

About Padmasambhava

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Historical Narratives and
Later Transformations of Guru Rinpoche

edited by
Geoffrey Samuel and Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie



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4 The Formative Impact of Guru Chöwang's (gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug, 1212-1270) Secret Embodiment of the Lama (bla ma gsang 'dus) on the Padmasambhava Ritual Traditions¹¹⁷

Cathy Cantwell,
University of Oxford and University of Kent

The discussion of Padmasambhava rituals in this chapter represents provisional work towards what I hope will be more extensive research on Guru Chöwang's legacy.¹¹⁸ It also ties in with my doctoral fieldwork on contemporary rNying ma ritual from the early 1980s, and with much of the Tibetan Studies work I have been involved with over the years, including work on the rNying ma canon, and early Tibetan Buddhist tantric rituals. After all, Padmasambhava or Guru Rinpoche is central to all rNying ma ritual and meditative practice. There is also considerable

117 This paper was first presented at the Conference on *Padmasambhava: Different Aspects*, SOAS, London, September 2013. I am grateful to the organisers of that conference for their commitment to the topic, and I am especially happy through this publication to honour the memory of my long-time loved and respected friend, the late Judy Allan, who dedicated so much of her life to the Guru Rinpoche traditions, and who was instrumental both in the conference and in encouraging the subsequent publication.

118 The 2013 paper was written as preliminary work for a research grant application. Following two failed funding applications, I now hope to achieve at least some of the work during retirement, and further hope that this article, in drawing attention to the survival of Guru Chöwang's versions of the textual traditions, will help to inspire the next generation to take the academic study further (see also note 122 below).

continuity between Guru Rinpoche related tantric rituals of different cycles, and here I introduce a thirteenth century Revelation (*gter ma*) which left its indelible mark on the tradition: that of the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* (*bla ma gsang 'dus*) of Guru Chos kyi dbang phyug or Guru Chöwang (*guru chos dbang*) for short.



Fig 4.1: Seated Manifestations for the Dance of the Eight Aspects or Manifestations of the Guru “*guru mtshan brgyad*” *chams*, Jangsa Monastery, Kalimpong 2009

In fact, the most important single supplication to Guru Rinpoche, the Seven Syllable Supplication (*tshig bdun gsol 'debs*), is especially associated with the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*.¹¹⁹ Moreover, the popular Dance

119 I am uncertain whether the Seven Syllable Supplication was first witnessed in the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*, but certainly, Dudjom Rinpoche's *Chos spyod* collection presents it as coming from the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* (Dudjom 2000: 102-103). The short text on the Seven Syllable Supplication which Dudjom Rinpoche presents, along with explanatory notes, is found in the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* cycle mentioned below (Guru Chöwang 1979b: 329ff.).

of the Eight Aspects or Manifestations of the Guru (*guru mtshan brgyad 'chams*) is said to derive primarily from Guru Chöwang's visions. I hope later to explore this claim more carefully,¹²⁰ but what is clear is that the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* gives a central place to the set of eight in its visualisations of the maṇḍala, and meditative practice to accomplish the deities, and the wording of some of its supplications and praises are used in contemporary dance performances. In the present tradition, the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* is represented principally by the compilations made by the seventeenth century founder of the Central Tibetan Monastery of Mindroling (*smin grol gling*), Terdak Lingpa (*gter bdag gling pa*), and the famous nineteenth century Eastern Tibetan master, Jamgön Kongtrul ('*jam mgon kong sprul*), in his *Treasury of Revelations*, the *Rin chen gter mdzod*.¹²¹ In the case of some of Guru Chöwang's important textual cycles, such as his Vajrakīlaya cycle, the *Ultra Secret Razor Vajrakīlaya* (*yang gsang spu gri*), it seems that the only extant versions are those of Terdak Lingpa's and Jamgön Kongtrul's compilations. However, it is fortunate that other versions of Guru Chöwang's *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* (*bla ma gsang 'dus*) have survived. One handwritten manuscript collection of 513 folios in the late Lopon Choedak's possession was published in Bhutan in 1979 at Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's instigation, as one of the supplementary textual collections to accompany the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Guru Chöwang 1979b). A second manuscript collection with a number of illustrations is contained within a similar double volume published in 1980 (Guru Chöwang 1980). The *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* texts follow a series of texts from another Guru Chöwang collection, and the two volumes are labelled in accordance with that collection, although

120 Guru Chöwang 1979a represents his visionary autobiography in two volumes; as yet, I have not had the time to explore this source in full for its references to his visions of Zang mdog dpal ri. Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), of whom Guru Chöwang is said to be a rebirth, is also credited with having some role in the genesis of the Dance of the Guru's Eight Aspects.

121 See Terdak Lingpa's *Collected Works* Volume 10; Jamgön Kongtrul *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* Volume 7 (Kongtrul'), and see also Mireille Helffer 2012: 160-161.

the *Secret Embodiment* texts run from pp.175-486.¹²²

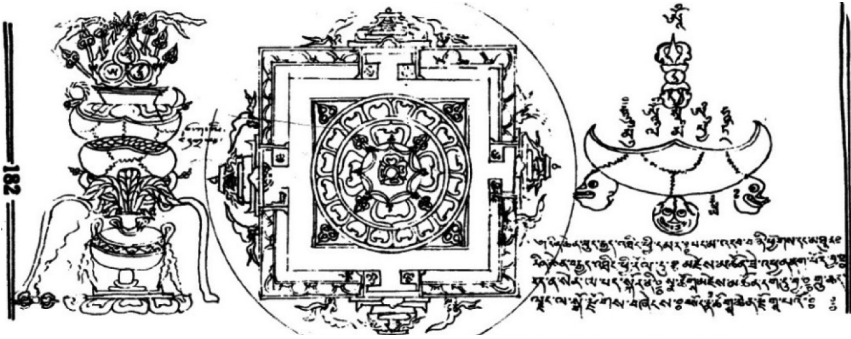


Fig 4.2: Labelled diagram of the maṇḍala, and the flask to be placed within it, from Guru Chöwang 1980: 182

