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A Nineteenth-Century Intra-Sectarian Polemical Controversy in the Tibetan Buddhist Geluk Order

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by

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September 2021

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ABSTRACT

A Nineteenth-Century Intra-Sectarian Polemical Controversy

in the Tibetan Buddhist Geluk Order

by

ErdeneBaatar Erdene-Ochir

This dissertation explores a series of nineteenth-century intra-sectarian polemical writings in the Tibetan Buddhist Geluk order between Buddhist scholars representing Khalkha's Ih Hüree, the largest monastic institution of Outer Mongolia (today, the independent state of Mongolia), and Labrang Monastery in Amdo, eastern Tibet. China. In the nineteenth century, Labrang Monastery was a major Geluk monastery and a rising cosmopolitan center, located at the frontier of Tibetan, Mongolian, and Han Chinese cultural regions. This dissertation focuses not only on the doctrinal issues involved in the polemics over the interpretation of a particular text, but also on the sociopolitical motivations behind the dispute, its historical impact, and institutional ambitions underlying the exchange.

The polemical disputes between leading scholars of these two important Geluk institutions in the Qing dominated Mongolian and Tibetan cultural

regions highlight the historical development of Buddhist scholasticism and institutional competitions in the Qing border regions, isolated from the central government in Beijing and the religious center in Lhasa. Unlike many other polemical exchanges in Tibet, which mostly involved defeating or responding to the views of the "other" sects or schools, the polemic dispute examined in this dissertation occurred within a single school, the Geluk. Moreover, the most prominent polemicists of this exchange—Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen (1764–1853) from the Amdo-Tibetan region and his Mongolian counterpart Ngawang Khedrup (1779–1838)—were trained in the same monastic textbook (yig cha) tradition. I therefore call their exchange an "intra-sectarian" polemic. Plausible motivations behind this intra-sectarian dispute are explainable through a detailed study of the ambitions of Amdo-Tibetan and Mongolian monasteries to develop their respective institutions into influential cosmopolitan centers in the northern part of the Qing-Geluk world. Moreover, certain personal factors were also involved, since the polemicists also sought to defend the viewpoints of their respective teachers.

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TECHNICAL NOTES

For the transliteration of Sanskrit names and terms, the standard system of the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST) is used. There is no standardized system for phonetically rendering Tibetan words. However, for the purpose to phonetically spell Tibetan terms, I closely consulted the Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan scheme, suggested by the Tibetan and Himalayan Library (THL). However, I deviated from the scheme in cases where I did not agree with it.

The Tibetan names of Mongolian figures are pronounced by their fellow Mongols differently from their standard pronunciation by native Tibetan speakers. Moreover, those names are also variously transliterated or spelled in Mongolian traditional vertical script and in the new Cyrillic Mongolian script. Nevertheless, in order to make the transliteration of Tibetan names consistent throughout this dissertation, I used the THL scheme for nearly all Tibetan names, including those of ethnic Mongols. Thus, I transcribed "Ngag dbang mkhas grub" as "Ngawang Khedrup" instead of the Khalkha Mongolian pronunciation, which would be something like "Ağwaŋhaidaw." However, there are many exceptions. Because of the well-known conventions of spelling the names of certain historical figures, such as Ligden and Gombodorji, I chose to use those conventional forms although their Tibetan names, "Legs ldan" and "Mgon po rdo rje," would be phonetically rendered as "Legden" and "Gönpo

Dorjé" respectively. Nevertheless, when a Tibetan name or term occurs for the first time in the main body of the dissertation, it is followed by its Tibetan transliteration in parentheses using the Wylie system. For each Tibetan proper name, its first letter, instead of the root letter, is capitalized.

Similar to the examples above, although the Mongolian saint Zanabazar's name is clearly derived from the Sanskrit word "Jñānavajra," I still used the conventional spelling "Zanabazar" in this dissertation. Moreover, although Mongolian proper names are often transliterated here following the THL Transliteration Systems for Uyghur-Mongolian Script, I frequently used the well-known spelling practices that are inspired by Cyrillic Mongolian for the more popular names, such as Kubilai, Khalkha, Tüsheet Khan, or Ih Hüree—instead of Qubilai, Qalq-a, Tüšiyetü Qan, or Yeke Küriy-e. It is also noteworthy to mention that I have preferred "Chinggis" over the complicated "Čiŋgis" or the better-known anglicized form "Genghis" for the founder of the thirteenth-century Mongol Empire. I also used the terms "khagan" (qağan) and "khan" (qan)—terms that are often used interchangeably—as different titles in order to make clear that the former term denotes an emperor, or a ruler of a great dynasty, whereas the latter denotes a lesser king, a prince, or a ruler of a tribal group within an empire or a federation.

When transliterations of a technical term from more than one language occur in the same parentheses, the abbreviations Skt., Tib., and Mon. are used to differentiate Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian transliterations, respectively. For

Chinese names, their hanzi (漢字) characters are placed in parentheses following their phoneticization

Introduction

There have been numerous published and unpublished academic studies on Tibetan polemical literature, which deal with various polemical disputes between either Tibetan indigenous Bön and the Buddhist tradition (Dan Martin 1997)[1] or between distinct Tibetan Buddhist schools (Seyfort Ruegg 1989,[2] Paul Williams 1998,[3] Karma Phuntsho 2005,[4] José Cabezón and Lobsang Dargyey 2007,[5] Sonam Thakchoe 2007,[6] Jeffrey Hopkins 2008,[7] Markus Viehbeck 2014,[8] Nyingcha Duoji 2014,[9] and many more). These works either surveyed the history

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[1] Martin 1997: "Beyond Acceptance and Rejection? The Anti-Bon Polemic in the Thirteenth-Century *Single Intention* (Dgong-gcig Yig-cha) and Its Background in Tibetan Religious History," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 25 (1997): 263–264.

[2] Ruegg 1989: *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. The Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 13. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.

[3] Williams 1998: *The Reflexive Nature of Awareness: A Tibetan Madhyamaka Defense*. London: Curzon.

[4] Phuntsho 2005: *Mipham's Dialectics and the Debates on Emptiness: To Be, Not to Be or Neither*. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.

[5] Cabezón & Lobsang Dargyey 2007: *Freedom from Extremes: Gorampa's "Distinguishing the Views" and the Polemics of Emptiness*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.

[6] Thakchoe 2007: *The Two Truths Debate: Tsongkhapa and Gorampa on the Middle Way*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.

[7] Hopkins 2008: *Tsong-kha-pa's Final Exposition of Wisdom*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications.

[8] Viehbeck 2014: *Polemics in Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism: A Late 19th-Century Debate Between 'Ju Mi pham and Dpa' ris Rab gsal*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien.

[9] Duoji 2014: "Gha rung pa Lha'i rgyal mtshan as a Scholar and Defender of the Jo nang Tradition: A Study of His Lamp That Illuminates the Expanse of Reality with an Annotated

of Tibetan Buddhist polemical writings or focused on particular instances of inter-sectarian polemics. However, despite philosophical or interpretive divergences within a single school of Tibetan Buddhism, no work to date has focused on intra-sectarian polemics. Furthermore, polemical writings are by nature communicative and driven by various social interests. My dissertation demonstrates that although many doctrinal polemics are motivated by the already existing sectarian conflicts, their outcomes should not be reduced to mere sectarian divergences.

Little work has been done to date on the intellectual history of Buddhism in Mongolia. Scholars of Mongolian studies mostly focus on Mongolian legal literature, martial arts, material culture, performing arts, nomadic culture, and archeological findings. When it comes to Buddhism in Mongolia, academic studies tend to emphasize the influence of the Tibetan tradition because Mongols adopted Tibetan Buddhism exclusively in the Tibetan language. Hence, Buddhist literature, especially philosophical works written by Mongolian scholars and their historical and sociopolitical contexts have been understudied. There has been no single thorough study focused on Mongolian Buddhist intellectual history despite the fact that hundreds of ethnic Mongolian writers continued to compose Buddhist texts in various genres until the early twentieth century. In my dissertation I intend to contribute to our understanding of the

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Translation and Critical Edition of the Text" PhD diss., (Harvard University). https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/12274606.

elite Buddhist philosophical traditions of pre-modern Mongolians through a close study of the nineteenth-century primary works composed by Mongol authors in the Tibetan language. My dissertation is in part a historical study of the monastic institutions in Mongolia and in eastern Tibet, namely Ih Hüree and Labrang, including their exchanges of ideas, mutual influences, and polemical competitions.

The polemical disputes between leading scholars of these two important Geluk institutions in the Qing dominated Mongolian and Tibetan cultural regions highlight the historical development of Buddhist scholasticism and institutional competitions in the Qing border regions, isolated from the central government in Beijing and the religious center in Lhasa. Unlike many other polemical exchanges in Tibet, which mostly involved defeating or responding to the views of the "other" sects or schools, the polemic dispute examined in this dissertation occurred within a single school, the Geluk. More than that, the most prominent polemicists of this exchange—Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen (1764–1853) from the Amdo-Tibetan region, and his Mongolian counterpart, Ngawang Khedrup (1779–1838)—were trained advocates of the same monastic textbook (yig cha) tradition. I therefore call it an "intra-sectarian" polemics. Plausible motivations behind the intra-sectarian disputes are explainable through a detailed study of Amdo-Tibetan and Mongolian monasteries and of the monastic authorities' efforts to develop their respective institutions into influential cosmopolitan centers in the northern part of the Qing-Geluk world. Moreover,

certain personal factors were also involved, since the polemicists also sought to defend the interpretations of their respective teachers.

The Geluk tradition is renowned for training its monks in both oral and written forms of argumentation. This dialectical pedagogy is considered the foundation of scholarship. After the seventeenth century, most Mongols had converted to the Geluk form of Buddhism, and gradually adopted this dialectic training in their newly established monasteries. In the eighteenth century, ethnic Mongol authors, many of whom were associated with Geluk monasteries in the Amdo-Koko Nor region, began to compose doctrinal exegeses on subtle points of Geluk doctrine utilizing this dialectic method. However, in Outer Mongolia, it was not until the nineteenth century that Geluk monastic institutions started to emphasize philosophical dialectical studies. After the establishment of the first monastic college of Buddhist philosophy in Khalkha in the mid-eighteenth century, systematic training in Buddhist philosophy in Outer Mongolia gradually improved. The polemical writings of Ngawang Khedrup that I explore here marks a vibrant example of Ih Hüree's scholastic efflorescence as a result of its growing maturity regarding Buddhist philosophical scholarship in both sūtra and tantra.

For a depiction of the relationship between the involved texts, Figure 2 is found in the page 206. However, for a quick reference, the main texts were linked to one another in the following way. The Geluk lama Changkya Rölpé Dorjé (1717–1786), the imperial preceptor of the Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799)

of the Qing Dynasty, composed a short work entitled the *Song on the Profound View, the Recognizing the Mother*, which I consider the root text of the polemical exchange I discuss here.[10] This root text led to interpretational disagreements among scholars within the Geluk order. Changkya's disciple Könchok Jikmé Wangpo (1728–1791), the head of the Labrang Monastery, interpreted the text as a Buddhist exoteric philosophical work and composed an exoteric commentary to it. Another important student of Changkya, Reting Lobsang Tenpa Rabgyé (1759–1815), wrote an esoteric commentary on the root text from a tantric perspective. These two exegeses led to further polemical exchanges among the authors' disciples.

The first polemical criticism was from Labrang, critiquing the esoteric commentary. Rebuttals to this critique were composed by Reting's students—Ngawang Khedrup, a scholar of Khalkha's Ih Hüree, and Mati, a scholar from U. In response to these rebuttals, Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen, a student of Jikmé Wangpo and a retired abbot of Labrang Monastery, attacked Ngawang Khedrup and Mati in his polemical refutations. Subsequently, Ngawang Khedrup and Lobsang Tseten (d.u.) individually responded to Belmang's refutations. The debate covers various philosophical and hermeneutical issues, including how a specific term connects to its intended meaning such that a symbol can indicate its designated object. More importantly, these scholars argued whether

[10] I will include all the biographical information of the texts, mentioned in this short Introduction, in the footnotes when the texts are substantially discussed in the main body of the dissertation.

interpretations determine the meaning of a text or whether the text should have only one final meaning.

Unlike early Geluk proponents, the Geluk scholastics from the seventeenth trough the nineteenth century had almost no challengers from outside of the Geluk world due to their political dominance—they were supported by the Mongols and Manchus. There were only relatively minor intra-Geluk disputes between different composers of monastic textbooks concerning their slightly varying presentations of the Geluk doctrine. This condition continued until the second half of the nineteenth century, at which point some non-Geluk scholars from Kham resumed their doctrinal disputes with Geluk scholasticism as a by-product of the so-called trans-sectarian Rimé (*ris med*) movement. However, the debate between Belmang, Ngawang Khedrup, and Lobsang Tseten, the major polemicists of the intra-Geluk debate, is significant. Belmang's interest in politics and his desire to expand Labrang's influence, and Ngawang Khedrup's effort to develop Ih Hüree in the northern part of the Qing-Geluk world were important factors in the nineteenth-century connections between the Tibeto-Mongolian Geluk form of Buddhism and the Qing supervision over the Geluk world. The polemicists had either direct or indirect involvement in politics as the representatives of influential monastic institutions which served as major territorial units in their respective regions. My research also takes into account both local patronage and that of the central administration, or the Qing court. I employ three methodological approaches: historical, philosophical, and

hermeneutical. Through these approaches, the dissertation explores (1) the polemics' historical setting and the exegetes and polemicists' biographies as well as histories of their affiliated institutions; (2) their philosophical/doctrinal views and arguments as regards the *Song*; and (3) the significance of the polemics in association to hermeneutics and institutional identities.

The chapters of the dissertation are organized as following: Chapter 1 discusses how, owing to Mongols, the Tibetan Buddhist Geluk order began to spread in the Amdo-Koko Nor area and in various Mongolian cultural regions. It briefly reviews how Tibetan missionaries successfully converted the Mongols in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and how their approach to the Later Jin or Manchu rulers was received. Chapter 2 summarizes the history of the establishments of two monastic institutions—Mongolia's Ih Hüree and Amdo's Labrang Tashi Khyil. It sheds light on the founding of these two Geluk monasteries and on the ways in which they became the focal points of politics and religion for the entire Mongolian and Tibetan cultural spheres from the seventeenth century until the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911. The chapter also contains brief biographies of the figures involved in the polemics. Chapter 3 contains my analysis of the literary aspects of the root text, the *Song*, specifically, the circumstance of the composition, its genre, and subject matter. Chapter 4 focuses on the three selected and mutually divergent exegeses, which are based on the different interpretive perspectives—Geluk exoteric, Geluk esoteric, and Nyingma perspectives on the meaning of the *Song*. Chapter 5

discusses selected debates from the exchanged rebuttals between the polemicists, who argued on the interpretational topics of the *Song* in their major commentaries. In addition to detailed doctrinal issues regarding the esoteric system, a discussion includes various polemical tools used in those debates. The Conclusion examines my findings of this particular polemics, their impacts and significances. The main argument of my dissertation is that doctrinal debates should not be approached as mere hairsplitting doctrinal polemics, because they also can be motivated by political and economic concerns, reflecting the institutional visions and ambitions on the part of monastic hierarches. It is my hope that this dissertation contributes to the fields of Tibetan and Tibeto-Mongolian Buddhism, especially in the frontier regions (Amdo and Mongolia), and to a broader study of religious sectarian rivalries and ethnic identities. Not content to take theological debates at face value, the dissertation seeks reasons behind them—for example, the sociopolitical and historical underpinning of the philosophical/theological debates, including those based on ethnic and institutional identities.

I. Historical Background

Chapter One: The Dissemination of the Geluk Tradition to Amdo-Koko Nor and Mongolia in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries

This chapter discusses the historical contexts of the Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in Amdo-Koko Nor region and Mongolia, where the main exegetes and polemicists, whose works are examined in this dissertation, later flourished. It covers elaborations on how the Geluk order of Tibetan Buddhism spread among the Mongols in the Amdo and Mongol regions in the late sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries; how they initially received it, including their attempts to adapt it in the Mongolian language; and then how Geluk monasticism became one of the most important constituents of their social order, which eventually paired with the Qing political order, creating the new "ideal" Qing-Geluk world order. The elaborations help to lay out the bigger picture to understand the motivations of the concerned parties for why it may have been important for them to carry out debates to defend their lineages and the reputation of their monasteries.

The Mongols and their Inner Asian ancestors were not strangers to Buddhism long before the Mongol Empire of the thirteenth century. As Christopher Atwood points out, "The earliest Inner Asian empire to accept Buddhism was the western branch of the first Türk Empire (552-659), under

which Buddhism became the court religion."[11] Based on archeological evidence, Mongolian scholars also maintain that the Huns (Xiongnu) should be identified as the ancestors of the Mongols and that Buddhism was well adopted by the Hun Empire (209 B.C.E. – 1st century C.E.).[12] However, it was Kubilai Khagan (Qubilai Qağan, 1215-1294), who eventually became the first Great Emperor ruling the Yüan dynasty, and who summoned the Tibetan Sakya hierarch Pakpa Lodrö Gyeltsen ('Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1235-1280) to his camp in 1253 and eventually promoted him to the imperial preceptor (帝師). It is only after that event that Tibetan Buddhism was officially recognized by the Mongols in the east as their main religion. The thirteenth-century Mongol court's reception of Buddhism from Tibetan lamas is often considered the first dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolia. This chapter, however, is concerned with the early years of the second dissemination of Tibetan Buddhism to Mongolia, especially in its Geluk form.

In the sixteenth century, within an ostensible dynasty, which historians conceptually call the Northern Yüan, Mongolian polity consisted of the federations of many fragmented Mongol tribes, some of which were more powerful than the others.[13] The federations were seldom unified under one ruler,

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[11] Atwood 2004: 48.

[12] See for example, N. Ishjamts 2004: 235-245.

[13] The term "Northern Yüan" is often used by scholars denoting the dynastic regime ruled by the Chinggisid Mongols after they were withdrawn from China proper to the north in 1368. However, about the duration of the dynasty, scholars express different opinions. For example, Luc Kwanten (1979: 272) asserts that the Northern Yüan dynasty, whose primary aim was the

i.e., the Great Khagan (Mon: *qağan* or *khaan*), and were often disassociated by war—sometimes with one another and other times with the rival Ming dynasty of China. In the second half of the century, Altan Khan (1507-1582) of the Tümed Mongol tribe became a dominant force in the Mongol world.[14] One of Altan's momentous activities was the historic invitation of the leading representatives of the Tibetan Buddhist Geluk school, which had become noticeably well-positioned as a religiopolitical institution in central Tibet, to his newly occupied region of the Koko Nor (Köke Nağur) area, an important site where trade routes from and to Tibetan, Mongolian, Chinese, Uyghur, and other lands intersect. Within a few decades of Altan Khan's invitation of the Geluk leaders, almost all major Mongol groups—the Chinggisid Mongols in the east and the Oirat tribes in the west—actively converted to the Geluk form of Buddhism. They reformed their legal codes based on Tibetan Buddhist principles and established routines of monastic and lay Buddhist practice. While this was going on, there were also attempts to *mongolize* Tibetan Buddhism by translating a large corpus of Buddhist texts, including scriptures, esoteric ritual

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reconquest of China, was maintained only for 20 years following 1368 whereas Christopher Atwood (2004: 407) states that the Chinggisid emperors of the Northern Yüan maintained the claim for their legitimacy until its last emperor Ligden Khan (b. 1588 – r. 1604 – d. 1634) died.

[14] The Tümed was one of the three *tümen*s of the Right-Wing of the Eastern Mongols ruled by the Chinggisids. In the early sixteenth century, the Dayüan Khagan Batumöngke reunited the Mongols and reorganized the Eastern Mongols, a.k.a. the Chinggisid Mongols, into six *tümen*s within the Right and Left-Wings. The Khalkha (Qalq-a), Chahar (Čaqar), and Uriankhai (Uriyangqan) were the three *tümen*s of the Left-Wing, and the Ordos (Ordus), Tümed, and Yünsheebü (Yünsiyebü) were of the Right-Wing. In addition to the six *tümen*s, the Western Mongols, a.k.a. the Oirats, were the organized federations of four *tümen*s, which have been variously accounted in different contexts and times; yet they are commonly listed as the Choros, Torgut, Dörbet, and Khoit tribes.

and meditation manuals, doctrinal teachings, religious stories, etc., from Tibetan into Mongolian.



Map 1: Adapted and modified from "Empires of Ming, Jurchen (Later Jin), Mongol, Oirat, Upper Mongols (Kokonur, Qinghai), Chagatai Khanate (Yarkent Khanate), Turpan circa 1616" by Kallgan

Map 1 shows estimated territories of the Mongol groups, Chinggisid and Oirats, of the sixteenth- and the seventeenth-century, as well as those of the Ming dynasty, central Tibet, and the Later Jin dynasty of the Jianzhou Jurchens (建州女真).[15]

[15] Map 1 is a retouched picture, altered from its first English version by Kallgan, which was also modified from the original Chinese version. See Kallgan 2019a: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/ca/Map-Qing_Dynasty_1616-en.jpg.

The Geluk Interest and Altan Khan

By the mid sixteenth century, central Tibet was fragmented along regional aristocratic and religious sectarian lines. As the previous ruling power Pakmodru's strength gradually waned, the Geluk monasteries in central Tibet, which was supported by the Pakmodru authorities, began to suffer from the lack of rich patronage they used to have. In the meantime, the monasteries of the competing Karma Kagyü sect in Tsang, supported by the new political powers—the Rinpungba and the Tsangpa—in the west, were attempting to expand their influence toward the Ü region of central Tibet, where the major large Geluk monasteries had been established. Eventually, some Geluk monasteries were forcefully converted to the Kagyü tradition, and their monks were required to follow the Kagyü practices, including the style of a monastic clothing.[16] This tense and difficult situation in which the Geluk tradition found itself called for the search of new political and financial sources of support. The Chinese Ming dynasty in the mid sixteenth century was relatively weak, slowly losing its glory, and it showed very little interest in Tibet.[17]

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[16] According to Shakabpa's account, the Geluk monks were required to wear red hats of the Karma Kagyü school when going about in small numbers, but once they stepted inside their monasteries, they turned their hats inside out, displaying the yellow color of the Geluk school. Shakabpa 1984: 90.

Shakabpa also reports that after Rinpung forces took over the Lhasa area sometime after 1498, the monks of Drepung and Sera monasteries were not able to attend their annual Mönlam festival in Lhasa until the Rinpungs were driven out in 1517. Shakabpa 1984: 88 and 90.

[17] Compared to the Yüan and Qing policies, the relatively passive attention from the Ming court to Tibetan Buddhism may be explained by the dynasty's emphasis on the restoration of

As mentioned above, despite the nominal Great Khagan Daraisun Güdeng (1520-1557) still reigning the Northern Yüan, Altan Khan led the most important military campaigns against the Oirats, who had taken over much of the Chinggisid Mongol territories. He won back from the Oirats the important section of the Mongol territory, where Karakorum, the ancient capital of the Great Mongolian Empire of the thirteenth century, had once flourished, and where the Khalkha tribes would center in the following centuries. However, though probably the most powerful, Altan would not be able to legitimately take over the khagan's throne because he was only a leader of the Right-Wing of the Eastern Mongols whereas the Great Khagans were customarily chosen among the Left-Wings, since the time of Dayan (or Dayüan, 大元) Khagan Batumöngke (1464-1517/43). Thus, Altan was ostensibly subordinate to the legitimate khagan Daraisun Güdeng. Nevertheless, not only did his power eventually exceed the latter's but he also pushed his own territorial border toward the east by forcing out the Chahars, the direct subjects of the Great Khagan, to move further eastward, all the way to the Liao River in the northeastern China proper, almost reaching the Bohai Sea. Accepting Altan's rulership over the Right-Wing Mongol federations and his successful campaign against the Uriankhans and the Oirats, the Khagan granted him the title "Khan" and avoided direct conflicts with him.[18]

Confucian traditions regarding institutions and policies, intentionally replacing the old Yüan practices inherited from the Mongol dominance. See Dawa Norbu 2001: 59-60.

[18] Most sources, including the *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan*, record Altan as a khagan, as opposed to a khan. While it is questionable why the legitimate Great Khagan bestowed the tile of

After Daraisun Güdeng, his eldest son Tümen Jasağtu (1539-1592) was enthroned as the khagan in 1558. Unlike his father, Tümen Jasağtu succeeded not only to unite the Right and Left-Wings of the Eastern Mongolia but also, thanks to Altan Khan and Qutuğtai Sečen Qong Tayiji (1540-1586) of Ordos Mongols, to bring back portions of the Four Oirats' federation, the Western Mongols. Under his rulership, the Mongols expanded their dominance to the eastern regions, including over the Jurchens—the chief ethnic group of the later Manchus. Tümen Jasağtu Khagan is also remembered for his codification of laws and for his reformation of the central governance among the fragmented Mongol tribes after the Dayan Khagan's reunification.

Altan Khan had also led a number of military operations against Ming China. As a result, the Ming emperor offered him tributes and a peace agreement along with trade concessions. Then, toward the west, Altan invaded the Koko Nor region, defeated the Oirats, and conquered the Khotanese. It is believed that during this campaign, in 1558, Altan encountered Tibetan Buddhist monks. He refrained from destroying their establishments, despite the fact that he, like the other Eastern Mongol lords of the early sixteenth century, had yet to convert to Buddhism.[19] In fact, although the Mongol nobility of the thirteenth century,

khagan to his subordinate, it is possible that the title was to designate Altan's rulership over all of the Right-Wing tribes.

[19] Although among the eastern, or Chinggisid Mongols, of the early sixteenth century, the presence of Tibetan Buddhism had become very minimal, the western Mongols, or the Oirats, still had access to Tibetan Buddhism and Buddhist clergy, perhaps mostly to those of non-Geluk orders, as well as to Christian and Islamic traditions. The geographical location of the Oirats was relatively close to the regions in which those religions were dominant was most likely responsible for their access to non-Geluk traditions as well as to Christianity and Islam. For more

especially those in the capital of Karakorum and in the Yüan court, had been converted to Tibetan Buddhism, among the Eastern Mongols of the first half of the sixteenth century, Buddhism seems to have been already lost its influence in their everyday life. However, in 1571, Altan Khan hosted in his court Dzoge Ashing, a.k.a Aseng ('Dzo dge A seng, 16th century) or Azheng Lama (A zhang bla ma), a Tibetan missionary, who encouraged him to adopt Tibetan Buddhism in its Geluk form and to invite Sönam Gyatso (Bsod nams rgya mtsho, 1543-1588), one of the most important Geluk clergymen of the time, who would later be recognized as the Third Dalai Lama.[20] It is not quite clear how Altan Khan was convinced to invite Sönam Gyatso and his party to his court. In any case, in response to Altan's invitation, and consulting with his advisors, Sönam Gyatso was initially reluctant to accept the Khan's invitation, and hence, he appointed the Dulba master Rinchen Tsöndru Gyaltsen (Rin chen brtson 'grus rgyal mtshan, 16th century) to go meet Altan.[21]

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information on the activities of Tibetan lamas in Oiratia after the Great Yüan dynasty and before the dissemination of the Geluk order in Mongol lands, see Jagchid 1971.

[20] More reliable and detailed information about Ashing Lama was not found. Tibetan sources spell his name as *A seng*. Based on the findings of the Inner Mongolian scholar Darmabazar, D. Zayabaatar reports that Ashing Lama, whose personal name was Sherab, was an Amdo native and a maternal uncle of Sönam Gyatso, the future Dalai Lama, for which reason he may have been called Azhang, meaning "maternal uncle" in Tibetan. [Anonymous] 2006a: 120. According to this source, Ashing Lama studied at Drepung Monastery in central Tibet, came to Inner Mongolia through Wutai Shang, and met Altan Khan at Tsagaan Khad (Čağan Qada), just outside of Hohhot to the north. Nonetheless, Sönam Gyatso's Tibetan biographies do not mention anything about this apparent family relation between the two men.

[21] In the Sönam Gyatso's hagiography composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso, this appointed person's name is mentioned as Tsöndru Zangpo (Brtson 'drus bzang po). Later Tibetan sources identify this person as the founder of a hermitage in Tsongkha where Kumbum Monastery was later established.

Also, at this time, Altan Khan was probably ill. For the stability of Altan Khan's life, a longevity ritual associated with the Buddhist deity Uṣṇīṣavijayā, or Tsüktor Namgyelma (Gtsug gtor rnam rgyal ma), was performed at Sönam Gyatso's private ritual college (Tib. *grwa tshang*) Pendé Lekshéling (Phan bde legs bshad gling). Since then, this college has been known as Namgyel College (Rnam rgyal grwa tshang).[22] Until the new evidence emerges, we can only speculate as to why Altan Khan sent a second invitation to Sönam Gyatso. Is it possible that Altan Khan recovered from his illness and considered his recovery was owing to Sönam Gyatso's ritual or did he also have a secular motivation related to the glory of his great ancestor Kubilai Khagan, who had conquered the entire contiguous regions and was also honored as a great Buddhist monarch (*cakravartin*)? Kubilai ruled Tibet not as much by military means as through the strength of Tibet's own Buddhist leaders. Moreover, stories about Kubilai's witnesses of miraculous deeds performed by Tibetan lamas that we can find today were probably also told in Altan's days. It is not unimaginable that Altan Khan, now wealthy yet old and probably ill, was seeking more clever strategies to stretch his political power, while also seeking answers to personal concerns—health and wellbeing. In either case, it appears that his close associate Qutuğtai Sečen Qong Tayiji, who is remembered for his remarkable success in military campaigns and for his revision of Mongolian Buddhist legal codes, also played an important role in inviting Sönam Gyatso to Mongolia, perhaps as one of the

[22] Blo bzang bsam gtan 2003: 2.

masterminds behind the Mongol's second adoption of Tibetan Buddhism. We will revisit this idea below.

The Mongols' Reception of the Geluk Hierarchs in Amdo

In the meantime, the Rinpungbas were threatening the Lhasa area in central Tibet. In 1575, soon after the Geluk Mönlam festival, the chief of Rinpung raised an army against the Tibetan Geluk benefactors and reached Kyishö (Skyid shod) region in lower Lhasa.[23] Although this particular campaign was unsuccessful in Lhasa, many Geluk monasteries elsewhere had been already forcefully converted to the Karma Kagyü order. Sönam Gyatso traveled extensively in central Tibet, attempting to establish friendly relationships with the authorities of the Karma Kagyü and other Tibetan Buddhist orders, but he was far from succeeding in building a peace between the rivalry local chieftains fractioned by warfare.

Meanwhile, in 1576, Tümen Jasağtu Khagan of Mongolia hosted in hist court a certain Karma Kagyü lama, known as the *ildün-i ǰanggiduǧči* ("the one who tangles a sword"), and converted to Tibetan Buddhism under him.[24] This information shows that the adherents of the Karma Kagyü order were also active in Mongolia, attempting to missionize the Mongols through the khagans and their courts.

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[23] See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 543; and Shakabpa: 298.

[24] Shagdar 2010: 12.

Having repeatedly received invitations from Altan Khan, Sönam Gyatso, after careful contemplation and consultations with chief Geluk patrons and adherents, including the Dharma-protector Behar, decided to meet Altan Khan in Amdo, in the region northeast of the Tibetan plateau, a large portion of which Altan Khan already controlled. Having departed to Amdo in 1577, Sönam Gyatso seems to have never returned to Lhasa.

Amdo, together with Kham, is generally considered as the eastern Tibet and collectively called Do-Kham. However, during Sönam Gyatso's trip to this area, there was no direct political relation between central Tibet and the Amdo regions nor was there any administrative unit called "Amdo," a term that came into existence under Geluk influence in the region beginning from the following century.[25] Even central Tibet was not ruled by a centralized political power, since different chieftains and families, such as the Khön, Pakmodru, Rinpung, and others, ruled different areas. A similar situation was in Amdo, but the Amdowas, the major ethnic group in premodern Amdo, did not consider themselves Tibetans (*bod pa*)—that is, to belong to the same ethnic group as those in central Tibet.[26] Moreover, in contrast to Central Tibet and Kham, where the Geluk has established monasteries, the Geluk presence in northern Amdo

[25] Tuttle: https://collab.its.virginia.edu/wiki/aboutthl/An%20Overview%20of%20Amdo%20%28Northeastern%20Tibet%29%20Historical%20Polities.html.

[26] Local Mongolians in Amdo and surrounding areas often refer to the Amdowas as "the Tanguts," thus distinguishing them from Tibetans.

was relatively minimal even after a century and half when Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419), an Amdo native who founded the Geluk order, and his direct disciples had established early Geluk monasteries in central Tibet and Kham.[27]

Altan Khan and Sönam Gyatso met at the khan's camp prepared for the meeting at Chabcha in Koko Nor region in 1578. The khan's meeting with the Geluk grand clergyman took place right after the consecration of Kumbum Monastery—perhaps the first Geluk monastery of the region where Tsongkhapa was born—by Rinchen Tsöndru Gyaltsen.[28] Nonetheless, the inauguration of this monastery may not have been directly related to the historical meeting.[29] In Sönam Gyatso's retinue at the Mongol camp were also present the two younger but important Geluk "reincarnated" (*tülku*) lamas—Sönam Yeshé Wangpo (Bsod nams ye shes dbang po, 1556-1592) and Yönten Gyatso (Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1556-1587). Sönam Yeshé Wangpo's incarnation lineage is traced back to Tsongkhapa's famous disciple Düldzin Drakpa Gyaltsen ('Dul 'dzin Grags pa

[27] The first Geluk monastery established in central Tibet was Ganden Monastery founded by Tsongkhapa himself in 1409; and the first Geluk monastery Chamdo Chökhor Jampaling (Chab mdo chos 'khor byams pa gling) in Kham was established by his disciple Jansem Sherab Zangpo (Byang sems shes rab bzang po, 1395-1457) in 1436. According to Tuttle, the first Geluk monastery established in Amdo is Kālari Kirti (KA la ri kirti), founded by the First Kirti Gendun Gyeltsen (1374-1450) in 1412. See Tuttle 2012: 129 and 132.

[28] There had been an early establishment of a minor retreat hut in 1560 at the place where Kumbum Monastery was later established by Rinchen Tsöndru Gyaltsen. Tuttle 2012: 133.

[29] See Gruschke, v. 1: 22 and 215. It is unclear whether Sönam Gyatso visited Kumbum Monastery during his first visit to the Koko Nor region; but it seems much more clear that he established a monastic college in Kumbum during his second visit to Amdo in 1584.

rgyal mtshan, 1374-1434), who had been considered, along with Gyaltsab Darma Rinchen (Rgyal tshab Dar ma rin chen, 1364-1432), as one of the two closest disciples of Tsongkhapa until Khédrub Gélek Pelzang (Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang, 1385-1438) displaced his role.[30] Sönam Yeshé Wangpo, the fourth in the Kyorlung Ngari (Skyor lung mnga' ris) incarnation lineage, was recognized as the immediate reincarnation of the eminent Paṇchen Sönam Drakpa (PaN chen Bsod nams grags pa,1478-1554), a prolific scholar, who was Sönam Gyatso's teacher and the only person in Geluk history who held the thrones of all the three Geluk monastic seats in Lhasa—Ganden, Drepung, and Sera. While residing in Drepung Monastery, Sönam Drakpa established his residence, known as the Upper Chamber (*gzims khang gong ma*), a potentially competing estate with that of Sönam Gyatso, which was known as the Lower Chamber (*gzims khang 'og ma*) or as Ganden Podrang (Dga' ldan pho brang) established by Sönam Gyatso's previous "incarnation" Gendün Gyatso, (Dge 'dun rgya mtsho, 1475-1542).[31] Because of Sönam Drakpa's preeminent reputation in the Geluk domain, his "reincarnation" Sönam Yeshé Wangpo was obviously regarded as a very high-ranking *tülku* lama. Indeed, the incarnation lineages of Sönam Gyatso and Sönam Yeshé Wangpo may have been regarded the highest *tülku* lineages in

[30] For Düldzin Drakpa Gyaltsen as a previous incarnation of the Tongkhor *tülku*s, see [Anonymous] 2006a: 84-91.

[31] As it was common in Tibetan monastic structures, the Upper and Lower Chambers were named after their elevation levels in Drepung's landscape. Although a competition between the two chambers has been speculated later, there seemed no indication of conflicts between the two during Gendün Gyatso, Sönam Drakpa, Sönam Gyatso, and Sönam Yeshé Wangpo's lifetimes or even much later than them.

the sixteenth- and the early seventeenth-century Geluk tradition until the institutions of the Dalai and Paṇchen Lamas replaced them in the seventeenth century.[32]

As for Yönten Gyatso,[33] he was recognized as the Second Tongkhor Zhabdrung (Stong 'khor zhabs drung) and as a reincarnation of Dawa Gyaltsen (Zla ba rgyal mtshan, 1476-1556), the founder of Tongkhor Tashi Lhünpo (Stong 'khor Bkra shis lhun po) Monastery in Kham. In 1583, Tongkhor Yönten Gyatso was installed at Sera Monastery as its throne-holder.[34] Later, he would be appointed by Sönam Gyatso as the resident lama of Altan Khan's court followed by his extensive missionary activities throughout Eastern and Western Mongol groups. Eventually, his reincarnation lineage split to at least three different lineages. One resided in his original Tongkhor Monastery in Kham, the second in another Tongkhor Monastery, known as Tongkhor Ganden Chönkhorling (Stong 'khor Dga' ldan chos 'khor gling) in Amdo, and the third in Khalkha as one of its most important *qutuǧtu* lineages.[35] Sönam Gyatso brought

[32] In the seventeenth century, a controversy rose between the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682) and Düldzin Drakpa Gyeltsen (1619-1656)—the later indirect "reincarnations" of Sönam Gyatso and Sönam Yeshé Wangpo, respectively—resulting in a great tension among their Geluk followers. The controversy has been fueled as the Dorjé Shukden issue and still noticeably continues in contemporary Tibetan communities to this day. For the issue, for example, see Dreyfus 1998.

[33] Yönten Gyatso, who came from Kham to join Sönam Gyatso at Chabcha, took the opportunity to receive his full ordination from him.

[34] Cabezón 2019: 536.

[35] The first Mongolian Tongkhor Mañjuśrī Qutugtu is said to be the Second Jebtsundampa Lobsang Tenpé Drönmé's (Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, 1724-1757) teacher Ayimag Saba-yi Bariǧči Ačitu Nom-un Qan Lobsang Jampel Tenzin (Upholder of the Tripiṭaka, the Kind Dharma-Lord Blo bzang 'jam dpal bstan 'dzin, 1695-1750). However, Mañjuśrī Qutugtu of

these two men to the meeting with Altan Khan perhaps because they were expected to contribute to the Geluk expansion among Mongols. The three—Sönam Gyatso, Sönam Yeshé Wangpo, and Yönten Gyatso—were greatly honored by Altan Khan, and their subsequent "reincarnations" were highly revered by the future Geluk Mongols.[36]

It is said that in order to express his commitment to introduce Buddhism in Mongolia and accept Sönam Gyatso's religious authority, Altan Khan ordered 108 men among his twelve Tümeds, including one of his grandsons, to receive ordination from Sönam Gyatso. Following this example, many Mongol princes had their sons be ordained as well.[37] This marked the introduction of monasticism in Mongolia centuries after the Great Yüan dynasty had collapsed. I have yet to find an account of a large number of ethnic Mongols being ordained

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Khalkha is mentioned in the *Laws of Da Qing (Daičing Ulus-un Mağad Qauli)* as early as 1647. The chronicle titled *A History by Asarağči (Asarağči Neretü-yin Teüke*), written in 1677, clarifies the family genealogy of a certain Khalkha Mañjuśrī Qutugtu. For a brief note about early Khalkha's Mañjuśrī Qutugtu(s), see N. Khatanbaatar: 217-8. Thus, the Khalkha Tongkhor Mañjuśrī Qutugtu lineage may have been initiated before Ngawang Jampel Tenzin, or there were also more than one Tongkhor Mañjuśrī Qutugtu lineage in Khalkha.

[36] Sönam Yeshé Wangpo, Yönten Gyatso, and their subsequent "reincarnations" are famous in the history of Buddhism in Mongolia. For example, the *Pure Dharma-Body (Rnam dag chos sku ma)*, an incense offering ritual text, by Sönam Yeshé Wangpo is commonly recited in Mongolia for both monastic ceremonial offerings and lay household or for the landscape purification rites. Subsequently, the Fifth Kyorung Ngari Tülku Drakpa Gyeltsen (1594-1615) is said to have been highly honored by Mongol pilgrims, resulting in a possible competition between the Upper and Lower Chambers in Drepung; whereas, Tongkhor Yönten Gyatso is remembered for his leading role in the dissemination of Geluk tradition to Eastern Mongolia. His subsequent reincarnation Gyalwa Gyatso (Rgyal ba rgya mtsho, 1588-1639) spread the tradition among the Oirat Mongols. Later, Khalkha's Tongkhor Mañjuśrī incarnation lineage became one of major *qutuğtu* lines, with a seal to govern the serfs (Mon. *shabi nar*) within the domain of Khalkha Jebtsundampa's estates.

[37] See, for example, [Anonymous] 2006a: 52.

during the early Buddhist dissemination in the Mongol Empire, when many of the Mongol nobility converted to Tibetan Buddhism. While Altan Khan was not delaying his efforts in developing monasticism among ethnic Mongols with the assistance of Sönam Gyatso, he prosecuted the indigenous *bö (böge)* practitioners, destroyed their *ongǧud*s (shamanic idols), and outlawed shamanic rituals of blood sacrifice performed for the deceased, replacing them with Buddhist prayers and worships of the Buddhist deities such as Mahākāla. He also instituted legal codes that protected the Buddhist monastics. Qutuǧtai Sečen Qong Tayiji, the talented Ordos Mongol nobleman who assisted Altan Khan in defeating his rivals, edited the *White History of the Ten Virtuous Dharmas (Arban Buyantu Nom-un Čaǧan Teüke)*—a Mongol legal document which he attributed to Kubilai Khagan and which is influenced by Buddhist principles—and distribute it as Altan Khan's new regulations, which authorized a dissemination of Buddhism among Mongols.[38]

During Sönam Gyatso's visit to Altan Khan's camp, Altan and his Tibetan guests mutually awarded themselves with prestigious titles. Altan Khan offered to Sönam Gyatso the title of "Dalai Lama Vajradhara," together with a hundred-*srang* golden seal with a silver box and other abundant gifts. The latter, along

[38] About the authorship of the *White History of the Ten Virtuous Dharmas*, see [Anonymous] 2006b: 5-17; and about Qutuǧtai Sečen Qong Tayiji's edition of this text, see [Anonymous] 2006b: 10 and Sağan Sečen 2006: 316. Accounts found in Mongolian sources, such as in the *Precious Summary (Erdeni-yin Tobči)* by Qutuǧtai Sečen Qong Tayiji's grandson Sağan Sečen Qong Tayiji (b. 1604), and in Tibetan sources, such as the *Hagiography of Sönam Gyatso (Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i rnam thar)* by the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682), contain selections of the Altan Khan's Buddhist legal codes.

with the lamas of his incarnation lineage in the Geluk order, became known as a "Dalai Lama." Altan Khan also offered the titles of "Mayidaru Qutuğtu" ("Noble Maitreya") and "Manjuširi Qutuğtu" ("Noble Mañjuśrī") to Sönam Yeshé Wangpo and Yönten Gyatso, respectively. For their assistance in inviting Sönam Gyatso to Koko Nor, Altan Khan bestowed the title of "Ečege Lama" ("Father Lama") to Ashing Lama; and to Taklung Nangso (Stag lung nang so, 16th century) he gave the title "Dayičin Darqan" ("Inviolable Adjutant").[39] In return, Sönam Gyatso awarded Altan Khan with the title of "Cakravartin Dharma King, Great Brahmā of Gods," and to his queen Jüngken (16th century), he gave the name of "Ārya Tārā." At this time, the interpreter by name Ayuši (16th-17th century) was given the title "Ānanda Mañjuśrī Güöši" for his knowledge of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian languages; and other Mongolian and Tibetan officials were also awarded meritorious titles for their executive roles in Sönam Gyatso's visit and in bringing the copies of the Kangyur (*bka' 'gyur*) and Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*) to Altan Khan's Mongol camp. We will briefly see Ānanda Mañjuśrī Güöši Ayuši's contribution to the literary transformation of Tibetan Buddhism in the Mongolian language later in this chapter.

Altan Khan's intention to receive Sönam Gyatso in his residence, imitated Kubilai Khagan's reception of Pakpa Lama, who later became the imperial

[39] I could not identify with certainty who Taklung Nangso, Sönam Gyatso's adjutant was, and I wonder whether he was Taklung Zhabdrung Namgyel Tashi (Stag lung zhabs drung Rnam rgyal bkra shis, 1536-1599/1605), who commissioned the restorations of Taklung Monastery and the Jowo Temple in Lhasa and who also travelled to Mongolia.

preceptor, and Sönam Gyatso's interest in gaining a strong political ally for his Geluk order coincided. First, Sönam Gyatso, now entitled as the Dalai Lama, suggested Altan make a *maṇḍala* offering to the Jowo statue in Lhasa, probably the most central Buddhist sacred object in Tibet, as a symbol of their diplomatic relations in both religious and temporal matters. In response, Altan Khan prepared a large silver *maṇḍala* for the Jowo statue as well as many valuable items and a large number of monetary offerings for Geluk monasteries in Lhasa. He sent Ashing Lama to deliver them to Tibet. Afterwards, Altan Khan requested the Dalai Lama to bestow upon him the empowerment of Hevajra, a Buddhist deity of the Unexcelled Yoga Tantra, as Kubilai Khagan had received the empowerment from Pakpa Lama of the Sakya order. The fact that he asked for the empowerment may be suggestive of his intention to be seen as the "second" Kubilai who replicates the activities of the Buddhist Great Emperor. However, one should not disregard the possibility of Altan Khan's genuine faith in Buddhism and its effectiveness.[40] In any event, although the bestowal of the Hevajra empowerment in the Geluk tradition was not as popular as it was in the Sakya order, Sönam Gyatso fulfilled Altan Khan's request by conferring the empowerment upon him, his queen, heirs, officials, and ministers. It is said that

[40] According to the *Hagiography of Sönam Gyatso* and the *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan*, both written in the first half of the 17th century, the khan was already complaining about his health at the time when he sent an invitation to Sönam Gyatso and at the time of their meeting. Each time Sönam Gyatso performed rituals that were effective for the khan's health. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009a: 129 and [Anonymous] 2006a: 51. These events possibly contributed Altan Khan to generate faith in Buddhist rituals.

in return, Altan Khan offered to the Dalai Lama many precious objects as well as the three regions of central Tibet—Ü, Tsang, and Ngari.[41] Altan Khan never had central Tibet under his rulership to be able to offer it. That offering may have been an expression of his intent to conquer central Tibet and transfer the rulership to Sönam Gyatso, in which case, it would resemble Kubilai's offering of the three *cholkha*s (Mon: *chölge*, Tib: *chol kha*), the three regions of Tibet, to Pakpa Lama.[42]

Sönam Gyatso consecrated the place where he had met with Altan Khan in order to establish Tekchen Chönkhorling (Theg chen chos 'khor gling) Monastery that would be sponsored by Altan Khan.[43] Although there were functioning Geluk pilgrimages and small settlements in Amdo prior to the founding of this monastery, the establishment of Tekchen Chönkhorling was likely the first ever Mongol-sponsored, sizeable Geluk monastery in the Koko Nor area.[44] In any case, the monastery was to be built in a Chinese style by Chinese artisans and

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[41] The *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan* vaguely mentions that Altan Khan offered the three regions to Sönam Gyatso. [Anonymous] 2006a: 57. However, Sönam Gyatso's hagiography does not confirm this account.

[42] Kubilai Khan is said to have offered the three *chölka*s to Pakpa. The three regions are often referred to Ü-Tsang, Dotö, and Domé. However, Eveline Yang argues that the three *chölka*s offered by Kubilai may have been limited only to the central and eastern three regions of Tibet (Ü, Tsang, and Ngari), excluding the two western Tibetan cultural regions (Dotö and Domé). See Yang: 558.

[43] Tegchen Chönkhorling Monastery is located in Chabcha, the seat of Gonghe County of Qinghai Province, PRC.

[44] Although Kumbum Monastery, which eventually became much larger and more renowned monastery than Tekchen Chönkhorling, had been established by Tsöndru Zangpo earlier than the latter, at this point during Altan and Sönam Gyatso's meeting, its size and fame were much minimal.

craftsmen. At this time, Sönam Gyatso also received abundant gifts from neighboring Chinese rulers.

Not only did Altan Khan convert to Tibetan Buddhism and encourage other Mongol tribes to adopt it, but he also attempted to missionize western regions including that of Yarkent Khanate, the last successor of the Chinggisid Chagadai Khanate. For this purpose, he led a military campaign against the Muslim Hui group, known as the "white-cap people," and succeeded in establishing a peaceful relation with the Yarkent ruler Abdul Karim Khan (1529-1591), and conquered the Uighurs and the Hui people in the Turpan area.

Consulting with the Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatso, Altan Khan decided to establish a Buddhist center with a large statue of Jowo Śākyamuni back in the Mongolian steppe. Building the monumental statue of Jowo Śākyamuni as an object of worship, which had a great significance in Tibetan Buddhism, may have been also not accidental. The original statue of Jowo Śākyamuni in Lhasa, which was supposedly brought by the Chinese Tang dynasty's princess Wencheng (文成, 628-680/2) to Tibet during the emperor Songtsen Gampo's (Srong btsan sgam po, d. 649) reign, is considered the most sacred statue for Tibetan Buddhists. To create its replica meant to create a new Buddhist center in Mongolia. Erecting the replicas of important Tibetan sacred temples, religious institutions, monastic structures, etc. became a common practice in Amdo and in Mongolia in the following centuries, perhaps for the purposes of creating new, important institutions in the region that would be equal to or rival the originals.

According to the *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan*, when the Dalai Lama advised Altan Khan to commission the Jowo monastic structure as a Buddhist center, he also assigned Tongkhor Yönten Gyatso, now known as the "Mañjuśrī Qutugtu," to be his representative in the khan's court.[45] By 1580, the Geluk monastery that was sponsored by Altan Khan housed the large Jowo Śākyamuni statue made of 30,000 pure silver coins. It was built in modern-day Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, where the khan's primary residence was located and became known as Ikh Zuu (Yeke Jou), or the Great Jowo Temple.

The Dalai Lama departed from the Mongol camp in Chabcha to Kham, where already a handful of Geluk monasteries were functioning in contrast to the situation of that time in Amdo. During that visit, the Dalai Lama founded additional Geluk monasteries there. In Kham, in the autumn of 1579, he was visited by a delegation of the Ming emperor Wanli (萬曆帝, 1563-1620), who with copious gifts invited him to the Ming court. Under Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng's (張居正, 1525-1582) administrative reforms, the Ming dynasty's economic and military strength by then had been significantly improved in comparison to that of the preceding decades.[46] Thus, the dynasty's external policy toward Tibet may have been temporarily reactivated until its next crises that caused the dynasty's eventual collapse. In any event, the Dalai Lama never

[45] [Anonymous] 2006a: 60.

[46] About Zhang Juzheng's reforms, see, for example, Miller: 28.

went to the Chinese capital. Simultaneous with Altan Khan's commission of Ikh Zuu, the most central Geluk monastery of Inner Mongolia, the Dalai Lama also established Litang Ganden Tübchen Chönkhorling (Li thang Dga' ldan thub chen chos 'khor gling), in 1580, which was a major Geluk monastery in Kham.

While the Dalai Lama, who was again invited by the Mongols, was too busy with his missions in Kham, Altan Khan died at his Mongolian residence in 1582. The khan's body was buried, and Tibetan Buddhist funerary practices were performed. The Ming emperor Wanli sent his delegation with lavish offerings for ritual performances according to a Chinese custom as well. Nonetheless, according to Sağan Sečen's *Precious Summary* (*Erdeni-yin Tobči*), later on, the Dalai Lama, during his visit to Mongolia condemned the fact that the khan's body had been buried. Hence, the body was taken out and cremated under the Dalai Lama's supervision.[47]

In the following year of the khan's death, the Dalai Lama visited the Kumbum Monastery, where he established a philosophy college (*bshad grwa*).[48] From then on, the Kumbum Monastery grew into one of the largest Geluk monasteries in Amdo. Afterwards, by the invitation of Altan Khan's successor Dügüreng Sengge Khan (1521/2-1585), the Dalai Lama came to the khan's main

[47] Sağan Sečen: 158.

[48] The Third Dalai Lama's founding of the philosophy college is mostly narrated in the traditional Tibetan Buddhist scholarships. However, Tuttle notes that Kumbum was not said to be a proper Geluk monastery until under the Fourth Dalai Lama instruction that a philosophy college be established there in 1612. Tuttle 2012: 134.

court in Hohhot.[49] Similarly to Tsongkhapa, who in 1409 offered a precious crown to the Jowo statue in Lhasa, transforming it from a representation of the Buddha's Emanation Body (*nirmāṇakāya*) to that of his Enjoyment Body (*saṃbhogakāya*), the Dalai Lama ordered the queen Jüngken to commission a golden crown for Ikh Zuu's Jowo statue to transform it to the same representation of the Buddha's Enjoyment Body. Upon the ceremony of the crown offering to the statue, the Dalai Lama declared that the statue became equal to the original Jowo statue in Lhasa. While the Dalai Lama was still in Hohhot, Dügüreng Sengge Khan died and Namudai Sečen (d. 1607) succeeded him.

Another significant event in relation to the Mongol adoption of Tibetan Buddhism during the Dalai Lama's stay in Hohhot was Khalkha's Abatai Khan's (1554-1588) visit to him in 1587. Abatai was not a complete stranger to Buddhism since he was responsible for the founding of Erdene Zuu (Erdeni Jou) Monastery, also known as Lhündrub Dechenling (Lhun grub bde chen gling), in 1585 or 1586 in Khalkha at the remains of the ancient Mongolian imperial center Karakorum. In this way, he initiated the Khalkha's appropriation of Tibetan Buddhist monasticism.[50] During his meeting with Dalai Lama in

[49] The *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan* reports that Dügüreng Khan died on the 29th of the last Autumn Month of the Blue Bird Year (1585) at the age of 65. See [Anonymous] 2006a: 71. Following the Mongolian tradition, Dügüreng Khan's birthyear can be calculated as 1521-2. If the accounts in the *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan* of the respective birthyears of Altan Khan and Dügüreng Khan are true, Altan Khan fathered Dügüreng Khan around at age of 14.

