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Revealing the Hidden Buddha: Buddhagupta, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, and the
Development of Mahāyoga

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Religious Studies

by

Jake Ernest Nagasawa

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September 2021

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September 2021

Revealing the Hidden Buddha: Buddhagupta, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, and the

Development of Mahāyoga

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Jake Ernest Nagasawa

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ABSTRACT

Revealing the Hidden Buddha: Buddhagupta, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, and the Development of Mahāyoga

by

Jake Ernest Nagasawa

The eighth-century Indian Buddhist master Buddhagupta (more commonly known as Buddhaguhya) is one of the most influential figures in the history of Tibetan Buddhism. According to the Tibetan religious histories, Buddhagupta was invited to teach at the Tibetan imperial court in the mid-to-late eighth century. Though he did not accept the invitation, Buddhagupta is said to have initiated the emperor's envoys into several tantric systems and transmitted to them many of his own works. There are numerous tantric commentaries and other works attributed to Buddhagupta in the various recensions of the Tengyur—the commentarial section of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon—as well as in other canonical collections such as the Nyingma Kama (*Rnying ma bka' ma*). The scope of these works is vast, ranging from exoteric Mahāyāna topics and orthodox tantras of the *kriyā*, *caryā*, and yoga tantras, to the transgressive *mahāyoga* tantras, which are known for their use of ritual sex and violence. The Tibetan manuscripts at Dunhuang even preserve a text attributed to Buddhagupta on Dzokchen (*Rdzogs chen*) or the Great Perfection, the *summum bonum* of the Nyingma (*Rnying ma*) or “Ancient” School of Tibetan Buddhism. Contemporary scholarship remains divided as to whether all of these works are attributable to a single, mid-to-late eighth-century author or if the texts on *mahāyoga* and Dzokchen

were written by a later hand. Drawing on the methodologies of philology, history, higher textual criticism, and translation, this dissertation argues that the *mahāyoga* and Dzokchen works were written by a later author from the mid-to-late ninth century who shared the same name as the eighth-century Buddhagupta who transacted with the Tibetan emissaries. This conclusion is based on an analysis of two of these *mahāyoga* works: *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* (*Lam rnam par bkod pa*) and *Brief Explanation of the Path* (*Lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*), both of which draw heavily on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* (*Rgyud gsang ba 'i snying po*) and other *mahāyoga* tantras of the *Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*) cycle. Moreover, through a close examination of Tibetan text catalogs, treatises, and historical sources from the eighth to the eighteenth century, this dissertation proposes that the original Sanskrit name of both figures is in fact Buddhagupta and not Buddhaguhya. It further suggests that Buddhaguhya is reconstruction by post-dynastic Tibetan authors based on *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which was the way the imperial period translators rendered Buddhagupta. Finally, this dissertation explores several related issues, Buddhagupta's biographies and his influence on the Nyingma tradition's interpretation of the *mahāyoga* tantras, especially the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*.

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Introduction

༄༅། །དབུས་འབྲུངས་ལྷ་རྩ་རྩ་སི་བུ།
།བྱུབ་བརྟེས་སྐྱུ་འཕུལ་ལ་སོགས་པའི།
།ལམ་མཚོག་འཆད་ཚོད་ཚོམ་པས་བྱེད།
།སངས་རྒྱས་གསང་བ་ལ་བྱུག་འཚལ།

Born in Central India, he attained *siddhis* in Vārāṇasī, and
Through his teaching, debating, and compositions,
He revealed the supreme path of the Māyājāla and other tantras.
To Buddhaguhya, I pay homage!¹

The eighth-century Indian *ācārya* Buddhaguhya is without a doubt one of the most influential figures in the history of Tibetan Buddhism; numerous are the tantric commentaries and *sādhana*s attributed to him in various recensions of the Tengyur as well as in other paracanonical collections. These works are cited by Tibetan scholars of both the Nyingma (*Rnying ma*) or “Ancient” School of Tibetan Buddhism and the Sarma (*Gsar ma*) or “New” schools. Yet, as Stephen Hodge has noted, “we know next to nothing about Buddhaguhya.”² There are no lengthy hagiographies dedicated to Buddhaguhya’s life as there are for other figures revered in the Nyingma tradition like Padmasambhava or Vimalamitra. The available details about Buddhaguhya are found in religious histories and other works written long after Buddhaguhya is thought to have lived. Contemporary scholarship holds that he was born shortly after the turn of the eighth century. The traditional narratives state that Buddhaguhya was a highly accomplished monastic scholar and tantric

¹ This verse of praise is from Khempo Sangyay Tenzin and Gomchen Oleshey, “The Nyingma Icons: A Collection of Line Drawings of 94 Deities and Divinities of Tibet,” *Kailash—Journal of Himalayan Studies* 3, no. 4 (1975): 343. The Tibetan name of the master being praised is given as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which has often been rendered in Sanskrit by both Tibetan and Western scholars as Buddhaguhya. I prefer the Sanskrit name Buddhagupta for this figure—or more precisely *figures*—for reasons explained further on.

² Stephen Hodge, *The Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra: with Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: Routledge, 2005), 23.

master of royal parentage who trained at Nālandā. After receiving signs of spiritual attainment, he is said to have gone into retreat at Mount Kailash (*gangs ti se*), which, in the mid-eighth century, was on the periphery of the Tibetan empire. The Tibetan imperial court heard about Buddhaguhya residing at Mount Kailash and sent envoys to invite him to teach the Dharma in Tibet. However, on the advice of his *iṣṭadevatā* (*yi dam*) Mañjuśrī, Buddhaguhya declined their offer but decided to grant the envoys tantric initiation, sending them back to the court laden with his own treatises as well as scriptures that he helped to translate. Again, contemporary scholarship generally holds that this interaction took place in around the 750s to the 760s CE. At the end of his life, it is said that Buddhaguhya's body completely vanished.

Aside from the late and brief biographical accounts, all that remains of Buddhaguhya are the works attributed to him. However, it is unclear how many of the works of his wide-ranging *œuvre* were actually written by him. Many of the commentaries attributed to this figure are characterized by what Ronald Davidson calls “institutional esotericism,” which he sees as an attempt by conservative Buddhist monastics to assimilate, systematize, and ultimately sanitize the Buddhist tantric scripture emergent in Buddhist India during the seventh to eighth centuries. These focus on what the later Nyingma tradition refers to as the three outer tantras (*phyi rgyud*), i.e., tantras from the *kriyā*, *caryā*, and yoga categories.³ These include commentaries and liturgical texts written on tantras such as the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra*, the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra*, and the *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī*, among others. However, a number of commentaries also traditionally attributed to Buddhaguhya do deal with the more “radical” *mahāyoga* tantras,

³ Throughout this dissertation, I will refer to these three classes of tantras using the collective term “outer tantras.” This is done purely for the sake of convenience and concision, and should not be taken to be the author's own assessment of the validity of these classification schemes.

particularly the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* (*Rgyud gsang ba'i snying po*), which endorse antinomian behaviors such as ritual sex and violence. The *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and other *mahāyoga* tantras would later become of vital importance to the Nyingma (*Rnying ma*) or “Ancient” School of Tibetan Buddhism.⁴ Indeed, the *mahāyoga* texts attributed to Buddhaguhya become central to the Nyingma traditions and are cited by several influential Tibetan commentators. To complicate matters further, there may even be a Tibetan manuscript from Dunhuang attributed to this same figure concerning Dzokchen, or Great Perfection, the *summum bonum* of the Nyingma tradition.

As such, the question of Buddhaguhya’s identity and the provenance of the *mahāyoga*-related works attributed to him strikes directly at the heart of the early development of the Nyingma School. The Nyingma school did not develop a robust sectarian identity until around the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But for centuries before that time there existed ideas and practices that later would become central to Nyingma identity. There has been considerable scholarly interest in these “proto-Nyingma” ideas and practices in recent years, especially as regards historiography and tantric doxography. Some scholars, such as Sam van Schaik, Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer have focused primarily on the Tibetan manuscripts discovered in the Dunhuang caves.⁵ Others, such as Daniel Hirshberg and José I. Cabezón have focused on the writings of early Nyingma masters in Tibet, such as Nyangrel Nyima Özer (Nyang/Myang ral nyi ma ’od zer, 1124-1192 CE) and Rokben Sherap

⁴ Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 158.

⁵ See Sam van Schaik “A Definition of *Mahāyoga*: Sources from the Dunhuang Manuscripts,” *Tantric Studies* 1 (2008): 45-88., Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer, “Continuity and Change in Tibetan *Mahāyoga* Ritual: Some Evidence from the Tabzhag (Thabs zhags) Manuscripts and Other Dunhuang Texts,” in *Tibetan Ritual*, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón, 69-88 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and by the same authors *A Noble Noose of Methods, The Lotus Garland Synopsis: A Mahāyoga Tantra and its Commentary* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2012).

Ö (Rog ban Shes rab 'od, 1166-1244), respectively.⁶ To date, however, few have thoroughly examined the treatises of putative Indic origin found in the Nyingma Kama or “Nyingma Canonical Transmission” (*Rnying ma bka' ma*, hereafter NKM),⁷ a collection of texts part of which is traced by the Nyingma School to the earlier dissemination (*snga dar*) of Buddhism during the Tibetan dynastic period (c. seventh to ninth centuries). As a result, a significant body of sources for understanding the development of the Nyingma School has been effectively ignored. Without examining these works—their origin, authorship, and content—scholars will continue to have an incomplete picture of the history of Buddhism in Tibet, and especially of the Nyingma School.

This dissertation is the first monograph-length exploration of several issues connected to Buddhaguhyā—his names, biographies, and especially his works concerning the *mahāyoga* tantras. I make two primary assertions regarding the identity of this figure. The first is that the name Buddhaguhyā is a reconstruction from the Tibetan *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which was itself the way the name Buddhagupta was translated during the dynastic period.⁸ Hence I suggest that this figure’s actual name was Buddhagupta. Moreover, based on my study of two of the major *mahāyoga* commentaries traditionally ascribed to Buddhaguhyā—*An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* (*Lam rnam par bkod pa*) and *Brief Explanation of the Path* (*Lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*)—I argue that these works were

⁶ Daniel A. Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet’s Golden Age* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2016) and José I. Cabezón, *The Buddha’s Doctrine and the Nine Vehicles: Rog Bande Sherab’s Lamp of the Teachings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁷ See for example, the extensive *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgya pa*, 120 vols. (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'jam dbyangs, 1999). Many of the purportedly Indian commentaries in the NKM can also be found in certain recensions of the Tengyur.

⁸ I will develop this argument further on. In short, in the dynastic period translation catalogs, we mostly see this author’s name rendered phonetically as Buddhagupta, and in one case in Tibetan as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. According to the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (*Bye brag tu rtogs par byed pa*), the lexicon used by government sponsored translators in the early ninth century, *gsang ba* and *sbas pa* are the Tibetan words used to translate the Sanskrit word *guhya* and *gupta* respectively. However, it is clear from compound words in the *Mahāvīyutpatti* that *gsang ba* and *sbas pa* were not always mechanically applied as translation of *guhya* and *gupta*. Thus *sangs rgyas gsang ba* could simply have been the way dynastic period translators interpreted the name Buddhagupta.

most likely composed by a different author after the second quarter of the ninth century and thus well after the outer tantra commentator is thought to have lived. Thus, from this point on, I will be referring to two different figures who share the name Buddhagupta: the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta who wrote on the *kriyā, caryā*, and yoga tantras, and the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta whose works are inspired primarily by the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. This introduction will provide a review of the available scholarly literature on Buddhagupta, historical background of tantric Buddhism in Tibet with a focus on the Nyingma tradition, and an outline of the chapters to follow.

Literature Review

The scholarship on the figure I have been referring to as the outer tantric commentator Buddhagupta is robust. Early studies of his work include several essays by Alex Wayman, that seek to contextualize Buddhagupta in relation to other early tantric commentators, and even interrogate the provenance of at least one commentary attributed to Buddhagupta on the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra*.⁹ The most substantial study is Stephen Hodge's monumental translation of the *Mahā-vairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra* (MVT) together with both the word-by-word commentary and the condensed commentary on the tantra by Buddhagupta. In this work, Hodge also provides a helpful introduction, which introduces the biography and work of Buddhagupta. Another important study is Nicholas Schmidt's translation of two texts, a commentary and a *sādhana*, attributed to Buddhagupta on the deity Vajravidāraṇa.¹⁰ Erberto Lo Bue¹¹ has translated a short treatise by Buddhagupta on different

⁹ See, respectively, Alex Wayman, "Three Tanjur Commentators: Buddhaguhya, Ratnākaraśānti, and Smṛtijñānakīrti," *The Tibet Journal* 8, no. 3. (Autumn 1983): 24-36, and "The Disputed Authorship of Tibetan Canonical Commentaries on the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra" in *Bukyō to isshūkyō: Kumoi shōzen hakushi koki kinen 仏教と異宗教 : 雲井昭善博士古稀記念* [=Buddhism and Other Religions : Essays in Honor of Dr. Shōzen Kumoi], Hōjun Nagasaki et al., eds., 201-213, (Kyoto: Heiraji Shoten, 1985).

¹⁰ Nicholas Schmidt, "The Jewel's Radiance: A Translation of '*Ratnabhāsvara,' an Extensive Commentary on the Vajravidāraṇa-nāma-dhāraṇī," MA thesis, (Kathmandu University, 2018).

types of mandalas, and Siglinde Dietz¹² had translated into German Buddhagupta's epistle to the Tibetan imperial court. I have translated the same letter into English, as well as a treatise attributed to Buddhagupta on the four immeasurables (*tshad med bzhi*).¹³ I have also written a biographical essay on Buddhagupta's life.¹⁴ In Japanese, OCHI Junji has written several essays about Buddhagupta's MVT commentaries and about Buddhagupta's historical milieu.¹⁵ Several of these authors, especially, Hodge, Schmidt, and myself have questioned the authorship of the *mahāyoga* commentaries attributed to this figure by the Nyingma tradition.

The *mahāyoga* commentaries in the NKM ascribed to Indian authors have been overlooked; this lacuna is, I think, the result of several factors. First, from a practical standpoint, many of these of these texts, such as Sūryaprabhāsīṃha's (Nyi 'od seng ge) and Vilāsavajra's (Sgeg pa/pa'i rdo rje) respective commentaries on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, are lengthy texts, each about two hundred folios in length, making their study and translation a significant undertaking. Secondly, the authorship of these treatises, including the *Arrangement*, remain in question; many of them are deemed apocryphal—that is, not of Indian origin, but written rather by Tibetans—especially by followers of the New Translation Schools that arose after the eleventh century. I argue that this has influenced contemporary

¹¹ Erberto Lo Bue, "The Dharmamaṇḍala Sūtra by Buddhaguhya," in vol. 2 of *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, edited by Gherardo Gnoli and Lionello Lancotti (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orientale, 1987), 787-788.

¹² Siglinde Dietz, *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens. Nach dem tibetischen Tanjur herausgegeben, übersetzt und erläutert*, vol. 84 of *Asiatische Forschungen* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1984).

¹³ Jake E. Nagasawa, "Buddhaguhya and his *Epistle to the Ruler, his Subjects, and the Clergy of Tibet (Rje 'bangs dang bod btsun rnam la spring yig)*: A Biography of the Saint, a Tibetan Critical Edition of the Epistle, and its English Translation," MA thesis, (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2017) and "A Study and Translation of An Extensive Commentary on the Four Immeasurables (*Tshad med bzhi rgya cher 'grel pa*) attributed to Buddhagupta, with a Note About the Author," *Journal of World Buddhist Cultures* [世界仏教文化研究] 3 (March 2020): 5-32.

¹⁴ Jake E. Nagasawa, "Buddhaguhya" in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (March 2017), <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Buddhaguhya/10546>.

scholarly reception of these works. Finally, much of the published scholarship on the Nyingma School has focused on other aspects of the tradition. These include 1) Dzokchen (*rdzogs chen*), the Great Perfection, 2) the *terma* (*gter ma*) or revealed treasure literature, 3) the writings of influential Tibetan Nyingma masters.¹⁶ As the *summum bonum* of the Nyingma tradition and a fascinating mystic tradition with a complex history, Dzokchen has been extensively studied in works like Samten Karmay's influential *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*.¹⁷ In Tibet, the *termas*¹⁸ seemed to have eclipsed scriptures of the Ancient Tantra Collection (*Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum*, NGB)¹⁹ and the treatises of the NKM. Although the *terma* texts often linked themselves with the teachings and practices of the Ancient Tantra Collection and their commentaries to claim legitimacy, Janet Gyatso points out that the *termas* had a distinctive advantage over the NGB and NKM by virtue of the fact that the treasures were "received in a 'close transmission' (*nye brgyud*)," implying that their discoverers had "great proximity to (and by implication mastery of) the source of the teachings."²⁰ The *terma* tradition is a dynamic one, with new *tertöns* (*gter ston*) or treasure revealers emerging with each new generation of Nyingma

¹⁵ See *inter alia* OCHI Junji 越智 淳仁, "Buddhaguhya no nendai kō, Buddhaguhya の年代考," [Buddhaguhya's Chronology], *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 [Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies] 22, no. 2 (March 1974): 130-134.

¹⁶ There are notable exceptions, such as Jacob Dalton's, *Gathering of Intentions*, a history of the Nyingma School from the perspective of the *Gathering the Intentions Sutra* (*Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*), a Nyingma tantra of the anuyoga class. See Jacob P. Dalton, *The Gathering of Intentions: A History of Tibetan Tantra* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2016).

¹⁷ Samten Karmay, *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2007).

¹⁸ The *termas* are revelatory or visionary texts said to have been hidden, either in the earth (*sa gter*) or in the consciousness (*dgongs gter*) of the revealer, by Padmasambhava, the eight-century tantric master who the tradition claims was instrumental in establishing Buddhism in Tibet.

¹⁹ The NGB contains tantras and other scriptures that are unique to the Nyingma school and some that shared with the later translation schools. For example, the Collection contains versions of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* that seems have more in common with versions found at Dunhuang than those in the Kangyur, suggesting that the Collection might indeed preserve older translations. Other tantras, such as the *Tantra of the Twelve Daggers* (*Phur ba bcu gnyis*) are particular to the Nyingma tradition. See Robert Mayer, *A Scripture of the Ancient Tantra Collection: The Phur-pa bcu-gnyis*. Oxford: Kiscadale Publications, 1996.

practitioners. Perhaps as a result, the *termas* and their *tertöns* have attracted much scholarly attention.²¹ Finally, there is no dearth of excellent translations and studies of the many writings of Nyingma masters, both ancient and modern, including those of Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (Rong zom chos kyī bzang po, eleventh-century), Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyeltsen (Sog blog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1552-1624),²² Longchenpa, (Kong chen Rab 'byams pa nyi ma 'od zer, 1308-1364), and so on down to Dūjom Rinpoché (Bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1904-1987). Some of these writings, especially the older ones, can also be found in the NKM.

There is thus little scholarly work available on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, or on any other works of the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta. The most extensive treatment so far is Kammie Takahashi's, "Like Birds Soaring and Fish Gliding: View and Method in the *Mahāyoga* Texts of Buddhaguhya." Takahashi offers a philosophical view of both texts with a focus on how they blur the lines between genre. This is particularly true of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, which as Takahashi observes, blends aspects of "origin narrative, liturgical manual, ontology, cosmology, doxography, [and] epistemological treatise."²³ Other works by Takahashi that include substantial engagement with *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in particular include her "Lamps for the Mind: Illuminations and Innovation in dPal dbyangs's *Mahāyoga*" and "Contribution, Attribution, and Selective Lineal Amnesia in the Case of

²⁰ Janet Gyatso, "Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury: The *gTerma* Literature," In *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, edited by José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 150.

²¹ See, for example, Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) and Andreas Doctor, *Tibetan Treasure Literature: Revelation, Tradition and Accomplishment in Visionary Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2005).

²² See, respectively, Dominic Sur, *Entering the Way of the Great Vehicle: Dzogchen as the Culmination of the Mahayana* (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017) and James Duncan Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism: The Life, Writings, and Legacy of Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyeltsen* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2017).

²³ Kammie Takahashi, "Like Birds Soaring and Fish Gliding: View and Method in the *Mahāyoga* Texts Of Buddhaguhya," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 41 (2018): 247.

Mahāyogīn Pelyang,” both of which compare the early ninth century *mahāyoga* of the Tibetan master Pelyang to that of Buddhagupta.²⁴ *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* also features prominently in Cabezón’s *The Buddha’s Doctrine and the Nine Vehicles*, which is a study and translation of Rokben Sherap Ö’s *Lamp of the Teachings (Bstan pa’i sgron me)*, an early Nyingma treatise on the Buddhist path. Cabezón translates a short passage from the *Arrangement*, noting its close similarity to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. He also points out that the only other extant work by Rokben is *Clear Lamp of the Supreme Path (Lam mchog gsal ba’i sgron me)*, a commentary that elaborates on the more difficult points of the *Arrangement*.

Fortunately, there is a great deal of scholarship more broadly on the *mahāyoga* tantras themselves and their place in the Nyingma tradition. The most substantial study of *mahāyoga* is Nathaniel Garson’s “Penetrating the Secret Essence Tantra: Context and Philosophy in the *Mahāyoga* System of rNying-ma Tantra,” which provides a detailed overview of *mahāyoga* philosophy and literature, in addition to focusing more specifically on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which is the chief *mahāyoga* tantra in the Nyingma tradition.²⁵ Garson also provides a translation of a short treatise on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* by the third Dodrupchen, Jikmé Tenpé Nyima (’Jigs med bstan pa’i nyi ma, 1865-1926) titled *Key to the Precious Treasury (Mdzod kyi lde mig)*. Gyurme Dorje’s contribution to the study of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in particular are indispensable; his “The *Guhyagarbhatantra* and its XIVth Century Commentary phyog-bcu mun-sel” is in part a translation of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* together with what is arguably one of the most influential commentaries on the tantra, *Dispelling the*

²⁴ See Kammie Takahashi, “Lamps for the Mind: Illuminations and Innovation in dPal dbyang’s *Mahāyoga*,” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2009) and “Contribution, Attribution, and Selective Lineal Amnesia in the Case of Mahāyogīn Pelyang” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 32 (April 2015): 1-23.

²⁵ Nathaniel Garson, “Penetrating the Secret Essence Tantra: Context and Philosophy in the *Mahāyoga* System of rNying-ma Tantra,” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2004).

Darkness in the Ten Directions by the renowned Nyingma master Longchenpa.²⁶ He has also translated a commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* by Chöying Topden Dorjé (Chos dbyings stobs ldan rdo rje, 1785–1848).²⁷ Finally, there is Steven Weinberger’s “The Significance of Yoga Tantra and the *Compendium of Principles (Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra)* within Tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet” which contains a useful chapter on the historical connection between the earlier yoga tantras and the *mahāyoga* tantras.²⁸

In sum, this dissertation fills a significant gap in the scholarly literature. It is the first major study of the works of the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta, focusing particularly on his two most important works, *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, the *Brief Explanation of the Path*. As such, it is also a novel contribution to the much understudied early Kama literature of the Nyingma tradition.

Historical Background

Traditional historians trace the origin of the Nyingma School to the short-lived Pugyel (Spu rgyal) Dynasty (c. seventh to ninth-century), when Buddhism was first introduced to Tibet. Contemporary scholars, however, date the emergence of Nyingma sectarian identity to the later dissemination period. For this reason, it is more correct to refer to pre-eleventh-century texts and practices later appropriated by the emerging Nyingma School as “proto-Nyingma.” An overview of the dynastic period to the twelfth-century is key to contextualizing the works of the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta. The tradition places Buddhaugupta and his

²⁶ Gyurme Dorje, “The *Guhyagarbhatantra* and its XIVth Century Commentary phyog-bcu mun-sel,” PhD diss., (University of London, 1987).

²⁷ Gyurme Dorje trans., *The Complete Nyingma Tradition from Sutra to Tantra, Books 15 to 17: The Essential Tantras of Mahayoga*, 2 vols. (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2016).

²⁸ Steven Weinberger, “The Significance of Yoga Tantra and the *Compendium of Principles (Tattvasaṃgraha Tantra)* within Tantric Buddhism in India and Tibet,” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2003).

contact with Tibet in the eighth century. But it is in the post-dynastic early medieval period when treatises like *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and others are collected and made the core texts of the Nyingma School.

At its apogee during the reign of the emperor (*btsan po*) Tri Songdetsen (Khri Srong lde btsan, 742-c. 800),²⁹ the Tibetan empire had conquered the capital of Tang China, Chang'an and spread into parts of Central and South Asia. While Buddhism had apparently been current in Tibet since the reign of the emperor Tri Songtsen Gampo (Khri Srong btsan sgam po, 605?-649), it was under Tri Songdetsen that Tibet's first Buddhist monastery, Samyé (Bsam yas), was built and Buddhism was established as the state religion. According to traditional accounts, Tri Songdetsen did not do this alone; he invited the Indian abbot Śāntarakṣita for help. The abbot in turn invited Padmasambhava, the powerful tantric master who would later become the central figure in the Nyingma School, to tame the indigenous deities of Tibet who were preventing Samyé from being built. The Nyingma traditions holds that during this time, Padmasambhava transmitted a vast amount of teachings to his disciples, entrusting his Tibetan consort Yeshé Tsogyel (Ye shes mtsho rgyal) to hide some of these as treasure or *terma* (*gter ma*) to be revealed in the future when the time was right. This is also the time of the so-called Samyé Debate (sometimes referred to in contemporary scholarly literature as the Council of Lhasa³⁰) where it was decided that Tibet would follow the Indian gradualist approach represented by the scholar Kamalaśīla while rejecting the subitist approach of Chinese Chan represented by Heshang Moheyan (和尚摩訶衍, Hwa shang). It

²⁹ Dates of birth, death, and reign for the Tibetan emperors are drawn from Brandon Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals: An Annotated Translation of Tibet's First History, with an Annotated Cartographical Documentation* by Guntram Hazod, vol. 381 of *Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 143.

³⁰ See for example Paul Demiéville, *Le Concile de Lhasa: Une controverse sur le quétisme entre bouddhistes de l'Inde et de la Chine au VIIIe siècle de l'ère chrétienne* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale de France, 1952).

was also during this time that the imperial court initiated an effort to translate massive quantities of Buddhist texts from India. This translation effort, which was sponsored and regulated by the imperial government, reached its zenith with the emperor Tri Tsukdetsen (Khri Gtsug lde btsan, reigned 815-841), also known as Relpachen (Ral pa can). The Nyingma tradition, and the Tibetan historical literature in general, asserts that, during this period, figures like Padmasambhava and Buddhagupta transmitted to Tibet the scriptures (e.g., the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*) and treatises (e.g., *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*) now strongly associated with the school.³¹ The “Holy Buddhist Empire,” however, would be short-lived.³²

After the disintegration of the Tibetan empire in the mid-ninth-century, the “historical record becomes largely erased.”³³ According to the Tibetan religious histories, such as that of Lama Dampa Sönam Gyeltsen³⁴ (Bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, 1312-1375), this purportedly anti-Buddhist emperor Üdumten (U’i dum brtan, reigned 841-842), *alias* Lang Darma (Glang dar ma), together with his ministers, sought the destruction of Buddhist temples and monasteries in Tibet. To stop such a sacrilegious course of action, the Buddhist monk Lhalung Pelgyi Dorjé (Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje, ninth century) committed regicide, throwing the empire into chaos. A succession crisis ensued between Üdumten’s sons, Ösung (’Od srung) and Yumten (Yum brtan), splitting the empire in two, with Ösung fleeing to western Tibet to consolidate power. Thus, Tibet descended into what Tibetan historians call the “Age of Fragmentation” (*bsil ba’i dus*).

³¹ NSTB, 533-537.

³² This discussion, and the creative moniker “Holy Buddhist Empire,” is based on Sam van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 21-40.

³³ Robert Mayer, “Rnying ma Tantras,” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Vol. One*, Jonathan Silk, et al. eds. (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2015), 393.

³⁴ Per Sørensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies: Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: an Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Tibetan Chronicle: rGyal-rabs Gsal-Ba’i Me-long*, vol. 128 of *Asiatische Forschungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 427-439.

Many of these narratives have been questioned by contemporary scholars who have relied primarily on evidence from the Tibetan manuscript from Dunhuang. Van Schaik has demonstrated that Chan Buddhism had continued to survive, perhaps having influenced and been influenced by *mahāyoga*.³⁵ Karmay, in his reading of early pre-eleventh century sources from Dunhuang, questions whether Üdumten actually persecuted Buddhists and suggests that Üdumten was merely opposed to the involvement of the Buddhist clergy in politics, a fact that was exaggerated in later histories.³⁶ Hugh Richardson even casts doubt on the split of the empire, noting that Yumten is not mentioned in any of the Dunhaung documents, whereas Ösung is mentioned in several of them as the successor to Üdumten.³⁷ Most importantly, Jacob Dalton has argued that although the rule of law had broken down and local rulers waged war against each other, the Age of Fragmentation was in fact “marked by an eruption of religious creativity.” This is once again evinced in the Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang, which date to the Age of Fragmentation.³⁸

At Dunhuang, we find tantras³⁹ that Robert Meyer sees as “proto-Nyingma,” i.e., texts that seem to have well-established ritual and doctrinal traditions built around them, such as *Lasso of Methods (Thabs kyi zhags pa)*. Mayer also notes that “it seems likely that most old tantras were produced in Tibet through the ninth and tenth centuries, by Tibetan masters quite possibly emulating their Indian *siddha* counterparts.”⁴⁰ Interestingly enough,

³⁵ Sam van Schaik, *Tibetan Zen: Discovering a Lost Tradition* (Boston: Snow Lion, 2015).

³⁶ Samten Karmay, “King Lang Darma and his Rule” in *Tibet and her Neighbours: A History*, ed. Alex McKay, (London: Editions Hansjörg Mayer, 2003), 64-65.

³⁷ Hugh Richardson, *High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected Writings on Tibetan History and Culture*, ed. Michael Aris (London: Serindia Publications, 1998), 48-55. The editor mentions that Richardson rethought his position on this issue later, though I think the Richardson’s argument is plausible.

³⁸ Jacob Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 5-10. The quote is on p. 7.

³⁹ This discussion focuses on certain tantric texts from Dunhaung. There certainly were tantras in Tibet prior to the Age of Fragmentation, but see below. Moreover, there are copies of many non-tantric texts from Dunhuang.

⁴⁰ Mayer 2015, 393-394.

we also find at Dunhuang tantras that are normally associated with the later dissemination period, such as IOL Tib J 438, which is a nearly complete copy of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, and IOL Tib J 481, a complete copy of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*.⁴¹ Versions of both texts are found in the NGB and are categorized by the Nyingma School as *mahāyoga* texts. The Dunhuang documents, then, preserve Indic tantras that may have been transmitted during the dynastic period and ones that were composed by Tibetans based, perhaps, on Indian antecedents.

Starting in the eleventh-century, we begin to see “historical accounts of lineal transmissions for emerging sectarian traditions” in an attempt to “anchor their own teachings’ origins” in India and “account for subsequent unbroken transmission of those teachings in Tibet.”⁴² This period is a crucial one in the development of Tibetan Buddhism as we know it today—it is a time in which Buddhist practice is reestablished by the founders of the New Schools (Gsar ma). Tibetan masters, such as Marpa Chökyi Lodrö (Mar pa chos kyi blo gros, 1012-1072) brought new tantric texts and practices fresh from India. Up to this point, the proto-Nyingma teachings were passed down through clans that dated to the dynastic period such as the Zur (Zur), Nup (Gnubs), and Nyang (Nyang/Myang).⁴³ Now, as the emerging New Schools asserted themselves over and against the older traditions, we see early signs of Nyingma identity. For example, in the *Jewel Commentary (Dkon mchog ’grel)*, Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo is moved to defend the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, an important Nyingma tantra whose authenticity was questioned by, among others, Gö Khukpa Lhetsé

⁴¹ See Jacob Dalton and Sam van Schaik, *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang: A Descriptive Catalog of the Stein Collection at the British Library* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

⁴² David Germano, “The Seven Descendants and the Early History of Rnying ma Transmissions.” In *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism*, edited by Helmut Eimer and David Germano, (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002), 226.

⁴³ On these Nyingma clans, see NSTB, 601-617.

(Mgos khug pa lhas btsas, eleventh century).⁴⁴ Rongzom also openly questioned the legitimacy of the teaching being newly imported from India. Rongzom's criticism would be amplified in the next century by Rokben Sherap Ö.⁴⁵ The New Schools' criticisms of the older traditions of Buddhism in Tibetan allowed them to distinguish themselves from the old translations and traditions, but ironically, it may also have acted as a catalyst for the formation of Nyingma identity.

It is in the twelfth century that the Nyingma School coalesces and takes a shape more familiar to a contemporary eye. One of the most important figures in this process was Nyangrel Nyima Özer, one of the earliest treasure revealers and historians of the Nyingma School. Perhaps his most important treasure revelation is the *Copper Island Chronicle* (*Bka' thang zangs gling ma*), the earliest hagiography of Padmasambhava. The *Copper Island Chronicle* makes Padmasambhava the hero of the story of Buddhism's establishment in Tibet, and "presents the first apotheosis of the imperium as the golden age of Tibetan Buddhism."⁴⁶ It is because of Nyangrel's hagiography that Padmasambhava is so revered by Tibetans today. This is also the period of Rokben Sherap Ö, the author of the *Lamp of the Teachings*, a treatise that was part of the movement to "construct and legitimize Nyingma as a legitimate tradition. More importantly for the present project, it is also "one of the earliest philosophically robust explanations of the nine vehicles,"⁴⁷ the most important Nyingma doxographical scheme. Finally, in 1159, Katok Dampa Deshek (Kaḥ thog dam pa bde gshegs, 1122-1192), a student of the Zur clan tradition, founded the monastery of Katok Dorjé Den (Kaḥ thog rdo rje ldan), the earliest Nyingma monastery and the place where an

⁴⁴ Dorji Wangchuk, "An Eleventh-Century Defense of the Authenticity of the Guhyagarbha Tantra" In *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism*, edited by Helmut Eimer and David Germano (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2002), 278-285.

⁴⁵ Ronald Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*, (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2005), 187, 232-235. These

early version of what would become the NKM was compiled.⁴⁸ It is during this period that the *mahāyoga* master Buddhagupta seems to rise to prominence.

The works of the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta bookend these periods of Tibetan history. They emerge at some point in ninth century as part of the proliferation of tantric scriptures and treatises straddling the end of the dynastic period and beginning of the religiously creative Age of Fragmentation. They gain prominence again after the eleventh century as central to the Zur clan's exegetical tradition of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. And in the twelfth to the fourteenth century, Rokben Sherap Ö penned the first Tibetan commentary on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, titled *Clear Lamp of the Supreme Path* (*Lam mchog gsal ba'i sgron me*).⁴⁹

Dissertation Overview

Chapters one and two focus on substantiating my arguments regarding the name and identity of Buddhagupta. In chapter one, I propose that the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya, which is commonly used in both traditional and contemporary scholarship, was reconstructed by Tibetans from *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which itself was the dynastic period translation of Buddhagupta. I trace this process beginning with early Tibetan texts such as the *Denkar Catalog*, the *Pangtang Catalog*, and Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* and through early Nyingma works like the *Copper Island* and into the catalogs and colophons of various Tengyur compilation projects. In chapter two, I compare twelve major Tibetan sources for Buddhagupta's biography in order to draw out their

⁴⁶ Hirshberg 2016, 177

⁴⁷ Both are quotes from Cabezón 2013, 4.

⁴⁸ Dalton 2016, 48-54.

consistencies and evaluate their historicity. I propose that Nyingma authors equated the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta with the *mahāyoga* master in an attempt to legitimate their tantric system, which had come under attack by Sarma scholars in the early medieval period. I then compare the biography of Buddhagupta to that of his purported disciple Vimalamitra and suggest that they may both have their origin in a manuscript from Dunhuang. Both chapters end with the assumption that the outer tantra exegete Buddhagupta is an entirely separate person from the Buddhagupta associated with the *mahāyoga* tantras.

Chapters three and four focus on the overall history in Tibet of *mahāyoga* and the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* with an emphasis on the role Buddhagupta plays in their transmission and reception in Tibet. In chapter two, I show how the works of the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta are used in the Nyingma tradition as an authoritative source on *mahāyoga*, with a focus on two sources spanning several centuries. I then move to an examination of Buddhagupta's categorization of the tantras, suggesting that it is reflective of a period in the late ninth century when Tibet when *mahāyoga* was considered the pinnacle of tantric practice. Following this, I examine the core texts of the *mahāyoga* section of the Nyingma Gyübum, and then move to an analysis of the hostile reception of *mahāyoga* in Tibet—at least on the part of the royal courts—beginning in the dynastic period and extending into the eleventh century kingdom of Gugé. In chapter three, I shift my focus to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which is the main focus of the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta. Following a substantial overview of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, I demonstrate that Buddhagupta is traditionally considered to have played a pivotal role in the translation and transmission of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* to Tibet. I also examine the way in which Buddhagupta's works

⁴⁹ Rog ban Shes rab 'od, *Rnal 'byor chen po 'i rgyud sgyu 'phrul drwa ba 'i man ngag dpal lam gyi rim pa zhes bya ba 'i dka' ba rnam par 'grel pa lam mchog gsal ba 'i sgron me*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 83 [u], pp. 161-394 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999).

were deployed in the debates regarding whether the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* is an authentic Indian tantra or a Tibetan forgery.

The final two chapters provide the textual evidence in favor of my argument for two different Buddhaguptas. In chapter five, I examine a wide range of instances in the works of the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta that might trick the reader into thinking that he would have endorsed various aspects of *mahāyoga* tantra. I then introduce the two texts—*An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path*—focusing on their classically mahāyogīc elements. However, it is precisely because of this content, particularly their explanation of sexual practices and their awareness of yogīc techniques, that we know that both of these texts did not gain currency in Tibetan until the mid-to-late ninth century, and that therefore these two texts were written by a different author who postdates the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta, perhaps by nearly a century. In chapter six, I present the first Tibetan critical editions and annotated English translations of *Brief Explanation of the Path* and chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. I close this dissertation with a concluding remarks regarding avenues for the future study of Buddhagupta, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, and *mahāyoga* in general.

This dissertation is decidedly a work of Tibetan Buddhist intellectual history. The question of whether a single Buddhagupta wrote all of the texts traditionally attributed to him has remained unresolved because of a lack of historical-critical engagement with his *mahāyoga* compositions. I therefore rely on what Dorji Wangchuk refers to as “Buddhist textual scholarship.” Wangchuk defines this approach as

An academic discipline within the domain of the humanities (*Geisteswissenschaften*), (a) whose ultimate goal is the investigation and explanation of the intellectual history (*Geistesgeschichte*) and intellectual culture (*Geisteskultur*) of a society impregnated with Buddhist religion and philosophy, (b) whose main research material consists of written texts (or written sources) transmitted through the medium of manuscripts,

xylographs, epigraphs, modern books, and so on, and (c) whose methodology is defined by the employment of historical-philological tools and techniques, which presupposes a profound knowledge of the languages and cultures in which the pertinent texts have originated and through which they have been transmitted and disseminated.⁵⁰

As such, I employ the two historical-philological methods that Wangchuk recommends in his essay. The first is text criticism, which seeks to establish a reliable source text that can then serve as the basis for a translation. I therefore provide Tibetan critical editions of both of the key source texts—*An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Paths*—based on multiple textual witnesses in order to achieve this. I then proceed to use second method—translation—as a mean of interpreting the text and moving toward an understanding its historical context. Indeed, as scholar and translator Alan Williams contends, “translation requires the closest of readings,” and a textual project like the present one that attempts to ascertain the provenance of a text necessitates the closest possible reading.⁵¹ It is often in the process of attempting to clearly render the source text into the target language when variant readings or innuendos become even more apparent. Finally, I engage in higher criticism of the text, which attempts to establish authorship and dating through a historical analysis of the content and language of the text; this often includes critical comparison to texts whose authorship and dates have already been established. In the case of this dissertation, this entails comparison of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Paths* to texts that have already been well-studied and with firm dates such as the works of the tantra commentator Buddhagupta or the *mahāyoga* treatises of the early ninth century Tibetan *mahāyoga* master Pelyang (Dpal dbyang).

⁵⁰ Dorji Wangchuk, “A Rationale for Buddhist Textual Scholarship,” in *Cross-Cultural Transmission of Buddhist Texts: Theories and Practices of Translation*, Dorji Wangchuk, ed. (Hamburg: Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg, 2016), 339.

⁵¹ Alan Williams, “Translation,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Research Methods in the Study of Religion*, Michael Strausberg and Steven Engler, eds. (London: Routledge, 2011), 421

Abbreviations, Signs, and Sigla

Abbreviations

add.	adds or added
f.	folio
ff.	folios
p.	page
pp.	pages
om.	omits or omitted

CN	<i>Chos kyi rnam grangs</i> by Gönpö Wanggyel ⁵²
GT	<i>Guhyagarbha Tantra</i>
IOL Tib J	India Office Library, Tibetan collection
MMW	Monier Monier-Williams's <i>A Sanskrit-English Dictionary</i> ⁵³
MV	<i>Mahāvvyutpatti (Bye brag tu rtog par byed pa)</i> ⁵⁴
MVT	<i>Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra</i>
NGB	<i>Nyingma Gyübum—Nyingma Tantric Canon</i>
NKM	<i>Nyingma Kama—Nyingma Canonical Transmission</i>
NSTB	<i>The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism</i> by Düjom Rinpoché ⁵⁵
PT	<i>Pelliot Tibétain</i>
STTS	<i>Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha Tantra</i>

Signs

]	separates variant readings
{ }	indicates that the enclosed word(s) are my emendations of the text

Sigla

C	Choné Kangyur and Tengyur
D	Dergé Kangyur and Tengyur ⁵⁶
D ^{CT}	Comparative Tengyur ⁵⁷

⁵² Mgon po bang rgyal, *Chos kyi rnam grangs* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs pa'i skrun khang, 1988).

⁵³ Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special Reference to Greek, Latin, Gothic, German, Anglo-Saxon, and Other Cognate Indo-European languages* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1872).

⁵⁴ Reference numbers according the text as cataloged in SAKAKI Ryōzaburō 榊亮三郎, *Hon'yaku myōgi taishū: Bon-Zō-Kan-Wa yon'yaku taikō* 翻譯名義大集：梵藏漢和四譯對校 [=Mahāvvyutpatti: Sanskrit-Tibetan-Kanji-English Quadrilingual Edition] (Tokyo : Suzuki Gakujutsu Zaidan, 1973).

⁵⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism Its Fundamentals and History*, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002).

⁵⁶ Kangyur and Tengyur catalog numbers follow UI Hakuju, et. al., eds., *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon (Bkaḥ-ḥgyur and Btsan-ḥgyur)* (Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934.)

⁵⁷ The Comparative Tengyur uses the Dergé recension as its basis for comparison in most cases. For texts, particularly certain commentaries, the Comparative Tengyur used the Nartang recension as its basis.

G	Golden Tengyur ⁵⁸
N	Nartang Kangyur and Tengyur
Q	Peking Kangyur and Tengyur ⁵⁹
Ctg	Chomden Reldri's <i>Ornamental Sunbeam for the Doctrine's Spread</i> ⁶⁰
Ldk	<i>Denkar Catalog</i> ⁶¹
Ptm	<i>Pangtang Catalog</i> ⁶²

Style and Conventions

I have rendered Tibetan names and select terms in phonetics using the THL Simplified Phonetic Transcription system devised by David Germano and Nicholas Tounadre. I have also translated the titles of the Tibetan texts I cite. In all cases, I provide the Tibetan spelling in Wylie in parentheses after names, terms, and text titles at first occurrence. For the transcription of Tibetan texts, I follow most of the conventions established by Turrell Wyle, save for the *shé* (*shad*) or vertical punctuation marks, for which I substitute the standard for the transcription of Dunhuang text, however, I follow strict Extended Wylie.

I use the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration to render Sanskrit words in Roman script, except for terms well-known by speakers of English such as *chakra*, *sutra*, and *mandala* (which would be *cakra*, *sūtra* and, *maṇḍala* in IAST). Since most readers will likely be familiar with Buddhist tantras by the Sanskrit names, I leave them mostly untranslated (i.e., *Guhyagarbha Tantra* instead of *Secret Nucleus Tantra*).

⁵⁸ MIYAKE Shin'ichrō, "Comparative Table of the Manuscript Tenjur in dGa'-ldan Monastery with the Peking Edition of Tenjur," *Annual Memoirs of the Ōtani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute* 17 (2000): 1-65.

⁵⁹ Kangyur and Tengyur catalog numbers from vols. 165-168 of Suzuki, Deisetz T, ed., *The Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking Edition, Kept in the Library of the Otani University, Kyoto*. 168 vols. (Kyoto: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1961).

⁶⁰ Kurtis R. Schaeffer and Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp in *An Early Tibetan Survey of Buddhist Literature: The Btsan pa rgyas pa Rgyan gyi nyi 'od of Bcom ldam ral gri*, (Cambridge: The Harvard Oriental Series, 2009).

⁶¹ Reference numbers from Adelheid Herrmann-Pfandt, *Die lHan kar ma. Ein früher Katalog der ins Tibetische übersetzten buddhistischen Texte. Kritische Neuausgabe mit Einleitung und Materialien*. Vol. 367 of *Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften*. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009).

For contemporary scholars whose work is written in a non-English language and whose surnames come before their given name in their native language, as in Japanese, I place their surnames first in uncial script (e.g., OCHI Junji).

All reference to texts from the Kangyur and Tengyur are to the D edition, except in the case of commentaries from the Tengyur related to the Nyingma tantras. References to these are generally to their recension in Q. Due to a technical error on BRDC, I am unable to access several of these commentaries, so in some cases, I refer to the Comparative Tengyur (Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma).

In the critical editions in chapter six, a siglum followed immediately by a number indicates the folio or page numbers of the source (e.g., D135a). Otherwise, a space will separate sigla from catalog numbers (e.g., D 4194). I have left the footnotes in the apparatus single-spaced for easy reference.

⁶² Reference numbers from KAWAGOE Eishin 川越 英真. *dKar chag 'Phang thang ma*. (Sendai: Tōhoku indo chibetto kenkyūkai 東北インド・チベット研究会 [Tohoku Society for Indo-Tibetan Studies], 2005).

Chapter I. A Three Body Problem?: Clarifying the Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhyā Issue



Figure 1: Line Drawing of Buddhagupta by Khempo Sangyay Tenzin and Gomchen Oleshey. This is an excerpt of drawing no. 21 from "The Nyingma Icons: A Collection of Line Drawings of 94 Deities and Divinities of Tibet."⁶³

Who is Buddhagupta? From the scholarly point of view, this question has remained mostly unresolved, and for good reasons. Unlike his supposed contemporaries Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, Buddhagupta was not made into a Tibetan dynastic period hero of the Dharma. Indeed, there are no extensive hagiographic works celebrating Buddhagupta's life and

⁶³ Kempo Sangyay Tenzin and Gomchen Oleshey 1975, 343. The iconography of Buddhagupta has not been consistent over time. Lokesh Chandra has a brief entry about Buddhagupta in *Dictionary of Buddhist Iconography, Volume 2* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture and Aditya Prakashan, 2003), 657, where he notes that Buddhagupta's right hand is usually in the *vitarka mudrā* with his left hand holding a book. Chandra's source is Tarthang Tulku's *Lineage of Diamond Light*, Crystal Mirror Series, vol. 5 (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1991), 293. However, this source has a line drawing that is nearly identical to the one above, with his right hand in what looks to be the *bhūmisparśa mudrā*. Another nearly identical line drawing can be found in Düjom Rinpoché's NSTB, 565. The oldest painting I have been able to find of Buddhagupta is a mural on the top floor of the Kumbum (*Skū 'bum*) Stupa in Gyantsé (*Rgyal rtse*), Tibet. In a chapel featuring the Indian Buddhist masters, there is a painting of Buddhagupta that differs from the line drawings mentioned above in that he has a much more severe look on his face and is sporting a light beard. Both of his hands are composed in the *dharmacakra mudrā*. See Franco Ricca and Erberto Lo Bue, *The Great*

accomplishments akin to those chronicling other early masters, like the *Copper Island Chronicle* (*Bka' thang zangs gling ma*),⁶⁴ or the *Chronicle of Padma* (*Padma bka' thang*),⁶⁵ or the *Great History of the Heart Essence of Dzokchen* (*Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gyi lo rgyus chen mo*).⁶⁶ Even Tibetan figures of the same period such as the translator Pagor Vairocana enjoy a more thorough hagiographic treatment.⁶⁷ The scant details we do have about Buddhagupta—who is sometimes said to have been a teacher to all three of the figures just mentioned—are found scattered throughout Tibetan historical works and religious treatises. Nevertheless, Buddhagupta's writings are among the few tantric commentaries mentioned in the two ninth century text registers, the *Denkar Catalog*⁶⁸ and *Pangtang Catalog*.⁶⁹ The three works recorded there are commentaries on tantras that would later be categorized in Nyingma tradition as outer tantras (*phyi rgyud*) or in the Sarma schools as

Stupa of Gyantse: A Complete Tibetan Pantheon of the Fifteenth Century (London: Serindia Publications, 1993), 108-109, 220, and 297.

⁶⁴ For two of the oldest extant recensions of the text, see Lewis Doney, *The Zangs gling ma, The First Padmasambhava Biography: Two Exemplars of the Earliest Attested Recensions* (Andia: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2014). For a translation of this work, a terma revealed by the twelfth century tertön Nyangrel Nyima Özer (Nyang/Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1124-1192), see Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava*, trans. Erik Pema Kunsang (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publication, 2004).

⁶⁵ This terma revealed by the fourteenth century tertön Orgyen Lingpa (O/U rgyan gling pa) is an important hagiographical source on the life of Padmasambhava. U rgyan gling pa, *U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1996).

⁶⁶ This is discussed extensively in Joel Gruber's study of Vimalamitra, "Vimalamitra: The Legend of an Indian Saint and His Tibetan Emanations," PhD diss., (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2016). According to Gruber, this anonymous twelfth century text is an important early source for Vimalamitra's hagiography. See *Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi lo rgyus chen mo*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 34 [ngi]: 505 – 660 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog Mkhan po 'jam dbyangs, 1999).

⁶⁷ Pagor (Spa gor) Vairocana, sometimes rendered using the Tibetan pronunciation Bairotsana (*Bai ro tsa na*), was a dynastic period translator closely associated with the transmission of Dzokchen to Tibet. He is said to have compiled a collection of Nyingma tantras called the *Collected Tantras of Vairocana* (*Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*) His biography, *Great Image of Vairocana* (*Bai ro'i 'dra 'bag chen mo*), attributed to Yudra Nyingpo, is translated in *The Great Image: The Life Story of Vairochana the Translator*, trans. Ani Jinba Palmo (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 2004).

⁶⁸ The catalog was first studied by Marcelle Lalou in "Les textes bouddhiques au temps du roi Khri-sron-lde-bcan" *Journal Asiatique* (1953): 313-354. An annotated edition can be found in Adelheid Herrmann-Pfandt, *Die lHan kar ma. Ein früher Katalog der ins Tibetische übersetzten buddhistischen Texte. Kritische Neuausgabe mit Einleitung und Materialien*. Vol. 367 of *Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften*. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009).

⁶⁹ KAWAGOE Eishin 川越 英真. dKar chag 'Phang thang ma. (Sendai: Tōhoku indo chibetto kenkyūkai 東北インド・チベット研究会 [Tohoku Society for Indo-Tibetan Studies], 2005).

kriyā, caryā, and yoga tantras. The Tengyur and the Nyingma Kama (NKM) contain a vastly expanded body of writing attributed to Buddhaguhya, which includes treatises on *mahāyoga* and other works on outer tantras. It seems that, as a figure associated with the earliest days of Buddhism in Tibet, many lineages wanted to claim him as their own. Buddhagupta’s commentaries on the outer tantras are widely cited by Sarma commentators, including such luminaries as Butön Rinchen Drup (Bu ston Rin chen grub, 1290-1364 CE), Tsongkhapa Lozang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419), and Khedrup Gelek Pelzang (Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang, 1385-1438). By the fourteenth century, Buddhagupta appears in the narratives of several major transmission lineages, including *mahāyoga*, Dzokchen, Zhijé (*zhi byed*) or Pacification, and even the *Sutra Gathering the Intentions of All the Buddhas* (*Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgong pa ’dus pa mdo*).

The problem of Buddhagupta’s identity is further complicated by the fact that even his name is in dispute, due in large part due to the multiform names given for this figure in Tibetan religious literature. As Sam van Schaik notes, “the names Buddhagupta and Buddhaguhya (as well as their Tibetan equivalents Sangs rgyas sbas pa and Sangs rgyas gsang ba) seem to have been used interchangeably.”⁷⁰ In the *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalogs he is known as Buddhagupta (*bu ddha gu pta*), yet the same texts in the Tengyur are said to be authored by Buddhaguhya (transliterated into as *bu ddha guhya* or rendered in Tibetan translation as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*), the more common name among both Tibetan and contemporary scholars. Other old texts—including manuscripts from Dunhuang—render his name as Buddhagupta but in the corrupted Sanskrit form *’bu ta kub ta* or *’bu ta kug ta*, or in Tibetan translation as *sangs rgyas sbas pa*. Given the fact that *guhya* and *gupta* have very similar meanings, it would seem that these are the same person. However, because his

writings seem to span several lineages and periods of Buddhism's development in Tibet, some scholars have proposed that there may be multiple figures variously called Buddhaguhya or Buddhagupta.

Scholarly opinions on whether Buddhagupta and Buddhaguhya are a single individual can be divided into two camps, as Catherine Dalton has observed: “maybe yes” and “maybe no.”⁷¹ Kammie Takahashi accepts the possibility that the outer tantra commentator and the *mahāyoga* commentator might indeed be one in the same person, given that these works may have been composed around the same time. More important, she notes, early commentators in the Nyingma tradition considered him to be one figure.⁷² Stephen Hodge, who has written more than any other scholar about Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, states that there is “no intrinsic reason” for the two figures to be separate, although the works on the outer tantras do seem to differ stylistically from the body of *mahāyoga* treatises attributed to him. Hodge also notes that the outer tantra commentaries do not cite any *mahāyoga* tantra even where it would have been appropriate.⁷³ Ronald Davidson considers the outer tantra commentator to belong to a distinctly conservative, institutional monastic milieu that would not allow for the antinomianism of the *mahāyoga* tantras.⁷⁴ Sam van Schaik remains open to the possibility that the outer tantra exegete might be identical with the *mahāyoga* exegete, and proposes that it is the latter who may have written the single Dzokchen treatise attributed to him.⁷⁵ Samten Karmay states “the existence of a Buddhagupta practising Māyājāla Tantras and

⁷⁰ Sam van Schaik, “The Early Days of the Great Perfection,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 186-187.

⁷¹ Catherine Dalton, “Enacting Perfection: Buddhajñānapāda’s Vision of a Tantric Buddhist World,” PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2019), 43 n. 224.

⁷² Takahashi 2009, 198 and Takahashi 2015: 19-21.

⁷³ Stephen Hodge, *The Maha-Vairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra: With Buddhaguhya's Commentary* (London: Routledge, 2005), 23.

⁷⁴ Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 154 and 158.

⁷⁵ Van Schaik 2004, 187.

consequently as one of those who first promulgated the rDzogs chen doctrine is irrefutably attested” in the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation (Bsam gtan mig sgron)* by Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé (Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, mid-ninth to tenth century), one of the earliest known Tibetan commentators.⁷⁶

To be clear, the central claim of this dissertation is that the author of the outer tantra commentaries—that is, the works on the tantras of the *kriyā*, *caryā*, and yoga classes—were written by a dynastic period figure named Buddhagupta who most likely *did not* author the *mahāyoga* treatises that Tibetan scholars, particularly Nyingma ones, associate him with. These *mahāyoga* treatises were written by a different figure called Buddhagupta. They reference concepts and practices that are more reflective of a mid-ninth century, perhaps even early post-dynastic developments in tantric Buddhism in Tibet. I also propose that some of the philosophical views articulated in these *mahāyoga* texts resonate with a Dzokchen view allowing for his works to be interpreted in such a way. These arguments will be developed in subsequent chapters. The present chapter begins by clarifying the most basic of issues at hand, the actual name of the person—or rather persons. In this regard, I argue that the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya is a reconstruction from the Tibetan *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which itself was as the dynastic period translation of the name Buddhagupta. Indeed, most early Tibetan sources from the dynastic period and shortly after know of the name Buddhagupta, which is used to refer to an outer tantra commentator, a *mahāyoga* master, and a Dzokchen lineage holder. I show that the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya came about in process of cataloging and compiling the early Tengyurs in the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries. In short, I argue that there are two figures who shared the name Buddhagupta—an

⁷⁶ Samten Karmay, *The Great Perfection (Rdzogs chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 63.

outer tantra commentator and a *mahāyoga* exegete; the name Buddhaguhya is a reconstruction based on the early translation of Buddhagupta as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*.⁷⁷

What is in a Name?: “Buddhaguhya” as Reconstruction

In this section, I take up the argument that the proper Sanskrit name for our figures is Buddhagupta, and that Buddhaguhya may be a Tibetan reconstruction of the Tibetan name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which itself was the way dynastic translator chose to render Buddhagupta. This possibility was first suggested by OCHI Junji,⁷⁸ and later by Matthew Kapstein.⁷⁹ Even Stephen Hodge has admitted that our figure’s name may in fact be Buddhagupta.⁸⁰ The argument was recently (and cogently) advanced by Nicolas Schmidt in his study of two texts attributed to Buddhagupta on the *dhāraṇī* of the deity Vajravidāraṇa.⁸¹ In addition to examining the sources that Schmidt consults, I extend his argument by looking at instances of the occurrence of the name in the early Tibetan tantric commentator Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé’s *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*. I also consider the possibility that early renderings of this name in forms like *'bu rta kug ta* might have been early phonetic

⁷⁷ It is not at all unheard of in the Buddhist tradition for different figures to share the same names. For example, in *The Alchemical Body*, David Gordon White deals with the issue of multiple authors named Nāgārgjuna in Buddhist and alchemical literature. White suggests that there are at least three different Nāgārgjunas who lived in the second century, seventh century, and ninth century. See David Gordon White, *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 66-77. As I will show in chapter five, the origin myths of the *mahāyoga* tantras feature three separate figures that were said to have shared the name Indrabhūti.

⁷⁸ OCHI Junji 越智 淳仁, Buddhagupta to Buddhaguhya ni tsuite, Buddhagupta と Buddhaguhya について” [On Buddhagupta and Buddhaguhya] *Nippon Chibetto Gakkai Kaihō* 日本西藏学会々報 [Report of the Japanese Association of Tibetan Studies] 26 (1980): 3-6. Ochi separates the *mahāyoga* commentator who was a student of Vilāsavajra from the one recorded in the *Denkar Catalog*. He implies that Buddhagupta’s name was rendered early on as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which was later interpolated in Tibet as Buddhaguhya.

⁷⁹ Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 62-63 n. 73.

⁸⁰ Stephen Hodge, “Considerations on the Dating and Geographical Origins of the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi-sūtra*,” in *The Buddhist Forum Volume III 1991-1993: Papers in Honour and Appreciation of Professor David Seyfort Ruegg’s Contribution to Indological, Buddhist and Tibetan Studies*, ed. Tadeusz Skorupski and Ulrich Pagel (Tring: Institute of Buddhist Studies, 2012 [1992]), 70.

⁸¹ Nicholas Schmidt, “The Jewel’s Radiance: A Translation of ‘*Ratnabhāsvara,’ an Extensive Commentary on the *Vajravidāraṇa-nāma-dhāraṇī*,” (MA thesis, Kathmandu University, 2018). In particular, see Appendix D: Remarks on the Identity of Sangs rgyas gsang ba, 149-155.

renderings of the Sanskrit. I will conclude by showing how the name Buddhagupta became confused with the translation *sangs rgays gsang ba* and was subsequently interpreted as Buddhaguhya in the Tengyur colophons and catalogs beginning in the thirteenth century.

First, a note on the Sanskrit words that form the second part of our figures' purported names—*gupta* and *guhya*. The semantic fields these two words are generally similar. As Schmidt notes, they derive from different Sanskrit roots: *guhya* is a noun derived from the root *guh* and has an active or prescriptive sense—“to keep secret” or “to cover”—whereas *gupta* is a past passive participle derived from *gup* meaning “hidden” or “concealed.”⁸² Both terms are attested in the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (*Bye brag tu rtogs par byed pa*), an early ninth century bilingual Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary, with *guhya* represented in Tibetan as *gsang ba* (MV 6790) and *gupta* as *sbas pa* or *bsrungs pa* (MV 6343). But the translators of the *Mahāvvyutpatti* did not always intend that one Sanskrit word be translated in exactly the same way every time, it seems. There is, for example the term *kośopagatavastiguhyaḥ* or “penis retracted in a sheath,” one of the thirty-two major marks of a Buddha.⁸³ This term is rendered in Tibetan as *'doms kyi sba ba sbubs su nub pa* (MV 259), and the *guhya* element of the Sanskrit term is rendered in Tibetan *sba ba*, a noun whose verb root *sba* is related to *sbas*, as in *sbas pa*. The point here is that the Tibetan translations of Sanskrit terms was not necessarily mechanical, and that the closeness of and slippage between these words—*guhya*, *gupta*, *gsang ba*, *sbas pa*—could have been cause for varying translations of these words.

Buddhgupta as a Sanskrit given name is well-attested in the centuries both before and after the time our figure (or rather, *figures*).⁸⁴ In his study of the famed Indian Buddhist

⁸² *Ibid.*, 149-150. See also MMW, 360 on *guh* and *guhya* and 358-359 on *gup* and *gupta*.

⁸³ On this term, see José Ignacio Cabezón, *Sexuality in Classical South Asian Buddhism* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2017), 316 n. 811.

⁸⁴ Some the sources cited in this paragraph are from Dan Martin's immensely helpful “Tibskrit Philology,” last modified April 21, 2014, <http://tibetologic.blogspot.in/2014/04/released-tibskrit-2014.html>.

monastic university of Nālandā, Hiranand Sastri describes the royal seal of a monarch named Buddhagupta, who seems to have been an emperor of the third to sixth century Gupta Empire.⁸⁵ The 646 *Great Tang Record of the Western Regions* (大唐西域记), a travelogue by the Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang (玄奘, 600-664) who spent sixteen years in India, also mentions a king named Buddhagupta, the son and successor of the founding patron of Nālandā, King Śākṛāditya.⁸⁶ Buddhagupta is also mentioned as the name of a seafaerer on a fifth century inscription from coastal Malaysia. The inscription itself is on a stone stele, and includes an engraved image of a stupa with a Sanskrit text of good tidings from “Captain Buddhagupta.”⁸⁷ Finally, there is the example of a sixteenth century Buddhagupta, also known as Buddhaguptanātha, the guru of the Tibetan master and historian Tāranātha (Tā rā nā tha, 1575-1634). Buddhaguptanātha is said to have traveled widely throughout Asia and is both author and translator of several works in the Tengyur.⁸⁸ Therefore, there have been several historical Buddhist or Buddhism-inclined figures in South Asia with this name, so it is unlikely that the name is a mere a Tibetan invention. By contrast, I have not been able to find any attestations of Buddhaguhya as a Sanskrit given name.

⁸⁵ Hiranand Sastri, *Nalanda and its Epigraphic Material* (Delhi: Government of India Press, 1942), 29 and 64. Sastri also mentions the Xuanzang reference on p. 15.

⁸⁶ Xuanzang, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions*, trans. Li Rongxi (Moraga: Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai, 1996), 249.

⁸⁷ Michel Jacq-Hergoualc’h, *The Malay Peninsula: Crossroads of the Maritime Silk-Road*, trans. Victoria Hobson (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 213-216. The relevant part of the inscription states: *mahānāvīkabuddhaguptasya raktamṛttikavās sarvveṇa prakāreṇa sarvvasmin savvatthā savva siddhayātā*. Jacq-Hergoualc’h provides a translation of this by B. Ch. Chhabra: “Of the great sea-captain Buddhagupta, a resident (?) of Raktamṛttika...by all means, in all, in all respects...all...,be [they] successful in their voyage!” Jacq-Hergoualc’h notes that archeologists have found in Bengal the remains of a city they consider be the Raktamṛttika, which seems to be the hometown of Captain Buddhagupta according to the inscription.

⁸⁸ For a biographical essay, see Sherab Drime, “Buddhaguptanātha,” in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (no date) <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Buddhagupta-natha/6412>. David Templeman demonstrates that Buddhaguptanātha was a trained Nāth yogī. See David Templeman, “Buddhaguptanātha: A Late Indian *Siddha* in Tibet,” in *Tibetan Studies*, Herbert Krausser et al. eds., vol. 3 of *Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 956-957.

Dynastic and Early Post-Dynastic Occurances of the Name Buddhagupta

The earliest Tibetan source for the Buddhaguptas that we are concerned with is the *Denkar Catalog*, a register of Buddhist texts translated under the imperial aegis and completed when the court was residing at a fortress called Denkar. Adelheid Hermann-Pfandt notes that it was initially written in 812—toward the end of the reign of Emperor Tri Desongtsen (Kri Lde srong btsan, late eighth century-815)—based on the earlier work of the dynastic period translators Kawa Peltsek (Ska ba Dpal brtsegs), Namkhé Nyingpo (Nam mkha'i snying po) and Lui Wangpo (Klu'i dbang po), and was added to until at least 830.⁸⁹ Its ongoing composition thus coincides with the height of Great Revision (*zhus chen*), a decades-long effort on the part of the Tibetan government to standardize the Tibetan language used in the translation of texts. And in this regard, Hermann-Pfandt suggests that it “may have been a list used for collecting all existing translations to ensure that no text was forgotten in the Great Revision.”⁹⁰ In the catalog’s section on “tantras of the secret mantra” (*gsang sngags kyi rgyud*), we find entries for three tantras, each of which also mentions commentary attributed to Buddhagupta.⁹¹

⁸⁹ The 830 date is based on the mention of translations from Chinese into Tibetan by the dynastic translator Gö Chödrup ('Gos Chos grub), whose Chinese name was Facheng (法成) and who is known to have worked in Dunhuang from 830 onwards. Adelheid Hermann-Pfandt, “The Lhan kar ma as a Source for the History of Tantric Buddhism” in *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism*, edited by Helmut Eimer and David Germano (Leiden: Koninklijk Bill NV, 2000), 135 n. 20. On Gö Chödrup, see Alexander Gardner, “Go Chodrub,” in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (December 2019), <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Go-Chodrub/13634>. The brief biographies of the three translators listed in the *Denkar Catalog*, Kawa Peltsek, Namkhé Nyingpo, and Lui Wangpo of these figures in *The Treasury of Lives* states that they lived and died on the eight century. If Herman-Pfandt is correct about the dating of the *Denkar Catalog*, then the lifespans of these must be revised somewhat.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135. I am aware that scholars such as YOSHIMURA Shuki have proposed a later date of 824, but Hermann-Pfandt’s works on the *Denkar Catalog* are the most exhaustive to date, so I prefer her dating of the text. For the former, see YOSHIMURA Shuki, *The Denkar-ma: An Oldest Catalog of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons* (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1950).

⁹¹ Hermann-Pfandt 2008, 176-180, identifies each entry in the *Denkar Catalog* with its extant version in the Tengyur, explaining her rationale for each. The catalog also mentions the *Ārya-subāhu-pariprcchā* and its commentary without naming an author (Ldk 325 and 326). Since the name Buddhagupta does not appear explicitly, I do not consider it here. Herman-Pfandt notes that Buddhagupta’s *Ārya-subāhu-pariprcchā Tantra*

- *Vairocanābhisambodhi* (*rnam par snang mdzad mgon par byang chub pa*, Ldk 321)⁹² and its condensed commentary by master Buddhagupta (*de'i bsdus 'grel slob dpon bu ddha gu ptas mdzad pa*, Ldk 322)
- *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-tejo-rajasya-kalpa* (*ngan song thams cad yongs sug byong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa*, Ldk 323)⁹³ and its commentary by master Buddhagupta (*de'i 'grel pa slob dpon bu ddha gu ptas mdzad pa*, Ldk 324)
- *Dhyānottara-ṣaṭṭala-krama* (*bsam gtan phyi ma'i rim par phye ba*, Ldk 327)⁹⁴ and its condensed commentary by master Buddhagupta (*de'i 'grel pa slob dpon bu ddha gu ptas mdzad pa*, Ldk 328)

These same commentaries are preserved in the received recensions of the Tengyur as

Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi,⁹⁵ the *Word-by-Word Commentary*

commentary as preserved in the Tengyur is much shorter than the one mentioned in the *Denkar Catalog*, which is stated to be 1500 verses long. She thus suggests that an anonymous commentary from the Tengyur ('Phags pa dpung bzangs kyis zhus pa'i rgyud kyi tshig gi don bshad pa'i brjed byang, D 2672), which is much longer, might better correspond to Ldk 326. For the canonical Tibetan translation of the scripture, see *Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā-nāma-tantra*, 'Phags pa dpung bzang gis zhus pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 805, Rgyud wa, 118a-140b. For Buddhagupta's commentary, which is called *Condensed Commentary on the Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā Tantra*, see *Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā-nāma-tantrapiṇḍārtha*, 'phags pa dpung bzangs kyis zhus pa'i rgyud kyi bsdus pa'i don, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2671, Rgyud thu, 38a-54b.

⁹² *Mahāvairocanābhisambodhivikurvātī-adhiṣṭhānavaipulya-sūtra-indrarājā-nāma-dharmaparyāya*, *Rnam par snang mdzad chen po mngon par rdzogs par byang chub parnam par sprul ba byin gyis rlob pa shin tu rgyas pa mdo sde'i dbang po rgyal po zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 494, Rgyud tha, ff. 151b-260a.

⁹³ *Sarvadurgati-pariśodhana-tejorājāya-tathāgatasya-arhate-samyaksambuddhasya-kalpa*, *De bzhin gshegs pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po'i brtag pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 483, Rgyud ta, ff. 58b-96a. It was translated by the Indian scholar Śāntigarbha with Kawa Peltsek, and was revised by Ma Rinchen Chok (Rma Rin chen mchok). The Tengyur also preserves a later translation, D 485, completed in the early to mid-thirteenth century by Chak Lotsāwa Chöjé Pel (Chag Lo tsā ba Chos rje dpal, 1197-1264). This later translation is closer to the extant Sanskrit version studied in Tadeusz Skorupski, *The Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra: Elimination of All Evil Destinies* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1983). Buddhagupta's commentary cited below (D 2624) accords with the earlier translation. The *Sarvadurgati-pariśodhana Tantra* has a complex translation and transmission history; like the Nyingma tantras, it was the subject of censorship and criticism in early medieval Tibet. On the history of a this text and particularly the funerary rites associated with it, see Rory Lindsay, "Liberating Last Rites: Ritual Rescue of the Dead in Tibetan Buddhist Discourse," PhD diss., (Harvard University, 2018).

⁹⁴ *Dhyānottara-ṣaṭṭalakrama*, *Bsam gtan gyi phyi ma rim par phye ba*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 808, Rgyud wa, ff. 223a-225b.

on the *Durgati-pariśodhana*⁹⁶ (or perhaps *Ornamental Light for the Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-tejo-rajasya-kalpa*⁹⁷), and the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-paṭala-krama*.⁹⁸ In the Tengyur, however, the name of the author of these is rendered as Buddhaguhya (*bu ddha gu hya*) or in Tibetan translation as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. We shall return to the reason for this later. Ronald Davidson⁹⁹ and Kammie Takahashi¹⁰⁰ have separately suggested that the appearance of the name Buddhagupta might itself be a retrotranslation from the Tibetan *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, though neither provides evidence for this claim. As Schmidt notes, even if this were the case, it would still support the idea that the figure's name was originally Buddhagupta.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, *Sangs rgyas gsang ba, Vairocanābhisambodhitāntrapañḍārtha, Rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa'i rgyud kyi bsdus pa'i don*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2662, Rgyud nyu, ff. 1b-65a.

⁹⁶ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, *Sangs rgyas gsang ba, Ngan song sbyong ba'i don gyi 'bru 'grel zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 2624, Rgyud cu, 152b-231a.

⁹⁷ *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana-tejorāja-kalpālokāṃkāra, Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gzi brjid kyi rgyal po brtag pa snang ba'i rgyan*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2627, Rgyud chu, ff. 219b-290a. Alex Wayman proposes that D 2624, the *Word-by-Word Commentary on the Durgati-pariśodhana*, is pseudoepigraphic, and that this anonymous text, D 2627, is the one authored by Buddhagupta. Regarding D 2624, Wayman points an odd line in the text on f. 192a1: *dper na bon po lha bka' 'bebs pa ni lha'i bka' zer ba dang 'dra bar*], which I tentatively translate as, “For example, it is like the so-called ‘word of the deity,’ which is, according to the Bönpos, the deities command.” Unless *bon po* here refers to something other than the priesthood of the indigenous deities of Tibet, this would seem to be an anachronism or something that Buddhagupta might not have been aware of. Apparently, Tsongkhapa also considered D 2624 to be a forgery. Wayman notes few examples that seem inconsistent with Buddhagupta's other works, though they are significantly less convincing. In favor of a Buddhagupta authorship for D 2627, Wayman demonstrates a few stylistic and terminological similarities to other of Buddhagupta's works such as D 2662 and D 2670. Since I am unable to do an extensive study of both of these lengthy texts at this time, I hesitate to make any definitive conclusions. See Alex Wayman, “The Disputed Authorship of Tibetan Canonical Commentaries on the Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra” in *Bukyō to isshūkyō: Kumoi shōzen hakushi koki kinen 仏教と異宗教：雲井昭善博士古稀記念* [=Buddhism and Other Religions : Essays in Honor of Dr. Shōzen Kumoi] (Kyoto: Heiraji Shoten, 1985), 203-210.

⁹⁸ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, *Sangs rgyas gsang ba, Dhyānottarapaṭalaṅkā, Bsam gtan phyi ma rim par phyé ba rgya cher bshad pa*, Sde dge bstan' 'gyur, D 2670, Rgyud thu, ff. 1b-38a.

⁹⁹ Davidson 2002, 376 n. 132. Davidson bases his considerations on an excerpt from a letter attributed to Buddhagupta under name Buddhaguhya, sent to the Tibetan Emperor Tri Songdetsen. Though he notes that he is aware of the letter's potentially dubious status, he concludes, rather conveniently, that the brief section he cites is authentic, providing no further evidence. As I have argued elsewhere, this letter—*Epistle to the Ruler, his Subjects, and the Clergy of Tibet (Rje 'bangs dang bod btsun rnam la spring yig*, D 4195) is more likely than not a forgery. See Nagasawa, 2017b. I shall return to this text and my argument later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Takahashi 2018, 238 n.7. Takashi cites p. 326 of Lalou 1953, see *supra*, though Lalou says nothing there about the retrotranslation of *sans rgyas gsang ba* to Buddhagupta.

¹⁰¹ Schmidt, 150.

The other extant dynastic period register, the *Pangtang Catalog* from the reign on Emperor Tri Tsukdetsen preserves the Sanskrit name Buddhagupta, but is also the first instance of the Tibetan *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. This catalog was also named after the base of the imperial court at the time of composition, which Brandon Dotson argues is no earlier than 842,¹⁰² though it was added to throughout the ninth century and possibly beyond, since the available manuscript seems to be a post-ninth century production.¹⁰³ Here we find only a single mention of the name Buddhagupta, as the author of a commentary on the *Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* (*Bstam gtan phyi ma'i 'grel pa slob dpon bud dha gup ta mdzad pa*, Ptm 504), which almost certainly corresponds to the canonical *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* cited above. However, we also find a text on “essence extraction” (*rasāyana*), possibly alchemy, called *Compendium on the Practice of Essence Extraction of Gold and Other Materials*¹⁰⁴ which is said to be authored by *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, (*Gser la sogs pa'i bcud kyi len brten kun las btus slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa*, Ptm 950).¹⁰⁵ Unfortunately, this text seems to no longer be extant so it is at this point impossible to determine its authorship, as Takahashi points out.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Brandon Dotson, “Emperor” Mu rug btsan and the ’Phang thang ma Catalogue,” in *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* Issue 4 (December 2007): 4. Also in this article, Dotson notes that a later date for the aforementioned Denkar Catalog may be possible, but this has yet to be definitely proven. There was a third dynastic catalog called the *Chimpu Catalog* (*Mchims phu dkar chag*) which was produced in the years between the *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalogs. This catalog has not yet come to light.

¹⁰³ Georgios T. Halkias, “Tibetan Buddhism Registered: A Catalogue from the Imperial Court of ’Phang thang” *The Eastern Buddhist* 36, nos. 1-2 (2004): 77-79.

¹⁰⁴ In the Nyingma tradition in particular, essence extraction (*bcud len*) has also been used to refer the preparation of life-sustaining and life-extending formulas that are meant for the solitary yogī with limited access to food. These substances are often compounded from herbal, mineral, and animal products which are then imbued with power through ritual. Robert Mayer has proposed that the Nyingma practice of making “medical accomplishment” (*smān sgrub*) is a form of essence extraction. In these rituals, which are often done in a group or monastic setting, medicinal pills are prepared and then consecrated as part of an elaborate ceremony lasting several days, often referred to as a “great accomplishment ceremony” (*sgrub chen*). The *smān sgrub* pills are then consumed at the conclusion of the ceremony, distributed to faithful as a blessing, and saved for future use in other rituals. See Robert Mayer “Reflections on Rasāyana, Bcud len and Related Practices in Nyingma (Rnying ma) Tantric Ritual,” *History of Science in South Asia* 5, no. 2 (2017): 181-203.

¹⁰⁵ KAWAGOE, 25 and 45. This catalog records another set of texts possibly connected to Buddhagupta. First there are the long and short sādhanas of the *Tantrārthāvatāra* (*Rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa'i sgrub thabs che chung gnyis*, Ptm 908). The received Tengyurs preserve a commentary on the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha*

Several important developments took place in the imperial translation of Buddhist texts between the *Denkar Catalog* and the *Pangtang Catalog*. As we have already mentioned, the Great Revision, the standardization of the Tibetan language used in translation took place in the decades following the initial composition of the *Denkar Catalog*. The year 814 saw the completion of the *Lexicon in Two Fascicles* (*Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*), which contains procedures for translating Sanskrit texts into Tibetan and rules about the formation of new Tibetan words, and in the same year, the composition of the *Mahāvvyutpatti* had begun, but not yet completed.¹⁰⁷ But prior to the early ninth century, as Cristina Scherrer-Schaub has noted, there was a lack of standardization in the translation of Sanskrit terms, even though the imperial translation bodies had been put in place possibly as early as the last decade of the eighth century.¹⁰⁸ This may explain why we see the name Buddhagupta rendered in phonetic Sanskrit in the *Denkar Catalog*, rather than in Tibetan translation, as the

(STTS) attributed to Buddhagupta (under the name Buddhaguhya) called the *Introduction to the Meaning of Tantra: Tantrārthāvatāra, Rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa*, Sde dge btan 'gyur, D 2501, Rgyud 'grel 'i, ff. 1b-91b. These two sādhanas may have been related to this commentary. However, I have not been able to find such texts in any recension of the Tengyur, so they may be no longer extant. Moreover, in the line just before Ptm 504 is Ptm 503, *Rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa'i rgyud kyi bsdu pa'i don*. This in all likelihood refers to the same text as Ldk 322, which is preserved in the Tengyur D 2662. Since the name Buddhagupta is not mentioned in relation to this text, I do not consider it in this discussion. There are two other possible texts in the catalog that the Tengyurs associate with Buddhagupta: D 2671, Buddhagupta's commentary on the *Ārya-subāhu-pariprechā Tantra* as Ptm 906 and D 2663a, Buddhagupta's longer commentary on the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra* (MVT), as Ptm 896. In sum, although there is only one instance of the name Buddhagupta, there may be as many as four texts in the *Pangtang Catalog* that are later attributed to Buddhagupta in the received Tengyurs. For the latter text, see Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Rnam par snang mdzad mngon par byang chub pa'i rgyud chen po'i 'grel bshad*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2663(a), Rgyud nyu, 65a-260b.

¹⁰⁶ Takahashi 2018, 273 n. 5.

¹⁰⁷ On the date of the MV, see KAGAWA Takao 香川孝雄, “Mahāvvyutpatti no hensan nendai kō, Mahāvvyutpatti の編纂年代考” [The Dating of the Compilation of the Mahāvvyutpatti], *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 印度學佛教學研究 [Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies] 7, no. 1 (1958): 160-161. Kagawa notes that the MV's compilation began in 814 and was completed in 824.

¹⁰⁸ See Cristina Scherrer-Schaub, “Enacting Words. A Diplomatic Analysis of the Imperial Decrees (*bkas bcad*) and their Application in the *sGra sbyor bam po gnis pa* Tradition,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 25, nos. 1-2 (2002): 283. Some of the structures are explained in an early version *Lexicon in Two Fascicles* promulgated in 795. This version is preserved in fragments studied by Jampa L. Panglung in “New Fragments of the *sGra-sbyor bam-po gñis-pa*,” *East and West* 44, no. 1 (March 1994): 161-172. Thus it seems that the *Lexicon in Two Fascicles* was started in the late eighth century and extended into the early ninth. The process of translation was overseen by a religious official called the Lord's

conventions for translating the names of Sanskrit authors may not yet have been formalized. The presence of the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in the *Pangtang Catalog* as associated with the text on alchemy may have been an early attempt at translating Buddhagupta, with the translators opting to use *gsang ba* instead of *sbas pa* to render *gupta*.

Forms of the name Buddhagupta can be found in other early texts that date to shortly after the dynastic period. The first is Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé’s monumental *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*,¹⁰⁹ which in all likelihood dates to the early tenth century.¹¹⁰ Aside from being a foundational work for what would eventually become the Nyingma School, it also preserves, by my count, four instances of the name Buddhagupta in what would seem to be a transliterated form, as either *'bu ta kug ta* or *'bu ta kag ta*, and there is one instance of the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*.¹¹¹ Now, all extant versions of the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* have copious interlinear notes (*mchan*) that were probably not written by Nupchen; it has been suggested that they were inserted by his close disciples or the early inheritors of his tradition, such as the members of the Zur clan.¹¹² In any case, given certain

Commissioner (*bcom ldan 'das ring lugs*) and carried out by a college of translators (*lo tsa ba'i grwa*) housed in the imperial palace. The Emperor himself had final say in any decision. See Scherrer-Schaub, 288.

¹⁰⁹ Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, *Rnam 'byor mig gi bsam gtan or Bsam gtan mig sgron* (Leh: Smarntsis Shesrig Spendzod, 1974).

¹¹⁰ Dylan Esler, “On the Life of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes,” *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 29 (April 2014): 16. Manuel López has tentatively suggested the possible birth year of 844 for Nupchen. See Manuel López, “Bringing Light into the Darkness: An Intellectual History of Tibet’s Dark Age (842-978 CE),” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2014), 67. He has noted elsewhere that Nyingma sources state that the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* was composed when Nupchen was sixty-one years old. See Manuel López, “Contemplative Practices, Doxographies, and the Construction of Tibetan Buddhism: Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé and *The Lamp for the Eye in Meditation*,” *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 14. If the Nyingma sources are correct, the work was composed around the 904-905.

¹¹¹ Van Schaik 2004, 186 n. 57 identifies these occurrences. One of them, on p. 204 of Nupchen text, does have the phrase *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in it, but it is not a reference to our figure. The line reads: *sarba 'bu ta las sangs rgyas gsang ba las||yod pa ma yin med pa min||dbu mar yang ni dmigs su med||shes rab pha rol phyin sbyor ba||sangs rgyas byang chub rab grub pa 'o*. This is not a reference to Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya but a quote from the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga Tantra*, a tantra considered by the Nyingma tradition to be of the *mahāyoga* class. The quote is found, with minor differences, on f. 175b5 in *Srī-sarvabuddha-samayoga-ḍākinijāla-sambara-nāma-uttaratantra*, *Dpal sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba mkha' 'gro ma sgyu ma bde ba'i mchog ces bya ba'i rgyud phyi ma*, Sde sge bka' 'gyur, D 366, *Rgyud ka*, ff. 151a-193a.

¹¹² López 2014, 116. As we shall see in chapter three, the Zur clan spawned what would become the Zur exegetical tradition of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which relies *inter alia* on Buddhagupta’s commentaries.

linguistic anachronisms among the interlinear notes, they certainly post-date the original text.

Three of the four instances of *'bu ta kug ta* occur in the interlinear notes:

- At the beginning of a discussion of the types of nine views:¹¹³ “In general, there is no more than a single [view] as asserted by Buddhagupta, but since it is beyond comprehension in terms of their enumeration, tentatively, there are several virtuous spiritual friends who using their particular terminologies teach this teaching.” (*de ni sbryir[=pyir] gcig <'bu ta kug ta'i bzhed> las kyang med | bsam las <bgrang na> kyan 'das na | re zhid dge ba'i bshes gnyen gyi bzhed gzhung 'ga' <sgra so sor phyed ba> 'di bstan te*).¹¹⁴
- Prefacing a passage attributed to Buddhagupta about *mahāyoga* and the meaning of “freedom from activity”: “Hence, Buddhagupta taught the meaning of ‘freedom from activity’ in the following way.” (*de la bya rtsal <'bu ta kug ta'i> dang bral bar 'dod pa'ang 'di ltar bzhed de*). The text goes on from here to quote an unnamed source that remarks on the needlessness to exert oneself since the mind already possesses enlightened qualities¹¹⁵
- In a list of eight masters and their methods of meditation practice.¹¹⁶ Here we see what is likely an error: “From one point of view, Buddhagupta taught that [...] the sublime method in which the mind rests in its natural state because it is free from action.”

¹¹³ On these views, see *ibid.*, 329-339. López translates the following lines but he does not include the comment on the interlinear note mentioning *'bu ta kug ta*.

¹¹⁴ Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, 315.4. In the translations of this and following passage, the interlinear notes are rendered in small script.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 344.5-6.

¹¹⁶ On these López 2014, 342. Other well-known figures are mentioned including those with a connection to Buddhagupta, including Vimalamitra and Vairocana.

(*rnam pa gcig tu* | <'bu ta kag ta bzhed> [...] *bya ba med pas rang bzhin bzhag pa med par gsal na bzhag pa ste thabs dam pa pa 'o*).¹¹⁷

There is a single instance of *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in these interlinear notes:

- In a discussion of *mahāyoga* according to different teacher:¹¹⁸ “The several mantric scholars namely Buddhaguhya who taught the *mahāyoga* view of the non-duality of method and gnosis...” (*mkhan po* <*sngags kyi*[?]> *la la* <*sangs rgyas gsang ba 'i bzhed*> *dag rnal 'byor chen po ni thabs dang shes rab gnyis su med par blta ba min no*)¹¹⁹

Finally—and most importantly—there is one reference to the name Buddhagupta in the text itself, specifically in chapter six of the work, which is an explanation of *mahāyoga*. After briefly mentioning a technique involving the manipulation of the winds (*rlung*) or internal subtle energy so that they enter the chakras (rendered phonetically as *tsa kra* here), Nupchen states that such techniques are found in the pith instructions of masters like Vimalamitra, Buddhagupta, and Padmasambhava (*man ngag slob dpon bi ma la dang* | 'bu ta[rta?] *kug ta dang* | *padmo 'i gzhung*).¹²⁰ This of course indicates that Nupchen himself only knew of a *mahāyoga* master by the name Buddhagupta who specialized not in Dzokchen or the outer tantras, but in subtle body practices; this we be important for the consideration of the texts translated in chapter five. The interlinear notes are nonetheless important, however. It seems that both names, 'bu ta kug ta and *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in all likelihood refer to a single *mahāyoga* master who was well-associated with establishing the philosophical view (*lta ba*) of the system, especially since there is no mention of an author by either name associated

¹¹⁷ Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, 414.1-4.

¹¹⁸ See López 2014, 301.

¹¹⁹ Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, 198.3.

with the outer tantras. Thus it seems the name *'bu ta kug ta* continued to be conflated with *sangs rgyas gsang ba* through to the time the interlinear notes were added to the text, perhaps in the mid-tenth century or later.

The next source to consider is a Dunhuang manuscript, IOL Tib J 1774, which preserves a similar reading of the name. Most of the manuscript is an incomplete copy of a Chan text called the *Short Scripture (Lung chung)*, a complete version of which is found in IOL Tib J 689. The *Short Scripture* also enjoys a commentary in another Dunhuang text, PT 699. The end of IOL Tib J 1774 has what appears to be brief *mahāyoga*-related notes that mention the names of three masters who are known as *mahāyoga* specialists: the masters Buddhagupta, Śrīmañju, and Hūmkara (*slob dpon ni 'bu ta kub ta dang / shI rI man 'ju dang / hung ka ra dang*). Jacob Dalton and Sam van Schaik suggest that this indicates that Chan texts may have been popular among *mahāyoga* practitioners in and around Dunhuang.¹²¹

There are three further relatively early attestations of the name Buddhagupta. The first is in a text called *Sun of the Heart: Essential Nectar of Scholars and Saints (Pañ sgrub rnam kyī thugs bcud snying gi nyi ma)*, the first text contained in? a collection of Nyingma texts known as the *Tantra Collection of Vairocana (Bai ro rgyud 'bum)*, which are said to contain translations done by the aforementioned Tibetan translator Pagor Vairocana. Due to a possible reference to it in a hagiography of Zhikpo Dütsi (Zhiḡ po Bdud rtsis, 1143-1199), Kapstein suggests that the *Sun of the Heart* dates to around the twelfth century. The *Sun of the Heart* contains a lineage list of Indian Dzokchen masters of the mind class of teaching

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 223.1.

