

A Roll Of Thunder From The Void

Vajrakīla texts of the Northern Treasures Tradition

Volume Two

annotated translations

by

Rig-'dzin rdo-rje



WANDEL VERLAG berlin 2010



Khordong Commentary Series V

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ISBN 978-3-942380-05-8

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Published by **WANDEL VERLAG** berlin 2010

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First Edition, 2010

edition khordong is the publication series of the non-profit association Khordong e.V. in Germany, published by **WANDEL VERLAG** berlin.

Please visit our websites: www.khordong.net & www.wandel-verlag.de
Contact: edition@khordong.net & mail@wandel-verlag.de

Typesetting and design by Andreas Ruft, Berlin, Germany
Cover design based on a template by Lisi Frischengruber, Vienna, Austria

Printed at EU on 100% chlorine & acid free paper



WANDEL VERLAG berlin 2010



ITI SAMAYA

Refuge in the Triple Gem, it is said, should be taken with the attitude of an ill person seeking health and wellbeing. The Buddha is the great physician, the Dharma is his medicine, and the Sangha actively supports and assists the patient in every way that it can. The reader should be aware that the teachings contained in this book consist of very potent medicine indeed, compounded of various poisons. And, as with all pernicious poisons, the novice should keep away and avoid making contact, while those who have some knowledge should uproot those poisons and apply the antidote, for only the skilled master physician can be trusted to take the essence of those poisons and utilise them in the preparation of medicine. Intended for lions (i.e. bodhisattva sons and daughters of the Buddha), this medicine is available only on prescription. It to be utilised by Vajrayana initiates only and is not available over the counter, on demand. Should this book reach the hands of one who lacks the proper authorising empowerment, bestowed by a competent master of the lineage, please put it to one side.

Long ago, in ancient times, the demon Rudra (epitome of ego-grasping ignorance) attained his condition of dreadful power through misuse of the sacred teachings. The enlightened Buddhas consequently took on the demonic appearance of Rudra as a subterfuge and, following the demon's inevitable overthrow, his bodily form, accoutrements and palatial home were all adopted by the victorious Buddhas as their playground, the joyful abode of naturally blissful wisdom.

The story of the subjugation of Rudra indicates that all beings, no matter how morally reprehensible they may be, do not lack the potential for salvation, and, furthermore, the appearance of the demon to be subdued actually provided an historical occasion for

the manifestation in this world of the wrathful Mahayoga tantras. His subjugation is thus to be celebrated both inwardly, as the enlightenment of our own defiled consciousness, and outwardly, as the occasion for the revelation of the teachings.

The yogic process of *utpattikrama*, as taught in this book, involves recreating the world from the seed of compassion within the essential sphere of voidness. The vajra world, thus produced, is the actual mandala of Rudra as seen through the enlightened eyes of the fully awakened Buddhas. Anyone who lacks this pure vision, however, entering the mandala without the pure intention of the Buddhas, sets himself firmly upon the downward path of returning to Rudra. Meditating upon the lustful and angry nature of the demon is very dangerous for those whose wisdom minds were not made clearly manifest at the time of empowerment. As it is said: "Meditating upon the perverse form of Rudra, one becomes Rudra in all his depravity." Such a calamity is to be avoided at all costs. May the Lords of Wisdom, Compassion and Empowerment protect us from downfall!

Orgyan Rig-'dzin rDo-rje
Oxford, March 2008

Contents

INTRODUCTION

scope and structure of the work	xi
Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las and the Great Fifth Dalai Lama	xviii
<i>ki kang, sri & mi kha</i>	xxvii

CHAPTER ONE

Byang gter rdo rje phur pa dril sgrub (arranged by Padma 'phrin-las) **A SHARP WEAPON WHICH CONQUERS MĀRA'S UNRULY ARMIES**

lineage prayer	3
[going for refuge]	
[developing <i>bodhicitta</i>]	
generating the deity as oneself	13
establishing the boundaries	
the outer boundary	15
the inner boundary	15
the secret boundary	16
making confession	17
opening the symbolic doors	18
saluting the symbols	19
taking the oath	19
receiving blessings	20
blessing the offerings	
the outer offerings	21
the inner offerings	22
meditation on the three <i>samādhi</i>	22
producing seats for the deities	25
generating the deities	
<i>cakra</i> of the <i>dharmakāya</i>	26
<i>cakra</i> of the <i>sambhogakāya</i>	28
meditation on the body <i>maṇḍala</i>	35
<i>cakra</i> of the <i>nirmāṇakāya</i>	40
generating the goddesses of the gates and the oath-bound protectors	41
empowerment of the life force	42
invitation of the <i>jñānasattva</i>	43
paying them homage	44

	merging into non-duality	44
	presenting the offerings	
	the outer offerings	45
	presenting the inner offerings and receiving <i>siddhi</i>	
	<i>amṛta</i> medicine	46
	<i>bali</i> cake	54
	<i>rakta</i> blood	55
	the secret offerings	
	killing the three poisons	55
	union	58
	praise	58
viii	<i>mantra</i> recitation	60
	receiving the blessings of sound and emptiness	62
	offerings	70
	praise	71
	summoning the <i>vidyādhara</i>	71
	[offering to the protectors]	82
	offering to the assembly	82
Contents	the initial portion with deep respect	83
	the middle portion with a confession of sins	84
	the final portion of killing	86
	solemn declaration of truth	88
	dispatching the remains	89
	the dance stomp	94
	dissolution of the <i>maṇḍala</i>	95
	prayers of aspiration	96
	auspicious verses	98

CHAPTER TWO

Thugs kyi 'phrin las discovered as a *gter ma* by Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem
HEART ACTIVITY OF VAJRAKĪLA 101

CHAPTER THREE

**bCom ldan 'das rdo rje gzhon nu 'bring po spu gri'i sgrub chen gyi
chog khrigs lag len snying po rab gsal** by Rig-'dzin Padma 'phrin-las
CLEAR ELUCIDATION OF THE ESSENCE

author's homage, dedication and introduction of topics 123

section one: PREPARATION (<i>prayoga</i>)	
(1) [investigation of the site (<i>bhūparikṣā</i>)]	125
(2) acceptance of the site (<i>bhūgraha</i>)	125
(a) [acceptance from a visible landlord]	125
(b) acceptance from an invisible landlord	125
(3) purification of the site (<i>bhūśodhana</i>)	130
(a) [examination of the <i>mahoraga</i>]	130
(b) purification by means of <i>mantra</i> and <i>mudrā</i>	131
(c) purification by means of <i>samādhi</i>	131
(4) holding the site (<i>bhūparigraha</i>)	131
(5) protecting the site (<i>bhūrakṣā</i>)	137

section two: MAIN PRACTICE (<i>mauli</i>)	
(1) the outer boundary	139
(2) the intermediate boundary	145
(a) suppressing the vow-breaking demons	145
(b) fixing a plaque over the door	151
(3) the inner boundary	154
(4) the secret boundary	159
(5) erecting the <i>maṇḍala</i>	160
(a) sprinkling the ground	160
(b) blessing the threads and colours	161
(c) laying down the lines	162
(i) wisdom lines (<i>jñānasūtra</i>)	162
(ii) [activity lines (<i>karmasūtra</i>)]	165
(d) performance of the preparatory rites (<i>adhivāsana</i>)	165
(i) placement of the deities (<i>devatāpratiṣṭhāpana</i>)	165
(ii) [preparation of the flasks]	165
(iii) [preparation of the disciples]	165
(e) applying the colours	167
(f) the material requisites	169
(g) the descent of blessings	180
(h) the genuine attainment and worship	180

section three: SUBSEQUENT ACTIVITIES OF FINAL RESORT (<i>anvayavidhi</i>)	
(1) the rite of implanting the <i>kila</i>	217
(2) the three rites of pressing down, burning & hurling	237
(3) taking <i>siddhi</i>	261
(4) the sequence of follow-up rites	267

CHAPTER FOUR

Phur pa yang gsang spu gri'i las mtha' 'byung po sri non
discovered as a *gter ma* (by Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem ?)

PRESSING DOWN THE SRI (A LOST TREASURE) 275

CHAPTER FIVE

Phur pa las kyi sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa'i sngags
discovered as a *gter ma* by Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem

PRESSING DOWN THE SRI (THE ROOT TEXT) 287

CHAPTER SIX

Byang gter phur pa'i sri gnon gyi ngag 'don chog khrigs
rdo rje'i lhun po zhes bya ba by Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las

PRESSING DOWN THE SRI (VAJRA MOUNTAIN COMMENTARY)

x

Contents

introduction	299
(1) preparation	300
(2) main practice	300
(a) the manner of the arising of the Sri in former times	301
(b) the manner of their suppression in the middle period	304
(c) the manner of their suppression in the final period	316
(i) the manufacture of the effigy	316
(ii) summoning the Sri and forcing them to enter into that effigy	316
(iii) the act of suppression	326
(3) subsequent activities	329

CHAPTER SEVEN

Phur pa'i sri chung bcu gsum gnon pa'i lhan thabs rab gsal me long
by Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las

PRESSING DOWN THE SRI (UTTERLY CLEAR MIRROR APPENDIX) 361

CHAPTER EIGHT

Byang gter phur pa rgyun khyer

as edited by 'Chi-med rig-'dzin rin-po-che

A SHORT RITUAL OF VAJRAKĪLA FOR DAILY MEDITATION 375

Bibliography 387



INTRODUCTION



This present volume, incorporating eight texts associated with the deity Vajrakīla according to the tradition of the Northern Treasures (Byang-gter), is predominantly the work of Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las, the 17th century incarnation of the 14th century revealer of those treasures, and their foremost historical authority. Our opening chapter, the *sādhana* or means of accomplishment of the deity, entitled *A Sharp Weapon which Conquers Māra's Unruly Armies*, follows his personal arrangement, and many of the verses contained within it are his own composition. But it is not his own invention. As Padma 'phrin-las himself writes, "This is the liturgy for the ritual activities taken from the original old texts and arranged in clear reading order in accordance with received tradition." In his commentary, *Clear Elucidation of the Essence*, he explains, "With regard to this ritual, it never actually existed in the form of a written book. The so-called *rDo rje phur pa dril sgrub kyi phrin las* is really made up of the medium *Kīla Razor* meditation in combination with an extensive portion of ritual activity." The basic treasure texts of this system, then, are the *Black Razor Tantra*, in which the divine *maṇḍala* unfolds, and the ritual *rDo rje phur pa thugs kyi 'phrin las*. The former text was published earlier, together with the 'Bum nag, in *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue*,¹ and the latter is included as our Chapter Two, below.