[50] …

Hohhot, he was offered the title of "Ochirai Khan" by the Dalai Lama after his fortuitous selection of Vajrapāṇi as his tutelary deity.[51] For this reason, he has been considered by some to be an emanation of Vajrapāṇi.[52] According to Sağan Sečen, despite the Dalai Lama's concern not to affect the hierarchy within the Mongol aristocracy, Abatai repeatedly requested that the title of "khan" be given to himself.[53] Most likely due to the meeting between the Dalai Lama and Abatai Khan, Erdene Zuu became affiliated with the Geluk order, although there were the obvious signs of its Sakya aspects. For example, the main protector deity of the monastery was Panjaranātha, or Gurgyi Gönpo (Gur gyi mgon po). This could be explained by possible Sakya influences that were still present in Khalkha before the historical meeting of the Dalai Lama with Abatai Khan, and Erdene Zuu grew as a Geluk monastery after the Geluk presence substantially increased, exceeding that of Sakya.

The Dalai Lama Sönam Gyatso became very popular in Mongolia. In 1588, while traveling to the residence of the prince of the Kharchin, a tribe located in the further eastern territory of Mongolia, and perhaps to the court of the Ming emperor, the Dalai Lama unexpectedly died. Soon after that, a royal Mongol boy, the heir of Abatai Khan's grandson Sümbür Hong Tayiji (16th-17th century) was

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[51] "Ochirai" must have been derived from the Mongolian loanword *ochir (včir)*, whose Sanskrit original is *vajra*.

[52] In some versions of Sağan Sečen's *Precoius Summary*, the Dalai Lama proclaimed that Abatai was an emanation of Vajrapāṇi. Sağan Sečen 2006: 161.

[53] Ibid.

born in 1589 and was declared to be the reincarnation of the deceased Dalai Lama.[54] The boy was later officially recognized as the Fourth Dalai Lama, Yönten Gyatso (Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1589-1617). This was the Mongols' move to incorporate Sönam Gyatso's fame and influence into their political agenda. A reincarnation of arguably one of the greatest lamas of the Geluk order as a foreign boy was not easily accepted by Tibetans. In fact, the dislikes and doubts among Tibetans that had taken place then lasted until much later,[55] as there was another candidate for the "reincarnation" of the late Dalai Lama, a Tibetan boy born near Lhasa in Drikhung ('Bri khung).[56] But, rejecting the authenticity of the Mongol Dalai Lama could have jeopardized the newly regained Mongol patronage of the Geluk order. Thus, it seems that to secure the revived patron-priest relationship between Tibetan Buddhist order and the Mongol military and economic protection, the Geluk authorities in Lhasa could not help but accept the Mongol child as a true reincarnation of the late Sönam Gyatso. With intention to confirm the Mongolia child as the Dalai Lama's authentic reincarnation and to bring him "back" to Lhasa, the Tibetans sent a delegation consisting of high ranking Geluk lamas, including Dülwa Chöje ('Dul ba chos rje,

[54] According to Darma Güüsh (Dharma Göüši, 18th century), the Mongol royal boy, who was soon to become the Fourth Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso (Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1589-1617), was born in the Chinggisid "golden lineage" from his father's side and Chinggis Khan's brother Khasar's lineage from his mother's side. See Darma Güüsh 2006: 102.

[55] Suspicions about Yönten Gyatso may have been still found as late as the Fifth Dalai Lama's time. For his justification of the previous Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso's birth in Mongolia, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009c: 166-8.

[56] Ibid: 165-6.

d.u.) and the previous Dalai Lama's assistant Sangyüpa (d.u.), to Mongolia although the Mongols initially insisted that the young child be not taken away until he reached the adolescence.

After the thirty-four years of reign, in 1592, Tümen Jasağtu Khagan died, and in the following year, his eldest son Buyan Sečen (1555-1603) was enthroned as the khagan. Buyan Sečen reigned for ten years during which he successfully defended his monarchy against the Ming dynasty's attacks. During his reign, Buddhism further spread among the Mongols. He died in 1603, and his grandson Ligden, or Legden (Legs ldan, 1592-1634), became the khagan in 1604, marking the eve of the loosely linked Mongolian federations, known as the Northern Yüan dynasty. Ligden was generally accepted as the khagan by most of the Mongol groups in the early years of his reign, but eventually, only the relatively powerful Chahars, who constituted eight clans, remained under his direct rulership. In fact, different Mongol lords of his time started ruling other variously fragmented Mongol tribes. Among them were the Khalkhas and the Oirats who would hold the main role in a political history of the Mongols after the collapse of the so-called Northern Yüan. However, in his thirty years of reign, Ligden khagan unseccesfully attempted to reunite the Mongol groups and strived with various means to compete with the Ming dynasty and the Later Jin, which were respectively the longstanding adversaries to the Mongols and the then newly arising power that would later become the Qing dynasty and dominate Inner Asia for the next two and a half centuries.

In the meantime, the Jowo temple in Lhasa and many Geluk monasteries in central Tibet were continuously receiving abundant offerings and donations from the Mongols, whose conversion to Tibetan Buddhism now has become sealed by the birth of the "Mongol reincarnation" of the late Dalai Lama.

In 1602, accompanied by the welcoming Tibetans and escorting Mongols, the young Dalai Lama left his native land for central Tibet. On their way, the the Dalai Lama's entourage stopped by important monastic centers, including Reting (Rwa sgreng), Taklung (Stag lung), and Ganden, where they were received with great respects and greeted by lay officials and important clergy, including the former and sitting Ganden Tripas—the throne holders of Tsongkhapa's tradition. In return, the Dalai Lama's entourage showed respects to the monasteries and monastics with prosperous offerings. In 1603, the Dalai Lama was brought to the Jowo temple in Lhasa with large procession. There he received his *śrāmaṇera* vows (the novice monastic precepts) from Sangyé Rinchen (Sangs rgyas rin chen, 1540-1612), who had just retired as the Twenty-Seventh Ganden Tripa, as his preceptor (Skt. *upādhyāya*; Tib. *mkhan po*) and from Gendun Gyaltsen (Dge 'dun rgyal mtshan, 1532-1607), the recently installed Twenty-Eighth Ganden Tripa, as the assistant preceptor (Skt. *karmācārya*; Tib. *las kyi slob dpon*).[57] The Mongol Dalai Lama was now given the monastic name Yönten Gyatso. According to the *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan*, the young Dalai Lama chose the retired Ganden Tripa as his monastic

[57] Dpal 'byor rgya mtsho: 22b-23a.

preceptor and said that one of the reasons for his coming to central Tibet was to receive a monastic vows from the Gandan Tripa because there was no one in Mongolia who could fulfill that role.[58] If this was a strategic move of his Mongol aristocratic family, this was due to their intent to keep the Dalai Lama's status as the highest Geluk clergyman whose preceptor could be none other but the throne-holder of Tsongkhapa. The young Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso was installed in Ganden Podrang, the residence of his "previous incarnation" in Drepung. The Dalai Lama was there joined by his new tutor, a well-respected and relatively young trülku lama, who at that time was the abbot of Tashi Lhünpo, the largest Geluk monastery in Tsang, and of several other Geluk monasteries. That lama was none other than the First Paṇchen Lama Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1570-1662), who would play an exceptional role of the principal teacher of the most important Tibetan and Mongolian Geluk devotees in the coming decades. He was now appointed by the retired Ganden Tripa Sangyé Rinchen as a tutor to the young Dalai Lama. He also had an important role in the matters of choosing the next Dalai Lama and Geluk missionaries sent to the northern and northeastern regions, such as Amdo, Mongolia, and Manchuria. Upon hearing of the Dalai Lama's arrival in central Tibet, the Paṇchen Lama, accompanied by all important lamas and

[58] See [Anonymous] 2006a: 81. In the scene, when the Mongols ask the Dalai Lama to stay in Mongolia and receive ordination in the presence of Hohhot's Jowo statue, he refuses their request and claims that only can the Ganden Tripa become his master in accordance with the custom of the holy beings.

officials of Tashi Lhünpo, came to pay a visit to the latter, indicating his sincere approval of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation.[59] After sending his entourage back to Tashi Lhünpo, Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen extended his stay in Drepung to teach and give empowerments to the Dalai Lama. His student Shukhang Rabjampa Gélek Lhündrub (Gzhu/Bzhu khang rab 'byams pa Dge legs lhun grub, 16th-17th century), also held the prestigious title of tutor to the Fourth Dalai Lama.[60] Yönten Gyatso frequently met with Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen in various places of central Tibet and received from him many instructions, empowerments as well as his full ordination in 1614.

Attempts for the Mongolization of Tibetan Buddhism

Altan Khan and his immediate successors, having adopted Tibetan Buddhism in its Geluk form, had intentions to adapt it to Mongolian soil with a series of projects. The activities of promoting Buddhism in Mongolia, especially in Hohhot, greatly increased. After Ikh Zuu was established in 1587 as the central

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[59] Later in his *Secret Hagiography of Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi gsang ba'i rnam thar)*, the Fifth Dalai Lama says, "On the day of meeting with the Omniscient [Yönten Gyatso] for the first time, [Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen] saw him in a form of the Four-Armed Avalokiteśvara" ("thams cad mkhyen pa dang mjal ba'i nyin thog mar spyan ras gzigs phyag bzhi pa'i rnam par gzigs") in Ngag dbang blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan 2009d: 263 (239).

[60] Gélek Lhündrub wrote what was most likely the first biography of the Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso, which is entitled the *Hagiography: Opening the Door of Inspiration* (*Rnam thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed*). In addition to this work, the Fifth Dalai Lama mentions another biography of Yönten Gyatso, known as the *Versed Hagiography* (*Rnam thar tshigs bcad ma*), composed by Kharnag lotsawa Peljor Gyatso. Based on both, the Fifth wrote his biography of the Fourth Dalai Lama, the *Precious Rosary*. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009c: 257 (233). However, the Gélek Lhündrub's biography seems to be no longer extant to this day. See van der Kuijp & Tuttle: 466.

Buddhist temple in Mongolia, Ayuši Göüši composed a series of new Mongolian letters as an extension of the traditional Mongolian script that could transliterate Sanskrit and Tibetan words into Mongolian writing system. This new form of the Mongolian alphabet is known as the Ali-Gali üseg, meaning the vowel-consonant alphabet, or simply as the Galik alphabet.[61] Many of these new letters continue to be used to this day for rendering foreign words in the Mongolian-Uighur script. The invention of the Ali-Gali üseg became of great importance for the sixteenth-century Mongolian writing system, and for launching a systematic translation project of Tibetan Buddhist canonical texts into Mongolian language. Only a few years later, between 1592/3 and 1600/1, a collection of the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras (Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra) was translated into Mongolian and compiled into a set of volumes.[62]

According to the *Tale of Cakravartin Altan Khan*, later on, while the Mongol Dalai Lama was settling in Lhasa, a project of translating the entire Tibetan Kangyur into the Mongolian language by Mongol translators led by Širegetü Göüši (16th-17th century) and Ayuši Göüši was completed in Hohhot between 1602/3 and 1607/8.[63] Thus, the Kangyur became compiled in the Mongolian language for the first time. Although the task of translating the canonical works

[61] The Ali-Gali script was used in a translation of the *Five Protectresses* (*Pañcarakṣā*) for rendering its *dhāraṇīs*, which are known to be difficult to read and pronounce for the reciter.

[62] [Anonymous] 2006a: 79.

[63] [Anonymous] 2006a: 84.

was carried during the Yüan dynasty in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, those translations were not compiled in a systematic matter.

The available accounts about Širegetü Göüši, a.k.a. Shri shi la swa ra ba (perhaps, Śrī Śīlaśvarapa), found mostly in the colophons of his translations and other inscriptions, indicate him as a Buddhist monk and a prolific translator. Since he is renowned as Göüši Chöje of Hohhot, it is likely that he in most part resided in Hohhot during his active years and held the post of an enthroned lama of Ikh Zuu, holidng the official title of "Širegetü" (the one who has the throne). In addition to translationg the canonical scriptures, he also translated the arguably most famous Tibetan Buddhist literary works, such as the *Collected Pronouncements Concerning Maṇi* (*Ma Ni bka' 'bum*), a heterogeneous terma (*gter ma*, discovered treasure) text attributed to the ancient Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po, c.605-650), the *Life of Milarépa* (*Mi la'i rnam thar*), and the *Collected Songs of Spiritual Experiences of Milarepa* (*Mi la'i mgur 'bum*), the latter two of which were composed and compiled by the Kagyü master Tsangnyön Heruka (Gtsang smyon he ru ka, 1452-1507). In translating the *Collected Pronouncements Concerning Maṇi*, he collaborated with Tibetan translator Sakya Döndrub (Sa skya don grub, 16th-17th century) in 1608; and Dai Göüši Ngawang Tenpel (Ngag dbang bstan 'phel, 17th century) completed his partial translation of the *Collected Songs of Spiritual Experiences of Milarepa*.[64]

[64] According to Bira Shagdar, Sakya Döndrub, a Tibetan raised in Mongolia, was an outstanding translator, who rendered Tibetan texts, including the *Chronicle of Padma (Pad+ma*

The works Širegetü Göüši chose to translate are not associated exclusively with the Geluk tradition but are chiefly associated with the Nyingma and Kagyü orders. The *Collected Pronouncements Concerning Maṇi*, being a terma text ascribed to Songtsen Gampo, who preceded the early dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet, and revealed by Nyingma masters, is primarily linked to the Nyingma tradition.[65] Moreover, the *Life of Milarepa* and *Collected Songs of Spiritual Experiences of Milarepa* are closely associated with the Kagyü order. Širegetü Göüši translated the *Life of Milarepa* at the request of Khalkha's Tsoğtu Qong Tayiji (1581-1637) and his mother Mati Tayiqal (16th-17th century), known also as Ching Taihou (誠太后), in 1618, and at their request, he began his translation of the *Collected Songs of Spiritual Experiences of Milarepa*. As we will later see, Tsoğtu Tayiji was known as an ally of the Tsangpa king and fought against the young Fifth Dalai Lama and his Geluk supporters in Lhasa. Regardless of his connections to various groups of different Tibetan Buddhist orders—the Kagyü inclined Tsoğtu, Sakya Döndrub, and the Geluk adherents—Širegetü Göüši refrained from sectarianism in his work of a translator. The detailed biographical accounts of Širegetü Göüši remain unknown in contrast to those of

bka' thang) and the *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies (Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long)*, into the Mongolian language. See Shagdar: 168 and 178. For more accounts about Sakya Döndrub, see Myangad 2012: 187 – 200.

[65] The revealers of the *Collected Pronouncements Concerning Maṇi* are identified Drubtob Ngödrub (Grub thob dngos grub, c.12th century), Nyangrel Nyima Özer (Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, 1124/1136-1192/1204), and Shākya Ö (ShAkya 'od, 13th century). For a study of this text, for example, see Kapstein 1992.

Ayuši Göüši and other Mongol translators of the Kangyur, hence it is impossible to determine where he was privately affiliate with one of these orders or not.

An important religious leader who greatly contributed to the spread of the Geluk order among Mongols was Neyiji Toyin Tsultrim Tsangwa (Tshul khrims gtsang ba, 1557/87-1653), a son of the Oirat Torgut Mergen Tebene, a descendant of Chinggis Khagan's brother Khavt Khasar (Qabutu Qasar).[66] Before his monastic ordination, his was known as Abida. He is believed to be the first Oirat nobleman to become a Geluk monk.[67] The accounts tell us that Abida desired to become a monk already at young age, but his parents did not allow him to leave the household. Obeying his parents' wishes, Abida got married and had a son, called Erdemün Dalai, meaning the "Ocean of Excellence." Not abandoning his desire for monkhood, Abida eventually escaped from home in western Mongolia and received the monastic vows from the Paṇchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen at Tashi Lhünpo in Tibet. This was perhaps the earliest incidence of the Paṇchen Lama establishing a master-student relationship with a son of Mongol nobility, who would later serve the Geluk order as a missionary to Mongolia. Upon his ordination, Abida was given a monastic name, Tsultrim Tsangwa (Tshul khrims gtsang ba). Subsequently, he extensively studied the exoteric and esoteric Buddhist teachings in accordance with the Geluk tradition.

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[66] Urad's Göüši Biligündalai wrote Neyiji Toyin's biography, titled the *Rosary of Wish-Fulfilling Jewels* (*Čindamani Ereki*) in 1739. Soon after that, its xylogprahic version was produced in Beijing.

[67] Taichuud Mansan 2004: 250.

After completing his studies in Tibet, he did not return to his native Oirat region. A possible reason for that is that the Geluk influence in Oiratia was not well established at that time. Instead, on the advice of Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen, he went to eastern Mongolia. In 1592, at the age of thrity-five, he witnessed the young Fourth Dalai Lama's arrival to Ikh Zuu in Hohhot. For the next three and a half decades, he lived as a hermit in mountain caves and became known as Neyiji Toyin, who later became the name of his famous reincarnation lineage. He also dedicated himself to spreading the Lama Tsongkhapa's teachings among Chahars, Kharchins (Qaračin), Khorchins (Qorčin), Gorlos (Ǧorlus), and others. Unlike many other Gelukpa missionaries, Neyiji Toyin established a unique tradition of reciting Buddhist prayers and ritual texts exclusively in the Mongolian language. This tradition continued by Neyiji Toyin's subsequent "incarnations," by his student Mergen Dayanči (17th century), and by later Mergen Dayanči's reincarnation lineage, especially by Urad's Third Mergen Gegen Lobsang Tenpé Gyeltsen (Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1717-1766).[68]

Neyiji Toyin's missionary activities included teaching the exoteric and esoteric Buddhist doctrines, giving rewards to those who memorized Buddhist ritual texts whether they are monastics or not, commissioning statues for monasteries, an inscription of a complete Kangyur collection, and so forth. In the

[68] About the tradition of Mergen Gegen for the Buddhist practices in the Mongolian language, see Ujeed 2015.

last twenty years of his life, Neyiji Toyin resided mostly in the Khorchin region. He was also one of the earliest Geluk clerics who directly contacted the Jurchen rulers of the Later Jin dynasty, the new arising power in East Asia. According to his eighteenth-century biographer Biligün Dalai, Neyiji Toyin died in Onniut (Ongniğud) at the age of ninty-six.[69] His propagation of Buddhism in eastern Mongolia was encouraged by Hong Taiji (皇太极, 1592-1643), the Khan of the Later Jin dynasty and the Tiancong (天聰) Emperor, the founder of the Manchu Qing dynasty. Although Neyiji Toyin's methods of disseminating Buddhism, which included making the laity memorize texts of the Highest Yoga Tantras and rewarding them for that with money, livestock, and so on were considered as controversial by some and were criticized even by some of his fellow missionaries. Nevertheless, Neyiji Toyin has remained to be one of the most influential and earliest Geluk teachers among the eastern Mongols.

Soon after the Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso was installed in Drepung and while Neyiji Toyin was active spreading the Geluk influence in eastern parts of the Mongolian cultural regions, Tongkhor Yönten Gyatso's subsequent reincarnation Tongkhor Gyelwa Gyatso (Rgyal ba rgya mtsho, 1588-1639), who was residing in Tongkhor Monastery in Kham, was first invited to Koko Nor by Altan Khan's descendants and was then sent to western Mongolia to spread the Geluk teachings among the Oirat tribes. In 1616, Tongkhor Gyelwa Gyatso, also

[69] Following the Mongolian tradition of calculating people's age, in which a newborn infant is considered to be one year old, Biligün Dalai reported that Mergen Gegen was 97 when he passed away. For a photocopy of Mergen Gegen's published biography, see [Biligün Dalai] 2015.

known in Mongolian sources as Čağan Nomun Khan, was well received by the Oirats, especially by Bayibağas Khan (c.1550-c.1640), the leader of Khoshut and the executive of the Four Oirats' alliance. He asked all Oirat nobles to allow one of their sons to be ordained by Čağan Nomun Khan. This event marked the adoption of Geluk order by the Oirat tribes, which eventually became devout patrons and fierce protectors of the Geluk Church for the next one hundred years or so, who were also greatly involved in the political history of Tibet.

As each of the Oirat nobles sent one of his heirs to Tibet to become a monk, the Oirat leader Bayibağas Khan had someone else's boy go in the name of his own son. Later, this boy became the famous Oirat Zaya Paṇḍita Namkha Gyatso's (Nam mkha' rgya mtsho, 1599-1662).[70] The expansion of a Geluk dispensation in Mongol territories would be incomplete without Zaya Paṇḍita Namkha Gyatso's contribution to it. Namkha Gyatso was from Khoshut tribe and his grandfather Khüngüi Zayach was known among the Four Oirats as "Yeke Sečen," meaning "a supremely wise." After being ordained as a novice by Tongkhor Lama at the age of eighteen, Namkha Gyatso left for central Tibet for studies. He spent there twenty-two years, during which he studied first in Rawa Tö and Drepung monasteries and obtained his *rabjampa* title—a degree awarded in the philosophy colleges or *dratsang*s (*grwa tshang*) of Geluk monasteries. Then, he completed esoteric trainings in Gyümé Dratsang and subsequently

[70] Oirat Zaya Paṇḍita Namkha Gyatso's biography the *Moon Light: The Tales of Rabjampa Zaya Paṇḍita (Rab-'byam Za-ya Paṇdidayin Touji Sarayin Gerel)* was written by Ratnabhadra in the 1690s. For a publication of this text, see Radnaabadraa.

became the abbot of the Ngakpa Dratsang, one of the seven colleges of Drepung. Namkha Gyatso was most likely the first ethnic Mongol, whose prestigious achievements along the meritorious stages of the Geluk educational system was recorded.[71] As an abbot of Drepung Ngakpa Dratsang, he was mentioned in the Fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography as a member of his own ordination committee.[72] By the orders of the Paṇchen and Dalai Lamas, in 1638 Namkha Gyatso went back to Oiratia and other Mongol regions to spread the Geluk tradition. It is worth mentioning here that Namkha Gyatso, similarly to Ayuši Göüši, composed a new alphabet that was also based on the traditional Mongolian script for the sake of rendering Indo-Tibetan Buddhist texts into his own Oirat-Mongolian dialect. He is also one of the most prolific Mongolian translators, who translated at least 107 individual Buddhist texts covering various genres, ranging from *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* to Tsongkhapa's *Great Stages of the Path* (*Lam rim chen mo*), from the *Kadam's Father Teachings* (*Bka' gdams pha chos*) and *Kadam's Son Teachings* (*Bka' gdams bu chos*) to the *Life of Milarepa*, into Mongolian.[73] In fact, his translation activities suggest that he might have envisioned a project of *mongolizing* Tibetan Buddhism.

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[71] For the meritorious stages of the Geluk educational system, see, for example, Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee 2019: 261-275.

[72] For a translation of the occurrence found in the Fifth Dalai Lama's Autobiography, see Karmey 2014: 134.

[73] About the lists of Namkha Gyatso's translations and their studies, see Myangad 2008. Namkha Gyatso's translations are also praised for their accuracy. For example, his translation of the *Life of Milarepa* is said to be more accurately rendered in terms of its word-by-word technique comparing to that of Širegetü Güöši Chöje. See B. Nyammyagmar: iii.

The Geluk Foundation at Stake and Its Triumph

By the early seventeenth century in central Tibet, the clashes between Kagyü and Geluk adherents grew more vicious. Attempts to establish friendly relationships between the Fourth Dalai Lama and the Sixth Shamarpa Chökyi Wangchuk (Chos kyi dbang phyug, 1584-1630), who was at that time the highest lama of the Karma Kagyü sect backed by the politically powerful Tsangpa kings, were only worsening the situation. Offences were felt, insults were suffered, and a war broke out. At the hillside above the Paṇchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen's Tashi Lhünpo monastery, a new Kagyü monastery Tashi Zilnön (Bkra shis zil gnon, meaning "Auspicious Suppressor"), whose name potentially indicated the meaning of the "Suppressor of Tashi Lhünpo," was built. It is said that Tashi Zilnön's monks enjoyed rolling large rocks down on the Tashi Lhünpo monks.[74] As sectarian conflicts increased, religious leaders became politically and spiritually involved. The Nyingma lama Lodrö Gyeltsen (Blo gros rgyal mtshan, 1552-1624) became known as Sokdokpa (Sog bzlog pa), or the "Mongol Repeller," for his magical rites against the Mongol armies, while the Fourth Dalai Lama was called Tutob (Mthu stobs) or "Shaman" Yönten Gyatso for his tantric ritual performances against Tsangpa's efforts to conquer Geluk monasteries. Eventually, the Karma Püntsok Namgyel (Kar ma Phun tshogs rnam rgyal, 1587-1620), one of the Tsang rulers, defeated the Geluk supporters in Lhasa

[74] Gier: 151.

along with their Mongol allies in the region. In those circumstances, the only Mongol Dalai Lama suddenly died young at the age of twenty-seven, nominally being considered to be the thirteenth throne holder of Drepung Monastery and the seventeenth throne holder of Sera Monastery.[75]

The Geluk missionaries, like Neyiji Toyin and Namkha Gyeltsen, patronized by local Mongol rulers in Eastern and Western Mongolia, respectively, reached an enormous success in disseminating Geluk doctrine. Yet, the Geluk hierarchs and their monasteries were in danger of losing their control to the rival Karma Kagyü sect in central Tibet. Thousands of monks, perhaps mostly Gelukpas, may have been killed during that war,[76] and many more were in danger. We also know that Buddhist missionaries in Mongol regions and among the Manchus were not exclusively Geluk representatives.[77] In fact, Tibetan Buddhist non-Geluk sects were also very active in missionizing throughout these regions. However, the achievements of Geluk missionaries among Mongols, including

[75] For the list of the throne holders of Sera Monastery, see Cabezón: 535-536.

[76] Shakabpa described that the hill behind Drepung Monastery was littered with the bodies of slaughtered monks. See Shakabpa: 283 and 328.

[77] Although after the Yüan dynasty's collapse, a connection between the Mongol khans and Tibetan Buddhist leaders became infrequent, the Tibetan Buddhist missionaries from all sects still had access to various parts of Mongolia proper. While the Karma Kagyü order had made a connection to Tümen Jasağtu Khagan and converted him to Buddhism in 1576, the Sakya order became preeminent in the Chahar court by 1617. The Sakya missionary Ölüg Darqan Nangso (17th century) reached the court of Nurhaci (1559-1626), the founder of the Later Jin dynasty. Nurhaci's successor Hong Tayiji, or Abahai, (1592-1643), who was the founder of the Qing dynasty, founded the Temple of Mahākāla, the guardian deity of the Sakya order, at Mukden in 1635. The sectarian conflict between the Gelukpas and Kagyüpas in central Tibet greatly influenced the early seventeenth-century Mongol polity until Güshi Khan's (1582-1655) victory over the rival Kagyü forces in 1637.

those in the Amdo area, and of Manchu rulers resulted in a great defense for the Geluk Church in central Tibet protected by the Mongol and Manchu powers and in its ultimate triumph within Tibetan Buddhism in the Qing territories.

Once the Geluk Church gained a stronghold in the Mongol dominant Amdo and beyond, the Geluk authorities appealed for help from their Mongol supporters against their rival Kagyüpas who were empowered by the Tibetan Tsang rulers. Yet, the Gelukpas were not the only ones in Tibet who had a support of the Mongols. The Tsangpa rulers also had strong Mongol allies, including the last nominal Great Khagan Ligden and his Khalkha partner Tsoğtu Qong Tayiji. However, although still considerably powerful, both Ligden and Tsoğtu were sacked by the rival Mongol and Manchu groups from their respective territories. Hence, they moved to the west to the Koko Nor region, where Ligden died. The Northern Yüan ended in this way. Tsoğtu's campaign headed by his son Arslan (17th century) reached Lhasa to threaten the major Geluk institutions, but he ended up converting to the Geluk order and attacking Tsoğtu's ally, the Tsang army. Tsoğtu, who remained in Koko Nor area, was killed in 1637 by Güshi Khan (1582-1655), the Khoshut Mongol leader, who further campaigned in Kham between 1639-1641 in order to destroy the King Donyö Dorjé (Don yod rdo rje, 17th century) of Beri, an adherent of the Bön religion and an enemy of the Geluk order. After crashing the enemies of the Geluk order in Kham, Güshi moved to conquer central Tibet. By 1642, Güshi Khan's army defeated the major forces of the rivals of the Geluk in U-Tsang

areas in central Tibet and declared the Dalai Lama's absolute authority over central Tibet, from Dartsedo in the east to Ladakh in the west. In return, the Dalai Lama also confirmed Güshi Khan's position as the Dharma king of the three *cholkhas* of Tibet. This event signifies the establishment of the Khoshut Khanate in Tibet. The descendants of Güshi Khan were considered the nominal kings of Tibet in the next seventy-five years until the army of the Dzungar Khanate, another Oirat Mongol force, temporarily conquered central Tibet in 1717. Only three years after this incidence, the Dzungars were expelled by the Qing dynasty, which unifyed Tibet under Qing rule for nearly the next two hundred years.

Conclusion

The political transformations in Inner Asia in the second half of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries facilitated a unique religiopolitical space for various ethnic groups inhabited in the Amdo-Mongol regions. A major portion of this space was formed by Buddhist institutions, especially sister Geluk monasteries, founded in the Amdo and Mongolian speaking areas. As a result, the alliances of the Geluk monasteries throughout this large expanse of Inner Asia led by reincarnation lineages, which were often mutually connected through guru-disciple relationships, created a new political space where the role of a monastery became more primary than the any ethnic or tribal affiliation. This reality seems to have also led to competitions between monasteries, even among

those affiliated with the same Geluk order, concerning the reputation of the monastic institution and ability to attract potential patrons and prospective students. Likewise, as more similar monasteries became founded in the vicinity, the authorities of the monasteries had to compete more with one another. Smaller monasteries competed with local small monasteries, while large monastic seats had to compete with large regional monasteries. The competition was carried out in various ways, including a contest in the quality of scholarship they produced. This may have been one of the motivations for the polemical controversy discussed in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation.

Chapter Two: The Monasteries and the Involved Individuals

In the preceding chapter we saw how, thanks to the Mongols, the Tibetan Buddhist Geluk order began to spread in the Amdo-Koko Nor area and various Mongolian cultural regions. The chapter also briefly reviewed how Geluk missionaries successfully converted the Mongols during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and how they approached the Later Jin rulers, or the future Manchus, resulting in a great support from both the Mongol and Manchu rulers. However, it was not until the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries that the monasteries of Ih Hüree and Labrang, where the major polemicists in the consideration resided and composed their polemical works, were established. I argue that the polemical works studied in this dissertation were not mere hairsplitting polemics over doctrinal points. The polemicists involved in these doctrinal disputes were most likely motivated by their insitutuions' political and economic concerns that reflected the ambitions of monastic hierarches.

The first half of the present chapter summarizes the histories of the establishments of the two monastic institutions—Khalkha's Ih Hüree (Mon. Yeke Küriy-e) and Amdo's Labrang Tashi Khyil (Bkra shis 'khyil)—shedding light on (1) the founding of these two Geluk monasteries; (2) how they became the leading religious and political institutions in the northern part of the Manchu-Mongol and later the Qing-Geluk world orders; and (3) how they

became focal points of politics and religion for the entire Mongolian and Amdo-Tibetan cultural regions from the seventeenth century until the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1912. Khalkha Mongolian Ih Hüree and Amdo's Labrang were arguably the two most important regional sites of Geluk scholasticism in the second half of its history. Many scholars associated with these two institutions, including the polemicists who are the object of our study, rank among the eighteenth- and the nineteenth-century Geluk School's greatest intellectuals and most prolific exegetes. The sheer number and the quality of the Buddhist scholastic literary compositions produced during these centuries by the scholars from Amdo and Mongolia, especially from Labrang and Ih Hüree, are evidence of the educational excellences of the regions and these two monastic institutions.

The second half of this chapter introduces the important historical figures, exegetes, and polemicists who were directly associated with this particular polemical exchange. We will look at their short biographies and their connections through institutional affiliations and educational and devotional lineages. In brief, Changkya, the author of the root text which became the foundation of the polemics, was extremely influential in the religio-political realm of the mentioned period. The Second Jamyang Zhepa and the Second Reting, the first two exegetes who diverged in their interpretations of Changkya's root text, were disciples of Changkya and were also the chief religious leaders of their time and communities. Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen, Ngawang Khedrup, and Lobsang Tseten, who were students of the two

mentioned exegetes, wrote polemical treatises to one another, either defending their teacher or challenging the rival's exegetical position. Changlung Paṇḍita, a contemporary of the three aforementioned polemicists and an important lama of Inner Mongolia, seems to have served as a mediator among the three. Map 2 depicts the Manchu-Mongol world order in the late seventeenth century, during which the Manchus secured their control of "China proper," while the Mongols, despite severe conflicts among khanates, universally patronized Geluk monasteries throughout the Tibeto-Mongolian regions, whereas Russians pushed more into Transbaikalia.[78]

[78] Map 2 is a retouched picture, altered from its first English version by Kallgan, which was also modified from the original Chinese version. See Kallgan 2019b: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-Qing_Dynasty_1689-en.jpg.



Map 2: Adapted and modified from "Qing Dynasty, Khalkha, and Dzungaria in 1689" by Kallgan

Khalkha's Ih Hüree

Khalkha's Ih Hüree is believed to have been originally called "Örgö" (Mon. *Örgüge*, meaning the "Palace Residence"). Örgö, better known as Urga, was the main residence of the Khalkha's First Jebtsundampa Qutuğtu Zanabazar,[79] Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen (Blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1635-1723). It is commonly believed that Örgö, having eventually expanded in size, came to be called "Ih Hüree," or "The Great Settlement." Ih Hüree, along with its units and

[79] Zanabazar is a Mongolian rendering of the Sanskrit Jñānavajra.

assets, was considered the main estate of the successive generations of the Jebtsundampa incarnation lineage; and it developed as the single largest monastic institution, perhaps not only in Khalkha Mongolia but also, as an estimation suggests, in the entire Geluk world.[80] However, Ih Hüree's origin is often traced to at least three different establishments. The first was the founding of a portable residence for young Zanabazar's enthronement as a "reincarnated" lama in 1639. The second was his early establishment of a Geluk portable monastery constituted by seven *aimags* (Mon. ayimağ), or monastic regional houses probably equivalent to Tibetan *khamtsen*s (Tib. *khams tshan*), in 1651 after his return from Lhasa. The third was his later establishment of a more stationary monastic seat Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling (Ri bo dge rgyas dga' ldan bshad sgrub gling) in 1654 at the front side of the Hentii Mountains, not far from where Chinggis Khaan is believed to have been born. Whatever the case may be, Ih Hüree's original establishment is considered to have preceded the establishment of its counterpart Labrang Tashi Khyil in 1709.[81] However, after moving its location several times, in 1778, Ih Hüree was ultimately settled its renowned location, which today is the modern Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia.

[80] A claim that Ih Hüree was the largest Geluk monastery is perhaps based only on an estimate of its monastic population and not easy to prove because of the inconclusive numbers of the monks residing in the monastery, even during its pinnacle. The estimate is discussed later in this chapter. Of course, a more popular candidate for the largest Geluk monastery is pre-modern Drepung Monastery in Lhasa, whose monastic population in its peak is also uncertain.

[81] The exact year of Labrang's founding is also discussed below in this chapter.

Zanabazar is credited with founding another portable monastery, also called Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling, near the famous Erdene Zuu Monastery located not far from his birthplace, which belonged to the territory of his father Tüsheet (Tüsiyetü) Khan Gombodorji (1594-1655?). It appears that this monastery split into two separate monasteries, both called "Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling." One of them slowly moved toward Khalkha's East-Wing, toward the Hentii Mountains in the 1650s, and it eventually became Örgö, the future Ih Hüree. The other stayed in central Khalkha, a territory of Khalkha's Tüsheet Khan, and for that reason, this Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling became known as Baruun (Mon. Barağun) Hüree, or the "Western Settlement," as it eventually settled in its current location on the front side of the Shankh (Mon. Šangqu) Mountain in 1787.[82] The original Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling is believed to be the first Geluk monastery established by Zanabazar in the vicinity of Erdene Zuu, which was the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Khalkha founded by his great-grandfather Abatai Khan in the second half of the 1580s after his meeting with Sönam Gyatso. As briefly mentioned in the preceding chapter, the sectarian affiliation of Erdene Zuu in its early days is complicated. Traditional Buddhist historical sources often suggest that Abatai founded Erdene Zuu after his meeting with Sönam Gyatso during wich he converted to Tibetan Buddhism and that this monastery was established and consecrated as Khalkha's first Geluk

[82] Baruun Hüree is also often called the Monastery of Shankh after the mountain's name.

monastery.[83] Other scholarly accounts suggest that Abatai had initiated the establishment of this monastery a couple of years before he met Sönam Gyatso.[84] Evidently, Sakya representatives seem to have played important roles in initiating the traditional routines of the monastery prior to its sectarian affiliation as a Geluk institution that took place in an undetermined time. Regardless of its sectarian identity, Erdene Zuu had been the main Buddhist temple for the Khalkha's Tüsheet Khan family before the young Zanabazar founded his own temples and monasteries at this site.

Zanabazar traveled to central Tibet at the age of fourteen to meet with the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Paṇchen Lama and to receive Buddhist instructions, empowerments, transmissions, and so on. He stayed there for two years between 1649 and 1651. Then, he was sent back by the Geluk hierarchs with various specialists of Buddhist teachings, arts, and rituals to disseminate the Geluk tradition among the Khalkhas. Upon his return to Mongolia, Zanabazar reorganized his Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling before it branched into two monasteries. It had seven *aimag*s on the example of the original seven monastic subunits of Drepung Monastery, which had been established by Jamyang Chöjé Tashi Pelden ('Jam dbyangs chos rje Bkra shis dpal ldan, 1397-1449) in Lhasa in

[83] For example, the nineteenth-century account *The History of Erdene Zuu and the High Saint* (*Erdeni jou ba öndür gegen-ü namtar*) depicts Abatai to have no idea about Buddhist Dharma prior to meeting Sönam Gyatso. [Anonymous] 19th cen.: 24.

[84] See N. Khatanbaatar 2018: 30.

1416.[85] The similarity to Jamyang Chöjé's founding of his monastery may have not been accidental because Zanabazar had been recognized as a reincarnation of Jamyang Chöjé.[86] It is plausible that Zanabazar, a member of the Khalkha ruling family, founded his monastery in the image of Drepung, which by then was already the largest Geluk monastery and the main seat of the last three Dalai Lamas. Thus, to build a Geluk monastic institution in the Khalkha territory would be to have a monastery that is socio-politically dominant among the Mongols just as Drepung was among central Tibetans. Eventually, as mentioned above, in 1654, Zanabazar started building the second Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling in the Hentii Mountains located in the eastern Khalkha region as a stationary monastery, which was an extension of his original Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling that was still operating in central Khalkha.

The establishment of large Geluk monasteries in Khalkha was not as easy as Zanabazar might have initially thought. Soon after his stationary Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling's main temple was completed in 1686, a war broke out between the Khalkhas and the Oirats, resulting in the invasion of Khalkha by Galdan Boshogt (Mon. bošoğtu) Khağan (1644-1697) of the Oirats' Dzungar (or

[85] The original seven monastic subunits of Drepung Monastery were Gomang (*sgo mang*), Loseling (*blo gsal gling*), Shakkor (*shag skor*), Gyepa (*rgyas pa*), Deyang (*bde yangs*), Ngakpa (*sngags pa*), and Dülwa ('dul ba). These seven subunits were developed as specialized *dratsang*s, instead of regional housings. By the 1950s, only four colleges—Gomang, Loseling, and Deyang as three philosophy colleges and Ngakpa as a tantric college—survived in Drepung, Lhasa.

[86] Between Jamyang Chöjé and Zanabazar, Geluk authorities also identified other incarnations, including the famous Jonang polymath Tāranātha Künga Nyingpo (Kun dga' snying po, 1575-1634).

Jungar) Khanate in 1688. Though a Geluk adherent and a follower of the Dalai and Paṇchen Lamas, Galden is often considered responsible for the destruction of Geluk establishments in central and eastern Khalkha, especially of Erdene Zuu and the Jebtsundampa's monasteries.

During that war, Tüsheet Khan Čaqundorji (1634?-1698?), a brother of Zanabazar and the leading khan of the Khalkha federation, ultimately lost in two fronts to his adversaries. While Galdan was occupying the major territories of Khalkha, the Russians, as part of the conquest of Siberia, were advancing into the areas of the present-day Buryatia and Lake Baikal, which they easily annexed the region after the Khalkhas gave up their resistance to the Russian expansion into Transbaikalia. Ultimately, all three Khalkha khans, leading their subjects, fled from Galdan's charge to the south in what is now Inner Mongolia taking refuge under the protection of the newly established Manchu-Qing dynasty. In 1691, the Khalkha khans, princes, lords, and religious leaders assembled in Dolon Nor (Mon. Doluğan Nağur) in present-day Inner Mongolia, not far from Beijing, for a ceremony marking their formal submition to the Qing Emperor Kangxi (康熙, b. 1654-r. 1661-d. 1722), who came in person to the assembly and accepted the Khalkhas' voluntary submission. The emperor not only protected the Khalkhas from Galdan but also patronized Zanabazar and other Mongol religious leaders. By suggesting that the Kangxi Emperor and Zanabazar treated each other as a pious benefactor and a saintly lama, Zanabazar's biographies seem to imply that the two men's association was

modelled on the famous religiopolitical patron-priest relationship between Kubilai Khagan and Pakpa Lama during the Mongol-Yüan dynasty. While we can only speculate about Zanabazar's influence on the emperor as his spiritual preceptor, we know that the emperor was a Buddhist, especially in his last twenty years or so before death, as was noted, he actively practiced Buddhism.[87] After Galdan's defeat in 1697 by the Qing army constituted of various Mongol and Manchu soldiers, Zanabazar returned to Khalkha to restore the badly damaged monasteries, including Erdene Zuu. He continued to maintain close ties to the Kangxi.

It is unclear to what extent Zanabazar maintained Örgö as his main monastic seat, or Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling, then. John Bell (1691-1780), a Scottish traveler and the earliest known westerner to visit Khalkha during that time, in reporting about Örgö, wrote, "The present Prince of Mongalia [sic] is called Tush-du-Chan [i.e., Tüsheet Khan], and resides about six days journey, to the south-east, from Selinginsky [the Selenga River]. The place is called Urga [i.e., Örgö], and is near to where the Kutuchtu [i.e., Qutuğtu Jebtsundampa], or high priest, inhabits."[88] Bell traveled through Mongolia in 1720, and according to his account, Örgö was located to south-east from the Selenga River. He described it

[87] Regarding the Kangxi's Buddhist piety, Patricia Berger says, "In truth, from about 1701 until the time of his death in 1723 [sic], the intensity of Kangxi's Buddhist practice notably increased. During these years alone he produced more than four hundred handwritten copies of the *Heart Sutra*, a material testament to his heightened piety." Berger 2003: 28.

[88] Bell 1763: vol.1, 274.

primarily as a residence of Tüsheet Khan, instead of Zanabazar's, which was then nearby. However, we know that Jebtsundampa's monastic residence was primarily called "Örgö," and that it was eventually separated from the Tüsheet Khan's state-administrative residence.

The stationary Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling in the Hentii Mountains seems to have been completely destroyed during the Dzungars' attack and abandoned ever since. But it also seems that both Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédruplings—one in the east in the Hentii Mountains and another in the west within central Khalkha—were preserved and maintained, likely as separate portable monasteries.[89] Eventually, the one in the east might have grown into Ih Hüree as the principal seat of the later Jebtsundampa reincarnations. Accordingly, Zanabazar's monastic residence at the time of Bell's travel could have been the eastern Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédruplings, the monastic foundation of the future Ih Hüree.

It was not until the significant expansions of Örgö by the Second Jebtsundampa Lobsang Tenpé Drönmé (Blo bzang bstan pa'i sgron me, 1724-1757) that we see new monastic colleges or *dratsang*s within the reorganized Örgö. The emperor Kangxi died in December of 1722, and Zanabazar, who came to Beijing for his funerary rites, also died in Beijing in early 1723.[90] In the

[89] For a study on the two Ribo Gegyé Ganden Shedruplings, see N. Khatanbaatar 2018: 51-71.

[90] It is sometimes believed that the new emperor Yongzheng (雍正, b. 1678-r. 1722-d. 1735) may have murdered Zanabazar because of the latter's fame in the imperial palace.

following year, the Second Jebtsundampa was born to Junwang Dondubdorji (d. 1743), a grandson of Tüsheet Khan Čaqundorji, and to his Mongol queen Bayartu. Dondubdorji also married a Manchu princess, becoming an *efu* (額駙), or son-in-law, of the Qing emperor.

It is believed that in 1736, the young Jebtsundampa, having attended the Qianlong Emperor's (乾隆, b. 1711-r. 1736-d. 1799) enthronement, on his way back to Khalkha founded a portable *tsennyi dratsang* (*mtshan nyid grwa tshang*), a monastic college for the studies of Buddhist exoteric doctrine, in Dolon Nor. Such a *tsennyi dratsang* was also often called a "*chöra* (*chos ra/chos grwa*) *dratsang*" in Mongolia. In its early days, the *dratsang* does not seem to have regularly functioned as an educational institution that could be compared to the large Geluk *tsennyi dratsang*s in Lhasa or those in Tashi Lhünpo. In the course of time, this *dratsang* merged into Ribo Gégyé Ganden Shédrupling and became its first *dratsang*. Although the Second Jebtsundampa was too young to have established a new college, he was mentored by his tutor Tongkhor Ngawang Jampel Tendzin (Stong 'khor Ngag dbang 'jam dpal bstan 'dzin, 1695-1750), a Koko Nor Mongol, who was later renowned as the Khalkha's Mañjuśrī Qutuğtu.[91] The *dratsang* was officially reorganized much later as a part of Ih Hüree in 1756, when Ih Hüree moved to Uliyasutai, the eastern district of modern-day Ulaanbaatar.

[91] Because of Tongkhor Ngawang Jampel Tendzin's role in establishing the first *dratsang* for the future Ih Hüree, his reincarnation lineage was greatly honored with the special status of a high-ranking khutugtu.

In 1751, a few years before the reestablishment of the *tsennyi dratsang* as a part of Ih Hüree, another *tsennyid dratsang* was established in the Sečen Khan's Hüree in eastern Khalkha by Chöjé Tapkhé Rinchen (Chos rje Thabs mkhas rin chen, d.u.). Tapkhé Rinchen was an Oirat Mongol monk residing in Khalkha, who had studied at Drepung's Tashi Gomang Dratsang in Lhasa. After returned to his homeland, he was allegedly captured by the Khalkhas during a fight between the Oirats and the Khalkhas and was exiled to eastern Khalkha until his scholarly achievements were recognized by the locals, who ordered him to establish a *tsennyi dratsang*. For this reason, some Mongolian accounts report the *tsennyi dratsang* of Sečen Khan's Hüree as being earlier than Ih Hüree's *tsennyi dratsang*, and as the first institution of its kind in Khalkha. Whatever the case, both of these *dratsang*s adopted Drepung Gomang Dratsang's *yigcha* (*yig cha*) textbooks composed by the Amdo scholar Ngawang Tsöndrü (Ngag dbang brtson grus, 1648-1721/2), better known as the First Kunkhyen Jamyang Zhepé Dorjé (Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje), the founder of Labrang Monastery—the counterpart institution of Ih Hüree in the polemics we discuss in this dissertation.

The name of the *tsennyi dratsang* founded by the Second Jebtsundampa was "Tashi Chönpel" ("Bkra shis chos 'phel/spel"), but it frankly did not receive this name until 1837, when the Fifth Jebtsundampa Lobsang Tsültrim Jikmé (Blo bzang tshul khrims 'jigs med, 1815-1841) named it at the time when he also gave the name of "Künga Chöling" ("Kun dga' chos gling") to the second *tsennyi*

dratsang of Ih Hüree, which had been founded by the Fourth Jebtsundampa Lobsang Tübten Wangchuk (Blo bzang thub bstan dbang phyug, 1775-1813).[92] Since the time of the Fourth or Fifth Jebtsundampas, Ih Hüree's two *tsennyi dratsang*s eventually became the home institutions of many prominent Buddhist scholars in Mongolia. Tashi Chönpel Dratsang in particular produced scholars well-known even in Tibet. Because of this and because of its scholarly association to Drepung Tashi Gomang Dratsang of Lhasa, Tashi Chönpel was sometimes called by its nickname "the second Gomang" (*sgo mang gnyis pa*) with the implication that this was a *dratsang* into which Tashi Gomang's traditions have poured down.

An interesting oral account about the original establishment of the *tsennyi dratsang*—the one which later became Tashi Chönpel Dratsang—has circulated among the *dratsang*'s monks to this day.[93] When the Second Jebtsundampa, accompanied by his tutor Ngawang Jampel Tenzin, paid a visit to the Qianlong Emperor, the emperor asked the young Jebtsundampa if he was studying Buddhist philosophy. The boy, i.e., the Jebtsundampa, looked at his tutor, who in return responded on his behalf by nodding his head in affirmation. Later, on the way back to Khalkha, the Jebtsundampa acted as disciplinarian, his tutor

[92] The Fourth Jebtsundampa established the second *tsennyi dratsang* in Ih Hüree in 1809. About the Fifth Jebtsundampa conferring names to the two *tsennyi dratsang*s, see Shagdarsüren 2007: 13.

[93] The story has been also recorded, for example, by Soninbayar Shagdarsüren. See Shagdarsüren 2007: 13.

Ngawang Jampel Tenzin as the *lama*, and their retinue—all together a group of seven monks—established the *tsennyi dratsang* in the sand-hills of Dolon Nor in Inner Mongolia. At that time, an elderly lady came to them and offered *huushuur*s or fried meat dumplings, a Mongolian traditional dish. Also, a good-looking man on a black horse arrived and volunteered to help them build the exterior. When he was asked what his name was, the man responded "Gombo," a common Mongolian men's name derived from the Tibetan "gönpo" (*mgon po*), often rendered as "protector." After the work was completed, the man disappeared and was nowhere to be found. He was later believed to be an emanation of Mahākāla, a famous Dharma-protector of Tibetan Buddhism who is often known as Gönpo. For this reason, the story concludes, Mahākāla became the unique protector of the *dratsang*, and offering *huushuur*s to the *dratsang*'s monks during the annual ritual ceremony associated with Mahākāla has become a tradition followed to this day. Because the man is said to have been good-looking, the ceremony is called "Sayiqan Gombo," or "Pleasant Gönpo."

In addition to launching the first *tsennyi dratsang*, the Second Jebtsundampa is also credited with the establishments of the Gyüpa Dratsang (*rgyud pa grwa tshang*), or a monastic college for the studies of Buddhist esoteric teachings, and of the *Emči nar-un dratsang,* or a monastic college for physicians, in 1739. These two dratsangs later also became subunits of Ih Hüree. In 1745, he designated a group of specialized monks to focus on the ritual worship of the tantric deity Hayagrīva in the most secret form, called Tamdrin Yangsang (Rta

mgrin yang gsang). It is said that this later led to the founding of the Padmayoga Dratsang, a.k.a Sangdrup Tegchenling (Gsang grub theg chen gling), another tantric ritual *dratsang* in Ih Hüree. The subsequent Jebtsundampas are also credited with developing Ih Hüree by founding new *dratsang*s and other units. While the *dratsang*s often served as educational institutions in their respective fields, *aimag*s provided the monks who belonged to any of the *dratsang*s with housing according to their regional origins. For example, Ngawang Khedrup (Ngag dbang mkhas grub, 1779-1838), the main polemicist from Ih Hüree under our study, was a monk who belonged to Ih Hüree's Jyedor, or Kyedor (Kyai rdor), *aimag* and is believed to have been a student at Tashi Chönpel Dratsang.[94] A short biographical sketch of Ngawang Khedrup will be found later in this chapter.

Beginning in the early eighteenth century, the Jebtsundampas and other Ih Hüree's administrators were committed to expanding Ih Hüree by improving its organizational structures, artistic features, and educational system. Since 1778, when the monastery had moved to its final location, Ih Hüree became more stationary. New immobile temples were built for the *dratsang*s and *aimag*s, their educational curricula gradually became systemized, and large statues were erected. The administrators also paid more attention to the monastic culture

[94] A biography of Ngawang Khedrup was composed by his disciple Ngawang Tupten (Ngag dbang thub bstan, nineteenth century) in 1840 and xylographically published in Ih Hüree. For a short biography of him in English, see Erdene-Ochir: https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Ngawang-Khedrub/7162.

within the monastery from this point forward, urging monks to study and practice Buddhist teachings and to uphold their monastic vows and regulations. By the time Ngawang Khedrup began debating with his counterpart who resided in Amdo's Labrang in the 1830s, Ih Hüree was in process of becoming a mature Buddhist educational and cultural center in the northern part of the Qing-Geluk religiopolitical world order.

At its zenith in the early twentieth century, Ih Hüree had more than 10,000 enrolled monks in addition to many more who lived in the vicinity of Ih Hüree with hopes to become official members of this monastic center. However, a reliable official count of its monks, whether enrolled or not, has yet to be determined.[95] In 1911, Outer Mongolia proclaimed its independence from the Qing dynasty, the Bogda Khanate was established, and the Eighth Jebtsundampa Ngawang Lobsang Chökyi Nyima Tenzin Wangchuk (Ngag dbang blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma bstan 'dzin dbang phyug, 1870-1924) was enthroned as the sovereign king and final authority in political and religious matters of this

[95] Adding up the numbers of monks in the 30 *aimag*s' of Ih Hüree, reported by Sereeter Ölzii based on the census of 1915, one could calculate that there were 13777 enrolled monks altogether in the 30 *aimag*s. Yet, this seems more than likely a very rough estimation because the monks' number of each *aimag* is often rounded as 300, 600, 1000, or so.