¹²¹ Jacob Dalton and Sam van Schaik, *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang: A Descriptive Catalog of the Stein Collection at the British Library* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 346-347. See also Jacob Dalton and Sam van Schaik, "Where Chan and Tantra Meet: Tibetan Syncretism at Dunhuang," in *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, ed. Susan Whitfield (London: British Library Press, 2004), 68-69. The authors identify Śrīmañju as the tantric commentator Mañjuśrīmitra. For a full translation of the *Lung chung* or *Short Scripture*, which van Schaik translates as *Brief Precepts* and its commentary, see Sam van Schaik, *Tibetan Zen: Discovering a Lost Tradition* (Boston: Snow Lion, 2015), 181-191.

(*sems sde*), which includes the name Buddhagupta in the transliterated form *bud dha kug ta*.¹²² A nearly identical list is found in the *Great Image of Vairocana (Bai ro 'dra 'bag chen mo)*, a hagiography of the Tibetan translator Vairocana which Samten Karmay dates to the thirteenth century, with Buddhagupta's name is represented as *bhu ta kug ta*.¹²³ The narrative of the *Great Image of Vairocana* includes an episode featuring a *mahāyoga* master named Buddhagupta (also *bhu ta kug ta*) who receives instructions in Dzokchen from a master named Devarāja (Lha'i rgyal po). After accomplishing the Dzokchen teachings of Devarāja, Buddhagupta sings several songs demonstrating his realization.¹²⁴ The third instance is in a collection of teachings apparently compiled by Padampa Sangyé, the twelfth to thirteenth century Indian master who brought the Pacification (Zhu byed) lineage of teachings to Tibet and is said to have been the guru of Machik Labdron (Ma chig Lab sgron, 1055-1149), the founder of the Chö or Severance lineage. This particular text contains aphorisms from fifty-four male and fifty-four female teachers, collectively referred to as the *Pure Silver Orb (Dngul sgong dag pa)*. One of these teachers is named Buddhagupta, rendered as *bhu ka ku ta*.¹²⁵

¹²² Matthew Kapstein, "The Sun of the Heart and the Bai-ro-rgyud-'bum," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 15 (November 2008), 279.

¹²³ Karmay 2007, 20 and 33. Karmay suggests that some part of the text postdates the thirteenth century, but given that the list also appears in the somewhat earlier *Sun of the Heart*, it is reasonable to assume that Dzokchen lineage list mentioned, which is in chapter five of the *Great Images of Vairocana*, is probably from the earlier editorial layer.

¹²⁴ G.yu sgra snying po, *Bai ro 'i rnam thar 'dra 'bag chen mo* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe srung khang, 1995), 59-60, 68-69. The text relates that Buddhagupta is a bhikṣu learned in the five sciences (*rig pa 'i gnas lnga la mkhas pa*) and in the meaning of the *mahāyoga* of secret mantra (*gsang sngags ma hā yo ga 'i don la mkhas pa*). On p. 69, we learn Buddhagupta's secret name (*gsang mtshan*) as a Dzokchen lineage holder, Dorjé Drupchok Mawé Ter (Rdo rje grub mchog smra ba 'i gter) or Adamantine Supremely Accomplished Treasure of Speech.

¹²⁵ See *Bka' babs snyan brgyud dang bcas pa*, in *Zhi byed snga bar phyi gsum gyi skor: The Tradition of Pha Dam-pa Saṅs-rgyas*, vol. 1 (Thimphu: Druk Sherik Parkhang, 1979), 236. On Phadampa Sangyé and the compiled teaching related to him, see Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "Crystal Orbs and Arcane Treasuries: Tibetan Anthologies of Buddhist Tantric Songs from the Tradition of Pha Dam pa sangs rgyas," *Acta Orientalia* 68 (2007): 20-21 and 70.

There are also similar such renderings in the Tibetan historical works. The two so-called Deu (Lde'u) chronicles of the thirteenth century, the *Great History of the Victory Banner of the Teachings* (*Chos 'byung chen mo bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*, perhaps better known as *Deu's History*, *Lde'u chos 'byung*) and the longer *Extensive History of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (*Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*), each contains one instance of the name Buddhagupta in the transliterated form of *bu dha gu pta* and *bu dha kug rta* respectively.¹²⁶ The latter text associates *bu dha kug rta* with a Dzokchen teaching called the “complete summary of Dzokchen” (*rdzogs chen sgang dril*), and states that he transmitted two Dzokchen tantras, *Sun of the Knowledge of Mudrāyoga* (*Phya rgya rnal 'byor rig pa'i nyi ma*) and *Brocade Cushion* (*Za 'og ber khyim*).¹²⁷ Gö Lotsāwa Zhonnu Pel's ('Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, 1392-1481) famous and extensive 1487 history, the *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*), contains a single mention of Buddhagupta, in the form *buddha gupta*, as one of eleven Indian masters who taught about the movements of the wind energies.¹²⁸ We shall return to these sources later in this chapter.

There is an old and much-studied source that provides the earliest Tibetan translations of Buddhagupta as *sangs rgyas sbas pa*. This is the *Gupta's Small Crop* (*Sba ba'i rgum chung*),¹²⁹ which is preserved in IOL Tib J 594, one of the few texts from Dunhuang that “is

¹²⁶ Lde'u jo sras, *Lde'u chos 'byung* (Lhasa: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 133 and Mkhas pa Lde'u, *Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa* (Lhasa: Bod ljong mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 330.

¹²⁷ The former text is also mentioned in the fifteenth century *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*), which I will discuss next. See 'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, *Deb ther sngon po*, vol. 2 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1984), 175. The *Blue Annals* does connect the text to Buddhagupta. I have not been able to find a tantra in the NGB that corresponds directly to this. Regarding the latter, I have found a text called *Brocade Cushion: Magical Wheel of the Essential Drop* (*Thig le'i 'khrul 'khor za 'og ber khyim*), as the fourth chapter of the *Coiled Lotus Tantra* (*Padma 'khyil pa'i rgyud*) from a typeset edition of the NGB published in Beijing in 2009. See *Thig le'i 'khrul 'khor za 'og ber khyim gyi le'u*, in *Snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum phyogs bsgrigs*, eds. Thub bstan nyi ma and 'Gro 'dul rdo rje, pp. 335-331 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009). On *za 'og ber khyim* as a “brocade sitting bag,” see Dan Martin, “Zhangzhung Dictionary,” *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 18 (April 2010): 146.

¹²⁸ 'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, 1017.

¹²⁹ More on the translation of this title further on. Karmay 2007, 70, translates the title as “Small Hidden Grain.”

explicitly classified as *Atiyoga*” i.e., Dzokchen.¹³⁰ The first folio of the text serves as an introduction, and it states that it was composed by the “the master, the supremely learned Buddhagupta” although in this case, we see the name of the figure rendered in Tibetan translation (*slob dpon ni mkhyen rab kyi mchog sangs rgyas sbas bas mdzad do*). This introduction also provides another title for the text that glosses *Sba ba’i rgum chung* as *Nam mkha’i thig le* or *Drop of the Sky*. It is important to note that these introductory verses would probably not have been part of the original text. The body of the text is also pervaded by interlinear notes, which indicate that the introduction may be from the same hand. In any case, the body of the text resonates with the theme of “beyond effort” (*bya rtsal dan bral ba*) or effortlessness, which was connected to Buddhagupta in Nupchen’s *Lamp for the Eye*. For example: “Sitting upright and cross-legged—indeed any bodily posture—arises from attachment to conceptions of the body; in space, which is without action,¹³¹ there is no contrivance. In the sky-like primordial abiding, there is no crossing of legs or sitting upright, since it abides intrinsically in space and is the basis of transforming into space.”¹³² And indeed, there are echoes of this in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. Based on the paleographic analyses, Jacob Dalton, Tom Davis, and Sam van Schaik suggest that IOL Tib J 594 dates to around the tenth century.¹³³ Karmay notes that a text with very similar wording is referenced by Nupchen in the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* with the name *rgum chung*, but that he is in fact referencing a text attributed

¹³⁰ Dalton and van Schaik 2006, 289-290. Karmay 2007 provides a full translation and transcription of the text on 76.

¹³¹ Karmay reads *las* as *lus*, which would seem to make sense given that the text is talking about the body.

¹³² IOL Tib J 594: */dkyil dkrung drang gdug bcas pa dang//lus kyi bcas pa thams cad kyang //lus rtog mngon bar zhel las byung //las myed mkha’ la bcas su myed//nam mkha’ lta bur ye gnas la//dkyil krung drang gdug bcas pa myed//rang bzhin nam kar gnas pa la//nam khar ’gyur ba’i gzhi ma yin/*. The text includes interlinear notes which are also found in Karmay’s texts.

¹³³ Jacob Dalton, Tom Davis, and Sam van Schaik, “Beyond Anonymity: Paleographic Analyses of the Dunhuang Manuscripts” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 3 (December 2007): 9 and 18.

to the Tibetan *mahāyoga* master of the early ninth century, Nyen Pelyang (Gnyan Dpal dbyang). Karmay concludes that the lines were likely originally drawn from *Gupta's Small Crop*, but for reasons I shall develop in chapter four, the relationship between the *mahāyoga* master Buddhagupta and Pelyang are not quite so simple.

Why would an early text like IOL Tib J 594 preserve a translation *sangs rgyas sbas pa* for Buddhagupta and not a phonetic rendering like other early Dharma treatises like the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* or early histories like Deu José's *Great History of the Victory Banner of the Teachings*? And why did the sources that attempt a phonetic rendering of Buddhagupta come up with slightly corrupted names with elements like *kug rta* or *kug ta*? Dan Martin suggests that some Tibetans, especially earlier on, understood *kug rta/kug ta* as a metaphorical translation of the Sanskrit word *gupta*.¹³⁴ He notes, there maybe a connection between this understanding of *kug rta/kug ta* and the element *rgum* in the title *Sbas pa'i rgum chung*. Martin points to an example from the collection of teachings compiled by Padampa Sangyé cited above. In a text called *Symbolic Pith Instructions of the Precious Mahāmudrā* (*Phya rgya chen po rin po che brda'i man ngag*), there is a line that reads: *khug sta'i sgum bu sa la nams kyang min*. Taking the *sa* superfixes in *khug sta'i sgum bu* as errors and reading them instead as *khug rta'i rgum bu*, Martin translates the line as “The *cātaka*'s crawl-full [has] never touched the ground.” Indeed, the *cātaka*, the Sanskrit name for mythical bird that corresponds to a sparrow or cuckoo, is attested in MV as *khug rta* (MV 4906). Since birds, specifically the *cātaka* (*khug rta*), are known for the food hidden (*gupta*) in their crawl or crop (*rgum bu*), Martin suggests that there is a bit of Sanskrit-Tibetan wordplay taking place in the title of the text, *Sbas pa'i rgum chung*. Moreover, the entire symbolism of the *cātaka*'s crawl never touching the earth, which would seem to draw on the

¹³⁴ See Martin 2014, Tibskrit entry for Buddhagupta.

idea that the *cātaka* only drinks rainwater,¹³⁵ may be connected to the sky/space (*nam mkha'*) motifs in the text and as well as the alternate title *Drop of the Sky*.¹³⁶ Martin implies that an overly zealous editor, perhaps the scribe of IOL Tib J 594, may have corrected the title from *Kug rta'i rgum chung* to *Sbas pa'i rgum chung*.¹³⁷

To summarize the situation so far, the balance of early sources that scholars use to understand Buddhism in early Tibet—the dynastic period catalogs, the Dunhuang manuscripts and the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*—know one or more figures named Buddhagupta who commented upon the outer tantras, on *mahāyoga*, and was considered a teacher of Atiyoga. Putting aside the post-twelfth century histories, there are two incidences of the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, one regarding a non-extant text in the *Pangtang Catalog* and the other in an anonymous interlinear note in the *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* that postdates the composition of the text.

“Buddhagupta” and “Buddhaguhya” in Early Nyingma Sources

It seems that already by the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the name Buddhagupta was being phased out in favor of *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in the works of proto-Nyingma and early

¹³⁵ The *cātaka* is well-known in Sanskrit literature as a bird that drinks rainwater. Kālidāsa's lyric poem, *Cloud Messenger (Meghadūta)*, tells of a yakṣa exiled from his celestial home on Mount Kailash who tries to convince a cloud to take a message to his wife. Toward the end of the poem, he urges the cloud, saying: *kaccit somya vyavasitam idaṃ bandhukṛtyaṃ tvayā me pratyākyātum na khalu bhavato dhīratāṃ tarkayāmi| niḥśabdo 'pi pradiśasi jalaṃ yācitas cātakebhyaḥ pratyuktam hi praṇayiṣu satāṃ īpsitārthakriyaiva||*: “I hope, kind sir, that you have decided to carry out this task for me, your friend. In no way do I consider your silence a refusal: when asked, you give water to the *cātaka* birds without a word, for the good answer supplicants by doing what they want.” See James Mallinson, trans., *Messenger Poems* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 96-97.

¹³⁶ In tantric contexts, the word *thig le*, translated here as “essential drop,” often refers to semen or drops of rarified energy in the subtle body. That said, might the symbolism go even deeper, perhaps? In a section about aphrodisiacs, the *Carakasamhitā*, a foundational text of Ayurveda or traditional Indian medicine, observes that the flesh of sparrows (in this case, spelled *caṭaka* declined in the masculine plural) when eaten, is sweet, unctuous, and promotes both physical strength and the production of semen (*caṭakā madhurāḥ snigdḥā balaśukravivardhanāḥ*). See Vaidya Jādevaḥ Trikamji, ed., *The Carakasamhitā by Agniveśa* (Mumbai: Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1941), 158, verse 75.

Nyingma authors. Here, we shall consider two examples. The eleventh century master Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po, born ca. 1040) does not cite our figure(s) very often—there is no indication of the name Buddhagupta or Buddhaguhya in any of their forms in Rongzom’s *Jewel Commentery* (*Dkon mchogs ’grel*),¹³⁸ a commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, his *Introduction to the Way of the Great Vehicle* (*Theg pa chen po’i tshul la ’jug pa*),¹³⁹ or his *Establishing Appearances as Divine* (*Tshul las snang ba lhar bsgrub pa*).¹⁴⁰ There is, however, a single mention of the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in Rongzom’s *Stages of Buddhahood* (*Sangs rgyas kyi sa chen mo*),¹⁴¹ where h is mentioned in a discussion about the nature of buddhahood together with Sūryaprabhāsīmha, whose only known work is a commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Another early Nyingma figure, Rokben Sherap Ö (Rog ban Shes rab ’od, 1166-1244), also seems to know only of the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* for a figure associated with the *mahāyoga* tantras. Rokben Sherap Ö is particularly important because he authored the earliest commentary on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* titled *Clear Lamp of the Supreme Path* (*Lam mchog gsal ba’i sgron me*). In this commentary, he refers to the author of *An Orderly Arrangement of the*

¹³⁷ In light of these intriguing suggestions, I have chosen to translate the text’s title as *Gupta’s Small Crop*, with the word “crop” preserving the double meaning of a bird’s claw and grain ready for harvest.

¹³⁸ Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po, *Rgyud rgyal gsang ba snying po dkon cog ’grel*, in *Rong zom chos bzang gi gsung ’bum*, 31-250 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999).

¹³⁹ Dominic Sur, “A Study of Rongzom’s *Disclosing the Great Vehicle Approach* (*theg chen tshul ’jug*) in the History of Tibet’s Great Perfection Tradition,” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2015).

¹⁴⁰ Heidi I. Köppl, *Establishing Appearances as Divine: Rongzom Chözang on Reasoning, Madhyamaka, and Purity* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2008).

¹⁴¹ See Orna Almogi, *Rong-zom-pa’s Discourses on Buddhism* (Toyko: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2009), 269 and 407.

Paths as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*.¹⁴² The name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* is also mentioned once in Rokben's doxographical work, *Lamp of the Teachings (Bstan pa'i sgron me)*.¹⁴³

There may be one early instance of the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya in Nyangrel Nyima Özer's twelfth century *Copper Island Chronicles*, but the textual evidence remains somewhat inconclusive. In a narrative about Padmasambhava's early training in chapter three, it states that he (under the name Loden Choksé, Blo ldan mchog sred) learned about the peaceful and wrathful deities of the *Māyājāla* tantras from Buddhaguhya.¹⁴⁴ The modern typeset version of the text renders the name as *buddha guhya*.¹⁴⁵ If this recension is correct, then this would be the earliest attestation of the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya. However, there is reason to doubt the reading of these verses, since two manuscript copies of the text available on BRDC give the name the *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, and a third supplies *bu ddha sangs rgyas* (=Buddha-buddha!).¹⁴⁶ The earliest recensions of the *Copper Island Chronicles* studied by Lewis Doney is currently unavailable to me,¹⁴⁷ so I cannot make any definitive conclusions about this here. I tentatively suggest however, that the reading of the modern typeset edition is a late addition to the text, especially since another work by Nyangrel, *Flower*

¹⁴² Rog ban Shes rab 'od, *Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i man ngag dpal lam gyi rim pa zhes bya ba'i dka' ba rnam par 'grel pa lam mchog gsal ba'i sgron me*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 83 [u], pp. 161-394 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999), p. 167: gzhung rtsom pa'i mkhan po sangs rgyas gsang bas.

¹⁴³ José Ignacio Cabezón, *The Buddha's Doctrine and the Nine Vehicles: Rog Bande Serab's Lamp of the Teachings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 156. For a transliterated edition of the text, see José Ignacio Cabezón and Erdenebaatar Erdene-Ochir, eds., *Grub mtha' so so'i bzhed tshul gzhung gsal bar ston pa chos 'byung grub mtha' chen po bstan pa'i sgron me* (Unpublished critical edition, 2010), where the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* is found on f. 117.

¹⁴⁴ See Tsogyel 2004, 43.

¹⁴⁵ See Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, *Slob dpon padma'i rnam thar zangs gling ma* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989), 20: slob dpon chen po **buddha guhya** spyi'i na nngar byon nas: zhi khro gyu 'phrul gyi chos thams cas gsan:.

¹⁴⁶ For the first two manuscripts, see Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, *U rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar mnga' bdag nyang ral pas lho brag gi brag srin po'i sbar rjes 'dra ba nas gter nas ston pa*, BDRC W4CZ20868 (La g.yag: A ma bkra shis dpal 'dzoms nang mi, no date), f. 14b2 and *U rgyan gyi slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa nyang gter zangs gling mar grags pa*, BDRC W4CZ42596 (no publisher, no date), f. 8a4. For the third, see *Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu 'phreng ba*, BRDC W1KG13828 (Spiti: Dragkhar Lobsang Madang, no date), f. 21b2.

¹⁴⁷ See Doney 2014.

Nectar: The Essence of Honey (*Chos 'byung me tog snying po 'i sbrang rtsi 'i bcud*) mentions our figure's name as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*.

Finally, Orgyen Lingpa's 1352 *Chronicles of Padma*, another *terma* hagiography of Padmasambhava, is most unusual because it mentions both the names Buddhagupta and Buddhaguhya in various forms, sometimes on the same page. As Lewis Doney has pointed out, most of the received editions of the *Chronicles of Padma* derive from a sixteenth century edition that was heavily redacted by Zahor Miwang Sönam Topgyel (Za hor Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyal, sixteenth century).¹⁴⁸ I shall thus look comparatively at the modern typeset edition,¹⁴⁹ at a manuscript edition from Gondhla Village in Lahaul,¹⁵⁰ and at the *Golden Rosary Chronicle* (*Bka' thang gser phreng*)¹⁵¹ by Sangyé Lingpa (Sangs rgyas gling pa, 1340-1396), a text that Doney proposes is based the original fourteenth century version *Chronicles of Padma*:

Table 1: Comparison of Three Textual Editions of the *Chronicles of Padma* (*Padma bka' thang*) on the Names Buddhagupta and Buddhaguhya

	<i>Chronicles of Padma</i> , 1987 Typset Edition
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¹⁴⁸ Lewis Doney, "A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the Padma bka' thang," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 37, (December 2016): 70-72.

¹⁴⁹ U rgyan gling pa 1996. For the passages referenced in Table 1, see pp. 187-188, 419, 446, 465, 472, 493.

¹⁵⁰ U rgyan gling pa, *U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas pa bkod pa*, BDRG W2KG5018 (no publisher, no date). For the passages in Table 1, see ff. 94a, 36b, 48a, 54b, 58a, 68a. In this manuscript, the order of the chapters do not follow the order of the page numbers; for example, the passage I cite from chapter twenty four of the text is found on f. 94a, but the passage from chapter seventy is found on f. 36b, which is earlier in the sequential page numbering than one might expect. This is an *üchen* (*dbus can*) or block letter manuscript is from Gondhla Village in Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh, India. It was scanned in 2015 by the Shantarakhshita Library at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Varanasi. The monastery in Gondhla is famous for preserving a fourteenth century manuscript "proto-Kangyur." On this, see Hulmut Tauscher, *Catalogue of The Gondhla Proto-Kanjur* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für tibetische und buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 2008).

¹⁵¹ Sangs rgyas gling pa, *U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar rgyas pa gser gyi 'phreng ba thar lam gsal byed* (Thimphu: National Library of Bhutan, 1985). The passages reference in Table 1 on are found on pp. 178, 459, 486, 501, 510, and 533.

	Chapter 28: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	Chapter 72: <i>guhya buddha ; buddha gupta</i>	Chapter 77: <i>buddha gu hya</i>	Chapter 80: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	Chapter: 82: <i>buddha gu hya ; buddha gupta</i>	Chapter 84: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>
<i>Chronicles of Padma, Gondhla Manuscript (fourteenth century?)</i>	Chapter 24: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	Chapter 70: <i>gu ya bu dha ; bud dha ku pt+ha</i>	Chapter 75: <i>'gu ya bhu dha</i>	Chapter 76: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	Chapter 78: <i>bhud dha gu ya ; bhud dha ku ha</i>	Chapter 80: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>
<i>Golden Rosary Chronicle (late fourteenth century)</i>	Chapter 24: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	Chapter 70: <i>guhya buddha ; buddha ku ta</i>	Chapter 75: <i>buddha gu hya</i>	Chapter 76: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	Chapter 78: <i>buddha gu hya (mentioned only once)</i>	Chapter 80: <i>sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>

Since the chapters of the Gondhla manuscript accord with those of the *Golden Rosary Chronicle*, it is safe to assume that they are from the same editorial stratum. The differences in the readings between all three witnesses are minor, though it is notable that they all contain the name Guhyabuddha, which I have not seen attested in any other texts. It is clear from the discrepancy between the Gondhla manuscript on the one hand and the typeset edition and the *Golden Rosary Chronicle* on the other regarding the reading in chapter 77/75 that Guhyabuddha is another rendering of Buddhaguhya and not a reference to another figure. It seems that the author, authors, and/or redactors of the *Chronicles of Padma* are trying to negotiate the actual Sanskrit name of our figure, even through the figure's original name—Buddhagupta—is on the very same page in two places!

The notion that Buddhagupta and Buddhaguhya were separate figures is reflected in several historical and hagiographic works already mentioned: the *Great Image of Vairocana*, the *Extensive History of Buddhism in India and Tibet* attributed to the Khepa Deu (*Mkhas pa Lde'u*), and Gö Lotsāwa Zhonnu Pel's *Blue Annals*. As I have already noted, the *Great*

Image mentions Buddhagupta (*bhu ta kug ta*) as a Dzokchen lineage master. However, the text also mentions a Buddhaguhya (i.e., *sangs rgyas gsang ba*) who worked with Tibetan translators at Mount Kailash during the reign of Tri Songdetsen. The text states that the Tibetan representatives translated many texts, including the *Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions* (*rdo rje'i las rim*),¹⁵² as well as tantras of the “*bodhisattva*,” “*avādhara*,” (*a ba dha ra*) and other classes.¹⁵³ Elsewhere in the *Great Image*, Vairocana tells the king to invite Vimalamitra and Guhyabuddha (*ghu a bhu dha*) to Tibet; here we see a similar retrotranslation of *sangs rgyas gsang ba* as in the *Chronicles of Padma*.¹⁵⁴ Khepa Deu's work, which has been dated by Leonard van der Kuijp to the second half of the thirteenth century,¹⁵⁵ also considers Buddhagupta (*bu dha kug rta*) a Dzokchen lineage master. In several other places, Khepa Deu mentions the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. The most detailed passage also relates his work with Tibetan translators at Mount Kailash, where they are given the *upāya* tantras, the *Vairocanābhisambodhi Tantra*, and a number of treatises related to *mahāyoga*.¹⁵⁶ Lastly, Gö Lotsāwa Zhonnu Pel's 1487 *Blue Annals* also knows a Buddhagupta, not as a master of Dzokchen but a teacher of the wind energies and their movement in the channels (*g.yo ba rlung gi bla ma*). For Gö Lotsāwa, this figure seems to be

¹⁵² This title refers to one of two texts preserved in the Tengyur. The most likely candidate is *Sgyu 'phrul khro bo'i dbang bskur ba dkyil 'khor rdo rje las kyi rim pa*, Pe cin bstan 'gyur, Q 4761, Rgyud 'grel mu, 166b-180a. It is a work of the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta having to do with initiation, consecration, and the sādhana of wrathful mandala of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. There is another, work, possibly by the same hand called *Sgyu 'phrul dra ba rdo rje las kyi rim pa*, Pe cin bstan 'gyur, Q 4720, Rgyud 'grel bu, 382a-402a. Both texts certainly merit further study. In both cases *las* means *karma* in the sense of a ritual act.

¹⁵³ G.yu sgra snying po, 91: *byang chub sems dpa'i tantra dang| a ba dha ra la sogs pai rgyud sde dang|*. It is unclear that what the *bodhisattva* and *avadhara* classes of tantra are. *Avadhāra* may be a corruption of *avatāra*, in which case the author of the text might have been trying to refer to the *Tantrārthāvatāra* (*Rgyud kyi don la 'jug pa*, D 2501), a text by the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta on the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha Tantra*. *Avadhara* may also be a corruption of *vajradhara* (“vajra holder”).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 181. Karmay dates the *Great Image* to the thirteenth century but notes that the text was added to in subsequent centuries. In this passage from the middle of chapter eleven of the *Great Image*, Vairocana addresses Tri Songdetsen before he is exiled from the kingdom. His words here are exactly the same as chapter 77/75 of the *Chronicles of Padma*. It is unclear which text influenced the other.

¹⁵⁵ Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp, “Dating the two Lde'u chronicles of Buddhism in India and Tibet,” *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Asienkunde* 46, no. 1 (1992): 489.

distinct from a *sangs rgyas gsang ba* who is mentioned in several places as a master of the yoga tantras, as a master of the *Māyājāla* Tantras, and as the student of the tantric master Buddhajñānapāda or as the master of Vimalamitra.¹⁵⁷

From “Buddhagupta” to “Buddhaguhyā” in the Tengyur

In the received Tengyurs, Buddhaguhyā is listed as the author of the three commentaries recorded in the *Denkar* and *Pangtang Catalogs*, where the name of the author is Buddhagupta (rendered phonetically as *buddha gupta*). The name in the Tengyurs is rendered in most cases as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, but occasionally as *buddha gu hya*. Moreover, the situation becomes more complicated when we compare the colophons of these texts to the Tengyur catalogs. Certain discrepancies in this regard were first noticed by OCHI Junji. Here is a condensed version of the table he provides in his article:¹⁵⁸

Table 2: A Comparison of the Catalog Entries and Colophons of Three Texts Attributed to Buddhagupta, Based on a Table by OCHI Junji.

	D Catalog	D Colophon	Q Catalog	Q Colophon
D 2662 Q3486	Śrī Buddhaguhyā	Śrī Buddhaguhyā	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i> Buddhagupta	Śrī Buddhaguhyā
D 2624 Q 3451	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>
D 2670 Q 3495	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>	<i>Sangs rgyas gsang ba</i>

¹⁵⁶ Mkhas pa Lde’u, 72, 180, and especially 304.

¹⁵⁷ ’Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, 429; 238; and 214, 425.

¹⁵⁸ OCHI 1980, 5.

This chart compares the names of the author of the three commentaries mentioned in the *Denkar Catalog* with what appears in the colophons of those texts in the Dergé (D) and Beijing (Q) Tengyurs, as well as their entries in the D and Q Tengyur catalogs.¹⁵⁹ The first thing to note is that the author of the three commentaries mentioned in the *Denkar Catalog* has changed from the Sanskrit name Buddhagupta, in most cases to *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, but also to Śrī Buddhaguhya (*shrī buddha guhya*) in the case of the first text on the list (D 2662), *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi*. OCHI points out that there is also an inconsistency between the colophon of the translation and its catalog entry in Q with regard to this first text; the colophon renders the author's name as Śrī Buddhaguhya while the catalog has *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. Moreover, he notes, the Q catalog states that there were originally two translations available of *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi* available: one by an author named Śrī Buddhaguhya and translated by Śīlendrabodhi and Peltsek Rakṣita, and another with by an author named Buddhagupta and no translators. Due to an error in the BRDC text database, I am unable to access the Q catalog to verify this or to see if it provides any further elaboration. But it seems that the former of the two translations was the one included in Q, or perhaps the received Q version was edited in consultation with Buddhagupta copy. In any case, it is clear that these texts—at least their colophons and catalog entries—have undergone editing such that the name Buddhagupta was changed. There are yet other inconsistencies in the outer tantra and non-tantric commentaries not mentioned in the dynastic catalogs that indicate this as well.

¹⁵⁹ The catalogs here are not the contemporary catalogs prepared by UI Hakuju, et. al. for D and Daisetz Suzuki for Q, but rather the catalogs composed by the Tibetan compilers of each Tengyur.

One important text contains traces of the name Buddhagupta—this is *The Jewel’s Radiance—An Extensive Commentary on the Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī*,¹⁶⁰ a text that seems to have been written by the same author as the three commentaries mentioned in the dynastic catalog.¹⁶¹ The *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* is a brief text from the Kangyur that teaches the *dhāraṇī* or spell of the deity Vajravidāraṇa, who is often associated with spiritual purification. It seems to have been an important *dhāraṇī*, as there remain several extant Sanskrit manuscripts of it and five complete copies in Tibetan translation at Dunhuang (namely, IOL Tib J 411 with IOL Tib J 414/1; IOL Tib J 412; IOL Tib J 413; IOL Tib J 415/1; IOL Tib J 416/1 with IOL Tib J 462/1).¹⁶² *The Jewel’s Radiance* is unique in that its introduction contains information about Buddhagupta’s own Vajravidāraṇa lineage and the circumstance of the text’s composition. Its conclusion is particularly important because it has a colophon written by the author himself which appears just before the translators’ colophon, and it is here that we might have the only reference to the author’s complete name in his own words. The problem, however, is (1) that the name is translated into Tibetan and not

¹⁶⁰ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Ārya-vajravidāraṇā-nāma-dhāraṇīṭīkā-ratnābhāsvārā*, ‘phags pa rdo rje rnam par ’joms pa zhes bya ba’i gzungs kyi rgya cher ’grel pa rin po che gsal ba, Sde dge bstan ’gyur, D 2680, Rgyud thu, ff. 176a-186b.

¹⁶¹ Schmidt, 72-73, provides several reasons for attributing *The Jewel’s Radiance* to Buddhagupta, the outer tantra commentator mentioned in the *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalogs. The most convincing of these is that the author of *The Jewel’s Radiance* quotes from the MVT and from the *Subāhupariṣṭhā Tantra*, both of which the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta has written on. I think that the clearest evidence in terms of intertextual elements is that *The Jewel’s Radiance* presents the same, somewhat unique sub-typology of the kriyā tantras as that found in Buddhagupta’s *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-ṭāḷa-krama*, a text mentioned in both the *dynastic* catalogs. Near the beginning of *The Jewel’s Radiance*, the author states that all the Dharma is divided into four “baskets” (*ṭāḷa*, *sde*) classes: Sutra, Abhidharma, Vinaya, and the class of the Vidyādhara. Within the Vidyādhara class is kriyā tantra, which itself has two types: the general and the distinct (D 2680, f. 176b2-3: |sangs rgyas mchog gis chos gsungs pa||mdo sde mngon pa ’dul ba dang ||rig pa ’dzin pa’i sde bzhi gnas||de yang bzhi ste **bya ba’i rgyud**||**spyi dang bye brag** de la gnyis||rtog pa bdag ni las su bshad|). The *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-ṭāḷa-krama* also divides the kriyā tantras into general and distinct, giving a few examples of each (D 2670, f. 9a4: **bya ba’i rgyud thams cad kyi spyi’i cho ga bsdu pa’i rgyud** ’phags pa rab tu grub par byed pa dang | dpung bzangs dang| dpal rtog pa bsdu pa la sogs pa dang | **bye brag gi rgyud** ’phags pa rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa rnam par sprul pa’i byin gyis brlab pa dang |).

¹⁶² See Schmidt, 129-141 for diplomatic editions of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of the *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī*, and an English translation. The Kangyur contain two Tibetan translations of the text, D 750 and D 949.

transliterated from Sanskrit, and (2) that different recensions of the Tengyur preserve different versions of the translated name. The last four lines of the colophon read: “Exhorted by the deity and the guru, this stainless commentary was composed by Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya. May all be liberated through it.” The G, N and Q versions have *sangs rgyas sbas pa*, but the D and C versions have *sangs rgyas gsang ba*!¹⁶³ To resolve the matter, we must turn to the aforementioned introduction to the text. Here, unlike in any other writing attributed to him, Buddhagupta pays direct homage to the teacher from whom he learned the practice of Vajravidāraṇa, a guru named Kumārasena (*bla ma gzhon nu’i sde*). Fortunately, Kumārasena’s Vajravidāraṇa liturgical instruction manual is preserved in the Tengyur. Kumārasena’s text has the following notice in its colophon: “This concludes *The Liturgical Manual of the Noble Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* by the Brahmin caste *mantrin*, the great scholar Kumārasena. It was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian scholar Buddhagupta, and Pa[=Wa? Ba?] Mañjuśrīvarma.”¹⁶⁴ All versions of the text present Buddhagupta’s name in its transliterated form, just as it was rendered in the dynastic catalogs (*buddha gupta*). We can therefore conclude that the name Buddhagupta in the form of *sangs rgyas sbas pa* was probably “corrected” to *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in the C and D recensions of *The Jewel’s Radiance*.

¹⁶³ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, *Sangs rgyas gsang ba, Ārya-vajravidāraṇā-nāma-dhāraṇīṭīkā-ratnābhāsvarā*, ‘Phags pa rdo rje rnam par ‘joms pa zhes bya ba’i gzungs kyi rgya cher ‘grel pa rin po che gsal ba, Pe cin bstan ‘gyur, Q 3504, Rgyud ‘grel chu, ff. 181b-193a. On f. 193a5, the text reads: *lha dang bla mas bskul ba’i phyir|| ‘grel pa dri ma med pa ‘di||sangs rgyas sbas pas byas pa ste|| ‘di yis kun kyang de grol shog*. But, D 2680, f. 186a6-7, reads: *lha dang bla mas bskul ba’i phyir|| ‘grel pa dri ma med pa ‘di||sangs rgyas gsang bas byas pa ste|| ‘di yis kun kyang de grol shog*. Schmidt, 122, does not mention this difference in his translation. It is easy to miss, as even the Comparative Tengyur (*Bstan ‘gyur dpe bsdur ma*) edition of the text does not note this variant. Again, it was OCHI 1980, 5 who first noticed it.

¹⁶⁴ Kumārasena, *Gzhon nu’i sde, Āryavajravidāraṇā-nāma-dhāraṇī-sādhanam-sakalpam*, ‘Phags pa rdo rje rnam par ‘joms pa zhes bya ba’i gzungs kyi sgrub thabs cho ga zhib mo dang bcas pa, Sde dge bstan ‘gyur, D 2925, Rgyud nu, ff. 325a-329a. This part of the colophon is on f. 329a4-5: | ‘phags pa rdo rje rnam par ‘joms pa’i sgrub thabs cho ga zhib mo dang bcas pa| bram ze rig sngags ‘chang ba mkhas pa chen po ku mā ra se nas mdzad pa rdzogs so|| rgya gar gyi mkhan po buddha gupta dang | bod kyi lo tsā ba dpa’ manydzu shrī warmas bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa’o||.

There are two further texts to consider. One is a short treatise called *An Extensive Commentary on the Four Immeasurables*.¹⁶⁵ This text provides some basic instructions for meditating on the four immeasurables (*caturapramāṇa*, *tshad med bzhi*): loving kindness (*maitrī*, *byams pa*), compassion (*karuṇā*, *snying rje*), empathetic joy (*muditā*, *dga' ba*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*, *btang snyoms*). The content is mostly exoteric, though there is a vague reference to an unnamed tantra. Its colophon simply states that it was composed by the master Buddhagupta (*slob dpon buddha gupta*), using the same transliteration as the text mentioned in the dynastic catalogs; no translators are mentioned. The D and Q catalogs, however, state that the text's author is Buddhaguhya (*sangs rgyas gsang ba*). The earliest reference to the work that I have been able to find is in *Catalogue of Treatises (Bstan bcos kyi dkar chag)* by Üpa Losel Töpé Senggé (Dbus pa Blo gsal Rtsod pa'i seng ge, c.1270-c.1355), which dates to the first quarter of the fourteenth-century. This catalogue, however, also records this text as “*An Extensive Commentary on the Four Immeasurables* by the *ācārya* Buddhaguhya.”¹⁶⁶ The second text to consider is the *Epistle to the Ruler, his Subjects, and the Clergy of Tibet*, which presents itself as a letter by Buddhagupta written in response to Emperor Trisong Detsen's invitation to Tibet.¹⁶⁷ As I have argued elsewhere, this text is most likely pseudoepigraphic, because it is not attested in any text catalogs prior to the fifteenth century; it shares several verbatim passages with Nyangrel's *Copper Island Biography*, and it contains several anachronisms.¹⁶⁸ The epistle actually contains an instance of the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya (*bu ddha gu hya*) in the body text, but given all of the evidence I have cited for Buddhaguhya being a back-translation of *sangs rgyas gsang ba*,

¹⁶⁵ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, *Sangs rgyas gsang ba, Tshad med bzhi rgyas cher 'grel pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 3914, Dbu ma ki, ff. 19a-21b.

¹⁶⁶ Dbus pa Blo gsal Rtsod pa'i seng ge, *Bstan bcos kyi dkar chag*, BDRC W2CZ7507 (No publisher, no date), f. 54b5: *tshad med pa bzhi rgyas cher 'grel pa slaun[=slob dpon] sangs rgyas gsang ba'i mdzad pa*.

this occurrence probably reinforces my argument regarding the epistle's questionable provenance.¹⁶⁹

How, then, did the name Buddhagupta or *sangs rgyas sbas pa* become Buddhaguhya or *sangs rgyas gsang ba* among these texts in the Tengyur? I argue the process can be traced through the early Tibetan catalogs of scriptures and treatises that were the basis for creating the first Kangyurs and Tengyurs in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.¹⁷⁰ I shall now examine several examples from this period, focusing particularly on the efforts of the Kadampa master Chomden Rikpé Reldri (Bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral dri, 1227-1305, Chomden Reldri hereafter) and Üpa Losel Töpé Senggé (Dbus pa Blo gsal rtsod pa'i seng ge, c. 1270-c. 1355, hereafter Üpa Losel), finally culminating in the Butön's influential Tengyur compilation project at Zhalu (Zhwa lu) Monastery.

Chomden Reldri's 1261 *Ornamental Sunbeam for the Spread of the Teachings* (*bstan pa rgyas pa gryan gyi nyi 'od*) is an important early catalog that also includes a brief history of the Dharma in Tibet. It has a number of features relevant to this dissertation that we examine later, including an early attestation of the story of Buddhagupta's interaction with emissaries from the Tibetan imperial court, and it also contains a reference to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Closer to the matter at hand, it records an expanded list of texts attributed to an author named *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, though it also contains a reference to the name Buddhagupta.

¹⁶⁷ Buddhaguhya, *Sangs rgyas gsang ba. Rje 'bang dang bod btsun rnams la spring yig*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 4194, Spring yig nge, ff. 135a-139a.

¹⁶⁸ Nagasawa 2017, 30-40.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 44 and 57. After praising Emperor Tri Songdetsen's royal lineage and dramatic rise to power, the author of the epistle states: *|bu ddha gu hya bdag dngos glo ba dga'*, "I Buddhaguhya, take real joy in this."

¹⁷⁰ There were already some efforts in Tibet's early medieval period to compile lists or collections of texts that contributed to the development of what we now know as Kangyur and Tengyur, including tantric catalogs by the early Sakya hierarchs, the non-extant Old Nartang Kangyur and Tengyur which Butön worked to expand, as well as other compilations among the various Kagyü traditions, such as the Tselpa (Mtshal pa). These details are explained in Kurtis R. Schaeffer and Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp in *An Early Tibetan Survey of Buddhist Literature: The Btsan pa rgyas pa Rgyan gyi nyi 'od of Bcom ldam ral gri*, (Cambridge, MA: The Harvard Oriental Series, 2009), 9-41.

Chomden Reldri states explicitly in the third chapter of the work that he consulted with the *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalogs; this is clear since, like the dynastic catalogs, he gives the name Buddhagupta (*buddha gu ta pa tas mdzad pa*) for the author of the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* (Ldk 328, Ptm 504), and records the *Compendium on the Practice of Essence Extraction of Gold and Other Materials* as being authored by *sangs rgyas gsang ba* (Ptm 950).¹⁷¹ However, the entry for the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* has an interlinear note connected to the name Buddhagupta that reads *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. Two verses later, we find the *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, which in the *Denkar Catalog* was said to be authored by Buddhagupta.¹⁷² In this case, there is no author mentioned, but again in an interlinear note we see the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. There are a few more texts attributed to *sangs rgyas gsang ba* as well, including what is probably the *Jewel's Radiance* commentary on the *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī*, two non-extant texts seemingly related to the *Vajrapānyabhiṣeka Tantra*, and a few which are difficult to identify.¹⁷³ In any case, an *Ornamental Sunbeam for the Spread of the Teachings* seems to capture a moment in time when the name Buddhagupta was being corrected or retranslated to *sangs rgyas gsang ba* as part of the process of collecting and registering the texts that would eventually make up the Tengyur.

It is in the next major text catalog by Üpa Losel where, for the first time, we see the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* retrotranslated as Buddhaguhya. The title of this early fourteenth century catalog is simply *Catalogue of Treatises (Bstan bcos kyi dkar chag)*, and the extant

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 182 and 187. The text mentioned here are Ctg 18.26 and 18.149.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*: *don bsdus 'grel pa rdzogs pa*, Ctg 18.28. Just before this is a commentary, *Rnam snang mgon byag gi bstod 'grel*, Ctg 18.27, that Schaeffer and van der Kuijp identify as Buddhagupta's long commentary on the MVT, D 2663. I remain uncertain about this identification as the title does not quite match.

¹⁷³ Ctg 18.99; 18.29 and 18.30; 18.84.

version is an *umé* (*dbu med*) or cursive manuscript. Üpa Losel was a student of Chomden Reldri and was based at Nartang Monastery, but it is not clear if this catalog was to the famed and now non-extant Old Nartang Tengyur, one of the first text collections to separate scriptures from treatises. This catalog, by my count, references at least twelve commentaries attributed to *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, among them the *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi* and *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama*.¹⁷⁴ An unknown hand has added the Sanskrit equivalents of each Indian author's translated Tibetan name in interlinear notes—for example, at each instance of the name *sangs rgyas ye shes zhabs*, there is an interlinear note above or below that reads *Buddhajñānapāda* in Tibetan script. And so, in every case of the twelve instances of *sangs rgyas gsang ba* in this catalog, there is an interlinear note that reads *Buddhaguhyā* (*bud dha gu hya*). Determining the provenance of these interlinear notes is close to impossible, but if they are anything like the notes from Nupchen's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*, then they may have been added by a disciple or successor to Üpa Losel. If so, this catalog marks the earliest attestation I have been able to find of the name *Buddhaguhyā* as such, at least among the Tengyur-related materials. Moreover, there is no trace here whatsoever of the name *Buddhagupta*.

¹⁷⁴ Dbus pa Blo gsal Rtsod pa'i seng ge, *Bstan 'gyur dkar chag*. The *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi* (D 2662) is mentioned on f. 28b6 and the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* (D 2670) on f. 30a1. The remaining ten texts and their locations in the catalog are: *Buddhagupta's Tantrārthāvatāra* (D 2501) on f. 24b5; a liturgy for the deity Vajrapāṇi (D 2865) on f. 26b1; three texts regarding the *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* including *The Jewel's Radiance* commentary (D 2680), the *Solitary Hero* liturgy (D 2926), and an oblation ritual (D 2927) on f. 27b3-4; his commentary on the *Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā Tantra* (D 2671) on f. 29a2-3; his *Dharmamaṇḍalasūtra* (D 3705) on f. 32a6; a liturgical manual for creating a mandala (D 3761) on f. 36a6; a short treatise on removing conceptual obstacles in meditation (D 2456/4535) on f. 54a6; and his *Extensive Commentary on the Four Immeasurables* (D 3914) on f. 54b5.

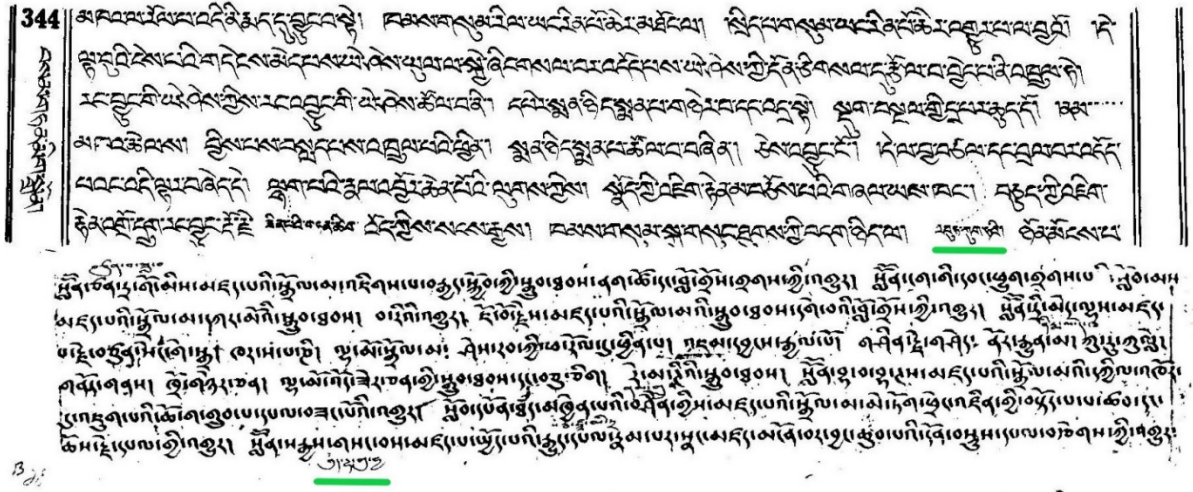


Figure 2: Examples of Interlinear Notes (mchan) from Nupchen's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* (top) and Üpa Losel's *Catalog of Treatises* (bottom). The notes are underlined in green; the note in Nupchen's text reads 'bu ta kug ta'i', and the one in Üpa Losel's reads 'bud dha gu hya'.

The last major Tengyur compilation project we examine in detail was supervised by Butön Rinchen Drup at Zhalu Monastery. The catalog to the Zhalu Tengyur, *Garland of a Mighty King: A Tengyur Catalog of Wish-fulfilling Jewels* (*Bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin nor bu dbang gi rgyal po'i 'phreng ba*) was completed in 1335 with Gelong Śākya Pelzangpo (*Dge slong Shākya dpal bzang po*) acting as scribe. Butön's Tengyur catalog mentions most of the texts by Buddhagupta that Üpa Losel's does, and in all cases, the author's name is rendered as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, but with no interlinear notes indicating the name Buddhaguhya.¹⁷⁵ But regarding this Tengyur, Peter Skilling notes that the “received [Tengyurs] all descend from Bu ston's edition,”¹⁷⁶ particularly in terms of its layout and its editorial methodology. Butön placed “editorial work at the heart of his scholarly activities,” due in large part to a vision he had in 1332 of his Sakya forebearer, Drakpa Gyeltsen (Grags

¹⁷⁵ Bu ston Rin chen grub, *Bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin nor bu dbang gi rgyal po'i 'phreng ba*, in *Bu ston rin chen grub dang sgra tshad pa rin chen rnam rgyal gyi gsung 'bum* vol. 26 [la], (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965-1971). See p. 517 for D 2632; p. 520 for D 2662, 2670, and 2671; p. 563 for D 3705; and p. 619 for D 4194.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Skilling, “From bKa' bstan bcos to bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur,” in *Transmission of the Tibetan Canon*, ed. Helmut Eimer, vol. 3 of *Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan*

pa rgyal mtshan, 1147-1216).¹⁷⁷ Out of his wish that the work be done correctly and according to his exacting standards, he composed *Instructions for the Scribes* (*Yig mkhan rnam la gdams pa*), a letter to all those involved in his editorial activities. His directions are quite specific; for example, he makes recommendations regarding the proper spacing and punctuation between fascicles (*bam po*) in a single text. And, as Kurtis Schaeffer relates in his study and translation of this letter, Bu ston directed his editors to correct spelling mistakes, update remnants of old orthography, and emend texts “in accordance with [their] reasoned understanding of what the text *should* say.”¹⁷⁸ Butön sets a precedence for subjective interpretation in the editing of the canon; based on this, I suggest that at some point, an editor of the Tengyur took license to retrotranslate *sangs rgyas gsang ba* as *Buddhaguhya*, at least in the case of D 2662, the condensed MVT commentary, and perhaps with the knowledge that previous editors such as those associated with Üpa Losel’s project had done so. Butön also documented translations of Indian treatises available to him in his 1322 *Treasury of Precious Speech: A History of the Elucidation of Thus-Gone One’s Teachings* (*Bde bar gshegs pa’i bstan pa’i gsal byed chos kyi’byung gnas gsung rab rin po che’i mdzod*). Here we find a total of twelve works attributed to *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, but no occurrences of the Sanskrit name *Buddhaguhya* and no trace of any form of the name *Buddhagupta*.¹⁷⁹

Studies for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 100 n. 96.

¹⁷⁷ Kurtis R Schaeffer, “A Letter to the Editors of the Buddhist Canon in Fourteenth-Century Tibet: The Yig Mkhän Rnam La Gdams Pa of Bu Stön Rin Chen Grub,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 2 (April 2004): 266.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁷⁹ See NISHIOKA Soshū 西岡祖秀, “Putun bukkyōshi’ mokuokubu sakuin” 『プトゥン仏教史』 目録部索引 II [=Index to the Catalogue Section of Butön’s “History of Buddhism”(II)] *Tōkyō daigaku bungakubu bunka kōryū kenkyū shisetsu kenkyū kiyō* 東京大学文学部文化交流研究施設研究紀要 [=Annual Report of the University of Toyko Institute for the Study of Cultural Exchange] 5 (1982): 62, and by the same author “Putun bukkyōshi’ mokuokubu sakuin” 『プトゥン仏教史』 目録部索引 III [=Index to the Catalogue Section of Butön’s “History of

The questions remains as to when the reconstructed Sanskrit name *Buddhaguhya* entered the canon; I have not been able to find the exact point at which this occurred. I have consulted several Tengyur catalogs that succeeded Butön’s, searching particularly for the *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhīṣambodhi* (D 2662),¹⁸⁰ the 3rd Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé’s mid-1330s *Heart Commitment: A Tengyur Catalog* (*Rje rang byung rdo rje’i thugs dam bstan ’gyur gyi dkar chag*),¹⁸¹ Dratsepa Rinchen Namgyel’s 1362 *Tengyur Catalog: A Basket of Wish-fulfilling Jewels* (*Bstan ’gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin gyi nor bu rin po che’i za ma tog*),¹⁸² and Jonang Choklé Namrgyel’s fourteenth century *Tengyur Catalog* (*Bstan ’gyur dkar chag*).¹⁸³ Although D 2662 is recorded in each of these, the author’s name provided is always *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. That said, I tentatively suggest that this development took place during the compilation of what we now know as the Beijing Tengyur. The Beijing Tengyur was sponsored by the Kanxi emperor of the Qing Dynasty and was initially supervised by the second Chagkya, Ngawang Lozang Chöden (Lcang skya Ngag dbang blobzang chos ldan, 1642-1714). It was completed in 1724 and is the earliest of the received Tengyurs; it therefore exerted influence on all subsequent Tengyurs, especially, G and N.¹⁸⁴ In terms of works attributed to Buddhagupta, the Beijing Tengyur has a much expanded scope as compared to the previous catalogs mentioned above, including his *mahāyoga* commentaries. One text included in the Beijing Tengyur which is not recorded in

Buddhism”(III)] *Tōkyō daigaku bungakubu bunka kōryū kenkyū shisetsu kenkyū kiyō*
 東京大学文学部文化交流研究施設研究紀要[=Annual Report of the University of Tokyo Institute for the Study of Cultural Exchange] 6 (1983): 70, 74, 75, 78, 83, 107, and 113.

¹⁸⁰ For a helpful list of Kangyur and Tengyur catalogs spanning the history of Buddhism in Tibet, see Benjamin Nourse, “Canons in Context: A History of the Tibetan Buddhist Canon in the Eighteenth Century,” PhD diss., (University of Virginia, 2014), 34-37.

¹⁸¹ Rang byung rdo rje, *Thugs dam bstan ’gyur gyi dkar chag*, in *Karma pa rang byung rdo rje’i gsung ’bum*, vol. 4 [*nga*] (Xining: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006), p. 483.

¹⁸² Sgra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal, *Bstan ’gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin gyi nor bu rin po che’i za ma tog*, in *Bu ston rin chen grub dang sgra tshad pa rin chen rnam rgyal gyi gsung ’bum* vol. 28 [*sa*] (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965-1971), p. 458.

¹⁸³ Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal, *Bstan bcos ’gyur ro ’tshal gyi dkar chag dang dus ’khor sgrub thabs sogs* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2010), 88.

the earlier catalogs is a short work called *Method of Ritual Actions (Las kyi thabs)*, which contains pith instructions for the practice of Vajravidāraṇa. The colophon lists no translators, but it does state that it was authored “by the greatly accomplished master Buddhaguhya,” with the name rendered in transliteration as *bud dha guhya*.¹⁸⁵ Since the only other such occurrence of the transliterated name Buddhaguhya in a colophon appears for the first time in the Beijing Tengyur it seems possible, based on admittedly circumstantial evidence, that this is the point at which the name *buddha guhya* enters the received Tengyur collections we know of today.¹⁸⁶

Conclusion: A Tale of Two Buddhaguptas

In sum, I have argued that the Sanskrit name Buddhaguhya is a retrotranslation of the Tibetan *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, which itself was erroneously applied to the name Buddhagupta. I have demonstrated that during Buddhism’s early development in Tibet, there were two figures known by the name Buddhagupta, one mentioned in the dynastic catalogs who commented on the outer tantras and one mentioned other early post dynastic texts who was a master of *mahāyoga*. I then traced the process of the retrotranslation of *sangs rgyas gsang ba*—an early translation of Buddhagupta—to Buddhaguhya, a name that occurs for the first time in both Nyingma works such as the *Chronicle of Padma* and perhaps the *Great Image of Vairocana*, and Üpa Losel’s *Catalogue of Treatises* in the fourteenth century. Except for the sporadic occurrences in the Dergé and Beijing Tengyurs noted above, the name

¹⁸⁴ See Nourse, 99-102.

¹⁸⁵ Buddhaguhya/Buddhagupta, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Karmopāya, Las kyi thabs*, Pe cin bstang ’gyur, Q 3754, Rgyud ’grel *nyu*, ff. 380b-381b. On the last folio is the colophon: slob dpon grub pa chen po bud dha guhyas mdzad pa. The same text is preserved in the Dergé Tengyur as D 2928 with a nearly identical colophon, though Buddhaguhya is rendered there as *buddha guhya*.

¹⁸⁶ Nourse notes that the catalog of the Q Tengyur was based largely on one composed by the 5th Dalai Lama’s powerful regent, Desi Sangyé Gyatso (Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653–1705) in 1688, which

Buddhagupta does not seem to appear as often after the fifteenth century. I have proposed that, according to the earliest sources available, the name Buddhagupta (which was misinterpreted as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*) initially referred to an early tantric commentator who wrote about the outer tantras and another Buddhagupta who specialized in *mahāyoga*, whose works may have later been interpreted through the lens of Dzokchen. As a result of the confusion between the names Buddhagupta and *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, it seems that proto-Nyingma and early Nyingma authors understood the *mahāyoga* commentator's name to be *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. A similar process took place among the early Tengyur compilers. In the fourteenth century, the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* was retrotranslated both in Nyingma works and in the Tengyur catalogs as *Buddhaguhya*.

Although this chapter has served to clarify several elements regarding the name of the two figures called Buddhagupta, there remains much to be explored. To date there have not been any critical studies of the other two texts by the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta recorded in the *Denkar Catalog*. Of particular interest is the *Word-by-Word Commentary on the Durgati-pariśodhana* (D 2624), since the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra* seems to have been particularly important during the dynastic period and afterwards, at least according to the *Testament of Wa* and the existence of several manuals related to the tantra among the Dunhuang manuscripts.¹⁸⁷ And as I have noted above, the authorship of the received *Word-by-Word Commentary on the Durgati-pariśodhana* has also been questioned. Further study of this commentary, the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pātala-krama* (D2670) and the *Condensed Commentary on the Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā Tantra* (2671) would fill

seems to be non-extant. So if indeed the Q Tengyur was based on Desi Sangyé Gyatso's, then perhaps the inclusion of the name *Buddhaguhya* occurred somewhat earlier.

¹⁸⁷ Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, trans., *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften,

out our knowledge not only of the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta, but also of tantra in Tibet at the height of the dynastic period.

2000), 104-105. Rituals associated with the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra* came to be used in funerary rites.

Chapter II. Reframing Buddhagupta’s Hagiographies: Origins and Inconsistencies

Contemporary scholars have tried to pin down the details and dates of Buddhagupta’s life and his interaction with the Tibetan court. Stephen Hodge, who admits that having a full historical picture of Buddhagupta is close to impossible, has suggested that we can conclude at the very least that “Buddhaguhya” was born somewhere around 700 CE or a bit before, that he lived mainly in Vārāṇasī, and that he was invited to Tibet by Tri Songdetsen around 760 CE.¹⁸⁸ Alex Wayman proposes that he was a direct disciple of the famed *Guhyasamāja Tantra* commentator Buddhajñānapāda, and that he participated in the translation of Buddhist texts around 760-770 CE.¹⁸⁹ As Nathaniel Garson notes, Buddhagupta is also considered to have also been a student of Vilāsavajra, from whom he received teachings in the *mahāyoga* tantras.¹⁹⁰ Some scholars such as Loden Sherab Dagyab¹⁹¹ and Erberto Lo Bue,¹⁹² following T.G. Dhongthog, accept the specific dates of 740-802 for Buddhagupta’s lifespan.¹⁹³ As I have already indicated, however, much of what we know about Buddhagupta comes from short passages drawn from Tibetan histories and other texts, and apart from a few details, these accounts are not consistent and it is difficult to draw conclusions from them regarding the “historical” Buddhagupta.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁸ Hodge 2005, 22.

¹⁸⁹ Alex Wayman and R. Tajima, *The Enlightenment of Vairocana* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 27-28.

¹⁹⁰ Garson, 174-175

¹⁹¹ Loden Sherab Dagyab, *Tibetan Religious Art*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 1977), 141.

¹⁹² Erberto Lo Bue, “The Darmamaṇḍala Sūtra by Buddhaguhya,” in vol. 2 of *Orientalia Iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, edited by Gherardo Gnoli and Lionello Lancotti (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Orientale, 1987), 787-788.

¹⁹³ T.G. Dhongthog, *Important Events in Tibetan History* (Delhi: ALA Press, 1968), 32. Dagyab applied the dates that Dhongthog supplies for Emperor Tri Detsuktse to Buddhagupta.

¹⁹⁴ For a synthetic biographical essay on Buddhagupta based on multiple sources, see Jake E. Nagasawa, “Buddhaguhya” in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (March 2017), <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Buddhaguhya/10546>.

In this chapter, I offer a critical examination of Buddhagupta's hagiography as told in Tibetan historical writing. I understand these sources, particularly those by Nyingma authors, to be part of the process of fusing the outer tantra commentator and the *mahāyoga* commentator into a single figure. I then shift to comparing Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra, who is considered by the Nyingma tradition to have been the former's student. Beside their respective hagiographies having strikingly similar elements, one figure is often mistaken for the other; between the Tengyur and the NKM, there are several instances where one text said to be authored by Buddhagupta in one collection it said to be authored by Vimalamitra in the other. I propose that the Dunhuang manuscript Pelliot tibétain (PT) 849—a bilingual Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary which ends with a striking biographical sketch of the author's Indian master—might have served as inspiration for their respective hagiographies, perhaps contributing to the confusion between them.

Merging Two into One: Comparing the Biographical Sources

In this section, I will focus on the Tibetan narratives of Buddhagupta's life with critical attention to their divergences and differences, as well on the works from which they are absent. I suggest that these narratives—particularly the ones by Nyingma authors such as Gyelsé Tukchoktsel (Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal, fourteenth century)—fuse the multiple Buddhaguptas into a single figure. The following is an encyclopedia entry for Buddhagupta (under the name Buddhaguhya) by the twentieth century Nyingma scholar and master Khetsün Zangpo Rinpoché (Mkhas btsun bzang po rin po che, 1920-2009) found in his twelve-volume *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism* (*Rgya bod mkhas grub rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*). Because it is a late account that seems to combine elements of Buddhagupta's hagiography from multiple histories and attempts to

reconcile some of the differences between them, I translate it nearly in full. Khetsün Zangpo Rinpoché uses the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba* for our figure, which for the sake of clarity I translate as Buddhaguhya:¹⁹⁵

Ninth century A.D., Buddhaguhya: Master Buddhaguhya was born in central India and took monastic vows at Nālandā. Both he and Master Buddhaśānti¹⁹⁶ were students

¹⁹⁵ Mkhas btsun bzang po, *Rgya bod kyi mkhas grub rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs: Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 1 (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1973), 542-546: ||A.D. brgya phrag 9 buddha gu hya ni| slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang ba ste| yul dbus su 'khrungs shing na lendar rab tu 'byung | 'di dang slob dpon sangs rgyas bzhi ba gnyis ka ye shes zhabs kyi sku tshe 'i stod kyi slob ma yin| wa ra na si 'i gnas shig tu 'phags pa 'jam dpal bsgrubs pa| nam zhig na bris sku bzhad cing dngo grub kyi dzas ba dmar po 'i mar khu yang khol| me tog rnying pa rnam kyang kha 'bus pas dngos grub kyi ltas su mkhyen kyang| thog mar me tog 'bul lam mar khu gsol snyam pa 'i the tshom kyi ngang du cung zad lus pas| gnod sbyin mo zhig gis gegs byas te slob dpon gyi 'gram par tha lcag bsnun pas cung zad brgyal| de sangs tsa na bris sku rdul gyi gos| me tog rnying | mar khu gang bo bar gzigs| 'on kyang rdul physis me tog dbu la phul| mar khu gang yod gsol bas sku lus nad thams cad dang bral te stobs dang ldan pa blo shin tur rno zhing mngon par shes pa la dbang sgyur ba byung| de skabs shig o rgyan du byon nas slob dpon sgegs pa 'i rdo rje dang mjal| rnal 'byor rgyud dang | bla med nang rgyud sde lnga gsan cing khyad par sgu 'phrul la mkhas| dus gzhan zhig tu sangs rgyas zhi ba dang mnyam du ri po ta la 'phags pa spyen ras gzigs mjal bar byon pas| ri 'i rtsa bar 'phags ma sgrol mas klu 'i tshogs la chos ston pa dang | skyer par khro gnyer can mas lha ma yin dang gnod sbyin gyi tshogs la chos ston pa dang | rtse mor 'phags pa mngon sum du bzhugs pa yang rang rang gi snang ba dang mthung par mjal| der sangs rgyas gsang bas zhabs sa la mi reg pa sogs dngos grub kyang brnyes| 'phags ma sgrol mas ri kha ba can gyi gangs ti ser song la sgrub pa gyis zhes lung bstan| tshur slebs nas wā ra na sir lor mang po 'i bar chos bshad nas bzhugs pa na slar 'phags pa 'jam dpal kyis sngar sgrol mas lung bstan pa ltar bskul bas ti ser byon nas sgrub pa mdzad pas rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po lan grangs du mar gzigs shing 'jam dpal dbyangs dang mi dang mi lab pa bzhin du gyur| mi ma yin rnam kyang bran du 'khol de 'i skabs bod kyi btsan po khri lde gtsug btsan gyi mes srong btsan gyi bka' chems kyi yi ge mchims bu 'i [=phu 'i] phyag mdzod na blon po mgar gyis zangs kyi byang bu la bris nas sbas pa bltas pas| nga 'i dbon sras kyi ring la rgyal po lde zhes bya ba 'i ring la dam pa 'i lha chos 'byung | de bzhin gshegs pa 'i rjes su rab tu 'byung ba dbu reg dang zhabs rjen sku la ngur smrags gi rgyal mtshan gsol ba| lha dang mi 'i chos [=mchod] gnas kyang mang du 'byung ngo || de la rang rang gzhan gyi 'di dang phyi ma mtho ris dang thar pa thams cad kyi dbe ba 'byung bas| nga 'i dbon sras rje blon rnam kyis 'tso ba bla nas sbyar| chab 'og nas bde byin la dbu 'i chos [=mchod] gnas su khur cig| ces bya ba bris nas 'dug pa de gzigs pas| lde zhes bya ba de nga yin par dgongs nas bran ka mu le ko sha dang | gnyag dznyā na ku ma ra gnyis rgya gar du chos 'tshol du btang bas pañdi ta sangs rgyas gsan ba dang | sangs rgyas zhi ba gnyis gangs ti se la sgom mo zhes thos te de gnyis spyen 'dren du btang yang spyen ma 'drongs te de gnyis kyi thugs la mdo sde las rnam par 'byed pa dang | gser 'od dam pa 'i mdo gnas pa de gnyis spyen drangs nas rgyal po 'i chos [=mchod] gnas su phul| de 'i bzhugs khang lta bur lha khang lnga bzhengs te lha sa 'khar brag| brag mar 'gran zang | mchims bu [=phu] ne ral | brag dmar ka chu| bsam yas ma sa gong gi gtsugs lag khang dang lnga bzhengs so| de ltar rgyal po yab kyi dus su bod du chos dar bas thugs dam mtshams spor mdzad rjes su brgya phrag dgu pa 'i khri srong lde 'u btsan gyis bod du dam pa 'i chos kyi sgron me spor bar pañ chen brgya rtsa dus cig la dpal mi 'gyur lhun gyi grub pa 'i gtsug lag khan chen po bsam yas su spyen drangs [...] padma bka' thang las| rgya gar yul nas buddha guhya dang | zhes dang | yang de las| sangs rgyas gsang ba be ro tsa na yis| sgyu 'phrul sde brgyad rdor dbyings dgongs 'dus dang | a nu 'i mdo bzhi khirms lnga la sogs bsgyur| zhes gsungs pa bzhin bkrin che ba 'i pañ chen zhig ste| rjes brtse 'i yig 'jog mdzad pa la 'ang bsam gyis mi khyab ste| gsang ba snying po la 'grel pa rnam dbye 'grel dang | rdo rje las rim| dkyil 'khor chos don dam pa rgyan| dra chen dra chung gnyis| zhi ba dang khro bo 'i mngon par rtogs pa 'i rim pa| rnal 'byor rgyud la 'ang rdo rje dbyings kyi sgrub thabs yo ga la 'jug pa| rnam snang mngon bayng gi bsdus 'grel| bsam gtan phyi ma 'i 'grel sogs shin tu mang bar mdzad yod par snang ngo| dus rabs ni| A.D. brgya phrag dgu 'i pa 'i nang du dpal bsam yas su byon par gnang ba ltar na sku tshe ni ha cang ring ba zhig yin par mngon no||. The section I omitted consists of a several lines lauding Tri Songdetsen's Dharma activity in Tibet.

during the early part of Jñānapāda's lifespan. In Vārāṇasī, he accomplished the practice of Noble Mañjuśrī such that the painted image of his deity smiled at him, the red ghee [he used as sacramental] substance of attainment boiled up, and even wilted flowers blossomed anew. Although he understood these to be signs of his spiritual accomplishment, he remained in a state of doubt for a moment, unsure about whether he should first offer the flowers or consume the ghee. As a result of his doubt, an obstruction-causing *yakṣiṇī* [appeared] and slapped the master on the face, causing him to fall unconscious for a short while. When he awoke, he noticed that the painted image of his deity had become dusty, the flowers had wilted, and the ghee had spilled over. Nevertheless, he wiped off the image, offered the flowers, and drank what was left of the ghee. Thereafter, his body was freed of all illness and became strong, his intellect sharpened, and he became clairvoyant.

Sometime after this, he journeyed to Oḍḍiyāna and met with Master Vilāsavajra, under whom he studied the yoga tantras and the five classes of the inner unsurpassed tantras, becoming particularly skilled in the *Māyājāla*.

On another occasion, he travelled together with Buddhaśānti to Mount Potala in the hope of seeing Ārya Avalokiteśvara himself. At the base of the mountain, Ārya Tārā was teaching the Dharma to an assembly of *nāgas*, half way up the mountain, Bhṛkuṭī was teaching the Dharma to an assembly of demigods and *yakṣas*, and at the peak, the Ārya [Avalokiteśvara] himself was manifestly present. Each of these things appeared to them just as they were, and Buddhaguhya received various spiritual accomplishment, such as walking without his feet touching the ground. Ārya Tārā herself instructed them, saying, “Go forth to Mount Kailash in the Himalayas and practice there!”

After their return, [Buddhaguhya] spent many years in Vārāṇasī teaching the Dharma and once again Noble Mañjuśrī appeared to him and gave him an instruction similar to the one he received from Tārā. Having gone to Mount Kailash, he practiced there and had repeated visions of the Vajradhātu Mandala.¹⁹⁷ He even attained the ability to speak to Mañjuśrī as if the deity were just another person, and he bound the non-human beings in the area to his service. At that time, the Emperor of Tibet, Tri Tsukdetsen read the royal testament of his ancestor, Songtsen [Gampo], which had been written on copper plates by [his] minister Gar and hidden in the treasury at Chimphu:

“In the time of my descendants, during the reign of king called Dé, the holy and divine Dharma will arise. There will be many monks, the followers of the Tathāgata, with shaved heads, bare feet, and wearing saffron robes as victory banners on their bodies,

¹⁹⁶ The figure *sangs rgyas zhi ba*, tentatively translated here as Buddhaśānti, is mentioned as a travel companion of Buddhagupta in several hagiographical narratives. I have not been able to identify this figure. The Tengyur preserves a single text attributed to a Buddhaśrīśānti: *Deśanāstavavṛtti*, *Bshags pa 'i bstod pa 'i 'grel pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 1160, Bstod tshogs ka, 206a-229b. The text was translated by the early Sarma translator, Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 958-1055) and is a commentary on Candragomin's *Deśanāstava* or *In Praise of Confession*. Buddhaśrīśānti, who is sometimes known as Buddhaśānti, also worked with Rinchen Zangpo on several translations, and so he post-dates the dynastic period, and thereby Buddhagupta, by about a century. For a translation of D 1160, see Mark Joseph Tatz, “Candragomin and the Bodhisattva Vow” PhD diss., (University of British Columbia, 1978).

¹⁹⁷ Vajradhātu Mandala (*rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor*) refers to the mandala of Sarvavid Vairocana as explained the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha Tantra*. It can also be used to refer to the mandala of the forty-two peaceful deities from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, the principle *mahāyoga* tantra in the Nyingma tradition. Another iteration of the Vajradhātu Mandala is the *Kongōkai Mandara* (金剛界曼荼羅) of the Japanese Shingon tradition, which is based on the *Vajraśekhara Sutra*.

who will arise and be the object of worship for gods and humans alike. Since they are the source of happiness both heavenly and transcendent, for the benefit of self and others, now and in the future, my descendants, I declare that my lords and ministers should support them from above. And for the sake of happiness and abundance, I declare that they must also be venerated from below.”

Thinking that “Dé” referred to himself, the Emperor sent Drenka Mūlakośa and Nyak Jñānakumāra¹⁹⁸ to India to seek out the Dharma. They heard that the two scholars Buddhaguhya and Buddhasānti were meditating at Mount Kailash, so they invited the two to come [to Tibet], but they did not go. The two scholars thought that instead of the two of them, two scriptures, the *Karmaśataka*¹⁹⁹ and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sutra*²⁰⁰ should be invited and offered as objects of worship for the king. As shrines for those scriptures, five temples were erected: Khardrak in Lhasa, Drenzang and Kachu in Drakmar, Nerel in Chimphu, and Masagong [near the future location of] Samyé. And so during time of that king, the Dharma proliferated in Tibet and connections were made to the deities.²⁰¹

Thereafter in the ninth century, the great Dharma King Tri Songdetsen raised the torch of the holy Dharma in Tibet, having invited hundreds of scholars to the great glorious temple of Samyé Mingyur Lungyi Druppa. [...] ²⁰² In the *Chronicle of Padma* it states, “Buddhaguhya from India...”²⁰³ and later “Buddhaguhya and Vairocana

¹⁹⁸ The names and numbers of emissaries sent by the Tibetan court differ between texts. According to most, the emissaries are Drenka Mūlakośa and Nyak Jñānakumara. The latter is mentioned as the translator in the colophon to *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. In Gyelsé Tukchoktsel’s account, the emperor sends four emissaries: Wa Mañjuśrīvarma (Dba’ manydzu shrī warma), Chim Śākyaprabha (Mchims Shākya pra bha), Drenka Mukhendra (Dran ka ra Mu khendra) and Tsangté Lekdra (rtsangs the leg dra); these four then transmit the teaching to Ma Rinchen Chok (Rma Rin chen mchog) and Nyak Jñānakumara in Tibet. Pema Trinlé mentions two of Tibet’s first seven monks, Bé Mañjuśrī and Drenka Mutika (*sad mi bdun gyi nang nas dbas manydzu shrī dang | bran ka mu ti ka*). Tāranātha mentions only the name Ü Mañjuśrī, but states that others went as well (dbus manydzu shrī la sogs pa).

¹⁹⁹ *Karmaśataka*, *Las brgya tham pa*, Sde dge bka’ ’gyur, D 340, Mdo sde ha, ff. 1b-309a and a ff. 1b-128b. This text lacks a translator’s colophon, though it is recorded in the *Denkar Catalog* (Ldk 272). Some sources, such as Chomden Reldri’s *Ornamental Sunbeam*, say instead that the two masters gave the Tibetans a copy of the *Karmavibhāṅga*. Such a text is also recorded in the *Denkar Catalog* as Ldk 280. *Karmavibhāṅga*, *Las rnam par byed pa*, Sde dge bka’ ’gyur, D 338, Mdo sde sa, 277a-298b.

²⁰⁰ *Ārya-suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtrendrarāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, *’Phags pa gser ’od dam pa mdo sde’i dbang po’i rgyal po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po’i mdo*, Sde dge bka’ ’gyur, D 557 Rgyud pha, ff. 1b-62a. D 557, like D 340 mentioned above also lacks a translator’s colophon. This text is found in the *Denkar Catalog*, see Herman-Pfandt 2008, 138-139. Herman-Pfandt states that Ldk 256 refers D 557 given that their titles are the same and that length of both texts are similar in terms of number of verses and fascicles (*bam po*). Ldk 256 appears in a list of texts translated from Chinese, which Herman-Pfandt suggests is an error, based on the fact that a text with the same title is mentioned in the *Pangtang Catalog* as being a translation from Sanskrit. D 557 corresponds exactly to an extant Sanskrit version studied by Johannes Noble. This might also refer to D 556, though this translation seems to have been completed after the reign of Tri Detsuktzen by Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi, and Yeshé Dé. There is indeed also a translation of *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama Sutra* in the Tengyur translated from Chinese (D 555) by the Gö Chödrup.

²⁰¹ This part of the story is veritually identical to the account found at the very beginning of the *Extended Testament of Ba*. A similar prophesy is also mentioned in several other sources, including Sönam Gyeltsen’s thirteenth century *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Chronicle*, where the testamental letter is said to prophesy a king with the names Tri (khri) and Dé (Ide). For all of these sources, see Table 2 below.

²⁰² The part of the text omitted here is a length praise of Tri Songdetsen’s efforts to establish Buddhism in Tibet.

²⁰³ U rgyan gling pa 1996, 472.

translated the eight [tantras] of the *Māyājāla* cycle, the Vajradhādhu[-related scriptures], the *Gathering of Intentions*, the four sutras of the Anu[yoga], the five ethical codes, and others.”²⁰⁴ Out of his great compassion, this beneficent scholar authored countless works, including: *An Analytical Commentary on the Guhyagarbha*, *The Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions*, *Dharmamaṇḍala* [Sutra], the *Sublime Ornament*, the *Greater Net* and *Lesser Net*, the *Stages of Realization of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*, the *Introduction to Yoga*, which is the method of accomplishing the Vajradhātu [Maṇḍala] according to the yoga tantras, the *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* [Tantra], the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara* [paṭala-krama] and many other compositions. In the ninth century, it seems that he agreed to come to the glorious Samyé Monastery. His life span was very long.

In this narrative, Buddhagupta is born in central India, and ordained at Nālandā Monastery. While living in Vārāṇasī, he engaged in meditating on the deity Mañjuśrī, which resulted in miraculous signs. Because he was unsure about how to proceed in his practice, a *yakṣiṇī* or malevolent spirit appeared and knocked Buddhagupta unconscious. Upon awakening, he consumed what remained of his offering, which restored his strength and made him free of illnesses. He then traveled to Oḍḍiyāna and studies with Vilāsavajra, from whom he receives the teachings of the *Māyājāla Tantras*. Subsequently, he traveled with Buddhaśānti to Mount Potala hoping to have a vision of Avalokiteśvara. The pair end up seeing the bodhisattvas Tārā, Bhṛkuṭī, and Avalokiteśvara himself at the top of the mountain, and Buddhagupta attains the power to walk without touching the ground. Tārā instructs both masters to practice meditation at Mount Kailash. Buddhagupta then returned to Vārāṇasī to teach the Dharma for an extended period of time, whereupon he has a vision of his personal deity Mañjuśrī, who also instructs Buddhagupta to go to Mount Kailash. At Mount Kailash, Buddhagupta had visions of the Vajradhādhu Mandala and gains the ability to speak to Mañjuśrī at will. The narrative then shifts to Tibet and the reign of Emperor Tri Detsuktsen (Khri De gtsug brtsan, 705-c.754) who was the father of Tri Songdetsen. Tri Detsuktsen discovers a testamental letter apparently written by his ancestor, Songtsen Gampo predicting that a king with the

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 493. See Table 1 above for further instances beyond the two mentioned by Khetsün Zangpo

name Dé will establish Buddhism in the kingdom. In accordance with this, Tri Detsuktsen dispatches two emissaries—Drenka Mūlakośa and Nyak Jñānakumara—to seek out the Dharma in India. Hearing that Buddhagupta and Buddhaśānti were at Mount Kailash, the emissaries proceed there instead to invite these masters to Tibet. However, the two refuse the invitation, but send the emissaries back with Buddhist scriptures as gifts for the emperor. Tri Detsuktsen then builds five temples as repositories for the texts sent by Buddhagupta and Buddhaśānti. After a brief interlude, it seems that Buddhagupta returns to Tibet to remain at Samyé, and perhaps partipate in translation there.

Khetsün Zangpo Rinpoché, as I have noted, attempts to reconcile the main difference between the accounts of Budddhagupta’s life. Most of the Tibetan historical works, for example, are split regarding which emperor sent emissaries to invite Buddhagupta to court. Table 3 below lists the major histories and their positions:

Table 3: Placements of Buddhagupta in the Dynastic Period

During Tri Detsukten’s Reign (712-c.754 CE)	During Tri Songdetsen’s Reign (756-c. 797)
Chomden Reldri’s <i>An Ornamental Sunbeam of the Spread of the Teachings</i> (1261) ²⁰⁵	Nyangrel’s <i>Flower Nectar: The Essence of Honey</i> (late twelfth century) ²⁰⁶
Sönam Gyeltsen’s <i>The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Chronicle</i> (1368) ²⁰⁷	Butön’s <i>Treasury of Precious Speech</i> (1322) ²⁰⁸
Shākya Rinchen’s <i>Precious Rosary: Hagiographies of the Dharma King, Ancestor, and Descendant</i> (c. early 15 th century) ²⁰⁹	Gyelsé Tukchoktsel’s <i>Sunlight Illuminating the Precious Treasury of the Teachings</i> (1362) ²¹⁰

Rinpoché

²⁰⁵ Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, 109-110.

²⁰⁶ Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer, *Chos ’byung me tog snying po ’i sbrang rtsi ’i bcud* (Lhasa: bod ljongs mi dbang dpe bskrun khang, 1988), 435. My dating of this text is somewhat tentative, since the sole reference to Buddhagupta is one short line: rlang chung dpal gyi seng ge la sangs rgyas gsang ba ’i bka’ babs|. I understand this to mean that Langchung Pelgyi Senggé received transmission from Buddhagupta (as Buddhaguhya). This is unusual as no other text that I have consulted associates these two with each other. In any case, Lang Pelgyi Senggé is often associated with Padmasbhava and the era of Tri Songdetsen’s rule.

²⁰⁷ Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal rabs gsal ba ’i me long* (Beijing: Nationalities Publishing House, 2002), 196-197, and Per K. Sørensen, *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies: Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: an Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Tibetan Chronicle: rGyal-rabs Gsal-Ba’i Me-long*, vol. 128 of *Asiatische Forschungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994), 350-353.

²⁰⁸ János Szerb, *Bu ston’s History of Buddhism in Tibet: Critically Edited with a Comprehensive Index* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990), 31.

<i>Extended Testimony of Ba</i> (c. early 15 th century) ²¹¹	Tāranātha's <i>History of Buddhism in India</i> (1608) ²¹²
Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa's <i>A Feast for Scholars</i> (1564) ²¹³	Pema Trinlé's <i>Hagiographies of the Lineage Masters</i> (1681) ²¹⁴
Fifth Dalai Lama's <i>Song of the Queen of Spring</i> (1643) ²¹⁵	Dungkar Rinpoche's <i>Great Encyclopedia</i> (published 2002) ²¹⁶

All of the histories listed above in the Tri Detsuktsen column only mention the “Buddhagupta at Mount Kailash” pericope in passing as part of the broader history of Buddhism in the dynastic period; no further details are given. The most detailed accounts, matching that of Khetsün Zangpo Rinpoché, come from the Nyingma writers Gyelsé Tukchoktsel (who is often confused with Longchenpa) and Pema Trinlé (Padma 'phrin las, 1641-1717) Tāranātha's account matches these two scholars' accounts in terms of amount of detail, but is unflattering in its portrayal of Buddhagupta. One unique source not mentioned

²⁰⁹ *Mi rje lhas mdzad byang chub sems dpa' chen po chos rgyas mes dbon rnam gsum gyi rnam par thar pa rin po che'i phreng ba* (Paro: Ugyen Tempai Gyaltsen, 1980), ff. 102a-103a. This text is often attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Özer, but Lewis Doney has suggested that it actually post-dates him by several centuries. He points to the fact that the *Precious Rosary* does not mention Nyangrel and that it seems unaware of the *Copper Island Chronicles*. In terms of its historical narrative, the *Precious Rosary* is much closer to the *Extended Testament of Ba* (*Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*), from which it liberally quotes. He also observes that the colophon mentions that the text belonged to Shākya Rinchen (1347–1426?), who Doney suggests is probably the compiler of the text. Based on the dates of Shākya Rinchen, Doney thus concludes that *Precious Rosary* dates to the fifteenth century. He also proposes that the *Extended Testament of Ba* must not be far off from the *Precious Rosary* in its composition, and hence dates it to the fifteenth century as well. See Doney, Lewis. “Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and the *Testimony of Ba*,” *Bulletin of Tibetology* 49, no. 1 (2013): 8-9, 17, and 31.

²¹⁰ Rgyal sras thugs mehog rtsal, *Chos 'byung rin po che gter mdod bstan pa gsal bar byed pa'i nyi 'od* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrunghang, 1991), 272-257.

²¹¹ Rolf A. Stein, ed., *Sba bzhed. Une chronique ancienne de Bsam-yas: sBa-bzhed* (Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1961), 1.

²¹² Tāranātha, *Tā ra nā tha'i rgya gar chos 'byung. Tāranāthae de doctrinae Buddhicae in India propagatione narratio: contextum Tibeticum e codicibus Petropolitanis*, ed. Anton Schiefner (St. Petersburg: Academiae scientiarum Petropolitanae, 1868), 170-171. See also Tāranātha, *History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, ed. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1970), 280-283.

²¹³ Dpa bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrunghang, 2006), 156 and 191-192.

²¹⁴ Padma 'phrin las, *Slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang ba'i rnam thar*, in *Bka' ma mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1972), ff. 47a-48b.

²¹⁵ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Gangs can yul gyi sa la spyod pa'i mtho ris kyi rgyal blon gtso bor brjod pa'i deb ther rdzog ldan gzhon nu'i dga' ston dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (Beijing: Nationalities Publishing House, 1980), 50. See also Zahiruddin Ahmad, trans., *A History of Tibet by Nāg-dBañ Blo-bzañ rGya-mTSho, Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1995), 47.

²¹⁶ Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (Beijing: Khung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrunghang, 2002), 1270.

in the table above is Dūjom Rinpoché's 1962 *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* which, though it accords with Khetsün Zangpo Rinpoché's account above, is silent about when Buddhagupta's interaction with Tibetan emissaries took place.²¹⁷

The two Nyingma accounts of Gyelsé Tukchoktsel and Pema Trinlé are, perhaps unsurprisingly, the most detailed.²¹⁸ Gyelsé Tukchoktsel's account is of particular importance. Not only does it seem to serve as a source for Pema Trinlé, it is also one of the earliest Nyingma source to explicitly portray a coherent narrative that combines the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta with the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta under the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. In both narratives Buddhagupta is unsure of how to proceed in his Mañjuśrī practice and is knocked unconscious by an obstructive spirit. According to Gyelsé Tukchoktsel, it was Buddhagupta's own father, a king from west India, who gave him the practice of Mañjuśrī. Considering his hesitation to be the result of a lack of traditional Buddhist learning, Buddhagupta travels to East India to undertake formal studies under hundreds of different scholars, and he receives the teachings on both the outer and inner tantras. He becomes a renowned scholar at a monastic university, and according to Gyelsé Tukchoktsel, he also served as a royal chaplain at this time. But again, he had doubts, thinking now that he had focused too much on learning. Buddhagupta thus decided to leave his academic post to pursue intensive meditation at Mount Kailash, settling at a place called Raven-Headed. In Tibet, Emperor Tri Songdetsen hears that there is a famous Indian scholar at Mount Kailash, so he sends his representatives to invite the master to court. Buddhagupta declines the emperor's invitation because he has made a vow to remain in retreat. After consulting with his deity Mañjuśrī, Buddhagupta grants the representatives initiation into the, making the mandala appear on the surface of Lake Manasarovar, a sacred lake near Kailash.

²¹⁷ NSTB, 464-466.

Gyelsé Tukchoktsel adds that Buddhagupta conferred on them the transmission of tantric traditions, including the MVT, the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana*, the *Guhyagabhra Tantra*, and the *Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama*. Both authors mention that he gave them several of his own compositions, including *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. Pema Trinlé adds that Buddhagupta then returns to India and lives for a total of five hundred years. Neither account mentions Buddhaśānti or the episode of their travel to Mount Potala. Both texts conclude the narrative by listing a number of works by Buddhagupta, but only Gyelsé Tukchoktsel notably lists both outer tantra commentaries and *mahāyoga* commentaries, the earliest history to do so.