It is intended that the present work be of practical value for meditators and, with that in mind, I have transcribed the original Tibetan text of much of the liturgy designed for formal recitation and juxtaposed it with its English translation, throughout.

All the recensions of these texts to which I could gain access were brought in manuscript form by Tibetan refugees fleeing the Chinese

¹ *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue*, edition khordong, Berlin 2002, in which the higher rites leading to enlightenment and the lower rites leading to the eradication of evil are extensively discussed. re-publ. 2010, Wandel Verlag



communist invasion of their country in the middle of the last century.² From these same mss, useful clear copies were made of two of our texts, and these were published by sTag-lung-rtse-sprul Rinpoche from his exile home of rDo-rje-brag monastery in Simla, North India, in 1997, in a five-volume collection of the prayers and ritual practices of the Northern Treasures Tradition (*Byang gter chos spyod*).³ Born in 1926, sTag-lung-rtse-sprul Rinpoche was recognised by the ninth Rig-'dzin chen-po of rDo-rje-brag, Chos-dbang mnyam-nyid rdo-rje, and enthroned as the *sprul sku* of sTag-lung-rtse Monastery at the age of five. When he was eight years old, he was invited to take his Dharma seat at the mother monastery of rDo-rje-brag, where he quickly gained proficiency in all the religious arts and rituals of that tradition. In 1941 he sat with the newly-enthroned tenth Rig-'dzin chen-po of rDo-rje-brag, Thub-bstan 'jig-med rnam-grol rgya-mtsho (born in Lhasa in 1936), and received with him the empowerments and transmissions of the Northern Treasures. Despite the overthrow of Tibet by the communist Chinese, rNam-grol rgya-mtsho has remained in Tibet where he has lately been active in the rebuilding of his monastery which was almost completely devastated during the 'cultural revolution.' Thus, even though the present holder of the throne of rDo-rje-brag is rNam-grol rgya-mtsho, the tenth Rig-'dzin chen-po, the lineage prayers in our texts generally do not go beyond Rig-'dzin chen-po IX, mNyam-nyid rdo-rje, who died in 1932. The single exception to this is to be found in the opening section of the first chapter where the name of my teacher, *bla ma 'Chi-med rig-'dzin*, the '*Khor gdong gter chen sprul sku*, and reference to his teacher, U-rgyan bstan-'dzin, the *sprul sku* of Ba-gnas-dgon, are included. Bowing my head, I humbly dedicate this work to them.

My previous study of the '*Bum nag*, Tibet's most authoritative literary overview of the entire tradition of Vajrakila, revealed the history of the Vajrakila doctrines and analysed their twofold purpose. The present work goes directly to the essential core and offers the reader those very meditations by means of which such twofold purpose may be accomplished. As stated in the ritual text, "Padmasambhava studied

² The only xylograph among them is the *Phur pa thugs kyi 'phrin las*.

³ *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*. Volume three: Ritual for the suppression of Sri demons, entitled Vajra Mountain (*rDo rje'i lhun po*), pp.231-270, A Sharp Weapon Which Conquers Māra's Unruly Armies (*Phur pa dril sgrub*), pp.589-636, and, The Heart Activity of Vajrakila (*Thugs kyi 'phrin las*), pp.637-666 (xylograph).

the hundred thousand sections of the *Kīlavidyottama-tantra* and then practised for twelve years in the rock cavern of gYa'-ri-gong. The ritual form of his practice is exactly the one given here." The amazing results of the great guru's meditation in gYa'-ri are well known. As it is written in the *gSol 'debs bar chad lam sel*:⁴

*At the time when you introduced the jina's doctrines [to Tibet]
 You accomplished your practice in the forest around gYa'-ri.
 The kila of your ritual service rose up to the vault of the sky
 And you caught it with a vajra gesture.
 Rolling it between the palms of your hands,
 You threw it into the sandalwood forest
 And the resulting blaze even dried up the lake.
 Thus the abode of wicked heretics was completely destroyed
 And the evil spirits [that they served] were annihilated.
 As the destroyer of Māra, you have no equal!*



xiii

Thus, for those who have studied the *'Bum nag* and wish now to absorb themselves in such powerful meditation for the destruction of Māra, this book is offered. For his generous help in providing the opportunity to write it, I give thanks to Reg Milne.

When meditating upon this ritual text according to the instructions of Rig-'dzin Padma 'phrin-las, one should always begin with the *Seven Line Prayer* and general introductory verses, such as those to be found at the beginning of the *Daily Practice* (the final chapter of the present work). Presenting, as it does, a sequence of meditations not intended for beginners, the ritual sections of 'going for refuge' and 'developing *bodhicitta*' are taken for granted in the *sādhana* and referred to as 'the preliminary practices according to rule.' By this is meant that we are dealing here with a mahāyāna Buddhist practice. The mark of a Buddhist is one who has taken refuge in the three jewels and the characteristic of the mahāyāna is *bodhicitta* or great compassion. These texts are manuals for both personal and community use, through which individuals may be ritually trained in skilful altruism. They are designed as methods for overcoming the instincts of egotistic self-interest, so that the mind may become focussed on the general welfare of the world,

⁴ A translation of which is to be found in Ngawang Zangpo, *Guru Rinpoche: His Life and Times*, Snow Lion Publications, NY, 2002, pp.260-267. Also, Padmasambhava, *The Seven Chapters of Prayer*, edition khordong, 2008, pp.240-271



and beneficial changes of great social value will be brought about in both thought and behaviour. Having become empowered to do so within the *maṇḍala* of Vajrakīla by a master *guru*, trainees may use these skilful esoteric techniques to develop a profound experiential certainty of the true nature of reality, so that they may live fearlessly in the face of worldly vicissitudes with confidence in their own ability to bless those less fortunate than themselves, and ease their suffering. Indeed, the vows of the trainee, articulated on a daily basis, state, quite unambiguously: “I engage in the great deeds of *guhyanmantra* in order to bring all living beings to maturity.”

The *sādhana* makes explicit that the ten *krodha* kings of the Vajrakīla *maṇḍala* annihilate the ten non-virtues and that the four goddesses who guard the palace gates embody ‘the four immeasurables’ (*catuḥ aprameya*) — altruistic states of mind otherwise known as ‘the stations of Brahmā’ (*brahmavihāra*). Such equivalents are ubiquitous in vajrayāna theory and practice, which recreates the world as a purified construct of Buddhist Dharma, traditionally codified in numerical lists. Thus, in the opening verse of his *Clear Elucidation of the Essence*, Padma ‘phrin-las praises the *maṇḍala* of Vajrakīla as the means to the accumulation of virtue and the eradication of vice. Such personal defects as the twenty *upakleśa* (secondary afflictions), viz: *krodha* (anger), *upanāha* (enmity), *mraṅka* (hypocrisy), *pradāsa* (outrage), *irṣyā* (jealousy), *mātsarya* (avarice), *śāḥhya* (fraud), *māyā* (deceit), *mada* (pride), *vihimsā* (violence), *ahriḥ* (lack of shame), *anapatrapa* (indecenty), *styāna* (inertia), *auddhatya* (agitation), *aśrāddhya* (lack of faith), *kausīdya* (indolence), *pramāda* (negligence), *muṣitasmr̥tītā* (forgetfulness), *vikṣepa* (distraction), and *asaniḥprajanya* (lack of proper introspection), he says, are brought under control by the devourers and killers who patrol the ten directions in search of trouble. These wild anthropomorphic creatures with the heads of animals and birds are the active messengers of the ten wrathful kings and it is due to their ceaseless vigilance that the awakened mind of buddhahood remains undisturbed by the demonic influences of Māra. Similar in many ways to the animal-headed Sri demons which cause much grief to religious and lay folk alike, these restless retainers were converted to a higher purpose and incorporated into the *maṇḍala* of divinities when their masters, the old gods of ignorance who formerly held sway over the ten directions, were overthrown.

Liturgy for the worship of the protectors, also, is not seen in the *sādhana* text because there are so many variations from which to choose and, to a large extent, the choice is based on location. The pre-Bud-

dhist sacred topography of Tibet, whose local spirits successively became tamed and elevated to the status of 'protectors of the Buddhist teachings and those who uphold them,' is quite different for example in Ladakh and Sikkim, each location being unique and local spirits tending to become the guardians of sites and traditions in their own neighbourhood.

Among the particular protectors of the Vajrakila doctrines, we encounter bands of male and female demons whose designated task became, upon their subjugation and conversion, the assistance of all those engaged in the difficult rites of the Kila. Chief among these are the 12 Mother Goddesses who appeared to Padmasambhava when he himself had accomplished mastery of this rite in Nepal. Appearing in groups of four, in the evening, at midnight, and at dawn, the last group to arrive were the four sisters who control the earth (*bhūmipati*) and who gave their secret names (those by which they are addressed in their *mantra*) as Jayā, Vijayā, Ajitā and Aparājītā. Known to outsiders as the sisters (consorts) of Tumburu, these goddesses are spoken of in the earliest tantric texts of the *vāmasrota* (left-hand stream) followed by the heterodox worshippers of Rudra. Since the eighth century, these goddesses have become part of the Buddhist world and their wrathful forms are described in meditation texts, such as those included in the *Sādhanamālā*. Following a recently published study by Miranda Shaw (*Buddhist Goddesses of India*), it is interesting to note that the earth sister Aparājītā can be identified as the wrathful aspect of the Māra-defeating Earth Goddess Pṛthivī.

