the Buddhas.” [1.2-1.3] Another mantra follows: “*aoum va jra ra kṣa ka ra kṣa ka man hung bhang hang*,” evoking the “*vajra rakṣaka*” or “vajra protector.” Finally, the nature of the protection being offered is clarified: “In the momentary sign, phenomenon, reality does not abide. The momentary wisdom cakra dispels the obstacles, the corrupting influence of discursive thought.” [1.3-1.4] The reader then encounters yet another mantra, “*aoum vajra pra ka ra pra ka ra hung phat*” eliciting the creation of the “vajra fence,” the “*vajra prākāra*,” as a protective boundary. The mantra, “*aoum pra pa n̄ca ra ya; pa n̄ca ra ya hung phat*,” follows. “*Prapañca*” may be used here in the sense of appearance or false imaginings, expansion or elaboration. This is followed by what appears to be another mantra calling upon the “vajra wrath,” [*vajra krodha*] to perform a series of tasks (to slay, to run, to cook and to go), all issued in the imperative form. [1.5 & 3.1]

This first portion of the text we have clearly conveys the vajra armor to be the power of mantra itself to defeat the imputations of conceptual thought, thereby associating it with the nature of emptiness. Armoring, protection, fencing off, and illusion or imagination are all evoked through the ritual performance of mantras. The mantra becomes the sign that defeats all other signs. By partaking in the semiotic world, it defeats it. Invested with this deep sense of paradox, the mantra, the momentary sign, is the hallmark of impermanence.<sup>158</sup> As such, it functions as the ultimate apotropaic, driving away all obstacles.

The core part of the text is prefaced by the following statement: “The so-called Buddhas of the five families are the image<sup>159</sup> of the five wisdoms of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three times. They continuously abide, not passing away into nirvana.” [3.1-.2] At this point, at the end of line two on folio 3, the text changes modes.

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<sup>157</sup> For important discussions of the connections between mantra and ritual performance, see Patton 2005 and Staal 2008 pp.191-221.

<sup>158</sup> Janet Gyatso’s 1992 essay provides a Peircean reading of a late nineteenth/early twentieth-century Tibetan text on the use of “literal formulas” known as *dhāraṇī* in Buddhist visualization practice. Gyatso presents a fruitful assessment of the somewhat paradoxical role of syllables and phrases in Buddhist practice as a means of defeating the cognitive bonds of language. It is difficult to differentiate definitions of *dhāraṇī* from those of mantra as they generally share many of the same qualities of unmodified form, resistance to translation and emphasis upon use vs. semantic meaning. Themes of their role in imprinting texts and experiences upon the memory through ‘holding them fast’ in a visible and oral form are integral to definitions of *dhāraṇī*, and their protective functions are key. Later in this chapter, we will return briefly to the *dhāraṇī* and their apotropaic functions to consider some inscribed example from Dunhuang. See Fig. 19-21.

<sup>159</sup> *Gzugs bsnyan* can also be translated as “reflection.”

This shift is manifested visually by an increased “density”<sup>160</sup> in the text, filled as it is by interlinear commentary and mantra. For the next two folia or so, the primary text is composed of pairs of Sanskrit mantras, transliterated into Tibetan script.

At this juncture, we should pause for a moment to reinforce the connection between inscribing the text and inscribing the body on a larger level. Tantric ritual manuals such as this one are themselves a form of commentary, a ritual commentary that augments and transforms the tantric root text (here the STTS) upon which it is loosely based. The addition of mantras for recitation and of visual and performative strategies all work together to orally, visually, and physically relocate the narrative action of the tantra to the body of the practitioner, or rather, the bodies of initiate and ritual specialist. Therefore, on a certain level, the interlinear commentary we see in IOL Tib J 576 is merely another layer of inscription upon the root text of the tantra itself (not seen here). In the root text, each of the bodhisattvas is summoned into the mandala and consecrated through the recitation of their name; the consecration is finalized through their recitation of a mantra. However, in IOL Tib J 576, the manner in which the mandala is built is somewhat different. The drama of the tantra is transposed to the human body. Here, there are five sets of five pairs of mantras that make up the mandala. See **Fig. 11** for a visual map of this portion of together with a numbered deity list based on IOL Tib J 576; compare this with **Fig. 12**, a more standardized representation of the Vajradhātu mandala. Each pair of Sanskrit mantras (transliterated into Tibetan script) is accompanied by one line of interlinear text that supplies a location on the body where two deities are positioned. The names of these deities are translated into Tibetan. The five Buddha families are mapped onto the head, two hands and two feet in a manner akin to the five Buddha-families of the Vajradhātu mandala. The resemblance is due primarily to the order in which the deities are presented and their grouping into retinues centered on the five *jinas* or main Buddhas. The connection of this mandala with the Vajradhātu is further substantiated by the mantra appearing on folio 2.5: *aoum ba dzra dha tu ma 'da la si ti hung*; the corrected Sanskrit version would be: *om va jra dhā tu maṇ ḍa la sid dhi hung*. Thus the reader is encouraged to recall the *siddhis* or powers to be attained in connection with the practices related to this mandala.

The five *jinas* are associated with the head, the middle fingers of the hands, and the middle toes of the feet; each is accompanied by a goddess. Their association with the directions in the Vajradhātu mandala is not referenced. Therefore, Vairocana, who resides in the centre of the standard Vajradhātu mandala, here inhabits the head, likely at the crown, together with Vajradhātviśvarī. Akṣobhya, typically in eastern direction of the mandala, resides on the middle finger of the right hand, together with his Buddha Locanā. Ratnasambhava, usually an inhabitant of the Southern direction of the mandala is associated here with the middle finger of the left hand, together with Māmakī; Amitabha, usually in the West, with the middle toe of the left foot, together with Pāṇḍaravāsini; Amoghasiddhi, typically in the north, with the middle toe of the left foot together with his consort Samayatārā. So something of the centrality of the main Buddhas of the mandala is communicated through their association with these respective parts of the body,

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<sup>160</sup> Goodman in his account of ‘notational systems’ and ‘qualities of the aesthetic’ describes as increased “density” in which a visual surface can be characterized by a “lack of differentiation” amongst its parts. See Goodman, 1976.

namely aligning the main Buddha of each family with a central appendage. By ‘centrality,’ I am referring to the logic by which the mandala’s form evolves over time into a space which negotiates between a core and a periphery as articulated by the arraying of lesser deities around a central Buddha image.<sup>161</sup> Therefore, the association of centrality with primacy which comes to typify the structure of the mandala is asserted here in the context of the body, albeit in a different form.

However, this is the only instance I have encountered of mapping the five families onto the five appendages of the body. We will see in the next chapter how there are many instances of mapping other deities onto the limbs, fingers, sense orifices, and so forth. In many cases, the crown is the primary site and maintains its associations with Vairocana as head of the *tathāgata* family. Some scholars identify the STTS as the tantric system in which the shift from a three-Buddha system to a five-Buddha system occurs (Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi being the additional *jinas*).<sup>162</sup> In establishing the deities within the mandala, the root text of the STTS itself does not appear to explicitly set forth the colors, directions, or attributes of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The canonization of these associations is itself likely produced over time through experimentation with various ritual commentaries and visual forms. In the pivotal transition from a three to five Buddha family structure that begins to emerge in the STTS, we encounter many non-standardized and experimental visual representations of mandala. For example, the frequently referenced tenth-century scroll painting of the five *jinas* from Dunhuang shows a yellow Vairocana (usually white) in the center with the four Buddhas/*jinas* in the corners surrounding him [Fig. 13]. The colors, attributes, and positions of these Buddhas all contain non-standard elements.<sup>163</sup> The mandala itself is not round, but rather fits the definition of mandala as an assembly of deities in the relation of central deity and retinue as described by Christian Luczanits.<sup>164</sup> Perhaps we may think about the model presented here in a similar way, as a mode of experimenting with a five family structure in relation to the body where the most obvious pentad is that of the protuberances of head and limbs.

An even more relevant comparison might be made with another painted mandala from Dunhuang in the collection of the Musée Guimet; in this painting, the five buddhas sit alongside their consorts. [See Fig. 14] The inclusion of goddesses or consorts to accompany the buddhas in IOL Tib J 576 is anomalous; it indicates that it is a transitional text, a text absorbing details and practices from other yoga and even higher yoga tantric practices. To my knowledge, the goddesses accompanying the main Buddhas here do not appear in the *Sarva-tathāgatha-tattva-saṃgraha*. Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, and Tārā are the four goddesses of the intermediary directions in both the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana* mandala and *Guhyasamāja* mandala. There are also some inconsistencies in

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<sup>161</sup> See Luczanits 2008 for an important introduction to the evolution of the form and structure of early mandala. Luczanits’ essay deals specifically with many of the drawings and paintings from the library cave at Dunhuang for examples that challenge the standard definitions of mandala, definitions based in later fixed iconographic standards.

<sup>162</sup> See Snellgrove 1987 (2002 Reprint) pp198-213 and Luczanits 2013.

<sup>163</sup> I am grateful to have studied this mandala painting under the tutelage of Patricia Berger and Christian Luczanits in Spring 2011 at UC Berkeley.

<sup>164</sup> See Luczanits 2008, especially p.113-115.

IOL Tib J 576 in the rendering of their names from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Most significantly perhaps, the Sanskrit Māmakī is translated within the interlinear commentary as “jewel-eye” (*rin cen spyan*), what appears to be a reference to the association with the jewel family and to the goddess Locanā.<sup>165</sup>

The case of the relationship of Māmakī and Locanā has been assessed in detail by Roger Wright 2010 in the context of *Nāgārjuna’s Piṇḍikṛta-sādhana* on the Guhyasamāja.<sup>166</sup> In this *sādhana*, the position of the two goddesses is reversed. Wright discounts Tsuda’s theory that the authors of the *sādhana* misunderstood the tantra and questions his assertion of the relevance of links between the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha* and the *Guhyasamāja*. Instead, he points to the inclusion of the goddesses Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini, and Tārā in an eighth-century translation of the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-tantra* in place of Vajralāsyā and the other inner offering goddesses (shared by STTS & SDPT).<sup>167</sup> The inner offering goddesses are then relegated to the next level of the mandala where they reside alongside the outer offering goddesses. The author concludes that the source for this set of four goddesses (Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā) is therefore the SDPT rather than the STTS. As for the reversal of the positions of Locanā and Māmakī, Wright suggests that the “promotion of Akṣobhya” to the center of the mandala occurring in the Ārya Guhyasamāja mandala is the reason, thereby reversing the positions of Akṣobhya and Vairocana.<sup>168</sup> What all this suggests is that ambiguities in both names and positions of the goddesses may be one sign of the transitional and experimental nature of IOL Tib J 576. We will see how the transitions and influences operating here suggest not only a dialogue between the practices of different yoga tantras, but also with those of higher yoga tantra as well.

Vairocana’s retinue is organized within the space of the head with the four *pāramitās*, goddesses embodying spiritual perfections, placed on the eyes, nose, ears and tongue. We will see how in the more developed versions of body mandala practice, the sense doors are key sites around which single and even pairs of deities may be positioned. Locating deities at these sites indicates the need for protection of the doors to the senses; it may even represent the transformation of sense perception itself into a divine and non-dual form that casts off the distinction of subject and object binding us to the cycle of rebirth. One anomaly in the enumeration and distribution of the *pāramitās* here in IOL Tib J 576, however, is that of gender. Namely, there is no obvious marker of female gender in either the transliteration of the Sanskrit (less surprising) or in its Tibetan translation. Furthermore, the Tibetan commentary pairs these figures with four seemingly un-standardized goddesses. The primary lines of text in IOL TIB J 576 pair the mantras of the four *pāramitās* with the same mantra: “*Aoum vajra muṣ ti hum.*” The *vajra muṣti* is the vajra fist, a particular position of the hands. The reason for introducing the term here is unclear. It seems likely that it refers either to a ritual gesture and/or pose

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<sup>165</sup> Mallmann states that Māmakī can be associated with either Akṣobhya or Ratnasambhava.

<sup>166</sup> See Wright 2010, pp.38-41

<sup>167</sup> That particular manuscript is referred to in Skorupski 1983 as Source A.

<sup>168</sup> One might even see places within the STTS and related practices where the vajra family is emerging as primary. However, in the case of the body mandala described in IOL Tib J 576, Vairocana maintains the central position.

in which the *pāramitās* are imagined to be engaged or which the practitioner him/herself performs.<sup>169</sup> However, the Tibetan text ‘translates’ or identifies *vajra muṣṭi* in the commentary with four discrete names of unfamiliar goddesses: *brtan ma rdo rje*, *'bar ma rdo rje*, *dud ma rdo rje* and *bskyod ma rdo rje*<sup>170</sup> So some form of gender confusion or manipulation appears to be at play, with the *pāramitās* becoming male and accompanied by the seemingly female figures.

As for the limbs, beginning with the right hand proceeding to the left, then to the left foot and finally to the right foot, for each the order of enumeration is middle (the *jina* or chief buddha of the family), index finger /toe, ring, pinky and thumb. The four attendant bodhisattvas of each buddha are invoked through mantra and laid out in this order from index finger through thumb. They are each accompanied by an inner offering goddess, an outer offering goddess, what appears to be a door protector and, somewhat mysteriously, by yet another goddess. In three of the five instances, this latter set of goddesses placed on the thumb/big toe may identified as bearing names related to the goddess accompanying the main buddha on the middle finger/toe of the same limb. They furthermore may be seen to symbolize the respective poisons that each buddha family is identified with bearing the capacity to purify. For example, Dveṣarātī, related to Akṣobhya’s consort Māmākī, represents “rejoicing in enmity.”

In the external Guhyasamāja mandala and the body mandala of the father deity as described in the *Piṇḍikṛt-sādhana*, the four goddesses Locanā, Māmākī, Paṇḍaravāsīnī, and Tārā are referred to as Moharātī, Dveṣarātī, Rāgarātī and Vajrarātī respectively. In the external mandala, they inhabit the intermediary directions of the central palace, while in the body mandala, they are located on the elements. [See Fig. 15-17] As several manuscripts related to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* were also found in the library cave, there is the possibility of influence of this textual cycle upon IOL Tib J, 576.<sup>171</sup> However, just when we think we have pinpointed the logic of including these goddesses, the Tibetan translation of their names in the interlinear commentary confounds. In IOL Tib J 576, the names given for these goddesses on the thumb/big toe of the body mandala are:

Teja-ratī/Dveṣarātī	Tibetan translates as :	<b>Rdo rje sgril ma</b>
Vajra-ratnarātī		<b>Rdo rje bde ma</b>
Rāga-ratī		<b>Gsal bkra ma</b>
Vajra-Ratī		<b>Rdo rje'i 'bebs ma</b>

In the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana* mandala, there is a Rdo rje dril bu ma, one of the four female gate guardians. Perhaps there is a connection to Rdo rje sgril ma; confusion of these homophones *sgril* and *dril* is an error easily made by a scribe. This does not of

<sup>169</sup> It is less likely that it is the goddess known as Vajramuṣṭi mentioned in the *SDPT*. See Mallmann, 411.

<sup>170</sup> The standard Vajradhātu mandala does not include any goddesses in Vairocana’s portion of the mandala except for the four *pāramitās*. It is possible that since the Sanskrit mantras which appear here do not bear any obvious marker of the feminine or the *pāramitās*, the Tibetans thought they were supplying consorts for male deities here.

<sup>171</sup> For example, under the tutelage of Jacob Dalton I have read portions of ITJ 438/1, IOL T J 331/2 and 464/1. Dalton and van Schaik, 2006 also identify other versions found at Dunhuang: 419/1,6, /9 &/10; 437/1& 2; 454/1; 481/1; 508/1; 565/1.

course explain the connection to Teja-ratī/Dveṣaratī. Vajra-Ratī, translated here as *Rdo rje'i 'bebs ma* appearing on the big toe of the right foot, and thereby associated with Amoghasiddhi and Tārā, presents a similar and perhaps related conundrum. *Rdo rje'i 'bebs pa* [Vajrāveśa], a male form, is a gate guardian of the Vajradhātu mandala associated with Amoghasiddhi and the female form, *rdo rje'i 'bebs ma*, is a gate guardian of the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana* mandala.<sup>172</sup> We should bear in mind that these are both yoga tantras in which the main mandala locates Vairocana at the center and of which there are several related manuscripts and ritual diagrams at Dunhuang.<sup>173</sup> These tantric systems may therefore be regarded as compatible on a couple of levels. However, in the pattern that seems to emerge in IOL Tib J 576,<sup>174</sup> we would expect a door guardian to appear instead on the pinky or little toe. Nonetheless, on the little toe of the right foot, instead of Vajrāveśa, we find Vajra-ghaṇṭa,<sup>175</sup> translated in the Tibetan commentary as *Rdo rje dril 'sgrol ma*. Now, the *'sgrol* may be read in connection with Tārā [Sgrol ma], paired with Amoghasiddhi. However, the standard Tibetan translation of Vajra-ghaṇṭa would be *rdo rje dril bu*. Furthermore, the door guardian associated with Amoghasiddhi's retinue in the STTS mandala<sup>176</sup> is once again Vajrāveśa, or in Tibetan, *Rdo rje 'bebs pa*.

So we can observe in just these few examples how in the overall arrangement of deities on the body in IOL Tib J 576, the identity and position of many of the goddesses is a source of confusion. It seems that they are being introduced here merely to produce a set of five pairs in each region of the five regions of the body/mandala. The fact that the goddess and accompanying bodhisattva placed on the thumb/big toe of each hand/finger are explicitly referred to as “resting in union” [*sbyor ba'i tshul du bzhugs*] presents yet another anomaly. Note that this phrase occurs with the last pair of deities of each Buddha family (and bodily protuberance) with the exception of Vairocana's and might therefore be read as applying to all of the deities in that Buddha family. One possibility is that this phrase refers to a position of the hands.

English 2002 described a rite of *hastapūjā-vidhi* within the ‘external worship’ portion of the Vajravārāhī *sādhana* that is the subject of her study. In this rite, the six ‘armour gods’ associated with Cakrasaṃvara tradition are installed on the fingers and nails of the left hand as the six buddhas. Sanderson pointed out that the Śaiva “prototypes” of the rite install a mantra on the thumb with the index finger and then in

<sup>172</sup> There is also a female gate guardian by this name in the Vajradhātu mandala based in the *Samputa Tantra* (*rgyud sde kun btus* #111).

<sup>173</sup> On the SDPT at Dunhuang see Dalton and van Schaik, 2006 on IOL Tib J 318/1, 384/1, 384/4 & 420/1.

<sup>174</sup> By this pattern I am referring to the fact that the right hand, left hand and left foot, on the little finger or toe we find respectively: Añkuśa translated as *rdo rje gyo ga ma*; Vajra-pāśa translated as *rdo rje zhags pa*; Vajra-sphoṭa translated as *rdo rje lcags sgrog ma*. The Sanskrit refers to the door guardians with the associations with Buddha families we would expect to find in the Vajradhātu mandala. Two of the Tibetan names do as well, *rdo rje rdo rje gyo ga* [‘vajra dishonesty’] would need to be emended to *rdo rje lcags kyu* in order for all of the Tibetan translations to match.

<sup>175</sup> It appears here as *ba dzra gan ta* in Tibetan transliteration.

<sup>176</sup> See diagram Giebel 2001.



turn use the thumb to install mantras on the others.<sup>177</sup> Perhaps a similar ritual gesture is occurring in IOL Tib J 576. However, ‘*rnams sbyor ba’i tshul du bzhugs*’ would most commonly be translated as ‘abide in union,’ suggesting that the bodhisattvas (and perhaps the buddhas as well) are imagined to be in union with their consorts. However, one key feature of yoga tantric literature (to which the STTS belongs) is that, unlike that of higher yoga tantra, it does not depict deities in union. Therefore, there is a distinct possibility that IOL Tib J 576 is drawing upon a larger inventory of tantric texts to complete this mandala, potentially including those of higher yoga tantra.<sup>178</sup>

It is essential to recognize that the enigmas that arise in observing the manner in which this text inscribes the portions of the mandala on the human body is not exclusive to the medium of the body. The translation of the mandala into the architectural framework in the eleventh century expresses the same kind of experimental spirit we find in IOL TIB J 576’s translation of the form of the mandala onto the body. Within a hundred years or so of the composition/inscription of IOL TIB J 576, the Vajradhātu mandala was mapped onto the assembly hall at Tabo monastery in Western Tibet [See Fig. 18 and compare with Fig. 11 & 12] through the arrangement of clay sculptures of the deities of the mandala around the periphery of the hall.<sup>179</sup> Only Vairocana and his immediate retinue are positioned centrally, at the ‘head.’ The ‘extra’ *prājñās* (found on the thumbs of the body mandala) are not found in this model, nor are the main consorts of the five *jinas*. Perhaps the most potent aspect of this arrangement is the placement of the door guardians (the ‘pinkies’ of the body mandala) flanking the actual entryways into the hall. As indicated in this comparison with imposing the mandala upon an architectural space, as well as with more general comparisons to the standardized artistic representations of the mandala, we see how the arrangement of its component parts in space and on the surface of the body emphasizes fundamental aspects of the logic of its design.

The necessity of guarding the doorways points to an important aspect of the model found in IOL TIB J 576. Namely, virtually all of the points specified on the body are connected with the sense faculties (eyes- sight; nose-smell; ears- hearing; tongue-taste; fingers and toes-touch).<sup>180</sup> As points of vulnerability in the Buddhist construction of the person, the armoring, and in the tantric case, deification of the sense doors is essential to insuring ritual purity and a pristine condition of awareness. Considering corporeality and textuality side by side, the protection of the holes for binding together *pothi* manuscripts with *dhāraṇī* may be regarded as an analogical process. Inscribing the

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<sup>177</sup> See English 2002, pp218-220; on p.219 English references this 1999 personal communication with Alexis Sanderson.

<sup>178</sup> I am grateful to Kris Anderson for reminding me of the frequent addition of goddesses in the higher and yogini tantras.

<sup>179</sup> On the possibility that the ninth-century Indonesian stūpa complex at Borobudur expresses the order of the Vajradhātu mandala and forms a pair with Candi Mendut, a nearby complex mapping the Garbhadhātu mandala consider Kemper 1959 and Chandra 1980, referenced in Kim 2007 p141 fn44. See also Mus 1998 and Huntington 1994.

<sup>180</sup> Though of course the fingers and toes are not the only sites on the body to absorb sensation, they are more obvious instruments of touch.

body and inscribing the text are both acts of protection of volatile openings.<sup>181</sup> In the model of the Guhyasamāja body mandala presented in the *Piṇḍikṛta-sādhana* (to be discussed in the next chapter and frequently cited by Mkhas grub rje in the context of the body mandala debate), bodhisattvas are positioned on the sense faculties, the heart, totality of the body, head, and the joints in the body mandala of the father deity.<sup>182</sup> On the body mandala of the consort, on the other hand, the bodhisattvas appear on the sense faculties in union with the sense goddesses of form, taste, and so forth.<sup>183</sup> Therefore, reading these examples together with IOL Tib J 576, we can deduce that the association of apertures of the body with sensory perception is highly charged in the Buddhist context.

One might also consider the power invested in the apertures of the body as sites of liminality, not just between interiors and exteriors but between life and death. Alexis Sanderson discusses Buddhist tantric practices that specify how the consciousness leaves the body at death through one of nine doors or orifices depending upon one's karmic "destiny." The door at the crown of the head is considered the most auspicious. Sanderson traces this model back to Brahmanical sources as well as to early non-tantric Buddhist ones.<sup>184</sup> Furthermore, as mentioned above, related rites such as *nyāsa* and *hastapūjā-vidhi* found in non-Buddhist tantric ritual as well, employ the placement of deities and their related seed syllables on the body as a mode of protection and purification.<sup>185</sup> Elizabeth English has astutely noted the resemblance of the technologies of purifying the body of the practitioner through association of the components of the body with deities,<sup>186</sup> of the armoring the body through *nyāsa*,<sup>187</sup> *hastapūjā-vidhi*<sup>188</sup> and

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<sup>181</sup> I am grateful to Alexander von Rospatt for suggesting this comparison. If we continue to evaluate body and text as "*rten*," representations or "supports," one might ask what these mutual acts of protection are warding off. In the case of manuscripts, like that of sculptures in need of consecration, the perceived threat is likely the invasion of demonic presences. In the case of the body, the nature of the threat may be somewhat different; the points of vulnerability are sites of perception. The concern is with being distracted or persuaded by sensory stimuli. Pursuing the comparison further, therefore, would invite us to engage with Buddhist understandings of the senses as found in the Abhidharma literature.

<sup>182</sup> See Wright 2010, Appendix B2

<sup>183</sup> See Wright 2010, Appendix B4. According to the Hevajra system, moreover, these sense goddesses appear like reflections.

<sup>184</sup> See Sanderson 2009, note 297. Sanderson uses the term *utkrāntiḥ* in his description. Sanderson refers to the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* 3.43abc where Vasubandhu describes the cessation of consciousness at various bodily sites and specific case of the *arhat* for whom consciousness may cease at the heart or crown. Among the tantric sources he refers to Bhavabhata's commentary of the *Catuspītha-tantra* f.52r2.

<sup>185</sup> I have located several manuscripts on *nyāsa* practice within the catalogues of the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project that may be of interest. These texts appear to be based in Hindu tantra. A few examples are NAK accession numbers: 5/2284, 4/3206, 1/630, 5/4456, 8/1410, 6/302.

<sup>186</sup> See English 2002, pp.114-119.

<sup>187</sup> See English 2002, pp. 163-6.

body mandala practice.<sup>189</sup> We have touched upon the employment of visions of generation and dissolution, and of mantra and breath manipulation to purify the elements of the body in the context of the *bhūtaśuddhi* as related by Flood from the *Jayākhyā*. To review, after the purification of the body, Flood presented the “divinization” of the body through *nyāsa*, installing mantras on points of the body through touch and recitation as a means of making the practitioner worthy of worshipping a divinity. Mantras were installed “on the head, eyes, ears, mouth, shoulders, hands (again), buttocks, heart, back, navel, hips, knees and feet.”<sup>190</sup> This stage prepared the practitioner to envision the deities on his/her own body in the stage of “mental worship” [*manasayāga*]. The practice then concluded with external worship of the mandala. The rite of armoring the body through *nyāsa* described by English in the context of the Buddhist Vajravārāhī *sādhana* is comparable to Flood’s phase two, “divinizing the body.” After imagining oneself as Vajravārāhī, the practitioner “protects the body of ‘himself-as-goddess’ with an armor (*kavaca*) of mantra syllables, and then infuses it with transcendental knowledge.”<sup>191</sup>

Through reference to these practices we see how inscribing deities on the body through mantra serves an apotropaic function fundamental to achieving both immediate ritual and far-reaching soteriological goals. We are reminded of the mantra of the *vajra kavaca* presented in the first surviving portion of IOL Tib J 576. The apotropaic potential of inscription may be reinforced through reference to Buddhist practicing of inscribing such *dhāraṇī* upon amulets worn for protective purposes as well as their enshrinement in memorial sites such as stūpas. In fact, examples of such *dhāraṇī* are profuse at Dunhuang.<sup>192</sup> [See Fig. 19-21]

In IOL TIB J 576, the main deities of the mandala are inscribed upon the template of the human body through mantras that are attached to points on the body together with

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<sup>188</sup> See English 2002 pp.218-20.

<sup>189</sup> On body mandala, see English 2002, pp. 197-203. For observations of the similarity of these ritual technologies existing side-by-side the Vajravārāhī *sādhana* that is the focus of her study, see for example pp. 116, 166 & 197.

<sup>190</sup> Flood 2006, 114

<sup>191</sup> English 2002, p163

<sup>192</sup> See, for example, Tsiang 2010. Tsiang presents numerous correlations between employment of *dhāraṇī* for protecting the body and creating a sacred ritual space: “As a group, the *dhāraṇī* sheets may be seen to have functioned and to have been understood on various levels. One one level, they were regarded as talismans and charms having magical power for protection. On another, they are representations of ritual performance and sacred spaces...While as sacred enclosures, their symbolic spatial configurations can be considered as mandalas, as they have been identified by Ma Shichang, they are of a different type from the hierarchical groupings of deities that are common in later periods. The objects and hand gestures depicted on the *dhāraṇī* sheets are representations of ritual performance that are closely related to those in esoteric practice manuals, *yigui*, used in the Tang period and refer to practice rather than cosmology.” (Tsiang 2010, p.246) For other examples of the apotropaic uses of inscription in the Chinese religious context, see James Robson 2008 & Paul F. Copp 2014.

the names of the deities to be imagined there in Tibetan. There are however, no descriptions of the colors or attributes of these deities, no visual cues, only mantras. It is beyond the scope of the present work to fully examine the structure of these mantras. However, on a general level we can see that all of the deities associated with Akṣobhya are linked with *hung/hūm*, of Ratnasambhava with *hram/traṃ*, of Amitābha with *hriḥ*, and of Amoghasiddhi with *ā*. Vairocana and Locanā are associated with *aoum / om* but among the other deities in his retinue and located on the head, (seemingly male forms of) the *pāramitās* are all associated with variations upon *om*, while the four iterations of *vajra muṣṭi* paired with them end with: *hung*, *hram*, *dhi* and *ā* respectively. If we were to read *dhiḥ* as *hriḥ*, then this set would imply the connection of each of these pairs with the retinues of the Buddhas distributed across the limbs. At the completion of the retinue of each Buddha, there is a mantra, transliterated into Tibetan as: *sa ma ya sa tvam sa ma ya stvam* [*Samayasattvaṃ samayasattvaṃ*]. This mantra indicates that ‘you are the *samaya*’ [Tib. *dam tshig*], the “vow”; it seems to refer to the identity of the practitioner’s mind with that of the Buddha.<sup>193</sup>

The transition to the next section of the text is made with the mantra: *aoum ba dzra dha tu ma 'da la si ti hung* [*Om vajradhātu maṇḍala siddhi huṃ*], a reference to the powers attained through practice of the Vajradhātu mandala. The final section of the text, pages 5-8, features mantras for the ten krodhas or wrathful deities together with their consorts.<sup>194</sup> The interlinear commentary supplies their names in Tibetan together with those of their consorts as well as the directions they inhabit, their colors, and their attributes. There are two striking elements in this transition. The first is that suddenly the ritual action has been relocated outside of the human body. There is no placement of these deities on the body of the sort we will find in the Guhyasamāja body mandala where they are located on the hands, mouth, vajra, shoulders, knees, top of head and

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<sup>193</sup> Initially, I interpreted this mantra as a reference to the *samayasattva*, the “pledge beings” that the practitioner imaginatively merges with the *jñānasattva*, the “wisdom beings,” in many tantric *sādhana*; such a merger is one technology of ritualized divination in Buddhist tantric *sādhana*. However, drawing upon his experience with such Dunhuang ritual texts, Jake Dalton brought my attention to the subtleties of the context and to the closer parallel of the “*samaya*” with the qualities of the *jñānasattva* here. [Jake Dalton, Personal communication, December 2015] English 2002 fn411 remarks: “The appearance of the *samayasattva* and *jñānasattva* in yoga tantra texts is worth further study. Mkhas grub rje (p.235) gives little idea of the use of these terms in the yogatantra scriptures, citing only the explanatory tantras, the *Paramādyā* and *Vajraśekhara*, rather than the root yoga tantra, the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*. Mention of the *samayasattva* appears in the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-tantra* (19b) where it is described in terms that are associated in our texts with the *jñānasattva*, namely, the drawing down of deities into the heart mandala with rays, a process that, however, is said to complete the *samayamandala*...” These references to the STTS explanatory tantras and to the root text of the SDPT are worth consideration in our context together with other instances of the appearance of these terms in Dunhuang ritual manuals. See, for example, IOL Tib J 422 as described in Dalton and van Schaik 206, p. 166-7.

<sup>194</sup> Aparājītā appears to be the exception.

bottom of feet [see Fig.16 & 22]; the Guhyasamāja model itself closely resembles the *nyāsa* ritual for divinizing the body described by Flood in the context of non-Buddhist tantra in this regard. In the standard external Ārya form of the Guhyasamāja mandala, the *krodhas* inhabit the doors of the mandala as well as the corners, zenith, and nadir, much as we find here. [See Fig.15] They are wrathful protectors extraordinaire, and they guard the boundaries of the mandala.

The other striking feature of this transition in the text is that the descriptions in the interlinear commentary have suddenly become explicitly visual. Why is so much energy being devoted to describe these fierce protectors when the buddhas and bodhisattvas themselves were presented only through names, bodily locations, and mantra? While we may not be able to resolve this question here, we can observe that the ritual goal of protection appears to be paramount here, protection not only of the body but also the space around it.

We will not deal with this portion of the text with the same level of detail as the preceding section as the body is not explicitly involved, and the *krodhas* appear to be a standard set. Only the male *krodhas* associated with the zenith and nadir, *hung ka ra hung*, translated in the commentary as *hung mdzad hung gi rgyal po*, and *ba drza ka ma li kun da li*, translated as *pad ma 'khyil pa* seem unfamiliar. The consorts, explicitly referred to as *yum* here, also require further research. The final section begins with a transliteration of what appears to be a set of somewhat standard Sanskrit mantras *Sarva tathāgata mahā śūnyatā jñāna vajra atmako hum...Mandalaja hrung bang ho*, likely an evocation of the *jñānasattvas* to merge with the *samayasattvas*. Then we have a formula for twenty-four deities evoked via mantra ending *ja hrung bang ho*.<sup>195</sup> There is no commentary providing any information about their appearance or the translation of their names.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Over the course of IOL Tib J 576, we see a progression from subtle to gross, from descriptions of emptiness, to the location of specific deities upon the body through mantra, the evocation and visualization of wrathful protectors in the directions outside the body, and then a movement further outward into the realm of mundane worldly deities. In observing the many anomalies in the naming and arrangement of deities, in particular, the case of the goddesses, we identified this text as transitional and experimental in nature, drawing upon a larger inventory of tantric texts from both the yoga and perhaps even the higher yoga tantric classes. Themes of protection and purification are apparent in the choice of locations on the body, in the mantras tied to protective aims, and in the evocation of wrathful protectors to guard the boundaries of space. Through comparison with similar ritual technologies of protection and purification from Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources, we were able to see how this proto-body mandala text from Dunhuang employs the power of inscription as an apotropaic force. One might link this power to the abundant production of *dhāraṇī* at Dunhuang in media that fused both text and image. By analyzing the form and contents of IOL Tib J 576 through the lense of inscribing the

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<sup>195</sup> I am grateful to Professor Jacob Dalton for his help in reading this *sādhana* and in particular for helping me to discern how this final portion of the text fits in.

body, we created an analogy between corporeality and textuality, an analogy that will continue to unfold over the course of the dissertation.

In examining the body mandala practice of the Guhysamāja cycle in the next chapter, we will continue to engage with ritual technologies of relating deities to sites on the body through visualization, mantra, and the use of syllables in their recited or envisioned forms. Transitioning from the theme of “inscribing” to “mapping,” we will explore how these practices of locating deities on the body are employed to protect sites of vulnerability or even to pierce to the pith of potent energy centers of the human body. Furthermore, in beginning to address Mkhas grub rje’s writing on such ritual actions in the text that sparked the body mandala debate, we will explore his citations from the vast commentarial literature of the Guhysamāja system. In doing so, we hope to catch a glimpse of how the body mandala practice evolved and how anomalous details like those brought to our attention in exploring the IOL Tib J 576 were revised, standardized, and reinterpreted across Indian and Tibetan traditions.

### Chapter Three: Mapping the Body: Locating Deities within the Bodily Landscape in the Guhyasamāja Body Mandala Practice

#### Introduction:

How do we prepare the body as the proper basis for enlightenment? The early Buddhist practices of mindfulness of the body discussed in the previous chapter suggest that knowledge of the body, and specifically of its constituent parts, facilitates the qualities of non-attachment essential for enlightened realization. We have also observed non-Buddhist tantric practices that demonstrate the fundamental tantric principle that one must become a god to worship a god. The Vaiṣṇava practices described by Flood exemplify the kinds of practices of purifying the body that play a key role in this transformation. The practices of purification [*viśuddhi*] correlate microcosmic and macrocosmic elements and manipulate visualized forms and breath through regions of the body; this purification concludes with the imagined incineration of the body from the ground up and its dissemination in the four directions. The subsequent “deification” of the body involves the placement of mantras onto bodily sites through *nyāsa* practice, making the practitioner a god fit to worship a god. The ‘proto-body mandala’ practice described in the ritual text from Dunhuang (and created during a similar time frame to Flood’s Vaiṣṇava source), places or ritually ‘inscribes’ deities on the body in a way that resembles Vaiṣṇava practices’ objectives of purification and protection as well as a variety of preliminary deification. Based loosely upon the STTS mandala, this text (IOL Tib J 576) however, arrays deities onto the body’s protuberances rather than either upon concentrated regions or a total surface area. In translating the form of the mandala onto the surface of the body, it adapts the radial hierarchy of mandala in a creative way. IOL Tib J 576’s model of the body reveals a concern with protecting the sensory capacities as sites of vulnerability in the Buddhist construction of personhood. It also enacts an abstract correlation of the human body with the mandala. Yet it reveals little else about the nature of the body itself, its subtle or hidden potentialities. Our Dunhuang text employs a ritual technology for deifying the body through the placement of deities upon it, treating the body predominantly as a surface for inscription.

As we begin to engage with the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice that is the focus of Mkhas grub rje’s body mandala text, we will encounter a tension between the treatment of the body as a surface for inscription and as a basis for enlightenment. We will also observe the varieties of ritual transformation required to prepare this basis. This tension between the body as surface and as basis indicates larger themes in the evolution of tantric ritual. These include the development of a sophisticated understanding of the body’s hidden sites of power and the movement of its energies through these sites in the form of winds [*rlung*]. In addition, the stratification of *sādhana* practice into a two-fold structure of generation and completion stages, a division that originates within later additions to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (in the Eighteenth Chapter, the *Uttaratantra*) plays an important role. Both of these themes are central to Mkhas grub’s and his teacher Tsongkhapa’s role in emphasizing the completion stage as a ritual technology for accessing the subtle potentialities of the body and for freeing those potentialities from the ties that bind.

We have already encountered the idea that to know the body is to know the world in early Buddhist practices. The Gelukpa emphasis upon the completion stage of the Guhyasamāja *sādhana* promotes an especially potent manifestation of this principle. Namely, through the completion stage, the practitioner has the opportunity to manipulate the process of death and of rebirth. Locating deities upon the body in the generation stage prepares the body as a basis by making its hidden potentialities malleable, ‘simulating’ a deified body in preparing to produce even more subtle varieties of body in the completion stage.

In transitioning to a metaphor of mapping rather than inscribing, we begin to consider what lies beneath the surface of the body, the qualities that are not apparent to the untrained eye. The project of mapping the bodily landscape invites a comparison with the mapping of the Tibetan landscape as the body of a supine demoness.<sup>196</sup> According to legend, the great Indian tantric master Padmasambhava travelled to Tibet to quell the demonic forces inhabiting it. Through a geomantic enterprise of locating these hidden forces, Padmasambhava then erected temples to ‘pin down the demons,’ to control the body of the demoness in order to establish Buddhism within the body of Tibet. He erected temples upon these bodily points, with the temple at the heart, the Jokhang, as the most sacred. Therefore to map the bodily landscape is to see beyond its surface, to know its hidden points of power and danger as a means of harnessing them.

We will begin by outlining the basic features of the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice of the Ārya tradition, based in the thirty-two deity Akṣobhyavajra mandala. For this description, we will rely upon Geshe Lobsang Tsepel’s contemporary commentary on Yangchen Galo’s eighteenth-century text, *Paths and Grounds of Tantra*.<sup>197</sup> Beginning with this accessible and practice-focused account provides us with an opportunity to familiarize ourselves with the Gelukpa perspective on the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition. This commentary frequently references Tsong kha pa’s *Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages Teachings on Guhyasamāja Tantra*. [*Rgyud kyi rgal po dpal gsang ba ‘dus pa’i man ngag rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba’i sgron me*], a text we will deal with in more detail later in the dissertation with the aid of Gavin Kilty’s 2013 translation. It also invokes Mkhas grub rje’s *Ocean of Attainment* [*Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal gsang ba ‘dus pa’i bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*], the very text in which the body mandala debate is formally initiated. This contemporary account will aid us in forming of holistic view of the practice as it has evolved within the Ārya Guhyasamāja lineage of the Gelukpa tradition. The commentary suggests that Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub were influential in standardizing the form of the body mandala practice for the Gelukpas and making sense of its connection to a tradition of authoritative Indian texts. It will,

<sup>196</sup> See Gyasto, Janet. 2003. “Down with the Demoness: Reflections on the Feminine Ground in Tibet.” in *The History of Tibet* Vol.1, edited by Alex McKay. Oxford: Routledge Curzon: 307-321.

<sup>197</sup> Geshe Lobsang Tsepel 1995 (Reprint 2008) is translating and commenting upon Yangchen Gawai Lodoe’s “Eloquent Explanation- A Port of Entry for the Fortunate Ones into the Paths and Grounds of Mantra according to the Glorious Guhyasamāhja of the Ārya (Nāgārjuna) Tradition.” *Dpal gsang ba ‘dus pa ‘phags lugs dang mthun pa’i sngags kyi sa lam nam gzhag legs bshad skal bzang ‘jug ngogs*. Class No Ga-4,34; Acc No-1043, Tibetan Manuscript Seciton, LTWA, Dharamsala, H.P. India.



therefore, prepare us to recognize the role that Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainment* and the body mandala debate played in this standardization process.

In outlining the practice, we will remain attuned to different approaches to mapping the mandala onto the human form, to correlating macrocosm and microcosm, and to ordering ritual forms such as the spectrum of subtle and gross phenomena. Having examined some key themes in the evolution of tantric ritual, namely the development of more sophisticated knowledge of the subtle body and the two-stage *sādhana* structure, we are equipped to recognize the curious manner in which different versions of the practice exist side beside within the body mandala ritual. These acts of inscribing and mapping, transforming and even transcending the body suggest co-existent phases in the evolution of tantric ritual practices oriented around the body. In engaging with various interpretations of the Guhyasamāja body mandala through the citation of carefully-selected texts, Mkhas grub further contributes to this evolution.

### I. An Outline of the Guhyasamāja Body Mandala Practice

In laying the groundwork for the body mandala, the body is generated as a celestial palace to house the mandala deities. Geshe Lobsang Tsephel translates the term for this structure, *rten pa'i dkyil 'khor*, as “residence mandala.” The introduction to this dissertation highlighted the nuances of *rten* in framing Himalayan artistic and ritual approaches to representation. This dissertation translates *rten pa'i dkyil 'khor* as “mandala of the support,” to emphasize the foundational role of representations and bodies in the creative soteriological project that is body mandala ritual. The mapping of the celestial palace onto the body encompasses internal and external aspects of the body, surfaces and protrusions as well as inner organs together with more subtle aspects of winds, sensory perception, and consciousness. Geshe Lobsang Tsephel describes this correlation of the parts of the body with those of the celestial palace as follows:

“Visualize the front, back and the two sides of our body form the four corners of the walls of the mansion; the mouth, nose, anus and urethra form the four doors; the five coloured wind energies, as the basis of conceptions, form the five fold layers of the walls which are white, yellow, red, green and blue; tongue consciousness becomes the precious molding; intestines become jeweled nets; the sinews and so forth become half nets; a certain portion of the white drop of the mind of enlightenment becomes the half moon; eye consciousness becomes the mirrors; nose consciousness becomes garlands of flowers; tongue sense becomes the bells; body sense becomes the yak tail fans adorning the jewel nets and half nets; ear and body consciousness become the banner and pendants on the parapet; the two shins, thighs, forearms and upper arms become the eight pillars; the belly becomes the interior vases; the ear sense becomes the half moon adorned with vajras at the four corners; the four physical and mental objects such as form become the five colours of the mansion-white, yellow, red, green, blue; the secret place, navel, heart and tip of nose become the four arches; the eye sense becomes the wheel of dharma and the mental consciousness becomes a buck and a doe on the top depicted over the eastern door; the nose sense becomes the banners on the four arches and the mental sense

becomes the lotus in the center of the mansion. In this way, the different parts of our body are transformed into the residence mandala.”<sup>198</sup>

We can see a few interesting points in the means of correlating the body with the architectural structure of the palace. Some portions are fundamental such as the five winds as the layered walls. None of the other natural elements appear to be represented here. In fact, this is not the general wind [*rlung*] of the great elements, but rather, “the basis of conception,” the very vehicle for the mind and the precondition for embodiment. Equating limbs and pillars shows a more straightforward structural correlation. Other aspects are what we might call “ornamental,” such as the intestines and sinews as nets. The sense consciousnesses and objects also seem to fit within the class of the ornamental. The material representation of the sense consciousness and objects prepares us for their embodiment as deities within the “mandala of the residents” [*brten pa’i dkyil ‘khor*] to be discussed next; this representation also reminds us of the symbolism of the sense offerings through image, gesture, and sound within Tibetan art and ritual. There appears to be a hierarchy expressed among the senses, with the “mental sense” as the central lotus. Relating “mouth, nose, anus and urethra” to four doors demonstrates a conception of orifices as doorways and potentially as sites of vulnerability, as the doors of the conventional mandala palace are often guarded by fierce protectors. The designation of the “secret place, navel, heart and tip of nose” as the four arches seems to assign them a primary role in defining the boundaries of the space.<sup>199</sup>

We can now proceed to unpack this mandala, to observe the manner in which it comes to be populated and to form the *brten pa’i dkyil ‘khor*, the “mandala of the supported,” (referred to by Tsephel as the “mandala of the residents”). The generation stage can be broken down in terms of the three kinds of Buddha bodies: *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya*. These bodies are the three results of the practice with three corresponding bases of purification: death, the intermediate state, and rebirth. The actual attainment of these buddha bodies occurs later on in the completion stage, but the generation stage is regarded as the essential trial run, a repeated fabrication that becomes a reality.

In producing the *dharmakāya*, the “mind of clear light” is the path of purification, whereas for producing the *sambhogakāya*, the path of purification is the “illusory body.” Kilty 2013 defines the illusory body and its relationship to the clear light as follows:

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<sup>198</sup> Geshe Lobsang Tsephel, *Paths and Grounds*, pps.33-34.

<sup>199</sup> The Guhyasamāja system contains a unique grouping of “nose tips.” Mkhas grub debates the question of whether they are to be enumerated as three or four in his *Ocean of Attainment* (256.5-257.1) through recourse to the *Vajramālā* explanatory tantra. The *Vajramālā* is a text quoted extensively by Mkhas grub and will be examined as such within this dissertation. The description of the mandala of the support provided here by Geshe Lobsang Tsephel appears to be in accordance with the description found in Chapter Sixty-eight of the *Vajramālā Sde dge* 275a.2-.6 [549.2-.6] as cited in Mkhas grub 255.6-256.1.

“This body is created from the subtle inner winds and is in the aspect of the resultant Buddha form that is the goal of the practice. This illusory body is the exclusive cause of the form body of the Buddha, the *rūpakāya*. Alongside this practice is the wisdom development of the mental state of clear light. This is in the nature of a very subtle level of mind and is the exclusive cause for the enlightened mind, or *dharmakāya*.”<sup>200</sup>

The generation stage itself produces the *nirmāṇakāya*. It is likely that the aggregates, elements, and so forth of the body have already undergone a basic purification before this phase begins as part of the preparatory rites; the limbs and sense spheres are further purified in constructing the body as the celestial palace, the “mandala of the support” described above. The body mandala practice seems to include multiple phases of purification, a theme we will attend to in our description; light and sound, extolled from the time of the Vedas in the Indic context, for example, are two common purifying factors in tantric ritual manuals. Throughout the process of the body mandala practice, the body described becomes increasingly more subtle, bathed in the luminance of clear light.

First, one envisions oneself as Akṣobhya (the central deity of the outer mandala of the Ārya tradition, the Akṣobhyavajra mandala). Then, one imaginatively installs the deities of the mandala on key parts of the body. The *tathāgatas* emerge from the skandhas as Vairocana, Amitābha, Ratnaśāmbhava, and Amoghasiddhi and are positioned at the crown, throat, navel and “groin” with Akṣobhya fused with the main deity (embodied by the practitioner).<sup>201</sup> Four goddesses then emerge from the elements and unite with these *tathāgatas*: Green Tārā with Vairocana (with Amoghasiddhi in her crown), red Pāṇḍaravāsīnī with Amitābha (with Amitābha also in her crown), and white Locanā with Ratnaśāmbhava (with Vairocana in her crown). Māmākī resides at the heart with Akṣobhya in her crown.<sup>202</sup> As observed through the summary of Wright’s theories in the previous chapter, Māmākī’s affiliation is complex. We will return to the case of Māmākī later in the context of the evolution of body mandala materials within the literature of the Guhyasamāja.

As we have already noted in our exploration of the proto-body mandala from Dunhuang, the positions and associations of the goddesses exhibit a great deal of slippage in their evolution through practice manuals and commentarial literature. In Geshe Lobsang Tsepel’s account of the practice used as a standard here, the goddesses are associated with respective sites on the body where they unite with a *tathāgata*, a lord of

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<sup>200</sup> Kilty 2013, Translator’s Introduction, pp.2-3.

<sup>201</sup> Akṣobhya may also simultaneously be envisioned at the heart.

<sup>202</sup> The emergence of the buddhas from the skandhas and of the goddesses from the elements and their subsequent placement upon more specific bodily locales may conflate two forms in the evolution of the practice. Where precisely are the skandhas and the elements and how are they to be imagined? Do all texts imagine the goddesses to be in union with the *tathāgatas*? There is no mention of arraying deities upon the body of a consort here, unlike the descriptions found in some versions of the practice. What role does this absence play in this interpretation of the practice? These are the sorts of questions that loom in the background of Mkhas grub’s body mandala text. We will examine some related points of controversy later in this chapter.

the family who mark their crowns, a body color, a natural element, and a colored seed syllable. So Locanā is associated with earth and a yellow *lām*, Māmakī with water and a blue *mām*, Pāṇḍaravāsini with fire and a red *pām*, and Tārā with wind and a green *tām*. The colors seem to reflect connections both with the symbolism of the elements and of the buddhas they unite with, though it is hardly a one-to-one correlation. For example, Tārā unites with white Vairocana but is associated with a green seed syllable, the color of Amoghasiddhi the lord of her family.<sup>203</sup> Later in our discussion we will encounter texts that assign further correlations to these goddesses, with particular winds, the Buddhist doctrine of the perfections, and so forth. For the time being, we will bracket the resolution of these issues and merely note their complexity and the need for recourse to a variety of literature of the Guhyasamāja and other tantric systems across time to attempt to resolve them. In addition, in light of this complexity, we will pay careful attention to the citation of passages regarding these goddesses within the texts of the body mandala debate.

To continue with our basic description of laying out the body mandala according to Yangchen Galo's account, eight bodhisattvas are each associated with sites on the body: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, heart, "vajra organ," joints, and crown. Five of them are embraced by the goddesses of the sense objects at the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and vajra organ.<sup>204</sup> Furthermore, the ten krodhas are positioned on the right thumb, left thumb, mouth, tip of vajra, joints of the right and left shoulder, the knees, crown of the head, and soles of feet. Geshe Lobsang Tsepel clarifies the purpose of identifying the deities with bodily sites as follows: "We must know these deities of the body mandala, their locations in it, and the respective constituents of our body they are associated with, in order for us

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<sup>203</sup> The evolution of the color symbolism of the elements as found in Abhidharmic descriptions of the formation of the cosmos, Indian and Tibetan medical accounts, and non-Buddhist tantric literature on *bhūtaśuddhi* such as the texts described by Gavid Flood, are potential sources for understanding the relationship of the elements to particular colors (and often, shapes). Payne refers to Wayman 1977's proposed correlation of the shapes of Vedic fire altars with those of the tantric cakras as well as with "continents of Purāṇic mythology." See Payne 2002, p.195 and Wayman 1977 pp66-67.

One might also consider how the designation of the central deity of the mandala may shift color associations of the directions of the mandala and how a similar logic might be at play in body mandala practice. In the tradition of the Ārya Guhyasamāja, Ākṣobhya replaces Vairocana as the main deity of the mandala. For example, when the main deity of the mandala is of the Vajra family, as is the case for the Ārya Akṣobhyavajra mandala, the central portion of the mandala is depicted as blue while the eastern portion becomes white, the color associated with the *tathāgata* family; this adjustment alters the 'standard' association of the eastern quadrant with blue and the center with white (and the vajra and *tathāgata* families respectively).

<sup>204</sup> Note that in this account of the practice, the fifth *rdo rje ma*, Sparśavajra, crowned by Akṣobhya, unites with Sarvanivaraṇaviṣkambhin at the opening of the vajra organ. The role played by this goddess in different accounts of the practice varies; in some she is considered to be the consort of the main deity of the mandala, Akṣobhya.

to meditate on the process of death and take it as a path to actualize the truth body.”<sup>205</sup> This interpretation of the body mandala practice as a means to attaining or rehearsing this kind of knowledge of the body directed towards successful navigation of the death process is significant. It exemplifies a dimension of the practice that may have become more prominent over time and may be deeply indebted to Tibetan interpretations. We will touch upon this dimension of the Ārya Guhyasamāja interpretation in the final portion of this chapter.

The next step is to dissolve the deities and their associated bodily sites. Each deity is associated with a physical element in this process. The stages accord with the order of the dissolution of the body at death, a process ordered as a progression from gross to subtle properties and levels of experience. Geshe Lobsang Tsephel outlines the stages of dissolution at death as follows:

Earth into water  
water into fire  
fire into wind  
wind into consciousness  
consciousness into mind of white appearance  
mind of white appearance into radiant red increase  
radiant red increase into black near-attainment  
dawning of mind of clear light of death<sup>206</sup>

In his description of the body mandala practice, the first four of these stages, in which the potency of earth is subsumed by that of water, water by that of fire, fire by that of wind, and wind by that of consciousness are each associated with a *tathāgata* (Vairocana, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi respectively) as well as with a goddess, two bodhisattvas, and two krodhas. The pairing of goddess with *tathāgata* here matches that of the lord of the family and seems to agree with what has become the more standardized association of elements with directions of the mandala.<sup>207</sup> Yet, the dominant schema for this system is the dissolution of the elements and the concordant signs experienced at the moment of death.

The final four stages of consciousness being subsumed by the “mind of white appearance,” and that in turn by the “red increase,” that by “black near attainment,” and that phenomenon by “clear light” are associated with the deities Uṣṇīṣacakravartī and Sumbharaja, Mañjuśrī, and Akṣobhya respectively. Note that the lord of the mandala, Akṣobhya is correlated with the final and most subtle stage of this process, that of clear light.<sup>208</sup> Within the outer, or standard Ārya Gūhyasamāja mandala, Uṣṇīṣacakravartin and

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<sup>205</sup> *Paths and Grounds*, p.27.

<sup>206</sup> *Paths and Grounds*, p.21. For a detailed and compelling account of this process, see Sogyal1992.

<sup>207</sup> In understanding the logic of this system, one might consider how the skandhas and sense spheres fit within this set of correspondences.

<sup>208</sup> We might make sense of the progression between the two krodhas Uṣṇīṣacakravartin and Sumbharaja on to the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in relation to tantric subtle body

Sumbharaja appear as the zenith and nadir, often shown in front and behind the main deity, with Mañjuśrī to the left of the western door of the palace. One might also think about how Mañjuśrī in the form of Manjuvajra is the central deity in the Guhyasamāja-mandala of the Jñānapada tradition. So positioning him as the second most subtle phenomenon may accord him a somewhat central status, as his position on the heart in the body mandala certainly does. Read in this way, the celestial palace of the body is collapsed into its central point, a trope we are familiar with in a variety of descriptions of the emanation of and dissolution of mandalas and deities. In deity *sādhanas*, that central point is often marked by a seed syllable, and in the mandala it may simply be referred to as the drop (*bindu*) or the pith.

After the deities have been installed in the mandala, there is the blessing of the vajra body, speech and mind and the merging of the *jñānasattvas*, the “wisdom beings” or in a sense, the true deities, with the *samaya-sattvas* or “pledge beings,” the imagined form of the deities the practitioner has just established within the mandala.<sup>209</sup> Once again, we might note the movement towards more subtle forms of emanation as the practice progresses as well as a sense of what we might hazard to call a more genuine experience of divine nature. These transformations occur as a result of the repetition of patterns of ritual activity; through repetition one achieves effortlessness and naturalness in identifying with enlightened existence. The blessing of body, speech, and mind is correlated with three sites on the body and three divine couples: Vairocana and Locanā, as the emissaries of vajra body, direct their activities of emanation toward the crown of the head; Amitābha and Pāṇḍaravāsiṇī, as emissaries of vajra speech, direct theirs towards the tongue<sup>210</sup>; Akṣobhya and Māmakī, as emissaries of vajra mind, direct theirs toward the heart. In a sense all three sites are treated as orifices, as porous centers for the production and reception of divine energy. This energy transforms the nature of one’s fundamental components of body, speech, and mind into their ideal steadfast and true “vajra” potential. The transformation is sealed or confirmed by a mantra asserting one’s identity with these three varieties of vajra potential. This visualization entails the common theme of emanation and absorption, beginning with an white *om* on a moon disk from which five rays of light emanate, transforming into a multitude of Locanās, who are then joined by a multitude of Vairocanas. The practitioner requests their blessing of the

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phenomenon with the descent of the white element, here a light, ascent of the red light and the dissolution of all the winds or lights into the heart.

<sup>209</sup> In her discussion of the Vajrayoginī *sādhana*, English 2002 clarifies the terms *jñānasattva* and *samayasattva* through reference to Buddhaguhya and Mkhas grub rje: “The pledge deity is the imaginary form of the goddess created by the ‘pledge-holding’ initiate through the self-generation. In his *Tantrārthāvatāra*, Buddhaguhya describes the pledge forms (*samayasattvah...*) as ‘those [forms] discerned by persons pledged (\**samayin*) [to them]...ones imagined as arising from the body of a deity and having the shape of a deity which the pledge person has generated in conformity with that [body of a deity], or imagined congruently with the latter’s parts.’ Buddhaguhya describes the knowledge forms (*jñānasattvam...*) as ‘the self-existent (*svabhāvin*) discerned as deity.’ The knowledge being is said to have both form and ‘inherent nature.’ (Mkhas grub rje: 235, citing the *Paramādyatantra*.)” (English 2002, p.167)

<sup>210</sup> Often one associates Amitābha with the throat rather than the tongue specifically.

vajra body and they fuse into one another, with one remaining couple melting and then diffusing into thirty two drops. The largest of these drops melts into Vairocana at the crown while the others fuse with the other deities of the body mandala. Then, there is the recitation of the mantra. The blessing of speech and mind follow and proceed in a similar manner but with different main deities and colored syllables and slightly varied mantras.

### **The Supreme Conquerer of the Mandala**

This next phase of the body mandala practice presented in Yangchen Galo's account is particularly relevant to this dissertation's approach to the body mandala because it introduces different varieties of mandala and suggests levels of relationship between them. A similar process of transformation and identification to that of the fusion of *jnānasattvas* and *samayasattvas* in the previously described phase of the blessing vajra body, speech, and mind occurs here, but with multiple phases. First, one imagines oneself as Vajrasattva with a vajra consort emerging from one's heart. Through mantra, she dissolves into emptiness, and a syllable marked with a vajra appears in her place. Then, one places seed syllables of the individual deities of the mandala on her body, and the associated deities emerge from them. Next, one blesses the vajra organ of oneself as Vajrasattva and her lotus organ and then unites with her. All the deities of the mandala dissolve through the intensity of this union. Vajrasattva's bodhicitta enters her womb, diffuses into thirty-two drops that become the celestial palace, the mandala of the support [*rten pa'i dkyil 'khor*] and the thirty-two seats within. Then, yet another drop diffuses into thirty-two parts, and these, in turn, are installed on the seats of the palace; then, they transform into the syllables and then the symbols of the deities, and finally, into the deities themselves. The practitioner uses mantra to draw them out of the lotus through the "vajra path" and to project them in the ten directions, where they act for the benefit of sentient beings. Akṣobhya returns to the heart center and effects the practitioner's transformation into Vajradhara and then Dveṣavajra. Mkhas grub rje specifies that one assumes the identity of the latter deity in this process of projecting the deities outwards, whereas one identifies which each of the mandala deities individually when installing them in the mandala within the womb of the consort.<sup>211</sup> Finally, the deities of the mandala return from the ten directions and take residence on the seats of the "external mandala," the visualized mandala resembling representations painted on cloth or an altar of painted powders.

Note that in the "Supreme Conquerer of the Mandala," the sexual organs and the heart function as the primary orifices or sites of power on the body, and they are connected energetically through the practice. This process also creates a dialogue between different layers of interiors and exteriors that lay at the very foundation of defining mandala, a form based in the understanding of the relation of center and periphery. There is the body mandala of deities positioned on the body of the envisioned consort, the celestial palace and residing deities ejected into her womb from the

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<sup>211</sup> See Mkhas grub rje, *Ocean of Attainment*, p.367 (TCPP edition class No Ga-2, 17; Acc No-4085, Tibetan Manuscript Section, LTWA Dharamsala, H.P., India) as cited by Geshe Lobsang Tsephel in *Paths and Grounds*, note 46.

bodhicitta of the practitioner as Vajrasattva, and finally the outer mandala produced through the drawing each deity from the mandala in her womb up through the vajra and out through the heart of Vajrasattva with the aid of mantra.

Mkhas grub rje explains the intention of the ritualized dialogue between inner and outer mandala as follows:

“Meditating on an inestimable mansion purifies an impure environment. What this means is: it is not that practitioners can transform all this impure environment into our inestimable mansion by doing such a meditation but they do it in order to purify themselves of their potency to utilize the impure environment in the future and also to ripen their potency by the completion stage for enjoying the inestimable mansion of exalted wisdom.”<sup>212</sup>

In this interpretation of the “supreme conqueror of the mandala,” the practitioner is not changing the world, but rather his/her relation to it.

### Completion Stage

There are three main steps during the completion stage that allow the body, speech, and mind, respectively, of the practitioner to be isolated from their gross identity. Through these “isolations” [*dben* Skt. *viveka*], the practitioner gains access to his/her more subtle divine identity. The first of these three, body isolation, is most relevant to our discussion of how the body mandala contributes to the larger ritual project of accessing the subtle body and preparing the practitioner for the moment of death. Moreover, it bridges both generation and completion stage practice of the Guhyasamāja. Speech isolation uses the combination of mantra recitation and breath practice to loosen the knots above and below the heart center and dissolve their associated winds inside, producing the “wisdom of appearance.” Mind isolation is characterized by the use of such mantra recitation and breath practice as well as union with a consort to loosen the knot at the heart center and to dissolve all the bodily winds there, producing the “four empties.” In the process, the signs of death appear, ending with clear light. Yangchen Galo clarifies that: “Such a clear light is the exemplary clear light of the final isolated mind and it is [also] the final [substantial] basis for accomplishing an illusory body of the third level.”<sup>213</sup> We are now dealing with a different variety of body, an illusory body, a type that we will see can be further divided into pure and impure varieties. This body is achieved by once again reversing the dissolution process:

“As one begins to wake up from the exemplary clear light of the final isolated mind, which has just been explained, [its] wind is slightly stirred, due to which the mind of near-attainment of the reversal [process] is accomplished. Along with it, like a fish

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<sup>212</sup> Mkhas grub rje, *Ocean of Attainment*, p.123 (TCPP edition), as cited by Geshe Lobsang Tsepel in *Paths and Grounds*, note 47. See also English 2002’s reference to Mkhas grub’s parsing of outer rites (*bāhyakriyā*) and inner rites (*adhyātmayogaḥ*) from Mkhas grub p219 in Lessing and Wayman, 1978 (1993 Reprint). See English 2002, p.32.

<sup>213</sup> Yangchen Galo, *Paths and Grounds*, p.63



leaping out of water, an illusory body characterized by the noble signs and auspicious signs is literally accomplished as distinctively separate from the coarse body precipitated by ripening [actions]. The wind with five rays of light as the mount of the clear light serves as the substantial cause and the clear light mind itself serves as a cooperative condition.”<sup>214</sup>

Apart from the “auspicious signs,” a distinguishing factor of this illusory body seems to be the fact that it is composed of wind and mind but not of karma. In the system of causes and conditions that produce form, clear light has replaced karma. Yangchen Galo invokes Mkhas grub rje, Tsong kha pa, and the *Pradīpoddyotana* to explain the difference between this impure illusory body and an ordinary body:

“As Khedrup Je’s Notes on the Five Levels (*mkhas grub rje’ rim lnga’i dzin bris*) says: ‘An impure illusory body accomplished in this life is distinguished from the coarse body but it is not accomplished on a separate basis (*go sa*) as it does not have the ability to do so.’ The Lamp Illuminating the Five Levels (*rim lnga gsal sgron*) also says, ‘As stated earlier, for [an illusory body] to be separated from the old body, it is not absolutely necessary for it to abandon the basis (*go sa*) of the old body to exist. The same thing can also be understood from the *Bright Lamp* which states that the pure illusory body exists within the vessel of the old aggregates and so forth.”<sup>215</sup>

In the conclusion of the completion stage, the pure illusory body, an even more subtle form of body, is achieved through persistence in practice and consequent realization of emptiness in the “meaning clear light of the fourth level.” Until one achieves this pure illusory body in the completion stage, one is unable to attain the *sambhogakāya* of a Buddha. Without attaining this fourth level together with an accurate understanding of emptiness and the practice of taking those three bodies resulting from the generation stage as paths, one is unable to achieve the *dharmakāya* either. A system of practices and realizations together with particular phases of initiation are consequently required to manifest the three Buddha bodies.

The shared basis [*go sa*] of ordinary and illusory bodies asserted by Mkhas grub here signals one of the most complex points of Buddhist tantric practice. What kind of foundation does the body provide for tantric practice? Moreover, how do the techniques of body mandala ritual shed light on attitudes toward the liberating and obstructing potential of the human body in progressing towards a soteriological goal? One of the goals of this dissertation is to reflect upon how the texts of the body mandala debate may assert subtle distinctions in Gelukpa and Sakyapa perspectives on tantric practice as evidenced by attitudes towards the body articulated in terms of the body mandala practice. How do Gelukpa scholars think about the ordinary body, illusory body, and the Buddha bodies in relation to one another?

Tsong kha pa clarifies his position on the relation to the different varieties of bodies as follows:

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<sup>214</sup>Yangchen Galo, *Paths and Grounds*, p.63

<sup>215</sup> Yangchen Galo, *Paths and Grounds*, p.64

“...even when becoming a buddha in a single lifetime on the paths of highest yoga tantra, it is not taught that from the moment your body is formed it has to be adorned with the marks and features of enlightenment. If there is no attainment of a body adorned by these marks and features on the paths of practice, there will no similar-in-type cause, and consequently there will be no spontaneous transformation of that body. It is necessary to produce a body adorned with the marks and features of enlightenment while on the completion-stage paths of practice. This coarse body of ripened karma will not develop into a body adorned by the marks and features of enlightenment through deity-yoga meditation, and the body created by just the mind meditating on the body of a deity, as is done on the generation stage, is not sufficient. You need a very special deity yoga that will achieve a body distinct from these, and that is adorned by the marks and features of enlightenment. The substantial cause of a such a body can be none other than the winds. Therefore a method to achieve an illusory body from the winds is definitely necessary.”<sup>216</sup>

This passage touches upon a question central to this dissertation: how do Tibetan authors explain the distinctions and connections of ordinary and enlightened bodies effected through ritual practice? The first distinction Tsong kha pa makes divides the coarse ordinary body from a body possessed of the marks of Buddhahood. In order to transform that coarse body and to manifest those marks, one must practice the completion stage and thereby produce a “similar in type cause.” Tsong kha pa is emphasizing the role of the completion stage as an exclusive means for attaining the illusory body from the winds. The significance of this kind of tantric logic of causality for both Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub will be discussed in further depth in Chapter Four of this dissertation together with the distinction of the generation of completion stages.

Bentor 2006 provides some context for better understanding this emphasis upon the necessity and even superiority of completion stage practice as exemplified by statements like Tsong kha pa’s. Bentor suggests that the historical evolution of these practices over time may be at the root of such attitudes towards the distinction of the two stages of *sādhana* practice. Bentor describes the Gelukpa perspective on the relation of the two stages in the Guhyasamāja practice as follows:

“Even though the practice which is centred on the transformation of bardo, death and the intermediate state into the three bodies of the Buddha is the generation process (*bskyed rim*), the actual transformation of these bodies is considered to take place not during the generation process, but rather at the culmination of the completion process (*rdzogs rim*). This apparent contradiction seems to be the result of a historical process in which initially the generation process may have been an autonomous transcendent process in its own right, leading to the attainment of complete enlightenment. But later on, the emphasis was transferred to the completion process, and it received the primary role, while the generation stage became its preliminary step, in which only similitudes of the true transformations take place. Still, these similitudes are regarded as eventually enabling the ripening of the true transformation during the completion process.”<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Kilty 2013, pps.118-19.

<sup>217</sup> Bentor 2006, p.186 fn4

These categories of generation and completion stages first emerged in the literature on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, in particular in Chapter Eighteen, the *Uttaratantra*; they were later developed in commentaries on the *nidāna* verses of the *Vajramālā*. Tsong kha pa himself dedicated great effort to parsing the elements of *sādhana* practice into these two stages.<sup>218</sup> The notion of “similitude” vs “true transformation” proposed by Bentor will continue to inform our discussion of the two stages in the next chapter.

## II. Issues Regarding the Mapping of Deities onto the body in Mkhas grub’s *Ocean of Attainment*

Having outlined a basic schematic of the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice, we will now look closely at a few key points from Mkhas grub’s text. Our goal is to draw attention to the ways in which this fifteenth-century Tibetan scholastic is negotiating different versions of the practice presented in various Indian texts accepted as authoritative within the Ārya tradition, the texts linked with Nāgārjuna and his disciples.<sup>219</sup> In doing so, we will learn more about Mkhas grub’s perspective on the Buddhist tantric tradition at large and the importance of the Guhyasamāja system within it. We will also observe the ingenuity required of Tibetan commentators in adhering to the standards of textual authority while struggling to account for discrepancies amongst authoritative texts. Mkhas grub’s commentarial strategies produce a portrait of his own identity as a writer, but they also contribute to the formation and distinction of a tradition of descent from Tsong kha pa that over time became identified as the dGa ldan pa or Gelukpa [dge lugs pa] tradition. Finally, the citations he provides suggest themes in the evolution of the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice itself within the Indian context and its Tibetan reception.

The main points to be addressed in this section of the chapter concern the principles of mapping and correlation in Mkhas grub’s writings on body mandala. The featured examples are issues surrounding mapping the Buddha families and the goddesses Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, and Tārā onto the body as well as the association of those goddesses with the elements and winds of the body. We will consider how the details of these aspects of the practice connect with themes in the evolution of tantric ritual over time.

Some techniques of mapping deities onto the body in association with aspects of the psycho-physical person reveal a refined understanding of the body’s hidden structures and processes. These understandings build upon or operate in relation to existing systems

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<sup>218</sup> Tsong kha pa as well as many Indian commentators proposed different methods for relating these different schema. Tsong kha pa devoted particular attention to relating the body, speech and mind isolations [*dben* Skt. *viveka*] to other schema such as the six yogas and five stages. See Wayman 1977 (2005 Reprint), pp. 156-180 for a more detailed discussion.

<sup>219</sup> In fn2 of the introduction to their 2009 edition of the *Vajrasattva sādhana*, Tomabeche and Hong make the important point that there is no Sanskrit evidence for the term ‘Ārya tradition’ [Tib. ‘Phags lugs] and therefore, we must be cautious about projecting such terms upon the Indian context. They refer likewise to Tomabeche 2008 or further detail.

such as the elements, skandhas, and other lists of bodily constituents. This conjunction of systems of meaning may require modifications to those existing systems.<sup>220</sup> Some scholars have theorized that the earliest Guhyasamāja materials lack the subtle body practices that later became a prominent feature of their exegesis and ritual practice.<sup>221</sup> Others contest that the systems of winds so profoundly developed with Buddhist tantra have their origins in the Vedas while others find these origins in the Upaniṣadic context.<sup>222</sup> Further influences might be traced from non-Buddhist tantra and Ayurveda.<sup>223</sup> However, it is important to consider influences from within the network of Buddhist tantra as well. For example, some of the commentarial traditions of the Guhyasamāja coincide with the composition of texts regarded as yoginī tantras, texts renowned for their sophisticated formulations of the inner workings of the subtle body. Therefore, Indian commentators on the Guhyasamāja may have been influenced by the yoginī tantras. Moreover, the working knowledge of the body informed by both the fifteenth-century Tibetan tantric and medical discourses further contributed to this evolution. The competition and prestige involved in presenting a compelling and effective ritual means for tapping into the body's utmost potential motivated the production of ritual texts. These texts employ the principles of mapping and correlation oriented around the body to navigate the very boundaries of life and death.

Our first example deals with a tension between accounts of mapping the buddha families onto regions of the body and accounts of mapping them onto more precise points. In encountering the representations of the body presented by Mkhas grub and his creative navigation of the gaps between them, it may be fruitful to consider: How specific is this mode of mapping? Our second example demonstrates how through correlating the goddesses with elemental winds [*rlung*], Mkhas grub emphasizes the completion stage of the Guhyasamāja as a technology for navigating the death process, an imperative of direct relevance to fifteenth century tantric exegetes.

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<sup>220</sup> In the previous chapter, we discussed an example of such a conjunction in the transition from a three to five-Buddha family schema and its impact upon the mandala and its correlations. Once again, see Snellgrove 1987 (2002 Reprint) pp198-213.

<sup>221</sup> See Kittay 2011's synopsis of historical developments in tantra, based upon the work of Weinberger. Kittay 2011, pp.121-22 and Weinberger 2003, p37.

<sup>222</sup> Kittay 2011 cites Hartzell (1995 & 1997) and Samuel 2008 respectively. Kittay adds: "Hartzell also notes the features of Tantra that do not appear in the Brāmanas 'in any germinal form,' including seed syllable mantras, the aim of liberation as opposed to immortality through these practices, sexual rites not concerned with procreation, the central role of elaborate visualizations of deities (although there is an idea of 'entering deities') male/female couples and Buddhist notions of emptiness and the like." See Hartzell 1995, p.125-127 and Kittay 2011, p. 128 & fn354.

Patton 2004 (pp.47-8) provides references to the internalization of the sacrifice or "cosmology of the sacrifice" in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 3.1.5 & 3.1.8-10. Her reference to the correlation of worldly rivers with rivers inside the body is of particular interest for considering the origin of the channels. [see *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, 1.1.1]. I am grateful to Alexander von Rospatt for directing me to this portion of Patton's work.

<sup>223</sup> See Timalina 2012 and Wujastyk 2009 respectively.

As we proceed to look closely at a few of the issues he raises, his critiques, his theories, and the sources upon which he relies for support, we begin the slow but important work of contextualizing his writings on body mandala within a larger project of tradition-building. In particular, we will consider the manner in which he elevates and distinguishes what he envisions to be his own tradition in relation to others. Observing the manner in which he forms his claims, accepting the positions of some writers and refuting those of others, is a key part of this process.

## IIA. Mapping the Five Buddha Families onto the Body

Following Wright’s survey of the scholarship on dating the texts of the Guhyasamāja cycle, the first seventeen chapters of the root tantra might be dated to the late eighth-century while Chapter Eighteen, known as the “*Subsequent Tantra*” [*Uttaratantra*], to be discussed a bit later, seems to have been completed by 800 CE.<sup>224</sup> The texts of Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, and Candrakīrti form the corpus of commentaries commonly referred to as the Ārya tradition; these texts are taken as authoritative by those who, like Mkhas grub, claim inheritance of that tradition. Many scholars agree that although these authors share the names of renowned Madhyamaka philosophers, they are distinct from and lived centuries later than them. Wedemeyer dates the texts of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva to 925-1025 CE and those of Candrakīrti to 950-1057 CE.<sup>225</sup> Determining precise dates for these texts is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it may be helpful to keep this general outline in mind.

We begin by examining an excerpt on mapping the five Buddha families onto the body from the first half of Mkhas grub’s text; this excerpt appears in the context of refuting the traditions of others. Specifically, Mkhas grub is contesting the assertions of some proponents of the Guhyasamāja who claim that only seeds syllables are arranged on the body, not deities. Mkhas grub insists that the authoritative Indian sources of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition support the location of deities upon the body. We will follow Mkhas grub in his journey through an elaborate program of textual exegesis, a journey he undertakes to prove that body mandala ritual rather than mere syllable placement or *nyāsa*, is indeed substantiated by the textual sources. “As for the arrangement of just the seed syllables of the deities, not arranging the deities on the body, in the *Mdor byas* [*Piṇḍikṛta*] it says:

‘Having arranged ‘thlim’ on the eye(s),  
One should visualize Kṣitigarbha.  
Arranging ‘aom’ on the ears,  
One should visualize Vajrapāṇi.’

<sup>224</sup> See Roger Wright, “A Survey of Explanatory Tantras and Commentaries of the Guhyasamāja Tantra,” ?Unpublished paper. Accessed via: <http://www.wrighrp.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/SOASMA2010/GuhyasamajaCommentarySurvey-corrections-20100718.pdf>

<sup>225</sup> IBID. See also Wedemeyer 2007.

That (statement by some follower of the Guhyasamāja claiming the arrangement of just seed syllables and not deities) contradicts the explicit explanation for visualizing the deities (*Piṇḍikṛta*).<sup>226</sup> The *Rnam gzhag rim pa* says:

‘From the arrangement of the five *tathāgatas*, the five aggregates (*skandhas*) will become the cause of enlightenment.’<sup>227</sup>

And further,

‘The cause and result of arranging the bodhisattvas on the sense spheres, on the eyes and so forth are taught.’

(This statement) explains arranging the (actual) deities (vs. just syllables).<sup>228</sup>

Nāṅārjuna’s *Mdor byas* [*Piṇḍikṛta*] and Nāgabodhi’s *Rnam gzhag* are both Ārya cycle texts dealing with the generation stage practice of the Guhyasamāja. Mkhas grub continues:

“Moreover, in particular, (there is) that very arrangement of the body mandala, from the eighth chapter of the [GS] root tantra:

‘from between the breasts up to/in the middle of the crown  
by the ritual specialist, moreover between the feet/legs  
in the navel-waist-secret, the bodhisattva (lit. son of victor)  
The arrangement of the five families is to be performed.’

[*nu ma'i dbus bar spyi gtsug mtha' yi bar*  
*cho ga shes pas yang na rkang pa'i bar*  
*lte ba rked pa gsang par rgyal ba'i sras*

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<sup>226</sup> See 239.2-240.4 in Mkhas grub’s text for the claims of the opponents.

<sup>227</sup> This quote is derived from Chapter Two of the *Rnam gzhag*. See Tanaka’s partial edition of this text 2001-2, 2004 & 2009).

*gyur ro* usually indicates the future tense. *rgyu dang 'bras bu* may refer to the seed syllable and body of deity respectively. [Khenpo Choying Dorje, Personal communication, Spring 2011]

<sup>228</sup> *lus la lha mi 'god par lha'i sa bon 'ba' zhig 'god pa ni mdor byas las; Thi lim mig tu bkod nas ni ; sa yi [243.2] snying po rnam par bsgom ; aom ni rna ba dag la dgod ; phyag na rdo rje bsgom par bya ; zhes sogs kyis lha bsgom par dngos su bshad pa dang 'gal zhing; rnam gzhag rim par yang; de bzhin gshegs pa lnga bkod pa las phung po lnga byang chub kyis rgyur [243.3] 'gyur ro ; zhes dang; mig la sogs pa'i skye mched rnams la byang chub sems dpa' rnams dgod pa'i rgyu dang 'bras bu gsungs pa zhes sogs kyis lha nyid dgod par bshad cing*

See 241.1 for a similar quote from the same text. It may be fruitful to consider the quality of the different texts of the Guhyasamāja cycle in relation to one another, contemplating how such comparisons may inform our understanding of an evolving genre of tantric commentarial literature. For example, can we say that the *mdor byas* is more like *sādhana* and *Rnam zhag* is more like commentary? [The connections were initiated in a discussion with Khenpo Yeshe, Spring 2011]

*rigs lnga rnams ni dgod pa rab tu bya]*  
It is taught by this quote from the *Mdo bsres*.”<sup>229</sup>

At present I have retained a word by word translation of this verse in order to leave room for the discussion of different interpretations of its meaning. It would perhaps be more accurate to say: “the arrangement of the five families (and associated) bodhisattvas should be performed by the ritual specialist (onto the regions) ranging from the breasts up to the crown, and moreover, between the feet/legs, in the navel-waist-secret.” Alternatively, we might read: “The ritual specialist should arrange the five families between the breasts, ?in the middle of the crown and between the feet and the bodhisattvas in the (region of) the navel, waist and secret place.” For the time being, we will refrain from determining a conclusive translation. Instead, we will focus upon what this quote meant to Mkhas grub, other possible interpretations, and how Mkhas grub goes about establishing his own interpretation in the face of those alternatives.