Tāranātha's account seems to be source of the narrative of Buddhagupta and Buddhaśānti's travel to Mount Potala, though Tāranātha's portrayal of Buddhagupta is less laudatory than that of Gyelsé Tukchoktsel and Pema Trinlé. After mentioning Buddhagupta's hesitation in his Mañjuśrī meditation, Tāranātha states that Buddhaśānti, though mediating alone and without the proper ritual substances or doubts, attained the same spiritual accomplishment as Buddhagupta. Then, during their pilgrimage to Mount Potala, although several deities—Tārā, Bhṛkuṭī, and Avalokiteśvara—are present, neither master has visions of them, and they are disappointed to find only a stone image of Avalokiteśvara at the summit of Mount Potala. Buddhaśānti, however, knows this must be due to his own mental obscurations, so after giving rise to deep faith, he has visions of the deities and acquires several magical abilities, including the power to transform rocks into anything he pleases, clairvoyance, and complete knowledge of the Dharma without studying. Meanwhile, Tāranātha says, Buddhagupta prayed with less faith and only received ability to walk without his feet touching the ground. On their return journey, Buddhagupta asks Buddhaśānti about

²¹⁸ For a translation of both of these narratives, see Nagasawa 2017b, 13-18.

what kind of powers he received and, upon hearing that Buddhaśānti's had attained a superior level of accomplishment, Buddhagupta becomes jealous and thus loses all of his own powers. It is only after many years of purification that Buddhagupta gets his abilities back. Finally, after Buddhagupta's travels to Mount Kailash and meets with Tri Songdetsen's emissaries, Tāranātha states that Buddhagupta did not attain the supreme accomplishment of enlightenment, but that his body vanished when he died.²¹⁹

The placement of Buddhagupta's interaction with representatives from the Tibetan court during Tri Songdetsen's reign would at first glance seem to be an attempt to further reinforce his status as a great Dharma king who brought many masters from India to Tibet. This tendency is seen in Nyingma texts like the *Copper Island Chronicle*. But perhaps placing Buddhagupta earlier, during Tri Detsukten's reign, may actually be meant to bolster the broader claim that the royal line of the Pugyel emperors were unflinching supporters of the Dharma since the time of Songtsen Gampo. In his study of Kachu Temple—which the hagiographies of Buddhagupta claim was built by Tri Detsukten to house the texts he received from the master—Roberto Vitali argues that the Tri Detsukten was likely more “concerned with affairs of state” than religion. Although he accepts that the temple was built during the time Tri Detsukten, since it states as much in the Karchung (Skar chung) pillar

²¹⁹ Tāranātha's account of Buddhagupta's life is distinctly unflattering—in his narrative, Buddhagupta is portrayed as self-doubting, jealous, and ultimately unable to attain enlightenment in his lifetime. It remains an open question as to why he would write so derisively about one of the most important Indian tantric commentators. Tāranātha's history makes no mention of the *mahāyoga* commentaries associated with Buddhagupta, but it is unlikely that a scholar of Tāranātha caliber would be unaware of them. The saints revered in the Nyingma tradition, such as Padmasambha and Vimalamitra, do not figure prominently at all in Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India*. Nevertheless, I do not think Tāranātha is known for having anti-Nyingma views, unlike Butön, who is famous for having challenged the authenticity of the Nyingma tantras and Dzokchen. I speculate that since Tāranātha associated Buddhagupta with the *kriyā*, *caryā*, and yoga tantras, and *not* with the *niruttarayoga* tantras, which are key to the Sarma schools' tantric systems, Tāranātha might not have considered Buddhagupta as being particularly highly realized.

inscription,²²⁰ he shows that Khotanese documents from around the time attribute the building of temples in Tibet during this period entirely to Tri Detsukten's wife, the Chinese princess Kimsheng Kongjo (Kim sheng Kong jo, or sometimes Gyim shang Ong jo; in Chinese Jincheng Gongzhu 金城公主).²²¹ This accords with the brief note about Tri Detsukten and Kongjo in the *Testimony of Wa (Dba' bzhed)*, which does portray the latter as a devout Buddhist.²²² And indeed, in Christopher Beckwith's account of the period, which draws on contemporaneous Chinese sources, he notes that Tri Detsuktsen was concerned with the consolidation of the Tibetan Empire, even leading his armies against Tang China personally on at least two occasions.²²³ It thus seems unlikely that Tri Detsukten was personally involved in temple building or inviting Indian masters to Tibet from afar, though it is impossible to definitively determine this.

One historical source not mentioned in Table 3 is Deu José's (Lde'u jo sras) *Great History: The Victory Banner of the Teachings (Chos 'byung chen mo bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan)*. This is the older of the two so-called Deu chronicles mentioned in the previous chapter. Van der Kuijp has suggested that this work dates to first half of the thirteenth century.²²⁴ It is not clear if the later Deu history, also mentioned above, was written by the same hand. The *Great History of the Victory Banner of the Teachings* is the only historical source I have been able to find that places Buddhagupta in the time of the emperor Tri

²²⁰ Hugh Richardson, "The sKar-chung Inscription," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 1 (1973), 13 and 15: *myes|khrI lde gtsug brtsan gyI ring la||brag mar gyI kwa cu dang |mchIng phur gtsug lag khang brtsigs ste||dkon mchog gsum gyI rten btsugs pa dang|*.

²²¹ Roberto Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (London: Serindia Publication, 1990), 5-11. Vitali cites several documents, including the well-known *Li yul gyi dgra bcom pas bstan pa* and other similar accounts, which portray Kongjo appealing to Tri Detsuktsen to grant asylum to a group of Khotanese Buddhist monks in the kingdom of Tibet. Kongjo also asks that seven monasteries be built to house them.

²²² Wangdu and Diemberger, 33-35.

²²³ Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese during the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 101 and 127.

Desongtsen (Khri Lde srong bstan), who seems to have reigned twice—initially as Tri Songdetsen’s successor from around 798-800, then again from 802-815, the gap being due to a brief seizure of the throne by his brother, Muruktsen (Mu rug btsan).²²⁵ The text simply states that during Tri Desongtsen’s reign, “the scholar Buddhagupta, having been invited [to Tibet], translated a great many Dharma [texts] of sacred mantra.”²²⁶ There is thus an indication, albeit a rather small one, of a Buddhagupta coming to Tibet in a slightly later period.

The legend of Buddhagupta’s stay at Mount Kailash is found in every source listed above with the exception of Nyangrel’s *Essence of Honey*, which mentioned Buddhagupta (with the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*) on only a single line. There are at least two works attributed to Buddhagupta that mention his presence in or near Himalayan region. The colophon to *The Liturgy for the Solitary Hero Practice of the Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* (*Rdo rje rnam par ’joms pa zhes bya ba ’i gzungs kyi sgrub thabs dpa’ bo gcig tu sgrub pa*), states that it was “composed by the great scholar Buddhaguhya in the Himālayas”²²⁷ and the colophon to *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* states that it was given by Buddhagupta at a place called Mangyül Tribap (*mang yul khri babs su*). Regarding the latter, Butön’s major treatise on yoga tantra, *Ship for Entering the Ocean of Yoga Tantra* (*Rnal ’byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor ’jug pa ’i gru zings*)²²⁸ does note that Buddhagupta had been living and

²²⁴ van der Kuijp, 484.

²²⁵ Dotson 2009, 143.

²²⁶ Lde’u jo sras 1987, 133: paṇḍita bu dha gu pta spyang drangs nas dam pa’i chos gsang sngags ches cher bsgyur ro.

²²⁷ *Vajravidāraṇā-nāma-dhāraṇīsādhana ekavīra-sādhana-nāma*, *Rdo rje rnam par ’joms pa zhes bya ba ’i gzungs kyi sgrub thabs dpa’ bo gcig tu sgrub pa*, Sde dge bstan ’gyur, D 2926, *Rgyud nu*, 329a-330a. See Schmidt, 142-148 for a critical edition and translation of this work. On f. 330a3, it states: *mkhas pa chen po sangs rgays gsang bas ri gang can du mdzad pa*.

²²⁸ Bu ston rin chen grub, *Rnal ’byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor ’jug pa ’i gru zings* in *Rinchen grub gsung ’bum*, vol. 11 [*da*] (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1965-1971), ff. 68a7-68b1. Earlier in the text, Butön mentions another figure named Buddhagupta who was a master of all fields of knowledge, who spent seven years in retreat in the forest, had a vision of Mañjuśrī, and received the spiritual accomplishment of the great seal. See f. 63a4-6. Butön does not seem to connect this figure to either *mahāyoga* or to the figure he

practicing in the areas of Ngari (Mnga' ris) and Mangyül.²²⁹ Nevertheless, there is no direct indication of Mount Kailash. The hagiographical accounts of Gyelsé Tukchoktsel and Pema Trinlé are specific regarding the area's features—they both portray Buddhagupta making the Vajradhātu Mandala magically appear on top of the sacred Lake Manasarovar (*mtsho ma pham*), and they both name the particular place he lives in as Jarok Dongchen (*bya rog gdong can*) or Raven-Headed,²³⁰ which is said to be a rookery on a golden cliff (*gser brag bya skyibs*). While I have not been able to find other Tibetan sources that discuss this location, a peak with a similar name—"Charok Tongchhen"—is represented on a 1947 map (see Figure 3) of Mount Kailash and its environs drawn by the Indian explorer and yogī Swāmi Praṇavānanda based on his journeys to the region; unfortunately, he does not elaborate on Charok Tongchhen elsewhere in the work.²³¹ Again, since we are in the realm of hagiography, it is of course impossible to verify whether Buddhagupta actually travelled to Mount Kailash. Regardless, it seems that this legend has become part of the mythology of the area, as Buddhagupta's stay is mentioned twice in an 1896 pilgrimage guidebook (*gnas bshad*) to Mount Kailash written by the Drikung Kagyü hierarch Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö (Bstan 'dzin chos kyi blo gros, 1868-1906).²³²

latter refers to as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*. It is not immediately clear to me who this figure is, so the matter requires further study.

²²⁹ Mount Kailash is in the far western region of Tibet, which is generally known as Ngari. Mangyül is in the southwestern part of Tibet on the modern day border of Nepal north of Kathmandu. According to Dungkar Rinpoché's encyclopedia, Mangyül is part of one of the three districts of Upper Ngari (Stod mnga' ris skor gsum). See Dungkar Blo bzang 'phrin las 2002, 1014 and 1594.

²³⁰ In Gyelsé Tukchoktsel's retelling, the demon that causes Buddhagupta to swoon appears as a large black bird (*bya nag po chen po*), perhaps a large raven.

²³¹ This is Map No. 3 found at the end of Swāmi Praṇavānanda, *History of Kailash Manasarovar with Maps* (Calcutta: S.P. League, Ltd., 1949). Some of the details are discussed on p. 125.

²³² The text is reproduced in Elena De Rossi Filibeck, *Two Tibetan Guidebooks to Ti se and La phyi* (Bonn: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, 1988), and the relevant passages are on pp. 11 and 21. In the second instance, Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö gives an abbreviated account of Buddhaguhya's stay at Mount Kailash, placing it during the reign of Tri Detsuktsen. He also mentions a place that seems to be near Raven-Headed called Raven Guesthouse (*bya rog mgron khang*) near the Drölmala Pass, which is close to the peak of Charok Tongchhen on Pranavādanda's map. Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö relates that the guest house received its name from a story about the Drukpa Kagyü master Götsangpa Gönpö Dorjé (Rgod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje, 1185-1258) making an

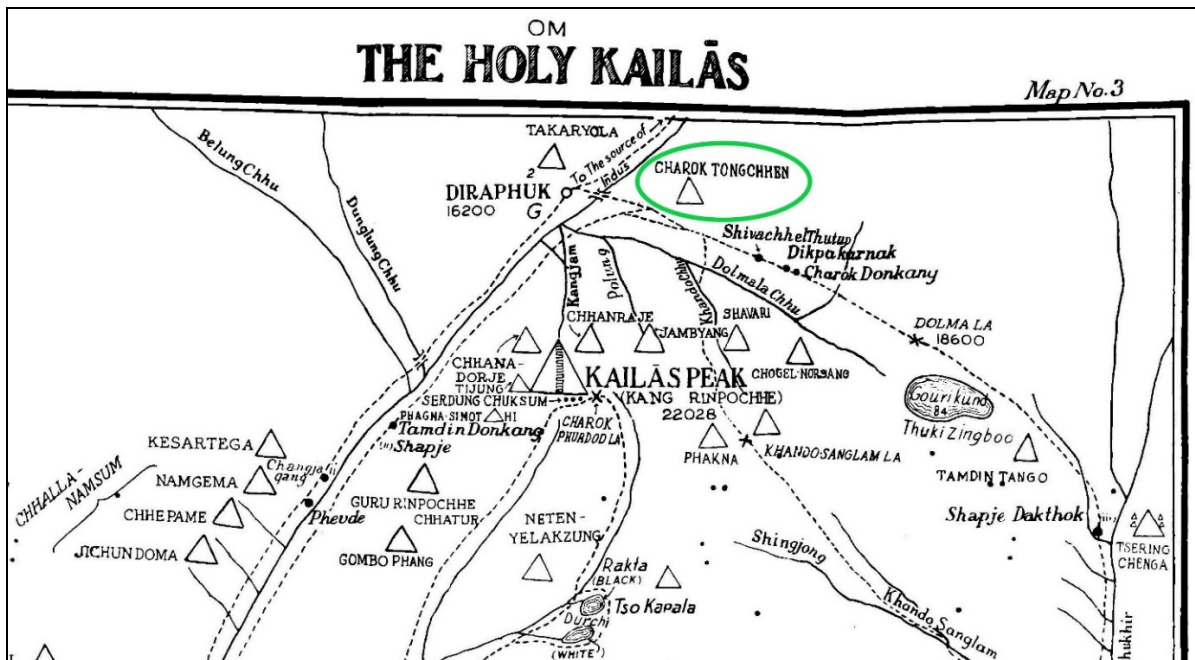


Figure 3: Raven-Headed—Buddhagupta’s Reputed Retreat near Mount Kailash. An excerpt from Map No. 3, “The Holy Kailās” from Swāmi Praṇavānanda’s History of Kailash Manasarovar. The peak, “Charok Tongchhen,” is circled in green.

These hagiographical accounts do not say much about Buddhagupta’s lineage. Both Khetsün Zangpo Rinpoché and NSTB state that Buddhagupta studied the *Māyājāla Tantras* under Vilāsavajra in Oḍḍiyāna. This seems to be a late addition to the narrative—none of the sources in the table above mention this detail, and it is unclear when this was added to the narrative. Both also mention that Buddhagupta studied with Buddhajñānapāda in the early part of the latter life, a detail that seems to be found for the first time in Gö Lotsāwa’s *Blue Annals*.²³³ It is also mentioned at the beginning of Tāranātha’s account. This connection seems somewhat difficult to accept since Davidson dates Buddhajñānapāda’s *floruit* to the early ninth century, well after Buddhagupta is thought to have had contact with the Tibetan

offering of a *torma* (*gtor ma*) ritual cake to the deity Mahākāla while in the area. In response, Mahākāla emanated as a raven, scooped up the ritual cake, and then dissolved into a boulder, producing an imprint of a bird. See Toni Huber and Tsepak Rigzin, “A Tibetan Guide for Pilgrimage to Ti-se (Mount Kailas) and mTsho Ma-pham (Lake Manasarovar),” *The Tibet Journal* 20, No. 1 (Spring 1995), 23. The Raven Guesthouse is also mentioned by Swāmi Pranavādanda on pp. 13 and 127, though by his time, it was in ruins. There is a form of Mahākāla called Raven Headed (also *Bya rog gdong can*); on this deity see Martin Willson and Martin Brauen, eds., *Deities of Tibetan Buddhism: The Zürich Paintings of the Icons Worthwhile to See* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 148-149 & 345.

emissaries.²³⁴ Pema Trinlé inserts Buddhagupta into the initiation lineage of the *Sutra Gathering the Intentions of All the Buddhas*, stating that Buddhagupta received the lineage from a figure called Genyen Lekpa (Dge bsnyen legs pa, a name that might imply the status of an *upāsaka* or layperson).²³⁵ This would seem to be a fabrication, since the *Sutra Gathering the Intentions of All the Buddhas* seems to have been partially translated from the obscure Burushaski language of the Gilgit-Baltistan region, while the rest of the text was probably composed in Tibetan.²³⁶ The twelfth century *Sun of the Heart* and the thirteenth century *Great Image of Vairocana*, both of which I mentioned in the previous section, list a figure called Devarāja as Buddhagupta’s Dzokchen teacher. Finally, none of the Tibetan historical sources mention Kumārasena, the teacher who Buddhagupta himself states he received the *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī*-related practices from.

The narrative of Buddhagupta’s interaction with Tibetan emissaries—or any mention of him whatsoever—is notably absent from several early Tibetan histories. As van der Kuijp has noted, the oldest extant Tibetan history (*chos ’byung*, literally “emergence of the Dharma”) is the Sakya master Sönam Tsemo’s (Bsod nams rtse mo, 1142-1182) *Introduction to the Dharma* (*Chos la ’jug pa’i sgo*), which dates to 1167-1168.²³⁷ The bulk of the text focuses on the history of Buddhism in India, and it is admittedly short on details regarding the development of Buddhism during the dynastic period; only the final six or so folios of the text are devoted to the subject. That said, it does mention the invitation to Tibet of Indian masters such as Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava, as well as Indian scholars such as

²³³ ’Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal 1987, 214-215.

²³⁴ Davidson 2002, 79 n. 69.

²³⁵ Pema Trinlé relates that Buddhagupta received the secret name Dorjé Sangdzok (Rdo rje gsang rdzogs) or Adamantine Perfected Secret from Genyen Lekpa.

²³⁶ Dalton 2016, 6-7.

²³⁷ Leonard W.J. van der Kuijp, “Tibetan Historiography” in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1996), 46-47.

Jinamitra who worked on the translation projects undertaken by the imperial government.²³⁸ There is, however, no mention of Buddhagupta. Buddhagupta is also absent from the 1283 history (or more precisely *rgyal rabs* or royal chronicle, as van der Kuijp observes) by Nelpa Paṇḍita Drakpa Mönlam Lodrö (Nel/Ne'u paṇḍi ta Grags pa smon lam blo gros, thirteenth century) called *Garland of Flowers: An Account of the Past* (*Sngon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba*). Nelpa Paṇḍita briefly mentions the story of Tri Detsuksten's discovery of the testmental letter of Songtsen Gampo. Tri Detsuksten's response was to erect four (instead of five) Buddhist temples, but there is no mention of dispatching emissaries to India, meeting Buddhagupta, or bringing back scriptures.²³⁹ Finally, the eleventh century manuscript of the *Testament of Wa*, an account of the dynastic period told by members of the influential Wa clan, also does not mention Buddhagupta. Though it does mention Tri Detsuktsen's construction of five temples, the reason for this seems to be his marriage to Kimsheng Kongjo.²⁴⁰

In sum, the available biographical sources do not agree about when exactly Buddhagupta was invited to the Tibetan court; some say it was during was during the reign of Tri Detsuktsen (reigned 715-c. 754) and others say it was during the reign of Tri Songdetsen (reigned 756-797, and 798-c. 800). Though much of the other details are mostly consistent, the Nyingma authors in particular connect the outer tantra commentator

²³⁸ See Bsod nams rtse mo, *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos* in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, vol. 5 [nga] (Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006), p. 672-684 for the section on Buddhism in Tibet. The translation activities of the Tibetan government and the invitations of Indian masters and scholars are mentioned on 673-674. Oddly, the text mentions an Indian scholar named Jñānasena (*rgya gar gyi mkhan po dznyā na se na*); this name is usually given as the Sanskrit name of the Tibetan translator Yeshé Dé (Ye shes sde).

²³⁹ Nel/Ne'u paṇḍi ta Grags pa smon lam blo gros, *Sngon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba*, in *Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe nying dpe skrun khang, 1990), pp. 19-20. The passage, which is the only mention of Tri Detsuktsen, is quite short: *khri de [=lde] gtsug brtan [=btsan] me ag tshom du grags ma des| mes srong btsan sgam po'i yi ge gzigs pa la brten nas| lha sa 'khar phug| brag mar 'bring bzang | 'chims phu na ral| mdas gong gi gtsug lag khang dang bzhi bzheng|*.

²⁴⁰ See Wangdu and Diemberger 2000, 33-34. The five temples named here are: 'Ching bu nam ra, Brag mar kwa chu, 'Gran bzang, 'Khar brag, and Smas gong.

Buddhagupta to the transmission of the *mahāyoga* tantras. That said, I have suggested that Tri Detsukten is unlikely to have been involved in or personally interested in the translation of Buddhist texts. Unfortunately, there is not much historical information to glean from these accounts. Although all of the stories mention a pilgrimage and retreat at mount Kailash, this is not necessarily verified from the colophons of the text attributed the two Buddhaguptas. However, they do seem to suggest that these figures were active in the southern and southwestern parts of Tibet among the Himalayas and in Mangyül. And finally, the earliest historical sources do not mention Buddhagupta in any way whatsoever.

Even Newer Light on an Old Friend, PT 849 Once More Reconsidered; or Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra as Devaputra?

Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra are considered by the Nyingma tradition to have been teacher and student. This relationship is particularly important as Vimalamitra is said to have received the initiations and teachings of the *Māyājāla* cycle, and especially the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, from Buddhagupta. Indeed, the Tengyur and the NKM record many *mahāyoga* commentaries attributed to Vimalamitra, and he is also listed as a translator on several *mahāyoga* scriptures in the NGB. Vimalamitra is also considered to have been essential to the introduction of Dzokchen to Tibet, culminating in what is known today as the *Heart Essence of Vima (bi ma snying thig)* cycle of instructions. Like Buddhagupta, Vimalamitra is a complex figure associated with multiple lineages, though there is much more textual data about him. This, however, poses something of a problem. For example, *The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions* mentions the story about a Kashmiri Abhidharma master called Vimalamitra who was vehemently opposed to the Mahāyāna. And there may even be a Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscript by this Vimalamitra. In Tibet, Vimalamitra has worn

many hats. The *Denkar Catalog* records two or possibly three commentaries attributed to Vimalamitra on the *Prajñāpāramitā* Sutras,²⁴¹ though nothing about tantra; the *Testament of Wa* mentions a figure called Nyak Vimala (Gnyags Bi ma la) who seems to be sympathetic to the adoption of Chinese Buddhism in Tibet;²⁴² and in early Nyingma histories we hear of the more familiar Vimalamitra trained in *mahāyoga* and Dzokchen. All of these inconsistencies are explored at length by Joel Gruber in his comprehensive study of Vimalamitra.²⁴³

As with Buddhagupta, Vimalamitra's hagiography²⁴⁴ as we know it today is the product of post-dynastic Nyingma works, mainly the anonymous twelfth century *Great History of the Heart Essence of Dzokchen* (*Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gyi lo rgyus chen mo*), and to a lesser extent Nyangrel Nyima Özer's (Nyang/Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1124-1192) famous *terma* revelation, *Copper Island Chronicle*.²⁴⁵ According to these sources, Vimalamitra was born in a western Indian town called Hastisthala. His mother's name was Ātmaprakāśā and his father's name was Sukhacakra, and some narratives describe a virgin birth. Vimalamitra began his studies in an unnamed monastery in Bodhgayā where he met his future travelling companion Jñānasūtra and became a distinguished scholar. At some point during his time in Bodhgayā, Vimalamitra is said to have met Buddhagupta with whom he studied *mahāyoga* (Gruber notes that this relationship is a late addition to the hagiographic narrative). Eventually Vimalamitra and Jñānasūtra both had a vision of Vajrasattva, who

²⁴¹ These are Ldk 519 and 529, which both mention Vimalamitra specifically, and possibly 499, whose title is similar to one in the Tengyur attributed to Vimalamitra.

²⁴² Wangdu and Diemberger, 76 and 80. Here, due to the outrage at the perceived mistreatment of the Chinese Buddhist position, Nyak Vimala crushes his genitals, while other Chinese partisans slash open their bodies and set their heads on fire.

²⁴³ See Gruber 2016, 57-90 and his helpful table on 103.

²⁴⁴ The following brief summary of Vimalamitra's life story is based on Gruber's concise "Vimalamitra," in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (March 2012) <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Vimalamitra/9985>. There are certain key discrepancies between the major hagiographies, which are explored in detail in his dissertation

²⁴⁵ For a study of this work and of Nyangrel's career as the first truly influential *tertön*, see Hirshberg 2016.

instructed them to go to study with Śrīsimha at the so-called Bodhi Tree Temple in China. Vimalamitra hastily packed his things and went immediately to China and studied the Dzokchen Heart Essence teachings with Śrīsimha²⁴⁶ for twenty years. Then he returned to India and persuaded Jñānasūtra to go to China himself. At this point, Gruber notes, the story takes an unexpected turn—Jñānasūtra begins to outshine Vimalamitra. For example, Jñānasūtra is said to have gotten to China faster because of his magical abilities; he also received a more profound instruction from Śrīsimha, even receiving Śrīsimha’s final pith instruction. Thereafter, Vimalamitra and Jñānasūtra are reunited at a charnel ground, and Vimalamitra receives all of the instructions from Jñānasūtra, who then achieves the rainbow body and disappears.²⁴⁷ In Tibet, meanwhile, Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo (Myang ting ’dzin bzang po) begins having visions of Vimalamitra, and so he is sent by Emperor Tri Songdetsen together with other emissaries to India to invite the master to Tibet. In India it is Buddhagupta who introduces the Tibetan emissaries to Vimalamitra! After arriving in Tibet, Tri Songdetsen has Vimalamitra confined out of fear of his spiritual power, but after performing some miracles, he participates in the consecration of Samyé. After spending

²⁴⁶ Gruber 2016, 138, speculates as to whether the name of Vimalamitra’s Dzokchen guru in China, Śrīsimha, might have been inspired by that of the Indian tantic master Śubhakarasiṃha (637-735, known in Chinese as *Shanwuwei*, 善無畏) who resided in the Tang capital of Chang’an and was responsible for translating the MVT into Chinese. Both Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra composed commentaries on the MVT. On Śrīsimha, see Georgios T. Halkias, “Śrīsimha’s Ultimate Upadeśa Seven Nails that Strike the Essence of Awakening” in *Illuminating the Dharma: Buddhist Studies in Honour of Venerable Professor KL Dhammajoti*, ed. Toshiich Endo (Hong Kong: Centre for Buddhist Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 2021). Halkias notes that in the mind class lineage of Dzokchen outlined in the *Great Image of Vairocana*, Buddhagupta (i.e., *bhu ta kug ta*) appears as Śrīsimha’s teacher. This is also the case in Pema Trinlé’s recounting of the *Gathering of Intentions* lineage—Buddhagupta transmits the tantra to Śrīsimha.

²⁴⁷ The rainbow body (*ja’ lus*) is a phenomena that is said to take place at the end of the life of an accomplished Dzokchen practitioner. Recall Tāranātha’s remark that, although he did not achieve the supreme spiritual accomplishment (i.e., enlightenment) Buddhagupta’s body disappeared at the end of his life. Although his remark may have been intended as a slight, Tāranātha infact gave Buddhagupta the highest accomplishment of the Nyingma tradition!

thirteen years in Tibet and transmitting the Dzokchen teaching to the emperor and others, Vimalamitra departs for Mount Wutai²⁴⁸ in China, where he attains the rainbow body.

There are clear similarities between Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra in terms of their hagiographies. Some of these are due to the formulaic nature of the life stories of Indian Buddhist masters—they are often prodigious, they have visions of and receive prophecies from divine beings, they study with accomplished masters and perform magical feats. But there are some aspects that resonate clearly with other narratives: Tri Songdetsen’s fear of Vimalamitra’s powers and the latter’s subsequent quarantine are reminiscent of the emperor’s ambivalence toward Padmasambhava and the temporary detention of Śāntarakṣita upon his arrival to Tibet as described in texts like the *Testimony of Wa*. The relationship of Vimalamitra and Jñānasūtra, however, is notable because it is reminiscent of Tāranātha’s unflattering portrayal of Buddhagupta’s jealousy of Buddhaśānti’s spiritual accomplishments. There are also similar motifs, such as meditating at a sacred mountain far from India. And Vimalamitra’s name, like Buddhagupta’s, has even been variously misrepresented in Tibetan transliteration as well (e.g., as *Bye ma la mu tra*, *Bhi ma la mig kra*, etc.).

Much of this might seem purely coincidental if there were not such frequent confusion between Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra in Tibetan religious literature. This has already been noted by Joel Gruber who, though he does not provide specific examples, correctly points out that some texts attributed to one Vimalamitra in one canonical collection

²⁴⁸ Mount Wutai (Ri bo rtse lnga, 五台山) is a mountain in Shanxi, China that, since at least the Tang period, has been a pilgrimage site for Buddhists across Asia because it is considered to be the earthly dwelling place of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Visions of Mañjuśrī are a common motif in narratives of eminent Chinese and Japanese monastic pilgrims who visited the site. See Daniel Stevenson, “Visions of Mañjuśrī at Mount Wutai,” in *Religions of China in Practice*, ed. Donald Lopez Jr., 203-222 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). On the development of Tibetan Buddhist institutions in the environs of Mount Wutai during the Qing dynasty, see Gray Tuttle, “Tibetan Buddhism at Ri bo rtse lnga/Wutai shan in Modern Times,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 2 (August 2006): 1-35.

might be attributed to Buddhagupta in another.²⁴⁹ This is the case with one of the texts translated in this dissertation, *Brief Explanation of the Path of the Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*). In the NKM, this text is unequivocally attributed to Buddhagupta. But the Tengyur preserves a text titled *An Explanation of the Path of Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i lam bshad pa*, Q 4740) attributed to Vimalamitra, but this text is line for line the same as the *Brief Explanation of the Path of the Māyājāla* from the NKM! The same is true of the *Stages of Illumination of the Vajrasattva Māyājāla* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i 'od kyi rim pa*),²⁵⁰ In the Tengyur, it is attributed to Buddhagupta. The *Stages of Illumination—An Extended Liturgy of the Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul rgyas pa'i sgrub thabs 'od kyi rim pa*)²⁵¹ found in the NKM is attributed to Vimalamitra, and upon inspection, they are the same text. Another example which I explore further in chapter three, is a commentary titled *The Eye Commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra of Vajrasattva's Net of Illusion* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgyud dpal gsang ba'i snying po'i spyang 'grel*, Q 4756),²⁵² which in the Tengyur and the NKM is anonymous, but different Nyingma authors attribute it to either Buddhagupta or Vimalamitra.

To account for the origins of this confusion between Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra, I suggest we consider a text from Dunhuang, PT 894. This text was first studied by Joseph Hackin, who transcribed and translated it into French.²⁵³ PT 849 as a whole is a fascinating text; among other things, it contains a glossary of Buddhist, and particularly tantric,

²⁴⁹ See the section titled “Buddhaguhya and (as?) Vimalamitra” in Gruber, 133-139.

²⁵⁰ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i 'od kyi rim pa*, Pe cin bstan 'gyur, Q 4731, Rgyud 'grel bu, 440a-448b.

²⁵¹ Vimalamitra, *Sgyu 'phrul rgyas pa'i sgrub thabs 'od kyi rim pa*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 82 [zu], pp. 577-610 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999).

²⁵² *Vajrasattvamāyājālatantraśrīguhyagarbha-nāma-cakṣuṣṭikā*, *Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgyud dpal gsang ba'i snying po zhes bya ba'i spyang 'grel pa*, Pe cin bstan 'gyur, Q 4756, Rgyud 'grel mu, 26a-157a.

terminologies in Tibetan and Sanskrit (or perhaps middle Indo-Aryan). For example, it contains an attestation of the name *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, whose authenticity as a scripture of Indian provenance was disputed beginning in the late tenth century. In his essay “New Light on an Old Friend: P 849 Reconsidered,” Matthew Kapstein concludes that the Dunhuang text was probably composed in the last quarter of the tenth century and constitutes the Dharma notes of a Tibetan student named Dro Köchok Pel, whose name appears at the very end of the manuscript. Kapstein concludes that the final part of the text, translated below, is a summary of the career of Dro Köchok Pel’s teacher, a prince-yogī from India.²⁵⁴ A number of details in the text, however, are strikingly similar to those found in the late hagiographies of both Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra.²⁵⁵

The son of an Indian Dharma king, Devaputra,²⁵⁶ knew the Dharma on his own without having to study. He had attained the spiritual accomplishment of

²⁵³ Joseph Hackin, *Formulaire sanscrit-tibétain du Xe siècle*, Mission Pelliot en Asie Centrale, Série Petit in-Octavo, vol. 2. (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1924). On the passage translated below, see p. 36-37 of the Tibetan text, 26-27, 40, and 54-56 for the French translation and analysis.

²⁵⁴ Matthew Kapstein, “New Light on an Old Friend: P 849 Reconsidered,” in *Tibetan Buddhist Literature in Praxis*, eds. Ronald M. Davidson and Christian K. Wedemeyer (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 17 and 23. Kapstein provides a translation of the text that follows on p. 10-11.

²⁵⁵ PT 849: \$/ rgya gar chos kyi rgyal po 'i po 'i sras /de ba pu tra chos ni ma bslabs par rang shes // 'phag pa spyang ras gzig kyi dbang phyug kyi dngos sgrub ni brnyes //bod yul gshes te //bod kyi lha btsan po thams cad la //chos bshad cing dbang bskurs //gangs ti se la bsnen bsgrub zab mor bgyis // 'tsho ma 'phang la 'khrus brgyis nas //chos 'khor bsam yas su gdan gshags / bcom ldan 'das kyi ring lugs dang //dbas rgyal ba ye shes dang //mkhas btsun mang po gis //dge 'dun sde gnyis gis //mchod gnas cher mdzad //bang chen dang //rim mgro' bgyis nas //rgya yul du bskyal //rgya rje dang //rgya blon mang pos mchod gnas cher bgyis //ri bo rtsa lnga la // 'phags pa 'jam dpal gi zhal mthong //slar rgya gar yul du gshags pa 'i shul kar //sug cur gdan gshags //yul dpon dang //dge 'dun sde gnyis dang //rnal 'nyor 'phreng thogs gi sde dang //sug cu yon bdag thams cad kyis //mchod gnas cher bgyis //slobs dpon thug dges nas //theg pa chen po 'i chos bka rtsal //

\$ /glang gi lo dpyid sla ra ba 'i tsho nyi shu gsum gig dug la // 'bog rdo rje rgyal po dang //skya phud yang a dge dang //rnal 'byor slobs dpon sde la //rdo rje slobs //rdo rje rgyal po 'i dbang lung rdzigs par stsal //sngags dang phyag rgya man ngag gtan la phab pa //rdzogs //

\$ / 'bro dkon mchog dpal gis bris pa // //

²⁵⁶ It is entirely possible that Devaputra, which literally means “divine son” in Sanskrit, might not be the name of the prince but rather stands in apposition to the phrase “son of an Indian Dharma king.” This tale might thus be one of an anonymous prince-yogi who taught in Tibet and China. Sylvain Lévi has proposed that the name or title Devaputra may be a Sanskritization of the Chinese “Son of Heaven” (天子) via a Middle Persian intermediary. See Sylvain Lévi, “Devaputra,” *Journal Asiatique* 224 (Jan.-Mar. 1934): 1-21. The adoption of royal titles from China occurred in Tibet as well. Rolf A. Stein has argued that one of the epithets of the dynastic period Tibetan monarchs, 'phrul gyi lha or “holy and divine,” was based from an epithet for the Chinese emperors, sheng shen (聖神). See Rolf A. Stein, “‘Saint et Divin’, un titre tibétain et chinois des rois tibétains.” *Journal Asiatique* 269, no. 1 & 2 (1981): 274.

Avalokiteśvara. He went²⁵⁷ to Tibet and explained the Dharma to all of the divine emperors of Tibet²⁵⁸ and granted them tantric initiation. He practiced the profound rites of service and evocation²⁵⁹ at Mount Kailash and performed ablutions in Lake Manasarovar. He then went to the seat of Samyé Monastery. The Lord's Commissioner,²⁶⁰ Wé Gyelwa Yeshé, many learned and reverend people, and the two sections of the sangha greatly revered him. Having provided him with emissaries and attendants, he was escorted to China. The ruler of China and many of his ministers greatly revered him. At Mount Wutai, he beheld the face of Mañjuśrī. On his return journey to India, he travelled to the seat of Suzhou.²⁶¹ He was worshipped greatly by the local magistrate, the two sections of the sangha, a group of yogīns bearing rosaries, and all the patrons of Suzhou. With joy in his heart, the master preached the Dharma of the Mahāyāna.

In the year of the bull,²⁶² at midday on the twenty-third day of the first month of spring, he bestowed the initiation and scriptural transmission of the Vajra King²⁶³

²⁵⁷ Following Kapstein, I read instances of *gshags* thought this passage a *gshags*.

²⁵⁸ The phrase *bod kyi lha btsan po thams cad* might also mean “the divine emperor of Tibet and all [his subjects]”

²⁵⁹ Tibetan Buddhist deity yoga is generally divided into two stages, the generation stage (*utpattikrama*, *bskyed rim*) and perfection stage (*sampannakrama*, *rdzogs rim*). These two terms can refer either to discreet steps or stages within a single practice, or to describe categories of practices. Here, we are concerned with the former. In brief, during the generation stage, one generates the visualization of the deity beginning with a meditation emptiness, then gradually (or sometimes suddenly) imagining the deity appearing from a seed-syllable (*bījā*, *sa bon*). In the Nyingma tradition, the stages of service (*bsnyen*) and evocation (*sgrub*) are themselves successive stages of practice within the generation stage, each of which are further divided into intimate service (*nye bsnyen*) and great evocation (*sgrub chen*). These four stages often involve closer identification with the deity and subtler forms of meditative concentration. They are sometimes also related to different methods of visualization to be done during mantra recitation. On these, see Dharmachakra Translation Committee, trans., *Deity, Mantra, and Wisdom: Development Stage Meditation in Tibetan Buddhist Tantra* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2006), 56-67 and 134-138. In the *mahāyoga* tantras, these four stages are sometimes used euphemistically to refer to increasing levels of intimate physical contact with one's consort in the context of sexual yogas. More on this in succeeding chapters.

²⁶⁰ The *bcom ldan 'das kyi ring lugs* was a senior monastic official appointed by the Tibetan Emperor during the dynastic period. I have translated it here as Lord's Commissioner, with “Lord” referring to the Buddha (as *bcom ldan 'das*, the Tibetan translation for the Sanskrit epithet *bhagavat*). Michael Walter argues that the *ring lugs* element of the title, which typically means “tradition” or “long-standing,” implies that the *bcom ldan 'das kyi ring lugs* was seen as one who “helped maintain the contractual arrangement between the Btsan-pos and their spiritual ancestors, now become Bodhisattva lineages, overseeing the transfer of merit, etc., to the Btsan-pos and their families.” See Michael Walter, “The Significance of the Term *ring lugs*: Religion, Administration and the Sacral Presence of the Btsan-po,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 51, no. 3 (1998): 316. Kapstein notes that it may be the title of the Wé Gyelwa Yeshé mentioned in the text.

²⁶¹ Citing a 1912 article by Paul Pelliot, Hackin, p. 82, states the Tibetan name *Sukchu* (*Sug cu*) refers to a city called Suzhou (肅州) in northwestern China. Apparently, the Tibetan name for this city is an accurate rendering of the Tang period Chinese pronunciation of the name. Suzhou was one of the first major cities that traders from Central Asia would encounter if travelling via northern China. The name *sug cu* is also attested in PT 1088 and in Zhejiang Dunhuang Text 114; it seems to have been administered by the Tibetan military government in the greater Dunhuang region in the eighth to ninth centuries. See Cuilan Liu, “Buddhist Litigants in Public Court: A Case Study of Legal Practices in Tibetan-ruled Dunhuang (786–848),” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 139.1 (2019), 95-97 and Tsuguhito Takeuchi, “Formation and Transformation of Old Tibetan,” *Journal of Research Institute: Historical Development of the Tibetan Languages* 49 (2019), 8.

²⁶² Kapstein's dating of this text relies on comparing the probable tenth century dates for the year of the bull to a list of Tibetan monarchs elsewhere in PT 849. He suggests that the initiation described here took place in 977.

upon Bok Dorjé Gyelpo, Kya Püyang Agé, and a group of yogīs and masters. The mantras, *mudrās*, and pith instructions were completely explained.

Written by Dro Könchok Pel.

In this narrative, we hear of a yogī of royal descent, possibly named Devaputra who understands the Dharma without having studied, and is already accomplished in the practice of the deity Avalokiteśvara. Immediately, the text notes that he preached the Dharma and gave tantric initiations to all the emperors of Tibet. Although it does not say explicitly, this may be the reason for his journey north and his visit to the Mount Kailash region. Devaputra then visits Samyé Monastery and is honored there by the Tibetan clergy. He then sets out for China with an entourage of Tibetan servants, where he meets with the Chinese imperial court. In China, he visits Mount Wutai, where he has a vision of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. On his way back to India, the yogī stops in Suzhou where again he is greatly honored. Finally, Devaputra gives tantric transmission to a group of disciples, including Bok Dorjé Gyelpo, Kya Püyang Agé, and perhaps the author of the narrative, Dro Köchok Pel.

I propose that PT 849 might have served as inspiration for the hagiographies of both Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra. The details of the earlier part of Devaputra’s story more closely resemble the hagiography of Buddhagupta: both figures are of royal birth; Devaputra’s accomplishment of Avalokiteśvara recalls Buddhagupta’s vision of the deity at Mount Potala; the practice of meditation at Mount Kailash and Lake Manasarovar; even Devaputra’s vision of Mañjuśrī resonates with Buddhagupta’s own experiences. The other

²⁶³ “Vajra King” or Dorjé Gyelpo (*rdo rje rgyal po*) seem to be an early Tibetan synonym for the vajra master (*rdo rje slob dpon*), a preceptor who is qualified to give tantric initiations. Karmay 2009b, 91-92 notes the occurrence of the term in PT 840, which refers to buying tantric initiation from a *rdo rje rgyal po* without the proper prerequisites. Note that the phrase *rdo rje slob* is crossed out in PT 849 just before the occurrence of the term *rdo rje rgyal po*. In the yoga tantric system, there is indeed an initiation called the vajra master initiation (*rdo rje slob dpon gyi dbang*). More interesting perhaps, chapter ten of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* describes the initiation of the vajra king (*rdo rje rgyal po’i dbang*) as one of the tantra’s eighteen initiation rites. See Garson, 105 and 334. The *niruttarayoga* tantras of the late tenth century, belonging to the later propagation of the Dharma in Tibet also know of a vajra master initiation. See Tsele Natsok Rangdröl, *Empowerment and the Path of Liberation*, Erik Pema Kunsang, trans. (Kathmandu: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1993), 18-20.

details are closer to Vimalamitra's: his presence at Samyé, his bestowing initiations on the Tibetan emperors, travelling to China, and making a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai. It would not be unusual for PT 849, or at least the mythemes drawn from it, to serve as the basis or inspiration for a hagiographic narrative. For example, Jacob Dalton has demonstrated that the story about an unnamed tantric practitioner taming demons using the deity Vajrapāṇi from IOL Tib J 644 eventually became a part of Padmasambhava's standard hagiography, which depicts the master taming demons at Asura Cave in Nepal with the even more fearsome deity, Vajrakīla.²⁶⁴ The question remains as to how the narrative from PT 849 made their way into the formal biographies. I speculate that the narrative in PT 849 is a recording of a story that was originally disseminated orally, and perhaps continued to be passed on orally such that it could have easily been retold. On the other hand, it is also possible that old manuscripts like PT 849 were rediscovered and appropriated by later authors. This seems to have been the case with for the tertön or treasure revealer Nyangral Nyima Özer, whose treasure revelations were "compiled and from rediscovered folios of old manuscripts."²⁶⁵

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown that the available biographical materials do not agree on the period of Buddhagupta's interaction. I have suggested that Nyingma authors in particular were interested in merging the outer tantra and the *mahāyoga* commentators into a single figure, variously referred to as *sangs rgyas gsang ba* or *Buddhaguhya* in their historical and hagiographical writings. I have shown that there little historical information to be taken from these writings, though I suggest that there was likely not much activity in Tibet around the

²⁶⁴ Jacob Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Study of IOL Tib J 644 and Pelliot tibétain 307," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2004): 307.

translation and transmission of texts from Indian during in the early to mid-eighth century. Finally, I have proposed that similarities between the biographies of both Buddhagupta and his purported student Vimalamitra are due to them being drawn from a single source, the narrative of the prince-yogī Devaputra as related in the Dunhuang manuscript PT 849.

In the end, perhaps the similarities between Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra go even further. The hagiographies of both Vimalamitra and Buddhagupta emerge in the twelfth to the fifteenth century, a crucial time for development of Nyingma sectarian identity. Gruber ultimately concludes that there seem to have been two Vimalamitras—a “historical Vimalamitra,” an Indian scholar present in Tibet in a minor role during the dynastic period as attested in early sources, and the “Vimalamitra of Dzokchen lore” who undergoes an “apotheosis” in Nyingma histories.²⁶⁶ Gruber also notes that “there is not a modicum of evidence from the seventh to the mid-ninth century to support the claim that Vimalamitra composed or translated a single ‘tantric’ work.” By contrast, he notes that “Buddhaguhya was the more influential tantric exegete.”²⁶⁷ In light of this, we might say that there are also multiple Buddhaguptas. As I have demonstrated above, there seems to have been at two historical Buddhaguptas—the outer tantra commentator and the *mahāyoga* commentator. There is then the third Buddhagupta of lore, who is later construed by Nyingma and other histories as a single figure, who is a combination of the two historical ones, and who has more often been known as Buddhaguhya.

²⁶⁵ Hirshber 2016, 135. Hirshberg cites the work of Cantwell and Meyer on the Vajrakīla-related texts from Dunhuang.

²⁶⁶ Gruber 2016, 7-8. This still leaves open the question of when the *mahāyoga* treatises attributed to him were composed.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 133 and 139.

Chapter III. “The Trailblazer of the Māyājāla”: Buddhagupta and Mahāyoga



Figure 4: An image of Buddhagupta from the third folio of the NKM recension of the Blazing Palace (*Spar khab*) commentary attributed to Vilāsavajra. The caption below the image reads, “Buddhagupta (*sangs rgyas gsang ba*), Trailblazer of the *Māyājāla*”

In chapters one and two, I advanced two main arguments: 1) that the name of the influential tantric master(s) often known as Buddhaguhya is in fact Buddhagupta and 2) that the author named Buddhagupta, whose works commenting on the outer tantras are recorded in the dynastic *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalogs is *not* the same figure as the *mahāyoga* master Buddhagupta well-known in the Nyingma tradition from its earliest days. This chapter further develops this second argument, which in turn requires delving into the hitherto little-studied *mahāyoga* commentaries of the latter Buddhagupta, and examining the Nyingma understanding of *mahāyoga* with an eye toward understanding Buddhupta’s role in its development.

Among certain Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholars between the eight to twelfth-centuries, the term *mahāyoga* (*rnal ’byor chen po*) was used to describe the highest class of tantra on the “cutting edge of Buddhist ritual development.”²⁶⁸ The category was devised in

²⁶⁸ Dalton 2016, 34.

response to a need to distinguish certain emergent tantras from the older tantras and from the category of yoga tantra. While yoga tantras such as the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha Tantra* (STTS) provided elaborate rituals and visionary meditations for attaining buddhahood, newer tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (GT)²⁶⁹ tended “to focus more on what one does after becoming that buddha.”²⁷⁰ As such, the *mahāyoga* tantras emphasize a view and approach beyond dualistic conceptions such as good and evil or pure and impure. It thus become possible to incorporate into one’s practice transgressive behaviors that defy social and religious norms: ritualized sexual union, the consumption of taboo substances like meat and alcohol, and the use of magic to kill enemies.

Eventually in both the Nyingma and Sarma doxographies, *mahāyoga* as a category of tantra was gradually downplayed or phased out. With the emergence of tantras such as the *Gathering of Intentions* and later the development of Dzokchen, in the Nyingma School, *mahāyoga* was eventually surpassed by the categories of anuyoga and atiyoga. And although late Indian tantric masters who were influential in the Sarma schools such as Atiśa and Śraddhākaravarma incorporated the category of *mahāyoga* into their doxographical schemes, they placed a new category in the top spot—*niruttarayoga* (*rnal ’byor bla na med pa*).²⁷¹ Nevertheless, in the Nyingma tradition, the chief *mahāyoga* tantra—the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*—came to be understood as the paragon of tantra as such; the GT becomes the single most widely-commented upon tantra in Nyingma tradition. The Nyingma Gyübum (NGB) or Nyingma Tantra Collection has an entire section devoted to the *mahāyoga* tantras, with a set of thirty four tantras making up the core of the *mahāyoga* corpus. As we shall see, the

²⁶⁹ *Śrī-guhya-garbha-tattva-viniścaya, Dpal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nam par nges pa, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 832, Rnying rgyud kha, 110b-132a.*

²⁷⁰ Dalton 2016, 34.

²⁷¹ Jacob P. Dalton, “A Crisis of Doxography: How Tibetans Organized Tantra During the 8th-12th Century,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 155.

mahāyoga tantras with their violent imagery and sexual content, were subject to royal censorship and prohibition during the early periods of Tibetan history described above.

The Eighteen Mahāyoga Tantras and the Māyājāla Tantras

Mahāyoga commentators in the Nyingma traditions often speak of a core collection of eighteen *mahāyoga* tantras (*ma hā yo ga 'i rgyud sde bco brgyad*), of which the root is said to be the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. As a subsidiary to these, there are the lists of eight *Māyājāla* tantras (*sgyu 'phrul sde brgyad*) and four *Māyājāla* Tantras (*sgyu 'phul sde bzhi*)—these have sometimes been referred to in Western scholarship as the *Māyājāla* cycle of series of tantras.

As with many canons of the religious texts, including the Tibetan Buddhist Kangyur(s) and Tengyur(s), the list of texts that constitute the collection of eighteen *mahāyoga* tantras and their organization are not fixed or standardized; indeed some of them seem to be non-extant. And though there are some general tendencies, Nyingma commentators present different lists of *mahāyoga* tantras. These lists and their discrepancies have been extensively studied by Gyurme Dorje, Nathaniel Garson, and Orna Almogi. Almogi in particular has suggested that the notion of a standard Nyingma *mahāyoga* canon is simply that—a “mere notion.”²⁷² The purpose of this section is to summarize these findings as an introduction to the scope and development of the *mahāyoga* scriptures.

Generally speaking, there are two major lists of the eighteen *mahāyoga* tantras, as proposed by Nathaniel Garson: one which is attributed to the eleventh-century commentators associated with the Zur clan, and one articulated by Longchenpa in his *Thunder of the Divine Voice—On the General Meaning of Mantra* (*Sngags kyi spyi don tshangs dbyangs 'brug*

sgra). This divergence comes out of two schools of *mahāyoga* exegesis known among Nyingma commentators as the Zur tradition (*Zur lugs*) and the Long tradition (*Klong lugs*); since much of their differences boil down to their interpretation of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, I shall explore these traditions in further detail in the next chapter. Since the early masters of the Zur tradition were more concerned with “promulgating oral traditions” instead of producing commentaries, there are no sources from the period for their list of the eighteen tantras.²⁷³ They must instead be gleaned from the works of later authors such as the *Pool of White Lotus: Elegant and Concise Advice on the Eight Chariots of the Practice Lineages* (*Sgrub brgyud shing rta brgyad kyi byung ba brjod pa'i gtam mdor bdsdus legs bshad padma dkar po'i rdzing bu*) by Zhechen Gyeltsab Pema Namgyal (Zhe chen rgyal tshab padma rnam rgyal, 1871-1926) and the NSTB by Dūdjom Rinpoché.²⁷⁴ The lists are different from each other not only in the texts that they present but also in the way the texts are categorized.²⁷⁵

Table 4: Comparison of the Zur and Longchenpa Lists of the Eighteen Mahāyoga Tantras

Zur Categories	Zur List Titles	Lonchenpa Categories ²⁷⁶	Longchenpa List Titles
Five ²⁷⁷ basis	1. <i>Sarvabuddhasamayoga</i> ²⁷⁸	Enlightened	1. <i>Rutting Elephant</i> ²⁷⁹

²⁷² Orna Almogi, “The Eighteen Mahāyoga Tantric Cycles: A Real Canon of the Mere Notion of One?,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* 30 (October 2014): 47.

²⁷³ Garson, 659.

²⁷⁴ Dorje 1987, 35. See also NSTB, 283.

²⁷⁵ The following table is based on the two lists and their accompanying footnotes presented in Garson, 260-264. Garson provides bibliographic information for each tantra as found in the Tsamdrak (Mtshams brag) and Tingkyé (Gting skyes) editions of the NGB, as well as the D Kangyur. For the sake of brevity, I will provide the references for each from the Tingkyé edition (which is the most easily searchable on BRDC). For Longchenpa’s list, I also rely on in Dan Martin’s “Illusion Web—Locating the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in Buddhist Intellectual History,” in *Silver on Lapis: Tibetan Literary Culture and History*, ed. Christopher I. Beckwith (Bloomington: The Tibet Society, 1987), 179-182.

²⁷⁶ Longchenpa’s five categories are named after the fivefold effect states, namely enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities and activities. He then divides the eighteen tantras by three so that there are three in each category. He then gives sub-designations to the members of each triad according to the scheme of enlightened body, speech, and mind. Thus the first text in the list is designated as the enlightened body of enlightened body tantra, and so on.

²⁷⁷ Texts one to five are referred to in this system as the tantras of enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities.

²⁷⁸ *Sku’i rgyud sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*. See *Rnying ma rgyud ’bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pa, pp. 167-273 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rinpoche, 1975).

and root tantras (<i>gzhi dang rtsa bar gyur pa'i rgyud lnga</i>)	2. Secret Moon Drop ²⁸⁰	form (<i>sku</i>) tantras	2. <i>Elephant Entering Water</i> ²⁸¹
	3. Guhyasamāja Tantra ²⁸²		3. Sarvabuddhasamayoga
	4. Śrī Paramādyā Tantra ²⁸³	Enlightened speech (<i>gsung</i>) tantras	4. Heaped Mountain
	5. <i>Garland of Activities</i> ²⁸⁴		5. <i>Great Lotus Lord</i> ²⁸⁵
6. <i>Play of Heruka Tantra</i> ²⁸⁶	6. Secret Moon Drop		
Five tantras of play that teach the practice of accomplishment (<i>sgrub pa lag len tu bstan pa rol pa rgyud sde lnga</i>)	7. <i>Play of the Supreme Steed Tantra</i> ²⁸⁷	Enlightened mind (<i>thug</i>) tantra	7. <i>Gathering at the Peak</i> ²⁸⁸
	8. <i>Play of Compassion Tantra</i> ²⁸⁹		8. <i>Proliferation from the One</i> ²⁹⁰
	9. <i>Play of Nectar Tantra</i> ²⁹¹		9. Guhyasamāja Tantra
	10. <i>Twelve Pegs</i> ²⁹²	Enlightened qualities (<i>yon tan</i>) tantras	10. <i>Blazing Lamp</i> ²⁹³
Five tantras that serves as the branches of activity (<i>spyod pa yan lag tu 'gro ba'i rgyu sde lnga</i>)	11. Heaped Mountain ²⁹⁴	Enlightened qualities (<i>yon tan</i>) tantras	11. <i>One Hundred Thousand Nectar-Samayās</i> ²⁹⁵
	12. <i>Lightning of Gnosis</i> ²⁹⁶		12. Śrī Paramādyā Tantra
	13. Arrangement of Samayas ²⁹⁷	Enlightened activities	13. <i>Glorious White Garland</i> ²⁹⁸

²⁷⁹ *Sku'i rgyud glang po rab 'bog*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. dza, pp. 199-288. (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸⁰ *Gsung gi rgyud zla gsang thig le*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pa, pp. 375-543. (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸¹ *Glang po chur 'jug*—unidentified.

²⁸² *Thugs kyi rgyud gsang ba 'dus pa*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsa, pp. 1-177. (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸³ *Yon tan gyi rgyud dpal mchog dang po*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsa, pp. 177-470 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸⁴ *'Phrin las kyi rgyud las kyi phreng ba*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsa, pp. 470-627 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸⁵ *Padma dbang chen*—unidentified.

²⁸⁶ *He ru ka'i rol pa'i rgyud*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsha, pp. 1-184 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸⁷ *Rta mchog rol pa'i rgyud*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsha, pp. 184-315 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁸⁸ *Rtse mo 'dus pa*—unidentified.

²⁸⁹ *Snying rje rol pa'i rgyud*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsha, pp. 315-449 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁹⁰ *Gcig las 'phros pa*—unidentified.

²⁹¹ *Bdud rtsis rol pa'i rgyud*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tsha, p. 449-567 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁹² *Phur pa bcu gnyis*. This is a tantra associated with the tantric meditational deity Vajrakīla. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. dza, pp. 1-199 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁹³ *Sgron me 'bar ba*—unidentified.

²⁹⁴ *Ri bo brtsegs pa*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. cha, pp. 323-349 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁹⁵ *Bdud rtsi samaya 'bum sde*—unidentified.

²⁹⁶ *Ye shes rngam glog*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. na, pp. 276-438 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

²⁹⁷ *Dam tshig bkod pa*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. na, pp. 560-626 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

	14. <i>Single-Pointed Samādhi</i> ²⁹⁹	('phrin las) tantras	14. <i>Tantric Scripture of the Mamos</i> ³⁰⁰
	15. <i>Rutting Elephant</i> ³⁰¹		15. <i>One Hundred Thousand Vidyotamala</i> ³⁰²
Two tantras to supplement what was left out (<i>ma tshang kha skong ba'i rgyud gnyis</i>)	16. <i>Magical Emanation Net of Vairocana</i> ³⁰³	General (<i>spyi</i>) tantras	16. <i>Lasso of Methods</i>
	17. <i>Lasso of Methods</i> ³⁰⁴		17. <i>Arrangement of Samayas</i>
The root tantra (<i>rtsa rgyud</i>)	18. <i>Guhyagarbha Tantra</i> ³⁰⁵		18. <i>Secret Māyājāla</i> ³⁰⁶

Table 4 compares the Zur tradition's list and Longchenpa's list. They hold a total of nine texts in common; the titles of these texts have been rendered in bold in the table. The Zur list has five categories, which Garson suggests is intended to “encode in its structure a historical progression” culminating in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Longchenpa's list, on the other hand, divides the eighteen tantras into five groups of three, but he substitutes several texts from the Zur list with “more obscure” ones, several of which remain unidentified.³⁰⁷

However, Tibetan commentators and historians have been idiosyncratic in their *mahāyoga* tantra lists. Orna Almogi points out that the Tibetan sources fall into two groups generally aligning with what we have referred to above as the Zur list and the Longchenpa

²⁹⁸ *Dpal phreng dang po*—unidentified.

²⁹⁹ *Ting 'dzin rtse gcig*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. nya, pp. 558-569 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³⁰⁰ *Ma mo rgyud lung*. Garson identifies this as *Yum gzungs ma'i dngos grub chen po'i rgyud*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. a, pp. 1-124. (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975). However, the title of the next text in the NGB is closer to the name from the Zur list: *Ma mo thams cad kyi las rgyud lung*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. a, pp. 125-161 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³⁰¹ *Glang chen rab 'bog*. See the note *supra*.

³⁰² *Bi dyo ta ma la 'bum sde*—unidentified.

³⁰³ *Rnam snang sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. dza, pp. 289-395 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³⁰⁴ *Thabs kyi zhags pa*. See *Glang chen rab 'bog*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. dza, pp. 395-422 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³⁰⁵ *Gsang ba snying po*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 2-61 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975). As Garson notes, there are three versions of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. These will be discussed in more detail below and in the next chapter.

³⁰⁶ *Gsang ba sgyu 'phrul*. On p. 264, Garson concludes that this refers to the *GT*.

³⁰⁷ Garson 260 and 262.

list, but there is much variation between individual authors within each group. Moreover, she “consider[s] the list[s] to be referring to eighteen Tantric cycles, each containing numerous *tantras*, and not to eighteen single tantras.”³⁰⁸ In her study of the matter, Almogi examines many Tibetan works ranging from the thirteenth century *Deu’s History (Lde’u chos ’byung)* to the eighteenth century *Narrative History of the Collection of Ancient Translation Tantras (Snga ’gyur rgyud ’bum rtogs brjod)* by the famous *tertön* or treasure revealer Jikmé Lingpa (’Jigs med gling pa, 1730-1798). Almogi also provides a helpful and exhaustive list of the various *mahāyoga* tantra lists; since it is quite extensive, there is not room to reproduce and compare them all here. One example to note is Sangyé Lingpa’s fourteenth century *Supportive Teachings on the Blazing Palace Commentary (Rgyab chos spar khab)*. Sangyé Lingpa presents a list of eighteen *categories* of *mahāyoga* tantras, with each category consisting of several tantras. For example, in his third category, “Enlightened mind tantras” (*thugs kyi rgyud*) he lists the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* as the root tantras together with eight other related tantras. This scheme is also followed with some variations by Nyingma commentators such as Khyenrab Gyatso (Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, sixteenth century) and Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyeltsen.³⁰⁹

While these lists include several classically Nyingma *mahāyoga* tantras such as the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and the *Tantra of the Twelve Pegs*, which is related to the deity Vajrakīla, they also include several that are normally associated with the post-dynastic, later dissemination (*phyi dar*) period of translation. These include the *Śrīparamādya Tantra*, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, and the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga Tantra*.³¹⁰ According to the colophons of the Kangyur recensions, these three tantras were translated by Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen

³⁰⁸ Almogi 2014, 1 n. 2.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 79-88.

³¹⁰ These correspond to D 487, D 442, and D 8 respectively.

bzang po, 958-1055) and Śraddhākaravarman in the case of the former two, and by Lha Rinpoché³¹¹ in the case of the latter. The NGB claims to contain earlier translations of these texts apparently completed during the dynastic period; in fact, Buddhagupta (under the same *sangs rgyas gsang ba*) is listed as the Indian scholar who assisted in translating the NGB recensions of the *Śrīparamādyā Tantra* and the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*! This is surprising since neither of the Buddhaguptas are typically associated with the transmission of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.³¹² However, it is clear from his comments in the *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi* that the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta at least knew of a text called the *Śrīparamādyā*, though he mentions it together with the STTS as an exemplar of the yoga tantra class.³¹³ The inner tantra commentator Buddhagupta was primarily concerned with the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and its related tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle

The *Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul drwa/drwa ba*) or *Net of Magical Emanation* tantras, sometimes referred to as the *Māyājāla* cycle, is a set of eight tantras that are said to have been extracted by the tantric siddha Kukurāja from a much larger ur-tantra of one hundred thousand verses, which he and other tantric adepts received directly from the wrathful bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. The *Guhyagarbha Tantra* also serves as the root tantra of the *Māyājāla* cycle. However, as with the eighteen *mahāyoga* tantras, there are different lists of *Māyājāla* tantras. Once again, the lists of *Māyājāla* tantras differ according to the Zur and

³¹¹ Samten Karmay considers that title *lha* in this figure's name might indicate a connection to the royal family of Gugé (recall that King Yeshé Ö is often known as Lha Lama, *Lha Bla ma*). Karmay notes that aside from prince Zhiwa Ö, there was another translator in the royal family called Lha Yeshé Gyeltsen (Lha Ye shes rgyal mtshan), but it remains uncertain whether either of these two figures are the Lha Rinpoche mentioned in the colophon of the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga* and other translations in the Kangyur and Tengyur. See Samten Karmay, "An Open Letter by Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od," in *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet*, (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Print, 2009), 17 n.2.

³¹² I tentatively suggest that the compilers of the NGB listed Buddhagupta as a translator of their recension of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* to make it seem older, thereby creating distance between their recension of the tantra and the versions known to Sarma schools.

Longchenpa traditions. The Zur list is a straightforward set of eight tantras; according to Nyingma scholar Samdrup Dorjé (Bsam grub rdo rje, 1295-1376) in his *Tent of Blazing Jewels* (*Rin po che 'bar ba 'i gur*) these are:³¹⁴

1. *Guhyagarbha Tantra*
2. *Māyājāla of the Goddess*³¹⁵
3. *Eight-Chapter Māyājāla*³¹⁶
4. *Forty-Chapter Māyājāla*³¹⁷
5. *Unsurpassed Māyājāla*³¹⁸
6. *Eighty-Chapter Māyājāla*³¹⁹
7. *Māyājāla of Mañjuśrī*³²⁰
8. *Māyājāla Appendix*³²¹

This list agrees for the most part with lists found in the works of other commentators such as Sangyé Lingpa and Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa, with slight variations. As Garson notes, Longchenpa's list of *Māyājāla* tantras actually “creates another level of division of the [*Māyājāla*] tantras that subsumes the list of eight within it.”³²² Longchenpa presents a list of four sets of *Māyājāla* tantras (*sgyu 'phrul sde bzhi*) that includes two text from the Zur list, plus one new text:

³¹³ See Hodge 2005, 449.

³¹⁴ See Garson 264-266. As before, Garson provides bibliographic information for each tantra as found in the Tsamdrak and Tingkyé editions of the NGB. I will again provide only the Tingkyé information for each text.

³¹⁵ *Lha mo sgyu 'phrul*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. ba, pp. 1-96 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³¹⁶ *Sgyu 'phrul brgyad pa*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 549-571 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³¹⁷ *Sgyu 'phrul bzhi bcu pa*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 317-415. (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975). The tantra actually consists of forty-six chapters rather than forty.

³¹⁸ *Sgyu 'phrul bla ma*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 572-638 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³¹⁹ *Sgyu 'phrul brgyad bcu pa*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 67-317 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975). This tantra in fact consists of eighty-two chapters, not eighty.

³²⁰ *'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drwa ba chen po*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. ba, pp. 96-118 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975). This is the famed *Litany of the Manjuśrī's Names* (*Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṅgīti*, *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod*).

³²¹ *Sgyu 'phrul le lag*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 415-549 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³²² Garson, 266. Much of the discussion that follows is a distillation of Garson 266-210.

1. *Māyājāla of Vajrasattva*
2. *Māyājāla of Vairocana*
3. *Māyājāla of the Goddess*
4. *Māyājāla of Mañjuśrī*

Then, under the category of *Māyājāla of Vajrasattva* (*Rdo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*), Longchenpa lists nine subsidiary tantras similar to the Zur list, though he replaces the *Māyājāla of the Goddess* and the *Māyājāla of Mañjuśrī* with three explanatory tantras (*bshad rgyud*) related to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*:

1. *Guhyagarbha Tantra*
2. *Forty-Chapter Māyājāla*
3. *Eight-Chapter Māyājāla*
4. *Unsurpassed Māyājāla*
5. *Māyājāla Appendix*
6. *Eighty-Chapter Māyājāla*
7. *Māyājāla Vajra Mirror* (*Sgyu 'phrul rdo rje me long*)
8. *Ocean of Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul rgya mtsho*)
9. *All-Surpassing Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul thal ba*)

Finally, the Nyingma commentarial tradition provides a list of four explanatory tantras, three of which, as I have already noted, come at the end of Longchenpa's list. The four explanatory tantras are further divided according to the two paths of *mahāyoga* discussed above—the path of liberation and the path of method. Each category is then further divided into gradual (*rim gyis pa*) and sudden (*cig car ba*):

1. *Essence of Gnosis*³²³—Gradual path of liberation
2. *Mirror of Vajrasattva*³²⁴—Sudden path of liberation
3. *Vajra Ocean*³²⁵—Gradual path of methods
4. *All-Surpassing Māyājāla*³²⁶—Sudden path of methods

³²³ *Ye shes snying po*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. ba, pp. 310-338 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³²⁴ *Rdo rje sems dpa' me long gi rgyud*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. tha, pp. 530-578 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³²⁵ *Rdo rje rgya mtsho*. See *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. ba, pp. 338-420 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

³²⁶ See *Sgyu 'phrul thal ba'i rgyud chen po*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. ba, pp. 420-538 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

These thirty-four texts are the basic texts of the Nyingma *mahāyoga* corpus. Unfortunately, the majority these have yet to be studied or translated, so there is little to be said regarding the history of these scriptures or their relationship to each other. Aside from these, the *mahāyoga* section of the NGB also contains many other tantras, known collectively as the means of accomplishment class (*sgrub thabs sde*). They are further divided into eight categories according to the texts' main deity or type of deity: : 1) Mañjuśrī-Yamāntaka ('Jam dpal gzhin rje gshad), 2) Hayagrīva (Rta mgrin), 3) Heruka (He ru ka or Yang dag thugs), 4) Vajrāmṛta ('Chi med bdud rtsi), 5) Vajrakīla (Rdo rje phur pa), 6) Mātṛkā (Ma mo), 7) Lokastotrapūja (Mchod bstod), and 8) Vajramantrabhīru (Drags sngags).³²⁷ This set of eight transmissions are sometime referred to in the later tradition as the kagyé (*bka' brgyad*) or Eight Kama deities.³²⁸ In fact, the kagyé deities become central to the early terma treasure revelations of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, particularly in the *Gathering of All Sugatas* cycle (*Bde gshes thams cad 'dus pa*) of Nyangrel Nyima Özer, and especially the *Complete Perfection of the Eight Secret Pronouncements* cycle of Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug, 1124-1192), who seems to have coined the term kagyé.

Some scholars have suggested that the notion of an eighteen tantra *mahāyoga* canon may have had its roots in India. As Steven Weinberger and others have noted, the Chinese Buddhist tradition preserves a commentary by the eighth century Indian Tantric master Amoghavajra (705-774) titled *Index of the Vajraśekhara Sutra Yoga in Eighteen Sections* (*Jingangding jing yuqie shibahui zhigui*, 金剛頂經瑜伽十八会指歸)³²⁹ which speaks of a

³²⁷ This list based on Garson, 270-271.

³²⁸ Kagyé (*bka' rgyad*) is often translated as Eight Pronouncements. Since the deities of the kagyé tradition ultimately come from the Nyingma *Kama*, I suggest that this is what the *ka* element of kagyé refers to.

³²⁹ For a complete study and translation of this text, see Rolf W. Giebel, "The Chin-kang-ting ching yü-ch'ieh shih-pa-hui chih-kuei: An Annotated Translation," *Journal of the Naritasan Institute for Buddhist Studies* 18 (March 1995): 107-202.

set of eighteen tantras called the Vajrasēkhara cycle, the principle text of which is the STTS. Amoghavajra also mentions texts that commonly appear in the Nyingma *mahāyoga* lists such as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*. Apparently, Amoghavajra’s own teacher Vajrabodhi (671-741) also knew of such a collection.³³⁰ Moreover, there is the case of Jñānamitra’s *Way of the Prajñāpāramitā in One Hundred Fifty Stanzas*, which also mentions a collection of eighteen tantras, though he only name four titles: *Sarvabuddhasamayoga Tantra*, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the STTS, and the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*. The *Way of the Prajñāpāramitā in One Hundred Fifty Stanzas* was translated into Tibetan quite early, as it is recorded in the *Denkar Catalog as Commentary on the Way of the One Hundred Fifty* (*Tshul brgya lnga bcu pa’i ’grel pa*, Ldk 523).

Mahāyoga’s Origin and History (and Buddhagupta’s Role in its Development in Tibet)

As I have already noted, the *mahāyoga* tantras are well known for their use of the themes of sexuality and violence. I shall examine specific passages from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* that illustrate these in the next chapter. For now, we may look to a few examples from other *mahāyoga* tantras. In the very first line from the first chapter of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, we read: “Thus have I heard: at one time, the Lord was dwelling in the vagina of the Vajra Consort of the Essence of the Body, Speech and Mind of all the Tathāgatas.”³³¹ In this provocative setting, the host of buddhas that have gathered begin emanating the deities of a mandala. Eventually, they emanate female consorts for themselves and enter into sexual union with them. In other *mahāyoga* texts, we find retold in several different forms the story

³³⁰ See Weinberger, 257.

³³¹ Francesca Freemantle, “A Critical Study of the Guhyasamāja Tantra,” PhD diss., (University of London, 1971), 27-32 and 174-187: *evam mayā śrutam | ekasmin samaye bhagavān sarvatahāgatakāyavākcittahrdayavajrayoṣidbhageṣu vijahāra*]. Freemantle provides a useful side-by-side comparison of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts.

of the subjugation of Rudra, originally the origin myth of the STTS. In the *Tantra of the Twelve Pegs*, the story begins with the Buddha noticing that the Śaiva deities were causing harm to Buddhist teachings and could not be stopped by peaceful means. Hence Vajrakīla emanates the deities Vajrakumāra and his consort Ekajaṭī who proceed to subjugate the Śaiva deities by trampling upon them; the more obdurate of those deities are slaughtered, cooked, and eaten by other wrathful Buddhist deities.³³²

These elements, however, are prefigured in the yoga tantras. The earliest attestation of the subjugation myth of Rudra is the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha Tantra* (STTS), where the wrathful emanation at work is Vajrapāṇi, not Vajrakumāra.³³³ A mandala of wrathful deities is also found in the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra*. Chapter two of the text recommends a ritual utilizing a mandala of *bhairavas* in order to bring evil spirits under control. After drawing the mandala, which consists of eight *bhairavas* together with their consorts surrounding the deity Trailokyavijaya, one is directed to worship the deities with offerings of “intoxicating liquor, flesh, divine offerings, vessels filled with blood, a skull and remains from the head, and eight vases filled either with blood or intoxicating liquor.”³³⁴ Returning to the STTS, this tantra contains explicit references to deities in sexual union. Take, for example, the following passage of the “secret gnosis of the samaya mudrā” (*dam tshig phyag rgya gsang ba’i ye shes*) associated with the ratna family or jewel family (*nor bu rigs*):

If, while meditating on the *mahāmudrā*,
You bind the great vajra jewel and
Insert it into the female orifice,

³³² Robert Mayer, “The Figure of Maheśvara/Rudra in the rÑin-ma-pa Tantric Tradition,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 21, no. 2 (1998): 271-310.

³³³ A particularly violent iteration of the subjugation of Rudra is also found in fifteenth chapter of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. I shall return to this narrative as well as the one from the STTS in the next chapter.

³³⁴ Skorupski, 59-61.

You will attain spiritual accomplishment.
 As for the jewel of the supreme *samaya*,
 Having inserted that too into the female orifice,
 The supreme *samaya* is bound, and one attains
 The spiritual accomplishment of being able to grant all the initiations.³³⁵

The text contains several more similarly-worded verses, and there are several other such references scattered throughout the text. Although Indian scholars, including Śākyamitra, who wrote a major commentary on the STTS called the *Ornament of Kosala*,³³⁶ have sought to reinterpret these as instance where one engages with a visualized consort, Steven Weinberger³³⁷ proposes that these are in fact the earliest references to sexual yoga, and that they helped set the stage for the emergence of the more explicit *mahāyoga* tantras.

In Tibet, the origin myths for what would become known as the *yoga* and *mahāyoga* involve different characters named Indrabhūti—Indrabhūti the elder, Indrabhūti the middle who is also called King Jaḥ (Rgyal po Tsa/Dza), and Indrabhūti the younger:

- Indrabhūti the Elder, King of Oḍḍiyāna, is said to have lived during the time of Buddha Śākyamuni.³³⁸ After seeing a group of five hundred Arhats flying through the sky, an impressed Indrabhūti invites them to a feast to receive teachings from them. He is disappointed with the more conventional teachings of the sutras and asks if there is a way to attain enlightenment without abandoning the sense pleasures. In

³³⁵ *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi de kho na nyid bsdus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po 'i mdo*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 479, Rgyud nya 1b-142a. See f. 100a5: |phyag rgya chen por bsgoms na ni||rdo rje nor bu che bcings la||nor bu bud med bu gar bcug |de ltar dngos grub thob par 'gyur||dam tshig mchog gi nor bu ni||bud med bu gar bcug nas kyang ||dam tshig mchog bcings thams cad kyi| dbang bskur ba yi dngos grub 'gyur|. Do-Kyun Kwon relates that the text is describing the deity yoga for meditating upon the deities of the ratna of jewel family entering into sexual union with their respective consorts. See Do-Kyun Kwon, “*Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*: Compendium of all the Tathāgatas, A Study of its Origin Structure and Teachings,” PhD diss., (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2002), 262-253.

³³⁶ Śākyamitra, *Kosalālamkāra-tattvasaṃgraha-tīka*, *De kho na nyid bsdus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa ko sa la'i rgyan*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2503, Rgyud yi 1b-245a and ri 1b-202a.

³³⁷ Weinberger 2003, 197.

response, the Arhats disappear and a mandala spontaneously manifests. At its center is Śākyamuni himself, who initiates Indrabhūti and transmits all of the tantras to him.

- Indrabhūti the middle is explicitly connected to the *yoga* and *mahāyoga* [tantras] according to the early Indian commentator Jñānamitra in his *Way of the Prajñāpāramitā in One Hundred Fifty Stanzas*.³³⁹ According to Jñānamitra,³⁴⁰ because of Indrabhūti's great merit and faith in the Dharma and through the blessings of the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, the texts of eighteen tantras descended magically in the kingdom of Zahor in eastern India. Unable to understand them, Indrabhūti sought out a master named Kukkuru (who is known in other narratives as Kukurāja), who already knew through clairvoyance that Indrabhūti was coming to seek his help. However, when Indrabhūti presents the texts to Kukkuru, the latter is devastated to find that he also does not understand them. Hence, Vajrasattva appears and grants Kukkuru the ability to understand all of the tantras merely by looking at them. Thereafter, Kukkuru returns to Zahor with Indrabhūti to instruct the entire royal court in the ways of tantra. Since Indrabhūti's son and heir is too young at the time, Kukkuru transmits the teaching to Indrabhūti's daughter Princess Govadevī (otherwise known as Gomadevī), who later transmits them to the prince. Jñānamitra mentions only a few of the eighteen tantras: *Savabuddhasamayoga Tantra*, *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Śrī Paramādyā Tantra*, and the STTS. In the Nyingma tradition, this Indrabhūti is referred to as King Jaḥ, and the story is somewhat different from that in Jñānamitra. According to the account in Dūjom Rinpoche's

³³⁸ The identities and number of Indrabhūtis is a complex topic that cannot be explored fully due to the limited scope of the present work. For the full details, see Garson, 151-171, upon which the proceeding discussion is based.

³³⁹ Jñānamitra, *Ārya-prajñāpāramitā-naya-śatapañcāśatikā-ṭīkā*, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa'i 'grel pa, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2647, Rgyud ju 272b-294a.

NSTB, King Jaḥ has several prophetic dreams featuring Vajrapāṇi, then wakes to find a bejeweled chest containing a large text together with a golden image of Vajrapāṇi on the roof of his palace. In this narrative, King Jaḥ actually fully comprehends the tantras and accomplishes them, but seeks out Kukurāja for the sake of appearances. Kukurāja himself has a vision of Vajrapāṇi, who gives the complete instructions in the tantras. Kukurāja then returns to Zahor with King Jaḥ and then proceeds to divide the 100,000 stanza text from the bejeweled chest into tantras. Samten Karmay has suggested that the narrative of King Jaḥ is a Tibetan reimaging of the original narrative which came out of a need for Nyingma authors to distinguish the *mahāyoga* from the yoga tantras.³⁴¹

- Indrabhūti the younger, is said to have been the son of the middle Indrabhūti, sometimes referred to as Prince Śakrabhūti. In some traditions, he is equated with the *mahāsiddha* Kambalapāda, known in Tibetan as Lawapa (Lwa ba pa).

It is from the middle Indrabhūti that the traditional lineal succession of *mahāyoga* tantras begins. As Buddhagupta implies in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, Kukurāja, Indrabhūti the younger, Princess Gomadevī, and the scholars Siṃharāja and Uparāja received initiation into the *mahāyoga* tantras all at once from Indrabhūti the middle. According to most accounts, Gomadevī initiated Vilāsavajra, who then initiated the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta, though some scholars such as Jikmé Tenpé Nyima (’Jigs med bstan pa’i nyi ma, 1865-1926) say that Vilāsavajra and Buddhagupta both received the initiation from Gomadevī.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ The following summary is based on Weinberger’s on 253-256.

³⁴¹ See Samten Karmay, “King Tsa/Dza and Vajrayāna,” in *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet*, 76-93 (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Print, 2009).

³⁴² Garson, 173.

In the most general sense, the term *mahāyoga* is roughly equivalent in terms of content to the later Sarma schools’ *niruttarayoga* tantra—advanced tantric practices that work with themes of sex, violence, and antinomian behavior. More specifically, *mahāyoga* in the Nyingma tradition’s nine vehicle system constitutes its own vehicle (*theg pa*) to liberation with a distinctive view (*lta*), meditation (*sgom*), practice or conduct (*spyod*), and result (*’bras bu*). Here, I will provide an overview of the *mahāyoga* vehicle based on explanations from Rokben Sherap Ö’s *A Lamp of the Teachings*, which is “one of the earliest philosophically robust explanations of the nine vehicles,”³⁴³ and from the *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya mzdod*)³⁴⁴ by the nineteenth century Rimé (*ris med*) or Ecumenical Movement luminary, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé (*’Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas*, 1813-1899). The purpose of this is twofold: As we shall see, both commentators rely heavily upon the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* itself as well as works of Buddhagupta, especially *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Paths*.

Before we get to these texts, we examine two instances where Buddhagupta actually provides his own definition of *mahāyoga*, focusing on the nature of its view and practice. One example comes directly from chapter six of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, “Training in the Yoga of Elaboration” (*spros pa’i rnal ’byor*). Regarding view and practice, he states:

Now, as for the view and practice of *mahāyoga*,
 However much you practice it, it still has no intrinsic nature.
 Like a great bird soaring in the sky,
 A fish gliding through water,
 Or a gale blowing through the sky,
 The yogī sees the view to be like this.

³⁴³ Both are quotes from Cabezón 2013, 4.

³⁴⁴ I will be drawing upon Jamgön Kongtrül, *The Treasury of Knowledge, Book Eight, Part Four, Esoteric Instructions: A Detailed Presentation of the Process of Meditation in the Vajrayāna*, trans. Sarah Harding (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publication, 2007).

As for the practice of *mahāyoga*,
 It is to practice without any kind of differentiation.
 It is to taste the supreme flavor of bliss,
 And becomes attached to no one.
 Anyone might become attached to it,
 But being unattached to it [even in the context] of one's practice is gnosis.
 Supreme bliss is itself the collection of merit.
 Practice in just such a state as that.
 This is an enormously effective practice.
 Mantrins are always making sure that view and practice are not divergent.³⁴⁵

Another such statement is found in Nupchen's *Lamp for the Mind in Contemplation*, though a source is not given and the attribution to Buddhagupta is from the anonymous interlinear notes to the text. Nevertheless, Nupchen makes the following comment, which is presented as the pith instructions of Buddhagupta:

According to the system of the superior *mahāyoga*, the unfabricated, vessel-like mundane world is the celestial palace, and its contents, the beings of the six realms, become buddhas through the light of the self-arising vajra. The three realms are themselves the nature of enlightened body, speech, and mind. The mental affliction are removed and expelled in the *dharmatā*. Suffering is spontaneously established as great bliss. Obscurations set themselves ablaze as gnosis. Birth and death are transformed into eternal life, and old age and decay are buddhahood, the primordial changeless essence. So, what is there to search for?³⁴⁶

Both of these passages emphasize a view that is beyond duality; the *mahāyoga* practitioner is instructed to perceive the immanence of the enlightened body, speech, and mind by seeing all

³⁴⁵ Quoted in Takahashi 2018, 254-255, n. 39. from Q 4736, 489b-90a: *rnal 'byor chen po 'i lta spyod ni || ji ltar spyad kyang rang bzhin med || mkha' la bya chen lding ba bzhin || chu la rkyal chen 'phyo ba bzhin || mkha' la rlung chen 'phyo ba bzhin || rnal 'byor lta ba de ltar lta || rnal 'byor chen po 'i spyod pa ni || thams cad kun la dbyer med spyod || bde ba 'i ro mchog myong 'gyur te || de la su zhig chags par byed || spyod bzhin ma chags ye shes yin || bde ba mchog nyid bsod nams tshogs || de lta bu 'i ngang la spyod 'di ni spyod pa rlabs chen yin || lta spyod ya char ma gyur par || sngags 'chang rnams kyi rtag tu dpyad*. The translation above is mine.

³⁴⁶ Gnubs sangs rgyas ye shes 1974, pp. 344.5-345.2: *lhag pa 'i rnal 'byor chen po 'i lugs kyi | snod kyi 'jig rten ma bcos pa 'i gzhai yas khang | bcud kyi 'jig rten 'gro drug rang byung rdo rje 'od kyi sangs rgyas | khams gsum sku gsung thugs kyi bdag nyis la | nyon mongs pa chos nyid du bskyal btab | sdug bsngal bde ba chen por lhun gyi grub | sgrub pa ye she su rang 'bar | skye zhig yung drung tsher gyur | rgas rgud 'pho 'gyur med pa 'i ngo bor ye sangs rgyas pa la | de 'phral du ba tsal [= btsal] du ci yod*. See also Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Enrico Dell'Angelo, trans., *The Little Hidden Harvest* (Arcidosso: Associazione Culturale Comunità Dzogchen, 1996), 17.

phenomena as the mandala of the enlightened deities. As we shall, these elements are also reflected in the Rokben and Jamgön Kongtrül's works.

Rokben relies primarily on citations from the *Guhyagabha Tantra* and Buddhagupta's works in his explanation of *mahāyoga*. According to Rokben, the view of *mahāyoga* sees all appearances as manifestations of the Buddha's *svabhāvikakāya* (*ngo bo nyid kyi sku*) or essence body. Rokben elaborates that all phenomena should be perceived as being essentially inseparable from the enlightened deities of the mandala. Citing *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, he implies that such a view, however, is ultimately based on seeing "the great, all encompassing emptiness."³⁴⁷ Rokben then explains that meditation in *mahāyoga* has two parts, the "meditation on reality, the way things are" and the "meditation on oneself as the deity" that "uses symbolic signs."³⁴⁸ Rokben describes the former as placing one's mind in an uncontrived state; he elaborates on this point by providing a quote from an unnamed source, though Cabezón notes that it likely come from *Brief Explanation of the Path*: "Do not think that something is to be contemplated. Nor should you even think 'I am now contemplating.' Not thinking about anything, being devoid of ideation, is the highest *samādhi*."³⁴⁹ The latter—meditation on oneself as the meditational deity—consist of imagining or visualizing oneself at the deity in a rudimentary way at first, which should lead to a more stable certainty that one is in fact the deity. Even before this certainty arises, one still should generate the notion of being the deity even though it might not be stable. In this regard, Rokben again quotes *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*: When one meditates on

³⁴⁷ Cabezón 2013, 288. This quote comes from chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, CT 43-976: [rnam pa kun ldan stong chen mthong].

³⁴⁸ Cabezón 2013, 229.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 230. Rokben's text reads: *bsam bya bsams par mi bya ste||mi bsam par yang mi bsams mo||gang la rnam par mi bsam pa||'du shes kun bral ting 'dzin mchog*; see Cabezón and Erdenebaatar Erdene-Ochir, 203. As Cabezón notes, the third line of Rokben's text does not appear in *Brief Explanation of the Path*.

the entire path in a single instant, one does not meditate on the wheel of proliferations.”³⁵⁰

Rokben provides further details about the meditation involving complete certainty, but I will discuss this meditation later using Jamgön Kongtrül’s text. Unfortunately, Rokben’s comments on the practice of *mahāyoga* are brief; he mentions a list of twenty-five dharma cycles that are to be practiced without naming each one. Finally, Rokben states that the result of *mahāyoga* is the attainment of the state of the “great wheel of letters” (*yi ge ’khor lo chen*) without providing much further comment, though the term is used throughout *mahāyoga* literature for the “culmination of the inner Vajrayāna path.”³⁵¹

Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé’s presentation of the *mahāyoga* system is somewhat different from Rokben’s, though it is still very much influenced by *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. Using a framework already deployed by early *Guhyagarbha Tantra* commentators, like Longchenpa, Jamgön Kongtrül divides the *mahāyoga* meditation into two types—the path of methods (*thabs lam*) and the path of liberation (*sgrol lam*). The path of methods is the term used by Nyingma commentators in Tibet for the subtle body practices associated with *mahāyoga* that involve the manipulation of the subtle energetic physiology of the body—the channels, winds, and drops (*rtsa rlung thig le*). This path is itself divided into two parts: 1) the upper door (*steng sgo*) method, which entails melting the energetic drops which drip through the chakras (*’khor lo*) or energy centers in the body where the channels

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* Rokben’s text reads: [*lam kun skad cig chas bsgoms na||spros pa’i ’khor lo mi sgom zhing*]; see Cabezón and Erdenebaatar Erdene-Ochir 2010, 203. These lines are found with some variation in chapter three of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, CT 43-986: [*lam kun skad cig chas sgom nas||spyod pa’i ’khor lo mos sgom zhing*]. According to this recension of the text, Buddhagupta is recommending that the practitioner engage in a wheel of action (*spyod* for *spros*), having already meditated on the entire path in a single instant. Although the wheel of action might imply sexual practice with a consort, I suspect this might be an error in the CT, as the wheel of proliferation is discussed elsewhere in the text as an elaborate, highly detailed visualization of the mandala.

³⁵¹ Cantwell and Mayer 2012, 98. The term “level of great accumulation of the wheel of letters” (*yi ge ’khor lo tshogs chen gyi sa*) is used in the *Garland of Views* (*Man ngag lta ba’i phreng ba*), a work often ascribed to Padmasambhava, to describe the culmination of *mahāyoga*. This occurs at the final stage of *mahāyoga* practice. As far I can tell, the term “great wheel of letters” is not found in *An Orderly Arrangement*

converge, and 2) the lower door (*'og sgo*) methods, which involves sexual union and energetic exchange between a male and female partner.³⁵² Although these practices are not explicitly taught in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, they are alluded to in the first chapter of the text.³⁵³ The path of liberation has two types of practitioners—those who attain realization gradually, and those who attain it instantaneously. Since the latter type of person is exceptionally rare, the remainder of Jamgön Kongtrül's comments focuses on the stages of meditation for the gradual adept. Jamgön Kongtrül's explanation of these is quite detailed, but they boil down to five types of yoga, each of which are steps of meditating upon a mandala: the yoga of great emptiness (*stong pa chen po 'i rnal 'byor*), the yoga of great compassion (*snying rje chen po 'i rnal 'byor*), the yoga of the single *mudrā* (*phyag rgya gcig pa 'i rnal 'byor*), the yoga of the elaborate *mudrā* (*phyag rgya spros bcas kyi rnal 'byor*), and the yoga of the accomplishment of the clustered assembly (*tshom bu tshogs sgrub gyi rnal 'byor*). I explore the practice of these yogas further in chapter five of this dissertation, but in short, these are stages of generating the visualized mandala in increasingly more elaborate ways. More importantly for our present purposes, Jamgön Kongtrül's principle sources for

of the Paths, though there is one occurrence of the term “supreme accumulation of the wheel of letters” (*yi ge 'khor lo tshogs mchog*) at the very end of the chapter six. See CT 34-1010.

