Niguma
Lady of Illusion

Sarah Harding
Niguma, Lady of Illusion
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NIGUMA,
LADY OF ILLUSION

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Prayer to the Gurus of the Shangpa Lineage

by Tenga Tulku Rinpoche

Vajradhara, Niguma, Sukhasiddhi, Râhula,
Vajrásana, great adept Maitripa,
And Hidden Yogin Râhula:
I supplicate the six sublime gurus.

Crown jewel of learned adepts, sublime Khyungpo Naljor,
Mokchokpa and Wöntön Kyergangpa,
Sangye Nyentön Chökyi Sherab and
Sangye Tönpa Tsöndru Senge:
I supplicate the lineage of seven jewels.

Nurtured by the sublime glorious guru
In this life and in all future lives,
Through the consummate realization of Five Golden Dharmas
May I gain the original sovereign state in one lifetime.
THE MYSTERIOUS NIGUMA was an Indian woman from Kashmir who probably lived in the tenth and eleventh centuries. Not only are the dates uncertain, but so too is almost everything about her. I will explore what there is to know and not to know about Niguma in the introduction. What does stand firmly as testimony to her existence, however, is her legacy of teachings, which form the very core of the Shangpa Kagyu lineage, one of the “Eight Great Chariots of the Practice Lineages” that were later identified as the main conduits through which experiential Buddhism spread from India to Tibet.

The collection translated here consists of all of the works that are attributed to Niguma contained in the Tibetan Buddhist “canon,” a total of seventeen separate texts, plus the only known biography from the collected texts in the Shangpa tradition. Most of these are only a few pages in length, though their original verses gave rise to a whole body of literature in the Shangpa practice tradition. The exception is her master work, the Stages in the Path of Illusion (sGyu ma lam gyi rim pa), and its commentary (sGyu ma lam gyi rim pa'i 'grel pa). This is our main focus here, though the other texts will be briefly introduced.

Stages in the Path of Illusion depicts a spiritual journey, beginning with the point of departure, or “ground”—the underlying buddha-nature with its inherent potential for awakening. It takes us through the progressive journey common to Mahāyāna Buddhism, but with Niguma’s distinctive twist of using the journey’s illusory nature as our guide. That it is illusion is not in question. The crucial instruction is in
the way to engage that insight to gain the goal of the journey, illusory buddhahood.

It could be said that Niguma is the mistress of illusion. Not only is her very nature as a historical person obscure in every way and her main and only treatise focused on that subject, but the other teachings for which she is most famous also reverberate with this theme. The two principal areas of practice in the tradition are the yogas based on the Six Dharmas of Niguma, with an emphasis on the illusory body and dream yogas, and the special Amulet Mahāmudrā, a practice of doing nothing. This twofold division of teachings represents the two universal approaches in tantric practice: the path of methods or techniques (thabs lam) and the path of liberation (grol lam), which focuses on the cultivation of a superior way of knowing (shes rab). The original verses or “vajra lines” (rdo rje tshig rkang) of these subjects are translated here. In the first category there are also five very cryptic instructions (zhal gdams) concerning yogic exercises associated with the practice of inner heat (gtum mo), one of the six dharmas. The mahāmudrā category includes an annotated version of the Amulet Mahāmudrā and a further instruction entitled Naturally Free Mahāmudrā.

Two other very important source texts of Niguma in this collection are Three Dharmas to Integrate on the Path (lam khyer gsum), which instruct the practitioner on how to integrate all appearances as the guru, the deity, and illusion in daily life, and Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness, which contains teachings on the immortal and infallible nature of the mind and body. Together with the six dharmas and mahāmudrā, these form four of the famed Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa that make up the core of the tradition, and that will be discussed later. The fifth golden dharma, that of the two Kechari dākinīs, was not included in this canonical collection. However, deity visualization practice, known as creation phase (bskyed rim), is represented by the means of accomplishment (grub thabs) and empowerment conferral in the important tantric deity Chakrasamvara: Swift Accomplishment of Glorious Chakrasamvara and Mandala Ritual of Chakrasamvara. Surprisingly, we also find another tantric text: the Mandala Ritual of Glorious Hevajra, a practice that does not currently
form part of the core Shangpa tradition. I will provide more context for the Shangpa literary and practice tradition in the introduction.

The collection is capped off by the lyrical prayer known popularly as Niguma's *Aspiration Prayer of the Sealed Word* or simply *Kagyama* (*bKa' rgyama*), in which she prays to "become the protector, hope, and reinforcement for all sentient beings equaling space, their every desire and hope, whatever they are, satisfied by me exactly as they wish."

I would like to add my own altruistic aspirations, otherwise stranded in the realm of wishful thinking, to be carried by Niguma's powerful blessing so that the work of translating her teachings will help accomplish her profound prayer.
I am most grateful for help and comments by Acārya Lama Tenpa Gyaltsen in translating the *Stages in the Path of Illusion* and its commentary. We studied every word of it together. His knowledge and enthusiasm for the path-system in the mahāyāna tradition was indispensable. And that’s not to even mention the help with Tibetan itself! Khenpo Tsering Gyurme of Surmang Dudtsitil Monastery worked valiantly for many months searching for the quotations, often reading whole sūtras by the dozen. I don’t think any database will ever replace the Tibetan lamas’ training in memorization and reading. Khenpo Tsering also made himself available at the drop of a hat for any questions regarding my research. I thank both of these lamas for their benevolent support. Some friends and colleagues helped by reading the manuscript and offering suggestions: Erin McCartney for a first reading of the introduction, Anne Blasing for a second, Steven Johnson for detailed cross-checking, and Robert Spellman for one final reading with an eye for style (who knew you were such a grammar nerd?). Lama Drupgyu, my friend and colleague in the three-year retreat and himself once a retreat master, helped to retrieve my long dormant memories of yogic exercises. We should all be grateful that someone remembers such things. I am also grateful for other friends that are now working under the auspices of the Tsadra Foundation, such as Ngawang Zangpo, Cyrus Stearns, Karl Brunnhölzl, and Richard Barron. Thank you for keeping in touch and adding to my knowledge when needed, which was often enough. Thanks go to graduate students Cory Leistikow and Daniel...
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Technical Notes

In the transliteration of Sanskrit terms, I have deviated from standard practice to bring it slightly more into line with English by replacing ś, s, and c with sh, sḥ, and ch, respectively. In addition, I have dispensed with diacritics altogether for certain Sanskrit terms that have found their way into English dictionaries, such as "samsara," "nirvana," "mandala," and so forth. When the Sanskrit word was retained in the Tibetan translation, I too have retained it rather than translating it into English. The phonetics for Tibetan names, places, and occasionally terms has been rendered in the closest approximation of pronunciation in English without burdening the reader overmuch with subtleties of dialect or bringing even more languages into the mix (except for the indispensable German umlaut: ö). The transliteration scheme developed by Turrell Wylie in "A Standard System of Tibetan Transcription" (1959) can usually be found in parentheses or in endnotes.

I consulted many editions of each text; the sources are quite ancient, and many errors have certainly found their way into the copies over the centuries. One could even say that they are riddled with spelling and word mistakes. I chose to translate the version of each word that makes the most sense, taking into consideration context, commentary (written and oral), meaning, and frequency of occurrence. The variances are often noted in the endnotes if they are meaningful or problematic. This is not, however, a critical text study, and every "te" that should be "de" is not noted. As mentioned in the translations, several of the texts have additional interlinear notes that were added at some earlier time to clarify the original. If these notes were included in the canonical editions, then I included them in the English translation, indicated
by using a smaller font. In the case of such notes from other editions besides the canon, I included in the endnotes only those that seemed helpful. Finally, where I needed to add words for clarification or grammatical purposes, they will be found in brackets.
NIGUMA, THE ĐĀKIŅĪ OF TIMELESS AWARENESS

WHO WAS THIS phantasmic lady Niguma? I will include here the brief biography found in the Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies, but other than that, one finds only hints and guesses from other sources. For instance, here is a typical description from the great Tibetan master Tāranātha:

The đākinī Niguma's place of birth was the Kashmiri city called "Incomparable." Her father was the brahmin Sāntivarman (Tib.: Zhi ba'i go cha). Her mother was Shrīmati (dPal gyi blo gros ma). Her real name was Srijñāna (dPal gyi ye shes). She had previously gathered the accumulations [of merit and wisdom] for three incalculable eons. Thus, in this life [as Niguma], based on the teachings of the instructions by the adept Lavāpa and some others, she manifested the signs of progress in the secret mantra vajrayāna, and attained the body of union. So her body became a rainbow-like form. She had the ability to really hear teachings from the great Vajradhara. Having become a great bodhisattva, her emanations pervaded everywhere and accomplished the welfare of beings.6

The elusiveness of Niguma is typical of the lore of the đākinī, the very embodiment of liminal spiritual experience. Additionally the difficulty
of pinpointing historical information may well be due to the lack of ancient sources from India and the lack of concern about such mundane matters by the Tibetan masters who encountered her in dreams and visions and maybe in person. After all, when confronted with the blazing apparition of the resplendent and daunting dark dakini bestowing critical cryptic advice, a background check would be rendered irrelevant. Indian Buddhist hagiographies are virtually unknown, whether of men or women. In Tibet, where hagiography became a prolific genre in its own right, those of women were extremely rare, for all the usual reasons. It is in the experiences of those heroes who encountered the dakini that one finds the most information, and these experiences are invested with the value of spiritual meaning. In the Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies, Niguma’s life story consists of only six folios, and half of them contain a supplication prayer to her, while that of her disciple Khyungpo Naljor, called a “mere mention” (zur tsam), consists of forty-three folios, and those of her brother Nāropa, Tāranātha, Tangtong Gyalpo, and so forth where Niguma is mentioned are much longer than that. Even more distressing, I have discovered that half of the remaining half of Niguma’s life story, the part that concerns her birthplace, appears to be directly lifted from a biography of Nāropa! Perhaps she is just an adornment of the lives of great saints, a figment of men’s imaginations.

That, of course, is something one has to wonder and worry about in nearly all of the more ancient writings about dakinis. The idealized image of a female messenger, awesome keeper of the great mysteries to be revealed only to the deserving spiritual virtuoso, is packed with power and intrigue for both male and female practitioners. Though unique in its particulars to Himalayan Buddhism, it is found in reminiscent forms throughout the cultures and religions of the world. The mystery of the dakini herself will not be revealed because she is the very definition of mystery, and were she discovered by those other than mystics, it would not be she.

But what of the actual woman behind the image? In the case of a reportedly historical woman such as Niguma, we should be able to find at least some hint of a subjective story, something to convince us that she is more than the object or projection of the practitioner’s realiza-
tion. And more than the "other" of the male "self." We seek her as the subject of her own story.

Niguma's Home

Niguma's life does present us with a few crumbs. First of all, her birthplace is known to be in Kashmir, a hub of Buddhist tantric activity that probably was in close quarters with the Shaivite tradition and other forms of esoteric Hinduism. The specific town, or perhaps monastery, is called Peme (dpe med) in Tibetan, meaning "without comparison," translating the term "Anupama." But we learn in her biography that this is not a real town, exactly, but one that has been created by an illusionist. So the first hard fact is already shaky. The story first mentions the creation myth, as it were, of Kashmir itself, a land that was once under water. According to Niguma's biography, the story takes place during the time of the previous buddha, Kāshyapa, though in other versions the story centers around Buddha Shākyamuni's time and his disciple Ānanda. In any case, a disciple wished to build a temple in the area of Kashmir and stealthily negotiated with the subterranean beings, or nāga, who were tricked into "upmerging" and surrendering a large area of land. It reports that the residents were amazed, though in the same story in Naropa's biography, it is the nāga themselves who were amazed. In any case, the amazed ones commission an illusionist to create a city, which he does based on the "blueprint" of the great celestial city of the gods called Sudarshana. But this talented architect-magician dies before he could dissolve the city, and so it remained. This, then, is Niguma's home town: a divinely inspired illusion.

Family and Friends

Niguma's family relationships are similarly elusive, particularly when it comes to her connection with Nāropa (956–1040),11 her contemporary and a great adept whose teachings on the six dharmas that he learned from Tilopa spread widely in Tibet. The names of Niguma's parents given above by Taranātha are indeed the same as the names of Nāropa's parents as given in his biography by Lhatsun Rinchen
Namgyal (1473–1557) and are similar in other biographies too. These biographies tell the story of those parents’ first child, Shrijñana, and how they had to perform special supplications for a male child after her birth. We also have the name of Nāropa’s wife, Vimalā or Vimalādīpi (Dri med pa or Dri med sgron ma), with whom he parted to pursue his spiritual career. Nāropa is sometimes said to be from Bengal in the east, but there is little evidence for this theory, and most authors locate his birthplace in Kashmir, along with Niguma. There is even some evidence that Nāropa’s well-known hermitage of Puṣṭpahari, or Pullahari, commonly identified as being on a hillock west of Bodhgaya, may have been in Kashmir. In Niguma’s biography, it simply mentions that Nāropa was also in the area. Despite any misinformed discrepancies, it would seem to be quite clear that Niguma and Nāropa were sister and brother. Yet scholars, mostly Western, have insisted on suggesting that Niguma was his consort, perhaps his sister too, in a sort of tantalizing tantric gossip. Alas it may be the great translator Herbert Guenther who started the trend. In his introduction to The Life and Teaching of Nāropa, he makes a most puzzling allusion:

[Nāropa’s] wife seems to have gone by her caste name Ni­gu-ma, and according to the widely practiced habit of calling a female with whom one has had any relation ‘sister’ she became known as ‘the sister of Nāropa.’

Guenther cites The Blue Annals and the Collected Works of bLo bzang chos-kyi nyi-ma, an eighteenth-century Gelukpa scholar known as Tuk­wan Lama, as the sources where “Ni-gu-ma is stated to have been the wife of Nāropa.” However, both sources state nothing so definitive. The Blue Annals, which devotes most of a chapter to the accounts of Niguma and her lineage, mentions her only as Nāropa’s sister, using the Tibetan word lcām mo, a combination of lcām (an honorific) and sring mo (sister). The second source similarly says only that she is Nigu­ma’s lcām, as do all other sources in Tibetan that I have seen. A suppli­cation to Niguma in the practice of the white and red Khecharī ākāniks uses the unambiguous term sring mo, calling her “the single sister of the awareness-holder.” Admittedly, the word lcām mo can be used as
mistress or wife, particularly as the senior of several wives," but given this bivalent meaning and the fact that we have the identical parents' names and the name of Nāropa’s real wife, why on earth would one choose to translate it as “wife”? Even the translator Roerich does not do so in the *Blue Annals* and comments elsewhere that “in the ancient language *lcam* means always ‘sister’.” It does seem to be that tired old need to attribute a woman’s worth to her mate that plagues the annals of history, coupled with the scholarly penchant for repeating the confident pronouncements of former scholars.

Another possible source of confusion pertains to a supposed meeting between Nāropa’s Tibetan disciple Marpa and Niguma. In the introduction to the translation of Tsangnyōn Heruka’s biography of Marpa called *The Life of Marpa the Translator*, the following information is offered, repeating the relationship in an even stranger way:

> After attaining his first realization of mahāmudrā under Maitripa, Marpa returned to Nāropa. This time, Nāropa sent Marpa to receive teachings from Niguma, Wisdom (Jñāna) Dākinī Adorned with Bone ornaments. She was Nāropa’s wife before he renounced worldly life to enter the dharma, and later she became his student and consort. Finally, she became a great teacher herself and her lineage of teachings was taken to Tibet (though not by Marpa) and continues to this present day. Unfortunately, our story here does not tell us very much about their meeting (xliii).

The Tibetan text reveals that Marpa was indeed sent on two separate occasions, first by Nāropa and later by Shantibhadra, to meet a certain dākinī called simply by the metonym “Adorned with Bone Ornaments.” Nowhere does it mention Niguma specifically by name in this or other biographies of Marpa. It is true that in later eulogies Niguma is described as wearing bone ornaments, but I believe this could be considered a regular wardrobe for dākinis, whose options were generally confined to charnel grounds. Better evidence of their identity than similar attire would be that both Marpa’s dākinī and Khyungpo Naljor’s Niguma can sometimes both be found in the same great cemetery of
Sosadvipa (Tib. Sosaling), said to be just to the west of Bodhgaya and the vacation spot of many a great master, including Padmasambhava. It was also, however, a famous dakinī gathering spot. In Marpa’s biography, he finds the bone-decked dakinī on two occasions: once he receives the empowerment and instructions in the Four Seats Tantra from her, and a second time he receives a prophecy about meeting Nāropa (after he had already passed away). Given the widespread prevalence, even requirement, of dakinī encounters on the spiritual path of yogis, this account gives us nothing to cling to. Moreover, there is no account wherein Niguma receives any teachings from Nāropa, though the similarity of the content of their teachings might lead one to believe otherwise. But how do we know that it was not the other way around—that Nāropa did not receive teachings from his big sister?

Teachers

The only piece of specific information about Niguma’s teachers that I have from my sources is her connection with a certain Lavāpa, according to two accounts by Tāranātha. However Lavāpa is not mentioned by name in Niguma’s Life Story, where it says only that “she directly saw the truth of the nature of phenomena just by hearing some instructive advice from a few adept masters.” The only two named masters in the Life Story are Nāropa and Ratnavajra, and then only as cohabitants in Kashmir. Again, the commonly held belief that Niguma received the six dharmas from Nāropa seems to be unsubstantiated. In fact, the Blue Annals, following a similar statement in Khyungpo Naljor’s biography, quotes Niguma saying that “these six doctrines are known only to myself and Lavāpa.”

It is, however, difficult to identify this Lavāpa. Tāranātha provides some nice anecdotes of an ācārya Lavāpa in The Seven Instruction Lineages and discusses him again in his History. He is also mentioned by Nāropa’s guru, Tilopa, as one of his four human teachers and the one from whom he received dream yoga, or lucid clarity, depending on the account. Some sources identify Ācārya Lavāpa with Kambhalapāda, one of the eighty-four great adepts (mahāsiddhas) of Indian Buddhism who is associated with the conversion activities in the west of
India. Tāranātha does not seem to make this identity and we are left with a lack of information on this “Lavāpa of the East,” other than that he is called “the lesser (that is, younger), or latter Lavāpa.” Here is another version by Tāranātha, with its veiled jab at this unidentified Lavāpa:

She listened for a bit to instructions from Lavāpa of the East, and after meditating for seven days together with the master himself, she became a dakini of timeless awareness with a rainbow body. She manifested the realization of the eighth ground. It is said that Lavāpa of the East [did not gain the full rainbow body because he] left behind a palm-sized portion of the crown of his head. This Lavāpa is the lesser. The name Nigu accords with the Indian language, which is Nigupta, and it is said to mean “truly secret” or “truly hidden.” In fact, it is the code-language of the dakinis of timeless awareness.

Code-Language

The symbolic or code-language of the dakinis (mkha'gro'i brda'skad) is itself “truly hidden.” Masters of meditation decipher these communications in moments of inspiration, but by the time we hear what they might be, they have already been translated and carry all the perils of that craft, including possible fraud. We can see a few indecipherable graphics called “dakini code-letters” (mkha'gro brda'yi) in treasure texts, but even this is only a subcategory of the mystery code-language itself. In his commentary on the treasure text Lamrim Yeshe Nyingpo, Jamgön Kongtrul explains:

A person endowed with the karmic continuation and destiny will, by means of a profound coincidence of place, time, and aspiration, be able to decode the symbolic meaning of these treasure letters that are nirmānakāyas, the vajra forms endowed with all eminent aspects, and establish them correctly in writing.
Perhaps the dākinī code-language is beyond verbal communication, with its necessarily dualistic and designatory nature. But then why call it “language”? Symbolic communication is specifically distinguished from nonverbal transmission in the Nyingma tripartite transmissions of dzogchen teachings, where the symbolic lineage of the awareness-holders (rig 'dzin brda'i brgyud pa) falls neatly between the nonverbal lineage of the buddhas’ “thought” or intention, and the aural lineage of ordinary people. Janet Gyatso suggests that the dākinī, in keeping with her playful character, is “working within language to subvert it, drawing attention to its own (dualistic) structures while never retreating outside its realm.” And certainly the esoteric teachings of the tantras themselves in their written form are known to be coded. After all, the common name for those teachings is “secret mantra” (gsang sngags). The dākinī code-language is a secret within that secret and seems to be reserved for the most profound and spontaneous experiences of only very gifted practitioners.

Tāranātha makes no attempt to tell us what the name “Niguma” really means in that language, leaving it rather to the initiated to find out.

In a similar way it is difficult to precisely identify Niguma’s other attributes that recur in most sources, although they are reported as quantifiable facts. She had high-level realization, placing her in the “pure” (dag pa) or nondissipating (zag med) grounds, she attained the so-called rainbow body, and most famously, she could receive teachings directly from Vajradhara. What do these qualities actually mean, apart from being ways to impress us?

Pure Ground

The first attribute is at least locatable in the mahāyāna map to enlightenment, or road to glory, as some have put it. The milestones on this journey are a main subject in the Commentary to Stages in the Path of Illusion and will be discussed in more detail later. The division into anywhere from ten to fourteen levels or stations (literally “grounds” Skt. bhūmi, Tib. sa) has become somewhat standardized and carries designations of either pure or impure. The impure stages are the grounds up to and including the seventh since there is still the risk that someone
of low acumen could revert to a lesser degree of enlightenment. The grounds from the eighth and up are pure grounds since there can be no reverting from them. Taranātha designates Niguma’s position as on only the eighth ground. By her own admission (if indeed she is the true source of the commentary to the Path of Illusion), she states confidently: “The author is myself, one who dwells on the three pure grounds and has obtained authorization from Vajradhara.” The Life Story reveals more of a progression through these last pure grounds, culminating in the tenth ground, “Cloud of Dharma,” so-called because, as it says in the commentary, “cloud-like great timeless awareness pervades throughout the sky-like dharmakāya.” Here is her description from Path of Illusion:

Then, in a single instant, amidst
the great appearance of dharma and
immeasurable light and dharma clouds and
dharma appearance and dharma light of immeasurable
tathāgatas,
the immeasurably great Cloud of Dharma is attained.33

After the culmination of the tenth ground, wherein the perfection of timeless awareness is achieved, there is the state of total awakening as a buddha. Different systems describe different ways that this final transformation occurs, as we shall see, and often further levels are enumerated. Twelve are described in Path of Illusion, but it seems that more levels were always being added, especially in the dzogchen tradition, making buddhahood ever more distant. In any case, awesome as Niguma’s tenth-ground status appears, with its “twelve hundred sets of unimaginable qualities,” she herself warns that “the difference between buddhas and bodhisattvas is like the difference in the waters of the ocean and in the hoof print of an ox.”34

Rainbow Body

The language of the paths and levels in general is so dazzling as to render one impotent. Even the lowest of the impure grounds are unimaginable. Yet these specific statements on Niguma’s status must be made
for a purpose, or else one could just as well have said merely that she was really fantastic and leave it at that. One issue involves the technical verification of the other two traits that she boasts: the body of a rainbow and her lessons from Vajradhara. Descriptions of Niguma are all ephemeral because they are descriptions not of a person but of a yogic experience. Later visionary accounts of her, such as that of Tangtong Gyalpo, are of course out of this world. But even the supposedly “real-time” encounters described in the biography of Khyungpo Naljor are dreamlike, if not dreams in fact. Rainbows are one of the primary examples of phenomena that both appear distinctly and yet are insubstantial, so it is not surprising to hear that the dākinīs encountered in paranormal or liminal states of consciousness are described as being rainbow-like. Words could only point to such an experience by evoking in us a similar experience, and even then must fall tragically short. But far beyond a mere metaphor, the phenomenon known as “rainbow body” has produced considerable speculation and technically specific statistics—as though it truly existed. Perhaps the rainbow body is a poetic trope of mystical virtuosos used to communicate their innermost experiences. Whether this actually produced the attempt to identify and locate the phenomenon in the maps of spiritual progress cannot be known. But at least in some literature, the rainbow body is described quite specifically, one might even say concretely, as when Tāranātha weighs the exact portion of Lavāpa’s body that did not rainbow-ize in the above story.

There is an enormous amount of material concerning the phenomenon of light that permeates almost all aspects of Buddhism, and it is not uncommon in other spiritual traditions as well. These many aspects are not irrelevant, but just too much to cover here, and I refer the reader to other sources. For our immediate purpose, I could at least narrow the field by pointing out that the majority of the material in the Buddhist tradition concerns the nature of the mind, whether it be the light that describes its essence of clear awareness, or the light that is an actual perception of luminosity (either could be indicated by the Tibetan terms gsal ba and ’od gsal). But the term “rainbow body” (ja’lus) concerns an actual physical body that is transformed in its very nature into another kind of appearing phenomenon that is like a rainbow. The simple dictionary definition is “the corporeal body liberated
Introduction

into a body of light.” This sometimes occurs at death, in which case the corpse either disappears altogether, leaving only fingernails and hair, or else shrinks, a phenomenon known as “lesser rainbow body.” This phenomenon has been reported throughout Tibetan history up to the present. For instance, a person who observed the funeral of Lama Norbu Dondrup, the teacher of the late Kalu Rinpoche, reported that his body had diminished to the size of a baby.

In the dzogchen tradition, it is said to be the product of very specific and intentionally designed practices, unique to that tradition. According to the modern Tibetan master Namkhai Norbu, what occurs is that “instead of decomposing into its constituent elements in the usual way, [the body] dissolves into the essence of its elements, which is light.” However in certain other tantric traditions, such as Kalachakra, it can be the product of particular completion phase yogic practices that work with the subtle energetic body with its potential for enlightenment.

Again, it occurs based on inner heat practices in the Kagyu tradition:

The ultimate attainment, like using quicksilver to transform iron into pure gold, is that the quintessence of the channels, energy currents, and vital essences will increase, gradually consuming the refuse and transforming the body into the actual rainbow body of inseparable form-emptiness, the sambhogakāya.

It becomes clear that these are not just remarkable death stories, however astonishing. The Tibetan developments of the esoteric instructions concerning this phenomenon perhaps eventually grew into a way to identify the ultimate fruition of practice and hence to describe enlightened beings as well as the practitioner’s effulgent experiences of them. Whether applied retroactively or not, the salient point of assigning the rainbow body to the great masters of the past, such as Niguma, would seem to be to explain their remarkable and continuing appearance in the lives of their devotees, long after their possible normal life spans. In some places, Niguma is even named “she with the deathless body of a rainbow.” About this on-going beneficence, Namkhai Norbu continues,
But a practitioner who perfects and completes the fourth level of the Todgal \([thod rgal]\) visions does not manifest death at all, and makes this transubstantiation while actually living, with none of the symptoms or phenomena of a physical death, gradually becoming invisible to someone with normal karmic vision. This level of realization is called the ‘Great Transfer’, and this is the realization that Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra manifested. Both the Great Transfer and the Body of Light [i.e., rainbow body] are in essence the same; it is just that, in the Great Transfer, one arrives earlier. 42

Although that particular terminology is specific to the dzogchen literature, it must be that they refer to a similar or equivalent phenomenon, as do a variety of other terms such as “body of union” \([zung 'jug gi sku]\), “vajra body” \([rdo rje sku]\), and so on. Such terms are found mainly in the context of vajrayāna, and we don’t find such language in the Indian mahāyāna delineation of paths and grounds. 43 Later, Tibetan scholars attempted to correlate the two vehicles of spiritual journeying. However, when and where the transmutation occurs in relationship to the mahāyāna path is difficult to pinpoint (as is befitting of an idea that intentionally indicates elusiveness). In the system of Highest Yoga Tantra, Jamgon Kongtrul mentions it in connection with the peak experience, which is the second ground on the third path. 44 According to the general correspondences of the five paths and ten grounds, this would not even be the first ground of a bodhisattva, which does not begin until the Path of Seeing. Again, in the same source, the term “rainbow body” is used in connection with the first ground in the Kalachakra system, but with the caveat that the term refers to an approximation of the ultimate accomplishment. 45 Finally we find it again in the final Path of Consummation as the ultimate achievement of enlightenment. 46 Another source, Dagpo Tashi Namgyal, similarly assigns it to the highest, or thirteenth, level. 47 What are we to make of these various assignments in relation to Niguma? Jamgon Kongtrul may be trying to clarify this in the following passage:
It can be determined that the fruition aspect of tantra is two-fold: the actual fruition and the nominal results. The actual fruition is that of supreme Vajradhara, the powerful state of mastery over all family types. The nominal results are those of the illusory body and of an ordinary being who has realized primordial unity. The latter case is the flawed embodiment of one who is still on the path of training, while the former is the flawless embodiment of timeless awareness of one who has reached the path of no more training. The illusory body is also termed that of “a master of awareness” and “rainbow body”; it constitutes a complete transcendence of the three realms. 48

We have seen already that by all accounts Niguma was considered a bodhisattva of the pure grounds, that is, the eighth to the tenth grounds. Her rainbow body must be an attainment less than that of total buddhahood, otherwise it might be expected that her appearances were a manifestation of sambhogakāya, the body of total enjoyment, which is an embodiment of a buddha only perceptible by bodhisattvas with extremely pure vision, themselves abiding on the eighth ground or above. If that were the case, what would we make of the fact that she received teachings from the buddha Vajradhara? Why would she even need to do that? And what does it mean to say that? These questions are given added urgency in the biography of Khyungpo Naljor, who roamed India specifically in search of those who had “met the buddha.”

**Buddha Speaking**

One might be surprised to find that the *Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies* begins with the “life story” of the buddha Vajradhara, incidentally by the same author as that of Niguma’s biography. 49 “Life story” is a functional translation of *namtar* (*rnam par thar pa*) in Tibetan, which literally means “total liberation.” We are accustomed to these accounts’ tracing at least some trajectory of the aspirant’s journey to the liberated state, so it is odd to find such a genre applied to an epitomized
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

buddha. In this “biography,” Vajradhara is described as the inner aspect of the buddha Shākyamuni. In this form, the Buddha taught the four classes of tantra to King Indrabhūti, “he” abides until the end of time, and he dwells in that mysterious place called the bhaga of the vajra queen.\(^5\) As Shākyamuni, therefore, he in fact does make a spiritual journey that began with the initial arousing of the spirit of supreme awakening. This inner aspect is called Vajradhara because of “holding (Skt. dhara) the adamantine or vajra-like absorption of the nature of phenomena.”\(^5\) Buddhhas have many dimensions. After presenting various enumerations of buddha-bodies or kāyas (sku), this text settles on the usual three: dharmakāya, the body of dharma, sāṃbhogakāya, the body of perfect engagement, and nirmāṇakāya, the body of emanation. Vajradhara as buddha manifests all three. But which Vajradhara does Niguma meet? All indications point to the sāṃbhogakāya Vajradhara, an actual findable buddha, the intermediary or liminal form of buddha that facilitates communication, not the all-encompassing spacious buddha-mind of dharmakāya. In Vajradhara’s biography the question arises, “To whom do the three kāyas appear?” It is answered quite succinctly:

The dharmakāya free of all embellishment [appears] in the meditative equipoise above the first ground. The sāṃbhogakāya adorned with the signs and marks appears in the subsequent knowing on the three pure grounds. The nirmāṇakāya appears in the subsequent knowing up through the seventh ground and above the greater [ground] of the Path of Accumulation.\(^5\)

It is interesting that the dharmakāya is accessible first, though specifically in meditation. It seems more profound, the ground of all buddha-bodies, and therefore more difficult to realize. But the keener realization is to meet the fully adorned and manifesting buddha, not in meditation but in the subsequent awareness after meditation—in “daily life” so to speak. In fact, according to this statement, the nirmāṇakāya, the actual Shākyamuni or other physical emanation, does not appear to
someone dwelling above the seventh ground. In other words, the highest bodhisattvas dwelling on the three pure grounds only encounter the sambhogakāya. They know the manifest appearance of enlightenment, or perhaps that appearance is enlightenment.

It must be this sambhogakāya that is meant in the *Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary* where the imminent attainment of the tenth ground is “to see the Body of the tathāgata [in] a fathom of light of a color like gold, completely surrounded by ten million billion brahmās.” And this must be why Khyungpo Naljor is so determined to find someone who has directly encountered the buddha. For if someone had perceived a buddha, that is, a sambhogakāya, it would indicate the highest of realizations, higher than even finding dharmakāya, which would be *merely* “abiding in one’s own mind pure as space.” Although he has already met many great masters of India, Khyungpo Naljor wants to meet an actual person who moves in the world with constant and normalized awareness of all dimensions and who can move between those dimensions with ease. In other words, a traveler through space—a dākinī.

As much as I have searched for this dākinī named Niguma and hoped to find her as an actual person and the subject of her own story, it may have been in vain. The more I dig, the more elusive she becomes. No doubt I am looking in all the wrong places, in old books and dusty corners. Still, I hope that this might be more than another case of the female as a vehicle of meaning for men, or that, as one post-Buddhist feminist puts it, “the place of the male as subject is unconsciously protected, whilst creating a notion of fluidity around the concept of the female body.” I might have to admit, however, that she is primarily an important event in the lives of the men who saw her, rather than a historically locatable person. Those men, in any case, are really the only sources of information about her. Her own story, if it ever existed, is not to be found apart from the few details that I have explored here. Before providing the translation of her biography, therefore, let us see what a few of those masters have said of their encounters with Niguma.
STORIES OF NIGUMA

Khyungpo Naljor’s Niguma

(This section is a summary based on the *Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor* found in the *Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies*, vol. 1, 59–143.)

After studying with many gurus in Nepal and India, the Tibetan yogi Khyungpo Naljor resolved to find someone who had met the Buddha face-to-face. He was directed to Niguma, who was reported to have received teachings from the great Vajradhara. Inquiring as to where she was at present, he was told that if one had pure perception, one could see her face anywhere, but those with impure perception might search up and down without ever finding her. That was because she dwelt on the pure grounds and had transformed to a rainbow body. “Pure grounds” are certainly a matter of perception, rather than location. Nevertheless, they said, she occasionally shows up in the forest of a great charnel ground, Sosadvipa, to preside over the feast circles of ēkākīnīs. Inspired, Khyungpo travels there immediately, while paying homage to the Buddha. He sees a dark ēkākīnī hovering in the sky, bedecked in bones and holding a trident and skull-cup, dancing about and displaying various forms, appearing sometimes as one and sometimes many. Convinced it is she, Khyungpo requests teachings, but the ēkākīnī is uncooperative.

“I am a flesh-eating ēkākīnī,” she says. “When my retinue arrives, you’ll be devoured. Get out now.”

Flesh-eating ēkākīnīs may have been the original ēkākīnīs of Indian lore, those scary females that populated the charnel grounds and other places where god-fearing people dared not tread. They constellate some of our greatest fears and are never far behind the more beneficent figures that entice and instruct the Tibetan adepts. Here, the gimmick of terrorizing the aspirant as a test of determination is of course a common element in hero stories. At the same time, it is not entirely a ruse. The chimerical ēkākīnī, or the energy she represents, could turn dangerous at any time and devour rather than nurture the practitioner. Khyungpo, undeterred, again requests instruction in secret mantra.
"To request secret mantra mahāyāna requires gold. If there’s gold, I’ll do it," the dakini retorts.

Khyungpo offers her the nearly impossible amount of five hundred gold srang, but she just throws it about the forest. At this point Khyungpo starts to wonder if she really is a flesh-eating dakini since she does not want the gold. It is difficult not to speculate about the implication here: that a genuine dakini would be greedy for gold, but apparently a flesh-eating dakini is satisfied with—well, flesh.

The dakini then glares into space to invoke her vast dakini entourage, who begin constructing, in space, all the requisites for an empowerment, such as palace, sand mandala, and feast provisions. She then bestows the empowerments for the practices of illusory body and dream, tells Khyungpo to get up, and then transports him miraculously about twenty-five miles. There, in the sky above a golden mountain like the great Mount Avrha, the dakinis perform the feast ceremony and dance about. The golden mountain has four rivers of gold pouring from the four sides, and Khyungpo asks if it can really be somewhere in India or if it is the dakini’s magical projection. To this she replies with perhaps the most famous verse associated with Niguma, reiterated in various ways in the Path of Illusion:

This variety of desirous and hateful thoughts that strands us in the ocean of cyclic existence once realized to be without intrinsic nature, makes everything a golden land, child.

If you meditate on the illusion-like nature of illusion-like phenomena, actual illusion-like buddhahood will occur through the power of devotion.

Niguma then commands Khyungpo to recognize his dreams by means of her blessing, which he does indeed do. He continues to have the very dreamy experience of traveling to the land of gods and demigods, being swallowed whole by a gigantic demigod, and receiving the entire instruction on the Six Dharmas from Niguma. She even mentions, in
his dream, that no one but he has ever received the complete teaching in one nap in all of India. What is never clarified is the starting point of the dream experience: whether it was from the time of being transported to the Golden Mountain or from his first encounter with the ḍākinī. He recognizes the dream only after she blesses him to do so. In any case, he now wakes up and “really” (dngos su) receives the guidance on the Six Dharmas again three times, along with a number of other instructions.60

In short, the story goes on to say, Khyungpo received boundless tantras, sādhanas, and instructions from this ḍākinī of timeless awareness. Ever insatiable, Khyungpo Naljor continues on his quest, offering pounds of gold to many more teachers. Again asking for one who has seen the Buddha, he is directed to the other principal ḍākinī in the lineage, Sukhasiddhī. That is another story, but with many similar elements. Of the twenty-eight or so Indian and Nepali gurus that are mentioned by name in Khyungpo Naljor’s biography, seven of them are female. This fact is not emphasized in any way, and one might feel it to be quite normal and unremarkable. Female gurus in India, though certainly a minority, continue to be commonly accepted up to the present. Possibly it was in Tibet that it became such an exception.

Tangtong Gyalpo’s Niguma

(This section on Tangtong Gyalpo is from “A Jewel Mirror in Which All Is Clear” by Lochen Gyarme Dechen, translated by Cyrus Stearns in King of the Empty Plain, 150–51. I have retained his translation.)

The great adept [Tangtong Gyalpo] then practiced these profound instructions [on Niguma’s teachings received from living masters] in an isolated and pleasant wilderness hermitage. Many types of meditative concentration arose in his mind, so that he considered spreading this profound oral transmission in these glacial mountain ranges. At that moment a clear voice from the sky called out, “Son! Yogin!”

When he looked up into midair, in the center of a bunch of clouds, the famous Niguma, the ḍākinī of primordial awareness endowed with the power to traverse space and with the immortal form of a rain-
bow body, directly revealed her face to the great universal emperor of attainment known as Tangtong Gyalpo, “King of the Empty Plain,” the thunder of whose fame totally fills the expanse of space. When she completely bestowed the four initiations in a great sublime mandala, he was filled with the youthful vitality of the four joys. At that time they fully engaged in the great secret practices, such as questions and responses, symbols and return symbols, and happily enjoyed the miraculous sensory objects of a ritual feast.

On that occasion, Niguma deciphered and fully instructed the great adept in each of the Vajra Lines by means of actual, implied, and hidden oral instructions. In particular, she bestowed the extremely profound transference practices of the infallible White and Red Khecaris, together with instructions for enhancing them by means of two examples sealed by her command. When he put these into practice, he gained an inconceivable repertoire of attainments, such as the instantaneous display of countless physical forms in just a single moment, a clairvoyant knowledge of others’ minds, and the ability to actually transfer [the consciousness] when he performed the transference for another person.

Later, on the peak of the famous glorious Riwoche in Latö Jang that was the adept’s home, he was given permission by the dākinī and placed in writing the guidance manual for this profound path, the Collection of the Essentials, together with the affiliated texts. But the oral instructions for the transference practices of the White and Red Khecaris, together with the illustration of the two examples, he taught with the tune of the indestructible nāda.61

Mokchokpa’s Niguma

The following is translated from the Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies, and constitutes the second account there, immediately after that of Buddha Vajradhara. The two were authored by the same person, identified simply as “the vagabond Mokchokpa.” An easy assumption would be to identify this with the principal lineage-holder after Khyungpo Naljor, Mokchokpa Rinchen Tsöndru (1110–1170), and indeed the name “Rinchen Tsöndru” is inserted as an interlinear note
in this edition of the *Life Story*. Jamgön Kongtrul, however, specifically warns against making this mistake and identifies the latter Mokchokpa, Kunga Ö, as the author in two separate sources. The current successor (sprul sku) to the Mokchokpa lineage says that this is another name for Jatang Kunga Yeshe (Bya btang Kun dga’ ye shes), the second Mokchokpa. Kongtrul’s correction, if true, must apply to quite a long tradition of conflation. Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal wrote, in 1503, that he had copied the *Life Story of Buddha Vajradhara* specifically from that of Mokchokpa Rinchen Tsöndru. In any case, we are getting used to certain vagaries when it comes to everything Niguma.

**The Life Story of Niguma, Đākinī of Timeless Awareness**

Homage to all the holy gurus

From the sky-like nature of the dharmakāya,
Light rays of the sun-and-moon-like form-kāyas
Illuminate the mental darkness of those to be tamed;
I bow reverently at the feet of the holy guru.

With that, I would express here just a fraction of the life story of Niguma, the đākinī of timeless awareness.

The land of her birth was the great city called Anupama [Incomparable], located in Kashmir. That place, moreover, was a city emanated by an illusionist. The way in which it was emanated is this: During the time of the previous buddha, Kashyāpa, there was an arhat named Madhyāntika [Midday Sun]. At that distant time the entire area was covered by water. The arhat wished to build a vihāra in that country, so he requested land from the nāga king. The nāgas said, “We will give you as much land as you can cover sitting in lotus posture.” Then the arhat emanated a huge body there that covered all the territories of Kashmir. As the nāgas had promised, ground arose there and a vihāra called Amṛtabhāvana was built.

The local people were truly amazed, so they sent for an illusionist.
That illusionist emanated the great city called Anupama, by using the example of the great [city of] Sudarshana. But before the illusion could be dissolved, the illusionist was killed, and so it has remained until now. Everyone said that this city had no exact comparison to anything in the world, and so it was known as “Incomparable.” There are even thirty-six hundred thousand beer maids there. That is why it is called special. The great pāṇḍita Nāroṭapa and Ratnavajra both lived there.

Now about the dākinī of timeless awareness herself. She was born as the daughter of the brahmin Shāntivarma [and the brahmini Shrimati]. She was Nāro Paṇḍita’s sister and a member of the brahmin caste.

She had cultivated the path previously during three incalculable eons, and its continuity was actualized, so that in this life she directly saw the truth of the nature of phenomena just by hearing some instructive advice from a few adept masters. Her dissipating illusory body arose as the nondissipating kāya. Dwelling in the three pure grounds, she encountered the great Vajradhara in person. After she had fully received from him the complete four empowerments in the emanated mandala of secret mantra mahāyāna, she developed the timeless awareness of the understanding of all dharma doors—sūtras, tantras, esoteric instructions, treatises, and so on. She realized all phenomena the way they are and the way they appear in their multiplicity, and became a real bodhisattva dwelling on the tenth ground, Cloud of Dharma. Cognitve obscuration became more and more subtle until there was nothing left to eliminate. She was none other than a buddha, the epitome of the three kāyas.

Having perfected renunciation and realization for her own welfare, she continues to accomplish the welfare of others through the two form kāyas, benefiting whatever beings are to be tamed until the end of cyclic existence. In particular, she watches over the holders of the lineage with impartial compassion, blessing them and compassionately overseeing the success of their enlightened activity.

Even more specifically, on the great adept Khyungpo Naljor she fully conferred the complete four empowerments in the emanated mandala and gave him the oral transmission of unimaginable tantras and
esoteric instructions. In particular, she gave many profound and vast pithy instructions that have the power to establish worthy recipients in the awakened state of manifest realization with one body in one lifetime. Niguma sealed this with the command that it not spread beyond a one-to-one lineage for seven generations. She then prophesied that the disciples and holders of this lineage would all go to the celestial realm, Khechara. Such is this very lineage that is exalted above others.\(^{72}\)

This is the mere mention of the liberation story of the ākāśiṇī of timeless awareness, written for the realization of the lineage holders by the vagabond\(^{73}\) Mokchokpa in the Glorious Monastery of Gyere Yangön.\(^{74}\)

By this merit may all persons who hold the lineage maintain themselves in the manner of the guru’s life story.

By the pure white virtue of writing this, may I and the sponsors, teachers, and students, and all sentient beings of the three realms, quickly attain unsurpassed awakening.

THE TEXTUAL TRADITION

The decision to limit the choices for this collection of Niguma’s work to the selection in the so-called Tibetan Canon is somewhat random. The tendency to regard this canon as definitive is always tenuous. There are currently as many as ten known canons, and their formation and historical links to each other are not well documented, although research is proceeding. The most basic division in all cases is between the kanyur, the translated words of Buddha Shākyamuni in one form or another, and the tengyur, the translations of treatises by Indian authors such as Niguma that comment upon those ‘original’ words. With more than 5,250 texts, the Tibetan Buddhist canon contains the textual corpus of Indian Buddhism that was translated into Tibetan and which forms the foundation of the practice of Buddhism in the Himalayan region. The tremendous amount of literary output by Tibetans themselves is, for the most part, not included in the canons, where all sources are held to be Indian. Thus for a text to be included, or excluded, from
any particular canon may be construed as a comment on its origin and even its authenticity, where authenticity is defined as having Indian origins. It almost goes without saying that the decisions about and preparations of the canons nearly a millennium after Buddhist teachings first reached Tibet were fraught with trouble, politics, biases, and, surely, some serious scholarship. The intricacies and implications of the process make for very interesting research but will not be explored here.

What is of interest to us is that not all of Niguma’s works are included in all versions of the tengyur, and with one exception, they are most conspicuously missing from the widespread Derge Canon in its many editions. The one exception is the short ritual practice of the deity Hevajra included in the Derge Tengyur, and set apart in the Peking Tengyur in a different volume than all the rest of her works. It is interesting too that, of all these texts attributed to Niguma, this is the only one not in common use in the living Shangpa tradition. The deity Hevajra, so important in the Kagyu and Lamdre lineages, plays only a small role in the Shangpa practice of Five Tantras’ Deities, although the empowerment of Nine Emanated Deities of Hevajra was bestowed on Khyungpo Naljor directly by Niguma.

I do not mean to read too much into this oddity. Simple omission is certainly a possibility when dealing with thousands of texts being compiled in different corners of a vast country, where communications moved at the speed of horses at best and printing was a matter of carving blocks of wood in mirror image for each and every page. I just present it here as a point of interest for further speculation. It seems to suggest that those tengyurs that do contain the majority “bundle” of Niguma’s work, such as the Peking and Narthang Tengyurs, had access to local Shangpa collections while others did not. One might have expected the opposite, that is, that the corpus of Niguma’s work would be in the tengyur printed in Derge, the physical center of the later eclectic movement (ris med) that played such a pivotal role in rescuing the Shangpa teachings from obscurity. But it could be that the geographical location of the earliest Shangpa establishments in the far west of Tsang, far from the Derge cultural arena, played a role in this. Finally, given the obscurity of Niguma and her historicity, it is possible that the compilers of the Derge Canon had doubts as to the true Indic origins of these
texts. In any case, we find them now only in the closely related Peking, Narthang, and Golden Tengyurs.\textsuperscript{78}

Perhaps the earliest inclusion of Shangpa texts in a collection besides these tengyurs is to be found in the massive collection of Bodong Chokley Namgyal (1376–1451). It is said that he received a direct transmission from the two \dakini{Niguma} and Sukhasiddhi, the two primary sources of the Shangpa tradition, at the age of sixteen, presumably in visionary experience.\textsuperscript{79} Bodong’s core collection, \textit{The Compendium of Suchness} in four forms and 137 volumes, may be considered a sort of canon, although it also contains works by Tibetan authors. It forms the bulk of the Tibet House publication called \textit{Encyclopedia Tibetica}, or \textit{Collected Works of Bodong Chokley Namgyal}. Bodong’s bold project, at which he succeeded, was to comment on everything conceivable and organize all the teachings of Buddhism in a comprehensive manner. Because of this style of organization by subject, the works attributed to Niguma are scattered among three separate volumes, interspersed with other works and Bodong’s own exegeses on the subject.\textsuperscript{80} We find there some of the works presented in this collection, as well as some of the instructional guides (\textit{khrid yig}) on these practices also attributed to Niguma but left out of the tengyur.\textsuperscript{81}

The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) holds a copy of a two-volume handwritten manuscript of Shangpa texts found in the monastery of Sangak Choling in Kinnaur, a county in Himachal Pradesh bordering on Tibet.\textsuperscript{82} Many of the Shangpa texts found in the tengyur are also included in these two volumes,\textsuperscript{83} along with some very interesting and apparently unique texts from the lineage that need to be researched further. In addition TBRC holds a rare handwritten copy of the \textit{Path of Illusion} and its Commentary, which I have also consulted for this translation.

Other sources for Shangpa texts include the collected works of past masters who received both the original teachings from lineage holders, called the “long lineage” (\textit{ring brgyud}), and were granted further instructions and empowerments in direct visions of Niguma, called the short or “direct lineage” (\textit{nye brgyud}). Of these, the most famous is the great adept Tangtong Gyalpo (1361?–1485), whose visions of Niguma are recounted above.\textsuperscript{84} He did not write down the instructions that he
received until Niguma granted permission in a third vision in 1458. They are known as the *Collection of the Essentials*, and with a set of related teachings formed a branch of the Shangpa Kagyu called the Tangtong Gyalpo Tradition (*Thang lugs*). They are contained in *Supplemental Texts to the Collected Works of Thang stong rgyal po Series*. In the Jonang tradition, Kunga Drolchok (1507–1566) is said to have received the long lineage many times and the direct lineage twice from Niguma in pure visions. Since he also received guidance more than a hundred times in twenty-five lineages, his very diverse collection is called *Hundred Guides of Jonang* and is supplemented by sources and histories. His immediate incarnation, the great Tāranātha (1575–1635), minces no words in describing his own mastery of these teachings. He made important contributions to the body of Shangpa literature that can be found among his *Collected Works*. These include both histories of the lineage and probably the most widely used practice guides.

The works of both of these masters were included in the later collections of Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye (1813–1900). This great eclectic savant gathered what he considered the most crucial of the Shangpa cycle of teachings in the collection known as *Treasury of Instructions*. They constitute two volumes (eleven and twelve) in the eighteen-volume edition. But only two of our original Niguma texts are included there: *Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas* and *Niguma's Aspiration Prayer*. Mostly this collection contains works by later holders of the lineage and by Kongtrul himself. All of Kongtrul's own compositions related to the Shangpa tradition are found in his *Treasury of Extensive Teachings*, volumes eight and nine.

The definitive and probably final collection in Tibetan of Shangpa texts was gathered by the late great master and lineage holder Karma Rangjung Kunchab (1905–1989), better known in the west as Kalu Rinpoche. It consists of eleven volumes and is entitled *Indian Source Texts of the Dharma Cycle of Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa*. A later title within the texts, however, admits "Indian and Tibetan Source Texts" and is more reflective of the actual contents since very few Indian texts are represented. Our current edition of this is based on the original work from Palpung Monastery in Kham, Eastern Tibet, where Kalu Rinpoche was the retreat master at Tsadra Rinchen Drak,
the three-year retreat facility founded by Jamgön Kongtrul. All of the works attributed to Niguma that I have translated here are included in that collection, with the conspicuous exception of the Hevajra sadhana. In addition there are copious compositions and commentaries from all lines of the Shangpa tradition, as well as sources from other lineages that are commonly used as practice material in the tradition.

At present this collection forms the primary source for all practice and is transmitted in its entirety through a series of empowerments and scriptural transmission by lineage holders up to the present. It forms the basis especially of the three-year retreat tradition from Palpung that Kalu Rinpoche continued in India and the West, and in which I was privileged to participate. Most recently, in September of 2008, the young incarnation Kalu Yangsi Rinpoche completed this same retreat based on these same teaching transmissions that were granted to him by the late Bokar Rinpoche, dharma heir of the previous Kalu Rinpoche. The next collection of Shangpa texts will be the highly anticipated English translation of necessary three-year retreat texts that was initiated by Bokar Rinpoche shortly before his passing on August 18, 2004.

Finally, a necessarily brief survey of some available titles in English thus far: In 1978 the scholar Matthew Kapstein wrote an article called “The Shang-pa bKa’-brgyud: An Unknown Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism.” Thanks in part to his own extensive research in this and other articles, this is no longer an entirely appropriate title since the tradition has become rather well known. Well before that, George Roerich's translation of The Blue Annals, a historical work by Gō Lotsāwa Zhunnu Pal, was first published in 1949, and contains “The Book on Ko-brag pa and Ni-gu,” a required unreadable reading. Then, the not-to-be-forgotten eccentric Yogi Chen received profound instructions in Shangpa practice from Kalu Rinpoche and wrote his own versions and translations into Chinese and sponsored English translations that are still available on his web site. The bibliographer Gene Smith wrote a short introduction to a new edition of the Shangpa Golden Rosary in the fifteenth volume of the Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod collection entitled “The Shang-pa Bka’ brgyud Tradition,” first published in 1970 and now found in his Among Tibetan Texts. Glen Mullin has presented the Shangpa teachings that were practiced by Gendun Gyatso in Selected
Works of the Dalai Lama 2: The Tantric Yogas of Sister Niguma. More recently, at last, there are some entire books dedicated to bringing the tradition to modern readers. Nicole Riggs has translated most of the life stories mentioned above in Like an Illusion, and Ngawang Zangpo has provided translations of the spiritual songs of the lineage masters in the volume Timeless Rapture, which includes brief stories and translated praises as well. Additionally, some of the Shangpa practices are outlined by him in Jamgon Kongtrul's Retreat Manual. An important text used in the Shangpa tradition as a basis for preliminary practices called “Stages in the Path of the Three Types of Person” (skyes bu gsum gyi lam rim) by Taranatha has been translated as Essence of Ambrosia by Willa Baker. Finally, my translation of Jamgon Kongtrul’s synopsis of Shangpa esoteric instructions constitutes chapter 5 in Jamgon Kongtrul, The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions. The brief history of the lineage in the same book is a summary of Kongtrul’s, which will soon be available in full in books two, three, and four of The Treasury of Knowledge.

THE SHANGPA TRADITION

The story of the Shangpa literature itself of course does not actually reveal what the tradition represents. Through the centuries a distinctive body of practice has developed from these writings that I have been discussing. This body of practice is far from a lost tradition, as some scholars have suggested. At this point in history, it might be said that more practitioners outside of Tibet have had extended retreat experiences of this tradition than any other, due mainly to the activities of Kalu Rinpoche. While it is impossible to do justice here to all of the teachings transmitted in this tradition, I will nevertheless attempt a brief overview to provide a context for Niguma’s writings and their importance in the lineage. Particular teachings will be presented more thoroughly in the translations later in the book.

The teachings of Niguma and other Indian masters were received primarily by the Tibetan Khyungpo Naljor, “Yogi of the Garuda Clan.” All the texts that are attributed to Niguma were in fact written down by him. Khyungpo Naljor was born in a Tiger Year, probably
in the eleventh century, and is reputed to have lived for 150 years, an admittedly suspicious age. It is said that Khyungpo Naljor, like many other founders of lineages, went to India and Nepal to seek out the great teachers:

Khyungpo Naljor, endowed with five culminations, received the entire dharma treasury—the quintessence of the heart-mind—of one hundred and fifty scholar-adepts. These include four root gurus, thirteen especially exalted gurus, and two dakinis of timeless awareness, Niguma and Sukhasiddhī, who had heard the dharma directly from Buddha Vajradhara. Although this scholar-adept Khyungpo Naljor had progressively studied the [traditions of] Bön and Nyingma and attained accomplishment, the time had come for the [fulfillment of his previous] aspirations for enlightened activities, so he went in search of the profound teachings of sūtra and tantra from the exalted country [of India].

The vast number of teachings he received could be classified into three areas: those of exegesis, debate, and practice. According to Jamgön Kongtrul and textual evidence, only the last of these, the area of practice, has continued. However one might suggest that Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary is an exception due to its exegetical character. The teachings of these 150-plus gurus are reduced to five cycles by Kongtrul and others:

Thus, [Khyungpo] was the unique teacher in the Land of Snows who [provided] unlimited doorways to the dharma and was unrivaled in his enlightened activity. It is just unimaginable! Of all of these, it is only the quintessence of the heart of the last one—the stages of practice—that has lasted until the present day. This is known as the five dharma cycles that are the root of the golden dharmas of Niguma and Sukhasiddhī. That is, the five cycles of Niguma, Sukhasiddhī, Vajrāsana, Maitrīpa, and Rāhula, along with various miscellaneous precepts.
Khyungpo Naljor returned to Tibet and established his seat at Zhangzhong in the Shang region of Western Tsang. Henceforth he was known as the Guru of Shang, and the holders of his lineage became known as the Shangpa Kagyu. It must be noted again that the Tibetan word “kagyu” (bka' brgyud) generically means “lineage of Buddha's Word” and is often applied to lineages other than the famous Kagyu tradition founded by Marpa the translator. The Shangpa Kagyu stands as an entirely separate lineage, though it may be argued that in modern times it was swept into the political camp of the Karma Kagyu and shares some masters with that, and other, lineages.