All of these protectors are described in detail, for the purpose of their invocation and worship, in the commentary by Padma 'phrin-las, in a manner which is typical of his erudite scholarship. Typical in this regard, too, are his illuminating essays on the subjugation of Sri demons, which are included in the present volume (Chapters Six & Seven) and discussed below.

Although the *Sharp Weapon* (Chapter One) is derived, to a certain extent, from the *Heart Activity* (Chapter Two), there are some significant differences in approach. Generally speaking, the *Sharp Weapon* expands upon the contents of the *Heart Activity*, adding extra sections and embellishing those features already present. Thus, for example, the meditation in which one generates oneself as the deity is very brief in the *Heart Activity* compared with the same section in the *Sharp Weapon* and, while the *Sharp Weapon* establishes an outer boundary, an inner boundary and a secret boundary around the sacred *maṇḍala*, the





establishment of an inner boundary alone serves for all boundaries in the *Heart Activity*. Such minor differences between the two texts are legion. It is in the section dealing with meditation on the three *samādhi*, however, that we encounter a truly significant difference of approach. These three *samādhi* arrange the conditions for the arising of the manifest *vajra* world. The text of the *Black Razor Tantra*, which is utilised in the *Sharp Weapon sādhana*, propounds the big bang theory of *mahāyoga-tantra* origination, in which a condensed drop (*thig le chen po, mahābindu*), within which all possibilities are latent, is all that is seen to exist within primordial empty space. This condensed drop then explodes to permeate all-encompassing universal emptiness with the fundamental elements of existence: earth, water, fire and air, out of which living beings arise by an evolutionary series of transformations. The *Heart Activity*, on the other hand, describes this creation according to the steady-state theory of the *atiyoga* texts in which essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and compassion (*thugs rje*) are always and everywhere present.

The structural outline of the *sādhana* can be seen in the table of contents, above, and for a detailed study of the esoteric theory underlying its sequential meditations, I refer the reader to the '*Bum nag*.

Chapter Three of the present volume is the *Clear Elucidation of the Essential Branches of Ritual Practice in which are analysed the full series of activities for the great attainment of the blessed Vajrakumāra Medium Razor (bCom ldan 'das rdo rje gzhon nu 'bring po spu gri'i sgrub chen gyi chog khrigs lag len snying po rab gsal)*, by Rig-'dzin Padma 'phrin-las. This most valuable commentary discusses, in Part One, how to take the *sādhana* meditation practice out into the wilderness for a period of intense isolation. First of all, one should carefully select a suitable site for retreat, where one makes offerings to the Earth Goddess and to the local gods and spirits, and then one contemplates the establishment of the *maṇḍala* upon that site through dance gestures and *mantra*, so that all evil is ritually banished from the land. In Part Two, the *maṇḍala* rites are applied to the retreat hut and an extended series of boundaries is established. These include a ring of stone cairns for the four Great Kings, to be erected around the outside of the meditation hut, and a pit of suppression in front of the doorway, within which the *dam sri* demons are buried in order that they be trodden down every time the yogin goes outside to answer the call of nature. This fascinating topic is discussed in detail in Chapters Four, Five, Six & Seven of the present volume. Within the meditation hut, practical instructions are given for

the construction of a material *maṇḍala*, and these complement the instructions for visualisation given in the liturgy of invocation. Thus, lines are drawn, colours are applied, and the offerings and ritual items are set down in their proper places. Through the proper performance of the subsequent rituals, then, it is said that the yogin gains the power to destroy the triple world of *samsāra* with his body, speech and mind in a single instant and the meditation on the dissolution of the *maṇḍala* at the end of the rite, followed by its sudden reemergence from the void like a fish leaping out of water, is intended to protect the mind of the meditator from the extreme views of eternalism and nihilism. Thus the liberated yogin, with all false notions of *samsāra* destroyed, is free to assume forms in the world suitable for the benefit and guidance of others.



This final verse, together with those forming the concluding prayers of aspiration (*praṇidhāna*) and auspiciousness (*maṅgalam*), were composed by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, whose family lineage had been traced back to the bygone rulers of Tibet.

A significant feature of the Northern Treasures tradition is its historical link with the ancient lineage of Tibetan kings, and many of its secret rites are known to have been taught at the end of the eighth century to the warrior emperor Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan by Guru Padma himself. Later revealed as a treasure by Rig-'dzin rgod-ldem in 1366, this cache of mystic doctrines is considered crucial to the preservation of the royal line and to the welfare of the Tibetan subjects. The rule of the kings, however, had long since been overthrown by a popular uprising, which brought an end to the feuds for succession to the throne following the assassination of gLang-dar-ma in 842, and the empire had fragmented and collapsed. Nevertheless, among the writings of the great master of the Northern Treasures, bKra-shis stobs-rgyal dbang-po'i-sde (1550-1607), is to be found a prophesy concerning a future treasure-revealer whose destiny it would be to become king of all Tibet in his fifth incarnation:

*Twenty-five [treasures] and five special treasures of mind
 Will be revealed, through pure aspirations,
 By your fifth incarnation,
 Oh present king of the black-headed race.⁵*

⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, pp.822-823.

The one referred to in this verse is the fifth Dalai Lama, whose 25 treasures pertain, for the most part, to the corpus of the Byang-gter — a sacred system to which he was introduced at birth and within which he was encouraged by repeated visitations of lineage holders, including the deceased bKra-shis stobs-rgyal himself.



Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las and the Great Fifth Dalai Lama

xviii

Introduction

Foretold in numerous Dharma treasures as the actual embodiment of the compassion of Avalokiteśvara (bodhisattva protector of Tibet) and the enlightened activity of king Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan,⁶ the fifth Dalai Lama was born in 1617 (fire female snake year) as a son of the rNying-ma-pa family of the dukes of 'Phyong-rgyas stag-rtse, home of the ancient Tibetan monarchy. His father was Mi-dbang bdud-'dul rab-brtan, a descendent of the royal line of Za-hor, and his mother Kundga' lha-mdzes was a daughter of the *khri dpon* of Yar-'brog. Born amidst many auspicious signs and omens, he was blessed in the year of his birth by the empowerment of long life according to the Northern Treasures system of Yamāntaka, the Lord of Life, in tandem with Vajrapañjara Mahākāla, bestowed upon him by Rig-'dzin ngag-gi-dbang-po (1580-1639), the third incarnation of the Northern Treasures *gter ston*. Thus his life was filled with auspiciousness and joy from the outset.

Recognised as the incarnation of Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (Dalai Lama IV) by the Paṅ-chen bla-ma, bLo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan, the boy was brought to the monastery of 'Bras-spungs in 1622 where he took his first set of vows (*upāsaka*) and installed upon the lion throne with the name bLo-bzang rgya-mtsho. At the age of eight he was ordained as a novice monk, and he became a fully ordained *bhikṣu* for the first time in 1628, aged eleven.

With dKon-mchog chos-'phel of gLing-mad, foretold by Padma-sambhava as the incarnation of rNgog lo-tṣā-ba, the young Dalai Lama studied the great texts of Buddhist philosophy, mastering all of them with ease. Subsequently, under the greatest teachers of his time, he studied the various arts and sciences, such as grammar, poetic compo-

⁶ The three great Dharma rulers of Tibet, according to popular tradition, were: Avalokiteśvara (manifest as Srong-btsan sgam-po), Mañjuśrī (manifest as Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan), and Vajrapāṇi (manifest as Khri Ral-pa-can).

sition, astrology and divination, so that he became renowned as a *mahāpaṇḍita*. Receiving empowerments and instructions in all the major tantric cycles of the old schools and the new, he became a fully awakened Dharma master and a true manifestation of Buddhahood in this degenerate world. He upheld the purity of his vows of *prātimokṣa*, *bodhisattva* and *guhyanmantra* without the smallest blemish and the catalogue of his studies (*gsan yig*) fills four volumes.

The times into which he was born were a troubled period in Tibetan history, during which the country was torn apart by religious and political rivalries. Certainly, at this time, a rebirth of the ancient line of kings would be a great blessing for the people. In particular, in the language of the Dalai Lama's biography, "the lords of Chog-tu, Be-ri and gTsang became confused by demons who established wrong views in their minds and thus they became enemies of Dharma, suitable to be overthrown by the wrathful rites.⁷ It then happened that, in accordance with the prophesies and as a result of his past actions, the *cakravartin* king bsTan-'dzin chos-kyi rgyal-po (the Mongolian warlord Gushri Khan, leader of the Qoshot Mongols), came to the province of dBus in central Tibet where he developed profound faith in the Lord Lama as soon as he set eyes upon him, so that the hair of his body quivered and he took the feet of the Dalai Lama upon the crown of his head. He then gathered together his army and dispatched those enemies of Dharma to the realm of Samantabhadra."⁸

In 1641,⁹ when the Dalai Lama was just 24 years old, Gushri Khan, having overthrown those three rebellious provinces, offered all that he had conquered, both secular and religious, to the dominion of the Dalai Lama. Later, the Dalai Lama was invited to Peking by the emperor of China who proclaimed him Lord of the Doctrine and installed him as the imperial preceptor. Thus the vow-holding monk became the *de facto* king, the foretold ruler of all Tibet, and he united the country under one banner for the first time since the collapse of the royal dynasty,

⁷ For the ten categories of those suitable to be destroyed by the wrathful rites (*bsgral ba'i zhing bcu*), see: *A Bolt of Lightning from the Blue*, p.223. With regard to the wrathful rites, it is believed that the mighty warlord Gushri Khan, "the very essence of bravery and courage," was the reincarnation of Phyag-rgya zil-gnon, a rNying-ma-pa specialist in the destructive rites of Yamāntaka.