³⁵² Kongtrül, 71-73. Here, Jamgön Kongtrül provides further details about these practices, some of which I describe in the annotations to my translation of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, chapter one, based on Adzom Gyelsé Gyurmé Dorjé's commentary. Here, it is worth explaining the two culminating stages of the lower door technique that I do not mention in my annotations. After the male and female have entered into sexual union, the male is to bring down his seminal essence, which is thought to dwell at the top of the subtle body in the head, through the four chakras in the head, throat, heart and navel. At each of these, he experiences the four types of bliss, respectively: initial bliss (*dang po 'i dga' ba*), supreme bliss (*mchog dga'*), special bliss (*khyad dga'*), and innate bliss (*lhan gcig skyes pa 'i dga' ba*). Then, during the culmination of the practice, after male and female have combined their sexual fluids during union, the male draws their comingled essences through his penis (“vajra”) and back up through the chakras, thus experiencing the four types of bliss in reverse order.

³⁵³ The *Guhyagarbha Tantra* itself does not contain any discussion of techniques related to the subtle body. The primary source of such practices seems to be the explanatory tantras (*bshad rgyud*) of the *Māyājāla* cycle. See Garson, 268. As I demonstrate in chapter five, scholars like Kammie Takahashi and Jacob P. Dalton have proposed that elaborate subtle body practices did not figure in Tibetan *mahāyoga* until well into the ninth century. When exactly these practices became current remains an open question and is thus a significant desideratum for the study of *mahāyoga*. A good place to start would be the *Vajra Ocean* (*Rdo rje rgya mtsho*),

his explanation of these five yogas is *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. They are explained in chapters three to seven of the text; in fact, these five yogas are, with some minor differences, the names of these five chapters:

- Chapter Three: A Teaching on the Yoga of Great Emptiness (*stong pa chen po'i rnal 'byor bstan pa*)
- Chapter Four: A Teaching on the Yoga of Great Compassion (*snying rje chen po'i rnal 'byor bstan pa*)
- Chapter Five: The Samādhi that Binds the Mudrā (*phya rgya bcing ba'i ting nge 'dzin gyi le'u*)
- Chapter Six: A Teaching on the Elaborate Yoga (*spros pa'i rnal 'byor bstan pa'i le'u*)
- Chapter Seven: Accomplishing the Assembly, The Unimpeded Path (*bar chad med pa'i lam tshogs bsgrub pa*)

Thus, even as late as the nineteenth century, Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* works remained the authoritative source for explaining the Nyingma conception of the *mahāyoga* path and concepts.

Buddhagupta and the Categorization of the Tantras

Buddhism's establishment in places like Tibet and China began with large-scale translation projects. As massive amounts of Buddhist textual material entered a new cultural milieu, Buddhists developed ways to organize and make sense of it all. Some early examples include

also known as the *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra* (*Sgyu 'prul rgya mtsho'i rgyud*), which the Nyingma commentarial tradition often points to as a significant source for the techniques of the path of methods.

the *panjiao* (判教, doctrinal classification) schemes worked out by Buddhists in China beginning in the Southern and North Dynasties (365-589) and inspired by the basic division of the scriptures into Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna by the Kuchean translator Kumārajīva (334-412).³⁵⁴ For example, there is a “Five Periods” (*wushi*, 五時) classification of Zhiyi (智顓, 538-597), the founder of the Tiantai School (天台), which is based on his chronological reckoning of when the Buddha taught the various sutras. Chanju Mun concludes: “The *panjiao* systems served as a critical tool to justify the sectarian claims of different traditions.”³⁵⁵

The Nyingma School’s distinctive nine vehicles (*theg pa dgu*) system may be seen in a similar light. It is a doxography that organizes and make sense of the vast amounts of scriptural material that the Tibetans inherited from the dynastic and fragmentation periods. The *locus classicus* for the nine vehicles scheme is the forty-fourth chapter of the *Gathering of Intentions Sutra*, the chief tantra of the anuyoga class.³⁵⁶ The nine vehicles are:

1. *śrāvaka* vehicle (*nyan thos kyi theg pa*)
2. *pratyekabuddha* vehicle (*rang sangs rgyas kyi theg pa*)
3. bodhisattva vehicle (*byang chub sems dpa’i theg pa*)
4. *kriyā* tantra (*bya rgyud*)
5. *ubhayā* tantra (*gnyis ka’i rgyud*)
6. yoga tantra (*rnal ’byor gyi rgyud*)
7. *mahāyoga* (*rnal ’byor chen po*)
8. *anuyoga* (*rjes su rnal ’byor*)
9. *atiyoga* (*shin tu rnal ’byor*)

³⁵⁴ Chanju Mun, *The History of Doctrinal Classification in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of the Panjiao Systems*. (Lanham: University Press of America, 2006), xix.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, xvii.

³⁵⁶ Dalton 2016, 32.

The first three vehicles are exoteric and coterminous with the sutra corpus.³⁵⁷ The latter six are categories of tantra, which are divided into two groups: the *kriyā*, *ubhayā*, and yoga tantras are collectively referred to as the outer tantras (*phyi rgyud*) while *mahāyoga*, *anuyoga*, and *atiyoga* are known as the inner (*nang rgyud*). The Tibetan translation of the *Guhyagarbha* states that it was translated from the Burushaski (*bru sha skad*), one of the languages of the Gilgit region. Indeed, parts of the text contain words in Burushaki that were left untranslated. Jacob Dalton has convincingly demonstrated that much of the text was composed directly in Tibet around an original Burushaski core, i.e., the chapters of the text where Burushaski terms are found. These chapters uniformly focus on telling the narrative of the Subjugation of Rudra.³⁵⁸ Since the Burushaski ends at chapter twenty-seven, it is likely that the forty-fourth chapter containing the discussion of the nine vehicles was composed in Tibet.

How this ninefold doxographical system came to be remains an open question. It seems that there may have been several ninefold doxographic systems drawn from putatively Indian sources that contributed to the standard formulation. However, the legitimacy, i.e., the Indian provenance, of this system was nevertheless called into question by Sarma scholars such as the eminent Sarma savant Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltzen (Sa skya paṇḍi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182-1251)³⁵⁹ and the Kadam scholar Chomden Reldri.³⁶⁰ Jacob Dalton has suggested that the fourfold classification of the tantras popular among the Sarma schools of Tibet—*kriyā* (*bya*), *caryā* (*spyod*), *yoga* (*rnal 'byor*), and *niruttarayoga* (*bla na med pa 'i rnal 'byor*)—may have itself been a Tibetan invention, inspired in part by later Indian

³⁵⁷ Cabezón 2013, 21.

³⁵⁸ Dalton 2016, 7-9.

³⁵⁹ Jared Rhoton trans., *A Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes: Essential Distinctions among the Individual Liberation, Great Vehicle, and Tantric Systems* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 133.

commentators like Atiśa and Śraddhākaravarma.³⁶¹ To be clear, as Anthony Tribe notes, “there was never a single, predominant Indic classification of Buddhist tantras.”³⁶² Rather, as Ronald Davidson observes, “Indian authors fielded a large variety of [tantra] classification, so that a unanimity of position regarding category structures remained as elusive in this as in all other areas of tantric Buddhism.”³⁶³ In other words, although there are some general similarities between them, the doxographic system in the works ascribed to Indian masters tend to be idiosyncratic. In this section I, will contextualize the doxography found in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* by the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta. This work offers a categorization of practitioners based on their philosophical view rather than on the content of the rituals and meditations they perform.

The earliest Indian tantric doxography comes from the works of none other than the outer tantra commentator, Buddhagupta. The issue is discussed in his *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi*, *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama*, and *Explanatory Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi*.³⁶⁴ Buddhagupta discusses two or possibly three categories of tantra. In his *Explanatory Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi*, Buddhagupta introduces two categories of tantra: *kriyā* tantra (*bya ba'i rgyud*) and yoga tantra (*rnal 'byor gyi rgyud*). These are intended to be practiced, respectively, by “those who engage in practice with visualization” (*dmigs pa dang bcas pa spyod pa*) and those who are oriented toward practice involving “the profound and

³⁶⁰ Bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri, *Bslab pa gsum gyi rgyan gyi me tog*, in *Bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri gsung 'bum*, vol 1 (*ka*), ed. Kham srpul bsod nams don grub (Lhasa: 2006), 389.

³⁶¹ Dalton 2005: 117-121. The situation may be somewhat more complex, however. For example, Cabezón, notes that the fourfold scheme can be found in the *Sarvatathāgataguhyantra Yogamahārāja Dvayasamatāvijaya* (D 453). See Cabezón 2013, 21.

³⁶² Anthony Tribe, *Tantric Buddhist Practice in India: Vilāsavajra's Commentary on the Mañjuśrī-Nāma-Saṃgīti* (London: Routledge, 2016).

³⁶³ Davidson 2005, 35.

³⁶⁴ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Rnam par snang mdzad mngon par byang chub pa'i rgyud chen po'i 'grel bshad bzhugs*, Sde dge btan 'gyur, D 2663(a), Rgyud nyu, 65a.-260b.

extensive” (*zab cing rgya che ba*). Thus the *kriyā* tantra such as the *Susiddhikāra Tantra* focus on outer practices such as visualizing the mandala and meditational deities externally, while the yoga tantras such the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha Tantra* (STTS) emphasize inner yogas such as visualizing oneself as the deity.³⁶⁵ He concludes that the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*, though technically a yoga tantra, can be considered a tantra of both (*gnyis ka’i rgyud*) categories because it utilizes both of these types of approaches. It remains unclear whether Buddhagupta intended “both” to constitute its own category. He makes similar comments at the beginning of his *Condensed Commentary on the Vairocanābhisambodhi*, though he also names other tantras from each category such *Trisamayarāja* and the *Vajrapanyabhiṣeka* in *kriyā* and the *Śrī Paramādyā* in yoga.³⁶⁶ In his *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama*, Buddhagupta introduces two subcategories of *kriyā* tantra: tantras that are compilations of general ritual (*spyi’i cho ga bsdus pa’i rgyud*) such as the *Subāhupariṣcchā* and specific tantras (*bye brag gi rgyud*) which are more fully fleshed out like the *Vairocanābhisambodhi*.³⁶⁷ All told, the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta knows of two categories of tantra: 1) *kriyā*, which has the two subcategories of a) tantras of general ritual manual and b) specific tantras, and 2) yoga. There is possibly one additional category of “both” (*gnyis ka’i*). In any case, the outer tantras in Buddhagupta’s classifications are concerned with how the rituals and meditations of the tantras are carried out

Another early tantric doxography is found in the *Explanation of the Meaning of the Name Mantras* (*Nāmamantrārthāvalokinī*), a commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* by

³⁶⁵ See D 2663(a), f. 65a5-65b6 for Buddhagupta’s discussion. For a translation of the relevant passages, see Hodge 2005, 43.

³⁶⁶ See D 2662, f. 3a5-3b6 and Hodge 2005, 448-449 for the relevant passages.

³⁶⁷ Dalton 2005, 122 n. 19.

the Indian tantric commentator Vilāsavajra. A Sanskrit version of this text does exist,³⁶⁸ though it was also translated into Tibetan after the dynastic period.³⁶⁹ Vilāsavajra presents three categories of tantra: *kriyā*, *caryā*, and *yoga*.³⁷⁰ Unfortunately, Vilāsavajra does not give a definition of any of these three categories. However, he does use the term *mahāyoga*, as evinced in his comment on the very first verse of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*:

The fortunate one Vajradhara [is present] in order to request instruction in that “*Nāmasaṃgīti*,” possessing the truth, of the fortunate one, the gnosis being Mañjuśrī, spoken by the fortunate one Śākyamuni in the “Net of *samādhi*” chapter occurring within the sixteen thousand [verse] *mahāyogatantra* [called] the “*Āyamāyājāla*” for the sake of benefitting beings of weak [spiritual capacities].³⁷¹

As Anthony Tribe notes, it seems that Vilāsavajra did not see *mahāyoga* as a separate category, but perhaps used the term to indicate a particular “*yogatantra*’s higher status.” Another intriguing aspect of Vilāsavajra’s *Explanation of the Meaning of the Name Mantras* is that it quotes from tantras such as the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* and the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga* without identifying them with a particular class of tantra. Tribe concludes that Vilāsavajra’s commentary “appears to represent a time when these texts were in circulation and had acquired some authority but were not yet seen as warranting a special classificatory status.”³⁷² Comparing these pieces of evidence, Tribe suggests that Vilāsavajra was active in the late eighth to the early-to-mid ninth centuries, and was probably a junior contemporary of the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta.³⁷³

³⁶⁸ See Tribe, 95-172, for a translation from the Sanskrit of the first five chapters of the text.

³⁶⁹ Vilāsavajra, Sgeg pa’i rdo rje, *Āryanāmasaṃgītiṭīkā-nāmamantrārthāvalokinī*, ‘*Phags pa mtshan yang dag par brjod pa’i rgya cher ’grel pa mtshan gsang sngags kyi don du rnam par lta ba*, Sde dge bstan ’gyur, D 2533, Rgyud khu, 27b-115b. According to the colophon, the text was translated by Smṛtijñānakīrti, who was active in the eleventh century.

³⁷⁰ Dalton 2005, 125, points out that this work contains the earliest instance of the *caryā* classification.

³⁷¹ Tribe, 11-12.

³⁷² *Ibid.*

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 12, 24.

The doxography articulated by the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* is much more expansive and philosophical than that of the outer tantra commentator, Buddhagupta. His comments are found in chapter two of the text, which is titled “Perceiving One’s Own State.” (*rang gnas mthong ba*). Cabezón notes that the distinctions made in Buddhagupta’s system are “mostly about views or belief about the world, about reality, and about the relationship between the two...they are about realizations that result from having such different views.”³⁷⁴ The key realization that distinguishes the practitioner of each system is their proximity to the insight into equality (*mnyam pa nyid*), a radically nondual conception of the world which holds that “each and every sentient being without exception is essentially, primordially awakened.”³⁷⁵ From the perspective of equality, there are no such things as different views, purity, or positive qualities that need to be cultivated. Buddhagupta thus proposes eight categories or spiritual levels of understanding equality:

- 1) gods and humans (*lha dang mi*), who are born as such because they act virtuously while not realizing the ultimate equality of virtue and non-virtue,
- 2) the *śrāvaka* stage (*nyan thos sa pa*): those who, not understanding nonduality, see everything from the perspective of the four noble truths
- 3) the pratyekabuddha stage (*rang sangs rgyas kyi sa*): those who do not understand their karma and afflictions in terms of equality
- 4) the bodhisattva stage (*byang chub sa*): those who misunderstand equality in that they distinguish between conventional and ultimate reality while grasping at the concept of non-self.
- 5) the highest vehicle (*bla med theg pa*): those who say that there are ultimately no divisions while maintaining dualistic notions such purity and impurity on the conventional level
- 6) the stage of the *kriyā* ritualist (*bya ba las kyi sa*): those who see the four types of gnosis³⁷⁶ as conventional and only meditate part of the time

³⁷⁴ Cabezón 2013, 27.

³⁷⁵ Quoted from Q 4736, f 431a. in Nathaniel Rich, “The Modern Development of Scholasticism in the ‘Ancient’ Sect of Tibetan Buddhism,” PhD diss., (University of California, Santa Barbara, 2016), 145: [*sems can ma lus thams cad kun*||*ye nas byang chub snying por gnas*||*de phyir dpyad pa’i bya byed med*].

³⁷⁶ According to the commentary on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* by Adzom Gyelsé Gyurmé Dorjé, the four wisdoms refers to four of the five types of gnosis: gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (*chos dbyings ye*

- 7) the stage of yoga (*rnal 'byor sa*): those who think that the blessings of the dharmakāya are required for the mandala to become manifest (instead of considering the mandala always present and manifest)
- 8) the great vehicle of methods (*thabs kyi theg pa chen po*) also called the great view-practice of methods (*thabs lta spyod chen mo*): those who understand that purification and suffering are indistinguishable even on the conventional level, who do not distinguish between conventional and ultimate.³⁷⁷

Of course, a person who is on “the great vehicle of methods” is the *mahāyoga* practitioner who, as we have seen above in Buddhagupta’s comments on the *mahāyoga* view and practice, perceives the world as being inseparable from the mandala of the deities, from enlightened body, speech and mind. This eightfold doxography differs significantly from that of the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta, whose tantric categories relied on ritual distinctions rather than philosophical views; this in itself, I suggest, is proof that the two authors are in fact separate figures. In any case, *An Orderly Arrangement the Paths* marks a time when *mahāyoga* was considered the highest form of tantric Buddhist practice. There are two other doxographies that also place *mahāyoga* at the pinnacle, though they seem to show additional developments beyond what Buddhagupta suggests.

First we shall examine the *Garland of Views* (*Man ngag lta ba 'i phreng ba*),³⁷⁸ a text traditionally ascribed to Padmasambhava. The text is considered by scholars like Rongzom to be a commentary on the thirteenth chapter of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Although its provenance has not been established, Karmay argues that it is a text of some antiquity because it is quoted in the *Lamp for the Eyes in Contemplations* (*Bsam gtan mi sgron*) by Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé (Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes), a figure who was born slightly

shes), mirror-like gnosis (*me long*), gnosis of equality (*mnyam nyid*), gnosis of discernment (*sor rtog*), and all accomplishing gnosis (*bya grub*). See f. 50a.

³⁷⁷ These are a summary of Cabezón’s translation of the passage describing these in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. See Cabezón 2013, 23-27.

³⁷⁸ Padmasambhava, *Man ngag lta ba 'i phreng ba*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 73 [pu], pp. 147-162 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009).

after the fall of the empire and lived through the Age of Fragmentation.³⁷⁹ The *Garland of Views* offers a sevenfold scheme and, as in Buddhagupta's system described above, *mahāyoga* still remains supreme in *Garland of Views*. However the author of the text breaks *mahāyoga* into three parts. Moreover, as the title of the text implies, these categories are also distinguished based on their philosophical view.

- 1) *śrāvakas*: reject the permanence of the self, but holds that the aggregates, atoms, consciousness, etc., truly exist.
- 2) *pratyekabuddhas*: also reject the notion of the permanent self, but partially understands the non-substantiality of the aggregates.
- 3) bodhisattvas: see that all elements of samsara and nirvana have no intrinsic existence.
- 4) *kriyā* tantra practitioners: understand that meditational deities are ultimately free of origin and cessation, but relies on them conventionally, interacting with them through the use of external rituals, proper behavior, cleanliness, etc.
- 5) *ubhayā* tantra practitioners: also use external rituals, but relies mainly on the practice of *samādhi*.
- 6) yoga tantra practitioners, also referred as followers of “Conquerer tantra” (*thub pa'i rgyud*): understand the ultimate nature of both external ritual and of the meditational deities, and meditate upon themselves as the deity
- 7) *mahāyoga* (*rnal 'byor chen po*) practitioners, also referred to as followers of a “tantra of the vehicle of methods” (*thabs kyi theg pa'i rgyud*) adhere to:
 - a) way of generation (*bskyed pa'i tshul*) and gradually generate the mandala mentally

³⁷⁹ Karmay 2007, 142.

b) way of perfection (*rdzogs pa'i tshul*) and sees the ultimately empty nature of the deities, but on the relative level contemplate on the deities as distinct from themselves.

c) method of great perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po'i tshul*), which is the ultimate goal of *mahāyoga*, and understand that everything mundane and transcendent is undifferentiated, that they have been always present as the mandala of enlightened body, speech and mind.³⁸⁰

To be clear, the culmination of the *mahāyoga* to which Padmasambhava refers as the methods great perfection is *not* to be confused with Dzokchen, which emerged, as we know today, later than Padmasambhava's time. In the early *mahāyoga* tradition, the great perfection refers to a final stage of meditation where the visualized mandala is dissolved into emptiness during the time to what Jacob Dalton refers as the "consumption of the sacramental drop," i.e., the comingled sexual fluids of the male and female which is the result of ritualized sexual union.³⁸¹

Lastly, there is the *Blazing Palace (Spar khab)*³⁸² commentary, which is traditionally ascribed to Vilāsavajra. Whether this text is attributable to the Vilāsavajra who penned the *Explanation of the Meaning of the Name Mantras* discussed above remains uncertain, though I suggest that it is a later composition. The *Blazing Palace* is one of the most important Indian commentaries on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. This text offers an eightfold doxography that distinguishes between categories based on the adherent's level of spiritual realization. This notion has its root in a key verse from chapter thirteen of the GT: "There are those with

³⁸⁰ Dalton 2005, 133. The explanations of each are adapted from Samten Karmay's translation of *Garland of Views* in Karmay 2007, particularly 152-156.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

no realization, those with erroneous realization, those with partial realization, those who do not realize the nature of reality, those who possess discipline, enlightened intention, the secret, and the intrinsically secret truth.”³⁸³ Each of these are thus associated with a particular mode of practice:

- 1) those with no realization → those who are apathetic
- 2) those with erroneous realization → nihilists and externalists
- 3) those with partial realization → śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and vijñānavādins
- 4) those who do not realize reality → mādhyamikas
- 5) those who possess discipline → *kriyā*
- 6) enlightened intention → yoga
- 7) secret → *mahāyoga*
- 8) intrinsically secret truth → *atiyoga*³⁸⁴

Here, the author of the *Blazing Palace* introduces a new, higher class—*atiyoga* (*a ti yo ga*)—which he defines as “that which teaches that the stages [conceived by] those who are attached to analysis are nothing but various kinds of obscuration”³⁸⁵ Although this appears within a commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, the author does not actually specify which of these categories the tantra falls into. Dalton suggests that this hesitancy may be due to the fact that the *Blazing Palace* commentary may have been composed at a time when the relationship between the *mahāyoga* tantras and early forms Dzokchen began to emerge in the ninth century

It is possible that the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta’s eightfold doxography predates that of the *Blazing Palace*. In his “A Crisis of Doxography: How Tibetans Organized Tantra During the 8th-12th Century” Jacob Dalton he states that the system of the *Garland of Views* “skillfully wove together earlier writings” of the outer tantra commentator

³⁸² Vilāsavajra, *Dpal gsang ba'i snying po'i 'grel pa spar khab kyi mchan 'grel nyi ma'i 'od zer*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 70 [*thu*], pp. 1-392 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009).

³⁸³ *Śrī-guhyā-garbha-tattva-viniścaya*, D 832, f. 123b5-6: *|ma rtogs pa dang log par rtogs||phyogs rtogs yang dang nyid ma rtogs||'dul bad gongs pa gsang ba dang ||ran bzhin gsang ba'i don rnams ni|*.

³⁸⁴ This list is based on the one found in Dalton 2005, 130.

Buddhagupta and Vilāsavajra.³⁸⁶ But as I have already noted, these systems were often idiosyncratic and there is no reason to conclude that these authors knew of each other’s work. What seems clear, however, is that the system of the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta—which Dalton does not take into account—seems unaware of the developments in the *Blazing Palace*. Buddhagupta’s text does not seem to know of atiyoga as a separate category of tantra above *mahāyoga*.

Reception of Mahāyoga in Dynastic and Early Medieval Tibet

At the beginning of the 814 *Lexicon in Two Fascicles* (*Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*), a dynastic period work on translating texts from Sanskrit, we find recorded an edict issued by the Tibetan emperor Tri Desongtsen regarding regulations and procedures for translating Sanskrit texts into Tibetan. Amidst the various rules about how to render Sanskrit *upasargas* or propose new Tibetan words to the imperial translation bureau, there is a curious passage about the translation of tantra:

In accordance with the scriptures themselves, the tantras of secret mantra are to be kept secret; it is improper to explain or teach them to those who are unqualified. However, in the meantime, because they have been translated and given out for practice with their concealed meaning not properly explained, they were taken literally, and perverse practices came about. Although selections from the tantras of secret mantra do exist in Tibetan translation, it is henceforth decreed from on high that, with regard to the dhāraṇī-mantras and tantras, unless you are commissioned to translate [a particular text], compiling or translating the tantras of secret mantra and the words of the mantras is prohibited.³⁸⁷

³⁸⁵ Quoted in Dalton 2005, 129: |brtags pa la zhen pa'i rim pa sna tshogs kyi bsgrub pa tsam du ston pa'i a ti yo ga'o|.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 134.

³⁸⁷ See ISHIKAWA Mie, ed. *A Critical Edition of the Sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa: An Old and Basic Commentary on the Mahāvīyutpatti* (Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1990), 4: *gsang sngags kyi rgyud rnams gzhung gis gsang bar bya ba yin te| snod du ma gyur pa rnams la bshad cing bstan du yang mi rung la| bar du bsgyur zhing spyod du gnang gis kyang| ldem po dag tu bshad pa ma khrol nas sgra ji bzhin du 'dzin cing lopar spyod pa dag kyang byung| sngags kyi rgyud kyi nang nas thu zhing bod skad du bsgyur ba dag kyang byung zhes gdags kyi| phyin chad gzungs sngags dang rgyud bla nas bka' stsal te| sgyur du bcug pa ma gtogs pa| sngags kyi rgyud dang| sngags kyi tshig thu zhing bsgyur du mi gnang ngo|*.

Due in part to such sentiments in the Tibetan imperial court, we in fact know little about *mahāyoga* tantric practice in Tibet during the dynastic period. The two extant imperial text catalogs, the *Denkar Catalogue* of 812 and the *Pangtang Catalog* of 842, contain the titles of a few tantras, but they are primarily of what would be considered by later classificatory schemes as *kriyā*, *caryā*, and yoga. We find no reference to tantras of the *mahāyoga* types, which are famously characterized by their violent and sexual imagery. One of the earliest historical sources, the *Testament of Wa* mentions that restrictions were placed specifically on translating the *mahāyoga* tantras.³⁸⁸ It even suggests that the imperial court feared the magical powers of the tantric master Padmasambhava, so they sent him back to India after only a short stay.³⁸⁹

Although the nature and extent of *mahāyoga* tantric practice during the dynastic period remains an open question, there are some possible hints, particularly in later non-Nyingma sources and perhaps even among the Dunhuang manuscripts. We have already seen that yoga tantras such as the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra*, which were precursors to *mahāyoga*, were current in the dynastic period and used in imperial funeral rites. As Samten Karmay has noted, the fourteenth to fifteenth century Sarma scholar Drigung Pendzin (’Bri gung Dpal ’dzin)—a vehement critic of Dzokchen—alleges that early references to Dzokchen in works such as the *Garland of Views* attributed to Padmasambhava are in fact references to *atiyoga* as the final stage of practice within *mahāyoga*. In his *Thorough Differentiation between Dharma and Non-Dharma* (*Chos dang chos ma yin pa rnam par dbye ba ’i rab tu byed pa*), he remarks that, “During the early spread of the Dharma here in Tibet, there was the practice of giving initiation of the *Guhyasamāja*, and the *Garland of*

³⁸⁸ Wangdu and Diemberger 2000, 88.

Views was composed...but among those authentic [royal] catalogs which scholars take as testimony [to the period], there is no mention of any translation of Dzokchen [scripture] at the time of the ancient translation of secret mantra of the Nyingma.”³⁹⁰ There may be some indication that the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* was current in Tibet before the emergence of the early Sarma. Sam van Schaik has noted that the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is extensively referenced and quoted throughout the Dunhuang manuscripts; in fact, IOB Tib J 438 is a nearly complete manuscript. By contrast, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* is much less represented.³⁹¹ There may also be some evidence that the version of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* preserved in the NGB is closer to the version preserved at Dunhuang than the Sarma translation in the Kangyur initially completed by Śraddhākaravarman and Rinchen Zangpo. Dan Martin notes that the full title of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* as given at the end of IOL Tib J 438 and the colophon at the end of chapter seventeen in the NGB are nearly identical; most notably, they both omit the *guhyasamāja* element which appears in the Kagyur recension’s colophon:³⁹²

Table 5: Comparing Colophons of the *Guhyasamāja Tantras* translations from Dunhuang, the Nyingma Gyübum, and the Dergé Kangyur

IOL Tib J 438 Colophon	NGB Colophon (v. 17, p. 152)	Kangyur Colophon (D 477)
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³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 52-59. At the insistence of the imperial court, the *Testament of Wa* reports, the emperor even sent assassins to kill Padmasambhava, but the latter used his powers to halt the attempt.

³⁹⁰ Karmay 2007, 141: *bod 'dir bstan pa snga dar la| gsang ba 'dus pa'i dbang bskur dang|... mkhas pa(s) dpang du byed pa yi| dkar chag khung ma de dag las| snga 'gyur gsang sngags rnying ma'i tshe| rdzogs chen bsgyur ba ma bshad do*. Drigung Pendzin refers directly to the *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalog in the lines that I have elided. If the extant version of these two catalogs are reflective of the ones Drigung Pendzin knew of, then his comments might be somewhat misleading. As we have already seen, these catalogs—or at least the recension available to us now—only mention a few lower tantras, and certainly not the *Guhyasamāja*.

³⁹¹ Sam van Schaik, “In search of the Guhyagarbha tantra,” *Early Tibet: Notes, thoughts and fragments of research on the history of Tibet*, entry posted August 27, 2007, <https://earlytibet.com/2007/08/27/in-search-of-the-guhyagarbha-tantra/> (accessed October 9, 2020).

³⁹² Martin 1987, 183-184. Martin states that he did not have access to a copy of IOL Tib J when he wrote this piece, so he was unable to make any further conclusions. However, he does point out that a comparison of randomly chosen portions of the NGB and Kangyur recensions of the *Guhyasamāsaja Tantra* differ in terms of wording and syntax. Moreover, Dalton and van Schaik, 185, note that there are discrepancies between IOL Tib J 438 and the Kangyur recension. A significant comparison of these three *Guhyasamāja Tantra* translations is warranted; this is unfortunately beyond the scope of the present work.

//de bzhIn gshegs pa thams cad kyI sku dang/gsung dang/thugs gsang zhIng rab tu gsang ba zhes bya ba 'I rtog pa chen po 'i rgyal po rdzogs so //	de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku dang gsung dang thugs gsang ba zhing rab tu gsang ba zhes bya ba rtogs pa chen po rgyal po rdzogs s+ho	de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku dang gsung dang thugs gsang chen gsang ba 'dus pa zhes bya ba rtag pa 'i rgyal po chen po rdzogs so
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Martin also notes a similar pattern between passages from different translations of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*—the NGB and Dunhuang recensions show more similarities to each other than to the translation preserved in the Kagyur. It is therefore possible that the NGB preserves older translations of some *mahāyoga* tantras from as early as late dynastic period, adding some credibility to Drigung Pendzin’s (and the Nyingma tradition’s) claim.

There is one other possible example of a *mahāyoga* tantra translation in the dynastic period *Pangtang Catalog*. Giorgios Halkias notes that this catalog records a translation of a “rNying ma tantra of the *Mahāyoga* class” called the *Tantra of the Supreme Dancer of the Yakṣas* (*Gnod sbyin gar mkhan mchog gi rgyud*, Ptm 903).³⁹³ Indeed, the *mahāyoga* section of the NGB does preserve a tantra consisting of eighteen short chapters by the same name, though there are no translators mentioned in the colophon.³⁹⁴ However, the Kangyur also has two texts that are related to each other: the *Ritual Manual of the Supreme Dancer of the Great Chief* (*Sde dpon chen po gar mkhan mchog gi brtag pa*, D 766) and a text by the same name as the one found in the NGB (*Gnod sbyin gar mkhan mchog gi rgyud*, D 767), which seems to be an explanatory tantra to D 766. According to the colophon of both of these they were translated by the Kashmiri master Dānagupta and the Tibetan translator Rapzhi Lotsāwa at the central temple of Toling; this indicates that they were translated in the

³⁹³ Halkias, 2004: 70.

³⁹⁴ *Gnod sbyin gar mkhan mchog gi rgyud*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. za, pp. 102-112 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

Kingdom of Gugé, well after the dynastic period.³⁹⁵ Neither of these bear any resemblance to the *Tantra of the Supreme Dancer of the Yakṣas* from the NGB. It is therefore unclear exactly what text the *Pangtang Catalog* is referring to, though it remains possible that it is referring to a *mahāyoga* tantra. At this point, a more definitive conclusion on the matter will have to await further study.

Though the Age of Fragmentation was a time of great religious creativity, especially in terms of tantric ritual, *mahāyoga* would again be subject to censorship in the kingdom of Gugé (*Gu ge*) in western Tibet. The kings of Gugé traced their royal lineage to the Pugyal Dynasty through Ösung, who fled westward after the death of Üdumtsen. The most famous of these kings was Yeshé Ö (*Ye shes 'od*, tenth to eleventh-century), whose devotion to the Dharma was so great that he eventually ordained as a monk. He may be credited with reawakening Buddhism in Tibet by dispatching the translator Rinchen Zangpo (*Rin chen bzang po*, 958-1055) to Kashmir and other places in India to bring back Buddhist scriptures. In response to tantric practitioners apparently run amok in his kingdom, Yeshé Ö issued an ordinance (*bka' shog*) condemning practices such as sexual rites (*sbyor*) and ritual killing (*sgrol*), both of which are explained in the GT and other *mahāyoga* tantras. He states: “Heretical tantras, pretending to be Buddhist, are also widespread in Tibet. These have brought harm to kingdom in the following ways: ... As the ‘sexual rite’ has become popular different classes of people are mixed...As the ritual of sacrifice has become popular, it happens that people are ‘delivered’ alive.”³⁹⁶ More recent scholarship, however, suggests that Yeshé Ö held a somewhat more nuanced view of *mahāyoga* tantric practice. Jacob

³⁹⁵ *Mahāyākṣasenapati-nartakapara-kalpa*, *Sde dpon chen po gar mkhan mchog gi brtag pa*, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, D 766, *Rgyud wa*, ff. 69a-81b, and *Gnod sbyin gar mkhan mchog gyi rgyud*, *Sde dge bka' 'gyur*, D 767, *Rgyud wa*, 81b-88b. The colophon of the D 766 states: ||rgya gar gyi mkhan po dā na gupta zhes bya ba spyod mdzad chos kyi rdo rje'i slob ma dngos las rab zhi lo tsā bas tho ling du bsgyur ba'o||. The colophon of D 767 provides the additional detail that Dānagupta is a scholar from Kashmir (*ka che'i mkhas pa*).

Dalton notes that in recently discovered manuscripts of Yeshé Ö's writings such as the *Blue Scroll* (*Dril sngon*) Yeshé Ö states, "As for those who already have studied, and have faith in, the path of *Mahāyoga*, how could it ever be suitable for them, who have such faith in that, now to give it up? [So] they must continue to strive earnestly at cultivating [that path], in accordance with the scriptures."³⁹⁷ Dalton makes it clear that Yeshé Ö's primary concern was the establishment of orthodox monasticism and Mahāyāna Buddhism with the goal of consolidating the kingdom under the rule of law.

In 1092, another member of the Gugé royal family, the prince and translator Zhiwa Ö (Pho brang zhi ba 'od, eleventh century) issued his own ordinance against texts which were, in his estimation, not of Indian origin but "written by Tibetans themselves."³⁹⁸ He lists many *mahāyoga* tantras—including the GT and several tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle—and their commentaries, including, perhaps, *An Orderly Arrangement of the Path* and other texts associated with Buddhagupta.³⁹⁹ He also lists more orthodox tantras such as the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana*, despite it being recorded in the dynastic *Denkar Catalog*. This period marks the beginning of intense scrutiny of the proto-Nyingma school's main scriptures and doctrine. Early Kadam scholars such as Rinchen Zangpo and Gö Lotāwa Khukpa Lhetsé (Mgos/'Gos Lo tsā ba Khug pa Lhas btsas, eleventh century) would go on pen broadsides against what they perceived as false teachings; chief among the scripture they criticized were

³⁹⁶ Samten Karmay, "The Ordinance of lHa Bla-ma Ye-Shes-'od," in *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet*, (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Print, 2009), 10-11

³⁹⁷ Jacob P. Dalton, "Power and Compassion: Negotiating Buddhist Kingship in Tenth-Century Tibet," in *The Illuminating Mirror: Tibetan Studies in Honour of Per K. Sørensen on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, ed. Olaf Czaja and Guntram Hazod (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2015), 104: *rnal 'byor chen po'i lam sngar thos shing yid ches ste de la mos pa rnams kyis phyis dpang [spang] du ga la rung| gzhung dang mthun par bsgom pa la nan tan bgyid 'tshal*.

³⁹⁸ Samten Karmay, "An Open Letter by Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od," in *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals, and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Print, 2009), 31.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 32.

the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. I shall explore these criticism and the responses to them in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the works of the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta, particularly *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Paths*, is the principle source from the NKM on *mahāyoga* thought and practice. I have also suggested that the eightfold tantric doxography from *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* may have been a source of later doxographies such as those found in *Garland of Views* and *Blazing Palace*. I then provided a general overview of the core *mahāyoga* tantras found in the NKM, emphasizing how the two *mahāyoga* exegetical traditions—the Zur and the Longchenpa traditions, organized and categorized these tantras. In the end, however, though there were some general trends depending on the interpretive tradition (i.e., Zur vs. Longchenpa), Nyingma authors tended to be idiosyncratic in their listing of the *mahāyoga* tantras. Finally, I explored the criticism and restrictions that the *mahāyoga* tantras faced both during the dynastic period and in the early medieval western Tibetan kingdom of Gugé. There is still a monumental amount of scholarly work to be done on Nyingma *mahāyoga*. The vast majority of the *mahāyoga* tantras in the NKM mentioned in this chapter—including most of the tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle—remain unstudied and untranslated. Until these receive the scholarly attention they deserve, our understanding of the early development of *mahāyoga* will remain fragmentary.

Chapter IV. Buddhagupta and the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in Tibet

In the Nyingma tradition, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* (GT)⁴⁰⁰ is considered the root, which is to say, the most important, of the eight tantras in the *Māyājāla* cycle and is also said to summarize the meaning of all the *mahāyoga* tantras in general. Indeed, as Steven Weingerber has noted, the GT is “the tantra that came to be understood in Nyingma traditions as the very embodiment of a tantra per se, of what a tantra is,”⁴⁰¹ in its view and approach to tantric deity practice and ritual. While contemporary scholarship has questioned the provenance of the Buddhagupta’s GT-based *mahāyoga* commentaries, the GT itself has generally been accepted as an authentically Indian tantra. Among traditional Tibetan scholars, the case has often been the opposite—the GT has been the subject of significant criticism. As a way for the proto-Nyingma masters to distinguish their tantric system from that of the Sarma Schools that emerged in the eleventh century, the GT became a target of Sarma polemicists beginning in the tenth century. Some Sarma scholars alleged that the GT was not an authentic Indian tantra but rather a Tibetan forgery. According to Nyingma sources, the GT has a close connection with Buddhagupta. Indeed, the GT serves as the basis of Buddhagupta’s *Brief Explanation of the Path* and *An Orderly Arrangement of the Path*, but the Nyingma tradition also includes Buddhagupta in its list of GT lineage masters and even holds that he worked on an early Tibetan translation of the GT.

This chapter examines several issues concerning the GT and their connection to Buddhagupta. Following a general introduction to the content and history of GT, I examine Buddhagupta’s GT-related legacies in Tibet. Following that, I delve into the debates in Tibet about the provenance of the GT, highlighting the role of Buddhagupta’s works in these

⁴⁰⁰ *Śrī-guhyā-garbha-tattva-viniścaya, Dpal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid rnam par nges pa*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 832, Rnying rgyud *kha*, 110b-132a.

⁴⁰¹ Weinberger 2003, 223.

deliberations. Finally, I delve into two related though relatively unexplored issues related to the GT: the thirteenth century discovery and translation of a Sanskrit manuscript of the GT, and the accusation that the GT contains sporadic insertions (*'phyong* or *'chong*) from other tantras. Since Buddhagupta is central to the GT's reception in Tibet, these two issues involve him as well.

Overview of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*: Content and History

The *Guhyagarbha Tantra* is an immensely dense text (despite being only twenty-two folios in the Dergé Kangyur) with a complex editorial history and a long, rich commentarial tradition. There have been several extensive studies, most notably those of Nathaniel Garson and Gyurme Dorje,⁴⁰² and an important early essay by Dan Martin.⁴⁰³ The goal of this section is to provide an introduction to the GT's structure, themes, and history, and to provide context for Buddhagupta's connections to the GT and some of the textual issues explored in the rest of this chapter.

Contemporary scholarship has yet to come to a consensus about the tantra's Sanskrit title, which is in large part due to the fact that a Sanskrit version of the text has not come to light in contemporary times. All the available Tibetan translations of the GT in both the Kangyur and in the Nyingma Gyübum (NGB) provide a Sanskrit title for this text, though some scholars have hesitated to accept the Sanskrit title's authenticity. The Sanskrit title given in the canonical recensions of the GT is *Śrīguhyagarbha-tattva-viniścaya* (*Dpal gsang ba snying po de kho na nyid rnam par nges pa*), or in English *The Glorious Secret Nucleus—Ascertainment of Reality*. In their recent works, Jacob Dalton and James Gentry place an asterisk (*) in front of “*Guhyagarbha Tantra*” indicating that it may be a Sanskrit

⁴⁰² Garson 2004.

reconstruction of Tibetan *Rgyud gsang ba'i snying po*.⁴⁰⁴ Alexis Sanderson has proposed that the true Sanskrit title of this tantra is *Guhyakośa*, since a reference to a text by this title is found in the received Sanskrit version of Vilāsavajra's *Nāmamantrārthāvalokini*,⁴⁰⁵ and perhaps also Bhavabhaṭṭa's *Cakrasaṃvarapañjikā*.⁴⁰⁶ Anthony Tribe notes that there is one other possible attestations of *Guhyagarbha*: the Sanskrit title of Vilāsavajra's commentary in the Peking Tengyur: *Mahārāja-tantra-śrīguhyagarbha-nāma-ṭīkā* (*Rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal gsang ba'i snying po 'i 'grel pa*, Q 4718).⁴⁰⁷ By this logic, there are two more attestations: the Peking Tengyur's anonymous *Vajrasattva-māyājāla-tantra-śrīguhyagarbha-nāma-cakṣuṣ-ṭīkā* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgyud dpal gsang ba'i snying po zhes bya ba'i spyān 'grel pa*, Q 4756), a commentary sometimes attributed to Buddhagupta that I shall discuss below, and the Sanskrit title from a late translation of the GT preserved in the Phukdrak Kangyur, *Śrī-guhyagarbha-tattvaviniścaya-mahātantra*. It is most likely that the examples from the Tengyur may be reconstructions. Nevertheless, I have chosen not to use an asterisk, as the Sanskrit word *Guhyagarbha* is attested in the bilingual Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary of the tenth-century from Dunhuang, PT 849, a text I discussed in chapter two. It contains the rough phonetic transliteration of the Sanskrit *gu ya kar rba tan tra* in Tibetan script with the parallel Tibetan translation, *rgyud gsang ba'i snying po*.⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰³ Martin 1987.

⁴⁰⁴ See Dalton 2016 and Gentry, 2016.

⁴⁰⁵ Mayer 1996, 142 n. 29. I have not been able to obtain a copy of the source for this argument, an unpublished handout from a lecture that Sanderson gave at the University of Leiden in 1995.

⁴⁰⁶ Alexis Sanderson, "The Śaiva Age—The Rise and Dominance of Śaivism during the Early Medieval Period," in *Genesis and Development of Tantrism*, ed. Shingo Einoo (Tokyo: Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 2009), 136 n.384. To be clear, only the title *Guhyakośa* is mentioned; there are no quotes from this text in these works by Vilāsavajra and Bhavabhaṭṭa.

⁴⁰⁷ Tribe 2016, 16 n.36.

⁴⁰⁸ Hackin 1924, 7. It is certainly possible that the author of PT 849 fabricated the name, though in the same lists, he does render the Sanskrit titles to other tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* ('*gu jya sa ma ja* for *gsang ba 'dus pa*).

The GT itself, as we have noted, is the root tantra of the entire *Māyājāla* cycle, and the shortest of three *Guhyagarbha* tantras. It consists of twenty-two chapters that describe two different mandalas and their associated mantras, initiations, ritual activities and meditations.⁴⁰⁹ The main speaker of the tantra is a Buddha called Tathāgata Great Joy (De bzhin gshegs pa Dgyes pa chen po), also referred to as Samantabhadra (Kun tu bzang po). The first fourteen chapters focus on a peaceful mandala of forty-two deities:⁴¹⁰

- Samantabhadra and his consort Samantabhadrī in sexual union are the main figures of the mandala (2 deities)
- The Five Tathāgatas and their female consorts in union,⁴¹¹ symbolizing the five aggregates and the five elements respectively, in the center of the mandala (10)
- Eight male and eight female bodhisattvas in union, with the male bodhisattvas symbolizing the four sense consciousnesses plus the four sense organs, and female bodhisattvas symbolizing the four sense objects and the four times (16)⁴¹²
- Four male guardians and their female consorts, symbolizing four aspects of the sense of touch and four antidotes to wrong views respectively, situated in the four cardinal directions (4)⁴¹³

⁴⁰⁹ For concise summaries of each individual chapter's contents, see Garson 281-360.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 295-303.

⁴¹¹ In the GT, the typical names of the Five Tathāgatas (Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha and Amoghasiddhi) their consorts (Dhātviśvarī, Māmakī, Locanā, Pāṇḍarā, and Tārā) are not used. Instead, the Five Tathāgatas appear as the King of Consciousness (Rnam par bshad pa'i rgyal po), King of Form (Gzugs gyi rgyal po), King of Sensation (Tshor ba'i rgyal po), King of Perception ('Du shes kyi rgyal po), and King of Formation ('Du byed kyi rgyal po). As for which of these correspond to the traditional names, the Nyingma commentarial tradition is split on whether Vairocana and Akṣobhya are King of Consciousness and King of Form respectively or vice versa. The female consorts are not named in the GT at all.

⁴¹² The eight male bodhisattvas are Kṣitigarbha, Vajrapāṇi, Ākāśagarbha, Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Nivāraṇaviṣkambhin, and Mañjuśrī. Their female consorts are, respectively, Lāsyā, Gītā, Mālā, Nṛtyā, Dhūpā, Puṣpā, Ālokā, and Gandhā. As with the Five Tathāgatas, these sixteen bodhisattvas have alternate names in the GT: Vajra Seeing (Rdo rje mthong ba), Vajra Hearing (Rdo rje thos pa), Vajra Smelling (Rdo rje snom pa), Vajra Tasting (Rdo rje myong ba), Vajra Seer (Rdo rje mthong byed), Vajra Hearer (Rdo rje thos byed), Vajra Smeller (Rdo rje snom byed), and Vajra Taster (Rdo rje myong byed); Seen (Mthong bar bya ba), Heard

- Six sages (*thubpa drug*), symbolizing the six realms of cyclic existence (6)⁴¹⁴

=42 total peaceful deities

Chapters fifteen to twenty-one focus on a wrathful mandala of fifty-eight deities:⁴¹⁵

- The Five Tathāgatas in union with their female consorts in wrathful forms (10)⁴¹⁶
- Eight solitary wrathful female deities called Mātārī, which correspond to the eight male bodhisattvas of the peaceful mandala (8)
- Eight solitary, wrathful female deities called Piśacī, which correspond to the eight female bodhisattvas (8)
- Four female guardians, who symbolize the four immeasurables (4)
- Twenty-eight unnamed Īsvarī goddesses at the edge of the mandala (28)

= 58 total wrathful deities

Chapter twenty-two closes the text with instructions about entrustment of the practices to worthy lineage holders. This configuration of one hundred total peaceful and wrathful deities of the GT became well-known in Tibetan though their use in Karma Lingpa's treasure cycle *The Profound Teaching of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Self-Liberation of the Enlightened Intent* (*Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol*), from which the so-called *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (or rather *The Great Liberation through Hearing in The*

(Mnyan par bya ba), Smelled (Bsnam par bya ba), Tasted (Myong bar bya ba), Past ('Das pa), Present (Da ltar), Indefinite ('Byung ba), and Future (Ma byon pa).

⁴¹³ The male guardians are Vajra Touch (Rdo rje reg pa) Vajra Toucher (Rdo rje reg byed), Vajra Tangible Object (Rdo rje reg bya) and Vajra Touch Consciousness (Rdo rje reg shes); their consorts are: Impermanent (Rtga par ma yin pa), Unannihilated (Chad par ma yin pa), Non-Self (Bdag tu ma yin pa), and Signless (Mthsan mar yin pa). They are more commonly know as Amṛtakuṇḍalin, Hayagrīva, Mahābala, Yamāntaka, Aṅkuśī, Pāśī, Śṛṅkhalā and Ghṇṭā.

⁴¹⁴ The six sages are not given names in the GT, but as Garson notes, NSTB gives the following list: Indra, Vemacitra, Śākyamuni, Siṃha, Jvālamukha, and Yama.

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 350-353.

Intermediary State, Bar do thos grol chen mo) is derived. The other two GTs in forty-six (*Dpal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*)⁴¹⁷ and eighty two chapters (*Gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*, D 834),⁴¹⁸ which may be later compositions, are considered to be elaborations of the root GT. Indeed, as Gryume Dorjé has demonstrated, the twenty two chapters of the root GT correspond to chapters in both the forty-six and eighty-two chapter GTs.⁴¹⁹ That said, these two longer tantras seem to have been less well-studied and commented upon in Tibet. Longchenpa claims, for example, that the longer versions of the tantra were kept secret, since they more fully elaborated upon the wrathful rites of the root GT and were considered inappropriate for most practitioners.⁴²⁰

The generation stage (*bskyed rim*) practices described in the GT are classically *mahāyoga* tantric in that they incorporate elements of sex and violence with the techniques of the outer tantras—visualization of deities arrayed in a mandala and of seed syllables and other forms in the body, the use of mantras and *mudrās*, and rituals such as *homa* (*sbyin sreg*, or fire offerings). There are several chapters of the GT to highlight at this point to demonstrate this. Chapter eleven, titled “Mandala of the Assembly” (*Tshogs kyi dkyil 'khor*), describes the rite of sexual union (*sbyor*):

Differentiating between goddess, *nāginīs*, and women of ignoble birth,
 Or otherwise not differentiating between them [as consorts],
 There are the [rites of] Service, Intimate Service,
 Evocation, and Great Evocation.
 In the mandala of the lotus [i.e., vagina] of the female consort,
 The mandala of blissful *bodhicitta* is emitted.

⁴¹⁶ These deities are not named in the tantra but are referred to by their Buddha families (i.e., Tathāgata, Vajra, Jewel, Lotus, and Action) followed by the appellation *Heruka* for the male deities and *Mahākrodhīśvarī* for the female deities.

⁴¹⁷ *Dpal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, pp. 317-415 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975). Unlike the eighty-two chapter GT, the forty-six chapter GT is not preserved in the Tengyur.

⁴¹⁸ *Gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 834, *Rnying rgyud kha*, ff. 198b-298b.

⁴¹⁹ Dorje 1987, 50-57.

⁴²⁰ Dorje 2016, xlv.

Through the supreme gift of enjoyment and equanimity
 Made to the buddhas amassed like clouds without exception, [the deities] dissolve.
 The essences of the sun and moon—the essence of accomplishment—
 Are received through vajra-tongues into the mandala.
 One will be transformed into a sky-walker, radiant, blazing with life, and so on,
 A lord of wish-fulfilling clouds.⁴²¹

Although the text is quite clear, the commentarial traditions make it evident that the male practitioner is to engage in amorous play with an actual female consort, who is to be visualized as a female deity, culminating in sexual union and the mingling of their sexual fluids.⁴²² The importance of these practices in the commentarial tradition is evidenced by the fact that these very lines are paraphrased in chapter 6 of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, where Buddhagupta elaborates on the rite of sexual union. The very next set of verses in the GT describes the rite of liberation (*sgrol*) involving the summoning the consciousnesses of demonic forces through visualization and mantra, binding them to an effigy, and then ritually killing them. The violent aspects of the GT, however, are clearer later in the tantra.

Chapter fifteen of the GT, “Emanation of the Cloud-like Mandala of a Wrathful Nature” (Khro bo rang bzhin gyi dkyil ’khor gyi sprin rnam par spros pa), retells the story of the subjugation of Maheśvara (i.e., the Hindu god Śiva) in his demonic form of Rudra by the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, but in an intensified way. This story is first found in the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha*, an important yoga tantra precursor to the GT. In this text, as the members of the retinue of the mandala begin emanating other deities, Vajrapāṇi hesitates due to the presence of unwelcome beings such as Maheśvara. Vairocana, one of the principle

⁴²¹ GT, D 832, f. 122a5-6: *[lha mo klu mo rigs ngan mo||dbye ’am yang na mi dbye bar||bsnyen pa dang ni nye bsnyen dang ||sgrub pa dang ni sgrub chen po||yum gyi padma ’i dkyil ’khor du||bde ba thugs kyi dkyil ’khor spro||sangs rgyas sprin tshogs ma lus la||dgye mnyam mchog gi sbyin pas bstim||sgrub pa ’i nyi zla snying po ste||dkyil ’khor rdo rje lce yis blang ||mkha’ ’gro gsal ’bar tshe la sogs||yid bzhin sprin gyi bdag por ’gyur].*

⁴²² Dorje 2016, 434-436. Compare this to the description of sexual rites in the GT-related ritual manuals from Dunhuang such as IOL Tib J 332/1 studied in Dalton 2004, 9, where it is unambiguous that a physical consort is called for by the ritual.

characters of the text, utters a mantra, forcing Maheśvara to appear before the gathering of deities, and demands his submission to the Buddhadharmā. Maheśvara refuses and threatens them with his wrathful form of Rudra, but Vairocana and Vajrapāṇi utter another mantra causing Maheśvara to die and his retinue to writhe in pain. Maheśvara is revived, but still refuses to submit, so Vajrapāṇi tramples Maheśvara and his consort Umā underfoot. Maheśvara's consciousness is then sent to a pure land where he attains Buddhahood, and finally he and his entire retinue are placed in the mandala.

The GT features a more violent version of this narrative. After establishing that Maheśvara was a fallen tantric practitioner in a previous life, Tathāgata Great Joy (Dgyes pa chen po) emanates a host of wrathful female deities who join in sexual union with their male consorts and cause the universe to shake and Rudra and his retinue to faint. All the deities in the mandala then transform into their wrathful *heruka* forms and take the unconscious bodies of Rudra and his retinue as mounts. After waking up, Rudra and company remain obdurate, so the wrathful Buddhist deities pull out their entrails, dismember their bodies, and begin feasting on their flesh. The Buddhist deities then defecate the remains of Rudra and his retinue. The resulting cesspool is consumed by the deity Ucchuṣmakhrodha transforming the Hindu deities into submissive subjects who profess their allegiance and are granted initiation.⁴²³ A similarly violent story is retold in the *Tantra of the Twelve Pegs (Phur pa bcu gnyis kyi rgyud)*,⁴²⁴ which features Vajrakīla as the main Buddhist deity of the narrative, and in an expanded form in the *Sutra Gathering the Intentions of All the Buddhas*, where it spans eleven chapters.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Garson, 345-350.

⁴²⁴ See Mayer 1998.

⁴²⁵ See Dalton 2011, 159-206 for a translation of the relevant chapters, and Dalton 2016, 2-9 and 19-26 for a discussion of its place in the *Gathering of Intentions*

Finally, although the GT is mostly concerned with classic tantric elements, it does contain notions that contributed to the development of the Nyingma category of Atiyoga or Dzokchen. In the GT’s chapter thirteen, “Essence of the Exceedingly Secret Pith Instruction” (*shin tu gsang ba man ngag gi snying po*), Samantabhadra, in the form of Great Joy, enters into a state of meditative absorption on the essence of the most secret precept—that all phenomena are spontaneously present in the primordial great perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*). Great Joy continues speaking the rest of the chapter in verse, and for much of it, the mandala of enlightened deities is equated with the mind of the practitioner in statements such as the somewhat cryptic: “Through the mandala endowed with a mandala, meditate on the mandala in the mandala. The mandala arises from the mandala. The mandala of the enlightened mind is supreme mandala.”⁴²⁶ Regardless of these potentially proto-Dzokchen undertones, Garson notes that the GT remains firmly rooted in the *mahāyoga* tantric tradition. The text does not contain references to practices of Trekchö (*khregs chod*, “breaking through”) and Tögel (*thod rgal*, “leaping over”), which developed long after the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* was composed. And the rest of the chapter goes on to emphasize the importance of the sexual practices explained in chapter 11.⁴²⁷ On the other hand, chapter thirteen of the GT is the basis of the famous commentary *Garland of Views—A Pith Instruction* which is attributed to Padmasambhava and is often cited as a source for the Nyingma School’s nine vehicle doxography, the pinnacle of which is Atiyoga.⁴²⁸

It is important to note that although the Nyingma tradition does have a GT-based tradition of perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*) practices emphasizing the manipulation and control of the subtle body—the energetic channels, winds, and essential drops (*rtsa rlung thig le*)—

⁴²⁶ GT, D 832, 123b6-7: |*dkyil 'khor ldan pa'i dkyil 'khor gyis*||*dkyil 'khor la ni dkyil 'khor bsgom*||*dkyil 'khor dkyil 'khor las byung ba'i*||*thugs kyi dkyil 'khor dkyil 'khor mchog* |.

⁴²⁷ Garson 338-339.

such techniques are not described in the root GT, but rather in other *Māyājāla* Tantras and in the commentarial tradition. The development of such practices in the context of *mahāyoga* are crucial to the dating of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Path* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, so they will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The GT is one of the single most commented upon of the Nyingma tantras—it enjoys many commentaries by both Indian and Tibetan authors too numerous to list here. Of the ones by Indian authors, the most influential include the *Extensive Explanation* (*Rgya cher bshad pa'i 'grel pa*, Q 4719) attributed to Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, the *Blazing Palace* (*Spar khab*, Q 4718) attributed to Vilāsavajra, *A Summary of the Meaning* (*Gsang ba'i snying po'i don bsdus 'grel pa*, Q 4755) attributed to Vimalamitra, and finally *Eye Commentary* (*Spyan 'grel*, Q 4756), which is variously attributed to Buddhagupta or Vimalamitra. Some of the main Tibetan commentaries include Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo's (Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po, 1012-1088) *Jewel Commentary* (*Dkon mchog 'grel pa*), Longchenpa's *Dispelling the Darkness in the Ten Direction* (*phyogs bzhu mun sel*), Lochen Dharmaśrī's (Lo chen Dharmaśrī, 1654-1717) *Oral Instruction of the Lord of Secrets* (*Gsang bdag zhal lung*), and Jikmé Tenpé Nyima's ('Jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1865-1926) *Key to the Treasury* (*Mdzod kyi dle mig*).

Although the GT has been somewhat difficult to date, scholars generally accept that it is the product of the eighth century, given its similarity to tantras that date from around the same period such as the *Tattvasamgraha* and the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. Stephen Hodge seems to suggest that the GT dates to the early eighth century, given several instances of the phrase *gsang ba'i snying po* in the continuation tantra (*utatantra*, *phyi ma'i rgyud*) of the MVT, for which he proposes a date of around 711-714 based on astrological calculations

⁴²⁸ Garson, 137.

found in the text. Hodge also proposes that the GT predates the other tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle and even the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.⁴²⁹ In his remarks on the relationship between yoga tantra and *mahāyoga* tantra, Steven Weinberger, proposes that the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*—which also refers to a sixth Buddhas beyond the common five, but with Mahāvairocana in this position—marks a transitional period between the yoga tantric MVT and the GT. Although he does not propose a date for the GT, Weinberger places the earliest versions of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* to the first half of the eighth century, implying that the GT was developed after this period.⁴³⁰ Nathaniel Garson proposes that the GT emerged as part of the canon of eighteen *mahāyoga* tantras and was most likely composed in the mid-eighth century in Eastern India.⁴³¹ Garson’s dating of the emergence of the GT coincides with Hodge’s dating of Buddhagupta’s MVT commentaries of *circa* 760, in the early years of the reign of Tri Songdetsen and when, as Hodge surmises, Buddhagupta was living near Mount Kailash. In terms of its presence and influence in imperial period Tibet, Sam van Schaik has suggested that the importance placed on the GT by Nyingma sources might be somewhat exaggerated, since the GT seems to be less well-represented in the Dunhuang manuscripts

⁴²⁹ This Continuation Tantra is a seven-chapter work included the canonical translation of the MVT, which was translated by Śilendrabodhi and Kawa Peltsek most likely in the early ninth century. Buddhagupta’s commentaries on the MVT, which Hodge dates to around 760, do not comment on this Continuation Tantra. Buddhagupta does reproduce a lengthy quote from a text he refers to as MVT Continuation Tantra in the extensive commentary, though the quote is not to be found in the later Tibetan translation of the work. Hodge actually proposes several possible dates for the Continuation Tantra: 682, 711, and 740. Hodge’s calculation of these dates are based on the Continuation Tantra’s discussion of the planet Saturn’s 29 Earth-year journey through the celestial houses, which is one of the ways of calculating the appropriate time for tantric rites of destruction. He ultimately concludes, albeit tentatively, that the canonical recension of the Continuation Tantra in the MVT predates Buddhagupta. If the references to a *gsang ba’i snying po* in the Continuation Tantra do refer to the GT, and since Buddhagupta seems to have been unaware of the Continuation Tantra preserved in the Kangyur, might a later date for the MVT Continuation Tantra—perhaps 740—be more likely? See Hodge 14, 17, 538-539, and 560-561.

⁴³⁰ Weinberger, 245.

⁴³¹ Garson, 425.

than, for example, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, which appears as a nearly complete manuscript in IOL Tib J 438, and is mentioned more often in other manuscripts.⁴³²

Buddhagupta and the GT Lineage in Tibet

According to the Nyingma tradition, Buddhagupta had an active role in the translation and transmission of the GT to Tibet. The renowned treasure revealer Jikmé Lingpa (’Jigs med gling pa, 1730-1798) write in his catalog to the NGB that the GT was translated into Tibetan three times; first by Buddhagupta and Vairocana, then by Padmasambhava and Nyak Jñānakumāra, and then finally—and definitely—by Vimalamitra, Ma Rinchen Chok, and again Nyak Jñānakumāra.⁴³³ It is worth noting that Nyak Jñānakumāra is also listed as the translator in the colophon of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. Though the details of Buddhagupta’s biography are far from certain, most Tibetan hagiographic narratives portray Buddhagupta as having had significant interactions with a number of other dynastic period Tibetan figures such as Wa Mañjuśrīvarma and Drenka Mūlakośa, both of whom are listed as translators in the colophons of other works attributed to Buddhagupta. Moreover, the Nyingma School considers Buddhagupta a lineage holder of the GT who received the initiations and teachings from Vilāsavajra in Oḍḍiyāna. Vilāsavajra himself is said to have received the transmission from Gomadevī, who was said to have been present at the initial revelation of the *Māyājāla* tantras. Some sources place Buddhagupta even closer to the revelation of the *Māyājāla* cycle, proposing that both Buddhagupta and Vilāsavajra were students of Gomadevī, the daughter of Indrabhūti.⁴³⁴ Buddhagupta is said to

⁴³² Van Schaik, 2007.

⁴³³ Dorje 1987, 80.

⁴³⁴ Garson, 173.

have transmitted the GT to Vimalamitra.⁴³⁵ The Nyingma School also consider Buddhagupta to be the third of the seven canonical transmissions (*bka' babs bdun*), a list of lineages held in the Nyingma School to date to the imperial period.⁴³⁶

There is a close intertextual relationship between the GT and the two major treatises of Buddhagupta examined in this dissertation. Although neither of Buddhagupta's texts cite the GT directly, there are several instances in which lines from the GT⁴³⁷ appear in these texts, with some variance (and in some cases verbatim) but without attribution. Kammie Takahashi has pointed out the following example (one of several, in fact), comparing lines from chapter two of the GT and chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*:⁴³⁸

Table 6: A Comparison of Passages from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*

<i>Guhyagarbha Tantra</i> , D 832. f. 112b3-4	<i>An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths</i> , Q 4736, f. 470b4
<i>sus kyang ma bcings bcings med de bcing bar bya ba yod ma yin rnam rtog bdag tu 'dzin pa yis nan gyis mkha' la mdud pa 'dor bcings med rnam par grol med pa 'i ye nas lhun rdzogs sangs rgyas chos bstan phyir spro ba sna tshogs mdzad </i>	<i>sus kyang ma bcings bcings med de bcing bar bya ba yod ma yin bcings med rnam par grol med pas grol bar mi 'dod bcings dang bral </i>
“No binder, no binding, nothing to be bound. By grasping egocentrically at conceptual thought, one ties and unties knots in the sky. In order to teach the primordial, spontaneous, and perfect Dharma of the Buddhas, in which there is neither binding nor liberation, various emanations are created.”	“No binder, no binding, Nothing to be bound Unbounded, and unliberated— Not desiring liberation, one is freed from bounds.”

Takahashi suggests that instances like these reflect the originally oral nature of texts like *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, which make no secret of the fact that they were probably

⁴³⁵ Gruber, 26-28 and 138.

⁴³⁶ Germano 2002, 227-229. Nyingma authors vary on the Indian masters named in these lists. The notion of seven canonical transmissions is attributed to Rongzom, but the original source text seem not to be extant. According to a history by Kyenrab Gyatso (Mkhyan rab rgya mtsho, sixteenth century) titles *Garland of Jewels* (*Nor bu phreng ba*), Rongzom's list of seven are: 1) Padmasambhava, 2) Śāntigarbha, 3) Buddhaguhya (whom I have been referring to as Buddhagupta), 4) Hūṃkāra, 5) Śrīsiṃha with Vairocana, 6) Prajñāvarman with Dānaśīla, and 7) Vimalamitra .

⁴³⁷ As we shall see, the *Brief Explanation of the Paths* also contains nearly verbatim, uncited passages from other tantras of the *Māyājā* cycle.

oral instructions (man ngag) written down by disciples; in essence, Takahashi implies that the speaker/author of the original text was riffing on these lines from the GT. Whatever the case, either the author—purportedly Buddhagupta—was intimately familiar with the GT or parts of the GT were compiled in Tibet from a number of sources.⁴³⁹ There are also nearly verbatim passages shared between the GT, Buddhagupta’s texts, the *Lamp for the Mind* attributed to the imperial period Tibetan *mahāyoga* master Pelyang (Dpal dbyang), and in some cases other GT-based canonical commentaries; these will be explored in further detail in the next chapter. The GT was indeed accused of being a Tibetan composition or it was claimed that certain passages were inserted into the GT by Tibetan translators from other texts, though the overlapping lines between the GT and Buddhagupta’s work were never part of those debates.

Some Nyingma sources register a commentary by Buddhagupta focused specifically on the GT, though it is unclear exactly which text is being referred to. Dūjom Rinpoché, for example, mentions a text called *Explanatory Commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra* (*Gsang ba snying po la ’grel ba rnam bshad kyi ’grel*) in a listing of composition by Buddhagupta.⁴⁴⁰ This text has either been lost or remains unidentified, however.⁴⁴¹ On the other hand, in his famous commentary on the GT, Longchenpa quotes from a work by Buddhagupta called *The Eye Commentary* (*Spyan ’grel*),⁴⁴² but Dūjom Rinpoché attributes this text to Vimalamitra,⁴⁴³ leading us yet again to another Buddhagupta-Vimalamitra confusion. Fortunately, *The Eye Commentary*, whose full title is *The Eye Commentary on the*

⁴³⁸ Takahashi 2015: 1 and n.1-2.

⁴³⁹ This latter possibility is made in light of José I. Cabezón’s suggestion regarding a similar case between lines from *An Orderly Arrangement of the paths* (incidentally, also from chapter two of the work) and the longer *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in eighty-two chapters. See Cabezón 2013, 22 n. 37.

⁴⁴⁰ NSTB, 466.

⁴⁴¹ Dorje 1987, 1495-1496.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*, 367.

⁴⁴³ NSTB 481.

*Guhyagarbha Tantra of Vajrasattva's Net of Illusion (Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i rgyud dpal gsang ba'i snying po'i spyan 'grel, Q 4756)*⁴⁴⁴ is preserved in both the Tengyur and in the NKM and warrants a closer look.

The *Eye Commentary* itself is rather lengthy, consisting of thirty-three chapters. None of the extant versions mentions an author or translator in the colophons, but the canonical recensions and the NKM recensions differ in one significant way: the canonical versions consist of annotations (*mchan*). These annotations are not found in NKM recensions. Therefore, the title of the text, *Eye Commentary (Spyan 'grel*, pronounced “*chen drel*”), may originally have been *Annotation Commentary (Mchan 'grel*, but also pronounced “*chen drel*”).⁴⁴⁵ It is also not immediately apparent that *The Eye Commentary* is a comment on the root text GT. And in this regard, it differs from the two other major purportedly Indian commentaries on GT, the *Extensive Explanation* attributed to Sūryaprabhāsiṃha and the *Blazing Palace* attributed to Vilāsavajra. Both of these commentaries a) incorporate most if not all of the root text into body of the commentary, and b) consist of 22 chapters, with each chapter commenting on the corresponding one in the GT. *The Eye Commentary*, by contrast, seems to take a thematic approach to explaining the GT, and it quotes from other *Māyājāla* cycle texts such as eighty-two chapter GT and the *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra* to elucidate points from the root tantra.

Together with Vilāsavajra's *Blazing Palace*, Buddahgupta's *Explanatory Commentary*—unknown under this title, but perhaps the same as *The Eye Commentary*—is

⁴⁴⁴ As with the other *mahāyoga* works attributed to Buddahgupta, it is only found in G, N, and Q, and is also preserved in the NKM. I consulted the version from the Kaḥtok Monastery edition of the NKM: *Rdo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i rgyud dpal gsang ba'i snying po zhe bya ba'i spyan 'grel*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgya pa*, vol. 80 [wu], pp. 237-724 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog Mkhan po 'jam dbyangs, 1999). This recension does not name an author.

⁴⁴⁵ In other words *mchan 'grel* was at some point rendered incorrectly as *spyan 'grel*. Consequently, this implies that the Sanskrit title of the work mentioned *supra* was retrotranslated as *caḥṣuṣṭīkā*. My thanks to José I. Cabezón for this helpful suggestion.

the backbone the Zur tradition (*Zur lugs*) of GT exegesis, as opposed to the Rong-Long system of Rongzom and Longchenpa, which is said to follow the commentary of Sūryaprabhāsiṃha. The Zur tradition has its roots in the three ancestors of the Zur clan (*zur mes dbon gsum*): Zurchen Śākya Jungné (*Zur chen Śākya 'byung gnas*, 1002 - d.1062), Zurchung Sherap Drakpa (*Zur chung Shes rab grags pa*, 1014-1074), and Zur Śākya Senggé (*Zur Śākya seng ge*, also know as Dropukpa, *Sgro phug pa*, 1074-1134).⁴⁴⁶ The key difference between the two traditions aside from their source material is their hermeneutic or interpretive lens.⁴⁴⁷ Whereas the Rong-Long tradition views the GT through the lens of Atiyoga, the Zur traditions's exposition remains strictly within a *mahāyoga* tantric philosophical framework. Lochen Dharmaśrī, who is considered the preeminent Zur system commentator, sums up the difference quite succinctly in his GT commentary, *Oral Instruction of the Lord of Secrets (Gsang bdag zhal lung)*:

Mahāyoga realizes all things to be the miracle of mind's true nature in which appearance and emptiness are indivisible [...] while Atiyoga realizes all things to manifest naturally as mind's true nature, the naturally present pristine cognition, which is present atemporally, without creation or cessation.⁴⁴⁸

Other important commentators of the Zur system include Yungtön Dorjé Pel (G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal, 1284-1365) and Jikmé Tenpé Nyima ('Jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1865-1926), the latter of whom draws heavily on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in his *Key to the Precious Treasury*.

⁴⁴⁶ Garson, 209.

⁴⁴⁷ Garson concludes that there are other fundamental differences between the Zur and Rong-Long traditions, though they concern some of the fine-grain details of the GT. The most important of these concerns the deity at the center of the mandala. Recall that the deities in the GT mandalas are not referred to by their common names. In the Zur tradition, it is taught that Akṣobhya in the form of Vajrasattva is the central deity, whereas in the Rong-Long tradition it is Vairocana. *Ibid.*, 428-432.

⁴⁴⁸ As quoted in Dorje 2016, xlvi.

Aside from these three works—*An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, *Brief Explanation of the Path*, and *The Eye Commentary*—there are nine other *mahāyoga* texts attributed to Buddhagupta across both the Tengyur and the NKM. While not commentaries directly on the GT, these works expand upon the rituals and practices associated with it, and take the form of versified treatises and *sādhana*s. These include texts such as the *Māyājāla Initiation Mandala of the Wrathful Ones: Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions* (*Sgyu 'phrul khro bo 'i dbang bskur ba dkyil 'khor rdo rje las kyi rim pa zhes bya ba*, Q 4161) and *Drop of the Enlightened Mind* (*Thugs kyi thig pa*, Q 4738), both of which—like *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*—mention the GT by name.⁴⁴⁹ Some of these will be explored in the next chapter, which offers an assessment of Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* works.

Debating the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*: Critics and Proponents in the Tibetan Renaissance

As we have already seen, Lha Lama Yeshé Ö, the tenth to eleventh century king of Gugé in western Tibet, who was concerned with reforming Buddhism in his kingdom, wrote an ordinance (*bka' shog*) denouncing practices commonly associated with the GT such as sexual rites and ritual killing (*sbyor* and *sgrol*, respectively). His text, however, does not directly name the GT, so I mention him here in passing since he is often cited as a GT critic. It is well-known that Yeshé Ö dispatched to India the scholar and translator Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 958-1055), in an effort to reinvigorate orthodox Buddhist practice in his kingdom.⁴⁵⁰ In his famous work *Clear Differentiation of the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab*

⁴⁴⁹ The latter text states that it was co-authored by three generations of GT lineage holders: Vilāsavajra, Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra. The grouping of these three as co-authors in one text is interesting in light of the overlap between their writings, and the regular confusion of Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra.

⁴⁵⁰ See, for example, a passage from a detailed colophon to the translation of Ānandagarbha's commentary on the *Śrīparamādi*, mentioned in Karmay 2009, 6 n. 26: |gzhan yang gsang sngags sbas don nub gyur cing||sbyor sgrol dang ni tshogs la sogs pas slad||'di rnams don nges btsal phyir bkas gnyer ste||lo tsā rin chen zang po kha cher brdzangs|. See Ānandagarbha, Kun dga' snying po, *Śrīparamādiṭīkā*, *Dpal mchog dang po'i*

dbye), Sakya Paṇḍita notes that Rinchen Zangpo composed a text called *Differentiating Dharma from Non-Dharma* (*Chos dang chos min rnam 'byed pa*). Unfortunately, this text is no longer extant. In any case, the writings of both the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta and the *mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta play an important role in the deliberations around the authenticity of the GT after Yeshé Ö and Rinchen Zangpo's time. Since the tradition considers these authors to be a single person, their writings are used in answer to the critics of the GT.

This however was not the case for Prince Zhiwa Ö (Pho brang Zhi ba 'od, the eleventh century) of the Gugé kingdom, who was the nephew of Yeshé Ö. Unlike his uncle who wrote in general terms condemning *mahāyoga*-related practices, Zhiwa Ö explicitly targets the tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle, specifically naming the *GT* and other tantras and treatises now associated with the Nyingma School. Zhiwa Ö's own ordinance (*bka' shog*) states that it was written in the male water monkey year (according to Samten Karmay, this is 1092). It was sent to Buddhists practicing Vajrayāna in Tibet in order to make it clear that certain texts claiming to be of Indian origin were in fact written by Tibetans. It should be noted that an independent copy of this ordinance has not yet come to light, but it is quoted in full in the Nyingma apologist Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyeltsen's *Thunder of Definitive Truth* (*Nges don 'brug sgra*). The first texts listed by Zhiwa Ö in the category of inner tantras are, “the *Māyājāla Tantras* in thirteen chapters, nineteen chapters, forty chapters, eighty chapters, its supplement, and so on, which appear to be of mixed [origin].”⁴⁵¹ Sokdokpa simply notes that these correspond to the eight tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle. Samten Karmay suggests, and is

rgya cher bshad pa, Sde dge Bstan 'gyur, D 2512, Rgyud *si*, ff. 49b-242a, *hi* 1b-352a, *i* 1b-192b. The passage is found in vol. *i*, f. 192a5-6.

⁴⁵¹ See Karmay 2009a, 38: *nang pa la | sgyu 'phrul gyi rgyud la bcu gsum pa dang | bcu dgu pa da[n]g | bzhi bcu pa dang | brgyad bcu pa dang | le'u lag la sogs pa ni 'dres mar snang |*. Karmay translates 'dres *ma* as “syncretic.”

in all likelihood correct, that the nineteen-chapter text corresponds to the GT, though all extant versions of the GT have twenty-two chapters. If the nineteen-chapter Māyājāla text mentioned by Zhiwa Ö does indeed refer to an earlier version of the GT, then his claim that it is of mixed (*'dres ma*) origin may accord with a passage in Rongzom's *Jewel Commentary* (discussed below), that mentions a rumor that Tibetan authors had inserted lines into the GT. Moreover, the attestation of a nineteen chapter GT may bolster Weinberger's theory that it was added to over time.⁴⁵²

Zhiwa Ö's ordinance is important here not only because it is an early criticism of the tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle, but it also names specific commentaries on these tantras by both Indian authors including texts attributed to Buddhagupta, that Zhiwa Ö considered to be fabrications. Among those that Zhiwa Ö lists are two notable titles: *Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions* (*Rdo rje las rim*) and *Stages of the Yogic Path* (*Rnal 'byor lam rim*). The first, which Sokdokpa says is an Indian composition, probably correspond to a text from the Tengyur often attributed to Buddhagupta called *Stage of the Vajra Ritual Actions of the Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul dra ba rdo rje las kyi rim pa*, Q 4720). As for the second one, Sokdokpa states that it appears to be one by Buddhagupta, but does not give an indication of which text it is. Karmay suggests that Sokdokpa is probably referring to *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*.⁴⁵³ If Karmay is correct and if the ordinance is a faithful reproduction of an authentic eleventh century text, then it would establish a *terminus ad quem* for *An Orderly Arrangement of the Path* of 1092; that said, we shall return to the issue of dating later. The ordinance also targets the *Blazing Palace* commentary of Vilāsavajra, the all *Lamp* texts of Pelyang, and even more orthodox tantras such as the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana* (D 483), an important yoga tantric scripture that Buddhagupta also commented upon.

⁴⁵² Weinberger 2003, 284-285.

One of the best-known opponents of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* seems to have been the eleventh-century Bka' gdams pa scholar and translator, Gö Lotāwa Khukpa Lhetsé (Mgos/'Gos Lo tsā ba Khug pa Lhas btsas, here after Khukpa Lhetsé).⁴⁵⁴ Khukpa is said to have articulated the “four erroneous faults” (*log pa 'i skyon bzhi*) of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. The issue, however, is that these faults are not mentioned in any of 'Gos Khug pa's extant works, of which there are precious few. These faults (and their refutations, of course) are discussed at length in several late Nyingma tracts, such as Sokdokpa's *Thunder of Definitive Truth*. One early source, however, that mentions the four erroneous faults is the *Mirror for Clarifying the Meaning of the Glorious Guhyagarbha Tantra* (*Dpal gsang ba snying po 'i rgyud kyi don gsal byed me long*) by the Yungtön Dorjé Pel (G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal, 1284-1365). The following is a summary of Yungtön's discussion:

1. **The erroneous introduction (*gleng gzhi log*):** whereas the all Buddhist scriptures begin with “Thus I have heard...” (*'di skad dag gis thos pa*), the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* begins with “Thus it is explained...” (*'di skad bshad pa*).
2. **The erroneous time (*dus log*):** whereas most scriptures describe time in terms of the “three times” (*dus gsum*, i.e., past, present, and future), the *Guhyagarbha* speaks of “four times” (*dus gzhi*, past, present, future, and indefinite)
3. **The erroneous mandala (*dkyil 'khor log*):** although the holder of the *Guhyagarbha* is Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva is chief deity of the tantra's mandala.

⁴⁵³ Karmay 2009a, 32 and n. 86.

⁴⁵⁴ For a full biographical essay on Gö Khukpa Lhetsé, see José Cabezón, “Go Khukpa Lhetse,” in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (July 2017), <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Go-Khukpa-Lhetse/5803>.

4. **The error of the tantra itself (*rgyud log*):** that the *Guhyagarbha* makes reference to other tantras.⁴⁵⁵

It is important to note that Yungtön does not mention Khukpa Lhetsé; instead, the passage begins with “Some say that the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* has four erroneous faults...” using the ubiquitous and intentionally vague polemical phrase, *kha cig na re*. Later Tibetan scholars like Sokdokpa and Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba; 1504–1566) also report slight variations on Go Khukpa's criticism.⁴⁵⁶

Whether Khukpa Lhetsé actually articulated or held these beliefs has been cast into doubt by both Tibetan and contemporary scholar alike. Sokdokpa, for example, says that there were at one point in time three anti-Rnying ma pamphlets (*'byams yig*) of varying length in circulation attributed to Khukpa Lhetsé, of which two were in his possession. He concludes that the two pamphlets he had were probably forgeries, and that the third probably never existed. Sokdokpa quotes from one of the pamphlets in his possession, though he does not specify which one.⁴⁵⁷ The quoted text corresponds exactly to passages from an extant text titled *Gö Khukpa Lhetsé Refutation of False Mantra* (*'Gos khug pa lhas btsas kyi sngag log*

⁴⁵⁵ Cited in Wangchuk 2002, 277. See G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal, *Dpal gsang ba snying po'i rgyud kyi don gsal byed me long*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. sa (Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1978), 22b: *kha cig na re| gsang ba snying po'i rgyud 'di la logs pa'i skyon bzhi yod de| rgyud gzhan na 'di skad thos bya ba yod pa la| 'dir 'di skad bshad bya ba byung bas gleng bzhi log| gzhan na dus gsum du yod pa las| 'dir dus bzhi byung ba dus log| rgyud kyi bdag po kun tu bzang po yin pa la skyil 'khor gyi gtso bor rdo rje sems dpa' byung bas dkyil 'khor log| sgrub pa'i zhag dang tshe grang ni| rgyud las smos pa bzhin du bshad| ces kha 'phangs pas rgyud log go zhe na|*.

⁴⁵⁶ Dorje 1987, 64 mentions that Sokdokpa, for example, in his late work *Thunder of Scripture and Reasoning—A Letter in Response* (*Dris lan lung dang rig[s] pa'i 'brug sgra*), relates that Khukpa Lhetsé considered the *GT* flawed in its language (*sgra skyon*), flawed in meaning (*don skyon*), flawed by contradiction (*gal skyon*), and flawed by disconnection (*ma 'bral ba'i skyon*). Unfortunately, Sokdokpa does not go into detail about these. Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa in *Feast for Scholars* (*Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*) speaks of four errors (*mi rigs pa bzhi*) associated with the *GT* which more closely resembles G.yung ston's formulation: the error of its introduction, which states “At the time this was explained...” (*'di skad bshad pa'i dus na ces ma rigs pa*), the error of its mandala which is said to have an immeasurable base (*gzhi tshad med pa'i ma rigs pa*), the error of explaining the three times as four times (*dus gsum la dus bzhir bshad pa mi rigs pa*), and the error of Vajrasattva being the central deity of the mandala (*dkyil 'khor gtso bo rdo rje sems dpas mi rigs pa*).

sun 'byin).⁴⁵⁸ These lines allege that the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* was written by the dynastic period translator Ma Rinchen Chok, who apparently was later censured by the Tibetan imperial government and exiled to Nyangrong in Tsang, where he lived the rest of his life.⁴⁵⁹ Moreover, the author states that the commentaries and liturgies associated with the *Guhyargarbha Tantra* (presumably those of purported Indian origin) were in fact written by the eleventh century masters Zurchen Shākya Jungné⁴⁶⁰ and Zurchung Sherap Drakpa.⁴⁶¹ Although the author does not mention Buddhagupta or any of his compositions by name, we can assume that he is referring to the treatises associated with Zur tradition of GT exegesis, which includes the *mahāyoga* writings of Buddhagupta. This *Refutation of False Mantra* says nothing about the four erroneous faults. Christian Wedemeyer argues that *Refutation of*

⁴⁵⁷ Wangchuk 2002, 275-277. Sog bzlog pa devotes a section of his text to discussing 'Gos Khug pa's allegations in *Gsang sngags snga 'gyur la bod du rtsod pa snga phyir byung ba'i lan nges don 'brug sgra*, in *Sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, vol 1 (New Delhi: Sanje Dorje, 1975), 475-488.

⁴⁵⁸ 'Gos khug pa lhas btsas kyi sngag log sun 'byin, in *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*, (Thimphu: Kunsang Topgyel and Mani Dorji, 1979).

⁴⁵⁹ Sog bzlog pa also states that some scholars considered the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* to have been composed by the translator Vairocana, though Sog bzlog pa does not name the scholars who made these allegations. See Wangchuk 2000, 277 n.53 and Sog bzlog pa's *Nges don 'brug sgra*, 212.

⁴⁶⁰ Nyingma apologists generally seem to imply that Khukpa Lhetsé's antipathy toward the Nyingma tantras had its root not in any genuine qualms about the GT, but rather in his falling out with Zurpoché Śākya Jungné, under whom he is said to have studied earlier in his career. According to the *Blue Annals (Deb ther sngon po)*, the elder Zur made Khukpa Lhetsé do manual labor without giving him many teachings. Frustrated, Khukpa Lhetsé took leave and then sought teachings from the proto-Sakya teacher Drokmi Lotsāwa (Brog mi lo tsā ba). After receiving only an introductory level exposition, Drokmi apparently demanded payment in gold for tantric teachings, which Khukpa Lhetsé could not afford. Thwarted yet again, Khukpa Lhetsé decided to seek out the *mahāsiddha* Maitripa to invite him to Tibet in an attempt to compete with Drokmi. See van Schaik 2007. In Nepal, however, he was tricked by Drokmi's own teacher Gayādhara, into thinking that Gayādhara was in fact Maitripa! Some of these details are corroborated in Martōn Chökyi Gyelpo's (Dmar ston Chos kyi rgyal po, c.1198-c.1259) *Subtle Vajra (Zhib mo rdo rje)*, a history of the early masters of the Sakya *lamdré (lam 'bras)* tradition; Martōn was himself a student of Khukpa Lhetsé. See Cyrus Stearns, *Luminous Lives: The Story of the Early Masters of the Lam 'bras Tradition in Tibet* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001), 53-55, 93-95, 217-219, n.50-59. Unfortunately, Khukpa Lhetsé's bad luck does not seem to end there—although there are not many details available about the end of his life, there is a legend that he was killed by Ra Lotsāwa Dorjé Drak (Rwa lo tsā ba rdo rje grags, 1016-1128?), the (in)famous Yamāntaka practitioner, following a dispute about whose tantric system was superior. See Ra Yeshé Sengé, *The All-Pervading Melodious Drumbeat: The Life of Ra Lotsawa*, translated by Bryan J. Cuevas (New York: Penguin Classics, 2015), 151-154 and Davidson 2005, 139-140.

⁴⁶¹ 'Gos khug pa lhas btsas kyi sngag log sun 'byin in *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*, (Thimphu: Kunsang Topgyel and Mani Dorji, 1979), 20-21: |du phyis rin chen mchog gis gsang ba snying po brtsams| de'i kha skong sgyu 'phrul le'u la sogs pa brtsams pa rgyal blon rnams kyis rig nas tshig phar gcogs tshur gcod byas las| de las bka' bcad dam po byas te lo bcu la ma rnyed de phyis gtsang gi nyang rong du shi'o| |phyis la brten nas zur chen zur chung gis gsang ba snying po'i 'grel pa dkyil 'khor gyi cho gas grub thabs mang du brtsams|.

False Mantra was very likely written by Khukpa Lhetsé because of the “unmistakable ideological consonance” between it and *A Survey of the Guhyasamāja* (*Gsang 'du stong thun*), his only other extant work.⁴⁶² On the other hand, Cabezón suggests that the extant version of Khukpa Lhetsé’s *Refutation of False Mantra* might in fact be a paraphrasing rather than a facsimile of the author’s work.⁴⁶³

Turning to the early Sakya view of the GT, Sakya Paṇḍita was a critic of tantras from both the Nyingma and Sarma traditions. His criticisms, however, remain vague, while others in his tradition seem to implicitly endorse the GT’s authenticity. In his *Clear Differentiation of the Three Vows*, Sakya Paṇḍita cautions the reader against spurious scriptures, after naming a few obscure texts, he notes that “both Old and New schools of Mantra have many tantras that were composed by Tibetans. The wise will place no confidence in fabricated sutras and tantras like these.”⁴⁶⁴ Elsewhere, in a letter to Chak Lotsāwa Chöjé Pel (Chag Lo tsā ba Chos rje dpal, 1197-1264), Sakya Paṇḍita notes, “Among the Nyingma, there are a great many [false tantras] such as *The Tantra of Generating the Goddess*, the *Fortress of the Skull*, and so on,” but hesitates to go into further detail, concluding “as many feeling would be hurt if I were to point them all out individually, you should investigate this yourself.”⁴⁶⁵ We might conclude, however, that the GT was probably not one of the texts that remain unnamed. Sakya Paṇḍita’s predecessor and successors to the office of Sakya Throne-holder

⁴⁶² Christian K. Wedemeyer, “Sex, Death, and ‘Reform’ in Eleventh-century Tibetan Buddhist Esotericism: ‘Gos Khug pa Lhas btsas, spyod pa (caryā), and mngon par spyod pa (abhicāra),” in *Sucāruvādadeśika: A Festschrift Honoring Professor Theodore Ricciardi*, eds. Todd Lewis and Bruce McCoy Owens, (Kathmandu: Himal Books, 2014), 245; 252-254.