122 The first version of this paper was written before I was aware of these two manuscript volumes which clearly preserve early materials. By the time of the conference in 2013, in the course of preparing a research project application, I had found and reviewed the first manuscript volume (Guru Chöwang 1979b), and integrated consideration of it into the presentation, but it was only later that I discovered the substantial additional materials in the second manuscript volume (Guru Chöwang 1980), since I had been misled by the volume label which gave no hint of its contents. It is to be hoped that future academic research will remedy the neglect of these crucial materials for understanding the early development of the Padmasambhava cult (see also note 118 above).

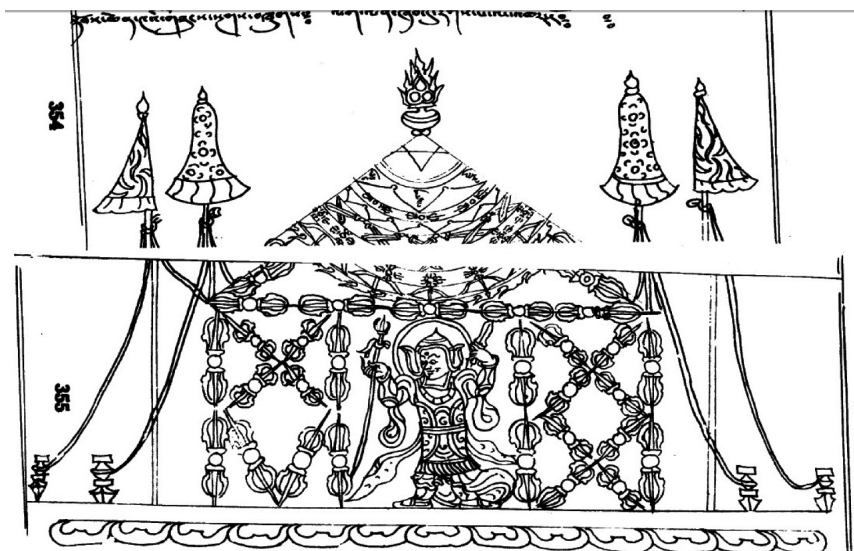


Fig 4.3: A depiction of a three-dimensional protective circle (the canopy has the concentric circles of tantric weapons), from Guru Chöwang 1980: 354-355. Fig. 4.2 and Fig. 4.3 with thanks from BDRC, <http://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=W2CZ7960>

A number of texts of the cycle with some illustrations (and some apparently later compilations and commentarial notes) are also contained within an early eighteenth century volume of Guru Chöwang's Revelations, which bears the stamp of the eighteenth century Prince Yun-li (Khen ze chin van, 1697-1738 CE) on the title folios (Guru Chöwang n.d.). Further texts, which are apparently compilations stemming from several important lamas of the tradition, are found in another of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* supplementary volumes, and these apparently miscellaneous texts, written in various hands, may incorporate some early materials.¹²³

123 Sādhana for the practice of the *Bla ma rig 'dzin 'dus pa*, *Bka' brgyad*, and *Bla ma gsang ba 'dus pa*, 1979.

Thus, along with the compilations used widely today, we additionally have a wide range of extant texts from the cycle, carrying the Revelation symbols and punctuation, and the Revealer's own colophons. We can allow for transmissional errors through generations of copying, but a textual analysis increases one's confidence that apart from scribal corruptions, the contents of many texts within these manuscripts, and especially those presented as Guru Chöwang's Revelations in Guru Chöwang 1979b and 1980, are close to Guru Chöwang's intended work, free from the editorial interventions of the later compilations.¹²⁴

It is sometimes assumed that new revelations must be innovative, or at least, introduce new formulations appropriate for the new times. While it is true that some new Revelations may be quite different from what has gone before, this need not be the case, since it is rather the blessing or consecrations of the practice which are to be celebrated as fresh, not the content of Guru Rinpoche's timeless teachings.¹²⁵

124 Electronic scans of the manuscript volumes published in Bhutan have been made available by the Buddhist Digital Resource Centre (Guru Chöwang 1979b and 1980). Beautiful colour photographic images of the eighteenth century volume are available on the website of the Royal Library (National Library of Denmark and Copenhagen University Library), <<http://www.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/239/>>, and BDRC have produced an outline (the work is classified by BDRC as, *chos dbang gter ma*, TBRC W1PD45090). I have not yet had the opportunity to do more than a preliminary examination of the content of these texts. Consultation of the later compilations is also crucial for two reasons. First, we have little understanding of the provenance of the two manuscript volumes representing copies of Guru Chöwang's own texts (Guru Chöwang 1979b and 1980); they also have numerous minor scribal errors which might also be suggestive of more serious possible lapses in parts of the texts. Apart from these volumes, we have only a few texts within the eighteenth century copy. These limited materials should not be exclusively depended upon as the only reliable sources for the earlier texts. A second reason is that we need to understand the later tradition and its interpretations of Guru Chöwang's heritage, both in order to gain a rounded understanding of Guru Chöwang's influence, and because appreciation of the development of the tradition is in itself a crucial goal for Tibetan Studies.

125 For a detailed study of developments in such Revelations over the generations, see Cantwell 2020, *Dudjom Rinpoche's Vajrakīlaya Works: A Study in Authoring, Compiling and Editing Texts in the Tibetan Revelatory Tradition*.