⁸ Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, *Life of the Fifth Dalai Lama* pp.260-261.

⁹ Iron serpent year (1641) according to the Dalai Lama's biography, although other sources give the year of the water horse (1642) for this event.



eight hundred years previously. Restoring peace and prosperity to his people, he showed himself to be the least sectarian of religious leaders so that all factional fighting was brought to an end and his successive incarnations have upheld the happiness and welfare of a greater Tibet down to the present time.

As recounted in his *Secret Biography*, the Dalai Lama experienced throughout his life a series of mystic visions (*gzigs snang*), in the course of which were revealed to him a number of Dharma treasures which became known as the 'Twenty-five Doctrines Sealed for Secrecy' (*gsang ba rgya can du gsol ba'i chos sde nyi shu rtsa lnga*). Many of these visions were connected with doctrines of the Northern Treasures tradition and involved masters of the lineage (both living and deceased), and two of the 'seals which keep them secret' relate directly to the deity Vajrakila, a deity that also looms large within the visions themselves. During one such ecstatic experience, the Dalai Lama was granted the empowerment of Vajrakila by the *mahāsiddha* Prabhahasti, by whom Guru Padma himself had been empowered in India almost nine centuries earlier. On that occasion, Prabhahasti displayed the *maṇḍala* of deities within his heart and no sooner had the ritual *kila* been placed into his hands than the Dalai Lama began to dispatch messengers, with instructions to drag forth the *dam sri* demons so that they may be destroyed. So important was the deity Vajrakila to the Dalai Lama that, much to the disapproval of his personal attendants, he adopted the habit of wearing a ritual *kila* stuck into the belt of his monastic robes, following a visionary empowerment bestowed upon him in 1642 by bKra-shis stobs-rgyal dbang-po'i-sde. Later, when he decided to move the seat of his new government from 'Bras-spungs to Lhasa, the Dalai Lama instructed the monks of rNam-rgyal monastery to enact sacred dances outlining the black deity *maṇḍala* of Vajrakumāra upon the site, and thus the ritual 'taming of the earth' was performed for his new Potala palace. In this way, the circle of 51 blood-drinkers brought all the local gods under control and the demons were destroyed. This took place in 1645, when the Dalai Lama was just 28 years old. As for his ongoing struggle against the *dam sri* demons, we will hear more of this in due course.

In his youth, the Dalai Lama had been initiated into the rDzogschen (Great Perfection) meditations by dKon-mchog lhun-grub, as well as by his root teacher Chos-dbyings rang-grol of the great family of Zur. These teachings influenced him greatly, but the tradition in which he always had the greatest faith was that of the Northern Treasure reve-



lations of Rig-'dzin rгод-ldem. These teachings he also learned from his root *guru* Chos-dbyings rang-grol, who himself had been nurtured as a *sprul sku* by Rig-'dzin Ngag-gi dbang-po since the age of nine years.

In fact, the Dalai Lama's personal support of the rNying-ma schools in general is quite evident in many of the changes which he made to the structure of religious and political authority during the course of his lifetime. Several of the important ceremonies of state, newly instituted during his reign and subsequently performed annually in Lhasa for centuries, clearly reveal their Old School antecedents and he also sponsored the carving of a large number of xylographic blocks for the preservation and dissemination of texts of the early translations. His own writings, also, (amounting to 235 titles in 24 volumes) include many prayers and meditations designed to be incorporated into the rituals of the Northern Treasures and other early cycles. In the reports of his visions recorded in his *Secret Biography* (which, uniquely among his works, was never carved onto wooden blocks and printed), the Dalai Lama states that Legs-ldan rdo-rje appeared to him several times and gave him specific instructions to propagate the teachings of the Northern Treasures. After that, he received visionary empowerments and guidance in the Byang-gter tradition from both the recently deceased Ngag-gi dbang-po and his long dead father bKra-shis stobs-rgyal, and it is clear that he regularly performed the ritual practices of the Northern Treasures throughout his lifetime.¹⁰

In his *Secret Biography* it is recorded that, at the age of 35 years, on the 23rd day of the eleventh month in the year of the iron rabbit (1651), a group of five dancing *ḍākinī* with *ḍamaru* drums and hand bells appeared in the sky before him leading a long white cloud, at the end of which was the master Padmasambhava. In order to instruct the Dalai Lama in the doctrines of the Northern Treasures, Padmasambhava presented him with his heart practice (*thugs sgrub*) by appearing in the form of Guru drag-po-rtsal (one of the most important teachings of the Byang-gter). Upon the crown of his head stood an especially wrathful form with nine faces and eighteen arms, and he was surrounded by a retinue of deities and an outer circle of Dharma protectors. Furthermore, within an unprecedented divine palace situated inside the 'vast knot' of his large ritual *kīla*, the Dalai Lama could

¹⁰ Sections eight ('sealed by the kiss of sun and moon' — containing prophecies) and nine ('sealed by the Kīla' — containing rituals) of the secret teachings, were taught to the Dalai Lama by bKra-shis stobs-rgyal during a Byang-gter retreat on the teachings of Legs-ldan rdo-rje.





clearly see all the deities in the *maṇḍala* of Vajrakīla. Entering into that palace, he found a gathered assembly of tantric heroes and heroines, all dancing, and so he joined in the dance. Within the recesses of a chapel in that place, a throne had been set up, upon which was seated a maroon coloured *rākṣasa* demon holding aloft a mirror in his hand. “Look into this mirror!” he commanded and, having done so, the Dalai Lama saw all the countries such as India, China, Nepal, Oḍḍiyāna, Śambhala, and so on, most clearly and distinctly. He then understood with certainty that his vision had taken him to the pure land of the Copper Coloured Mountain (Zangs-mdog dpal-ri).¹¹ There, on top of a mountain shaped ‘like the handle of a *kila* of control’ (i.e. like a tall, upturned bowl), stood a three-storeyed palace. The lower storey was occupied by the precious teacher of Oḍḍiyāna in his activity manifestation as the Karma Guru, teaching the profound means of averting the hosts of Māra. In the middle and upper storeys of the palace, he appeared in various guises to be worshipped by sentient beings.

Then the Dalai Lama was taken behind a bright veil of white light, like a curtain, where he encountered the woman Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, white in colour and adorned with ornaments of bone, who acted as his support (consort) for the empowerment of wisdom-knowledge (*prajñā-jñānābhīṣeka*). This empowerment brought his psychic channels (*nāḍī*) and subtle drops (*bindu*) to the state of ultimate perfection, so that a very special experience of bliss and emptiness was generated within his mindstream. After that, he went immediately to a castle where he encountered a maroon coloured woman, blazing brightly and looking a little fierce. She took him into her mouth and swallowed him, and he was transformed into rDo-rje gro-lod in her womb. Emerging from her birth canal, the Dalai Lama maintained the divine pride of himself as the deity rDo-rje gro-lod and understood that, even though he himself rested in the state of clear light within which all illusory appearances had come to an end, the entire triple world of phenomenal appearances existed within his belly. This vision lasted for as long as it takes to drink a cup of tea.

When it was all over, a disembodied voice gave ominous warning of trouble arising after three lifetimes,¹² so the Dalai Lama then pre-

¹¹ The Copper Coloured Mountain is situated on the island of Cāmaradvīpa, to the southwest of our world. It is inhabited by *rākṣasa* demons, kept under control by Padmasambhava himself who is believed to reside there currently as their king in the form of the dark maroon demon on the throne.

¹² It should also be noted that, throughout his visions, the Dalai Lama

pared a ritual thread cross (*mdos*) for the restoration of broken vows, dedicated to the protector Remati (dPal-ldan lha-mo).¹³ When the goddess arrived, galloping across the sky, the whole Earth shook and trembled violently. Then five *ḍākini* appeared in the sky before him, their bodies shining like crystals — white, yellow, red, green and blue. Their leader, white in colour, gave some teachings on the different classes of *māra* and the means of averting difficult circumstances, at the end of which she carried the Dalai Lama in her womb until they reached a cave in a *vajra*-shaped rocky mountain that seemed to rise precipitously up into the sky. Within that cave they entered a palace of the gods where they found an ordinary-looking yogin that the Dalai Lama knew must really be Padmasambhava himself. That yogin placed several volumes of books upon the Dalai Lama's head, granting him mystic empowerments and blessings. And when this was over, that yogin dissolved into light and became absorbed into the Dalai Lama's heart.¹⁴

A religious commentary on the significance of this single day's visions could fill a book, and it is recorded that all of his visions and their meanings were transmitted by the Dalai Lama to his favourite disciple, Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las.

Throughout the course of his life, the Dalai Lama built a vast number of shrines and temples, fully endowing each one with all the paraphernalia of worship in accordance with his visions. Following the Byang-gter predictions concerning the restoration of the ancient lineage of kings, he also sponsored Bon priests to perform regular rituals for the good of the countryside and his people, for the Bon continued to honour the old gods of the soil so that the countryside remained fertile and productive, just as they had been in the days of the kings. And he rebuilt the decayed temples of the early dynastic period, renewing

received many prophetic warnings concerning future interferences to be caused to his work by troublesome *dam sri* demons. In particular, the wild spirit called Shugs-ldan arose at this time, following the murder of Grags-pa rgyal-mtshan, and remains a cause of trouble to the present day.

¹³ The Dalai Lama received visionary teachings on dPal-ldan lha-mo from the Byang-gter master bKra-shis stobs-rgyal. Subsequently, this goddess became not only the chief personal protectress of the Dalai Lama himself but, in accordance with the prophesies concerning the importance of the Byang-gter tradition for the welfare of Tibet, has remained to this day the main protector of his dGa'-ldan pho-brang theocratic government.

