

**Faculty of Oriental Studies
(Tibetan and Himalayan Studies)**

**‘Extracting the Essence’:
Bcud len in the Tibetan
literary tradition**

**Charles Jamyang Oliphant
Wolfson College**

Supervisors:

Professor Charles Ramble and Dr Ulrike Roesler

ABSTRACT

‘Extracting the Essence’: *Bcud len* in the Tibetan literary tradition

Charles Jamyang Oliphant

Faculty of Oriental Studies (Tibetan and Himalayan Studies)

Wolfson College

The Tibetan practice of *bcud len*, or ‘extracting the essence’, has been for long a neglected aspect of Tibetan medical and spiritual knowledge with scattered evidence and little certainty regarding its origins or the extent of its effective presence, either in the past or at currently. In this study, seventy-three texts have been identified and tabulated. Of these, sixty-seven have been summarised and commented on, and five of these, each representative of one type of the practice, have been translated in full. All but a handful of these texts have not been translated previously.

The research findings suggest that, whatever its influences from Indian, Chinese or other medical cultures, *bcud len* soon evolved into a distinctively Tibetan method of life enhancement, with teachings that emphasise both spiritual and medical aims and the use of indigenous Tibetan remedies, accompanied in some cases by particular rituals. The content of the texts indicates that the term *bcud len* can be applied legitimately to practices involving ritually empowered pills and elixirs which are ingested, respiratory and yogic exercises, dietary restrictions and rituals involving mantra recitation, visualisation and *yab yum* union with a consort, in that all these are considered to be means of obtaining ‘the essence’.

II

The teachings offer extensive material for those interested in the evolution and contemporary practice of Tibetan medicine, especially its botanical aspects, and for historians of ritual. In particular, the texts provide ample evidence of the lineage tradition in Tibetan religious culture, citing examples of transmissions through *gter ma*, whereby teachings are preserved in secret to be recovered at a future date by a *gter ton* or treasure revealer.

The final section contains conversations with Tibetan doctors, lamas and contemporary practitioners of *bcud len* in Asia and the West that complement recent ethnographic studies in the field testifying to the continuing vitality of the tradition.

**IN THE GOLDEN AGE WHEN HUMAN BEINGS HAD COME INTO
EXISTENCE THEY, FOR A LONG TIME, DID NOT HAVE TO EAT
MATERIAL FOOD BUT LIVED IN *SAMĀDHI*.**

(RECHUNG RINPOCHE 1973: 8)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In its long evolution, this project has benefited from the insights and kind assistance of many lamas, scholars, doctors and librarians, from Oxford to Dharamsala and Kathmandu.

Professor Charles Ramble provided the original inspiration to embark upon doctoral studies. The clarity of his observations at every stage opened new perspectives and greatly enriched the work. I thank him profusely for his generosity in giving me the opportunity to be the first to translate a text he discovered in Mustang, Nepal.

My practical understanding of Tibetan medical culture, such as I have garnered, owes everything to the patient explanations of *em chi* Tenzin Sherab, expert physician in Kathmandu with a thorough practical and theoretical knowledge of *bcud len*; *em chi* Phuntshog Wangmo, erudite director of the School of Tibetan Medicine of the Shang Shung Institute of America in Conway, Massachusetts; and *em chi* Nida Chenagtsang, widely known as a skilful diagnostician and leader of medical courses and retreats.

Thank you also to the seven generous contributors who give life to Chapter 5 with their conversations, sharing, variously, their professional experiences and personal histories in relation to *bcud len*, thus adding a necessary present day dimension to our discussion: in order of the appearance of their articles, Jamyang Khyentse Norbu, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Dr. Sherab Tenzin, Elio Guarisco, Sangay Tsering, Dr. Nida Chenagtsang and Iacobella Gaetani.

The detailed criticisms of Dr Robert Mayer and Dr Martin Boord at early stages were of great help in shaping and refining the study. For his invaluable observations and

generous support in the final stages I thank Dr Lama Jabb. I am also deeply grateful to the late Anthony Aris as I am among the fortunate in Tibetan studies who benefited from his constant encouragement and erudite comments. Jeff Watt's penetrating insights into the tantras were an inspiration.

This study in both its form and content owes much to Dr George FitzHerbert, whose prose offers a model of rare elegance in academic writing. Dr Barbara Gerke, with her impressive knowledge of Tibetan medical history pointed out my misinterpretations and introduced me to many new perspectives on current debates.

Finally, I would like to express my respectful appreciation of Dr Ulrike Roesler without whose linguistic expertise, patience, contagious intellectual curiosity, encouragement and calls to rigour this study would very probably not have been completed.

In my pursuit of elusive sources, the librarians of our University (in particular the indefatigable Charles Manson), as well as of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamasala and of the Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Kathmandu offered invaluable help.

Elio Guarisco and Adriano Clemente both helped me understand particularly complex passages of certain texts and I wish to thank them thoroughly. Professor Fabian Sanders of the Ca' Foscari University in Venice and Mr Tsering Gongkatsang both made valuable suggestions and pointed out my errors and misinterpretations in translations. Dr. James Valby shared precious information about passages on *bcud len* in ancient texts and I thank him much.

I also am deeply grateful to two men with a love for Tibetan literature and interest in religion who helped me review my many translations. Mingyur Dorje is an inspiring

Tibetan language teacher who has become a *sngag pa*, a layman who dedicates his life to tantric practice. The other, Sangay Dorje, is a soft-spoken very kind Nepalese monk based in Singapore who perfectly embodies Buddhist values. Both these men were immensely helpful in elucidating certain obscure passages and in deepening my knowledge of Tibetan religious practices.

I would also like to thank the lively Julia Sprishevskaja for her contagious enthusiasm for medical matters, a product of her seven years of study with Dr. Sherab Tenzin; and her help in understanding the four *bcud len* texts of 'Ju Mipham, a special interest of hers, contained in my compendium.

I thank especially Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, perhaps the leading living authority on *bcud len*, who introduced me to its practice and pointed me to the first texts that I translated. His outstanding contributions to Tibetan studies and his profound knowledge of the Dzogchen teachings inspired this investigation.

Lastly, heartfelt thanks go to the members of my family who encouraged and helped me in my on-going project in every possible way and with great patience.

My gratitude also goes to the many people not thanked personally but who were of appreciated support.

It goes without saying that the responsibility for any lacunae or misunderstanding is entirely my own.

**‘EXTRACTING THE ESSENCE’: *BCUD LEN*
IN THE TIBETAN LITERARY TRADITION**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Aims	1
1.2 Conceptual clarification	4
1.3 Research questions	11
1.4 Methods and ethical issues	12
1.5 Sources	14

Chapter 2: Review of literature

2.1 A short historiography of <i>bcud len</i> with reference to <i>rasāyana</i> , <i>rtsa lung</i> and yogic medicinal practices	19
2.2 <i>Bcud len</i> techniques in Tibet	28

Chapter 3: Towards a classification of the corpus of *bcud len* literature

3.1 Introductory remarks	37
3.2 Indigenous <i>bcud len</i> typologies	43
3.3.2 A guide	51
3.3.2 A table of <i>bcud len</i> literature	53
3.3.3 An introductions to the texts	70
3.3.4 A compendium	91
3.3.5 Observation	295

Chapter 4: Representative texts

4.1 Introductory remarks	303
4.2 Rock <i>bcud len</i> (<i>Rdo'i bcud len</i>)	304
4.2.1 Introduction	304
4.2.2 Calcite <i>bcud len</i> translation	308
4.3. Flower <i>bcud len</i> (<i>Me tog gi bcud len</i>)	314
4.3.1 Introduction	314
4.3.2 Flower <i>bcud len</i> translation	316
4.4 Water <i>bcud len</i> (<i>Chu'i bcud len</i>)	330
4.4.1 Introduction	330
4.4.2 Water <i>bcud len</i> translation	332
4.5 <i>Prāṇa bcud len</i> (<i>Rlung gi bcud len</i>)	340
4.5.1. Introduction	340
4.5.2. <i>Prāṇa bcud len</i> translation	343
4.6 Pill <i>bcud len</i> (<i>Ril bu'i bcud len</i>)	346
4.6.1. Introduction	346
4.6.2. Pill <i>bcud len</i> translation	350

Chapter 5: Conversations with contemporary *bcud len*

adepts and practitioners	367
5.1 Conversation with Jamyang Khyentse Norbu, Tibetan filmmaker and spiritual teacher	370
5.2 Statement by Chögyal Namkai Norbu, Dzogchen master, teacher and practitioner of <i>bcud len</i>	372

5.3 Conversation with Dr Tenzin Sherab, physician expert in the preparation of <i>bcud len</i> substances, based in Kathmandu	375
5.4 Conversation with Elio Guarisco, a non-Tibetan initiate and instructor of <i>bcud len</i> practice	381
5.5 Conversation with Sangay Tsering, a senior monk from Shechen Monastery, Kathmandu	385
5.6 Conversation with Dr. Nida Chenagtsang, Medical Director of the International Academy for Traditional Tibetan Medicine, leader of <i>bcud len</i> retreats	388
5.7 Conversation with Iacobella Gaetani, translator of <i>The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Dakini: Mandarava</i> and witness to Chögyal Namkai Norbu's revelation of his Mandarava long-life practice in Maratika, Nepal in 1984	394
Chapter 6: Concluding observations	397
Bibliography	405
Glossary	422

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims

The aim of this research project has been to examine both past and continuing practice of the method of *bcud len* in its various forms in ‘the Tibetan world’, identifying its distinguishing characteristics and tracing its dissemination. The *bcud len* practice represents a highly particular forging of diverse strands of spiritual legacies that deserves detailed critical examination. There has long been a need to draw together the findings of scholars working from different angles whose work is beginning to intersect. The project has assumed greater urgency with the passing of leading practitioners and, due to the prevailing political situation, the increasing difficulty of gaining access to contacts and sources within Tibet.

Tibetanists have only recently focused in more detail on the subject of regenerative medical practices (see sections 2.1, 2.2) and, as is the case whenever an avenue of enquiry opens involving researchers with differing cultural baggage, a clarification of the terminology employed is useful. This is attempted in the introductory chapter, where the research questions that framed my enquiry are presented and I discuss the methodological and ethical issues arising from the research. The extent and nature of the sources used are then described in section 1.5 and again, more specifically, in Chapter 3.

Chapter 2 offers a critical overview of relevant research findings and publications and includes some recent unpublished work.

Chapter 3 provides a listing of all the texts that I have encountered that make more than a passing reference to *bcud len*. I have summarized many of the extant *bcud len* texts contained in the table, but due to the constraints of time, it has not been possible

to obtain, translate and summarize them all. As researchers continue to make new texts available, I hesitate to claim that all existing texts are included, but in this study I have gathered, analysed and presented all that I have found. In the chart in 3.3.2 I indicate the provenance and authorship of each text wherever possible. Section 3.3 contains an introductory essay identifying the salient features in the compendium's texts. In the subsequent section, 3.3.4 I have provided a summary of contents and identified the salient features in my remarks. This thesis is intended as an open-ended contribution to Tibetan Studies in that more texts are being found and translated as momentum gathers in research into both Tibetan spiritual practices and medical knowledge.

I conjectured a classificatory model to organise and present the data I considered most important from the texts. The reader will note an interesting variety of methods and substances to be employed in *bcud len* practices, including the use of human flesh and sexual practices. The texts range from those with more mundane declared aims focused, for example, on alleviating stomach problems or eliminating parasites to texts that instruct the practitioner on the mastery of the subtle body through mantras, yogic techniques and visualisations, all representative of a rich and diverse *bcud len* tradition. The table in 3.3.2 is intended to provide a reference framework for future research and to contextualise the works given more detailed examination in section 3.3.4. In 3.2 other classificatory models, including two particular Tibetan examples, are discussed.

In Chapter 4, there are five selected *bcud len* texts not hitherto translated. I examine the lexical components, imagery and structuring principles of these texts and have paid particular attention to such questions as the variation in the medicinal compounds prescribed. I also comment on the forms of offerings and the nature of the *dharmapālas* who receive them. The rituals described offer interesting examples of the

types described by René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz in his chapter on sacrificial objects and offerings, including human flesh, in tantric terminology *mahāmamsa*, the ‘great meat’ (de Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956:344). Human flesh as an ingredient of pills is mentioned by Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310-1391) in his *Bcud len sna tshogs*. Later, similar references are found in texts by Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802) and Nyag bla padma bdud ’dul (1816-1872) in his text *Man ngag sku gsum bcud len ’ja’ lus rdo rje’i skye brnyes* (see more on these in 3.3.4). Frances Garrett (2010) has discussed the question of whether this instruction to partake of human flesh was intended literally or, as certain scholars have suggested, was meant more figuratively. Garrett tends to the former interpretation and points out that human flesh is seen to represent ‘the distilled quintessence of the body’. She also indicates that while the Āyurvedic tradition includes the use of excrement, semen and blood, human flesh is not mentioned (Garrett 2010: 316-18). This is a factor to consider in evaluating the roots and the distinctive nature of Tibetan *bcud len* practices, where references to human flesh appear both as an ingredient and an element in visualisations. The references to this aspect of *bcud len* in the collected texts presented below suggest that both literal and metaphorical instructions were given.

Apart from their value to the growing body of research on ritual, the texts possess an intrinsic literary value as they have what Lalou calls a ‘prodigious lyricism in both form and substance’ (Lalou 1953:2).

One of the most demanding tasks has been to resolve issues of authorship, especially within the *gter ma* genre. One has to be constantly aware of the implications when similarities are found between *bcud len* texts. In an article discussing *gter ma* literature in general, Robert Mayer has pointed out (Mayer 2010) how establishing *gter*

ma authorship is highly complex because of the nature of its transmission. His points are most relevant and useful in the analysis of *bcud len* literature. I have tried to note similarities and differences in the texts and to deduce patterns where, for example, certain deities are associated with particular practices.

In Chapter 5, I conclude the project with an investigation of contemporary *bcud len* practices. This section contains a series of conversations with living religious figures, monastic scholars, doctors competent in preparing medicinal *bcud len* compounds, and *bcud len* practitioners themselves. These conversations with acknowledged masters and adepts of the *bcud len* tradition have been recorded, transcribed and edited, so as to provide insight into contemporary *bcud len* practices.

1.2 Conceptual clarification

When searching through Tibetan dictionaries, such as that compiled by Lokesh Chandra, for the translation of *bcud len*, I found the most precise and helpful entry to be in the *Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary*¹:

RY) Rejuvenation practice; extracting the essence; *rasāyana*. One of the eight common siddhis/accomplishments {*thun mong gi dngos grub brgyad*} extraction of nutrients, [the art of] extracting essence, alchemy. A means of extracting the elixir of minerals from the earth and subsisting upon it. Essence-extract, extracting essences, extraction of nutrients; alchemy/extracting the quintessence.

In the *Rangjung Yeshe Dictionary*, as in many others, the term *rasāyana* appeared. This refers to an Indian practice that Richard Barron's Tibetan-English glossary describes as 'alchemical transmutation'. This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.1.

Bcud len consists of varied methods whose goal is to extract, through alchemical

¹ Online: <http://www.nitartha.org> accessed on February 15th 2011

processes, ritual and contemplation, nutrition or ‘essence’ from sources which may include plants, flowers, barks and roots, rock, sperm and blood, and human flesh as well as other less tangible substances, such as the ‘essence of space’ and the stars. There are also texts describing how the practitioner’s subtle energies can be reinvigorated through sexual practice, both actual and visualised in the mind of the yogin. These I have included within this spectrum. Thus, the extraction can be compounded either with actual solid, tangible objects or imagined in the meditator’s mind. The underlying idea is to transmute the extracted essence into a ‘nectar’ *bdud rtsi* that the practitioner will use for his or her sustenance. Mantra recitation and visualisations of particular deities empower the substances to make them ‘divine’.² *Bcud len* exercises and techniques can involve preparations of alchemical compounds and medicinal concoctions, recitation of mantra, adherence to specific dietary regimes and a variety of exercises, mental, respiratory and physical. Unlike many other meditative practices, which focus mostly on mental exercises and visualisations, in the practice of *bcud len* the physical body is given great importance and concoctions are prepared according to the practitioner’s physical typology. The medicinal goal of certain texts is to nourish the body’s strength and organs and to increase longevity. The focus of the *bcud len* texts with a more spiritual emphasis is on increasing wisdom and sharpening mental faculties as well as attaining various other *dngos grub*, ‘attainments’. These include ‘pushing out’ white hair and a ‘miraculous’ riddance of wrinkles. As the evidence of this study indicates, in Tibetan literature one can find reference to several variations of *bcud len* whose purpose is to allow the practitioner to live on negligible amounts of food, thereby purifying the body and its energy flow and sharpening mental focus on his or her path to Buddhahood.

² Dzongsar Khyentse, oral communication.

Barbara Gerke has repeatedly emphasised the polysemous nature of Tibetan medical terms (Gerke 2012b: 21-22). *Bcud len* itself has been applied to practices of many types and with diverse aims. *Bcud* can have various meanings, including essence, elixir or simply nutrient or even drink. It might also be used as part of a name of a tonic (Gerke 2012a: 197). Medicinal preparations easily obtained from *am chi* can therefore be referred to as *bcud len*. On the other hand, there are highly secret tantric practices of *bcud len* where individuals, exercising contemplative skills, use the visualisation of the deity and the recitation of mantras with internal yogic breathing exercises in their quest for enlightenment. As Geoffrey Samuel points out, ‘The central issue for Tantric practitioners is how one uses a particular system as a meditational device for personal transformation or other ritual ends’ (Samuel 2013:41). The texts in this thesis are mostly concerned with *bcud len* used with such aims.

The practice of *bcud len* never became institutionalised and was not a communal spiritual practice. *Bcud len* often has no clear linear transmission lineage and few histories of *bcud len* practitioners are recorded, since the meditative practice was probably carried out in retreat, often by hermits. The meditators lived in solitude and with limited access to food; therefore certain practices were designated for those who sought sustenance while avoiding social interaction. This complicates the formulation of neat generalised conclusions regarding the purposes of the practice of *bcud len* and the context of the practice.

Discussion of the *bcud len* tradition inevitably raises questions on methods of transmission, since records refer to a highly particular form of teaching that some more ‘earthbound’ scholars have found difficult to accept. The term *gter ma*, which can be translated as ‘treasure’, is a teaching in the form of a sacred text or material object

which has been deliberately concealed in a specific place and then discovered and extracted from that place, or ‘treasury’, by a *gter ston*,³ who then expounds the teaching anew.

The *gter ma* has been a bone of contention in academic discourse, with a strong degree of skepticism displayed both in past sectarian polemics of Tibetan scholastics and in modern times by sceptical Western scholars. An account of the currents of opposition to the acceptance of *gter ma* within a detailed analysis of the historical framework of the tradition is to be found in Gene Smith’s work (2001: 237-247). It is not within the scope of this study to examine that particular adversarial discourse; what is said below on the nature and characteristics of the *gter ma* is based on the acceptance of the legitimacy of its origin. The notion of *gter ma* is especially associated with the early Rnying ma masters who used this method for the transmission of advanced teachings, and has often been refuted or challenged by the other schools,⁴ although examples of this process can be witnessed in Indian Buddhism in earlier times, as in certain Mahāyāna sutras.⁵ The principal source of the *gter ma* teachings of the Rnying ma is considered to be the tantric master Padmasambhava, said to have been invited to Tibet by King Trisong Detsen (Khri Srong lde btsan) in the eighth century to help establish his hegemony over troublesome local spirits (Guenther 1996).

³ Note that in the Bon tradition a *gter ston*, or treasure revealer, is not necessarily a predestined one.

⁴ The exponents of the ’Bka rgyud, Sa skya and Dge lugs new (*gsar ma*) schools follow the New Tantra tradition (eleventh century) and historically have often doubted the authenticity of the *gter ma* tradition of the Ancient Tantras, despite the fact that some famed *gter ston*, such as the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Third Karmapa, for example, have manifested in their ranks.

⁵ For example the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, a Mahāyāna scripture, explains the doctrine of voidness (*sūnyatā*) that shows how all phenomena lack intrinsic existence or self-nature. It was concealed by the Buddha in the *nāga (klu)* realm, (the waters inhabited by cruel, powerful, fabulously wealthy half-serpent, half-human beings who often guard great treasures) and retrieved by the great pandit Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika or ‘Middle Way’, through his enlightened power.

In the early Rnying ma tradition Guru Rin po che (Padmasambhava) with his consort, Ye shes mtsho rgyal,⁶ and other masters close to him, are said to have concealed, as part of their enlightened activity, innumerable treasures in external elements (*sa*) in Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan and the depths of the mind (*dgongs*) of their destined disciples.⁷ These were to be discovered and revealed at the appropriate time for the benefit of future generations. Thousands of *gter ma* exist, classifiable in eighteen types.⁸ Of the two main categories, the first is the earth *gter ma* (*sa gter*). These are sacred religious objects or scriptures hidden in the earth, rocks, water, trees, temples, images or sky, and which then become invisible and indestructible through the power of the blessing of Padmasambhava and the protection of the *gter ma* guardians; the second are the mind *gter ma* (*dgongs gter*) which are concealed and then arise once more, awakened spontaneously in the essential nature of the mind of the *gter ston*.

I include for discussion in this thesis *gter ma bcud len* texts attributed to Guru Rinpoche and Ye shes mtsho rgyal that have been revealed over the ages by several different treasure revealers. In the overview in Chapter 3, they are dated according to the date of the respective *gter ston*, because it is through the activity of these *gter ston* that the texts assumed the form known to us.

The term ‘Bon’, or its adjectival form ‘Bon po’, appears in this study, often in contradistinction to ‘Buddhism’ or ‘Buddhist’, when the origins of particular texts

⁶ Padmasambhava’s close disciple. She compiled the major part of his teachings.

⁷ The first of the special treasure transmissions; *gtad rgya*: the transmission of aspirational empowerment or the mind-mandate transmission, which is the transmission of teachings from the enlightened mind of Padmasambhava to the luminous natural awareness of the minds of his disciples.

⁸ According to the *gter ston* Sangye Lingpa (1340-1396): the fourfold group of Secret (*gsang*), Profound (*zab*), Mind (*thugs*) and Intentional (*dgongs*) Treasures; the fourfold group of Material (*rdzas*), Life-Supporting (*bla*), Minor (*phran*) and Liberating by Taste (*myong*) Treasures; the fourfold group of Indian (*rgya*), Tibetan (*bod*), Lordly (*rje*) and Father (*yab*) Treasures; the threefold group of Mother (*yum*), Neuter (*ma-ning*) and Outer (*phyi*) Treasures and last the group of Inner (*nang*), Middling (*bar*) and Wealth (*nor-gter*) Treasures (Dudjom Rinpoche 1969).

are discussed. Bon has many similarities to Buddhism in doctrines and practice. It was for a long time, however, described by Western scholars as an unorthodox, and sometimes by implication ‘debased’ form of Buddhism, retaining earlier elements of ‘shamanism’ or animism. There is now greater awareness that the two sets of beliefs and their practices are historically interwoven, which makes earlier simplistic delineations less acceptable (Kvaerne 2000: 7-19, Guenther 1996: 5, Karmay 2007: 55ff., Kvaerne 1995: 9ff.). Kvaerne offers a succinct account of the interpretations surrounding the term. He endorses the Tibetan Buddhist view of Bon as a separate religion with an unbroken tradition on the criteria of ‘religious authority, legitimation and history rather than on rituals, metaphysical doctrine and monastic discipline’ (Kvaerne 1995: 10). The Bonpo claim that their original scriptures come from Stag gzig and were written in the language of Zhang zhung.⁹ The founder of what became the most widespread Bon spiritual lineage was Shenrab Miwoche, who lived in western Tibet in the proximity of Mount Tise. In attributing texts, including *bcud len* treatises, to either Bon or Buddhist sources, it must be borne in mind that in periods of intolerance against everything non-Indian, texts were often given a Sanskrit title and terms were switched to render the text authentically Buddhist (Guenther 1996: 5-6).

In any readings on Tibetan medicine, abundant references will be found to ‘the subtle body’. This elusive concept and the recent attempts to define it are discussed in section 2.1 below. Essentially every sentient being is said to be endowed with a subtle body that comprises channels, winds and drops (*rtsa, rlung, thig le*). *Nāḍī (rtsa)* is the term for physical and subtle channels in the Indian system. The Hindu and Buddhist

⁹ See Section 2.1 regarding debate on its existence and, where this is acknowledged, its possible classification.

ideas are similar but not identical. Even within the Tantric Buddhist systems, there are variations in descriptions of the subtle body and the meaning and placement of the *rtsa*, *rlung* and *thig le*, which can vary according to the specific Tantric system involved, such as the Hevajra, Guhyasamāja or Kālacakra.

The Tibetan terms are renderings of respective Sanskrit terms. Geoffrey Samuel's extensive work on the subtle body referred to in Chapter 2 examines these distinctions. According to all major systems of traditional Asian medicine – Chinese, Indian and Tibetan – vital forces flow through a network of these subtle channels traversing the body. The literal meaning of *nāḍī* is a 'tube' or a 'channel' through which something flows. The Tibetan term *rtsa* carries meanings which include channel, passageway, root and cause, and refers to both physical channels like nerves, veins and arteries and subtle or immaterial *nāḍī* or energy channels. Three main channels - central, left and right – run through the body, from the crown of the head to the lower part of the trunk. The central *dbu ma* channel is connected to the two lateral *ro ma* and *rkyang ma* channels. According to some descriptions the *ro ma* channel is white. It corresponds to lunar energy. It is found on the right side in men and on the left side in women. The red *rkyang ma* channel corresponds to solar energy. It is on the left side in men, and on the right in women. In the literature of the *gsar ma* schools the position of the channels is reversed (Norbu 2008: 383).

A variety of exercises engaging the subtle body are used by practitioners to reach enlightenment (*byang chub*) through the unblocking of obstacles in the flow of vital breath current or *prāṇa*. *Prāṇa* is our physical breath and the essence of life itself, our energy, power and life force. One must note that the Tibetan term *rlung* at times can refer to *prāṇa* and also to the wind element.

Another recurring word in the texts is *kumbhaka* (*bum pa can*), a special method of ‘holding the breath’. The regular practice of *kumbhaka* helps to coordinate breathing. The Tibetan term *bum pa can* is an exact translation of the Sanskrit term and literally means ‘vase-shaped’ holding (Norbu 2008).

1.3 Research questions

At the outset of this project I focused on the following questions to provide a framework for my investigation. Chapter 6 of this work offers comments on the degree to which these questions were answerable.

1. Is *bcud len*, in both its spiritual and medical aspects, an independent tradition or is it inextricably linked, by the nature of its origins, to other sets of practices such as *rtsa rlung* and a minor component in a greater yogic tradition?

The research of Yang Ga (2010, 2014), discussed below, has brought greater specificity to debate on the question of the existence of a Tibetan medical tradition prior to the arrival of the main Indian works that influenced its development. He stresses how important it remains to Tibetans to ‘emphasize the value of Tibetan culture and identity historically’ (Yang Ga 2010: 19-20). Meanwhile Yoeli-Tlalim’s linguistic evidence on the diversity of the sources of Tibetan medical culture has helped to create a consensus that a melange of influences came into play (Yoeli-Tlalim 2013). In the light of their work, as my research progressed, the emphasis of my enquiry shifted from seeking to establish an ‘independent’ Tibetan tradition to identifying specific features and practices in the texts translated that can be seen as reflections of the particular legacies of Indian, Chinese and indigenous sources.

2. In addition to the preparation and ingestion of medicinal compounds, which of the following practices should be included for discussion as integral parts of *bcud len* practice:

breathing, yogic exercises such as Yantra Yoga, *gtum mo*, mantra recitation, visualisation and meditative exercises, sexual practices?

There remains some ambiguity about what might be termed a *bcud len* practice. My intention was to find and analyse evidence of each of the above in the translated texts in order to suggest a more comprehensive, and at the same time more specific definition.

3. What is the medical value of the medicinal compounds *per se*? Are certain substances employed purely because they are considered 'auspicious'? To what degree is ritual empowerment considered essential for a concoction's efficacy?

This line of enquiry has aimed to evaluate the importance of ritual empowerment in the *bcud len* practices analysed by examining the incidence and nature of ritual instruction in the texts selected.

4. Having analysed these examples of *bcud len* literature, is it possible to speak of distinctive forms and functions of *bcud len* pertaining to specific schools? Are particular deities associated with specific practices?

Here, the aim has been to identify possible correlations between deities and specific typologies of practice with authors adherent to one particular school.

5. What are contemporary attitudes towards *bcud len*? Is the tradition experiencing a renaissance in monastic communities or elsewhere in Tibetan Buddhist practice? Is there a tangible interest amongst Western Buddhist or Bonpo practitioners?

The conversations held with the interlocutors were intended to inquire into a resurgence of interest in the practice. The range of interlocutors reflected the broad appeal of the practice.

1.4 Methods and ethical issues

Textual research is the key component of this project. The available *bcud len* texts are often somewhat ambiguous, since the reader does not have the benefit of the

oral commentaries accompanying the transmission of their *lung*.¹⁰ To fathom their complexity, the researcher should be equipped with some familiarity with the Tibetan medical system and its underlying premises. The complexity of Tibetan medical terms was made very clear in the late R.E Emmerick's analysis of terms used in a single chapter of the *Rgyud bzhi* (Emmerick 1975). As research into previously neglected branches expands and connections between different sources are explored, the need in the future might be, as Barbara Gerke suggests, for interdisciplinary teamwork as a background in classical Tibetan alone is sometimes insufficient. In the past, Indian scholars would work alongside Tibetan translators and editors (Gerke 2012b: 21-22). Apart from the linguistic challenges, the researcher needs some understanding of notions of the subtle body and the esoteric practices connected to it, and at least some acquaintance with esoteric Buddhist, Bonpo and Dzogchen concepts. Thus, prior to embarking on the translation and scrutiny of selected texts, I read the relevant secondary literature, and the second and third chapters provide an overview of existing related research.

One ethical issue that arises in working with sacred texts, especially those dealing with esoteric practices, is that of the *samaya* (*thugs kyi dam tshig*), the sacred bond between teacher and practitioner based on a commitment to teacher, spiritual companions and practice. Although I have not received the teachings contained in the translated texts directly, I feel that there is a justification on historical grounds for creating and preserving in translation a cultural treasure that has been neglected, and that might have otherwise remained in obscurity. Those sufficiently interested to have read the teachings included will know that they are transmitted by lineage and require

¹⁰ In order for a tantric practice, and the mantras contained therein, to be effective a master must transmit the practice by reading the text aloud to his disciple.

empowerment to be practised with effect. In certain cases, the fact that the texts located were printed from woodblocks suggests that the particular teachings were not destined for exclusive use of a master and a single aspiring practitioner.

Chapter 5 of this study, an investigation of contemporary practice of *bcud len*, contains a series of interviews with teachers and practitioners. A code of responsible behaviour is emerging among researchers in oral history with certain ethical considerations. David Bridges, a noted philosopher of education, has discussed a number of these in an influential collection of essays (Bridges 2003). One fundamental issue is the possible infringement of human rights in the process of research or publication. Secondly, there is the question of whether publication will cause harm or suffering or endanger others. Bridges suggests furthermore that the researcher must ask whether any vulnerable individuals or groups of people are exploited, and whether the research requires the manipulation of participants (ibid: 131-132).

Thought should also be given to the circumstances under which data is collected and to the sharing of the fruits of research. Where there is value to the community affected by the enquiry, copies of the published findings should be given to participants by researchers. The study undertaken here involved the risk of offending participants' religious sensibilities and care has been taken to avoid the inherent dangers indicated above. For instance, wherever particularly arcane mantras appear in translated passages, they have been omitted.

1.5 Sources

The relatively few references to *bcud len* in Western secondary sources on Tibetan medicine has been pointed out in more detail in Chapter 2, although Emmerick's

translation of a *bcud len* practice in Chapter 90 of the *Rgyud bzhi* (Emmerick 1990) did stir more interest in this lesser known aspect of Tibetan medical practice. Gerke's recent works (2012a and 2013a) have established *bcud len* as an important hitherto neglected aspect of contemporary Tibetan medicine. Garret's work on nectar-oriented writings is of immense value in understanding ritual aspects of the practice. Tibetan works in translation, such as the seventeenth century *A Mirror of Beryl* (*Gso ba rig pa'i khog 'bubs vaidurya'i me long*) have been helpful in setting the context for the set of translations of *bcud len* texts in Chapter 3. Visual evidence has also been of use. The set of seventy-nine *thangkas*, commissioned by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama's regent Sangye Gyatso (1653-1705) to illustrate the latter work contains two *thangkas* of particular interest that illustrate the greater and the lesser elixirs of rejuvenation (Williamson and Young 2009: 147-152).

As mentioned above, I have transcribed conversations with renowned masters of *bcud len*, including Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who revealed the *bcud len* practice of Mandarava (Norbu 1999) as well as with doctors who currently compound the medical substances.

The main source for the present study, however, is the collection of seventy-three *bcud len* texts that I present and analyse. Chapter 3 contains a rubric of extant *bcud len* texts, composed over an arc of several centuries and authored by masters affiliated with Tibet's various religious schools from a range of localities in Tibet. These texts help to create the context for the selected texts translated in Chapter 4.

The primary sources that form the basis of these two chapters were gathered from a variety of sources. As discussed in the essay introducing the compendium in Chapter 3, no distinct *bcud len* chronological lineage exists; thus texts needed to be gathered

from broader works by individual authors. Initially, scholars and Tibetan masters pointed me towards *bcud len* texts, which I then sought out in their authors' broader works. My search for *bcud len* texts has taken me to various institutions and libraries across Europe and Asia. I have tried, whenever possible, to locate the gathered texts on the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center website and to provide a web link so that whoever may be interested can easily access the text with a few clicks.

Because of the secret nature of the texts and their restricted circulation, many questions about the practice of *bcud len* and its history in Tibet remain unanswered. There has not been a traceable, distinct *bcud len* school or continuous lineage in Tibetan history, but the tradition has survived through the sporadic appearance of individual *bcud len* adepts who practiced methods often received by masters in *gter ma* revelations and revealed, to be then practiced by a select few. Due to this secret nature of the *bcud len* transmission lineages, they are difficult to trace. Therefore, my thesis does not focus on a particular lineage, but attempts to provide a conspectus of the available literature and practices, in the hope that this survey may open up new passageways for future research.

Since *bcud len* texts do not tend to belong strictly to a particular school or cycle of teachings, and many texts have colophons describing their provenance in a rather too ambiguous manner, my initial task has been to try and collate the extant literature.

Fortunately, certain groupings of *bcud len* texts have been compiled in the past, and these groupings were helpful in starting my classification. Among them are the texts found in Chapter 48 of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, the collection of *gter ma* texts assembled by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and others in Chapter 17 (*tsa*) of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, a collection of texts belonging to the eight traditions of Tibetan Buddhism that

were also collected by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul. All of the texts I have found thus far are from larger works by particular authors and many of these can be found on the website of the Tibetan Buddhist Research Centre. In the process of reading and gathering references to *bcud len* texts, I have come across some that proved unavailable to me, since many works are not yet scanned and placed on TBRC, and access to archival resources within the Tibetan world is laden with difficulties, particularly for a foreign researcher not integrated in the local religious community.

In classifying the texts, one difficulty pointed out by Samten Karmay (2007: 219) is that Bonpo texts were transformed into Buddhist ones and vice versa. Techniques of adapting the texts can be very basic, with the terms *bon* and *chos* or *rdo rje* and *g.yung drung* substituted. The similarities in philosophical perspective are therefore clear and thus it is sometimes possible to discern a common origin or author for the texts.

The annotated classification is intended to provide an example of how these long ignored treatises can play an important role in both broadening and refining our understanding of Tibet's spiritual and medical heritage.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 A short historiography of *bcud len* with reference to *rasāyana*, *rtsa rlung* and yogic medicinal practices

In the introduction to his general history of Tibet, Matthew Kapstein commented on the remarkable expansion of Tibetan studies, recalling a conference in 1979 when most of the world's Tibetanists could be gathered in a single room in Oxford, all inhabiting 'a common microcosm in which it was taken for granted that one should be familiar with all things Tibetan . . .' (Kapstein 2006: vi). In subsequent years, with the rapid growth of this scholarly community there has been an inevitable process of specialization with far less interaction among those working on their own narrower interests.

With the vast corpus of religious texts available, the focus of study long remained in that sphere, and it is only relatively recently that Tibetan medicine has attracted more scholarly attention. One of the pioneering works on Tibetan culture reflected the earlier dismissive attitude towards Tibetan medical knowledge and practice; Snellgrove and Richardson barely mentioned Tibetan medicine per se and denigrated the idea of the 'Tibetan medical college' suggesting that the Tibetan medical practitioner was most often a mendicant layman selling pills, medicines and concoctions 'rather like a medieval apothecary', whose surgical skills were mostly derived from experience with livestock. (Snellgrove and Richardson 1986: 6).

Subsequently, following the appearance of Ferdinand Meyer's *Gso-Ba Rig-Pa: le Système Médical Tibétain* in 1981 (Meyer 1981), a plethora of publications has appeared on Tibetan medicine in general, debating its origins, describing its techniques and discussing the philosophy underpinning them.

At an early stage, the first preoccupation had been to establish its origins. In 1975 Emmerick published the first detailed full English translation of a chapter from the *Rgyud bzhi* (as opposed to summaries). In Emmerick's words, the *Rgyud bzhi* was ' . . . generally recognized as the fundamental handbook on Tibetan medicine' (Emmerick 1975: 141). As Yang Ga (2010: 22-23) recounts, Emmerick's early research found similarities between the Tibetan translations of the *Aṣṭāṅgahr̥dayasamhitā* and of the *Rgyud bzhi*. He also found elements of Chinese medicine present in the *Rgyud bzhi* and therefore suggested that the *Rgyud bzhi* was not the work of a single Indic scholar but rather a composite work.

The focal point of much of the discourse on the origins of Tibetan medicine has been the *Rgyud bzhi*. This compendium of 156 chapters is often referred to as 'The Four Medical Tantras' and has also been described as 'the Bible of the Tibetan medical science' (Karmay 2007: 6). Its full name is the 'Secret Instruction Tantra on the Eight Branches of the Ambrosia Essence' (*Bdud rtsi snying po yan lag brgyad pa gsang ba man ngag gi rgyud*). The work is still not fully translated.¹¹

The consensus among Western researchers was for a long time that Tibetan spiritual and medical knowledge was 'essentially Indian' in nature (Snellgrove 1987. Yang Ga 2010: iii). For some two centuries dating from around the mid-tenth century, Tibetan travellers and scholars returned from India, introducing and translating from Sanskrit major Buddhist medical literary works. Those who stress this Indian essence of Tibetan culture claimed that even before this wave of new knowledge reached Tibet, the seeds of knowledge of the Indian or Āyurvedic medical system had been planted from

¹¹ See Gerke's essay published as an introduction to the German translation of the first two of the four and in particular her useful visual summary of the organisation of the complete work (Gerke 2012b: 29).

the eighth century onward by translators and scholars sent to India King Khri srong lde btsan. Among them was the celebrated Vairocana, said by some to be the translator of ‘The Four Tantras’.

Perhaps European and American scholars prematurely labelled *bcud len* as deriving from Indian longevity practices and, conditioned by their views on mainstream Tibetan medicine, did not delve deeper into the possible origins of the practice. This was due to its apparent similarities with the Āyurvedic system of *rasāyana*, which also involves the preparation of medicine to maintain the health and strength of the body. The most detailed study of *rasāyana* remains Edward Fenner’s unpublished doctoral thesis on the uses of medicine and alchemy as described in the Buddhist tantras (Fenner 1979). The passage of these teachings from India to Tibet is also described by Kurtis S. Schaeffer (Schaeffer 2003: 515-513), while Geoffrey Samuel has also examined the theme of rejuvenation in Cittar and Nath teachings, referring to the Kaulajñānanirnaya text ascribed to Matsyendranath, dating from the ninth or tenth century, that provides several methods of meditation and methods to defeat old age (Samuel 2008: 277). David Gordon White in 1984, emphasising the Indian origins of life-enhancing practices, spoke of a Buddhist tradition in the Himalayas and Vindhya from the fourth century. In his view, this precedes the emergence of the Hindu alchemical tradition that arose, together with Tantrism and various other yogic traditions, around the tenth century. His argument was based on the finding of cinnabar and other ingredients in alchemical recipes in those mountainous parts (White 1984: 40-73).

With the deepening of interest and the expansion of research in Tibetan medicine, however, perspectives are shifting. In his doctoral thesis, completed in 2010, the Tibetan scholar Yang Ga offers highly convincing and detailed evidence that the emphasis on

Indian influence has been excessive and that much of the *Rgyud bzhi* was derived from a multiplicity of sources, including Tibetan sources which predate the introduction to Tibet of the *Aṣṭāṅgahrdayasamhitā*. He also challenges ‘the basic assumption that the *Rgyud bzhi* has always been the ‘root’ and the only main text of Tibetan medicine’ (Yang Ga 2010: 28). In his doctoral thesis he points out that the origin of the *Rgyud bzhi* has been debated since the fourteenth century, with Tibetan scholars arguing that the mention of foods, herbal plants and articles peculiar to the Himalayan region, as well as Chinese astrology (*nag rtsis*) and Bon po rituals indicate that the treatise is a composite, and not an entirely Indian work (Yang Ga 2010:8-12).

Among these other influences, Yang Ga points to the Chinese medical tradition. We know through the work of Tansen Sen of the extensive material, cultural and intellectual exchanges between China and India from the seventh century CE onwards (Sen 2003), suggesting reciprocal early influences. A further complication, as Carla Nappi points out, is the tendency to treat ‘Chinese-ness’ in an unexamined manner, ignoring the changing boundaries of the empire (Nappi 2010: 21). Yang Ga believes that Chinese medicine entered Tibet in the early seventh century when Tibet occupied six states bordering China, and King Srong btsan sgam po sent envoys to China, pointing out how later kings had contacts with Chinese physicians (Yang Ga 2010: 36-7). The Chinese influence on medical thought and practice in Tibet appears to have been dominant in the seventh and eighth centuries; it is recorded that the Chinese bride of Srong btsan Sgam po (c. 617- 650) brought a medical text from China as a gift for the King, and that Chinese translators compiled and translated many medical texts into Tibetan (Gyatso 2010: 4).

As evidence of the enduring links between the two cultures, Nappi reminds us that in later periods there was a movement to translate Tibetan works at the Qing court, with

a school for Tibetan established in 1657 and Tibetan language training and the printing of books in Tibetan peaking in the eighteenth century (Nappi 2010: 27).

Giuseppe Tucci devoted a section of *The Religions of Tibet* to an explanation of the more direct interplay of the Indian and Chinese currents in Tibet's religious culture, mentioning the Council of *Bsam yas*, called by King Khri srong lde btsan (c.742-797) to decide which view of the path to Buddhahood was correct, that of the Siddha Medical tradition or that of the Ch'an School (Tucci 1980: 12-15). Although the Indian school gained the upper hand following the Council, defenders of the Ch'an School did not disappear. Samten Karmay examines the consequences of the Council for the monasteries and the banishment of Vairocana (Karmay 2007: 4-6).

In the recent modification of historical perceptions of an essentially Indian alchemical tradition transplanted to Tibet, Chinese influences on Indian longevity practices are increasingly mentioned. White himself later indicated China as the source of methods for longevity involving mercury, 'India's original fascination with mercury most probably arose out of early contacts with China [. . .] whose Daoist speculative alchemical tradition had been developing since the second century A.D.; one might conclude that such traditions reached South India via a maritime route' (White 1996: 53). He points out the similarities between the South Indian Cittar tradition and the outer alchemy *neidan* of the Daoists (Ibid.: 55). Meanwhile, Tansen Sen, in his studies on reciprocal influences on longevity practices in China and India, gives several examples of journeys, including the unauthorized pilgrimage of the seventh-century monk Xuang Zang to South Asia, which stimulated the Emperor Taizong's interest in Indian life-prolonging drugs and spiritual healing. In this connection, Sen mentions a Brahmin doctor expert in longevity medicines who came to China and treated the Emperor Taizong in the last stages of his life (Sen 2001: 1-28). The Japanese scholar

Yoshinobu Sakade offers one of the clearest accounts of Chinese views of the body, Daoist medicine and methods and ideas for increasing vitality. He describes the Daoist use of combinations of breathing exercises, spells and visualisations of the relevant deities. Sakade uses interesting examples to distinguish *neiguan* (insight meditation) which concentrates consciousness through visualisation of the numerous gods dwelling in the body, from the concept of *neidan* which involves preparation of an external elixir, and the mental processes employed for carrying the ‘golden elixir’ to all parts of the body (Sakade 2007: 51-63). Livia Kohn discusses in more detail the Daoist notion of *qi* in a recent collection of essays on the subtle body. She mentions *jing*, often translated as essence, as a functioning of yin and yang energies, whose dominant form is sexual energy, semen in men and menstrual blood in women. Practices are taught to control sexual energies and make *jing* revert to *qi* (Kohn 2013). In the essay presenting the texts found in Chapter 3 I refer to Geoffrey Samuel’s discussion of the Chinese sexual spiritual practices that he argues predate the Indian ones. References to semen and menstrual blood, both in visualisations and as ingredients in recipes themselves, are found in a number of the texts translated in this work and may have originally derived from the Daoist tradition, but the complexities of separating the Chinese Daoist and Indian tantric concepts mentioned above makes it hazardous to speculate on the original source of the practices.

To support his argument that the influence on Tibetan medicine attributed to India has been exaggerated, Yang Ga points out that the testing of the pulse in Tibetan medicine derived from Chinese influence (Yang Ga 2010:85), noting that it was not part of Āyurvedic practice, and that neither was urine analysis (Ibid:129). Furthermore, Yang Ga confirms references to Chinese astrology in the *Rgyud bzhi* (Yang Ga 2014: 157).

Chinese researchers, meanwhile, are beginning to make more detailed contributions to Western academic discourse and will undoubtedly help to develop a more nuanced perspective on life-nourishing sciences through their translation and interpretation of previously unknown texts (Chen Hsui-fen 2008: 29-45).

A Mirror of Beryl (*Gso ba rig pa'i khog 'bubs vaidurya'i me long*) refers to the non-indigenous sources of medical knowledge influencing Tibet from the seventh century onward as 'three great rivers'. It mentions three physicians in particular as purveyors of their systems: Bharadvaja from India, Galenos from 'Trom'¹² and Hsüan Yüan Huang from China. While the Chinese and Indian strands of influence have been more widely discussed, as indicated above, other possible sources of medical ideas and practices have been explored, including the introduction of Greek medicine into Tibet prior to the great exodus of Tibetan scholars to India (Beckwith 1979: 297-313).

In the field of Tibetan medical studies, Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim's paper on early Tibetan medicine based on evidence from Dunhuang (2013) makes an important contribution. In this work, the author demonstrated the plurality of influences and the multicultural character of early Tibetan medicine by examining foreign words and mentions of foreign places in various texts discovered at Dunhuang and describes the result as a 'melange' (Yoeli-Tlalam 2013). While the attempt to reach more nuanced conclusions is a welcome development, an earlier article by Per Kvaerne on 'Dualism in Tibetan Cosmogonic Myths and the Question of Iranian Influence' shows the pitfalls involved in trying to establish particular cultural influences in plurality conscious studies (Kvaerne 1987).

¹² Beckwith (1979: 299) identifies Trom as Rome.

It is in the effort to gain recognition of the indigenous roots of Tibet's medical culture that the most evident differences have emerged among scholars. As Yang Ga stresses, the question has profound implications for Tibetans and their historical identity (Yang Ga 2010: 19-20).

In maintaining that Tibetan medical culture was not simply derived from India, most attention has been placed on finding evidence on the contribution of Tibetans to the compilation of the *Rgyud bzhi*. It has also been claimed that, apart from the use of pulse and urine analysis, certain foods, plants and ingredients of medicinal compounds mentioned in the *Rgyud bzhi* are peculiar to Tibet.

Gavin Kilty focuses on issues of authorship and indicates the points raised by Tibetan scholars in their arguments that the Four Medical Tantras, at first glance standard Indian compositions, were in fact either adapted or created entirely by Tibetan authors. He also asserts that instructions seem adapted to the climate and environment of Tibet, methods of pulse and urine diagnosis are decidedly non-Indian, references are made to yak meat and barley porridge, clearly Tibetan foods, and above all there is no reference to the canon of translations from India (Kilty 2010: 7).

The most intensive and perhaps most controversial research on the roots of Tibet's medical culture has been focused on the long ignored, pre-Buddhist Bon culture of Tibet, and it is now argued that there existed what might be called a Bon medical system. Chögyal Namkhai Norbu provides a succinct historical overview of Tibet's indigenous medical science, *nad gso sman dpyad*, or 'diagnoses and remedies for curing disease' (Norbu 2009: 217-219). He contends, on the basis of the Old Tibetan Dunhuang Chronicles (PT 127,183), that the *Rgyud bzhi* was compiled by Vairocana, using Bon po medical texts. According to Norbu, the evidence for this lies in the names of the sages, persons in the retinue, and the sacred formulae to cure disease, which were all left in

the original Zhang Zhung language.¹³ However, the very existence of a Zhang Zhung language is still debated and Norbu's claims have been questioned (Nishi and Nagano 2001: 1-30).¹⁴

The current slow emergence of the medical texts from Dunhuang¹⁵ has led to Bon po medical culture attracting more scholarly attention,¹⁶ and the issues raised in the aforementioned studies have helped highlight the complex and highly varied provenance of Tibetan medical knowledge. Yang Ga has probably been the most diligent contributor to this particular debate. He speaks of 'a good knowledge' of medicine in Tibet prior to the arrival of knowledge from elsewhere in the seventh tradition. However he concludes that given the lack of reliable early Bon and Zhang Zhung medical texts, 'it is difficult to know what relationship Bon or Zhang Zhung medicine had with Tibetan medicine in general or with the *Rgyud bzhi* in particular'. (Yan Ga 2010:32).

As Emmerick, Yang Ga and Yoeli-Tlalim have demonstrated, the *Rgyud bzhi* is a complex work (Emmerick 1977, 1987; Yang Ga 2010; Yoeli-Tlalim 2010). It contains extensive borrowings from a major Āyurvedic text, the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasamhitā* of Vāgbhaṭa, elements of Chinese and Greco-Islamic medical theory, and no doubt also many indigenous elements have their origin, as Chögyal Namkhai Norbu has argued, in Tibet's pre-Buddhist culture. With the growing acknowledgement of the significance

¹³ (Norbu 2009: 218). The kingdom of Zhang zhung in western Tibet is widely considered the centre of pre-Buddhist Tibetan culture and Norbu puts forward his evidence for a written language of Zhang Zhung in Chapter 4 of this work.

¹⁴ The consensus is that this language was spoken in western Tibet but was gradually replaced by Tibetan and died out completely around the eleventh century. It is now considered more accurate to speak of it as the language of the Dmu, a tribe in lower Zhang Zhung which followed Bon, rather than a language spoken by all believers in Bon.

¹⁵ The so-called 'Library Cave' of Dunhuang in Gansu, part of the complex found by European archaeologists and explorers in the early twentieth century, contains tens of thousands of manuscripts, including more than 4,000 in Tibetan. This collection is divided largely between London, Paris and China.

¹⁶ See, for example, Yaeli-Tlalim 2013 and Craig, Cuomo, Garrett, Schrempf 2010.

of other elements, both foreign and indigenous, it is important to bear in mind this multiplicity of influences when reading *bcud len* texts.

The above outline of recent studies is intended to provide a context for the investigation of Tibetan *bcud len* practices. In the absence of detailed comparative historical and lexical examination or detailed accounts of medicinal preparations and yogic exercise, scholars remain far from agreement on the ‘Tibetan’ features or the autonomous nature of *bcud len* practice in the Tibetan world. The translation of and commentary on Tibetan *bcud len* texts that follows (Chapter 4) is intended to shed more light on this aspect of Tibet’s autochthonous medical system. With Tibetanists preoccupied for so long with debating the origins of longevity techniques, the close study of Tibetan rejuvenating practices has barely begun. My reading of secondary sources in Western literature suggests that no single major published work has yet focused specifically on Tibetan *bcud len*.

2.2 *Bcud len* techniques in Tibet

As the body of work appearing on Tibetan medicine grows, studies with a greater degree of specificity emerge and the exploration of life-regenerating practices has intensified. In this context, initial soundings have been carried out on the topic of *bcud len*. Despite an abundance of primary literature, authored over several centuries and consisting chiefly of instructional texts on practicing *bcud len*, this ancient practice had received surprisingly little attention from established researchers. Its adherents’ claims of wondrous effects, such as ‘the obtainment of all the qualities of the Buddha’ (promised to those who practice the *bcud len* by Gar dbang Dorje, Text 29 in my collection), for long failed to arouse much serious interest amongst either Tibetan or Western academics.

There exist but a handful of studies published by Western academics that discuss the detailed methods of *bcud len* practice. Glen Mullin's translation of the flower *bcud len* composed by the second Dalai Lama, Rgyal ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1475-1542), who died while sitting in meditation, is one of the few published. But the fact that Mullin included no commentary of his own nor proceeded to investigate other *bcud len* texts suggests that *bcud len* was of peripheral interest within the greater framework of his work on the writings of Rgyal ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (Mullin 2005: 183-191).

David Germano in his essay 'Food, clothes, dreams' has investigated the topic of *rlung gi bcud len*, or breath (*prāna*) *bcud len*. He worked on particular sections of the *Snying thig* (Seminal Heart) that began in the eleventh century within the Nyingma school and was systematized by Klong chen pa (1308-1363). Germano describes *bcud len* generally as a technique 'for contemplatively generating constant dietary nourishment and warmth without relying on ordinary sources'. He makes a threefold classification of food-related *bcud len*:

- 1) rocks, flowers, herbs, mercury, gold and so forth
- 2) imbibing one's own energized breath
- 3) consuming one's own excretion

In this article, Germano focuses on the 'eating wind' *bcud len* practices, explaining their aims and then presenting their function in considerable detail, basing his observations on the text entitled 'The Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle' (TCD 164.4-5). This is a faithful recounting of Klong chen pa's instructions on how to 'eat wind' in order to replenish one's energy through visualisation-energized breathing (Germano 1997: 293-312).

Fernand Meyer, an inspirational pioneer of the study of Tibetan medicine, spoke extensively on the topic of *bcud len* in his series of lectures entitled 'Aspects rituels et matériels des techniques de longévité visant à absorber les essences (bcud-len)' during

the 1997-1998 academic year at Paris's École Pratique des Hautes Études (EHPE); these lectures, regrettably, have never been published.

The difficulties of locating and translating esoteric texts have long been a deterrent to scholars who also may have had pragmatic concerns about peer judgements on the 'scientific' value of work connected to an area of medicine as yet unproved by scientific testing. G.J. Meulenbeld's 2003 review of Aschoff and Tashigang's (2001) work on Tibetan 'precious pills', in which he deplores the absence of 'hard facts' (Meulenbeld 2003: 211), clearly illustrated how differing perceptions of medicine, healing and life enhancement clash.

The extensive work of Barbara Gerke on life-enhancing practices in Tibetan medicine with a more ethnographic approach has drawn together much useful evidence and has recently been accorded considerable attention.

There is also a notable shortage of Tibetan-language secondary sources on the more contemplative aspects of *bcud len*, particularly in translation. Usually, the texts that are our primary sources were instructional in nature and restricted to committed practitioners; they were not divulged in public and thus were never regarded in the traditions of scholarship in Tibet as a bone of academic contention. The most comprehensive unpublished work available now is Lungtok Coktsang's thesis 'Les techniques de *bcud len* dans le monde tibétain' (Lungtok Coktsang 2007). Lungtok Coktsang offers translations of selected *bcud len* texts but has not contextualised them within a corpus. A list of *bcud len* texts found in the *Rnying ma* tradition was presented by Mei at an IATS conference in 2010, but it was never published.

In their work entitled *Tibetan Medicine*, Rechung Rinpoche and Jampal Kunzang (Rechung & Kunzang 1973) dedicate a single page to the practice where *bcud len* is defined as 'the observance of health rules', chiefly consisting of correct diet, good habits

and proper medication. General guidelines for healthier living are given, but no specific instructions for practicing *bcud len* are presented. The authors refer their readers to the ‘*Man ngag rgyud*’, the third treatise of the *Rgyud bzhi* Medical Tantra, where Chapters 90 and 91 offer some substantial descriptions of *bcud len* practice. Tsepak Rigzin (1982) has translated a flower *bcud len* text authored by the second Dalai Lama.

With these exceptions, to date I have been unable in my research to locate studies by Tibetans on the practices of *bcud len*.

Fortunately, a number of publications have appeared which help clarify the principles underpinning the practice of *bcud len*. These have been centred on the nature of the subtle body and the tradition of exercises connected with its nurture. These may include techniques to accompany the ingestion of medicine such as breathing, mantra, visualisation or ‘*phrul ’khor*’ (yogic exercises) that are all methods to control the inner channels and vital energy. Some, according to Fenner, also consider *gtum mo* (the method of generating inner heat) and *yab yum* (sexual union) as closely related to *bcud len* practices (Fenner 1979: 82).

As Geoffrey Samuel once wrote, the subtle body is one of the most difficult concepts for Westerners to grasp (Samuel 1993: 237). More recently, in their editorial introduction to a collection of essays, Samuel and Jay Johnson describe the very term ‘subtle body’ as ‘problematic’, as it has associations that go back to Madame Blavatsky and the early Theosophists (Samuel and Johnson 2013: 2). It is, simply put, a vessel that enables transformation, a dimension that offers a path to enlightenment. For Samuel, the subtle body is connected with the mind. Channels (*nadis*) exist through which various substances flow and the points of intersection of those channels are the *cakras*. ‘Practices usually involve moving “substances” through the body, clearing “knots” in

the flow and directing the substances into a central channel flowing along the spine’ (Samuel 2008: 274).

Philip Rawson in his book *The Art of Tantra* indicates fundamental differences that Tibetan Buddhists assert exist between the Hindu pattern of the subtle body and their own, for example, the diverse number of *cakras* recognized – six by the Hindus and four by the Buddhists (Rawson 1978: 160-166). Samuel, however, contends that ‘Although significant discrepancies exist in descriptions of the subtle body, Tibetans are not disturbed by differences that are apparently irreconcilable and recognise the validity of each within its own context’ (Samuel 1989: 201).

It is the respiratory practices associated with the subtle body that have received the most attention to date. Germano, as mentioned above, wrote on *bcud len* of the breath, while Daniel Cozort in a chapter entitled ‘Channels, Winds and Drops’ compares the Kālacakra and the Guhyasamāja systems, examining their schemes of channels and winds (Cozort 1986: 119-122). Kenneth Zysk discusses the ancient Indian conceptualisation and codification of the bodily winds and their operations in the human organism, examining classical Āyurvedic concepts, breathing and yoga. He concludes that the influence of Āyurvedic notions on the development of yogic breathing had a significant impact (Zysk 1993, 2007).

Yantra Yoga (*'phrul 'khor*) is described as a Tibetan Buddhist practice that includes physical movements, breathing exercises and methods of concentration. The system of Yantra known as ‘The Union of the Sun and Moon’ (*'phrul 'khor nyi zla kha sbyor*), said to have been transmitted to Padmasambhava, was then transmitted by him to Vairocana in the eighth century (Norbu 2008: 1). Yantra Yoga is not normally included in the discourse on practices directly associated with *bcud len*, but I have found examples of texts advocating the complementary use of Yantra exercises such

as Thangthong Gyalpo's *Dka' thub rde'u'i bcud len* (text 13 of this study). Other texts prescribing Yantra are from Blo bzang don grub (1696-1756), who taught the *Chu'i bcud len gyi snying po dngos grub kun 'byung*; Btsun pa ye shes don grub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1792-1855) who transmitted the *Chu'i bcud len gyi gdams pa 'chi med rig 'dzin sgrub pa'i chu rgyun zhes bya ba bzhugs so*; and Nyag bla padma du 'dul (1816-1872) who taught the *Man ngag sku gsum bcud len 'ja' lus rdo rje'i sku brnyes*.

Another relevant work which describes the Bonpo tradition of *'phrul 'khor* yogic exercises is Marco Alejandro Chaoul's unpublished doctoral thesis on ancient yogic practices in the Bon religion (Chaoul 2006). Chaoul discusses the term 'yantra', which is used with three different meanings in the texts he examines: a magical diagram, a yogic posture and a machine or mechanism (Ibid: 72). He offers in the third chapter of his work a highly detailed presentation of the magical movements contained in the 'The Great Completeness Oral Transmission of Zhang Zhung' (*rdzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud*), the text of cardinal importance studied at the main Bonpo monastic centres and lay communities (Chaoul 2006: 3). Chaoul asserts that channel breaths or *rtsa rlung* and 'magical movement' or *'phrul 'khor* are distinctive Tibetan mind-body practices that have been part of spiritual training in Tibet since the tenth century CE (Chaoul 2011: 297). This collection of texts offers several instances where the practitioner is instructed how to carry out physical yogic exercises, whose names and origins are unspecified, but which may well have been of that type.

Mantras and visualisations employed by *bcud len* practitioners have remained almost entirely unexplored, largely because of the element of secrecy surrounding the practice. The more accessible mantras employed in the preparation of medicinal substances have been examined by Frances Garrett, who studied the empowerment of medicine in an article tracing connections between Buddhist and medical traditions.

Garrett also studies the rituals surrounding the practice of *sman sgrub* (Accomplishing Medicine), its passage from India and its adaptation in Tibet (Garrett 2009: 207-230). Although the *sman sgrub* practice has no direct link with *bcud len*, much of the theoretical background and understanding of the subtle body is similar.

The other practice that Fenner believes merits consideration as a form of *bcud len* is what he refers to as ‘*yab yum bcud len*’. He argues from an etymological viewpoint that *bcud* is female essence and points to the inner *rasāyana* use of Tantric ritual where the male essence is not expelled but drawn upwrd with the female essence along the central channel (Fenner 1979: 82). In the *bcud len* texts in my compendium, often the sexual act is explicitly discouraged as it is said to exhaust the body; however, in many texts there are visualisations of deities joined in sexual union and one imagines their sexual fluids blessing the practitioner. In some instances the ‘red and white *bodhicittas*’, the female and male sexual fluids, are used in the compounds to make *bcud len* nectar or pills.