The primary citation is derived from Chapter Eight, verse nine of the *Guhyasamāja Root Tantra*.<sup>230</sup> The quote appears in 203.4 in the sde dge bka’ gyur edition. However, the form in which it appears there is somewhat different from the form it takes in Mkhas grub’s text:

*nu ma’i dbus gang spyi tsug mtha’ dbus su*  
*cho ga shes pas rkang pa’i bar du yang*  
*lte bar ro smad gsang ba rgyal ba’i sras*  
*rigs lnga rnams ni dgod par rab tu bya*

The significance of the appearance of *gang* rather than *bar* of the phrase in Mkhas grub’s text as *nu ma’i dbus bar* and *dbus su* vs. *yi bar* of *spyi gtsug mtha’ yi bar* is debatable. However, when we look at Candrakīrti’s commentary, we will see how the meaning of *bar* as ‘between,’ rather than simply ‘in the middle,’ is fully exploited in locating Amitābha in the region of the throat, ‘between’ the crown and the heart center. The most significant of the differences is the compound *lte bar ro smad gsang ba*. The locative has been removed from *gsang ba* and added to *lte ba*, and *ro smad*, the “lower body,” appears instead of *rked pa*.<sup>231</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> *khyad par du yang; lus dkyil ’god pa de nyid rtsa rgyud kyi le’u brgyad pa [243.4]*  
*las...zhes pas bstan par mdo bsre las gsungs la*

<sup>230</sup> See Matsunaga’s 1978 edition of the tantra, p.24 for the Sanskrit text:  
*stanāntaraṃ yāvachchikhāntamadye caraṇāntare cāpi nyased vidijñāḥ/  
nābhikaṭiguhye jinātmajānāṃ nyāsaṃ prakuryāt kulapañcakānām/  
Matsunaga 1978 (fn16) states that two manuscripts, BG & BT read *valgāntare* vs. *caraṇāntare*. Fremantle’s 1971 edition likewise footnotes this an alternative and also makes note of a manuscript C that reads *sparsāntare* instead.*

<sup>231</sup> IW of thlib [Accessed: 10/23/2013] defines *ro smad* as “lower body.”  
The *dpe bdur ma* edition of the GST [locate bibliographic info-recent publication] is identical to the sde dge except that it reads no locative into the compound: *lte bar ro smad gsang ba*. See *dpe sdur ma* publication 317 lines 6-8.

The context in which the verse quoted here appears in the root tantra itself refers to practice with a consort accompanied by offerings of the impure substances.

However, it is important to remember that Mkhas grub is extracting this quote from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* via Nāgārjuna's text, the *Mdo bsres*, a commentary on generation stage practice based upon the first seventeen chapters of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.<sup>232</sup> The form of this short text of about ten folia sides is one in which Nāgārjuna appears to be extracting quotes from different portions of the root tantra (not in chronological order) and explaining how they refer to different elements of the generation stage practice. The sde dge edition of this text reads *nu ma'i bar nas klad pa'i rgya bar du* vs. *nu ma'i dbus bar spyi gtsug mtha' yi bar*. The *nas...bar du* construction supports an interpretation of the quote as referring to a span of the body from between the breasts up until the uppermost portion (of the body).<sup>233</sup> The second line adds a verb, with *rkang mthil bar du dgod* instead of *rkang pa'i bar du yang*. It also tells us that the lowermost portion referred to is the 'soles of the feet.' In addition, it is more easily read as "arrange up until the soles of the feet" than the somewhat confusing designation "between the feet." Therefore, this version of the quote from Chapter Eight of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* describes a ritual specialist performing an arrangement of deities spanning from between the breasts up to the head and then down to the soles of the feet. The emphasis here appears to be upon covering the entire span of the body rather than targeting specific sites.

Nāgārjuna introduces this particular quotation within his text as follows: "Since beings with awareness, possessed of form, with bodies with the nature of wisdom, taught in Chapter One, are not able to manifest as sentient beings, Chapter Eight says..."<sup>234</sup> Nāgārjuna seems to be setting up the location of deities within or even as the human body in terms of the broader theme of compassionate embodiment in a *nirmāṇakāya* form. The author then concludes discussion of the quotation with: "All the *tathāgatas* enter the body (with) the nature of wisdom in the nature of the skandhas and so forth through the mantric consecration [*sngags kyis byin gyis brlabs*] that is taught in that quote (from the

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<sup>232</sup> The quote appears on 24.5-.6 of the sde dge bstan 'gyur edition of the *Śrī guhyasamāja-mahāyogatantrapattikrama-sādhana-sūtra-melāpaka-nāma*; *Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i bskyed p'i rim pa'i bsgom pa'i thabs mdo dang bsres pa zhes bya ba*; Translators: Dharmasribhadra and Rin chen bzang po; P2662, Vol. 60-61; T1797.

The last two lines of the quote are virtually identical to Mkhas grub's version.

<sup>233</sup> JV, IW and RY of thlib.org all interpret the term *klad pa* as "the uppermost portion" or the "brain" or "mind." (Accessed 10/24/2013) The latter seems inappropriate as within Indian and Tibetan traditions, the mind is commonly conceived of as abiding in the heart region. As for the 'brain,' it would likely be necessary to consult early Tibetan medical sources to understand how specific the understanding of its location was. Therefore, for the time being, it would be best to translate *klad pa* as referring to the uppermost portion of the body.

<sup>234</sup> *mdo bsres* [24.4-.5] : *da nas le'u dang po las gsungs pa'i rig pa'i skye bu gzugs can ye shes kyi rang bzhin gyi lus kyis sems can gyi ngon bya bar mi nus pas na le'u brgyad pa la*



tantra).”<sup>235</sup> Nāgārjuna then links our quote to the description of the skandhas as the five buddhas and of the sense spheres as the “bodhisattva mandala” from Chapter Seventeen of the tantra.<sup>236</sup> Next, he refers to the body mandala explicitly (*sku'i dkyil 'khor*):

“Then, after imbuing [*zhugs*] (the body with) the deities of the body mandala, for the benefit of disciples, one should cultivate oneself as Vajradhara in his three-faced aspect. This very point is taught from Chapter One: ‘The form of the being of great awareness, the lord of all *tathāgata*, consecrates (them) with mantra. As soon as they are

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<sup>235</sup> *mdo bsres* [24.6]: *zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsung pa'i sngags kyis byin gyis brlabs pas phung po la sogs pa'i ngo bo nyid la de bzhin bshags pa (read gshegs pa) thams cad ye shes kyi rang bzhin lus la rjes su zhugs par bya'o*

<sup>236</sup> The Buddha-skandha correlation should not be taken for granted in our approach to the Guhyasamāja materials; it is a correlative set that evolved over time and in relation to other sets of syllables, colors, and bodily locations. Though we have the relation of the five wisdoms and five families emerging in the STTS, the skandhas don't appear to be included there. Snellgrove doesn't address this issue directly but rather says that the scheme of elements and skandhas is "readily adaptable" to the five buddha family formation. See Snellgrove 1987 (2002 Reprint), p201.

In my preliminary attempts to locate the source of the correlation of Buddhas with skandhas, the literature of the Guhyasamāja cycle appears to be the context in which the connection is solidified. As will be discussed below, in his *Mdor byas*, Nāgārjuna refers to Chapter Seventeen of the root tantra for this correlation. However, the specific correlations are not elaborated there.

Wayman 1977 seems to highlight a rather tenuous link between the skandhas and Buddha families in Chapter Sixteen of the root tantra; he expects the reader to apply this connection to the correlation of Buddha families and poisons and in Chapter 18, the *Uttaratantra*, which we know to be a later addition. The *Piṇḍikṛta-sādhana* and *Vajramālā* (and its forty nidāna verses also cited in the in Candrakārti's *Pradīpoddyotana* and briefly in Āryadeva's *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*) are among the texts from the Ārya cycle referenced by Wayman in this regard. See See Wayman 1977 (2005 Reprint), pps. 208-214.

Mapping the buddhas onto regions of the body, although not as specific as onto cakras or vital points allowed for a more location-oriented model than the Buddha-skandha correlation. Though one might be able to imagine Vairocana to be in the nature of the form aggregate in an abstract sense, it is difficult to locate the aggregates, in particular the non-material aggregates, in specific bodily sites. It is necessary to look at the individual sādhanas and commentaries to better understand how these two schema for correlating the five Buddha families with bodily regions and skandhas respectively developed in relation to one another. We may also look at later developments in Buddhist tantra such as those of the Cakrasaṃvara system in which preliminary practices include the more abstract correlation of Buddhas with skandhas while the body mandala practice proper locates deities more specifically upon the body.

consecrated, the Buddha, the mind of enlightenment vajra, becomes visible to all the *tathāgatas* as the three-faced *tathāgata*.’ So there is the teaching of *atiyoga*.”<sup>237</sup>

It seems likely the Mkhas grub is interpreting the quote through Nāgārjuna’s text. Though Mkhas grub chooses not to quote any of Nāgārjuna’s commentarial notes from the text, it is possible that he assumes his readership to be familiar with the *Mdo bsres*; specifically, he may assume his readers are aware of the tradition of reading four stages of generation stage practice, the four yogas (*yoga*, *anuyoga*, *atiyoga* and *mahāyoga*) onto the root text of the tantra. Wayman describes how these terms are used by Nāgārjuna to structure his *Pinḍīkṛta-sādhana*, a generation-stage text we will examine more closely below.<sup>238</sup> Wayman observes:

“...in *yoga* there is the rite involving the recitation of the celebrated mantras, *Oṃ śūnyata*... With verse 51, he (Nāgārjuna) mentions the *anuyoga* and this culminates in the contemplation of the ‘primeval lord’ (ādinātha). Then the *atiyoga* develops vajrasattva...as the progressed self of the yogin with his body as a mandala...The *mahāyoga* starts with verse 70 and involves the blessing of the empowerment of body, speech and mind, using the mantras of Guhyasamāja, Chapter 6.”<sup>239</sup>

Wright 2010 specifies that the *atiyoga* “consists of transforming oneself, as the Ādibuddha, into the form of Akṣobhya and visualizing the deities and their attributes placed on various parts of the body...”<sup>240</sup> Understanding the context of the quote in

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<sup>237</sup> *mdo bsres* [24.7-25. 2]: *da ni sku'i dkyil 'khor gyi lha rnams la rjes su zhugs pas zhal gsum lta bus gdul bya rnams kyi don du rdo rje 'chang gi bdag nyid du bsgom par bya'o; don 'di nyid bstan pa di le'u dang po las; rig pa'i skye bu chen po'i gzugs da (read de) bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi bdag po sngags kyis byin gyis brlab so; byin gyis rlabs ma thag tu bcom ldan 'das byab (read byang) chub gyi sems rdo rja (read rje) de bzhin gshegs pa zhal gsum pa lta bur de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyis gzigs par 'gyur ro zhes gsungs pa ni shin tu rnal 'byor ro*

<sup>238</sup> See Wayman 1977 (2005 Reprint), p.156-163 for a detailed description of these terms and their deployment by Nāgārjuna and Tshongkhapa, among others.

<sup>239</sup> Wayman 1977 (2005 Reprint), p.157-58. See also the description of the four yogas in Wright’s 2010 translation and study of the *Pinḍī-kṛta*, pp. 31-33 and Appendix A. Wayman also highlight an interesting passage from Tsong kha pa’s *Sngags rim chen mo* (f.364b) in which the author correlates the four yogas with those presented in the *Kṛṣṇayamāri-tantra*. (Wayman, p157).

<sup>240</sup> Wright 2010, p.32. For the *atiyoga* section of the *Pinḍī-kṛta*, see v.52-68. Wright makes an interesting point about the preceding stage of *anuyoga*: “Later commentaries, from those attributed to Candrakīrti onwards, explain this yoga as representing the exercise of the body, speech and mind of the *Sambhogakāya*, which is consistent with the structure of the *sādhana* since the previous section manifested the *Dharmakāya* (v.44ff) and the following section manifests the *Nirmāṇakāya*.” (Ibid) Therefore, this might suggest that the three Buddha body model that Tsong kha pa was so invested in reading into the Guhyasamāja in terms of the stages of birth, death and the intermediate state does

Nāgārjuna's *Mdo bsres*, therefore allows us to situate it within the enactment of generation stage ritual in the Ārya tradition, the larger topic of Mkhas grub's text.

Mkhas grub follows his citation from Chapter Eight of the root tantra via the *Mdo bsres* with a citation from Candrakīrti's *Pradīpoddyotana*. Here, the correlation of the Buddhas with regions of the body is situated in the *yoga* and *anuyoga* stages of the ritual drama:

“From the '*grel pa sgron gsal* (it says):

‘In terms of the stages derived from the *sādhana*, in the *yoga* and subsequent *yoga* (*anuyoga*), for the purpose of demonstrating oneself and one's *mudrā* to make the five families, it says “*nu ma'i dbus*,” and so forth.<sup>241</sup>

As for the statement, “*nu ma'i dbus*,” it is abode of the heart.

When it says “*bar*” (it means), that in the section in between there is the syllable ‘*hum*’ and Akṣobhya's family is arranged here.<sup>242</sup>

When it says “*spyi gtsug mtha*” (the edge of the crown of the head), the words “*spyi gtsug mtha*” mean the edge of the hair [lit. starting with the hair].

From the edge of the hair up until the root [*skye gnas*], arrange Vairocana who arises from the letter ‘*aoum*’.<sup>243</sup>

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not appear in the interpretation of this tantric cycle before Candrakīrti. For more on Tsong kha pa's correlation of these triads, see Wayman 1977 (2005 Reprint).

<sup>241</sup> Khenpo Choying Dorje explains *rigs lngar bya ba* as meaning ‘transforming into’ the five families, much like *byin gyis brlabs* would be used to express blessing or transformation. He adds that both Mkhas grub and Tsong kha pa say that one can't transform one's actual body, but rather a future body. He also makes the important point that the *sgron gsal* leaves room for disagreement on this issue. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

It is of note that the *Pradīpoddyotana*'s account refers to transforming the bodies of both practitioner and consort into the bodies of the five Buddha families.

<sup>242</sup> The Sanskrit *humkārajam* makes explicit the fact the Akṣobhya's family is produced from the syllable *hum*.

<sup>243</sup> Perhaps we might translate this as “as far as it is able to grow.” This section is difficult to translate definitively. It seems to be saying that Vairocana is imagined from the root to the tip of the hair, but might also mean from the crown up until the spot above the forehead where hair begins to grow. The 2010 Sanskrit edition of the text reads:

*śikhāntaṃ itil śikhāntaśabdena keśā upalakṣyante yāvat keśāntaṃ/ keśabhūmau aomkārajam vairocana nyāset/*

See Candrakīrti. 2010. *Guhyasamājantrapradīpodyotanaṭīkā Ṣaṭkoṭivyaṅkyā of Ācārya Candrakīrti*. Ed., Ngawang Samten and S.S. Bahulkar. Dhīh: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research Department. Sarnath, Varanasi: Central University of Tibetan Studies.

*keśāntaṃ* corresponds with the Tibetan *skra'i mtha'* and is defined by Monier-Williams as both “the border of the hair on the forehead” and “lock of hair, tuft,” the latter presumably referring to the brahman's topknot. Monier-Williams likewise defines *keśabhūmi* (the Sanskrit translation of *skra'i skye gnas*) as the “the skull on which hair grows. [MW definition accessed on 10-24-2013 via [www.lexica.indica-et-buddhica.org/dict/lexica](http://www.lexica.indica-et-buddhica.org/dict/lexica)]

As for the “*cho ga shes pas*,” it is the one who knows the generation stage. When it says “*bar*,” (it means) between the heart center and the crown. If you ask why, (it is because) the region of the throat is the mandala of the mouth [*lkog ma'i phyogs kha'i dkyil 'khor*].<sup>244</sup> There, Amitabha is to be arranged arising from the letter ‘*ā*.’

When it says “*rkang pa'i bar*,” it means between the foot and the root of the thigh, (that is) “between the foot/leg.”<sup>245</sup>

As for the word “*dang*”, the meaning condensed (therein) is the two feet.

There, Amoghasiddhi is to be arranged arising from the letter ‘*hā*.’

As for “*lte ba rkad pa gsang ba*,”<sup>246</sup> [lit. navel-waist-secret]

Here, the seventh (case) [*nam dbye*] is invisible.<sup>247</sup>

In these places, Ratnsambhava is to be arranged arising from the letter “*sva*” [Tib. *soha* ].

As for *rgyal ba* (“the victor”), that refers to Vairocana and so forth.

As for *rgyal ba'i sras* (“the bodhisattva”), there are the families of those (buddhas).

So “*rgyal sras*” refers to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, Vairocana and so forth.

The ritual which explains the families of those from the *sādhana* says to arrange each of the five families just like this.’

This teaching clearly explains generation in the manner of arising from the seed (syllable) of each (deity).<sup>248</sup>

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In his contemporary writings on the Guhyasamāja practice, discussed in the first part of this chapter, Geshe Lobsang Tsephel locates Vairocana “between the crown and the hairline.” (Paths and Grounds, p.34). His description also correlates the buddhas with the skandhas. He reads the buddhas onto five regions: between crown and hairline, hairline and throat, throat and heart, heart and navel and navel and groin. This description appears to co-exist alongside a more localized one focused on the crown, throat, navel and groin. In that version, Akṣobhya, the main deity is fused with the body of the practitioner, though we might simultaneously interpret imagining him at the heart (though this is not explicitly stated in this account.) See Geshe Lobsang Tsephel, *Paths and Grounds*, p.26.

<sup>244</sup> Khenpo Choying Dorje remarked upon the somewhat unusual use of *kha'i dkyil 'khor* (mandala of the mouth/throat) as we usually find *mgrin pa'i dkyil 'khor*. I suggested a possible translation as ‘speech mandala.’ [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

<sup>245</sup> The fact that *rkang pa* may refer to either the foot or the leg may help to explain how the *bar* is working here as referring to the entire span of the leg.

<sup>246</sup> Read *rked pa* vs. *rkad pa*.

<sup>247</sup> In Sanskrit grammar, the seventh case is the locative case.

<sup>248</sup> *de'i 'grel pa sgron gsal las; sgrub pa'i thabs [243.5] las byung ba'i rim gyis rnal 'byor dang rjes su rnal 'byor byas la ; bdag nyid dang rang gi phyag rgya rigs Ingar bya ba bstan pa'i phyir; nu ma'i dbus zhes bya ba la sogs pa gsungs te; nu ma'i dbus zhes bya ba ni snying kha'i gnas so ; bar zhes bya ba ni de srid kyi [243.6] bar 'dir yi ge hum ste mi bskyod pa'i rigs dgod pa'o ; spyi gtsug mtha' zhes bya ba ni spyi gtsug gi mtha'i sgras skra nye bar mtshon te; skra'i mtha' ste skra'i skye gnas ji srid pa'i (sde dge reads kyi vs. pa'i) par du yi ge aom las byung ba'i rnam par snang mdzad dgod ro (sde dge reads do vs. ro); cho ga shes pas [244.1] zhes bya ba ni bskyed pa'i rim pa shes pas so; bar zhes bya ba*

The most obvious addition provided by the *Pradīpoddyotana* is the explicit correlation of sites on the bodies with specific buddhas and their association with respective seed syllables from which they arise. Furthermore, there is enhancement and revision of the bodily sites with which these buddhas are associated. For example, in clarifying the location referred to as “between the feet,” Amoghasiddhi is located in the region from the feet to the root of the thigh. The commentary also adds the “mandala of the mouth” in the throat region, inhabited by Amitābha, a site not explicitly named in the root. On a general level, both the root text and Candrakīrti’s commentary appear to be locating the buddhas of the five families in regions of rather than points on the body. The root text only directly names three or four regions or spans of the body [*nu ma'i dbus bar; spyi gtsug mtha' yi bar ; rkang pa'i bar ; lte ba rked pa*]. The *Pradīpoddyotana*, on the other hand, specifically refers to a fourth site in the throat and explicitly parses the lower body as the abodes of Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi to total five. We might be tempted to read other versions of mapping deities onto the body, such as those that separate the navel and genitals as separate vital points, onto this model. However, the *Pradīpoddyotana* reads them as a single region inhabited by Ratnasambhava.

The *Pradīpoddyotana* does, in a few instances, add further specificity to the assignment of bodily locales; for example, it clearly identifies the area between the breasts as the abode of the heart. It also appears to be emphasizing that bodhisattvas associated with the Buddha families are likewise being mapped onto the body although it

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*ni snying kha dang sbyi gtsug gi bar te; gang yin zhe na; lkog ma'i phyogs kha'i dkyil 'khor te; der yi ge aa las byung ba'i od dpag tu med pa dgod par bya'o ; rkang pa'i bar zhes bya ba ni rkang pa dang brla'i ( sde dge reads brla vs. brla'i) [244.2] rtsa'i ba'i bar du ni rkang pa'i bar ro (sde dge reads bol vs. bar ro); dang zhes bya ba'i sgra ni rkang pa gnyis su zhes bsdu ba'i don te; der yi ge haa las byung ba'i don yod par grub par dkod bar (sde dge reads dgod par) bya'o ; lte ba rkad pa (sde dge reads rked pa) gsang ba zhes bya ba ni; 'dir bdun pa mi mngon par byas pa yin te; gnas 'di dag tu sba' [244.3] las byung ba'i rin chen 'byung ldan dgod par bya'o ; rgyal ba ni rnam par snang mdzad la sogs pa'o ; rgyal ba'i sras ni de'i rigs te; rgyal ba dang rgyal ba'i sras dag ni rgyal sras zhes bya ste; rnam par snang mdzad la sogs pa dang; de'i rigs rnam sgrub pa'i thabs [244.4] las bshad pa'i cho gas rigs lnga'i bdag nyid dgod pa ji lta ji lta (sde dge reads ji lta ji lta) bar bya'o zhes pa'o ; zhes gsungs pa 'dis rang rang gi sa bon las byung ba'i ltar bskyed pa dngos su gsal bar bshad cing*

This quote is found on 118.4-119.3 of the sde dge bstan 'gyur edition of the *Pradīpoddyotana-nāma-tīkā* (*sgron ma gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba'i rgya cher bshad pa*) by Candrakīrti (*zla ba grags pa*) Vol.29 (ha) p.2-402 (ff.1v-201v). I have compared this edition with Mkhas grub’s citation and annotated the minimal differences in parentheses. The only variation of potential significance is 244.2 *rtsa'i ba'i bar du ni rkang pa'i bar ro* for which sde dge (118.7) reads *bol* vs. *bar ro*. According to RY on thlib.org (Accessed 10/18/2013) *bol* can mean the upper part of the foot whereas for IW it may mean the upper part of the leg.

For a Sanskrit edition of this passage see the 2010 publication by Ngabang Samten & S.S. Bahulkar. pps. 114-115.

remains unclear where precisely they are being located. In other versions of the practice, we commonly find the bodhisattvas mapped onto the sense spheres, vajra, and joints.

In order to reveal the evolution of notions of the subtle body inherent in changes in modes of mapping deities onto the body, it is vital that we resist the tendency to impose what may be a later formulation of the practice upon open-ended or idiosyncratic passages we encounter.<sup>249</sup> Doing so allows us more freedom to generate potentially fruitful questions with regard to this model of the body mandala. Such questions include the following. Is it possible that the mode of mapping buddhas onto segments of the body rather than cakras or vital points as found in the *Pradīpoddyotana*'s interpretation of the verse from Chapter Eight of the root leaves open the question of whether the manipulation of energies through the particular bodily centers is involved in the practice? When did the practice of “piercing the pith” [*gnad du bsnun*], tapping into specific vital energy centers of the body through mantra recitation and visualization practice, become prominent within the Guhyasamāja system?<sup>250</sup> In the next chapter, we will begin to closely examine this notion of “piercing the pith” and the way it functions as a defining quality of body mandala for both Mkhas grub and Ngor chen. In terms of the evolution of tantric ritualized knowledge of the body, however, the *Pradīpoddyotana*'s description does not suggest a model of the body focused upon the “pith,” but rather a more general localization of a bodily totality.

Mkhas grub concludes his discussion of these passages from the root tantra via the *Mdo bsres* and *Pradīpoddyotana* as follows:  
This is an explanation for arranging the five families and all the deities of those (families) upon both one's own body and that of the consort. Therefore, (in my mind) the one who claims this arrangement of deities is not the explanation of '*phags pa yab sras* [the Ārya fathers and sons] has not seen the *Pradīpoddyotana*.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> An excellent example of this tendency is found in Fremantle's 1971 translation of this verse as “knowing the ritual, he should place the Five Families, the sons of the Jinas, on the forehead (fn5), the throat, the heart, the navel and the genitals.” Fremantle's translation reflects a degree of confidence in mapping Buddha families onto a set of five cakras that is premature in the case of the root tantra. In this way, Fremantle obscures the technology of parsing the body into regions suggested by the root text and preserved, to a degree, by Candrakīrti's commentary (despite the fact that the author relies heavily upon this very text in the translation of the root tantra.) The compound *lte ba rkad pa gsang ba* which in Fremantle's Sanskrit edition of the root tantra corresponds with *nābhikaṭiguhye* presents particular challenges. In the case of the root, Fremantle is parsing this as “navel and genitals.” Her translation therefore creates a system of five sites that overlooks “*rkang pa'i bar*” and divides *lte ba* and *gsang ba* without accounting for *rkad pa*.

<sup>250</sup> The definition of body mandala practice as that which “pierces to the pith of the body” [*lus la gnad du bsnun*] will be discussed in further depth in the next chapter of the dissertation. I have yet to locate a Sanskrit equivalent for this term. This may suggest that its origins and emphasis lie in the Tibetan rather than the Indian tradition.

<sup>251</sup> Khenpo Yeshe confirmed that here Mkhas grub is mocking the proponent who thinks you just arrange syllables rather than the deities themselves. [Personal Communication, Spring 2011]

In other words, Mkhas grub is defending the validity of this mode of mapping deities rather than just seed syllables onto the body by securing its position with the authoritative texts of the Ārya tradition.<sup>252</sup> Finally, Mkhas grub proposes a theory of accommodation of two different modes of mapping deities onto the body: Furthermore, in terms of this quotation from the root tantra that was just cited, if one follows the same model of (explaining) arranging Vairocana (in the region) from the edge of the hair [*skra mtshams*] to the crown and Amitabha from the throat [*lkog ma*] to the edge of the hair, and Akṣobhya, from the heart center to up to edge of the throat, then it seems permissible to arrange Ratnasambhava from the heart to the navel and Amoghasiddhi from the lower edge of the navel up until the root of the thigh. In accord with the literal understanding of the (section from the) *Pradīpoddyotana* that was just cited,<sup>253</sup> Ratnasambhava pervades the three, the navel, waist, and secret place, and Amoghasiddhi appears to be arranged from the base of the thigh up until the toes. However one chooses to arrange those two, it is fine.<sup>254</sup>

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*rang dang phyag rgya gnyis ka'i lus la rigs lnga dang de'i rigs [244.5] kyī lha thams cad 'god par bshad pa yin pas lha 'gong pa 'phags pa yab sras kyī bshed pa ma yin par smras pas ni 'grel pa sgron gsal ma mthong bar go bar byas so*

<sup>252</sup> It seems a bit strange that Mkhas grub mentions the consort here yet does not quote the almost immediately preceding verse from the root that explicitly mentions the consort. For the moment we will bracket the significance of this omission, but it is important to note that understanding how the relationship of the body mandalas of main deity/practitioner and consort is a complex issue Mkhas grub himself grapples with elsewhere within his text. See, for example, 239.4-241.5. Fremantle 1971 identifies this chapter as dealing with the “secret consecration” (*guhyābhīṣekha*) [Chap 8, fn1.]

If indeed the emerging Gelukpa tradition embraced and promoted the Guhyasamāja system with an emphasis upon its power as a wisdom tantra as a part of a larger monastic reform initiated by Tsong kha pa, the role and nature of the consort within this equation would be significant. I am grateful to as suggested by Christian Luczanits for bringing my attention to this aspect of the tantra in the Tibetan context. [Private communication, 9/17/2013], One potential source for exploring how the Guhyasamāja might be understood to fit within a paths and stages model of Buddhist practice is Atiśa’s *Lamp for the Path*.

<sup>253</sup> See *Ocean of Attainment* 243.4-244.4.

<sup>254</sup> *de yang drangs ma thag pa'i rtsa rgyud kyī lung 'dis; nam snang skra mtshams nas spyi bo'i bar dang; 'od dpag med [245.2] lkog ma nas skra mtshams par dang; mi skyod pa snying kha nas lkog ma'i ma mtha' bar du 'god par bshad ba'i rigs; 'gres<sup>254</sup> sbyar na snying kha nas lte ba'i bar la rin 'byung dang; lte ba'i ma mtha'i mstshams nas brla'i rtsa [245.3] ba'i bar la don grub bkod pas chog par snang la; drangs ma mthag pa'i sgron gsal gyi tshig zin ltar na lte ba rked pa gsang gnas gsum la khyab par rin 'byung dang ; brla'i rtsa ba nas rkang sor bar la don grub 'god par snang ste de gnyis [245.4] gang byas kyang chog par bzhed do*

It is interesting that the two Buddhas whose positions are at issue are the buddhas of the jewel and karma families; these two families are considered to be a later addition in the evolution of mandala from a three to five family scheme typically associated with the STTS.<sup>255</sup> As such, earlier depictions of these two families within both visual and textual representations were often unstandardized.<sup>256</sup> Slippage in techniques of mapping Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi between different texts that serve as sources for body mandala may be connected with the evolution from a three to five buddha family schema. Therefore, divergences in methods of mapping buddhas onto the form of the mandala found in visual and textual representations may also have occurred in technologies of mapping deities onto the body.<sup>257</sup>

What is most important for our purposes of understanding the body mandala debate is attuning ourselves to the ways in which Mkhas grub copes with variant modes of mapping the body. In our readings, Khenpo Choying Dorje highlighted the significance of the phrase *chog par bzhed do*, as meaning something along the lines of “it’s ok.” This phrase is far less definitive than other terminology Mkhas grub uses to assert his position within the text, which typically takes the form of what is ‘logical’ or ‘illogical,’ ‘acceptable’ or ‘unacceptable.’ It signals Mkhas grub’s prowess in navigating delicate issues of textual authority. If he were to exclusively assert his own interpretation of the root tantra, then he would be contradicting Candrakīrti. Such a move would be unacceptable, not simply because the latter is an Indian commentator (for Mkhas grub is known to at times be surprisingly liberal in his critiques of some Indian commentators), but because he is a hallmark writer of the Ārya tradition as perpetuated by the emerging Gelukpa tradition.<sup>258</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> On the transition from a three to five-family schema, see Snellgrove 1987 (2002 Reprint), pp.189-213.

<sup>256</sup> I am grateful to have had the opportunity to study some examples of such representations in a Fall 2009 seminar on the STTS with Alexander von Rospatt and Jake Dalton as well as in a Spring 2011 seminar on Tibetan art with Christian Luczanits at UC Berkeley.

<sup>257</sup> Note that one of these modes of mapping posits the thigh as the lowest point for arranging the Buddhas; the other, derived from the *Pradīpoddyotana*, retains the feet as the lowest point (as found in the root text.) A divergence of this kind raises further questions, of the kind posed in mapping the proto-body mandala from Dunhuang in Chapter Two. If the focus of mapping deities onto the body is to cover its full span, rather than to locate specific vital points, is it a seated or a standing body that is the prototype? Is it appropriate to locate a Buddha upon the feet? We will return to explore different modes of mapping deities onto the body in dialogue with some non-Buddhist examples in the conclusion of the dissertation.

<sup>258</sup> I am deeply indebted to Khenpo Choying Dorje for bringing my attention to such subtleties in Mkhas grub’s polemics. He also suggested a possible attempt on Mkhas grub’s part to relate his own position to Tsong kha pa’s on this issue. More research is needed on this point. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]



## IIB. Locating and Correlating the Four Goddesses

The next topic to be addressed from Mkhas grub's text involves similar issues of how to locate deities on the body, in this case, the four goddesses Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā. We have already noted the complex history of these goddesses and their identifications with the buddha families, in particular the troubled relationship of Māmakī and Tārā, in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Therefore, it is necessary that we remain attuned to changes in the associations of these goddesses within the Indian context. Such changes may lay the backdrop for Mkhas grub's efforts to account for the multiple strategies for identifying the goddesses and their connections to the buddha families and bodily elements. Above, we referenced the comparison of frameworks associating buddhas with bodily regions and with the skandhas. Here, in the case of the goddesses, once again we encounter an initiative to more concretely 'locate' deities within the space of the body.

In this portion of his argument, Mkhas grub is attempting to modify an existing correlation of these goddesses with the elements to posit and solidify their relationship to bodily winds. The passages to be discussed appear in the same section of Mkhas' grub's texts as those interpreted above. Therefore, both clusters of passages share a common goal of articulating the mapping of deities vs. merely seed syllables onto the body and thereby distinguishing body mandala practice from practices like *nyāsa*. This argument regarding the goddesses is more complex than that of mapping buddhas onto bodily regions. The incorporation of the body mandala of the consort, or "mother deity," here in relation to that of the male practitioner or "father deity" is one reason for the added complexity of the argument surrounding the goddesses.<sup>259</sup> Therefore, although it precedes the latter in Mkhas grub's text, it is presented after it here; this will allow us to build upon the observations made in interpreting Mkhas grub's discussion of mapping buddhas onto bodily regions.

Mkhas grub begins the relevant section by referencing the arrangement of the goddesses according to the *Rnam gzhag rim pa* [*Samāja-sādhana-vyavasthole (sthāli)*]. As mentioned above, this text, attributed to Nāgabodhi, is an Ārya cycle text dealing with the generation stage practice of the Guhyasamāja.<sup>260</sup> Mkhas grub asserts: "The *rnam gzhag rim pa* intends for one to arrange the goddesses who are the five mothers [*yum*] on the bodies of both the father and mother deity. It's unreasonable [*mi*

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<sup>259</sup> The use of the terms "father deity" and "mother deity" here reinforce the ritual notion of the practitioners acting as the main deities of the Akṣobhyavajra mandala of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition.

<sup>260</sup> Toh 1809 Sde sde bstan 'gyur Vol. 35 ff. 121a-131a by Nāgabodhi. For partial editions, see Tanaka 2001-2, 2004 & 2009. For Tsong kha pa's position on the attribution of texts to Nāgabodhi, see Kilty 2013, p.65-66. See also Tsong kha pa's commentary on this text: *Rnam gzhag rim pa'i rnam bshad dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i gnad kyi don gsal ba*. In *gsung 'bum/ Tsong kha pa blo bzang grag pa* (Reproduced from Lhasa zhol par khang blocks). New Delhi: Lama Guru Deva, 1978-9. Vol.6. pps. 5-166.

*rīgs*] to arrange the four, Locanā and so forth on the navel, heart center, throat, and crown.”<sup>261</sup>

We have come to know the four goddesses Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā to be associated with the buddha families and positioned on the elements. However, texts (such as the *Pinḍikṛta* discussed above) that map the goddesses onto elements without specifying precise bodily regions or sites exhibit a somewhat imprecise variety of mapping not unlike mapping buddhas onto skandhas rather than regions or points.

The reference to the five goddesses as the five mothers [*yum*] is also somewhat perplexing. The set of five goddesses we are familiar with is the five *rdo rje ma*: Rūpavajrā, Śabdavajrā, Gandhavajrā, Rasavajrā and Sparśavajrā. The first four of these are, in some cases, considered to be in union with four of the bodhisattvas in the body mandala. The fifth goddess, Sparśavajra, is often united with Akṣobhya, the main deity of the mandala.<sup>262</sup>

The *Rnam gzhag* itself addresses the four goddesses as follows:

“The arrangement of the goddesses is taught.

Moharatī Locanā is the earth element.

Dveṣaratī Māmakī is water

Rāgaratī Pāṇḍaravāsini is fire

Vajraratī Tārā is *rlung*.

We look to the root tantra to clarify the meaning:

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<sup>261</sup> *rnam gzhag rim par yum lnga'i lha mo rnam bkod pa ni yab yum gnyis ka'i lus kyi [240.2] dbang du byas pa'i lha rnam la dgongs pa yin no spyan ma la sogs pa bzhi lte ba snying kha mgrin pa spyi bo rnam su 'god pa yang mi rigs te*

<sup>262</sup> Further study is required to understand when and how Sparśavajra comes to be one of the mothers of the five families. In one sense, she might be imagined at the heart in union with Akṣobhya, while in another, she may be the consort herself in union with the practitioner as father deity. The question of how the consort was incorporated into body mandala practice may be relevant to grappling with this ambiguity.

Von Rospatt 2010 grapples with a potentially related issue involving the deployment of the goddesses in his study of a consecration ceremony based in Kuladatta's *Kriyāsamgrahapañjikā*. He is dealing with a set of four *Vajrī* derived from the Vajradhātu mandala: Sattvavajrī, Ratnavajrī, Dharmavajrī and Karmavajrī. In the *adhivāsana* mandala component of the consecration, these *Vajrī* exchange places with Locanā, Māmakī, Paṇḍara and Tārā. This exchanges defies the standard of the Vajradhātu mandala explicated in Abhayākara Gupta's *Niṣpaṇṇayogāvalī*. Von Rospatt observes: “This configuration is not a Newar innovation, but accords with the general tendency in Indian Buddhism to substitute the *Vajrī* goddesses of the Vajradhātu-mandala...with Locanā and so on. The four goddesses of both sets are related each to one of the five Buddhas in a largely but not completely congruent manner.” See von Rospatt 2010, especially p.221-2. In fn 45, he provides a reference to the Mañjuvajra mandala (associated with the Jñānapāda lineage of the Guhyasamāja system) for comparison.

‘As for the element of earth, it is explained as Locanā  
 As for the element of water, it is explained as Māmakī  
 [330] As for the element of fire, it is explained as Pāṇḍaravāsini  
 As for the element of air, it is known as Tārā’  
 So it is said.’<sup>263</sup>

The *Rnam gzhag* itself therefore seems to refer to this set of four as “goddesses” [*Iha mo*], not “mothers” [*yum*], and makes no mention of a fifth goddess or to the body of a consort. It also provides alternate names for them. Furthermore, the *Rnam gzhag* solidifies the relationship of these four goddesses to the elements through citation of Chapter Seventeen verse 51 of the root tantra.<sup>264</sup>

When Mkhas grub critiques the practice of mapping these goddesses onto the navel, heart, throat, and crown as unreasonable [*mi rigs*], he is taking a definitive stance against this technique although he does not cite its source. Mkhas grub continues by citing the *Piṇḍikṛta* [*Mdor byas*], a text attributed to Nāgārjuna that also deals with the generation stage practice of the Guhyasamāja. This text is believed to be a counterpart to the more well-known *Pañcakrama* by the same author which focuses upon the completion stage practice.<sup>265</sup> Roger Wright has dated the *Piṇḍikṛta* to between 800 and 950 CE.<sup>266</sup> Wright attests to the enduring significance of this text within the Geluk tradition in revealing that it is the basis for Tsong kha pa’s Guhyasamāja *sādhana*, a practice widely used today.<sup>267</sup> It is perhaps of note that the alternate names for the goddesses provided in the *nam gzhag* citation above are found in the within the body mandala of the father deity; in that text, the names Locanā... refer instead to the goddesses in the body mandala of the consort. Mkhas grub cites the *Piṇḍikṛta* as follows :

“In the *Piṇḍikṛta* (it says):

‘As for Locanā and Māmakī, likewise Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā,  
 they are arranged by the mantrika on the earth (element) and so forth.’

And in terms of the explanation of arranging the four goddesses in the sites of the four elements:

‘It is proper to arrange Locanā in (the area of) the genitalia, the abode of earth *rlung*, Tārā at the navel, the abode of *rlung rlung*, Māmakī at the heart center, in the abode of water *rlung*, and Pāṇḍaravāsini at the throat, in the abode of fire *rlung*.’ So it is said.”<sup>268</sup>

<sup>263</sup> I have located and translated this passage using Kimiaki Tanaka’s partial critical edition, which has been emerging over the course of a series of articles. See Tanaka 2001-2, 2004 & 2009.

<sup>264</sup> This citation from the root text was identified by Kimiaki Tanaka.

<sup>265</sup> Wright 2010, p.8.

<sup>266</sup> Wright 2010, p.16.

<sup>267</sup> Wright notes that Tsong kha pa’s text elaborates upon the basis of the *Piṇḍikṛta* but “maintains the same sequence of visualizations and mantras.” Wright 2010, p.54. See Tsong kha pa T5303: *Dpal gsang ba ‘dus pa’i sgrub thabs rnal ‘byor dag pa’i rim pa*. See also Wright 2010, Appendix A in which he compares the structure of the two texts.

<sup>268</sup> *mdor byas su, spyan dang ma’ ma ka’i dang ni ; de bzhin du ni gos dkar mo*

The initial quote from the *Piṇḍikṛta* is derived from the *mahāsadhana* section of that text, explaining the arrangement of the body mandala of the consort.<sup>269</sup> [See Fig.17] In the context of laying out the body mandala of the father deity, in the *atiyoga* section of the text<sup>270</sup>, the *Piṇḍikṛta* instructs [See Fig.16]: “With Moharatī, the mantrin should place them on the earth (element), and so forth: that with solidity, that with fluidity, that with warmth and that with airiness respectively.”<sup>271</sup>

Therefore, the *Piṇḍikṛta* clearly connects these four goddesses with the elements and their defining characteristics. The goddesses appear in the body mandalas of both father deity and consort, albeit with different names [Locanā...vs. Moharatī...] However, they are not located on sites in the body in any specific sense. In my own diagram of the body mandala of the father deity based on the *Piṇḍikṛta* and Wright 2010, I struggled to locate these goddesses in their elemental abodes. [See Fig.22] Like mapping the Buddhas onto skandhas vs. specific points or regions of the body, mapping goddesses onto elements appears to be a more abstract correlation than is typically found in *nyāsa* or body mandala practices. According to Wright’s study of the *Piṇḍikṛta-sādhana*, the buddhas of the five families are positioned upon the bodies of both the father deity and the consort at the crown, throat, heart, navel and feet. [See Fig. 16 & 17] So if one were to map the consorts onto those points by their associations with the buddhas of the respective families we would have a similar layout to that critiqued by Mkhas grub, with the addition of the feet.

As for Mkhas grub’s next citation, (“it is proper to arrange Locanā in the (area of the) genitalia...”) it’s derivation is unclear, as it does not appear in *Piṇḍikṛta*.<sup>272</sup> The closing phrase *zhes zer ro* suggests that it is a quotation, although it is possible that Mkhas grub is simply paraphrasing, perhaps even from a Tibetan source.<sup>273</sup> The statement locates the goddesses [Locanā, Tārā, Māmakī, and Pāṇḍaravāsini] on four

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*sgrol ma yang ni sngags pa yis; sa [240.3] la sogs bar rnam par dgod; ces 'byung ba bzhi'i gnas su lha mo bzhi dgod bar bshad pas; sa rlung gi gnas 'doms su spyān ma dang; rlung gi rlung gi gnas lte bar sgrol ma dang; chu rlung gi gnas snying khar ma' ma ki dang; me rlung gi gnas mgrin par gos [240.4] dkar mo dgod par rigs so zhes zer ro*

<sup>269</sup> See Wright’s 2010 translation v.96-97.

<sup>270</sup> See Wright’s 2010 v.52-69.

<sup>271</sup> *gti mug dga' sogs sngags kyis ni ; sa la sogs la rab tu bzhug; sra dang gsher dang dro ba dang; rlung sogs der ni rim pa bzhin* [Skt. *moharatyādikair mantri pṛthivyādin praveśayet; kharatvam; dravatā auṣṇyam īrṇatvam ca te kramāt*] See Wright 2010 translation and edition v61.

<sup>272</sup> I was also unable to locate it in Tanaka’s partial editions of the *Rnam gzhag*.

<sup>273</sup> For example, Bentor 2006 has demonstrated Bu ston to be the target of some of Mkhas grub’s critiques within the *Ocean of Attainment*. Among the texts she cites is Bu ston’s commentary on the *Piṇḍi-kṛta*. See Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364). *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i sgrub thabs mdor byas kyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gsal byed*. In *The Collected Works of Bu-ston*. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1967, Vol. 9, 683-877.

specific sites on the body [genitalia, navel, heart and throat] which are, in turn, defined as the abodes of elemental *rlung* [earth, *rlung*, water, and fire *rlung*]. These sites differ from the set critiqued by Mkhas grub in that the genitalia [‘*doms*] replace the crown. Neither the crown nor the feet, for that matter, are included here. Understanding how the sites on the body are associated with different elemental *rlung* as well as with the elements themselves is one point for further exploration.

Mkhas grub continues his critique a few pages later:

“There is the claim that it’s necessary to arrange (deities) on sites such as the secret place based upon the explanation for arranging deities such as Locanā on (elements such as) earth. For you who lack discerning minds when it comes to the meaning of the tantra, of course you have doubts.”<sup>274</sup>

The polemical flavor of Mkhas grub’s writing is impossible to ignore here. He then proceeds to set forth his own position:

Nevertheless, as far as I’m concerned, this is how it is:

Within the classification of five root *rlung*, the abode of the earth *rlung*, downward-clearing *rlung*, is the secret place.

The abode of balancing, the *rlung* *rlung*, is the navel.

The abode of life-sustaining, water *rlung*, is the heart center.

The abode of the upward moving, fire *rlung*, is the throat.

The abode of the all-pervading, space *rlung*, is the whole body.<sup>275</sup>

The list of five primary or root winds matches a common set [*thur sel*, *mnyam gnas*, *srog 'dzin*, *gyen rgyu* and *khyab byed*].<sup>276</sup> Here Mkhas grub is identifying each of

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<sup>274</sup> *spyan ma sogs bzhi sa la sogs pa la dgod par bshad pas gsang gnas sogs su dgod dgos par 'dod pa de ni khyed cag rgyud don la zhib par 'byed pa'i blo dang mi ldan pa dag la de lta bu'i dogs ba 'byung ba [245.5] bden no*

Khenpo Choying Dorje and Khenpo Yeshe suggested that the use of *dod pa* may contribute the derogatory tone of the passage (whereas *dgong pa* would have been the more neutral choice). [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

<sup>275</sup> *'on kyang nga ni 'di yin te; rlung la rtsa ba'i rlung lngar phye ba'i sa rlung thur sel gyi gnas gsang dang; mnyam gnas rlung gi rlung gi gnas lte ba dang; srog 'dzin chu rlung gi gnas snying kha dang; gyen rgyu me rlung gi gnas mgrin pa dang; khyab byed [245.6] nam mkha'i rlung gi gnas lus thams cad la*

<sup>276</sup> See entries by OT, IW, & RY on thlib.org [Accessed 7/29/201] 5 [*srog 'dzin*, *gyen rgyu*, *khyab byed*, *me mnyam*, *thur sel*] Garrett 2008 pp.65-66 describes how these five root winds (together with five subsidiary winds) are common in tantric physiological accounts, citing the twelfth-century Sakyapa patriarch Grags pa rgyal mtshan as one example. She locates the winds at areas of the body: *thur sel* in the anus, *mnyam gnas* (or *me mnyam*) in the navel, *srog 'dzin* in the heart, *gyen rgyu* in the throat, and *khyab byed* throughout the body. They bear associations with the elements and with colors as

the five root winds as an elemental wind and locating it within the body [at the secret place, navel, heart, throat & bodily totality]. There is, however, no mention of the goddesses, and we are working with a list of five rather than four. Mkhas grub continues: “In light of this explanation, as for the one who explains the four (goddesses), Locanā and so forth, as the four elements here (this may be said):

Generally speaking, there are many contexts for applying the four elemental winds to the four such as Locanā. However, having construed the four goddesses as the elements such as earth, here one generates the four goddesses as the aspects of bodily solidity, moisture, heat, and motility. If one arranges them like that, having condensed all five root *rlung* into just the element of *rlung*, it is necessary to make all of those as the basis of accomplishing Tārā. So then it would not be fitting to apply the generation of Locanā from the earth *rlung* and so on, on account of the absence of the characteristics of solidity in the downward-clearing *rlung*.”<sup>277</sup>

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well as bodily functions. On the medical conception of *rlung*, see pp62-63. The three humors are *rlung*, bile and phlegm; each construed in terms of five types. Further research into both tantric and medical systems to determine subtleties in their understanding of *rlung*. Garrett 2008 makes some important inroads in chapters four and six. Khenpo Choying Dorje pointed out that the medical definition of *rlung* is just one aspect of what Vajrayāna describes as *rlung*. Translating *rlung* provisionally as “energy,” he explained the Vajrayāna view of *rlung* as the horse and the mind as the rider. Everything that is moving, everything in the physical world has *rlung*. Even the bodhisattva still has *rlung* when reborn with karma. Within the thirteen-stage model of the path, *rlung* is at play until you reach stage of Vajradhara. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

See also Kontrul 2005, *Systems of Buddhist Tantra*, Book Six Part Four, pp.176-180, especially fn 47. The comparison of the relationship between the role of *rlung* in cosmic creation and destruction (derived from the Abhidharma tradition) and its role in tantric conceptions of bodily creation and dissolution is compelling. Kittay 2011 (p.133) observes that the five winds presented in the *Vajramālā* accord with those found in the *Visuddhimagga* 11:37.

<sup>277</sup> ...bshad pa yin la; 'dir spyān sogs bzhi sa la sogs pa'i khams bzhir bshad pa ni spyir 'byung ba bzhi'i rlung dang spyān sogs bzhi sbyor ba'i skabs mang du yod kyang; 'dir ni lus kyi sra ba'i cha dang; [246.1] gsher ba'i cha dang; dro ba'i cha dang; g.yo ba'i cha rnam la sa'i khams la sogs pa bzhir byas nas; de dag lha mo bzhir bskyed ba yin zhing; de ltar bzhang pa na ni; rtsa ba'i rlung lnga ka yang rlung gi khams gcig bur byas nas de thams cad sgrol ma'i bsgrub gzhir [246.2] byed dgos kyi sa rlung las spyān ma bskyed pa sogs byar mi rung ste; thur sel gyi rlung la sra ba'i mtshan nyid ma tshang ba'i phyir ro

This is a difficult point to understand. We should begin by clarifying that the context to which Mkhas grub refers with ‘here’ is indeed the *Piṇḍikṛta* excerpt cited earlier by Mkhas grub [240.2-.3]: “As for Locanā and Māmakī, likewise Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā, they are arranged by the mantrika on the earth (and so forth).”

As observed above, the identification of the defining qualities of the elements to which he refers is actually derived from the earlier *atīyoga* section of the *Piṇḍikṛta*.<sup>278</sup> This citation, not provided by Mkhas grub himself, has been discussed above: “With Moharatī, the mantrin should place on them the earth (element), and so forth: that with solidity, that with fluidity, that with warmth and that with airiness respectively.”<sup>279</sup> To review, this statement is made in the context of the body mandala of the father deity [i.e. the male practitioner], whereas that cited by Mkhas grub describes the body mandala of the consort. The correlation of these goddesses with the elements and their defining characteristics is the dominant mode of correlation for the *Piṇḍikṛta*. There is no reference to the locations of the elements or to elemental *rlung*. Likewise, the root tantra [XVII.51]<sup>280</sup> itself clearly correlates these goddesses with the elements, though there is no mention there of their locations, elemental qualities (ex. solidity), or elemental *rlung*. Mkhas grub is grappling with two alternative systems of correlation for the goddesses. Unfortunately, mapping the goddesses onto the body through association with the elemental *rlung* contradicts the already existing system of correlating them with the (un-located) elements in both the root and the *Piṇḍi-kṛta*. In attempting to make sense of the relationship between two networks of correlation, one based in the elements and the other in winds, Mkhas grub copes with a clash:

“For that reason, conflating earth and earth *rlung* is mistaken.  
If it is otherwise, do you claim the pervasive *rlung* is that of space?  
If the downward-clearing wind has the characteristic of solidity, then you have to say that the four, earth, water, fire, and *rlung* are non-contradictory.  
[You are] like a child who’s never mastered the signs of related and contradictory (phenomena). Go ahead and exert your minimal effort commenting on the meaning of the sūtras and tantras!”<sup>281</sup>

Here Mkhas grub invokes the terms of Buddhist logic and epistemology to deliver his critique. In the next chapter of this dissertation, we will investigate various examples of

<sup>278</sup> See Wright 2010, verses 52-69.

<sup>279</sup> [*gti mug dga' sogs sngags kyis ni ; sa la sogs la rab tu bzhug; sra dang gsher dang dro ba dang; rlung sogs der ni rim pa bzhin*] (Skt. *moharatyādīkair mantrī pṛthivyādin praveśayet; kharatvaṃ; dravatā auṣṇyam īrṇatvam ca te kramāt*) Wright 2010, v61.

<sup>280</sup> As identified by Tanaka in the context of its citation within the *Rnam gzhag*.

<sup>281</sup> *des na 'di 'dra ba ni sa dang sa rlung gi shan ma phyed pa ste; gzhan du na khyab byed kyī rlung nam (m)kha'i yin par khas len nam; thur sel [246.3] gyī rlung la'ang sra ba'i mtshan nyid tshang na sa chu me rlung bzhi mi 'gal bar khas len dgos mod kyī 'gal 'brel gyī brda la gtan ma byang pa'i byis pa nyid nas mdo rgyud kyī don 'grel ba'<sup>281</sup> la snying las chung ngur gyis shig*

Mkhas grub's use of these discourses as a strategy for legitimizing his tantric hermeneutics. In referring to "the signs of related and contradictory (phenomena)" [*gal 'brel gyi brda*], Mkhas grub challenges the relationship of the elements to the elemental *rlung* and the five root *rlung* through the authority of firmly established categories of Buddhist logic and debate.<sup>282</sup> He implies that the essential properties of the elements are mutually exclusive; therefore, fusing them onto the elemental *rlung* conflates contradictory phenomena. He attempts to show how earth *rlung* is not simply composed of both *rlung* and earth; rather, it resembles earth in certain aspects. So, for example, solidity is a property that can't exist together with non-solidity; it is an exclusive property essential to the definition of earth.<sup>283</sup> Therefore, the simple conflation of correlation of the goddesses to varieties of *rlung* and correlation of elements presents a potential clash of systems of meaning.

As observed in previous chapter, system of correlation for mandala were often modified and structures adapted to effectively incorporate or even conflate multiple systems of "correlative correspondences."<sup>284</sup> The most familiar instances occurred in the transition from a three to five buddha family system. For example, two poisons were added to the standard set of three (desire, aversion and ignorance) in the transition to the five family system. Other systems, like the skandhas, lent themselves to adoption without modification. In that light, Mkhas grub's polemics on correlating the goddesses might be read as a form of iconography in the making in which elements, elemental winds and root winds must all be accommodated in attempting to locate them more concretely upon the human body. The polemical aspect of his approach is accentuated in the final line of the passage. It bears the colloquial flavor of many of Mkhas grub's heated critiques, conveying something like "you're not ready to write about those texts" or "go ahead and write your elementary commentaries!" In other words, "Go ahead and embarrass yourself! Deplete your virtue in doing a bad job writing about sūtra and tantra!"<sup>285</sup>

Mkhas grub then tests out his theory, turning for support to yet another text of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition:

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<sup>282</sup> For more on the principal of contradiction in Buddhist philosophical debate, see Dreyfus 2002, p.212-13.

<sup>283</sup> I am grateful to Khenpo Yeshe for clarifying the logic of this statement. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

<sup>284</sup> This term was coined by Charlotte Furth in her 1999 study of womens's medicine in Imperial China to describe the multiple relationships of yin and yang as a correlative set to one another as well as to other like sets such as male and female. I explored and modified "correlative correspondence" as an interpretive tool for understanding the modes of representations of the body in a set of seventeenth-century Tibetan medical paintings in my unpublished 2007 Masters thesis.

<sup>285</sup> I am grateful to Khenpo Choying Dorje and Khenpo Yeshe for their suggestions in better understanding the meaning and tone of this remark. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]



“If so, in this case, if you ask how do I know it’s related to setting forth the component of solidity in earth, you can look at the *Vajrasattva-sādhana* in which Candrakīrti wrote<sup>286</sup>: ‘When arranging the four, Locanā and so forth, on the body, the so-called Moharatī is Locanā and has the nature of the earth element.’”

Up until: “The thus-called Vajraratī is Tārā and has the nature of the *rlung* element. Having arranged (them thus), thoroughly envision solidity and moisture and heat and motility.’ Thus, it is clearly taught.”<sup>287</sup>

Here the goddesses are located upon the body through reference to the elements and their defining qualities; however, no specific bodily sites are named. In other words, Mkhas grub seems to be asking how earth is related to solidity and not to the elemental wind of earth (or to the downward-clearing root *rlung*). Luo Hong & Toru Tomabechei have published a critical edition of both the Sanskrit and the Tibetan texts of the *Vajrasattva-sādhana*.<sup>288</sup> The editors suggest that the text is authored by the same Candrakīrti who wrote the *Pradīpoddyotana* (although not the *Madhyamika* Candrakīrti).<sup>289</sup> Like the *Mdor byas* and the *Rnam gzhag*, it focuses upon generation vs. completion stage practice. The editors present a useful overview of the *sādhana* in their introduction that helps us to contextualize this quotation within the overall structure of the text.<sup>290</sup> It occurs within the *atiyoga* portion of the text in which the practitioner manifests as the *nirmāṇakāya* buddha body; it appears alongside the placement of Buddhas on the skandhas, bodhisattvas on the sense faculties, and krodhas on the limbs. The *sādhana* as a whole seems to espouse a three buddha body system. According to this system, in producing the *dharmakāya*, the practitioner generates deities, absorbs them, places them on the body, and dissolves them into emptiness. In producing the *sambhogakāya*, the practitioner manifests as white Vajradhara. Finally, in producing the *nirmāṇakāya*, the practitioner locates the deities on the body.<sup>291</sup> The mapping of these three bodies onto the *sādhana* structure becomes significant in the Tibetan interpretation of the *Guhyasamāja* as a technology for manipulating the process of death and rebirth, a theme to which we shall return below.

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<sup>286</sup> See *Vajrasattva-sādhana. Gser bris bstan ‘gyur* Vol.35 436-61.

<sup>287</sup> 'o na skabs 'dir sra ba'i cha la sar [246.4] bzhag pa sogs kyi dbang du byas par gang las shes zhe na; dpal ldan zla ba grags pas rdo rje sems dpa'i sgrub thabs las; lus la sbyan ma sogs bzhi 'god pa'i skabs su ; mo ha ra ti zhas bya ba spyan ma sa'i khams kyi rang bzhin zhes bya'o; zhes ba nas; [246.5] ba dzra ra ti zhes bya ba sgrol ma rlung gi khams kyi rang bzhin gyis so; bkod nas sra ba nyid dang ; gsher ba nyid dang; dro ba nyid dang; g.yo ba nyid du rab tu bsam par bya'o; zhes gsal bar gsungs la

<sup>288</sup>For this quote, see 49.15-19 [III.3.2] in their edition. Luo Hong and Toru Tomabechei (eds.), *China Tibetology Publishing House & Austrian Academy of Sciences Press*, Beijing-Vienna, 2009.

<sup>289</sup> Hong and Tomabechei 2009, Intro p.x

<sup>290</sup> Hong and Tomabechei 2011, Intro p.x. See also pp.xii-xv

<sup>291</sup> Later on in the *sādhana*, there is also a section devoted to consort yoga; this text appears to identify Spārśavajra as Akṣobhya’s consort.

Mkhas grub then proceeds to quote another text, one that extends the correlation of goddesses and elements to include not only elemental qualities but also bodily substances:

“In the *Vajramālā Explanatory Tantra* (it says):

‘Moreover, the Bhagavatī Locanā abides in the earth element, in the fat and so forth of this one. The Bhagavatī Māmakī abides in the water element, the blood and so forth. The Bhagavatī Pāṇḍaravāsīnī abides in the fire element, heat and so forth. The Bhagavatī Tārā abides in the *rlung* element, trembling and so forth.’<sup>292</sup>  
Thus it is clearly explained.”<sup>293</sup>

Based upon these correlations, Mkhas grub asks:

How could anyone in their right mind claim that the flesh of the body (is endowed with/made up of) the earth *rlung* and the blood (with/of) fire *rlung*?<sup>294</sup>

The *Vajramālā* is an explanatory tantra [Tib. *bshad rgyud*/ Skt. *vyākhyātantra*] accepted as *buddha-vacana* within the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition. It is, therefore, in a different class than the commentaries attributed to Nāgārjuna and his disciples that have formed the core of the body of citations discussed thusfar. This text is cited extensively by Mkhas grub as well as in the writings of his teacher Tsong kha pa and in the body mandala text of Ngor chen as well. It is perhaps most well-known for the forty verses which expound upon the first-forty syllables of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. These verses are cited in both Candrakīrti’s *Pradīpoddyotana* and in part within Āryadeva’s *Caryāmelāpakapradīpa*.<sup>295</sup> No original Sanskrit text of the *Vajramālā* survives (except portions cited in these texts); however, Tibetan translations began to emerge in the eleventh century.<sup>296</sup> Unlike the other texts cited by Mkhas grub thusfar in the sections discussed, the *Vajramāla* focuses

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<sup>292</sup> With regard to the translation of this passage, once again we are faced with the issue of how best to translate the *ladon* particle. Kittay 2011 has opted for “in” (743) and I have followed suit.

<sup>293</sup> *bshad rgyud rdo rje 'phreng ba las kyang; yang 'di'i sha sogs [246.6] sa khams la ; bcom ldan 'das yum spyan bzhugs so ; khrag sogs chu'i khams la ni ; bcom ldan 'das yum ma ma bzhugs ; dro ba la sogs me khams la ; bcom ldan 'das yum gos dkar bzhugs ; bskyod pa la sogs rlung khams la ; bcom [247.1] ldan 'das yum grol ma bzhugs ; zhes ches gsal bar gsungs te*

This quotation can be found in the sde dge edition of the *Vajramālā* 270a.3-.4 [539.3- .4] where the only real difference in *mi bskyod* vs. *bskyod pa*. For Kittay’s translation see Kittay 2011, p.743

<sup>294</sup> *lus kyi sha sa rlung dang; khrag me rlung du shes rig dang ldan pa su zhig khas len par byed*

I have emended *ma* to *me* and *shas* to *shes*.

<sup>295</sup> Kittay 2011, 5.

<sup>296</sup> Kittay 2011, 6.

upon completion stage practices of the Guhyasamāja, although some generation stage practices are included.

We are fortunate to be aided in our understanding of the *Vajramālā* by Kittay's 2011 study and translation. Kittay regards the text as a compendium of different practices inclusive of both Mahāyoga and yoginī-tantra based interpretations of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.<sup>297</sup> This quote is extracted from Chapter Sixty-Four, entitled "The Explanation of Mandala of Body, Speech and Mind." Kittay summarizes this chapter as a detailed description of the arraying the body mandala on the body of the guru<sup>298</sup> according to the Ārya tradition as follows:

"The beginning of the chapter explains that the enlightenment spirit in the thirty-two channels in the crown cakra constitutes the body mandala, the division of the parts of the letters forms the speech mandala, with twenty-seven members, and the distinguishing of 'the instincts of desire and so forth' is the mind mandala, with twenty-eight parts."<sup>299</sup>

The section cited here, the body mandala, (see v.4-17) describes the correlation of the *jīnas* (albeit in a more abstract sense of body, space, speech, action and mind) with the skandhas, the four goddesses, the eight bodhisattvas on the sense faculties (plus joints and sinews), and the ten krodhas on the limbs (and mouth). Mkhas grub explains further:

"In that case, there is the explanation for dissolving earth, water, fire and *rlung* and so forth. At the time of the dissolution the twenty-five coarse (constituents) the potential for producing the consciousnesses [*rnam shes kyi rten phyed pa'i nus pa*] dissolves. The bodily deities, the (set of) four, Locanā and so forth, are taught to be dissolved in accord with the dissolution (of) those."<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>297</sup> Kittay 2011, p. 188. As Kittay notes, some chapters of the text explicitly clarify the *Mahāyoga* or *Yoginī-tantric* basis for interpretation.

<sup>298</sup> The issue of whether the mandala is arrayed on the body of the guru or upon the practitioner's own body is an important issue touched upon in Wayman's translations of Mkhas grub's *Fundamentals of Buddhist Tantra*. This is a point for further research and calls into question the relationship of the body mandala practice to guru yoga, consecration rites, and deity yoga. Note that this description of arranging the body mandala on the body of the vajrācārya from the *Vajramālā* does not include the five *rdor rje ma*. The number of deities thus equals twenty-seven, as is the case for the body mandala of the main deity in the *mdor byas*.

<sup>299</sup> Kittay 2011, p283

<sup>300</sup> *des na rags pa nyi shu rtsa lnga thim pa'i skabs su; sa chu me rlung sogs thim [247.2] pa bshad pa ni; lus kyi sra ba'i cha la sogs pa la sa la sogs par byas nas; de dag gis rnam shes kyi rten phyed pa'i nus pa thim pa'i dbang du byas te; de dag thim pa dang mthun par lus kyi lha spyen ma la sogs pa bzhi yang thim par gsungs pa yin [247.3] la; khams phra pa thim pa'i skabs su; sa chu la thim pas smig rgyu lta bu'i nyams 'char ba sogs ni 'byung ba bzhi'i rlung la phra rags du ma yod pa'i nang nas rags pa thim pa'i dbang du byas nas gsungs pa yin te; 'di lta bu'i rnam dbyed dag ma shes na rags [247.4] pa thim pa dang*

That being the case, at the time of the dissolution of the subtle elements [*kham phra pa*], a vision akin to a mirage manifests on account of the dissolution of earth into water and so forth. So here is the teaching concerning the dissolution of the coarse among the many subtle and coarse (components) possessed by the four elemental *rlung*. If you don't know how to make distinctions like this, not knowing how to distinguish the dissolution of the coarse and the dissolution of the subtle, how would it be possible to realize the essential point of the completion stage?"<sup>301</sup>

Mkhas grub is interpreting the correlation of goddesses with the elements, qualities, and substances cited from the *Vajramālā* in terms of the order of dissolution of the body at death enacted in completion stage practices.<sup>302</sup> The dissolution of the bodily elements in *sādhana* practice serves as preparation for the moment of death. Earth *rlung* is the most coarse of the elemental *rlung*, while *rlung rlung* is the most subtle. The signs of death can also be distinguished in terms of coarse and subtle. For example, when earth dissolves into water, the appearance of mucus is a coarse sign that can be seen by anyone, while the vision of the mirage is a subtle sign that only the dying person themselves can see. The sense consciousnesses reliant upon the presence of these elements in the body, likewise, dissipate. When Mkhas grub refers to the dissolution of “the potential for producing the consciousnesses” [*rnam shes kyi rten phyed pa'i nus pa*], he is referring to the vital connections between the elements and the varieties of sensory consciousness; he is solidifying the correlation of the goddesses with particular phases of this process.

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*phra ba thim pa tsam gyi khyad par yang mi shes na rdzogs rim gyi gnad zab mo dag  
rtogs par lta ga la 'gyur*

<sup>301</sup> *des na rags pa nyi shu rtsa lnga thim pa'i skabs su; sa chu me rlung sogs thim [247.2]  
pa bshad pa ni; lus kyi sra ba'i cha la sogs pa la sa la sogs par byas nas; de dag gis rnam  
shes kyi rten phyed pa'i nus pa thim pa'i dbang du byas te; de dag thim pa dang mthun par  
lus kyi lha spyen ma la sogs pa bzhi yang thim par gsungs pa yin [247.3] la; kham phra  
pa thim pa'i skabs su, sa chu la thim pas smig rgyu lta bu'i nyams 'char ba sogs ni 'byung  
ba bzhi'i rlung la phra rags du ma yod pa'i nang nas rags pa thim pa'i dbang du byas nas  
gsungs pa yin te; 'di lta bu'i rnam dbyed dag ma shes na rags [247.4] pa thim pa dang  
phra ba thim pa tsam gyi khyad par yang mi shes na rdzogs rim gyi gnad zab mo dag  
rtogs par lta ga la 'gyur*

<sup>302</sup> Khenpo Choying Dorje clarifies that Mkhas grub is addressing two topics: the deities of the body and the winds of which there are five different varieties. In addressing the meaning of *dbang du byas nas*, he observes how while in some cases it indicates a clear causal relationship, here it denotes a more general connection and can thus be translated as ‘concerning’ or the like. When Mkhas grub says *nus pa thim pa'i dbang du byas*, therefore, the meaning is concerning dissolving the potential of producing consciousness, although this is not explicitly stated. Likewise, when the elements are dissolved, the four *dākinis* are dissolved. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

Within the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice transmitted by Geshe Lobsang Tsephel, this phase of dissolution occurs in generation stage practice after one has generated oneself as the main deity, Akṣobhyavajra, and arrayed all of the mandala deities upon one’s body (five *tathāgatas*, four consorts, eight bodhisattvas, five *rdo rje ma* & and ten krodhas). The goal of such practice is to enable the practitioner to control their progress through the death process by attaining the three Buddha bodies.<sup>303</sup> Such attainment requires a mastery of techniques designed to draw the bodily winds as purveyors of consciousness into the central channel to enter the clear light. Many tantric texts use such descriptions of the dissolution of the body characterized by both a microcosmic-macrocosmic interplay as well as by tensions between emanation and absorption and gross and subtle phenomena. The ritual drama of dissolving the body reverses the order of composition involving the natural elements and particular bodily winds. Tibetan interpreters of the Ārya Guhyasamāja tradition such as Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub emphasized this aspect of the practice. When Mkhas grub specifically identifies this practice of dissolution of course and subtle components as fundamental to the “essential point of the completions stage,” he reveals the importance of ritual technologies of dissolution to a two-stage *sādhana* structure for his interpretation of the Guhyasamāja. While his own text is focused upon the generation stage, his consistent references to the *Vajramāla* and the logic of dissolution in mapping the goddesses onto bodily constituents, elements, and winds emphasize this dimension of the practice.

It seems odd that Mkhas grub chose to cite Chapter Sixty-four of the *Vajramālā* rather than Chapter Sixty-eight, “The Epitome of All Attainments” in which a more detailed account of the body mandala appears. In the latter chapter, we find a complex grouping together of buddhas, skandhas, elements, *rdo rje ma* as sense objects, bodhisattvas as sense faculties, and krodhas (See v.27-37) in the context of “dissolving and enjoying.” These correlations are followed by the grouping of buddhas with elements and bodily constituents (v.37-41), a list of internal parts of the body to be “known in succession” (v42-44) and the location of twenty-four external sites (familiar from yoginī tantra) onto sites of the body (v. 45-50). Note, however, that the account from Chapter Sixty-eight, does not include the four Goddesses (Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā) included in Chapter Sixty-four. Chapter Sixty-four, on the other hand, does include the *rdo rje ma*. However, while Chapter Sixty-eight may not include the goddesses at issue, it is there that the five root winds are itemized, located within the body, and associated with the five Buddhas:

Now, further, I will explain  
The supreme characteristics  
Of the energy-winds.  
The life-energy energy-wind  
abides in the heart,  
born from the particular clan  
of Akṣobhya. V52

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<sup>303</sup> The mapping of the bodies onto the Guhyasamāja *sādhana* may have begun with works such as Candrakīrti’s *Vajrasattva-Sādhana*.

The Evacuative energy-wind  
That abides in the crotch  
Is born from the aspect  
Of Ratnasambhava.  
The Ascending energy-wind  
Abides at the end  
Of the throat,  
The nature of Amitābha. V53

The Fire and Equalizing  
Abide in the navel  
The nature  
Of Amoghasiddhi.  
The pervading  
Abides in all the limbs  
Blessed by Vairocana. V54

The continuity  
of life energy and effort  
From the continuity  
of the sense doors  
moves at all times  
explained as 'life-energy.' v55<sup>304</sup>

The text then describes the bodily functions performed by each of these winds, followed by their destruction; this description resonates with Abhidharmic accounts of cosmic destruction like the excerpt from Chapter Eleven of the *Visuddhimagga* described in Chapter Two of this dissertation.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>304</sup> Translation by Kittay 2011, p.773

<sup>305</sup> Then, the *Vajramālā* relays how the winds and consciousness arise again, together with karma and kleśa, to reenact the birth process. This is a remarkable dramatic enactment of the destruction of ignorance that is the goal of cultivating an understanding of the processes of birth and death through Buddhist tantric *sādhana* practice:

And from that,  
Again death and birth  
Thus like a cakra turning  
As before, vajra recitation  
And so forth  
Gradually divides that. V63

Then all the great beings,  
With a spoonful of eye ointment,  
Dispel the blindness of the mistakes of all.

Mkhas grub continues his discussion of the dissolution of the body by parsing the relationship of subtle and gross components:

“(With regard to) that which is referred to as the “dissolution of the subtle,” the three, earth, water, and fire are coarse. Compared to these, the element of *rlung* is subtle. There are many distinct degrees of coarse and subtle for the internal subdivision of *rlung* itself.”<sup>306</sup>

Here Mkhas grub is breaking down the elements on a scale running from coarse to subtle. Generally the order of emanation we witness in *sādhana* practice (typically generation stage) and in material formation (of the cosmos or person) proceeds from subtle to coarse, whereas that of dissolution in *sādhana* practice (typically but not exclusively completion stage) and in material disintegration (of cosmos or person) reverses that order, moving from coarse to subtle. Mkhas grub is showing how *rlung* is the most subtle of the elements, but that *rlung* itself can be broken down further into gross and subtle components. Until the most subtle of these components of *rlung* is dissolved, the ultimate dissolution of the body is incomplete. Mkhas grub then elaborates upon the breakdown of *rlung* to describe what we have termed the elemental *rlung*:

“Since the hue and function and so on of each of the five primary *rlung* individually accord with the four elements in term of location and so forth, the earth *rlung* and so on are set forth (systematically). There is *rlung*, moreover there is earth. So there is the earth *rlung*. (This rationale) is not posited. Composed as yellow earth, white water, and green

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They see perfect reality. V.64

Then, having prostrated again and again,  
With eyes full of tears,  
Having circled the lord  
Three times

They praised vajradhara. V.65

[Translation Kittay 2011, p.775]

Chapter Sixty-Eight of the *Vajramālā* provides an extremely more detailed picture of the human body together with the energies that move through it and impel it through the cycle of *samsāra* than found in Chapter Sixty-Four. As such it seems like the more intuitive choice for citation if the ordering schema of dissolution is indeed the process is attempting to foreground. However, the absence of Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā from the description in Chapter Sixty-Eight likely prevents Mkhas grub from referencing that chapter in his argument on correlating the goddesses. Moreover, although it establishes connections between five Buddha families and the five root winds of the body, there is no explicit mention of “elemental winds.”

<sup>306</sup> *phra ba thim zhes pa yang; sa chu me gsum rags shing; di las rlung gi khams phra pa yin gyi; rlung rang gi nang gses kyi dbye ba [247.5] la phra rags kyi khyad par rim pa du ma zhig yod do*

Khenpo Choying Dorje presents the possibility that Mkhas grub may be citing a root text here. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

*rlung*, though they are in accord with the color of the three mandala which are the base of the world, (they) are not in accord with the colors of any of the three, earth, water, and *rlung* which are on the earth [*sa stengs*].<sup>307</sup> If the abode of the body's earth element is in the secret place, then it doesn't contradict being in the navel."<sup>308</sup>

From this passage we learn that each of the five root winds shares a common color and location with the one of the four elements [earth, water, fire, *rlung*]. The next point is more complicated. Mkhas grub appears to be distinguishing these varieties of *rlung* from the larger category of the element *rlung*. He does so by producing an example based in Abhidharmic theory and the pan-Indian conception of cosmos as composed of three realms. Mkhas grub makes a parallel between macrocosm and microcosm, comparing elements of the earth realm to those belonging to the region below it; this comparison displays the manner in which earth may abide in both the navel and secret place of the human body. Mkhas grub seems to be saying that although the other cosmic elements share qualities with the elements as they appear in the realm of earth, they are not identical. Likewise, although the internal subdivisions of elements of the body share qualities amongst one another, they remain distinct. Mkhas grub's concluding move is more radical. Moving farther afield from the texts of the Ārya Guhyasamāja cycle, beyond the completion-stage focused explanatory tantra of that system, Mkhas grub invokes an explanation from another explanatory tantra, the *Samputa*:  
Alternatively, then you must reflect on how to account for the explanation from the *Samputa Tantra* of arranging Locanā in the navel, the abode of earth and Tārā in the crown, the abode of *rlung*.<sup>309</sup>

The *Vajramālā* and *Samputa* tantras will play an important part in the analysis of the dynamics of tantric polemics and exegesis expressed within the texts of the body mandala debate in this dissertation. The *Samputa Tantra*, regarded as common to the interpretation of both the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara systems, is a more radical source for support than Mkhas grub's previous choices. He builds upon his discussion of the completion stage-focused interpretations of the *Vajramāla* and its incorporation of both

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<sup>307</sup> Khenpo Choying Dorje suggests that this may be a quotation of a tantric commentary/root text. He refers to Abhidharma theory according to which wind holds water, and the elements combine with other things on earth to make colors. In other words, wind isn't color but it has color.

<sup>308</sup> *rtsa ba'i rlung lnga'i rang dbang gi kha dog dang byed las sogs 'byung ba bzhi dang rnam pa mthun pa dang gnas la sogs pa du ma zhig gi sgo nas sa rlung sogs su bzhag gi; sa yang yin rlung yang yin pas [247.6] sa rlung sogs su bzhag pa ma yin la; sa ser po chu dkar por rlung ljang khur byas pa yang; 'jig rten gyi 'og gzhi'i dkyil 'khor gsum gyi kha dog dang bstun pa'i dbang du byas kyi; sa stengs kyi sa chu rlung gsum gang yin thams cad kyi kha dog dang [248.1] bstun pa ma yin la; lus kyi sa khams kyi gnas gsang gnas na yod pa dang lte ba na'ang yod pa 'gal ba ma yin te*

<sup>309</sup> *gzhan du sam pu ta las; lte ba sa'i gnas su spyen ma dang spyi gtsug rlung gi gnas su sgrol ma 'god par bshad pa ji ltar 'chad soms [248.2] shig*



Mahāyoga and Yoginī tantra-based approaches to the Guhyasamāja to extend the limits of interpretation beyond the Guhyasmāja system. After working carefully and closely through the interpretation of commentaries and an explanatory tantra associated with the Ārya tradition of the Guyasamāja, suddenly Mkhas grub has brought those approaches to locating goddesses and elements within the human body into dialogue with a yoginī tantra- affiliated explanatory tantra. The reference to the *Samputa* appears to be to a passage cited by Ngor chen is his own response to Mkhas grub’s text:

“The *karmamudrā*, Locanā, she of great compassion, she of great method, she with the domain of manifold nature, abides in the *nirmāṇacakra* in the variegated lotus at the navel. She should be known as *baṃ* in/as the water element.

The *dharmamudrā* Māmākī, possessed of loving kindness and the manner of prayer, preeminent goddess of the vajra family, abides in the *dharmacakra* within the eight-petalled lotus in the heart. She should be called *mā* in/as the fire element.

The *mahāmudrā* Pāṇḍaravāsini, with joy and vigor, goddess of the lotus family abides in the *sambhogacakra* in the eight-petalled lotus at the throat. (With )*yā*, the nature of *rlung*, she conquers all afflictions.

True *samayamudrā*, goddess of the karma family, with the yoga of equanimity ?and wisdom, the liberator from *saṃsāra*, Tārā, abides in the *mahāsukhacakra*, the thirty-two-petalled lotus...<sup>310</sup>

The four goddesses are densely encoded with correlations in this passage: they are named, associated with a *mudrā* (*karma*-, *dharm*-, *mahā*-, *samaya*-), associated with particular spiritual perfections, located within a *cakra* (envisioned as a lotus at a particular site on the body), and finally, connected to a seed syllable and an element.