⁴⁶³ José Ignacio Cabezón and Geshe Lobsang Dargyay, *Freedom from Extremes: Gorampa’s “Distinguishing the Views” and the Polemics of Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 258 n.93.

⁴⁶⁴ Rhoton 2002, 167 and 323: |gzhan yang gsang sngags gsar rnying la'ang ||bod kyis sbyar ba'i rgyud sde mang ||de' dra'i rang bzo'i mdo rgyud la||mkhas pas yid brtan mi bya'o|.

⁴⁶⁵ Sa skya paṇḍi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *Chag lo tsā ba'i zhus lan*, in *Sa paṇ kun dga' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 3 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1992), pp. 545-546: *sngags rnying ma la lha mo skye rgyud dang | bum ril thod mkhar la sogs pa shin tu mang bar gda' | [...] thams cad gsal kha ston na phog thug bag tsam yong bar gda' bas khyed nyid kyis dpyad mdzod|*.

(*sa skya khri 'dzin*), Drakpa Gyeltsen (Grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1147-1216) and Pakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen ('Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1235-1280) both penned tantric catalogs that included the GT and other *mahāyoga* tantras of the “early translation of secret mantra” (*gsang ngags snga 'gyur*). As Helmut Eimer has noted, these two important catalogs served as sources for the first version of the Nartang Kangyur.⁴⁶⁶

One of the most important defenses of the GT comes from an unlikely source—the prolific Kadam master Chomden Rikpé Reldri, who actually cites Buddhagupta in his arguments. Chomden Reldri was an extraordinary scholar who, among his many compositions, wrote an influential text catalog that shaped what would eventually become the Nartang Tengyur.⁴⁶⁷ He is also known for his role in translating a Sanskrit manuscript of the GT and for writing in defense of the GT’s authenticity. One of these texts, a translator’s colophon to his GT translation, is translated below. The other is a text sometimes called *An Ornamental Flower for the Proof of the Guhyagarbha* (*Gsang Snying sgub pa rgyan gyi metog*). In this short treatise, Chomden Reldri deploys three strategies to prove the authenticity of the GT. First, he points to several passages from a commentary on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (*Gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud*) attributed to a certain Viśvamitra⁴⁶⁸ in which the GT is quoted—discussing them in order to demonstrate that there are other Indian authors that cite the GT aside from those usually mentioned in Nyingma sources such as Vilāsavajra. Chomden Reldri then replies to each of the four erroneous faults, including some

⁴⁶⁶ Helmut Eimer, “A Source for the First Nartang Kanjur: Two Early Sa skya pa Catalogues of the Tantras” in *Transmission of the Tibetan Canon* ed. Helmut Eimer, vol. 3 of *Paper Presented at a Panel of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1997), 11-77. See pp. 51-52, which focus on the ancient tantras section of Dakpa Gyeltsen and Phakpa’s catalogs.

⁴⁶⁷ In this catalog, called *An Ornamental Sunbeam for the Spread of the Doctrine* (*Bstan pa rgyas pa rgyan gyi nyi 'od*), Chomden Reldri includes the GT as the first text in the category “Unsurpassed Yoga” (*rnal 'byor bla na med*). See Schaeffer and Kapstein, 181.

⁴⁶⁸ Viśvamitra, Bi shwa mi tra, *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud kyi man ngag gi rgya mtsho thigs pa*, Sde dge Bstan 'gyur, D 1844, Rgyud ji, ff. 53b-161b. This appears to be the only text attributed to Viśvamitra in the Tengyur. The text does not have a Sanskrit title and its colophon does not mention any translators.

of its variations, by showing that some Sarma tantras and commentaries are themselves guilty of the four erroneous faults. For example, in reply to criticism that the GT uses the term four times (*dus bzhi*), Chomden Reldri rightly points out that Buddhagupta (i.e., as Buddhaguhya/Sangs rgyas gsang ba) uses the very same terminology.⁴⁶⁹ Finally, he quotes from the Sanskrit manuscript that he apparently had in his possession to clear up the meaning of an obscure line from GT's fourth chapter, though the Sanskrit line itself seems to be somewhat obscure. Chomden Reldri's defense is widely cited in Nyingma sources, including in Sokdokpa's *Thunder of Definitive Meaning*, and even Dūjom Rinpoche's NSTB.

Over the course of the debates around the authenticity of the GT, Buddhagupta's works have been both part of the critique—especially in Zhiwa Ö's ordinance, but also implied in Khukpa Lhetsé's *Refutation of False Mantras*—and part of the defense, since he is also cited by Chomden Reldri. Given the importance of Buddhagupta to the GT lineage in Tibet, it is surprising that his commentaries were not more often the target of anti-Nyingma polemicists. This may be due to the fact that Buddhagupta's works on the other classes of tantra, such as his commentaries on the MVT and the *Sarva-durgati-parisodhana*, were clearly authentic, since it was well-known in Tibet that they were among the earliest tantric commentaries translated into Tibetan, and were foundational to the Sarma traditions' interpretation of these tantras.

The Storied Sanskrit Manuscript

As far as Nyingma scholars are concerned, the issue of the authenticity of the GT became a non-issue when a Sanskrit manuscript (*rgya dpe*) of the tantra was allegedly

⁴⁶⁹ Chomden Reldri does not cite any particular text but presumably, he is referring to Buddhagupta's commentaries on the non-*mahāyoga* tantras. Indeed, the term *dus bzhi* is in fact found throughout

discovered in the thirteenth or fourteenth century. As we shall see, the story of its discovery, translation, and transmission is also somewhat convoluted, and the deliberations around the manuscript again involve the *mahāyoga* works of Buddhagupta.

The story of the initial discovery of a GT Sanskrit manuscript is described in Sönam Pel Zangpo's (Bsod nams dpal bzang po) commentary on Tropu Lotsāwa's (Khro phu Lo tsā ba, 1172-1236) biography of Śākyaśrībhadrā (1127-1225), a Kashmiri Buddhist master who came to teach in Tibet in 1204 at Tropu Lotsāwa's invitation. While the identity of Sönam Pel Zangpo remains in question, David Jackson suggests that the commentary dates to the thirteenth to fourteenth century. Sönam Pel Zangpo relates the following story:

The Dharma Lord [Śākyaśrībhadrā] said to Jowolha, "I ask that you show me any Sanskrit manuscripts in your realm that you can find." Thereupon, two manuscripts were discovered: the ancient tantra *Guhyagarbha*, and the *Extensive Commentary on the Root Downfalls*.⁴⁷⁰ He said, "These should be shown to the Nyingmapas!"⁴⁷¹ He then had Nyelwa Zhanglo compile an extensive commentary and entrusted the *Guhyagarbha* to Geshé Śākya Senggé.⁴⁷²

Here, Śākyaśrībhadrā asks Jowolha, the local ruler in the vicinity Samyé Monastery, to show him any Sanskrit manuscripts he can find. Manuscripts of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and the *Extensive Commentary on the Root Downfalls* are discovered. Śākyaśrībhadrā then has a certain Nyelwa Zhanglo write a commentary and entrusts the Indian manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha* to a Geshé Śākya Senggé. While I have not been able to identify the latter,

Buddhagupta's *Word-by-word Commentary on the Meaning of the Durgatipariśodhana* (*Ngan son byong ba'i don gyi 'bru 'grel*, D 2624), one of the commentaries mentioned in *Denkar Catalog*, Ldk 324.

⁴⁷⁰ It is not clear what text is referred to here, though there is a commentary by this name in the Tengyur attributed to Atiśa: *Mūlāpattiṭīkā*, *Rtsa ba'i ltung ba'i rgya cher 'grel pa*, Sde dge Bstan 'gyur, D 2487, Rgyud zi, ff. 192b6-197b6.

⁴⁷¹ The use of the term Nyingmapa (*rnying ma pa*) in this quote from Śākyaśrībhadrā is probably anachronistic. During Śākyaśrībhadrā's time, the notion of Nyingma sectarian identity had not been fully formed.

⁴⁷² David P. Jackson, ed., *Two Biographies of Śākyaśrībhadrā: The Eulogy of Khro-phu Lo-tsa-ba and its "Commentary" by bSod-nams-dpal-bzang-po. Texts and Variants from Two Rare Exemplars Preserved in the Bihar Research Society, Patna* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1990), 69: chos rje[s] jo bo lha la kyed kyi nye 'khor na rgya dpe yod tshad rtsad chod la kho bo la ston par zhu gsungs nas de bzhin du byas pas sngags rnying ma'i gsang ba snying po dang| rtsa ltung gi rgya cher 'grel gnyis kyi dpe rnyed| rnying ma pa rnam la bstan

Nyelwa Zhanglo may refer to Zhang Lotsāwa Druppa Pel (Zhang Lo tsā ba Grub pa dpal).⁴⁷³ According to one biographical account, Zhang Lotsāwa, who was from the Nyel clan, received full ordination vows from Śākyaśrībhadrā himself, and later studied with Tropu Lotsāwa, but there is no mention of an episode in which he was entrusted with a Sanskrit manuscript of the GT.⁴⁷⁴ The identification of Nyelwa Zhanglo with Zhang Lotsāwa thus remains tentative, especially because I have not been able to find any commentaries on the GT attributed to Zhang Lotsāwa. Geshé Śākya Senggé might refer to the key Zur tradition master Zur Śākya Senggé, but his dates are too early to overlap with Śākyaśrībhadrā's visit to Tibet.

According to the Gö Lotsāwa's *Blue Annals (Deb ther sngon po)*, the Sanskrit manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha* that was discovered by Śākyaśrībhadrā eventually found its way to Chomden Reldri and ultimately to Gö Lotsāwa himself. Gö Lotsāwa states that the Sanskrit manuscript that Śākyaśrībhadrā discovered at Samyé Monastery was eventually passed down to Tatön Ziji, who in turn offered it to Shagé Lotsāwa (Sha gad Lo tsā ba).⁴⁷⁵ He then sent it Chomden Reldri, who then penned his defense of the GT and presented the Sanskrit manuscript to a group of tantric practitioners at a place called Mamoné. Subsequently, Tarpa Lotsāwa made a translation of the *Guhyagarbha Continuation Tantra*, which had not been found previously. Although he does not say how, Gö Lotsāwa states that

dgos smras pa la gnyal ba zhang los rgya cher 'grel tshags byas| gsang ba snying po dge bshes shākya seng ge la bcol ba yin no|.

⁴⁷³ Zhang Lotsāwa was a twelfth to thirteenth century lineage holder of the oral transmission (*snyan brgyud*) of Rechungpa Dorjé Drakpa (Ras chung pa rdo rje grags pa, 1085-1161).

⁴⁷⁴ See 'Prin las rgya mtsho, *Zhang lo tsā ba grub pa dpal gyi rnam thar*, in *Bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar zla ba'i me long*, 359-362 (Plouray: Drukpa Plouray, 2009). For more on Zhang Lotsāwa and especially his role in consolidating and codifying the Cakrasaṃvara Aural Transmission tradition of Rechungpa, see Fabrizio Torricelli, "Zhang Lo-tsā-ba's Introduction to the Aural Transmission of Saṃvara," in *Le parole e i marmi. Studi in onore di Raniero Gnoli nel suo 70° compleanno*, edited by Raffaele Torella, 875–896 (Roma: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2001).

⁴⁷⁵ Little is known about Shagé Lotsāwa outside of his association with this narrative about a rediscovered Sanskrit manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. He apparently lived in the thirteenth-century and he wrote a letter to Chomden Reldri about the Sanskrit manuscript in question.

damaged remains of the manuscript eventually came into his possession.⁴⁷⁶ It is interesting to note that in this narrative, Tarpa Lotsāwa (Thar pa Lo tsā ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan), a thirteenth to fourteenth-century Sanskrit teacher to the renowned scholar Butön Rinchen Drup,⁴⁷⁷ is said to have translated the *Guhyagarbha Continuation Tantra* (*gsang snying rgyud phyi ma*), not the root tantra. As we shall see below, Tarpa Lotsāwa was actually quite involved in translating the Sanskrit manuscript of the GT. Although it is not clear from Gö Lotsāwa’s account, both he and Tarpa Lotsāwa seem to have also come into the possession of a Sanskrit manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha Continuation Tantra*, and their translation has apparently survived.⁴⁷⁸ This thirteen folio subsequent tantra—worthy of its own separate study—is fascinating as it presents itself as chapters twenty-three and twenty-four of the GT, and is an entirely different work from the much shorter *Glorious Guhyagarbha Continuation Tantra* (*Dpal gsang ba’i sying po’i rgyud phyi ma*) in five brief chapters preserved in the NGB.⁴⁷⁹

There is some evidence that Shagé Lotsāwa had indeed received the Sanskrit manuscript of the GT and passed it on to Chomden Reldri. At the end of a recension of

⁴⁷⁶ ‘Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, *Deb ther sngon po*, vol. 1 (Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 1984), 136: *kha che pañ chen gyis bsam yas su byon pa’i tse gsang snying po’i rgya dpe rnyed| phyis de rta ston gzi brjid kyi lag tu byung nas| khong gis sha gang[=gad] lo tsā ba la phul| des bcom ldan ral gri la bskur nas| bcom ldan ral gris thugs ches te gsang snying sgrub pa rgyan gyi me tog mdzad| ma mo gnas su sngag pa ’dus pa la rgya dpe bstan nas che ba brjod| slad kyiis thar pa lo tsā bas sngon ma byung ba’i gsang snying rgyud phyi ma dang bcas pa la ’gyur mdzad de| dpe de’i steng nas mang rab cig zags pa’i lhag ma’i rgya dpe ni kho bo’i lag na mchis so|.*

⁴⁷⁷ See D.S. Ruegg’s translation, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che: With the Tibetan Text of the Bu ston rNam Thar* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1966), 80-81. Butön’s biography, completed by Rinchen Namgyel (*Rin chen rnam rgyal*) alias Dratsepa (*Sgra tshad pa*) in 1355, mentions that Butön spent 14 straight months under Thar pa lo tsā ba’s tutelage. The focus of his studies with Thar pa lo tsā ba was, as one might expect, Sanskrit grammar. Dratsepa states that Tarpa Lotsāwa was “renowned as Tibet’s chief *bhadanta* (*btsun pa*) in the East, West and Center of India who had mastery over the sense of the profound spiritual power, and was a lo tsā ba who was the eye of the world.” Tarpa Lotsāwa was quite prolific—he translated 52 texts found in both the Kangyur and Tengyur. His knowledge of Sanskrit apparently came from having spent a significant amount of time in India. See *infra*.

⁴⁷⁸ *Gsang ba’i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa’i rgyud phyi ma*, BDRC W8LS16600 (No place of publication: Rnam rgyal phun tshogs, 1992). The colophon notes that after Tarpa Lotsāwa translated the text it was revised by Gö Lotsāwa.

Guhyagarbha Tantra found in Longchenpa's collected works is a letter apparently written by Shagé Lotsāwa addressed to Chomden Reldri asking for the latter's help in translating a Sanskrit manuscript of the GT. This same letter is also reproduced in Sokdokpa's *Thunder of Definitive Meaning*. Shagé Lotsāwa writes:

Namaḥ śrīgurave ratnatrayāya—Homage to the Guru and the Three Jewels!

You are like Nakṣatrarāja, the King of Constellations,
Among the upholders of the scriptural collections, here in the Cool Land
of Tibet.

Victory to the great scholar Chomden Reldri
Who illuminates everything completely and without obstruction!

A request [made] to your honorable self—

With regard to the Sanskrit manuscript of the *Glorious Guhyagarbha* that you have told [me] to send, it is beautifully written in the *vartu* script on *tāla* palm leaves. Since it arrived [in Tibet] in ancient times, some of the letters have faded. At the beginning of chapter nine, one palm leaf folio is missing, and the end is also incomplete. Moreover, at the end of twenty chapters, there are two untranslated chapters, which are for the most part complete. Nonetheless, I am not certain how to complete it. When the letters in these two [chapters] run into one another, I barely understand them and cannot figure them out. Those portions that I slightly figured out contained errors, so I corrected them and translated and edited the two [chapters]. Where the *saṃdhi* was missing and where the punctuation marks were not written in the verses, I thought it best to leave them just as they appear in the Sanskrit original. I also made other corrections.

Having encountered such a great tantra as this, which is
Inseparable from the *Glorious Samāja*, the essence of all tantras,
And the other profound tantras and the Mahāyāna doctrines—
May we be able to spontaneously accomplish them.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁹ *Dpal gsang ba 'i snying po 'i phyi ma*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. pha, ff. 31b-34a. (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

⁴⁸⁰ *Rgyud gsang ba snying po 'i rtsa ba*, in *Klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. ga, f. 26b4: ||na maḥ śrī gu ra be ratna tra yāya| bsil ldan 'di na sde snod 'dzin rnam kyī| nang na rgyu skar rgyal po gang ba ltar||kun nas thal le rab tu gsal ba yi||mkhas chen bcom ldan ral gri rgyal gyur cig |spyan sngar zhu ba||dpal gsang ba snying po 'i rgyud kyi rgya dpe la bskur gsungs pa la||dpe de ta la 'i lo ma la yi ge wartu la shin tu legs par bris pa||snga dus su byon pas||yi ge la la zabs||le 'u dgu pa 'i stod nas ta la 'i byang bu gcig kyang chad||mjug kyang ma rdzogs pa zhig gda '||'on kyang le 'u nyi shu rdzogs nas ma 'gyur ba le 'u gnyis rdzogs su nye ba zhig gda '||des kyang ji tsam rdzogs ma 'tshal||gnyis po 'di la 'bru thug bgyis na cung zad go 'am snyam par gda 'ste ma bgyis||'ga' zhig la cung zad bgyis pa 'di dag la yang nor ba mchis pas de rnam

Shagé Lotsāwa unfortunately does not explain how he obtained the Sanskrit manuscript of the GT, but he does say a bit about its condition, noting that it is written the *vartula* script⁴⁸¹ on palm leaves and that some parts of the manuscript were damaged or missing. It seems that Shagé Lotsāwa tried his best to translate the text, but struggled particularly with the final two chapters.

The modern typeset edition of Chomden Reldri’s collected works preserves a short text that is presented as a response to Shagé Lotsāwa’s request. This same text is also found among his writing in the *Collected Kadam Works (Bka’ gdams gsung ’bum)*, where it is given the title *Translator’s Colophon to the Guhyagarbha (Gsang ba snying po’i ’gyur byang)*. In this text, Chomden Reldri writes:

Homage to the Buddha!

Since the Sanskrit manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha*—the king of tantras,
The holy words proclaimed by the all-good Vajrasattva
In the pleasant land of Akaniṣṭha above the pure abodes—was unavailable,
Word spread in this Land of Snows that it was fabricated by Tibetans.

But I, Chomden Reldri, having searched well for the Sanskrit manuscript
[And found it], showed it to the mantrins who uphold this text.
See that I have proven the authenticity of the *Guhyagarbha*
[Based on the] evidence from the texts of the great scholar Viśvamisra and others.

Since the translators and scholars of yore, intelligent
And well-educated both in India and Tibet,

legs par ’chos pa dang ||’di gnyis legs par bsgyur ba yang zhu| |gzhan mtshams sbyor ma byas pa dang ||tshigs bcaad la shad ma bris pa rnams rgya dpe la ji ltar ’dug pa bzhin bris pa legs so||dang zhus kyang bgyis so||rgyud kun snying po dpal ldan ’dus pa dang ||dbyer med rgyud chen ’di lta bu dang gzhan||zab mo’i rgyud dang theg chen chos rnams dang ||mjal nas thul bzhin sgrub pa byed par shog|.

⁴⁸¹ If this account is reliable at all, then the manuscript in Shagé Lotsāwa’s possession was most likely not from the imperial period given the *vartu* or *vartula* scripts’ rather late introduction to Tibet. Although the *Maṇi Collection (Ma ṇi bka’ ’bum)*, a series of treasure texts from the twelfth to thirteenth century, records a narrative about Tönmi Sambhoṭa (Thon mi Sam bho ṭa, the legendary seventh century father of the Tibetan script) using the *vartula* script as a model for the Tibetan cursive script called *umé (dbu med)*, Sam van Schaik points that *vartula* was probably not known in Tibet prior to the eleventh century. See Sam van Schaik, “The Origin of the Headless Script (dbu med) in Tibet,” in *Medieval Tibeto-Burman Languages IV*, ed. Nathan Hill (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 413.

Did not find this manuscript, it is [as rare as] a wish-fulfilling jewel,
A sun that clears away the darkness for one who engages this tantra.

Buddhaguhya and Sūryaprabhāsiṃha,
Composed commentaries in accordance with the Subsequent Tantra.
Scholars who ignore these two [commentaries, and explain the tantra] on their own
Are stupid, [and their texts] a garland of errors.

Not perceiving [where in the] text Ma Rin[chen Chok's] six insertions were made,
They are renowned as those who do not know of the junctures of the six insertions.
Those intelligent ones who wish to know about the six insertions,
Should come to me, keeping an open-minded,

Arranged by Chomden Reldri.⁴⁸²

Chomden Reldri briefly recounts his search for the GT's Sanskrit manuscript and criticizes those who might have considered to be a forgery. As in his defense of the GT, Chomden Reldri cites three Indian commentators: Viśvamitra, Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, and Buddhagupta (as Buddhaguhya). Unfortunately, he does not give the name of the commentary by Buddhaguhya, though it is tempting to consider that he may be referring to the *Eye Commentary*, or perhaps to the non-extant analytical commentary. In the final stanza, Chomden Reldri mentions, albeit briefly, the issue of insertions and their association with Ma Rinchen Chok, to which we shall return later in the chapter.

While this Sanskrit manuscript has not come to light—indeed it already seemed to have been in poor condition during Chomden Reldri's time—the Phukdrak recension of the

⁴⁸² Bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri, *Gsang ba snying po'i 'gyur byang*, in *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum phyogs bsgrigs thengs gnyis pa*, vol. 26 (Chengdu: Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House, 2007), f. 37a: *sangs rgyas la phyag 'tshal lo||gnas gtsang steng gi 'og min nyams dga' bar||kun bzang rdo rje sems dpas gsung pa'i bka' ||rgyud rgyal gsang snying rgya dpe ma rnyad pas||bod kyis byas zhes gangs ri'i khrod 'dir grags||bcom ldan ral gris rgya dpe legs btsal nas||gzhung 'di 'dzin pa'i sngags 'chang rnams la bstan||pañ chen bi shwa mi tra la sogs pa'i||gzhung gi sgrub byed gsang snying sgrub par ltos||sngon gyi lo pañ mang gzigs blo gros can||rgya bod gnyis su mkhas la legs sbyangs pas||dpe 'di ma rnyed yid bzhin rin chen 'dra||rgyud 'dir 'jug pa'i mun sel nyi ma yin||sangs rgyas gsang ba nyi 'od seng ge yis||phyi ma'i rgyud dang mthun pa'i 'grel pa mdzad||'di gnyis spang nas rang gar 'chad pa rnams||shes rab 'chal ba nor ba'i 'phreng ba yin||rma rin 'chong drug spyad gzhung ma mthong bas||'chong drug gzhung mshams shes pa med ces grags||'chong drug shes par 'dod pa'i blo gsal rnams||gzur gnas blo yis kho bo'i drung du byon||bcom ldan ral gris bkod|. This text is also found in the colophon to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in Longchenpa's collected works, following Shagé Lotsāwa's letter.*

Kangyur apparently preserves a late translation of the GT⁴⁸³ completed by Tarpa Lotsāwa. The colophon to this translation states that Tarpa Lotsāwa received a Sanskrit manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* from Chomden Reldri. It was at Chomdel Reldri's behest that Tarpa Lotsāwa assisted with the translation, consulting an older translation, commentaries on the GT by the Indian master Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, and other textual witnesses.⁴⁸⁴ The translation was completed at the temple of Tarpa Ling.⁴⁸⁵ Based on the colophon to this translation and in contrast to the narrative above about Śākyaśrībhadrā, Jampa Samten notes that it was Chomden Reldri and Tarpa Lotsāwa who together discovered the manuscript at

⁴⁸³ The Pukdrak recension is a manuscript Kangyur written between 1696 and 1706 at the eponymous Western Tibetan monastery. See Jampa Samten, *Phug brag bka' 'gyur bris ma'i dkar chag: A Catalogue of the Phug-brag Manuscript Kanjur* (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1992), iv. In addition to publishing the catalog, Samten also created a microfiche edition of this Kangyur now held by the Institute for Advanced Study of World Religions. Helmut Eimer has put together a location list for this edition in *Location List for the Texts in the Microfiche Edition of the Phug brag Kanjur: Compiled from the Microfiche Edition and Jampa Samten's Descriptive Catalogue* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1993). According to Samten 233, this translation is No. 754, found in *Rgyud sde wa* (Vol. 118), ff. 212a3-258a3. On p. 63, Eimer notes that it is found in the microfiche listed as #917 34A-41B/41.

⁴⁸⁴ *Śrī-guhyagarbha-tattvaviniścaya-mahātantra*, *Dpal gsang ba'i snying po rgyud chen po de kho na nyid rnam par nges pa*, Phug brag bka' 'gyur, F 754, *Rgyud sde wa*, f. 257b3-5: *thar pa lo tsa ba nyi ma rgyal mtshan dpal bzang pos| mkhas pa'i dbang po bcom ldan ral gris dbus kyi sa cha nas| 'di'i brgya[=rgya] dpe rnyed nas bsgyur shig ces pa'i gsungs la rten nas| 'gyur snying[=rnying] pa dang | nyi 'od seng ge'i 'grel pa la sogs dpyad por bzhag nas| dpal thar pa gling gi gtsug lag khang du bsgyur ba'o*.

⁴⁸⁵ Tarpa Ling (Thar pa gling), ostensibly the seat of Tarpa Lotsāwa, seems to be a further point of connection between the latter and Chomden Reldri. As Roberto Vitali notes, those associated with Tarpa Ling—which began as a hermitage for masters from the Chel (Dpyal) clan—have deep ties to India. Both Chel Lotsāwa Chökyi Zangpo (Dpyal Lo tsā wa Chos kyi bzang po, 1163-230) and his cousin Chel Amogha (Dpyal A mo gha) spent significant stretches of time in India, particularly in Bodhgaya and its environs. Tarpa Ling itself was eventually expanded, with the new structures styled after the main complex in Bodhgaya, also known as Vajrāsana or Dorjé Den (Rdo rje gdan) in Tibetan. Subsequently, Tarpa Lotsāwa—an associate of the Chel clan—spent fourteen years in India, and is said to have served as abbot of Bodhgaya for three of those years. Now, Chomden Reldri is well-known for having written a detailed guidebook to the holy sites in Bodhgaya titled *Explanation of Vajrāsana—An Ornamental Flower (Rdo rje gdan rnam bshad rgyan gyi me tog)*, despite never having been to India himself. Vitali speculates that Chomden Reldri may have learned what he records about Vajrāsana from Tarpa Lotsāwa, and perhaps even Chel Lotsāwa, since Chomden Reldri received full monastic ordination from the abbot of Tarpa Ling, Chel Nyima (*Dpyal Nyi ma*). See Roberto Vitali, “In the Presence of the ‘Diamond Throne’ Tibetans at rDo rje gdan (Last Quarter of the 12th Century to Year 1300),” *The Tibet Journal* 34/35, no. 3/2 (Autumn 2009-Summer 2010): 164-173. For a translation of Chomden Reldri's *Explanation of Vajrāsana*, see Kurtis R. Schaeffer, “Tibetan Narratives of the Buddha's Acts at Vajrāsana,” *Journal of Tibetology* 7 (2011): 106-121. Schaeffer suggests that Chomden Reldri received most of what he knew about Vajrāsana from Chim Namkadrak (Mchims Nam mhka' grags 1210-1285), who was abbot for much of the time Chomden Reldri was in residence at Nartang and who created a detailed three-dimensional model of the Vajrāsana temple complex. It is not entirely clear, however, whether Chim Namkadrak had ever been to India. Chomden Reldri may also have been influenced by Chak Lotsāwa in their interaction around 1258.

Samyé Monastery.⁴⁸⁶ This late translation, which deserves a study of its own, contains a number of interesting features, including a different opening formula: instead of the controversial *'di skad bshad pa'i dus na* this translation has the more traditional *'di skad dag gis thos pa*. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether this is a faithful rendering of the Sanskrit text they possessed or a deliberate correction of a problematic phrase. Apparently, Tarpa Lotsāwa penned his own colophon to this late translation, which, like Chomden Reldri's is preserved in a separate collection. I shall examine relevant portions of it in the following section, but it is worth noting here that Tarpa Lotsāwa also mentions a GT commentary by Buddhagupta as a reference for the translation of the Sanskrit manuscript.

This Sanskrit manuscript connected to Chomden Reldri and Tarpa Lotsāwa was apparently not the only one of its kind. Sokdokpa alleges that yet another Sanskrit manuscript of the *Guhyagarbha* was discovered in the Stham Bihar⁴⁸⁷ (Fig. 1) in Kathmandu by Lowo Lotsāwa Penden Jangchup (Glo bo Lo tsā ba Dpal ldan byang chub). Based on this manuscript, a certain Maṅikaśrījñāna made yet another translation of the GT at Zurkhang Ganden Ling on the twentieth day of the eighth month in the male iron monkey year.⁴⁸⁸ There

⁴⁸⁶ Samten 1992, 234 n.1.

⁴⁸⁷ For a detailed description of the architecture, traditions, and history of this temple, see John K. Locke, S.J., *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal: A Survey of the Bāhās and Bahās of the Kathmandu Valley* (Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press, 1975), 404-413. It is situated close to the tourist district of Thamel, which is modern corruption of one of the temple's names, Thām Bahīl. Thām Bahī is well-known for preserving a collection of Sanskrit manuscripts of Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras written in gold. According to Tibetan sources, the temple was founded by Atiśa during his stay in Nepal before coming to Tibet. It is also associated with the tantric master Vibhūticandra, who is said to have been abbot of Thām Bahī in the thirteenth century. Apparently, Situ Pañchen Chökyi Jungné visited this temple while on pilgrimage in Nepal in the early eighteenth century. See Cyrus Stearns, "The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the *Mahāpaṇḍita* Vibhūticandra," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 19, Issue 1 (Summer 1996): 127-171, particularly 137 n. 37.

⁴⁸⁸ Davidson, 153 and 404 n. 112. See Sog bzlog pa's *Nges don 'brug sgra*, p. 479: bal po thang bhi ha ra nas blo bo lo tsā ba chen po pal ldan byang chub kyis rnyed pa'i rgya dpe las| bshus pa'i dpe yod pa las| sngar gyi 'gyur rnying dang bstun pas khyad che bar mthong nas| lo tsā'i ming can ma ṅi ka shrī dznyā nas zur khang dga' ldan gling du| lcags pho spre'u lo ston bryad pa'i tshes nyi shu yan la 'gyur rnam legs par bcos shing gtan la phab pa'o|. If this translation is extant at all, I have not been able to find a copy of it, or other sources that mention it. As for the identities of the translators involved, there is little information about the figure named Lowo Lotsāwa Penden Jangchub; one wonders whether he is the identical to Lowo Lotsāwa Sherab Rinchen (Glo bo Lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen), a thirteenth century translator who spent time studying in Nepal and India, and who translated several texts in the Tengyur. He apparently also corresponded and perhaps

is also a narrative mentioned in a commentary by the 8th Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé (Mi bskyod rdo rje, 1507–1554) about a Sanskrit manuscript of the GT in the possession Yungtön Dorjé Pel. Yungtönpa sent his manuscript to Nepal for copying on palm leaves. After receiving this new copy, Yungtönpa asked Butön to translate it, offering him a measure of gold in exchange. Considering the Sanskrit copy to be fraudulent, Butön declined the request.⁴⁸⁹



Figure 5: The former home of a Guhyagarbha Tantra manuscript in Sanskrit? A photo of Stham Bihar in Kathmandu, known formally today as Bikramashila Mahabihara and popularly as Tham Bahil. Taken by the author, August 2019.

studied with Sakya Paṇḍita. See Rhoton, 225-228. Maṅikaśrījñāna is also known as Drigung Lotsāwa (‘Bri gung Lo tsā ba, 1289-1363)—a name he earned due to his being a translator and in the service of Drikung Monastery—who studied with the Jonang master Dölpopa Serab Gyaltzen (Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292-1361). See Cyrus Stearns, “Drigung Lotsāwa Maṅikaśrījñāna,” in *The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia, and the Himalaya* (August 2008), <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Drigung-Lotsawa-Manikashrijnana/3936>.

⁴⁸⁹ Schaeffer and van der Kuijp, 48-49. They note that this story is also mentioned in Sokdokpa’s *Nges don ’brug sgra*, p. 394.

This discovery of Sanskrit manuscripts of certain Nyingma tantras is actually acknowledged by Butön, though, as the aforementioned story seems to imply, he appears to have otherwise been skeptical of the Nyingma tantras in general. In the text catalog appended to his history of Buddhist in Tibet and India, *Treasury of Precious Teachings* (*Gsung rab rin po che'i gter mdzod*), Butön acknowledges that while ancient masters like Rinchen Zangpo, Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, Prince Zhiwa Ö, Gö Khukpa Lhetsé considered the GT and *Kīla Tantra* to be inauthentic, his own teachers—Chomden Reldri and Tarpa Lotsāwa—taught that they were authentic, “because some Sanskrit manuscripts were discovered at Samyé and because the Sanskrit *Fragment of the Vajrakīla Root Tantra*⁴⁹⁰ had appeared in Nepal.” Nevertheless, after quoting unnamed sources on the importance of remaining impartial in the face of controversy, Butön flatly states “I shall remain equanimous”⁴⁹¹ But was Butön truly non-partisan? The Nyingma tantras, including the GT, are famously absent from both this work and from Butön’s *Catalog of Tantras* (*Rgyud bum dkar chag*). Eva K. Neumaier-Dargyay suggests that Butön’s disinclination toward Nyingma texts was perhaps due to the “political affiliations of [Butön]’s patrons, the princes of Zha-lu” who were closely aligned with the

⁴⁹⁰ This refers to Sanskrit fragment by Sakya Paṇḍita and preserved in the Kangyur as *Vajrakīlaya-mūlatantra-khaṇḍa*, *Rdo rje phur pa rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi dum bu*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 493, Rgyud ca, 43b-45b. According to its colophon, the fragment was thought to have originally belonged to Padmasambhava. For a translation and edition of the text, see Martin J. Boord, *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue: The Vast Commentary on Vajrakīla that Clearly Defines the Central Points* (Berlin: edition khordong, 2002), 79-99.

⁴⁹¹ Bu ston Rin chen grub, *Chos kyi 'byung gnas gsung rab rin po che'i gter mdzod*, in *Bu ston rin chen grub dang sgra tshad pa rin chen rnam rgyal gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 24 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1971), f. 179b2: |snga 'gyur gsang sngags rnying ma ni| lo tsā ba chen po rin chen bzang po dang lha bla ma ye shes 'od dang pho brang zhi ba 'od dang 'gos khug pa lhas btsas la sogs pa rnam yang dag pa ma yin par smra la| kho ba'i bla ma skad gnyis smra ba nyi ma'i mtshan can dang rigs ral la sogs pa| bsam yas nas rgya dpe rnyed pa'i phyir dang| phur pa rtsa ba'i dum bu'i rgya dpe bal por yang snang bas rgyud yang dang go zhes gsung ngo||kho bos ni yid kyi nyes pa rang bzhin gdung pa ste| |mi rigs pa yi gzugs la 'ang mi rigs na||the tshom za ba'i chos la smos ci dgos| de phyir btang snyoms bzhag legs nyes pa med||ces 'byung ba dang | chos yin pa la ma ying zer ba dang | ma yin pa la yin zer ba las 'bras mnyan par bshad pas dang | chos kyi mtshan nyid gang la yod med dang| mi shes mthong ba med par rgyu bzhi yis| |rnam dbye smra ba'i kha nib dud kyi phyel||chos la nyes smod thub pa'i gzhung las bkag||ces zer ba bzhin du btang smyons su bzhag go|.

Sakya hierarchs who ruled Tibet and who, she notes, were critics of the Nyingma tantras.⁴⁹²

As we have seen, however, the Sakya position is somewhat more complicated than this.

Butön also excluded any of the *mahāyoga* works attributed to Buddhagupta from his account of Indian commentaries in *Treasury of Precious Teachings*,⁴⁹³ but he does, at least in one case, appropriate them when they suit his needs. In his *Ship for Entering the Ocean of Yoga Tantra* (*Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa 'i gru gzings*), Butön quotes none other than Buddhagupta's *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in his deliberations on the validity of the origin narratives of the yoga tantras!⁴⁹⁴

Insertions ('*phyong*/'*chong*) in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*

One issue yet to be fully explored in the scholarly literature is a peculiar feature of the GT called *chong* ('*phyong*/'*chong*) or, following Dorji Wangchuk's translation, "[sporadic] insertions." And again, Buddhagupta's GT association is part of the debate about these. These insertions are first mentioned by Rongzom, who states that certain passages in the *Guhyagarbha* were inserted into the root text by the dynastic period translator Ma Rinchen Chok from other tantras in the *Māyājāla* cycle. Centuries later, both Chomden Reldri and Tarpa Lotsāwa mention in separate texts that the Sanskrit manuscript of GT that they worked with contained insertions not found in the classical purportedly Indian commentaries attributed to Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, Vilāsavajra, and most importantly for our purposes,

⁴⁹² Eva K. Neumaier-Dargyay, *The Sovereign All-Creating Mind the Motherly Buddha: A Translation of the Kun byed rgyal po' mdo* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 25.

⁴⁹³ Butön does mention what seems to be a non-extant commentary on the *Litany of the Manjuśī's Names* (*Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti*, 'Jam dpal mtshan brjod) by Buddhagupta (under the name Buddhaguhya), but notes that it was not included in the Tengyur: mtshan brjod 'grel pa gsangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa 'di bstan 'gyur du ma tshud|. See text no. 1956 of NISHIOKA Soshū 西岡 祖秀, "『プトゥン仏教史』 目録部索引 III" [An Indexed Catalog to Butön's History of Buddhism, Part III] 東京大学文学部文化交流研究施設研究紀要 [Annual Report of the Institute of The Tokyo University Institute for Cultural Exchange] 4 (December 1983), 83.

⁴⁹⁴ Karmay 1982, 198.

Buddhagupta (as Buddhaguhya); this implies that the insertions were not made by Ma Rinchen Chok. Wangchuk suggests that the issue of insertions may have been a major contributing factor to the consistent questioning of the GT's authenticity as reflected, for example, in the *Refuting False Mantra* attributed to Khukpa Lhetsé who alleged that the GT was completely fabricated by Ma Rinchen Chok. The entire matter is further complicated by the fact that Tibetan authors differ in their tally of the number of insertions present in the GT and the possibility that, contrary to Chomden Reldri and Tarpa Lotsāwa separate accounts, the extant Indian commentaries do contain the supposedly inserted passages.

The *Jewel Commentary* (*Dkon mchog 'grel pa*) by the eleventh century proto-Nyingma master Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo is the first commentary on the GT written in Tibetan; it thus contains the earliest references to the insertions. Referring to the passage in chapter 6 of the GT, “As for the supreme great *mudrās* of enlightened body” (*sku yi phyag rgya che mchog ni*), Rongzom states this and several lines following it are known as insertions. He notes in passing that there was a rumor that Ma Rinchen Chok had sporadically inserted lines from other *Māyājāla Tantras* into the GT. Thereafter, his disciple Tsukru Rinchen Zhönnu extracted the insertions and this created two versions of the GT, one with insertions and one without.⁴⁹⁵ Rongzom then refers to four other passages as insertions further along in his commentary, for a total of five. So according to Rongzom, the insertions in the GT are the following:

1. Chapter Six: Thirteen lines beginning with *|sku yi phyag rgya che mchog ni|*
2. Chapter Seven: Twenty-one lines from *|rgyud mchog sgyu 'phrul dra ba las|*
3. Chapter Eight: Four lines from *|phyag rgya chen po 'i tshogs mchog ni|*
4. Chapter Eleven: Thirty-eight lines from *|rnal 'byor sngags 'chang dngos 'grub ni|*

⁴⁹⁵ Cited in Wangchuk, 286 and n. 72. See Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po 1999, 149: *sku yi phyag rgya che mchog ni||zhes bya ba la sogs pa ni phyong du grags pa stel||slob dpon rin cen[=chen] mchog gis sgyu 'phrul gzhan nas phyung ste| skabs skabs su bcug pa las gtsug ru rin cen gzhon nus phong yod pa dang med pa 'i dpe ris gnyis su phye ste de bzhin du grags so zhes zer ro|*.

5. Chapter Twenty: Fifty-one lines from |*sngon tshe dpal chen he ru ka*|⁴⁹⁶

Unfortunately, Rongzom does not say much more about the origin of these. Moreover, it is also worth mentioning that, although Dūjom Rinpoche’s NSTB contains a quote from the *Jewel Commentary* that mentions Buddhaguhya as one of the scholars who supervised the translation of the GT, I have not been able to find any mention of Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya in the *Jewel Commentary*.⁴⁹⁷

Centuries later and apparently as part of their project to translate the late Sanskrit text discussed above, Tarpa Lotsāwa and Chomden Reldri each penned translator’s colophons that reference the issue of insertions and their absence from Indian commentaries like Buddhagupta’s, though neither of their colophons is found appended to their translation of the GT as preserved in the Pukdrak Kangyur. Chomden Reldri’s was translated above and is sometimes presented as a response to a request from Shagé Lotsāwa. Recall that in this text, as in his defense of the GT, Chomden Reldri mentions his discovery of the Sanskrit manuscript of the GT and points to three Indian commentators as proof of the GT’s authenticity, including an unnamed one by Buddhagupta. Note that on Chomden Reldri’s colophon to the GT mentions six insertions (*’chong drug*), not five as discussed in Rongzom’s *Jewel Commentary*. His colophon also presents a different spelling of the Tibetan word for insertion (*’chong* instead of *’phyong*, with both pronounced as “*chong*”)

As one might expect given their apparent collaboration, Tarpa Lotsāwa’s colophon accords with Chomden Reldri’s colophon in terms of the number of insertions. It takes up

⁴⁹⁶ The other relevant passages can be found in the *Jewel Commentary* on pp. 161, 165, 185, and 244. Rongzom does not offer much commentary on these passages except to say that they are insertions. He then proceeds to the next passage he wishes to comment upon. The number of lines for each insertion is a calculation I made based on the number of lines of the GT he skips in the commentary.

⁴⁹⁷ NSTB 889. I am grateful to Dorji Wangchuk for sharing with me a searchable Wylie version of the Rongzom’s commentary.

four folios—rather lengthy for a colophon—and it is also found at the end of GT reproduced in Longchenpa’s collected works. Regarding the insertions, Tarpa Lotsāwa writes

For the sake of clearing up doubt concerning the six insertions, it was requested that I translate [this Sanskrit manuscript]. Relying on the [manuscript] that was sent to me, I compared it to the [Tantra as embedded within] commentaries by Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, Buddhaguhya, and Vilāsavajra, and to the ancient translations. [I conclude that] the texts of the old translation do not contain the insertions, while this manuscript does; I have rendered all of them herein. [...] The six insertions appear in full in this Sanskrit manuscript, but they do not appear in the extensive commentary of Sūryaprabhā[simha] and other [Indian commentaries]. Thus, regarding the [original] Sanskrit manuscripts, it is clear that there were two [versions], a longer and a shorter one, and that the [rumor that] the [parts of the] manuscript [containing insertions] were hidden in Tibetan is not true. I [therefore] hold that there are longer and shorter versions of the scripture.⁴⁹⁸

Tarpa Lotsāwa also refers to six *'phyong*, but also notes that the commentaries attributed to Indian authors such as Sūryaprabhāsiṃha, Vilāsavajra, and Buddhagupta (under the name Buddhaguhya). Unfortunately, like Chomden Reldri, he does not provide the name of Buddhagupta’s commentary on the GT. He also compared the Sanskrit manuscript to an older translation of the GT, presumably from the imperial period, which did not contain insertions.

Chapter six of Longchenpa’s famous fourteenth commentary on the GT, *Dispelling Darkness in the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu mun sel)* contains the most detailed discussion of insertions. Longchenpa, however, mentions a total of nine *'phyong* instead of the Rongzom’s five, and Tarpa Lotsāwa and Chomden Reldri’s six. He even provides designations for each of the insertions. They are:

⁴⁹⁸ *Rgyud gsang ba snying po'i rtsa ba*, f. 28b4-5 and 29a2-3: 'chong drug gi the tshom bsal ba'i phyir khyed kyis bsgyur bar zhu| ches bskul ba la brten nas nyi 'od seng ge'i 'grel chen dang | sangs rgyas gsang ba'i 'grel pa dang | sgeg pa rdo rje'i 'grel pa dang | snga 'gyur rnam dpang po byas nas| snga 'gyur na med cing rgya dpe 'di na yod pa thams cad bsgyur[...] 'chong drug kyang rgya dpe 'di nas tshang bar byung zhing | rgya

1. Insertion about the Enlightened Body (*sku'i 'phyong*) in Chapter Six: Thirteen lines (*rkang pa*) beginning with *|sku yi phyag rgya che mchog ni|*
2. Insertion about Enlightened Speech (*gsung gi 'phyong*) in Chapter Seven: Twenty-one lines beginning with *|rgyud mchog sgyu 'phrul dra ba las|*
3. Insertion about Enlightened Mind (*thugs kyi 'phyong*) in Chapter Eight: Four lines beginning with *|phyag rgya chen po 'i tshog mchog ni|*
4. Insertion about the Offering (*mchod pa'i 'phyong*) in Chapter Nine: Four lines beginning with *|phyag rgya chen po 'i phyag mthil du|*
5. Insertion about Enlightened Qualities (*yon gtan gyi 'phyong*) in Chapter Nine: Eight lines beginning with *|phyogs bcu dus bzhi mngon rdzogs pa 'i|*
6. Insertion about Accomplishment (*sgrub pa'i 'phyong*) in Chapter Eleven: Twenty-two lines beginning with *|sngags 'chang dngos grub yang dag ni|*
7. Insertion about Enlightened Activity (*'prin las kyi 'phyong*) in Chapter Thirteen: Five lines beginning with *|ye shes rdzogs pa 'i dkyil 'khor la|*
8. Insertion about Samaya (*dam tshig gyi 'phyong*) in Chapter Nineteen: Four Lines lines beginning with *|dam tshig 'di ni rmad po che|*
9. [A second] Insertion about Enlightened Action (*'prin las kyi 'phyong*) in Chapter Twenty: Twenty-four lines beginning with *|khro bo bsgrub kyi gtso bo 'di yin no|*⁴⁹⁹

'grel nyi 'od la sogs par ma byung bas rgya dpe la yang rgyas bsdud gnyis su yod par gsal zhing | bod du dpe mkhyud byas zhes pa mi bden cing | gzhung rgyas bsdus bstan pa yin no ll.

⁴⁹⁹ For the relevant passage, see Klong chen Dri med 'od zer, *Dpal gsang ba'i snying po'i 'grel pa phyog bcu'i men sel*. BDRC W1KG9042. (Serta: Gser ljongs bla ma rung lnga rig nang bstan slob drwa chen mo, no date), 264-265.

Longchenpa goes on to offer a cogent, text-critical explanation for these insertions which I shall explore at the end of this section. He does state that the original translation by Buddhagupta and Vairocana did not contain the insertions.

Since the rumor that Rongzom mentioned held that the insertions were made by Ma Rinchen Chok from the other Māyājāla tantras, the most likely candidates would be the GT in forty-six chapters and eighty-two chapters. I searched for all nine insertions in the corresponding chapters in these to longer GTs. Moreover, to verify Chomden Reldri and Tarpa Lotsāwa's claims that the insertions were both present in their late GT translation but not in the commentaries of Sūryaprabhāsīṃha or Vilāsavajra, I searched for the full list of insertions found in Longchenpa's commentary in these texts as well. My findings are summarized in the following table:

Table 7: Presence or Absence of Insertions ('phyong/'chong) in The Late Guhyagarbha Translation, in other Māyājāla tantras, and in Indian Commentaries

5 Insertions (Rongzom)	9 Insertions (Longchen)	Tarpa/Reldri Trans.	46 Ch. GT	82 Ch. GT	Sūryaprabhāsīṃha	Vilāsavajra
Ch. 6, 13 lines	Ch. 6, 13 lines	✓	X	✓, in Ch. 10	X	✓
Ch. 7, 21 lines	Ch. 7, 21 lines	✓	X	✓, in Ch. 13	X	✓
Ch. 8, 4 lines	Ch. 8, 4 lines	✓	X	✓, in Ch. 16	X	✓
	Ch. 9, 4 lines	✓	✓, in Ch. 15	✓, in Ch. 19	✓	✓
	Ch. 9, 8 lines	✓	✓, in Ch. 15	✓, in Ch. 19	✓	✓
Ch. 11, 38 lines	Ch. 11, 22 lines	✓	X	✓, in Ch. 23	X	✓

	Ch. 13, 5 lines	✓	✓, in Ch. 11	✓, in Ch. 25	✓	✓
	Ch. 19, 4 lines	✓	✓, in Ch. 30	✓, in Ch. 51	X	✓
Ch. 20, 51 lines	Ch. 20, 24 lines	✓	?, in Ch. 39 ⁵⁰⁰	✓, in Ch. 60	X	✓

A comparative study of all of these texts yields the following results: All nine of the insertions described by Longchenpa are found, with somewhat different wording, in Tarpa Lotsāwa's and Chomden Reldri's late translation of the GT. This is to be expected, since Tarpa Lotsāwa stated in his colophon that the insertions were present in the Sanskrit manuscript. Comparing the lists of insertions to the GT in forty-six and eighty-two chapters, we find that four out of five of Rongzom's insertions are not found in the former, but are in the latter. The fifth insertion is present in the forty-six chapter GT, but the wording of the lines differ somewhat. The other four insertions mentioned by Longchen are found in both GT.

Shifting now to the commentaries, we find that all five of Rongzom's insertions and one of Longchenpa's are not found in Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's *Extensive Explanation* while all nine are found in Vilāsavajra's *Blazing Palace*. It should be noted here that Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's commentary is not a word-by-word commentary, so the entire text of the root GT does not appear in the commentary. Until a Tibetan translation of the GT without insertions comes to light, we can tentatively conclude that at least the insertions outlined by Rongzom might have been placed into the root tantra from the eighty-two chapter GT. Moreover, it seems that Tarpa Lotsāwa might have been mistaken about the presence of

⁵⁰⁰ The wording of the passage differs somewhat in the forty-six chapter GT.

insertions in Vilāsavajra’s commentary, though it may be the case that Tarpa Lotsāwa was referring to a non-extant commentary by him, or even consulted a different translation.

The missing link here is Buddhagupta’s GT commentary. If the *Eye Commentary* is indeed the one referred to by Tarpa Lotsāwa and Chomden Reldri, finding the relevant passage presents a challenge, since the *Eye Commentary* does not comment on lines from the GT in an orderly way like Sūryaprabhāsiṃha and Vilāsavajra’s commentaries.⁵⁰¹ And since the *Eye Commentary* seems to take a more thematic approach, I surmise that not all of the lines of the root would be present in the text anyway. A complete critical study of *Eye Commentary* or the discovery of another GT commentary that equates to Buddhagupta’s *Explanatory Commentary* is necessary to make any further determinations.

Longchenpa’s perspicacious comments on the issue of insertions is perhaps most helpful at this point. After listing all all possible insertions, Longchenpa dismisses all of the speculation that Ma Rinchen Chok made the insertions or that he tried to conceal them out of shame. Citing the idea that the GT was translated in three stages—first by Buddhagupta and Vairocana, then by Padmasambhava and Nyak Jñānakumāra, and finally by Vimalamitra, Ma Rinchen Chok, and again Nyak Jñānakumāra—he proposes that any varying translations of the GT available in his time were simply the result of the early translators working from different Sanskrit redactions of the root text. He then points to two similar cases: the *Prajñāpāramitā Sutra in Eight-Thousand Verses* and the *Sitātapatrā Dhāraṇī*, varying translations of which were known to exist in Tibet.

Conclusion

⁵⁰¹ This would seem to be evidence in favor of *Eye Commentary* (*spyān ’grel*) as a corruption of *mchan ’grel*, since the tendency of *mchan ’grel*-style commentaries is to quote the root text as needed rather than reproduce the entire root text word-by-word.

In sum, although Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* tantric works have yet to attract much scholarly attention, he is clearly an important figure, even if he is not the same person as the yoga tantra commentator. From the traditional perspective of the Nyingma School, he was involved with the transmission of the GT from the beginning. As I have noted and will continue to explore, Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* writing are so closely connected to the GT; the title of the GT is mentioned several times, and in some cases he seems to paraphrase the text nearly verbatim without attribution. Together with Vilāsavajra, his works helped to create an exegetical tradition of the GT in Tibet. And his works have even had implications on the debates around the GT's authenticity and related issues such as the verification of a late Sanskrit manuscript of the GT and the peculiar issue of sporadic insertions. There remain more issues to be explored concerning the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, its relationship to the other tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle, and especially on the GT's Indian commentaries. Sūryaprabhāsiṃha's and Vilāsavajra's commentaries have also yet to be translated or systematically studied.

Chapter V. (Re)assessing Buddhagupta's Mahāyoga Corpus: Dating *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, *Brief Explanation of the Path*, and Other Treatises

In the previous chapter, I introduced the content and history of the *Guhyagabhra Tantra* (GT), the principle *mahāyoga* tantra in the Nyingma tradition. I focused on the tradition's view of Buddhagupta's role in the transmission of the GT, and I examined a few of the key commentaries on the GT that are often attributed to him. I also explored the contested provenance of the GT in Tibet beginning in the late eleventh century, with particular attention to the way in which Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* works have been used in the debates around the GT's authenticity. And in chapter three, I presented an outline of *mahāyoga* tantric practice and history, with a focus on the influence Buddhagupta's commentaries have had in the development of *mahāyoga* in Tibet. These two chapters lay the groundwork for the present one, which focuses on the central claim of this dissertation: that the Buddhagupta who commented on the outer tantras, whose works are mentioned in the dynastic text catalogs, *did not* author the *mahāyoga* commentaries often attributed to him.

I begin this chapter by examining passages from the works of the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta that contain the kernels that would later become central to *mahāyoga*, such as wrathful deities, movement of the wind energies, and mandalas with deities in sexual union. Since these aspects occur in an earlier, embryonic form in the works of the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta, it might seem possible that he would also endorse *mahāyoga*. But, as I will demonstrate, this seems less likely when we look carefully at the themes and content of these *mahāyoga* works. To this end, I provide an overview of the texts translated in chapter six: the first chapter of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, and *Brief Explanation of the Path*. I then attempt to date these texts and other *mahāyoga*

works of Buddhagupta by comparing them to early *mahāyoga* texts from the Tengyur and from Dunhuang whose dates have already been established by other scholars. By way of conclusion, I will briefly show how Buddhagupta’s *mahāyoga* works were later interpreted in support of Dzokchen.

Antecedents to Mahāyoga in Works of Buddhagupta, the Outer Tantra Commentator



Figure 6: An image of Buddhagupta from the first page of the Dergé recension of the Condensed Commentary on the MTV (D 2662). The caption below the image reads: “Buddhagupta (sangs rgyas gsang ba), Author of the Extensive Commentary on the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra

It is already well established that the yoga tantras such as the *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha Tantra* (STTS) and the *Mahāvairocanābhisaṃbodhi Tantra* (MVT) contain within them the kernels that would develop into what we know as *mahāyoga*. This chapter as a whole argues that Buddhagupta the outer tantra commentator did not author the works attributed to him on *mahāyoga*, since the *mahāyoga* works explain ideas and practices that had not become a central to tantric practice in Tibet until around the second half of the ninth century. That said, there are occasional references to what would seem to be mahāyogic motifs—deities in sexual union, interiorization of ritual, and so on—that might make it seem plausible to the reader, both ancient and contemporary, that Buddhagupta the outer tantra

commentator and Buddhagupta the *mahāyoga* expert were indeed one in the same. In this section, I survey several instances from the former's works.

There are references to wrathful deities, possibly in sexual union, in two texts by the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta: *The Jewel's Radiance—An Extensive Commentary on the Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* (D 2680) and a related liturgy called *The Solitary Hero Liturgy for the Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* (D 2926). Vajravidāraṇa is a deity of purification who removes karma hindrances and harmful spirits. As we have already seen, Buddhagupta categorizes the *Vajravidāraṇa Dhāraṇī* as a *kriyā* tantra. According to his liturgy, one begins by visualizing oneself as the deity Vajrapāṇi with the mandala of Vajravidāraṇa in front arising from the Sanskrit seed syllable *hūṃ*. At this early point in the liturgy, it is already implied that Vajravidāraṇa is to be visualized in union with a female consort surrounded by a retinue of wrathful deities.⁵⁰² The commentary elaborates on the fifteen wrathful deities in the mandala. To be clear, the presence of wrathful deities is not uncommon in the outer tantras. But some of the deities Buddhagupta mentions share their names with deities who figure prominently in the *mahāyoga* tantras, particularly Vajrakīla (Rdo rje phur pa, but also Rdo rje kī la ya elsewhere in the commentary, who is a principle figure in the mandala) and Yamāntaka (Shin rje mtha' byed).⁵⁰³ Moreover, Buddhagupta obliquely hints at the possibility that all the deities in the mandala can be visualized with consorts. Following the section of the commentary where he described the mantras to be recited for the principle wrathful male deities of the retinue, Buddhagupta instructs the practitioner on how to adjust the words of each mantra if visualizing the principal male-female deity-pair (*gtso bo yab yum*) as dictated by the by the pith instruction (*man ngag gis*). He concludes the passage by

⁵⁰² The text here is from Schmidt's diplomatic edition of the text on p. 143: *[hūṃ las rdo rje rnam 'joms te | yum dang khro bo bcas par bsam]*.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 64 and 106.

noting that these particular instructions were “taught under [the seal of] samaya” by his guru, i.e., that is to be kept secret, and that it should be taught to disciples in a similar manner.⁵⁰⁴

The same author’s *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* (D 2670) also contains references to techniques that are taken up in the subtle body manipulations of the later *mahāyoga* system. This text comments upon the *Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama*, a chapter from the non-extant *Vajroṣṇīṣa Tantra*. As the title of the tantra suggests, it focuses on practices subsequent to attaining firm meditative concentration (*dhyāna*, *bstam gtan*), which includes mantra recitation paired with yogic breath control (*prāṇāyāma*, *srog rtsol*). Buddhagupta himself classifies *Dhyānottara-pāṭala-krama* as a *kriyā* tantra. The commentary begins with a curious verse of praise, which reads: “Homage to Glorious Vajrasattva, the yogī of the great yoga!” (*dpal rdo rje sems dpa’ rnal ’byor chen po’i rnal ’byor pa la phyag ’tsal lo*) It seems possible to mistake “great yoga” as a reference to *mahāyoga*, since the Tibetan term typically used for *mahāyoga* appears in the phrase. Moreover, in the Zur exegetical tradition of the GT, Vajrasattva, as a form of Akṣobhya, appears at the center of the mandala. Nevertheless, these references are innocuous; Vajrasattva also appears as a prominent figure in the outer tantras such as the MVT, and since the *Dhyānottara-pāṭala* discusses more advanced meditative techniques, it is might be considered a great(er) type of yoga. Moving to the content of the commentary, Buddhagupta discusses the movements of the winds and how to restrict them during meditation:

The vital life force is the wind energy characterized by exiting from or entering through the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, navel, male and female sex organs, anus, and pores of the head hair and body hair. Controlling those energies means restricting their entrance and egress. So, when contemplating your own body as being indivisible from the suchness of

⁵⁰⁴ D 2628, f. 182b4: *dam tshig bstan cing bstan par bya ba yin no||zhes bla mas bstan to*. For the translation of the passage, see Schmidt, 109.

the deity's enlightened body,⁵⁰⁵ you restrict the entrance and egress of the winds by drawing in the breath like a turtle retracting its body into its shell or the tongue that retracts while drinking water.⁵⁰⁶

Buddhagupta is stating that the movement of the wind energy through these various orifices or apertures is facilitated by the act of breathing. These energetic movements can cause mental disturbances. Thus by restricting the breath, Buddhagupta suggests that one is better able to enter into a deeper state of meditative absorption conducive to actualizing deity visualization and mantra recitation. Elsewhere in the text, Buddhagupta notes that drawing and holding one's breath in such a manner requires a mental recitation of mantra; this should only be done after first performing a vocalized recitation of the mantra and entering into a state of non-distraction. To be clear, breath-related practices have long been a key part of Buddhist meditation; techniques like *ānāpānasati* or “remembering the breath” are taught in the Pāli *suttas*, and indeed there are corollaries to it in other Buddhist traditions. In this commentary, however, we see a merging of breath regulation and the movement of internal energies in a Buddhist tantric context, albeit without the mention of subtle body structures such as the channels or chakras. Breath retention indeed becomes the basis of later tantric yogas such as inner fire (*gtum mo*) or the “sky cow” (*rnam mkha' ba*) technique mentioned

⁵⁰⁵ Twice now, we have seen Buddhagupta describe self-visualization in the context of *kriyā* tantra. *Kriyā* tantra is typically associated with visualizing the deity externally and performing rituals and meditations to receive the blessing related to the deity. There was some disagreement in Tibet about whether or not visualization of oneself as the deity was found in *kriyā* tantra, or so it is implied in the writing of the Gelukpa master Khedrup Gelek Pelzang (Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang, 1385-1438) in his *General Presentation of the Classifications of Tantra* (*Rgyu sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa*). In his discussion of *kriyā* tantra, Khedrup notes that the Tibetan gurus of yore considered visualizing oneself as the deity during *kriyā* tantra practice as untenable, since the entire point of visualizing the deity externally was first to receive its blessings and spiritual accomplishments. Khedrup counters by citing the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-ṣaṭāla-krama* as evidence that this clearly is not the case, since Buddhagupta classifies the *Dhyānottara-ṣaṭāla-krama* as *kriyā* tantra while also recommending self-visualization. See F.D. Lessing and A. Wayman, *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), 162-168.

⁵⁰⁶ D 2670, f. 14b2-4: |*de la srog ces bya ba ni mig dang*| *rna ba dang* | *sna dang* | *kha dang* | *lte ba dang* | *skye pa dang* | *bud med kyi dbang po dang* | *mi gtsang ba'i khung bu dang*| *skra dang ba spu'i bu ga nas 'byung ba dang* | *'jug pa'i mtshan nyid kyi rlung ste*| *de bsdams pa yang skabs 'dir 'byung ba dang 'jug pa dgag pa'o* | *des ni bdag gi lus lha'i sku'i de kho na nyid gnyis su med par ji ltar bsams pa'i gnas ji lta ba bzhin*

in Nyingma sources, which entail using the vase breath (*kumbhaka*, *rlung bum pa can*) in combination with physical movements and visualizations of the wind energy flowing through aspects of the subtle body to generate a direct experience of non-conceptual bliss.

As Jacob Dalton has noted, the developments of Buddhist tantra in the eighth and ninth centuries involved shifting the focus of tantric ritual and meditation onto the practitioner’s body and its interior.⁵⁰⁷ Returning to interiorized techniques like inner fire, Yael Bentor has noted an early antecedent in Buddhagupta’s lengthy word commentary on the MVT (D 2663a/2663b), where he discusses an “inner fire offering” (*nang gi sbying sreg*):⁵⁰⁸

The five subjective *skandhas* are dissolved into emptiness, as are the objective external forms, such as the external fire hearth. In the same way, the consciousnesses issuing from the six doors⁵⁰⁹ are each dissolved. When they do not issue forth and are thus stopped, the [ultimate] *bodhicitta*, which destroyed and stopped [the consciousness from issuing forth], is itself destroyed and stopped by the non-issuing [i.e., naturally abiding] wisdom, and one thus abides in a state of non-discursive meditative absorption—this is the inner fire offering. Hence the fire of wind is stopped by the non-issuing wisdom, and one makes the inner fire offering with the mind. Stopping the fire of wind means restricting the movements of the vital life force. And so making the inner fire offering means incinerating thoughts [which have been] immobilized.⁵¹⁰

du|rlung 'jug pa dang 'byung ba rnam par dgag pa gyen du 'dren pa'i rlung gis|rus sbal gyi lus bskum pa dang | lce yis chu btung ba'i tshul du bsdus te|.

⁵⁰⁷ Jacob Dalton, “The Development of Perfection: The Interiorization of Buddhist Ritual in the Eighth and Ninth Centuries,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32, no. 1 (February 2004): 1-30.

⁵⁰⁸ Yael Bentor, “Interiorized Fire Ritual in India and Tibet,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 120, no. 4 (December 2000): 606. Bentor credits Alex Wayman for finding this passage.

⁵⁰⁹ Alex Wayman clarifies that this refers to the consciousness tied to the five sense plus the mental consciousness. See his “Studies in Yama and Māra,” *Indo-Iranian Journal* 3, no. 2 (1959): 122-123.

⁵¹⁰ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhitāntrasadvṛtti*, *Rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs pa byang chub pa'i rgyud kyi chen po'i tshig 'grel*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 2663(b), Rgyud nyu 261a-351a; tu, 1b1-116a. See tu, f. 115b2-3: *de yang bdag nyid kyi phung po lnga stong pa nyid du bshig la| phyi rol gyi me thab la sogs pa yul gyi gzugs rnams kyang stong par bshig ste| de bzhin du sgo drug gi rnam par shes pa 'phro ba rnams kyang so sor bshig nas mi 'phro bar bkag cing de ltar 'jig cing 'gog par byed pa'i byang chub kyi sems de yang 'phro ba med pa'i shes rab kyi bkag pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i ting nge 'dzin la gnas pa ni nang gi sbyin sreg ste| de bas na| rlung gi me yang 'phro ba med pa'i shes rab kyi bkag ste| yid kyi me la sbyin sreg bya 'o zhes gsungs pa yin no|.* This text is a revised translation of D 2663(a) undertaken by Gö Lotsāwa Zhönnu Pel.

In this passage, Buddhagupta explains an interiorized way of practicing the fire offering (*homa, sbyin sreg*), which typically entails the physical burning of comestibles and other offerings as an oblation to the deity with the goal of achieving a particular result, such as increasing wealth or subjugating demonic forces. Buddhagupta compares the ritual to the dissolution of the consciousnesses in meditation, then *bodhicitta*—here referring to emptiness—is itself dissolved by wisdom, which is inborn, ultimately allowing the practitioner to enter into a deep state of meditative absorption which is free from conceptualization. Buddhagupta implies that this inner fire offering made by the mind itself can occur when the “fire of the winds” is stopped by means of breath retention.

Finally, we come to a text that, though it has not received much contemporary scholarly attention, might be the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta’s *magnum opus*—his *An Introduction to the Meaning Tantra* (*Rgyud kyi don la ’jug pa*, D 2501), a commentary on the STTS that also serves as a general introduction to yoga tantric practice. Butön, who considered himself a yoga tantra specialist, cites it extensively in his *A Ship for Entering the Ocean of Yoga Tantra*. And the Tengyur preserves a commentary on the text attributed to Padmavajra.⁵¹¹ Now, as I have noted in chapter two, the STTS contains the kernels of sex and violence that are further elaborated in the *mahāyoga* tantras. Throughout the STTS, there are references to “secret” activities, variously called “the secret *mudrā*” (*rahasyamudrā* or *guhyamudrā, gsang ba’i phyag rgya*) and “the secret accomplishment” (*guhyasiddhi, gsang ba’i dngos grub*). Some of these occur in the context of rituals involving spells for attracting

⁵¹¹ Padmavajra, Padma badzra, *Tantrārthāvatārvyākhyāna, Rgyud kyi don la ’jug pa’i ’grel bshad*, Sde dge bstan ’gyur, D 2502, Rgyud ’i, 91b-351a. The provenance of this commentary remains uncertain, especially since it lacks a translator’s colophon. It is not mentioned in the dynastic period catalogs, nor is it mentioned in Chomden Reldri’s *Ornamental Sunbeam*. It is also not clear if the Padmavajra who authored this commentary is the same as the author of the more well-known *Guhyasiddhi*, which focuses on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and is preserved in Sanskrit.

a female partner, while others occur in discussions of deity yoga.⁵¹² Here is an example of the latter from the STTS, which is referred to as the “gnosis-mudrā of the secret offering”⁵¹³ (*rahasya-pūjā-mudrā-jñānam, gsang ba’i mchod pa’i phyag rgya’i ye shes*):⁵¹⁴

If you proffer the self-arising offering of bliss that embraces all bodies,
 You shall swiftly become equal to Vajrasattva himself.
 If you offer the bliss of the seizing of garments in intense, passionate union
 To the buddhas, you shall become equal to Vajraratna.
 If you offer the supreme bliss of being kissed with intense affection and delight
 To the buddhas, you shall become equal to Vajradharma.
 If you offer entirely the enjoyment of the yoga of joining the two organs⁵¹⁵
 In worship, you will become equal to Vajrakarma.⁵¹⁶

Buddhagupta’s *An Introduction to the Meaning Tantra* is not a word commentary, but fortunately, he does comment upon meaning of “joining the two organs.” However, his

⁵¹² Weinberger, 197.

⁵¹³ I was able to find the following passage in Sanskrit thanks to Do-Kyun Kwon’s excellent “*Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha*: Compendium of all the Tathāgatas, A Study of its Origin Structure and Teachings,” 122-123.

⁵¹⁴ Isshi Yamada, *Sarva-tathāgata-tattva-saṅgraha nāma mahāyāna-sūtra: A Critical Edition Based on a Sanskrit Manuscript and Chinese and Tibetan Translations* (Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1981), 139.13-20: *sarvakāyapariṣvaṅgasukhapūjā svayambhuvā | niryātaṃ bhavecchīggraṃ vajrasattvasamo hi saḥ || dṛḍhānurāgasamyogakacagrahasukhāni tu | niryātaṃstu buddhānāṃ vajraratnasamo bhavet || dṛḍhapratīṭisukhasakticumbitāgryasukhāni tu | niryātaṃstu buddhānāṃ vajradharmasamo bhavet || dvayendriyasamāpattiyogasaukhyāni sarvataḥ | niryātaṃstu pūjāyāṃ vajrakarmasamo bhavet ||*. For the Tibetan canonical translation, which differs somewhat, see D 497, f. 45a4-6: *de nas gsang ba’i mchod pa’i phyag rgya’i ye shes la bslab par bya ste| rang byung la ni lus kun gyis||’khyud pa’i bde ba’i mchod pa ni| phul na rdo rje sems dpa’ dang ||’dra ba de ni myur bar ’gyur||shin tu chags pa’i sbyor ba yi| dam pa’i gzung ba’i bde ba ni|sangs rgyas rnams la phul gyur na||rdo rje rin chen ’dra bar ’gyur||shin tu dga’ zhing bde chags pas||sprad par gyur pa’i mchog bde ba||sangs rgyas rnams la phul na ni||rdo rje chos dang ’dra bar ’gyur||dbang po gnyis ni sbyor ba yi||kun tu sbyor ba’i bde ba ni||mchod pa’i phyir ni phul bas na||rdo rje las dang ’dra bar ’gyur|.*

⁵¹⁵ Kwon, 122 n. 496, points out that the Chinese translation supplements “vajra and lotus” for “two organs.” Indeed, the Chinese translation completed in 1015 reads 金剛蓮華. See T.18.882.367c13. In the *mahāyoga* tantras like the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and the Sarma *niruttarayoga* tantras, vajra and lotus are euphemisms for penis and vagina. The Chinese translation, which dates to 1015, seems therefore to be more directly referring to sexual union.

⁵¹⁶ The verse immediately following this one in the Tibetan text has the intriguing phrase (D 497, f. 45a6): *[de dag gi gsang ba’i snying po ni de dag yin no]*. Here, we see a word that resembles the typical Tibetan rendering of *guhyagarbha* as in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* (**Gsang ba’i snying po**’i rgyud). This line becomes even more provocative when we consider that the preceding passage in the STTS seems to be endorsing a sexual practice of some kind, be it actual or visualized, and that the GT is well-known for its sexual rites. However, the extant Sanskrit of this line reads in Yamada, p. 139.21: *tatraitāni guhyamudrāhrdayāni bhavanti*. The Tibetan seems to be missing the *mudrā* of the Sanskrit, and has translated *hrdaya* as *snying po*. The MV does indeed suggest *snying* for *hrdaya* (MV 3936). The Chinese translation is completely different

explanation does not give the term any sexual meaning. He states “‘Two organs’ means the faculties of your own body and the various faculties of the gnosis being dwelling within your own body.”⁵¹⁷ He continues on to say that this refers to the merging of one’s own body visualized in the form of the deity, known in tantric traditions as the commitment being (*samayasattva, dam tshig sems dpa’*), with the gnosis being (*jñanasattva, ye shes sems dpa’*), which is the actual deity invited from a pure land to dwell within the visualized form for the duration of the meditation session. As Weinberger notes, a non-sexual meaning for the term is also given by Śākyamitra in his word commentary on the STTS, where Śākyamitra states that “joining the two organs” refers to merging of the mind of the practitioner and the mind of the deity.⁵¹⁸ Given the clear sexual symbolism in the Chinese translations, and other sexual themes in the STTS, Weinberger concludes that the tantra is indeed recommending sacramental sex, but that this inconvenient truth is reinterpreted by monastic commentators like Śākyamitra. This may also be the case with the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta.

Several works of Buddhagupta the outer tantra commentator reference deities in sexual union, yogīc breath control, and even an interiorized form of fire offering. However, his explanation of these remains firmly grounded an outer tantric approach without reference to the *mahāyoga* tantras whatsoever, even where it might have been appropriate.⁵¹⁹ Stephen Hodge has suggested that this may be an indication that the *mahāyoga* treatises associated

from both the Tibetan and Sanskrit (T.18.882.367c15: 即說如是等大明日). It may be that the Tibetan and Chinese translators were working from Sanskrit originals that were different from the extant Sanskrit text.

⁵¹⁷ D 2502: [dbang po gnyis zhes bya ba ni bdag gi lus kyi dbang po rnam dang | bdag gi lus kyi nang na gnas pa’i ye shes kyi sems dpa’i dbang po’i tshogs thams cad yin par shes par bya’o].

⁵¹⁸ Weinberger, 197-199. Nevertheless, Weinberger considers the STTS passage above to be referring to actual sexual intercourse in the context of deity yoga. If this is true, he notes, then it would be one of the earliest references to sacramental sex in a Buddhist tantric context.

⁵¹⁹ Although it might seem strange that a higher tantra is being used to explain a lower one, we have already seen that Buddhagupta, the outer tantra commentator, has a tendency to apply the yoga tantra technique of self-visualization in *kriyā* tantric contexts. But there is no trace of him using *mahāyoga* to explain the outer tantras.

with Buddhagupta were penned by a different, perhaps later author.⁵²⁰ In order to settle the matter, the remainder of this chapter will focus on these *mahāyoga* treatises, particularly *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path*.

Overview of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path*

An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths

Throughout the present work, I have referred to this treatise as *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*; this is a shorted version of the text's full title in the canonical recensions: *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths: Pith Instructions from Buddhagupta* (*Lam rnam par bkod pa sangs rgyas gsang ba'i man ngag*). The paracanonical recensions present different titles: K^g and K^{sgn} call it *The Great Exposition of the Graded Stages by Master Buddhagupta* (*Slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa'i lam rim chen mo*), while the others call it *An Orderly Arrangement of the Precious Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra Vajrayāna* (*Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa*). The text as a whole has been cataloged and categorized in various ways. The canonical recensions of the text in G, N, and Q have the phrase *man ngag* or oral/pith instruction in the title and place it “tantric commentary” (*rgyud 'grel*) section of the Tengyur. The NKM and other Nyingma sources refer to it as a “graded stages” (*lam rim*) text. However, as Takahashi has correctly noted, *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in fact defies genre, insofar as its content combines “origin narrative, liturgical manual, ontology, cosmology, doxography, [and] epistemological treatise.”⁵²¹

There are four major commentaries on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, all of which are written by Nyingma scholars. The earliest commentary is one we have mentioned

⁵²⁰ Hodge 2005, 23.

in previous chapters, Rokben Sherap Ö's *Clear Lamp of the Supreme Path* (*Lam mchog gsal ba'i sgron me*). Although this commentary is quite lengthy, it only comments upon the difficult point (*dka' ba*) of Buddhagupta's text. The next chronologically is the *Pearl Rosary Commentary* (*'Grel pa mu tig phreng ba*)⁵²² by the fifteenth abbot of Kaḥtok Monastery, Yeshé Gyeltzen (Ye shes rgyal mtshan, born 1395). Next is a word commentary called *Dispelling the Darkness of the Transmigrators' Minds* (*'Gro blo'i mun sel*)⁵²³ by the Adzom Gyelsé Gryumé Dorjé (A 'dzom rgyal sras 'Gyur med rdo rje, 1895-1969), the third son of the famed treasure revealer Adzom Drukpa (A 'dzom 'brug pa, 1842-1924). Finally, there is a commentary called the *Precious Purificatory Gem* (*Rin po che'i chu dwangs*)⁵²⁴ attributed to a certain Namkha Pel (Nam mkha' dpal); it is not clear to me whether this refers to Ngadak Drowagönpo Namkha Pel (Mnga' bdag 'Gro ba mgon po Nam mkha' dpal, twelfth to thirteenth century), the son of Nyangrel Nyima Özer.⁵²⁵ In my translation of chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*, I consult both Rokben and Adzom Gyelsé's commentaries to parse the often obscure or cryptic language of the text.

An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths is a work in nine chapters. The first two chapters are more introductory and philosophical in nature, while chapters three to seven give

⁵²¹ Takahashi 2018, 247

⁵²² Ye she srgyal mtshan, *Sgyu 'phrul lam gyi rim pa'i 'grel pa mu tig phreng ba*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 84 [yu], pp. 5-1138 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999).

⁵²³ A 'dzom rgyal sras 'Gyur med rdo rje, *Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa'i 'bru 'grel 'gro blo'i mun sel*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 76 (mu), pp. 241-736 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang 2009). This helpful typeset version of the commentary marks the roots verses so that they are easy to distinguish from Adzom Gyelsé Gryumé Dorjé's comments.

⁵²⁴ Nam mkha' dpal, *Sgyu 'phrul man ngag lam gyi rim pa'i 'grel bshad rin po che'i chu dwangs*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 85 [ru], pp. 5-1068 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999).

⁵²⁵ Of these three commentaries, Takahashi mentions only the ones by Rokben and Adzom Gyelsé. Takahashi mentions two other commentaries in her article: a perhaps non-extant one by Sangyé Rinchen Gyeltzen (Sans rgyas rin chen rgyal mtshan) and a text by Śākya Dorjé called *Elucidating Mirror* that, like Rokbens's commentary (though much shorter) focuses on the difficult points of the text. See *Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa'i 'bru dka'i don bkrol gsal byed me long*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 86 [lu], pp. 5-332 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999).

practical instructions for *mahāyoga*-style deity yoga practice. The final two chapters discuss the attainment of the knowledge-holder levels:

- Chapter One: Dwelling on Gnosis Itself (*ye shes rang la gnas pa*)
- Chapter Two: Perceiving One’s Own State (*rang gnas mthong ba’i le’u*):
- Chapter Three: A Teaching on the Yoga of Great Emptiness (*stong pa chen po’i rnal ’byor bstan pa*)
- Chapter Four: A Teaching on the Yoga of Great Compassion (*snying rje chen po’i rnal ’byor bstan pa*)
- Chapter Five: The Samādhi that Binds the Mudrā (*phya rgya bcing ba’i ting nge ’dzin gyi le’u*)
- Chapter Six: A Teaching on the Elaborated Yoga (*spros pa’i rnal ’byor bstan pa’i le’u*)
- Chapter Seven: Accomplishing the Assembly, The Unimpeded Path (*bar chad med pa’i lam tshogs bsgrub pa*)
- Chapter Eight: A Teaching on the Final Path (*mthar phyin pa’i lam bstan pa*)
- Chapter Nine: A Teaching on the Final Result (*mthar phyin pa’i ’bras bub stan pa’i le’u*)

The first chapter of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* is called “Dwelling on Gnosis Itself (*ye shes rang la gnas pa*)” and acts as an introduction to rest of the text, presenting the reasons for composition. After an initial verse of benediction, the chapter opens with a recounting of the origin myth of the *Māyājāla* tantras. Buddhagupta briefly mentions the prophetic dreams of King Jaḥ predicting the revelation of the *Māyājāla* tantras, then proceeds to describe the actual occasion of its revelation to Kukurāja, Indrabhūti, Siṃharāja, Uparāja,

and Princess Gomadevi in a jeweled palace in eastern India. These statements constitute the author's promise of composition (*rtsom par dam bca'*), a traditional aspect of Buddhist treatises. Then, the author reminds the reader of the importance of following a guru when engaging the tantric path. Here, we find an explicit reference to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*:

You cannot simply engage the *Guhyagarbha*
Through your own coarse and unrefined experience;
This would be like [expecting] flowers to bloom from dry kindling.
Therefore, you must revere the guru according to the scriptures.⁵²⁶

He discusses the hardships and trials that a guru will put a student through in order to determine whether the student is worthy of receiving the teachings of secret mantra. This is essential for both parties involved, because an unworthy student will bring nothing but ruin upon both himself or herself and the guru. Thus, Buddhagupta states, his *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* is for those who have been properly investigated by a guru, so that the stages and goals of *mahāyoga* practice are clear.

Buddhagupta then launches into an explanation of the view and practice of *mahāyoga*. He begins by explain how one should understand the nature of oneself and external phenomena. Here, Buddhagupta emphasizes that all phenomena, and even one's own mind, are ultimately inseparable from the enlightened mind. He states: "The nature of the ten direction and the four times, is the very essence of the Tathāgata. Since the samsaric mind [exists], but has no self, it is therefore the inconceivable Tathāgatas."⁵²⁷ From here, Buddhagupta then moves to a more concrete meaning of the chapter's title by presenting practices related to the subtle body. He describes several practices, including the

⁵²⁶ See the critical edition the first chapter of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in chapter five of this dissertation: |*rtsing po dmu rgod rang nyams kyis*||*gsang ba 'i snying por mi 'gyur te*||*bud shing me tog 'bras bzhin 'gyur*||*de bas bla ma lung bzhin bkur*|.

visualization of the seed syllables in the chakras and energetic channels, the visualization to perform during sexual yoga with a consort, and even what seems to be a reference to a form of inner fire yoga. The chapter closes by returning to the idea that external phenomena are appearances of the mind.

The second chapter of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* contains the well-studied doxographical passage where Buddhagupta explains an eightfold tantric hierarchy that places *mahāyoga* at the top. Since I have already discussed this doxography in chapter two and will examine it further below, I simply list the vehicles or stages he outlines: 1) gods and humans (*lha dang mi*), 2) the *śrāvaka* stage (*nyan thos sa pa*), 3) pratyekabuddha stage (*rang sangs rgyas kyi sa*), 4) bodhisattva stage (*byang chub sa*), 5) the highest vehicle (*bla med theg pa*), 6) stage of the *kriyā* ritualist (*bya ba las kyi sa*), 7) the stage of yoga (*rnal 'byor sa*), 8) the great vehicle of methods (*thabs kyi theg pa chen po*).

The remaining chapters of the text consist of instructions for *mahāyoga* tantra deity meditation. Chapters three to seven focus on the five meditative stabilizations (*ting 'dzin*) of *mahāyoga*, each of which are stages for generating oneself as the deity.⁵²⁸ In the yoga of great emptiness, one begins by dissolving one's ordinary physical form and meditating on emptiness, a process which is meant to simulate the experience of death. Through this yoga, one purifies and transforms one's actual, eventual death into an occasion for attaining the *dharmakāya*. Next, in the yoga of great compassion, sometimes called the yoga of illusory compassion (*snying rje sgyu ma 'i rnal 'byor*) one generates compassion with the goal of realizing that the object of compassion—all sentient beings—is illusory; perfection of this

⁵²⁷ See the critical edition of chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*: [phyogs bcu dus bzhi 'i rang bzhin 'di||de bzhin gshegs pa 'i ngo bo nyid||'khor ba sems phyir bdag med pas||de phyir de bzhin gshegs bsam yas].

⁵²⁸ The following explanation is based on my cursory study of the other chapters and Garson's explanation of the five meditative stabilizations on p. 413-419.

yoga results in the attainment of the *saṃbhogakāya*. The remaining three meditative stabilizations focus on actually visualizing oneself as the deity; accomplishing these results in the attainment of the *nirmāṇakāya*. The first is the yoga of the binding *mudrā*, which entails visualizing one's consciousness as a seed syllable. Then in the yoga of the elaborate *mudrā*, one begins to visualize oneself as the deity at the center of a simplified form of the deity's mandala. And finally with the yoga of accomplishing the assembly, one visualizes the full mandala. Chapter eight and nine detail the attainment of the four levels of *vidyādhara*, or knowledge-holder (more on this below). The five stages outlined in chapters three to seven can also be thought of as what the later tradition refers to as perfection stage practices involving the manipulation of internal energies and sexual union with a physical consort.⁵²⁹

Chapter seven of *An Orderly Arrangement for the Path* is particularly interesting in this regard, since it provides instructions for the practice of sexual union with a consort in the context of deity yoga. Much of the chapter is devoted to the process of visualizing in a more elaborate way the peaceful and wrathful deity mandalas related to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Buddhagupta's description of the practice of sexual union is similar in its language to the one from chapter eleven of the GT. Here, however, there is a bit more detail about the sexualized meaning of the rites or stages of service or worship of a consort, intimate service, evocation, and great evocation, as well as a description of the meditations to be done while actually engaging in sexual practice. The passages that reflect those from the root GT are rendered in bold in the translation:

**Differentiating between goddess, *nāginīs*, and women of ignoble birth,
Or otherwise not differentiating between them [as consorts],
Through the [rites of] Service, Intimate Service,
Evocation and Great Evocation:
Perform ablutions for the basic space of wisdom, and**

⁵²⁹ Kongtrül 2007, 71-83.

Arrange all the mandalas of the Sugatas.
 Meditating on yourself as the deity of primordial awareness,
 Become inseparable [from the consort].
 Holding a Vajra and Bell,
In the mandala of the lotus of the female consort,
The blissful enlightened mind of the lotus [mingling with] *bodhi*[*citta*] is emitted.
Through the supreme gift of enjoyment and equanimity
Made to the mandala of the buddhas without exception [which were arranged]
 By the apprehending the stages of the five minds, [the gnosis beings] dissolve.
 Delighting in the three mandalas of space and time, and [imagining that]
 Many sentient being have attained [a similar level of] joy,
 Once again, dissolve [the assembled deities] into non-dual basic space.
 From the basic space of dissolution, the *mudrā* [i.e., the consort] blazes, and
 The method and wisdom of the Tathāgatas are perfected;
 The six *mudrās* [of the mandala] and the central deity are perfected;
 And the two accumulations of method and wisdom are perfected.
The essences of the sun and moon—the essences of accomplishment—
Are received though vajra-tongues into the mandala.
One will be transformed into a sky-walker, radiant, blazing with life, and so on,
A lord of wish-fulfilling clouds.⁵³⁰

Buddhagupta elaborates on the actual practices of the four stages of service and evocation in the context of sexual yoga. As I mentioned in chapter one, these four stages are normally considered distinct phases involving deeper meditation upon and closer connection or identification with the deity in the context of deity yoga. Buddhagupta equates these with stages of closer physical contact with the consort. Since the language in Buddhagupta's text is difficult to parse, I rely here on Adzom Gyelsé's gloss of these verses. The stage of service corresponds to performing "ablutions for basic space of wisdom," which Adzom Gyelsé explains as bathing the body of the consort in luscious substances such as soap, milk, and perfume. The stage of intimate service corresponds to arranging "all the mandalas of the

⁵³⁰ CT 43-1021: *|lha mo klu mo rigs ngan mo||dbye 'am yang na mi dbye bar||bsnyen pa dang ni nye bsnyen po | |bsgrub pa dang ni bsgrub chen pos||shes rab dbyengs ma khros byas la||bder gshegs dkyil 'khor kun bkod de||bdag nyid rig pa'i lhar sgoms nas ||gnyis su med par ldan par bya||rdo rje dril bu ldan gyur nas||yum gyi padma'i dkyil 'khor du||byang chub padma'i bde thugs spros||sems lnga rim par zin pa yis||sangs rgyas dkyil 'khor ma lus la||dgyes mnyam mchog gi sbyin pas bstim||phyogs dus dkyil 'khor gsum mnyes dang ||'gro ba mang po de thob na||slar yang gnyis med dbyings su thim||thim 'gyur dbyings nas phyag rgyar 'bar||bde gshegs thabs dang shes rab sdogs ||phyag rgya drug kyang yang dag rdzogs||bsod nams tshogs chen gnyis kyang rdzogs||bsgrub pa nyi zla'i snying po de||dkyil 'khor rdo rje lce yis blang ||mkha' 'gro gsal 'bar tshe la sogs||yid bzhin sprin gyi bdag por 'gyur*.

Sugatas” and “meditating on yourself as the deity of primordial awareness,” where the yogī beholds both his own body and the body of the consort as divinities within a celestial palace. The stage of evocation begins with “becoming inseparable from [the consort],” like “Vajra and Bell,” which means initiating sexual congress with the consort and continues up to the where “two accumulations of method and wisdom are perfected.” Finally, the stage of great evocation is the culmination of the process resulting in an experience of bliss and the mingling of the two male and female sexual fluids, referred to as the “essences of the sun and moon.” Here the practice is very similar to those described in the *Guhyagarbha*-related material from Dunhuang that I examine in the next section.