It is reputed that Khyungpo Naljor had eighteen thousand disciples, but in obedience to the specific injunction of Niguma, her teachings were not spread openly for seven generations. This is known as a one-to-one lineage (gcig brgyud), and thus it passed from Khyungpo only to his last main disciple, Mokchokpa Rinchen Tsöndrü (1110–1170), and thence sequentially to Wöntön Kyergangpa (or Chökyi Senge, 1143–1216), Sangye Nyentön (or Rigongpa, 1175–1247/1255?), and Drogon Sangye Tönpa (1207–1278). Sangye Tönpa was to be the seventh “jewel,” counting the first as Buddha Vajradhara, from whom it is said Niguma received the direct revelations. And so the vajra seal of the one-to-one lineage was lifted by Sangye Tönpa in the thirteenth century. “Then,” says Kongtrul, “the world of Jambudvipa and its surrounding islands were filled with his adept disciples.”

From that time, the stream of Niguma's teachings flowed out through many channels, often becoming known as specific lineages within the Shangpa, such as Jonang, Jakchen, Samding, and so forth. In addition, the continuing revelations of Niguma to later adepts in direct lineages added greatly to the streams of transmission and to the overall body of teachings. Though there are these many streams as well as different specialties and inherited teachings (bka' babs), the tradition remains quite cohesive. Taranātha sums it up in this way:

Although [Niguma's teachings] split into immeasurable different kinds of lineages, due to the fact of being preserved in the dākinī's Testimonial, neither the word nor the meaning have ever been compromised. Since it is therefore
uncontrived and uncorrupted, it remains on the highest pinnacle of all practice lineages. This cycle of all of Niguma’s instructions in general maintains the perspective of all sūtras and tantras. In particular, it is the heart of the ultimate teachings of the five tantra classes. Even more particularly, and extraordinarily, it is believed to have extracted the essence of the Samvara Ocean and Jewel Ocean [Tantras].

There are several arrangements of the progressive path of practicing these instructions, such as the extensive, abbreviated, and very abbreviated. However, the framework of the Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa that was passed down in a one-to-one lineage has become the most renowned, while several other practices have become signature Shangpa practices. Here is the short list of those practices.

THE FIVE GOLDEN DHARMAS

These form the heart of the Shangpa spiritual practice and are so-called because of the enormous amount of gold that Khyungpo Naljor offered to receive them. They have been diagrammed in the mnemonic device of a living tree:

- The roots are the six dharmas
- The trunk is mahāmudrā
- The branches are the three integrations on the path
- The flowers are the white and red Khecharī
- The fruit is immortal and infallible.

Empowerment

Niguma’s original vajra lines come directly from the Buddha Vajradhara. Most of these are included in this collection and will be discussed later. As Niguma points out in Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, a practitioner must first receive tantric empowerment in order to become spiritually mature and able to best benefit from the practices. This is the usual and necessary preparation for all tantric practice. It
presupposes a deep connection with a guru or spiritual mentor who holds the specific lineage and is able to transmit it fully. The initiatory ceremony also involves the taking of pledges that in effect bind one to that preceptor in a sort of covenant (dam tshig; Skt. samaya). That relationship between the guru and disciple forms the working basis of practice. The primary empowerment required for this tradition comes from either the Five Tantras' Deities or from Chakrasamvara.  

**Preliminaries**

The preliminary practices originally seemed to consist of a single purificatory practice unique to the teachings of Niguma called “The Purifier, Hollow Interior of A.” Though barely mentioned in the *Vajra Lines* and in several early texts by Khyungpo Naljor, it is elaborated in greater detail by later contributors such as Tāranātha. The practice involves visualizing and reciting the syllable “A” (pronounced “ah”) as it moves through the central channel and throughout the whole body (the hollow interiors) as purifying elixir, inseparable from the guru. It was traditionally presented as the preliminary of the Six Dharmas, specifically of inner heat, perhaps much the same way as the practice of Vajrayogini is said to prepare the subtle channels of the vajra body for the practice of inner heat yoga. Later the tradition developed along the lines of other sects in maintaining a four- or fivefold preliminary practice commonly known as “ngöndro” (sngon ’gro). In that system, the hollow interior practice takes the place of the Vajrasattva mantra practice.

**The Roots: Six Dharmas**

These consist of the same practices as its better-known cousin, the Six Dharmas of Nāropa. Khyungpo Naljor received the six dharmas several times from Niguma, the first time in a dream from inside the belly of a demigod. In the Shangpa tradition, they are given in verse with their defining characteristics, which can be found in the text translated later:

The path of methods [of inner heat]— naturally blazing bliss-warmth.
Illusory body—naturally liberated desire and anger.
Dream—naturally pure sleep-delusion.
Lucid clarity—naturally clarified stupidity.
Transference—buddhahood without meditation.
Intermediate state—sāṃbhogakāya of the victors.¹⁰

The Trunk: Amulet Mahāmudrā

This is the particular name given to the Shangpa mahāmudrā tradition not by Niguma herself but because Khyungpo Naljor treasured these teachings so dearly that he wore them constantly in a sandalwood amulet box around his neck. Concerning the more profound interpretations of the name, Tāranātha had this to say: “Other explanations of the term such as that the ‘jewel of the awareness mind is inserted in the amulet box of method and wisdom’ are just utterly meaningless gossip.”¹¹¹

These are the instructions on the core meaning of mental non-engagement (yid la mi byed pa). This particular system is also called “three naturally settled states” (rang babs rnam gsum) after the initial practice from Niguma of settling the body, speech, and mind in calm abiding and higher insight. Niguma’s instructions are translated later in this book. The main practice is to become resolved about the nature of mind itself through the natural freedom from four faults, once that nature has been introduced. Khyungpo Naljor received this teaching from Maitripa.¹¹² The final practice is to maintain the recognition that one’s own ordinary mind is the three kāyas of the buddha, as taught by Sukhasiddhi. Special enhancement practices are also associated with it.¹¹³

The Branches: Three Integrations

In this practice all sights, sounds, and thoughts are understood to be the nature of the guru, yidam, and illusion. This understanding is integrated in life and in a matter of months or years, the three kāyas naturally arise as clarity, emptiness, and great bliss.¹¹⁴ Niguma’s instructions on this are translated later in the book.
The Flowers: White and Red Khechari

These practices concern white and red forms of Vajrayogini. Khechari (Tib. mkha’ spyod) means to engage in space, synonymous with the Tibetan word for dākini: khandroma (mkha’ gro ma), “she who moves in space.” Though Khyungpo Naljor reportedly received these teachings from Niguma, the source of the Vajra Lines for White Khechari is attributed to Atisha Dipamkara Shrijñāna. The source text for Red Khechari includes the practice of transference to the Khechara realm at the time of death, instructions that are attributed to Lama Rāhula. Transference teachings based on both dākinīs were also transmitted directly to Tangtong Gyalpo by Niguma in his first vision of her, and his teachings on them are well known. The practice is summarized by Jamgön Kongtrul as follows:

The Conqueror, the Vajra Queen, as the radiance of sun and moon, is aroused through special supplications and the vital points of visualization. The chanḍālī (inner heat) of bliss-emptiness blazes up based on the release of passion at each of the chakras in the four places. Through those very supports, one comes to engage in the space of great unity.

The Fruit: Immortal and Infallible

The instructions called “Mind and Body, Immortal and Infallible” are actually a combination of the precepts of the deathlessness of the mind that were transmitted to Khyungpo Naljor by Niguma, translated later in this book, and the instructions on the infallible nature of the body that are attributed to Virūpa. Essentially, mind is immortal because it is unborn. The body is merely inert matter and therefore death and other such designations are irrelevant. The realization of immortal body is achieved through thirty-two yogic practices.
OTHER SHANGPA PRACTICES

Six Dharmas of Sukhasiddhi

The other principal female guru of Khyungpo Naljor was Sukhasiddhi, another dakini of timeless awareness. The tradition tells the intriguing story of her transformation from a sixty-year old housewife whose generosity to a beggar caused her expulsion from her home, to a stunning sixteen-year-old devotee of the beer-guzzling adept Virūpa. She too had direct access to the Buddha as Vajradhara. Of the teachings that Khyungpo Naljor received from her, only the most profound Six Dharmas and the Mahāmudrā precepts of pure timeless awareness remain. These more or less parallel the similarly named practices of Niguma, though both systems are practiced separately by modern-day Shangpa practitioners.

Five Tantras' Deities

Khyungpo Naljor received the transmission in these five tantras many times, first individually from Vairochanarakṣhita, and then as a combined practice from Vajrāsana, his principal male guru. He also received the empowerments from Niguma and later in Tibet from Lama Rāhula. The Indian Source Text of the Glorious Five Tantras is by Vajrāsana, but this special practice of visualizing the five tantric deities in the five chakras of one's body is said to be originally from Jewel Ocean Tantra, a major source of many Shangpa doctrines. It is often said that Khyungpo fully realized the five tantric deities in the five chakras of his body and even appeared to his disciple Mokchokpa in the company of those deities. The practice holds a special significance in the Shangpa tradition for this reason and also, no doubt, because it conveniently combines five of the most complex and weighty tantras in a single practice. According to Tāranātha, the six dharmas are the essence of these five tantras. Kongtrul connects them with other important practices as follows: Hevajra is the culmination of inner heat; Chakrasaṃvara is the culmination of action mudra; Guhyasamāja is the culmination of illusory body and luminous clarity; Mahāmāyā is the culmination of dream; and Vajrabhairava is the culmination of enlightened activity.
In the sādhana itself, Vajrāsana describes the practice as “the essence of all tantras gathered into one.”

The Five Deities of Chakrasamvara

Niguma’s texts translated later in this book cite the Samvara Ocean Tantra as the source of this tradition. Niguma imparted certain versions of the Chakrasamvara, especially the completion phase, to Khyungpo in their initial encounter and, like the mahāmudrā instructions, he kept them in the amulet around his neck. He also received the full practice shortly thereafter from a certain Hidden Yogin. The practice text attributed to Niguma translated here is quite remarkable and considerably different than the one found in the later Shangpa tradition. The more usual visualization, such as that found in Kalu Rinpoche’s daily practice, involves Chakrasamvara with Vajrayogini as the central deities in union surrounded by four dākinīs.

There is also a practice of visualizing just the dākinīs without Chakrasamvara called Five Dākinīs (mkha’gro sde lnga) in the Shangpa lineage. The relevant texts of this were arranged by Kongtrul, drawing on Taranatha’s Mine of Jewels, and seem not to date earlier than that, though it is described as an esoteric instruction of Khyungpo Naljor, received directly from the five dākinīs themselves and in turn from the Lion-faced dākinī.

The Four Deities Combined

In the seeming fondness for simplifying practices, this creation phase practice groups four beloved deities into one visualization: Six-armed Mahākāla, Vajrayogini, Avalokiteshvara, and Green Tārā, with one’s guru as Vajradhara in the center. Thus it is considered a kind of guru yoga, bringing the practitioner’s mind into union with that of the guru in many forms. Kongtrul explains in his guidance manual to this practice that these four deities first actually appeared to the great adept Shavari and then were codified in a practice manual by Maitripa. Khyungpo Naljor apparently heard it from him, and it became known as the Blessing of Constant Four Deities. However, the main source
for this current transmission was again Lama Rāhula. After receiving it from him in Tibet, Khyungpo Naljor could be seen by his fortunate disciples actually manifesting as these four deities. There is also a practice of the four deities individually (lha bzhi'i sgs sgrub).

Six-Armed Mahākāla, “Chakdrukpa”

The special dharma protector of the lineage is six-armed Mahākāla, or the Swift Protector of Timeless Awareness, a wrathful emanation of Avalokiteshvara. The particular iconography of the protector is distinguished from the Gelukpa counterpart by having the right foot bent up at the ankle, rather than bent at the knee. There is also a peaceful, white Chakdrukpa specializing in prosperity. Khyungpo Naljor received these practices and empowerments from Maitriṣṭa in the Shavari line and from Rāhula in the Atayavajra line.131 This wisdom protector also serves in the most treasured guru yoga practice called Dwelling in the Heart, where guru and protector are inseparable.132 Tāranātha wrote a “biography” of Chakdrukpa and a history of the transmission that is found in the Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies after those of all the lineage lamas.133 Maitriṣṭa’s own story and explanation of the protector as told by him to Khyungpo Naljor is included in the latter’s biography.

Extraordinary Practices

There are certain practices unique to the Shangpa tradition that have been passed down orally through the lineage and have historically been closely guarded. On his third trip to the West in 1977–1978, the late head of the lineage, Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche, decided the time was right to spread one of these practices. It is called Uncommon Calm Abiding and Higher Insight (thun mon ma yin pa'i zhi gnas lhag mthong). In addition to the common practices of calm abiding and higher insight, such as those found in the Karma Kagyu tradition, this version employs special visualizations involving abstract forms of the elements and the aggregates. In some sense they might be called the vajrayāna version of calm abiding and higher insight. Instructions are not found in the collections, but were spread far and wide by Kalu Rinpoche.134
INTRODUCTION

Niguma as the embodiment of illusion may be a distinctive and fascinating twist, but her emphasis on teaching illusion is at least as old as the Buddha. In sūtras and tantras beyond count the Buddha spoke of the illusory nature of all perceived phenomena, primarily as a way to cut through attachment. In the earliest sermons, a primary focus was in explaining the lack of intrinsic, findable existence in the person as an individual as well as in all other phenomena. Later this developed into the full-blown doctrine of emptiness (śūnyatā), based on mahāyāna sūtras known collectively as the perfection of wisdom (prajñāpāramitā). The philosophy based on those sūtras, madhyamaka, refuted every aspect of existence and nonexistence. Through the rigors of logic and reasoning, when followed to their conclusion, it is discovered that there can be no conclusion, and that things cannot be found. This approach, however, may not imbue the logician with the visceral experience of phenomena that may well be empty and yet undeniably appear clearly. How can one understand such an idea that is ultimately ineffable, a concept beyond conceptual mind?

The Magic

The Buddha apparently thought that providing illustrations would be a way in to this mystery, a way to get a handle on it through the imaging mind rather than just through the intellect. This is why one finds
discussion of examples or similes of illusion almost as much as discussion of emptiness itself and its integral ideas of contingency and impermanence. The two most common images are dream and illusion since both provide excellent metaphors of our general condition. Dream especially is considered a fortunate fact of human life. How else could we understand our range of reactive emotions to ultimately unreal events if we had not experienced them all in dreams?

There are well-known lists of eight, ten, and twelve similes of illusion, although there is considerable variation. A typical list of the eight examples of illusion consists of (1) dreams, (2) illusions, (3) hallucinations, (4) mirages, (5) moon reflected in water, (6) echoes, (7) fairy cities, and (8) emanations or projections. If extended to twelve, the most commonly added are (9) water bubbles, (10) lightning, (11) mirror reflections, and of course (12) rainbows, which were discussed in the introduction. Further examples are eye disease, wheels made by a whirling fire brand, the reflection of trees in water, perceived hair-nets, water whirling about in a mirage, dim-eyed people in the dark, a corpse animated by a ghost, machines, clouds, stars, mirages in the air, reflections in the eyes, a barren woman's child, and many more. The popular Diamond Sutra, for instance, states:

As stars, blurred vision, candles, illusions, dew, bubbles, dreams, lightning, and clouds; so should all that is conditioned be seen.²

The term being translated as "illusion" is māyā in Pāli and Sanskrit. It appears as an item in all versions of the lists, as well as being the overall concept that each example is illustrating. As a specific term, "māyā" has a history of its own. In its earliest usage it seems to be precisely "deceit." For instance, in The Path of Purification (Visuddhimaga), a comprehensive summary of the doctrine and practice of the Pāli canon by the fifth-century Indian Buddhaghosa, it appears only as one of the many traits of a person of "greedy temperament," and as one of an even larger number of flaws that must be overcome for someone to be called "blessed" (bhagavā).³
Another interesting occurrence early on is in the name of the Buddha's mother, Queen Māyā. It would be tempting to draw some profound conclusions about the nature of women and the doctrine of illusoriness, but that must be a later doctrine as there is little evidence of it here. Rather, it seems to be a pleasant twist on its meaning as "deceit" in the sense of the beguiling charm that robs men of their good sense, like many such names for women. The Sūtra of the Vast Display (Lalitavistara) on the life of the Buddha, says:

Ravishing the heart like a magical creation,
she is called Māyādevī, Goddess of Illusion.

There is a particular sense that developed from the term "māyā" as deceit, which is evident in the lists of types of illusion: the idea of a magic show that is intentionally created by an illusionist. It has been variously translated as "mock show," "apparition," "magic show," "wizardry," "enchantment," "wonderment," and so on. Māyā was translated into Tibetan as sgyu ma, (from sgyu, "deceit"). This in itself can mean the illusionist as well as the illusion that he or she creates, though to be more specific the texts will use sgyu ma mkhan for the illusionist. The story is often told in the sūtras of a magician who uses sticks and stones to create an apparition, such as this one narrated in the Sūtra That Unravels the Intent (Samdhinirmocana):

Child of good lineage, for example, a magician (sgyu ma mkhan) or a magician's able student, standing at the crossing of four great roads, after gathering grasses, leaves, twigs, pebbles or stones, displays various magical forms, such as a herd of elephants, a cavalry, chariots, and infantry; collections of gems, pearls, lapis lazuli, conch-shells, crystal, and coral; collections of wealth, grain, treasuries, and granaries.

When those sentient beings who have childish natures, foolish natures, or confused natures—who do not realize that these are grasses, leaves, twigs, pebbles and stones—see or hear these things, they think: 'This herd of elephants that appears, exists; these cavalry, chariots, infantry, gems, pearls,
lapis lazuli, conch-shells, crystal, coral, wealth, grain, treasur­ies, and granaries that appear, exist.⁶

The modern reader might feel a sense of incredulity that there were apparently magicians in ancient India who could produce such illusions and people who actually believed them, at least until they discovered the pebbles and sticks. Few people these days are fooled by magic shows, and so this may seem like an obscure example and an out­dated simile. At the same time, few people believe that motion pictures are real, and yet the theater can be full of laughing, crying, or screaming people covering their eyes. Sometimes they have to purposefully remember that it is “only a movie.” The metaphorical value of a movie is the same as that of a magic show.

Māyā in particular is an example of an illusion that is purposefully created, unlike the natural phenomena of the other similes, such as rainbows and mirages. This is an apt metaphor, then, for mind—the illusionist—that under the influence of habitual cognitive and emotional obscurations perceives reality as solid entities permanently fixed in their status as good, bad, or neutral, despite all evidence to the contrary. There is almost a sense of purposefulness in this creation of the magic show and then an intentional ignoring of its illusory status. One wants to believe in the show and wills it to be real—to provide entertain­ment, to corroborate emotional response, and to verify one’s very existence.

The original Indian idea was that we are duped by māyā. The whole display of our senses has tricked us into believing it and thus seduces us into the world of suffering. And the illusionist is that old trickster, one’s own mind. But when this illusory nature is recognized to be just that, one is released from the bondage of the magic show, at which time it becomes a wonderful spectacle, even a display of the unimpeded creativity and freedom of mind. Then māyā itself is both the medium for this realization and the expression of it. This conscious and intentional method of relating to all phenomena as illusion is thus cast in a totally positive light on the spiritual path, a complete turn-around from the original negative valuation of it as deceit. Now illusion is seen as illumina­tion and opportunity. The nature of our relationship with it is the
salient point, rather than its own nature, which certainly does not exist anyway, in any way. Āryadeva says:

Since everything is an illusory display,
it is possible to attain enlightenment.\(^7\)

The transformation of the māyā concept from something to escape to something to engage may be loosely correlated with the shift of emphasis on understanding emptiness that emerged in the mahāyāna teachings. A further development may be seen in the vajrayāna teachings with the esoteric instruction known as Illusory Body (sgyu lus). This occurs as one of the Six Dharmas of Niguma and in other configurations of completion stage practices in many lineages.

According to Jamgön Kongtrul, there are four levels of illusory body practice.\(^8\) (1) The literal practice is simply to understand all phenomena as the embodiment of illusion. (2) The general practice of illusory body is a more specific application of the similes in meditation to develop the understanding that all appearances lack true existence despite their appearance as real. In classical vajrayāna methodology, this will involve seeing oneself and the environment as deities in the mandala, still in conjunction with the eight or twelve similes. This is called the special or pure illusory body in the general sense. (3) The hidden sense of illusory body is the application in completion phase yoga of the realizations from the previous practices. This involves the dissolution of the energy currents (prāṇa) in the central channel and, ultimately, the appearance of a divine form based only on energy current and mind. This is the true goal of illusory body practice in the context of the six dharmas. (4) The ultimate illusory body is the same as the rainbow body and has already been discussed in the context of Niguma’s level of attainment.

This range—and change—of the meaning of illusion is also expressed simply as illusion that is “impure” and “pure;” or “false” and “genuine.” Thus the great Nyingma master Longchen Rabjam (1301–1363), in the commentary to his famous *Natural Ease in Illusion*, says:

All dharmas of samsara, appearing to the mind, develop from the force of habitual propensity of the mind. Therefore
that is called “erroneously conceived illusion.” All dharmas of nirvana, appearing to timeless awareness, are the Bodies of the natural radiance of intrinsic awareness and appearances of timeless awareness; a spontaneous presence that is beyond things and characteristics of dharmas. Therefore that is called “genuine illusion.”

Longchenpa’s text bears many resemblances to Niguma’s treatise, Stages in the Path of Illusion. Indeed the autocommentaries to both works cite so many of the same sources that it seems either that one copied from the other (and if chronology and authorship are true, that would mean Longchenpa copied from Niguma), or that they both utilized the same earlier Indian sources. However, their general approach is quite different. Longchenpa’s work is one of a trilogy, each volume offering a method to rest and restore the mind: in the nature of mind itself, in meditative stability, or in illusion. In the latter, he discusses at length the application of practice through each of the eight similes of illusion. Each of the eight is further correlated with the eight qualities of dependently arisen phenomena mentioned in Nāgārjuna’s famous opening verse in his Root Verses of the Middle.

Niguma’s treatise, on the other hand, speaks only of illusion as the over-all theory of illusion, which at the same time implies the one example of the magic show. She then shows how one must engage this perspective step by step to travel the bodhisattva path to enlightenment.

**Stages of the Path**

Stages in the Path of Illusion and its Commentary do not pursue the hidden or ultimate levels of illusory body except for the occasional verses. Niguma leaves this for the actual practice of illusory body in the context of the Six Dharmas. Rather, Stages in the Path of Illusion applies the attitude of realization indicated by Kongtrul’s first and second levels of illusory body to the complexities of the bodhisattva’s spiritual journey: the factors of enlightenment, perfections, paths, and grounds.

The idea of “path” (mārga, Tib. lam) is as central and ubiquitous in
Buddhism as the concept of emptiness. The multileveled structure of the spiritual journey may even seem ironic in light of those teachings on emptiness. Yet as soon as a goal was identified—freedom from suffering—then some way to get there from here had to be identified. The path theory has prominence of place in one of the earliest formulations of the Buddha: the four noble truths. There is suffering, it has a cause, removing the cause will eliminate the suffering, and there is a way to do that: “the path.” The Buddhist path describes a journey from the bondage of ignorance to the freedom of complete awakening. Every teaching to be practiced that is attributed to the Buddha or to enlightened beings of all times and in all directions makes up the path. One could say that it is a synonym of “buddhadharma.” It is not just a random grab bag of methods (though at times it certainly seems so) but is presented as an enlightened and exact formula of spiritual practice and patterns of behavior that progressively remove the factors that obstruct progress and develop the powers one needs to traverse the path to its end. Even though one might say that to wake up from the sleep of ignorance could happen in an instant, there is a gradual journey of many moments to get to that instant. And even though one might say that to reach the goal is to arrive at the starting point and know the place for the first time, there is still the attempt to impose a linear order onto the circular journey, to make sense of it. To ask “how far?”

The Buddha’s teaching of the path to awakening is predicated on the one fact accepted by all Buddhists: that he himself had traveled it and was describing it from the vantage point of its destination. “This is how I got here, and therefore you could get here by that same route.” Details of the path, in fact, seem to be originally based on the literature concerning the previous lives of the Buddha, in the same way that the ideal Buddhist aspirant is based on the Buddha as arhant and later on the Buddha in his former life as bodhisattva. As the path descriptions grew—and grow they did, into what appears now as more of a maze than a road—two functions can be discerned: to be a source of faith and a source of guidance. The path is both descriptive (of what the Buddha, or any idealized person, did), and prescriptive (of what their followers should do). Distinguishing these two functions may help to understand the intimidating amount of material about the
path. Sometimes, as in the most inclusive tripartite path description of ethical discipline (śīla), meditative absorption (samādhi), and wisdom or intelligence (prajñā), one can engage it as advice and undertake any number of practices that fall under those three headings to lead a wholesome life that tends toward spiritual development. Sometimes, as in the descriptions of even the first ground (bhūmi) of the bodhisattva, where one is capable of feats such as visiting a hundred buddha realms, one should perhaps simply appreciate that there are great beings with such powers. Because, as Donald Lopez puts it:

That path was increasingly seen as more and more protracted, encompassing lifetimes of practice, finally reaching, in the Mahāyāna, the generally accepted length of three periods of innumerable aeons (which Har Dayal has kindly calculated for us at \(384 \times 10^{58}\) years).¹³

Finding one's way through the intricacies of path literature is no task for the timid. It has been the occupation of scholars since the beginning, all trying to make sense of it while adding lists upon lists. There is no point in repeating all of that here, as it would be, indeed, all of the buddhadharma. There are several recent publications that will provide readers with more than they will ever need to know.¹⁴ But the subjects of Niguma's texts deserve at least brief mention. These subjects combine four enumerations that appear to have developed somewhat organically along separate lines and in various texts, and were later merged into one comprehensive map painstakingly configured by mahāyāna scholars (who were apparently unaware of the emptiness of categories).

The basis of it all should be mentioned first as the starting place of the path. This refers to the idea of an underlying stratum or foundation that supports all aspects of mind and perception, and so is termed literally the ground of everything or all-base (ālaya, Tib. kun gzhi). The concept of all-base was articulated in the yogāchāra philosophy developed primarily by Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu based on sūtras of the third turning of the wheel of dharma. Although not posited as a "self" or existent entity, it nevertheless is used in attempts to explain
the continuity of karmic actions and as such is sometimes translated as “storehouse.” It is a neutral base or ground on which everything occurs. It is the ground of timeless awareness and at the same time the basis of delusion, in which aspect it is known as “all-ground consciousness.” As such, it is the base of an eightfold scheme of consciousness used by yogācārans to describe human experience. There is an enormous range of interpretation of all-base; Niguma’s version in her *Commentary* follows the classical yogācāra description with a leaning toward what later became known as an “other-emptiness” viewpoint. In Niguma’s teaching, it is the illusory basis upon which the illusory path proceeds to reach the illusory goal of realizing the illusoriness of that basis.

The thirty-seven factors or *dharmas* that are conducive to or concordant with awakening seem to have very early beginnings. They are mentioned throughout the early sūtras and in the abhidharma and are explained at length in *The Path of Purification*. The list includes some very well-known concepts such as the eightfold path of the noble ones and the four foundations of mindfulness. They are as follows: Four foundations of mindfulness (1–4), four renunciations (5–8), four supports for miraculous activity (9–12), five faculties (13–17), five powers (18–22), seven branches of enlightenment (23–29), and the eightfold path of the noble ones (30–37). This represents just a slight shift of the progressive list in the theravādin tradition, where the eightfold path is listed before the seven branches of enlightenment.

The five paths (pañcamārga; Tib. lam lnga) are also an early development. They emerged as the predominant schema from among what Kongtrul calls “limitless classifications”; ways of dividing up the basic Buddhist path-theory. “The Sanskrit word “mārga” (path) derives from the verbal root mārg (to seek; to search; to strive to attain; to go) and has a wide range of meanings, such as “way,” “tracks” (of wild animals), “passage,” “course,” “channel,” “range,” “search,” “inquiry,” “manner,” “method,” “practice,” and, specifically, “the way or path pointed out by Buddha for escape from the misery of existence.” Kongtrul explains that the “essence of ‘path’ (that on which one progresses) is that, through having entered it, it serves as a stepping-stone for progressing
toward more superior mundane or supramundane states.” Niguma’s own verse on the matter defines it as follows:

Since calm abiding and higher insight
are combined together,
and since it is supreme,
and one desires to arrive, it is called “path.”

And the commentary elaborates:

The essence of the path is that it is the way of combining calm abiding and higher insight. The literal definition is that since one desires to arrive at supreme enlightenment it is called “path.” The divisions are the path of accumulation, the path of joining, the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path of consummation.

The ten (or so) grounds can be found in various enumerations in the scriptures. The earliest mention of ten grounds may be the Mahāvastu, a compilation of stories and traditions about the Buddha. There the ten grounds or levels (bhūmi; Tib. sa) occur in the context of the Buddha’s previous life as the bodhisattva. This represents a pre-mahāyāna formulation and may or may not be the source of later classifications, as the ten mentioned in the Mahāvastu do not bear the same names as those of the later standardized lists found in mahāyāna sūtras such as the Sūtra on the Ten Grounds and in treatises such as the Bodhisattva Grounds composed in Sanskrit in the late fourth century by Asaṅga. In fact, in the Entry into the Middle Way, another classical treatise devoted to the subject, Chandrakīrti declares that the scheme is peculiar to the mahāyāna tenets. The most commonly studied authoritative text on the matter is Maitreya’s commentary on the perfection of wisdom, The Ornament of Clear Realization.

The Sanskrit word “bhūmi” has several definitions depending on which etymology it is given. In Tibetan it was translated as “sa,” meaning literally “ground” and by connotation “level” or “stage.” In her commentary to the following verses in Stages in the Path, Niguma states
simply, “The literal definition is that since they are the support for all qualities or the basis for progressing higher they are called ‘grounds.’”

The combined calm abiding and higher insight that transcends the mundane as unfixated naturally arisen illusion is nonconceptual timeless awareness.

Being the foundation of the pure qualities, and [because] one progresses higher, they are called “grounds.”

The divisions are Very Joyful and so on, with ten early signs that one should know.28

These verses also serve to remind us that the development of calm abiding and higher insight is, in short, the Buddhist path. The names for the ten grounds that have become standardized (though not in English translation!) in the mahāyāna are: Very Joyful, Stainless, Illuminating, Radiant, Difficult to Overcome, Manifest, Gone Far, Immutable, Excellent Intelligence, and Cloud of Dharma. The tenth ground, Cloud of Dharma, was traditionally equated with buddhahood, but as discussed earlier, there has been a tendency to add further and further levels in the vajrayāna tradition—now up to fourteen.

The six or ten perfections refer to qualities that a bodhisattva practices and develops on the path and ultimately “perfects.” Thus there is both a sense of path and of fruition. In later Pāli texts a list of ten such perfections (Pāli: pāramī) were added to the canon, possibly as a retroactive addition from the mahāyāna.29 They differ slightly from the mahāyāna list and include two of the four immeasurables: love and equanimity.30

In the mahāyāna, the formula of the six perfections “was evolved after a process of selection and experimentation.”31 The list is found throughout Sanskrit literature and makes up the main path of the bodhisattva once the thought of enlightenment has been aroused. In that sense it is comparable to the eightfold path of the noble ones in early teachings of the Buddha. The Sanskrit term pāramitā was translated into Tibetan
as *pha rol tu phyin pa*, meaning literally “to arrive over there,” which was perhaps suggested by the addition of the term “ita” (gone to the beyond). There are many variables, however, and there has been much discussion about the actual meaning and derivation of the term. Consequently, there does not seem to be any adequate English translation to capture the full range of meaning, and one has to fall back on the deficient but easy term “perfection.” Other options are “transcendent action,” “transcendental virtue,” highest perfection,” and “complete attainment.”

With some overlap of the earlier list, the six pāramitās are generosity, ethical discipline, patience, diligence, meditative stability, and wisdom. A common way to understand the six perfections in terms of the path and its result is to regard the regular practice of the first five—generosity and so on—as the actions that the aspiring bodhisattva must practice. When the sixth—the perfection of wisdom—is applied to those first five, then those practices become truly “transcendent” or “perfect” and are the actual fruitional qualities possessed by a noble bodhisattva, which is to say, one who traverses the bhumis. Kongtrul also states that the six pāramitās bring about the unfolding of the modes of the ten bhumis according to the ways of engaging cognition.

At some point four more pāramitās were added to the list: skill in methods, aspirations, power, and timeless awareness. These four are obviously associated mainly with the higher levels of fruition. A marriage of numerical harmony was destined for these two lists of ten, the pāramitās and the bhumis, which might not have been an accident. In the *Sūtra on the Ten Grounds*, the ten pāramitās are correlated one-to-one with the ten grounds. The common scheme of six perfections was perhaps expanded to ten precisely for this purpose.

**All of the Above**

Thus begins the intricate process of spiritual cartography and matchmaking that occupies much of the mahāyāna literature. The thirty-seven factors conducive to awakening are lined up alongside a steady progression in the first three paths, the ten grounds are grafted on to the five paths beginning with the onset of the third path, and the perfections
are perfected in a steady sequence on the grounds. The whole map is fine-tuned even further by adding subcategories and levels within each of the five paths; thus there are the lesser, intermediate, and greater levels of the Path of Accumulation, and so forth. It is unfortunate that the ancient writings did not include charts, such as the one presented on pages 52–53, which make the path-map easier to visualize.

Why and Wherefore?

As the subject progresses in complexity, the question constantly arises “to what end?” Although one might master the correlations of the chart, how does one actually apply the information to one’s own path? For if one cannot do that, it certainly seems to be an exercise in frustration. The idea is often presented that the complexity of the proposed path reflects the complexity of the defilements that it purports to purify. This sounds true but still begs the question whether knowledge of such minutiae actually aids the purification process or confounds it. Certainly examination of defilements is de rigueur for Buddhists. Yet how important is it to identify and even name the process and one’s location in a sort of Buddhist GPS? The question is especially pertinent given that the mahāyāna list in particular seems to be referencing something we can only hope to achieve, even at the very initial stages. The process of trying to apply the categories to oneself and one’s own journey seems fraught with the dangers of straying into error, developing arrogance, and just plain wasting time.

As I suggested before, one can gain the benefit only if one distinguishes those aspects that are meant to be applied as personal practices now, “starting from where you are,” and those that might inspire confidence in and credulity toward great spiritual beings. In suggesting these two modes of understanding the topic, I am not saying that the inherent ability of all beings to attain buddhahood is in doubt. I am just seeking a way through the maze of endlessly proliferating path-categories toward the exit light of what must somehow be edifying knowledge. Here is another, perhaps similar, way elaborated by Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello in the foreword to their collection Paths to Liberation:
It may well be that the persistent Buddhist tendency to elaborate on the path by dividing it into multiple and further subdivisible stages, although perhaps begun as a kind of “cartography” of the terrain of Buddhist religious experience, led retrospectively to creation of a spiritual pedigree for the ideal person such as might render that person worthy of emulation by others. Thus the process of mārga construction, whereby the path is built step by step, may be said to define a necessary stage in the evolutions of a tradition, viz., the stage of transition from the category of the particular, the idiosyncratic, or the biographical to the category of the universal and the generic. In this way the experience of one person is made accessible, in principle, to all. By organizing experience into sequences of stages, the transcendent goal presumed to have been achieved by spiritual exemplars at the source of the tradition is objectified, codified, and made available to ordinary Buddhist practitioners. The detailed ordering of experience that these schemata of the path provide offers practitioners an explicit guide to achieving the original and archetypal goal for themselves. The path thus mediates between the enlightened and the unenlightened.38

Nothing to Get Hung About

And if that doesn’t work, well, you might try viewing the path as illusion.

This would not be a new concept. As mentioned before, the simile of illusion covers everything and has been used to qualify the Buddhist path specifically at least since the appearance of the perfection of wisdom sūtras. For example, in the Perfection of Wisdom in Eight-thousand Lines, the dream/illusion simile is used to describe the four stages on the path of the arhants, as well as of pratyekabuddhas and buddhas:

Children of gods, all dharmas are like illusion, like dream. Stream-winning is also like illusion, like dream. The fruition of stream-winning is also like illusion, like dream. In the
same way once-returning and coming back with its fruition, nonreturning and its fruition, and arhants are also like illusion, like dream. Arhanthood itself is also like illusion, like dream. Pratyekabuddhas are also like illusion, like dream. Pratekyabuddhahood itself is also like illusion, like dream. Genuine complete buddhas are also like illusion, like dream. Genuine complete buddhahood is also like illusion, like dream.\textsuperscript{39}

In the commentary to the \textit{Stages in the Path of Illusion}, Niguma cites a similar passage in the \textit{Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines} that names all thirty-seven factors of enlightenment as being like illusions and dreams. But what is the point of analyzing the path down to its tiniest track if anyway it is just illusion?

Illusion gives us the perfect metaphor to make sense of the reality of emptiness and appearance; of primordially present awake awareness and an impossibly protracted path to enlightenment. In a way it is the naming of the area between paradoxes, of the creative space in the tension of opposites. The path makes sense only on the level of illusion: a journey that must be negotiated, carefully and with determination, but treading lightly and lightheartedly without becoming trapped in the doldrums of believing in it. The path and its fruition exist only as illusion, but without that marvel there is no path and no fruition. Then you are stuck. The difference between being stuck in samsara and free in nirvana is only the illusory journey on the illusory path. Careful, lest it disappear or solidify.
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### 37 Factors Conducive to Enlightenment

**Four direct applications of mindfulness**
1. of the body
2. of sensations
3. of the mind
4. of phenomena

**Four [aspects of] genuine renunciation**
5. not to generate vice and unvirtuous factors that have not yet arisen
6. to renounce those vices and unvirtuous factors that have arisen
7. to generate virtuous factors that have not yet arisen
8. to keep and increase the virtuous factors that have arisen

**Four supports of miraculous ability: meditative absorptions distinguished by**
9. determination
10. diligence
11. intention
12. conduct (or analysis)

**Five faculties**
13. faith
14. diligence
15. mindfulness
16. absorption
17. wisdom

**Five powers**
18. faith
19. diligence
20. mindfulness
21. absorption
22. wisdom

**Seven branches of enlightenment**
23. mindfulness
24. revealing phenomena
25. diligence
26. joy
27. agility
28. absorption
29. equanimity

**Eightfold path of the noble ones**
30. genuine view
31. genuine thought
32. genuine speech
33. genuine completed action
34. genuine livelihood
35. genuine effort
36. genuine mindfulness
37. genuine absorption
STAGES IN THE PATH OF ILLUSION

Sanskrit: Māyādhanakramanāma
Tibetan: sGyu ma lam gyi rim pa ("Gyuma Lamrim")

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1. I pay homage to you, mind itself: primordial lucid clarity by nature, [satisfying] all needs and desires, like a wish-fulfilling jewel.

2. For the benefit of others I will explain Stages in the Path of Illusion, the central theme that is the quintessence of the minds of the ocean of victors.

3. Beginningless basic space itself, primordially nonexistent illusion, is the seed of all phenomena, the buddha nature, and virtue. It is known as the essential base of all.

4. If those endowed with excellent faith, diligence, and devotion meditate on the illusion-like [nature] of illusion-like phenomena, illusion-like buddhahood will manifest.

5. So listen well as I duly explain the five paths and ten grounds [as illusion].

6. The entire animate and inanimate [world] and whatever appears to the five senses is all the empty appearance of the deity's Body. The deity's Body is limitless illusion.
7. The wise should take into practice all the factors of enlightenment as inseparable from the illusion of the deity’s Body.

8. The stages on the five paths and ten grounds are traversed on the strength of devotion. The sublime vital point of the tantras’ intention is never to be separate from the guru’s manifestation.

9. Thus, the extraordinary practice [is to experience] all the sights and sounds of phenomena as the nature of the deity and guru.

10. Shapes, colors, the five poisons, and types of accomplishing activity are the five buddha families. Whatever appears is appearance and emptiness: creation and completion and their unity.

11. One should know [this through] the purifying vase [empowerment], the secret [empowerment of] inseparable white and red [essences], the third [empowerment which is the] aspect of bliss, and the fourth inexpressible [empowerment].

12. Where there is bliss, clarity, and nonthought, there the three kāyas are naturally arising. Clarity without concept is twofold knowledge.

[The Paths]

13. Since calm abiding and higher insight are combined together, and since it is supreme, and one desires to arrive, it is called “path.”
14. The Path of Accumulation is to renounce vice, however small, and take up virtue, gathering accumulations in order to realize the illusion of the nature of phenomena.

15. There are greater, intermediate, and lesser levels, each formulated with further fourfold division: four mindfulnesses, four renunciations, and four supports of miraculous action.

16. Carelessness and impaired mindfulness cause downfalls. Therefore mindfulness is explained first.

17. To practice mindfulness and awareness of the illusion of inseparable appearance-emptiness of this heartless body as the Victor’s Body is the direct application of mindfulness to the body.

18. The reference-points of pleasure, pain, equanimity, and the sensations of all designated phenomena understood as [mere] sensation are the direct application of mindfulness to sensation.

19. All phenomena are mind, yet mind will not be found inside or outside. Mind not existing at all [except as] illusion is the application of mindfulness to the mind.

20. Shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas label all things as phenomena. [To know them as] random labels of mere names is the application of mindfulness to phenomena.
21. Suffering is caused by nonvirtues. Since those who desire freedom from it regard all nonvirtue as though it were poison, there are four genuine renunciations.

22. In order not to generate vice and unvirtuous factors that have not arisen, arouse determination, effort, and attention to fully engage in what is genuine.

23. In order to renounce vice and unvirtuous factors that have arisen, arouse determination, effort, and so forth; understand it the same as above.

24. In order to generate virtuous attributes that have not arisen, energetically arouse determination, effort, and so forth, as above.

25. In order that virtuous attributes that have arisen may remain and increase without any diminishing, and not be lost or wasted, arouse determination and so forth as above.

26. As for “arousing determination not to generate vice and unvirtuous factors that have not arisen,” the proper mental engagement is to practice with whatever appears as illusion. Thus unvirtuous factors will not occur.

27. Furthermore, “vice and unvirtuous factors” are whatever is incongruous
with ethical discipline, meditative absorption, and wisdom. The mental engagement is that in order to renounce those nonvirtues, determination and so forth must be developed. That is the idea of the first genuine renunciation.

28. Furthermore, the "unvirtuous factors" are desirous attachment, angry aggression, and unaware dullness. The mental engagement is [contemplation] on foulness pacifying desire, love pacifying aggression, and [contemplation of] interdependence pacifying stupidity. Knowing that they are without intrinsic nature pacifies all afflictive emotion. That is the idea of the second genuine renunciation.

29. In order to generate virtuous factors that have not arisen, the determination to accomplish buddhahood by developing determination and effort is the root of all roots of virtue. The practice of mental attention is the supreme virtue. That is the idea of the third genuine renunciation.

30. In order that virtuous factors that have arisen not diminish or be wasted, arouse determination, effort, mental attention, and engage the genuine. The practice of illusion [regarding] the roots of virtue is that by dedicating them to [attaining] omniscience, rather than remaining in the three realms, ultimately they will never be wasted. That is the idea of the fourth genuine renunciation.

31. Those who desire to cross the ocean of suffering of cyclic existence and arrive at the ground
that transcends misery
[need] the four absorptions of miraculous activity.

32. All phenomena are like illusion.
Unafraid of unreal, unlimited phenomena,
renouncing them, one is determined.
That is the absorption of determination.

33. When practicing the illusion of a determined goal,
once worldly attachment is discarded
and sloth abandoned, one is endowed with diligence.
Then it is the absorption of diligence.

34. With that unceasing diligence,
mind is without reference to anything inside or out.
Free of fixation, one-pointed focus on illusion
is the absorption of mind.

35. With that one-pointed absorption,
integrating unreal illusion on the path
during all moving, walking, lying down, and sitting,
is the conduct, so it is [the absorption] of conduct.

36. The absorption of conduct and the others are all called
"the meditative absorptions that are the support of miraculous
ability
having the volition of renunciation."

37. The nature of meditative absorption
is to support miraculous activity.
Without fixation all mistaken factors
are genuinely renounced
and turned into virtue and genuine virtue.

38. Not to conceive even those virtuous factors
makes one free of concept,
so absorption is the nature of the miraculous.
Through that stainless, sublime path
one arrives in the genuine place,
so they are called “supports of miraculous activity.”

39. The signs on the Path of Accumulation are faith and
diligence,
and since ethical discipline is pure, the sense faculties
shun even the slightest misdeed.

40. One knows that external objects of desire and aggression
arise in oneself and are not “other”
and that that arising itself is illusion.
Day and night one’s conduct is that of total renunciation.
The habitual patterns of intense determination arise.

41. By applying these former habitual patterns
to the things that appear in this way,
one does not conceive of them as permanent or real.
No doubts about their lack of reality ever arise.

42. Even if doubt does arise, one knows all composite phenomena to be impermanent,
[since even] the web of existence will disintegrate.
What need is there to make sure?

43. Therefore letting go of self-fixation,
the root of the suffering of cyclic existence,
that person will definitely find happiness.
Nonhumans will see and make offering and praise.

44. The period from when someone first generated the
aspiration
of previously developed determination
until the arising of the timeless awareness of warmth
should be known as the Path of Accumulation.
[The Path of Application]

45. Since the [realization] of impermanent illusion from the Path of Seeing is applied now, it is called “the Path of Application.” [It consists of] the absorptions of warmth and peak. There are five faculties.

46. Doing no nonvirtue even to save one’s life, having faith in the powers, fearlessness, emptiness, and the meaning of illusion: that is called the faculty of faith.

47. Practicing the illusion [of what one has] faith in, continually familiarizing oneself with it, and arousing the faculty of diligence: that is called the faculty of diligence.

48. Mindful of illusion that has come of diligence so that it does not go to waste, while abandoning all attachment to real existence: that is the faculty of mindfulness.

49. Absorption in the illusion of mindfulness and determination becomes one-pointed and without distraction. Since absorption is included in one-pointedness, that is the faculty of absorption.

50. That illusion that is included in absorption is distinctly revealed by wisdom that knows all phenomena to be without intrinsic nature: that is the faculty of wisdom.

51. They are called the five faculties because everything inconsistent with them is overwhelmed.
52. By practicing in this way
all phenomenal sights and sounds in the daytime
arise as the experience of unreal illusion.
Through time, body, and visualization [practices],
Dreams are recognized in an isolated place.46

53. However many dreams are dreamt,
they do not transcend four habitual patterns.47
The power of training with virtue, nonvirtue, and neutrality
produces the great timeless awareness.

54. Therefore those endowed with intelligence
[regard] dreams as golden.
Containing virtue and nonvirtue,48 one practices accepting
and rejecting,
and applies the meaning of illusion to dreams.

55. Just recognizing that it is a dream is warmth.49
"Warmth" because it is the early sign of
the fire of illusion arising naturally without concept.

56. Form and so on are inseparable appearance-emptiness,
without increase and decrease—thus illusion.
When that illusion occurs naturally
for a bit in a dream, it is the peak.

57. Connecting mindfulness, determination, and devotion,
with the vital points of blending and transferring,50
when waking up from sleep
and recognizing one's former dream,
meditate on it as being no different than waking deluded
appearances.

58. Furthermore, without opening the eyes
decline that the pictures of your memories,
perceptions, and thoughts are illusory dreams
and then practice with intense determination.

59. When deluded perception occurs, train again and again.
Meditate that the outer environment and all beings within it
are the residence and residents [of the mandala],
and that this itself is illusory dream.
It is most crucial to train in this again and again.

60. With intense weariness leave behind
the fascination with hapless cyclic existence\(^{51}\)
and this deceitful seducer: appearance.
With fierce determination discard it for the essence.\(^{52}\)

61. Without mentally releasing this life,
whatever one does will be meaningless suffering.
Many attendants and servants are like an anthill.
Possessions are the same as passing clouds.

62. Even living in a jungle, one is just like a parrot,
clever in the designations of wildlife.
Therefore those who are thoughtful
should not be attached to this world.

63. Experience the sights and sounds of daily life
determined that you have fallen asleep.
There is no difference whatsoever
in actual perceptions and dreams.
To the unrealized they appear as two;
but there is nothing other than that.

64. The signs of warmth are that the notion of the reality
of the five aggregates is countered by illusion,
there are no hesitations or doubts
about the genuine profound meaning of illusion,
and oneself and others are joined to virtues.
65. One’s body and so on are naturally endowed with loving mind, and one does not come under the power of sleep and torpor. Since latent habitual patterns of afflictive states are conquered, one is possessed of the mindfulness and awareness of illusion.

66. The signs of the peak are that clothes, seat, and so on do not develop odors and the body is free of parasites inside and out. Without avarice, body, speech, and mind are without deceit and remain in isolation, which stabilizes [practice] and sustains joy.53

67. There are five powers in the meditative absorptions of [the levels of] acceptance and supreme dharma:

68. The power of faith when practicing illusion with faith and devotion
is such that even if a devil emanated in the form of a buddha and dissuaded one with “this is not the dharma,” one would not be subject to conversion.

69. The power of diligence in the diligent [practice of] illusion is such that the forceful power of steadfast reliance disables gods [and others] from turning one away when reaching the ultimate ground.

70. The power of mindfulness that is generated in the undistracted mind [focused on] the meaning of illusion that cannot be distracted by thoughts or disrupted by emotions is the power of mindfulness.

71. Meditative absorption in illusion free of concepts without fixation on any objects of attachment and aggression attains the power of isolation from busyness and is the power of meditative absorption.
72. Wisdom knows that all phenomena are illusion, without intrinsic existence. That which liberates worldly ones arises from wisdom and is the power of wisdom.

73. They are called “five powers” because discordant factors do not move them.

74. Acceptance is lack of fear of the profound meaning of illusion that appears yet is free of fixation. Through training and increasing lucid dreaming, if one is not afraid, then it is acceptance.

75. The signs are that in all daily activities one is possessed of illusion’s meaning and, while accepting the illustrations by words, the real meaning is willingness to be born in hell.

76. One is not affected by perverse dharma, and will not come under the power of all the devils who fake the dharma.

77. Even in dreams all phenomena are known to be the dream itself. Those are the signs of acceptance, and not to fully fall into the three bad existences.

78. Once dreams are recognized, if the deity’s Body arises naturally just for a moment, there is no question of recognition in the intermediate state. The same will be true for illusion.

79. All phenomena, free of arising and ceasing, becoming illusion is [the level of] supreme dharma. Realizing all dream objects as one’s own mind, is mundane supreme dharma.
80. The signs of supreme dharma are that, in all activities, whatever one does is for the welfare of beings, and the activity that pleases the buddha is free of all entanglement of attachments to this life.

81. The poison flowers of the eight worldly concerns are genuinely liberated in illusion itself. Once dreams are recognized, luminous clarity is realized. That is what conquers the intermediate state.

82. From warmth up through mundane supreme dharma is known as the Path of Joining.

[The Path of Seeing]

83. In the last moment of supreme dharma, nonconceptual timeless awareness of the Path of Seeing is the natural arising of illusion that has the characteristic of being incontrovertible.

84. Seeing what was not seen before is the timeless wisdom of the Path of Seeing. The seven branches of enlightenment are the meditative absorption on the Path of Seeing.

85. Since illusion, which is beyond intellect, involves no deliberate application of mindfulness, all phenomena are seen as nonentities. This is the mindfulness branch of enlightenment.

86. Practicing illusion-like experience with regard to all illusion-like phenomena, there is no frame of reference for truly existent phenomena, virtuous, nonvirtuous, or indeterminate. This is the direct revealing of phenomena branch of enlightenment.
87. Since all concepts are eradicated in illusion, which is free from all fixation, striving without accepting or discarding phenomena is the diligence branch of enlightenment.

88. Since joy and sorrow are eradicated with regard to illusion, which is free from rejection or acceptance, joy about habitual phenomena is not aroused in the disciplined mind. This is the joy branch of enlightenment.

89. Because there is no reference point to whatever one references—since illusion has no existence in essence—there is mental agility regarding all phenomena. This is the mental agility branch of enlightenment.

90. Even illusion itself is not truly existent. The realization that follows the eradication of phenomena does not reference [even] the mind. This is the meditative absorption branch of enlightenment.

91. Illusion, which dwells nowhere, creates no dependency, attachment, or bondage. No concern with phenomena is the equanimity branch of enlightenment.

92. Once accustomed to that meditative absorption, from day through half the night all aspects of appearance and sound will arise as illusion, without intrinsic existence, limitless appearance inseparable from emptiness.

93. Just as bubbles arise and dissolve back into the sparkling sea,
so thought bubbles also cannot be anywhere else except in the ocean of phenomena's nature. So rest at ease without rejecting or accepting.

94. At that time the fog of conceptual patterns becomes baseless and cannot disturb. Having generated certainty and conviction, one gets used to [just that] without adding or subtracting anything.

95. Having engaged this by blending it with devotion, the deity's Body [appears] clearly without concept, blissful without fixation and free of craving, naturally arisen, naturally liberated, and uncompounded.

96. Lucid clarity, omniscient yet free of concept, occurs in sleep, dream, and the intermediate state, or else in lucid dreaming or naturally arising; this saṃbhogakāya lasts as long as one does not waver.

97. Day and night blend inseparably and whatever appears is endowed with three constants. If one then practices without distraction, making offerings and supplications,

98. one will attain stabilization of emanations and transformations in dreams and train in the creativity of illusion with [everything] from buddhas to bugs.

99. Once the nonreferential illusory body is actualized, illusion, deities' Bodies, and manifest clarity become inseparable, and the lucid appearances increase.
100. Having similarly traversed through to objective appearances,\(^57\)
one hundred and twelve [Path of] Seeing eliminations are eliminated.
One becomes clairvoyant and joyful,
while frightening appearances occur.

101. The signs that the lucid appearance of illusion has arisen are that during sleep or otherwise,
in one second, lasting a mere instant,
twelve hundred qualities occur.

102. One enters the equilibrium of a hundred absorptions,
sees the faces of a hundred buddhas,
listens to the teachings of a hundred buddhas,
shakes a hundred world systems,

103. visits a hundred buddha realms,
fills a hundred realms with light,
matures a hundred sentient beings,
opens a hundred dharma doors,

104. remains for a hundred eons,
penetrates a hundred past and future lives,
and issues a hundred emanated bodies,
each surrounded by a hundred teaching attendants.

105. Since one can relinquish even life for the sake of dharma,
sense pleasures become allies.
Perfecting the four kinds of generosity,\(^58\)
one does whatever one can of the remaining [perfections].

106. Attaining the [first] ground, one is free of the five fears:
lack of sustenance, death, lower realms,
criticism, and [troublesome] retinue.
Being without fear, anxiety is abandoned.
107. Thus all sights and sounds from the realization arise as unreal illusion through realization.

108. If, in daytime and in dreams, the habitual tendencies of confusion are not purified, one does not abide even on the eighth ground—no need to mention the Lotus-endowed.

109. Therefore, [regarding] the various appearances, if one does not involve mental fixation in the brilliant clarity of the five sense consciousnesses, then that is clarity and emptiness inseparable; the natural appearance of illusion without attachment.

110. All the phenomena of dreams are realized as great bliss clarity-emptiness without fixation. That timeless awareness on the Path of Seeing is explained as the sign of a nonreturner.

111. One should know that the Path of Seeing [extends] from the supreme dharma until the second ground.

[The Path of Meditation]

112. The Path of Meditation means nonconceptual illusion. Since seeing becomes familiar, it is the Path of Meditation. The grounds are from the second to the tenth. The mental engagement in meditative absorption is the eightfold path of the noble ones.

113. All phenomena of samsara, nirvana, and so forth, are all equal in illusion. Free of all reference points of a view, it is the genuine view.
114. All thoughts of anything at all are genuinely liberated in illusion itself. Totally eliminating all thoughts is genuine thought.

115. Words that are free of self-other concepts, and ritual expressions that cause the realization of the equality of all phenomena in illusion are genuine speech.

116. Completed action becomes exhausted: freedom from all limitations—positive, negative, compounded, uncompounded—is genuine completed action.

117. Any livelihood that is free from harming or violence, that purifies violence toward beings, and arrives at ultimate benefit of oneself and others is genuine livelihood.

118. Total attention of the mind for the purpose of accomplishing the meaning of illusion that is profound and free of elaboration, and the persistence of undaunted effort is genuine effort.

119. One's own naturally arising illusion affords no opportunity for interference from devils, nonvirtue, and deviations; this is genuine mindfulness.

120. Self and other are equal in illusion, all phenomena are totally pure in illusion; attaining omniscience in that very moment is genuine meditative absorption.
121. The grounds are from the second, Immaculate, through the tenth, Cloud of Dharma. There are four hundred and fourteen Path of Meditation eliminations.

122. Sorcery, miraculous powers, and so on develop; the signs and qualities of these nine grounds should be learned from the section on the ten grounds.

123. Whatever is attained after the Path of Seeing up until the tenth ground is the Path of Meditation.

[The Path of Consummation]

124. Illusion totally liberated from all obscurations is genuine, perfect buddhahood. When other phenomena do not impede the swift attainment of that unsurpassable enlightenment, it is known as the path of no obstacle.

125. Once all obscurations are eliminated on the Path of Meditation, in the last of the final stage of the tenth ground, the most subtle of subtle fixations on illusion are known as cognitive obscurations.