Some of the texts included in this collection are entirely focused on sexual practices, such as the *Zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal las: bcud len rdo rje'i chu 'thung* taught by Gar dbang rdo rje (1640-1685) and also the text *Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus dag snang du stsal ba'i thabs kyi lam mchog nyi zla'i bcud len dang brgyad 'debs* which was received in a pure vision by Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1697- 1740). The more recent *bcud len* text '*Chi med gnyug ma'i gsang mdzod zhes/ lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor gyi rig 'dzin thugs tig padma'i srog/ bcud len bdud rtsi'i gdam zab las/ gzhun don cha lag mdor bsdus bzhugs* by Gter chen kar ma (1943-2005) has a section on Amitāyus which includes sexual practices in which during copulation, one controls the lower *prāṇa* while imagining that lights radiate from one's secret place. It is interesting to note that

all texts with instructions on sexual practices advocate sperm retention or advise in case of ejaculation to swallow the lost semen or to visualise it as an offering.

In the analysis of primary sources in the present study, I have searched for evidence of all the above forms of *bcud len* and for traces of the influences of all the strands of the diverse medical traditions noted above.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARDS A CLASSIFICATION OF THE CORPUS OF *BCUD LEN* LITERATURE

3.1 Introductory remarks

This section provides a framework for the classification of the extensive corpus of *bcud len* literature (seventy-three texts produced by forty-three authors have been found thus far). Tibetan masters and Western scholars have directed me to specific works on *bcud len*, but the majority of texts are listed in the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) online collection. Even when I found texts independently, I checked if they were held in the TBRC collection. Whenever this was the case, I provided references for those same texts in that collection, so that the reader might more easily locate the works discussed. The provenance of each text is, wherever possible, given in section 3.3.5, titled ‘A Compendium’.

The content of these texts is made clear in the table below. They are drawn from all four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism and from the Bon tradition. That the authors of the texts have widely varied affiliations and that the texts have come down to us from very different times and places complicates the classification of the texts. The few academics who have encountered *bcud len* writings while researching spiritual practices have therefore found it difficult to place the texts in their context. The absence of a framework of reference has also compounded the numerous difficulties facing historians of Tibetan medicine, as Blezer pointed out repeatedly (Blezer 2007).

In formulating a classificatory model for *bcud len* texts a first necessary step is to overcome the limitations of the biomedical frame of interpretation that has long influenced historians of medicine in general and of early readings of *bcud len* texts.

Western distinctions between medical and religious purposes tend to exclude Tibetan notions of disease and therapy and are not always appropriate or helpful. The authors of a recent work examining the nature of Tibetan medical practice refer to the concept of *gso ba rig pa* (science of healing) which extends beyond the classical body of Tibetan medical knowledge to include ‘knowledge and practices that have either become marginalised within modern institutions or have been seen as belonging to the domain of religion’ (Adams, Schrempf, Craig 2011: 3-4). Barbara Gerke, similarly, points to the need for a more nuanced approach where boundaries between the religious and the medical ‘become blurred’ in the case of advanced Buddhist practices (Gerke 201b: 85).

As a life-enhancing, regenerative medical practice, *bcud len* places great emphasis on the physical body, unlike many other meditative practices that focus mostly on mental exercises and visualisations. A basic tenet of Tibetan medicine is that the functioning of the human organism is supported by the three humours, *nyes pa gsum*. Gerke (2012b: 22) has pointed out the troublesome issues surrounding the translation of medical terms so laden with meaning. She has highlighted how English renderings fail to convey the polysemous nature of the Tibetan terms. The basic overview of the three terms that follows, aiming to provide the reader with a general overview, exemplifies how lengthy the rendition of three words can be.

These humours arise from various combinations of the elements. Air and space produce the humour ‘wind’ (*rlung*). Water and earth produce the ‘phlegm’ (*bad kan*) humour; energy, fire and water combine to form the ‘bile’ (*mkhris pa*) humour.

The general functions of the ‘wind’ humour (*rlung*) concern sense perceptions, awareness and movements of body and limbs, respiration, swallowing food and drink, circulation of the blood, retaining and evacuating faeces and urine, opening and closing

the orifices, the workings of the nervous system and the circulation of the nutritive essence through blood. The general function of ‘phlegm’ (*bad kan*) is to develop all the humid and wet components of the body, such as saliva and gastric juices and so forth; maintain and safeguard body humidity; prepare food for assimilation; enable digestion; strengthen physical health; make the skin more supple; stabilize the mind; and induce sleep. The general functions of the ‘bile’ humour (*mkhris pa*) are to ensure and protect the body heat and in particular heat for digestion; maintain the complexion; regulate the stimuli of hunger and thirst; enable digestion of food and drink; and govern the production of bodily substances through the blood (Norbu 2006).

There are other *bcud len* practices in which the subtle body plays a more significant role. The aim of the *bcud len* texts with no specific focus on a bodily weakness and which could be designated more meditative in emphasis is to allow the practitioner while on the path to buddhahood to live on negligible amounts of food, thereby purifying his or her body and energy flow and sharpening mental focus.

On balance, this thesis focuses more on *bcud len* texts that are not specifically medical in purpose but belong more in the context of instructions for spiritual practice, in particular for yogic sustenance and solitary meditation. There is, however, insufficient reason to adopt the medical/religious binary as a basic division for classification.

In the absence of any established comprehensive classificatory model recognised and accepted by scholars in the field, I devised my own model. In presenting the summaries and tables below, I chose to select and present certain criteria, chiefly: author, listed chronologically (re-discoverer in the case of a *gter ma*); dating of the text; a summary of the contents; main deities and substances involved; translation of the colophon; remarks on the text.

The precise date of the creation of a text is not always specified and is hard to determine; since the teaching may have been transmitted orally for a very long time before being written down. The dates of the lifetime of the author or *gter ston* are therefore the basis of the chronological organisation.

Establishing the authorship of the text is a further complication. As was explained in the preceding chapter, there are numerous difficulties in pinpointing a single origin for the *bcud len* tradition; thus we cannot view *bcud len* as a monolithic cultural or religious tradition, where being ancient and unchanged translates as ‘authentic’. As Robert Mayer points out, traditional Tibetan literary work is a final product which contains ‘the input of more persons than the nominal ‘author’, while in modern literary ideals, the ‘author’ is constructed somewhat heroically as an individual creative source’ (Mayer 2010). Another factor inhibiting research into *bcud len* in the past was the need to accept the concept of *gter ma*. A considerable number of *bcud len* texts are *gter ma* texts, rendering questions of classification and chronology still more complex, given the added difficulties of defining authorship in such cases.¹⁷ For example, a teaching from a *gter ston* may have stemmed from a remembered dream and then was communicated orally. Subsequently it could have been recorded in writing, perhaps through the patronage of a teacher, a monastery or a sect, and we can never establish with certainty the accuracy of statements regarding its origin.¹⁸ Many *bcud len* texts have been

¹⁷ The concept of *gter ma* is discussed within a detailed analysis of the historical framework of the tradition in Gene Smith’s (2001) work. For Smith, ‘. . . the false prophet is a possibility that plagues any opposition to the tradition that accepts the principle of continuing revelation with doubt.’ (Smith 2001: 240). However, as Dudjom Rinpoche points out in his lucid essay in defence of the *gter ma* tradition, ‘The Shortcomings of Refutation and Proof’, these arguments had long been anticipated in the world of Tibetan sectarian debate and ‘. . . if all the doctrines refuted by learned and accomplished Tibetans were false, no authentic doctrine at all would be found’ (Dudjom 1991:927-933). As stated earlier, I have not pursued this argument in its minutiae and my attribution of authorship to *bcud len gter ma* texts is based on an acceptance of *gter ma* legitimacy.

¹⁸ An example of a rather complex development and transmission of a *bcud len* practice is the *Me tog*

included in *gter ma* collections such as the *Rin chen gter mdzod* and the *Gdams ngag mdzod* or have been published in the collected writings of individual *gter ston*, or as individual works. This vast corpus of textual material on *bcud len* has never been comprehensively assembled and classified; to do so is the primary aim of this thesis.

Religious works from different traditions have often influenced one another and may contain shared thoughts or even shared textual passages. For instance, Samten Karmay (2007: 219) points out that Bonpo texts were transformed into Buddhist ones and vice versa. Techniques of adapting the texts can be very basic, such as substituting the terms *bon* for *chos* and *g.yung drung* for *rdo rje*, or in some cases the reverse. Where the substitutions are simple, the similarities in philosophical perspective are clearer and thus it is sometimes possible to discern a common origin or author for the texts.¹⁹

In the process of establishing my own criteria for classification, I investigated the aforementioned early Tibetan typology, ascribed to the eighth-century scholar Vimalamitra. This offers, I believe, an excellent basis for a classification. It mentions seven categories of *bcud len* (*bcud len* of precious substances, *bcud len* of minerals,

bcud len gyi gdams pa bdud rtsi'i thigs pa text, attributed to Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802). The introduction tells us the practice was originally transmitted by Vajrayoginī to Pha dam pa Rin po che, and later the colophon (f. 162, lines 5-6) states: *bcud len gyi gdams pa bdud rtsi'i thigs pa zhes bya ba 'di ni bya bral ba blo bzang chos kyi nyi mas rang gi slob ma dben par chas pa 'ga' zhig gis nye bar bskul ba la brten nas tshe blos btang gi thar/ ong ba don gnyer ba rnams la phan pa'i bsam pas kun nas bslangs te rgyal ba dge 'dun rgya mtsho'i gsung la rang gi bla ma'i zhal gyi man ngag gis brgyan nas chos grwa chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs su yi ger bkod pa'o//* (These *bcud len* instructions on the nectar drop were written by the renunciate Bya bral ba Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma at the request of his students, may they benefit those who pursue liberation! By supplementing the words of Rgyal ba dge'dun rgya mtsho with the instructions of my own guru, it was written at the great monastic institution of 'Bras spungs.)

With so many people involved in the handing down of the practice, one can understand the difficulties in identifying a single 'author'.

¹⁹ A Bon *bcud len* text which has many similarities (structural as well as the deities involved) with other Buddhist *bcud len* texts and worthy of an interesting comparative study is a work by Shar rdza Bkra shis rgyal mtshan (1859-1934), *Rdzogs pa chen po sku gsum rang shar las sku gsum bcud len thar pa'i rgyags phye* (*The nutrition of liberation: The three kāya essence extraction, from 'The Dzogchen spontaneous arising of the three kāyas'*).

bcud len of herbs, *bcud len* of aromatic substances, *bcud len* of meat, *bcud len* of *prāṇa* essence of outer elements, *bcud len* of *prāṇa* essence of inner elements). In spite of the validity of these categories, my research has not brought to light a sufficient number of texts in which aromatic substances or meat are mentioned as major ingredients to qualify them as individual topics. The fact that I have yet to identify such texts however does not exclude the possibility of their existence; in fact, several other *bcud len* substances are mentioned in Martin Boord's forthcoming translation of a biography of Padmasambhava, *O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar dri med pa*, indicating that a greater array of substances, far more than the seven categories discussed in the aforementioned text by Vimalamitra, the *Sgra thal 'gyur rtsa rgyud 'grel sgron ma snang byed*, may be used for *bcud len* practice.²⁰ At this stage (of my research), however, two of the seven subdivisions seem superfluous to the primary material presented in this thesis. I therefore excluded aromatic substances and meat as separate categories in my own classification, while opting to add the deities found and the substances prescribed in the texts.

In the section that follows I offer my own classification of existing texts and a framework in which to place others that may surface in the future.

²⁰ “. . . Everywhere he went, he extracted various essences, binding their hands and feet with seals in order to make them remain firm. Then he prepared the elixir of water and fire and, furthermore, he undertook the great austerity of [subsisting on] wind and space. In particular, he undertook the great austerity of the five nectars and sand, as well as the various medicinal herbs and poisons employed in the austerities of the Bodhisattva *Sadāprarudita*. Then he undertook austerities using trees, shrubs and leaves, as well as the nectar of the lotus and the rest of the five nectars. He underwent austerities using human flesh and urine and the herb *Indrahasta*. He extracted the essence of faeces and the five precious substances, including gold and the rest. He extracted the essences of rocks and flowers and fruit and horn and so on, of bones and beer and an unimaginable number of other substances. As a result of all this, he attained the deathless *vajra* body.” Boord [forthcoming].

3.2 Indigenous *bcud len* typologies

In the review of the work on *bcud len* produced by Western academics to date, found in Chapter 2 above, I indicated the absence of any generally accepted comprehensive classification and a lack of contextualisation, in the isolated examples available.

Although it would be simplistic to speak of a ‘traditional’ Tibetan model, I shall begin by examining two groupings found in primary sources, prior to introducing my own working model. These are the only examples of a classificatory model and of *bcud len* texts groupings that I have found thus far in Tibetan literature. The first, which deserves detailed attention, draws from the aforementioned forthcoming work by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Ka dag khregs chod kyi dgongs pa gsal bshad klong chen 'od gsal*, currently being translated by James Valby. Norbu presents his explanation of the typology that if indeed drafted by Vimalamitra in the eighth century, may be the first model for a classification of *bcud len* teachings in Tibetan literature. The second is a grouping of *bcud len* texts from the collected writings of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul in the nineteenth century.

The work accredited to Vimalamitra, as presented by Norbu, contains what is possibly the earliest classification of *bcud len* practices. It is found in *The Illuminating Lamp* (*Sgron ma snang byed*), a commentary attributed to Vimalamitra on *The Root Tantra of All-Penetrating Sound* (*Sgra thal 'gyur rtsa ba 'i rgyud*). It is impossible to prove the provenance of the work, but *The Illuminating Lamp* is generally ascribed to Vimalamitra and the commentary's colophon attributes the work to him.²¹

²¹ F. 957, line 4. *Rin po che snang byed sgron ma zhes bya ba/ mkhas pa bye ma mu tras mdzad pa rdzogs so*. TBRC W25983, vol. 4016, folio 957 (Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center).

Ultimately it is not crucial whether Vimalamitra devised this classification or not (it may have been attributed to him so as to give the work more legitimacy). Its inherent value is that it offers a Tibetan example of *bcud len* classification, and a possible example to emulate. I have searched, to no avail, for

In the section titled “Meditation sessions to cut attachment to food” in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s forthcoming work (Norbu forthcoming: 31-36) he cites from the *Sgron ma snang byed*. I have summarised and quoted from the extracts he has chosen, firstly as they offer to the reader clear statements of the purpose and processes of the various forms of *bcud len* practice made by renowned Tibetan masters and scholars. In addition, their instructions provide interesting points of comparison with those included in my subsequent analyses of texts from later periods. The extracts reproduced below were translated from the Tibetan by James Valby.

Prior to citing the explanations of the various forms of *bcud len*, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu cites a passage on the purpose of practising *bcud len* from Klong chen pa’s *Treasure of the Supreme Vehicle (Theg mchog mdzod)* (Öser 1983: 1320):

Second, there are all kinds of deliberate meditations, like deity development and completion stages, with their non-conceptual and conceptual contemplative meditations that are intentionally cultivated by mind. The intellect uses them for its purposes. For our needs in this section we have three classifications. At first practitioners are harmed by food and clothes, and in the end they are harmed by dreams and karmic tendencies that continue in the three realms. As an antidote to these, we have three trainings for meditation sessions: meditation sessions to cut attachment to food, meditation sessions to cut attachment to clothes, and meditation sessions to cut attachment to dreams and karmic tendencies. The first training has two subdivisions: dependence upon various *bcud len* and dependence upon *prāṇa* energy. Various *bcud len* include *bcud len* of the five elements and many most precious supreme *bcud len* substances, like medicines, plants, nectars, and so forth. (Norbu forthcoming: 31)

Five types of *bcud len* are described in *The Root Tantra of All-Penetrating Sound (Great Tantra 1982, op. 7: 6, 40, 80)*: the *bcud len* of precious substances, the *bcud len* of

similar classification models in the Indian *rasāyana* system that may have inspired the above model and also consulted David White, an expert on the subject, who told me he is unaware of any such occurrences in Indic literature.

minerals, the *bcud len* of herbs, the *bcud len* of aromatic substances and the *bcud len* of meats:

These *bcud len* explanations are marvelous, extraordinary and supreme. They are not taught in other tantras. Powerful gods and *sattvas*, you listen. Whoever depends upon the precious substances is identical to the sun and moon. The body of one who uses various minerals cannot be cut by a blade. Whoever uses and depends upon herbs never has white hair or wrinkles. Whoever takes *bcud len* of pure nectar has a healthy appearance and remains youthful. Whoever uses and depends upon meat has a strong body and develops physical strength. (Norbu forthcoming: 31)

The commentary on the *Root Tantra of All-Penetrating Sound* elaborates further on these five types and then annexes the descriptions of another two types of *bcud len*, namely the *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of the outer elements (*phyi 'byung ba'i rlung gnad kyi bcud len*) and the *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of the inner elements (*rlung gnad la brten pa'i bcud len*). This sevenfold classification of *bcud len* practices explains the purpose, preparation and application, as well as the benefits of each type, providing examples of recipes and methods to apply with each. Although we cannot claim to know exactly when this classification was formulated, whether by Vimalamitra or at a later stage, it is still a useful subdivision of *bcud len* according to the techniques used.

Thus, the seven categories of *bcud len* described in the *Sgron ma snang byed* are:

- *bcud len* of precious substances (*rin po che'i bcud len*)
- *bcud len* of minerals (*rdo sbyor gyi bcud len*)
- *bcud len* of herbs (*sngo sbyor gyi bcud len*)
- *bcud len* of aromatic substances (*rtsi sbyor gyi bcud len*)
- *bcud len* of meat (*sha sbyor gyi bcud len*)
- *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of the inner elements (*rlung gnad la brten pa'i bcud len*)
- *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of the outer elements (*phyi 'byung ba'i rlung gnad kyi bcud len*)

Spatial constraints do not permit the reproduction of the explanations in their entirety; however, the following selected extracts, derived from Valby's translations, offer the reader relevant examples of each of these categories.

1. *bcud len* of precious substances

The Illuminating Lamp Sgron ma snang byed (Vimalamitra 1998: 5, 54, 113) contains a rather long explanation on the *bcud len* of precious substances, reproduced in Norbu (forthcoming: 32). This describes the preparation of edible mercury, explaining the four methods for melting, tempering, refining and eating it.²² An explanation follows on the method for preparing and ingesting a compound of gold, barley, copper and jewels. The various benefits of the practice are provided in the final section. It should be pointed out that neither in this, nor in any other of the descriptions of *bcud len* methods found in *The Illuminating Lamp*, are specific deities or mantras mentioned. This might be simply because these methods make no use of deity invocation or mantric recitation: however the author may have chosen to omit these details either in order to illustrate a generic example of practices or out of respect for the secrecy of the transmission of mantras and yogic methods.

2. *bcud len* of minerals

Second is the explanation of the *bcud len* of minerals, from *The Illuminating Lamp* (vol. ZHE: 119, 57, 3) and reproduced in Norbu (forthcoming: 33), that provides precise instructions on how to process a variety of minerals: *smug po sbal rgyab* (hematitum), *cong zhi* (calcite), *mu zi* (brimstone), *mtshal* (vermillion), *rdo rgyu* (grey antimony),

²² An interesting work on the topic is 'The Social Life of Tsetel: Processing Mercury in Contemporary Tibetan Medicine' (Gerke, 2013c).

pha wang long bu (cubic stone magnetite), *gyam pa sngon po* (blue slate), *ngul rdo* (hematite iron ore), *rag rdo* (chalcopyrite mineral), *zangs rdo* (copper ore) and *lcags rdo* (iron ore). Over a period of three weeks, these are sprinkled with one's urine, "seasoned" with spittle of beer, and finally boiled. The effects of partaking of this concoction are listed and these include the loss of body hair, pain in the intestines (as a result of their turning into "the nature of stone"), freedom from the need for food and so forth.

3. *bcud len* of herbs

Third is the explanation of the *bcud len* of herbs, drawn from *The Illuminating Lamp* (vol. ZHE: 121, 58, 2) and reproduced in Norbu (forthcoming: 33) that provides a recipe for making pills containing twenty-six different herbs and seeds. The benefits, which include the ability to endure cold temperatures and to walk a distance of 84,000 miles in thirty-two seconds, are listed at the end.

4. *bcud len* of aromatic substances

Fourth is the explanation of the *bcud len* of aromatic substances, drawn from *The Illuminating Lamp* (vol. ZHE: 123, 59, 3) and reproduced in Norbu (forthcoming: 34) that provides a recipe for preparing a *bcud len* of aromatic substances (juniper, turmeric, syrup from apricots, rose bush) which is blended with sesame, white mustard, black mustard, various grain oils, alum and various tree oils and left in an iron vessel for five years. After that time it can be consumed with soil. Finally the benefits are described, the most remarkable of which is the ability to fly in the sky, as well as overcoming the need for food and clothes and becoming capable of enjoying the great celestial realms.

5. *bcud len* of meats

Fifth is the explanation of the *bcud len* of meats, drawn from *The Illuminating Lamp* (vol. ZHE: 125, 260, 2) and reproduced in Norbu (forthcoming: 35) that provides a recipe for a meat powder soup that should be consumed for a period of six months.

The recipe is straightforward, involving drying and pulverizing meat, and what is most striking (perhaps because it is so exaggerated) is the concluding section, dedicated to the benefits of the practices:

The practitioner's strength will never decline: One's strength will be unshakeable, just as you cannot shake an elephant, wherever you grab it, by the ear or by the tail. Then, after a while, one is able to knock over the flourishing tree of paradise using only one hand. And one discovers the power capable of moving rocks and mountains. Then internally one is beyond food, externally one's body becomes powerful and the size of sixteen cubits, and secretly one becomes equal to the sun and moon.

Then follow the last two methods of *bcud len* that rely upon the essence of *prāṇa*.

6. *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of the outer elements

As regards the *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of the outer elements that breaks the continuity of external elements, the practitioner is told, in summary, to relax the body, massaging it with butter and cumin seed for five or six days, splashing it with *chang* and tanning it in the sun. In a remote place, sitting upright, visualise the letter *yaṃ* as a green vase of presence and practice *prāṇa* exercises to keep *prāṇa* in the stomach area, filling the stomach with 'fire', before letting the *prāṇa* move upwards to the throat.

Food is limited to seven measures of rice, cleansed by wind and sunlight. After seven or eight days when bodily strength weakens, drinking fine *chang* is suggested. A small piece of meat, eaten heedfully, generates heat. After nine months of this meditation the

complexion becomes bright and healthy. There will be no attachment to food. After three more months, white hair and wrinkles will be gone. Teeth and nails will transform. Continuing a further six months, the practitioner will no longer have a contaminated body and will need to meditate only a little. After another six months, the body will be able to fly in the sky, and others will see it in a pure transparent vision. After that, the practitioner will be ‘like the sun and moon’, beyond food and ready to depart to celestial realms.

Summarised from *The Illuminating Lamp* (vol. ZHE: 128, 61, 6).

7. *bcud len* of *prāṇa* essence of inner elements

As for the explanation of the *bcud len* of the *prāṇa* essence of inner elements: with regard to the alchemy of inner *prāṇa*, the practitioner is told to perform a series of 120 inhalations and exhalations. A small pile of beans mixed with brown sugar, honey and castor oil should be eaten. Continuing this practice, one should not sleep for seven days or nights. The body will strengthen, the voice will gain power and the mind will be energized. Special experiences of body, voice and mind will occur. After forty-nine days there will be no need to defecate, and there will be only pure yoga food. If hunger arises at this time, by fixing awareness upon some appearances of earth, water, fire and air, pure outer elements will become food for the practitioner. The practitioner of that *bcud len* obtains wisdom and in the future avoids rebirth. Its effects are exceptionally profound when one has the capacity for both the internal and the external practices.

Summarised from *The Illuminating Lamp* (vol. ZHE: 128, 61, 6).

The account of *bcud len* methods thus ends, providing an interesting example of an indigenous sevenfold classification.

Another text devoted to *bcud len* in Tibetan literature worthy of particular attention is that written by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813-1899), who produced a remarkable range of writings, collected in *The Five Treasuries (Mdzod chen lnga)*. In appreciation of Kong sprul's wide-ranging interests, Gene Smith (2001: 267) described him as 'the nineteenth-century Tibetan Leonardo'. Two compilations of *bcud len* texts are found in Kong sprul's collections and to the best of my knowledge 'Jam mgon Kong sprul stands alone in having created two such distinct groupings, one contained in the forty-eighth volume of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* and the other in Chapters 15 and 17 of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. In that forty-eighth volume of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, thirteen *bcud len* texts are found; forms of *bcud len* including those based on stone, flowers, herbs, water and *prāṇa* are present in this collection. I have yet to find a conclusive explanation as to what criteria were adopted in selecting these particular *bcud len* texts for this collection.

In the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, the section called *Khrid skor sna tshogs* (assorted texts of instructions) contains seven *bcud len* texts. This set of texts also represents a diversity of *bcud len* forms and includes treatises on water, flower and stone *bcud len*. Again, I have yet to discern whether these texts were selected for specific purposes.

According to a statement in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (2003: 102), it would appear that heprul was asked to tabulate the *bcud len* texts included in his collections of writings for the sake of the continuation of the teachings, and especially for the preservation of lesser *gter ma* teachings (such as *bcud len* since they were not transmitted in an institutionalised setting).²³ There may also have been an element of

²³ The following statement was made by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (2003:102): 'During the spring equinox I spent a week in retreat focusing on White Tara according to the tradition of Duddul Dorjé.

interest derived from personal experience since we know, from his biography, that Kong sprul himself had adopted some of these techniques. In the section on Kong sprul's biography in the work on *Ris med* philosophy written by Ringu Tulku (2006: 17) we read that in his late adolescence Kong sprul subsisted for a week on extracted essences, obtaining all his nutrition from stalagmites. Ringu Tulku (2006: 21) also informs us that Kong sprul pursued studies on formulating and dispensing medicines as well as using herbs.

3.3.2 A guide

The purpose of section 3.3.2 is to offer the reader a listing in tabular form of texts devoted to the practice of *bcud len* found to date. As mentioned earlier, it does not include the numerous texts that may mention the practice in passing. The chosen method has been to list the texts by author in chronological order and to identify in key words the essential content of each text. In this constantly evolving project, I obviously cannot claim that this list is exhaustive.

The texts are listed chronologically according to the author or rediscoverer's dates. Often the exact dating of the text is unspecified, so I have listed the texts according to the author or rediscoverer's dates. Authorship issues have been discussed

Previously, it had occurred to me that it would be of benefit in the transmission of all the many important minor *terma* cycles I had received over the years if I were to collect the texts together, and again I summoned up the inspiration behind that project. I now felt that it would be best to include these minor instructions – which after all were cases of less important techniques for purposes that were both beneficial and harmful – in a compilation of the empowerments I had received for the rare *termas* of the major and more well-known *tertöns*, editing these into a concise format. I asked my all-seeing precious master about this. His response was to write four volumes of texts summarising some minor *termas*. He said, “It would be ideal if you were to use these as your basis and write your work, collecting all the cycles of *Guruyoga*, Dzogchen teachings, and Avalokiteśvara practice from the major *tertöns*.” I replied, “That being the case, please compose a table of contents showing which *termas* should be included and what order should be adopted.”

in more depth in section 3.3.1; at times texts authored by others may have been subsumed into another author's collected writings or erroneously listed as another's work. I have endeavoured to note and rectify such instances. The title of the text follows with, in brackets, the numbers of folios that it comprises. The folio numbers listed refer specifically to the folios of the text's subsection dealing with *bcud len*.

In the fourth column, I note the category of *bcud len* that the text falls into. To avoid excessive repetition, I have devised the following symbols to insert into the box 'typology of practice': A single asterisk * means the reading and identification are still in progress. A double asterisk ** signifies that the text has not yet become available to me. This table offers a swift indication of the contents of the individual texts.

The last two columns list the text's principal deities and main substances. I have rendered certain words, such as deity names and terms related to the subtle body in Sanskrit rather than Tibetan. I opted for this choice in instances where the original coinage was in an Indian tantric context and therefore a Sanskrit term seemed more appropriate to express the term's various meanings. Throughout the compendium the materia medica terms are left in the original Tibetan with their Latin nomenclature appearing in brackets the first time the term appears. The terms are further examined in the glossary at the end of this work.

3.3.2 A table of *bcud len* literature

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 1	Ba ri lo tsa ba rin chen grags (1040-1111)	<i>Zas bcud len du 'gyur bar 'dod na/ om maṇi padme hūṃ amrite hūṃ phaṭ</i>	Mantra	Avalokiteśvara	Mantra. A mere sentence telling of how to transform food into <i>bcud len</i> by reciting an Avalokiteśvara mantra
Text 2	Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216)	<i>Sman chen po 'i bcud len bzhuḡs (2.folios)</i>	Pill	No specific deity	<i>Arura (Terminalia chebula), bong nga (Aconitum sp.)</i>
Text 3	Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251)	<i>Lam zab mo bla ma 'i rnal 'byor (2.folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i>	No deity	<i>Prāṇa</i>
Text 4	Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339)	<i>Ra mo shag gi bcud len/ dbang lag gi bcud len/ 'od ldan sngo 'i bcud len/ ya ma spyi 'joms man ngag drug pa bcas (4.folios)</i>	Flower, herb	One's own personal <i>yi dam</i> (unspecified deity)	<i>Ra mo shag (Polygonatum cirrifolium) Dbang lag (Dactylorhiza hatagirea)</i>

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 5	Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339)	<i>Rlung dang rigs pa 'i bcud len (3 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Lha mo dkar mo	<i>Prāṇa</i>
Text 6	Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339)	<i>Chu 'thung ba 'i gdams pa (5 folios)</i>	Water, yogic exercises	White, red and green Goddesses and a “Great Brahmin blue in colour”	Snow water and waterfall water
Text 7	Dri med 'od zer (1308-1364)	<i>'Byung ba rdo 'i bcud len (5 folios)</i>	Rock	Hayagrīva	Five types of stones: <i>rdo sha chen, tshil chen, rdo thu ba, rus pa chen, ma khris pa can</i>
Text 8	Dri med 'od zer (1308-1364)	<i>Rigs lnga 'i bcud len bdud rtsi 'i thigs pa (11 folios)</i>	Rock and earth, pill, water, flower and <i>prāṇa</i>	A golden coloured <i>ḍākinī</i> and Vajrayoginī	Earth and stones, <i>prāṇa</i> exercises, recipes for <i>bcud len</i> pills

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 9	Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310-1391)	<i>Bcud len sna tshogs (3 folios)</i>	Herbs and flowers	Avalokitesvara	Various recipes whose main ingredients are: <i>dbang lag, nye shing (Asparagus adscendens), arura, sha chen</i> (human flesh), <i>ram mye (Polygonatum cirhifolium), ba lu (Rhododendron sp.), shug pa (Juniperus communis), mkhan pa (Artemisia sp.)</i> and <i>mtshe (Ephedra)</i> . <i>Dbang lag</i> and <i>rtag tu ngu pa (Drosera peltata)</i> .
Text 10	Rig 'dzin rgod ldem (1337-1408)	<i>Rdzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal las: bcud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba (32 folios)</i>	<i>Prāna</i> , calcite	Vajra dākinī zhi byed ma	<i>Cong zhi</i> (calcite), <i>arura</i> and <i>ram mye</i>

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 11	Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1396)	<i>Bcud len snying po bsdus pa: dngos grub longs spyod kyi gnas drug (bla ma dgongs 'dus bcud len) (26 folios)</i>	*	*	*
Text 12	Thang stong rgyal po (1361-1485)	<i>Gnas skor byin brlabs grub rtags bzlag cing skye ba dran pa sprul sgyur 'gro don mdzad/ zas rnams gang byung bcud len brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa mthar pa 'i le 'u ste re bdun pa (7 folios)</i>	There are no practical instructions on <i>bcud len</i> practice in this text. It consists of stories of Thang stong rgyal po's present and past lives, of his austerities and how he practiced essence extraction	No main deity	No substances
Text 13	Thang stong rgyal po (1361-1485)	<i>Ma gcig gsang spyod snyan brgyud las dka' thub rde 'u 'i bcud len (7 folios)</i>	Rock and mantra, breathing exercises	Rdo rje 'dzum mo	Rock and mantra
Text 14	Dge 'dun grub pa (1391-1474)	<i>Dngul chu 'i bcud len gyi man ngag (2 folios)</i>	Mercury	White ḍākinī and Vajrayoginī	<i>Dngul chu</i> (mercury) and <i>chang</i> (barley beer)

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 15	Rin chen rgya mtsho (b. 14th century)	<i>Bcud len gyi skor (3 folios)</i>	Pill	Vajrayoginī, Rje btsun ma	<i>Cong zhi, dbang lag, rtag tu ngu, arura</i>
Text 16	Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)	<i>Yang zab tshe'i bcud len rdo rje'i phreng ba (4 folios)</i>	Pill	Vajravārāhī, Amitāyus	<i>Arura, byang sems dmar po, byang sems dkar po (white and red boddhicita, semen and menstrual blood), dbang lag, rtag tu ngu pa, brag zhun (bitumen), gla rtsi (Moschus moschiferus L.), tsan dan dkar (Santalum album), li shi (Syzygium aromaticum), dngul chu, cong zhi, ram mnye</i>
Text 17	Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)	<i>Tshe sgrub gsang 'dus las 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len (3 folios)</i>	Pill	Amitāyus, Avalokiteśvara	<i>Arura, Barura (Terminalia belerica), Skyurura (Emblica officinalis)</i>

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 18	Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)	<i>Them med cong zhi sogs rdo rje bdud rtsi 'i bcud len (3 folios)</i>	Calcite stone	Vajrayoginī	<i>Cong zhi</i>
Text 19	Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)	<i>Rtag ngu 'i bcud len zab mo (8 folios)</i>	Flower, pill	Avalokitesvara, Vajravārāhī and Mañjuśrī	<i>Rtag tu ngu pa</i>
Text 20	Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)	<i>Bcud len khyad 'phags zab mo (5 folios)</i>	Herb, flower	Avalokitesvara	<i>Dbang lag, sro lo dkar po (Cochlearia scapiflora), shug pa (Juniperus communis), ra mo shag</i>
Text 21	Padma gling pa (1450-1521)	<i>Bcud len yid bzhin nor bu (15 folios)</i>	15 types of <i>bcud len</i> , some of which: <i>prāṇa</i> , earth, water, fire, space, nectar, flower, calcite, rock, heat producing	Padma <i>dākinī</i> , Vajrayoginī zhi byed ma, Ye shes mka' gro'	An array of ingredients, too numerous to list here
Text 22	Bya bral ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang po (1476-1542)	<i>Bcud len gyi gdams pa rim pa lnga pa (3 folios)</i>	Flower, herb	Vajrayoginī, Avalokitesvara	<i>Ba lu (Rhododendron sp.), rtag tu ngu pa, arura, dbang lag</i>

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 23	Blo bzang byang chub bstan pa'i sgron me (1504/1505-1565/1566)	<i>Me tog bcud len gyi khrid gnang skabs kyi brjed byang (7 folios)</i>	Flower, pill	Vajradhara, Vajrayoginī	<i>Rtag tu ngu pa, ba lu, ug chos (Incarvillea compacta maxim), g.yar mo thang (Primula fasciculata), me tog gser chen (Trollius pumilus d. don)</i>
Text 24	Rig 'dzin 'Ja' tshon snying po (1585-1565)	<i>Bcud len sman gyi tshe sgrub zab mo bdud rtsi'i lcags kyu (5 folios)</i>	Pill; flowers, herbs, meat	Amitāyus	<i>Arura, barura, skyu ru ra, sha lnga (the 'five fleshes', see glossary)</i>
Text 25	Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1650)	<i>Ril bu'i bcud len zag bral (7 folios)</i>	Pill	Padmasambhava in union with a consort	Ingredients undisclosed
Text 26	Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1650)	<i>Rdo rje snying po las cong zhi'i bcud len bla ma'i snyan brgyud dri ma med pa (3 folios)</i>	Pill	Amitāyus	<i>Cong zhi, byang sems dmar po, byang sems dkar po, sindura (Limonite), bzang po drug (six excellent substances; see glossary)</i>

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 27	Bdud 'dul rdo rje, padma rgyal mtshan (1615-1672)	<i>Bstan srung chen po legs grub rdo rje yab yum gyi 'chi med tshe 'i bcud len zab mo (4 folios)</i>	Pill, nectar	Simhamukhā	<i>Cong zhi, bzang po drug, rat na lnga</i> (five jewels), various (unspecified) flowers, curd and meat, <i>byang sems dmar po, byang sems dkar po</i>
Text 28	Bdud 'dul rdo rje, padma rgyal mtshan (1615-1672)	<i>'Gro don las tshogs zag med bdud rtsi 'i bcud len (8 folios)</i>	Flower	Dorje Drolö, Vajrapāṇi	<i>Rtag tu ngu, arura, cong zhi</i>
Text 29	Gar dbang rdo rje (1640-1685)	<i>Zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal las bcud len rdo rje 'i chu 'thung (3 folios)</i>	Sexual yoga	No specific deities. One visualizes a seed syllable in his body	A sexual partner
Text 30	Blo bzang don grub (1696-1756)	<i>Chu 'i bcud len gyi snying po dngos grub kun 'byung (9 folios)</i>	Water	Brahmin Saraha and several <i>ḍākinī</i>	Water, mantras
Text 31	Bzhad pa 'i rdo rje (1697-1740)	<i>Nam mkha 'i bcud len bdud rtsi 'i thur ma zhes bya ba bzhuqs (3 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i>	A blue <i>ḍākinī</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i> and visualisations

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 32	Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1697-1740)	<i>Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus dag snang du sstal ba'i thabs kyi lam mchog nyi zla'i bcud len dang brgyad 'debs (5 folios)</i>	Sexual yoga	Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus	A youthful girl with all suitable qualities, visualized as the goddess. One drinks the mixture of sperm and vaginal secretions
Text 33	Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1697-1740)	<i>Bden ishig smon lam 'chi med grub pa'i bcud len (3 folios)</i>	An aspirational prayer not relying on any substance	Masters and <i>dākinī</i>	No substance utilised
Text 34	Tshul khriims rin chen (1697-1774)	<i>Phyi nang bdud rtsi'i bcud len (2 folios)</i>	Medicinal <i>bcud len</i>	Jñānasattva, Vajrayoginī	The 'five nectars', <i>bdud rtsi Inga</i> , (see glossary). Various recipes for each nectar are explained, with accompanying visualizations

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 35	Tshul khrims rin chen (1697-1774)	<i>Thams cad kyi dbang phyug gi bcud len nad thams cad 'joms shing lus kyi stobs rgyas par byed pa (1 folio)</i>	Medicinal <i>bcud len</i>	No main deity	<i>Dngul chu</i> and several ingredients such as <i>ku ma ra</i> , <i>kanti (Aquilaria sinensis)</i> , <i>kon (Saussurea pachyneura Franch)</i> , <i>tsi tra (Capiscum annuum)</i> , <i>ma dza tsa</i>
Text 36	Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755)	<i>Bla med sngags chos kyi snying po 'i bcud len lam zab bdud rtsi 'i thig le (7 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Kālacakra	No ingredients. <i>Prāṇayama</i> , <i>kumbhaka</i> and <i>gtum mo</i> exercises
Text 37	Kun dga' blo gros (1729-1783)	<i>Dpal rdo rje nag po chen po gur mgon dkar po 'i tshe sgrub 'khor 'das bcud len (5 folios)</i>	Pill	White Panyjaranatha	Long life pills made up of 35 ingredients
Text 38	'Jigs med gling pa (1729-1798)	<i>Sku gsum bcud len (2 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa, rock</i>	“Wrathful king”	Barley, <i>cong zhi</i> , 'bri milk and fresh butter, <i>ga bur</i> (camphor) and honey

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 39	Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802)	<i>Me tog bcud len gyi gdams pa bdud rtsi 'i thigs pa (5 folios)</i>	Flower, herb pill	Avalokitesvara Vajrayoginī	<i>Mi sha</i> (human flesh), <i>ba lu</i> , <i>rtag tu ngu pa</i> , <i>ug chos</i> , <i>g.yar mo thang</i>
Text 40	Dharma bhadra (1772-1851)	<i>Bcud len gyi ril bu bsgrubs nas spyod tshul dang zhabs brtan srub 'jug (4 folios)</i>	Pill, nectar	Amitāyus	<i>Ra mo shag</i> , <i>rtag tu ngu pa</i> , <i>cong zhi</i> , <i>dban lag</i>
Text 41	Btsun pa Ye shes don grub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1792-1855)	<i>Chu 'i bcud len gyi gdams pa 'chi med rig 'dzin sgrub pa 'i chu rgyun zhes bya ba (8 folios)</i>	Water, pills and <i>prāna</i>	Vajrayoginī	Pills with honey, old butter, old bones
Text 42	Blo bzang nor bu shes rab (18th century)	<i>Rdo rje phag mo bcu gsum ma 'i sgrub thabs dang rde 'u bcud len gyi gdams pa gnyis (8 folios)</i>	Mantra	Vajravarāhī	Mantra recitation and <i>gtor ma</i> offering
Text 43	Dkar ru grub dbang bstan 'dzin rin chen (1801-1860)	<i>Theg pa chen po dmar khrid dug lnga rang drol gyi brgyud las bcud len zas kyi gdams pa bzhugs (13 folios)</i>	Pill, water, <i>prāna</i>	Samantabhadra	Various plants and types of water (rain water, lake water, snow water)

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 44	Dbyangs can grub pa'i rdo rje (1809-1887)	<i>Bde mchog dkar po'i sgo nas tshe ril sogs bsgrub cing longs spyod pa'i tshul 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len (4 folios)</i>	Pill, nectar	White Cakrasamvara, Vajrayoginī	Pill. No specific ingredients are mentioned
Text 45	Pad ma bdud 'dul (1816-1872)	<i>Man nga sku gsum bcud len 'ja 'lus rdo rje'i sku brnyes bshugs (11 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i> , pill	Padmasambhava and princess Mandarava	Nirmānakāya: wheat, barley and white rice. Sambhogakāya: various kinds of flowers devoid of poison. Dharmakāya: <i>utpala (Meconopsis sp.)</i> and <i>rtag tu ngu</i>
Text 46	Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)	<i>Bdud rtsi sman gyi sgrub pa mdor bsdus su bya tshul 'chi med rtag pa'i bcud len (5 folios)</i>	Nectar	The five family Buddhas, Che mchog, the Goddess Gnam Zhal Ma (The Sky-faced One)	Eight (unspecified) herbs
Text 47	Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)	<i>Nye bryud tshe khrid sgrub thabs dbang chog bcas (17 folios)</i>	Pill	Hayagrīva, Amitāyus	Pills, <i>tshé chang</i> (long life alcohol)

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 48	Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)	'Chi med bcud len gyi man ngag bkra shis zho yi snying po (8 folios)	Flower	Avalokiteśvara, Vajrayoginī	<i>Ba lu, rtag tu ngu pa, arura, dbang lag</i>
Text 49	Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)	Tshe sgrub zhag bdun ma'i nyams len gyi rim pa 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len (3 folios)	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Amitāyus	<i>Prāṇa</i>
Text 50	Mchog gyur gling pa aka Gter slob sangs rgyas chos 'phel (1829-1870)	Mi g.yo ba'i nam mkha'i bcud len gyi zin bris bltas chog tu bkod pa phyogs med ri khrid khrod 'grim pa'i cha rkyen blo gtad gcig chog log 'tsho'i zhen pa rang grol (4 folios)	<i>Prāṇa</i>	O rgyan Mi bskyod rdo rje chang	<i>Prāṇa</i>
Text 51	Bdud 'joms gling pa (1835-1904)	'Chi med tshe yi bcud len dngos grub gter gyi 'byung gnas bzhus (2 folios)	<i>Prāṇa/pill</i>	Amitāyus	<i>Prāṇa</i> , clarified butter, oily dough
Text 52	Bdud 'joms gling pa (1835-1904)	Thugs sgrub ye shes nyi ma'i skor/ bcud len 'od gsal snying po yi/ rtsa rlung byin r labs chos nyid sprin phung (5 folios)	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Dharmakāya ḍākinī	<i>Prāṇa</i>

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 53	'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)	' <i>Chi med bcud len sgrub pa'i thabs mchog bdud rtsi'i bum pa bzang po (6 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Māmākī, Mañjuśrī, Pāṇḍaravāsīnī	<i>Prāṇa</i>
Text 54	'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)	<i>Bcud len gyi cha lag rin chen za ma tog (8 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i> , pill	Mañjuśrī, Buddhalocanā and Pāṇḍaravāsīnī	<i>Arura</i>
Text 55	'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)	<i>Bcud len sgrub pa'i ishe bka' srung mchod thabs bdud rtsi'i char 'bebs (1 folio)</i>	Aspirational prayer	Dharma protectors	No substances employed
Text 56	'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)	<i>Bcud len sgrub thabs mandzu shri ra sa ya na sa dha ni (3 folios)</i>	Mantra, <i>dam tshig rdzas</i>	Mañjuśrī	<i>Dam tshig rdzas</i> (samaya substances); <i>bdud rtsi Inga</i>
Text 57	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Pad ma longs sku tshe mtha' yas kyi sgrub thabs (8 folios)</i>	Pill	Padma dbang chen Heruka	Five (unspecified) medicines, five (unspecified) incenses, <i>bdud rtsi Inga</i> , <i>sha Inga</i> . Non-poisonous leaves of trees, flower seeds, rice, tsampa, <i>chang</i> , mare's milk, <i>dbang lag</i> , precious metals.

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 58	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Rdzas tshogs bsdu thabs kyi man nag (3 folios)</i>	*	*	*
Text 59	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Zag med rdo rje 'i bcud len (7 folios)</i>	Pill	Mañjuśrī, Amitāyus	<i>Ba lu, cong zhi, arura</i>
Text 60	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Ril sgrub yid bzhin gter mdzod (4 folios)</i>	Pill	Unspecified 'deities'	Ingredients not listed
Text 61	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Tshe ril sgrub pa 'i cho ga (7 folios)</i>	Pill	Amitāyus, Kun dpal rdo rje	Master's relics, <i>Inga log sman rigs</i> (non specified types of medicine), five incenses, precious metals
Text 62	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Sprul sku 'i bcud len (6 folios)</i>	Mantra	Amitābha	Old wheat, clean rice, barley flour
Text 63	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Longs sku 'i bcud len (7 folios)</i>	*	*	*
Text 64	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Mi 'gyur rdo rje 'i bcud len (7 folios)</i>	*	*	*
Text 65	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Mngon par byang chub bcud len (6 folios)</i>	Mantra	Amogasiddhi	Liquor, rice, butter
Text 66	Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)	<i>Chos sku 'i bcud len (7 folios)</i>	Mantra	Vairocana	Tsampa and tea

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 67	Shakya shri (1853-1919)	<i>Bcud len gyi rim pa lam gong 'phel ba 'i gdams pa (3 folios)</i>	<i>Prāṇa</i> , calcite, grain	No deities	Grain, calcite, <i>prāṇa</i>
Text 68	Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan (1859-1935)	<i>Rdzogs pa chen po sku gsum rang shar las sku gsum bcud len thar pa 'i rgyags phye (9 folios)</i>	Water, <i>prāṇa</i> , pill	Tshe dbang rigs 'dzin, Kun tu bzang po	Water, <i>prāṇa</i> , nettles, dough pills
Text 69	Blo bzang rta mgrin (1867-1937)	<i>Rye bla ma tshe lha sku gsum la brten pa 'i tshe sgrub pa 'i bcud len (3 folios)</i>	Mantra; a prayer and invocation to Lord Tsongkapa	Amitāyus, White Tārā and Nam Rgyal Ma (Unisha Vijaya) and Tsongkapa (also known as Lobsang Drakpa)	No substances used and not even breathing. Mantras and visualisations are used
Text 70	Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu (1867-1940)	<i>Me tog bcud len skal bzang rna rgyan gyi lhan thabs dngos grub mchog ster (5 folios)</i>	Flower, pill	Deities not specified	Pill's ingredients unspecified
Text 71	Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (b.1938)	<i>Tshe sgrub rdo rje 'i srog thig rgya</i>	Pill, <i>prāṇa</i>	Mandarava	7 different recipes for pills, including a <i>cong zhi</i> based one

	Rediscoverer/ Author	Text title and number	Typology of practice	Main deity	Main substance used
Text 72	Gter chen kar ma (1943-2005)	'Chi med gnyug ma 'i gsang mdzod zhes/ lus med mkha' 'gro 'i chos skor gyi rig 'dzin thugs tig padma 'i srog/ bcud len bdud rtsi 'i gdam zab las/ gzhun don cha lag mdor bsdus (18 folios)	Pill, <i>prāṇa</i>	Amitāyus, Vajravārāhī.	Pill containing <i>cong zhi, arura</i>
Text 73	Gter chen kar ma (1943-2005)	'Chi med gnyugs ma 'i sangs mdzod lus med mkha' 'gro 'i chos skor las/ yi dam 'khor lo bsdoms pa yab yum gyi sgrubs thabs dang a dkar bcud len kyi gdam pa rlung khrid dang cas pa (10 folios)	<i>Prāṇa</i>	Vajrayoginī	<i>Prāṇa</i>

3.3.3 An introductions to the texts

The contents of the gathered texts, translated, summarised and annotated in the compendium, range from a mere mention of *bcud len* in the eleventh century to the complex *gter ma* teachings rediscovered in the latter part of the twentieth century. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, it is difficult to ascertain a posteriori the exact dating of the origins of the *bcud len* tradition. These texts were often passed down in oral lineages and recorded in writing only later. They were authored by exponents of all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism as well as practitioners from the Bon tradition, a testimony to the extent of the practices on the Tibetan plateau. The vast majority of the texts collected here are Buddhist. The Bon tradition is very much underrepresented. This discrepancy has occurred partially because I gave priority to texts which could be viewed online at the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, enabling potential researchers easy access to the texts of interest. I am aware that further research into Bon *bcud len* texts is necessary before definitive findings about the *bcud len* tradition can be stated. Indeed, the findings in this essay are based on patterns emerging from a few dozen texts and therefore cannot be considered as representative of the whole *bcud len* tradition. Certainly there are many more texts, both Bon and Buddhist, awaiting translation and interpretation that may well change our understanding of the *bcud len* tradition. Despite its current limitations and lacunae this rubric is presented as a contribution to the body of work on *bcud len*, an area of study still in its initial stages.

The reader should bear in mind some of the unresolved complications encountered by researchers in the field. The practical difficulties in identifying the *materia medica*, the differing interpretations of the subtle body, the debates on authorship, and the legitimacy of the *gter ma* literary tradition. The texts presented assume an understanding

and acceptance of the existence of *dākinīs*, *nāga* and other semi-mythical classes of beings, all of them extremely important in meditative *bcud len* texts. In the readings below, they often are referred to in regard to the origins and transmissions of the practices; and instructions are found on rites to appease them so as to avoid disturbances from the realms of the intangible. In the quest to extend their lifespan, well-being and physical and mental powers, *bcud len* practitioners developed a broad tradition, embracing a wide range of techniques. As the collection shows, these include exercises to develop the subtle body, sexual practices involving a consort, yantra yoga, breathing techniques, mantra recitation, visualisations, and the preparation and consumption of concoctions that sometimes contain ingredients unfamiliar or unpalatable to the modern reader such as human flesh, semen or menstrual blood.

There are structural similarities in many of the examples; typically, a text begins by paying homage and the preliminary practices follow. The main practice is next and after that the concluding section, where the benefits of the practices are explained. A colophon often but not always describes who wrote the text, why, when and where.

In this short introduction to the compendium I indicate the main themes, presences and practices of the literary corpus of *bcud len* reflected in the writings. My remarks are focused on the following themes in particular. First, I explore the main substances used. I then identify the principal deities addressed. Discussion follows with examples of the inner yoga techniques found in *bcud len* rituals that focus on the subtle body, sexual union, and breathing. I mention important figures and aspects of the tradition (Padmasambhava, *gter ma* and *dākinīs*). I also explain through example the problems in establishing authorship and evaluating the purposes of the texts, while investigating the possible reasons for the prolific period concomitant with the *ris med* movement.

Substances

There have been difficulties surrounding the identification and labelling of Tibetan materia medica since the Russian doctor Rehmann's first publication on the subject in 1811, as Robert Mayer points out. Discussing the historiography of Tibetan medicinal plants, Mayer recounts how the distance and isolation of places in the Tibetan world resulted in different labels for the same plant, citing the example of *skyu ru ra* that has been identified as: *Cratageus pinnatifida* (Chinese hawthorn), *Mallus Baccata* (Siberian Crab apple) and *Phyllanthus emblica* (Indian gooseberry) (Mayer 2007:35-36).

The precise identification of the vast array of ingredients found in *bcud len* recipes, formulated in diverse regions over many centuries, is highly problematic. Tibetan medicine evolved over several centuries in an enormous area comprising several countries and as pointed out its materia medica show variation according to local vegetation, traditions, and foreign influences. All these factors may affect traditional plant identification and classification as the field data of several scholars has shown. 'Thus Tibetan *materia medica*, as Tibetan medicine in general, is not to be considered as standard and static both in time and space, but as a tradition that has been constantly evolving' Boesi (2006:78). Boesi provides an example of the complexity of a plant's identification:

'A Tibetan doctor from Khyungpo (east Tibet) has reported that there are five types of this plant: *shang dril dkar po*, *shang dril dmar po*, *shang dril ser po* (*P. sikkimensis*), *shang dril smug po*, and *shang dril nag po* (*P. atrodentata*). The informant has affirmed that the designation *shang dril nag po*, only used in Khyungpo and in few other Tibetan regions, is a synonym for the more common *shang dril sngon po*, "blue *shang dril*". The name *shang dril nag po* is not mentioned in the classical and modern pharmacopoeias examined. Similarly, traditional doctors from the region of Dolpo use the expression *shang dril sngon po* as a synonym of *shang dril nag po* (*Primula macrophylla*), thus corroborating the information reported by the informant from Khyungpo' (Ibid: 79).

Boesi's observations reflect the difficulties that Western translators have experienced since the early nineteenth century in translating Tibetan medical texts. These have been further elucidated by Gerke who reminds us how hard it is, in the absence of oral instructions, to extract the meaning and implications of medical terms that are often represented by only one syllable (Gerke 2012b: 18). The teachings are part of an oral tradition and meanings can be lost in adopting a strictly literal translation (Ibid: 22).

Glover (2010: 255-277) points out uncertainties surrounding Tibetan plant names and medicinal ingredients in general in her analysis of the categories of plants specified in two texts: *The Four Tantras (Rgyud bzhi)* and the contemporary commentary *The Crystal Mirror*. She also refers to various other medical texts, to point out the changes in recognised categories of plants throughout the history of Tibetan medicine. She asserts that 'there is not absolute concordance between various texts as to the exact number and kind of plant categories nor to which category a plant should be assigned' (Glover 2010:255).

It appears the most detailed, systematic and scientifically referenced work published thus far in the English language is *Tibetan Medicinal Plants* (edited by Christa Kletter and Monika Kriechbaum) which I have used as a general reference, alongside other sources that are listed in the glossary at the end of this work.

Despite *bcud len* being a centenary tradition, detailed research has only recently begun on its specific substances, their inherent qualities and the nature of their ritual empowerment. As mentioned in chapter 2 above, The *Rgyud bzhi* is a reference point in Tibetan medical studies and therefore it seems apt to enquire whether it may have significantly influenced Tibet's *bcud len* tradition. This is referred to in the twenty-third chapter of the second volume, and in the ninetieth chapter of the third volume of the *Rgyud bzhi* (Emmerick 1975 and Gerke 2012b).

The *Rgyud bzhi* is generally thought to date from around the twelfth century and possibly earlier. The earliest mention of *bcud len* in the texts I have studied is from the eleventh century. One important point to note is that *bcud len* was mentioned in Tibetan medicinal texts before the *Aṣṭāṅgahrdayasamhitā* was translated into Tibetan. Yang Ga has argued that there seem to be earlier examples of Tibetan essence extraction practices (the pre-eleventh century Tibetan medical text *King of the Moon* (*Zla ba'i rgyal po*) predating the advent of major Indian medical influence. However Gerke (2013a: 334) encourages caution before jumping to conclusions, and calls for more detailed research on this point as *bcud len* might have been added retrospectively to the title by later editors (Gerke 2013a: 334). Further detailed examination is needed to clarify this observation.

Of the ingredients found in the *Rgyud bzhi's* *bcud len* recipes it is particularly worth mentioning *a ru ra*, *ba ru ra* and *skyu ru ra*. These ingredients, found in *bcud len* recipes spanning several centuries, are of Indic origin and suggest the Indian provenance of several recipes, including many found in *gter ma* texts rediscovered in Tibet.

The first mention of *a ru ra* is in the second text in the compendium, in a text by Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216). This is nearly concomitant with the estimated dates of the emergence of the *Rgyud bzhi*. Given the scarce and imprecise historical evidence, however, it would be irresponsible to claim on this basis that the *Rgyud bzhi* is the principal source of the *bcud len* tradition in Tibet. Also, much research into Bon *bcud len* literature remains to be carried out and may change of current understanding of the *bcud len* tradition.

Mercury is an ingredient which occurs in *bcud len* texts, starting from Text 14 attributed to By Dge 'dun grub pa (1391- 1474). This teaching is said to have originated

from an unspecified wisdom *dākinī*; not a satisfactory scientific explanation of the pathway by which mercury entered into the *bcud len* tradition (as exemplified by the texts in this compendium).

Substance identification is further complicated in that the texts are addressed to individuals with a background in meditation and are laden with unexplained religious terms and concepts familiar to the yogin with an experiential background in the practice but not easily comprehensible to others. This may cause misunderstandings when particular ingredients are included, perhaps because they are deemed auspicious rather than for their actual medicinal properties. Often terse, the instructions in the texts are meant to be accompanied by the commentary of a qualified lama or practitioner.

In several recipes for example one encounters the ‘five nectars’ and the ‘five fleshes’. In fact, neither of the fivefold sets of substances are definitively identified (for a summary and analysis of academic perspectives on the identification of the ‘nectars’ and ‘meats’ see Wedemeyer, 2007). Frances Garrett has shown how these substances are laden with tantric meaning. Deemed impure by most, they are transformed, empowered and consumed by tantric practitioners (Garrett 2010). Essentially, substances in *bcud len* recipes transcend conventional medical paradigms. The potency an ingredient is said to possess is an important factor to consider when analysing *bcud len* formulas. Spatial constraints prevent me from delving further into this question but I refer the more medically oriented reader to the second chapter of the *Rgyud bzhi* where a section, Chapter 20, entitled ‘The Potency of Medicine’ is found. Tibetan belief in a substance’s potencies can be understood as the qualities of several substances, such as gems, rocks, soils, herbal medicine, animal products (including horns, bones, flesh, tongue, bile, fat, brain, urine and faeces) that are listed in this section.

Examining *bcud len* texts, one realises that the substances employed, the mantras and the visualisations all interrelate and affect one another. Certain peculiar ingredients are listed in *bcud len* preparations and one cannot but wonder whether their efficacy is psychosomatic or due to the substances themselves. The late Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche (1931-2005), founder of the Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute in Darjeeling stressed that the potency of an elixir is derived from the rituals of consecration as much as from the substances themselves (Baker: 1997: 174).

These observations on the multiple factors empowering the substance, such as mental focus and mantra, were echoed in my conversations with Tibetan traditional medicine doctors Tenzin Sherab and Nida Chenagtsang, transcribed in Chapter 5.

Practising *bcud len* often entails the highly complex preparation of pills, medicinal unguents and oils that can contain large numbers of ingredients. But it is not the ingredients alone that give the *bcud len* practices their potency. As an example, the instructions may specify that the persons who should gather a specific flower, must pick it at a certain place and time as well as and the mantra to be recited while doing so. Furthermore mantras, invocations and prayers are indicated for the later stages of the preparation, and the ingestion of the pill can be accompanied by intricate recitations, visualisations and breathing exercises that give the practice a power that transcends our common understanding of the ‘medical’.

Numerous deities appear in *bcud len* practices, in a variety of roles; at times they are said to be at the origin of the specified teaching, or they may be invoked, propitiated and visualised for their blessings and empowerments.

In the compendium we find: Avalokiteśvara, Lha mo dkar mo, Hayagrīva, Vajrayoginī, ḍākinīs of different colours and different families, Rdo rje ’dzum mo,

Vajravārāhī, Amitāyus, Rje btsun ma, Mañjuśrī, Vajradhara, Siṃhamukhā, Dorje Drolö, Vajrapāṇi, and many more too numerous to list here.

The range of these deities illustrates the breadth of the aims of *bcud len* and the large number of enlightened activities connected with the above deities that *bcud len* practices strive to attain. The deities most frequently mentioned are Amitāyus (featured in ten texts) and Vajrayoginī (who features in thirteen texts).

Whereas Vajrayoginī practices tend to be associated with the Gsar ma schools, Amitāyus is connected with masters and lineages from the Rnying ma tradition. We cannot however adopt a binary perspective and divide the practices involving these two deities into two distinct lineages with particular association, since Vajrayoginī practices (for examples Texts 18 and 21) are included in *gter ma* texts connected with Padmasambhava, which by definition would be labelled as Rnying ma.

Amitāyus makes his first appearance in Text 17, a *gter ma* revealed by Ratna gling pa (1403-1479). Vajrayoginī's appearance in *bcud len* texts predates his, for she first appears in Text 8, composed by Dri med 'od zer (1308- 1364).

Generally speaking, Vajrayoginī is more often found in *bcud len* texts associated with the Bka' rgyud school, although Rnying ma masters such as Rat na gling pa (1403-1479) discovered and propagated Vajrayoginī *bcud len* texts.

The origins and evolution of Vajrayoginī practices have been studied in depth by Elizabeth English (2002) and to a lesser extent by Simmer-Brown (2002). English states that Vajrayoginī's first appearance in scriptures occurred in *sādhana* texts written in Sanskrit, many of which were grouped in a collection known as the *Guhyasamayasadhanamala*. Dating these texts is problematic, but English concludes that they may well have originated around the tenth century. (English: 2002: Introduction)

Frequently in the *bcud len* instructions, often given largely for the benefit of advanced meditators, the description of the deities is minimal. The texts often merely say one should mentally transform into the deity, expecting the reader to be familiar with the deity's appearance and attributes. Vajrayoginī's appearance, stance and ornaments are all laden with meaning. Concerning the figure and symbolisms Simmer-Brown (2002: 142) writes thus:

... Vajrayogini is visualized in semi-wrathful style, fiery red in color because red is the color of Mother Prajnaparamita. She is naked, with charnel ground ornaments, because she is untouched by the neurosis of *klesas*, with no armour of ego to clothe her". Since she dwells in the charnel ground of egocentrism, she stands on the chest and lower face of a decaying corpse. As a wisdom dakini, Vajrayogini carries a hooked knife (*kartari, triguk*) known as the hook of mercy, the weapon of non-thought that cuts the deceptions of self-cherishing. Non-thought (*togme*) is the most basic expression of Vajrayogini, for her mind is completely free from subconscious chatter and from the habitual patterns that give rise to obsessive thought.

Her explanation on Vajrayoginī continues (Ibid: 149):

... Vajrayogini is understood to be a yidam, a personal meditational deity, a potent ritual symbol simultaneously representing the mind of the guru and lineage of enlightened teachers, and the enlightened mind of the tantric practitioner.