An oral story claims that when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama died in the winter of 1933, the resident Tibetans of Ih Hüree sponsored a mortuary ritual with offering donations to all the monks in Ih Hüree and that according to those Tibetans, they offered around 9,800 pieces of donations apparently to the same number of monks. Chimedtsiye 2007: https://www.mongoliantemples.org/oralhistorypdfs/L027.pdf. In the 1930s, the monastic population in Ih Hüree was already substantially reduced due to the social change affected by the recent political oppressions of monasteries, including the arrests of head lamas with charges of espionage, and the failed revolts of Mongolian citizens against the government of the Mongolian People's Republic backed up by Soviet Bolsheviks and Comintern.

new khanate. Ih Hüree was then declared to be the capital of the new nation, as Niislel (Mon. Neyiselel) Hüree, or the Capital Hüree, which would eventually become a secular city founded on the monastic settlement of Jebtsundampa's Ih Hüree. In 1924, when, under a new constitution, Ih Hüree became Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of the People's Republic of Mongolia, it had a Tsokchen (Tshogs chen), or Central Assembly, 12 *dratsang*s, 30 *aimag*s, and other important units, including the late Eighth Jebtsundampa's residence palaces, branch monasteries and temples, the districts of non-monastic settlers, and markets.[96] Each of the *dratsang*s, *aimag*s, monasteries, and temples had its own individuals activities, masters and students, houses, and assets in livestock. For example, according to a report based on the census of 1927, Tashi Chönpel Dratsang, the second largest unit of Ih Hüree after the Tsokchen, had 4,526 heads of large livestock (cattle, including horses and camels) and 26,049 heads of small livestock (sheep and goats). The Jyedor *aimag*, a relatively small regional house to which Ngawang Khedrup belonged, had 684 heads of large livestock and 3,163 heads of small livestock.[97] By the spring of 1938, all the units of the former Ih Hüree monastic center were completely closed by the government of the Mongolian People's Republic, which adopted the anti-religious policies of Stalinist Great Purge carried out in the Soviet Union in the 1930s.[98]

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[96] For detailed studies of Ih Hüree's units, see, for example, Ölzii and Teleki.

[97] Ölzii: 57 and 22, respectively.

[98] An oral testament of Luvsan Tsegmed (1913/4-2012), a former monk of Tashi Chönpel, informs that Tashi Chönpel was closed in the night of the 15th Day of the Lunar 3rd Month in

Amdo's Labrang Monastery

During its pinnacle, the pre-modern Labrang, a.k.a. Tashi Khyil Monastery, was the largest Buddhist monastery in the Amdo-Gansu region. Jamyang Zhepé Dorjé Ngawang Tsöndrü, as an Amdo native and a prominent and sophisticated scholar, seems to have intended to establish Labrang Tashi Khyil as a monastic university and to propagate Geluk thought and culture. Though far away from Lhasa, the monastery was located at the meeting point of the various ethnic-cultural and sociopolitical realms—Chinese, Mongolian, Tibetan, Muslim, etc. Abandoning the political turmoil in Lhasa, including the disputes over the fifth Dalai Lama's reincarnation, Jamyang Zhepé Dorjé, also simply known as Jamyang Zhepa, who had earned his fame and influence among the political and religious leaders in Lhasa, seems to have decided to leave central Tibet for his home region in 1709 for the sake of a "new beginning." His decision was also likely prompted by the invitations of Erdeni Jinong Tsewang Tenzin (Tshe dbang bstan 'dzin, d. 1735), a Khoshut Mongol prince and a great-grandson of Güshi Khan, who requested that he return to Amdo and build a monastery like Drepung.[99] Accordingly, Erdeni Jinong and his third wife Namgyel Drölma

1938, after which, the other two *tsennyi dratsang*s in Ih Hüree—Künga Chöling and Yiga Chöndzinling—were closed within one month. Chimedtsiye 2007: https://www.mongoliantemples.org/oralhistorypdfs/L027.pdf.

[99] According to Belmang, Erdeni Jinong sent invitations to Jamyang Zhepa in 1704 and again in 1706; see Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974d: 82a-83a (163-165).

(Rnam rgyal sgrol ma (the 18th century), led eleven other Monngolian supporters as Jamyang Zhepa's major donors and as the major economic force for building Labrang.[100]

At the age of twenty-one, in 1669, Jamyang Zhepa had left for Lhasa to study. Admitted to Drepung Gomang Dratsang, he trained in the traditional curriculum. While in Lhasa, in 1675, he received full ordination from the Fifth Dalai Lama, who conferred him the monastic name "Ngawang Tsöndrü." Meanwhile in Lhasa, the Great Fifth died in 1682, and his regent Desi Sangyé Gyatso (Sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653-1705) decided to keep the Dalai Lama's death a secret for fifteen years. After the secret was exposed, in 1697, when the new Dalai Lama received his novice monastic ordination from the Paṇchen Lama Lobsang Yeshé (Blo bzang ye shes, 1663–1737) in Tashi Lhünpo, Jamyang Zhepa was a member of the ordination committee. At the same time, he was also a guru of Lhabsang Khan, the nemesis of Desi and the sixth Dalai Lama. All of this shows that over the course of his time in central Tibet, Jamyang Zhepa had become an influential political figure in the Lhasa area. He eventually served as the abbot of Gomang Dratsang between 1700 and 1708. It is unclear whether or how much Jamyang Zhepa was involved in Sangyé Gyatso's deception. Paul Nietupski doubts whether Jamyang Zhepa had knowledge of the Fifth Dalai Lama's early death.[101] Whatever the case, Jamyang Zhepa is more

[100] For details of Bla brang's establishment and its development, see Nietupski 2011.

[101] Neitupski: 119.

celebrated as a scholar and for his brilliant writings in Buddhist philosophy than as a politician. His works were adopted as the *yigcha*, or the principal textbooks, in Gomang Dratsang for the training of students in Buddhist philosophy and have been broadly used in many monastic colleges throughout Amdo and Mongolia.[102]

It is commonly believed that Jamyang Zhepa established Labrang Monastery in 1709 at Khoshut Erdeni Jinong's invitation, but this founding story is due to the fact that 1709 was the the three hundredth anniversary of Ganden Monastery's establishment by Tsongkhapa. Although after returning to Amdo in 1709, Jamyang Zhepa performed religious rituals, such as conferring novice ordination to his new Mongol disciples, he did not formally inaugurate the establishment of a monastery at Labrang's current location until the following year. The project of building temples began in the early summer of 1710, following a formal ceremony at which many local Mongol and Amdo lords offered him abundant gifts, including hundreds of recruited boys for his new monastery and several hundreds of families as the servants for the Labrang estate. Following the building of the Tsokchen, or Main Assembly Hall, which also functioned as the *tsennyi dratsang* entitled "Tösamling" (Thos bsam gling), Jamyang Zhepa and his patron Erdeni Jinong built many residences and other units as well as the monastery's tantric college Gyümé (Rgyud smad) Dratsang,

[102] On Gelug monastic curricula and pedagogies as well as *yig cha* traditions, see Dreyfus 2003 and Newland 1996: 202–216.

founded in 1716. During this period, Mongol sponsorship of a monastery in Tibetan cultural areas was not an unusual phenomenon, and many Geluk monasteries throughout Amdo and central Tibet enjoyed Mongol patronage. In fact, after the extensive conversion of the Mongol tribes by the Third Dalai Lama, many of the major Geluk monasteries and institutions in Greater Tibet received abundant donations from different Mongol princes, demonstrating their commitment to the Geluk order.

Later, the Second Jamyang Zhepa Könchok Jikmé Wangpo (Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po, 1728-1791), "an institution builder" as Nietupski calls him, and a prolific scholar in his own right, significantly expanded Labrang by establishing the Dünkhor (Dus 'khor) Dratsang, a monastic college for rituals associated with the tantric deity Kālacakra, in 1763, the medical Menpa (Sman pa) Dratsang in 1784, the Serkhang Chenmo (Gser khang chen mo) or the Golden Temple in 1788, and other units, most of which were sponsored by local Mongol lords. By the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, Labrang had seven *dratsang*s, including the Ngakpa (Sngags pa) Dratsang, which was located just outside of the monastery and intended for lay tantric practitioners who were often linked to the Tibetan Buddhist Nyingma and sometimes to the non-Buddhist Bön traditions. According to Nietupski, in addition to these specialized *dratsang*s there were a few dozen other temples and residential units occupied by at least 3,500 monks.[103] There are also other different accounts about the

[103] Nietupski 2011: 22.

population of Labrang; for example, as Nietupski notes, Li An-che reported that there was a population of 7,640 monks during the Republican era in China, and Miao Zhou reported 5,800 monks during the Qing dynasty, etc.[104]

As briefly described earlier, Buddhist scholasticism developed in Ih Hüree gradually, but it was very differently in Labrang, which has never been short of learned scholars from the very moment when it was established. This was true even throughout the most difficult moments of its history, such as during the Qing-period wars and local rebellions or the reopening after its temporary closures due to the early twentieth-century Muslim invasion or later the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. From the time of its very founding, Jamyang Zhepa seems to have ensured that Labrang was home of educated scholars. For this reason, he brought with him his highly educated Amdo disciples who had trained in Lhasa under him and other great scholars. Among them were Gungtang Gendün Püntsok (Gung thang Dge 'dun phun tshogs, 1648–1724), Detri Lobsang Döndrup (Sde khri Blo bzang don grub, 1673–1746), and Setsang Ngawang Tashi (Bse tshang Ngag dbang bkra shis, 1678–1738). As far as the curriculum of exoteric studies is concerned, Labrang's *tsennyi dratsang* was originally established in imitation of Drepung Gomang Dratsang in Lhasa, and its esoteric training was modelled on Gyümé Dratsang because

[104] ibid: 43 and 54. As referenced in Nietupski, the report may be found in Miao Zhou, *Meng zang fo jiao shi* (Yang-zhou, Jiangsu: Jiangsu guanglin guji ke yinshi, 1993), chapters 11 and 7; and in Li An-che, *History of Tibetan Religion: A Study in the Field* (Beijing: New World Press, 1994), 234-247.

Jamyang Zhepa maintained a special connection with those two colleges in Lhasa where he had studied. Nevertheless, considering Jamyang Zhepa's involvement in the political affairs in central Tibet, it would seem to be naïve and mistaken to think that his motivation for establishing Labrang was purely religious or educational, that is, outside of politics.

When Örgö, or later Ih Hüree, was established by the Khalkha khans for Zanabazar, there was only one sizable monastery—Erdene Zuu Monastery, which belonged to Zanabazar's own family—in the entire Khalkha region. No Geluk or any other Tibetan Buddhist monastery was dominant in Khalkha before Örgö's establishment. In contrast, when Labrang was established, there already had been a number of monasteries, including important Geluk monasteries, flourishing throughout Amdo.[105] Whereas Kumbum Monastery, as mentioned in the previous chapter, traces its origin to 1578, Jakhyung (Bya khyung) Monastery dates its founding to as early as 1349 in association with Tsongkhapa's teacher Chöje Döndrup Rinchen (Chos rje Don grub rin chen, 1309-1385), although obviously it affiliated to the Geluk order much later. Moreover, there were Gönlung Jampaling (Dgon lung byams pa gling) established by Gyelsé Dönyo Chökyi Gyatso (Rgyal sras Don yod chos kyi rgya mtsho, d.u.) in 1604, Rongwo (Rong bo) Monastery or Tösam Namgyeling (Thos bsam rnam rgyal gling), originally a Sakya monastery converted to Geluk by Shar Kalden Gyatso (Shar Skal ldan rgya mtsho, 1607-1677) in 1630, Chubsang

[105] For more about early Geluk monasteries in Amdo, see Tuttle 2012.

(Chu bzang) Monastery or Ganden Migyurling (Dga' ldan mi 'gyur ling), a.k.a. Tüpten Rapgyéling (Thub bstan rab rgyas gling), founded by Chubsang Namgyel Peljor (Chu bzang Rnam rgyal dpal 'byor, 1578-1651) in 1649, and Serkhok (Gser khog) Monastery or Ganden Damchöling (Dga' ldan dam chos gling) established by Döndrup Gyatso (Don grub rgya mtsho, 1613-1665) in 1650. Of special importance was Gönlung Jampaling, the primary residence of the famous reincarnation lineages of the Changkya (Lcang skya) and Tuken (Thu'u bkwan) Lamas. It was the largest monastery in Amdo since the seventeenth century until its "size and influence waned beginning in the mid-eighteenth century after it was implicated in a major Mongol rebellion and the monastery was subsumed within the Qing empire's system of regulating the Buddhist clergy."[106] Surrounded by its sister Geluk monasteries, including the influential Gönlung, Labrang gradually grew and surpassed the older monasteries in size and reputation, becoming the largest monastery of its kind in the Amdo region. By the early nineteenth century, Labrang slowly grew in size to become a major Buddhist center of learning and practice, on the one hand, and a sociopolitical nexus of the multiethnic groups in the region, on the other. Map 3 depicts the tentative map of the mid eighteenth-century Qing dynasty and the Dzungar

[106] Sullivan 2013: ii. For a detailed published study of Gönlung Monastery, also see Sullivan 2020.

Khanate.[107] In the same decade, the Qing conquest ended the last sovereign Mongol khanate of Dzungaria, which is the last counter part of the Manchus in the Manchu-Mongol world order. However, under the political dominance of the Qing, the Geluk monasteries, now flourished throughout Mongolia and Tibet, created a new "religious world" which constitutes a federation of monastic "kingdoms," such as Ih Hüree in Khalkha and Labrang in Amdo.



Map 3: Adapted and modified from "Qing Dynasty and Dzungaria in 1757" by Kallgan

[107] Map 3 is a retouched picture, altered from its first English version by Kallgan, which was also modified from the original Chinese version. See Kallgan 2019c: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-Qing_Dynasty_1757-en.jpg.

Changkya Rölpé Dorjé (1717-1786), the Author of the Root Text *Song*

Before I briefly discuss Rölpé Dorjé's influential role in the history of the Geluk world in association with Qing power, it is important to mention the origin of the Changkya incarnation lineage, to which he belongs as the Third Changkya, and its long-rooted influence in the Qing-Geluk domain. When Jamyang Zhepa was studying at Drepung Gomang during his early years in Lhasa, he befriended a half Chinese man by name Ngawang Lobsang Chöden (Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldan, 1642-1714), who was also of Amdo origin and would later ascend to the abbatial throne at Gönlung Monastery.[108] This man had been recognized by the Panchen Lobsang Chökyi Gyeltsen as the reincarnation of the deceased Gönlung abbot Drakpa Özer (Grags pa 'od zer, d. 1641). Drakpa Özer's was born in the Changkya village of Amdo, giving the name to the lineage. Ngawang Lobsang Chöden was identified as the second embodiment of the Changkya incarnation lineage.[109] Jamyang Zhepa and he became lifelong close collaborators, and that special connection continued between the subsequent Changkya and Jamyang Zhepa lamas. Completing his studies in Lhasa before Jamyang Zhepa did, Ngawang Lobsang Chöden left for his native Amdo earlier and established a special relationship with the Kangxi Emperor, who bestowed upon him imperial honors, such as the title "Da Guoshi"

[108] For details on Changkya Ngawang Lobsang Chöden's biography, especially on his service to the Qing emperor, see Sullivan 2013: 119-153.

[109] About the creation of the Changkya incarnation lineage, see Cabezón 2017: 17-21.

(大國師), or the "Great Dynastic Preceptor," with a golden seal, for his successful services as a mediator between conflicting Mongol groups.[110] Ngawang Lobsang Chöden spent his later years mostly at the Qing court in Beijing, and on one occasion was sent to Lhasa to serve as the emperor's representative at the enthronement of Tsangyang Gyatso as the Dalai Lama. His loyalty and close connection to the Qing court undoubtedly benefitted the growth of his home monastery of Gönlung, allowing it to become the most significant Geluk center in the region until its destruction by the Manchu force in 1724 during the local Mongol rebellion against Qing dominance.[111]

After Ngawang Lobsang Chöden's death, a Monguor or "Tibetanized Mongol" boy was recognized as his reincarnation and installed at Gönlüng in 1720 by none other than his close associate Jamyang Zhepa, now perhaps the highest Geluk authority in Amdo. This boy was the future Changkya Rölpé Dorjé. However, in 1724, following the rebellion and the destruction of the monastery mentioned above, the young *trülku* was taken to Beijing to the Yongzhen Emperor's court perhaps because of the exceptional high status and influence of his previous "incarnation," who was apparently still remembered in the royal palace. The boy grew up with the prince Hongli, who would later ascend to the imperial throne as the Qianlong Emperor, becoming a highly educated, well respected, and probably the most influential Buddhist teacher in the Qing court.

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[110] See Lcang skya Ngag dbang blo bzang chos ldann [1713]: 30b.

[111] About the so called Lobsang Danjin's Rebellion, see, for example, Soloshcheva 2015.

Meanwhile, Gönlung was rebuilt by an imperial order in 1732.

Approved by the Yongzhen Emperor, the Third Changkya went to central Tibet in 1734 for the first time accompanying the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso (Skal bzang rgya mtsho, 1708-1757), who had been exiled to eastern Kham. In the following year, he received monastic ordination at Tashi Lhünpo from the Second Paṇchen Lama Lobsang Yeshé (Blo bzang ye shes, 1663-1737) and was given the monastic name "Yeshé Tenpé Drönmé" ("Ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me"). During this visit in central Tibet, he received numerous important teachings from the Dalai Lama's tutor Ngawang Chokden (Ngag dbang mchog ldan, 1677-1751), who would later be enthroned as the Fifty-fourth Throne-holder of Ganden Monastery, as the Ganden Tripa, and posthumously identified as the First Reting Rinpoché. Ngawang Chokden was also of Amdo origin and had connections to many of the key figures mentioned in the current study: he was a student of Jamyang Zhepa, a teacher of Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, and reckoned as the previous incarnation of Reting Tenpa Rapgyé. Recognizing his tutorial service to the Dalai Lama, the Qianlong Emperor granted Ngawang Chokden the Mongol title "Ačitu nom-un khan," meaning "a kind king of the Dharma." The Dalai Lama offered him Reting Monastery, formerly the famous Kadam monastery founded by Dromtön Gyelwé Jungné ('Brom ston Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas, 1004/5-1064) in 1057.

The Yongzhen Emperor died in 1735, and Rolpé Dorjé was summoned back to Beijing by the Qing court where his childhood friend Hongli ascended to the

emperor's throne. Upon his arrival in Beijing, the new emperor Qianlong appointed Rölpé Dorjé to be the chief administrative lama in the capital. From then on, he simultaneously served both the Geluk church and the Qianlong Emperor by mediating between Lhasa and Beijing—the centers of the two overlapping religio-political domains. It is said that through an edict issued by the emperor in 1744, Rölpé Dorjé converted the former prince Yong's residence to the Geluk monastery Ganden Jinchakling (Dga' ldan byin chags gling), which is better known as Yonghegong (雍和宫), the major Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Beijing with imperial status.

Traditionally, monks mostly from Mongolia, but also some Manchu, Tibetan, and Chinese monks, resided at this monastery and maintained its religious services until its closure in 1949.[112] In addition to being influential in politics, which is reflected in Qing policy toward Buddhism and to Tibet and Mongolia in this period, Rölpé Dorjé was renowned among the Geluk intellectuals for his scholarship. Among other things, he played a leading role in the translation project of the Tibetan Tengyur (Bstan 'gyur), the Tibetan Buddhist commentarial canon, into Mongolian and in its publication taking place between 1742 and 1749. He also later initiated the Manchu translation of the Tibetan scriptural canon, the Kangyur (Bka' 'gyur), which started in 1773 and was published in 1794. Changkya Rölpé Dorjé composed his *Song*, the root text of the

[112] The monastery was reopened after the Cultural Revolution and remains open today, still manned mostly by Mongolian monks. For a detailed study of Yonghegong, see Greenwood 2013.

polemical exchange that is the main subject of the current study, no later than 1769.[113] And, the two exegetes who wrote commentaries on the *Song*, Jikmé Wangpo and Lobsang Tenpa Rapgyé, were among his many disciples.

Jikmé Wangpo (1728-1791), the Author of the Exoteric Commentary, the *Lamp*

A special connection between the Changkya and Jamyang Zhepa reincarnation lineages is also witnessed by the fact that Rölpé Dorjé, now an extremely influential lama in the Qing-Geluk world as the Dynastic Preceptor, confirmed Jikmé Wangpo as the reincarnation of the late Jamyang Zhepa. He later granted him full ordination, giving him the ordination name "Könchok Jikmé Wangpo."[114]

Jikmé Wangpo, the second Jamyang Zhepa, was born to a noble family in southern Amdo. His uncles from both of his parents' sides, including Tongkhor Ngawang Sönam Gyatso (Stong 'khor Ngag dbang bsod nams rgya mtsho, 1684-1752), were influential learned monks in the region, He was able to receive teachings and novice ordination from them even before officially being enthroned on the Jamyang Zhepa's seat. During the dispute over his legitimacy as the

[113] In the summer of 1769, Könchok Jikmé Wangpo visited Rölpé Dorjé at Wutai Shan in China and, likely while there, composed his commentary the *Lamp* on Changkya's *Song*. More about the *Song* is found in the following chapter.

[114] There was a controversy among some senior disciples of the late Jamyang Zhepa and local Mongol and Tibetan nobles over the identification of his "true reincarnation." Despite this dispute, which continued for years, Rölpé Dorjé legitimized Könchok Jikmé Wangpo as the authentic rebirth of Jamyang Zhepa. For a summary of the controversy, see Nietupski 2011: 126.

unmistaken reincarnation of Jamyang Zhepa among the deceased's chief disciples and important patrons, he was supported by Namgyel Drölma, the wife of Labrang's primary Mongol patron Erdeni Jinong, who by then had also died, and Tenzin Wangchuk (Bstan 'dzin dbang phyug, the eighteenth century, r. 1736-1752), then the local Mongol leader. Ultimately, Changkya Rölpé Dorjé settled the dispute by choosing him. In 1743, Jikmé Wangpo was formally installed at Labrang as the next Jamyang Zhepa and began his studies, following the monastery's curriculum; and in 1749, the ceremony of his full ordination took place at Gönlung Monastery.

Since the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, it was customary for the "reincarnated" young lamas in every part of Amdo and Mongolia where the Geluk had spread to go to central Tibet and to affiliate themselves to one of the main three seats—Ganden, Drepung, and Sera—in Lhasa or to Tashi Lhünpo in Tsang, where they continued their religious education and built the in-person guru-disciple spiritual relationships with the Dalai and Paṇchen Lamas. Yet, the vast majority of Amdo *trülku*s who studied in central Tibet matriculated at Drepung or Sera.[115] As was customary for Labrang monks, Jikmé Wangpo enrolled in Drepung Gomang Dratsang, which had adopted Jamyang Zhepa's philosophical works as textbooks on the five volumes of exoteric doctrine, known

[115] By the late seventeenth century, a monk's affiliation to a *dratsang* of the three *densa*s (gdan sa)—Ganden, Drepung, and Sera—was generally predetermined and could not change, being governed by the documents of monastic rules and regulations called *chayig* (bca' yig). These strict rules meant that monks had to stay in one institution (and indeed one *dratsang*, and even one *khamtsen*) during their educational career.

as the *kapö nga* (*bka' pod lnga*).[116] For eight years he continued his studies and received many teachings from the leading Geluk teachers of the time, including the Seventh Dalai Lama. His knowledge in all the subjects of the Geluk curriculum was praised by his colleagues; and from the Lhasa administration, he received honors, gifts, and the Tibetan-Mongolian hybrid title, the "Paṇḍita king of the Dharma, who illuminates the Geluk teachings" (Tib. *dge ldan bstan pa'i gsal byed paN+Di ta no min han*). After then, he returned to his native Amdo.

Whereas the First Jamyang Zhepa had been the founder of Labrang, which was still a humble little monastery when his "rebirth" was recognized, the Second Jamyang Zhepa Könchok Jikmé Wangpo was truly "an institution builder," who greatly expanded the monastery's infrastructures, estates, properties, curriculum, benefactors, population, and ultimately its reputation. A year after he arrived in Labrang from Lhasa, Jikmé Wangpo established at Tösamling Dratsang a curriculum and the tradition of a debate examination for monk in the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* class, the second of the five volumes of the exoteric doctrine in the Labrang syllabus, and the final debate examination for those who completed their studies in all the five volumes and earned the *dorampa* (*rdo rams pa*) degree, a type of the *geshé* (*dge bshes*) degree also awarded in Drepung and Sera.[117] In 1762, the Qianlong Emperor awarded Jikmé

[116] About the *kapö lnga*, for example, see Cabezón & Penpa Dorjee 2019: 215-220.

[117] For final examinations and the *geshé* degree, see, for example, Dreyfus 2003: 254-260, or more detailed in Cabezón & Penpa Dorjee 2019: 286-302.

Wangpo the title of the "Precious king of the Dharma, who upholds and disseminates the Buddhist teachings" (Tib. *bstan pa 'dzin cing spel bar byed pa'i erti ni mo min han*) along with a seal and an edict.

In addition to expanding Labrang by establishing new *dratsang*s and accumulating new property estates, he raised funds to renovate, rebuild, and newly establish numerous temples and monasteries throughout Amdo. He was also enthroned as the abbot of important monastic centers, including Gönlung, Kumbum, and Jakhyung in 1763, 1765, and 1789 respectively. Könchok Jikmé Wangpo owned an extraordinary collection of texts that greatly contributed the Labrang's already wonderful library. Among his extensive writings, which were later published in twelve volumes, the *Lamp* was probably the first commentary to Changkya's *Song*. It was written from an exoteric perspective, likely in 1769 while he was traveling to Wutai Shan (清凉山) to visit Changkya.

Tenpa Rapgyé (1759-1815), the Author of the Esoteric Commentary, the *Sun*

The Second Reting Lobsang Yeshé Tenpa Rapgyé was born in Litang in Kham in 1759.[118] At young age, he was identified as the reincarnation of the famous Fifty-fourth Ganden Tripa Ngawang Chokden by Püntsok Gyatso (Phun tshogs rgya mtsho, d.u.), the abbot of Litang, who gave him the name Lobsang Tendar (Blo bzang bstan dar). Later, at the request of the Litang abbot, the

[118] Lobsang Yeshé Tenpa Rapgyé's student Gyelwang Chöje Lobsang Trinlé Namgyel (Rgyal dbang chos rje Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal, the nineteenth century) composed his extensive biography in 1818. See Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal.

Seventh Demo Rinpoché Ngawang Jampel Delek Gyatso (Ngag dbang 'jam dpal dge legs rgya mtsho, d. 1777), then the sitting regent of Tibet, confirmed the recognition of the Second Reting.[119] Tenpa Rapgyé was brought to Reting Monastery in 1765. That same year, Tenpa Rapgyé also paid a visit to the then young Dalai Lama at the Potala palace and received novice ordination from the Sixth Paṇchen Lama Lobsang Pelden Yeshé (Blo bzang dpal ldan ye shes, 1738-1780) followed by many important teachings. The Lhasa hierarchs paid special attention to the young Reting Trülku's education, so even the basics of his training had to be approved by the Fifty-ninth Ganden Tripa Ngawang Chodrak (Ngag dbang chos grags, 1710-1772). While he was still very young, Tenpa Rapgyé also received many advanced tantric teachings from his teachers. His biography includes numerous stories about extraordinary events that together paint a picture of Tenpa Rapgyé as a highly realized tantric yogi.

As his previous "incarnation" had been affiliated to Sera Jé, he was enrolled in the same *dratsang* in 1769 and studied in accordance with its educational curriculum. Because of the previous Reting Rinpoché's extraordinary prominence throughout the Geluk world, the Geluk authorities in Lhasa often granted exceptions to the young *trülku*. He was also held in high esteem by the

[119] Reting Tenpa Rapgyé's biographer informs us that there was another boy, who is not officially counted in the Reting incarnation lineage, recognized as as Ngawang Chokden's incarnation soon after the latter's death. That boy died at a very young age before Tenpa Rapgyé was born. Changkya Rölpé Dorjé later said that this boy was an "intermediate *trülku* who must have been the residue of the previous incarnation's life." *lcang skya thams cad mkhyen pa'i bka' las/ sprul sku bar pa de gong ma'i tshe lhag yin pa 'dug ces gsung pa ltar khri chen gong ma de nyid kyi sku tshe'i lhag ma'i zlos gar gang rigs su nges pas*…" Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal: 158.

Qianlong Emperor who, via his amban's office in Lhasa, conferred on him the Mongolian title, the "Noble king of the Dharma," or "Qutuğtu non-un khan," related to the previous Reting's title, the "King of the Dharma." In 1777, on the occasion of the Paṇchen Lama's visit to the Dalai Lama, Tenpa Rapgyé, though a little short to the age of twenty, asked the Paṇchen Lama for full ordination which was granted by him in Potala. Soon after that, the Sera Jé administration gave him permission to prepare for his *geshé lharampa* degree during the Lhasa Mönlam Chenmo (*smon lam chen mo*), the Great Festival of Lhasa. In 1780, Tenpa Rapgyé, then only twenty-one years old, was awarded his *geshé lharampa* degree. His biographies mention his brilliance in his oral examinations and his lavish offerings to the monastic community and high lamas. Upon the completion of his exams, he transferred to Gyümé Dratsang for esoteric studies as is still the tradition today for those who graduate from the *tsennyi dratsang*s. However, feeling the activities even within the monastery as destructive to profound tantric practices, he requested permission to leave for Reting to retire in retreat practices. He spent the next seven years mostly at Reting.

After years of meditation practices in a retreat, Tenpa Rapgyé was called back to Lhasa by the Dalai Lama not only to join him in receiving teachings—for example, from his tutor Tsechokling Yeshé Gyéltsen (Tshe mchog gling Ye shes rgyal mtshan, 1713-1793)—but also to teach young *trülku*s and monks in the *densa*s. Tenpa Rapgyé's teachings were well attended, and he was often regarded as a true embodiment of the Buddha Vajradhara, which was seen as

reminiscent of the previous Reting's honorary title, "Vajradhara-Throne Holder," or "Trichen Dorjé Chang" (Khri chen rdo rje 'chang). From then on, Tenpa Rapgyé split his life between Reting and Lhasa, making Sera's Pabongka hermitage his home when in Lhasa. His biographer expresses the admiration for the quality of Tenpa Rapgyé's teachings with these words:

> [The Reting Rinpoché] taught limitless amounts of profound and vast [Dharma teachings]. His explanations were perfectly balanced like a square in which the entire stages of the path, both exoteric and esoteric—which include everything ranging from the path for the individuals with small scope to luminosity, illusory body, and union—are comprised within a single line of text, a concept even beyond the mental abilities of the bodhisattvas in a *bhūmi* to perceive.[120]

Although such praise in Tibetan Buddhist texts is not uncommon, the writer of the biography may have tried to shed light on Tenpa Rapgyé's ability to interpret a text from more than one perspective. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, his *Sun* interpretes the "definitive" meaning of the *Song* from a tantric perspective.

While still busy and traveling between Lhasa and Reting, in 1795, Tenpa Rapgyé reached the age of thirty-six, which according to the Tibetan astrology is an obstacle year. For a rite of protecting his life and accumulating merit, he commissioned a beautiful Maitreya statue at Reting. He also either restored, commissioned, or built temples, *stūpa*s, statues, and images at Reting, venerated

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[120] *tshig rkang pa gcig tsam gyi nang du yang skyes bu chung ngu'i lam nas bzung ste/ 'od gsal/ sgyu lus/ zung 'jug dang bcas pa'i bar gyi mdo sngags lam gyi rim pa mtha' dag gru bzhi lam gyis tshang ba'i gsung bshad la sogs pa zab cing rgya che mtha' yas pa sar gnas kyi sems dpa' dag gis kyang blo'i yul du 'dzin par mi nus pa du ma 'byams klas su 'doms par mdzad…*" Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal [2016]: 328.

many large and small monastic communities, and sponsored religious ceremonies in the Lhasa area, repeatedly offering tea, lunch, and other donations. The Lhasa administrators often invited the Reting Rinpoché to have him lead the monastic assemblies in religious rites, for example, consecrating Lhasa's Buddhist images or sometimes praying for peace during difficult times, such as when Nepalese Gorkhas invaded Tibet between 1788 and 1792.

In 1801, the Reting Trülku Tenpa Rapgyé, now a highly esteemed senior lama, whose knowledge and spiritual power were broadly acknowledged by the Geluk communities and who was a teacher of thousands of students, was appointed to be the tutor to the next Changkya Yeshé Tenpé Gyéltsen (Ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1787-1846), who came to Drepung Gomang to study. When the Fourth Khalkha's Jebtsundampa Lobsang Tupten Wangchuk (Blo bzang thub bstan dbang phyug, 1775-1813) visited central Tibet in early 1804, Tenpa Rapgyé also met with him and offered him many teachings. In 1806, the Reting Rinpoché granted full ordination to the Changkya Trülku Yeshé Tenpé Gyeltsen. According to the *Sun*'s colophon, it was this Changkya Trülku, accompanied by the Third Drupkhang Lobsang Gélek Gyéltsen (Sgrub khang Blo bzang dge legs rgyal mtshan, 1780-1815), who petitioned the Reting Trülku to compose a commentary to the *Song,* explaining it from the tantric points of view. This is how the *Sun*, a relatively short work included in Reting Tenpa Rapgyé's four volumes of writings, was composed. The Reting Rinpoche's biography repeatedly asserts that the Changkya Trülku was his closest disciple.

Belmang Könchok Gyéltsen (1764-1853), the Refuter of the *Sun* in His *Ocean*

Unlike the other key figures in this polemics, Belmang Könchok Gyéltsen completed the entire educational program of the *geshé* curriculum in his home monastery of Labrang, instead of going to Lhasa. Only after that did he go to central Tibet for a short period of time, mainly for work related to the recognition of the Second Jamyang Zhepa's rebirth, in which he played an important role.[121] Belmang was born near Labrang in 1764. He was recognized as the reincarnation of Belmang Lobsang Döndrup (Blo bzang don grub, 1696-1756) by Könchok Jikmé Wangpo, the Second Jamyang Zhepa, and was installed at Labrang in 1770.[122] Belmang's studies followed the Labrang curriculum and, as soon as he reached the age, he received full ordination from Jikmé Wangpo. From early on, Labrang had a reputation of being one of the few Geluk monasteries where a monk can formally learn, in addition to Buddhist doctrines and rituals, many other traditional sciences such as Sanskrit grammar, poetics, astrology, medicine, and so forth. Belmang, it is said, took full advantage of this

[121] About Belmang's involvement in the Third Jamyang Zhepa's recognition, see Oidtmann 2013: 200-2014.

[122] Belmang Könchok Gyéltsen's student Dragönpa Könchok Tenpa Rapgyé (Brag dgon pa Dkon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1801-1866), the Forty-ninth Throne-holder of Labrang, wrote his extensive biography in 1864. Dragönpa is also known for his more famous work, the *History of Amdo* (*Mdo smad chos 'byung*) completed in 1865. The nineteenth-century Sakya master Jamyang Khyetsé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 1820-1892), an important figure in the so-called *Rimé* (ris med) non-sectarian movement, mentions Dragönpa as one of his teachers.

and became well versed in many fields of learning. In 1793, he defended his *dorampa* degree, a type of the *geshé* degree Labrang awards to its scholars.

While visiting Lhasa in 1797, on at least two occasions Belmang was offered admission to different monasteries: once to Gyümé Dratsang and once to Tengyüling, but he declined both offers. He showed no interest to take up residence in central Tibet. Returning to Labrang, in 1800 Belmang composed his *Succession of Abbots in Labrang (Bla brang gdan rabs)*, an important work for the study of the Geluk school in Amdo, and especially for the early history of Labrang. As an important reincarnate lama and as an exceptional scholar in his own right, in 1804 he was enthroned as the Twenty-Fourth Labrang Tripa, the head of Labrang and held the abbacy for six years. Throughout his tenure he had a busy schedule that included teaching and ritual activities, but also managing various construction projects, correcting ritual practices, implementing monastic rules, and raising funds for the maintenance of the monastery.

Khoshut Mongol support for Labrang Monastery had significantly waned as a result of losing dominance over the region since the Qing conquest in 1723-24. Belmang, however, was able to replace the Khoshut support with the patronage of local Tibetans, which permitted Labrang to continue to grow during a difficult period in its history. Belmang wrote his *Lessons Summarizing the History of India, Tibet, and Mongolia* (*Rgya bod hor sog gyi lo rgyus nyung ngur brjod pa*) in early 1820s, perhaps in response to the shift of power in Amdo from Mongols to the Qing, and the subsequent territorial reorganizations. The *History* may

have been Belmang's attempt to readjust Labrang's vision to the "new" Qing policy implemented since the Qianlong era. According to Max Oidtmann, Belmang claimed that he "shared Qianlong's interest in rule by law, yet contra Qianlong, Belmang argued that just rule had only one foundation: the Law as understood by Gelukpa."[123] Ultimately, Belmang made Labrang an important regional hub founded upon Geluk ideology. He also made the monastery less dependent on Lhasa and on exogenous political authorities: the local laity and the Qing court. Belmang was a strong adherent of Geluk orthodoxy, but his version of Geluk orthodoxy, as is clear in his works, is inclusive.[124] Thus, compared to many of his fellow Gelukpas, especially those of the preceding generations, Belmang, perhaps driven by his need to insure a place for Labrang within the shifting political realities of his day, took a relatively more clever approach to sectarianism.

Around 1833, in response to Ngawang Khedrup's charges, Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen, now almost a seventy-year-old retired abbot, decided to intervene in the debate by penning his *Ocean*, a work in which he defends his Labrang colleagues against the charges of a younger Mongol abbot in his mid-fifties. Details about this debate will be discussed in Chapter Five. Belmang lived to be eighty-nine years old, outliving his Khalkha counterpart, and possibly also his

[123] Oidtmann 2015: 112.

[124] For Belmang's version of Geluk orthodoxy, one can examine it in Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974b.

Üjümčin opponent, whose dates are unknown, as well as the Söned mediator—about all of whom is found in the following pages.

Ngawang Khedrup (1779-1838), a Defender of the *Sun* and a Critic of the *Ocean*

Ngawang Khedrup, known also as Agwaankhaidav (Mon. Ağvangqayidub), was born in 1779 in Mandal, located in Khalkha's Darqan Qinwang's Banner of Tüsheet Khan Province, not far from Ih Hüree. His parents were very religious, probably just like most Mongols of that time, and they taught him mantras and simple prayers. He also learned how to read from his father, to whom he later referred as a guru. At young age, Ngawang Khedrup received lay vows and matriculated at Riwo Gegyé Ganden Shédrupling, i.e., Ih Hüree. After receiving the vows of a novice monk from the Fourth Jebtsundampa's tutor Ngawang Trinlé (Ngag dbang 'phrin las, d.u.), he enrolled Ih Hüree's *tsennyi dratsang*, which would later be known as Tashi Chönpel Dratsang. There he started his formal training in Buddhist philosophy with his teachers Ngawang (Ngag dbang, d.u.) and Könchok (Dkon mchog, d.u.), who later became the abbot of Amarbayasgalant (Amurbayasqulangtu), a major Mongolian monastery established by the Yongzheng Emperor for Zanabazar's entombment. During his early years studying in the *tsennyi dratsang*, he gained fame among his cohorts for his special talent in debate.

On the advice of his teacher Konchok, Ngawang Khedrup decided to travel to Lhasa and study at Drepung Gomang for advanced training in Buddhist philosophy. When he was of the age of eighteen, he consulted with the Fourth Jebtsundampa who gave him permission to travel. However, the disciplinarian of the Tsokchen or the Main Assembly did not approve of his intention to travel to Lhasa, saying, "There is much for you to study in Ih Hüree. Don't speak such words!" The disciplinarian's words, cited in Ngawang Khedrup's biography, suggest that by then Ih Hüree was already considered a place for serious learning and that students did not need to seek education elsewhere. Despite this, Ngawang Khedrup secretly left Ih Hüree for Lhasa.

Customarily, the newly admitted monks at Drepung Gomang, advancing through all the classes for their preliminary training in Buddhist dialectics, would reach the Parchin Dzindra (*phar phyin 'dzin grwa*), the Perfection of Wisdom class, in their fifth year. However, according to Gomang rules, new students who transferred from other Geluk institutions outside of Lhasa were allowed to join at most the Parchin Dzindra, only if they proved their skill and knowledge in the preliminary subjects and came from home monasteries with a good reputation. This was true even for those who had been awarded a *geshé* degree from their home monasteries. The fact that Ngawang Khedrup was allowed to start his training at Gomang in with Parchin Dzindra tells us that he had all the requisite skills for a debate on the subject of the Perfection of Wisdom and that Drepung Gomang recognized Ih Hüree's reputation in

preparing advanced students. Having completed the Gomang curriculum, Ngawang Khedrup was awarded the *geshé rabjampa* (*dge bshes rab 'byams pa*) degree. He received full monastic ordination from the Dalai Lama at the Potala; and according to his biography, he paid special attention to keeping his vows pure. Ngawang Khedrup received various exoteric and esoteric teachings from various teachers, including the Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso ('Jam dpal rgya mtsho, 1758-1804) and the Seventh Paṇchen Lama Pelden Tenpé Nyima (PaN chen dpal ldan bstan pa'i nyi ma, 1782-1853) as well as their tutors, various Ganden Tripas, and many more. He was particularly devoted to the Second Reting Lobsang Yeshé Tenpa Rapgyé and received from him various empowerments and special instructions, both exoteric and esoteric. Ngawang Khedrup's biography reports that he painted or at least commissioned multiple portraits of Reting Rinpoche Tenpa Rapgyé in his life. Therefore, his fierce defense of Tenpa Rapgyé's work in debate must have been strongly motivated by his devotion to his guru.

During Ngawang Khedrup's studies at Gomang, the Fourth Jebtsundampa visited central Tibet, and Ngawang Khedrup acted as his attendant during his stay in Lhasa. Ngawang Khedrup wanted to remain in Tibet for an extended period of time to further his studies and receive the *geshé lharampa* (*dge bshes lha ram pa*) degree, but Reting Rinpoche told him that although he had the ability to become not only a *geshé lharampa* but also the abbot of Gomang, it would be more beneficial for him to return to Ih Hüree and assist the

Jebtsundampa in his mission of developing Buddhism in Khalkha. He thus decided to return to Ih Hüree.

While in Lhasa, Ngawang Khedrup is said to have a dream in which a marvelous looking horseman wearing a traditional Mongolian dress advised him to return to Mongolia. Reting once again suggested that he should return home, lest there be a life-threatening obstacle for him in Tibet. Later on, according to his biography, Ngawang Khedrup wondered whether that horseman in his dream was the protector deity of Ih Hüree embodied within Bogda Khan Mountain, to south of Ih Hüree.

After he arrived in Ih Hüree, during one of his occasional meetings with the Jebtsundampa, the latter remarked that among the Jebtsundampa incarnation lineage, the First was exceptionally kind whereas the Second and Third had short lives and thus did not accomplish as much. Ngawang Khedrup pointed out that the kindness of the Second Jebtsundampa was also notable because he was responsible for establishing the two *dratsang*s of the exoteric and esoteric studies: the Philosophy College, i.e., the *tsennyi dratsang* founded in 1736, and the Tantric College, i.e., the Gyüpa Dratsang founded in 1739, both of which he described as the two eyes of Ih Hüree.

While at Ih Hüree, Ngawang Khedrup received numerous important teachings and transmissions from the Jebtsundampa and Arjia Qutuğtu Lobsang Jamyang Gyatso (A rgyā hu thug tu Blo bzang 'jam dbyangs rgya mtsho, 1768-1816), who was visiting Khalkha. In addition, he spent his days extensively

teaching students the five volumes for Buddhist philosophical training in accordance with the Geluk system. On the Jebtsundampa's recommendation, Ngawang Khedrup was offered a *chöje* (*chos rje*) position at Ih Hüree in 1812, and eventually, by order of the Daoguang Emperor (道光, b. 1782-r. 1820-d. 1850), he became the vice-abbot in 1822; this was for the first time that the position of vice-abbot in Ih Hüree was established. Later, in 1834, he was appointed as the abbot and became known as the Kyedor Khenpo (*kyai rdor mkhan po*) after the name of a residential *aimag* in Ih Hüree where he was based.

His biography recounts of the Fourth Jebtsundamba blessing and entrusting Ngawang Khedrup as his proxy in Ih Hüree when he was about to travel to Wutai Shan. Because the Fourth Jebtsundampa died while at Wutai Shan, Ngawang Khedrup, then the vice-abbot, acted in the late Jebtsundampa's stead until the Fifth Jebtsundampa Lobsang Tsültrim Jikmé Tenpé Gyéltsen (Blo bzang tshul khrims 'jigs med bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1815-1841) was recognized. Saddened by the Jebtsundampa's untimely death, Ngawang Khedrup made extensive commemoration offerings and created a golden statue of the late Jebtsundampa. He also had a close association with Lobsang Gendün (Blo bzang dge 'dun, d.u), a tutor to the late Jebtsundampa, and received from him many teachings. Lobsang Gendun had been trained in Drepung Loseling Dratsang in Lhasa, whereas Ngawang Khedrup had studied at Gomang Dratsang, so the pair is said to have enjoyed each other's company, debating

together as the representatives of the two colleges. It was Lobsang Gendün who assisted the late Jebtsundampa in establishing Künga Chöling, the second *tsennyi dratsang* in Ih Hüree, which followed Loseling Dratsang's *yigcha*. Later, Lobsang Gendün became the abbot of Drepung Loseling when he returned to Tibet. When the newly recognized Fifth Jebtsundampa arrived in Ih Hüree from Tibet in 1821, Ngawang Khedrup was among those who ceremonially welcomed him.

In the meantime, Ngawang Khedrup taught students on a daily basis and greatly contributed to the nineteenth-century efflorescence of monastic and scholastic trainings at Ih Hüree. In particular, as the abbot, he placed special emphasis on the importance of monasticism and stressed the proper observance of monastic vows and commitments. He also installed a number of small and large statues in Ih Hüree, which were said to be comparable to the famous statues of Lhasa. Many scroll paintings of different buddhas and bodhisattvas were also created under Ngawang Khedrup's order. The famous towering statue of Maitreya in Ih Hüree was also said to be erected due to his efforts. He paid special attention to improving the methods of creating Buddhist visual arts, such as the painting of the bodies of deities and the decoration of dance (*'cham*) implements. In addition to his contributions to the visual arts, Ngawang Khedrup was a prolific writer, with contributions to genres of as diverse as poetry, prayers and supplications, fables, commentarial exegeses on Buddhist philosophy and tantra, polemics, biographies, catalogs, rituals, and practice

related advice. In 1838, Ngawang Khedrup passed away while gazing at a painted portrait of his teacher, the Second Reting Tenpa Rapgyé. His writings were compiled into five volumes and published in Ih Hüree. Among his works we find two works that are rebuttals, which are studied in this dissertation. The details are found in Chapter Five as well.

Lobsang Tseten (18-19th cen.), Another Defender of the *Sun* and a Critic of the *Ocean*

Lobsang Tseten (Blo bzang tshe brtan), better known as Tseten Lharampa of Üjümčin, is the least known figure among the exegetes and polemicists who were directly involved in this particular polemics. His exact dates and life details are not available to us. What little information we have about him suggests that he was born in the Üjümčin tribe of eastern Mongolia. He went to central Tibet at a young age and entered Sera Jé Dratsang in Lhasa, where he received various exoteric and esoteric teachings and transmissions from the Seventh Dalai Lama, Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, Changlung Paṇḍita Ngawang Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen (Lcang lung paN+Di ta Ngag dbang blo bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1770-1845), and Reting Lobsang Tenpa Rapgyé. Completing his studies at Sera in accordance with its curriculum, he earned the *lharampa* degree. Recently, in 2011, his compositions were compiled and published in Lhasa in two volumes. In this dissertation, we examine some of his arguments made by defending his

teacher Reting Tenpa Rapgyé's points and arguing against Belmang's criticism, which are also discussed in Chapter Five.

Changlung Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen (1770-1845), the Mediator in the Polemics

Ngawang Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen, also known as Ārya Changlung Paṇḍita, was born in Inner Mongolian Söned Left Banner to an aristocratic family in 1770. When he was five, Changkya Rölpé Dorjé and Khenchen Ngawang Tsültrim (Mkhan chen Ngag dbang tshul khrims, 1721-1791), who was then the abbot of Beijing's Yonghegong and a future Regent and Ganden Tripa, recognized him as the reincarnation of the late Changlung Lobsang Peljor Lhündrup (Blo bzang dpal 'byor lhun grub, 18th cen.). The local prince Lobsang Tsering (Blo bzang tshe ring, d.u.) went to Beijing to obtain a permit from the Qianlong Emperor to install the boy in the previous Changlung Lama's home monastery, Genpel Ganden Chönzöling (Dge 'phel dga' ldan chos mdzod gling), which later became known in short as Ārya Paṇḍita's monastery after Changlung Paṇḍita's honorary title. With the emperor's approval, he was brought there and ordained by Khenchen Ngawang Tsültrim, who gave him the ordination name "Ngawang Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen." He mostly studied at his home monastery but also visited Changkya Rölpé Dorjé and Khenchen Ngawang Tsültrim in Wutai Shan and Beijing at several occasions and received advanced

teachings from them. In 1790, accompanied by some twenty servants, he left for Lhasa to study and later matriculated in Sera Jé.

The Eighth Dalai Lama Jampel Gyatso ordained Changlung Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen in 1791. In the autumn of the same year, when the Paṇchen Lama, escaping from the Gorkha invasion, arrived in Potala, Ngawang Lobsang Tenpé Gyéltsen took the opportunity to meet with the Paṇchen Lama. After spending five years in Lhasa, he received the title of the "Paṇḍita who illuminates the teachings of Ganden" ("Dge ldan bstan pa'i gsal byed paN+Di ta) along with seals and various gifts from the Dalai Lama. Afterwards, Changlung Paṇḍita returned to his monastery in Inner Mongolia. Upon his return, he commissioned a large Maitreya statue, which was completed in 1797 and housed in a temple at his monastery. As the head lama of Changlung, which was an important monastery in Inner Mongolian Šili-yin Ǧoul region, he attended imperial ceremonies in Beijing on many occasions. In the summer of 1804, when Ngawang Khedrup, who was on his way back to Mongolia, arrived in Chubsang Monastery, Changlung Paṇḍita went there to see him. The two must have been acquainted years earlier in Lhasa. In 1814, at his monastery, Changlung Paṇḍita founded a *tsennyi dratsang*, which followed Sera Jé's *yigcha*.

Changlung Paṇḍita met in person all the authors of the texts that together constitute the polemics we are interested in this dissertation: the Third Changkya, the Second Jamyang Zhepa, the Second Reting, Belmang, Ngawang Khedrup, and Lobsang Tseten. He cared a great deal about the controversy and

mediated between the polemicists, who were geographicaly distant from one another. Sometimes, he was transporting one polemicist's work to another, and at other times, he was requesting them to write a reply to the previous volley. Changlung Paṇḍita's enthusiasm is vividly depicted in Ngawang Khedrup's eulogy at the beginning of one of his polemical texts.

> I also pay homage to the Great Ārya [Changlung Paṇḍita],
> Who [wandering] hither and thither with his interjection "Aho!"
> Praises the various rebuttals related to the *Song: Recognizing the Mother*
> And being circulated, like [the shape of] hoop earrings.[125]

In addition to encouraging others to compose works, Changlung Paṇḍita was also a productive writer whose collected works were compiled and published as xylographs in Inner Mongolia in six or eight volumes.[126]

Conclusion

The seventeenth-century victory of the Geluk School in central Tibet allowed Geluk hierarchs to implement a policy of aggressive expansion of the school into Mongolia and the Amdo area, where Mongol tribes were still dominant over other ethnic groups. As a result of the expansionist policy carried out by the Fifth Dalai Lama and the First Paṇchen Lama—then the two towering religious

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[125] *a ma ngos 'dzin lta mgur las brtsams pa'i/ a long sgor 'dra'i dgag bzhag mang byung ba/ a la la zhes phar bstod tshur bstod mdzad/ A+rya chen po la yang phyag 'tshal lo*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th or 20th century: 2a.

[126] In its possession, the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC) has two editions of Changlung Paṇḍita's *Collected Works*. The original edition (W1KG1338) is constituted of six volumes, and the later reprinting (W6799) of the same edition by the Mongolian Lama Gurudeva in Delhi, India was organized in eight volumes. A catalog of collected works compiled in Sichuan, China (W19837) indicates that his collected works comprise seven volumes.

authorities of the Geluk School—and their successors supported by the local nobles, and later by the Manchu-Qing rulers, numerous Geluk monasteries were built throughout Amdo and Mongolia within a short period of time. Amidst the social fluctuations that resulted from the clash between various competing powers, by the eighteenth century, Khalkha's Ih Hüree and Amdo's Labrang became the two largest Geluk institutions in Mongolia and Amdo, respectively. For the Mongols, Tibetans, and the other ethnic minorities in these areas, the eighteenth century was a period in which the Manchu-Mongol world order gave way to the religio-political Qing-Geluk world order. Although there was no direct conflict between Ih Hüree and Labrang as the leading institutions in the northernmost part of the Qing-Geluk world, the administrators of the two institutions engaged in a competition, claiming their respective institutions to be the center of the northern region—the center of the southern region being Lhasa.

It is against this background that we must judge the impact and influence of the various figures involved in the polemics studied in this disssertation: the Third Changkya, the Second Jamyang Zhepa, the Second Reting, the Second Belmang, the Ih Hüree abbot Ngawang Khedrup, and the two Inner Mongolian religious leaders, Changlung Paṇḍita and Tseten Lharampa. Each was the leader of his respective institutions, but their connections with one another often involved the guru-disciple relationship embedded within important incarnation lineages. The reputation of a religious institution, especially in the Geluk worldview, largely depended on the number of its students and the quality of the

education it provided. Therefore, throughout the Geluk history, the largest monasteries have paid special attention to their educational curricula; and, should a chance arise, scholars of those institutions have hardly been shy to engage rivals in intellectual debates, either directly or indirectly, in order to demonstrate the greatness of their institutions. Polemicists like Belmang, Ngawang Khedrup, and Tseten—representing Amdo, Khalkha, and Inner Mongolia, respectively—wrote their polemical works not only because of their intellectual convictions about various points of doctrine but also because their works individually demonstrated the scholastic excellence of their institutions. At stake was not only their individual fame, but more importantly, the possibility for larger institutional impact within the emerging Qing-Geluk world.