126. Alternatively, it is the obscuration of believing the excellence of ultimate views. To eliminate that very obscuration there is vajra-like meditative absorption.

127. Unfixated clarity-emptiness great bliss, uncompounded naturally arising luminous clarity comes from the force of blessings. Like torchlight illuminating gold coins in a dungeon,
the most subtle of subtle obscurations are naturally purified by unimpeded ability.

128. Then uncompounded basic space itself and timeless awareness are not two. The complete purity of afflictive emotion and cognition is the dharmakāya endowed with two purities.

129. Kāyas are support and accumulation and pervasive and naturally existing. Without change, birth, or characteristics, all buddhas are dharmakāya.

130. There is no constructing or dwelling, yet the two kāyas arise naturally from the force of previous merit accumulation, thought of awakening, aspirations, and creation phase.

131. Thus, in the palace of the Akaniṣṭha, Sambhogakāya Vairochana Vajradhara fully possesses the excellent major and minor marks.

132. The stainless kāya of appearance-emptiness, free of elaboration, together with a host of bodhisattvas, proclaims with unbroken continuity the sounds of mahāyāna dharma without limits.

133. Nirmāṇakāya arises naturally to tame whomever in place, time, teacher, retinue, and so forth, according to the interests of those to be tamed. An unimaginable array manifests in forms of this and that.

134. Until the ocean of samsara is emptied, like a lotus unsoiled by the swamp
or like a wish-fulfilling tree or jewel,
they ripen and liberate sentient beings.\textsuperscript{60}

135. The dharmakāya free of birth and cessation is attained through accumulation of awareness and completion phase. Great bliss of three kāyas inseparable is attained through two accumulations and creation-completion inseparable.

136. In short, from the sky-like dharmakāya, the rainbows of form kāyas arise naturally. Without discursive thought, everything is known; inseparable natural freedom and spontaneous presence.

137. Essence itself and complete enjoyment and emanation are the activity of dharmakāya. If you would like elaborations on any eloquent explanations of these four, you should respectfully consult and learn from the sūtras and the works of Lord Maitreya.\textsuperscript{61}

138. Here practice is the primary concern. Designations are like mirages. Therefore, with no spare time in life, mentally abandon this world. Relying on an excellent holy guru, you should actualize realization.

139. This life is short; things to know are many. Moreover, one’s lifespan is uncertain, so like a goose drinking milk,\textsuperscript{62} take what you need.

140. For as long as ideas exist, there is no end of vehicles.
When ideas are no more, there is no vehicle, and no expression.

141. The signs of the paths and grounds vary according to differences in the force of familiarization, and to differences in seniority [in practice]. [There are differences in the] external objects, perceived objects, perceived essence, and qualities that are attained.

142. The stages of external miraculous emanations of arhants with or without adornments, in the early or later part of life, and so on, should be learned from the sūtras and tantras.

143. From the end of the continuum of the tenth ground until twofold wisdom produces the four kāyas that are spontaneously present for oneself and others should be known as the Path of Consummation.

[The Ten Grounds]

144. Now listen while I explain well the ten grounds of a bodhisattva.

145. The combined calm abiding and higher insight that transcends the mundane as unfixed naturally arisen illusion is nonconceptual timeless awareness.

146. Being the foundational support of the pure qualities, and [because] one progresses higher, they are called “grounds.” The divisions are Very Joyful and so on. There are ten early signs that one should know.

147. These are the defining characteristics of the ten grounds: The meaning of illusion free of limitations and beyond intellect
that was not seen before becomes manifest, and one's purpose is attained, so joy is born. Therefore [the first ground] is called "Very Joyful."

148. The host of physical, verbal, and mental delusions are realized as illusion since they are unborn. Since ethical discipline is free of faults' stain, [the second ground] is called "Stainless."

149. Appearance, sound, and all phenomena arise as illusion with no fixation on their clarity. Since the power of timeless awareness illuminates, [the third ground] is therefore called "Illuminating."

150. That light of lucid appearance without fixation is also nonexistent illusion. Since radiating light burns up afflictive states, [the fourth ground] is called "Radiant."

151. All fixation on the truth of remedial eliminations turns into illusion that is genuine and unreal. Since this subdues the difficult-to-tame afflictive states, [the fifth ground] is called "Difficult to Overcome."

152. All phenomena of samsara, nirvana, and so on are indivisible, unlimited illusion. Since the intrinsic nature becomes manifest, [the sixth ground] is called "Manifest."

153. All phenomena are genuinely liberated in illusion, while nonreferential compassion performs all purpose. Since this is far from the [grounds of] shrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, [the seventh ground] is called "Gone Far."
154. Illusion is beyond intellect and effort; great naturally arising spontaneous presence. Since afflictive emotion has no power to move it, [the eighth ground] is called “Immovable.”

155. However many phenomena one fixates on, they are liberated in illusion itself. Since intelligence is expansive and unhindered, [the ninth ground] is called “Excellent Intelligence.”

156. The illusion of the two accumulations in union attains mastery over enlightened activity. Since clouds of awareness pervade the dharmakāya sky, [the tenth ground] is called “Cloud of Dharma.”

157. The ten grounds are ten perfections. This is the order of which goes with which: First, mainly generosity is perfected, while the remaining are accomplished as much as possible. Second is the perfection of ethical discipline.

158. Third is done by patience. Fourth is the perfection of diligence. Fifth [attains] meditative stability. Sixth the perfection of wisdom.

159. Seventh is method. Eighth is the perfection of aspirations. Ninth [attains] power. Tenth the perfection of timeless awareness.

160. The characteristics of the ten perfections will be explained without mistake. In seeking timeless awareness, one dedicates the roots of virtue to sentient beings in generosity.
161. To pacify all anguish of afflictive emotion 
ethical discipline [is practiced].
Love and compassion for sentient beings 
without malice is patience.

162. Insatiable perseverance 
in the quest for virtuous factors is diligence. 
Possessing an unregretful mind for the actualization 
of omniscient timeless awareness is meditative stability.

163. When what is intrinsically unborn 
is actualized, it is wisdom. 
The timeless awareness of the victors 
is accomplished by skillful method.

164. When the activity of timeless awareness 
is really accomplished, it is aspiration. 
No interference in the path continuum 
from opposing forces and evil hordes is power.

165. This realization of phenomena just as they are 
is held to be the perfection of timeless awareness. 
The bodhisattvas become buddhas 
on the tenth and eleventh grounds.

166. One should know about the obscurations 
of twenty-one delusions.

167. Whoever is deluded has the delusion of fixating on something. 
Therefore totally eliminating any fixation 
on all the phenomena on the grounds, 
one must realize illusion without fixation.

168. If somehow one becomes fixated on that mere illusion, 
then that too must be eliminated.
Beyond the existence or nonexistence of illusion, elimination, acquisition, negation, and affirmation are free in themselves.

169. The conventional reality of fixation on something is naturally liberated without fixation—beyond intellect. Therefore getting used to nonfixation on all phenomena on the grounds purifies all obscurations.

170. The stages of naturally arising realization and the stages of the signs will arise. With realization of the meaning of naturally arising illusion, the three spheres are totally pure and generosity is effortless.\(^6^5\)

171. At all times of day and night, naturally arising illusion-like [experience] occurs. Furthermore, the meaning of omnipresent and pervasive illusion of the realm of phenomena is realized.

172. There are twelve hundred clear appearances. Outer and inner signs are as before.\(^6^6\)

173. At Stainless, illusion and the deity's Body without attachment is the stainless kāya. Beyond ideas of going, coming, existing, and not existing, this itself is the excellent support of familiarization: The natural arising of illusion as the realm of phenomena itself is the realization of the sublime meaning.

174. The signs are that, whether day or nighttime, in a single instant, one enters the equipoise of powers of absorption, and twelve hundred [other qualities that] one should know.

175. At Illuminating, lucid clarity and the deity's Body of great bliss are inseparable.
[In waking] clarity and dream time itself, in order to tame immeasurable sentient beings, unimaginable Bodies of deities naturally arise, filling the realms and proclaiming the dharma.

176. The meaning that is similar to the cause is that all phenomena are realized as the realm of phenomena. One enters the equipoise of a hundred thousand absorptions, and other [qualities of] a hundred thousand that one should know.

177. At Radiant, since the deity’s Body is effortlessly familiar, one becomes free from the poison of strife and effort.

178. The meaning of the absence of total fixation in the realm of phenomena is realized. There are twelve [sets of] one billion, such as entering into equilibrium and so forth.

179. On the ground Difficult to Overcome, from within the realization that all phenomena are unborn, unrestricted, nonreferential compassion [manifests] the great seal of the deity’s Body for others’ sakes, becoming inseparable during all activities. Everything in the realm of phenomena is realized to be undifferentiated from others.67

180. There are twelve [sets of] ten billion, such as entering the equipoise of ten billion absorptions in a single instant.

181. On Manifest, all the causes and results of samsara and nirvana become manifest. The deity’s Body of interdependent origination
arises in lucid clarity without fixation on clarity.

182. All intense afflictive states and perfect purity are realized to be undifferentiated in the realm of phenomena. There are twelve [sets of] one trillion, such as one trillion meditative absorptions.

183. In the Far ground, all phenomena are the Body of illusion without arising or ceasing; the limitless great bliss of unity. In all activities of day and night recollection in that absence of attachment is attained, which is known as being a "nonreturner."

184. The meaning of no differentiation in the realm of phenomena and phenomena's defining characteristics are realized. There are twelve [sets of qualities], such as entering in the equipoise of ten sextillion.

185. On the Immovable ground, day and night lucid clarity as the deity's Body without effort arises naturally in aspects similar to sambhogakāya, and refines illusion in the array of pure lands of the buddhas of the ten directions and three times.

186. Like the totally pure spontaneously present sky, the realm of phenomena without increase or decrease is a sign of attaining power over the pure realms.

187. In a single instant one attains absorptions equal to as many atoms as there are in one hundred trillion worlds; there are twelve such sets.

188. On the ground of Intelligence, lucid clarity and phenomena are limitless, uncompounded,
free of going and coming, birth and death, rejecting and accepting; beyond utterance, imagination, and description, unborn, and without the duality of meditated object and meditation.

189. Like the pure sky without clouds, the meaning of the timeless awareness of unimpeded confidence is realized.

190. In a single instant one enters the equipoise of absorptions equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms; there are twelve such [sets of qualities].

191. On the Cloud of Dharma, the union of two accumulations, nonabiding, without abiding, lucid clarity is the natural, totally pure, nonconceptual kāya, known vividly without fixating thoughts.

192. Beyond mind, free from the limits of reference points, like the sky without arising or ceasing, pure as space without defining characteristics, beyond utterance, imagination, description, and intellect.

193. In all times of day and night, the sublime inseparable appearance-emptiness, bliss-emptiness, arises without increase or decrease; the meaning of the power of enlightened activity.

194. This is truly a lord of the tenth ground whose empowerment conferral is amazing; the greatest of all in the three realms. Placed on the lion throne of fearlessness, empowerment is conferred by great light rays and the hands of the victors of the ten directions.
195. Then, in a single instant, amid the great appearance of dharma and immeasurable light and dharma clouds and dharma appearance and dharma light of immeasurable tathāgatas, the immeasurably great Cloud of Dharma is attained.

196. In that final existence, cognitive obscurations are thoroughly eliminated and vajra-like absorption is realized.

[The Fruition]

197. According to inner [tantra], the lord of the eleventh ground receives the immaculate mahā-empowerment in the infinite palace of the Queen of Akaniṣṭha, and realizes the lucid clarity of vajra absorption.

198. The twelfth, passionless Lotus-endowed, the genuine buddha is the buddha there, while an emanation attains awakening here.

199. The difference between a buddha and bodhisattvas is similar to an ocean and [water in] an ox’s hoof print. Even the qualities of the three pure grounds cannot be measured or evaluated; what need to mention measures or descriptions of the qualities of total omniscience?

200. As the sky is to the earth, a hair’s tip can indeed be measured. The victorious one’s ocean of qualities cannot be described in an immeasurable eon.

201. In this way, traversing all the grounds, like iron transmuted by burning,
affictive states become nonconceptual mentation, the five sense consciousnesses become fivefold timeless awareness, the all-base transmutes into the ultimate kāya: nondissipating, unconditional great bliss.

202. Basic space and timeless awareness being not two, spontaneously present enlightened activity is uninterrupted: a great natural arising without limits.

203. With the prediction and proper compilation of sūtra and tantra, the words of this Stages in the Path of Illusion were arranged without contradiction or confusion in accordance with [my own] practice experience.

204. By that vast and immaculate virtue, may all beings pained by suffering, having trained well in the stages of illusion, attain the great lucid clarity.

The Essential Stainless Stages in the Path of Illusion by Niguma, the dākinī of timeless awareness, is complete. It was translated by the dākinī of timeless awareness herself and Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrö. Afterward, I, Khyungpo Naljor, received it and put it into practice.

mangalam
OUTLINE OF THE COMMENTARY

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STAGES IN THE PATH OF ILLUSION: THE COMMENTARY

Sanskrit title: Māyādhvanakramavṛtti-nāma
Tibetan Title: sGyu ma lam gyi rim pa'i ’grel pa zhes bya ba

I. Homage and Author’s Statement

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Vajradhara, ocean of victors,
Having bowed at your feet,
I write this clarification of Stages in the Path of Illusion
According to the teachings of sūtra and tantra.

These days one may ask what constitutes an unerring treatise that faithfully ascertains the meaning of the authentic word of the victorious ones. [It must consist of] the authorship, the source, the composition, the reason, the necessity, and the clarification of meaning.70

As for the first, the author is myself, one who dwells on the three pure grounds and has obtained authorization from Buddha Vajradhara. As for the source, it is taken from direct experience and many sūtras and tantras. The composition is Stages in the Path of Illusion. The reason was the inspiration to benefit sentient beings. The necessity is the release from the clutches of the devil, which is the fixation on all the phenomena of samsara and nirvana. The clarification of meaning is the homage that dispels obstacles, the promise to complete it, and the source texts that clarify the meaning.

1. I have inserted the headings in bold as a guide for the reader. I have also inserted the verse numbers in brackets that are keyed to the verse numbers in the source text. The verse numbers are only a rough guide as to which verses in the root text Niguma is commenting on; she does not comment on every verse in the root text (so there are some gaps), and she does not always comment on the verses in the order given in the source text (so the numbers are not always consecutive).
A. The Homage

[1] First of all, this precious jewel of the mind itself is worthy of homage since it is the source of all one's needs and desires once it has been polished by the two accumulations. The Great Brahmin [Saraha] said:

One's own mind is the seed of everything.
It bestows the fruits of our desires
For anything in existence or beyond;
Homage to the wish-fulfilling jewel of the mind.⁷¹

Alternately, resting the mind in the great bliss of unfixated lucid emptiness without the whole network of fixating views is the most sublime of all homage. It says in the Vajra Garland:

Like putting water into water,
or like putting butter into butter,
seeing one's own timeless awareness
by oneself—that is the homage here.⁷²

B. The Promise

[2] Placing myself in abject obedience⁷³ to all the truth-telling sages, I make this promise as if it were a royal decree.

C. The Source Texts That Fully Clarify the Meaning

[3–4] From the Actualization of Timeless Awareness Extensive Tantra:

Meditating on the illusion-like [nature]
Of illusion-like phenomena
in the illusion realm of phenomena, the all-base,
ilusion-like Buddhahood manifests.

There is no other realization than this
in the five paths and twelve grounds.
The meaning of base and its inherent fruition are inseparable in profundity and breadth. 74

What does that mean? [Primordial] unity is ascertained in the abiding base just as it is, the practice of unity is the path that is the nature of method, and actualized unity arises naturally as the result.

II. The Base
Regarding [primordial] unity as the base just as it is, there is the all-base and the four empowerments.

A. The All-Base
What does it mean to say “the abiding base just as it is”? [It refers to] the all-base consciousness, the afflictive mentation, the mental consciousness, and the five sense consciousnesses.

1. All-Base Consciousness
To classify that all-base consciousness further, there is the all-base as indeterminate awareness, the all-base as the seed of everything, the all-base where latent habitual patterns ripen, and how the all-base consciousness is presented.

a. All-Base Consciousness as Indeterminate Lucid Empty Pure Awareness
*The Fully Illuminated Essence Sūtra* states:

The all-base that is lucid, empty pure awareness is known as indeterminate. 75

That lucid, empty all-base is neither one nor many, but rather a unity. In the *Stainless Essence Sūtra* it says:
All-base, lucid, empty, indeterminate,
being neither one nor many,
is the unity of empty and nonempty.
At that time it is the seed of all phenomena.  

When the lucid, empty awareness is covered by the latent habitual patterns of karma, it is like the example of the waxing and waning moon. The all-base revolves in the constituent of sentient beings, but since it is without increase or decrease, it is naturally lucid clarity. It says in the Dense Array of Adornments:

This all-base of embodied beings
is covered by the habitual patterns of karma.
Like the light of the full moon
that illuminates millions of realms,
and hovers around the Supreme Mountain,
[yet it is] not destructible like real objects.
Likewise mind and consciousness and mentation
certainly revolve around the constituent of sentient beings
[but do not increase or diminish it].
It is always light by nature.

b. All-Base as the Seed of Everything

Virtuous, nonvirtuous and indeterminate latent habitual patterns accumulate upon the all-base and become seeds. From the same source:

All-base that is constituted by various forms
is the abode of all consciousness.
The all-base with its latent habitual patterns
is the seed of everything.

From that, the seeds of previous habitual patterns give rise to subsequent ones, as stated in Illuminated Essence:
Since the previous latent habitual patterns give birth to subsequent ones, it is the "seed.\textsuperscript{80}

How did those latent habitual patterns accumulate? \textit{Dense Array [of Adornments]} explains:

- Immature beings impute samsaric forms that are without beginning in that realm.
- Negative tendencies and karmic conditions accumulate latent habitual patterns beginninglessly.\textsuperscript{81}

How do these two—the beginningless all-base and the latent habitual patterns—cohabit? The \textit{Fully Illuminated Essence} states:

- Just as gold is to tarnish, the all-base is to habitual patterns.

Also it is like river stones and algae, as stated in \textit{Adornments}:

- Just as the stones in the depths of the water are completely enwrapped with algae, so the all-base consciousness is said to be stained by latent habitual patterns.\textsuperscript{82}

c. All-Base Is Where Latent Habitual Patterns Ripen

The subtle habitual patterns of virtue, nonvirtue, and neutrality that are overlaid on the all-base ripen from subtle into grosser [patterns] and then fully ripen into each of the six kinds [of ordinary beings]. It says in the \textit{Fully Illuminated Essence}:

- Virtue, nonvirtue, and in between; habitual patterns ripen into six kinds of cycling beings.
d. How All-Base Consciousness Is Presented

All-base is fully conscious in its empty-clarity, the nature of light. From [this] aspect of pure awareness, it is called “all-base consciousness.” It states in *Sections on Grounds*:\(^{84}\)

The clarity of all-base consciousness is fully conscious as nonconceptual consciousness. Consciousness itself in its clarity is without concept.\(^{85}\)

All-base consciousness does not conceive of external objects that are truly existent. Therefore, the scope of its frame of reference is unlimited. Moreover, since it becomes the basic support of all samsara and nirvana, it is not differentiated from total perfection (*rnam byang*). As it says in *Adornments*:

No different than total perfection,
all-base cannot be differentiated.
If it could be differentiated
then all-base would not be permanent.\(^{86}\)

And in *Illuminated Essence*:

Since the all-base becomes the base of everything,
it is therefore the base of total perfection.

Other sūtras iterate this as well. In them, the basic space of beginningless time is called “the base constituent” (*gzhi khams*). It says in the *Journey to Lanka*:\(^{87}\)

The basic space of beginningless time
is the base of all phenomena.
Because that exists, all beings
will attain nirvana.
Again, the all-base or buddha nature (bde bar gshegs pa'i snying po, sugatagarbha) is described in the Highest Continuum:

The [buddha nature] constituent is one that is beginningless. Because that exists, all beings will attain nirvana. 88

And again, in Adornments, the all-base or buddha nature is described thus:

The base of all the various grounds is buddha nature; virtue is also that. That nature is also termed all-base, which was taught by the tathāgata. But feeble-minded people do not understand [buddha] nature known as the all-base. 89

It is also called “the appropriating consciousness,” 90 “base of the body,” “base of all,” and “mind support,” as in the Sections on Grounds:

That consciousness thus grasps this body and takes possession of it and then it is also called “the appropriating consciousness.” Since it has become the base of this body, it is called “all-base.” Since it is indeterminate it is also called “a sentient being” because all the consciousnesses come about based on that. 91

There are limitless synonyms given in the sūtras, such as beginningless time (thog ma med pa'i dus), pure awareness (rig pa), basic space (dbyings), constituent (khams), all-base (kun gzhi), suchness (de bzhin nyid), realm of phenomena (chos dbying, dharma dhatu), heart (snying po), the body of dharma (chos sku, dharma kāya), unborn (ma skyes pa), all-base consciousness (kun gzhi'i rnam shes), the base support pervading sentient beings (sems can kun khyab gzhi rten), lucid emptiness (gsal stong), indeterminate (lung ma bstan), the house of the light of pure awareness (rig pa 'od kyi khang pa), the abiding base (gnas pa'i gzhi), and so forth. The mantra tradition also explains many synonyms, such as causal continuum (rgyut'i rgyud), base continuum (gzhi'i rgyud),
quintessence continuum (bcud kyi rgyud), supporting continuum (rten pa'i rgyud), all-continuum (kun gyi rgyud), beginningless continuum (thog ma med pa'i rgyud), core continuum (snying po'i rgyud), and so on.

To be learned in the secrets of the all-base and mind and consciousness without confusion about the meaning of the names that are thus explained endlessly in the sūtras and tantras as synonyms for all-base is to be unconfused about all Buddhist teachings and to fully master them. This is taught in the Sections on Grounds Sūtra.92

2. Afflictive Mentation

The mentation with afflictive states93 is that which fixates on the self with no reference to the all-base consciousness that is lucid, empty pure awareness, the nature of light.

3. Mental Consciousness

The mental consciousness (yid kyi rnam par shes pa) is so-called because it fixates on outer and inner phenomena, or objects. As it says in the Journey to Lanka:

Mind is the all-base consciousness.
The thought of “I” is the afflicted mentation.
Whatever it is that fixates on objective reality,
is called “mental consciousness.”94

4. Consciousnesses of the Five Senses

The consciousnesses of the five senses (sgo lin ga'i rnam par shes pa) are the eye consciousness that apprehends form, ear [consciousness] that apprehends sound, nose [consciousness] that apprehends smells, tongue [consciousness] that apprehends tastes, and the body [consciousness] that apprehends tactile sensations. Since it is aware and conscious of those objects in that way, it is it is held to be consciousness. Furthermore, mind [as] all-base is indeterminate. Mentation with afflictive states is unvirtuous. Mental consciousness is both virtuous
and unvirtuous. The *Journey to Lanka* states:

Mind is wholly indeterminate.
Mental [consciousness] becomes both
because when) consciousness arises,
it is virtuous and unvirtuous.

There are ten virtues of the mental [consciousness]. The nonvirtues of mental [consciousness] are six primary afflictive states and twenty secondary afflictive states. Therefore, this mental [consciousness] can be both virtuous and unvirtuous. The consciousnesses of the five doors of the sense organs are indeterminate. It is also taught this way in the *Sublime Absorption Sūtra*:

Mind is indeterminate.
The afflicted one is unvirtuous.
Mental [consciousness] is both virtue and vice.
The five sense doors are indeterminate.

**B. The Four Empowerments**

The basis of secret mantra is the four empowerments, as stated in the *Actualization of Timeless Awareness*:

The tantric basis is the four empowerments
because they are the basic support for creation and completion.

And from *Secret Dākini*:

Tantra is the essence of the four empowerments;
[both] the subject and the medium are tantra.

All of that was the exposition on how the base abides.
III. The Path

Next, to explain the nature of the methods or the path of unity\textsuperscript{101} with its corresponding signs. There is both a brief presentation and an extensive explanation.

A. Brief Presentation

The factors of enlightenment are presented as inseparable from illusion and dream. From the [Sūtra of the Perfection of Wisdom in] Eighteen Thousand [Lines]:

Children of gods, the applications of mindfulness are like dreams, like illusions. In the same way, the genuine renunciations and the supports of miraculous powers, the faculties, the powers, the branches of enlightenment, and the noble eightfold path are all like dreams, like illusions. Children of gods, the ten powers of a tathāgata are similarly like dreams, like illusions. Likewise, the four fearlessnesses, the four modes of specific genuine awareness, great love, great compassion, and the eighteen distinct qualities of a buddha are like dreams, like illusions.\textsuperscript{102}

The Array of Sacred Oaths Subsequent Tantra says:

Lord of Secrets, [Vajrapani], realize that the five sense support objects and all other categories—the palace residence and the resident forms of deities—are like illusions. Know that in the same way those residences and residents are also inseparable from the factors of enlightenment. Thus those residences and residents are also the nonduality of illusion and the factors of enlightenment. They are not divisible into two.\textsuperscript{103}
From those, the path becomes sublime. The paths and grounds are traversed through months and years of guru devotion. As said in the Actualization of Timeless Awareness:

Stages of the grounds and paths are traversed through months and years of guru devotion. If one is never apart from the guru's manifestation, then one will dwell together with all buddhas.  

The Array of Sacred Oaths says:

By six months of unwavering devotion the ground of Vajradhara is attained.

The same thing is expressed in the fifty sections of tantra. Furthermore, all appearance exists as the five families. By taking that as the path and meditating on it, appearances need not be dispelled by other methods. That is to adhere to the sacred oath of secret mantra. It says in the Array of Sacred Oaths of the Five Families:

Nirvirana Vishkambin, whoever wishes to abide by the sacred oaths of the five families should understand the shapes of all phenomena as the five insignia. Know the various colors as the five families. Similarly, the five elements, the five aggregates, the five afflictive states, and the variety of sentient beings should be known as the five families. Thus the various shapes, colors, elements, aggregates, afflictions, and beings are the five families without any duality; they are not divisible into two.

The form of the deity, whether created in ritual or self-arising, is creation phase in its appearing aspect and completion phase in its empty aspect; by nature an inseparable unity. From Actualization:

The deity's form that purifies the ordinary is creation phase from the aspect of its appearance
and completion phase from the aspect of its emptiness. This is taught in this way as inseparable.

And from the same source:

All things are appearance and emptiness inseparable. Creation and completion and their unity; there is not a single phenomenon that is not creation and completion. This is the way that enlightenment is taught.

[12] The clarity of the deity's appearance is taken on the path as nirmāṇakāya, the bliss as saṃbhogakāya, and the nonconceptuality as dharmakāya. From the Array of Sacred Oaths:

The clarity of phenomena is nirmāṇakāya. The nonconceptuality of that is dharmakāya. Because that freedom from concept is joyful, it is the saṃbhogakāya. This is the way enlightenment has been taught.

In this way, the nonconceptual wisdom of the clarity of all phenomena is the timeless awareness of the path that is like the first day of the new moon. The timeless awareness of the fruition is like the full moon. It says in the Vimalakirti Sūtra:

Whoever dwells in sublime meditative absorption [experiences] clarity without concept and comprehends vividness while not having conceptual thought. The timeless awareness of the path and fruition grows like the new moon becoming full.108

In this way, taking appearances and deities and the factors of enlightenment as inseparable from illusion on the path should be understood through mastering the victor's sūtras and tantras.
B. Extensive Explanation: The Five Paths

Experience and the five paths and ten grounds are inseparable from illusion.

[13] The essence of the path is that it is the way of combining calm abiding and higher insight. The literal explanation is that since one desires to arrive at supreme enlightenment it is called "path." The divisions are the Path of Accumulation, the Path of Application, the Path of Seeing, the Path of Meditation, and the Path of Consummation.

1. The Path of Accumulation

[14] The essence of the Path of Accumulation is to abandon vice and to earnestly undertake the practice of virtue. It is defined as the gathering of the accumulations for the purpose of realizing the nature of phenomena (chos nyid; dharmatā).

[15] There are three divisions: the lesser, intermediate, and greater paths of accumulation.

a. The Lesser Path of Accumulation

[16] Since carelessness and impaired mindfulness are the cause of downfalls, the meditative absorption on the lesser Path of Accumulation involves four direct applications of mindfulness. In the Sūtra of Bodhisattva Drdhramati, Drdhramati asks, "Bhagavan, how should one meditate on the four direct applications of mindfulness?" The Bhagavan answers:

[17] Drdhramati, you ask how a bodhisattva practices the direct application of mindfulness of the body in scrutinizing the body. You should examine individually the body's past limits, future limits, and present occurrence. Alas! Examining this body [that arises from] causes and conditions [one finds it] to be impermanent and changing, like an illusion. In this body there is nothing to call "mine." You must impart heart to this body that has no heart. What is that heart? It is
to accomplish and attain the Body of the Tathāgata. That is the direct application of mindfulness of the body.

[18] Drdhramati, you ask how one should practice the direct application of mindfulness of sensation to sensations. Any sensation is pertinent: pleasant sensations cause joy, painful sensations cause hatred, and those that are neither cause dullness. Train [in considering that] all of your sensations are like an illusion and without intrinsic nature. Teach the dharma so that all sentient beings can cut the continuity of sensation. For what reason? Realized sensation is blissful. Unrealized sensation becomes painful. Therefore, the wisdom that all the sensations in all mental images, mental engagements, and all designations of possible phenomena are like an illusion is the direct application of the mindfulness of sensation.

[19] Drdhramati, you ask how one should practice the direct application of mindfulness of scrutinizing the mind with the mind. Mind, once it arises, is perishing—it does not abide. It is not that once you have initially engendered mind it then abides. No matter what, it does not abide. Therefore mind does not see mind. Thus, the defining characteristic of the mind is that it is like an illusion. Since therefore there is no [real] defining characteristic, you should rest without fixation. That is the direct application of mindfulness to mind.

[20] Drdhramati, you ask how one should practice the direct application of mindfulness of phenomena by scrutinizing phenomena. Other than anything being emptiness, without attributes, and without aspirations, do not imagine that there is even a speck of existing phenomena. While looking at that phenomenon and abiding, by genuinely seeing the nature of phenomena, you are genuinely not actually seeing the nonphenomena. As for what is called “the direct application of mindfulness [to phenomena],” the Buddha said that all labels of the multiplicity of phenomena are mere names. You will not find anything inside or outside [corresponding to] names or phenomena. So freedom from
extremes and truly existent phenomena is the direct application of mindfulness to phenomena.

**b. The Intermediate Path of Accumulation**

[21] Furthermore, on the intermediate level of the Path of Accumulation, one comes to regard vice and nonvirtue as toxic since they are the cause of suffering. In order to renounce them, there are meditations on the four aspects of genuine renunciation. Drdhramati asked, “How should one regard the four aspects of genuine renunciation?” The Bhagavan answered:

[22–25] Drdhramati, you ask about the fourfold path of a bodhisattva. In order not to generate vice and unvirtuous factors that have not yet arisen, one develops determination, makes effort, initiates diligence, takes control of the mind, and fully engages in what is genuine. In order to totally renounce those vices and unvirtuous factors that have arisen, one develops determination and the rest, as before. In order to generate virtuous factors that have not yet arisen, one develops determination and the rest, as before. In order that the virtuous factors that have arisen may remain, continually increase, not diminish, and not be wasted, one develops determination and the rest, as before.

[26–27] Drdhramati, “vices and unvirtuous factors” are those things that are incongruous with ethical discipline, meditative absorption, and wisdom. The things that are incongruous with ethical discipline are impaired ethical discipline and all those factors that will cause it to become impaired. Those things that are incongruous with meditative absorption are whatever distracts the mind and impairs meditative absorption. Those things that are incongruous with wisdom are impaired views or holding one’s own views as supreme, factors that will obscure the genuine [view]. The mental engagement is to develop determination, make
effort, initiate diligence, take control of the mind, and fully engage in what is genuine in order to renounce unvirtuous factors. That is the first genuine renunciation.

[28] Furthermore, those so-called unvirtuous factors are called "desirous attachment," "angry aggression," and "unaware dullness," arising from any cause. The mental engagement is to pacify desire with [the meditation on] foulness, aggression with love, and stupidity with [meditation on] interdependence. By the distinct revelation of any afflictive emotion, it is "renounced." Whatever is renounced will no [longer] be found, and that is the second genuine renunciation.

[29] "To develop determination, make effort, initiate diligence, take control of the mind, and fully engage in what is genuine in order to generate whatever virtuous factors have not yet arisen" [means] determination in the immeasurable virtuous factors that are to be accomplished and putting that into practice through complete control of the mind. This is the root of all the roots of virtue, and it is the third genuine renunciation.

[30] In order that the virtuous factors that have arisen may remain, continually increase, not diminish, and not be wasted, one must dedicate all the roots of virtue to enlightenment. For what reason? By dedicating absolutely all the roots of virtue to omniscience without [applying them] to remaining in the three realms, then nothing whatsoever will be wasted. This is the fourth genuine renunciation.

c. The Greater Path of Accumulation

[31] Then, on the greater Path of Accumulation, which is the nature of meditative absorption, there are meditations on the four supports of miraculous ability. Drdhramati inquired, "Bhagavan, how should one regard the four supports of miraculous ability?" The Bhagavan answered:
Drḍhramati, there are four in the path of the bodhisattva. What are those four? The meditative absorption of determination that is the support of miraculous ability which has the volition of renunciation, the meditative absorption of diligence that is the support of miraculous ability which has the volition of renunciation, the meditative absorption of intention that is the support of miraculous ability which has the volition of renunciation, and the meditative absorption of conduct that is the support of miraculous ability which has the volition of renunciation.

[32] Drḍhramati, whoever [knows] all phenomena to be nonexistent and like illusion, without any frame of reference, free of fixation, [that person] is without fear or anticipation of fear [concerning phenomena], and is joyous and enthusiastic, which generates determination. That is the meditative absorption of determination.

[33] Drḍhramati, whoever possesses the determination of one-pointed faith abandons the endeavors of all worldly concerns and resists everything that causes sloth, all the while maintaining constant diligence. That is the meditative absorption of diligence.

[34] Drḍhramati, whoever, through possessing the uninterrupted effort of effort, has one-pointed intention concerning mind's intrinsic nature of lucid clarity, which has no established existence whatsoever or frame of reference—that is the meditative absorption of intention.

[35] Drḍhramati, whoever possesses one-pointed meditative absorption engages in all the four periods of moving, walking, sitting, and lying down without ever leaving that meditative absorption—that is the meditative absorption of [engaged] conduct.

[37–38] Furthermore, Drḍhramati, why are these called "supports of miraculous activity"? It is because those meditative absorptions cause one to renounce all mistaken factors, engage genuine virtue, arrive at a genuine place, and
progress. [In that sense] the nature of the meditative absorption is called “the support of miraculous activity.”

[39][Aspects of] the lesser Path of Accumulation that are partially concordant with liberation are that the special outlook of faith in the Jewels and the special faith from the distinct revelation of all phenomena arise in one’s stream of being. The conducive aspects of the intermediate [level] are the birth of diligence and enthusiasm with reference to the six perfections. The aspect conducive to liberation on the greater [Path of Accumulation] is the birth of frequent, short nonconceptual meditative absorptions in one’s stream of being.

[40–43] In this way, the signs of the four [aspects on the] three levels—or twelve [in all]—on the Path of Accumulation is that once the pure ethical discipline refrains the doors of the senses from any impropriety, one shuns even the slightest evil misdeed. Therefore one understands that all external hateful enemies come from oneself and that there is no self and no other. That which is renounced are the ten nonvirtues accumulated through the three poisons.

[44] The parameters of the Path of Accumulation are from the first thought of the preliminary determination until the arising of the timeless awareness of warmth.

2. The Path of Application

[45] The essence of the Path of Application is the unity of calm abiding and higher insight. The literal explanation is that since it applies to the Path of Seeing, it is called the “Path of Application” (sbyor lam). The divisions are four: warmth, peak, acceptance, and supreme dharma.

a. Warmth and Peak

The defining characteristic is [meditative] warmth since there is an early sign (snga ltas) of the fire of nonconceptual timeless awareness from the Path of Seeing. Alternatively, it is warmth since one realizes that all the afflictive states that have arisen are baseless or without intrinsic nature.
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

It is the timeless awareness of the peak [experience] since the roots of virtue increase, or since one has a slight realization without fixation of the clarity-emptiness of the factors of total perfection.

The meditation that mentally engages this are meditations on the five faculties at the time of warmth and peak. Concerning that, Drdhramati asked, “Bhagavan, what are the five faculties.” The Bhagavan answered:

Drdhamati, on the path of the bodhisattva there are five. What are those five? The faculty of faith, the faculty of diligence, the faculty of mindfulness, the faculty of meditative absorption, and the faculty of wisdom.

[46] What is the faculty of faith? This concerns the actual faith in the genuine view for a worldly person involved in cyclic existence. When such a person would not commit vice even to save their life for fear of the fully ripening consequences of action, and enters into the conduct of a bodhisattva, and harbors no doubts when hearing about emptiness, absence of characteristics, the powers, fearlessness, and other qualities of a buddha, [but experiences only] joy, then that faith is the faculty of faith.

[47] What is diligence? To generate the power of diligence in whatever dharma one has faith in is the faculty of diligence.

[48] What is the faculty of mindfulness? To [apply] the power of mindfulness to whatever dharmas were diligently gathered so that they are not lost is the faculty of mindfulness.

[49] What is the faculty of meditative absorption? To apply the power of undistracted, one-pointed meditative absorption to whatever dharma has been retained through the faculty of mindfulness of those dharmas is the faculty of meditative absorption.

[50] What is the faculty of wisdom? To examine those dharmas that have been retained through the faculty of mindfulness of whatever dharmas, and to thus know that
all dharmas are like illusions and totally nonexistent is the faculty of wisdom.

[64] In general there are twenty signs of abiding in the four [levels of] the Path of Application. First, the ten signs of warmth, according to Maitreyanātha:

1. Countering form and so on,
2. the expiration of doubts,
3. nonleisure,
4. dwelling in virtue oneself,
5. establishing others in it also,
6. [practicing] generosity and so on as support for others,
7. no hesitation about the profound meaning,
8. loving [actions] of the body, and so on, not accompanied by the five obscurations,
9. all latent tendencies conquered,
10. mindfulness, and awareness.

From the *Actualization of Timeless Awareness*:

Illusion-like direct experience
is in small part the warmth of timeless awareness.
Sometimes the teaching of timeless awareness of conduct
increases the direct experience.

[66] Four signs of the peak [experience] are taught by Maitreya:

Clean clothing and such,
parasites and such not occurring on the body,
mind free of deception, assuming abstinence,
and eliminating avarice.

Even in dreams all phenomena
are seen to be like dreams, and so forth;
signs of arrival at the peak of application.
They were held to be twelve.
From the *Latter Ocean Tantra*:

When once a dream is recognized
the yogin is blissful for a fortnight.
Gods, nāgas, and gandharvas make offerings and praise.
Heroes and dākinīs actually gather 'round.
It is the ship of liberation from the sea of bad existence.126

b. Acceptance and Supreme Dharma

[67] Then there are meditations on the five powers on the [levels of] acceptance and supreme dharma. Drdhramati asked, “Bhagavan, what are the five powers?” And the Bhagavan answered:

Drdhramati, there are five on the path of the bodhisattva.
What are those five? They are the power of faith, the power of diligence, the power of mindfulness, the power of meditative absorption, and the power of wisdom.

[68] What is the power of faith? It is to be unintimidated by anyone at all with regard to that in which one has faith and one-pointed interest. [For instance], if a devil came and transformed into a buddha right in front of you and said, “Yours is not the [true] dharma,” and [tried to] convert or avert you, you would not lose [that faith] or [try to] escape. Moreover, [even] the four great elements that can change things could not divest you of that power that is focused in the power of faith. That is the power of faith.

[69] What is the power of diligence? Whoever has undertaken diligent [application] and through the force of the power of steadfast adherence to whatever virtuous dharma it is, maintains such power of diligence until that goal is achieved, so that no one at all would be able to turn one away from it—that is the power of diligence.

[70] What is the power of mindfulness? It is an undistracted mind in the direct application of mindfulness to any
and all phenomena. That is, the power of mindfulness that no afflictive emotion can overwhelm. If that mindfulness is not defeated by afflictive emotion, then it is the power of mindfulness.

[71] What is the power of meditative absorption? With conscientious mindfulness that is not overwhelmed by afflictive emotion, wherever one dwells is isolated from busyness. One does not get involved in the notion of fixating on all those objects of attachment and aggression, such as form and so on. Being totally nonconceptual about any phenomenon is the attainment of the power of isolation from busyness. That is the power of meditative absorption.

[72] What is the power of wisdom? Fully knowing all mundane and supramundane phenomena through the power of wisdom, that which liberates worldly beings from cyclic existence arises from the power of wisdom and timeless awareness. Therefore it is called “the power of wisdom.”

[73–74] Why are they called five powers? As the five faculties stabilize, their power increases, so they are called “powers” (stobs).

[75–76] The signs of acceptance, according to Maitreya:

Proceeding by possessing the nature of phenomena, seeking hell for the sake of sentient beings, impervious to others’ misguidance, and as to devils expounding alien paths, realizing that they are “devils.”

[77–79] From the Questions of Four Girls:

Having stayed alone in the forest and taken up the practice of phenomena as illusion, the various dreams are known as dreams and one abides in acceptance, free of bad existence.
The single sign of supreme dharma
is conduct that pleases Buddha.

Through those twenty signs
abiding in warmth and peak
with acceptance, and supreme dharma,
one will not turn back from perfect enlightenment. 129

Free of all worldly attachment,
whoever possesses the altruistic mind
pleases the victorious ones
like no other dharma. 130

The eliminations are the same as before: [the ten unvirtuous actions accumulated through the three poisons.] The parameters are from the timeless awareness of warmth up until supreme dharma.

3. The Path of Seeing

Now I will explain the Path of Seeing. The essence of the Path of Seeing is that the meaning of the four noble truths lacks a frame of reference. The literal explanation is that the Path of Seeing is the direct seeing of the nature of phenomena that was not seen before.

There are four divisions: suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path. The defining characteristics of the divisions are to see suffering and the other truths as emptiness, which is the acceptance of the knowing of phenomena. 131 Additionally, the subsequent moment of knowing sees that emptiness in an expansive way. It is that seeing of the nature of phenomena that is the Path of Seeing. The realization of thinking that both the acceptance and knowing of phenomena are the infallible causes of attaining enlightenment is the acceptance of subsequent knowing of the four truths. The arising of decisive certainty that such
realization is unmistaken is the acceptance of the subsequent knowing of the phenomena of the four truths. That is seeing with the timeless awareness of the Path of Seeing. Those are differentiated by four degrees of [seeing] the extent of the nature of phenomena: lesser, greater, still greater, and much greater.

[84] The mental engagement of the meditative absorption [involves] the seven branches of enlightenment. In the Questions of Matisambhava Sūtra*, Matisambhava* asks, “Bhagavan, how should one regard the seven branches of enlightenment?” The Bhagavan responds:

[85] Matisambhava, since one neither recollects nor deliberates anything, all phenomena are empty of their own characteristics. To see all phenomena as in essence nonexistent is the genuine mindfulness branch of enlightenment.

[86] Matisambhava, since one [sees that] there is no established existence to virtue, nonvirtue, or neutrality, all designations of phenomena have no frame of reference and are illusion-like. This is the revealing phenomena branch of enlightenment.

[87] Matisambhava, since one totally eradicates concepts about phenomena, there is actual realization of the path without accepting or discarding the phenomena of nirvana or the three realms, freedom from fixation, enthusiasm, nondiscursive interest, and sustained effort. This is the genuine diligence branch of enlightenment.

[88] Matisambhava, since one totally eradicates all joy and sorrow, joy about habitual phenomena is not aroused, and intense afflictive states are removed. This is the genuine joy branch of enlightenment.

[89] Matisambhava, since one has not even an atom of reference point to any phenomenon that one references, the extreme physical and mental agility [with regard to] all phenomena causes the mind to abide in meditative absorption without obscuration or reference point. This is the genuine extreme agility branch of enlightenment.
Matisambhava, since one totally eradicates or realizes the fixation on all phenomena, the mind does not reference anything at all. When the mind rests in equipoise on anything, the realization of phenomena occurs. But if the mind does [not] rest in equipoise, it is not it. And if the mind rests in equipoise that is not the equipoise of awakening, it is not it. In this way, the placement in equipoise free of fixation is the genuine meditative absorption branch of enlightenment.

Matisambhava, one does not abide in phenomena whatsoever, nor depend [on them], nor attach [to them], nor bond [with them]. Mind does not fixate on phenomena at all—happy, sad, or in between. Without being carried away by all the mundane phenomena, once one is possessed of the equanimity that is genuinely not preoccupied with all phenomena, it is a joy. This is the genuine equanimity branch of enlightenment.

Matisambhava, this is how you should regard the seven branches of enlightenment.

Thus by the power of that absorption, one directly sees the nature of phenomena, and when endowed with the clairvoyant powers, knows heartrending joy. Ever pure in conduct, one can transform this body for beings and give up one's life for dharma. The intelligent [experience] this on the Path of Seeing; it is explained as the sign of a nonreturner.

In addition to that, twelve hundred qualities will also develop.

As soon as one attains that ground one is free of five fears: lack of sustenance, death, criticism, lower realms, and troublesome retinue. Free of those fears, one finds nothing causing anxiety. This is because the self does not dwell there.

One should understand the freedom from these five fears.
There are one hundred and twelve eliminations on the first Path of Seeing. In particular, the six imputed \(\text{or acquired}\) afflictive states. These are ignorance, desire, pride, anger, doubt, and \(\text{mistaken}\) views.

There are five views \(\text{to be eliminated}\): the view of the transitory collection \(\text{as a self}\), fixation on extremes, perverse views, holding views as paramount, and holding one’s ethical discipline and deliberate conduct \(\text{as paramount}\). Adding those five views to the five nonviews of ignorance and so on makes the ten afflictive states. In the desire realm, those ten afflictive states of views \(\text{and nonviews}\) occur \(\text{in relation to}\) each of the four truths, so that there are forty. In the higher realms—\(\text{the form and formless realms}\)—\(\text{because they are}\) without anger, there are nine \(\text{afflictive states}\) connected with each of the four truths. This makes nine times four, or thirty-six, for the form realm and nine times four, or thirty-six, for the formless realm; seventy-two in all. Adding the forty of the desire realm to that, we get the one hundred and twelve factors that are eliminated on the Path of Seeing.

This is how they are eliminated: The greatest of the great afflictive states to be eliminated on the Path of Seeing are like a great darkness, and the least timeless awareness dispels them like a candle. Again, as above, they are eliminated by the four truths and by the realization of no-self, which eliminates them all at once.

The way it is viewed in the truth of Mantra is taught in the Actualization of Timeless Awareness:

The great bliss of action-mudra
releases the channel knots of fixation on valid existence in daytime,
and releases the channel knots of confusion at nighttime.
This is the way enlightenment is taught.

And from the same source:

The great bliss of the mudra’s bliss,
direct seeing of the nature of phenomena,
occurring through the guru’s kindness.
This is known as the primary truth.
[95–99] From the *Array of Sacred Oaths*:

By day the illusions of appearance-emptiness and at night the deity’s dream forms arise naturally. When one remains focused on that, it is the *sambhogakāya* of the victors. In a moment nirvana is attained in the intermediate state; what need to mention abiding there continuously. It is the same with illusion and lucid clarity. One need not speak of anything else.

The *Illuminated Timeless Awareness Latter Tantra* states:

Any pure realms of the ten directions are refined by the array of bodies in dream. The qualities of the first ground come from that and nothing else.¹⁴⁴

[108] Again from the same work:

If, in daytime and in dreams, the habitual tendencies of confusion are not purified, one does not abide even on the eighth ground; no need to mention the Lotus-endowed?¹⁴⁵

And in the *Sūtra of Brahmānanda* *, it says:

The qualities of the grounds and paths should be realized during the occasion of dreaming.¹⁴⁶

[111] The parameters are from the supreme dharma [at the end of the Path of Application] through the Path of Seeing.
4. The Path of Meditation

[112] Now I will explain the Path of Meditation. The essence of it is totally nonconceptual timeless awareness. The literal explanation is that [it is called] “the Path of Meditation” (sgom lam) because after one has seen the truth of the nature of phenomena [on the Path of Seeing], one must become familiar (goms) with it.\textsuperscript{147}

The divisions are the nine grounds, such as the [second] ground Stainless and so on.\textsuperscript{148} The mental engagement of meditative absorption [involves] the eightfold path of the noble ones.

Matisambhava asked, “Bhagavan, how should one regard the eightfold noble path of a bodhisattva?” And the Bhagavan answered:

[113] Matisambhava, the equality of all phenomena is the genuine view. So the view [that there exists] the self or the person or the sentient being or the life-force or emptiness does not produce the genuine view. To be free of all views, from the least reference point of a view up through nirvana, whether superior, average, or inferior—that is the genuine view.

[114] Matisambhava, whatever thought [one has, one should] eliminate thoughts. One who is skilled in the higher insight that incorporates calm abiding eliminates thoughts of good and bad phenomena, thorough thinking, and all discursive thought. Not thinking of anything, no thoughts at all, no thoughts even about what is genuine—that is genuine thought.

[115] Matisambhava, whatever words [one utters should] not hurt oneself or others. They should not cause afflictive states in oneself, nor cause afflictive states in others. Words that induce the certain realization\textsuperscript{149} of the equality of all phenomena—that is genuine speech.

[116] Matisambhava, any action that is exhausted with no more to accomplish is a completed action. That is, action
that pacifies afflictive states, that is not done to inflame
afflictive states, any action that is free of afflictive states, and
is not done to arouse afflictive states, free of all complete
actions that are positive, negative, or mixed and that are not
accomplished—that is genuine completed action.

[117] Matisambhava, not to accumulate afflictive states is
genuine livelihood. That is any livelihood that does not hurt
oneself or hurt others and that achieves the purpose of the
dharna—that is genuine livelihood.

[118] Matisambhava, effort is for accomplishing the
dharna that is profound, free of elaboration, and uncom­
pounded. Real, genuine persistence that includes mental
attention, determination, diligence, and being undaunted
in that purpose is genuine effort.

[119] Matisambhava, any mindfulness should afford no
opportunity to all the afflictive states. That includes the
mindfulness of the branches of enlightenment [such as the
direct application of mindfulness to] the mind, mindfulness
of the immeasurables, and mindfulness of the six perfections.
Any mindfulness that affords no opportunity to the devil,
any mindfulness that does not turn into the wrong path,
mindfulness that is like a sentinel that allows no opportu­
nity for all of the unvirtuous phenomena of the mind and
mental events—that is genuine mindfulness.

[120] Matisambhava, from the equality of the self comes
the equality of all phenomena. Since the self is totally pure,
all phenomena are totally pure. From the emptiness of the
self comes the emptiness of all phenomena. One genu­
inely enters into that equipoise. Any genuine meditative
absorption knows everything through the wisdom of mind
moments. The all-knowing timeless awareness [attains]
actual genuine perfect buddhahood—that is the genuine
meditative absorption.

Matisambhava, that is how one should regard that eight­
fold noble path of the bodhisattva.
The signs that occur after one has mastered the profound meaning and become familiarized and stabilized are that one comes to possess force and miraculous powers. From the second through the tenth grounds twelve hundred unimaginable qualities arise.

The factors that are eliminated on the Path of Meditation are divided into six latent afflicting states that one is born with. What are those six? They are ignorance, desire, anger, pride, the view of the transitory collection [as a self], and the view of fixating on extremes. For the desire realm, if we divide each of those six into great, medium, [and small, and each of those in turn into great, medium, and small, such as greater great, greater medium, and so on], then there are nine [divisions] in each. The timeless awareness that eliminates them is also divided into nine [aspects] of great, medium, [and small]. So nine [divisions] of six makes fifty-four.

In the form realm anger has been discarded, so for the [remaining] ones, the five afflicting states of the first meditative stability each have nine divisions that are eliminated by nine timeless awarenesses (great, medium, and so on). Nine times five is forty-five. In the second, third, and fourth [meditative stabilities], there are forty-five each, making one hundred and eighty.

In the formless realm also there are forty-five for each of the [realms]: forty-five in the perception-field of Infinite Space, and in the same way for the other three fields—Infinite Consciousness, Neither Presence nor Absence, and Nothing Whatsoever—there are forty-five each, totaling one hundred and eighty. In that way, two [times] one hundred and eighty is three hundred and sixty. Adding the fifty-four of the desire realm on top of that makes four hundred and fourteen eliminations on the Path of Meditation.

5. The Path of Consummation

Now the explanation of the Path of Consummation. It states in the Sutra of Teaching the Unimaginable:

[124] Child of a good family, what is the Path of Consummation? In the swift attainment of unsurpassable
enlightenment, if no other phenomena interfere, then it is called “the path without obstacle.”

[125–26] What is that, child of a good family? Once all the obscurations have been eliminated by the path in which one meditates, the very most subtle of subtle obscurations in the last of the continuum of ten grounds are conquered by the unhindered ability of the vajra-like meditative absorption. 155

[127] And from the Highest Intention Tantra:

Unfixated clarity-emptiness great bliss, uncompounded naturally arising luminous clarity, the bliss of the secret stamens, 156 comes from the force of blessings.

Like torchlight illuminating gold coins in a dungeon, the most subtle of subtle obscurations are conquered by the ability of natural purity and natural freedom. This is the secret sphere of activity. 157

What is that buddha that is purified of cognitive obscurations in that way? The Highest Timeless Awareness Tantra says:

[128] The uncompounded basic space itself and timeless awareness are not two. The complete purity of emotional and cognitive [obscurations] is the dharmakāya endowed with two purities. [129] Without change, birth, or characteristics, all buddhas are dharmakāya. [130] There is no constructing or dwelling, yet the two kāyas arise naturally from the causes and conditions of the former thought of awakening, accumulation of merit, aspirations, and creation phase.
[131] In the palace of Akaniṣṭha, Vairochana sāmbhogakāya Vajradhara fully possesses the excellent major and minor marks.

[132] The stainless kāya of appearance-emptiness is beyond examples:
the perfect inseparability of bliss-emptiness free of attachment. Buddhas surrounded by bodhisattvas proclaim with the natural sounds of the unborn, the dharma of inseparable bliss-emptiness without limits.

[133] The place, time, teacher, retinue, and so forth of nirmāṇakāya arise naturally to tame whomever, taking forms that tame whomever is to be tamed.

[134] They ripen and liberate [beings], faultless like the lotus, or like a wish-fulfilling tree or jewel.158

[135] Again, from the Highest Intention [Tantra]:

Creation phase is characterized by bliss.
In that the two [form] kāyas develop.
Dharmakāya comes from completion phase.
It is taught in this inseparable manner.

[136–37] Sāmbhogakāya arises or comes from dharmakāya, and nirmāṇakāya from sāmbhogakāya. It says in the Sublime Golden Light Sūtra:

For example, lightning occurs based on the empty sky. [The appearance of light is based on the lightning]. In the same way, the merit-kāya159 appears based on the dharmakāya, and the nirmāṇakāya appears based on the merit-kāya.160

There is this enumeration of three kāyas that in essence are not three. In short, the rainbow-like form kāyas arise in the sky-like dharmakāya, knowing without concepts the state of absolutely all that is to be known, knowing everything vividly without thought. It is sky-like dharmakāya endowed with the beautiful bodies of the form kāyas.
The essence of dharmakāya is threefold: it is uncompounded, spontaneously present, and those [traits] cannot be affected by outside conditions. The essence of rupakāya is also threefold: it has knowledge, love, and ability. In that vein, Maitreya said:

Spontaneously present and uncompounded,  
and not realized through external conditions,  
it has wisdom, love, and ability.¹⁶¹

If you are interested in further elaborations—such as the way the four kāyas are established from the five timeless awarenesses, and [how] the four kāyas come from creation and completion and from the two accumulations, and how the four kāyas are established from the four empowerments—then these should be learned from the many sūtras and tantras.

[138–39] Here, [we are concerned with] teaching the experience of one-pointed practice and summarizing without contradiction the intent of the sūtras and tantras. There is no spare time to know the unreachable limits of everything to be known and all approaches.

[140] In the Journey to Lanka it states:

For as long as ideas exist,  
there is no reaching the end of vehicles.  
When ideas are no more,  
there is no vehicle, and no expression.¹⁶²

[143] The parameters of the Path of Consummation are from the last continuum of the tenth ground through the four kāyas with their enlightened activities.

6. The Ten Grounds

[144] Now I will explain the progression of the grounds.  
[145] The essence of the grounds is supramundane higher insight free of duality.
The literal explanation is that since they are the support for all qualities or the bases for progressing higher, they are called “[progressive] grounds” (sa, bhūmi). It says in the Ornament of the Sūtras:

Since measureless elementals are [made] fearless, [and] those measureless ones are endowed with progress and go higher, they are therefore held to be “grounds.”