It is important to consider the significance of Mkhas grub’s decision to bring *Samputa Tantra*, a text closely connected with the *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra* tantras, into his discussion of the Guhyasamāja’s treatment of the goddesses, elements, and *rlung*. On one level, this example makes a basic hermeneutic point, that one must develop interpretations that allow for multiple readings and reworkings. Otherwise one runs the risk of violating the fundamental rules of preserving the integrity of the Buddha’s word, in this case, the tantras. On another level, it demonstrates that the human body is, to

<sup>310</sup>This quote can be located in the sde dge version of the *Samputa Tantra* 81a.5-81b.1 as cited in Ngor chen’s text:

*e nis sa ru shes par bya; las kyi phyag rgya spyan ma nyid; snying rje chen mo thabs chen mo; rang bzhin sna tshogs sbyod yul ma; lte bar sna tshogs 'dam skye la ; sprul pa'i 'khor [562.3] lo rnam par gnas; wam ni chu ru shes par bya; chos kyi phyag rgya ma ma ki; byams pa dang ni smon lam tshul; lha mo rdo rje'i rigs gtso ma; snying gar chu skyes 'dab brgyad la; chos kyi 'khor lo yang dag gnas; ma ni me ru brjod pa ste; phyag [562.4] rgya chen mo gos dgar mo; dga' dang stobs kyi rnal 'byor gyis; lha mo pad ma'i rigs 'byung ma; lkod mar chu skyes 'dab brgyad gnyis; longs spyod 'khor lor yang dag gnas; ya ni rlung gi rang bzhin te; nyon mongs thams cad rab 'joms byed; [562.5] dam tshig phyag rgya chen mo nges; lha mo las kyi rigs gtso ma; btang snyoms ye shes rnal 'byor gyi; sgrol ma 'khor ba sgrol ba mo; 'dam skyes 'dab ma sum cu gnyis; bde chen 'khor lo chen por gnas*

some degree, a signifier that remains constant within the body mandala practice across a variety of tantric cycles and their interpretation by Indian and Tibetan thinkers. It is the deployment of symbols upon this body that changes. In the evolution of the practice through tantric exegesis and polemics, there is a tendency to create links with other systems of signification. The case of the goddesses is, therefore, an extreme instance of phenomenon common to the evolution of mandala systems, a phenomenon we might identify as “correlative correspondence.” Here, in the formulation and exegesis of body mandala ritual, there is a repeated redeployment of a set of symbols in different configurations in relation to the body and in different patterns of relationship to other correlated sets such as the elements and buddha families.

Mkhas grub’s sources for citation reveal a great deal. Both of these “explanatory tantras,” the *Vajramālā* and the *Saṃpuṭa*, will continue to be relevant to our discussion of the body mandala debate; they will play an important part in our discussion of Ngor chen’s reply later in the dissertation. The use of these explanatory tantras within the body mandala debate highlights the delicate network of relations between root and explanatory tantras as well as between different tantric textual cycles. Mkhas grub ends his body mandala debate text with a comparison of the Guhyasamāja with the Cakrasaṃvara; this choice attests to the fact that articulating such relationships was a pressing concern for the author. In tracing such choices in the texts of the body mandala debate, we witness the reinvention of hermeneutic strategies; the body itself is encountered anew through such acts of interpretation.

We noted the significance of the *Vajramālā*, as an “evolving text” focused heavily upon completion stage practices and yogīni tantra-based readings of the Guhyasamāja.<sup>311</sup> Likewise, we considered why Mkhas grub would conclude his discussion of the goddesses with a quote from the *Saṃpuṭa Tantra*, an explanatory tantra deeply connected with the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara cycles.<sup>312</sup> Both of these explanatory tantras express more complex and sophisticated understandings of nature and inner workings of the subtle body than the other texts Mkhas grub cites in this section.

Kittay 2010 notes that the correlation of the goddesses with elemental winds rather than with the elements themselves was a form of the practice promoted by Tsong kha pa.<sup>313</sup> Therefore in the context of Mkhas grub’s writings on body mandala, it is possible that Mkhas grub’s extensive exploration of this aspect of the mechanics of the practice was motivated by a need to support the validity of a practice expounded by his teacher.<sup>314</sup> For example, as we observed, while the *Vajramālā*, which we have established openly employs some of the techniques of yogīni tantra, incorporated winds into the Guhyasamāja practice, the description of dissolution there does not precisely parallel what we find in Mkhas grub’s text. Kittay remarks on the representation of the *rlung* practices in the *Vajramālā* and its commentary by Alaṃkakalaśa as follows:

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<sup>311</sup> Kittay 2011, p.185 .

<sup>312</sup> Note that Ngor chen’s text N1 cites this tantra several times.

<sup>313</sup> Kittay 2010, 258 note 923.

<sup>314</sup> Of course, in light of Bentor 2006 work, we know that Mkhas grub’s approach does not always match his teacher’s.

“The Tantra does not explicitly identify which elemental mandalas and colors are identified with which energy-wind. *Alaṃka* identifies the Amitābha fire element with the Ascending energy-wind and the Amoghasiddhi wind element with the Equalizing energy-wind, 168B, but makes no specific link to the others. In his detailed discussion of this practice in the BIL (*Rim pa Inga rab tu gsal ba'i sgron me*), Tsong kha pa outlines the correspondences with the other energy-winds indicated above, and gives greater detail on the practice, which involves meditating the primary Buddha energy-wind with the other goddess elemental-winds, so e.g. the red Amitābha Ascending energy-wind emanating from the left nostril is meditated with the four elemental energy winds of Pāṇḍaravāsinī, Tārā, Locanā and Māmākī in that order, which, influenced by the fire mandala, appear as red, reddish green, reddish white, and reddish yellow respectively.”<sup>315</sup>

In his own discussion of the links between goddesses and elemental winds, Mkhas grub emphasized the dissolution of the body and its attendant winds, constituents, and elements at death as the primary organizing schema for establishing correspondences. As referenced above, Gelukpa scholars consider the manipulation of the death process through mastery of completion stage practices that mirror this very process to be a vital aspect of the Guhyasamāja system as a tantric practice. Reinterpreting the role of the goddesses in connection with the dissolution process emphasizes this dimension of the practice. In her study of the varying uses of embryological accounts in Tibetan Buddhist texts, Frances Garrett has explored tantric narratives of gestation and the formation of the human body as models for spiritual transformation. In doing so, she has demonstrated how these narratives were often produced in dialogue with narratives of the body’s dissolution at death.<sup>316</sup> In the tantric context, we might view the relationship of birth and death processes as a highly evolved instance of the principle of “correlative correspondence”; ritual reinforces this relationship through the logic of emanation and absorption orchestrated between subtle and gross components.

In accounts of ordinary birth, wind and karma interact with the elements as well as with the essences of father and mother to produce the human body. However, the goal of tantric practice is to create not an ordinary human body but a buddha body. Referring to the work of Brian Cuevas, Garrett notes the proliferation of ritual formulations of the intermediate state in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Tibet based in the six doctrines of Nāropā.<sup>317</sup> Tsong kha pa, in particular, is credited with “synthesizing a comprehensive

<sup>315</sup> Kittay 2010, 258 note 923. Kittay adds here a reference to a relevant passage in Tsong kha pa’s writings: “See TK 2010 at 234.” For *Alaṃka*’s commentary, see *Alaṃkakalaśa* (Tshul khrims rin chen). *Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba'i rgya cher 'grel pa zab mo'i don gyi 'grel pa*. In bstan 'gyur (sde dge). TBRC W23703. 34: 4 - 442. delhi: delhi karmapae choedhey, gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1982-1985.

*Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng b'i rgya cher 'grel pa zab mo'i don gyi 'grel pa*. In bstan 'gyur/?gser bris ma/. TBRC W23702. 34: 3 - 638. tibet: [snar thang], [17-?]

<sup>316</sup> Garrett 2008.

<sup>317</sup> Garrett 2008, p.110. See Cuevas, Bryan J. 2003. *The Hidden History of The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. New York: Oxford University Press and Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-

path of training based on Nāropā's six doctrines" and integrating "intermediate stage teachings with instructions for the purification of the three life stages."<sup>318</sup> In other words, Tsong kha pa mapped the life trajectory of death, intermediate state [*bar do*], and rebirth states onto *sādhana* practices based in highest yoga tantra.<sup>319</sup> Employing *sādhana* as a means to purify these states of existence is referred to as "bringing the three bodies to the path." [*sku gsum lam 'khyer*]<sup>320</sup> The trajectory of embodiment was thereby connected with the production of three varieties of buddha bodies: *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya* respectively.<sup>321</sup> Garrett describes Tsong kha pa's articulation of these practices in his *Sngag rim chen mo* as part of the transition from generation stage to completion stage practice: "Success in this type of meditation is said to result in the winds of one's subtle body entering, remaining, and then dissolving inside the central channel, whereupon one may begin completion stage practices."<sup>322</sup> Manipulation of and control over the channels, winds, and drops of the subtle body or perhaps, more accurately, of the "vajra body" is therefore essential to this practice and ultimately to the soteriological project.

In Garrett's comparison of embryological narratives, she notes discrepancies over the role of the elements in human conception and development and, in particular, over the role of wind [*rlung*]. Garrett observes that: "the names and functions of the winds, as taken from the Buddhist sutra, are the most prominent and consistent details these medical commentators add to their accounts of the body's weekly development."<sup>323</sup> These winds include the five root winds discussed above along with five subsidiary winds, all drawn from tantric physiology. None of these, however, seem to be labeled specifically as elemental winds. She notes that by the fifteenth century, the winds became more important to Tibetan medical accounts of fetal gestation, suggesting that religious texts actually influenced medical ones.<sup>324</sup> Moreover, the role of the elements also became more prominent over time. In this regard, Garrett observes: "the increasing interest in the material nature of the human body, and in connecting the human individual

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grags-pa, and Glenn H. Mullin. 1996. *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.

<sup>318</sup> Garrett 2008, p.110.

<sup>319</sup> Garrett 2008 also refers to Bentor 2006's discussion of Tsong kha pa's and Mkhas grub's participation in debates over this practice, in particular over the questions of whether or not only birth is purified by the generation stage and whether the rules only apply for birth from a womb. Garrett 2008 p.114. See Bentor 2006 p.186 fn4 & p. 192 respectively. It is of interest to note that Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub postulate the purification of the three states occurs in the generation stage while the generation of the Buddha bodies occurs in the completion stage.

<sup>320</sup> Garrett 2008, p.112.

<sup>321</sup> As discussed above, Candrakīrti's Vajrasattva-sādhana organized generation stage practice in terms of the production of these bodies.

<sup>322</sup> Garrett 2008, p.113.

<sup>323</sup> Garrett 2008, p.147.

<sup>324</sup> Garrett 2008, p.153.

with the cosmos at the material level, may be an idea that comes to medical thinkers as a result of the increasing influence of Buddhism on contemporary scholarly communities.”<sup>325</sup> Both elements and winds appear to have been given more weight and attention than karma in this context.

Above, we have looked closely at Mkhas grub’s efforts to negotiate the relationship of winds and elements embodied as buddhas and goddesses in aspects of body mandala ritual. If we consider these efforts in light of Garrett’s discussions of controversies within Tibetan embryologies, we find a shared discourse of themes of gross and subtle, emanation and absorption, cosmic creation and destruction all located within the body. Concerns with causality and especially with the causal efficacy of winds and elements at the nexus of tantric and medical accounts provides us with a taste of the intellectual climate expressed within the bodily discourses of late fourteenth and fifteenth-century Tibet. They also prepare to engage with comparable tensions between tantric and sūtric approaches to the human body to be discussed in the next chapter of this dissertation. We will see how, like the tension between karma and human intervention that Garrett describes in the context of medical rituals to alter the gender of a human fetus, for example, Mkhas grub’s writings on body mandala reflect a tension between “determinism and ritual agency.”

In the case of such medical rituals, Garrett suggests that Tibetan medical writers referred to a wider domain of discourses such as Indian medical and Tibetan astrological texts.<sup>326</sup> In the case of body mandala ritual, Mkhas grub too, refers to a wider range of discourses to navigate tensions in the interpretation of ritual practice focused upon the human body; in his case, such tensions express concerns with the relationship between that unenlightened body and a buddha body. In the next chapter we will observe Mkhas grub’s mode of engagement with these discourses, while continuing to consider exegetical details such as his sources for citation and polemical aspects such as tone. In his account of what makes the body mandala practice special and distinct from other mandala traditions, we will become more intimately acquainted with Mkhas grub, both in terms of his polemics and his commentarial skill. In the process, conceptions of the body and its role in tantric practice will begin to rise to the surface.

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<sup>325</sup> Garrett 2008, p.137.

<sup>326</sup> Garrett 2008, p. 142.

## Chapter Four: Imagined or Real?: The Use of the Category of “Fabrication” [bcos ma] in Mkhas grub’s Body Mandala Chapter

This chapter focuses upon the notion of “fabrication” [bcos ma] introduced by Mkhas grub in his chapter on body mandala in his *Ocean of Attainment*. In particular, it draws attention to how Mkhas grub uses “fabrication” as a standard in articulating relationships, namely, the ontological relationship of the human body to the mandala and the relationship of the body mandala to “outer mandala.” In this context, “outer mandala” refers to mandala paintings or ritual altars made of painted powders, what we might call ‘representations.’<sup>327</sup> Through his deployment of this category of “fabrication,” Mkhas grub probes the boundaries of the *pāramitānaya* and *mantranaya* and brings to light key aspects of the body’s role as a basis for tantric practice. He explores ritual and philosophical implications of “fabrication” side by side to establish the superiority of the body mandala to other mandala practices. In the process, he challenges a defining feature of tantric practice, the act of imagining oneself as a deity. In examining these various dimensions of “fabrication” in Mkhas grub’s argument, we will consider possible motivations for his attempts to reconcile the methods and aims of tantric practice with the *pāramitānaya* at large through the language of Buddhist philosophical investigation. We will also highlight particular sensitivities triggered by the topic of the human body.

### I. The Positions of others

#### IA. Category confusion

Mkhas grub begins his chapter on body mandala with a discussion of a quote from Ghantapa’s “Condensed Activities of the Cakrasaṃvara initiation” [dpal ‘khor lo sdom pa’i dbang gi bya ba mdor bsdu pa]:

“These sentient beings, are not separated from the naturally established mandala.”<sup>328</sup>

Mkhas grub uses his opponents’ inaccurate interpretation of this quote as the point of entry for the portion of his text assessing the positions of others; he returns to the quote later to articulate his own views on body mandala. We will first deal with Mkhas grub’s critique of other’s interpretations as found in 234.1-238.2 of his text; the friction he creates in juxtaposing tantric practice and the idea of visualizing the human body as divine with *pāramitānaya* practice at large is of especial relevance. In Part II of this chapter, we will consider the original context in which this controversial statement appears in Ghantapa’s text. However, for the present, we will focus upon the particular points of critique that it enables Mkhas grub to raise.

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<sup>327</sup> In the conclusion of the dissertation, we will explore the implications of this category of fabrication for defining and evaluating representations from a Buddhist perspective.

<sup>328</sup> 234.1 'gro ba 'di dag rang bzhin gyis; sgrub pa'i dkyil 'khor gnyis med pa'o

Mkhas grub introduces the inappropriate usage of the category of “fabrication” by his opponents immediately following the Ghantapa quote:

“They speak of the body mandala as an unfabricated mandala [*ma bcos ba'i dkyil 'khor*], (and) they don't understand in what way the bodies of sentient beings are primordially mandalas. Therefore, they say that what already existed [*sngar yod*] is cultivated through visualization.”<sup>329</sup>

Mkhas grub seems to be highlighting tensions inherent in the classification of the body mandala as ‘unfabricated.’ If it’s already formed, what’s the point of performing the body mandala practice? The tone of the critique resembles similar statements made in the critique of subitism, the archetypical enemy within the realm of Tibetan philosophical debate and reasoning. In other words, if we are already enlightened, why practice? Such objections also characterized Buddha nature debates, a connection to be explored in further depth below. Similar critiques are reiterated throughout this section of Mkhas grub’s text, bringing attention to the importance of the path structure in legitimizing tantric practice for the Gelukpas. In the context of Gelukpa interpretations of Guhyasamāja practices, the structure of Nāgārjuna’s five stages was instrumental in such acts of legitimation. As we will see below, in the section devoted to his own views on the practice, Mkhas grub is not defying the classification of the body mandala as “unfabricated”; rather, he is pointing out areas of confusion for those who lack his training and clear perspective.

Mkhas grub then points to ways in which proponents who accept that the body is already a mandala threaten the very structure of the Buddhist path, beginning with the four noble truths:

“As for those who speak in this way, they are of improper understanding that is extremely uncritical. If you see things in this way, isn't it the case that the (noble) truth of suffering- (the very fact) that the body of sentient beings is generated by karma and *kleśa*- is eradicated?”<sup>330</sup>

In these terms, the body is virtually equated with suffering, making any view of it as divine a category confusion of the worst kind. Mkhas grub then proceeds to make a number of hyperbolic statements targeting the opponent who confuses human bodies with mandalas. Such an opponent jeopardizes the very pillars of the Buddhist tradition,

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<sup>329</sup> *lus kyi dkyil 'khor ni ma bcos ba'i dkyil 'khor du gsungs pas; [234.2] 'gro ba thams cad kyi lus gdod ma nas dkyil 'khor du yod pa la yod par ngo ma shes pa shes par bya ba'i phyir du sngar yod gsal 'debs pa'i tshul gyis bsgom pa yin no zhes zer ro*

<sup>330</sup> *'di lta smra ba ni ha chang yang ma brtags pa'i log bar rtog pa yin [234.3] te; de lta na 'gro ba rnams kyi lus las dang nyon mongs pas bskyed pa'i sdug bsngal bden ba ma yin ba'am*

particularly the path model of gradual practice, ethical conduct, and the theory of karma. For example:

“One would thus be lead to conclude that the mandala of Vajradhara (ie. the body mandala) is established by the power of karma and *kleśa*. (Further, the state of) being Vajradhara and (the state of) being a transmigrator would be inseparable [*mthun yod pa tsam du ma zad*]. Not only that, but also, due to that perverse implication, the state of being a sentient being who experiences the suffering of *samsāra* would be pervaded by (the state of) being Vajradhāra.”<sup>331</sup>

In other words, mixing inalienable categories like Buddha and sentient being contaminates both and potentially obliterates the possibility of moving beyond *samsāra* at all. Even more dramatically, Mkhas grub elaborates upon his critique, asserting:

“From this perspective, one would have to claim that if there is defilement, it is wisdom, or (for that matter) anything at all. If all sentient beings were actually buddhas, the worldly container (of sentient beings) would have to be the celestial palace of self-appearing wisdom. By virtue of this contradiction, the (inevitable) consequence would be that *samsāra* itself would be untenable as an object of knowledge. How could it be that a Buddha who doesn’t recognize himself as being Buddha, not even knowing himself, would be omniscient? The result would be a buddha who does not know any object of knowledge at all. Such a foolish one is truly incredible!”<sup>332</sup>

In other words, one is leveling the very ground from which the path begins, the recognition of suffering and of the nature of *samsāra*. If *samsāra* cannot be conceived of as an object of knowledge [*shes bya*], the entire imperative of liberation through reasoning as well as the necessity of working from within the bonds of conventional reality are called into question. These are methods embraced by the Gelukpas as essential for liberation. Mkhas grub is therefore playing upon the resonance of the rhetorical power of issues surrounding the relationship of the two truths (conventional and ultimate) grounded in the Gelukpa Madhyamaka perspective. In the process, he is employing the tools provided by Buddhist logic and epistemology for explaining human perception and conception and their potential to access the true state of things.

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<sup>331</sup> *rdo rje 'chang gi dkyil 'khor las nyon gyi dbang gis grub pa yod par thal ba'i phyir dang ; rdo rje 'chang dngos yang yin 'khor ba ba yang yin pa'i gzhi [234.4] mthun yod pa tsam du ma zad; 'khor ba'i sdug bsngal myong ba'i sems can yin na rdo rje 'chang yin pas khyab par 'gyur te*

<sup>332</sup> *de lta na ni sgrib pa yin na ye shes yin pa sogs su'ang 'dod dgos la; sems can thams cad sangs rgyas dngos yin na snod kyil 'jig rten ye shes rang snang gi gzhal yas khang dngos ma yin ba 'gal bas 'khor ba shes bya la mi srid par [234.6] thal zhing; rang nyid sangs rgyas yin pa la yin par ngo ma shes pa'i sangs rgyas des ni rang yang ma shes na chos thams cad mkhyen pa lta zhog ; de bas na shes bya gang yang mi mkhyen pa'i sangs rgyas shin tu blun pa de lta bu ni ches ya mtshan no*



This is not to suggest that Mkhas grub is alone in invoking multiple frameworks of Buddhist thought in the polemical context. Rather, it is our objective to highlight the different ways these arguments and levels of discourse are employed by the author at hand for different purposes. For example, Mkhas grub may be building upon or even resurrecting charged controversies surrounding Buddha nature, for example, to give momentum to an argument. Alternatively, the writer may garner rhetorical advantage by accentuating certain aspects of the opponent's argument to make it resemble the view of a heretical tradition like the Sāṃkhya (as Mkhas grub does at one point in this text).<sup>333</sup> Moreover, understanding Mkhas grub's writings on Madhyamaka, for example, and his encounters with other thinkers on the topic may inform our interpretation of Mkhas grub's polemical writings on tantra. Tsong kha pa's positions and the responses of *his* contemporaries to similar issues may also better contextualize Mkhas grub's position. In highlighting these connections, we will attempt to gain a more comprehensive view of Mkhas grub's literary persona, his voice and strategies of argumentation as well as of the intellectual milieu of scholar monastics to which he contributed.

Next, Mkhas grub applies this critique of those who confuse sentient beings and mandala to explicitly challenge some interpretations of the logic of tantric ritual:

“On the other hand, one who makes claims like that would have to (also) claim that it is totally unnecessary for one who is a Buddha and recognizes oneself as such to cultivate the path [*phyin chad lam*]. (Based on that) one would have to claim that cultivating the path after encountering [*brda 'phrod*] the body mandala one time is totally unnecessary.”<sup>334</sup>

From the Sakyapa perspective, the body is considered, in a sense, to already be divine. From that perspective, tantric practice is used to revolutionize the mind's understanding of the body, to expose it to the light per se. This is one potential target of Mkhas grub's critique here, although certainly not the only one.<sup>335</sup> Initiation into the body mandala of Hevajra for the Sakyapa entails the crucial phase of the guru showing that each part of the disciple's body is a part of the mandala inhabited by deities. Of course, such initiation also demands a commitment to the continued practice of this embodied visualization. Therefore the centrality of the tantric vow to the practice itself counters Mkhas grub's concerns with the abandonment of practice. Below we will return to the phenomenological dimension of tantric ritual and initiation practice raised in this example by the term “encounter” [*brda 'phrod*]. We will see how such remarks such as these within the body mandala debate alert us to the volatile status of sense perception and cognition as instruments or catalysts for realizing enlightened awareness. For now, we will take note of this passage as evidence of Mkhas grub's strategy of alluding to the

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<sup>333</sup> Personal communication, John Dunne Fall 2011.

<sup>334</sup> *gzhan yang de ltar [235.1] 'dod pas ni sangs rgyas yin pa la yin par ngo shes phyin chad lam bsgom pa'i dgos pa ci'ang med par 'dod dgos pas lus dkyil lan gcig brda 'phrod phyin chad lam gang yang bsgom mi dgos par 'gyur ro*

<sup>335</sup> Personal communication, Kurt Keutzer 12-16-2013.

opponent's (/opponents') understanding of the relationship of the human body to the mandala as a threat to the very principle of the Buddhist path.

Mkhas grub proceeds to address the status of the tantric approach in relation to that of the perfection vehicle [*phar phyin theg pa'i lam.*]. In doing so, he attempts to demonstrate that those who reify the tantric path over the latter suffer from a fatal self-contradiction:

“ [235.2] ..one who claims that it's necessary to traverse the grounds and paths in stages while cultivating the path is unstable. Having asserted the “Universal Illumination,” the eleventh (*bhūmi*), which is explained as the ultimate object of attainment of the path of the perfection vehicle, to moreover be inferior to tantric Vajradhara, [235.3] (such a proponent) establishes all sentient beings as primordially the mandala of Vajradhara. (So matters really) become extraordinary.”<sup>336</sup>

The equality of the tantric path to that of the perfections is a standard formulation of what we understand as the Gelukpa tradition. Other traditions, such as the Sakyapa, disagree, holding the tantric path to be superior.<sup>337</sup> This fundamental disagreement may shed some light upon Mkhas grub's motivation for measuring tantric practice according to the standard of the “path of the perfection vehicle.” Mkhas grub's use of hyperbole in his elaboration upon such category confusions is charged and borders upon comical at times. However, he touches upon significant points of tension for Tsong kha pa's disciples in their attempts to position their teacher's tradition in relation to those of the others.

Before concluding our discussion of Mkhas grub's concerns with category confusion, I would like to draw attention to two important technical terms he introduces:

“In these positions, it is necessary to assert that the basis of purification [*sbyang gzhi*], the world and its inhabitants, is impossible. Thus, any category of the purifier [*sbyong byed*] at all becomes (logically) untenable. [236.2] Since it would then be the case that all sentient beings are simply Vajradhara, there is a resultant inseparability of those who are endowed with the destiny of mantric action and those who are not.”

The term *sbyang gzhi*, translated here as “basis of purification,” is a vital expression for evaluating the role of the body in tantric practice recurring throughout Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's texts. Bentor 2006 suggests that Geluk and non-Geluk perspectives on the *sbyang gzhi* diverge. According to Bentor, several non-Gelukpa schools of thought split the category of into a pure basis and a *sbyang bya*, what is to be

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<sup>336</sup> [235.2] *lam bsgom nas sa lam rim can du bdrod dgos par 'dod pa rig pa rnal du ma bzhag pa yin la ; phar phyin theg pa'i lam gyi thob bya mthar thug tu bshad pa'i bcu gcig kun tu 'od kyis sa thob kyang da dung sngags kyi rdo rje 'chang las ches dman par khas blangs* [235.3] *nas; sems can thams cad rdo rje 'chang gi dkyil 'khor dngos su gdod ma nas grub par khas len pa 'di las ngo mtshar du gyur ba ci zhig byar yod*

<sup>337</sup> Personal communication, Kurt Keutzer, 12-16-2013. For an example of this perspective, see Chapter 5 in Verrill's 2012 translation of the Sakyapa patriarch Sonam Tsemo's (1142-1182) *The Yogini's Eye*.

purified (i.e. the defilements).<sup>338</sup> In reference to the *sbyang gzhi*, Bentor states, “While in the Dge lugs pa tradition it refers to the ordinary saṃsāric state, according to others it is the true nature of things.” In our interpretation of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen’s texts on body mandala, we will devote attention to the use of such terms, terms describing the basis or support for practice. In doing so, we may come closer to determining how Gelukpa and Sakyapa attitudes toward the role of the human body in tantric practice diverge and how this divergence informs their views on body mandala.<sup>339</sup> On a more general level, attention to such terminology may reveal how these authors cope with the problem of relating ordinary and enlightened realities. This is a problem that is central to writings on tantra but features prominently in other genres of Buddhist discourse as well.

### **IB. The causal link**

Tsong kha pa and his descendants express concerns with establishing a verifiable causal link between this present human body and the Buddha bodies produced through tantric practice. These concerns often took shape in discussions of the need to produce a “similar type cause” [*rigs ‘dra’i rgyu*], as introduced in Chapter Three. Such a variety of cause provided the necessary link between the ordinary and inherently flawed human body and the form body of the Buddha. This cause was to be produced through mastery of the completion stage of *sādhana* practice. Tsong kha pa describes the Buddha body as a type of container:

“For those tormented by thirst their main focus will be the search for something to drink, but for that they will need a container. Likewise, for those of the Great Vehicle who are moved by a great compassion that is unable to bear living beings being tormented by suffering and deprived of happiness, their main focus will be striving for the welfare of others...actually appearing before sentient beings and then accomplishing their needs is to be performed by the form body (*rūpakāya*) from the two types of enlightened bodies, and not by the *dharmakāya*. Therefore the main focus of their endeavor is the form body. Because of this, a special cause that is similar in type to the form body, that is used as a method for achieving the form body, and that is a special and peerless feature not found in other vehicles, other classes of tantra, and in the generation stage has to be present in the completion stage.”<sup>340</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Bentor 2006, pp.196-7

<sup>339</sup> The Sakyapa triadic framework of the cause, path, and fruit/result may also be helpful in evaluating attitudes toward the body as a support for practice. In our spring 2011 meetings, Khenpo Yeshe explained the *sbyang gzhi* as the body and the *sbyong byed* as the path. He added that while Ngor chen regards the body is the basis for purification, Mkhas grub sees it as an impure thing needs to be left behind. Khenpo Choying Dorje pointed out that the late Fifteenth-century Sakyapa interpreter Go rams pa explicitly stated that the kleśas become wisdom.

<sup>340</sup> Kilty 2013, p.117.

In this quote, Tsong kha pa copes with a perceived challenge posed by tantric practice to the Buddhist theories of causality that form the very basis for karmic law and human embodiment. Resources for such theories of causality include the Abhidharma literature and Madhyamaka reformulations of the ideas presented therein.<sup>341</sup> If a Buddha body is not the result of or equal to karma and kleśa, then how does it manifest? Among the five standard categories of effect, the Buddha body seems to most closely resemble the *niṣyanda-phala* or the “natural outflow” effect; this is an effect that “corresponds to the nature of its cause in activity and experience” and is produced by the *sabhāga-hetu* or “homogenous cause.”<sup>342</sup> Within Abhidharmic literature, the *niṣyanda* is used to describe how one’s present actions can positively influence future moral tendencies.<sup>343</sup> In applying such a formula within the tantric context, the requisite action is the completion stage of *sādhana* practice. The cause appears to then be the series of simulations of self as Buddha effected through such practice. Therefore, in primatizing the production of a form body and substantiating the coherence of causal logic for producing such a body, Tsong kha pa identifies tantric practice as central within a larger *pāramitānaya* project of compassionate activity.<sup>344</sup>

As evidenced by his repeated recourse to hyperbolic category confusions, Mkhas grub expresses a comparable anxiety to negotiate the relationship of the human body to the Buddha’s form body in terms of the larger *pāramitānaya: mantranaya* framework. However, in doing so, Mkhas grub challenges a fundamental aspect of tantric meditation, visualizing oneself as a Buddha, by subjecting it to the principles of Buddhist logic and epistemology:

Moreover, when cultivating oneself as a deity, some (say) that, ‘I am actually divine.’ In that case, that mind becomes a mistaken consciousness [*log shes*] when cultivating the self as divine even when it isn’t. Thus, it becomes inadmissible as the cause of Buddhahood.<sup>345</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Frances Garrett 2008 has presented the complex theory of causes and conditions that pervade embryological accounts from Tibetan medical works and their Indian sources.<sup>341</sup> Garrett has explored the different uses of embryological accounts in Tibetan Buddhist texts, as both a deterrent to craving rebirth in a human body and as positive model for spiritual transformation.

<sup>342</sup> Hodge 2003, fn 10.5 & Hirakawa 1993, p.189

<sup>343</sup> See *Abhidharma-kośa* II.56-58 as referenced in Hodge 2003, fn 10.5. For an example Madhyamaka understanding of Abhidharmic causality, see Kalupahana 1996 on Nāgārjuna’s writings, pp. 110-111 & 284.

<sup>344</sup> I have encountered numerous references in secondary scholarship that suggest that the ability to produce a form body by means of the “similar type cause” was regarded as distinguishing feature of the tantric path, one that marked it as superior even, to the path of perfections. For example, see Hopkins 2007, p.315.

<sup>345</sup> [236.3] *yang kha cig rang lhar bsgom pa'i dus na lha dngos yin te; gal te lha ma yin kyang lhar bsgom pa yin na blo de log shes su 'gyur pas sangs rgyas ky'i rgyur mi 'thad pa'i phyir ro;*

Here we find another manifestation of Buddhist notions of causality introduced within the framework of Buddhist theories of perception and cognition. Namely, false cognitions [*log shes Skt. mithyā-jñāna or viparyaya-jñāna*] are insufficient bases for liberation. The passage suggests an irreconcilability of certain canonical Gelukpa philosophical notions with the most essential principles of tantric practice, most notably, the practitioner's identification with a deity. Mkhas grub continues:

“...when performing imaginative activity [*lhag mos*] in cultivating clear realization [*mngon rtogs*]:

All sentient beings are empowered. All obstacles and obscurations are purified. One cultivates installation in the level of Vajradhara...

Is that the case or not? What is cultivated?

If it's like the first (i.e. if these propositions are indeed true), all sentient beings would become Vajrasattva. (These would be the consequences):

Beings who hadn't overcome (the) obstacles (ie. non-Buddhas) would be impossible. Beings who hadn't attained empowerment would also be impossible. Sentient beings who hadn't completed the purification of obstacles and obscurations would also become impossible.<sup>346</sup>

Because one becomes mistaken in cognition [*log shes su 'gyur bas*] if one practices as though one were a Buddha even though one is not, (that consciousness) is untenable as the cause of Buddhahood. If one speaks thus, what is to be said?<sup>347</sup>

This passage probes the very basis of imagination itself and its potential as a tool for liberation. Why is Mkhas grub pressing the issue of a seeming irreconcilability of vital principles of the *pāramitānaya* such as the two truths with visualization of oneself as a Buddha, a vital aspect of tantric theory and practice? The author appears to question the point of repeatedly imagining something that isn't, logically speaking, true. Ultimately, he begs the question as to how inculcating oneself in such delusions could possibly help to defeat ignorance and to realize enlightened awareness. In invoking the category of *log shes* or “false cognition” to describe such acts of imagination, Mkhas grub taps into yet another level of Buddhist discourse, the realm of “valid cognition” [*pramāna Tib. tshad ma*].

## **IC. Pramāṇa**

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<sup>347</sup> ...*mngon rtogs bsgom pa'i skabs su lhag mos kyi mdzad pa lta bu bsgom nas sems can thams cad la dbang bskur; sdig sgrib thams cad sbyangs; rdo rje sems [236.5] dpa'i go 'phang la bkod par bsgom pa sogs de ltar yin nas sam ; ma yin bzhin du bsgom pa gang yin; dang po ltar na [yin]; sems can thams cad rdo rje sems dpar gyur zin pas sangs ma rgyas pa'i sems can mi srid pa dang; dbang bskur ma thob pa'i [236.6] sems can mi srid pa dang; sdig sgrib dag ma tshar ba'i sems can mi srid par 'gyur zhing; ma yin bzhin du bsgom na log shes su 'gyur bas sangs rgyas kyi rgyur mi 'thad do zhes brjod na ci smra*

The Sakya patriarch Sa skya pandita's (Sa pan) thirteenth-century antirealist reading of Dharmakīrti, the *Tshad ma rigs gter* and its autocommentary (itself a response to the works of the Gsang phu tradition of Phya ba<sup>348</sup>) sparked centuries of debate. Its relevance persists even today. Dreyfus regards Mkhas grub as part of the larger project of clarifying Sa pan's ideas in terms of the Gelukpa realist interpretation of Dharmakīrti's philosophy. A significant portion of this philosophy concerned theories of "valid cognition." [*pramāṇa* Tib. *tshad ma*]. *Pramāṇa* theory provides a forum for considering how the two truths frame our processes of perceiving and conceiving objects. Do we see things because they are really there? Can we rely upon our senses for an accurate portrait, view, or understanding of the world? Is it ever possible to see things as they truly are? These are among the many questions entertained by *pramāṇa* theorists. Building upon the suggested equivalence of tantric acts of visualization with *log shes* or "false cognition" discussed in the preceding section, we will examine Mkhas grub's relationship to *pramāṇa* theory. In the process, we will assess how this relationship may have factored into his evaluation of tantric practice in the body mandala debate.

Dreyfus describes the climate that characterized writing on *pramāṇa* during Mkhas grub's time as charged: "...at the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, a conflict of interpretations opposed the partisans of Tibetan realism to those who followed Sapan's antirealism."<sup>349</sup> Dreyfus describes the Gelukpa perspective on valid cognition shared by Tsong kha pa's disciples, specifically Mkhas grub and Rgyal tshab dar ma rin chen (1364-1432) (though they differ on various points), as distinct from Sa pan's in significant ways:

"the explanation of valid cognition as the elimination of a superimposition is an obvious truth. This has important consequences for their understanding of perception...For Sapan, perception does not eliminate superimposition, for its function is strictly limited to the passive appearance of things."<sup>350</sup>

These conflicting perspectives, inherited generally by the Gelukpa and Sakyapa traditions, revolve around fundamental assumptions about the relationship between conventional and ultimate realities. For example, if it is not possible to perceive reality without projecting inaccurate frameworks of understanding onto it, then how are we to practice within the bounds of conventional reality? What shape should such practices take, and what are their limits?

Dreyfus has shown how Mkhas grub was embroiled in debates over identity that dealt with how to properly understand the relationship of perception, cognition and reality in Dharmakīrti's thought.<sup>351</sup> Mkhas grub and his fellow "moderate realists" distinguish identity in terms of substance and concept, perception and conception: "As realist thinkers, Ge-luk philosophers tend to stress the importance of intelligibility as a criterion of existence. Due to the moderation of their realism and their historical

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<sup>348</sup> See Cabezon 2007, p.26-27.

<sup>349</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p26.

<sup>350</sup> Dreyfus 1997, pp.376-77.

<sup>351</sup> In particular, the question of the relationship of universals and particulars was at the heart of the controversy.

situation as commentators of a conceptualist system, they do not go, however, as far as equating intelligibility and reality, as extreme realists do.”<sup>352</sup>

Whereas in the antirealist vein of interpretation set forth by Sa pan and many of his Sakyapa followers, perception is inherently flawed, the moderate realists attribute a vital role to perception in determining identity. For them, “Perception is understood to have undistorted epistemic access to reality. Nevertheless, it does not establish identity but only substantial identity.”<sup>353</sup> As moderate realists, Gelukpa thinkers like Mkhas grub emphasized the importance of the conventional tools of perception and intellect in working towards a more accurate view of things as they truly are, the ultimate truth. This driving imperative of the Gelukpa project may have inspired Mkhas grub to attempt to reconcile the soteriological orientation of certain aspects of the philosophical and practical or meditative systems.

In discussing Mkhas grub’s interpretation of Dharmakīrti’s chapter on *pramāṇasiddhi*, van der Kuijp demonstrates the link created between this chapter and the Kadampa *lam rim* teachings.<sup>354</sup> This link helps to “form the hermeneutic grid along which the soteriology of Buddhist *pramāṇavāda* came to be established.”<sup>355</sup> Pace Steinkellner, he suggests that Tsong kha pa, rather than his teacher Ren mda’ ba may have started this trend<sup>356</sup>:

“If we recall that the last half of the fourteenth century witnessed an unprecedented revival in the Bka’-gdams-pa *stan/lam-rim* and *blo-byong* cycles- among the prime movers behind this revival were the highly influential Rgyal-sras Thogs med dpal-bzang-po (1295-1362) and Tsong kha pa’s teacher Chos-skyabs dpal bzang po- which to some degree culminated in Tsong kha pa’s *Lam-rim chen-mo*, it would not appear wholly unreasonable to suggest that the specifically dga’ ldan pa linkage between Dharmakīrti and the *lam-rim* teachings could very well have had its inception with Tsong kha pa.”<sup>357</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p.176.

<sup>353</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p.175.

<sup>354</sup> See Jackson’s 1993 edition and translation of the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter. Jackson, Roger R., and Rgyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen. 1993. *Is enlightenment possible?: Dharmakīrti and rGyal tshab rje on knowledge, rebirth, no-self and liberation*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.

<sup>355</sup> van der Kuijp, Leonard. 1985b. "Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje I: Mkhas grub rje's Epistemological Oeuvre and His Philological Remarks on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya*," *Berliner Indologische Studien* 1 (1985b), 75-105: p.75.

<sup>356</sup> See Steinkellner 1983, pp. 282-283. Steinkellner, Ernst. 1983. “Tshad ma’i skyes bu: Meaning and Historical Significance of the Term,” In Csoma de Kőrös Memorial Symposium, Ernst Steinkellner, and Helmut Tauscher. 1983. *Contributions on Tibetan language, history, and culture*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien: 275-283.

<sup>357</sup> van der Kuijp 1985b, p77.

As a lineal descendent of Tsong kha pa, Mkhas grub is therefore potentially involved in a discourse on *pramāṇa* that incorporates the notion of a graded Buddhist path into the realms of Buddhist epistemology and soteriology. Van der Kuijp describes how Mkhas grub himself emphasized his reception of these teachings from Tsong kha pa rather than from Ren mda' ba.<sup>358</sup> Determining the boundaries of perception and conception, how best to access a more accurate view of reality, and, ultimately, how to liberate oneself from the bonds of *samsāra* are the underlying problems framing these discourses. Further reinforced by the plenitude of polemical discourse on *pramāṇa* sparked by Sa pan, we can imagine the ways in which Mkhas grub's invocation of *pramāṇa* here within his commentary on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* resonated with the charged tenor of those debates.

In his commentary, Mkhas grub continues to probe the boundaries between different levels of Buddhist discourse in introducing the terms of *pramāṇa* into the the realm of tantric ritual and imagination:

“Moreover, having consecrated a thangka, a statue, and so forth, it becomes necessary to claim that it is really a Buddha. One imagines all the realms of space to be filled with flowers at the time of making offerings. If this is as one imagines, there's the problem of it not being visually perceptible [*snang du rung ba*]. If it's not (i.e. if the statues are not really Buddhas, the sky is not really full of flowers...), it becomes a false cognition [*log shes*]. (Therefore) it is rendered untenable as the cause of Buddhahood.”<sup>359</sup>

The object of perception is negated here based upon the fact that the flowers offered imaginatively in *sādhana* practice are not readily observable by everyone [*snang du rung ba*]. The categories of *snang du ma rung ba* and *snang du rung ba* are important for structuring refutation within the Prajñāpāramitā literature; they refer to two basic categories of phenomena, those that are visible and those that are invisible to the ordinary person.<sup>360</sup> In this context, the *log shes* is to say something like a statue is actually a Buddha once it is consecrated or that an object of visualization is really there. This passage requires further clarification and attunement with *pramāṇa* theory. However, on a basic level we can see how Mkhas grub is playing upon and bringing attention to the controversial status of acts of imagination.

He continues to target possible contradictions underlying the logic of tantric ritual, bringing both *pramāṇa* and the force of the vinaya to bear upon the mechanics of consecration:

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<sup>358</sup> van der Kuijp 1985b, p76.

<sup>359</sup> *gzhan yang bris sku blugs sku sogs kyang rab [237.1] gnas zin nas sangs rgyas dngos su 'dod dgos par 'gyur zhing; nam mkha'i khams thams cad me tog sogs kyis gang bar bsgom nas mchod pa 'bul ba'i tshe; bsgom pa ltar yod na de'i tshe snang du rung ba las mi dmigs [237.2] pas khegs la; med na log shes su song bas sangs rgyas kyi rgyur mi 'thad do*

<sup>360</sup> I am grateful to Khenpo Choying Dorje for clarifying this context for me in our Spring 2011 meetings.



“At the time of consecration, the disciple has already been transformed [*gyur zin*] into Akṣobhya by the Akṣobhya water consecration. So again, why would it be necessary to purify the stains of pride and so on with the Ratnasambhava consecration and so forth? When one cultivates oneself as Vajradhara, one’s own body is ornamented with the major and minor marks (of Buddhahood). One is practicing without experiencing any direct perception [*mngon sum du rtogs pa*] of omniscience whatsoever. So then the pretense of oneself as a Buddha as a direct perception is nuts. That being the case, assuming that we’re not talking about the pride of conceit, then you know yourself to be totally devoid of the qualities of that (Buddha) like longevity [*tshe stobs*] and so forth. Surely, it would be a (major) transgression to claim that, at that time, one is a Buddha. Don’t be careless by causing trouble [*dbyen bcos pas*] with faulty doctrine.”<sup>361</sup>

This passage refers to the logic of consecration ritual in which each empowerment purifies one of the obscurations through association with one of the five Buddha families. In the water empowerment, the Vajrācārya imagines himself and the disciple and the water as Akṣobhya.<sup>362</sup> Mkhas grub evokes *pramāṇa* theory here by the use of the term *mngon sum du rtogs pa*, “direct perception.” His use of this term alerts us to the tension between theory and practice articulated through a kind of tantric epistemology in the body mandala texts. How is direct perception employed in tantric ritual practice? How do sense perceptions and mental cognitions interact in the process of realizing oneself as a Buddha? Is their cooperation different than it would be in other non-tantric contexts? Furthermore, in pursuing the full implications of such questions raised by Mkhas grub’s comments, one would have to consider how such questions play out in the conflicting positions of the Gelukpa and Sakyapa on direct perception [*mngon sum Skt. pratyakṣa*]. For the Gelukpa, such perception is unmediated whereas for the Sakyapa, ultimately, it is always mediated. Dharmakīrti and his Tibetan antirealist interpreters, the Sakyapas, differ from his realist interpreters, the Gelukpas on the nature of this mediation:

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<sup>361</sup> *dbang bskur ba'i tshe bskyod pa chu'i dbang bskur ba nyid kyis slob ma mi bskyod bar gyur zin pas; da de la rin 'byung gi [237.3] dbang la sogs pas nga rgyal la sogs pa'i dri ma sbyang dgos pa 'gal zhing; rang nyid rdo rje 'chang du bsgom pa'i tshe rang gi lus mtshan dpes brgyan pa dang; sems kyis chos thams cad mngon sum du rtogs pa gang yang med par myong bas grub [237.4] bzhin du de'i tshe rang nyid sangs rgyas su khas 'che ba ni mngon sum la smyon par byed pa yin la mngon pa'i nga rgyal ma yin na ni rang nyid la de'i tshe stobs sogs kyi yon tan gang yang med par shes bzhin du; rang nyid de'i tshe sangs rgyas su zhes bas [237.5] smras bas pham pa bskyed par byed pa gdon mi za bas; grub mtha' ngan bas dbyen bcos pas bag med par ma byed cig*

<sup>362</sup> This passage raises the question of what the transformative power of consecration really achieves. In other words, if one were really already transformed into a Buddha like Akṣobhya, what need would there be to become Ratnasambhava? If one is truly transformed, what is the relationship between these transformations? Moreover, how do individual phases of consecration inculcate the practitioner in cultivating generation and completion stages, respectively?

“Dharmakīrti and his Sa-gya interpreters hold a position we will describe...as representationalism, which postulates that awareness is directly in contact with only representations, what Dharmakīrti call *reflections* or *aspects*. By contrast Kay-drup holds a direct realist view, according to which mental episodes are in direct contact with objects. Hence, the reflection of a thing in consciousness is not a representation but the revelation of that thing itself.”<sup>363</sup>

While the Gelukpa don’t go so far as to say that we can (conventionally speaking) see things as they truly are, there are certain aspects of our powers of perception that Mkhas grub’s philosophical position requires him to salvage and even prioritize. These notions of the link between conception and language bring our attention to the controversial status of ‘representation’ for Tibetan thinkers, a theme to which we will return in the conclusion of the dissertation.

Davidson 1999 addresses the use of *pramāṇa* terminology in the writings of medieval Indian authors on meditative, and in particular, esoteric practice. Davidson describes a “definite proclivity on the part of Buddhist meditative theoreticians to employ philosophical and doctrinal terminology for their own purposes.”<sup>364</sup> Davidson associates this tendency with the “institutionalization of esoteric Buddhism, a purpose well served by this language.”<sup>365</sup> Although such texts may be the province of a different time and place, they are the inheritance of Tibetan scholar monastics like Mkhas grub. Therefore, Davidson’s study of the Indian precedent for incorporating *pramāṇa* discourse into the tantric context attunes us to the possibility that Mkhas grub may have followed the lead of his Indian predecessors. In other words, he may have appropriated *pramāṇa* discourse to confer prestige upon certain aspects and interpretations of tantric practice over others.

For the time being we will forego further investigation of the role of *pramāṇa* in Mkhas grub’s account of tantric ritual. However, we will remain attentive to the ways in which he treats perception and cognition in his discussions of visualization practice. In particular, we will take note of occasions in which such references challenge or impart validity upon the tantric project. Moreover, later in this chapter, we will consider how Mkhas grub depicts perception as essential for substantiating the basis for body mandala practice.

Mkhas grub’s use of another term in the passage cited above draws even more explicitly upon what Davidson might call the “institutional” domain of Buddhism. The term *mngon pa’i nga rgyal* refers to the false conceit of oneself as an enlightened being. Namely, if you are aware that you are not actually a Buddha, but still claim to be one, you are lying. The focus shifts from faulty perception to flawed action. To claim false accomplishments is to commit one the four major transgressions or “defeats” [*pham*] outlined in the vinaya. Many thinkers consider the reconciliation of tantric practice with the principles of the vinaya to be one of the major contributions of Tsong kha pa’s monastic reform. Moreover, the clash of tantra and the vinaya characterizes much of the early polemics of the Gsar ma era in Tibet. In this passage, Mkhas grub forces his

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<sup>363</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p.252. For more on the role of representations in Dharmakīrti’s thought, see Dreyfus, p.220.

<sup>364</sup> Davidson 1999, p.26.

<sup>365</sup> Davidson 1999, p.35

opponent into a position of inevitably violating the rules of either Buddhist epistemology or of the vinaya, two charged levels of discourse, with the latter, in particular, invested with inalienable authority.

#### **ID. Buddha nature and Buddha bodies**

Yet another level of Buddhist discourse generating polemical writings in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Tibet concerns the questions raised by Buddha nature, loosely defined as the potential possessed by beings to realize Buddhahood. Much of Mkhas grub's description of the positions of others and the attendant category confusions presented in the juxtaposition of human body and mandala touches upon many of the same points and utilizes many of the same formal arguments as found within contemporary writings on Buddha nature. The evolution of the *gzhan stong* view at the hands of Dolpopa (1292-1361), trained in the Sakya tradition but identified as a Jonangpa, in particular, is regarded as having sparked controversies. Mather describes the Jonangpa *gzhan stong* position as follows: "The Jonang tradition of zhentong Madhyamaka asserts a truly existing ultimate that is endowed with all Buddha qualities and thus not "empty of an own-being" (*rang stong*), but "empty of other" (*gzhan stong*) nonexistent stains."<sup>366</sup> The ontological implication of such true existence offended many, both in challenging classic Madhyamaka fundamentals on emptiness and in resembling non-Buddhist heretical views. Dolpopa explains his position on existence as follows: "The *dharmakāya* is free from mental fabrications throughout beginningless time. Because of recognizing it as being free from mental fabrications, it is truly established."<sup>367</sup> The term Mathes translates as "mental fabrications" here is *spros ma* [Skt. *prapañca*], not *bcos ma*, as found in Mkhas grub's texts, but the connotations of the terms are similar; often taken as "elaboration," *spros ma* refers to the tendency of our minds to proliferate ideas and concepts that obstruct our ability to experience reality accurately.

Salient issues within buddha nature discourse include the contested status of Buddhahood as immanent or transcendent and the relationship of Buddha bodies to the mindstream of sentient beings. The broader implications of Buddha nature theories for understanding the relationship of the two truths and even the paths of *pāramitānaya* and *mantranaya* were also at stake. Buddha nature debates called into question the role of perception and cognition in actualizing one's potential to be liberated. These debates also investigated the basis for Buddhist practice and its relation to the stains of karma and kleśa.<sup>368</sup> Within this particular aspect of the discourse, the notion of transforming the basis of practice is introduced. These discussions of transformation pose an interesting point for comparison with the varieties of transformation effected through tantric practice in ritual acts of identifying with the divine like body mandala practice.

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<sup>366</sup> Mathes 2008, p.45.

<sup>367</sup> Translation by Mathes 2008 p.45. Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal msthan. (1292-1361) *The Ocean of Definitive Meaning of Mountain Dharma*. ( Jo nang ) *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1998.: 446.26-447.1  
*chos sku de ni gdod nas spros dang bral; spros dang bral ngo shes pas bden par grub*

<sup>368</sup> See Mathes 2008, pp.25-129

Concerns with providing a causal link between conventional and ultimate realities in terms of the Buddha bodies factored into Buddha nature debates in a manner comparable to Mkhas grub's tantric context. Mkhas grub follows his vitriolic accusations of the practitioner who declares himself to be a Buddha to be either an idiot or a liar with the following direct reference to the Buddha nature problem: "Anyone who makes claims like this, asserting that the continua of sentient beings possess a stable and permanent *svābhāvikakāya* together with all the qualities of results of separating (from obscurations) is an intolerable proponent."<sup>369</sup> In debates surrounding Buddha nature, parsing the qualities of different Buddha bodies provided a method for coping with tensions between the categories of the natural and the fabricated, that which is inherently present and that which must be actualized or acted upon. Dolpopa parses these qualities as follows:

"For example, in the same way as the inexhaustible treasure underground is naturally present, not newly brought about by effort, and the tree with its fruits gradually grows in the garden by having brought about [the necessary conditions] with effort, the Buddha potential, which has the ability to bring forward the three *kāyas*, should be known to be twofold as well. It is both the natural potential, [namely] the pure *dharmadhātu*, which is closely present as the nature of mind through beginningless time, and the fortified potential, [which is] supreme in terms of virtues and conducive to liberation. [The fortified potential] arises from [virtuous deeds] being newly acquired by effort, [namely by] something being done, such as focusing on the naturally present potential] and studying.

As to how the three *kāyas* are attained, it is [here] maintained that the fruit, [namely] the three *kāyas* of the perfect Buddha, are attained owing to a cause, [namely] these two naturally present and fortified potentials. First, the naturally present potential is perfected through many accumulations of wisdom, and becomes free from all adventitious stains, and.. the *svābhāvikakāya*, the *dharmatā* endowed with both purities, is thereby attained. Second, the accumulation of merit is perfected by increasing the fortified potential, and the latter *kāyas*, namely the *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya*, which appear to disciples near and far, are thereby attained."<sup>370</sup>

In this account of the development of the Buddha bodies by Dolpopa, concerns with identifying a particular notion of causality attuned to the subtleties of differentiating inherent and acquired elements and with defining the role of practice in bringing about the result are prominent. Mkhas grub deals with these same issues through asserting the distinction of the fabricated and unfabricated [*bcos ma bcos kyi khyad par 'byed pa*]: If that is the case, many things could be said (such as):

<sup>369</sup> *'di ltar 'dod bzhin du gang dag sems can gyi rgyud la ngo bo nyid sku rtag brtan bral 'bras kyi yon tan thams cad dang ldan pa yod [237.6] par khas len pa la mi bzod bar smra ba ni*

<sup>370</sup> Translation by Mathes 2008, pp.83-84; Dolpopa; *Nyi ma'i 'od zer* 987.3-.6. "Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos legs bshad nyi ma'i 'od zer." The 'Dzam-thang Edition of the Collected Works of Kun mkhyen Dol-po-pa Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan, vol.4 (ma), 883-1161. Delhi: Shedrup Books, 1992.

“For us, considering the suchness of the bodies of sentient beings and the suchness of the deities of the mandala to be inseparable in nature, all sentient beings are asserted to be mandalas primordially.’

If you say that the mandala of the Buddha is not actually accepted (to be primordially existent in sentient beings), well in that case, (one might reply), by that reasoning, the distinction of that which is fabricated and that which is unfabricated is illogical just like the suchness of painted powders and cloth paintings being inseparable in nature from the suchness of deities.”<sup>371</sup>

Bentor 2006 notes that although the issue of *tathāgatagarbha* isn’t “central” for Mkhas grub, it is one of the sectarian claims emerging in the present text. Through reference to Ruegg ’68 and (Lessing &) Wayman ’68, Bentor clarifies Mkhas grub’s position on the *svābhāvikakāya*, namely that it is not found in the continua of all sentient beings and cannot be equated with Buddha nature, counter the Jonangpa position.<sup>372</sup> Bu ston, on the other hand, equates the *svābhāvikakāya* with Buddha nature but denies its inclusion in the mindstream of all sentient beings.<sup>373</sup>

In his *Rgyud sde spyi rnam*, Mkhas grub gives attention to sūtra teachings on *tathāgatagarbha* theory and explicitly differs both from the Jonangpa as well as from certain aspects of Bu ston’s writings.<sup>374</sup> Bentor also brings attention to the fact that in that text Mkhas grub is explicit in identifying the objects of his critiques. The context in which Mkhas grub introduces these positions in that text is a presentation of the three turnings of the wheel of the Buddha’s teachings. The interpretation of the schema of the three turnings of the wheel provided a forum for Tibetan thinkers to compare and stratify multiple levels of Buddhist discourse. Where to fit the sūtras dealing with Buddha nature and how to rank them on the spectrum of definitive and provisional teachings were key elements of such interpretations. Both Mkhas grub and Bu ston, counter the Jonangpas, regarded the second turning of the wheel, classified by Mkhas grub as the teachings on emptiness and the unity of all three vehicles, as the sole definitive teaching. The Jonangpas, according to Mkhas grub, regard both the first and second turnings of the wheel as provisional, taking only the final turning in which they include the *tathāgatagarbha* sutras, to be definitive.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>371</sup> *gal te mang du smras mod; kho bo cag ni 'gro ba'i lus kyi de kho na nyid dang dkyil 'khor gyi lha'i de kho na nyid rang bzhin dbyer med pa la bsams nas 'gro ba thams cad gdod ma nas dkyil 'khor du grub bar smra'o; sangs rgyas kyi dkyil 'khor dngos su khas mi len [238.2] no zhes zer na;'o na de'i sgo nas bcos ma bcos kyi khyad par 'byed pa mi rigs te; rdul tshon dang ras bris kyi de kho na nyid kyang lha'i de kho na nyid dang rang bzhin dbyer med ba mtshungs pa'y phyir ro*

<sup>372</sup> Bentor 2006 p195-7, Fn33; Ruegg 1968: 504-5 & Wayman 1968: 50-51.

Ruegg, David Seyfort. 1968/9. *La théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du gotra; études sur la sotériologie et la gnoséologie du bouddhisme*. Paris: École Française d'Extrême-Orient.

<sup>373</sup> See Bentor 2006, fn39 and Wayman 1968, p.48-49.

<sup>374</sup> See Bentor 2006 and Ruegg 1968, fn 501.

<sup>375</sup> Wayman 1968, p49-51.

While it is likely that the Jonangpa are indeed being targeted here in the chapter on body mandala of Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainment*, there may also be a critique of the Sakyapa position implied as well. Such a critique may be employing a sarcastic note, to the effect of: 'you say that your theory is different from that of the Jonangpas, but it isn't.'<sup>376</sup> Such a reading brings attention to the relation of the Jonangpas as a newly evolving institution to the Sakyapas, from whom they descended formally but distinguished themselves doctrinally. Cabezon 2007 speculates: "...both the Dga' ldan pas and Jo nang pas were attempting to create identities for themselves apophatically- by distinguishing themselves from their rivals, and among these rivals were the Sa skya pas."<sup>377</sup> Buddha nature was among the hotly debated topics in these encounters, and such debates reflect a willingness to juxtapose multiple fields of Buddhist discourse in a manner matching Mkhas grub's discussion of the human body: mandala relationship.

Discussions of both Buddha nature and body mandala pivot upon a carefully articulated distinction of the relationship of enlightened and ordinary bodies and perceptions. One might even consider how polemical writings on body mandala transfer many of the issues addressed in Buddha nature debates in terms of the mindstream and the *ālayavijñāna* onto a new locus, the human body.<sup>378</sup> One might further compare descriptions of the *ālayavijñāna* and the human body to ask: what about the socio-political and intellectual climate of fifteenth-century Tibet may have contributed to a heightened interest in problems of embodiment?

In describing the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Frances Garrett encourages connections between tantric, medical, and geographic traditions in forming understandings of the body: "Geographic and geometric conceptualization-whether for individuals, texts, or internal organs- was thus an important form of self-identification and validation, and arguably it was often the most significant factor enabling a Tibetan notion of history in which history itself serves as a validation of the present."<sup>379</sup>

<sup>376</sup> Personal communication, Khenpo Choying Dorje, Spring 2011

<sup>377</sup> Cabezon 2007, p.43. Cabezon, likewise, highlights that these exchanges were multidirectional, including Jonangpa critiques of Tsong kha pa and so forth (fn207). Tsong kha pa's Sakyapa teacher, Ren mda' ba, refuted the Jonangs on many issues beyond Buddha nature, including aspects of interpreting the Kālacakra system. (Personal communication, Khenpo Choying Dorje, Spring 2011).

<sup>378</sup> For a thorough exploration of the early Buddhist evolution of attitudes toward embodiment in the Indian context, see Radich, Michael David. 2007. 'The somatics of liberation: Ideas about embodiment in Buddhism from its origins to the fifth century C.E.' PhD dissertation, Harvard University.

Radich makes some interesting observations using a rich array of source materials. For example, he comments, "Early Mahāyāna texts are more central than has been recognized to the rise of new, positive ideas of embodiments, which are connected with a broader Mahāyāna shift towards greater emphasis on immanence." On the relation of the *ālayavijñāna* and the *āśraya*, see Radich, p. 1165. *On āśraya-parāvṛtti and āśraya-parīśuddhi*, see 1109-1188.

<sup>379</sup> Garrett 2004, p.236. It should be noted that this statement, found in the "Concluding Digressions" of Garrett's dissertation does not reflect the scope of the work as a whole.

Garrett's approach suggests a willingness to combine the resources of multiple varieties of Tibetan discourses on the body that is lacking in contemporary scholarship.<sup>380</sup> The conjunction of *mantranaya* and *pāramitānaya* perspectives on the body within fifteenth-century polemical discourses is one potential avenue for investigating such connections. For the time being, it is sufficient to acknowledge the compulsion to account for the role of the Buddhist path in actualizing the full extent of human potential common to polemics on Buddha nature and on body mandala.

### **IE. 'Grinding the axe': Mkhas grub's approach to sūtra and tantra**

van der Kuijp's research on Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub helps to relate Mkhas grub's presentation of the relationship of *pāramitānaya* and *mantranaya* to the larger fifteenth-century Tibetan intellectual climate. In his review of Thurman's dissertation on Tsong kha pa's *Legs bshad snying po*, van der Kuijp brings attention to an unsubstantiated claim by Thurman that Ren mda' ba disapproved of Tsong kha pa's enthusiasm for tantra. Van der Kuijp traces this claim to Mkhas grub's biographical writings on Tsong kha pa and critiques its accuracy<sup>381</sup>:

"...Mkhas-grub-rje states that at that time, Tibetans were generally either involved in *mdo*, or in *sngags* studies and exegesis, and that there existed a considerable rivalry among them, with one faction belittling the other. While there is some, albeit meager, tangible evidence for several fourteenth century Tibetan scholars who may have held this view- such can perhaps be gleaned from a number of remarks found in Sgra-tshad-pa Rin-chen rnam-rgyal's (1318-1388) commentary on Bu-ston's *tathāgatagarbha* treatise in which he explicitly states that categories should not be mixed- this state of affairs was by no means as prevalent as Mkhas grub would want us to believe. A mere glance at the oeuvre of the most famous masters of the fourteenth century would indeed strongly testify that in fact the opposite was the case. Future research may very well establish my hunch that, with this assessment, Mkhas grub was grinding his own axe."<sup>382</sup>

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The dissertation and resulting monograph are more specifically focused upon the encounter of tantric and medical traditions.

<sup>380</sup> Willa Blythe Miller's 2013 dissertation (though not as broadly situated as the approach suggested in this statement by Garrett) makes an important contribution to better understanding fourteenth-century conceptions of the body in Tibet through the juxtaposition of Buddhist discourses. I look forward to engaging more deeply with Miller's work in the future, and specifically, to exploring how her claims compare with my own findings for the fifteenth-century context. See Miller, Willa Blythe. 2013. 'Secrets of the Vajra Body: Dngos po'i gnas lugs and the Apotheosis of the Body in the work of Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa.' Ph.D. dissertation. Harvard University.

<sup>381</sup> See van der Kuijp 1982, p.47.

<sup>382</sup> van der Kuijp 1982, p.50; see Thurman 1972, p. 69.

Van der Kuijp points to the importance of confirming a more specific date for Mkhas grub's biography of Tsong kha pa than the colophon provides. Based upon the colophon's statement that the text was written in Nyang stod in Gtsang, van der Kuijp deduces that it was composed after Tsong kha pa's death in 1419 and before Mkhas grub's tenure as throneholder at dga' 'ldan beginning in 1431. He speculates further that it may have been written in the midst of the friction with prominent Sakyapas.<sup>383</sup> It is important to note that the colophon of the text that is the focus of our study, the *Ocean of Attainment*, also indicates Nyang stod as the site of composition. Therefore it is possible that both texts were written during a period when Mkhas grub was "grinding his own axe," emphasizing the distinction of paths of sutra and tantra rather than their complementarity. On the one hand, Mkhas grub may have been picking fights, in a manner of speaking, to bring attention to the claims of his tradition over and against that of others. He may have been creating an artificial conflict between these two genres of Buddhist learning that he might skillfully resolve it for his audience.<sup>384</sup>

The gradual solidification of a "Gelukpa philosophical stance" based in Madhyamaka values may have influenced Mkhas grub's approach to the tantric path here. For example, the relationship between the two truths, the importance of working towards enlightenment from within the boundaries of conventional reality, the definition of existence, and the status of the flawed tendencies of our cognitive impulses are issues of the Madhyamaka that take on a different flavor in the tantric context. They are key issues that must be accounted for if the two paths are to be reconciled.

## II. Mkhas grub's own perspective

We have been able to make some useful observations about Mkhas grub's thought based upon his descriptions of others' views, i.e. those of his opponents who 'misunderstand' the relation of sentient beings to mandalas. This situation attests to the very nature of Buddhist debate, in which one clarifies one's own ideas and demonstrates their logical verifiability in relation to the positions of others.

The second part of Mkhas grub's text is specifically devoted to presenting and validating his own views. It is divided according to the subjects of the body mandalas of support and supported and of generating deities from seed syllables located on specific bodily sites. The mandala of the support is the generation of the body as the celestial palace; the mandala of the supported is the generation of deities therein. The discussion of the generation of deities from seed syllables is here distinguished from *nyāsa*, the placement of deities upon the body through mantra. *Nyāsa* is among the repertoire of practices referred to in Chapter Two of the dissertation that resemble body mandala, practices often classified as preparatory and/or purificatory in nature. We will discover that the nature of the body as the basis of ritual practice is of vital importance to Mkhas grub in distinguishing body mandala from such practices. However, the category of "fabrication" may be the most important element for Mkhas grub in distinguishing body mandala practice from other tantric ritual technologies. We have addressed the

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<sup>383</sup> van der Kuijp 1982, fn8.

<sup>384</sup> Catherine Bell 1992 has brought attention to the tendency of many Western scholars to create such artificial conflicts in their studies of ritual.



multivalence of “fabrication” in the preceding section of this chapter, observing connections with the discourses of Buddha nature and Buddhist logic and epistemology. Here we will witness how Mkhas grub applies “fabrication” not only to describe the ontological status of the body mandala, but also, to describe disputed aspects of the mechanics of the practice. In the process, we will continue to develop a portrait of Mkhas grub’s commentarial style, strategy in argument, and authorial voice.

## **IIA. The mandalas of support and supported**

We will first deal with Mkhas grub’s views on the body mandalas of support and supported as presented in an excerpt from *Ocean of Attainment* [250.5-253.4]. First, Mkhas grub distinguishes body mandala from *nyāsa*:

“The point of what’s called cultivating the body mandala doesn’t mean only merely cultivating a deity on each place on the body. Establishing each respective part of the body as the foundation [*bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas*] for each deity [250.6] means cultivating the deity. Otherwise, even from the lower sections of tantra, many body mandala cultivations would be explained.”<sup>385</sup>

For Mkhas grub, unlike *nyāsa*, body mandala practice involves more than simply placing deities on the body or imprinting them there through imagination. What does it mean to take the body as a foundation for practice [*bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas*]? How precisely does this act distinguish body mandala from ritual technologies like *nyāsa*? Moreover, what kind of foundation is the body in this instance? These are important questions, questions we will keep in mind as we work slowly through the details’s of Mkhas grub’s account of body mandala as a unique and ultimately, superior form of tantric ritual practice.

As for the reference to the lower tantric classes in this passage, biographical sources as well as secondary scholarship suggest that Mkhas grub and Ngor chen clashed on topics surrounding cultivating deities in practices associated with the lower tantric classes; this controversy was addressed briefly in Chapter One of this dissertation. However, it is important to recognize that classifying the varieties of deity cultivation in relationship to other tantric practices was controversial for these fourteenth and fifteenth-century scholars. Such controversies may indeed have impacted their views on body mandala.

In this section of his chapter, Mkhas grub addresses the category of “fabrication” as it relates to the basis for establishing a mandala and uses this category to differentiate the body mandala from “outer mandala” [*phyi'i dkyil 'khor*] like paintings or altars made of painted powders:

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<sup>385</sup> *lus dkyil bsgom pa zhes bya ba'i don ni lus kyi gnas so sor lha bsgom pa tsam mi zer gyi ; lus kyi cha de dang de lha de dang de [250.6] bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas lha bsgom pa la zer ba yin te; gzhan du na rgyud sde 'og ma rnam las kyang lus dkyil bsgom pa du ma zhig bshad par 'gyur ro*

“Moreover, painted powder and cloth and so forth are the basis of establishing [*gang las bsgrub pa'i gzhi*] the celestial palace in the outer mandala [*phyi'i dkyil 'khor*]; the seed syllable, symbol and so forth are the basis of establishing the deity. Since the mandala has been newly fabricated by colors and by artist (i.e. the causes), it is called the fabricated mandala. As for the body mandala, the particular parts of the body mandala have not been newly fabricated. (Rather) being perfected since the time of generation from the mother and father, (they) created the basis for establishing (the body mandala) [*bsgrub gzhir byas*]. Since the (body) mandala is established from those, it is taught as the unfabricated mandala.”<sup>386</sup>

In evaluating the nature of the basis of establishment [*bsgrub pa'i gzhi*] and whether it is inherent or newly produced through causes and conditions, Mkas grub defines body mandala as “unfabricated” in contradistinction to other mandala. The rhetoric of the naturally present vs. the produced is familiar from the discussions of Buddha nature described above; it also resonates with more general Buddhist theories of cause and effect. As for the latter, on the most basic level, that which is conditioned is a product of *samsāra*, produced by and productive of karma and therefore, in a sense, inferior. Deconstructing an entity in terms of its parts as well as the compounded causes and conditions that have contributed to its formation was a core Buddhist technique. This technique was most commonly used to break down the conventional illusion a self or of the true ontological existence of an entity. It can be found throughout early Buddhist literature and practice, as exemplified by some of the practices described in Chapter Two of this dissertation, as well as in later developments in Buddhist philosophical pedagogy. To show that an entity is conditioned is demonstrate its ties to defilement and its ultimate impermanence.

In the context of Buddha nature debates, asserting the presence of a permanent and unchanging Buddha nature or an enduring *dharmakāya* posed serious problems for many thinkers. Such trouble appears to be at the heart of Mkhas grub’s critique of the idea that sentient beings are mandalas in any primordial way. Perhaps it is a consciousness of such ontological issues posed by the body mandala that inspires Mkhas grub to distinguish it as not “newly fabricated.” He stills maintains a basic causal model: the union of the fluids of father and mother provided the basis for personhood in cooperation with karma and kleśa and, in turn, form the basis for establishing [*bsgrub gzhir*] the body mandala. In qualifying fabrication in term of its ‘newness,’ Mkhas grub presents fabrication as a spectrum rather than a duality. The bodily basis must, of course, be produced by causes. To say that it is primordially a mandala in any definitive sense would be to deny this. However, Mkhas grub is able to maintains that the body is a

<sup>386</sup> *de yang rdul tshon dang ras bris la sogs pa'i phyi'i dkyil 'khor la ni gzhal yas khang* [251.1] *gang las bsgrub pa'i gzhi* ; *dang lha gang las bsgrub pa'i gzhi sa bon phyag mtshan la sogs pa tham cad tshon dang ri mo mkhan la sogs pas gsar du bcos nas de dag las dkyil 'khor bsgrub pa yin pas bcos ma'i* [251.2] *dkyil 'khor zhes pa dang lus dkyil la ni*; *lus dkyil cha de dang de gsar du ma bcos par pha ma las skyes pa'i dus nas rdzogs par grub yod pa dag bsgrub gzhir byas nas*; *de dag las dkyil 'khor bsgrub pas ma bcos pa'i dkyil 'khor zhes* [251.3] *gsungs pa yin no*

different kind of basis for practice by distinguishing it from “newly fabricated” mandala such as a mandala painting.

Mkhas grub juxtaposes the categories of intrinsic and conditioned, fabricated and unfabricated in a variety of ways. In the following example, he applies the tools of Buddhist linguistic theory and logic to solidify his argument. Returning to further expound upon the correct interpretation of the Ghantapa quotation introduced at the beginning of the chapter, Mkhas grub asserts:

“Therefore, since those foundations for establishing [*bsgrub pa'i gzhi*] the mandala are intrinsic [*rang chas su yod pa*] as soon as one’s body is formed:

‘These beings are not separate from the naturally established mandala.’

So it is said. The basis of establishing the mandala is like using the verbal convention [*tha snyad*] ‘mandala,’ before it (a mandala) is drawn with painted powders and so forth.”<sup>387</sup>

Mkhas grub appears to strike a balance, capitalizing upon the positive connotations of *rang chas su yod pa* and its association with ultimate reality while also tempering any ontological consequences of permanence and true, unchanging existence. He does this with the help of the notion of “conventional designations” [*tha snyad*]. Buddhist linguistic theory such as that based within the tradition of Dharmakīrti emphasizes the conventional aspect of language. This view of language distinguishes Buddhists from Hindu schools of thought like the Mīmāṃsā that posited a true existential connection between words and referents.<sup>388</sup> Buddhist thinkers like Dharmakīrti treat language as an intermediary in the thought process: “Thought, then, conceives its object through an object designated by words.”<sup>389</sup>

Mkhas grub connects the Ghantapa quote and this notion of “conventional designation” to illustrate how the body is not a mandala from the beginning, but just the basis. In other words, ‘we just call it mandala,’ for the sake of making communication about it easier within the parameters of conventional discourse. Therefore, one should not superimpose ideas about its ultimate primordial status based upon such statements.<sup>390</sup> It would be interesting to know more about how and why Mkhas grub employs linguistic theory in the tantric context.<sup>391</sup> For example, what does a comparison of the basis of

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<sup>387</sup> *de bas na dkyil 'khor gang las bsgrub pa'i gzhi de dag rang gi lus grub tsam nas rang chas su yod pas' 'gro ba 'di dag rang bzhin ni gyis ; grub pa'i dkyil 'khor gnyis med pa'o zhes gsungs pa yin te; dkyil 'khor [251.4] gang las bsgrub pa'i gzhi rdul tshon sogs kyis bris pa dag la ma bsgrub pa'i gong nas dkyil 'khor zhes pa'i tha snyad byed pa dang 'dra'o rang bzhi* has been emended to *rang bzhin* as it appears in 234.1 where the same quote by Ghantapa appears with the variation of *sgrub* vs. *grub*. Thanks to Khenpo Yeshe for noting this discrepancy.

<sup>388</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p.222

<sup>389</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p.222

<sup>390</sup> I am indebted to Khenpo Choying Dorje for his help in interpreting this passage.

Personal Communication, Spring 2011

<sup>391</sup> Mkhas grub refers to Buddhist linguistic theory again, later in the chapter, in a discussion of the mandala of the support that seems to be based on the *Vajramālā*. Mkhas

naming things and the basis of generating deities reveal? However, for the purposes of the current chapter, the connection between language, conceptualization, and superimposition is sufficient.<sup>392</sup>

As explored above in the section on *pramāṇa*, conceptual acts of superimposition or imputation are varieties of “fabrication” that hold a negative valence in the Buddhist context. The fact that the imaginative acts of *sādhana* practice are fabrications of the mind presents a problem for Mkhas grub:

Having established, when cultivating as a deity, regarding both, the outer and the body mandala, there is no distinction in terms of what is fabricated by the mind [*blos bcos pa*] and what is imputed by the mind [*blos btags pa*]. And therefore, in all the stages of development from Vajraḍākinī and the ‘drop of springtime’ [*dpyid kyi thig le* Skt. *vasantatilaka*] and so forth, it is called the ‘yoga of fabrication’ [*bcos ma'i rnal 'byor*].<sup>393</sup>

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grub anticipates doubts concerning the practice of generating the sense and mind consciousnesses as part of the celestial palace/body correlation and responds accordingly: “When there is the teaching of the manner of cultivating the celestial palace here, why do you think there is the teaching of the sense and mind consciousnesses as individual parts of the body? The meaning of the term ‘body’ is said to be a ‘conglomeration.’ The body, a coarse vessel, is a conglomeration of the constituents of fat and so forth up until the subtle particles; the consciousness is a conglomeration of various moments. Therefore, there is no fault based on the definition of the term ‘body.’ Moreover, it is not pervaded by being the basis of engaging [*'jug pa'i gzhi*] in being the foundation of defining [*sgra bshad pa'i gzhi*] the term ‘body.’”

*'dir lus gzhal yas khang du bsgom pa'i tshul ston pa na dbang shes dang yid shes rnams gzhal yas khang gi cha rer bsgom [257.3] par gsungs ba ci snyam na; lus kyi sgra don bsags ba zhas bya ba yin la; rags pa 'bem<sup>391</sup> bo'i lus 'di ni sha'i kham chad la sogs pa nas rdul phrar rab kyi bar du bsags pa dang; shes pa rnams ni skad cig du ma bsags pas lus kyi sgra [257.4] bshad pa'i gzhi yin pa'i phyir skyon medo; 'on kyang lus kyi sgra bshad pa'i gzhi yin pa la 'jug pa'i gzhi yin pas ma khyabo*

This is a complicated passage, and several aspects of it need further clarification. These include the application and relation of the terms *sgra bshad pa'i gzhi* and *'jug pa'i gzhi*. In our discussion of this passage, Shabdrung Rinpoche summarized the meaning as follows: while we can use the definition of the body for the mind (i.e. a “conglomeration”), referring to the body as the mind doesn’t make sense.

<sup>392</sup> See Dreyfus 1997 for more on Mkhas grub’s approach to Buddhist linguistic theory. For a study of Buddhism and language, see Cabezón, José Ignacio. 1994. *Buddhism and language a study of Indo-Tibetan scholasticism*. Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press.

<sup>393</sup> *bsgrub zin nas lhar bsgom pa na phyid dang lus kyi dkyil 'khor gnyis ka la yang blos bcos pa dang blos btags pa [251.5] tsam du khyad par med pas; rdo rje mkha' 'gro dang dpyid kyi thig le sogs las bskyed pa'i rim pa thams cad la bcos ma'i rnal 'byor zhes gsungs so*. I have emended *bsgrub bzhi* to *bsgrub gzhi* on the basis of the numerous appearances of that term in similar contexts within this text.

Mkhas grub's direct correlation between the categories of "what is fabricated by the mind" [*blos bcos pa*] and what is "imputed by the mind" [*blos btags pa*] provides a prime example of the relevance of accounting for Mkhas grub's philosophical perspective in better understanding his approach to tantric materials.