¹⁴ *rGya can gyi 'khrul snang rnams gsal bar bkod pa mthong ba don ldan (Visions and their Significance, being the elucidation of the visions recorded in the Sealed Volume)*. Text I in *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, pp.182-183.





them with fresh consecrations, and endowed them with monastic communities. He put a golden roof on the temple of Mount Chu-bo, and another on the Yum-bu bla-sgang, as well as a crown on the statue of Mahākaruṇā in the Jo-khang, and so on, and among the countless gifts of statues and other works of art offered as part of this restoration process, it is recorded that he bequeathed pennants of pearls and precious stone and an iron lattice fence to an ancient *maṇḍala* of Vajrakila.

As for our author, bLo-bzang padma 'phrin-las (1641-1718), universally acknowledged as the greatest scholar in the lineage of the Northern Treasures, he is traditionally regarded as the immediate incarnation of Ngag-gi dbang-po and thus the fourth incarnation of the Byang-gter's founder. Born at Mon-mkhar rnam-sras-gling, his birth was similarly marked by an unusually high number of auspicious portents. Following the ceremony of his re-enthronement as the *rig 'dzin chen po* of rDo-rje-brag by his former disciple bsTan-'dzin nor-bu of Yolmo, Padma 'phrin-las became a disciple of Dalai Lama V, from whom he received both *śrāmaṇera* and *bhikṣu* vows. In his autobiography, Dalai Lama V repeatedly refers to Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las as "the best of reincarnate ones" and "spiritual son of supreme virtue," and it is evident that Padma 'phrin-las was his favourite disciple. The Dharma treasures of the Dalai Lama, the 'Twenty-five Doctrines Sealed for Secrecy' spoken of above, were all transmitted to Padma 'phrin-las who incorporated much of their highly esoteric ritual lore into the Northern Treasure school of rDo-rje-brag. It could also be said that Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las himself was instrumental in bringing about some of these visions. Thus, for example, on the 20th day of the fourth month in the year of the water hare (1663), as a long-life rite was being performed by Padma 'phrin-las on behalf of his master, a vision of Amitāyus and his consort arose which subsequently blessed the Dalai Lama by becoming absorbed into his body.

Studying intensively under some of the greatest teachers of his day, including Zur-chen Chos-dbyings rang-grol, Padma 'phrin-las received the empowerments and commentaries of a large number of tantric doctrines from both the old and new schools which enabled him to revise and greatly extend the teachings of his own tradition. Gathering together all of the instructions that had been handed down in the three streams of transmission from the original *gter ston* (the Mother, Son and Disciple lineages), he united them into a single line. He composed a number of new treatises and worked extensively to arrange the ritual texts of the Byang-gter in proper liturgical order, supplementing the

original texts with extra parts wherever necessary. Correcting such errors as had arisen in the transmission, he reinstated earlier traditions of ritual activity which had become lost or confused, such as the proper systems of chanting, constructing the *maṇḍala*, preparing the sacrificial *bali* cakes and so on, filling thirteen volumes with his work.

Throughout this period, with the patronage and support of the Dalai Lama, huge new rNying-ma monasteries were founded throughout central and eastern Tibet, the two monasteries of rDo-rje-brag and sMin-grol-gling in central Tibet being of particular significance, so that the years of the Dalai Lama's reign saw an increase in the general fortunes of the rNying-ma-pa with a clearly marked tendency towards such larger monastic institutions.

During this period, also, for primarily political reasons, Padma 'phrin-las produced extensive writings on the *anuyoga* system of 'Sūtra Empowerment' (*mdo dbang*), based on the *anuyoga tantra* entitled *dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo* (*Sūtra of the Gathering of all Buddha's Intentions*). Historically, this *Sūtra which Gathers all Intentions* provided much of the mythological and doctrinal structure for the orally transmitted teachings (*bka' ma*) of the rNying-ma-pa and, as a result, by the seventeenth century the Sūtra Empowerment had become a grand ceremony that was thought to embody the very heart of the *bka' ma* transmission. In his previous life as Legs-ldan rdo-rje, Padma 'phrin-las had received this important text at a young age and, having incorporated it into the curriculum of study at rDo-rje-brag, had become one of its chief proponents. In this life, having received the full empowerment of the sūtra from Nyang-ston bLo-mchog rdo-rje, together with the esoteric instructions, practical techniques and authoritative seal of entrustment, at the request of the Dalai Lama, Padma 'phrin-las composed a massive new three volume ritual manual for the performance of this ceremony entitled *Embarking on the Ocean of Maṇḍala: Empowerment Ceremonies of the Sūtra which Gathers all Intentions* ('*Dus pa mdo'i dbang chog dkyil 'khor rgya mtsho'i 'jug ngogs*). He also compiled a new collection of the biographies of the masters of the Sūtra Empowerment lineage. By these means, it was hoped that control of this key ritual system would be taken away from the Dalai Lama's enemies and tilt the balance of political authority in his favour. This project also represented a power shift within the rNying-ma school that paralleled the wider change to the new Dalai Lama government. Previously, under the rule of the gTsang kings, the main central Tibetan rNying-ma lineage enjoying royal patronage was that stemming from the *gter ston* Zhi-g-po gling-pa, passing through Sog-bzlog-pa and Gong-ra lo-chen



amongst others. After Dalai Lama V's takeover, this group fell out of favor while the new monasteries of rDo-rje-brag and sMin-grol-gling were established. Padma 'phrin-las' new ritual manual reflected this change in royal patronage.¹⁵

On the fourth day of the first month of the water dog year (1682), Padma 'phrin-las sent a message to the Regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho at the Potala, informing him of bad omens concerning his teacher, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. He insisted that certain rites should be performed for the benefit of his health and recommended a retreat which the Dalai Lama followed eleven days later. During this retreat, the Dalai Lama died at the age of 65 on the 25th day of the third month 1682. The fact of the retreat, however, facilitated keeping the news of the Dalai Lama's death from all his rivals for a further fifteen years, and his fragile new government of the dGa'-ldan pho-brang continued to function unimpeded so that it was in a position of strength by the time that his successor, the sixth Dalai Lama, was announced and enthroned at the age of fourteen.

Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las himself was killed in 1718 when the invading Dzungar Mongols razed his monastic seat of Thub-bstan rdo-rje-brag to the ground.

¹⁵ The Sūtra Empowerment writings of gTer-bdag gling-pa, produced at sMin-grol-gling just a few decades later, approach the subject in an entirely different style — greatly simplifying the empowerment ceremony in an attempt to make it more suitable for the general public and render it more easily manageable for a festival format. Thus, the most secret tantric elements were removed from the ceremony and the unwieldy manual was divided into smaller parts that could be distributed among separate groups of ritual specialists within the monastery. In this way, both the preparations and the actual performance became streamlined so that the entire ceremony could be completed in just three days. This new system, backed by a rigorous historical study that provided unprecedented detail on the ritual tradition, culminated in 1691 when hundreds of leading rNying-ma masters throughout Tibet were invited to a grand unveiling at sMin-grol-gling. The project was highly successful, and today sMin-grol-gling's ritual manuals are standard at all rNying-ma monasteries other than those affiliated with rDo-rje-brag. (Jacob Dalton, *The Uses of the dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo in the Development of the rNying ma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, University of Michigan, 2002.)



Ki-kang, sri & mi-kha

Among the dark forces of disintegration and chaos inhabiting the world of Padma 'phrin-las and the fifth Dalai Lama, against which they struggled throughout their lives, not all those who opposed them were human, nor all their motives political. Struggle and opposition were also to be witnessed as dramatic themes in a larger theatre. Thus, in this uncertain world, malevolent *ki kang* are thought to send down violent hailstorms from above, destroying the harvest that benevolent gods have nurtured with gentle seasonal rains and sunshine. And the profound wisdom teachings of the buddha, guarded for millennia by wise and noble *nāga* who honour them in their subterranean homeland for the benefit of all who live, are opposed by malignant *sri* who rise up seeking to destroy the holy Dharma by means of insidious heretical doctrines and broken vows. In an ideal world, men would live mutually supportive lives in peace and harmony with each other, in accordance with the Dharma, but in the world as we know it, however, backbiting *mi kha* people selfishly vie with each other out of spite, jealousy, pride and contempt, and the treacherous powers of chaos are forever lurking, ready to destroy all happiness at a stroke.

Among these three categories of indigenous Tibetan demon referred to in our texts, only the Sri are treated in detail.¹⁶ Understood here as some sort of primordial ghosts, devilish spirits of original sin whose ancestral home is situated among the very roots of the tree of paradise, they are recognised by the wise as misdeeds of the past that remain to haunt us in the present. In his book *Drung, Deu and Bon*,¹⁷ Namkhai Norbu identifies Sri as "maleficent spirits whose fundamental characteristic is to cause the cyclical repetition of different types of misfortune on the basis of a calamity that once occurred." And, further, he says that "the provocations they cause consist of different kinds of sudden attacks (*ye 'brog*). They go around all the worlds of the universe unleashing wars between nations, spreading epidemics, provoking diabolical hindrances to men, harming animals and livestock and inflicting all sorts of calamities and disasters." From

¹⁶ Sri are unknown in Indian cosmology. The Tibetan word *sri* is used to translate *parihāṇikā* (loss-maker) in the *Vinaya sūtra*, and the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* lists *kṛcchra* (wicked, causing pain). They are, however, said to be similar in many aspects to the Indian *bhūta* and *preta* (ghosts).

¹⁷ *Drung, Deu and Bon: Narrations, symbolic languages and the Bon tradition in ancient Tibet*, Chapter XII



the original pair, according to the Bon tradition, arose eight sons so that ten types of Sri are listed in these sources. Our Buddhist texts list Sri of thirteen varieties.