More on the influences of Vajrayoginī in the *bcud len* tradition will be said in Chapter 4, section 4.2, in the introduction to my translation of a *cong zhi bcud len* text by Ratna gling pa. I point out that text's similarities to the Indic Vajrayoginī rite of 'Tasting Nectar' (*Amṛtasvādānam*) found in the *Cakrasaṃvarabalividhi*.

In reading through this compendium of *bcud len* texts, the reader will realise that such similarities in ritual procedures, both visualised and actual, are not limited to that particular *cong zhi* text, and can indeed be discerned in many other *bcud len* texts which utilise various other substances.

It is noticeable how Vajrayoginī, and indeed most *ḍākinīs*, usually empower and transmit their blessings by chopping open the practitioner’s heart, trunk or inner body channels; the earliest example is in Text 5, where *Bdud rtsi yi lha mo*, ‘The Goddess of Nectar’, is visualised chopping the tip of the meditator’s heart and pouring nectar into it. In other instances the meditator visualises that drops issue from the *ḍākinī*’s vagina, empowering the practitioner.

Instead, Amitāyus *bcud len* practices tend to involve visualisations of his vase, filled with nectar, pills or various substances; lights spread and reabsorb, imbued with blessings which empower the practitioner. Amitāyus is associated with long life, but several other benefits of the practice are listed in concluding sections of the texts; for example Text 17 lists the power to attract the opposite sex. The first Amitāyus *bcud len* is Text 17, a thirteenth century *gter ma* revelation.

Long life, however, is the chief ‘*siddhi*’ of Amitāyus practice, which is closely connected to Guru Padmasambhava, said to have attained the long-life *siddhi* of Buddha Amitāyus at the Māratika cave (*’chi ba mthar byed*) in Nepal.

Inner yoga techniques found in *bcud len* rituals that focus on the subtle body, sexual union and breathing.

Compared to many other meditative practices, a distinguishing feature of the *bcud len* tradition is the importance it attributes to the subtle body, which was discussed in Chapter 2.

A number of practices with exercises involving the subtle body are found within this *bcud len* compendium. These yogic techniques are used to create and enhance meditative experiences by manipulating the body’s internal energies. They may include

either visualisations of mantric syllables at the body's *chakras*, coloured 'drops' moving in the subtle body's winds and channels or nectar filling the body and channels of the meditator. Meditative *bcud len* practices are not confined to mental visualisations; there are also other forms that serve to raise energy and harmonise the physical body, such as yogic practices and copulation. The breathing practices of *bum pa can* 'vase breathing' are the subtle body exercises that occur most frequently in this collection of texts. Their aim is to bring the 'winds' into the central channel, an important goal in meditation. The importance of this exercise is reiterated by Dzongsar Khyentse in his personal statement on *bcud len* (see conversations in chapter 5).

Chaoul (2006: 29-30) dates certain *phrul 'khor* yogic practices, found in a chapter of the *Zhang Zhung snyan rgyud*, around the eight century. Time constraints have impeded the inclusion of those texts in this study, but in the future it would be interesting to research early Bon texts for elements that perhaps have made their way into later Buddhist *bcud len* texts. For the moment on the basis of this compendium it can be suggested that the roots of these subtle body practices lie in Buddhist tantras that originated in India. Their origins, development and contents have been discussed in several works, such as Reginald A. Ray (Ray 2002) and Ronald M. Davidson (Davidson 2008). Both these authors trace their development in India and their subsequent arrival in Tibet. Interestingly, certain inner yoga practices, initially disdained by the Buddhists in India, slowly made their way into Tantric Buddhist teachings. Davidson (2008: 27) lists practices employing human bones, scatophagy and ritual copulation, examples of which are found in this *bcud len* compendium.

Despite their Indian origins, several subtle body practices either originated or were passed on in pure visions or *gter mas* by Tibetan masters. For example the work

Rdo rje lus kyi sbas bshad (*Explanation of the Hidden Vajra Body*) by Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213-1258) represents an extremely important systematisation of subtle body practices, supplemented by his own experiential realisations and dreams. Thus, the seeds of the practices may be Indian, but we should not regard them strictly as Indian practices, given their subsequent transformations in the Tibetan context. Such subtle body exercises are intended to bring about particular meditative experiences, such as realisations of emptiness or blissful sensation. Descriptions of the practice's possible effects and the benefits attainable are found in the concluding section of *bcud len* texts.

Copulation plays an important part in certain subtle body practices. In her research on women in Tantric Buddhism Miranda Shaw quotes a statement from the *Cakrasaṃvara* Tantra on how the contemplative yoga of sexual union is necessary to attain full enlightenment. She explains how the text proclaims that practising Tantra without a partner is 'as useless as churning water to make butter.' (Shaw 1994: 142-143) Further on, Shaw explains that according to the *Cakrasaṃvara*, the bliss that Buddha *Śākyamuni* experienced with his wife before leaving the palace was essential for his enlightenment.

Regarding the Indian influence on sexual practices; Samuel (2013:43) mentions India's sophisticated tradition of eroticism, exemplified in the Kama Sutra, a work that does not, however, seem to refer directly to spiritual development nor longevity. The earliest Indian sexual meditational practice are found in the Mahāyāna Sūtrālamkāra, a Buddhist text dating from the fifth century. Samuel notes (Ibid: 43) that early Chinese evidence from around 150-100BCE concerning sexual practices and inner workings of the subtle body predates the Indian texts by several centuries and may well have influenced the latter. However, due to the complexities of establishing this,

no concentrated attempt has been made to do so as yet. While remaining with our uncertainties regarding their origins, the texts collected below offer several examples within their instructions on the subtle body that prescribe sexual union, whether actual or imagined.

Samuel has explained (2013:43) part of the aim of these sexual practices is ‘to maintain balance and self-control over the processes of the subtle body in an emotionally intense situation’. This view is echoed in texts by Gar dbang dorje (Text 29) and Bzhad pa’i rdo rje (Text 32). The *gter ma* Text 29 instructs the practitioner on how to overcome attachment to sex while riding the waves of emotions and pleasure without ejaculating and remaining in a state of awareness while imagining the union as illusion. The highly explicit Text 32 on sexual practice also advocates the retention of semen and remaining in a state of awareness during the blissful sexual experience. There are also other examples, such as Text 54 by ’Ju Mi pham, which advocate sexual union as a means of gaining meditative insights. It can be said that sexual intercourse, real or imagined, is frequently suggested to stimulate the flow of substances along and within the subtle body. Thus, through harnessing passion, somehow the practitioner overcomes attachment to it.

A particular exercise that appears with some regularity in the instructional *bcud len* texts gathered here is *bum pa can*: a special method of breath retention using particular holds and muscular contractions. The regular practice of *kumbhaka* is said to coordinate breathing and to aid meditation. Exercises comprising retention of the breath and the contraction of muscles, often adopting specific body postures and visualising deities or syllables, are frequently mentioned in this collection. These exercises aim to harness the *prāṇa* circulating within one’s subtle body and guide it into the central

channel. Simmer-Brown (2002: 170-171) describes in detail what occurs when *prāṇa* enters the central channel, explaining the subtle body dynamics of this yogic practice that, if practiced properly, ‘frees the mind of dualistic thought, allowing the natural luminosity to be seen directly.’

The virtues of practising *bum pa can* are expressed in several of these collected texts, such as ‘Ju mipham’s. (Text 53: f. 700, line 5):

‘The damaged wind element will be restored by applying *bum pa can* and so forth.
Gathering the essence of the immortal sky will heal the degenerated mind.’

In Text 36, by Tshe dbang nor bu, the power of *prāṇa* entering the central channel is again emphasised:

‘... By the power of *prāṇāyāma* the *prāṇa* enters, stays and dissolves in the central channel. This is done below the navel. Again, this process (entering, staying and dissolving) should be done at the upper and the secret cakras. . . Having attained stability, one can attain the first level of attainment (*bhumi*). Hold [the breath] in this way; there are also separate pith instructions but many yogic masters claim that *prāṇāyāma* instructions are sufficient. . .

(f. 323, line 1-3)

From what is known of them, authors of the texts in this compendium range from the relatively obscure to prominent figures affiliated with all four schools of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as with the Bon tradition. However the majority of these teachings were composed or compiled by masters whom we connect with the Rnying ma school. This is probably due to the fact that Padmasambhava, the founder of the Rnying ma school, is a central reference point in many *bcud len* practices.

To the best of my knowledge, the first recorded instance of Padmasambhava practising *bcud len* is recounted in the twenty-third chapter of his biography, *O rgyan gu ru padma ‘byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar dri med pa*. Martin Boord is currently translating parts of this biography and he kindly shared the first draft of his translation

of a particular section entitled *Dka' spyad mdzad pa'i skor bzhugs so* (Concerning [the guru's] engagement in ascetic discipline), which tells how Padmasambhava foresaw that he would receive and practise *bcud len* teachings.

The following summarised extract from the biography offers an opportunity for comparison to a text in this collection that describes Padmasambhava's involvement with *bcud len* practices.

Then, Padmasambhava of Oḍḍiyāna thought to himself, “Now I should go to the eight great charnel grounds and receive the teachings that I have not practised before concerning the austerities that will bring about an unprecedented body and unprecedented life force. It will be as if I have taken a drab body of clay and given it a fresh coat of paint.”

At the *stūpa* called Youthful Bestower of Bliss in the central charnel ground of Lankakūta, Padmasambhava practiced and mastered *bcud len*. For five years he practiced the art of ‘extracting the essence’ by absorbing the vital qualities of air and water and stone and so forth, and then he began to prepare the elixirs of various medicinal herbs and poisons.

Thereafter, everywhere Padmasambhava went he prepared the elixir of water and fire. He subsisted on wind and space, on the five nectars and sand, as well as on the various medicinal herbs and poisons employed in bodhisattva Sadāprarudita's austerities. He undertook austerities employing shrubs, trees and leaves, as well as lotus nectar [vaginal secretions] and the remaining five nectars. He underwent austerities using human flesh, urine and *dbang lag*. He extracted the essence of feces and of the five precious substances, including gold and the rest. He extracted the essences of rocks, flowers, fruit, horn, bones, beer and of an unimaginable numbers of other substances. As a result of all this, he attained the deathless *vajra* body.

(Boord, forthcoming)

The biography does not explain exactly how or from whom Padmasambhava first received the various essence extraction techniques listed above. There is a similar account, however, of Padmasambhava receiving and practicing *bcud len* teachings in charnel grounds in Text 28, folio 447 below. Regarding the origins of the particular practice (Text 28, a flower and calcite *bcud len*), the text states that the practice was

first given by Buddha *Śākyamuni* to a *ḍākinī* in the sacred place called Dan ta. Then the wisdom *ḍākinī* hid it and Guru Rin po che went to Dur khrod bde byed brtsegs (‘Enchanting Mound Cemetery’, one of the eight main charnel grounds) and retrieved it. He transmitted it to eight yogins who benefitted from this *bcud len* and Padmasambhava himself accomplished the immortal *vidyādhara*. (f. 447)

This account is in accord with Boord’s translation of the biography, indicating that the first contact that Guru Padmasambhava may have had with teachings on *bcud len* occurred through a *ḍākinī* transmission in charnel grounds.

An oft-recurring element in the compendium, *ḍākinīs* are of great significance in both the origins and in the transmission mode of *bcud len* practices. They are mysterious multidimensional figures. As Simmer-Brown states: ‘It is perhaps folly to attempt to systematically describe the dakini, for she manifests in forms consistent with her nature. Scholars of Tibetan Vajrayana have despaired at her definition, calling the term *dakini* “semantically ambiguous,” “multivalent,” “curious” and “impossible to pin-down or limit to a single definition’. (2002: 43).

The *ḍākinī*’s origins are Indian, and Simmer- Brown offers a succinct account of their emergence and development on the subcontinent (Ibid: 45-51). In Tibetan tantric teachings the *ḍākinī* took on an important role and Simmer-Brown describes how the *ḍākinī* ‘evolved from a minor goddess figure to a central symbol of meditative experience in iconography, ritual, and meditation (Ibid: 72). In Tibetan religion the integrity of the oral tradition of instruction and transmissions is preserved and the secret nature of the *ḍākinī* remains. In the Tibetan context, we find the figure at the heart of a vital, living tradition of Tantra.

In this *bcud len* corpus *ḍākinīs* appear in a great variety of forms, ranging from extremely feminine and sexually attractive (such as Nyi ma gzhon nus in Text 32 or 'Od gsal *ḍākinī* in Text 52) to wrathful sow-faced figures bearing weapons, such as Rdo rje 'dzum mo in Text 14. The unpredictability of the forms that the *ḍākinī* may take on was reiterated by Dzongsar Khyentse in my conversation with him.

Bdud rtsi yi lhamo is the first *ḍākinī* mentioned in the compendium, in Text 5 (dated around 1338). The *ḍākinī* figure recurs throughout the teachings presented below, up until the very last text (73), where the practitioner mentally transforms into Vajrayoginī, surrounded by *ḍākinīs* from the various families.

As mentioned earlier, Text 28 states that Guru Rinpoche first received *bcud len* teachings from a *ḍākinī*. In their colophons many texts (32, 41, 58, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 71) state that *ḍākinīs* guard and disclose the particular teachings. Ye shes mtsho rgyal, a *ḍākinī* who was one of the two main consorts of Padamsambhava, was an instrumental figure in recording and compiling *bcud len* teachings found in this compendium. Padmasambhava's other main consort, *ḍākinī* Mandrava, was very important for his spiritual progress. The latter two are said to have achieved immortality in Maratika, Nepal, by mastering the longevity practice of Amitāyus, the most prominent deity in *bcud len* texts dealing specifically with longevity.

Bcud len texts are often associated with Padmasambhava, either directly through attribution to him or indirectly, by association. For example, *bcud len* practices were revealed by the reincarnation of some of Padmasambhava's original closest twenty-five disciples. Amongst them, the texts mention Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem phru can (1337-1408 CE), the reincarnation of Sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms (eight-ninth century). Rat na gling pa (1403-1471) was a reincarnation of one of Padmasambhava's s closest

disciples, Kon mchog 'byung gnas. Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs was a close disciple of Guru Rinpoche who later incarnated in the lineage of the Karmapas and was a forefather of Dri med 'od zer, 1308-1364. There are also other instances of masters who revealed or composed *bcud len* texts who were reincarnations of masters who formerly had contact with teachings on *bcud len*, for example Śākya Śrī (1853-1919), author of Text 67, was said to have lived previously as Saraha, an important Indian figure mentioned in several *bcud len* texts.

In this collection, many of the *Bcud len* teachings are said to have been revealed as *gter ma* texts, usually connected to Padmasambhava. In contrast, others were deliberately composed by authors aware of the value and benefits of *bcud len* practices who based their instructions on their own meditative experiences, medical and religious studies. It would appear that *gter ma* rediscoveries occur through the power of karmic connections and at the appropriate time the *bcud len* text is revealed by the pre-destined *gter ston*. The authorship issues surrounding *gter ma*, discussed in Chapter 2, should be kept in mind when noting the origins of these texts.

At times the texts state with some precision why and how the teachings emerged. In the preamble to Text 19, there is an account of how Guru Padmasambhava was asked for a *bcud len* that would be easy to perform in the future when scarce harvests will make it hard to practice free from preoccupation about procuring food. A troubled future when food will not be plentiful and circumstances adverse for meditators is often cited as one of the reasons underlying the setting down of *bcud len* instructions that are then concealed as *gter ma*. Or, the authors extol the benefits they received from the practices for the benefits of others. In order to try and understand why individuals may have authored particular *bcud len* texts, I have attempted to note, in the 'Remarks' section in

the compendium below, instances where the authors may have been inspired to do so by virtue of prolonged periods of solitary retreat with limited access to food, or if their connection to *bcud len* came from a training in Tibetan medicine. In the absence of sufficient evidence on this question we are often in the realm of speculation, limited in value in the study of *gter ma* literature. As Holly Gayley points out in her introduction to Sarah Harding's translation of Padma Lingpa's life and revelations, 'Tertöns may receive some training during their youth in textual study and ritual practice, but this is not seen as the basis for their literary achievements'"(Gayley in Harding 2003:16). Her point is reiterated by Tulku Thondup; (1990:154):

Most of the tertöns, before discovering any Ter [treasures], seem to be ordinary people. They do not necessarily appear as scholars, meditators or Tulkus [reincarnate lamas]. However, due to their inner spiritual attainments and the transmissions they have received in their past lives, at the appropriate time, they suddenly start discovering Ters [treasures] without the need for any apparent training".

This is exemplified by Gnam chos mi 'gyur rdo rje (1645-1667) who was already retrieving *gter ma* while in his teens, producing works of literature which transcend the standard intellectual capabilities of an adolescent. Trying to deconstruct a treasure text's literary contents and style can thus be problematic. In a biography of Mi 'gyur rdo rje's by Karma Chagme (2008: 113) there is a short section titled 'How the tertön composed instruction' which offers an insight into the nature of *gter ma* literature:

Terton Mingyur Dorje then told me that if he wished he could write instructions that had never before been recorded. He wrote down a few, and I asked whether his deity had spoken them. He answered that he had heard nothing from his deity. Did he then compose them in his mind? I asked. He responded by asking me how he could possibly know such a style of composition. Next, I asked whether he had written down whatever appeared in his spiritual appearance, such as songs arisen from spiritual experiences. He replied that these instructions could not appear as spiritual songs. I again asked whether he wrote down whatever appeared in his mind without any forethought, and he said there would not be much benefit in doing that.

So I asked exactly how he wrote them down, and he responded that just as he could see very clearly whatever objects did or didn't exist in the house, he could in the same way see all the specific wisdom deities and mundane protectors, their complexions, their implements, and their mantras, as well as the methods required to accomplish them, regardless of whatever their respective collective domain of activities might be.

He could also see that major deities and spirits have life force mantras that can be practiced and he saw the specific activities that can be accomplished. He saw that some cannot accomplish any activities, and that some minor deities and spirits lack life force mantras... ..He saw how specific mantras, substances and auspicious remedies could help cure different diseases but that these methods are not inexhaustible, and do not occur according to one's wishes..."

(Karma Chagme 2008: 113)

Besides the complexities and doubts raised by the *gter ma* tradition, there are other authorship issues one must be aware of in this compendium. In some cases it is hard to pinpoint the original source, as a specific teaching will have passed through various stages of transmission and recording. The practice of *bcud len*, despite its popularity among all religious schools, was never institutionalised and there is no clear transmission lineage. Vague divine origins are attributed to several texts, and with *gter ma* texts said to have been planted into the rediscoverer's stream of consciousness centuries prior to their actual discovery, it is difficult to pinpoint the 'author'.

Often, the origins of practices are attributed to semi-mythological figures; for example, Text 15, (f. 102, line 4; f. 103, line 2) states that the *rtag tu ngu bcud len* was transmitted from the gods, the *dbang lag bcud len* from the *nāgas*, and the *arura bcud len* from the sages. The mythical origins of the specific *bcud len* recipes are also echoed in Text 28 (f. 483, line 3) which states that the recipe of the *rtag tu ngu bdud tsi lha dbang rgyal po* was transmitted by the *dākinīs* to Guru Rinpoche. The *Nāga* king gave him that of the *dbang lag*. The 'three *a ru ra*' recipes were offered to him by Indian *ṛṣi*. The fourth one, a calcite *bcud len*, he received from the *dākinīs*.

Colophons illustrate how a teaching from a *gter gton* may have stemmed from a remembered dream, which was then communicated orally and subsequently recorded in writing, perhaps through the patronage of the supporter of a teacher, a monastery or a sect. Thus we can never establish with certainty the accuracy of statements regarding its origin. We must always be cautious before attributing a *bcud len* teaching to exalted figures, such as Padmasambhava, since attributing a text to them gave a work legitimacy and status. As Davidson (2008: 49) suggests: ‘We will see that great antiquity is one of the important values of Tibetan religion, and imputing it into the lives of the saints becomes an essential tool for the affirmation of their sanctity and authority.’

The reader should bear all of these points in mind while reading through the compendium and note carefully the authors’ stated motivations in the colophons.

To conclude this brief introduction to the compendium, I briefly discuss what may have been the most prolific period of *bcud len* text writing, the nineteenth century. Concomitant with the *Ris med*, ‘non-sectarian’, movement, around two dozen *bcud len* texts emerged from Eastern Tibet. The high incidence of texts could be attributed to certain factors. Perhaps, more texts survived simply because they were authored more recently. However my inclination would be to think this owes much to the eclectic spirit of scholars of the period such as ’Jam mgon kong sprul.

The only attempt at grouping *bcud len* literature that I am aware of was made by ’Jam mgon Kong sprul (1813-1899). Most probably, Kong sprul was moved to do this for the sake of the preservation and continuation of the teachings, especially the lesser *gter ma* teachings, but there could well have been a reflection of personal interest. The section on Kong sprul’s biography in the work on *Ris med* philosophy written by Ringu Tulku (2006: 17) states that in his late teens Kong sprul subsisted for a week

on extracted essences, obtaining all his nutrition from stalagmites as instructed in the Northern *gter ma* ‘Vitality Practice’. Kongtrul’s groupings of *bcud len* texts are found in the forty-eight chapter of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* and in the fifteenth and seventeenth chapters of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. In the forty-eighth chapter of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, thirteen *bcud len* texts are found. Several forms of the practice, including rock, flower, water, *prāna* and nectar pill *bcud len* are present in this collection. In the *Gdam ngags mdzod* instead, in the section headed *Khri skor sna tshogs* (assorted texts of instructions), seven *bcud len* texts are found. This set of texts represents the diversity of *bcud len* forms, an important characteristic that the collection I have presented below is intended to emphasise.

3.3.4 A compendium

Text 1:

Front page: *zas bcud len du 'gyur bar 'dod na / OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ AMRITE
HŪṀ PHAṬ*

(note that there is no title for a specific section on *bcud len*)

Author: Ba ri lo tsa ba rin chen grags (1040-1112)

Source: *Man ngag zab mo ga. Ba-ri lo-tsa-ba Rin-chen Grags kyi Be'u Bum*, Delhi 1974 (PL 480). F. 487-496.

Folios: 1 (f. 490)

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 5 lines

Dating: No specific indications are provided

Content: *zas bcud len du 'gyur bar 'dod na / OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ AMRITE HŪṀ*

PHAT (If you wish to transform food into *bcud len* [recite:] *OM MAṆI PADME HŪṀ AMRITE HŪṀ PHAT*)

Main deity and main substance employed: An Avalokiteśvara mantra.

Colophon: No colophon is present.

Remarks: This is the earliest mention of *bcud len* that I have located in Tibetan literature. Regarding the authorship, this text is included in the compilation attributed to Bari Lotsawa Rinchen Drag. Unfortunately this Be'u Bum has been augmented with other texts, composed after the time of Bari Lotsawa. The majority of the later texts are added at the conclusion. Most of the early texts are not necessarily or actually written by Bari Lotsawa himself but rather collected from many sources and compiled together under the name Bari Be'u Bum, rendering it difficult to pinpoint the authorship and dating of what appears to be the earliest mention of *bcud len* in Tibetan literature. Perhaps this *bcud len* instruction was received from Vairochanavajra (born in Orissa around 1100) who was renowned for his skill in alchemy and who is said to have worked on translations along with Bari Lotsawa. Orissa was the native region of Mitra Dzo ki and of Saraha who are mentioned in texts in this compendium, making one wonder how that region's yogic tradition may have influenced *bcud len*.

Text 2:

Front page: *Sman chen po'i bcud len bzhugs*

The great medicinal *bcud len*

Author: Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216)

Source: *Grags pa rgyal mtshan*. In *Sa skya''bka'bum*, 1736 Derge Edition, New Delhi, 1992, vol. 8, item #21, folio 140-141. Accessed through TBRC W2DB4569.

Folios: 1a-1b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-1b; six lines.

Dating: No specific dates mentioned

Content: The great medicinal *bcud len* is a pill *bcud len*.

After paying homage to the lama, the practitioner gathers *bong nga* (*Aconitum species*) flowers. *A ru ra* is added to the aconite (if the *bong nga* is of good quality add six parts of *a ru ra*, if not, add twelve parts of *a ru ra*). This is cleaned, dried and ground, then mixed with urine and beaten. Pills are made the size of peas and placed in a pot. Above, one visualises a moon *maṇḍala*; in the middle of that the *HRĪḤ* syllable, at its four directions *OM ĀḤ HRĪḤ KHAM*. From these syllables, imagine nectars flow and the pills become nectar. The mantra on line six should be recited many times.

At first, eleven pills are taken as food. Each month, one reduces this by two *a ru ra* (units). Depending on the quality of the *bong nga*, after six or twelve months only *bong nga* will remain. One eats an amount of *bong nga* the size of a pea. Each month, this is increased by one twelfth of this pea size until, after a year, the size will be like a sheep's dropping. Each day, one eats a scoop of that size and it acts 'as both food and clothing'.

Should one fall ill, be poisoned or experience mental torpor, one imagines a moon *maṇḍala* at the crown of the head and from the letters (previously mentioned), nectar gushing out and washing one's body. The nectar fills the body and one recites the mantras.

Main deity and main substance employed: No deities, but visualisation of seed syllables combined with the intake of *a ru ra* and *bong nga*.

Colophon: No colophon is present. This short text is part of the Sa skya Vajrayoginī corpus of material.

Remarks: It is noteworthy that certain sub-varieties of *aconitum species* are highly toxic. In the scrutinised passages there are no mentions or instructions on how to detoxify *bong nga*, however in the last section a visualisation as an antidote to poisoning is mentioned.

Text 3:

Front page: *Lam zab mo bla ma'i rnal 'byor bzhugs so*

The profound path of Guru Yoga

The subsection containing the *bcud len* text is called: *Lnga pa rlung gi bcud len bstan pa ni*. The fifth part, on *rlung bcud len*.

Author: Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251)

Source: Khecharī Sa pan. Sakya Collected Works (*Dpal ldan Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum*) Sakya Pandita, 1968, vol. 12, folio 215 – 230. Accessed through TBRC W22271.

Folios: 2

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 6 lines

Dating: No specific indications are provided.

Content: One practices ‘with the *rlung* of wrathful forms’: sitting cross-legged with fingers placed on the chest and the hands rotating in circles. The body is straight and eyes gaze upwards. The facial expression is as wrathful as that of a wrathful deity’s. Holding the head up, one inhales air with force, holding it as long as possible; when one can hold it no longer, it should be released slowly from the nose. The instruction reads: ‘Do this seven times each session and repeat it twenty-one times a day’. As for the effects, the author claims that one will overcome ageing and eliminate white hair

and wrinkles. One's life span will be equal to the sun and moon and no harm will come from obstacles and hindrances. One's body will become somewhat similar to the body of Bhairava.

Main deity and main substance employed: *Prāṇa*

Colophon: No colophon is present.

Remarks: This is the earliest example I have found of a *prāṇa bcud len* advocating the practice of breath retention, a key component of *bcud len* practices.

Text 4:

Front page: *Ra mo shag gi bcud len*

The *ra mo shag bcud len*

Author: Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339)

Source: Rang byung rdo rje. *Ra mo shag gi bcud len/ dbang lag gi bcud len/ 'od ldan sngo'i bcud len/ ya ma spyi 'joms man ngag drug pa bcas*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Zi ling:

Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, vol. 11: 639-646. Accessed through TBRC W30541.

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 4 lines. 3a-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 5 lines.

Dating: No specific date is indicated.

Content: After a brief description of the *ramo shag* (*Polygonatum cirhifolium*) plant, an account on its mythological origin is given (f. 636, lines 1-2). The account states that in previous times at 'O ma'i mtsho ('Lake of Milk') nectar churned from the lake was

stolen by Rahula, who put it in a vase. Vajrapani, with a weapon, cut the neck of the vase. From the fallen nectar the *ra mo shag* sprung from the ground.

The text then explains how to prepare a concoction using *ra mo shag*.

The second part of the text (starting on f. 637, line four) is a *dbang lag* (*Dactylorhiza hatagirea*) *bcud len*. An account of the mythological origin of the plant is given (f. 638, lines 1-2): In previous times, the gods and the asuras had a dispute and the chief of the asuras shot an arrow into the hand of a god. The spilt blood spread forth like a hand shape on the surface, thus came about the name *dbang lag* [*lag* meaning hand in Tibetan]. After preparing and partaking of medicinal substances, said to increase strength and lifespan, one is instructed to visualise one's *yi dam* above one's head and a syllable *HŪM* that bestows bliss inducing nectar.

The text concludes with a list of remedies for a range of ailments, spanning sinus and intestinal blockage to illnesses caused by spirits.

Main deity and main substances: One's *yi dam*; *ra mo shag* and *dbang lag*.

Colophon: There is no colophon present in this text; however, as regards its authorship Rang byung rdo rje states twice:

(f. 637, line 3) *bdud rtsi ra nye'i bcud len yin/ rang byung rdo rjes sbyar ba yin/ skal ldan rnams kyi nyams su long*

‘This is the *bcud len* of the *ram mo shag* nectar. This was written by Rang byung rdo rje. Practice it, fortunate ones!’

And again: (f. 641/line 5) . . . *ces pa rang byung rdo rjes bkod/ dge bas 'gro dang thun mong bsngo/*

‘Rang byung rdo rje composed this, dedicating the virtue [of writing it] to all beings.’

Remarks: Overall, this is a *bcud len* text with a medical emphasis; it describes the physical benefits of particular plants and instructions for concoctions. It is the first text in which *dbang lag*, an ingredient often seen in *bcud len* recipes, appears. With so little stated about the origins of the text, it is difficult to determine how this practice came about. In this text there are no deities visualised, nor are any mantras recited. This is the first text with a major list of home remedies for illnesses. This suggests that perhaps *bcud len* was devised for practitioners who spent long periods of time in isolation and who would have to resort to self-medication. Such lists are also interesting in that they indicate which sorts of illness were widespread, or at least a concern, in particular periods of time in Tibet.

Text 5:

Front page: *Rlung dang rigs pa'i bcud len*

A *bcud len* associated with *prāṇa*

Author: Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339)

Source: Rang byung rdo rje. In *Gsung 'bum*. Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, vol. 11: 623-626. Accessed through TBRC W30541.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 4 lines. 3a: 5 lines.

Dating: The colophon (f. 626) informs us that it was written during a *stag lo* (Tiger year). The Tiger years that occurred during Rang byung rdo rje's life are the following: 1290 (he was most likely too young to have composed it then) 1302, 1314, 1326, 1338. I have yet to find the location and the date of construction of the shrine room of 'the great

palace of *sta'i tu'i steng gser ba'* (which is mentioned in the colophon); however, the author mentions the shrine room's ongoing construction at the time of writing.²⁴

Content: One performs breathing exercises and visualisations of the goddess of nectar (*bdud rtsi yi lha mo*); she is visualised cutting off the tip of the practitioner's heart. She fills it with nectar from the vase she carries; this leads the practitioner to a state of bliss.

Main deity and substances employed: The goddess of nectar (*bdud rtsi yi lha mo*); *prāṇa*.

Colophon: The colophon (f. 626, lines 1-5) states:

... *bla ma dam pa rims kyis rgyud pa yin/ bcud len kun la khyad par 'phags pa*
 yin/ rang byung rdo rjes mthong nas ni/ gzhan la phan par bsam nas ni/ 'phri mnan
 med par bris pa yin/ slob dpon gsang zhing rang che 'dod/ yig ge yod nas nga mkhas
 zer/ don med 'chal pa'i gang zag la/ gsang nas bsgrub pa man ngag yin/ dad ldan 'jig
 rten zhen pa chung/ bsgrub la brtson zhing gdams ngag la/ 'phri bsnan mi byed bstan par
 mkhas/ de 'dra rnams la phyogs med sbyin/ bcud len thams cad kyi rgyal po rlung rigs
 pa'i bcud len rdzogs so/ stag lo zla ba bzhi pa la pho brang chen po sta'i tu'i steng gser
 ba na/ lha khang chen po bzheng zhing yod pa'i dus su bris pa'o/ bkra shis dpal 'bar
 'dzam gling brgyan du shog/

‘... This is transmitted by the lineage of eminent lamas. This is outstanding amongst all practices of *bcud len*. Rang byung rdo rje has experienced [lit.: seen] this. Thinking that this may benefit others, I wrote it without adding or withholding anything. There are teachers who keep secrets and say, wishing to be grand, “I have a text, I am knowledgeable!” This practice instruction will be hidden from people who

²⁴ The name *Sta'i tu*, may well be rendered as *Dadu*, the name of the Chinese capital Beijing. The author was there visiting the Yuan court in 1332-34, and then again in 1338-9; therefore the Tiger year in question was probably 1338.

say such senseless, confused things. This is a secret method for obtainment that I will give without partiality to the faithful, to those having little attachment to the world, to diligent practitioners and those who are skillful in giving unadulterated teachings. This completes the king of all *bcud len*, the *bcud len* associated with *prāṇa*. Written in the Tiger year, in the fourth month, in the great palace of Sta'i tu'i steng gser ba, at the time when the great shrine room was being built. May the world be adorned by auspicious, blazing glory!'

Remarks: A rather short and straightforward text describing a wind *prāṇa* practice. There is no mantra recitation, nor special pills to be made, empowered or consumed, nor ritual accessories such as *kapāla* (cups made from human skulls) or vases, nor particular circumstances nor places where one should practice. It is the first text where we find instructions for visualisations of a deity chopping open the practitioner's heart and filling it with nectar, a recurrent theme in several texts. As will be seen in the texts to come, female deities (such as Vajrayoginī) are often visualised slicing the meditator's body or heart and filling it with nectar. English, (2002: preface xxiii) claims that Rang byung rdo rje was responsible for first writing down the oral transmission of Vajrayoginī practices in the form of *sādhana*. Establishing whether this particular visualisation technique was imported along with Vajrayoginī practices or if it was found prior to the importing of Vajrayoginī practices into Tibet would make an interesting study.

Text 6:

Front page: *Chu 'thung ba'i gdams pa*

An instruction on how to drink water

Author: Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339)

Source: Rang byung rdo rje. In *Gsung 'bum*. Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, vol. 11: 627-634. Accessed through TBRC W30541.

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 4 lines. 3a-4b: 6 lines. 5a: 2 lines.

Dating: No specific dates indicated.

Content: A *bcud len* text on how to avert starvation in future degenerate times, by sustaining oneself on water. It has the further goal of developing one's meditation.

One offers a *gtor ma* (sacrificial cake made from barley flour) and invokes the lamas and *yi dam*, visualising the lamas of the Bka' brgyud lineage. There is a long list of the characteristics of which waters are suitable to be employed; murky and stagnant is inappropriate and one should use snow water, slate water or waterfall water. Then, the water is visualised as nectar and the goddesses of nectar (*bdud rtsi yi lha mo*) of the four directions are the chief deities involved. A green goddess cuts open the practitioner who visualises the other goddesses pouring nectar into his severed body, which is filled with nectar and then made whole again. One drinks the water and practices a twelve fold set of [unspecified] yogic exercises. Then, one meditates in an undistracted state of equanimity. The final section of the text contains a list of remedies for the physical ailments that may arise during the practice of this *bcud len*.

Main deity and main substance employed: Goddesses of nectar (*bdud rtsi yi lha mo*); water.

Colophon: The information usually contained in the colophon is found in the opening section of this text (f. 628, lines 2-3). Rang byung rdo rje explains the historical transmission of the practice:

(f. 628, line 2) 'di'i rgyud pa ni/ dur khrod chen po dpal gyi rgyu skar rol par/
 bram ze chen po sa ra has/ rje btsun dam pa rin po che la gnang/ des kun dga' la gnang/
 des dam pa phyags la/ des ko brag pa la/ des dung ston dge bshes la/ des Dharma shri
 la/ des rnal 'byor rang byung rdo rje la phul/ des bu sangs rgyas ye shes la/ des bdag
 rgyud tshul la'o/

‘As regards its lineage; at the great cemetery of Dpal gyi rgyu skar rol pa, the great Brahmin Saraha transmitted it to Rje btsun dam pa rin po che. He transmitted it to Kun dga’, who transmitted it to Dam pa phyags, who gave it to Ko brag pa who gave it to Dung ston dge bshes who transmitted it to Dharma Shri who offered it to the yogi Rang byung rdo rje who transmitted it to his spiritual son Sangs rgyas ye shes, who transmitted it to me.

Remarks: f. 632 and f.633 are in the wrong order. This text appears in the *Gsung 'bum* of Rang byung rdo rje. It, however, must have been compiled in its current form after Rang byung rdo rje's death, as the colophon states that this particular text was recorded two generations later. Similar deities and visualisations are used in the *rlung dang rig pa'i bcud len* authored by Rang byung rdo rje. This makes one wonder if that text might share the same lineage of transmission as this water *bcud len*. Rang byung rdo rje states that the *mahāsiddha* Saraha is the originator of the transmission, thereby attributing an Indian provenance to the practice.

It is interesting to note the dietary recommendation of avoiding roast barley for at least one month. Alongside the various spiritual benefits of the practice the riddance of parasites is mentioned; this is often mentioned in *bcud len* texts, suggesting that it probably was a serious health issue in Tibet at the time.

Text 7:**Front page:** *'Byung ba rdo'i bcud len*

A rock element essence extraction

Author: Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer (1308-1364)**Source:** Dri med 'od zer. *'Byung ba rdo'i bcud len*. In *Snying thig ya bzhi*. Delhi: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1975, vol. 11: 205 - 211. Accessed through TBRC W12827.**Folios:** 1a-5a**Script:** *dbu can***Layout:** 1a-5a: 6 lines**Dating:** Unspecified**Content:** This text presents a dialogue in which Pad ma 'byung gnas gives detailed instructions to Ye shes mtsho rgyal in response to her request for a teaching for practitioners who are distracted and hindered by their continual search for sustenance of the body.

A specific description of the types of stones used, their qualities and where they are to be found is included. The terms used to designate various stones are unusual and do not correspond to the terms found in medical treatises or the *Rgyud bzhi*. Only *sha chen* ('human flesh') and *tshil chen* ('human fat') stones are suitable material for this *bcud len*. Others such as *rus pa can* 'bony' stones, *mkhris pa can* ('bile') stones and *shi sha* stones [unidentified] are to be discarded.

The practice of the nectar of the stone *bcud len* has eight aspects: After the homage to the five classes of *ḍākinīs* the first aspect consists of an examination of the stones. In the collection of the stones, one proceeds by visualising oneself as Hayagrīva, one's fingers as the five *ḍākinīs* and the stones as nectar. Reciting the appropriate mantra

one invites the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, masters and *ḍākinīs* to enter the stones. Then one places the stones first in a heap, and then in a yak hair pouch under one's armpit. The third aspect consists of the ways of ingesting the stone once ground: either accompanied by a thick soup or mixed into a thick soup with cooked vegetables and spices and salt; in the absence of salt the flavour of the stone will suffice.

As regards the consecration, five types of flesh (*sha lnga*), five nectars (*bdud rtsis lnga*) and mantra recitation are used. The commitments consist in always performing the appropriate consecration and visualisation before eating the stone powder. One must practice in a solitary fashion, shun all contact, not lose semen nor eat any oil. The sixth aspect is the removal of obstacles by resolutely performing this practice without fear for one's life. If one feels hungry, cold, on the point of death or discouraged, one must eat a small piece of butter before and after swallowing the stone powder.

The benefits will be a stronger, lighter body free of parasites, supple soft skin, and a general aversion to food. The five senses will become more acute, the mind and one's understanding will become clearer, spiritual practice will progress. One will be blessed by the masters of the lineage, by the protectors and by the *ḍākinīs*. One will acquire clairvoyance, purify all greed and attachment to food, attain stable practice rapidly and have a fortunate rebirth. Finally Pad ma 'byung gnas gives precise instructions on the locations where the stones are to be found, the various caves and hermitages where he and Ye shes mtsho rgyal practiced in Bhutan and in Central Tibet.

Main deity and main substance employed: Hayagrīva; a variety of stones.

Colophon: f. 211/line 5 . . . 'di rdo'i snying po yin gsungs/ bdud rtsi'i rdo bcud len gyi gdams pa/ ku su lu'i tsha rkyen/ kun las khyad par du 'phags pa rdzogs so/ las can cig dang 'phrad par shog/ sa ma ya a thi rgya rgya rgya padma las 'brel rtsal gis gter gnas khra mo brag nas gdan drangs pa'o//

‘ . . . It is said that this is the essence of rock. The instructions on the rock nectar essence extraction, which are particularly suitable for mendicants, are completed. May the fortunate ones encounter them! *Samaya A thi rgya rgya rgya* Padma las ’brel rtsal retrieved it from the treasure place of the Khra mo brag.’²⁵

Remarks: A thorough set of instructions for advancing spiritual practice while allowing one to live in a very simple fashion. At the end of the text on f. 4a Guru Rin po che states that this *bcud len* is particularly suited to *ku su lu* (mendicants). The title probably does not specifically refer to rock (*rdo*) as the earth element (*’byung ba*) but rather as a material substance. This practice of the *bcud len* of the element of stone is found in the *Mkha’ ’gro snying thig* treasure teaching revealed by Pad ma las ’brel rtsal in Khra mo brag. This *gter ma* is contained in the *Snying thig yab bzhi* collection. A disciple of Rong ston chos rje, the *gter ston* Pad ma las ’brel rtsal is considered to be the reincarnation of Princess Pad ma gsal, King Khri Srong lde btsan’s daughter.

Text 8:

Front page: *Rigs lnga ’i bcud len bdud rtsi ’i thigs pa*

The extraction of the essence of the five kinds [that is, the five elements] [that are like] drops of nectar

Author: Klong chen rab ’byams pa Dri med ’od zer (1308-1364)

²⁵ This practice of the *bcud len* of the element of rock is found in the *Mkha’ ’gro snying thig* treasure teaching revealed by Pad ma las ’brel rtsal in Khra mo brag. It is a *gter ma* contained in the *Snying thig yab bzhi* collection. A disciple of Rong ston chos rje, the *gter ston* Pad ma las ’brel rtsal is considered to be the reincarnation of Princess Pad ma gsal, King Khri Srong lde btsan’s daughter. Pad ma las ’brel rtsal was to receive his full gterma cycle in his future reincarnation as Dri med ’od zer, hence one can label Dri med ’od zer as the rediscoverer.

Source: Dri med 'od zer. *Rigs lnga'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*. In *Snying thig ya bzhi*. Delhi: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1975, vol. 9: 299-320. Accessed through TBRC W12827.

Folios: 1a-11b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-11b: 6 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A method using the five external elements to heal the five internal elements. The first part of the text describes the *bcud len* of earth. Numerous points, such as the terms used to designate earth and stone (the 'fat of the earth' *sa'i tshil* and the 'fat of the stone' *rdo'i tshil bu* that corresponds to calcite), are similar to the practice of the '*byung ba rdo'i bcud len* (rock element essence extraction, see text 6). There follow sections on water, flower and *prāṇa bcud len*.

Main deity and main substance employed: Self-visualisation as a golden-coloured *dākinī* and as Vajrayoginī; calcite, pills, *prāṇa* practices.

Colophon: (f. 320, line1) *rigs lnga'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thigs pa zhes bya ba/ dpal o rgyan gyi slob dpon chen po pad ma 'byung gnas kyis rjes su bzung ba'i rnal 'byor pa dri med 'od zer gyis/ ston gsum me tog dang 'bras bu smin pa'i tshe bkod pa rdzogs so//*

'Here ends "The essential nectar of the five families" essence extraction that was arranged by the yogi Dri med 'od zer, who had been favoured by the glorious great master of O rgyan, Pad ma 'byung gnas, in autumn, at the time of the ripening of fruits and flowers.'

Remarks: The *Rigs lnga'i bcud len* authored by Klong chen pa Dri med 'od zer is part of the *Mkha' 'gro yang thig* (a commentary on the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig*) contained

in the *Snying thig yab bzhi* collection. The practice is interesting in its five elements-based approach to *bcud len* that resonates with other texts (for example Text 43, by Dka' ru grub dbang Bstan 'dzin rin chen). In this text we have the first appearance of Vajrayoginī, one of the most frequently occurring deities in *bcud len* practices. It is interesting to note that Klong chen pa Dri med 'od zer is considered to be a reincarnation of princess Lha lcam Pad ma rtsal (eighth century), as is Pad ma gling pa (1450-1521), the rediscoverer of text 21 which also contains a Vajrayoginī calcite *bcud len*.

Text 9:

Front page: *Bcud len sna tshogs*

Various *bcud len*

Author: Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310-1391)

Source: Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang. In *Gsung 'bum*. Dehradun: Ngawang Gyaltzen and Ngawang Lungtok, 1970, vol. 13:564-568. Accessed through TBRC W19975.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a-1b: 7 lines. 2a: 7 lines. 2b: 5 lines. 3a: 7lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A medically oriented plant *bcud len*. Instructions for various *bcud len* substances are divided into several sections. The first section, presented as an oral transmission the *nāga* king offered to the great master Nāgārjuna, concerns a *dbang lag bcud len*. The *dbang lag* is ground and cooked in milk and raw sugar. Pills are prepared and should be consumed within one month. As for their ingredients, it is suggested that

one obtain a deer's female organ. Should this be unavailable, one should take a female sheep's organ, chop and grind it into each pill. This added ingredient is said to 'prevent obstacles'. One gradually decreases the intake of food.

Next, from an oral transmission, comes the *nye shing bcud len* (*Asparagus adscendens*); the bark is removed and beaten into coarse chunks which are then boiled in one's own urine. A paste is made with refined butter and beaten molasses and three chunks of *dbang lag*. Calcite is heated and added into the mixture that is then ground into a fine powder to make pills. These are taken and then *prāṇa* practices are applied.

The third section is on a *a ru ra bcud len*. *Gser mdog a ru ra* (*Terminalia chebula Retz.*) and human flesh are soaked in two pints of milk for three nights, and nectar pills are added. Boiled, dried mutton is added to the milk. After the milk thickens and dries, the flesh is masticated on an empty stomach at dawn. In *prāṇa* practice afterwards, the body will be light and purified, 'like yoghurt in a jar'. This advice and practice is said to stem from the oral transmission given by Guru Rinpoche.

Instructions follow on the *bcud len* of the four *bka' shing*. Pills the size of a deer's dropping are made with *ba lu*, *shug pa*, *mkhan pa* and *mtshe*. These are beaten, boiled and mixed with honey, molasses and fresh butter, with which roughly ground *dbang lag* is mixed thoroughly. Eaten at dawn on an empty stomach the pills will greatly enhance *prāṇa* meditation. It states that when the stomach is accustomed, one should eat as much as is appropriate and great benefits will result. This is an oral transmission of 'the noble practice of the supreme *bcud len*'.

The *ra mo shag bcud len*: The instruction reads, 'Having dug up a large amount of *ramo shag* from a damp area, rinse (the earth off), place it in a mortar and beat it into chunks, and add oil or butter. Add water, filling the pot almost to the top. Boil

thoroughly on a stove lit by dry meadow grass. When the mixture starts boiling you will see a greyish froth: drain it once or twice and then throw it out. Then, boil it again for a long time, and strain it through a wet cloth. Then, pour it back in, let it boil again using dry meadow grass fire. Stir it only in one direction. Add molasses and a good amount of butter and whatever amount of honey you can obtain. When you boil it, it will simmer out. On a flat stone slab or in a tray, pour it over tsampa and mix it in. Knead it just as you knead molasses. Become accustomed to eating it on an empty stomach. It will greatly benefit your *prāṇa* meditation; it will purify and cleanse your body perfectly’.

Then comes an oral transmission on the *bcud len* of *rtag tu ngu*. The flower is simmered along with *'brong* (wild yak) meat, *dbang lag* and calcite in butter or milk, until the liquid dissolves. Jaggery, garlic and *chang* are added. After the paste is dried and beaten into a powder, it is heated with *'bri* butter. It becomes a solid mould of medicinal paste that is then heated and allowed to cool. Honey is added and the pills, the size of a deer dropping, are eaten on an empty stomach. This oral transmission of the practice ends with the dedication, ‘May things be auspicious and glory blaze and all undertakings be realised!’

Main deity and main substance employed: No specific deity; *dbang lag*, *nye shing*, *arura*, *ra mo shag*, *ba lu*, *shug pa*, *mkhan pa*, *mtshe* and *rtag tu ngu pa*.

Colophon: (f. 3a, line 1)

Yig chung gi zhal shes stong gi mdzal pa bzhugs so ‘This small document is the work of Zhal shes stong.’

The colophon does not provide much information regarding the text’s origins; however, as seen above, each subsection of the various *bcud len* has a few words on the recipe’s origins or transmission lineage.

Remarks: Regarding the origins, there is a vague statement that ‘this is the oral transmission lineage’ at the end of many of the subsections. The plurality of the nature of the recipes perhaps suggests this compilation of *bcud len* recipes and instructions was compiled but not necessarily entirely authored by Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang.

The ingredients in these recipes are said to enhance *prāṇa* meditation. Also in Text 13, a rock *bcud len*, it is said that eating rocks will improve *prāṇa* practice. The way diet affects meditative states clearly was an important concern. Further research into the correlation between certain *bcud len* diets or substance intake and their effects on the humours and winds in the subtle body would be interesting.

This is the first text found where human urine is used to empower the ingredients. In the compendium there are other such occurrences, for example Text 21, in its eleventh section, states that urine makes all problems related to the *nāga* disappear.

Text 10:

Front page: *Rdzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal las/ bcud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba*

From ‘The great perfection’s piercing contemplation: The garland of nectar *bcud len*’

Author: Rig ’dzin rgod ldem (1337-1408)

Source: Rgod kyi ldem ’phru can. In *Dgongs pa zang thal*. Vol.2: 45-64. Simla: Thub bstan rdo rje brag e wam lcog sgar, 2000. Accessed through W18557.

Folios: 1a-32b

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-32b: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Time constraints did not allow me to examine the whole text, however in the first section the practitioner visualises himself as *vajra ḍākinī zhi byed ma* (*vajra ḍākinī* who pacifies), while practising *prāṇa* exercises. *Cong zhi*, *arura*, and *ram mnye* are empowered with mantras and visualisations and eaten.

Main deity and main substance employed: *Vajra ḍākinī zhi byed ma*. Calcite, *arura* and *ram mnye*.

Colophon: (f. 484, line 5) *Dgongs pa zang thal gyi cha lag rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis zang zang lha brag gi sked sgrom smug po'i mdzod dbus ma nas gdan 'drangs pa'o/ sarba manga lam//*

‘The auxiliary teachings on the piercing contemplation were retrieved by Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can, from the middle treasury of the maroon casket from the slope of Zang zang lha brag.’

Remarks: Rig 'dzin rgod ldem was a reincarnation of Sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms (eighth-ninth centuries) was one of Guru Padmasambhava's closest disciples. As will be mentioned in section 3.3.3 disciples of Padmasambhava are often connected to the transmission of *bcud len* teachings.

Text 11:

Front page: *Bcud len snying po bsdus pa dngos grub longs spyod kyi gnas drug (bla ma dgongs 'dus bcud len)*

The essence extract on the six precepts on the condensed essence of the spiritual enrichment [The essence extraction of the summary of the guru's intention]

Author: Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1396)

Source: *Bcud len snying po bsdus pa*. In *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*. Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1972, vol. 7:293-344. Accessed through TBRCW18978.

Folios: 26

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 2 lines. 1b-2a: 4 lines.

Dating: Yet to be established.

Content: Yet to be analysed.

Main deity and main substance employed: Yet to scrutinise.

Colophon: Yet to scrutinise.

Text 12:

Front page: *Gnas skor byin brlabs grub rtags bzhag cing skye ba dran pa sprul sgyur 'gro don mdzad/ zas rnams gang byung bcud len brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa mthar pa'i le'u ste re bdun pa*

The sixty-seventh chapter; how the signs of accomplishment through pilgrimage and blessing were established: how he remembered his previous births and worked for the benefit of beings through his manifestations: how he observed the vow of extracting the essence of any food

Author: Thang stong rgyal po (1365-1480)

Source: Thang stong rgyal po. In *Gsung 'bum*. Thimphu, Bhutan: National Library of Bhutan, 1984-1985, vol. 2: 299- 312. Accessed through TBRC W23918.

Folios: 1a-7b

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: 6 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Several stories regarding Thang ston rgyal po's current as well as past incarnations recount places he visited and people he brought onto the *Dharma* path such as kings and ministers. In the past he took birth as an elephant, and sacred scriptures and Buddha shapes appeared on his skull. In his many rebirths he benefited innumerable sentient beings.

He writes about how he remembers each and every past life and that there are too many to recount. He was a monk called Padmākara 730 lives ago and remained at Karita cave for almost ninety years where he performed the *smyung gnas* fasting practice continuously.

Of the two specific mentions of *bcud len*, only on the penultimate folio (f. 311, line 5) does the first mention of *bcud len* appear: *tham la zas rnams gang byung bcud du len*, 'even the most nutrition-less foods I transform them into *bcud len*'.

The very last line (f. 312, line1) states: *zas rnams gang byung bcud len rtul bshugs kyi spyod pa pa mthar pa'i le'u ste re bdun pa'o* ('This is the sixty-seventh chapter: whatever food he partook of throughout his life he transformed into *bcud len*.')

Main deity and main substance employed: No specific deities or substances are described.

Colophon: No colophon present.

Remarks: Although there are no practical instructions on *bcud len*, the text is included in the rubric because it indicates that Thang stong rgyal po practised *bcud len*, a fact of interest to those researching this remarkable lama.

Text 13:**Front page:** *Ma gcig gsang spyod snyan brgyud las dka' thub rde'u'i bcud len*

Ascetic practice of stone essence extraction

Author: Thang stong rgyal po (1365-1480)**Source:** Thang stong rgyal po. In *Gsung 'bum*. Thimphu: Kunsang Topgey, 1976, vol. 2: 401- 414. Accessed through TBRCW23919.**Folios:** 1a-7b**Script:** *Dbu can***Layout:** 1a: 1 line. 1b-7a: 5 lines. 7b: 3 lines.**Dating:** Unspecified.**Content:** A rock *bcud len* practice involving visualisation and mantra recitation.

Stones are purified, empowered and eaten. The stated benefits are curing stomach illness, *bad kan* and specific male genital troubles, improving *prāṇa* practice and clearing worms from the body. Ultimately, it is said to close the door to rebirth as a *preta*. Specific instructions are given on purifying the practice place where there should be no 'non human, wild or savage beings'. Visualisations and mantras are performed and a flower is offered to the *dharmapālas* and *ḍākinīs*. Hard white stones, round in shape and the size of a sheep dropping, are thrown into the sky, saying a mantra. Then they are empowered with the hot urine of one's lama, or one's own.

One visualises oneself first as a Brahmin with a white, radiant body and then as Rdo rje `dzum mo. Her right hand holds a *gris gu* (curved knife) in the air and the left hand, a nectar pill. She wears bone ornaments, and sits on a half lotus. She has a sow's face and her body flows with nectar; the syllables *OM Ā HŪM* are at the three usual places of her body. One recites a mantra to attract the *ḍākinīs*. The stones are

empowered as an inner offering, and the mantra of emptiness is recited along with a series of mantras to appease the *rgyal po* and *nāga*, to aid digestion and so on.

There are instructions to place five or seven stones on the tip of the tongue and to visualise a red *HŪM* on the palate and a *BAM* syllable on the forehead. The two letters disappear into the stones and the stones take on a *yab yum* manifestation and are swallowed. Then one imagines that nectar flows uninterruptedly from the union of the *yab yum* and fills the body with white and red *bodhicitta*. *Samādhi* food reinforces the body and many benefits arise.

While doing the practice one should speak little and recite mantras under one's breath, move calmly and maintain *bar lung* (continuous presence of a light *kumbhaka*). The body should not perspire and the loss of semen should be avoided. One should keep a pure vision of one's lama and *vajra* brothers and keep the practice secret, except from lamas.

A list of benefits follows; the practice is said to aid the digestion; *bad kan* troubles and male illnesses disappear; 'In life you will be like the sun and moon, with the strength of an elephant, and fast as the wind; sight and dreams are lucid; the ultimate benefits are that one closes the door to *preta* rebirth; *samādhi* and clairvoyance increase; the two *siddhis* (minor and major) are swiftly obtained' (f. 412, line 4).

Some final instructions to overcome obstacles in the practice are given: for example, if stones remain blocked in one's stomach one must empower one's urine or delicious beer with a mantra, visualise a blue *vajra* and do certain yoga movements to eliminate the undigested stones.

Main deity and main substance employed: Rdo rje 'dzum mo. Rocks empowered in urine which can be consumed with vegetables and bitumen.

Colophon: f. 413, line 2 *'di ltar snyan brgyud zab mo'i chos// bkod ces dad ldan slob bu yis// nan gyis bskul ngor mkhas btsun gyi// bla ma'i gsung bzhin bkod 'di zab//*

‘Faithful disciples requested that this profound Dharma of the hearing lineage be written down. They earnestly appealed for it and to please them I wrote in the way the learned lamas taught. This is profound!’

Remarks: The instructions point out that ingesting rocks makes the *prāṇa* practices more effective. It is interesting to note which substances are said to bring about certain meditative effects; for example, Text 9 listed herbal ingredients said to aid *prāṇa* practices. This text’s practice comes from the ‘oral tradition of the secret practice of Ma gcig’ (presumably Ma gcig lab sgron) and it is worth keeping in mind that it might have been transmitted through her teacher Pha dam pa Sangs rgya, who is found in several *bcud len* transmission lineages such as those in Texts 22, 30, 39 and 70.

Text 14:

Front page: *Dngul chu'i bcud len gyi man ngag*

The pith instructions on mercury *bcud len*

Author: Dge 'dun grub pa (1391-1474)

Source: Dge 'dun grub pa. In *Gsung 'bum*. Bkra shis lhun po: Bkra shis lhun po gzhung, 1996, vol. 6: 330 - 331. Accessed through TBRC W24769.

Folios: 1a-2a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 6 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The practitioner is instructed to mentally transform into a white-coloured *ḍākinī*, wearing bone ornaments, hair tied up and flowing outwards, with three eyes wide open. Three separate mantras are recited one hundred times to rid the mercury of its toxicity.²⁶ Then a drop or up to four drops of mercury is put into half a *bre* of pure *chang*. If it is consumed, the *samādhi* will flourish, and strength will increase.

The text states that even if one reaches one hundred years of age, the teeth will grow again, white hair will be pushed out by black hair and even at sixty years one will regain a youthful appearance. The lifespan will be as long as the sun and moon, and one will have the energy of a lion and the strength of an elephant. One feels able to lift an entire mountain. Even if one consumes the various types of poisons such as highly poisonous peacock eggs, Indian stone poisons or Chinese mixtures of poisons, all these will have no effect. There will be no swelling in the throat, no blockages, no ulcers, no piercing pains, no disturbances from the *gnyan* (a class of beings causing disease) or from the 424 illnesses. In particular, the flesh and body will become stronger. The practitioner will have many outstanding friends.

Main deity and main substance employed: The practitioner transforms into an unnamed white-coloured *ḍākinī*. Mercury and alcohol.

Colophon: (f. 330, line 6) *'di'i rgyud pa ni/ ye shes/ mka' 'gro ma/ kha che'i paṇḍita rdznya na siddha/ ma ha ka ra dzi/ bla ma rdo rje gdan pa/ lo tsa bag rags pa 'bum/ nyi ma seng ge khro lo/ chos dpal bzang po/ bya bral chos rje/ des grags pa 'byung gnas la'o//*

‘As regards the lineage of this practice; Ye shes mtsho rgyal transmitted it to the *paṇḍita* from Kashmir Rdznya na siddha to Ma ha ka ra rdzi to Bla ma Rdo rje gdan pa

²⁶ Gerke in her article in *Asian Medicine* has written in some detail on the use of mercury in Tibetan medicine describing the lengthy process of detoxification. (Gerke 2013)

to Lo tsa ba Grags pa 'bum to Nyi ma seng ge, Khro lo, Chos dpal bzang po and Bya bral chos rje and to Grags pa 'byung gnas.'

Remarks: The practice is said to enhance one's life force. This is the first instance of a mercury based *bcud len* practice. Unfortunately no indications are provided as to its precise origins.

Text 15:

Front page: *Bcud len gyi skor.*

Concerning *bcud len*

Author: Rin chen rgya mtsho (born fourteenth century)

Source: In *'Brong rtse 'i be 'u bum dkar po*. Delhi: Damchoe Sangpo, 1983, vol. 1: 99-103. Accessed through TBRC W25101.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: 1a-2b: 7 lines. 3a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified.

Content: The first subsection (f. 99, lines 1-5) describes a recipe where *dbang lag*, rice, butter and cloves are blended and stirred into cooking milk. Then the concoction is taken on an empty stomach before dawn.

The second subsection (f. 99, line 5- f. 100, line 7) provides a recipe for a medicine to generate strength and increase one's lifespan. An array of ingredients including *cong zhi* (for healing bones), *brag zhun*²⁷ (for healing flesh), *shug pa*, *ba lu*

²⁷ Dark, sticky substance with medicinal qualities that seeps from cracks in mountains, also used in Ayurvedic medicine.

and molasses is prepared for consumption and partaken of so that illness is stopped in its tracks, ageing is prevented, one's body becomes like that of a sixteen-year-old and one gains the strength of an elephant, among other benefits.

The third subsection (f. 100, line 7- f. 102, line 4) is an *arura bcud len* pill recipe that was given to *Nāgārjuna* by the *nāga king*. After processing the ingredients, one mentally transforms into Vajrayoginī and one carries out *prāṇa* exercises while visualizing the syllables *RAM* and *YAM*, working with upper and lower *prāṇa* winds. Finally, the nectar pill is empowered by placing it on a *maṇḍala* before ingesting it.

The fourth and last subsection (f. 102, line 4- f.103, line 2) states that the *rtaṅṅu bcud len* was transmitted by the gods, the *dbang lag* by the *nāgas*, and the *a ru ra bcud len* by the sages. One should mentally transform into Rje btsun ma [Tārā], while reciting the mantra and take the pills on an empty stomach. The text ends by listing the benefits of these *bcud len*, which include swiftness of foot and an increase in bodily strength.

Main deity and main substance employed: Vajrayoginī and Rje btsun ma. The main ingredients are: *rtaṅṅu pa*, *dbang lag* and *a ru ra*.

Colophon: f.103, line1-line 2 *phan yon sbyin dang mthun/ sbyor 'di gu ru'i bcud len yin no/*

‘This is a *bcud len* of the masters; the benefits are similar to those [of other *bcud len* practices].’

Remarks: The only *bcud len* practice I am aware of where Rje bstun ma is found. The belief, repeated in other texts, that certain *bcud len* recipes and practices have divine origins is stated in the text, (f. 102, line 4- f.103, line 2) ‘the *rtaṅṅu bcud len* was transmitted by the gods, the *dbang lag* by the *nāgas*, and the *a ru ra bcud len* by the sages.’