Fig 4.4: ceiling maṇḍala of Dudjom Rinpoche's Lama Heart Accomplishment Practice, *The Embodiment of Seven Revelations* (*bla sgrub gter kha bdun 'dus*), Zangdok Palri Monastery, Kalimpong 2009

The Lama Heart Accomplishment (*bla ma thugs kyi sgrub*) practices, of which the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* is an early example, demonstrate this point very clearly, in fact, more strikingly than any other practice cycles I have examined. Guru Chöwang's *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* can be seen not just as a model for the later practices, but as *the* detailed template, incorporating sacred words of eternal potency, and with many

of its most important sections reproduced intact in later works. The Lama Heart Accomplishment practice of the twentieth century Dudjom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje (*bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje*, 1904-1987; hereafter, Dudjom Rinpoche), is said to comprise an embodiment of seven revelations (*gter kha bdun 'dus*), and especially acknowledges the centrality of the *Eight Chapter Ritual Manual* (*las byang le brgyad*) of the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*.¹²⁶ When I studied this practice tradition during my Ph.D fieldwork in a Dudjom monastery in northern India in the early 1980s, I had wondered what this idea of embodying seven revelations implied. I have since realised that it is quite literal: all seven Revelations of different periods share extensive passages of text, and most of Dudjom Rinpoche's key verses for recitation within his main Ritual Manual are almost word-for-word identical to those in Guru Chöwang's *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*.

A comparison of the Dudjom *Lama Accomplishment* Ritual Manual with that of Terdak Lingpa's compilation of the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* demonstrates close textual parallelling. The main difference is the order of sections: Dudjom Rinpoche significantly re-orders the material to fit the now standard sections for *sādhana* practice. For instance, in Terdak Lingpa's version, a long Supplication to the Guru, the Vajra Guru mantra, and a verse requesting empowerment are placed within the preliminary sections, but in Dudjom Rinpoche's manual, they are given within the standard section for mantra recitation performed later. As is

126 The six previous Treasure Revealers whose Lama Heart Accomplishment works are embodied within Dudjom Rinpoche's own practice: (1) *gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug*, 1212-1270; (2) *o rgyan rdo rje gling pa*, 1346-1405; (3) *ratna gling pa*, 1403-1479; (4) *padma gling pa*, 1450-1521; (5) *zhig po gling pa gar gyi dbang phyug rtsal*, 1524-1583; (6) *khrag 'thung bdud 'dul rdo rje*, 1615-1672. Guru Chöwang's *Eight Chapter Ritual Manual* is particularly singled out in Dudjom Rinpoche's introduction to the Lama Heart Accomplishment revelations, where he cites a *gter ma* prophecy: «In general, each will have its own approach; But especially, the *Eight Chapter Ritual Manual* is auspicious» (*spyir ni rang rang lugs bzhin la: khyad par las byang le brgyad shis*: Dudjom Collected Works, Volume Ca: 3).

typical, Dudjom Rinpoche's root mantra practice section is given before the tantric *tshogs* offerings, but Terdak Lingpa gives this recitation section within the tantric *tshogs* offerings section, following the third portion select offering for releasing or liberating negative forces, and there are several other re-orderings.¹²⁷

There are also minor differences between the texts, such as variants on occasional words, and a number of additions in the Dudjom Ritual Manual, including a section for consecrating the maṇḍala, and an introduction to the Excess offering. Apart from such minor variations, and the different order to the recitations, a list of the few sections which differ would be shorter than the list of the bulk of the text which is substantially paralleled.¹²⁸ Most of the differing sections do not involve

127 These include Dudjom Rinpoche's placement of the consecration of the offerings in the usual preliminary section, while Terdak Lingpa places this immediately before the offerings section itself. As is now standard, the Praises section follows the main practice Offering sections in Dudjom Rinpoche's text, but in Terdak Lingpa's, the Praises are positioned after the tantric *tshogs* offerings. Dudjom Rinpoche gives a standard positioning for the section for confession and fulfilling the deities wishes, after the consecration of the tantric *tshogs* offerings but before the three portion select offerings, while Terdak Lingpa places this recitation after the tantric *tshogs* offerings have all been presented, and the mantra practice completed. Note that although there is not a single complete text which fully incorporates all these sections within the manuscript volumes of Guru Chöwang's texts, the presentation of the practice structure within Guru Chöwang's own Ritual Manual (1979b: 7-38), together with the explanation of the eight sections in the *Eight Chapter Ritual Manual* compilation (see below note 128) would suggest that Terdak Lingpa is faithfully representing the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama's* practice tradition in his Ritual Manual's ordering.

128 The first verse for the Medicinal elixir offering (*sman mchod*) and the Rakta offering section (*rakta'i mchod pa*) differ in the two versions. The lines within the Medicinal elixir offering which specify the lineage lamas differ for obvious reasons. The third portion select offering in the tantric *tshogs* offering is quite different, and longer in Dudjom Rinpoche's Manual, including a separate verse for offering the effigy of negative forces to the deities. There are some differences between Dudjom Rinpoche's and Terdak Lingpa's versions of the Excess offering (*lhag ma*) within the tantric *tshogs* feast. In both cases, the main words recited are variants of a well-known sequence for the Excess offering, found widely in both Transmitted sources (such as the *Sa skya Phur chen*: 68r-v), and in revelations, including Terdak Lingpa's compilation of Guru Chöwang's Vajrakīlaya practice (Terdak Lingpa Volume 9: 298r). Here, Dudjom Rinpoche identifies a First fruit offering, a Middle offering, and a final Excess offer-