Both Buddhist and Bon traditions attach much importance to the ritual exorcism of the Sri and, among the collected Vajrakila texts of the Northern Treasures, I have found two original *gter ma* texts: the '*Byung po sri non*¹⁸ and the *Sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa*.¹⁹ Unfortunately, these early documents are not much read in the modern age, their importance to the tradition having been overshadowed by the later ritual texts of Padma 'phrin-las. As a result, their textual transmission has become almost extinct and I have only a single witness for the first text, with each flaw in the transmission most difficult to rectify. It is of some help, however, that the two texts shed light on each other when read in parallel. For example, when speaking of the place deemed suitable for the suppression of the Minister Sri, the '*Byung po sri non* states *mdun la 'du bar*, 'in a gathering in front,' while the *Sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa* says *bdun la gcig ru byed pa'i sar*, 'in a place where seven are made into one.' Neither reading is readily intelligible. However, if we take them together and consider that *mdun sa* is the Tibetan word for *sabhā*, the parliament chamber where ministers gather together to discuss politics and strategy, we can confidently reject the word *bdun* (seven) as a misspelling and understand that Minister Sri (the ghosts of evil ministers, or malicious spirits that would seek the corruption of present ministers and the perversion of their business) are to be subjugated within the ministerial assembly rooms, at the time of a gathering of ministers. Other misspellings may also be corrected with some confidence. It is a matter of regret that Padma 'phrin-las himself had access only to the second of these texts, the *Sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa*, a document which he cites regularly in his ritual writings, and in the reading of which we can therefore feel more secure. Padma 'phrin-las refers to this document as "the root text" but even he, however, was obliged to note serious flaws in the reading of the text and, at one point, he remarks, "Even though Door Sri are described as Sri afflicting fathers and paternal uncles, the skulls and places of their suppression are not explained." The text, in fact, goes on to explain that 'The Sri of ill-omened conception for mothers and children should be pressed down within the skull of a dog, pig or camel, beneath the threshold.' The

¹⁸ C30 *Phur pa yang gsang spu gri'i las mtha' 'byung po sri non* [317-323]

¹⁹ B18 *Phur pa las kyi sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa'i sngags* [19-26]



reading of the key words here is: *ma bu'i byur yug*, which, in the 'Byung-po sri non is: *nal bu'i byur 'byug*. If *ma bu* (mother and child) should really be *nal bu* (incestuous offspring), and 'byug (smear) should be read as the close homophone *yug* (embryo, lump of flesh), then both texts are telling us that the Sri of Doorways are devils with easy access to the inner chambers of the house, namely, those fathers and paternal uncles who incestuously defile their family daughters and, making them pregnant, give rise to ill-fated (*byur*) conceptions (*yug*), offspring (*bu*), or abortive 'lumps of flesh' (*yug*).

The race of Sri has a pedigree more ancient than that of human kind. Indeed, they are said to be as old as the world, their ancestors having come into existence at the beginning of creation, arising from beneath the roots of the tree of paradise which flowers in the gardens of the Trāyastriṃśa heaven on the summit of Mount Meru. There, this tree called Pārijātaka is believed to fulfil all wishes and its vicinity is the favourite place for the gods to make love. It grows one hundred *yojana* tall, and its branches, leaves and petals spread out to a distance of fifty *yojana*, diffusing its divine fragrance for hundreds of miles in every direction. Its roots also dig down deep into the earth and it is there, at a depth of more than fifty *yojana* beneath the surface, that the ancestors of the Sri came into existence.

In our Buddhist texts, this ancient race of beings is said to comprise thirteen clans and their social structure is clearly well organised — with a royal family, ministers of state, and so on. They are, however, wicked by nature and ceaselessly evil in their effects. Bringers of madness and disease, they include among their number those who cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and illness for mothers and children, those who lay waste to crops and livestock, those who bring disease and misfortune to the young and those who afflict the old, those who prowl the graveyards and haunt the tombs as ghosts, and those who delight in causing religious practitioners to abandon their vows. As such, it is essential that they be kept far away from humans at all costs. They are by no means foolish creatures, however, and the wise among them have long recognised the tricks played on them by sorcerers attempting to exorcise them from the human realm.

Within the *Secret Biography* of the fifth Dalai Lama, in which he outlines the circumstances of his mystic visionary experiences, we learn that the Northern Treasures adept Legs-Idan rdo-rje (1512-1625) appeared to the Dalai Lama whilst he was in retreat in the Potala palace in 1672 and empowered him in the wrathful practice of the *kila*-wield-





xxx

Introduction

ing Padmasambhava (rDo-rje gro-lod) as the most effective means of dealing with *dam sri* spirits. We also know that the 25 'sealed' chapters of esoteric instructions resulting from these visions were transmitted to our author Padma 'phrin-las who subsequently incorporated them within his writings on the Northern Treasures. Thus it is no surprise to find in the golden manuscript of the Fournier collection (Plate 50),²⁰ in which the Dalai Lama's visions are illustrated, a drawing that corresponds in almost every detail to the description of the *linga* for the subjugation of *dam sri* demons given by Rig-'dzin padma 'phrin-las in his *Clear Elucidation of the Essence* (see below, pp.145-147). Upon the drawing of a demoness with the head of a bird,²¹ just as described in our text, are two inscriptions that read (beginning at the throat, clockwise with letter heads outwards): "At the end of the *mantra*, **Drag forth this bSen-mo demoness called So-and-So HŪM JAḤ JAḤ** and so on, write extensive curses that will cause them to be summoned." And then, again, (beginning at the top of the head, anticlockwise with letter heads inwards): "At the end of the fierce *mantra*, **RAṂ RAṂ on the heart of the bSen-mo demoness**, and so on, write, **Press them down to the land of the dead**, and then inscribe extensive curses after this." Also, in the Tibetan text at the back of the book (TEXT X, p.251, f.2, l.1 illustrated in plate 34), we read, "With regard to pressing down upon the interruptions of *dam sri* demons, on a black background (*'og ti nag po*) draw an effigy of the four: the one with a pig's snout, she with the beak of a bird, the stabilising peg of the earth, and she of the listening ears.²² All of these should have their heads pointing inwards (*nang bstan*) towards the centre of a circle. Inscribe the long *mantra* on the spokes of the circle and, around the circumference, write the fierce *mantra* together with whatever extra curses may be required. The rite should be performed in accordance with the general requisites for subjugation. SAMAYA GUHYA"

With regard to those 'general requisites for subjugation,' in rites known as *sri mnan*, the treacherous Sri spirits are, themselves, sum-

²⁰ Samten Karmay, *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama*, Serindia Publications, London, 1988.

²¹ David Gordon White, *The Kiss of the Yogini*, Chapter 2, points out that the majority of "Skanda-Seizers" (demonesses) of the Kushan age and beyond are portrayed with the heads of birds.

²² These four seem to be referred to in the "solemn declaration of truth" (probably written by the Dalai Lama) given by Padma 'phrin-las in his *Clear Elucidation of the Essence* (see below, pp.147-148).

moned and coerced by trickery, fraud and deceit to enter a trap within which they will be imprisoned. They are offered the skull of some ritually prescribed animal and told that it is a grand palace, full of wonders. They are offered scraps of food and told that it is a feast. Among the foodstuffs presented to them is a thin gruel composed of milk and ashes called “pale ash porridge” (*go kha'i thal skyo*), which they are supposed to experience as delicious *skyo ma bal skya*, a delicacy served at wedding feasts. They are also invited to gaze into magic mirrors made of silver, and thus they reveal themselves as if staring into the lens of a television camera. They are then tied up with threads of five colours, representing the five powers of the *vajra maṇḍala*, and told that these are delightful robes of silk for them to wear, and so on. Having been thus beguiled, they are caught and imprisoned within the skull so that their exorcism consists of their being buried and pressed deep into the earth. They cannot be destroyed, however, unless their ‘souls’ (*bla*) are first caught and killed. But this is very difficult to achieve, for the souls of Sri demons take the form of a group of seven tiny mice which hide by day on the icy peaks of lofty snow mountains and submerge themselves at night into the dark depths of the watery ocean.

In the biography of kLong-chen pa (1308-1363) is described the occasion when he went to the delapidated temple of Zhva'i lha-khang, founded by Myang Ting-'dzin bzang-po in the year 700 CE, in order to effect its restoration.²³ As the workers were clearing away earth from the foundations, they discovered a number of skulls of different kinds that had formerly been used in just such *sri mnan* rituals. Becoming uncovered, those skulls leapt up into the sky, which suddenly became dark as a violent storm arose and lumps of earth and stone fell down from above. The skulls themselves were clattering together in a most threatening and alarming manner so that all the workers cowered down and hid themselves in fear. The lama, however, with the use of appropriate *mudrā*, *mantra* and *samādhi*, was able to return those skulls to their pit and suppress them once more by trampling them beneath his feet.

²³ dBu-ru zhva'i lha-khang, also known as Mal-gro gung-dkar-rdzong, in Central Tibet, is noted as the place from which lDang-ma lhun-rgyal recovered the *rgyud bcu bdun* and their commentaries. It was later held as a seat by the Jo-ldan-pa and the 'Bri-gung-pa. Dalai Lama XIII, while he was on a visit to India, assigned its restoration to the rDo-rje-brag chu-bzang sprul-sku.





Furthermore, another skull that had been used in such a ritual, dated circa 750-850 CE, was recently recovered during an archaeological dig excavating a Tibetan tomb sanctuary at Kexiaotu, Dulan County. Now housed in the Qinghai Archaeological Institute, a clear photograph of this artefact and its inscribed *sri mnan* charm is to be seen in Amy Heller's *Tibetan Art* p.35. And the skulls of horses, wild ass, yaks, goats, dogs, marmots, and humans, all inscribed with spells of suppression against the Sri, have been unearthed in large numbers along the route of the recently-completed Qinghai-Tibet railway. With no master the calibre of kLong-chen pa currently available to take care of such archaeological finds, it is surely of no surprise to read the report in *The Times* newspaper, London, 15th August 2006, headlined: Beijing pledges 'a fight to the death' with Dalai Lama.