Text 16:

Front page: *Yang zab tshe'i bcud len rdo rje'i phreng ba*

The most profound life *bcud len*, the *vajra* garland

Author: Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)

Source: Rat na gling pa. In *Gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, vol. 7: 477-484. Accessed through TBRCW21730.

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *Dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-4a: 4 lines. 4b: 2 lines.

Dating: Retrieved in a Rat year.

Content: The text begins by stating that the essence of the supreme inexhaustible life force that accomplishes long life is a pill *bcud len*.

There are three parts; the preliminary, the main practice and the concluding section.

For the preliminary section one accumulates merit by keeping the *samaya* and making a *maṇḍala* in a remote place. Instructions are given for the outer and inner offerings. In a precious vessel or in a *kapāla*, one places the three syllables *OM ĀḤ HŪM*, *byang sems dkar po*, *byang sems dmar po*, *dbang lag*, *rtag ngu*, *brag zhun*, flour, *gla rtsi*, *smyug cu gang*, *li shi*, *shing mngar* (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), *tsan dkar po*, *cong zhi*, *ngul chu* and *ram mnye*. Recite the hundred-syllable mantra 100,000 times. Instructions are given to mix the *amṛta* nectar and the lama's urine and the *mngar gsum* 'three sweets' (molasses, sugar and honey). The pills are made the size of peas, then placed in a vase. A multicoloured thread is tied to the vase that is hung around the neck, at the heart; mantras are recited.

For the main practice, the root mantra is visualised around the *HRĪḤ* syllable at the heart. Elaborate instructions are given for visualisations of oneself as Amitāyus, red-bodied with all the *sambhogakāya* ornaments, as one eats the pill. The merits and life of all sentient beings are invited through emanations of light and everything in the vase melts into Amitāyus; everything becomes red and white immortal nectar. Again and again, the lights expand and return. The visualisation is repeated as before, reciting mantras and summoning life.

The concluding section instructs one to practise recitation for a week, purifying one's karma., Clear white light spreads from the deities' nectar in the vase and the essence of life dissolves into the practitioner. A concentrated mind and pleasant bodily experiences result. Pleasing dreams of sun and moon, picking flowers and drinking beer are signs of the arising stages. After three days, one receives *siddhi*. Further instructions on mantras and visualisation follow. Each day at sunrise, five pills are eaten and one practises the sky *prāṇa* breath retention. Thus, one attains the life power of a *vidyādhara* and can live one year and four months without food.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus. Pill *bcud len* utilising *a ru ra*. *Prāṇa* breath retention.

Colophon: f.484, line 1 *da la'i dpe'u chung ngo/ rad na gling pa'i thugs bcud 'di kho na'o/ shog ser ngos las nub g.yu mtsho'i mgul du byi ba'i lo la zhus so/// bkra shis par shog//*

‘This is a small *dpe cha* from a *maṇḍala* (*da la*). This is the mind essence of Rat na gling pa. From the yellow scroll recovered on the bank of the western Turquoise Lake, in the year of the Rat. May it be auspicious!’

Remarks: The first instance where *Amitāyus*, an often-recurring deity, is found in a *bcud len* text. However, since the text is a *gter ma*, it is problematic to adjudicate the appearance of the figure *Amitāyus* as a result of the concurring historical moment, or to associate it with a particular wave of texts translations, as the rediscovered text is deemed to have originated from the teachings of *Padmasambhava* some centuries earlier.

Text 17:

Front page: *Tshe sgrub gsang 'dus las 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*

From 'The secret collection of long life *sādhanas*: the immortal nectar *bcud len*'

Author: Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)

Source: Rat na gling pa'i gter chos. In *Gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, vol. 13: 409-503. TBRC W21730.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *Dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 5 lines. 2b: 6 lines. 3a: 2 lines.

Dating: The colophon informs us that the text was revealed in an unspecified Rat year; the Rat years occurring during Ratna gling pa's life are: 1408 (although he would have been very young), 1420, 1432, 1444, 1456, 1468.

Content: In this pill *bcud len* the practitioner visualises *Amitāyus* and *Avalokiteśvara*. The pills, 360 in number, are made with an array of ingredients including *arura*, *barura*, *skyurura*, as well as *ka ko la*, *pi pi ling* and molasses. After going to a secluded place the practitioner makes an *Amitāyus* and *Avalokiteśvara maṇḍala*. The vase with the ingredients is placed in the middle of the *maṇḍala*. Its neck is covered with a cloth, and offerings are made to the three roots and to the spirits and negative forces that

may otherwise obstruct the practice. The visualisation is of oneself as Avalokiteśvara, white in colour, holding a life vase and united with a *yum*. Above the crown of his head is an Amitāyus joined in *yab yum*. Nectar pours down into the vase and the body is filled with it. From the heart, lights spread and strike the pills in the vase. Amitāyus and Avalokiteśvara become wisdom nectar, lights spread in the ten directions, and everything dissolves into the life nectar. A mantra is recited. For twelve months, pills should be taken before dawn; these will bring various benefits, such as a body free of illnesses. Strength will be generated along with a clear intellect and the power to attract the opposite sex.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus and Avalokiteśvara. Pills made entirely from plant substances.

Colophon: f. 502, line 6 *'di'i rgyud pa ni/ mgon po tshe dpag med kyi[s] spyen ras gzig la gsungs/ des 'phags pa klu sgrub la gsungs/ des a orgyan pad ma la gsungs/ ao rgyan bdag gis phyi rabs kyi don du gter du sbas so/ ma 'ongs byi ba'i dus kyi tshe/ shes rab blo ldan snying po can dang 'phrad par shog sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ gter rgya/ gu ru rad na gling pa'i thugs bcud lho brag gnam skas can gyi gter ma'o//*

‘As regards the lineage: Lord Amitāyus gave it to Avalokiteśvara who gave it to *Nāgārjuna*, who gave it to O rgyan Padma[sambhava]; then I, [the one from] O rgyan, concealed it for the benefit of future generations. In the future in the year of the Rat may it be met by a wise man endowed with the essence *Sa ma ya. rgya rgya rgya. gter rgya. sbas rgya. gter rgya* Guru Rat na gling pa’s heart essence, the *gter ma* from the “Sky Ladder [rock]” in Lho brag.’

Remarks: Listed among the benefits of the practice is the power to attract the opposite sex. It indicates how *bcud len* can be a practice with worldly benefits and not restricted

to the monastic community. In this particular practice one does not engage in actual sexual practice; however one visualises *Amitāyus* joined with a consort. For more about tantric sexual practices, both imagined and visualised, see Shaw (1994:140-171).

Text 18:

Front page: *Them yig med cong zhi la sogs bdud rtsi rdo rje'i bcud len bzhugs pa'i dgu phyogs lags so*

There is no abstract: the ninth section on the calcite [and so on] *vajra nectar bcud len*

Author: Rat na gling pa (1403-1479)

Source: Rat na gling pa. *Them yig med cong zhi la sogs bdud rtsi rdo rje'i bcud len bzhugs pa'i dgu phyogs lags so*. In *Rat na gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul PemaWangyal, 1977-1979, vol. 12: 153 -159. Accessed through TBRC W21730

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1line. 1b- 2a: 5 lines. 2b-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 3 lines.

Dating: The colophon informs us that the text was revealed in an unspecified Rabbit year. The Rabbit years occurring during Ratna gling pa's life are: 1411 (although he would have been very young), 1423, 1435, 1447, 1459, and 1471.

Content: A full translation of this text is included in Chapter 4 of this study and can be referred to.

Main deity and main substance employed: *Vajrayoginī. Calcite stone.*

Colophon: f. 159, line 2 *'di 'dra'i gdams pa yang zab ngo mtshar che/ g.yeng med dge sbyor ngang gi 'phel/ ma 'ongs las can gcig L3 dang 'di 'phrad nas/ skal ldan las can*

*rnams la phan thog par shog/ sa ma ya/ kha tham/ gu ha ya/ yos kyi lo la gu ru rad nas
bton/ dge'o//*

‘Such teachings are profound and marvellous. The undistracted virtuous activities will spontaneously increase. In the future, after one with the right karma has found it, may the fortunate ones gain benefit from it. *Samaya ka tham gu ha ya.*

In the year of the Rabbit extracted by the master Rat na.’

Remarks: For more on this text, see a full translation and its introduction to it in Chapter 4.

Text 19:

Front page: *Rtag ngu'i bcud len zab mo*

The profound *rtag ngu bcud len*

Author: Ratna gling pa (1403-1479)

Source: Ratna gling pa. *Rtag ngu'i bcud len zab mo*. In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, vol. 4: 135-149. Accessed through TBRC W21730.

Folios: 1a-8b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 5 lines. 3a-8a: 6 lines. 8b: 3 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: This text is fully translated in Chapter 4 and the reader can refer to it there.

The text contains instructions for a set of practices involving visualisations combined with mantra recitation and breathing exercises as well as ingesting pills made with ingredients such as flowers and human and snake flesh, that are empowered with the practitioner's own urine.

Main deity and main substance employed: Avalokiteśvara and Vajravārāhī (their mantras are recited while picking the flowers), a beautiful medicine goddess (whose visualisation and mantras are used for empowering medicines), and Mañjuśrī (visualised chopping off the tip of the practitioner’s heart and filling it with white nectar). Air retention, a recurring feature in most *bcud len* texts, is also practiced at different stages of the practice. Several herbs, the main one being *rtag tu ngu*, are utilised. In the explanation on the making of pills according to ‘method and wisdom combined’, male and female genital secretions are utilised in the compound.

Colophon: (f. 148, line 6). *mkhar chen mtsho rgyal gyis/ ma ’ongs don du yi ger btab/ da lta ma spel gter du sbas/ nam zhig rtsod ldan rnying ma la/ las can gcig dang ’di ’phrad nas/ bsgrub pa byed pa dpag med/ ’gro don dpag med ’byung bar shog/ rgya rgya rgya/ zab rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ zathi/ mantra/ gu yha/ sha ma tha sha tha rtsa sprul sku ratna gling pa ’i dmyal smad dge ri ’i brag nas gdan drangs pa ’o/ manga lam/*

‘I, Mkhar chen mtsho rgyal, have recorded this in writing for the sake of future (beings). It is not to be disseminated at present, but hidden as a treasure. One day, in the strife-ridden Kali Yuga times, may a fortunate one encounter this text and practising it relentlessly may he benefit countless beings. *Guyha sha ma tha sha tha rtsa.*’

Retrieved from a rock at *sprul sku* Ratna gling pa’s Dmyal smad dge ri.

Remarks: In the preamble to the text, four people, Bdag dkar chen sa, Lang dro lo tsa wa, the divine prince Mu tig Btsan po and Shel dkar bza’ ask Guru Rin po che for a *bcud len* that would be easy to perform in the future, when scarce harvests will make it hard to practice free from preoccupation about procuring food. They request concise advice to remove obstacles and to attain long life.

Future troubled times are often cited as one of the reasons underlying the setting down of *bcud len* instructions to be concealed as *gter ma* and rediscovered at the appropriate time.

Text 20:

Front page: *Thugs rje chen po gsang ba 'dus pa las bcud len khyad 'phags zab mo rnam s bzhugs so*

From 'The secret gathering of the Great Compassionate One: the exalted profound *bcud len* practices'

Author: Ratna gling pa (1403-1478)

Source: In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, vol. 7: 135-149. Accessed through TBRCW21730.

Folios: 1a-5b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a 1 line; 1b-2a 5 lines; 2b-5a 6 lines; 5b 3 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Part one refers to the preparation 'in the king's tradition' of the *dbang lag bcud len*. The best quality *dbang lag* measures five finger spans; if white and its fruit fulsome it is auspicious. It must be dug up in spring and autumn, dried in a cool, dry, breezy place and then ground into a fine powder and stirred as it is cooked in one 'bre (a measure corresponding to about two pints) of milk. Once it becomes milk pap one spreads and dries it on a flat slate, beats and grounds it into a fine powder, adds brown sugar, honey and the six auspicious substances, as well as *a ru ra*, *ba ru ra* and *skyu ru ra*. With that paste, one makes three or four pills. Three should be eaten at a time.

Part two is a simpler version, ‘according to the queen’s tradition’. The *dbang lag* should be cooked in milk and once it becomes milk pap, dried in the shade. Then it is ground finely and mixed with honey and medicinal substances and supplementary ingredients. One ingests three spoonfuls.

Part three regards the method for taking the essence of *rmongs* (ram meat). It is cooked in water until it sinks to the bottom, then dried and beaten to the size of barley grain and mixed with incense. If available add *tsampa*, tea and *thug pa* (soup). There is no prescribed quantity. Empowered with mantras and Guruyoga, the mixture has to sit for a few nights. This is beneficial when *chu skyag*²⁸ or phlegm illnesses arise and enhances longevity and vitality.

The text goes on to describe the *sro lo dkar po* (*Cochlearia scapiflora*) *bcud len*, said to be good for the bones and the heart. The best specimens of this herb are found where the meadow meets the mountain slope. The leaf should be greyish or whitish and fluffy and the root should be white. It tastes like turnip and will remove illnesses of the lungs. It is peeled, boiled, dried and mixed with roasted barley, ground finely and added to *tsampa* and made into a warm paste. Butter or meat fat is added and it may be mixed with brown sugar and nutmeg. Prepared as *chang*, it is made in the same way, adding yeast and left to ferment. Once strained, it can be drunk and will give strength and balance and all illnesses related to blood, remove pus and phlegm. This ends the *sro lo dkar po bcud len*.

There follow instructions on the *sro lo dmar po* (*Rhodiola crenulata*) *bcud len*. The plant grows on rocky mountains along the snow line. The reddest type is best. The

²⁸ Literally ‘water excrement’ could be diarrhea.

preferred type grows in the meadow of Mon kha seng ge rdzong cave [a cave in eastern Bhutan where Padamsambhava practiced].

Instructions are given on preparing the plant, cleaning it, drying it and mixing it with roasted barley and then making it into a warm broth. Alternatively, it can be cooked like rice. If the ingredients are good it will be delicious. Or else, to beat it, one kneads it without any mixture. If milk and fresh butter are available, it is cooked as one would rice, using old bones to make gruel. This helps control the *rlung* and one will not suffer harm from spirits or invisible entities. When it is boiled with extracts from barks, leaves, herbs, and fruits, innumerable *dākinīs* will appear bearing elixirs. These are mixed with the concoction, which mantras will transform into elixir. The preparation will remove any chance of death through famine. Furthermore, one's meditative concentration will develop spontaneously.

(f. 189, line 1) Next, the text describes the *bcud len* of a substance called *rdhe* [?] that comes from the juniper tree. Practice in a grove of tall cypress and juniper trees. The *rdhe* [?] is yellowish and can be found among the juniper leaves. It is boiled until the juice becomes a sap. Then one adds barley and makes pills from it. Otherwise, one boils the barley into a paste and mixes it with white butter. Alternatively, one cooks seven juniper acorns and boils them until they become a sap, adding brown sugar and *dbang lag*, and *a ru ra, kyu ru ra, bu ru ra*. One eats the pills while practising the generation stage, holding the air in 'bar *rlung* (presence of slight continuous *kumbhaka*). This brings a feeling of balance and warmth. The qualities and benefits are long life and youthful radiance. One's meditation will be clear and one will develop prescience. This ends the *shug pa bcud len*, the juniper *bcud len*.

(f. 190, line 2) The text then describes a *ramo shag bcud len*. The plant grows where there is slate and groves of willow. Its roots resemble the horns of a Tibetan antelope. The leaves are slender and the flowers are brownish purple. The taste is bittersweet and nutritious. Initially, it is cooked gently with milk. The roots are most nutritious in the spring or autumn. They should be dug up and cooked gently in milk until they become sap. This is dried in the shade and mixed with roasted barley, then ground and mixed as a paste or as a broth (*thug pa*). It can be eaten as such or preserved or else mixed with *chang*. This will be very nutritious and makes the mind clear.

The practitioner is told to practice this *bcud len* in future degenerate times as it will revitalise and prolong life and remove all kinds of cold-related illnesses.

Main deity and main substance employed: Avalokiteśvara. *Dbang lag, rmongs, sro lo dkar po, sro lo dmar po, shug pa* and *ra mo shag*.

Colophon: (f. 191, line 4)

bdag 'dra bud med mtsho rgyal gyis/ mon kha seng ge rdzongs gsum du/ gu ru nyid la zhus nas kyang/ gsang 'dus chos kyi cha rkyen du/ zin bris yi ger bkod nas kyang/ gnam skas brag la sbas te bzhag/ phyi mar gyur pa'i dus kyi tshe/ las can chos byed dpag med la/ phan thogs 'gro don dpag med shog/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ zab rgya/ gtad rgya/ zab mo'i bcud len gyi skor rdzogs so/ zab mo'i bcud len lus stobs rgyas gyur cig/ sbas yul mnga' bdag bstan pa rgyas par shog/ skye dgu thams cad chos la 'god gyur cig/ mnga' dbang rgyal brgyud mu mtha' btsan par shog.

‘I, Lady Ye shes mtsho rgyal, at the three forts of Mon kha seng ge rdzong, by asking the Guru himself and to make the conditions favourable for the Guhyasamāja, wrote this and concealed it in the “Sky Ladder” rock. In later degenerate times may it benefit countless *Dharma* practitioners connected to this practice. May it immensely

benefit beings *gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ zab rgya/ gtad rgya/*. This completes this profound *bcud len*. With this profound *bcud len* may the body gain in strength. May the ruler of the hidden land [Bhutan] and the doctrine prosper. May all beings be brought into the *Dharma*. May the lineage of the powerful Victorious One be continuous and strong.’

Remarks: Like the previously analysed Text 19, this practice was concealed as a *gter ma*. It was intended for later use for those who want to focus on practice and minimize their involvement in worldly affairs, a purported goal of *bcud len* practice. This is the first instance of a complete set of *bcud len* instructions based on *shug pa* connected with Padmasambhava. In Text 71 we find another *shug pa bcud len*.

Text 21:

Front page: *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: bcud len yid bzhin nor bu zhes bya ba bzhugs*

From The Lama Jewel Ocean; the *bcud len* of the wish-fulfilling jewel

Author: Ye shes mtsho rgyal. Rediscovered by Pad ma gling pa (1450-1521)

Source: In *Rig ’dzin pad ma gling pa yi zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975-1976, vol. 2: 715 - 744. Accessed through TBRC W21727.

Folios: 1a- 15b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-15a: 6 lines. 15b:1 line.

Content: This text begins by foretelling how, in the future, Princess Lha lcam Pad ma rtsal will take rebirth in ’Bum thang [as Pad ma gling pa, the rediscoverer of this *gter ma*]. The introductory section offers specific indications on when one should practice particular types of *bcud len*. For example, when one’s body feels too hot, one should

practice *rlung bcud len*; when one's *rlung* (wind element) is overly agitated, earth *bcud len* is advised. If the fire element is too active, one should practice water *bcud len*; when the water element is too forceful, fire *bcud len* is appropriate. When all four elements (earth/wind/fire/water) are unbalanced, one should practice the *bcud len* of space. When physical strength deteriorates, nectar *bcud len* is suggested. When the mind becomes dull, the practice of flower *bcud len* helps. When the constituent elements are weak, one should practice the *tshan (Rhodiola dumulosa (Franch) Fu) bcud len*; when the five sense faculties are dull, *dbang lag bcud len*. After the above indications on when to apply each *bcud len*, the text gives instructions on a set of fifteen different types of *bcud len* practices.

1) *Rlung gi bcud len (Prāṇa bcud len)* (f.717, line 2): Rubbing one's body with one's hands, stroking one's chest with clawed fingertips, one stares upwards, the eyes rolled back, and makes a face like a wrathful skeleton. Whatever sickness or negative influence is encountered, one retains the breath and exerts pressure on it. At the locus of the illness, one visualises whirling wind and imagines a wheel with eight spokes. For a heat disorder, one imagines a white wheel. For a cold disorder, one imagines a red wheel. A practitioner can recover from an earth disease or parasites as well as most other illnesses, and the body will feel very comfortable.

2) *Sa yi bcud len (Earth bcud len)* (f.718, line 1): This *bcud len* should be practiced in the early morning because this is when the 'wind of life' (*rlung srog*) moves in the body. Visualising a syllable (unspecified) at the navel, one focuses on the light that issues from it, spreading over the whole world, and returns, carrying the energy of the universe and sentient beings. The light transforms into the precious three syllables (*OM ĀḤ HŪM*). The practitioner visualises his or her whole body transforming

into a wish-fulfilling jewel. After doing this, one performs *mudrās*, remains in a meditative posture and imagines the vital essence moving around; once it is in motion, one imagines the body transforming into precious substances. Whatever is desired showers down like rainfall. Sometimes, one moves one's vital essence to the centre and sometimes it is spread. Practising this, unlimited wealth is attained.

3) *Chu yi bcud len* (Water *bcud len*) (f.718, line 5): Sitting cross-legged, in meditative posture, one visualises a *HAM* syllable on the crown of the head; the syllable is turned upside down. In the middle of the eyebrows, one visualises a *HAM* syllable facing outwards; on the tip of the tongue, a white syllable *SŪM*; at the heart a *HŪM* surrounded by letters; in the central channel a red letter *A*. Flames issue forth from the letter *A* at the navel. All the syllables, the *HŪM* at the heart, the *HAM* between the eyebrows and the *SŪM* on the tip of the tongue all melt and become of a blissful nature. The upper wind moves for a while and the *SŪM* syllable produces nectar that goes to the *HŪM* at the heart and generates power. From this power, the eight consciousnesses²⁹ suddenly become white in colour and fill the navel. One sucks the tip of one's tongue, swallowing the saliva. Then one practises vase-breathing retention (*kumbhaka*) and all the mental perceptions, lustre, organs and senses will become more vivid and one will gain youthfulness and become a long-lived *vidhyādhara*.

4) *Me yi bcud len* (Fire *bcud len*) (f.719, line 3): One visualises the whole body as stainless glass, completely transparent. Holding down the upper *prāṇa* below the

²⁹ The first five consciousnesses, linked to the five senses, are the visual, the auditory, the olfactory, the gustatory and the tactile. The sixth is mental consciousness which engages with the five sensory ones. The Mahāyāna teachings of the Buddha describe a seventh, the 'afflicted consciousness' that clings to a self, and an eighth consciousness, known as the 'ground consciousness', that is an aspect of understanding that is ever present. The latter provides an underlying continuous consciousness that is the basis, the 'ground', underpinning all the other consciousness.

navel, one visualises a *RAM* syllable with flames issuing forth. Flames pervade the body and depart through the crown of the head and reach all the way up to the *tshangs pa* (Brahma) god realm. These flames help to open up the ‘door’ of the *dbu ma* central channel. The practitioner visualises the inner and outer body totally covered in fire. If feeling too hot, then one visualises one’s body as white in colour; if sleepy, flames move downward. If feeling exceedingly blissful, one no longer requires clothes. Completing this visualisation, the body will produce heat automatically.

5) *Nam ’mkha’i bcud len* (Space *bcud len*) (f. 720, line 1): The instructions are to sit with both elbows on the knees, both hands below the chin, pressing the thumbs close to the ears and visualizing the outer and inner body as totally empty. The entire universe dissolves into space. The breath is held down with force; while thinking that death has been deceived, from emptiness a loud sound arises. Again, one focuses on the mind without being distracted; doing so, one becomes clairvoyant.

6) *Bdud rtsi’i bcud len* (Nectar *bcud len*) (f. 720, line 3): One prepares nectar, dries and soaks it in water before extracting the fluid. This is then soaked into meat and cooked. One puts barley wheat onto it and allows it to cool down; then yeast is placed on it and it is left to rest. Once it rises, it can be eaten with roast barley or *chang*. Pills can be made with it. The body will become strong and the *dākinīs* will bestow attainments upon those who practise this *bcud len*.

7) *Me tog bcud len* (Flower *bcud len*) f. 720, line 5: The instructions are to collect *ba lu*, meadow flowers and any nonpoisonous flowers, to essicate and pulverise them. One adds honey and molasses and makes pills the size of a sheep’s dropping and places them in a bowl. One should eat five pills a day; this will help balance physical energy and mental sharpness and knowledge will develop.

8) *Tshan gyi bcud len* (*Sro lo dmar po bcud len*) (f. 721, line 2): At the time of picking, the flower's head is red, the stalk has green petals and its roots are very thick. It has thorns. This flower is filled with nutrients and represents the four tantric spiritual activities;³⁰ its redness is power; its root's long reach represents the flourishing of spiritual activities; its thorns represent wrathful spiritual activities; its green petals represent pacifying activities.

There are various categories of the flower; the male flower's stem is larger than the female's. The female flower's stem is narrow but its roots are larger than those of the male. The gender neutral's flower swirls like a sheep's horns. The *'dre tshan* demon flower is a deeper hue of red and faces outwards from its stalk. The *lha tshan* god's flower is white with red points, its stem is medium-sized and it has long branches. Once ripped up, the female flower will be like calcite stone. One cannot consume the *'dre tshan* or the neutral gender flowers, but one can consume all others.

The flowers should be collected in November, invoking the *ḍākinīs* in a place where there are no *samaya* breakers, on an attractive mountain that faces southwest. The flowers must be cleaned of impurities with water and chopped finely, dried for seven days, then soaked in water, allowed to dry again and then pulverised.

As regards the actual practice, one visualises a red *HŪM* at the crown of the head; a huge flame gushes out, burning one's body and the universe. On a sun and moon disc, a lotus throne emerges from emptiness and on it is a dead body. Above this, one visualises the Padma Ḍākinī: she has one face, two arms, a red-coloured body in her left hand she holds a curved knife with a *kapāla* full of blood in her right hand. At the crown

³⁰ Four activities (*las bzhi*): 1) pacification (*zhi*); 2) enrichment (*rgyas*); 3) subjugation (*dbang*); 4) wrath (*drag*).

of her head is a pig's head, making loud noises. She is standing, holding a *kaṭvaṅga*, her left leg extended and the right curled up; very hot flames surround her. At her heart the *HRĪḤ* syllable red in colour, circled by the mantra (red in colour). Above and below the *HRĪḤ* syllable there are *HŪM* syllables. One recites the mantra undistractedly at least one hundred times. In a bowl on a stove there is nectar, with flames inside; one chants mantras and imagines that the nectar is made of the nature of emptiness. Chanting other mantras purifies the substance. It is then cooked and butter and milk are added. One visualises sacred syllables and the mixture transforming into pure nectar that spreads through one's body. While stirring, *OM ĀḤ HŪM HRĪḤ* is recited. Flames from the *HŪM* at the navel go up to the *HŪM* at the heart as the nectar is consumed, and one visualises it spreading through the body while reciting *OM ĀḤ HŪM* at least twenty-one times. The benefits claimed for this practice are a good complexion, an enhanced intellect and the ability to summon *ḍākinīs* and gods. One will meet kindness from humans and one's lifespan will be extended; one will have mastery over all appearances. Any cold-natured illness will be cured. A powder can be made of the nectar and mixed with flour or wheat and offered to the *ḍākinīs* in the morning on one's awakening. The blessing and visualisation is the same as above. One will have a pleasant voice and any liver disease will be pacified.

9) *Cong zhi bcud len* (Calcite *bcud len*) f.725, line 1: The text differentiates types of calcite as male, female and neutral as well as demon and god calcite.

In an isolated place one takes refuge, recites *HŪM* and visualises Vajrayoginī *zhi byed ma* (in her pacifying aspect) standing on a sun and moon lotus disk on a corpse. She is white in colour: one face, two arms: holding a curved knife and *kapāla*, in a dancing posture. Visualising the seed syllable, spreading and absorbing lights, one does *kumbhaka* and recites mantras.

The calcite is cooked with *a ru ra*. While practising *bcud len*, one should adopt a peaceful, quiet way of behaviour. There follows a list of benefits and antidotes for health issues that might arise during *bcud len* practice.

10) *Dbang lag bcud len* (f.730, line 4); there are female and male types of *dbang lag*. The male plant has four short fingers, the female has three longer fingers, while the neutral one has only two fingers; the ‘god’ variety of the plant has five, the demon variety only one.

At the end of September, taking refuge, one goes to collect the *dbang lag*, then washes and dries it. Then, visualising oneself as a *dākinī*, one grinds the *dbang lag* (male and female). One visualises a red *HŪM* at the navel and the whole body blazing, and oneself as Ye shes mkha’ ’gro Stobs ldan ma, red in colour. Reciting mantras, one visualises lights spreading. After preparing the concoction with molasses, one consumes a spoonful a day for seven days. While consuming it, one repeats the visualisation and all illnesses will disappear, and vital energy will expand. In listing the benefits, there appears a long list of concoctions for various diseases. Antidotes are given for health problems that might arise during *bcud len* practice, including the visualisation of a swirling, flaming swastika at the stomach in case of pains in the lower parts.

11) *Rdo yi bcud len* (Rock *bcud len*) f.734, line 2: The male stone is white in colour and the female is delicate and oily. A neutral stone is as supple as butter. The gods’ stone radiates lights and merely seeing it makes one feel at ease. The demon’s stone is rough and not delicate. The practitioner is told to self-visualise as a *dākinī* with a lion’s head, a *HŪM* at the belly and a mantra swirling around it; one recites the mantra at least 800 times and then blows on the stone. Holding the stone powder in a bowl, one recites the mantra of emptiness. This powder is offered to the *yidams*, *dākinīs* and

dharmapālas while visualising the light from the *HŪM* striking the stone powder that becomes nectar. Remedies for problems of stone indigestion are suggested. The benefits listed are mental clarity, physical strength and a realisation of the ultimate nature of reality.

Furthermore, with the heat of *HŪM* and breathing exercises, one imagines a wheel of fire and all the stones' powers spreading throughout one's entire body, or it may be consumed with a little water. There are various ways of mixing: with sweets (to increase energy), with urine (*nāga* related problems disappear) or with dairy products (this increases the family clan [fertility]). If a small part of stone remains in the body it helps transform it into a *vajra* body. For throat pain, one visualises a blazing *RAM* syllable; if the eyes twitch one tenses up the lower body muscles; if one shivers or has a headache, one applies black sesame oil to one's body.

The list of benefits includes the gathering of the *dākinīs*, the avoidance of hunger at any time, and agreeable weather wherever the practitioner goes.

12) *Rdo rje zab mo'i bcud len* (The profound *dor je bcud len*) f.737, line 3; there are three sections: the outer, the inner and the secret.

12a) The first section is on the *Phyi yi bcud len* (outer *vajra bcud len*) (f. 737, line 3): one should take a handful of *dkar po chig thub* (*Sorozeris sp.*), *tshan*, *dbang po lag pa* and *sro lo dkar po*. One boils the mixture, dries it and extracts the liquid. The process is repeated three times. One mixes butter and honey and extracts the liquid from broad beans. One mixes the three together with a little water and churns them in a circular motion until they form a paste.

This should be consumed on an empty stomach, adjusting the quantity to one's stature. If the stomach becomes withered, gas arises and the stomach becomes tight,

milk should be boiled and the film eaten. One can drink fresh *chang* but should avoid salt and sunlight.

The list of benefits includes a youthful appearance and living for a hundred years.

12b) *Nang gi bcud len sman* (Inner *bcud len*) (f.738, line 2): Take one bowlful of calcite and two handfuls of *brag zhun*³¹ and boil them in water: this will produce a liquid to be mixed with butter and a broad bean liquid. Mix all and pour into a clean pot. Consume an amount the size of a bird's egg every day.'

12c) *Gsang ba'i bcud len* (Secret *bcud len*) (f. 738, line 3): The practitioner is instructed as follows: 'Take stone liquid, mercury, well water and rainwater and combine these four. The secret *bcud len* is mostly extracted from water. Pour it into a bottle and add blood powder, dark red in colour, from the blood of ox and cow, and sulphur and calcite. Once it is all mixed, take half out and mix this half with milk and boil it. Drink for at least twenty-one days.'

The list of benefits includes regaining the body of a twenty-one year old, becoming more attractive and living to the age of one hundred. If one mixes nectar with *chang*, four parts *chang* and one part nectar, and adds to the liquid black sesame seed, it can be boiled and applied onto one's body. One will return to being youthful and will never forget what one has studied and heard from one's teacher.

An alternative recipe is suggested: 'Take nectar, mercury, *shilajit*, then mix and add butter or honey. This will extend the life span.'

Another method, ascribed to Guru Rin po che, is to collect one hundred pods of black cardamom and juniper berries; cook these to liquefy them and mix them with nectar, mercury and *shilajit*. One adds butter and pours it into a *kapāla* tied with red and

³¹ See note 26.

white fabric. One then pours *amṛta*, the five fleshies and five nectars into the *kapāla*. The *kapāla* is placed on a tripod with a butter lamp below it and mantras are recited for seven days. On the last day, when an odour arises, milk should be added. Consuming this for twenty-one days, one's body becomes like a *vajra*. The list of benefits includes total enlightenment.

13) *Yongs rdzogs bcud len* (The perfectly complete *bcud len*) (f. 739, line 5): One collects sap from a *sho ka* [possibly a synonym for *ba spru*, *myrabilis himalaica*], silk, liquid calcite, *brag zhun*, honey, butter, a handful of *dkar po chig thub* and a handful of *dbang lag*. One crushes them separately to extract their liquid and mixes them all with butter. One should not drink water during this period. After consuming the *bcud len*, one drinks boiled milk and a little new wine. One has to avoid old wine, salt and copulation.

14) *Drod skyed bcud len* (The heat producing *bcud len*) f. 740, line 2: The practitioner is told to collect sow's blood, the brain of a small child, gold and turquoise snakes, the meat from between skin and muscle of a female goat, and bear's bile. This should all be poured into a white goat's milk, covered with muslin and turned upside down. The pure liquid filters out, and one eats it on an empty stomach. After consuming it, one feels extreme body heat. Those unable to control their sperm should not ejaculate. If one has problems with constipation, butter yeast mixed with the milk of a red cow will help. If the stomach is filled with air, one should drink bone soup. If one has parasites, one must chew on white garlic. If one feels too much water in the stomach, yeast should be taken.

15) *Ting 'dzin bcud len* (*Samādhi* essence extraction) (f.740, line 6): This *bcud len* is explicitly prescribed for tantric yogins. They should see their own body as identical with the teachers and the deities; form corresponds to the male deities and

emptiness to the female deities. They should realise form and emptiness, body and mind as inseparable. Searching for *ḍākinī* nectar and substances external to one's own mind would produce mental and physical distractions; through meditative concentration, the yogin does not need to search for food and drink externally. Consuming one's own perceptions as food during meditation will help to make the meditation free from obstacles.

More specific instructions on visualisation and breathing follow: Pad ma thod threng rtsal is visualised with a dark blue body in union with a female consort (Bde sbyin *jñāna*). The syllables *SŪM*, a downward facing white *HAM*, a blue *HŪM* and a red *A* with flames blazing forth are visualised at the tip of the tongue, between the eyebrows facing inward and at the heart and at the navel, respectively. The lower wind rises up to touch the *HŪM*. Flames rise to the *SŪM* and then again upwards to the crown of the head. The *HŪM* and the *HAM* dissolve into light that dissolves into the *SŪM* and then into flowing nectar. The upper *prāṇa* is pushed downwards, the tongue's saliva is swallowed and the tongue sucked on continuously. Sitting in meditative posture with thumbs touching the sides of the nape of the neck, one meditates on the nature of emptiness while retaining the two *prāṇa* winds gently.

There is a list of benefits; for example, one will be reborn neither as an animal nor in a barbarian place, nor will one experience rebirth as a demigod or god; supreme wisdom arises within; one will have a fair complexion and strength, desires will be fulfilled and a state of longlived *vidhyādhara* achieved. Antidotes are given for problems arising in meditation: if your body experiences shaking, visualise a golden skull at your heart with a white *Bhrūm* syllable inside it which produces a yellow-coloured nectar that spreads in your body, aiding health and well-being. If you feel hungry, suck on your tongue forcefully.'

The benefits cited are: a mind resembling the pure mind of Samantabhadra, rebirth in the realm of Buddha Amithāba, pure vision and ordinary and extraordinary attainments.

Main deity and main substance employed: There are several deities found in the above fifteen *bcud len* practices: in the *tshan* flower *bcud len* one transforms into a Padma *ḍākinī*; in the calcite *bcud len* into Vajrayoginī; in the *dbang lag bcud len* into Ye shes mkha' 'gro stobs ldan ma; in the rock *bcud len* into a *ḍākinī* with a lion's head. In the *samādhi bcud len* one visualises Pad ma thod threng rtsal with a consort. The main substances are: *rlung*, earth, water, fire, space, nectar, *tshan*, calcite, *dbang lag*, rock. The four last *bcud len* have a great array of ingredients.

Colophon: (f. 743, line 5) *mtsho rgyal bdag gis yi ger bris/ rin chen bcud len bdud rtsi mchog/ lho brag sman mdo'i brag la sbas/ bdag gi nying sras skal pa can/ padma'i ming can 'phra par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ bdag pad ma gling pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag senge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drangs pa'o//*

'I, (Ye shes) mtsho rgyal, wrote this precious supreme nectar *bcud len* and concealed it in the Medicine Valley Rock (Sman mdo brag) at Lho Brag. May it be discovered by my fortunate heart-son known as Padma.' I, Padma gling pa, retrieved this text from the 'lion-faced rock' at Lho brag Sman mdo brag.'

Remarks: The *Lama Jewel Ocean* contains a series of tantric initiations (*dbang bskur*) and practice manuals (*sgrub thabs*). These instructions come from that cycle of teachings. Because of the great variety of detailed instructions and antidotes contained within that cycle, I decided to reproduce the translation of the entire text for it illustrates the broad variety of subjects that can be found in a *bcud len* text. A variety of remedies, for minor ailments such as headaches or eye twitching are accompanied by profound

instructions said to lead to total enlightenment (section 12c). The last subsection, starting on f.741, is considered the highest practice contained in the text. It states that the highest *bcud len* practice lies entirely within one's mind and that 'through meditative concentration, the yogin does not need to search for food and drink externally.

Consuming one's own perceptions as food during meditation will help to make the meditation free from obstacles.' This view, that the ultimate nutrition lies in one's own mind, is repeated in Text 23.

Text 22:

Front page: *Bcud len gyi gdams pa rim pa lnga pa bzhugs so*

The essence extraction instructions in five stages

Author: Bya bral ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang po (1476-1542)

Source: In *Gdams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: Shechen Publications, 1999, vol.17: 303-309.

Accessed through TBRCW23605.

Folios: 1a-3b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 5 lines. 3a-3b: 7 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: This text, on 'the essence extraction instructions in five stages', is a flower *bcud len* treatise said to have been transmitted by Vajrayoginī to Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (d. 1117), who by virtue of practising this *bcud len* obtained *siddhis* and lived for 572 years.

Regarding the making of the pills: entering a field, one visualises oneself as Avalokiteśvara and recites the *maṇi* mantra. The following flowers are gathered: *ba*

lu and *rtag tu ngu*. These are dried, ground and mixed with *a ru ra*, *dbang lag*, as well as the six precious substances and other ingredients. As regards the practice: after preparing offerings for the shrine, seeking refuge and refreshing the *bodhicitta* commitment, one visualises Vajrayoginī. The masters of the lineage all give their blessings and these, along with the essence of all elements enter the pills, transforming them into a nectar of wisdom. A mantra is recited a thousand times. Thus the pills are empowered. Two or three pills are consumed daily, while one imagines being in a state of emptiness and bliss, accompanied by the recitation of the mantra twenty-one times. One should practice for twenty-one days; the first week is linked to the stomach, the second week to disease and the third week to reverting illness. The text describes a range of benefits resulting from the practice.

Main deity and main substance employed: Avalokiteśvara and Vajrayoginī are the deities invoked in this flower *bcud len*. Some of the main plants used are: *ba lu*, *rtag tu ngu*, *a ru ra* and *dbang lag*.

Colophon: (f.308, line 6) *bya bral ba dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang pos gzhan la phan par 'dod pa'i bsam pas yi ger bkod pa'o// dge'o// 'di'i khrid lung gnyis ka'i brgyud pa/ rgyal ba dge 'dun rgya mtsho nas/ pan chen bsod nams grags pa/ rgyal ba bsod nams rgya mtshos/ sgom sde nam mkha' rgyal mtshan/ grub dbang bkra shis rgyal mtshan/ gnas brtan 'jam dbyangs grags pa/ rje blo bzang sgom chung/ nyang tshang pa ngag dbang bstan pa'i nyi ma/ zhabs drung nam mkha' seng ge/ ri khrod pa 'jam dbyangs shes rab/ ri khrod pa ngag dbang bsam grub/ mkhan chen dkon mchog rgyal mtshan/ 'jam pa'i dbyangs ye shes don grub zhi ba'i rgyal mtshan/ 'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po / des bdag la'o//*

The colophon informs us about the oral transmission and explanations of the practice, which originated from Bya bral ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang po (1476-

1542) was practised by hermits in eastern Tibet and ultimately transmitted from 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po to 'Jam mgong kong sprul, who set it down on paper.

Remarks: It is a text related to specific medical problems, focusing on reversing illnesses and restoring the health of the stomach. In the list of benefits, however, intelligence, enhanced clarity, a propensity to comprehend 'the way' and becoming attractive to the *dākinī* are all listed; therefore it may also qualify as a spiritual practice. No breathing or yogic exercises are included. The colophon informs us that this *bcud len* was practiced by hermits in eastern Tibet, regrettably without specifying what lineage or school they belonged to. However this may be a fertile lead for future research into what may have been a continuous lineage of *bcud len* practitioners. Due to the fact that *bcud len* was never institutionalised or part of monastic curricula, discovering a continuous lineage of practice would be a land mark point in this area of studies. This practice, once perhaps only orally transmitted and restricted to initiated hermits, was set down on paper in its current form thanks to the efforts of 'Jam mgong kong sprul, who as was mentioned earlier, was the only known person to have gathered *bcud len* texts into a compendium.

Text 23:

Front page: *Me tog bcud len gyi khrid gnang skabs kyi brjed byang.*

The instruction on extracting the essence of flowers

Author: Blo bzang byang chub bstan pa'i sgron me (1504/1505-1565/1566)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Byang chub bstan pa'i sgron me. Sku 'bum: Sku 'bum byams pa gling, 1999, vol.3: 353 - 364. Accessed through TBRC W29200.

Folios: 1a-7b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b- 7b: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: ‘The *bcud len* of extracting the essence of flowers’; Dge gdun bstan ’dzin rgya mtsho dpal bzang po received the teaching on *bcud len*. Vajradhāra said this *bcud len* should be for the use of those living in mountain retreat; it is a secret teaching but the author states that he will explain the practice a little, saying ‘those who enjoy food and clothing and material goods do not require these instructions’.

Before giving out detailed *bcud len* instructions the author writes about the *bcud len* tradition and its various typologies.

There is a warning that the texts should not be given to ‘those who are full of desires but pretend to be sages in retreat’ (f. 355, line 1). The early Bka’ brgyud pa required food and clothing but did not look for food and shelter; and so had need of these instructions. The text mentions Mi la ras pa and Indian saints who had great accomplishments, such as Lūyipa who relied on fish intestines, and other Bka’ brgyud pa like Lo ras and Rgod tshang ba who completed countless retreats. The all-knowing ’Khor dag pa meditated in ’Ol khar where a realised sage (a *rtogs ldan*) called ’Jam dpal rgya mtsho sustained himself on juniper berries and so was known as the juniper seed lama, *bla ma shug ’bru*. Those masters and disciples who went on retreat in solitary places worked hard to attain the supreme accomplishment.

We find a quote from Milarepa to the effect that ‘If the *rdo rje* cliff is not high, then how is it that the eagles fly under it? If on New Year’s Day the wind is not strong, then how will it freeze the mountain river and village water? If *gtum mo* clothing does not keep you warm, then how can a single wool cloth be warming? If you do not eat *samādhi* food, then how can you stand hunger? Likewise, if you retreat into the

mountains and eat meditative foods, because of their power you will not suffer from thirst or hunger.’ (f. 355, line 1)

The author states that just as in earlier times it was Milarepa, at present it is Blo bzang don grub who requires no external substances, except for basic food and clothing. On f. 357, line 1 the text states, ‘Blo bzang don grub practiced this supreme path and became enlightened in one lifetime’. It is said that practising perfectly with perfect contemplation, one does not need to rely on essence extraction. However, first time practitioners need to rely on extraction.

The text explains that there are different types of essence extraction such as water, wind, flower and soup and so forth. The first three are said to be the best ones.

Regarding the latter type, Blo bzang chos ’phel from Phan po brag rgyab wrote treatises on soup *bcud len*. He said that *rlung bcud len* is difficult to master, but once done is very useful. There is also rock extraction. Students of ’Brug pa pad dkar put stone extraction into practice. During the summer, the students would carry stones on their wanderings. Rgyal ba bden sa pa wrote a profound treatise on water essence extraction.

Although Milarepa attained Buddhahood in one life, he practiced many austerities, experiencing hunger and thirst. With patience initially, it becomes easier as one makes progress. Acquiring the foundation is very difficult. Amongst all *bcud len*, the flower *bcud len* is the easiest. The instructions by Dge ’dun rgya mtsho are called *Rim pa lnga pa*, ‘the five stages’. When carrying out flower *bcud len* one should also refer to the text written by Mkharrdo blo bzang sgom chung called *Skal bzang rna rgyan*. The first one in the lineage of the practice of *Skal bzang rna rgyan* is Nam ’mkha rgyal mtshan from the temple of Gag a dhwa rdza sgom sde. Then the lineage passed to Pan chen Blo

bzang chos rgyan, next to Pha bong kha pa 'Jam dbyang grags and afterwards to Mkharrdo blo bzang sgom chung, along with others.

The actual instructions on flower extraction follow (f. 360, line 3). The time to gather the flowers is between the fifth month and the eighth day of the sixth month. Gathering the flowers, one visualises oneself as Avalokiteśvara and recites mantras. The flowers may be gathered with others or alone. Flowers that disturb *rlung*, *mkhris pa* or *bad kan* should not be picked. The important flowers are *rtag ngu*, *ug chos*, *g.yar mo thang*, *ba lu* and *sur dkar me tog*. It is always better to collect poison-free flowers and to discard bitter or spicy flowers. It is best to collect just their petals. Spread them to dry them in the shade. If one needs them to dry quickly, they should be covered with a basket and dried in the sun.

The preparation of the flower pills is then described (f.361, line 4). The best flowers are selected and then heated until yellow. One adds two 'bre measures of roast barley. Honey is shaken and used with tsampa medicine (unspecified) and flowers and made into a mixture. The pills should be slightly larger than the size of goat or sheep dropping.

When making the pills, one rubs one's hands with oil. After the ingredients have dried in the shade, they are put in a precious vessel or in a skull. The practitioner transforms into Vajrayoginī and following the five stages, makes the pills. The pill is taken two or three times a day with soup or tea, reciting one's personal *yi dam* mantra. When taking the pill, it should be chewed and swallowed. Initially, one takes seven pills at a time and then gradually reduces the pills. If they are hard to digest, then one can take fewer pills at first, and more later. Sunlight or proximity to fire must be avoided. Immobility may cause stomachaches so one should move a little and perform

prostrations or circumambulation and recite daily prayers. Movement should be gentle and exertion avoided. Mantras are recited slowly. To avoid *rlung* problems, one can suck on paper that contains molasses. One teacher's advice is to keep meat or tsampa out of sight to avoid the arising of desire for meat. Another teacher advises keeping food in view as one can practice essence extraction by seeing it. It is best if the pills have been blessed by a lama. Vajradhāra and the author of this text have no experience of extraction, so he has no pills to give out. Those who have practical experience based on this system should be asked for pills. It is good to practise with such people. The real name of Mkhār rdo blo bzang sgom chung is Blo bzang rin chen, who said that a practitioner of *bcud len* should be devoted to spiritual practice and not be affected by the eight worldly affairs.

Main deity and main substance employed: Vajrayoginī. The main flowers are: *rtaḡ tu*, *ug chos*, *g.yar mo thang* and *me tog gser chen* (a yellow flower which grows near water).

Colophon: There is no colophon present; however in its opening lines the text identifies Dge gdun bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho dpal bzang po as a recipient of the teaching, without specifying previous lineage holders.

Remarks: The secret nature of this *bcud len* is emphasised at the beginning of the text, where it is recommended that the practice should not be given to 'those who are full of desires but pretend to be sages in retreat' (f. 355, line 1). The stories of former practitioners, both Indian and Tibetan, in the preamble remind the reader that the essence extraction tradition was widespread and its importance is pointed out in f. 357, line 1 'first time practitioners need to rely on extraction'. Interesting insights about diet and behaviour that one should keep during *bcud len* are also given; the exact dosage of pills to take in case of indigestion is mentioned as well as recommendations to avoid

exposure to heat, sunlight or fire. The practitioner is recommended to undertake certain physical exercises.

Text 24:

Front page: *Tshe sgrub gnam lcags rdo rje dngos grub kun 'dus las: bcud len sman gyi tshe sgrub zab mo bdud rtsi'i lcags kyu zhes bya ba bzhugs so*

From the gathering of the long-life sādhanā of the Sky Iron Vajra: the profound life granting medicinal bcud len of the nectar hook

Author: Rig 'dzin 'Ja' tshon snying po (1585-1656)

Source: In *'Ja' tshon pod drug*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1979-1982, vol. 2: 299 - 307. Accessed through TBRC W23757.

Folios: 1a-5a folios

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 5 lines. 2b-4b: 6lines. 5a: 5 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A *bcud len* method for manufacturing and taking medicinal pills to increase one's lifespan. Originally, the princess consort Caṇḍālī gave the instructions on this medicinal *bcud len*. A great variety of [not always specified] medicinal ingredients are included: the three root medicines, the four medicines of the tree trunk, the five medicines of the branches, the six medicines of the leaves, the seven medicines of the flowers, the medicinal ingredients of the ten bodhisattvas, the two inner ingredients and the five fleshes, the secret ingredients of the various caves, the essence of rocks, ocean and wood, silver, gold, *a ru ra*, *ba ru ra*, *skyu ru ra*, honey and good quality alcohol. The text prescribes making two hundred and sixty pills the size of beans. They should be wrapped in five-coloured silks. As regards the practice: a *bsang* ritual is performed

to dispel obstructing forces, fumigation is carried out with a burner of frankincense, reciting *RAM YAM KHAM*. Mentally, one transforms into Amitāyus in his celestial palace. The pills should be taken at dawn every day.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus. Pills with several ingredients, including the five fleshes, silver and gold and also more abstract ones such as ‘the essence of rocks, ocean and wood’.

Colophon: (f. 307, line 4) *gu ru'i thugs kyi 'od zer las sprul pa/ sngags 'chang zhum nag me 'bar gyis/ shar ljon pa lung gi gnas sgo nas bton pa 'o// //*

‘The teaching manifested from the light of the Guru’s heart, the mantric practitioner *HŪM nag me 'bar* extracted it from the valley of the eastern forest.’

Regarding the origins of the practice, one should also note that the first folio states that ‘the princess consort Caṇḍālī gave the instructions on this medical *bcud len*’.

Remarks: The practice comes from the Gathering of Long Life *sādhanā* of the Sky Iron Vajra (‘Ja’ tshon snying po’s second volume of *gter ma* dedicated to long life practice), and is titled *bcud len sman gyi tshe sgrub zab mo bdud rtsi'i lcags kyu*, ‘the profound life granting medicinal *bcud len* of the nectar hook’. The ingredients mentioned are not specified and their identification would require consulting a medical expert. This is the first instance of a *bcud len* text I am aware of that includes a *bsangs* ritual.

According to Namkhai Norbu *bsang* originally was a Bon smoke purification ritual that Padmasambhava assimilated into the Buddhist tradition. (Norbu 1996: 193-197). Traditionally performed early in the morning in open spaces or on rooftops by burning fragrant branches of juniper, cypress or pine and other aromatic plants, the rite was carried out in order to purify and enhance the practitioner’s energy and the immediate environment. *Bsangs* offerings serve to eliminate any contamination, negativity, or

obstacle that the practitioner might have unknowingly provoked and to propitiate the local gods and spirits, so as to ensure their benevolence. Many different versions of the *bsangs* exist.

Text 25:

Front page: *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub las ril bu'i bcud len zag bral 'chi med bdud rtsi'i dwangs bcud 'od gsal gyi myu gu bcud du len pa'i dmigs rim zab mo bzhugs so*

From [the cycle of] 'The *vidyādhara's* accomplishment of life: extracting the stainless pill essence – the pure immortality nectar: the profound gradual concentration method on extracting the essence, the burgeoning of clear light quintessence.'

Author: Nam mkha' 'jigs med lha btsun (1597-1650)

Source: In *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*. Delhi: Chos spyod dpar skrun khang, 2000, vol.1: 191 - 197. Accessed through TBRC W13779.

Folios: 1a-4a

Script: *dbu chen*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-3b: 6 lines. 4a: 2 lines.

Dating: Sometime between 1646 and the author's death (1650), as the cycle was discovered by Lha btsun after his arrival in Sikkim.³² The exact date is not specified in the text. To establish it, further research into the other texts of this cycle (five volumes) is needed or Lha btsun's biography consulted.

³² '...Lhatsün proceeded on foot to Lhari Ösel Nyingpo in Sikkim in 1646 (a fire Dog year). While residing there, in accord with a prophetic declaration of the *ḍākinī*, in the Dhaki-nying Cavern at Trakar Trashiding, he discovered the *Doctrinal Cycles of the Vital Attainment of the Awariness-Holder*; extraordinary instructions of Ati, the unsurpassed Innermost Spirituality, that emerged in a pure vision.' Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, Its Fundamentals and History*, trans. and ed. Gyurme Dorje (Boston: Wisdom, 1991), p. 820.

Content: After taking Refuge and Bodhicitta in Padmasambhava's *maṇḍala*, the practitioner visualises Padma thod phreng rtsal in union with his consort. They are holding their attributes of long life vase, *mda' dar*; sword and *kapāla*, emitting light rays.

The nectar of immortality, the accumulated essence of methods and wisdom (sexual union), dissolves into the red syllable *Hrī* visualised in the practitioner's center, which in turn dissolves in the practitioner's body, transforming it into a *vajra* rainbow body. The practitioner engages in *prāṇa* exercises.

Main deity and main substances employed: Padmasambhava in union with a consort. The substance is the visualised nectar of immortality. *Prāṇa* exercises are also employed.

Colophon: (f. 196, line 6) *skye 'chi spang bar do rje'i rig 'dzin zhes/ 'ja' gur pad ma dra wa ba'i gling mchog tu/ ma ha gu ru'i gsung bzhin 'od gnang gsang chen rdo rje'i ngo sprod 'di thob nas/ skyes chen mchog rnam sku tshe brtan pa'i phyir/ gsang yang ma thub mchod par phul ba lags/*

‘Having renounced life and death, one who is known as Vajra Vidyādhara, in the supreme place of *'ja' gur pad ma dra wa* (“rainbow tent lotus field”), having been authorised by the Great Guru, having obtained this highly secret direct introduction, in order to stabilise the lives of the greatest humans, I was not able to keep the secret, so I offer it.’

Remarks: The text follows the standard structure of a *sādhana* (*grub thabs*) starting with Refuge and Bodhicitta, visualisation, a dissolving phase, and a final dedication.

Text 26:

Front page: *Rdo rje snying po las cong zhi'i bcud len bla ma'i snyan brgyud dri ma med pa bzhugs so*

From 'The vajra essence: the lama's stainless oral transmission on calcite *bcud len*'

Author: Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1597-1650)

Source: In *Rdo rje snying po sprin gyi thol glu*, vol. 2: 747 - 751. Accessed through TBRC W13780.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b: 6 lines. 3a: 2 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A *bcud len* practice using *byang sems dkar po*, *byang sems dmar po* and *dam rdzas* (*samaya* substances). Ideally, one should obtain the lama's semen from his union with a consort or if this is unattainable, the lama's hair or saliva. First one cleans thoroughly and then grinds finely all these ingredients: calcite, *sindhura*, a substance from the *rgya skyegs*, the head of a 'bri and bamboo sap. The text says offerings should be made with the fragrance of the 'six excellent substances' and garments sealed with the letter A. Having completed the outer, inner and secret preliminaries, one sounds *HŪM* and the outer appearances merge into the pills. Recalling all the Victorious One's kindness in the form of light, one recites the three syllables, the one hundred syllables of Vajrasattva and the *Alkali* Sanskrit alphabet with the seal of nondualistic direct perception. Once again, all outer worldly appearances merge into the A and dissolve into light, which then dissolves into the pills. These are consecrated as before (with mantras), and one imagines that all worldly appearances dissolve into the *HRĪH* of

Amitāyus and that the light rays from the *HRĪḤ* strike the pills and dissolve into them. Again, one consecrates the pills, visualising lights coming from the *HŪM*, imagines that the lama's body, speech and mind dissolve into the pills. The signs of the practice will appear in dreams and all obstructing and illness-causing spirits will be completely cleared. Strength and might will increase. The power of the three realms gathers and one's lifespan will be (as lengthy) as the sun and moon and other unimaginable virtues will be gained.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus. The *bcud len* ingredients: *byang sems dkarpo*, *byang sems dkar po*, *dam rdzas*, the lama's semen from his union with a consort, or at least the lama's hair or saliva; *cong zhi*, *sindhura*; *rgya skyegs*; a'bri's head; and bamboo sap. One also makes offerings with the fragrance of the 'six excellent substances'.

Colophon: There are no details about the text's transmission, which ends with a list of the practice's benefits. With no details about the text's origins it is difficult to speculate, however one might hypothesize Indian influences, given the presence of Amitāyus and of the Sanskrit alphabet. The 'bri's head in the recipe however is distinctly Tibetan.

Remarks: The strong degree of devotion felt toward the Guru figure and the blessings believe to derive from one's Guru are made very clear in this text.

Text 27:

Front page: *Dam chos sprul sku snying thig las bstan srung chen po legs grub rdo rje yab yum gyi 'chi med tshe'i bcud len zab mo bzhugs so*

From 'The innermost essence emanation (of) noble Dharma, the profound *bcud len* of immortality of the great Dharma protector Legs grub rdo rje in *yab yum*'

Author: Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615-1672)

Source: Bdud 'dul rdo rje pad ma rgyal mtshan. *Bstan srung chen po legs grub rdo rje yab yum gyi 'chi med tshe'i bcud len zab mo*. In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'dul rdo je. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997, vol. 5: 555 -561.

Accessed through TBRC W22123.

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 4 lines. 3a-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 5 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A *ril bu* (pill) *bcud len* text with three methods, consisting of the visualisation of the deity, mantra recitation and intense focus. One transforms into Siṃhamukhā and, after reciting a mantra, visualises receiving blessings from Amitāyus, Samantabhadra and Guru Rinpoche. The practice concludes with a week of silent meditation and there follows a list of signs of attainment that could occur in dreams. The signs that may occur in dreams signifying attainment of the practice include: copious quantities of falling water, a shining sun and moon, washing oneself, wearing new ornaments and clothes, finding swords and other types of weapons, dreaming of mountains and holy places, fire blazing from one's own body or blood and pus issuing forth or seeing the Noble Ones and beautiful women offering one food, clothes and ornaments. The final paragraph lists a lengthy list of ingredients for the pill, including calcite, various flowers and meat.

Main deity and main substance employed: One transforms into Siṃhamukhā. Blessings are received from Amitāyus, Samantabhadra and Guru Rin po che. The pill contains a variety of ingredients: *cong zhi*, *bzang po drug*, *byang sems dkar po*, *byang sems dmar po*, *rtaḡ tu ngu*, *a ru ra*, *ba ru ra*, *skyu ru ra*, various (unspecified) flowers, meat.

Colophon: (f.561, line 4) *bdag 'dra bdud 'dul rdo rje yis/ tsha ba sgro brag ces tsit ta ga nam langs 'dra ba'i mgul nas gdan drangs pa'o/ shog ser ngos nas dag par phab pa'i yi ge ba ni bstan 'dzin no/ sar ba mang ga lam.*

‘I, Bdud ’dul rdo rje, retrieved this *gter ma* at Tsha ba sgro from the boulder called Tsit ta gnam langs ’dra ba (“The Dawning of the Mind”). It was accurately transcribed from a yellow scroll by Bstan ’dzin.’

Remarks: The week of silent meditation following the main practice is a rarely seen feature in *bcud len* practices.

Text 28:

Front page: *Dam chos sprul sku'i thig las: 'gro don las tshogs zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*

From ‘The sphere of the noble Dharma’s emanation body: the stainless nectar *bcud len* practice for benefitting sentient beings.’

Author: Bdud ’dul rdo rje padma rgyal mtshan (1615-1672)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Bdud ’dul rdo rje. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997, vol. 11: 475 – 490. Accessed through TBRC W22123.

Folios: 1a-8b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b: 4 lines. 2a: 6 lines. 2b: 4 lines. 3a-8a: 6 lines. 8b: 1 line.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A ‘stainless nectar *bcud len*’ known ‘in the language of India’ as *ro dhanati amṛta*, and in Tibetan as *sbrang zil rtag tu ngu*. This predominantly medical *bcud len* offers very specific remedies for a wide variety of illnesses, including the cold ones, the restoration of youth and protection from negative spirits and disease.

The teaching is divided into topics. First, its origin, then the places where the flower can be found, its characteristics, how and when to gather the ingredients, the methods of compounding it (and additional ingredients and their specific purposes), how to consume the concoction, its benefits, and finally the meditation.

As regards the origins; the practice was first mentioned by Buddha Śākyamuni to *dākinī* in the sacred place called Dan ta. Then the wisdom *dākinī* hid it and Guru Rin po che went to Dur khrod bde byed brtsegs (‘Enchanting Mound Cemetery’, one of the main eight charnel grounds), and retrieved it. He transmitted it to eight yogins who benefitted from this *bcud len* and Padmasambhava himself accomplished the immortal *vidyādhara*. He concealed the teaching, unsuitable for that time, entrusting it to ’Jo mo mtsho rgyal and to ’Broq ban lo tsa wa khrom pa rgyan who in the future would reincarnate as Bdud ’dul rdo rje and rediscover it.

The text states that the flower can be found in abundance at ’Thing po nying ldan and at Guru Rin po che holy sites. The root looks like ginger or onion with fine hairs and very thin petals and pistil. The flowers come in five colours, the white, yellow and blue ones represent Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapani and Mañjuśrī. While other plants have no dew, *rtag tu ngu* has dew on it all the time and is constantly circled by bees. It possesses compassion nectar, which helps us avoid suffering hunger and thirst.