Further clarification of the ritual context referenced by the passage is required. However, it is likely that *bcos ma'i rnal 'byor* refers to the generation stage of *sādhana* practice.<sup>394</sup> In our discussion of Bentor's theories on the stages of *sādhana* practice in Chapter Three, we observed the dichotomy of "similitude" vs. "true transformation" in Gelukpa presentations of the generation vs. completion stages of the Guhysamāja.<sup>395</sup> The language of 'similitudes,' 'fabrications' and 'imputations' and the 'contrived' pervade such descriptions of the generation stage. Such terms treat the generation stage as the requisite 'practice run' for the actual realization we find in the completion stage.<sup>396</sup> Tsong kha pa uses this framework for distinguishing the two stages to cope with the notion of fabrication in tantric practice. It is clear that Tsong kha pa, like Mkhas grub, regards fabrication as an inferior quality. For example, Tsong kha pa extols the quality of non-fabrication quoting the *Samputa Tantra*:

'That with the nature of nonfabrication  
Is known as wisdom...'<sup>397</sup>

Above we have discussed examples of Mkhas grub's reservations about tantric acts of imagination as "fabrications." Tsong kha pa appears to neutralize the potentially problematic status of tantric acts of imagination by relegating the qualities of fabrication to the generation vs. completion stage and stressing their value as skillful means. In the following passage, he associates the completion stage with the genuine, automatic response produced by the repeated imaginings of the generation stage:

"Therefore, just as you can discard the boat when you arrive at the far bank of the river but have to rely upon it to get you there, likewise the attainments of the natural and uncontrived completion stage will mean the discarding of the generation stage, but to attain them you will need the contrived generation stage. Thus, for the beginner, the generation stage is worthy of great praise and very important. The *Vajradāka Tantra* says:

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<sup>394</sup> In his *Fundamentals of Buddhist Tantra*, Mkhas grub explains the "drop of springtime" in the context of Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice as a drop in the heart of the "ground Heruka" from which the main deities in union are generated. (Lessing and Wayman 1968, p.305)

<sup>395</sup> See Bentor 2006, p. 186 fn4.

<sup>396</sup> Where the body mandala practice, included in body isolation [*lus dben*], fits in relation to these classificatory schema was an issue of concern for Tsong kha pa. This concern may signal the problematic status of the body itself at the intersection of fabricated and natural realities and ordinary and extraordinary bodies.

<sup>397</sup> The context for the quote is a discussion of in the context of the bliss resulting from the union of compassion and emptiness. Kilty 2013, p107.

‘To gain the insights of the natural yoga,  
 you undertake the meditations of the contrived  
 and perform the recitations of the contrived.  
 With the realization of the natural yoga,  
 The contrived yoga will be external,  
 So having realized the natural yoga,  
 You do not perform the contrived.  
 For example, you take a boat across a river,  
 And when you arrive, you leave the boat.  
 The contrived yoga is similar to this.  
 The activities of the mandala and so forth,  
 All undertaken with the contrived mind,  
 Are activities clarifying the external  
 And for the beginner are worthy of praise.  
 As all those siddhis are found there,  
 The reality of the conqueror is not known.’<sup>398</sup>

In other words, though not ultimately viable, acts of imagination are indeed necessary. This is a familiar Buddhist mode for relating different phases of meditative practice; only by forfeiting attachment to one level of experience may one progress to the next. Without the make-believe buddhas of the generation stage, no actual Buddha bodies could come about.

Both Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub agree that the body mandala is unique in its avoidance of fabrication. For example, in his own commentary upon the much-disputed Ghanatapa quote, Tsong kha pa remarks: “As the mandala which pierces to the pith in the body [*lus la gnad du bsnun*], the body mandala which refrains from [*mi bya*] the two fabrications is essential.”<sup>399</sup> The two fabrications Tsong kha pa speaks of are mandala paintings and altars of painted powders. What is most problematic about these fabrications, their materiality or their role as mediators? In the conclusion of this dissertation, we will have the opportunity to reflect upon such problem expressed in Buddhist attitudes toward representation more specifically. In the next section of this chapter, we will focus specifically upon the notion of “piercing to the pith” [*gnad du bsnun*] in Mkhas grub’s body mandala writings and observe how it helps him to distinguish the body mandala as superior and unfabricated. In the process, we will consider what kind of basis that the body forms for tantric practice as well what ‘true’ bodily ‘transformation’ entails.

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<sup>398</sup> Kilty 2013, p.85-6; see note 147

<sup>399</sup> *lus la gnad du bsnun pa'i dkyil 'khor ni bcos ma gnyis la mi bya'i lus dkyil la bya dgos te* [61.3-4]

Tsong kha pa. *The Jewel Treasury: The Rite of Empowerment of the Body Mandala of Ghanatapa, the Lord of Yoga. Rnal 'byor dbang phyug dril bu lugs bde mchog lus dkyil gyi dbang chog rin po che'i bang mdzod*. Tsong kha pa, Vol. 10 pps. 57-106 ; Toh 5327, pp. 58.6 to 59.3. I tracked this source down based upon a reference in Bentor 2006.

## IIB. Piercing to the pith and the superior body mandala

“Piercing to the pith” has been described to me through the metaphor of an arrow hitting its target, getting to the essential point or heart of the matter.<sup>400</sup> It is a phrase used to distinguish the *pāramitānaya*, which “pierces to the pith of the mind” [*sems la gnad du bsnun*], from the *mantranaya*, which pierces to the pith of the body [*lus la gnad du bsnun*]. This distinction attests to the centrality of the body to the tantric project. In the Sakyapa context, the profundity of practice is discerned by “...whether or not the path is embellished with ecstasy is distinguished by [whether there is] piercing to the pith of the mind or body.”<sup>401</sup> Verrill elaborates: “This expression specifically refers to the concentration meditation of Pāramitā and the internal and external body yogas that are practices in the completion process of Guhyamantra, respectively.”<sup>402</sup> Tsong kha pa further describes the latter as a defining factor of highest yoga tantra and its techniques for manipulating the subtle body:

“In short, in the three lower tantras from yoga tantra downward and within the Philosophical Vehicle, there are descriptions of many instances of uncontaminated and non-worldly bliss achieved through meditating without error on the significance of emptiness. Nevertheless, they do not describe the bliss of the melting bodhicitta brought on by the blazing candali ignited by the force of the winds entering the *dhūti* from the practice of penetrating the vital points of the channel cakras in the body, and therefore, such bliss does not fulfill the criteria of being the bliss of bliss and emptiness united.”<sup>403</sup>

In the following excerpt, Mkhas grub proclaims the superiority of the body mandala based upon the “unfabricated basis of establishment” discussed above. He then uses the concept of “piercing to the pith of the body” to identify a crucial transition from the repeated imaginings or mental ‘fabrications’ of the generation stage to the natural appearances of the completion stage:

“So, if you ask, ‘why is the body mandala superior to the two fabricated external mandala?’:

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<sup>400</sup> Khenpo Choying Dorje, Personal Communication, Spring 2011

I have been unsuccessful to date in locating the Sanskrit equivalent of *gnad du bsnun* or in securing the Indian origins of this practice. “Piercing to the pith” may have different meanings in the different cycles and transmissions of tantric practice. It is possible that it is a practice that evolved in conjunction with acts of reading the yoginī tantras back into the Guhysamāja system (as the Vajramālā does). The notion of the pith evolves in representations of the subtle body in ritual practices like the body mandala. For example, as discussed in Chapter Three, the *Guhysamāja Tantra* divides the body into regions rather than cakras with clearly identifiable piths.

<sup>401</sup> See Tsemo 2012 p.163, an excerpt from *Notes on Ngor chen Kun dga’ bzang po by dPal kyi rGyal mtshan* [See bibliography, “NOTES”] where this statement is made in the context of differentiating the practices of the different varieties of disciple.

<sup>402</sup> Tsemo 2012, Fn 344.

<sup>403</sup> Kilty 2013 p.105.

The distinction of the superior and inferior emerges based on the fabricated and unfabricated basis of establishment. The completion stage, generated from meditation by piercing to the pith of the body [*lus la gnad du bsnun*], is the main cause of establishing the supreme siddhi. By cultivating the transformation [*byin gyis brlabs pa*]<sup>404</sup> repeatedly while generating all the current parts [*da lta kyī cha thams cad*] as a deities, the channels, winds and drops of the body become workable [*rung du gyur*]. By piercing to the pith of the body in meditation, the ripening of the effortless generation [*bde blag tu skye ba*] of realizing the completion stage becomes supreme.<sup>405</sup>

A key aspect of bodily transformation as described here is making the components of the subtle body “workable” [*rung du gyur*]. Mkhas grub then presents another comparison between the body mandala and outer mandala to emphasize the limitations of the latter:

“One generates [*bskyed*] the painted powders and cloth and so forth as the deity (/deities) and transforms (them). As in the case of the body mandala, the accumulation of merit and initiation and so forth are possible to achieve. However, there is no way to generate wisdom by meditatively piercing to the pith in colored powders and cloth.”<sup>406</sup>

Without an unfabricated basis for practice, it is not possible to pierce to the pith of the body, to make the body “workable” as a basis for transformation. How do ritual acts of imagination, acts of mental fabrication, transform the basis for ritual action? The final portion of this chapter will explore the ramifications of the category of “fabrication” as manifested in a few specific points of body mandala practice raised by Mkhas grub.

### **IIC. Transformation and the Ritual Context**

As discussed in the early chapters of this dissertation, in examining the structure of body mandala ritual, we encounter many practices that resemble it in some way. Such practices include those that are Buddhist and non-Buddhist in origin. They are used to purify the body, speech and mind as well as to transform and deify the body of the

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<sup>404</sup> After much deliberation and consultation with learned teachers, I have chosen to translate *byin gyis brlabs pa* here as “transformation” rather than the more standard definition of “blessing.” There have, of course been influential critiques of the language of transformation in studies of Buddhist meditation practice by scholars such as Sharf. See, for example, Sharf 1995, 1998 & 2005.

<sup>405</sup> *lus la gnad du bsnun nas bsgom pa las byung ba'i rdzogs rim nyid yin la; da lta kyī cha thams cad lhar bskyed cing byin gyis brlabs pa [252.2] yang yang goms pas lus kyī rtsa rlung thig le rnam las rung du gyur te; lus la gnad du bsnun nas bsgom pa'i tshē rdzogs rim gyī rtogs pa bde blag tu skye ba'i smin byed khyad par can du 'gyur la*

<sup>406</sup> *rdul tshon dang ras bris sogs lhar bskyed cing byin gyis [252.3] brlabs kyang bsod nams kyī tshogs dang dbang bskur sogs kyī dgos pa bsgrub nus pa ni lus dkyil dang 'dra la; rdul tshon dang ras bris la gnad du bsnun nas bsgom pa'i stobs kyis ye shes bskyed par byar med pa'i phyir ro*



practitioner. Understanding how these practices may relate to the evolution of body mandala is a complex and intriguing avenue of inquiry for better understanding the history of the body in tantric ritual. Mkhas grub's discussions of the relationship of different varieties of practices focused upon the body to body mandala demonstrate the continued relevance of this evolution within the fifteenth-century Tibetan polemical context. Bentor's 2015 article introduces the possibility that they may also be the next phase of evolution in the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice within the tradition of Tsong kha pa's descendants:

“Geluk scholars that followed Tsong kha pa were certainly willing to challenge, or improve upon, the explanations of their founder on the working of the Guhyasamāja *sādhana*. Their modifications seem to have resulted from the internal contradictions in the notion of transforming the body by means of creative visualization. Their aim was to find a way to bridge over between the limitations that general Buddhist theoretical considerations put on the transformative power of the mind and the point of view of meditators who were seeking a more substantial transformation than visualization alone can provide.”<sup>407</sup>

Bentor's observations are illuminating with regard to the themes of imagination, fabrication, and transformation to be explored in the final portion of this chapter.

Multiple varieties of bodily practice are included within body mandala practice and multiple phases of transformations occur; visualizations are created, dissolved and recreated. In describing the method of generating deities from seed syllables located at various sites on the body, Mkhas grub explains:

“...One makes each part of the aggregates, skandhas, elements and sense spheres and so forth into the foundation for establishing the deity [*lha bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas*]. Once they are transformed [*yongs su gyur pa*], they must be generated as each deity...For example, one's eye organ is changed into the syllable THLIM. Having been changed, that then is visualized as changing into Kṣitigarbha.[253.1] First, with your mind, generate THLIM without a foundation. Having generated Kṣitigarbha from that, afterwards, it's not enough to simply imagine [*mos pa tsam*] the inseparability of own's own eye organ and Kṣitigarbha. Having finished arraying the deities on the body, there is the basic meditation upon (those deities) as essentially inseparable from one's skandhas and so on. Even though imaginative activity [*lhag mos*]<sup>408</sup> is the repeated dissolution (of those deities) in the body [*lus la bsdus pa*], that itself is not like cultivating the body mandala.”<sup>409</sup>

<sup>407</sup> Bentor 2015, p.72.

<sup>408</sup> Bentor 2006 translates *lhag mos* [Skt. *adhimokṣa*] as “special visualization.”

<sup>409</sup> The phrase *lus la bsdus pa* here is one of many instances of the term *bsdus* within the body mandala texts. Although I have opted for “dissolution” as a translation here, “gathering” is also appropriate.

... *phung khams sky mched sogs kyi cha de dang de lha bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas* [252.6]; *de dag yongs su gyur pa las lha de dang der skyed dgos so...*  
*dper mtshan na rang gi mig gi dbang po yongs su gyur pa las yi ge thlim du gyur*

As for the ritual context being referenced here, there are several possibilities. Bentor 2015 has interpreted this passage as evidence that Mkhas grub propounds a different approach to the mechanics of the practice than Tsong kha pa. Bentor explains:

“Apparently Mkhas grub rje offers his divergent suggestion because for him a significant transformation of all the psycho-physical elements of one’s body into the seed syllables of the deities is crucial. For him merely visualizing that the essence of the psycho-physical element abides in the appearance of the seed syllable, as instructed by Tsong kha pa, in a insufficient initial step for the transformation of the impure body into the pure divine mansion. Therefore he requires a complete transformation of each psychophysical element into the respective seed syllable within the visualization, before the seed syllable transforms into a deity. At the same time Mkhas grub rje never regards the creation stage as capable of producing true transformations.”<sup>410</sup>

Whether the passage is interpreted in terms of the juxtaposition of varieties of transformation realized through generation and completion stage practice, as a modification of Mkhas grub’s teacher’s approach to the mechanics of body mandala, or as an assertion of the distinction of body mandala from related preparatory practices oriented around the body, Mkhas grub’s use of the language of imagination suggests important subtleties. As observed above, not all imaginative activities are regarded as equal. It is clear is that Mkhas grub wishes to distinguish ‘mere imagining’ [*mos pa tsam*] from body mandala. Furthermore, he connects *lhag mos* (a terms that seems to be associate with generation rather than completion stage practice), with the imaginative act of dissolving deities into the body and distinguishes that particular activity from body mandala proper.

Next, Mkhas grub makes a salient point about the connection between imagination and “fabrication” in the context of practice with a consort. In doing so, he produces a juxtaposition of the points of *pramāṇa* and tantric visualization suggested in more general, theoretical terms by the excerpts discussed above in the first part of this chapter:

“Therefore, afterwards, in the context of union with the *mudrā* (consort), if one arrays the deities on the body of a karma *mudrā*, then it becomes the body mandala of the consort.

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*de yongs su gyur pa las sa snying du [253.1]gyur par bsgom pa yin gyi; dang por thlim rang gi blos gzhi med du bskyed cing; de las sa snying bskyed nas; de'i rjes su sa snying rang gi mig dbang dang dbyer med yin par mos pa tsam gyis mi chog ste; lha lus la bkod tshar nas rang gi phung sogs [253.2] dang ngo bor dbyer med du bsgom pa tsam ni lhag mos lus la bsdu pa la yang yang mod kyang de nyid lus dkyil bsgom pa ma yin pa bzhin no*

<sup>410</sup> Bentor 2015, p.70. Bentor also demonstrates how Tsong kha pa differed from later Geluk thinkers on the mechanics of generating the body as the celestial palace; see Bentor, pp.66-67.

There is the generation of seed (syllables) of the deity from that transformation of the individual aggregates and so forth of the body. For the wisdom *mudrā*, (on the other hand) one doesn't establish (them) in actual sites that are not the mere fabrication by the mind [*blos bcos pa rtsam*]. Therefore, the body that is the basis of establishment [*bsgrub bzhi'i lus*] does not become the body mandala even though one arranges the deities in a similar way."<sup>411</sup>

In other words, actual transformation into the body mandala can only occur with an actual human consort (i.e. the karma *mudrā*), not an imagined one. The wisdom *mudrā*, the imagined consort, is regarded as a mere mental fabrication [*blos bcos pa rtsam*], and therefore an insufficient basis for transformation. So not only is it necessary to do more than merely 'locate' deities on the body, one must transform the bodily basis. And in order for that transformation to be possible, that basis must be 'real.'

In the final portion of his chapter, dedicated to his views on issues surrounding the generation of deities from seed syllables, Mkhas grub solidifies the connection between the practitioner's own body and the generation of the body mandala. Again, the emphasis is upon establishing an unfabricated basis for practice through reliance upon an actual, empirically verifiable body:

“Moreover, though there are six eyes that are cultivated when cultivating oneself with three faces and six arms, it's not necessary to cultivate the Kṣitigarbha from the right and left faces. Cultivating (him) as the two eyes of the main face will suffice. Likewise, it's sufficient to arrange Vajrapāṇi and Ākāśagarbha (respectively) in the two ears and two nostrils of (just) the main face. The *Vajramālā* says, 'In the two eyes is Tathāgata Kṣitigarbha. In the two ears of that (one ie. the father deity) is Tathāgata Vajrapāṇi.' So it is taught. Likewise, it's fine to arrange Yamāntaka and Aparājita on the two main hands. Why? It is the basis of purification or the basis for establishing the deity. (As for) those limbs of the body, if there are many, it's necessary to generate many deities (on them). It's like cultivating two Kṣitigarbhas on account of there being two eyes. For that reason, it's necessary to generate Samantabhadra within the (bodily) sites in accord with however many joints there are in the body. In the *Vajramāla* (it says): 'In all the joints of the body, Samantabhadra.'<sup>412</sup> It is taught like that.

Like generating Kṣitigarbha from the right and left faces without there being an actual entity (there), the basis for practice becomes fabricated. As a result, the manner of generating deities of the unfabricated mandala does not happen."<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> *des na 'og tu phyag rgya dang snyom par 'jug pa'i skabs su; phyag rgya'i lus la lha 'god pa yang; phyag [253.3] rgya de las rgya yin na de'i lus kyil phung sogs de dang de yongs su gyur pa las sa bon dang de las lha bskyed pa yin na yum gyi lus dkyil du 'gyur ba yin gyi; ye rgya la ni bsgrub bzhi'i lus blos bcos pa rtsam ma yin pa'i dngos gnas la grub pa med pas; [253.4] de'i lus la lha 'god tshul ji ltar byas kyang lus dkyil du mi 'gyur ro*

<sup>412</sup> This quote appears to be derived from Chapter 68 of the *Vajramālā*. See Kittay 68.12.

<sup>413</sup> *de yang rang zhal gsum phyag drug par bsgom pa'i tshe bsgom pa'i spyang drug yod kyang; g.yas g.yon gyi zhal gyi spyang la sa snying [260.5] bsgom mi dgos kyil; rtsa zhal gyi spyang gnyis la bsgom pas chog la ; de bzhin du phyag rdor dang nam snying yang rtsa*

Despite the very technical nature of this excerpt, the general point is clear. It is not possible to achieve the body mandala just by imagining an abstract correlation between imagined deities and imagined body parts. Even though one might imagine oneself (or one's consort) as a deity with multiple pairs of eyes, only the eyes that are really there can be the basis or point of departure for imagining deities. Even mental fabrications must be founded upon an actual physical reality to ensure efficacy. The human body is that reality. The ground for practice must be stable and the rules of conventional reality followed for true transformation to occur.

Mkhas grub concludes his chapter on body mandala by critiquing yet another aspect of fabrication, the invention of spurious Tibetan body mandala practices. He identifies such practices as “baseless mental imputations [*rgyu med pa'i blos btags*] masquerading as the oral instructions and the profound dharma.”<sup>414</sup> This climactic concluding statement confirms our suspicions about the negative valences of the category of fabrication, valences we have explored within multiple levels of Buddhist discourse. In the context of questions of textual authority, fabrication is decidedly negative. Though Tibetan authors were great innovators, innovation in and of itself was regarded as a transgression rather than a virtue. The authorial ideal was to seamlessly transmit the teachings of the Tibetan and in particular, the Indian masters of the tradition, without superimposing one's own ideas. In order to be appreciated, innovations needed to be presented as elucidations of the teachings of the past.

Whether one is discussing fabrication in the context of Buddha nature, *pramāṇa*, the Madhyamaka or on the more general level of determining textual authority, it is a volatile category. It is often used to identify flawed human tendencies to superimpose false concepts upon reality, obstructing our ability to access a clear vision of things as they really are. Yet we have also observed the manner in which tantric acts of imagination, in particular, the act of identifying oneself with a deity, shed new light on fabrication, revealing tensions that lay at the very root of Buddhist practice. Such

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*zhal gyi rna ba'i nang gnyis dang sna bug gnyis bkod bas chog ste; bshad rgyud rdo rje 'phreng ba las; de mig dbang po gnyis la ni; de [260.6] bzhin gshegs pa sa snying po; de yi rna ba'i dbang gnyis la; bde gshegs phyag na rdo rje'o; zhes gsungs pa ltar ro; de bzhin di khro bo gshin rje gshed dang gzhan gyis mi thub pa yang rtsa phyag gnyis la bkod pas chog go; 'di dag gi rgyu [261.1] mtshan ni; yang na sbyang gzhi'am lha'i bsgrub gzhi lus kyi yan lag de dngos po la du mar yang na lha yang du ma bskyed dgos te; mig gnyis yod pas sa snying gnyis bskyed pa bzhin no; de'i phyir lus la tshigs ji snyed yod pa'i grangs [261.2] dang mthun pa'i kun bzang gnas du dang der bskyed dgos te; rgyud rdor 'phreng las; lus kyi tshigs ni thams cad la ; de zhin gshegs pa kun tu bzang; zhes gsungs pa ltar ro; dngos po la med pa g.yas zhal dang g.yon zhal gyi [261.3] mig las sa snying lta bu bskyed kyang; bsgrub gzhi bcos mar song bas ma bcos pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi lha bskyed tshul du mi 'gyur ro;*

<sup>414</sup> The passage, found at 263.5, reads: *bod la grags pa'i lus dkyil mang po zhid la de 'dra ba'i rnam gzhas gang yang sbyar rgyu med pa'i blos btags 'ba' zhid la man ngag dang zab chos su byed par snang bas*

tensions resonate across multiple levels of Buddhist discourse. In this light, we begin to see how “fabrication” assumes the status of a kind of ‘necessary evil,’ in the tantric context. In this chapter, we have had the opportunity to explore the ways in which Tibetan writers like Mkhas grub developed strategies for coping with the contradictions “fabrication” presents; these means of coping are productive, telling us more about why ritual, and more precisely, tantric ritual acts of imagination like body mandala, are deemed necessary or efficacious.

## **Chapter Five: The Body Mandala Debate: Body as Explanatory Tantra**

In Chapter Three we observed the complex ways in which Mkhas grub's manner of engaging with his many "unknown opponents" reflects both a tendency to play to his strengths as well as a desire to tap into the main issues characteristic of the intellectual climate of the times. In terms of the former, he embraced the methods of Buddhist logic and epistemology and the tone of philosophical debate for which the emerging Gelukpa sect gained such renown. As for the latter, he grappled with the contradictions inherent in human embodiment in the terms of the Buddha nature debates, with a particular interest in reconciling the paths of the *mantranaya* with the *pāramitānaya* at large. In this chapter, we turn to the body mandala debate proper, in other words the explicit encounter of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen on the body mandala practice. As in discussed in Chapter One of this dissertation, this is just the beginning of a debate that extends far beyond the limits of Mkhas grub's chapter and Ngor chen's response, into at least two further texts by Mkhas grub as well as into the writings of Ngor chen's students and successors.<sup>415</sup> In another sense, it is not the beginning but rather a particular crystallization and redeployment of the views of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's predecessors. As such, it indicates how these two authors formulated and distinguished their traditions and contributed to the fifteenth-century moment. Attending to the tension between such vastness and particularity, a tension that might be said to characterize the practice of Tibetan exegesis, we turn to the 'body mandala debate.'

Ngor chen begins his text by citing a passage from Mkhas grub's body mandala chapter and then proceeds to refute the critiques presented therein. Basically, he is responding according to the structure laid out by Mkhas grub in part two of his chapter on body mandala; this triadic structure contains Mkhas grub's own views on the body mandala of 'support' [*rten*] and 'supported' [*brten pa*] as well as on generating seed syllables on the body. Ngorchen's response to these three topics makes up just under half of his text. The remainder is devoted to issues of textual authority, a defense of the particular body mandala practice critiqued by Mkhas grub through recourse to a variety of tantric texts, commentaries, and oral instructions. Ngor chen's defense is a testament to his prowess as a tantric commentator extraordinaire as well as to the Hevajra *abhisamaya*'s centrality to the Sakya tradition.

In this chapter we will explore the subtle dynamics of Mkhas grub's accusations and Ngor chen's responses. In doing so, we will also situate these accusations within the larger context of Mkhas grub's text, adding to the observations on his method and style of argumentation made in the previous chapter. Furthermore, we will begin to build a portrait of Ngor chen based upon his response. The next chapter of the dissertation will add further dimension to this portrait by examining the heart of Ngor chen's defense of the Hevajra body mandala on issues of textual authority and comparing the two versions of Ngor chen's body mandala text. While exploring the details of this debate, we may reflect upon how the body mandala practice allows these two thinkers to articulate and

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<sup>415</sup> For one example, see (Go rams pa) bsod nams seng ge (1429-1489). *Illuminating the Pith: Dispelling Objections to the Moonrays of the Pith. Gnad gyi zla zer la rtsod pa spong ba gnad kyi gsal byed*,

distinguish their views and the views of their traditions on larger issues. In the process, we will begin to see why the body mandala debate matters. For it is through technical details of the mechanics of visualization practice and commentarial method that identities are concretized, authenticated, and even reinvented.

### I. Ngor chen's Introduction

As is typical of response texts within the polemical genres, Ngor chen introduces his argument with a statement of intent, to set right the accusations of the sectarians [*phyogs 'dzin*] and repudiators [*skur pa 'debs pa*].<sup>416</sup> He then paraphrases the opponent's most offensive claim that the oral instructions of Virūpa in the Hevajra body mandala contain lies and fabrications [*mun sprul dang rtog brtag*]. What is somewhat odd is that nowhere in Mkhas grub's text does he explicitly refer to the Hevajra system by name. It is completely standard practice to elide the names of one's opponents or of their traditions, and to cite rather liberally from texts without providing precise citations. However, initially it seems strange that Ngor chen would construct his entire project as a recovery of the Sakyapa Hevajra practice if Mkhas grub never explicitly referred to that tantric cycle. In proceeding, we must therefore attend to the clues provided by Mkhas grub's text that the Hevajra practice is indeed at issue. In doing so, we must also consider both the centrality of the Hevajra-based *Lam 'bras* tradition to the Sakyapa tantric system and the history of critiques waged against this system in the earlier history of Tibetan Buddhism.

### II. The Opponent's View

Ngor chen follows standard protocol in first laying out the opponent's objections [*rtsod pa'i ngag dgod pa*] before refuting them. This entails citing from Mkhas grub's body mandala chapter which he identifies as the "hoarse screaming" of the logician [*rtog ge pa*] who hasn't even engaged in Vajrayāna practice for a long time." [*Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil* (N1) 548.1] Though not necessarily indicative of the dominant tone of Ngor chen's writing style, comments such as these demonstrate that Ngor chen also participates in the spirit of the polemical drama so adamantly embraced by Mkhas grub. Ngor chen present the opponent's objections by citing Mkhas grub's text [see *Ocean of Attainment*, 254.6-255.5]; the citation, provided below, may be broken down into three parts. The first part describes what 'some Tibetans' claim as body mandala practice in the mother tantras. The second describes the position of Bu ston on the version of the practice described in Nag po pa's *Samvara-vyākḥā* (a Cakrasaṃvara-affiliated text). The final part critiques various Tibetan versions of the body mandala practice as inauthentic with a particular focus upon problems in relating internal and external mandala.

This excerpt appears in Mkhas grub's chapter on body mandala in *Ocean of Attainment* early on in the section of the chapter asserting his own tradition with regard to the mandalas of support and supported and the placement of seed syllables on the body [*Ocean of Attainment*, 250.4-263.6]. The first couple folia of this portion of the text contain the discussion of the Ghantapa quote from his "Condensed Activities of the Cakrasaṃvara Initiation" together with Mkhas grub's distinction of fabricated and

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<sup>416</sup> In the conventions of Tibetan polemics, see Lopez 1996 and Cabezon 2007.

unfabricated mandalas [250.4-252.2]. This is followed by a more detailed discussion [252.5-254.5] of how this notion of fabrication plays out in the actual mechanics of the body mandala practice. In particular, Mkhas grub describes the transformation of the bases of aggregates and other components of the body and their subsequent generation as deities through the use of seed syllables and consort. Mkhas grub's treatment of these issues is familiar from the two preceding chapters of this dissertation. Mkhas grub then grapples with the relationship of the body mandalas of support and supported and with the relationship of the multiple varieties of celestial palace generated and dissolved over the course of the body mandala practice.<sup>417</sup> In the process, he refers to two of Guhyasamāja texts discussed in Chapter Three, the *Rnam gzhag rim pa* and the *Vajramālā* explanatory tantra, as evidence for the necessity of generating the body as the celestial palace (the body mandala of the support).

Understanding the different ways in which Mkhas grub and Ngor chen use the *Vajramālā* will prove to be an important avenue for exploring their methods of tantric exegesis. We first encountered this text in Chapter Three of the dissertation, where we noted the significance of the *Vajramālā* as an explanatory tantra of the Ārya tradition with a strong tendency to interpret the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and its *sādhana* practice from the perspective of yoginī tantra. Kittay regards the text as an anthology composed of both mahāyoga and yoginī tantra-based practices. This very quality of compiling and combining different kinds of practices in new ways is as an important theme for understanding the significance of the *Vajramālā* to the body mandala debate. This quality makes it potentially useful to our authors but also makes it controversial. One way of interpreting such controversy is in terms of a tension between innovative syncretism and a conservative anxiety, a tension that plays out in terms of a variety of category confusion.<sup>418</sup>

By observing the ways in which Ngor chen and Mkhas grub exhibit tendencies both of syncretism and of conservatism, we obtain a glimpse of some of the larger dynamics fueling the art of Tibetan commentary. We will explore these authors' particular ways of using the *Vajramālā* in light of these dynamics in further detail later in this chapter. However, in embarking upon a discussion of their body mandala debate, we

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<sup>417</sup> See folia 253.5-254.6 of Mkhas grub's text for his interpretation. This is a complicated and very technical section of Mkhas grub's argument. The gist is that it is necessary to generate the body as the celestial palace for body mandala practice. Mkhas grub's rationale seems to rest in the continuity between the phases of visualization. As indicated by her 2013 IATS and 2014 Berkeley Tantra conference papers, as well as her recently published 2015 article, Yael Bentor is dealing more extensively with this particular aspect of Mkhas grub's argument and how it relates to the position of his teacher, Tsong kha pa. See Bentor 2015, pp. 66-67. I will engage briefly with this interpretation below. However, I refer the reader to Bentor's article as well as to her forthcoming translation of the complete text of Mkhas grub's *Ocean of Attainments* for a more in-depth treatment of this issue.

<sup>418</sup> I am grateful to Christian Luczanits for bringing my attention to the larger significance of the artful navigation of issues of syncretism in the Tibetan tradition. In particular, we discussed the centrality of such issues to reform movements like the one initiated by Tsong kha pa and perpetuated by Mkhas grub. Personal communication 7/17/2014



can begin to see how this tension between syncretism and conservatism pervades the interpretation of both bodies and texts. We have already introduced the problem of category confusion relating to the tension between ordinary and samsāric bodies in the previous chapter. The category confusion we encounter here, on the other hand, pertains to the classification of texts, broadly conceived as “doxography.” Establishing which texts may be brought to bear upon others, to support or confound the authenticity of a given interpretation, is a vital part of both polemical and exegetical processes. Authors typically draw upon established systems for classifying texts. Texts may, for example, be grouped according to the deity they focus upon, the philosophical view they express, or who authored them: whether they are regarded as the word of the Buddha, the work of an Indian scholar or accomplished practitioner, or the work of a Tibetan master. Tantric texts, in particular, often defy clear classification and inhabit grey areas. Davidson has coined the term “grey text” to refer to tantric texts regarded as the work of Indian masters in collaboration with their Tibetan disciples and translators.<sup>419</sup> Some of these “grey texts” were transmitted orally from master to disciple for generations before being written down. Tantric teachings focused on a particular deity like Cakrasaṃvara or Hevajra, deities whose qualities and worship may take a very particular form (potentially sexual or violent in nature), may be further stratified on a scale of esotericism and profundity. Only more advanced practitioners may be deemed capable to engage with the more ‘profound’ texts and their associated ritual practices.

Mkhas grub’s final remark before the contested section of his text cited and disputed by Ngor chen reflects a concern with preserving a category distinction between tantric cycles:

“Therefore, this is how it is for the manner of establishing the body mandala in accord with the tantra *piṭaka* and the texts of the *mahāsiddhas* and the texts of the Indian *panditas*. This is not the case for particular extraordinary situations such as those pertaining to Cakrasaṃvara. Terrifying with power, (that tradition) is not explained here, but it should be understood from the great exegesis of Luipa, the discourse(s) of Rje rin po che himself (i.e. Tsong kha pa) and so forth.”<sup>420</sup>

We have already observed the importance of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* to Mkhas grub’s argument through the detailed exploration of the Ghantapa quote in Chapter Four. We will continue to explore the role of that tantric textual cycle in both Ngor chen and Mkhas grub’s arguments on body mandala over the course of the present chapter. However, for now, we should note that, for some reason, Mkhas grub feels compelled to introduce this system into his discussion of the Guhyasamāja body mandala while also

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<sup>419</sup> Davidson, 2005.

<sup>420</sup> *des na rgyud sde dang grub chen gyi gzhung dang rgya gar mkhas pa gzhung dang mthun pa'i lus dkyil bsgrub tshul ni de ltar yin la; bde mchog la sogs pa'i thun mong ma yin pa'i khyad par dag ni skabs ma yin pa dang mngas pas [254.6] 'jigs te 'dir ma bris gyi; rje rin po che nyid kyi gsung rab lu i pa'i rnam bshad chen mo sogs las shes bar bya zhing*

attempting to distinguish the two systems.<sup>421</sup> Moreover, unlike the Hevajra cycle, he refers to Cakrasaṃvara explicitly by name. The need to articulate these complex relations and the nature of continuity and conflict between different textual cycles and their related practices sets the stage for the contested section of Mkhas grub's text, the excerpt that sparks the body mandala debate.

As texts and bodies are repeatedly collapsed and disambiguated in new ways, the nature of their relationships is potentially recreated. For example, in certain contexts but not others, an author may choose to bring Cakrasaṃvara-related materials to bear upon the interpretation of Guhyasamāja-related materials. Likewise, in certain instances the nature of enlightened bodies may be brought to bear upon the experience of saṃsāric embodiment, while in others, the distinction must be preserved. Tantric ritual practice, and particularly deity yoga, plays upon this tension between merging and separation. As this chapter progresses, we will begin to see a correlation between the impulses to classify bodies and texts. Furthermore, we will observe how tensions between conservatism and syncretism, distinction and merging, exhibited in both polemical and ritual practice, bear the potential to transform the limits of textuality and corporeality.<sup>422</sup>

### **IIA. The Protective Circle and the Body Mandala of the Support**

Frameworks for classification are also used to articulate the relationships between different varieties of mandala and different phases of ritual practice. In Chapter Four, we discussed Mkhas grub's views on the relationship of external to internal (i.e. body) mandalas in terms of their status as fabricated and unfabricated bases for tantric practice. We recall how Mkhas grub praised the body mandala as a superior basis on account of this unfabricated quality. In this chapter, we will look more closely at an even more subtle level of distinction within the body mandala practice itself, between the mandalas of support and supported. Although the definitions of the mandala of support and supported vary from one tantric cycle to the next, generally speaking, the mandala of the support is the body as the celestial palace, in some cases also including the cremation grounds and protective circle. The mandala of the supported is the deities inhabiting that bodily palace, and in some instances, the channels and chakras together with other psycho-physical elements like the winds and drops. The first part of the citation from Mkhas grub's critique describes a version of the protective circle and mandala of the support:

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<sup>421</sup> In her March 2013 paper at the Berkeley Tantra conference, Yael Bentor also questioned the relevance of Mkhas grub's remarks on the Cakrasaṃvara to the purported focus of his text on the generation practice of the Guhyasamāja tantra. I look forward to seeing more of Bentor's conclusions in her forthcoming work and would add that this is not the only aspect of Mkhas grub's work that seems to transcend his focus. For example, his repeated reference to the Vajramālā, a text more focused on completion stage practice for support seems to exceed his own text's focus the generation stage.

<sup>422</sup> Of course, there are moments in which Tibetan authors experiment with the metaphorical relation between frameworks governing the classification of texts and of bodies. A particularly illuminating example to be discussed below presents the body as the explanatory tantra upon the root tantra that is the mind. See Stearns 2006, fn19.

Some Tibetans say for the many body mandalas of the mother tantras:

“The crown is the *viśva-vajra*;  
The soles of the feet are the vajra foundation.  
The ribs are the vajra fence.  
The skin is the vajra tent and canopy  
The body hairs are a net of arrows.  
The fingernails are the utterly blazing fire mountain.”

They also say:

“The four channels of the heart are the four gates.  
The eyes are the tiered walls of the palace.  
The nose is the jeweled beam<sup>423</sup>.  
The teeth are the lace curtains.<sup>424</sup>  
The tongue and lips are the sense pleasures.”<sup>425</sup>

This quote [254.6-255.1] forms the bulk of a section of Mkhas grub’s text cited by Ngor chen [254.6-255.5]. As the point of direct exchange of Ngor chen and Mkhas grub and Ngor chen’s explicit object of refutation, it is vital to our understanding of the body mandala debate. This quote of ‘some Tibetans’ can be found in contemporary Hevajra *sādhanas* used by the Sakya school.<sup>426</sup> However, these *sādhanas* which are a core part of daily practices for initiates in the Hevajra practice and central to the Sakya *Lam ’bras* tradition, were formulated and compiled after Ngor chen’s time, primarily by the tenth abbot of Ngor, Dkon mchog lhun grub (1495-1557). In looking to the works of the five great Sakyapa patriarchs for an earlier precedent for this version of the practice, we find that it appears both in a work attributed to Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Lus kyil dkyil ’khor*,<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> *pha gu* can also be translated as “cornice.”

<sup>424</sup> DM on defines *dra ba dra phyed* as: “Fabric temple-hanging forming a kind of latticework of jewels and auspicious symbols which seem to be spit out of the mouth of a *kīrtimukha*.” [thlib.org - Accessed 1/9/2013]

<sup>425</sup> *bod dag gis ma rgyud kyil lus dkyil mang por; sbyi ba sna tshogs rdo rje ; rkang mthil rdo rje'i sa gzhi; rtsib ma rdo rje'i rwa pa; pags pa rdo rje'i [255.1] gur dang bla re; ba spu mda'i dra ba; sen mo me ri rab tu 'bar ba; zhes pa dang; snying kha'i rtsa bzhi po sgo bzhi; mig pa 'tsa re ga'i rtsig pa; sna rin po che'i pha gu; so dra ba dra phyed; lce dang mchu 'dod pa'i yon tan*

Ngorchen N1 reads: *lce dang mchu 'dod yon gyi snam bu*, ‘the corridors of the desire goddesses.’ *snam bu* may also be translated as “terrace.”

<sup>426</sup> I am grateful to Drapa Gyatso of the IBA for first bringing my attention to this fact. [Personal communication, Spring 2011]

<sup>427</sup> See the digital Sakya *Lam ’bras* collection, Vol.10, p.140-143. I am grateful to Rory Lindsay for his help in locating this text. This appears to be the same text referred to in Davidson 1992 fn 26 within the collection of the *Pod gser ma*, or the “Yellow Book” compilation of esoteric instructions [(?) *Lus kyil dkyil 'khor*, in *Pod-ser-ma* (Bhir:Jam dbyangs lung-rtogs dpal-bzang, 1970), pp. 169.3-173.4] and in Sobisch 2008 Title list #290 [ (*Lam la sogs pa' 'chos nyi shu la*) *lus kyil dyl 'khor*, *Sa skya Lam 'bras* series Vol. 11, 68r-69v].The *Yellow Book* was intended to transmit the esoteric teachings passed down orally until the time of Sa chen. This text is one of twenty-three in that collection

as well as in 'Phags pa's Hevajra body mandala *sādhana*.<sup>428</sup> Davidson 1992 points out that Grags pa rgyal mtshan, one of the two sons of the Sakyapa patriarch Sa chen kun dga' snying po, instituted a tradition of composing addendum texts to the Hevajra *sādhana*s to describe the body mandala practice; this tradition was continued by 'Phags pa, the fifth of the great five Sakyapa patriarchs.<sup>429</sup> Davidson adds : “ 'Phags pa, however, went one step further and, following instructions from the *Pod-ser-ma*, combined the structures of the internal mandala and the reception of the consecration (*abhiṣekha*) into one unified work.”<sup>430</sup> In order to better understand how this quote fits into the tradition of Sakyapa body mandala practice, we will briefly summarize and compare these two addenda body mandala texts.

Beginning with Grags pa rgyal mtshan's text, we find the first part of our quote identified with the protective circle and the second with the support [*rten*]. (140.3) The author then informs us that while in (fetal) gestation [*lus chags tshul*] the deities of the mandala of the supported reside in the navel, in the context of meditation, they are visualized from the heart center.<sup>431</sup> The remainder of the short text describes the mandala of the supported, the five cakras or mansions [*pho brang*] at particular sites on the body inhabited by the respective pairs of Buddhas and consorts and their retinues of goddesses.<sup>432</sup> Details of their source seed syllables, appearance, attributes, purification of particular skandhas and poisons and resulting realization of the five wisdoms enrich the account. Then, the practitioner is instructed to recall the ten *krodhas* as the syllable *hum/hung* and the six (deities) of senses and sense objects. The text concludes with the spontaneous generation of the four Buddha bodies and summarizes that this is the visualization of the support [*rten*], protective circle, celestial palace, and the one hundred and fifty-seven inhabitant deities. Finally, it declares that the practitioner should

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intended to clarify Virūpa's teachings and Sa chen's explanations of them. While Davidson attributes this particular text to Grags pa rgyal mtshan, Sobisch does not specify its authorship. Many of the twenty-three clarifying texts are indeed by Grags pa and the inclusion of this text as one of the twenty-three within his own title list of the work might support this attribution. On the *Yellow Book*, see Sobisch 2008 Chapter One (pp85-101).

<sup>428</sup> ('Phags pa) Blo gros rgyal mtshan. (1235-1280). *Hevajra Body Mandala Sādhana*. "Kyai rdo rje lus dkyil gyi sgrub thabs/." In *Sa skya bka' 'bum*. *Collected writings of the first five great patriarchs of the Sakya order*: Includes the three supplementary volumes recently published by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyaltzen, listed separately [W20751]. Reprinted from a set of Dege Parkhang prints. TBRC W22271. 13: 538 - 542. dehra dun: sakya center, 1992-1993.

<sup>429</sup> Davidson 1992, p112 and fn 26.

<sup>430</sup> Davidson 1992, p112 and see fn 27.

<sup>431</sup> For a detailed description of the formation of the body by Grags pa rgyal mtshan, see his *Rin po che'i ljon shing*, pp. 117-119.

*The Wish-Fulfilling Tree*. *Mngon par rtogs pa rin po che'i ljon shing /*." In gsung 'bum ?dpe bsdur ma?/\_grags pa rgyal mtshan/. TBRC W2DB4569. 1: 19 - 293. pe cin: krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007

<sup>432</sup> The number of retinue goddesses for each palace equals the number of channels or channel petals of which each of the five cakras is composed.

maintain the four consecrations of the path through one of the three practices of extended, middle, and condensed (*sādhana*) as appropriate. These are the three versions of the Hevajra *sādhana* that initiates employ in daily practice based upon their level of attainment as well as upon the time available for meditation sessions (of which optimally, there are four).

'Phags pa's text begins with a statement similar to the much-discussed Ghantapa quote, that primordially the bodies of sentient beings are spontaneously produced as undifferentiated from the mandala. He specifies that the body mandala is taught for the purpose of actualizing this primordial status. He locates the practice within the ritual chronology after the dissolution of the wisdom beings into the pledge beings, and then proceeds with the order of visualization. 'Phags pa identifies the first part of our controversial quotation (beginning with "The crown is the *viśva-vajra*..."), associated by Mkhas grub as the view of "some Tibetans" on mother tantra body mandalas, with the protective circle [*Hevajra Body Mandala Sādhana* 526.6-527.1]. 'Phags pa identifies the second part of the quotation (beginning "The four channels of the heart are the four gates...") as the celestial palace [*Hevajra Body Mandala Sādhana* 527.1-2]. Both texts contain an additional section between these two passages; this section, not cited by Mkhas grub, describes four portions of the body as four cosmic elements in ascending order, and the spine and top of the head as portions of Mt. Meru. This aspect of the practice resonates with the abhidharmic imagery of cosmic creation and destruction discussed in the Chapter Two of the dissertation. This portion of the *sādhana*, while elided by Mkhas grub, is, in fact, cited in Ngor chen's response; therefore, it will be discussed further below as the "elided section." This three-fold framework of correlations of parts of the body with parts of the protective circle, with the elements of the universe, and with the parts of the celestial palace is common to both Grags pa rgyal mtshan and 'Phags pa's texts. Below, we will have the opportunity consider why the component of cosmic correlation is absent from Mkhas grub's account.

'Phags pa then describes five cakras named dharma, emanation, great bliss, enjoyment, and (again) great bliss (though he presents them in a different order from Grags pa). The descriptions are similar in the two texts; here it is summarized as the channel mandala of the one hundred and fifty-seven deities gathered by the five mansions. 'Phags pa provides more detail on the sense goddesses and *krodhas*, naming and locating them individually. He concludes the discussion of deities with a meditation on the empty aspects of the divine forms and the cultivation of the channel body as the *nirmāṇakāya* (i.e. emanation) the channel letter as the *sambhogakāya* (i.e. enjoyment), the elemental nectar as the *dharmakāya* and the heart wisdom wind as the *svābhāvīkākāya*. As suggested by Davidson, the next portion of the text adds the element of consecration, prescribing that the practitioner first imagine the deities of the body mandala together with the outer mandala. 'Phags pa adds an explanation of how this fits in with other versions of the Hevajra practice: "Concerning the connection with the extended outer *abhisamaya*, there is no contradiction between cultivating oneself as just a single lord and cultivating the expanded body mandala."<sup>433</sup> 'Phags pa specifies that this method of

<sup>433</sup> [*Hevajra Body Mandala Sādhana* 529.5-6] 'di ni phyi'i mngon par rtogs pa rgyas ba dang 'brel pa'i dbang du byas pa yin la; bdag bskyed dpa bo gcig btsam zhig bsgoms nas lus kyi dkyil 'khor rgyas pa bsgoms kyang 'gal ba med do

practice is found in the oral instructions of the lineage [*brgyud pa'i man ngag*].<sup>434</sup> In terms of the systems of classification discussed above, therefore, this text inhabits what some interpreters regard as a grey area, with its authorship hovering somewhere between Indian and Tibetan. As a result, the practices described within the text might be deemed, by some, to be of questionable authenticity.

In comparing these two works, we have established a ritual context for the version of body mandala problematized by Mkhas grub and located it firmly within the Sakya Hevajra and *Lam 'bras* tradition transmitted by the early Sakya patriarchs. In the process, we have produced a rough outline of what the Hevajra body mandala practice looks like. It is possible this description of the body mandala might be found in even earlier texts as well, such as in the works of Sa chen or even in an Indian source. The *Lam 'bras* tradition was passed down for two hundred years before Sa chen put it in writing; this aspect of the textual history of the core teachings of the Sakya tantric tradition provoked critiques from skeptics who doubted its authentic basis in Indian Buddhist tradition at several key instances in Tibetan history.

### **IIB. Bu ston on Nagpopa**

In the second part of the Mkhas grub quote, he contests the validity the manner of generating the protective circle portion of the body mandala described above. He sets forth the claim that Bu ston himself, in writings that appear to deal with the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala, objected to the authenticity of such a practice:

With regard to that writing, the omniscient Bu ston says:

“In the *sdom pa bshad pa* [*Saṃvara-vyākhyā*] (it says):

‘Generating the body in stages, Vajrakīla is spontaneously generated. The binding with a string is firmly fastened without a gap while the tent is the garland of bones itself.’

Except for this, there is no explanation like that one anywhere in any Indian system.”

That is correct.<sup>435</sup>

Bu ston is citing Nag po pa’s text, the *Saṃvara-vyākhyā* [13.4].<sup>436</sup> The context in which the source passage appears in Nag po pa’s text is one in which there is a description of

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This is followed by *zhes gsung go*, indicating that is a quote or a summary of transmitted instructions.

<sup>434</sup> His conclusion also contains an interesting verse reflecting upon the nature of the internal [*nang*] body mandala. The verse can be roughly translated as follows: “In order to supremely practice inside, in agreement with the inner way, the manner of cultivating the inner mandala is taught through the perception of internality itself.” [530.1] *nang la mchog tu gzhol ba'i phyir; nang gi tshul dang rjes mthun par; nang gi dkyil 'khor bsgom pa'I tshul; nang gi nyid gzigs pas gsungs*

<sup>435</sup> *zhes sogs bris pa la; thams cad [255.2] mkhyen pa bu ston rin po ches; sdom pa bshad par ; go rim bzhin du lus skyes nas<sup>435</sup> ; rdo rje phur bu lhan cig skyes ; bcings pa thig skud rab tu ldan ; shin tu mtshams med brtan par bcings ; gur ni rus pa'i phreng ba nyid; ces ba tsam ma gtogs rgyud gzhung [255.3] gang na'ang de 'dra ba bshad pa mi 'dug go ; zhes gsung ba ni shin tu med do*

Cakrasaṃvara (technically Heruka in the Cakrasaṃvara mandala) in his spontaneously generated form [*lhan cig skyes pa*] continuously abiding in the heart, equal inside and out.<sup>437</sup> [*Samvara-vyākhyā* 13.2-.3] Then, we are told that, “The array having been explained in terms of the mind of the mandala [*dkyil 'khor gyi yang sems*], the sites of the body are to be explained.” [13.3] Our passage is part of the instructions for what the yogin should cultivate after spontaneously generating Hevajra. As such, it can likely be understood as the body mandala produced after generating oneself as the deity and then imagining the deity positioned on one’s heart.<sup>438</sup>

The passage in question is introduced in Nag po pa’s text as “the generation of the body in stages” [*go rims bzhin du lus bskyes* ]; this is likely intended to distinguish it from the spontaneous generation. It is followed there by further embellishment of the appearance and qualities of Heruka [13.4-.5] and then by a passage [13.6-.14.1] that resembles the description of the mandala of the support as the elements of the cosmos elided from Mkhas grub’s citations. To review, that “elided passage” emerged in some part from Hevajra *sādhana* and their addenda within the work of the Sakya patriarchs; in those texts, it formed part of a three-fold method of correlating the body with the protective circle, cosmic elements, and celestial palace of the mandala. This passage from Nag po pa’s text describes elemental mandalas located in the soles of the feet,

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<sup>436</sup> Nag po pa. *Samvara-vyākhyā. Sdom pa bshad pa*. In *bstan 'gyur* (sde dge). TBRC W23703. 22: 13 - 22. Delhi: delhi karmapae choedhey, gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1982-1985. Toh:1460; *bstan 'gyur gser bris 179 vol 14 ff. 8r-14v* (pp.15-28); *Otani Beijing* 2177.

<sup>437</sup> For an interesting inquiry into the meaning of *lhan cig skyes pa* [Skt. *sahaja*], see Kvaerne, Per. 1975-6. “On the Concept of Sahaja in Indian Buddhist Tantric Literature,” *Temenos: Studies in Comparative Religion*, vol.11-12: 88-135.

<sup>438</sup> Jake Dalton has pointed out how this citation sounds like a body-based or ultimate-truth oriented interpretation of the preparatory rites for constructing a mandala. [Personal communication, June 2015] Drapa Gyatso suggested that Vajrakīla’s *lus dkyil* is the object of this spontaneous generation. [Personal communication, Spring 2012]. Preparatory tantric rites often involve the spontaneous generation of the form to which the main rite as a whole is devoted to building in stages. For example, rites for creating a sand mandala are typically prefaced by the mental production (or imagination) of that mandala. Likewise, initiation rites typically require the vajrācārya to first generate self as deity before ritually guiding the initiate in cultivation those same divine qualities through a series of consecrations. In the discussion of the “proto-body mandala rite” from Dunhuang in Chapter Two of this dissertation, we discussed its possible relation to such a preparatory rite. One might even hazard to say that tantric preparatory rites are, by nature, prototypical in the sense that they lay out a form or structure upon which later versions are modeled.

See Beyer 1973 [Reprint 1978, p. 73-74] for a helpful description of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice based upon Pad ma dkar po’s *Snyan rgyud yid bzhin nor bu bskyed rim*, fols.12b ff.

stomach, chest, throat and crown (as well as perhaps an elusive description of the secret place) [14.1].<sup>439</sup>

Our goal is to understand Mkhas grub's use of Bu ston's interpretation of Nag po pa's text. Locating the source for this comment on Nag po pa's text within Bu ston's writings proves challenging since Bu ston wrote extensively on the Cakrasaṃvara practice. For example, while his *Nag po pa's Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana, Free from Errors or Impurities* seems a likely candidate, no such comment appears there.<sup>440</sup> The description of the mandala of the support in that text does not seem to include the protective circle; however, it does, once again, resemble the description of the body as cosmos common to the Sakyapa Hevajra *sādhana*s but elided by Mkhas grub in his citation of them.<sup>441</sup> In continuing to search for the source of Bu ston's statement, clues may be derived from Ngor chen's rebuttal [549.2-5]. There Ngor chen asserts that his opponent's statement contains a misreading of Bu ston. In doing so he refers to two texts, the *Yoginī-saṃcāra*

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<sup>439</sup> *rkang pa'i mthil du rtsom pa'i rlung; yang dag gnas shing lter son par; me yi dkyil 'khor gzi brjid 'bar; lto bar ches ni dkar ba yi; chu ni mdzes pa nyid kyi gzugs; brang du yang ni dbang chen ni; kha dog ser pos rnam par spyas; mgrin pa'i steng du brten ba yi; rtse brgyad ldan pa'i ri rab bo; bdun ldan nyi ma a li zla; dri med zla ba'i gzi brjid nyid; nang du 'grod pa 'ong ba dang; chu skyes 'dab ma sum cu drug; ldan bar rdo rje'i dbus son par; aa li ka' li las byung grub; mdzes pa'i spyi bor hum byas te; der gnas gser gyi gnas su ni; sna tshogs dbus su dang po'i ming; zhes bya ba lhan cig skyes pa yang*

Shortly after, Nagpopa writes, “As for the mandala that is produced in terms of the three, it is the mandala of that one's body.”[14.3] [*gsum gyis bskyed pa'i dkyil 'khor ni; de yi lus su dkyil 'khor nyid*]. “The three” may refer to the circles of deities of body, speech and mind that characterize many descriptions of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala. It is also possible, though perhaps less likely, that it refers to the rungs of the protective circle (or even more tentatively, to the body as protective circle, cosmic elements, and celestial palace).

<sup>440</sup> *Nag po pa's Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana, Free from Errors or Impurities. Bde mchog nag po pa'i sgrub thabs 'khrul ba'i dri bral. Toh 5049. In gsung 'bum/\_rin chen grub (zhol par khang). TBRC W1934. 7: 151 - 186. [lha sa]: [zhol par khang], [2000].*

I did find compelling descriptions of body mandala practice of the Nag po pa tradition there. Cumulatively, these practices reflect a dense layering of elements, deities, cakras, channels and in particular, mantras and syllables upon the human body as well as subtle body practices involving the manipulation of winds and drops in close cooperation with mantra and syllable recitation and visualization.

<sup>441</sup> *tshur 'dus nas rang yab yum la thim pas ro gcig tu gyur p'i sku la rten and brten par bcas pa'i dkyil 'khor rang bzhin gyis gnas pa gsal gdab par bya ste; rkang pa gnyis bgrad pa rlung gi dkyil 'khor; sum mdo grug sum me; lto ba zlam po chu; brang gru bzhi sa; skal tshigs ri rab; mgo bo ri rab kyi stod kyi cha; lus 'dom gang gru bzhi ni gzhal yas khang gru bzhi; sgo dgu ni sgo mtshams; yan lag gan rkang brgyad ni ka ba brgyad; lus ngag yid gsum ni 'khor lo gsum*

The detail that distinguishes this description of the mandala of the support in Bu ston's text from the one we quoted above from Nag po pa's text is the correlation of the shape and measurement of the body with the celestial palace and of the limbs of the body with the pillars.



and the *Commentary on Nag po pa's Sādhana*.<sup>442</sup> Additional possibilities include Bu ston's *Eliminating Errors in the Commentary on the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*<sup>443</sup>, his *Garland of Perfection Yoga*<sup>444</sup>, or even his *Ghaṅṭapa Cakrasaṃvara Mandala Abhisamaya*.<sup>445</sup> Another possibility is that the reference is to a text Bu ston composed on another tantric cycle.<sup>446</sup>

We will see why the difficult task of locating precisely where this statement by Bu ston is made is important when we evaluate Ngor chen's critique. The main point here, however, is to determine how Mkhas grub is using it. Bu ston, the great fourteenth-century cataloguer and compiler of the Tibetan canon is invoked as an authority on what is authentic, in other words, what texts and practices can be definitively identified as Indian in origin. Mkhas grub is therefore saying that this body mandala description derived from Nag po pa's text is the only one of its kind in an Indian source. Therefore, he implies the preceding quote of "some Tibetans," which we have traced to the Sakyapa Hevajra body mandala texts, is an account of an illegitimate version of the practice. Mkhas grub's claims direct our attention to the relationship among various phases of the body mandala practice, among the various components of the mandala of the support (the protective circle, the 'container' built of cosmological elements, and the detailed formation of the celestial palace), and of the mandalas of support to the supported.<sup>447</sup> The relationship between different structural components of body mandala and the transitions between the phases of the ritual practice are an important aspect of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's methods for defining body mandala.

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<sup>442</sup> As discussed below, the former, the *Rnal 'byor ma kun spyod*, probably refers to Bu ston's *Rnal 'byor ma kun tu spyod pai rgyud gyi bshad pa bde mchog gi don rab tu gsal ba* [Bu ston's *Collected Works* (rin chen grub (zhol par khang), Vol. 6, pp. 725-876 (76ff) Toh 5045]. The latter, "*Nag po pa'i sgrub thabs kyi 'grel pa*," is likely the text briefly discussed above, Bu ston's *Bde mchog nag po pa'i sgrub thabs 'khrul ba'dri bral* [Toh 5049].

<sup>443</sup> *Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i sgrub thabs kyi 'grel pa 'khrul bas pong par byed pa* [Toh 5050]. I have reviewed about one third of this text to date, and have yet to find a connection.

<sup>444</sup> *Rnal 'byor rdzogs pa'i 'phreng ba*. This text on the Cakrasaṃvara *abhisamaya* appears to be referred to by Mkhas grub at 260.1. See 6 ff scanned *dbu med* manuscript found as TBRC W1CZ1191.

<sup>445</sup> *Bde mchog dril bu lugs kyi dkyil 'khor gyi mgon rtogs*. There is an *dbu med* manuscript of this text by Bu ston on the Ghaṅṭapa Cakrasaṃvara *abhisamaya*. See TBRC W1CZ1248.

<sup>446</sup> In her 2006 essay, Bentor refers to several ways in which Mkhas grub and Bu ston differ in their understanding of the Ārya Guhysamāja practice. For example, Bentor refers specifically to Bu ston's commentary on the *Mdor byas* [*Pinḍikṛta*], his *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i sgrub thabs mdor byas gyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gsal byed*. *Collected Works* (New Delhi International Academy of Indian Culture, 1967, vol.9, 683-877).

<sup>447</sup> No mention is made of the cremation grounds here, but as a key feature of both the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra body mandala and outer mandala, of of yoginī tantra more largely, one might be lead to consider how they fit in as well.

## IIC. What Really Qualifies as a Body Mandala?

The final section of the quote from Mkhas grub's text identifies and denounces various fraudulent forms of body mandala practice:

“There is that method of generating the body as a celestial mansion like that, of arranging the one hundred and fifty-seven deities of the body mandala and so forth in the outer mandala of only nine gods, of arranging the deities of the outer mandala in the inner mandala, and without deities common to the two (inner and outer). (Such methods) are not explained in the tantra or any authentic Indian system nor even in the implicit meaning [*don thob*].

In investigating with a mind that doesn't even distinguish between a body mandala and establishing deities on the body, many lies masquerading as the superior instructions appear in the Tibetan methods of establishing the body mandala. The affirmation and negation are not elaborated at length here.”<sup>448</sup>

In this section, Mkhas grub appears to refer to version of the Hevajra (outer) mandala popular in artistic representations; this mandala contains nine deities, Hevajra united with Nairatmya and surrounded by the eight retinue goddesses. The Hevajra body mandala or inner mandala on the other hand, contains one hundred and fifty-seven deities. I have not encountered any other version of body mandala practice from another tantric cycle that shares this enumeration; therefore, it seems likely that a scholar monk, the most likely audience for the body mandala debate texts, would have easily identified Mkhas grub's comments here with the Hevajra system. Therefore, we can understand why Ngor chen construed his remarks as an attack on the Hevajra practice of the Sakyapa despite the fact that Mkhas grub never identifies that system by name.

Mkhas grub is troubled by the question of how precisely to relate the deities of these versions of inner and outer mandala, presenting us with another variety of category confusion (and also an iconophilic challenge). He, likewise, repeats his charge of fraudulence with regard to the basis of such practices in the Indian tradition. Furthermore, he clarifies that his critique includes the full range of traditional exegesis ranging from explicitly to implicitly-rendered interpretations of the texts. The division of meaning into explicit or clearly apparent meaning [*nītārtha* Tib. *nges don*] as well as or interpretable meaning [*neyārtha* Tib. *drang don*], meaning that must be sought, is a standard Buddhist exegetical principle. This two-fold principle of meaning-making is often placed in dialogue with two truths of conventional [*saṃvṛti*] and ultimate

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<sup>448</sup> *lus gzhal yas khang du bskyed tshul de 'dra ba dang; phyi'i dkyil 'khor la lha dgu las med pa la; lus dkyil gyi lha brgya rtsa lnga bcu rtsa bdun la sogs pa bkod cing; lus dkyil [255.4] gyi lha'i nang na phyi dkyil la 'god pa dang thun mong ba lha gcig kyang med pa sogs; rgyud dang rgya gzhung tshad ldan gang nas kyang ma bshad cing don thob la'ang med kyang; lus dkyil dang lus la lha 'god pa ci ma gyi khyad par yang ma phyed pa'i blos btags [255.5] la; man ngag mchog tu ming btags pa'i mun sprul du ma zhig bod kyi lus dkyil bsgrub tshul rnam la snang ste; 'dir dgag sgrub rgyas par ma spros so*

[*paramārtha*].<sup>449</sup> The category of implicit meaning introduced in this passage, *don thob*, is literally meaning “obtained” or “made manifest.” While it is juxtaposed with what’s been “explained” [*bshad*], Mkhas grub does not provide any clues as to how *don thob* can be accessed. Finally, Mkhas grub critiques those who fail to distinguish body mandala from practices like *nyāsa*. We discussed this distinction in Chapter Four; Mkhas grub understands *nyāsa* as simply placing syllable upon the body’s exterior; body mandala, on the other hand, involves a holistic transformation of the parts of the body to prepare them to support the generation of deities.

Once again, in this passage from Mkhas grub’s text, the relationship of inner and outer mandala comes to the forefront. However, it is not their ontological status or their aptness to serve as a basis for tantric practice that is at issue. Rather, in this instance, the problem is the specific manner in which they are related through the mechanics of body mandala practice. A few additional points are clarified as well. First, we now know that Mkhas grub is troubled specifically by the manner of generating the celestial palace in his citation of the practice of ‘some Tibetans’ [*pod dag*]. According to Dongsung Shabdrung Rinpoche, some of the Mkhas grub’s problems with the relationship of inner and outer mandala can be attributed to the ritual context, the dissolution of inner into outer mandala.<sup>450</sup> The ritual order of such acts of dissolution does indeed seem relevant, as the preceding portion of Mkhas grub’s text negotiated the relationship of earlier and later visualizations of the celestial palace.

“Gathering/Dissolution” [*bsdus pa*] is a vital ritual act that blurs the boundaries between emptiness and form. This very act call the relationship of different stages of the practice to one another into question. The first verse of the quote from the practice of “some Tibetans” suggests another source of confusion in the relation of inner and outer mandala. Shabdrung Rinpoche identified this particular kind of issue as “*go rims ‘khrugs*,” a confusion of the order or stages of practice.<sup>451</sup> This confusion pivots upon the placement of the *viśvavajra* or crossed vajra. The *viśvavajra* typically appears at the base of the protective circle in outer mandala representations, whereas this body mandala

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<sup>449</sup> Lamotte 1988 p.17 and Broido 1988, pp. 80-81. Lamotte, Etienne, 1988. “Assesment of Textual Interpretation in Buddhism,” in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*. Ed, Lopez, Donald S. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Broido, Michael M. 1988. “Killing, Lying, Stealing and Adultery: A Problem of Interpretation in the Tantras,” in *Buddhist Hermeneutics*. Ed. Lopez, Donald S. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

<sup>450</sup> Dongsung Shabdrung Rinpoche, Personal Communication, Fall 2013. Bendor’s findings reported in her 2015 article would appear to support this interpretation in the case of the visualizing the body as the selectial palace. The evidence presented by Bendor suggests that Tsong kha pa maintained that the earlier visualization of the celestial palace plays a parts in the practitioner’s later generation of the parts of the body as the parts of the palace. Mkhas grub, on the other hand, intends to first dissolve that earlier visualization.

<sup>451</sup> Personal Communication, Fall 2013.

practice locates it on the crown of the head.<sup>452</sup> Several sources have suggested that the location of the *viśvavajra* in this version of body mandala practice provoked Mkhas grub by turning the practice on it's head, so to speak. In his writings on the *Lam 'bras* teachings of the “Outer Creation Stage” of Hevajra, sixteenth-century Sakyapa master Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk (1524-68) distinguished the *viśvavajra* at the base of the celestial palace from that at the base of the protective circle. His comments suggest that there was some controversy over the *viśvavajra* at the base of the celestial palace: “Some claim that this is the crossed vajra of the protection cakra, but we maintain that that is invisible, obscured by the tiny vajras spread out like barley. This is the seat of the celestial mansion.”<sup>453</sup> In this case, the exegete compensates for the absence of clear relationships between these elements by suggesting that there is more than one *viśvavajra*. Mkhas grub's concerns with the connections between the components of inner and outer mandala, as exemplified in the problem of the *viśvavajra*, highlight the significance of both establishing a proper basis for generation and for maintaining order in the relationship of different types of mandala and of their parts.

### **III. Ngor chen's Reply Part One: on Bu ston and the Mandala of the Support**

Ngor chen begins his defense by challenging the validity of Mkhas grub's citation of Bu ston. He claims that Bu ston never denied the existence of such teachings on the mandala of the support in the Indian system. In doing so, he refers to what appear to be two commentaries by Bu ston, one on the *Yoginī-saṃcāra-tantra*, the other on Nag po pa's *sādhana*. The latter is likely the text briefly discussed above, Bu ston's *Nag po pa's Cakrasaṃvara sādhana, Free from Errors or Impurities*<sup>454</sup>. The former probably refers to Bu ston's *The Commentary on the Yoginī-saṃcāra-tantra, the Utterly Clear Meaning of Cakrasaṃvara*.<sup>455</sup> The *Yoginī-saṃcāra-tantra* was classified by Bu ston as an uncommon explanatory tantra of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle.<sup>456</sup> Both texts, therefore, are

<sup>452</sup> I am grateful to Dongsung Shabdrung Rinpoche for his guidance on this point and to Dan McNamara who, in his readings of Chogay Trichen Rinpoche's body mandala commentary, first brought my attention to this important detail.

<sup>453</sup> Translated in Stearns 2006, 503. *Summarizing Notes of the Outer Creation Stage From the Expansion of the Great Secret Doctrine: Summarizing Notes of Guidance for the Precious Teaching of the “Path with the Result”* by Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk.

<sup>454</sup> *Bde mchog nag po pa'i sgrub thabs 'khrul ba'dri bral* [Toh 5049]

<sup>455</sup> *Rnal 'byor ma kun tu spyod pai rgyud gyi bshad pa bde mchog gi don rab tu gsal ba*. Bu ston's Collected Works (rin chen grub (zhöl par khang), Vol. 6, pp. 725-876 (76ff).

<sup>456</sup> Gray 2007, p16. See Pandey 1998 for a Sanskrit and Tibetan edition of this tantra. (Gray 2007, fn52). According to English 2002, this tantra was significant for the study of body mandala practice because it “emphasizes the importance of the practice in the Cakrasaṃvara tradition by ascribing it to the mythical *Lākṣābhīdhānatantra* (although the practice was in fact Śaiva in origin).” (p.197) For more on the relevant passage from the *Yoginī Saṃcāra* and on Sanderson's work in tracing body mandala prototypes to Śaiva sources such as the *Tantrasadbhāva* see also fn 470 and Sanderson 2001.

Cakrasaṃvara-related. Ngor chen argues that it was only in the case of Cakrasaṃvara that Bu ston denied an Indian textual basis for this version of the mandala of the support.

He then cites the “elided section” from the Hevajra body mandala quote referenced above (although, he too does not yet identify it explicitly with the Hevajra cycle): “The soles of the feet, the *rlung*; the abdomen, fire; the stomach, water.; the heart center, earth; the vertebra, Mount Meru, the highest part of the summit of (/which is) the head; The armspan, the 4 cornered celestial palace, The eight bones, the pillars...”<sup>457</sup> We will recall that this teaching was included both in the body mandala text attributed to Grags pa rgyal mtshan and in that by ‘Phags pa. Similar versions of the practice were also found in Nag po pa’s text, the *Saṃvara-vyākhyā* (albeit in a portion also not quoted by Mkhas grub) as well as in Bu ston’s *Nag po pa’s Cakrasaṃvara Sādhana, Free from Errors or Impurities*.

### IIIA. A Diagram of the Mandala of the Support?: Cultivating “Iconophilia” in Approaching *Sādhana* as Bodily Discourse

If we are having difficulty imagining what such a vision of the human body would actually look like, we can refer to a cakra diagram dated by Amy Heller to eleventh-century Western Tibet.<sup>458</sup> [See Fig. 23] We will look more closely at this diagram in our discussion of representations of the subtle body in the conclusion of this dissertation. At present, we are merely using it as a point of reference. The front side of the drawing depicts a body containing a series of cakras while the reverse, of primary interest to us here, reduces the body to just a series of stacked forms, with no bodily outline or cakras present. One noteworthy detail of the recto drawing in the boars’ head emerging from the head of the main figure. It seems likely that Heller’s interpretation of this detail as indicating a connection to the practices of Vajravārahī, and thereby connected at least peripherally with the Cakrasaṃvara system, is correct. Using English’s 2002 monograph as a guide, Heller has identified the stacked shapes and associated seed syllables that make up the verso drawing with the fundamental elements of the universe upon which the celestial palace is built.

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<sup>457</sup> *rkang mthil rlung; sum mdo me; lto ba chu; snying ga sa; sgal [549.5] tshigs ri rab; mgo bo’i rab kyī stod kyī cha; lus ’dom gang gru bzhi gzhal yas khang; rkang brgyad ka ba rnams ’don pa yin na ni*

<sup>458</sup> Heller 2009. I am grateful to Nancy Lin for bringing this drawing to my attention. More research is required on the dating of the drawing. Heller based her dating on four factors: a radio-carbon analysis of the paper, mention of a Zhi ba’Od in the inscription (which she takes to connect it to the royal family of the Guge-Puhrang empire of Western Tibet), stylistic aspects of the drawing and “archaic orthography.” In consulting with other scholars such as Christian Luczanits, I am lead to doubt the validity of the latter points of evidence. This diagram was recently displayed in the Rubin Museum’s “Bodies in Balance” exhibition. I am grateful to Christian Luczanits for discussing some of the details of the drawing with me at that time. [Personal communication, 7/17/2014].

While we have not had the opportunity to explore the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice in depth, this diagram and Heller’s interpretation of its parts helps us to think about how the “elided section” of the citation from the body mandala practice of ‘some Tibetans’ in Mkhas grub’s text relates to the cited portions. Theoretically, the element of wind resides in the soles of the feet, and the universe/body is built up from there, gradually assuming more coarse levels of embodiment up until the earth element in the chest. However, the location of the *viśvavajra*, the foundation for the celestial palace and the base for the protective circle, is unclear. In this drawing, likely associated with the Cakrasaṃvara system, the *viśvavajra* appears above all the other elements rather than at the base.

Heller envisions the *viśvavajra* in this diagram as the base of the palace and the vajra as its tip. Therefore, in her view, the palace is represented only elliptically, and no direct correlation is specified between the palace and the parts of the body. Instead, the palace appears to be founded upon the basis of the body as a container of cosmic elements. English’s 2002 work on the practices of Vajrayoginī (upon which Heller relied in part), presents a relevant passage on the generation of the deity’s abode upon a foundation of cosmic elements:

“The commonest method of visualizing the deity’s dwelling place in mainstream *sādhana*s...is not a cremation ground but as the traditional Abhidharmic universe. This begins with the visualization of the elements that underpin the earth’s surface; the yogin sees the axial Sumeru (or Meru) rising up into the heavens. Above this (or encompassing it all), he installs the circle of protection and the dharmodayā, or “origin of existents.” Finally, upon the mountain’s peak, he visualizes an elaborate and decorative temple palace (*kūtāgāraḥ*) as the future abode of the deity.”<sup>459</sup>

English compares the vision of the Abhidharmic universe with the *Vajravārāhī sādhana* that is the focus of her study. In the process, she demonstrates how certain details were modified in the *sādhana*s of higher yoga tantra, such as the correlation of space with the principle of emptiness as well as the order of the elements. Fire comes to follow wind and therefore to agree with the description of the body in Chapter Three of the *Abhidharmakośa* (v.44b).<sup>460</sup> In the case of the *Vajravārāhī sādhana*, English observes how this correlation of macrocosm with microcosm plays out with particular salience in the body mandala practice.<sup>461</sup> Finally, she interprets the absence of the palace from that *sādhana* as a significant indication of the evolution of the practice to a “more integrated higher tantric practice” placing more emphasis upon the cremation grounds as the abode of the deity and thereby a key site in the ritual drama. Based on this observation, one might speculate that the absence of visual or textual representations of the body as celestial palace in a given account of body mandala practice reflects a similar emphasis upon the higher yoga tantra agenda.

As observed in Chapter Two, the mandala, as a three-dimensional form that can be collapsed along its axis to a pith or central point, contains a tension between center

<sup>459</sup> English 2002, 144.

<sup>460</sup> English 2002, 146.

<sup>461</sup> Ibid.

and periphery, top and bottom in its very structure. The mapping of these forms onto the body in body mandala practice further complicates this system of relations, by introducing the form of the body with its own structures and hierarchies. It is therefore not surprising that questions of the relation of its parts would arise in the creation and exegesis of ritual practice. English, for example, encounters comparable difficulties in her interpretation of the relationship between the protective circle and the cosmos in the *Vajravārāhī sādhana*:

“*Sādhana*s that directly follow the emptiness meditation with the visualization of the cosmos must postpone installing the circle of protection until after the cosmos has been set in place. This differs from the *Vajravārāhī sādhana*, in which the emptiness meditations lead on directly to the circle of protection, and in which the cosmos...is visualized inside the circle of protection...The difference is more apparent than real, since, in this case, the circle of protection presumably encompasses the visualized cosmos, or on “top”, perhaps “superimposed”? The dharmodaya and temple palace are then visualized within the circle of protection, on top of Mount Meru.”<sup>462</sup>

English’s comments highlight the connection between structure and chronology in visualization practice. They also suggest that *sādhana* themselves do not always provide clear transitions between parts of a visualized structure or phases of the visualization process. English is grappling with a similar problem in interpreting her *sādhana* as we do in viewing the diagram. As we recall, Mkhas grub appears to have also shared similar concerns with the versions of body mandala practice from the mother tantras (presumably Hevajra). We described this problem above as *go rims ‘khrugs*, a confusion of the order of the stages of practice. In the case of the *viśvavajra* introduced in the context of relating inner and outer mandalas, Mkhas grub expressed similar concerns for establishing a proper basis for generation and for maintaining order in the relationship of different types of mandala and of their parts.

In order to fully understand the role of the citation from the Hevajra body mandala practice in the body mandala debate, one would need to engage with multiple aspects of the order of ritual practice of the mandalas of support and supported. Furthermore, comparison of their roles in the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra practices would be necessary. Even in just beginning with the basic details of the citation, we are led to question how the body can function simultaneously as a circle of protection, the universe, and a palace. In the excerpts from the Hevajra practice quoted by Mkhas grub, all of the body parts correlated with parts of the palace seem to belong to portions in and above the heart. However, there is also an emphasis upon the all-encompassing aspect of the body as palace, both in the span of the body and the limbs as foundational elements that also demarcate the borders of the palace. Therefore, despite the localization in the upper part of the body that might be interpreted as an expression of vertical hierarchy, there is also a decidedly holistic or totalizing aspect to the body: palace correlation.<sup>463</sup> Moreover, when

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<sup>462</sup> English 2002, fn321.

<sup>463</sup> In the early chapters of this dissertation, we have discussed the different modes of representing hierarchies in the mandala. We have also considered how the hierarchies of

we address Ngor chen's discussion of the mandala of the supported below, we will find that deities of the Hevajra body mandala inhabit cakras along the central channel of the body from top to bottom. We can see, therefore, how the relation of top to bottom, inside to outside, in this version of Hevajra practice is far from straightforward.

How then are we to interpret the absence of transitions between representations of the body in *sādhana* and diagrams like this one? If we were to interpret the diagram as a representation of body mandala, the front side with the drawing of the cakras would be the mandala of the supported; the reverse would be the mandala of the support emphasizing the correlation of body with cosmos through reference to the elements, Mt. Meru, etc... But we are still left with the problem of navigating the transition between the two. Are we perhaps dealing with multiple bodies or versions of the body? Are these different phases in a ritual process rather than a collection of forms simultaneously mapped onto a single body? The mode of representing the body in this case, plays upon the implied relation of the elemental composite on the reverse side to the drawing of the body with the cakras on the front side, a implied relation of support and supported.<sup>464</sup> However the phases of constructing a protective circle from the body or of generating parts of the body as parts of the palace are absent.<sup>465</sup>

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body and mandala interact in body mandala ritual. We will revisit this topic in the discussion of representations of the subtle body in the conclusion of the dissertation.

<sup>464</sup> A similar logic might be said to be at play in relating a painting to the consecratory inscriptions and forms that appear on its reverse. See the introduction for a brief engagement with such representations in terms of the principle of container and contained.

<sup>465</sup> Bentor 2015 has suggestion a distinction between Tsong kha pa's interpretation of the relationship between the different versions the visualization of the body as the celestial palace and those of later Geluk thinkers. Bentor cites Tsong kha pa's '*Dod pa 'jo ba* to clarify this distinction: "From now on, the continuum of your earlier visualization of the stacked up physical elements, Mt. Meru and the celestial palace proceeds without being dissolved. Therefore when you begin your meditation on your body as the celestial mansion, on the basis of each former similar moment and each part of the body, a subsequent similar moment arises." [*Dod pa 'jo ba* folio 122b, p442.5-.6 as translated by Bentor 2015, p.66.] *The Wish-Granting Extensive Explanation of the Cakrasaṃvara Abhisamaya. Bde mchog mngon rtogs rgya cher bshad pa 'dod pa 'jo ba/*." In gsung 'bum/\_tsong kha pa/?bla brang par ma?/. TBRC W22273. 9: 195 - 592. [bla brang]: bla brang bkra shis 'khyil, [199?]

Bentor also provides a reference (p.67 fn23) to Ngor chen's commentary on the Ghantapa transmission fo the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice to demonstrate that Ngor chen disagreed with this interpretation. [Bentor cites folio 375b, p.402.2.1-2. in the following version: Ngor chen *Commentary on the Ghantapa Body Mandala Practice. Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum*. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1969, vol.10, folios 117b-140a, pp. 398.1.1-405.4.1]. These differences in interpretation nicely exemplify the very challenges of connecting different versions of a visualization or phases of a ritual practice faced by ritual exegetes. I am using Latour's concept of "iconophilia" to suggest that the gaps in many *sādhana* between these visualizations or ritual phases are productive.