These more elaborate rites of *sri mnan* are dealt with by our author in two interrelated texts: the *Byang gter phur pa'i sri gnon gyi ngag 'don chog khrigs rdo rje'i lhun po zhes bya ba* (*Vajra Mountain*), and the *Phur pa'i sri chung bcu gsum gnon pa'i lhan thabs rab gsal me long* (*Utterly Clear Mirror*). The first of these texts outlines the procedures for the ritual of subjugation, while the second (referred to by the author as 'the appendix') details the manufacture of the paper effigy (*liṅga*) for use in the rite. Both works are said to be based upon the *Phur pa las kyi sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa'i sngags*, discovered as a *gter ma* by Rig'dzin rgod-ldem, and referred to by Padma 'Phrin-las as "the root text." All three of these texts are translated in the present work, below, together with a *gter ma* text transmitted within the Northern Treasures tradition but unnoticed by Padma 'Phrin-las, the *Phur pa yang gsang spu gri'i las mtha' 'byung po sri non* (*a lost treasure*).²⁴ Our author's other sources include, as we have seen, the oral instructions of his teacher, Dalai Lama V, as well as a mysterious text called *The Gathering of all Precious Elements* (*'Byung ba rin chen kun 'dus*).

According to legend, the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī taught five primary tantras of divination: *sDong po dgu 'dus shing gi rgyud* (the tantra of wood), *sNang gsal sgron me me'i rgyud* (the tantra of fire), *Rin chen kun 'dus sa'i rgyud* (the tantra of earth), *Ba la patra lcags gi rgyud* (the tantra

²⁴ The importance of Padma 'Phrin-las' work to the Tibetan tradition as a whole can be judged by the fact that it was extensively plagiarised and re-presented in a combined text entitled *Byang phur sri mnan yi dam drag po gang la'ang sbyar du rung ba'i lag len 'don 'grigs dkyus gcig tu bsdeb pa 'bar ba'i brjid gnon thog brtsegs* by Padma gar-dbang-rtsal ('Jam-mgon skong-sprul blo-gros mtha'-yas) and transmitted in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*.

of metal), and *bDud rtsi'i bum pa chu'i rgyud* (the tantra of water) to four listeners: the god Brahmā, the goddess Vijayā, the *nāgarāja* Takṣaka *vidyādhara*, and Kapila the brahmin. Among these, the tantra of earth called *The Gathering of All Precious Elements* is renowned as the tradition's most authoritative text on geomancy. Takṣaka the *nāga* taught it to King Wan of Zhou, author of the *Zhou-i* (3rd & final redaction of the *I-ching*) and father of the founding king of the Zhou Dynasty of ancient China (i.e. pre 1066 BCE). Eventually this text was translated from Chinese into Tibetan by Kun-'byung a-lo-che and Khams-pa lo-tsā-ba gtsug-ston, and the remarkable King Wan of Zhou came to be known in Tibet as Wang-the 'phrul gyi rgyal-po. It is said that this king died in a duel and never really reigned. Thus the Western Zhou dynasty is reckoned from the reign of his son, King Wu.

The great abbot of Bya-khyung, the renowned dGe-lugs-pa scholar Thu'u-bkvan III, bLo-bzang chos-kyi-nyi-ma (1737-1802), wrote in his *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long* in 1801: "The earlier [systems] of the Le'an-shan (Lianshan) and the Kus-tsang (Guizang) together with this [Zhou-i system] are very well known [in China] under the name of "The Three Treatises of sPor-thang" (*spor thang gi gzhang gsum*, Ch. *san yi*, the three [systems of] mutations). It seems that the scholars of the later generations in the country of China referred to the group of 'Phu-shi (Fuxi), Wen-wang (King Wen), Ci'u-kyung (Zhougong, the Duke of Zhou) and Khung-tsi (Confucius) as 'the four saints' (*skyes mchog bzhi*, Ch. *si sheng*, 'four sages'), but the Tibetans call them 'the four receivers' (*len pa mi bzhi*). Although these are the four persons referred to, because the Tibetan authors misspelt or mispronounced [their names], they wrote Kong-tse instead of Khung-tsi, Ji-gong instead of Ci'u-kyung, She-nong instead of Ji-nong (?) and Wang-the instead of Wen-wang. [Furthermore ...] Tibetan elders maintained that Chinese astrology was first expounded by Mañjuśoṣa in China on Mount Wutaishan (Ri-bo rtse-lnga), or that they emerged from the forehead of Goddess Vijayā (Lha-mo rnam-rgyal-ma), or that they were uttered by the master Padmasambhava, and so forth. [In short.] they spread all sorts of rosaries of lies. Not only that, the astrological texts diffused in Tibet, which are supposed to have come from China, do not exist, even by name, in China, and I wonder whether they were not fabricated by a Tibetan."²⁵

²⁵ *Thu'u bkvan grub mtha'*, Lanzhou edition, pp.399-400. My thanks to Guilaine Mala for the reference and translation.





It appears that the full text of the *'Byung ba rin chen kun 'dus* is no longer extant. It was evidently of great interest to Dalai Lama V, and relied upon heavily by his regent Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho as well as by Lo-chen Dharmaśrī (1654-1718) in their astrological writings, and then, again, by our author Padma 'phrin-las, all three of whom were protégés of Dalai Lama V. Since their time, however, it seems to have disappeared and the Potala archive no longer contains this text. The citations that we have, however, clearly mark it out as an original Tibetan composition (as suggested by Thu'u-bkvan), incorporating both Chinese and Indian motifs.

Among the mysterious, shadowy entities dealt with in the Astrological texts of this sort are the group known as *sa bdag* (often equated with Sanskrit *bhūmipati*), 'Lords of the Soil.' There are countless numbers of these creatures inhabiting the earth and they include within their ranks a king, queen, ministers, courtiers and so forth, in a manner imitative of the structure of society in the human world. Of particular interest to 'terrestrial astrologers,' that is to say, those diviners more properly referred to as geomancers, are the *sa bdag* of the years, the *sa bdag* of months, the *sa bdag* of the cycle of nine numbers (*sme ba*), the *sa bdag* of the cycle of eight trigrams (*spar kha*), and the *sa bdag* of days (*zhag*). These groups are all enumerated in the thirty-first chapter of the *Vaidūrya dkar-po* by *sde srid* Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho.²⁶

The name Ki-kang occurs three times in our texts. In the *zlog pa* (averting) rites of Vajrakila (see below, p.258) we find the injunction: "You must avert the *ki kang* of the *btsan*!" and, also, "You must avert the *ki kang* of the planets (*gza*)!" Then, in the *sri mnan* section (p.327), it is noted in passing that the Sri demons are to be separated from their protective gods, "using the style of *ki kang*."

bLo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1552-1624), a teacher widely respected as a scholar of the Vajrakila cycle and whose profound skill in the rites of Vajrakila earned him the epithet *sog bzlog pa* when he turned away an invading army of Mongol soldiers, wrote a pair of texts entitled *gShin rje ki kang gi dbang chog* (rites of empowerment for Ki-kang, the Lord of Death) and *gShin rje ki kang gi dgra brubs* (rites of imprisoning the enemy [from the cycle of] Ki-kang, the Lord of Death). Clearly, the Ki-kang of these texts is of some singular significance but, unfortunately, the texts bearing these titles (listed in the catalogue of bDud-joms rin-po-che's library) are now lost.

²⁶ *Phug lugs rtsis kyi legs bshad bai dūr dkar po*, published by the Krung-go'i bod-kyi-shes-rig dpe-skrun-khang, 1997

In the chapter dealing with marriage in the *'Byung rtsis man ngag zla ba'i 'od zer* by Lo-chen Dharmasri, Ki-kang is/are described as malignant and harsh. And then, in the root text *Vaiḍūrya dkar-po* by *sde srid* Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho we find the name listed among the group of the 49 *sa bdag* of days.²⁷ In this text it is said: *ki kang 'byung ba'i spyi bdud po / gza' rgod drag po sgra gcan ni /* "With regard to Ki-kang, the demon chief of elemental spirits, the wild, fierce planet Rāhu ..." And thus we see that Ki-kang may be none other than Rāhu, the northern node of the moon, variously considered an evil planet responsible for the periodic eclipses of both sun and moon, and a protector of the profound esoteric teachings of *guhyanmantra*.

According to Varāhamihira (*Brhat Samhitā* III.7), Rāhu has 33 comets named Tāmasakilaka (Small Kila of Darkness) as his offspring. These appear from time to time as observable disturbances on the surface of the sun (sun spots), which can be correlated to dust-storms, earthquakes and famines on Earth, as well as to outbreaks of disease and destructive tendencies among men. Writing at the end of the fifth century CE, Varāhamihira was steeped in the ancient tradition of the Vedas, and I cannot help but wonder whether the Tibetan *ki kang* is not based on Sanskrit *kilaka* in this usage.²⁸ According to Varāhamihira, when these dark spikes assume the form of a raven (*dhvāṅkṣa*), their effects are inevitably evil.

The principal text dedicated to the demonic protector Rāhu in the Tibetan tradition is the *bdud bya rog mgo brtsegs gsang ba sgrol byed kyi rgyal po ki kang rog ti'i mdo snying gzer nag po'i rgyud chen po*, 'The Great Black Tantra Summarising the Crucial Points of Dark Ki-kang, King of the Secret Liberators, the Raven Demon With a Pile of Heads.'²⁹ In the opening chapter (*nidāna*) of this source we learn of the great *rākṣasa* called Yakṣajvala who blazed with fire upon the summit of Mount Meru and his wife, the *nāginī* Vajrayakṣī, who heaved with passionate desire in the depths of the great ocean. From the union of these two

²⁷ Chapter XXXI, *Lo zla tsho grangs dus tshod la rgyu ba'i sa bdag skor*, The revolutions of the *sa bdag* who move with the years, months, dates and hours.