The divisions are ten grounds, such as Very Joyful. The defining characteristics of each of the ten grounds [are described] in Sublime Golden Light:

Child of a good family, for what reason is the first ground called “Very Joyful” (rab tu dga' ba)? It is because it is the first time that the supramundane mind that was not seen before becomes manifest, and thus one attains excellent meaningful thoughts. [Becoming very greatly joyful], the first ground is called “Very Joyful.”

The second ground is called “Stainless” (dri ma med pa) because the stains of the subtle downfalls and all of the mistakes and faults in ethical discipline are purified.

The third ground is called “Illuminating” (’od byed pa) because there is immeasurable timeless awareness of the absence of characteristics and absence of mental engagement, and the light radiance of the timeless awareness of meditative absorption is incapable of being moved or outshined by anything at all, and because one abides in the retention of recollecting what was heard.

The fourth ground is called “Radiant” (’od ’phro ba) because that fire of timeless awareness burns up all afflicitive states and the firelight of meditation on the factors of enlightenment radiates [and grows].

The fifth ground is called “Difficult to Overcome” (sbyang dka' ba) because of the difficulty of mastering the methods of meditation and sublime timeless awareness,
and because of taming the difficult-to-tame afflictive states that are to be eliminated on the Paths of Seeing and Meditation.

[152] The sixth ground is called “Manifest” (mgon du gyur pa or mgon sum pa) because all habitual phenomena become manifest without interruption, that is, all mental engagement in the absence of characteristics is made manifest.

[153] The seventh ground is called “Gone Far” (ring du song ba) because the nondissipating phenomena are uninterrupted and with the mental engagement in the absence of characteristics there is long-lasting meditation in the absorption of total liberation, totally pure and unhindered. Also because one has gone far from the shrāvākas and pratyekabuddhas.167

[154] The eighth ground is called “Immovable” (mi gyo ba) because of attaining mastery of the meditation on mental engagement in the absence of characteristics whereby the afflictive states have no power to move it.

[155] The ninth ground is called “Excellent Intelligence” (legs pa'i blo gros) because of gaining the power to teach dharma in all its aspects and, being without misdeeds, there is unhindered attainment of extremely expansive intellect.

[156] The tenth ground is called “Cloud of Dharma” (chos kyi sprin) because cloud-like great timeless awareness pervades throughout the sky-like dharmakāya.168

The early signs of the ten grounds are described in the Sūtra of Teaching the Unimaginable:

Child of a good family, the early sign of the first bodhisattva ground is that the bodhisattva, the great being, sees the world systems of the three thousand-fold universe of world systems completely filled with ten million [times] one hundred thousand billion treasures. Child of a good family, such is a bodhisattva, a great being.

Child of a good family, the early sign of the second
bodhisattva ground is that the bodhisattva, the great being, sees the three thousand-fold universe of world systems as if in the palm of the hand, fully adorned with ten million times one hundred thousand billion multitudes of jewels. Child of a good family, … ([the same formula] is applied to the following as well).

The early sign of the third ground is to see oneself as a hero bearing weapons and solid armor and defeating all opposition.

The early sign of the fourth ground is to see various flowers manifestly strewn over the all-inclusive great earth mandala by all the wind mandalas in the four directions.

The early sign of the fifth ground is to see women adorned with all of the ornaments attaching garlands of tsampaka flowers \(^{169}\) to their heads.

The early sign of the sixth ground is to see a bathing pond with four steps and golden sand freely flowing around, completely filled with water possessing the eight kinds of purity \(^{170}\) and adorned with kumuta and utpala flowers and white lotuses, and to see oneself delightfully enjoying it.

The early sign of the seventh ground is to see sentient beings in the abyss of hell to the right and left, and to see oneself bringing them back without damage or impairment.

The early sign of the eighth ground is to see, on [one’s own] two shoulders, the king of the beasts, the maned lion bearing a crown, frightening all the little wild animals.

The early sign of the ninth ground is to see the wheel-wielding universal monarch completely surrounded by ten million billion people. Looking in front, one sees them holding a white parasol hung with various jewels above his head.

The early sign of the tenth ground is to see the Body of the Tathāgata in a fathom of light of a color like gold, completely surrounded by ten million billion brahmās. Looking in front, one sees [the Tathāgata] teaching the dharma.

Those ten are the early signs of the bodhisattva grounds...
that [are experienced] by the bodhisattvas, the great beings. 171

Thus it is taught here, and similarly in the Sublime Golden Light.

[157–59] As to which perfection is achieved on which ground, it further states:

Child of a good family, a bodhisattva on the first ground achieves the perfection of generosity. In that way, the second-ground bodhisattva achieves ethical discipline, the third patience, the fourth diligence, the fifth meditative stability, the sixth wisdom, the seventh skill in methods, the eighth aspirations, the ninth power, and, child of a good family, the bodhisattva dwelling on the tenth bodhisattva ground achieves the perfection of timeless awareness. 172

[160–65] The defining characteristics of the ten perfections are taught in the Flower Ornament Sūtra:

The perfection of generosity is that while seeking the timeless awareness of buddhahood, one completely dedicates all roots of virtue to sentient beings. Ethical discipline is to thoroughly pacify all anguish of afflictive emotion. Patience is to be without malice toward sentient beings because love and compassion were initially developed. Diligence is [to promise] never to be satisfied 173 in one’s quest for more and more virtuous factors. Meditative stability is to be in possession of a path with no regrets concerning the actualization of omniscient timeless awareness. Wisdom is the actualization of what is naturally unborn. Skillful method is the accomplishment of the immeasurable timeless awareness of the victors. Aspiration is to actually accomplish the timeless awareness that one has envisioned. Power is when all the opposing forces and all the evil hordes do not interfere at all with the
path. The perfection of timeless awareness is the realization of [the genuine state of] all phenomena just as they are.  

The meditative absorptions, as stated above, are the seven branches of the bodhisattvas of the first ground, and the eightfold path of the noble ones from the second through the tenth grounds.

What is eliminated are the [previously taught] Path of Seeing eliminations and Path of Meditation eliminations.

[166–69] The obscurations of twenty [kinds of] delusion are as follows:

Child of a good family, two kinds of delusion obscure the first ground:

1. Delusion of overt attachment to phenomena and individuals as bearing characteristics and
2. delusion of the fear of the afflptive states of samsara and bad states.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the second ground:

3. Delusion of confusion over subtle downfalls and
4. delusion of the arising of various actions and behaviors.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the third ground:

5. Delusion of desiring to obtain what was not obtained and
6. delusion about the excellent attainment of sublime mental retention.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the fourth ground:

7. Delusion of craving the joyful experience of equipoise and
8. delusion of craving the total purity of phenomena.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the fifth ground:

9. Delusion of extreme weariness with samsara and
10. delusion of overt dedication to nirvana.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the sixth ground:

11. Delusion about the manifestation of the movement of [karmic] formations and
(12) delusion about the manifestation of coarse characteristics. Two kinds of delusion obscure the seventh ground:

(13) Delusion about the manifestation of subtle marks and
(14) delusion about the absence of mental engagement in the lack of characteristics.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the eighth ground:

(15) Delusion about purposefully seeking the absence of characteristics and
(16) delusion about attaining power over the fixation on characteristics.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the ninth ground:

(17) Delusion of not becoming skilled in the immeasurable teachings and immeasurable words and letters of any dharma and
(18) delusion of not attaining the power of confidence.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the tenth ground:

(19) Delusion of not attaining the total mastery of manifest great knowing and
(20) delusion of not becoming skilled in the subtle [meaning] of the ultimate, and so on.

Two kinds of delusion obscure the ground of buddhahood:

(1) Delusion of the cognitive obscuration about all the extremely subtle spheres of activity and
(2) delusion about taking bad states of extremely subtle afflictive states.

Which unobscured realizations are realized on which grounds is taught in the Sūtra of Kumarāprabha*:

Child of a good family, one who dwells on the first ground realizes the meaning of the realm of phenomena pervading everywhere. The second ground realizes the meaning of the sublime stainlessness of the realm of phenomena. The third ground realizes that natural luminous clarity is concordant with the realm of phenomena. The fourth ground realizes
the meaning of complete lack of fixation to all phenomena. The fifth ground realizes the meaning of undifferentiated nature since all phenomena are one in the realm of phenomena. The sixth ground realizes the meaning of the lack of true existence of all afflictive states and discursive thoughts. The seventh ground realizes the meaning of no weariness with samsara and that all phenomena are without characteristics. The eighth ground realizes the meaning of pure realms and freedom from thought patterns. The ninth ground realizes the meaning of unimpeded immeasurable dharma, letters, and confidence. The tenth ground realizes the meaning of mastery over enlightened activity. The eleventh ground realizes the dharmakāya that is the thorough transformation of the all-ground, the sāmbhogakāya that is the thorough transformation of the five sense consciousnesses, the nirmāṇakāya that is the thorough transformation of meditation by various concepts of afflictive states, the excellence of their inseparability and freedom from all extremes, and the highest perfect pure meaning.

From the Sūtra of Kumarāprahba:

[172] Kumarāprahba asked, “Bhagavan, what are the signs that are seen by the bodhisattvas who dwell on the grounds?”

The Bhagavan replied, “Child of a good family, these are the signs of one who dwells on the first ground of a bodhisattva: The [bodhisattva] in a fraction of a second, at will can (1) attain one hundred meditative absorptions, and (2) enter into their equipoise, (3) see one hundred buddhas, (4) completely know their blessings, (5) shake one hundred world realms, (6) travel to one hundred buddha realms, (7) completely illuminate one hundred world realms, (8) fully mature one hundred sentient beings, (9) remain for one hundred eons, (10) penetrate one hundred eons of the past and one hundred eons of the future, ¹⁷⁷ (11) open one
hundred dharma doors, and (12) fully display one hundred bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of one hundred bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching. Having exerted diligence, they are possessed of these very qualities.

Attaining this ground, one is free of five fears—lack of sustenance, death, criticism, bad states, and [troublesome] retinue—because one knows their nature. As soon as the ground is attained, one knows the feeling of crying for joy, and can give up one's life for the dharma; these arise in the intelligent. ¹⁷⁸

[173–74] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the second ground in a fraction of a second can attain one thousand absorptions and enter into their equipoise, see one thousand buddhas, completely know their blessings, shake up one thousand world realms, travel to one thousand buddha realms, completely illuminate one thousand world realms, fully mature one thousand sentient beings, remain for one thousand eons, penetrate one thousand eons of the past and one thousand eons of the future, open one thousand dharma doors, fully display one thousand bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of one thousand bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching.

[175–76] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the third ground in a fraction of a second can attain one hundred thousand absorptions, see one hundred thousand buddhas, completely know their blessings, shake up one hundred thousand world realms, travel to one hundred thousand buddha realms, completely illuminate one hundred thousand world realms, fully mature one hundred thousand sentient beings, remain for one hundred thousand eons, penetrate one hundred thousand eons of the past and
one hundred thousand eons of the future, open one hundred thousand dharma doors, fully display one hundred thousand bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of one hundred thousand bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching.

[177-78] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the fourth ground in a fraction of a second can attain one billion absorptions and enter into their equipoise, see one billion buddhas, completely know their blessings, shake up one billion world realms, travel to one billion buddha realms, completely illuminate one billion world realms, fully mature one hundred thousand sentient beings, remain for one hundred thousand eons, penetrate one billion eons of the past and one billion eons of the future, open one billion dharma doors, fully display one billion bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of one billion bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching.

[179-80] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the fifth ground in a fraction of a second can attain ten billion absorptions and enter into their equipoise, see ten billion buddhas, completely know their blessings, shake up ten billion world realms, travel to ten billion buddha realms, completely illuminate ten billion world realms, fully mature ten billion sentient beings, remain for ten billion eons, penetrate ten billion eons of the past and ten billion eons of the future, open ten billion dharma doors, fully display ten billion bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of ten billion bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching.

[181-82] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the sixth ground in a fraction of a second at will can attain one trillion absorptions and enter into their equipoise, see one trillion buddhas, completely know their blessings, shake up one trillion world realms, travel to one trillion buddha realms, completely illuminate one trillion world realms, fully mature one trillion sentient beings, remain for
one trillion eons, penetrate one trillion eons of the past and one trillion eons of the future, open one trillion dharma doors, fully display ten billion bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of one trillion bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching.

[183–84] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the seventh ground in a fraction of a second at will can attain ten sextillion\(^{179}\) absorptions and enter into their equipoise, see ten sextillion buddhas, completely know their blessings, shake up ten sextillion world realms, travel to ten sextillion buddha realms, completely illuminate ten sextillion world realms, fully mature ten sextillion sentient beings, remain for ten sextillion eons, penetrate ten sextillion eons of the past and ten sextillion eons of the future, open ten sextillion dharma doors, fully display ten sextillion bodies, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of ten sextillion bodhisattvas who are each perfectly teaching.

[185–87] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the eighth ground in a fraction of a second at will can attain absorptions equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds\(^{180}\) and enter into their equipoise, see buddhas equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, completely know their blessings, shake up world realms equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, travel to buddha realms equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, completely illuminate realms equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, fully mature sentient beings equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, remain for eons equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, penetrate eons of the past equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds and eons of the future equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, open dharma doors equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, fully display bodies equal to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of bodhisattvas equal
to the atoms in one hundred trillion worlds who are each perfectly teaching.

[188–90] Child of a good family, the bodhisattva who dwells on the ninth ground in a fraction of a second at will can fully attain absorptions equal to the atoms in one million infinite\textsuperscript{\textit{81}} buddha realms and enter into their equipoise, see buddhas equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, completely know their blessings, shake up world realms equal to the atoms in one million infinite worlds, travel to buddha realms equal to the atoms in one million infinite [buddha realms], completely illuminate world realms equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, fully mature sentient beings equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, remain for eons equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, penetrate eons of the past equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms and eons of the future equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, open dharma doors equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, fully display bodies equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms, each body completely surrounded by an entourage of bodhisattvas equal to the atoms in one million infinite buddha realms who are each perfectly teaching.

[191–96] Child of a good family, one who dwells on the tenth ground, even from a single tathāgata, in a fraction of a second accepts the great appearance of dharma, and the great light of dharma, and the immeasurable great cloud of dharma. Completely takes it, completely grasps it, and owns it. Tathāgatas from two and three up until an immeasurable [number] in a fraction of a second attain acceptance of the great appearance of dharma, and the great light of dharma, and the immeasurable great cloud of dharma. Completely take it, completely grasp it, and own it. Why is that? From the sky-like dharmakāya one is endowed with unimaginable
clouds of dharma or timeless awareness, so [this ground] is called “Cloud of Dharma.”

IV. The Fruition: Buddhahood

There are two manners of becoming a buddha: in the traditions of the perfections and of mantra. Then in the perfections there are two: the small vehicle and the great vehicle.

According to the small vehicle, Prince Siddhārtha\(^2\) attained buddhahood as an ordinary [person, after traversing] the ten grounds, at Akaniṣṭha, the Unexcelled Realm, or the Vajra Seat [in Bodhgaya].

According to the great vehicle, this victorious one had reached buddhahood countless eons earlier. It says in the *White Lotus Sūtra*:

> Children of good families, I became a buddha previously many billions of eons ago.\(^3\)

And in the *Meeting of Father and Son*:

> In ancient times, immeasurable countless eons ago, I became a buddha called “Buddha Indraketu.”\(^4\)

\[^{197}\text{According to the yoga tradition of secret mantra, Prince Siddhārtha went to Akaniṣṭha, and like a sesame bag bursting open, all the buddhas said, “Son of a good family, how will you attain buddhahood?” Thinking thus, he subsequently became buddha based on the outer five manifest awakenings.}\]

\[^{198}\text{According to the father tantras of highest yoga tantra, in Akaniṣṭha he received empowerment from Mahāvairochana. He became a buddha there, and an emanation of that was the buddha here. From the *Secret Moon Drop*:}\]

> Having abandoned the Pure Domains,\(^5\) in the joyous Densely Arrayed Akaniṣṭha, he awakened to genuine perfection and became a buddha there, while a single emanation is the buddha here.\(^6\)
Alternatively, it is held that that bodhisattva on the tenth ground received the conferral of empowerment by Vajradhara in the place Akaniṣṭha. [The bodhisattva] became a buddha through the bestowal of the empowerment. As stated in the Meaningful Discipline Tantra:

In the excellent secret place, the sublime Akaniṣṭha, Chief Lord conferred empowerment on the bodhisattva there in the palace of dharma, Samantabhadra Vajradhatu conferred [empowerment], Vajra Bodhichitta conferred blessing, and suchness manifested as genuine awakening, becoming Supreme Essence Vajradhara; manifest buddha in naturally occurring great bliss.¹⁸⁷

According to the mother tantras, the renowned buddha on the eleventh ground received the complete four empowerments in the Queen’s infinite palace in Akaniṣṭha. He attained the state of a thirteenth-ground vajra-holder by relying on an excellent woman. As stated in the Tantra of Total Nonabiding:

All the buddhas of the eleventh ground attain the state of vajra-holder by relying on the mudra of a woman.¹⁸⁸

Alternatively, that tenth-ground bodhisattva in Akaniṣṭha received the complete four empowerments from the great Vajradhara in union as saṁbhogakāya and great Vajradhara as sukhakāya, the sixth family. By that, he traversed to the fourteenth ground. It says in the Tantra of Vajra Bliss and in the Tantra of Timeless Awareness Drops:

The vase empowerment is the eleventh, the secret empowerment the excellent twelfth, the wisdom-timeless awareness the thirteenth, thus the tathāgata is the fourteenth. Each ground for each empowerment. These are the lords of the grounds.¹⁸⁹
As to this, some [believe that] Akaniśṭha of the Pure Domains is perishable. The Akaniśṭha of Dense Array is not perishable. As it states in *Vajra Peak*:

> The joyous realm of Dense Akaniśṭha,  
> the pure land Dense Array, is not perishable.  
> There, the dharma of the buddhas  
> arises in the manner of perfect saṃbhogakāya.  

They hold that, “The place where the saṃbhogakāya of great Vairochana Immense Ocean dwells, surrounded by a retinue of tenth-ground bodhisattvas, is Dense Array. That does not perish. All of the lesser pure lands that exist within that are nirmāṇakāya pure lands, and therefore will perish.” If that is so, and the realm of Immense Ocean does not perish, then [Pure Domains] also does not perish. The reason is that [otherwise] there would be both an explanation as a pure land and an explanation as a worldly realm. For instance, if an individual’s limbs, eyes, ears, and so on are individually all impermanent, then their whole body would also be impermanent. The reason is that the general and the particular are subject to [the same] limits. Therefore, the place of Pure Domains is Akaniśṭha. Akaniśṭha as a place that has “abandoned” Pure Domains is like a hermitage is to a town. That it is imperishable is because it only appears to tenth-ground bodhisattvas. Perishability is what would appear to impure, ordinary individuals, and there are no [such] individuals [on the tenth ground]. Therefore, all scripture is scripture in accord with that.

From the *Tantra of All-Victorious Nonduality*:

> The place of supreme timeless awareness,  
> the fine place of excellent Pure Domains:  
> here the Bhagavan dwells forever in Akaniśṭha.  
> It is the domain of Samantabhadra.

Alternatively, mind itself that is coemergent with timeless awareness is Akaniśṭha. From the *Highest Timeless Awareness Tantra*:
Mind itself is coemergent with bliss-emptiness. This is the excellent place of Pure Akaniṣṭha.

[199] The difference between buddhas and bodhisattvas is like [the difference in] the waters of the ocean and in the hoof print of an ox. As it says in the *Flower Ornament Sūtra*:

The difference between a buddha and a bodhisattva is similar to an ocean and an ox’s hoof print. Even the qualities of the three pure grounds cannot be measured or evaluated. What need to mention measures or descriptions of the qualities of total omniscience?

[200] And from the *Sūtra of Teaching the Unimaginable*:

As the sky is to the earth, a hair’s tip can possibly be measured. The Victorious One’s ocean of qualities cannot be described in an immeasurable eon. It is beyond measure or evaluation: for that reason it is unimaginable.

The commentary on the meaning of *The Stages in the Path of Illusion* was completed by the dākini of timeless awareness, Niguma. It was translated by the dākinī of timeless awareness herself and Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrö.

Additionally, I, Khyungpo Naljor, received it and put it into practice.

*ithi mangalam*
INTRODUCTION

The Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas holds a central place in the teachings of Niguma. They were given to Khyungpo Naljor a total of four times during his encounter with the dākinī, and by her own testament were held only by herself and her teacher Rāhula in all of India. Their practice is "the roots" of the tree of the Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa Kagyu, and indeed they serve that function. The teachings of the six dharmas, whether of Niguma or Nāropa, ultimately derive from the completion phase practices (rdzogs rim) in the major yoga tantras. These are the practices that make use of the subtle energetic currents and essences in the body ("the subtle body" or "vajra body"), using yogic exercises, breathing techniques, and visualizations to control those energies and thereby the state of the mind. These yogic practices represent the "path of means" (thabs lam) or techniques in training with the body as the means to change the mind. It is a central tenet of tantric teachings that the human body in this way embodies the potential for enlightenment.

Sangye Tönpa's Collection of Necessary Oral Advice on Niguma's Six Dharmas attempts to differentiate the tantric sources of the two systems:

The six dharmas, according to Nāropa's position, are the collected essence of all mother tantras, and of those are considered to be from the esoteric instructions of Hevajra.
According to the Niguma position, they are the essence of all the father tantras condensed in one direction. In particular, they are based on the *Jewel Ocean Tantra*. According to Rinpoche, there are many teachings on dream and lucid clarity from the fifteenth chapter (or fifteen chapters) of *Guhyasamāja*, so the primary source is said to be *Guhyasamāja*.

Concerning Niguma's six dharmas, Jamgön Kongtrul connects the *Hevajra* tantra specifically with inner heat and *Guhyasamāja* with illusory body and lucid clarity, while the tantra of *Mahāmāyā* is connected with the dream yoga practice. In any case, as we have seen, it is difficult to definitely cite the source and ultimately perhaps irrelevant since these teachings are cherished as the direct revelations of the Buddha Vajradhara. In his *Treasury of Knowledge*, Kongtrul elucidates three exceptional qualities of the Shangpa lineage, among which is this:

> The oral instructions are exceptional because the *Vajra Lines* that were listed by the dākinī of timeless awareness are unerring in meaning and uncorrupted in letter. They have not been afflicted with the compositions and alterations derived from the intellectual analyses of ordinary people.

This is a very interesting statement since, at first glance, most editions of the *Vajra Lines*—and above all the one in Kongtrul's own collection—appear to be a jumble of indecipherable notes upon notes with tiny flea-tracks connecting fragments of comments to their places between words. In fact, none of the six texts that I consulted contain the actual unadorned vajra lines. Tangtong Gyalpo, who received the "direct transmission" from Niguma in vision, quotes each verse and then comments upon it, so that presumably one may use the text in his *Collection of the Essentials* to determine which parts are the "real" vajra lines. The clearest presentation I have seen is in an illuminated manuscript, written in gold, in the collected works of Lochen Gyurme Dechen. There, the scribe's wise use of fonts clarifies the intent: the main vajra lines are written in large Tibetan print called "uchen" (*dbu chen*), the
clarifying prose sentences after each verse are in large letters of a different script called “ume” (dbu med), and the comments which adorn the interspaces are in small print (yig chung).

But who was responsible for each of these layers? This is not easy to sort out with certainty. The “actual” (dngos) vajra lines are those in all editions and commentaries that one can assume are Niguma’s verses as remembered by Khyungpo Naljor. The next level may also be attributed to the same source; perhaps they were not integral to the original verses, but were added as prose clarification by Khyungpo Naljor based on Niguma’s teachings. According to the colophon here, they were translated by Lendarma Lodrö and “verified” or finalized by the great translator Rinchen Zangpo at Tholing monastery. This event is also alluded to in the life story of Khyungpo Naljor. Returning from India, Khyungpo befriended the translators Lendarma Lodrö and Gayādhara, and came to Tholing monastery in Ngari (mNga ris), part of the ancient Guge kingdom of western Tibet. There he encountered the great master Atisha Dipamkaraśrijñana (982–1054), who we know was in residence there for three years beginning in 1042. Khyungpo Naljor felt that his texts had been corrupted and that he should return to India, but Atisha announced that “they are in accord with my Indian texts; it would be good to give them to Rinchen Zangpo to translate.” So it came to be, it seems, that the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas were translated by both Lendarma Lodrö and Rinchen Zangpo, the famous translator from Tholing. Taranātha specifies that what was first translated by Lendarma was retranslated by Rinchen Zangpo and then corrected by Atisha himself. The only other Niguma text that bears the latter’s name is Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness.

Finally, the interlinear small print that is not included in the canon but only in later texts appears to be ultimately by Gyurme Dechen. That is how I make sense of the following additional information found in Gyurme Dechen’s edition, as well as those in Kongtrul’s Treasury of Instructions and in the Shangpa Texts:

In the Vajra Lines, Khyungpo’s notes are an integral part. Buddhaśrī distinguished the source from the notes and made some annotations. Again, the bilingual Gyurme
Dechen examined them carefully with his great intellect, and arranged the more expanded [version]. May this be of vast benefit to the doctrine and to sentient beings.  

This addition is further commented upon by Jamgön Kongtrul and appears only in his edition and in the *Shangpa Texts* which were copied directly from it:

Here, all the verses are the vajra lines themselves, while the prose in between seems to be the oral directions of the dākinī that have been written and arranged. This is the extensive commentary by Lochen Gyurme Dechen.

Still confused? In another text, Kongtrul recapitulates:

This text ends, “Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrö translated it; later, Lochen Rinchen Zangpo verified it.” One with Khyungpo’s notes included and one where Buddhasrī separated the source from the notes, adding some notes, and again carefully examined by Lochen Gyurme Dechen are two different [versions]. “Clarifying Words of the Six Dharmas” with the notes is by Khyungpo.  

In keeping with the plan, I have translated here the text as it appears in the canon—that is, the Vajra Lines of verse and the interspersed prose. Since these were not distinguished there by the clever use of fonts, I have followed the edition in Gyurme Dechen’s collected works by using italics where he has used the ume script. I have not included the notes, but have relied on them for clarification, mainly those in Gyurme Dechen’s text, since they do appear to originate with him, and in any case that is the least problematic version.

These are just translation issues. In fact, these *Vajra Lines* were never intended to be understood except by those who genuinely put them into practice with the help of a qualified teacher. They were the lines that helped Khyungpo Naljor remember Niguma’s indescribable teach-
ings and that will similarly help all lineage holders to remember the personal teachings that they have received.

VAJRA LINES OF THE SIX DHARMAS

Sanskrit: \( \text{Śaddharma-vajragāthā} \)
Tibetan: \( \text{Chos drug rdo rje'i tshig rkang} \)

Homage to the Glorious Unity—Great bliss.
1. I heard this talk, the natural sound of the unborn great vehicle, from one who is ineffable, spontaneously present, and unconditioned; union and great bliss sāmbhogakāya, arising to tame anyone, the mighty Vajradhara of three kāyas and seven aspects.

2. Matured by four empowerments, faithful, and diligent, having first [experienced] impermanence, weariness, [and samsara's] deficiencies, whoever strives at this sublime path will awaken in six months, a year, or in this lifetime.

The path of methods: naturally blazing bliss-warmth.
Illusory body: naturally liberated desire and anger.
Dream: naturally pure double-delusion.
Lucid clarity: naturally awakened stupidity.
Transference: buddhahood without meditation.
Intermediate state: [the victors'] sāmbhogakāya.

3. One's own body is the means: three channels and four chakras.
The blazing and melting of a-ham adorns one in moments with four joys.
By uniting with the wisdom's khagamukhā, dissipating and nondissipating four joys arise in sequence.
4. Gather the quintessence, the hollow interior purifier in three vital points, and to quicken the heat, the six dharmas, such as inner heat in sequence: rabbit descending, holding, reversing, spreading, and blending with vital energy currents.
Adorn oneself with nondissipating great timeless awareness.

Hollow interior of fire—the vital point of the body, eating the food of inner heat, wearing the clothing, spreading the seat, receiving the empowerment of existence, naturally liberating obstructing forces, and riding the horse of energy currents.

5. Unreal illusory body is for highest, medium, and lower faculties.
With constant devotion, one's body and whatever appears is integrated as the deity's form of empty appearance free of attachment.
Passion and aggression naturally liberated, the fourteenth ground will be attained.

Those of highest faculties rely on the friendship of a holy guru, the medium are guided without interruption by other words, and the least develop meditative absorption on a single seat.

6. One who has completely abandoned all concepts should constantly maintain the vital point of intention for dreaming. [Dream's] double delusion is naturally purified and the qualities of the path stages of illusion will naturally arise at all times of day and night.

Dreams are recognized, refined, increased, emanated, changed, and appear objectively. Excessive delusion, excessive wakefulness,
excessive bliss, and excessive emptiness should be cleared up by devotion, accumulation of merit, and clearing of obstructions, and worn as ornaments.\textsuperscript{33}

7. Lucid clarity arises through devotion to the guru, and the great bliss of dissipating and nondissipating steady gaze causes bliss, clarity, and nonthought inseparable to arise naturally.

Preliminary, main, and concluding practices are adorned by vital points of time.\textsuperscript{34}

Lucid clarity is recognized, integrated, blended, and consummated. A holy one who actualizes lucid clarity in direct experience [introduces] the experience, enhancement and obstruction-clearing adorn it.\textsuperscript{35}

8. Nothing transferred, no transference; that is for the very best. Medium and least, after abandoning passion and aggression, with joy and devotion, project upward with single-pointed visualization, adorned by aspiration prayers.

\textit{Transference to dharmakāya suchness, transference to unity of the yidam, transference of the guru's blessing, and transference to the unerring heavenly realm.}\textsuperscript{36}

Vital points of time, of body, of speech, and of substance are trained and stabilized in the most excellent transference.\textsuperscript{37}

9. In the intermediate state, light and so on are lucid clarity; the deity's Body, and nirmāṇakāya to tame whomever; at intercourse, revulsion is the vital point. Passion, aggression, and jealousy are refined by the deity's Body of lucid clarity.
The two obscurations are naturally purified and three kāyas actualized.\(^{38}\)

*Lucid clarity arises naturally in the first intermediate state, middling, the victors' *sambhogakāya *arises naturally, at the least, the *nirmāṇakāya *arises naturally without hindrance. The general vital point is [three] unerring integrations on the path.*\(^{39}\)

Forms, sounds, water, earth, light, increase, and so on;\(^{40}\) one should know the progression of dissolution and eighty natures.\(^{41}\)

10. In the degenerate times of strife and the disturbance of perverse views, genuine dharma is as rare as daytime stars and turtle fur. In a time when perverse dharma is bartered as the milk of ethical behavior,\(^{42}\) cherish the adornments of practice experience, scriptures, and directories.\(^{43}\)

Those who practice this sublime path with no time intervening, or in this life, or in the intermediate state, after the three kāyas of inseparable bliss-emptiness arise naturally, will go to the actual heavenly realm of total purity.

I stamp this with the vajra seal to not spread it beyond the one-to-one lineage for seven generations.\(^{44}\)

This completes the *Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas.*

From the mouth of the Đākinī of Timeless Awareness, Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrö translated this. I, Khyungpo Naljor, offered her five hundred measures of gold and requested it, and then put it into practice. Later, at Tholing, it was verified by Lotsāwa Rinchen Zangpo.
INTRODUCTION

MAHĀMUDRĀ is the main trunk of the tree of the Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa. In this tradition and in others, such as the Marpa Kagyu, Kadampa, and Chöd lineages, the word “mahāmudrā” connotes the highest realization and represents the most direct path of liberation (grol lam). Sangye Palzang’s excellent commentary on the Vajra Lines gives this semantic explanation:

Since that great seal (phyag rgya chen po, Skt. mahā-mudrā) stamps all things both animate and inanimate, anything higher than the “seal” does not exist, so it is “great.” And what is that? The lucid clear dharmakāya.”

Khyungpo Naljor kept the teaching ever close to his heart, literally in a charm-box around his neck, and so this particular tradition is known as the “Amulet Mahāmudrā” (phyag chen ga’u ma) and also the mahāmudrā of “Threefold Letting-Go” (rang babs gsum), referring to the main instruction from Niguma. It is also sometimes called the mahāmudrā of lucid clarity (od gsal). The distinctive feature is resting the mind without any mental fabrication or contrivance, from which state realization and liberation arise naturally. Jamgön Kongtrul describes it succinctly:
The vajra lines of the instruction on the essential meaning of no mental engagement were highly valued by the scholar-adept Khyungpo, such that he rolled up the paper and inserted it into a heart-like Nepalese amulet box, which he tied it around his neck. Thus it is known as the “Amulet Mahāmudrā.” In the preliminary of the threefold letting-go, one cultivates calm abiding and higher insight. In the main practice, the descent of vajra timeless awareness points out [mind’s nature] in a sneaky way (the burglar method), and by means of the liberation of the four faults in their own ground, one becomes resolved about mind itself. In the concluding practice, one maintains the state of the naturally arisen three kāyas and relies on the extraordinary enhancement and obstruction-clearing practices. Thus, it is the heart of all teachings of sūtra and tantra, the pith of all esoteric instruction, and the actualization of the natural liberation of the four kāyas in mahāmudrā.2

The original vajra lines attributed to Niguma are, once again, overlaid with copious interlinear notes. This time, however, one can still find the unadorned lines since almost all sources present the annotated and unannotated versions separately.3 In the Peking Tengyur, for instance, the two are not even consecutive, and the annotated version appears earlier in the volume. There is a sense that the simple beauty of the original lines are certainly worth presenting as such, but that it is quite difficult to gain even a basic understanding of their import without comment. So, as in the canon, I present here both versions, although I have chosen to put the unelaborated vajra lines first, and then follow them up by the awkward but more informative annotated version. The interlinear notes have been added in smaller font, more or less as they appear in the text (given the radically different order of English sentence structure). In trying to keep the simple vajra lines simple, my own endnotes are confined to the latter translation.

Niguma’s two known teachings on mahāmudrā, the Vajra Lines and Naturally Free Mahāmudrā (which I have placed after the two versions
of the first), are also included in the *Ocean of Song* (*mGur tsho*). This is a collection of the inspired spiritual poems of the Shangpa lineage masters collected by Jamgön Kongtrul that is often recited in group service as a meditation in itself. Indeed, the full title is *The Collected Dohā, Vajra Lines, and Songs of the Glorious Shangpa Kagyu: An Ocean of Blessings Meaningful to Hear*. Niguma’s verses are introduced as follows:

The Lord of all families, the sixth victor great Vajradhara, appeared naturally to the dākinī of timeless awareness as unborn native natural sound, which naturally revealed the abiding nature of mahāmudrā in samsara and nirvana, and she spoke these vajra lines.⁴

**VAJRA LINES OF THE AMULET MAHĀMUDRĀ**³

Sanskrit: *Mahāmudrā*
Tibetan: *Phyag rgya chen po*

Homage to Glorious Unity Mahāmudrā!
I heard this talk, the uncreated natural sound, from great saṃbhogakāya Vajradhara:
great bliss, spontaneous presence, and unconditioned.

*Emaho!* Ordinary mind—amazing!
The preliminary is threelfold letting-go.
The main practice is natural liberation from four faults.
The ultimate result is naturally arisen four kāyas.

In solitude, with earth-touching mudrā, four joints and four channels relaxed: the natural resting of body.
No effort of the lips, no expression or utterance: the natural resting of speech.
Mind free of the desire to meditate with gazing eyes: the natural resting of mind.
Make that itself free of four faults: mind dharmakāya is beyond inclusion or separation, yet is so close it is not recognized. It arises to oneself, yet is so profound it is not grasped. So easy it is not believed, divorced from nondistraction. So excellent that it does not fit into intellect; without conviction one wanders in cyclic existence.

Ultimately, free of meditative equipoise, subsequent attainment, and mental fabrication, the natural arising of various clear appearances is nirmāṇakāya. Nonconceptual freedom from fixation on that clarity is dharmakāya. The arising of bliss in that very nonconceptual clarity is the saṃbhogakāya. Those three by nature inseparable is the ultimate mahāsukakāya.
The aspect of nonconceptuality in that suchness is the awareness of things as they are. The aspect of clarity of how things are in nonconceptuality is the timeless awareness of the understanding of things in their multiplicity. Those two by nature inseparable is called the nonduality of space and timeless awareness.

The preliminary's sacred pledge is a vajra secret. The enhancement is supplication for compassion. The integration on the path is that whatever appears is that suchness. Actualization is being without meditation and without distraction. The blending is integrating nonconceptuality on the path. The direct gaze of lucid clarity is enhancement. After waking, blend without fixation with the clarity. Lucid clarity in the day, night, and intermediate state: See the natural arising of the three kāyas inseparable.
This is the single word that will ultimately liberate whomever does not understand the meaning that is hidden in the mind stream.

Habituating and stabilizing nonmeditation and nondistraction, one traverses the grounds and paths at that time. With no mental engagement, the two obscurations are purified on their own.

The resultant naturally arising three kāyas are spontaneously present.

This is taught in all sūtras and tantras, but it is naturally hidden. One should know it directly from the guru’s blessing.

In the sky of dharmakāya, lightning of five poisons comes from the clouds of thought: See great timeless awareness. Without mental engagement, free of all hopes and fears, I bow to you, ordinary mind.

The vajra lines of naturally arising mahāmudrā are complete.

To please the dākinī of timeless awareness, I [Kyungpo Naljor] offered five hundred measures of gold and requested this. Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrō translated it. ham

VAJRA LINES OF THE AMULET MAHĀMUDRĀ (WITH NOTES)⁶

Sanskrit: Mahāmudrā
Tibetan: Phyag rgya chen po

Homage to Glorious Unity Mahāmudrā!
I heard this talk of uncreated natural sound from great saṃbhogakāya Vajradhara: great bliss, spontaneous presence, and unconditioned.
Emaho! Ordinary mind—amazing!
The preliminary is threefold letting-go.
The main practice is natural liberation from four faults.
The ultimate result is naturally arisen four kāyas.

In a solitary place, sitting cross-legged with the hands in the earth-touching mudrā, the spine straight and the four joints, channels, and lips all relaxed is the effortless natural resting of the body.

No effort of smiling, no opening or closing of the lips, no expression or utterance of speech, resting in that state is the effortless natural resting of speech.

Mind being free of the concept of the desire to meditate with gazing eyes is the effortless natural resting of mind.

Second, the main practice is to make that itself free of four faults: though mind-dharmakāya is beyond inclusion or separation, one wanders in samsara because of the fault of being so close that it is not recognized.

Mahāmudrā arises to oneself, yet is so profound, incapable of being illustrated by examples, since in essence it is not established by color and so on, that it is not grasped.

So easy, even arising by letting go in meditation, yet it is not believed, [and one becomes] divorced from undistracted meditation.

Since it is the natural arising of the three kāyas, it is so excellent, but certainty does not arise because it does not fit into the intellect, and without conviction in dharmakāya, one’s mind wanders in cyclic existence due to that fault.

Third, the natural arising of the three kāyas: Ultimately, [being] free of meditative equipoise, subsequent attainment, and mental fabrication, is the condition for the natural arising of mahāmudrā, and those various naturally arising clear appearances are nirmāṇakāya.

Nonconceptual freedom from conceptual fixation on that clarity of those various clear appearances is dharmakāya.
The arising of nondissipating bliss in that very [state of] nonconceptual clarity is the sambhogakāya. Those three by nature inseparable is the ultimate mahāsukakāya.

The aspect of nonconceptuality in that suchness is the awareness of the understanding of things as they are abiding.

The aspect of clarity and understanding of how the mandalas of all knowable things are in nonconceptuality is the timeless awareness of the understanding of things in their multiplicity.

Those two by nature inseparable is called the nonduality of dharma space and fourfold timeless awareness.¹⁰

The preliminary's sacred pledge of threefold letting-go, the burglar's pointing-out,¹¹ is a vajra secret.¹²

The enhancement of mahāmudrā is devotional supplication to the guru for immeasurable compassion.

The integration on the path of the times of the four daily activities such as going, moving, and so on is that whatever appears is that suchness.

Actualization of the result is being without even a speck of meditation and without even a moment of distraction.

The blending of day and night is integrating nonconceptuality of lucid clarity in sleep and between dreams on the path.

The elephant's direct gaze of lucid clarity of sleep is enhancement that takes total sleep to lucid clarity.

After waking from sleep, blend daytime and nighttime by meditating without fixation with the clarity of all the appearances.

Threefold lucid clarity in the daytime, the nighttime, and the intermediate state:

See¹³ the natural arising of the three kāyas inseparable and indivisible.

This is the single word that will ultimately liberate whomever does not understand the meaning that is hidden in the mind stream.

Habituating and stabilizing nonmeditation and nondistraction,
one traverses the grounds and paths at that time. 
With no mental engagement, the two obscurations are purified on their own.
The resultant naturally arising three kāyas are spontaneously present. 
This is taught in all sūtras and tantras, but it is naturally hidden. 
One should know it directly from the guru’s blessing.

In the sky of dharmakāya, lightning of five poisons comes from the clouds of thought whose nature is suchness: 
See great timeless awareness. 
Mahāmudrā without mental engagement, free of all hopes and fears for samsara and nirvana, 
I bow to you, ordinary mind, the state free of contrivance and corruption.

The vajra lines of naturally arising mahāmudrā are complete.

To please the dākinī of timeless awareness, I [Kyungpo Naljor] offered five hundred measures of gold and requested this. Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrō translated it.\textsuperscript{14} \textit{ham}

\textbf{NATURALLY FREE MAHĀMUDRĀ}\textsuperscript{15}

Sanskrit: \textit{Svayammukti-mahāmudrā} 
Tibetan: \textit{Rang grol phyag rgya chen po} 

Homage to dharmakāya dākinī of timeless awareness! 
I bow to you, mind itself, 
the wish-fulfilling gem.

Wishing to attain perfect awakening, 
in order to purify ordinary concepts, 
imagine one’s own body as the deity 
and be devoted with a pure, noble heart to the guru.
Without contemplating the guru and yidam, things and no things and all of that, without any feats in mentation whatsoever, rest within the uncontrived native state.

One’s mind without distraction is dharmakāya. Nondistraction from that is the vital point of meditation. Realize the great freedom from limitations.

This thought of afflicted passion or aggression that flings one into the ocean of samsara: sever it as intrinsically nonexistent with the sharp weapon of the unborn. If the tree is cut at the root the branches will not grow.

Just as bubbles arise and dissolve in the water of the limpid sea, In that way conceptual thinking is nothing other than the dharma nature. Don’t see it as a problem—relax.

Whatever arises, whatever is born, that itself is free by itself without fixation to it. Phenomena appearing and resounding are one’s mind. Aside from mind there are no other phenomena. Mind is free of the elaborations of birth and cessation.

By knowing that suchness of mind, even when engaging in the five sense desirables, one does not move out of the nature of phenomena.

For instance, one who goes to the golden isle cannot find dirt and stone even when sought.
In the equality of the great realm of phenomena, there is no rejecting or accepting, no equipoise or subsequent attainment.

At whatever time this is actualized, at that time it becomes spontaneously present. One becomes like a wish-fulfilling gem who fulfills the hopes and desires of beings.

One should understand this in intellectual stages of highest, intermediate, and lesser personal capacity.

Naturally Free Mahāmudrā by Niguma, the ḍākinī of timeless awareness, is complete.
The Three Integrations

INTRODUCTION

The branches of the tree of the Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa are the Three Integrations. The term translated as “integrate” literally means “to carry on the path” (lam du khyer ba) and refers to a practice or attitude that one can apply during all activities, not just in formal meditation. It is an attitude of mindful awareness that, when maintained and carried throughout daily life, makes all activities into opportunities for further insight and awakening.

Tāranātha explains: “They are known as ‘branches’ because they are offshoots of the threefold practice of illusory body in the Six Dharmas: for lesser, medium, and greater faculties.” Thus they are specifically the “meditation-in-action” practices of the illusory body emphasized as a separate, effective practice. Briefly, it is to view all experience as the guru, as the yidam deity, and as illusion (corresponding to greater, medium, and lesser faculties, respectively, in illusory body practice). Each of those three practices also has a component that includes the three dimensions of awakening, or kāyas, in the realization: dharma-kāya, saṃbhoga-kāya, and nirmāṇa-kāya. This is especially emphasized in the relatively few interlinear notes in the tengyur edition.

This seems to tie into another apparent text of “vajra lines” that was not included in the canon editions of Niguma’s works, namely: Integrating the Nature of Three Kāyas (sKu gsum rang bzhin lam khyer) or simply Three Kāya Integration (sKu gsum lam khyer). It is interesting that this work seems to have all the elements of the other vajra line
texts, including the Sanskrit title, the words “I heard this talk, the uncreated natural sound, from great saṃbhogakāya Vajradhara,” and the usual colophon from Khyungpo Naljor (with the difference that he states specifically practicing it for three months, and no translator is mentioned). The contents, though by no means identical, are essentially similar.

Our text here, on the other hand, does not contain those elements. The fact that this colophon uses the term mdzad pa (created, composed) uniquely among Niguma's vajra lines is discussed by Gyurme Dechen in Complete Explanation of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas. The use of mdzad pa seems to “admit” that it is in fact the work of Niguma herself rather than Vajradhara. According to Gyurme Dechen, this would designate it as “treatise vajra lines” (bstan bchos rdo rje'i tshig rkang) rather than “buddha-word vajra lines” (bka’ rdo rje'i tshig rkang). In any case, Gyurme Dechen has objected to the interpretation of the opening lines, “I heard this talk, ... and so forth” in any of the vajra line texts as meaning that Niguma heard it from Vajradhara. Rather, he says, it means that Vajradhara himself heard or “understood” it, as it is commonly understood in the Rechung Hearing Lineage and other such sources. He goes on to conclude, therefore, that since it is well known in the Shangpa tradition that these teachings of the Three Integrations were also received by Niguma from Vajradhara, they could just as well be set up in the same [wrong] way as the others! Unfortunately he does not take into account the Three Kāya Integration, which would have added another interesting twist to his argument.

Aside from Tāranātha's brief comment, it is difficult to trace the sources of these teachings. The transmissions from Niguma that are listed in Khyungpo Naljor's life story mention only “vajra lines,” and one must assume that all of the texts bearing that name were included. Three Integrations is not specifically mentioned anywhere in his life story, although a teaching on integrating the three kāyas was one of many teachings that Khyungpo received from Maitripa. It is yet another mystery why this text rather than the other was included in the canon and why it came to occupy the important position in the Five Golden Dharmas. One may rest assured, however, that the vital points of utilizing all appearances as guru, yidam, and illusion, including the
recognition of the three kāyas therein, are available in these lines and in the few commentaries on them.

THREE DHARMAS TO INTEGRATE ON THE PATH

(Herein is the source text of the three integrations on the path with the guiding instructions, essence of the vital points, and so on.)

Sanskrit: Dhana-dharma-treya-nāma
Tibetan: Lam khyer [kyi chos] gsum zhes bya ba

Homage to the glorious three-kāya great bliss.

One who has attended an excellent guru and received empowerment, who dwells in solitude, having mentally given up the world, and practices this sublime path with single-pointed effort, will attain the three spontaneities within years or months.

In this way, using the variety of appearances as the bliss, emptiness, and clarity of the guru, yidam, and illusion, integration of three kāyas will occur naturally.

The intelligent practitioner, after the preliminaries of weariness with impermanence and sublime aspiration for awakening, completes the practice of guru yoga with one’s body as yidam and the guru above the head. Then on behalf of all beings throughout space, one prays with the motivation of compassion. By that, devotion will arise and all varieties of appearance will be gradually seen as the guru.
In all four kinds of daily activity\(^9\) one's body is the empty appearance of the deity's form.

Once all mental concepts are completely abandoned, integrating the ever-present guru on the path causes whatever appears to arise as the guru. This is the sublime integration of the guru.\(^1\)

(4) It becomes stable in this way, and one [contemplates that] it is this very guru who will liberate me from this unbearable great ocean and [so I will] obtain in this life what is not obtained in innumerable [eons].

Pray while constantly recalling this kindness.

Do the pure sevenfold service, such as prostrations.\(^12\)

(5) All sounds of audible emptiness are the guru's speech.

(6) Thoughts and memories are integrated as [the guru's] mind. This is the integration of the guru's three kayas.

(7) Thus with the specially exalted integration on the path during all equipoise and subsequent attainment, day and night, (8) know everything that appears as the guru and that very guru as one's own mind.

That inseparability of mind and guru occurs as the natural arising of great bliss,\(^13\) (nirmāṇakāya) clarity, and (dharmaḥkāya) emptiness (inseparable).

*****

Then the explanation of integrating the yidam:

In order to reverse attachment to the ordinary,\(^14\) meditate without concepts on the clarity of one's own body as clear [but] empty illusory form.

(9) Then, attraction to the pleasant, aversion to the unpleasant, and stupidity toward objects difficult to comprehend—these three objects and the variety of all external appearances
will be gradually known as the deity's form. With faith and devotion in that, do the pure seven such as prostrations, as before.

(10) Know whatever appears as the illusion of the deity's form, and that very deity's form as one's own mind. The inseparability of mind and the deity's form is great bliss, (nirmāṇakāya) clarity, and (dharma) emptiness (inseparable as the) deity's form. That is the explanation of the three-kāya integration.

The benefits are that all concepts are completely abandoned, and if the deity's form is constant for six months, then in this life or in the intermediate state one will attain the saṃbhogakāya of the victors.

(11) In that, the aspect of appearance is creation phase and the aspect of emptiness is completion phase. There is no dharma that is neither creation nor completion. This is the manner of unity that is taught.

(12) Having seen oneself and appearance as deity, view the full range of all sounds as mantra. All mantras are empty sound without intrinsic nature. Their clear resonance is timeless awareness, their emptiness is basic space; knowing their inseparability is liberating and becomes the attainment of nirmāṇakāya that tames anyone.

(13) Listen to the explanation of integrating memory and thought: The three poisons arise naturally without restriction. Without rejection or fixation, know them as the three kāyas. The essence of desire is bliss—saṃbhogakāya, the essence of anger is clarity—nirmāṇakāya, the essence of stupidity is [non]thought—dharma.
Knowing this will undoubtedly bring liberation.

Alternatively, the steady gaze at three poisons will [reveal] their lack of intrinsic nature and dharmakāya will be attained.

* * * *

Then, the integration of illusion on the path:
Using the example of the variety of dreams in this way, appearances are ascertained as mind.

Mind, in illusory dreams, recognizes, refines, increases, emanates, and changes.

Having completely abandoned all concepts during all daytime activities, practicing with intention while falling sleep, naturally arising [illusion] occurs in dream time.

The lucid clarity free of fixation on illusion will arise from the force of devotion and steady gaze.

(Sambhogakāya) bliss, (nirmāṇakāya) clarity, (dharmakāya) nonthought, ineffable three kāyas inseparable: (svabhāvikakāya) great bliss will arise naturally at all times of day and night.

This is lucid clarity mahāmudrā.

(Conclusion:) In brief, with sublime devotion and the view of one's body as empty appearance of the deity's form, speech as empty sound of utterance and recitation, mind as thoughts and memories with no fixation, practicing one-pointedly in that way, the result will be actualized in years or months. The secret mantra path of direct actualization is superior to all others.
This concludes the especially exalted Three Integrations on the Path created by the dakini of timeless awareness.

It was translated by Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrö. I, Khyungpo Naljor, offered that dakini herself five hundred measures of gold and requested it, and have put it into practice.
Immortal and Infallible

INTRODUCTION

The fruit of the tree of the Five Golden Dharmas of the Glor­rious Shangpa is the teachings of immortal mind and infallible body, called simply “Immortal and Infallible” ('chi med 'chugs med). It is also known as “Naturally Liberated Immortality” ('chi med rang grol). Tāranātha describes it as the combined essence of lucid clarity, illusory body, and mahāmudrā, and so it is known as “the fruit.”

The two parts have different sources, although they are practiced together in the Shangpa tradition. The teachings of infallible body are based on an esoteric instruction of the siddhacārya Virūpa called Spiritual Power of Immortality ('Chi med grub pa). This is included in the collection of vajra lines as “the root text of immortal body.” According to the colophon, it was presented to the “Cemetarian” and the Tibetan Ma Lotsāwa,2 who translated it right there in the cemetery of Teto. This is certainly the same text found in the tengyur with the title Spiritual Power of Amrita (bDud rtsi grub pa) by Virūpa and translated by Enadeva (or Edewa), who has the epithet “Cemetarian.” The text is largely similar but with enough variations to make for a fascinating comparison, though unfortunately not here. The homage in both versions to the headless ċākini Chinnamunḍā would indicate that this is not the famous mahāsiddha Virūpa known as the source of the vajra lines in the Lamdre tradition, but the junior Virūpa, or Virūpa of the East, who is connected especially with Sukhasiddhī in the Shangpa tradition and is the formulator of the practices of Varāhi with the Severed
The subject matter involves esoteric yogic practices that utilize the energy currents, channels, and vital drops of the subtle body to reach the realization of its infallible and deathless nature.

Niguma's teachings on immortal mind that are translated here, on the other hand, employ a creation phase/mahāmudrā approach in first visualizing a deity and then, based on that, examining the nature of mind. This involves an introduction to or a pointing-out to oneself of the nature that was always there. The two practices together, then, form a consummate whole by including both creation and completion phases, or the two approaches known as the path of liberation and the path of methods. Kongtrul describes the two together:

Through thirty-two exercises to achieve immortality, the body enters into the path of emancipation. One's own mind that was never born is therefore deathless and attains the great natural liberation. The fully ripened body is a corporeal collection of aggregates, so it is empty of any basis on which to designate birth and death. This means that the body occurs from the mere appearance of mind, and mind is without birth and death. When this is deeply realized, the body appears as the mahāmudrā of deity's form, held in the space that is not fallible by deluded appearance. There are various instructions, but [the point is that] in this life one can discover the kāya of unity. It is said that just hearing about this will result in awakening in the intermediate state as the sambhogakāya of the victors, and so forth.

This edition in the tengyur has interlinear notes included, which have been replicated here also in a smaller font. The edition in Bodong's collection has interlinear notes, though not always the same ones. The other editions consulted have only a few notes.
GLORIOUS IMMORTAL GREAT TIMELESS AWARENESS
(The vajra lines of immortality and such concerning deathlessness.)

Sanskrit: Śri-amāra-jñāna-mahā-nāma
Tibetan: dPal 'chi med ye shes chen po zhes bya ba

Homage to the Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness

I heard this talk, the natural sound of immortal timeless awareness, the activity of nirmāṇakāya, from the victors' dharmakāya essence, saṃbhogakāya great Vajradhara.

Anyone person with faith and devotion to the guru who has received this and other empowerments and has the root and branch sacred pledges, will realize this meaning of immortality by attending an excellent guru.

One with faith and devotion who has mentally left this life behind, in one-pointed meditation, at best in seven days, at least in years, and middling in months, will purify this body of however much afflictive emotion and the immortal body of timeless awareness will occur in due course.

Having done the preliminaries of the four immeasurables and arousing the aspiration, [generate], by the three rites or instantaneously, one's own body as the yidam Chakrasamvara masculine-feminine. Light rays from the seeds hūṃ and bāṃ in the top of their heads purify everything outside and inside the body and refine it as empty-clarity itself. Empty-appearance is the rainbow-like form of light;
without intrinsic nature yet appearing with color, face, hands, ornaments, and bonfire.

Look at the great nondissipating empty-bliss of clarity without concepts. One's body as empty appearance of the deity's form is actually one's mind. Mind is the empty appearance of the deity's form. Mind and the deity's form are inseparable. (Not that the deity's form is beyond the mind once it has been discounted, or that that the mind is truly existent beyond the deity's form that has been discounted.)

Like dream objects and water moons, by nature inseparable great unity, in essence ineffable and beyond intellect. Buddhas of the three times did not see that ineffable essence in the past, will not see it in the future, and do not see it at present.

Thus, there is no cause of illness, no cause of death, no cause of wandering in cyclic existence, and the cause of awakening in nirvana is nonexistent. Since there is freedom from all transitors and transitions, therefore that timeless awareness is the natural liberation of immortality. 12

The yogin who does not realize the immortal mind in that way, will practice hardship for an immeasurable eon without reason, and just be wasted, having entered merely a dead-end path.

Any person, even one who committed the entire five acts of immediate retribution, at the time of the point of death or at other times, 13 who recalls by contemplating in the mind, hears the speech, or touches physically with the body for a mere moment or a single second,
this fourfold vajra verse of immortality from the *Ocean of Timeless Awareness Tantra* will naturally purify all suffering of the interruption of life.

Then in the first intermediate state one will actually perfectly awaken as the victor sāṃbhogakāya.

What need to mention those of lesser obscurations?

This is the infallible vital point.

If, somehow, under the power of conditions, the body-mind does not become clear at the point of death, then, for instance, like a catapult mechanism, the previous vital points will produce the natural arising as the victor sāṃbhogakāya in the intermediate state.

Even with a difficult passage that agitates the mind stream, it is like a stone thrown into a clear limpid pool: by the previous vital points the great bliss sāṃbhogakāya will arise naturally in the intermediate state.

Even without stability or sufficient time, it is like the moonrise at sunset on the fifteenth: hearing or recalling now or at the point of death will no doubt result in the sāṃbhogakāya in the intermediate state.