LaTour's notion of "iconophilia" may provide some clues for interpreting the ambiguity of relations between internal and external mandala and as well as between the different phases of body (inner) mandala ritual. We have observed the problem of locating the *viśvavajra*, a foundational element of the protective circle of the mandala in both practices, reinforced this ambiguity of connecting different phases or varieties of the ritual. In the examples we have encountered, diagram and *sādhana*, image and text, both challenge their audiences to be iconophilic, to focus upon "the movement between images" and, in doing so, to bring them to life, to animate or even embody them. We will continue to examine the ways in which ambiguities of relationship between representations of the body as mandala power the body mandala debate.

### IIIB. Ngor chen and the *Samputa Tantra*

Bearing these problems of the relation of the mandalas of inner and outer and support and supported in mind, we will return to our discussion of Ngor chen's reply. To review, first, in the section devoted to correcting "literal flaws" [*tshig la skyon*] Ngor chen points out that Bu ston only claimed that such versions of body mandala are absent from the Indian sources on Cakrasaṃvara in particular, with the exception of the Nag po pa verse. Then, he cites the "elided section" of the quote correlating the body with the cosmic elements that we know to be part of the Hevajra body mandala *sādhana* and prepares us to engage with counter-evidence from the *Samputa Tantra*.<sup>466</sup> Next, in the section devoted to correcting "flaws in meaning" [*don la skyon*], Ngor chen interprets the quote from Nag po pa's *Sdom pa bshad pa* [*Samvara-vyākhyā*]. He clarifies "tent" in "as for the tent, the very garland of bones" as a reference to the protective circle. He supports his interpretation with a description of the protective circle by the Indian author Abhayākara Gupta:

"Abhayākara clearly explained:

'In the limit of nadir, in whatever size, it is all firm and indestructible. The vajra foundation (which has) the nature of the flaming vajra is bounded at the border by a garland of lightrays like the fire at the end of a kalpa. From the nadir to the top is very high. The flaming vajra fence is thick, solid, and firm. Above the vajra fence, there, the blocks become all solid wall without a break. Above there is a lattice of arrows. Below, there is the flaming vajra tent which is ornamented by vajra canopies.'<sup>467</sup>

<sup>466</sup>[549.5] *De rnams sam pu tar bshad pas rgyud 'gog par 'gyur la*

<sup>467</sup>*slob dpon a bha ya ka ras; sa 'og gi mthar thug par ji ltar mngon par 'dod pa'i rgyar gcig tu sra zhing mkhregs la; [550.2] 'bar ba'i rdo rje'i rang bzhin gyi sa gzhi bskal pa'i mtha'i me ltar 'bar ba'i 'od zer gyi phreng bas mtshams bcings pa dang ; sa 'og nas steng gi bar du shin tu mtho pa; mthug cing mkhregs pa sra zhing 'bar ba'i rdo rje'i ra ba dang; rdo rje ra ba'i steng du phar [550.3] mtshams med par dum bu gcig tu gyur cing; steng rdo rje'i mda'i dra ba dang; 'og tu rdo rje'i bla res brgyan pa'i rdo rje'i gur 'bar ba'o; zhes gsal bar gsungs pa'i phyir ro*

This quote is derived from Chapter One of Abhayākara's *Niṣpannayogāvalī* [*rdzogs pa'i rnal 'byor gyi phreng ba*] (Toh 312 1) *sde dge bstan 'gyur Vol.75 ff. 94v-151r (pp.188-301) 189.4-6.*

Here Ngor chen moves beyond the purview of Bu ston to show that such descriptions of the body mandala of the support as presented by Mkhas grub for scrutiny (familiar form Hevajra body mandala *sādhana*) can indeed be found in Indian sources. This move is tricky and presents some difficulties for interpretation. He seems to claim that indeed there is a practice of generating the body as the protective circle in the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice.<sup>468</sup> We will not be able to explore all of the subtleties it suggests here.<sup>469</sup> Instead, we will focus Ngor chen's next move: the presentation of evidence from the *Samputa Tantra*.

The *Samputa Tantra* plays a prominent role in Ngor chen's rejection of Mkhas grub's charges that a particular version of body mandala connected with Hevajra is absent from the Indian sources and therefore, not authoritative.<sup>470</sup> The Sakyapas classify

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I am grateful to have had the opportunity to read portions of this text in a seminar with Professor Musashi Tachikawa during his time at UC Berkeley in Fall 2012. The passage appears in that text as a description of the protective circle; I do not know of any explicit mention of body mandala within the *Vajrāvalī* cycle. In his 2003 dissertation, Lee claims that although Abhayā does not use the term "body mandala," he refers to the practice in some of his ritual descriptions in the *Vajrāvalī*. [Lee 2003, p.130 fn4]

I explored the possibility that this quote might be found in Abhayā's extensive commentary on *the Samputa Tantra, the Āmnāyamañjari*. Although the precise quote does not appear there, there are references to aspects of the protective circle at 100b,127b & 231b of the sde dge edition. Mori 1997 has located eight references to the *Samputa Tantra* within the *Vajrāvalī* itself. He also points out that Abhayā composed this commentary simultaneously with the *Niṣpannyogāvalī* or the *Vajrāvalī*. See Mori 1997 p.26.

<sup>468</sup> *des na; lus kyi spyi bo'i rus pa sna tshogs rdo rje; rkang mthil gyi rus [550.4] pa rnams rdo rje'i sa gzhi; rtsib rus rdo rje'i gur la sogs par lung 'dis bsnyon med par grub pas bde mchog gi skabs su srung 'khor lus dkyil gtan nas ma bshad pa ma yin no*  
Ngor chen's N2 reads *bsnyon med par 'grub pa yin no* without the final phrase.

<sup>469</sup> Among them are further possibilities for interpreting the relation of descriptions of the protective circle in body mandala to those in other mandala rituals and in Cakrasaṃvara to Hevajra systems. More specifically, the final portion of the same chapter from Abhayā's text, not cited by Ngor chen, includes a detailed discussion of the role of the the protective circle; this section compares its role in the generation and perfection processes as well as its application in imagined [*bsgom bya' dkyil 'khor*] vs. drawn [*bri bya's dkyil 'khor*] mandalas. [See Sde dge 194.1-195.1]

<sup>470</sup> For partial translations of the tantra, see Elder 1978 and Skorupski 1983. For a short philological assessment of the tantra, see Szanto 2013. For an overview of the Indian and Tibetan literature on the *Samputa* embraced by the Sakya tradition, in particular, see Sobisch 2008. I have strong intuitions that pursuing the *Samputa* is of value to the project, motivated in part by a comment relayed by Drapa Gyatso of the IBA. He recalled

the *Samputa* as one of the “three tantras” of Hevajra; the text provides a wealth of information on the completion stage of *sādhana* practice.<sup>471</sup> The three tantras are: the *Hevajra Root Tantra*; the *Vajrapañjara Tantra*, often labeled an “uncommon” explanatory tantra (meaning in pertains only to the interpretation of the *Hevajra Tantra*); the *Samputa Tantra*, a “common” explanatory tantra applied to both the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara systems.

The classifications of root and explanatory tantra and, further, of common and uncommon explanatory tantra are important for understanding the underlying structure of Ngor chen’s commentarial method. These systems of classification provide another example of the concerns with articulating relationships between different varieties of texts (and bodies) expressed by the authors of the body mandala debate. We first encountered the genre of explanatory tantras [Tib. *bshad brgyud* Skt. *vyākhyā*] in our discussion of *Vajramālā* in Chapter Three. How explicit is the relationship of an explanatory tantra to the ‘root’ with which it is connected? In the case of the *Samputa*, Elder claims that while the *Hevajra Tantra* is cited multiple times, the *Guhyasamāja* is the only tantra explicitly referred to by name.<sup>472</sup> Szanto 2013 identifies the *Samputa* as “a compilation from most major tantras, such as the *Hevajra*, the *Herukābhidhāna*, the *Catuspītha*, etc..”<sup>473</sup> Lee 2003, likewise, suggests that “the principal purpose of the SPT is to synthesize several Yoga tantras and Yoginī tantras in terms of theory and practice.”<sup>474</sup> However, the notion of the “common” explanatory tantra, one that can be shared by multiple tantric systems, poses some questions about Tibetan hermeneutic and exegetical practices.

Why are these systems for classifying the *Samputa* relevant for the body mandala debate? They may be used to set the boundaries for textual interpretation. Sufficient ambiguity in the relationship of texts allows for the potential modification of those boundaries. The rules of exegesis may therefore be restructured through polemical encounters like the body mandala debate. We will continue to explore these issues in our examination of how Mkhas grub and Ngor chen use the *Vajramāla* and *Samputa* explanatory tantras.

How have authors understand the scope of application for a tantra like the *Samputa*? Verrill’s translation of an excerpt from a text he refers to as “Notes on Ngor chen kun dga’ bzang po by Dpal gyi brgyal mtshan in A mes zhabs”<sup>475</sup> suggests the scope

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how the great 20<sup>th</sup> century Sakya master Khenpo Appey Rinpoche suggested that Mkhas grub’s issue with the Hevajra body mandala was based on a misunderstanding of the *Samputa Tantra*.

<sup>471</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.6.

<sup>472</sup> Elder 1978, 15.

<sup>473</sup> Szanto 2013, p.5. Szanto also provides clues for dating the text such as the “conspicuous absence” of the Kālacakra (c.1030) from its contents as well as the likelihood it was quoted by Durjayacandra. [c. 1000c.e.]

<sup>474</sup> Lee 2003 dissertation, p. 35.

<sup>475</sup> This is the same text Sobisch 2008 is working with as “Notes” but a different edition. (“Notes for the Correct Explication of How to Enter into the Writings of the Venerable

was vast. According to that text, Bu ston regarded the *Samputa* as applicable to the interpretation of thirty-two tantras and for Bsod nams rtse mo, to sixteen or seventeen tantras. The excerpt continues: “[in addition to the Two-Part *Hevajra Tantra*], it is most importantly an explanatory tantra for the *Guhyasamāja*..., *Vajra Caturpitha*..., *Cakrasaṃvara*..., and [four others] ending in Guhya, because it clarifies their uncommon philosophical systems.]” This list includes both yoga and higher yoga tantras of both the father and mother classes.<sup>476</sup> The variety in this list raises the question of whether or not all of the parts of the *Samputa* are equally applicable to the understanding and practice of all of these tantras. More specifically, for the purposes of the body mandala debate, can the *Samputa* be applied to both the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra tantras (higher yoga “mother” tantras) in part or in their totalities or even to the *Guhyasamāja* (a higher yoga “father” tantra)?<sup>477</sup> Tsuda 1994 briefly assessed the state of the field of study of the *Samputa*, comparing it with other tantras of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle as follows: “The relations between these tantras and the principles of classification which have been adopted by Bu ston and other scholars should be discussed after studying each of the tantras carefully. Nearly everything is left to be done in this regard.”<sup>478</sup> Although Tsuda made that comment two decades ago, many questions remain unresolved.

Ngor chen introduces this first quote from the *Samputa Tantra* explicitly within the context of Hevajra body mandala practice [*kye rdor gyi skabs su*] rather than the Cakrasaṃvara. It describes what has become familiar to us as the body mandala of the support:

“As for the body, the mandala, pleasant, the four gates; so it is taught.  
(It) abides surrounded by the pillars which arise (from) one’s own eight limbs.  
Because of being equal in all dimensions, it is known as a square.

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Sa skya pas: Opening Wide in a Hundred Directions the Dharma Gates to which All Beings of Tibet are Guided”) *Rje btsun sa skya pa’i gsung rab la ‘jug tshul legs par bshad pa’i yi ge bod yul ‘gro kun bsgrod pa’i chos sgo phyogs brgyar ring du phye ba*. Edited by A-med-zhabs and originally composed by Chos dpal bzang po. Collected works, vol. kha, fols. 384r-393v. Verrill cites another version of A-med-zhabs’s collected works, Vol.21, p.76.2. This text will be explored in greater depth later in this chapter.

<sup>476</sup> Verrill 2012, p.328.

<sup>477</sup> Szanto 2013 has narrowed the scope, based upon a comment from Bu ston’s ‘*Extended Categorization of Tantric Classes*’ suggesting the Saṃvara as the primary object of interpretation for the *Samputa*. The quote from p. 429 of Bu ston’s *Rgyud sde rnam bzhag rgyas* is cited in Szanto 2013 fn25. [See *The Jewel Ornament of Tantric Classes: the Classification of the General Tantric Classes. Rgyud sde spyi’i rnam par gzhang pa Rgyud sde rin po che’i mdzes rgyan*. Lokesh Chandra (ed.) The Collected Works of Bu ston (vol.Ba). New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture 1966.] I have translated it as follows: “Being the explanatory tantra of many tantras generally, the Saṃvara is primary. This is on account of the distinguishing Vajrasattva Saṃvara as the main deity of the mandala of this one. (Another reason is) to be explained in the introduction of the Saṃvara. (And also since) the commentaries count it as an explanatory tantra of Saṃvara.”

<sup>478</sup> Tsuda 1994, p.40 fn1.

As for the nature of body, speech and mind, the three cakras are taught as one.  
As for the mountain, in the center of the head.  
Likewise, the stage of *rtsom chen* and so forth.  
Through the stage of the method of the time of the guru,  
As for that, the mandala abides completely.<sup>479</sup>

The passage itself, taken together with its context within the *Samputa Tantra*, refers to generating the body as the celestial palace and likely also as the cosmic elements as in the Hevajra *sādhana*.<sup>480</sup> The way Ngor chen uses the *Samputa* reveals some key aspects of his strategy as a tantric commentator. For example, Ngor chen is using the *Samputa* in its capacity as an undisputedly authoritative tantric text (of the explanatory tantra category) to establish the centrality of the guru's oral instructions at "the time of the guru" to the successful completion of the Hevajra body mandala practice. He identifies the quote as an explicit explanation [*dngos su bshad pa*] and then adds that even without such a direct reference, there are implicit meanings [*don la thob pa*] that can be sought out for clarification. He then introduces another authoritative source, the oral instructions of the lineage gurus [*bla ma brgyud pa'i man ngag*]. He refers to the process of seeking support

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<sup>479</sup> *lus ni dkyil 'khor nyams dga' bar; sgo bzhir ji skad gsungs pa'o; rang gi yan lag brgyad byung ba'i; ka ba de yis bskor nas gnas; dngos po kun gyis mnyam pa'i phyir; gru [550.6] bzhi par ni rab tu grags; sku gsung thugs kyi ngo bos ni; 'khor lo gsum ni gcig tu gsung; ri ni mgo po'i ze'u 'bru la; ji ltar rtsom chen la sogs rim; bla ma'i dus thabs rim nyid kyis; de ni rdzogs par dkyil 'khor gnas*

This quote is found in 113b.3-.5 (i.e. p226) in the sde dge edition of the *Samputa Tantra* [Toh 381].

<sup>480</sup> Resolving all of the questions raised by this citation may not be possible at present. A few suggestions are included here. The three circles likely refer to the three rungs of the protective circle, here taught as one, a detail not mentioned in the *sādhana* quote. I am indebted to Drapa Gyatso for suggesting this interpretation. [Personal communication Spring 2012]. However, we can also see how the text may allow for interpretation of the "three" as the cakras of body, speech and mind in the case of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle. Other details, like the four gates, also suggest reference to the Cakrasaṃvara system in which there are four gates at the heart for body mandala.

The reference to the stage of *rtsom chen* requires further investigation in the context of the tantra itself; there, the verses that follow it describe the location and shape of the cosmic elements in parts of the body in a similar way to that description quoted from the Hevajra body mandala practice above.

The reference to the 'method of the time of the guru' [*bla ma'i dus thabs rim*] is also somewhat difficult to interpret. My Tibetan mentors had some suggestions. Drapa Gyatso of the IBA suggested the reference is to understanding the formation of body in accord with the fifth instruction of guru [Personal communication, Spring 2012]; Shabdrung Rinpoche proposed the reference is to the completion stage practice and the Vajrācārya initiation [*rje slob dpon kyis dbang*]. [Personal communication, Fall 2013] Further clarification is needed on this point.

from this particular type of source as ‘supplemental’ [‘*kha bskangs*]. Moreover, he claims that while there are many methods of supplementing or filling in the blanks left by the teachings, the oral instructions of Jetari prove most reliable for the Sakyapa masters.

As discussed above, Mkhas grub’s critique of the (Hevajra) body mandala practice targeted both explicit and implicit varieties of interpretation: “(Such methods) are not explained in the tantra or any authentic Indian system nor even in the implicit meaning [*don thob*].”[KJ 255.4] While we referred to the more general Buddhist exegetical framework of apparent meaning [*nītārtha* Tib. *nges don*] vs. interpretable meaning [*neyārtha* Tib. *drang don*] in that discussion, we observed that Mkhas grub provided no clear reference for *don thob*. Ngor chen’s response fills that gap by asserting that the oral instructions of the lineage gurus may be used as a valid resource in the exegetical process. Moreover, he uses a tantra, an undisputedly authoritative text, to validate this creative process of supplementing from these instructions in determining the ritual application of somewhat obscure tantric literature. He also begins to forge a bond between the teaching of one particular realized Indian tantric master [*mahāsiddha*], *Jetari*, and the lineage instructions of the Sakyapa gurus.

To determine the significance of the conflict over *don thob* within the body mandala debate and the implications it holds for understanding the broader controversies over textual exegesis within fifteenth-century Tibet, we will recall a few points from scholarship introduced earlier in the dissertation. First, historically the Sakyapas have been critiqued for the ambiguous origins of the *Lam ‘bras* teachings as “grey texts” produced as a collaboration between Indian masters and Tibetan disciples and translators, passed down orally for centuries before being written down.<sup>481</sup> While the Sakya tradition makes a distinction between the transmission of the *Lam ‘bras* according to the “explanatory system” [*grel lugs*] of scriptural exegesis based in the *Hevajra Tantra* and the “oral instructions system” [*man ngag lugs*] whereby the practices themselves are explained, both are regarded as valid.<sup>482</sup> However, Cabezón has observed that Mkhas grub expresses a characteristic skepticism on the part of the Gelupkas toward the oral instructions. According to this view, “the way to a true understanding of Buddhism is not through mystical oral tradition, passed down in secret from master to disciple, but through long and arduous study and analysis of scriptures...”<sup>483</sup> In synthesizing these two forms of knowledge, Ngor chen demonstrates his prowess as a tantric commentator and an iconophile, creatively linking different classes of representation in his exegetical process.

Ngor chen proceeds with a description of the mandala of the support [551.3-552.1] extracted from Jetari’s *Sādhana of the Four Seals* [*phyag rgya bzhi yi sgrub thabs*].<sup>484</sup> Each seal refers to one aspect of the mandala of the support, namely, of the

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<sup>481</sup> Davidson 2005.

<sup>482</sup> Davidson 1991, 12

<sup>483</sup> Cabezón 1992, p.418 fn53.

<sup>484</sup> Jetari (Slob dpon dgra las rnam rgyal). *Caturmudrā-sādhana. Phyag rgya bzhi yi sgrub thabs gser bris bstan 'gyur* 2695 Vol 75 pp.387-393; *snar thang bstan 'gyur* vol.76, ff.142v-144v (pp284-288); Otani Beijing edition: 4690.

generation of the body as the protective circle, as the cremation grounds, as the cosmic elements and as the celestial palace. Ngor chen uses this quote to make his concluding point on the mandala of the support and to issue his defense of the Sakyapa interpretation of the practice. Ngor chen claims that Bu ston wasn't denying the validity of the Sakayapa method of generating the body as the mandala of the support in Hevajra *sādhana* practice. First of all, Bu ston didn't actually deny the generation of the mandala of the support in the context of Cakrasaṃvara (though he may indeed say that the quotation from Nag po pa's text is the only evidence for such a practice in the Indian sources). Moreover, since the Sakyapa masters only accept the form of body mandala cited and critiqued by Mkhas grub for Hevajra practice and not for Cakrasaṃvara practice, the oral instructions on Hevajra practice (of whose view Jetari's writings are representative) are not in error. By this point in Ngor chen's text, it is clear that, as the title of the work has indicated, his driving imperative is to defend the Sakyapa Hevajra practice despite the fact that Mkhas grub never named the Hevajra system explicitly. The centrality of the oral instructions to that system requires a display of legitimacy to support the method of filling in the blanks from sources that were not strictly textual. The quote from the Samputa helps Ngor chen to identify this practice of supplementing as a legitimate means of attaining the implicit meaning of a tantric text.

#### **IV. Ngor chen's Reply Part Two: On the mandala of the supported**

The second portion of Ngor chen's argument [552.3-560.5] concerns issues of the relationship of external and internal mandalas raised by Mkhas grub as well as the distinction of body mandalas from practices such as *nyāsa* (the placement of seed syllables and/or deities on the body). The majority of the sources cited by Ngor chen here are clearly Cakrasaṃvara-related, including references to the *Samvarodaya* and *Abhidhānottara* 'explanatory tantras' as well as to *sādhana*s by Indian masters such as Darikapa and Tilopa. Ngor chen's basic strategy in the discussion of the relationship of inner and outer mandalas is to show how these various accepted authoritative texts contradict Mkhas grub's critiques regarding the disjunction of the number of deities of the outer mandala [*phyi dkyil*] and of body mandala and the lack of gods common to both. Once again, the explanatory tantras (and their commentaries) play a crucial role in Ngor chen's reformulation of the issues.

Buddhaguhya and Bu ston both classify the *Abhidhānottara* as an explanatory tantra exclusive to the Cakrasaṃvara cycle.<sup>485</sup> Tsuda 1994 problematized the unqualified

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I have located this quote in p388.4-389.2 of the *gser bris bstan 'gyur* 2695 Vol 75 pp.387-393. It also appears on p286.5-287.2 of the *snar thang bstan 'gyur* vol.76, ff.142v-144v (pp284-288), however the print is difficult to read; there is also an Otani Beijing edition: 4690.

<sup>485</sup> See English 2002, p.7 and Gray 2007, p.16 respectively. Gray cites both the *Abhidhānottara* and the *Yoginīsaṃcāra* (to which we referred above in our discussion of Bu ston) as sources providing the "correlations to body parts and constituents" not included in the Cakrasaṃvara tantra itself (Gray 2007, p.18 fn 60). Gray dates the *Abhidhānottara* together with the Cakrasaṃvara itself among the oldest strata of texts of this tantric cycle; he bases this claim upon references to these texts within other

application of the label “explanatory tantra,” adding depth to our understanding of different perspectives on the status of the various types of tantric literature of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle. On the vast amount of “internal evidence” still to be collected from these tantras, Tsuda remarks: “we must be content with the bare fact that some mutual relation exists between the *Laghusaṃvara*, the *Samvarodaya* and the *Abhidhānottara* which, apart from the *Yōginīsaṃcāra*, can also be taken as a mūla-tantra.”<sup>486</sup> Looking beyond the formally doxographical activities of scholars like Bu ston to tantric exegesis and polemics as exemplified by the body mandala debate will contribute to the understanding of how such classificatory schema are applied in new ways and, potentially, thereby transformed.

Typical representations of the Cakrasaṃvara “outer mandala” include the most basic, with five deities, the main father and mother deity in union surrounded by four dākinīs, or one with thirteen deities, adding the eight goddess guarding the gates and corners of the mandala. The body mandala typically enumerates sixty-two deities made up of the main father and mother, the four dākinīs and eight goddesses and adds twenty-four dākinīs with their hero consorts located at various bodily sites. These sites correspond to twenty-four sacred sites of the Indian landscape. The *Wish-Fulfilling Jewel Sādhana* [*sgrub thabs yid bzhin nor bu* is] is an example of a text cited by Ngor chen that provides a complementary description of the body mandala practice.<sup>487</sup> It first describes what we might call the “outer mandala,” though it is to be cultivated in the womb (of the consort presumably). This mandala is composed of five Heruka with consorts in the cardinal directions and center, with skullcups in the intermediary directions. Then the practitioner transitions to the body mandala of the main deity, described by Nāropā as follows: “When cultivating the body mandala in the body of that main deity, there are the stages of self-consecration [*rang byin brlabs pa'i rim* ] and the transformation [*gyur pa* ] of the superior body mandala.”<sup>488</sup> First, one imagines the main deity and consort at the

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explanatory tantras such as the Saṃvarodaya (while acknowledging that Tsuda has problematized the use of the term “explanatory tantra” to refer to the latter). (Gray 2007, p20) As with many of the tantras, the issues surrounding the dating of the texts of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle are highly complicated and remain unresolved. For a partial translation of the *Abhidhānottara*, see Kalff 1979. Gray is currently working on a new translation of the *Abhidhānottara*.

The *Abhidhānottara* is one of many Buddhist tantras within which Sanderson has located sections derived from Śaiva tantras. ( Sanderson 1995 as cited in English 2002 p7) English identifies chapters nine and fourteen in particular as sources for descriptions of the Cakrasaṃvara mandala. (English 2002, p.109)

<sup>486</sup> Tsuda 1994, 45. See Tsuda pp.40-45, in particular, for discussion of these issues in dialogue with the tantric classifications of both Bu ston and Tsong kha pa.

<sup>487</sup> This text is likely Nāropā’s *dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i sgrub thabs yid bzhin nor bu*, translated by Marpa chos kyi blo gros) in *mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud kyi yig rnying* pp. 299-320; Drapa Gyatso had also suggested that the text referred to here is by Nāropā.

<sup>488</sup> Ngor chen 556.4: *de'i gtso bo'i lus la lus dkyil bsgom pa na; rang byin brlabs pa'i rim pa ste; lus kyi dkyil 'khor mchog gyur pa*



center of the lotus at one's heart with the four dākinīs at the petals in the cardinal directions, with skull-cups of nectar on the intermediary petals. These deities are common to the descriptions of both inner and outer mandala. Ngor chen refers to elements of the twenty-four sites, of the twenty-four heroes (the male consorts of the yoginīs linked with those sites) as well as of the eight guardian goddesses that reside on the bodily gates or orifices in the inner mandala.<sup>489</sup>

The transition between 'outer mandala' to inner or body mandala, however, appears to vary from one *sādhana* to the next. The variety of descriptions even among the texts selected by Ngor chen texts suggests that the Indian *sādhana* literature (and perhaps even the explanatory tantras) varied widely in their descriptions of this ritual transition within Cakrasaṃvara body mandala.<sup>490</sup> The variety of practices was troubling enough to prompt Ngor chen to deal extensively with the relationships and transitions between inner and outer mandala in another body mandala text not engaged within this dissertation<sup>491</sup> In the quote above, from the *Wish-Fulfilling Jewel Sādhana*, the transition from external to internal mandala is effected through *rang byin brlabs pa* [*svādhiṣṭhāna*].<sup>492</sup> Determining the meaning of *rang byin brlabs pa* [*svādhiṣṭhāna*] in this particular context is important for understanding this form of the body mandala practice. *byin brlabs* itself has undeniable meaning as "blessings." These blessings infuse the body of the practitioner or even other objects like precious pills or blessing cords, momentos of ritual encounters with a sacred person or place. One possible translation of *rang byin brlabs pa* is therefore, "self-blessing." "Self-consecration" or "self-empowerment" are also possible translations. The Sanskrit term *adhiṣṭhana* denotes the act of installing a presence within an abode and is commonly used to describe the infusion of sacred presence into an image in image consecration rituals. *Abhiṣekha*, on the other hand, is consecration proper; the root *abhi-ṣic* conveys the act of anointing in a royal consecration and has been extended to the consecration of practitioners in tantric initiation rites. In Tibetan, the inconsistent use of *dbang* to refer to both Sanskrit terms has generated

<sup>489</sup> These citations are are elliptical, in that they use a limited number of members of a set to refer to the set as a whole. Both names and locations are provided for some of these members.

<sup>490</sup> Tsunehiko Sugiki's work illuminates this diversity brilliantly. See his "Five Types of Internal Mandala Described in the Cakrasaṃvara Buddhist Literature: Somatic Representations of One's Innate Sacredness." See also Sugiki 2009. "The Structure and Traditions of the Systems of Holy Sites in the Buddhist Saṃvara Cycle and its Related Scriptural Cycles in Early Medieval South Asia: The Geography of Esoteric Buddhism in the Eyes of the Compilers of the Scriptures," *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, edited by Shingo Einoo. Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, Institute of Oriental Culture Special Series, 23: 515-562.

<sup>491</sup> This is Ngor chen's *Explication of Difficult Points of the Ghantapa Cakrasaṃvara Body Mandala* [*dpal 'khor lo bde mchog lus kyil 'khor gyi sgrub pa'i thabs kyil dka' bas gnas kyil mtha' rnam par dpyad pa*].

<sup>492</sup> Another quote Ngor chen provides from Darikapa's *sgrub thabs de kho na nyid bsodus pa*, describes this transition after generating the 'outer circle' of thirteen deities, as proceeding from the cultivation of the *nirmāṇakāya* to that to the *sambhogakāya*.

confusion. Generally, my Tibetan mentors used the language of “transformation” vs. “blessing” for translating *rang byin brlabs pa* [*svādhiṣṭhāna*], emphasizing its role in transforming ordinary nature to Buddha nature. Drapa Gyatso explained how in body mandala practice, all ordinary forms must be transformed into the forms of the deity and celestial palace; dissolving one form into another is often a key moment in this process.<sup>493</sup>

The use of the term “transformation” of course has serious doctrinal implications, suggesting a change from one state to another.<sup>494</sup> Some of these implications were explored in Chapter Four in the context of Mkhas grub’s critique of interpretations of the quotation from Ghantapa’s “Condensed Activities of the Cakrasaṃvara initiation” [*dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i dbang gi bya ba mdor bsdus pa*]: “These sentient beings, are not separated from the naturally established mandala.”<sup>495</sup> Mkhas grub raised ontological tensions between the claim that the body is inherently pure and the view of ritual as a transformative and efficacious event:

“They speak of the body mandala as an unfabricated mandala [*ma bcos ba'i dkyil 'khor*], (and) they don’t understand in what way the bodies of sentient beings are primordially [

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<sup>493</sup> Personal communication, IBA, Spring 2012.

<sup>494</sup> See Sharf 2003 for a critique of the use of this term in the context of Japanese Shingon ritual.

Davidson 1992 describes the ritual phase of *svādhiṣṭhāna* in the Hevajra abhisamaya practice. He shows how the body mandala practice is initiated during the generation stage after the merging of the *jnānasattva* and *samayasattva*. Previous to this, the meditator has visualized the union of Hevajra and Nairatmya as the causal Vajradhara (Hetu-Vajradhara). According to Davidson, it is the “cause (*hetu*), in the sense of the ground of purification (*sbyong gzhi*), (and) operates as the fruit and to utilize the five types of gnosis of the Buddha as the path.” This causal Vajradhara is dissolved, and the fruitional Vajradhara (*Phalavajradhara*) produced. Once the body mandala is created, the meditator requests consecration from the deities, and the result is the “sealing” of “four internal centers.” All of this is performed regularly to maintain the “stream of consecration.” [See Davidson 117-119]. Davidson refers to Ngor chen’s *gNad kyi zla zer* 235.3.1-258.2.4 on *rjes chags* (the first part of the process described here) and 258.2.3-261.2.1 on *dbang*; the fact that a different term is used here, *dbang* vs. *rang byin brlabs pa* suggests further inquiry is required.

See also Tsong kha pa’s writings on the stage of *svādhiṣṭhāna* in the context of the ritual system of the Guhyasamāja [for example, see Kilty 2013]. See Wayman 1977 (2005 Reprint) pps. 170-173 on the place of *svādhiṣṭhāna* within Candrakīrti’s six-branched yoga and Nāgārjuna’s five stages.

<sup>495</sup> 234.1 *'gro ba 'di dag rang bzhin gyis; sgrub pa'i dkyil 'khor gnyis med pa'o*

*gdod ma nas* ] mandalas. Therefore, they say that what already existed [*sngar yod*] is cultivated through visualization [*gsal 'debs pa'i tshul gyis bsgom pa*].”<sup>496</sup>

Mkhas grub’s argument played upon the fundamental tension between subitism and gradualism in the Tibetan Buddhist philosophical approach together with doctrinal skepticism toward the mind’s tendency to impute false constructs upon reality. Building upon this foundation, he challenged his opponents’ views on the role of ritual and the status of the human body by juxtaposing the categories of fabricated and unfabricated and what naturally exists with what is perfected through practice in interpreting body mandala. The challenges posed for translating and interpreting the language of transformation in the body mandala debate texts invite us to engage body mandala in understanding Tibetan Buddhist ritual theory. How do tantric ritual exegetes like Ngor chen and Mkhas grub explain the function of rituals like body mandala? Do rituals actually change one’s unenlightened form into an enlightened one? Do they effect a change in perspective or a change in matter, and on what basis does this purported transformation occur?

### **Transforming the Basis**

The last page or so of this portion of Ngor chen’s text [559.3-560.5], distinguishes body mandala from *nyāsa*, referred to here as ‘placing deities on the body’ [*lus la lha dgod pa*], and presents us with some additional points to reflect upon. First, Ngor chen mentions all three tantric systems here by name: the Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra. In addition, the sources he cites are less predictable and may contain clues for better understanding how he envisions the relationship of body mandala practices between these systems.<sup>497</sup> Finally, these passages provide a glimpse of Ngor chen’s views on the body as the basis for or support of tantric practice and the role of body mandala practice in effecting embodied liberation. Likewise, they give us the opportunity to briefly revisit issues discussed in Chapter Four, issues of fabrication and imputation, the nature of the body as a basis for generating deities, and the role of imagination in realizing tantric ritual goals.

Earlier in the dissertation, we discussed how there are a variety of such techniques of imagining deities or seed syllables on the body such as *nyāsa* and *hasta-pūja-vidhi*. Mkhas grub directly challenged the confusion of such techniques with the actual transformation of the bodily basis effected through body mandala practice; he argued that rather than merely locating deities on the body in a superficial way, body mandala entails a more holistic transformation of this basis into enlightened form:

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<sup>496</sup> *lus kyi dkyil 'khor ni ma bcos ba'i dkyil 'khor du gsungs pas; [234.2] 'gro ba thams cad kyi lus gdod ma nas dkyil 'khor du yod pa la yod par ngo ma shes pa shes par bya ba'i phyir du sngar yod gsal 'debs pa'i tshul gyis bsgom pa yin no zhes zer ro*

<sup>497</sup> Specifically, Ngor chen refers to the “Tantra of Six faces,” which appears to be a reference to the Kṛṣṇayamāri tantra, as well as to Ghantapa, Ācārya Prajñārakṣita. The latter two references are Cakrasaṃvara-related. However, ngor chen refers to the school of a slob dpon sgron ma can in the case of Hevajra as well.

The point of what's called cultivating the body mandala doesn't mean only merely cultivating a deity on each place on the body. Rather, one establishes such and such a part of the body as the foundation [*bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas*] for such and such a deity [250.6] and thus cultivates the deity.<sup>498</sup>

Likewise, Mkhas grub states:

(In piercing to the pith through body mandala practice) moreover, having taken that particular portion of the aggregates, skandhas, elements and sense spheres and so forth as the foundation for establishing the deity [*lha bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas*], they are completely transformed [*yongs su gyur pa*] and must be generated as that particular deity.<sup>499</sup>

In Chapter Four, we discussed how rendering the body as the proper basis for practice [*bsgrub pa'i gzhi*] was a defining aspect of body mandala for Mkhas grub, one that at least partially reveals his understanding of the role of the body and imagination in tantric practice. Moreover, Mkhas grub distinguished body mandala from “outer mandala” by its unfabricated basis and its unique capacity of “piercing to the pith” of the body [*lus la gnad du bsnun*]. The latter refers to a process of making the elements of the subtle body malleable [*las rung du gyur*]. In this section, we will see how Ngor chen regards the body as the basis for generating deities [*bskyed gzhi*] and how he understands the nature of this basis to also be inextricably tied to the psycho-physical constituents of the subtle body.

Ngor chen begins by describing the purification of the sense spheres, a preparatory practice resembling body mandala in some ways. In terms of the ritual context, he appears to refer to the stage of generating emptiness, in which the practitioner visualizes deities on the sense spheres as a means for merging with the body, speech and mind of the *jñānasattvas*.<sup>500</sup> Ngor chen provides a quotation from the “Tantra of Six Faces,” [*gdong drug gi rgyud*] that describes applying deities such as Moha-vajra to the sense spheres to empty the sense orifices; then, one uses the the seed syllable or name letter to generate the form (of the deities presumably) together with the attribute of their respective buddha family. [559.5] Ngor chen articulates the distinction of such preparatory practices from the body mandala proper by showing how: “any part of the body, in particular the three (main subtle body constituents) of channels, winds, and drops, etc... must be the cause [*rgyur byas pa*] of the body mandala.”<sup>501</sup> So what is the relationship between Mkhas grub's notion of turning the body into a basis for generating

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<sup>498</sup> *lus dkyil bsgom pa zhes bya ba'i don ni lus kyi gnas so sor lha bsgom pa tsam mi zer gyi ; lus kyi cha de dang de lha de dang de [250.6] bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas lha bsgom pa la zer ba yin te*

<sup>499</sup> *'dir yang phung khams sky mched sogs kyi cha de dang de lha bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas [252.6]; de dag yongs su gyur pa las lha de dang der skyed dgos so*

<sup>500</sup> Drapa Gyatso, Personal communication, Spring 2012.

<sup>501</sup> *lus [559.6] dkyil ni; rnal 'byor pa rang gi lus la gnas pa'i rtsa thig rlung gsum sogs lus kyi cha shas gang yang rung pa cig rgyur byas pa dgos te*

divine forms as indicated by *bsgrub pa'i gzhir byas nas* in order to “pierce to the pith of the body” [*lus la gnad du bsnun*] and Ngor chen’s focus upon subtle bodily constituents as the “cause” of body mandala? In order to apprehend the impact of Ngor chen’s understanding of the body as a cause, we must first consider some fundamentals of the Sakyapa perspective on tantric practice.

The standard Sakyapa view distinguishes reality in terms of three continua [*rgyud gsum*], the cause, the path, and the result, corresponding to the “universal ground,” the body and the *mahāmudrā* respectively. However, the distinction of the three continua is complex, as attested by the description of tantric practice by the Sakyapa patriarch Grags pa rgyal mtshan as “taking the result as the path” [*bras bu lam du byad pa*].<sup>502</sup> Stearns 2006 provides an insightful synopsis of this view:

“The result—the essence or innate true nature of a living being—is actually present at all times. Were this otherwise, the practices of the spiritual path would be futile. This essence is not transformed by the practices of the path because it is beyond conceptual elaboration. The qualities of a Buddha, or enlightened being, are obtained instead through removing obscurations and transforming one’s body, speech and mind. This process involves concentrated focusing on the essence itself. The result that is already present at the beginning is thereby taken as, or made into, the spiritual path by means of tantric techniques.”<sup>503</sup>

The archetypical clash of sudden vs. gradual approaches embodied in the figures of Kamalaśīla and Mohoyen structures the very narrative foundation of Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, it is not difficult to anticipate that this perspective of “taking the result as the path” would trouble some Tibetan thinkers. In Chapter Four, we explored tensions between theories of primordial enlightenment and graded spiritual practice in Mkhas grub’s writings. We contextualized these tensions as attempts to resolve the methods and aims of *Mantranaya* practice with those of the *Pāramitānaya*. In the case of Mkhas grub’s text we saw how the role of the body in tantric practice often produced anxiety about category confusions of the worst kind, between saṃsāric and enlightened bodies. These anxieties often prompted detailed explorations of the chain of causality linking these two types of bodies; one example of such an explanation was Tsong kha pa’s description of the “similar type cause.” Employing the rhetoric garnered from charged issues of the era such as the Buddha nature debates, Mkhas grub exploited the full scope of the tensions between sudden and gradual practice and enlightened and saṃsāric bodies. Perhaps the most radical aspect of Mkhas grub’s text is the manner in which he brings all of these tensions to bear on his analysis of a fundamental aspect of tantric practice: imagining oneself as a buddha.

Mkhas grub challenged the very act of imagination itself, using *pramāṇa* theory to show how reliance on false imputations resulted in a mistaken consciousness [*log shes*]. According to Mkhas grub, such a consciousness could never serve as the cause for

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<sup>502</sup> Stearns 2006 fn1 traces this reference to Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s commentary on Sa chen’s *Explication of the Treatise for Nyak* (11b) translated by Stearns in this same volume.

<sup>503</sup> Stearns 2007, p1.

enlightenment. [236.3-.4] We also touched upon connections between the “moderate realism” of the Gelukpa philosophical tradition and their approach to tantra. In doing so, we considered some basic philosophical differences from the Sakyapas. In introducing the Sakyapa tantric perspective and how it structures the terms of the body mandala debate, it will be useful to keep these basic philosophical concepts and related tensions with the Gelukpa in mind. Therefore, we will briefly revisit Dreyfus’s distinction of Mkhas grub’s (and rGyal tshab’s) view on *pramāṇa* from that of the Sakya patriarch Sa skya pan di ta:

“the explanation of valid cognition as the elimination of a superimposition is an obvious truth. This has important consequences for their understanding of perception...For Sapan, perception does not eliminate superimposition, for its function is strictly limited to the passive appearance of things.”<sup>504</sup>

The Gelukpas envision the goal of philosophical practice as the removal of ‘superimpositions’ or ‘imputations’ in order to actualize a form of “direct perception” [*mngon sum* Skt. *pratyākṣa*] of the nature of reality. The Sakyapas, on the other hand, see the mind itself to be bound by dualistic perceptions; for them, such direct or unmediated perception is impossible. For the Sakyapa, all phenomena are just the appearance of the mind. The manner in which this particular conviction translated into their tantric perspective may have inspired accusations that they embraced a Cittamātrin view, fueling a clash with the Prasangika Madhyamaka view embraced by the Gelukpa. One of Ngor chen’s most respected polemical texts, the *Overcoming Objections to the Three Tantras* [*Rgyud gsum ngan ‘joms*], is a defense against such accusations (and the particular accusation that Virūpa himself was a Cittamātrin.). Now that we have outlined the basic parameters of these philosophical tensions and planted the seeds for interpreting their relevance to the tantric perspectives of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen respectively, we will consider the Sakyapa view of tantric practice and the role of the body as a means of liberation in more depth.

For Ngor chen, the psycho-physical constituents of the subtle body, the channels, winds and drops are the cause of the body mandala. By properly ‘aligning’ those constituents through imaginative activity in body mandala practice, the mind can attain realization. This kind of imaginative activity focused on the body’s vital points and energies is not a mental imputation [*blos brtag pa*] because those points and energies are “naturally established.” Thus Ngor chen states:

The five channel cakras are naturally established [*rang grub du yod pa*] in the vajra body. Having generated the goddesses and the drops in the center of the five cakras together with outer husk channels as the five *yab-yum* deities, one visualizes them within individual sites within the body. Therefore, this is not a mental imputation [*blos brtag pa*].

As for the twelve deities of sense objects and faculties and the ten wrathfuls, both the explanation in the context of the body mandala of the Ārya cycle of the Guhyasamāja and the explanation here in the oral instructions are undifferentiated in

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<sup>504</sup> Dreyfus 1997, 376-77

terms of the arrangement and basis of generation [*bskyed gzhi*]. So these lack any error as far as not becoming the body mandala.<sup>505</sup>

Here Ngor chen establishes the common ground of the Hevajra and Guhyasmāja systems: the ground or basis of generation [*bskyed gzhi*]. He also describes a particular kind of body, the vajra body [*rdo rje'i lus*], the body of the tantric practitioner. In this passage, Ngor chen describes the cakras as “naturally established” [*rang grub du yod pa*].<sup>506</sup> This term is quite similar to *rang chas su yod pa*, the very term Mkhas grub used to emphasize the superiority of the body mandala as an “unfabricated” mandala. Likewise, the term *blos brtag pa* or “mental imputation” is also familiar from Mkhas grub’s writings and from our extensive discussions in Chapter Four. There we observed a parallel between his use of the categories mental fabrication [*blos bcos pa*] and mental imputation [*blos btags pa*].<sup>507</sup> While Ngor chen does not elaborate upon the problem of “fabrication” [*bcos ma*] in the manner that Mkhas grub does, the authors express a common concern with navigating the delicate balance between the naturalness and artifice in interpreting body mandala. This concern is not particular to body mandala alone but rather underlies all tantric ritual acts of imagination, in particular, acts of identifying oneself as a buddha in deity yoga.

An account of the implications of imagining oneself as Hevajra by Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk (1524-68) serves as a counterpoint to Mkhas grub’s diatribe on the problems of generating oneself as a Buddha discussed above:

“Briefly, this ordinary body arises as just a confusing appearance, in which the very essence of the united lucidity and emptiness of the mind is not recognized. No body of *samsāra* exists as the ground of purification established outside this ordinary mind. When precisely this momentary pure awareness arises in the form of the Hevajra of the time of the path, those grounds of purification transform into the essence of the purifying path.

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<sup>505</sup> *rtsa 'khor lo* [560.4] *Inga rdo rje'i lus la rang grub du yod pa de; lha mo rnam dang 'khor lo Inga'i dbus kyi thig le phyi shun gyi rtsa dang bcas pa gtso bo yab yum Ingar bskyed nas; lus kyi nang so so'i gnas su bsgom pas blos brtag pa ma yin no; yul yul can gyi lha bcu* [560.5] *gnyis dang khro bo bcu ni; dpal gsang ba 'dus pa 'phags skor gyi lus dkyil gyi skabs su bshad pa dang man ngag 'dir bshad pa gnyis; dgod pa dang bskyed gzhi spyi tsam*<sup>505</sup> *la khyad par med pas; 'di dag lus dkyil du ma song* [560.6] *ba'i skyon med do*<sup>505</sup>

I am grateful to Lama Kunga Thartse Rinpoche for directing my attention to the fact that the Hevajra system is indeed at issue here. Personal communication, Fall 2010.

<sup>506</sup> This term is discussed in depth by Willa Blythe Miller in her 2013 dissertation on Yang dgon pa’s thirteenth-century text, *Secrets of the Vajra Body*. Miller investigates the author’s use of the term *dnagos po'i gnas lugs* translated as “the nature of things” or “the nature of material substance” to describe ordinary vs. enlightened embodiment. Davidson 1992 fn 47 provides a helpful reference to Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s *rgyud kyi mngon rtogs rin po che'i ljon shing* [Complete works Vol. 3, pp.29.1.3ff] for a detailed account of the Sakyapa view of the “vajra body.” On the wider use of the term in early Buddhist literature, see Radich 2007 p1485.

<sup>507</sup> See especially *Ocean of Attainment*, 251.4.

Because the result of purification, or what is to be obtained, is also not established outside one's mind, precisely this is Hevajra residing in the thirteenth spiritual level of a vajra holder. Thinking that, apply the pure appearance and take it as the path. At that point, the ground, path, and result have become indivisible in the perception of the yogin. Precisely that is the indivisibility of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.<sup>508</sup>

As we have mentioned, the Sakyapa philosophical view of perception defines all thoughts and forms as “appearances” or representations in the mind. As “perspectivalists,” they define enlightenment as a radical shift in perspective, a re-ordering of the boundaries that produce the illusion of an apparent separation between ordinary and enlightened being.<sup>509</sup> Tantric ritual provides many opportunities to enact this breaking down of boundaries, through acts of dissolution that blur the distinction between one variety of form and the other. In the Sakya tantric context, the ordinary body is just another representation appearing to the mind; the goal of tantric practice, embodied in the form of the deity, also exists only in the mind, but, as a form of awareness itself, it may be used to structure one's practice. The Sakyas identify the body with the path or method of practice, and thus it is not a cause *per se*, but rather a kind of means to an end. However, as shown in this quotation, there is often an intentional blurring of the three categories of cause, path and result in describing the process of overcoming the ultimate duality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk used the term “ground of purification” [*sbyang gzhi*] to discuss the illusionistic quality of the ordinary saṃsāric body; by generating the divine form in the mind, the ground of purification becomes the path. The term the *sbyang gzhi* is familiar from our discussion of Mkhas grub's writings in Chapter Four and his concerns with the aspects of deity yoga construed as acts of mental fabrication [*bcos ma*] and imputation [*blos rtag pa*]; one example of Mkhas grub's use of the term occurred in addressing the question of whether one generates deities on all the hands of the main deity or just on the two principal hands. He concluded that it is only necessary for the practitioner to generate deities on the two main hands of the body (as the other imagined hands are a fabricated basis for practice). There, Mkhas grub referred to the two main hands as the “ground of purification or the ground of generating deities” [*sbyang gzhi'am lha'i bsgrub gzhi*]. [261.1] As mentioned above, Bentor 2006 suggests that Geluk and non-Geluk perspectives on the *sbyang gzhi* diverge, with several non-Gelukpa schools of thought splitting the category of *sbyang gzhi* into the pure basis and the *sbyang bya*, what is to be purified (i.e. the defilements).<sup>510</sup> In this regard, Bentor states, “While in the Dge lugs pa tradition it refers to the ordinary saṃsāric state, according to others it is the true nature of things.”<sup>511</sup>

The category of the ground or basis provided a way for thinkers to deal with the ambiguous role of the body in tantric practice. In other words, referring to the body as a

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<sup>508</sup> Stearns 2006, 484. Translation of *Summarizing Notes in the Outer Creation Stage* by Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk (1524-68).

<sup>509</sup> I am grateful to John Dunne for his comments on the realist vs. perspectivalist distinction. Personal communication, Fall 2011.

<sup>510</sup> Bentor 2006, pp.196-7

<sup>511</sup> Bentor 2006, p.197.



ground or basis allowed thinkers to account for the causal dimension of the body's instrumental role in achieving liberation without blatantly designating it as a cause.<sup>512</sup> As expressed in the renowned quote from the *Hevajra Tantra*: “Great bliss resides in the body. Casting off all conceptualizations (and) pervading all entities, what resides in the body is not produced by the body.”<sup>513</sup> In identifying the body as the cause of body mandala practice, Ngor chen plays with the ambiguity in the frameworks of cause, path and result and ground of purification, purifier and purified. While he carefully resists explicitly defining the body as a cause of enlightenment, he maintains its centrality as the ground for ritual action.

## **VI. Explanatory Continuum/ Explanatory Tantra [*bshad rgyud*]: Corporeality and Textuality in the Body Mandala Debate**

In commenting upon a verse from Virūpa's *Vajra Lines*, “For the method continuum of the body and so forth, there is the causal initiation with four triads, the seats and so forth,” the Sakyapa patriarch Sa chen remarks:

First, this is called the “method continuum of the body” because the alignment of the dependently arisen connections in the body is the method that brings about the realization of the mind, the universal ground, which exists in the manner of a seed or cause. The “and so forth” includes the meaning “the body is the explanatory continuum” because that mind that is the root of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* can be realized by means of aligning the dependently arisen connections in the body.<sup>514</sup>

This well-elaborated framework explains the relation of body and mind in tantric practice and their respective roles in the liberation process. Sa chen identifies the role of the body, commonly referred to as the “method continuum” [*thabs rgyud*], here as the “explanatory continuum” [*bshad rgyud*], the very same term used for “explanatory tantra.” The body provides the necessary context for realizing the mind. The final section of this chapter will consider the relation of body and mind from the Sakyapa tantric perspective in conversation with the metaphor of explanatory and root tantras. Building upon our discussion of the nature and function of the body as the basis for tantric practice, we will begin by thinking more deeply about what it means to “align the dependently arisen connections in the body.”

<sup>512</sup> A similar dynamic may be at play in the use of the term “support” to designate the body or even an image. We will pursue this possibility in the conclusion of the dissertation.

<sup>513</sup> *Hevajra Tantra*, Snellgrove 1.12. *lus la ye shes chen po gnas; rtog pa thams cad yang dag spangs; dngos po kun la khyab pa po*; [2b.1] *lus gnas lus la ma skyes pa'o* [see sde dge 2a.6-2b.1]

<sup>514</sup> Stearns 2006, p28. Translation of Sa chen kun dga' snying po's *Explication of the Treatise for Nyak*. In this text, Sa chen further identifies the body mandala as the inner dependently arisen connection necessary for enlightenment, while the outer connections are receiving the initiations from a *nirmāṇakāya* emanation. See Stearns 2006, p.96. Davidson 2005 translates *bshad brgyud* as “articulate continuity.” See his reference to variations among the commentaries on this point. (Davidson 2005, Appendix 2 Fn3)

I had the privilege of an audience with His Holiness Sakya Trizin in which I introduced my research on the body mandala debate. When I asked His Holiness about the role of the body in tantric practice, he remarked that it is difficult to purify the mind while focusing on the mind itself. In other words, by focusing on the body, one can more effectively purify the mind.<sup>515</sup> In clarifying this perspective, His Holiness cited a metaphor of the mind as the scent inhering in the flower of the body. This metaphor is introduced in the *Hevajra Tantra* [II.2.36] in reply to Vajragarbha's inquiry as to the necessity of generation if the completion process [*utpanna-krama*] is so blissful: "Just as the perfume of a flower depends upon the flower, and without the flower becomes impossible, likewise without form and so on, bliss would not be perceived."<sup>516</sup> This metaphor is discussed in the *Sras don ma*, yet another commentary by Sa chen on Virūpa's *Vajra Lines*.<sup>517</sup> It also shares a context with the quote from Sa chen's *Explication of the Treatise for Nyak* discussed above. That context is the elaboration of the three continua: the causal continua of the foundation [*kun bzhi*], the method continua of the body [*lus*] and resultant continua, the *mahāmudrā*: "The two, support [*rten*] and supported [*brten pa*], are undifferentiated like a mixture of water and milk or the mixture of earth and water called mud. What is separate becomes uniform. The container is like a flower, and the contained is like a scent. Likewise, the scent residing in the flower would be imperceptible without the flower..."<sup>518</sup>

Further along in the same section, Sa chen revisits the metaphor: "Residing in the cause' (means) the coarse and subtle wheels of the channel body. The emanation body is said to spontaneously manifest in that; it is like a flower. The supported [*rten pa*], the mind, the foundation [*kun bzhi* Skt. *ālaya*], is like the flower's scent, and the seed is flawless."<sup>519</sup>

<sup>515</sup> Personal Communication, Lumbini, November 2011

<sup>516</sup> *ji ltar me tog la gnas dri; me tog dngos med shes mi 'gyur; de bzhin gzugs sogs dngos med pas; bde ba nyid kyang ngos med 'gyur//*

Translation by Snellgrove, p 92. I am grateful to Kurt Keutzer for identifying the source of this passage.

<sup>517</sup> Sa chen kun dga' snying po. *Sras don ma*. Lam 'bras literature Series 12, folios 1r-222v (pp.1-446); NGMPP L 170/4, *Lam 'bras gzhung sras don ma* (xylograph from Tyangpoche), 22 fols. [As cited in Sobisch 2008, Title list # 283.] (See also contemporary two volume series)

<sup>518</sup> *rten dang brten pa gnyis chu dang 'o ma 'dres pa'am; sa dang chi 'dres pa la 'jim pa zer ba bzhin tha mi dad par gnas; grub sde gcig par gnas te; rten ni me tog lta bu la; brten pa ni dri lta bu ste; ji ltar me tog la gnas dri; me tog dngos med shes mi 'gyur*  
Sa chen kun dga' snying po. *Sras don ma* (Contemporary series, *Lam 'bras stod cha*) p.33.

<sup>519</sup> *rgyus la gnas pa rtsa lus kyi 'khor lo rags pa dang phra ba; de la sprul sku rang bzhin gyia lhun grub ces bya ste me tog dang 'dra la; rten pa sems kun gzhi me tog gi dri dang 'dra ste sa bon gas chag med lta bu'o* Sa chen kun dga' snying po, *Sras don ma* (*Lam 'bras stod cha*) p.46.

In these excerpts, Sa chen presents the mind as subtle and elusive, an aroma perfuming the body. Through the method or explanatory continuum of the body, the practitioner realizes the mind:

“[The method continuum] is also called the ‘explanatory continuum’ because the root to be realized, which is the mind, is realized and mastered through the alignment of the dependently arisen connections in the body, which is the agent of realization, and thus the explanatory continuum.”<sup>520</sup>

Thus the body is not merely the ground for ritual action, but also the “agent of realization.”

Ritual and exegetical action, body and text are poetically intermingled in these statements. Just as the explanatory tantras provide access to the elusive meaning of the ‘root’ tantra, so the body provides access to the true nature of the mind. Stearns points to the double entendre of the root and explanatory continuums [*rtsa rgyud* and *bshad brgyud*] as root and explanatory tantras; he suggests that some Tibetan commentaries deliberately exploited the semantic overlap of these terms.<sup>521</sup> In light of the important role of explanatory tantras in the arguments that make up the body mandala debate, this double meaning might add depth to our understanding of the relation of root and explanatory tantras and of mind and body.

In approaching the final chapter of the dissertation, we transition from exploring the mechanics of ritual practice, their ontological implications for the status of the human body, and the soteriological efficacy of tantric acts of imagination. However, we should maintain this framework of interplay of body and text in progressing to investigate the centrality of Ngor chen’s commentarial prowess to his polemical strategy. In the process, we will observe how issues of textual authority are mapped onto the body, making it what Foucault would call a “cultural text”<sup>522</sup> or Sa chen would call an “explanatory continuum,” or even an “explanatory tantra.”<sup>523</sup>

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The description appears in the context of discussing the vase consecration within a larger section on the three continua.

<sup>520</sup> Stearns 2006, p46. Translation of Sa chen kun dga’ snying po’s *Explication of the Treatise for Nyak*.

<sup>521</sup> Stearns 2006, fn19.

<sup>522</sup> See Susan Hekman, “Material Bodies,” in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Donn Welton (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1998).

<sup>523</sup> For one approach to body as text in the Kālacakra Tantra, see Wallace 2009.

## Chapter Six: In Defense of the Hevajra Body Mandala

### I. Ngor chen's reply Part Three: Textual Authority

Ngor chen devotes over half of his text to responding to Mkhas grub's claim that the body mandala as rendered by "some Tibetans" is absent from the tantras or Indian sources. [560.6- 580.6] We have already established the association of this version of body mandala with the Hevajra practice despite Mkhas grub's choice not to identify it as such. However, we have also observed how Ngor chen's sources for the first half of his text are predominantly connected with the Cakrasaṃvara cycle. The role of the *Samputa Tantra* as an explanatory tantra common to both Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra systems proved to be of particular interest. In this second half of his text, Ngor chen shifts to focus predominantly on the Hevajra system. It is here that we begin to see how Ngor chen has built his momentum in the first part of the text, in which he directly responded to the form and content of Mkhas grub's argument. In doing so, he has lead us to a space in which he will reformulate the debate on his own terms. In this space, the text transforms and Ngor chen actualizes the intent suggested by his title. Through a series of maneuvers, Ngor chen asserts his defense of the Hevajra body mandala.

Ngor chen's defense is divided into two parts. The first is based in the Hevajra commentarial tradition, as made up of tantras, commentaries, and oral instructions. Ngor chen includes the three tantras of Hevajra [*rgyud gsum*]: the *Hevajra Root Tantra*; the *Samputa Tantra*, the common explanatory tantra; and the *Vajrapañjara*, the uncommon explanatory tantra. For Ngor chen, the oral instructions as well as the commentaries of other mahāsiddhas (namely Jetari, Darikapa, Indrabhūti and Vajragarbha) are also essential components of the tradition. The second part of his argument is based in "other tantric commentaries," but, in actuality, it refers exclusively to the *Vajramālā*, the explanatory tantra attributed to the Ārya tradition of the Guhysamāja.

Ngor chen introduces his defense with a critique of the paucity of the opponent's (whom he addresses directly here as "you" [*khyed*]) scriptural knowledge. He offers a citation that appears to be from Sakya Pandita to enhance to potency of his critique: "Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there."<sup>524</sup> [561.1] In our discussion of some of the basic differences between the Sakya and Geluk philosophical perspectives, we encountered the problem of direct perception [*mngon sum*]. While the Gelukpa accept the possibility of such unmediated contact with things as they really are, the Sakyapa insist that all perception is mediated. For the Sakyapa, empirical observation cannot account for all phenomena, and therefore "direct perception" is not an accepted means of valid cognition [*tshad ma* Skt. *pramāṇa*]. In citing Sa pan, Ngor chen seems to be playing upon this philosophical tension and responding in his own way to Mkhas grub's use of *pramāṇa* in his tantric polemics. This move is part of Ngor chen's style; while his own argument adheres far more closely to the standards of tantric exegesis than of philosophical debate, he peppers his text with choice comments that engage with his opponent's approach. The tone of these comments varies from playful and ironic to more impassioned. For example, in refuting Mkhas grub's interpretation of Bu ston's

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<sup>524</sup> *ma mtong phyir na med pa min*

statement on the body mandala of the support, Ngor chen remarks: “...what’s the point of responding to this lie about direct perception [*mngon sum*]?”<sup>525</sup> Also, in the conclusion of his text, Ngor chen refers to direct perception once again to critique Mkhas grub even more explicitly: “Therefore, the proponent who denies the existence of the explicit explanation from the tantra(s) and the authentic Indian system (does so) in sheer disavowal of direct perception.”<sup>526</sup> While Ngor chen himself does not rely upon *pramāṇa* discourse in formulating the core of his defense, these comments not only play upon a difference in philosophical perspectives, but also suggest a critique of Mkhas grub as the master of *pramāṇa* who can’t see what’s sitting right in front of him.

We will now turn to closely examine how Ngor chen navigates the complexities of tantric literature to reveal what is not immediately apparent about his sources and how they support the validity of Hevajra body mandala practice. In the final portion of this chapter, we will compare the two ‘versions’ of Ngor chen’s text. In focusing upon a few key distinctions, we will enrich our portrait of Ngor chen to better understand the significance of the body mandala debate for informing the connection of exegesis and polemics in Tibetan scholasticism.

### IA. On the Hevajra Tantras and Oral Instructions

Ngor chen begins, appropriately, at the root, with a quote from the *Hevajra Tantra* that correlates the four goddesses, Locanā...with the seed syllables E VAM MA YA.<sup>527</sup> [561.3] In Chapter Three, we explored the role of these goddesses in the evolution of the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice. Ngor chen’s goal here is to show how what is not readily apparent in the text of the *Hevajra Root Tantra* can be accessed, a process he refers to as “attaining the meaning” [*don thob*]. Much of his supporting evidence is derived from the *Samputa Explanatory Tantra*. First, he quotes the description of the mandala of the support of cosmic elements discussed in detail above and insists that this prototype is shared by both the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara systems.<sup>528</sup> Ngor chen therefore provides an example for understanding the scope of exegesis of the *Samputa* as an explanatory tantra common to both systems; we have already suggested the possibility that this scope invited innovative acts of parsing and exegesis reinvented through polemical and hermeneutic contexts like the body mandala debate. Then, Ngor chen proceeds to the mandala of the supported with a few verses correlating each of the four goddesses with a seed syllable (E WAM MA YA), a *mudrā*, a buddha family, qualities identified with the perfections and immeasurables, and a cosmic element (earth, water, fire, *rlung*).<sup>529</sup> [562.2-.6] The verses also locate each of the goddesses in a cakra

<sup>525</sup> [N1 549.4] *mngon sum la rdzun du smra bas dgos pa ci zhig bsgrub*

<sup>526</sup> *des na rgyud dang tshad ldan gyi rgya gzhung rnams las dngos su bshad cing don thob la yod bzhin du de las* [588.1] *bzlog ste smra ba ni; mngon sum la bsnyon pa kho nar zad la*

<sup>527</sup> See the *Hevajra Tantra*, sde dge 2b.7.

<sup>528</sup> *Samputa Tantra*, sde dge 113b.5 &.5-.6.

<sup>529</sup> *Samputa Tantra*, sde dge 81a.5-81b.1.

(*nirmāṇa*, *dharma*, *sambhoga*, *mahāsukha*) at a specific bodily site (navel, heart, throat, lotus).<sup>530</sup>

Ngor chen further expands upon the correlation of the goddesses with “cakras and so forth” by referring to the fourth “cluster” [*snye ma*]. [562.6- 563.2] This is one of several references, in fact, to the *snye ma*, a somewhat elusive term referring to a commentary on the *Samputa Tantra*, Abhayākāragupta’s *Sam pu ta ’i ’grel pa man ngag gi snye ma* [Skt. *Āmnāyamañjarī*].<sup>531</sup> Sobisch 2008, in reviewing the Hevajra literature outlined by A mes zhabs (1597-1659), discusses the ambiguous status of Abhayākāragupta for the Sakyapa commentators, an ambiguity observed by A mes zhabs himself.<sup>532</sup> The problematic aspect of the Indian commentator’s approach is traced to a critique by Sa pan of his inclusion of the four initiations in the lower tantras and both generation and completion stages in the Amoghapāśa practice.<sup>533</sup> Most importantly, Sobisch points out that the earliest Sakyapa patriarchs, Sa chen, Sonam Tsemo and ‘Grags pa rgyal mtshan disregarded Abhayākāragupta’s perspective in their interpretation of the *Lam ’bras* teachings. However, apparently Bla ma dam pa, upon whom Ngor chen is regarded to have relied heavily for his writings on the *Lam ’bras*, referred to Abhayākāragupta often, and Bu ston took different positions with regard to the author on different issues. Therefore, these citations in Ngor chen’s texts may also provide clues to the evolving attitudes of Sakyapa authors toward Abhayā’s texts in the particular case of Hevajra-affiliated teachings. We have seen Ngor chen refer to Abhayākāragupta by

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<sup>530</sup> This passage from the *Samputa* was discussed in Chapter Three of the dissertation in the context of Mkhas grub’s argument surrounding the location of the goddesses in the Guhyasamāja body mandala practice. [KJ 248.2] Mkhas grub referred to the *Samputa*’s arrangement of the goddess Locanā in the navel, the abode of earth, and of the goddess Tārā in the crown, the abode of *rlung*, in the process of his attempt to establish the goddesses’ association with elemental *rlung* rather than merely with the elements.

<sup>531</sup> Abhayākāragupta. Dpal yang dag par sbor ba’i rgyud kyi rgyal po’i rgya cher ’grel pa man ngag gi snye ma. *Āmnāyamañjarī*. Toh 1198 cha 1v-316r. In bstan ’gyur (snar thang). TBRC W22704. 21: 5 - 708. [narthang]: [s.n.], [1800?].

The fourth *snye ma* appears to be roughly equivalent to the fourth chapter, 44b-59a of the sde dge edition; this citation is found at 56a. It seems that *rab byed* is the term used to demarcate a chapter within the *Samputa Tantra*; within the *Āmnāyamañjarī*, *snye ma* is the term used for the “cluster” of commentary upon the equivalent chapter [*rab byed*] in the tantra.

I am grateful to the ACIP and Kurt Keutzer for their efforts in making a digital version of this extensive text accessible. Without this resource, it would have been very difficult to definitively identify the *Āmnāyamañjarī* as the source. For another Indian commentary on the *Samputa*, See Sobisch 2008 Title list #18: the *Sam pu ta ’i ’grel pa chen po by Indrabodhi* [Toh 1197].

<sup>532</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.76. Sobisch interprets A mes zhabs’s remarks that contemporary scholars are more inclusive of Abhayākāragupta contributions to be ecumenical in nature.

<sup>533</sup> Sobisch has identified this critique within Go rams pa’s commentary on Sa pan’s text, the *sDom gsum rab dbye ’i rnam bshad* (94r). See Sobisch p.76 fn 217 and reference to Rhoton 2002: 105, 186n. 20

name in a more general context in his citation describing the protective circle discussed above [550.1-550.3].<sup>534</sup>

Szanto remarks on the *Āmnāyamañjarī*: “The influence of this text on Tibetan authors, most significantly Tsong kha pa, is a well-known fact to Tibetanists and should not be insisted on further.”<sup>535</sup> Support for such a claim can be found in the frequent citation of the *Āmnāyamañjarī* in texts like Tsong kha pa’s *Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages*, a Guhyasamāja based commentary.<sup>536</sup> Therefore, another line of inquiry might be to ask how the Sakyapas use Abhayā’s work differently than Tsong kha pa and his disciples do.

Here in Ngor chen’s text, the citation from the *Āmnāyamañjarī* reinforces the identification of the goddesses with the cakras and particular *mudrās*, *dhātus*, and so forth and describes their nature in terms of emptiness and compassion, method and wisdom. The quote also explains that while, on some occasions, the letters are the focus of the practice, on others, the *mudrās* may be the focus. [562.6-563.2] The commentary therefore allows for variety amongst *sādhana*s. Ngor chen then interjects an explanation to account for the enumeration of four cakras, motivated, we would assume by the fact that the *Lam ‘bras* system teaches five cakras or palaces. By his reckoning, the great bliss cakra refers to both the crown and secret place on account of the movement of bodhicitta between them; he suggests that the commentaries themselves have produced this explanation. In the final section of this chapter, we will see how Ngor chen’s other version of his text [N2] further elaborates on conflicts between different systems in enumerating the cakras. Such problems are similar in kind to those addressed early in the dissertation, both in our exploration of the proto-body mandala text from Dunhuang as well as in the case of Mkhas grub’s discussion of the goddesses and their larger place in the exegetical tradition of the Guhyasamāja system. Therefore, Ngor chen’s text manipulates systems of correlation and reconciles conflicting accounts in a manner typical of Indian and Tibetan mandala iconography and exegesis.

Next, Ngor chen refers back to the *Samputa Tantra* to describe the “generation of five Buddha families in the center of the cakras from a drop.” He quotes the tantra, naming the five wisdoms and five jinas and identifying the pure nature of the drop with the goddesses. He then supplements the description with yet another quote from the *snye ma*, naming the five consorts: Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini, Tārā, and *rdo rje snyems*

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<sup>534</sup> Recall also Ngor chen’s citation of Abhayākara Gupta on the Cakrasamvara mandala of the support above. (549.6-550.3) That citation directly preceded Ngor chen’s explicit introduction of the Hevajra body mandala context with a quote from the *Samputa* itself. Lee 2003 remarks upon the importance of the *Samputa Tantra* for gaining insight in Abhayā’s tantric writings, especially for the *Niṣpannayogāvalī* and *Vajrāvalī* mandala manuals. See Lee 2003, p.29.

<sup>535</sup> Szanto 2013, p6.

<sup>536</sup> See Kilty Translation, 2013 and Tsong kha pa & Thurman 2010. Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, Robert A. F. Thurman, and Thomas F. Yarnall. 2010. *Brilliant Illumination of the Lamp of the Five Stages (Rim Inga rab tu gsal ba’i sgron me)* : *Practical Instruction in the King of Tantras, The Glorious Esoteric Community*. New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies.

*ma* [564.1-.2]<sup>537</sup> Ngor chen identifies this last goddess with Vajradhātu-īśvarī, who we often find as the consort of Vajrasattva, and explains how all five families are sealed by Vajrasattva. This inclusion of Vajrasattva is a standard technique in mandala logic for elaborating a structure from four to five-fold. Therefore, cakras and mandalas are expanded, classified, and reformulated in similar ways.

Moving beyond the central deities of the mandala to the limb or ancillary deities [*yan lag gi lha*], Ngor chen includes another quote from the *Samputa*. [564.3-.4] This citation describes how beings of the three realms are generated from the bodhisattvas and krothas. These deities are included as part of the body mandala but do not seem to be counted in the enumeration of the one hundred and fifty-seven main deities of the Hevajra body mandala. The tantra specifically refers the reader to the guru's instructions for the details of the practice. This reference to the guru's instructions is an important part of Ngor chen's citations from the *Samputa Tantra*. Ngor chen uses this aspect of the tantra as an exegetical tool for linking the Hevajra tantras with the oral instructions.

Then, once again, Ngor chen directs us to the *Snye me* for more explicit detail. [564.4-.6]<sup>538</sup> The passage describes the pure nature of the inner and outer sense spheres in association with the bodhisattvas (ex. Kṣitigarbha), sense spheres (ex. Mohavajra), and sense objects (ex. Rūpavajrā) and the pure nature of the elements in association with the goddesses (ex. Locanā). There is also mention of the krothas.

Ngor chen then responds to an anticipated critique that the evidence he has provided only authenticates the practice of generating these ancillary deities, but not the deities of the body mandala proper. Ngor chen's response is a quote from "further along in the text" [*lung de'i rjes kho na la*] (meaning in the *snye ma*) : "The skandhas [*phung po*] of sentient beings are nothing more than the very nature of the causal continuum Vajradhāra."<sup>539</sup> As addressed above in our discussion of the Sakyapa tantric view, the causal continuum is based in the storehouse consciousness [*kun gzhi*] or what might be called the universal basis. It has the nature of mind and accords, in some ways, with Buddha nature.<sup>540</sup> Therefore, the quote, on the most basic level, communicates that all beings are Buddhas or possess Buddha-potential.<sup>541</sup>

<sup>537</sup> *Āmnāyamañjarī*, sde dge 227a. On his blog, Tibeto-logic [07/13/2011], Dan Martin speaks to the problem of determining the Sanskrit equivalent for Rdo rje snyems ma. Citing Vajrāvalī ch. 28 [ed. Mori 2009, vol. 2, pp. 428-429] and Abhayākara Gupta's Abhayapaddhati [Chog Dorje 2009, skt. p. 3, tib. p. 93], he suggests Vajragarvā.

<sup>538</sup> *Āmnāyamañjarī*, sde dge 52b.

<sup>539</sup> [N1 565.1] *sems can gyi phung po yang de bzhin kho nar rgyu'i rgyud gyi rdo rje 'dzin pa'i rang bzhin kho na'o*

<sup>540</sup> I am grateful to Drapa Gyatso for his patience in explaining the continua for me. Spring 2012.

<sup>541</sup> More specifically, in translating *phung po* as "skandhas" rather than merely as "masses," the quotation might be more precisely interpreted as a reference to the ritual correlation of the body's psycho-physical constituents with their inherent purity through envisioning them as deities. As discussed in previous chapters, this ritual correlation is a technology shared by body mandala and preliminary practices.

Davidson's account of the Hevajra abhisamaya helps to clarify the specific ritual context of the causal Vajradhara referred to here. The body mandala practice is initiated



Ngor chen then summarizes the import of these exegetical maneuvers through the root (Hevajra) tantra, *Samputa Explanatory Tantra*, and its commentary. He states that while only a little bit of the body mandala practice is described explicitly in the root tantra, the *Samputa* or “King of Explanatory Tantras” provides the implicit meaning. [565.2] Most importantly, he declares that the main point [*gnad gyi don*] to be derived from all of this is that the lama’s oral instructions are key to realizing the body mandala, a point the *Samputa* itself reinforces. His final citation for this portion of the argument is derived from the ‘uncommon’ explanatory tantra of the Hevajra cycle, the *Vajrapañjara*.<sup>542</sup> As a way of completing the extent of the body mandala practice within all three of the Hevajra tantras, he provides two brief references [*mdor bstan*] to the introduction [*gleng bzhi*] to Chapters Seven and Eight of that text. The quote for Chapter Seven is an abridged version of that chapter’s correlation of the constituents with the five Buddha families and of the elements with the goddesses.<sup>543</sup> Ngor chen describes the material from Chapter Eight as providing a bit of information on arranging deities on the sense organs as well as descriptions of the deities of the five families in the outer mandala. He suggests the latter are useful for envisioning the deities of the inner mandala.<sup>544</sup> [565.4-.5] Ngor chen therefore solidifies the basis of the practice in all three tantras of the Hevajra cycle, provides justification from within the tantras themselves for incorporating oral instructions, and forges connections between inner and outer mandala.

Ngor chen concludes this portion of the argument by foregrounding the consolidated explanation of body mandala from the teachings of Virūpa and from another text, the *Lam bsdus pa*. The latter likely refers to Sa chen’s *Lam bsdus pa’i bshad pa*,<sup>545</sup> a short exposition of Virūpa’s teachings included in the *Red Book* compilation of esoteric instructions.<sup>546</sup> The *Red Book* (*pod dmar/pusti dmar chung*) was compiled by Ngor chen

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during the generation stage during the “Passion” [*rjes chags* Skt. *anurāga*] after the merging of the *jnānasattva* and *samayasattva*. Previous to this, the meditator has visualized the union of Hevajra and Nairatmya as the causal Vajradhara (Hetuvajradhara). According to Davidson, it is the “cause (*hetu*), in the sense of the ground of purification (*sbyong gzhi*), (and) operates as the fruit and to utilize the five types of gnosis of the Buddha as the path.” This causal Vajradhara is dissolved, and the fruitional Vajradhara (*Phalavajradhara*) produced. Once the body mandala is created, the meditator requests consecration from the deities, and the result is the ‘sealing’ of ‘four internal centers. Using this ritual context to interpret the quote, we might say that through the production and dissolution of Buddha bodies, the practitioner enacts a ritualized transition from ordinary to enlightened being although the ‘results’ of that process are present from the start. Davidson 1992, pp. 117-18.

<sup>542</sup> *Yang dag par sbyor ba zhes bya ba’i rgyud chen po* [Toh 381]

<sup>543</sup> See *Vajrapañjara Tantra*, sde dge 45b.4 -45b.6.

<sup>544</sup> See Chapter Eight of the *Vajrapañjara Tantra*, sde dge 45b.6-51a.5, especially 46a.5-46a.7. .

<sup>545</sup> *Sa skya Lam ‘bras Series* 13, 119r-119v. See Sobisch 2008 Title list #393. See also references in Sobisch pp.107 &120.

<sup>546</sup> Alternatively, it is possible that the reference is to one of the three versions of Hevajra practice: the extensive, middle and condensed.

himself and includes writings by sixty previous Sakya masters as well as ten works by Ngor chen.<sup>547</sup> His nephew, fourth abbot of Ngor, Rgyal tshab dbang phyug (1424-78), organized the title list.<sup>548</sup> This particular work by Sa chen is classified in a section exhibiting the “authenticity of the treatise,” one of the “four authenticities” [*tshad ma bzhi*], “of the guru, of experience, of the treatise, of the basic scriptures”; this framework, first established by Grags pa rgyal mtshan, was often employed to organize esoteric literature.<sup>549</sup> The nine works by Sa chen grouped in this section of the *Red Book* were transmitted from his own teacher, Rje Dgon pa, Zhang-ston Cho-bar.<sup>550</sup> Ngor chen solidifies the final link connecting the Indian and Tibetan masters in the Sakya lineage of the Hevajra tradition in stating: “So it is taught from the condensed meaning and ascertained by the mahasiddhas as the whispered lineage in the inviolate oral instructions.”<sup>551</sup> Utilizing the full range of exegetical potential of the resources at his disposal, Ngor chen has artfully navigated the reader through the complexities of relationships between root and explanatory tantras and their commentaries, of explicit and implicit meanings, of extensive and pithy and of scriptural and oral instructions to reify the “inviolate oral instructions” that are the unique inheritance of the Sakya tradition. As direct inheritors of this tradition, the Sakyapa hierarchs are further validated, supporting Davidson’s claim that Ngor chen attempted to place the work of the first three Sakya patriarchs, Sa chen and his sons, on par with the Indian masters as fully authenticated authorities on esoteric practice.<sup>552</sup> According to Davidson, Ngor chen

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<sup>547</sup> On the *Red Book*, See Sobisch 2008 Chapter Two: pp. 103-112 and Title List #344-435.

<sup>548</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.103.

<sup>549</sup> See reference to the ‘*tshad ma bzhi*’ in the conclusion of Ngor chen’s text [578.3]: “Strive to practice in accord with these oral instructions which are established through the four authenticities through the yoga of the four sessions.” [*tshad ma bzhis grub pa’i gdams ngag ‘di lta bu la thun bzhi’i rnal ‘byor gyis nyams len la brtson par gyis shig dang*] On the ‘*tshad ma bzhi*’, see Sobisch 2008, 99-100.

<sup>550</sup> On this identification of Rje dgon pa, See Sobisch 2008 p.106 and references there to Stearns 2001: 63,242, n.162; 2006:220 ff and to Davidson 2005 301 &303.

<sup>551</sup> *don bsdus nas bstan zhing; man ngag ma nyams par grub chen rnams kyis snyan brgyud du gtan la phab pa yin no*

It is, moreover, possible that the *don bsdus* refers to a specific text, such as the *Kyai rdor don bsdus* referred to in the following section by its other name, the *Nā ro ‘grel chen* [567.5]. This text is cited below by Ngor chen at 567.5. See below for further detail.