II. Textual Studies

Chapter Three: The Root Text, the *Song*

In the last chapter, I sketched out the history of the two main monasteries that were home to our polemicists as well as brief biographies of the involved parties: the composer of the root text, the authors of the two diverging commentaries, and the subsequent polemicists as well as of the mediator. The current chapter focuses on the literary aspects of the root text, the *Song*: the circumstance of the composition, its genre, and subject matter with my short assessments based on the words of the *Song* itself. Little or no mention is made of the traditional commentaries, which are the subject of the following chapter.

The Title of the *Song*, and Its Time and Place of Composition

Changkya Rölpé Dorjé's *Profound Spiritual Song on the View* (henceforth, the *Song*) is the root text on which all the subsequent commentaries and polemical exchanges are based. As for the title, the original xylographic Beijing edition of the author's collected works entitles the work *The Profound [Spiritual] Song on the View* (*Lta ba'i gsung mgur zab mo*) in the title page, but its colophon provides an alternative title: Deceptive Words for Recognizing the Mother: A Melody of an Echo (*A ma ngo shes kyi brdzun tshig brag cha'i sgra dbyangs*).[127]

[127] *The Profound Spiritual Song of the View* (*Lta ba'i gsung mgur zab mo*) is found in the Fourth (*Nga*) volume of Changkya Rolpé Dorjé's xylographic collected works published in Beijing. Rol pa'i rdo rje 2003.

Accordingly, Jikmé Wangpo's commentary, which is likely the first exegesis to the *Song*, the root text's title is *The [Spiritual] Song on the View* (*Lta' ba'i gsung mgur*), basically preserving what is found in the title page of the Beijing xylographic edition of the root text with the omission of the adjective "profound" ("zab mo").[128] However, when Tenpa Rapgyé, the writer of the second commentary which takes an esoteric perspective, identified the root text's title in his work, he slightly modified and integrated both titles found in the Beijing xylograph—the one on the title page and the other in the colophon—to create a main title with a subordinate heading, so it reads as *Recognizing the Mother: The Spiritual Song of Experience on the View* (*Lta ba'i nyams mgur a ma ngos 'dzin*).[129] Also, instead of the term "sunggur" (*gsung mgur*), literally "spoken song," found in the title page of the originally published root text, which denotes the song's oral expression in an honorific tone, Tenpa Rapgyé uses the term "nyamgur" (*nyams mgur*), literally meaning "song of experience," suggesting that the *Song* is a poetical work that is an expression of the author's spiritual experience. Subsequently, the *Song* came to be known both as a *sungur* and a *nyamgur*—which denote, respectively, a literary genre and its sub-genre of

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[128] Jikmé Wangpo's commentary, *The Verbal Lamp: A Commentary to the "Spiritual Song on the View"* (*Lta ba'i gsung mgur gyi 'grel pa tshig gi sgron me*), is found in the Seventh (*Ja*) volume of his collected works. Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1999.

[129] Tenpa Rapgyé's commentary's full title reads, *The Sword to Destroy the Hostile Army of the Clinging to a Self, the Sun to Make the Fortunate Lotus Blossom: A Commentary to the "Recognizing the Mother: The Spiritual Song of Experience on the View"* (*Lta ba'i nyams mgur a ma ngos 'dzin gyi 'grel pa bdag 'dzin dgra dpung 'joms pa'i mtshon cha skal ldan pad+mo bzhad pa'i nyin byed*). It is found in the Second (*Kha*) volume of his collected works. Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas 1985.

Tibetan spiritual "poetry."[130] We will briefly discuss these genres later in this chapter.

Later in the twentieth century, the *Song* in its entirety as an individual text was included in the collected works of the Nyingma polymath Ju Mipam Gyatso ('Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho, 1846-1912) along with his own commentary to it.[131] This version calls the *Song* as *The Profound [Spiritual] Song of the View* (*Lta ba'i mgur zab mo*), also principally maintaining the original title with a small exclusion of the terms "gsung" or "nyams," which were used adjectively modifying the "mgur" in the other titles. The omissions of *gsung* or *nyams* should not be interpreted as Mipam's attempt to denigrate the work or its author, for not only does the term "mgur" in itself already carry a reverential tone regarding the spiritual experience of its writer, but Mipam preserves the term "profound" (*zab mo*). In fact, a profound sense of respect for Changkya Rölpé Dorjé is evident throughout Mipam's commentary. We will also revisit this commentary in the next chapter. Moreover, another Nyingma master Katok Gedsé Gyurmé Tsewang Chokdrup (Kaḥ thog dge rtse 'Gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub, 1761-

[130] For an overview of this genre, see Jackson 1996.

[131] Changkya Rölpé Dorjé's root text along with Mipam Gyatso's commentary—*The Root Text of Changkya Rölpé Dorjé's Middle Way, the "Profound Spiritual Song on the View," and Its Commentary* (*Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i dbu ma lta ba'i mgur zab mo'i rtsa 'grel*)—is located in the Fourth (*Nga*) volume of Mipam Gyatso's collected works published in Paro, Bhutan. Mi pham rgya mtsho. 1984–1993. Karl Brunnhölzl translated both the *Song* and Mipam's commentary into English and published them along with the author's short biographies. Brunnhölzl 2007: 391-427.

1829), who was Changkya's direct disciple, is also said to have composed a commentary to the *Song*.[132]

In 1882, while still a teenager, Lobsang Pelden Tendzin Nyandrak (Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin snyan grags, 1866-1928), a.k.a. the Dragkar Trülku (Brag dkar sprul sku), a younger contemporary of Mipam and one of his future Geluk opponents in polemics, also wrote a commentary to the *Song*, in which the root text was labeled as *Recognizing the Mother* qua *View* (*Lta ba'i a ma ngo shes*).[133]

Another major commentary to the *Song* was written in 1983 by a contemporary Tibetan lama, the late Drepung throne-holder Gungru Geshé Tenpa Tendzin (Gung ru dge bshes Bstan pa bstan 'dzin, 1917-2007), and it identifies the title of its root text as *Recognizing the Mother: A Unique Spiritual Song of Experience on the View*" ("Lta ba'i nyams mgur thun mong ma yin pa a ma ngo shes").[134] In these commentaries composed by different Tibetan authors in the traditional commentarial style, the *Song* is variously classified as a

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[132] Karl Brunnhölzl mentioned this account (Brunnhölzl 2007: 553), but unfortunately, we could not locate the text.

[133] The Dragkar Trülku's commentary is entitled, *A Mirror to Illuminate the Profound Meaning: A Commentary to the "Recognizing the Mother of the View"* (*Lta ba'i a ma ngo shes kyi 'grel pa zab don rnam par gsal ba'i me long*). The text is found in the First (*Ka*) volume of his nineteen volume collected works published in Khreng tu'u (Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin snyan grags 2001). Jü Mipam and the Dragkar Trülku are known for their polemical debate on the theory of emptiness, but their individual commentaries on the *Song* are completely distinct from their debates. For a study of the polemical exchanges between Ju Mipam and the Dragkar Trülku, see Phuntsho 2005.

[134] Tenpa Tendzin's commentary "The Essential Square Gem: The Detailed Exegeses of the 'Recognizing the Mother—the Unique Spiritual Song of Experience on the View' (Lta ba'i nyams mgur thun mongs ma yin pa a ma ngo shes kyi rnam bshad grub bzhi'i snying nor)" was first published in Mundgod, India in 1985 (Bstan pa bstan 'dzin: 1985). Subsequently, it was republished along with his other works in Lhasa in 2009 (Bstan pa bstan 'dzin 2009).

spiritual song (*gsung mgur*, or simply just *mgur*), or a spiritual song of experience (*nyams mgur*), or a song on the view (*lta ba'i mgur*, or *lta mgur*) with or without the adjectival modification of "profound" (*zab mo*).

Several Mongolian Buddhist scholars have also written commentaries to the *Song*. For example, Erdeni Mergen Paṇḍita Ngawang Yeshé Zangpo (Ngag dbang ye shes bzang po, 1846/7-1896), a.k.a. Agvaan-Ishsambuu from the Khalkha's Tüsheet Khan's Province, wrote a commentary, entitled the *Resonant Melody of Dependent Origination: A Pseudo Song Imitating the "Recognizing the Mother"* (*A ma ngo shes zlos pa'i rdzun mgur rten 'byung brag ca'i sgra dbyangs*), followed by its outline, entitled the *Clear Divisions of the Song of Experience: An Outline of the "Recognizing the Mother"* (*A ma ngos 'dzin gyi sa bcad nyams mgur tshig gsal*).[135] Also, a handwritten copy of the *Song* with annotations, which accord with Tenpa Rapgyé's esoteric commentary, is found in the collections of Gandan Tegchenling Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The short and sparse annotations found in this manuscript are orally ascribed to Ngawang Yeshé Zangpo, but unfortunately, the text has no colophon or any

[135] For the bibliographical records of these texts, see Ragchaa 2004: v.3; 948 and 961. The texts were published within the author's collected works in 2013. Ngag dbang ye shes bzang po 2013a & 2013b. The title of the commentary may read as if suggesting the work is a song (*mgur*) on the view of dependent origination that was inspired by Changkya's *Song*. While it is true that the commentary is in verses, it is more like a word commentary (*tshig 'grel*) in accordance with the *Sun*, than a song on a different concept, such as dependent origination. For Ngawang Yeshé Zangpo's personal connection to the controversy of the esoteric interpretation of the *Song*, it is interesting to note that he was considered the subsequent reincarnation of Ngawang Khedrup, who is one of the main polemicists studied in this dissertation.

information to prove this attribution.[136] Moreover, another short commentarial glossary for selected terms of the *Song*, entitled *A Glossary of the "Recognizing the Mother: The Spiritual Song of Experience on the View"* (*Lta ba'i nyams mgur a ma ngos 'dzin gyi tshig 'grel*), written by Ngawang Tendzin Nyima (Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nyi ma, 1882-1937), a.k.a the master reincarnation (*slob dpon sprul sku*) at the Western Monastic School (Mon: Barağun Čoyir-a) of Khalkha,[137] and another outline of Jikmé Wangpo's commentary entitled the *Outline of the "Recognizing the Mother: The Unique Introduction to the View" According to the Commentary "Verbal Lamp"* (*Lta ba'i ngo sprod thun mong ma yin pa a ma'i ngo 'dzin gyi sa bcad 'grel tshig sgron ma ltar ro*) presumably by an anonymous Mongol writer have been also documented.[138] Furthermore, a commentary to the *Song*, reportedly entitled the *Flower of Words, the Blazing Lamp (Tshig gi me tog 'bar ba'i sgron me)*, by the famous Khalkha Mongolian scholar Lobsang Tayang (Blo bzang rta dbyangs, 1867-1937), a.k.a. Tsawa Tamdrin (Rtsa ba rta mgrin) or Zava Damdin, was recorded.[139]

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[136] This short text has no reference locator number in the libraries of Gandan Tegchenling Monastery. I'm very grateful to Mr. Amgalan Norovtseden for sharing some oral accounts on the text and providing me with access to this text.

[137] The title of this work is listed in Geshé Yeshé Tapkhé's catalog published in India. Ye shes thabs mkhas 1961: 82.

[138] Since I have not had a chance to put my hands on either of these works, there is not much I can say about them. However, Bayantsagaan Sandag described these two short works (Sandag 1990: 147): the first work is reportedly only one-folio long and comments on only a few selected words from the *Song* that are difficult to understand, and the second work is four-folio long and explains the main terms of the *Song* in accordance with the *Lamp*.

[139] Soninbayar Shagdarsüren reports on the existence of this text, which may have been long lost, with the following accounts. Shagdarsüren 1997: 25. The Lhatsün Trülku Lobsang Tupten Gelek Rapgyé (Lha btsun sprul sku Blo bzang thub bstan dge legs rab rgyas, 1883-1967), an

The *Song* has been translated into English several times, for example, by Robert Thurman and Paul Nietupski in 1975-1976, by Chogkhan Thupten Tandhar in 1995, by Gavin Kilty in 1998 which was later edited by Geshe Dorje Domdul in 2003, by Thupten Jinpa and Jaś Elsner in 2000, and by Stephen Dominick in 2003. Thurman and Nietupski's translation of the text also contains their translation of Jikmé Wangpo's commentary after each verse.[140] Tandhar separately studied the same two texts and wrote a master's thesis, which contains a very useful critical edition of the *Song*, in 1995.[141] Dominick's translation includes his own comments in English on some of the stanzas from the *Song*.[142]

According to the colophon of the *Song* found in the original Tibetan versions, Changkya Rölpé Dorjé composed the text at Mount Wutai. His biography written by his student Tükwan Lobsang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u kwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737-1802) reveals that he visited this scenic Buddhist site several

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important "reincarnated" lama of Sera Mé Dratsang in Tibet, and Lobsang Tayang of Khalkha's Ih Hüree became close religious associates when he visited Mongolia. At the Lhatsün Trülku's request, the latter composed his commentary to the *Song*, whose only copy was taken away by the Lhatsün Trülku when he went back to Tibet. This is the apparent reason for that commentary's absence in Lobsang Tayang's collected works in seventeen volumes. The biographical accounts of the Lhatsün Trülku confirm his visit to Khalkha's Ih Hüree accompanying the Thirteenth Dalai Lama Tupten Gyatso (Thub bstan rgya mtsho, 1876-1933) and his return to Tibet. For a short biographical sketch of the Lhatsün Trülku, see [Anonymous]: [1994].

[140] Nietupski & Thurman 1975-1976.

[141] Tandhar 1995.

[142] Dominick 2003; it also includes Geshe Dorje Domdul's edition of Gavin Kilty's 1998 translation.

times. Mount Wutai is located southwest not too far from Beijing and is believed by the Chinese and Tibetan Buddhists alike to be Lord Mañjuśrī's abode in China. It was Changkya's favorite place to vacation in the summer while on leave from his official duties in Beijing, especially during his senior years and where he later drew his last breath.[143] Neither the *Song*'s colophon nor its commentaries provide us with information on the exact year or the occasion when the author penned down the text. However, the author's biography gives us a slightly richer picture not only about Changkya's fondness for Mount Wutai but also, more relevant to the discussion, about the *Song* when the biographer wrote about Changkya's life events in the Fire Pig Year, 1767.[144] The account narrates that, due to his cultivation on the view of the profound middle way, which had first arisen in his mind when he was very young, Changkya developed a spiritual experience of the view of emptiness arisen from his profound meditation. On this special occasion, as his gratitude, Changkya offered the Buddha, Nāgārjuna (second to third century), and his disciples as well as Tsongkhapa a versified spiritual song, which could be none other than the root text *Song*, as an expression of his experiential religious realization. The biographer likens this event to Tsongkhapa's much celebrated eulogy to the Buddha in verses—the *Essence of the Eloquent Explanation: In Praise of*

[143] Not only did Changkya Rölpé Dorjé write several works at Mount Wutai, but a pilgrimage guide explaining the features of this historic Buddhist site, a spiritual song exclusively praising the place, and ritual manuals dedicated to its local deities are also found in his collected works.

[144] Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma: 511-512.

Dependent Origination (Rten 'brel bstod pa legs bshad snying po)—a beautifully written poetic piece, which had been inspired by the author's first breakthrough experience of exploring the profound middle way view—the equation of emptiness and dependent origination.[145] However, it is interesting to note that Tsongkhapa's composition of the praise marks the point at which he is understood to have realized the correct view of the Middle Way for the first time—a kind of "eureka" moment after many years of effort and struggles—whereas Changkya, in his biography, is said to have had such an experience when he was very young, as if it was natural to him.[146]

"Emptiness," both in Tsongkhapa and Changkya, refers to the ultimate nature of reality, the absolute non-implicative negation (*prasajyapratiṣedha*; *med dgag*) of the independent existence of all things. When Tsongkhapa explained how one should understand emptiness, he emphasized dependent origination, the conventional nature of reality, according to which every phenomenon, including emptiness itself, arises in dependence upon other phenomena. Correspondingly, for Tsongkhapa, dependent origination can be explained in terms of emptiness. By this, he did not merely mean that the theory

[145] About Tsongkhapa's composition of the praise after his breakthrough experience of a profound realization, for example, see Jinpa 2019: 162-171.

[146] Even though it is common in Tibetan hagiographical writings that the protagonist is often described as a highly realized master, if not an already fully enlightened being, even before their birth, Lobsang Chökyi Nyima made the point regarding Changkya's special realization of the correct view amid Changkya's deeds within limits of his ordinary life events that took place in 1767. Lobsang Chökyi Nyima also includes an oral story in Changkya's biography that the latter obtained the view the Middle Way when he was only twelve (Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 105).

of dependent origination helps one understand the theory of emptiness or *vice versa*. He meant that emptiness is nothing but dependent origination, and that dependent origination is emptiness. Thus, the Middle Way, for him, is explained by the equation of emptiness and dependent origination. The *Song*'s expressions of these points will be briefly explained below in this chapter, and in the next chapter when we examine the commentaries.

The colophon of the *Song* also reveals the text's scribe to be a monk called Gelek Namkha (Dge legs nam mkha', d.u.), who was a personal assistant to Changkya and is mentioned multiple times in works associated with Changkya's life events. In addition, according to the colophon of Jikmé Wangpo's commentary to the *Song*, Gelek Namkha, accompanying Üjümüčin Güshri Ngawang Tenpel (U cu mu chin gu shri Ngag dbang bstan 'phel, 1700-1780), requested Jikmé Wangpo to compose the commentary.

Although we do not have any reliable information from the *Song*'s colophon and Changkya's biography about who requested the text, an oral account claims that Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Peljor (Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, 1704-1788) urged Changkya to compose such a text. Skimming through Sumpa Khenpo's exhilarating, though quite lengthy, autobiography, I found the following passage among the events recorded in the autobiography as taking place during his visit to Changkya at Mount Wutai in the summer of 1767, the same year in which the *Song* was composed.

> Having offered a spiritual song (*mgur*) [to Changkya Rinpoché], I requested [him] saying, "Previously, I have received many times the

> inconceivably profound and extensive oral transmissions of the unique instructions on the Prāsaṅgika view. However, now in order for me to cut through doubts and to obtain the most quintessential point that will enable me to reach the final conclusion, once more based on your spiritual experience, [you] need to grant me [such a quintessential point] that was unclear in the famous written instructions of the view and that has been verbally transmitted from the holy masters.'"[147]

Sumpa Khenpo's request for quintessential instructions on the Middle Way based on Changkya's inner spiritual experience seems to coincide with the place and approximate time of the year in which the latter composed the *Song*. In that summer, Changkya mostly held meditation retreats and composed a few poems, such as praises to Mount Wutai and other experiential songs, but none of these explicitly focus on the view as the *Song* does. So, on the occasion of two great lamas meeting at Mount Wutai in the summer of 1767, it is not unimaginable either that Changkya, inspired by Sumpa Khenpo's request for a quintessential instruction on the profound view, composed the *Song*, or that Sumpa Khenpo,

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[147] *thal 'gyur ba'i thun mong ma yin pa'i lta khrid snyan brgyud blo'i yul du sngon chad ma myong ba'i zab rgyas sngar lan mang du nyan kyang da dung brdar sha bcad de rdo rus thug gi bar du snying po'i snying po len phyir/ slar yang lta ba'i khrid yig grags che ba rnams na mi gsal ba'i dam pa'i zhal nas zhal du brgyud pa nyams myong steng nas gnang dgos zhes (mgur phul nas) zhus pas/.* Ye shes dpal 'byor 2001: 371.

The piece of the passage "*mgur phul nas*" for "Having offered a spiritual song" is visibly an insertion added between the lines in the original xylographic edition of the autobiography found in the author's collected works. With this insertion, the passage straightforwardly reads as Yeshé Peljor being the one who offered a spiritual song, though whose specification is not clarified, to Changkya in order to receive an essential point on the Prāsaṅgika view. However, given that it is potentially an important passage for the question of who requested the *Song's* composition, I could not help but wonder why these words were inserted, whether those were inserted correctly, what if Yeshé Peljor's song offered to Changkya was related to the *Song*, and so forth. The passage in the original xylographic edition of Yeshé Peljor's autobiography is found in Ye shes dpal 'byor 1975: 655 (143a).

perhaps having heard about the freshly composed *Song*, acknowledged it and requested the author for instruction on it.

The Genre of the *Song*

The *Song* is a poetic work belonging to the Tibetan literary genre of the *gur* (*mgur*), often called "spiritual songs." *Gur* are rhythmic verses conveying the poetic immediacy of the author's spiritual experience. A related Tibetan term to the *gur* is "lu" (*glu*), which is also rendered as "song" in English. Döndrup Gyel (Don grub rgyal, 1953/4-1985), a Tibetan poet and scholar of the twentieth century, explained the difference between the two types of songs—*lu* and *gur*—as having to do with folk and religious connotations, respectively.[148] Roger Jackson, adding another category of Indian-inspired and more ornate verse writings, suggests that three types of poetic expressions—*lu*, *gur*, and *nyan-ngak* (Tib. *snyan ngag*, literally meaning "sweet speech;" Skt. *kāvya*)—together constitute the genre of Tibetan traditional poetry.[149] In brief, as Jackson assserts, the *lu* mostly refers to folk and more secular songs, whereas the *gur* largely denotes a Tibetan religious song in which the authors celebrate their own or someone else's spiritual experience or accomplished realization. The *nyan-*

[148] Döndrup Gyel speculated that there may have been no connotational difference between the terms "*gur*" and "*lu*" during the first dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet and that the difference seems to initially be based on the fact that "*gur*" is the honorific form of "*lu*." Over time, the term "*lu*" started to refer to folk songs and "*gur*" to religious songs. Don drub rgyal 1997: 338-339.

[149] For the full discussion of the three types of poetry, see Jackson 1996.

ngak denotes a poetic peace that is often highly formalized with complex Indian-inspired literary ornaments and technical rules.[150] Thus, while the *lu* type is considered more indigenous and perhaps the earliest form among the three, the *nyan-ngak* poetries, which are exclusively based on the Sanskrit aesthetic theory of *kāvya*, were not widely used by Tibetans until the thirteenth century, when Sakya Paṇḍita Künga Gyeltsen (Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182-1251), in his *Gateway for the Learned (Mkhas pa 'jug pa'i sgo)*, etc., brought *kāvya* in the writings and influenced Tibetan intellectuals. In this regard, the *nyan-ngak* is listed as one of the traditional ten fields of Buddhist learning (*rig gnas bcu*) in Tibet, more specifically as one of the five minor fields of knowledge (*rig gnas chung ba lnga*), the others being synonymy (Tib. *mngon brjod*; Skt. *abhidhāna*), meter (Tib. *sdeb sbyor*; Skt. *chanda*), astrology (Tib. *skar rtsis*; Skt. *jyotiṣa*), and drama (Tib. *zlos gar*; Skt. *naṭa*). Excluding the astrology and drama, the remaining three minor fields of learning are pertained to literary composition linked to the study of language and grammar (Tib. *sgra'i rig pa*; Skt. *śabdavidyā*), one of the five major fields of learning (*rig gnas che ba lnga*) alongside the logic (Tib. *gtan tshigs rig pa*; Skt. *hetuvidyā*), medicine (Tib. *gso ba'i rig pa*; Skt. *cikitsāvidyā*), arts and crafts (Tib. *bzo gnas kyi rig pa*; Skt. *śilpavidyā*), and Buddhist theology (Tib. *nang gi rig pa*; Skt. *adhyātmavidyā*). Under the influence of *kāvya*, and especially after the translation of Daṇḍin's

[150] For a clarification, a *nyan-ngak* does not have to be in verse, for it could be written in prose as well.

classic on poetics, *The Mirror of Poetry* (*Kāvyādarśa*, 7th-8th cen.), Tibetan poets have commonly adopted Daṇḍin's principles of poetics derived from ancient Indian culture—not only the figures of Indian mythologies such as the Vedic gods and particular characters from the Indian epics but also the images of animals, plants, and other objects not found on the Tibetan Plateau.

During this evolution of Tibetan "poetry" from the indigenous *lu* or *gur* type to the Indian-inspired classic *nyan-ngak* writings, the reference of the term "gur" seems to have also shifted from an ordinary sense of folk songs to that of a religiously motivated, emotional expression in verses. Furthermore, there is also a special type of *gur* called "nyamgur" (*nyams mgur*), i.e., songs of experience, which are verses spoken from even more intense forms of emotional expressions of religious masters involving their spiritual experiences mostly arisen as the result of meditation or some other intensive religious practice. The Tibetan indigenous term "nyamgur" is often understood to be equivalent to the Sanskrit term "dohā," which may have originally referred to a form of couplet poetry, but in the context of Vajrayāna Buddhism, mostly to aphoristic verses of mystic teachings preached by the Buddhist tantric adepts, or *mahāsiddhas*. In the latter sense, the *nyamgur* type is considered to be a sub-genre to the *gur*.[151]

The *Song*, as previously mentioned, is an example of a *nyamgur*. Because *gurs*, and especially *nyamgur*s, are spontaneous expressions of the authors' deep and personal experiences, they are more comparable to the "poetry" as

[151] See Jackson 369 and 377-378.

understood in western Romanticism than the other types of Tibetan verse works. Nevertheless, the boundaries of the types of Tibetan poetry are blurry, as they often overlap with one another. In the Tibetan Geluk literature, Tsongkhapa's poems *In Praise of Dependent Origination* (*Rten 'brel bstod pa*) and *Songs of Spiritual Experience: Condensed Points of the Stages of the Path* (*Lam rim bsdus don gyi nyams mgur ma*) are examples of beautiful poetry that contain the features of both *nyamgur*, songs of experience, and *nyan-ngak*, classic poems with highly formalized *kāvya* elements.[152] Although the indigenous *gur* genre of Tibetan songs has been influenced by various Indic literary devices and by the Indian mystic *dohā* tradition, there are still many other examples of Tibetan *gur* that maintain their Tibetan originality in both eloquence and structural form.

According to Thupten Jinpa, the rhythms of *nyamgur* deliberately defy the meters of the conventional Tibetan verse, which are suited for chanting and recitation.[153] In this regard, the cadences and stresses of *nyamgur* lines tend to be somewhat different from the other types of Tibetan religious poetry—such as supplication prayers (*gsol 'debs*), praises (*bstod pa*), and aspirational prayers (*smon lam*), which are often chanted together in either monotone or simpler melodies than traditional Tibetan folk songs—in terms of their regularity and rhythmic tones.

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[152] For aesthetic translations of these works by Thupten Jinpa, see at http://tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/In%20Praise%20of%20Dependent%20Origination.pdf and http://tibetanclassics.org/html-assets/Songs%20of%20Experience.pdf, respectively.

[153] About the meter of *nyamgur*, see Jinpa & Elsner 2000: 13-14.

Each line of the conventional Tibetan verse is typically composed of the pairs of two syllables, called a "foot" (Skt. *pada*; Tib. rkang pa), concluded by a longer foot of three syllables, and each line within a stanza normally contains the same number of feet as the other lines. A stanza mostly has four lines, each of which usually has three or four feet, including the last longer foot, and the stress of each foot is regularly on the first syllable. In contrast, although a *nyamgur* is composed of the two or three-syllabled feet, each of which with the accent falling on the first syllable, its long foot could occur anywhere in the line, most commonly in the second to the last foot. It may also be containing a short foot of only one syllable somewhere in the line.

As for the *Song*, it has 103 lines, excluding the colophon; and except for the last four lines, each line has four feet—one long and three short feet—for a total of nine syllables. The long foot is located at the second position. Unlike the stresses of the feet in conventional verse, the emphasis of each of the long feet in the *Song* is on the last syllable. Thus, the meter of each of these lines can be depicted as following, where each * is a syllable, a ◌ྃ is the emphasized syllable, and each / represents the end of the foot:

** / **◌ྃ / ** / ** /.

Composed of only three feet, the last four lines are shorter than the other lines. Each of these four lines starts with a long foot of three syllables followed by two short feet, and can be depicted:

**◌ྃ / ** / ** /.

Another important feature of the *Song* as an expression of the realization of the view (*lta ba'i nyams mgur*) is its wide doctrinal scope within Tibetan Buddhist practices of *wisdom*, covering the two most crucial cognitive aspects—the profound philosophical view and the meditation reflecting on that view—which are understood to be mutually complementary for achieving the correct realization, even though they may be seen as distinct in practice, resembling a theory and its practical application. In its exoteric sense, the *Song* predominantly focuses on the philosophical view of the mind as empty—explained in terms of dependent origination—in accordance with Nāgārjuna's Middle-Way philosophy as interpreted by Tsongkhapa as well as on the comparisons of that view with the various other philosophical views held by the major Indian and Tibetan Buddhist schools of philosophy. Therefore, although short in length, the *Song* should be considered a versified philosophical discourse that contains the relevant polemical tools, such as argument, analogy, analysis, conclusion, etc. On the other hand, the *Song*, as a work that was supposed to have arisen from the author's meditative experience, is meant to recreate that experience in the reader and to transport the reader beyond a mere conceptualization of the theory of emptiness. Thus, the *Song* can be also understood to be a testimony of the author's profound religious experience and inspiration that was meant to give the reader a glimpse of it. Moreover, because of its experiential nature communicated with a simple and lively conversional form incorporated by interjections, the *Song* is free from the overly "dry"

philosophical discourses devoid of human emotional expressions derived from affect or excitement. In fact, the spontaneous expressions in the *Song* offset the rigorous analysis refuting the "others'" views. Furthermore, as was common in the Tibetan tradition of spiritual songs of experience of the view, the *Song* articulates a profound philosophical view absorbed through supramundane meditative realization by means of mundane expressions that convey the "sacred" through more familiar images known to the audience. In this way, Changkya employs the genre of spiritual songs of experience on the view as the means of conveying his realization of the Middle Way view of emptiness to his intended audience.

If we temporarily leave aside the traditional commentaries, the *Song* itself can be outlined as following:[154]

1. Prologue (lines 1-4)
2. Allegory of the *mother* (lines 5-32)
3. Relationship between the allegory and the subject matter of the text (lines 33-36)
4. Criticism of fellow Gelukpas through the allegory of the *mother* (lines 37-43)

[154] For the purpose of this dissertation, I have retranslated the *Song* having consulted the existing translations as well as the commentaries, especially Tenpa Rapgyé's tantric exegesis. In this chapter, however, the translation is embedded in brief comments. Without commentarial interruptions, it is found in Appendix I.

5. Assessment of the reality regarding the allegory of the *mother* (lines 44-47)
6. Refutation of the wrong views of the Indian Buddhist lower tenets (lines 48-54)
7. Refutation of the wrong views of the Tibetan Buddhist non-Geluk tenets (lines 55-62)
8. Appeasing those who hold wrong views with an apology (lines 63-80)
9. The author's evaluation of himself (lines 81-84)
10. Explanation of the experience of the reality (lines 85-88)
11. Curtain lines of the allegory (lines 89-91)
12. Appreciation, aspirational prayer, and rejoicing (lines 92-103)
13. Colophon

The Prologue

Perhaps, one of the most common themes of *nyamgur* is the devotional supplication to one's own guru. Tibet's famous *nyamgur* composers, from the arguably most celebrated contemplative Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1052-1135) to the renowned Geluk poet Kalden Gyatso (Skal ldan rgya mtsho, 1607-1677), from the great visionary Tselé Natsok Rangdrol (Rtse le Sna tshogs rang grol, b. 1608) to the more contemporary master Zemey Lobsang Palden (Dze smad Blo bzang dpal ldan, 1927-1996), wrote spiritual songs of experience exclusively

dedicated to their gurus.[155] Yet, devotional supplications, at least within a single line, to either a divine or a human guru, are found in the prologue verses of almost every single instance of complete *nyamgur*s, including the *Song*, where the guru's ability of "nakedly" demonstrating the profound meaning of dependent origination is emphasized.

The *Song*'s four-line prologue reads:

O incomparably kind guru, who nakedly demonstrates
The brilliant nature of profound dependent origination,
Please remain within my heart!
I'll say three spontaneous words that arose in my mind.

Buddhist compositions, especially those of Tibetan Buddhist scholastic commentarial tradition, which traces its roots to the Sanskrit Buddhist treatises of India, typically begin with an homage or a supplication prayer eulogizing the guru—one's spiritual master in the path to enlightenment—or the Buddha or one of the Buddhist enlightened deities. This element of Tibetan composition is called the "invocation prayer" (*mchod par brjod pa*), literally, the "words of offering" or worship; and it is often followed by two other elements, namely the "pledge to complete the composition" (*rtsom par dam bca' ba*) and exhortation to the audience to listen (*nyan par bskul ba*). Accordingly, in the *Song*, the fourth line explicitly serves as the author's pledge to complete the composition while implicitly leaving the audience in anticipation to listen to what he has to say. By

[155] The translations of their guru devotional songs of experience are found in Jinpa and Elsner 2000: 73-81.

"three words" Changkya seems to have meant that he would express his experience in just a few words, instead of with a wordy explanation.

The Allegory in the *Song*

Following the prologue, the *Song* continues with an allegory of particular characters, metaphorically symbolizing Buddhist philosophical concepts such as emptiness and dependent origination. These characters were interpreted differently by the commentators, whose interpretations will be discussed in the next chapter. Without relying on any of the commentaries for now, the allegory can read in the following way.

The narrator, a *lunatic son*, who thought that *his elderly mother* had been lost for a long time, comes to recognize that *she* may have been actually with *him* all along but that he is unaware of it. Because of *his* confusion, *he* asks *his big brother* for help to recognize *his mother*, but the *brother*'s description of *her* is too vague and inconsistent. The *lunatic son* still wishes *his brother* to clarify *his* confusion, despite the fact that *he* is still deceived by a mask and other misinformation that hide *his mother*'s face. *He* also ultimately puts *his* hopes in the kindness of *his mother* to reveal *herself* to *him*. Thereupon, *he* realizes that all the deceptions that had been misleading *him* are indications of *his mother*'s existence. As a byproduct of this realization, *he* also finds *his father*, who too has been sought out, but the way in which *he* finds the *father* is actually a finding of *his mother*. The *mother* is found as *the father*, and vice versa. Finally, the

lunatic son now concludes that *his mother*, who is neither one with nor separate from the *father*, can appear only as a reflection in the *big brother*'s mirror. At the end of the allegory, the *son* is relieved that now *he* does not need to wait to see *his parents* in the far distant future, and that he can see *them* in short order by relying on the instructions of the Middle Way.

The allegory begins with the following lines:

By a chance, I, a lunatic son,
Who lost his elderly mother long ago,
Seem about to know what has been unknown to me
That my kind mother has always been with me.
With his concealed descriptions, my big brother, dependent origination,
Explains how she does and does not appear to be, but vaguely.

In the first four lines, the *lunatic son* is portrayed as being about to recognize that *his long-lost mother* has actually always been with *him*. Yet, in the next two lines, the author informs the audience that the *mother*, as well as the next character *big brother*, are metaphors. Whereas the *big brother* is explicitly spelled out as a metaphor for dependent origination through syntactical apposition, the *mother*'s identity is explained, as being described in the *brother*'s vague and conflicting statements, as not clear. For the Tibetan Buddhist, especially for the Gelukpa, who has a certain familiarity with Tsongkhapa's theory of emptiness, no more explanation is required here to understand that the *mother* is a metaphor for emptiness.[156] However, as will be discussed in the next

[156] In the *Perfection of Wisdom* (Skt. *prajñāpāramitā*; Tib. *sher phyin*) literature of the Mahāyāna tradition, the term "mother" (Skt. *mātā*; Tib. *yum*) often denotes not only the sūtras of that genre but also the wisdom that correctly realizes emptiness, i.e., the ultimate reality. For this reason, the term "mother" can also indirectly symbolize emptiness itself. Although Changkya does not mention any of this notion in this metaphor, one who is familiar to the

chapter, the two commentators—Jikmé Wangpo and Tenpa Rapgyé—will disagree with each other regarding what kind of emptiness and what aspect of dependent origination the *mother* and *big brother* denote. But for now, we at least have an indication that the *mother* and *big brother* of the allegory represent respectively emptiness and dependent origination, which are the two interwoven aspects of the nature of phenomena according to Tsongkhapa—the ultimate and the conventional. In addition to these two family members, the *father* is also depicted later in the *Song*, and we will discuss that shortly.

It may be true, as Thupten Jinpa states, "the freedom of the genre of experiential songs allows a creative play of imagination and fantasy."[157] While the characters in the *Song* could be purely metaphorical, not referencing to an actual person, it is at least worth asking whether the author's imagery had any connection to his actual family history. Is it possible that the fifty-year-old Changkya's actual parents and older brother were the inspiration for the characters of the allegory—*mother*, *father*, and *big brother*—in the *Song*? His biography mentions that his parents' names were Guru Tenzdin (Gu ru bstan 'dzin, d.u.) and Bukyi (Bu skyid, d. 1748?).[158] As discussed in the previous chapter, Changkya was enthroned in Gönlung Monastery about at the age of

Perfection of Wisdom literature would easily see the connections between the term "mother" and emptiness.

[157] Jinpa and Elsner 2000: 20.

[158] Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 49-50.

three and was then sent to Beijing at the age of seven after going through life-threatening calamities caused by the war between the local Mongol nobles in Amdo and the Manchu imperial army. During that conflict, Gönlung, the young Changkya's own monastery, was razed to the ground, and his own wellbeing was in serious danger. Since then, he does not seem to have seen his parents for a very long time. Had Gönlung still functioned and had he stayed there, the young Changkya would be at least occasionally visited by his family members from time to time, but he does not seem to have been accompanied by any of the members of his family in Beijing. Even after he was appointed to go to Central Tibet to escort the Dalai Lama from Kham to Lhasa in 1734, and while returning to Beijing in the following year, he was not granted permission to stop by his home region, as he must have taken the southern route from Beijing to Lhasa. According to his biography, later on, in 1748, Changkya petitioned the Qianlong Emperor to be granted an approval to visit Amdo for the sake of his late mother's mortuary rituals and to see his elderly father.[159] In the following year, while noticeably hesitant, the emperor granted him permission, and the thirty-two-year-old Changkya arrived in Amdo, met with his family, and stayed there for two months. This was also the same year when Changkya's younger brother, the Third Chübzang Ngawang Tüpten Wangchuk (Ngag dbang thub bstan dbang phyug, 1725-1796) had returned to Amdo after completing his studies in Lhasa. At Chübzang Monastery in Amdo, Changkya reunited with his

[159] Changkya's visit to Amdo is found in Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 310-329.

family for a short time, but his mother was absent, and it seems, he never saw her again since his early childhood. In this section of the biography, his father was addressed as "Darhan Noyon," an old Mongolian title which refers to a chieftain exempt from tax. The imperial preceptor's father must have been offered this privilege regardless of his whereabouts within the Qing Empire. Moreover, in the aforementioned family union, there was another person called Sönam (Bsod nams, d.u.), whom the biography addresses as the "older brother" (*jo lags*).[160] Given the traumatic separation from his family in his young age, it is conceivable that Changkya's choice of metaphors was not accidental, and that his longing for his family was sublimated in the *Song* into a longing for reality, with the pain of human loss rendered in a religious and philosophical register.

The allegory continues with the indications of the existence of the *mother*, i.e., emptiness, who has features that appear counterintuitive.

Various dualities are the mother's smiling mask;
The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is the mother's lies;
My infallible mother has been deceiving me!

The indication of the *mother* is explained by the very notion of the subject-object duality—the subject that apprehends an object and the object that is apprehended by the subject. With the metaphor of a smiling mask, which hides the true features of one's face, the author seems to be at least questioning the reliability of our habitual dualistic conceptions of subject and object. Accordingly,

[160] The actual Tibetan term for the *big brother* in the *Song* is "*jo jo*," which is semantically not much different from the term "*jo lags*."

all phenomena, even the Buddhist fundamental theory of existence in terms of birth, death, and rebirth in *saṃsāra*, are called here "lies" or false from the perspective of the nondual reality of emptiness, which is the true nature of the *mother*. Normally, a child recognizes their mother infallibly even at young age. But here the narrator acknowledges his own surprise at having been deceived by the *mother*. Here, the metaphor seems to be pointing out the author's disappointment regarding the reliance on the mask—a dualistic conventional reality—and not on what lies beneath it. Therefore, in the following line, *he* places *his* hopes in his *big brother*, dependent origination, to save him from such a dire situation.

So, I hope my big brother, dependent origination, will save me.

This makes philosophical sense, since the understanding of dependent origination is explained to be the counterbalancing factor for recognizing emptiness, and the concept of dependent origination is believed relatively more comprehensible to analyze compared to the theory of emptiness.

In the following two lines, the narrator of the *Song*, though mislead by his *mother*'s external appearance, remains hopeful that he will be able to overcome the deceptions through the *mother*'s kindness.

Ultimately, it is my hope that I will be liberated
By the sole kindness of my elderly mother.

The meaning is self-evident from the viewpoint of the Buddhist teachings on emptiness: although the conventional aspect, or appearance, of ultimate reality constantly misleads us, it is the ultimate aspect of reality, or emptiness, that

liberates us from *saṃsāra*. Therefore, emptiness is considered "kind." If the realization of emptiness were impossible and the subject and object were independent of each other, then liberation would also be impossible. Because the unchanging emptiness of all phenomena allows for the change to happen, it follows that emancipation is possible. Moreover, the *mother*, i.e., emptiness, is beyond ordinary conceptual expression because it is a non-implicative negation, but it manifests as mutually dependent phenomena. The understanding of emptiness by means of understanding dependent origination is especially emphasized in the Geluk analyses of emptiness. The *Song* makes these points by saying:

If the duality is real as it appears,
There would be no way even for buddhas of the three times to save me.
Various changes are my unchanging mother's manifestations;
Therefore, liberation is possible.
The inexpressible mother, who is by no means real,
Has a false implication for that which pretends to be interdependent;
In this alone, there is a meaning to understand.

The allegory of the *mother* continues with the introduction of a new character, the *father*, whom the narrator previously had lost and not found. By searching for *him*, the *son* finds *his mother* instead, but the *mother* is none other than the *father*. In the next lines, the narrator states that he has heard that when the *father* is found embracing with the *mother*, the *duo* will protect *him*.

My elderly father who is not found after being sought
Is nowhere but where my mother is found.
When my elderly father is found in my mother's embrace,
Both my kind parents are said to protect me.

Once again, Changkya affirms here that emptiness and dependent origination are reciprocally complementary—without one, the other is incomprehensible and understanding one necessarily supplements the understanding of the other. By accurately and simultaneously understanding both of them, as Tsongkhapa explained, one will be saved from *saṃsāra*. Jikmé Wangpo was probably right when he stated that the *father* is a metaphor of the appearance of dependent origination within the reality of emptiness, instead of straightforwardly as the metaphor of dependent origination, which is reserved for the *big brother* as Changkya himself literally suggests. We will discuss the details in the next chapter.

By stating that the *mother*'s appearance is vaguely reflected in the *mirror* of the *big brother* as neither one with nor separate from the father's appearance, the narrator humiliates himself that the *lunatic son*, by whom he is clearly referring to one's delusion of not realizing emptiness, lacks any idea about his own *mother*'s appearance. Changkya expressed his humbleness more than one time in the *Song* as if also assuring he would be misunderstood as arrogant in explaining the finest points of the theory of emptiness.

My mother's face, neither *one* nor *another*,
Seems to reflect as ungraspable
On the mirror of the big brother, dependent origination;
Yet, lunatic beings like me have not analyzed it!

The *mother*—emptiness which is neither one with the appearance of dependent origination nor separate from it—appears as an ungraspable reflection in the *big brother*'s *mirror*, which metaphorically refers to the

inferential mind. As indicated earlier, without Jikmé Wangpo's explanation it would be a difficult passage to understand because of a potential misunderstanding of the distinctions between the metaphors of the *father* and *big brother*. Though one should remember that Tenpa Rapgyé's explanation, which will be discussed later, is also idiosyncratically consistent within the frame of his esoteric take of the *Song*.

The Relationship Between the Allegory and the Subject Matter of the Text

In the following four lines, Changkya reveals how the allegory of the *mother* relates to the poem's subject matter, which is emptiness, by tracing the "correct" explanatory lineage of the Middle Way, from Nāgārjuna (seventh century), through Candrakīrti, to Tsongkhapa, a.k.a. Mañjuśrīgarbha.[161]

By the virtue of Mañjuśrīgarbha showing a good example,
Brought by the wind of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti's legacy,
I hope, without difficulties of searching from far-away,
To see my mother, who has always been with me.

The Geluk tradition exclusively follows Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Nāgārjuna's philosophy as explained by Candrakīrti. Thus, the author acknowledges the validity of Tsongkhapa's interpretation, which saves him from searching for other teachings to understand the Middle Way. Thanks to that, in the last line of this passage, he states that now he hopes not to look for the

[161] Mañjuśrīgarbha in Sanskrit, or Jampel Nyingpo ('Jam dpal snying po) in Tibetan, is the name of Tsongkhapa's mythical future form in the Tuṣita Heaven. As it is an example here, this name commonly refers also to Tsongkhapa himself.

mother, i.e., emptiness, somewhere else, for *she* is known to have been always with him.

The Criticism of the Fellow Gelukpas Through the Allegory of the *Mother*

Once the allegory has been narrated and explained, Changkya turns to criticizing the wrong views of all the major Indian and Tibetan Buddhist tenets and schools, including that of some of his fellow Gelukpas. By doing so, he also skillfully surveys their highest philosophical views in a few verses. Changkya's works, including the *Song* and his *Beautiful Adornment of Mount Meru: A Presentation of Classical Indian Philosophy* (*Grub mtha' thub bstan lhun po'i mdzes rgyan*), seem to have later inspired his student Tükwan Lobsang Chökyi Nyima to compose his comprehensive survey of Tibetan Buddhist schools in his *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* (*Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*).[162] In the next two lines of the *Song*, Changkya criticizes the "wrong" understanding of some of his fellow Geluk adherents who were too concerned with the technical terms used to describe what needs to be negated: "substantial," "real," and so forth:

Now there seem to be amongst us, some scholars,
Who are attached to terms such as "substantial" and "real;"

[162] For a translation of Changkya's magnum opus on the Indian tenets, see Changkya Rölpai Dorjé 2019. For a translation of Tükwan's study of Asian Religious Thoughts, including those of Tibetan, see Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima 2009.

By doing so, continues Changkya, they tend to ignore the fluctuating appearance of phenomena, which needs to be negated for the correct view of emptiness, and seemingly try to find some other object, which they portray as terrifying, as though having horns, in order to negate it.[163] Yet, from the point of emptiness itself, as the text says, the fluctuating appearance does not exist in the first place, nor it needs to be negated. Otherwise, the excessive verbal explanations of emptiness that miss the vital points may prevent one from realizing emptiness, represented by the *mother* fleeing to an unknown place, so *her son* does not find *her* anymore. In this instance, Changkya uses a cross allegory in which a projected empty image of a terrifying creature with horns can in fact scare away the *mother*, i.e., emptiness itself, even if such a creature does exist in the real world.

Ignoring the fluctuating appearances,
They seem to seek something with horns to negate.
On my mother's unobscured face,
There is nothing to be said about such fluctuations.
When there are excessive explanations off the key point,
I'm afraid that my elderly mother runs away.

The Assessment of the Reality Regarding the Allegory of the *Mother*

[163] According to Tsongkhapa, the notion of identifying the object of negation (*dgag bya ngos 'dzin pa*) is an important stage to the correct realization of emptiness. Although this stage was not unique to Tsongkhapa's analyses, it has been criticized by some Tibetan scholars, for example, by Gorampa Sönam Sengge (Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge, 1429-1489), as an unnecessary detour to the direct cultivation of emptiness. For Tsongkhapa's explanation for identifying the object of negation, See Tsongkhapa 2021: 171-190. For Gorampa's criticism, see Cabezón and Dargyay 2007: 53.

According to Changkya's understanding of the Middle Way, all phenomena exist. This is how philosophical nihilism is avoided. But phenomena do not exist in the way they habitually appear to us. There is a constant dissonance. When we can see the *parents*—emptiness and its appearance—as harmonious, as inseparable, and at ease, phenomena actually become tender and pleasantly congruent with one another. Thus, Changkya says,

Things may exist, but they appear not in the way
In which they habitually appear: opposing and contradicting one another.
When parents in love are inseparable and cheerful,
They seem to be tender and pleasant to one another.

Here, in addition to emphasizing the *parents*' harmonious nature as the nonduality of appearance and emptiness, the vital point for emancipation from dissonances, one may notice the sexual imagery in the language regarding the union of the *father* and *mother*. Similar sexual imagery with even more shocking tone can be found in different *nyamgur*s composed by celibate monks like Changkya himself. One can begin to see here how the exegetes who preferred a more tantric understanding of the *Song* came to that interpretation based on the sexual imagery.[164] More about the tantric exegesis of the *Song* is found in the following chapters.

[164] As we will see in the next chapter, in his esoteric commentary, Tenpa Rapgyé wrote about this sexual tone of the allegory with reference to the inseparable union of the father and mother—one of the very common and important vision in the highest yoga tantric practices to transcend one's mind beyond any dualistic notion—a profound expression of "orgasm" in the ultimate experience of awakening.

The Refutation of the Wrong Views of the Indian Buddhist Lower Tenets

As a great taxonomer of the ancient Indian philosophical tenets, Changkya criticized the "lower" tenets of Indian Buddhism from the Prāsaṅgika Mādyamika perspective as understood by Tsongkhapa. The Tibetans developed comprehensive and sophisticated taxonomies of the ancient Indian Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical schools. Especially for the hierarchy of the Indian Mahāyāna schools, based on Tsongkhapa's *Essence of the Explanation of the Provisional and True Meanings (Drang nges legs bshad snying po)*, the Gelukpas elegantly articulated a unique taxonomy placing the Prāsaṅgika Mādyamika school atop the philosophical hierarchy, considering its philosophical views to be the final intention of the Buddha. Tsongkhapa's understanding of emptiness and dependent origination as complementary is believed by the Gelukpas to be the most correct viewpoint that accords with the Prāsaṅgika Mādyamika's view attributed to Indian Buddhist thinkers such as Buddhapalita (fifth to sixth century), Candrakīrti, and Śāntideva (eighth century). Although this school is considered the highest, each of the "lower" school is also believed to have a profound philosophical view that elaborates its own view of ultimate reality. For example, for the Vaibhāṣika, it is subtle atomic matter that is the fundamental building block of all physical reality; whereas for the Vijñaptivādin, it is the truly existing subjective apprehender, and for the Svātantrika Mādhyamika, represented by the three abbots of the East, it is the self-subsisting non-

duality.[165] However, from the Prāsaṅgika's perspective, all of these views are not only inferior to that of Prāsaṅgika but also strictly-speaking wrong and cannot lead to awakening. Thus, with the following lines, Changkya states with interjections that all those non-Prāsaṅgika thinkers have lost the *mother*, the ultimate reality:

The Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Vijñaptivādin, and the three abbots of the East
Variously try to label the mother,
Who is in the form of a great white elephant:
"Matter" as if she were a beaming striped tiger,
"Subject" as if she were a brainless crazy monkey,
"Stable non-duality" as if she were a powerful bear;
Yet, they all have lost the elderly mother.

As opposed to the *mother*, the *ultimate realities* of the "lower" Buddhist tenets are likened to undependable creatures such as the tiger, monkey, and bear.

The Refutation of the Wrong Views of the Tibetan Buddhist Non-Geluk Tenets

Changkya further criticizes the highest philosophical views of the major Tibetan Buddhist non-Geluk schools. The "self-cognizant awareness of the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness" is the term that denotes the highest philosophical view for the Sakyapa. Likewise, the "primordial pure and

[165] The three abbots of the East are Jñānagarbha, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla, who are believed to come from eastern India. Their respective works—*Distinguishing the Two Truths (Satyadvayavibhaṅga)*, *Ornament of the Middle Way (Madhyamakālaṃkāra)*, and *Illumination of the Middle Way (Madhyamakāloka)*—are regarded in Tibet as important treatises of the Svātantrika Mādhyamika School.

spontaneous identity of Samantabhadra," "unfabricated innate Mahāmudrā," and "neither existent nor non-existent, the absence of any stand" are the terms for the highest views of the Nyingmapa, the Karma Kagyüpa, and the Drükpa Kagyüpa, respectively. In the following lines, Changkya rhetorically rejected all of them as the correct view because they miss their targets:

Many scholars and adepts of the Sakya, Nyingma, and Karma and Drükpa Kagyü traditions
Boast about the reality with various terms, such as
"Self-cognizant awareness of the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness,"
"Primordially pure and spontaneous identity of Samantabhadra,"
"Unfabricated innate Mahāmudrā," and
"Neither existent nor non-existent, the absence of any stand."
If any among these hits the target, that is wonderful!
Yet, I wonder what they are all pointing at!

Appeasing Those Who Hold Wrong Views with an Apology

After a radical criticism of their views, Changkya appeases with amusement those who hold the wrong views by stating that his own view is not entirely contradictory to theirs. Though rejecting inherent existence, by not negating the external objects, Changkya appeases the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika. Though rejecting the possibility of self-cognition, by accepting the cognizing validity of the mind, he also appeases the Vijñaptivādin. While rejecting the intrinsic nature of phenomena, because he approves of dependent origination, he also appeases the Svātantrika Mādhyamika. Likewise, by accepting clarity and emptiness as non-contradictory, Changkya appeases the private-explanation tradition of the Sakya school. Though accepting the difference between the

concepts of good and bad, he also calms down the mad yogis of the Nyingma tradition not to be attached to purity. Similarly, the realized masters of the Karma Kagyü order were appeased by Changkya's acknowledgement of the arising of innate nature if it is fabricated and meditated upon. The "thick headed" logicians of the Drükpa Kagyü school were also calmed by his accepting the possibility of the freedom from proliferations of existence and nonexistence. Then, at the end of following lines, Changkya, with empathy for those who were even not aware of conventionality because of their unfamiliarity with a scholastic training, apologized in case he was understood to be offending them without respect:

External objects are not destroyed, so do not worry!
O followers of the two schools of external reality, be pleased!
Without self-cognition, cognizing validly is acceptable.
So, O Vijñaptivādins, be pleased!
Without intrinsic nature, dependent origination is vivid.
So, O three abbots of the East, be pleased!
Clarity and emptiness can be held as non-contradictory.
So, O lineage holders of the private explanation tradition, be at ease!
Though primordially pure, good and evil are still acceptable.
So, O mad knowledge-holders, do not cling at the purity!
Though being fabricated and then meditated upon, the innate nature is preserved.
So, O senior realized masters, do not insist!
The freedom from proliferations of existence and nonexistence is acceptable.
So, O stubborn logicians, do not get all riled up!
Those who lack extensive textual trainings
May not even know the way of conventionality.
It is not that I do not respect you;
Please excuse me, if you are offended!