One’s mind as unborn dharmakāya unhindered arises naturally as rūpakāya and until the ocean of samsara is emptied is spontaneously present for the benefit of others to be tamed.

With the realization of the great unity of essence, form, and enlightened activity, this conceptual thought called “death” [known as] causeless death [relates to] the highest faculty.
The instant that this meaning is realized, one goes to the pure heavenly realm of great bliss.¹⁸
The victors of the three times, by realizing this, conquered the devil, awakened, and turned the wheel.

Therefore, this heart-essence of the victorious ones, although taught in many tantras and sūtras, cannot be found by any other method except the benevolence of the holy ones.

Therefore, serving an excellent guru with respect and consideration is the vital point. When degenerate wrong views mixes up the mind stream, don the ornament of confidence based on scripture.

This immortal great timeless awareness is stamped by the seal of a one-to-one lineage from seven generations to three.¹⁹

This concludes one's mind naturally liberated as immortal.

This was taught by the ḍāki-ma of timeless awareness in the teakwood forest. It was translated by Lendarma Lodrö and ascertained by himself and Lotsāwa Rinchen Zangpo.²⁰ I, Khyungpo Naljor, offered that ḍāki-ma herself five hundred measures of gold and requested it, and I have put it into practice.
INTRODUCTION

The Chakrasamvara Tantra is one of the major tantras in the division of what is now called “Mother Tantras” (ma rgyud) or Yogini Tantras, within the broader category of highest yoga tantra. The so-called root tantra is said to be an appendix (uttaratantra) of a mythic root text that was an enormous work of one hundred thousand or even three hundred thousand verses, which, if true, makes the extant tantra a tiny fraction of the original. The relative brevity of this root tantra is compensated for by at least nine major explanatory tantras, further commentaries on the root text, and hundreds if not thousands of texts that instruct practitioners in the ritual components of practice, such as sadhanas, abhiṣekavīdhis, and maṇḍala-vīdhis, such as we have here.

The colophon of the mandala ritual translated here cites a tantra called Samvara Ocean Tantra (sDom pa rgya mtsho) as its ultimate source. This and the Jewel Ocean Tantra are said to be the main sources of all of Niguma’s teachings. In the Blue Annals, Roerich suggests that this obscure title may refer to the Ocean of Dakas Tantra, which is one of the major Chakrasamvara explanatory tantras and would make much sense, but it is not at all certain. What is recorded in the Shangpa biographies is that Niguma granted Khyungpo Naljor “the empowerment of Chakrasamvara mandala of sixty-two, thirteen, and five deities.” This seems to be exactly what we have here in The Mandala Ritual of Chakrasamvara, as the directions at the beginning of the empowerment
suggest. Khyungpo received transmissions of the Chakrasamvara cycle from several of his gurus, but this has prominence of place in being directly from Niguma.

The yogini tantras, and Chakrasamvara in particular, are associated especially with tantric sexual practices and the experiences of meditative bliss and other nonnormative Buddhist practices associated with the siddha movement. The term samvara was translated by Tibetans as both "union" or "binding" (dom pa), and as "sublime bliss" (de mchog, from samvara), giving rise to the two names commonly used in Tibetan: Khorlo Dompa, "Binder of Wheels," and Khorlo Demchok "Wheels of Bliss." The interpretation of the term as bliss connotes the fruition of the practice, while "binding" refers to the process of meditation. "Wheels" (khor lo) can be synonymous with "mandala" (kyil khor) and in the tantra refers to the visualizations of the central mandala of Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini with the four direction dakiniś, who are further surrounded by three concentric wheels—the blue mind wheel, the red speech wheel, and the white body wheel. Chakrasamvara practice binds the wheels of the network of the dakinis in the triple wheel configuration. Simultaneously the pattern is mapped on to the practitioner’s subtle energy body, with the wheels corresponding to the three chakras or converging hubs of the energy channels. This simultaneous macrocosm-microcosm application is a signature theory of the tantras. From this description by David Gray, it can be seen that all of these elements from the root tantra are present in Niguma’s two texts as well:

Accordingly, the Cakrasamvara adept, who is shown the mandala in the context of his or her consecration, is to engage in an intensive practice of meditation which involves visualizing the mandala—which is thought to pervade the triple world of ancient Indian cosmology—within his or her body. The practitioner’s body is linked to the larger cosmos via the three wheels of the mandala, which are correlated to the triple world cosmology—to the heavens, earth, and underworlds, respectively—and also the three bodies of a buddha, namely to the reality body (dharmakāya), the
communal enjoyment body (*sambhogakāya*), and the manifestation body (*nirmānakāya*), respectively.\(^8\)

This microcosmic or inner application to the practitioner’s body is more evident in Niguma’s works, which tend to emphasize the completion phase practices of subtle energy control, as in her *Six Dharmas*. The *Mandala Ritual* is of course meant to be a guide for the preceptor bestowing the empowerment or auspicious blessing for the practitioner to pursue the practice, as is clear not only from its contents but also its secondary appellation in the colophon as an empowerment into absorption (*samādhi-abhisheka*). In itself it would be employed only once by a practitioner.

It is the *sādhana* (literally “method of accomplishment”) *Swift Accomplishment of Glorious Chakrasamvara* that would be used as the basis for regular practice. This incorporates the three-wheel visualization as a self-visualization and purification practice. The wheel imagery is extended to include the wheels as weapons, as the meditator visualizes a “slicing and dicing” effect to subdue negative forces. The results of the purification, such as the purging of toxic emotions, obscurations, disease, and so forth, are standard vajrayāna fare. There is a final section for the enactment of the four modes of tantric action—peaceful, enriching, overpowering, and wrathful—which mentions, along with other benefits of the practice, several kinds of physical ailments that are eliminated. This has prompted Miranda Shaw to label the practice as an unusual “Chakrasaṃvara Healing Mandala,” contending that “Niguma is the lineage founder of a specialized meditation that is designed for the healing of illness through visualizing Vajrayogini and Chakrasaṃvara in sacred union.”\(^9\) Though healing in its broadest sense is certainly a component, there are clearly much loftier benefits in mind, including nothing less than total awakening. It does not strike me as a specially designed medical *sādhana*, and it is not utilized that way in the Shangpa tradition. In fact, it is unfortunately not used much at all since simpler methods of practice composed by later holders of the lineage, such as Taranātha, seem to be preferred. Nevertheless, it is a powerful and beautiful practice with an unbroken transmission since its mysterious beginning.
MANDALA RITUAL OF GLORIOUS CHAKRASAMVARA¹⁰

Sanskrit: Śrī-cakrasamvara-mandala-vidhi-nāma
Tibetan: dPal 'khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba

Homage to Glorious Chakrasamvara!

Whoever desires to perform the empowerment conferral of the meditative absorption should first just become well prepared in a place where the mind can engage.¹¹

There set up a nice arrangement of excellent pictures, statues, and so on of the Conqueror Śākya. Then anoint well the ground of the mandala with the five things of a cow,¹² saffron, alcohol, and so forth. Then do the mandala¹³ of sixty-two, thirteen, or five deities. Furthermore, arrange four lotus petals with heaps of flowers of the direction colors (east: blue, north: green, west: red, south: yellow) and the center, making five.¹⁴ Generate the five deities from those. Set up extensive fivefold offerings and five torma, and so on. Then seat the qualified disciples in rows. If they are experienced, have them recite the hundred-syllable mantra of Heruka or the hundred-syllable mantra of Vajrasattva, whichever is appropriate. Then do the preliminary practices from death and impermanence and so on.¹⁵

Then engage oneself in the yoga of the creation phase. In the practitioner's own heart imagine a lotus from paṃ, the sun mandala from raṃ, and upon that a blue hūṃ. Imagining the seven letters circling that, recite the mantra however much is appropriate. Then light rays radiate from hūṃ in the center of the mandala, purifying the sins and obscurations of all sentient beings in the three realms. The light returns and dissolves into hūṃ. From that is generated the mandala of sixty-two, or thirteen, or five deities. The blessings of Body, Speech, and Mind of the awareness beings come to dwell there and seal the empowerment conferral, and so forth; follow the source texts.

Next, saying the mantra om hriḥ ba ha hūṃ hūṃ phat, offer the outer offerings of the five things, the inner offering,¹⁶ the secret offering, and the praises. Then the consecration of the alcohol: inside the kapāla (skull
cup), Saṃvara masculine-feminine arises instantly in the spontaneously present manner. Reciting the mantra, imagine that from the couple’s place of union, vital essence bodhichitta that is the nature of elixir falls and changes the alcohol in the skull-cup to elixir. Then imagine that the couple dissolve into the essence of bliss and fill the skull-cup to the brim. Sprinkle that [elixir] on all of the assembly items and offering substances, consecrating them as elixir.

Next, on the disciples’ heads a lotus arises from \textit{paṁ}, the sun mandala from \textit{ram}, and Bhairava and Kālarātri, and on that, \textit{hūm}. At the throat, from \textit{paṁ}, is a red [four-petaled]\textsuperscript{17} lotus with a red \textit{a}\textsuperscript{18} swelling up in the center. At the heart also is a lotus, sun, and Bhairava and Kālarātri, upon which is \textit{hūm}. At its center is a dharma-source and within that a red \textit{bam}. Have them visualize this.

Then light radiates from the \textit{hūm} on the crown of the head and purifies the sins and obscurations of all beings in the three realms, placing them in the state of the Conqueror Chakrasaṃvara. The light rays gather back and dissolve into \textit{hūm}. That \textit{hūm} completely transforms into the nondual nature of the guru and Heruka,\textsuperscript{19} with all the attire and adornments, in the form of the masculine and feminine surrounded by the four dākinīs. Thus meditate.

Light rays arise from the seed-syllables in their hearts and infuse the great bliss [chakra] with light, purifying sins and obscurations of the body. Think that the vase empowerment has been received.

Then the throat chakra of enjoyment is infused with light, purifying sins and obscurations of speech. Think that the secret empowerment has been received.

Then the dharma chakra at the heart is infused with light, purifying the sins and obscurations of mind. Think that the timeless awareness through wisdom empowerment has been received.

Then the emanation chakra at the navel is infused with light, purifying the sins and obscurations of all three—body, speech, and mind. Imagining that, the fourth empowerment is obtained.

Then the \textit{hūm} at the heart completely changes into the mandala of Five Deities of the Conqueror Chakrasaṃvara. Then also, the four root dākinīs are made to circumambulate the principal ones. Direct the attention there. From the heart of that [Chakrasaṃvara], light rays
arise and strike the bam in the dharma-source. The bam completely transforms into Jetsunma [Vajrayogini], with one face and two hands. She holds a small drum in the right hand and a skull-cup in the left. Her body is red, adorned with the bone ornaments. She is wrathfully smiling and in a playful dancing pose. Direct the attention there.

Then the guru at the crown dissolves into light and melts into the Conqueror at the heart. The Conqueror dissolves into light and melts into Yogini at the navel. From Yogini's right nostril emerges the vowels [of the Sanskrit alphabet] and the consonants from the left. Coming together as a red svästika at her mid-brow, imagine that it revolves intensely. Then Yogini dissolves into light and melts into oneself. One's body also becomes like a body of light, empty and clear. Enter for a moment the meditation on the nature of all phenomena being like the cloud-free sky. Meditating with the mind focused on the guru at the crown in this way causes heat to rise. That is the introduction of the vase empowerment. In terms of the joys, it is the joy of experience.

At the time of directing the attention to the host of deities at the heart, bliss arises without thinking of body-mind. That is the introduction to the secret empowerment. In terms of the joys, it is the sublime joy.

At the time of directing the attention to Yogini in the dharma-source, no thought of body-mind arises. That is the introduction of the empowerment of timeless awareness through wisdom. In terms of the joys, it is the joy that is free of joy.

The essence of the three empowerments existing as one is the introduction to the fourth empowerment. In terms of the joys, it is the coemergent joy.

Then, unborn dharmakäya, in the fashion of unimpeded sanbhogakäya, appears as the deities' form like an illusion. Have them meditate without attachment to it since it is mere appearance with no intrinsic nature, like the reflected image in a mirror.

Offer the single set of five offerings to them. The awareness-beings above the mandala depart, and the pledge-beings dissolve into the disciples' hearts.

By these means, those who have not received this empowerment will receive it, those who have received it will revitalize it, and once all sins quickly
vanish, one will actually see the form of Glorious Great Bliss. Coemergent timeless awareness will be born in one's mind stream, and in this very life one will attain the fourteenth ground, Great Bliss.

Then send the torma, partake of the feast, recite the hundred-syllable mantra, and do the dedication.

This completes the empowerment ritual of meditative absorption in the Five Deities of Chakrasaṃvara that was extracted from the *Saṃvara Ocean Tantra* by Niguma, the dākini of timeless awareness. I, Khyungpo Naljor, having pleased the dākini herself, received it from her. It was translated by Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrö.

**SWIFT ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GLORIOUS CHAKRASAṀVARA**

Sanskrit: *Śrī-cakrasaṃvara-sādhana-nāma*

Tibetan: *dPal ’khor lo sdom pa myur du sgrub pa zhes bya ba’i thabs*

Homage to glorious great bliss timeless awareness.

After first giving rise to the immeasurable spirit of awakening, meditate in the emptiness of all phenomena. From within that emptiness oneself appears with the white letter *brum* on the crown of one's head. It becomes a white four-spoked wheel. On its hub is a lotus and sun and moon, upon which a white *būm* and red *bam* radiate light, establishing beings of the three existences in the state of white Chakrasaṃvara. Light rays return, becoming the white masculine and red feminine deities. Imagine that on the spokes of the wheel are the four Chakrasaṃvara goddesses, white of body, holding flaying knives in their right hands, skull-cups in the left, and *khatvāṅgas*.

On the tips of the wheel's spokes are four *ram*
blazing with the bonfire of timeless awareness.
After the secret union and suchness mahāmudrā offerings,
white bodhichitta with a reddish glow is produced
from the joining place of the feminine and masculine in union.
The stream flows to the crown of one's head.
The four surrounding goddesses unite with their khaṭvāṅgas
as the males,
and streams of bodhichitta fall from their secret places.
The streams become one as they enter one's crown.
Falling to the four places (of crown, throat, heart, and navel),
sins and obscurations are purified.
The wheel spins swiftly, slicing and dicing
all disease and spirits; they are burned by the bonfire
and scattered by the wind into nothing.
Stream, wheel, bonfire, and wind—
stay on that without distraction and repeat the secret mantra.
Focusing on the visualization refines one's dreams.
Śaṃbhogakāya will occur, arising naturally.
That is the wheel of the Body.

Then from the red brum at the throat
on a red wheel and lotus-sun
the red hūm and bām
radiate light out and back as before. In the center the Chakrasaṃvara couple
are a color resembling rubies,
adorned by bones and fresh and dry skulls,
they possess the nine modes of drama. In the four directions the goddesses are red
with knives, skulls, and khaṭvāṅgas.
As before the ram on the spokes blazes
with timeless awareness, making offerings that delight.
A stream of red bodhichitta flows from the joining places
of the main couple and their entourage.
Imagine that it fills one down to the throat, purifying disease, spirits, sins, and obscurations.
Stream, red wheel, bonfire, wind, and repetition of the heart-mantra are no different than before. Imagine it as a red fire pit inside the torso. This is the red wheel of Speech.

The blue wheel of one’s Mind is a lapis-colored brum at the heart. Imagine the sharp four-spoked wheel with a lotus at the hub. Upon sun and moon, Bhairava and Kalarâtri, hûms and vajras radiate and return, becoming blue Chakrasamvara and the red feminine, wrathful by nature, and with entourage. On the tips of the four spokes, dark blue bonfires blaze with roaring and banging. Masculine and feminine unite and arouse their energy, causing nondissipating great bliss to expand, as their laughter of hûm and phat resounds like a thousand claps of thunder.

Sulphate-blue bodhichitta flows from their place of union and fills one down to the heart, purifying disease, spirits, sins, and obscurations of mind. In particular, the bad spirits and hatred are diced by the wheel, burned by the fire, and dispersed by the winds of timeless awareness. A torrential river of bodhichitta purges sins, obscurations, disease, and bad spirits like a waterfall hitting a mountain of ashes.

For pacifying stupidity and fevers, the white Body wheel at the crown spins with a stream of camphor. For the overpowering activity, desire, and chills, the red Speech wheel at the throat spins like burning metal and molten copper. For obstructing spirits, anger, and phlegm, the Mind wheel at the heart spins with a blue stream blazing with blue-black fire. For turning back evil curses,
light rays from the *ḥum* seed form an iron hook
that snare the harm-doers, who are diced by the wheel,
burned by the fire, and scattered by the wind.
To liberate the vow-breakers,
face all the deities outward and
repeat the heart-mantra with *maraya* added to the end.
For the Body, Speech, and Mind wheels,
repetition of the mantra seven hundred thousand times for each
[syllable]
shakes the earth and accomplishes peaceful, enriching, overpowering,
and wrathful activities.

Exert yourself at this total practice of Saṃvara
to complete the fourteen grounds.

I entrust to you the heart life-force of the ḍākini.\(^{32}\)
Do not spread it beyond the one-to-one lineage.
In the *chitta* palace [of your heart]
hold the guru and this close practice as dear as your own life.
Meditate on me, Niguma, on the top of your head to receive my
blessing.
The stages of the ten grounds and the five paths
are traversed through the power of devotion.
This is the ultimate sublime secret mantra.

*The Method of Accomplishment of the Body, Speech, and Mind of the Conqueror Saṃvara* by Niguma, the ḍākini of Timeless Awareness, is complete.

I, Khyungpo Naljor, wrote down the notes\(^{33}\) on these oral instructions
of the ḍākini on palm leaves in the dense forest of teakwood, and kept
them inside an amulet box that I wear always on my body.

May spontaneous, effortless vast benefit for beings be accomplished.
This is the practice of triple white, red and blue Saṃvara.\(^{34}\)

*itti*
INTRODUCTION

The Hevajra tantra is also usually classified as a mother tantra. In his summary of mother tantras, Panchen Sonam Dragpa generalizes that while the Chakrasamvara tantra emphasizes mainly the characteristics of the external karmamudra, or spiritual consort, and the skillful methods that rely upon union practice, the Hevajra stresses the special nature of coemergent bliss. That may be, but the tantra does not give that impression. In any case, the two tantras contain many of the same elements. As with Chakrasamvara, there is a legendary enormous root tantra, from which was extracted the extant Hevajra Tantra in Two Parts as a root text, with several explanatory tantras and commentaries and countless practice texts. Here again is a mandala ritual for use as the initiation process into Hevajra practice, attributed to Niguma.

As discussed in the introduction, this Hevajra practice stands apart from the other texts attributed to Niguma in several ways. In the Peking Tengyur, it is in a different volume than are all of the other Niguma texts, and it is the only one of Niguma’s works that is included in the Derge Tengyur. In addition, it does not seem to have any continuity of transmission within the Shangpa tradition and is not mentioned in any of the Shangpa catalogues that have been searched. There is, however, a record of Niguma’s transmission of the two-part tantra and an empowerment of “Nine Emanated Deities of Hevajra” to Khyungpo Naljor in his biography, which is repeated in Taranātha’s history. This is likely
the source of the mandala ritual translated here, with the nine emanated deities referring to the central deity and the surrounding eight manifestations of the goddess Nairātmyā.

There is a fascinating story about Khyungpo Naljor and Hevajra told by Tāranātha in *The Seven Instruction Lineages.*³ It concerns a master known as “Aged Kāyastha,” the scribe of King Dharmapāla, who wrote a commentary to the Hevajra tantra called *Stainless Union.*⁴ According to the story, Khyungpo Naljor requested this commentary directly from him, and it was translated as usual by Lendarma Lodrō, who attributed it to Kāyastha in the colophon. This, however, does not help in tracing the Niguma lineage of Hevajra.

The deity Hevajra is also important in the core Shangpa practice called *Five Tantras’ Deities,* where he is visualized abiding in the south in the outer mandala and in the heart chakra in the inner mandala. Perhaps it was the popularity of this practice, which boasts of accomplishing five tantras at once, which eclipsed the separate Hevajra practice. Tāranātha developed a practice text of the five tantras that utilizes the creation phase of Hevajra as the basis for all five deities.⁵ On the other hand, the lineage that he traces for the Hevajra tantra in the Shangpa’s five tantras does not include Niguma.⁶ So the presence of this text remains somewhat of a mystery, not surprisingly, as well as evoking a sense of loss that this intriguing practice seems not to be upheld.

MANDALA RITUAL OF GLORIOUS HEVAJRA⁷

Sanskrit: Śrī-hevajra-mandala-vidhi-nāma
Tibetan: dPal dgyes pa rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga zhes bya ba

Homage to Glorious Hevajra!

After finishing hundreds of thousands and tens of thousands of the recitation practice of the Conqueror Hevajra,⁸ retire to a solitary place, and in order to mature those in the family, set up a mandala there [with a lotus of] eight red petals surrounded by vajras and railings. Then
arrange nine bunches of red flowers. Put two ritual vases, filled with substances and adorned, in the center and in the northeast. Decorate it with canopies and curtains and so forth. In the four directions of the mandala set up four sets of five offerings, five tormas, and the articles of the feast all around.

Then the vajra master does the cleansing and, on a comfortable seat, meditates on the creation and completion phases. Instantly, within the empty vase, the infinite palace arises from the letter bhrum. In the middle of that is an eight-petaled red lotus on a lotus stem arisen from pam. In the center is the sun and the corpses of four devils. Upon that create Heruka, either through the five rites, the three rites, or instantaneously. He has eight faces and sixteen arms, or one face and two arms, and is with consort. On the eight lotus petals, from a, create eight one-faced two-armed Nairātmyas. Then the light of one’s hūṃ invokes the awareness beings. Do the offerings and praises, and after doing however many required recitations of the couple’s four mantras, do more offerings. The deities dissolve into the elixir.

Create Amṛtakunḍali in the activity vase, and doing the recitation, cleanse the disciples with that. Then arrange the disciples in rows and do the refuge, arousing the spirit of awakening, supplications, granting of permission, dissolution of concepts, five branches, upholding of vows, and proclamation of truth, all according to the traditional sources. Do the descent of the awareness beings.

Then the disciples supplicate to request the guru to confer the empowerment:

Confer empowerment in Glorious Heruka,
brilliant in order to protect beings,
likewise perfect as the source of all qualities.
I request to be like that now.

Just as great offerings were made
to the Buddha by Vajra Bodhi,
I too, for the purpose of protection,
Beseech now the vajra of the sky.
Supplicating like that, goddesses carrying vases full of elixir emanate from the hearts of the deities of the mandala and the sky and confer the empowerment with the secret stream. Think that this purifies sins and obscurations of the body.

Then say:

Bestow the great vajra empowerment conferral,
worshipped by everyone in the three realms,
totally arisen from the three secrets
of all the buddhas.¹³

Saying that, think that the vase empowerment has been received. Similarly, the secret empowerment [is received] at the throat, the awareness through wisdom empowerment at the heart, and the fourth empowerment at the navel. These empowerments are exclusively for the benefit of others.

Then [there is] the explanation of the regular conferral of the four empowerments on oneself and others:

On one’s head, the syllable *paṭṇ* changes to a lotus stem and upon that is a red eight-petaled lotus with the sun and corpses. Through the three rites or instantaneously, imagine there Hevajra without a consort. On the eight lotus petals, upon suns and corpses, imagine from *a* the eight Nairatmyās full with bliss. Then supplicate as before. Infinite light rays come from the deities on one’s head and totally pervade one’s body inside and out. All obscurations from karmic action and afflictive emotion are cleansed and purified. Imagine that one’s body is the nature of light. By that, one becomes Hevajra without consort. That is the vase empowerment.

Then, supplicate again. The goddesses on one’s head become increasingly blissful and fuse into light.¹⁴ She embraces the male consort and masculine and feminine unite. From their place of union white and red bodhichitta blissfully trickles down and lands on one’s tongue. The arousing of bliss is the secret empowerment.
Again supplicate the host of deities. A single Nairātmyā breaks off from the principal female consort. She embraces, rubs, and unites with oneself as Hevajra. Nondissipating great bliss arises in the body. This is the empowerment of awareness [through uniting with] wisdom.

Then, after making offerings to the host of deities on one’s head, the deities together with their seats dissolve into the crown of one’s head. Possessing the deity’s form, one rests in equipoise in great bliss without fixation on the empty clarity. In short, the essence of all phenomena included in the apparent existence of samsara and nirvana is totally pure, free of all embellishment, and by nature lucid clarity mahāmudrā—rest in that alone. That is the fourth empowerment.

Then yam ram kari15 thoroughly refine the various substances within [the skull-cup arisen] from a, into the five meats and the five elixirs. Offer to the host of deities, and then the yogins partake of it.

Cleanse the five tormas as before and satisfy the guru, Hevajra, the dharma protectors, the local spirits, and the harm-doers with the mantra of all spirits. Sing the vajra song, do the offerings and praises to the host of deities, and the confession.

Dedicate with:

By the merit of my generosity and so forth, may the Conqueror Hevajra be delighted. Having totally completed the six perfections may all beings attain the vajra monarch.

Then the master and everyone together with one voice make this aspiration:

Born into the family and holding the sacred pledge, a teacher of incomparable Hevajra, devoted to the guru and compassionate: may it be so lifetime after lifetime.

Vajra in hand and ringing the bell, reading the profound dharma,
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

consuming the fluids of the queen:
may it be so lifetime after lifetime.¹⁶

Then, circumambulating the mandala, request forgiveness. Do auspicious verses, the departure of the awareness beings, dissolution of the pledge beings into one’s head, and pleasing the vajra master with compensation.

This concludes the brief ritual of the empowerment conferral in Glorious Hevajra by Niguma, the ḍākinī of timeless awareness. Translated by the Vajra ḍākinī of Timeless Awareness herself and Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrō.
The Đākini’s Personal Instructions:
Five Short Texts on Yogic Techniques

INTRODUCTION

These five brief personal or oral instructions (zhal gdams) that are attributed to Niguma in the Peking Tengyur may be the source of the yogic techniques that are used in conjunction with Niguma’s Six Dharmas, and particularly that of inner heat (gtum mo). In most traditions of the path of methods, while the actual seated practice involves visualization and breath-control techniques, there is also a regimen of physical training (lus sbyong, lujong) that enhances the efficacy of the main practice. These individual exercises are known as “trulkor” (’khrul ’khor), a word that in other contexts means “machine” or “device” but is here translated simply as “yogic technique.” The practice of these techniques involves special clothing and housing and was traditionally kept quite secret, hidden from all viewers. The tantalizing accounts in Alexandra David-Neel’s travel books of her surreptitious witnessing of strange goings-on were most likely in regard to such techniques.\(^1\) Any number of texts, commentaries, and descriptions, however, will never successfully convey the actual practice, which must be learned directly from a master who is accomplished in both the physical training and the meditation technique. These descriptions are thus “self-secret,” perhaps more than any other textual accounts. They offer only some tips for those already initiated into their practice.

Niguma’s instructions here are particularly cryptic, and practitioners in this tradition have long relied on other sources for clarification,
which in any case are mostly used to jog one’s memory of the instruc-
tor’s direct demonstration. Lineage holders of the past culled from the
original sources a system of eighteen or twenty-five specific techniques
(though, as noted, there are some issues with enumeration). Perhaps
the most central such text is, again, by the great Tāranātha: *Nigu’s Yogic
Exercises, Root and Commentary*. “Root” in this case refers to a sec-
tion quoted by Tāranātha that appears to be the jumbled remains of
what was once Niguma’s outline of these practices. The commentary is
Tāranātha’s own attempt to make sense of them. He explains:

Most of these yogic exercises each have vital points of visu-
alization that should be learned from the source text. These
are the personal instructions of Niguma, Ḍākini of Time-
less Awareness. They are esoteric instructions for dissolving
the energy-mind in the central channel and for releasing the
knots in the channels, primarily using one’s own body as the
method. They are the esoteric instructions for the supreme
accomplishment of the path of liberation that are known as
“The Eighteen Physical Trainings” (*lus sbyong bco brgyad pa*).
As for the source text of this, the oral directions are some-
what arcane and have been scattered among a great many
words, and there have been many that do not know how
to collect them. Although it is possible that there are select
collections assembled by uneducated persons, the practical
application does not actually emerge clearly. Since I saw that
the practice was close to disappearing, in order to save it and
spread it, I, Tāranātha, having attained some degree of devo-
tion in the glorious Shangpa Kagyu, have not kept it hidden
and have laid it out clearly.2

The “vital points of visualization” to which Tāranātha refers are, at least
partially, apparent in the collection translated here. Most of the cur-
rently available practice manuals, on the other hand, even some illus-
trated notebooks that have been in circulation at monasteries, do not
include these essential visualizations. These five “originals,” if that is
what they are, as well as some others that should have been included in
this set, are indeed contained within the eleven-volume *Shangpa Texts*, hidden in a collection of more than thirty brief instructions labeled with the names of only two of them. This seems to represent a wholesale incorporation of an older collection into the puzzling organization of the *Shangpa Texts*. They are not mentioned individually in either of the Shangpa catalogues written by Jamgön Kongtrul to record his doxological methods.

Comparing the five texts here with that collection and the commentary by Tāranātha, it appears that the exercises described here correlate loosely with the fifth through the eighteenth of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises. In that system, the eighteenth is further subdivided into eight (or maybe nine), which leads to the alternate accounting of twenty-five exercises of Niguma. But who's counting? Perhaps initially they were meant to be one continuous, flowing yoga of body and mind, synchronized in movement and creative visualization.

ESOTERIC INSTRUCTIONS ON OPENING THE CHANNEL

*Nāmo Guru*

These are esoteric instructions on opening the channel:

Sitting cross-legged with spine straight, put your left clenched fist to your chest, extend the right [arm] down vigorously. Then do the same with your left.

After that, the four limbs are vigorously extended for that reason. Open your mouth and also open the eyes wide. Then vigorously shake your four limbs.

After that, meditate on the guru's inner heat. With your body in the seven-point posture of Vairochana,
imagine the central channel remaining straight, and imagine the root guru on your head.

After that, the fire of timeless awareness blazes up again into the central channel and touches the guru's feet, causing elixir to fall—meditate in bliss.

Un-visualizing the guru, fire abides on its own. Un-visualizing the elixir, meditate in emptiness.

This is Niguma's personal instruction. iti

MEDITATION ON CHANNELS, PRĀṆA, AND SUCH

Nāmo Guru

In the meditation on channels, prāṇa, and such, once bliss has arisen in the body, if there is danger of losing the bliss externally due to the bliss falling below, then bringing the prāṇa into the channel entrance is crucial.

In a secluded place, on a soft seat, stand with the two [legs] straight. Demolish down the prāṇa wheel, extend the two hands above the head, and join it together with the fire wheel. Raise the heels and hit the ground.

Visualize that four fingers beneath the navel, from the region where the three channels gather, the fire of timeless awareness of inner heat blazes. It moves up within the avadhūti and straight away reaches the top of the head. Visualize the letter kṣa in the aperture of Brahmā,
and the tongue of fire stretching out.
Imagine that the prāṇa that accompanies the fire
is blue in color and wafting upward,
issuing forth in the manner of smoke.

Then, just at the time of entering,
[the prāṇa] goes to that fire's place.
Imagine that the kṣa blocks the aperture of Brahmā.
That will draw in the vital essence.

To spread the vital essence through the body,
stand and hold the two hands in clenched fists.
Extend the right [arm] to the crook of the thigh
and hold the left one slightly bent.
With the left side [of the body],
forcefully pull toward the right seven times.ª
Similarly with the left extended
forcefully pull toward the right seven times.
Then, with the fingers of the two hands
interlocking over the chest
and the two thumbs under the armpits,
squeeze the breasts from below.
Forcefully twist the upper torso
seven times each to the right and left.
That spreads [the vital essence] through the body.
It releases the flaws in the vital essence.

This is Niguma's personal advice.

MEDITATION ON INNER HEAT IN THE PATH
OF METHODS

Nama Guru

Meditating on inner heat in the path of methods,
if the prāṇa-mind is not captured with precision
and the problem of bodily pain occurs,
one should go to an isolated area
and diligently practice the vajra dance.  

First, to insert in the central channel
there are three: guiding, heat, and gathering.
To first insert in the central channel,
on a soft seat, raise up with the hands,
line up and straighten the legs,
and extend the two clenched fists to the crooks of the thighs.
Holding prāṇa, forcefully draw up the lower prāṇa,
strike the chest three times with the heels [of the hands],
lift up [on the toes] three times and, swirling the arms
like vulture wings, shake the upper torso.

With a straight body and two clenched fists
crossed, press on the breast.
Bend the body, leaning forcefully right and left.
This is done three times; holding prāṇa is crucial.

Then, standing up, cross the two hands
and cover the upper arms,
forcefully twisting the waist right and left.

The visualization is to imagine [the syllable] a at the navel,
and the vital essence of all the channels gather into a.
Meditate on a as unborn emptiness.
Do this three times with everything the same.
If heart-prāṇa arises, imagine a within the heart
and focus the attention on its radiating light.
This will clear it up.

This instruction of the vajra dance is the instruction of the ḍākinī of
timeless awareness. iti
The Yoga of Meditation in the Path of Methods

Namo Guru

In the yoga of meditation in the path of methods, the diseases that are among the results of the three poisons arising in the mind stream are healed by the yogic exercises of physical training.

[1. Clearing up Stupidity]
When the force of stupidity occurs, take the position of Vairochana, while the radiation and convergence of white light illuminates the darkness of stupidity. Imagine the afflictive emotion of stupidity pacified.

[2. Clearing up Agitation]
When the force of agitation makes you restless, put your body in the vajra cross-legged position, grasp the nape of the neck by [interlocking] ring fingers, bend forward and forcefully twist the right and left [arms] three times each. Slap your palms on your head and think that it dissolves.

[3. Clearing up Fury]
When you are infuriated by the force of hungry ghosts, take the position of Amoghasiddhi, and satisfy the dangerous hungry ghosts with a continuous flow of elixir.

[4. Pained by Harm-Doers]
After that, assume the vajra position and with the “burning” mudra at the heart, gaze with wrathful eyes in the ten directions. As the seeds of ten directions blaze all around,
imagine that those who would harm you are expelled. Do a bit of wrathful recitation.

[5. Clearing up Anger]
When the arising of anger in your mind stream results in aching pain in the upper body, assume the vajra position with intertwined fingers on your chest, and twist your chest three times each to left and right, looking to the right and left with wrathful eyes.

[6. Clearing up Pride]
After that, with the mudra of equipoise, hold the belly tight and strike it three times.

[7. Clearing up Desire]
When the arising of desire in your being results in discomfort of the lower body, stretch out prone and wave the legs, doing the dough-kneading mudra with your hands.

For those two the visualization is the same: In the heart center is the letter ma; by the joining of the red and white vital essences, imagine that bliss-emptiness arises in your being.

[8. Clearing up Greed, for Much Descent of Bliss]
When losing [vital essence] externally and lacking heat internally, body and mind are separated, and should be united. Pure inner heat is fire; imagine that fire as fine as a thread reaches through the central channel from top to bottom, and focus the mind there, meditating clearly. When heat arises but bliss does not, use the esoteric instruction of bringing down the vital essence: On a seat that is big enough for three arm spans,
stand up suddenly [with a hop] and point with outstretched forefinger.
Twist and turn as far as possible to the front and similarly as far as possible to the back.

[9. Threefold Shake, for Less Descent of Bliss]
After that, take the heroic sitting posture, with fingers intertwined,
forcefully twist and rub the forearms.
Following that, shake [the body] three times.
That will cause the descent of bliss.

Whichever of those physical trainings you practice, holding the prāṇa is most critical.

Ḍākinī Niguma’s personal instruction. iti

CHANNEL CHAKRAS OF ONE’S BODY

Nama Guru

The channel chakras in one’s own body that are extended should be contracted and those that are contracted should be extended. If one meditates without doing so, discomfort in the channels and prāṇa will develop.

For that, in an isolated place, to raise oneself up by the palms, grasp a staff with two hands.
Put the heel of the right [foot] on the thigh of the left [leg], move back the right knee, and lift up the body.
After that, strike with the left heel three times. Similarly the right, making it straight.
After that, put the two legs together, straight and extended, and strike the ground forcefully three times with the right heel. The same for the left, three times each. After that, set aside the staff.

Cover the chest with the fingers of both hands entwined, with two thumbs under the armpits and squeeze the breasts together. Twist your upper torso forcefully to the right and left three times.

After that, do the small child yogic exercise,$^{22}$ [tilting] your head in four directions. That can also be done three times each.

After that leap up and after that hit the ground with the heels three times.$^{23}$ It is critical not to leave the mat.

That also is the dākini's personal instruction. iti
Niguma’s Aspiration Prayer

ASPIRATION PRAYER OF THE SEALED WORD (“KAGYAMA”)¹

Sanskrit: Arya-praṇidhānarāja-nāma
Tibetan: ’Phag pa smon lam gyi rgyal po zhes bya ba
English (alternative title): The Sovereign of Noble Aspirations

Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

May the ocean of victors in the ten directions and three times, with their abundance of compassionate activity, accomplish all these prayers of mine just as they have been supplicated.

May everything in every form from now on please the guru through immeasurable devotion, and by offering infinite pure bodies and enjoyments, may you ever be close and your activities flourish.

May I attain enlightenment relying on gurus in all lives while hearing, explaining, meditating, and practicing dharma, and not meet with bad āchāryas and bad lamas, or bad friends and bad benefactors.²
May I have good family, health, eloquence, fine physique, charisma, and power in all lives, and with longevity, companions, and wealth arising spontaneously, be respected by all.

May I be free of discord and harmonious with all throughout all my lives wherever I am born, so that beings who see, hear, recall, or touch me perceive beauty and charm that is ever interesting.

May I become the protector, hope, and reinforcement for all sentient beings equaling space, their every desire and hope, whatever they are, satisfied by me exactly as they wish.

May those friends who wish me well, who practice the same aspirations of body, speech, and mind, ever be close from this moment on, and enjoy abundant happiness and pure perception.

May I become a wish-fulfilling gem wherever I'm born and establish all beings in happiness by raining down an immeasurable abundance of all their desires as soon as they think of them.

May all lands and countries wherever I am be free of disease, negative forces, strife, and poverty, and all beings possess long life, health, wealth, and dharma, in an abundance of auspiciousness and well-being.

May I, in this life and in all lives, gain access to the sky-treasure of wealth and dispense the four kinds of gifts³ in the ten directions, ripening and liberating all beings through the ten perfections.

May every mandala of knowledge in the three times all become manifest in a mere instant.
through the sublime knowing of all dharmas in samsara and nirvana without attachment or obstruction.

May I be indisputably adorned by the correct stainless three trainings, such that the world and its gods render offerings and praise, and by placing all beings in sublime ethical discipline, fully perfect all good qualities without exception.

May I be content in a remote hermitage with food and clothes, perfecting ultimate realization without a moment of outer or inner obstacle, ripening and liberating all beings without exception through immeasurable enlightened activity.

May all the arrogant powerful gods and demons, without need of a moment of exhortation or worship, offer their life-force and obey like servants to protect the doctrine with abundant magical power.

May I, by actualizing loving-kindness and compassion, totally pacify destructive hostility that sentient beings have toward each other in the three realms, so that they dwell in the love of a mother toward her only child.

May there be no interruption in manifesting dharmakāya when the time of my death is upon me, so that the spontaneously present form-kāyas help others and my remains and relics continue to influence beings.

May I make offerings, for an ocean of eons, of Samantabhadra's offering clouds equal to space to an ocean of buddhas as numerous as atoms in the universe in all the pure realms of the victors.

May I manifest an ocean of totally pure buddha realms and with immeasurable knowledge and totally pure conduct
thoroughly see the whole ocean of dharmas
and realize the whole ocean of timeless awareness.

May I actualize the melodious speech of an ocean of victors
and proclaim throughout the reaches of space with Brahmā’s voice,
teaching dharma in the languages of all people
and placing all sentient beings in the state of buddha.

May I actualize the absorption of illusion without limit,
just as in Samantabhadra’s life story of illusion,
and instantly manifest buddha bodies
and every buddha field upon a single atom.

May my aspirations, absorptions, and activities
be as boundlessly deep and vast and impossible to measure
as the realms of beings and the depths and reaches of the oceans,
the limits of the sky and the immeasurable realm of reality.

May I emanate as endless universal monarchs
to fulfill the hopes of beings and guard the dharma domain,
and gaining dominion over all realms equaling space,
establish all sentient beings in happiness.

May I become the sovereign of supreme healing,
to instantly soothe the pain of sentient beings
when they are worn out by the suffering
brought on by the future age of disease and weapons.

May there be a rain of five desirables in the ten directions
from thick clouds of abundance equaling the sky,
replete with a wealth of food, drink, textiles, silver, and gold
for the times of hunger and thirst during the age of famine.

May the tremendous force of my bodhisattva activity
manifest precisely in the way appropriate to transform
each and every sentient being throughout the reaches of space
until the ocean of samsara becomes empty.

May I totally subdue powerful and haughty beings
who engaged a perverse path and were not subdued
by the victors in three times and ten directions,
and establish them in buddhahood instantly.

May naturally arising effortless enlightened activity
ripen and liberate all sentient beings
with spontaneously present uninterrupted benefit
for as long as there are sentient beings in samsara.

May my enlightened activity of aspiration
be greater than the combined enlightened activity of aspirations
of the ocean of victors in the ten directions and three times
who, when they were ordinary beings and bodhisattvas,
made aspirations for generating awakening mind for countless
eons,
perfected the two accumulations and actualized buddhahood,
and then through an ocean of qualities, might, and excellence,
ripened and liberated limitless sentient beings.

May all of my aspiration prayers that produce
limitless spontaneously present benefit for others
fully generate sublime awakening, interest, and faith
and be completely realized by whoever adopts them.

May all abundance of auspiciousness and happiness
in the ten directions, three times, samsara and nirvana,
flow uninterruptedly like the course of a great river
and pervade myself and others everywhere in all directions.

Thus ends the Sovereign of Noble Aspirations by Niguma, the dākini of
timeless awareness. iti
Appendix 1: “The Basis of Everything”

by Khyabje Kalu Rinpoche

(Copied by the translator from a scrap of paper circulating in the monastery, circa 1975)

This all-base, buddha nature (sugatagarbha), is the original great timeless awareness occurring naturally through the empty, lucid, unimpeded pristine quintessence of five elements. Not recognizing itself, it is wrapped up in the darkness of ignorance. Thus it presides pervasively as samsara’s common all-base consciousness, the source of all delusion, like the basic ground or principal sovereign. Then the empty [aspect is apprehended] as “self,” the clarity as “other,” and attachment, aversion, stupidity, and all afflicted mentation with its associates occur from its unimpededness. Further, the natural radiance of the five [qualities of] original emptiness, clarity, movement, firm solidity, and continuous flow occur as the appearance of extremely subtle five lights: blue, red, green, yellow, and white. On that basis, then, arise the appearances of the five elements: space, fire, wind, earth, and water. The one [experiencing] these deluded appearances in that way is the aggregate of consciousness, and based on that, first a mental body arises, and then in relation to it, feeling, perception, and formation: four and a half aggregates. Mixing with external elements, such as the father’s semen and the mother’s blood, the coarse physical form of a fully ripened corporeal body consisting of the five elements as orifices, warmth, breath, flesh, and blood is achieved, and the six faculties of the eyes,
ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind occur. Based on that, like the sovereign's heir, the unvirtuous afflicted mentation arises from the aspect of consciousness and virtuous mentation such as faith, compassion, and wisdom arise from the aspect of timeless awareness. Like their emissaries, the six kinds of consciousness arise, and the six objects of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and [mental] phenomena [appear] to them. Then the prince-like afflicted mentation presides over the conference with the six sense faculties, six objects, and six consciousnesses, and a whole host of interdependent causes and conditions are convened. The bodies, speech, and minds of hundreds and thousands of deluded concepts are consigned into service and perform various acts. Habitual patterns, like seeds, are planted in the all-base consciousness, which is like the basic ground. For instance, to grow crops one must assemble many dependent conditions such as water, fertilizer, warmth, moisture, and the seeds to produce the cause and result. Similarly, assembling the various dependent causes and conditions for the seeds of one's previous actions will result in the higher realms and liberation from virtuous causes, and samsara and lower realms from unvirtuous causes.
Appendix 2: The Tibetan Text of *Stages in the Path of Illusion and the Commentary*'

The Tibetan texts of the root and commentary are based on five editions from the Peking Tengyur, Collated Tengyur, Shangpa Texts, Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, and an Ume edition. Where there was significant variation, the translator's choices are referenced in the endnotes to the translation. The few bracketed words represent portions of quotation from scripture that were missing in all Niguma texts.
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Niguma, Lady of Illusion
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

"Niguma, Lady of Illusion"
དིར་བཞི་བཞུགས་ལེགས་ཀྱི་ལེགས་དོན་

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2.2.2. Niguma, Lady of Illusion
2.2.4 Niguma, Lady of Illusion
2.26 Niguma, Lady of Illusion
2.2.8 • Niguma, Lady of Illusion
ིན་བོད་དཔེ་བདུན་མི་བཅོས་པར་བཞིན་བཤེས་པ་ཉིད་མོ ཡིན་བོད་དཔེ་བདུན་མི་བཅོས་པར་བཞིན་བཤེས་པ་ཉིད་
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Niguma, Lady of Illusion
Appendix 2

ཉིད། གཟུགས་པའི་དབང་པོ། མི་ཤེས་ཏེ་ཞི་ཤེས་ཤེས་ཅིང་
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། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་སྱར་བྱ། གཟུགས་པའི་བཞག་ཞེས་
""
Appendix 2

[Text in Tibetan script]

Translation:

[Translated text in English]
2.34 ~ Niguma, Lady of Illusion
Appendix 2

2.35

Appendix 2
2.36 Niguma, Lady of Illusion

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ཨེ་ལེ་བོད་ལུས་ཐག་པར་འར་ཞི། སེམ་གུ་བུམ་གདམ་པར་ཞི་བཟོ་ལ་ཞི་ི་ཟོལ་
སོང་། ཟིང་ཚེ་ནི་ཚོགས་པ་བཅུ་དམེ་འབུམ་བཤེས་པར་གཉིས་པའི་འོག་མོ་
ཕམ་། བཟོ་མོ་མ་མ་བུ་མ་དགེ་པོ་ི་མ་ཁྲི་བཞི་མཐོ་བར་བཞིན།

ཉི་མངོན་ཐེ་དེ་ཁུང་ཁུང་ན། ས་གཞི་ས་སངས་སུ་སོགས་པ་གཞུང་ལན་སུ་མ་ཐོབ་
གནས་པ་མས་ལྕེ་དུས་རྫོག་པར་ཟོམ་པའི་ཐོའ་མ་དེ། བཞུགས་བྱུར་ཐོབ་ཞིས་
བས་སུ་དང་། སྣོད་སྲོང་གཞི་བཞི། སྣས་བསྟོད་པར་ཟོམ་པའི་ཐོའ་མ་དེ། བཞུགས་བྱུར་ཐོབ་ཞིས་
ཐེ་ནོར་བྱུགས་གཞུང་པ་སོགས་པ་གཞུང་ལན་སུ་མ་ཐོབ་གནས་པ་མས་ལྕེ་
གནས་པ་མས་ལུས་ཐག་པར་འར་ཞི། སེམ་གུ་བུམ་གདམ་པར་ཞི་བཟོ་ལ་ཞི་ི་ཟོལ་
སོང་། ཟིང་ཚེ་ནི་ཚོགས་པ་བཅུ་དམེ་འབུམ་བཤེས་པར་གཉིས་པའི་འོག་མོ་
ཕམ་། བཟོ་མོ་མ་མ་བུ་མ་དགེ་པོ་ི་མ་ཁྲི་བཞི་མཐོ་བར་བཞིན།
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2.40 •

**Niguma, Lady of Illusion**

[Text continues in a language that is not clearly legible due to the quality of the image.]
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སོགས་པའི་འཕྲིན་འཛིན་པའི་ནག་རིང་ལེགས་པའི་བརྙན་པོ་ཀྲུངས་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་
སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་དེ་བཟུང་སེམས་དཔའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་འཕྲིན་འཛིན་དུ་གྲོང་གི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་
བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་
དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་
བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་
དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་
དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་
དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་སྟེང་སྤྱོད་

དེའི་མཛད་མཁྲིས་བྲིས་ཀྱི་སྐབས་དང་དཔལ་བེད་བཅས་ཏེ་བཞི་བོད་
བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ
བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ
བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ
བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ

སངས་རྒྱས་བོད་དུ་གཞི་བེད་བཅས་ཀྱི་ཡུས་དང་སྟོན་པོ་བཅས་གྱི་བོད་
དུ་གཞི་བེད་པའི་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ་ལོ་ཟོཁ

དེའི་མཛད་མཁྲིས་བྲིས་ཀྱི་སྐབས་དང་དཔལ་བེད་བཅས་ཏེ་བཞི་བོད་

བོད་ཡིག་[ཁོ་རིང་པོ་ཆེན་ཕྲུལ་]་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་། བོད་ཡིག་གི་ཐོ་བཱ་དོན་པའི་བུ་ཁོང་འཛམ་ཤིང་.
2.46 "Niguma, Lady of Illusion"
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ཐུས་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། དེས་གཞན་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། བོད་ཀྱི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ་གཞན་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། ཚོགས་རྒྱས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་དེ། དེས་གཞན་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། གཞན་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། བོད་ཀྱི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ་གཞན་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། ཚོགས་རྒྱས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་དེ། དེས་གཞན་ཚད་ཀྱང་ཆུབ་ཐོབ་གཞན་བཅོས་སོགས་བོད་ཀྱིས་ཇི་རེ་ཚོགས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་ཞི་ནི་དོན་ལས་འོད་བསྟན་པ་དེ། ཚོགས་རྒྱས་ཞིང་བསྟན་པ་དེ།
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ཨུ་ཐོ་ཤེུ་ད་པ་ན་བཞི་བཞུགས་ཤུས་པར། སུ་ཏོ་ད་ད་ད་ཐ་མ་ ལེགས་པའི་བོད་ཆོས་གད་ཀྱང་བཞུགས་ཤུས་ཤུས་བཤད་པར་ ས་ཐུ་སྡུག་བསུམ་བཞུགས་ཤུས་པར་དོན་དོན་འཐོབ། སུ་ཏོ་ད་ད་ད་ཐ་མ་ ལེགས་པའི་བོད་ཆོས་གད་ཀྱང་བཞུགས་ཤུས་བཤད་པར་ ས་ཐུ་སྡུག་བསུམ་བཞུགས་ཤུས་པར་དོན་དོན་འཐོབ།
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བོད་ཀྱིི་ཐོང་ལས་ཐུན་པོ་ཙུམ་དྲི་བུ་ཆེ་ཐེག་

{ཤུགས་དི་ཐུན་པོ་ཙུམ་དྲི་བུ་ཆེ་ཐེག་}
NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

1 The so-called Eight Great Chariots of the Practice Lineages (sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad) is a system of identifying the streams of esoteric instructions (man ngag) that came into Tibet from India. Based on an initial listing by Prajñāraśmi (1517–1584), it was developed primarily by the great Tibetan savant Jamgon Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé (1813–1900) as a doxographical tool in his great efforts to preserve the histories and teachings of all those lineages by collecting and printing them in the large compendiums known as his Five Great Treasuries. He enumerates these eight chariots as (1) Nyingma, (2) Kadam, (3) Lamdre, (4) Marpa Kagyu, (5) Shangpa Kagyu, (6) Zhijé and its branch of Chöd, (7) Dorje Naljor Druk (or Jordruk), and (8) Dorje Sumgyi Nyendrup. See Jamgon Kongtrul, The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions.

2 Jamgon Kongtrul mentions the existence of another life story written as a praise authored by Nyukla Panchen (sMyug la Pan chen Ngag dbang grags pa, 1458–1515), but this text has not come to light. See n. 62.

3 'Chi med rang grol. This is really more of a subject name. The actual title is Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness (dPal 'chi med ye shes chen po).

4 dPal 'khor lo sdom pa myur du sgrub pa and dPal 'khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga.

5 dPal dgyes pa rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga.

6 Clearing up Darkness of the Mind, T-CW, vol. 17, 459 (f. 22a1–4). Taranatha (1575–1635) gives his full name as Kunga Nyingpo Tashi Gyaltsen Palzangpo (Kun dga' snying po bKra shis rgyal mtshan dPal bzang po). He used the Sanskrit translation of his title Drolwai Gonpo (sGrol ba'i mgon po) as his name to show his close connection with the Indian tradition, as he studied directly with Indian teachers in Tibet. Taranatha was an incredible master, historian, and philosopher, whose prolific writings encompass nearly every aspect of knowledge in Tibet, with his collected works numbering twenty-three volumes. He is remembered particularly in connection with the Jonang school, as his most common epithet “Jonang Taranatha” or “Jonang Jet-sun” clearly indicates, but his influence is much broader.
7 Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self*, 115: “Even Indian Buddhist hagiographical narratives are scarce and are limited to idealized renderings of the life of the Buddha and a few other works.”

8 *The Life Story of the Supreme Learned Nāro Panchen (mKhas mchog nā ro pa n chen gyi rnam thar)* by Sangye Bum, in the *Rwalung Kagyu Golden Rosary*, vol. 1, 87–129, a collection of biographies of the Middle Drukpa masters in Rwalung, compiled 1799–1803.


10 See, for example, the recounting of this tale by Bu-ston, translated by Obermiller in *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, 89–91. One of a group of Ānanda’s disciples called Madhyanētika is prophesied by Ānanda to be the future settler of Kashmir, “the place suitable for mystic absorption and the best resting-place.” In fulfillment of that prophecy, the events of the story unfold more or less as related here. In terms of the drastic environmental change in the geography of Kashmir that resulted, the time of the previous buddha might be more appropriate. See also n. 65.

11 Nāropa’s dates are given as fire-dragon to iron-dragon year, which would be 956–1040. Atisha’s departure for Tibet is reliably dated to 1040, and he brought relics from the cremation of Nāropa with him. The stūpa in which they are enshrined still survives in Nethang Dolma Lhakang temple, founded by Atisha. According to Peter Roberts’s introduction in *Mahāmudrā and Related Instructions*, the common erroneous dates of 1016–1100 (such as in Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*) were the result of taking literally an episode in Tsangnyon Heruka’s version of the life of Marpa in which he visits Nāropa. However it turns out that the visit and Nāropa’s song are derived from one of Tsangnyon’s visions and are without historical basis.

12 See Guenther, *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*, xi–xii, which has the following information: born into the Shākya clan, brahmin caste, his father was named Zhi ba go cha (Shāntivarman), and mother dPal gyi blo gros (Shrimati), who was the daughter of the great king sKal ldan grags pa. They had only one daughter, the princess dPal gyi ye shes (Shrijñana). Nāropa’s wife was Dri med pa (Vimala), whose mother was the Brahmini Nigu. (Note that the Sanskrit names are reconstructions from the Tibetan.) These names accord with those given in the biography by Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (1284–1339). However in *The Life Story of the Supreme Learned Nāro Panchen* by Sangye Bum, the father’s name is given as the brahmin dGe ba bzang po, and his mother’s name as the brahmin dPal gyi ye shes (89–90; 2a6–b1), which in other places is actually the daughter’s name.

13 The earliest biographies of Nāropa, such as that of Gampopa (1079–1153) and Lama Zhang (1123–1193), do not name a specific birthplace other than simply “the west.” All accounts of Nāropa include the story of a dākini appearing to him and telling him to “go east” to find his guru Tilopa, which really only makes sense if he is somewhere in the west. In *The Life Story of the Supreme Learned Nāro Panchen*, which claims to have compared five different biographies, Sangye Bum (88) gives Nāropa’s birthplace as the “land of Moslems” (kha chei yul), which is almost universally interpreted to mean Kashmir. (Recall that Moslems gained control of Kashmir in the fourteenth century.) In case this is not clear, Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (1284–1339) specifies “ka smi ra,” transcribing the Indian “Kashmir” as nearly as is possible in Tibetan in his version of the life story in the *Kagyu Golden Rosary*, f. 26a. Khachö Wangpo (1350–1405) is
even more specific, saying: “In the east of India, the town of Jammu (‘Dzam bu) in Srinagar (Sri na ga ra), a district of Bha ga la.” *Earring of Accomplishment*, f. 1b1. Srinagar and Jammu are easily identified in the southeastern part of the Kashmir valley. In the Tibetan dictionary, Bangala is identified as an early Tibetan name for Zahor (usually located in northwest India), which, it says, is currently called “Ca la.” *BD*, vol. 2, 2444. The biography by Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal (1473–1557), called *The Amazing, Wonderful Life of Nāropa*, which was translated by Herbert Guenther in *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*, is a verbatim copy of Khachö Wangpo’s, a very common practice in Tibetan literature, where plagiarism is truly the highest form of flattery. Dorje Dze-ö’s biography of Naropa, translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen in *The Great Kagyu Masters*, has the same information. It seems that it is only because of the inexplicable identification of the Tibetan transliteration “Bha-ga-la” as “Bengal” in these two translations (despite the obvious reference to Srinagar and Jammu) that Nāropa has been widely viewed in the Western world as Bengali. Later Tibetan authors such as Tāranātha have upheld Kashmir as his birthplace. One last twist to this research is that Sangye Bum’s description of “the land of Moslems,” identical to the one in Niguma’s life story, adds that it is also called “Kosala!” *Rwalung Kagyu Golden Rosary*, 89 (f. 2.a6). This ancient kingdom where the Buddha Shākyamuni spent most of his teaching life is nowhere near Kashmir or Bengal, but somewhere in the middle. This seems to come out of nowhere, and I have no explanation for it. On Nāropa’s birthplace see also Jo nang Taranatha, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, 46 and 115, n. 157.