<sup>552</sup> Davidson 1992, p.112 provides a reference to Ngor chen ‘s *gnad kyai zla-zer* [p.179.3.6] composed in 1419, therefore seven years before the present text. As discussed in the introduction to the dissertation, Ngor chen’s writings on the Hevajra practice in this text prompted controversies that required his successors to continue to defend his perspective. See for example, Go rams pa’s *dPal kyai rdo rje’i sgrub pa’i thabs kyai rgya cher bshad pa bskyed rim gnad kyai zla zer la rtsod pa spong ba gnad kyai gsal byed*. See Sobisch 2008 Title List #167.

envisioned the Hevajra and *Lam 'bras* instructions as incomplete until the compilations of the *Yellow Book* [*Pod ser ma*] based on the work of these three patriarchs.<sup>553</sup>

While we have focused thusfar upon the manner in which Ngor chen is defending the Hevajra body mandala system against the charges issued by Mkhas grub, it is likely that Ngor chen, too, has other unnamed opponents. Sobisch's 2008 study of A mes zhab's (1597-1659), *Notes on How to Enter Into the Writings of the Sakapas* [NOTES], a text primarily composed by Chos dpal bzang po (fifteenth century) based on Ngor chen's own teachings, offers some clues to who these opponents might be.<sup>554</sup> The two systems of pith instructions on Hevajra practice are those passed from Nāropā to Marpa and from Virūpa to "Nagpo of the East" [Kanha].<sup>555</sup> While the former system was favored by the Kagyupa, the latter was the province of the Sakyapa. In the "Notes" text, Ngor chen quotes a couple of polemical comments by Kagyupa authors that elevate Marpa's transmission and even critique the efficacy of the Sakyapas' received transmission.<sup>556</sup> There, in the "Notes," Ngor chen (as rendered by A mes zhabs) proceeds to expose the weaknesses of the Marpa transmission, in particular the absence of the Sampuṭa transmission within it as well as of the commentaries on the Hevajra and Vajrapañjara.<sup>557</sup> Verrill's translates one such excerpt from the "Notes" as follows:<sup>558</sup>

"In the path tradition of the great siddhas Padmavajra, Shantipa, and others, the Sambhuti (Sampuṭa) was considered unnecessary as an explanatory tantra; but in the special Lamdre (Path and Result) instructions in the tradition of the great siddha Virūpa, the Samputi is a necessary explanatory tantra following the revelation of the Two-Part [*Hevajra Tantra*]."

Sobisch very tentatively sets forth a compelling theory distinguishing the Kagyupa and Sakapa exegetical styles on Hevajra:

"One possible interpretation of a 'Sakyapa' and 'Kagyupa' approach to tantra may therefore be that the Sakyapas consider the Indian commentaries (and the Sampuṭa) to be of major importance, while the Kagyupas stress the importance of the pith instructions

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<sup>553</sup> Davidson 1992, p.111. See also Davidson's reference to Ngor chen's gnad kyi zla zer 179.3.5-.6 in fn 16.

<sup>554</sup> ("Notes for the Correct Explication of How to Enter into the Writings of the Venerable Sa skya pas: Opening Wide in a Hundred Directions the Dharma Gates to which All Beings of Tibet are Guided") *Rje btsun sa skya pa'i gsung rab la 'jug tshul legs par bshad pa'i yi ge bod yul 'gro kun bsgrod pa'i chos sgo phyogs brgyar ring du phye ba*. Edited by A-med-zhabs and originally composed by Chos dpal bzang po; collected works, vol. kha, fols. 384r-393v. [as cited in Sobisch 2008]

This text was cited above in our discussion of the classification of the *Sampuṭa Tantra*.

<sup>555</sup> On Kanha, see Stearns 2006 pp.9-13 and Part One, fn12.

<sup>556</sup> Sobisch 2008, 5-6

<sup>557</sup> Sobisch 2008, 6.

<sup>558</sup> The text is referenced by Verrill 2012 on p.331 as "Notes on Ngor chen by dPal kyi rgyal mtshan in A mes zhabs," Vol.21, p.76.4.

alone, and in particular advise refraining from mixing these with commentaries or mixing different systems together.”<sup>559</sup>

What we have encountered thusfar of Ngor chen’s exegetical style in the body mandala debate suggests that there is some truth to Sobisch’s theory. Indeed Ngor chen’s inclusion of all three Hevajra-related tantras, as well as commentaries and oral instructions in his claim for textual authority displays a totalizing strategy that likewise garners the associated prestige of his sources. Having gleaned the significance of the identities of particular mahāsiddhas to the nature and authority of a tantric transmission, we will proceed to examine how Ngor chen employs citations from the systems of four other mahāsiddhas. Sobisch’s 2008 study of the *Notes on How to Enter Into the Writings of the Sakapas* will prove particularly useful in this enterprise.

### **IB. On the commentaries of the other mahāsiddhas**

Ngor chen divides the next section of his argument into four parts: on Nag po pa, Jetari (whom we have already encountered above), Indrabhūti, and Vajragarbha. In order to better understand how these masters fit into the larger schema of the transmission of the Hevajra teachings from India to Tibet, we turn to Sobisch’s study of the “Notes.” The “Notes” outlines eight categories of transmission of the Hevajra instruction; these include the two systems of pith instructions of Marpa(-Nāropā) and of Virūpa(-Kanha) discussed above as well as “six great chariot systems” (*shing rta’i srol chen po drug*) of teachings connected with: Ḍombī[heruka]; Mtsho skyes rdo rje (Saroruhavajra/Padmavajra); Nag po Dam tshig rdo rje (Kṛṣṇa Samayavajra); Shāntipa (Ratnākaraśānti); Snyan grags bzang po (Yaśobhadra?); Gnyis med rdo rje (Advayavajra/Avadhūtipa/Maitrīpa).<sup>560</sup> The “Notes” further specifies that of these six chariots, the first three are perfectly transmitted by the Sakyapas at that time.<sup>561</sup> The centrality of the first two “chariots” to the Sakyapa Hevajra practice is attested by the fact that they serve as the basis for the middle and extended Hevajra *sādhana* practice respectively.<sup>562</sup> The significance of the others is more nuanced. We will refer to these eight categories of transmission to determine the import of Ngor chen’s strategy of citation from the works of the Mahāsiddhas.

### **IBi. Nag po pa’s Position**

The “Notes” associates the teachings of Nag po pa’s transmission with Nag po Dam tshig rdo rje (Kṛṣṇa Samayavajra) and his student Nag po Zhi ba bzang po (Kṛṣṇa Śānti

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<sup>559</sup> Sobisch 2008, 6.

<sup>560</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.30.

<sup>561</sup> Sobisch 2008, 39.

<sup>562</sup> As explained by Davidson 1992 p.111, Bsod nams rtse mo developed the four-limbed *sādhana* of the extensive practice based on Padmavajra’s system, while Grags pa rgyal msthan developed the six-limb *sādhana* of the middle-length practice based on Ḍombiheruka’s system. Davidson fn17 refers to this as Grags pa rgyal msthan’s own understanding of the systems as conveyed in Go rams pa’s *gnad kyī zla zer la rtsod pa spong ba gnad kyī gsal byed*, *Collected Works*, Vol. 12, 598.1-.3.

bhadra).<sup>563</sup> ‘Gos Khug pa lha bstas, transmitter of the Guhyasamāja, studied Hevajra with Nag po Dam tshig rdo rje in India and proceeded to transmit the teachings in Tibet as well as to translate the Hevajra commentaries.<sup>564</sup>

Davidson 1992 identifies four main systems transmitted by the Sakyapas as those of Kanha, Dombiheruka, Padmavajra, and Kṛṣṇa Pandita (the *nag po’i lugs*). With regard to the latter, Davidson observes that while Grags pa rgyal mtshan considered it important, “it...did not seem to receive the intense interest that the other three meditative cycles did and, while maintained down to the present, it appears to be more of an archaic appendage than a vital part of the Sakya heritage.”<sup>565</sup> He accounts for the exclusion of Kanha from Ngor chen’s classification as based on the dearth of materials from that system.

The possibility of translating Nag po pa as either Kanha, “Virūpa’s disciple” or Kṛṣṇa, “the scholar” presents an obstacle for definitive interpretation of his use by Ngor chen.<sup>566</sup> If the Nag po pa referred to in this portion of the body mandala debate is indeed Nag po Dam tshig rdo rje (Kṛṣṇa Samayavajra) and/or his student Nag po Zhi ba bzang po (Kṛṣṇa Śānti bhadra), Ngor chen’s choice of citations may enrich our understanding of the weight given to this system of transmission at Ngor chen’s time. If the reference is to Kanha instead, then Ngor chen’s use of the quotation may reveal what part Kanha’s system played in the Hevajra exegetical tradition despite his choice not to include it in the “six chariots” framework of the “Notes.”

The first citation, in this section, however, is incomplete; Ngor chen merely indicates that it was composed by Nag po pa.<sup>567</sup> The citation describes the body mandala of the support, associating regions of the body with the elements in a manner familiar from the discussion above; however, it adds the bliss cakra and the correlation of the womb with space. [566.2-.5] Furthermore, it locates the cremation grounds/sacred sites on the orifices, and appears to include a reference to the dākinīs, the 72,000 channels and the cakras. Ngor chen clarifies the meaning as a description of the five palaces or cakras of the body mandala, made up of the one hundred and fifty-two retinue goddesses of the channel petals plus the five mothers of the Buddha families (thus totaling one hundred and fifty-seven). Next, Ngor chen refers to the “Commentary on the Vajra Song”; this is likely to be a reference to the portion of the *Hevajra Tantra* in which the goddesses sing to Hevajra to manifest himself.<sup>568</sup> The quote describes the six Cakravartin males and

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<sup>563</sup> Varying explanations appear in the works of different authors attempting to parse the authorship of the works of Nag po Dam tshig rdo rje (Kṛṣṇa Samayavajra) and Nag po Zhi ba bzang po (Kṛṣṇa Śāntibhadra). Davidson 1992 fn9 points to a reference to Kṛṣṇa Śānti bhadra as Kṛṣṇa Pandita in Ngor chen’s *gnad kyi zla zer* 175.3.3.

<sup>564</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.36.

<sup>565</sup> Davidson 1992, p.110.

<sup>566</sup> See Stearns 2001, p.242 fn 160. Stearns provides as example here of an instance of dealing with this conundrum. Sobisch 2008 fn also refers to an instance on Nag po pa as Kanha in Stearns 2002, 171 n.112.

<sup>567</sup> If it refers to the *Rnal ‘byor rin po che sbyor ba’i phreng ba* (Toh 1183, for which Snellgrove 1959 provides an edition), then it is Kanha vs. Kṛṣṇa that is the author. See Sobisch 2008 Title List #6.

<sup>568</sup> However, it is also possible that the reference is to either Saroruha’s *Rdo rje’i glu’i grel pa* (Toh 1207) or to Sgrol ma can gyi sde’s *Rtsa rgyud phyi mar* (Toh 1208).

females and compares them with subtle particles [*rdul phra rab*]. Ngor chen explains that the cakravartins are enumerated as six because Vajrasattva is added and clarifies the analogy to subtle particles through reference to the later part of the (two-part) Hevajra root tantra (i.e. “yoginīs equal to the subtle particles of Mt. Meru”). Furthermore, he clarifies the ritual context as one in which the practitioner has generated the channels as goddesses and arranged them on the body of Hevajra (referred to here *Pi tsu ba jra*).<sup>569</sup>

The final citation in this section is from the *Nā ro ‘grel chen*.<sup>570</sup> It specifies five seed syllables together with the five associated buddhas which are to be arranged on the bodily sites (crown, navel, throat, secret place and heart) of *pi tsu ba jra*, in other words, on the body of the practitioner which has been generated in the form of Hevajra; it also refers to the subsequent realization of the vajra dākinīs.<sup>571</sup> If we look to the context of this quote within the *Nā ro ‘grel chen* itself, we find that it is preceded by the perfection of wisdom through purifying the skandhas and followed by the mantra for actualizing the sixteen arms (of oneself as Hevajra). The ritual described seems more like a preparatory ritual for purifying the body and/or the initial generation as the deity and less like body mandala proper.

In general, these citations share a vision of the body mandala composed of five Buddha families, with the exception of the cakravartin system, which adds Vajrasattva. While Nag po pa’s description emphasizes the role of the goddesses as channels, focuses upon the subtle body, and incorporates cosmic factors like the elements and cremation grounds, the *Nā ro ‘grel chen*’s description of the buddha families parses the body in a more basic way. Ngor chen’s motivations for incorporating the *Nā ro ‘grel chen* as part of his description of Nag po pa’s system remain unclear.

### **IBii. Jetari’s position**

Jetari’s system is one of the two sets of pith instructions include in the framework of the “Notes” and is regarded as unique in its basis in all three Hevajra tantras.<sup>572</sup> Ngor chen has already cited the mahāsiddha Jetari’s *Sādhana of the Four Mudrā* [*Phyag rgya bzhi yi*

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<sup>569</sup> I am grateful to Kurt Keutzer in helping me to clarify this.

<sup>570</sup> Sobisch 2008 describes this text as a commentary on the Hevajra tantra, the *Kyai rdor don bsdus*, with an incomplete sub-commentary, the *Kyai rdor don bsdus kyi ‘grel pa*. See Sobisch 2008 Title List # 12 & 134 (Toh 1186) respectively. According to Sobisch, Ngor chen’s disputed this text’s attribution to Nāropā; however, he maintained its value and compatibility with the generation stage of mahāsiddha Saroruha and with the completion stage of Kālacakra. (Sobisch 2008, p.43. The “Notes” classifies this text within sNyan grags bzang po’s cycle of teachings.

<sup>571</sup> Thanks to Kurt Keutzer, this quote has been located at p.926 of OCR’d version of Toh 1186. *Rdo rje tshig gi snying po bsdud pa’i dka’ ‘grel* (*Vajrapada-sāra-saṃgraha-pañjikā*) also *Nā ro ‘grel chen*, *Kyai rdor don bsdus*, and *Rdo rje tshig gi snying po bsdud pa*; Nāropāda. P 54/2316, 69r-169v, A. Naro-zhabs, Toh 1186, ka 58v-146v. A. Snyan-grags-bzang-po. [cited in Sobisch 2008, title list #134].

<sup>572</sup> Sobisch 2008, p48

*sgrub thabs*], earlier in his argument on body mandala, in the section devoted to the proper interpretation of Bu ston's comments on the body mandala of the support. [551.3-552.1] In that quote, the four *mudrā* schema was used to describe four aspects of the mandala of the support, correlating the parts of the body with the protective circle, cremation grounds/sacred sites, cosmic elements, and the celestial palace, respectively. In that context, Ngor chen endorsed Jetari's views as the quintessence of the Sakyapa interpretation of Virūpa's teachings.

Here, in the evaluation of Jetari's system among other mahāsiddha traditions, Ngor chen once again cites the *Sādhana of the Four Mudrā*. He establishes the ritual context for the quote, explaining that the practitioner first establishes the nine deity outer mandala deities and Heruka and then proceeds to array the body mandala onto the main deity's body. [568.2-570.1] In this quote Jetari redeploys the four *mudrā* schema to describe the four goddesses (Locanā, Māmakī, Pāṇḍaravāsini and Tārā) inhering in their respective cakras (composed of particular numbers of petals); he also identifies these goddesses the with particular elements and colors.<sup>573</sup> The buddhas dwelling in the center of those cakras are mentioned as well. Next, the fourfold schema is used to describe the six bodhisattvas and six goddesses of the sense objects and the ten wrathful males in union with ten wrathful females; the text locates them on the sense spheres, sense objects, and limbs respectively. The text concludes: "The skillful ones diligently visualize all things that are produced from the channels, the supreme mandala of body, speech and mind within one's own body as the cause of accomplishment (Tib. *dnegos grub* Skt. *siddhi*)."<sup>574</sup>

Ngor chen again endorses Jetari's view as on par with Virūpa's oral instructions and then proceeds to explore potential contradictions or "doubts" pertaining to Jetari's description of the body mandala practice.<sup>575</sup> The first point deals with the order of generating the mandalas of the support and supported in the Luipa transmission of the Cakrasaṃvara practice. As mentioned above, Ngor chen wrote a whole text dealing with the different versions of Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice; such questions of ritual order and of the relation of different aspects or phases of the mandala assume a prominent position in that text.<sup>576</sup> In the present text, we find Ngor chen anticipating

<sup>573</sup> This account resembles the one critiqued by Mkhas grub and described in Chapter Three of this dissertation in the context of mapping and correlating the goddesses in the Guhyasamāja body mandala. The resemblance is worthy of further attention.

<sup>574</sup> *thams cad rtsa las skyes pa'i dnegos; [570.1] sku gsung thugs kyi dkyil 'khor mchog; mkhas bas rang gi lus nyid la; dnegos grub rgyur ni 'bad pas bsgom*

<sup>575</sup> It is of note that in Ngor chen's other version of the text, N2, he uses the exploration of doubts [*dogs pa dbyed pa*] as a larger organizational schema for the second half of the text (on scriptural authority). There he divides the text according three topics:

explanation from the tantra, by the siddhas, and investigating related doubts. [N2 607.5]

<sup>576</sup> *Commentary on the Ghantapa Body Mandala Practice. Dril bu pa'i lus dkyil gyi bshad pa*. TBRC W11577. 4: 735 - 766. [dehra dun]: [sakya centre]Vol.4 .[see also *Dril bu pa'i lus dkyil gyi bshad pa. Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum*. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1969, vol.10, folios 117b-140a, pp. 398.1.1-405.4.1 (cited in Bentor 2015)].

I hope to present further research on this work in future.

issues of what we referred to above as *go rims 'khrugs* or “confusion of the order of things” to be of concern for his interlocutors. Such discussions express both practical concerns with ritual efficacy as well as their more theoretical implications of ontological hierarchies.

For Ngor chen, however, the focus of the present text, and in particular of this latter section on textual authority, is to articulate the relationship between different kinds of sources that compose the Hevajra body mandala tradition. One way in which he manifests this goal is by comparing apparently contradictory accounts and neutralizing the contradiction. In the process, he reveals an intricate mastery of textual exegesis based in, and in some ways particular to, the Sakya tradition. For example, he validates the process of generating the cremation grounds on the bodily orifices from Jetari’s text by showing how even though it has no basis in the *gdams ngag* [Skt.*upadeśa*], it appears in many “textual commentaries of the precious oral instructions” [*gsung ngag rin po che'i gzhung bshad du ma*] [570.4-.5]. The latter most likely indicates commentaries on Virūpa’s *Rdo rje tshig rkang* [Toh 2284] composed by the Sa chen and his sons. This line of reasoning would further support Davidson’s theory that one of Ngor chen’s driving motivations was to elevate the authority of these three early Sakyapa patriarchs to match that of the Indian masters.<sup>577</sup>

In other examples, the potential contradiction is neutralized by using references to different versions of the practice as alternatives or options [*gdam ga*] in the *gdams ngag*. Finally, Ngor chen skillfully negotiates the relationship of orally and textually transmitted practices, a relationship deeply layered with subtle dynamics of authority. In one case, Ngor chen applies the common strategy of explaining different versions of a practice in terms of the differing capacities of practitioners. [571.6-572.3] In this particular example, the version in Jetari’s text agrees with the *Vajrapañjara Explanatory Tantra* but disagrees with the oral instructions. Ngor chen carefully manipulates the versions derived from the work of one Indian master, from an explanatory tantra and from the mouth of the Indian progenitor of the Sakya *Lam 'bras* tradition to preserve a variety of authority for each.

### **IBiii. Indrabhūti’s position**

Indrabhūti composed another (Indian) commentary on the *Samputa Tantra*, the *dPal kha sbyor thig le zhes bya ba rnal 'byor ma'i rgud kyī rgyal po'i rgya cher 'grel pa yang dag par lta ba'i dran pa'i snang bar*. [Toh 1197] Sobisch 2008 makes a point of the fact that, according to the “Notes,” this particular commentary is “very unrefined” [*shin tu gyong ba*].<sup>578</sup> If this is indeed Ngor chen’s stance on the text, then his choice to incorporate Indrabhūti’s system in his defense of the textual authority of a heterogeneous Hevajra system is significant. In fact, the longer version of Ngor chen’s text [N2], to be discussed in the final portion of this chapter, appears to eliminate Indrabhūti’s position from the argument entirely.

The citation includes descriptions of both a six cakra body mandala and a five-cakra body mandala. The first model includes cakras at the navel, heart, throat, crown,

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<sup>577</sup> Davidson 1992, p.111.

<sup>578</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.76



the center of the crown [*spyi gtsug*], and the secret place. Indrabhūti names the cakras and designates their respective colors, syllables, and number of petals which total one hundred and fifty-seven (the standard number of deities in the Hevajra body mandala). In addition, the citation provides the succession of associated Buddhas and goddesses (as elements). Finally, the three main channels are located in the center of the structure. The second model is a less elaborate depiction of the pentadic structure that links the syllables, Buddha families, channels, and cakras. In citing these two different models for body mandala from Indrabhūti's text side by side, Ngor chen allows for multiple iterations of the subtle body structure within a single Indian text.<sup>579</sup>

#### **IBiv. Vajragarbha's position**

The final system invoked here by Ngor chen is Vajragarbha's; the "Notes" classifies Vajragarbha's two commentaries on the *Hevajra Tantra* among the minor works related to the "six chariot system."<sup>580</sup> The two commentaries interpret the first and second part of the two-part *Hevajra Root Tantra* respectively. The citation here appears to be from the former, the *Kyai rdo rje bsdus pa'i don gyi rgya cher 'grel pa [Piṅḍārtha-tīkā]*.<sup>581</sup> The description of the cakras are complex and initially appear contradictory; both incorporate a cakra at the forehead, but only one includes the crown cakra. However, the varying and intricate descriptions crescendo in a neutralizing statement by Ngor chen. His overall explanation for variation in the number of cakras is in accordance with the number of Buddha families presented in a particular system, further reinforcing the connections we have drawn between the evolution and exegesis of mandala iconography and descriptions of the cakras.

Ngor chen concludes the section on the commentarial tradition of the mahāsiddhas with a *pramāṇa*-inflected admonition of his opponent: "Taking merely not seeing as your reasoning, you criticize the profound oral instructions of the mahāsiddhas."<sup>582</sup> As noted in the beginning of this chapter, Ngor chen plays off of

<sup>579</sup> In our discussion of this portion of the text, Drapa Gyatso of the IBA in Kathmandu, observed that much of Indrabhūti's description differs from the system of oral instructions that is the basis for the Hevajra *sādhana*s commonly in use by the Sakyapas today. Noting the multiplicity of systems for cultivating Hevajra, Drapa Gyatso recalled how the twentieth-century master Khenpo Appey Rinpoche enumerated some twenty-eight different methods. In terms of the structure of the subtle body described by texts such as Indrabhūti's commentary, Drapa Gyatso explains how tantric texts account for the existence of an infinite number of channels in the body, all of which originate from the three main channels. The 'palaces' [*pho brang*] or cakras are composed of a main channel surrounded by the branch channels. [Personal communication, Spring 2012]

<sup>580</sup> Sobisch 2008, p.43.

<sup>581</sup> *Piṅḍārtha-tīkā* [Toh 1180]. See Sobisch 2008 Title list #7. See also Shengde's 2004 edition and the forthcoming one by Francesco Sferra (as indicated by Sobisch 2008 fn103).

<sup>582</sup> *des na rang gis ma mthong ba kho na rgyu mtshan du byas nas; grub chen gyi gdams ngag zab mo la skur pa 'debs pa ni*

his opponent's integration of valid cognition into his tantric polemics. His comments, on the one hand, remind the reader that for the Sakyapas, the possibility of unmediated, direct perception is impossible. Recall his remark, derived likely from Sakya Pandita: "Just because you don't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there." [561.1] Such comments also suggest that perhaps the opponent is missing something right before his eyes or even that his command of the texts is lacking. Building upon this bit of a polemical flair, Ngor chen concludes the section on the mahāsiddhas with a dramatic citation of a prophecy by the bodhisattva Vajrapāni damning those who misconstrue tantric materials to a sentence in hell. [576.1] Ngor chen shows that he too can fight fire with fire. However, even in this rare glimpse of the polemical tone in Ngor chen's text, it is clear that he relies primarily upon the discourse and methods of tantric commentary to articulate and defend his position. Of course he is familiar with the strategies of philosophical debate relished by Mkhas grub as any monk trained in the Sakya scholastic tradition would be. He even pauses at choice moments in the text to playfully exhibit that familiarity with a few loaded comments. But ultimately, Ngor chen defends his tradition through mastery of the tantric corpus and skillful display of that mastery.

### IC. The *Vajramālā*

The final part of Ngor chen's argument investigates methods for explaining from other tantric commentaries but is actually devoted entirely to the *Vajramālā*. As discussed above, Mkhas grub relied heavily upon the *Vajramālā*, particularly in articulating his argument on the body mandala of the support. The majority of his citations were derived from two chapters, Chapter Sixty-Four, "The Explanation of the Mandalas of Body, Speech and Mind," and Chapter Sixty-Eight, "The Collection of All Siddhis." Ngor chen begins his discussion of the *Vajramālā* by referring to three different varieties of body mandala described in those very same chapters and identifying them with three different tantric cycles: the Guhyasamāja version in Chapter Sixty-Three (by which he actually means Sixty-Four); the Hevajra version in Chapter Sixty-Seven (by which he actually means Sixty-Eight); the correlation of twenty-four places with twenty-four internal sites in the same chapter. [586.6-587.1] He then turns his attention to an entirely different chapter of the *Vajramālā*, Chapter Seventeen, "The Sites of the Successive *rlung*." The first verses he quotes describe five cakras (*rlung*, fire, enjoyment, dharma, and bliss) with six, three, sixteen, eight and thirty-two channel petals respectively as well as an additional version of one-hundred thirty one channels.<sup>583</sup> Ngor chen skips the next twenty verses of the *Vajramālā*, which name all of the channels that make up the cakras;

<sup>583</sup> The verses referred to here are verses one through five in Kittay's 2011 translation. Different accounts enumerate the petals as 129 or 131. Kittay 2010, fn 981: "The Tantra says that these total 'more than 131' but all of the sDe dge, Peking and Snar thang versions of the Commentary have 129 here, and the various numbers do in fact add up to 129, Alamka 125A."

See Alamkakalaśa (Tshul khriims rin chen). *Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal rdo rje phreng ba'i rgya cher 'grel pa zab mo'i don gyi 'grel pa*. In bstan 'gyur (sde dge). TBRC W23703. 34: 4 - 442. delhi: delhi karmapae choedhey, gyalwae sungrab partun khang, 1982-1985

he briefly summarizes them and then resumes his citation with an series of verses translated by Kitty 2011 as follows:

The body with the nature of the five aggregates  
Is well known as the five dākinīs.  
That very thing,  
Through the five elements,  
Abides as the five wisdoms.  
Therefore, with all effort,  
You should know the channel wheels .v26

Just as a tree  
In the middle of water  
Grows quickly,  
From it there is fruit  
And so forth,  
It will give.  
In this there is no doubt. v27

Similarly, the aggregates  
Are like a tree,  
Having grown by the water  
Of the channels.  
Increasing, they bestow  
The perfect fruit  
Of omniscience.  
You should meditate on  
The nature of the channels  
Through the actualities  
Of the forms  
Of deities v28<sup>584</sup>

These verses suggest that knowledge of the elements of the subtle body and their relationship to the ordinary body of psychophysical aggregates is essential. They also describe the relationship between the subtle body and the ordinary body: the channels

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<sup>584</sup> The verses appear in Ngor chen's text as follows:  
*[577.2] de nyid 'byung ba lnga yi ni; ye shes lngar ni rnam par gnas; de phyir 'bad pa thams cad kyis; rtsa yi 'khor lor shes par bya; ji ltar chu yi dbus kyi shing; myur du yang ni 'phel nas 'gro; de las 'bras bu sogs ldan pa; ster [577.3] bar 'di la the tshom med; de bzhin phung po'i shing zhes bya; rtsa yi chu yis 'phel nas ni; 'phel bas yang dag 'bras bu ni; thams cad mkhyen pa nyid ster byed; lha yi rnam pa'i ngo bo yis; rtsa rnam rang bzhin sgom par byed*

support the aggregates and catalyze their development.<sup>585</sup> According to this model, the coarse elements of embodiment actually rely upon their subtle invisible counterparts. Body mandala is the ritual practice that re-enacts this underlying reality of human embodiment through cultivating the channels in the form of deities. Ngor chen chooses not to belabor the ontological implications of the verses; in other words, he could have used the verses to engage with Mkhas grub's argument regarding the interpretation of Ghantapa's position on the body's primordial equivalence with the mandala. Moreover, there are other verses in the section of the *Vajramālā* framing the passage Ngor chen cites that he might have used to reinforce the soteriological importance of bodily knowledge and even the metaphorical equivalence of embodiment with omniscience.<sup>586</sup> Instead, Ngor chen applies these verses from the *Vajramālā* to bare bones ritual mechanics: generating the five *dākinīs* in the center of the five cakras and arranging the one hundred and thirty-one goddesses as the channel petals.<sup>587</sup> This final quote describes the ancillary deities (tathāgatas, goddesses, sense object deities, bodhisattvas, ten wrathfuls), thereby completing the depiction of the body mandala.<sup>588</sup>

Ngor chen shows the *Vajramālā* to contain versions of the Guhyasamāja, Hevajra, and Cakrasaṃvara body mandalas and yet selects passages for interpretation that are not explicitly linked with any of these three cycles. Ngor chen's choice to cite from this particular section of this extensive and diverse text indicates a subtle mastery of the materials as well as a nuanced understanding of the relationship of coarse and subtle bodies. Through careful citation practices he is able to suggest this relationship without diverting his focus from the topic of textual authority. Through interpreting the ritual mechanics of body mandala, Ngor chen makes an implicit, rather than explicit, argument for bodily knowledge, skillfully infused into a highly technical orchestration of source materials in defense of the Hevajra body mandala practice.

## II. Ngor chen's Conclusion

As in his introduction to the text, Ngor chen uses the conclusion to rally sentiment in defense of the Hevajra body mandala practice and to establish its authenticity and superiority. However, he also presents some final insights into why the body mandala is

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<sup>585</sup> See the description of Kontrul's *Treasury of Knowledge*, Book Six, Part Four: *Systems of Buddhist Tantra* in which he explains the relation of gross and subtle bodies as follows: "that which is supported, the body of habitual tendencies; and the support, the innate body." p.169

<sup>586</sup> For example, Kilty 2011 translates verse 25 as follows: "Thus, you should know From the guru's speech, The true stages Of the channels. The aggregates and so forth Will not arise Without ascertaining The stages of the channels. Without the aggregates, The yogi cannot achieve Great wisdom." Verse 36 reads: "At that time, A seed arises. From the seed Arises a living being. Therefore, you arise perfectly. From the channels, The wonderful fruit is born."

<sup>587</sup> See note above on the problem of enumerating 131 vs. 129.

<sup>588</sup> Although Ngor chen identifies this final quotation as being from from "that chapter," the quote is actually derived from Chapter Eighteen, "The Gathering of the Channels of the Body of the Yogin."

so important as well as into how his exegetical style compares with that of his more polemical opponents. As for the centrality of body mandala practice to liberation, Ngor chen states: “It is necessary for the Buddha to consecrate the channel winds in the generation of the wisdom of bliss of the completion stage. Other than the body mandala, there is no profound shortcut for achieving that.”<sup>589</sup> [578.6] After an invective targeting frauds and proclaiming the benefit of the text for “other impartial scholars” [*gzur gnas mkhas gzhan*], Ngor chen eloquently justifies his own method of argument in opposition to the style of harsh polemics so familiar from Mkhas grub’s text as follows:

Even without wielding sharp weapons

or wearing strong armor,

How could the armies of flawless scripture and reasoning

fail to defeat the opponent?<sup>590</sup>

The final portion of this chapter will compare the two versions of Ngor chen’s text body mandala text. Through this comparison, we will gain more privileged access to Ngor chen’s authorial voice. In the process, we will enhance our understanding of the authorial choices he makes in striking a subtle balance between polemical and commentarial methods.

### III. “Dispelling Evil Views” vs. “Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil”: a Comparison

A mystery surrounds the existence of two ‘versions’ of Ngor chen’s body mandala text. The longer “version,” *Dispelling Evil Views by Eliminating Objections to the Hevajra Body Mandala* (*Kye rdo rje'i lus kyil dkyil 'khor la rtsod spong lta ba ngan sel*) has a virtually identical title to the text that has been the focus of our study thus far.<sup>591</sup> Mkhas grub’s citations from Ngor chen’s argument in his *Thunderbolt Wheel of Reply to Ngor* suggest that *Dispelling Evil Views* is the version of Ngor chen’s text he was reading and responding to. So what makes *Dispelling Evil View(s)* different from *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*? The texts appear side by side in Ngor chen’s collected writings, with *Dispelling Evil View(s)* [N2] immediately following *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*. [N1] N2 is markedly longer, approximately

<sup>589</sup> *rdzogs rim bde ba'i ye shes bskyed pa la; rtsa rlung rgyal bas byin gyis brlabs pa dgos; de nyid sgrub la lus kyil dkyil 'khor las; gzhan ba'i myur lam zab mo yod ma yin*

<sup>590</sup> [579.4 ] *gang gis rno ba'i mtshon cha ma bzung zhing; sra ba'i go cha lus la btags min kyang; skyon med lung dang rigs pa'i dpung tshogs kyis; phyir rgol pham par byas pa min nam ci*

<sup>591</sup> Ngor chen kun dga' bzang po (1382-1456). *The Collected Teachings of Ngor chen kun dga' bzang po* (*Ngor chen kun dga' bzang po'i bka' 'bum*). Compiled by Bsod nams rgya mtsho and reproduced from the Sde dge block prints. Dehra dun: photomechanical print from a set of prints from the Sde dge kdgon chen blocks. Vol.1. N1 appears on pp.545-580, and N2 follows on pp. 580-625.

forty-five folia sides relative to N1's thirty. The texts share identical colophons (with the exception of their titles) suggesting that they were regarded as interchangeable:

“Having negated the imposters who assert conceptual imputations and lies as the profound practice of the Hevajra body mandala, this treatise establishes the oral instructions as superior through pure scripture and reasoning. This *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*, by arriving at the far shore of the ocean of one's own and others' tenets, becomes the crown jewel of the Buddha's followers.

Through raising the dust on the feet of Rje btsun mkhas pa'i dbang po Ye shes rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po to the crown, Sha kya'i dge slong kun dga' bzang po has increased the appearance of understanding of the infinite tantric scriptures a little bit. He excellently composed (this) in the year of *zil gnon*, on the third day of the month of Buddha's consecration in the school of wise ones at Sakya, the origin of many precious jewels. May demons, opponents, and dissenters from all directions be conquered by this!”<sup>592</sup>

The only apparent difference in the colophons is the title provided for the respective texts. Why would the compiler choose to include both texts in the collection if one was truly a version or draft of the other? Did they perhaps address the needs of different audiences? Is one a revision or condensation of or elaboration upon the other? The scholar monks of the Sakya tradition with whom I consulted could not explain this anomaly. Van der Kuijp 1985a observes: “Written in the first half of 1426, these are two prints of the same text, with some interesting variant readings.”<sup>593</sup> Ngor chen's biography by Sangs rgyas phun tshogs (1649-1705), discussed in the introduction to the dissertation, mentions both texts but does not provide any additional insights into their relationship:

“..there was a terrible misconception of imagining the Hevajra body mandala not to be explained anywhere in the Indian tantric system. Through scripture and reasoning and the oral instructions, he (Ngor chen) thoroughly refuted that circumstance of the Hevajra initiate admitting wrong.”<sup>594</sup> He composed the great treatise that establishes the

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<sup>592</sup>N1 580.2-.6: *dpal kye rdo rje lus kyi dkyil 'khor gyi sgrub thabs zab mo la rtog btags dang; [580.3] mun sprul du 'dod pa'i shes byed ltar snang rnams bkag nas yang dag pa'i lung dang rig pas man ngag mchog tu sgrub pa'i bstan bcos smra ba ngan 'joms zhes bya ba 'di ni; bdag dang gzhan gyi grub pa'i mtha' rgya mtsho'i pha rol du son pas bde bar gshegs pa'i [580.4] ring lugs ba rnams kyi gtsug gi nor bur rgyur pa rje btsun mkhas pa'i dbang po ye shes rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i zhabs rdul spyi bos blangs pas; sngags gzhung rab 'byams la blo gros kyi snang ba cung zad rgyas pa sha kya'i dge slong kun dga' bzang [580.5] pos zil gnon gyi lo sangs rgyas dbang bskur ba'i zla ba'i yar tshes gsum la mkhas pa'i chos grwa dpal sa skya yon tan rin po che du ma'i 'byung gnas su legs par sbyar ba'o ; 'dis bdud dang phyir rgol ba dang mi mthun pa'i phyogs thams cad las rnam par [580.6] rgyal bar gyur cig*

See N2 624.5-625.3.

<sup>593</sup> Van der Kuijp 1985, p.88.

<sup>594</sup> As discussed in the introduction to the dissertation, the phrase *lam dus blangs pa mthol bshags byed pa'i skabs byung ba* is compelling but difficult to translate. Khenpo

insurpassable intention of the tantric system called *Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil through Eliminating Objections to the Body Mandala* and *Dispelling Evil View(s)*.<sup>595</sup>

Although their titles are abridged, the two texts are clearly mentioned side by side as part of the same polemical project. Moreover, that project is identified as chiefly concerned with the textual authority of the Hevajra body mandala system. N1 is mentioned before N2, and it is possible that the phrase “treatise that establishes the insurpassable intention of the tantric system” refers only to N1 or that they are regarded as the same treatise. However, nothing conclusive can be determined based on the conjunction *dang*. In fact, large portions of the texts are identical, but the differences, or as van der Kuijp refers to them “variant readings,” are significant and worthy of scholarly attention. While there are thirteen major variations between the texts, we will focus upon a few key examples representative of the types of variation they exhibit.

The most general standard of variation between the texts concerns strategies of citation. As we have already observed, N2 appears to eliminate the tradition of the Mahāsiddha Indrabhūti from discussion. Abhayākāragupta’s *Āmnāyamañjarī*, a text whose significance has been discussed above, appears to be cited an additional time [589.5-590.5]. Ngor chen concludes that citation with the following remark: “Although some monks perform detailed analysis of the meaning of this text, flaws in your intelligence replace them.”<sup>596</sup> This more pointed critique of the opponent may come as a surprise. While the title “Dispelling Evil Views” [N2] suggests a less personal attack than “*Destroyer of the Proponents of Evil*” [N1], there are instances of more polemically charged and directly targeted attacks within N2 than might be expected.

We will begin by examining the details of one of the longer divergences of N2 from N1, an approximately three and a half page section [N2 596.6-602.3] that departs from 559.3 of N1; the text resumes at the same point at which it diverged. The context is Ngor chen’s refutation of the charges based on an absence of deities common to inner and outer mandala. Before diverging, both texts cite Chapter Twenty-Six of the

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Tashi Dorje of the IBA suggested that it refers to Mkhas grub as someone who received the *lam ‘bras* initiation but later critiqued the legitimacy of the transmission. Personal communication, Fall 2011.

<sup>595</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 1688, p.546.4-.5

*yang phyis kyis kye [546.4] rdo rje'i lus dkyil rgyud rgya gzhung gang nas kyang ma bshad pa'i rtog brtags yin no zhes pa'i log rtog 'jigs su rung ba lam dus blangs pa mthol bshags byed pa'i skabs byung ba de lung rigs man ngag gi sgo nas legs par sun phyung nas; rgyud gzhung gi dgongs pa bla na med pa sgrub par byed [546.5] pa'i bstan bcos chen po'i lus dkyil rtsod spong smra ba mngan 'jom zhes bya ba dang; lta ba ngan sel zhes bya ba gnyis mdzad do*

<sup>596</sup> *kye dge sbyong dag; lung 'di'i don la zhib tu dpyad cig kyang; khyed kyī blo gros [590.6] kyī mtshang dag dod rtog par 'gyur ro*

*Abhidhānottara Tantra* [N1 557.6-559.3 & N2 595.3-596.6]. Ngor chen sums up the import of the citation as follows:

“So, there is the explanation for arranging the eight blue deities of the mind cakra at the heart center of the principal deity, the eight red deities of the speech cakra at the throat, (and) the eight white deities of the body cakra at the crown. ‘All inner and outer phenomena are purified by the union of body, speech & mind as buddhahood.’<sup>597</sup> So, it is correct to say that, combining the thirteen deities of the outer mandala and the twenty-four deities of the inner mandala,<sup>598</sup> there are thirty-seven factors conducive to enlightenment in all.”<sup>599</sup>

However, N2 then proceeds to add an additional quote from Chapter Twenty-Seven of that same tantra. [N2 596.6-598.1] The quote in N2 first describes the nine deities of the outer mandala (Vajrasattva, four consorts and four offerings). It then arranges the body mandala on the main deity of that array with the three cakras of body, speech, and mind from the syllables *hung*, *Ā*, and *Aoum* respectively. Ngor chen adds that here the arrangement of the twenty-four heroes and goddesses of the three cakras is taught without arranging the nine deities of the outer mandala. [598.1-.2] Therefore, here N2 specifies additional information about the relationship of the two types of mandala in ritual practice.

Ngor chen then cites a prophecy by Vajrapāṇi regarding the root downfalls, reminding monks that misunderstanding tantra can land you in hell. [N2 598.2-.3] This same quote appears at a later point in N1 [575.6-576.1] as the dramatic conclusion to the section on the support for Indian sources in the works of the *mahāsiddhas*. There it follows right on the heels of the phrase mentioned above “Just because you don’t see it, you criticize the profound pith instructions of the *mahāsiddhas*,” likely as a play upon the verse from Sa pan: “Just because you don’t see it, doesn’t mean it isn’t there.” In N2, Vajrapāṇi’s ominous prophecy is followed by a warning that Mahāsiddha La ba pa’s Cakrasaṃvara commentary would be invalidated along with all the versions of the practice that don’t arrange the deities of the outer mandala in the inner mandala; there was no mention of La ba pa in N1. Ngor chen then proceeds to assert that if his opponent’s position were valid, then Jetari’s *Sādhana of the Four Seals* would be

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<sup>597</sup> This verse is found in *mngon par brjod pa’p rgud bla ma* [*Abhidhānottara Tantra*] searchable sde dge 311b.1-2.

<sup>598</sup> Note here that Ngor chen uses the term ‘outer mandala’ to refer to the eight goddesses of the gates and corners and the main deity (no consort mentioned here) with retinue of four goddesses.

<sup>599</sup> *zhes gtso bo’i lus kyi snying gar thugs ’khor gyi lha brgyad sngon po; mgrin par gsung ’khor gyi lha brgyad dmar po; sbyi bo’i ’khor lor sku ’khor gyi lha brgyad dkar [559.2] po rnam dgod par bshad pa dang; sku gsung thugs kyi sbyor ba yis; phyi dang nang gi chos rnam kun; byang chub phyogs kyis rnam par dag<sup>599</sup>; ces phyi dkyil lha bcu gsum dang nang dkyil nyer bzhi po gnyis char bsdoms nas; byang phyogs so [559.3] bdun dang sbyar ba’i dag pa gsungs pa’i phyr ro*



untenable on account of not explaining arraying nine deities of the outer mandala on the body.<sup>600</sup>

To review Ngor chen's strategy in this section of N2, first he elaborates upon the quotations from the *Abhidhānottara Tantra* of the Cakrasaṃvara cycle shared by both N1 and N2, providing an additional citation from that tantra. He then cites Vajrapāṇi's ominous prophecy, refers to Mahāsiddha La ba pa's Cakrasaṃvara commentary, and interjects a somewhat snide comment about silencing his opponent. [596.1-598.6] Next, he invokes Jetari's *phyag rgya bzhi'i sgrub thabs*, a text that, according to Ngor chen, is essential to the Sakya tantric perspective. [598.6-599.4] That text was presented in N1, first in interpreting Bu ston's contested statement on the absence of protective circle body mandala in the Cakrasaṃvara cycle [N1 551.3-552.1] and, later on, in the section on the commentaries of the *mahāsiddhas*. Ngor chen's next move is to call upon the writings of the Guhyasamāja cycle to break down his opponent's argument regarding the lack of gods common to inner and outer mandalas. [N2 599.5-602.3].

In this next phase of the argument, Ngor chen's polemics become increasingly targeted. His use of the Guhyasamāja system narrows the focus of his critique, and he stops just short of naming Mkhas grub as his opponent. Ngor chen first disputes the claim (we know to have been made by Mkhas grub), that the Hevajra body mandala practice (not named explicitly in Mkhas grubs' text, but rather identified as the inner mandala of one hundred and fifty-seven deities and the outer mandala of nine deities) is invalidated because it lacks deities shared by both inner and outer mandala. Ngor chen argues that if possessing deities common to both varieties of mandala were to be taken as the criteria for assessing the efficacy of a body mandala system, then even Ārya Nāgārjuna's commentarial lineage contradicts the Guhyasamāja system. In support, he provides an extensive quotation from Nāgārjuna's student Āryadeva's *Caryāmelā-paka pradīpa* [599.6-601.4].<sup>601</sup> Ngor chen summarizes the import of his citation of Āryadeva as follows:

“In short, not arranging twenty goddesses taught in outer mandala within the inner mandala and not arranging the thirty-two deities of the inner mandala in the outer mandala and without any deities common to both, this supreme tradition is negated. If you think one can't establish an absence of deities common to inner and outer (mandala)

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<sup>600</sup> The same section appeared in N1 [551.3-552.3]; however the citation there was somewhat different and noticeably less fragmented. In N2, it appears much later in the text; see N2 617.2-6 where it is combined with the preceding part of the Jetari quotation [N2 615.2-617.2]. We have already established that Ngor chen regarded Jetari's view as the quintessence of the Sakyapa interpretation of Virūpa's teachings. Tracing the deployment of quotes from this incredibly short text by Jetari across Ngor chen's two texts provides a tangled web of repetition, modification, and fragmentation that we will have to bracket for the time being. What is important to note is that the system of five palaces or cakras of the body mandala described in this quote is shared by the Sakya Hevajra *Lam 'bras* system.

<sup>601</sup> Note that Mkhas grub's chapter on body mandala did not quote Āryadeva's text, relying more heavily upon Candrakīrti's rescension of Nāgārjuna's Ārya transmission. Wedemeyer 2008 provides annotated translation of Āryadeva's text.

in this tradition on account of the fact that the deities are arranged on the body of the main deity, you're wrong. The reason is that in the outer mandala the main deity is in union with a consort. For the inner mandala, the main deity is at the heart, and the consort is placed at the vajra door. Monks, in claiming to understand the texts of the Ārya cycle, (there is) this insincere speech which neglects the texts of Aa cu de ba [Āryadeva]. What is it but aversion towards phenomena and persons?"<sup>602</sup>

In turning the attention back to the Ārya Guhyasamāja system, the main topic of Mkhas grub's text as a whole, Ngor chen hones in on the identity of his opponent. The passage also employs a common polemical strategy of augmenting a defense by showing the opponent is not only wrong about your views but contradicting their own.

Ngor chen employs this very strategy in an even earlier instance of divergence in N2. N1 552.4 references the opponent's writings (which we can of course trace to Mkhas grub) and criticizes a particular point within them: "You (*rtog ge pa*) say (that we) "arrange one hundred and fifty-seven deities of the body mandala for only the outer mandala which has only nine deities." Although you write that, you're wrong."<sup>603</sup> However, rather than just negating the opponent's view with 'you're wrong,' N2 instead reads: "This is mere impudent speech without regard for the vast Vajrayāna scriptural system. This is shown to be erroneous in three regards: obstructing highest yoga tantra, obstructing the Hevajra system; obstructing your own claims." Ngor chen's critique hits even closer to home within a longer divergence [N2 591.5-594.6]. This section is devoted to defending against the claim of a discordance in the enumeration of deities in inner and outer mandala. Ngor chen connects the opponent so explicitly with the Guhyasamāja here that he seems to barely stop short of naming Mkhas grub:

"You babble senselessly without recalling your very own claims. Likewise, your very own Ārya Guhyasamāja commentary becomes invalidated on account of arranging the forty-nine deities in the inner mandala within the mere thirty-two of the outer mandala.

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<sup>602</sup> *mdor na gzhung 'dir phyi dkyil la lha mo nyi shu bshad pa de nang dkyil la ma bkod nang dkyil gyi lha so gnyis po de phyi dkyil la ma bkod pas; phyi nang thun mong ba'i lha gcig kyang med pas; mchog tu gyur pa'i gzhung 'di yang [602.2] 'gog par byad dam gal te lugs 'di la phyi nang thun mong ba'i lha gcig kyang med pa ma grub ste; gtso bo lus la bkod pa'i phyir ro snyam na ma yin te; phyi dkyil gyi gtso bi ni yab yum zhal sbyor yin la; nang dkyil la gtso bo snying ga dang; yum rdo [602.3] sgor dgod pa'i phyir ro; kye dge sbyong dag; 'phags skor gyi gzhung shes par khas len bzhin du; grub chen aa cu de ba'i gzhung ma dran par bab col du smra ba 'di chos dang gang zag la zhe sdang bar gyur pa las gzhan ci zhig*

<sup>603</sup> *khyed kyis phyi'i dkyil 'khor la lha dgu las med pa la lus dkyil kyi lha brgya lnga bcu rtsa bdun la sogs pa bkod cing ; zhes bris pa'ang mi 'thad de* instead of *pa'ang mi 'thad de* N2 587.4 reads just *pa yang* then adds: *[...587.4]rdo rje theg pa'i gzhung lugs rgya chen po ma mthong bzhin du; spyi brtol gyi s?mra ba tsam zad de; 'di 'khrul par bstan pa la gsum; rnal sbyor bla med spyi dang 'gal ba; kye rdo rje'i gzhung dang 'gal ba; rang gi khas blangs dang 'gal ba'o*

The reason is your very own claim: ‘arranging Amoghasiddhi on the two channels of vital basis, Kṣitigarbha on the two eyes, Vajrapāṇi on the two ears, Rūpavajra on the two eye orifices, Śabdavajra on the two nostrils, Samantabhadra on the twelve joints, Sumbha, on the two feet.’ You yourself wrote it. Remember?’<sup>604</sup>

Although this paraphrase of Mkhas grub’s text is not immediately recognizable from his body mandala chapter, it corresponds roughly with Mkhas grub’s citation from the *Pinḍikṛta*. [KJ 257.5-259.1] However, it is also possible that it refers to another portion of Mkhas grub’s text outside of the body mandala chapter or even to another one of his texts. Ngor chen may even have undertaken a deeper investigation of Mkhas grub’s writings between the time of composing N1 and N2. This longer “version” may therefore represent Ngor chen’s findings.<sup>605</sup> In the instances of divergence between N1 and N2 discussed thusfar, themes of variation in citation and increased polemical tone have been established. The final standard of variation to be discussed here concerns Ngor chen’s sophisticated approach to tantric commentary.

A particular passage from N2 [585.4-587.3] reveals an impressive attempt to synthesize the versions of body mandala from different tantric texts and systems as well as to evaluate their relationship. Here, Ngor chen synthesizes the *Vajramālā*, *Samputa*, and *Cakrasaṃvara* together with the writings of Darikapa and Ghantapa. The context is the interpretation of Bu ston’s contested statement on the absence of protective circle body mandala in the Cakrasaṃvara cycle discussed in Chapter Three. Ngor chen quoted Abhayākāragupta’s *Niṣpannayogāvaī* and the *Samputa Tantra* and referred the reader to the explicit and implicit layers of textual meaning. He emphasized the importance of “supplementing” [*kha bskangs*] from the oral instructions of the Sakya lineage gurus and expressed the equivalence of those instructions with the teachings of Jetari. The complexity of tracing citations of Jetari in Ngor chen’s texts has been referenced above. In N2, Ngor chen postpones the citation of Jetari’s *Sādhana of the Four Seals*, for the time being, and instead diverges to expound upon the precise methodology of “supplementing” or “amending” [*kha bskangs*]:

“What’s the contradiction in supplementing in the context of Cakrasaṃvara? If you think it’s inappropriate to supplement what’s not explained in the Cakrasaṃvara texts by

<sup>604</sup> *rang gi khas ci blangs ma dran par ci rung rung du smra ba’i bab col te; de ltar na; khyed rang gi gsang ’dus ’phags lugs [594.5] kyi sgrub thabs kyi ti ka de’ang mi ’thad par ’gyur te; phyi dkyil la lha so gnyis las med pa las; nang dkyil la lha bzhi bcu zhe dgu bkod ba’i phyir ro; rtags khyed rang gis khas blangs te; don yod grub pa brla rtsa (emend to bla rtsa) gnyis dang; sa snying mig gnyis dang; [594.6] phyag rdor rna ba gnyis dang; gzugs rdo rje ma mig gi sgo gnyis dang; sgra rdo rje ma rna ba’i sgo gnyis; kun bzang tshigs bcu gnyis dang; gnod mdzes rkang mthil gnyis la bkod pa rgyu mtshan dang bcas te bris pa de; nga [?da] dran par gyis shig*

<sup>605</sup> I am grateful to Professor Jacob Dalton for proposing this possibility. Ngor chen’s own compositions on the Guhyasamāja system between 1423 and 1425 which just preceded his 1426 body mandala texts may also have involved investigation of Mkhas grub’s and Tsong kha pa’s writings on the Guhyasamāja system.

drawing upon the Hevajra (corpus), then likewise, your own use of the *Vajramālā* to explicate all cases in which the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala (appears) ...[long quote from *Vajramālā* describing the body mandala of the support in equating the parts of the body with parts of the celestial palace] ...would be invalid. This is because you're supplementing what's not actually explained in the Cakrasaṃvara text from a Guhyasamāja explanatory tantra. To supplement the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala with the *Vajramālā Explanatory Tantra* would be wrong".<sup>606</sup>

The quotation from the *Vajramālā*, elided here in my translation, is the very same quote cited by Mkhas grub [*Ocean of Attainment* 255.6-256.4] to describe how to generate the body mandala of the support. We have observed above the somewhat puzzling significance of Mkhas grub's invocation of the Cakrasaṃvara system in a text intended to focus upon the Guhyasamāja. For example, Mkhas grub's choice to begin his critique of other approaches to the body mandala practice as well his pronouncement of his own interpretation with a quote from Ghantapa's Cakrasaṃvara text reinforces the connection between the two systems in his text. [See *Ocean of Attainment* 234.1 and 251.3 respectively] Mkhas grub did make some effort to distinguish his remarks on generating the body as the celestial palace from the Cakrasaṃvara system, in stating:

“Therefore, as for the manner of establishing the body mandala in accord with the tantra *piṭaka* and the texts of the *mahāsiddhas* and the texts of the Indian panditas, it is like this. As for particular extraordinary cases such as Cakrasaṃvara, it is not the situation. Terrifying with power, it is not explained here, but it should be understood from the great exegesis of Luipa, the discourse(s) of *rje rin po che* [Tsong kha pa] himself and so forth.”<sup>607</sup>

Yet, Mkhas grub's critique of the version of the body mandala practice propounded by “some Tibetans” for “body mandala practice in the mother tantras” on the basis of Bu ston's interpretation of Nag po pa's Cakrasaṃvara commentary marks the persistent relevance of the Cakrasaṃvara system to Mkhas grub's argument. We have discerned how Ngor chen uses the *Sampuṭa Tantra* to invalidate Mkhas grub's claims and

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<sup>606</sup> [585] *bde mchog gi skabs su'ang kha bskangs pa yin bas 'di la 'gal ba ci yod; gal te bde mchog gi gzhung du ma bshad pa; kye rdor rje nas kha bskang du mi rung ngo snyam na; de ltar na khyed rang gis bde mchog gi lus dkyil kyi skabs thams cad du; bshad rgyud rdo rje 'phreng ba nas bshad pa ltar ...[586.3] zhes pa ci rigs pas kha bskang la gsal gdab; ces bris pa yang mi 'thad par 'gyur te; bde mchog gi gzhung du dngos su ma bshad pa; gsang 'dus kyi bshad rgyud nas kha bskangs pa'i phyir ro; bde mchog lus dkyil gyi skabs su bshad rgyud rdo rje phreng bas kha bskang ba yang mi thad de*

<sup>607</sup> *des na rgyud sde dang grub chen gyi gzhung dang rgya gar mkhas pa gzhung dang mthun pa'i lus dkyil bsgrub tshul ni de ltar yin la; bde mchog la sogs pa'i thun mong ma yin pa'i khyad par dag ni skabs ma yin pa dang mngas pas [254.6] 'jigs te 'dir ma bris gyi ; rje rin po che nyid kyi gsung rab lu i pa'i rnam bshad chen mo sogs las shes bar bya zhing*

observed how the application of this explanatory tantra to both the Hevajra and Cakrasamvara tantras is a source of potential confusion.

In our discussions of Ngor chen's use of the *Samputa Tantra* above, we considered the particular ambiguities presented by explanatory tantras for textual interpretation. We also explored the possibility that polemical and exegetical contexts like the body mandala debate are the very ground upon which the boundaries of tantric hermeneutics are established. Ngor chen's statement about supplementing the Cakrasamvara body mandala with the *Vajramālā Explanatory Tantra* further substantiates that hypothesis. The *Samputa* is an explanatory tantra common to both Cakrasamvara and Hevajra systems and a text that has been labelled a "compilation" or "synthesis" of other tantric texts.<sup>608</sup> The *Vajramālā*, an explanatory tantra of the Guhyasamājā, has been described as an "anthology" of mahāyoga and yoginī tantra approaches and itself refers to those different orientations in its respective chapters.<sup>609</sup> Both texts present gray areas regarding the scope and limits of their application. While Mkhas grub and Ngor chen exploit this interpretive range, Ngor chen takes a further step in this particular divergence in N2. Rather than merely synthesizing traditions, he is drawing a line to demarcate the limit for the *Vajramālā*'s range of application.

Ngor chen provides a host of short excerpts and references in the following order: Cakrasamvara, the previously quoted *Samputa Tantra*, (Abhayākāragupta's) *Āmnāyamañjarī*, Mahāsiddha Darikapa, the *Vajramālā*, Cakrasamvara again, Mahāsiddha Ghantapa and finally, the *Vajramālā* once again. These citations are organized as evidence that it's wrong to supplement the Cakrasamvara from the *Vajramālā* and are all familiar from Ngor chen's larger argument. The essential differences Ngor chen suggests concern the architecture of palace/body correlation, specifically the dimensions of the four sides of the palace and the four gates of the mandala compound. He is attempting to show that the explanations from the *Vajramālā* are incompatible with those associated with the Cakrasamvara; he includes the *Samputa Tantra* and its commentary, the *Āmnāyamañjarī*, among the latter. While at first glance, this may appear to be a mere summary of the ground covered in Ngor chen's larger argument, N2 actually adds an important element:

"For these reasons, it's wrong to supplement the Cakrasamvara from the *Vajramālā* since it (the Cakrasamvara) agrees with the mother tantras. It's utterly appropriate to supplement it from the Hevajra cycle. This manner of scriptural explanation will be expounded upon below."<sup>610</sup>

In this display of commentarial mastery, Ngor chen thereby not only limits the scope of application of the *Vajramālā*, but also, solidifies the hermeneutic link between

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<sup>608</sup> See Szanto 2013, p.5 and Lee 2003, p.35

<sup>609</sup> Kittay, p.189.

<sup>610</sup> [587.1] *rgyu mtshan de rnam kyī phyir; bde mchog gi skabs su rgyud rdor phreng gis kha bskang ba mi 'thad par grub la; ma rgyud nang mthun pa'i phyir ro; kye rdor gyi chos skor nas kha bskang ba shin tu 'thad par grub pa yin no; lung las ji ltar gsung tshul yang 'og nas rgyas par 'chad par 'gyur ro*

the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara cycles. Ngor chen's biography itself explains his tantric polemics, as embodied in particular in his *gnad kyi zla ser* (and various letters and replies) as a refutation of those who misunderstand the forefathers' approaches to all three systems: Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, and Guhyasaṃāja.<sup>611</sup>

Our comparisons of the two 'versions' of Ngor chen's text have highlighted three important themes of variation: in citation strategies, polemical tone, and enhanced doxographical or syncretic emphasis. Questions still remain as to the precise relationship of these two texts. However, examining instances of these variations has enriched our portrait of Ngor chen and the ways in which his identity as tantric commentator is harmonized with his polemics. More largely, the comparison has reinforced the importance of the body mandala debate as a site for experimenting with the boundaries of tantric exegesis.

#### IV. Reflections on the Body Mandala Debate as Bodily Discourse

We will conclude by reflecting upon the significance of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's engagement with the ritual mechanics and textual bases of body mandala practice. To what degree does the body mandala debate have anything to do with the body? Catherine Bell's theories of the "ritual body," discussed in the introduction, suggest that through ritual the body both internalizes and even subverts external forces of discipline. The issues raised in this debate speak to a similar variety of corporeal potential for the body as both instrument and agent. The body mandala practice by definition internalizes the cosmic structure of the mandala, transforming the practitioner's view of his/her own body as well as its relationship to the environment and community. Controversies over techniques of mapping this structure onto the body explore its limits and strive to articulate vital relationships between different ways of viewing the body. Perhaps like simultaneously contemplating a vivisection and a skeletal drawing, mandalas ask us to simultaneously view the world in two ways at once. To see the mandala is to see both a bird's eye view and an embedded view, to engage with the world with an apprehension of the big picture.

To construct a mandala is to construct a world; to dissolve it is to abandon form itself to the boundless expanse of emptiness. Through the embodied experience of the practitioner, the mandala is spontaneously redeployed in new ways. The body mandala debate presents a nuanced concept of the body as a "basis" or "support" [*rten*] for generating deities and ultimately, for soteriological practice. The status of the body as support raises questions about the relationship between ordinary and enlightened bodies as well as between the ordinary body and the subtle body, or specifically in this context, the vajra body. We have discussed the complex formulations of causality produced by Tibetan scholars to describe the body's role in facilitating liberation. To construct a body

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<sup>611</sup> Sangs rgyas phun tshogs, 564.5-.6. [546.5] *gzhan yang bla ma gong ma'i lugs kyi bde kye gsang gsum gyi don ma rtogs pa dang; log par rtogs pa mtha' dag sun 'phyin pa'i bstan bcos chen po legs* [564.6] *bshad gnad kyi zla zer; spring yig dbang po'i rdo rje; de bzhin du dris lan sna tshogs kyi sgo nas log rtog zlog par byed pa'i bstan bcos du ma mdzad do*

mandala is to ‘pierce to the pith’ of the body, to access its subtle energies and to harness their potential.<sup>612</sup> Body mandala is therefore a ritual technology for interacting with the body in a deeper way; the body mandala debate suggests competing systems of knowledge and interpretation of the body’s points of power and vulnerability and how best to control them.

In the body mandala debate, the body also functions as what Foucault would call a “cultural text.”<sup>613</sup> As summarized by Judith Butler, Foucault describes the body as “a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves, a nodal point or nexus for relations of juridical and productive power.”<sup>614</sup> Mkhas grub and Ngor chen use the body as a site for contesting issues of textual authority. Through exegesis and polemics, they reinvent the relationships between texts in interpreting the body mandala practice. The body provides a site for establishing the legitimacy of a tradition through complementarity and conflict, and therefore as the ground for deploying “discipline” as defined by Foucault. The body mandala debate therefore suggests complex dynamics of institutional identity that help us to discern the contours of the “social body” of fifteenth-century Tibet in a new light.

Butler highlights important paradoxes in Foucault’s treatment of the body, especially problems of its ontology and materiality:

“In a sense, for Foucault, as for Nietzsche, cultural values emerge as the result of an inscription on the body, where the body is understood as a medium, indeed, a blank page, an unusual one, to be sure, for it appears to bleed and suffer under the pressure of a writing instrument.”<sup>615</sup>

Butler’s investigation of Foucault’s perspective on body as “surface,” “resistance,” and “cultural or discursive practice” might be translated into our interpretation of the body mandala debate:

“That history is ‘inscribed’ or ‘imprinted’ onto a body that is not history suggests not only that the body constitutes the material surface preconditional to history, but that the deregulation and subversion of given regimes of power are effected by the body’s resistance against the workings of history itself...Yet his statements on ‘history’ appear to undermine precisely the insight into the constructed status of the body which his studies on sexuality and criminality were supposed to establish.”<sup>616</sup>

In order to avoid limiting our search for ways of knowing the body through the body mandala texts, it is necessary to combine Bell’s ideas about the “ritual body” with Foucault’s “cultural text.” Butler’s critique of Foucault is also valuable in prompting us

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<sup>612</sup> On the etymology of mandala as ‘taking the pith,’ see Lee 2003 p. 130 fn4.

<sup>613</sup> See Susan Hekman, “Material Bodies,” in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Donn Welton (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1998).

<sup>614</sup> Butler 1989, p.601. Butler, Judith (1989). “Foucault and the paradox of bodily inscriptions.” *Journal of Philosophy* 86 (11): 601-607.

<sup>615</sup> Butler 1989, p.604.

<sup>616</sup> Butler 1989, p.607.

to question our own motivations for seeking the body in the body mandala texts. In combining these different approaches to the body together with those of Mkhas grub and Ngor chen, we can see that the body is not just the ground for resistance or a blank slate, the remnant of karmic defilement or the basis for transformation, illusive or real.

Interpreting the body mandala debate presents the possibility that body is, perhaps, best known as what Sa chen would call an “explanatory continuum,” or even, an “explanatory tantra”:

“[The method continuum (i.e.the body)] is also called the ‘explanatory continuum’ because the root to be realized, which is the mind, is realized and mastered through the alignment of the dependently arisen connections in the body, which is the agent of realization, and thus the explanatory continuum.”<sup>617</sup>

Just as the body helps us to better apprehend the subtle perfume of the nature of the mind, it is always pointing beyond itself.

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<sup>617</sup> Stearns 2006, p46. Translation of Sa chen kun dga’ snying po’s *Explication of the Treatise for Nyak*.



## **Conclusion: Iconoclasm and the Subtle Body: Art, Ritual, and the Body in a Single Painting of the Cakrasaṃvara Body Mandala**

This conclusion examines an unusual painting of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala [Tib. *lus dkyil* Skt. *deha-maṇḍala*] practice created in Nepal in the nineteenth or twentieth century.<sup>618</sup> This anomalous painting provides an opportunity to revisit the broader issues of embodiment, ritual, and representation framing this dissertation and discussed in its introduction. [Fig.24] In Chapter Five, we initiated a comparison of visual and textual representations of embodied ritual practice. In the process, we experimented with LaTour's concept of "iconophilia" as a tool for interpreting *sādhana* as bodily discourse. In this conclusion, we will re-introduce a dialogue between visual and textual representations of the body and also more deeply explore the relationship of images and bodies.

How do we interpret the absence of comparable examples of paintings of body mandala alongside the array of other varieties of mandala paintings created by Newar and Tibetan artists? Does this absence qualify as a form of iconoclasm? Within the visual culture of tantra, there are no apparent reservations about creating images of divine or human bodies, although there are certainly iconographic convention and guidelines for distinguishing the two. However, images of the subtle body are more rare. By "subtle body," we mean a body defined by invisible structures and processes realized exclusively by the advanced tantric practitioner through sustained ritual practice. Does the subtle body perhaps pose a problem of potential category confusion of divine and human bodies, a confusion on par with the kind discussed by Mkhas grub in Chapter Four in the context of body mandala?

The first part of this conclusion deals with particular modes of representing the human body in the visual culture of India and the Himalayas.<sup>619</sup> We will explore the

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<sup>618</sup> I presented my research on this painting at a workshop on Buddhist art and text in September 2013. I am grateful for the feedback I received from the workshop participants at that time. See my forthcoming publication: Dachille, Rae Erin. "Iconoclasm and the Subtle Body: a Study of Art, Ritual and the Body in a Single Nineteenth- Century Nepalese Painting." *Reading Outside the Lines: A Workshop on the Intersection of Buddhist Art and Texts September 13-15, 2013, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich* (Contemporary Issues in Buddhist Studies) (Publication forthcoming 2016).

<sup>619</sup> Swiss art critic Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945) introduced the term "mode of representation" within art historical parlance in his *Principles of Art History*, a comparison of ways of seeing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as embodied in the classical and baroque movements in Europe. Melville 2009 provides an overview of Wölfflin's contributions to the study of the role of representation in the "history of vision." Melville observes: "two levels of linguistic analogy are run constantly together in this text, thus tangling together problems of translation and representation. Such terms as 'one's own language' or mode of representation as such' introduce a deep complication to notions of medium, genre, and relation within art history: all of them, I

solutions the creator of this nineteenth/twentieth-century Nepalese body mandala painting produced in response to the challenges of representing the body mandala practice alongside other representations of the subtle body. We will then move on to reconsider the concept of “fabrication” [Tib. *bcos ma*] familiar from our discussion of Mkhas grub’s writings on body mandala in Chapter Four and explore its implications for understanding material representations of this ritual practice. In doing so, we bring to light a significant aspect of Tibetan Buddhist ritual and philosophical understandings of material creation that may enrich art historical approaches. In addition, we will call into question assumptions about the relationship of embodiment and materiality, suggesting that the categories of body, image, and matter be re-evaluated in light of Buddhist sources. Finally, we conclude by reflecting upon the relationship of representation and reality expressed through body mandala to make sense of how images and bodies function as “supports” for liberation.

## **I. Modes of Representing the Subtle Body**

### **A. The microcosm-macrocosm correlation**

The body mandala painting from a Private Collection has been identified by Jeff Watt of the Rubin Foundation as a nineteenth or twentieth-century creation from Nepal based in the Newari Cakrasaṃvara tradition.<sup>620</sup> [Fig. 24] However, the painting appears to be an anomaly, the only one of its kind. Why would Buddhists choose not to depict the body mandala tradition in material form? The rich legacy of *paubha* paintings of mandala created by Newar artists, often for Tibetan patrons, and specifically of Cakrasaṃvara mandala attests to the fact that in Nepal itself esotericism didn’t necessarily limit artistic production. Despite the prohibition on revealing tantric practices to the uninitiated, there is a prolific tradition of representing material (or what will be

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suggest, work to maintain a constant reference to reading within the field of the history of vision, and to maintain it as at once fleeting and natural, something like a metaphor- but a metaphor without which one cannot manage, a catechresis then.” Stephen Melville, “Deconstruction and the Limits of Interpretation,” *The Art of Art History: a Critical Anthology*, edited by Donald Preziosi (ed) (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1998 & 2009): 271-316. See pp. 279-280.

I have explored modes of representation as an interpretive tool in my studies of a set of seventeenth century Tibetan medical paintings: Rae Erin Dachille-Hey, “The Case of the Disappearing Blue Woman: Understanding How Meaning is Made in Desi Sangye Gyatso’s Blue Beryl Paintings,” *Asian Medicine* Vol. 6, Issue 2 (2011): 293-320. See also Rae Erin Dachille, “Modes of Representation and Meanings in the Blue Beryl Paintings of Desi Sangye Gyatso” (unpublished Masters thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2007).

This approach to representations through emphasizing mode over content has also been articulated by Vidya Dehejia in the context of early Indian Buddhist art. See Vidya Dehejia, “On Modes of Visual Narration in Early Buddhist Art,” *The Art Bulletin* Vol. 72 No. 3 (Sept. 1990): 374-392.

<sup>620</sup> See [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org) HAR Item no. 59648 for image and identification.

termed ‘outer’) mandala, the mandala as a celestial palace inhabited by deities depicted in two-dimensional form; such representations take the form of murals paintings, paintings on cloth or more ephemerally, altars of painted powder that are ritually destroyed. The absence of examples for comparison with our body mandala painting suggests that perhaps there is something special about the body itself that resists such representation.

Let’s look for a moment at a few examples of representations of the body in South Asia and the Himalayas that may suggest comparable modes of representing aspects of the body invisible to the untrained eye. The first is a Hindu depiction also from Nepal and likewise dated fairly late, the eighteenth century. [Fig. 25] Here we find the mapping of the universe onto the human form in a union of microcosm and macrocosm. This image type may be classified as one of the Viṣṇu viśvarūpa forms in which the body of the god contains the universe in its entirety. Howard has detailed aspects of the evolution of the *viśvarūpa* type from Vedic through to Upaniṣadic and Purāṇic sources.<sup>621</sup> The lord’s body is encircled by a large black and white serpent, presumably the serpent upon whom he rests during periods of cosmic gestation. A small red serpent also appears at his feet and a rope-like form extends from a small white house beside his waist along the lower contours of the body and up to an identical structure on the opposite side. Deities inhabit subtle points of the body like the set of seven cakras as well as more external points on the arms and legs and the gates or orifices of the body. Demons, beasts and humans all appear within the serpentine enclosure, while the lower registers of the painting seem to depict an epic struggle with demonic forces. On the upper portion of the torso a crowned red deity approaches a mythical beast and what appear to be four human figures. The main figure is positioned in three-quarter view circle with hands in a *añjali mudrā* facing a red circle containing a seated figure facing him. While the precise identification of all the elements of this painting lies beyond the scope of this article, on a general level we may compare the manner of mapping deities onto the body, the correlation of macrocosm and microcosm, and the dialogue between internal and external produced therein with the representation of the body mandala.

Another image of the Viṣṇu viśvarūpa from the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum appeared in the recent Smithsonian exhibition, *Yoga: the Art of Transformation*, an exploration of the visual culture of yoga from the first millennium to the present day.<sup>622</sup> [Fig. 26] In this representation from Jaipur, dated to between 1800 and 1820, the entire cosmological drama is located within the boundaries of the blue body of the god rather than spilling outward across the different domains of the painting. The correlation of lord and cosmos is complete, reinforced by the many-headed serpent upon which he stands and the cosmic elements of sun and moon appearing as the eyes. Clouds, vapor and rain are mediating elements between the body of the god and the otherwise empty background. Unlike the previously discussed example, the body of the

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<sup>621</sup> Angela Falco Howard, *The Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha* (Studies in South Asian Culture). Leiden: Brill, 1986. See especially pp.58-64.

<sup>622</sup> The exhibition, curated by Debra Diamond, first appeared at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in Washington, D.C. (10/19/2013-01/26/2014) before proceeding to the San Francisco Asian Art Museum (02/21/2014-05/25/2014) where I had the opportunity to view it. The final leg of the tour was the Cleveland Museum of Art (06/22/2014-09/07/2014).

god is forward-facing, adorned with jewelry, and possessed of his signature attributes like the conch and discus. Both deities and architectural forms make up the structure of the body. Deities are shown residing on key points of the body such as the forehead, throat, heart and genitals, but no circles forming cakras or lotuses contain them. Other deities appear on the arms and in the nostrils, reflecting some concern with occupying both peripheries and orifices of the body. Only the shoulder region and central abdomen are vacant spaces. Gold lines create registers in the lower part of the body and order the interaction of various human, divine and animal figures; the effect is an apparent hierarchy of cosmological domains.

The palatial architectural structures, in particular those at the crown, between the eyebrows, and at the throat, suggest a correlation of human and divine through the metaphor of the space of the royal court. David Gordon White has located some early imaginings of the subtle body within the *Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad* (c. third century BCE) that depicts the body as a “fort with eleven gates” inhabited by the soul in the form of thumb-sized human who is the locus of divine adoration.<sup>623</sup> One way of interpreting architectural spaces within representations of the body is according to a socio-political model assuming a correlation of human and divine orders.<sup>624</sup> A painting from the Buryiat Museum exemplifies the application of architectural and courtly metaphors for describing the body within the textual and visual culture of Tibetan medicine. [Fig.27] For example, registers three and four of the painting depict the heart as the king and the members of his court as the supporting organs.<sup>625</sup> Registers one, two and five show the other parts of the anatomy as architectural forms.

One way of defining mandala is as an assembly of buddhas and attendant deities, in other words, as a royal court.<sup>626</sup> The mandala palace invokes multiple modes of expressing hierarchy, through vertical as well as through radial stratification, negotiating both the interplay of top and bottom as well as of center and periphery. Both of these modes co-exist in this Victoria and Albert Viṣṇu viśvarūpa. Key deities are aligned on a central axis, although the identity of this axis with the central channel of the subtle body is not explicit; deities are also clustered around the figure at the heart and stratified in the

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<sup>623</sup> David Gordon White, “Yoga in Transformation,” in *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, ed. Debra Diamond (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2013), 35-45. See p. 36 and *Kāṭhaka Upaniṣad* 4.12; 5.1.3.

<sup>624</sup> Indeed the correlation of king and god is a common trope articulated in Indian myth and ritual.

<sup>625</sup> Such correlations can be found within the Chinese medical system as well. See Livia Kohn’s discussion of the courtly model in Daoist representations of the body-cosmos relation through reference to texts such as the *Huainanzi*, *Huangdi neijing suwen* and *Laozi zhongjing*. Livia Kohn, “The Daoist Body of qi,” in *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Bod*, edited by Geoffrey Samuel and Jay Johnston (Routledge Studies in Asian Religion and Philosophy) (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 16-32. See pp. 29-30.

<sup>626</sup> This trope of the “imperial metaphor” is appropriated by tantric literature as well, especially through the template of the mandala. See Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

registers in the lower body. Relationships between figures also manifest in their particular postures and gestures of exchange; multiple dramas are enacted within the space of the body.<sup>627</sup>

Angela Falco Howard has studied the impact of Viṣṇu viśvarūpa iconography upon Buddhist representations of the cosmological Buddha found in the caves of China and Central Asia.<sup>628</sup> Howard shows how early Hindu representations of the cosmic Viṣṇu interpreted his manifold and all-encompassing nature as a many-headed form expanding within the fixed limits of an aureole. However, the creators of Buddhist representations were inspired by textual accounts of the cosmic aspect of Viṣṇu to create a cosmic Buddha whose manifold nature was expressed not merely through a multiplication of heads and arms but rather as a body populated by an infinite variety of human, animal and divine forms.<sup>629</sup> This infinity of forms indicated the totality of the realm of rebirth within the form of this universal Buddha as exemplified by an early representation from Northern Wei- (386-534) Dunhuang, Mogao Cave 428.<sup>630</sup> [Fig 28] A Sui-dynasty (581-618) example, a gray marble statue in the collection of the Freer Gallery, exploits the full potential of its three-dimensionality; all sides of the Buddha's garment are covered with scenes of the realms of rebirth as well as with narratives from the life of Śākyamuni.<sup>631</sup> [Fig.29] The latter example, in particular, employs a multiplicity of architectural forms in combination with mountain formations to frame and demarcate the various narrative vignettes. Both examples employ a vertical hierarchy in depicting the levels of rebirth on the garment draping the Buddha's form while marking a central point on the body. In the Dunhuang example, this central point is demarcated by a demi-god holding the sun and moon while in the Freer example, the heart center is marked by Mt. Meru and a pair of *nāgas*. Stephen Teiser has described these images in his study of representations of the Buddhist wheel of life, considering similar issues of vertical vs. radial modes of

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<sup>627</sup> Within the textual traditions of Buddhist *yoginī tantra*, it is a common trope to locate the ritual drama within the space of the womb of the *ḍākinī*; within certain varieties of body mandala ritual, the practitioner projects this drama onto the womb of the consort. However, I am not aware of any visual representations depicting the *ḍākinīs* in this way. Therefore, the Viṣṇu viśvarūpa imagery may be an unusual occasion in which the rich detail of mythological drama connected with a totalizing bodily form actually appears in a visual representation.

<sup>628</sup> Howard 1986, especially pp.58-64. I am grateful to Monika Zinn for encouraging me to explore these materials during *Reading Outside the Lines: A Workshop on the Intersection of Buddhist Art and Texts September 13-15, 2013, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich*.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> See figure 13 in Angela Falco Howard, "A New Chronology for the Kizil Mural Paintings," *Archives of Asian Art*, Vol. 44 (1981): 68-83. Here Howard explains that there is some discrepancy in the dating of cave ?428 as Northern Zhou ca. 575 by the Dunhuang Institute vs Northern Wei (ca. 525) by Paul Pelliot. See p.74.