The time to gather the flower is when the pea flower and bean plant are bright. The flower should be collected in autumn, when grass is being cut, at the time of the *rgyal* and *phur* constellations, or at special holy times. When gathering the flowers, the name of Guru Padmasambhava as Medicine Buddha is recited. A specific mantra should be recited one hundred times when picking the flower, which should be collected by a young girl possessing all the (unspecified) characteristics.

Instructions on preparing the nectar when the flower is picked: it should be dried and crushed into a powder to which butter and honey is added. Pills should be made the size of a finger joint bone. The *bcud len* should be mixed with the five fleshies and alcohol. One should not take excessive amounts of the pill and a prayer should accompany the practice.

Elaborate instructions are given for visualisations of Guru Padmasambhava and Amitāyus at the top of the head; at the forehead, Mañjuśrī; at the throat, Avalokiteśvara. At the heart, one visualises one's own root master, then oneself as Vajrapani. Streams of nectar pour into one's body and a supreme blissful experience is imagined.

The text indicates diseases against which this *bcud len* practice can be applied with benefit and specific recipe modifications are suggested for particular ailments and imbalances.

The text states (f. 483) that the recipe of the *rtag tu ngu bdud tsi lha dbang rgyal po* was transmitted by the *dākinīs* to Guru Rinpoche. The *nāga* king gave Padmasambhava the *dbang lag* one. The 'three *a ru ra*' recipe was offered by Indian *ṛṣi*. The fourth one, a calcite *bcud len*, he received from the *dākinīs*.

When the pills are made and dried they are placed in a human skull and covered with a red mirror. The practitioner self-visualises as Vajravārāhī, and recites a mantra while visualising that all the powers of the universe dissolve into the pills. These can be consumed three each day. The number can gradually be increased. The Mañjuśrī mantra and others should be recited for at least seven days or better two months. When reciting and taking the pill, the practitioner becomes like Jamyang himself. Several variations, using different ingredients for specific ailments are explained.

Another recipe with a different empowerment method starts on f. 488. Using raw sugar and avoiding all poisonous flowers, one mixes in several ingredients, including Indian *a ru ra*, *dbang lag*, blood and intestines [of an unidentified source], rice powder. Consuming the powder of these medicines for three months, three times a day, one visualises oneself as Rdo rje khro lod: at the heart Padma drag po tsal's body is red and in his right hand he holds a curved knife and in the left hand a *kapāla* filled with the *bdud rtsi* of all these ingredients. With the knife he severs the life channel in the upper trunk; he also splits the *cakra* of the practitioner's heart where there is a syllable *YAM*. Then, one takes a spoonful of the nectar and visualises that the nectar powder is falling all over one's body and one's nose, spreading within the body and filling the *cakras* and channels. Again, the upper life channel is severed and the mind no longer focuses on one object. If the mind is concentrated on one thing, a prayer is offered to one's masters, and one makes the *maṇḍala* offering to them seven times. In this way, all diseases and harm from malign spirits disappear.

Main deity and main substance employed: Several deities and ingredients are present, however; the main ones are Vajrayoginī and *rtag tu ngu*.

Colophon: (f. 489, line 4) *Bdag 'dra rig 'dzin bdud 'dul rdo rje yis/ tsha ba brag cas tsi tta ga nam langs 'dra ba'i mgul nas gdan drangs pa'o/ bde chen 'pho ba chen po'i sku 'grub pa/ bi ma mi tra dngos snang sgyu ma'i gar/ zla bral rtsod med zhing 'dir yongs grags pa/ rnam dag brig le 'od sku bde ba'i gar/ 'gro ba'i mgon po chos kyi bdag po mchog/ lha btsun nam mkha' 'jigs med des bskul ngor/ bdag 'dra bdud 'dul rdo rje yis/ rgyas dar chos sding po brang yang dben du/ shog ser rnam dkar ngos phab/ yi ge'i ris byed bstan pa rgya mtsho'o/ chos 'di ci srid bskal pa ma stongs kyi bar du ma rdzogs so/ manga lam//*

‘I Bdud ’dul dorje discovered this text from *tsha ba sgro* boulder, which is like the dawning of the mind. In accordance with the request of the great transference body Vimalamitra, his illusory magical manifestation Lha btsun nam kha’ ’jigs med, known as an incomparable scholar who enjoys the totally pure light body essence, the supreme teacher protecting beings. I, Bdud ’dul dorje, wrote down this text in the palace of Rgyas dar chod sding, on a totally pure yellow scroll to foster beneficial activities. The scribe is Bstan pa rgya tsho. This teaching will remain until the eon is exhausted.’

On f. 477 there is an account of the practice’s origins, which I have reproduced in the above content summary.

Remarks: The first instance where a recipe includes intestines. This ingredient reappears in Text 54. On f. 476 the text recounts how these instructions were first practiced by Padmasambhava in a cemetery. As discussed in the essay introducing this compendium, those early charnel ground *bcud len* practices may be the first *bcud len* instructions that Padmasambhava received and practiced.

Text 29:

Front page: *Zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal las: bcud len rdo rje’i chu ’thung*

From ‘The profound Dharma essence expanse of self-clarity: the *bcud len* of drinking vajra water’

Author: Gar dbang rdo rje (1640-1685)

Source: In *Rdor sems thugs kyi me long dang zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal*. New Delhi: *Rta rna bla ma*, 1974, 427-432. Accessed through TBRC W30347.

Folios: 1a-3b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-3b: 6 lines. 3b: 1 line.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The penis is made erect, and when engaged in the sexual act, one practises purifying the sperm. Instructions are given for overcoming attachment to sex. The practitioner is told first to remain alone for seven days, refraining from engaging in any sexual act. Then, when joining in union with the consort, sperm should not be lost. Again when bliss is imminent, one should abandon it. Finally when sperm is about to issue it should be pulled back in. The *vajra* (penis) becomes round, able to divide water and milk. The essence of the *yum* is collected from the *vajra*.

If one seeks the Mahāmudrā with a consort, one should practice for seven days. After massaging the consort's breasts, one embraces her and engages in union. Types of vaginas are described; 'sometimes they look like an elephant's trunk, sometimes like a lotus . . .'

Controlling ejaculation, the union is gentle and 'the red and white arise from making love'. The *rig pa* can be established in different ways; either by remaining still, moving a little, or moving more actively. One visualises the clear pure red of the *yum* entering through the *vajra* and dissolving into the *HAM* syllable at the heart. This should be practised repeatedly. Attachment must be eradicated from one's thoughts. Practising again, the consort's vagina is opened slowly. The union is imagined as an illusion. This way of thinking leads to happiness and the obtainment of all the qualities of the Buddha.

Main deity and main substance employed: No specific deities, but the seed syllable *HAM* is visualised. Genital secretions are the main substance employed.

Colophon: (f. 432, line1) *Sprul sku rig 'dzin gar dbang rdo rje mang yul byams srin nas spyang drangs pa 'o//*

‘Sprul sku Rig ’dzin Gar dbang rdo rje retrieved this (teaching) from the “Loving Kindness Cloud of Mang Yul”.’

Remarks: A sexual practice to generate energy, instructing on how to unite with a consort with the purpose of extracting female essence. It is the first sexual practice found in this compendium and one of its aims is for the practitioner to work on his attachment by deeming the union illusory.

Text 30:

Front page: *Bcud len rdo rje'i chu 'thung*

The *bcud len* of drinking *vajra* water

Author: Blo bzang don grub (1696-1756)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang don grub. Chengdu: Lho nub mi rigs par khang, 2006, vol. 2: 371 - 379. Accessed through TBRC W11128.

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 2 lines. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b: 5 lines. 3a: 6 lines. 3b-5a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: As regards the origins of the practice, it is said that the great Brahmin Saraha transmitted the practice to Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, at the great cemetery of Dpal gyi rgyu skar rol ba (‘The Glorious Enjoyment of Stars’).

The teaching is divided into three parts: *sbyor ba* (preliminaries); *dngos gzhi* (the practice itself); and *mjug* (the dedication).

As to the preliminaries, one goes to a place with water, with no sinful people or malign spirits guarding the land. The water should not be stagnant, swirling or turbid.

Ideally, it should be purificatory or snow water; otherwise, fast flowing water or, at the very least, slowly flowing water. One takes refuge and offers a *gtor ma*.

Water should be placed in a vessel without cracks before generating *bodhicitta*. Visualising oneself as a *yidam*, one recites a mantra (f. 374, line 3) and purifies the water. From emptiness, the syllable *BHRŪM* appears and the water is imagined as nectar. On a sun and moon disk, on a lotus on the water, sits Saraha, blue in colour. He is joined in union with his consort Sangs rgyas mkha 'gro. One dissolves the visualisation and imagines joining their state.

As for the *ngos bzhin*, the practice itself (f. 375, line 3): reciting a mantra twenty-one times, one imagines that all the water's faults are purified; one then recites another mantra twenty-one times and blows on the water, ridding it of harmful parasites.

One visualises being surrounded by deities: to the right a white nectar goddess holding a vase; behind, a red Rje btsun ma; to the left a blue *ḍākinī* holding a curved knife. She cuts one's body in half, slicing the heart in two and opening the three channels. The *ḍākinī* behind takes the upper half of one's torso. The nectar goddess on the right pours nectar into the practitioner's body from her vase, completely filling the three channels with nectar. The *ḍākinī* behind reattaches the two divided parts of the body, returning it to its former state. The whole body is filled with nectar. The nectar overflows from the crown of one's head, where, in the middle of a four-petalled lotus is the Brahmin Saraha, embraced by his consort Sangs rgyas mkha 'gro.

Further details are given for the visualisation of other deities (a blue *heruka* embracing Vajravārāhī) surrounded by buddhas and bodhisattvas. All deities dissolve into the water that one now drinks, imagining one's whole body filled with nectar that enters through the mouth and exits from ears and nose. This pacifies all sufferings of

hunger and thirst. One can practice yogic exercises. One meditates on equipoise with one's mind.

The *rjes kyi bya ba*, instructions on the conclusion of the practice are given (f. 377, line 6). A long list of the benefits for the practitioner's body, energy and mind are listed.

Main deity and main substance employed: Brahmin Saraha in union with Sangs rgyas mkha' 'gro. Water empowered by visualisations and mantras is the sole substance used.

Colophon: (f. 379, line 4) *'Di lta bu'i gdams pa khyad par can gyi brgyud pa ni/ he ru ka/ sa ra ha/ dam pa sangs rgyas/ kun dga'/ dam pa 'phyar chen/ ko brag pa/ gdung stor dge bshes/ Dharma shri/ rang 'byung rdo rje/ rgyal mtshan dpal/ tshul 'khrims dpal ldan/ dpal ldan 'don grub/ rgyal dbang chos rje/ bkra shis dpal ba/ shes rab rgya mthso/ des kho bo la'o//*

'As for the transmission lineage of the practice: the lineage of this teaching comes from Heruka, Saraha, Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, Kunga, Dampa 'phyar chen, Ko brag pa, Gdung stor dge bshes, Dharma shri, Rang 'byung rdo rje, Rgyal mtshan dpal, Thsul 'khrims dpal ldan, Dpal ldan 'don grub, Rgyal dbang chos rje, Bkra shis dpal ba, Shes rab rgya mthso; from them down to me.'

Remarks: There are similarities with Text 6, both being water *bcud len* practices with Saraha at the texts' origin. In both texts *ḍākinī* are visualised filling the practitioner's body with nectar. This particular text however contains more elaborate practices; if both texts came from the same original source it would be an interesting example of how the practice evolved over time.

Text 31:**Front page:** *Nam mkha'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thur ma zhes bya ba bzhugs*The sky *bcud len* of the spoon of nectar**Author:** Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1697-1740)**Source:** In *Gsung 'bum*. Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. Leh: T. Sonam & D.L. Tashigang, 1983-1985, vol. 6: 173 – 176. Accessed through TBRC W22130.**Folios:** 1a-3a**Script:** *dbu can***Layout:** 1a: 1 line. 2a: 4 lines. 2b: 5 lines. 3a: 5 lines.**Dating:** Unspecified**Content:** This 'sky *bcud len* of the spoon of nectar' has two sections; the preliminaries and the practice itself.

The *ngondro* is said to both purify negative circumstances and establish positive conditions. For the former purpose, one exhales the stale air three times, imagining all the outer and inner negative circumstances having been purified. Visualising the lama on the crown of one's head, devotion is paid to the lama as the essence of all the Buddhas of the three times.

The second part (on the main practice) has four subsections: first, one imagines oneself as a *dākinī* of the Buddha family, blue in colour. Further instructions follow on visualising one's body with three *nāḍi* and five *cakras* at its centre. Gazing upwards, the essence of the sky enters the practitioner's central channel through the path of the *ro* and *rkyang*, filling the *nāḍi* and body to the brim. The air is sealed in vase breath retention.

In the second section, one imagines that the outer sky dissolves into the inner sky and remains in the equanimity of contemplation.

In the third subsection, one imagines that the outer world as Mount Meru melts into the outer sky dissolving into the inner sky.

In the fourth section one mentally transforms into a luminous deity, the *nāḍi* and *cakras* are radiant and the two skies, outer and inner, become one. Rest in a state of equanimity.

Finally, the virtues are dedicated and the benefits are listed. If practiced continuously one can effortlessly liberate and achieve the body of light; it is said the nature of the mind is the essence of the immense sky.

Main deity and main substance employed: A blue *ḍākinī* of the Buddha family. *Prāṇa*.

Colophon: f. 76, line 3 *Kun bzang pad ma dbang gi sras/ bde chen por mos la byin/ ces pa'ang bzhad pa'i rdo rjes gnas mchog pad ma bkod kyi snying ga chos kyi 'khor lo'i dben gnas su sbel ba'o//*

‘To the heart disciple Kun bzang Pad ma dbang who desired great bliss, I Bzhad pa'i rdo rje spread it in the supreme place at the heart of Pad ma ko, in the hermitage of “the wheel of the Dharma” (*chos kyi 'khor lo*).’

Remarks: A more essential practice in that it does not contain many visualisations and no ingredients, focusing on merging inner and outer space and awareness.

Text 32:

Front page: *Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus dag snang du stsal ba'i thabs kyi lam mchog nyi zla'i bcud len dang brgyad 'debs*

The supreme path of skillful means given through the pure vision of Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus: the sun and moon *bcud len* and the eight supplements

Author: Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1697- 1740)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. Leh: T. Sonam & D.L. Tashigang, 1983-1985, vol. 12: 363 – 370. Accessed through TBRC W22130.

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a: 5 lines. 2b-5a: 6 lines.

Dating: The author tells of when he composed the text, in eastern Tibet, in the male Iron Dog year at the age of thirty-four (therefore in 1730) on the twenty-ninth day of the fifth month, between the full moon of the fifth moon and the middle of the sixth moon.

Content: The first two folios (f. 364-365) contain supplications to these masters, starting from Guru Samanthabadra, down to Ye shes mtsho rgyal and Nyi ma gzhon nus. The instructions on the practice methods start on f. 366.

The author describes (f. 367, lines 3-4) his visions of the goddess, ‘her beauty generates strong desire for her. Lying down, she shows her lotus, described as a source of desire water boiling forth. She invites the practitioner to a blissful time together, saying she is a yogini who practices secret sexual yoga, eliminating all the obstacles and harm of the three realms. . .’

There are three subdivisions to this ritual; the preparation *sbyor ba*, the actual practice *dngos gzhi* and the final *siddhis*.

In the preparation stage; one prepares a comfortable bed and the consort’s required qualities are described in detail. She should be a very attractive young adolescent, with a clean body and genitals that emanate a good smell and remain warm all the time. Her skin should be very soft and delicate, her complexion fair. Her voice is beautiful, she talks aimlessly and just by hearing her sweet voice she can turn any mind towards her.

She is fundamentally modest and not hypocritical in regard to sexual activities and she is not jealous, having a very kind heart. Once we have her, we should visualise her as the goddess Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus.

The main section, rife with explicit details on how to engage with the consort, starts on f. 368, line 1. Details on how to tease her with salacious words and jokes to excite sexual desire, including where to touch her and how to suck on her nipples are given.

During the sexual acts the *yogin* visualises himself as Chags pa rdo rje (the author), and the female practitioner as the goddess Nyi ma zhon nus.

Specific [although cryptic] instructions are given (f. 369). The male practitioner is instructed to thrust sideways, upwards and downwards, sometimes ‘in the manner an arrow is released from a bow’, or ‘how a lion does it to a lioness’. After that, to rub his genitals on the face, in the way one applies oil. Anthropomorphic literary elements appear and one is told to ‘extend your body like a lion, engage like a fish, do it like a tortoise’. One generates and keeps that blissful, inexpressible experience.

Sperm should not be lost. If lost and one is not familiar with the techniques to retrieve it or how to reverse and spread it (within the body), then the ejaculation is visualised as an offering.

After ejaculation, one does not exit immediately but stays inside and feels the female blissfulness without exiting. With the tongue, the male sucks the mixture and inserts the ring finger and tastes it. This is the supreme *bcud len* mixture and it helps to remove any kind of obscuration.

(f. 369, line 4) The third section is on the ending of the practice. Once sexual intercourse is completed, there should not be immediate separation but embracing, and

one should apply to the female's navel, the lower part of her body and her mouth and genitals, specified herbs such as musk and cumin, mixed with sesame oil. Additionally, fat collected from vulture, sparrow, duck and donkey can be boiled and blended and applied to male and female genitals. This helps to make them very warm and to gain ultimate blissfulness during sexual intercourse, and makes them very strong.

(f. 370, line 1) Further advice is given on other medical conditions. Mixing donkey fat with ginger and *pi pi ling* (long pepper) and cloves into oil and applying it to the back and stomach helps one recover from any cold diseases. After rising and separating from the consort one should eat delicious food with her, avoiding tiring activities or aggressive behaviour and emotions like sadness and anger that might diminish the blissful experience generated.

One should avoid people who break Vajrayāna vows; if with them by chance, one should perform the purification ritual for oneself. Admissions of wrong doing need to be expressed.

Main deity and main substance employed: Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus. One tastes the sexual fluids resulting from the union.

Colophon: (f.370, line 5) *ces gsungs/ rdo rje'i gsung nying bcos med du/ chags pa rdo rjes yi ger bkod/ gang zhig rgyo yi chog las/ byang chub 'dod rnams 'dir ltos shig/ dge 'dis snang srid ma lus pa/ rgyo yi 'khor lor 'char ba dang/ rang rig rang so zin pa yis/ cham gcig 'od skur grol gyur cig/ lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus gsungs pa'i thabs lam gyi le'u tshan no//*

‘These are the genuine, very secret *vajra* words written down by Chags pa rdo rje. Anyone who wants to reach liberation through sexual intercourse should engage in this practice. May this work's virtues liberate all beings without exception in the body

of light with self-awareness and self-confidence as soon as they engage in this practice. This completes the section on the method of *bcud len* taught by Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus.’

Remarks: An interesting description of the manner in which this *bcud len* practice was received in a pure vision, from the goddess Lha cgig nyi ma gzhon nus, is provided, giving the reader an insight into how the practices can come into being. Like the practice in text 29, these instructions teach how to maintain awareness during moments of intense bliss.

An important practice for those who seek liberation through sexual intercourse, the text states that this ‘sun and moon’ (referring to male and female essence) *bcud len* is the supreme *bcud len* mixture and that consuming it helps to remove any kind of obscuration. Text 54 also instructs the yogi to eat this mixture.

Text 33:

Front page: *Bden tshig smon lam 'chi med grub pa'i bcud len*

A truthful aspirational prayer for a *bcud len* to attain immortality

Author: Bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1697- 1740)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. Leh: T. Sonam & D.L. Tashigang, 1983-1985, vol. 3: 471 - 473. Accessed through TBRC W22130.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-3a: 6 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: An aspirational longevity prayer.

The text describes how the eight classes of *dharmapāla* have made the lives of the supplicants shorter. In particular, Dkor bdag rgyal po [the *dharmapāla* who decreases lifespan] has taken, stolen and shortened our lifespans.

From the palace of the *ḍākinī* realm, the main *ḍākinī* ‘Dod khams ma is invited from the *ḍākinī* paradise, De mchog gsang ba palace, along with her retinue and messengers, to bestow immortality.

Sounding *OM ĀḤ HŪM* the practitioner summons the entire essences of gods, *nāgas*, humans and the core essence of the four elements (wind/fire/water/earth) from the essence of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. All virtuous activities are summoned uninterruptedly.

Then Bzhad pa’i rdo rje’s prayer begins, invoking all *ḍākinīs* to remove all obstacles, inner, outer and secret, and invoking the powers to see all one’s *vajra* brothers as a *maṇḍala*.

Here is a paraphrase of an excerpt of the invocation:

‘May I always be inseparable from all *dharmapālas* who are helping to preserve Dharma teachings. May they always be with me, day and night, and protect me. May I always continue to make offerings and may they continue always to enjoy those offerings. May all the buddhas and *ḍākinīs* who have realised the union of bliss and emptiness always be victorious. May a new auspicious sun shine on us. May I reach the summit of *samsāra* and may my fame spread in the ten directions. May I raise the victory banner. When the perfect hundred-petalled white lotus blossoms may one find the honey essence of virtuous activities. May the clear light realised by all the various gods and Dharma protectors like a bee [imbued in pollen] spread thoroughly throughout the oceans and forests.’

Main deity and main substance employed: The *dākinī* 'Dod khams ma. No substances.

Colophon: (f. 473, line 3) *Ces 'od gsal lha'i gdud las nye 'og gi rgyal po chen po'i rigs kyi btsun mo yid bzhin rnam rgyal dbang mo'i sku tshe'i 'gal rkyen sel thabs kyi bden tshig smon lam du mkha' 'gro dga' ba'i lang tshos sol byung du smras sarba rdza aryu//*

‘The queen Yid bzhin rnam rgyal dbang mo had a life obstacle. Her husband was the king of Nye 'og whose forefathers descended from the gods of clear light. To remove the obstacles to her lifespan this aspirational prayer was spontaneously said by Mkha' 'gro dga' ba'i lang tshos.’

Remarks: It differs from other *bcud len* texts in that no substances are employed, no yogic breathing exercises are carried out and one does not mentally transform into a deity. Instead, attention is directed to supplicating various divine beings and protectors, such as the Dkor bdag rgyal po who are deemed to have influences on the length of one's lifespan. For more on Tibetan concepts of lifespan see Gerke (2008).

Text 34:

Front page: *Phyi nang bdud rtsi'i bcud len*

The *bcud len* of the inner and outer nectar

Author: Tshul khriims Rin chen (1697-1774)

Source: In *Bstan 'gyur*. (Sde dge). Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982-1985, vol. 53: 76 – 78. Accessed through TBRC W23703.

Folios: 1a-2b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-2b: 7 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: ‘The inner and outer nectar *bcud len*’ (in the Indian language *Bahara antara amṛta kelpa nama*; in Tibetan *Phyi nang bdud rtsi’i bcud len*) is a pill practice said to extend life, remove illness and purify the body. After six months, it enhances natural wisdom and intelligence. After the homage paid to Vajrayoginī, the method of practice and the preparation of the medicine are explained. The *yogin* who wants to practise the outer yoga should purify the body with the five nectars: ‘Vairochana, Akṣobhya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, Amoghasiddhi abide in one’s body, but their practices are not known’.³³

Excrement is stirred with ‘*vajra water*’ (urine) and squeezed. For those with *rlung* problems it is mixed with molasses, for phlegm with *a ru ra*, *kyu ru ra* and *ba ru ra*. The excrement is dried in the shade, ground into fine powder and mixed with butter and honey. Stirred with urine it is made edible and taken. Meat and milk may be eaten but *chang* is renounced. It is said that the practice of *rnam snang* (excrement), was taught by the honourable Vairocana himself.

Human urine, mixed with milk and sugar, is cooled and drunk by the practitioner who by abandoning alcohol and women can accomplish this *bcud len* in six months. It is said that Vairocana taught the urine *bcud len*.

The text gives specific instructions for variations of this *bcud len* to be practised in accordance with different states of mind, seasons and different medical conditions.

³³ In this instance it appears that the five Dhyani Buddhas symbolize the five body fluids or *amṛta* (*bdud rtsi lnga*), which are: feces, urine, menstrual blood, semen and brains. In medicine *rnam snang* is a secret name for feces, *bskyod ba* refers to urine, *’byung ldan* refers to sperm, *don yon grub* to bone marrow and *’od dpag med pa* to menstrual blood. Dr. Sherab Tenzin, personal correspondence 5/11/14.

In the *bcud len* of Amitābha one takes liquorice, honey, butter, 'od dpag med pa (menstrual blood) and the three fruits. If these are mixed with calcite, all illnesses will disappear. One follows whatever advice the lama gives. After six months, the mixture can be taken along with boiled root of *ru rta*, *dkar gsum* and *mngar gsum*. Vahyira (Vairocana) is said to have relied on these and rocks. Instructions are given for a visualisation of the tutelary deity Vajravārāhī, one face, two hands, in the bodhisattva cross-legged stance, holding a nectar vase. Mantras are recited, and visualisations of seed syllables, lights and nectar filling the body are described in great detail.

The visualisations can vary according to the medical problem experienced by the practitioner. For *rlung* problems, the vase is imagined as filled with butter; for *mkhris pa*, epidemics or fever, one imagines the body being washed by camphor water; while those suffering from cold diseases should meditate on the power of heat medicines. If the mind wanders when meditating, an intelligent practitioner should recite *HRĪH*. The Bhari considers this the secret *bcud len*. 'Only the stable *yogins* will accomplish it'.

Main deity and main substance employed: Vajravārāhī. The substances used are the five nectars: Vairochana (excrement), Akṣobhya (urine), Ratnasambhava (blood), Amitābha (semen), Amoghasiddhi (flesh).

Colophon: (f. 78, line 5) *slob dpon bhya ris gsungs pa'i phyi nang gi bcud len gyi gdams pa rdzogs so/ rgya gar gyi pan di ta rat na pa las rang 'gyur du mdzad nas/ bshad rgyud kyi gdams pa bar ma chad par gsungs pa'o//*

'This completes the inner and outer nectar *bcud len* of Slob dpon Bha ri. The Indian *paṇḍita* Rat na pha la translated it [into Tibetan] without the help of a native speaker. The teachings of the oral lineage have been transmitted without interruption.'

Remarks: The focus of this practice is on the 'five nectars'; regarding the purpose of

utilising the five nectars, Garret (2010: 307) quotes Guru Chos dbang's *Bdud rtsi sman bsgrubs* that states that nectar elixirs subdue the five afflictive poisons of desire, anger, delusion, pride and envy. Besides this Garret (ibid: 314-315) explains and provides examples of instances in the Four Medical Tantras where human by-products are advocated as ingredients in recipes for a wide range of ailments and health benefits. More on the nature of the five nectars is said in the Glossary.

Text 35:

Front page: *Thams cad kyi dbang phyug gi bcud len nad thams cad 'joms shing lus kyi stobs rgyas par byed pa*

The all-powerful *bcud len* that overcomes every sickness and generates bodily strength

Author: Tshul khrim rin chen (1697-1774)

Source: In *Bstan 'gyur*. (Sde dge). Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982-1985, vol. 203: 34 - 35. Accessed through TBRC W23703.

Folios: 1a-1b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-1b: 7 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Mercury is the main ingredient. After purifying and refining it, several ingredients are added, such as wood and wood sap (*ku ma ra, kanti, kon, tsi tra, ma dza tsa*). In one who takes four pills, it is claimed, all illnesses will disappear. Sour foods, vegetables and sugar should be abandoned.

As for the benefits: taking four doses daily for six months one will have neither white hair nor wrinkles. One's life will be equal to the sun and moon. Weapons will

not harm one. One will be able to practise sperm retention with young women. For six months, if travelling on a boat, one will be protected from sinking.

Main deity and main substance employed: No deity visualised. Mercury.

Colophon: f. 35, line 2 *ha ri dho bar kyi rnal byor bas hi ba da sha dang urgyan pas butar bsgyur ba'o//*

‘The *yogins* of Haridhoba, Shi ba da sha and Urgyan pa, translated (it) at Buta.’

Remarks: Many typographical mistakes in the text make it barely comprehensible.

Dietary restrictions, such as avoiding sour foods, vegetables and sugar are advocated and could be noted for further research on the effects of foods in *bcud len* practices. The stated benefits appear to be more concerned with mundane rather than spiritual goals, although sperm retention (in the context of meditation and awareness of sensations) is not merely a mundane practice.

Text 36:

Front page: *Bla med sngags chos kyi snying po'i bcud len lam zab bdud rtsi'i thig le*

The heart of the *bcud len* of the unsurpassable mantra tradition, the nectar thigle of the profound path

Author: Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755)

Source: In *Gdams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: Shechen publications, 1999, vol. 15: 315 - 326.

Accessed through TBRC W23605

Folios: 1a-7a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b: 5 lines. 2a: 5 lines. 2b-6b: 7 lines. 7a: 6 lines.

Dating: The text was written in (an unspecified) year of the *bgrang bya rnga chen* (an

epithet for a male Water Dog year), on the tenth day of the waning moon of the fourth month.

Content: A rejuvenation practice associated with the Kālacakra.

The first section is on the generation and completion stages of Kālacakra; the second section is related to *prāṇāyāma*; the third section to *gtum mo* yoga; the concluding section is made up of a dedication and a colophon explaining who wrote the text.

In the first section, one pays homage to Kālacakra. One takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta*, seated in equipoise. All the outer and inner impurities are naturally purified into a state free from elaboration, which is the *maṇḍala* of the three complete bases (*ngo bo, rang bzhin, thugs rje* ‘essence, nature and compassionate activity’).

One visualises the pure self-manifested Kālacakra and his consort with all attributes and characteristics. A detailed description of their manifestation follows.

Their bodies blaze with five-coloured light rays of primordial wisdom fire. At the six *cakras* are the syllables *OM ĀḤ HŪM HOḤ SVĀ HĀ* in their respective colours: white, red, black, yellow, green, dark. Light rays radiate from the letters, spreading throughout the sky’s expanse, inviting lamas, *yi dams*, buddhas, bodhisattvas and *dharmapālas*. One visualises infinite offerings to delight them and as they dissolve they become indivisible from the practitioner. Then one fervently supplicates Buddha Kālacakra, essence of the three roots, asking to be freed from the fearful ocean of *samsāra*. Then joining palms and paying homage to Kālacakra three times, praising him, one recites viva voce that he is the dispeller of all obscurations, whose primordial wisdom body is blissful, so he may kindly bestow the empowerments for the union of emptiness and compassion, and so that one’s *bodhicitta* may become unchangeable.

From the small hairs between Kālacakra's eyes and those of his consort, white moonlight radiates, entering the forehead of the practitioner, whose outer and inner body is purified. One performs the activities of purification and attainment of the ripening and liberation related to the vase empowerment, which is like a joyful appearance.

One visualises that from their place of unification, the mixed red and white essences drop onto one's tongue and descend into the central channel filling the body. One executes the activities of purification and attainment of ripening and liberation related to the secret empowerment, which is the special enjoyment of fellow practitioners.

From the heart centre of the *yab yum* five-coloured light rays [similar to] silk-like threads dissolve totally into one's heart centre and cover one with a net of light rays. The activities of purification and ripening and liberation are carried out through the wisdom empowerment, which is the enjoyment of supreme Dharma attainment.

From the heart core of the *yab yum* manifestation, the union of clarity and emptiness full of unchanging supreme bliss enters into the crown of one's head and dissolves into the heart centre. All related activities of manifestation and attainment of ripening and liberation connected to the fourth empowerment, the *nyer thob lhan dga'* are performed.

One remains in meditative equipoise, in single-pointed focus as much as possible. This is the empowerment of meditation.

Next, above one's head, one visualises Kālacakra with his consort. They dissolve into light, and one's three gates become one with the stainless primordial Buddha Kālacakra. One abandons all thoughts and stays in meditative equipoise as much as possible. If thoughts arise, one recites the Kālacakra mantra to disperse them. Lights

radiate from Kālacakra's heart and all appearances become purified in clear light.

Everything becomes a great enjoyment of primordial wisdom.

Concluding section (f. 321, line 5): all the appearances of the Pure Land and the deities dissolve into light, as does one's manifestation of Kālacakra *yab yum*. Everything becomes one fine dot and then disappears. Again one manifests as Kālacakra; if one wants to meditate on the completion stage one should meditate free from mental elaborations, seated in the six-fold posture, with a straight back, clearing the stale air, relaxing the breath, eyes slightly open, mouth slightly open, body immobile.

At the time of practising, even if empty forms appear one does not pursue them but looks at the sky. As for concentration, when there are no empty appearances one experiences them and the sky as the same.

All the appearances we conceive of as permanent are perceived as empty. One conceives the mind as empty, natural, clear light. These aspects are concepts with no confusion, the aspects of Mahāmudrā. That is the complete pure primordial Buddha.

In this way, whether one is familiar or not with this, while keeping the breath relaxed, one does the *vajra* breath recitation as much as possible while controlling the *prāṇā*. In this way *kumbhaka* is accomplished. Then, one performs *vajra* recitation without interruption, practising *gzhil ba* (a type of breath retention), inhaling, holding and releasing. In this way the uniting of *prāṇā* connected with *vajra* recitation becomes unique. This is the mingling of *prāṇāyāma* and empty appearances.

By the power of *prāṇāyāma* the *prāṇā* enters, stays and dissolves in the central channel below the navel. Again, this process (entering, staying and dissolving) should be done at the other, upper and secret, *cakras*. Having attained stability one can attain the first *bhūmi*. Hold in this way. There are also separate pith instructions, but many yogic masters claim that the *prāṇāyāma* instructions suffice.

If one is relying on the three *mudrās*, the ultimate fourth joy, or the recollection of the sixteen letters, will be accomplished. The qualities and the state of Vajrasattva are attained. To accomplish all of these, one should practice *gtum mo* diligently in this manner: visualising oneself as Kālacakra in *yab yum*, one carries out exercises with *prāṇā* and channels, visualising the *HAM* syllable. The *gtum mo* fire mingles with empty forms and has the special marvellous completion stage of the primordial Buddha. Milarepa also told Gampopa that if he practised this *gtum mo* meditation of the small A (*a thung*), then he would see the essence. At the end of the *gtum mo* session, dedicate merit.

Main deity and main substance employed: Kālacakra. *Prāṇā*.

Colophon: (f. 326, line 3) *Ces bla med sngags chos kyi snying po'i bcud len lam zab bdud rtsi'i thig le zhes bya ba 'di ni sgrub brgyud bstan pa'i mnga' bdag dpal ldan 'brug pa zhes snyan pa'i ba dang srid rtser 'phyo ba gang gi spyi phud yongs kyi 'dren pa 'jig rten dbang phyug gi sgyu 'phrul 'gog pa med pa'i rang gdangs rje 'gro mgon rin po che sprul pa'i sku mchog kun mkhyen rgyal dbang bka' brgyud phrin las shing rta'i zhal snga nas gong gi bka' stsal dgyes pa bsgrub pa'i slad du rang gi nyams len snying po dang mthun par rab byung bcu gnyis pa'i bgrang bya rnga chen gyi lo sa ga zla ba'i dmar phyogs kyi tshes bcu mkha' 'gro 'du ba'i dus bzang por kong yul zang kha lcags ri 'od gsal lding du rnal 'byor pa tshe dbang nor bu rdo rje dpal 'bar gyis sbyar pa sarba mangalam.*

‘As for the heart of the *bcud len* of the unsurpassable mantra tradition, it is the nectar *thig le* of the profound path. The holder of the practice lineage teaching is called Dpal Idan 'brug pa; he is renowned as at the peak of the world, the leader of the most eminent, the self-appearance of the ceaseless illusory manifestation of Avalokiteśvara,

the precious protector of beings. He is the supreme *nirmāṇakāya* form of Rje 'gro mgon Rin po che, the all-knowing Victorious One, Bka' brgyud phrin las shing rta from his teaching, in order to happily accomplish the previous instructions, matching with the essence of his own practice, in the twelfth year of the sixty-year cycle, in the *bgrang bya rnga chen* (an epithet for male Water Dog year), on the tenth day of the waning moon of the fourth month, at the excellent time when the *ḍākinīs* gather, in the Kong District at the place of Zang kha lcags ri 'od gsal lding, the yogin Tshe dbang nor bu rdo rje dpal 'bar composed this. *Sarva manga lam.*'

Remarks: The practice works with sensation, through visualisations, *prāṇā* manipulation and respiratory exercises. The text states how mastery over *prāṇā* is essential for spiritual progress and ends by stating that Milarepa told his disciple Gampopa that by practising *gtum mo* he would 'see the essence'. The practices contained in the first section on the generation and completion stage of Kālacakra indicate the importance attributed to sensations of pleasure connected with sexual experience. Since they are mentally constructed even those with celibacy vows can experience the sensations ensuing from them.

Text 37:

Front page: *Dpal rdo rje nag po chen po gur mgon dkar po 'i tshe sgrub 'khor 'das bcud len*

The life attainment of the glorious Mahākāla, the great white Panyjaranatha, the essence extraction of *samsara* and *nirvana*

Author: Kun dga' blo gros (1729-1783)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Kun dga' blo gros. Boudha, Kathmandu: Sa skya rgyal yongs gsung rab slob gnyer khang, 2008, vol. 5: 303 - 311. Accessed through TBRC W24054.

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-4b: 6 lines. 5a: 1 line.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: After paying homage, white Panyjaraṇatha is visualised in front of the practitioner.

Before engaging in the practice, one recites the Hevajra and Brag ljonṅ ma mantras.

In an isolated place and on a raised table one places *gtor ma*, pills and nectar. The *gtor ma* is human-shaped with lotuses on the four sides. A white *mda' dar* [ceremonial long life arrow] is placed next to the *gtor ma*. The main *gtor ma* is surrounded with four small *gtor ma*.

On the right side; the long life pills are placed. The thirty-five (unspecified) ingredients are set out and placed in the long life vase. Then a fine powder is made of all of these: saffron, juniper acorns, *ba lu*, *brag zhun*, red calcite, raw sugar and honey from red bees.

On the left side; a *kapāla* filled with *tshe chang* (long life alcohol). In front, watering bowls placed in two rows of seven.

The main practice;

When practising, one should complete either three or four sessions, keeping a *vajra* and bell before one. It is best to do this practice during the waxing moon. Mantras are recited to purify the substance. From the nature of emptiness the syllable A manifests and becomes an enormous and luminous *kapāla*. Inside it a syllable *HŪM* and from there the eight offerings (water, for drinking and for bathing, flowers, incense, light,

perfume and music) emerge. One performs *mudrās*, blesses the offered substances and rings the bell.

Now, as to the root text of Hevajra and Brag ljong ma, one recites and visualises from the taking of refuge until the part where the ten protector deities dissolve into one. All the substances are purified through recitation of mantras. From the nature of emptiness a sky-like blue light arises, from which a syllable *PAM* emerges and turns into a lotus. Above the lotus there is a syllable *RAM* that transforms into a sun disk. Above it, trampling on a dead corpse, stands white Panyjaraṇatha, looking as glorious as the sun shining over the mountains. His right hand holds a curved blade, the left a skull cup full of blood held at his heart. He has three widely opened eyes and a semi-wrathful expression. His moustache and hair are red and yellow and extend upward. He wears a crown with five wet human heads, a garland of human heads, human bone ornaments and snakes. He dons a tiger skin as a lower garment and on the torso, silks. He stands with the left leg extended; an *OM* at the forehead; an *ĀḤ* at the throat and a *HŪM* at the heart are visualised. From the *HŪM* a very bright light radiates in all directions, inviting all deities and in particular long life deities. All deities gather and now surround Panyjaraṇatha. Again lights radiate from the *HŪM*, inviting the power deities (*dbang gi lha*) and their retinues. Now, while reciting a mantra one pours the nectar from the vase on the crown of the head and imagines that all obscurations and negative karma are cleansed. Once purified one imagines oneself wearing a crown.

Again from the Panyjaraṇatha's *HŪM* syllable white lights radiate, collecting all the dispersed fortune and long life belonging to oneself, one's benefactors and friends, which return to the *HŪM*. Again, white lights radiate from the *HŪM* and all the power, potential, blessings, wisdom and life of sublime and sentient beings and of all material existence dissolve into the *HŪM* syllable.

Now, from the *HŪM* syllable nectar flows down and dissolves into one's body, into the three principal channels and the five *cakras*, and the 72,000 channels. The nectar spreads everywhere in the body, purifying all negative karma and dispelling darkness like the rising sun or moon. One feels blissful. As this visualisation is repeated, one contemplates in a nonconceptual state, at the same time reciting the mantra of Mahākāla. It can be recited 100 or 1000 times and a water stream is visualised continuously pouring down on one's body.

To conclude the practice one recites an aspiration prayer to Panyjaranatha, asking for protection and blessings for oneself, one's patrons and friends. Now one offers the *gtor ma*, recites mantras and does *mudrās* and visualisations of the eight offerings. The invocation to Panyjaranatha requesting the dispelling of negativity and problems and the granting of protection, merits, and wisdom is recited so that one may gain all the glory and fortune of the entire universe; and so that visualising the three syllables at one's three gates may be a cause to reduce accumulated karmic debts, and that one's mind may always be directed towards Dharma activities; and that assistance be granted in Dharma practice, so that one may be able to practise *bodhicitta* and to engage in Vajrayāna practice; and that one never be separated from one's teacher and to never have to face poverty; and so that one may practice Dharma in a joyful manner. At every moment may it bring auspiciousness!

Main deity and main substance employed: White Panyjaranatha. The main ingredients are saffron, juniper acorns, *ba lu*, *brag zhun*, molted iron, red calcite, raw sugar and honey from red bees.

Colophon: (f. 4b, line 6) *Sa skya pa nga dbang kun dga' blo gros bsam ye sman gong chos dgon bshur 'che kun dga' chos 'phel zhes bya ba bskul ba bzhin sbyar//*

‘I, the Sa skya pa Nga dbang blo gros, composed this in Bsam yas in the temple called Sman gong chos dgon as requested by Kun dga’ chos ’phel.’

Remarks: One of the few Sa skya texts found in this compendium. The text mentions how it is preferable to practise during the waxing moon. This has been reiterated in texts 40, 49 and by *emchi* Tenzin Sherab in conversation (see Chapter 5).

Text 38:

Front page: *Sku gsum bcud len*

The *bcud len* of the three bodies

Author: ’Jigs med gling pa (1729-1798)

Source: ’Jigs med gling pa mkhyen brtse ’od zer. *Sku gsum bdud rtsi’i bcud len*.

In *Gsung ’bum*. ’Jigs med gling pa. A ’dzom par ma ’brug spa gro la bskyar par brgya pa, vol.10: 303-305. Accessed through TBRC W7477.

Folios: 1a-2a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-2a: 6 lines. 2b: 5 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: ‘The *bcud len* of the three bodies’ is a teaching on the essence extraction of Dharmakāya, Saṃbhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya.

There are instructions on how to work with *prāṇa* doing a breath retention exercise, as well as a recipe for a concoction made with calcite stone and instructions on ingesting it. The last section is dedicated to the essence extraction ‘of the great barley’, where the practitioner is sustained on boiled barley alone. The benefits of the practice are listed.

Main deity invoked and main substance employed: The only mention of a deity is when one is instructed to transform into the ‘wrathful king’. Barley, (female) calcite, yak milk and fresh butter, camphor and honey are used.

Colophon: Not present.

Remarks: A straightforward text, it explains the practice in just a few paragraphs. It does not have long invocations to deities or masters of the lineage and is instructional and concise in nature. The subdivision according to the three *kayas* is similar structurally to that found in Texts 45 and 68.

Text 39:

Front page: *Me tog bcud len gyi gdams pa bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*

The nectar drop instructions on flower *bcud len*

Author: Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma. Lhasa: Zholpar khang gsar pa, 2000, vol. 5:153-162. Accessed through TBRC W21507. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O00CHZ0102865|O00CHZ01028653006\\$W21507](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O00CHZ0102865|O00CHZ01028653006$W21507)

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-5a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Praise is offered to Vajrayoginī. As for the origins of the practice: Vajrayoginī gave the practice to Pha dam pa Rinpoche (d.1117) who practised and lived for 577 years, accomplishing great yogic feats. It reached the author through Bla ma Skal bzang chos dbang who was born in Amdo and was taught by Bla ma Ngag dbang byams pa.

After receiving teaching directly from this lama he renounced everything and went to Mount Kailash, Skyid grong, and several sacred places. He sustained himself on *bcud len*. Later, he taught the instructions on the Stages of the Path in *Phyis su chu bar 'phan gling* and had several students.

The instructions are fourfold: on the appropriate adept, the motivations to practise, the appropriate times and the method.

The practice is for any religious person, whether a renunciate or a householder. Excellent candidates are those who discard 'the pleasures of Brahmā and Indra' and having experienced a wish to renounce, retreat to a hermitage. A destitute person wishing to learn or someone stricken by a severe illness is considered a candidate with 'lower aspirations'.

As for the motivation, one should not practice *bcud len* as a means to collect alms or out of miserliness wishing to preserve one's wealth. Doing so, one will turn into a hungry ghost, since if the practice is done with wrong intentions it will damage the body, leading one to perdition.

Regarding the time to practise, the best practitioner will practise all the time or when he cannot obtain alms (food).

Concerning the method, it has two aspects: the way of practising and its benefits. The former has three components: how to compound the substance, the practice itself, and how to complete it.

The compounding has two stages, making the pills and their consecration. Instructions on the first stage begin with the gathering. The pills are made from flowers in bloom, gathered on the eighth day of the month and on auspicious days, while reciting mantras, having bathed and put on new clothes. In the fields, while reciting the

mantras, one visualises oneself as Avalokiteśvara; at his heart a white *ḍākinī* appears, holding a *gri gu* and a *kapāla*, radiating infinite *ḍākinīs*, as the curved knife lops off the flower heads before they are collected.

Specific medical conditions require particular plants. For *bad kan*, one uses human flesh and the *ba lu* flower; for *mkhris pa*, the *rtag tu ngu pa*; for the ears the entire (unbroken flower) *ug chos me tog*; for the eyes the *g.yar mo thang* flower. If the above are not available, any flower that is not poisonous may be collected. The flowers are washed and well dried.

The pill will also contain *arura gser mdog*, *arura*, human flesh, and *dbang lag*. All of these are necessary, essential medicines. Whichever medicine is apt for the specific illness is used in the same measure as the *arura*. Ambrosia pills with seven benefits can also be added, and other blessed substances, honey and jaggery.

Pills the size of a large sheep dropping are made and placed in a precious *kapāla*. Offerings are made before the three jewels according to one's circumstances and the practitioner then sits in meditation, reciting the *SVĀ BHA HA* mantra. Instructions are given for visualising oneself as a white Vajrayoginī, standing on a corpse with her right leg stretched out. Glancing skyward, all the lineage lamas and all Buddhas arrive like clouds. They are attracted in the form of light and the rays dissolve into the pill, which turns into the ambrosia of uncontaminated wisdom. After reciting the mantra one thousand times one blows on the pills.

Secondly, the practice itself has four aspects: the process of consuming the pills, the revitalizing of the body, the removal of obstacles and the behaviour of the practitioner.

On taking the pills, it is said that doing the practice for the first time one should become accustomed gradually. The number of pills is slowly reduced over twenty-one

days, but at least one pill per day is taken while focusing on uncontaminated, blissful emptiness.

On the second aspect, physical revitalisation, the practitioner is instructed to go to the top of a mountain at dawn and while the sky is still grey and before the greyness vanishes, facing east, to eat the sky. This is to help prevent a loss of physical energy.

Third, on eliminating obstacles, the methods are connected particularly to *rlung* problems. One needs to know all methods from other sources to be rid of *rlung*.

Fourth, concerning behaviour, one should perform prostrations and circumambulations, reciting mantras. With the mind one visualises deities, otherwise *bad kan* illnesses may result. When practising this for twenty-one days to overcome illness, one tries to proceed without one's usual food for the first week. In the second week all illnesses might be overcome and in the third week, if relying on *bcud len*, energies will revive. If it is for other purposes, it will differ.

On ending this gradual process. If the practice is successful one is revitalised and becomes very strong. But it may be unsuccessful or inappropriate for some people. If this happens, one should not persevere and thereby endanger one's life.

Having concluded a (period of) *bcud len* practice, initially one has either tea or water with *tsampa* in it, gradually increasing the *tsampa* intake before returning to one's normal food. If one finds alms and overeats greedily, death may result. The benefits claimed are the alleviation of all diseases and a long life.

The practice is good for body, complexion and for ageing; it reduces white hair and wrinkles, protects from epidemics and infections and deters nits and lice. It increases one's intelligence and reduces dependence on the offerings of others and 'obtaining by inappropriate means'. People are compassionate and *ḍākinīs* gather.

Main deity and main substance employed: Avalokiteśvara, Vajrayoginī. *Arura gser mdog, arura, sha chen, dbang lag.* The following flowers: *ba lu, rtag tu ngu pa, aug chos, g.yar mo.*

Colophon: (f. 5a, line 5) *bcud len gyi gdams pa bdud rtsi'i thigs pa zhes bya ba 'di ni bya bral ba blo bzang chos kyi nyi mas rang gi slob ma dben par chas pa 'ga'zhig gis nye bar bskul ba la brten nas tshe blos btang gi thar ba don gnyer ba rnams la phan pa'i bsam pas kun nas bslangs te rgyal ba dge 'dun rgya mtsho'i gsung la rang gi bla ma'i zhal gyi man ngag gis brgyan nas chos grwa chen po dpal ldan 'bras spungs su yi ger bkod pa'o//*

‘This *bcud len* teaching called “A drop of nectar” was written by Bya bral ba blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma at the request of his students. He went to solitary places with the motivation of benefiting those who have let go of worldly concerns so as to pursue liberation. Supplementing the words of Gyal ba dge 'dun rgya mtsho with the pith instructions of my own guru, it was written at the great monastic institution of glorious 'Bras spungs.

Remarks: The remarks found at the beginning of the summary of contents, on who is an appropriate adept and on the motivations one should have for practising *bcud len* are noteworthy.

Text 40:

Front page: *Bcud len gyi ril bu bsgrubs nas spyod thsul dang zhabs brtan srub 'jug*
From the pill *bcud len* accomplishment on the behaviour and the prayer for the stability of life

Author: Dharma bha dra (1772-1851)

Source: in *Gsung 'bum*. Dharma bha dra. New Delhi: Tibet House, 1973-1981, vol. 2: 425 - 431. Accessed through TBRC W20548.

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b: 4 lines. 2a: 5 lines. 2b-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 4 lines.

Dating: Written on the seventeenth day of the tenth month of the (unspecified) Iron Tiger year.

Content: This longevity practice provides elaborate instructions on the preparation, empowerment and consumption of Amitāyus *bcud len* pills.

Homage is offered to Amitāyus prior to treating specific ailments. For wind problems *ra mo shag* is used; for bile, *rtag tu ngu*; for phlegm, calcite; for negative vital force in the body, *dbang lag*. To improve general physical health, *arura gser mdog* and *ra mo shag* are suggested. These are purified and detoxified, then poured through a sieve and boiled in another pot. Honey, calcite and cow's milk to make a broth are added. Next day, when solidified, the powders of *arura gser mdog*, *rtag tu ngu pa* and calcite, along with jaggery are blended in. Round pills the size of a rabbit's droppings are made and dried.

Secondly, having prepared the pills for their empowerment, pills are placed in a suitable *kapāla* on an altar. The front of the skull should be facing the practitioner and the *kapāla* covered with a cloth with a string of five-coloured threads attached to a *vajra*. The refuge prayer is recited. One purifies everything into emptiness, reciting a mantra. From the space of emptiness, on top of a throne of precious metals held up by peacocks, a lotus emerges from a *PAM* syllable. From the *A* syllable a moon seat emerges. On that moon throne is the *HRĪH* syllable, above which one visualises oneself

as a red Amitābha, hands in a meditative equipoise position, holding the longevity vase. One recites syllables and carries out visualisations leading to a state of unification with Amitāyus. The visualisations include wind energy, fire, a tripod with a human head, human flesh and urine, the meats of cow, ox and dog, blood, elephant flesh and semen emanating from the different syllables. Light emanates, wind blows, fire blazes, and all the ingredients in the *kapāla* dissolve into red and white nectar and bubble away. As further light emanates, the essence of the five elements, the longevity, fortune and charismatic power of all sentient beings, all the blessings of the bodhisattvas manifest. All these are summoned in the form of the five nectars with shining light and dissolve into the nectar in the *kapāla*. Reciting and visualising in that way, one recites *OM ĀH HŪM*, imagining that the three syllables dissolve into the wisdom nectar. The *siddhi* of immortality is bestowed. The practice is dedicated to the *lokapāla* (worldly protectors) and to 'Phrog ma (female *yakṣa*). One practises four sessions every day, ideally for seven days; the middle way is for five days or three days, or at the very least for one day.

Thirdly, having practised, instructions follow on how to consume the pills. 'The pills are not to be seen by anyone else. From the first day of the waxing moon, at dawn, one visualises oneself as Amitāyus and recites a mantra. One imagines the white *ḍākinī* appearing at the heart from the *HŪM* syllable. From the *HŪM* at the heart, light emanates and the essence of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is collected and dissolves into the nectar in the *kapāla*. The nectar overflows and from the three arteries at the heart it spreads through one's body, filling it and bestowing immortal life. Imagining this, one eats the pill'.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus. *Ra mo shag, rtag tu ngu; cong zhi, dbang lag; arura gser mdog*; honey and cow's milk.

Colophon: There are three separate sections relevant to the authorship and origin of the text.

(f.424, line 6) *tshul 'di ma gcig grub pa'i rgyal mo dang/ skyes mchog rgyal
mtshan dpal bzang thugs kyi bcud/ rim brgyud gdams pa'i 'phreng bas gsal byas pa/ ces
pa 'di yang Dharma bhadras sbyar ba'o/ ces pa 'di yang dge tshul ma skal bzang chos
skyid nas sngar gyi yun brtan tshigs bcad lnga po'i snyon mar tshigs bcad gsum pa zhig
dgos tshul nan cher byung ba bzhin/ bgrang yas bskal par mi 'gyur rtag brtan shog/
dang khyod zhal bdud rtis yongs brlan gdul bya'i son/ zhes pa'i bar du 'jug rgyur lcags
stag zla ba bcu pa'i tshe bcu bdun bzang por dhar ma bha dres sbyar pa'o/ mang ga
lam//*

In the above statements the author, before dedicating merit, explains that this lineage came from Ma gcig grub pa'i rgyal mo to the great noble one, Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang. He states it was written on the auspicious seventeenth day of the tenth month of the Iron Tiger year by Dhar ma bha dra.

Remarks: Elaborate visualisations are used to empower the pill. The empowerment process is lengthier and more detailed than the actual pill consumption stage, indicating the importance attributed to substance empowerment.

Text 41:

Front page: *Chu'i bcud len gyi gdams pa 'chi med rig 'dzin sgrub pa'i chu rgyun zhes
bya ba bzhugs so*

The instructions on water *bcud len*, called *the stream of attainment of the immortal vidyadhāra*

Author: Btsun pa ye shes don grub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1792-1855)

Source: In *Gdams ngag mdzod*. Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1979-1981, vol. 17: 311- 318. Accessed through TBRC W20877.

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 5 lines. 2b-4a: 7 lines. 4b: 2 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A water *bcud len* practised to obtain the *vidyādhara* state. Waters deemed suitable and unsuitable are listed; sea and lake water must not be drunk, nor water touched by sun or moon rays. Rainwater, snow water, water from slow-flowing rivers and from springs may be used. Water from glaciers is considered the best. Ganges river water is deemed medicinal, as tasty as nectar and by virtue of drinking it one's mind will become clearer.

Without taking food or other beverages, one partakes only of water, meditating on Vajravārāhī. Let the water boil. Mantras and visualisations of the three syllables are used to empower the water, which is imagined as nectar. Four *ḍākinīs* holding *kapālas* appear and from their secret places and *kapālas* the nectar descends. One visualises all obstacles, illness, hunger and thirst disappearing. If problems arise in meditation, one can do Yantra Yoga. One can also practise *gtum mo* (visualising) the sun at the belly and the moon at the head. Practising three sessions daily, one takes pills made with honey, butter and old bones. Rang byung dorje (the third Karmapa) recommends mixing them with *tsampa* so as not to disrupt eating habits suddenly. Once the practice is stable, one can partake of *chang* and meat.

The practitioner is instructed to visualise various letters in the four directions and to visualise the letter *PAṂ* at the throat to overcome thirst. To overcome cold, fire is

imagined at the forehead. To control the mind, the space element syllable is visualised. To overcome desire, one controls the *rlung* of the wind element by holding the breath in *kumbhaka*. For *rlung* problems one drinks bone soup.

The text concludes with a list of the benefits that should manifest in six months.

Main deity and main substance employed: Vajravārāhī. Pills made with honey, butter and old bones.

Colophon: 318/L2 *ces mang du thos pa'i btsun pa ye shes don grub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan gyis yig rnying rnams kyi bcud bsdus pa manga lam//*

Written by the erudite monk Ye shes don grub bstan pa rgyal mtshan, who gathered the essence from ancient documents.

The first folio is on the origins of the practice, explaining that it is linked to Nāropā, his disciple Maharipa and the four Ḍākinī Rohima. The instruction were given by the *dākinīs* and written down by Karmapa Rang byung Dorje, the third Karmapa. Linked to Saraha, this is an authentic *bcud len*.

Remarks: in these instructions, based on Text 6 by the third Karmapa, there are visualisations said to overcome physical and mental cravings, such as thirst, hunger and desire, suggesting how powerful mental visualisation are deemed to be.

Text 42:

Front page: *Rdo rje phag mo bcu gsum ma'i sgrub thabs dang rde'u bcud len gyi gdams pa gnyis*

The teachings on the method of attainment of Vajravārāhī and her thirteen-fold retinue, the secret instructions on entering the citadel of happiness

Author: Blo bzang nor bu shes rab (eighteenth century)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang nor bu shes rab. Beijing: Yellow Pagoda, 1996, 2: 307 - 321. Accessed through TBRC W23471.

Folios: 1a-8a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-8a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: There are instructions from Mi tra dzo ki to visualise oneself as Vajravārāhī, making inner offerings and reciting mantras. One visualises the state of emptiness; from the *YAM* syllable wind arises; from the *RAM* fire arises; from the letter *A* a human head on a tripod of three heads appears. From the *A* a *kapāla* arises, white outside and red inside, containing five meats and five nectars. One imagines an ocean of nectar, and recites *OM ĀḤ HŪM*.

The preliminary empowerment; reciting many mantras, one visualises a *kapāla* arising from emptiness and offers butter lamps, flowers, incense, and food, *gtor ma* and blessings to eliminate obstacles. At one's heart, one imagines a blue *HŪM* from which lights spread and return, inviting the deities from all directions, bringing their blessings. One offers the blessed *gtor ma* to the deities and recites mantras of supplication for help in one's practice.

Offerings are made to the self-generated deities as before. One takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta*. One transforms as Vajravārāhī and from the heart lights emanate, inviting buddhas and bodhisattvas. They dissolve into the heart and one is liberated from *samsāra*, bestowed with happiness.

The seven limbs of offering (*yang lag bdun*) are carried out; 1) prostration 2) making offerings 3) confession of wrongdoing 4) taking refuge and generating

bodhicitta 5) rejoicing 6) urging the turning of the wheel of Dharma 7) supplicating not to enter *nirvāṇa*.

One generates altruistic intentions and promises to engage in good deeds until enlightenment is reached. One should cultivate the Four Immeasurables: loving kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity.

Reciting the mantra one visualises a *HŪM* from which light shines creating a *vajra* tent surrounded by fire. A divine palace, square-shaped, with four doors. Inside the palace a red eight-petalled lotus upon which sits a red Vajravārāhī on a corpse and sun throne.

There is a detailed description of her retinue of thirteen deities; each one has an individual position and manner of sitting around Vajravārāhī at the centre. On top of the crown of the head of each deity is a white *OM* syllable, at the throat a red *ĀH*, at the heart a blue *HŪM*. Lights spread from the *HŪM* inviting the wisdom from each deity seated in their place, blessing the practitioner's body, speech and mind. One recites the mantra again and lights spread. Water is offered to the deities who are asked for their blessing. One imagines the body clean and purified. Reciting mantras one imagines making offerings, and praising Vajravārāhī with her various mantras.

One recites Vajravārāhī mantras and invites the thirteen deities, offers praise and *gtor ma* blessed with mantras for the prevention and overcoming of obstacles, dedicating all merits and praying for enlightenment.

To conclude the practice, lights spread from the practitioner's heart and strike the circle of protection that then dissolves. All deities dissolve into a seed at the heart. The practitioner also dissolves into this seed at the heart; this dot disappears like a rainbow in the sky.

Main deity and main substance employed: Vajravārāhī. Mantras and visualisation are used, no substances or *kumbhaka* breathing present.

Colophon: (f. 321, line 2) *gzhan la phan pa dang rang la dgos pa'i phyir du/ lha'i
btsun pa su ma ti ma ni pra dza nyas sbyar ba'i yi ge pa ni sang gha bha dra'o/ 'dis
kyang rgyal ba'i bstan pa yun ring du gnas pa dang / ma gyur sems can thams cad rdo
rje 'chang gi go 'phang thob par gyur cig//*

Written for the benefit of others and his own. Lha'i btsun pa su ma ti ma ni pra dza composed it and the scribe was Sang gha bha dra. May this particular victorious teaching remain for a long time and may all sentient beings reach the state of Vajradhāra.

Remarks: The instructions are attributed to Mitra dzoki also known as Mitra yogin, who was a yogin from Orissa. The possible connections with Orissa of Text 1 were commented upon earlier. The eastern Indian coast region might well have played an important role in the formation of essence extraction traditions in India, which would merit more scholarly attention.

Text 43:

Front page: *Theg pa chen po dmar khrid dug lnga rang grol gyi brgyud las bcud len zas
kyi gdams pa zhugs*

The advice on the essence extraction food that spontaneously removes the five poisons from the Tantra of the Direct Instruction of Mahāyāna

Author: Dkar ru grub dbang bstan 'dzin rin chen (1801-1860).

Source: This manuscript belongs to the cycle of *Dmar khrid dug lnga rang grol*, (3827-3838). The manuscript was found in Mustang by Charles Ramble and is not at present easily available.

Folios: 1a-8a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line (title with swastika symbols on both sides). 2a: 4 lines. 2b-8a: 6 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The text explains two methods of practice; the first is the method of practice ‘which relies on visible symbols’: the five elements, earth, rock, water, fire and air, as well as that of medicines, flowers and plants in the preparation of *bcud len*. The text continues with a detailed explanation on how to empower the substances with visualisations (transforming oneself into Kun tu Bzang po) and mantra recitation, followed finally by the explanation of the practice itself. The second method of practice ‘relying on wisdom with no visible signs’ does not make use of substances nor of complicated visualisations or mantras. One merely sounds ‘A’ nine times.