Brief Explanation of the Path

The *Brief Explanation of the Path* is significantly shorter than *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*, consisting of about seven folios. Its full title according to the non-Tengyur witnesses is *Brief Explanation of the Māyājāla Path (Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu)*. As far as I can tell, there is only one commentary on the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, Adzom Gyelsé Gyurmé Dorjé's *Drop of Nectar: A Word Commentary on the Brief Explanation of the Path (Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu'i)*.⁵³¹ One of the most interesting aspects of the text is that in the Tengyur, the text is attributed it to Vimalamitra and is known by the title *An Explanation of the Māyājāla Path (Sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i lam bshad pa)*. The NKM and Nyingma commentators in general including Adzom Gyelsé attribute it to Buddhagupta (to *sangs rgyas gsang ba*, to be precise) and often consider it to be an abridgement of *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*. Previous scholarship on the text has not taken notice of this

difference in the text’s attributed author. As I proposed in chapter one, this is part and parcel of a tendency of confusing the compositions of the Vimalamitra and Buddhagupta, which may have its roots in shared hagiographic source.

With that difference in attribution in mind, the question remains as to whether the *Brief Explanation of the Path* was authored by the same person as *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*. As Takahashi has noted, the two texts share several nearly verbatim passages in common.⁵³² Some of these shared passages also resemble ones from the eighty-two chapter *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. For example:

Table 8: Comparison of a Passage from the GT in 82 Chapters, *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, and *Brief Explanation of the Path*

Chapter 77 of the <i>Guhyagarbha Tantra</i> in 82 Chapters, D 834, f. 295b7	<i>An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths</i>, Q 4736, CT vol. 43, pp. 966-967	<i>Brief Explanation of the Path</i>, Critical Edition in Chapter Five
dbang po yul du snang ba kun yul rnams yod pa ma yin te kun gzhi rnam par shes pa nyid dngos po sna tshogs par snang ste	dbang po yul dang snang ba kun yul rnams yod pa ma yin te kun gzhi rnam par shes pa nyid dngos po sna tshogs par snang bas	dbang po yul du snang ba kun yul rnams yod pa ma yin te kun gzhi rnam par shes pa nyid dngos po sna btshogs par snang ba
All that appears as objects of the sense faculties, Do not exist as such objects; It is the storehouse consciousness itself that Appears as those various things.	The objects of the sense faculties and all that appears, Do not exist as such objects; It is the storehouse consciousness itself that Appears as those various things.	All that appears as objects of the sense faculties, Do not exist as such objects; It is the storehouse consciousness itself that Appears as those various things.

Since the provenance of the GT in eighty-two chapters remains in question, it is difficult, if not impossible, to determine which text influenced which.⁵³³ Nevertheless, given the

⁵³¹ A 'dzom rgyal sras 'Gyur med rdo rje, *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu'i 'bru 'grel bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 71 [du], pp. 555-646 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang 2009).

⁵³² Takahashi 2018, 254-257. These will be noted in my annotated translation of *Brief Explanation of the Path*.

⁵³³ It might be possible to establish a *terminus ad quem* for the eighty-two chapter GT. It is referenced throughout chapter six of Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*. See for example p.

similarities between *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path* in terms their approach to view, practice, and other important elements such as their system of *vidyādhara* or knowledge-holder levels, as well as other shared passages and ideas, they may very well have been written by the same person.

The *Brief Explanation of the Path* presents a succinct, general explanation of the *mahāyoga* path as a whole. Unlike *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*, it does not contain practice instructions but rather focuses mostly on philosophical aspect of the path. In this regard, there is a clear consonance between the two texts. Compare for examples the following excerpt from the *Brief Explanation of the Path* to the one cited above from chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*:

All phenomena without exception,
 Are included within mind and enlightenment itself,
 Which is profound, vast, and spontaneous.
 Outer and inner, the container and its contents, are primordially pure.
 This purity and realization is itself the *dharmadhātu*.
 This is the Vajra-equality.⁵³⁴

The emphasis here, as in *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths*, is on the primordially pure nature of mind that encompasses all phenomena, which is equated with the *dharmadhātu*, or absolute space in which all phenomena arise. That said, there are occasional gestures toward practical elements, such the following passage which advocates sexual practice with a consort:

Although it is understood that there is the actual consort (mudrā
 And the [imagined] mudrā, since this not an appropriate time [for actual consort
 practice],

198.5 of the *Lamp*, which quotes from the “Eighty-Chaptered One”: |*bryga bcu[=brgyad bcu] pa las| snang ba mi 'gog thabs yin te||rang bzhin med pa shes rab yin|. These two verses are indeed found in D 834 on f. 296a2, not far from the verses quoted in the table above. If we accept an early tenth century dating for *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*, then this might also be the *terminus ad quem* for the eighty-two chapter GT.*

⁵³⁴ See the critical edition of the *Brief Explanation of the Path* in chapter five of this dissertation: |*thams cad ma lus chos so cog||sems dang byang chub nyid du 'ub||yangs shing rgya che lhun grub ni||phyi nang snod bcud ye nas [D^{ns} 3b] dag |dag rtoqs nyid kyang dbyings nyid yin||'di ni rdo rje mnyam yin no|.*

Do not meditate using the [former]. As for the latter, she is your intrinsic wareness.

And [meditating using her], naturally brings no suffering or mental affliction.⁵³⁵

Here, the word *mudrā* (*phyra rgya*) is used euphemistically to refer to a consort in the context of deity yoga. This passage aligns well with the passage from chapter seven of *An Orderly Arrangement for the Paths* in that it demonstrates and awareness of the use of an actual, physical consort.

There is one additional scripture that *Brief Explanation of the Path* draws from (or perhaps was incorporated into), a Nyingma tantra of the *Māyājāla* cycle called *The Great Unsurpassed Secret Nucleus—Ascertainment of Reality* (*Gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i bla ma chen po*).⁵³⁶ This thirteen-chapter tantra emphasizes the importance of initiation and elaborates upon the *samayas*, or tantric commitments associated with the *Māyājāla* tantras.⁵³⁷ Although the Kangyur and some NGB recensions of the tantra do not have a translators' colophon, the recension from the Tingkyé edition of the NGB does have a translators' colophon which states that the text was translated by Vimalamitra and Nyak Jñānakumāra.⁵³⁸ There are several verses shared between *The Great Unsurpassed Secret Nucleus* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, all of which I point out in my annotated translation of the latter in chapter five. Here, we shall examine the longest passage, which unsurprisingly, is about the nature of *samayas*:

Table 9: Comparison of a Passage from D 837 and *Brief Explanation of the Path*

Chapter 11 of <i>The Great Unsurpassed Secret</i>	<i>Brief Explanation of the Path</i> , Critical edition
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⁵³⁵ See the critical edition of *Brief Explanation of the Path*: *[de yang gnyis te phyag rgya dngos||phyag rgya shes mod dus min phyir||mi bsgom gcig shos rang rig la||sdug bsngal nyon mongs ngang gis med]*.

⁵³⁶ *Gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i bla ma chen po*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, D 837, Rnying rgyud ga, 34b-60a. The English translation of the title of this tantra is from Garson, 265.

⁵³⁷ Dorje 1987, 44-45

⁵³⁸ Martin 1987, 182. Dan Martin consider *bla ma* to mean guru. Thus on his reading, one possible translation of the text's title might be *The Great Guru of the Secret Nucleus—Ascertainment of Reality*.

Nucleus, D 837, f. 57a2	in Chapter Five
sdom pa rnam pa bcu gsum dang spyi yi dam tshig mtha' yas pa thig le chen po'i ngang du gsal	sdom pa rnam pa bcu gsum dang spyi yi dam tshig mtha' yas par thig le chen po'i ngang du gsal
<p>The thirteen vows and The limitless general <i>samayas</i> Are illuminated in the state of the great <i>bindu</i>.</p>	

According to Adzom Gyelsé, the “great *bindu*” (*thig le chen po*) refers to the *mahāyoga* view of equality (*mnyam nyid*), a *mahāyoga* philosophical concept which is developed in both *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and in Pelyang’s *Lamp for the Mind*.⁵³⁹ In essence, it is a radically nondual view that “refuses to acknowledge dualities even conventionally.”⁵⁴⁰ Thus here, *thig le* does not have its usual sexualized *mahāyoga* meaning of “essential drop” but refers to the total sphere that encompasses everything, beyond dualistic distinctions. In any case, as with the eighty-two chapter GT, the provenance of *The Great Unsurpassed Secret Nucleus* remains uncertain, so the direction of influence here is unclear. All of the shared passages come from chapter eleven of *The Great Unsurpassed Secret Nucleus*, which is titled “Heart of the Pith Instructions—Great Bliss of Bodhicitta” (*man ngag snying po byang chub sems bde ba chen po*), perhaps leaving open the possibility that some of the “pith instructions” in the chapter were incorporated from other sources⁵⁴¹ As a final note, the text immediately following this tantra in the NGB is not another tantra but, unusually, a treatise called *Drop of the Enlightened Mind* (*Thugs kyi thigs pa*), a text also found in the Tengyur that is said to have been coauthored by Vilāsavajra, Buddhagupta, and Vimalamitra. Given my arguments in chapter one regarding Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra’s hagiographies, this shared authorship is highly doubtful.

⁵³⁹ Takahashi 2009, 344-345.

⁵⁴⁰ Cabezón 2013, 28.

⁵⁴¹ D 837, f. 57b5.

Proposed Dating of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Paths* (and other Mahāyoga Works of Buddhagupta?)

I now attempt to establish the *terminus a quo* and *terminus ad quem* for Buddhagupta's *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*. Though determining the *terminus ad quem* of these texts will be straightforward, the *terminus a quo* presents some challenges and will rely on a relative dating of Buddhagupta's texts to the *mahāyoga* works of the late eighth or early ninth century Tibetan master Pelyang. Pelyang's work has been extensively studied by Kammie Takahashi. Although I agree with Takahashi about her dating of Pelyang's work, I disagree with her assertion that Pelyang was influenced by and drew from Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* treatises. Instead, I assert that Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* treatises actually postdate those of Pelyang. The *mahāyoga* approach represented in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path* seems to be an expansion of teachings already present in Pelyang's key *mahāyoga* writings, especially his *Responses of Vajrasattva* and *Lamp for the Mind*. The *mahāyoga* writings attributed to Buddhagupta advance practices and ideas such subtle body techniques and an enumeration of the knowledge-holder (*vidyādhara*, *rig 'dzin*) levels that seem to have been unknown to Pelyang. I now compare the relevant passage from each author's text to make this point clear. I will then examine two other *mahāyoga* treatises that are typically attributed to Buddhagupta, arguing that they are of the same era and perhaps the same hand as *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*. Since these *mahāyoga* treatises postdate Pelyang, perhaps significantly, I conclude that the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta cannot have been the same person as the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta discussed in the first section of this chapter.

As mentioned in chapter three, the ordinance issued by Prince Zhiwa Ö of Gugé mentions a particular text, *Stages of the Path of Yoga (Rnal 'byor lam rim)*, which Sokdokpa in his commentary considers to probably be by Buddhaguhya (*sangs rgyas gsang ba*), without saying anything more. Karmay suggests that this may refer to *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. If he is correct, then this would establish the text's *terminus ad quem* as 1092, which is the date Karmay proposes for Zhiwa Ö's ordinance. Nupchen's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* quotes from a text called the *Orderly Arrangement (Rnam par bkod pa)*. As far as I can tell, this does not refer to *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* but to an obscure Nyingma tantra (*De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs gsang ba 'i ye shes don gyi snying po khro bo rdo rje 'i rigs kun 'dus rig pa 'i mdo rnal 'byor grub pa 'i rgyud*, D 831), as Dominic Sur has noted.⁵⁴² There are also references to a text called the *Vajra Arrangement (Rdo rje bkod pa)*, but this also refers to D 831.⁵⁴³ A more secure *terminus ad quem* are the works of Rokben Sherap Ö, which both mention and comment upon *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. Since there are no exact dates for Rokben's compositions, the *terminus ad quem* for *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* would slightly before 1244, the year of Rokben's death.

⁵⁴² Sur 2015, mentions one such example on 618 n. 2140. A quote from the text is found Rongzom's *Introduction to the Way of the Great Vehicle*. The same text is quoted in Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes 1974, 231.1-3. The tantra is *Sarvatathāgatacittaguhyajñānārthagarbha-krodhavajrakula-tantra-piṇḍārthavidyāyogasiddhi-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs gsang ba 'i ye shes don gyi snying po khro bo rdo rje 'i rigs kun 'dus rig pa 'i mdo rnal 'byor grub pa 'i rgyud*, Sde de bka' 'gyur, D 831, Rnying rgyud kha, 1b-110a.

⁵⁴³ See, for example, the reference in chapter six of Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes 1974, 273.4-6. The text reads: *[rdo rje bkod pa las] sems kyi chu gsal nam mkha' la||nyon mongs spring gyi rnyog med na||dngos grub nyi zla skar tshogs bkram||sgrib med byin rlabs dang gis 'char*. The quote is from D 831, f. 13a6. Takahashi 2009, 341 n. 1171 mentions that a few lines from Pelyang's *Lamps for the Mind* that are also found in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, and quoted in chapter 6 of Nupchen's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*. She notes that in Nupchen's text, the quote is "glossed appropriately to the context in the *Margavyūha*." The lines quoted in Nupchen's text on p. 197.3-4 actually differ from those in Buddhaguhya's text. Nupchen states that his source is "the tantra" (*rgyud las*), which often refers to the eighty-two chapter GT. And indeed these exact lines are found in D 834, f. 297a3.

Making a similar determination regarding the *Brief Explanation of the Path* is somewhat more difficult, as I have not been able to find any early direct attestations of it. The issue is complicated by the fact that the canonical recensions of the text attribute it to Vimalamitra. The *Brief Explanation of the Path* and *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* are stylistically similar and deploy the same terminologies on their discussion of the view. And as we have seen, both texts share several verbatim passages. That said, there may be one reference to the *Brief Explanation of the Path* in Rokben’s *A Lamp of the Teachings*. In his discussion of *mahāyoga* tantra, Rokben quotes four lines from an unnamed text, which Cabezón identifies as being from *Brief Explanation of the Path*. It is curious that Rokben does not mention the title of the text, especially since he quotes from *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* by name elsewhere in the work.⁵⁴⁴ Perhaps already by Rokben’s time, the authorship of *Brief Explanation of the Path* was already in question—e.g., whether the text was authored by Buddhagupta or Vimalamitra—so he prefers not to name the text directly. In any case, I thus propose an early thirteenth century *terminus ad quem* for the *Brief Explanation of the Path*.

Establishing a *terminus a quo* for both of these texts is significantly more difficult. In general, we might consider that, since Buddhagupta was already known to Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé as a *mahāyoga* master, Buddhagupta’s *mahāyoga* corpus may be at least at least as old as the early tenth century, if not slightly before. As I have noted, Takahashi argues that the early eighth century Tibetan *mahāyoga* master Pelyang was influenced by the *mahāyoga* writing of Buddhagupta, particularly *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. This is due in large part to a host of passages from Pelyang’s works, particularly his *Responses of Vajrasattva* and *Lamp for the Mind*, that seem to be borrowed without attribution directly

⁵⁴⁴ Cabezón 2013, 229-230 n. 10. Rokben cites *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* with the title *Graded*

from these works. Since the *mahāyoga* works of Pelyang and Buddhagupta are so often referred to as “oral instructions” (*man ngag*, sometimes translated as “pith instructions”), Takahashi claims that the original orality of these texts, together with the “bibliographically unbounded” milieu of the ninth century has resulted in “ambiguous literary borders” between the texts of these authors. In essence, Takahashi is proposing that Pelyang, having aurally received the *mahāyoga* pith instructions of Buddhagupta, organically incorporated them into his own compositions, which themselves may have been orally transmitted.⁵⁴⁵ Thus according to Takahashi, Buddhagupta’s texts pre-date those of Pelyang and would establish a very early ninth century or perhaps even a late eight century *terminous a quo* for the Buddhagupta’s *mahāyoga* writings. This also leaves open the possibility that the *mahāyoga* commentator was the same author as Buddhagupta the outer tantra commentator.

However, the situation is much more complicated than Takahashi’s chronology allows for. I will begin by considering the doxographical passage from chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, which Takahashi cites and which Cabezón has translated.⁵⁴⁶ As we have already seen elsewhere in this dissertation, Buddhagupta proposes a tantric doxography that places *mahāyoga* tantra at the pinnacle; he refers to *mahāyoga* in this context as “Great Vehicle of Methods” (*thabs kyi theg pa chen po*) and the “Great View-Practice of Methods” (*thabs kyi lta spyod chen po*). Takahashi notes that Pelyang similarly places *mahāyoga* at the top of his doxographical system, deploying the very same terminology of “Great Vehicle of Methods;” in fact the doxographical section in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and Pelyang’s *Lamps for the Mind* are remarkably similar, leading Takahashi to conclude that Buddhagupta’s system influenced Pelyang’s. Cabezón has

Stages (Lam rim), which accords with the title of the commentary in some NKM recensions.

⁵⁴⁵ Takahashi 2015, 1-2 and Takahashi 2018, 260-261.

⁵⁴⁶ Takahashi 2015, 17-18 and Cabezón 22-27.

already noted that a passage nearly identical to the one in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* is also found in the eighty-two chapter GT. I have discovered that key parts of the passage are *also* found in a treatise related to the GT called *Six Stages (Rim pa drug pa)*⁵⁴⁷ which is attributed to the *mahāyoga* master and putative teacher of Buddhagupta, Vilāsavajra. Here are the relevant parts from all four texts side-by-side:

Table 10: Comparison of Doxographical Passages from the 80-Chapter Guhyagabha Tantra, Vilāsavajra’s Six Stages, Buddhagupta’s An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths, and Pelyang’s Lamp for the Mind

Chapter 77 of the Guhyagarbha Tantra in 80 Chapters, D 834, f. 291b1-3	Six Stages, Q 4741, CT vol. 43, p. 1166	An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths, Q 4736, CT vol. 43, p. 973	Lamp for the Mind, (Q 5918) Critical Edition in Takahashi 2009, 377
<p><i>bla med theg chen ngang gnas ni don dam kun rdzob dbyer med de kun rdzob tsam du thams cad la dag dang ma dag gnyi gar 'dzin thabs kyi theg pa chen po ni rnam par byang dang sdug bsngal dag kun rdzob tu 'ang dbyer med de lta ba mtho dman de tsam mo thabs kyi lta spyod chen po ni bla med theg pa las 'phags pa don dam du ni nor bdun no kun rdzob tu ni mnyam rdzogs so </i></p>	<p><i>bla med theg pa'i nang nas ni don dam du ni dbyer med la kun rdzob du ni thams cad la dag dang ma dag gnyis kar 'dzin thabs kyi theg pa chen po ni rnam par byang dang sdug bsngal dag kun rdzob du yang dbyer med na lta ba mtho dman de tsam mo thabs kyi theg pa chen po ni bla med theg pa las 'phags pas don dam du ni skor bdun la kun rdzob du ni myam rdzogs so </i></p>	<p><i>bla med theg pa'i nang nas ni don dam du ni dbyer med 'ang kun rdzob tu ni thams cad la dag dang ma dang gnyis kar 'dzin thabs kyi theg pa chen po ni rnam par byang dang sdug bsngal dag kun rdzob tu yang dbyer med de lta ba mthon sman de tsam mo thabs kyi lta spyod chen po ni bla med theg pa las 'phags pa don dam du ni skor 'dun⁵⁴⁸ ni kun rdzob tu ni mnyam rdzog so </i></p>	<p><i>de bas bla med theg pa pa don dam du ni dbyer med de kun rdzob tsam du thams cad la dag dang ma dag gnyis kar 'dzin thabs kyi theg pa chen po ni don dam du ni dor bdun no kun rdzob du ni mnyam rdzogs so </i></p>

The similarities and differences between these lines evoke an interesting line of questioning. If we accept the traditional account of the lineage, which holds that Vilāsavajra was the teacher of Buddhagupta, and that Pelyang received the instructions of Buddhagupta, then we

⁵⁴⁷ Vilāsavajra, Sges pa rdo rje, *Rim pa drug pa*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Q 4741, Rgyud, vol. 43 [zu], pp. 1148-1172.

might expect Vilāsavajra’s text to accord more closely to the source text, the eighty-two chapter GT. Though all three texts are clearly quite similar, Buddhagupta’s readings are slightly closer to the eighty-two chapter GT, especially with regard to use of the term “Great View-Practice of Methods” (*thabs kyi lta spyod chen po ni*), which appears in Vilāsavajra’s text only as “Great Vehicle of Methods” (*thabs kyi theg pa chen po*). Moreover, as Cabezón notes, the eighty-two chapter GT—at least the Kangyur recensions of it—do not list any translators, leaving open the possibility that portions of it were composed in Tibet.⁵⁴⁹ This would not be unusual for a Nyingma tantra; Jacob Dalton has argued that much of the *Gathering of Intentions* (*Dgongs pa ’dus pa mdo*), the principle tantra of the anuyoga class, was composed in Tibet.⁵⁵⁰ And as evidence in favor of Dalton’s assertion, we can look to the eighty-two chapter GT; the tantra itself and its notion of a “Great Vehicle of Methods”—is explicitly mentioned in chapter forty-seven of the *Gathering of Intentions*!⁵⁵¹ At this point, chronology and lines of influence between all of these texts remain uncertain and will have to await further study. The point here is that we cannot make conclusions about who influenced whom based on traditional lineage accounts (recall that the Vilāsavajra-Buddhagupta relationship seems to be a late addition to the latter’s hagiography) and unattributed quotations; it is necessary to look at other aspects of the texts as well.

⁵⁴⁸ In his translation of the full passage, Cabezón suggests that *skor ’dun* be emended to read *skor bdun*. This is probably correct, since this is the reading provided by Vilāsavajra’s text. See 2013, 25 n. 54. Note, however, the Kangyur recension of the eighty-two chapter GT reads *nor bdun*.

⁵⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22 n. 47.

⁵⁵⁰ Dalton 2016-6-7.

⁵⁵¹ *Sarvatathāgata-citta-jñāna-guhyārtha-garbha-vyūha-vajra-tantra-siddhi-yogāgama-samāja-sarvavidyāsūtra-mahāyānābhisamaya-dharmaparyāya-vivvyūha-nāma-sūtra*, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs gsang ba’i ye shes don gyi snying po rdo rje bkod pa’i rgyud rnal ’byor grub pa’i lung kun ’dus rig pa’i mdo theg pa chen po mngon par rtogs pa chos kyi rnam grangs rnam par bkod pa zhes bya ba’i mdo*, Sde dge bka’ ’gyur, D 829, Rnying rgyud ka, 86b-290a. On f. 230b4-5, the text reads: |*de’i tshe de’i dus na mi chen po’i spyod yul thabs kyi theg pa chen po’i gsang ba’i snying po ’di sku bzhi rnam par snang ba la thos pa phyin ci ma log pa’i don rgyal ba’i sras dag la de kho na nyid ltar bgro ba ni ’di lta ste*|.

One of the major reasons that Takahashi presents for the antiquity of Pelyang's *mahāyoga* compositions is that they refer neither to sexual yogas nor subtle body techniques.⁵⁵² Regarding the latter, Takahashi claims that “systems of subtle body manipulations and clear light meditations was a later development and most likely not known to Buddhaghosa or dPal dbyangs”⁵⁵³ and that *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in particular are not concerned with such practices.⁵⁵⁴ In terms of Pelyang's *mahāyoga* works, Takahashi is absolutely correct. Jacob Dalton has demonstrated that a major development in tantric Buddhist practice begins in the second half of the eighth century: a focus on the sexual anatomy of the practitioner and the emergence of ritualized sexual practice. He cites several tantric instructions manuals related to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and the *Guhyasamāja* from Dunhuang that explain these sexual rites in detail. The climax of the ritual is an ecstatic experience of bliss, during which the practitioner generates a visualization the mandala of the deities in a single instant and worships the mandala “using the blissful sensations of flowing through his body.” Nevertheless, there is no indication in these texts of subtle body physiology—complex networks of channels and chakra—and the manipulation of winds and drops that are ubiquitous in later formulations of *mahāyoga* tantric practice and in the *niruttarayoga* tantras of the Sarma schools.⁵⁵⁵ One of the earliest descriptions of these mechanisms on the commentarial side of Buddhist tantra is found in the *Dvikramatattvabhāvanā-mukhāgama* of Buddhajñānapāda, which Ronald Davidson has dated to the first quarter of the ninth century.⁵⁵⁶ In this treatise, Buddhajñānapāda describes the sexual rites associated with the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. During his explanation of the stage

⁵⁵² Takahashi 2009, 158-159.

⁵⁵³ Takahashi 2015, 17.

⁵⁵⁴ Takahashi 2018, 261.

⁵⁵⁵ Dalton 2004, 10.

⁵⁵⁶ Davidson 2002, 77 n. 99.

of great evocation (*sgrub pa chen po*) in which orgasmic bliss occurs, Buddhajñānapāda states that the “wisdom mother blazes at the triple intersection” (*sum mdo ye shes ma sbar*).⁵⁵⁷ This seems to refer to the three main energetic channels—the central channel (*avadhūti, rtsa dbu ma*), the channel to its right (*rasanā, ro ma*), and the channel to its left (*lalanā, rkyang ma*)—which converge at the navel. Returning to the *mahāyoga* texts of Pelyang, indeed none of his writings whatsoever address either the sexual rites described in these Dunhuang sources, or even the rudimentary mapping of the subtle body implied in Buddhajñānapāda’s *Mukhāgama*.

As we have already seen, Buddhagupta’s *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* contains both explicit instructions for sexual rites with a consort as well as allusions to subtle body practice. Buddhagupta’s sexualized understanding of the four stages of service and evocation is similar to Buddhajñānapāda’s, though they differ in terms of what each stage entails. Already in this respect, Buddhagupta’s work contains elements seemingly unknown to Pelyang. But *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* also demonstrates a complex understanding of the subtle body and techniques associated with it beyond even what Buddhajñānapāda describes. Take for example the following passage from chapter one:

In the four mandalas and the three life-posts
 Abide the consonants and vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet.
 In space is *evaṃ mayā* and
 At the heart, the wind resides in the hollow abode. [...]
 The four and the eight [of the] channel mandalas,
Raṃ and *yaṃ* on the left and right [respectively], and the fire offering is
 possessed [within].⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Dalton 2004, 13.

⁵⁵⁸ See the critical edition of chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*: |*dkyil 'khor bzhi dang srog shing gsum*||*gnas na kā li 'i sgra dbyangs ldan*||*e bam ma ya mkha' ldan dang*||*snying po rlung sgrom gnas na yod*[...]||*bzhi brgyad shi ra maṇḍa la*||*raṃ yaṃ g.yas g.yon sbyin sreg ldan*]. See also the annotated translation where I provide an extensive explanation of the practices associated with these verses according to the commentarial tradition.

Here Buddhagupta deploys terminologies regarding the subtle body that are typically associated with later development in the Nyingma tradition, and even the Sarma traditions. The term “four mandalas” (*dkyil 'khor bzhi*) is also found in the *Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa* (*Chos drug gi man ngag*), which is attributed to the Indian siddha Tilopa, in a pith instruction-style description of inner fire.⁵⁵⁹ According to the commentaries of both Rokben and Adzom Gyelsé, this refers to four chakras in the head, throat, heart, and navel. The “three life posts” (*srog shing gsum*), which refer to the three main channels, are mentioned in a discussion of an inner, heat-like technique called the “sky cow” (*nam mkha' ba*) discussed in the *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra* (*Sgyu 'phrul rgya mtsho*), a Nyingma tantra that is considered to be an explanatory tantra (*bshad rgyud*) of the GT.⁵⁶⁰ Although the provenance of the *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra* remains uncertain, it almost certainly postdates the root GT and, like the eighty-two chapter GT, may be of Tibetan origin. The phrase “the four and the eight [of the] channel mandalas” (*bzhi brgyad shi ra maṅḍa la*) also to refer to channels and chakras; in the commentaries of Rokben and Adzom Gyelsé, these refer again to the four chakras mentioned above plus the eight branch channels connected to them. Finally, the phrase “at the heart, the wind resides in the hollow abode” refers to the practice of concentrating the vital winds at the heart chakra and the phrase “*Raṃ* and *yaṃ* on the left and right” refer to an inner fire practice of moving the vital winds in the left and right channels. These lines are difficult to dismiss as referring to something else when we consider that the only time Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé’s early tenth century *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* explicitly

⁵⁵⁹ See Fabrizio Torricelli, “The Tibetan Text of Tilopa’s *Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa*,” *East and West* 46, no. 1/2 (June 1996), 150-152.

⁵⁶⁰ *Sgyu 'phrul rgya mtsho zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Mtshams brag edition, vol. za (Thimphu: National Library of Bhutan, 1982), f. 6a1. Rokben refers directly to this tantra in his commentary on f. 14a.

mentions Buddhagupta ('*bu ta kug ta*) it is in connection to the channels and chakras; in fact, Nupchen uses the same archaic term for the channels (*shi ra*) used in the lines above.

Given the evidence I have just presented, it already seems that Buddhagupta's *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* represents a development in the interpretation of *mahāyoga* beyond Pelyang's own works. That said, I will investigate one further, perhaps minor, piece of evidence that Takahashi provides for the dating of Pelyang's works—his understanding of the progression of the *vidyādhara* levels as gradual stages of spiritual development. This is important because both *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path* have a different, possibly later interpretation of these levels.

The term *vidyādhara* has had a long and colorful history. In South Asia, it originally referred to a type of semi-divine wizard who possesses (*dhara*) knowledge of spells (*vidyā*) and other magical rites, and has miraculous powers such as the ability to fly, travel to other world-systems, and live for an extraordinarily long time. References to and stories about *vidyādhara*s are found throughout Sanskrit literature, including the *Rāmāyana* and the *Kathāsaritsāgara*, Jain sources such as the *Bṛhatkathākośa*,⁵⁶¹ and Indian Buddhist tantras. The term is attested in Pāli Buddhist sources such as the *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, where we encounter figures called *vijjādhara*s who, by reciting a mantra, can fly and summon an array of celestial warriors.⁵⁶² Early tantric Buddhist texts such as the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* explain rituals that can transform a tantric practitioner into an emperor of the knowledge-holders (*vidyādhara**cakravartin*) endowed with the power to travel to celestial realms and see the face of Mañjuśrī himself.⁵⁶³ As I noted in chapter one, Buddhagupta the outer tantra

⁵⁶¹ Jean Przyluski, "Les Vidyārāja. Contribution à l'histoire de la magie dans les sectes mahāyānistes," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 23 (1923): 302.

⁵⁶² Jörg Grafe, "Outlines of a Classification of *vidyādhara*s," *Archiv orientální* 67, no. 2 (1999): 232.

⁵⁶³ Phyllis Granoff, "Other People's Rituals: Ritual Eclecticism in Early Medieval Religious [*sic*]," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 28, no. 4 (August 2000): 412-419. On the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa*, see Glenn Wallis,

commentator refers to a collection of tantric scriptures as the “Collection of the Knowledge-holders” (**vidyādharaṭīṭaka, rig pa ’dzin pa ’i sde*) in multiple texts.⁵⁶⁴ In the Nyingma tradition’s interpretation of the *mahāyoga* tantras, successful practice results in traversing through four increasingly more powerful levels of knowledge holder. In his commentary on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* titled *Dispelling the Darkness in the Ten Directions*, Longchenpa mentions the process of accomplishing four *vidyādhara* levels. In perfecting the stages of generation and completion in tantric deity yoga, one can gradually attain the *vidyādhara* levels of 1) maturity (*rnam smin*), 2) power over life (*tshe dbang*), and 3) great seal (*phyag chen*). As the culmination of one’s practice, one proceeds to the final *vidyādhara* level of 4) spontaneous presence (*lhun grub*), which is tantamount to attaining enlightenment.⁵⁶⁵ Later commentators such as Jikmé Lingpa connect the attainment of the four *vidyādhara* levels with completing the four stages of service and evocation.⁵⁶⁶

Jacob Dalton notes that this standard, fourfold formulation of the *vidyādhara* levels are a late construction from after the Dunhuang cave were closed at the turn of the eleventh century. He points to IOL Tib J 644, which presents a much more complex system of the knowledge holder levels according to different tantric systems. These include:

- Three *vidyādhara* levels according to the *kriyā* tantra: 1) the *vidyādhara* of accomplishment (*grub pa ’i rig ’dzin*), 2) the *vidyādhara* who dwells on the levels (*sa la gnas pa ’i rig ’dzin*), and 3) the *vidyādhara* of spontaneous presence (*lhu gyis grub pa ’i rig ’dzin*).

Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

⁵⁶⁴ These include D 2628 and D 2670. The *Collection of the Knowledge-holders* is also mentioned in the D 2663(a) and 2663(b), see Hodge 2003, 43.

⁵⁶⁵ Dorje 1987, 810-811. For a detailed explanation of these, see 853-854 and 959-969. As Garson notes on 416-419, the Zur system of explaining the attainment of the four knowledge-holder levels differs somewhat.

⁵⁶⁶ Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2006, 56-67.

- One level of *vidyādhara* according to yoga tantra called “beautifully ornamented second buddha” (*sdug pos brgyan pa’i sangs rgyas gnyis pa*)
- Four levels of *vidyādhara* of *mahāyoga* tantra: 1) the deity *vidyādhara* (*lha’i rig ’dzin*), 2) the medicinal *vidyādhara* (*sman gyi rig ’dzin*), 3) the matured *vidyādhara* (*rnam par smin pa’i rig ’dzin*), and 4) the *vidyādhara* of the great seal (*phyag rgya chen po’i rig ’dzin*). In general, a knowledge-holder in the *mahāyoga* system is called “Vajradhara Buddha” (*rdo rje ’chang gi sangs rgyas*).

The text goes on to point out that in the vehicles of anuyoga and atiyoga, there are no *vidyādhara* levels because “there is no knowledge whatsoever to hold,” (*rig gang du yang mi ’dzin*), the implication being that these higher vehicles transcend such concepts. Without naming all of them, the author of IOL Tib J 644 states that there are a total of sixteen knowledge-holder levels.⁵⁶⁷ Unfortunately, Dalton does not say when the standard four knowledge-holder levels became the norm in the Nyingma tradition. But we might see properly Nyingma authors such as Longchenpa, a scholar renowned for his systematization of the Nyingma teachings, as attempting to stabilize and formalize an earlier disorderly understanding of the knowledge-holder levels.⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶⁷ For a transcription and translation of IOL Tib J 644, see Dalton 2005, 163-168. I have rendered the Tibetan names of the knowledge-holder levels using classical spelling.

⁵⁶⁸ Dalton cites the English translation Nyangrel’s *Copper Island Chronicle* as source for the four knowledge holder levels, but the pages he refers to are from the glossary to the translation. See Tsogyal 2004, 294-295. I have not been able to find any references to the fourth *vidyādhara* level of spontaneous presence in the *Copper Island Chronicle*, although the other three levels are mentioned throughout the text. In fact, chapter five of the work focuses specifically on Padmasambhava’s attainment of the level of the *vidyādhara* of the great seal through the practices of Yangdak Heruka, the principle wrathful deity of the *Guhyagarbha*-related tantras, and Vajrakīla, another key *mahāyoga* deity. At the beginning of the chapter, Padmasambhava thinks to himself, “I have attained the yoga *vidyādhara* level of longevity. Now, I must accomplish the *vidyādhara* level of the supreme great seal” (*yo ga tshe’i rig ’dzin ni thob: da phyag rgya chen po mchog gi rig ’dzin zhig bsgrub par dgongs*). See Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer 1989, 29-30. Moreover, it seems that Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo considers the *vidyādhara* of the great seal to be the highest level of a set of three. In his *Jewel Commentary* on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, Rongzom states, regarding the particular *vidyādhara* levels, that, “according to the instructions of the masters of old, these are the entry into the levels, dwelling on the levels, and the maturation of the levels. Others say that they are the *vidyādhara* level of maturity, the *vidyādhara* level of longevity, and

Pelyang's *mahāyoga* works subscribe to a threefold enumeration of the *vidyādhara* levels with the “*vidyādhara* of the great seal” as the highest level. In the final verses of his *Lamp of the Mind* that summarize the accomplishment of *mahāyoga* practice, Pelyang states that “The third [level] *vidyādhara*, having reached and completed his or her final existence, realizes the conferral of empowerment and is awakened. There is no doubt that he or she is Vajradhara.”⁵⁶⁹ And in Pelyang's *Reponses of Vajrasattva*, we see the following exchange translated by Takahashi:

According to the correct *mahāyoga* way, what is the pinnacle of meditative practice? How is one posited as becoming a *vidyādhara*?

[According to] our own system, the Great Seal of the conquerors [is the pinnacle]. Having been meditatively cultivated, the deity perceived directly, possessing the primary and secondary marks of the perfection and clairvoyance is known as the Great Seal Vidyādhara.⁵⁷⁰

Two questions before this one, we also see the *vidyādhara* level of longevity (*rig pa 'dzin pa'i tshe*) mentioned. Citing Dalton, Takahashi rightly suggests that Pelyang's placement of the “*vidyādhara* of the great seal” as the pinnacle is indicative of an early authorship, since it accords with IOL Tib J 644.⁵⁷¹ And indeed, Pelyang's emphasis of this particular knowledge-

the *vidyādhara* level of the great seal.” See Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po 1999, 189: |sngon gyi slob dpon rnam kyī gdams ngag las| sar chud pa dang | sa la gnas pa dang | sar smin pa zhes kyang gsungs so||gzhan yang rnam par smin pa'i rig 'dzin dang | tshe'i rig 'dzin dang | phyag rgya chen po'i rig 'dzin zhes kyang gsungs so|. He then goes on to clarify the various opinions on what the *vidyādhara* level of the great seal entails, and then he proceeds to explain the etymology of the word *rig 'dzin*. It thus remains unclear to me exactly when the fourfold enumeration of the knowledge-holder levels become standard; the matter certainly merits a separate study.

⁵⁶⁹ Takahashi 2009 363. See p. 406 of Takahashi's critical edition: |rigs 'dzin gsum pa'i gang de nyid||srid pa tha ma mdzad rdzogs pas||de la dbang bskur mgon sangs rgyas||rdo rje 'dzin par the tshom med|.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 312 for both the translation and critical edition, which is based on several Dunhuang manuscripts: |ma ha' yo ga tshul bzhin| ci ltar bzgoms pa'i mtha' | rigs 'dzin ci lta bu zhig du 'gyur bzhed||rang lugs rgyal ba'i phyag rgya che||bsgoms pas mngon sum gyur pa'i lha||mtshan dang dpe byad mngon shes ldan||phyag rgya chen po'i rigs 'dzin grags|.

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 312-313 n. 996.

holder level resonates with chapter eleven of the root GT, which culminates in the attainment of the Great Seal.⁵⁷²

Both *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path* maintain an enumeration of the *vidyādhara* levels that is consistent with the later, normative Nyingma formulations. The more standard fourfold model is mentioned early on in chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* in connection to his reason for composing the work:

Thus, for the sake of those fortunate ones who have been [properly]
investigated,
Who recognize that inherent gnosis is inherently present
And engage with it, I will explain
The way to actualize the stages [of the paths],
The four yogas uninterruptedly attained: the paths of Maturity,
Power [Over Life], [Great] Seal, and Spontaneous Presence.⁵⁷³

Moreover, chapter eight of the text focuses specifically on attaining the latter two *vidyādhara* levels, where they are mentioned by name specifically.⁵⁷⁴ In the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, four *vidyādhara* levels are equated with different stages of the ten bodhisattva *bhūmi* or levels, with the *vidyādhara* knowledge-holder level of spontaneous accomplishment equated with the attainment of buddhahood:

Through the engagement of power of gnosis,
One completely ascends the *bhūmis*.
Now, the first [*vidyādhara* level] and the first [*bhūmi*] are equal.
And the superior, second *vidyādhara* level,
Is equal to a being on the eighth [*bhūmi*].
The third [*vidyādhara* level] is equal to the tenth [*bhūmi*]. [...]
In the end, at the [*vidyādhara* level of] spontaneous presence

⁵⁷² *Ibid.* The relevant verses from the GT are found in D 832, f. 122b5-6: |od 'phro 'bar ba rab tu sgom| |tshogs med tshul gyis bstim par bya||gnysis med gyur nas phyag rgya che|.

⁵⁷³ See the critical edition of chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*: |de ltar brtags pa'i skal ldan phyir||rang bzhin ye shes rang gnas dang ||der mthong der 'jug rnal 'byor bzhī||bar chad med sgrub rnam par smin||dbang sgyur phyag rgya lhun grub lam||mngon byas rim pa brjod par bya|.

⁵⁷⁴ See CT vol. 43, pp. 1030 and 1032, where we respectively phrases *phyag rgya chen po'i rig 'dzin* and *lhun gyis grub pa'i rig pas 'dzin*.

Creates, a regent of the sixth [buddha, Samantabhadra].⁵⁷⁵

According to the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, one who attains the first *vidyādhara* level or maturity through *mahāyoga* practice also attains the first bodhisattva *bhūmi*. One who attains the second *vidyādhara* level of power over life attains the eighth *bhūmi*, which seems to imply that the second to seventh *bhūmis* can be traversed very quickly through the special methods of *mahāyoga*. Attaining the third *vidyādhara* level, one ascends to the tenth *bhūmi*. Finally, by attaining the *vidyādhara* level of spontaneous presence, one attains buddhahood and acts as the regent of the sixth buddha who is, according to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*'s mandala configuration, Samantabhadra. Elsewhere in the text, we also find the phrase, “four *vidyādhara* [levels]” (*rig 'dzin bzhi*).

Based on the above considerations, it would seem that *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path* were composed after Pelyang's time, if we accept Takahashi's otherwise cogent arguments in favor of an early ninth century authorship for Pelyang's works. The question remains whether other texts from Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* corpus are in fact by the same hand as the two studied in the present work. Unfortunately, it is impossible to examine all of them here, but I will examine several other texts that I consider to be of the same period of development and perhaps by the same hand as *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*. Zhiwa Ö's 1092 ordinance mentions a text called the *Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions (Rdo rje las rim)*, and several of the hagiographic sources I surveyed in chapter one associate a text by the same name with Buddhagupta. This probably refers to a text called *Initiation Mandala of the Wrathful Ones of the Māyājāla: Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions (Sgyu 'phrul khro bo'i dbang*

⁵⁷⁵ See the critical edition of *Brief Explanation of the Paths*: |ye shes rtsal gyi spyod pa yis||sa rnams yongs su 'phar bar byed||de yang dang po dang po dang ||skal mnyam gnyis pa'i rig mchog de||brgyad pa'i sems dpar

bskur ba dkyil 'khor rdo rje las kyi rim pa, Q 4761).⁵⁷⁶ The text explains a lengthy liturgy for initiating a student into the mandala of wrathful deities of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Like *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, it mentions the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* by name several times.⁵⁷⁷ Moreover, it contains a shorter but similar explanation of sexual union to the one from chapter seven of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*.⁵⁷⁸

The situation, however, is not so cut-and-dried. The Tengyur preserves a different text with a similar name, the *Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions for the Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul dra ba rdo rje las kyi rim pa*, Q 4720).⁵⁷⁹ This text does not name an author or translators. To complicate the situation further, there is an important philosophical passage shared between *Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions of the Māyājāla*, *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*, although the verses are ordered differently in each text:

Table 11: A Comparison of Passages from *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, *Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions*, and *Brief Explanation of the Paths*

<i>An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths</i> , CT vol. 43, p. 983	<i>Stages of Vajra Ritual Actions</i> , Q 4720, CT vol. 43, pp.	<i>Brief Explanation of the Path</i> , Critical Edition in Chapter 5
byang chub sems kyi de bzhin nyid shin tu mi dmigs brtag dka' ba yangs la rgya che gting zab pas shes rab zab pas rtogs 'gyur te gang nas ma 'ongs gar mi 'gro 'gro dang 'ong bar bya ba min shin tu rtag dka' mi dmigs pas mtha' dang dbus kyang rtag tu med gzung 'dzin bral ba'i rang	gang nas ma 'ongs gar mi 'gro 'gro dang 'ong bar bya ba min shin tu rtag dka' mi dmigs la mtha' dang dbus su rtag tu med gzung 'dzin bral ba'i rang rig nyid dmigs med tshul du de snang ngo dbyings dang dbyings kyi ye shes kyang rang rig kho nas tsam du zad 'das dang ma 'das bdag	gzung 'dzin bral ba'i rang rig nyid dmigs med tshul du rang snang ba'o byang chub sems rnam's thams cad ni shin tu brtags dka' gting zab pas ma dmigs mi dmigs dmigs su med sems nyid de ni ji lta bu byang chub de ni sems yin no sems dang byang chub gnyis med pas sems can ma lus

skal pa mnyam||gsum pa bcu dang skal mnyam mod[...]|de mtha' lhun gyis grub pa des||drug pa'i rgyal tshab skyes bu mdzad|.

⁵⁷⁶ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Abhiṣiṅca-māyājāla-vajrakrodhamaṇḍala-karma-prāla*, *Sgyu 'phrul khro bo'i dbang bskur ba dkyil 'khor rdo rje las kyi rim pa*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Q4767, Rgyud, vol. 44 ['u], pp. 374-402.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 375-375.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 393: |rdo rje'i lam nas padmor 'khyil||rtse nas stim zhing dkyil 'khor bsgyur||bsgrub pa nyi zla'i snying po de||dkyil 'khor rdo rje lce yis blang |.

⁵⁷⁹ *Sgyu 'phrul dra ba rdo rje las kyi rim pa*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Q 4720, Rgyud, vol. 43 [zu], pp. 770-808.

<i>rig nyid dmigs med tshul du der snang ngo dbyings dang dbyings kyi ye shes kyang rang rig kho na tsam du zad </i>	<i>yin pas kun la smon cing chags su med sems dang byang chub dbyer med pas sems can ma lus thams cad dang dus gsum chos rnams thams cad gsal </i>	<i>thams cad dang dus gsum chos rnams thams cad yin </i>
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As with several passages from *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path* mentioned above, these passages seem to be based on one from chapter seventy-seven of the eighty-two chapters of the GT.⁵⁸⁰ Now the NKM also preserves a version of this text, which is line-by-line the same as Q 4720, but the NKM version supplies a short colophon that states that its author is Vilāsavajra!⁵⁸¹ A more extensive and comparative study of *Initiation Mandala of the Wrathful Ones of the Māyājāla: Stages of Vajra Actions Stages of Vajra Actions of the Māyājāla* is required to make a determination about which of these might actually be authored by the same hand as *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the *Brief Explanation of the Path*. That said, all four texts would seem to be from the roughly the same period, and either *Initiation Mandala of the Wrathful Ones of the Māyājāla: Stages of Vajra Actions Stages of Vajra Actions of the Māyājāla* or both might in the end might be attributable to Buddhagupta.

The other text I will examine is one that has often been considered by the Sarma tradition to be a yoga tantra treatise. This is the *Summary of the Aspects of a Mandala (Dkyil 'khor gyi chos mdor bsdu pa, D 3705)*, a versified treatise that explains the types and elements of mandalas.⁵⁸² The earliest attestation I have found of this in the Tengyur-related

⁵⁸⁰ D 834, f. 296a6-296b1.

⁵⁸¹ Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba rdo rje las kyi rim pa, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 80 [wu], pp. 1041-1116 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999), 1115: *slob dpon sgeg pa rdo rje mdzad pa rdzogs s+ho*].

⁵⁸² Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Dharma-maṇḍala-sūtra, Dkyil 'khor gyi chos mdor bsdu pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, D 3705, Rgyud tsu, 1b-5b. I will refer here into the version of the text translated and presented in Lo Bue, 1987, which is based on the N recension.

materials is Üpa Losel’s early fourteenth century *Catalogue of Treatises* (*Bstan bcos kyi dkar chag*).⁵⁸³ Butön, in his *Ship for Entering the Ocean of Yoga Tantra*,⁵⁸⁴ notes that the text is related to the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana Tantra*. As Weinberger points out, though, there is nothing in the text that indicates this relationship.⁵⁸⁵ A Tibetan translation of the text is also found in the NKM, which is somewhat unusual. In the NKM, the text is categorized as one of sixty pith instructions by Indian authors concerning the *Māyājāla* tantras.⁵⁸⁶ I propose that the NKM is actually correct in this attribution—upon close examination, the *Summary of the Aspects of a Mandala* seems to mention some *mahāyoga* themes: it contains brief though unmistakable references to deities in union, sexual yoga, subtle body physiology, and perhaps more. For example, the text describes the arrangements of a mandala with male-female pairs using the terms “father” (*yab*) and “mother” (*yum*), which in tantric commentaries are normally euphemisms for male and female sexual consorts, or wisdom and method sides of the enlightened mind presented as the male and female presiding deities of the mandala.⁵⁸⁷ In describing the physical characteristics of deities, Buddhagupta notes that some deities may have three faces and six arms (*zhal gsum phyag drug*);⁵⁸⁸ though this could apply to deities from many different tantras, it is notable that the main deities of both the peaceful and wrathful mandalas of the GT have three faces and six arms. The most interesting verses, however, come from the author’s description of three types of mandala with superior imagery (*lhag pa’i gzugs brnyan rnams gsum*). These are identified as the outer ones of the body and the five limbs (*phyi ni lus dang yan lag lnga*), the inner one of the five

⁵⁸³ Dbus pa Blo sgal, *Bstan ’gyur dkar chag*, f. 32a6: *slaun*[=*slob dpon*] *sangs rgyas gsanb bas mdzad pa’i dkyil ’khor gyi chos mdor bsdus pa dpal brtsegs la gos pa’i ’gyur*.

⁵⁸⁴ Bu ston Rin chen grub, *Rnal ’byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor ’jug pa’i gru gzings*, f. 70a2.

⁵⁸⁵ Weinberger, 153.

⁵⁸⁶ *Dkyil ’khor gyi chos mdor bsdus pa*, in *Kaḥ thog bka’ ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 80 [wu], pp. 989-1008 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po ’Jam dbyangs, 1999).

⁵⁸⁷ Lo Bue, 799 and 812.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 798 and 811.

subtle chakras (*nang ni 'khor lo dangs*[=*dwangs?*] *ma lnga*), and the secret one of joined vajra and lotus (*gsang ba rdo rje padma sbyar*).⁵⁸⁹ The most vexing line come from an explanation of the stairways that lead to the central palace of a mandala. The author states that these have eight steps, which symbolize the eightfold path, the eight liberations, and the eight vehicles (*theg pa brgyad*). Unfortunately, there is no further comment about this provocative phrase; one is tempted to imagine that it is a reference to the eight vehicles outlined in chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. Taking all of this together, it seems tentatively possible that the *Summary of the Aspects of a Mandala* is in fact a composition of the *mahāyoga* tantra commentator Buddhagupta, and not the outer tantra commentator.⁵⁹⁰

The teachings advanced in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths, Brief Explanation of the Path* and the other treatises examined above seem to postdate Pelyang and mark a different stage in the development of *mahāyoga* tantric practice in Tibet. The *mahāyoga* treatises of Buddhagupta would also seem to postdate the *Guhyasamāja* works of Buddhajñānapāda since they present a more sophisticated understanding of the subtle body; this would leave us with a *terminus a quo* of the first quarter of the ninth century. Returning to Pelyang, the evidence from Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* and from the Tibetan tantric manuscripts from Dunhuang seems to indicate that Pelyang was perhaps the more influential *mahāyoga* commentator. We saw in chapter one that Nupchen

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 795-796 and 809.

⁵⁹⁰ There is still the matter of the text's colophon. The colophon to its canonical recension states that the text was given to Wé Mañjuśrī and Drenka Mutita, and that it was translated in Tibet by Kawa Peltsek and others. The NKM recension contains the same information, but states that the author's name is Buddhaguhya-pāda, which is clearly a much later addition. Give my argument in chapter one regarding the changes in Buddhagupta's name across the text catalogs and colophons, there is reason to doubt the information provided in this colophon. On the other hand, if my argument here is incorrect and the *Summary of the Aspects of a Mandala* was indeed authored by the outer tantra commentary Buddhagupta, then it may have implications for not only the argument of this dissertation but perhaps our entire understanding of the development of tantric Buddhism in early Tibet.

Sangyé Yeshé's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* cites Buddhagupta as a *mahāyoga* master once in the body of the text, thrice in the interlinear notes, and once under the name *sangs rgyas gsang ba*; none of his writings are mentioned by name. By contrast, Pelyang is cited by name five times in the body of the text, twice in the interlinear notes, and texts that are known to be authored by Pelyang are cited seventeen times.⁵⁹¹ Moreover, Pelyang's *Responses of Vajrasattva* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhu lan*) is extant in several of the Dunhuang manuscripts, including IOL Tib J 470, IOL Tib J 578, PT 837, and PT 819. All of this may indicate that Buddhagupta's own *mahāyoga* works may have still been emergent in the religiously creative period during the decline of the Tibetan Empire beginning in the latter half of the ninth century.

In this regard, perhaps it is worth considering just one more text. Returning to Jacob Dalton's excellent work on the interiorization of tantric ritual, one of the *Guhayagarbha Tantra* manuals he examines is IOL Tib J 332, a text called *Appearance of Reality: A Method of Meditation to Serve as an Ornament for the Holy Ones* (*De kho nan yid snang ba dam pa rgyan gyi bsgom thabs*). The text give instructions for liturgy involving sexual rites, the relevant parts of which are quoted in Dalton's article. The text also uses the term *shad ta pa*, a term that Dalton suggests is a Tibetan vulgarization of the Sanskrit *śākta*, which is used here to refer to vital energy. The first few folios of the text are translated by Kenneth Eastman in his survey of *mahāyoga* texts from Dunhuang.⁵⁹² Both Dalton and Eastman note that the text quotes the GT. However, it seems that these and other scholars have missed an important connection to Buddhagupta—that the Tengyur preserves a text called *Appearance*

⁵⁹¹ Takahashi 2015, 7-8.

⁵⁹² Kenneth Eastman, "Mahāyoga Texts at Tun-huang," *Bulletin of Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies* 22 (1983): 47-49.

of Reality: A Sublime Ornament (*De kho na nyid snang ba dam pa rgyan*, Q 4735)⁵⁹³ and NKM a text called *Liturgy of the Gathering of Wrathful Deities from the Māyājāla, an Appearance of Reality: A Sublime Ornament* (*Sgyu 'phrul khro bo bsdus pa'i sgrub thabs de nyid las snang ba dam pa brgyan*),⁵⁹⁴ both of which are attributed to Buddhagupta. These three texts are almost the same, save for several of passages in IOL Tib J 332 that do not appear in the other two texts.⁵⁹⁵ All three draw upon the same passage regarding sexual union from chapter eleven of the GT as the *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*.⁵⁹⁶ Tsuguhito Takeuchi considers IOL Tib J 332 part of a group of Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang that date from the second half of the ninth century to the tenth century.⁵⁹⁷ If the author of *A Holy Ornament* is the same as *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and the other texts I have discussed, I suggest that this may indicate an early post-dynastic date of composition for Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* corpus.

Finally, there remains the question of whether the *mahāyoga* master Buddhagupta who authored *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path* was Indian or if these texts were in fact written by Tibetan. Firstly, I have already established in chapter one that the early Tibetan sources such a Nupchen's early ninth century *Lamp for Eye in Contemplation* and IOL Tib J 1774 clearly knew of an Indian *mahāyoga* master named Buddhagupta. As to whether he composed *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and

⁵⁹³ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *De kho na nyid snang ba dam pa rgyan*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Q 4735, Rgyud, vol. 43 [zu], pp. 950-958.

⁵⁹⁴ *Sgyu 'phrul khro bo bsdus pa'i sgrub thabs de nyid las snang ba dam pa brgyan*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 82 [zu], pp. 825-840 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999).

⁵⁹⁵ In light of this striking finding, I will be preparing a study and comparative edition of these the texts.

⁵⁹⁶ IOL Tib J 332/1, f. 8b4-5: *bsnyen pa dang ni nye bsnyen po||bsgrub pa dang n bsgrub cen[=chen] pos||yum gyi padma 'i dkyil 'khor du ||bde ba thugs kyI dkyil 'khor spro [=spro]||sangs rgyas sprin tshogs ma lus la||dgyes mnyam mchog gi sbyin pas bstim*. *Sgyu 'phrul khro bo bsdus pa'i sgrub thabs de nyid las snang ba dam pa brgyan*, pp. 833-834.

⁵⁹⁷ Tsuguhito Takeuchi, "Old Tibetan Buddhist Texts from the Post-Tibetan Imperial Period (mid-9th C. to late 10th C.)," in *Old Tibetan Studies: Dedicated to the Memory of R.E. Emmerick, Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS*, ed. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 208. Tentatively, I suggest that IOL

Brief Explanation of the Path, I think that it is helpful here to reflect on the nature of formal composition in Tibet since at least the tenth century. In his study of Tibetan letters written in the early tenth century, Tsuguhito Takeuchi has noted the high formulaic nature of official correspondences; such compositions required the skill of a professional scribe versed in these conventions. Indeed some of the documents studied by Takeuchi were not real letters but “exercises,” or letters written by scribes for practice.⁵⁹⁸ Moreover, José Cabezón has observed that literary production in medieval Tibet was often a collaborative effort that involved a division of labor among the primary author, students, scribes, editors, fundraisers, woodblock carvers, and printers.⁵⁹⁹ Lastly, we must consider Takahashi’s point about the original orality of texts from the *man ngag* or “pith instructions” (sometime translation as “oral instructions”) genre, which includes *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path*. I accept, as Takahashi does, that these two texts were orally transmitted as pith instruction to their Tibetan recipients by Buddhagupta. As such, these texts were in all likelihood set to writing and translated in the same moment; making its composition a collaborative effort between Buddhagupta and his Tibetan disciples.

Conclusion

In sum, the *mahāyoga* works surveyed above postdate those of Pelyang⁶⁰⁰ and Buddhajñānapāda, and are more closely linked to IOL Tib J 332 in the second half of the

Tib J 332 is closer to the ninth century rather than the tenth century manuscript because of the style of handwriting and the presence of the reverse *gigu* or *i* vowel diacritic.

⁵⁹⁸ Tsuguhito Takeuchi, “A Group of Old Tibetan Letters Written Under Kuei-I-Chün: A Preliminary Study for the Classification of Old Tibetan Letters,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 44, no. 1/2 (1990): 179.

⁵⁹⁹ José I. Cabezón, “Authorship and Literary Production in Classical Buddhist Tibet” in *Changing Minds: Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins*, edited by Guy Newland, 233-263. (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2001).

⁶⁰⁰ A note about an adjacent matter. Takahashi 2015, 19-20 suggests that the *Epistle to the Ruler, his Subjects, and the Clergy of Tibet* (*Rje ’bang dang bod btsun rnams la spring yig*, D 4194), which has

ninth century. Nupchen's early tenth century *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* also knows of a *mahāyoga* master called Buddhagupta who taught about the channels and chakras. I conclude that the *terminus a quo* for the *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path* (and the other works mentioned above, thereby) is the second half of the ninth century and that the *terminus ad quem* is the late eleventh century. Since these *mahāyoga* texts seem to mark new developments in tantric practice not seen in the Tibetan imperial period, I think it is safe to conclude that they were not authored by the Buddhagupta whose commentaries are recorded in the *Denkar* and *Pangtang* catalogs. Nevertheless, as I demonstrated above, the seeds of certain aspects of *mahāyoga* can be found in the works of outer tantra commentators. In the end, it seems that scholars such as Davidson and Hodge were correct about the matter of two Buddhaguptas. In alignment with his own theories about the early assimilation of tantric Buddhism into the monastic context, Davidson dismisses the possibility that an institutional monastic intellectual like the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta would endorse *mahāyoga* tantras. Hodge tentatively suggests that the two bodies of work may have been composed by different authors given their stylistic differences, and the fact that the outer tantra commentaries seem to be unaware of the *mahāyoga* tantras. However, neither scholar performed a close, comparative reading of the texts required to come to a more definitive conclusion on this matter.

historically been attributed to Buddhagupta (as *sangs rgyas gsang ba*) served as the inspiration for Pelyang's own *Epistle that Gathers the Essential Points* (*Gces pa bsdu pa'i 'phrin yig*, D 4355), given their similarity in terms of style and format. Pelyang's letter is attested, perhaps in a somewhat shorter form, in the *Denkar Catalog* (Ldk 647) and is quoted in Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* on p. 127. As I have already mentioned in the present work and in Nagasawa 2017b, the earliest attestation I have been able to find of D 4194 is Butön's fourteenth century Tengyur catalog. The letter also contains anachronistic references to the fall of the empire due to a struggle between descendants of Tri Songdetsen and even predicts his death around the age of sixty. I have thus concluded that the D4194 is probably a late forgery. Taking this together with the findings that I have presented in this chapter, it seems more likely that, given the pattern we have seen with other works, Pelyang's letter probably served as inspiration for the pseudoepigraphic D 4194.

How then did the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta become associated with Dzokchen? We have already seen that Nyingma authors identified the *mahāyoga* commentator Buddhagupta with the earlier outer tantra commentator in order to legitimate their contested practices and doctrines. I think that Buddhagupta’s approach to the *mahāyoga* view and practice was understood as being in alignment with Dzokchen as the latter began to emerge and develop in the ninth to tenth centuries. For example, the *Great Image* hagiography of the Tibetan translator Vairocana portrays a *mahāyoga* master named Buddhagupta receiving Dzokchen instructions and singing several songs demonstrating his realization. And Sam van Schaik has already suggested that there are “good reasons” to believe that the author of *Gupta’s Small Crop* (*Sbas pa’i rgum chung*, IOL Tib J 594) “really was the *Mahāyoga* exegete Buddhagupta.”⁶⁰¹ Here is a song attributed to Buddhagupta from a collection of Dzokchen-related texts called *A Compendium of Essential Points*:

In a state of great silence, Buddhagupta expressed thus the contemplation of the song of the bursting forth of wisdom [from the] intention of the Sublime Lord.⁶⁰²

All phenomena, being uncontrived, are Samantabhadra. As such, in the state of bodhicitta which is luminous and unchanging, there is no contamination by conceptualization. One dwells within a state in which conceptualization arise and settle on their own. If one is separate from this meditation, there is no realization. If one does not perceive the mirror of the mind, then verily, is it obscured by the stain of conceptualization.

*Prajñā kośala aho!*⁶⁰³

⁶⁰¹ Van Schaik 2004, 187.

⁶⁰² This apparently refers to a one of several tantras of the mind class (*sems sde*). The entire tantra is less than one folio in length. See *Rje btsan dam pa*, in *Rnying ma rgyud ’bum*, Gting skye edition, vol. ka, pp. 442-443 (Thimphu: Dingo Khyentse Rimpoche, 1975).

⁶⁰³ *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde’i rgyud lung gi rtsa ba gces par btus pa rnams*, in *Kaḥ thog bka’ ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 30 [a] (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po ’Jam dbyangs, 1999), p. 313: |rje btsan dam pa’i dgongs pa| shes rab klong rdol glu’i bsam gtan| dben pa chen po’i gnas su buddha gupta ’di skad lo||chos rnams thams cad ma bcos kun tu bzang po la||gsal la ’gyur pa med pa byang sems ngang de la||mtshan ma’i rnam par rtogs pas ma bslad de||rnam rtog rang byung rang zhir gnas pa las||sgom pa ’di las gud na med par ’khums||sems kyi me long ma bltas na||rnam rtog dri mas gos ta re||pradznya ko sa la a hoḥ|. A translation of this song based on a copy of this text from Jamgon Kongtrül’s *Treasury of Instructions* (*Gdams ngang mdzod*) is also found in Norbu and Dell’Angelo, 16.

Compare this to the following excerpt from the *Brief Explanation of the Path*:

Knowing that everything is spontaneously established
And they are illusory like reflected images,
Both of these gathered within intrinsic awareness itself.
All phenomena without exception
Are intrinsically primordially pure.
They are not created by anyone and are continuously illuminated.⁶⁰⁴

Or the following passage from chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*:

The nature of the ten direction and the four times
Is the very essence of the Tathāgata.
Since the samsaric mind [exists], but has no self,
It is therefore the inconceivable Tathāgatas.
Since the intrinsic nature of samsara cannot be seen,
Nirvana does not exist either.
Thus, if the essence of supreme awakening,
Which is beyond clan or lineage,
Is known as the intrinsic nature of each being,
Then it cannot be contrived, even by means of a perfect path.
As for the duality between authentic enlightenment and mistaken conceptualization,
If one were to abide within the essential nature [of reality]
There is no contrivance or transformation.⁶⁰⁵

All three texts emphasize the all-encompassing nature of the enlightened mind and the ultimate futility of conceptualization. Buddhagupta's Dzokchen song of realization, the first passage, expresses ideas that are also found in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Paths*. Moreover, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* already mentions the term "great perfection" (*rdzogs pa chen po*) as describing the accomplishment of the perfection stage of *mahāyoga* practice. There is one further relevant example from Buddhagupta's *mahāyoga* works. In his *Comments on the Important Points of the Māyājāla*

⁶⁰⁴ From the critical edition of *Brief Explanation of the Path*: |*thams cad lhun gyis grub pa dang ||sgyu ma mig yor tshul shes pas||gnyis ka rang rig nyid du 'dus||chos rnam ma lus thams cad kun||rang bzhin ye nas dag pa yin||sus kyang ma byas ngang gis gsall.*

⁶⁰⁵ From the critical edition of chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*: |*phyogs bcu dus bzhi'i rang bzhin 'di||de bzhin gshegs pa'i ngo bo nyid||'khor ba sems phyir bdag med pas||de phyir de bzhin gshegs bsam yas||'khor ba'i rang bzhin mi dmigs phyir||mya ngan 'das pa yod ma yin||de ltar rigs dang rgyud med pas||byang chub mchog gi ngo bo la||so so'i rang bzhin nges shes na||yang dag lam gyis bcos su med||yang dag gshegs dang log rtog gnyis||ngo bo nyid kyes gnas gyur na||de la bcos shing bsgyur du med.*

Initiation (Sgyu 'phrul dbang gi gal po'i don 'grel),⁶⁰⁶ Buddhagupta explains a stage of *mahāyoga* meditation called “perfection of perfection” (*rdzogs pa'i rdzogs pa*). After an exhaustive description of the anatomy of the subtle body, he describes a final, abstract state of contemplation in which one lets go of visualizing syllables and deities and is “free from activity” (*bya rtsal dang bral*). He concludes by stating that “This is called the ‘Great Perfection’ (*rdzogs pa chen po*) because from that point on, one does not need to make any effort to obtain all the qualities of a buddha.”⁶⁰⁷ Using the very same terminology in his *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*, Nupchen explains a Dzokchen view called “free from activity” (*bya rtsal dang bral ba*), which the interlinear notes ascribe to Buddhagupta. Thus Buddhagupta’s work, while remaining firmly grounded in *mahāyoga* thought and practice, was already being recognized as an example of Dzokchen by the tenth century.

⁶⁰⁶ Buddhagupta/Buddhaguhya, Sangs rgyas gsang ba, *Sgyu 'phrul dbang gi gal po'i don 'grel*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Q 4762, Rgyud, vol. 44 [*'u*], pp. 403-414. The colophon to this text states that both the root verses and the commentary were written by Buddhagupta and translated by Nyak Jñānakumāra. The root verses are found in the Tengyur as a separate text which lacks a colophon. See *Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i dbang gis gal po*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Q 4721, Rgyud, vol. 43 (*zu*), pp. 809-814. The NKM contains an omnibus version with the root text followed by the commentary. See *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba dbang gi gal po*, in *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 80 [*wu*], pp. 1197-1228 (Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999). *Comments on the Important Points of the Māyājāla Initiation* is yet another work of Buddhagupta that requires further study because it presents a highly sophisticated understanding of the subtle body. On p. 409, for example, Buddhagupta describes the energetic channels, chakras, and their intersection. In his discussion of the central and left channel, the text renders their names not in Tibetan (*dbus ma, rkyang ma*) but in transliterated Sanskrit: *a ba dhu ti (avadhūti)* and *la la nā (lalanā)*.

⁶⁰⁷ Q 4762, CT 44-413: |*de phan chad sangs rgyas kyi yon tan kun brtsal mi dgos pas rdzogs pa chen po zhes smros so*|. I discovered this passage thanks to Karmay 2007, 138.

Chapter VI. Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, Chapter One and *Brief Explanation of the Paths*

An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths, Chapter One

Sources

Each of the three recensions of the Tengyur (G, N, and Q) preserves a version of the text titled *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths—A Pith Instruction of Buddhaguhya* (*Lam rnam par bkod pa sangs rgyas gsan ba'i man ngag*), all of which I have consulted herein. I have also consulted the Comparative Edition of the Tengyur, the Pedurma edition, which is based on N with endnotes noting variants from Q. For historical reasons discussed in previous chapters, the Choné and Dergé Tengyurs do not preserve a version this text.

I consulted a version of the text from each of the following NKM collections: the *Extensive Canon* (*Bka' ma rgyas pa*, K^g) edited by Dūjom Rinpoché, the *Very Extensive Canon* (*Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, K^{sg}) from Kaḥthok Monastery in Tibet, and the typeset *Very Extensive Canon of the Ancient Translation Tradition* (*Snga 'gyur ka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, K^{sgn}) published by the Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House in Chengdu. K^g and K^{sgn} both record the text's title as *The Great Stages of the Path by Master Buddhaguhya* (*Slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa'i lam rim chen mo*). K^{sg} supplies the title *An Orderly Arrangement of the Precious Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra Vajrayāna* (*Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa*).

The four sources represented by the single siglum E^{NAN} are xylographs preserved on microfilm at the National Archives of Nepal; the originals belong to individuals or monasteries in Nepal. A comparative reading of these four shows that they were copies printed from the same xylograph. Like K^{sg}, these bear the title *An Orderly Arrangement of the Precious Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra Vajrayāna* (*Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i*

man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa). All four texts are exactly the same in terms of wording and pagination as W8LS16627 in BDRC. This version of the text contains anonymous handwritten interlinear notes in *umé (dbu med)*, a form of Tibetan cursive, as well as corrections to the root text in red ink. Since the interlinear notes were too small to be legible to me, I did not consult this version of the text. A text with the same interlinear notes is also found in a collection of old and rare texts from Adzom Monastery available on BDRC as W3PD981.⁶⁰⁸ The root text and pagination of the annotated witness and E^{NAN} are exactly the same. I conclude that these five witnesses—the four E^{NAN} version and the one with interlinear notes—were likely originally printed from one set of blocks, perhaps at Adzom Monastery, which is notable in light of the word commentary by Adzom Gyelsé Gyurme Dorjé that I consult in the translation.

E^{NAN}: -*Gsang sngag rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa*.

Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of
Nepal. E 2262/7.

-*Gsang sngag rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod
pa*. Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of
Nepal. E 2659/5.

-*Gsang sngag rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod
pa*. Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of
Nepal. E 2712/1.

⁶⁰⁸ *Rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa*, in Khams a 'dzom dgon du bzhugs pa'i dpe rnying dpe dkon, W3PD981, vol. 3, no date.

-Gsang sngag rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa. Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of Nepal. E 3117/4.

G: *Lam rnam par bkod pa sangs rgyas gsan ba'i man ngag*, Gser bris bstan 'gyur, G 2735, Rgyud 'grel bu, ff. 571a-620b.

K^g: *Slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa'i lam rim chen mo.* In *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 23 ['a], 7-136. Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1987.

K^{sg}: *Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa*, In *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 83 ['u], 7-162. Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999.

K^{sgn}: *Slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa'i lam rim chen mo.* In *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 73 [pu], 9-132. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009.

N: *Lam rnam par bkod pa sangs rgyas gsan ba'i man ngag*, Snar thang bstan 'gyur, N 3533, Rgyud 'grel bu, ff. 426a-466b.

N^{CT}: *Lam rnam par bkod pa sangs rgyas gsan ba'i man ngag*, Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma, Rgyud zu, pp. 959-1043.

Q: *Lam rnam par bkod pa sangs rgyas gsan ba'i man ngag*, Pe cin bstan 'gyur, Q 4736, Rgyud 'grel bu, ff. 465b-506b.

Additional Remarks on the Critical Edition and Translation

In the process of translating this text, I was aided by the Venerable Kachupa Ngawang Tenzin. He recommended that we consult a commentary, given that there are many passages that are difficult to parse. I therefore decided to use two commentaries: 1) the oldest extant

commentary on this text by the Nyingma master Rokben Sherap Ö called *Clear Lamp of the Supreme Path* (*Lam mchog gsal ba'i sgron me*), which focuses on the more difficult points (*dka' ba*) of the root text; and 2) a word-by-word commentary by modern Nyingma master Adzom Gyelsé Gyurmé Dorjé called *Dispelling the Darkness of the Transmigrator's Intellect* (*'Gro blo'i mun sel*)⁶⁰⁹. In the annotations to this translation, the abbreviation AGGD refer to this later commentary. For readers of Tibetan, the critical edition is formatted according the layout of the translation in terms of spacing, and the translation contains the page numbers of N^{CT}. Words in brackets {} indicate my emendations of the text.

Critical Edition

[E^{NAN}1b][G571a3][K^g1b][K^{sg}1b][K^{sgn}1b][N426a6][N^{CT}43-959][Q465b2]⁶¹⁰

⁶¹¹|dpal gyi dpal gsum nyid ldan rdo rje lta bu'i⁶¹² ye shes 'dus ma byas|
 |ma btsal lnga rdzogs skyon⁶¹³ bral mi shegs dbyings⁶¹⁴ nyid ye shes 'du 'bral med|
 |lnga yis⁶¹⁵ ⁶¹⁶grub nyid gnyis med dang gsal mi g.yo mi sems sems chen po|
 |'phrin [K^{sg}2a] las bzhi⁶¹⁷ bcom dpa' bo rang⁶¹⁸ nyid lha yi⁶¹⁹ [E^{NAN}2a] lha la gnyis med
 mos|
 |gsang ba'i bdag po mngon gshegs⁶²⁰ nas|

⁶⁰⁹ A 'dzom rgyal sras 'Gyur med rdo rje, *Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa'i 'bru 'grel 'gro blo'i mun sel*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 76 [mu], pp. 241-736 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang 2009).

⁶¹⁰ |rgya gar skad du| gu hya mantra badzra yā na ū pa de sha pa thaḥ kra ma ratna vi ū ha nā ma| bod skad du| gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa zhes bya ba| E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁶¹¹ dpal gyi dpal rdo rje sems dpa' la phyag 'tshal lo| add. E^{NAN}] dpal gyi dpal rdo rje sems dpal la phyag 'tshal lo| add. K^{sg}

⁶¹² bu K^{sg}E^{NAN}

⁶¹³ rkyen E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁶¹⁴ dbyangs GNQ

⁶¹⁵ yi K^gK^{sgn}

⁶¹⁶ rdo rje add. K^gK^{sgn}

⁶¹⁷ bdud sde bzhi K^gK^{sgn}

⁶¹⁸ rin K^{sg}

|lha klu [N426b] gnod sbyin srin po dang |
 |mi las⁶²¹ skal ldan 'dus pa la|
 |dbang pos⁶²² ji ltar lung bstan dus|

 |rgyal bu⁶²³ rigs can ltas shar ba⁶²⁴|
 |'brel ba snang la mngon brtags pas|
 |thugs kyi sgrub⁶²⁵ pa mngon rtogs [K^g2a] te|
 |de nyid sgo nas de nyid grub|
 |bstan⁶²⁶ pa'i dngos grub de nas thob|
 |don dam [G571b] bcud⁶²⁷ kyis⁶²⁸ de nas rgyas|
 |'dod pa'i bsam⁶²⁹ pa de ru 'grub|
 |smon pa'i lha dang de ru [K^{sg}2b] mjal⁶³⁰|

 |de nas rdo rje gdan steng⁶³¹ gi⁶³²|
 |'dzam gling shar gyi phyogs [E^{NAN}2b] mtshams su|
 |pho brang dam pa [N^{CT}43-960] rin chen nang |
 |bkra shis dam pa'i khang pa⁶³³ ru|
 |ku ku rā⁶³⁴ {dza indra}⁶³⁵ bhū⁶³⁶ ti⁶³⁷ |[K^{sgn}2a]

619 lha'i GNQ

620 shes K^gK^{sgn}

621 yi K^gK^{sgn}

622 dang po K^gK^{sgn}

623 bu'i K^gK^{sgn}

624 nas K^{sg}E^{NAK}

625 dgongs K^gK^{sgn}

626 brtan K^gK^{sgn}

627 bcu K^{sgn}

628 kyang K^gK^{sgn}

629 bsams GN

630 'jal N

631 stengs GNQ

632 kyi GNQ

633 bu E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|sing ha⁶³⁸ u pa rā dza⁶³⁹ dang |
 |sras mo go⁶⁴⁰ ma sa la sogs|
 |sgyu 'phrul dra⁶⁴¹ ba'i dbang thob nas|
 |tshogs kyi dkyil 'khor mngon bsgrubs⁶⁴² te|
 |rdo rje 'chang sar mngon du gshegs|

 |de phyir sangs rgyas mtshan thobs ngas⁶⁴³|
 |[K^{2b}]dam pa'i rigs can dra⁶⁴⁴ ma dang |
 |de rjes ma 'ongs skal ldan phyir|
 |stong phrag brgya yi⁶⁴⁵ rgyud dag las|
 |gshegs shul lam mchog 'dir bsdus te|
 |snyigs ma'i rgyud drag dus kyi tshe|
 |dus kyi⁶⁴⁶ 'dul phyir bstan par bya'o⁶⁴⁷|

 |spyan bzangs 'gro mthu med pa yis⁶⁴⁸|
 |dmigs bu bral [Q466a] ba'i nyams stor bas⁶⁴⁹|
 |bgrod cing phyin par mi nus bzhin|
 |rtsing po dmu rgod⁶⁵⁰ rang nyams kyi|

⁶³⁴ ra GNQ

⁶³⁵ dzendra E^{NAN}K^{sg}] tsa in tra G] dzāndre K^gK^{sgn}] tsa intra NQ

⁶³⁶ po G] bhu K^gK^{sgn}] bo NQ]

⁶³⁷ dang add. GNQ

⁶³⁸ singha E^{NAN}K^{sg}] sing nga GNQ

⁶³⁹ ra tsa GNQ

⁶⁴⁰ 'go GNQ

⁶⁴¹ drwa K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁴² sgrub K^{sgn}

⁶⁴³ nges K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁴⁴ drwa K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁴⁵ brgya pa'i E^{NAN}K^{sg}] brgya'i GNQ]

⁶⁴⁶ dus kyi GNQ

⁶⁴⁷ bya E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁶⁴⁸ yi NQ

|gsang ba'i snying por mi 'gyur te|
 |bud⁶⁵¹ shing me tog 'bras bzhin 'gyur|
 |de bas bla ma lung bzhin bkur⁶⁵²|
 |brtag spyo zhe gcod bzod bya⁶⁵³ ste|
 |mthong [**K^{sg}3a**] ba'i gdung ba khur⁶⁵⁴ mi lta⁶⁵⁵|
 |de kun yun⁶⁵⁶ gyi don du bzod|
 |dka' bas bsten na⁶⁵⁷ rdo rje rgyal|
 |nyams snang mthong zer⁶⁵⁸ thob 'gyur te|
 |de tshe rgyud chen [**K^{sgn}2b**] gzhung gi⁶⁵⁹ yon|
 |phul na thugs kyi nying khu ster|
 |de yis bzhon pa bzang⁶⁶⁰ 'gro [**E^{NAN}3a**] bzhin|
 |gsang ba'i rdzu 'phrul stobs zhon pas
 |mthong [**G572a**] 'jug mthar phyin bzhi bgrod⁶⁶¹ nas|
 |ye shes snying po'i gnas su phyin|
 |de bas rdo rje gnyer ldan pas⁶⁶²|
 |rgyang drung sems pra⁶⁶³ mkha' 'gro yi|
 |gsang sngags ltas ston {spyod}⁶⁶⁴ ba [**N427a**] yis|

⁶⁴⁹ nas K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁵⁰ rmu dgod GNQ

⁶⁵¹ bul E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁶⁵² bskur GNQ

⁶⁵³ byas E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁶⁵⁴ khu G

⁶⁵⁵ blta E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁶⁵⁶ yum GNQ

⁶⁵⁷ brten nas K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁵⁸ nyams kyis gngang ba E^{NAN}K^{sg}] nyams kyi gngang ba K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁵⁹ bzhin E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁶⁶⁰ zang K^{sgn}

⁶⁶¹ bsgrod GQ] bgrong K^{sg}

⁶⁶² ma K^gK^{sgn}

⁶⁶³ sra K^gK^{sgn}] sprā NQ

|ci nas brtags te bzang ldan na|
 |mi ldog brtan [**K^g3a**] byas brtas⁶⁶⁵ pa yi|
 |shi sha⁶⁶⁶ gang yin lag tu gtad|

 |ngan pa'i ltas⁶⁶⁷ mthong mngon shes pas|
 |'dod pa phra⁶⁶⁸ mo'i⁶⁶⁹ rgyur byed dang |
 |khe dang grags pa che ba'i rgyu⁶⁷⁰|
 |byed cing bcud chen 'dzag dang 'go⁶⁷¹|
 |⁶⁷²mi⁶⁷³ chags ma rungs byed pa dang|
 |zang zing mtha' gtong [**N^{CT}43-961**] dbus 'ching dang|
 |g.yon can ngo dga' lhag⁶⁷⁴ sprang⁶⁷⁵ skur|
 |lkog na rang dgar byed pa dang|
 |ngag la [**K^g3b**] rigs nges⁶⁷⁶ bsam⁶⁷⁷ mi nges⁶⁷⁸|
 |bud med 'dod pas⁶⁷⁹ phyal⁶⁸⁰ ba dang|
 |mun lkog 'phrad⁶⁸¹ par 'dod spyod snyeg⁶⁸²|⁶⁸³

664 spyo E^{NAN}GK^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}NQ
 665 rtas E^{NAN}GK^{sg}NQ
 666 slob bu E^{NAN}K^{sg}
 667 rtags K^gK^{sgn}
 668 'phro GN] 'pra Q
 669 mo K^gK^{sgn}
 670 rgyur E^{NAN}K^{sg}
 671 'bo E^{NAN}K^{sg}] dbo K^gK^{sgn}
 672 | om. G
 673 ma GNQ
 674 ltag K^{sgn}
 675 sprad E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}
 676 nges bas K^{sg}
 677 bsams G
 678 des N
 679 pa E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}
 680 'chal K^gK^{sgn}
 681 prad GNQ
 682 bsnyegs K^{sg}
 683 | om. E^{NAN}K^{sg}NQ

|pho mo tantrar⁶⁸⁴ ma bsngags⁶⁸⁵ la|
 |bskal⁶⁸⁶ par dri⁶⁸⁷ bzhin 'khor 'gyur yang|
 |thugs kyi bde ba spro mi bya|
 |'tshams⁶⁸⁸ par skur bstan⁶⁸⁹ gcan 'phrang⁶⁹⁰ bzhin⁶⁹¹|
 |de min be'u⁶⁹² sbrel g.yang bsgyur⁶⁹³ bzhin|
 |'dod khes phrogs⁶⁹⁴ zhing bcas⁶⁹⁵ 'phyar⁶⁹⁶ bas|
 |ma rtogs⁶⁹⁷ [**K^{sgn}3a**] spros na dur khrod gling|
 |brgyad kyi mkha' 'gro bzhin 'dus nas|
 |sha [**E^{NAN}3b**] za srog la [**Q466b**] 'bebs shing lhung⁶⁹⁸|

 |de ltar brtags pa'i⁶⁹⁹ skal ldan phyir|
 |rang bzhin ye shes rang gnas dang |
 |der⁷⁰⁰ mthong der 'jug rnal 'byor bzhi|
 |bar chad med sgrub⁷⁰¹ rnam par smin|
 |dbang⁷⁰² [**G572b**] sgyur⁷⁰³ phyag [**K^g3b**] rgya lhun grub lam|
 |mngon byas⁷⁰⁴ rim pa brjod par bya⁷⁰⁵|

684 gtad trar GNQ] tantra K^gK^{sgn}]

685 sngags GNQ

686 skal GNQ

687 gri E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

688 'tsham GNQ

689 brtan K^gK^{sgn}

690 'phran GNQ

691 sbyin E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

692 de men be NQ

693 'gyur GNQ] skur K^gK^{sgn}

694 'phogs GNQ

695 gcam E^{NAN}K^{sg}] brtsam K^gK^{sgn}

696 'phyal K^{sgn}

697 gtogs GNQ

698 ltung E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

699 pas K^gK^{sgn}

700 de E^{NAN}K^{sg}

701 bsgrub GNQ

702 sbas GNQ

|de la dang po nyid spros pas|
 |de nyid de yis shes bya ba|

 |phyogs bcu dus bzhi'i rang bzhin 'di|
 |de bzhin gshegs pa'i ngo bo nyid|
 |'khor ba sems phyir bdag med pas|
 |de phyir de bzhin gshegs bsam yas|
 |'khor ba'i rang bzhin mi [K^{sg}4a] dmigs phyir|
 |mya ngan 'das pa yod ma yin|
 |de ltar rigs dang rgyud⁷⁰⁶ med pas⁷⁰⁷|
 |byang chub mchog gi ngo bo la|
 |so so'i rang bzhin nges shes⁷⁰⁸ na|
 |yang dag lam gyis bcos su med|
 |yang dag gshegs dang log rtog⁷⁰⁹ gnyis|
 |ngo bo nyid kyis gnas gyur na| [N427b]
 |de la bcos shing bsgyur⁷¹⁰ du med|
 |'ching⁷¹¹ bu rin chen bzhin mi rigs|

 |de bas de lta 'di bzhin pas⁷¹²|
 |ma rig log rtog⁷¹³ zhags⁷¹⁴ pa'i rgyu⁷¹⁵|

703 bskur K^gK^{sgn}

704 byang K^gK^{sgn}

705 bya'o K^gK^{sgn}

706 rgyu K^gK^{sg}

707 par GNQ

708 zhe E^{NAN}K^{sg}

709 rtogs K^gK^{sgn}

710 sgyur E^{NAN}K^{sg}

711 mching E^{NAN}K^{sg}

712 bas K^gK^{sgn}

|las dang nyon mongs rgyu⁷¹⁶ rkyen gyis⁷¹⁷|
 |bcu⁷¹⁸ [**K^{sgn}3b**] gnyis 'khor lo⁷¹⁹ gnas su bskyar⁷²⁰|
 |rten dang 'dod pa tha dad pa'i|
 |bde sdug gdung bas nyam thag [**N^{CT}43-962**] bral|

 |rtsom⁷²¹ med bzhi⁷²² dus⁷²³ kun tu⁷²⁴ nyams|
 |rang bzhin [**E^{NAN}4a**] nyid las⁷²⁵ nyams pa med⁷²⁶|
 |de lta'ang rgyal po phru gu⁷²⁷ 'khyams⁷²⁸|
 |de bzhin rigs la [**K^{sg}4a**] 'gyur med pas|
 |shul don rang las gzhan⁷²⁹ med⁷³⁰ phyir|
 |'phrul dga'i tshul⁷³¹ gzhan tha dad zer⁷³² du⁷³³ min|

 |de yang⁷³⁴ rnams gsum⁷³⁵ gnas tshul gzhag⁷³⁶
 |**[K^{sg}4b]** 'bru lnga⁷³⁷ gnas {pa}⁷³⁸ thabs chen po|

713 rtogs K^gK^{sgn}GNQ

714 zhugs G

715 rgyus GNQ

716 brgyad E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

717 kyis K^gK^{sgn}

718 bcud K^gK^{sgn}

719 los E^{NAN}K^{sg}] lo'i K^g

720 skyar GNQ

721 brtsom E^{NAN}K^{sg}

722 bzhin Q

723 'dus K^gK^{sgn}

724 du GNQ

725 ni K^gK^{sgn}

726 |rang bzhin nyid las nyams pa med| *minute scriptum* G

727 gur GNQ

728 |de lta'ang rgyal po phru gur 'khyams| *minute scriptum* G

729 gzhin K^{sgn}

730 min E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

731 de add. E^{NAN}K^{sg}] te add. K^gK^{sgn}

732 tha dad zer om. E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

733 las E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

734 de'ang K^gK^{sgn}GNQ

735 rnams G

736 bzhag K^gK^{sgn}

737 lngar E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|'gro ba kun la⁷³⁹ rang bzhin⁷⁴⁰ gnas⁷⁴¹|
|dkyil 'khor bzhi dang srog shing gsum|
|gnas na⁷⁴² kā⁷⁴³ li'i⁷⁴⁴[G573a] sgra dbyangs ldan|
|e bam⁷⁴⁵ ma ya mkha' ldan dang|
|snying po rlung sgrom gnas na yod|
|de yis⁷⁴⁶ tantra⁷⁴⁷ 'byin par byed⁷⁴⁸|
|de don de na⁷⁴⁹ chos nyid⁷⁵⁰ dang|
|[Q467a] |ye shes yon tan las nyid dngos⁷⁵¹|
|rnal 'byor lam rim rang bzhin ldan⁷⁵²|
|snod kyi 'od dbyibs 'phrin⁷⁵³ las bzhi|
|thig le bsnyen sgrub⁷⁵⁴ rang bzhin ldan|
|[⁷⁵⁵ bzhi brgyad shi ra⁷⁵⁶ maṅḍa la⁷⁵⁷]|
|ram yaṃ⁷⁵⁸ g.yas g.yon sbyin sreg ldan|
|gnas bzhi⁷⁵⁹ 'byung ba⁷⁶⁰ las bzhi ste|

738 pa'i E^{NAN}GK^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}NQ

739 las K^gK^{sgn}

740 gnas GNQ

741 te GNQ

742 nas K^gK^{sgn}

743 ka K^gK^{sgn}GNQ

744 la GNQ] li K^gK^{sgn}

745 waṃ E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

746 yid G] yi K^gK^{sgn}

747 tan tra G

748 skyed E^{NAN}K^{sg}

749 ni K^gK^{sgn}

750 de K^gK^{sgn}

751 dngos K^gK^{sgn}

752 gnas K^gK^{sgn}

753 phrin K^gK^{sgn}

754 bsgrub GNQ

755 pa add. K^{sg}

756 kshi GNQ] shing K^{sg}

757 ma dal GNQ] ma dha la K^gK^{sgn}

758 ra ya GNQ

759 bzhi'i K^gK^{sgn}

|gsang ba'i mkha' la rang⁷⁶¹ bzhin ldan|
 |gnas rten rtsa dang thig le la|
 |bcu dbang lnga gsum dbang rnams ldan|
 |gsang ba nang gi 'dod yon dang |
 |[K^{sgn}4a]|dam rdzas lnga⁷⁶² ldan mchod pa ste|
 |de dag rang gnas mi 'du⁷⁶³ ba⁷⁶⁴|
 |rang bzhin gsang⁷⁶⁵ ba'i sa ma ya|
 |rang bzhin phyi nang gsang ba yi|
 |'du byed spyod⁷⁶⁶ pa ngang gis⁷⁶⁷ gnas|
 |[E^{NAN}4b] chags pas khams⁷⁶⁸ 'grub cig⁷⁶⁹ shos⁷⁷⁰ kyis⁷⁷¹|
 |rang [K^s4b] bzhin ye shes 'grub byed pa'o|

 |rdo rje phung po'i⁷⁷² yan lag kun|
 |[K^{sg}5a]|rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas lngar⁷⁷³ grags sogs|
 |dngos kun chags dang nang⁷⁷⁴ tshul gyis⁷⁷⁵|
 |las dang ngo bo 'bras bur gnas|
 |chu zla sgyu [N428a] ma sprul pa bzhin|

760 ba'ang E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}
 761 las E^{NAN}K^{sg}
 762 rang K^gK^{sgn}
 763 'du GNQ
 764 bar E^{NAN}K^{sg}] bas K^gK^{sgn}
 765 gsang GNQ
 766 sprod GNQ
 767 gi GNQ
 768 'khams GNQ
 769 gcig K^gK^{sgn}
 770 shes GNQ
 771 kyis GNQ
 772 po'i E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}
 773 sngar GNQ] ldar E^{NAN}K^{sg}
 774 ngang GNQ] snang K^gK^{sgn}
 775 gyi E^{NAN}K^{sg}

|phung po khams dang skye mched rnams|

|gzhi⁷⁷⁶ rdzogs phyag rgya ma 'dres gsal

|cir yang 'gyur zhing cir yang 'grub|

|bar ma⁷⁷⁷ lam dang 'bras bu rnams|

|gang yang rigs rgyud [NCT43-963] rtags⁷⁷⁸ med⁷⁷⁹ pas|

|sems phyir kun kyang de de dang⁷⁸⁰ |

|gzugs gnyis mtshan gsum yod dang med|

|gnas ris⁷⁸¹ sde cha yod min⁷⁸² rdzogs⁷⁸³|

|gnyis [G573b] yul bral bzhin de ldan pa'i|

|don mchog lnga 'bras⁷⁸⁴ ye shes dbyings|

|bdun dang gsum phyir don dam la⁷⁸⁵|

|dpag bsam shing dang rin chen ltar⁷⁸⁶|

|de kun ngo bo nyid rgyur gnas|

|'jig rten brtan g.yo la sogs pa|

|snang ba nyid na ngo bo med|

|de nyid chos⁷⁸⁷ sku chen po yin|

|rang bzhin ngang⁷⁸⁸ gis de ltar gnas|

|[K^{sgn}4b] de las gzhan pa'i thob bya med|

⁷⁷⁶ bzhi GNQ

⁷⁷⁷ sa dang K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁷⁸ rtag E^{NAN}GK^gK^{sg}NQ

⁷⁷⁹ min E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁷⁸⁰ ngang E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁷⁸¹ rigs E^{NAN}K^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁷⁸² med K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁸³ sogs GNQ

⁷⁸⁴ ldan pa'i|don mchog lnga 'bras om., 'dir 'bru chad| *minute scriptum* add. K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁸⁵ pa E^{NAN}K^{sg}] dang K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁸⁶ dang K^gK^{sgn}

|kun kyang smin zin bgrod pa med|
 |de nyid lam gyi'ang⁷⁸⁹ ngo bo ste|
 |'jug⁷⁹⁰ [K^{sg}5b] gnas 'byin pas che⁷⁹¹ ba [Q467b] yin⁷⁹²
 |phyogs bcu ma lus thams cad la|
 |rang byung⁷⁹³ chen [E^{NAN}5a] pos⁷⁹⁴ kun tu khyab|
 |rang byung⁷⁹⁵ de nyid dngos med par|
 |kun gyi phyag rgya'i rgyu yin phyir⁷⁹⁶|
 |de lta bu yi⁷⁹⁷ ngang du nges⁷⁹⁸|
 |de bzhin nyid [K^g5a] dbyings ye shes te|
 |thabs kyi phyag rgya kun gyi rgyu|
 |ming grangs med pa'i rgyu nyid dang |
 |yongs su rdzogs pa zhes kyang brjod|
 |gsum pa dngos por⁷⁹⁹ zhen pa yi⁸⁰⁰|
 |mya ngan 'das dang 'khor ba'i chos|
 |ye nas rigs rgyud rtag⁸⁰¹ min pas|
 |so so'i gzugs sgra dri ro reg⁸⁰²
 |chos kyi bye brag tha snyad kun|

⁷⁸⁷ na ngo bo med||de nyid chos om. K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁸⁸ dang G

⁷⁸⁹ gyi 'ang G

⁷⁹⁰ 'jugs Q

⁷⁹¹ phye E^{NAN}K^{sg}

⁷⁹² che ba yin| om., mtshams 'dir 'bru chad snyam| *minute scriptum* add. K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁹³ 'byung GNQ

⁷⁹⁴ po K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁹⁵ 'byung GNQ

⁷⁹⁶ phyin K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁹⁷ bu'i GNQ

⁷⁹⁸ gnas K^gK^{sgn}

⁷⁹⁹ po K^gK^{sgn}

⁸⁰⁰ pa'i GNQ

⁸⁰¹ rtags K^gK^{sgn}

|'ja' snang mkha' ltar ma 'dres shig⁸⁰³
 |'dus ma byas pas⁸⁰⁴ 'dus byas snang |
 |'dus byas snang ba⁸⁰⁵ rdo rje nyid|
 |rgyal 'gros ma⁸⁰⁶ mdzad ma bcos pas⁸⁰⁷|
 |rang bzhin ngang⁸⁰⁸ gis dbyer med pa'ang⁸⁰⁹|
 |de min zhen pa dgrol⁸¹⁰ phyir las|
 |tha snyad gnyis par⁸¹¹ bsam brjod 'das|

 |yul dang shes par⁸¹² snang ba yang |
 |rang byung⁸¹³ ye shes rang snang zad|
 |rgyu 'bras [N428b] snang yang gnyis pa med|
 |phyi nang gsal [G574a] ba'ang nang nyid [K^{sg}6a] dang |
 |de ltar ye shes rang snang ba⁸¹⁴|
 |lam dang 'bras [K^{sgn}5a] bu⁸¹⁵ kun gnas pa⁸¹⁶|
 |'brel pa bdag phyir [N^{CT}43-964] thabs chen pos|
 |mngon byed rang las 'byung⁸¹⁷ bar zad|

802 | add. G

803 gcig E^{NANKsg}

804 nyid GNQ

805 ba'ang E^{NANKsg}] pa G

806 mi K^{gKsgn}

807 par E^{NANKsg}] pa K^{gKsgn}

808 rang GNQ

809 ngang E^{NANKsg}

810 sgrol GNQ

811 pa K^{gKsgn}

812 rab K^{gKsgn}

813 'byung GNQ

814 snang ba GNQ

815 'brasbu G

816 po K^{gKsgn}

817 byung E^{NANKsg}

|ye shes rang la gnas pa'i le'u ste dang po'o||

[E^{NAN}5a6][G574b2][K^g5a6][K^{sg}6a2][K^{sgn}6a][N428b1][N^{CT}43-961][Q467b6]

[Colophon]

mang yul khri babs su^{818 819} dznyā na ku mā⁸²⁰ ras bsgyur ba⁸²¹ | lam rnam par bkod⁸²² ba⁸²³
sangs rgyas gsang ba'i man ngag rdzogs so||⁸²⁴

[E^{NAN}61a][G620a][K^g65a][K^{sg}77b-78a][K^{sgn}62b][N466b3][N^{CT}43-1041][Q 506b]

⁸¹⁸ | om. K^gK^{sgn}

⁸¹⁹ gnyags

⁸²⁰ ma GNQ

⁸²¹ ba'o K^gK^{sgn}

⁸²² bgod Q

⁸²³ | om. K^gK^{sgn}

⁸²⁴ |gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa zhes bya ba mchog dang mthun mong gi dngos grub brnyes pa'i slob dpon sangs rgyas gsang bas mdzad pa rdzogs so|| |rgya gar gyi mkhan po ma hā paṇḍi ta buddha gu hya nyis dang| bod kyi lo tsa ba gnyags dznyā na ku mā ras mang yul khri babs su bsgyur ba'o |slad kyis rgya gar gyi mkhan po ma hā paṇḍi ta bi ma la mi tra dang| bod kyi lo tsa ba gnyags dznyā na ku mā ra la sogs pas bcos shing zhus te gtan la phab pa'o|| add. E^{NAN}K^g

An Orderly Arrangement of the Path
Chapter One: Dwelling on the Gnosis Itself

[N^{CT}43-959]

May I be inseparable from the god of gods, the heroic one who conquers by means of the
four actions,⁸²⁵

Whose unconditioned vajra-like gnosis possesses the three glories⁸²⁶ of glory,⁸²⁷

Who effortlessly perfected the five⁸²⁸ [qualities], and is faultless, indestructible, and beyond
union or separation from the gnosis and the [*dharma*]*dhātu* itself,

Who, because of the five, is an accomplished, non-dual, luminous, immovable, and
incomprehensible *mahāsattva*!