any of the key visualisation sequences, but two do relate to the main meditative practices. One is the meditation instruction for the accomplishment section, which is not found in Terdak Lingpa's manual. I have not yet identified it within the many texts of the full manuscript volumes of Guru Chöwang's cycle, but since there are extensive meditation instructions there, this too may be witnessed somewhere within the larger collection. It may alternatively derive from one of the other Lama Heart Accomplishment Revelations which Dudjom Rinpoche's is said to embody. However, it is worth adding that the dominant influence of Guru Chöwang's Revelation in the way that the meditation instructions are understood is witnessed in the commentary to the Dudjom practice, written by Chatral Sangye Dorje Rinpoche (*bya bral sangs rgyas rdo rje*, 1913-2015). There, he gives four citations from the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*, although only the first is explicitly identified.¹²⁹ All four relate to the meditation instructions connected with the mantra recitation practice, and three are extensive passages.¹³⁰

The second contrast between Terdak Lingpa's and Dudjom Rinpoche's meditation sections is that Dudjom Rinpoche includes two alternative

ing, where Terdak Lingpa follows the First offering with the Excess, and then a quite different Final offering. This recitation is also followed by further lines which are not parallel at all. The first two lines for the Dance of subjugation are the same, but the rest of the recitation differs. A further contrast between the two texts is in the final Auspicious wishes (*bkra shis*), which is three verses in Dudjom Rinpoche's text, having nothing in common with the single verse given in Terdak Lingpa's practice.

- 129 The second is identified as deriving from (Dudul Dorje's, [*bdud 'dul rdo rje*, 1615-1672]) *Complete Embodiment of Enlightened Intention* (*dgongs pa yongs 'dus*). No doubt it occurs there, but its original source would seem to be the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*. The four citations occur in Chatral Rinpoche: 9 (corresponding to Guru Chöwang 1979b: 16-17); 9-10 (corresponding to Guru Chöwang 1979b: 18); 11 (corresponding to Chöwang 1979b: 22-23); 11-12 (corresponding to Chöwang 1979b: 27-28).
- 130 The first relates to the instruction for receiving empowerment; the second to the ultimate empowerment; the third to focusing on a *tsakli* image; and the fourth to the final «protection of the enlightened intention» (*dgongs pa bskyang ba*). Here, this section is elaborated on by glossing the inner significances of the features of the maṇḍala and its deities.

sequences for the figure of the main Padma Thod-'phreng-rtsal figure, and only the second is found in Terdak Lingpa's Manual. The first is identified in the shorter version of Dudjom Rinpoche's Ritual Manual as the "Nirmāṇakāya Zahor style" (*sprul sku za hor ma ltar*, Volume Ca: 47) and is replete with the characteristic Guru Rinpoche costume.¹³¹ There is also an appropriate lengthy praise for this additional figure in Dudjom Rinpoche's Praises section (Volume Ca: 20-21). The second, which clearly derives from the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*, and is found word-for-word identically in Terdak Lingpa's Manual, is explicitly identified as the "Secret Embodiment Sambhogakāya Lama" form (*bla ma longs sku gsang 'dus ltar*, Volume Ca: 8). This form appears as a dark blue Vajrasattva in union with the consort, with three eyes, bone ornaments, the vajra in the right hand held at the heart and the bell in the left, embracing the consort.

Now, although Dudjom Rinpoche preserves this second form of Guru Rinpoche within his text, and gives the option for practitioners to use it, it appears that the more typical Guru Rinpoche visualisation is almost exclusively preferred in practice in the Dudjom tradition.¹³² However, although I have not identified an exact parallel for the precise lines within the wider *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* texts, this form is not altogether absent. In fact, in the Guru Chöwang manuscript volume, the main practice text at the beginning gives the blue Vajrasattva form (p.20-21), just as we find in the Terdak Lingpa compilation, but two shorter texts also in the collection give similar visualisations to this form. One is a brief text specifically on absorbing the accomplishment of the nirmāṇakāya

131 This includes the lotus hat with the vulture feather, the blue, white, maroon and red layers of garments, the Guru brandishing the vajra in the right hand, holding the skull cup with the longevity vase in the left hand, and the trident placed in the crook of the elbow.

132 Certainly, the verses for this visualisation and praise were always recited on each tenth day practice at the Rewalsar Monastery during my fieldwork in 1981-1983, and *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* visualisation was always omitted. Lopon P. Ogyan Tanzin commented that this preference for the typical Guru Rinpoche form is general in the practice of Dudjom Rinpoche's text throughout the tradition.

lama,¹³³ which gives several of the main elements.¹³⁴ The other text, entitled *the Eight Chapter Ritual Manual* (*las byang le brgyad*),¹³⁵ appears to have been compiled by an early lineage master, bSod nams rgyal mtshan, and gives a visualisation (p.485) which does not repeat the exact words but is nonetheless a kind of parallel to both of the elements in the Dudjom text. Instead of two alternative visualisations, it gives first the standard Guru Rinpoche form, after which the practitioner should visualise that this transforms, and the lama as dark blue Vajradhara or vajra holder (*rdo rje 'dzin*) arises, with three eyes, holding vajra and bell, seated cross-legged and adorned with jewels and bone ornaments. A

133 The text is entitled: *bla ma sprul sku'i sgrub pa phyi ltar nyanisü blang ba* (1979b: 241-249).

134 It gives the youthful appearance with a reddish white complexion, the cross-legged posture, the Dharma robes and the brocade cloak.