<sup>631</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the Freer example, see Angela Falco Howard, "The monumental 'Cosmological Buddha' in the Freer Gallery of Art: Chronology and Style," *Ars Orientalis*, Vol. 14 (1984): 53-73. The Dunhuang example also appears in this article, as figure 2, but is labeled as cave 428 vs. 429 as in Howard 1981.

representing the complete span of the wheel of rebirth.<sup>632</sup> Teiser reflects upon the embodiment of narrative and cosmos as Buddha as follows:

“The cosmos is part of his body—a point made equally well, in different form, by the common mythological motif in which entire world systems emanate from various parts (pores, tongue, *ūrnākeśa* [wisp of hair between the eyebrows]) of the Buddha’s body. In one mode, the whole world is projected outward from a single part of the Buddha’s body. In the other mode, the world is inscribed upon the entire body of the Buddha. In both modes—unlike pictures of the wheel of rebirth—the Six Paths are tied directly to the physical body of the Buddha.”<sup>633</sup>

What is achieved by representing a multiplicity of forms within the body of a deity? Is the body itself a narrative frame with the capacity to simultaneously contain multiple temporal and spatial dimensions of reality? One key distinction between the Viṣṇu-viśvarūpa forms and many of the cosmological buddhas discussed by Howard is that while the former display cosmic bodies inhabited and pervaded by or even composed of manifold forms, in the case of the cosmological buddhas, the variety of forms might be described as ornamental. In other words, the narrative detail is translated into visual form as a tapestry, a garment worn by the buddha that appears more exterior than interior (if indeed those categories are deemed useful for examining this issue). From a philosophical perspective, this garment is more like the screen upon which the proliferation of forms of the phenomenal world manifest in an ephemeral manner than a representation of a fixed ontological state.

In the case of the Viṣṇu viśvarūpa examples we have examined, locating the narrative and formal details within or surrounding the deity’s body conveys a more vivid equivalence of the body of the deity with the cosmos. Ornament does, however, play a role in these examples as well. In the Nepalese example, the body of the deity itself is, in a sense, ornamented by cakras and various figures. The Indian example exhibits an even stronger principle of ornamentation, with the golden architectural structures at the throat, between the eyebrows and at the crown bearing a strong resemblance to jewelry. The deity’s body is marked and adorned with the forms of various deities and their respective abodes. As with the thirty-two *lakṣaṇas* or “marks” that identify the Buddha’s body as extraordinary (like his elongated earlobes and the wheels that appear on the soles of his feet), these ornaments or markers indicate the divine nature of this body.

We will compare two illustrations from a Rajasthani manuscript dated to 1824 of Gorakṣānatha’s hatha yoga text, the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati*. This comparison provides the opportunity to juxtapose the two different modes of representing the structure of the subtle body of the yogic practitioner: in terms of architectural forms and of cakras. [Fig. 30 & Fig. 31] The text itself, which Mallinson 2011 has dated to the

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<sup>632</sup> Stephen F. Teiser, *Reinventing the Wheel: Paintings of Rebirth in Medieval Buddhist Temples* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 130-135. I have found Teiser’s work helpful in identifying the central points of these figures.

<sup>633</sup> Teiser 2006, 131.

early eighteenth century, propounds a nine-cakra system.<sup>634</sup> These folia from the Mehrangarh Museum Trust (also featured in *Yoga: the Art of Transformation*) use a common template of the body as flesh-colored, facing front against a solid blue background, and adorned with jewelry. Only a decorative mountain or cloud element around the shoulders in **Figure 31** bleeds beyond the boundaries of the body. Both cosmic elements and deities inhabit the body; the sun and moon are located on the cheeks, and Śiva resides in the genital region, with Brahma in the area between the throat and heart. Hosts of beings appear on the upper arms and inside the elbows, and a blue figure, perhaps Kṛṣṇa, appears on the upper left shoulder. A male and female retinue congregates near the navel, listening to the teachings of a divine being standing upon a cosmic tortoise. Debra Diamond has identified further cosmological elements within this painting, equating the palaces, for example, with the fourteen worlds.<sup>635</sup> Both architectural and environmental/geographic forms structure the space in a similar manner to the cosmological Buddha images discussed by Howard but with less density of form. The artist is, in a sense, punctuating the space of the body, making it legible to the viewer. In the case of the two folia from the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati*, while **Figure 31** imagines the body as built environment composed of architectural forms, **Figure 30** maps the cakras onto the body. There, only two deities are shown residing within key points along the central axis of the body, at the navel and genital region respectively. The figure is more akin to a human body than the other examples we have discussed, neither resting upon a mythically charged animal nor containing cosmic elements like the sun and moon.

Thriving upon multiple correlations of human, divine, and cosmic bodies, the body mandala practice plays with conceptions of inner and outer in comparable ways to the cosmic Viṣṇu and Buddha representations. The ritual destabilizes any fixed boundary between self and other, inside and outside, transforming the perception of the practitioner by simultaneously revealing the nature of one's own body as a divine container inhabited by deities and of the whole universe as part of the mandala. The question of what it means for deities to reside within the body has larger philosophical implications that may lie beyond the purview of this paper, but a few basic aspects of the problem will be introduced. First, one must consider the question of what kind of body is being inhabited. In the case of the Viṣṇu viśvarūpa, it is a divine body that encompasses or permeates the realms of existence and articulates a strong microcosmic-macrocosmic relationship. In the case of representations of the bodies of yogic practitioners, these bodies reveal previously invisible and inherent forces manifested through practice.

### **Methods for Interpreting Representations of the Subtle Body**

A Kāśmiri scroll also featured in *Yoga: The Art of Transformation* instantiates the template of the body in the format of the scroll itself.<sup>636</sup> The scroll combines the representation of the cakras and deities residing therein with architectural forms, all

<sup>634</sup> Debra Diamond, *Yoga: The Art of Enlightenment* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2013), 166 fn9.

<sup>635</sup> Diamond 2013, 164.

<sup>636</sup> See Diamond 2013, fig 11c.

aligned along a vertical hierarchy. Therefore the “corpus” becomes the body upon which the cakras and cosmological systems are diagrammed. This fusion of corporeal spaces evokes Foucault’s interpretation of the body as a “cultural text” upon which society maps its norms and desires; for Foucault, this body/text is the ground for regulation through “discipline.”<sup>637</sup> <sup>638</sup> Catherine Bell’s theories of the “ritual body,” discussed in the introduction, suggest that through ritual the body both internalizes and even subverts external forces of discipline. If we regard visual representations of the cosmic man or the yogic practitioner in light of Foucault and Bell, what can we see about the systems of authority they internalized and externalized, and transformed or were transformed by?

Debra Diamond, Associate Curator of South and Southeast Asian Art at the Freer and Sackler Galleries and curator of *Yoga: The Art of Transformation*, observes that “a multiplicity of subtle body systems flourished in medieval and early modern India.”<sup>639</sup> This diversity of systems should be taken into account in comparing different visual and textual representations of the subtle or yogic body and different versions of ritual practices like body mandala. The hierarchical placement of deities and cosmological sites should be evaluated in relation to ritual, medical and even socio-political understandings of the sites of power and vulnerability of the human body. For example, the cakra system was gradually absorbed by Hindu yoga and Ayurveda from Buddhist and Hindu tantric practices.<sup>640</sup>

Samuel has identified the principle of *prāṇa* as a key concept in subtle formulations linking human physiology and cosmos, a concept intertwined with theories of selfhood or *ātman*.<sup>641</sup> Building upon the work of Larson, he indicates Patañjali’s fourth-century *Yoga Sūtras* as one source for tracing the “localization of yogic processes” in particular sites within the body.<sup>642</sup>

In comparing different versions of ritual practices oriented around the subtle body, practices such as body mandala, it is necessary to take into account variant understandings of the movement of psycho-physical energies along pathways within the body’s boundaries and beyond. Such understandings of the body’s hidden structures and processes underlie visual and textual accounts of deities residing within the body. In other words, locating deities on or within the body is a way of punctuating it, drawing attention

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<sup>637</sup> See Susan Hekman, “Material Bodies,” in *Body and Flesh: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Donn Welton (Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, Ltd., 1998), 61-70. Hekman provides an interesting comparison of Judith Butler and Susan’s Bordo’s approaches to Foucault’s writings on the body.

<sup>638</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

<sup>639</sup> Diamond 2013, 167.

<sup>640</sup> Geoffrey Samuel, “Introduction to Part One” and “The Subtle body in India and Beyond” in *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Bod*, edited by Geoffrey Samuel and Jay Johnston (Routledge Studies in Asian Religion and Philosophy) (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 13-15 & 33-47. I am grateful also to Lisa Brooks, my peer at UC Berkeley, for her insights on this issue during our May 2014 communication.

<sup>641</sup> Samuel 2013, 34.

<sup>642</sup> Samuel 2013, 34 and Larson 2009, 488 & 493.



to sites of particular strength or vulnerability. Points on the body are marked for a reason, be it to locate powerful forces of heat or generation that can facilitate an experience of bliss or to locate places where the flow of breath can become trapped and stagnate, prohibiting future spiritual advancement. Whether the nature of the potentiality is strength or vulnerability, these bodily sites are marked as important objects of focus for the ritual practitioner. To know the body is to be empowered.

When we search for precedents for visual and textual representations of deities within the body and, more specifically, in the cakras, the question of the origins of such practices comes to the forefront.<sup>643</sup> The images discussed thusfar in this article emphasize the microcosmic-macrocosmic correlation; the latter two images of the yogic body [Fig. 30 & 31] reveal the hidden structures of more explicitly human rather than divine bodies. Though we have a plenitude of Indian textual sources of the Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa or *mahāpuruṣa* variety, most of the Hindu visual sources we have discussed above do not predate the nineteenth century. The “cosmological Buddhas” from East and Central Asia appear over a millennium earlier.

There are also Jain images of a cosmic man dating from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries. [Fig. 32 & Fig. 33]<sup>644</sup> John Cort describes how these images were used by preachers to reveal the hidden order of the universe and to locate human practitioners within it.<sup>645</sup> Phyllis Granoff shows how such representations juxtapose the mathematical order of the cosmos with the chaos and uncertainty of the round of rebirth. Both of the Jain cosmic man representations featured in Granoff’s catalogue reveal an underlying order to the cosmos as a means of promoting moral action. The cosmological Buddha images described above are likely to have inspired a similar response in their viewers. Granoff highlights how cosmic order is encoded in the images through the use of numbers and labels to consolidate vast amounts of information.<sup>646</sup> This detail is of interest in demonstrating one technique available to artists for creating a totalistic vision of the universe within the confines of the human form. It may be useful to keep this method of encoding in mind later in this article as we proceed to examine the ways in which the Nepalese painter of the body mandala painting at issue coped with the challenges of spatial limitations.

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<sup>643</sup> Mallinson has described how the cakra system itself is predated by the system of *granthi* or knots within the subtle body. (Personal communication with Diamond cited in Diamond 2013, p166 fn7) Therefore, one might begin by searching for references to deities inhabiting these sites. For a visual representation, see Diamond 2013, Figure 11a, a late seventeenth-century painting in which Brahma, Viṣṇu, and Śiva are located at the navel, heart and forehead of the body of Raja Mandhata. See Diamond 2013, p166.

<sup>644</sup> These images were featured in the 2009-10 exhibition, *Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection*, curated by Phyllis Granoff at the Rubin Museum of Art.

<sup>645</sup> John E. Cort, “Contemplating the Jain Universe: Visions of Order and Chaos,” in *Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection*, edited by Phyllis E. Granoff (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2009-2010), 34-37.

<sup>646</sup> Phyllis Granoff, “The Mathematics of the Jain Cosmos,” in *Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection*, edited by Phyllis E. Granoff (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2009-2010), 54.

Turning now to focus upon representations of the subtle body, a body marked by vital points and permeated by the flow of psycho-physical energies, we are led to ask if there are factors that may have made the body a more compelling subject for visual representation during the nineteenth century and beyond than it had been in previous eras. For example, might we find clues in the *bhakti* movement and its associated visual tradition which emphasizes the overall breakdown of the boundaries between devotee and god, with the human devotee partaking of and even making up the body of the divine? With regard to representations of the subtle body that make visible the invisible centers through which psycho-physical elements circulate, why do we suddenly find examples like the folia from the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati* arising in the nineteenth century? In discussing the representations of the subtle body featured in the *Yoga* exhibition, Curator Debra Diamond remarked that in the Indian case, representations of the subtle body of the yogic practitioner seem to proliferate in response to the demands of “new audiences.”<sup>647</sup> Remaining open to the utility of patronage as a model for interpreting the connection between the production of visual representations and the demand for a means of circulating systems of ritual or spiritual knowledge to audiences of often elite patrons, we will investigate a few Tibetan images that reveal the secrets of the human form invisible to the naked eye.

### **III. Visualizing the Invisible: Tantric and Medical Imagery in Tibet**

The visual cultures of both tantra and medicine in Tibet employ modes of representation for revealing hidden aspects of the structures and processes that lie beneath the surface of the human body. This section takes a closer look at the two-sided cakra diagram discussed in Chapter Five and compares it with a Tibetan medical painting. Heller 2010 theorizes that the cakra diagram is an eleventh-century creation from Western Tibet.

**[Fig.23]** Although this dating is not definitive, it is likely that this diagram is significantly earlier than the Indian and Nepali examples discussed above. In line with the theories of Robert Mayer, Heller suggests that this diagram provides evidence for the transmission of Indic tantric knowledge to a Western Tibetan audience and perhaps even of the incorporation of Hindu elements into Buddhist tantra.<sup>648</sup>

To review, the front side of the diagram depicts a body with some unusual cakras and inscriptions. With regard to these inscriptions, Heller has observed that “rather than give names for each cakra as in an anatomical system, the cakra are associated with different ritual phases.”<sup>649</sup> No deities are explicitly represented within the cakras or upon any external points of the body. With this emphasis upon process vs. structure, the diagram appears to emphasize the manipulation of psycho-physical energies now associated with completion stage practices of yoginī tantra. Tsenshab Rinpoche suggested to Heller that the uppermost cakra, composed of forty-nine squares, is connected with progress through the bardo; considered in light of the inscription on the reverse side of

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<sup>647</sup> Personal communication, June 2013.

<sup>648</sup> See Robert Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection: The Phur-pa bcu-gnyis* (Oxford: Kiscadale Publications, 1996), 135.

<sup>649</sup> Heller 2010, 63.

the image, Heller concludes that the diagram was likely created to provide instruction for funerary rites.<sup>650</sup>

The reverse side of the image is a stack of eleven shapes marked by seed syllables together symbolizing aspects of tantric and abhidharmic cosmology; the composite is reminiscent of descriptions of the formation of the human body from the elements of the universe. Such descriptions abound in tantric literature. There is an apparent resemblance to the shapes and syllables used to manifest the basis for imagining the deities in the generation stage body mandala practice of Cakrasaṃvara.<sup>651</sup> If this drawing is indeed connected with funerary rites, it reveals an important aspect of Buddhist tantric perspectives on death. Namely, only by understanding how the body is formed can one properly understand how it dissolves in the death process; through this understanding, one becomes empowered to harness the dissolution process to liberate oneself from the cycle of rebirth.

Therefore, one way of understanding this diagram is as a representation of invisible processes enacted by the tantric practitioner through ritual. Tantric *sādhana* practice is often understood as comprised of two stages, the generation and completion stages. A very basic distinction of these two stages can be articulated in terms of structure and process. In the generation stage, the practitioner focuses upon the structure of the subtle body; in the completion stage, the practitioner focuses upon manipulating psychophysical energies like *prāṇa* along particular pathways within that structure.<sup>652</sup> In confronting visual representations of the subtle body, it is important to consider the challenges posed to the artist in representing such processes.

Tibetan medical illustrators faced similar problems, as suggested by an eighteenth-century Tibetan medical representation from the collection of the Rubin Museum of Art. [Fig.34] This appears to be a later copy of a drawing from the set commissioned by Desi Sangye Gyatso in the seventeenth century to illustrate his commentary upon the Tibetan medical tantras, the *Blue Beryl Treatise*.<sup>653</sup> It should be noted that much of the information contained in the Tibetan medical tantras is derived from Indian Āyurvedic sources. Therefore, the medical tantras reflect certain shared conceptualizations of the human form in both its subtle and coarse capacities. One interesting aspect of this representation is that it presents different ways of viewing the body side-by-side.<sup>654</sup> We have more traditional or empirically verifiable anatomical

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<sup>650</sup> The chart-like geometry is reminiscent of the Jain cosmic man depictions discussed above.

<sup>651</sup> John C. Huntington and Dina Bangdel, *The Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art* (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2003), 247.

<sup>652</sup> I am grateful to Dong Sung Shabdrung Rinpoche for his feedback on this topic during our meetings in Fall 2013 at UC Berkeley.

<sup>653</sup> See Meyer, Fernand with Yuri Parfionovich and Gyurme Dorje. 2002. *Tibetan Medical Paintings: Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso* Vol.1 (London: Serindia Publications, 1992)

<sup>654</sup> On the modes of representation employed by Desi Sangye Gyatso's medical paintings, see: Dachille, R.E. 2007, 'Modes of Representation and Meanings in the Blue Beryl Paintings of Desi Sangye Gyatso,' Unpublished masters thesis, University of Wisconsin, Madison. & Dachille(-Hey). 2011. "The Case of the Disappearing Blue Woman:

information about the flesh and bones appearing alongside the central illustration of the channels and cakras (aspects of the body known directly only by tantric practitioners). Frances Garrett, Janet Gyatso, and Vincanne Adams have discussed the controversies that have arisen over the course of Tibetan medical history with regard to representing the subtle body.<sup>655</sup> At the forefront is the issue of how to empirically verify the existence of the channels within the human body. If only accomplished tantric practitioners can access this understanding of the body, then how can it be measured, confirmed, and depicted? And yet without a basic knowledge of how such invisible elements and processes work, one cannot even grasp how the human body is formed. So an image like this enables the viewer to imagine the human body in its most essential form, perhaps in the hopes of one day experiencing it that way for oneself.

Both the tantric and medical illustrations seem to have been created for specialist audiences. These were audiences who engaged in practices, whether spiritual or medical, theoretical and/or practical, aimed at cultivating a way of seeing the human body that transcends the obvious. Visual representations may serve to preserve this knowledge and also to disseminate it by offering the audience a preview of a variety of perception of the human body cultivated over time. The final portion of this article will consider how this latter aspect of representation produced anxiety for one fifteenth-century Tibetan commentarial writer on body mandala and provoked a response that might be labeled as a variety of iconoclasm. This iconoclastic tendency, fueled by concerns that viewers might mistake this ‘preview’ or simulacrum for the real thing may, in turn, be linked with other motivations for refraining from representing the subtle body in fabricated material images in India and the Himalayas.<sup>656</sup> Before engaging these philosophical tensions, we will pause to look closely at the Nepalese body mandala painting.

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Understanding How Meaning is Made in Desi Sangye Gyatso’s *Blue Beryl* Paintings.” *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity*, Volume 7, Issue 1 ‘Gender, Health and Medicine in Tibet’: Dr Heidi Fjeld and Theresia Hofer (eds), Autumn 2011.

<sup>655</sup> Frances Garrett and Vincanne Adams, “The Three Channels in Tibetan Medicine, with a translation of Tsultrim Gyaltzen’s ‘A clear explanation of the principal structure and location of the circulatory channels as illustrated in the medical paintings,” *Traditional South Asian Medicine* 8 (2008) 86-114. Janet Gyatso, “The Authority of Empiricism and the Empiricism of Authority: Medicine and Buddhism in Tibet on the Eve of Modernity,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Volume 24, Number 2 (2004): 83-96. I look forward to reading Janet Gyatso’s recently published study of Tibetan medical discourses: Gyatso, Janet. 2015. *Being human in a Buddhist world: an intellectual history of medicine in early modern Tibet*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

<sup>656</sup> For example, if we subscribe to a Foucaultian view of tantra as a ritual technology inextricably linked with power and control, much like the model embraced by Davidson 2003, then one motivation for the iconoclastic tendency to refrain from producing visual representations of the subtle body could be the desire to control the spread of ritual knowledge. For images, even more than texts seem to contain an extraordinary capacity for replication and proliferation beyond the scope of their origin.

## The Nepalese Body Mandala Painting: Challenges and Insights

### A. Situating the body

Like the artists executing the tantric and medical representations discussed in the previous section, the creator of the Nepalese body mandala painting faced the challenge of representing invisible psycho-physical processes through visible forms. Just as a medical illustrator may have struggled to devise a mode for representing the formation and workings of the channels of the human body, the body mandala painter faced the challenges of depicting the structure of the subtle body alongside the processes enacted through it. On one hand, representing the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice visually required the artist to locate and demarcate essential points of the body as the abodes of particular deities, a kind of parsing of the body's form more clearly associated with generation stage practices. On the other hand, the project demanded that the artist simultaneously display the animation or manipulation of this form in processes associated with the completion stage of the body mandala practice: the movement of psycho-physical energies, the blazing of the inner fire, the melting of the drop of bodhicitta and the repeated experiences of varieties of bliss.<sup>657</sup> As the essential points on the subtle body and the foci of such practices, the cakras represent these processes, processes like the ones to be described below in terms of “piercing to the pith” of the body. They are, however, represented together with what we might call the more structural aspects of the practice; in other words, the techniques of mapping the deities of the mandala onto the body are more strongly connected with the generation stage of tantric *sādhana* practice.

On a more basic level, we can begin exploring the Nepalese body mandala painting by asking what kind of body is being represented. Is the body portrayed here divine or human? The proportions of the body indicate some general iconometric standard is being applied as one would find in the representation of a deity. There are certainly no realistic or naturalistic elements in the sense in which those terms are typically defined in an art historical context. There are none of the marks of a ‘mad yogi’ type either, but there are features beyond the deities inhabiting it that mark this body as unusual or extraordinary. For example, the hair has been transformed into what appear to be lotus petals, while the earlobes are elongated like those of a Buddha.<sup>658</sup> Technically, the body mandala practitioner first produces a vision of the self as Cakrasaṃvara before arraying the mandala deities upon the body.<sup>659</sup> Therefore, the ritual practice itself uses the form of the human body as a basis while simultaneously preserving a distinction between the ordinary and enlightened body.<sup>660</sup> The form of the body depicted in this

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<sup>657</sup> I am grateful to Professor Patricia Berger for suggesting this concept of “animation” to me in our Fall 2013 meetings.

<sup>658</sup> Meghan Howard, a peer of mine at UC Berkeley, suggested to me that perhaps the stylized hair might be an attempt to represent the flaming and upright locks that often appear in descriptions of fierce deities in tantric *sādhana* texts. [Personal communication, Fall 2013].

<sup>659</sup> There is a course a great deal of variety in the order and details of this practice as articulated in different Indian and Tibetan *sādhana* texts.

<sup>660</sup> I am grateful to Kurt Keutzer for his insights into the nature of the body projected in body mandala practice.

Nepalese painting seems to function in a similar way. Fusing elements of the human and divine, this representation of the body may serve as a template for imagining the transformation of an ordinary way of perceiving the body into an extraordinary or enlightened perspective.

Another basic observation about this body is that, unlike the other representations we have discussed above, it is seated. In my own attempts to diagram various body mandala practices I have found the form seated in meditative posture to be the most intuitive. Similarly, English 2002 observes: “Although in the Vajrayoginī tradition the body mandala should be undertaken by the yogin who imagines himself as the goddess, the correlations with the body points fit more naturally upon a figure seated in meditation.”<sup>661</sup> [See Fig. 13] Therefore, the posture of the body emphasizes the dimension of tantric practice, inviting comparison with depictions of renowned *siddhas* or accomplished tantric practitioners.

The background is another feature to consider in evaluating the artist’s tools for situating the body.<sup>662</sup> While it lacks the specificity of rich landscape detail found in many Tibetan *thangka* and Nepalese *paubha* paintings, the representation does locate the body within a natural, hilly environment of the variety imagined as conducive to spiritual practice in popular imagination. The upper portion is indeed the most descript, depicting the heavens populated by gods resting upon clouds, with the cosmic features of sun and moon as well as the *sambhogakāya* forms of Buddhas in union. On a more abstract level, the tricolor scheme might suggest a correlation with the three realms to which the three varieties of mandala deities of body, speech and mind relate. While it is indeed possible to assume that the artist was merely replicating conventions of Buddhist painting in situating the body of the practitioner within this landscape, it seems equally plausible that the artist is using the landscape as a mode of referencing a particular feature of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice. This feature typifies yet another variety of macrocosmic-microcosmic correlation, between the human body and cosmos, on one hand, and on the other, between the mandala and the Nepalese landscape.

The Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice associates the twenty-four goddesses of the body, speech, and mind cakras with twenty-four sacred sites.<sup>663</sup> These sites are transposed onto the human body. English 2002 provides a diagram of the Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārahī body mandala practices [See Fig. 35]; English eloquently summarizes the structure and process behind this aspect of body mandala practice:

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<sup>661</sup> English 2002, p198.

<sup>662</sup> I am grateful to Orna Tsultrim for her suggestion to devote more attention to this aspect of the painting during *Reading Outside the Lines: A Workshop on the Intersection of Buddhist Art and Texts September 13-15, 2013, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich*.

<sup>663</sup> Sugiki 2009 deals extensively with the evolution of this dimension of the practice. Tsunehiko Sugiki, “Five Types of Internal Mandala Described in the Cakrasaṃvara Buddhist Literature: Somatic Representations of One’s Innate Sacredness.” See “The Structure and Traditions of the Systems of Holy Sites in the Buddhist Saṃvara Cycle and its Related Scriptural Cycles in Early Medieval South Asia: The Geography of Esoteric Buddhism in the Eyes of the Compilers of the Scriptures,” *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, 2009.

“...the site goddesses dwell ‘within’ the sites identified at a particular point on the body...but they are imaginatively transformed into channels ‘within’ the body. Tantric sources commonly refer to the goddesses ‘as’ the channels or veins...the twenty-four male gods on the sites (consorts to the site goddesses) are said to ‘purify’ certain aspects of the body. For example, Pracaṇḍā’s consort, Khaṇḍakapālin, becomes the nails and teeth; the channel (Pracaṇḍā herself) carries nourishment from the head (Pullīramalaya) to the nails and teeth (Khaṇḍakapālin).”<sup>664</sup>

Citing the work of Kalff, English 2002 also points out that this list of twenty-four bodily constituents purified by the male consorts is the same list found in the Pāli canon as components of the human body.<sup>665</sup> In the dissemination of tantric practice throughout the Himalayan region from India, these sites were also mapped onto local landscapes, and the meridians of this tantricized landscape were reinforced through pilgrimage practices.<sup>666</sup> Dina Bangdel has discussed the mapping of these sites onto the geography of the Kathmandu valley.<sup>667</sup> By depicting the body in this sort of background rather than against the bare monochromatic backdrop found in many Indian representations of the subtle body like those from the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati* [Fig. 30 & 31], the Nepalese artist invokes a deep network of correlations. Embedding the body in multiple frameworks of mandala, cosmos, and landscape, the artist succeeds in representing defining elements of body mandala practice.

## B. Locating the Mandala deities

Of course the more deities included in the mandala practice of a particular tantric system, the more difficult it becomes to represent them in visual form within the space not just of the body but also of a canvas or manuscript. In the case of the sixty-two deity Cakrasaṃvara body mandala, this is one obstacle representation poses for the artist. Without the structure of the mandala palace to contain the deities, they are dispersed throughout the canvas and connected by lines to their associated bodily sites, albeit in potentially meaningful groupings. Though the artist does choose to represent a few deities within the confines of the body, were he/she to attempt to include them all, the body itself would be effaced by images of the deities. Ultimately this might be what body mandala practice is doing, effacing the ordinary body by over-inscribing it with a multiplicity of divine forms. However, for the purposes of representing a ritual process grounded in the basis of the human form, the very foundation for tantric practice, we must begin within the confines of the human form. Whether regarded as a tool or an

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<sup>664</sup> English 2002, 199 & 202.

<sup>665</sup> English 2002, p203. Michael Martin Kalff, “On Supreme Bliss: A Study of the History and Interpretation of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1979). Gray 2007 (p61) also makes this connection.

<sup>666</sup> On the mapping of the mandala onto the Tibetan landscape, see Toni Huber, *The Holy Land Reborn: Pilgrimage and the Tibetan Reinvention of Buddhist India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

<sup>667</sup> I am indebted to Dina Bangdel for suggesting that I explore this correlation. Dee Dina Bangdel, “Art in the Ritual Context: The Chakrasaṃvara Tradition in Newar Buddhism,” *Orientalia* No.8 Vol. 34 (2003).

obstacle, the human body is the ultimate framework for our situatedness in time and space, the backdrop against which our stories are woven and the altar upon which our rituals take place.

So how does the method of mapping deities onto the human body depicted here compare with methods of mapping them onto the space of a palace as frequently depicted in art? There are many varieties of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala tradition, the three main transmissions being those of the Indian *siddhas* Luipa, Ghantapada and Kṛṣṇapada.<sup>668</sup> The anomalous nature of this painting together with certain inconsistencies in the mode of representing the deities therein suggests that while certain details of representation and inscription are of interest, it might not be wise to focus too literally upon connecting this representation with a particular ritual text. Our focus here is instead the mode of representing the practice employed by the painter. Therefore, we will begin to approach the details through a comparison with a more familiar mode of representing the Cakrasaṃvara mandala. In comparing the body mandala practice with the format of a fifteenth-century Nepalese *paubha* painting of a mandala palace, we will progress from center to periphery, tracing the progression from the most subtle and profound to the mundane; this progression is inscribed in the logic of the mandala. [See Fig.36] As observed above, there are many different versions of the body mandala practice; this variety of ritual forms of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice, in particular, have been brilliantly outlined and compared by Sugiki 2009.<sup>669</sup> Here we will simply make some general observations about the relation of the form of the body mandala to that of the mandala palace. Then, we will attempt to understand the mode of representation used within this body mandala painting together with the peculiarities of some of its details.

I have inserted numbers into this image of the body mandala painting for the purpose of explaining the positions and identities of the deities and provided a translation of the inscriptions with corresponding numbers. [See Fig. 37 and corresponding list of

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<sup>668</sup> In their outline of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala practice, Huntington and Bangdel 2003 rely largely upon Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's 1997 description.. That practice, according to the Ghantapa system, was transmitted by the Sakya patriarchs and received by Tsong kha pa. Huntington and Bangdel observe the overall similarity of the Newar version of the practice to that propounded by Tsong kha pa. They also use "Newar Sanskrit ritual texts" including the "*Trisamadhi puja vidhi, Samvarodaya dashami, Abhidanottara tantra* and *Samvarodaya Tantra*." See Huntington and Bangdel 2003, pp.243-250, especially 243. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Essence of Vajrayana: The Highest Yoga Tantra Practice of Heruka Body Mandala* (London: Tharpa Publications, 1997). On the importance of the *Samvarodaya Tantra* within the Newar Cakrasaṃvara tradition, see David Gellner, *Monk, Householder and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). More research is indeed still needed to understand the nature and history of the Newar body mandala practice.

<sup>669</sup> See Tsunehiko Sugiki 2009. See also Tsunehiko Sugiki, review of *The Cakrasaṃvara Tantra (The Discourse of Śrī Heruka): A Study and Annotated Translation*, by David Gray, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 31 No.1-2 (2010): 505-542.



inscriptions and deity identifications]. We begin with Cakrasaṃvara and consort at the center of the mandala palace, surrounded by the four goddesses and four skullcups. In some versions of the body mandala practice, these four attendant goddesses are imagined to be the four channels of the heart. In the body mandala painting, the main deity and consort appear upside-down within the cakra at the body's heart center, and although no retinue goddesses or vessels appear, they are likely symbolized by the syllables on the eight petals of the cakra. The next tier of the mandala, often referred to as the 'mind cakra' is embodied by eight deities plus their consorts who, in the case of the body mandala, are generally positioned in the upper region of the body. The next tier is the 'speech cakra,' embodied by eight deities and their consorts positioned in the middle region of the body mandala. Then, the 'body cakra' is embodied by eight deities and their consorts positioned in the lower region of the body mandala. Therefore, the standard hierarchy of body, speech and mind is reiterated here and translated from the radial axis of center to periphery onto the vertical axis of the human body.

The majority of the deities of these three cakras are accounted for by the images and inscriptions of the body mandala painting. Most of these deities of the three cakras appear on the bodily site with which they are connected. In the rare case in which they do not, as with the three couples in union that appear in the foreground of the painting [#53-55], their association with the body part, in this case the anus and genitalia, is indicated by a color-coded line. Red, white, and blue lines trace the courses of the right, left and central channels respectively. Many of the deities associated with the three cakras appear individually but are easily linked as they inhabit corresponding body parts (like the right and left hand), exhibit the same flesh tone, and bear inscriptions with identical seed syllables linking them to the same bodily site. Although the inscriptions are generally in Devanāgarī script and provide the familiar Sanskrit names with some minor inconsistencies, there are a few cases in which the artist or scribe has provided the Newari names for the part of the body that is being indicated, as in the case of the eye and big toe.<sup>670</sup> [See F & #49] In some instances, the goddesses appear in union with their male consorts together with an inscription naming both and providing a syllable matching the site with which the couple is connected. [See, for ex. #31-32, #39-40 & 53-55].

Twenty-eight additional deities or deity pairs hover around the main figure; gold, red, and blue lines connect the majority of them with their corresponding bodily sites. The eight pairs of deities that form the outermost layer of the painting are those often referred to as the *samaya-cakra* goddesses (#1-4 & 23-26). They signify a set of eight goddesses who typically inhabit the four corners and four gates of the mandala palace. In the case of the body mandala, they are often imagined within the sense organs /apertures of the body (the navel and the space between the eyebrows being perhaps less intuitive members of this category). Their role in guarding the boundaries has been translated here in the case of the body mandala painting by placing them in the outermost zones of the painting and providing, in most cases, blue lines linking them to the bodily gates. What is strange is that they are depicted with male consorts, a non-standard feature that does

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<sup>670</sup> I am grateful to Alexander von Rospatt for his guidance in identifying these inscriptions.

not appear to match textual descriptions. The artist/scribe even went so far as to supply the names of these male consorts.<sup>671</sup>

Figures #7-10 appear to be four of the six armor goddesses together with their consorts. Gold lines connect three of the four to the body of the main figure. These goddesses are represented as a complete set of six in the lower register of the mandala palace painting. [Fig. 36] Therefore, although they are not part of the body mandala proper, these goddesses are included by virtue of association with preparatory practices employed in body mandala; that are part of a larger set of auxiliary deities hovering around the body of the main figure. Likewise, #'s 19, 20, 21, 27 & 28 are goddesses the practitioner imagines in purifying the bodily elements; they are depicted individually with gold lines that seem to connect them to the cakras of the main figure. All members of this set are depicted with two arms except for #19, Padmajvālini, here referred to as “Padmajvālini vajra vārāhi,” who is associated with the purification of space and displays four arms. These particular goddesses do not appear in the painting of the mandala palace although that painting does include some auxiliary deities, like the armor goddesses, that are not a part of the Cakrasaṃvara mandala proper. Such deities appear in the corners outside the mandala as well as in the top and bottom registers of the painting beyond the outer rungs of the mandala palace, the protective circle and the cremation grounds.<sup>672</sup> Both paintings, therefore, locate these deities in peripheral positions that indicate their subsidiary status.

Deities numbered 11-13 and 16-18 are individual two-armed deities; red lines connect them to apertures of the body such as eyes and ears. They appear to refer to the set of six bodhisattvas invoked in the purification of the sense spheres. Numbers 14 and 15 depict deity couples that are somewhat more difficult to identify. While the former lacks any color-coded line connecting it to a particular bodily site, #15 has a golden line joined with that of #19 and connecting it to what appears to be the cakra at the forehead. The inscription for #15 is illegible. However, the inscription for #14 reads “Raga Vajra Raga vajri.” The identity of this couple is unclear but shares qualities with couple #22. Couple 22 also appears to be connected with the purification of the sense spheres and is inscribed: “Aiśvaryya vajra. Aiśvaryya vajri.” Although Aiśvaryyavajra is connected with the purification of the body in its totality in some practices, the invention of the consort seems anomalous.

A basic observation can be made with regard to the number of deities represented in the body mandala painting. Typically the sixty-two deities of the Cakrasaṃvara body mandala are counted as forty-eight deities of the body, speech and mind cakras (i.e. the twenty-four pairs), eight deities of the *samayacakra* (the goddesses guarding the gates and corners), plus the two main deities (Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārahī) and the four retinue

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<sup>671</sup> Further research is required to determine whether this detail is significant, but from my own experience working with a proto-body mandala text from Dunhuang, consorts (though in that case, female consorts) are sometimes added somewhat arbitrarily. We have observed how inconsistencies like these often point to iconographic experimentation and the attendant modification of existing structures; these themes illuminate important aspects of the exegesis itself.

<sup>672</sup> See Huntington and Bangdel 2003, p.262 for identifications of these deities.

goddesses. Here instead we have twenty-four deities basically within the bodily frame and twenty-eight deities surrounding it as well as a host of deities inhabiting the cakras. Some of these cakras hover beyond the confines of the body, but are connected to it by color-coded lines. The web of deities and cakras is somewhat unclear but may supply additional information about subtle body processes and structures. For example, the sixteen, eight, and sixty-four petals or channels of which the throat, heart and navel cakras are composed are represented together with syllables that may indicate the goddesses residing in or as those petals/channels. The central deities in three of the six cakras appear upside-down; in ritual visualization, it is common to imagine inverted seed syllables at key bodily points.

More research is required to better understand the cakra representations in this painting, but I would offer one preliminary observation. They reflect a focus upon the cultivation and manipulation of psycho-physical energies that is often associated with completion stage practices. Therefore, there is the potential for comparison with both the Western Tibetan cakra diagram [Fig. 23] and the Tibetan medical painting depicting the bodily cakras and channels [Fig.34] discussed above. As observed in the discussion of those cases, the challenges of representing process and structure simultaneously require the artist to innovate and to experiment with new modes of representation.

### **V. The Problem of Fabrication: Body and Image in the Body Mandala Debate**

Now that we have had the opportunity to compare the mode of representing the body in this painting with other visual representations of the subtle body and of the mandala, we can place the painting in dialogue with the body mandala debate texts. We are now familiar with the basic distinction between “outer mandala,” the mandala of painted cloth or powders) and “inner mandala,” the body mandala. In Chapter Four, we discussed the notion of “fabrication” [*bcos ma*] as it is deployed by Mkhas grub to make sense of tantric ritual acts of imagination and to mark body mandala practice as superior. “Fabrication” proved to be a charged category of analysis imbued within philosophical, linguistic, ritual, and even artistic dimensions of meaning. From a philosophical perspective, fabrication is linked with the flawed tendencies of our mind to superimpose false concepts upon reality. Fabrication is also tied to the “conventional designations” characterizing the way we engage with the world through ideas and language, operating on the conventional vs. ultimate level of truth. Mkhas grub uses the language of fabrication to consider the primordial status of the body as mandala, tapping into issues such as Buddha nature and the relationship of the human body to samsāric existence.

Tantric ritual acts of imagination are also forms of fabrication; however, not all imaginings are equal. For example, in the case of *sādhana*, we encountered the language of ‘similitudes,’ ‘fabrications,’ ‘imputations’ and the ‘contrived’ in descriptions of the generation stage of practice completion stage as juxtaposed with the naturalness and authenticity of the completion/perfection stage.<sup>673</sup> Through its basis in the human body, the body mandala possesses a naturalness lacking in other mandala, both imagined and materially generated varieties. Mkhas grub rje distinguishes the body mandala as an

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<sup>673</sup> Bendor 2006 also discusses this distinction of the generation stage in terms of “similitudes.” See Bendor 2006, p.186 fn4.

“unfabricated mandala” [*ma bcos pa'i dkyil 'khor*] because it has been present since human conception; other mandala supports are “newly fabricated” [*gsar du bcos*] using paints and cloth and so forth.<sup>674</sup> All mandala may function as supports for ritual practice, but the body mandala provides a superior means of support for the body mandala, in turn, rests upon the support of the human body.

Like an image on an altar or on cloth, the body functions as a support [Tib. *rten*] for ritual practice.<sup>675</sup> However, the texts of the body mandala debate suggest that the body forms a different kind of support than others. How does the body serve as a basis for generating deities, and how can it serve as a support for furthering the goals of tantric practice? Mkhas grub argues the mechanics of visualization practice, specifying that only imaginings based in valid cognition can properly transform the body to function as the support for generating deities to become the body mandala. And through that connection to the body, the body mandala is a distinct variety of tantric imagining for “piercing to the pith” of that body. Through ritual practice, the true nature and potential of the human body is discovered and actualized. The channels, winds, and drops of the subtle body or “vajra body” play a vital role in this process. Mkhas grub emphasizes that “piercing to the pith” in body mandala practice makes these subtle elements malleable. Ngor chen justifies the naturalness and authenticity of the practice through its connection with these inherent aspects of the body: “The five channel cakras are naturally established [*rang grub du yod pa*] in the vajra body... Therefore, this is not a mental imputation [*blos brtag pa*]”. (N1 560.4)

The body mandala debate demonstrates the delicate status of both visualization practice as a method and of the human body as a basis for tantric practice. It also suggests that representations, both material and imagined, poses problems of authenticity for both philosophers and tantric exegetes. These problems extended to the domain of textual authority as well; body mandala practices that are fabricated are critiqued as apocryphal. Mkhas grub and Ngor chen link representation with embodiment through classifying and relating texts, creative processes, and bodies.

Just as the body mandala painting presents a seated figure in meditation rather than the body of a recognizable deity, the template of the ordinary human body is necessary for practice. Despite the saṃsāric ties of human embodiment, the broader Buddhist perspective identifies the human form as the ideal form for soteriological progress. Bearing these issues in mind, let us now briefly return to the body mandala painting.

## **VI. Anomaly and Patronage: Further Reflections on the Body Mandala Painting**

Why would a nineteenth-century Newari painter ‘fabricate’ a body mandala if the unfabricated quality of the human body is what distinguishes it from other supports for mandala visualization practice? One possibility presented itself in a recent conversation with Debra Diamond, Senior Curator at the Sackler Museum of Art in D.C. about their

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<sup>674</sup> See especially Mkhas grub 250.6-251.3.

<sup>675</sup> See Tsultemin (forthcoming) 2016 for a discussion of the concept of the “support” in discussions of the artistic process in regard to the practice laying the ground for the creation of a thangka painting.

upcoming exhibition, *Yoga: the Art of Transformation*. We were discussing the disproportionate amount of textual vs. visual representations of the ‘yogic body’ in India. I commented upon the fact that while we find many depictions of tantric practitioners in the art of Tibet and Nepal, in particular the famous Buddhist depictions of the *mahāsiddhas*, illustrations of the subtle body including the channels, winds, and drops are far from common. Now this has been somewhat changed of course by the modern tourist art market in which low-quality reproductions of illustrations of the body copied by artists from published sources abound. One example is reproductions of select paintings of the anatomy and the subtle body from Desi Sangye Gyatso’s famed series of the seventeenth-century medical illustrations of the *Blue Beryl Treatise*. Illustrations of the cakras based in Hindu yoga also proliferate in such circles. However, when we search for historical precedents, only a select few surface.

As mentioned above, when asked to speculate about the Indian case, Debra Diamond remarked that many of the examples they’ve collected for the exhibition seem to suggest the kind of “new audience” for yogic texts and practices.<sup>676</sup> How might we use this category of “new audiences” to think creatively about the patronage of the body mandala painting? Unlike many Newari *pauha* paintings, this one does not include a lower register depicting a donor and ritual specialist, so it seems less likely that the painting was created to commemorate an initiation ceremony. Could there have been a new audience for the body mandala practice in Nepal? Could this painting perhaps signal the reintroduction or revival of the body mandala practice among the Newars? Was there a disruption of the lineage of transmitting this practice that prompted an attempt at revitalization? While we know the cult of Cakrasaṃvara has been popular in Nepal and that Newar artists have been prolific in the production of Cakrasaṃvara statues and mandala, it is difficult to trace the evolution of the body mandala practice there. Even if manuscripts detailing the practice survive in Nepal, it’s hard to tell who was transmitting these practices and to how large an audience. Scribal culture and ritual culture do not always exist in clear relationship to one another. That said, considering existing manuscripts and their colophons is one future avenue of research for connecting scribal activity, ritual practice, and artistic production.

Another consideration is: what does the style of script used in the body mandala painting tell us? Can it more accurately help us to date the painting and to determine its patron or audience? Does it eliminate the possibility that the painting was created for a Tibetan patron, for example? And finally, are there other new audiences we are overlooking? Perhaps a European missionary or government official interested in cataloguing the traditions of Nepal like Brian Houghton Hodgson?<sup>677</sup> But who would reveal such information to a non-initiate, and what sort of prototype would the artist be

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<sup>676</sup> Personal communication, June 2013.

<sup>677</sup> See von Rospatt 2016 for an exploration of a painting commissioned by Hodgson. Keynote Speech presented at *Reading Outside the Lines: A Workshop on the Intersection of Buddhist Art and Texts September 13-15, 2013, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, Munich* (Publication forthcoming, 2016). For more on Hodgson, see Waterhouse, David M. 2004. *The origins of Himalayan studies: Brian Houghton Hodgson in Nepal and Darjeeling, 1820-1858*. London: RoutledgeCurzon.

relying upon? Without more information, we can't identify the artist or patron of this painting or their motives for representing the body mandala practice. However, in presenting this host of questions, I hope I have succeeded in showing that there are some interesting possibilities.

## **VII. Body, Image and the Problem of Matter**

In highlighting the anomalous character of this painting, I have placed it in dialogue with both visual representations that display the microcosm-macrocosm relation embraced by body mandala practice as well as with those that reveal invisible aspects of the structures and processes of the subtle body. Such comparisons have allowed me to foreground questions regarding the modes of representing the subtle body displayed in the body mandala painting. Thematic connections with Tibetan writings on body mandala practice have likewise been explored to exhibit subtle tensions underlying both the creation of material images as well as of simulations. In the process, I have begun to uncover hidden aspects of the relationship of representations to ritual acts of imagination and their respective roles as “supports” for achieving ritual goals. I have also explored the category of fabrication itself as what some Tibetan perspectives might even label as the curse of artwork: invention or even more harshly, imputation. Perhaps most importantly, I have pointed to ways in which the body mandala practice is special because it relies on a very different type of support, the body itself, naturally existing and unfabricated.

I will conclude by taking a moment to reflect upon the relationship of body, image, and matter. From the Buddhist perspective, one of the defining qualities and flaws of the body (Tib. *lus*, hon. *sku*, Skt. *kāya/deha*) is its status as a compounded entity, an assemblage of psycho-physical components that assume material form largely by force of the winds of karma. The etymology of the Sanskrit term *deha* derived from the root *dih*, “to fashion or mold,” tells us that the body is, in a sense, fabricated.<sup>678</sup> The terminology for bodies, images, and forms seems to be virtually interchangeable in many cases in both Sanskrit and Tibetan and emphasizes the shadowy or reflective nature of images. We will recall that Mkhas grub's issues with material images, articulated through juxtaposing the “outer” and “fabricated” mandala with the superior “unfabricated” body mandala, involve their identity as simalra, as reflections or imitations of a true perception of reality. Taking into account tensions surrounding the human body within the larger context of his writings on body mandala, its conflicting capacities as flaw and instrument for liberation, we might consider whether the category of “matter” helps to illuminate the relationship of bodies and images.

Carolyn Walker Bynum's *Christian Materiality* pushes back against the trend in Medieval Studies to fixate upon “the body” and “visuality” as privileged categories for interpreting Medieval Christian religiosity.<sup>679</sup> Bynum demonstrates that what are often interpreted as anxieties about bodies are actually anxieties about the status of “matter.”

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<sup>678</sup> *Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, <http://lexica.indica-et-buddhica.org/dict/lexica>

<sup>679</sup> Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

The author cites the account of Theodulf of Orleans, the eighth-century author of the *Libri Carolini* :

“...There is indeed a very great difference...between the sacrament...and images executed by painters...The former is consecrated by the priest invoking the divine name, the latter painted by a painter with the erudition of a human technique; the former is carried by angels to the altar of God, the latter placed by human hands through their skill on walls to startle the eyes of those looking at them.”<sup>680</sup>

While Bynum interprets this account in terms of the ‘hierarchy of matter,’ one might likewise consider what it tells us about human creation and artistic fabrication. An explicit link between bodies and images is found in Bynum’s recounting of Bonaventure’s vision of St. Francis. St. Francis bears the “image [*effigium*] of the crucified, which was not imprinted [*figuratum*] on tablets of stone or wood by the hands of a craftsman, but marked [*descriptum*] into the members of his body by the finger of the living god.”<sup>681</sup>). Bynum interprets this vision as follows: “Bonaventure’s language makes clear the arguments of medieval theologians that only God can craft or enliven flesh, that it is living men (not dead wood and stone) that are image and image potential.”<sup>682</sup>

The tantric body mandala inscribes the body with the marks of divine enlightened status, and this act of inscription is repeated through ritual practice as a catalyst for change. This comparison between Buddhist and Medieval Christian attitudes towards the creative process suggest that they share a sense that images, bodies have the potential to inspire wonder and deception. They extol a quality Medieval Christians term divine and Buddhists term natural or unfabricated. In terms of Buddhist theories of personhood, bodies pose the ultimate threat of attachment to a stable and fixed notion of self and other. They come into being and ooze and decay through forces beyond control. Through intellectual and moral discipline, the Buddhist practitioner aspires to harness their tendency to replicate in a multiplicity of forms through the stream of rebirth. However, tantric practices like body mandala embrace bodies and images as powerful tools in the project of liberation. Practitioners become both “image and image potential.” The body mandala debate shows the resistance to reifying bodies and images within the very context of generating images on the basis of the body. In struggling to make sense of this paradox, we encounter what LaTour would call the “iconoclash”:

“But what if human hands were actually indispensable to reaching truth, to producing objectivity, to fabricating divinities? What would happen if, when saying that some image is human-made, you were increasing instead of decreasing its claim to truth? That would be the closure of the critical mood, the end of anti-fetischism. We could say, contrary to the critical urge, that the more human-work is shown, the better is their grasp of reality, of sanctity, of worship. That the more images, mediations, intermediaries, icons are multiplied and overtly fabricated, explicitly and publicly constructed, the more

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<sup>680</sup> Bynum 2011, 47.

<sup>681</sup> cf 2 Cor 3:3; Exod 31:18, cited Bynum 2011, 112.

<sup>682</sup> Bynum 2011, 112.

respect we have for their capacities to welcome, to gather, to recollect truth and sanctity (“religere” is one of several etymologies for the word religion.)...Thus we can define an iconoclasm as what happens when there is uncertainty about the exact role of the hand at work in the production of a mediator. It is a hand with a hammer ready to expose, to denounce, to debunk, to show up, to disappoint, to disenchant, to dispel one’s illusions, to let the air out? Or is it, on the contrary, a cautious and careful hand, palm turned as if to catch, to elicit, to educe, to welcome, to generate, to entertain, to maintain, to collect truth and sanctity?”<sup>683</sup>

Tantric practitioners are, themselves, reveling in the iconoclasm, perpetually engaging with images and bodies, mediators navigating the relationships between their creation and destruction. To deny the relevance of representations and embodiment would be to deny the importance of human life itself. What would it look like to continuously create illusions and then “let the air out” of them? How could one adopt the “a cautious and careful hand” necessary to navigate the fine line between attachment and aversion to images and bodies? How might the “iconoclasm” play a crucial role in actualizing a state of mind in which in life’s final breath, we yearn neither for escape nor return, neither for creation nor destruction?

### **VIII. Representation and Reality**

We will conclude by reflecting on the relationship between images and bodies as representations in Buddhist tantra, with a little help from LaTour. To review, we have briefly described Buddhist philosophical attitudes toward representations. The Sakyapa perspective, with which we will become more familiar through Ngor chen, has often been described as “representationalism.” This term was defined above as a view which “asserts that we know not external things, but the representations, or copies, of external things in our own minds.”<sup>684</sup> George Dreyfus describes the conflicting approaches to the relationship between representation and reality developed by the Sakya tradition, of which Ngor chen is a part, and Mkhas grub’s Gelukpa tradition : “Dharmakīrti and his Sa-gya interpreters hold a position we will describe...as representationalism, which postulates that awareness is directly in contact with only representations, what Dharmakīrti call *reflections* or *aspects*. By contrast Kay-drup holds a direct realist view, according to which mental episodes are in direct contact with objects. Hence, the reflection of a thing in consciousness is not a representation but the revelation of that thing itself.”<sup>685</sup>

The description of the Sakyapa position (as developed in response to the work of the Indian philosopher Dharmakīrti) suggests that representations mediate our very experience of the world. Mkhas grub’s position, on the other hand, proposes the possibility of obliterating these representations. One way of describing these conflicting

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<sup>683</sup> LaTour 2002: pp.18 &20

<sup>684</sup> C.E.M. Joad, *Guide to Philosophy*, I.ii.41 (1936) [OED online]

<sup>685</sup> Dreyfus 1997, p.252. For more on the role of representations in Dharmakīrti’s thought, see Dreyfus, p.220.



positions on the nature of the mind is an iconoclasm. If the Sakyapas are iconophiles, in the sense that they accept the inevitability of representations, the Gelukpas are iconoclasts, seeking to destroy the representations that mediate direct contact with reality.

LaTour describes the iconophile's approach to images as attentiveness to the "series of transformations for which each image is only a provisional frame."<sup>686</sup> In my previous work, I described what it means to regard an image as a "provisional frame," as a process that:

"requires a viewer to anticipate that the way meaning is being conveyed by a single image builds upon what precedes it as well as what follows. Viewing images in this way entails accepting that one image possesses the capacity to both prefigure and refigure the images after and before it. The undetermined quality of the segues between images provides an opportunity for a viewer to become self-conscious of the 'transformations' operating through images because the ambiguous connections permit no definitive interpretation of a single image."<sup>687</sup>

The "iconophilic" attitude has potential applications for understanding Buddhist approaches to both images and bodies. We have explored some of these applications, such as in representations of the body in *sādhana*, in diagrams of the subtle body, and even in terms of the karmic connections between births. In the context of meditative practice, the Sakyas not only accept representations (images and ideas) as fundamental, but they also, like LaTour's iconophile, prioritize the movement between them. The transitions between thoughts become a key focus of realization. How can iconophilia be used to read the spaces between thoughts?

In our discussion of the Sakyapa tantric perspective late in Chapter Five, in attempting to glean the attitude towards the body reflected by the Sakya *Lam 'bras* tradition, we discussed the framework of the three continua of cause, method or path, and result. While formally, the body is identified with the method continuum, we observed a degree of blurring the three categories. It was in this context that we were able to discern just how the body, as the foundation for practice, and more specifically, for generating the body mandala, could be endowed with a causal capacity. In other words, we encountered the body as instrument, agent, and foundation for facilitating a realization of the mind, the causal continuum. In a teaching on the "Nature of the Mind," His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama explains the Sakya *Lam 'bras* approach in greater depth. He references a meditative practice whereby one can experience the causal continuum, defined as the "innate mind of clear light," as a distinctly iconophilic process:

"Sakya Pandita says, 'In between the arising of different thought processes, the arising of a radiant clear light mind remains uninterrupted.' So what he is saying is that if you observe the mind, your own thought processes, one after another, in a kind of a sequence, between the arising of one thought and the dissolving of that and the arising of another, there are intervals; regardless of how short they may be, there are transitions between the arising of different thought processes. The practice involves trying to tease out those

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<sup>686</sup> LaTour 1998, p.56

<sup>687</sup> Dachele 2007, Unpublished Master's thesis.

transitional periods so that one can recognize these gaps in the arising of another thought and the dissolution and arising of another thought...So one refrains from both looking backward into the past nor into the future through anticipation and hopes and so on, but remains simply in the present moment. So initially what one experiences is simply a kind of absence or a gap, but through experience, as one learns to prolong that period of this absence, simply remaining focused on the present moment, at that time, one comes to recognize the subtle thought processes. And although this is not exactly the clear light state of mind, it is somewhat indicative of that basic clear light mind... ”

In navigating the space between thoughts, and even prolonging them, one is granted access to a more subtle level of experience of the mind. His Holiness describes the resultant mental state as one of “wonder”:

So in the Sakya tradition...the idea is to cultivate that kind of present moment awareness with a sense of wonder, where one does not let one’s mind follow after the temptation of looking into the past or into the future but simply remaining in that present moment of consciousness. As one learns to remain simply focused upon the present moment of consciousness, then one allows for the natural quality of the mind to express itself. And the natural quality of the mind is clear light.<sup>688</sup>

Within the Sakyapa sources, we encountered the notion of the body itself as one among many “confusing appearances.” In this sense, the body is a representation, an idea, image, or thought that confounds clear definition. Like Baudrillard’s “image,” it inspires wonder and confusion: “it is the reflection of a profound reality; it masks and denatures a profound reality; it masks the absence of a profound reality; it has no relation to any reality whatsoever; it is its own pure simulacrum.”<sup>689</sup>

## **IX. Piercing to the Pith of the Body Mandala Debate**

The body mandala debate reveals profound philosophical tensions underlying tantric exegesis and ritual practice in Tibet. This dissertation demonstrates how tantric polemics

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<sup>688</sup> His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama “Nature of the Mind.” UC Santa Barbara, April 24, 2009 [video recording available on YouTube, 1:40-1:51:15] Here, his Holiness draws a parallel between this Sakya practice and the Dzogchen approach to experiencing *rig pa* awareness. I am grateful to my colleague Dan McNamara for his insights on the connection between the Dzogchen and Sakya approaches. [Personal communication, September 2015]

<sup>689</sup> Jean Baudrillard, “The Precession of Simulacra,” in *Simulacra and Simulation*, translated by Sheila Faria Glaser cited in Margaret Miles, “Image,” in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, Ed., Mark Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) pp.60-72, p.66.

function as a site for reconfiguring the boundaries of exegetical practice. Variations in Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's authorial styles, strategies of argumentation, citation methods, and tone have revealed tensions underlying the intellectual climate of fifteenth-century Tibet. Mkhas grub's methods are informed explicitly by his philosophical training as evidenced by his more aggressive polemical tone and his incorporation of non-tantric discourses like *pramāṇa*. Despite the fact that his chapter on body mandala forms part of an extensive treatise on the generation stage of the Guhyasamāja *sādhana* practice, he can't quite seem to get past the larger implications of core tantric ritual acts of imagination like imagining oneself as a deity. Mkhas grub continually 'grinds his axe,' to borrow van der Kuijp's phrase, construing the connection of imagination and fabrication as a potential threat to the efficacy of tantric ritual action. Mkhas grub works hard to emphasize the centrality of proper causal basis for enlightenment, one that is not corrupted by mental imputations and that complements the *pāramitānaya* approach. Ngor chen, on the other hand, relies more consistently upon the methods of tantric exegesis and focuses upon navigating the relationships between texts, 'aligning the connections,' for his readers. Yet he also plays off Mkhas grub's reliance upon *pramāṇa*, taunting him with comments like, "Jut because you don't see it, doesn't mean it isn't there." While we have exercised caution to avoid attributing undue weight to the sectarian dimension of the body mandala debate at the outset, working slowly through the materials has substantiated some fundamental doctrinal conflicts informing Mkhas grub and Ngor chen's encounter.

In emphasizing the textual authority of the oral instructions and of the teachings of the Sakyapa patriarchs, Ngor chen participates in a broader field of what Davidson has termed "Sakyapa apologetics." The nature of his defense of the Hevajra body mandala is fueled by concerns over its legitimate basis in attested Indian sources. However, factoring in his other polemical writings, we find that Ngor chen's writings on body mandala are also constructed explicitly as part of a larger defense against charges that the Sakyapa tradition of interpreting the *Hevajra Tantra* (at the very core of the *Lam 'bras*) was Citramatrin in orientation. Why precisely was this construed as problematic? In repeated rhetorical acts of reifying the Prasangika Madhyamaka perspective through polemical writing and debate practices, Tibetan authors have created an impasse. For many, this philosophical orientation makes resolving the relationship of the *pāramitānaya* and *mantranaya* approach particularly challenging. The Sakyapa "representationalist" perspective embraces the illusive nature of reality as an unavoidable dimension of saṃsāric existence. This approach lends itself more easily to explaining the efficacy of tantric ritual action as part of a superior path leading to a higher level of realization, the Thirteenth level of Vajradhara. However, Mkhas grub continues to 'grind his axe' precisely because the emerging Gelukpa tradition placed so much emphasis upon reason in the soteriological quest. Regarding *pāramitānaya* and *mantranaya* as two methods leading to the same goal made it hard for Mkhas grub to avoid evaluating them according to the same criteria. The emphasis upon successfully performing the Prasangika Madhyamaka position came with the risk of arriving at a place of no return. Therefore, Mkhas grub is more likely to have been "grinding his axe" precisely because of his prowess (and that of his teacher) in executing a philosophical position. In emphasizing the significance of valid cognition and the necessity of directing the mind towards the apprehension of verifiable objects of knowledge, the Gelukpa stance limits the

possibilities for explaining how the methods of tantra work. Tsong kha pa developed a complex causal schema to explain how tantric ritual may be used to connect ordinary and enlightened existence. Mkhas grub, likewise, emphasizes the “unfabricated” nature of the body mandala through foundation on a basis that is not “newly fabricated.” Both thinkers resolve the problems of “fabrication” by emphasizing the completion stage as the essential link between defiled and enlightened embodiment. Yet, in a sense, the problems they solve are problems that have created for themselves. The body mandala debate is also, therefore, an example of the risks of taking philosophical debate too far as emphasized in Mkhas grub’s attempt at a retraction in *Reply to the Questions of the Kalyānamītra Kon ting gug śrī ba*.

The tensions between gradualism and subitism expressed so potently by the iconic debate of Kamalaśīla and Mohoyen also continue to haunt the project of defining Tibetan Buddhist identity. The polemical exchange between Mkhas grub and Ngor chen demonstrates how fourteenth-century tensions over Buddha nature remain unresolved; they have merely been combined with other philosophical tensions to take on a new form in ritual discourses. The pull between determinism and agency colors the interpretation of ritual methods and goals and their relationship to embodiment in compelling ways. For example, the Gelukpa Guhyasamāja body mandala practice creatively manipulates different types of bodies, working through progressively more subtle varieties aimed at controlling future embodiment. The Sakyapas, on the other hand, embrace the ambiguity of cause, method, and result, experimenting with the very boundary between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Both experiment with the category of the body as a foundation or support for ritual action in a fruitful interplay of instrumentality, agency, and transcendence.

In addition to ritual and philosophy, the body mandala debate suggests connections between tantric ritual and other technologies for knowing the body. For example, Mkhas grub’s emphasis upon the link between the goddesses and elemental *rlung* suggests concerns with articulating the nature of the elements and the movement of bodily winds shared by medical authors. Moreover, his emphasis upon ritual acts of dissolution reflects his formative role in shaping and promoting the Guhyasamāja ritual tradition as a technology for navigating the transition between death, the intermediate state, and rebirth. Considering multiple technologies for knowing the body’s sites of vulnerability and potentiality promises to improve understandings of the evolution of tantric ritual and to meaningfully investigate tantric texts as bodily discourses.

What does it mean to “pierce to the pith” [*gnad du bsnun*] of the body mandala debate, to locate the “main point” [*gnad don*], the very heart of the matter? This dissertation embraces the analogy between corporeality and textuality in various ways. It explores ritual technologies of inscribing the body as a surface to be effaced, protected, and purified or a basis to be transformed. Ritual correlations of body and cosmos suggest that to know the body is to know the world. It considers how in mapping and manipulating vital points, the practitioner parses the body, making it intelligible. Both Ngor chen and Mkhas grub agree that body mandala practice pierces to the body’s very pith, granting access to its hidden potentialities. Soteriology and exegesis are therefore analogous processes. The classification of texts and of bodies has proven to be volatile sites for experimenting with different Buddhist ways of knowing. Sakyapa tantric perspectives suggest that the body is an “explanatory tantra,” a unique resource for accessing the true nature of the mind. In learning to “align the dependently arisen

connections,” to connect the dots, the ritual practitioner and exegete both strive to get to the heart of the matter. And yet the body is always pointing beyond itself. As JZ Smith would remind us, in a sense, there is only commentary.

There are multiple ways in which the body is a text we have authored. It is the creative product of our karma and of the workings of our mind. Looking at representations of the body can help us to learn more about social, economic, and doctrinal anxieties of fifteenth-century thinkers as well as about the interplay of different intellectual discourses: ritual, medicine, exegesis, polemics. So, like Foucault, we might regard the body as a “cultural text.” However, as Judith Butler points out, this blank slate approach presupposes that there is something we can call a body really there. Foucault’s disciplined body does indeed bleed; it resists the effacement of its materiality. So the contradiction Butler finds within Foucault’s thought, between the constructed nature of embodiment and of its resistance, might be similar to the conundrum Mkhas grub faces in two respects: in his struggle to resolve the relationship of ordinary and enlightened bodies as well as between determinism and ritual agency. We might even think of Butler in dialogue with the Sakyapas. For them, the body is an appearance masquerading as reality, an appearance we ourselves don’t realize has been projected or constructed by our mind or (for Butler) by our culture.

How do we access the true nature of reality, the true nature of the mind? Is it through reason or through embodied ritual action? Like the new historicists, do we need to learn a new way of understanding representations to access what lies beneath? Or do we need to consider the possibility that the ‘reality’ we seek beneath the surface is just another expectation or construction? LaTour is an ideal conversation partner in the sense that he tempers the poststructuralist conundrum in a way that accords with Buddhist perspectives. He encourages the iconoclasm, that moment where we are poised on the brink between structuralist and poststructuralist thought, between creation and destruction, eternalism and nihilism, emptiness and form. LaTour teaches us to regard the tensions between these dualities as productive in a similar way that ritual is- playing upon the tension between representation and reality.



Fig. 1 Mkhas grug dge legs dpal bzang po Nineteenth-century 40.64 x 68.58 cm (16 x 27 in) Collection of Shelley and Donald Rubin P1994.8.4 himalayanart.org HAR#56





Fig. 2  
Mkhas grub rje and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī  
Eighteenth-century  
30 in x 20 in, 76.2 cm x 50.1 cm (image); 58 1/2 in x 33 in, 148.6 cm x 83.8 cm (overall)  
The Avery Brundage Collection, Asian Art Museum Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian  
Art and Culture, San Francisco B62D33

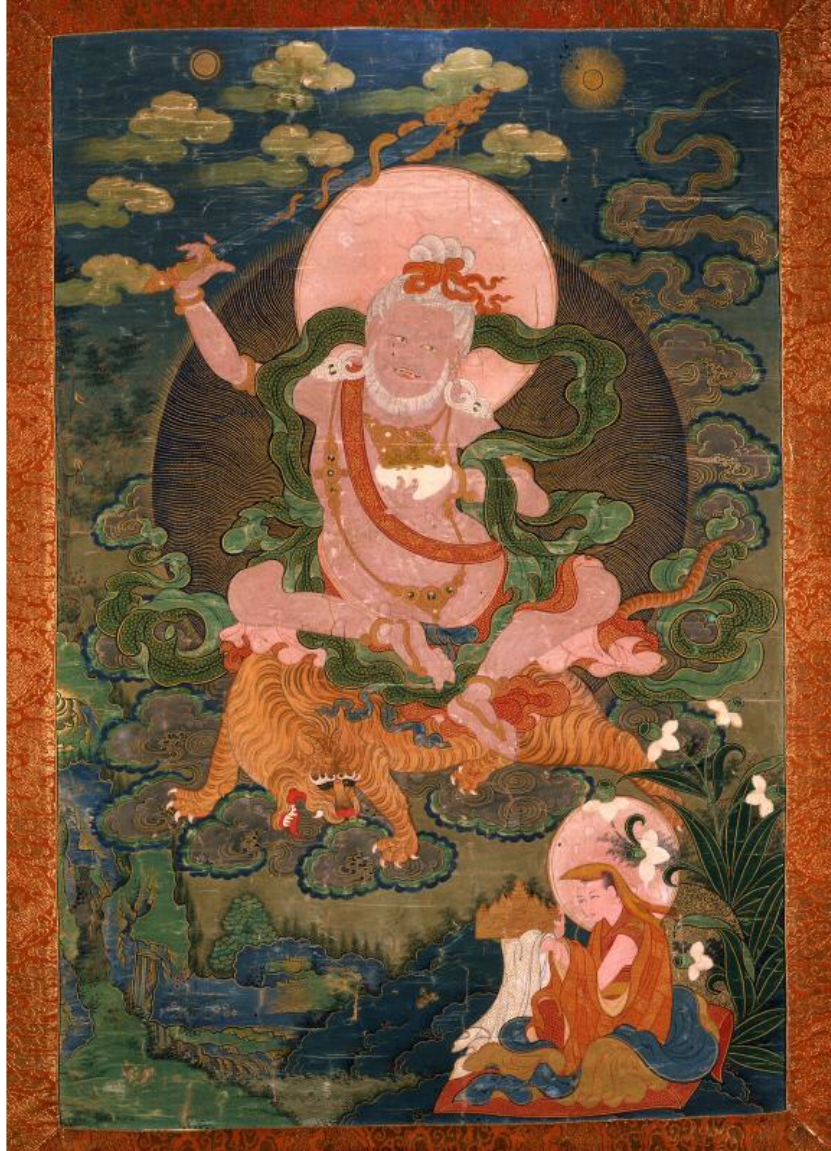


Fig. 3  
Mkhas grub rje and the great adept Dombhi Heruka  
Eighteenth-century  
29 3/4 in x W. 20 in, 75.6 cm x W. 50.1 cm (image); 58 in x W. 34 in. 147.3 cm x W.  
86.4 cm (overall)  
The Avery Brundage Collection, Asian Art Museum Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian  
Art and Culture, San Francisco B62D37





Fig. 4  
Ngor chen kun dga' bzang po with two lineages  
1430's-1460  
34 1/16 x 28 3/8 in. (86.5 x 72 cm)  
Michael Henss Collection, Zurich  
Published in Jackson 2010

[himalayanart.org](http://himalayanart.org) HAR#88708





Fig. 5 Mandalas from the Vajrāvalī Cycle, Painting Five in the Set of Fourteen  
Ngor Monastery, 1429-56  
35 1/4 x 29 in (89.5 x 73.7 cm); Mount: 53 x 33 in (134.6 x 83.8 cm)  
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Stella Kramrisch Collection 1994-138-635  
Published in Thurman and Rhie 1997 [Fig.21], Kossak and Singer 1998 [Fig.47c]



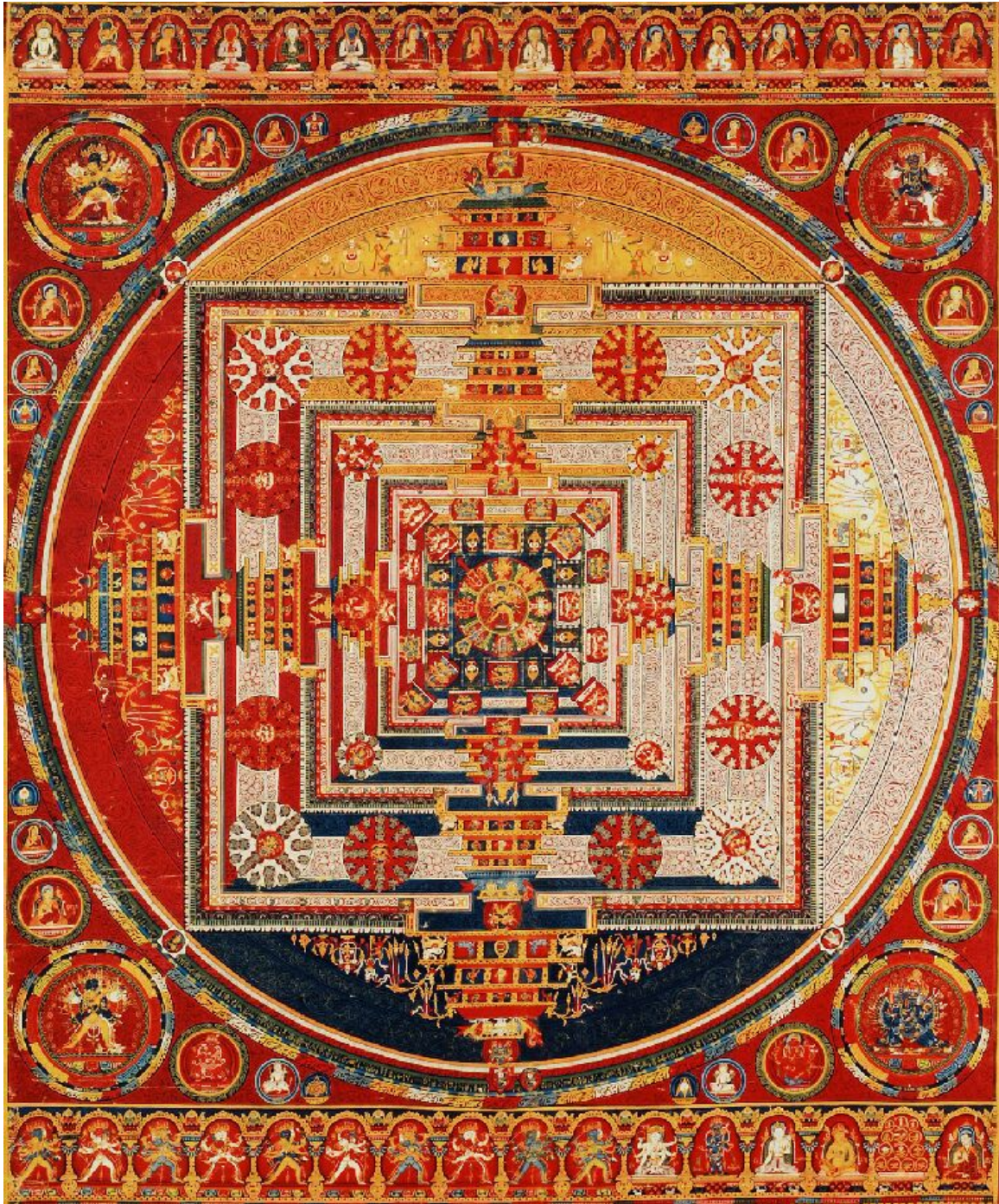






Fig. 6 and detail  
Kālacakra Mandala from the *Vajrāvalī* cycle, Painting 11 in the set of Fourteen  
And painting detail of *sādhaka*  
Ngor Monastery, 1429-56  
35 5/8 x 29 in (90.5 x 75.5 cm)  
Published in Kossak and Singer 1998 [Fig.47b]





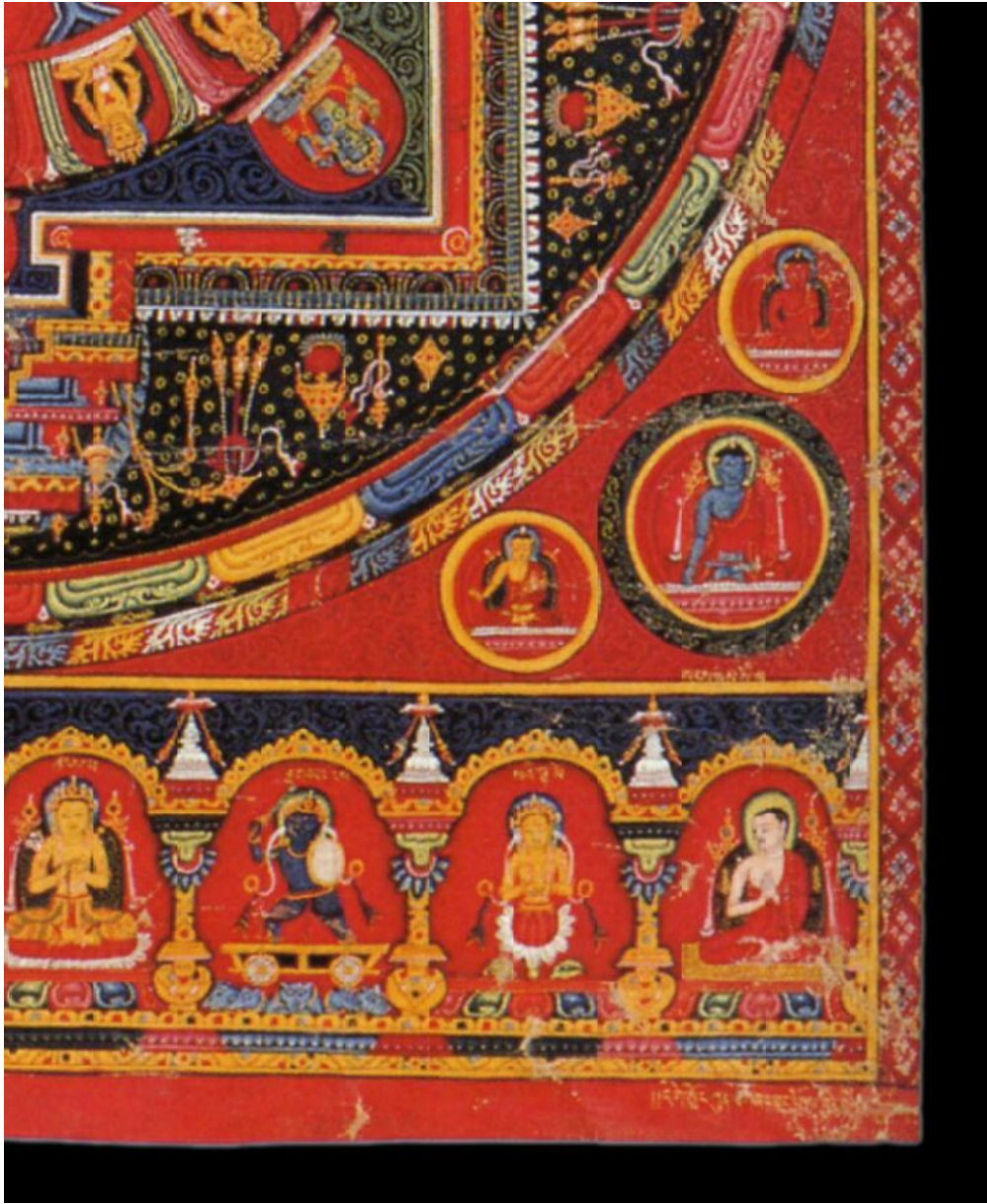


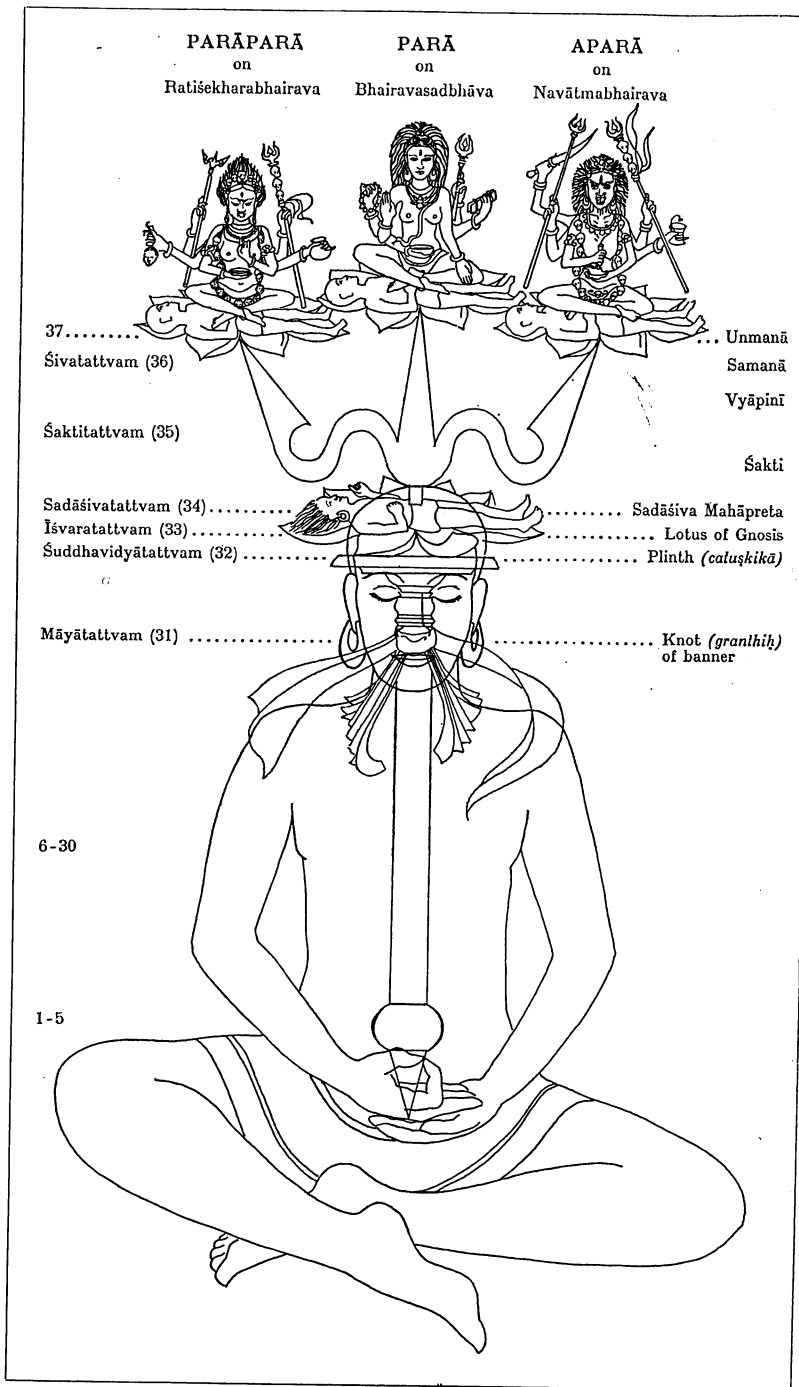
Fig. 7 and detail  
Mandalas of the *Vajrāvalī* and *Kriya-samuccaya* cycles and detail of patron, final  
painting in the set of Fourteen  
Ngor Monastery, 1429-56  
35 x 29 in (88.9 x 73.7 cm)  
Kimbell Art Museum AP 2000.01  
Published in Thurman and Rhie 1991 [Fig.73]



Fig. 8. The Maitreya Temple, Glo smon thang [Exterior and interior of middle floor restoration]

Mustang, Nepal

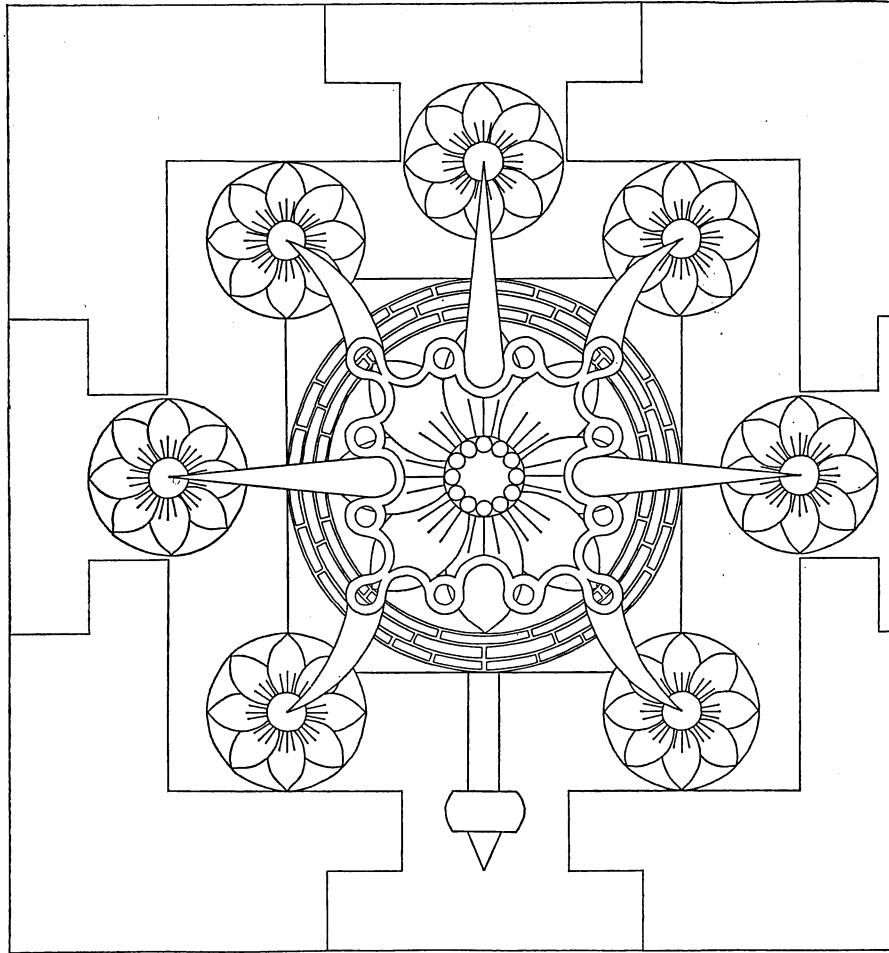
Photos by Luigi Fieni, published in Lo Bue 2010



The maṇḍala throne and the three goddesses enthroned upon it, as visualised along the axis of internal sensation during internal worship. See TĀ 15.295c-328b.