Main deity and main substance employed: Kun tu Bzang po (Samantabhadra) is the only deity mentioned in the text. Pills made from: earth, *rgya mtshal* (vermillion), *btsag dkar* (a red-whitish stone?), *sindhura*.

Colophon: There is no colophon per se in the text. As for the origins of the text, Dka ru (f. 3828b, line 3) writes he received signs through his mental awareness regarding this *bcud len* when he was out in the wilderness and had no food, and so relied on earth and stones to survive. Therefore, it appears that this practice does not belong to any particular lineage and was created spontaneously. At the moment I am not aware of whether Dka ru had received *bcud len* teachings during his life and may have been influenced (in this composition) by the teachings he may have previously received.

Remarks: This text describes the preparation, ritual empowerment and the actual practice of a *bcud len* said to liberate from suffering caused by any illness and to enable

one to enjoy longevity, clear wisdom and sharp intellect. Atypically, it begins by paying homage to the nature of the mind (rather than to a particular deity as in most other texts). Also, this manual of instructions on *bcud len* practice lacks any mention of breathing exercises, which instead appear in almost every other *bcud len* text thus far surveyed.

Text 44:

Front page: *Bde mchog dkar po 'i sgo nas tshe ril sogs bsgrub cing longs spyod pa 'i tshul 'chi med bdud rtsi 'i bcud len zhes bya ba bzhugs so*

By way of white Cakrasaṃvara, the life pill accomplishment and enjoyment, the immortality nectar *bcud len*'

Author: Dbyangs can grub pa'i rdo rje (1809-1887)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Dbyangs can grub pa'i rdo rje. Dngul chu bla brang, 1999. Vol. 2: 157-163. Accessed through TBRC W22334.

Folios: 1a-4b.

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 3 lines. 2a: 4 lines. 2b: 5 lines. 3a-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 6 lines.

Dating: This text was written in the Water Rabbit year 1843.

Content: White Cakrasaṃvara is the main deity and Vajrayoginī also features. Pills are placed on a raised table, *tshe chu* 'life water' on their right and *tshe chang* 'longevity alcohol' to their left. A series of visualisations of syllables and deities follow. One visualises the Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* with Cakrasaṃvara in *yab yum* union. Vajrayoginī is also visualised. In the mind's eye, mantra garlands swirl and gather good qualities, life essence and radiance from both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. The practitioner then visualises receiving four separate empowerments. The first is the 'vase empowerment', where the

Cakrasaṃvara in the vase turns into life essence in the form of white semen, fills the body and bestows the life empowerment.

The second is the ‘secret empowerment’, where Vajrayoginī inside the *kapāla* transforms into the nectar of female fluid that fills the practitioner’s body and bestows the ‘secret empowerment’. The third is the ‘wisdom-knowledge empowerment’, where both white and red fluids dissolve into the crown of one’s head. Fourth is the ‘precious empowerment of words’ where the *HŪM* syllable at the heart gradually dissolves into the central channel. Each empowerment purifies various hindrances and obscurations the practitioner has accrued through body, voice and mind. The pills are finally consumed and auspicious prayers are recited.

Main deity and main substance employed: White Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī. Pills (ingredients unspecified).

Colophon: There is no colophon and the author does not explain exactly how he received the practice. The only reference to the origin and transmission of the text is found on f.1b, line 1 ‘as for the White Cakrasaṃvara ritual, it was given by ’Jam pa’i dbyangs (Mañjuḥṣa) to Tsong kha pa. That Mañjuśrī is the direct source of this teaching is reiterated on f.3b, line 5.

Remarks: Pills are used but the text gives no instruction on how to make them, which makes one wonder whether there might be a previous section related to this *bcud len*. No physical yogic or breathing exercises are advocated.

Text 45:

Front page: *Bka’ gsang zab chos mkha’ khyab rang grol las/ man ngag sku gsum bcud len ’ja’ lus rdo rje’i sku brnyes bzhugs so*

From the cycle of ‘The profound secret teaching, space-pervading self-liberation: The esoteric instructions on the three *kāya* essence extraction, the obtainment of the rainbow *vajra* body’

Author: Nyag bla padma bdud ’dul (1816-1872)

Source: In *Nyag bla pad ma bdud ’dul gyi gter chos skor*. Vol. 2: 219-237. Accessed through TBRC W23695.

Folios: 1a-11a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-9a: 6 lines. 9b: 5 lines. 10a: 3 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A *bcud len* of the three *kayas*: *nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *dharmakāya*.

The teaching is divided into three parts, the preparation, the main practice and the conclusion.

The preparation; after taking refuge and practising *bodhicitta*, recitations to empower the offerings, exhaling the impure air and practising Yantra Yoga.

The main part is divided into three categories: *nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *dharmakāya*. Each of these in turn has three subcategories (the *nirmāṇakāya* of *nirmāṇakāya*, the *sambhogakāya* of *nirmāṇakāya*, the *dharmakāya* of *nirmāṇakāya* and so forth).

For the *nirmāṇakāya* section, one makes pills for each subcategory (*nirmāṇakāya* of *nirmāṇakāya*, the *sambhogakāya* of *nirmāṇakāya*, the *dharmakāya* of *sambhogakāya*) using various ingredients. One puts the pills into skull cups and empowers them with practice. One mentally transforms into Pad ma thod phreng rsal in union with Ḍākinī Mandarava and summons all Buddhas for blessing. As lights

from the whole universe and the five natural elements enter the pills one empowers the visualisation with mantras. One consumes seven pills, three times a day. To conclude the practice one carries out vase retention breathing.

In the *sambhogakāya* section there are numerous *prāṇa* exercises, as well as recipes containing *dbang lag* and rock *bcud len* used in conjunction with human flesh. One visualises Amitābha and, reciting mantras, one empowers the pills, imagining lights integrating into the pills. Once a week one consumes a *sambhogakāya* pill, visualising Amitāyus joined in sexual union with a consort, and does breathing exercises working with the sensation of heat.

In the *dharmakāya* section, for the *nirmāṇakāya* of the *dharmakāya* there is a milk *bcud len*, where one pours (cow's or other) milk into water.

In the *sambhogakāya* of the *dharmakāya* one simply uses water. Salty water must be avoided. Water from white cliffs is considered sacred water.

In the *dharmakāya* of *dharmakāya* the two substances (the milky water of the *nirmāṇakāya* of *dharmakāya* and the pure water from the *sambhogakāya* of the *dharmakāya*) are placed in the centre of the *maṇḍala*. One sounds *HRĪḤ*, and visualises Amitāyus joined in sexual union with his consort the red Padma Space Queen. Reciting mantras one visualises lights spreading to the enlightened beings of the ten directions. Besides Amitāyus, one also visualises Vajradhāra, as well as Samanthabadra and Samanthabadri joined in sexual union. All these deities, along with hosts of other visualised gods, dissolve into the water nectar. One recites a mantra 1000 times and then drinks the two types of water, and afterwards holds *kumbhaka* for twenty-one counts.

The final part of the text enumerates the benefits of the practice such as the flourishing of *rigpa*, the mind no longer craving food or drink and, ultimately, the attainment of the inexhaustible great rainbow body of light.

Main deity and main substance employed: Padmasambhava, Mandarava, Amitāyus are the main deities. A variety of ingredients are used, including *dbang lag*, human flesh, calcite and water.

Colophon: (f. 237, line 1) *shar gter khams pa padma bdud 'dul gyis/ gnas chen lhang lhang nor bu'i yang rtse nas/ rin po che yi shog ser spyang drangs te/ skyes bu chos bdag mang pos bskul pa'i ngor/ brda ris gsal la brten nas phab pa'o/ yige pa ni lung dzin mtha' yas so/ nam mkha'i mtha' khyab sems can ma lus pas/ sku gsum bcud kyi snying pol on nas kyang/ gdod ma'i mgon po'i go 'phang myur thob shog/*

‘(I) the eastern Khampa treasure (revealer) Pad ma Bdud 'dul retrieved the precious golden paper (scroll) from the topmost peak of the great sacred place of Lhang lhang nor bu. I bestowed it, requested by many Dharma practitioners and based on the clear signs that appeared. The scribe was Lung 'dzin mtha' yas.

By extracting the heart essence of the three *kāyas*, may all beings without exception in pervading space swiftly obtain the state of the primordial master (Samanthabdra).’

Remarks: A *gter ma* text rediscovered by Nyag bla padma bdud 'dul in Lhang lhang nor bu yang rtse.³⁴ The *bcud len* of the three *kayas* is described as leading to the attainment of the rainbow body. Upon dying Nyag bla padma bdud 'dul's physical body dissolved into the elements, leaving no bodily remains behind. This episode was investigated by Mathew Kapstein in an article titled: *The Strange Death of Pema the Demon-Tamer* (Kapstein 2004: 119-56)

This is the only recipe in which the *utpala* flower is listed. Boesi (Boesi 2006: 70) speculates that in ancient times it corresponded to the imported Indian blue lotus (*Nymphaea nouchali*). Boesi explains: ‘The Tibetan expression *utpala* is the

³⁴ A sacred mountain in the lower region of Dokham where *gter gton* Sangs rgyas Gling pa revealed numerous treasures (Karmay and Nagano 2003:181-189).

transliteration of the Sanskrit word *utpala* that points to the blue lotus. Some plants thriving in Tibetan regions are the substitutes for plants that once were imported from India. Some of them have maintained their original Sanskrit designation as in this case.’

Text 46:

Front page: *Bdud rtsi sman sgrub mdor bsdus bya tshul 'chi med rtag pa'i bcud len*

The *bcud len* of deathless permanence that is a brief way of practising with nectar medicine

Author: 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten, 1977-1980, vol. 16: 215 - 223. Accessed through TBRC W21807.

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-5a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: There are three sections; the preparation; the main practice; the dedication

1) The preparation

There are four aspects; the place, the time for practice, collecting the medicines and mixing them, the items necessary for carrying it out.

No specific instructions are given for the first three; the texts say written instructions from the lineage of instructions should be followed. As for the fourth (the necessary items for carrying it out); one fashions a *maṇḍala* on a table and places a *kapāla* at its center, with the forehead facing one. One fills it with medicine nectar containing eight herbs. If only a small quantity of medicine is available, one fills the

base with grain and tops it with medicine nectar. One covers it with red silk and a five-coloured mantra thread. Inner and outer offerings are made and (unspecified) ritual implements gathered.

2) The main practice

This can be done with musical accompaniment or solely reciting. Only the reciting practice is explained here. Imagining one possesses a *maṇḍala* nature and focusing on the nectar substance before one, mantras are recited to purify it. The letters *RAM YAM KHAM* are visualised, emanating fire *prāṇa*. On a skull tripod hangs a vast, spacious and glorious vessel, marked with the letter *AM*. In the middle of the vessel there is a wheel with four spokes;

At the centre: red and white *bodhicittas*, lion meat and the six excellent substances.

In the east: human excrement, elephant meat, nutmeg.

In the south: human flesh, the best horsemeat, cardamom.

In the west: peacock flesh, cloves.

In the north: urine, the flesh of the *garuḍa*, saffron.

All of the substances should have colour, odour, taste and power.

Light rays emanate from the mantra at the practitioner's heart. Fire blazes in the blowing wind, all the substances in the *kapāla* dissolve into light and become ten symbolic emblems. In the middle of each are ten distinct seed syllables (*HŪṂ, OṂ, SVĀ, AOM, HOḤ, MŪṂ, LAM, MAM, PAM, TAM*).

Boundless light rays fill the sky and the essence of all *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is collected and dissolves into the syllables. These instantaneously become the five Buddha families in union with their consorts, in the state of union of bliss and

emptiness. One visualises the nectar nature *maṇḍala* in whose eight directions are the deities: Rnam rgyal ma, Yamantaka, Hayagrīva, Vajra Amrita, Nīldaṇḍa, Mi g.yo, Takkirāja and the three victorious ones. Above and below are Hūṃkara and Mahābala. They are splendid *maṇḍala* being tamers, carrying weapons. Over them, in the middle, there is the *maṇḍala* of wrathful Takrita, and in the four directions there are four *herukas*: Sanurakṣa, Guhya, Bishwa, Yaksha. They are fierce Victorious Ones and their respective colours are dark blue, yellow, red and green. They have a blackish hue.

Their consorts hold *kapālas* full of blood. In the sky *maṇḍala* above them is Gnam zhal ma, her four feet posed on the heads of the four wrathful ones. She is light blue, with nine heads and eighteen hands. At Gnam zhal ma's vagina is the forehead of Sa nu Heruka with half of his forehead inside her. Above her is the great glorious *maṇḍala* of the deity Rdo rje tshe (Vajra Life). He is dark maroon, with twenty-one heads and forty-two hands; to his right are the peaceful fathers and to his left the consorts. He is flanked by six buddhas. One visualises the five Buddha families with their consorts. One visualises the *maṇḍala* of Hayagrīva. One's life force coils around the thread of mantra light rays and one visualises this as an offering to the five Buddha families with their consorts. One requests that one's mind-stream be *samaya* bound. The visualised offerings generate joyfulness in the five Buddhas and their consorts. The buddhas and bodhisattvas' *siddhis* and blessings are collected. The substances are now shining with lights endowed with the five qualities. The lights enter into the heads of the five Buddhas who are in the *kapāla*. From the supreme one's penis lights and nectars enter the consort's vagina, from which lights exit and enter the crown of the head of Sa nu Heruka. The nectar drops fill the bodies of the four families of wrathful ones (*heruka*). Through the points where the five wrathful *herukas* unite with their consorts, the lights

and nectar strike the ten wrathful ones in the *kapāla* containing nectar. Lights also emanate from the uniting places of the five Buddha families with their consorts and mix with the nectar. The qualities of the inner and outer world are summoned and the unceasing descent of nectar blesses. Mantra recitation follows.

There are detailed instructions on how to practise different sections of the above practice on different days. The section ends with the instructions on how, finally, to partake of the nectar, dipping one's left thumb into it and placing it on one's tongue while reciting mantras and doing visualisations. One abides in the primordial wisdom of the union of emptiness and pleasure.

3) The dedication

With the sweet dew of deathless nectar, one who wants to attain permanent youthfulness can rely on this *vajra bcud len*. One will acquire the jewel of all *siddhis*.

Main deity and main substance employed: Several deities, prominent ones include the five Buddha families, Gnam zhal ma, Sanu Heruka. Nectar containing eight (unspecified) herbs.

Colophon: (f. 556, line 6) *Bdud rtsi sman gyi sgrub pa mdor bsdus te lag tu blang ba'i tshul nyung gsal nying por dril 'di 'am rdi 'dzin gnye bdag gling pa'i gsung gi rdze su 'brangs te nyer mkho'i yan lag tu mnyang gho shas bris pa siddhi hum.*

‘It is a brief practice of nectar medicine, succinct and clear, essentially constructed in the way it should be practised. Following the teachings of Rigdzin gter bdag glin pa, I, Mañjugosha, have composed it as a part of daily practice.’

Remarks: The importance attributed to meditation and visualisations for empowering substances is particularly evident in this text. The elaborate visualisations accompanied by mantras are carried out to imbue the substances with divine blessings. Both doctors

with whom I conversed (see Chapter 5) made it clear that visualisation is of cardinal importance for substance empowerment.

Text 47:

Front page: *Nye brgyud tshe khrid sgrub thabs dbang chog bcas pa 'chi med rdo rje 'i bcud len*

The immortal *vajra bcud len* connected with the empowerment ritual of the obtainment method, the direct transmission on life instructions

Author: 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. Vol 13:135-167. Gangtok: GonpoTseten, 1977-1980. Accessed through TBRC W21807.

Folios: 1a-17a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 4 lines. 2b-16b: 6 lines. 17a: 5 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: There are three parts: the preparation; the method for the main part; the empowerment ritual.

1) The preparation

In preparation, a *mañju* syllable is placed on an ornamental vase representing life at the centre of a raised table. On the right side is alcohol representing life; on the left pills; in front, a *gtor ma* and offerings. Before the practitioner there should be a *vajra*, bell and *damaru* and a small 'inner offering' bowl, a *mda' dar*, *sindhura*, an 'activity vase' (*las bum*), flowers, *gtor ma* for the obstructing spirits and other ritual implements.

2) The method for the main part

The practitioner generates as the deity, reciting mantras and sprinkling the nectar from the *kapāla*. From the state of emptiness, visualising oneself as Hayagrīva, on a sun and moon disk, holding a curved blade on the right and, on the left, a *kapāla* filled with blood, with above him a neighing green horse head. Hayagrīva wears eight skulls and blazing wisdom fire is all around. Regarding the offering for the obstructing spirits, from the state of emptiness arises an *OM* syllable, from which appears a very light, enormous precious vase, and within it, a pure *gtor ma* and the unhindered five desired qualities. The practitioner is instructed to recite *OM ĀḤ HŪM* three times, perform mudras and dedicate the five desired qualities to all sentient beings.

Sounding *HRĪḤ*, all the obstructing demons are invited and offered the *gtor ma*. They are then requested to leave and if they do not, they must be ordered fiercely to do so.

(f. 138) The practitioner is instructed to perform a complex series of visualisations and mantra recitation. Self-visualising as Hayagrīva, one gathers lights from the heart of the protector Amitāyus, with mantras and mudras and playing of instruments. Homage is paid to Vajradhāra. Invocations are dedicated to Amitāyus and one prostrates before him. Nonvirtuous actions are confessed and *maṅḍala* offerings made to Kun tu bzang po. Then one imagines obtaining the *siddhi* of deathlessness and dedicating it to all sentient beings, collecting the merit. All virtues dissolve within as one continues to make offerings.

(f. 141) On a seat held up by lions one visualises the letter *PAM*; on top of it a lotus; on top of the lotus a *RAM* syllable; on top of that a sun disk with an *A* with a moon disk mounted, and a long red *HRĪḤ* letter that becomes Hayagrīva.

The practitioner becomes Amitāyus, red in colour, one face and two hands. One hand is in meditative equipoise, holding a vase filled with nectar. Holding a *mda' dar* in the other hand, he is wearing ornaments, very peaceful and smiling. His body is of the nature of light and he is surrounded by manifestations of himself, a secret wisdom *dākinī* and Guru Rin po che, and by other buddhas. All the lineage of gurus amass like clouds, at their foreheads the letter *OM*, *ĀḤ* at the throat and *HŪM* at the heart; from there lights go to western *dbe ba chen* and invite all wisdoms. One visualises being empowered by all *Tathāgatas*. On top of the vessel filled with nectar one visualises the mantra and receives the empowerment, imagining the nectar filling one's body. Now the pure water exits from the top of one's head and swirls and Amitābha is on top of one's head. All power deities dissolve into the practitioner.

The practitioner is told to make offerings and request the *siddhis* of the deathless nectar, to recite mantras and perform *mudrās*.

(f. 143) As the essence of the elements, red, yellow, blue, white and green, all dissolve in one's heart, along with the glory and radiance of the three worlds, all the obstacles are purified. Visualising oneself as Hayagrīva, with a red precious vase filled with nectar at one's navel, Amitāyus gives empowerment. The power gods dissolve into the vase he is holding. Inside the vase is a moon *maṇḍala*, on top of which a red letter *HRĪḤ* surrounded by mantras radiating lights that emanate and gather all essences. Habitual tendencies, fear, faults and *samaya* breakages are purified.

(f. 149) All wisdom *siddhis* are obtained. The hundred-syllable mantra is recited as many times as possible. Offerings and praise requesting *siddhis* from Amitāyus and the retinue of deities are recited. Again, one's heart radiates lights that shine like sunrays reaching out and gathering all essences that dissolve into the *HŪM* syllable on the tongue. Life obtainment is attained.

(f. 150) Next there is a visualisation of the *vajra* disciples dissolving into the sun and moon, which then dissolve into white light. Then the white light dissolves into the *NRI*, and the syllable disappears like a rainbow. One recites mantras.

3) The empowerment ritual

The environment is cleansed and the teacher gives the explanation. The disciple is told to practise the pacification of untimely death and all disciples attain the *siddhi* of life. To accomplish the rainbow wisdom body one visualises Amitāyus giving empowerment to all disciples and to the guru.

There follow oral instructions featuring Mkha' 'gro ma gsang ba ye shes seated on the sun and moon. She gives the empowerment and Guru Padmasambhava is present and listening. Padmasambhava dissolves into a letter *HŪM* and the *HŪM* dissolves into Ye shes mkha' 'gro ma. Now Amitābha is giving the long life empowerment. Avalokiteśvara gives the great Mahāmudrā empowerment. Hayagrīva is visualised giving secret empowerment to all gods and demons, taming them. Through this the practitioners are granted the *siddhi* of long life and one will see the true bodies of Padmasambhava and Dpal ldan rdo rje. You will see Dpal ldan bsod nams rgya mtsho in whirling light. There follows a list of names of masters of the lineage.

(f. 152) *Maṇḍala* offerings are made to the deities visualised previously (Mkha' 'gro ma gsang ba ye shes, and so forth). Then, the practitioner recites three times an aspirational prayer of refuge and *bodhicitta*. Further visualisations follow in which Amitāyus is inseparable from one's root guru. Padmasambhava is also in the group of lineage gurus. One visualises taking all sentient beings to this sacred place and reciting a mantra. Everything dissolves into emptiness. From the emptiness, a syllable *PAM* emerges, from there a lotus and on top of it a *RAM*, on top of the *RAM* a sun, on top of it an A, above it a moon *maṇḍala* with a red *HRĪḤ* syllable. Now all disciples transform into red Amitāyus deities holding long life vases.

(f. 154) With Padmasambhava visualised, with his heart light going out to the west, one invites the bodhisattvas, who dissolve into oneself. Visualizing the gurus of the lineage, Amitāyus and Gsang ba ye shes, one recites the mantra and supplicates them to grant *siddhis*. The mantras are recited three times. One imagines receiving the long life empowerment from Amitāyus's vase, then receiving the empowerment again through the long life pill and the long life alcohol, visualising in front of one the *HRĪḤ* syllable on top of a moon *maṇḍala* in Amitāyus's hand; from it light arises, surrounded by mantras and five-coloured thread lights. The lights spread out purifying the Lord of Death and reaching the practitioner and all acquaintances, demons, ghosts, nonhumans, and thieves and then return, filling the *kapāla*, the vase and the begging bowl.

They all dissolve into the mantra garland from which nectar pours forth; it fills the vase and then pours into the crown of the practitioner's head, filling all the inner body.

One then washes the outer body and becomes like a diamond, indestructible and all conquering. Wishing to attain the *siddhi* of immortality, one rings a bell and with one's disciples recites mantras. The fortunate ones receive the life empowerment from the practitioner. Their life becomes diamond-like, victorious and never sets. They become *vidyadhāras* beyond death. When the mantras are recited, flowers are scattered. Bells are rung as aspiration prayers are said. All lost power and longevity is regained. If *samaya* is broken one tries to mend it. One's vows are refreshed. Amitāyus is visualised once again. One washes one's body, purifying all that has been obscured and accumulated illnesses. One's body elements and life are refreshed and one visualises attaining the state of *vidyadhāra* beyond death.

Reciting mantras, lights emanate from Amitāyus's vase and all life merits of the three worlds dissolve into the vase. They dissolve into the crown of the head of the

vajra disciples filling their inner body entirely. The practitioner is told to wave a *mda'* *dar* in the air and sound *HRĪḤ* again as lights emerge from one's guru's heart and invite from the western field, Amitāyus, Samantabhadra, and buddhas and bodhisattvas, who return and surround the guru. They dissolve into the immeasurable light in the vase. This light dissolves into one's head and the crown of the head of the other disciples. All their bodies, speech and minds become one with Amitāyus's body, speech and mind. One wishes for attainment of the *vidyadhāra* state beyond death and imagines that obscuration and all illnesses disappear, and that one has protection from the provocations of *nāga* and *gyalpo*.

Now, one takes the thread from the vase, tying it so that it connects to the heart. This is the life alcohol (*tshe chang*) empowerment in which one drinks and imagines that the *nāḍi* and 72,000 channels are filled with nectar. The working of the conceptual mind is suspended. One is in an inseparable union of bliss and emptiness. The power of the *rtsa*, *rlung* and *thigle* are refreshed. One attains the *vidyadhāra* of life without death, recites the mantra and hands out the nectar.

The empowerment arises through the life pill. The essence of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is combined in the pill and by taking it the 84,000 illnesses and 80,000 types of obscuration and obstacles are all purified and one attains the *vidyadhāra* state beyond death. The aspiration prayer is recited, along with mantras and the life pills are handed out. Further visualisations follow. One imagines the disciples transforming into Amitāyus. He appears with the guru lineage. The practitioners must visualise a rain of flowers and musical sounds, and also recite the hundred-syllable mantra and confess thoroughly their aspirations.

The previous practices were carried out reading the text. There now follow instructions for a silent meditation: from the heart, lights go out and invite enlightened

beings from the western field, and *gtor ma* and water are offered. Reciting mantras, the life essence dissolves into one and one receives *siddhis*.

Offering *gtor ma*, one imagines a *kapāla* surrounded by wind and fire with above it the five nectars and five fleshes. The liquid within boils and dissolves into light and the nectar essence and offerings fill the sky. Mantras are recited to empower the *thsogs* offerings. *HRĪḤ* is sounded. One visualises the twenty-four palaces of *bde ba can*. In all directions there are lotuses and lights and the immortal three roots and the host of deities. These are invited. One sounds *HRĪḤ* again, visualising Amitāyus, Sangwa Yeshe and Padmasambhava and the lineage gurus there, eating the *tsogs* food. Mistakes and vow breakages are confessed. One asks them to grant the supreme life *siddhi*. Transforming into the *maṇḍala* deities, one eats the food, offers the leftovers and recites mantras and performs mudras to invite the lower beings as guests. *HRĪḤ* is sounded and *samaya* nectar is offered to the protector deities of the *maṇḍala*. All that is negative is abandoned, all that is positive is increased. Mantras are recited. If the deities are present, they are requested to stay. If they are no longer there, one visualises that they have dissolved within one. Dedications and aspiration prayers are offered.

Main deity and main substance employed: Hayagrīva and Amitāyus. Long life pills and long life alcohol.

Colophon: (f.167, line 3) 'di' brgyud pa ni/ ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho nas/
byams pa ngag dbang lhun grub/ rmor chen kun dga' lung grub/ gnas gsar ba legs
pa'i 'byung gnas/ 'phags pa dge legs rgyal mtshan/ bla ma skal bzang bstan dar/ bka'
bcu byams pa blo gros/ slob dpon 'phags pa mchog dga'/ chos rje ngag dbang 'jams
dbyangs rdo rje 'dzin pa kun dga' dpal ldan/ des dbang mkhyen brtse'i dbang po la'o//

‘As for this lineage, it is from Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho to Byams pa

ngag dbang lhun grub to Rmor chen Kun dga' lhun grub to Gnas gsar ba legs pa'i
 'byung nas to 'Phags pa dge legs rgyal mtshan to Bla ma Skal bzang bstan Tar to Bka'
 bcu byams pa blo gros to Slob dpon 'phags pa mchog dga' to Chos rje ngag dbang 'jam
 dbyangs to Rdo rje 'dzin pa kun dga' dpal ldan who gave it to me, Mkhyen brtse dbang
 po.'

Remarks: this text is very rich in details with regard to ritual procedures.

Text 48:

Front page: 'Chi med bcud len gyi man ngag bkra shis zho yi snying po

The pith instructions of deathless *bcud len*, the auspicious yoghurt essence

Author: 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)

Source: In *Sgrub thabs kun btus*. Kangra, H.P.: Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Literature
 Publisher, Dzongsar Institute for Advanced Studies, vol. 10: 699-715. Accessed through
 TBRC W23681.

Folios: 1a-8b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 5 lines. 2b-8b: 7 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A flower *bcud len* treatise attributed to Vajrayoginī and which was passed on
 to Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (d. 1117).

Ba lu and *rtag tu ngu* are mixed with *a ru ra*, *dbang lag*, as well as the six
 precious substances and other ingredients. One visualises oneself as Vajrayoginī and a
 mantra is recited a thousand times to empower the pills. Further instructions on how to
 consume the pills are present. The text ends describing a range of benefits resulting from
 the practice.

Main deity and main substance employed: Avalokiteśvara and Vajrayoginī are the deities invoked in this flower *bcud len*. Some of the main plants used are: *ba lu*, *rtag tu ngu*, *a ru ra* and *dbang lag*.

Colophon: (f. 715, line 6) *zhes pa'ang sgrub thabs rin po che kun las btus pa'i kha skang du gdams ngag rin po che'i mdzod kyi khrod nas blo gter dbang pos nyung ngur bsdus pa'i dge bas sems can thams cad ring 'tsho'i rten la dam chos spyod pa'i rgyur gyur cig//*

‘As an addition to the *Compendium of Precious Sadhanas* [a collection of *sadhanas* transmitted in the Sakya], among the Treasury of Precious Oral Instructions [of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul], there is a short dedication of merits composed by Blo gter dbang po which states: “May this become the cause for all beings to practise the sacred Dharma with a long-lasting body.”’

Remarks: This text's contents are very similar to those of text 22. In the opening section (f. 700) the author notes that the text is ‘based on former instructions on the essence of the supreme method.’

Text 49:

Front page: *Tshe sgrub zhag bdun ma'i nyams len gyi rim pa 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*

The immortal nectar *bcud len*, the seven-day practice to accomplish life

Author: 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892)

Source: In *Sgrub thabs kun btus*. Kangra, H.P.: Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Literature Publisher, Dzongsar Institute for Advanced Studies, vol. 1: 495 - 400. Accessed through TBRC W23681.

Folios: 1a-3b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-2a: 5 lines. 2b-3b: 7 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Desiring Amitāyus's life and wisdom, at dawn when the crows are quiet and not cawing, the practitioner abides in *samādhi* and is instructed to take refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, generate *bodhicitta* and to meditate on the Four Immeasurables. In the space in front of one, the practitioner visualises a red lotus with a thousand petals, and above it on a full moon disk, a clear red Amitāyus, manifesting as a sixteen-year old youth. He has a single smiling face, a peaceful appearance, two hands joined together at the heart and holds a glowing nectar vase. He is standing with his feet parallel. He has pitch black matted hair; half of his hair is tied up in a knot and the other half falls loose, reaching his feet. He wears a red silk shawl and different silks. Surrounding him is a retinue of bodhisattvas, root gurus and buddhas.

With great devotion one pays homage, reciting mantras, visualising offerings, performing mudras and prostrating. One recites mantras three times and supplicates. Inhaling and exhaling from the nostrils three times, one clears the stale air. Then one exhales softly from the left nostril. One visualises the *prāṇa* moving from the tip of one's nose, and the [nine] syllables that make negativities and ailments disappear. The syllables enter the nectar-filled bowl in the Buddha's hands. One visualises the immortality nectar brimming out of the vase. This is connected with the *prāṇa* breathing visualisation: inhaling it into one's mouth, the white nectar flows through one's mouth, downward. The body is filled with fire, which purifies all illnesses, obscuration, untimely death, and fears. One visualises attaining the immortality *siddhi*. Holding

kumbhaka breathing, one does this five, ten or fifteen, twenty times, or as much as possible.

One repeats the visualisation as before and now recites the mantra, one hundred or one thousand times with the offerings and praise as before. From the Buddha in space in front of one, red light dissolves into the practitioner who becomes Amitāyus with immeasurable wisdom. At the heart, atop a moon disk there is a red *HRĪḤ* syllable, encircled by a long mantra emanating lights that completely fill one's body. One imagines attaining the long life *siddhi*, recites the mantra twenty-one times, then dedicates virtues and recites the aspiration prayer.

For those wishing to carry out the seven-day life obtainment practice, it is best done in the first month of the [Tibetan] New Year during the waxing moon. One focuses diligently for one week in retreat under an auspicious constellation, making a daily offering of food and white pebbles, washing one's body every morning and, when finished, taking on the vows of *poṣhadha* (healing and purifying the *samaya* breakages). After taking a break and repeating another session, one pauses in the heat of the day, then practices every single session in the same way, doing the *prāṇa* exercises and increasing the mantra recitation. After noon, one recites the brief Prajñāpāramitā, the *zlog pa* to repel negativities and strives to perform guardian rituals. Before going to sleep, one's pillow is turned to the west and the practitioner sleeps in the lion position. In sleep the conceptual mind is cut out and in dreams one sees Amitāyus's body and hears his speech. Dreaming, one will see the sun and moon rising and be undisturbed by outer noises. Upon awakening in the morning, one finds the begging bowl and vase filled with white nectar and the countryside with white *tsa tsa* (clay moulds). These are some of the virtuous signs of this special teaching. If the effects do not appear, practice again for seven days without interruption.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus. *Prāṇa*.

Colophon: (f. 399, line 5) *Rje btsun dam pa 'i thugs bcud bdud rtsi 'i rgyun/ rgyun chad med par bla ma 'i drin las thob/ gang 'dir ris med bstan pa 'i sbyin bdag che/ nor 'dzin skyong bdag dbang mtshan can gyi/ rgyun gyi nyams bzhes tshul du bkod pa ni/ sha kya 'i btsun pa blo gsal ming can no/*

‘This is the mind essence continuity of Rje btsun Tārānatha. The nonsectarian teacher treasure-holder, Ngag dbang mtshan can, wrote on how to practise. Shakya btsun pa blo gsal wrote this down.’

The texts end with a long supplication to all the masters of the lineage by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo asking them to grant long life *siddhi*.

Remarks: Specific respiratory exercises are connected to particular visualisations, providing details not usually given in other texts. The breakdown of which practices are more suitable to be carried out in the morning (*prāṇa*) and in the evening (guardian propitiation) is interesting. Other texts in this compendium recommend that *prāṇa* exercises be carried out in the morning.

Text 50:

Front page: *Mi g.yo ba 'i nam mkha 'i bcud len gyi zin bris bltas chog tu bkod pa phyogs med ri khrid khrod 'grim pa 'i cha rkyen blo gtad gcig chog log 'tsho 'i zhen pa rang grol*

Presenting a note on unwavering sky-nectar extraction, supreme array of view, open-hermitage essentials, single-mind focus, self-liberation from the desire for wrongful living

Author: Gter slob Sangs rgyas chos 'phel (1829-1870)

Source: In *Mchog gling gter gsar*. Paro: Lama Pema Tashi, 1982-1986, vol. 11: 459-465. Accessed through TBRCW22642.

Folios: 1a-4a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 2 lines. 1b-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 2 lines.

Dating: Written on the tenth day of spring (*ston zla ra ba dmar phyogs*) of an (unspecified) Wood Ox year.

Content: Indications as to the ideal place and season for practising are given and one melodiously recites the invocation to the root lama O rgyan Mi bskyod rdo rje chang. One raises one's right palm to the middle of the eyebrows and recites the Guru Rin poche mantra three times. One visualises one's root lama above one's head.

Detailed explanations of breathing practices follow, aimed at curtailing desire for food and surviving on sky-nutrition. In a place where a blue sky is visible, one praises the lama. Blocking the left nostril, one exhales with force and visualises that diseases, negativities and obstacles exit the body as smoke, dissolving into space. Blocking the right nostril, while inhaling imagine that power and blessing enter one in the form of blue light. Inhaling gently from the left nostril and gently retaining the air, one then forcefully exhales from the right nostril. One inhales thrice from the left nostril and exhales thrice from the right one. Uniting one's heels one rests hands on knees, bending the head down slightly. One exhales forcefully from the mouth sounding 'Ha' and tensing the body. This is repeated thrice. Visualising all three realms turning a lapis blue colour and inhaling this via the mouth, one retains the air in the stomach as long as possible, then releases it slowly through the nostrils.

Sometimes, one sounds *HŪṂ* and merges awareness and space. Sometimes, visualising O rgyan rdo rje chang as clear silver-white and in space before one, a *BAM* syllable. Lights issue forth from the letter and return carrying back with them the essence of both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* in the form of elixir nectars. One inhales

and retains the breath in the stomach. Keeping the saliva in the mouth, one visualises having an indestructible *vajra* body, all skin pores sparkling with elixir. One practices the extraction of essence nutrition from physical substances. Then from the *BAM* letter for any period such as three, four, five, seven, twenty-one or twenty-eight days. A list of benefits derived from pratising concludes the text.

Main deity and substance employed: O rgyan Mi bskyod rdo rje chang, Guru Rin po che. *Prāṇa*.

Colophon: (f. 464, line 5) *ces pa 'ang mtsho skyes ma ha gu ru'i rgyal mtshab rig 'dzin bla ma mchog gi bka' stsal spyi bor mchod de/ gnas mchog nam mkha' mdzod kyi dbu rtser bla ma'i gdams ngag zab mo la mos pa bgyis pa rnams slar rang gi mi brjed phyir rten mchog 'gyur med gling gi gtsug lag khang du gter slob sangs rgyas chos 'phel gyi shing glang ston zla ra ba'i dmar phyogs kyi tshes bcur zin bris su btab pa dge'o/ dge'o/ dge'o//*

‘With deep reverence to the instructions of the Knowledge-Holder Lama, the representative of the Great Lotus Guru, I, the treasure-disciple Sangs rgyas chos 'phel, produced this text. I wrote it down in order not to forget the profound teachings of my Lama which I had received with great joy on the summit of the great sacred site of Nam mkha' mdzod – Sky Treasury, on the tenth day, during the waning moon of *ston zla* (the seventh month) of the Wood Ox Year, at the main temple of the most sacred 'Gur med gling. May it bring virtues!’

Remarks: The text gives meditative instructions on ways to consume *prāṇa* as nutrition. The importance of pratising in open spaces and the visibility of blue skies is stated, as it was in Text 31, for the meditator to merge space and awareness.

Text 51:

Front page: *Dag snang ye shes drwa ba las/ 'chi med tshe yi bcud len dngos grub gter gyi 'byung gnas bzhugs*

From the net of pure appearing primordial wisdom, the source of the rediscovered treasures on the accomplishment of the essence of immortality

Author: Bdud 'joms gling pa (1835-1904)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'joms gling pa. Thimphu, Bhutan: Lama Kuenzang Wangdue, 2004, vol. 15: 202 – 207. TBRC W28732. Accessed through:

Folios: 1a-2b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-2a: 6 lines. 2b: 1 line.

Dating: unspecified

Content: Homage is offered to Guru Padmakara.

Regarding the place: in a solitary land free of (negative) conditions, *gtor ma* are given to the guardians of the land and the place, entrusting them as harbingers of favourable secondary conditions. Cooked rice and ransom effigies are offered to the obstructing forces. Once the deity is visualised, having cast away obstructions, one meditates on the *maṇḍala* of protection.

Entering the actual practice session; first, after sitting cross-legged on a comfortable cushion, one cleanses nine times the karmic *prāṇa* of the three poisons, then meditates, visualising the lama above the crown of the head, and offering many prayers. At the end, the master dissolves in a dimension of light within the practitioner, who meditates that all ailments, hindrances, impediments and karmic traces dissolve in space in the form of a black light.

One's own tutelary deity is then visualised as the Lord Amitāyus, seated on a lotus and moon seat, body red like a ruby lotus, adorned with major and minor signs, with two legs in the Vajrāsana posture.

(f. 204) In his two hands, held in meditative equipoise, he carries a life vase, and he wears all the ornaments of the perfect *sambhogākaya*. Light emits from the essence of his three *vajra* places that are visualised in his illusory rainbow body, within a dimension of five rainbow-coloured lights.

The tutelary deity in the form of the Immortal Lord together with the sons of all the Buddhas of the three times, dissolves in the form of the *samayasattva* like snow falling into the ocean, and then the three doors change and turn into a display of the three vajras.

After that, one imagines that the blue essence of all space of the three worlds enters the mouth, and all the body is filled by that blue essence.

Then one should practice eating the air element a hundred or a thousand times. Only a few cups of a beverage should be drunk the following morning and at midday and in the evening.

At midday, for food, having made a lump of clarified butter or a lump of oily dough, one eats seven times without dissipating the heat.

Food and beverages should be gradually increased little by little in accordance with the physique of the practitioner.

When thirsty, in the space in front of one, as before, one visualises Lord Amitāyus on a *maṇḍala* on a resplendent moon disc, from whom the pale-white shimmering *amṛta* emerges and enters the body through one's mouth (f. 205); everything is filled by the

pale white light and then glittering small drops issue from all pores. To pacify thirst one should drink in large gulps.

It should be known that the main point is continuously maintaining the *prāṇa* of the stomach. When one talks excessively, the *prāṇa* becomes wild; therefore one should train in restraining speech. At night too, in order not to lose the main point of the *prāṇa*, sitting in a squatting position is advised.

When eating and drinking a great deal, there is no control of the main point of the *prāṇa* and one becomes an unworthy recipient of this teaching; therefore, one should rely on a small amount.

Otherwise, the beginner's mind, being irritated, will be unable to train for a long time. As eating and drinking are reduced, eating to sustain life will decrease likewise. This is the practice.

At the end, both food and clothing are no longer needed because of mastery over *prāṇa*. As for the elements, one will have achieved the purification of the elements.

Attainment in this practice brings longevity and absence of illness; the common *siddhis*, the eight accomplishments and the supreme accomplishment; the *nāḍi*, the *bindu* and the three *prāṇas* will be purified in their own place. Through contemplating the door of accomplishment, the practitioner will have attained the state of an end to learning.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus. *Prāṇa*. Eat a lump of clarified butter or a lump of oily dough.

Colophon: (f. 205, line 6) *Zhes pa 'di rang slob dam pa mkhyen rab rgya mtsho nan du bskul ngor khrag 'thung bdud 'joms rdo rjes dag snang ye shes drwa ba las bsgyur pa 'o/ dge 'o/ dge 'o/ dge 'o//*

‘As for this, to fulfil the persistent request of my own noble disciple Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, Khrag ’thung Bdud ’joms rdo rje translated it from *The Net of Pure Appearing Primordial Wisdom*.’

Remarks: This text offers some interesting insights into subtle body dynamics, the purpose of certain respiratory practices and *prāṇa* circulation. In the preliminaries section there is a mention that exhaling the stale air nine times (an instruction often imparted at the beginning of *bcud len* practices) cleanses the karmic *prāṇa* (*las rlung*) of the ‘three poisons’. Advice regarding factors affecting *prāṇa* circulation includes dietary recommendations: to not talk excessively (as it results in the *prāṇa* going wild) and to sit in a squatting position at night.

Text 52:

Front page: *Zab gsang mkha’ ’gro ’i snying thig las/ thugs sgrub ye shes nyi ma’i skor/ bcud len ’od gsal snying po yi/ rtsa rlung byin rlabs chos nyid sprin phung bzhugs so*

From ‘The profound and sacred heart essence of the *ḍākinīs*: the accomplishment of enlightened mind, the sun-like primordial wisdom, the essence of the clear light *bcud len*, the blessing of channels and *prāṇa* [which is like] the amassing of clouds of Dharma nature’

Author: Bdud ’joms gling pa (1835-1904)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Bdud ’joms gling pa. Thimphu, Bhutan: Lama Kuenzang Wangdue, 2004, vol. 7: 153 - 157. Accessed through TBRC W28732.

Folios: 1a-4a 6 lines

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-3a: 6 lines.

Dating: Female Sheep year, in the eleventh month of the Mongolian calendar, on the tenth day, in the *gser smad rnga* constellation.

Content: This teaching, associated with Padmasambhava, is described as the finest essence of all *rtsa rlung* methods. If applied correctly, it should enable the practitioner to obtain liberation in this lifetime.

The text begins with an invocation to Padmasambhava, followed by instructions.

Practice: at dawn, in the first practice session, one takes refuge, generates *bodhicitta* and at the end of the (mantra) recitation pledges to practise *bcud len* and sounds A. The five *skandhas*, five *dhātus*, five *āyatanas*, five afflictions, objects of accumulation, fixations, faith, desire and attachments, all of them without exception, through the awareness at the core of the heart and through the powerful, skilfully blazing primordial wisdom fire are dissolved in the illusory dimension. One visualises the Clear Light *Ḍākinī*, radiating, red in colour, a symbol of power. Her simultaneously peaceful and wrathful demeanor symbolises the union of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Her three eyes symbolise the perfect obtainment of the three *kāyas*. Her right hand holds the curved knife that subjugates appearances; the left hand holds a *kapāla* filled with blood, symbolizing her enjoyment of the three worlds.

Her dancing posture symbolises the taming of the unfaithful.

She stands on a blooming uncontaminated flower while above it is a sun and moon disk symbolizing faultless skilful means and wisdom. She steps on the heart of a *rudra* that clings to his self. The left sole is turned out, subjugating the three worlds. As a sign of altruism, she holds a *kathvanga*.

(f. 154) Her voluptuous breasts symbolise a rainfall of accomplishments.

As a sign of possessing the five (*sambhogakāya*) aspects connected with the six consciousnesses she is adorned with bone ornaments and a garland of white lotuses.

Within are the channels; at the centre of her body, the *kundarma* central channel has different colours: externally, internally and secretly, it is white, red and blue symbolizing the union of the essence of the three *kāyas*. To symbolise the non-fabricated and primordially established four *kāyas*, the channel has the characteristics of being straight, slender, lustrous and luminous. On her right side abides the *ro ma* channel, the self-appearing *sambhogakāya*. On her left side the *rkyang ma* channel, the *nirmāṇakāya* (that is) total compassion. To symbolise the indivisibility of *ngo, rang, thugs rje* they unite below the navel and blend into one.

As for the main *rtsa 'dul*: the habitual tendencies (brought about by) karmic wind trickle down the channel, together with all malady and suffering, from the *ro ma* and the *rkyang ma*, developing into a thick mist (*na bun*), (which) disappears in the space of the basic sphere. One visualises that the channels become free of all faults. One expels the impure air nine times.

As for the *prāṇa bcud len*: one sounds *A* and visualises that at her heart centre, on a lotus flower the all-pervading Dharmakāya *Ḍākinī*, dark blue, naked, sits cross-legged in meditative equipoise. At her heart centre there is a sphere approximately the size of a pea, and at its centre is one's own consciousness, in the form of a clear white letter *A*, very thin as if drawn by a hair. To receive the blessings of the three *kāyas* and the Victorious Ones, in the form of the wisdom *prāṇa*, one visualises a rainbow-like thread stretching out through the nostrils. It is inhaled swiftly, passing through the *ro ma* and *rkyang ma* into the clear and aware white *A* and the residual part drips into the *cakra* of emanation. One executes this up to one hundred times.

Engaging in the union of the three primordial wisdoms, engaging in the path of magnetizing power, one visualises the letter *A* at the crown of *Brahmā*'s head, the great bliss *maṅḍala*. In the heart centre of the all-pervading protector *Khyab bdag 'od*

min 'gyur, the lineage lamas appear one after the other. They gradually dissolve and are subsumed in the lama who is at the heart. The lama dissolves into a white and red sphere and at Brahmā's white crown of the head, the letters *Hūṃ* and *Haṃ* shine in the bliss-sustaining *cakra*; the red *a shad* is clear and shines; the light of the letter *HAM*, is an offering to all the Victorious Ones who are invited and dissolve into the *HAM*. The essence of the universe's elements, subsumed in the letter *HAM*, shine.

The five wisdom *prāṇas* stimulate the *a shad*, the flames of *prajñā* and *jñāna* blaze, flickering. The flames reach the letter *HAM* and the immeasurable primordial wisdom of the union of bliss and emptiness is produced. Thirty-two small drops spread through the secondary channels in the bliss *cakra* and restore, by making offerings to the Buddha families, all that has been damaged; thus the two accumulations are perfected and all obscurations purified.

Trickling down to the heart centre, the drops repair all damage (to the) Vajra family, perfecting the accumulations and all obscurations without exception are purified.

Trickling down to the *cakra* of emanation, the drops pervade it and then restore the damage (to the) Ratna Family, perfecting the accumulations and all obscurations without exception are purified.

Trickling down to the *cakra* that enhances bliss, it restores the damage done (to the) Karma Family, perfecting the accumulations. All obscurations without exception are purified.

The last *thigle* drop flows into the fire; the essence of the *agniprāṇa* and the nectar blaze inseparably, pervading the channels of the bliss-sustaining *cakras*.

One imagines that one has obtained the initiations of the *tsal* energy and *rigpa* and that one experiences the wisdom union.

One imagines experiencing at the navel the empowerment of the word; at the heart, the empowerment of knowledge; at the throat, the secret empowerment; and at the crown of the head, the empowerment of the body.

If the practitioner holds *kumbhaka* and makes offerings the unfavourable conditions will be burnt; having made the *prāṇa* subtle, one abides in the great state totally free from elaboration.

Main deity and main substance employed: Clear light *dākinī*. *Prāṇa*.

Colophon: (f.158, line 3) *zhes pa 'di yang gar bdang bdud 'joms rdo rje khrag 'thung rol pa rtsal lha btsun 'od gsal snying po sngags nag hum che ka ra gling pa mkha' 'gro'i gtso mchog klong chen mi 'gyur rdo rje la sogs dpa' bo mkha' 'gro'i gling du ming gi tha snyan grags pa don la kun gyi skar 'debs dang gleng mot ha snyad kyi gans ma nus sbrang smyon zob rdzun mkhan des sa mo lug gyi lor hor zla bcu gcig pa'i tshes bcu'i nyin gser smad rnga la stag rtse'i g.yas logs brag rdo rje zhes grags pa'i brag dkar seng ge 'dra ba'i mgul nas bton te mi lo bzhi la bka' rgyas btab nas mthar smar stod 'bros phug ces pa'i dben pa'i khrod du dpal ldan rang byung rgyal mos bskul ba'i ngor shog ser las zhal bshus te dag par phab pa'i yi ge'i mthun rkyen phun tshogs bkra shis kyis bgyis pa dge'o/ sarba manga lam.*

Compared to Lha btsun 'od gsal snying po, Hum ka ra gling pa, Mkha' 'gro'i gtso mchog klong chen, Mi 'gyur rdo rje and so forth, how can I take the place of these *dakas* and *dākinīs*? I, Gar bdang bdud 'joms rdo rje khrag 'thung rol pa rtsal, the crazy, hypocritical one, cannot do what he says.

In the female Earth Sheep year, in the eleventh month of the Mongolian calendar, on the tenth day, that of the *gser smad rnga* [constellation], on the right side of Stag rtse county, in the place of 'Vajra Rock' (brag dorje) from the white rock which looks like a snow lion, I retrieved [a *terma*] from its neck. I kept it for four years and finally in the

solitary cave of Smar stod 'bros, at the bequest of Dpal ldan rang byung rgyal mos, I copied it from the yellow paper. It was copied clearly by Phun tshogs bkra shis. May it be auspicious!

Remarks: A particular, and previously unseen, description of a *ḍākinī's* subtle body (f. 154) tells us that her three channels symbolise the three *kayas*. Regarding the effects of *prāṇa* spreading to various areas of the subtle body, the text states that spreading the *thig le* 'drops' through secondary channels appease the Buddhas of the different (Ratna, Karma, Buddha, Vajra) families.

Text 53:

Front page: *'Chi med bcud len sgrub pa'i thabs mchog bdud rtsi'i bum pa bzang po*

The perfect vase of elixir; the supreme *bcud len* method for achieving immortality

Author: 'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Vol. 4: 691-702. Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi. Accessed through TBRC W5062.

Folios: 1a-6b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b -6a: 6 lines. 6b: 2 lines.

Dating: The tenth day of the waning moon of the eighth lunar month of the Iron Hare year. (1891)

Content: The full translation of this pill *bcud len* text is found in Chapter Four.

Main deity and main substance employed: Mañjuśrī. *Prāṇa* exercises.

Colophon: f.701, line 6 *Ces pa 'di rab chos lcags yos khrum zla'i dmar phyogs kyi tshes bcu'i nyi dros kyi thun skabs su mi pham rnam par rgyal ba'am 'jam dpal dgyes pa'i rdo rjer grags pas shar mar sbel ba dge'o mangalam*

‘This was written in haste by Mipham Nampar Gyalwai, also known as Jampel Gyepa’i Dorje, during the morning meditation session on the tenth day of the waning moon of the eighth lunar month in the year of the Iron Hare. *Mangalam.*’

Remarks: see the introduction to the text’s full translation in Chapter 4.

Text 54:

Front page: *Bcud len gyi cha lag rin chen za ma tog bzhugs so*

The precious receptacle of *bcud len* implements

Author: ’Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)

Source: In *Gsung ’bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Vol. 4: 185-199. Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi. Accessed through TBRC W5062.

Folios: 1a-8a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 1b-8b: 6 lines. 8a: 2 lines.

Dating: The eighth month of an unspecified Fire Monkey year.

Content: One awakens at dawn, straightens one’s body, exhales the stale air and self-visualises as Mañjuśrī. One swallows the pill imagining that one’s heart delight increases. One inhales and retains air according to one’s capacity. Instantly, one transforms into Māmaki and recites her mantra for as long as possible. Afterwards, one invokes the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions into one’s *vajra* body. Recitation of mantras follows and all that was visualised dissolves into clear light.

One transforms into Sangs rgyas spyān ma (Buddhalocanā). From the heart, mantra lights spread and gather. From the *OM* at the crown of the head, while reciting

Locanā's mantras one visualises nectars that gather and descend. Nectar dissolves into the cranial aperture and fills the body, which one imagines becoming transparent, and recites the mantra. Then, imagining that one is eating the sky as food, one inhales more air and retains it. The deities dissolve. The *smon lam bkra shis* (auspicious aspirational prayer) should be recited in the first session.

Nurturing the primordial nature of mind, one trains in conceiving everything as a magical illusion. A whole day is dedicated to the second session. Also, in this session, one ingests a pill whenever needed, at a time of one's choice and does whatever one likes, increasing the heart joy and gathering essence, like the sky essence, and so forth.

At night, one visualises oneself as Gos dkar mo (Pandara) and recites her mantra. At the end of the session, one practices the 'blazing and trickling down' meditation. One visualises the hollow parts of the body, the three channels and the four *cakras* and expels the stale air. While inhaling, one visualises inhaling the pure essence of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* in the form of yellow and red lights. Visualising this as dissolving at a point four fingers below the navel, into the blazing *a shad*. The fire enters upward into the central channel. It strikes the red *OM* at the heart causing blissful heat. The fire touches the upside down *HAM* syllable at the centre of the moon disk; bliss pervades. From there, a white stream of nectar pours forth. As soon as it touches the base of *gtum mo's* fire, the *a shad*, the fire blazes more intensely, as when butter is poured on fire. Then, the fire melts more nectar and the blissful heat blaze increases. The red and the white mix and pervade all the channels, purifying the body's impurities. One imagines obtaining *vajra* life and strength. If one holds the air as much as possible in rhythmic breathing, from this alone, one will accomplish the liberating air *bcud len* and the purifying transformation of the defiled material body. At the end of the session, one

imagines the body becoming clearer, light-like, blending into space. One remains in this state of equanimity. Then, at night, usually it is better to practise the instructions on clear light, invoking the wisdom lineage holders. Offering a *pūjā* to the gods and *dākinīs*, one confesses and atones and offers *gtor mas* to the healers. As a support to this *bcud len* there is the long life *sādhanā* and the dedication of merit. At dawn one visualises oneself as Pāṇḍaravāsīnī and recites her mantra 108 times. At the crown of one's head, is a red Amitāyus holding a vase. On his right is the sun goddess and on his left, the moon goddess. Holding the arrow banner and the vase, they gather the life, essence and lustre of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* and pour it into the vase in Amitāyus's hand. These descend into the crown of one's head and fill one's body. All obstacles are pacified.

Imagining oneself as an accomplished immortal *Vidyādhara*, one recites the mantra 108 times. Then, one imagines on the crown of one's head the deity (Amitāyus) and his retinue dissolving into the wisdom nectar. This dissolves into oneself and one thus imagines obtaining a sky-like (eternal) life, free from destruction. One recites as many Amitāyus mantras as one wishes. One will obtain the life of a *Vidyādhara* and *vajra* strength. Then, the author recommends a recipe for an *a ru ra bcud len* to be carried out periodically to regenerate bodily strength, and for purification. He mentions that one should practice the various stone essence, water essence, and flower essence practices in accordance with one's desired goals or illnesses, constitution and temperature.

One should also practice *prāṇayama* and *bcud len* with water empowered by Māmaki mantras and visualisations.

After one week of *bcud len*, body parasites will be purged and one will be accomplished in the essence. As for this long life practice, it is very important and

special, so it is beneficial to do it. Not only that, but at this time recite the mantra of Māmaki who is surrounded by a retinue; the long life practice will become supreme’.

The text states the practitioner should offer *gtor ma* to (unnamed) *bcud len* protectors, offer *maṅḍalas*, ransom animal lives, do prostrations and so forth to accumulate merit.

Yogīns are recommended to find a suitable young consort with whom to practise. It is emphasised that an eleven year-old girl is not suitable. One should ejaculate sperm onto the consort’s vagina and draw it back in or scoop it with one’s tongue and eat it.

When practising *bcud len* one needs to eat correctly, according to one’s inner constitution.

Then, there is an explanation for a practice and a recipe to expel worms, to be taken on an empty stomach in the middle of autumn on the eighth or tenth day. It consists of: *srin bu ke ke ru* [probably a slight misspelling of *srin bu ka ka ru*, scorpion], *rtsi bo che* (*asafoetida*), *glad pa* (brain), honey, white garlic, which are all mixed and boiled in a soup of deer intestine (*sha ba’i rgyu*). Should the worms be particularly resistant another recipe and mantra to purge them are provided.

The text concludes by listing the benefits of practising the great bliss nectar *bcud len*.

The *thig le* of great bliss, abiding within, neither diminishes nor increases. If the method of restoration is well executed, one develops clear wisdom and strength. The common body will become the indestructible *rdo rje* body. It is beneficial also for elderly people.

Experiences and realisations will occur. The finely treated ingredients will bestow strength. The mantras will restore both subtle and coarse energies. Breathing exercises

and visualisations will separate and awaken the subtle and coarse energies. When the three ingredients (mantra and air and visualisations) are combined and enhancing, the *bcud len* will certainly be accomplished swiftly.

Main deity and main substance employed: Mañjuśrī, Buddhalocanā and Pāṇḍaravāsini. *Prāṇa*. A pill containing several ingredients, chiefly *a ru ra*.

Colophon: f.199, line 5 *rig pa'i rtsal las ma bris thabs med byung/ / rang bzo ma yin rgyal gsung dbang du bzhag / 'dra rtsom ma yin lha yi byin rlabs yin/ don med ma yin don chen gter dang ldan/ gzhan phan blo dang bla ma lha yi mthu/ rten cing 'brel ba'i stobs las 'di byung phyir/ /skal bzang brtson ldan lus srog bla ma'i phyir/ /gtong bar nus pa de dag rnam kyis 'grub/ /rab tshes me sprel khnums zla'i chu gter tshes la 'chi med mchog grub gling du rnal 'byor pa 'jam dpal dbyes pa dbang gi rdo rjes spel ba dge legs 'phel lo//*

‘I wrote this from my knowledge, I had to write it. It is not my making; they are the words of the Victorious One; it is not made by others; it has the blessings of the gods. It is not meaningless, it is endowed with great significance. I received it through the motivation to benefit others, by the power of the divine lama and the power of interdependence. It will be accomplished by those who are fortunate and possess diligence, who will give their life and body for the sake of the lama.

‘During the water treasure time of the eighth month of the Fire Monkey year, at ‘Chi med mchog grub gling, the *yogī* ‘Jam dpal dbyes pa dbang gi rdo rjes wrote this. May virtue increase!’

Remarks: It is interesting to note that the practitioner is instructed to meditate on certain deities, such as Mañjuśrī and Buddhalocanā in the daytime and on Pāṇḍaravāsini at night. We know from the texts that certain lunar dates are associated with

Padmasambhava and others with the *dākinī*, but nothing is said about meditating on certain deities at particular times of the day.

Mentions of parasites and remedies against them are common throughout the compendium, so I would like to reproduce a particularly detailed one found in this text. On f. 194, line 6 a section begins regarding the purification of obstacles derived from the text *bka' brgyad kyi gzhung sogs* (The Eight Sādhana teachings of Padmasambhava), which concerns two families of worms. Since they demolish the body's energies, if these worms are not defeated, then it is difficult for *bcud len* to be as effective as it should be. A method is provided: in the middle of the autumn, on the eight or tenth day, mix and boil *srin bu ke ke ru* (scorpion), *rtsi bo che* (*asafoetida*), *glad pa* (brain), honey and white garlic, in a soup of deer intestine. Consume it on an empty stomach, the two worms will come out from the urinary tract in the form of a silk thread. If this method is ineffective another recipe (f. 195, line 4) is provided to prepare a pill with: *sdom* (spider), the skin of a baby scorpion (*sdig pa bu'i shun*), human, goat and pig fat, the six precious substances, various salts. Take them on an empty stomach and the worms will be expelled.

Text 55:

Front page: *Bcud len sgrub pa'i tshe bka' srung mchod thabs bdud rtsi'i char 'bebs*

The rainfall of nectar: the method for offering to the dharmapalas at the time of practicing *bcud len*

Author: 'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Khreng tu'u: Gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs, 2007, vol. 28: 190 - 191. Accessed through TBRC W2DB16631.

Folios: 1a-1b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a-1b: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The text states (f. 190, line 3) that whenever practising *bcud len* one ought to make offerings to the *dharmapālas* before carrying out the practice. One offers *gtor ma* and *pūjā* beverages, purifying them with mantras.

There is an invocation asking for help in the practice and to avert illness, invoking the worldly protectors, the *devas*, the *nāgas*, the *raksas* (local gods), and those who possess various mantric powers, the immortal *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs* who look after sacred places, valleys and fields, the medicinal nectar goddess and the *rasāyana dharmapālas*. One invites them and offers them sacred substances.

The invocation reads: ‘Assist me in accomplishing the *bcud len* practice.

Guru Rinpoche is the embodiment of the Buddha of all times. He and his disciples in the lineage tamed and bound by vows the immortal *dharmapālas*, the long-lived Mahākāla and long-life goddesses, the male and female Dharma practitioners. The skilled and powerful *dharmapālas* who can bestow long life, the assembly of lower rank *dharmapālas*, the *dharmapālas* who can manifest in any form, the messengers of the *dharmapālas* and the various *upāsaka* who look after those engaged in virtuous activities. The gods, *nāgas*, local deities, local guardians who help extend people’s lifespan and who bestow *bcud len*, the lesser deities, protectors and the *gnyan po* [a class of spirits said to cause serious illnesses in humans]. We request all of them to increase our lifespan.

Come, holders of profound teachings and protectors of *gter ma* teachings. I will offer you whatever you desire, *gter ma* and appropriate sacred substances. I confess all of my mistakes and transgressions. May my confession please you!

You are entrusted by the buddhas, *vidyādharas* and lineage masters who gave you particular responsibilities; once you accept them you should not break your vows and should help and assist all those protectors who follow the lineage masters from whom you have received vows.