135 This name is associated with the cycle in a Revelation prophesy cited in Dudjom Rinpoche's Lama Heart Accomplishment practice (see above, p. 130). Guru Chöwang's own Ritual Manual (1979b: 9) refers to it as the first of six sections comprising the cycle's pith instructions (*man ngag*), and it is quite likely that its primary sense is to a set of early instructions on eight important sections of the Ritual Manual. The text entitled, *the Eight Chapter Ritual Manual*, within the manuscript volume (1979b: 479-501) is a relatively short and summarised text, with notes and in some cases brief recitations on each of eight aspects of the practice. The colophon (1979b: 500-501) suggests that it was compiled by bSod nams rgyal mtshan, based on the great master's quintessential Ritual Manual. In other colophons of the *gter ston*'s texts within the volume, bSod nams rgyal mtshan is noted as the scribe, copying from original manuscripts hand-written by the *gter ston*'s son (p.72-73), or by Padma dbang (p.199). Padma dbang is specified in further colophons; one (p.271) says that he received and wrote down the teachings in the presence of the guru. He may possibly correspond to Padma dbang chen mentioned by BDRC as one of Guru Chos dbang's sons (a Padma dbang chen is also specified in a lineage list following Guru Chöwang on p.442), but it is perhaps more likely that he is Padma dbang rgyal (1979b: 226, 368, 376), apparently a direct student of the *gter ston*'s from mNga' ris. In any case, it would seem clear that bSod nams rgyal mtshan is no more than a second generation disciple, so it is quite likely that the visualisation sequence mentioned here stems directly from Guru Chöwang. A very much longer or expanded version of this *Eight Chapter Ritual Manual*, or a text of the same title with significant differences, exists within the manuscript compilation of Guru Chöwang's texts held in Copenhagen (n.d., s.n.). This text includes a quite different and more extensive selection of the practice verses; its colophon (329; 15r) notes the involvement of later lamas, and makes no mention of bSod nams rgyal mtshan, unless he is to be equated with sKäl ldan Yar klungs sprul sku, who is specified as the primary compiler in this case.

further variation is found on this theme in Pema Lingpa's (*padma gling pa*, 1450-1521) *Jewel Ocean* Lama Heart Accomplishment practice. There, a similar meditation on a Guru Rinpoche form is followed by a form similar to Dudjom Rinpoche's sambhogakāya lama (*Padma Gling pa Collected Works* Ka: 768-769; *Dudjom Collected Works* Cha: 10-11). This time, the two forms arise together, the dark-blue cross-legged form with vajra and bell in union with the consort, appearing on the top of the crown of Guru Rinpoche's head.

The difference between the two central forms of the Guru is also reflected in different imagery associated with the four or five family Thod-'phreng-rtsals, the "Skull-garlanded Adepts", who in these Lama Heart Accomplishment practices arise in the four directions on lotus petals around the central figure. Terdak Lingpa's and Dudjom Rinpoche's *Ritual Manuals* say little about these figures, except to identify the four in each direction starting from the east, and to specify their colouring in accordance with the four directions and their associations with the four ritual actions respectively, of pacifying, increasing, captivating and destroying. The main practice text in the Guru Chöwang manuscript volume gives more detail in its section on engagement in ritual action, mentioning that they are without consorts but otherwise appear like the main deity, and specifying the particular implements they hold. Now, clearly, if their appearance accords with that of the central Guru figure, this will differ depending on which visualisation is used for this. Thus, two sets of *tsak li* initiation cards used in contemporary empowerments of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* both depict the Thod-'phreng-rtsals in the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* similarly with features resembling Vajrasattva.¹³⁶ A set of *tsak li* initiation cards for the Pema Lingpa *Jewel Ocean* (*nor bu rgya mtsho*) Lama Heart Accomplishment cycle give the four

136 One of these sets of black and white drawings has been made available on the Himalayan Art Resources website, Items 77920-77939, in the thematic set labelled, «Initiation Cards: Sangdu (Guru Chowang)», <https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=691>.

Thod-'phreng-rtsals with similar appearance,¹³⁷ carrying the same individual emblems, but in this case, each has a consort, and they lack the hand-drum given in the Guru Chöwang *tsak lis*. On the other hand, the Thod-'phreng-rtsals in Dudul Dorje's *Complete Embodiment of Enlightened Intention* (*dgongs pa yongs 'dus*) are explicitly described as resembling the usual Guru Rinpoche appearance with the lotus hat.¹³⁸ Further differences relate to whether a fifth Thod-'phreng-rtsal is part of the group. In the Pema Lingpa tradition, the group can be considered to consist of five, since the four surround the Lord Padma Thod-'phreng-rtsal, who appears above the head of the figure in the usual Guru Rinpoche form (see above), although this means that there are two called Padma Thod-'phreng-rtsal, and none referred to as Buddha Thod-'phreng-rtsal. Although not described in the Generation section, in the Praises section of both the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*, and the *Dudjom Embodiment of Seven Revelations*, Buddha Thod 'phreng-rtsal is mentioned at the end of the list as spontaneously accomplishing all actions (Terdak Lingpa *Collected Works* Volume 10: 14a; Guru Chöwang 1979b: 33; Dudjom *Collected Works* Ca: 21). The manuscript volume of the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* gives more detail in its mantra practice section which relates to the ritual actions (1979b: 25-26), but the position in the maṇḍala of the maroon Buddha Thod 'phreng-rtsal who arises from all five primordial wisdom lights is not specified. However, Chatral Rinpoche's Commentary to the *Embodiment of Seven Revelations* (p.8) notes that Buddha Thod 'phreng-rtsal appears in front of the central deity. In Dudul Dorje's *Complete Embodiment of Enlightened Intention*, Buddha Thod 'phreng-rtsal is

137 Colour images of these cards from the Shechen Archives are found on the Himalayan Art Resources website, within the thematic set labelled, «Initiation Cards: Peling». See in particular Items 51745421-51745427. See also their descriptions in a compilation of this practice, Dudjom *Collected Works* Volume Cha: 11-12.