The Author's Evaluation of Himself

Thereupon, Changkya once more humbly explained his position to criticize the philosophical views with the lines:

Although I am not an omniscient man,
I am skilled in riding the good horse of my forefathers' works
With endurance and devotion.
Thus, I hope to cross the only impassible cliff.

The analogy Changkya uses in these lines is clear: he hopes that his skill riding a good horse will allow him to freely cross the impassible cliff, referring to his diligent trainings in the great teachings of the past to be able to explain their definitive meanings, regardless of the fact that he was not omniscient.

The Explanation of the Experience of the Reality

The next four lines read as an exposition of Changkya's recognition based on his experience of reality. He states that since the *mother*—the ultimate reality—is with him all along, *she* does not need to be sought; and that since even the perception of reality is false, one should not be attached to it. Furthermore, he continues, since even that falsity is the reality itself, it should not be negated; thus, one can relax in the absence of nihilism as well as of realism. The points are made the following lines:

No need to search because the seeker is all there is.
No need to cling to reality because all is false.
No need to negate the falsity because it is the reality itself.
The absence of nihilism and eternalism is enough for relaxation.

The Curtain Lines of the Allegory

The allegory of the *mother* concludes with Changkya's feeling that his parents, whom he has been missing for a long time, are seemingly right next to him.

Though not seeing the mother, by mere terms,
I feel like I am encountering my kind parents,
Whom I lost for a long time, right here and now.

While having distinctive philosophical import of what reality is in accordance with his understanding of the Geluk stand, these lines also read as a beautifully expressed emotion of a middle-aged man, perhaps missing his parents who are probably no longer alive but imagining them with him all along.

The Appreciation, Aspiration Prayer, and Joy

The *Song* was finalized with the author's appreciation, an aspiration prayer, and joyful utterances, each in one stanza. Changkya's thanks once more goes to the lineage gurus of the Middle Way represented by Nāgārjuna and his students, followed by Tsongkhapa and his own root guru. In gratitude to these masters, Changkya obligates himself to revere the *mother* by saying:

How gracious the Nāgārjuna father and sons!
How gracious Tsongkhapa Lobsang Dragpa!
How gracious my kind guru!
To repay their kindness, I revere the mother!

Changkya's aspiration prayer was dedicated to the *mother*, whose nature is unborn and inexpressible, to meet *her child*, which Changkya labels as no longer the *lunatic son* but as the awareness of reality, and to guide all sentient beings to the bliss of emancipation with the joyous celebration of perfect deeds. In this

prayer, the metaphoric expression of the *mother* is linked to the Buddhist concept of *mother* sentient beings to lead them to everlasting bliss.

May the unborn, inexpressible elderly mother,
Having met with her child, the awareness,
With the utterly joyous celebration of perfect conducts,
Guide all kind mother beings to everlasting bliss!

The final four lines are joyful utterances of the author as the expression of his tremendously joyful experience with various interjections as the following:

E ma! I, Rölpé Dorjé!
A o! The dance of joy!
O na! Performing it here!
A ho! Revering the three jewels!

Colophon

As discussed early in this chapter, the colophon of the *Song* gives us the brief information on the alternative subtitle as well the names of the author, place, and scribe. It reads:

This *Deceptive Words as a Melody of an Echo for Recognition of the Mother* were composed by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, who deeply admires the Great Middle Way, at the mystically emanated great Mount Wutai. The scribe was the monk Geleg Namkha.

Conclusion

The present chapter examines the root text—the *Song*—that is the basis of this dissertation. Although the colophon of the text does not provide a date for

the composition of text, based on the biography of the author Changkya, we can establish that he composed it in 1767 during his summer retreat in Wutai Mountain. Also, the biography of Sumpa Khenpo, the author's contemporary, suggests that Sumpa probably requested the *Song*.

The chapter also provided an overview of the *nyamgur* genre to which the *Song* belongs and offered some hypotheses about why Changkya might have chosen the specific metaphors (the absent family) that he did.

In outlining the contents of the *Song* according to my interpretation of the text, I have intentionally avoided the available commentaries composed by traditional scholars except for a couple of instances when they were needed for understanding the impenetrable root text. While no interpretation is objective, in this chapter, I have avoided to bring in the commentaries into discussion in order to give the reader an overview of the *Song* on its own terms, before the radically different exegeses on the *Song* are presented in the following chapter. The root text reads in itself as a beautiful song composed from the author's spiritual experience, on the one hand, and as an emotional expression related to the author's longing for seeing his parents, on the other hand.

The content of the *Song* is a philosophical teaching on the view of emptiness using the interesting allegory of the *mother*. However, as a song of experience, it stands in contrast to the overly "dry" philosophical discourses, while covering and criticizing the "wrong" views of all the Indian and Tibetan non-Prāsaṅgika Buddhist schools.

Chapter Four: The Main Commentaries and Their Differing Interpretations

In the previous chapter we touched upon the exegetical tradition on the *Song*, briefly mentioning the extant commentaries and others that are now missing. This chapter focuses on the three selected commentaries. The three diverge from one another in their different interpretative perspectives on the definitive meaning of the *Song*—namely, the Geluk exoteric, Geluk esoteric, and Nyingma perspectives. The first of these, the Geluk exoteric, or simply the exoteric commentary, was authored by Jikmé Wangpo and is entitled the *Verbal Lamp: A Commentary to the "Spiritual Song on the View"* (*Lta ba'i gsung mgur gyi 'grel pa tshig gi sgron me*; henceforth, the *Lamp*). The Geluk esoteric commentary, whose full title reads, *A Sword to Destroy the Hostile Army of the Clinging to a Self, the Sun to Make the Fortunate Lotus Blossom: A Commentary to the "Recognizing the Mother: The Spiritual Song of Experience on the View"* (*Lta ba'i nyams mgur a ma ngos 'dzin gyi 'grel pa bdag 'dzin dgra dpung 'joms pa'i mtshon cha skal ldan pad+mo bzhad pa'i nyin byed*; henceforth, the *Sun*), was composed by Tenpa Rapgyé. This chapter also examines, though to a lesser extent, the only available non-Geluk exegesis on the *Song*, authored by Jü Mipam from a Nyingma perspective. Inspired by Changkya's *Song*, Mipam also composed a similar experiential song on his own Nyingma view of Dzogchen.[166]

[166] Jü Mipam's *Melodic Music: A Spiritual Song of Experience on the View of Great Perfection (Rdzogs pa chen po'i lta ba'i nyams mgur sgra snyan gyi rol mo)* is found in his

Other commentaries apart from these three are no less interesting and may also deserve detailed study, but the most essential points of their interpretations more or less accord with one or another of those three main commentaries, especially resonating the two Geluk interpretations.[167] Thus, we do not include them in the present study, except in passing. It is not certain, though I think likely, that Mipam was aware of those Geluk commentaries when he composed his own.

The Commentary *Lamp* by Jikmé Wangpo

The *Lamp*, the first known major exegesis of the *Song*, was composed by Changkya's student Jikmé Wangpo, and its xylographic edition was first published in the author's collected works printed in Labrang.[168] In the summer of 1769, two years after the *Song* had been penned, Jikmé Wangpo traveled

collected works as well as in Gangshar Wangpo Jikmé Choklé Namgyel's collected works along with the latter's commentary to it (Mi pham rgya mtsho 2008 and 1984-1993a and Gang shar dbang po 2008).

[167] For example, the outline or the internal organization of the Dragkar Trülku's commentary is exactly the same as that of Jikmé Wangpo's *Lamp*, and the Mongolian scholar Ngawang Yeshé Zangpo explicitly states in his commentary that he followed the esoteric perspective of Tenpa Rapgyé's *Sun*. The last major commentator Tenpa Tendzin mentions the two Geluk exegeses as well as some of the subsequent polemical works in his commentary, and he seems to have closely consulted them—echoing the perspective of the *Lamp* and defending it against the *Sun*. Yet interestingly, the compositional organization of Tenpa Tendzin's commentary appears more similar to that of Mipam's commentary.

[168] The original xylographic edition of the text is found in the seventh (*ja*) volume of Jikmé Wangpo's collected works (Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1999). This commentary along with its root text has been translated into English at least in two different occasions, first by Robert Thurman and Paul Nietupski (Nietupski & Thurman 1975-1976) and subsequently by Chogkhan Thupten Tandhar (Tandhar 1995).

through Inner Mongolia at the invitation of the local Mongol patron lords, and arrived in Wutai Shan to visit his teacher Changkya, who was then in a strict retreat. While waiting a few days for Changkya to conclude his retreat, Jikmé Wangpo composed the *Lamp* in the Seven Successive Buddhas' Temple (*sangs rgyas rab bdun gyi lha khang*; 七佛寺) at Mount Wutai at the request of Changkya's personal assistant Gelek Namkha, who was also the scribe of the *Song*, and the well-known Üjümüčin Mongol translator Ngawang Tenpel.[169] The colophon of the *Lamp* reports that the scribe was Ngakrampa Lobsang Wanggyel (Blo bzang dbang rgyal, d.u.).

The *Lamp* is likely the only commentary to the *Song* composed during Changkya's lifetime and was apparently approved by him for the accurateness of its interpretations. The biographies of Changkya and Jikmé Wangpo each confirm the occasion of the *Lamp*'s composition and reports that Changkya later praised its excellent quality and its accurate interpretation of the *Song*. There was something additionally peculiar about the *Lamp*. The scope of the *Song* is quite broad; though short, it covers the highest views of the major Indian and Tibetan Buddhist philosophical schools. According to the biographies, however, Jikmé Wangpo did not consult any textual material to explain the profound views of the various Buddhist schools. Perhaps this was due to his lack of access

[169] Although Ngawang Tenpel's role as a requestee of the commentary *Lamp* is presented in the *Lamp*'s colophon, the relevant biographies do not explicitly mention him requesting the composition. Ngawang Tenpel is well-known for his important role in the translation project of the entire Tibetan Tengyur collection into the Mongolian language between 1742 and 1749 led by Changkya and commissioned by the Qianlong Emperor.

to the relevant reference works or to a library at Wutai. In any case, it is said that Jikmé Wangpo's *Lamp* is based on religious ritual practices, such as reciting the *Song* three times and praying to Changkya on a daily basis. This account was first recorded by Changkya's biographer Tuken, perhaps as a way of eulogizing Jikmé Wangpo's innate scholastic ability and spiritual accomplishment, which allowed him to write an accurate commentary on the *Song* without the need to consult reference works. [170] Despite tales like this, which are obviously meant to legitimize Jikmé Wangpo's interpretation, other alternative viewpoints about the meaning of the *Song* did in fact arise, and this is what we analyze in this chapter.

Tuken Rinpoché further recounts another personal testament about the accuracy of Jikmé Wangpo's commentary, albeit one that also expresses a minor criticism expressed by Changkya:

> Later, when I met Lord [Changkya] Lama, I asked if the commentary accorded with his intentions. He said, "Although the Sakyapas use of the term 'ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness' (*gsal stong 'dzin med*) to refer to the *view* even in Sakya Paṇḍita's works, the commentary explains it as if it originated from Tsarchen father and heirs. Other than that, everything else looks right to me."[171]

Here, Changkya claims that the unique term the Sakyapas use to designate the view, namely "the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness," had already

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[170] Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 527-528.

[171] *dus phyis kho bos rje bla mar 'jal skabs 'grel pa de thugs la babs e byung zhus pas/ sa skya pas lta ba la gsal stong 'dzin med kyi tha snyad byed pa sa paN gyi gsung na'ang yod kyang/ 'grel pa 'dir tshar chen yab sras nas byung tshul gnang 'dug/ de tsam ma gtogs gzhan thams cad 'chad lugs bzang bar snang/.* Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 528.

been used by Sakya Paṇḍita, the twelfth- to the thirteenth-century scholar who is regarded as one of the five Sakya forefathers (*sa skya gong ma lnga*), instead of being used for the first time by the sixteenth-century Sakya master Tsarchen Losel Gyatso (Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho, 1502-1566) and his students. Therefore, according to Tuken, Jikmé Wangpo may have been seen by Changkya as making a minor mistake when he traced the origin of the Sakya term in the *Lamp*, where he says, "Although there are many different subdivisions within the Sakya adherents whose philosophical views are mutually discordant, Tsarchen Losel Gyatso and so forth—the followers of the private explanation—say that the awareness of the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness is the ultimate natural state."[172] We will revisit this point later when we briefly discuss Tenpa Rapgyé's *Sun* where this again becomes an issue which is then countered by subsequent polemicists.

Gungtang Könchok Tenpé Drönmé (Gung thang Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, 1762-1823), a biographer of Jikmé Wangpo and a renowned scholar in his own right, also mentions hearing the Gomang abbot Kelsang Ngödrup (Skal bzang dngos grub, d.u.) complimenting the *Lamp* by claiming that it enhanced the *Song*'s reputation. According to this account, the Gomang abbot reportedly said that it was the *Lamp* that made the *Song*, a short experiential song, a great

[172] *… sa skya pa la nang gses kyi lta grub mi mthun pa mang du yod kyang tshar chen blo gsal rgya mtsho sogs slob bshad rjes 'brang dang bcas pa rnams kyis gsal stong 'dzin med kyi rig pa gnas lugs mthar thug yin zhes zer/* (Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1999: 8a).

extensive treatise (*gzhung rgya chen po*).[173] This is a striking point for it claims that a commentary could elevate the root text's reputation bringing it to a new status, in this case that of a *great treatise*. Jikmé Wangpo's interpretation of the *Song* may indeed have created a new future for the root text by stimulating different interpretations of the *Song*, specifically by Tenpa Rapgyé and his followers, which resulted in the series of subsequent polemical writings. Moreover, Gungtang Rinpoché himself considered the *Song* to be profound, unique, and difficult for anyone to comprehend on their own, for it covers an extensive subject matters and expressions resembling the language in the tantras. Gungtang also praised the *Lamp* as a wonderfully eloquent work that "nakedly" demonstrates the essential philosophical views of all the major Indian and Tibetan Buddhist philosophical schools. [174]

According to Gungtang's account, an unnamed "lewd" Nyingma opponent wrote a polemical work refuting both the root text and its commentary—the *Song* and the *Lamp*. Jikmé Wangpo reportedly examined it, but despite its reputation among some readers, he found it not to be worthy of a response—to be a waste of ink and paper—because of its obvious lack of a pure motivation and logical coherence. Unfortunately, the text in question is no longer available. Regardless, the account tells us that the commentary brought about a dispute as early as the time of Jikmé Wangpo, who decided that it did not merit a response.

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[173] Dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me 2019: 148.

[174] Ibid.

Moreover, Gungtang also records that Jikmé Wangpo bestowed on a certain *geshe lharampa* of Drepung Gomang, called Sönam (Bsod nams), an exegetical transmission of the *Lamp* in 1779 at the latter's request, ten years after its composition.[175] All these accounts ultimately document that the *Song* along with its commentary, the *Lamp*, were held in high regard by scholars, raised certain questions and responses, and perhaps even a sectarian controversy even during the time that the authors were still active.

The Commentary *Sun* by Tenpa Rapgyé

More than three decades after Jikmé Wangpo wrote his *Lamp*, Tenpa Rapgyé composed the *Sun*, the second commentary to the *Song*.[176] Unlike Jikme Wangpo, Tenpa Rapgyé comments on the *Song* exclusively from a Geluk esoteric perspective—that is, through a tantric lens. The *Sun* claims to decipher the *Song*'s allegory, the metaphorical characters of the allegory, and the overall message of the *Song* in Buddhist tantric terms. That is why we characterize the *Sun* as the esoteric exegesis in contrast to the *Lamp* which is the exoteric exegesis.

As in the case of the *Lamp*, the *Sun*'s colophon identifies the individuals who requested the text as well as the scribe and the place where the author composed

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[175] Ibid: 218.

[176] The xylographic edition of this text is found as the fourth (*nga*) text in the second (*kha*) volume of Tenpa Rapgyé's collected works (Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas 1985). Its complete translation is found in Appendix II.

it, but it does not provide us with a date when it was actually penned. The students requesting the work include the Changkya Tülku Yeshé Tenpé Gyeltsen (Ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1787-1846), the Third Drupkhang Lobsang Gelek Gyeltsen (Sgrub khang Blo bzang dge legs rgyal mtshan, 1780-1815), and others. Tenpa Rapgyé states that he composed the *Sun* in his residence, the Palace of the Indivisible Great Bliss, or Zungjuk Dewa Chenpö Podrang (Zung 'jug bde ba chen po'i pho brang) at Zhidé Ganden Samtenling (Bzhi sde dga' ldan bsam gtan gling).[177] His secretary, the monk Gyatso Pelwar (Rgya mtsho dpal 'bar, d.u.) was the scribe. As for the outline structure of the *Sun* and its commentarial subheadings, these are virtually identical to those of the *Song*.[178]

Tenpa Rapgyé's biography does not help to clarify exactly when the *Sun* was composed. However, it records an interesting event that took place on the Fifth Day of the Sixth Mongolian Lunar Month in the Water Pig Year (July 23, 1803). On this day, Tenpa Rabgyé gave an exegetical transmission of his *Sun*, which obviously had been already composed by then, to the Changkya Tülku and others after giving an extensive transmission of Tsongkhapa's commentary on the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*.[179] Given that the young Changkya Tülku met Tenpa Rapgyé in person for the first time in 1801 when he came to central Tibet to

[177] Zhidé Ganden Samtenling is a Geluk monastery located in Lhasa.

[178] For the detailed outline of the *Sun*, see Appendix II.

[179] Blo bzang 'phrin las rnam rgyal [2016]: 459.

study, it is unlikely that he requested the text before then. So, certain facts in Tenpa Rapgyé's biography suggest that the *Sun* was written between 1801 and 1803. The biography also states that both the Changkya Tülku and the Drupkhang Tülku, the latter of whom was then abbot of Gyütö Dratsang—both requesters of the *Sun*—along with other important lamas, including the abbots of Gyümé Dratsang and other monasteries, gathered at Zhidé Ganden Samtenling in early 1803 to receive a series of tantric teachings from Tenpa Rapgyé. This might well have been the occasion when they petitioned him to compose a commentary to the *Song* that was written "in accordance with the esoteric teachings," as the colophon states.

From a traditional Tibetan Buddhist emic perspective, it would be considered religiously significant or auspicious that Changkya wrote the root text and his student Tenpa Rapgyé later wrote a commentary to it at the request of Changkya's "reincarnation," who explicitly asked for an esoteric commentary. The text's connection to the late lama's reincarnation could be understood as giving Tenpa Rapgyé the authority to compose the work and to legitimize his esoteric commentary to the *Song* even though, unlike the *Lamp*, it was not personally acknowledged by Changkya himself. This kind of emic logic may have also bolstered the *Sun*'s authoritative reputation in Geluk communities, though of course Reting Tenpa Rapgyé, one of the greatest teachers of the Geluk world at this time, hardly needed this type of legitimation given that he was known throughout the Qing-Geluk world.

In the *Sun*, Tenpa Rapgyé mentions Jikmé Wangpo by name twice. The first mention is not strictly polemical, but he directly attacks the latter the second time. In the first instance, Tenpa Rapgyé says, "[The Second] Jamyang Zhepé Dorjé [i.e., Jikmé Wangpo] composed a commentary [to the *Song*] exclusively in accordance with the exoteric system. However, the actual intended meaning of the *Song* is ultimately [found] in the esoteric system. Accordingly, I am composing this short commentary…"[180] Although not very polemical at face value, Tenpa Rapgyé implies that his own commentary, the *Sun*, explores a more profound (tantric or esopteric) dimension of the *Song* that is closer to Changkya's definitive intention than Jikmé Wangpo's *Lamp*. Indeed, while Tenpa Rapgyé does not seem to have explicitly criticized Jikmé Wangpo or attempted to defeat him at this point, he clearly indicates his divergence from the *Lamp* in terms of the different perspectives—exoteric vs. esoteric—that each commentary takes. Besides this difference in perspective, the *Sun* has no disagreement with the *Lamp* on particular philosophical points, but regardless of Tenpa Rapgyé's intentions, it opens up the way for subsequent disputes among the followers of the two commentators which we will discuss in the next chapter.

Tenpa Rapgyé explicitly criticizes Jikmé Wangpo only one time—the second time that he mentions him by name in the *Sun*—where he says:

… within the glorious Sakya tradition, there are traditions of the public explanation (*tshogs bshad*) and the private explanation (*slob bshad*) [of the Path

[180] "*…nyams mgur 'di nyid kyi 'grel pa mdo lugs rkyang pa'i phyogs su 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rjes bkral zin kyang / gsung mgur gyi dgongs gzhi dngos sngags lugs su 'dug gshis de don bzhin nyung ngu'i tshig gis 'grel pa la …*" Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas 1985: 124 (2b).

and Effect teachings] … The main one is the great secret tradition of the private explanation, which was transmitted through a single lineage from the Nepalese Pamtingpa to Tsarchen. From then on, the lineage slightly expanded. In his commentary, the scholar adept, [the Second] Jamyang Zhepa, because of his lack of familiarity, erroneously explained the tradition as if it was established by Tsarchen. According to this tradition, the wisdom of the ungraspable [union of] of clarity and emptiness is asserted as the ultimate natural state."[181]

This is also the same point, described above—that is, the point that Changkya tells Tuken involved a minor mistake on the part of Jikmé Wangpo. Although Jikmé Wangpo did not explicitly state in the *Lamp* that Tsarchen Losel Gyatso had actually founded the private explanation tradition, he specified Tsarchen, making it seem as if he had been at least one of the most important representatives of that tradition. Nonetheless, likely aware of Changkya's assessment of the *Lamp* and his criticism of Jikmé Wangpo on this issue, Tenpa Rapgyé explicitly criticizes Jikmé Wangpo by name in this passage. According to Tenpa Rapgyé himself, the tradition is traced to the much early figure of Pamtingpa (Pham mthing pa, eleventh century) of Nepal.[182] He was Nāropa's student and transmitted many important new tantric teachings to the Tibetans.

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[181] "*… dpal ldan sa skya pa la tshogs slob gnyis … gtso bor gyur ba gsang chen slob bshad ni bal po pham mthing pa nas mtshar chen gyi bar chig brgyud dang / de nas cung yangs su song ba la 'di'i 'grel pa mdzad pa po mkhas grub 'jam dbyangs bzhad pas mtshar chen nas byung ba lta bu zhig mdzad 'dug pa thugs rgyus med pa'i skyon du mchis/ de'i lugs la gsal stong 'dzin med kyi rig pa gnas lugs mthar thug tu 'dod …*" Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas 1985: 135-136 (8a-8b).

[182] Pamting (*Pham mthing*), a.k.a. Pharping, is a small Newar town in the southern Kathmandu valley. A native from there is known as a Pamtingpa. There were more than one Pamtingpa. For example, the Pamtingpa brothers were the early eleventh-century Newars Abhayakīrti, or Jikmé Drakpa ('Jigs med grags pa), and Vāgīśvarakīrti, or Ngaki Wangchuk Drakpa (Ngag gi dbang phyug grags pa). But scholars suggest that there may have been more than two Pamtingpa brothers. For their identities and the number, whether there were two, three, four, or five of them, see Lo Bue 1997: 643-652.

Many Sakya accounts claim that the Pamtingpa brothers transmitted the most profound private explanations to the lineage teachers of the Sakya ancestors, including Lokya lotsāwa Sherap Tsekpa (Klog skya lo tsA ba Shes rab brtsegs pa, d.u.) and Mal lotsāwa Lodrö Drakpa (Mal lo tsA ba Blo gros grags pa, d.u.).[183] In the next chapter, we will see how Belmang defended Jikmé Wangpo and illustrated five faults of Tenpa Rapgyé's point on this issue.

We will not discuss the other commentaries here because they tend to be fairly repetitive. But it is worth mentioning the last Geluk commentary, written by Gungru Geshé Tenpa Tendzin in 1983. Echoing Belmang, the late Gungru Geshé also defended Jikmé Wangpo and attacked Tenpa Rabgyé.[184] Extensively quoting arguments from Belmang's polemics, Tenpa Tendzin's commentary (henceforth, the *Gem*) refutes the *Sun*'s interpretation of the *Song*'s definitive meaning. In this regard, the *Gem* differentiates itself from the other commentaries for its noticeably more polemical tone—extensively attacking one commentary while defending another. Because it is a relatively new

[183] For example, according to Sangyé Püntsok (1649-1705), refusing to transmit a certain practice of Vajrayoginī even to Marpa and many other Indian and Tibetan accomplished disciples, Nāropa transmitted it as a private explanation only to the Phamtingpa brothers, who further transmitted it to the Sakya forefathers through Mal lotsāwa. Sangs rgyas phun tshogs 2007: 54; 4b.

[184] The *yikcha* or the monastic textbook tradition is an important aspect of the monastic philosophy colleges in Tibet. When monks study Buddhist philosophy, they usually follow the interpretative positions of their respective *yikcha* authors, and their loyalty to those positions is often expected. When they encounter alternative interpretations that challenge the positions of their *yikcha*, they almost always defend their *yikcha*, and should a chance arise, they counterattack the opposing positions with rebuttals. Given that Geshé Tenpa Tendzin is originally a Gomang monk and that Jikmé Wangpo is one of the authors of the Gomang *yikcha*, it is not very surprising that Geshé-la should have defended Jikmé Wangpo in his commentary.

commentary—in fact, the latest among the traditional exegeses of the *Song*—the author of the *Gem* evidently had access not only to all the other major commentaries but also the major polemicists' works, which gives him the advantage of being able to consult the work of all his predecessors.

Though not directly related to the intra-Geluk polemical exchanges studied here, we will briefly examine the commentary by the nineteenth-century Nyingma polymath Jü Mipam. This is particularly interesting because Mipam, a non-Geluk master, is also famous for engaging in a number of other polemical debates with various Geluk masters. Mipam wrote a complete commentary on the *Song*, which is obviously a Geluk work, from a Nyingma perspective.[185]

The Commentary *Concise* by Jü Mipam Namgyel

At about the age of twenty-six, in the Year of Water Monkey (1872 or 1873), the young Jü Mipam, a.k.a. Lodrö Drimé (Blo gros dri med), wrote his commentary to the *Song*.[186] The commentary in its original printing has no particular title. Mipam refers to it as a "slight elucidation" (*cung zad bkral ba*). A later copy editor, Tsewang Rikdzin (Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, d.u.), calls it a "concise

[185] For Jü Mipam's polemics with the Tibetan Geluk master Pari Lobsang Rapsel (Dpa' ris Rab gsal, 1840-1910?), see Viehbeck 2014. And, for his polemics with another Geluk polymath Dragkar Lobsang Pelden Tendzin Nyendrak (Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin snyan grags, 1866-1928), see Phuntsho 2005. For a translation of Mipam's commentary along with the root text, see Brunnhölzl 2007. Brunnhölzl's translation does not include Mipam's concluding remarks and verses; instead, he briefly summarizes them in his back notes.

[186] The text is a xylograph and was published in the fourth (*pa*) volume of Mipam's collected works, which was originally printed in Dergé and later expanded and republished in Katok in 1985. Mi pham rgya tsho 1984-1993b.

commentary" (*'grel chung*) although it is not significantly shorter than the other major, preceding Geluk commentaries. Nonetheless, Mipam's commentary (henceforth, the *Concise*) is significant because of his sectarian affiliation with the Nyingma tradition. Regardless of the centuries-long hegemony of the Geluk Church in Tibet, a non-Geluk author's exegesis on a Geluk work is exceptionally rare in premodern Tibetan literature. In addition to the *Concise*, Mipam is also said to have composed a commentary to the *Three Principal Aspects of the Path (Lam gyi gtso bo rnam gsum)*, one of Tsongkhapa's most famous works.[187]

Mipam does not exclusively state who requested him to compose this work; instead, he mentions the blessings of his principal teacher Jamyang Khyetsé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po, 1820-1892) in the colophon as if his composition was due to his teacher's kindness. This may be an indicator that Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo inspired or urged him to write this text. In the *Concise*, referencing an anonymous Geluk source, Mipam praises Changkya. "Exalted like the top ornament on the banner of victory" from among Tsongkhapa's followers, he states, Changkya uttered the *Song* upon his attainment of the Supreme Joy (Skt. *pramuditā*), the first stage of the noble bodhisattva's ten grounds (Skt. *bhūmi*).[188] Mipam also eulogized the *Song* as an

[187] Douglas Duckworth states that this work is mentioned in a catalog of Mipam's works, but it is not included in his collected works published in either the Zhechen and Katok editions. Duckworth 2011: 62 & 215.

[188] Without clarifying his sources, Mipam mentions on different occasions that Changkya had attained the *bhūmi* and that he composed the *Song* based on that experience. Mi pham rgya mtsho 1984-1993b: 827, 861-862, and 863.

expression of Changkya's experience of the profound view, which was an imprint of his oceanlike learning and reflection. In praising Changkya and his work, Mipam also does not seem to have explicitly intended to refute the validity of Tsongkhapa's interpretation of the Middle Way view.[189]

Regarding Changkya's Geluk inclination, he negates their criticism of the philosophical views of the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist schools that were understood by the Gelukpas to be non-Prāsaṅgika—which terminologically, if not hermeneutically, conflicts with the Nyingma point of view, and explains his own interpretative position on the *Song* as that of the "Great Middle Way" without any sectarian partiality. The term "Great Middle Way" refers to a number of different theories interpreting the Madhyamaka philosophy attributed to Nāgārjuna (second century).[190] The Great Middle Way advocated by Mipam refers to the gnosis of coalescence which is understood in terms of the union of form and emptiness or of the conventional and ultimate truths.[191] At the same time, Mipam is not only an unbiased interpreter who has a great

[189] For the difference between the philosophical views of Tsongkhapa and Mipam on the conceptualized ultimate reality, see Garfield 2020.

[190] For example, the Jonangpas use the term "Great Middle Way" for their unique other-emptiness (*gzhan stong*) view derived from the amalgamation of the Mind Only and Middle Way systems in relation to the Kālacakra system. Mipam, not an adherent of the other-emptiness theory himself, used the term in his own unique way, as referring to the Nyingma Great Perfection view. Many Sakya and Geluk thinkers, on the other hand, believe that "Great Madhyamaka" refers to nothing other than Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka, especially its Prāsaṅgika interpretation.

[191] For Mipam's explanations of the Great Middle Way, see Karma Phuntsho 2005: 9 and 158-159.

admiration of Changkya but also an independent skeptic. Thus, he warns his audience that the *Song* is not a Buddhist canonical work—not a scripture (Skt. *buddhavacana*; Tib. *sangs rgyas kyi bka'*) of the Buddha nor an expositional treatise (*gzhung*) by an Indian *paṇḍita* whose works are recognized as authoritative by all Tibetan Buddhist schools; so, it would be difficult to determine whether or not the *Song* is Changkya's final view.

On this point, Mipam seems to have touched upon an important hermeneutical method of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism. He brings up a Tsongkhapa-like perspective about how to determine the authenticity of a Buddhist doctrine. Tsongkhapa is not only known for his advocacy of logical reasoning but is also celebrated, like many other Tibetan scholars, for determining the authenticity of a Buddhist doctrine through its origin—whether it is attested in the scriptures, or in the authoritative treatises of Indian Buddhist *paṇḍita*s and accomplished masters. In other words, whenever there is no source for a doctrine in Indian Buddhist textual tradition, Tsongkhapa did not consider it authentic, regardless of its fame or reputation in Tibet. Invoking this principle of authenticity, Mipam says that the *Song* should not be taken at face value because it is not an authoritative Indian treatise. By saying, "…logical reasoning established by conventional valid cognition is not applied to some authentic texts such as [those on] Dzogchen, so there is no necessity of trying [to correspond them in this text]," he implies that the *Song* and his commentary may have not adequately depicted the validity of the views of Dzogchen or the

likes.[192] Therefore, Mipam continues, "I am [writing this work] to create within my mind the seeds of intelligence regarding [Changkya's] teachings with admiration for the fact that it is certainly correct to consider him the noble being (Skt. *ārya*; *'phags pa*)— someone who attained the path of seeing (Skt. *darśana-mārga*; *mthong lam*)—as he was renowned to be."[193] By this statement, Mipam takes the author's reputation as an important aspect for a confidence about the doctrinal accuracy of the text by reasoning that the meaning of the text must be accepted at least to a certain extent because the author had achieved a high realization by the time he composed the text. One may see this method as contradicting the first principle of the four types of reliance taught in Buddhist scriptures: reliance on the doctrine rather than on the individual.[194] Yet, since Mipam is a strong advocate of the four types of reliance in his own hermeneutics, here he seems to be explaining why he commented on the *Song* and perhaps simply suggesting a solution that when the doctrine of a text is uncertain to be

[192] *rdzogs pa chen po sogs gzhung tshad ldan rnams la tshad mas grub pa'i rigs lam rnam dag gzhan gyi bklag mi rnyed pa yod pas 'di la re mi dgos mod*. Mi pham rgya mtsho 1984-1993b: 863.

[193] *skyes bu dam pa 'di ni mthong lam mngon sum mthong ba'i 'phags par grags pa bzhin don dang ldan par nges so snyam du gus pas gsung gi snang ba la blo gros kyi bag chags bzhag pa yin no*. Mi pham rgya mtsho 1984-1993b: 863.

[194] The four reliances are (1) reliance on the doctrine rather than on the individual, (2) reliance on the meaning rather than on the words, (3) reliance on the definitive meaning rather than on the provisional meaning, and (4) reliance on gnosis rather than on the ordinary mind. Teachings on the four reliances are found in scriptures such as the *Holy Vinaya Text (Vinaya-uttaragrantha)*, the *Bodhisattva Basket (Bodhisattva-piṭaka)*, the *Teaching of Akṣayamati (Akṣayamati-nirdeśa)*, and the *Teaching of Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa)*.

determined by reasoning, the credibility of the individual who composed the text can be accountable.[195]

Seemingly inspired by Changkya's *Song*, Mipam also wrote his own song on the view of Dzogchen, entitled *A Melodic Music: A Spiritual Song of Experience on the View of Great Perfection (Rdzogs pa chen po'i lta ba'i nyams mgur sgra snyan gyi rol mo*, henceforth, the *Music)*, again at the request of his teacher Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo. [196] As is clear from the title, Mipam's song is dedicated to the Dzogchen view of his Nyingma tradition, but its general structure is very similar to that of the *Song*, of course, with some necessary modifications. For example, in the original *Song*, what is being sought is the long-absent mother, which is generally understood as referring to emptiness of the mind, whereas in the *Music*, it is a missing *gem*, which in Mipam's text is a metaphor for *rikpa*, or "awareness."[197] Similarly, by emptiness of the mind,

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[195] Mipam says about the four reliances, for example, in his *Sword of Wisdom: Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality; With Annotations (Don rnam par nges pa shes rab ral gri mchan bcas)*: "If we do not have this understanding based on our own analyses, then, like a blind man relying on a guide, we may go against the four reliances—relying on the individuals rather than on the doctrine, etc. as opposed to relying on the doctrine not on the individual, etc.—because of the mere reasons that [the individual] is famous in the world, or that we only grasp the words, or of the similar reasons for the other two reliances." *de 'da'i rang stobs kyis dpyod pa'i blo dang mi ldan na/ mig med dmigs bur brten pa bzhin/ 'jig rten nag rags pa tsam gyi phyir dang tshig tsam 'dzin pa'i phyir dang phyi ma gnyis rtogs sla'i rgyu mtshan tsam gyi phyir/ gang zag la mi rton chos la rton pa sogs kyi rton pa bzhi las go bzlog ste chos la mi rton gang zag la 'gyur*. Mi pham rgya mtsho 1984-1993c: 806.

[196] For a translation of Mipam's *Spiritual Song of Experience on the View of Great Perfection*, see Erdene-Ochir 2020: *unpublished*. I will discuss more about this work along with its commentary by Gangshar Wangpo Janchup Dorjé (Gang shar dbang po Byang chub rdo rje, 1925-1958/9), elsewhere (in ISYT 2022).

[197] Mi pham rgya mtsho. 1984–1993a: 1a (200).

Changkya meant the ultimate reality as understood in Geluk Madhyamaka, whereas Mipam used the term *rikpa* to refer to the absolute reality according to the Nyingma Dzogchen view.

The Diverging Exegetical Interpretations of the *Song*

The Phrase "E ma ho!"

As we have seen, the *Lamp*, the *Sun*, and the *Concise* represent Geluk exoteric, Geluk esoteric, and Nyingma interpretations of the Song, receptively. But there is a unique feature of the *Sun* that is worth mentioning, and this has to do with the exclamatory phrase "E ma ho!" After the customary eulogy, prayers, statement for the purpose of composition, etc., Tenpa Rapgyé begins to explain the phrase "E ma ho!" as if the root text *Song* started with this phrase. Though some later editions of the *Song* in fact start in this way, neither its first official block-print edition in Changkya's collected works published in Beijing nor the other early edition found in Changkya's biography written by Tuken contains this phrase. Moreover, there is no comment whatsoever on this phrase in the *Lamp*, the earliest commentary. Yet the *Sun*'s comments on this phrase eventually resulted in one of the major topics of the subsequent polemical works. Belmang, for example, assures his readers that the earlier editions of the *Song* had not included the "E ma ho!" and he continues,

> There wouldn't be a purpose for *jasak* Namkha, the scribe of the *Song*, to conceal the term 'E ma ho!' when, presenting a copy of the text, he requested [Jikmé Wangpo] to compose a commentary. Nor is there a purpose for Künkhyen Rinpoché [Jikmé Wangpo] himself to omit the 'E ma ho!' from the text [if it had

been there]. Even if he intentionally omitted the term, [Changkya,] the author of [the *Song*,] would have said that there was an 'E ma ho!' that was essential [to the text's meaning]. But there were no such words.[198]

In the next chapter, we will discuss some of the details of the debates between the polemicists on this issue.

While the *Lamp* and the *Concise* have no comment on the phrase "E ma ho!"[199] the *Sun* explains them as the symbols of the most important Buddhist tantric concepts according to the Geluk interpretation of the Unexcelled Yoga Tantras. The phrase symbolizes the meanings of the three types of *e-vam*—the result, path, and sign—and the *e*, *ma*, and *ho* syllables individually symbolize the meanings of the method which is great bliss, wisdom which perceives emptiness, and the union of the two.[200]

Except for the phrase "E ma ho!" that is unique to the *Sun*, all three commentaries similarly parse every single word of the *Song*. The two Geluk commentaries identify the metaphors depicted in the *Song* differently. They identify the characters being referenced with different exoteric and esoteric concepts. Likewise, as mentioned above, Mipam explains the *Song* from the

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[198] *gsung mgur 'di nyid kyi drung yig nam mkha' ja sag gis dpe cha phul nas 'grel ba rtsom bskul zhu skabs e ma ho zhes ba sbed dgos pa yang med/ kun mkhyen rin po che nas e ma ho zhes skyur dgos pa med/ bsam bzhin du skyur na yang rtsom pa po nyid nas 'di'i mgor e ma ho zhig yod/ de gnad che gsung dgos pa la de yang ma gsung pa'i phyir/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974: 82b-83a (164-165).

[199] Although Mipam did not comment on this phrase in his *Concise*, the *Song*'s edition published in his collected works along with the *Concise* contains the phrase. When the editors of his collected works decided to include the *Song* in the collection, they may have used an edition of the *Song* in which the phrase had been already inserted.

[200] For details in the *Sun*, see Appendix II.

perspective of the Great Middle Way in accordance with his Nyingma reading of the text, so the identification of the characters in his commentary also differs from those found in both the *Lamp* and the *Sun*.

The Exegetical Interpretations of the Allegory and the Metaphors of Its Characters

As explained in the previous chapter, the *Song* is an allegory containing the following characters: the narrator who is a lunatic son, his elderly mother and father, each of whom was thought to be lost a long time ago, and his big brother who has a special mirror on which the mother's face reflects, allowing the lunatic son to realize the reality that he has actually been with his parents all along. Each of the commentators explains what each of the characters in the allegory represents according to their own interpretive lend. In the following sections of this chapter, we discuss the different understanding of those characters depicted in the three commentaries followed by a chart that summarizes the discussion.

Jikmé Wangpo's Analysis of the Allegory

In the exoteric commentary *Lamp*, the metaphor of the lunatic son refers to the mind of the reality seeker, the individual seeking "the view" (*lta ba 'tshol mkhan gyi sems*). The elderly mother whom the lunatic son seeks out metaphorically refers to the nature of the mind (*sems kyi chos nyid*), which is further equated with a number of doctrinal concepts: emptiness (*stong pa nyid*),

natural emptiness (*rang bzhin gyi stong pa nyid*), the permanently changeless state (*dus rtag du 'gyur pa med pa*), the fact that ultimately there is nothing real (*don dam par cir yang ma grub pa*), the inexpressible (*brjod med*), the emptiness of own-nature (*rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid*), the ineffable (*brjod pa dang bral ba*), and the buddha-nature (*bde gshegs snying po*). Then, since, for Mādhyamikas, the variety of dependently arisen phenomena—including external objects as well as internal subjects (*phyi gzung ba dang nang 'dzin pas bsdus pa'i rten 'brel sna tshogs pa*)—are nothing but transformations of emptiness, the *Song* likens the duality of the apprehended and apprehender (*gzung 'dzin*) to the mother's smiling mask. Likewise, the birth and death that result from karma and mental afflictions and all the ever-changing forms of happiness and suffering encountered in life (*las nyon gyi dbang gi skye ba dang 'chi 'pho ba dang bde sdug 'gyur ba sogs sna tshogs pa*) are likened to the mother's lies because while appearing to be real, they are actually empty. The big brother, according to the *Lamp*, refers to the inference that relies on the reasoning of dependent origination (*rten 'byung gi gtan tshig la brten pa'i rjes dpag*) and to the correct decision to pursue virtue and abandon evil (*dkar nag gi las la spang blangs tshul bzhin du byas pa*). As for the elderly father, whom the seeker finds in the process of looking for his mother, the *Lamp* identifies it as the basis of emptiness, the thing that possesses the quality of being empty (*stong pa nyid kyi stong gzhi chos can*), as well as to dependent origination (*rten 'brel*). Consequently, to find the correct view according to the *Lamp*, one needs to

realize the reality of the mind, which is by nature empty, changeless, ultimately unreal, and inexpressible. And this nature or reality of the mind is also ultimately understood to be the buddha-nature. Such an empty nature manifests as dualities of various subject-object phenomena through the process of dependent origination, and ordinary beings experience it as a cycle of happiness and suffering.

In the *Lamp*, echoing the Geluk doctrine about the equivalence of emptiness and dependent origination, Jigmé Wangpo also says, "Based upon these eloquent explanations, one must find certainty about how emptiness and dependent origination with respect to a single object are posited as mode and function."[201] Accordingly, for any single object, its emptiness and its dependent origination are simply two different aspects of that single object. For this reason, the elderly father, i.e. dependent origination, is said to be effortlessly found in the process of finding the elderly mother, emptiness. Indeed, in the root text, he is found in her embrace inseparable from her. Thus, consistent with the Geluk doctrine, the *Lamp* explains that the lunatic son will be saved from the two extremes of eternalism and nihilism when the elderly father and mother—dependent origination and emptiness—manifest without mutual contradiction. Moreover, the empty mother's face, which is neither exactly identical (*ldog pa gcig*) with the basis of emptiness—the thing that is empty—nor essentially other than that, is

[201] "*… legs bshad 'di rnams la brten nas stong pa dang rten 'byung gnyis gzhi gcig gi steng du thabs dang thabs byung du 'jog pa'i tshul la nges pa rnyed par gyis shig.*" Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po: 8a.

likened to the non-affirming negation (*med dgag*) that merely eliminates inherent existence. When the non-affirming negation that merely eliminates inherent existence—the appearance of emptiness as the mother's face—reflects on the *big brother*'s *mirror*, i.e., the inferential cognition that relies on the logic of dependent origination (*rten 'byung gi gtan tshigs la brten pa'i rjes dpag*), it manifests as if ultimately there is nothing that is graspable. An important implication of this metaphor, as interpreted in the *Lamp*, is that ordinary beings are not directly able to see the reality, i.e., emptiness. Instead, first they can see only the non-affirming negation that is the defining characteristic of emptiness via inference that is based on the valid reasoning of dependent origination.

Tenpa Rapgyé's Analysis of the Allegory

Tenpa Rapgyé's esoteric commentary, the *Sun*, identifies the *Song*'s cast of characters differently than the *Lamp* does. According to the *Sun*, the lunatic son refers to the *gross* mind (*sems rags pa*) that is contaminated by mental afflictions as opposed to just the mind seeking the view, as Jikmé Wangpo claimed. The *elderly mother*, for Tenpa Rabgyé, is also a metaphor for a variety of exoteric notions such as the Dharma Body during the time of the ground (*gzhi dus kyi chos sku*), natural emptiness (*rang bzhin stong pa nyid*), freedom from all proliferations (*spros pa mtha' dag bral ba*), the fact that nothing exists ultimately (*don dam par cir yang ma grub pa*), the inexpressible (*brjod med*), and emptiness. Moreover, it is a metaphor for more tantric concepts including the

luminosity of the mother (*ma'i 'od gsal*), the extremely subtle mind-wind (*shin tu phra ba'i rlung sems*), the gnosis of blissful emptiness (*bde stong gi ye shes*), the luminous dharma body (*'od gsal chos sku*), and luminous emptiness (*'od gsal stong pa nyid*). Hence, the *Sun* identifies the lunatic son's search of his mother in the allegory as the gross mind's search of the extremely subtle mind, which in the tantric context is equated not only with emptiness but also with the *luminous* dharma body.

Such a mother's smiling mask is then equated with "the aspect of external objects and the appearing aspect of that object to the internal mind that is observing it—regardless of whether or not they are pure" (*phyi gzung ba yul gyi rnam pa dang nang 'dzin pa sems kyi snang cha dag ma dag kun*). In this regard, for the *Sun*, the mask is the totality of the manifestations of the extremely subtle mind-wind. Although this reference does not explicitly contradict the *Lamp*'s identification of the mask, Reting's nuancing of the mask leads to a more tantric understanding of the original poem, suggesting that all phenomena are nothing but manifestations of the extremely subtle mind. The mother's lies are then the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth as well as various experiences of happiness and suffering that are not natural to the mind-wind itself.

The elderly father, who is found in the process of seeking the mother, is the gnosis of great bliss (*bde ba chen po'i ye shes*), the gnosis of the method aspect of the method-wisdom union of the Highest Yoga Tantra, the partner of the wisdom

aspect that realizes emptiness.[202] Why is the father found on the way to finding the mother according to Highest Yoga Tantra? Tenpa Rapgyé explains, "Here, according to the esoteric system, the elderly father—the gnosis of great bliss—is found inseparably embracing the mother, the luminosity that causes the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve into the central channel through one's focus on the essential point in the vajra body."[203]

Lastly, whereas the big brother in Jikmé Wangpo's *Lamp* is equated with the logic of dependent origination, in the *Sun* it generally refers to dependent origination *qua* conventional method aspect (*kun rdzob thabs kyi cha*), and to the accumulation of merit (*bsod nams kyi tshogs*). Accordingly, the luminous mind as the appearance of the mother that is also neither exactly identical nor essentially separate from the basis of emptiness, manifests in the big brother's mirror, i.e., *via* the illusory body, like the reflection of a form in the mirror. Then, the *Sun* continues, the ordinary lunatic who is bound by conceptualizations due to karmic energy does not even analytically conceive the reality that the illusory body and luminosity are an indivisible entity.

Mipam's Unpacking of the Allegory

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[202] Tsongkhapa explains his understanding of inseparable bliss and emptiness in association with the union of the two syllables *e* and *vaṃ* in many of his important tantric exegeses. For example, see Tsongkhapa 2013: 91-122.

[203] "*de yang sngags kyi skabs'dir rdo rje'i lus la gnad du bsnun pa la brten nas rlung dbu mar zhugs gnas thim gsum byas pa'i 'od gsal gyi a ma de nyid kyi pang na 'bral ba med par 'khyud pa'i bde ba chen po'i ye shes pha rgan ji lta ba bzhin du rnyed pas/ …*" Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas: 5b.

Although Jü Mipam Gyatso's commentary *Concise* had no direct impact on subsequent intra-Geluk polemic writings, it is noteworthy enough to warrant comparison to the other commentaries. Mipam mostly echoes Jikmé Wangpo's exoteric understanding in the *Lamp* regarding the lunatic son and the elderly mother. However, he uses some nomenclature not found in the Geluk system. For example, he identifies the mother with concepts of the Great Middle Way, the union, and the natural state of all phenomena (*chos thams cad kyi gnas lugs zung 'jug dbu ma chen po*). He further explains the Great Middle Way to be the gnosis of the union of appearance and emptiness (*snang stong zung 'jug gi ye shes*), which is also synonymous to different terms such as Mahāmudrā (*phyag chen*) and Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*). Mipam's Great Middle Way, however, is quite problematic for the Gelukpas, who do not accept his view of the Great Middle Way as leading to a superior type of gnosis that is beyond the scope of one's mind.[204] In addition to equating the mother to emptiness, Mipam also equates it with a cognizant quality, namely "truly authentic cognition" (*yang dag pa'i tshad mar gyur pa*), that is consistent with "the valid cognition that analyzes the true ultimate" (*don dam rnam grangs ma yin pa dpyod byed pa'i tshad ma*), one of the four types of valid cognitions in his unique interpretation of Buddhist epistemology (*pramāṇa*).[205] Mipam's theory of the four types of valid cognition

[204] For Mipam Gyatso's understanding of the Great Middle Way, see Karma Phuntsho 2005: 9 and 158-159.

[205] The Sanskrit term *pramāṇabhūta* found in Dignāga's *Compendium of Valid Cognition (Pramāṇa-samuccaya)* was translated into Tibetan as *tshad mar gyur pa* which is explained an epithet of the Buddha. Accordingly, the term is widely discussed in the Geluk epistemological

terminologically does not accord with the Geluk explanations of valid cognition nor with the Geluk doctrine of emptiness. Moreover, Mipam also interprets the elderly mother as "the primordially innate state free from amalgamation and separation" (*gdod nas rang dang lhan cig 'du bral med pa*) and as the "original state of all phenomena" (*chos thams cad kyi gshis lugs*).

Furthermore, in his *Concise*, Mipam understands the elderly father to refer to appearances—their aspect *qua* dependently originated things (*snang ba rten 'byung gi cha*)—and dependent entities (*dngos po*) as well as dependent origination itself. These appearances, he continues, are "of the same taste as the sphere of emptiness" (*stong pa'i dbyings dang ro mnyam par mthong ba'i snang ba*). As for the big brother, he equates it to method, the apparent aspect, and the facet of dependent origination as well as the mere dependent origination that is, although intrinsically empty, not seen as unified with emptiness (*don gyis stong yang stong pa dang zung du zhugs par ma mthong ba'i rten 'byung tsam*). For Mipam, the mother's face—the natural state of form devoid of elaborations—is neither identical with nor other than the conventional phenomenal entity (*chos*

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studies referring to an individual, i.e., the Buddha, who possesses the quality of valid cognition, as opposed to to the impersonal cognition itself. When Mipam wrote an annotated commentary to the *Pramāṇa-samuccaya*, he similarly parsed the term as such. Mi pham rgya mtsho 1984–1993d. In the same text, Mipam also mentioned the term "*yang dag pa'i tshad ma*" as well as the similar term "*yang dag pa'i shes pa*" that could be understood referring to fundamental gnosis. Mipam categorizes valid cognition into four types: two for conventional truth and two for the ultimate truth. The two valid cognitions for the conventional truth are confined perception and pure vision. The remaining two are the valid cognition of the ultimate in name only and of the true ultimate. For the details of Mipam's theory of fourfold valid cognition, see, for example, Duckworth 2011: 76-79. And for Do-ngak Tenpé Nyima's exposition of it, see Lipman 1992: 27-32.

can kun rdzob). When appearing in the big brother's mirror to be reflections of all phenomena, it manifests as innately devoid of any nature. Thinking that this implies that all phenomena are the bases of negation, the foolish completely negate them and focus on their absences. Mipam states that such people are to be pitied.

In the *Song*, Changkya upholds the Geluk view while criticizing other Tibetan interpretations of emptiness, including those of Nyingmapas. Mipam does not drastically depart from Changkya's criticisms on the views of the other non-Geluk orders. However, as a strong proponent of Nyingma he had an obligation to defend this view, on the one hand, and to clearly distinguish it from that of the Geluk view, on the other. In doing so, Mipam did not attempt to critique Tsongkhapa's view; instead, he accuses certain Geluk thinkers to have strayed from Tsongkhapa's final interpretation. In particular, Mipam faults the famous Gungtang Rinpoché and other Gelukpas for not being able to understand Tsongkhapa correctly when they explained the nonconceptual understanding of emptiness. According to Mipam, these scholars merely understood appearances as empty because they were dependently arisen, and they explained the mere ascertainment of dependent origination based on appearances' empty nature. Mipam suggests that, by contrast, Tsongkhapa's final and definitive view corresponds to the Great Middle Way, which in return accords with Dzogchen and with what Changkya taught in the *Song*. For an easy chart reference to

compare the commentarial interpretations of the metaphors in the allegory, see Figure 1 as following.