Help us accomplish this nectar *bcud len* practice; protect us from any hindrance and obstacle and grant us blessings without exceptions. May we remain youthful and attain the *vajra* (indestructible) life and carry out enlightened activities’.

Main deity and main substance employed: In this invocation one praises several *dharmapālas* and deities. There are no substances partaken by the practitioner, but *gter mas* and *pūjā* beverages are offered to the deities.

Colophon: (f.191, line 6) ’*jam dpal rdo rjes spel ba manga lam//*

‘Jam dpal rdo rje composed this. *Mangalam.*’

Remarks: The text is not an instructional treatise about *bcud len* methods related to specific deities or substances; it is more of an aspirational prayer asking for success to be granted in the practice and to rid the practitioner of obstacles on the path. The text (f. 190, line 3) states that aspirational prayers should be recited whenever one sets out to practise *bcud len*; however the vast majority of texts in this compendium lack such aspirational prayers. There is also the mention of the *gnyan po* to whom respects are paid in the invocation.

Text 56:**Front page:** *Bcud len sgrub thabs mandzu shri ra sa ya na sa dha ni*The *bcud len* obtainment method on Mañjuśrī *rasāyana sādhanā***Author:** 'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (1846-1912)**Source:** In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngo drup and Sherab Drimey, 1984-1993, vol. 5: 177 – 180. Accessed through TBRC W23468.**Folios:** 1a-2a**Script:** *dbu can***Layout:** 1a-1b: 6 lines. 2a: 5 lines.**Dating:** Written on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month of the Wood Horse year (unspecified)**Content:** One visualises oneself as Mañjuśrī united with a consort and holding a sword and a text of scriptures in his hand; surrounded by the four secret *yum* families. One visualises that all outer phenomenal appearances dissolve and converge into the *dam tshig rdzas*³⁵ substance. Thereafter, one empowers the substance by reciting several mantras, which transform it into wisdom nectar. The signs of the practice include experiences of lights and pleasant smells. If the nectar goddess appears in dreams, then youthfulness and indestructible life are attained.**Main deity and main substance employed:** Mañjuśrī. The *dam tshig rdzas* substances.**Colophon:** (f.178, line 4) *zhes pa 'ang nye bar mkho pa 'i slad du lugs gnyis kyi 'dun chen po dpal lhun grub steng gi pho brang yang rtsi nas 'jam dpal dgyes pas shing rta zla ba bcu gcig gi tshes bcu bzhi la dge bar bris pa mangalam*

³⁵ In this text no specific ingredients are listed; as for *dam tshig rdzas*, Van Schaik (2010: 62) suggests that: 'The five nectars of tantric ritual – the faeces, urine, semen, blood and human flesh – are known as the *samaya* substances (*dam tshig rdzas*) because they embody this ritualized inherence of the divine in the ordinary'.

‘For the purposes of the requirement of the daily practice, on the crown of the spontaneously perfected palace that is the great aspiration of the two traditions, ’Jam dpal dgyes pa virtuously wrote this in the Wood Horse year, on the fourteenth day of the eleventh month.’

Remarks: The first instance where Mañjuśrī features as the main deity. Similarly, Text 59 features Mañjuśrī who is visualised empowering the *bcud len* substances.

Text 57:

Front page: *Pad ma longs sku tshe mtha’ yas kyi sgrub thabs bcud len dang ’brel ba ’chi med grub pa’i sgrom zhes bya ba bzhugs so*

The method for accomplishing the limitless life of *sambhogakāya*, the so-called ‘*Frame for the accomplishment of deathlessness*’ connected with *bcud len*

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu’u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 27: 611 – 624. Accessed through: TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-8a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line. 2a-2b: 5 lines. 3a-8a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Time constraints prevented me from reading the complete text, but I reproduce here a summary of the content of the first few folios.

The text starts by listing ingredients to make life-prolonging pills: relics and *samaya* substances from supreme teachers are collected. The text also lists: five medicines, five incenses, five precious substances, non-poisonous leaves of trees, flower

seeds, clean rice, tsampa, *chang*, mare's milk (beverage made from fermented mare's milk) and more.

After having beaten, ground and filtered the ingredients properly, one makes bean-sized pills, using vermilion for their colouring. One places them in a *kapāla* and blends in the *bzang drug dri* (six excellent odours). These are covered with five-coloured silks and placed in the middle of a *maṇḍala*. The substances should be gathered and prepared by one who has pure *samaya*, in a solitary place. One cleans and sprinkles water and then prepares outer offerings, ornaments the *maṇḍala* and prepares *gtor ma*. Now, taking the relics, one mixes them with *dbang lag*, *tsan dkar po*, saffron, *gla rtsi*, nutmeg, powders of precious stones, the five fleshs and the five nectars. One mixes all these with clean rice and makes bean-sized pills. These are then placed in a *kapāla* with all the characteristics and the *bzang drug dri* are then mixed in. One covers the *kapāla* in five-coloured silks, and places it in the middle of the *maṇḍala*. One sprinkles water and removes hindrances and recites supplications.

There are preliminaries, a main part and a conclusion.

First; one practices refuge and *bodhicitta*, reciting it three times. One dispels the hindrances offering *gtor ma* and *bsang*. Sounding *HRĪH* one self-visualises as the primordial deity Padma dbang chen Heruka, extremely wrathful.

The text continues.

Main deity and main substance employed: The primordial deity Padma dbang chen Heruka. Refer to the above section for the main ingredients in the pills.

Colophon: (f. 624, line 5) *Pad ma longs sku tshe mtha' yas kyi sgrub thabs bcud len dang 'brel ba 'chi med grub pa'i sgrom zhes bya ba bzhugs so 'di rang gzhan la nye 'khor bsams te gsang gling pas gter gzhung gi dgongs pa'i lta ba bzhin dmar khrid du*

*bsdebs 'di'i yig ris dge sbyor shar rdzas bgyis 'dis kyang lus can rgya mtsho 'chi med
tshe mtha'yas kyi srog chen 'grub pa'i rgyur gyur cig sarba mangalam*

‘The method for accomplishing the limitless life of *sambhogakāya*, the so-called “Frame for the accomplishment of deathlessness” connected with *bcud len*. Thinking that it might be necessary for others and myself, I prepared it in the form of a commentary with the point of view of Sangs gling pa’s *gter ma* text. This virtuous work was arranged by Shar rdza. May it become the cause for obtaining the great life force of limitless immortality for the ocean of beings. *Sarva mangalam.*’

Remarks: This is the first of a series of *bcud len* texts found in this compendium rediscovered by Rang rig rdo rje. He was a disciple of Nyag bla pad ma bdud ’dul and a prolific treasure revealer. His master Nyag bla padma bdud ’dul (1816-1872), the rediscoverer of Text 45, claimed that his practice would enable one to manifest a miraculous death where the cadaver shrinks or ‘disappears’. Interestingly both masters manifested such signs at death and a comparative study of their *bcud len* practices and mysterious deaths could be an interesting topic for future research. Rang rig rdo rdje’s *gter ma* teachings may somehow be connected to the *Mkha' khyab rang grol* cycle of teachings of his master Pad ma bdud ’dul. Further research on the correlations between these two masters’ *bcud len* teachings would probably bring about interesting discoveries regarding *gter ma* authorship and interconnectedness. This is one of the rare *bcud len* texts that I am aware of which prescribes the practice of *bsang*. (See Text 24)

Text 58:

Front page: *Bla ma bka' brgyad zab pa gten mdzad las/ bcud ldan zag med bdud rtsi'i
bcud len rdzas tshogs bsdu thabs kyi man nag gzer ti ka*

The explanation of the Nail of Secret Instructions on the way of accumulating and collecting the substances of stainless nectar *bcud len* extracted from the *gter ma* treasury of the unsurpassable eight pronouncements

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 19: 455 – 458. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 2 lines. 2a-2b: 5 lines. 3a: 2 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Yet to be analysed.

Main deity and main substance employed: Yet to be identified.

Colophon: f. 2b, line 5 *Zhes zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len rdzas tshogs bsdu thabs kyi man ngag gsal ba'i lag len 'debs tshul gyi gdams pa zab mo 'di ni/ 'ga' brag dkar gyi dben khrod du/ man ngag gsang mdzod gyi bdag po kho bo sku gsum gling pas mkha' 'gro'i gsang sgrom nas bton 'di'i/ yig ris snang med rdo rjes bgyis 'dis kyang skye bzhi'i sems can zag med ting 'dzin gyi bdud rtsi'i ro la longs spyod cing rgyal dbang mtsho skyes rdo rje'i go 'phang bde blags tu 'god pa'i rgyur gyur cig/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ bcud len rdzas tshogs bsdu thabs sarba tish thati//*

These are profound instructions on the practice that clarifies the pith instructions on the way of accumulating and collecting the substances of stainless nectar *bcud len*. At the hermitage of 'Ga' brag dkar, I, Sku gsum gling pa, who has the mastery of the secret treasury of pith instructions, retrieved this from the *dākinī*'s secret hiding place. It was written down by Snang med rdo rje. May it become the cause for beings of the four

types of birth to enjoy the taste of stainless *samādhi* nectar and comfortably place them in the state of the Victorious One of the Lake-born Vajra (Guru Padmasambhava). The method of gathering *bcud len* substances is completed.

Remarks: It must be remembered that Sku gsum gling pa and Rang rig rdo rje are two name variants of the same person.

Text 59:

Front page: *Tshe yi dngos grub la zab pa 'jam dpal gzhin rje'i gshed sku'i sgrub pa la brten pa'i zag med rdo rje'i bcud len 'chi med rang grol shes bya ba bzhugs*

The profound *siddhi* of life; the practice of Mañjuśrī Yamantaka, the body of the destroyer. Relying on the 'stainless *vajra bcud len* of deathless self-liberation

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar Rin po che Thub bstan Nyi ma, 2005, vol. 21: 619 – 630. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-7a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 2 lines; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-6b: 6 lines; 7a: 2 lines

Dating: Unspecified

Content: There is a section on preliminary practices and preparations, followed by three sections on *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya bcud len* practices.

As for the preparations, the main ingredients are: *dbang lag*, bamboo, calcite, *a ru ra*, *ba ru ra*, *skyu ru ra*, nutmeg, yogurt, meat, yellow pigment and the six excellent substances with the addition of stag horn's blood and deer musk. This is mixed with milk from one hundred red cows and shaped into gold-coloured pills. Sprinkling water

on them, one imagines that obstacles disappear and primordial wisdom dissolves into the pills. [Go to] an isolated hermitage, during an auspicious constellation in the period between summer and autumn, where fruit trees bloom and birds gather. One visualises the gathering of pure *maṇḍalas*. On a yellow four-sided table, one draws an *OM* syllable and at its centre the *HRĪH* syllable. Offerings are placed on these syllables.

As for the preliminary practices, the practitioner is told: ‘Purify your mind-stream with the preliminary practice and be diligent in practising Guruyoga’.

The main practice: One takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta*. For removing obstacles, one self-visualises as a wrathful Mañjuśrī Yamantaka, dark yellow in colour. His right hand raises the wisdom sword, the left hand forms a fierce, threatening mudra and the fingertip emanates *kalpa* destroying fire. From his five places and from the body’s every pore, emanate innumerable small, wrathful Yamantaka forms, similar to himself, bearing sharp weapons blazing with fire. They spread in all directions and all the misguided groups of spirits have no place to stay or go to. One recites the main mantras and the four *HŪM* mantra.

To create the circle of protection, the instructions are as follows: one visualises wrathful deities endowed with primordial wisdom light and recites the interdependence mantra and other mantras. One visualises oneself as Mañjuśrī, with at the heart a peaceful Amitāyus, holding a vase containing the essence of deathless life. His retinue of *vidyādharas*, *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs* radiates light rays from their three gates. The lights purify one’s obscuration. One recites a mantra and visualises five-coloured light rays spreading to the outer world and to inner beings. Summoning their clear essence, life, merits and glory, particularly from the pure lands, the three roots, wrathful and peaceful buddhas, along with all their qualities and activities, splendour and power, dissolve

into the *HRĪḤ* letter at one's heart centre, around which a garland of mantras revolves clockwise as mantras are recited.

One practises the *nirmāṇakāya bcud len* in four daily sessions and takes a pill every seven days. The practitioner should drink four cups of excellent tea daily. At the end of the session, one remains in the equipoise of *samaya* and wisdom, in the sphere of pacification of all elaborations. The practice's benefits are listed: one will remain youthful, possess a melodious voice and attain the deathless *vajra* body.

In the *sambhogakāya bcud len*, one is in a state inseparable from the vivid deities appearing. One imagines at one's navel an inconceivably hot black *HŪḤ* letter, the size of the three realms. Exhaling, one imagines all obstacles disappearing. Then, one imagines inhaling all the splendid power of the illusory *maṇḍalas* of the three roots. One takes in the essence of stillness and movement. The air is visualised as a glittering white *HRĪḤ* letter. One holds *kumbhaka*. After training for four sessions in the *sambhogakāya bcud len* benefits will ensue.

In the *dharmakāya bcud len*, *chang* is boiled and shaped into a ball the size of a pigeon's egg. One is taken at each meditation session. The practitioner engages in gentle *kumbhaka* and will be totally freed from conditioning thoughts. All elaborations will be pacified in the sphere of great emptiness. Moving from this base, one does not struggle but stays relaxed and opened, with the channels uncontrolled. The benefits are that one's five aggregates and five sense faculties will be transformed into the five Buddhas; one will attain the stainless rainbow body.

The final advice is that one should practice accordingly: *nirmāṇakāya* for three weeks, *sambhogakāya* for six weeks, *dharmakāya* for nine weeks.

Main deity and main substance employed: Mañjuśrī, Amitāyus. Pills with several ingredients listed in the beginning of the 'content' section.

Colophon: (f. 629, line 4) *zhes zag med rdo rje'i bcud len 'chi med rang grol zhes pa'i gdams pa khyad du 'phags pa 'di ni rig 'dzin bla ma dgyes pa'i dben khrod 'ga' brag dkar gdas kyi zhol 'go min pa'i dgal tshal du kun bzang za hor bla ma'i phrin las kyi kha longs kho bo sku gsum gling pas bro'i gsang yig las bton 'di ni dpa'bo'i bstan pa tshul bzhin du gzhol ba'i slob skal bzang chos kyi bdag po 'od zer rdo rje legs par thon 'di'i kyang skye bzhi'i bsdu pa'i sems can rnams gdos bcas kyi phung po snang med 'pho chen dwangs ma'i skur 'grub pa'i rgyur gyur cig/ samaya/ rgya rgya rgya.*

‘As for the particularly supreme teaching known as the “stainless *vajra bcud len* of deathless self-liberation”, At the pleasure grove of the White Rock Solitary Hermitage that pleases the *vidyādhara*s and gurus, from the sphere of buddha activities of the all-perfected Za hor Guru, I, Sku gsum ling pa, have extracted these from the secret dancing letters. It (this teaching) was given to the disciple known as Skal bzang chos kyi bdag po 'od zer legs pa. This *bcud len* enables beings conditioned by birth and death to accomplish the clear body of great transformation and causes their solid aggregates not to appear.’

Remarks: The text claims that if this practice is carried out properly one will accomplish the ‘great transference’ and at death leave behind no bodily remains. The inclusion of ingredients such as ‘milk from one hundred cows’ would merit further analysis to understand their perceived value.

Text 60:

Front page: *Bla ma bka' brgyad zab pa gter mdzod las: bcud ldan zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len gyi ril sgrub yid bzhin gter mdzod*

From ‘The treasure of the eight profound pronouncements of Guru Padmasambhava: the

essence extraction of stainless nectar possessing essence, the treasure of wish-fulfilling pills'

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyima, 2005, vol. 19: 453-459. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-4b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 2 lines. 2a-2b: 5 lines. 3a-4a: 6 lines. 4b: 3 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The essence extraction to make pills, from the eight pronouncements of Guhyasamāja.

One meditates on the nature of emptiness and pours the ingredients into a *kapāla*, covering them with five-coloured silks. One applies pleasing fragrances around the skull, meditating that on the right side of the *kapāla* there are *ḍākas*, and on the left side *ḍākinīs*.

As for the actual practice; after reciting the mantra, one visualises a five-coloured *KEM* syllable at one's heart and in front of one a *kapāla* filled with nectar of one hundred flavours. One invites the blessings of the deities into the skull's contents.

One sounds *HRĪḤ* and imagines deities before oneself, lights expand and are reabsorbed, moving between oneself and the deities. The three realms of existence, gods, *nāgas* and the powers of the eight nonhuman life forms, blessings and merits all dissolve into the pill's ingredients. Continuously reciting Guru Rinpoche mantras one imagines lights from the deities going into the pills. One practises this for a month or six weeks. When this is completed, then one prepares the pills. One stays in retreat relying

on the pills, for the summer and some of the autumn months. The text ends with a list of the practice's benefits.

Main deity and main substance employed: Unspecified deities are visualised before the practitioner. The pills contain unspecified ingredients.

Colophon: (f. 458, line 6) *'di ni rig 'dzin bla ma dgyes pa'i dben khrod 'ga' shel rdzong gi mgul dag pa lha yi 'og min gsang ba chen po'i khang bzang du/ dus snyigs mtsho skyes bla ma'i bris pa kho bo sku gsum gling pas mkha' 'gro'i gab sgrom nas bton 'di'i yig mkhan slob ma skal bzang snang med rdo rje grub 'dis kyang skye rgu'i 'gro ba cog 'dzad med bdud rtsi'i dpal gyi dga'ston la rol zhing o rgyan chen po'i thugs klong rnam par mi rtog pa'i dbyings su grol ba'i rgyur gyur cig/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ bcud len ril sgrub gyi gdams pa sarba du athi//*

‘The “*Vidyādhara* Lama Pleasing” Hermitage on the slope of ‘Ga’ shel, is the excellent heavenly, highly secret abode of pure deities. For the degenerate times, the *bcud len* text was written by the Lake-Born Lama. I, Sku gsum Glin pa retrieved it from the *ḍākinī*’s treasure casket. The scribe who completed it was the disciple Skal bzang snang med rdo rje. Through this, may all beings enjoy the joyful gloriousness of the inexhaustible nectar and may it be a cause for liberating beings in the inconceivable sphere of Guru Rin po che’s mind expanse. The explanations on the *bcud len* pill practice are completed.’

Remarks: the text focuses almost entirely on the empowerment of the pills and lacks instructions on how to ingest them or on breathing practices. This brings one to question whether there might be accompanying texts.

Text 61:

Front page: *Tshe dbang rdo rje'i srog sgrubs ril bu'i sgrubs pas cho ga tshe'i bcud len zhes bya ba bzhugs so*

The making of the pill of *vajra* life power obtainment *bcud len* ritual

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 27: 689 - 701. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-7b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-7a: 6 lines; 7b: 4 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Instructions are given for the making of the pills, their empowerment and the practice itself. The practitioner is told to supplicate Mañjuśrī and Hevajra for the blessings of long life and to remove obscuration.

There are instructions on the ingredients of the pill and its preparation.

The ingredients include relics of the Victorious Ones, the five different medicines (*lnga log sman rigs dang*), the five different incenses, and leaves from the 'excellent tree' (*shing bzang po*) that have the essence of life. Other ingredients include: gold, silver, *dbang lag* and mare's milk. These are mixed with rice flour and very strong *chang* and shaped. Mustard seeds are added and the pills rolled into balls.

In the preliminary stage the instructions are to visualise Mañjuśrī, prepare *gtorma* offerings, meditate on the emptiness of appearances; in the generation stage one is instructed to visualise that the *maṇḍala* retinue; oneself and the pills are purified.

For the actual practice:

Sounding *HRĪḤ*, one transforms into Amitāyus with a *HRĪḤ* syllable at his heart. Five colours spread and one unites with the glorious three roots. One imagines the essence and glory of the three realms dissolve into one's heart. Reciting mantras, from the red *HRĪḤ* syllable at Amitāyus's heart, lights spread to all buddhafiels and to countless buddhas. Their power, love and knowledge dissolve into the accomplishment pills in front of one. One recites mantras and does this practice for seven days but if that is not possible for at least three days. When reciting the mantras one prepares *pūjā* offerings and transforms as Hayagrīva. One recites mantras and plays instruments. One imagines being in the Dharma expanse (*dharmadhātu*) of the *saṃbhogakāya* realm of enjoyment, Akaniṣṭha. One transforms into the presiding master, Kun dpal ldan rdo rje, surrounded by his retinue. Hevajra is there along with Guru Rinpoche, Yeshe Tsogyal, Mañjuśrīmitra, and Śrī Siṃha. They sit on thrones and bestow empowerments and blessings. One is surrounded by an ocean of accomplished ones, eighty different types of Mahāsiddha, the lamas of the lineage and they grant empowerments and blessings. One recites *HŪM* several times in succession, each time visualising receiving empowerments from various buddhas and enlightened ones such as Amitābha and Pāṇḍaravasinī and Amitāyus's secret male and female union, Guru Rinpoche and Mandhara.

Finally, one recites *HŪM* and visualises the three roots dissolving into the three gates of Guru Rinpoche. One visualises infinite offerings to Guru Rinpoche and Mandhara and to protectors. The inner and outer and secret obstacles and negative forces are pulverised. One visualises the buddha *maṇḍala* field in the sky dissolving and becoming inseparable with the substances. One carries out further rituals described in the text. Finally one prepares a *maṇḍala* and places the pills on it and visualises them receiving empowerment. Offering praises, one confesses all wrongdoings and offers the

maṇḍala to the root guru for his long life. Aspiration prayers are offered for all beings in all directions.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus, Kun dpal ldan rdo rje. Ingredients include masters' relics, five different medicines (*Inga log sman rigs dang*), five different incenses and leaves from the 'excellent tree' (*shing bzang po*). Also: pearls, gold, silver, *dbang lag* and mare's milk, rice flour, strong *chang* and mustard seeds.

Colophon: There are no specific indications as to the lineage of transmission.

Remarks: Once again we see a text containing particularly elaborate rituals and visualisations for the pill's empowerment.

Text 62:

Front page: *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig las/ sprul sku'i bcud len gsal rang grol bzhungs*

From 'The heart essence, the luminous great secret: the self-liberation clear light *nirmanakāya bcud len*'

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Ggzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 28: 555 - 565. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-6b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 lines; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-6a: 6 lines; 6b: 4 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: First, one makes *maṇḍala* and *gtor ma* offerings. The *gtor ma* should be red, with colourful decorations. After completing the *maṇḍala* one practises the *bcud len*.

The instructions are as follows: one places a *kapāla* in the *maṇḍala*'s centre, fills it with old wheat, clean rice and barley flour, covers this with a red silk cloth and empowers it by reciting *OM ĀḤ HŪM*, meditating in early morning, afternoon and evening sessions. One drinks boiled water in the early morning and evening. During the afternoon session one takes some food from the *kapāla* and cooks it in white butter.

The ritual has three sections: preparation, the main part and the latter stage.

1) Preparation

One takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta*. One accumulates merit and dispels obstacles by reciting mantras. One receives blessings from the Padma family in the Palace of the Dharma Expanse.

2) Main part

From the letter *AM* one visualises that Amitābha and his retinue manifest before one. Amitābha has a red body, and sits peacefully cross-legged, in his right hand a lotus, in his left hand a longevity vase. His consort has a white, slightly reddish complexion. One invites their wisdom and makes *maṇḍala* offerings and prostrates to the host of deities, reciting the Amitābha mantra as many times as possible.

3) Concluding section

One requests and the deities bestow supreme body, speech and mind empowerments. One confesses any transgressions of one's vows. One makes offerings and receives blessings from the host of deities. One eliminates the evil spirits by performing the Hayagrīva dance. More confessions, prayers, invocations and aspiration dedications are offered.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitābha. Old wheat, clean rice and barley flour.

Colophon: (f. 565, line 1) *lhun grub dpal gyi bsam yas su/rigs bdag padma 'od 'bar gyis/ ji bzhin gdams pa ma 'khrul ba/ 'gro don dus bab byung ba'i tshe/ kho bo klong chen rdo rje yis/ gtan la phab cing zhal bshus so/ bka 'di pad ma mkha' 'gros tshongs/ dam nyams lag tu ma shor gces/ kho ba'am chos kyi gdung 'dzin pa'i/ skal ldan skyes bu dam pa rnams/ 'phrad nas phung po 'od sku ru/ grol ba'i smon lam 'grub par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ zab rgya/ gter rgya/ dam rgya/ sbas rgya//*

‘The instructions without mistakes are given by the lineage master Pad ma ’od bar in the spontaneously perfected glorious Bsam yas. I, Klong chen rdo rje, prepared the texts at the appropriate time for the benefit of beings. These instructions are safeguarded by Padma Ḍākinī, do not allow them to fall into the hands of *samaya* breakers. Meeting these, may the body aggregates of fortunate ones longing to grasp the Dharma and I, become a body of light and may they obtain the aspiration of liberation! *Samaya.*’

Remarks: The food used for the yogin’s sustenance is placed in a *kapāla* and resides there throughout the period in which it is empowered. In Chapter 5 Doctor Tenzin Sherab discusses the use of the *kapāla* for empowering substances. The interested reader can refer to research carried out by Andrea Loseries-Leick (2008) in her study of human bones, skulls and relics.

Text 63:

Front page: *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las/ longs sku'i bcud len bde chen rang grol bzhugs*

From ‘The great secret clear light heart essence: the self-liberating great bliss sambhogakāya *bcud len*’

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: in *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 28: 539 - 550. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-7a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-6b: 6 lines; 7a: 1 line

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Yet to be translated.

Main deity and main substance employed: Yet to be identified.

Colophon: (f. 549, line 5) *bcud len bde chen rang grol 'di/ sngon tshe dpal gyi bsam yas su/ padmas gdams bzhin ma 'khrul ba/ kho bo klong chen rdo rje yis/ gtan la dbab cing zhal bsdus so/ bka' 'di rin chen mkha' 'gros srung/ snod med dam nyams lag ma shor/ shor na don snying 'phyungs la shog/ skal bzang chos kyi bdag po dang/ 'phrad nas man ngag 'di brten te/ lhag med 'od skur 'grub par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ zab rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ dgongs rgya/ kha tham / smrag/ sitta rgya/*

The *bcud len* of self-liberating great bliss. In previous times, at the glorious Bsam yas, as instructed by Padmasambhava, without making any errors, I, Klong chen rdo rje prepared it and gathered the teachings. This teaching is protected by the Ratna Ḍākinī; do not let it fall into the hands of unsuitable recipients, *samaya* breakers. If it does so, may their hearts be removed! May it be met by those fortunate ones who have faith in the Dharma. By relying on these pith instructions may they accomplish the rainbow body!

Remarks: The colophon mentions the accomplishment of rainbow body, a common theme of Rang rig rdo je's teachings.

Text 64:

Front page: *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las / mi 'gyur rdo rje'i bcud len ka dag rang grol bzhugs*

From 'The great secret clear light heart essence: the unchanging *vajra bcud len*, the self-liberating primordial purity'

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 28: 571 - 582. Access through TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-7a

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-7a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Yet to be translated

Main deity and main substance employed: Yet to be identified

Colophon: (f. 581, line 6) *bcud len ka dag rang grol 'di/ lhun grub dpal gyi bsam yas su/ rigs bdag sngags rgan pad ma yis/ gdams bzhes dus bab byung ba'i tshe/ mkha' 'gros brda rim dang/ mi brjed gzungs gzung blo gros las/ dag ther byed cing gtan la phabs/ zhal bshus khrigs chags legs sdeb pa/ rdzogs pa chen po gdung 'dzin ba/ zab lam gsang spyod phyogs dgyes pa'i/ sngags kyi rnal 'byor brtul zhugs can/ o rgyan klong chen rdo rje'i/ 'gro 'dul dpa' bo kho bos dgyes/ bka' 'di thugs kyi srung ma las rdo rje mkha' 'gror gtad/ ma dad cing log par lta ba dang snod med dam tshig nyams ral can gyi lag tu ma shor gces/ gal te shor na srog gcod cing snying khrag rol cig/ gsang chen theg mchog rgyal po'i snod du 'os pa rnams dang kho bos chos kyi gdung rabs 'dzin cing sgrub brgyud snying po gzhol ba'i skal bzang skyes bu dam pa rnams dang 'phrad*

*nas zab mo'i gdams pa 'di nyams su bzhes te gdan thog gcig du rdzogs pa chen po'i
 dgongs pa blo sems las 'das pa ka dag zang ka dren pa'i ngo bo mngon du gyur nas
 'ja' lus 'pho ba chen po'i sku bsnyes pa'i rgyur gyur cig/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ zab
 rgya/ gsang rgya/ dgongs rgya/ rgya gsum gyis shin tu dam zhig/*

Instructions for this self-liberating, primordially pure *bcud len* were given by Padma, the elder *mantrika* and lord of the lineage, in the spontaneously perfect glorious Bsam yas. At the appropriate time the different stages of the signs of the *ḍākinīs*, were made clear by the profound mind that holds the *dhāraṇī* [long rolls of symbolic Sanskrit syllables that sum up the true nature of reality] who prepared it. The one who properly copied and compiled this was the *rdzog pa chen po* lineage holder, the ascetic yogic mantra practitioner who delights in the secret conduct of the profound path, I the *ḍāka* tamer of beings O rgyan klong chen rdo rje wrote it.

The last part of the colophon contains warnings about not passing the teachings on to *samaya* breakers, and aspirations expressed for attaining the rainbow body.

Remarks: I have not as yet scrutinised this teaching imparted by Padmasambhava at Bsam yas in Tibet.

Text 65:

Front page: *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las/ mngon par byang chub bcud len
 'ja' lus rang grol bzhug so*

From 'The heart essence the luminous great secret: the essence extraction of complete enlightenment: the self-liberation rainbow body'

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, vol. 28: 589 – 599. Accessed through: TBRC W1PD289.

Folios: 1a-6b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a:1 line; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-6b: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The practitioner, having paid homage to the rainbow body of Padmasambhava, makes *maṅḍala* and *gtor ma* offerings. The *gtor ma* should be green and one adds colourful decorations.

One places liquor, rice and butter in the *kapāla*. One covers this with green silk and places it in the center of the *maṅḍala*, empowers it with the *OM ĀḤ HŪM* mantra and meditates in early morning, afternoon and evening sessions.

In the morning one drinks green tea, and in the evening water. Every afternoon, one takes rice and butter from the skull at the center of the *maṅḍala* and boils it in a vessel’.

(f. 591) The practice and prayers start. It comprises sections on the preparation, main part and concluding stage.

1) Preparation

One takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta*, accumulates merits and dispels obstacles by reciting mantras. One receives blessings from the Bde chen ’gyur med ’og min celestial palace, the deity of the karma family. One makes offerings and recites mantras.

2) Main part

Reciting *HA* one transforms into Lord Amoghasiddhi. He has a blue body and a peaceful countenance, embraced by his green-coloured young consort Samaya Tārā. Sperm flows between them and is converted into bright light and returned to her.

One visualises the Karma family *maṇḍala*, whose nature is like a clear mirror. Sperm retrieving is practiced along with visualisations of light. Then, one invokes merit fields and makes offerings. One performs prostrations, recites mantras and makes *maṇḍala* offerings to the host of deities, confessing any transgressions of one's vows.

3) Concluding section

All visualisations dissolve within and one invites merits. One presents the (unspecified) medicine, makes final offerings and confesses any mistakes. One offers any remaining *gtor ma* cakes and makes final requests to be granted blessings. One subjugates evil spirits by performing the Hayagrīva dance. More confessions, prayers, invocations and aspiration dedications are offered.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amoghasiddhi embracing his consort Samaya Tārā. One empowers liquor, rice and butter and consumes them.

Colophon: (f. 599, line 3) *Bcud len 'ja' lus rang grol 'di/ sngon tshe padma 'od 'bar gyis/ lhun grub dpal gyi bsam yas su/ gdams pa ji bzhin ma 'khrul ba/ 'gro don dus la bab pa'i tshe/ padma'i gsung dang mkha' 'gro'i brda'/ bsgyur te khrigs chags sdeb pa po/ rdzogs pa chen po'i gdung 'dzin pa/ o rgyan klong chen rdo rje 'am/ 'gro 'dul rol pa rtsal nyid do/ dam nyams rnams kyi lag tu khros mas ma shor bar bya ra ma dzod cig/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya gya/ zab rgya/ gter rgya//*

This self-liberated rainbow body *bcud len*, taught in former times by Blazing Light Padma in the spontaneously perfected glorious Bsam yas, to benefit beings at the right time. The words of Padma and numerous signs of the *dākinīs* will appear at the right time. It was prepared by the lineage holders of *rdzogs chen* O rgyan klong chen rdo rje and 'Gro 'dul rol pa rtsal nyid. Vajravārāhī watches carefully so that these teachings do not fall into the hands of vow breakers.

Remarks: This is the only text I have thus far encountered where there is a mention of a dance (in this case a Hayagrīva one) to subjugate evil spirits. Interesting to note that the *gtor ma* (prepared at the initial stage of the practice) are green due to the fact that this practice is related with the Karma family deities. Text 62 featured red *gtor mas* as that text's practice dealt with Padma family deities.

Text 66:

Front page: *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las/ chos sku'i bcud len dri bral rang grol bzhugs*

From 'The luminous secret heart essence: the self-liberating stainless *dharmakāya bcud len*'

Author: Rang rig rdo rje (1847-1903)

Source: In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005. TBRC W1PD289. 28: 519 - 531.

Folios: 1a-7b

Script: *dbu med*

Layout: 1a: 1 line; 2a-2b: 5 lines; 3a-7a: 6 lines; 7b: 2 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: Instructions are given for the three stages. Go to a secret beneficial place in the mountains, with chirping birds and yaks about. Sitting motionless in the Vairocana posture, one exhales the stale air nine times and practices *kumbhaka*. One pours black tea in the best *kapāla*, empowering it reciting *OM ĀḤ HŪM*. One places the *kapāla* in the middle of the *maṇḍala*. One repeats this thrice daily; before dawn, at daybreak and at noon. One mixes *tsampa* with the tea in the *kapāla* and boils it for a long time to purify it, preparing this offering every day in this way.

One engages in the main *maṇḍala*; takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta* and then makes five types of beautifully coloured *gtor ma* offerings.

There are three sections, the preliminaries, the main part and the dedication.

Sounding A, one practises *bodhicitta* with limitless compassion towards all beings, offering all one's merits, virtues and results to them and abandoning all obscuration.

Sounding *HOH*, one prostrates and confesses all one's misguided deeds and malignity and supplicates one's *yi dam* to grant blessings. Sounding *HŪM*, one abandons obscuration and recites mantra to accomplish the secret *maṇḍala*. As one sounds *OM*, from the letter *OM* at the center of one's heart, lights emanate. Five *yum* consorts emanate and from the *E WAM* syllables at one's heart arises a blue-grey Vairocana with one face, two arms and bent legs, holding a wheel in the right hand and a long life vessel in the left. The secret *yum* of Vairocana is young with a smiling face, a secret *ḍākinī* beyond happiness and suffering. They are joined together, enjoying the union of bliss and emptiness. As they unite, their white and red *bodhicittas* emanate lights. The *maṇḍala*'s deities are mirror-like, clear and insubstantial; they are illusory and come from emptiness; they generate as one essence.

The supplication: sounding *HŪM*, one supplicates the deities from the place of *Stug po bkod pa'i og min* [Gandavyuha Akaniṣṭha] and the field of self-appearance purifies. Reciting mantras, one visualises all the deities abiding in the secret *maṇḍala*; one recites mantras.

Prostrating, paying homage and offering: sounding *HŪM*, one pays homage to the inseparable *samaya* and primordial wisdom in the *dharmakāya*. Recite the mantra. Sounding A, having made the gods rejoice, now one receives the essence of all appearances from *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* and recites mantras.

Praise and confessions: sounding *HŪM* and *HRĪḤ*, one visualises the main supreme Buddha and his retinue and Vairocana in *yab yum*, praises the various types of *maṇḍala*. Sounding *HOḤ*, one supplicates fervently so that one's mistakes, caused by ignorance, may be forgiven. The recitation of mantras follows.

One sounds *A* and recites mantras. From the white *OM* at the heart of one's lama lights emerge and dissolve into the practitioner. The guru's lights dissolve all obscurations of sentient beings and the lights return to one. The essence of the four elements dissolves into one. One imagines gaining complete *siddhis* and recites mantras.

The concluding stages: supplications, purifying, and increasing.

Sounding *HOḤ*, one offers all phenomena of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* to Samantabhadra and recites mantras. The offerings make all the gods from Vairocana's field rejoice.

Supplicating and offering medicine: one sounds *HŪM*, receives the blessings from all the gods in the self-manifesting *maṇḍala*, and recites mantras. Sounding *HOḤ*, one makes offerings so that the Buddha may rejoice and the five poisons transform into nectar medicine.

Offering merit and confessing: sounding *HOḤ*, one offers the stainless *bcud len* substance to the buddhas, making them rejoice. Mantras are recited. Sounding *HOḤ*, one confesses one's *samaya* breaches to the gods. One recites mantras.

Purifying: sounding *HOḤ*, from the dimension of the *E* syllable, in order to be free from clinging to the self, one recites mantras. *HOḤ* is sounded; at night mantras are recited to receive the power of the glorious gods.

Supplicating: sounding *KHYEE*, one visualises the *vajra* king Bhagawan who governs the enjoyment of tastes. Sounding *HOḤ*, one visualises oneself giving all creatures the substance that liberates through taste. There is the recitation of mantras.

Encouraging (the gods): one sounds *HŪM* and *BHYO*, offering *gtor ma* to the deities in the sacred *maṇḍala* and reciting mantras. Sounding *HŪM*, one awakens all the gods and the three roots in the self-appearing supreme field.

Teaching *samaya*: one sounds *HŪM* and *HRĪḤ*; the three times, primordially pure and beyond expression, are inseparably joined by the intentions of the Buddha and his retinue. One opens the spontaneously perfected *maṇḍala*; the Dharma protectors, buddhas and *ḍākinīs* all promise to protect the *samaya*. Enlightened activities and *gtor ma* are offered; mantras are recited. Sounding *HŪM* and *BHYO*, one visualises Padma 'od bar, who in a past life bound beings by making them drink special water. Recitation of mantras.

For the *siddhi* of taming horses; one sounds *HOḤ*, tames all who are bound by ignorance by pegging them under a stupa of Dharma nature. Mantras are recited. Sounding *HOḤ*; after one accomplishes the body *maṇḍala*, one bestows *siddhis* on others. Mantras are recited.

Confessing and dedicating: sounding *HOḤ*, one confesses all wicked deeds from previous lives until now, recites the one hundred syllable Vajrasattva mantra intensely. When one sounds A, the self-appearing deity dissolves into primordial space.

The dedication after awakening from postmeditation: sound *HOḤ*. The illusory primordial wisdom deity appears in the postmeditation state. Equally, enjoy the essence of inner and outer worlds. Sound *HOḤ*; dedicate the virtue and results, stained and stainless, for the benefit of all beings to attain great happiness.

Aspirational prayers and explanation: sound *HOḤ*. May all sentient beings who wander in unending *samsāra* attain the space of great happiness. Sound *HOḤ*; by the compassionate truth of the three roots, may all beings pervading space attain the *vajra*

body! May you take the light [teachings] of the Lotus One (Padmasmbhava), having received the profound oral instructions, following Vairocana, in the times when lifespan will only be thirty years, the disciple wishes to ripen buddhahood. The diligent *yogīn* will gain innumerable qualities. Purifying all ignorance and habitual tendencies. One will be in the Dharma expanse of primordial wisdom, one will be in the main retinue of heart disciples. One will certainly be inseparable from the Buddha. *Samaya rgya rgya rgya*.

Main deity and main substance employed: Vairocana and his secret consort. *Tsampa* and tea.

Colophon: (f. 530, line 3) *Bcud len dri bral rang grol 'di/ sngon tshe pad ma thod phreng gis/ ji ltar gdams par ma 'phrul ba/ 'gro don dus bab byung ba 'i tshe/ gtan bab zhal bshus khrigs chags su/ kho bo klong chen rdo rje 'am/ sngags 'chang rnal 'byor ku su lu/ 'gro 'dul rol ba rtsal gyis brdebs/ bka' 'di sangs rgyas mkha' 'gros srungs/ snod med lag tu ma shor gces/ shor na snying khrag dron mo 'thungs/ kho bos chos kyi gdung 'dzin 'di/ skal bzang las can dang 'phrad nas/ gdams pa 'di nyid nyams su blangs te/ tshe gcig 'od lus 'grub par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ zab rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ dam rgya/ gtad rgya/ las 'phro smon lam gyi rgya/*

The self-liberating, stainless *bcud len*. As in the past Guru Rinpoche taught this faultlessly when the time came to benefit sentient beings; so did Klong chen Dorje, also known as Sngags 'chang rnal 'byor ku su lu 'gro 'dul rol ba rtsal. This teaching is protected by Sangs rgyas mkha' 'gro. May it be cherished so it does not fall into unsuitable hands. If it is lost, one drinks warm heart blood. May my work be met by the fortunate ones who will become holders of this Dharma. Practising this teaching may they attain the body of light in one life. *Samaya rgya rgya rgya zab rgya gter rgya sbas rgya dam rgya gtad rgya*. Sealed with an aspiration of connection.

Remarks: the practice focuses on offerings both physical and mental. Five-coloured *gtor mas* are prepared and one mixes *tsampa* with tea in a *kapāla*. The offerings are commonplace, perhaps indicating how visualisations and mantras are given a greater importance than the actual material offerings.

Text 67:

Front page: *Bcud len gyi rim pa lam gong 'phel ba'i gdams pa bzhugs so*

The composition on the stages of *bcud len*; the oral instructions that lead to the higher path

Author: Shakyā Shri (1853-1919)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum. Shakyā Shri*. Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin and Lama Thinley Namgyal, 1998, vol. 765 – 770. Accessed through TBRC W23563.

Folios: 1a-3b

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line; 1b-2a: 4 lines; 2b-3a: 6 lines; 3b: 5 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: One takes refuge and generates *bodhicitta*.

As for the grain *bcud len*: for those of lower capacity, one fills a *kapāla* [measure] with barley free of dust, pours it into a clean vessel and cooks it properly. One reduces the broth that dissolves into itself.

(f. 767) At sunrise and sunset one eats seven grains, visualising them as unpolluted *bcud len* pills. At the end, in the raw natural state of the unity of awareness and emptiness, whatever self-arises will self-liberate. Maintaining that state, one ultimately abides in the equanimity of the virtuous three roots, free from the elaborations of

the three spheres. The conclusion is adorned with the dedication of virtues and the proclaiming of auspiciousness.

For the *bcud len* of stone essence, first one grinds calcite stone, cooks it properly in milk and makes the broth dissolve into itself. The method of relying on it and the visualisation and aspiration is performed as before.

(f. 768) The *prāṇa bcud len* for those of medium capacity: at the beginning, having completed the motivation of *bodhicitta*, with one's body upright one exhales the stale air three times.

One sits in the posture with seven characteristics. The key point of the breathing; one breathes in slowly from the mouth with the sound of the teeth, and presses [the air] down below the navel with some force.

As for the visualisation, one visualises that the compassion of the buddhas of the pure lands of the ten directions, the life, merits and prosperity of the six realms and especially all the clear essence of the four elements enters into one's mouth in the form of white nectar.

One envisages that one becomes the indestructible clear essence of a *vajra*-like body. In accordance with the presence of the sun, whether it is shining or overcast, one performs this twenty-one times. One's mindfulness must be continuous like water flowing. In that way the natural state abides in the equanimity of the state of Mahāmudrā.

The end of the session, in the state free from the elaborations of the three spheres, is completed by proclaiming auspiciousness.

For the ones with superior capacity: the *samādhi bcud len*.

(f. 769) As for seeking refuge: all three, the refuge field, the refuge and the refugee, take refuge in the state free from attributes in its fundamental nature, primordially pure.

Concerning the generating of *bodhicitta*: the object of the generation of *bodhicitta* and the agent generating *bodhicitta*. One remains with equanimity in the way of the very beginning, in the nature of the nondual great primordial expanse. With the body held upright, the breath moves slowly within. One remains empty, effortless, after exhaling. At that time, the sky softens into a blueish hue and enters through the mouth. One imagines that it remains below the navel in a blue-tinted hue. At sunrise and in the evening one fills the body with blue light and instantaneously does the *bar rlung* twenty-one times. It should be practiced along with the aspiration and visualisation.

The main practice: one frees one's own mind from fabrication and from accepting and rejecting; mindfulness is kept without distraction or effort.

The thoughts of the three times: whatever arises is liberated as it does so; one keeps on doing this without interruption. In the inseparable unity of space and awareness, one abides evenly in the flowing river of the yoga of awareness.

As for the fruit, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are all phenomena taken as dually manifesting characteristics, exhausted in the primordial space of the *Dharmatā* that arises, liberated impartially without interruption day and night. Beyond accepting and rejecting, ceasing and obtaining, purified together, the characteristics of the three times, all are beyond concepts, the primordial expanse, free from movement and transformation, *A la la ho!*

In this way, if one obtains stability in the *Dharmatā*, one will accomplish the *bcud len* of the ultimate Dorje Chang. At the time of practice, the agent, action and object

[of the action] rest in equanimity in the bare union of awareness and emptiness, in the nature of wisdom.

One should engage in the dedication prayers and proclamation of auspiciousness.

Main deity and main substance employed: There are no deities. There are four main subdivisions, by substance: 1) grain *bcud len* 2) calcite *bcud len* 3) *prāṇa bcud len* 4) *samādhi bcud len*.

Colophon: (f. 770, line 3) *zhes pa 'di yang sprang smyon bdag rgyal khams su 'khyams nyul byed skabs/ rje yongs 'dzin rin po che'i zhal slob kyi mchog gyur pa/ drung blo gros bcud len dang rig pa skyong thabs 'di ltar dgos zhes bka'yi phebs tshul ltar gnas mchog dpal tsa ri'i yang 'dabs bkra shis chos zam gdor nas sha kya shris bris pa'o//*

‘This work was completed by myself, the unquestionably poor, crazed one, when I was wandering aimlessly around the country. I was asked by Rje Yongs ’dzin Rin po che, the supreme disciple of Drung blo gros. He said, “I need a *bcud len* and method to maintain my awareness”. (This is) the way in which it was asked, in the supreme glorious place at the foothills of Tsari, in front of Chos zam. This was composed by Shakya Shri.’

Remarks: *Samādhi bcud len*, like in Text 21 by Padma Gling pa, is considered the highest form of *bcud len*. In the future it would be interesting to ask Dzongsar Khyentse, who mentioned having practised a *bcud len* from Shakya Shri’s lineage when he spoke to me about *bcud len*, to comment on this practice. The responses of an advanced meditator would greatly enrich our knowledge about meditative *bcud len*. In the biography of Shakya Shri, written by Ka thog si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880-1925), we find instances of Shakya Shri’s life where he most probably practised *bcud len*. Ka thog situ (2009: 54-55) describes a period when Shakya Shri lived in the Great

Cave of Evam in Drugu: ‘When he undertook strict retreat there, he had with him only a cracked clay pot to boil water, with a flat stone for a lid. He practised day and night. ...

When he had no roasted barley flour to eat, he would beg for food, walking about in the vicinity of Drugu Monastery. He lived on whatever he was given and dedicated himself solely to his practice.’ The biography (Ibid: 65) also tells of how ‘Shakya Shri spent many years of intensive practice at Lhadrag Pema Yangdzong, in the Long Vajra Cave, and in other places.’

Text 68:

Front page: *Rdzogs pa chen po sku gsum rang shar las sku gsum bcud len thar pa'i rgyags phye*

The Dzogchen self-liberating three bodies, the three bodies *bcud len*, the food of liberation

Author: Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan (1859-1935)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Bkra shis rgyal mtshan. Sde dge: Rdza steng chen dgon, 1983 vol. 11: 384-401.

Accessed through TBRC W2CZ7988.

Folios: 1a- 9a

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: 1a-9a: 6 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: A Bonpo text on a *bcud len* of the three *kayas*: *bonkāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *nirmāṇakāya*. Each of these sections is in turn divided into three subsections consisting of: superior, medium and inferior *bcud len* practices.

The text is divided in three parts: a preliminary practice of Guru Yoga of Guru Dran pa nam mkha',³⁶ the main part that is summarised below; the conclusion.

In the main part, the *bonkāya* section is divided into three components, one *bcud len* for those of superior capacities relying solely on air; one for the average, on water; and one for the least capable, utilising hot water. In all these practices, the deity Samantabhadra is central to the practice.

The *sambhogakāya* section is divided into three parts: the superior practitioner uses 'the supreme medicine', the average one relies on pills; and the least advanced on calcite.

The 'supreme medicine' type is based on *a ru ra* and the deity one transforms into is Tshe dbang rigs 'dzin.

The pill *bcud len* consists chiefly of *dbang lag*, *ra mnye*, honey and molasses. The central deity for the practice is 'Chi med 'dren pa.

The calcite *bcud len* uses two types of calcite and breath retention. The deity involved is a white-coloured *ḍākinī*.

The *nirmāṇakāya* section has three different *bcud len* based on the following three substances: nettles, dough pills and milk soup. For all three, the mantras, deity and breathing exercises are the same as those used in the aforementioned calcite *bcud len* recipe.

The concluding section describes the numerous benefits of the practice.

Main deity and main substance employed: In the *bcud len* of the *nirmāṇakāya*; nettles, dough pills, and milk soup. In the *bonkāya bcud len*: air, water, hot water. In all these practices the visualised deity is Samantabhadra.

³⁶ Dran pa nam kha' is a long life deity in the Bon pantheon.

The *sambhogakāya*'s *bcud len* deity is Tshe dbang rigs 'dzin and the substances are: 'the supreme medicine' (based on *a ru ra*), pills and calcite.

The pill *bcud len* consists chiefly of: *dbang lag*, *ra mnye*, honey and molasses. The central deity for the practice is 'Chi med 'dren pa.

Colophon: (f. 401, line 4) *Ces pa 'di'ang dge ba'i bshes gnyen bla ma don 'grub nas bcud len gyi gdams pa dam ral zab pa'i zhig cis kyang 'dri dgos zhes bskul ba'i ngor shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan gyis rtsom pa la/ /yi ge pa ni mchog sprul drung mu'i mtshan can gyis bgyis pas 'gro rnam s dig zas kyi zhen pa dang bral ba'i rgyur 'gyur ba gyur cig/ sarba manga lam//*

'Thus, in response to the request by the spiritual friend Lama Don 'grub, I composed a direct and profound teaching on *bcud len*. I, Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan (1859-1934), composed this. The scribe was Mchog sprul drung mu. May it be a cause for freedom from clinging to *karmic* food.'

Remarks: This text has been translated by Peter Roberts under the auspice of the Kalpa Group and is a forthcoming publication. The brief overview of the text's contents is based on that translation. The interested reader can refer to the full translation once it is published.

Text 69:

Front page: *Rje bla ma tshe lha sku gsum la brten pa'i tshe sgrub pa'i bcud len*

The accomplishing life essence extraction relying on the Lord Lama [Je Tsongkhapa] and the three goddesses

Author: Blo bzang rta mgrin (1867-1937)

Source: In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang rta mgrin. New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, 1975-1976, vol. 6: 25 – 29. Accessed through TBRC W13536.

Folios: 1a-3a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 1 line; 1b-2b: 7 lines; 3a: 5 lines.

Dating: (unspecified) Wood Tiger year, twenty-fifth day of the second month.

Content: The text starts with an invocation to Amitāyus, White Tārā, Nam Rgyal Ma (Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya) and Tsong kha pa (also known as Lobsang Drakpa). They are invited, an imaginary lotus seat is offered to Amitāyus (who is also Tsong kha pa in one inseparable essence) on the crown of one's head. Amitāyus, red and white in colour, holds *tshé chang* in the right hand and a nectar vase in the left hand. From his left thumb, a lotus stem emerges and appears above one's shoulder. At the three places are the syllables *OM ĀH HŪM*. From the *HŪM*, lights spread out to heavenly fields, summoning wisdoms that return and become inseparable from the practitioner.

These instructions are given for the main practice: 'Pay homage to the three deities, make offerings and recite confessions. Rejoice in the deities' power and request them to teach Sutra and Tantra and ask them to stay. Make aspiration prayers that all beings may reach enlightenment. Prepare a *maṇḍala* offering that can be either extensive or simple.'

Both types are explained. 'Now you invoke blessings from Tsong kha pa, recite long life mantras, Mañjuśrī mantras, Uṣṇīṣa Vijaya mantra, White Tārā mantra and Tsongkhapa mantras. At the end of the mantras, you recite the *yig brgyas lhag chad kha bskang* "the cut-off prayer" which redresses any mistakes in mantric recitation. Imagine Amitāyus dissolving into your three places and receiving the blessing of body, speech and mind from the goddesses. Finally, recite aspirational prayers to receive blessings to live one hundred years without diseases or suffering.'

Main deity and main substance employed: In this prayer and invocation to Lord Tsongkapa, the central deities are Amitāyus, White Tara, and Nam Rgyal Ma (Unisha Vijaya) and Tsong kha pa. No substances are used and there are no breathing exercises. Mantras and visualisations are carried out.

Colophon: (f. 29, line 2) *Ces rje bla ma tshe lha sku gsum la brten pa'i tshe sgrub pa'i bcud len zhes bya ba 'di ni/ 'jam mgon bla ma'i ring lugs la mos pa'i btsun gzugs snyoms las pa blo bzang rta dbyangs kyis/ dge phrug 'jam dbyangs shes rab dang phun tshogs tshe ring zer ba gnyis nas/ skyabs mgon sku phreng lnga pa'i mkha' spyod sgrub khang gi shul gyi phyag bdar khrod nas rje bla ma tshe lha sku gsum ma'i lder sku rnying pa shin tu dkon pa zhig rnyed nas rang la ster byung ba la zhig gsos dang gser tshon legs par phul te mchod gral du bzhugs su gsol ba'i skabs su/ rten 'byung gi sgo 'grigs par bya ba'i ched du mkhas grub dam pa rnams kyi man ngag bzhin du rab tshes shing rta zla 2 tshes 25 dge bar mdo sngags bstan pa'i 'byung gnas dga' ldan theg chen gling gi rang sbyil du sbyar ba'o/ 'dis kyang dpal ldan bla ma dam pa rnams dang mched grogs chos mdzad thams cad zhabs pad bskal brgyar brtan cing rnam dkar gyi mdzad 'phrin phyogs dus kun tu dar zhing rgyas par gyur cig/*

‘The text was written by Blo bzang mta grin, a follower of the Geluk sect. Two students, 'Jam dbyangs shes rab and Phun tshogs tshe ring, had found a *thangka* of the three goddesses in the refuse. After cleaning it, he wrote the text in a room in Dga' ldan theg chen gling.’

Remarks: A Dge lugs pa invocation requesting long life deities to bestow longevity blessings.

Text 70:

Front page: *Me tog bcud len skal bzang rna rgyan gyi lhan thabs dngos grub mchog
ster zhes bya ba bzhugs so*

The flower *bcud len*, the complimentary method of a ‘good age’s ear ornament’ that grants the supreme *siddhi*

Author: Ngag dbang bstan ’dzin nor bu (1867-1940)

Source: In *Gsung ’bum*. Ngag dbang bstan ’dzin nor bu. Kathmandu: Ngagyur Dongak Choling Monastery, 2004, vol. 7: 321-329. Accessed through TBRC W29036.

Folios: 1a-5a

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: 1a: 5 lines; 1b-2a: 4 lines; 2b-4b: 6 lines. 5a: 4 lines.

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The practitioner is given instructions in three stages and offering prayers:

‘From the potentiality of the expanse of stainless Samantabhadrī, the clear- hued everlasting Vajrayoginī. The prophesised one, Dam pa sangs rgyas and the host of lamas of the direct lineage, I pay homage to you!

‘With the practice displaced, having become haughty through wrong-living and fame, clinging to attachments and cravings because of this, one does not meet genuine goals. Therefore this *bcud len* of clinging-less nourishment, by relying on it, stainless pleasing accomplishment develops.’

‘The Indian holy man Pha dam pa sangs rgyas transmitted the oral teachings of this flower *bcud len* known as “a good age’s ear ornament”.’

For the ritual of the complimentary method of the practice we have three subsections, *sbyor ba* (preparations), *dngos* (main practice) and *rjes* (dedication/conclusion).

First, for the *sbyor ba*: the flowers are picked as described in the text and the making of the pills is practiced.

(f. 323, line 1) One should know how to do so as seen and transmitted. They should be put inside a skull possessing the characteristics. The text states that the practitioner, one's guru, kinsmen and friends with pure *samaya* should practice until signs appear. Then one goes to a suitable abode where there are no human crowds, no dogs barking and so forth; one cleans the place and sprinkles it with water and incense, makes offerings with whatever can be collected, displays them beautifully, with undecieving presentation. Moreover, one gathers medicines beneficial for the condition of ailments such as the rising of anger, and the necessary *samaya* substances.

First, one supports *bodhicitta* and experiences the generating and completion stages, especially *rtsa rlung*.

(f. 324, line 2) At this time, the conceptual mind has wandered in *samsāra* from time without beginning until now in this perishable and short-lasting human body. The only means of benefit is Dharma. Since life is subject to the need for food and clothing, therefore I will do away with them. By renouncing these things I will make all sentient beings who are mothers and who are suffering, attain buddhahood swiftly. The bodhisattvas of the noble land of Tibet developed this advice on *bcud len*. I will practice it and with this thought, take refuge and generate *bodhicitta*. As for lineage supplications, I recite: 'All pervading Primordial Protector Vajra Dhara, Mother Tantra Vajrayoginī, Dampa Rgya, Mi nyag rdo rje, Lama Tshe dbang, homage to you. May difficulties be overcome and ripening and liberation occur.

(f. 325, line1) Supplications to lineage holders, to fierce and peaceful deities, the *ḍākinīs* and *dharmapālas* of the three places.

May the clear essence of the five elements of the outer dimension ripen in the body. May the clear essence of the glorious life of inner beings ripen in speech. May the primordial wisdom of the secret Victorious Ones mature in the mind. May this defiled body no longer be visible but instead may I accomplish the rainbow body. May I become the protector of beings tormented by suffering for a long time. May I become one who ends suffering and guides beings . . . After reciting the invocation take the four empowerments and remain in nondual equipoise.

(f. 325, line 6) Secondly, the main practice (*dn̄gos gzhi*). The text of *phag mo mngon rtogs* says to rely on the practice of one's own tutelary deity at the time of eating pills is suitable. For one day one abandons material food, then the next morning, at noon and in the evening or just morning and evening, whatever is convenient, it is best to take the pill with the best water available, natural or boiled. Otherwise, the next best way is to take it with bone soup and black tea. The lesser way is to take it with some roasted barley. To bless the pills; one recites a mantra (line 3). The letter *A* arises from the nature of empty space and from that *A*, a precious vast skull cup. In the jewel ornament skull pot, from the *OM* letter, various flowers emerge and from them nectar pills that fill the skull to the brim. Above it the syllables *OM ĀH HŪM* one on top of another radiate red and white and blue light rays in the ten directions. The blessings of the root and lineage lamas and their blessing of the earth, water, space, the essence of the five elements and the lives and merits of all sentient beings, the splendour and lustre of the three worlds and all glories of the world dissolve in the form of light and nectars into the pills.

(f. 327, line 1) One imagines that the pills become stainless nectar pills, recites the mantra twenty-one times and blesses them. When eating, in a state of stable experience of generating the completion stage, one recites, 'My body from the very

beginning, the aggregates, constituents and sense basis and the *cakra* that possesses the three seats of completeness has primordial godly nature, the five perfected *maṇḍalas* and the places of great bliss. It has unsurpassed *samaya* bonds of the three *vajras*.

Marvellous! Sensual pleasures and the enjoyments are gathered like clouds and enjoyed in a state of nonduality, neither accepting nor rejecting. By giving at all times, may the unsurpassable fruition be enjoyed.’

(f. 327, line 4) One recites in this way and enjoys the benefits of the inner fire offerings. The body’s 72,000 energy channels will be filled with *bodhicitta* nectar, experiencing bliss and emptiness. At the end, seal it with dedications and aspiration prayers. The duration of this *sāadhanā* should be twenty-one days. In the first week, one should be liberated from the hindrances of hunger. The second week should give rise to the excellent qualities. From the third week one develops the radiance of flowers; in this way one will discover its happiness. If one experiences hunger and hindrances, it is from remembering them as the expression of sense desires. One should abandon the meaningless activities in life . . . Accepting hardships, one must be patient with hunger and thirst. It will generate joy and happiness, knowing that you are able to follow the Victorious One for the great benefits of total happiness. Moreover, whatever the high or low qualities and meditation experiences of happiness, it is nonconceptual clarity that is the main practice.

At the end of the session, with one’s body one does prostrations and practises circumambulation and Yantra Yoga. With speech, one recites supplications and retains *prāṇa*. With the mind one should endeavour to find the clear light *samādhi* of *rdzogs chen*, the Great Perfection. This should be done at all suitable times, day and night.

This main practice should be learned through the guru’s principal instructions.

Third are the instructions for the completion and dedication.

As for behaviour, one should avoid shade, foul places or prolonged exposure to sun and fire. One should not meet new people, entertain various thoughts nor wander here and there; one needs to abide in the commitments of retreat. One who has overcharged *rlung* should rely on molasses. If unable to sleep, mixed nutmeg with butter should be applied to the nose. Feeling nauseous, experiencing a spinning head, having a dull mind or sensing one's hearing is impaired is due to *rlung*. Therefore, one relies on bone soup and massaging one's body with butter. Feeling no appetite, one eats ginger. If urinating excessively, one relies on one bowl of *tsampa*. If parasites are present, one smells radishes and drinks garlic water. If one becomes lazy and one's mental faculties become poor, if virtuous activities are not enacted as they should be, then the cause is unclear *samādhi*. See that your *rig pa* is alert and offer praise with joy.

(f. 329) The benefits of these efforts are that one will not be obscured by wrong nourishment, it will be easy for the realisations of the path to be met and one will not need to rely on patrons. Omniscience arises and tutelary deities and *ḍākinīs* are attracted. One's body will be stainless, inner and outer parasites will not appear, mucous flow stops, white hair and wrinkles disappear, life is like the sun and moon, strength resembles that of an elephant, great wisdom and awareness grow, the body radiates heat, one is freed from the need to sleep, it is also said swift-footedness is granted. Especially, since one is eating *samādhi* as food, one will extract the essence of food and can overcome conditions through antidotes and acquire clarity as to what to accept and reject: these inexpressible qualities will arise.

Main deity and main substance employed: No specific deities are mentioned; the text states that one's own personal tutelary deity should be used. The ingredients contained

in the pill are not listed although the initial part of the text talks mentions collecting flowers.