138 See their descriptions in the Dudul Dorje *Collected Works*, Volume Kha: 158-159; and also in a compilation of this practice, Dudjom *Collected Works*, Volume Ja: 221.

visualised within the heart (Dudul Dorje *Collected Works* Kha: 158-159). In any case, it would appear that none of the maṇḍala depictions provide a separate seat for Buddha Thod 'phreng-rtsal (see below).

In the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* and subsequent cycles, Guru Rinpoche's Eight Manifestations (*guru mtshan brgyad*) are visualised in a latticework of rainbow light within the celestial palace, upon the eight facets of a jewel enclosing the centre of the maṇḍala. It seems that their overall features are quite similar in the different practice traditions. The manuscript volume of the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* has a separate section for meditations on the Eight Manifestations,¹³⁹ and this gives individual descriptions. If we take the case of Padmasambha, Guru Chöwang (1979b: 82) describes him holding a skull-cup with a jewel in his right hand, while his left hand makes the gesture of the giving of Refuge. We see in some other practice traditions that the skull-cup is placed in the left hand, while the right hand makes the gesture of the giving of teaching, although otherwise, the imagery is similar. Depictions of Padma rgyal po seem even more constant, with the reddish colouring, red brocade robe, ḍamaru hand-drum and mirror, although Guru Chöwang (1979b: 86) has him holding iron chains as well as the ḍamaru in his right hand. Dudul Dorje's depiction (Dudul Dorje *Collected Works*: Kha 160) gives him a bowl of lotuses. However, it could be that the apparent consistency in relatively modern artistic representations of the traditions may be misleading: Guru Chöwang's written descriptions could fit with a broader range of artistic interpretations. A thangka painting of Padmasambhava perhaps from the fourteenth century¹⁴⁰ gives eight figures in two registers to the right and left of the central

139 *thugs sgrub gsang ba 'dus pa'i las tshogs gsang ba mtshan brgyad sgrub pa*, Guru Chöwang 1979b: 75-96.

140 From the collection of Shelley and Donald Rubin, Himalayan Art Resources Item 160: <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/160>.

Guru Rinpoche, and these may be intended to represent the eight manifestations. The upper left figure could be Śākya Seng ge; the upper right figure seems to be Padmasambhava; the lower right figure could be rDo rje gro lod. The identification of the others is less clear, but if these are intended to represent the eightfold group of Guru Rinpoche's manifestations, clearly, most of the figures are shown very differently from the more familiar and now standard imagery.

Study of the historical development of the imagery is not yet well developed. However, what is clear is the textual continuity through a series of Revelatory cycles. As explained above, much of Dudjom Rinpoche's Ritual Manual is reproducing Guru Chöwang's words, albeit in a different order. Thus, when contemporary Dudjom tradition monasteries perform the Dance of the Eight Manifestations of the Guru, the praises from the Dudjom Ritual Manual (Volume Ca: 19-20), which are recited to each one as they dance, are identical to those in the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* (Terdak Lingpa *Collected Works* Volume 10: 14a; Guru Chöwang 1979b: 33-34):

Hriḥ! (I) praise the form of Padma 'Byung gnas,
 (who has) no attachment, and is untainted by any fault!
 (I) praise the form of Padmasambhava,
 (in whom) all (Buddha) qualities are totally perfected!
 (I) praise the form of Blo ldan mChog sred,
 (who is) undeluded respecting everything knowable!
 (I) praise the form of Padma rGyal po,
 (who) dominates the three (planes of) of existence (of) the three
 worldly realms!
 (I) praise the form of Nyi ma 'od zer,
 The tamer of beings who removes the darkness of delusion!
 (I) praise the form of Śākya Seng ge,
 The tamer of the four Māras (who) lead beings astray!

(I) praise the form of Seng ge sGra sgrogs,
 The tamer of the Tīrthika samaya breaker spirits!
 (I) praise the form of rDo rje Gro lod,
 (who) annihilates the arrogant hostile forces and obstacles!¹⁴¹



Fig 4.5:
 The Dance of the Male and
 Female Spiritual Warriors
 (*dpa'bo*, *dpa'mo*) in the
 entourage of Guru
 Rinpoche,
 Major Practice Session,
 Pema Yoedling Dratsang,
 Gelephu,
 Bhutan 2013

141 *hrīḥ ma chags skyon gyis ma gos pa'i; padma 'byung gnas sku la bstod: yon tan thams cad rab rdzogs pa'i; padma sambha'i sku la bstod: shes bya kun la ma rmongs pa'i; blo ldan mchog sred sku la bstod: khams gsum srid gsum dbang du sdud; padma rgyal po sku la bstod: rmongs pa'i mun sel 'gro ba 'dul: nyi ma 'od zer sku la bstod: log 'dren bdud bzhi 'dul mdzad pa'i; shākya seng ge'i sku la bstod: mu stegs dam sri 'dul mdzad pa'i; seng ge sgra sgrogs sku la bstod: dregs pa dgra bgegs tshar gcod pa'i; rdo rje gro lod sku la bstod:*