The metaphors in the *Song*	**The Geluk exoteric interpretation of the *Lamp***	**The Geluk esoteric interpretation of the *Sun***	**The Nyingma interpretation of the *Concise***
the elderly mother (*a ma*/ *ma rgan*)	• the nature of the mind (*sems kyi chos nyid*), • emptiness (*stong pa nyid*), • natural emptiness (*rang bzhin gyi stong pa nyid*), • the permanently changeless state (*dus rtag du 'gyur pa med pa*), • the fact that ultimately there is nothing real (*don dam par cir yang ma grub pa*), • the inexpressible (*brjod med*), • the emptiness of own-nature (*rang bzhin gyis stong pa nyid*), • the ineffable (*brjod pa dang bral ba*), • the buddha-nature (*bde*	• luminosity of the mother (*ma'i 'od gsal*), • the very subtle mind (*shin tu phra ba'i sems*), • the extremely subtle mind-wind (*shin tu phra ba'i rlung sems*), • the dharma body during the time of the ground (*gzhi dus kyi chos sku*), • natural emptiness (*rang bzhin stong pa nyid*), • freedom from all proliferations (*spros pa mtha' dag bral ba*), • the gnosis of blissful emptiness (*bde stong gi ye shes*), • the fact that nothing exists ultimately (*don dam par cir yang ma grub pa*),	• the natural state of all phenomena—the union—the Great Middle Way (*chos thams cad kyi gnas lugs zung 'jug dbu ma chen po*), • emptiness—free from proliferations—the kind one who liberate beings from samsara (*stong nyid spros bral 'khor ba las skyobs pa'i drin can*), • the primordially innate state free from amalgamation and separation (*gdod nas rang dang lhan cig 'du bral med pa*), • truly authentic cognition" (*yang dag pa'i tshad mar gyur pa*),

	gshegs snying po)	• the *luminous* dharma body (*'od gsal chos sku*), • the inexpressible (*brjod med*), • emptiness (*stong pa nyid*), • luminous emptiness (*'od gsal stong pa nyid*), • like the form of a great white elephant (*glang chen thal kar gyi gzugs dang 'dra ba*)	• empty by nature (*rang bzhin gyis stong pa*), • emptiness (*stong pa nyid*), • the inexpressible (*brjod du med pa*), • the sphere of emptiness (*stong pa nyid kyi dbyings*), • non-deceitful emptiness (*stong nyid bslu ba med pa*), • emptiness that is free from proliferations (*spros bral stong pa nyid*), • original state of all phenomena (*chos thams cad kyi gshis lugs*), • unapprehendable emptiness that is unborn and free from all expressions (*skye ba med cing brjod pa thams cad dang bral ba'i dmigs med stong pa nyid*)
the mother's smiling mask (*a ma'i 'dzum bag*) – various dualities	• the variety of dependently arisen	• the aspect of an external object and the apparent	• various phenomena including

	phenomena, including external objects and internal subjects (*phyi gzung ba dang nang 'dzin pas bsdus pa'i rten 'brel sna tshogs pa*)	aspect of the internal mind that is observing the object—regardless of their quality being pure or impure (*phyi gzung 178ac he gyi rnam pa dang nang 'dzin pa sems kyi snang cha dag ma dag kun*) • manifestations of the extremely subtle mind-wind (*shin tu phra ba'i rlung sems kyi rnam 'gyur*)	external objects and internal subjects (*phyi gzung ba dang nang 'dzin pas bsdus pa'i chos sna tshogs*)
the mother's lies (*a ma'i rdzun tshig*) – the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth	• birth and death due to karma and mental afflictions and various transformations such as those of happiness and suffering (*las nyon gyi dbang gi skye ba dang 'chi 'pho ba dang bde sdug 'gyur ba sogs sna tshogs pa*)	• the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth as well as various experiences of happiness and suffering that are not naturally real in the mind-wind itself (*skye 'chi 'pho 'gyur bde sdug sna tshogs—rlung sems kho rang gi rang bzhin la ma grub kyang snang tsam du ston pa'i rdzun pa*)	• all births, deaths, and temporal rebirths of beings (*gang zag skye 'chi dang dus kyi 'pho 'gyur thams cad*)
the lunatic son (*bu chung smyon pa*)	• the mind of the seeker, seeking the view (*lta*	• the *gross* mind that is contaminated by	• the mind of the seeker, seeking the view (*lta*

	ba 'tshol mkhan gyi sems)	mental afflictions (*nyon mongs pas bslad pa'i sems rags pa*)	*ba 'tshol mkhan gyi sems*)
the big brother (*jo jo*)	• the reasoning of dependent origination (*rten 'byung gi gtan tshigs*), • the correct decision to pursue virtue and abandon evil (*dkar nag gi las la spang blangs tshul bzhin du byas pa*)	• dependent origination (*rten 'byung*), • the conventional method aspect (*kun rdzob thabs kyi cha*), • the accumulation of merit (*bsod nams kyi tshogs*),	• the method, apparent aspect, the facet of dependent origination (*thabs snang cha rten 'byung gi phyogs*), • dependent origination (*rten 'byung*), • all phenomena that are dependently originated (*rten 'byung gi chos thams cad*) • the mere dependent origination that is, although intrinsically empty, not seen as unified with emptiness (*don gyis stong yang stong pa dang zung du zhugs par ma mthong ba'i rten 'byung tsham*)
the big brother's mirror (*jo jo rten 'byung gi me long*)	• the inference that relies on the reasoning of	• the illusory body (*sgyu ma'i lus*)	• establishing of all phenomena as reflections (*chos*

	dependent origination (*rten 'byung gi gtan tshigs la brten pa'i rjes dpag*)		*thams cad me long gi gzugs su bkod pa*)
the elderly father (*pha rgan*)	• the basis of emptiness, the thing that possesses the quality of being empty (*stong pa nyid kyi stong gzhi chos can*), • dependent origination (*rten 'brel*),	• the gnosis of great bliss (*bde ba chen po'i ye shes*)	• the appearances—their aspect *qua* dependently originated things (*snang ba rten 'byung gi cha*), • the entity of dependent origination (*rten 'byung gi dngos po*), • dependent origination (*rten 'byung*), • the appearance which is seen as the same taste as the sphere of emptiness (*stong pa'i dbyings dang ro mnyam par mthong ba'i snang ba*), • non-deceptive dependent origination (*pha rten 'byung bslu ba med pa*)
the phrase "E ma ho!"	• (no comment)	• *e* – method (*thabs*),	• (no comment)

		• *e* – great bliss (*bde ba chen po*), • *e* – the three gates to liberation (*rnam thar sgo gsum*), • *e* – the gnosis of great bliss (*bde ba chen po'i ye shes*); • *ma* – wisdom (*ye shes*), • *ma* – emptiness (*stong nyid*); • *ho* – union of the two (*zung 'jug*)	

Figure 1:
Chart Comparing the Commentarial Interpretations of the Metaphors in the Allegory

Conclusion

We have concisely examined here three existing commentaries to the *Song*, selected because they represent radically different interpretations: Geluk exoteric, Geluk esoteric, and Nyingma. The first two commentaries by Jikmé Wangpo and Tenpa Rapgyé are especially important to our analysis because they form the basis for the subsequent intra-Geluk polemics that is at the center of this study. The details of that polemic are elaborated in the following chapter.

The historical accounts suggest that attentions, inspirations, and devotions as well as criticisms by the contemporaries of the author merged soon after the *Song*'s composition. Eventually, the alternative Geluk interpretations of the

Song articulated in the *Lamp* and the *Sun* caused a long-lasting controversy among Gelukpas, each with its different interpretation of Changkya's allegory. The *Sun*, perhaps unintentionally, initiated the dispute with its quite radical and exceptional unpacking of the allegory in terms of tantric categories, and its controversial insertion of the phrase "E ma ho!" Apparently oblivious to the intra-Geluk polemics swerving around Chankya's text, the famous Nyingma adherent Ju Mipam wrote his commentary to the *Song* in which he accused *some* Gelukpas—albeit not the commentators or the later polemicists whose works are the focus of the present study—to have diverged from Tsongkhapa's explanation of Madhyamaka.

The three commentaries demonstrate how varying interpretations developed from a single religious text in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Tibet. The greater the number of people who consider a root text authoritative, the more alternative interpretations impact communities. Occupying a unique and high position in the Qing Empire, and a close acquaintance of the mighty Qianlong Emperor, Changkya, one of the finest scholars of his generation, was regarded as no less than the Dalai and Paṇchen Lamas in the eighteenth-century Geluk world. His works were therefore undoubtedly recognized as highly authoritative, so "correctly" interpreting his intention may have been as important to some scholars as correctly interpreting Tsongkhapa's. This is a high standard, for many Geluk scholars have treated Tsongkhapa's works not in any way inferior

to the Buddhist scriptures or to their Indian commentaries.[206] This phenomenon is certainly not unique to Tsongkhapa's works nor to the Geluk adherents in Tibetan Buddhism.

Though not scriptures in a literal sense, many of Tsongkhapa's works have generated a large commentarial and sub-commentarial literature akin to the corpus of scriptural exegesis found in many world religions. Thus, in a functional sense, Tsongkhapa's works, supplemented by those of his close disciples, could be seen as the authoritative *scriptures* of the Geluk order. Similarly, because of Changkya's authoritative position and because of the originality of the *Song* and the possibility of its being interpreted in very different (even cross-sectarian) ways, Changkya's text also served the commentators as a *de facto* scripture of sorts. As such, it is not surprising that it became a lens through which to refract the views of some of the major Tibetan Buddhist schools in the eighteenth century.

[206] A clear example of this is the publication of the Mongolian translation of the Tengyur collection, which in addition to containing the 226 volumes of the translations of Indian texts, includes translations of the complete collected works of Tsongkhapa in twenty volumes and of the five-volume collected works of Changkya Ngawang Lobsang Chöden, who was also an imperial preceptor in the Manchu court. Organized by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé et al with the sponsorship of the Qianlong Emperor, this expanded Tengyur was published in Beijing between 1742 and 1749.

Chapter Five: The Polemics

I. Introduction to the Texts That Carried Out the Polemics

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tenpa Rapgyé gave an esoteric spin to his exegesis of the *Song*, deliberately distancing himself from Jikmé Wangpo's exoteric commentary. In doing so, he did not extensively attack Jikmé Wangpo polemically, except on two occasions over minor points. In the first instance, in his *Sun*, Tenpa Rapgyé explains that the actual intended meaning of the *Song* should be found in the Buddhist esoteric system, which is believed to be for the few advanced practitioners who have the highest intellectual and karmic propensities, whereas Jikmé Wangpo's commentary, he claimed, exclusively accords the Buddhist exoteric system, the teachings for the general public. By making this distinction, Tenpa Rapgyé may have implied that his exegesis was more profound and more definitive than Jikmé Wangpo's exoteric interpretation. Second, he simply echoed Changkya's assessment of Jikmé Wangpo's explanation on the origin of the private-explanation tradition of the Sakya order. This notion that Tenpa Rapgyé's exegesis is superior to Jikmé Wangpo's interpretation and that he corrected Jikmé Wangpo's explanation of Sakya tradition was certainly unacceptable to the latter's students.

Initial textual responses to Tenpa Rapgyé's *Sun* emerged in the form of several complete works written by monks at Jikmé Wangpo's seat, Labrang Monastery, instigating a long polemic. Unfortunately, those initial polemical

responses have yet to be found—and probably never will—and we do not know their authorship, as they were reportedly written pseudonymously. Although the subsequent Khalkha Mongol polemicist Ngawang Khedrup accused his opponent Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen of being the author of at least one of those texts, the latter straightforwardly rejected the accusation in his reply. In any case, some of the passages and references to the main arguments of those works are either directly quoted or paraphrased in later polemical works by Ngawang Khedrup, Belmang Könchok Gyeltsen, and their Inner Mongolian counterpart Lobsang Tseten. Based upon their reports, we can reconstruct a number of their main points, both offensive (critiques of the *Sun*)—and defensive (vindication of Tenpa Rabgyé's interpretation). For an easy reference to the relationships of the main texts studied in this dissertation, one can consult the graphic (Figure 2) found later in this chapter (pg. 206).

The *Fire*: Ngawang Khedrup's Defense Against the Labrang Criticisms of the *Sun*

Chronologically speaking, the first complete text available to us in these later polemical exchanges was authored by Ngawang Khedrup, and it is found in his collected works under the title, *The Fire Wheel: A Reply to the Refutation* (*Dgag lan me yi 'khrul 'khor*; henceforth, the *Fire*). From the title as well as from the context, we know that it is a response to the missing initial textual refutations from Labrang. Ngawang Khedrup says in the colophon that he takes on a

rhetorical position of humility, stating that it was not appropriate for him to write such a polemical reply to defend his teacher because Tenpa Rapgyé had many other great students who were "like the sun and the moon for the world." He further humbles himself, identifying himself Khepa, a monastic *rapjampa* (*rab 'byams pa*) of scriptures and reasoning, residing in a border land in the direction of *yakṣa* (*mtha' khob gnod sbyin phyogs*).[207] Unfortunately, the colophon does not mention a date for the text's composition. Compared to the subsequent polemical texts, the *Fire* is relatively short, consisting of only forty-one folios in the traditional *pecha* format.[208]

Concerning the motivation of its composition, Ngawang Khedrup says:

> The supreme Trichen Rinpoché [Tenpa Rapgyé] explained the *Spiritual Song on the View*, composed by Lord Changkya Yeshé Tenpé Drönmé, in accordance with the esoteric system. Spreading allegations against it, an opponent who hid his name in the *dharmadhātu* wrote a refutation. Although this entire text in all its parts did not come into my hands, I could obtain most of it. Looking at this refutation, I figured that it was generally sagacious and logically coherent, and that its writer was very knowledgeable. However, it was inappropriate for him to have examined the [esoteric] commentary based on a biased contempt, and due to this bias, to have written the refutation without careful analyses. Not only that, relying upon this refutation, many wise and foolish individuals may get agitated. It might even inflame sins in many others. Moreover, since it is the Buddha's intention that

[207] The Tibetan word "Khepa" (*mkhas pa*) can be rendered as "a scholar" or "a wise one" or "a pundit." However, here, it is simply a reference to a shortened version (*ming zur*) of Ngawang Khedrup's personal name. The direction yakṣa is an epithet of the north.

[208] The work is found in the *ca* (5) volume of the original xylographic printing of Ngawang Khedrup's collected works published in Ih Hüree in the late nineteenth century. A new facsimiled edition of the collected works, which I used in this dissertation, was also published in Leh, India in 1972-1974. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972–1974b. According to the library catalog of the original xylography, the dimension of the folios is 60.2x10.0 cm. and the writing dimension is 50.0x6.5 cm. Sharav, Choimaa (ed.) 2013: 45.

one should cherish the guru's teachings, I'll respond to this refutation,
without being discouraged for the lack of good poetic literary adornments.[209]

In addition to the *Fire*, there seems to have been at least another complete textual reply to the unfound initial refutations. Not only are we also missing this text, but also the information about its authorship is not very clear to us. However, from the texts available to us, we can glean that text was titled *Meteoric Iron Thunderbolt* (*Gnam lcags thog mda'*; henceforth, the *Meteoric Iron*) or *Meteoric Iron Wheel* (*Gnam lcags 'khor lo*) and authored by a geshé called Mati who was from a place called U.[210] We will have a bit more to say about this below.

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[209] *rje lcang skya ye shes bstan pa'i sgron mes mdzad pa'i lta ba'i gsung mgur de nyid/ khri chen rin po che mchog nas sngags lugs su bkral ba la/ rang ming chos dbyings su sbas pa'i rgol ba zhig gis dgag tshig ngan smras kyi phreng ba spel ba dang bcas bris 'dug pa 'go 'jug tshad ma zhig lag tu ma 'byor kyang dgag tshig phal cher byung 'dug pas/ de la bltas tshe spyir na dgag tshig de rig pa rno la phul mtshams kyang 'brel chags shing smra ba po'ang mang du thos pa yin pa'i tshod du yod lags kyang dam pa'i gsung la rang mi 'dod pa rgyu mtshan du byas te brtag pa byas kyin byas rkyen dgag tshig gya tshom du byed pa mi rigs par ma zad/ de la brten nas mkhas blun mang po 'khrugs shing gzhan mang po'i sdig rgyan du'ang 'gyur la rang yang bla ma'i gsung la gces spras byed pa rgyal ba'i dgongs pa yin pas tshigs bcad dang gos dman pa la ma zhum par lan btab par bya'o/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972-1974b: 1b-2a (424-425).

[210] Belmang gives the title of this text as the *Meteoric Iron Thunderbolt* (Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 2b), but Lobsang Tseten calls it the *Meteoric Iron Wheel* (Blo bzang tshe brtan 2011: 1). Just like Ngawang Khedrup spoke of himself in his *Fire* as just "Khepa," using only a shortened portion of his full name, the author of the *Meteoric Iron Thunderbolt* (or the *Meteoric Iron Wheel*) may have also used a shortened portion of his name, but in this case rendered in Sanskrit. Now *mati* in Sanskrit is equivalent with the Tibetan term "lodrö" (*blo gros*), so the author's full name may have included "Lodrö," or even "Lobsang" (*blo bzang*) which corresponds to Sumati in Sanskrit. However, since Lodrö and Lobsang are two of the most common names among Tibetans and Mongolians alike, it does not help much in identifying the author. As for the place name U (simply *u* in Tibetan), it should not be mistaken with the central Tibet Ü (*dbus*). U also seems to be an abbreviated form of a longer name. I will provide my hypothesis about this name later in this chapter.

The *Ocean*: Belmang's Rebuttal Against the *Sun*, the *Fire*, and the *Meteoric Iron*

In response to the *Fire,* Belmang composed his *Enjoyable Ocean of Compassion Turning into Nectar: Sincere Words That Come from the Thick Clouds of an Ordinary Person's Impartial Mind* (*Gyi na ba zhig gi gzu bo'i blo'i sprin rum las 'ong ba'i bden gtam bdud rtsir 'khyil ba'i snying rje'i rol mtsho*; henceforth, the *Ocean*).[211] As a polemical reply to the *Fire*, the *Ocean*'s rebuttal begins with its title, as an ocean is obviously a huge supply to overcome fire. Yet, as the title also suggests, this fire-defeating "ocean" is not viewed agonistically, but rather as an ocean of compassion. In the text's colophon, Belmang identifies himself as an ordinary minor monk, or a bande (*ban chung*). He adds that he composed the text by relying on the kindness of his teacher Jikmé Wangpo and the latter's other great students, who are "like the sun and the moon." Belmang's analogy between his teacher and his teacher's students and celestial objects may not be coincidental. Indeed, his praise to Jikmé Wangpo and his students on this particular occasion cannot but be read as though a response to Ngawang Khedrup's eulogy to Tenpa Rapgyé's students mentioned above. Similarly, in the *Fire*'s colophon, Ngawang Khedrup identifies his teacher Tenpa Rapgyé as the Throne-holder Vajradhara. Belmang ups the ante, and calls his teacher in the

[211] The text is located in the *cha* (6) volume of Belmang's collected works originally published at the printing house of Amchok Monastery (Ganden Chönkhorling), a branch monastery of Labrang. The collected works were republished in New Delhi, India in 1974; Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c. I used this edition in my study. Later in 2018, a new edition of the collection was published in nine volumes in Qinghai, China, and in this collection, the text is found in the seventh volume. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 2018.

Ocean's colophon, "the definitively great omniscient Jamyang Zhepa paṇḍita Jikmé Wangpo, the glorious sovereign lord of all the buddha families." Moreover, as described in a previous chapter, Belmang never passed up an opportunity to extol Labrang's reputation as a center of Buddhism. Thus, unlike Ngawang Khedrup who figuratively labeled Ih Hüree a border land, Belmang seems to have once more taken this opportunity to praise Labrang's status by saying that he had "listened to the melodic sounds of scriptures and reasoning that came from the spiritual masters—both exoteric and esoteric teachings as well as all the traditional sciences (*rigs gnas*)—as many as a herd of swans gathered in a lotus lake." Since he principally studied at Labrang, he is certainly refering to Labrang as a community of masters and scholars.

Although the colophon contains some useful information, including the report that Geshé Könchok Jampa (Dkon mchog byams pa, d.u.) was the scribe of the text, it does not contain any information about the date of composition. Nevertheless, Belmang subsequently composed a supplementary text to his *Ocean*, titled *An Appendix to the Enjoyable Ocean of Compassion in the Form of Sincere Words: A Pauper's Cry Cast Afar, a Purifying Spritz of Nectar: A Concise Statement Distinguishing Sakya, Nyingma, Kagyü, and so forth* (*Bden gtam rnying rje'i rol mtsho las zur du phyung ba sa rnying bka' brgyud sogs kyi khyad par mgo smos tsam mu to'i rgyangs 'bod kyi tshul du bya gtong snyan sgron*

bdud rtsi'i bsang gtor; henceforth, the *Appendix*).[212] The colophon of the *Appendix* informs us that Belmang composed the text "at the age of seventy on an auspicious day during the holy day of Great Miracles (*cho 'phrul dus chen*) in the Water Snake Year (1833)."[213] Assuming that Belmang authored this text as a supplement or appendix to the *Ocean*, he must have composed it not long after the *Ocean*'s composition. In any case, we can definitively say that the *Ocean* was written no later than 1833. If we further assume that the *Fire* was written a few years prior to the *Ocean*, Ngawang Khedrup must have written it when he was the vice-abbot of Ih Hüree, a position he held from 1822 to 1834.

In the prologue of the *Ocean*, Belmang paints a clear picture of how this polemical controversy began in the first place. He explains that Tenpa Rapgyé had composed the esoteric commentary as if an exegetical correction to Jikmé Wangpo's exoteric commentary on the final "true meaning" (*don dngos*) of the *Song*. Reacting to Tenpa Rapgyé's commentary, anonymous students in the lower classes of Labrang's philosophy college started making both explicit refutations and indirect disapproving innuendos of certain points, implying that Tenpa Rapgyé had not understood the *Song*'s intended meaning. These initially existed as four or five distinct pamphlets, and some students then added more

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[212] The text is located in the *cha* (6) volume of Belmang's collected works of the Amchok Monastery edition and in the nineth volume of the new Qinghai 2018 edition.

[213] *… rang lo bdun cu pa chu sbrul lo cho 'phrul dus chen khyad par can gyi nyin*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974b: 63b. The holidays of great miracles were celebrated as a festival for the memory of the Buddha's miraculous deeds in the first half of the first spring month of the lunar calendar, so the *Appendix* was completed within few days after the lunar new-year day of 1833.

annotations to them. Compiling many of those pamphlets and notes, a certain scribe with the title of rapjampa called Puṇyaichen (PuNyai can) penned a text. Some students of Tenpa Rapgyé then heard about it and wrote on this controversy. Yet, Belmang continues, because of the distance between the monasteries and with the passage of time, he did not find any of those earlier works except for one that was short and very fragmented. Subsequently, he received two complete texts that replied to the refutations: the *Fire* by "Khepa," who hailed from the direction of yakṣa (the north), and the *Meteoric Iron* by "Mati" from U. Furthermore, in the *Ocean*, Belmang also mentions and refutes another text, perhaps another reply to the original refutations, reportedly composed by a certain monk bearing the *kabchupa* (*dka' bcu pa*) title, but any information about this text or its author has not been found.

Concerning the subject matter of his *Ocean*, Belmang says, "Here, I will present my evaluations of the validity [of the opponents' arguments] with an impartial outlook."[214] With the *Ocean*, Belmang ultimately not only polemicized against his fellow polemicists—Khepa, Mati, and others—but also refuted Tenpa Rapgyé's esoteric commentary and even criticized some of the points made in the early Labrang refutations of the esoteric commentary. He further states that he corrected other potential misunderstandings of his opponents, including the Labrang critics who defended the *Sun*. Though he frequently insults his

[214] *'dir de rnams 'thad mi 'thad kyi rnam gzhag gzu bo'i blos dgod par bya'o*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 2b (4).

opponents in his *Ocean*, a common polemical technique, he spares Tenpa Rapgyé, whom he refers to as Vajradhara (*rdo rje 'chang*), and even defends some of his points against the original Labrang critics.

The *Ocean* is the key to understanding the actual debate because it represents only one polarized side in this polemical exchange. According to Ngawang Khedrup, xylographs of the *Ocean* were distributed soon after its composition, and prior to the subsequent replies to it.[215] The text is quite lengthy in size—perhaps the longest of the polemical works discussed in this dissertation—having 108 folios in Labrang's traditional long *pecha* format. Among the many major and supplementary debates recorded in all of those works, we will focus on one selected major debate along with few minor disputes that are depicted in the *Ocean* later in this chapter.

In his attempt to defend Jikmé Wangpo, Belmang argues that explaining Buddhist exoteric teachings from an esoteric perspective would result in misunderstandings regarding the diverse doctrines of the great and lesser vehicles. For example, Belmang continues, suppose one gives Buddhist foundational teachings an esoteric spin; it would then follow that the profound tantric teachings were also taught as part of the foundational doctrine of the Four Noble Truths during the first turning of the Wheel of Dharma.[216] This

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[215] Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 2b.

[216] *gzhung 'di sngags dang sbyar ba kho nas je za btu 'gro na/ bden bzhi'i chos 'khor gyi sdug bsngal shes par bya/ kun 'byung spang bar bya/ zhes sogs kyi don yang gzhi dus kyi 'chi ba 'od gsal gyi shin tu phra ba gnyud ma'i sems de nyid las snang mched thob gsum lugs bzlog tu shar te skye ba blangs pa'i nyer len gyi phun po 'di nis dug bsngal bden pa'i gtso bo dang/ de gang las 'byung ba'i gzhi kun 'byung gi gtso bo yang rin chen phren bar bden 'dzin gyi ma rig pa'i dbang*

implies that the truth of suffering would have to be explained in terms of the tantric theories of death, involving three experiences—called appearance, increase, and attainment—and in terms of the tantric theory of rebirth, in which new "perpetuating aggregates" (Skt. *upādāna skandha*; Tib. *nyer len gyi phung po*) are acquired in tandem with those same three experiences but now in reverse order (*snang mched thob gsum lugs bzlog tu shar te skye ba blangs pa*). Suffering has two fundamental sources (*kun 'byung gi gtso bo*), according to the tantras— ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*; Tib. *ma rig pa*), which conceptualizes things as having true existence, and the wind energy of karma (Skt. *karmaprāṇa*; Tib. *las rlung*)—as taught respectively in Nāgārjuna's *Jewel Garland* (*Ratnāvalī*) and in the sublime tantras such as the *Prophecy of Realization* (*Sandhivyākaraṇa*) and the *Vajra Garland* (*Vajramālā*). Moreover, according to the tantras, the final truth of cessation (*'gog bden mthar thug pa*), freedom from the twofold source of suffering, is nothing but the twofold pure expanse of Vajradhara's mind in union (*zung 'jug rdo rje 'chang chen po'i thugs la mnga' ba'i dbyings dag pa gnyis ldan*). The principal truth of path (*lam bden gyi gtso bo*) that leads to that cessation is the actual luminosity of the practitioner (*slob pa mtha'i don gyi 'og gsal*).

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gis lam gsum du 'khor tshul gsungs pa dang/ dgongs pa lung ston/ bshad rgyud rdo rje phreng pa sogs su rlung gi dbang gis lam gsum du 'khor tshul gsungs pa 'dra bas gsal sgron bzhin 'khor ba'i gzhi rtsa mthar thug la thog ma'i rig pa dang las rlung gnyis su yod cing/ de gnyis zad par spangs pa'i 'gog bden mthar thug pa zung 'jug rdo rje 'chang chen po'i thugs la mnga' ba'i dbyings dag pa gnyis ldan de kho na dang de thob byed lam bden gyi gtso bo slob pa mtha'i don gyi 'od gsal sogs la 'jog dgos pas/ de ltar byas nab den bzhi'i chos 'khor gyis kyang sngags kyi zab gnad thabs cad ston pas ches brling du 'gro ba ltar snang na yang/ sangs rgyas rang nyid kyi dgongs pa min tshe theg pa che chung gi sde snod dkrug par 'gro nyen che ste/. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 33a-33b (65-66).

Appealing to the fixed doctrinal hierarchies, Belmang is concerned that explaining the Four Noble Truths from a tantric perspective violates the hermeneutical principle that teachings should be interpreted according to the audience for whom they were originally intended. So, he explains, though it may sound "well-established," the Buddha did not teach in this way, so there is a great risk to damage the systematic teachings of the Buddhist vehicles. He further supports his point with a famous passage from the *Treatise on the Sublime Continuum (Uttaratantra Śāstra)*:

> There is no one in this world wiser than the Victor;
> […]
> Thus, do not mix any *sūtra* that was established by the Sage, with another!
> [Otherwise,] it will destroy the Muni's system and will harm the holy Dharma.[217]

In addition to using logic and textual evidence, Belmang also frequently insults his opponents, Ngawang Khedrup and Mati. For example, he says,

> Using the many purported typos both in the writings of your own side and in other teachers' works as an excuse (*khag bzhag*), you made many corrections to them. You then had the works carved into new blocks. Is this so as to include them in your collected works and count them [as your own composition]? Like the custom for the Mongol pettifoggers, are you making the exagerrated claim that a mirage is the ocean? You two have written almost two hundred folios under the name "reply to the refutation," but most

[217] *gang zhig rgyal las ches mkhas 'jig rten 'di na 'ga' yang yod min te/ ma lus de nyid mchog ni tshul bzhing kun mkhyen gyis mkhyen gzhan min pa/ de phyir drang srong rang nyid kyis gzhag mdo sde gang yin de ma dkrug/ thub tshul bshig phyir de yang dam chos la ni gnod pa byed par 'gyur/.* Maitreya (Byams pa). *Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra-ratnagotra-vibhāga*, *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D4024, sems tsam, *phi*, fol. 72b.6. Belmang may have intentionally skipped the second line of this stanza to focus on the remaining lines that directly support his point. The translation is mine, but for a full translation of the *Treatise on the Sublime Continuum* along with a traditional commentary, see, for example, Arya Maitreya 2000.

of your writings are clearly based on the textual refutations of the early [Labrang] analyses which had criticized the *Sun*.[218]

Invectives of this kind are typical of Belmang's polemical style. Belmang here accuses his opponents of plagiarimsm. Under the pretense of correcting the errors and typos of others' works, their real goal, he implies, was to add another work to their oeuvre. Given that plagiarism was not an issue in pre-modern Tibet and that writers freely copied others' works to support or supplement their own positions, this is a strange charge against one's polemical opponents. It is more likely another example of Belmang's insults, as if to say that his opponents' works, though lengthy in size, have nothing new to offer and therefore not worthy of detailed discussions.

Another interesting insult Belmang directs at his opponents involves sarcasm referencing the "Mongolness" of his opponents, or at leats stereotypes of Mongolness. As described in Chapter Two, the Mongol authority in Amdo had largely waned, and while the local Mongol lords had lost their power and wealth,

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[218] *khyod rang tshos bris pa dang bla ma gzhan gyi gsung la yang ma dag pa mang du yod ces yig nor la khag bzhag te bla ma'i gsung rtsom la dras rgyab nas rtsom bcos mang du byas 'dug mod/ de ltar dpar gsar du brkos nas gsung 'bum grags su 'jog rgyu yin nam/ mong gol tha ma god gyi gtugs sher ba* [*gtug bsher ba*] *'ga' zhig gi lugs srol ltar rgya mtshos dpal 'bar la gu cer le nu/ khyed rnams gnyis nas dgag lan gyi ming btags pa shog grangs nyis bgya ma long tsam bris 'dug mod/ phal cher ni gong gi dogs gcod kyi nang du 'grel ba bzhad byed la bden kha byin pa lta bu'i ma rangs pa'i tshig yod pa la gzhi blangs pa kho nar mngon sum gyis grub pa 'di lags la/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 106a-106b (211-212). Generally speaking, in his *Ocean* and other works, Belmang uses Mongolian terms as if to demonstrate his knowledge in the Mongolian language. In this passage, the Mongolian word *gu cer le nu* (güjirlen-e-üü) can be rendered as an interrogative verb "exaggerating?" in the progressive tense. Another Mongolian word *tha ma god* in this passage seems to be a corrupted form of *tamağud* (*tamağ-a-nuğud*) designating the plural noun "seals." Given that the Mongols during the Qing period used the word *tamağ-a-yin ğajar* (the place of the seal) for a local administrative unit, I interpreted it in this context as the Mongol administrative units in the vicinity of Labrang.

Labrang flourished, gaining more estates when Belmang was active. Evidently, tensions, including legal disputes, increased among the local Mongols and Amdowas. So, it is understandable to see Belmang making reference to certain lawsuits filed by some Mongols. The abundance of ethnic and cultural stereotypes he used to characterize his Mongol opponents will be discussed later in this chapter.

The *Elephant*: Ngawang Khedrup's Reply to the *Ocean*

In reply to the *Ocean*, and continuing the debate, Ngawang Khedrup wrote his second text in this particular polemical exchange. The text is titled *The Roar of the Elephant Washing Off Muddy Contaminated Water: A Further Response to the Reply to the Refutation Which Holds the Deceitful Title "Enjoyable Ocean of Compassion Turning into Nectar: The Sincere Words"* (*Bden gtam bdud rtsir 'khyil ba'i snying rje'i rol mtsho'i zob ming 'chang ba dgag lan 'dam bu'i rnyog chu brlag par byed pa'i yang lan phyogs kyi glang po'i ngar skad*; henceforth, the *Elephant*).[219] The polemical implication, of course, is that

[219] Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th cen. The *Elephant* is located in the *ca* (5) volume of Ngawang Khedrup's collected works originally published in Ih Hüree in the late nineteenth century. However, it was omitted for an unknown reason in the newer edition of the collected works published in Leh in 1972-4. Oral lore has it that the *Elephant* was actually not written by Ngawang Khedrup but was by his student Ngawang Dorjé (Ngag dbang rdo rje, 19th c.). However, while Ngawang Dorjé's contribution to its composition is possible, both the main text and the colophon suggest that the principal author was Ngawang Khdreup himself. According to the Mongolian National Library catalog, the dimension of the folios of the original printing is 60.2x10.0 cm and the writing dimension is 50.0x6.5 cm. Sharav, Choimaa (ed.) 2013: 45.

Belmang's *Ocean* was actually just dirty, muddy water that Ngawang Khedrup's "elephant" was washing off.

The colophon of the *Elephant*, unlike those of the previous two texts, contains clear information about dates. The text was written in the Tiger Month (the first spring month) of the Wooden Sheep Year (1835) of the fourteenth sexegenary when Ngawang Khedrup had already been enthroned as the abbot of Ih Hüree. Although he modestly identifies himself as before, this time he does not acknowledge his residence—i.e., Ih Hüree—as a border land. Instead, he borrows Belmang's words to praise Ih Hüree as "a great monastic learning center (*chos grwa chen po*) in the northern direction," the place where "the melodic sounds of scriptures and reasoning"—both exoteric and esoteric teachings as well as all the traditional sciences (*rigs gnas*)—were roared out by "the spiritual masters as many as a herd of swans gathered in a lotus lake." Ngawang Khedrup's proclamation about Ih Hüree as a great learning center speaks to the role that institutional competition played in the polemical exchange. In other words, it was part of the motivation for their rebuttals. Hints of this institutional competition is conspicuous in the actual debates and will be explained later in this chapter. In addition, Ngawang Khedrup mentions in the colophon that Ārya Paṇḍita Ngawang Lobsang Tenpé Gyeltsen requested him to write an instant response to the *Ocean* so as to cleanse the Buddhist teachings. Moreover, someone called Śramaṇa Prajñāsagara (perhaps Prajñāsāgara), is also

mentioned in the colophon as the scribe of the text and is praised as possessing a broad knowledge of the great authoritative texts and the traditional sciences.[220]

Ngawang Khedrup starts the *Elephant* with a detailed discussion on his polemical exchange with Belmang in a tone much more bitter than in his earlier *Fire*. He claims that he had heard the rumor that Belmang, or Ratnadhvaja as he calls him, from Labrang originally refuted Tenpa Rapgyé's esoteric commentary in the first place,[221] but that he never received this refutation. Later on, when Changlung Paṇḍita gave him a copy of that text, he found it to be a sharply worded criticism in slanderous language. Ngawang Khedrup then expresses his concern that some individuals who do not know the convention that it is possible to criticize a particular text while treating its author with great respect, have deprecated Tenpa Rapgyé. So, on the one hand, out of respect for his teacher, he felt misery; and on the other hand, to benefit such individuals and to repay his teacher's kindness, he wrote his original reply to the refutation, i.e., the *Fire*, within a short period of time, without consulting many texts, and he gave it to Changlung Paṇḍita. Subsequently, someone else saw it in Changlung Paṇḍita's possession, and based on it, he composed the *Meteoric Iron*

[220] "Śramaṇa Prajñāsagara" corresponds in Tibetan to "Dge sbyong Shes rab rgya mtsho." So, presumably a fully ordained monk called Sherap Gyatso scribed this text for Ngawang Khedrup.

[221] Ngawang Khedrup calls Belmang Ratnadhvaja throughout the text. "Ratnadhvaja" is the Sanskrit equivalent of the Tibetan "Könchok Gyaltsen" (Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan), Belmang's monastic name. Evidently, our polemicists hardly addressed their opponents by their actual given names. Instead, they used altered forms of the names—either translating them into Sanskrit (Ratnadhvaja, Mati, and so forth), or Tibetanizing the Mongolian name, as in the case of Mergenpa, or shortening it into a nickname, as in the case of Khepa—when they address the opponents.

and passed it also to Changlung. When these two textual replies reached Belmang's hands at Labrang, he wrote the *Ocean* and had blocks carved for wide distribution of the xylograph. Ngawang Khedrup informs us that he received a copy of the *Ocean* through Changlung, and upon examination, he found it to be a decent work but certainly not worth the name "Enjoyable Ocean of Compassion."

Ngawang Khedrup finds the title "Enjoyable Ocean of Compassion" rather insulting because he suspects that Belmang is belittling his two opponents—Ngawang Khedrup and Mati—as the objects of his compassion. In his bitter polemical response, Ngawang Khedrup states that there are so many mistakes in the *Ocean* that it is Belmang himself who is an actual object of compassion. Thus, he adds, "No one here becomes afraid or discouraged when they hear the name 'Enjoyable Ocean of Compassion.'"[222]

Concerning the authorship of the original refutations that emerged from Labrang, Ngawang Khedrup alleges Belmang to be the author of the initial criticisms of Tenpa Rapgyé's esoteric commentary. He claims that not only did he directly hear this information from a certain honorable person, who was a student of Belmang himself and who would not tell lies, but also that everyone was sure that Belmang was the instigator. Then he asks Belmang why he would make up short names of four or five different individuals in his refutations. Moreover, Ngawang Khedrup sarcastically insults Labrang by asking Belmang

[222] *snying rje'i rol mtsho zer ba tsam gyis 'jigs zhum nas sdod mkhan ni 'di na med do*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 3a.

that if really four or five different individuals collectively wrote these refutations into one single text, "is there no single person who could independently compose such a refutational text at your place?"[223] He further questions Belmang with a series of offensive interrogations:

> If we take for granted that several authors, as you explained, had composed the original refutation, then why were you, an old man, obligated to write this further response, [i.e., the *Ocean*]? Did they all have died? If that is the case […], then besides you, did they not have anyone such as their student, who was able to write a further response? […As you said,] many individuals had originally written several refutations, so there should be even more [writers] now as if bees coming out from an opened honeycomb. How interesting is this that now they all need to take refuge in you alone, [when one is needed to write a response]?[224]

In the context of a polemical debate, these questions read as though Ngawang Khedrup is teasing his opponent that only Belmang, now an elderly man, had to bother himself responding to the polemical replies on behalf of the entire institution of Labrang. So, he is questioning if Labrang lacks serious scholars, apart from Belmang himself, who was then a retired abbot, to carry out this responsibility. In monastic debate, teasing during arguments—both textually and orally—was not only allowed but also common. It might even be considered a debate technique, meant to put psychological pressure on the opponent.

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[223] *khyed kyi phyogs na de 'dra thub pa'i mi gcig med pa e yin*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 3a.

[224] *khyed kyis bshad pa ltar sngar gyi dgag pa de nyid mi mang gis byas pa yin na da lta'i dgag lan de de rnams kyis ma byas par mi rgang po khyed rang la khral 'gel ba'i rgyu mtshan gang yin/ de thams cad gcig kyang ma lus par shi song ba yin nam/ gal srid de dag lnga lam du song tshar bas so zer na/ khyed rang min pa dgag lan bri nus pa de dag gi rjes 'brang 'dra med dam der ma zad sngar gyi dgag tshig de nyid mang pos dam dum re bris pas sprang po'i slong phye lta bu de byung ba yin pa la da lta thams cad kyis khyed kho na la skyabs su 'gro dgos byung ba ya mtshan che/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 3a-3b.

Whatever the case, of the polemicists considered here, Ngawang Khedrup can be considered the most "bad-mouthed."

Following those verbal insults, Ngawang Khedrup supports his position by making an interesting point regarding monastic polemics. He thinks that perhaps because the root text *Song* mentions many opposing philosophical views, this has given rise to a series of back-and-forth refutations and replies. He considers it auspicious because, he continues, this is a time in which debates on the Dharma have disappeared, having been eclipsed by debates concerning worldly matters. Therefore, Tenpa Rapgyé, foreseeing that there would be polemics about his work in the future, he, an accomplished master, seems to have intentionally composed the esoteric exegesis as a part of his infinite deeds to benefit living beings. Therefore, Ngawang Khedrup adds, "Even your [i.e., Belmang's] polemical response is something in which we [i.e., Ngawang Khedrup himself and others] should rejoice because it will serve to help all of our understandings increase."[225] He also acknowledges Belmang as a scholar, mentioning his background as a geshé who was educated at Labrang during its heyday; and that he was the chief disciple of the two great Labrang scholars of the previous generation—Jikmé Wangpo, the very author of the *Lamp*, and Gungtang Rinpoché. That being said, Ngawang Khedrup warns his opponent of what is to come:

[225] *khyed kyi dgag lan de yang rjes su yi rang gi gnas te/ rang gzhan blo 'phel ba'i yan lag tu song 'dug pa'i phyir/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 3b.

> Instead of taking such [qualities as you possess] as an excuse to sit with the palms joined [before you], I shall respond to you. Also, since it seems as though occasional rude speech has already become the natural disposition of both you and me, please forgive me if my words occasionally take a bad, insulting turn![226]

Ngawang Khedrup explains that he wrote the *Elephant* to correct errors, because even the treatises of the great *paṇḍita*s could contain errors, let alone Belmang's work, and also because he needed to answer Belmang's questions since the general scholarly tradition demanded that one should be responsible for one's own words, in this case for his treatise the *Fire*. In addition, he clarifies that Belmang addressed two different opponents in the *Ocean*, Mergenpa (*Me rgan pa*) and Matipa (*Ma ti pa*)—Ngawang Khedrup and Mati, respectively. Thus, he would reply only to the charges made against Mergenpa (i.e., Ngawang Khedrup himself) and leave the other points to Matipa's discretion.[227] Compared to his *Fire*, Ngwang Khedrup's first reply to the Labrang refutations, the *Elephant* is much longer (fifty-three folios) covering many more points in the debate. And because it is Ngawang Khedrup's follow-up work to his *Fire* and a rebuttal of Belmang's response *Ocean*, it is a crucial work for gleaning the

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[226] *'on kyang de 'dra yin pa rgyu mtshan du byas nas thal mo sbyar nas ma bsdad par lan gtab par bya'o/ de yang bar bar du tshig ngan 'dra smra ba rang gzhan gnyis ka'i gshis lta bur song 'dug pas tshig ngan shor ba byung tshe bzod par mdzod/.* Ibid. 3b-4a.

[227] Mergenpa is derived from the Mongolian word *mergen*, a skilled or learned person, corresponding to "khepa" (*mkhas pa*) in Tibetan. As already noted, Ngawang Khedrup calls himself Khepa in *Fire*. But, when addressing him, Belmang translates the name Khepa into Mongolian, adding the Tibetan nominalizing particle *pa* often to identify an agent, consequently creating the name Mergenpa for his opponent Ngawang Khedrup.

details and nuances of the debate, illustrating many of the lively polemical elements.

The *Illumination*: Lobsang Tseten's Reply to the *Ocean*

Another polemical reply to the *Ocean* was written by Lobsang Tseten, who entitled his text *A Brighter Illumination Lamp to Eliminate the Darkness of Misunderstanding: A Clarification of the Intentions of the "Commentary Sun to Make the Fortunate Lotus Blossom"* (*'Grel pa skal ldan pad+mo bzhad byed kyi dgongs pa rab tu gsal bar byed pa log rtog mun pa sel byed yang gsal sgron me*; henceforth, the *Illumination*).[228] In its colophon, Lobsang Tseten identifies himself as a student of Reting Tenpa Rapgyé and as a lazy minor bande, a monk from Jey dratsang of Sera Monastery. Guśrī Lobsang Tokmé (Gu srī Blo bzang thogs med, d.u.) is reported to be the scribe. But the colophon does not include any further information, not even a date. However, Lobsang Tseten states in the text that he would reply to Belmang's refutations on behalf of both Ngawang Khedrup and Mati for the points made against them, but that when the points of refutation are directed to only one of the two, he would respond only on behalf of Mati. This could be an implication that he was actually none other than Mati himself. Coincidentally, Lobsang Tseten's name has the portion *lo* (*blo*), which is rendered as *mati* in Sanskrit, and he is from the Üjümüčin banner of Inner Mongolia, which is a place name transliterated into Tibetan as *U ju mu chin* or

[228] Blo bzang tshe brtan 2011.

U tsu mu chin, beginning with a U. So, I suspect that the earlier *Meteoric Iron*, a reply to the original Labrang critiques of the esoteric commentary, composed by "a geshe called Mati who was from the place called U" may have been none other than Lobsang Tseten.

In the *Illumination*, Lobsang Tseten explains that he composed the work to respond to Belmang's *Ocean*. As was the custom, he humbles himself by claiming to naturally possess a poor intellect and knowledge. Although inappropriate for him to respond to the works of great scholars like Belmang, he continues, he couldn't help but noticed Belmang's *Ocean* refutes many points that were not actually made by its opponents; that it does not provide its audience with detailed explanations of its own points; that it appears to have contained many irrelevant arguments and cited unrelated confusing quotations; and that its words internally contradict themselves on many occasions. Because of these alleged faults, Lobsang Tseten wrote his extensive reply to the *Ocean*, his eighty folio *Illumination*.[229]

II. The Actual Debates Between the Polemicists

In the following pages, we discuss some of the main points in the polemical exchange to clarify how Belmang argued against Tenpa Rapgyé's *Sun*, Ngawang

[229] Although I had access only to the copy of the *Illumination* published within the collected works of Lobsang Tseten, in the modern book format, in Lhasa in 2011, it includes the folio numbers of the original text printed in the traditional *pecha* format. Unfortunately, the collected works do not include the supposed early work of him, known as being composed by Mati of U.

Khedrup's *Fire*, and Mati's *Meteoric Iron*, and in turn, how Ngawang Khedrup and Lobsang Tseten responded to Belmang with their own rebuttals. Figure 2 is an easy reference depciting the relationships between the main texts being discussed.

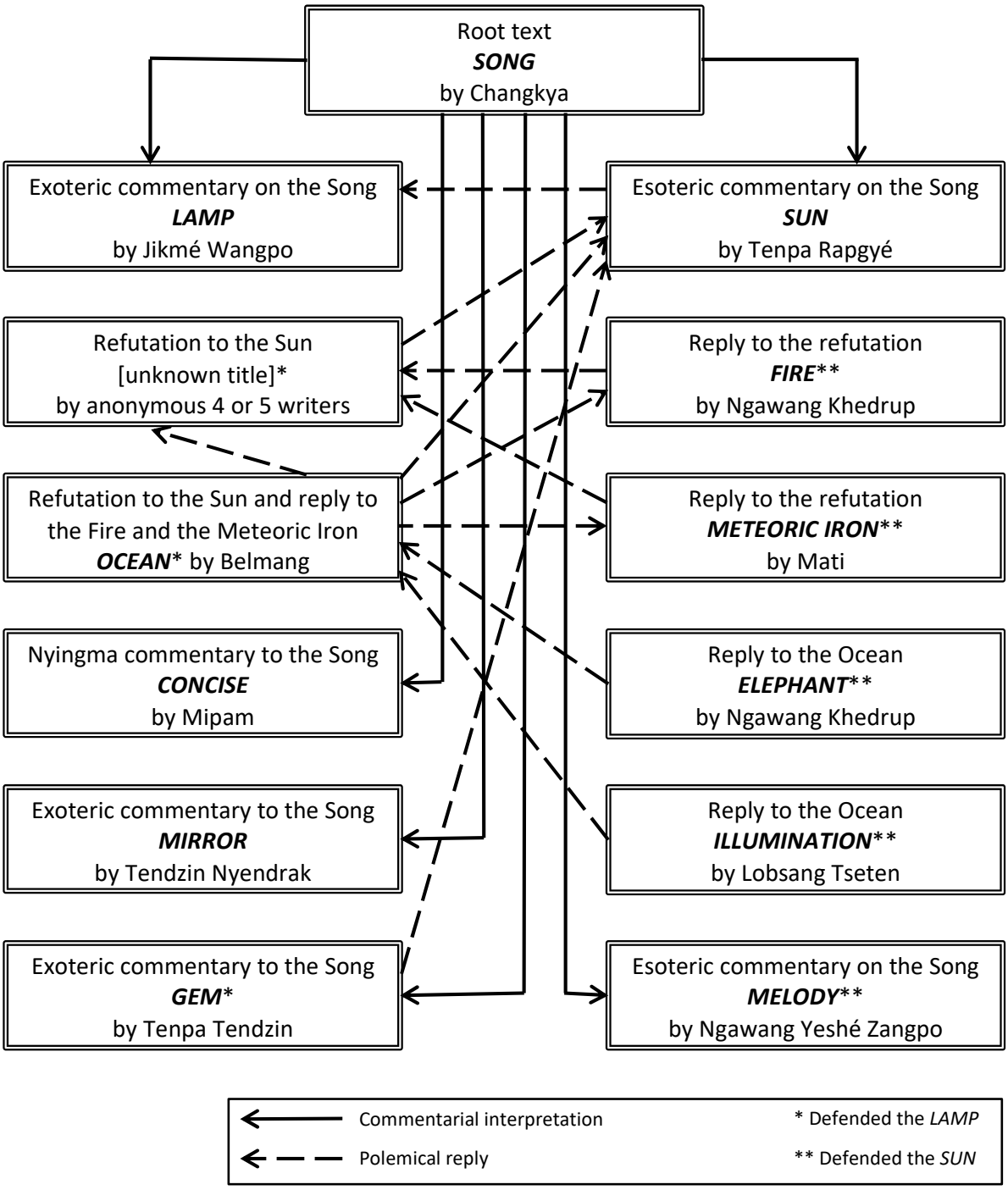


Figure 2: The relationship between the texts

The Debate on "E ma ho!"

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the two early publications of the *Song* do not contain the phrase "E ma ho!" nor does the *Lamp*, the first exegesis to the *Song*, mention anything related to this phrase. Therefore, perhaps one of the most controversial issues Tenpa Rapgyé brings up in his *Sun* is this phrase, which he not only inserted as the opening phrase of the root text, but also provides comments on it. The Tibetan phrase "E ma ho!" is an exclamation uttered as the result of a speaker's admiration or surprise and is often rendered in English as "How wonderful!" "How marvelous!" and the like.[230] The origin of this phrase, whether it is Tibetan or borrowed from another language, is unclear. Several instances of the phrase are found in the Tibetan Buddhist canon—mostly in the *Tantra* section, including the Nyingma *Tantra*s, but also in the *Vinaya* and *Sūtra* sections as well as in many *śāstra*s—mostly rendering the similar Sanskrit interjection phrase "Aho!" It is possible, however, that the Tibetan phrase "E ma ho!" derives from the infrequent Sanskrit phrase "Evaṃ aho!" In the *Sun*, Tenpa Rapgyé explains that this exclamation is the equivalent of *e-vaṃ*, a better-known word found in the prefaces of many Sanskrit *sūtra*s and *tantra*s and explained in many Indic commentaries. Indeed, the phrase "E ma ho!" for Tenpa Rapgyé symbolizes all the three types of *e-vaṃ*—the resultant *e-vaṃ* (*'bras bu'i e vaM*), the path *e-vaṃ* (*lam gyi e vaM*), and the symbolic *e-vaṃ* (*rtags kyi e vaM*), which are, respectively, the goal to be achieved (*thob bya*), the

[230] The variants of the phrase found in original Tibetan works as well in Tibetan translations are "E mao!" and simply "E ma!"

means of achieving it (*thob byed*), and the symbolic representation that elicits (*'dren byed*) the achievement, respectively. More specifically, according to the *Sun*, the "e" in "E ma ho!" symbolizes great bliss, which is the method aspect of the method-wisdom pair; the "ma" symbolizes emptiness, the wisdom aspect of the pair; and the "ho" symbolizes the union of the two aspects.

Furthermore, Tenpa Rapgyé goes on to explain that the "e" symbolizes the three gates to liberation—the source of all phenomena (*chos kun gyi 'byung gnas*)—the realization of which leads to liberation.[231] How is the "e" is connected to all phenomena? Tenpa Rapgyé says, "Since the symbolized gnosis of great bliss also generates all the positive and negative manifestations of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* as pure and impure appearance aspects, it is the source of all phenomena."[232] Accordingly, it is the gnosis of great bliss that ultimately generates all phenomena, so the "e," as a symbol of great bliss, also symbolizes all phenomena. The "ma" symbolizes wisdom-emptiness, also known as luminous wisdom. In accordance with Buddhist esoteric system, this luminous wisdom too is also the source of all phenomena, so Tenpa Rapgyé likens it to a mother who

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[231] The three gates to liberation (*trīṃi vimokṣamukhāni*, *rnam thar sgo gsum*) are emptiness (*śūnyatā*, *stong pa nyid*), aspirationlessness (*apraṇihita*, *smon pa med pa*), and signlessness (*animitta*, *mtshan ma med pa*). Although the three are interpreted differently in different Buddhist schools, each interpretation covers the different attributes of all phenomena. For example, in the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, a Yogācāra work, the three gates to liberation correspond to the three natures (*trisvabhāva*, *rang bzhin gsum*) of phenomena—aspirationlessness to the dependent nature (*paratantra*, *gzhan dbang*), attributelessness to the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna*, *yongs grub*), and emptiness to the imaginary nature (*parikalpta*, *kun brtags*).