For example, in his translation of the *Blue Annals*, George Roerich notes that modern Tibetan pilgrims believe the location of Pullahari (alternately called Pushpahari) to be in Kashmir near Srinagar (400). And more interestingly, the colophon to Tilopa’s *Esoteric Instructions on the Six Yogas* (*Chos drug gi man nag*) states that it was translated by Nāropa and Marpa in Pushpahari in the place of the Moslems (*kha che'i gnas*), again referring to Kashmir (Toh. 2.330, f. 2.71a2–3).

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14 For example, in his translation of the *Blue Annals*, George Roerich notes that modern Tibetan pilgrims believe the location of Pullahari (alternately called Pushpahari) to be in Kashmir near Srinagar (400). And more interestingly, the colophon to Tilopa’s *Esoteric Instructions on the Six Yogas* (*Chos drug gi man nag*) states that it was translated by Nāropa and Marpa in Pushpahari in the place of the Moslems (*kha che'i gnas*), again referring to Kashmir (Toh. 2.330, f. 2.71a2–3).


20 Roerich, *BA*, 390.

21 *rus pa'i rgyan can*: The actual description is “the dākini of timeless awareness with whom it is meaningful to be connected [and who] has bone ornaments” (*ye shes kyi mkha’ gro ma brel tshad don ldan rus pa'i rgyan dang ldan pa*). Tsangnyön Heruka, *The Life of Marpa the Translator*, 38. Fun fact: Tsangnyön Heruka was also called “Adorned with Bone Ornaments” (*gIshang smyon he ru ka Rus pa'i rgyan can*).

22 Ibid., 32 and 80, respectively. The *Four Seats Tantra* (*Catuhiptha; gDan bzhi*) is a mother tantra of Highest Yoga Tantra. In Sangye Bum’s *Biography of Marpa* in the *Rwalung Kagyu Golden Rosary*, Marpa receives this from ‘Phags pa rang byung. Vol. 1, 136. Khyungpo Naljor did not receive this tantra from Niguma either; it did not seem to be in her repertoire.

23 *grong khyer der che bai' pa pandita naro ta pa dang/ rin chen rdo rje gnyis bzhugs so. ST*, vol. 1, 40 (f. 2b4).
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2.4 The Blue Annals (Deb ster ngon po) by Gö Lotsawa Zhonnu Pal (1392–1481): chos drug gi gams pa ’di rnam shes pa nga dang lwa ba pa ma gtogs med. Vol. 2, 856. In the translation, Roerich inserts “Kambalapāda” as another name for Lavāpa, though this identity is not certain. The statement in Khyungpo Naljor’s life story is in ST, vol. 1, 92 (f. 17b4).

2.5 Jo nang Taranātha, The Seven Instruction Lineages, 33–36; and Taranātha, Taranātha’s History of Buddhism in India, 241–45. The supplementary notes in the back of the latter (408) reveal that the translators also identify him with Kambhala, as in the Blue Annals, although the author Gö Lotsawa did not make that identity explicit.

2.6 Jamgon Kongtrul, TOK, vol. 1, 526; The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, 137. Ācārya Lavāpa is also mentioned often in the various biographies of Tilopa. By some accounts, it was lucid clarity that Tilopa received from him, and Taranātha seems to corroborate this, although there are many versions. For a discussion of this issue, see Mar-pa Chos-kyi bLo-gros, The Life of the Mahāsiddha Tilopa, 69–70, n. 31.

2.7 Templeman, Taranātha’s Life of Kṣanācārya/Kānha, 82.

2.8 A Supplement to the History of the Lineages, DZ, vol. 18, 102–3 (ff. 2b6–3a3). For a brief and confusing discussion of Lavāpa’s identities and dates, see Jo nang Taranātha, The Origin of Tara Tantra, 60, n. 173. Also see some stories about this siddha in Dudjom Rinpoche’s The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 1, 485–87. Here he is identified with Indrabhūti the Younger, son of King Já, as his teacher, whereas Taranātha associates him with Indrabhūti the Middle. In fact much of this confusion may arise from the multiple Indrabhūtis.

2.9 Padmasambhava and Jamgon Kongtrul, The Light of Wisdom: Vol. 1, 37.

30 Gyatso, Apparitions of the Self, 251.


32 ST, vol. 1, 736–37 (ff. 2b4–5a1).


34 Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary, ST, vol. 1, 796 (f. 31b3), referencing the Avatamsaka Sūtra, in the commentary to verse 199.

35 One good attempt to cover a broad spectrum on the subject is The Presence of Light, edited by Matthew Kapstein, and particularly his own contribution therein.


37 Lama Gyaltseten, oral communication to the translator. There are many accounts in recent as well as ancient history. See Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche, Rainbow Painting, for a particularly interesting account of a woman who was observed in the process. For instance: “From the ends of the bones, swirls of rainbow light were coiling out as the body continued to fall apart” (182).

38 Namkhai Norbu, The Crystal and the Way of Light, 128.


41 ‘ja’lus chi bamed pa’i sku can ma, in Transference of White Khechari (mKha’ spyod dkar mo’i ’pho ba) by Gyurme Dchen, ST, vol. 3, 317 (f. 2a4).

42 Namkhai Norbu, The Crystal and the Way of Light, 129.

43 On the reticence of Indian Buddhists to reify the light imagery, see Kapstein, “The Strange Death of Pema the Demon Tamer,” 123–24.
44 "Then, due to the yoga of karmamudra, one's impure physical body is transformed into a more subtle and refined state. Once this has merged in one's experience with the enlightened embodiment that is simply the unity of subtle energy and mind, this is termed 'the vajra embodiment of the rainbow body', or 'master of awareness'. This is not considered to be a body within any of the three realms. However, since one lacks direct experience of the actual nature of phenomena, one is not yet considered a master of awareness who has transcended the ordinary world. And even though the enlightened embodiment that is simply the unity of subtle energy and mind may have been achieved, if the gross physical body has not yet been transformed, it is not considered the enlightened embodiment of a master of awareness. But once what is termed 'the enlightened embodiment of nondual timeless awareness' has been achieved, it is impossible for the gross physical body not to be transformed; and so the enlightened embodiment of primordial unity constitutes that of a master of awareness who has transcended the ordinary world." Jamgon Kongtrul, *TOK*, vol. 3, 514. This and the following two citations from this source are translated by Richard Barron in Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge: Books Nine and Ten: Journey and Goal*.

45 "Thus, when the experiences of ordinary body, speech, and mind that pertain to samsara are eliminated, all the other aspects of the mind-body aggregates are transformed. Under those circumstances, the expression 'the accomplishment of the vajrakāya, the rainbow body' is used, since the impure experience of ordinary body has been transformed; as well, the expression 'the accomplishment of the enlightened embodiment of nondual timeless awareness' is used, since what has been gained is the experience of the 'equal taste' of the four vajras." Jamgon Kongtrul, *TOK*, vol. 3, 521.

46 "When even the most subtle aspects of the subtle channels, energies, and bindu have been refined so that they are free of obscuration, one is purified of the ordinary experience of the body and abides on the thirteenth level. This is the actual accomplishment of the state of Vajradhara, that is, the enlightened embodiment of timeless awareness, the rainbow body of the consummate path of no more training." Ibid., 526.

47 "The attainment of the thirteenth bhūmi, which is the path of the ultimate conclusion, is when the subtlest aspects of the nādiṣīs, vāyus and bindus are clear and free of obscuration, the ordinary body is purified, and the rainbow wisdom body is attained." Dagpo Tashi Namgyal (1512–1587), *Rays of Light from the Jewel of the Excellent Teaching*.


49 *The Life Story of Buddha Vajradhara (Sangs rgyas rdo rje 'chang gi rnam par thar pa)* by Mokchokpa (either the first incarnation, Rin chen brtson grus, or the second incarnation, Kun dga' 'od), in *Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies, ST*, vol. 1, 1–36. This whole text was also copied verbatim in the Vajradhara biography by Lhatsun Rinchen Namgyal (1473–1557), who also reproduced the life story of Nāropa that was translated into English by Herbert Guenther.

50 Ibid., 3–4 (f. 223–b2).

51 Ibid., 4 (f. 2b2).

52 Ibid., 16–17 (f. 8b5–9a1). Also see Hanson and Hanson, "The Mediating Buddha," where the same conclusion is approached from a different perspective.

53 Niguma, *Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary, ST*, vol. 6, 778 (f. 22b5–6).

54 Mokchokpa, *The Life Story of Buddha Vajradhara, ST*, vol. 1, 11 (f. 6a4–5).

55 Campbell, *Traveller in Space*, 139.
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See, for instance, David Gray’s discussion in *The Cakrasamvara Tantra*, 77-103, where dakinis “were initially considered to be a class of nonhuman beings, akin to the rākṣasī demonesses, who were notable for their carnivorous appetite” (84).

This story of the guru throwing away the precious offering of the disciple appears again and again in Tibetan narratives. Nāropa thus disposes of all of Marpa’s gold (Roerich, *BA*, 401), and even the epitome of all gurus, Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava, throws it around and displays his ambivalence. Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born*, 60-61.

Tib. *Mi che ba*, “Not Great,” the name of the first of five Pure Domains (gTsang ma’i gnas) of the form realms.

This reading from Tāranātha’s Shangpa history (*Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind*, 457; f. 21a4) and elsewhere of *khor ba’i rgya mtshor bskyur byed pa’i/ chags sdang rtogs pa ma tshogs ’di* is preferable to *bskyur ba yi* in the Shangpa Text version (vol. 1, 90-91; ff. 166b-172a), which would literally read, “This variety of desirous and hateful thoughts of stranding in the ocean of cyclic existence.” I must confess confusion about the translation of *bskyur ba* as “stirring” (Kapstein) or “whirling” (Riggs). I find only meanings concerning “leaving behind” or “throwing out,” as in the famous *zan bskyur* of the gCod practice: throwing out (the body) as food.

The following list of instructions received is from Khyungpo’s life story (*ST.*, vol. 1, 91; f. 173b-84) and is checked against Tāranātha’s *Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind* (*T-CW.*, vol. 17, 458; f. 21b1-6): Vajra Lines; Stages in the Path of Illusion; Five Tantric Deities: empowerment, sādhana, and instructions; empowerments of Nine Emanated Deities of Hevajra and Thirteen Deities of the Armored One; Two Part [Hevajra] and [Vajra] Tent [Tantra]; Sampuṭa [Tantra] with its sādhana; extensive, [medium], and brief creation phase of the Armored One; instructions of the Fourfold Suchness; empowerment into Chakraśātikā mandala of sixty-two, thirteen, and five deities, and teachings of many tantras and sādhanas (in Tāranātha only); White and Red Khechari; obscuration-purification of Four Tantra Classes; completion phase of Chakraśātikā Five Families (Tāranātha has rim lnga, “five stages” rather than rigs lnga); completion phase of Vital Essence; and ascertainment and teaching of all yogic applications (las tshogs) of Vajradākinī Tantras; (or, according to Tāranātha, of all Dharma Cycles of Jñānadākinī Tantras).

*Nāḍā* in Sanskrit means sound or vibration and here indicates that the instruction was not written. According to Lochen Gyurme Dechen, Tangrong Gyalpo wrote down only the two illustrations but not the oral instructions, so they did not become well known. However, Gyurme Dechen himself received the practical instructions on these two illustrations from Kunga Drolchok (Kun dga’ grol mchog) and wrote them down in the text called *Transference in White Khechari* (*rnKha’ spyod mkar mo’i pho ba*), which is in *ST.*, vol. 3, 315-33.

Jamgön Kongtrul, *The Beryl Key Catalogue*: “*rno gcbog pa phyi ma kun dga’ od kyis mdzad pa.*” *GK*, vol. 10, 473 (f. 8a5). Then again, more thoroughly, in *Shangpa Catalogue*, it states: “The Vajradhara and Niguma life stories and Niguma’s Praises incorporating the thirty-seven [factors of] enlightenment were all three written by the latter Mokchokpa, Kunga Ō. Both the Vajradhara [life story] and Niguma’s Praises are not always reliable, so do not cling overly much to trusting in the words. There is no exaggeration or depreciation in *The Life Story of Niguma.* Nevertheless, the line of the reading transmission is presented here. Do not confuse [the author with] Muk
chokpa Rinchen Tsöndru. There is also Niguma's *Life Story Praises* written by Nyukla Pañchen. ST, vol. 9, 50 (f. 4b2–6).

I have not located this other life story of Niguma by Nyukla Pañchen Ngawang Drakpa (sMyang la Pan chen Ngag dbang grags pa, 1458–1515), though he also wrote a biography of the madman of Central Tibet (dBu myon) that is available. Niguma's Praises incorporating the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment (*byang phyogs bstod pa*) follows directly on her *Life Story* in the Shangpa Texts. Upon comparison to the edition in the Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, it certainly does appear corrupt, leading one to believe that either the Kinnaur text was revised or that it comes from a separate source not available to Kongtrul.

Oral communication to Christian Charrier, October 15, 2008, who kindly pursued this question with Mokchokpa Rinpoche in France on my behalf. I have not been able to locate the succession of Mokchok incarnations to verify the names.

Ye shes kyi daki ma ni gu ma'i rnam thar, in ST, vol. 1, 37–48. Also consulted were the *Life Story* from the Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, vol. 1, 529–35 and *The Life Story of the Supreme Learned Nāro Pañchen* by Sangye Bum (Sangs rgyas 'bum), where the first section on the tale of Kashmir is found nearly verbatim. Significant variations have been noted.

Nyi ma'i gung pa: a group of Ananda's followers, and their foremost leader, who attained the state of foe-destroyer (*arhant*) at midday. Another accounting of his name reports that Ananda went to pass away on an island in the Ganges midway between two groups who wanted his remains. A *rṣi* (sage) with five hundred disciples came and requested to enter the order. At midday in the middle island he attained arhant, so he was named Madhyāntika. See Cook, *Light of Liberation*, 179. Madhyāntika is credited with the introduction of Buddhism to Kashmir in the third century BCE. A good account of this legend can be found in Obermiller's translation of Bu-ston's *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, 89–91. There is also a short account in Taranātha, *Taranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, 29–33, and another in Roerich, *BA*, 23 that Gö Lotsāwa translated from "a stray page from an Indian text on the hierarchy of the Doctrine." Jamgon Kongtrul praises Niguma as "emanated from Madhyāntika's blessing." *Garland of Udumbara*, 3b.

Nāga are said to be subterranean beings. Also of note, one of the three tribes said to inhabit the area were the nāga tribe. The Chinese pilgrim and historian Hsuan-tsang relates that the land was protected by a dragon, possibly the same species as nāga. Cook, *Light of Liberation*, 269.

bdud rtsi 'byung ba ("arisen from elixir") as this expression is found in the same tale in Sangye Bum's Nāro Biography. Also see Cook, *Light of Liberation*, 272, concerning a vihāra called Amṛtabhāvana built by the queen Amṛtaprabhā.

†Ta na sdug pa, literally "Pleasing to Behold," the principal city of the god Indra on top of Mount Meru, according to ancient Indian cosmology. The whole city is made of gold and filled with special medicinal herbs. See Jamgon Kongtrul, *The Treasury of Knowledge: Book One: Myriad Worlds*, 116–18, for a description.

*ST*, vol. 1, 40 (f. 2b3–4). Sangye Bum's *The Life Story of the Supreme Learned Nāro Pañchen* (where the story of Kashmir is otherwise nearly identical) varies only slightly in stating "It is a city exclusively of beer maids, there being thirty-six hundred thousand." 89 (f. 2a6). From this point on, the two texts diverge into their respective sto-
ries of Niguma and Naropa. I am not quite sure what to say about the beer maids. Certainly thirty-six hundred thousand beer maids would make any place special. Keep in mind that one classic place to find dakinis is in the bar, serving alcohol.

Naroṭapa is a variant of Naropa. Ratnavajra (Rin chen rdo rje) was another master associated with Kashmir, a disciple of Dombiheruka. There are many works attributed to him in the Tengyur. In Kashmir he composed a Chakrasamvara sādhana that was given to Nāropa. Templeman, Taranathā's Life of Kṛṣṇācārya/Kānha, 94. He is also listed as one of the six doorkeepers at Vikramashila monastery: he was at the center while Nāropa was at the northern gate. Roerich, BA, 106.

The mother's name is added from the text. At this point was undertaken under a cooperative agreement with the state of Sikkim, for a useful collection.

Naroṭapa. As a young man, he was bestowed by the great lord King Bhāsyaśākta with the name Naroṭapa and was given the Sun and the Moon, also signed by the Sun and the Moon, also signed by the Sun and the Moon, also signed by the Sun and the Moon.

The profound long-life empowerment of Ni and Dhi (Niguma and Sukhasiddhi) was bestowed by the two dakinis of timeless awareness on Bo dong Jigs med grags pa at the age of sixteen. Jamgön Kongtrul, Catalogue of the Treasury of Precious Key Instructions, DZ, vol. 18, 512 (f. 66b1).

Bo dong Panchen Chokley Namgyal (Bo dong pan chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal), also known as Jigme Dragpa ('Jigs med grags pa) was one of the greatest minds to appear in Tibet. His four Denyi Dupa (De nyid dus pa) (The Compendium of Suchness) collections are magnificent compendia of the state of tantric knowledge as it existed in the first half of the fifteenth century. In a way, the Denyi Dupa Gyapa, which makes up the majority of these 137 volumes, is an early tengyur prototype, with writings by Tibetan authors. The scanning of these volumes of the Denyi Dupa collections was undertaken under a cooperative agreement with Ven. Doboom Rinpoche of...
Tibet House New Delhi, the original publisher. Tibet House hopes to reprint the Bodong texts in a new reorganized edition. This project is still in process (TBRC). The Shangpa-related texts can be found in vols. 57, 93, and 103.

81 For a discussion of the history of the Bodong tradition and specifically its literary output, see Chok Tenzin Monlam, “The Life and Works of Bodong Chokley Namgyal.” For recent attempts to reinvigorate this tradition, visit the web site of the Bodong Tradition, www.bodong.org.

82 Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, published under the title Śaṅś-pa Bka'-brgyud-pa Texts. It contains the collected biographies and teachings of the Shangpa Kagyu tradition, reproduced from an ancient manuscript from Himachal Pradesh, from the monastery of gSang sngags chos gling.

83 The following texts from the present book can be found in vol. 1 of the Kinnaur two-volume collection: Stages in the Path of Illusion and its Commentary, Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, Aspiration Prayer of the Sealed Word, Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness, Three Dharmas to Integrate on the Path, and Niguma’s Life Story.

84 Tsondru Zangpo (brTson 'grus bzang po) was the name of the great adept known as Tangtong Gyalpo (Thang stong rgyal po), the “King of the Empty Plain,” but he liked to call himself the “Madman of the Empty Valley” (Lung stong smyon pa). His teachings are important in many lineages, and he is remembered for his miraculous construction of iron suspension bridges throughout the Himalaya. For his fascinating story, see Stearns, King of the Empty Plain.

85 Collection of the Essentials (sNying po kun 'dus) contains Tangtong Gyalpo’s texts on the Niguma teachings, found in Supplemental Texts to the Collected Works of Thang-stong-rgyal-po Series (Grub chen thang stong bka’ bum gyi rgyab chos), vol. 1, 241–386, and in Jamgön Kongtrul, The Treasury of Precious Instructions (gDams ngag rin po che’i mdzod), vol. 8, 147–205. These works are signed “Madman of the Empty Valley” (Lung stong smyon pa), one of the names the dakinis gave Tangtong Gyalpo. Also see Gyatso, “The Literary Traditions of Thang-stong Rgyal-po,” 186–202, for more information about Tangtong Gyalpa’s Niguma texts and his role in the Shangpa tradition.


87 Kunga Drolchok, Hundred Guides of Jonang (Jo nang khris brgya) is a collection of texts containing the explanations of the guiding instructions (khris) for 108 special precepts of Buddhist practice whose transmissions converged and were collected in the Jonangpa tradition. They are found in DZ, vol. 18, 1–380, including a supplement by Taranātha. Kunga Drolchok (Kun dga’ grol mchog) was one of the principal masters of the Jonangpa school, founded in the eleventh century by Yumo Mikyo Dorje (Yu mo Mi bskyod rdo rje) and named after its principal seat in the Jomonang valley in the Lhatse country of Tsang. The school is known as the locus for the philosophical tenet called “other-emptiness” (gzhan stong).

88 Taranātha is counted as one of the lineage holders in the Shangpa tradition. He reported receiving all relevant transmissions and realizations before the age of twenty. Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind, 511–12 (f. 48a6–b1). His teachings in that tradition are found primarily in vols. 14, 15, 17 and 20 of the Dzamthang edition of his Collected Works (T-CW).

89 dpal ldan shangs pa’i chos ’khor gser chos rnam lnga’i rgya zhung, referred to throughout as Shangpa Texts or ST.
For the story of this retreat, see Zangpo, Sacred Ground.

Other relevant articles include Kapstein, “The Journey to the Golden Mountain,” “The Illusion of Spiritual Progress,” “Chronological Conundrums in the Life of Khyung po rnal ’byor,” and “The Strange Death of Pema the Demon Tamer.”

Partly reprinted in Mullin, The Dalai Lamas on Tantra.

Forthcoming from Snow Lion Publications, translated by Ngawang Zangpo. This material on the Shangpa has been translated by Matthew Kapstein in “Kong-sprul Rin-po-che on the Shangs-pa bKa’-brgyud.”

Khyung po rnal ’byor, from Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor in Golden Rosary of the Shangpa Biographies, ST, vol. 1, 59–143. In this biography, “Tsultrim Gonpo” (Tshul khrims mgon po) is the name given to him by his primary teacher, Dorje Denpa (rDo rje gdan pa). 72 (f. 7b2). Taranatha also gives the name “Shangpa Dubupa Minyam Dorje,” (Shangs pa bsdu bu pa Mi nyams rdo rje, Incomparable Vajra, Collector of Shangpa) and gives his birthplace as Nyemo Ramang (sNye mo ra mangs). Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind, f. 1846. The life story is translated in Riggs, Like an Illusion, 44–92. For a short account, see below or Taranatha, Taranatha’s History of Buddhism in India, 43–89.

See Matthew Kapstein’s attempt to sort it all out in “Chronological Conundrums in the Life of Khyung po rnal ’byor: Hagiography and Historical Time.” Kapstein suggests roughly 1050–1140 as plausible dates, but then admits of some troublesome inconsistencies, such as Khyungpo’s early meeting with Atisha. Dudjom’s The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, vol. 1, 950 and other traditional sources posit 978 or sometimes 990 as his birth year.


This was probably established in the last years of the eleventh century. Khyungpo Naljor is said to have founded 108 religious establishments in the area over a period of three years. In present-day China, Zhangs zhongs is Namuling xian (Namling County), just east of the county seat, along the Shangs chu river. The nearest big town is Shigatze. It is 8,113 kilometers from Lhasa in Ho-tsang (U-tsang) in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. Brief mention is made of the monastery sites of Khyungpo Naljor and the nearby seat of Mokchokpa in Ferrari, Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet, 27 for the transliterated Tibetan and 69 in English.

In Tibetan the number is khri phrag bco brgyad. This number has also been interpreted as one hundred eighty thousand (Ringu Tulkhu, The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgon Kongtrul the Great, 144) and eighty thousand (Tulku Thondup, Buddhist Civilization in Tibet, 48).

Jambön Kongtrul, TOK, vol. 1, 536. Jambudvipa generally refers to the whole known world in Indian cosmology, but specifically includes India, Tibet, Khotan, China, Shambhala, and the Himalaya. See Jambön Kongtrul, The Treasury of Knowledge: Book One: Myriad Worlds, 151–53. The “great translator” (lo chen) Gyurme Dechen (’Gyur med bde chen, 1540–1615) brought this idea of the seven jewels in the one-to-one lineage under scrutiny since it seems to leave out the important figures of Lavāpa and Atisha. His concerns are expressed in his [Questions concerning] the Instructions of Glorious Niguma, Mighty Kechari. See the introduction to the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas for more on this.

The complexities of the later lineages may be found elsewhere, such as Catalogue,
Notes to Introduction

102 Them{s} yig, a short summary of topics that were taught by Niguma in Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, ST, vol. 7, 525–43.

103 Supplement to the Lineage Stories of One Hundred Guidances, DZ, vol. 18, 104 (f. 3a7-b2). Rice Ocean (sDom pa rgya mtsbo) is identified by Roerich (BA, 390) as Sri-lakaraTavamahayoginatraraja, Dg.K. rGyud 'bum Kha 137a1-264b7 (Toh. 372), although this is by no means certain. It is said to be the source of The Mandala Ritual of Chakrasonara, translated later in this book. Jewel Ocean (Rin chen rgya mtsbo), though mentioned often, has not been found. Also see n. 124.

104 Niguma’s teachings are collected in the extensive version of Fifteen Specially Exalted Instructions of the Indian Dakini (rGya gar mkha’ gro’i khyad ’phags kyi gdams pa bco lnga), the abbreviated version called Instructions of Three Bodies (Lus gsum gyi gdams pa) and the very abbreviated version that is contained in The Natural Liberation of Deathless Mind (Sems ’chi med rang grol). Catalogue, 432 (f. 26b4-s). See Jamgon Kongtrul, The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, 250–53, for a brief description of these other systems.


106 “Matured by four empowerments, faithful and diligent, having first [understood] impermanence, weariness [and] deficiencies, whoever strives at this sublime path will awaken in six months, a year, or in this lifetime.” Verse 2 in the English translation of Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, provided in this volume.

107 Kongtrul recommends empowerment from the Five Tantras’ Deities as found in the great tantra called Jewel Ocean (see note 123), or the particular empowerment in the Chakrasonara mandala. Catalogue, 433 (f. 27a1).


109 As the preliminary practice of inner heat, it is called “the hollow interior of fire [as] the body’s vital point” (lus gnad me’i stong ra). As the general preliminary, it has three parts: dag byed stong ra, stong ra’i gdon sel byed, and rtags gsum stong ra’i khyad par. See Tangtong Gyalpo, Collection of the Essentials, TTG-S, vol. 1, 250 (f. sb2-3) and Dharma Mati, Extensive Outline of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, ST, vol. 7, 723–24.

110 See Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas in chapter 2.

111 Supplement to the Lineage Stories of One Hundred Guidances, DZ, vol. 18, 104.

112 Maitripa (mNga’ bdag me, 1007/1012–1085), also known as Advayavajra (Nyi su med pa’i rdo rje), according to Roerich, BA, 731, was a Brahmin scholar from Nepal who became a Buddhist when he met Naropa. He became a monk at Vikramashila Monastery, where he received the ordination name of Maitripagupta and studied with Shantipa and others. He was evicted from the monastery on the grounds of having been seen drinking beer in the company of a woman. Later he became a student.
of the yogin Shavari. See Jamgön Kongtrul, TOK, vol. 2, 527. Maitripa is particularly linked with the transmission of mahāmudrā. His students include Sahajavajra, Śunyatāsamādhi, Vajrapāṇi, Rāmapala, and the Tibetan Marpa, as well as Khyungpo Naljor.

See Jamgön Kongtrul, Catalogue, 433 (f. 2744–6) and Tāranātha, Supplement to the Lineage Stories of One Hundred Guidances, DZ, vol. 18, 104 (f. 3b2–7).

Jamgön Kongtrul, Catalogue, 433 (f. 2746–7).

Jamgön Kongtrul, Releasing the Central Knots, ST, vol. 3, 192 (ff. 1b4–222) and ST, vol. 6, 204 (f. 226b) in the colophon to the actual Vajra Lines. Dipamkara Śrīmāna is of course the famous Atisha (982–1054), the “chief lord” (jo bo rje), whose move to Tibet in 1042 is often cited as marking the beginning of the second spreading of Buddhism from India. Khyungpo Naljor reports encountering him in Tholing monastery, where Atisha verified some of Khyungpo’s texts.

116 Jamgön Kongtrul, Releasing the Central Knots, ST, vol. 3, 192 (ff. 1b4–222) and ST, vol. 6, 210 (f. 25b3–4). The instructions themselves are known as “Vital Essence Transference: the Purification of the Five Birth Places All at Once” (sKye gnas lnga geig car du dag pa sbig le’i ’pho ba). Though not identified by name in Khyungpo’s biography, a mysterious adept miraculously visits Khyungpo Naljor at his monastery in Tibet, arriving from India in less than a day. Khyungpo received almost every transmission that he had received in India again from this yogin in Tibet. He is identified in the Blue Annals as Rāhulaguptavajra (Gō Lōsawa, vol. 1, 858; Roerich, 732) and is also called “the yogin of the black mountain” (ri nag), which may refer to Krishnagiri in South India. He was also a teacher of Atisha (Chattopadhyaya, Atisha and Tibet, 72) and a disciple of Maitripa (Biographical Dictionary, vol. 1, 781, cited in Martin, Tibetskrit). As quoted above, Kongtrul refers to Lama Rāhula as one of the five main sources of Khyungpo Naljor’s doctrine. See Zangpo, Timeless Rapture, 245–48, for a brief story and a supplication to him by Kongtrul.

117 Catalogue, 433–34 (f. 2747–b1). “Engage in the Space” is mkha’la spyod pa, a literal rendering of the name “Khechara,” the realm or “heavenly abode” of those dākinis, the place of “engagement” or “activity” (spyod pa) in “space” (mkha’la). Space is also a relevant metaphor for vagina, and “great unity” refers to the union of that space (of emptiness) and bliss. The description references the specific transference practice (’pho ba) whereby the consciousness is visualized as moving up through each of the four chakras until its final exit into Kechari.

The Virūpā connected with Sukhasiddhi is apparently a different one than the Indian mahāsiddha of the same name associated with the Lamdre (lam ’bras) lineage. The Story of Sukhasiddhi can be found in ST, vol. 1, 49–58, with English translation in Riggs, Like an Illusion, 40–43.

Or Vairochanavajra, the Indian master active around 1150. Not to be confused with the Tibetan of the same name who brought the dzogchen teachings to Tibet (circa 800).

Mokchokpa et al., Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor, ST, vol. 1, 72 (f. 7b5–8a3); Riggs, Like an Illusion, 51. Vajräśana or Dorje Denpa (rDo rje gdan pa) in Tibetan can be translated as “The One at the Vajra Seat,” referring to Bodhgaya in India. There were at least four successors to that title: (1) Punyākaragupta, (2) Ratnākaragupta, (3) Abhayākaragupta, and (4) Tsa mi Lo tsā ba. There is much confusion around this, and both Tibetan and Western writers have avoided it by simply
calling him/them Vajrāsana or Dorje Denpa. One Tibetan author, Katok Rikdzin Tsewang Norbu (1698–1755), who tried to sort it all out, posits Puṇyākaraṇa as Khyungpo Naljor's guru. See his Biographies of Some Holy Ones in his Selected Writings, vol. 1, ffs. 669–705. (Thanks to Cyrus Stearns for providing his translation of the relevant section.) In Jamgon Kongtrul's lineage supplication, two Vajrāsanas are praised: the one called Great Dorje Denpa is presumably Puṇyākaraṇa and in the next supplication Abhayākaraṇa is named specifically. Jamgon Kongtrul, Garland of Udumbarā, DZ, vol. 12, 398 and 400. Thus it seems that Khyungpo Naljor had a connection with two different masters who might be called Vajrāsana, a fact both helpful and frustrating.

1. Tsewang Norbu (1698–1755), who tried to sort it all out, posits Puṇyākaraṇa as Khyungpo Naljor's guru. See his Biographies of Some Holy Ones in his Selected Writings, vol. 1, ffs. 669–705. (Thanks to Cyrus Stearns for providing his translation of the relevant section.) In Jamgon Kongtrul's lineage supplication, two Vajrāsanas are praised: the one called Great Dorje Denpa is presumably Puṇyākaraṇa and in the next supplication Abhayākaraṇa is named specifically. Jamgon Kongtrul, Garland of Udumbarā, DZ, vol. 12, 398 and 400. Thus it seems that Khyungpo Naljor had a connection with two different masters who might be called Vajrāsana, a fact both helpful and frustrating.


3. dPal rgyud sde lnga'i rgya gezhung or dPal rgyud sde lnga'i sgrub thabs by Loppön Dorje Denpa, translated by the Indian pāṇḍita Vairochanarākṣita and the Tibetan Lendarma Lodrö and edited by the great translator Lotsāwa Rinchen Zangpo, ST, vol. 9, 543–49.

Khyungpo's biography states that this practice was given according to the root and explanatory tantras of Jewel Ocean as found in the library at Śrī-dhanyakataka, a stūpa in south India associated with Kālachakra and other very early teachings: "de ni rin chen rgya mtho'i rtsa rgyud bshad brgyud dang/ dpa/ /dan 'bras phungs kyi bre'i nang na ji ltar bzhugs pa bzbin no." ST, vol. 1, 73 (f. 8a3–4). This tantra has not been located and may not now be extant. In the beginning lines of Kongtrul's recitation manual for this practice, Essence of Profound Meaning, he mentions that it was disseminated by Bodhisattva Ratnamati (Byang chub sems dpa' bLo gros rin chen) based on Jewel Ocean. See GK, vol. 8, 434. Ratnamati was a monk from central India who did translations into Chinese in the sixth century, though this may not be the same person. Also see Jamgon Kongtrul, The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, 249; TOK, vol. 3, 403.


6. Mokchokpa et al., Brief Life Story of Khyungpo Naljor, ST, vol. 1, 92 (f. 17b6) and Gō Lotsāwa, BA, vol. 2, 857; Roerich, BA, 731. The Hidden Yogen (sBa' sPa'i rnal 'byor) is sometimes associated with Rāhulapurāṇa or with Maitripurāṇa. In Riggs, Like an Illusion, for instance, the translator simply substitutes "Maitripa" for sBa' sPa'i rnal 'byor without comment. I have not found this identity explicitly stated in any records. Venerable Tenga Rinpoche states that the Hidden Yogen is a different person than either of the two masters, and that he is an incarnation of the Buddha's son Rāhula. E-mail communication through his translator Thomas Roth, Feb. 22, 2009.


9. Shavari or Shavari-pa (Sha ba ri pa, aka Ri khrod zhabs) was a great Indian master
of tantra and the guru of Saraha. He is especially associated with the mahāmudrā teachings, the doḥā tradition, and the practice of the Six-Branch yoga of Kālacakra. For the story of his life according to the Six-Branch yoga tradition (sadāngayoga), see Stearns, “The Life and Tibetan Legacy of the Indian Mahāpaṇḍita Vibhūticandra,” 139–41.

130 Blessing of Constant Four Deities (Byin rabs lha bzhi 'bral ba med) is mentioned in Jamgön Kongtrul, Radiant Light of Timeless Awareness. Also see Catalogue, 434 (f. 27b5).

131 Catalogue, 514 (f. 67b4); Roerich, BA, 730. Atavayajra is sometimes said to be Advavajra, who in turn is identified with Maitripa, but that would make Kongtrul’s lineage statement a rather strange redundancy.

132 The practice text called Guru Yoga in Connection with Six-Armed Protector Dwelling in the Heart (mGon po phyag drug pa snying bzhugs dang 'brel pa'i bla ma'i rnal 'byor) or Secret Precept (mka' rgya ma) was arranged by Khentse Wangpo (mKhyen rtse'i dbang po; 1820–1892) at Tashi Lhunpo, based on instructions from Kachen Lozang Gelek (dKa' chen bLo bzang dge legs), although in the index the famous Chankya Rolpai Dorje (ICang skya Rol pa'i rdo rje) is also mentioned. It can be found in DZ, vol. 12, 747–57.

133 Elixir Rain of Spiritual Powers, ST, vol. 1, 748. See Riggs, Like an Illusion, 263–77, although the author is misidentified there.

134 For Kalu Rinpoche’s “plan” in spreading the dharma in North America, see his The Dharma That Illuminates All Beings: Impartially like the Light of the Sun and the Moon, 7–12.

Notes to Chapter 1, Stages in the Path of Illusion

1 The eight similes (sgyu ma dpe brgyad) in Tibetan are 1) rmi lam, 2) sgyu ma, 3) mig thor or mig yor, 4) smig rgyu, 5) chu'i zla ba, 6) brag ca, 7) dri za'i grong khyer, and 8) sprul pa. The list varies and the order varies as well. This order follows Longchenpa in The Great Completion Natural Ease in Illusion. The list of twelve (sgyu ma dpe bcu gnyis) adds to those eight: 9) chu bur, 10) glog, 11) gzugs brnyan, and 12) ja' tshon.

2 Diamond Sūtra: skar ma rab rib mar me dang/sgyu ma zil ba chu bur dang/ rmi lam klog dang sprin lta bu/du byas de ltar blta bar bya.

3 Buddhaghosa, The Path of Purification: Visuddhimagga, book 3, paragraph 95 (p. 106) and book 7, paragraph 59 (p. 206).

4 In The Life of the Buddha, Edward J. Thomas says, “Māyā has also troubled the mythologists, and the attempt has been made to connect her with the Māyā-doctrine of Vedānta. But the sense of Māyā as cosmic illusion does not exist either in Pāli or Sanskrit in the works that record her name. Māyā is magic power, deception. The idea of the magic power of beauty is often expressed in a woman’s name” (25, n. 2).


Notes to Chapter I, Stages in the Path of Illusion


9 Longchenpa Drimey Özer, An Excellent Chariot, vol. Tha, 52 (f. 3b3-6).

10 Longchenpa Drimey Özer, Trilogy on Natural Ease (Ngal gso skor gsum), translated by Herbert Guenther in Kindly Bent to Ease Us.

11 Nāgārjuna, Root Verses of the Middle called Wisdom. That verse reads:
   I prostrate to the one
   Who teaches that whatever is dependently arisen
   Does not arise, does not cease,
   Is not permanent, is not extinct,
   Does not come, does not go,
   And is neither one thing nor different things.
   I prostrate to the perfect Buddha, the supreme of all who speak,
   Who completely dissolves all fabrications and teaches peace.
   Translation by Ari Goldfield, in Khenpo Tüütrim Gyamtso, The Sun of Wisdom, 1.

12 There are many instances of the term “bodhisattva” first used in the nikāyas to describe the Buddha’s life immediately preceding the one where he became Buddha. See also Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, 43; and Huntington, The Emptiness of Emptiness, 19–20.

13 Lopez, “Paths Terminable and Interminable,” 147.

14 Karl Brunnhölz has translated the all-important Ornament of Clear Realization by Maitreya and other commentaries on it as Gone Beyond, in three volumes, and Richard Barron has translated Jamgön Kongtrul’s section on the subject in books 9 and 10 as Treasury of Knowledge: Books Nine and Ten: Journey and Goal.

15 For example, in Vasubandhu’s Abhidharmakosha, they are defined in verse 6.67 (byang chub de dang mthun nyid phyir/ sum cu rtsa bdun de’i phyogs mthun). In Buddhagosha’s Visuddhimagga, they are described in chap. 22, 33–38. They can also be translated as “states sharing in enlightenment.”


17 Monier-Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, 812.


21 For instance, six or nine grounds are mentioned in the Abhidharmakosha of Vasubandhu, 5.15.

22 This is a Sanskrit text considered part of the Vinaya, primarily concerning the life of the Buddha (and not translated into Tibetan). The ten levels (daśa-bhūmi) occur in the context of the Buddha’s previous life as the bodhisatta, as does the original concept of the bodhisatta: “The word bodhisatta is very old and occurs in the Pāli nikāyas. Gautama Buddha speaks of himself as a bodhisatta, when he refers to the time before the attainment of Enlightenment. This seems to be the earliest signification of the word.” Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, 43.

23 Sūtra on the Ten Grounds, Toh. 44. This is chap. 31 of the Flower Ornament Sūtra.

24 Bodhisatta Grounds, a section of the massive work by Asaṅga called Yogāchāra-bhūmi.
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25 Rahul, A Critical Study of the Mahāvastu, 62, citing Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India, citing the Madhyamakāvatāra. For a review of the ten grounds and ten perfections according to Chandrakirti, see Huntington, The Emptiness of Emptiness, 20–23, and the translation of the relevant text on 149–96. See also Padmakara Translation Group, Introduction to the Middle Way.

26 Maitreya, Ornament of Clear Realization, Toh. 3786.

27 See note 163 below.

28 Niguma, Stages in the Path of Illusion, ST, vol. 6, 725 (f. 112a-3), vv. 145–46 and in Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary, ST, vol. 6, 774–75 (ff. 20b6–21a1).

29 Dutt, Buddhist Sects in India, 219 and 251.

30 The ten pāramīs in Pāli from the Buddhavamsa (chap. 2) are generosity (dana), ethical discipline (sīla), renunciation (nekkhamma), wisdom (paññā), diligence (vīrya), patience (khanti), honesty (sacca), determination (adhiṭṭhāna), love (metta), and equanimity (upekkhā).

31 Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, 168.

32 See, for example, the extensive discussion of the term in ibid. 165–67.

33 Jamgön Kongtrul, Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Frameworks of Buddhist Philosophy, 184. See that and 242 for more on the relationship of grounds and perfections.

34 Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, 207. Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature, 167, takes it one remarkable step further: "The [Dasabhūmika] definitely increases the number of the pāramitās to ten, as it teaches that a bodhisattva practices one of the pāramitās in each of the ten bhūmis (stages) of his career. This alteration may have been due to the rivalry with the Hinayānists, who had devised the Pāli formula of the ten pāramīs . . . . But it is more probably that the number of the pāramitās (and the bhūmis) was raised to ten as a consequence of the invention of the decimal system of computation in the science of arithmetic in the third or fourth century A.D." and "Many old formulae of Indian philosophy and religion were recast according to the decimal system on account of the enthusiasm evoked by this epoch-making invention."

35 Chart by David Picariello. Thank you Dave!

36 In his introduction to Gone Beyond, Karl Brunnhölzl suggests, "So, if one cannot or does not want to prepare for the 'higher teachings,' it seems better to study some 'lighter' Buddhist reading, since frustration is almost guaranteed."

37 In "Paths Terminable and Interminable," Donald S. Lopez suggests another point of view: "A historicist might argue that the persistence of this complex of defilements as an essential component of the vocabulary of Buddhist scholasticism only testifies to the inability of Buddhist practitioners to become enlightened: there must be such obstructions because, despite the earnest efforts of meditators, no one seemed to be arriving at the further shore. This very argument was put forth in China to prove the presence of the degenerate age" (154).

38 Buswell and Gimello, Paths to Liberation, 11.


40 Also entitled sGyu ma lam rim dri med snying po (The Essential Stainless Stages on the Path of Illusion), the descriptive title used in the colophon. This title is also used in Jamgön Kongtrul, The Beryl Key Catalogue, GK, vol. 10, 480 (f. 11b6). Five editions were consulted for this translation and are listed in the bibliography.
sankskṛt, Skt. kāya, is a difficult concept to translate. I have used “kāya” when in the context of the three kāyas and “Body” (as distinguished from “body,” lus) when in the context of the appearance of the deity’s Body. Another word for body is gzugs, generally translated here as “form,” such as in the “form kāyas” (gzugs kyi sku; Skt. rūpakāya).

las rigs grub pa: The five enlightened activities (phrin las lnga) of pacification, enrichment, overpowering, wrathful activity, and spontaneous accomplishment (zhi ba, rgyas pa, dbang ba, drag po, lhun gyis grub pa).

The Shangpa edition (ST) has dam pa (sublime) here, but I’ve preferred bum pa (vase) from the other editions since it is obviously a reference to the first part of an empowerment, called the “vase empowerment.”

spyod pa (conduct) in all copies. However one usually finds its homonym dpyod pa (examination, revelation) in its place in commentaries on the subject.

Taking brgya la (in a hundred) in most texts for rgya la (even if).

These two lines have a number of variable spellings. I have used: dus dang lus dang dmigs pa yis/ dben pa’i gnas su rmi lam bzang. ST has yul for lus, yin for yis, and dben pa’i gnas, which would hardly make sense. According to Tāranātha, “time, body, and mental images” refer to enhancement techniques called “nine unfailing vital points (gnad ’chugs med dgu) for recognizing dreams: three times of day, three physical postures, and three visualization practices. Profound Meaning Expanded, ST, vol. 3, 414 (f. 40bi-3).

bag chags bzhi: The four types of habitual patterns: habitual patterns which become the basis of attached conceptualization (mngon brjod kyi bag chags), habitual patterns of the self-concept (bdag lta’i bag chags), habitual patterns of the factors of existence (srid pa’i yan lag gi bag chags), and concordant habitual patterns (rigs mthun pa’i bag chags).

The unusual term in all texts is dge sdig bcas nas, but ATG thinks this could be a mistake for its homonym dge sdig dpyad nas (examining virtue and nonvirtue). In any case, the sense is that dreams offer the golden opportunity to practice virtue and reject nonvirtue while comprehending the nature of illusion.

drod in the Ume and Kinnaur texts seems correct, rather than don in the others.

bsre ’pho gnad: There are various meanings given for “blending and transferring,” such as that it is the blending of mind and prāṇa along with the ejection of consciousness, or the blending of basic space and awareness with the transference into the lucid clarity of dharmatā (BD, vol. 2, 3054). See also Jamgön Kongtrul, The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, 250–51 and The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Three: The Elements of Tantric Practice, 162–63 for the use of this term in the Kagyu traditions. Tāranātha distinguishes the Shangpa use of the term in Profound Meaning Expanded: “As to ‘blending and transferring,’ all of the individual instructions of Lord Marpa the Translator display many different layouts of ‘blending’, but that is not explained here. In this instruction tradition itself, there are four blendings, such as blending clarity and emptiness, [equipoise and subsequent attainment, day and night, and bliss and emptiness] that were explained, and in addition the three or four wisdoms of blending and transference.” ST, vol. 3, 481. This last refers to the sixth of Fifteen Especially Exalted Instructions in Niguma’s extensive path. In Khyungpo Naljor’s text of that name, it says “Illusion in dream (sleep) and lucid clarity, (these two) are mixed. That is the defining characteristic of blending and transference.” ST, vol. 6, 188 (f. 1444–5). P and CT mistakenly have gnas rather than gnad.
There are various versions of this phrase: khor ba skye med (unborn cyclic existence), ST; khor ba skye med (useless . . . ), P; khor ba skyid med (unhappy . . . ), Kinnaur.

Again there are several versions here: “Leave behind” (rgyab phul) in the tengyur, Ume, and Kinnaur editions, but rgyud khul in ST, which might be a misspelling of rgyud skul, “to inspire” or “prompt one’s being.” These are more or less the same meaning. The last line is more problematic: ST and Kinnaur editions have bdun pa drag pos bcud la bor, which I have attempted to interpret here, although the phrase bcud la bor (literally “discard in/to the essence”) is very unusual. The tengyurs have mdun ma drag po’i bcud la bor. Mdun ma or ’dun ma (rather than ’dun pa) means “concerns,” “goals,” or “desired results,” giving a meaning that one should “abandon the essence of one’s intense goals.” This interpretation was favored by ATG.

ST has “four joys” (dga’ bzhi), but I have used the reading in all other copies: dga’ zhing (or shing) brten par byed pa’o.

The reading of bra/ ba here in the tengyur, as against ’dra ba of the other texts, is consistent with the commentary, where it is given as ’dzin pa dang bra/ ba. ST, vol. 6, 763 (f. 15a1).

Of the various versions (gtags, rtogs, rtog), I have chosen gtogs (except). ST, vol. 6, 718 (f. 7b6).

’khor yug sum ldan, in all copies except Ume, which shows abbreviated style for ’khor lo gsum ldan (three wheels). I could not find a definitive explanation of this term. Most likely it is a reference to the other three of the four “blendings” discussed above in note 50. Or it may refer to the three times of sleep, dream, and intermediate state mentioned above, where this vision of sanbhogakāya occurs (this according to Lama Tarchin Rinpoche), or to the immediately following mention of “illusion, deity’s Bodies, and manifest clarity.” In Taranātha’s teachings on blending day and night, there are three times of dawn, dusk, and evening to train one’s intention, and there are also three applications of the blending: to dreams, to illusory body, and to lucid clarity. Profound Meaning Expanded, 468–69. Finally, if it is a mistake for “three wheels,” it might be khor lo rnam gsum: three ways a monk practices: 1) the wheel of study through reading, listening, and thinking (lgog pa thos bsam gyi ’khor lo), (2) the wheel of abandonment through meditative stability (spong ba bsam gtn gyi ’khor lo), and (3) the wheel of service through activities (bya ba las gyi ’khor lo).

yul snang ji bzhi (’phrub snang, “deluded appearance,” in Kinnaur carries the same meaning): The dream yoga sequential practices are to recognize, refine, increase, ema­nate, and transform dreams and to ascertain objective appearance as similarly illusion. See Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas in chapter 2 of this book; ST, vol. 6, 167; and the relevant teachings in Taranātha, Profound Meaning Expanded, 408 on.

byin pa rnam bzhi: the four kinds of generosity are to give material goods (zang zing), teachings (chos), comfort from fear (mi ’jigs pa), and love (byams).

yang na la ba mthar thug pa/ bsang por ’dod pa’i sgrib pa yin. This is similar to affective states of views, where one holds one’s own view as paramount (ATG). There is no clarification of this in the commentary.

Verses 129–34 are quoted and commented upon in Gyurme Dechen’s Complete Explanation of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, 486–89 and are used as the take­off point for an extensive discussion of exactly who proclaims the “sounds of the mahāyāna dharma” and to whom.

The reference seems to be to a verse by Maitreya in Ornament of Clear Realization that
is famously disputed as to whether it is positing four kāyas (in the original Sanskrit: svabhavikakāya, saṃbhogikakāya, nairmanikakāya, and dharmaṃkāya) or whether the first three are just different aspects of the dharmaṃkāya. The verse reads “Essence [kāya], complete enjoyment [kāya] and similarly the emanation [kāya] for others are the activity of dharmaṃkāya. Thus four are correctly named.” (ngo bo nyid longs rdzogs bcas dang/ de bezin gzhan pa'i sprul sku ni/ chos sku mdzad pa/ rnam pa bezir ni yang dag brjod). If you would like more elaborations, see Makransky, Buddhist Embodied.

62 The metaphor refers to the myth that geese (sometimes translated as “swan,” though they did not exist in India) can drink diluted milk while extracting only the milk from the water. The line in some texts, (such as ST and the tengyurs) reads “like a goose in a lake” (ngang pas mthob la 'o ma len pa ltar), but since this breaks the meter by two syllables, it appears to be a later insertion.

63 “Arhats with or without adornments” means with or without clairvoyance (mngon shes). As defined by Kongtrul, they “possess dissipating miraculous abilities of their own ground, such as clairvoyance” (rang sa'i zag bcas kyi rdzu 'phrul gyi mngon shes sogs dang Idan pa) (RY). The translation “in the early or later part of life, and so on” sidesteps a term in the Tibetan, rgur chu (or sgur chu), for which I have no information. The line reads: rgur chu tshes (or tse) stod tshes smad sogs.

64 There is some debate over this point since there is sometimes said to be no more affective emotion at this stage, but others say not until the eighth ground.

65 mngon in ST should be med as in the others. Here, “generosity” also implies the other perfections.

66 Described in the Path of Seeing, verses 101–4.

67 rgyu gzhan tha dad med pa (with rgyu here referring to “stuff” or nature, according to ATG). In the commentary, however, it reads rgyud tha dad med pa (“undifferentiated from [others’] minds or beings”), as in the Kinnaur edition.

68 The Kinnaur edition alone has chos nyid (nature of phenomena) rather than chos ni here.

69 zag med maha'i dbang bskur bas: The Tibetan retains the Sanskrit for “great” empowerment and may be a reference to receiving the empowerment from Mahāvairochana or Vajradhara, as explained in the commentary.

70 These are generic requisites for all traditional treatises (btsan bcos, Skt. sastra), although the list sometimes varies slightly. See, for example, the “five essential observations” in Jamgön Kongtrul’s introduction to his great Treasury of Knowledge in the first volume, Treasury of Knowledge: Book One: Myriad Worlds, 81–82.

71 This oft-quoted verse is from the Song of Dohā Treasury, f. 72b5 (Toh. 222.4), also known as “People’s Dohā” in Sarahā’s dohā trilogy. In the tengyur, the first line reads instead “Mind itself alone is the seed of everything” (sem nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te). For translations, see Snellgrove, “Sarahā’s Treasury of Songs,” Guenther, Ecstatic Spontaneity, and Jackson, Tantric Treasures.

72 Vajra Garland Tantra (Toh. 445), the explanatory tantra (bshad rgyud) of Guhyasamāja. The quotation is not found there, but is quoted in Nāgārjuna’s commentary on the Guhyasamāja called The Five Stages, vol. Ngī, chap. 2, v. 2, f. 48a4–5 (Toh. 1802). The original Sanskrit reads:

yathā jalām jale nyastam ghrtaṃ caiva yathā ghrte/
svakiyaṃ ca svayaṃ pāśyey jñanaṃ yatreḥa vandanaḥ/
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Drang srong rnam kha'og tu lus tsud pa (should be chud pa).

Ye shes mgon par 'byung ba'i rgyud rgyas pa, Skt. Jñānābhyyudeya, not located and possibly not extant. However it is confirmed in the lineage by the record of its transmission by Khyungpo Naljor, who received it from the Dakini Kanakshri of Devikoṭi, along with the Sampura Tantra (Toh. 381), Completion Phase Suchness, Śrīparamādāya Ocean of Sacred Oaths (dPal mchog dra ba [dang po?] sdom pa rgya mtsho), Ocean of Timeless Awareness, and Array of Sacred Oaths, the last two also quoted in this commentary but not located. See Tāranātha, Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind, T-CW, vol. 17, 454, and Mokchokpa et al., Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor, ST, vol. 1, 79 (f. 11a1-2). This same quote can be found in Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot (f. 43a3) with the last two lines reading, instead: gzhan dang rang bzhin 'bras bu'i don/ zab dang rgya che dbyer me pa'o.

sNying po rab tu gsal ba'i mdo. Not located.

Dri med snying po'i mdo. Not located.

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 110), f. 36b3-4, where there is considerable difference worth noting: The first line in fact concludes a previous point, while the second line is entirely absent. The third line reads "like the countenance of the new moon" (dang po tshes pa'i zla mdog ltar) rather than full moon (dbang po tshes pa). The rest is consistent, although the important ninth line is not in our Niguma text and has been added here from the sūtra. Of note also is the possible connection with the similar metaphor from the Mahāyāna Highest Continuum, where buddha nature is compared to the indestructibility of space, while consciousness and defilements are compared to the destructibility of the other elements that go to make up the Supreme Mountain and the rest of the phenomenal world (ATG).

sna tshogs gzugs can: that is, it carries the potential or seeds of all of our perceptions.

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 110). The first two lines are on 91 (f. 46a6) and the second two are on 98 (f. 49b4).

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra, the same as The Fully Illuminated Essence Sūtra.

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 110), f. 373a. Line 2 (de yi dbyings las thog ma med) appears also as de yi dbyibs la thog ma med (whose shapes are without beginning). "Negative tendencies" (gnas ngan len) is equivalent in meaning to "afflictive states" (nyon mong pa) (ATG).

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 110), 88 (f. 44b1-2).

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 110), 89 (f. 55a5-6).

Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 107). The quotation does not appear to be in this sūtra. However, in Asanga's Compendium of the Mahāyāna (Toh. 4048), it is quoted as...
a verse from the Abhidharma Sūtra, which is not extant: “bcom ldan ’das kyis chos mgon pa’i mdo las tshigs su bcad” (f. 346–7).

88 Mahāyāna Highest Continuum (Toh. 4024). This exact quote does not appear in the text, although there are many similar ones, especially in the fourth chapter on the buddha nature constituent.

89 Dense Array of Adornments Sūtra (Toh. 110), 110 (f. 55b1–2). The quote in the sūtra has “feeble-minded” (blo zhan) rather than “bad-minded” (blo ngan), as in the Niguma texts.

90 len pa’i rnam shes, also called “appropriating or acquiring consciousness.” It is the consciousness that results in taking on the five aggregates of existence in a body. It is the basic consciousness that continually identifies with the physical body, as well as with objects of perception (RY).

91 Sa sde: See note 84. A very similar quotation with the first lines nearly identical is found in Powers, Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Mahāyāna Sūtra, 70–71.

92 Sa sde’i mdo (see note 84 above). This line is missing in the Kinnaur edition. Again, there is a very similar statement in ibid. 74–76.

93 nyon mongs pa can gyi yid: There is a further twofold division of the seventh consciousness, mentation with afflictive states, posited by Karmapa Rangjung Dorje and later scholars: afflictive mentation (nyon yid) and instantaneous mentation (de ma thag pa’i yid). See Jamgön Kongtrul, Creation and Completion, 51–59 for more on this.