Beyond the specifically Guru Rinpoche practice, the far-reaching impact of Guru Chöwang's *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* is in evidence in another 'chams dance sequence, known as the *Space Dancer Consecrations* (*mkha' 'gro byin 'bebs*) or the Dance of the Male and Female Spiritual Warriors (*dpa' bo, dpa' mo*). This is a dance of figures in Guru Rinpoche's retinue, performed in some public ritual dances, such as during the preparatory dances before the Dance of the Eight Manifestations. It is also performed in the context of a Major Practice Session (*sgrub chen*) or communal practice performed intensively for a week or more. In this case, the dance takes place around the three-dimensional maṇḍala constructed in the temple, and it introduces the final ritual sequence at the end of each afternoon's practice, in which the practitioners visualise the descent of consecrations into the assembly hall. Throughout the dance, a verse invoking the consecrations, which is found in the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* (Guru Chöwang 1979b: 495-496), as well as in numerous later texts, is repeatedly recited:

Please consecrate this supreme place;
 Confer the four empowerments onto me, the practitioner (of) the
 supreme (practice);
 Clear away obstacles, hindrances and (everything which) leads
 astray, and
 Bestow supreme and mundane siddhis!¹⁴²

Like the Seven Syllable Supplication, this verse is well-known in rNying ma pa circles, and recited frequently, in introductory prayers for example, as well as having become central to the ritual action marking the culmination of each day's practice in Major Practice Sessions.

142 *gnas mchog 'di ru byin phob la: sgrub mchog bdag la dbang bzhi skur: bgegs dang log 'dren bar chad sol: mchog dang thun mong dngos grub stsol:*

Finally, I would like briefly to mention the maṇḍala depictions. Given the similarities in the textual recitations and visualisations described above, it is unsurprising that contemporary depictions of the central maṇḍalas of Guru Chöwang's *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* and Dudjom Rinpoche's *Embodiment of Seven Revelations* appear to be identical.¹⁴³ Note here that we have the four inner petals for the four family Thod-'phreng-rtals, around which is the eight-faceted jewel (*rin chen zur brgyad*), with the Eight Manifestations each placed on one of the facets. In a set of contemporary maṇḍala paintings printed by the Dudjom tradition Monastery in Odisha (Duddul Rabtenling Monastery 2012), the complete maṇḍala for Dudjom Rinpoche's *Embodiment of Seven Revelations* (Plate 1) appears identical to that for Pema Lingpa's *Jewel Ocean* cycle (Plate 8). At first I suspected that an error might have been made, and the same maṇḍala labelled for different practices, but in fact, the two differ in their depiction of the outer Celestial Palace. The arches over the four doors are much larger and more ornately adorned in the Pema Lingpa maṇḍala.¹⁴⁴ Depictions of Dudul Dorje's *Complete Embodiment of Enlightened Intention* contrast a little, since Dudul Dorje's Lama Heart Accomplishment practice includes a further circle outside the inner four-petalled lotus. This is a six-petalled lotus for the Guru Rinpoche

143 A copy of a drawing of the central maṇḍala for Dudjom Rinpoche's *Embodiment of Seven Revelations* procured from the Jangsa Monastery in Kalimpong is exactly the same apart from its added colouring as the *Secret Embodiment of the Lama* maṇḍala (Item 77939) on the Himalayan Art Resources website, <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/77939>. See also the ceiling illustration of the full *Embodiment of Seven Revelations* maṇḍala, Fig. 4.4 p. 129 (although note that the northern and southern sections of the maṇḍala, respectively to the left and right, are in reversed positions in comparison with floor and wall maṇḍalas, since the viewer is underneath rather than above them).

144 In comparison with the previous images, a different convention for showing the eight-faceted jewel has been used, but the overall structure of the inner four petals, the eight-faceted jewel and the outer sixteen-petalled lotus for the retinue of male and female spiritual warriors is the same. This is seen also in a *tsak li* initiation card used for the longevity empowerment in Pema Lingpa's tradition, although in that case, an eight-petalled lotus replaces the jewel.

forms for liberating the beings of the six realms. Thus we find from the inside, a four-petalled, six-petalled, eight-petalled, and sixteen-petalled lotus, although the Odisha Monastery depiction appears to have simplified this, and omitted the outer sixteen-petalled lotus.¹⁴⁵

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise that this has been a preliminary exploration of the Guru Rinpoche meditative practices of the texts and tradition of Guru Chöwang's *Secret Embodiment of the Lama*, and the impact of this seminal Revelation on the later generations of revelatory productions. It is clear that the different cycles have their own distinctive features, with some variations in the imagery, yet the continuities are extensive, even – perhaps especially – at the atomic level of specific passages of sacred text re-appearing anew within different frameworks.

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145 See the depiction from the collection of Shechen Archives, Himalayan Art Resources Item 52648368: <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/52648368>; and see also Duddul Rabtenling Monastery 2012, Plate 31.

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NOTE: Tibetan spellings, and the forms in which names are given, vary, particularly for the early period. We have respected the choices made by our authors, so some names occur in different forms in different chapters. Where this is the case, we have supplied cross-references or merged entries with slightly different spellings.

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Contributors

Martin Boord (Rig 'dzin rdo rje)

studied early in his life with Lama Khamtrul Yeshe Dorje, Chhimes Rigdzin Rinpoche and Dudjom Rinpoche. In 1993 he received a doctorate for his thesis *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakila* from the University of London. He taught for some years at the University of Oxford and currently lives with his wife in quiet seclusion, devoting himself to the study of the Northern Treasures (*Byang-gter*). His publications include *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakila* (Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1993) and a series of books on the Northern Treasures tradition, of which the most recent is *An Overwhelming Hurricane* (Wandel-Verlag, 2020).