[232] *mtshon bya bde ba chen po'i ye shes kyis kyang 'khor 'das bzang ngan gyi rnam 'gyur mtha' dag snang cha dag pa dang ma dag par bskyed pas na/ de nyid chos kun gyi 'byung gnas yin pa'i phyir/*. Blo bzang ye shes bstan pa rab rgyas 1985: 2b-3a.

gives birth to children. Regarding this seemingly controversial analogy of the gnosis of great bliss and luminous wisdom as the source of all phenomena, we will briefly examine later how our polemicists discussed this issue. Tenpa Rapgyé further explains that the "ho," which is an interjection of joy in the Tibetan language, symbolizes the union of great bliss and emptiness because when the gnosis of this union arises in the mind, all benefits are effortlessly accomplished, and it is an utterly joyful experience.

As previously mentioned, we have not located the original texts in which the early Labrang critics against Tenpa Rapgyé's explanation of "E ma ho!" put forward their critiques. Although we cannot say much about those anonymous texts, we know that they extensively criticized Tenpa Rapgyé for inserting the phrase "E ma ho!" into the root text. In the *Fire*, Ngawang Khedrup reveals some of those criticisms. For example, he describes a critic who argues that "E ma ho!" is not an esoteric concept because it is not unique to Tantra, as it is commonly found in ordinary usages as well. With an insulting tone, Ngawang Khedrup responds to this argument in a rebuttal that draws out an absurdity in the original critic's argument. Ngawang Khderup asks, "Then are terms such as 'the birth, death, and the intermediate state' or 'the sun, the moon, and the *rāhu*,' not to be used in esoteric contexts? [According to you, they would not,] because they are used in exoteric contexts as well as in mundane worldly matters. How would you respond? It was good for you to conceal your name."[233]

[233] *'o na skye shi bar do zhes pa dang/ zla ba nyi ma sgra gcan zhes pa sogs sngags kyi lam la sbyar tshul med par thal/ de ni mdo phyogs dang 'jig rten gyi gtam tshun chad la'ang byung ba'i*

He goes on to suggest two possible responses to his own argument that might be offered by his anonymous opponent to avoid a logical contradiction, and he replies to each of them. First, the opponent may say that the phrase "E ma ho!" is not found in any tantric scripture. This response, Ngawang Khedrup replies, would be either a total denial of reality or a superficiality like a monocular yak eating grass.[234] This is because there are many canonical tantric works containing this phrase, and Ngawang Khedrup quotes some of them as a support for his argument. Alternatively, the opponent might respond that even though the phrase is found in tantric scriptures, it can still not be used in esoteric contexts because the occurrences of the term found in the tantric scriptures do not explicitly refer to the esoteric path. Ngawang Khedrup replies to this response with a follow-up question: suppose a term in a tantric scripture does not refer to a tantric concept, then would the Buddha Vajradhāra—the chief tantric Buddha—teach such a useless phrase in the tantras? Following his reply, he mocks his opponent that "There is no worse omen in the world" than an

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phyir zer na lan ci yod/ ming sbas dgos pa'ang bden no/. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972-1974b: 2a (425).

The phrases "the birth, death, and the intermediate state" ("*skye shi bar do*") as well as "the sun, moon, and the *rāhu*" ("*zla ba nyi ma sgra gcan*") are frequently found in many tantric *sādhana* texts.

[234] The monocular or one-eyed yak is an analogy of an inconsistent learning habit in a Tibetan folk tale. The claim is that when a one-eyed yak is in the pasture, it eats grass scattered unevenly, here and there, because it can only see partially. Similarly, an inconsistent learning habit may result in a shallow knowledge of a topic that does not entirely understand it. Here, Ngawang Khedrup seems to be charging his opponent with being careless and skipping some details when reading texts.

affirmative answer to this question.[235] The assumption, he adds, that a term found in a tantric scripture has an exoteric or mundane meaning unrelated to the tantras is laughable (*bshad gad kyi gnas*).

Related to the discussion of "E ma ho!" and its association with esoteric teachings, the early Labrang opponents seem to have also charged the *Sun* for being in line with the heterodox Bön system, and for falling outside of the Buddhist tantras. Citing passages from various Buddhist *sādhana*s, Ngawang Khedrup links each syllable in "E ma ho!" to a seed syllable in a meditative visualization of the generation stage depicted in Buddhist tantras—*e* as the seed of the cervix or the source of phenomena (Skt. *dharmodaya*; Tib. *chos 'byung*) found in both mother and father tantras, *ma* as the seed of a form of Yamāntaka, the chief deity of the activity of increase (Skt. *pauṣṭikakarma*, Tib. *rgyas pa'i las*) in the Vajrabhairava cycle, and *ho* as the seed of Rasavajrā found in the Guhyasamāja cycle. For Ngawang Khedrup, those who do not accept the esoteric meaning of *e*, *ma*, and *ho* should be considered transgressors of the tantric vows because of their disparagement of the Unexcelled Yoga Tantras. So, he demands that the opponent not deprecate the *sādhana*s associated with the Guhyasamāja, Cakrasaṃvara, and Vajrabhairava systems, where these syllables have special meaning beyond the exoteric or mundane worldly usages.

[235] *rgyud kyi ston pa rdo rje 'chang gis don med pa zhig gsungs pa 'jig rten na ltas ngan de las che ba ci zhig yod/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972-1974b: 2b (426).

Ngawang Khedrup also defends Tenpa Rapgyé's insertion of the phrase in another discussion with the hypothetical opponents. He mocks the opponents, claiming that it is shameful to be overly enthusiastic of Tenpa Rapgyé's insertion of the phrase at the beginning of the *Song*. Then, he interestingly says, "Even if the phrase 'E ma ho!' is not explicit in the root text, there would still be no fault [to insert it there] because [the author, i.e., Changkya, evidently] had it in mind."[236] As evidence of Changkya's intention, Ngawang Khedrup explains that "E ma ho!" is an interjection of one's joy, and that the author's tremendous joy is evident in the *Song*'s opening verse. "When the author of the root text said, 'The brilliant nature of the profound dependent origination,' a tremendous joy must have arisen in his mind because he attained certainty of the union of appearance and emptiness—i.e., the union of bliss and emptiness," Ngawang Khedrup says. "Otherwise, if [the joyous interjections] 'A la la! E ma ho! How fortunate!' did not arise to him, he would not have used the word 'amazing' to characterize it."[237] To support this point, he quotes a passage from Dharmakīrti's works, "A word comes from the will to say it."[238] He also adds that Changkya's tremendous joy

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[236] *e ma ho zhes pa rtsa tshig la med kyang thugs dgongs la yod pas skyon med/*. Ibid: 3b (428).

[237] *rtsa tshig rtsom pa pos/ zab mo rten byung gi de nyid ngo mtshar/ zhes gsungs dus/ snang stong zung 'jug gam bde stong zung 'jug pa nges pa rnyed pas thugs la mchog tu dga' ba 'khrungs ste/ a la la e ma ho skal pa re bzang snyam pa thugs dgongs la med na ngo mtshar zhes ya mtshan pa'i tshig gsungs lugs med pa'i phyir/*. Ibid: 3b (428).

[238] *sgra ni brjod 'dod rjes 'brang phyir*. Dharmakīrti. *Pramāṇavārttikakārikā*, *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi tshig le'ur byas pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D4210, tshad ma *ce*, fol. 147a2; and Dharmakīrti, *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, *Tshad ma rnam par nges pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D4211, tshad ma *ce*, fol. 169a4.

was also explicitly expressed in the *Song*'s closing lines, where he used other similar exclamations such as "E ma!" "A o!" and "O na!" Concerning the appropriateness of inserting such a phrase, which is, even if supposedly implied, not explicit in the root text, Ngawang Khedrup claims that there should still not be a problem because when exegetes explain the Buddha's scriptures, they often extract broad meanings out of short phrases. For example, he continues, the phrase "Great king, form may arise" and so forth found in the *Basis of Discipline (Vinayavastu*; *'Dul ba gzhi)* can be elaborated to get at its intended meaning, which may not be explicitly stated in the text that each of the remaining five aggregates—feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness—may arise.[239] Similarly, from the term "Thus" (Skt. *evam*, Tib. *'di skad*) at the beginning of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, the entire teachings of the Sublime Yoga Tantra can be extracted.[240] Some scholars extract or infer the Buddha's qualities from the short phrase "It is like this" (Skt. *tadyathā*, Tib. *'di lta ste*), which is found in the *Heart of Wisdom Sūtra (Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*; *Shes rab snying po)*;[241]

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[239] *rgyal po chen po gzugs la skye ba yang yod/ 'jig pa yang yod de/ de'i skye ba dang/ 'jig pa yang rig par bya'o/ rgyal po chen po tshor ba dang/ 'du shes dang/ 'du byed dang/ rnam par shes pa la skye ba yang yod/ 'jig pa yang yod de/ de'i skye ba dang/ 'jig pa yang rig par bya'o*. *Vinaya-vastu*, *'Dul ba gzhi*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, Toh. No H1, 'dul ba *nga*, fol. 104a5-104a7.

[240] *Sarvatathāgata-kāya-vāk-citta-rahasyo-guhyasamāja-nāma-mahā-kalparāja*, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang ba 'dus pa zhes bya ba brtag pa'i rgyal po chen po*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, Toh. No D442, rgyud *ca*, fol. 90a1-148a6. The phrase "Thus" is found at the beginning of the tantra as the part of the typical opening phrase of many Buddhist scriptures—"Thus did I hear" (Skt. *evaṃ mayā śrūtaṃ*; Tib. *'di skad bdag gis thos pa*).

[241] *Bhagavatī-prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*, *Bcom ldan 'das ma shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i snying po*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, Toh. No D21, shes rab sna tshogs *ka*, fol. 144b6-146a3. In the *Heart of Wisdom Sūtra* the phrase "It is like this" is not translated into Tibetan as *'di lta ste*; instead, it is preserved the Sanskrit *tadyathā* as a part of a mantra (145b5).

accordingly, since there is no teaching in the three vehicles that is not included among the Buddha's qualities, commentators can infer all the Dharma teachings from that phrase.

Ngawang Khedrup then preemptively considers a potential rebuttal: the opponent could say that the phrase "Thus" is explicit in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, so one can comment on it, whereas the phrase "E ma ho!" is not explicit in the *Song*; hence, commenting on it is not only unnecessary but is also considered an invention. Ngawang Khderup then defends himself against this argument. First, the gloss of the *e-vaṃ* at the beginning of the *Sun* was necessary because Tenpa Rapgyé clearly intended to comment on the *Song* from a tantric perspective for the sake of a few selected students. Explaining the meaning of *e-vaṃ* in terms of the joyous exclamation "E ma ho!" is also relevant because the author's mind must have been filled with tremendous joy when he joyfully uttered the word "brilliant!" in the *Song*. Thus, according to Ngawang Khedrup, Tenpa Rapgyé may have intended to show how the meaning of *e-vaṃ* can be explained by means of the phrase "E ma ho!" Second, Tenpa Rapgyé's use of the phrase is not an invention; he inserted the phrase for a reason. That reason, Ngawang Khedrup claims, is to symbolize the great bliss with the syllable *e*. Relying on supporting passages from the *Guhyasamāja* cycle, he explains that the *e* letter is often used as the seed-letter of the cervix, the foremost essential source of bliss or the *dharmodaya*, which symbolize the great bliss, and also as the symbol of the vagina (*bhaga*) or the "seal's lotus" (*phyag*

rgya'i pad+ma), meaning the vajra-consort's vulva, because of its triangular shape (Figure 3: a – d).[242] Accordingly, he continues, because the *dharmodaya* symbolizes the great bliss, its seed *e* could also symbolize the great bliss.



a. Gupta script
b. Siddhaṃ script
c. Devanāgarī script
d. Rañjanā (Lantsa) script
e. Tibetan script
f. Soyombo (svayambhū) script

Figure 3: The *e* letters in various scripts

Another hypothetical argument follows. The opponent might object that that the Indic *e* letter in *e-vaṃ* is appropriate as a symbol of the *dharmodaya* because of its triangular shape, but the Tibetan *e* letter in "E ma ho!" cannot symbolize it. Ngawang Khedrup replies that the Tibetan *e* letter also has a sort of triangular shape (Figure 3: e). "If it has to be perfectly triangular to be

[242] By the *e* letter, Ngawang Khedrup seems to mean an Indic *e* letter in one or another South Asian script—perhaps Gupta Brahmi, Siddhaṃ, Devanāgarī, or Lantsa script. We know that in nineteenth-century Tibet and Mongolia, Sanskrit passages written mostly in Lantsa, or Rañjanā script, were available, but the *e* letter of the Lantsa alphabet is not particularly triangular. Though it is possible, we cannot be sure if the polemicists ever knew the other scripts or if they had access to texts written in any of them.

considered triangular, the Indic *e* letter would also be disqualified. So, there is no problem." He continues:[243]

> If Tibetan letters cannot symbolize tantric concepts, Gungtang Mañjuśrī [Könchog Tenpé Drönmé] would be wrong to symbolize various key points of the Kālacakra's perfection stage with the letters of the Mongolian script—called *svayambhū*—which was newly created by the Khalkha Jebtsundampa.[244] Moreover, there is no reason [to say] that the Mongolian letters could be used as symbols, but the Tibetan letters could not.[245]

Moreover, Ngawang Khedrup admits that the *e* of *e-vaṃ* usually symbolizes luminous emptiness of the bliss-emptiness pair in tantric literature. The *Sun* takes it instead a as a symbol of bliss. In defense of the *Sun*, he says that this is appropriate because the wisdom of luminosity—though a nominally different aspect of the pair—is not separate from the great bliss. Being an inseparable concept, its one aspect can symbolize the other aspect, just like wisdom can be symbolized by method, or an object by the subject that perceives it, or the result

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[243] *gru gsum gyi rnam pa thon pa la cha thams cad nas gru gsum dgos na rgya gar gyi e yig la'ang mtshungs pa'i phyir skyon med do/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972-1974: 5a (431).

[244] Here, Ngawang Khedrup may have referred to Gungtang Tenpé Drönmé's commentarial work, the *Profound Illumination: A Commentary to the Sādhana of the Maṇi Composed by the Jebtsundampa, the Sun of Teachings* (*Bstan pa'i nyi ma rje btsun dam pas mdzad pa'i ma Ni'i sgrub thabs zab mo'i 'grel pa zab mo snang ba*), an exegesis to the First Jebtsundampa's *Profound Sādhana of the Maṇi* (*Ma Ni'i sgrub thabs zab mo*). The Mongolian Soyombo (svayambhū) script was created by Zanabazar, the First Jebtsundampa of Khalkha, in 1686 (The Soyombo *e* letter is shown in Figure 3: d). This script was intended to transliterate Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Mongolian words into one unified system. The auspicious signs found in the Soyombo script are said to symbolize the profound meaning of the *maṇi*, and Gungtang in his commentary explored this meaning in the Highest Yoga Tantra system, especially in the Kālacakra cycle in relation to which he also extensively discussed the meaning of *e-vaṃ*.

[245] *gal te bod yig gis sngags lam mtshon du mi rung na 7 khal kha rje btsun dam pas gsar bzos gnang ba'i swa yan bhu zhes pa'i sog yig gis dus kyi 'khor lo'i rdzogs rim gyi gnad mang po mtshon par 7 gung thang 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyis gsungs pa mi 'thad pa'am/ yang na sog yig gis mtshon du rung la/ bod yig gis mi rung pa'i shes byed med pa'i phyir/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972-1974: 5a-5b (431-432).

by its cause. Similarly, Ngawang Khedrup defends the *Sun*'s point that the syllable "ma" of "E ma ho!" symbolizes wisdom-emptiness. Playing with the phonetic reference of the word *ma* in Tibetan, which means "mother," he argues that if the word *a ma* (also "mother") can symbolize emptiness, as is already suggested in the root text, then nothing is wrong with the syllable "ma" of "E ma ho!" symbolizing emptiness. It also accords the line in another scripture that states, "The mother is wisdom."[246]

The syllable "ho," he continues, symbolizes the union of bliss and emptiness because both the *Lamp* and the *Sun* agree on the point that the phrase "Ho!" is uttered as a pleasant exclamation, and according to the Buddhist esoteric system, the most sublime of all pleasant experiences upon the attainment of the union of bliss and emptiness. To the objection that there is no precedent for associating union with the letter "ho" in the commentarial tradition, Ngawang Khedrup replies that such a precedent is not necessary because, prior to the *Song*, there was no commentarial tradition that symbolized dependent origination with a *big brother* either. He ends this debate, suggesting the flexibility in interpretation, saying, "one should not be insistent about one side."[247]

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[246] *ma ni shes rab* (the passage is located in the *Sūtra of Druma's Question*). *Ārya-druma-kiṃnararāja-paripṛcchā-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, *'Phags pa mi 'am ci'i rgyal po sdong pos zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, Toh. No 157, mdo sde *pha*, fol. 254a1-319a7.

[247] *mtha' gcig tu u tshugs bya mi rigs pa'i phyir ro/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 1972-1974: 5b (432).

In response to Ngawang Khedrup's explanation of "E ma ho!"—the "e" as great bliss, the "ma" as luminous emptiness, and the "ho" as union—in accordance with the *Sun*, Belmang thinks the first two symbols should be switched. He says that the Indic *e* symbolizes emptiness, and the Tibetan *ma* symbolizes the great bliss, and with this logic, the Chinese word *ho* (好 *hǎo*), which means *good*, should also symbolize the ultimate good—the union of great bliss and emptiness. Then, he mocks his opponent, "Someone like you would not establish this secrecy, which is truly 'E ma ho!' in the eyes of the wise."[248] Why does he thinks the first two symbols should be switched? He maintains that it was an error in the carving of the blocks of the *Sun* because the author explicitly stated that "E ma ho!" symbolizes *e-vaṃ* and did not switch the order of the *e* and *vaṃ*, which are always glossed such that the triangle *e* letter symbolizes the wisdom consort's *dharmodaya*, and the triangle shape symbolizes the three gates to liberation.

As mentioned above, using the threefold concepts found in tantric meditation practices—such as "the birth, death, and the intermediate state" and "the sun, moon, and the *rāhu*"—as an analogy, Ngawang Khedrup argued that the phrase "E ma ho!" can also be explained esoterically, regardless of its mundane usages. Belmang responds by flinging an amusing consequential debate at Ngawang Khedrup: If those threefold concepts are applicable in esoteric contexts, then, for

[248] *zab mo'i gnas 'di ni khyod lta bus mi 'grub kyang mkhas pas mthong na e ma ho rang yin no.* Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 3b (6).

example, it would follow that the colors of dust (*rdul*) and darkness (*mun pa*), the two of the eight subsidiary colors, are applicable to the homonymous terms among the threefold quality taught in Sāṃkhya philosophy—motility (Skt. *rajas*, Tib. *rdul*), inertia (Skt. *tamas*, Tib. *mun pa*), and equilibrium (Skt. *sattva*, Tib. *snying stobs*).[249] He even attacks Ngawang Khedrup more sarcastically:

> You should ascertain the 'yama' in Yamarāja to be equivalent to the *yama*, the term by which the Mongols denote the goats. Likewise, you should say that all homonymic terms (*ming mthun pa*), such as the 'ground' in the concept of 'ten grounds (Skt. *daṣabhūmayaḥ*, Tib. *sa bcu*) and five paths (Skt. *pañcavidho mārgaḥ*, Tib. *lam lnga*) and the 'ground' of the four elements—earth, water, fire, and air—are equivalent! Maintaining that eastern Upagupta is the same as western Upagupta, please answer regarding the logic on the problem of the names and the problem of individuals![250]

Bringing up a Mongolian word *yama* for the goat, which is etymologically not related to the Sanskrit term *yama* in the compound *yamarāja*, as a surprise in the middle of his debate was probably not accidental on Belmang's part. But this can be seen as a polemical insult of his opponent using a stereotype, which in this case seems to hint at the opponent's background in Mongolian pastoral

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[249] The eight subsidiary colors taught in the *Abhidharma* literature are the colors of cloud, smoke, dust, mist, shadow, sunlight, brightness, and darkness. Belmang plays with the Tibetan terms *rdul* for dust and *mun pa* for darkness in reference to their literal meanings found in Sāṃkhya philosophy, according to which motility, inertia, and equilibrium are the essential qualities of all matter. For the first two qualities, Tibetans use the terms *rdul* and *mun pa*, respectively.

[250] *ya ma rA ja zhes pa'i ya ma dang/ sog pos ra skyes la ya ma zhes pa yang don gcig tu zungs shig/ de bzhin du sab cu lam lnga zhes pa'i sa dang/ sa chu me rlung zhus pa'i sa sogs ming mthun pa thams cad don gcig tu khas longs shig/ shar nub kyi nyer sbas gnyis kyang don gcig tu zungs la bdag ming 'gal ba dang bdag 'dres 'gal ba'i rigs pa la 'dod lan 'debs par mdzod cig/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 37a-37b (73-74).

culture. It is as though he were saying, "You have only the erudition of an animal herder, so don't venture into the realm of the sacred!"

Similarly, on another occasion in the *Ocean*, Belmang insults Mati for his sarcastic argument against the early Labrang critics. Mati cynically asks, "Has the appearance of hell already arisen to you, given that you said you're being mindful of such an appearance. If so, then it's justified because your karma is as wicked as Devadatta's."[251] Against this accusation, Belmang argues back, "In that case, when you've had your fill of meat and *airag*,[252] doesn't the appearance of your servants' torment arise for you, no matter how hungry and thirsty they are? If yes, then that is absolutely true."[253] This insult not only points to the stereotype of the Mongolian lamas as eating meat and drinking *airag*, but also indicates the feudalistic system of monasteries where the heads of the monasteries led a relatively indulgent life whereas their servants lived in poverty. As we see, the practice of insulting and teasing the opponent with stereotypes during a debate is not unique to any of the polemicists discussed in this study.

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[251] *yang ma ti ba na re/ khyed rang la da lta nas dmyal snang shar bar thal/ khyod kyis dmyal snang dran pa'i phyir/ 'dod na lhas sbyin ltar las tshab che bas bden zer ro/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 47b (94).

[252] *Airag* is a Mongolian word for the traditional drink of central Asian nomads made of fermented mare's milk. Though mild, *airag* often contains alcoholic contents. Yet, in Mongolia, traditionally not only the laity but also fully ordained monks were allowed to drink *airag*, in addition to their consumption of meat products, which was quite common.

[253] *'o na khyod kyis sha zos a rag 'thung nas 'grags yod pa'i tshe g.yog po bkres skom gyis ji ltar gdungs kyang snang ba de khyod la mi 'char bar thal/ 'dod pa'i phyir/ 'dod na bden shas che'o/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 47b (94).

Belmang also denies that the phrase "E ma ho!" implicitly means *e-vaṃ* and any attempt to connect the two he considers to be self-concoction. Therefore, he polemically demands that Ngawang Khedrup provides the rationale—among the six limits (Skt. *ṣaṭkoṭi*, Tib. *mtha' drug*) and the four modes (Skt. *caturvidha*, Tib. *tshul bzhi*) of interpretation—for interpreting "E ma ho!" as *e-vaṃ*.[254] Even Ngawang Khedrup's explanation of the *e*, based on many tantric passages, symbolizing the *dharmodaya*, the vajra-consort's vulva, etc. is not really possible, he claims, because it does not fit the details of the six limits and the four modes of interpretation explained in different tantras. So, Ngawang Khedrup's assumption relating the bliss to the consort's vagina is a big blunder, Belmang says. Moreover, he does not accept connecting the triangle shape to the great bliss. Yet, for him, Jebtsundampa's connecting *svayambhū* to the perfection stage is acceptable because, as Dharmakīrti says, "The sound of a word comes from the will to say it," the *svayambhū* letter was intended for the will to say in accordance with its name—the self-arisen light (*rang byung snang ba*).

Belmang assesses Ngawang Khedrup's statement that the *e*, the symbol of luminous emptiness, can also symbolize bliss because the wisdom of luminosity is not separate from the great bliss as a big stretch. If the *e* were to symbolize

[254] The six limits—provisional (Skt. *neyārtha*, Tib. *drang don*), definitive (Skt. *nītārtha*, Tib. *nges don*), direct (Skt. *ābhiprāyika*, Tib. *dgongs pa can*), indirect (Skt. *anābhiprāyika*, Tib. *dgongs pa can min pa*), literal (Skt. *yathāruta*, Tib. *sgra ji bzhin pa*), and non-liberal (Skt. *ayathāruta*, Tib. *sgra ji bzhin min pa*)—and the four modes—lexical (Skt. *akṣarārtha*, Tib. *tshig gi tshul*), general (Skt. *samastāṅga*, Tib. *spyi'i tshul*), concealed (Skt. *garbhin*, Tib. *sbas pa'i tshul*), and conclusive (Skt. *kolika*, Tib. *mthar thug gi tshul*)—are a series of indispensable methods to unlock the accurate meaning of a tantra in the levels of both the whole and a single-word of the tantra.

both on the basis that they are mutually inseparable, it would also symbolize the object of knowledge (Skt. *jñeya*, Tib. *shes bya*) and existence (Skt. *bhāva*, Tib. *yod pa*) because they are mutually inseparable too. Ngawang Khedrup also contradicts the *Song* by claiming that the word *a ma* ("mother") symbolizes emptiness. Although the *Song* expresses emptiness *via* the word "mother," it is just an analogy, not an act of symbolizing. Concerning the syllable "ho," Belmang accuses Ngawang Khedrup of going too in claiming that the syllable symbolizes every instance of joy and pleasure. Of course, Ngawang Khedrup would not agree with this accusation. We will see his response to it below in this chapter.

Before we consider some of the later known responses to Belmang's refutations, it is interesting to note how he also reacted to the other points that are related to the controversial phrase "E ma ho!" which is evidently brought up in the missing replies to the original Labrang critics of the *Sun*. First, Belmang attempts to refute a lesser-known figure whom he simply addresses a *kabchupa*:[255]

> The complete path and result are taught when the meaning of the tantras is explained via the four modes of interpretation. However, the "e-vam," rendered as *'di skad* (thus) in Tibetan, which is found in the beginning of all the sūtras of the Great and Lesser Vehicles as an introduction to the Buddha's scripture, is never explained by any great Indian paṇḍita as related to esotericism—that the complete esoteric teachings are taught via *e-vaṃ* when the meaning of tantras is explained via the four modes of interpretation; at the same time, the phrase "e-vaṃ" is rendered in Tibetan as *'di skad* (thus) which, though found in the beginning of all sūtras, has

[255] Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 39a-39b (77-78).

never been explained in relation to an esoteric meaning by any Indian great scholar.[256]

Here, Belmang seems to imply that the *kabchupa* asserted that the phrase "e-vam" expresses the profound esoteric meanings. So Belmang refutes him for reducing the entire teaching of a *sūtra* or exoteric scripture to the phrase *e-vaṃ*, which is rendered as "Thus" in the beginning of the scripture, in agreement with the tantric teachings.

He further explains that although there are unconventional gibberish phrases, such as *koṭākhya*, etc., which are linguistically nonsensical but taught in the tantras only by the Tathāgata for special usages, the phrase "E ma ho!" is not such a phrase.[257] Then, he adds, "One may truly be a present-day Vajradhara, but while imitating all the deeds of the Vajradhara of the past, he shouldn't speak nonsense, 'This must be negated; that must be learned.'"[258] As

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[256] *rgyud don tshul bzhis bshad skabs e vaM gyis lam 'bras cha tshang ston kyang/ e vaM bod skad du bsgyur ba'i 'di skad ces pa ston pa nyid kyi bka' bzhin theg pa che chung gi mdo sde thams cad kyi dbur bzhugs pa la sngags dang 'brel ba'i bshad pa rgya gar paN chen sus kyang ma gnang la/*. Ibid: 39a (77).

[257] *Koṭākhya* is not a real word that is linguistically comprehensible in Sanskrit. However, this word—or its variation *koṭa* along with nine similar nonsensical words, such as *koṭakṣa*, *koṭaba*, *koṭakoṭa*, *koṭabaśca*, *koṭika*, *kolakṣa*, *kolaba*, *kolakolabaśca*, and *kolastathā*—denotes various meanings in different tantras. For example, in the *Purification of All Unfortunate Rebirths (Sarvadurgatipariśodhana; Ngan song thams cad yongs su sbyong ba)*, it is an epithet of Vajrapāṇi. In the *Compendium of Vajra Gnosis (Jñānavajrasamuccaya; Ye shes rdo rje kun las btus pa)*, the ten words denote the senses and their objects. In the *Union with All the Buddhas (Sarvabuddhasamāyoga; Sangs rgyas thams cad dang mnyam par sbyor ba)*, the ten refer to the ten winds. Buton Rinchen Drup and Tsongkhapa, among others, explained the nonlinguistic unconventional words of the tantras with these exemplary words. See Broido 1995: 39.

[258] *da lta'i dus su don la rdo rje 'chang yin du chug kyang sngon gyi rdo rje 'chang gi mdzad pa thams cad lad mo byed pa la dgag dgos gzigs dgos kyi bab col mi rung ba'i phyir/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 39a (77).

mentioned above, Belmang addresses Tenpa Rapgyé as Vajradhara, so here, by "a present-day Vajradhara," he may also be refering to Tenpa Rapgyé. However, this time his reference to Vajradhara is rather sarcastic; he actually criticizes him for being too "creative" in his interpretation of "E ma ho!" in terms of *e-vaṃ*, which no previous authoritative figure, either Vajradhara or any Indian paṇḍita, had ever explained.

Generally, according to the tantras, the *e* symbolizes wisdom, the *va* symbolizes method, and the drop (Skt. *bindu*, Tib. *thig le*), or the *ṃ*, symbolizes the inseparability of wisdom and method. However, contrary to the tantras, Tenpa Rapgyé explained the "e" of "E ma ho!" symbolizes method, i.e., great bliss. Belmang's next refutation of the *kabchupa* reports that the Labrang critics had charged Tenpa Rapgyé with switching the symbolic meaning of the "e," not being concordant with the *e* of *e-vaṃ*, and that the *kabchupa* defended him by responding to the critics. According to Belmang's record, the *kabchupa* defended Tenpa Rapgyé against the charge that it is correct to symbolize great bliss with the "e" because it also symbolizes the three gates to liberation, which, like great bliss, generate *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*. In response to the *kabchupa* on this point, Belmang argues that the "e" should not symbolize such a causal or dependent relationship of phenomena. Otherwise, he maintains, applied to the passages such as "Born from karma are the various worlds,"[259] "Variously established by

[259] *las las 'jig rten sna tshogs skyes/*. Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośakārikā*, *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod kyi tshig le'ur byas pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D4089, mngon pa *ku*, fol. 10b7.

the mind are the world of sentient beings and the vessel-like world,"[260] and so forth, the "e" would also apply to numerous contexts that have never taught in such ways. So, for Belmang, appealing to the notion of the source of all phenomena to explain the "e" as the symbol of great bliss is strictly incorrect.

Belmang then turns his rebuttal to Mati, who is reportedly from a place called "northern U." According to Belmang, Mati, like Ngwang Khderup, argued that the phrase "E ma ho!" can be explained esoterically, regardless of its mundane usages, because other mundane terms—father and mother, liṅga and bhaga, and so forth—symbolize the method and wisdom of the esoteric tradition. Belmang therefore abridges his rebuttal by simply saying his refutation of Ngawang Khedrup on this point also applies to Mati's argument. Belmang continues with multiple charges against Mati's arguments. He condemns Mati for being self-contradictory as if a drunk, for self-fabricating ideas when he cannot provide a proof, for errors in clarifying details, and for erring in interpreting authoritative textual passages when citing them. For example, when Mati said, "If [an interpretation] does not appear in the *vinaya* [instructions], does not engage in the *sūtra* [discourses], and does not accord the

[260] *sems nyid kyis ni sems can 'jig rten dang/ snod kyi 'jig rten shin tu sna tshogs 'god/*. Candrakīrti. *Madhyamakāvatārakārikā-nāma*, *Dbu ma la 'jug pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3861, dbu ma *'a*, fol. 208b2.

abhidharma [teachings], one needs to refute it with a valid reasoning,"[261]

Belmang rebuts him by saying,

> You explained the "e" of the Sanskrit language and the "ma" of the colloquial Tibetan as the union of illusory body and luminosity. Yet, such an explanation has no source in the conventional world, nor in common knowledge, nor in the three collections of scripture, nor in the four tantras. So, how can something like it accord with the vinaya [etc.]? Applied to the ground, path, and fruition (*gzhi lam 'bras gsum*), the *e-vaṃ* is taught to integrate all the aspects of the path. [But] in which sūtra or abhidharma teaching is the practice of samādhi or wisdom that contemplates the "E ma ho!" applied to all the aspects of the path? Think about it! [Then,] you will realize the rest [of your mistakes].[262]

In response to the *Ocean*—Belmang's rebuttal—Ngawang Khedrup constructs counter arguments in his *Elephant*. As described above, Ngawang Khedrup had said that the phrase "E ma ho!", though found in mundane usages, can be used in tantric contexts just as the mundane terms "the sun, moon, and the *rāhu*" are also used in tantric visualization practices. Belmang argues against him claiming that a term should not be referenced across different contexts; otherwise, homonymic terms would be used in the same way. For example, as mentioned above, he insulted Ngawang Khedrup by saying, "You should ascertain the 'yama' in Yamarāja to be equivalent to the *yama*, the term by which the Mongols denote the goats." Ngawang Khedrup takes it only as

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[261] *'dul ba la mi snang/ mdo sde la mi 'jug/ mngon pa'i chos nyid dang 'gal tshul yod na/ rigs lam dpang du bzhag pa'i sun 'byin mdzad par rigs/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 43a (85).

[262] *khyod kyis e zhes pa legs sbyar gyi skad rgyud ltar dang/ ma zhes pa bod kyi phal skad la byas nas sgyur 'od zung 'jug la bkral ba 'jig rten tha snyad dang thun mong rig gnas sde snod gsum rgyud sde bzhi gang du yang mi 'byung ba 'di 'dra 'dul ba dang ji ltar mthun/ e vaM gzhi lam 'bras gsum la sbyar nas lam cha tshar sdud pa ltar/ e ma ho lam cha tshang la sbyar nas sgom pa'i ting nge 'dzin dang/ shes rab kyi nyams len mdo mngon gang du yod soms dang/ des lhag ma shes nus so/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 43a-43b (85-86).

evidence for Belmang being obsessed with winning the debate. He explains that while he had said that the "E ma ho!" can be explained esoterically, this does not mean the phrase must necessarily explained in such a way, so Belmang's accusation does not hit its mark. Ngawang Khedrup, as he often does, teases Belmang at this point: "Isn't it embarrassing to try to refute your opponent with an indefinite reason (Skt. *anaikāntika-hetu*, Tib. *ma nges pa'i rtags*)?"[263] Similarly, Ngawang Khedrup maintains he had never said that homonyms (*ming gcig*) have the same meaning (*don gcig*); thus, Belmang's argument alleging Ngawang Khedrup to have applied homonymic terms to their distinctive meanings is not appropriate. With a sarcastic absurdity, Belmang said, "You [Ngawang Khedrup] should argue that the *Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages* (*Rim lnga gsal sgron*) should have argued: 'Although the *self-consecration* and *conventional truth*, both found in the Ārya master and disciple's tradition and in the Kālacakra corpus, are homonyms, they have different meanings. For example, in the five stages as explained by Ghaṇṭapāda, meditation on the drop inside the heart is said to be self-consecration. There are many such examples.'"[264] In response, Ngawang Khedrup suggests that Belmang carefully

[263] *ma nges pa'i rtags kyis rgol ba sun phyin 'dod pa ngo tsha'i gnas ma yin nam/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 4a. The indefinite reason is one of the three counterfeit or pseudo-reasons in logical arguments according to the pramāṇa tradition. It suggests necessity between the subject and property when in actuality their relationship is contingent or indefinite.

[264] *'phags pa yab sras dang dus 'khor nas bdag byin rlabs dang kun rtsob bden pa zhes pa gnyis ming gcig kyang don mi gcig ste/ dril bu zhabs kyi rim lngar snying kar thig le sgom pa bdag byin rlabs su bshad pa bzhin te/ de 'dra mang ngo/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 37b (74). For an alternative English translation of the passage, see Tsongkhapa 2013: 153.

read his *Fire* before trying to quickly refute him: "Looking at my textual reply to the refutations, you should know how you rose the sun of refutation before the dawn of your opponent!"[265]

Ngawang Khedrup does not deny the accusation that Tenpa Rapgyé inserted the phrase "E ma ho!" into the root text and explained it in association with the better-known tantric idiom *e-vaṃ*. However, he seems to think that it is perfectly appropriate for a realized master or a great adept (Skt. *mahāsiddha*, Tib. *grub chen*) to insert a phrase into a text, even into an authoritative text, and that this should not be judged in a negative way by ordinary people. On this point, he says, "One should accept what a great adept intended to explain. The great throne-holder Vajradhara [i.e., Tenpa Rapgyé] is renowned as a great adept by everyone, regardless of their status, including the Victorious Master and Heir.[266] Not only that, but even you have said that he is a *mahāsiddha* who had unraveled the channel-knots at his throat [*cakra*]."[267] However, Belmang would not accept part of this argument because he already said in his *Ocean*:

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[265] *phyogs snga'i gnam ma langs par dgag pa'i nyi ma shar ba yin pa kho bo'i dgag lan gyi ye ge bltas pas shes/*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c.: 4b.

[266] The term "Victorious Father and Heir" ("*rgyal ba yab sras*") in this context may refer to the Seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso (1758-1804) and the Sixth (Third) Panchen Lama Pelden Yeshé (1738-1780) or better the Seventh (Fourth) Panchen Lama Tenpé Nyima (1782-1853), the representatives of the two highest reincarnation lineages of the Gelug tradition during Tenpa Rapgyé's lifetime.

[267] *e ma ho e vaM ltar bkral pa rgyud kyi tshig zin la med rung/ grub chen rang gis dgongs pas bshad pa yin pas khas blangs dgos la/ khri chen rdo rje 'chang grub chen yin pa rgyal ba yab sras nas bzung ste/ mtho dman thams cad la grags che bar ma zad khyod rang nyid kyis kyang mgrin pa'i rtsa mdud dkrol ba'i grub chen yin par smra 'dug*. Ngag dbang mkhas grub 19th c. 4a. Ngawang Khedrup says that even Belmang himself has acknowledged Tenpa Rapgyé as a *mahāsiddha* who had unraveled the channel-knots at his throat cakra. It is believed that when tantric adepts unravel the knots of their throat focal points, all their speech will be to the point

> For this issue, if we [i.e., those in Labrang] respond, 'Our guru is also a Vajradhara, so we need to accept whatever he said and do whatever he tells us to do.' If we did that, you and I would be laughing at each other. Moreover, if the followers of the Sakya, Nyingma, Karma, and Drukpa traditions say, 'Our gurus are also Vajradharas, so you Gelukpas must accept our tenets,' I wonder how you would respond to them.[268]

By saying this, Belmang seems to have effectively ruled out the appropriateness of interpretations that rely purely on a person's high reputation. Although, from the very beginning, the efforts to defend one's teacher's honor have apparently played an important motivational role in this whole polemical exchange, Belmang makes an important point here that in a debate, one's devotion to one's guru is not a valid reason that can convince the opponent.

As for the point that even Belmang himself has acknowledged Tenpa Rapgyé's accomplishment of unraveling the channel-knots at his throat cakra, Ngawang Khedrup seems to be refering to a passage found in the *Ocean*:

> The great throne-holder Vajradhara [Tenpa Rapgyé] was an extraordinary person to whom all appearances were experienced as the enjoyment of blissful emptiness. Therefore, based on his own experience, saying that all phenomena are nothing but the manifestation of the gnosis of blissful emptiness should not be considered faulty. Nevertheless, we shouldn't literally assert all his teachings. Considering the fact that he has unraveled the channel-knots and dissolved the wind of conceptualization, he said, 'There is no tangled knot in the channel-knots at the heart,' and 'The luminous aspect of the mind is mental, and the object-cognizing aspect is considered the wind. Otherwise, there is no wind on which the mind rides.'

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and valid. Ngawang Khedrup therefore implies that Belmang has already accepted the validity of Tenpa Rapgyé's teaching.

[268] *de la kho bo cag nas nged cag gi bla ma yang rdo rje 'chang yin pas de'i yang gang gsung ltar khas len dgos byas tshe de bzhin du bgyi'o zhes lan btab na bdag cag phan tshun 'dzum mul le bsdad pas chog go/ de la sa rnying kar 'brug pa mang pos 'o na nged rang gi bla ma yang rdo rje 'chang yin pas khyed dge lugs pa tshos nged tsho'i grub mtha' yang khas blangs dgos so zer na/ lan ji ltar gdab gros bya'am snyam/*. Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1972-1974: 105b-106a (210-211).

> Not only that, but he also said, 'In the beginning, one needs to concentrate the heart for the [*Guhyasamāja*] *Tantra* [practice] and on the navel for that of the mother tantras.' This is also what the master said based on his own practice, which cannot be taken as unequivocal truths in general.[269]

This is a passage in which Belmang once more regards Tenpa Rapgyé as a highly realized master, but at the same time, he explains the latter's controversial teachings should be understood as his idiosyncratic beliefs based on his experiential realization and personal practices.

Debate on the Source of the Private Explanation Tradition of the Sakya School

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tenpa Rapgyé refuted Jikmé Wangpo for mistakenly tracing the origin of the Sakya school's private-explanation tradition to Tsarchen Losel Gyatso, instead of to the eleventh-century Nepalese Pamtingpa(s). Although Belmang does not directly replied to Tenpa Rapgyé's criticism, he includes in his *Ocean* the initial Labrang critics' arguments—a series of counterattack to Tenpa Rapgyé as a response on behalf of his teacher Jikmé Wangpo. They likened Tenpa Rapgyé's criticism on this particular point

[269] *khri chen rdo rje 'chang ni gang snang bde stong gi rol bar shar ba'i gang zag khyad par can yin pas/ de'i rang snang la sbyar nas chos thams cad bde stong gi ye shes kyi rnam 'gyur kho na yin zhes gsungs pa la skyon gdags mi rigs mod/ rang re rnams kyis gang gsung tshig zin ltar khas blangs mi rung ste/ rdo rje 'chang nas/ nyid rang gi rtsa mdud grol yod pa dang/ kun rtog gi rlung thim yod pa la dgongs nas/ snying kha'i rtsa mdud sogs su rtsa mdud dkris pa med ces dang/ sems kyi gsal cha sems dang/ yul rig pa'i cha rlung du bzhag pa ma gtogs/ sems kyi bzhon pa'i rlung med ces bka' stsal 'dug pas so/ der ma zad brgyud la thog mar snying ga dang/ ma rgyud la thog mar lte ba la gnad du bsnun dgos zhes gsungs pa yang rje nyid kyi nyams bzhes kyi dbang du byas gsungs pa yin gyi/ mtha' gcig tu nges bzung min te…* Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 72a-72b (143-144).

to a string of conflicting statements and refute him with the following five charges.

First, they claim, saying that "within the glorious Sakya tradition, there are the traditions of the public explanation and the private explanation as well as of the trio of Ngor (*ngor*), Dzong (*rdzong*), and Gong (*gong*)" is unacceptable.[270] They explain that the triple tradition—Ngor, Dzong, and Gong—is a classification based on distinctive Sakya hierarchs[271] whereas the traditions of the public explanation and the private explanation are the divisions of teaching lineages. Thus, they refute Tenpa Rapgyé by asking, rhetorically, whether the traditions of the public explanation and the private explanation should be considered Sakya hierarchs or whether the triple tradition are the divisions of teaching lineages. Then, quoting Sakya sources and others, they expand their argument that the two categories—the division of teaching lineages and the classification according to hierarchs—should not be sorted together, and that by putting them together, Tenpa Rapgyé mixed them up. Mixing them up, for the Labrang critics, leads to inconsistencies, just as if one said, "Among the

[270] *dang po sa skya pa la tshogs slob gnyis dang ngor rdzong gong gsum yod ches pa*… Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 19b (38).

[271] The Labrang critics further explain that Ngor refers to a certain Ngorwa (Ngor ba) or Khau Drakdzongpa (Kha'u brag rdzong pa), by whom they probably mean Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, 1382-1456), the founder of Ngor Ewam Chöden (E waM chos ldan) Monastery; that Dzong refers to a certain holder of the former Dzong lineage transmitted from Ngakchang Zungkyi Pelwa (Sngags 'chang Gzungs kyi dpal ba, 1306-1389); and that Gong refers to the later Dzong lineage holder Tutön Kunga Namgyel (Thu ston Kun dga' rnam rgyal, 1432-1496), who founded Gongkar Dorjé Den Monastery.

proponents of the Buddhist tenets, there are Three Baskets and the four—the Vaibhāṣikas, the Sautrātinkas, the Mādhyamikas, and the Cittamātrins."[272]

Second, Tenpa Rapgyé's argument, "the main one is the great secret tradition of the private explanation, which was transmitted through a single lineage from the Nepalese Pamtingpa" is unfeasible. The Labrang critics try to defeat this argument with their explanation that a certain phrase that generally denotes a broader concept can refer to a particular narrower concept in some context. For example, they reason, in a particular commentary to the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, passages of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* can be quoted by saying, "in the root tantra," which would completely make sense since in this context "the root text" refers to nothing but the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*; and if the same phrase were out of the context, it would leave one wondering what text was being refered to. Similarly, when Jikmé Wangpo explained the term "the great secret tradition of the private explanation" in the context of the Lamdré, he was not wrong because the term is understood as referring to nothing, but the oral teachings of the private explanation found in the Lamdré tradition. Then, with various sources that support their positions, the Labrang critics further explain that the term "private explanation" is also found in many non-Lamdré contexts, such as in the

[272] *…dper na nang ba'i grub mtha' smra ba la dbye na sde snod gsum dang bye mdo dbu sems bzhir nges zhes pa ltar…* Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 20b (40). Here it says that the hypothetical opponent would be inconsistent if they mixed up the three categories of the Buddha's original teachings with the four Buddhist philosophical schools of India developed from the teachngs.

Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara traditions;[273] in particular, the private-explanation tradition that was transmitted from Pamtingpa belongs to the Cakrasaṃvara teaching lineage, not to the oral teachings of the private explanation of the Lamdré.

Third, Tenpa Rapgyé was wrong when he said, "[the] tradition of the private explanation … was transmitted through a single lineage … to Tsarchen. From then on, the lineage slightly expanded." Providing a complete account of the transmission lineages of the private-explanation tradition in accordance with Sakya sources, the Labrang critics argue that not only was the tradition of the private explanation more than a single lineage, but also the two types of transmissions—to one or two disciples and to the assembly of many students—do not have to be a private explanation and a public explanation, respectively.

Moreover, the Labrang critics explain Tsarchen's role played in the Sakya private-explanation lineage. They make reference to the Great Fifth's words: "Among the uncountably many scholars and adepts—like the dust of the earth—who hold the public explanation tradition such as Ngor, Dzong, and Gongkar, the great secret private-explanation tradition of the supreme Khau Drakdzongpa, which is like the wish-fulfilling tree, renowned as the Tsar

[273] In his *Extensive Explanation of the Illuminating Lamp (Pradīpodyotanāmaṭikā; Sgron ma gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba'i rgya cher bshad pa)*, Candrakīrti mentions the private explanation of the Guhyasamāja tradition, "For those who wish to listen to the explanations, there are two separate types: teaching via public explanation and private explanation (*'chad pas nyan par 'dod pa la/ dbye ba yang ni gnyis yod de/ tshogs la bshad par bstan pa dang/ gnyis pa slob ma la bshad pa'o)*." Candrakīrti (Zla bag rags pa). *Pradīpodyotanāmaṭikā*, *Sgron ma gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba'i rgya cher bshad pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D1785, rgyud 'grel, *ha*, fol. 3a.4.

tradition, is the most profound."[274] Recognizing Tsarchen's system as the most important in the Sakya tradition, they then argue that not recognizing the Tsarchen system, which was recognized by the Great Fifth as being attributed to Tsarchen himself, would contradict the omniscient Great Fifth. Hence, Tenpa Rapgyé's criticism that "the scholar adept [the Second] Jamyang Zhepa, because of his lack of familiarity, erroneously explained the tradition as if it was established by Tsarchen" would also contradict the Great Fifth's point. The Labrang critics further justify why the private-explanation tradition should be attributed to Tsarchen although the origin of this tradition preceded him. The traditional Tibetan taxonomers of the Buddhist tenets believe, for example, that the Middle-Way view, i.e., Nāgārjuna's tradition, preceded Nāgārjuna himself, who is credited with being the founder of the Middle-Way school. Tradition has it that the Middle-Way view is necessary for advancing on the Mahāyāna path, let alone becoming a buddha. For example, all the past buddhas, including the historical Buddha, have understood the Middle-Way view, regardless of to whom it is attributed. However, Nāgārjuna is still traditionally considered the "charioteer of the Middle-Way school" (*dbu ma'i shing rta'i srol 'byed*), that is to say, the founder of that system, because of his role in the dissemination of that

[274] *…ngor rdzong gong dkar ba sogs tshogs bshad 'dzin pa'i mkhas grub sa chen po'i rdul ltar grangs su mi chod pa'i nang nas/ yongs 'du'i ljon pa lta bur mchog tu gyur pa kha'u brag rdzong pa'am tshar lugs su grags pa zab pa las kyang ches zab pa'i gsang chen slob bshad…* Cited in Dkon mchog rgyal mtshan 1974c: 26a (51); originally found in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009b: 309-310. The Fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso had high regards for Tsarchen Losal Gyatso. Among several works dedicated to Tsarchen found in the Great Fifth's collected works, he composed Tsarchen's extensive biography, entitled the *Sunlight of the Private-Explanation Teachings* (*Slob bshad bstan pa'i nyi 'od*).

school with systematic explanations. Using the same logic, the Labrang critics argue that, though the tradition of private explanation precedes Tsarchen, its systematic development can be regarded as Tsarchen's system (*tshar lugs*) because he was like the charioteer of the system (*shing rta'i srol 'byed*), expanding it didactically.

Fourth, Tenpa Rapgyé's accusation that Jikmé Wangpo erroneously explained the private-explanation tradition to have been established by Tsarchen, for the Labrang critics, is groundless slander. In the *Lamp*, Jikmé Wangpo wrote, "Tsarchen Losel Gyatso and so forth—the followers of the private explanation—say that the awareness of the ungraspable [union of] clarity and emptiness is the ultimate natural state."[275] Against Tenpa Rapgyé's accusation, the Labrang critics defend Jikmé Wangpo by stating that he only explained Tsarchen as a major representative of the private-explanation tradition and not its founder. Similar to the previous argument, the Labrang critics maintain that Tsarchen disseminated the tradition which had preceded him, like the great charioteers of the Buddhist philosophical tenets disseminated their respective views, which had preceded them as well. More importantly, the Labrang critics point out that Jikmé Wangpo never implied that the private-explanation tradition had originated with Tsarchen, which is true.

[275] *…tshar chen blo gsal rgya mtsho sogs slob bshad rjes 'brang dang bcas pa rnams kyis gsal stong 'dzin med kyi rig pa gnas lugs mthar thug yin zhes zer/*. Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1999: 8a.

Fifth, Tenpa Rapgyé insulted Jikmé Wangpo by saying that "because of his lack of familiarity," he erroneously traced the origin of the private-explanation tradition to Tsarchen. The Labrang critics defend Jikmé Wangpo by appealing to his vast knowledge and high reputation, on the one hand. And they sarcastically make the point that Jikmé Wangpo indeed lacked a familiarity with the unique Sakya fundamental oral teachings of the private explanation that originated from Pamtingpa, on the other hand. Their sarcasm is nothing but a polemical point: because claiming Pamtingpa to be the founder of the Sakya private-explanation tradition is an error, a great scholar like Jikme Wangpo would indeed lack "a familiarity" with that false assumption.

Conclusion

The polemical exchange studied in this chapter is not straightforward, Belmang's *Ocean* in particular contains not only refutations of his opponents, those who defended Tenpa Rapgyé's alternative interpretation of the *Song*—like Ngawang Khedrup, Mati, and the certain *kabchupa*—but also the analyses of the initial Labrang criticisms. Thus, we can conclude that even though the *Ocean* did not initiate this particular polemical exchange, it is evidently the most important text that clarifies many of the arguments of the missing texts of the exchange, including those of the initial Labrang critics and their refutations composed by Mati and others. The *Ocean* also ignited the subsequent polemical responses by Ngawang Khedrup and Lobsang Tseten and became one of the

important sources of the most extended, relatively new commentary to the *Song* by the late Gungru Geshé Tenpa Tendzin.

While challenging one another with their doctrinal knowledge backed up by sophisticated logical syllogisms, our polemicists used various subsidiary polemical techniques, including verbal insults, mockery based on stereotypes regarding the opponent's ethnicity, as well as demeaning the reputation of each other's monasteries. As some of them literally said, the agenda was to defend the honor of their teacher, so this was openly held to be a central motivation of the debate. Moreover, they also seem to have competed to raise the reputation of their respective monastery by arguing it is a great learning center of scholars and realized masters. That said, all the polemicists showed respect to the original authors of the two diverging commentaries, and more importantly, they seem to have agreed that, like the debates that take place on a daily basis on the monastic debate ground, their rebuttals would help the Buddha Dharma flourish.

Conclusion

In the second half of the sixteenth century, the new alliance between Mongolia and Tibet created by Altan Khan and Sönam Gyatso began to form the Geluk world as a new religiopolitical space in Inner Asia. By the mid seventeenth century, the Geluk School backed by Mongol financial and military support won over the competing Buddhist schools in central Tibet and expanded into the major parts of both Mongolian and Tibetan cultural regions. As many Geluk monasteries were gradually established in these vast Inner Asian territories in the following two centuries, the political authority of the old aristocracy became largely replaced by that of monastic leaders, whose "incarnation" lineages were intertwined with one another through guru-disciple relationships. At this point, the Geluk monasteries became the main constituents of the Tibeto-Mongolian Geluk world, in which the old ethnic and tribal affiliations were often secondary to the alliances of Geluk sister monasteries. However, competitions for reputational recognition among monasteries, especially between large regional monasteries which were then becoming metropolitan centers, developed as a new political reality within the Geluk world. One of the ways to drastically elevate the reputation of one's monastery was to prove their claim that their monastery was an important Geluk center in a larger region. Through economic and scholastic achievements, the monasteries were afforded such claims.