94 Journey to Lanka Sūtra (Toh. 107), vol. Ca, 324 (f. 162b7). In the early sūtras attributed to the Third Turning of the Wheel of Dharma, such as the Journey to Lanka and Sūtra That Unravels the Intent, the teachings on consciousness divided consciousness into three groups: (1) mind (sems) which is equivalent to all-ground (kun gzhi), (2) mentation (yid) which is equivalent to the afflicted mentation (nyon yid), and (3) consciousness (rnam shes) which consists of six perceptions (tshogs drug). The language of the “eight consciousness groups” (rnam shes tshogs brgyad) developed in the later sūtras of the third turning (ATG, September 13, 2007).

95 According to ATG, consciousness here refers to all six consciousnesses (tshogs drug).


97 The six primary afflictive states (rtsa nyon) are: desire (’dod chags), anger (klong khrab), pride (nga rgyal), unawareness (ma rig pa), doubt (the tshom), and [afflicted] view (lta ba). The twenty secondary afflictions (nye nyon) are: wrath (khrab ba), resentment (’khon du ’dzin pa), concealment (’chab pa), spite (’shig pa), envy (phrag dog), avarice (ser sna), deceit (sbya), hypocrisy (gyo), self-satisfaction (rgyas pa), violence (rnam par ’ishe ba), lack of shame (ngo mis’bar med pa), lack of embarrassment (khrul med pa), lethargy (rugs pa), agitation (rgod pa), lack of confidence (ma dad pa), laziness (le lo), lack of conscientiousness (bag med pa), forgetfulness (brjed nges pa), distraction (rnam par gyeng ba), and lack of awareness (shes bzhin ma’cin pa). These are from the list of fifty-one mental events (sems byung) in the Abhidharmasamuccaya.

98 Sublime Absorption Sūtra (Toh. 137). But the quotation was not found in that sūtra nor in the King of Absorption Sūtra (Toh. 127).

99 Ye shes mngon ’byung, Skt. Jñānābhyudaya*, probably the same as Ye shes mngon par ’byung ba’i rgyud rgyas pa. Not located, and possibly not extant (see note 74).

100 Secret Dakini Tantra (Toh. 408), f. 246b1. An important difference in the second line
in the tantra reads *byod bya byod brgyad du bshad* (rather than *rgyud du 'gyur*), so that the quote would read, "Tantra is the essence of the four empowerments, [both] the contents and the medium, thus eight [tantras] are explained." The eight tantras, or continuums, then, would be the subject or contents and its medium, the words of the tantra, for each of the four empowerments. This is supported by the rest of this short tantra, really a chapter in the set known as the "Complete Thirty-two Ralis" (*Ra li so gnyis yongs rdzogs*), all found together in the kangyur (*Toh. 383–414*). *Secret Dakini* is #26 of the thirty-two Ralis.

101 *Lam zung 'jug*: the unity of calm abiding and higher insight. ATG, September 20, 2007.

102 *Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines* (*Toh. 10*). This quote was found in the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines* (*Toh. 12*), f. 255a6–7, but without the lines concerning love and compassion. Without that line, this can be regarded as a list of the thirty-seven factors leading to enlightenment, that is, the path. It is also quoted in Longchenpa, *An Excellent Chariot*, 112 (f. 18a4–b1).

103 *Dam tshig bkod pa'i rgyud phyi ma*. Not located. Probably the same as or an addition to *Array of Sacred Oaths* (*Dam tshig bkod pa*), which was bestowed on Khyungpo Naljor by the Dakini Kanakashri of Devikoiti. See Taranatha, *Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind*, *T-CW*, vol. 17, 454, and Mokchokpa et al., *Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor*, ST, vol. 1, 79 (f. 112a–b). The quotes from this tantra were not found in *Dam tshig gum bkod pa* (*Toh. 502*).

104 As a note of interest, this quote and several others are given in Longchenpa, *An Excellent Chariot*, as evidence that in the practice of guru yoga (*bla ma'i rnal 'byor*) one absolutely must visualize the guru as himself or herself rather than as the yidam. He says that not to do so is not guru yoga at all and is said to be an egregious fault (*nyes pa shin tu che*) (f. 40b3–41b1).

105 *Dam tshig bkod pa*.

106 *Rgyud sde lnga bcu*. In Longchenpa, *An Excellent Chariot* (f. 41a4), the quote is identified only as being from this text (fifty sections of tantra), if it is a single text. *Array of Sacred Oaths* (*Dam tshig bkod pa*) is not mentioned.

107 *Rigs lnga'i dam tshig bkod pa*, probably the same as *Array of Sacred Oaths* and *Array of Sacred Oaths Latter Tantra*. Nirvairana Vishkambin (*sGrib pa rnam par sel ba*) was one of the eight bodhisattvas who received teachings directly from the Buddha.

108 *Dri ma med par grags pa'i mdo*. This should be the famous *Vimalakirti Sutra* (*Toh. 176*), but the quote is not found there.

109 *dran pa nye bar bzhag pa bzhi*; Skt. *catvāri smṛtyupasthāna*.

110 *Byang chub sems dbang blo gros rab brtian gyi mdo*: not located. The Sanskrit name has been reconstructed from the Tibetan, as indicated by the asterisk. The same quotes are found in Longchenpa, *An Excellent Chariot* beginning on 88 (f. 21b5). Different quotes from the same sūtra are found as interlinear notes in Khyungpo Naljor, *Natural Liberation through Grasping Illusory Body and Sixfold Illusory Body*, ST, vol. 8, 617–33, so it was clearly available.

111 *stong pa nyid, mshyan ma med pa, smon pa med pa*: These are called the three gates or approaches to total freedom (*rnam thar sgo gum*).

112 *yang dag spong ba bzhi*, Skt. *catvāri samyakprabhāna*: "four correct abandonments," "four perfect eliminations." Also see Gampopa, *Ornament of Precious Liberation*, f. 150b.

113 *rdzu 'phrul [gyi] rkang pa bzhi*, Skt. *catvāri riddhipāda*: "Four 'feet' or 'limbs' of
miraculous action: they are the meditative absorptions of **dun pa**, **brtson 'grus**, **bsam pa** or **sems**, and **dpyod pa** or **spyod pa**. These four factors are called "supports" or "feet" because they serve as causes for the attainment of five supernormal states of perception (the "miraculous powers"): clairvoyance, clairaudience, recall of past lifetimes, telepathy, and special powers (such as flying, passing through solid matter, and creating emanations).

**spyod pa** in all versions of the Niguma texts, both in the root verses and commentary. However, in most instances of this list it is **dpyod pa**, "direct revelation," "analysis," or "discernment." See, for example, Gampopa, *Ornament of Precious Liberation*, f. 150b. I have left it as **spyod pa** ("conduct") since the commentary in the sutra seems to support that reading.

**mi dmigs**: The Ume edition has **mi gnas pa** ("not abiding"), which also works.

In the opinion of Ácaryā Lama Tenpa, **byed pa** does not mean "distinguish" or "analyze" but rather "to reveal," equivalent in meaning to **shes rab**. It is the defining characteristic (**mtshan nyid**) of wisdom (**shes rab**); wisdom develops through clear or distinct knowing.

**drod, rise mo, bzod pa, chos mchog.**

**dbang po lnga**; Skt. **pañcendriya**. As long as they can still be overcome by their respective discordant factors (such as the lack of faith or laziness), they are called faculties, and when they are not affected any more by these factors, the same five are called powers (**stobs lnga**; Skt. **pañcabala**).

There are numerous discrepancies in the wording in the quotations from *Ornament of Clear Realization*, and I have translated with reference to the original and its commentaries, rather than the Niguma texts. Here, for instance, the Niguma texts say "countering the notion of form" (**geugs sogs 'du shes ldog pa dang**), but this exact phrasing actually does not occur in the *Ornament* until the discussion of the signs on the Path of Seeing. Here it should just be **geugs la sogs las ldog pa dang**. It is possible that there were variant translations of the Sanskrit.

**the tshom mi dal zad pa dang** as in the Ume and Kinnaur editions and in *Ornament of Clear Realization* (rather than the **tshom yid la zad pa dang** in the canons and ST) refers to both the elimination of doubts concerning the ultimate meaning being in fact the ultimate meaning, and to the expiration of any rebirth in bad existences without freedom or leisure. Mikyō Dorje, *Noble One's Resting at Ease*, vol. 2, 147.

According to Mikyö Dorje, *Noble One's Resting at Ease*, vol. 2, 150, the five obscurations (**sgrib pa lnga**) are: (1) sense desire (**'dod 'dun**), (2) ill-will (**gnod sems**), (3) sleep and torpor (**gnid dang rmugs pa**), (4) agitation and guilt (**rgod pa dang rgyod pa**), and (5) doubt (**the tshom**).

Maitreyya, *Ornament of Clear Realization* (Toh. 3786), f. 8a7–b1 (chap. 4, vv. 40–42ab). According to the commentaries, these are the signs of irreversibility on the level of warmth (the signs of culmination are different and dealt with in chapter 5 of *Ornament*), and usually there are eleven (including "clean clothing" in the next quote from *Ornament*). Thanks to Karl Brunnhölzl for his input on this and all quotations from the *Ornament of Clear Realization*.

Ibid. The first verse is on f. 8b1–2 (chap. 4, vv. 42cd–43ab), continuous with the last quote from *Ornament*.

In this enumeration it seems that a) the mind free of deception and b) assuming abstinence (**sbyong ba ni len pa**) are counted as one. In the original, this list is continuous with the preceding list. Mikyo Dorje's commentary counts "clean clothing" as the
eleventh sign of warmth, while there are six signs of peak, beginning with no para-
sites.

125 This verse is not connected with the former verse in the original, and is from the fifth chapter of Ornament (chap. 5.1, f. 927) on the "culminating training," rather than "peak of application" (both translating rtse mo phyin pa'i sbyor ba in different contexts). It describes the twelve signs of the ground of warmth (not peak). The twelve signs were taught in the prajñāpāramitā sūtras and apply either to dreams or waking states, depending on the commentator. The last line (rnam pa bcu gnyis dag tu bzhed) is not included in the Kinnaur edition.

126 rGya mtsho'i rgyud phyi ma. This text has not been positively identified but is probably the same as or an appendix to Ocean of Timeless Awareness (Ye shes rgya mtsho'i rgyud) often referenced in Shangpa literature, as for instance in Glorious Deathless Great Timeless Awareness in this volume. It was received by Khyungpo Naljor from the īśākini Kanakashri of Devikoti.

127 Maitreya, Ornament of Clear Realization (Toh. 3786), f. 8b2 (chap. 4, vv. 43cd-44ac). According to the commentaries, the first two lines are the last two of the six signs of peak, while the last three lines represent the two signs of acceptance. Signs of acceptance (bzod pa'i rtags) is mistakenly written as bzod pa'i stobs in most editions except for the Kinnaur edition. Also in that edition, bkri bar (to guide) accords with the original in Ornament, rather than sгрib pa (to obscure) in the third line.

128 Bu mo bzhis zhus pa. Not located. The quotation was not found in the similarly titled Questions of Four Goddesses (Caturdevi-paripṛcchā; Lha mo bzhis yongs su zhus pa).

129 Maitreya, Ornament of Clear Realization (Toh. 3786), f. 8b2–3 (chap. 4, vv. 44d–45). This quotation closes the section in the Ornament of Clear Realization concerning the twenty signs on the Path of Application. In that text they are simply listed, though it seems that various commentators have divided them differently, including apparently Niguma, which explains why the quotation is divided up and interspersed with other quotations. For clarification, the list of the twenty follows, with divisions according to Mikyö Dorje's commentary in brackets.

[The Eleven Signs of Warmth]
(1) countering form and so on,
(2) the expiration of doubts,
(3) nonleisure,
(4) dwelling in virtue oneself,
(5) establishing it also in it also,
(6) generosity and so on as support for others,
(7) no hesitation about the profound meaning,
(8) loving [actions] of the body and so on not accompanied by the five obscurations,
(9) all latent tendencies conquered,
(10) mindfulness and awareness,
(11) clean clothing and such.

[The Six Signs of Peak:]
(12) parasites and such not occurring on the body,
(13) mind free of deception,
(14) assuming abstinence,
(15) eliminating avarice,
(16) proceeding by possessing the nature of phenomena,
(17) seeking hell for the sake of sentient beings.

[The Two Signs of Acceptance:]
(18) impervious to others’ misguidance,
(19) realizing that devils who expound alien paths are “devils.”

[The One Sign of Supreme Dharma:]
(20) Activity that pleases the Buddha.

Khye’u  rab snang [gi mdo], not located. (The quote is not found in the similarly named sutra at Toh. 103.) Tangtong Gyalpo (15th C.) also quotes from this sutra, calling it “The Questions of Kumārāprabha Sūtra” in Collection of the Essentials: Words on the Vital Points of the Hearing Lineage of Niguma, the Dākini of Timeless Awareness (TTG-S, vol. 1, 276–77). The quote there is germane: “It is said ‘all phenomena are illusions, dreams’. If you recall these spoken words, you will be released from the bonds of existence and definitely awaken in this very life.”

chos shes pa’i bzod pa. The knowledge or knowing of phenomena, or “dharma cognition” (chos shes pa) is one of the ten or eleven types of wisdom. “Acceptance of the knowing of phenomena” can also be translated as “patience acceptance producing knowledge of a phenomena.”

Another way of explanation by Longchenpa is clarifying: 1) “Knowing phenomena” (chos shes pa) is to see the specifically characterized (rang mtshan) subject (chos can) of each of the four truths. 2) “Acceptance of knowing phenomena” (chos shes pa la bzod pa) is to be unafraid when seeing the specific characteristics. 3) “Subsequent knowing” (rjes su shes pa) is to see the emptiness of the specifically characterized nature of phenomena (chos nyid) of each of the four truths. 4) “Acceptance of subsequent knowing” (rjes su shes pa’i bzod pa) is to be unafraid of seeing the sky. An Excellent Chariot, 103 (f. 29a3–4).

byang chub kyi yan lag bdun: seven factors or branches of enlightenment: (1) dran pa yang dag, (2) chos rab du rnam par ’byed pa yang dag, (3) brtson’grus yang dag, (4) dga’ ba yang dag, (5) shin tu sbyangs pa yang dag, (6) ting nge ‘dezin yang dag, and (7) bzang snyoms yang dag.

bLo gros ’byung gnas kyis zhus pa’i mdo (called bLo gros rab gnas kyis zhus pa’i mdo in the Kinnaur edition). Not located. The same quotes are used by Longchenpa in An Excellent Chariot, beginning on 97 (f. 26a1).

Though this line in all texts besides the Kinnaur edition, and in Longchenpa (f. 26b), reads sms mnyam par bzhag pa ma yin pa, ATG feels that it simply does not make any sense unless there is a negation. Thus we are reading: sms mnyam par ma bzhag pa ma yin pa, which is also confirmed by the Kinnaur text, 181 (f. 21a3).

The “fear of retinue” in this quotation is simply ’khor gyi ’jigs pa, and is often understood by Tibetans as referring to the fear of the loss or lack of retinue or support. However in Gampopa’s Ornament of Precious Liberation, a Wish-Fulfilling Gem (1563), also quoting from the Ten Grounds Sūtra, it says specifically “the fear of trouble among the retinue” (’khor gyi nang du bag tsha’bs ‘jigs pa). Compare to the third line here (’khor gyi ’jigs bral de la bag tsha’bs rnam pa med), where it appears
that "trouble" refers to the lack of anxiety regarding all five fears. Note also that in Guenther's translation, sGam.po.pa, The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, 2.41, he mistakes 'khor for 'khor ba' and mistranslates as "subjection to anxiety while in this world (Samsara)."

137 Flower Ornament Sutra (Toh. 44), f. 186a5–6. Titles of this sutra are also Great Bounteuousness of the Buddhas, and "Sutra of Universal Interpenetration" (Sangs rgyas rmad ga cad), in addition to the name in which it appears in its English translation from Chinese, Flower Ornament Sutra. This quotation is from the chapter entitled "Ten Grounds" (sa bcu pa'i le'u), which in some canons stands alone as the Sutra on the Ten Grounds.

138 de las dang po'i mthong spangs: "First" here refers to the fact that this is the first noble ('phags pa) or exalted of the five paths (ATG, December 6, 2007).

139 kun brtags kyi nyon mongs pa drug: "Due to the corrupting influence of bad tenet systems, mentally imputed perverse concepts concerning the genuine truth cause extremely unpeaceful views with afflictive states and so on (grub mtha' ngan pas blo bsgyur ba'i dbang gis yang dag pa'i don la phyin ci log gi rtog pas kun tu brtags pa'i sems rab tu ma zhi bar byed pa'i lta ba nyon mongs can la sogs pa'o) (RY). The six acquired afflictive states are in distinction from the six innate afflictive states (Ihan skyes) mentioned in the Path of Meditation.

140 The list in the tengyurs and Ume differ from this: they read "unawareness, desire, pride, jealousy, anger, and doubt, and views, making seven." The ST and Kinnuar editions correspond to the Abhidharma, which does not include jealousy.

141 These five are subdivisions of mistaken views. The views about the transitory collection is to regard the five aggregates (phung po; Skt. skandha) as an autonomous self, clinging either to "me" or "mine." The fixation on extremes refers to clinging to a personal identity as permanent and durable, or as something that is annihilated at death. Perverse views means to deny the existence of things that exist, such as karmic causes and results or future lives. Holding views as paramount means to cling to any of the wrong views of non-Buddhists as the best. Holding one's ethical discipline and deliberate conduct as paramount means to cling to them as being pure, excellent, and the path of liberation from suffering.

142 The above list of six afflictive states becomes five since the last one, "views," has itself been subdivided into five.

143 There is an interlinear note (mchan) inserted here in the tengyurs and ST editions that is not found in other copies. Apparently it concerns a debate about the number of factors to be eliminated. Numbers other than 112 are refuted in the Ornament of Clear Realization (Jamgon Kongtrul, "The Presentation of Grounds, Paths, and Results in the Causal Vehicle of Characteristics," 2.4, n. 42). The note here, which is not entirely clear to me, reads: "By adding the forty of the desire realm to that thirty-six, if one thinks or needs [to arrive at] the hundred and fifty-two [factors to be] eliminated on the [Path of] Seeing that is [sometimes] mentioned, if that is so, then one must [accept] the above [as] one hundred and fifty-two factors to be eliminated on the Path of Seeing."

144 Ye shes gsal ba'i rgyud phyi ma, but in Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, f. 42b6, the same quotation is attributed to Ye shes gsang ba'i rgyud phyi ma (Secret Timeless Awareness Latter Tantra). Alas, neither title has yielded positive identification.

145 Lotus-Endowed (Pad ma can) is one of the buddha realms of the ten directions
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(phyogs bcu'i zbing khams), being the one in the lower direction (og phyogs). In the tantric teachings, it is one of the three grounds of awakening (sangs rgyas sa gsum), or the twelfth bhūmi.

Tshangs pa kun dga'i mdo, also appears as Tshangs pa kun dge'i mdo, neither one located. This quote also appears in Longchenpa’s An Excellent Chariot as an example of “some who say that these qualities of the path concern only the increase and transformations in dream and not daytime experiences.” However, Longchenpa goes on to refute this by explaining that the dream is used as the special example of any stage of the path, not that these qualities do not arise in “real” life (33b2–3).

This contextual etymology reflects the connection between these two terms which are spelled differently but sound the same: goms means to become familiar or habituated to something, and sgom is the word commonly translated as “meditation,” meaning to make a habit of mental focus.

The first ground Very Joyful was attained on the Path of Seeing, the remaining nine on the Path of Meditation. See the detailed discussion in the section on the ten grounds.

rtog is used in all copies of the commentary, but in the corresponding root text (721; f. 9a4), the word rtogs (realization) was used, which is correct (ATG). In Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, 100 (f. 27b1), the line reads nges par ston par byed pa (that cause the certain teaching . . . ).

Reading nyon mong pa bag la nyal ba’i than skyes las phyre ba drug as in the Ume edition, rather than phyi nang drug (inner and outer six) from the others. Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, 104 (f. 29b5) has phyi na drug, apparently a mistake. Lhan skyes, usually translated as coemergent, is here more literally rendered as “born with” since these are not beginningless afflictions (ATG). It is distinguished from the acquired afflictive states mentioned in the Path of Seeing.

I am following the Kinnaur edition and Longchenpa, rather than the other editions of the commentary that list the six as ignorance, desire, anger, doubt, pride, and the view of the transitory collection [as a self]. This accords with TOK, (according to ATG), where the afflictive states here are four nonviews and two views.

The added clarification here is based on Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, 104 (f. 29b6).

The four meditative equilibriums or fields of perception (skye mched mu bzhi) of the formless god realm, in their more usual order, are Infinite Space (nam mkha’ mtha’ yas), Infinite Consciousness (rnam shes mtha’ yas), Nothing Whatsoever (ci yang med pa), and Neither Presence nor Absence (of Perception) (yod min med min te) (RY).

The Path of Consummation (thar phyin pa’i lam) is also sometimes called the “Path of No More Learning” (mi slob pa’i lam). This indicates that all action or training is perfected, rather than that one cannot train or learn anything.

bSam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa’i mdo. There are many sūtras in the canon that include this phrase, but the quote was not found in any of them.

This line of the quotation is not found in the root text, which is otherwise nearly verbatim. See verse 127.

dGongs pa bla na med pa’i rgyud. Not located.

Ye shes bla na med pa’i rgyud. Not located. The first section of the quote is found in Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, 33b6–34a2, but not the second part.

god nams kyi sku, the “merit kāya” is an archaic name for the sambhogakāya since it
is the result of perfecting the accumulation of merit. The original quote, in fact, uses *sambhogakāya* (*longs sphyod rdzogs pa'i sku*). The bracketed line also appears in the sūtra, but not in the Niguma texts.

160 **Sublime Golden Light Sūtra** (Toh. 556), f. 169b2. Of the three versions of this sūtra in the canon, this is the middle one.

161 **Mahāyāna Highest Continuum** (Toh. 4024), f. 55a1. The treatise is attributed to Asaṅga, based on the teachings of Maitreya. These lines are explained immediately afterward in the treatise and can be found in the many available translations and commentaries.

162 **Journey to Lanka Sūtra** (Toh. 107), 217 (f. 109a2–3). The quote as found in the sūtra and also as cited in Longchenpa, *An Excellent Chariot*, 154 (f. 54b1–2) uses “mind” or “thought” (*sems*) instead of “ideas” (*du sheg*). The whole quote from the sūtra as follows is actually a discussion of approaches or vehicles (*theg pa, yāna*):

For as long as mind exists,
there is no reaching the end of vehicles.
When mind is eradicated,
there is no vehicle, and no going either.
Although there is no presentation of vehicles,
in order to guide sentient beings,
I explain different vehicles,
I teach that the vehicles are one.

163 **Maitreya, Ornament of the [Mahāyāna] Sūtras** (Toh. 4020), f. 38a1. There is a mistake in quoting this important verse (except in the Kinnaur edition), so I have changed to the original. Where it says “byung po dpag med jigs med phyir” (since measureless elementals are fearless), the Niguma texts mistakenly have “byung po dpag med jigs byed phyir” (since measureless elementals are destroyed).

The meaning of this line is not immediately apparent, so a look at various commentaries was helpful. It is important to remember the bivalent meaning of “sa” (Skt. *bhūmi*) as both “level” and literally as “ground” or “earth.” An early commentary by Vasubandhu, *Explanation of the Ornament of the Sūtras* (Toh. 4026), 255b7–256a2 glosses as follows:

Since [the ground] makes measureless elementals fearless, [and] since for those measureless ones [the grounds] are endowed with progress while going higher, therefore those dwelling places are called “grounds.” It says “since [the grounds] make measureless elementals fearless” because the fear of measureless elementals is eliminated. It says “those measureless ones” because each [of those] is also immeasurable. It says “are endowed with progress while going higher” because [they are] endowed with [the potential of] going to the higher grounds.

But this is still not entirely clear until we read Mipam’s commentary in the *Complete Explanation of the Intended Meaning of “Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras.”* Why are they called grounds? The term *bhūmi* [in Sanskrit connotes] that since in the world [the ground] is the support for measureless elemental sentient beings, as well as grasses and trees and forests and so on, and since they rely on that [ground], they have no fear of falling. And just as [the ground] becomes the foundation of journeying to other places and countries and domains, the bodhisattva grounds are the support and dwelling
places of measureless elemental beings who are to be tamed and therefore [those grounds are] the dwelling places that cause them to be without fear. The higher and higher grounds are the places of measureless qualities, [and] since those situations have [the potential] to become the support for journeying or going progressively higher and higher, they are the dwelling places of bodhisattvas. Therefore they are held to be “grounds.” (Collected Works, vol. 2, 745-46; f. 374a6-b3)

Finally, in the Treasury of Knowledge, vol. 3, 496, Jamgon Kongtrul adds some more description, which would lend itself to an interpretation of the first line as a list of possible word derivations:

The Sanskrit equivalent is bhūmi. One arrives at the general hermeneutical etymologies of “ground” through the certainties that derive from deleting or adding [certain] syllables. Bhū derives from bhūta (Tib. 'byung po, that is., elements or the beings composed of elements) for, like the great elements, these grounds serve as supports for the amassing of positive qualities. Mi derives from amita, meaning “measureless” (dpag med) since they are attained through measureless hardships. Alternatively, bhū derives from abhaya, meaning “fearless” (jigs med), since once one has attained these grounds, one has eliminated the five fears, and so on. Or, bhū derives from bhūya[s] which means “progress” (phyi phyir), since one progresses by journeying higher and higher based on what preceded. So the term “ground” implies something that serves as a support. In brief, then, the general derivation of the term “ground” comes from using this word as a referent, since these grounds, similar to the earth as a foundation, serve as supports for positive qualities.

164 This line in the sūtra (rab tu dga’ ba chen po skye bas) is not in the Niguma texts and has been added here.

165 This phrase (mtshan ma med pa yid la byed pa med pa’i), on the other hand, is not found in the edition of the sūtra that was consulted, or in the Kinnaur edition, which in general seems to be closer to the the sūtras.

166 The sūtra has shes rab (wisdom) here rather than ye shes (timeless awareness), but I have kept ye shes since it was developed on the previous ground. Also “and grows” has been added from the sutra.

167 This line (nyan thos dang rang rgyal las ring du song ba’i phyir) is not in the edition of the sūtra that was consulted.

168 Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 194a5-b4. The same quote is also found in Questions of Aksayamati Sūtra.

169 me tog tsam pa ka: These are actually the seed pods of the tsampaka, which are often used in Buddhist rituals and strung into garlands to wear. Because of the abundance of seeds in one plant, they are considered to contain the essence of all flowers, and hence all beauty.

170 yan lag brgyad ldan gyi chu: 1) coolness (bsil ba), 2) sweetness (zhim pa), 3) lightness (yang pa), 4) softness (jam pa), 5) clearness (dvangs pa), 6) free of impurities (dri ma med pa), 7) drinking soothes the stomach ('thung na lto par jam pa), and 8) clears and comforts the throat (mgrim pa sang sang bde ba).

171 This quote was found in neither the Sūtra of Teaching the Unimaginable Secrets of the Tathāgatas (Toh. 47) nor in the Sūtra of Teaching the Unimaginable Buddha Realms.
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(Toh. 79) but in another sūtra of the same collection (Ratnakuti; dKon brtsegs) called Questions of Akṣayamati Sūtra (Toh. 89), ff. 180a6–181a3. It is also in Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 193b1–194a5. The phrase “Child of a good family, the early sign of the... bodhisattva ground is that the bodhisattva, the great being,...” repeats at each of the ten grounds in the sūtras, but is left out in the Niguma texts.

Again, found in Questions of Akṣayamati Sūtra (Toh. 89), f. 181a3–6, and in an expanded version in Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 195a6–b1.

“Promise” (mi ngoms par dam 'cha' ba) is added from the sūtra, f. 230b5.

“Genuine state” (yang dag pa) is also added from the sūtra, f. 131a1.

Flower Ornament Sūtra (Toh. 44), ff. 230b3–231a1.

“Promise” (mi ngoms par dam 'cha' ba) is added from the sūtra, f. 230b5.

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Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 195a6–b1.

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Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 195a6–b1.

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“Genuine state” (yang dag pa) is also added from the sūtra, f. 131a1.

Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 195a6–b1.

Again, found in Questions of Akṣayamati Sūtra (Toh. 89), f. 181a3–6, and in an expanded version in Sublime Golden Light Sūtra (Toh. 556), f. 195a6–b1.

“Promise” (mi ngoms par dam 'cha' ba) is added from the sūtra, f. 230b5.

“Genuine state” (yang dag pa) is also added from the sūtra, f. 131a1.
po'i tog gi rgyal mtshan gyi rgyal po (Indraketudhvajarāja), literally Buddha of the Pinnacle of Sensory Powers, counted as one of the thirty-five tathāgatas.

185 gTshangs mā'is ri[g][s], or Tsangs ma'i gnas (Skt. Śuddhanivāsa/Śuddhagasakayika), also called the Heaven of Pure Reaches.

186 Zla gsang thig le: one of the texts in the mahāyoga section of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum, said to be translated by Padmasambhava and Paltsek (see Roerich, BA, 102). See rNying ma rgyud 'bum (Collected Tantras of the Ancients), mTshams brag, vol. 18 ('Tsha), 557.1–548.7 (Tb 406) (THDL). The quote was not found in the similarly titled tantra in the canon translated by Rinchen Zangpo, Secret Moon Drop Tantra (Toh. 477).

187 'Dul ba don yod pa'i rgyud ('Dus pa don yod pa in Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, 34b3–5). Not located.

188 Rab tu mi gnas pa'i rgyud. Not located. Up to this point, both the quotes and the commentary in Longchenpa's An Excellent Chariot are nearly identical. Hereafter, Longchenpa concludes that while this is just a brief exposition of each vehicle, the final say seems to be from the nondual tantra, the great Net of Magical Manifestation (sGyu 'phrul dra ba chen po) and he adds several quotes from that, rather than the two tantras that follow here. Longchenpa, An Excellent Chariot, 115 (f. 35a1-3).

189 rDo rje bde ba'i rgyud and Ye shes thig le'i rgyud. The latter would seem to be Drop of Timeless Awareness (Toh. 422), but this quotation is not found there.

190 Vajra Peak Tantra (Toh. 480), f. 152b5. This is an explanatory tantra of the Yoga Tantras. In the tantra, this verse answers the question "Where does this secret arise?" (gsang ba 'di ni gang du byung), and in fact the word for imperishable (jig med pa) is perhaps misspelled there as "fearless" (jigs med pa).

191 This discussion attempts to resolve the apparent contradiction in the statement (above from the Secret Moon Drop Tantra) that the Buddha abandons the Pure Domains (Tsangs pa'i gnas) before attaining the state of a buddha in Akānīṣṭha (’Og min). It would seem to indicate that the Pure Domains are actually impure and separable from Akānīṣṭha, which is pure or permanent. Here it is maintained that Akānīṣṭha is the highest or best part of the Pure Domains (actually the fifth of five grounds), and thus both are imperishable and pure from the pure perspective.

Longchenpa discusses this in An Excellent Chariot, 35a4–36a2, before presenting this quote. There, he presents a different view that almost seems like a response: "In any case, what is this Akānīṣṭha of buddhahood? Some believe that this is the Akānīṣṭha of the Pure Domains, but that does not make sense, because [it says that] the Pure Domains are abandoned. Some say that it is [a distance] from the Akānīṣṭha of the Pure Domains [as] a hermitage is just a distance away from the town, but that does not make sense because it is described as "without direction or extent."" Here [in the Net of Magical Manifestation] it is explained that the primordial Buddha's natural pure manifestation is the Akānīṣṭha of pure awareness, so one finds the kāyas and timeless awareness as one in basic space."

It may be helpful to think of three kinds of Akānīṣṭha: (1) the ultimate Akānīṣṭha, that is, the formless state of the dharma-kāya, (2) the Densely Arrayed Akānīṣṭha (Tib. ’Ogmin rgyan stugpo bkod pa; Skt. Ghandavyūhākānīṣṭha), where the sambhogakāya manifests, and (3) the highest pure level of the form realm, which is a natural sphere of nirmānakāya.

192 gNyis med rnam par rgyal ba'i rgyud, not located.
Notes to Chapter 2, The Six Dharmas of Niguma

1 “Rinpoche” may refer to Shangs Rinpoche, a title for Khyungpo Naljor. However it may refer to one of Sangye Tönpa’s own teachers. Drogon Sangye Tönpa was the so-called “seventh jewel,” the seventh and last lineage holder in the one-to-one lineage. He was also, according to Jamgon Kongtrul, the first to actually write down the oral instructions from the root hearing lineages of the two dākinis (Beryl Key, 72). The Jewel Ocean Tantra (Rin  chen rgya mtsho'i rgyud), which is often mentioned as a major source of much of the tradition, has not been located. See note 123 in the introduction.


3 Jamgon Kongtrul, TOK, vol. 1, 537; The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, 235. This may be a direct reference to the Directory (Thems yig) attributed to Niguma, however, and not to the Vajra Lines as such. A similar statement by Taranātha on the purity of the tradition was quoted earlier, in the main introduction.

4 Lochen Gyurme Dechen (1540–1615) was recognized as an emanation of Maitripa and was considered the lineage holder of the vajra lines after Kunga Drolchok (1507–1566). Catalogue, 506 (f. 64b6). In his many works he signed himself as the “speaker of two languages (skad gnyis rma ba) and gained the name Lochen, “great translator,” based on his excellent understanding of Sanskrit. His personal focus was on the Kalachakra practices and the teachings of the Shangpa Kagyu. While he studied with many teachers of different traditions, he received the instructions of Niguma from Kunga Drolchok. His most enduring work is the definitive biography of Tangtong Gyalpo, which is translated in Stearns, King of the Empty Plain. See that book for more on him, especially 8–11. Also see Zangpo, Timeless Rapture, 168–69, for Gyurme Dechen’s beautiful supplication to Niguma.

5 Atisha’s sojourn there before proceeding to Central Tibet is well known. It was at Tholing (Tho ling, but more properly mtho gding, as in Roerich, BA, 248, or Taranātha’s unusual mton mting in Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind, 463; f. 242a2), the residence of Rinchen Zangpo, that he composed his famous Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment, the prototype for the many later works of this “path-stages” genre (lam rim) composed by Tibetan authors. Considering the story here in Khyungpo Naljor’s biography, it is interesting to speculate as to whether Atisha also had access to an even earlier prototype, namely, Stages in the Path of Illusion, either his own copy or that of Khyungpo, who would certainly have carried it with the Vajra Lines that he had received at the same time from Niguma. Unfortunately, the biography does not tell us which texts exactly were at issue. Matthew Kapstein, it should be noted, is not buying any of it and states, “That event, however, may best be read as a fiction inserted into the hagiography for apologetical reasons.” “Chronological Conundrums,” 8.


8 See chapter 5. There is another text of Indian origin, attributed to the Great Āchārya Vajrāsana (sLob dpon chen po rDo rje gdan pa) that bears a similar colophon and must have been included in the texts that Khyungpo Naljor showed to Atisha and Rinchen Zangpo. It is called Indian Source Text of the Glorious Five Tantras Method
of Accomplishment. The colophon reads: “In the presence of the Indian paññita Vairochanaraksita and the Tibetan Lotsāwa Lendarma Lodrō it was translated. Later, Lotsāwa Rinchen Zangpo verified and corrected it at the Golden Shrine Room of Tholing.” ST., vol. 9, 549.

9 ST., vol. 6, 172–73. I am not sure of the identity of this Buddhaśri. It may refer to the Mahāsiddha Buddhaśri from Nepal—said to have been invited to Tibet in 1198 (Tārānātha, Tārānātha’s History of Buddhism in India, 317)—although this would place him later than the dates for Khyungpo Naljor. He is mentioned several times in BA (Roerich, 1033, 1055, and 1065), where each invitation seems to come from a different translator. Alternatively, it might refer to Sangye Palzang (Buddhaśri could be translated into Tibetan as Sangye Pal), the author of Releasing the Knots of the Vajra Lines, written in the Shangpa monastery of Kuklung (IKugs lung).

10 Beryl Key, ST., vol. 6, 83 (f. 1721–4); GK, vol. 10, 477 (f. 1024–5).

11 Niguma, Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas (P 4633), ff. 142b6–144a2. Four other editions were also used: CT, vol. 42, 842–45 (2514); ST, vol. 6, 161–73; DZ, vol. 11, 1–27; and GD-CW, vol. 2 (ha). Tangtong Gyalpo’s Collection of the Essentials, TTGS, vol. 1, 241–336, where the vajra lines are quoted within the commentary, was also consulted.

12 The Sanskrit that is transliterated into Tibetan reads Dharma shad badzra gatha nama (clearly mistaken in CT (842) as “dharmashatvajrayoge thana ma”).

13 theg chen skye med rang sgra ’di skad thos. Gyurme Dechen had a great deal to say about this initial verse in his Complete Explanation of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas. According to him, it is here a misreading of the exact same phrase that appears in other source materials such as Nāropa, Vajra Lines of the Hearing Lineage (Toh. 233B), f. 301b6. There, it is understood to mean that Vajradhara himself heard this talk and that “heard” really means “to understand” (mkhyen pa) or “to realize” (rtogs pa). The compilers of the Shangpa texts then rendered it to mean that Niguma heard it from Vajradhara as a way to verify the Shangpa story line. Gyurme Dechen says, “Therefore, the explanation that someone ‘heard this talk; the unborn natural sound of the great vehicle’ means that Niguma heard [it from] Vajradhara should be understood as a sign of fabrication” (ST, 8, 489). He then goes on to present his reasoning in hair-splitting detail that will be of considerable interest to determined scholars. This and the many other questions that Gyurme Dechen raises concerning the Shangpa texts—all gathered in his [Questions concerning] the Instructions of Glorious Niguma, Mighty Kechari, and again in Complete Explanation of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas—in no way seemed to dampen his own faith in the lineage. I suspect that it was this seeming skepticism that made his work “meet with an ambivalent response in the Shangpa Tradition,” rather than his “wordy presentation of the path,” as Ngawang Zangpo suggests in Timeless Rapture, 344.

14 dbu ’byor is glossed in the interlinear note as the joining of bliss-emptiness or appearance-emptiness, indicating the dharmakāya.

15 All three kayas are presented in these first lines; “arising to tame anyone” indicates nirmāṇakāya.

16 The note says “possessed of seven branches” (yan lag bdun dang ldan pa). If these are the seven branches of enlightenment contained in the thirty-seven factors, then they are mindfulness, revealing phenomena, diligence, joy, agility, absorption, and equanimity (see the comments on verses 84–91 in Stages in the Path of Illusion: The
Commentary). More commonly, Vajradhara is described as having seven aspects of union (kha sbyor bdun ldan): (1) complete enjoyment (longs spyod rdzogs pa), (2) union (kha sbyor), (3) great bliss (bde ba chen po), (4) no intrinsic nature (rang bzhin med pa), (5) completely filled with compassion (snying rjes yongs su gang ba), (6) uninterrupted (rgyun mi chad pa), and (7) unceasing (gog pa med pa). See Mokchokpa, The Life Story of Buddha Vajradhara, 13–14 (f. 725–b1).

These three time frames apply to those of excellent (rab), medium (‘bring), and lesser (smad) caliber, respectively.

This formulation of the six dharmas of Niguma is quoted extensively in nearly all commentaries. “The victors” (rgyal ba’i) is missing in the tengyurs but appears in all other editions.

With notes inserted, this line reads: “One’s own body is the means in the practice of the secret empowerment: the right, left, and central three channels [and] four chakras at the navel, heart, throat, and head.” “One’s own body is the means” (rang lus thabs ldan) refers to the practice of inner heat based only on visualizations in one’s own body, as distinguished from the practice of uniting with another’s body (gehan lus shes rab kyi gtim mo), which is suggested in the last two lines of the verse. It is this practice based on one’s own body that is the main practice in the Shangpa tradition. This is made clear in Taranatha, Profound Meaning Expanded, ST, vol. 3, 384 (f. 25b1–5) and other commentaries. In Selected Works of the Dalai Lama 2, 112, Glen Mullin’s translation of rang lus thabs ldan as “sitting in correct posture” is one of many interpretations that were not fully informed by the teachings in this lineage.

With notes inserted this reads: “From the blazing and melting of the a-stroke below the navel and the ham letter in the crown of the head, one is adorned in four moments (various form, matured form, form itself, and free of defining characteristics) with four [degrees of] joy: joy, sublime joy, special joy, and coemergent joy.”

This refers to the practice of the third empowerment, the awareness-wisdom empowerment, and wisdom refers to one’s partner in practice (shes rab ma). Khagamukha, literally “bird face,” refers to the particular energy channel (rtsa), here referenced as “dakini-faced one” in the notes. See Gray, The Cakrasamvara Tantra, 113. Also see Jamgön Kongtrul, Treasury of Knowledge: Book Eight, Part Four: Exoteric Instructions, 252.

The descending sequence of four joys is dissipating or defiled (zag bcas), while the ascending sequence is undefiled (zag med). Tangtong Gyalpo also describes the sequence of experience as first heat, then bliss, then the absorption of bliss-emptiness. Collection of the Essentials, TTG-S, vol. 1, 260 (f. 10b4).

That is, gathering of the quintessence of the blessings through the preliminary practice of guru yoga. However, Gendun Gyatso (the 2nd Dalai Lama) comments that this indicates that the syllable “a” is the quintessence and shortest version of the prajñāpāramitā sūtras. Mullin, The Dalai Lamas on Tantra, 105.

stong ra: the hollow interior. The interlinear note here reads “such as clearing away sickness and bad spirits with ‘a’” (a’i nad gdon sel byed sogs), indicating the purification practice in the Shangpa tradition in which the verbalized letter “a” is imagined as elixir cleansing out the interior of the channels in the body. The three vital points or stages of this practice are: “purifier hollow interior of ‘a’” (dag byed a’i stong ra), “hollow interior clearing away disease and bad spirits” (stong ra nad gdon sel byed), and “special hollow interior of three signs” (rtsags gsum stong ra’i khyad par). Tangtong
Notes to Chapter 2, The Six Dharmas of Niguma

Gyalpo, Collection of the Essentials, TTG-S, vol. 1, 250 (f. 5b2–3). In English, there is a short summary in Jamgön Kongtrul, Treasury of Knowledge, Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions, 240–41; and a longer description in Mullin, The Dalai Lamas on Tantra, 105–8. Also see the introduction to this book.


26 The rabbit (ri bong) is a symbol for the moon, which is a symbol for the bodhichitta (byang sems) or seminal vital energy substance that descends in the central channel as a result of the blazing and melting. The rabbit represents the moon since one can see the form of a rabbit in the moon, and the white bodhichitta is associated with the moon. One practices control of this bodhichitta through descending, holding, and so on, finally blending it with the energy currents (lung, Skt. praśna).

27 Nondissipating (zag med) is here specified as “free of thought” and great timeless awareness (ye shes chen po) as “intrinsically fully known.” Instead of zag med, Tangtong Gyalpo’s commentary gives gnyis med, “nondual.” Ibid., 268 (f. 14b5).

28 These are the names of the sequence of practice of inner heat, beginning with the special preliminary practice of the hollow interior of fire, which is the vital point for the body (lus gnad me’i stong ra). See Taranatha, Profound Meaning Expanded, ST, vol. 3, 358–63 (ff. 12b1–15a4). (This first line is missing in the tengyur editions but present in all others.) Taranatha considers “Eating the Food” (zas su za ba) as the main practice, with the next two as branches, and the empowerment and liberation of obstructers as concluding practices.

29 zhen bral (free of attachment) in most copies, rather than bden bral (free of true existence) in CT. The notes clarify that devotion is the practice for those of highest faculties, and one’s body and all appearance arising as the deity’s form is for those of medium faculties. One’s body and all appearance arising as the deity’s form are two separate phases in the practice.

30 By way of explanation, the notes in the GD-CW edition quote from the Drop of Timeless Awareness: “The vase empowerment is the eleventh ground, the secret empowerment is the sublime twelfth, awareness-wisdom is the thirteenth, and in the same way [the fourth empowerment] is the fourteenth; thus each ground at each empowerment.” f. 3a2. All of these are progressive grounds of buddhahood in the system of vajrayāna, beyond the tenth ground where it is traditionally said to be achieved in the mahāyāna tradition. See the comments to verses 197–200 in Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary in this volume.

31 Tangtong Gyalpo explains that those of medium faculty should regard all appearing phenomena “without any interruption from any other words, such as idle chatter and so on, verbally repeating ‘it is illusion, it is dream; and in mind also maintaining mindfulness and determination of illusion and dream without slacking off.” Collection of the Essentials, 276 (f. 18b2–4). “The single seat” means that those of lower faculties can do the entire practice by visualizing all the realms of sentient beings as illusory, without ever letting their meditation cushion even cool off (mal gyi drod ma yal ba). Ibid., 277–78 (f. 19a3–b3).

32 “Double delusion” or the delusion of delusion (nying ’khrul) refers to the fact that nighttime dreaming is even more of a delusion than ordinary waking appearances.

33 This is treated as commentary in ST, DZ, and TTG-S, while in GD-CW, which is
usually the most reliable in distinguishing the sections, it is presented as the actual vajra lines, the way it appears in the tengyur. I think, however, that this is a mistake since it is clearly prose and not verse.

The dream yoga sequential practices are to recognize, refine, increase, emanate, and change dreams and to ascertain objective appearance (as also illusion) \textit{[bzung ba, sbyang ba, spel ba, sprul pa, bogyur ba, yul snang gnas la dbab pa]}]. See \textit{Taranatha, Profound Meaning Explained, ST}, vol. 3, 408–50.

The notes explain excessive delusion (\textit{’khrul ’byams}) as not recognizing that one is dreaming, excessive wakefulness (\textit{sad ’byams}), missing from CT) as waking up again and again, excessive bliss (\textit{bde ’byams}) as losing the seminal bodhichitta, and excessive emptiness (\textit{stong ’byams}) as not desiring dream and (in GD-CW only) the certainty of nihilism.

With the interlinear notes, this verse reads something like: “Lucid clarity \textit{is caused to} arise through the vital point of devotion and supplication to the guru. The great bliss, \textit{the cause (rgyu, not sku as in DZ and ST) of attaining the unity of no [more] training, [is] the practice of the dissipating and nondissipating four joys in descending (in GD-CW only) and ascending order, and the cause for those to arise, which is the vital points of the body and steady gazes, causes bliss and clarity and nonthought, those three as an inseparable unity, to arise naturally. The preliminary and main and concluding practices [are] adorned by the vital points of time.”

Again it is not clear whether it is part of the original vajra lines. In commentaries, such as those by Tangrong Gyalpo and Gendun Gyatso (Mullin, \textit{The Dalai Lamas on Tantra}, 143–46), it is not part of the vajra lines. In GD-CW, DZ, and ST, the first line “lucid clarity is recognized . . . consummated” appears as commentary. The last two lines are in regular letter size with their own interlinear notes, as follows: “A holy guru who has actualized in direct experience the lucid clarity that abides since forever, introduces the experience (\textit{’char sgo}) of the disciple’s lucid clarity, and it is adorned by enhancement and clearing away obstacles.”

These are the names of the different types of transference in the tradition of Niguma, described individually in \textit{Taranatha, Profound Meaning Expanded, ST}, vol. 3, 484–89. As he mentions, however, the transference most commonly practiced in the tradition is called “skylight of timeless awareness” (\textit{ye shes skar khung ma}).

These two lines also appear as part of the verses, though, as before, they are not quoted in the commentaries. With the interlinear notes, they read: “The vital point of certain time \textit{is the arising of the signs of death}; the vital points of the body are cross-legged, squatting, etc.; the vital point of speech \textit{is to train in blending transference by, as is said, ‘the intense shout of two and a half letters’} [that is, \textit{phat}] along with the sound of hie; the vital point of substance \textit{is to anoint the crown of the head with red and white bodhicitta, salt, and human brains.”

This last rather interesting note reads \textit{byang sems dkar dmar ’tshal la mi’i glad pa rnam sbyi bor byugs pa}]. GD-CW, f. 4ar. The version in DZ and ST seems to have been corrupted: \textit{tsha ba gsum mi klad rnam kyis spyi bor byug la}. However I’m using \textit{tsha ba} here for “salt” (rather than \textit{tshal la}, which is unclear to me) based on the following comment by Gendun Gyatso, as translated in Glenn Mullin, \textit{The Dalai Lamas on Tantra}, 146: “This is described in the oral tradition as follows: ‘One’s own and a female’s fluids/ Lead energy and mind upward./ Salt opens the mouth of the channel/ And brain guards against hindrances.’” I cannot follow up as the source verse is not
cited and Gendun Gyatso's text on Niguma does not appear in his collected works.

It is not readily apparent how this verse is arranged. According to the notes, those of highest acumen can be liberated in the first intermediate state after the three stages of light or appearance, the spreading of it, and the culmination of it (snang mched thob gsum), when lucid clarity is recognized. Those of medium capacity recognize the deity's body of saqtbhogakaya in the second intermediate state. Those of the least capacity should try to block rebirth by repulsion for the samsaric process, so that attraction and aversion and jealousy toward one's future parents during intercourse is refined away by the transformations of the lucid clarity as deities' bodies.

According to Tangtong Gyalpo, Collection of the Essentials, 38, weariness or revulsion with samsara is the vital point for all three kinds of best, medium, and least practitioners for the intermediate state after death, so one should apply the three integrations of practicing all phenomena as the guru, the yidam, and as illusion. See chapter 4 of this volume for the English translation of the Three Integrations.

Here snang byed should be snang mched (as in ST, 170; f. 5b4), again referring to the three lights or three “appearances” or “experiences” (snang ba gsum) at the time of death that begin after the dissolution of the senses (forms, sounds, and so on) and elements (water, earth, and so forth). In progressive or arising order they are light (snang ba), increase of the light (snang ba mched pa), and culmination of light (snang ba thob pa). When the true nature of mind as lucid clarity is not recognized, it shifts to three coarser phases of appearance in reverse order: culmination, increase, and light. See Jamgon Kongtrul’s extensive discussion of the three lights in TOK, 2, 689-707 or The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Six, Part Four: Systems of Buddhist Tantra, 251-72.

rang bzhin brgyad bcu’i rtog pa: The three lights become subject to and veiled by eighty conceptions or “natures” (rang bzhin, Skt. prakrti). They are called “natures” because they are the nature or obscuring transformations of the three lights. As mentioned in the interlinear notes, they are the seven conceptions of delusion indicative of the culmination of light, the forty of desire indicative of the increase of light, and the thirty-three of aversion indicative of light. In the final stages of the death process, or in the yogic realization of reversing the three lights, the eighty conceptions dissolve. They are listed and discussed extensively in relation to the three lights in Kongtrul, TOK, 2, 689-707 or The Treasury of Knowledge: Book Six, Part Four: Systems of Buddhist Tantra, 251-72. Tangtong Gyalpo also offers an excellent description in Collection of Essentials, 317-25 (ff. 39a5-43b1).

A reference to the common unethical behavior of selling watered-down milk. Tangtong Gyalpo says: “those bloated dharma practitioners who mostly are like merchants that sell milk polluted with water.” Collection of Essentials, 334 (f. 47a4).

The notes elaborate that personal practice experience, the scriptures of the Victor’s authentic word that have five aspects or branches, and the directories (them yig) are to be cherished. This last is likely a reference to the directory attributed to Niguma that Khyungpo Naljor assembled, called Directory of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas, which clearly lists the sequence of practice of these teachings.

Here is the famous injunction of Niguma’s to keep the teachings secret for “seven generations.” This would actually be just four more after Khyungpo Naljor, ending with Drogön Sangye Tönpa. Again, Gyurme Dechen takes issue with this countdown, wondering what happened to the crucial figure of Niguma’s teacher Lavapa, and the fact that Atisha apparently was “in” on the secret. In any case, it was Sangye Tönpa
who did in fact spread the teachings widely. The seven-generation injunction is also found in Niguma, *Glorious Immortal Deathless Great Timeless Awareness* and in many other places, such as the life stories.

**Notes to Chapter 3, Mahāmudrā**

3. An exception is the edition in *DZ* (vol. 11, 13–15), where Jamgön Kongtrul seems to incorporate some of what are, in other editions, the notes into the main text and present them all in the same size lettering. Furthermore, his version in *Ocean of Song, DZ*, vol. 12, 467–68, is highly edited and reorganized into metered verse, presumably to make it fit for chanting.
4. Jamgön Kongtrul, *Ocean of Song, DZ*, vol. 12, 467 (f. 3a6–7). The *Vajra Lines* are on 467–68 (f. 3a7–b5), and *Naturally Free Mahāmudrā* is on 468–69 (ff. 3b5–4a6). Some of this *Ocean of Song* has been translated by Ngawang Zangpo in *Timeless Rapture*.
5. Niguma, *Vajra Lines of the Amulet Mahāmudrā*. In these canons, the text is presented as "Vajra Lines of the Amulet Mahāmudrā and Clear Words" (*Phyag rgya chen po ga'u ma'i rdo rje'i tshig rkang dang/ tshig gsal bzhus so*), but "Clear Words" refers to a different text that is not contained here. The *Vajra Lines* are also in *DZ*, vol. 11, 13–15 (ff. 7a5–8a2) and *ST*, vol. 6, 192–96 (ff. 16a3–18b5) as *The Trunk, Amulet Mahāmudrā Vajra Lines* (*sDong po phyag rgya chen po ga'u ma rdo rje tsig rkang*), included in the set called *Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas of the Dākini of Timeless Awareness* (*Ye shes mkha' gro ni gu ma'i chos drug rdo rje'i tshig rkang*). It appears again in *ST*, vol. 8, 785–88, followed by *Clear Words*.
6. Niguma, *Vajra Lines of the Amulet Mahāmudrā (with Notes)*. This version with the interlinear notes is in *P, CT*, and *ST*, vol. 8, 799–803, with only slight variations.
7. Described in the commentaries as putting the two palms so they cover the knees. Sangye Palzang, *Releasing the Knots of the Vajra Lines, ST*, vol. 9, 119. Elsewhere, the mudrā of meditative equipoise is recommended, such as in Tangtong Gyalpo's *Guiding Instructions on Niguma's Branch Practice, Amulet Mahāmudrā, ST*, vol. 3, 686.
8. Here for simplicity I have interpreted the line based on the edition in Jamgön Kongtrul, which reads: *tshigs bzhis dang rtsa dang mchu klo pa ni lus rang babs so* *DZ*, vol. 11, 13 (f. 7a7). The versions in *P, CT*, and *ST* are problematic: *tshigs bzhis dang rtsa dang chu bs dus* *(or bs'dud) pa thams cad ldod kyis glod pa ni/ lus rang babs so*. Aside from the obvious difference in *chu* (water) rather than *mchu* (lips), there is the verb *bs dus pa* *(to gather)* or *bs'dud pa* *(dissolve)*. Although this version is not clear, it is possible that these were special instructions pertaining to the body, since *rtsa chu* can refer to the pulse and the urine or, alternatively, to feces and urine. That *chu* *(water)* is not a mistake for *mchu* *(lips)* here is also perhaps supported by the fact that "lips" is not misspelled in the very next line of any version (except in *CT*, where it is *ma*). However, there is no commentary to clarify this. (If I were giving advice on the natural resting of the body, I would say that there's no chance of relaxation if you have to go to the bathroom!)
9. The tengyurs (both *P* and *CT*) here have *sems chos sku 'du bral med*, but all other copies do not have *sems* *(mind)*. Sangye Palzang's commentary says, "calm abiding [with] the mind free of thoughts and higher insight become a unity; the uncompounded
dharmakāya that was introduced before is not contained or separated for even an instant, it being so very close, and yet without the previous nonconceptual wisdom there is the fault of not seeing the meaning of the nature of phenomena, causing one to wander in samsara. "Releasing the Knots of the Vajra Lines, ST, vol. 9, 152–53 (f. 274a–b1).

The note states here that "four" (bzhi) refers to the four kāyas mentioned before and the timeless awareness associated with each: dharmakāya, dharmadhatu awareness; nirmāṇakāya, mirror-like awareness; saṃbhogakāya, discriminating awareness; and mahāsukakāya, equanimity awareness. Then the spontaneous enlightened activity arising from all four is said to be the fifth awareness, that of being all-accomplished. Sangye Palzang, Releasing the Knots of the Vajra Lines, ST, vol. 9, 158–59, quoting from Clear Words.


Sangye Palzang comments: "'The preliminary secret vajra' [means that] first those in whom experience has arisen are carefully questioned, and if the pointing-out that it is like that has not taken, then it is a vajra secret." Releasing the Knots of the Vajra Lines, ST, vol. 9, 160 (f. 31b1).

The imperative sense (ltos shig) is taken from ibid., 168 (f. 35b6).

Sangye Palzang adds: "To Niguma, dākini of timeless awareness, the adept Kyungpo Naljor offered five measures of gold and requested it. He pleased her with devotion and practice. Then she and Lotsawa Landarma Lodrö translated it. It was brought to Tibet, where the word lineage (tshig brgyud) and the instructions were given to the fortunate disciple, the incomparable Mokchokpa the Great." Ibid., 172–73 (ff. 37b6–38a2).