At a certain time, the Lord of Secrets⁸²⁹ manifested

And, by virtue of his powers, gave the following prophesy

To a karmically fortunate assembly of

Gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *rākṣasas*, and humans:

A prince of noble birth to whom good omens have appeared,

⁸²⁵ AGGD clarifies, on f. 3b, these are the four tantric actions of pacifying (*zhi*), increasing (*rgyas*), overpowering (*dbang*), and subjugating (*drag*).

⁸²⁶ According to Rokben on f. 4b, this refers to 1) the glory of self-existent spontaneous accomplishment (*rang bzhin lhun gyi grub pa'i dpal*), 2) the glory of awareness appearing to itself (*rig pa rang la snang ba'i dpal*) and, 3) and the glory of the subsequent arising of compassion (*thugs rje zhar la 'byung ba'i dpal*).

⁸²⁷ The phrase *dpal gyi dpal* appears as the opening three words of IOL Tib J 646: */swa sti//dpal gyi dpal//bcom ldan 'das//kun du[=tu] bzang po//sku gsung thugs rdo rje bde ba chen po la phyag 'tshal lo/*. This text is preserved in the NGB as *The Single Stage of the Great Perfection (Rdzogs pa chen po sa gcig pa)*. As Karmay has pointed out, this very short text in six verses is better known as the *Cuckoo of Awareness (Rig pa'i khu byug)*, one of the eighteen texts of the mind class (*sems sde*) of Dzokchen, and one of five texts associated with the Tibetan translator Vairocana. It is also found as chapter 31 of the *All-Creating King (Kun byed rgyal po)*, another text of the mind class. See Karmay 2009c, 99-101.

⁸²⁸ Rokben notes on f. 5b that these refer to the five enlightened qualities: 1) a pure buddhafield (*rnam par dag pa'i zhing khams*), 2) a vast and measureless celestial palace (*rgya tshad bral ba'i gshal med khang*), 3) clear and pure light rays (*gsal zhing dag pa'i 'od zer*), 4) an exalted throne (*khyad par du 'phags pa'i gdan*), and 5) the delight of acting as desired (*dgyes rgur spyod pa'i longs spyod*). See also CN, 158.

⁸²⁹ According to AGGD, f. 4a, the Lord of Secrets (*Gsang ba'i bdag po*) refers to Vajrapāṇi (*Phyag nan rdo rje*)

Will investigate his connection [to these good omens] and
Because of this, will completely understand the heart practice;
In doing so, he will accomplish that practice.
From that he will obtain the spiritual accomplishments that have been taught,
And from those, by means of the elixir of ultimate truth, [his accomplishments] will
proliferate.

His wishes will be fulfilled and
He will meet his chosen deity.⁸³⁰

Later, upon a vajra throne
In the eastern part of Jambudvīpa
Within a [NCT 43-960] precious sublime palace,
In an auspicious and sublime hall,
Sat Kukurāja, Indrabhūti⁸³¹
Siṃha[rāja] and Uparāja
Princess Gomadevi,⁸³² and others,
Who, having received the initiation of the *Māyājāla*,
Accomplished the mandala of the assembly,⁸³³ and
attained the state of Vajradhara.

⁸³⁰ Here, the author summarizes the legend of King Jaḥ (Rgyal po dza) and the origins of the *Māyājāla* transmission lineage, the complexities of which I discussed previously. King Jaḥ has a series of seven prophetic dreams, the first of which features Vajrapāṇi, *alias* “Lord of Secrets” (*gsang ba’i bdag po*). See Garson, 161. Karmay concludes that the King Jaḥ story as it relates to the *mahāyoga* tantras is a Tibetan innovation borrowed from the origin myth of the *yoga* tantras. See Karmay 200b, 206-207.

⁸³¹ I emended the text here so that the names of these figures read more clearly.

⁸³² Some Tibetan scholars, such as Patrül Rinpoché, hold that Buddhagupta was a direct student of Gomadevī, who was a princess, the daughter of the so-called middle Indrabhūti and the sister of the Indrabhūti of the present narrative. See Garson, 172-173.

⁸³³ This may be a reference to the rite of a tantric feast or *gaṇacakra* (*tshogs kyi ’khor lo*).

Thus, I who have the name of “Buddha,”
 For the sake of learned holy ones of noble birth, and
 For those later, fortunate ones of the future,
 Will summarize the supreme path of the [Tathā]gatas
 As found in the pure *Tantra in 100,000 Stanzas*.⁸³⁴
 I compose this work for the sake of taming [sentient beings]
 Of this time period, [of] these degenerate and turbulent times.

 Just as one who has good vision, but no power to move,
 Or an inexperienced person separated from their guide,
 Cannot journey and arrive [at their destination],
 You cannot simply engage the *Guhyagarbha*
 Through your own coarse and unrefined experience;
 This would be like [expecting] flowers to bloom from dry kindling.
 Therefore, one must revere the guru according to the scriptures.
 When he investigates you with insults and harsh words, you must be patient.
 Do not pay attention to the suffering you experience [under his tutelage];
 Be patient—all of these are for the long-term goal [of Buddhahood].⁸³⁵
 If you rely on him or her through the trials, you [will] be a Vajra King,⁸³⁶

⁸³⁴ This is a reference the non-extant ur-tantra from which all the other *Māyājāla* mantras are said to have been extracted. According to the tradition, it was divided into the eight *Māyājāla* tantras by Kukurāja. See Dorje, 33 and Garson, 162. A myth about a hundred thousand stanza root text is a common trope in the origin narrative of several tantras, including the *Mahāvairocana Tantra* and the *Kālacakra Tantra*. See David B. Gray, “On the Very Idea of a Tantric Canon: Myth, Politics, and the Formation of the Bka’ ’gyur,” *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 2 (December 2009), 2-10. This is also the case with the *Sarvatathāgatātattvasaṃgraha*, which as we have seen, is historically related to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. See Weinberger, 95 & 166.

⁸³⁵ The canonical recensions of the text have *yum*, “mother” or “female consort” in place of *yun*, “duration.” This plausible alternate reading would have the sense of “Be patient, as all of this is for the benefit

And you will obtain, as it has been said, visionary experiences.

At that time, if you [make] offerings [as explained] in the text of the great tantras,

[The guru] will grant you the quintessence of the enlightened mind.

Thereafter, it will be like a journey on a fine horse;

Mounting on magical secret powers,

Through vision and actual engagement, you traverse the four culminations⁸³⁷

And arrive at the state of the essence of gnosis.

Therefore, the vajra master employs tantric divination

Both from near and far, [such as] mirror divination,⁸³⁸

of mother[-like sentient beings],” alluding perhaps the idea that all sentient being have at been one’s mother in a previous life.

⁸³⁶ Alternatively, *rgyal* might be read as a verb, with the meaning of “...he will win the vajra.” AGGD, f. 8a2, glosses this as *rdo rje rgyal po* but implies that it refers to the guru in his capacity as the vajra master who grants tantric initiation. The initiation of the vajra king (*rdo rje rgyal po 'i dbang*) is one of the eighteen initiations associated with the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. On these, see *infra*. The term *rdo rje rgyal po* is also used in the aforementioned PT 849, which I suggest served as a source for some of Buddhagupta’s hagiographical details. Toward the end of the manuscript, it states that the master Devaputa bestowed upon his Tibetan disciples the initiation and scriptural transmission of the Vajra King (*rdo rje rgyal po 'i dbang lung rdzigs par stsal*). In the manuscript itself, just in front of the words *rdo rje rgyal po* is a bit of text that was crossed out, which reads *rdo rje slob* (though without the *dpon* element of *rdo rje slob dpon*, vajrācārya). Perhaps this implies the underlying meaning of the *rdo rje rgyal po*.

⁸³⁷ AGGD, f. 8b1 indicates that this refers to the four *vidyādhara* or knowledge-holder levels, which are mentioned further on in the text: 1) matured *vidyādhara* (*rnam smin rig 'dzin*), 2) *vidyādhara* with power over life (*tshe dbang rig 'dzin*), 3) great seal *vidyādhara* (*phyag chen rig 'dzin*), and 4) *vidyādhara* of spontaneous presence (*lhun grub rig 'dzin*).

⁸³⁸ The Tibetan word here is *pra*, which ADDG, f. 8b5, glosses as *pra phab*. This refers to a method of mirror-scrying called *prasenā* (*pra se na* or *pra sen* in Tibetan) whereby the practitioner summons a deity or spirit to make signs or visions appear on the surface of the mirror. This practice is described in IOL Tib J 401, a ninth to tenth century grimoire that details many magic spells and rituals, among them *prasenā*. The practice seems to have come to Tibet from India, where it was a ubiquitous form of divination mentioned in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist tantric scriptures. The Kashmiri Śaiva tantric master and intellectual Abhinavagupta knew of it and was dismissive of the practice, considering it mere sorcery. There are number of similar practices mentioned in Greek, Roman, and Jewish sources. And in the Tibetan medical tradition, it is used to make diagnoses. See Sam van Schaik, *Buddhist Magic: Divination, Healing, and Enchantment through the Ages* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, 2020), 124-128. According to van Schaik, one the Buddhist canonical sources for the practice of *prasenā* is the *Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā Tantra* (D805). As I have mentioned, this is a text that the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta has written about. His comments on the *prasenā* practices of the *Ārya-subāhu-paripṛcchā Tantra* can be found in D 2671, ff. 45b-46b, where he explains some of the relevant rituals procedures such as bathing oneself and wearing white clothes, preparing the ritual altar, and deciding on a suitable medium for the deity, which could be the nail of one’s thumb, a mirror, a sword, water, a clear crystal, or even a young child. *Pra phab* is also mentioned in the *Testament of Wa* as one of the specialties of Padmasambhava, see Wangdu and Diemberger, 24. As David Gordon White notes, the earliest attestation of *prasenā* in India is in fact a Buddhist source, the *Dīgha Nikaya*, which states

And asking the dakinis [for omens].

Investigating [the student] in every way, if there are good [signs],

Such a student⁸³⁹ will be irreversible, stable, and developed

And is one who will be entrusted [with the teachings].

Through clairvoyance, the guru may instead see inauspicious signs:

That a student will have the causes of giving rise to subtle desire,⁸⁴⁰

Or that [the student] will be a cause for excessive profit and fame,

[Causing] his great vital essence to trickle away and become defiled;

That he will not be properly formed [spiritually] and will act maliciously;

And in the end, he will give material goods, [N^{CT} 43-961] but in the middle he will be
attached to them.

He will be crafty, flatter [those higher], and will deprecate those who are very humble.

He rejoices secretly [in others' misfortunes]

In his speech, he [will say he is] is of true lineage, though he knows this not to be true.

Out of his desire for women, he will become hedonistic;⁸⁴¹

He will have trysts in the shadows and will chase after sex.

that monks are prohibited from practicing divination with mirrors. See David Gordon White, *Dæmons Are Forever: Contacts and Exchanges in the Eurasian Pandemonium* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2021), 72-75.

⁸³⁹ G, K^g, K^{sgn}, N, and Q, supply the word *shi sha*, which is probably an attempt to render the Sanskrit word *śiṣya*, “student.” AGGD, f. 9a2, substitutes it for the Tibetan word *slob bu*. E^{NAN} and K^{sg} have *slob bu* as well. The word *shi sha* also occurs in the D recension of Pelyang’s *Lamps for the Mind*, while Q has *shi shi* and the NKM recensions have the Tibetan *slob bu*; see Takahashi 2009, 318 & 365. Takahashi notes that *shi shi* also occurs in *Rnal ’byor chen po shes rab spyan ’byed kyi man ngag* (Q 4724) on f. 413a6, a text attributed to Vimalamitra.

⁸⁴⁰ This line might also be read as saying that tantric teaching will cause subtle desire in the unworthy student.

⁸⁴¹ The word here is *phyal ba*, which more often means “ordinary, regular,” but can refer to a hedonist. Two witness have the word *’chal ba*, “fornicate.” I have chosen the former reading since *phyal ba* can also mean “protruding belly,” possibly hinting that, out of his desire for women, the unworthy (clearly male-assumed) student in question will eventually impregnate someone. My thanks to Ngawang Tenzin for this interpretation.

When men and women do not respect the tantric [teachings],
They will transmigrate again and again as in a dark age,
They will not feel the rapture of mental bliss.
Revealing the enlightened form [of the deity] to them is like [entering] a dangerous path⁸⁴²
Or like steering a calf over a cliff while tied to it.
They are enraptured by wealth and desire and disparage those who correct them.
Hence, if you do not realize [that such disciples are unfit] and elaborate on [the teachings],
It would be as if you had gathered the *dākinīs* of the eight great cemeteries,⁸⁴³
Caused them to fall onto [your body] and devour your flesh, causing your life force to
collapse.

Thus, for the sake of those fortunate ones who have been [properly] investigated,
I will explain the stages to actualize the paths,
The four yogas uninterruptedly attained: Maturity,
Power [Over Life], [Great] Seal, and Spontaneous Presence⁸⁴⁴
Which cause one [to understand] the inherent presence of innate gnosis,
And to see and engage with it.
Regarding [those four], in the beginning, they involve discursivity
And should be understood by means of that very [distinction].

[Everything in] the ten direction and the four times⁸⁴⁵ has as its essence

⁸⁴² An alternative translation of this line would be, “They show disrespect to retreatants like wild beasts.”

⁸⁴³ AGGD, f. 10a6, relates that these eight great cemeteries are 1) Cool Grove (Bsil ba'i tshal), 2) Pervasive Great Laughter (He chen brdal), 3) Great Secret Display (Gsang ba'i rol), 4) Perfected in Body (Sku la rdzogs), 5) Spontaneously Accomplished Mound (Lhun grub brtsegs), 6) Lañka Mound (Langka brtsegs), 7) World Mound ('Jig rten brtsegs), and 8) Lotus Mound (Padma brtsegs).

⁸⁴⁴ These are the names of the four knowledge-holder levels mentioned in the note *supra*.

The very essence of the Tathāgata.⁸⁴⁶

Since samsara is [just] mind, it has no self,

It is therefore the inconceivable Tathāgata.

Since the intrinsic nature of samsara cannot be seen,

Nirvana does not exist either.⁸⁴⁷

In this way, there is no such thing as spiritual lineages or causes [for achieving realization].⁸⁴⁸

Hence, if one truly understands that the individual essences [of everything]

Are just supreme awakening,

There is nothing that is being altered by means of “correct paths.”⁸⁴⁹

If there existed a real difference

Between authentic enlightenment and mistaken conceptualization,

[Samsara] could not be altered or changed.

But it is [as breakable as] a glass trinket⁸⁵⁰ and so this cannot be right.

⁸⁴⁵ The ten direction (*phyogs bcu*) are the four cardinal directions, the four ordinal directions, above, and below. The four times, as we have noted, are past, present, future, and indeterminate time. Recall that one of the “four erroneous faults” (*log pa’i skyon bzhi*) of the *Guhgyagarbha Tantra* according to some Sarma scholars was the use of the term four times. In his defense of the GT, Chomden Reldri refers to an unnamed commentary by Buddhagupta, where the terminology of *dus bzhi* is used. While he may have been referring to *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, Chomden Reldri may also have been referring to one of the outer tantra commentaries, such as D 2624, *Word-by-Word Commentary on the Meaning of the Durgatiparīśodhana*, where the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta uses the terminology of “four times.”

⁸⁴⁶ A similar couplet can be found in chapter twenty-two of the GT, on f. 132a3: *|kye kye phyogs bcu dus bzhi’i rang bzhin pa’i||de bzhin gshegs pa’i ngo bo nyid|*.

⁸⁴⁷ These four lines are also found in the *Six Stages* attributed to Vilāsavajra, *Rim pa drug pa*, Bstan ’gyur dpe bsdur ma, Rgyud, vol. 43, p. 1151: *’khor ba sems phyir bdag med pas||de phyir de bzhin gshegs bsam yas||thabs dang shes rab ldan gyur na||phyin ci log nyid byang chub lam||’khor ba’i rang bzhin mi dmigs phyir||mya ngan ’das pa’ang yog ma yin|*.

⁸⁴⁸ The term here is *rigs rgyud*. Some witness have *rgyu* in place of *rgyud*, which would change the meaning of this line to “Which is beyond classification and cause.” *Rgyud* seems to be the more plausible reading given the next few lines of the text.

⁸⁴⁹ Cf. Vilāsavajra, *Six Stages*, p. 1151: *|so so’i rang bzhin nges zhe na||yang dang lam gyis bcos su med|*.

⁸⁵⁰ On *’ching bu* or *mching bu* as meaning “glass” or even “lapis lazuli,” and its possible connection to similar words in the Zhangzhung language and Chinese, see Rolf A. Stein, “La langue zañ-žuñ Bon organisé,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême-Orient* 58 (1971): 236.

So it is like this:

Ignorance is the cause of the lasso of wrong views.

Due to the causal⁸⁵¹ conditioning of karma and afflictions

We repeatedly dwell in the different states of the twelve [links of interdependent origination];⁸⁵²

Differentiated according to the basis [of their external world] and their desires, we never weary

Of being tormented by happiness and suffering [N^{CT} 43-962].

The four [times] are beginningless, [and] time itself is in all ways deteriorated.

But in their intrinsic nature, they are undefiled.

Just as a prince's royal lineage does not change

Simply because he wanders [through his kingdom in the guise of a commoner].

Since goal of the pathway is not different from one[']s own mind],

The way [of enjoyment] of Nirmāṇarati⁸⁵³ is not said to be other than [the gods themselves who dwell there].⁸⁵⁴

Now, we posit the way things are, which has three aspects.⁸⁵⁵

⁸⁵¹ The non-canonical recensions of the text read *brgyad* “eight” in place of *rgyu*, “cause.” This is what AGGD’s text reads on f. 12b, where he implies that *brgyad rkyen* refers to the *kun dkris brgyad*, or “eight fetters.” According to CN, 230, these are lethargy (*rmugs pa*), sloth (*gnyid*), excitement (*rgod pa*), regret (*'gyod pa*), jealousy (*phra dog*), avarice (*ser sna*), shamelessness (*ngo tshar med pa*), and impropriety (*khrel med pa*).

⁸⁵² AGGD f. 12b makes it clear that “twelve” here refers to the twelve links of interdependent origination (*rten cing 'bral bar 'byung bay an lag bcu snyis*): ignorance (*ma rigs pa*), formation (*'du byed*), consciousness (*rnam par shes pa*), name and form (*ming dang gzugs*), the six sense bases (*skye mched drug*), contact (*reg pa*), sensation (*tsor ba*), craving (*sred pa*), grasping (*len pa*), becoming (*srid pa*), birth (*skye ba*), and old age and death (*rga shi*).

⁸⁵³ Nirmāṇarati (*'phrul dga*), literally “Delight in Their Own Creations” is one of the heavens in the *deva* or god where the gods who dwell there can make anything appear to please them.

⁸⁵⁴ Cf. Pelyang’s *Lamp for the Mind* in Takahashi 2009, 394 & 390: *smon pa kun rdzogs rang rig nyid||lam dang [758] 'bras bu dngos gzhi'i phyir||'phrul dga'i longspyod tshul bzhin du||gzhan du re smon skye ba med*. Also, there is a shift meter from seven to nine syllables in this final line of this passage.

⁸⁵⁵ ADDG, f. 13a-13b, explains the three aspects as provisional (*kun rdzob*), ultimate (*don dam*), and undifferentiated (*dbyer med*). The practices that Buddhagupta explains in the following lines fall under a subset

Resting [the mind] on the five letters is a great method.

[Those letters] abide intrinsically in all beings.⁸⁵⁶

When one rests [the mind] on the four mandalas⁸⁵⁷ and the three life-posts⁸⁵⁸

The consonants and vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet appear.⁸⁵⁹

The *evam mayā*⁸⁶⁰ is spacious.

of the provisional aspect. Each following couplet explains a discreet method of visualizing seed syllables within the different parts of the subtle body. Buddhagupta explains the view of the ultimate truth toward the end of the chapter.

⁸⁵⁶ AGGD, f. 13b, relates that the five syllables are the Sanskrit syllables *om āḥ hūm svā* and *hā*. These syllables are visualized inside of the body in either the five radial channels of the heart chakra (*snying gi rtsa 'dab lnga*) or in five places in the body—the crown, throat, heart, navel, and genitals. Rokben, f. 13a, gives a similar explanation.

⁸⁵⁷ AGGD f. 13b3: this refers to mandalas or chakras at four places in the body: 1) the mandala of great bliss at the crown (*spyi bor bde chen*), 2) the *sambhogakāya* mandala of at the throat (*mgrin pa long spyod*), 3) the *dharmakāya* mandala at the heart (*snying ga chos*), and 4) the *nirmānakāya* mandala at the navel (*lte ba sprul pa*). Again, this accords with Rokben's explanation on 13a. The *Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa* (*Chos drug gi man ngag*) attributed to Tilopa also enumerates four chakras in its pith instruction on the practice of inner fire (*gtum mo*). See Fabrizio Torricelli, “The Tibetan Text of Tilopa's Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa,” *East and West* 46, no. 1/2 (June 1996), 150-152.

⁸⁵⁸ Literally, “three life-trees,” I translate the term *srog shing gsum* as “three life-posts” following Garson's translation on 501 of Jikmé Tenpé Nyima's *Key to the Precious Treasury*. The term refers to the three main energetic channels (*rtsa, nāḍī*) in the body: the central channel (*avadhūti, rtsa dbu ma*), the channel to its right (*rasanā, ro ma*), and the channel to its left (*lalanā, rkyang ma*), according to AGGD f. 14b4 and Rokben 13a-13b. Jikmé Tenpé Nyima quotes as his source the *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra* (*Sgyu 'prul rgya mtsho*), a tantra that occurs in some lists of the *Māyājāla* Tantras. This line in our text is similar to the first line from *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra* passage cited by Jikmé Tenpé Nyima that describes subtle body yoga: |*'khor lo bzhi dang srog shing gsum*||*me rlung 'gro bas nam mkha' i ba*||*bzho ba steng du rnam par grags*||, “In the four chakras and the three life-posts, the sky cow is milked by the movement of fire and wind, this is known as the upper door.” See *Sgyu 'phrul rgya mtsho zhes bya ba'i rgyud*, in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Mtshams brag edition, vol. za (Thimphu: National Library of Bhutan, 1982), f. 6a1. The term also occurs in a text attributed to Vimalamitra called *Secret Drop* (*Gsang thig*), but Vimalamitra text explains six chakras, not four. See Orna Almqvist, “The Materiality and Immanence of Gnosis in Some rNying-ma Tantric Sources,” in *Yogic Perception, Meditation and Altered States of Consciousness*, Eli Franco and Dagmar Eigner, eds. (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 248-249. Jamgon Kongtrül mentions the three life-posts in his explanation “upper door” (*steng go*) technique of *mahāyoga*, wherein the practitioner uses inner heat (*gtum mo*) to melt the “sky cow” (*nam mkha' ba*) i.e., the seminal essence said to reside at crown chakra in the form of the syllable *ham*, causing it to drip through the other chakras below, causing an experience bliss. See Kongtrül 2007, 71. In his explanation of Tilopa's inner fire instruction in the *Ṣaḍdharmopadeśa*, the Drukpa Kagyü master Pema Karpo (Padma dkar po, 1527-1592) also uses the terminology of “three life-posts” to describe the three main channels of the subtle body and refers to the “sky cow” technique. See Torricelli 1996, 152 & 162.

⁸⁵⁹ The word here is *kā li*, referring to the *ālikāli* or Sanskrit vowels and consonants. AGGD, f. 13b-14a, provides an elaborate explanation of the technique to be employed, which involves visualizing the Sanskrit vowels and consonants in concentric, oppositely rotating garlands in the central and radial channels, surrounding a seed syllable at each of the four chakras. In the head chakra is the syllable *ham*, in the throat is *aṃ*, in the heart is *hūm*, and in the navel is *a*.

At the heart, the wind resides in the hollow abode,⁸⁶¹

The tantra issues forth from [that].⁸⁶²

That is the meaning. Suchness and gnosis becomes manifest

From enlightened qualities contained within it.

We [already] innately possess the stages of the path of yoga.

The light-like vessels, shapes, four activities,

The essential drop and the practice of service and evocation are intrinsically present [within us].⁸⁶³

⁸⁶⁰ This phrase is rendered in Sanskrit as *e vaṃ ma ya (evaṃ mayā)* The emphasis here on this phrase, which appears in the *nidāna* or opening lines of almost every Buddhist sutra and tantra, is interesting since the *Guhyargarbha Tantra* is particularly well-known for *not* having the phrase in its *nidāna*. As I have already noted, the absence of *evaṃ mayā* in the introduction is the first of the “four perverse faults” (*log pa'i skyon bzhi*) leveled against the GT. In light of this, it is even more curious that AGGD refers to the technique alluded to in Buddhagupta’s text as the “indwelling of the meaning of the tantra’s introduction” (*gleng gzhi dang rgyud don rang la gnas pa*). That said, the syllables *e vaṃ ma yā* do figure prominently in the rituals of the four tantric activities described in chapter 20 of the GT. In the commentarial traditions of other tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and the *Hevajra Tantra*, the individual syllables of the word *evaṃ* is explained as symbolizing the female (*e*) and male (*vaṃ*) genitals in sexual union, which itself represents the union of wisdom and compassion. See Alex Wayman, “Female Energy and Symbolism in the Buddhist Tantras,” *History of Religions* vol. 2, no. 1 (Summer, 1962): 80-94. Indeed, a similar symbolism seems to be at play here, at least according to AGGD’s late commentary.

⁸⁶¹ According to AGGD f.14a, the first line here refers to a technique called the “lower door” (*’og sgo*), which involves sexual union with a female consort. He provides a detailed explanation which I will summarize. One visualizes the syllable *e* in the vagina (“lotus”) of the consort from which arises a triangle, a square palace, and a half-moon shaped seat upon which rests a sphere. From the head of the male’s penis (“vajra”) arises a seminal drop which is visualized as the syllable *vaṃ*. The male practitioner merges his consciousnesses in the form of various seed syllables into the merged sexual fluids, resulting in a blissful, non-conceptual experience of gnosis. Continuing onto f. 14b, AGGD relates that the second line refers to the “upper door” (*steng sgo*) technique, which entails visualizing the four syllables *e vaṃ ma yā* at the heart center in the form of spherical essential drops (*thig le*) and uniting them with the five types of wind energy: life-bearing (*srog ’dzin*), upward moving (*gyen rgyu*), pervading (*khyab byed*), fire-like (*me mnyam*), and downward moving (*thur sel*). Again, the practitioners merges the consciousness with the winds and essentials drops at the heart center, resulting in a direct experience of bliss-emptiness. Rokben, f. 14a-14b gives a similar though much shorter explanation of these. These techniques are further expanded in the later Nyingma tradition, as evinced in Jikmé Tenpé Nyima’s *Key to the Precious Treasury* in Garson, 505-507 and Kongtrul 2007, 71-73.

⁸⁶² The text has the Sanskrit word *tantra* here, rather than the Tibetan word *rgyud*.

⁸⁶³ AGGD f. 15a-15b comments that this is refers to another upper door (*steng sgo*) method. The practice entails meditating on different shapes and different colored lights in each of the four radial channels of the heart chakra. To the right of the heart chakra is the channel of suchness (*chos nyid kyi rtsa*) which radiates white colored light and within which is a sphere; in front is the channel of gnosis (*ye shes rtsa*) radiating yellow light with a square; to the left is the channel of enlightened qualities (*yom tan rtsa*) radiating red light with a semicircle; and at the back is the self-reliant channel (*rang rgyud rtsa*) of dark red light and with a triangle. AGGD does not say what the four action are, but it seem reasonable to assume that they refer to the tantric actions of pacifying, increasing, overpowering, and subjugating. AGGD also explains the attainment four

The four and the eight⁸⁶⁴ [chakras], channel mandalas,⁸⁶⁵

Ram and *yam*, the left and right [channels], and the fire offering are all possessed [within].⁸⁶⁶

The elements at the four places are the four actions.⁸⁶⁷

They are intrinsically present in the secret space [of the female consort].⁸⁶⁸

The basis are the channels and that which is to be relied upon is the essential drops, and [as such]

The ten initiations, the five and the three initiations⁸⁶⁹ are possessed within.

stages of service, intimate service, evocation, and great evocation by meditating on the presence of essential drops in each of the four radial channels of the heart chakra.

⁸⁶⁴ On f. 15b, AGGA notes that the four refers to the four radial channels of the heart chakra, and eight refers to the branch channels of these four. The channel of suchness to the right and the channel of enlightened qualities to the left each have three branch channels, while the other two consist of a single channel each for a total of eight.

⁸⁶⁵ “Channel mandala” is my translation *shi ra maṇḍa la*. AGGD, f. 15b5, notes that *shi ra na ste rtsa'i maṇḍal*, implying that *shi ra* refers to the “maṇḍala of channels.” Rokben on f. 16b1 follows the canonical reading of *kshi ra*, commenting that *kṣi ra ni rtsa la ma dha la ni dkyil 'khor*. The reading of *ma dha la* is thus likely a corruption of *maṇḍala*. *Shi ra* seems to be a slight corruption of the Sanskrit word *śīrā*, which according to MV does in fact translate to *rtsa* in Tibetan (MV 3991). According to MMW, p 1073 and 1217, *śīrā* is a variation of the word *sirā*, which refers to any tubular vessel or vein of the body. The term *shi ra* is also used in Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation* in a brief discussion of the “upper door” method of *mahāyoga* mentioned above. Interestingly, this passage contains the only internal reference to Buddhagupta (using the transliterated form of his name) in his text, as other references to him are in the interlinear notes: *steng gi go la bsten pa ni||shī ra <po/> tsa kra <'khor po/> bzhi gnas gzhi na gnas pa la| de spyir bsgom ste bsam pa'ang las kyi me rlung so so'i thabs mi mthun pa las bskul te| nam <sgo/> mkha'i ba bzhos la ye shes kyi bdud rtsi phab la bde ba brtag pa da| de dag so sor rang re(?) la man ngag slob dpon bi ma la dang| 'bu ta kug ta dang| padmo'i gzhung la sogs pa bla ma'i zhal du rag lus so|. Nupchen implies that such techniques involving the channels and chakras are elaborated in the texts of Vimalamitra, Buddhagupta, and Padmasambhava. See Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, p. 222.5-223.1 and Lopez 2014, 305, n. 561. The term channel mandala, therefore, seem to be referring to the chakras.*

⁸⁶⁶ Rokben makes it clear on f. 16a that *ram* is the seed syllable of fire and *yam* the seed syllable of wind. According to AGGD 15b-16a, this line refers to an interiorized fire offering (*homa*, *sbyin sreg*). The syllable *ram* is visualized in the triple intersection (*sum mdo*) at the navel where the three main channels meet. Below that, at the area called the container intersection (*sgrom mdo*) where the wind energies converge is the syllable *yam*. By concentrating the wind energy in this area, the triple intersection begins to blaze. One imagines the right and left channels as the filling ladle (*pātrī*, *dgang gzar*) and pouring ladle (*sruva*, *blugs gzar*) used in a physical fire offering; the central channel is the fire deity Agni (*me lha*). AGGD states that the mental afflictions and conceptual thoughts become the offering substance. Rokben's explanation is a bit more concrete: he states that the offering substances are the essential drops (*thig le*, mentioned in the previous verse), which melt into the fire and causing their condensed energy to pervade the all of the channels, causing a sensation of bliss.

⁸⁶⁷ AGGD, f. 16a, mentions that there is another methods of accomplishing the four actions internally by meditating upon the four elements (air, water, earth, and fire) as various shapes (semicircle, sphere, square, and triangle) in four different places in the body (either the anus, navel, heart, and throat; or the navel, heart, throat, and head).

The secret inner offering of the [five] senses,
 And the five sacramental substances are the offerings.⁸⁷⁰
 Without having to be collected from their own [external] sites,
 They are intrinsically the secret *samaya*⁸⁷¹ [substances].
 The practice of the outer, inner and secret [offerings]
 Are activities that innately abide [within].
 The element⁸⁷² is created through desire, and it is through its single emission
 That intrinsic gnosis is accomplished.
 All of the parts of the vajra-aggregates

⁸⁶⁸ Returning the practices of the lower door, AGGD on f. 16b explains that the four activities can also be accomplished by meditating on different shapes mentioned in the previous note within the vagina of the female consort at the time of sexual union.

⁸⁶⁹ Toward the end of f. 16b, AGGD explains that these are the ten outer initiations of benefit (*phyi phan pa'i dbang bcu*), the five inner initiations of ability (*nang nus dbang lnga*), and the three secret profound initiations (*gsang zab mo'i dbang gsum*). These eighteen initiations are explained tenth chapter of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. The ten initiations of benefit are: the initiation of the five essences (*snying po lnga'i dbang*), the diadem initiation (*dbu mrgyan gyi dbang*), the vase initiation (*bum pa'i dbang*), the crown initiation (*cod pan dbang*), the garland initiation (*phreng ba'i dbang*), the armor initiation, (*go cha'i dbang*), the victory banner initiation (*rgyal mtshan gyi dbang*), the umbrella initiation (*gdungs kyi dbang*), the *mudrā* initiation (*phyi rgya'i dbang*), and the food and drink initiation (*bza' btung gi dbang*). The five initiations of ability are: the initiation of the hearer (*nyan pa'i dbang*), the initiation of the meditator (*bsgom pa'i dbang*), the initiation of enlightened activity (*phrin las kyi dbang*), the initiation of the expounder (*'chad pa'i dbang*), and the initiation of the vajra king (*rdo rje rgyal po'i dbang*) The three profound initiations are: the secret initiation (*gsang dbang*), the wisdom-gnosis initiation (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), and the word-meaning initiation (*tshig don gyi dbang*). See Garson 332-334. As an explanation of the initiations being intrinsically possessed AGGD, f. 16b-17a, connects the first fifteen initiations with different aspects of the subtle body, including the channels, radial channels, chakras, and essential drops. He connects the three profound initiations to experiences that arise from mastery of the subtle body: ultimate bodhicitta, great bliss, and the union of these two.

⁸⁷⁰ The inner and secret offerings are special offerings made to the meditational deities according the *mahāyoga* tantras. According to AGG f. 17a, the secret offering is sexual union with the consort, and the inner offering consists of the three poisons (*dug gsum*) of ignorance, hatred, and attachment. Alternatively, the inner offering can consist of the five sacramental substance mentioned in the second line. These are human flesh (*sha chen*), feces (*dri chen*), semen (euphemistically referred to as *bodhicitta*, *byang sems*), urine (*dri chu*), and blood (*ra kta*). Again, these offerings are said to be possessed intrinsically, i.e., within the body itself; these five sacramental substances are connected respectively with the naval channels (*lte ba'i rtsa*), the channels of the intestines (*long kha'i rtsa*), the central channel, the left channel and the right channel.

⁸⁷¹ The text renders this in transliterated Sanskrit as *sa ma ya*, rather than with the Tibetan word *dam tshig*.

⁸⁷² Element (*khams*) is being used here as a euphemism for semen.

Are known as the five perfect buddhas, and so on.⁸⁷³

Through desire and the method of interiorization, all things

The ritual action and essence become the result.

Like the reflection of the moon in the water, an illusion, and a magical apparition,

The aggregates, the elements, and sense bases⁸⁷⁴

Are the perfected ground. By visualizing the *mudrā*⁸⁷⁵

They [can] become anything and be established as anything,

The path—the [stages] in between—and the result

Have no types, continuity, or signs. As such, [N^{CT} 43-963]

Because they are [just] mind, they [appear] as this or that:

As the two [male and female] bodies,⁸⁷⁶ the third [neuter] sex, or they may lack [sex
altogether].

As for the types of abodes, they are perfected without having any parts.⁸⁷⁷

⁸⁷³ The text is referring to the transformation of the aggregates and the physical body into enlightened forms through the process of tantric meditation. The aggregates (*skandha*, *phung po*) are the five psycho-physical components that constitute a sentient being. These are form (*rūpa*, *gzungs*), feeling (*vedanā*, *tshor ba*), perception (*samjñā*, *'du shes*), mental formations (*samskāra*, *'du byed*), and consciousness (*vijñāna*, *rnam par shes pa*).

⁸⁷⁴ The aforementioned passage from chapter two of GT cited in the note *supra* and quoted in *Garland of Views* also goes on to discuss the elements (*dhātu*, *kham*s) and the sense bases (*āyatana*, *skye mched*), identifying the five elements with the female consorts of the five Buddhas, D 832, f.111b6: *|skye mched kham rnam mang po kun|byang chub sems dpa'i skyil 'khor nyid|sa chu spyang dang mā ma kī|me rlung gos dkar sgrol ma ste|nam mkha' dbyings kyi dbang phyug ma|srid gsum ye nas sangs rgyas zhing|*. The six sense bases are the six sense organs (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind) paired with their perceptual objects (sights, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, and mental objects). There are multiple enumerations and ways of explaining the elements, but in general they are categories of perceptible phenomena, the six sense organ that perceive them, and the six sense consciousnesses. On these see, Mipham's *Gateway to Knowledge* (*Mkhas pa'i tshul la 'jug pa'i sgo*), vol I, trans. Erik Pema Kunsang (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1997), 36-42 with parallel Tibetan text.

⁸⁷⁵ In this case, *mudrā* seems to refer to the sexual consort.

⁸⁷⁶ AGGD, f. 18b, interprets the two forms/bodies as male and female and the third as neuter (*ma ning*). The latter is here probably being understood as the hermaphrodite: beings who possess both male and female sexual organs. From other sources we know that there is a fourth possibility, that of the sexless individual (*animitta*, *mtshan ma med pa*) who possess neither male nor female sexual organs. See José Ignacio Cabezón, *Sexuality in Classical South Asian Buddhism* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2017), chap. 6.

As they are devoid of dualistic objects.⁸⁷⁸

The supreme objects that possess that [nature] are the five results,⁸⁷⁹ gnosis, and

[*dharma*]dhātu.

These seven, [which are further condensed] into three,⁸⁸⁰ are the ultimate;

Like a wish fulfilling tree and wish-fulfilling jewel,⁸⁸¹

All [three] of these dwell as the cause of their essential nature.

Although the mundane world, whether stable, in motion, and so on,

Appears, those appearances have no essence.

They are themselves the great *dharmakāya*,

That dwells spontaneously and intrinsically just as it is.

There is no other attainment besides these.

When these are fully ripened, there is nothing further.

This [result] is also the essence of the path:

Because [the path] extracts out what already abides within, this is the greatness [of

mahāyoga].

The great self-manifest [gnosis] pervades

Everything in the ten directions.

⁸⁷⁷ AGGD, f. 19a states that parts (*cha*) refer to atomic particles that have parts (*cha shas rdul*). According to the Vaibhāṣika (Bye brag smra ba) school of Buddhist thought, phenomena are made up of molecules which consist of several atoms. In brief, the Vaibhāṣika hold that these atoms are the irreducible and are the constitutive components of material phenomena. For an early Nyingma explanation (and refutation) of the Vaibhāṣika school, a subdivision of the Śrāvaka vehicle, see Rokben's remarks translated in Cabezón 2013, 183-185.

⁸⁷⁸ Continuing on f. 19a, AGGD explains that this refers to being free from the distinction between perceiving subject (*yul can*) and the essence of all phenomena (*cho kun ngo bo*).

⁸⁷⁹ These refer to the attainment of enlightened body (*sku*), speech (*gsung*), mind (*thugs*), qualities (*yon tan*) and activities (*phrin las*).

⁸⁸⁰ AGGD states that these three are the dharmadhātu, gnosis, and result (*bsdu na dbyings ye bras 'bru don dam gsum*).

⁸⁸¹ This line is also found in Pelyang's *Lamp for the Mind*. Cf. Takahashi 2009, 363 & 405. Takahashi points out that there is a somewhat similar line in chapter nine of the GT, D 832, f.120b5: |*dpag bsam shing dang yid bzhin gyi*|.

This self-manifestation does not exist substantially,
 But because it is the cause of the seal of everything,⁸⁸²
 One should ascertain it as just [explained].
 The gnosis of the sphere of suchness
 Is the cause of all the *mudrās* of skillful means;⁸⁸³
 It is known under innumerable names⁸⁸⁴
 But is also just called “complete perfection.”
 [Some] cling to the third [the result] as something real,
 but since the phenomena of samsara and nirvana
 Are primordially without classification, continuum, and permanence,
 Do not mix up all the particular terms [used to designate] phenomena—
 Each individual form, sound, smell, taste and touch—
 With the [reality that is] like the sky in which a rainbow appears,
 Perceiving that which is not compounded as compounded.
 The appearance of compounded phenomena is itself the vajra.
 The way of the Victors is neither composed nor fabricated.
 It is naturally and essentially devoid of divisions.
 But in order to free [those who] cling to [dualistic perception, they taught]
 The inexpressible [has been taught] through dualistic terminology.
 Even though [things] appear as objects and consciousnesses,

⁸⁸² Similar verses are found in Pelyang’s *Lamp for the Mind*, see Takahashi 2009, 338 and 379: |*phyogs bcu ma lus thams cad la*||*rang byung chen pos kun tu khyab*||*rang byung de nyid dngos med pas*||*chos dang gang zag bdag med pa*||*kun gyi phyag rgya’i rgyu yin no*|.

⁸⁸³ A similar couplet is found in a passage from chapter five of the GT on f. 115b4-5:|*de bzhin nyid dbyings ye shes te*||*thabs kyis phyag rgya kun gyi rgyu*|. These two lines are also found in a passage from Pelyang’s *Lamp for the Mind*, see Takahashi 2009, 338 and 379.

⁸⁸⁴ Literally, this line reads “It has acted as the cause of innumerable names.”

They are only the appearance of self-arising gnosis to itself.⁸⁸⁵

Though cause and effect appear, they are not two [different entities].

Though things manifest as outer and inner, they are just one inner essence and

Therefore are the self-appearance of gnosis.

The path and the result abide within all.

Since they are connected as a [single] entity, [N^{CT} 43-964] the great method

Actualizes this, and it is nothing but [enlightenment] arising from itself.

This has been chapter one, on the dwelling on gnosis itself

[Colophon]

—This concludes Buddhagupta’s Pith Instruction, *An Orderly Arrangement of the Path*, given at his seat in Mangyül. It was translated by Nyak Jñānakumara.—⁸⁸⁶

[N^{CT} 43-1041]

⁸⁸⁵ A similar line is found in the *Lamp for the Mind*. See Takahashi 2009, 351 and 939: |rang ’byung ye shes rang snang phyir|.

⁸⁸⁶ Witnesses E^{NAN} and K^g both have a much longer colophon: “This concludes *An Orderly Arrangement of the Precious Stages of the Path of Secret Mantra Vajrayāna* by the master Buddhagupta, who attained the ordinary and supreme spiritual accomplishments. It was translated by the Indian scholar, the *mahāpaṇḍita* Buddhagupta himself and the Tibetan translator Nyak Jñānakumāra at the master’s seat in Mangyül. Later, it was revised, edited and finalized by the Indian scholar, the *mahāpaṇḍita* Vimalamitra, the Tibetan translator Nyak Jñānakumāra, and others.”

Brief Explanation of the Paths

Sources

In this section of the dissertation I translate Buddhagupta's *Brief Explanation of the Paths* (give Tibetan). All of the available recensions of the texts are in Tibetan. I have consulted one recension of the text from the *Treasury of Instructions (Gdams ngag mdzod)* of the *Five Great Treasuries (Mdzod chen lnga)* collection of Jamgöon Kongtrül Lodrö Tayé. This recension has what is clearly a reconstructed Sanskrit title for the text: *Māyājālasya-pāṭha-vibhāṣastoka (Mā yā jā la sya pa tho bi bhā ṣa sto ka)*.

The three sources represented by the siglum E^{NAN} are preserved on microfilm at the National Archives of Nepal; the originals belong to individuals or monasteries in Nepal. A comparative reading of these three showed that they were printed from the same xylograph. There is an additional copy, E 2711/13, which also seems to be from the same xylograph as the other three, though it was omitted from this study as it missing two folios. All four texts are exactly the same in terms of wording and pagination as one found in a collection texts from Adzom Monastery, BDRC W3PD981.⁸⁸⁷ I conclude that all four copies preserved on microfilm at the National Archives of Nepal were originally printed from one xylograph, perhaps from Adzom Monastery, which again is notable since Adzom Gyelsé Gyurme Dorjé wrote a word commentary on both *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path*.

I also consulted the versions of the text found in the following NKM collections: the *Extensive Canon (Bka' ma rgyas pa)* edited by Düjom Rinpoché, represented by the siglum K^g; the *Very Extensive Canon (Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa)* from Kaḥthok Monastery in Tibet,

⁸⁸⁷ See *Sgyu 'phrul dra ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*, in Khams a 'dzom dgon du bzhugs pa'i dpe rnying dpe dkon, W3PD981, vol. 3, no date.

represented by the siglum K^{sg}; and the typset *Very Extended Canon of the Ancient Translation Tradition* (*Snga 'gyur ka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*) published by the Sichuan Nationalities Publishing House in Chengdu, represented by the siglum K^{sgn}).

Additional Remarks on the Critical Edition and Translation

As with the previous text, I was aided in my translation by the Venerable Kachupa Ngawang Tenzin. In this case as well, he recommended that we consult a commentary. The only word-by-word commentary on *Brief Explanation of the Paths* I have been able to find is authored by Adzom Gyelsé Gyurmé Dorjé and is titled *Drop of Nectar: A Word Commentary* (*'Bru 'grel bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*).⁸⁸⁸ In the annotations to the translation below, the abbreviation AGGD refers to this commentary. Words in brackets {} indicate my emendations of the text. For readers of Tibetan, the critical edition is formatted according the layout of the translation in terms of spacing, and the translation contains the page numbers from D^{ng}.

D^{ng}: *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. In *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1 [ka], 1-16. Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1981.

E^{NAN}: -*Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of Nepal. E 2262/6.

-*Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of Nepal. E 2659/3.

-*Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project. National Archives of Nepal. E 3117-3.

⁸⁸⁸ A 'dzom rgyal sras 'Gyur med rdo rje, *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu'i 'bru 'grel bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 71 [du], pp. 555-646 (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang 2009).

K^g: *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. In *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 23 [a], 135 - 154. Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1987.

K^{sg}: *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. In *Kaḥ thog bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 81 [zhu], pp. 759-781. Chengdu: Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, 1999.

K^{sgn}: *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu*. In *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 73 [pu], pp. 127-146. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009.

Critical Edition

[D^{ng}1b][E^{NAN}1b][K^g1b][K^{sg}1b][K^{sgn}1b]

bcom ldan 'das rdo rje'i thugs la phyag 'tshal lo|

sgyu 'phrul dra⁸⁸⁹ ba'i rgyud mchog las|
|skal mchog dbang mchog lnga ldan pa'i|
|dam pa'i yul lnga mthong goms mthar|
|byed phyir mtshan nyid gsum brjod bya|

|shes 'jug mtshan nyid 'byor pa'i gzungs|

|'bras bu smin byed rgyu dang rkyen|

|nus mthu can gyur bde gshegs rigs|

|yan lag 'byung ba'i gzhi⁸⁹⁰ ru dgod|

|⁸⁹¹sgrub pa'i rnal 'byor rgyu bshad pa|

|dbang po yul du snang ba kun|

⁸⁸⁹ drwa K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁸⁹⁰ bzhi D^{ng}

⁸⁹¹ de la add D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|yul rnams yod pa ma yin te|
 |kun gzhi⁸⁹² rnam [E^{NAN}2a] par shes pa nyid|
 |dngos po sna tshogs par snang ba|
 |[K^g2a][K^{sg}2a]|dang po pa yi brtag gzhir rung |
 |de gzod 'tshol⁸⁹³ dang 'phel rim dang |
 |nges pa gsum ste thog ma'i tshe|
 |so sor rtogs rgyu gzhung mthun⁸⁹⁴ pa'i|
 |⁸⁹⁵dbang mchog tshig yul byas la brten|
 |phyed⁸⁹⁶ pas rgyu byas bsam⁸⁹⁷ rtog tshe|
 |gzhung las grags pa'i gtan tshigs⁸⁹⁸ lnga|
 |sngon 'byung⁸⁹⁹ rjes sogs las nyid dang |
 |mi mthun mthun pa'i [K^{sgn}2a] gtan tshig⁹⁰⁰ gces|

 |des na rang spyi'i mtshan yul la|
 |bshes [D^{ng}2a] gnyen [E^{NAN}2b] bdag po rim⁹⁰¹ de thag
 |dang bas 'dod dang bag chags rgyud|
 |shes rab spyan mchog rang rig nyid|
 |gdod nas shes rab lnga yin mtshungs|
 |zhes⁹⁰² [K^g2b][K^{sg}2b] smos la sogs lhan cig byed|

892 bzhi'i E^{NAN}

893 tshol D^{ng}E^{NAN}

894 thos E^{NAN}

895 | om. D^{ng}

896 phyed K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

897 bsams E^{NAN}

898 tshig D^{ng}

899 byung E^{NAN}

900 tshig D^{ng}

901 rims E^{NAN}

902 gces E^{NAN}

|de dag sgo nas 'tshol byed pa|
 |kun tu rgyu bzhin⁹⁰³ 'dod⁹⁰⁴ smon byed|
 |de yis gzung 'dzin spyod yul mtha'|
 |yod med lung du ma bstan pas⁹⁰⁵|
 |'tshol⁹⁰⁶ na skyon gsum 'du mi rnyed|
 |de dag mi 'dod⁹⁰⁷ bral⁹⁰⁸ la 'tshol|
 |'on tang⁹⁰⁹ gnyis rdzogs gnyis med don|
 |kun yin gang yang min pa'i phyir|
 |phyogs bral phyogs bdag bsam brjod 'das|

 |thams cad mkhyen don bcud⁹¹⁰ Inga gcod|
 |sems chos ye nas dbyer med phyir|
 |brgyad drug shes pa shes rab mchog|
 |nges pa nyid du rgyal bas⁹¹¹ gsungs|
 |de 'tshol g.yo smon 'jug pa yang⁹¹² |
 |ngo bos 'brel phyir gzhi nyid nas|
 |'dir 'jug nges pa'i don du rung |
 |la la thun mong [**K^{sgn}2b**] lam rnams nas|
 |rkyen rgyus 'dir 'jug⁹¹³ slob par nges|

903 zhing E^{NAN}

904 gdod D^{ng}K^{sg}K^{sg}K^{sgn}

905 las E^{NAN}

906 tshol E^{NAN}

907 'dod D^{ng}E^{NAN}

908 phrel E^{NAN}

909 tang D^{ng}E^{NAN}

910 bcad D^{ng}] bco K^{sg}K^{sg}K^{sgn}

911 pas E^{NAN}

912 'jug pa'i ngag E^{NAN}

913 mjug D^{ng}] zhugs E^{NAN}

|kha cig sems brgyad nas brgyud⁹¹⁴ de|
 |bskal pa zhing gi rdul snyed nas|
 |thun mong [**D^{ng} 2b**] mchog lam sbyangs pas 'phrad|
 |thun mong sa mthar byas pa'i tshe|
 |yang dag sku gsung thugs bco lngas|
 |byin rlabs 'tshams par [**E^{NAN}3a**] mos snang bas|
 |'khor lo'i sa la 'gyur bar nges|
 |tha ma'i tshe na gsung lnga yis|
 |dngos ston sngon byung lam zhes bya|

 |rjes su 'jug pa shes 'tshol tshe⁹¹⁵|
 |mos pa tha dad [**K^g3a**][**K^{sg}3a**] dbang gis na|
 |bde gshegs sku lnga'i gsung tshul gyis|
 |so sor 'tshams⁹¹⁶ par gtan la dbab|
 |bskal pa gsum nas⁹¹⁷ sbyangs pa yi⁹¹⁸|
 |zab mo gsang thos bzod thob des|
 |chos sku'i gsung gi tshul bzhin du|
 |brjod med don gyis⁹¹⁹ gtan la dbab|
 |longs spyod rdzogs sku'i gsung lta bur|
 |dgongs dang brda⁹²⁰ yis gtan la dbab|
 |sprul pa tshig gi⁹²¹ gsung lta bur|

⁹¹⁴ rgyud K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹¹⁵ che D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹¹⁶ 'tsam E^{NAN}

⁹¹⁷ na E^{NAN}

⁹¹⁸ yis E^{NAN}

|brjod pa'i tshig gis rme⁹²² bar⁹²³ bya|
 |mngon par byang chub gsung ji⁹²⁴ bzhin|
 |rig pa'i rlabs⁹²⁵ kyis gtan la dbab|
 |rdo rje'i⁹²⁶ sku yi gsung lta bur|
 |gnyis med mtha' bral don gyis dbab|

 |la la ngo bo nyid gsung ltar|
 |snang srid mthong thos nyid kyis [**K^{sgn}3a**] 'bebs|
 |gsang ba'i⁹²⁷ sku yi gsung lta bur|
 |spyod pa thabs kyis phebs par 'gyur|
 |la la sngon byung bstan pa bzhi⁹²⁸|
 |ji bzhin don dam nges pa'i tshig
 |rang rkyen 'tshams pa'i⁹²⁹ gtan tshigs⁹³⁰ dang |
 |ldem dgongs sbyor ba'i gtan tshigs⁹³¹ dang |
 |bkri drong⁹³² brgyud pa'i gtan tshigs⁹³³ kyis|
 |so so'i [**E^{NAN}3b**] blo la nges byed cing |
 |brtags⁹³⁴ yul yongs su gzhig byed phyir|

919 byis E^{NAN}

920 brda' E^{NAN}

921 gis E^{NAN}

922 rmal E^{NAN}] smel K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

923 bang E^{NAN}

924 de E^{NAN}

925 brlabs E^{NAN}

926 rje K^{sgn}

927 ba E^{NAN}

928 bzhin K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

929 mtshan ma'i K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

930 tshig D^{ng}

931 tshig D^{ng}

932 drang E^{NAN}

933 tshig D^{ng}

|de dag las kyis gtan tshigs⁹³⁵ 'gyur|
|des⁹³⁶ [K^g3b][K^{sg}3b] na gtan tshigs⁹³⁷ dbang btsan par|

|gtan tshigs⁹³⁸ ma gyur gang yang med|

|de la⁹³⁹ re zhid tshig dbang du|

|dngos po gtan la 'bebs mi 'bebs⁹⁴⁰|

|dbab med ston pa'ang de yis de|

|mthong rnyed byed phyir dgos yod la|

|so sor rtog⁹⁴¹ pa'i yul du 'gyur|

|'tshol tshe dgos phyir de ltar nges|

[D^{ng} 3a] |de la gcig shos thun mong mchog

|thun mong grags pa'i rnam bzhi sogs|

|thun mong min pa rnam pa gnyis|

|tshig don mthun par⁹⁴² 'bebs pa dang |

|gtan tshigs⁹⁴³ don tshig mi mthun pas|

|gtan la 'bebs par byed pa'o|

|dang po tha snyad gtan la 'bebs|

|de bzhin nyid 'bebs dag⁹⁴⁴ mnyam rtogs|

⁹³⁴ brtag E^{NAN}

⁹³⁵ tshig D^{ng}

⁹³⁶ de K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹³⁷ tshig D^{ng}

⁹³⁸ tshig D^{ng}

⁹³⁹ las E^{NAN}

⁹⁴⁰ phebs mi phebs E^{NAN}

⁹⁴¹ rtogs D^{ng}

⁹⁴² pas D^{ng}

⁹⁴³ tshig D^{ng}

⁹⁴⁴ ngag K^{sgn}

|bden bdag gnyis med la sogs [K^{sgn}bb] pa'o|

|gnyis pa ci yang ma yin la|

|ci yang yin dang grub ma grub|

|de sogs don 'dod ci yang min|

|⁹⁴⁵phyir yin phyir min phyir ma grub|

|phyir brjod gtan tshigs⁹⁴⁶ la sogs pas|

|mi 'dra ltos rgyu ngo bo' phyir|

|de dag gtan tshigs 'gyur bar nges|

|de bas skabs 'dir de la brten|

|de de'i yul dang shes pa dang |

|'das 'khor snang ba gzhig bya ba|

[K^g4a][K^{sg}4a] |med na mi [E^{NAN}4a] 'byung tshul nyid dang |

|de ma grub pas de ldog dang |

|snang ba rang snang thabs chen dang |

|snang bzhin ma grub shes rab nyid|

|bar ma sems rtogs rnam par mthar|

|Inga bzhi gnyis sogs snga phyir 'phel|

|lam grangs 'phel ba'ang 'dir shes te|

|skabs skabs nyid du the tshom med|

|de mthar bzhi mthas gdeng ldan pas|

|dbyings dang rig pa gnyis med par|

⁹⁴⁵ | om. D^{ng}

⁹⁴⁶ tshig D^{ng}

|de bzhin nyid du rdo rje'i rigs⁹⁴⁷|
 |gzung 'dzin bral ba'i rang rig nyid|
 |dmigs med tshul du rang snang ba'o|
 |byang chub sems snang⁹⁴⁸ thams cad ni|
 |shin tu brtags dka' gting zab pas|
 |ma dmigs mi dmigs dmigs su med|
 |sems nyid de ni ji lta bu|
 |byang chub de ni sems yin no|
 |sems dang byang chub gnyis med pas|
 |[K^{sgn}4a] sems can ma lus thams cad dang |
 |dus gsum chos rnams thams cad yin|
 |thams cad ma lus chos so cog⁹⁴⁹|
 |sems dang byang chub nyid du 'ub|
 |yangs shing rgya che lhun grub ni|
 |phyi nang snod bcud ye nas [D^{ng} 3b] dag⁹⁵⁰|
 |dag rtogs nyid kyang dbyings nyid yin|
 |'di ni rdo rje mnyam yin no|
 |byang chub sems zhes brjod [K^g4b][K^{sg}4b] pa ni|
 |gang nas ma 'ongs gar mi [E^{NAN}4b] 'gro|
 |rtog med rang rig kho na tsam|
 |sangs rgyas sems can sems la gnas|

⁹⁴⁷ rdo rje'i rigs E^{NAN}

⁹⁴⁸ rnams D^{ng}E^{NAN}

⁹⁴⁹ | om. D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁵⁰ dang E^{NAN}

|mnyam pa'i don nyid ji lta⁹⁵¹ bu|
 |mnyam nyid rang bzhin gang yang min|
 |mnyam dang rtog pa gnyis ka med|
 |thams cad lhun gyis grub pa dang |
 |sgyu ma mig yor tshul shes pas|
 |gnyis ka rang rig nyid du 'dus|
 |chos rnams ma lus thams cad kun|
 |rang bzhin ye nas dag pa yin|
 |sus kyang ma byas ngang⁹⁵² gis gsal|
 |ma chags padma 'dra ba yi|
 |ye shes spyang gyi spyod yul de⁹⁵³|
 |kun dang thun mong de ma yin|
 |de bzhin gshegs pa'i spyod yul te⁹⁵⁴|
 |skyes bu blo rtsal rab kyis rtogs|
 |thams cad ma lus gcig pa'i {dwanggs}⁹⁵⁵ |
 |lta dang blta bar bya med par|
 |ye shes sgron ma sbreng bas ni|
 |phyogs bcu'i zhing [**K^{sgn}4b**] khams thams cad mthong |
 |thams cad ma lus don 'byung ba|
 |tshig gis mtshon las gud na med|
 |sgra nyid don gyi ngo bo min|

951 lta K^{sgn}

952 dang D^{ng}

953 ni K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

954 de E^{NAN}

955 dang D^{ng}E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|don nyid sgra las gud na med|
 |sgra dang tshig tu brjod pa ni|
 |yang dag don gyi snying po min|
 |ming tshig sgra la mi brten par|
 |blo yis gting du go bar byos|
 |dngos grub mchog gi snying po ni|
 |dang po don [K^g5a][K^{sg}5a] rtogs mthar⁹⁵⁶ mi gtong |
 |chu srin phyag [E^{NAN}5a] rgya ji bzhin du|
 |skye bar⁹⁵⁷ bgrangs⁹⁵⁸ kyang ltung mi srid⁹⁵⁹|

 |tshong dpon lam mtha'i bsam pa bzhin|
 |bsgrub pa'i rigs 'di⁹⁶⁰ rig 'dzin bzhi|
 |shes rab dang po smos pa gsum|
 |bar du rgyu mtshams⁹⁶¹ 'bras bu gnyis|
 |bar chad med sbyor shes rab rim⁹⁶²|
 |mtha' gsum kun 'gro mi g.yo dang |
 |mthar phyin shes rab rim shes dgos|
 |bdag nyid ma mthong shes rgyud ma sbyor bas|
 |gzhan du tshol⁹⁶³ zhing rmongs pa'i sems can gyis⁹⁶⁴|
 |bstan kyang ma thos mtshon [D^{ng} 4a] kyang ma mthong bas|

⁹⁵⁶ mtha' K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁵⁷ ba D^{ng}

⁹⁵⁸ bsgrangs D^{ng}

⁹⁵⁹ lhung mi 'gyur K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁶⁰ 'di K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁶¹ 'tshams K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁶² rims E^{NAN}

⁹⁶³ 'tshol E^{NAN}

⁹⁶⁴ sems can rmongs pa yis D^{ng}

|bdag dang gzhan du 'tshol bas 'tshang mi rgya|

 |mi⁹⁶⁵ g.yo bkod pa bsrung ba rol|
 |mdzad pa gnas stobs rim don gnyer|
 |'chid zlos ting 'dzin dkyil 'khor dang |
 |dam tshig 'phrin las spyod pa⁹⁶⁶ dang |
 |mchod [**K^{sgn}5a**] pa dbang dang sgrub pa dang |
 |phyag rgya sngags kyi lta ba rnams|
 |shes chod bya yi tshig tsam min|
 |de bas lam 'dir⁹⁶⁷ bye brag mthong |

 |thig le chen po'i rang bzhin la|
 |sgom pa rnam gsum dus gcig rdzogs|
 |de nyid ma bcos mi g.yo' phyir|
 |de ni de bzhin nyid kyi dbyings|
 |[**K^{sg}5b**][**K^{sg}5b**] de nyid kun gsal ye shes phyir|
 |de ni kun tu snang gi ngang |
 |'bras bu⁹⁶⁸ chos rnams [**E^{NAN}5b**] kun rdzogs⁹⁶⁹ phyir|
 |de ni rgyu yi rim par⁹⁷⁰ ldan|
 |rang rig byang chub dkyil 'khor te|
 |thams cad kun nas⁹⁷¹ 'khyil ba nyid|
 |gzung 'dzin bral ba'i ye shes ni|

⁹⁶⁵ ma E^{NAN}

⁹⁶⁶ spyod pa phrin las D^{ng}

⁹⁶⁷ di'i K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁶⁸ 'bru'i D^{ng}

⁹⁶⁹ dngos K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|de bzhin gshegs pa kun gyi gnas|
 |gzhal yas khang dang dkyil 'khor dang |
 |khro tshogs 'du 'phro mang po yang |
 |sems kyi cho 'phrul chen po yin|

 |dam tshig dam tshig ces⁹⁷² bya ba|
 |gud⁹⁷³ na yod pa ma yin te|
 |rang gi⁹⁷⁴ lta ba dam tshig yin|
 |sdom pa rnam pa bcu gsum dang |
 |spyi yi dam tshig mtha' yas par⁹⁷⁵|
 |thig le chen po'i ngang du gsal|
 |bya ba med pa'i tshul gyis su|
 |kun la thogs pa med par spyad|
 |bzhi yi las dang gcig po yang⁹⁷⁶ |
 |thig le chen po'i ngang du gsal|
 |dngos por zhen bcom bdag dbang bsdu|
 |[**K^{sgn}5b**] bdun⁹⁷⁷ rgyas zug rngu gnyis zhi mthong |
 |spyod pa rnam pa gnyis po yang |
 |thig le chen po'i ngang des phyir|
 |ci la'ang⁹⁷⁸ mi gnas kun tu⁹⁷⁹ spyod|

970 pa K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

971 la E^{NAN}

972 zhes E^{NAN}

973 logs E^{NAN}

974 rig K^{sgn}

975 pa D^{ng}E^{NAN}

976 yong E^{NAN}

977 bdud K^{sgn}

978 gcig la K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|spyod par byed dang spyad pa med|

|mchod pa'i rgyan dang longs spyod kun|

|bya byed gnyis dang las de yang |

|rig pa byang chub sems chen po|

[K^g6a][K^{sg}6a] |cho 'phrul chen po'i ngang du 'dus|

|bdag nyid chen po'i ye shes la|

|dbang **[D^{ng} 4b]** lnga ma btsal dus gcig **[E^{NAN}6a]** rdzogs|

|thob bya 'thob byed thob byas pa'ang |

|rig phyir gzhan nas thob pa med|

|sgrub med spang med chos nyid du|

|'gro med 'ong med de bzhin nyid|

|thams cad gnyis su med pa la|

|bsgrub dang sgrub pa ga la yod|

|dper na sgyu ma'i cho 'phrul ltar|

|don du gnyer ba'ang chud par bya|

|brag ca'i sgra dang chu zla bzhin|

|sgra gzugs mtha' dang bral bar rtogs|

|phyag rgya chen po'i mtshan nyid ni|

|phyogs bcu dus bzhir gshegs pa yi⁹⁸⁰|

|sku gsung thugs dang ye shes lnga|

|bdag dang dbyer med phyag rgya che|

|phyag rgya bzhi⁹⁸¹ bcu gnyis po yang |

⁹⁷⁹ la K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|thig le nyid las gzhan pa med|
 |sngags zhes rab tu brjod pa⁹⁸² yang⁹⁸³ |
 |don dam kun rdzob dbyer med pa'i|
 |mnyam pa'i dkyil [**K^{sgn}6a**] 'khor chen po ru|
 |sku gsung thugs kyi yi ge om|
 |de la sogs te bzhi bcu gnyis|
 |rtag tu mnyam gzhag phyag rgya yin|
 |dus gsum gting 'byin phyir sngags yin|
 |rnam par phye⁹⁸⁴ ba de dag kun|
 |thos bsam rten pa las byung dang |
 |[**K^{sgn}6b**][**K^{sgn}6b**] chags pa g.yas g.yon lam las skyes|
 |brgyud pa'i rnal 'byor las skyes pa|

 |sa yi cha yis phye ba ni|
 |nus pa thob dang ma thob kyi⁹⁸⁵|
 |mthong lam gnyis su [**E^{NAN}6b**] 'gyur ba⁹⁸⁶ yin|
 |zag yod ldog pa'ang gnyis yod de|
 |mthu yis ngan 'gror ldog mi ldog|
 |sngon gyi shes 'jug brgyad la yod|
 |mthar shes 'jug la ga la yod|
 |skabs gnyis mthar phyin rnam pa gnyis|

980 yis K^{sgn}

981 bzhin K^{sgn}

982 pa'ang E^{NAN}

983 om. E^{NAN}

984 phyed K^{sgn}

985 kyi D^{ng}

986 pa E^{NAN}

|yod phyir gcig la'ang gsum gsum ldan|
 |des na spyi dang bye brag shes|
 |gong⁹⁸⁷ gi don ltar ma rtogs pa'i|
 |blo ngan mnyam par khungs⁹⁸⁸ phyung⁹⁸⁹ nas|
 |ma rtogs le lo snyom las byas|
 |don ma 'grub par ngan song 'gro|
 |sems kyi mnyam pa ma rtogs na|
 |tshig gi mnyam pas 'tshang⁹⁹⁰ mi rgya|
 |de bas don tshig ldan par byos|
 |'on kyang⁹⁹¹ [D^{ng}5a] the tshom med pas 'grub|

 |sgrub pa'i rkyen 'jug rnal 'byor spyod|
 |rnal 'byor rkyen yang rnal lnga ste|
 |dkor [K^{sgn}6b] bdun dngos nyid rang rig pa|
 |don dam kun gyi rgyu yin phyir|
 |lhag pa'i rgyu de dang por bsgom|
 |bsam bya bsam par mi bya ste|
 |mi bsam par yang mi bsam mo|
 |'du shes kun bral ting 'dzin mchog|
 |de bas rang sems rtogs byas te|

 |[K^g7a][K^{sg}7a] le lo g.yeng ba yongs spangs la|
 |nga dang bdag med mnyam par bsrung |

987 gang E^{NAN}

988 khung D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

989 byung D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

990 sangs E^{NAN}

|mnyam pa'i dam tshig 'bral mi bya|
 |yid shes de bzhin nyid dmigs pas|
 |ci smos tshogs brgyad spyod yul rnam|
 |mi rtog gyur pas⁹⁹² dus gcig gsal|
 |de phyir thams cad mkhyen bsgom⁹⁹³ yin|
[E^{NAN}7a] |de ltar rgyu la brten pa yis|
 |gnyis phyir mtshams⁹⁹⁴ sbyor ting 'dzin bsgom|
 |de yang⁹⁹⁵ gnyis te phyag rgya dngos|
 |phyag rgya shes mod dus min phyir|
 |mi bsgom gcig⁹⁹⁶ shos rang rig la|
 |sdug bsngal nyon mongs ngang gis med|
 |kun tu rang gsal ye shes la|
 |gnyis med don gyis gdung ba'i mchog|
 |yongs grol las kyi skyabs kyi phul|
 |de mthong de la zhen par bya|

 |de ltar mthong goms su yod pa|
 |gnyis {las}⁹⁹⁷ gsum gyi skye ba 'byung |
 |de la brten pas don grub phyir|
 |'bras bu'i ting 'dzin rim bzhin bsgom|
 |sems nyid yi ge phyag rgya dang |

⁹⁹¹ tang D^{ng}E^{NAN}

⁹⁹² pos K^{sgn}

⁹⁹³ sgom E^{NAN}

⁹⁹⁴ mtshams E^{NAN}

⁹⁹⁵ de'ang D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

⁹⁹⁶ cig E^{NAN}

⁹⁹⁷ las D^{ng}E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

[K^{sgn}7a] |sku yi ngo bor rang snang phyir|
 |'bras bu rgya gcig spros sgom⁹⁹⁸ pa'ang |
 |sngon rjes gcig la goms byas nas|
 |rnal 'byor rig pa dbyibs med 'thu|
 |kha dog med pa'i kha dog lnga|
 |gang rung nyid dam gtsor hūṃ bsgom|
[[K^{sg}7b][K^{sg}7b] de la kha dog med {sngon}⁹⁹⁹ dbyibs|
 |med pa'i thugs¹⁰⁰⁰ yig rang rig shar|
 |brtan nas rgya gnyis rim brtan bya|
 |yongs 'gyur rgya chen zhal gcig pa|
 |phyag gnyis yan lag tshang byas la|
 |rang bzhin phab¹⁰⁰¹ mchod¹⁰⁰² bzlas **[D^{ng}5b]** pa bya|
 |de goms¹⁰⁰³ drug la'ang de bzhin no|
 |yang na mos pas khro bor bsgom|
[E^{NAN}7b] de yang de yi¹⁰⁰⁴ tshul bzhin bya|

 |spyod yul drug nyid phyag rgyar bsdam|
 |brtan na spros pa'i rnal 'byor la|
 |zhi khro gang la sngon byas pa'i|
 |zhal phyag grangs dang phyag rgya'i grangs|
 |gsum dang lnga dang dgu rtsa gcig

⁹⁹⁸ bsgom K^gK^{sg}

⁹⁹⁹ sngo D^{ng}E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}] sgo K^{sgn}

¹⁰⁰⁰ thug E^{NAN}

¹⁰⁰¹ bab D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

¹⁰⁰² mchog D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

¹⁰⁰³ gom E^{NAN}

¹⁰⁰⁴ de'i K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|dgu brgya la sogs zhal phyag dang |
 |rigs gsum lnga dang bzhi bcu gnyis|
 |rigs sam tshom bu'i grangs bzhin brlab|
 |goms nas chu las nya ldang tshul|
 |skad cig brjod pas 'od du 'bar|
 |stong gi dkyil 'khor man chad du|
 |rang rig gsal shar mthar phyin pa'o|
 |stong khri ci smros tshom bu yang¹⁰⁰⁵ |
 |shin [**K^{sgn}7b**] tu bstan¹⁰⁰⁶ nas gnas khang dang |
 |yo byad lnga sogs ldan byas te|
 |sgrub pa dus kyi tshogs la sbyar|
 |zla drug bcu gnyis bcu bzhi drug
 |khams dang brtson 'grus shes rab dang |
 |ting 'dzin rab 'bring mthar phye bas|
 |dus der rnam smin lus de nyid|
 |rdo rje'i [**K^{sg}8a**][**K^{sg}8a**] lus gyur tshe la sbyor|
 |mi ldog sa la nges par phyin|
 |shes rab ting 'dzin ldan¹⁰⁰⁷ min¹⁰⁰⁸ pa'i¹⁰⁰⁹|
 |sman sngags la sogs tshe las 'phags|

 |ldog bcas bzhi dang sbyor lam du|
 |rdo rje'i lus su ma grub pas¹⁰¹⁰|

¹⁰⁰⁵ 'ang E^{NAN}

¹⁰⁰⁶ brtan E^{NAN}

¹⁰⁰⁷ min E^{NAN}

¹⁰⁰⁸ pa E^{NAN}

|rkyen gyi las kyis lus 'dzin na|
 |spyod yul 'gyur tshe rang rig gi|¹⁰¹¹
 |rnal 'byor gsal byas stobs che bas|
 |las ngan rgyun gcod 'brel [**E^{NAN}8a**] ba¹⁰¹² yis|
 |bde gshegs sngags dang bkol¹⁰¹³ mi 'gyur|
 |bshes gnyen dam mthong lam la sbyor|
 |mdor na shes 'jug drug la¹⁰¹⁴ yang¹⁰¹⁵ |
 |skabs kyis rgyu rkyen 'bras gsum ldan|
 |de der der yang dgos ched¹⁰¹⁶ gnyis|
 |'jug tshul gnyis kyis sbyor bar byed|
 |spyod¹⁰¹⁷ pa rgyun gyi tshogs bsags phyir|
 |bdag dang gzhan don bsgrub bya ba|
 |zag ldog¹⁰¹⁸ mthong lam slob byed pa'i|
 |spyod byed bcu mthar 'byin byed pa'o|

 |rnal 'byor dang po dag phyir du|
 |bya byed mi dmigs [**D^{ng}6a**] tshul la [**K^{sgn}8a**] spyod|
 |gnyis pa tshad med bzhi la rol|
 |gsum pa rnal 'byor phyogs la 'bad|
 |bzhi pa rnal 'byor spros la spyod|

1009 yi E^{NAN}

1010 par E^{NAN}

1011 | om. D^{ng}E^{NAN}

1012 pa E^{NAN}

1013 bkor K^{sgn}

1014 la'ang E^{NAN}

1015 om. E^{NAN}

1016 chad D^{ng}

1017 skyod D^{ng}

|lŋga pa { 'dus }¹⁰¹⁹ kyi tshogs la rol|
 |gzhan phyir so so'i rnal 'byor gyis|
 |don byed ci smos [**K^g8b**][**K^{sg}8b**] dang po bcu|
 |gzhan la ston cing bkri bar byed|
 |spyod lŋga mos slob ting 'dzin dngos|
 |gnyis ka dbyings min grol bar spyod|
 |dbang bsgyur thabs kyi spyod 'dra yang |
 |rnal 'byor mthu yis khyad par 'gyur|

 |de bzhin las bzhi tshad med bzhi|
 |'tshams¹⁰²⁰ par dus la spyod pa yang |
 |shes rab ting 'dzin stobs kyis phye|
 |bdag dang¹⁰²¹ gzhan phyir spyod lam du|
 |rnal 'byor rim bzhin spyod¹⁰²² lam¹⁰²³ bsdam|
 |longs spyod rnam drug rnal 'byor rim|
 |[**E^{NAN}8b**] mthun spyod rang grol gzhan mos gzhug
 |longs spyod bde ba'i bsod nams tshogs¹⁰²⁴|
 |zin chags bral ba'i ye shes mod|
 |de de'ang sa yi zag dang sbyor|
 |lam bzhis zag med slob par 'gyur|

 |mnyan bsam mthong ba'i bsod nams dang |

1018 zlog E^{NAN}

1019 dus D^{ng}E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1020 'tsam E^{NAN}

1021 gam E^{NAN}

1022 sgo E^{NAN}

|dbang dam¹⁰²⁵ rnal 'byor sgrub¹⁰²⁶ pa dang |
 |mchod dang phrin¹⁰²⁷ las dkyil 'khor dang |
 |spyod pa¹⁰²⁸ kun dang¹⁰²⁹ tshogs gnyis te|
 |spyod dang ma chags cha yis dbye|
 |[K^{sgn}8b] rgyu tshogs gdod mthar ldan par spyod|
 |bdag phyir rnal 'byor grogs spyod pa'ang¹⁰³⁰ |
 |spyod lam kun tu nyams mi bya|
 |de nyid gzhan phyir sems yod pas¹⁰³¹|
 |don du bya ba rnam gnyis rdzogs|

 |de de de yi nus pa can|
 |[K^{g9a}][K^{sg9a}]|rnam smin tshe yi lugs¹⁰³² phye nas|
 |lhag ma yod med lung bstan pa|
 |mthar lam dngos la sbyor bar byed|
 |phyag rgya gcig brtan 'pho¹⁰³³ ba yang |
 |khyung dang seng ge ji bzhin no¹⁰³⁴|
 |spros tshogs skabs nas¹⁰³⁵ smos ci dgos|
 |yid kyis lha yi lus brtan zhing |
 |phyag rgya'i¹⁰³⁶ sku nyid gsal gyur na|

1023 gsum E^{NAN}

1024 nyid E^{NAN}

1025 dom D^{ng}] dang K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1026 bsgrubs E^{NAN}] sgrubs K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1027 'phrin E^{NAN}

1028 sogs E^{NAN}

1029 la'ang E^{NAN}

1030 pa E^{NAN}

1031 pa E^{NAN}

1032 lugs D^{ng}

1033 'phos E^{NAN}

|lhag ma bzhag pa'i bar ma la|
 |de med phyag rgya chen por smin¹⁰³⁷|
 |las kyis lus sbubs rnal 'byor smin|
 |ma rig¹⁰³⁸ [D^{ng}6b] cha la ming btags pas¹⁰³⁹|
 |smin pa'i ye shes lus su grub|

 |rgya mig rgya sa lta bu'i tshe|
 |dgongs spyod 'gyur sa gsum 'drar¹⁰⁴⁰ spyod|
 |[E^{NAN}9a]|sngon bzhin tshogs kyis¹⁰⁴¹ dbang bsgyur rig
 |'dzin spyad¹⁰⁴² de nyid kyi grub pa|
 |gzhan phyir bskal par gnas mod kyang |
 |bdag phyir bcu drug tshun chad rdzogs|
 |de tshe bsam yas lhun grub la|
 |bsgom mthong stobs kyis 'jigs dang bral|
 |shes 'jug rgyu rkyen stobs kyis skye|
 |mthong nas gnyis med sku rdzogs pa|
 |mthar [K^{sgn}9a] phyin lhag ma'i lus smin te|
 |ye shes sku lus nyid du grub¹⁰⁴³|
 |gzhan phyir smin¹⁰⁴⁴ dang sprul pa'i lus|