By the first half of the nineteenth century, among the hundreds of monasteries in the vast area of Inner Asia, Khalkha's Ih Hüree and Amdo's Labrang grew to the two largest Geluk institutions in Mongolia and Amdo, respectively. Belmang and Ngawang Khedrup—the high administrator lamas of the two institutions—individually claimed their own monastery was an important Geluk center. Though not as hostile as the feuds among medieval aristocrats, the competitions between these two fine scholars in this particular case manifested as an aggressive polemical debate, defending each of their teacher's interpretation and of their monastery's reputation. This may have been important for the purpose of attracting prospective students, patrons, and perhaps even the Qing court. Meanwhile, the Inner Mongolian geshé Lobsang Tseten, who had a monastery in an important historical site in the Ujumučin region of Inner Mongolia, also took part in the polemics. The intellectual debates between the trio on whose teachers' interpretation was more definitive constituted the core of the polemical exchange. Though frankly there was no explicit winner in the end, the polemics prove that all three monasteries housed mature Buddhist scholasticism, representing three major regions within the Geluk world—Amdo, Khalkha, and Inner Mongolian Šili-yin Goul—in the first half of the nineteenth century.

In their debate, each polemicist defended their teacher's interpretation of a single text—the late imperial preceptor Changkya's Song—against the rebuttals directed to their teachers. Hence, Changkya's Song, an eighteenth-century

original Tibetan text, served the concerned parties as the *scripture* in a functional sense to expand exegeses and polemical controversies. Furthermore, through their polemical exchange, we witness many examples of nineteenth-century Tibetan Buddhist monastic debate along with polemical techniques, skillfully employed by our polemicists. For a concluding remark, Buddhist polemical debates often explicitly seem to be on doctrinal issues, philosophical interpretations, or historical investigations. This dissertation, however, explores an example of Buddhist polemics that were deeply rooted in mundane worldly competitions, including the concerns for the reputation of monastic institutions and one's teacher's honor. Nevertheless, although the challengers often used verbal insults and mockeries in their debate, they tended to leave room for showing respect to their opponents and for acknowledging that their rebuttals were ultimately to propagate the Buddha's teachings. Indeed, regardless of the motivation, Buddhist intra-sectarian polemics were often carried out as an evidence of Buddhist scholasticism and were taken seriously by Buddhist intellectuals in premodern Mongolia and Tibet. It is my believe that further research on intra-sectarian polemics, especially between Buddhist leaders or institutions, should be done in a way in which it would contribute to comprehensive understanding of the sociopolitical concerns of the Buddhists and their institutions.

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Appendix I

The Profound Spiritual Song of the View

lta ba'ï gsung mgur zab mo

By Changkya Rölpé Dorjé

O incomparably kind guru, who nakedly demonstrates
The brilliant nature of profound dependent origination,
Please remain within my heart!
I'll say three spontaneous words that arose in my mind.

By a chance, I, a lunatic son,
Who lost his elderly mother long ago,
Seem about to know what has been unknown to me
That my kind mother has always been with me.
With his concealed descriptions, my big brother, dependent origination,
Explains how she does and does not appear to be, but vaguely.

Various dualities are the mother's smiling mask;
The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is the mother's lies;
My infallible mother has been deceiving me!

So, I hope my big brother, dependent origination, will save me.
Ultimately, it is my hope that I will be liberated
By the sole kindness of my elderly mother.

If the duality is real as it appears,
There would be no way even for buddhas of the three times to save me.
Various changes are my unchanging mother's manifestations;
Therefore, liberation is possible.
The inexpressible mother, who is by no means real,
Has a false implication for that which pretends to be interdependent;
In this alone, there is a meaning to understand.

My elderly father who is not found after being sought
Is nowhere but where my mother is found.
When my elderly father is found in my mother's embrace,

Both my kind parents are said to protect me.

My mother's face, neither *one* nor *another*,
Seems to reflect as ungraspable
On the mirror of the big brother, dependent origination;
Yet, lunatic beings like me have not analyzed it!

By the virtue of Mañjuśrīgarbha showing a good example,
Brought by the wind of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti's legacy,
I hope, without difficulties of searching from far-away,
To see my mother, who has always been with me.

Now there seem to be amongst us, some scholars,
Who are attached to terms such as "substantial" and "real;"

Ignoring the fluctuating appearances,
They seem to seek something with horns to negate.
On my mother's unobscured face,
There is nothing to be said about such fluctuations.
When there are excessive explanations off the key point,
I'm afraid that my elderly mother runs away.

Things may exist, but they appear not in the way
In which they habitually appear: opposing and contradicting one another.
When parents in love are inseparable and cheerful,
They seem to be tender and pleasant to one another.

The Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Vijñaptivādin, and the three abbots of the East
Variously try to label the mother,
Who is in the form of a great white elephant:
"Matter" as if she were a beaming striped tiger,
"Subject" as if she were a brainless crazy monkey,
"Stable non-duality" as if she were a powerful bear;
Yet, they all have lost the elderly mother.

Many scholars and adepts of the Sakya, Nyingma, and Karma and Drükpa Kagyü traditions
Boast about the reality with various terms, such as
"Self-cognizant awareness of the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness,"
"Primordially pure and spontaneous identity of Samantabhadra,"

"Unfabricated innate Mahāmudrā," and
"Neither existent nor non-existent, the absence of any stand."
If any among these hits the target, that is wonderful!
Yet, I wonder what they are all pointing at!
External objects are not destroyed, so do not worry!
O followers of the two schools of external reality, be pleased!
Without self-cognition, cognizing validly is acceptable.
So, O Vijñaptivādins, be pleased!
Without intrinsic nature, dependent origination is vivid.
So, O three abbots of the East, be pleased!
Clarity and emptiness can be held as non-contradictory.
So, O lineage holders of the private explanation tradition, be at ease!
Though primordially pure, good and evil are still acceptable.
So, O mad knowledge-holders, do not cling at the purity!
Though being fabricated and then meditated upon, the innate nature is preserved.
So, O senior realized masters, do not insist!
The freedom from proliferations of existence and nonexistence is acceptable.
So, O stubborn logicians, do not get all riled up!
Those who lack extensive textual trainings
May not even know the way of conventionality.
It is not that I do not respect you;
Please excuse me, if you are offended!

Although I am not an omniscient man,
I am skilled in riding the good horse of my forefathers' works
With endurance and devotion.
Thus, I hope to cross the only impassible cliff.

No need to search because the seeker is all there is.
No need to cling to reality because all is false.
No need to negate the falsity because it is the reality itself.
The absence of nihilism and eternalism is enough for relaxation.

Though not seeing the mother, by mere terms,
I feel like I am encountering my kind parents,
Whom I lost for a long time, right here and now.

How gracious the Nāgārjuna father and sons!

How gracious Tsongkhapa Lobsang Dragpa!
How gracious my kind guru!
To repay their kindness, I revere the mother!

May the unborn, inexpressible elderly mother,
Having met with her child, the awareness,
With the utterly joyous celebration of perfect conducts,
Guide all kind mother beings to everlasting bliss!

E ma! I, Rölpé Dorjé!
A o! The dance of joy!
O na! Performing it here!
A ho! Revering the three jewels!

This *Deceptive Words as a Melody of an Echo for Recognition of the Mother* were composed by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, who deeply admires the Great Middle Way, at the mystically emanated great Mount Wutai. The scribe was the monk Geleg Namkha.

Appendix II

A Sword to Destroy the Hostile Army of the Clinging to a Self, the Sun to Make the Fortunate Lotus Blossom: A Commentary to the *Recognizing the Mother: The Spiritual Song of Experience on the View*

lta ba'i nyams mgur a ma ngos 'dzin gyi 'grel pa
bdag 'dzin dgra dpung 'joms pa'i mtshon cha skal ldan padmo bzhad pa'i nyin byed

By Reting Lobsang Yeshé Tenpa Rabgyé

[1a] *Namo guru (Homage to the guru)!*

O *all*-pervasive one, the creator of *all*,[276] who embraces all with forms of both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*,
O omniscient one, the chief of the assembly of the *Conqueror*[277] together with the *Conqueror*'s heirs and disciples,
O venerable guru, the un*limit*ed supreme refuge of *limit*less living beings, until the end of *saṃsāra*,
I reverently bow down to you with my *crown* ornaments and *crown* jewels, so please inseparably stay in the lotus lake of my heart!

> The root text[278] was put into words by the lamp who shines his light over *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, the one called "Rölpé Dorjé,"
> Who since long ago showed affectionate mercy for living beings with acts of great compassion,

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[276] Although there is a controversial yet famous Nyingma tantra of the Great Perfection tradition, entitled the *All-Creating Sovereign (Kun byed rgyal po)*, the *kun gyi byed po* ("the creator of all") is a very unusual term used in a Gelug text referring to a supreme being or reality. It may raise a doctrinal concern within the Gelug tradition and its ontological teachings. For a translation of the *All-Creating Sovereign*, see Neumaier-Dargyay 1992.

[277] A "conqueror" is an epithet of a buddha.

[278] "The root text," an insertion for the sake of clarity, refers to the root text of the commentary—*The Song of Realization of the View, Recognizing the Mother*.

Who has arisen in the body of a vajra-holder with the three vows[279] with miraculous rainbows of the five types of gnosis,[280]
And who is the sole proprietor of the exoteric and esoteric teachings of the wise victor Tsongkhapa.[281]

Here is a wonderfully spoken commentary that nakedly demonstrates
The sole moon of blissful emptiness, born from a churning
Of the ultimate ambrosial elixir of the great secret absorbed from the root, [2a]
Without obscurations of the clouds of cognitive difficulties.

This commentary, risen from my intellect, the eastern mountain peak,
Which completely eliminates the darkness of ignorant delusion,
And which nakedly demonstrates all realities as they are,
Is certainly the heart jewel of all the discreet wise.

Those assemblies of intelligent goddesses,
Who beautify their bodies with intelligence and discernment
And who are endowed with enticing eyes of learning, reflecting, and meditating,
Should accept it as an ornament to adorn their necks!

As regards these verses, Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, who is the glorious Heruka[282] in the guise of someone who holds the saffron banner during this degenerated age, is the supreme illuminator of the exoteric and esoteric teachings of the purified

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[279] The three vows of a vajra-holder (*gsum ldan rdo rje 'dzin pa*) are the set of individual liberation vows, the bodhisattva vows, and the tantric vows.

[280] The five types of gnosis (*pañcajñāna*, *ye shes lnga*) are the gnosis of the expanse of reality (*dharmadhātujñāna*, *chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes*), the mirror-like gnosis (*ādarśajñāna*, *me long lta bu'i ye shes*), the gnosis of sameness (*samatājñāna*, *mnyam pa nyid kyi ye shes*), the gnosis of discernment (*pratyavekṣājñāna*, *so sor rtog pa'i ye shes*), and the gnosis of accomplishment (*kṛtyānuṣṭhānajñāna*, *bya ba grub pa'i ye shes*).

[281] In addition to explicitly mentioning Changkya Rolpé Dorjé's name, this stanza also implicitly contains his ordination name Yeshe Tenpé Drönme (Ye shes bstan pa'i sgron me), which semantically means "the lamp of the gnosis teachings." Three of the four lines of the stanza contains a word of this name, "the lamp of," "gnosis," and "teachings," These words are marked with underlines in this translation.

[282] "Heruka" denotes a "blood drinker from skulls" referring to a wrathful deity, such as Cakrasaṃvara, of the Buddhist Unexcelled Yoga Tantra tradition.

golden-crown tradition[283] which are the essences of the teachings of the incomparable Buddha, the king of the Śākya clan and the unique friend of all living beings. From his spiritual experiences, a song of realization, known as "Recognizing the Mother," which nakedly demonstrates the gnosis of blissful emptiness, was born. [2b] Then, the Jamyang Zhepé Dorjé composed a commentary on this song exclusively in accordance with the exoteric system. However, the actual intended meaning of the *Spiritual Song* is found ultimately in the esoteric system. Accordingly, I am composing this short commentary commenting on the meanings of: (1) the introduction, (2) the main body of the text, and (3) the conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION

This contains two parts: (1.1) the eulogy and (1.2) the pledge to complete the composition.

1.1. The eulogy

The root text reads:

E ma ho!

O incomparably kind guru, who nakedly demonstrates
The brilliant nature of profound dependent origination,
Please remain within my heart!

The meaning of these lines is this. The "**E ma ho**" symbolizes the meanings of the three types of *e-vam* from the prefaces of all *tantras*—the object of attainment which is the result *e-vam*, the factor of attainment which is the path *e-vam*, and the *e-vam* as the sign of coming together (*'dren byed rtags*). The *e*, *ma*, and *ho* syllables symbolize the method which is great bliss, wisdom which is emptiness, and the nature which is the union of the two, respectively.

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[283] "The golden-crown tradition" refers to the Tibetan Buddhist Gelug order, founded by Tsongkhapa. The Gelug order is also known as the Yellow-Hat tradition because its monks exclusively use yellow hats as a symbol of their pure observance of Buddhist monastic disciplines, the *Vinaya*. The xylograph edition reads *gsar zhun cod pan* ("purified new-crown"), but it is likely erroneous. I read it *gser zhun cod pan* ("purified golden-crown").

Moreover, the *e* syllable is said to symbolize the three gates to liberation,[284] which are the sources of all phenomena. Since the symbolized gnosis of great bliss also generates all the positive and negative manifestations of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* as pure and impure appearance aspects, it is the source of all phenomena. [3a]

The *ma* syllable symbolizes the wisdom-emptiness. That very wisdom-luminosity, in accordance with the esoteric system, generates the pure and impure appearance aspects in forward and reversed orders. This is like a mother who gives birth to a child.

The *ho* syllable symbolizes the union. "Ho" is an utterance of joy. When the gnosis of union arises in mind, all the benefits of both one's own and others are effortlessly accomplished, so one should be very happy with it.

Ordinary beings, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and even great holy bodhisattvas, who have not entered the tantric path, are not be able to realize such a gnosis of blissful emptiness. Not only that, but even bodhisattvas, who have entered the tantric path, are not to be able to realize it nakedly until they attain the true luminosity of the fourth stage.[285] Therefore, its meaning is said to be "**profound**."

Apart from the tantric path, there is no arising of a naked realization of the nature as it is. By "**nakedly**," it means that just like a body without covering clothes is called, "naked" or "nude," the freedom from obscuring covers of the three obscuring stains—appearance, increase, and attainment—during the very subtle mind directly perceiving the natural state, is absent in accordance with the exoteric system. [3b] Yet, this freedom is "**brilliant**" because even through a pure understanding of it merely arises in the mind—not to mention actualizing it in mind—one can shred *saṃsāra*.

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[284] The three gates to liberation (*trīṃi vimokṣamukhāni*, *rnam thar sgo gsum*) are emptiness (*śūnyatā*, *stong pa nyid*), aspirationlessness (*apraṇihita*, *smon pa med pa*), and attributelessness (*animitta*, *mtshan ma med pa*).

[285] This is the fourth stage of the five stages (*pañcakrama*, *rim pa lnga*) of the path in accordance with the Nāgārjuna's system of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. The five stages are the isolation of speech (*vākvyapakarṣa*, *ngag dben*), the isolation of mind (*cittavyapakarṣa*, *sems dben*), the illusory body (*māyāgātram*, *sgyu lus*), the luminosity (*ābhāsvara*, *'od gsal*), and the union (*yuganaddha*, *zung 'jug*).

The kindness of the provisional gurus who taught this is "**incomparably**" boundless. Such gurus exhort their followers to learn it as the root of all of their well-being.

Moreover, one's comprehension, realization of the meanings of *tantras*, etc. depend solely on the blessing of one's guru. Therefore, the eulogy supplicates the provisional guru in physical form, "**Please** permanently **remain** in the nature of the definitive guru, who is the object of attainment, as the mind-essence free from constructs, in the nature of eight extraordinary qualities,[286] at the center of the lotus palace of the eight channels of the dharma wheel **within my heart**!"

1.2. The pledge to complete the composition

I'll say three spontaneous words that arose in my mind.

The meaning is this. The gnosis of blissful emptiness that arose in or was apparent to the author Rölpé Dorjé's mind is due to his mercy, his great compassion. Therefore, he was moved and spontaneously taught the important points of his experience in few words without keeping anything secret. Hence, he pledges, "**I'll say three words**."

2. THE MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT

This has two parts: (2.1) a brief presentation and (2.2) an extensive explanation.

2.1. The brief presentation

The root text reads:

By chance, I, a lunatic son,

[286] The eight extraordinary qualities, according to Dungkar Lobsang Trinlé, are the qualities of body (*kāya*, *sku*), speech (*vāc*, *gsung*), mind (*citta*, *thugs*), magical power (*ṛddhi*, *rdzu 'phrul*), omnipresence (*sarvatraga*, *kun 'gro*), wish fulfilling (*nikāma*, *ci 'dod*), activity (*kārya*, *'phrin las*), and excellence (*guṇa*, *yon tan*). Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las 2002: 1527.

Who lost his elderly mother long ago,
Seem about to know what has been unknown to me
That my kind mother has always been with me.
With his concealed descriptions, my big brother, dependent origination,
Explains how she does and does not appear to be, but vaguely.

The meaning of these lines is this.

The "**elderly mother**" refers to the mother-luminosity, which is the very subtle mind of an ordinary person like us. [4a] No defilement resides within this very subtle mind and can contaminate it; thus, it is known as the dharma body during the time of the ground.

Although this very subtle mind manifests during the five or six times—the time of death, the time of intermediate state, the time of fainting, the time of sleep, the time of yawning, and the time of sex—ordinary beings cannot realize it. Why is it called "**mother**?" The one who gives birth to sons, daughters, and grandchildren regardless of their quality, is known in the world as a mother. Similarly, the descending attainments are born from the mother-luminosity, whereas the aspect that appears to pure gnosis is born from the aspect that appears to impure cyclic existence and the realization of it as it is.

Why is she "**elderly**?" A thing kept for a long is labeled "old." Similarly, because such a very subtle mind is immutably existent from beginingless time to the present, it is called "**elderly mother**."

Regarding the meaning of why the son "**lost his mother a long ago**," since long ago until now, the son did not realize who his mother was or could not recognize her as she is. The "**lunatic son**" is the gross mind, which is contaminated by mental afflictions. This gross mind, "**by chance**," due to the guru's kindness, is about to know what was previously unknown to it. What it will soon realize is the fact that that the mother's luminosity and its simultaneously existing emptiness exist as the ground that is empty and its emptiness.

How can you realize it? Relying on the responses of the chief gnosis of great bliss born from the accumulation of merit—the dependent origination denoted by the term "**big brother**"—[4b] you can realize what is not apprehensible by other methods which have been explained indefinitely. It will be realized initially through an abstract concept then through direct cognition; hence, "**it is both**."

It is similar to neither the common exoteric way of realizing emptiness nor the uncommon way of realizing the gross mind through subtle cognitions like appearance, increase, and attainment; hence, it says, "**it is neither**."

As regards the phrase "**it appears to be**," although the author knows reality in this way, he expresses modesty, saying that it is difficult for him to ascertain the reality because he has not directly realized it.

2.2. The extensive explanation has three parts: (2.2.1) a clarification of the unity gnosis of blissful emptiness, (2.2.2) describing the assertions of proponents of other tenets, and (2.2.3) explaining how the author himself sought out the profound view.

2.2.1. The unified gnosis of blissful emptiness is explained under three headings: (2.2.1.1) recognizing all phenomena as manifestations of just the gnosis of blissful emptiness; (2.2.1.2) reocgnizing that appearances and emptiness are a unity, and (2.2.1.3) how to apply these insights to the mind.

2.2.1.1. The first point, in turn, is divided into (2.2.1.1.1) the actual clarification and (2.2.1.1.2) how the ultimate result depends on the indivisible bliss and emptiness.

2.2.1.1.1. The actual clarification of the point that all phenomena are a manifestation of just the single gnosis of blissful emptiness

The root text reads:

Various dualities are the mother's smiling mask;
The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth is the mother's lies;
My infallible mother has been deceiving me!
So I hope my big brother, dependent origination, will save me.

The meaning of these lines is this. The aspect of an external object and the appearance aspect of the internal mind that is observing the object—regardless of whether they are pure or impure—are manifestations of the mother, the extremely subtle mind-wind, and are as fake as a deceitfully smiling mask.

The cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, as well as various experiences of happiness and suffering are not naturally real in the mind-wind itself. They are just lies and revealed as mere appearances. Thus, the conceptual thoughts of the karmic wind, the web of *saṃsāra*, are emanated from the manifestations of the infallible mother, the natural emptiness or the extremely subtle mind-wind. And ordinary beings like us have been deceived by these.

[5a] Therefore, it is saying that "**I hope my big brother, dependent origination,**" which is the conventional method aspect and the accumulation of merit, will empower the gnosis of great bliss, will accomplish the magical body of pure and impure qualities, and "**will save me**" from the fears of cyclic existence.

2.2.1.1.2. How the ultimate result depends on the indivisible bliss and emptiness. This has two parts: (2.2.1.1.2.1) showing that to accomplish the resultant unified body solely depends on the gnosis of blissful emptiness and (2.2.1.1.2.2) the reason that this liberates.

2.2.1.1.2.1. Showing that to accomplish the resultant unified body solely depends on the gnosis of blissful emptiness.

The root text reads:

Ultimately, it is my hope that I will be liberated
By the sole kindness of my elderly mother;
If the duality is real as it appears,
There would be no way even for buddhas of the three times to save me.

The meaning of these lines:

Ultimately, if you meditate on the elderly mother—the extremely subtle mind-wind, which is free from all proliferations and the very gnosis of blissful

emptiness—as the sole vital force of the path to enlightenment, you will be liberated from the bindings of the two obscurations.[287]

However, even though I hope such, if dual phenomena of apprehended object and apprehending subject are in fact real as they appear to ordinary beings like us, there would be no way to save me even for all the buddhas of the three times.

It is saying that if the mode of appearance is real as how dual phenomena appear to us existing from each of their own rights, then their intrinsic defects would exist independently. If that is the case, there would be neither eliminating defects nor increasing excellences. In this regard, neither *nirvāṇa* nor omniscience would be possible.

2.2.1.1.2.2. That this liberates

The root text reads:

Various changes are my unchanging mother's manifestations;
Therefore, liberation is possible.

The meaning of these lines:

If phenomena—apprehended objects and apprehending subjects—were naturally existent as they appear to us, liberation from cyclic existence would be impossible. [5b] However, the various changes of dependently arisen things are manifestations of the eternally unchanging gnosis of blissful emptiness, which is known as the mother. Therefore, it is saying that by the power of meditation, the winds which move discursive thoughts are to be gathered in the indestructible drop at the heart; based on that, you can be liberated from conceptual thoughts of apprehended object and apprehending subject.

[287] The two obscurations (*dve āvaraṇe*, *sgrib gnyis*) are the obscuration of mental afflictions (*kleśāvaraṇa*, *nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa*) and the obscuration of knowledge (*jñeyāvaraṇa*, *shes bya'i sgrib pa*).

2.2.1.2. The point that the appearance and emptiness are a unity

This has two sections: (2.2.1.2.1) the actual point and (2.2.1.2.2) identifying the gnosis of blissful emptiness.

2.2.1.2.1. The actual point that the appearance and emptiness are a unity

The root text reads:

The inexpressible mother, who is by no means real,
Has a false implication for that which pretends to be interdependent;
In this alone, there is a meaning to understand.
My elderly father who is not found after being sought
Is nowhere but where my mother is found.
When my elderly father is found in my mother's embrace,
Both my kind parents are said to protect me.

The meaning of these lines is this.

The inexpressible mother, who is ultimately not real, is the luminosity, the dharma body, but due to impure dispositions, the karmic wind fluctuates. So, one should understand that dependent origination, which variously pretends or appears to be pure or impure, and emptiness—the mother—are mutually interdependent, as opposed to being real in their own rights.

Moreover, the gnosis of great bliss, denoted by the term "elderly father," which was not found as a designated object after being sought through the conventional aspects of method, is found in presciely (*de ga*) the state of emptiness—the elderly mother.

Here, in accordance with the esoteric system, the elderly father—the gnosis of great bliss—is found as inseparably embracing the mother—the luminosity, which causes the winds to enter, abide, and dissolve into the central channel through one's focus on the essential point with regards to the vajra body. These kind parents—the gnosis of blissful emptiness—will protect their children, like us, from the disadvantages of the two obscurations. [6a]

2.2.1.2.2. Identifying the gnosis of blissful emptiness

The root text reads:

My mother's face, neither *one* nor *another*,
Seems to reflect as ungraspable
On the mirror of the big brother, dependent origination;
Yet, lunatic beings like me have not analyzed it!

The meaning of these lines is this. The luminous mind is differentially not identical with its empty ground, while the mother's nature is not separate from it. Although that mother's face, which is like a reflection on the mirror—the illusory body—of the big brother, is seen as if a rainbow, the ungraspable pure body and pure mind—the illusory body and the luminosity of reality—exist as the indivisibility of the body and mind. Nevertheless, lunatic ordinary beings who are bound by discursive thoughts of the karmic wind do not have the slightest idea of it.

2.2.1.3. How to apply these insights to the mind

There are two sections: (2.2.1.3.1) the actual point, and (2.2.1.3.2) refutations of errors made by some followers of our system.

2.2.1.3.1. The actual point about applying these insights.

The root text reads:

By the virtue of Mañjuśrīgarbha showing a good example,
Brought by the wind of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti's legacy,
I hope, without the difficulties of searching from far-away,
To see my mother, who has always been with me.

The meaning of these lines is this. There are many difficult points in the treatises that teach the general view, such as the *Collection of Reasoning*,[288] the

[288] The *Collection of Reasoning* refers to a set of five or six texts—(1) the *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way, Called "Wisdom,"* (2) the *Sixty Verses of Reasoning*, (3) the *Finely Woven*, (4)

Clear Words,[289] and the *Introduction to the Middle*[290]; and also in those that teach the unique gnosis of blissful emptiness, such as the *Summary*,[291] the

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the *Seventy Verses of Emptiness*, (5) the *Refutation of Accusations*, and (6) either the *Akutobhayā's Commentary* or the *Precious Garland*—all found in the Tibetan canon being attributed to Nāgārjuna. The list of the texts in Tibetan writings is often counted differently.

1. Nāgārjuna. Jñānagarbha & Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan (tr.). 1. Hasumati & Pa tshab Nyi ma grags; 2. Kanaka & Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (revis.). *Prajñā-nāma-mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, *Dbu ma rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3824, dbu ma, *tsa*, fol. 1b1-19a6.
2. Nāgārjuna. Mutitaśrī & Pa tshab lo tsā ba Nyi ma grags (tr.). *Yuktiṣaṣṭikākārikā-nāma*, *Rigs pa drug cu pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3825, dbu ma, *tsa*, fol. 20b1-22b6.
3. Nāgārjuna. Ānanda & Grags 'byor shes rab (tr.). *Vaidalyasūtra-nāma*, *Zhib mo rnam par 'thag pa zhes bya ba'i mdo*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3826, dbu ma, *tsa*, fol. 22b6-24a6.
4. Nāgārjuna. Gzhon nu mchog, Gnan Dar ma grags, & Khu (tr.). *Śūnyatāsaptatikārikā-nāma*, *Ston pa nyid bdun cu pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3827, dbu ma, *tsa*, fol. 24a6-27a1.
5. Nāgārjuna. Jñānagarbha & Ska ba dpal brtsegs rakṣita (tr.). Jayananda & Khu Mdo sde 'bar (revis.). *Vigrahavyāvartanīkārikā-nāma*, *Rtsod pa bzlog pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3828, dbu ma, *tsa*, fol. 27a1-29a7.
6. Nāgārjuna. Jñānagarbha & Klu'i rgyal mtshan (tr.). *Mūlamadhyamaka-vṛtti-akutobhayā*, *Dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa ga las 'jigs med*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3829, dbu ma, *tsa*, fol. 29b1-99a7.

Or,

Nāgārjuna. Jñānagarbha & Klu'i rgyal mtshan (tr.). Kanakavarma & Pa tshab Nyi ma grags (revis.). *Rājaparikathāratnāvali*, *Rgyal po la gtam bya ba rin po che'i phreng ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D4158, spring yig, *ge*, fol. 107a1-126a4.

[289] Candrakīrti. Mahāsumati & Pa tshab lo tsā ba Nyi ma grags (tr.). Kanakavarman & Pa tshab lo tsā ba Nyi ma grags (revis.). *Mūlamadhyamakavṛttiprasannapadā-nāma*, *Dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa tshig gsal ba zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3860, dbu ma, *'a*, fol. 1b1-200a7.

[290] Candrakīrti. Tilakakalaśa & Pa tshab lo tsā ba Nyi ma grags (tr.). Kanakavarma & Pa tshab lo tsā ba Nyi ma grags (revis.). *Madhyamakāvatāra-nāma*, *Dbu ma la 'jug pa zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D3861, dbu ma, *'a*, fol. 201b1-219a7.

[291] Nāgārjuna. Śraddhākaravarman & Rin chen bzang po (tr.). *Piṇḍīkṛtasādhana*, *Sgrub pa'i thabs mdor byas pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D1796, rgyud, *ngi*, fol. 1b1-11a2.

Integrated with Sūtras[292] and the *Brilliant Lamp*.[293] The Great Lord Lama Tsongkhapa—Youthful Mañjughoṣa, leaving behind his dark blue hair-knots, and manifesting as a spiritual mentor, who is complete in possessing the three seats[294]—nakedly explained those difficult points generally in all his eloquent teachings, particularly in his *Interwoven Commentaries of the Four*,[295] which is

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[292] Nāgārjuna. Dharmaśrībhadra & Rin chen bzang po (tr.). *Śrīguhyasamājamahāyogatantrotpattikramasādhana-sūtramelāpaka-nāma*, *Rnal 'byor chen po'i rgyud dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i bskyed pa'i rim pa bsgom pa'i thabs mdo dang bsres pa zhes bya ba*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D1797, rgyud, *ngi*, fol. 11a2-15b1.

[293] Candrakīrti. Śraddhākaravarman, Rin chen bzang po, Śrījñānakara, & 'Gos khug pa Lhas btsas (tr.). Nag po & 'Gos khug pa Lhas btsas (revis.). *Pradīpoddyotana-nāma-ṭīkā*, *Sgron ma gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba'i rgya cher bshad pa*, Sde dge bstan 'gyur, Toh. No D1785, rgyud, *ha*, fol. 1b1-201b2.

[294] *gdan gsum tshang ba* - three seats of completeness (tathagatas as aggregates & elements, bodhisattvas as sense-bases, gatekeepers as times & views) [JV].

[295] The *Interwoven Commentaries of the Four ('Grel pa bzhi sbrags)* include the *Root Tantra of Guhyasamāja (Gsang ba 'dus pa'i rtsa rgyud)*, together with its *Supplementary Tantra (Rgyud phyi ma)*, and three commentarial works by Tsongkhapa on the tantra. The three commentarial works of Tsongkhapa are his *Abbreviated Outline to "Illuminating Lamp" (Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rtsa ba'i rgyud sgron ma rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i rgya chen bshad pas 'cha pa'i sab cad bsdus don)*, *Annotations to "Illuminating Lamp" (Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i tshig don ji bzhin 'byed pa'i mchan gyi yang 'grel)*, and *Precious Sprout of Final Resolution (Rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i dka' ba'i gnas kyi mtha' gcod rin po che'i myu gu)*.

1. The root tantra: Śraddhākaravarman & Rin chen bzang po (tr.) and Ravīndra & Chos rje dpal (re.). *Sarvatathāgata-kāya-vāk-citta-rahasyo guhyasamāja-nāma-mahā-kalparāja*, *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi gsang chen gsang ba 'dus pa zhes bya ba brtag pa'i rgyal po chen po*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur, Toh. No D442, rgyud, *ca*, fol. 90a1-148a6.

The *Supplementary Tantra* to the *Root Tantra of Guhyasamāja* is an extra canonical text, yet its authenticity is commonly accepted in the major Tibetan Buddhist schools. Later editions of Tsongkhapa's Collected Works printed in Kunbum, Labrang, and Derge include this *Supplementary Tantra* in addition to the *Root Tantra*. Tsong kha pa. *Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rtsa ba'i rgyud rgyud phyi ma dang bcas pa*, Gsung 'bum, Sku 'bum, *ca*, fol. 1-102a3.

2. Tsong kha pa. *Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rtsa ba'i rgyud sgron ma rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i rgya chen bshad pas 'cha pa'i sab cad bsdus don*, Gsung 'bum, Toh. No 5283, Zhol, *ca*, fol. 1-27a5.

3. Tsong kha pa. *Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i tshig don ji bzhin 'byed pa'i mchan gyi yang 'grel*, Gsung 'bum, Toh. No 5282, Zhol, *nga*, fol. 1-476a3.

4. Tsong kha pa. *Rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bshad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i dka' ba'i gnas kyi mtha' gcod rin po che'i myu gu*, Gsung 'bum, Toh. No 5284, Zhol, *ca*, fol. 1-138a3.

the only lamp for the three worlds, as well as in his *Lamp to Illuminate*,[296] *Complete in One Seat*,[297] etc. [6b] Thanks to the beneficence of these teachings, we, unlike the translators and scholars of the past, do not need to go far-away and endure hardships to find answers. Yet, we are able to see directly the pleasant face of the elderly mother—the luminosity—who, although primordially abiding co-emergently with our mind, is covered by obscuring overlays of proliferations. Therefore, it says, "**I hope**."

2.2.1.3.2. Refutations of errors made by some followers of our system

The root text reads:

Now there seem to be amongst us, some scholars,
Who are attached to terms such as "substantial" and "real;"
Ignoring the fluctuating appearances,
They seem to seek something with horns to negate.
On my mother's unobscured face,
There is nothing to be said about such fluctuations.
When there are excessive explanations off the key point,
I'm afraid that my elderly mother runs away.
Things may exist, but they appear not in the way
In which they habitually appear: opposing and contradicting one another.
When parents in love are inseparable and cheerful,
They seem to be tender and pleasant to one another.

The meaning of these lines is this. Today, most scholars and logicians of our Great Ganden tradition, being attached to limits of the textbook explanations, want to negate the mere terms "substantial," and "real." However, doing so, they are afraid of falling into the extreme of annihilation if they negate the apparent fluctuating aspects that directly appear to our perceptions. This is absolutely wrong. Whenever a phenomenon appears to us, it appears to be an exclusive reality that exists in its own right. After negating such a reality, during the time

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[296] Tsong kha pa. *Rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i man ngag rim pa lnga rab tu gsal ba'i sgon me*, Gsung 'bum, Toh. No 5302, Zhol, *ja*, fol. 1-312b3.

[297] Tsong kha pa. *Rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal bsang ba 'dus pa'i rdzogs rim rim lnga gdan rdzogs kyi dmar khrid*, Gsung 'bum, Toh. No 5314, Zhol, *nya*, fol. 1-58a6.

of finding the correct view, two distinct aspects—the aspect of mere objective appearance and the aspect of objective appearance as existing in its own right—should be separated. [7a] At that time, without negating the mere objective appearance, one should negate the aspect of the object existing in its own right. Instead of negating this dualistic appearance, the scholars of these days, since the time of being novice learners, seem to be trying to find something to negate, such as "substantial" or "real," as if it is something else with horns. Here, the mother is the luminosity, which is the dharma body; her face, which is free from obscurations of discursive thoughts, is the face of apprehension. On this face, there is no fluctuating appearance or something like an exclusive reality whatsoever. Therefore, this fluctuating appearance is itself what needs to be negated. Although there are many excessive explanations, we are not able to see the elderly mother—the luminosity and the dharma body—because the key point is difficult to find. Hence, it says, "**I'm afraid that my elderly mother runs away**."

Then, although phenomena exist, when they appear to us as having exclusive reality, they do not appear as something radically different as deer horns. The mother and the elderly father—the luminous emptiness and the gnosis of great bliss—have never separated and have always been cheerfully embracing each other in love. Because the parents are free from the pain of proliferations—the ordinary fixation on appearances—it says, "**They seem to be reciprocally tender**" and "**happy**" that they have successively attained both the impure and pure illusory bodies.

Saying "**reciprocally tender and happy**" is extremely important. The ordinary appearance and its fixation, mentioned above, are a tremendous pain of proliferations. The reciprocal tender state is an aspect of their status of attainment. [7b] In this regard, fulfilling goals, one becomes happy and joyous.

2.2.2 Describing the assertions of proponents of the other tenets

There are three sections: (2.2.2.1) the actual point, (2.2.2.2) eliminating the unnecessary points and giving proper instructions on the exact point, and (2.2.2.3) requesting forbearance in the face of any errors.

2.2.2.1. Regarding the actual point, there are explanations of (2.2.2.1.1) the positions of the Indians and (2.2.2.1.2) the viewpoints of the early Tibetans.

2.2.2.1.1. The positions of the Indians

The root text reads:

The Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Vijñaptivādin, and the three abbots of the East
Variously try to label the mother,
Who is in the form of a great white elephant:
"Matter" as if she were a beaming striped tiger,
"Subject" as if she were a brainless crazy monkey,
"Stable non-duality" as if she were a powerful bear;
Yet, they all have lost the elderly mother.

The meaning of these lines is this. Not recognizing the luminous emptiness, which is like the form of a great white elephant, the Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, and Cittamātrin even as well as the three Svātantrika Mādhyamika abbots of the East—Śāntarakṣita, Jñānagarbha, and Kamalaśīla—variously label it. Here, the luminous emptiness is excellently labeled with the term "**great elephant**," which is used for the Great Vehicle or its stability. It is explained from the perspective that the luminosity in this context is also the main path of the Unexcelled Yoga Tantra, which is the foremost of the Great Vehicle. By "**white**," it explains the luminosity from its aspect that is free from all proliferating defilements.

Not understanding the reality in this way, Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntikas assert real external objective matters that are beaming and manifesting as the exclusive reality. Thus, their reality would be like a "**striped tiger**" of reality. Cittamātrins assert real internal subjective self-cognition. [8a] Although they do not accept the existence of indivisible objects of knowledge, they accept a real existence; hence, their reality would be like "**brainless**." They assert that only the mind, which is really existent, roams around variously as the all phenomena; hence, their reality would be like a "**crazy monkey**." As for the three Svātantrika Mādhyamika abbots of the East, although they believe that there is no external object nor a real existence because there is no duality of apprehended object and apprehending subject, they assert that all phenomena are substantially real. They are tremendously persistent about this position; hence, their reality would

be like a "**bear**." They emphatically claim that all phenomena exist by virtue of their own uncommon mode of subsistence; hence, their reality would be "**powerful**." Regardless of all their claims, none of them sees the elderly mother—the luminous dharma body. So, it says, "**they all have lost the elderly mother**."

2.2.2.1.2. The viewpoints of the early Tibetans

The root text reads:

Many scholars and adepts of the Sakya, Nyingma, Karma, and Drügpa Kagyü traditions
Boast about the reality with various terms, such as
"Self-cognizant awareness of the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness,"
"Primordially pure and spontaneous identity of Samantabhadra,"
"Unfabricated innate Mahāmudrā," and
"Neither existent nor non-existent absence of any stand."
If any among these hits the target, that is wonderful!
Yet, I wonder what they are all pointing at!

The meaning of these lines is this. Here in Tibet, within the glorious Sakya tradition, there are traditions of public explanation and private explanation. There are also the three sub-traditions, namely Ngor, Dzong, and Gong, and others. Among these, the main one is the great secret tradition of private explanation, which was transmitted through a single lineage from the Nepalese Pamtingpa to Tsarchen. From then on, the lineage slightly expanded. When the scholar adept Jamyang Zhepa composed a commentary to this lineage, because of his lack of familiarity, he erroneously explained about the tradition to be established by Tsarchen.

[8b] According to this tradition, the insight of the ungraspable union of clarity and emptiness is asserted as the ultimate natural state.

Within the Nyingma secret-mantra tradition, there are three scriptural divisions of *sūtra* (*mdo*), illusion (*sgyu*), and mind (*sems*) and three classes of mind (*sems*), expanse (*klong*), and instruction (*man ngag*). Moreover, in the expanse class, many sub-divisions such as namely white, black, and variegated. Among these, the followers of the instruction class assert that the self-cognition is primordially pure in terms of faults, and that Samantabhadra, the youthful vase-like body,

whose excellences are primordially spontaneous and perfect, is the ultimate natural state.

The Kagyüpas claim that the innate Mahāmudrā—the fresh mind, which is not newly altered by intellect—is the natural state.

The followers of Tangsagpa[298] claim that the natural state is neither existent nor non-existent.

In such ways, they all superimpose their own tenets to be the ultimate path to liberation. However, although the visions of all their founders, except for that of Tangsagpa, accord our tradition, if their hasty followers still unmistakably hit the target, that is wonderful! What the followers are pointing at as the ultimate natural state is a mere conventional state of the mind as opposed to the actual natural state. Therefore, about these claims about the ultimate natural state, the root text reads, "I wonder…" expressing doubt at the followers of those traditions.

2.2.2.2. Eliminating the meaningless points and correctly instructing the exact point

The root text reads:

External objects are not destroyed, so do not worry!
O followers of the two schools of external reality, be pleased!
Without self-cognition, cognizing validly is acceptable. [9a]
So, O Vijñaptivādins, be pleased!
Without intrinsic nature, dependent origination is vivid.
So, O three abbots of the East, be pleased!
Clarity and emptiness can be held as uncontradictory.
So, O lineage holders of the private explanation tradition, be at ease!
Though primordially pure, good and evil are still acceptable.
So, O mad knowledge-holders, do not cling at the purity!
Though being fabricated and meditated, the innate nature is preserved.
So, O senior realized masters, do not insist!

[298] Zhang Tangsagpa Yeshé Jüngné (Zhang thang sag pa Ye shes 'byung gnas, b. 11th cen.)

The freedom from proliferations of existence and nonexistence is acceptable.
So, O stubborn logicians, do not get all riled up!

The meaning of these lines is this. The assertion that external objects conventionally exist yet are naturally non-existent is uncontradictory. Therefore, the followers of the two schools of external reality should not unnecessarily worry. So, they are asked, "**be pleased!**" with us, who claim the absence of an inherent nature as the natural state.

When one sees inwardly, there will be no independent subjectivity found. However, valid cognitions comprehending their objects are still acceptable. Therefore, the Vijñaptivādins are asked, "**be pleased!**"

Phenomena do not exist in their own rights, yet the relations of actions and agents are still acceptable as mere appearances. Therefore, the three abbots of the East are asked, "**be pleased!**"

Although phenomena do not exist in their own rights, the clarity of the mind and the emptiness of the mind are possible to be uncontradictory as mere appearances. Therefore, the lineage holders of the private explanation tradition are asked, "**be at ease!**"

Ultimately, there is no good or evil, but both are acceptable as mere appearance. Therefore, the mad knowledge-holders are asked, "**do not cling at the purity!**"

When, having understood and fabricated the natural state of the mind via reasoning, [9b] one meditates, the luminous Mahāmudrā will arise. Therefore, the senior realized masters of the Karma and Drügpa Kagyü traditions are asked that "**do not insist**," without claiming that one needs to meditate on only unfabricated mind.

We can assert that the freedom from the two extremes of eternalism and nihilism is the natural state. Therefore, the logicians of Tangsagpa, who stubbornly do not rely on the supreme beings, are instructed that "**do not be hectic!**" as possessed by demons, and to enter into the correct path.

2.2.2.3. Requesting an excuse

The root text reads:

Those who lack extensive textual trainings
May not even know the way of conventionality.
It is not that I do not respect you;
Please excuse me, if you are offended!

The meaning of these lines is this. These days, the followers of the Sakya, Nyingma, Karma, Drügpa Kagyü, and other traditions are trained little in epistemological teachings, so there may be issues for them due to lack of knowledge about the way of conventionality. It is not that I do not respect you since I appropriately know the karma of forsaking the Dharma. However, besides the discussion of profound meanings, there may be issues of tenets touched. Thus, it says, "**Please excuse me, if you are offended!**"

2.2.3. Explaining how the author himself sought out the profound view of dependent origination

There are three stages: (2.2.3.1) the relied texts for the search, (2.2.3.2) how to obtain the view after search, and (2.2.3.3) recalling the beneficence of the obtainment.

2.2.3.1. The relied texts for the search

The root text reads:

Although I am not an omniscient man,
I have skilled in riding a good horse of my forefathers' works
With endurance and devotion.
Thus, I hope to cross the only impassible cliff.

The meaning of these lines is this. I, Rölpé Dorjé, am not a man, who has perfected his physical strength of a direct intellect to see the luminosity. [10a] Yet, I am skilled in how to ride, with endurance and devotion, the good horse of my forefathers—the teachings of Nāgārjuna and the father Tsongkhapa, who is the second conqueror, and instructions of my kind guru. Nevertheless, although

conceited individuals know the meaning of words, at the time of practice, they reach or arrive at nowhere but the great cliff of karma and afflictions. Hence, it says that "**I hope to cross**" swiftly the impassible cliff.

2.2.3.2. How to obtain the view after search

The root text reads:

No need to search because the seeker is all there is.
No need to cling to reality because all is false.
No need to negate the falsity because it is the reality itself.
The absence of nihilism and eternalism is enough for relaxation.

The meaning of these lines is this. The luminosity, the innately born gnosis, is not something one needs to search externally because it is indivisible with the seeker. One should not cling on dependent origination, which is nothing more than mere appearance, as the reality because it is false. One should not conventionally negate the mere appearance, because although it is not ultimately existent, it is functional in terms of action and agent as mere appearance. Thus, it is the reality and nondeceptive. Because the mere appearance is conventionally existent, it is not nihilated. Because it is not ultimately existent, it is not eternal. Because one can rest without moving from the sphere, the luminosity, free from all proliferations, it says, "**enough for relaxation**."

2.2.3.3. Recalling the beneficence of the obtainment

The root text reads:

Though not seeing the mother, by mere terms,
I feel like encountering my kind parents,
Whom I lost for a long time, right here and now.
How gracious the Nāgārjuna father and sons!
How gracious Tsongkhapa Lobsang Dragpa!
How gracious my kind guru!
To repay their kindness, I revere the mother!

[10b] The meaning of these lines is this. Although I have not directly seen the mother—the luminous emptiness—as the reality,[299] by the instructions of my guru, I feel like encountering the father and mother—the gnosis of great bliss and the luminous dharma body, respectively—whom I lost long since the beginningless time, right in front of me as mere terms and designations. Therefore, the Nāgārjuna father and sons, Lord Tsongkhapa, and my kind guru are greatly gracious. As to repay their kindness, meditating through the mother unborn luminosity—the gnosis of great bliss—one can swiftly actualize the final *nirvāṇa*, relying on which living beings will be extensively benefitted. Thus, the author says that he reveres the mother with offerings that please all conquerors.

3. THE CONCLUSION

There are three parts: (3.1) dedicating the merit, (3.2) rejoicing own attainment of the view, and (3.3) the colophon statements.

3.1. Dedicating the merit

The root text reads:

May the unborn, inexpressible elderly mother,
Having met with her child, the awareness,
With the utterly joyous celebration of perfect conducts,
Guide all kind mother beings to everlasting bliss!

The meaning of the lines is this. The mother is difficult to describe verbally as how she is directly realized to be ultimately unborn. Thus, the author is praying: by the virtue of explaining all these above, having integrated the elderly mother luminosity and the son luminosity, who knows the meaning of emptiness, as indivisible, may he guide all kind mother beings to the everlasting bliss—the supreme pleasant grove of union—through the utterly joyous celebration of

[299] The xylograph with a handwritten correction seems to read erroneously as *mngon sum du mthong yang* ("Although I have directly seen…"). Based on the context, the translation corrects it as *mngon sum du ma mthong yang* ("Although I have not directly seen…").

perfect conducts in which all appearances arise as the enjoyment of blissful emptiness.

3.2. Rejoicing own attainment of the view

The root text reads:

E ma! I, Rölpé Dorjé!
A o! The dance of joy!
O na! Performing it here!
A ho ya! Revering the three jewels!

The meaning of these lines is this. The author says that we should obtain the vajra-union, which permanently enjoys the gnosis of blissful emptiness symbolized by the *e* and *ma* syllables—the joyous attainment of everlasting bliss symbolized by the *a* and *o* syllables. [11a] Then, we should perform the dance of union for the sake of others' benefits here in the *o* and *na* syllables—in all the inanimate and animate worlds—and completely expel the ordinary fixation on appearances. Thereupon, by means of teaching the Dharma of illusory body, luminosity, and the union, which are symbolized by the *a*, *ho*, and *ya* syllables—the method that guides all living beings—we should swiftly shake off the whole *saṃsāra* from its root and strive for the method to please the conquerors.

3.3. The colophon statements

The root text reads:

This deceptive words as a melody of an echo for recognizing the mother were composed by Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, who deeply admires the Great Middle Way, at the mystically emanated great Mount Wutai. The scribe was the monk Geleg Namkha.

The meaning is this. This is a dependently originated melody of an echo accordingly demonstrated how it merely appear. The meanings for the one, who deeply admires the union of the two traditions—the Great Middle Way, the

supreme Prasaṅgika system, and the Unexcelled Yoga Tantra—and so on are easy to understand.

To conclude,

The venerable guru, the sole protector of the three worlds, the crown-prince of the Sugarcane One[300]—the guru of all living beings,
Who, by the scent of fully blossomed wish-fulfilling tree of the ten powers[301] grown from the whole world, which holds the supremely virtuous wealth of the three times,
Is victorious over the entire faults of the densely thick forests of this world where the five denigrating corruptions have spread—is the primordial protector,
Who is the lamp of the teachings of the nondual emptiness and compassion, the precious collection at the center of an immortal lake, the gnosis of knowledge eloquently explained by the *sūtras* and *tantras*.[302]

> [11b] His eloquent teaching is like a tune played by a harp,
> Like a speech of Brahmā,
> Like an echo for the fool, and
> Like a thorn to the hearts of conceited elephants.

Just like river water variously appears and functions
As variously as pus and blood, nectar, and so forth,
All conventional erroneous phenomena
Directly demonstrate the ultimate nature, the unobtained correct Middle Way.

> On the deep and extensive ocean of mind
> Where all the tokens of phenomena can be found within an instance,
> How come the form of the moon—

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[300] The Sugarcane One is an epithet of the Buddha.

[301] The powers are the powers over (1) life, (2) mind, (3) material things, (4) karma, (5) birth, (6) aspirations, (7) prayers, (8) miracles, (9) gnosis, and (10) Dharma.

[302] As it is the case in the opening eulogy to Changkya Rölpé Dorjé, this concluding eulogy also encodes his ordination name Yeshe Tenpé Drönme (semantically meaning, "the lamp of the gnosis teachings") in itself. To mark those words, "the lamp of teachings" and "gnosis" are underlined.

The luminous dharma body—is invisible and does not reflect?

When the reflection of the lord of Lanka—the indivisible bliss and emptiness—
Arises on the precious wall of the wise's heart,
Why does Hanumanta of my mind
Not perform a dance of joy?[303]

Just like the sunlight is helpless to a north-facing cave,
This eloquent teaching will not benefit those who,
Ignoring Sītā of the holy dharma, kidnapped by Rāvaṇa's magic of the eight worldly dharmas,[304]
Hunt after the deer of mere appearances.[305]

The glorious Heruka, the supreme *deity*—
The highest *deity* on the crowns of conquerors' *heirs* and
Their *heirs*—performs the dance of the vajra-holder's three vows to make *all* glorious guides
With the strength of the ten powers, for the sake of disseminating this eloquent teaching to delight *all*.

How can the crab of my mind cross
The deep and lofty ocean of your eloquent teaching? [12a]
Nonetheless, by a request of supreme beings,
I have written this in accordance with positions of Guru Mañjughoṣa.

I possess an empty fame as high as the pinnacle of *saṃsāra*,
Yet my confidence to explore the correct meaning of eloquent teachings is low.
I have no ability to compete the teaching-holders;

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[303] Here the fictional characters of the ancient Indian epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa* are metaphorically used. After searching the lord of Lanka and glimpsing his guise, Hanumanta becomes joyous to save Sītā. Likewise, the passage seems to suggest that finding a hint for the indivisible bliss and emptiness, one should be delighted.

[304] The eight worldly dharmas are attachments to (1) gain, (2) pleasure, (3) praise, and (4) fame, and aversions to (5) loss, (6) pain, (7) blame, and (8) infamy.

[305] Here the famous fictional characters of the ancient Indian epic poem *Rāmāyaṇa* are metaphorically used. The passage seems to suggest that the text will not help you if you ignore the Holy Dharma overpowered by the eight worldly dharmas as though Rāma, ignoring Sītā who was kidnapped by Rāvaṇa, goes to hunt games.

An ordinary sandalwood cannot be compared the fine sandalwood of Mount Malaya.

> With the everlasting river confluences of this virtuous merit,
> May the turbid defilement to the Buddha's teachings be completely cleansed!
> May all beings flow with the Ganges of purely assembled virtues
> To the ocean of innate omniscience!

May the precious teachings of the golden-crown tradition—
Housed in the victorious palace of the intellect that possesses the ten powers,
Dominated all with the everlasting glory of scriptural system of *sūtra* and *tantra*—
Whose fame of victory over the battle with the opponent *asuras* spread throughout the three realms, always flourish to all directions!

Changkya Chogtrül Rinpoché, the supreme reincarnation of the incomparable Excellency, together with the Drübkhang reincarnation requested that there was a need for a commentary in conjunction with the exoteric teachings on the *Song of Realization* of Changkya Rölpay Dorjé, the crown adornment of all scholars and adepts. In response to this request, the one, who is endowed with faith in the Excellency himself and who is renowned as the Achitu Nomün Han, the illuminator of the teachings of the Yellow Hat tradition with the His Excellency's instructions, composed this commentary at his residence, the palace of Zungjuk Dewa Chenpo, in Zhidé Ganden Samtenling Monastery.[306] The scribe is the secretary monk Gyatso Pelbar,[307] the faithful and diligent, who aspires to virtues. Jayantu![308] Maṅgalaṃ![309]

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[306] Zhidé Ganden Samtenling (*Bzhi sde dga' ldan bsam gtan gling*) is a Gelug monastery in Lhasa.

[307] Gyatso Pelbar (Rgya mtsho dpal 'bar, d.u.)

[308] "Jayantu!" is a Sanskrit phrase meaning "Be victorious!"

[309] "Maṅgalaṃ!" is a Sanskrit phrase meaning "Be auspicious!"