²⁸ *ki kang rog ti* is archaic Tibetan, corresponding perfectly to Sanskrit *tāmasakilaka*.

²⁹ Listed as text 931 in volume 46 (*mi*) of the mTshams-brag edition of the NGB (pp.276-361). The text itself, in 15 chapters, is also called *gZa' bdud chen po khyab 'jug gi rgyud*, the Tantra of Rāhu. Ki-kang rog-ti is also called Ki-kang rakṣa, where *rakṣa* is a Tibetan loan word, meaning 'rākṣasa demon,' not the Sanskrit *rakṣa*, meaning 'protection.'





were born five children: Ki-kang chung-byed chen-po, 'The Great Bringer of Disaster,' and his four sisters called collectively Ki-kang mgo-brnyan-ma, 'Horrible-Headed Apparitions.' These children promptly began to devour all sentient beings, so the Blessed Lord Bhairava Yamāntaka hurled a sharp weapon-wheel at the boy, which cut his body up into eight pieces. Those fragments were then spread out upon the golden disc at the foundation of the universe and pressed down by the weight of Mount Meru and the seven rings of cosmic mountains. At the same time, the four sisters were arranged beneath the four corners of the central king of cosmic mountains. Despite all this, however, it was not possible to completely cover those four sisters and so they rose up again. And, as for their brother, a new Ki-kang arose from each of the fragments of his body and thus those Ki-kang multiplied and covered the world. Wandering wherever fancy took them, their unpredictable movements brought chaos and destruction to the world. Again Bhairava Yamāntaka rose up against them and subdued them and they submitted to him and they surrendered the *mantra* of their life force and offered oaths of fealty. Vajrabhairava, being pleased, accepted their vows and gave them permission to move in certain directions at specific times. Thus, a multiplicity of demons become a singular body and in the *Vaiḍūrya dkar-po*, the most important text on astrology in the Tibetan tradition, we read: *stag rta khyi gsum zla ba la / bco lnga nyi shu brgyad la rgyu / phag lug yos gsum gnyis gsum la / byi 'brug sprel gsum bco brgyad dang / nyi shu brgyad rgyu bya glang sbrul / bcu drug nyer drug dag la rgyu //* "During the three months of Tiger, Horse and Dog, he moves on the 15th (the day of the full moon) and the 28th. During the three months of Pig, Sheep and Rabbit he moves on the 2nd and the 3rd. During the three months of Rat, Dragon and Monkey he moves on the 18th and the 28th. During the three months of Bird, Ox and Snake he moves on the 16th and the 26th."

In the *Ki kang rog ti'i mdo snying gzer nag po'i rgyud*, the group of Ki-kang are referred to as 'great sages' (*drang srong chen po*) and described as having the body of a *rākṣasa* (derived from their father) with the tail of a snake (inherited from the mother) and a pile of nine ugly heads, the uppermost of which is that of a black raven.³⁰ This raven head is believed to be especially pernicious, such that whomsoever passes beneath its shadow will suffer fits of apoplexy. When he moves in the night, he conquers the four directions. When he moves during the day,

³⁰ Tibetan icons, however, almost invariably depict Rāhu with ten heads.

he overthrows the four intermediate directions. Moving through the sky between heaven and earth, he burns the entire *traidhātuka*. He inflicts infectious diseases upon man and beast and devours the sun and the moon. His natural home is in the southwest but, when intercepting the moon, he moves towards the east and, when intercepting the sun, he moves towards the west. When he dwells at the bottom of the ocean, he agitates all the *nāga* so that they send forth lightning, hail and earthquakes. He is described as the great demon of the five elements and, in Chapter IV of his *tantra*, he is called by a different name and said to perform a different act of wickedness in every direction. Then, within the eighth chapter of this *tantra*, at the end of a long and elaborate description of all the planetary demons roaming the sky, each of which is understood to be a manifestation of the great demon Rāhu, it is said that they all “cause the *ki kang* of worldly destruction to descend” (*’jig rten phung ba’i ki kang ’bebs*).

Then, again, in Chapter IX of his *tantra*, this great offspring of a *rākṣasa* and a *nāga* is said to dwell “in the *maṇḍala* of the interplay of hatred and desire” as the leader of the ten non-virtues and the five poisons. Although he has only one body, he has nine different heads: the head of Vitripatra causes a great hailstorm of violent *ki kang* of the *rākṣasas* to descend. The head of Phung-byed srin-po rā-hu-la perpetually sends down the *ki kang* of lightning and hail. The head of ‘Jigs-byed gza’-bdud sgra-gcan-’dzin perpetually sends down the *ki kang* of impenetrable knives that sever the life force. The head of Du-ba mjug-rings chen-po causes the descent of the *ki kang* of fearful agitation and the breakdown of stability and order. The head of Khyab-’jug chen-po sprul-pa’i-sku sends down the *ki kang* of all the troublesome gods and demons. The head of dMu-bdud byi-snu rā-ja sends down the great *ki kang* of suddenly-arising warfare. The head of the demonic Ca-ra-ka sends down the *ki kang* of unexpected violence. The head of ‘Jigs-byed ljang-sngon dmag-dpon sends down the *ki kang* of lightning and hail that cuts in various ways. And the uppermost head of the black raven sends down the *ki kang* of earthquake, frost and hail, destroyed crops, famine, and all manner of devastation and evil disease.

Thus we may understand that the *ki kang* referred to in our literature are those ‘spikes of darkness’ (*tāmasakilaka*, *ki kang rog ti*) of the celestial sphere, the destructive aspects of nature that bring ruin and disaster upon the world. These are the very things that the *bzlog pa* rituals seek to avert, and it is interesting to note that “the style of *ki kang*” is employed in the *sri mnan* and *Kila* rituals of destruction to first render



the enemy helpless. In all such rituals, an effigy of the enemy to be destroyed is bombarded with noxious substances such as mustard seeds, poisonous blood and the smoke of crystal myrrh, so that the enemy becomes weakened and may thus more easily be overpowered.

Within the *sri mnan* ritual texts, also, mention is several times made of “items that ward off the demons of slander” (*mi kha’i rdzas*).³¹ It is taken for granted that the reader is a ritual specialist familiar with these magical items and attendant techniques. Our author, Rig-’dzin Padma ’phrin-las, wrote the *mi kha khrom bskyur zab mo*, listed in the Potala Palace archives but not available to me for consultation. Perhaps his text bears some close relationship to that of his younger contemporary, bZhad-pa’i rdo-rje (born 1697), who wrote the *mi kha khrom sgyur gyi las mtha’ bdud rtsi’i rgyun ’bab*. Another contemporary, Dri-med gling-pa (1700-1775), wrote the *’Chi bslu bdud bzhi gYul bzlog gi mi kha bzlog pa’i lhan thabs dgra bgegs dpung ’joms*. Others in the genre include early *gter ma* texts of the ‘thread cross’ ritual type (*mdos*), such as the *Mi kha bzlog mdos* included in the *brTan ma bcu gnyis kyi mdos chen* collection, and later texts by Ngag-dbang blo-bzang don-grub (19th century), who invoked the powerful protectors lCam-sring and dPal-ldan lha-mo to effect this task (*mi kha’i ’phrin bcol*).³²

We must suppose that such texts provide full details of these “items that ward off the *mi kha*,” just as the items that subjugate the Sri are detailed in the *sri mnan* texts. Within our sources, we read that the most important of the ritual ingredients for warding off the Sri are beer, polluted with various poisons and blood, the metallic dust derived from the sharpening of swords and battle axes and so forth, a red triangular *bali* cake smeared with blood mixed with poison, iron filings, copper filings, bell metal filings, water cress plants, and yellow mineral earth. Other items include broken pieces of stone from a mountain avalanche, dust from the navel of a millstone, salt, capsicum pepper, and white and black mustard seeds. “Fumigating the Sri with incense made of

³¹ *mi kha* are the malicious forces of arrogance, vindictiveness, resentment, jealousy, spite, false charges, calumny, slander and destructive gossip. Tibetan folk tales tell of a demoness known as ‘the gossip girl’ (*mi kha bu mo*), said to inflict dementia, chronic illness and fatal accidents upon her victims.

³² *Dregs pa lcam sring mi kha dgra bzlog gnod rgyal dmar po* (6 folios), *Dregs pa lcam sring mi kha gcod tshul ’jigs rung spu gri* (6 folios), and the *dPal ldan lha mo’i sgo nas mi kha dgra bzlog bya tshul gnam lcags rdo rje’i lhun brtsegs* (11 folios).



myrrh and pelting them with filings of iron, copper, bell-metal, mineral earth, water cress, and black and white mustard seeds, destroys their magical powers." (See below, p.326) Then, once they have been caught and bound, if they are buried with the five elements of Chinese astrology, together with blackened pieces of half-burned wood, these are considered magical items which close ("cut") their mouths so that they may never return. Most important of all, however, are the three items of salt, soda and borax which are renowned as the three special substances for the destruction of the Sri.

At the time of pressing down, the necessary items are the blackened pieces of burnt wood, salt, borax, soda, an upper millstone inscribed with Mount Meru and the four major and the eight minor continents, a tombstone inscribed with a *viśvavajra*, some cloth of black goat's wool or the lower garment of a widow or widower, thread of five different colours, five varieties of herbal medicine, various coloured silks, five varieties of precious jewel, earth from the foundation of an ancient *stūpa*, some kind of goat hair (*ra spu bzhud ma*), and items similar to those used in order to overthrow the *mi kha*.

Of great importance, then, to ritual specialists, this book is presented to those whose aspiration is for the welfare of the world, together with a prayer that its higher purpose be fulfilled.