1034 na D^{ng}E^{NAN}

1035 na E^{NAN}

1036 rgya E^{NAN}

1037 sbyin D^{ng}

1038 dag E^{NAN}

1039 pa E^{NAN}K^{sgn}

1040 'dra D^{ng}

1041 kyi D^{ng}K^{sg}K^{sg}K^{sgn}

1042 sbyar D^{ng}] sbyor E^{NAN}

1043 'grub E^{NAN}

1044 smon E^{NAN}

|thob nas tshogs chen sa la sbyor|

 |kha cig dbang bsgyur rigs nyid nas|
 |bcu [K^g9b][K^{sg}9b] drug rgyun gyi¹⁰⁴⁵ sku lnga rdzogs|
 |kha cig phyag rgya chen po nas|
 |bla med kun tu bzang por sbyor|
 |rin chen bzhi yi rgya mtsho la|
 |zho mar mer¹⁰⁴⁶ yi¹⁰⁴⁷ snang byed ltar|
 |kha cig rnam gsum bgrod pa'i mthar|
 |lhun grub rigs la¹⁰⁴⁸ rdzogs 'tshang¹⁰⁴⁹ rgya|¹⁰⁵⁰

 |shes rab dbang lnga rnal 'byor bdag|
 |gzhi gcig¹⁰⁵¹ slob pa¹⁰⁵² bsam yas pa|
 |rnal 'byor bogs la skabs ming brjod|
 |mi ldog mi g.yo mthar phyin pa'ang¹⁰⁵³ |
 |kun 'gro 'jigs bral yongs rdzogs dang |
 |rtsal rdzogs tha ma'i sbyor zhes bya|
 |bdag gzhan phyir na¹⁰⁵⁴ spyod pa lnga|
 |tshad med la sogs spyad pa rnams|
 |mi dgos¹⁰⁵⁵ mod kyang sgrib pa gsum|

1045 gnyis E^{NAN}

1046 mi K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1047 mi D^{ng}

1048 las E^{NAN}

1049 sangs E^{NAN}

1050 rgyas E^{NAN}

1051 cig E^{NAN}

1052 pai E^{NAN}

1053 pa E^{NAN}

1054 na'ang E^{NAN}

|gong [E^{NAN}9b] 'og cha yis¹⁰⁵⁶ dag pa'i phyir|
 |de nyid lam la khyad par 'gyur|

 |yul dang nus pa mtho dman yod|
 |de bzhin mngon shes spyod pa yis|
 cho 'phrul bzhi rnams 'drar thob mod|
 |rnam gsum yul dang zhing khams dang |
 |byin rlabs la sogs khyad par 'gyur|
 |bdag phyir yongs su [K^{sgn}9b] ma chags dang |
 |shin tu mi g.yo' rnal 'byor spyod|
 |ye shes rtsal gyi spyod pa yis|
 |sa rnams yongs su 'phar bar byed|
 |de yang dang po dang po dang |
 |skal mnyam gnyis pa'i {rig}¹⁰⁵⁷ mchog de|
 |brgyad pa'i sems dpar¹⁰⁵⁸ skal pa [D^{ng}7a] mnyam|
 [K^g10a][K^{sg}10a] |gsum pa bcu dang skal mnyam mod¹⁰⁵⁹|
 |dgongs spyod rgya mtshos khyad par 'phags|
 |lta ba'i sgrib pa¹⁰⁶⁰ phye phyir ro|
 |mthong bas ched du cho 'phrul ston|
 |rnal 'byor mi g.yo bzhin 'phrul¹⁰⁶¹ dang |
 |btsal¹⁰⁶² ba med par cho 'phrul mdzad|

1055 dgos D^{ng}E^{NAN}

1056 yig K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1057 rigs D^{ng}E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1058 par E^{NAN}

1059 mo K^{sgn}

1060 pa'i E^{NAN}

1061 sprul E^{NAN}

|de de de yis¹⁰⁶³ phye¹⁰⁶⁴ ba yin|
 |de mtha' lhun gyis grub pa des¹⁰⁶⁵|
 |drug pa'i rgyal tshab skyes bu mdzad|
 |gsang ba'i 'khor lo yang dag skor|
 |kun la mthun pa'i gzugs ston zhing |
 |mdzad pa bcu gnyis chos kyang ston|
 |so sor thar pa'i lam yang ston|
 |las rnam thams cad kun byas nas|
 |skye shi med pa'i g.yung drung sku¹⁰⁶⁶|
 |des na mthu can rnam gsum po|
 |sprul pa longs spyod drug pa la|
 |rim par zhal [E^{NAN}10a] mthong kan¹⁰⁶⁷ mod kyang |
 |gcig gi ston par gcig 'gyur bas|
 |rim pa bzhin du blar gyur te|
 |khyad par che ba de ltar yang |
 |skabs nas rdzogs sangs rgyas 'gyur ba¹⁰⁶⁸|
 |rgyu dang dgos dgongs dbang phye [K^{sgn}10a] ba|
 |khyad par med snang de 'dra la|
 |de phyir mnyam par lta ma yin|

 |de ltar rnam gsum gang zhig la|

1062 brtsal E^{NAN}

1063 yi D^{ng}

1064 phya D^{ng}

1065 de E^{NAN}K^{sgn}

1066 thob E^{NAN}

|thams cad mkhyen pa mngon byas pas¹⁰⁶⁹|
 |rang bzhin lhun grub dkyil 'khor du|
 |ye shes lha mor¹⁰⁷⁰ rol [**K^g10b**][**K^{sg}10b**] dbang gis|
 |seng ge lta bu'i gsung go bas|
 |dngos po rang byung ye shes myong |
 |rdo rje 'dzin pa'i spyi gzugs can|
 |sku gsung thugs lnga rdzogs pa des|
 |byin rlabs 'byin dang bstan pa'i phyir|
 |lnga gsum kun gyis brtan¹⁰⁷¹ par zad|
 |de phyir mun pa rnam gnyis {sel}¹⁰⁷²|
 |rnal 'byor ye shes stobs dang ni|
 |rim pa thob pa'i stobs bcom pas|
 |sa pa'i ye shes phyogs bral rgyas|
 |sku gsung thugs dang yon tan las|
 |ngo mtshar 'bras bus gzhan med de¹⁰⁷³|
 |thabs la brten pa'i shes rab nyid|
 |de lta bu yi dang du 'byung |
 |spyod yul bral bas ma chags phyir|
 |chu skyes can gyi sa yang thob|
 |phung sogs rang bzhin dkyil 'khor der¹⁰⁷⁴|

1067 nyan E^{NAN}

1068 ba'ang E^{NAN}

1069 pa'i E^{NAN}

1070 mo E^{NAN}K^{sgn}

1071 btsan E^{NAN}

1072 so D^{ng}E^{NAN}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1073 min te E^{NAN}

1074 de D^{ng}E^{NAN}

| [D^{ng}7b] mngon byas tshogs chen sa yangs¹⁰⁷⁵ rdzogs¹⁰⁷⁶|

|de nyid rang byung 'od gsal ba|

|mngon gyur¹⁰⁷⁷ [E^{NAN}10b] ye shes bla ma'o|

|kun gzhi ma bcos mngon byas phyir|

|de bzhin nyid du gshegs pa¹⁰⁷⁸ yang¹⁰⁷⁹ |

|drug 'gro brgyad [K^{sgn}10b] rgyud tha dad kyang |

|rigs¹⁰⁸⁰ rgyud min phyir shin tu gcig

|gcig po¹⁰⁸¹ ma 'dres yongs rdzogs pas|

|thams cad mkhyen nyid bsam yas kyang |

|rang rig de bzhin nyid du 'dus|

|de nyid thabs chen ma 'dres phyir|

|gcig dang du ma¹⁰⁸² bral bar [K^g11a][K^{sg}11a] gcig

|rang sems lhun grub mtha' bral de|

|gdod nas cha shas gnyis med pas|

|ma 'dres yongs rdzogs snying po de|

|mngon byas 'dra phyir kun kyang gcig¹⁰⁸³

|dus bzhi sems phyir rgyun bral ba'i|

|gzung 'dzin bral ba'i ye shes ni|

|de bzhin gshegs pa kun gyi gnas|

1075 zhes E^{NAN}] yang K^{sgn}

1076 brjod E^{NAN}

1077 byas E^{NAN}

1078 pa'ang E^{NAN}

1079 om. E^{NAN}

1080 rig D^{ng}

1081 bu E^{NAN}

1082 mar E^{NAN}

1083 cig E^{NAN}

|de phyir gnas der kun kyang gcig¹⁰⁸⁴
 |sems nyid gdod nas chos sku che|
 |de bzhin nyid kyi de nyid ni|
 |dpag med sangs rgyas pho brang phyir|
 |de ru kun bkod der gcig gnas|

 |'gro ba'i dus na rgyud drug nyid|
 |rigs¹⁰⁸⁵ rgyud mtshan dang gzugs ris med|
 |de yang de phyir rgyal ba'i rgyud|
 |gnas 'gyur cha gzung¹⁰⁸⁶ ga la yod|

 |'on te thams cad gcig zhe na|
 |gnas 'gyur rdzun zhing stong mthar 'gyur|
 |dogs pa skye bas¹⁰⁸⁷ kun gzhi'i¹⁰⁸⁸ sems|
 |gdod nas rang byung lhun rdzogs kyang |
 |mtshan nyid [E^{NAN}11a] mtha' bral bkol med pa'i¹⁰⁸⁹|
 |'khor ba mya ngan [K^{sgn}11a] 'das kun dngos|
 |smra bsam bral bas 'di 'drar med|

 |ye shes lnga'am rang byung gi
 |cha las btags¹⁰⁹⁰ kyi gzhan pa med|
 |de phyir gcig mthar lhung ba med|

1084 cig E^{NAN}

1085 rig D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1086 gzugs D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1087 ba K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1088 gzhi E^{NAN}

1089 pa D^{ng}

1090 brtags E^{NAN}

|rgyal ba de nyid rin chen ltar|
 |kun gyi spyi gzugs [K^g11b][K^{sg}11b] yin pa'i phyir|
 |rgyal tshab lnga la ris yod kyī|
 |yang dag rdzogs sangs rgyas la med|

 |rgyal ba kun kyang dus gsum chos|
 |bdag phyir kun gyi spyi gzugs can|
 |cha gnyis yod par gang gis rung |
 |yod na bdag nyid chen po rdzun|
 |'od¹⁰⁹¹ zer nyi ma'am shing me bzhin|
 |ngo bo gcig pa¹⁰⁹² ye shes rgyud|
 |so so yin na sprul pa [D^{ng}8a] yang¹⁰⁹³ |
 |gdul bya gcig la mthun par¹⁰⁹⁴ snang¹⁰⁹⁵ |
 |sems dpa' che dang khyad med 'gyur|
 |spyan drangs 'byon dang mi 'byon¹⁰⁹⁶ 'byung |
 |gzhi don lung rigs¹⁰⁹⁷ kun dang 'gal|
 |thugs rjes 'brel ba'i¹⁰⁹⁸ rigs chad 'gyur|
 |de phyir shing gi¹⁰⁹⁹ me dpung ltar¹¹⁰⁰|
 |ye shes ston pas¹¹⁰¹ bkri drangs phyir|

1091 nyi E^{NAN}

1092 la D^{ng}

1093 sprul pa'ang E^{NAN}

1094 om. E^{NAN}

1095 snang ba E^{NAN}

1096 byon E^{NAN}

1097 rig D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

1098 bas E^{NAN}

1099 om. E^{NAN}

1100 lta bur E^{NAN}

1101 pa D^{ng}K^gK^{sg}K^{sgn}

|rung gis yang dag nges pa med¹¹⁰²|
 |de bas sangs rgyas yang sangs rgyas|

 |log par rtogs¹¹⁰³ brtags nam dag cing |
 |ye shes dbyings las mi gzhan phyir|
 |thugs rje chen pos 'brel bas na¹¹⁰⁴|
 |'gro drug dus gnas ma lus snang |
 |mtho dman kun gyi gzugs snang yang |
 |bla med [E^{NAN}11b] byang chub skur¹¹⁰⁵ snang ba|
 |me long lta bu'i tshul bzhin du|
 |sna tshogs kha dog dbyibs su snang |
 |chos nam ma lus thams cad kun|
 |byang chub snying po'i [K^g12a][K^{sg}12a] ngang nyid du|
 |mkha' dang 'ja' lta ma 'dres gcig
 |de phyir yul med thams cad mkhyen|
 |dpag bsam shing dang rin chen lta|
 |rtog pa med par re ba skong |
 |nyi zla chu dang gzugs brnyan lta|
 |'gro 'ong med par kun la snang |
 |sku gsung thugs kyi bye brag chos|
 |ji lta 'tshams pa 'grol bar mdzad¹¹⁰⁶|
 |thugs rjes 'gro ba'i sems la son|

¹¹⁰² nges par min E^{NAN}

¹¹⁰³ rtog E^{NAN}

¹¹⁰⁴ 'bral ba yis E^{NAN}

¹¹⁰⁵ sku E^{NAN}

|dus gnas¹¹⁰⁷ kun la snyoms par zhugs|

|'gro ba lam log lam stor¹¹⁰⁸ zhing |

|dbang po lnga bral gcong rnying¹¹⁰⁹ gis|

|zin phyir lam mchog sman chen 'di|

|bsdus pas¹¹¹⁰ mtha' yas rgyal bar shog

|sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i lam rnam par bshad pa chung ngu zhes bya ba slob dpon sangs rgyas

gsang bas mdzad pa rdzogs so|| ||

[D^{ng}8a][E^{NAN}11b][K^g12a][K^{sg}12a][K^{sgn}11b]

1106 byed E^{NAN}

1107 gsum E^{NAN}

1108 gtor E^{NAN}

1109 snying E^{NAN}

1110 pa E^{NAN}

Translation

[D^{ng}1b]

Homage to the Tathāgata Vajra Mind!¹¹¹¹

I shall explain the three characteristics [of the path]¹¹¹²

According to the supreme *Māyājāla Tantra*

So that those fortunate ones whose five faculties are unparalleled¹¹¹³

May have insight into and familiarize themselves with the five sublime sense objects.¹¹¹⁴

I will set forth here the basis of the various branches [of the path]

For those who possess the power that conjoins the characteristics of knowledge and engagement,

Who possess the cause and condition for bringing forth the result,

Who possess ability and might, and who belong to the lineage of the Tathāgatas.

[First] I shall speak of the cause, the yoga to be practiced.

All that appears as objects to the sense faculties,

Do not exist as objects;

It is the storehouse consciousness itself that

¹¹¹¹ AGGD, f. 2a, indicates that this refers to Vajrasattva (*rdo je sems dpa'*), who can substitute for Akṣobhya as the Tathāgata King of Consciousness, the central deity of the peaceful mandala of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*.

¹¹¹² According to AGGD, f. 3a1, these are the 1) knowledge—the cause (*rgyu shes pa*), 2) engagement—the condition (*rkyen 'jug pa*), and 3) culmination—the result (*'bras bu mthar phyin pa*). As Garson notes on 408, the *locus classicus* of these is the famed commentary attributed to Padmasambhava, *Garland of Views—An Oral Instruction* (*Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*): *de la mtshan nyid gsum gyis don mthar phyin par 'gyur te| rtogs pa nam pa bzhi'i tshul rig pa ni shes pa'i mtshan nyid do| yang nas yang du goms par byed pa ni 'jug pa'i mtshan nyid do*. See Karmay 2007, 167. Cf. the following verses from chapter 12 of *Guhyagarbhatattvaviniścaya*, D 832, f.123a6-7: *|shes 'jug mtshan nyid 'byor ba'i gzugs||'bras bu smin byed rgyu dang rkyen||nus mthu can du gang gyur pa||rig 'dzin rgyal ba'i zhing du grags|*.

¹¹¹³ AGGD, f. 2b5, notes that such a person is one whose faculties are sharp, who, entering the supreme path, is free of defilements of the five sense, and is a worthy student.

Appears as those various things.¹¹¹⁵

The basis of analysis appropriate to the beginner

Are these three: investigating the origin,

The stages of development, and ascertainment.

Initially, you should rely on the topics of the supreme initiation

That are consistent with the texts, the cause of individual realizations.

By analyzing them, you create the cause [of realization]. When you contemplate them
conceptually,

During [the stage of] conceptualizing [the path], you should emphasize the well-known
topics of the texts:

The axioms [of the] five previous occurrences,¹¹¹⁶ the [types of] followers, and so on,¹¹¹⁷ and

The concordant and discordant reasonings from the texts.¹¹¹⁸

Hence, regarding the particular and general characteristics:

¹¹¹⁴ The five sense objects are forms (*gzugs*), sounds (*gra*), odors (*dri*), tastes (*ro*), and textures (*reg*). The five sense faculties (*dbang [po]*, *indriya*) are the faculties or powers of the eye (*mig*), ear (*rma ba*), nose (*sna*), tongue (*lce*), and body (*lus*). For a detailed explanation of these, see Mipham's *Gateway to Knowledge*, 17-21.

¹¹¹⁵ These same four lines are found in chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, CT 43-967: *[dbang po yul dang snang ba kun|yul rnams yod pa ma yin te||kun gzhi rnam par shes pa nyid||dngos po sna tshogs par snang bas]*.

¹¹¹⁶ One these, see Garson, 519. These are explored in the *Key to the Precious Treasury* of Jikmé Tenpé Nyima, who cites *An Orderly Arrangement of the Path* as his source. They are explained as 1) the axioms of the five actualities of the previous occurrences (*sngon byung dngos lnga'i gtan tshigs*), 2) the axioms of the five modes of followers (*rje 'jug tshul lnga'i gtan tshigs*), and 3) the axioms of the five phrases (*tshigs lnga'i gtan tshigs*). See the note *infra*.

¹¹¹⁷ *Ibid*. The three axioms are explained all together as ways understanding reality has been taught by the five enlightened bodies of the teacher to the five retinues of followers through five aspects of speech: 1) the *dharmakāya* communicating by means of the very fact of non-production itself to a retinue called Ocean of Gnosis, 2) the *sambhogakāya* communicating through symbols to a retinue called Ocean of Results, 3) the *nirmāṇakāya* communicating verbally to a retinue called Ocean of Belief, 4) the *vajrakāya* using vajra communication with a retinue called Undifferentiated Vajra, and 5) *kāya* of manifest awakening which communicates by means of the blessings of primordial awareness to a retinue called Ocean of Conquerers.

¹¹¹⁸ This refers to a complex aspect of discerning the correct view in *mahāyoga* through understanding the nature of both the logically consistent words and meanings found with the scriptures of the different vehicles as well as those words and meanings which seem to be contradictory. This matter explored at length and in great detail in Jikmé Tenpé Nyima's *Key to the Precious Treasury*. See Garson 525-544.

[D^{ng}2a] The spiritual friend is the dominant condition. The immediate condition
Is clear faith and the continuum of mental predispositions [that connect you to the spiritual
friend].

When the supreme one who possesses the eye of wisdom says,

“Your own awareness is primordially similar to the five wisdoms,”¹¹¹⁹ etc.

It acts as the cooperative condition [for realization].

The one who seeks [realization] through those means

Like a wanderer, make prayers.

By means of these, when all objects *qua* apprehended and the apprehender are investigated

With an attitude that is impartial regarding their existence and nonexistence,

You will not succumb to the three faults,¹¹²⁰

Search for these without [simply] rejecting them.

However, since the meaning of complete duality and non-duality

Is both everything and nothing,

The one who is free of positions is the inconceivable lord of [all] positions.

The Victors proclaimed in no uncertain terms

That the goal of omniscience is extracted by the five [faculties],¹¹²¹

And because the mind and phenoma are inseparable from beginningless time,

The eight or six consciousnesses¹¹²² are supreme wisdom.

¹¹¹⁹ On f. 4b, AGGD relates that this refers to the innate inseparability of the five sense faculties, their object and their corresponding consciousness from the enlightened body and gnosis.

¹¹²⁰ AGGD, f. 5a, that these are exaggeration, denigration, and vagueness (*sgro skur lung ma bstan*).

¹¹²¹ On f. 5a, AGGD notes that the five refer to the five faculties (*dbang po lnga*).

¹¹²² These refer to different enumerations of the types of consciousness. The six consciousness are the eye consciousness (*mig gi rnam shes*), the ear consciousness (*rna ba'i rnam she*), the nose consciousness (*sna'i rnam shes*), the tongue consciousness (*lce'i rnam shes*), the body consciousness (*lus kyi rnam she*), and the mind consciousness (*yi kyi rnam shes*). The eight consciousness enumeration add two more consciousness to these which are posited by the Yogacāra philosophical system: the deluded mind consciousness (*nyon yid kyi*

When one who investigates [in such a way], is distracted, makes prayers, or engages [with phenomena]

Since [they nevertheless understand that the faculties and their objects] are essentially connected from the beginning,

They are definitively suitable to enter into this [*mahāyoga* path].

There are others who must surely train, and who enter into this [understanding]

From the common paths by means of conditions and causes.

Some traverse through the eight kinds of mind.¹¹²³

They encounter [the truth] by training in the ordinary [**D^{ns}2b**] and supreme paths

For as many aeons as there are atoms in the buddhafield.

When they have perfected the stages of the common [paths],

They are inspired in accordance with the blessings they receive

From the fifteen—the perfect bodies, speech, and minds [of the five buddhas],¹¹²⁴

And they will therefore certainly reach the stage of the wheel.¹¹²⁵

rnam shes), and the storehouse consciousness (*kun gzhi'i rnam she*), known in Sanskrit as the *ālāyavijñāna*. See CN, 257.

¹¹²³ On f. 6a, AGGD explains that these are 1) the ordinary mind of a being who is merely aware of phenomena, which I like a seed, 2) the mind of someone who has been generous to their parents, which is like a shoot, 3) the mind of someone who is generous to others, which is like a stem, 4) the mind of one who has given alms to a suitable recipient, which is like a leaf, 5) the mind of one who makes offering to the guru, which is like a flower, 6), the mind of one who gives immense joy to other, which is like a fruit, 7) the mind of one who, for the sake of being reborn in heaven, engages in moral conduct, which becomes like nourishment, and 8), the mind of one who makes offerings to the worldly deities such as Indra and Brahmā, which attains power.

¹¹²⁴ According to AGGD, f. 6b, these refer to the five enlightened bodies (*sku lnga*), five kinds of enlightened speech (*gsung lnga*), and the five types of enlightened mind. Jikmé Tenpé Nyima relates that the five enlightened bodies are *dharmakāya*, *saṃbhogakāya*, *nirmāṇakāya*, *vajrakāya* (*rdo rje'i sku*), and the *kāya* of manifest awakening (*mngon byang gi sku*). The five kinds of enlightened speech (*gsung lnga*) are the teaching of the meaning of birthlessness (*skyes med don gi gsung*), the teaching of the intention through symbol (*dgongs pa brda'i gsung*), the verbal teaching of words (*brjod pa tshig gi gsung*), the vajra teaching of inseparability (*dbyer med rdo rje'i gsung*), and the teaching of manifest awakening (*mngon byang gi gsung*). The five kinds of enlightened mind (*thugs lnga*) are the mind of great non-cenptuality (*mi rtog chen po'i thugs*), the mind of great equality (*mnym pa chen po'i thugs*), the mind for liberating beings (*'gro ba grol ba'i thugs*), the unwavering vajra mind (*mi phye rdo rje'i thugs*), and the manifest awakening mind (*mngon byang gi thugs*). These will be described in brief in the next several lines of the text.

In their last life they are directly taught by the five types of enlightened speech.¹¹²⁶

This is called “the traditional path.”¹¹²⁷

When [other] adepts seek knowledge,

Because they have different dispositions,

They are established [in realization], each according to their predispositions,

By the teachings of the five enlightened bodies of the Tathāgatas¹¹²⁸

Having practiced for three eons,

They obtain endurance in regard to what they hear about the secret profound [path],

And are established [in realization] through the inexpressible truth

In accordance with the teachings of the *dharmakāya*.

They are established [in realization] by enlightened mind and symbols

In accordance with the teachings of the *sambhogakāya*.

They are summoned by spoken words

In accordance with the teachings of the *nirmāṇakāya*.

They are established [in realization] by a surge of awareness

¹¹²⁵ AGGD, f. 6b, equates the “level of the wheel” (*’khor lo’i sa*) with the thirteenth bodhisattva *bhūmi* or level (*bcu gsum pa*), which is buddhahood itself. The most common enumeration of bodhisattva *bhūmis* or levels (*byang chub sems dpa’i sa*) is ten, as articulated in the *Daśabhūmika Sutra*. Here, the author of the *Brief Explanation of the Paths* seem to be employing a thirteen level enumeration; he refers to the twelfth stage further on in the text. The origins of the thirteen level system remains unclear to me. In any case, these stages are: 1) Perfect Joy (*rab tu dga’ ba*), 2) Stainless (*dri ma med pa*), 3) Illuminating (*’od byed pa*), 4) Radiant (*’od ’phro can*), 5) Difficult to Overcome (*shin tu sbyang dka’ ba*), 6) Becoming Manifest (*mngon du gyur ba*), 7) Gone Afar (*ring du song ba*), 8) Immovable (*mi g.yo ba*), 9) Good Intelligence (*legs pa’i blo gros*), 10) Cloud of Dharma (*chos kyi sprin*), 11) Universal Radiance (*kun tu ’od*), 12) Lotus of Non-Attachment (*ma chags padma can*), 13) Vajra Holder (*rdo rje ’dzin*). For one explanation of these, see Tsele Natsok Rangdrol, *Heart Lamp: Lamp of Mahamudra and Heart of the Matter*, Erik Pema Kunsang trans. (Kathmandu: Rngjung Yeshe Publications, 2009), 63-69.

¹¹²⁶ See the note *supra* regarding the five kinds of enlightened speech (*gsung lnga*).

¹¹²⁷ Presumably, this is the path of someone who cannot enter the tantra directly but must first practice the exoteric path first over countless eons.

¹¹²⁸ These are the five enlightened bodies mentioned in the note above: *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *nirmāṇakāya*, *vajrakāya*, and *kāya* of manifest awakening. Buddhagupta will explain the teachings of each of these in the next few lines.

As per the teachings of the [*kāya* of] manifest awakening.

They are established [in enlightenment] through the truth of nonduality, the freedom from
extremes,

As per the teachings of the *vajrakāya*

Some are established [in realization] simply by seeing and hearing the world of appearances,

As per the teachings of the *svabhavikakāya*.

[Some] arrive [at the non-duality of bliss and emptiness] through the method of conduct,

As per the teachings of the *guhyakāya*.

Some, achieve certainty in their respective minds

And totally destroy the objects they analyze

In the manner of teachings that were [given to] the four[fold assembly] in the past,¹¹²⁹

In which the definitive words of the ultimate truth are ascertained

Through the syllogism suitable¹¹³⁰ to each person's individual condition,

Through the syllogisms that apply to the concealed intentions,

And through the syllogisms that descend from the provisional meaning,

Through [the certainty] they achieve.

Those become syllogisms due to their karma.

Hence, gaining complete mastery of the syllogisms,

They are no longer syllogisms, and cease completely.

Now, there are words that, under their own power, can and cannot

¹¹²⁹ AGGD, f. 8b, indicates that the four (*bzhi*) refers to the fourfold assembly (*'khor bzhi*). These are *bhikṣus* (*gde slong*) or fully ordained men, *bhikṣuṅīs* (*dgle long ma*) or fully ordained women, *upāsakas* (*dge bsnyen*) or laymen, and *upāsikās* (*dge bnyen ma*) laywomen. See CN 68.

¹¹³⁰ I follow the D^{ng} and E^{NAN} reading of *'tshams pa'i*, which accords with AGGD's commentary. The NKM recensions read *mtshan ma'i*.

establish their object [i.e., the intended meaning of the words].

The latter reveal [their meaning] without [the object] being established.

Since these can cause one to see and find that [meaning], they are necessary.

When investigating [reality], they become the object of individual understanding.

Since they are necessary at that time, they are ascertained in that way. [D^g3a]

The former [is divided into] common and superior.

The common are the four,¹¹³¹ etc., which are widely known.

The uncommon [or superior] are of two kinds:

Those in which the words establish the meaning in harmony,

And syllogisms in which the meaning is established

Through disharmonious words.

The first of these establishes nomenclature [or conventions]:

It establishes [conventions like] suchness, purity, equality, and realization,¹¹³²

¹¹³¹ AGGD, f. 9b, states that this refers to four renowned arguments from the Madhyārika texts (*dbu mail gzhung las grags pa'i gan tshig*). The explanation of these can be quite complex and detailed, so here I rely on a summary from Sonam Thakchoe. The first that AGGD mentions is the neither-one-nor-many (*gcig du bra*). Thakchoe relates that this “shows that things are produced from the associations of multiple causes and conditions” and that, therefore “things do not have any intrinsic reality on their own. Next is the “diamond slivers” (*rdo rje gzebs ma*) argument, which “shows that things are empty of intrinsic reality because things are analytically not found to arise—neither from themselves, nor from another nor both causelessly.” The argument refuting the arising of existence and non existence (*yod med skye 'gog*) “shows that all things are empty of intrinsic reality because their intrinsic reality is not found to arise either from things that exist or from things that do not exist.” Finally, there are the arguments refuting the four modes of arising and cessation (*mu bzhi skye 'gog*), which “show that things are empty of intrinsic reality for the reason that such reality is neither found analytically in existence (or being) nor in nonexistence (or nonbeing) nor both existence-nonexistence (being-nonbeing) nor neither existence nor nonexistence (neither being nor nonbeing)” See Sonam Thakchoe, “The Theory of Two Truths in India,” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, October 20, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/twotruths-india/>.

¹¹³² This is a reference to the reference to the four axioms of *mahāyoga*, each of which are broken down into different parts. These are explained succinctly in NSTB 275-276. The first, “suchness” (*de bzhin nyid*) refers to the axiom of great identity (*bdag nyid chen po*), through which understand that things are “established as primordially abiding in the identity of a single, great, naturally present pristine cognition.” The second, purity, refers to the three axioms of purity (*dag pa gsum*), which are the inherent purity of the outer world (*snog dag pa*), its contents, i.e., living beings (*bcud dag pa*), and mental continuum with all of its aspects (*rgyud rnam*

The truth, the lack of the two selves, etc.

The second of these, [are the statements] like “this is nothing at all,”

Or “this is something,” and “this is proven” or “not proven,” etc.

In such [statements], the intended object is nothing at all.

Syllogisms that use “because”—because of this x is so,

Because of this x is not so, because of this x is not proven—etc.

By nature rely on a variety [of other things].

Hence it is certain that they can become syllogisms,

And for this reason, by relying on them in this context,

One can destroy their object and the cognition [of the object],

One can destroy the appearances of samsara and nirvana.

[To understand] that when x is impossible, y is impossible;

That because x is not proven it precludes y,

That neither appearances, nor self-projections, nor the great method

Exists as they appear—this is true wisdom.

In the middle [stage], one realizes the mind and is liberated.

There are the five,¹¹³³ the two [sets of] four,¹¹³⁴ etc., increasing from the beginning [to the end].

dag pa). The third, sameness, refer to the four types of equality (*mnyam pa bzhi*), which are the equalities of emptiness (*stong pa*), of the unity of appearance and emptiness (*snang stong zung 'jug*), of freedom from conceptual elaborations (*spros bral*), and of equality itself (*mnyam nyid*). The fourth, realization, refers to the four types of realization (*rtogs pa bzhi*), which are related to deity yoga: the single cause (*rgyu gcig pa*), the way of seed syllables (*yig 'bru'i tshul*), blessing (*byin gyis rlabs*), and direction perception (*mngon gsum*). See NSTB 119, 124, 133, 134, of vol. 2 and 275-275 of vol. 1 .

¹¹³³ According to AGGD, f. 11b, this refers to the five minds (*sems nyid*). These are the five states of mind of individual who are progressing along the *mahāyoga* path. These are the: 1) rising mind (*g.yo ldang gi sems*), which is the mind that enters the path, 2) aspiring mind (*smon pa'i sems*), which is the aspiration to progress to higher levels, 3) engaging mind (*'jug sems*), which is the actualy practice that results in higher levels, 4)

The increasing number of the paths is understood like this.

From one moment to the next [in each stage], there should be no doubt.

At the end of those, at the end of the fourth,¹¹³⁵ when you are confident,

When the *dharmadhātu* and awareness become one,

And in reality [one becomes a member of] the vajra family,

Intrinsic awareness that is free from [the distinctions of] subject and object

Arises on its own without without objectifying anything.

Bodhicitta arises, and because everything

Becomes difficult to analyze and is exceedingly profound,

There [actually] is no observation, no observing, nothing to observe.

What is that [awakening] mind itself like?

That enlightenment is mind;

Since mind and enlightenment are now not two,

It is all beings without exception

And all phenomena in the three times.¹¹³⁶

abiding mind (*gnas pa'i sems*), which abodes on the levels of the path, and 5) final mind (*mthar phyin pa'i sems*), which has achieved the desired goal. On these, see Garson, 400.

¹¹³⁴ AGGD, f. 11b notes that this refers to two sets of four (*bzhi tshan gnyis*). The first set is the fours are the four kinds of realization (*rtogs pa bzhi*) of *mahāyoga*: 1) the sole cause (*rgyu gcig*), which refers to the inseparability of samsara and nirvana, 2) the syllables (*yig 'bru'i tshul*) which refers to meditation on the seed syllables, 3) blessings (*byin rlabs*), which are the result of the inseparability of appearance from the mandala, and 4) direct perception (*mgon sum*) of self-luminous primordial wisdom. The second set of four consists of emptiness (*stong pa nyid*), signlessness (*mtshan ma med pa*), wishlessness (*smon pa med pa*), and clear light (*'od gsal ba*). The first three are known as the three doors to liberation (*rnam thar sgo gsum*) and are common to all Buddhist traditions. The fourth is unique to tantra. Taken together, these are referred to as the four liberations (*thar pa bzhi*). See Garson 290.

¹¹³⁵ This refers to the four liberations mentioned above.

¹¹³⁶ This passage is similar in term of wording and subject matter to one found in chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. See CT 43-983: [byang chub sems kyi de bzhin nyid||shin tu mi dmigs brtag dka' ba||yangs la rgya che gting zab pas||shes rab zab pas rtogs 'gyur te||gang nas ma 'ongs gar mi 'gro||'gro dang 'ong bar bya ba min||shin tu rtag dka' mi dmigs pas||mtha' dang dbus kyang rtag tu med||gzung 'dzin bral ba'i rang rig nyid||dmigs med tshul du der snang ngo ||dbyings dang dbyings kyi ye shes kyang ||rang rig kho na tsam du zad].

All phenomena without exception,
Are included within mind and enlightenment itself.
Spontaneous presence, profound and vast,
Is the primordial purity of the outer and inner, the environment and its inhabitants [D^{ng}3b].
Even this purity and realization are themselves the *dharmadhātu*.

It is the vajra equality.

What is called “*bodhicitta*”

Does not come from or go anywhere.

It is only mere non-conceptual intrinsic awareness,

And dwells within the mind of buddhas and sentient beings.

What is the meaning of equality?

Equality is, in its very essence, nothing.

Both equality and conceptualization do not exist.

Knowing that everything is spontaneous presence,

And that they are illusory like reflected images,

Both of these subsumed within intrinsic awareness itself.

All phenomena without exception

Are intrinsically pure from the beginning.

They are not created by anyone and are self-luminous.

The object of the eye of gnosis

Which is like the Lotus Non-attachment¹¹³⁷ [stage],

Shares nothing in common with all the other [levels].

It is the object of the Tathāgatas;

It can be realized by sentient beings who possess the highest mental power.

All without exception is a single brilliance.

There is neither seeing nor thing seen.

By raising up the lamp of gnosis,

You see all the worlds of the ten directions.

Everything without exceptions gives rise to meaning.

These [meanings] are no different from what is signified by words.

[But] the sound itself is not of the nature of meaning,

Even if the meaning is nothing other than the sound.

Expressions that use sounds and words,

Are not the essence of the ultimate meaning.

Understand deeply using a mind

That does not rely on names, sounds, and words.

The essence of supreme accomplishment,

Is to first understand its purpose and not cast off the end[less samsara]

[But rather,] like [holding] the [jewel of the] *makara* or a *mudrā*,¹¹³⁸

One is reborn [many] times, yet one does not become defiled.

As the merchant who understands his path and destination,

It is necessary to understand, the classifications of accomplishment, the four *vidyādhara*

[levels].¹¹³⁹

¹¹³⁷ This is the twelfth of the thirteen bodhisattva levels listed in the note *supra*.

¹¹³⁸ On f. 14b, AGGD relates that these are compared to the process attaining enlightenment. AGGD states that the text is referring to the wishfilling jewel, which is said to dwell in the maw of the *makara* or water monster, or a consort, neither of which one would readily abandon. Just so, one does not cast off samsara but rather, in the manner of bodhisattva, remains within it.

¹¹³⁹ As I noted in chapter five, in the Nyingma tradition, the four *vidyādhara* levels (*rig 'dzin rnam pa bzhi*) are stage of spiritual development achieved through the practice of tantra. There are four *vidyādhara* levels in

First, wisdom and the three aspirations,¹¹⁴⁰

In the middle, the cause, relationship and the two results¹¹⁴¹

The stages of wisdom that are joined without obstacles,

And the final three: the omnipresent, the immovable [*samādhi*], and

The final stage of wisdom.

By not seeing your own nature, not connecting it to the mental continuum,

And looking for it elsewhere, deluded beings

Do not learn even when you teach them, and even if you point it out to them, they do not see

it.

Hence, by looking for it both within themselves and others, they will not attain

enlightenment.

Immovable [*samādhi*], arrangement [of the mandala], protection [of *samayās*], enjoyment,

Actions [related to practice] which bring the goal to fruition, stages [of offerings],

[accompliment of abilities] sought,

Binding [the *mudrās*], reciting [mantras], *samādhi*, mandala,

Samayas, activities, practices,

[Outer, inner and secret] offering, [the fifteen] initiations,¹¹⁴² accomplishment [of siddhis],

Mudrās, and mantric views—

total: 1) maturity (*rnams smin*), 2) power over life (*tshe dbang*), 3) *mahāmudrā* or great seal (*phyag chen*), and 4) spontaneous presence (*lhun grub*). The last of these are equated with attaining enlightenment.

¹¹⁴⁰ AGGD states on f. 15a that these are the three stages of discerning the view mentioned at the beginning of the text: investigation, stages of development, and ascertainment.

¹¹⁴¹ On f. 15b, AGGD relates that this refers to two of the five yogas associated with *mahāyoga*, the yoga of the single *mudrā* (*phyag rgya gcig pa 'i rnal 'byor*) and the yoga of the elaborate *mudrā* (*phyag rgya spros bcas kyi rnal 'byor*). The remaining three are the yoga of great emptiness (*stong pa chen po 'i rnal 'byor*), the yoga of great compassion (*snying rje chen po 'i rnal 'byor*), which are the first two, and the yoga of the accomplishment of the clustered assembly (*tshom bu tshogs sgrub gyi rnal 'byor*), which is the final one.

¹¹⁴² These are the fifteen initiation of *mahāyoga* mentioned above.

These should not be considered mere words, but rather understood [D^{ng}4a] and
differentiated;

Verily, in this path, one must understand the distinctions [between these].¹¹⁴³

The nature of the great *bindu*,¹¹⁴⁴

In a single moment one perfects the three aspects of meditation.¹¹⁴⁵

Since suchness is unfabricated and immovable,

It is the *dhātu* of suchness.

Since suchness is the all-illuminating gnosis,

It is the all-illuminating state.

Since it is the perfection of all phenomena of the result,

It possesses the stages of the cause.

Intrinsic awareness and enlightenment is the mandala;

[because] all are gathered within it.

The gnosis that is free [from distinguishing between] subject and object,

Is the state of all the Tathāgatas.

The celestial palace and the mandala,

And even the abundant radiation and absorption of the assembly of fierce [deities]

Are the great magical display of the mind.¹¹⁴⁶

¹¹⁴³ My interpretations of these are based largely on AGGD, f.15b-16a., who notes that these term summarize the meaning of tantra.

¹¹⁴⁴ According AGGD, f. 16a, the great *bindu* (*thig le chen po*) or sphere refers to the *mahāyoga* concept of equality (*mnyam nyid*). Takahashi 2009, 344-345, notes that equality is a radically nondual view that “refused to acknowledge dualities even conventionally. The great *bindu* it thus the one ontological reality that contains everything else within it, which is why this system can perhaps be considered a kind of monism.

¹¹⁴⁵ This line is nearly identical to one found in in chapter four of the *Gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i bla ma chen po*, D 837, f. 39b3: [bsgom pa rnam gsum dus gcig rdzogs]. While this particular line might simply be a fluke, the following about the *thig le chen po* or “great sphere,” have close affinity with passages from chapter 11 of this tantra. This tantra is the same as the *Unsurpassed Māyājāla* (*Sgyu 'phrul bla*

The *samayas* and that which is called *samaya*¹¹⁴⁷

Do not exist separately;

One's own view is the *samaya*.

The thirteen vows¹¹⁴⁸ and

The limitless general *samayas*

Are illuminated in the state of the great *bindu*.¹¹⁴⁹

Whoever, by means of non-dual action,

Acts unobstructed in all [things],

For them, the four actions¹¹⁵⁰ and even [spontaneously accomplishing them as] singular
action,

Are illuminated in the state of the great *bindu*.¹¹⁵¹

Those who destroy attachment to things, who have the power collect them in one nature,

ma) mentioned in chapter three of this dissections and is consistently listed as one of the eight Māyājāla tantras.

¹¹⁴⁶ This passage is found verbatim in chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. See CT 43-976: |gzhal yas khang dang dkyil 'khor dang ||khro tshogs 'du 'phro mang po yang ||sems kyi cho 'phrul chen po yin|. A similar passage is found in D 837, f. f. 57a3: |gzhal yas khang dang rgyan rnams dang ||cho 'phrul byang chub sems su thim||khro tshogs bdud 'dul rol pa yang ||byang chub sems su nges pa yin|. The middle two lines of this passage from D 837 are quoted in reverse order by Nupchen Sangyé Yeshé in *Lamp for Eye in Contemplation* on p.203.1 and 3: |sgyu 'phrul bla ma las kyang | [...] |khro tshogs 'du 'phro mang po yang ||cho 'phrul byang chub sems su thim|. Nupchen's first line is closer the line found here in the *Brief Explanation of the Path* and in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*.

¹¹⁴⁷ These refer, respectively, to the root *samayas* and the branch *samayas*. See AGGD, f. 17a

¹¹⁴⁸ AGGD, f. 17a, does not enumerate these thirteen. He simply states that they are a condensation of the root vows of enlightened body, speech and mind. This may refer to the thirteen *samayas* (*dam tshig bcu gsum*) of the yoga tantras: not to abandon the three jewels (*dkon mchog gsum*), bodhicitta (*byang chub sems*), the *mudrās* (*phyag rgya*), the vajra and bell (*rdo rje dril bu*), the deity and the guru (*lha dang bla ma*); not to sleep on a throne (*khri la mi nyal ba*); abstaining from meat (*sha mi za*), beer (*chang mi btung*), garlic (*sgog pa*), and radished (*la phug bza' mi bya*); not drinking water in a place inhabited by *samaya* breakers (*lung gcig chu la mi btung*); and not to converse with *samaya* breakers (*nyams dang kha mi bsre ba bsrung*). See NSTB vol. 2, 186-171.

¹¹⁴⁹ The preceding three lines are identical to ones found in chapter eleven of D 837, f. 57a2: |sdom pa nram pa bcu gsum dang ||spyi yi dam tshig mtha' yas pa||thig le chen po'i ngang du gsal|.

¹¹⁵⁰ The four actions are the four tantric actions of pacifying (zhi), increasing (rgyas), overpowering (dbang), and subjugating (drag). See AGGD, f. 17a.

¹¹⁵¹ The preceding two lines are also found in chapter eleven of D 837 with slight variation on f. 57a5: |bzhi yi las dang gcig po yang ||thig le sems kyi ngang du gsal|.

Increases the seven [riches]¹¹⁵² and understands that the pacification of suffering is [free of] duality.¹¹⁵³

Even the two types of activities,

Are [performed] within in the state of the great *bindu*.¹¹⁵⁴

Hence, performing actions while resting nowhere,

The agent and the action do not exist.¹¹⁵⁵

The offering ornaments, all of the enjoyments,

Both the object and the agent, and even the action itself,

Are subsumed within the great magical illusion of

The great mind of enlightened intrinsic awareness.

Within the gnosis of great beings

The five [D^{ng}4b] initiations¹¹⁵⁶ are perfected in single moment without having to be sought.¹¹⁵⁷

¹¹⁵² See AGGD, f. 17a-b. Cabezón notes that the seven riches are seven qualities of the ultimate truth (*don dam skor bdun*). See Cabezón 2013, 25. Garson relates that these are: superior indifferntiable truth (*lhag pa bden par dbyer med*), the *dharmadhātu* (*chos kyi dbyings*), gnosis (*ye shes*), enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities (*sku, gsung, thugs, yon tan, phrin las*). These are referenced again further along in this present text.

¹¹⁵³ This is AGGD's interpretation of this verse. See f. 17b.

¹¹⁵⁴ These two lines are similar to D 837, f. 57a1: |*spyod pa rnam pa nyid kyi yang ||thig le chen po'i lam du nges*|.

¹¹⁵⁵ This entire passage regarding the “state of the great *bindu*,” which seems to be related to passages from chapter eleven of the *Unsurpassed Māyājāla*, is strikingly similar to a passage from chapter two of an *Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. See CT 43-976: |*dam tshig dam tshig ces bya ba||rang gi lta ba dam tshig yin||sdom pa rnam pa bcu gsum dang ||spyi'i dam tshig mtha' yas pa||thig le chen po ngang du gsal||ji ltar spyad kyang sdom mi 'da' ||spyod pa rnam pa gnyis po yang ||thig le chen po 'i ngang du nges||ci la yang mi gnas kun la spyod||spyod pa byed dang spyod med mthong ||bya byed med pa'i tshul gyis su||kun la thogs pa med par spyad||bzhi'i las dang cig po'ang ||thig le chen po'i ngang du gsal*|.

¹¹⁵⁶ ADDED, f. 17b, states that these are the five initiations of the three groups of initiations of benefit, ability, and profundity (*phan nus zab gsum gyi dbang lnga*). These initiations are described in the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. As I noted in the translation of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, the five inner initiations of ability (*nang nus dbang lnga*) are the initiation of the hearer (*nyan pa'i dbang*), the initiation of the meditator (*bsgom pa'i dbang*), the initiation of enlightened activity (*phrin las kyi dbang*), the initiation of the expounder (*'chad pa'i dbang*), and the initiation of the vajra king (*rdo rje rgyal po'i dbang*).

¹¹⁵⁷ Once again, similar lines are found in chapter two of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*, CT 43-976: |*mchod pa'i rgyan dang log spyod kun||reg pa byang chub sems chen po||cho 'phrul chen po'i ngang du*

The object of attainment, the one who attains, and the action of attaining,
 Are [all] intrinsic awareness, so there is no attainment from some other source.
 There is no accomplishing or abandoning anything. Within the *dharmatā*
 There is no coming or going. It is all suchness.
 When all things are non-dual,
 How can there be accomplishment or act of accomplishing?
 As in an illusory magical display,
 All efforts at [acquiring what you see] go to waste.
 Like an echo or the reflection of the moon on water,
 Sounds and form are understood to be free from extremes.

The definition of great *mudrā*¹¹⁵⁸
 Is inseparability of oneself from
 The enlightened body, speech, mind, and five types of gnosis¹¹⁵⁹
 Of the Tathāgatas in the ten directions and the four times. That is great *mudrā*.
 Even the forty-two *mudrās*¹¹⁶⁰
 Are not separate from the *bindu* itself.¹¹⁶¹
 Even what we call “mantra,”

'dus||phul ba med pa thams cad mnyes||gzhal yas khang dang dkyil 'khor dang ||khro tshogs 'du 'phro mang po yang ||sems kyi cho 'phrul chen po yin||de bas rnam 'dun ring ba'i ngang ||chos rnams ma lus thams cad kun||rang bzhin ngang gis dag nyid phyir||dbang lnga ma brtsal lhun gyis rdzogs||bco bryad rang rig cho 'phrul snang|. Note that three lines in the middle of this passage (gzhal yas khang dang dkyil 'khor dang...) are found in *Brief Explanation of the Path* a few lines above.

¹¹⁵⁸ Here, *mahāmudrā* or great *mudrā* (*phyā rgya chen po*) refers to the visualized deities of the mandala. See AGGD f. 18b.

¹¹⁵⁹ This refers to the aforementioned five types of gnosis: gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (*chos dbyings ye shes*), mirror-like gnosis (*me long*), gnosis of equality (*mnyam nyid*), gnosis of discernment (*sor rtog*), and all accomplishing gnosis (*bya grub*).

¹¹⁶⁰ According to AGGD, f. 18b, this refers to the forty-two deities of the peaceful mandala of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*.

¹¹⁶¹ These two lines are similar to lines from chapter eleven of D 837, f. 57a5: [phyag rgya bzhi bcu gnyis po yang ||thig le nyid las gzhan na med].

In the great mandala of equality,
 Where there is no separation between ultimate and conventional truths,
 Are the enlightened body speech, and mind as the syllable *om*
 And the other [syllables], which are the forty-two [deities].¹¹⁶²
 Continuous meditative equipoise [on this] is the *mudrā*.¹¹⁶³
 Because it reaches the pith in the three times, it is mantra.
 All these distinctions,
 Arise from relying on hearing and contemplation and
 Are the born from the right and left paths through passion.
 They are born from yoga of the lineage [of the path of accumulation].¹¹⁶⁴

[In this system,] the distinctions between the levels are made
 On the basis of the two parts of the path of seeing.¹¹⁶⁵
 One has obtained power, the other not.
 The reversal of impurities also consists of two [parts]:
 Whether or not one has reversed the bad rebirths through force.
 They are contained within the eight aforementioned [stages of] understanding and
 engagement.

¹¹⁶² This refers to the forty-two deities of the peaceful mandala from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*.

¹¹⁶³ This line and the one that follows it are similar to ones found in chapter seventy-seven of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in eighty-two chapter, D 834, f. 289b5: |*rtaḡ tu mnyam gzhag phyag rgya yin||dug gsum gting 'byin sngags yin te*|.

¹¹⁶⁴ This interpretation is based on AGGD's comment on f. 19a-b. The path of accumulation (*tshogs lam*) is the first of the five paths (*lam lnga*), a system of explaining the progress of Buddhist adepts toward enlightenment.

¹¹⁶⁵ The path of seeing (*mtshong lam*) is the third of the five paths (*lam lnga*). The first two are the path of accumulation (*tshogs lam*), mentioned above, in which one begins to accumulate the vast amount of merits needed to attain liberation, and the path of joining (*sbyor lam*), in which one attains a conventional understanding of emptiness. On the path of seeing, one directly cognizes emptiness for the first time and reaches the first bodhisattva level. The latter two paths are the path of meditation (*sgom lam*), during which one trains in the remaining *bhūmis*, and the path of no more learning (*mi slob lam*), which is tantamount to Buddhahood. At least this is the way the five paths are understood in exoteric Mahāyāna.

How could they be contained in the [three stages:] engagement, understanding, and completion?

Since there are two aspects of completion in two moments,

Each one of these possesses three.

Therefore, understand these in both general and specific terms.

The unintelligent who do not understand the meaning of what was previously stated,

Having cast aside the scriptural sources for [the doctrine of] equality,

Conduct themselves through misunderstanding, laziness, and indifference.

They take bad rebirths without accomplishing their purpose.

If one does not understand the equality of the mind,

Then by [simply uttering the] word sameness, one will not attain enlightenment.

Therefore, you should conjoin meaning and word,

However, [D^{ng}5a] do so without any doubt.

Perform the yoga that addresses the conditions of attainment.

These conditions for yoga consist of five aspects.¹¹⁶⁶

The seven riches are themselves intrinsic awareness.

Since it is the cause of all ultimate truth,

One should meditate upon the higher cause first.

Do not think there is an object of thought;

One should not even think that there is no thinking.

Freedom from all identification is the supreme *samādhi*.¹¹⁶⁷

¹¹⁶⁶ According to AGGD, f. 21a, the five aspects are the *samādhi* of suchness (*de ting*), the all-illuminating *samādhi* (*kun snang*), the yoga of the single *mudrā* (*rgya gcig*), the yoga of elaboration (*spros*), and the accomplishment of the assembly (*tshogs sgrub*). These correspond to the five yogas of *mahāyoga*.

Therefore, having understood your own mind,
Completely abandon laziness and distraction.
Cultivate the equality of the I and no-self.
Do not separate yourself from the *samaya* of equality.
What need is there to speak, then, of the mental consciousness focusing on suchness?
Because the objects of the eight consciousness
Are not conceptualized, they are clarified in a single instant.
That is why this is a meditation of the omniscient ones.
By stabilizing the cause in that way,
One then meditates on the *samādhi* of combining the two.¹¹⁶⁸
Although it is understood that there is an actual *mudrā*
And an [imagined] *mudrā*, since this not an appropriate time [for actual consort practice],
Do not meditate using the [former]. As for the latter, she is your intrinsic awareness
And [meditating using her], naturally brings no suffering or mental affliction.
Within completely self-illuminating gnosis,
[Sexual union,] a symbol of non-duality, frees you
From supreme torment, and offers a refuge from karma.
Understanding this, one should be attracted to it.

Understanding and meditating in that way,
There arises the third [effect] from the two [causes and condition].
By relying on that, one accomplishes its purpose.

¹¹⁶⁷ The final three lines of this passage are quoted in Rokben's *Lamp of the Teachings*, though there is one line that appears in the work that is not found here in *Brief Explanation of the Path*. See Cabezón 2013, 230.

¹¹⁶⁸ According to AGGD, f. 22b, this two that are combined are the *samādhi* of suchness, which is the cause, and the yogas of the single *mudrā* and elaboration, which are the effect.

Therefore, one should meditate sequentially on the *samādhi* of the result.

Since the mind itself appears as

The syllables, the *mudrā*, and the essence of the body,

Even if you do the elaborate meditation in which the result and the *mudrā* are one,

By [combining] the previous and later [practices] as one and mediating upon it,

One meditates on whichever one wishes—

The yoga of intrinsic awareness, the gathering of shapeless letters,

The five colors¹¹⁶⁹ which are [ultimately] colorless—whatever is suitable

Or primarily on the syllable *hūṃ*.

That [*hūṃ*] is without colors like blue¹¹⁷⁰; it is the letter

[Symbolizing] enlightened mind, which is shapeless, and it manifests intrinsic awareness.

Having relied on this, one should then rely on the two *mudrās*,¹¹⁷¹ one at a time.

This [*hūṃ*] transforms and creates the great *mudrā* with one face,

Two arms and full limbs.

Having brought down the essence, [i.e., the *jñānasattva*,] make offerings,

Then recite **[D^{ng}5b]** [the mantra] and meditate.

The procedure for the six-[armed deity] is similar.

Alternatively, practice the fierce deities with devotion. Practice in accordance with this.

Bind the six objects of consciousnesses as the *mudrā*, and

When [your practice is] stable, [engage] in the yoga of elaborations:¹¹⁷²

¹¹⁶⁹ These are the five colors associated with the five buddha families: white for the buddha family, blue for the vajra family, red for the lotus family, yellow for the jewel family, and green for the karma family. See AGGD, f. 23b.

¹¹⁷⁰ All recensions of the text read *sngo*, except for K^{sgn} which reads *sgo*. AGGD, f.24a interprets *sngo* as *sngon* (*sngo te sngon*). In accordance with the commentary, I have emended the text to read *sngon*.

¹¹⁷¹ On f. 24a, AGGD notes that the two *mudrās* are the symbol of the enlightened mind (*thug phyag mtshan*) and the subtle enlightened body (*sku phra mo*).

[The deities here] have the same number of faces, arms, and *mudrās*

As peaceful and wrathful deities you previously used:

Faces and arms numbering three, five, nine, twenty-one,

Nine hundred hundred, and so on.¹¹⁷³

Train in the three classes, the five, or forty-two,¹¹⁷⁴

Or else treat them as if they were a mass.

Having meditated on this, as a fish emerges from water,¹¹⁷⁵

You make an utterance in a single moment, and they [suddenly] radiate light, and

[The deities] shine the light of intrinsic awareness in more than a thousand mandalas,

And [everything] becomes perfected.

What need is there to speak of the 1000 or 10,000, when [the light of intrinsic awareness]

is completely shown even to [limitless] clusters [of mandalas], they are made to possess

The five necessities¹¹⁷⁶ and a dwelling place.

Practice refers to the time[-specific] gatherings.

By dividing the *dhātus*, perseverance, wisdom,

And the higher and middling levels of *samādhi*,

For six months, twelve months, fourteen months, and six[teen] months,¹¹⁷⁷

¹¹⁷² This is the fourth of the five yogas of *mahāyoga*.

¹¹⁷³ As one progresses through the yoga of elaborations, the visualization of the peaceful and wrathful mandalas of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and other mandalas of the *Māyājāla* cycle becomes increasingly complex and detailed, to the point of imagining a limitless number of deities. See Kongtrül 2007, 78.

¹¹⁷⁴ “Three classes” refers to the simplest of visualization of deity cluster in which one visualizes the deities associated with the tathāgata, vajra, and lotus families. As one progresses, one then visualize the deities of the all five buddha families, then finally the full mandala of forty-two deities.

¹¹⁷⁵ The metaphor of a fish in water occurs in chapter six of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. See CT 43-1007: [*chu la rkyal chen 'phyo ba bzhin*]. It also occurs in Pelyang's *Lamps for the Mind*. See Takahahi 2009, 352 n.1192 & p. 395.

¹¹⁷⁶ These are the requisites for the achievement of the assembly (*tshogs sgrub*), which is the *gaṇacakra* or feast offering rite described in chapter eleven of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. According to the AGGD, f. 25a, the five requisites are 1) song and verse (*glu tshig gra*), 2) jewelry and raiment (*rgyan bgo ba*), 3) food (*bza' ba*), 4) drink (*btung ba*), and 5) the “secret *ālikāli*” (*gsang ba ā li kā li'i yo byad*). The fifth, “secret *ālikāli*” is code

In those time periods, the resultant body
 Transforms into the *vajrakāya*; it is linked to lifespan.
 One proceeds to the irreversible level.
 The lifespan is superior [to that achieved]
 From mantras and medicines unassociated with wisdom and *samādhi*.

 Turning away [from samsara], and taking up the four [yogas],¹¹⁷⁸ in the path of joining
 Because you have not yet attained the *vajrakāya*, and
 Having obtained the body of karmic conditions
 Which is a sensory object,
 You must clarify the yogas of intrinsic awareness.
 Through their great power,
 They cut off the stream of negative karma.
 Through [positive karmic connection], one becomes inseparable
 From the Tathāgatas' [path of] mantra.
 One meets a holy spiritual friend and joins the path of seeing.
 In short, the six [stages] of understanding, engaging, [etc.]¹¹⁷⁹
 Possess the three—cause, condition, and result.
 These, moreover, have two [aspects]: necessity and intent.
 These are connected through the two modes of engagement.¹¹⁸⁰

language, with *āli* referring to the requisites for sexual rites (*sbyor ba*) and *kāli* referring to requisites for ritual killing (*sgrol ba*, literally “liberation”). On the “secret *ālikāli*,” see Garson, 555 n. 400.

¹¹⁷⁷ These length of time for practice are specified in the chapter nine of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. See D 832, f. 112a1-2: |*zhag ni sum cu phrag drug gam||bcu gnyis bcu bzhi bcu drug gis||dbang bsgyur rigs kyi dam pa 'grub||de tshe bcu drug tshun chad kyis||sku lnga lhun gyis rdzogs pa ni*].

¹¹⁷⁸ This refers to the first four of the five yogas: the yoga of great emptiness (*stong pa chen po 'i rnal 'byor*), the yoga of great compassion (*snying rje chen po 'i rnal 'byor*), the yoga of the single *mudrā* (*phyag rgya gcig pa 'i rnal 'byor*) and the yoga of the elaborate *mudrā* (*phyag rgya spros bcas kyi rnal 'byor*).

In order to accumulate the collections of the continuity of conduct,
Accomplish the welfare of self and others,
You then train on the path of seeing, which reverses impurity and
Perfect the ten activities.¹¹⁸¹

For the sake of purifying themselves, yogīs first
Engage in the method of not objectifying [D^{ng}6a] action and agent.
Second, they enjoy themselves in the four immeasurables.¹¹⁸²
Third, they make effort in partial aspects of yoga.
Fourth, they engage in the yoga of elaborations.
Fifth, they enjoy themselves in the assembly of gathering.¹¹⁸³
There should be no need to mention that each yoga
accomplishes its goal for the sake of others.
At first, they teach them the ten [topics],¹¹⁸⁴ and act as their guide.
They model the five activities and then the actual *samādhi*.
They act freely without being biased toward either of the two [self and other].
Whether giving initiations or practicing methods,
Yogīs are distinguished by their power.

¹¹⁷⁹ The remaining four are view (*lta ba*), cause (*rgyu*), conditions (*rkyen*), and *samādhi* (*ting neg 'dzin*). See AGGD, f. 26b.

¹¹⁸⁰ AGGD does not state what the two modes of engagement (*'jug tshul gnyis*) are, so the meaning of this remains unclear to me.

¹¹⁸¹ According to AGGD f. 27b, this refers to the ten topics (*dngos po bcu*) of tantra. These are view (*lta ba*), *samādhi* (*ting nge 'dzin*), practice (*spyod pa*), mandala (*dkyil 'khor*), initiation (*dbang*), *samaya* (*dam tshig*), accomplishment (*sgrub pa*), making offerings (*mchod pa*), enlightened activity (*phrin las*), and *mudrā* (*phyag rgya*).

¹¹⁸² The four immeasurables are benevolence (*byams pa*), compassion (*snying rje*), joy (*dga' ba*), and equanimity (*btang snyoms*).

¹¹⁸³ On f. 27a, AGGD relates that these five lines are references to the five yogas of *mahāyoga*. In accordance with this, I have emended *dus*, “time” in the final line to *'dus*, “gathering.”

¹¹⁸⁴ See the note *supra* regarding the ten topics (*dngos po bcu*) of tantra.

Likewise, the four activities and the four immeasurables.¹¹⁸⁵

Are practiced at the appropriate times.

But wisdom and *samādhi* are differentiated according to power.

For the sake of others, in their behavior,

They restrict their behaviors according to their stage of yoga.

The six aspects of enjoyment¹¹⁸⁶ [correspond to] the six stages of yoga.

Although gnosis is devoid of grasping and attachment,

They possess the defilements of their own level,

But through the four paths¹¹⁸⁷ they train to be rid of defilements.

The merit of seeing, hearing, and contemplation,

Initiation and *samaya*, the practice of yoga, siddhis,

Offering, enlightened activity, the mandala,

All activities; and the two collections—

These are divided according to the activity and degree of detachment [they require].

They engage in the collection of causes from beginning to end.

Even if, for their own sake, yogīs may engage [in sexual union] with a companion,

This should not ruin their conduct as a whole.

Because they also think about others

They perfect the two benefits [of self and other].

Possessing the power of that, that, and that,¹¹⁸⁸

¹¹⁸⁵ The four activities are the four tantric actions of pacifying, increasing, overpowering, and subjugating. The author seems to be suggesting that the yogin should know when to use tantric actions, verses when to deploy the more common four immeasurable.

¹¹⁸⁶ This refers to the enjoyment experienced through the six senses, which AGGD, f. 28a refers to as the collections (*tshogs*).

Once the span of this life that is the result [of karma] has run out,
 They will receive the signs of whether [they will achieve nirvana] with or without remainder.
 Then they apply themselves to the actual final path.
 The ejection of consciousness, when grounded in the practice of a single *mudrā*,
 Is [swift and powerful] like the *garuḍa* and the tiger.
 There is no need to mention those who do it through the accumulations of the [yoga of]
 elaborations.
 [When death is near,] their minds become steadfast on the body of the deity.
 When the body of the *mudrā* has become clear,
 They leave behind their remainder in the intermediate state
 That is non-existent, and [instead] the *mahāmudrā* comes to fruition.
 The hollow body [caused by] karma is ripened by yoga,
 The aspect of ignorance [D^{ng}6b] is labeled with a name,
 And this is what is established as the ripened body of gnosis.
 Just as when a scale is balanced,
 One should practice the enlightened intention and conduct as the three stages of
 transformation.¹¹⁸⁹
 As [mentioned] previously, the collections, is what accomplishes
 The power enjoyed by the *vidyādhara*.
 Even though one must dwell [in samsara] for an eon for the sake of others,

¹¹⁸⁷On f. 28b, AGGD notes that this refers to the four yogic stages of service (*bsyen*), intimate service (*nye bnyen*), evocation (*sgrub*) and great evocation (*sgrub chen*).

¹¹⁸⁸ According to AGGD, f. 29b, “that, that, and that” (*de de de*) refers to view (*lta ba*), meditation (*sgom pa*), and practice (*spyod pa*).

¹¹⁸⁹ AGGD, f. 30b states that these are the latter three yogas of the single cause (*rgyu gcig*), elaboration (*spros pa*), and the great assembly (*tshogs chen*)

For the sake of one’s self, one will perfect this within sixteen [lifetimes].¹¹⁹⁰

At that time, within the inconceivable, spontaneous presence,

One becomes fearless by the power of meditation and insight.

Understanding and engagement, arises due to causes and conditions.

Having seen that, one perfects the non-dual body,

At the end [of life,] the remaining body is ripened,

And becomes the very body as the body of gnosis.

Then, for sake of others, one obtains the ripened body [i.e. the *saṃbhogakāya*] and the

nirmāṇakāya

And one joins the site of the great assembly.

Some say that it is from the class of the powerful [*vidyādhara*],

That one perfects the five *kāyas*¹¹⁹¹ within sixteen lifetimes.

Some say that it is from the state of *mahāmudrā* that

One unites with the supreme Samantabhadra.

Like the four jewels that cause cream, butter, fire, and blaze¹¹⁹²

¹¹⁹⁰ Again, see the passage from chapter nine of the *GT* on f. 121a: |*de tshe bcu drug tshun chad kyis||sku lnga lhun gyis rdzogs pa ni*|.

¹¹⁹¹ These are the five *kāyas* that were explained above.

¹¹⁹² AGGD explains these lines on f. 32a. This is apparently a reference to passage from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* about four types of luminous, precious jewels that are hidden at the bottom the bottom of the ocean. These jewels are named “essence of the sun” (*nyi ma’i snying po*), “evaporation” (*rlan med pa*), “fire light” (*me ’od*), and “total consummation” (*ma lus mthar thug pa*). These four jewels have such powerful transformative properties that if they were brought to the surface, it would result in a disasterous chain of events that would destroy the world. AGGD quotes this passage in full. The same passage from the D Kangyur recension of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* reads: “O Children of the Victor, moreover from within those waters gathered in the vast ocean, if the light from the precious jewel ‘essence of the sun’ were to strike water, the water would transform into milk and cream. If the light of the precious jewel ‘evaporation’ struck that milk and cream, it would them transform into ghee. If the light of the previous jewel ‘fire light’ struck the ghee, it would set that ghee on fire. And if the light of the precious jewel ‘total consummation’ shined forth, everything remaining without exception would be set ablaze.” See *Buddha-avatamsaka-nāma-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra*, *Sangs rgyas phal po che zhes bya ba shin tu rgyas pa chen po’i mdo*, Sde dge bka’ ’gyur, D 44, *ka* 1b-393a, *kha* 1b-396a, *ga* 1b-396a, *a* 1b-363a. The passage is in *Phal chen ga*, f. 112b4-6: |*kye rgyal ba’i sras rgya mtsho chen por ’dus pa’i chu’i phung po de dag kyang nor bu rin po che nyi ma’i snying po’i ’od kyis phog na chu’i rang bzhin spangs nas*| ’o *ma dang zhor gyur te ’dug go*||*nor bu rin po che chen po rlan med pa’i ’od kyis phog na ’o ma dang zho’i rang*

To appear in the ocean,

Some say that at the end of the three progressions¹¹⁹³

One [attains] enlightenment in a kind of spontaneous presence.

One learns the inconceivable [ways], the common basis of

The wisdom of the five [faculties]¹¹⁹⁴ and the yogas.

But the enhancements of the yogas are named according to the context:

Non-reversing, unmoving, perfected or

all-pervading, free of fear, completely perfected,

perfection of dynamism, and the final joining.

For the [benefit of] self and others, there are the five types of conduct,¹¹⁹⁵

Even though the four immeasurables, and so on are not necessary,

Because the three obscurations¹¹⁹⁶ are purified through both the higher and lower aspects [of
the path],

There is a difference in terms of the path.

There are higher and lower levels of objects and power.

Similarly, through the use of clairvoyance,

*bzhin spangs nas mar gyi nying khu lta bur 'gyur ro||me'i 'od kyi nor bu rin po che chen po'i 'od kyis phog na
mar gyi snying khu lta bu'i rang bzhin spangs te me lta bur 'bar bar 'gyur ro||nor bu rin po che chen po ma lus
pa'i mthar thug pa'i 'od kyis phog na| thams cad lhag ma med cing ma lus par mi snang bar 'gyur ro|.*

¹¹⁹³ AGGD notes on f. 32a that this refers to the progressing along the latter three *vidyādhara* levels, each of which are equated with one of the five paths: the *vidyādhara* with power over life enter the path of seeing; the *vidyādhara* of *mahāmudrā* enters the path of meditation, and the *vidyādhara* of spontaneous presence achieve the path of no more learning, which AGGD calls there the final path (*mthar lam*)

¹¹⁹⁴ According to AGGD, f. 32a, this refers to the five faculties (*dbang po go lnga*), which are the five physical sense faculties.

¹¹⁹⁵ AGGD states on f. 33a that these five are “liberation,” i.e., ritual killing (*sgrol ba*), ritual sex (*sbyor ba*), lying (*rdzun smra ba*), stealing (*ma byin len pa*), and abusive speech (*ngag brlang po*). The implication here is that the yogin can use these skillfully to tame sentient beings.

¹¹⁹⁶ AGGD does not mention what these three are, but they likely refer to the three types of obscuration: the obscuration of the ripening of karma (*rnam smin gyi sgrib pa*), the obscuration of kamic tendencies (*las kyi sgrib pa*), and the obscuration of the mental afflictions (*nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa*).

One can attain the likes of the four magical illusions.¹¹⁹⁷

Nonetheless, the three [*vidyādhara* levels]¹¹⁹⁸ are also differentiated according to their object, buddhafield, blessings, etc.

For the sake of oneself, engage in the yogas of

Non-attachment and immovability.

Through practicing the power of gnosis,

One completely ascends the *bhūmis*.

Now, the first [*vidyādhara* level] and the first [*bhūmi*] are equal.

And the superior, second *vidyādhara* level,

Is equal to a being [D^{ng}7a] on the eighth [*bhūmi*].

The third [*vidyādhara* level] is equal to the tenth [*bhūmi*].

Its oceanic enlightened intention and practice are superior

Because it clears away the defilements of the view.

By understanding all this, one deliberately put on displays of the magical illusions.

One should create the illusion of immovable yogīs

And the illusion [that great feats?] are effortless.

This is the way [the path system] is differentiated in terms of that, that, and that.¹¹⁹⁹

In the end, the [*vidyādhara* level of] spontaneous presence¹²⁰⁰

Creates a being who is a regent of the sixth [buddha, Samantabhadra].¹²⁰¹

¹¹⁹⁷ AGGD notes on f. 34a-b that these four are the magical illusions of miracles (*rdzu 'phrul gyi cho 'phrul*), the magical illusion of the appearance of phenomena (*chos snang ba'i cho 'phrul*), the magical illusion of the wonderful teachings (*rjes su bstan pa'i cho 'phrul*), and the magical illusion of conventional truth (*kun rdzob pa'i cho 'phrul*).

¹¹⁹⁸ On f. 34b, AGGD states that this refers to the latter three *vidyādhara* levels.

¹¹⁹⁹ According to AGGD, f. 36b, “that, that, and that” (*de de de*) refer to the latter three *vidyādhara* levels of power over life, *mahāmudrā*, and spontaneous presence.

¹²⁰⁰ This is the fourth of the four *vidyādhara* levels.

He completely turns the secret wheel [of *mantrayāna*]
 Revealing to everyone a body that accords [with their needs],
 He performs the twelve activities,¹²⁰² including teaching the Dharma
 As well as the way of the Pratimokṣa.
 Having performed all of the actions [of a Buddha],
 He obtains the eternal body that is free from birth and death.
 Thus, we see and hear those who [possesses] the three powers —
Nirmāṇakāya, *saṃbhogakāya*, and [the] six[th buddha]—
 Gradually, [they all appear the same].
 However, because each acts as the teacher of the next,
 They have become progressively better [over time].
 Although their degree of greatness is like that [i.e. different],
 In any given period, they each become perfect buddhas,
 And their cause, purpose, intention, and power appear no different.
 But although it appear to be no differences,
 They cannot be viewed as being the same.

In this way they have actualized omniscience

In one of three aspects:

1) Within the naturally spontaneously established mandala,

¹²⁰¹ AGGD does not specify this, though I suggest that this refers to the buddha Samantabhadra, who, according to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, is the sixth buddha in addition to the five tathāgatas.

¹²⁰² These are the twelve acts of a buddha: the descent from the Tuṣita heaven (*dga' ldan gyi gnas nas 'pho ba*), entering the mother's womb (*lhums su zhugs pa*), taking birth (*sku bltams pa*), becoming skilled in various arts (*bzo yi gnas la mkhas pa*), enjoying the company of royal consorts (*btsun mo'i 'khor dgyes rol ba*), becoming ordained (*rab tu byung ba*), practicing austerities (*dka' ba spyad pa*), proceeding to the center of awakening (i.e., the Bodhi tree, *byang chub snying por gshegs pa*), overcoming Māra's hosts (*bdud btul ba*), becoming completely enlightened (*mngon par rdzogs par sangs rgyas pa*), turning the wheel of Dharma (*chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba*), and passing into *mahāparinirvāna* (*mya ngan las 'das pa*).

2) Through the power of the play of the gnosis-goddess [consort],
 3) Or by understanding enlightened speech, which is like [the roar of the] lion,
 All three experience things as self-arisen gnosis.
 He possesses the general body of Vajradhara,¹²⁰³
 Which is perfected through the five enlightened bodies, speeches, and minds.¹²⁰⁴
 For the sake of granting blessings and the giving teachings,
 These three sets of five reinforce them.
 Thus, they clear away the two kinds of obscurations.¹²⁰⁵
 [These two obscurations] are destroyed
 As the yogī gradually obtains gnosis and the power.
 Thereby the gnosis of the *bhūmis* becomes increasingly more undifferentiated
 The enlightened body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities
 Which are not different from the amazing results
 Readily arise in this way
 As the result of wisdom that relies on method.
 Being free from objectification, he is unattached,
 And thus he also obtains the state of the lotus.
 When the aggregates, etc. are of the nature of the mandala [D^{ng}7b]
 The previously actualized great accumulations become perfected.
 That itself is self-arisen clear light,
 The highest gnosis that manifests.

¹²⁰³ This may also refer to the thirteenth *bhūmi* of enlightenment, which is also called *vajradhādra* or vajra-holder (*rdo rje 'dzin pa*).

¹²⁰⁴ See the note *supra* on the three sets of five (*sku lnga, gsung lnga, thugs lnga*).

¹²⁰⁵ AGGD, f. 38a, notes that this refers to obscuration of the mental afflictions (*nyong mongs pa'i sgrib pa*) and the obscurations to knowledge (*shes bya'i sgrib pa*).

For the sake of actualizing the unfabricated storehouse consciousness,
As you move toward the [state of] suchness,
The mental continua of the eight consciousnesses of the six classes of beings are different,
However, because there are no classifications of mental continua [within awareness], they are
a total unity.

Since this unity is uncorrupted and completely perfected,
Even inconceivable omniscience itself
Is included within the suchness of intrinsic awareness.

Since reality and the great method are uncorrupted,
They are a unity that is free from being one and many.

One's own mind, spontaneously present and free from extreme
Is primordially without parts or dualities.

Hence, that uncorrupted, completely perfected essence

Since it is similar to the what has been actualized, is also a total unity.

Since the four times are also the mind, there is no such thing as a continuity.

The gnosis that is free from [notions of] subject and object

Is the abode of all the Tathāgatas.

Therefore in this abode, everything is also one.

The mind itself is primordially the great *dharmakāya*.

The reality of suchness

Is the palace of infinite buddhas.

Hence, everything will be present therein, and there, they will all be one.

At the time when one is a sentient being [one is born] in the six worlds,

But self-awareness has no continua, characteristics, forms, or pattern.

Therefore, how can there be such a thing as the mental continuum of the Victor

That abides, transforms, or has parts?

[Objection:] Well then, if you say that everything is one,

Then it's a lie to say that we change abodes [at death], leading one to the extreme of nihilism.

[Reply]: If [this kind of] doubt arises, consider the storehouse consciousness.

Even though it is primordially self-arisen and spontaneously perfected,

When it is not used in the service of [realizing] the freedom from characteristics and extremes,

[The storehouse consciousness manifests the world, and] everything—both samsara and nirvana—is real.

But since it is [actually] free from expressing and thinking anything, it is not like that [i.e., it is not the world and everything is unreal.]

The divisions of the five types of gnosis¹²⁰⁶ or of self-arisen [gnosis]

Are nothing more than imputations.

Therefore, [our view] does not fall into the extreme of monism.

The Victor, like a jewel,

Is the embodiment of everything.

Hence, the regents¹²⁰⁷ may be of five types,

But the completely perfect buddha has no [divisions].

¹²⁰⁶ According to AGGD, f. 42b, this refers to the five types of gnosis associated with the each of the five buddha families: gnosis of the *dharmadhātu* (*chos dbyings ye shes*) of the buddha family, mirror-like gnosis (*me long*) of the vajra family, gnosis of equality (*mnyam nyid*) of the lotus family, gnosis of discernment (*sor rtog*) of the jewel family, and all accomplishing gnosis (*bya grub*) of the karma family.

[Opponent:] [According to you,] since even all the Victors are the nature of the phenomena
Of the three times, they are the embodiment of everything.

How, then, can there be two parts? ¹²⁰⁸

If they exist [as two], then the Great Lord has lied.

If you [claim that the two] are of the same nature,

Like light rays and the sun or a wood fire, then if the continua of gnosis [of different
buddhas]

Is different, the *nirmāṇakāyas* too would have to consistently appear to the disciples [**D^{ng}8a**]
as one;

There would not be any difference between the great beings [i.e. bodhisattvas and buddhas].

When the [deities] are invited, then some would come and some would not.

Your basic point would contradict both scripture and reasoning.

And the Compassionate Ones would be destroyers [rather than promoters] of logical
reasoning.

Therefore, [your claim] that, gnosis that is like a bonfire [in which everything is one] is
allowable

Because our teacher uses it in order to lead and guide [sentient beings,]

Is both untrue and uncertain.

[It would mean that] there is a buddha higher than buddha.

[Reply:] Erroneous view, pure analysis,

And gnosis are nothing but the *dhātu*.

¹²⁰⁷ This refers to the five buddhas Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava, and Amoghasiddhi.
See AGGD, f. 44a.

¹²⁰⁸ AGGD states on f. 42b that this refer to samsara and nirvana ('*khor* '*das*)

When the Great Compassionate Ones, because of their connection,
 Appear to the six classes of beings and all times and places without exception.
 Though they appear in all manner of bodies, both high and low,
 They [also] appear in the body of [someone who has attained] unexcelled enlightenment,
 Like reflections in a mirror,
 They appear in various colors and shapes.¹²⁰⁹
 Within the state of the essence of enlightenment,
 All phenomena without exception
 Are an uncorrupted singular [reality], like the rainbow and the sky.
 Thus, [even in] the absence of objects [the buddhas] understand everything.
 Like the wish-fulfilling tree and wish-fulfilling jewel,
 They fulfill all hopes without conceptualizing anything.
 Like the sun and moon in water, and reflections [in a mirror]¹²¹⁰
 They appear to all [beings] with coming or going.
 They liberate [sentient beings] according to their dispositions,
 [Teaching them] the distinctive qualities of enlightened body, speech and mind.
 Out of their compassion, they enter into the minds of sentient beings.
 All the while remaining in equipoise in all times and places.

 Beings have lost their way; they have gone astray.
 They have lost their five faculties, and have been seized by chronic illness.

¹²⁰⁹ Two similar verses are found without attribution in Rokben's *Lamp of the Teachings*. See Cabezón 2013, 249 and the edition of the text in Cabezón and Erdenebaatar Erdene-Ochir 2010, 225: *[me long bstan pa'i tshul bzhin du||sna tshogs kha dog dbyibs su snang]*. Cabezón notes that the first line is found in chapter six of the GT.

¹²¹⁰ Here, we find a several similes—the rainbow unmixed with the sky, a wish-fulfilling tree, a wish fulfilling jewel, and the reflection of celestial bodies on water—which are also used toward the end of chapter one of *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*.

May the great medicine of the supreme path that has been condensed here

Lead infinite beings to the goal of [becoming a] Victor.

—This concludes the *Short Explanation of the Māyājāla Path* by Ācārya Buddhagupta—

[D^{ng}8a]

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have sought to substantiate the central claim of this dissertation: that the outer tantra exegete Buddhagupta, whose works are recorded in the dynastic catalogs *is not the same author* as the Buddhagupta who wrote treatises on the *mahāyoga* tantras and who was thought to have written at least one text on Dzokchen. I began to establish this through examination of Tibetan texts from the eighth to the twelfth centuries such as the *Denkar Catalog*, the *Pangtang Catalog*, and Nupchen Sangyé Yeshe's *Lamp for the Eye in Contemplation*, and several Dunhuang manuscripts. These texts known of two separate masters that shared the name Buddhagupta, which I have suggested was translated into Tibetan as *gsangs rgyas gsang ba*. I then traced the origin of the retrotranslation of *sangs rgyas gsang ba* as Buddhaguhya in Tibetan text catalogs from the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries. Having collated biographical sketches from Tibetan histories and treatises spanning several centuries, I drew out the inconsistencies in their narratives and showed how Nyingma historians sought to identify the *mahāyoga* master Buddhagupta with the earlier, outer tantra exegete Buddhagupta. I also proposed that the Dunhuang manuscript Pelliot Tibétain 849 served as a common source for the biography of both Buddhaguptas and of Vimalamitra.

After providing an introduction to *mahāyoga* and to the *Guhyargarbha Tantras*, I demonstrated that Buddhagupta's *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path* are the two key sources from the NKM for *mahāyoga*, as the works of Rokben Sherap Ö and Jamgön Kontrül show. Furthermore, I suggested that the eightfold tantric doxography found in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* marks a period when *mahāyoga* was considered the highest level of Buddhist tantra and that it was one of many systems that contributed to the Nyingma tradition's nine vehicle doxography. A general

overview of *Guhyagarbha Tantra* with a focus on its connection to Buddhagupta given in chapter four demonstrated that Buddhagupta was the first Indian master to transmit the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* in Tibet who has also participated in its translation. I have also showed that Buddhagupta's works were often cited in the deliberations around the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* Indian provenance.

I then focused on the analysis on *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path* and examined selected passage that may lead the reader to think of Buddhagupta as the *mahāyoga* expert. I demonstrated that, based on references to sexual rites and subtle body physiology in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* and *Brief Explanation of the Path*, it is quite unlikely that these were authored by the outer tantra commentator Buddhagupta.

I see the present work as having several important implications for Tibetan Buddhist Studies. The most immediate implication, following from the arguments summarized above, is that future scholarship begin to distinguish between these two authors, referring to both as Buddhagupta.¹²¹¹ The broader implications of this suggestion becomes clear when we consider that bodies of work attributed to influential Indian tantric commentators like Vimalamitra and Vilāsavajra are in a similar situation to that of Buddhagupta. Recall that there are at least two commentaries on the *Prajñāpāramitā* sutras attributed to an Indian scholar name Vimalamitra mentioned in the *Denkar Catalog*. There are also several *mahāyoga* commentaries attributed to him, especially the *Condensed Commentary on the Guhyagarbha Tantra*. If Gruber's suggestion that the historical Vimalamitra of the *Denkar*

¹²¹¹ In a recent essay, Jacob Dalton explicitly uses the name Buddhagupta in place of Buddhaguhya. See Jacob P. Dalton "Mahāmudrā and Samayamudrā in the Dunhuang Documents and Beyond" in *Mahāmudrā in India and Tibet*, Roger R. Jackson and Klaus-Dieter Mathes eds. (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 126, 130, and 140. I gather that this is due in part to Dalton's work with Nicholas Schmidt on the latter's 2018 "The Jewel's

Catalog most likely had nothing to do with the tantric figure who transmitted the esoteric teachings to Tibet, then the *mahāyoga* works traditionally attributed to him were probably written by a different author. Regarding Vilāsavajra, his *Nāmamantrārthāvalokinī*, which post-dates the works of the outer tantra Buddhagupta, quotes from the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra but seems to be unaware of the *Guhyagarbha*. Nevertheless, there are several texts attributed to Vilāsavajra related to the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, particularly the *Blazing Palace* commentary, which asserts a tantric doxography that includes atiyoga as the highest category. It remains possible that as with Buddhagupta, the *mahāyoga* treatises attributed to these figures may have been written by a different author.

In terms of the study of the two Buddhaguptas, there is still an enormous amount of work to be done. Regarding the outer tantra exegete Buddhagupta, two out of three of his major commentaries recorded in the *Denkar Catalog—Word-by-Word Commentary on the Durgati-pariśodhana* and the *Extensive Commentary on the Dhyānottara-paṭala-krama* remain mostly unstudied and untranslated. A significant scholarly engagement with these texts might yield greater knowledge about Buddhism in dynastic Tibet, especially because it is quite clear the *Sarva-durgati-pariśodhana* was used in imperial funeral rituals. Of course there remain other important texts attributed to the outer tantra exegete Buddhagupta that merit in-depth study, especially the *Introduction to the Meaning of Tantra*, which seems to have been his *magnum opus*; recall that this text enjoys a lengthy commentary said to have been written by a certain Padmavajra. As for the *mahāyoga* tantric commentator Buddhagupta, a complete translation of an *Orderly Arrangement of the Paths* is most certainly warranted. As we have seen, this text has been fundamental to the development of the Nyingma understanding of *mahāyoga* in general. Our understanding of the root text

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would be greatly improved with a study of the two major commentaries: Rokben's *Clear Lamp of the Supreme Path* and Adzom Gyelsé Gyurmé Dorjé's word-by-word commentary, *Dispelling the Darkness of the Transmigrator's Intellect*.

More broadly, the study of *mahāyoga* in the Nyingma tradition remains nascent. Most of the texts in the *mahāyoga* section of the Nyingma Gyübum have yet to be studied. A text historical study of the tantras of the *Māyājāla* cycle, particularly the *Guhyagarbha Tantras* in eighty-two and forty-six chapters, and *The Great Unsurpassed Secret Nucleus*, might give us a clearer picture of how these may have developed in Tibet based on the root *Guhyagarbha Tantra*. Also of interest is the *Ocean of Magical Display Tantra*, an explanatory tantra of the cycle, since this tantra contains instructions for subtle body practices, which are referenced in *An Orderly Arrangement of the Paths*. A comparative study of the Nyingma Kama and Tengyur recensions of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the *Śrī Paramādya Tantra*, and the *Sarvabuddhasamayoga Tantra* would also be fruitful since the Nyingma Kama may indeed contain older translations of these text. Finally, our understanding of the development of the Nyingma tradition's *Guhyagarbha Tantra* exegetical tradition would be greatly enhanced by complete studies of the aforementioned *Blazing Palace* commentary attributed to Vilāsavajra and the *Extensive Commentary* attributed to Sūryaprabhāsīmha.

In sum, Buddhagupta has been key to the reception of *mahāyoga* in Tibet. His works on the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which became one of the defining tantras of the Nyingma tradition, shaped how Nyingma commentators came to understand and interpret this tantra and the *mahāyoga* path in general. As such, Buddhagupta has played a key role in the development of Nyingma sectarian identity. Moreover, as a figure who was mythologized to be one in the same as the early famed outer tantra commentator with the same name, his

dhāraṇī.”

works also served as a way to legitimate the Nyingma tradition's often criticized tantric system. I hope that this work has sown the seeds for future studies of both Buddhaguptas, the *Guhyagabrha Tantra*, and the *mahāyoga* tantras in general. May the protectors and future scholars alike forgive any mistakes or oversights I have made herein. *Sarva maṅgalam!*

༄༅། །སྒྲུང་གྲགས་རིག་གསུམ་ལྷ་ལྷགས་ཚོས་སྐྱུའི་ངང་།
།སྐྱུ་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་རོལ་བར་འབྱམས་ལྷས་བས།
།ཟབ་གསང་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ཚེན་ངོའི་ཉམས་ལེན་ལ།
།དབྱེར་མེད་ལྷགས་ཀྱི་ཐིག་ལེར་རོ་གཅིག་ཤོག།

The state in which appearance, sounds, and awareness are deity, mantra and dharmakāya
Is the total immersion in the display of *kāyas* and gnosis;
In practicing the profound and secret *mahāyoga*,
May they be of one taste, indivisible within the sphere of the enlightened mind.

Final words of Minling Terchen Gyurme Dorjé
(1646-1714), also known as Terdak Lingpa¹²¹²

¹²¹² See Smin gling gter chen'gyur med rdo rje, *'Das chems gdams pa'i snying po* in *Smin gling gter chen rig 'dzin 'gyur med rdo rje'i gsung 'bum*, vol. ma (Dehradun: D.G. Khochhen Tulku, 1998), p. 375.

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