Niguma, Naturally Free Mahāmudrā. Also translated in Zangpo, Timeless Rapture, 47–48.

Notes to Chapter 4, The Three Integrations

1 Taranātha, Supplement to the Lineage Stories of One Hundred Guides, DZ, vol. 18, 104–5 (ff. 3b6–4a1).

2 This text is found in ST, vol. 10, 277–81, along with an explanatory text and lineage supplication, together entitled Three Kāya Integration and Three Kāya Abiding Nature.

3 Ibid., 281 (f. 3a2).

4 ST, vol. 8, 491–95 (ff. 124a–142a). For more details on Gyurme Dechen's argument, see note 13 in chapter 2, Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas.

5 The statement in the translation of Khyungpo Naljor's life that Niguma bestowed "the Vajra Verses on the Three Ways of Integrating the Path" seems to be an addition by the translator since it does not appear in the Tibetan of any of my editions. Riggs, Like an Illusion, 63.

6 Mokchokpa et al., Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor, ST, vol. 1, 82 (f. 12b3).

7 Niguma, Three Dharmas to Integrate on the Path, based on editions in P, CT, DZ, and ST.

8 This line, present only in the tengyur editions and not in DZ or ST, seems to indicate
that there is more here than just the vajra lines, even another text possibly named “Essence of the Vital Points” (gnad kyi snying po). However it may just refer to the few interlinear notes that are included in this version and that are absent in the other editions.

9 This reconstructed Sanskrit title is quite different in DZ, vol. 11, 15 and in ST, where it appears as Margga karya тридхарма нāмā, a much more likely name.

10 spyod lam rnam bzhi: The four activities are going, walking, lying down, and staying (gro 'chag nyal 'dug). Gyaltsen Bum, Guidance Manual of Infallible Three Integrations, ST, vol. 7, 304.

11 Numbering in small letters starting with “four” begins the next section, which brings up the question of what the first three were. In Taranātha’s Dākini’s Personal Instructions That Clarify the Three Integrations on the Path, ST, vol. 10, 396, the first of the three integrations on the path, that is, the guru—is divided into three as follows: (1) integrating the guru on the spiritual path based on appearances, (2) integrating devotion on the path based on the guru, and (3) integrating the three kāyas on the path based on devotion. These seem to match up loosely with the foregoing.

12 bdun po rnam dag, more familiar as yan lag bdun, “seven branch” practice of prostrating to the Three Jewels, confessing negative actions, making offerings, rejoicing in the virtue of others, requesting the turning of the dharma-wheel, beseeching to not pass into nirvana, and dedicating the merit to the enlightenment of all beings.

13 Great bliss in all cases is the sambhogakāya aspect, according to Gyaltser Bum, Guidance Manual of Infallible Three Integrations, ST, vol. 7, 307 (f. 5a3).

14 tha mal zhen pa bzlog pa’i phyir in DZ and ST makes much more sense than the tengyur editions (P and CT) of tha mal shes pa bzlog pa’i phyir (in order to reverse the ordinary mind).

15 A similar quote from Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary, ST, vol. 6, 747–48 (f. 7a6–b1), commenting on verse 10, is attributed to Actualization of Timeless Awareness:

All things are appearance and emptiness inseparable.
Creation and completion and their unity;
there is not a single phenomenon that is not creation and completion.
This is the way that enlightenment is taught.

16 The tengyurs have sngags (mantra, praise) but DZ and ST have sgzę (sound).

17 The three poisons (dug gsum) are the three main afflictive or toxic emotions of desire, anger or aggression, and stupidity or ignorance. The editions in DZ and ST mistakenly have “three times” (dus gsum) here.

18 ma spangs ‘dezin med: although both DZ and ST have ma yengs ‘dezin med (undistracted without fixation), the commentaries suggest that “without rejection” is correct.

19 This note in the canons (P and CT) says gti mug ngo bo rtog pa chos sku, but it makes more sense as it is explained in Gyaltser Bum’s Guidance Manual of Infallible Three Integrations: “Stupidity is nonthought. Knowing nonthought to be dharmakāya will undoubtedly bring liberation from the three poisons.” ST, vol. 7, 313 (f. 8a2).

20 bzang ‘dezin bral ba (free of dualistic fixation) in CT should be sgyu ‘dezin bral ba (free of fixation on illusion) as in DZ, ST, and Gyaltser Bum’s Guidance Manual of Infallible Three Integrations. Ibid., 317 (f. 10a6).

21 bde gsal phyag rgya chen po (bliss-clarity mahāmudrā) in the tengyurs should be ’od gsal phyag rgya chen po (lucid clarity mahāmudrā) as in DZ, ST, and Gyaltser Bum’s Guidance Manual of Infallible Three Integrations. Ibid., 318 (f. 10b4–5).
Notes to Chapter 5, Immortal and Infallible

22. Gyaltsen Bum explains in the *Guidance Manual of Infallible Three Integrations*: “Now immediately all qualities actualize directly in myself, quickening the path. The ‘path of direct actualization’ (*mgon sum lam pa*) means that this is superior to all other instructions.” Ibid., 319 (f. 11a6–b1)

Notes to Chapter 5, Immortal and Infallible


2. rMa lo tsā ba Chos 'bar (1044–1089) was a Tibetan translator who studied in Kashmir and India with various great masters. He was married to the female master Machik Zhama (Ma gcig Zha ma, 1062–1149), important in the Lamdre tradition. Roerich, *BA*, 219–20. The colophon in DZ mistakenly has “Marpa Lotsāwa” as the translator, and this mistake is also copied in ST, but Kongtrul makes it clear that it is in fact Ma Lotsāwa in the *Beryl Key*, GK, vol. 10, 485 (f. 1446) and elsewhere.

3. The text *Spiritual Power of Amrita*, translated by “Enadeva.” In the *Beryl Key*, Jamgön Kongtrul also mentions a commentary to this text: ‘*Chi med grub pa'i 'grel pa*, in ST, vol. 6, 234. This must be Virūpa, *Spiritual Power of Immortality Commentary in the Peking Tengyur* (5016) (not included in the Derge Tengyur). The colophon of this commentary states, “the pandita known as the South Indian Cemeterian (rgya gar lho phyogs pa Dur khrod pa), Kāmarūpa or Etewa (E te ba) or Gya dre pa (rgya 'gres pa) and Ma Lotsāwa translated it in the cemetery of Tete.” In that line, the text is traced as follows: Vajradhara, Chinnamunḍa (dBu bcad ma), Virūpa, the Black Brahmin (Bram ze nag po, probably Kāla Virūpa or Virūpa the Younger), Black Cemeterian (Dur khrod nag po, Edewa/Lalitavajra?), Latō Gonpo (La stod mgon po), and then to Sangye Nyentön (Sangs rgyas gnyan ston or Ri gong pa, 1175–1255), the sixth “jewel” in the Shangpa one-to-one lineage and presumably the one in whom the two transmissions of Immortal and Infallible converge. In the *Beryl Key*, GK, vol. 10, 468 (f. 5b1), Kongtrul states that the instructions were given to Sangye Nyentön either by the Cemeterian (bLa ma Dur khrod pa) or by Latō Gonpo (bLa stod pa Shes rab mgon po). See Zangpo, *Timeless Rapture*, 282–85, for more about Sangye Nyentön.

4. See the comments by Jamyang Khyentse Wangchuk, translated in Stearns, *Taking the Result as the Path*, 133. For the story of Virūpa the Younger, see Tāranatha, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, 17–18.

5. Catalogue, 434 (f. 27b1–4).

6. *Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness/ Immortal Natural Freedom* (*dPal 'chi med ye shes chen po* or *'Chi med rang grol*).

7. This is how the Sanskrit reconstruction appears within the text in P and CT, although it seems to be a word-for-word rendering of the Tibetan. In the contents of the Peking canon, it is listed as *Śrī-mahāmāra-jñāna-nāma*. Yet another version appears in *DZ* and *ST*: *Śrī-amāra-mahājñāna-nāma*.

8. Although the tengyurs have *tshbe gcig* (one life) here, it is *rtse gcig* (one-pointed) in all other editions and commentaries and makes sense as such with the interlinear notes that relate the three levels of individual capacity or faculties to the three time periods of seven days, months, or years.

9. The generation of a deity in creation stage practice involves a number of steps: five, four, three, or all at once. The three rites (*cho ga gsum*) refer to three main stages of
visualizing the seat with the seed syllable, then the emblem or implement, and then the complete form of the deity. Instantaneous (skad cig) creation is the complete form present all at once.

The canon editions have only hûm in the notes, but in DZ and ST and in commentaries, there is both hûm and bâm. These are the seed syllables for Chakrasamvara and Vajrayogini, respectively, and are visualized consecutively as the source of purifying light.

gnyid (sleep) in the canons is clearly a mistake for nyid (itself), as in other editions, and follows the commentary in Gyaltsen Bum, Guidance Manual of Immortal Mind, by the Wise and Venerable Gyaltsen Bum, ST, vol. 7, 91 (f. 336) where it says, “Inside is empty, outside is refined into clarity itself” (nang stong pa/ phyi gsal ba nyid du sbyangs pas), and in Taranatha, Essence of the Last Four of the Golden Dharmas Taken from Taranatha’s Teachings, ST, vol. 7, 122 (f. 7b5–6), where it is described as, “whatever is struck by the light rays becomes more bright and clear, while flesh, blood, and bones and such subtle and gross particles are refined away.”

The canons have 'chi kha'i tshe 'di'i dus gezan du (at the point of death [and] other times of this life), but the more likely version found in other editions is simply 'chi kha'i tshéam dus gezan du. CT has a further interlinear addition of 'chi kha'i ma tshe, and the DZ and ST versions have ‘chi kha'i do tshéam, both of which are incomprehensible to me.

Ye shes rgya mtsho'i rgyud. This is one of the primary sources of the Shangpa teachings and is often quoted, but has not been located. A long shot would be the Ocean of Dâkas (Dâkârnavâ), a Chakrasamvara explanatory tantra with several chapters on “cheating death” (‘chi ba blu ba) and a first chapter entitled “Entering the Ocean of Timeless Wisdom” (ye shes kyi rgya mtsho la 'jug pa).

“Fourfold vajra verse of immortality” (‘chi med rdo rje'i tshig rkang bzhi) refers to the above quatrain, beginning with “Thus, the cause of Illness...” Bodong labels it “pointing out immortality by means of the fourfold verse.” Guide to One’s Mind Naturally Liberated as Immortal, 385. It is also quoted from the tantra in Gyaltsen Bum, Guidance Manual of Immortal Mind, by the Wise and Venerable Gyaltsen Bum, ST, vol. 7, 98–100. There it is described as the realization of one's mind as the deity's form being clarity, its essence being empty, and its nature their unity, unseen by buddhas of the three times yet appearing unhindered without truly existing, and hence one becomes free of all concepts of (1) illness, (2) death, (3) samsara, and (4) nirvana.

gsal bar ma gyur, but in DZ and ST it is dran par ma gyur (not remembered).

That is, the instructions and practice of these teachings. The canon editions have sngags kyi gnad (vital points of mantra) rather than sngar gyi gnad (previous vital points) in this verse.

According to Bodong’s Guide to One’s Mind Naturally Liberated as Immortal, 391, the three examples are as follows: the catapult is an example of the power of one's previous meditation, which is like a cannon and a machine; throwing stones into a clear pool is an example of the constancy of one’s equipoise; and the sun setting at the same time as the moon rising on the fifteenth day of the lunar month is an example of the unity of immortality and timeless awareness.
Notes to Chapter 6, Chakrasamvara

18 bde chen (great bliss) here (ST) but bde stong (bliss-emptiness) in other editions (DZ, CT, and Bodong, Guide to One’s Mind Naturally Liberated as Immortal).

19 Seven generations would be from Vajradhara until Sangye Tönpa, as has been mentioned before. “Three” is explained in Bodong’s Guide to One’s Mind Naturally Liberated as Immortal. “After seven generations, the guru who was thus predicted by the guru [Khyungpo Naljor] and the dakini [Niguma] will bestow this on three [kinds of] disciples: those of highest faculty who develop the belief that the guru is dharmakāya, the middling ones who develop certainty [even in] the ordinary, and the least, who mentally abandon the world and meditate.” 395 (f. 234a–6).

20 This line, “translated by Lendarma Lodrö and ascertained by himself and . . .” is missing in the canons, where only Rinchen Zangpo is credited.

Notes to Chapter 6, Chakrasamvara

1 rnal ’byor bla med kyi rgyud, with the Sanskrit is given as anuttarayoga-tantra. The schema of four divisions of tantra, of which anuttarayoga-tantra is the last or “highest,” was not developed until the later spreading of the dharma in Tibet in the tenth to eleventh centuries. The lineages resulting from that propagation and its translation efforts are now called Sarma (gsar ma) or “new ones,” which includes the Shangpa tradition. Yogini tantra is an earlier category and may be connected with an even earlier designation of dakini tantra. See Gray, The Cakrasamvara Tantra, 5–11.

2 As David Gray says in his incredible study and translation, “The text was written so as to require commentary. This was no doubt due to the imperative of secrecy, which the text itself repeatedly demands of its adepts. Only initiated adepts were to receive the Root Tantra (mūlatantra), and they would have required oral instructions from their gurus in order to understand it.” Ibid., 15.

3 For instance, in Taranatha, Supplement to the Lineage Stories of One Hundred Guides, DZ, vol. 18, 104 (f. 3a7–b2). For the Jewel Ocean Tantra, see note 123 of the introduction. It is admittedly confusing when it is stated that these particular texts are the source and at the same time that Niguma heard the teachings from Buddha Vajradhara, but of course, all tantras are ultimately buddha-word.

4 Roerich, BA, 390: Śrī-Dākārnava-mahāyoginitantrakāya (Toh. 372). For a list of the nine major Chakrasamvara explanatory tantras, see Gray, The Cakrasamvara Tantra, 16.


6 Gray, The Cakrasamvara Tantra, 7; and Davidson, Indian Esoteric Buddhism, 236–92.

7 Gray, The Cakrasamvara Tantra, 35–37 for a discussion of the term.

8 Ibid., 56.

9 Shaw, Passionate Enlightenment, 108.

10 Niguma, Mandala Ritual of Glorious Chakrasamvara. In ST, the title page reads: “Empowerment Conferral of Meditative Absorption in Chakrasamvara” (’Khor losdom pa’i ting ’dzin gyi dbang bskur). The empowerment ritual found in Jamgon Kongtrul’s The Treasury of Precious Instructions is by Taranatha: Chakrasamvara Five Deities Empowerment Ritual in Nigum’s Tradition (but called Mandala Ritual there). It is more commonly used because, as is pointed out in the colophon, there
are many missing components and those that are available are mixed up. DZ, vol. 11, 285.

11 The interlinear notes in the Shangpa Texts edition adds that this is done by sweeping and setting up covers and canopies. The translation here is from the t'engyur in the Peking Canon and only those notes that are there are included in the translation, appearing in smaller font. Additional notes from other editions will be added as footnotes.

12 ba'i rnam lnga or ba byung lnga: dung, urine, milk, curd, and butter (lei ba, chu, 'o ma, zbo, mar).

13 This is called the support (rten) mandala as indicated in the note in the Shangpa edition.

14 Hüm is at the center (ite bar hüm).

15 Several lines are added here in the Shangpa Texts edition, including both large and small print. It reads: “Do from finding the freedom and endowments [of the precious human life] and death and impermanence, the common and special going for refuge, engendering the two aspirations of wishing and engaging, together with the trainings, giving in generosity, gathering thoughts, the five branches of the path, the scarcity of the occurrence of secret mantra, bestowing the three sacred pledges, entering the mandala, and so forth.”

16 “in the basin” (nang gi mchod pa bzed zhal du 'bul). ST, vol. 7, 449 (f. 3a6).

17 'dab ma bzhi added from ST, vol. 7, 450 (f. 3b5), where it appears integral to the text.

18 Spelled simply a in the t'engyurs, but āh in ST.

19 Heruka is in this context a name of Chakrasamvara. For a discussion on the history of this term and the “Heruka origin myth,” which sets the stage for the Chakrasamvara teachings, see Gray, The Cakrasamvara Tantra, 39–54.

20 “adorned by five” bone ornaments. ST, vol. 7, 452 (f. 4b6). The six bone ornaments that represent the six perfections are bone earrings (patience), bone necklaces (generosity), bone bracelets, armlets, and anklets (morality), bone belt (perseverance), bone wheel worn on the head (meditation), and bone ashes, smeared on the body or marked on the forehead (wisdom). The first five are associated with skillful methods of the masculine principle. The sixth represents the feminine principle of wisdom, and is therefore absent here because the deity itself is feminine.

21 bde ba chen po, referring of course to Chakrasamvara. The notes in ST add that this encounter will include the entourage. ST, vol. 7, 455 (f. 6a2).

22 The notes in ST paraphrase this: “mind-itself as appearance-emptiness and bliss-emptiness inseparable.”

23 sDom pa rgyam tsho'irgyud, not located, possibly Śrī-Dākārnava-mahāyoginītantrarāja (Toh. 372).

24 Swift Accomplishment of Glorious Chakrasamvara. The full title literally is The Method of So-Called Swift Accomplishment of Glorious Chakrasamvara. The heading in the canons is “Saṃvara secret practice” (bde mchog gsang sgrub).

25 srid pa gsum: above, on, and under the earth; that is, the beings in the heavens, on the earth, and in the underworlds (such as nāga).

26 A khaṭvāṅga is a three-pointed staff carried by tantric adepts and representing the secret masculine consort and transformation of the three poisons. It is called rtse gsum in Tibetan, but the Sanskrit is often retained, as here.
Taking *dmigs pa stod* as *dmigs pa stad*, although it is spelled *dmigs pa bstod* (praise the visualization) in Bodong's edition. A note also indicates that it refers to the visualization above the crown of the head. I can find no comment on the dream reference.

This time the light is red. Bodong's edition notes: "the three existences [as] the red palace of great bliss."

*gar dgu'i nyams:* the nine sentiments or expressions of dance and dramatic art: erotic, heroic, disgusting, furious, humorous, frightful, compassionate, wonderful, and tranquil (*sgegpa dpa 'ba mi sdug pa/*rgod dang drug shul 'jigs su rung/snying rje rngam dang zhi ba'bd).

In the tengyur editions here and in the following paragraph, the word is *man chad,* "up to" or "below;" while in the ST and Bodong editions it is *yan chad,* "down to" or "above," although both words that are seemingly opposites can also be understood as "up to and including." The point anyway is that the elixir flows down through the top of the crown to the point that is specifically being purified, flowing further down each time—first to the head, then to the throat, and then to the heart.

It should be mentioned that *thugs* means both mind and heart, the same thing, located at the heart.

An obscure interlinear note here reads *shangs pa rngu* (or *rgu* pa).

This word is written as *rjed dor* (P), *rjod thor* (CT), *brjed thor* (ST), and *rjed thor* (Bodong). I am interpreting it as "notes" or, literally, minor (*thor*) expressions (*rjod*).

These last two lines are found only in the *Shangpa Texts* edition, not in the tengyurs or Bodong.

Notes to Chapter 7, Hevajra

1 Panchen Sonam Dragpa, *Overview of Buddhist Tantra,* 5o.

2 *Nine Emanated Deities of Hevajra* (*dGyes rdor sprul pa'i lha dgu*) and the Hevajra Tantra in Two Parts (*bTag gnyis*) are listed in Mokchokpa et al., *Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor,* ST, vol. 1, 91 (f. 1745–6) and in Taranatha, *Clearing Up Darkness of the Mind,* T-CW, vol. 17, 458. They are not mentioned in the Blue Annals.

3 *bKa' babs bdun ldan.* See David Templeman's translation in Taranatha, *The Seven Instruction Lineages,* 64 and n. 199.

4 *Stainless Union.* The author's name in the tengyur is given as Dhaṅkadāśa, which is also spelled Taṅkadāśa, and is identified as the Old Scribe (Kāyasthavrddha). This is a later translation by Vimalashribhadra and Lodro Tenpa (bLo gros brtan pa).

5 Taranatha, *Five Tantras' Mandala Method of Accomplishment.* This practice concerns thirteen deities of Hevajra as the basis of a sādhana of the five deities' mandala (*sgyes mdzad rdo rje drag po gdan can gyi bskyed pa'i rim pa la gzbi byas nas rgyud sde lnga'i dkyil 'khor gyi sgrub thabs nyams su len pa'i tshul ni 'di yin te).* ST, vol. 5, 452–53 (ff. 184–211).

6 Taranatha, *Supplication to the Lineage of Five Tantras in the Shangpa Tradition.* There the lineage is Vajradhara, Nairatmya, Dojilbiheruka, Ngotsar Dorje (mNgo mtshar rdo rje), Garbharipa, Gyalwa Pal (rGyal ba dpal), Dākini Gongyal Kadawa (mGon rgyal dKa' zla ba; Durjayacandra?), Ratnākara, and Vajrāsana. ST, vol. 5, 440 (f. 131–4).
7 Niguma, Mandala Ritual of Glorious Hevajra. I did not have access to the Peking edition of this text, so this translation is based on the single edition in the Derge Tengyur, with some reference to source texts for the verses.

8 “Hundred thousands” refer to the mantras of the principal deity and “tens of thousands” to those of the retinue.

9 The vase in the center represents the deity (lha bum) and the one in the northeast is the “activity vase” (las bum) used during the ceremony.

10 bDud rtsi 'khyil pa (Swirl of Elixir): the name of a deity that appears in various contexts, or emanations, such as one of the four gatekeepers in the set of a hundred peaceful and wrathful deities, or one of the five classes of awareness deities for accomplishment, and as the central figure in a sadhana of the Namchö tradition. Here it is the deity visualized inside the vase, the embodiment of the holy amrita, or elixir, contained therein.

11 rtog pa bsdu ba: that is, the concepts of oneself as ordinary.

12 The second verse here can be found in Dākini Vajra Tent Tantra, an Hevajra explanatory tantra, ACIP, rgyud, vol. Ka, 415b.

13 This is from the same tantra, continuous with the last quote.

14 'od du 'dus: it seems that the eight Nairātmyās dissolve into one, and that one then unites with Hevajra in the center. Possibly the original Tibetan was 'ub du 'dus (SKT).

15 These seed syllables of the purifying elements are more commonly in the order ram yam kam (fire, wind, water), and may be a mistake here.

16 From Hevajra Tantra in Two Parts, part 2., chap. 8, f. 572a–3, in the Rumtek edition. It is translated from the Sanskrit in Farrow and Menon, The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra Tantra, 272–73. There are some differences in the Tibetan with the Niguma text. The only one that is significant in meaning is where the Niguma text has mnyam med kye'i rdo rje ston, “teacher incomparable Hevajra,” the source text (Rumtek edition and ACIP, rGyud Ka, 374b) reads smyo med kye yi rdo rje ston: literally “teaching Hevajra unintoxicated” (sober Hevajra?). The commentary by Jamgon Kongtrul explains this as referring to the person carrying the sacred pledge, who is “not intrinsically reckless, with unrestricted conduct of the three doors, whose mind does not rest in its native state due to being bloated with pride over their clan lineage.” Rumtek edition, ff. 299a4–300a5. This is omitted in the Farrow and Menon translation, though it appears to be in the Sanskrit: kulajanmānumādi samayi hevajradeśakah.

Notes to Chapter 8, The Dākini’s Personal Instructions: Five Short Texts on Yogic Techniques

1 See, for instance, David-Neel, Magic and Mystery in Tibet.

2 Tāranātha, Nigu’s Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary, ST, vol. 6, 159–160 (f. 925b5).

3 Khungpo Naljor, Natural Liberation through Grasping Illusory Body and Sixfold Illusory Body.

4 These are the Shangpa Catalogue and The Beryl Key Catalogue to Fully Open the Precious Treasury of the Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa Kagyu.

5 This instruction probably represents the source of the two methods for opening the central channel that constitute the thirteenth and fourteenth methods in Niguma’s
eighteen yogic exercises, described in Tāranātha's Nigu's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary, ST, vol. 6, 153–54 (f. 6a5–b3).

6 **rnam snang gi chos bdun:** this position is described as the legs in full lotus, the spine straight, the shoulders broadened, the neck slightly bent, the hands in the gesture of equanimity, the tip of the tongue touching the palate, and the gaze placed in the direction of the nose.

7 This is also just known as **rLung 'don** in Sangye Tönpa et al., Natural Liberation through Grasping Illusory Body and Sixfold Illusory Body. ST, vol. 8, 742–44. This is probably the source of exercises 5, 6, and 7 in Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises. See Tāranātha's Nigu's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary.

8 **rlung gi ’khor lo thur du bsbig.** In Tāranātha's commentary, the apparently equivalent phrase reads "Scare down the downward-clearing [prāṇa] and draw up the life-force [prāṇa]" (mthur sel mthur du bsdi pa dang/ srog [rlung] steng du drang). ST, vol. 6, 150 (f. 4b6). This brings together the two kinds of prāṇa (“downward clearing” and “life force”) in the middle, a very common yogic method. Here it is expressed as joining the two wheels of prāṇa and fire. It is a puzzling use of the word bsbig, literally “to destroy” or “demolish,” and I can only assume that it is an alternate usage meaning roughly “to bear down” or “push.” The exact wording is also used in another of Niguma's instructions for straightening the channels in the collection of yogic exercises in the Shangpa Texts, but without the intervening line concerning placement of the hands. ST, vol. 8, 740 (f. 62b5–6).

9 **a ba dhu ti,** left in transliterated Sanskrit; it is the name for the central channel (Tib. rtsa dbu ma).

10 Here tsangs bug, but more properly tshangs pa'i bu ga, Skt. brahmarandra: the opening at the top of one's head, the path of which leads to the higher realms.

11 ST has drag po bdun bdun 'then par bya, which seems to be preferable to the tengyurs' drag po lan bdun bden par bya.

12 **rdo rje gar:** In Tāranātha's Nigu's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary, the vajra dance is said to consist of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises, that is, the exercises to help insert, guide, and gather the vital essence into the central channel. Sometimes the two exercises for opening the central channel are also included in the vajra dance, but that does not seem to be the case here. ST, vol. 6, 155 (f. 7a5–6).

13 In CT, vol. 42, 954–56 (2528) as Dākini's zhal gdamz gsum zhi byed (Dākini's Personal Instruction on Pacification of the Three Poisons). These exercises altogether correspond to the eighteenth of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises as described in Tāranātha, Nigu's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary, where they are called "Yogic Exercises for Clearing away Afflictive States." ST, vol. 6, 156–59.

14 These headings are added for clarification based on Tāranātha's commentary, Nigu's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary. As is often the case in Tibetan literature, there are issues with the enumeration. First of all, the title in CT, Dākini's Personal Instruction on Pacification of the Three Poisons, clearly involves a miscount since there are more than three poisons. Then, in Tāranātha's text, which includes what might be taken as the source text, it is clearly stated that the last or eighteenth exercise in Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises can be divided into eight parts, and if added separately then there are said to be twenty-five in all. The only problem is that Tāranātha presents nine divisions, and that is how it is currently practiced in the lineage. In the
text here, one might count only eight if numbers five and six are not separated, as they appear not to be in the original (without reference to Taranatha's commentary). But in order to offer a practical correspondence to the current tradition, I have used the nine exercises here.

15 'dug stangs: Although the term for "sitting position" is used here, which would normally mean the sevenfold posture of Vairochana, Taranatha's description of these exercises specifies "mudra" (hand gesture) in this and the following exercises. Niguma's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary, ST, vol. 6, 156 (f. 7b2).

16 mnyam bzha phag rgya: this is also known as the mudra of Amitabha, as it is called by Taranatha, Niguma's Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary, ST, vol. 6, 157 (f. 8a5).

17 'dom gsum chod pa, but in Taranatha's version it is "eight": 'doms jal brgyad. Ibid., f. 8b3.

18 lbog gis langs, is spelled variously as kag gis langs or kog gyis langs (this last one with its meaning of "suddenly" makes the most sense). "With a hop," though not in the dictionary, comes from the oral tradition and must be the meaning of the phrase. Taranatha adds that kog langs is in fact the name of this exercise.

19 In ST, vol. 8, 745-46 as rkyang bskum (Extend and Contract). These instructions seem to correspond to exercises 8 through 12 of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises, although the first two are no longer in use in this form.

20 Concerning these exercises, which correspond to exercises 8 and 9 of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises, Taranatha comments: "It says in the source that these two, the eighth and ninth, [involved] first grabbing hold of a staff with one hand and then afterward grabbing hold with two and lifting off to a distance, so it was considered "pole vaulting" (dbyug mchong byed pa). However these days this practice is not done." ST, vol. 6, 152 (f. 5b 3–5). The description here, then, represents the earlier practice and is not thus described in later works, making it impossible to verify my interpretation.

21 pus mo'i gnyan gong dag tu sbyar (ST) is better than pus mo snyan gong dag du sbyar (join the knee to the ear)! CT.

22 bu chung 'khrul 'khor, also called bu chung tshul (the manner of a small child), is the eleventh of Niguma's eighteen yogic exercises, involving rotating the head.

23 lag gsum (CT) should be lan gsum (ST). Sometimes to hit the ground with the heels (rting pa sa la brdab) refers to standing in place, raising up on the toes, and then falling back hard on the heels. Sometimes it refers to leaping up and landing on the ground in a cross-legged posture.

Notes to Chapter 9, Niguma's Aspiration Prayer

1 Entitled "The Sovereign of Noble Aspirations" ('Phags pa smon lam gyi rgyal po) in the tengyur, it is known as "Sealed Word" (bKa' rgya ma) in the Shangpa Texts and with practitioners. This translation is based on five versions: P rgyud 'grel, vol. Pu, 20127–2038 (4650), CT, vol. 42, 959–63 (2530); ST, vol. 6, 233–43; DZ, vol. 12, 459–62; and a separate xylograph copy in the translator's possession, ff. 1a–3b.

2 This verse is missing in the Peking Tengyur edition and in the CT reprint of it.

3 sbyin ba rnam bzhis: four kinds of gifts—of items, dharma, relief from fear, and love (zang zing, chos, mi 'jigs pa, byams).

4 chags thog med pa: desireless and unobstructed means free from the two obscurations (sgrub gnyis) of affective emotions and cognitive limitations, respectively.
slob pa gsum: ethical discipline, meditation, and wisdom.

There is a significant difference in the several versions of this verse. ST and my xylograph edition, which I have translated here, read: sems can khams dang rgya mtsho'i gting mtha' dang/ nam mkha'i mtha' dang chos dbrying tshad med ltar/ bdag gi smon lam ting 'dzin phrin las rnams/ gting mtha' dpag med tshad bzung med par shog. The tengyur editions read: sems can khams dang rgya mtsho'i gting mtha' dang/ nam mkha'i khams dang chos dbrying dbyer med lta/ bdag gi shes rab smon lam ting 'dzin rnams/ gting mtha' dpag med tshad bzung med par shog. This could be translated as: “May my knowledge, aspirations, and absorptions be boundlessly deep and vast, impossible to measure, see the realms of beings and the depths and reaches of the oceans, the realms of the sky and the realm of reality inseparable.”

Ácārya Tenpa Gyaltsen.


* Catalogue of the Treasury of Precious Key Instructions, a Collection of the Ripening and Liberating Essence of the Eight Great Chariots of the Practice Lineages: An Ocean of Auspicious Renown (*sGrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad kyi smin grol snying po phyogs gcig bstus pa gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod kyi dkar chag bkra shis grags pa'i rgya mtsho*). *DZ*, vol. 18, ff. 381–547.


Derge Kangyur (*sDe dge bka' 'gyur*): Derge edition of the Tibetan canonical collection of sutras and tantras.

Derge Tengyur (*sDe dge bstan 'gyur*): Derge edition
of the Tibetan canonical collection of commentarial treatises.


**GD-CW** Lochen Gyurme Dechen's Collected Works (*gsung 'bum/_'gyur med bde chen*), TBRC: W2DB16431.


**JIABS** *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*.


**SKT** Surmang Khenpo Tsering Gyurme.


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Essence of Profound Meaning: A Recitation Manual for Five Tantras Condensed into the Main Figure
rGyud sde lnga gtso bs dus kyi bsnyen yig zab don snying po GK, vol. 8, 433–52

Five Dākinīs’ Method of Accomplishment and Empowerment Blessing
mKha’ ’gro sde lnga’i sgrub thabs rjes gnang dang bcas pa ST, vol. 2 (Kha), 755–68

Garland of Udumbara: Supplications to the Lives of the Wonderful Lineage of Jewels, the Masters of the Glorious Shangpa Instruction Lineage
dPal ldan shangs pa bka’ brgyud kyi ngo mtshar rin chen brgyud pa’i rnam thar la gsol ba ’debs pa udumbara’i phreng ba DZ, vol. 12, 389–447

Increasing Enlightened Activity: The Feast Offering and Concluding Rites of White and Red Kechari in the Shangpa Tradition
Shangs lugs mkha’ spyod dkar dmar gnyis kyi tshogs mchod dang rjes chog phrin las yar ’phel ST, vol. 3 (Ga), 297–313

The Melody of Timeless Awareness: A Supplication to Niguma, the Dākinī of Timeless Awareness
Ye shes dāki ni gu ma la gsol ba ’debs pa ye shes sgra dbyangs shes bya ba (f. 4a) in A Garland of Udumbara DZ, vol. 12, 393–95
Translated in Zangpo, Timeless Rapture, 231.

Ocean of Song/ The Collected Doha, Vajra Lines, and Songs of the Glorious Shangpa Kagyu: An Ocean of Blessings Meaningful to Hear mGur mtsho/dPal ldan shangs pa bka’ brgyud kyi do ha rdo rje’i
tshig rkang dang mgur dbyangs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa thos pa
don ldan byin rlabs rgya mtsho (compiled by Jamgön Kongtrul)

*DZ*, vol. 12, 463–558; *ST*, vol. 5, 225–437

*Practice in a Single Sitting: The Condensed Guide of Niguma’s Root Six Dharmas, the Personal Advice of the Dākini of Timeless Awareness*

rTsa ba ni gu cho drug gi khrid bs dus sthan thog gcig ma’i nyams len
ye shes dāk’i’i zhal lung

*ST*, vol. 2, 513–77

*Radiant Light of Timeless Awareness: The Guidance Manual for the Practice of Four Deities Combined*

Lha bzhi dril sgrub kyi khrid yig ye shes ’od ’phro

*ST*, vol. 3, 163–89

*Releasing the Central Knots: The Practice of White and Red Kechari, from the Five Great Guides of the Shangpa’s Golden Dharmas*

Shangs pa’i gser cho s khrid chen rnam Inga las/ Me tog mkha’ spyod

dkar dmar gyi nyams len dbu ma’i mdud grol

*ST*, vol. 3 (Ga), 191–235

*Shangpa Catalogue: A Key to Open the Door of the Vast and Profound*

Shangs chos dkar chag zab rgyas chos kyi sgo ’byed lde mig

*ST*, vol. 9 (Ta), 43–70

*The Treasury of Extensive Teachings (GK)*

rGya chen bka’ mdzod


*The Treasury of Knowledge (TOK)*

Shes bya mdzod

rDo rje rGyal po and Thub bstan Nyi ma, eds. 3 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs

*The Treasury of Precious Instructions (DZ)*

gDams ngag rin po che’i mdzod

Katok Rikdzin Tsewang Norbu (Kaṭh thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu)

Biographies of Some Holy Ones, such as Marpa, Mila, Gampopa, Atisha and Sons

Mar mi dwags po jo bo rje yab stas so gs dam pa 'ga' zhig gi rnam thar sa bon dus kyi nges pa brjod pa dag ldan nyung gsal


Khachö Wangpo, Zhamarpa II (Zhwa dmar pa mKha' spyod dbang po)

Earring of Accomplishment: The Life of the Glorious Jñānasiddhi [Nāropa]

dPal dzyâ na sidhi'i rnam par thar pa grub pa'i rna rgyan


Khedrubpa (mKhas grub pa Shangs ston) and Khetsun Gyaltsen Bum (mKhas btsun rGyal mtshan 'bum)

Collection of Essential Directives on the Six Dharmas of Niguma

Ni gu chos drug gi zhal shes dgos rnams kyis lhan thabs

ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 311–68

Khyentse Wangpo (mKhyen rtse'i dbang po)

Guru Yoga in Connection with Six-Armed Protector Dwelling in the Heart/ Secret Precept

mGon po phyag drug pa snying bzhugs dang 'brel pa'i bla ma'i rnal 'byor/bka' rgya ma

DZ, vol. 12, 747–57

Khyungpo Naljor (Khyung po rnal 'byor)

Clear Lines of the Six Dharmas; Directory; Layout of the Ground, Path and Fruition; Fifteen Especially Exalted Instructions of the Dākinī of Timeless Awareness; and the Sixfold Illusory Body

Chos drug gi tshig gsal dang/ thems yig dang/ gzhi lam 'bras bu'i
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

Nam bzhag dang/ khyad 'phags kyi gdams pa bco lnga/ sgyu lus drug ldan nrams
ST, vol. 7 (Ja), 525–43

Directory of the Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas
Chos drug rdo rje tshig rkang gi them yig
ST, vol. 7 (Ja), 533–35

Fifteen Especially Exalted Instructions of the Indian Đākini
rgya gar mkha’ gro’i khyad 'phags kyi gdams pa bco lnga
ST, vol. 7 (Ja), 538–42, also vol. 6 (Cha), 186–90

Instructions for Unerring Three Intermediate States
‘Chug (or ‘Phyug) med bar do gsum gyi gdams pa
ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 187–207

Natural Liberation through Grasping Illusory Body and Sixfold Illusory Body
sGyu lus ’dzin pa rang gro l dang sgyu lus drug ldan
ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 617–33

The Story of Sukhasiddhi, “Spiritual Powers of Bliss”
Sukhasiddhi bde ba’i dangs grub lo rgyus
ST, vol. 1 (Ka), 49–58

Kinnaur Shangpa Texts
(published as) Śaṅs-pa Bka’-brgyud-pa Texts: A Collection of Rare Manuscripts of Doctrinal, Ritual, and Biographical Works of Scholars of the Śaṅs-pa Bka’-brgyud-pa Tradition from the Monastery of Gsang-sngags-chos-glin in Kinnaur

Kunga Drolchok, Jonang (Jo nang Kun dga’ gro mchog)
Guidance on Niguma’s Six Dharmas
Ni gu chos drug gi khrid
ST, vol. 7 (Ja), 545–59
Lineage History of the One Hundred Guides
Khrid brgya’i brgyud pa’i lo rgyus/ Jo nang khrid brgya’i lo rgyus
*DZ*, vol. 18, 67–98

Lama Zhang (bLa ma zhangs g.yu bra pa brTson ’grus grags pa)
*Life Story of Glorious Nāropa*
dPal nā ro pa’i rnam thar
In ’Gro ba’i mgon po zhang g.yu brag pa’i gsung mdzad pa rnam thar
gyi skor, vol. 1, 119–39, in *Collected Works of Zhaṅ brTson ’gru
grags pa*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin and Lama

Longchenpa Drimey Özer (kLong chen pa Rab ’byams pa Dri med ’od
er)
*An Excellent Chariot: The Commentary to the Great Completion*
*Natural Ease in Illusion*
rdZogs pa chen po sgyu ma ngal gso’i grel pa shing rta bzang po
In *Trilogy on Natural Ease* (Ngal gso skor gsum)

*Great Completion Natural Ease in Illusion*
rdZogs pa chen po sgyu ma ngal gso
In *Trilogy on Natural Ease* (Ngal gso skor gsum)

*Trilogy on Natural Ease*
Ngal gso skor gsum
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

Losang Chökyi Nyima, Tukwan Lama (bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, Thu'u bkwan bla ma)

*Collected Works of bLo bzang chos-kyi nyi-ma*

The *Origin of Kagyu Tenets from the Clear Mirror of Tenets*
Grub mtha' thams cad kyi khungs dang 'dod tshul ston pa legs bshad shel gyi me long las/ bKa' brgyud pa'i grub mtha' byung tshul

Mikyö Dorje, Karmapa VIII (rJe brgyad pa Mi bskyod rdo rje)

*Noble One's Resting at Ease: A Commentary on Ornament of Clear Realization*
mNgon rtogs rgyan gyi kar tika rje btsun ngal gso
In *mDo sngags gzhung chen brgyad*, 2 vols.

Mipam Gyamtsø, Ju ('Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho)

*Complete Explanation of the Intended Meaning of “Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras”: A Feast of the Supreme Vehicle’s Elixir*
Theg pa chen po mdo sde’i rgyan gyi dgongs don rnam par bshad pa theg mchog bdud rtsi’i dga’ ston

Mokchokpa (rMog lcog pa) (Rin chen brTson grus or Kun dga’ ’Od)

*The Life Story of Buddha Vajradhara*
Sangs rgyas rdo rje ’chang gi rnam par thar pa
In *Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies, ST*, vol. 1 (Ka), 6–36.

*The Life Story of Niguma, Dākini of Timeless Awareness*
Ye shes kyi dāki ma ni gu ma’i rnam thar
Xylograph: Karma sGrub brgyud and Kar-lu.
Also in *Kinnaur Shangpa Texts*, vol. 1, 529–35.
Mokchokpa et al.

*Brief Life Story of Lama Khyungpo Naljor*
bLa ma khyung po rnal 'byor gyi rnam thar zur tsam
Based on four life stories written by Mokchokpa, Zhangom Choseng (rTogs ldan Zhang sgom Chos seng), Meutonpa (bLa ma rMe'u ston pa) and Rinchen Dorje (Nye gnas Rin chen rdo rje). In *Golden Rosary of Shangpa Biographies, ST*, vol. 1 (Ka), 59–143. Also in *Kinnaur Shangpa Texts*, vol. 1, 417–65.

Nāgārjuna (sLob dpon kLu sgrub)

*The Five Stages*
Pañcakramā
Rim pa lnga pa
Dg.T. rGyud, vol. Ngi, ff. 45a–57a (Toh. 1802)

*Root Verses of the Middle called Wisdom*
Prajñānāmamulamadhyamakakārikā
dBu ma'i rtsa ba'i tshig le'ur byas pa shes rab ces bya ba
Dg.T. dBu ma, vol. Tsā, ff. 1b–19a (Toh. 3824) (P2663)

Nāropa

*Vajra Lines of the Hearing Lineage*
Kārṇatātravajrapādā
sNyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang

Niguma

*Aspiration Prayer of the Sealed Word/ The Sovereign of Noble Aspirations*
Ārya-praṇidhānarāja-nāma
sMon lam bka' rgya ma/ 'Phags pa smon lam gyi rgyal po
P rGyud 'grel, vol. Pu, ff. 201a7–203a8 (4650); CT, vol. 42, 959–63
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

(2530); DZ, vol. 12, 459–62; ST, vol. 6 (Cha), 233–43; Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, vol. 1, 399–403.

Channel Chakras of One’s Body
Svaśarīra-nādi-cakra
Rang lus rtsa yi ’khor lo
P rGyud ’grel, vol. Pu, f. 201a (4649); CT, vol. 42, 957–58 (2429)
as Dǎki ma’i zhal gdams; ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 745–46 as brKyang bskum

Esoteric Instructions on Opening the Channel
Nādi-vikāsanopadeśa
rTsa kha ’byed pa’i man ngag
P rGyud ’grel, vol. Pu, f. 199a (4645); CT, vol. 42, 948–949 (2525)
as Dǎki’i zhal gdams; ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 746–47

Glorious Immortal Great Timeless Awareness/ Immortal Natural Freedom
Śrī-mahāmara-jñāna
dPal ’chi med ye shes chen po/ ’Chi med rang grol

Mandala Ritual of Glorious Chakrasamvara
Śrī-cakrasamvara-manḍala-vidhi
dPal ’khor lo sdom pa’i dkyil ’khor gyi cho ga/’Khor lo sdom pa’i dbang chog
P rGyud ’grel, vol. Pu, ff. 158a–160a (4638); CT, vol. 42, 859–63 (2518); ST, vol. 7 (Ja), 445–55, as ’Khor lo sdom pa’i ting ’dzin gyi dbang bskur

Mandala Ritual of Glorious Hevajra
Śrī-hevajramanḍalavidhi
dPal dgyes pa rdo rje’i dkyil ’khor gyi cho ga
P rGyud ’grel, vol. Za, ff. 60a–61b (2426); Dg.T. rGyud, vol. Ta, ff. 187a–188b (Toh. 1296)
Meditation on Channels, Prāṇa, and Such
Nāḍyādi-bhāvanā
rTsa rlung la sogs sgom pa
P rgyud 'grel, vol. Pu, f. 199a-b (4646); CT, vol. 42, 950-51 (2526)
as Nī gu ma'i gdam s pa; ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 742-44 as rLung 'don

Meditation on Inner Heat in the Path of Methods
Upāya-mārga-candālikā-bhāvanā
Thabs lam gtum mo sgom pa
P rgyud 'grel, vol. Pu, ff. 199a-200a (4647); CT, vol. 42, 952-53 (2527) as Dāki ma'i zhal gdam s pa; ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 747-49

Naturally Free Mahāmudrā
Śvayamṃkuti-mahāmudrā
Rang grol phyag rgya chen po
P rGyud 'grel, vol. Pu, ff. 162b-163a (4641); CT, vol. 42, 871-72 (2521); DZ, vol. 12, 468-69

Stages in the Path of Illusion
Māyādhanakrama
sGyu ma lam rim/sGyu ma lam gyi rim pa/sGyu ma lam rim dri med
snying po
P rgyud 'grel, vol. Pu, ff. 165a-176a (4643); CT, vol. 42, 878-99 (2523); ST, vol. 6 (Cha), 705-33; Ume edition, scanned from an original microfilm copy of an dbu med manuscript, n.d. TBRC, W1CZ1161, ff. 1a-6b (incomplete); Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, vol. 1, 29-49 as sGyu ma lam gyi rtsa ba (rdo rje tshig rkang); Bodong, vol. 57, 359-74

Stages in the Path of Illusion: The Commentary
Māyādhanakramavṛtti
sGyu ma lam gyi rim pa'i 'grel pa
P rgyud 'grel, vol. Pu, ff. 176a3-199a2 (4644); CT, vol. 42, 900-947 (2524); ST, vol. 6 (Cha), 735-98; Ume edition, TBRC, W1CZ1157, ff. 1a-19b (incomplete); Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, vol. 1, 161-99; Bodong, vol. 57, 376-409

Swift Accomplishment of Glorious Chakrasāṃvara
Śrī-cakrasāṃvara-sādhana
dPal ’khor lo sdom pa myur du sgrub pa zhes bya ba’i thabs

P rGyud ’grel, vol. Pu, ff. 155a–158a (4637); CT, vol. 42, 855–58 (2517); ST, vol. 7 (Ja), 361–67; Bodong, vol. 93, 6.2–10.6/3b2–5b6

Three Dharmas to Integrate on the Path
Dhana-dharma-treya/ Mārgga-karya-tridharma
Lam khyer gyi chos gsum


Three Kāya Integration and Three Kāya Abiding Nature
Kāya-traya-dhanakra
sKu gsum lam khyer dang sku gsum gnas lugs
ST, vol. 10 (Tha), 277–90

Vajra Lines of the Amulet Mahāmudrā
Mahāmudrā
Phyag rgya chen po ga’u ma’i rdo rje’i tshig rkang


Vajra Lines of the Amulet Mahāmudrā (with Notes)
Mahāmudrā
Phyag rgya chen po ga’u ma’i rdo rje’i tshig rkang

P rGyud ’grel, vol. Pu, ff. 144a–145a (4634); CT, vol. 42, 846–48 (2515) as Rang shar phyag rgya chen po’i rdo rje tshig rkang; ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 799–803

Vajra Lines of the Six Dharmas
Śaḍdharma-vajragāthā
Chos drug rdo rje’i tshig rkang

Yoga of Meditation in the Path of Methods
Upāya-mārga-bhāvanā-yoga
Thabs lam sgom pa'i rnal 'byor
PrGyud 'grel, vol. Pu, f. 200a5–b8 (4648); CT, vol. 42, 954–56 as
Ḍāki'i zhal gdams dug gsum zhi byed; ST, vol. 8 (Nya), 749–52

Padma Gyurme Gyatso (Padma 'gyur me rgya mtsho)
Yogic Exercise Root Verses of Nigu’s Six Dharmas: Great Bliss Reward
Ni gu chos drug gi 'khrul 'khor rtṣa thṣig bde chen 'dod 'jo
ST, vol. 10 (Tha), 613–24

Rāhula, Lama (Rāhulaguptavajra)
Lama Rāhula’s Personal Instructions on Five Tantras
bLa ma ra hu la'i rgyud sde lnga'i zhal gdams
Kinnaur Shangpa Texts, vol. 1, 352–55

Rangjung Dorje, Karmapa III (Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje)
Kagyū Golden Rosary
bKa’ brgyud gser phreng
Collected Works of Rangjung Dorje, vol. 4, 1–83
(biographies of Telopa, Nāropa, and Marpa [incomplete])

Rinchen Namgyal, Lhatsun (Lha'i btsun pa Rin chen rnam rgyal)
The Amazing, Wonderful Life of Nāropa
Pan nā ro pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar rma d 'byung
In Songs of Esoteric Experience of Ran-rig ras-chen, 333–467 (TBRC: 01GS47725)

Rwalung Kagyu Golden Rosary
Rwa lung bka’ brgyud gser gyi 'phreng ba

Sangye Bum (Sangs rgyas 'bum)
Life Story of Marpa the Translator
Niguma, Lady of Illusion

sGrags bsgyur mar pa lo tsā'i rnam par thar pa/sKye mchog mar pa lo tsā'i rnam thar dri med mthong ba don ldan (colophon title, 155)

*Rwalung Kagyu Golden Rosary*, vol. 1, 131-60

*The Life Story of the Supreme Learned Nāro Panchen*

mKhas mchog nā ro paṇ chen gyi rnam thar

*Rwalung Kagyu Golden Rosary*, vol. 1, 87-129

Sangye Palzang (Sangs rgyas dpal bzang)

*Releasing the Knots of the Vajra Lines: A Guide to Amulet Mahā-mudrā*

Phyag rgya chen po ga’u ma’i khrid yig rdo rje’i tshig gi mdud grol

*ST*, vol. 9 (Ta), 99-173

Sangye Tönpa et al. (Sangs rgyas ston pa)

*Collection of Necessary Oral Advice on Niguma’s Six Dharmas*

Ni gu chos drug gi zhal shes sgos rnams kyi lhan thabs

*ST*, vol. 8 (Nya), 311-68

*Natural Liberation through Grasping Illusory Body and Sixfold Illusory Body (and Other Texts)*

sGyu lus ’dzin pa rang grol dang sgyu lus drug ldan

*ST*, vol. 8 (Nya), 617-809

*Shangpa Texts/ Indian Source Texts of the Dharma Cycle of Five Golden Dharmas of the Glorious Shangpa (ST)*

Shangs chos/ dPal ldan shangs pa’i chos ’khor gser chos rnam Inga’i rgya zhung

Edited by Karma Rangjung Kunkhyab (Kalu Rinpoche). 11 vols.


Tangtong Gyalpo (Thang stong rgyal po)

*Collection of the Essentials: Words on the Vital Points of the Hearing Lineage of the Dākini Niguma*
mKha’gro ni gu ma’i snyan brgyud kyi gnad yig snying po kun ‘dus

Guiding Instructions on Nigu’s Branch Practice, Amulet Mahāmudrā
Ni gu’i yan lag phyag chen ga’u ma’i khrid

Guiding Instructions on Nigu’s Branch Practice, Immortal Body and Mind
Ni gu’i yan lag lus sems ’chi med kyi khrid
DZ, vol. 12, 192–98; ST, vol. 3 (Ga), 703–13; TTG-S, vol. 1, 369–86

Guiding Instructions on Nigu’s Branch Practice, Three Integrations on the Path
Ni gu’i yan lag lam khyer gsum gyi khrid

Source of All Qualities: Entry to Nigu’s Six Dharmas
Ni gu chos drug gi ’jug sgo yon tan kun ‘byung
TTG-S, vol. 1, 1–67

Supplemental Texts to the Collected Works of Thang-stong-rgyal-po Series, Volume 1 (TTG-S)
Grub chen thang stong bka’ ’bum gyi rgyab chos ni gu chos drug
pod dang pa

Taranātha, Jonāṅ (Ṭā ra nā tha, Jo nang; a.k.a. sGrol ba’i mgon po)
The Amulet Mahāmudrā or Threefold Letting-Go Guidance Manual
Phyag chen ga’u ma’am rang babs rnam gsum zhes bya ba’i khrid yig
Taranātha’s Collected Works (rJe btsun Tā-ra-nā-tha’i gsung ’bum)
(T-CW), Dzamthang, vol. 20, 563–78; ST, vol. 3 (Ga), 655–82

Chakrasamvara Five Deities Direct Realization Manual in Nigu’s Tradition
Ni gu lugs kyi bde mchog lha lnga’i mgon rtogs
T-CW, vol. 12, 809–23
Chakrasamvara Five Deities Empowerment Ritual in Nigu’s Tradition
Ni gu lugs kyi bde mchog lha lnga’i dbang chog
*T-CW*, vol. 12, 769–808; *DZ*, vol. 11, 255–85 (as Ni gu’i lugs kyi bde mchog lha lnga’i dkyil chog)

Clarifying the Profound Meaning: The Complete Explanation of Chakrasamvara Five Deities Method of Accomplishment in the Shangpa Tradition
Shangs lugs bde mchog lha lnga’i sgrub thab skyi rnam par bshad pa zab don gsal byed
*DZ*, vol. 11, 297–331

rGyal ba’i bstan pa rin po che spyi’i rnam bzhag las ’phros pa’i dpal ldan shangs pa’ichos skor gyi ’byung khung yid kyi mun sel
*T-CW*, vol. 17, 417–535

Ḍākinī’s Personal Instructions That Clarify the Three Integrations on the Path
Lam khyer gsum gyi gsal byed ḍāki’i zhal gdams
*ST*, vol. 10 (Tha), 393–417

Elixir Rain of Spiritual Powers: The Sources of the Dharma Cycle of Glorious Six-Armed Wisdom Protector
dPal ye shes kyi mgon po phyag drug pa’ichos skor byung tshul dngos grub bdud rtsi’i char ’bebs
*ST*, vol. 1 (Ka), 717–48

Essence of the Last Four of the Golden Dharmas Taken from Tāranātha’s Teachings
gSerchos phyi ma bzhi’i snying po rje btsun tā rā nā thā’i gsung las byung ba’o
*ST*, vol. 7 (Ja), 109–24

Five ḍākinīs’ Method of Accomplishment and Empowerment Blessing in the Shangpa Tradition [extracted from Mine of Jewels]
Shangs lugs mkha’ ’gro sde lnga’i sgrub thabs rjes gnang dang bcas pa
ST, vol. 2 (Kha), 755–68

Five Tantras’ Mandala Method of Accomplishment
rGyud lde lnga’i dkyil ’khor sgrub pa’i thabs
ST, vol. 5 (Ca), 451–539

Heap of Gold: The Path of Methods of the Adepts of Shangpa Kagyu
Grub thob shangs pa bka’ rgyud kyi thabs lam gser gyi phung po
T-CW, vol. 20, 265–94

Mine of Jewels
Rin chen ’byung gnas/Yi dam rgya mtsho’i sgrub thabs rin chen
’byung gnas
T-CW, vol. 15, 3–744 and 1141–1238

Nigu’s Condensed Guidance Manual
Ni gu’i ’khrid yig bsdus pa
T-CW, vol. 12, 957–72

Nigu’s Yogic Exercises, Root and Commentary
Ni gu ma’i ’khrul ’khor rtsa ’drel
DZ, vol. 12, 137–45; ST, vol. 6 (Cha), 143–60; T-CW, vol. 12, 1013–26

Profound Meaning Expanded: A Guidance Manual for the Six Dhar-
mas of Niguma (“Tangdalma”)
Ni gu chos drug khrid yig zab don thang brdal ma/ Thang brdal ma
ST, vol. 3 (Ga), 335–512; T-CW, vol. 12, 825–955, as Zab lam ni gu
chos drug gi ’khrid yig zab don thang mar brdal ba zhes bya ba
bklags chog ma

Supplement to the Lineage Stories of One Hundred Guides
Khrid brgya’i brgyud pa’i lo rgyus kha skong
DZ, vol. 18, 99–118

Supplement to the Mamo’s Collection of Source Guides on the Profound
Path of Nigu’s Six Dharmas
Zab lam ni gu chos drug gi gzhung ’khrid ma mo’i lhan thabs kha
skong
ST, vol. 2 (Kha), 579–654; T-CW, vol. 12, 973–1011
Supplication to the Lineage by Negu, Letter 'A' Dharma Source
Nee gus brgyud 'debs a yig chos 'byung ma
_T-CW_, vol. 20, 595–604

Supplication to the Lineage of Five Tantras in the Shangpa Tradition
Shangs lugs brgyud sde lnga'i brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs
_ST_, vol 5 (Ca), 439–44; _T-CW_, vol. 12, 603–8, as _rGyud_ sde lnga'i brgyud 'debs dngos grub rol mtsho

Tilopa/ Telopa/ Tillipa
_Esoteric Instructions on the Six Yogas_
Saṭṭdharmopadeśa
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