Cathy Cantwell (Ph.D., University of Kent, 1989)

specialises in Tibetan and Himalayan tantric rituals of all periods from the 10th century CE, and especially the ritual texts and practices deriving from the “Early Transmissions” (*snga 'gyur rnying ma*). This work has included text critical and historical analysis, as well as ethnographic study of contemporary rituals. Her recent books include *Dudjom Rinpoche's Vajrakilaya Works: A Study in Authoring, Compiling and Editing Texts in the Tibetan Revelatory Tradition* (Equinox 2020, <https://www.equinoxpub.com/home/dudjom-rinpoches/>), and *A Noble Noose of Methods, the Lotus Garland Synopsis: A Mahāyoga Tantra and its Commentary* (Vienna 2012, together with Robert Mayer). She was a Research Officer at the Oriental Institute, University of Oxford, from 2002-2015, and is now an Associate

Faculty Member. She is President of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies and an Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Anthropology and Conservation, University of Kent.

Jacob P. Dalton (PhD, Michigan, 2002)

is Khyentze Foundation Distinguished University Professor in Tibetan Buddhism at UC Berkeley. He holds a joint appointment in South and Southeast Asian Studies and East Asian Languages and Cultures and teaches Tibetan Buddhism. After working for three years (2002–2005) as a researcher with the International Dunhuang Project at the British Library, he taught at Yale University (2005–2008) before moving to Berkeley. He works on tantric ritual, Nyingma religious history, palaeography, and the Dunhuang manuscripts. He is the author of *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (Yale University Press, 2011), *The Gathering of Intentions: A History of a Tibetan Tantra* (Columbia University Press, 2016), and co-author of *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Stein Collection at the British Library* (Brill, 2006). He is currently working on a study of tantric ritual in the Dunhuang manuscripts.

Lewis Doney

is a philologist of Tibetan Studies and a scholar of Buddhist Studies, who is currently Associate Professor for the History of Religion at the Norwegian University for Science and Technology. He received his MA (2004) and PhD (2011) from SOAS, University of London, and his publications include *The Zangs gling ma: The First Padmasambhava Biography* (International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2014).

Dr James Gentry

is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford University. He received his PhD from Harvard University in 2014, and recently published *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism: The Life, Writings and Legacy of Sokdopka Lodro Gyeltsen* (Brill, 2016).

Lama Jampa Thaye (born in England in 1952)

is a scholar and meditation master trained in the Sakya and Kagyu traditions of Buddhism by H.H. the 41st Sakya Trizin, Karma Thinley Rinpoche and other eminent Tibetan masters. He holds a PhD from the University of Manchester for his work on Tibetan religious history. He lives in London with his family and maintains a busy annual programme of teachings for Dechen and other international Buddhist organisations.

Jue Liang

is a PhD candidate at the University of Virginia, where she is expected to graduate with a Doctor of Philosophy in Religious Studies in May 2020, and is ASIA Network-Luce Foundation Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow at Denison University for 2020-21. She completed a Masters of Arts in Religious Studies at the University of Chicago Divinity School in 2013. Her research interests include Tantric Buddhist literature, Tibetan (auto-)biographies, and female practitioners in Tibet.

Robert Mayer

is University Research Lecturer in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies, The Oriental Institute, University of Oxford. He is a specialist in the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism, and has published a number of books, monographs and articles on the subject. One of his goals is to clarify the early rNying ma period by studying the Dunhuang texts in context. Another is to improve the standards of philology and critical editing within Tibetan Studies. A third goal is to preserve, protect and describe the few surviving witnesses of the once much more plentiful 'Ancient Tantra Collection', or *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*. Most recently, he and Cathy Cantwell have been working on a project on Myang Ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer and early *gter ma* in Tibet, based at the Ruhr University in Bochum.

Charles Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie

studied Asiatic religions, languages and cultures first at London University's School of Oriental and African Studies and then at the Oriental Institute at Oxford. His doctoral dissertation (Oxford, 2014) examined rejuvenating Tibetan medical practices, focusing on the practice of *chulen*. He has lived and travelled in Asia since his youth and leads tours to religious sites in a number of countries there.

Geoffrey Samuel

is an Honorary Associate at the University of Sydney, Australia, where he directs the Body, Health and Religion (BAHAR) Research Group, and Emeritus Professor at Cardiff University, Wales, U.K. His PhD (Cambridge, 1975) was an anthropological study of Tibetan Buddhism in

India and Nepal academic career has been in social anthropology and religious studies, and his books include *Mind, Body and Culture* (1990), *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (1993), *Tantric Revisionings* (2005), *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra* (2008) and *Introducing Tibetan Buddhism* (2012). His current research interests include Tibetan yogic health practices, Tibetan medicine, and the dialogue between Buddhism and science.

Nicolas Sahlé

is a social anthropologist by training (PhD Paris-Nanterre University, 2001), who first taught at the Department of Anthropology at the University of Virginia (2002–2010) before joining the Centre for Himalayan Studies (CNRS, France). He specializes in Tibetan society and religion and in the comparative anthropology of Buddhist societies more generally. His research focuses in particular on religious specialists called tantrists (*ngakpa*), key figures of the non-monastic side of Tibetan Buddhism, who specialize in tantric ritual practice and are associated with rituals involving strong ritual power and ritual violence such as violent exorcisms. He has carried out extended fieldwork in the Mustang district in northern Nepal and in the Repkong district in eastern Amdo (Qinghai) since 2003. He has published *Rituels bouddhiques de pouvoir et de violence: La figure du tantriste tibétain* (Buddhist Rituals of Power and Violence: The Figure of the Tibetan Tantrist) (Brepols, 2013), as well as co-edited “Towards a Comparative Anthropology of the Buddhist Gift (and Other Transfers)” (special issue of *Religion Compass*, 2015) and “Toward a Comparative Anthropology of Buddhism” (special section of *Religion and Society*, 2017).