Fig.9 Sanderson 1986





The outline of the Maṇḍala of the Three Tridents and (Seven) Lotuses (*tritrīśūlābja-  
maṇḍalam*) prescribed by the *Trikasadbhāvanira*. See TĀ 31.10-41b.

**Fig. 10 Sanderson 1986**

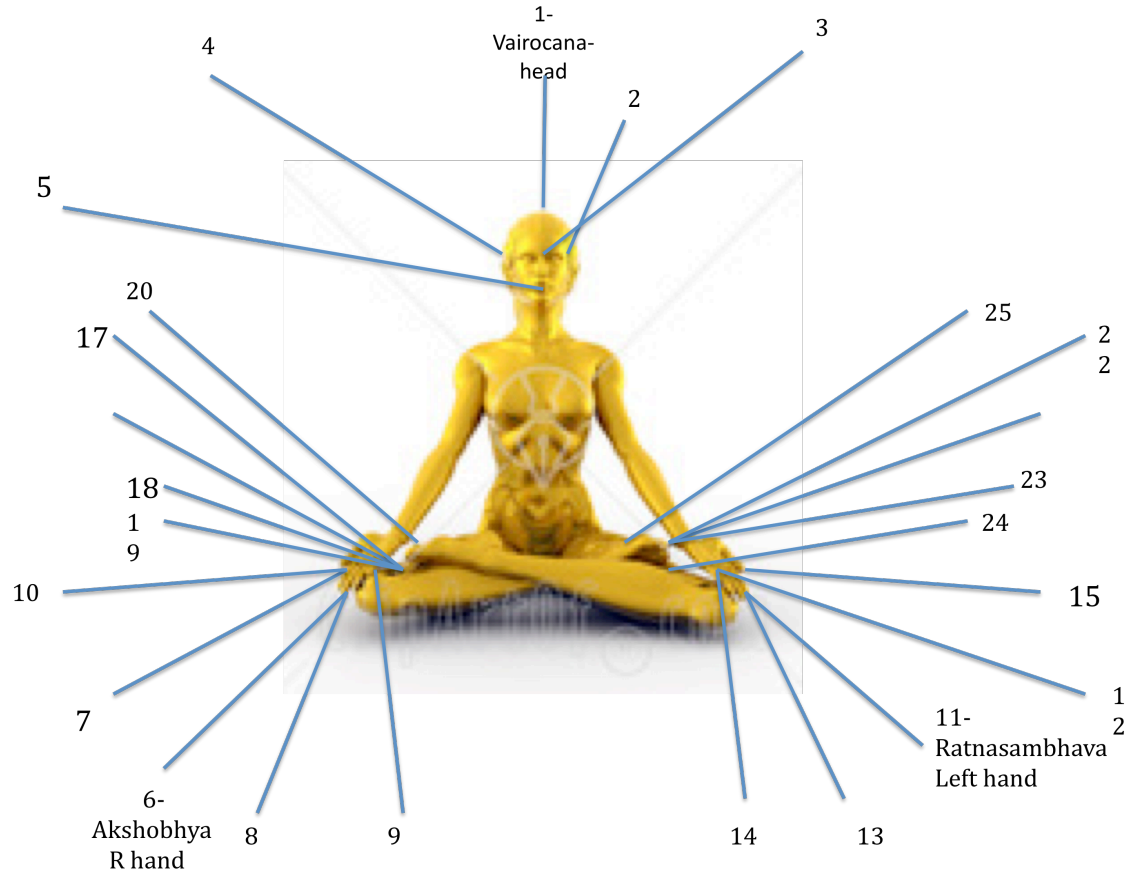


Fig. 11 diagram of Proto-body mandala in IOL Tib J 576

**Deity List based on IOL Tib J 576:**

ba dzra be ro tsa na [Vairocana] #1

ba dzra shwa ra [3.3] dha tu

**Comm:**

On the head, (**rnam par snang mdzad**) [Vairocana] and  
**(thams cad bdag [3.3] nyid ma)**

sa tva ba dzra [Sattvavajra] #2

ba dzra mu sti [Vajra-muṣṭi]

**Comm:**

On the eyes(s): (**sems rdo rje**) [Sattva-vajra]  
 ??(fem) [**brtan ma rdo rje**] ??

rad na ba dzra [Ratnavajra] #3

ba dzra mu sti [Vajra-muṣṭi]

**Comm:**

On the nose: (**rin cen rdo rje**) [Ratna-vajra] (pāramitā? But male)  
? fem) [**bar ma rdo rje**]??

dar ma [3.4] ba dzra [Dharmavajra] #4

ba dzra mu sti [vajra-muṣṭi]

**Comm:**

On the ear(s): (**chos rdo rje**) Dharmavajra (pāramitā? But male)  
? (fem)(**dud ma rdo rje**)<sup>690</sup>??

kar ma ba dzra [Karmavajra] #5

ba dzra mu sti [Vajra-muṣṭi]

**Comm:** On the tongue: Karma-vajra (**las rdo rje**) (pāramitā? But male) and  
?(fem) (**bskyod ma rdo rje**).??

ba dzra ag sho bya hung #6

[Akṣobhya]

ba dzra [3.5] bu ta lo ca na hung

(Buddha-Locanā)

**Comm:**

On the middle finger of the right hand: (**mi bskyod pa**) [Akṣobhya] and  
(**yangs pa'i spyan**) [Buddha-Locanā].

ba dzra sa tva [Vajrasattva] #7

ba dzra la sye [Vajra-lāsyā]

**Comm:**

On the index finger: (**rdo rje sems pa**) [Vajrasattva] and  
(fem) (**rdo rje rgeg mo**) [Vajralāsyā]. (inner offering)

ba dzra ra ja [Vajrarāja] #8

ba dzra tu pe [Vajradhupā]

**Comm:**

On the 4<sup>th</sup> finger from the thumb: (**rdo rje rgyal po**) [Vajrarāja] and  
(fem) (**rdo rje bdug pa ma**) [Vajradhūpa]. (outer offering)

Page 4:

[4.1] ba dzra ra ga [Vajra-rāga] #9

a 'gu sha hung [Añkuśa]

**Comm:**

On the little finger: (**rdo rje chags pa**) [Vajrarāga] and  
(fem) (**rdo rje gyo ga ma**)<sup>691</sup>

---

<sup>690</sup> This is unclear and therefore my translation of this name is tentative.

ba dzra sa tu [Vajra-sādhu] #10  
ba dzra te sha ra ti [Teja-ratī/Dveśaratī]

**Comm:**

On the thumb,: (rdo rje legs pa ) [Vajrasādhu] and  
(rdo rje sgril ma) rest in union.

sama ya sa tvam sa ma ya stvam  
om om [4.2] hung aoum am hung

ba dzra rad na sam bha ba [Ratnasambhava] #11  
bz dzra ma ma ki [Māmakī]

**Comm:**

On the middle finger of the left hand: (rin cen 'byung gnas) [Ratnasambhava] and  
“Jewel-eye”( rin cen spyan)

bz dzra rad na [Vajra-ratna] #12  
ba dzra [4.3] ma le [Vajra-mālā]

**Comm:**

On the index finger: (rdo rje rin cen) [Vajaratna] and  
(fem) (rdo rje 'phreng ba ma ) [Vajramālā] (inner offering)

ba dzra su rya [Vajra-sūrya]<sup>692</sup> #13  
ba dzra pu spe[Vajra-puṣpā]

**Comm:**

On the fourth finger from the thumb: (rdo rje nyi ma) [Vajra-surya]\* and  
(fem) (rdo rje me tog ma) [Vajrapuṣpā] (outer offering)

ba dzra ke tu [Vajra-ketu] #14  
ba dzra pa sha [Vajra-pāśa]

**Comm:**

On the little finger: rdo rje rgyal mtshan) [Vajraketu] and  
(rdo rje zhags pa) [Vajrapāśa] (door guardian)

[4.4] ba dzra ha sa<sup>693</sup> [Vajrahāsa] #15  
ba dzra rad na rad ti[Vajra-ratnaratī]

---

<sup>691</sup> Though the text reads “rdo rje gyo ga ma.” This seems a bit odd, translating as “vajra-dishonesty.” Jake Dalton suggesting emendation to “vajra-hook” [rdo rje lcags kyu ma] which matches the Sanskrit appearing in the mantra, Aṅkūṣa. Aṅkūṣa is a door guardian of the Vajradhātu mandala although in male vs. female form. The Sarvadurgati Pariśodhana tantra has four female gatekeepers of whom rdo rje lcags kyu ma is one.

<sup>692</sup> In the standard Vajradhātu arrangement, Vajrateja [rdo rje gzi brjid] vs Vajra-sūrya occupies this position. See Giebel, 2001

<sup>693</sup> Note the irregularity of the style of writing ‘sa’ and ‘ma’ in this text.

**Comm:**

On the thumb, cultivate (**rdo rje bzhad pa**) [Vajrahāsa] and fem) (**rdo rje bde ma**) in union.

*sa ma ya stvam sa ma ya stvam om am hung om am [4.5] hung*

ba dzra a mi ta ba [Amitabha] #16

ba dzra ban da ra ba si ni [Paṇḍaravāsini]\*

**Comm:**

On the middle toe of the left foot: **snang ba mtha' yas** [Amitabha ] and (fem) **gos dkar ma**[Paṇḍaravāsini]

ba dzra dar ma [Vajradharma] #17

ba dzra ki ti [Vajragīti].

**Comm:**

On the second toe from the big toe: **rdo rje chos** [Vajradharma] and **rdo rje dbyangs len ma**<sup>694</sup> (fem) [Vajragīti] (outer offering)

Page 2:[2.1] ba dzra tig sna [Vajra-tikṣṇa] #18

ba dzra a lo ke [Vajrālokā]

**Comm:**

On the fourth toe from the big toe: **rdo rje rnon po** [Vajratikṣṇa] and **rdo rje mye sgron ma**<sup>695</sup> (fem) [Vakrālokā]] (inner offering)

ba dzra ca kra [Vajra-cakra]<sup>696\*</sup> #19

ba dzra spo tha [Vajra-sphoṭa]

**Comm:**

On the little toe: **rdo rje 'khor lo** [Vajracakra] and **rdo rje lcags sgron ma** (fem)<sup>697</sup> (door guardian)

ba dzra ba she<sup>698</sup> [Vajra-bhāsa] #20

ra ga ra ti [2.2] [Rāga-ratī]

**Comm:**

On the big toe,.: **rdo rje smra ba** [Vajra-bhāsa] and

---

<sup>694</sup> Translated in *Rgyud sde kun btus* as *glu ma*, but the meaning is virtually the same.

<sup>695</sup> Translated in *Rgyud sde kun btus* as same as *mar me ma*, but the meaning is virtually the same.

<sup>696</sup> According to the standard formulation of the Vajradhatu mandala as found in Giebel and in the *rgyud sde kun btus*, the deity in this position should be Vajrahetu (i.e. *rdo rje rgyu*)

<sup>697</sup> The Tibetan translation of this name as a female deity is strange, as vajra-sphoṭa is one of the gate-keepers of the mandala. One again we appear to have a case of gender confusion.

<sup>698</sup> Following the standard layout of the mandala and Vajra-bhāsa's place here, I have read this as "ba-sa" rather than as how it appears (pa-sa).

**gsal bkra ma**<sup>699</sup> (fem)

sa ma ya stvam    sa ma ma ya stvam    aoum am hung    aoum am hung

ba dzra a mo ga si ti #21

ba dzra sa ma ya [2.3] ta ra

**Comm:**

On middle toe of the right foot: **don yod par grub pa** [Amoghasiddhi] and **dam tsig sgrol ma** (fem) [Samayatārā ].\*

ba dzra gar ma [Vajra-karma] #22

ba dzra nir ti a [Vajra-nīrtyā]

**Comm:**

On the second toe from the big toe: **rdo rje las** [Vajra-karma] and **(rdo rje gar byod ma)** [Vajranīrtyā] (inner offering)

ba dzra rak sha [Vajra-rakṣa] #23

ba dzra gan ti [Vajra-gantdhā]

**Comm:**

On the fourth toe from the big toe: **(rdo rje srung ba)**[Vajrarakṣa] and **rdo rje byug pa ma**<sup>700</sup> [Vajragandhā] (outer offering)

ba dzra yak sha [Vajra-yakṣa] #24

ba dzra [2.4] gan ta [Vajra-ghaṇṭā]

**Comm:**

On the little toe: **(rdo rje gnod spyin)** [Vajra-yakṣa] and **rdo rje dril 'sgrol ma**

ba dzra san di [Vajra-sandhi] #25

ba dzra ra ti [Vajra-Ratī]

**Comm:**

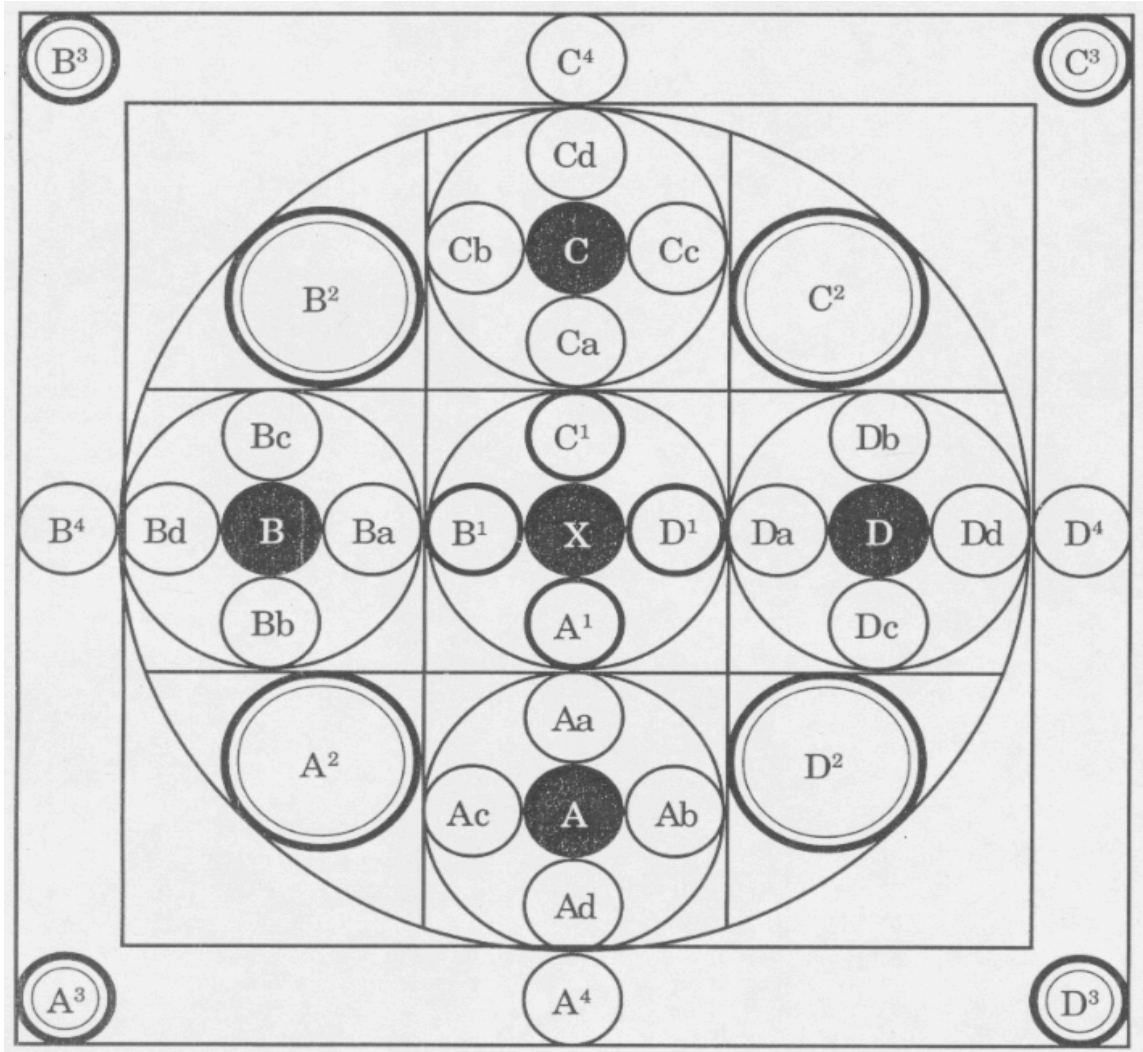
On the big toe: **(rdo rje mtshams sbyor)** [Vajrasandhi] (\*agrees w/ Geibel but **rgyud sde has khu tshur i.e. Vajramuṣṭi)** and **fem) (rdo rje'i 'bebs ma)**<sup>701</sup> the two resting in union.

---

<sup>699</sup> More research is required to confirm whether *Rdo rje gsal bkra ma*, “Vajra-bright effulgence” is a standard translation of Rāga-ratī.

<sup>700</sup> The translation in the *rgyud sde kun btus* is *dri chab ma*, but the meanings are compatible.

<sup>701</sup> This word, which I am reading as ‘bebs’ was unclear, and therefore I am uncertain of the translation as Vajrāveśa “vajra-descent” and of its relation to the Sanskrit, *vajra-ratī*. In accordance with the pattern of the text, we would have expected Vajrāveśa, one of the door guardians, to appear in the previous pairing with Vajrasandhi as noted above.



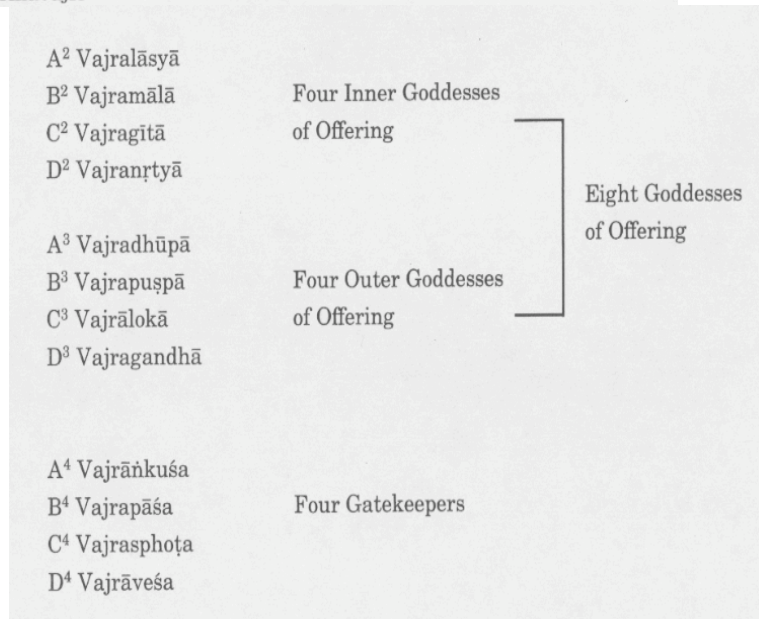
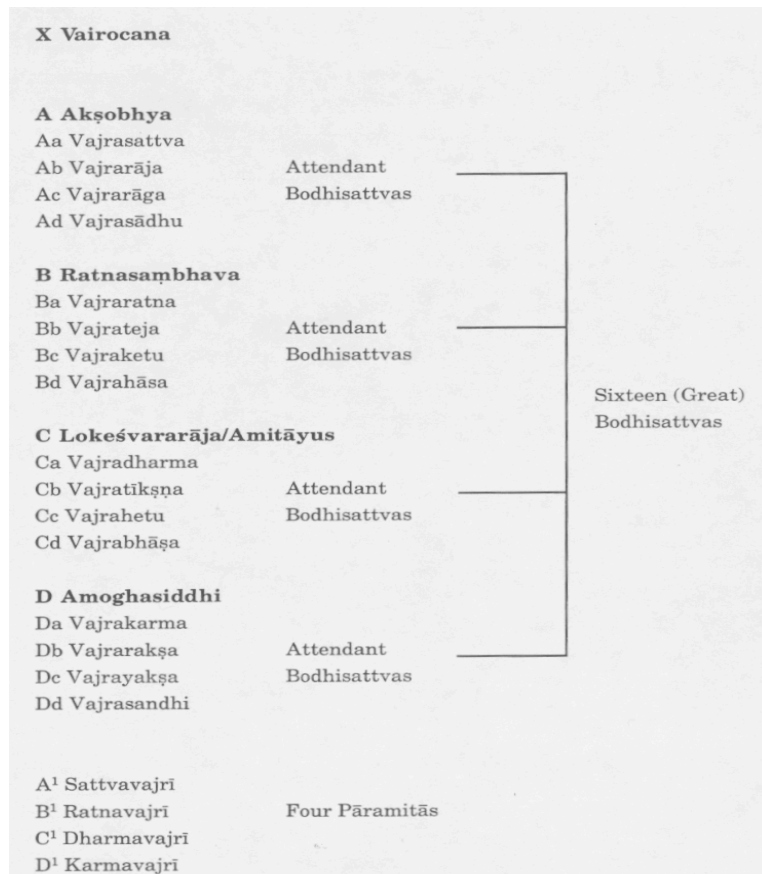


Fig. 12. Diagram & deity list of the Vajradhatu mandala from Giebel 2001





**Fig. 13**

Scroll painting of the Vajradhātu mandala from Dunhuang  
MG 17780 Recto

Institute & Copyright:  
Le Musée Guimet

Site: Dunhuang Mogao Form: painting, liturgical Materials: ink and colours on silk  
Size (h x w) cm: 101.5 x 61



Fig 14 Mandala painting from Dunhuang with consorts

EO 1148 Recto

Institute & Copyright:

Le Musée Guimet

Site: Dunhuang Mogao Form: mandala Materials: ink and colours on silk

Size (h x w) cm: 67.2 x 68

## Appendix B. Maṇḍala Visualizations

### B.1. Visualizing the thirty-two deities within the Maṇḍala Palace

Verses	Location	Deity
27	Central	Vajra-being (Akṣobhya)
28	East	Vairocana
	South	Ratnasambhava
	West	Amitābha
	North	Amoghasiddhi
29	South-east	Moharātī (Locanā)
	South-west	Dveṣarātī (Māmakī)
	North-west	Rāgarātī (Pāṇḍaravāsini)
	North-east	Vajrarātī (Tārā)
30	South-eastern intermediate	Rūpavajrā
	South-western intermediate	Śabdavajrā,
	North-western intermediate	Gandhavajrā
	North-eastern intermediate	Rasavajrā,
	Central, in union with Akṣobhya	Sparśavajrā
31	Eastern edge	Maitreya and Kṣitigarbha
	Southern edge	Vajrāpani and Khagarbha
32	Western edge	Lokeśvara and Mañjuḥoṣa [i.e. Mañjuśrī]
	Northern edge	Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambin and Samantabhadra
33	Eastern doorway	Yamāntaka
	Southern doorway	Aparājita
	Western doorway	Hayagrīva
	Northern doorway	Amṛtakuṇḍali
34	South-eastern corner	Acala
	South-western corner	Takkirāja
	North-western corner	Nīlandaṇḍa
	North-eastern corner	Mahābala
35	Below	Sumbharāja
	Above	Uṣṇīṣacakravartī

Fig. 15 Wright 2010

## B.2. Visualizing the main deity body maṇḍala

Verses	Location	Deity	Syllable	Colour	Nature
56	Crown	Vairocana	oṃ	white	form aggregate
57	Mouth	Amitābha	aḥ	red	discrimination aggregate
58	Heart-centre	Akṣobhya	hūṃ	lapis lazuli	consciousness aggregate
59	Navel	Ratnasambhava	svā	yellow	feeling aggregate
60	Both feet	Amoghasiddhi	hā	green	compositional factors aggregate
61	Place of earth element	Moharātī (Locanā)	-	-	solidity
	Place of water element	Dveṣarātī (Māmakī)	-	-	fluidity
	Place of fire element	Rāgarātī (Pāṇḍaravāsīnī)	-	-	warmth
	Place of air element	Vajrarātī (Tārā)	-	-	airiness
62	Eyes	Kṣitigarbha	thlīṃ	-	-
	Ears	Vajrapāṇi.	oṃ	-	-
63	Nose	Khagarbha	oṃ	-	-
	Tongue	Lokeśvara.	oṃ	-	-
64	Heart	Mañjuhoṣa [i.e. Mañjuśrī]	hūṃ	-	-
	Whole body	Sarvanīvaraṇa- viṣkambin	oṃ	-	-
65	Head	Maitreya	maiṃ	-	-
	All the joints (of the body)	Samantabhadra	saṃ	-	-
66	Right hand	Yamāntaka	-	-	-
	Left hand	Aparājita	-	-	-
	Mouth	Hayagrīva	-	-	-
	Vajra	Amrtakuṇḍali	-	-	-
67	Right side/shoulder	Acala	-	-	-
	Left side/shoulder	Takkirāja	-	-	-
	Right knee	Nīlandaṇḍa	-	-	-
	Left knee	Mahābala	-	-	-
68	Top of head	Sumbharāja	-	-	-
	Bottom of feet	Uṣṇīṣacakravartī	-	-	-

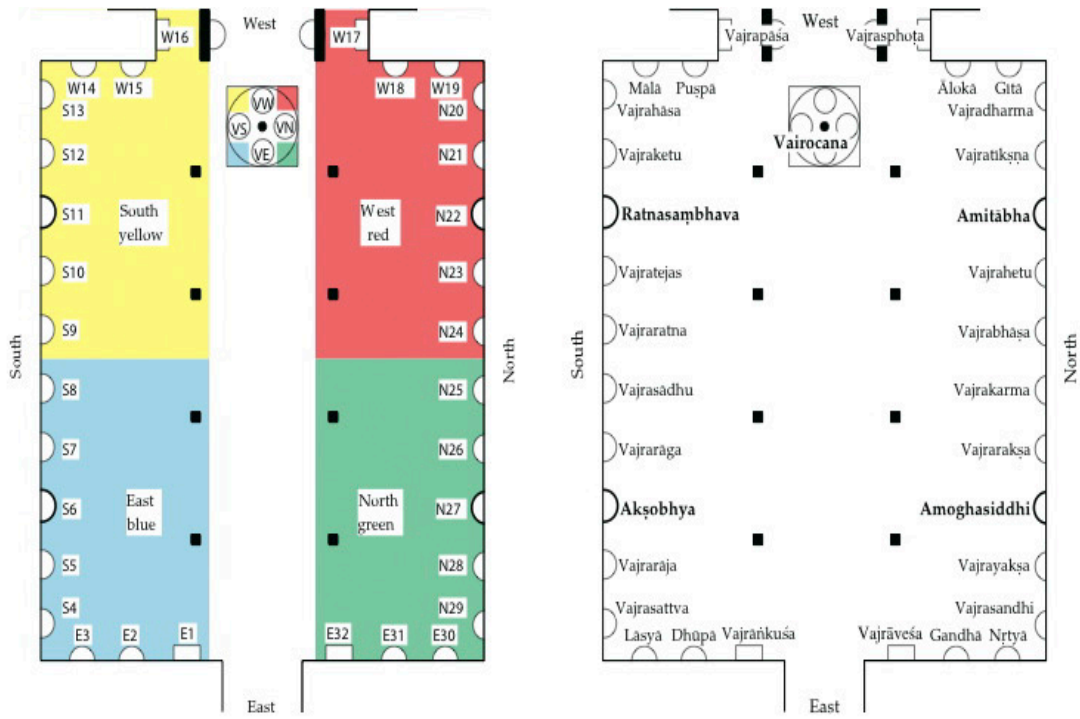
Fig. 16 Wright 2010



#### B.4. Visualizing the deity consort body maṇḍala

Verses	Deity	Syllable	Location
95	(Vairocana)	oṃ	Crown
	(Amitābha)	āḥ	Mouth
96	(Akṣobhya)	hūṃ	Heart-centre
	(Ratnasambhava)	svā	Navel
	(Amoghasiddhi)	hā	Both feet
96-97	Locanā	-	Place of earth element
	Māmakī	-	(water element)
	Pāṇḍaravāsini	-	(fire element)
	Tārā	-	(air element)
97	Rūpavajrā	-	-
	Śabdavajrā,	-	-
	Gandhavajrā	-	-
	Rasavajrā	-	-
98	Kṣitigarbha	-	Union with Rūpavajrā
	Vajrapāṇi	-	Union with Śabdavajrā,
	Khagarbha	-	Union with Gandhavajrā
	Lokeśvara	-	Union with Rasavajrā
	Vajravetālī	-	Right hand
	Aparājitā	-	Left hand
99	Bhr̥kūṭi	-	Mouth
	Ekajātā	-	Secret place
100	Viśvavajrī	-	Right shoulder
	Viśvaratnā	-	Left shoulder
	Viśvapadmā	-	Right knee
101	Viśvakarmā	-	Left knee
	Akaśavajriṇī	-	Top of head
	Earth-bearing Goddess	-	Bottom of feet

Fig. 17 Wright 2010



**Fig. 18** Main assembly hall at Tabo monastery in relation to the Vajradhātu mandala Luczanits 2004



**Fig. 19**

*Dhāraṇī*/mandala

1919,0101,0.18

Institute&Copyright: British Museum

Site: Dunhuang Mogao

(Ch.xxii.0015)

Form: mandala, painting

Materials: ink and colours on silk

Size (h x w) cm:

58.5 x 56.3

image: <http://idp.bl.uk>





Fig. 20  
*Dhāraṇī*  
Pelliot tibétain 4216  
Institute & Copyright:  
La Bibliothèque nationale de France  
Site: Dunhuang Mogao Materials: ink on paper  
image: <http://idp.bl.uk>





Fig. 21

*Dhāraṇī*/mandala

Pelliot Tibetain 389

ISite: Dunhuang Mogao Materials: ink on paper Size (h x w) cm: 31 x 40

image: <http://idp.bl.uk/> ̄ Bibliothèque nationale de France

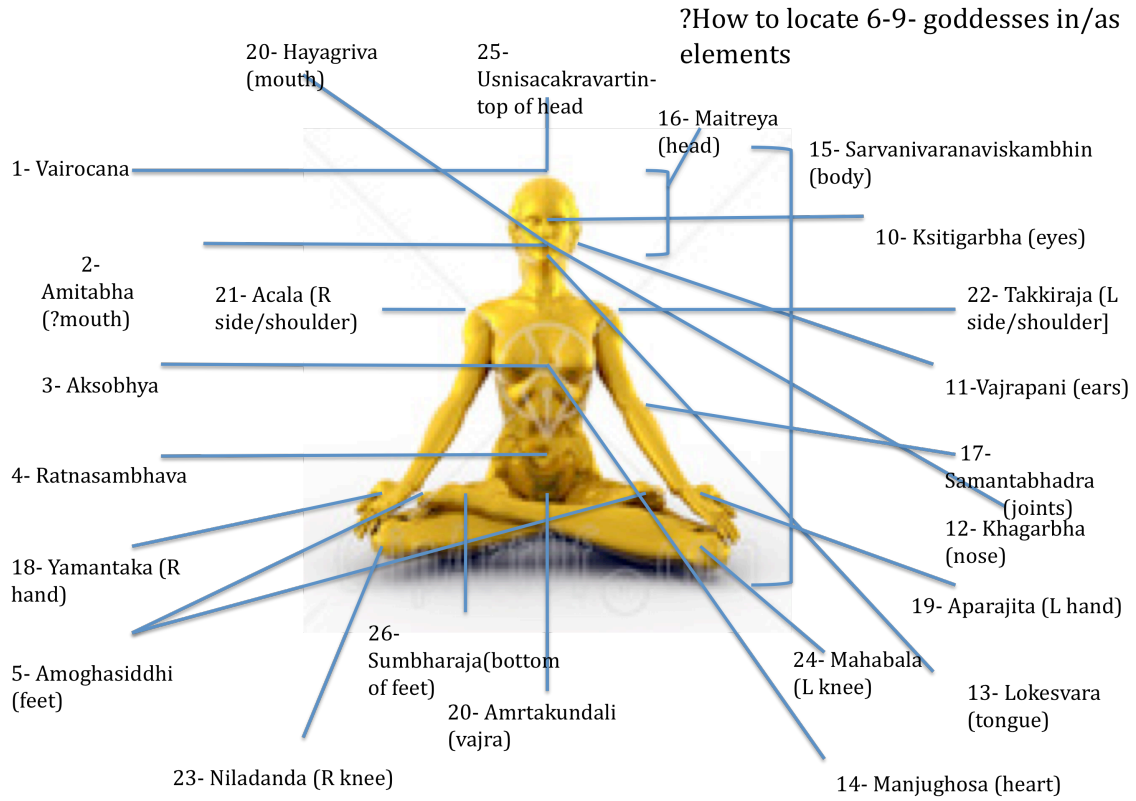
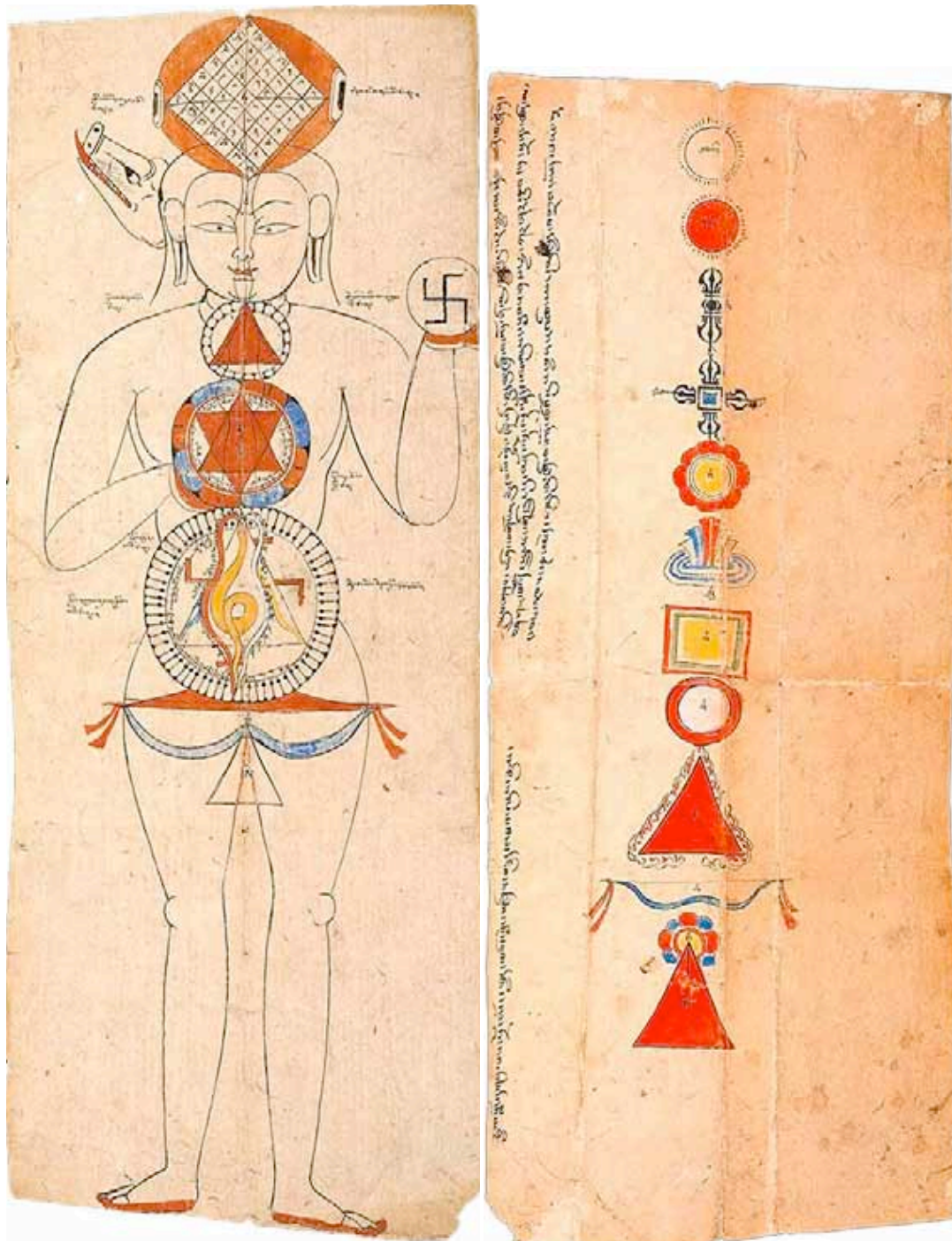


Fig. 22  
Mandala of Guhyasamāja body mandala based on *Piṇḍikṛta sādhana*



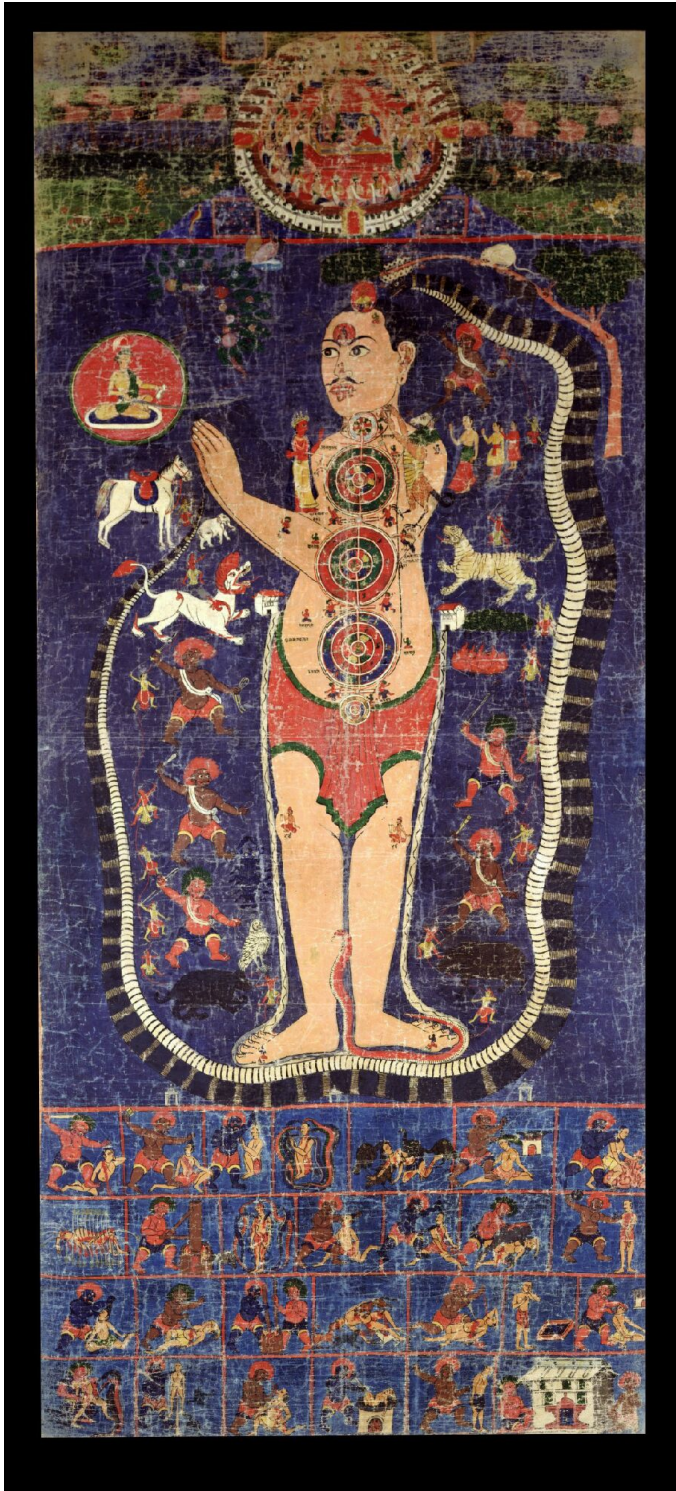
**Fig. 23**  
 Diagram for Cakra meditations (recto & verso)  
 published in Heller 2010 and Pal 2007

Fig.





**Fig. 24**  
Painting of the Cakrasamvara body mandala  
HAR# 5968  
Nepal  
Nineteenth or twentieth century  
Ground Mineral pigment on cotton  
Private Collection  
[www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org)



**Fig. 25**  
HAR#100001; Nepal; 18<sup>th</sup> century  
91.44 x 210.82 cm [36 x 83 in]  
Ground mineral pigment on cotton  
Collection of Shelley and Donald Rubin





**Fig 26**

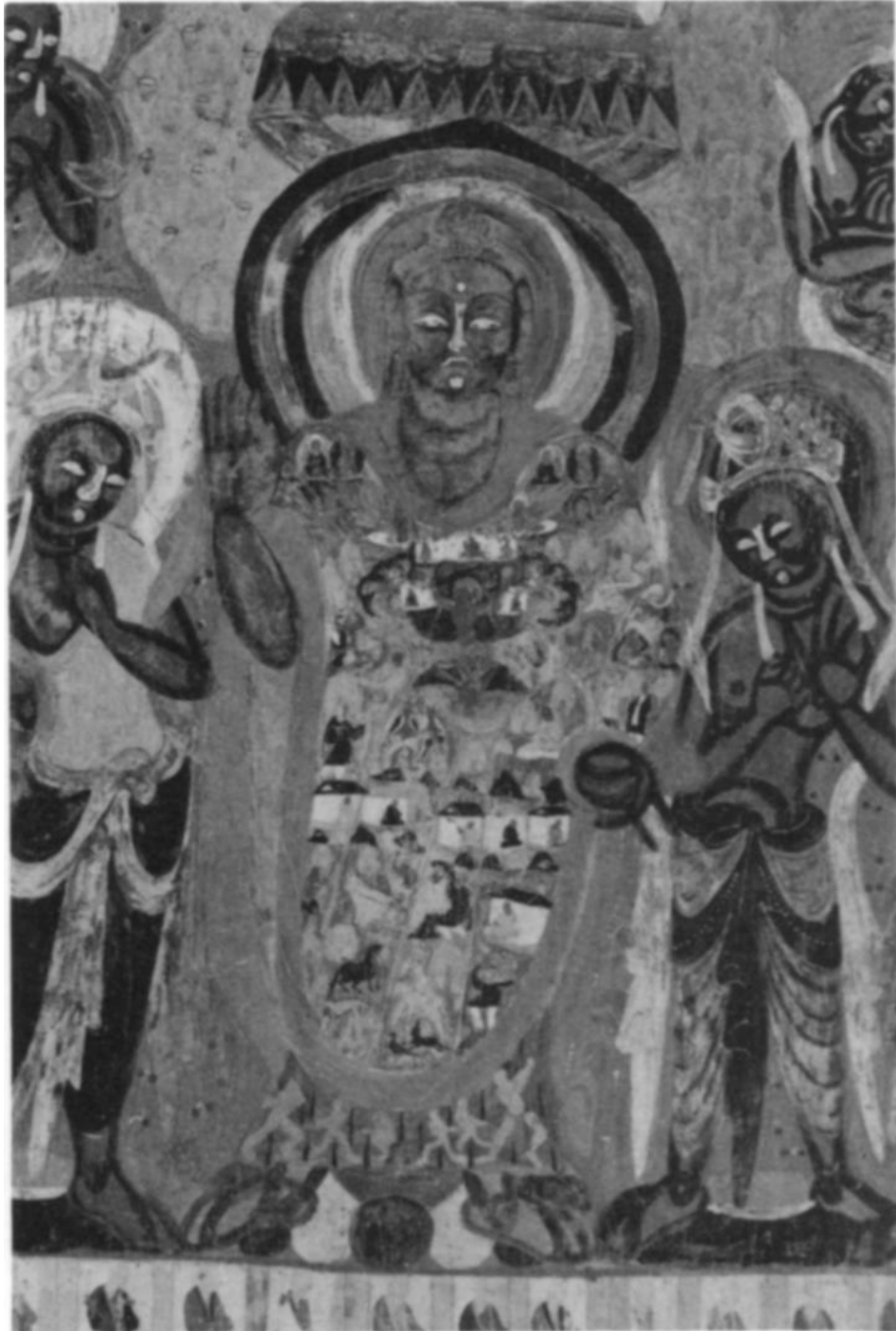
Viṣṇu Viśvarūpa. India, Rajasthan, Jaipur, ca. 1800-20. Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 38.5 x 28cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Given by Mrs. Gerald Clark, IS.33-2006

Published in Diamond 2013, fig. 10b



Fig. 27  
 Published in Fernand Meyer with Yuri Parfionovich and Gyurme Dorje, *Tibetan Medical Paintings: Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso Vol.1* ( London: Serindia Publications, 1992), Plate 6.



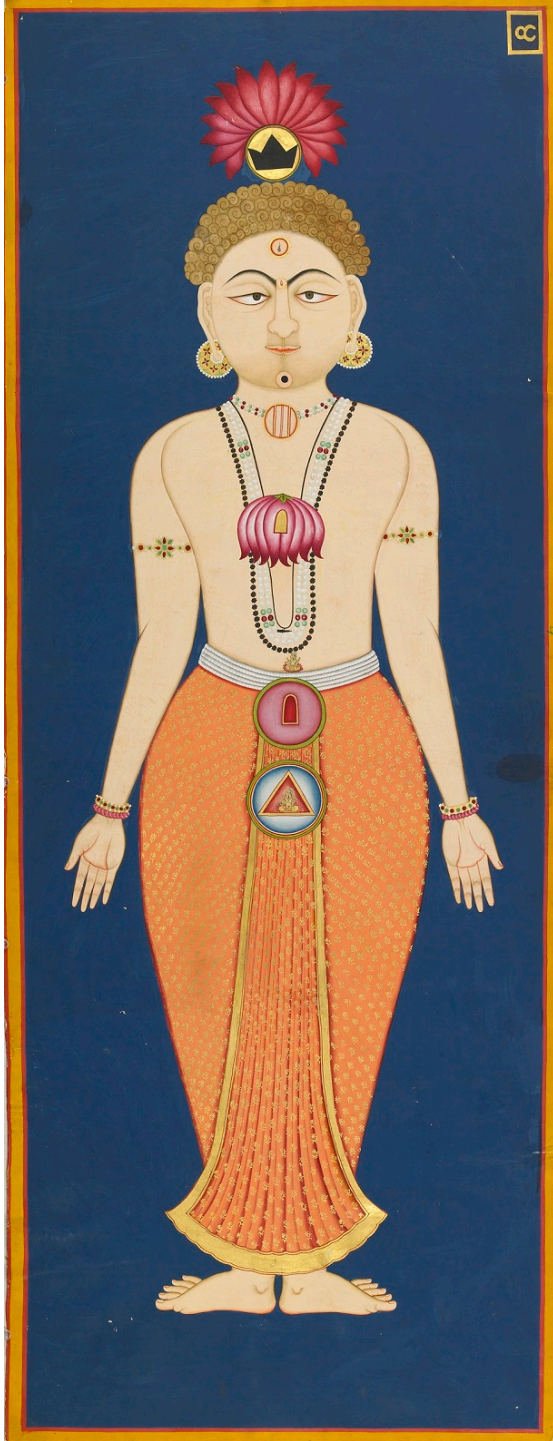


**Fig. 28** Published in Howard 1984, fig. 2 “Cosmological Buddha from a fresco in Cave 428 at Tun-Huang. Dated to the Northern Wei dynasty, circa 525 (After Tonkō Makkōkutsu, vol.1, pl.162.)”





**Fig. 29** Published in Howard 1984, fig.1 “Cosmological Buddha. Dated to the Sui Dynasty (581-618). Stone, 176.5 x 64.2 cm. Courtesy, Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.”



**Fig. 30**

Published in Diamond 2013 Fig.11B,  
Folio 4 from the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati*  
Bulaki

India, Rajasthan, Jodhpur, dated 1824 (Samvat 1881)  
Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 122 x 46 cm  
Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2376



**Fig. 31**

Published in Diamond 2013 Fig.10D, Folio 6 from the *Siddha Siddhanta Paddhati*  
Bulaki

India, Rajasthan, Jodhpur, dated 1824 (Samvat 1881)

Opaque watercolor and gold on paper, 122 x 46 cm

Mehrangarh Museum Trust, RJS 2378







**Fig.33**

“The Jain Universe in the Shape of a Cosmic Man or lokāpuruṣa”

Folia from loose leaf manuscript

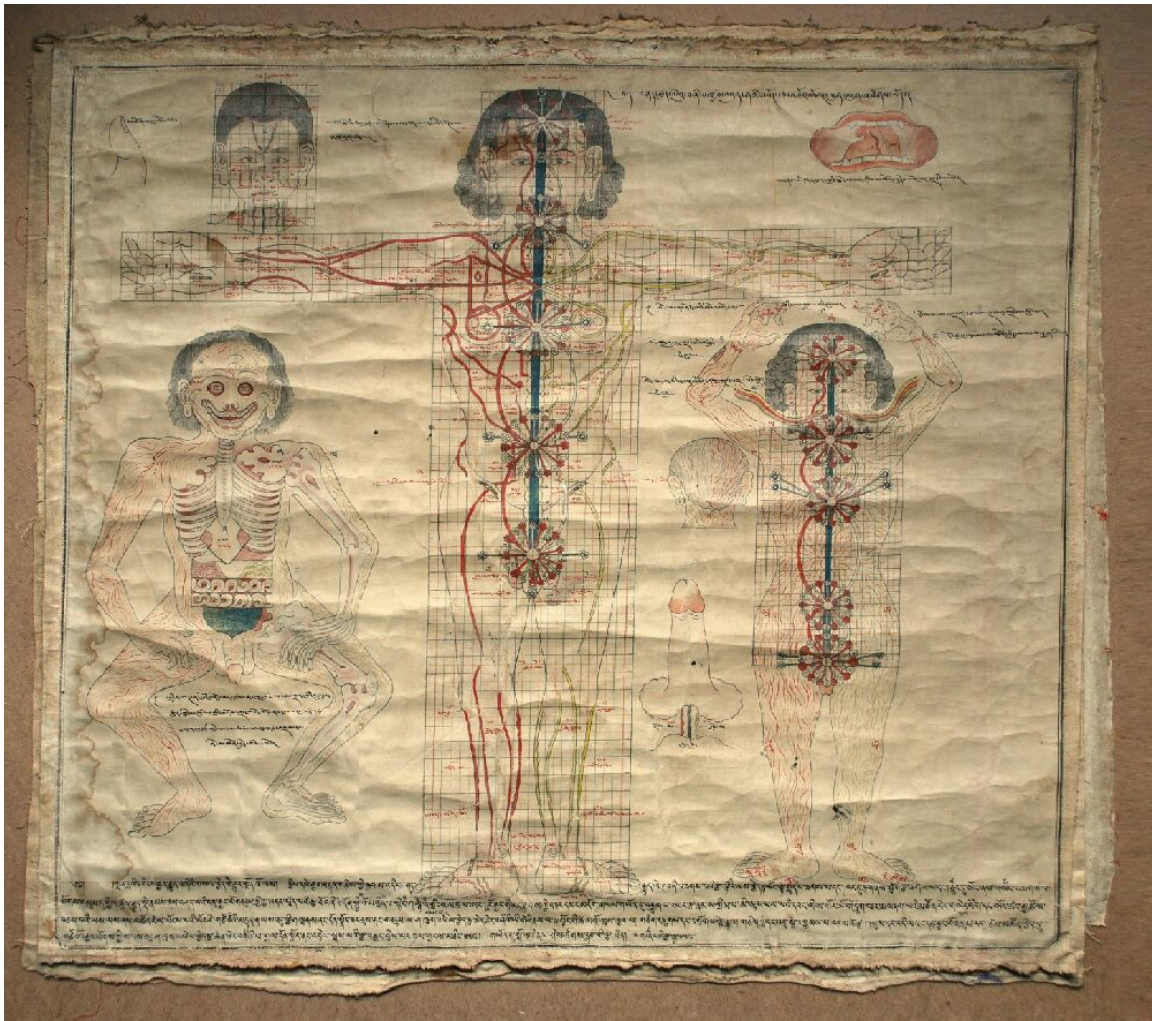
Gujarat or Rajasthan, early seventeenth century

Ink and opaque water color on paper

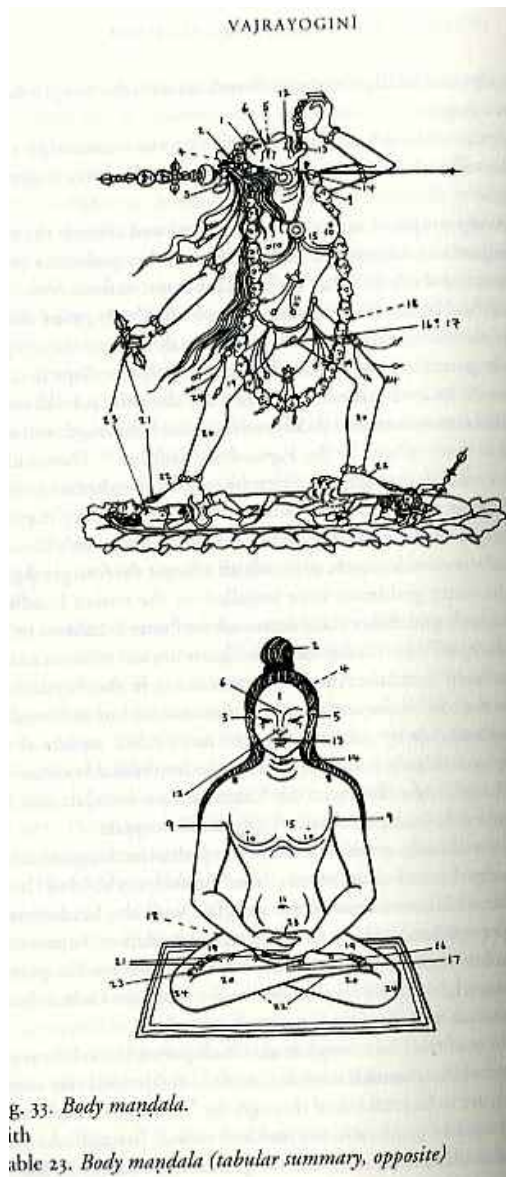
Collection of Bina and Navin Kumar Jain

Published in Granoff *Victorious Ones: Jain Images of Perfection* 2009-2010 Fig.2.1





**Fig.34**  
HAR# 81836; Tibet; 18<sup>th</sup> century; Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton; Collection of the  
Rubin Museum of Art



**Fig, 35**  
 Body mandala of Vajrayoginī  
 Published in English 2002 fig.33





**Fig. 36**

Cakrasamvara mandala

HAR #85813;

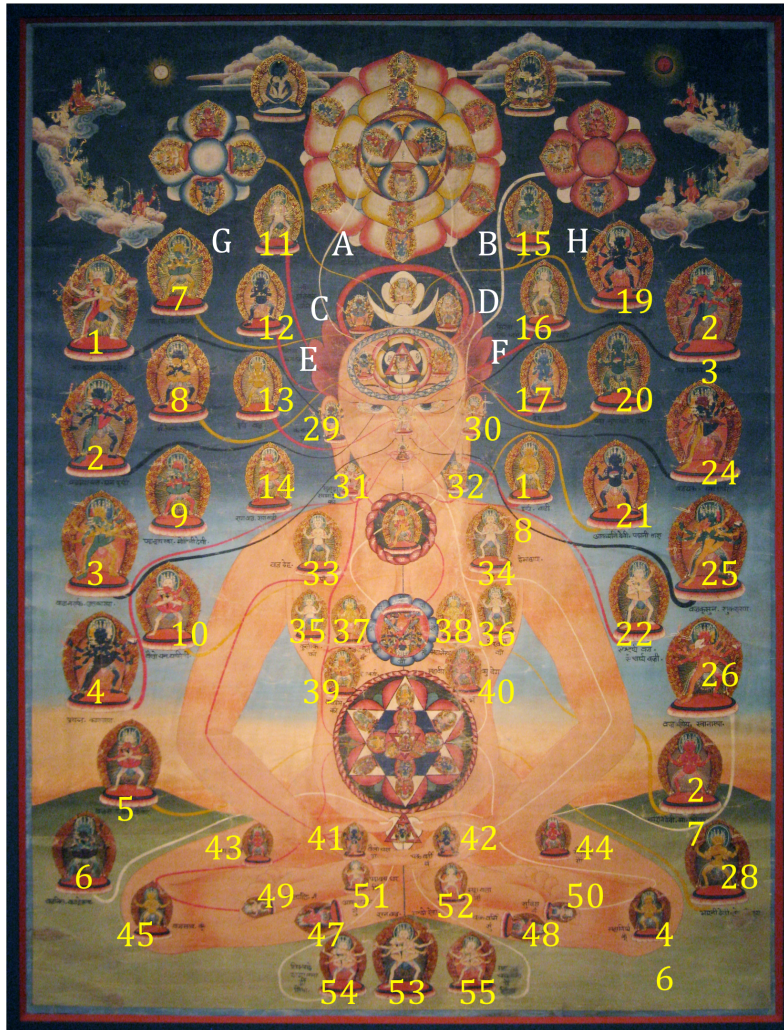
Nepal, 1490 Buddhist Lineage;

Ground Mineral Pigment on Cotton; Collection of the LA County Museum of Art;

Published in Huntington and Bangdel 2003 Fig.70; [www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org)



HAR# 5968  
Nepal  
19<sup>th</sup> century  
Ground Mineral  
pigment on cotton  
Private Collection  
www.himalayanart.  
org



**Fig.37**  
Numbered diagram of the body mandala painting (Fig. 24 HAR# 5968)

*Numbered Inscription, Descriptions, and proposed deity identifications from the Body Mandala painting*

- Identifications have been supplemented with English 2002's list of mandala deities; suggested parallels with those deities and their associated sites are indicated by '\*\*CKS.'
- Suggestions for Newarī terms and for resolving scribal idiosyncracies provided by Alexander von Rospatt and indicated by 'AVR.'
- Directions (North, Northwest...) have been abbreviated (N, NW).
- Illegible akṣaras indicated with ?

1. vajra kāla. Yamadhuti.

Blue/black line connects to ear (**our left his right**)

[flesh-colored 3-faced 6-armed male deity in union w/ two-tone red-orange female deity]

2. vajra maḥābala. yama vṛthṭhi

blue/black line connects to eye

[dark blue 3-faced 6-armed deity in union w/ two-tone red-green female]

\*\*seems likely this refers to Yamadaṃṣṭriṇī of the 'outer mandala'? meaning samayacakra who is connected w/ eye- NW

3. vajrānaḥāraka urukāsyā.

Blue-black line connects to nostril

[yellow 3-faced 6-armed deity in union w/ blue/green female]

\*\*CKS- Ulūkāsyā- - 'outer mandala'? meaning samayacakra- navel- N

4. pracaḥNa . kākasayā.

Red line connects to mouth

[dark blue 3-faced 6-armed deity in union w/ blue-black female]

\*\*CKS- Kākāsyā- - 'outer mandala'? meaning samayacakra- mouth- \*matches-E

5. Vajrasatva; vajramahiteja

yellow line connects to navel cakra

[white one faced two armed deity in union w/ red ?4-armed? female]

6. Vajranila. Vajraheruka.

White line connects to secret place

[blue 1-faced 2-armed male deity in union w/ dark blue female]

7. vajra suryya. Saṃvārini/saṃtrāhini [?Saṃtrāsini]

yellow line connects to ?crown cakra

[gold deity one-faced two-armed in union with green female]

8. śrī heruka saṃcāriṇi [?Saṃcālini]

yellow line connects to ?crown cakra

[dark blue deity one-faced two-armed in union with gold female]

9. padma nṛtyasvara. [?Padmanarteśvara] Mohinīdevī.

??no connecting line

[red deity one-faced two armed In union w/ green female]

10. Vail[?r]ocana.Yāminī.

Yellow line connects to axis between heart and throat cakra.

[flesh colored 1-faced 2-armed deity in union w/ red female]

\*\*CKS Vairocana is also identified w/ phlegm- nourished by goddess/vein Cakravartini

11. mohā vajra

red line connects to eye

[flesh colored 1 faced 2 armed deity]

\*Mohavajra is a name for the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha who is correlated with eye faculty in the preparatory practices for purifying the body, speech and mind of the practitioner in the Cakrasaṃvara tradition. Mohavajrā is the goddess associated with vision in the Hevajra system.

12.ḍho?ma vajra [does this refer to Dveṣavajra?]

red line connects to ear

[dark blue 1-faced 2-armed deity]

13. ??cvaryya vajra [?wierd akṣara- could this be Īrṣya vajra?]

red line connects w/ center of nose

[gold one-faced 2-armed deity]

14. raga vajra. Raga vajrī.

?no connecting line?

[red one-faced two-armed deity in union with gold female deity]

15. inscription difficult to read\*

gold line connects w/19, ?crown cakra & by extension, 7

[blue-green yab yum, single-faced and two armed]

16. mohā vajrī

red line connects to eye

[flesh colored singled faced 2-armed]

As for Mohavajrī, Huntington and Bangdel 2003 place her in the SE of the mandala in accord with the *Candamahārośana Tantra*. However, here she is more likely consort of #11.

[See also inscription F to the left: mikhā laṃke śvarī- see below]

17. de?gha(/dha) vajrī

red line connects to ear

[blue single-faced 2 armed]

18.?dvaryya vajri

red line connects w/ axis between eyebrows  
[yellow single-faced 2-armed]

19. pa?(nv?)ārinī vajra vārahi.

Gold line connects with ?crown cakra & ?15

[dark blue; 3-faced; 4-6 arms]

\*We read the first word as Padmajvālinī, associated with the element of space.

20. pa?? (?padma?) nṛtyaśvari. Tārā.

yellow line connects to ??red deity at crown cakra

[blue-green; single faced; four armed]

\*We read the first word as Narteśvarī, associated with the karma family (as is Tārā) and the purification of the wind element.

21. Āka?mani devi. Padmanī tārā

yellow line connects to ?throat cakra

[dark blue single faced four armed deity]

\*We read the first word as Ākarṣanī, associated with the lotus family [thus making more sense of Padmanī tārā as well] and the purification of the fire element.

22. seśvaryya vajra. seśvaryya vajri.

Red line connects to mouth

[flesh colored yab yum each with one face and two arms]

\*\*\*Aisvaryavajra- purification of sense fields

23. vajra miṭhāna/ vajra miṣṭhāna Yamathanī.

Blue/black line connects w/eye

[3-faced 6-armed red deity in union w/ two-tone blue consort]

\*\*CKS- Yamathanī- - ‘outer mandala’?meaning samayacakra- nose- NE

24. vajrayaka. Yamaḍādhī.

Blue/black line connects w/ ear

[3-faced 6-armed red deity in union w/ two tone yellow& blue consort]

\*\*CKS- Yamaḍādhī - ‘outer mandala’?meaning samayacakra -hair curl śSE

25. vajra kusuna/kusun sukasyā?/sukarāsyā

blue/black line connects to nostril

[3-faced 6-armed blue deity in union w/ yellow animal headed (?dog?) consort]

\*\*CKS- sūkarāsyā- ‘outer mandala’? meaning samayacakra- anus- S

26. vajra ??riya. svānasya.

White line connects to ?hip/secret place

[3-faced 6-armed red deity in union w/ orange animal-headed (?lion) consort]

\*\*CKS- Śvānāsyā- ‘outer mandala’?meaning samayacakra- sexual organ- W

27. mārini devī. Māma kītārā.

Yellow line connects with heart cakra  
[red single-faced 4-armed deity]

28. bhārinī devī. Lo?????rā

yellow line connects w/ ?navel cakra

[yellow single-faced 4-armed deity]

\*\*perhaps this completes the set of 4 w. Locanā and Pāṇḍara, but again, why in the CKS mandala? \*\*\*AVR- suggests Locanā Tārā could be Locanā-devī? Since there is a

**inscriptions surrounding head:**

**?a few seem to include seed syllables**

**\*\*some suggestion Newari may be used here**

from top

**our left (figure's right):**

A. diff to read: jā?ḥ/ṃ mahā?ke kā?? Caṇḍhāḍhī/ Caṇḍhākī

\*CKS- This is likely referring to Caṇḍākṣi, a goddess of the citta cakra associated with the topknot who nourishes the head and body hair as represented by Mahākankāla.

[Assoc site: Jālandhara]

**our right (his left)**

B. diff to read????????????????????

[could this be Pracaṇḍā (maybe 4)Goddess/channel at head who nourishes the nails & teeth in association with & Khaṇḍakapālin? [Pulliramalaya]

**Our left:**

C. lāḥ [AVR\*looks like anunāsika] hātikā ami tāhā

[AVR- Newar Above the east- AVR???

\*CKS?Amitābha is associated with the nourishment of the bones nourished by the goddess/channel Kharvarī of the citta cakra located at the point between the eyebrows.

[site: Rāmeśvara]

**Our right:**

D. Diff to read:mi??gā vikathavamkā ?mahā nāsā

\*\*CKS- Mahānāsā is the goddess/channel of the cittacakra located at the back of the head who nourishes the flesh in association with Vikatadaṃṣṭrin [site: Arbuda]

E & F- SPLIT UP COUPLE?

**Our left:**

E. mikhā/ bhikhā ?vajra(/bala) prabhā dem

\*\*bala more likely

\*\*As pointed out by AVR, mikha is the Newar word for eye. This may be a significant point in understanding the script style used here.

\*\*CKS-Vajraprabha is indeed associated with the nourishment of the kidneys by the goddess/channel LaNkeśvarī of the citta cakra who is located at the eyes. [site: Devikevikoṭa]

See inscription on the opposite side of the head : mikhā laṃke śvarī

### **Our right:**

**F.** mikhā laṃke śvarī

\*As noted above, AVR pointed out that mikha is the Newari term for eye.

\*\*CKS-Lankeśvarī is the goddess/channel of the citta cakra located at the eyes who nourishes the kidney as Vajraprabha. See the inscription on the opposite side of the head: mikhā ?vajra prabhā deṃ

### 29. Our Left:

(at ear level) kaṃ kālā pranāmatī

[deity on ear brown: ?1 face 4-armed deity in union w/ blue consort]

\*\*CKS- Kankala is associated with the nourishment of the skin and filth by the goddess/channel of the citta cakra, Prabhāvatī who is located at the right ear. See the inscription on the opposite side of the head, which also matches up with the CKS system in connection w/ the left ear.

### 30. Our right:

(at ear level) suvirā vīramatī

[deity on ear flesh-colored 1 face ?4 arms in union w/ red/brown consort]

\*\*CKS- Vīramatī is the goddess/channel of the cittacakra located at the left ear who nourishes the sinew in association with Surāvairin. [site: Godāvarī]

### 31. Our left:

(at earlobe) subhadrā syāmadevī kā

[deity on earlobe: 1 face 4-armed deity in union w/orange consort]

\*\*CKS-Śyāmadevī is the goddess/channel of the vakcakra who is located at the mouth and nourishes the ‘coiled gut’ in association with Subhadra. [site: Kalinga]

Subhadrā is the goddess/channel of the vakcakra who is located at the throat and nourishes the belly in association with Vajrabhadra.

So, perhaps we should read Subhadra., short a.

### 32. Our right:

(at earlobe) vaj(?r)aprabha subhadrā laṃ

[deity on earlobe- 1 face?4 arms gold in union w/ red/brown consort]

\*\*CKS- Subhadrā is the goddess/channel of the vakcakra who is located at the throat and nourishes the belly in association with Vajrabhadra. [site: Lampāka]

??see also opposite side: subhadrā syāmadevī kā.

**trunk: ONLY 39 & 40 are yabyum deities- the rest are depicted individually**  
**\*many include seed syllables**

**33. our left (his right):**(at shoulder) vajra deha. Pāṃ/pāh  
[flesh colored 1 faced 4 armed]

**\*\*CKS-** Vajradeha is associated with the nourishment of the heart by the goddess/channel of the \*citta cakra Drumacchāyā who is located at the shoulders. [site: Mālava]

**34. our right (his left):**(at shoulder) ?hemāchāyā mau[AVR- or anunāsika  
mah\*\*\*transcribe with colon: ma:]  
[flesh colored 1 faced 4 armed]

??Himālaya is the sacred site associated with the penis within the vakcakra, so this does not seem apt.\*However, Mālava is the sacred site connected w/ the shoulders within the citta cakra, and Drumacchāyā is the goddess/channel nourishing the heart in association with Vajradeha\*\*  
\*\*\*Hemachaya -AVR- ?aspirated cha (AVr-/kṣema]

**35. Our left:**(chest near armpit) kulīka. Kāṃ  
[flesh colored 1-faced 4-armed]

**\*\*CKS-** Ankurika is associated with the nourishment of the eyes by the goddess/channel Āirāvātī of the vakcakra who is located at the armpits. [site: Kāmarūpa]

**36. Our right:** (chest near armpit) seravatī. Phāṃ (?/khām)  
[flesh-colored one face two arms]

**\*\*CKS-** Airāvātī is the goddess/channel of the vakcakra located at the armpits (and associated with the nourishment of the eyes in association with ANkurika).

**37. Our left:** (chest near heart) vajra ??? tilaṃ/: vaṃ  
[gold 1 faced 4 armed]

**\*\*CKS-** perhaps this is Vajrajaṭila who is associated w/bile and nourished by the goddess/channel Mahābhairava of the vak cakra who is located at the breasts. [site: Oḍra]  
See opposite side.

**38. Our right:** (chest near heart) mahābhairava (seems to go w/ this)  
[gold 1-face 4-armed deity]

**\*\*CKS-** Mahābhairava is the goddess/channel of the vak cakra who is located on the breasts and nourishes the bile in association with Vajrajaṭila. [site Oḍra]

There is also a Mahābhairava who is associated with feces and nourished by the goddess/channel of the vak cakra Hayakarṇa who is located at the heart[site: Kāñcī]

39. Our left: (rib area) to right/center reads: ha?yakar?gha

\*\*CKS-Hayakarṇā is the goddess/channel of the vak cakra who is located at the heart and nourishes the feces in association w/ Mahābhairava. [site: Kāñcī]  
[gold deity 1-faced 4-armed in union w/ red female]

?below reads: vajraprabha kām

?SO 38 and 39 could be Mahābhairava and HayaHayakarṇā respectively

40. Our right: (rib area) mahāvīra vayuvega

[red deity 4/6 armed in union with red consort]

\*\*CKS- Vāyuegā is the goddess/channel of the vak cakra who is located at the navel and nourishes the lungs in association with Mahāvira. [site: Triśakuni]

### lower body

**\*seem to include seed syllables of a sort**

these deities appear to be represented singly with their partner on the opposite side- partners match in color

**41. our left (his right):** (on hand ) vailocarā sa. [blue deity ?1 face and 2/4 armed]

\*\*CKS- Vairocana is associated with the phlegm nourished by the goddess/channel Cakravartinī of the *kāya* cakra who is located at the thumbs & big toes. [site: Maru]

**42. our right (his left):** (on hand ) cakra vartī vaṃ [blue deity 1 face ?2/4 arms]

\*\*CKS- Cakravartinī of the *kāya* cakra who is located at the thumbs & big toes is the goddess/channel who nourishes phlegm which is associated with Vairocana. [site:Maru]

See opposite for Vairocana.

43. our left: (thigh) hayagrīva. ?laṃ [red deity 1 face 4 arms]

\*\*CKS- Hayagrīva is associated by the blood which is nourished by the goddess/channel Sauṇḍinī of the *kāya* cakra who is located at the thighs. [site: saurāṣṭra]

44. our right: (thigh) saunvirī soṃ/seṃ [red deity 1 face 4 arms]

\*\*CKS-Sauṇḍinī goddess/channel of the *kāya* cakra who is located at the thighs nourishes the blood which I associated with Hayagrīva. See opp for Hayagrīva.

45. our left: (knee) Vajrasatva. ?kaṃ [gold deity 1 face 4 arms]

\*\*CKS- Vajrasattva is associated with snot which is nourished by the goddess/channel Mahāvīryā of the *kāya* cakra who is located at the knees. [site : Kulatā]

46. our right: (knee) mahāvīryya kuṃ [gold deity 1 face ?4 arms]



\*\*CKS- Mahāvīryā is the goddess/channel of the kāya cakra who is located at the knees who nourishes snot which is associated with Vajrasattva. [site : Kulatā]  
See opp for Vajrasattva.

47. our left: (shin) ākāśagarbha suṃ [red deity 1 face ?4 arms]

\*\*CKS- Ākāśagarbga is associated with sweat which is nourished by the goddess/channel Cakravarminī of the kāya cakra who is located at the shanks. [site: Suvarṇadvīpa]

48. our right: (shin) cakra varmi suṃ [red deity 1 face ?4 arms]

\*\*CKS-Cakravarminī is the goddess/channel of the kāya cakra who is located at the shanks and nourishes the sweat which is associated with Ākāśagarbha. [site: Suvarṇadvīpa] See opp for Ākāśagarbha.

49. our left: (big toe ) mālyāli. ?naṃ [flesh colored deity 1 face ? 4 arms]

\*\*AVR-mālpati- big toe

50. our right: (big toe ) suvirā naṃ [flesh colored 1 face 4 arms]

\*\*CKS-Suvirā is the goddess/channel of the kāyacakra who is located at the fingers and toes and nourishes the fat which is associated with heruka. [site: Nagara] Should the opp [49?] then be Heruka?

51. our left: (sole of foot) padmanṛtya ghara/dhara siṃ [flesh colored deity 1 face ? 4 arms]

\*\*CKS- Padmanarteśvara is associated with the tears which are nourished by the goddess/channel Mahābalā of the kāyacakra who is located at the back of the feet. [site Sindhu]

52. our right: (sole of foot) mahā balā siṃ [flesh colored 1 face 4 arms]

\*\*CKS-Mahābalā is the goddess/channel of the kāyacakra who is located at the back of the feet and who nourishes the tears which are associated with Padmanarteśvara. [site Sindhu]. See opposite for Padmanarteśvara.

### foreground:

**\*\*these three are in union**

53. (central-seems to be aligned w/ central axis) ratna vajra. ?cando rohā  
[flesh-colored 1 face ?6 arms in union w/ flesh colored consort]

\*\*CKS- Khaṇḍarohā is the goddess/channel of the kāyacakra who is located at the anus and who nourishes pus, which is associated with Ratnavajra. [site Gṛhadavatā]  
(She is also one of the four goddesses in the retinue at the heart)[sh and kh exchanged - AVR]

54. (flanking to our left his right) viru pā?ḍe [AVR suggests che/could this be kṣe instead- ?consort of Khaganana] khagānanā hr: sipā.

White line connects to ?secret place

[flesh-colored 1 face ?6 arms in union w/ flesh colored consort]

\*\*\*CKS- Khagānanā is the goddess/channel of the vak cakra located on the penis who nourishes the hair part which is associated with Virūpakṣa. [site: Himālaya]

[AVR- khagānanā is associated w/ Guhyesvari- genitals]

55. (flanking to our right his left) Mahā???? Cakra??gā/mā peṃ

[AVR suggests cakradega-?Me- could this be cakravega]????[maybe mahābala]

(simha?)SMUDGED [could it match the other side- sipā? Like opposite side?]

White line connects to ?secret place

[flesh-colored 1 face ?6 arms in union w/ flesh colored consort]

\*\*\*CKS- Cakravega is the goddess/channel of the kāyacakra located at the penis who nourishes the phlegm which is associated with Mahābala. [site: Pretapuri]

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[www.himalayanart.org](http://www.himalayanart.org) [Himalayan Art Resource]

<http://idp.bl.uk> [International Dunhuang Project]

Oxford English Dictionary Online

<http://tibeto-logic.blogspot.com> [Tibeto-Logic](Dan Martin)

<https://sites.google.com/site/tiblical/home> (Dan Martin)

[www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org) [The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center]

[www.thlib.org](http://www.thlib.org) [The Tibetan and Himalayan Library]

[www.treasuryoflives.org](http://www.treasuryoflives.org)

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<http://dl.lib.brown.edu/BuddhistTempleArt/history2.html> [Tibetan Buddhist Wall Paintings: A Photographic Survey] (Philip and Marcia R. Lieberman)