Colophon: (f. 329, line 4) *De ltar me tog bcud len rtsa ba'i lhan thabs 'di bzhin/ rdza sprul ngag dbang stam 'dzin nor bu'i sdes sbyar ba'o//*

‘This accompanying method of the root practice on flower *bcud len* was composed by Rdza sprul ngag dbang stam 'dzin nor bu.’

Note that in the initial section of the text, the practice is attributed to Pha dam pa sangs rgyas.

Remarks: Pha dam pa sangs rgyas is often mentioned in texts, making him an important figure in the *bcud len* tradition.

Text 71:

Front page: *'Chi med mkha' 'gro'i bcud len rgya*

The practice of absorption of the essence of the *Ḍākinī* of Immortality

Author: Chögyal Namkhai Norbu (1938-)

Source: Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. In *The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava*. Iacobella Gaetani, trans. Arcidosso: Shang Shung Edizioni, 1999.

Folios: The *bcud len* text in Tibetan script pp.111-130.

Script: *dbu can*

Layout: The original text in Tibetan is printed in a Western style format.

Dating: The text appeared to the author in a pure vision in a dream in the early morning on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month, on the day of the *ḍākinī* in the year of the Wood Ox (1985).

Content: The practice of long life is performed with meditation on the five immortal *dākinīs*, the principal one being Mandarava, Mother of Life *tshé yum*. She is the *nirmāṇakāya* emanation of the Jñāna *Ḍākinī Ye shes mkha' 'gro*, the goddess of immortality. In the text she appears in the *sambhogakāya* form as *Caṇḍālī*, goddess of internal heat. She is known as *Samantabhadrī* in the *dharmakāya* form. Detailed instructions on the visualisations, mantras and mudras of the *sāadhanā* are given.

The *bcud len* instructions contain detailed descriptions of the preparation, use and properties of seven different types of *bcud len* elixirs or ‘nectars’ connected with this practice of long life: the elixir made from *shug pa* nectar; the elixir made from honey; the elixir made from calcite nectar; the elixir made from *a ru ra* nectar; the elixir made from *tshan dmar*; the elixir made from *ra mnye* nectar; the elixir made from the nectar of the blue *rtag ngu* flower. Each elixir contains a combination of various ingredients in varying proportions. Any of these seven nectars can be used according to circumstances and can be made into pills or a paste *lde gu*. Various substances and medicines are used. Some of the main ones are: cypress seeds and leaves and juniper berries; mountain water or water from rocks or melted snow; cypress syrup; honey; calcite crystals; the three fruits: *a ru ra*, *ba ru ra* and *skyu ru ra*; the three roots: *ra mnye*, *lca ba*, *ba spru*; *rtag ngu*, *dbang lag*, *shang dril dkar po* (*Primula sikkimensis Hook*) flowers and the *ha lo dmar* red flowers; white molasses *bu ram dkar*; ‘the six excellent substances’ used in purifications linked to the six principal organs: nutmeg, bamboo pith, saffron, cloves, cardamom and Chinese cardamom. The author also suggests appropriate behavior and diet and gives a list of further additional ingredients to cure particular disturbances and overcome specific problems.

Pills the size of deer droppings are made and then dried in fresh air. Then vermilion, *sindhura* and boiled linseed oil are mixed together and used to coat the pills so as to protect them and preserve their substance. The pills must then be empowered on an astrologically positive day with the appropriate visualisations and mantras.

The text suggests practising in a peaceful place with fresh air because it is necessary to do certain breathing and mental concentration exercises. The instructions for the *prāṇa* exercises linked to this *bcud len* are found in the section of the long life practice called *Man ngag srog thig* (*The Upadesha of the Sphere of the Life Essence*). Further instructions on *rtsa rlung* methods related to the teaching of the *Tshe sgrub rdo rje'i srog thig* are contained in the *Tshe sgrub rdo rje'i srog thig gi gnad kyi man ngag zab mo*³⁷ (*The Profound Essential Upadesha of the Long Life Practice 'The Thigle of Vajra Life*).

One *bcud len* pill is taken in the morning and one in the evening in combination with this long life practice, with its visualisations, mantras, mudras and breathing exercises.

Through this practice, energy, strength, agility and health are improved and clarity and blissful feelings are promoted. One's body will feel lighter and one's senses sharp; physically, one will manifest a more youthful and beautiful appearance. Normal food is reduced and gradually substituted with the essential substances contained in the *bcud len* pills. One should avoid meat, blood, garlic, onions, raw vegetables and intoxicants as well as sexual contact or anything physically disturbing. Benefits include the extension of one's lifespan and prevention of the exhaustion of one's fertility.

³⁷ The author received this *gter ma* in its complete form in July 1998, during a personal retreat in Tuscany, at *Me ri gar*, one the centers of the Dzogchen Community in western Europe

At the end of each *thun* of practice one integrates the presence of clarity into the state of contemplation and dedicates one's merits to all sentient beings for attaining their total realisation, authenticating the dedication with the appropriate mantra.

Main deity and substance employed: *Ḍākinī* Mandarava. Seven nectar recipes based primarily on: *shug pa*, honey, calcite, *a ru ra*, *tshan dmar*, *ra mnye* and the blue *rtag ngu* flower.

Colophon: (f. 119, line) 5 *Ye shes mkha' 'gro'i bcud len gyi man ngag zab mo 'di ni kho bo nam mkha'i nor bu'am klong chen rol pa'i rdo rje a me ri kha'i shar ljongs khams we rdzogs chen 'dus ste rtse rgyal sgar du ri mtshams bgyid bzhin yod pa'i skabs/ phyi lo 1985 bod sa ga zla ba'i tshes nyer lnga mkha' 'gro 'du ba'i dus chen gyi zhogs pa snga mo'i mnal lam du . . .*

The author informs us that the text appeared to him in a pure vision in a dream in the early morning on the twenty-fifth day of the fourth month, the auspicious day of the *Ḍākinī* during the month of the anniversary of Buddha Śākyamuni's birth, in the year of the Wood Ox (1985). This was during a retreat of *Rdzog chen* teachings the author was holding at the Dzogchen Community of *Tshe rgyal sgar* in Conway, Massachusetts on the East Coast of the United States.

Remarks: The practice of *bcud len 'chi med mkha' 'gro'i bcud len rgya* is connected to the long life practice of Mandarava titled *'chi med mkha' 'gro'i tshe sgrub rdo rje'i srog thig rgya* (*The Sphere of the Life Essence of the Vajra or The Long-Life Practice of the Immortal Ḍākinī*). It was revealed by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in a series of dreams during a pilgrimage to the sacred cave of Maratika in eastern Nepal in the year of the Wood Mouse (1984). This teaching belongs to both the category of *dgongs gter* (mind *gter ma*) and *dag snang* (pure vision). The description of the sequence of events that

occurred during the pilgrimage is narrated by the author in the chapter *A Bouquet of Lotus Flowers*. A brief summary of the way in which the teaching entitled ‘*The Sphere of the Life Essence of the Vajra*’ was revealed and sealed. (*Tshe sgrub rdo rje’i srog thig gi rgya ji ltar grol tshul nyung du’i ngag gis brjod pa pad ma’i chun po bshug.*)

Remarks: This *bcud len* practice is currently practised by thousands of disciples of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu who has been often transmitted it since its inception in 1985. This practice has probably been the most widespread *bcud len* practice in history.

Text 72:

Front page: ‘*chi med gnyug ma’i gsang mdzod zhes. lus med mkha’ ’gro’i chos skor gyi rig ’dzin thugs tig padma’i srog/ bcud len bdud rtsi’i gdam zab las/ gzhun don cha lag mdor bsdus bzhugs*

The immortal secret treasury of primordial wisdom. From the cycle of teachings of the bodiless *ḍākinī*, the heart essence of the *vidyādhara*, the lotus life force. From the profound teachings on *bcud len* nectar, the main parts and the supplementary section, in brief form

Author: Gter chen kar ma (1943-2005)

Source: A *gter ma* text discovered by Gter chen kar ma in Mtsho pad ma (‘Lotus lake’, also called Rewalsar, a place where Guru Rinpoche practiced with *Ḍākinī* Mandarava in Himachal Pradesh India). Given to me by Charles Manson, from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University, the folios were loose and we were not able to identify their place in any larger collection.

Folios: Originals misplaced. I currently possess only the transcribed typewritten Wylie version.

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: Currently unavailable

Dating: Unspecified Iron Pig year

Content: The text has a main part and a supplementary section.

One is instructed to go to a hermitage, to practise refuge and generate *bodhicitta*, and to prepare a *maṇḍala* of offerings to accumulate merits. Reciting a mantra, one invites the buddhas, bodhisattvas and life deities from the ten directions.

One then visualises Ma 'gag tshé lha, the unceasing life deity.

The practitioner is then told to sound A three times and visualise five lights pervading everywhere, forming a circle of protection. Then one sounds *OM ĀḤ HŪM RAM YAM KHAM* and visualises endless offerings. One visualises a red *RAM* syllable and from that a great clear red bliss *ḍākinī* with a pig face symbolising the dispersion of ignorance. At the crown of her head one visualises Amitāyus of a clear white hue; at the throat a red Amitāyus, at the heart an Akṣobhya sky blue in colour, at the navel a Ratnasambhava golden in colour and at the secret place the 'accomplishing' Buddha, ruby-coloured. All of them are holding long life vases. The practitioner requests that they totally fulfill desires, and recite mantras. The purpose of all these visualisations and mantras is to obtain long life.

Then the empowerment stages follow.

One repeats the aforementioned (f. 5a-7a) offerings, confessions, mantras and visualisation. Then, from a *BAM* syllable the great bliss wisdom *ḍākinī*, clear red in colour, appears. One visualises a *kapāla* filled with infinite offerings, mountains of flesh and oceans of blood, heaped with bones. All is offered to the self-liberated deities, one praises them sounding *HŪM* thrice, and prostrates before the *maṇḍala*. Pronouncing *HŪM HRĪḤ* one receives infinite blessing that overcomes all impediments.

There are a series of exercises dealing with *prāṇa* starting on 17b. The key aspects are said to be that, outwardly, the body is motionless; internally *prāṇa* is ceaseless; secretly, there is the unfixated primordial mind. Adopting the seven-point posture of Vairocana, one inhales and then holds the breath. One then exhales, shooting the breath out like an arrow. One inhales like a hook and silently releases the air. Then one presses the lower and upper *prāṇas* and visualises oneself as a rainbow body *ḍākinī*. The five elements correspond to the five colours of *prāṇa*. A series of visualisations of the minor and major channels is accompanied by breathing exercises. One visualises all illnesses, nonvirtues and obscuration as black smoke that one exhales.

In the next breathing exercise one self-visualises as Vajravārāhī. These are exercises envisaging the central channel filling with wisdom *prāṇa* and one visualises the letter *Bam*. The practitioner visualises lights spreading from his or her centre and reaching Buddha, Vajra, Ratna, Padma, and Karma Herukas, each in union with his consort. One visualises light rays and *prāṇa* coming from them, being absorbed in one's body and dualism, obstacles, death, demons, hindrances, mental confusion and agitation all dissipate. Other exercises follow where one transforms karmic breath into wisdom breath that spreads in the central channel through visualisations of light and *prāṇa* blessed by various buddhas and replete with yogic breathing exercises. A sexual practice centred on Amitāyus follows, where envisaging oneself as Amitāyus while copulating and controlling the lower *prāṇa*, one radiates lights from one's secret place.

Then there are instructions on how to prepare a longevity pill (31b). Ingredients include: *a ru ra gser mdog*, *ba ru ra*, *skyu ru ra*, cloves, cardamom, red and white sandalwood, *utpala* pistils, calcite, sugar, molasses and honey, and butter from a hundred cows. 'The pills are empowered in a skull cup then one self-visualises as a

heruka. Above this visualisation is Vajravārāhī; from her secret place one visualises nectar pouring down and empowering the pills. Mantras are recited to empower them and then they are ready to consume’.

(f. 33a) There is a flower *bcud len* to enhance beauty. One gathers and compounds *da lis* flowers, saffron, *utapala*, *a ru ra* and the three whites (yoghurt, milk, butter).

While partaking of these one follows a restricted diet. One practises *gtum mo* exercises.

(f. 34b) There is advice on a calcite *bcud len*. There is a description of the various male, female and gender-neutral calcite types and which to utilise. One grinds the stone reciting mantras and then mentally transforms into Vajravārāhī, empowering the stones with a visualisation and practising *gtum mo*.

Main deity and main substance employed: Amitāyus, Vajravārāhī. Several recipes make use of a number of substances. The longevity pill features: *a ru ra gser mdog*, *ba ru ra*, *skyu ru ra*, cloves, cardamom, red and white sandalwood, *ka li ka*, *utpala* pistils, calcite, sugar, molasses, honey and butter from a hundred cows. The flower *bcud len* contains: *da lis* flowers, saffron, *utapala*, *a ru ra*, the three whites (yoghurt, milk, butter). There also is a calcite *bcud len*.

Colophon: (f. 37b) *bcud len gyi ril bu dang gdams ngag bstan pa'i le'u ste lnga po/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ ces pa'ang lcags phag zla ba bcu tshe 'gza' skar bzang po mkha' 'gro bsdu ba'i dus chen la rnal 'byor rdo zab gling pa'am snags nag stobs ldan chos dbyings gling pas kun gzhi smug pa'i mtshe las bsre bslad med par gtan la phab pa'i mthus 'chi med tshe'i rig 'dzin thob pa'i rgyur gyur cig/ yi ge pa ni badzra shwa ras so/ dge'o//*

This is the fifth chapter on the preparation of the *bcud len* pill and advice. Samaya rgya rgya rgya. This text was written in the Iron Pig year, on the second day of the tenth

month on an auspicious astrological day when the *ḍākinīs* gather around the one called Rnal 'byor rdo zab gling pa also known as Snags nag stobs ldan chos dbyings gling pa. From the sea of the brown *dharmakāya* lake without adulteration as a result of codifying it (writing it down), may this become the source for attaining the *siddhi* of immortality. The scribe was Badzra Sha ra. May it be auspicious!

Remarks: The respiratory techniques found on f. 17b where visualisations are connected with specific exhalations are unlike any thus far encountered.

Text 73:

Front page: 'chi med gnyugs ma'i sangs mdzod lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor las/yi dam 'khor lo bsdoms pa yab yum gyi sgrubs thabs dang a dkar bcud len kyi gdam pa rlung khrid dang cas pa bzhugs so

The text on the natural deathless condition secret treasure, from the cycle of the *ḍākinī* with no body, the method of attainment of the father and mother *maṇḍala* of the *yi dam* and the white A *bcud len* instructions for *rlung* and *bad kan*

Author: Gter chen karma (1943-2005)

Source: A *gter ma* text discovered by Gter chen kar ma in Mtsho pad ma ('Lotus Lake', also called Rewalsar, a place where Guru Rinpoche practised with Ḍākinī Mandarava in Himachal Pradesh, India. The folios were loose and thus far I have not been able to identify their place in any larger collection.

Folios: Originals misplaced. I currently possess only a typed Wylie version.

Script: *Dbu can*

Layout: Currently unavailable

Dating: Unspecified

Content: The text is divided into four main sections: the section on ‘the flawless *ḍākinī*’; the section (6a-9a) on the *bcud len* of the ‘*lung khrid* of Vajrayoginī’; the section (9b-15a) on the teaching and commentary on the *lung* of Vajrayoginī; the section on the stages of instruction on the *lung* related to the *cakra*

The section on ‘the flawless *ḍākinī*’

One takes refuge and makes *bodhicitta* commitments. For the practice itself, sounding *HŪM* and *HRĪH*, the practitioner self-visualises as Cakrasaṃvara, dark blue in colour, in union with a supreme female *ḍākinī*, red in colour. Lights spread out to the victorious wisdom deities and return to merge nondually into one’s visualised manifestation. One envisages offerings and recites praises to deities. *HŪM* and *HRĪH* are sounded again and Cakrasaṃvara, in union with his consort and endowed with lights and nectars dissolves into you. In the last stage of the visualisation one sounds A, and everything visualised dissolves into the self-liberated empty space of Dharamakāya.

The section (f. 6a-9a) on the *bcud len* of the *lung khrid* of Vajrayoginī

Mentally transformed as Vajrayoginī, one generates *bodhicitta* and chants mantras. One visualises making offerings to the deities, lights spreading to the Victorious Ones and returning, blessing one. Surrounded by *ḍākinīs* of the various families who send us their wisdoms in the form of light, one visualises one’s body as composed of bright light and recites mantras. All visualisations dissolve and one meditates in the space of pure essence.

3) The section (f. 9b-15a) on the teaching and commentary on the *lung* of Vajrayoginī

Seated in lotus position, abiding in a state where the mind is nonfixating, one visualises oneself as Vajrayoginī with a mantra rotating counter-clockwise as one recites

it. Then, empowering a rock with mantras and holding it in one's hand, one visualises the essence of the whole world liquefying into it. Manifesting as Dorje Phagmo, from whose mouth wisdom lights radiates; one visualises the *Ali Kali* letters spinning in one's mouth. After washing the rock, one practices visualisations of the channels and of the masters and deities of the Ati lineage; these include: Cakrasaṃvara, Dorje Phagmo, Stong nyid ras pa dkar, Bstan skyong gling, Nus stan drag po stal and many more, including Ye shes msho rgyal at sixteen years of age. The lineage gurus dissolve into light and then into you. You practise *prāṇa* retention while visualizing the *a shad* emanating lights and heat spreads throughout your body. You conclude by practising *kumbhaka*.

4) (f. 15a) The section on the stages of instruction on the *lung* related with the *cakra*

One recites the mantra of emptiness and visualises that in the celestial palace, above a lotus and moon disk, at one's heart there is a *HŪM* syllable, radiating lights and accomplishing the two benefits (to self and others). One visualises a *maṇḍala* with Cakrasaṃvara, one-faced, two arms crossed, with hands holding vajra and bell. He has three eyes, a fierce grimace and is wearing splendid clothes. His two feet are in a dignified posture, pinning down the dying Kalaratri. There is also Dorje Phagmo, a yellowish red colour, holding a knife and skull. At their heart centres, mantras circle the *HŪM* syllable clockwise, exiting from the *yab*'s mouth and connecting through the *yum*'s mouth. It melts inside the *HŪM* and all benefits and qualities are obtained. Recite the mantras seven or twenty-one times, or as many times as possible.

Then, visualising the *yid dam* in front of one and generating primordial wisdom, one sounds *HŪM HRĪḤ*. On top of the head one visualises the *yid dam* in *yab yum*; the

body of Yeshe Sems dpa [the *yab*] is clear blue, and he gracefully embraces the Phagmo who is clear red in color. The heart mantra radiates, pervading the bodies of the *yab yum*.

The two benefits are obtained and from the uniting point of the *yab yum*, white sperm and red nectar gush forth. The liquids enter at the crown of one's head and one's body's obscurations are purified. Finally the *yab yum* dissolve into light and one becomes inseparable from their wisdom. Recite a [specific] mantra seven, twenty-one or as many times as possible. Imagine that this light dissolves into one.

Again, one imagines the *yab yum* and the retinue as visualised before. Following the three points, outer, inner and secret, without error, one extracts the clear essence of the five elements. The upper *prāṇa* presses down on the lower *prāṇa*; when inhaling, one visualises that the *yab yum*'s *rdo rje* and *pad ma* separate.

One visualises a red *RAM* syllable at the navel of the *yab*. As before, one visualises the *a shad* and *gtum mo* practices in the *yum*. After three sessions of *prāṇa cakra* practices, one imagines that the navel *cakra* is enveloped with fire that spreads to the tips of the toes.

Again, one visualises the *prāṇa* expanding and reabsorbing, as before. The *gtum mo* blazes intensely and fills the channels at the heart center.

Imagine that the body's heat rises and the fire element fills the body to the finger tips. Visualise that the throat *cakra* is filled with fire. One will attain the *siddhi* of the enjoyment of all desires. The *cakra* of great bliss at the crown of the head is filled with fire. The *HŪM* syllable at the crown of the head shines downwards and encircles the head. The white semen nectar greatly increases. After all these visualisations, one practices the wind's absorption and spreading as described before. The nectar above

the crown of the head dissolves into light and fills the crown of the head. The nature of supreme great joy is recognised and the nectar drops precipitate, in the manner of a breaking pearl rosary, striking the *a shad*. The fire heat increases greatly and sperm spreads upwards until it reaches the throat. Supreme joy spreads.

Sperm completely dissolves, filling the heart's channels. The *gtum mo* fire blazes intensely, the sperm spreads towards the navel and one feels immeasurable happiness. Again, one practices the breathing and visualises spreading and reabsorbing as before.

The semen descends to the secret place of unification. Co-emergent wisdom spreads everywhere, it is recognised and grasped. One visualises that the white semen of the male deity is offered to the delighted female deities. The red eggs of the female deities delight the male deities. Again, one imagines the lower *prāṇa* ever spreading. The male deity's sperm joyfully proceeds to dissolve into the *HŪM* syllable. The red essence of the female deity dissolves into the *a shad*. The *thig le*, the semen and the secretions of the *yab* and *yum*, return to their original resting places. The spreading and reabsorbing of *prāṇa* is practiced as before. The outer sphere is dissolved into the bodies of the deities. The *yum* dissolves into the *yab* and the *yab* dissolves into the *HŪM* syllable. The *HŪM* syllable is beyond utterance; it is clear emptiness without a reference point.

Transforming oneself into Vajrayoginī, one practices *kumbhaka* and loosens the shoulders three times. At the navel, fire spreads; one imagines that illnesses and obscurations are burnt. One rotates one's head many times and pauses intermittently. Imagining fire spreading to one's throat and heart *cakra* and that the five poisons are burned, one rotates the left, right and central parts of the back. Immeasurable bliss, heat and power spread all over the body. One contracts one's muscles at the navel. One

visualises illness, evil spirits, bad actions, obscuration all disappear into the ground. Pressing the thumb-sized vampires (*mtheb srin*) into the ground with five small controlled falls (*'bebs*), the heads of the five poisons are pressed down; one imagines the five wisdoms unravel. One stretches and compresses the body three times, imagines the channels are purified and wisdom light spreads. As for the six roots and the four branches, one rubs one's hands and imagines a sun on one's palms; the sun's heat and light dissolve into the *a shad* located under the navel.

Rubbing the soles of one's feet and the palms of one's hands, one visualises a lotus and the sun there. The heat and power dissolve into the *a shad* and unify. For the 'six fire stoves', one imagines the sun on one's shoulders and hands. Performing small falls (*'bebs*) striking the body, one imagines the blazing heat and power of the *gtum mo*. Hitting the two sides of one's trunk roughly with one's inner arms, simultaneously one sounds *HŪM HŪM*. Obscurations purified, the accumulations of merit are perfected; one imagines that one has attained the real nature. One pronounces *Ha* three times and abides in the primordially pure space. Each day one practises 'the middle *prāṇa*' according to the strength of one's body. If the wind element becomes too powerful, one eats a measure of sugar. If the *khrid pa* rises excessively, one takes sugar. If there are blood illnesses, one eats red-coloured fruit. As for indigestion, one relies on medicines, the teacher's advice and rest.

The final section is on the benefits of the practice and the dedication of merit.

The white hair and wrinkles of the old will disappear; the body strength of the young will increase and their appearance will improve. Hearts will be won with a divine body. Without seeking omniscience, one will obtain it. Visions of the deity will appear without one having to meditate. Practising heat generation one will need no clothes. One

will overcome the five poisons; all the obscurations accumulated in the past are purified and one will attain the perfection of wisdom and be endowed with the five faculties of prescience. All impediments to one's life are overcome and one attains the *vajra* body. This is the nondeceptive secret tantra and the never changing Dharma of the *ḍākinī*. If one gets properly used to this and gains certainty, one will attain the signs of realisation. Guru Rin po che will not disappoint sentient beings, whoever doubts the *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs* will harm their own soul. *Samaya rgya rgya rgya*. One should dedicate the merit accumulated according to the stage of gathering and the *sāadhanā* of the *maṇḍala*.

This is the fourth chapter explaining the breath flow according to the *A dkar po* (white A) *bcud len*.

Main deity and main substance employed: There are two main deities: Cakrasaṃvara in union with a *ḍākinī*, Vajrayoginī. There are no substances used except for *prāṇa* exercises.

Colophon: There is no colophon per se. The final lines (see the end of the 'contents' sections) list the practice's benefits but do not specifically mention the text's authorship or origin.

Remarks: This text begins by stating that this practice is the essence of Rdzogs chen, a method by which co-emergent wisdom is born. Several of the practices in this text end with a dissolution of the visualisation and indications to meditate in the state of pure awareness.

3.3.5 Observations

The summaries and remarks on the texts above suggests the following points on Tibetan medical and meditative *bcud len* practices connected to long life empowerment, health and spiritual fulfilment.

In reference to the lengthy debate on the origins of such practices in Tibet, certain teachings indicate a clear debt to Indic knowledge. At least seven of the texts specifically indicate their Indian origins, and are connected to masters such as Nāgārjuna and the Brahmin Saraha (texts 5, 8, 14, 27, 30). Several others have probable Indian connections or influences, as seen from the use of ingredients, the mention of deities, and stated links to Naropa (Text 41). One text is said to derive from a transmission lineage that mentions Orissa (Text 43). There is also a strong possibility that Text 1 was translated alongside Mitra yogin, from Orissa.

Subtle body exercises as discussed in Chapter 2, suggest the influence of Indian breathing exercises on the practice of *bcud len*.

Of the 73 texts collated, establishing a precise date of authorship is complicated by the fact that we often have only the dates of the author's birth and death. If we assume that they were not created or rediscovered in the author's childhood, then we can trace only one to the eleventh century, and that has only a simple reference to *bcud len*. The historical period puts it in a time frame similar to the advent of the *Rgyud bzhi* in Tibet. What we know of the chronology of the texts from documentation and evidence available at present is, however, inadequate to support the contention that *bcud len*, as a developed set of practices, was imported into Tibet from India. Many of the key elements however are decisively Indian in nature.

From the lives of the authors, it is highly probable that at least seven texts came from the fourteenth century. Those from Sa skya paṇḍita and Rang byung rdo rje also probably belong to that time as they turned 18 and 16 respectively in 1300. Rin chen rgya mtsho's pill text may be added to these as we know he was born in the fourteenth century. From the fifteenth century we have the four teachings of Ratna gling pa, while those from Padma gling pa, fifty years old in 1500, and Dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang po, in his early twenties in 1500, could also be placed there. Two flower pill *bcud len* remain from the sixteenth century, while five texts are from the seventeenth century, including the *yab yum* practice from Gar dbang rdo rje. At least six texts can be attributed to the eighteenth century, where more ingredients seem to be listed in the medicinal preparations. In one teaching by Kun dga ' blo gros, where White Panyajaranatha is invoked, 35 ingredients are listed for one pill. It is the nineteenth century that has left us the greatest number of texts; of the ten whose authors' lifetimes were within the nineteenth century, there is no discernible change in the pattern of the practices or ingredients used. Human flesh, first mentioned among these texts as a pill ingredient by Rig ' dzin ' Ja ' tshon po (born 1585), is also spoken of by Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1851) in Text 39. Later, it is again included by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po in a nineteenth-century pill text (Text 46), and most recently by 'Ju mi pham rgya mtso (Text 56). The 'five fleshies' are mentioned in prescribed visualizations and cow, elephant, horse and dog as specific ingredients in Text 46. References are made elsewhere to the flesh of peacock, vulture, donkey, snake and others.

It may be that the higher probability of survival of texts from the nineteenth century is the main reason for their greater number. It could, however, be the case that this was a prolific age for revelations and writing of *bcud len* practice. The high number

of texts recorded in this period also bears witness to the successful efforts for the preservation of spiritual traditions by the luminaries of the *ris med* movement, among whom 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po recorded a significant number.

Rang rig rdo rje is the single name associated with as many as ten *bcud len* texts, his prolific writings being a result of his *gterma* rediscoveries.

It is the *gterma* tradition that may be considered the most 'Tibetan' characteristic of the *bcud len* corpus. The texts recorded as being transmitted by *gter ma* continue into the late twentieth century. The earliest rediscovery is that by Dri med 'od zer (1308-1364), in his rock *bcud len* (Text 7), and the most recent are those of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu in 1984 (Text 71), and *Gter chen kar ma* (1943-2005). The texts in this collection recorded as *gter ma* transmissions are those numbered numbers 7, 10, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 27, 45, 52, 60, 62, 63, 64, 65, 71, 72 and 73 in the table in the preceding section of this work.

From a chronological perspective, there is no evidence to suggest that certain sub-genres of *bcud len* teachings were more diffused in particular periods (there were no identifiable 'new waves' of popular practices), nor can one detect a shift from more meditation oriented to more 'medical' texts. The blurred lines between medical and spiritual instruction were a historical constant.

As regards the aims of *bcud len*, rejuvenation is a recurring theme, but not its exclusive aim. The restoration or enhancement of the life force is an explicitly stated objective in the texts numbered 2, 3, 12, 13, 16, 19, 20, 24, 25, 34, 35, 39, 70, 71 and 73. Signs of the efficacy of the practice that are often cited are the return of original hair colour, white hair being pushed out, the banishing of wrinkles and the acquiring of the strength of an elephant and a swiftness of foot.

Remedies for specific ailments, such as parasites, that represent obstacles for the practitioner are also a part of *bcud len* teachings. Mentions of parasites are common throughout the compendium. An example from Text 54 (f. 194, line 6) begins a section regarding the purification of obstacles derived from the text *Bka' brgyad kyi gzhung sogs* (The eight sādhana teachings of Padmasambhava), which concerns two families of worms. Since they debilitate the body's energies, if these worms are not defeated the effectiveness of *bcud len* is diminished. Two alternative remedies are provided. The first instructs 'In the middle of the autumn, on the eight or tenth day, mix and boil *srin bu ke ke ru* (scorpion), *rtsi bo che* (*asafoetida*), *glad pa* (brain), honey and white garlic, in a soup of deer intestine. Consume it on an empty stomach, the two worms will come out from the urinary tract in the form of a silk thread'. The second (f. 195, line 4) suggests a pill prepared with *sdom* (spider), the skin of a baby scorpion, the fat of human, goat and pig, the six precious substances, and various salts, to be taken on an empty stomach.

Bcud len practice, either in the preliminaries or interspersed in the main body of the text also includes rites for the appeasement of negative spirits. One in Text 55 is addressed to the *gnyan po* who are believed to provoke illnesses. Text 65 mentions a Hayagrīva dance to subjugate harmful spirits, that might interest historians of ritual. Likewise, the practice in Text 28 is said to offer similar protection from spirits.

In Text 24, we find the only mention of the *bsang* ritual as part of a purifactory practice to appease local guardians. This may well represent another indigenous aspect of *bcud len* practice.

With regard to the more tangible characteristics of the practice, in these texts dating from the 11th century to the present the texts over the centuries reflect no clear pattern of change in their use of the principal botanical ingredients. The plant

ingredients specified most frequently over a wide timespan are *dbang lag* in texts 8, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 39, 40, 45 and 48 and *rtag tu* in texts 8, 14, 15, 18, 21, 27, 39 40 and 48. It should be noted that while the prescribed use of chosen plants and ingredients remains constant, we must not assume standard procedures across Tibet among those producing the medicines. Meulenbeld, in referring to Swiss analyses of Tibetan medicines, points out that they showed no consistency in ingredients and processing techniques (Meulenbeld 2003: 213-14). With more recent scientific approaches in pharmaceutical production, this may well be less the case by now.

The importance of *prāṇa* in the *bcud len* practice is evident in the frequency of its appearance in the texts as either the main or one of the two principal aspects of the practice in 23 of the 68 texts analysed. This has been discussed in the essay introducing the texts.

The controversial substance of mercury is found in this collection. The earliest mention is in Text 14, the teaching from Dge 'dun grub pa (1391-1474), which refers to the use of mantras to remove toxicity. It is also used in the 'secret' *bcud len* of Ratna gling pa (1403-1479), and in the 'all powerful' medical *bcud len* of Tshul khrims rin chen (1697-1774).

In seeking a definition of *bcud len*, the variance in its aims must be appreciated. Certain texts may be designated as more 'spiritual' in nature, in that they state goals that go beyond the easing of bodily ailments. Freedom from hunger, so as to enable the practitioner to pursue goals in meditation without worldly distractions, is often cited as a benefit and one text is recommended particularly for mendicants (Text 7). Texts 7, 13 and 21 suggest that the practitioner will never enter the *preta* realm or experience a lower rebirth. The supreme attainment of the rainbow body, through mastery of the

subtle body, is cited as a fruit of the practices given in the texts numbered 25, 31, 45, 59 and 71.

The question also arises as to whom these practices are intended to benefit. The secret nature of the meditative teachings is often specified, but the introduction to some texts suggests that they could be made available to all those seriously interested.

Text 39, like several others, speaks of ‘excellent’ and ‘lower’ candidates, while Text 67 and the Bon Text 68 describe three levels of practitioner: the those of lower and medium capacity, and the ‘superior’.

One aspect of the *bcud len* teachings that deserves more attention is the role of the female in *bcud len* practice. At first sight, the practice of *bcud len* appears to be centred on the male practitioner. Female authors are absent, with the notable exception of Yeshe Mtsho rgyal who recorded many of Guru Rin po che’s teachings, and in practices of sexual union females appear to be relegated to the supportive role of consort. Several texts, however, invoke, propitiate, recite mantras to or have their teachings originating from female deities such as Vajrayoginī or Bdud rtsi yi lha mo (‘goddess of nectar’). Also, in text 13 there is a mention of ‘the lineage of Ma gcig’ (probably Ma gcig lab sgron) suggesting some *bcud len* practices might derive from her. The texts where sexual practices are taught implicitly recognize the feminine principle as indispensable for the practitioner. For example, Text 29, which focuses on ‘extracting female essence’ claims to bring about ‘the obtainment of all qualities of the Buddha’. Several *bcud len* texts discourage sexual activity while practicing as it is said to bring about physical exhaustion. It is interesting to note how some *bcud len* texts will explicitly forbid sex and others actively encourage it as a means to extract the essence, as in Text 32, where

the practitioner drinks a mixture of his sperm and the vaginal excretions of a youthful girl visualized as the goddess.

Clearly, *bcud len* is an eclectic tradition, practised and authored by those from different religious lineages with distinct underpinning philosophies, that embraces diverse approaches and techniques to obtain the essence.

CHAPTER 4: REPRESENTATIVE TEXTS

4.1 Introductory remarks

In this chapter I have selected five *bcud len* texts of which, to my knowledge, no previous translations have been published. These texts are representative of the five main categories of substance found in *bcud len* literature: water, calcite, *prāṇa*, flower and pill. Classifying *bcud len* texts according to substances may seem simplistic, since often within a single text more than one substance is used. However, as was indicated in Chapter 3, this classification appears to be the most suitable to underpin a framework for the present study and, hopefully, for future investigation.

As the compendium in this work shows, several substances are combined in a single *bcud len* practice. It is hard to find texts focusing exclusively on a single substance. Although structural similarities such as the three sections labelled *sbyor ba*, *dnegos* and *rjes* (preparation, main section and conclusion) are found in texts and some deities feature more often than others, there is no ‘typical’ *bcud len* text. I have selected five exemplary texts that deal in depth with the respective substances.

The five texts were authored in a period of time spanning the fourteenth century to the nineteenth century and offer interesting and detailed contents that allow us an insight into the rich and multilayered world of the *bcud len* literary genre.

While the boundary between ‘medical’ and ‘spiritual’ teachings is not absolute, specific ingredients are utilised in *bcud len* recipes for specific physical conditions or circumstances, and in the introductions to each translation more will be said about the selected substances as well as the deities associated with each subgenre. The five texts chosen refer to a range of substances, deities and exercises. In the analysed texts

different practices are suggested according to circumstances or to the practitioner's medical conditions. An example of instructions regarding as to when particular types of *bcud len* should be carried out is offered in Text 21, the *Bcud len yid bzhin nor bu* (f. 716, line 3- f. 717, line 3) by Padma Lingpa (1450- 1521):

As for the stages of *bcud len*: when your body feels too hot you need to do *rlung bcud len*. When the *rlung* is too charged you need to practice earth *bcud len*. When the fire energy is charged, practise water *bcud len*. When the water element is too charged, do fire *bcud len*. When all four (heat/wind/fire/water) are imbalanced, then practise space *bcud len*. When physical strength deteriorates, practise nectar *bcud len*. When the mind becomes dull, practice flower *bcud len*. When the constituent elements are weak, practise the *na tshan bcud len*. When the five sense faculties are dull, do the *dbang lag bcud len*.

In the translations below, I have, as all translators of Tibetan must, attempted to strike a balance between accuracy and readability, striving to preserve each text's original spirit and yet making it comprehensible.

4.2 Rock *bcud len*

4.2.1. Introduction

Although several metallurgic and mineral ingredients (to list a few: silver, gold, mercury, cinnabar, calcite, along with various minerals and gems) are employed in traditional Tibetan medicine, rarely have the origins and development of their use been studied systematically. Mercury is the exception; its highly toxic nature and the ensuing controversies over its usage have stirred the interest of investigators.¹ Calcite, despite

¹ Interesting research was carried out by Geoffrey Samuel (2010: 222-234), who suggests that the use of refined mercury began in China, was then developed in India in the Ayurvedic branch of *rasāyana* and evolved into the refinement of the mercury found in Tibetan precious pills. Another important study on the development of mercury in Tibetan medicine is Olaf Czaja's *On the History of Refining Mercury in Tibetan Medicine*. Barbara Gerke is currently researching mercury processing in Tibetan pharmacology and her study is likely to bring further insights to this field of research. See also Gerke 2013c.

being an important ingredient in medical recipes (not only in the *bcud len* tradition), has not been given such extensive attention.

Among the texts I have examined, the first instance of calcite's use in a *bcud len* recipe appears in the compendium's eight text *Rigs Inga'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thigs pa* by Klong chen pa Dri med 'od zer (1308-1363). It is quite common to find calcite included as a secondary ingredient in recipes, and I have found eleven texts where calcite features as a main ingredient. As regards the perceived therapeutic value of calcite, I would like, drawing from selected texts to present some statements below on the purpose of its use.

In Rin chen rgya mtsho's *Bcud len gyi skor* text, calcite is described (f. 99) as useful for healing bones. Dharmabhadra (1772-1851) in his *Bcud len gyi ril bu bsgrubs nas spyod tshul dang zhabs brtan srub 'jug* (f. 420) states that calcite is said to be an antidote in cases of phlegm disorder.

'Jigs med gling pa (1729/30-1798), in his text *Sku gsum bcud len*, (text 38) describes the benefits of his calcite recipe in a less specific way: 'The diseases caused by [the imbalance of] the combination of the three humors will be cured, defilements cleansed and experiences and realisations will increase powerfully.' (f. 304)

Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615-1672) in his *'Gro don las tshogs zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len* (text 28) states: 'If you add calcite it helps extend long life, generating elephant-like body strength.' (f. 482)

It must be mentioned that in Tibetan medicine, calcite is differentiated into categories: male, female, neutral, 'god', and 'demon' calcite. In the text entitled *Man ngag sku gsum bcud len* by Nyag bla Pad ma bdud 'dul (1816-1872), a brief description of such types is found (f. 226, line 3): *lha cong* – the god's calcite, white-coloured,

smooth and supple like butter; *pho cong* – male calcite, white as a pile of snow; *mo cong* – female calcite, clear coloured and resembles small aligned needles; and *ma nying cong zhi* – neutral calcite.

Also, Rig 'dzin rgod ldem (1337- 1408) in his text *Bcud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba bzhugs* describes (f.426, line 3) the different types of calcite thus:

The male calcite looks like small needles. The female calcite is snow-like and cloudy. The neutral calcite looks like frozen water. The demon calcite is like putrid water. As for the 'nectar of the gods' calcite, it is supple like a white swan, soft and pliable like butter. The male calcite is good for use by females. The female calcite is good for use by males. The neutral one is appropriate for use by both [males and females]. The demon calcite is not appropriate. The god's calcite is the supreme substance of accomplishment.

In Tibetan literature we find mentions of masters who relied on calcite as nourishment during retreats; for example, in the section on the life of Kong sprul in a work on *Ris med* philosophy by Ringu Tulku (2006: 17), we read that in his late teens Kong sprul subsisted for a week on extracted essences, obtaining all his nutrition from stalagmites. Also, in Tibetan art images, Rma Rin chen mchog, one of Guru Padmasambhava's original twenty-five disciples, is depicted holding a calcite stone rock. Such occurrences confirm that calcite has long been an integral part of Tibetan yogic practices.²

Calcite continues to be utilised today; in fact, as an illustration of the continuing importance of calcite in medicinal concoctions, the Tibetan calcite refinement techniques, with their specific processes of cleansing, crushing, heating and placing calcite in a cooling solution, have been patented.³

² Rinchen Mchog was among the party who traveled to India to invite Vimalamitra (eighth century) to Tibet, becoming a close disciple of the master. Having practiced Padmasambhava's teachings, mostly at Chimpu (*mchims phu*), he demonstrated his realisation by cutting rocks into pieces as if they were dough and then eating them as if they were food. <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Ma-Rinchen-Chok/5234> (accessed on March 10th 2013)

³ More about the patent here: <http://www.google.com/patents/CN102114039B?cl=en>.

Although several deities (such as Vajravārāhī, Amitāyus, Ḍākinī Mandarava) are associated with calcite *bcud len* recipes, the most recurrent is Vajrayoginī. She appears in a number of calcite-related texts such as Padma ling pa's *Bcud len yid bzhin nor bu* (text 21); Rgod kyi ldem 'phru's *Rdzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal las: bcud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba* (text 21), and is also the central deity in Rin chen rgya mtsho's text, *Bcud len gyi skor* (text 10). Besides these calcite texts, Vajrayoginī features in other *bcud len* genre, making her one of the most prominent deities linked to *bcud len* practices.

To conclude, I point out certain similarities between a Vajrayoginī rite, as explained by Elizabeth English, and the particular calcite *bcud len* text by Ratna gling pa presented below. These similarities, however, are not limited to this calcite text, and indeed can be discerned in many other *bcud len* texts, utilising various other substances. In her study on the Vajrayoginī tradition in India, English dedicates a section to the rite of 'Tasting Nectar' (*amṛtasvādānam*) found in the *Cakrasaṃvarabalividhi*. Given the striking similarities of this practice with the ritual procedures found in so many *bcud len* texts, it seems appropriate to reproduce a passage from her work (English, 2002: 208-210):

. . . the rite of tasting nectar requires the *yogin* to generate an imaginary bowl in which he will visualise various substances transforming into nectarized offering . . . it describes an imaginary food offering resulting in great bliss, to be offered within the context of internalized meditative performance. Moreover, it describes a handy means of purifying offerings that in our tradition are composed of transgressive substances, and of transforming them into nectar fit for the gods. The first step in the rite of tasting nectar is the preparation of a hearth, whereon the food offerings may be cooked, purified and turned into nectar. First, raging flames are generated from the combination of wind and fire, represented by their elemental symbols and the syllables *YAM* and *RAM*. Above this, a hearth is then fashioned from three heads arranged like the base of a tripod; these are

produced (in our tradition) from the syllable *KAM*. On top rests a skull bowl generated from *ĀH*, as the cauldron.

..,The preparation of the nectar inside the cauldron. The ingredients are generated from seed-syllables and comprise the usual esoteric offerings, namely, the five nectars and the five meats. ... The fire should be visualised blazing up and heating the ingredients and turning them bright red. . . It only remains for the liquid to be empowered by the syllables *OM ĀH HŪM*. . . finally, the deities are retracted and dissolve into the three syllables, and the three syllables themselves dissolve into the nectar below.

We can see that certain notions, exercises and visualisations are shared in the Indian Vajrayoginī tradition and in certain ritual aspects of *bcud len* practice, such as the idea of purifying substances on a tripod of skulls and transforming them into nectars. Further study on the role of Vajrayoginī in the *bcud len* tradition would be of considerable interest given the number of texts in which Vajrayoginī features as the principal deity.

4.2 2. Calcite *bcud len* translation

Ratna gling pa, *Them med cong zhi sogs rdo rje bdud rtsi'i bcud len*. In *Rat na gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, vol. 12: 169 - 176. TBRC W21730

f. 153 *Them yig med: cong zhi la sogs bdud rtsi rdo rje'i bcud len bzhugs pa'i dgu phyogs lags so/*

There is no abstract: the ninth section on the calcite (and so on) *vajra* nectar *bcud len*.

f. 154 *bdag 'dra pad ma 'byung gnas kyi/ yang gsang klong gsal snying thig gi/ nyams len mtha' ru 'don pa la/ dad ldan skyes bu 'ga'zhig gi/ 'tsho ba'i g.yeng ba spongs ba dang / phung po tshe srog brtan bya'i phyir/ cong zhi rdo rje'i bcud len bstan/ 'di la don rnam pa lnga ste/ rdo brtag pa dang/ bsdu ba dang / bza' thabs dang / gegs sel*

dang/ yon tan 'bras bu'o/ dang po brtag pa ni/ sha chen/ tshil chen/ rkang dmar/ de la rdo phyin ci sogs/ sul dang byas pa ni sha chen no (gzhan yang rtags te gzugs 'di'ang 'dra'o)/ rdo 'jam la mnyen pa/ sos sod cing mi pag sa tshil lo/ snyi ba zhib pa/ grus 'jam sa dkar po'am/ ser po dul sla ba ni rkang dmar ro/ de yang 'di tsho cong zhi

The following is an extract from *The heart essence of the secret clear expanse* (*yang gsang klong gsal snying thig*) by the Lotus-Born. I will teach the calcite *vajra bcud len* in order to dispel the concerns for sustenance of certain devout people and to stabilise their body and life forces. This *bcud len* is composed of five sections: the examination of the stone; the collection; the method of consumption; eliminating hindrances; the ensuing benefits.

First, regarding the examination: human flesh, human fat, marrow and the rock's radiance and so forth. Taking it with fissures, it is known as 'human flesh' *sha chen*, also when you examine it the shape is the same. The rock is smooth and supple 'killed by teeth' [chewable] human skin is the fat of the earth. It is soft and fine, smooth beaten, white or yellow earth which is easy to treat is *rkang dmar* 'marrow'.

f. 155 *bya ste sha chen no/ gnyis pa bsdu ba ni/ rang nyid yi dam bla ma'i rnal 'byor dang ldan pas 'khor mkha' 'gro ma mang pos bskor bar bsam ste/ ngag tu/ ma tshogs mkha' 'gro dam can rnams/ bdag gi don chen thob pa la/ thar pa byang chub bsgrub pa'i rdzas/ dngos grub len pa'i grogs la gshegs/ zhes dbyangs dang bcas la 'gro'o/ da dril byas la 'gro'o/ de nas om sar ba si dhi pha la hum/ ces dngos grub dpag med du bsam la bsdus te/ de nas mdun du bzhugs la/ oM AH hUM bzlas pas sha lnga bdud rtsi lnga'i rang bzhin du gyur par bsam/ 'byung bzhi'i bcud thams cad de la bstim/ mkha' 'gro rnams kyang 'od du zhu nas de la bstim par bsam la snod du blug/ gsum pa ji ltar bza' ba'i thabs ni/ rdo rnams btag btsag zhib par btul te/ oM gu ru ha ri ni/*

This [stone], which is known as ‘calcite’ is human flesh.

Second, regarding the collection: do the Guru Yoga practice, imagining yourself surrounded by many *ḍākinīs*. Recite (say): “Female goddesses and *ḍākinīs* who have taken the commitments, in order for me to achieve great benefit (realisation), please come and assist me to attain the siddhis – the substance that generates liberation and enlightenment”. You should go along (collecting) while reciting melodies, and playing the *da ma ru* and bell. Then recite [. . . mantra . . .]. Imagine there are immeasurable siddhis and that you have collected them. Then sit in front of them and recite *OM ĀH HŪM*, imagine that the five meats become the nature of the five nectars. Imagine that you dissolve all the essence of the four elements into it. Imagine also that the *ḍākinīs* melt into light and that you dissolve them into it; then pour it into a receptacle. Third, the method of consuming it: the stones are ground, sifted and pulverized and you pronounce: [...mantra...]

f.156 *sa si dhi ba la hum/ zhes 'bum mam tha ma khri tsho lnga bsnyen la/ de nas
thab ke las mi mgo'i sgyed pu ri rab dang mnyam par bsam/ snod de thod pa dum cig
sa stong gsum gang bar bsam/ bsdud sha lnga bdud rtsi lngar bsam la/ rang nyid rdo
rje rnal 'byor ma'i bskyed rim gsal bar byas ste/ dkrug la de rdo rje'i skya bar bsam la/
oM trig ser trig ser mu le mu le ya hA mu le swa ha/ ces pa dang / 'bru gsum bzlas shing
dkrug go/ de las 'od 'phros lha mi'i tshe dang longs spyod 'byung bzhi'i bsdud thams
cad bsdus te thim par bsam/ mdun gyi nam mkhar bla ma yi dam spyan drangs/ sbyor ba
mdzad pa'i byang sems dkar dmar du bab/ gnyis su med par 'dres par bsam la dkrug go/
de nas rang yi dam mgrin par bla ma bka' brgyud/ lte bar mkha' 'gro chos skyong gsang
bar rigs drug lan chags rnam bskyed la phud phyir mi dor/ rang la mchod par dmigs la
yi dam gyi 'bru gsum bzla' shing bza' / snod chus mi bshal/*

Recite this 100,000 or at least 50,000 times. Then imagine that from the hearth [there come three] hearth-stones of human heads the size of Mount Meru. The container should be visualized as an intact skull that fills the thrice-thousand (or hundred million) worlds. Inside, imagine the collection of the five meats as the five nectars. Visualize yourself in the generation stage of Vajrayoginī. To stir imagine you are stirring with a *rdo rje* spatula. Recite the prescribed mantra and the three syllables and stir it. Imagine light emanating from there [the nectar], and the life force of gods and humans as well as their prosperity and all the essence of the four elements being collected and absorbed into the nectar. Invite the guru and tutelary deities into the space before you; the white and red fluids of their sexual union drop down. Imagine that they have been inseparably mixed, then stir. Then generate the tutelary divinity as yourself, the lama and lineage at your throat, and the *dākinīs* and *dharmapālas* at your navel, and the six classes of beings and your karmic debtors at your privy region; do not throw away the first-offering, but visualize it as an offering to yourself and eat it while reciting the three syllables of the tutelary deities. Do not rinse the vessel with water.

f.157 *lhag ma phyir mi dor/ rgyus med la gsang zhing mi bstan/ mched grogs dam tshig can min pa la mi sbyin/ phye tshun re btab/ de 'khril zhing sbyin/ tshwa rdor yang dum pa re bya/ rdor med na tsha re btab/ yod na gzhan bas ngo che/ za tshod ni dang po ran tsam za/ de nas 'grangs par za/ sngo tshod dang sres kyang 'ong/ pag gang dang yang bzar btub/ gar sla ni zan gron/ skyo 'dzog/ skyo tshod gang yang byar rung ngo/ de rnams ni dang kar shin tu 'ong/ dkar spyad du bsten na dmigs pa rnams sgom nas/ nas tsam 'bras tsam du brdungs/ skyo tsha 'am chus bdas kyang yong/ de la pho skor dang rlung ngam ro bzung ba gces so/ mdor na 'di nyid dka' thub min bcud len yang dag yin te yon tan bsam las 'das so/ bzhi pa gegs sel ni/ dang po zhag gsum bzhi ru gong ngos*

*su mar theb tshig re btang ste des gegs mi 'ong/ dri ma thon dka' na skam dang skyo
tsha mang du btang/ 'byams na skyo tshas sel/ skyug na*

The remains should not be thrown and should not be shown to those not familiar. Do not give this to Dharma friends who do not have (pure) *samaya*. Place one measurement (half a thumb) of tsampa and roll it into a ball and give it to the initiated. Add a part of salt and rock each; if there is no rock then put a chunk of salt. Its presence is more important than the other. The amount eaten initially should be moderate. Then eat until you are satiated. It can also be mixed with vegetables. It can also be eaten as barley dough. The thickness of this gravy, it can be eaten in any amount. You will have a lot of appetite. If you rely on dairy products, by meditating on the visualisations pound it into the size of barley or rice. You can mix it with broth or water. Ensure you rotate your stomach and the essence of the flavour [*rasā*] is retained. In short, it is not a difficult *bcud len* but a perfect one, and its excellent qualities are inconceivable.

The fourth: on eliminating hindrances. First, initially for three or four days, take a thumb of butter and no hindrances will arise. If it is hard to go to the bathroom, add more gruel to the dry ingredient. If you have loose bowels the gruel will eliminate it.

f.158 *chu drag po brten rlung ngam ro bzung/ bcud len 'byangs par lces/ bla ma
la gsol ba drag tu btab/ za mi 'dod pa'am/ dang kar mi yong ngam/ rtog snang byung
na gsol ba gdab/ shi ba srog la bab kyang dam bca' mthar mi 'don re'i zhes bcad sdam
des sel/ sha chang la sogs zas ni spel kyang mi lto/ bcud len rang du brten/ tshogs 'khor
ma gtogs kha zas spang/ srung bya ni/ tsha skyur/ rul sru pa/ za dang/ la phug / nya sha/
tsong/ mo nye/ tshig pa/ nya los dang drag las spang ngo/*

*lnga pa yon tan dang 'bras bu ni/ rgas dka'/ tshe skra dkar dang gnyer ma
'bud/ mkha' 'gro rigs 'du/ bkrag dang mdangs skye/ gnyid chung rig pa dangs/ shes*

*rab che / ting 'dzin gsal/ dge sbyor 'phel/ dkor med pas mngon shes 'char/ rmi lam du
mkha' 'gro tshogs 'khor rgyun mi 'chad/ 'byung ba snyoms pas nad mi 'byung/ lus kyi
srin bu 'dzad/ zhag lnga drug dug lus rgud/ bcud zla byed nas shed skye*

Rely on the *chu drag po* ('fierce water'), seize the *rlung ngam ro* (type of *prāṇa*?). Be sure to train in this *bcud len*. Invoke the master fervently. If you have no desire to eat or if you feel no appetite, or if you have misguided thoughts, you should pray. Even at the risk of your own life, do not give up your commitment. Making this vow will dispel the obstacles. Do not rely on meat, alcohol, and so forth, rely solely on *bcud len*. Apart from *gaṇacakra*, give up food. As for what to guard oneself from: salt and sour tastes, spoiled or rotting, food, nettles, radish, fish flesh, onion, intimacy with females, anger, exertive work. Fifth, as for the excellent fruition and qualities: it is difficult to age, one attains long life, white hair and wrinkles are removed, the *dākinī* families gather, a radiant lustre appears, you will sleep less, and have greater awareness and wisdom, clear meditation, and virtuous actions increase. Since you do not live on donations you will gain clairvoyance. In your dreams *dākinīs* will constantly perform *pūjā*, the elements are balanced, sickness will not be there, the parasites in your body are extinguished. In five or six days the toxicity of the body declines. Because one eats the essence, strength grows,

f.159 *rig pa dwangs/ zla ba gcig bcud len/ lus yang/ gnyid chung/ rig rtsal sna
tshogs 'char ro/ mdor na yon tan brjod las 'das te/ tshe gcig gi rdo rje 'dzin par 'gyur
ro/ 'di 'dr'i gdams pa yang zab ngo mtshar che/ g.yeng med dge sbyor ngang gi 'phel/
ma 'ongs las can gcig / dang 'di 'phrad nas/ skal ldan las can rnams la phan thog par
shog/ sa ma ya/ kha tham/ gu ha ya/ yos kyi lo la gu ru rat nas bton/ dge'o/ //*

the mind will be pure and clear. In one month of *bcud len*, the body will be light and sleep decreases, various capacities emerge. In short the qualities are inexpressible,

one will become a *vajra* holder in a single life. Such a teaching is profound and marvellous. Undistracted virtuous activities will spontaneously increase. In the future may a fortunate individual, having encountered this, benefit those who are karmically favoured. *Samaya ka tham guhya*. Extracted by the master Rat na in a year of the Hare.

4.3. Flower *bcud len*

4.3.1. Introduction

The medicinal qualities of flowers and herbs have long been recognised in the Himalayan region. Local flora has been used there in natural remedies from time immemorial. Early European travellers have left accounts of yogins performing supernatural feats, and in White's *Sinister Yogis* (White 2009: 217) he mentions the late seventeenth-century Englishman John Marshall, who commented on the longevity of the 'Fuckeers', and their knowledge of botanical and mineral elixirs. White reproduces a passage from Marshall's writings:

It is reported by these Moores and hindus that upon the hills by casmeere [Kashmir] and also by neopoll [Nepal] . . . there are people [who] live to 4 and 500 yeares of age. They can hold in their breath and ly as it were dead for some yeares, all which time their bodies are kept warme with oyles, &ca. they can fly, and change souls with each other or into any beast. They can transforme their bodies into what shapes they please and make them so plyable that [they] then can draw them thorow a little hole, and wind and turne them like soft wax. They are mighty temperate in diet . . . at first they use themselves to hold in their breaths for a very little time when young, and so more by little and little . . . tis very credibly reported that yearly some Fuckeers come from said [Kashmir] hills to Pattana, where they wash in ganges, [who] by their eating only herbs and roots, have such reamidies in Physick as hath not been heard of. they have at some times given powders to people when they have come, that have recovered them when almost dead, and hath in few howers made them as well as ever.

(White 2009: 217)

Tibet's centuries old tradition of floral remedies has also sparked interest in the West and is now used somewhat loosely as a reference point in centres of healing and spirituality. It has even been popularised in a children's book, *Tashi and the Tibetan Flower Cure* by the American author Naomi C. Rose (2011).

Tales abound of meditators in the Tibetan world surviving on flowers and herbs as they practised on isolated mountains. Foremost among these was the great ascetic Mi la ras pa, whose body was said to have taken on a green hue from his nettle-based diet; indeed, it is not uncommon to find him portrayed with a greenish hue in Tibetan paintings.

In the present study I have found fifteen texts containing purely floral ingredients. The earliest among these are from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje and Nyang ral Dri med 'od zer), the most recent one by the twentieth century teacher Gter chen Karma. Perhaps the most famous author of this type of *bcud len* is the second Dalai Lama, Dge 'dun rgya mtsho (1476–1542), who wrote the text *Bcud len gyi gdams pa rim pa lnga pa*. In his work on this Dalai Lama, Glenn Mullin (2005) discusses his *bcud len* recipe. This text is one of the few *bcud len* texts to have been translated into English, by Tsepa Rigzin (1982).

I reproduce below some of these texts which give indications of the purposes for carrying out flower *bcud len*.

In the introductory section of the text *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: bcud len yid bzhin nor bu zhes bya ba bzhugs* ("From the Lama Jewel Ocean; the *bcud len* of the wish fulfilling jewel") by Padma gling pa (1450-1521), the author states that when the mind becomes dull one should practise flower *bcud len*. Later in that text there are two flower *bcud len* recipes; the first is found on f. 720, line 5. Here one collects *ba lu*

and meadow flowers and prepares the *bcud len* which will ‘help your body energy be balanced and also your mental sharpness and knowledge will develop’.

The second recipe, found on f. 721, line 2 is more detailed. The different characteristics of the flower are explained and instructions are given on when to collect them, how to process them and how to practice this *bcud len* with specific visualisations. Dietary restrictions are also stipulated for this practice said to lead to a good complexion, a sharper intellect and the presence of *ḍākinīs* and gods. ‘Humans will be kind to you, your lifespan will be extended and you will have mastery over all appearances. If you have any cold natured ailments they will heal, your voice will be pleasant and liver disease will be pacified’.

Another flower *bcud len*, specifically reputed to develop beauty, is found in text 72 (f. 33a-33b) by Gter chen Karma (1943-2005). This flower *bcud len* is said to bring long life, prevent illness, improve health and increase body strength and radiance. One gains power to captivate the minds and hearts of all others and to subjugate gods and demons. In the dream state, the illusory clear light body will appear naturally.

Several other *bcud len* texts include floral ingredients as secondary ingredients. These can be identified by keywords in the table in section 3.3.2.

4.3.2. Flower *bcud len* translation

Ratna gling pa. *Rtag ngu'i bcud len zab mo*. In *Rat na gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, vol.4: 149 - 164. TBRC W21730.

f. 135 *Thugs sgrub yang snying 'dus pa las rtag tu ngu 'od ldan dang bdud rtsi'i bcud len zab mo bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs lags so*

From the collection of the heart essence of the *thugs sgrub*, the beginning of the text called *'The Profound Bcud len Nectar of the Luminous Always Crying (Drosera peltata).'*'

f.136 *mya rya ldan ma ma skyes 'jigs med rdo rje'i thugs/ gu ru rin po che la 'dud/ de la dpal gyi bsam yas lhun gyis grub' pa'i gtsug lag khang gi lho phyogs su/ khams gsum zangs khang gling gi lho nub ne'u sing metog gi tshal/ snyug ma'i zer khang sum thog tu/ bdag mkhar chen gza' dang/ lang gro lo tsā ba dang/ lha sras mu tig btsad po dang/ shel dkar bza' rnam kyis/ slob dpon la 'bras chang rgun chang zhal drang/ gser gyi maṅdal la g.yu yi 'phra bkod/ phyag dang bskor ba mang du byas nas zhus pa/ e ma 'gro mgon sprul pa'i sku/ da lta sa bzang longs spyod ldan/ nam zhig dus ngan snyigs ma'i tshe/ sa yi bcud nyams longs*

I pay obeisance to Guru Rinpoche, unborn fearless *vajra* mind. Now then, to the south of the glorious, naturally manifested glorious temple of Bsam yas in the flower grove in the meadow in the south west of the copper palace reigning over the three realms, in the three-storey bamboo house, Bdag mkhar chen gza', the translator Lang gro lo and the prince Mu tig btsad po and Shel dkar bza' offered the master drinks of rice beer and wine, and a golden mandala mounted with a turquoise ornament. After doing prostrations and many circumambulations, they said:

“You, who have emanated as the protector of sentient beings, at present we are endowed with fertile fields and wealth. One day, in degenerate times, the fertility of the earth will decline,

f. 137 *spyod bkren/ chos byed bsgrub pa 'tsho bas gdung/ lto phyir gyeng bas sgrub long med/ de phyir bcud len khyad par can/ bya sla tsheg chung dngos grub myur/*

*tshe ring bsgrub pa'i gegs sel ba'i/ tshig nyung don dril gdams pa zhu/ ces zhus pa'i
tshe/ slob dpon chen pos bka'rtsal pa/ legs so dad ldan skyes bu rnams/ ma 'ongs don
chen mchog tu 'gyur/ de phyir bdag gis bstan gyis nyon/ de la bcud len zab mo byed/
dang po bdud rtsi 'od ldan gyi bcud len bstan te/ de la spyi don lnga ste/ dang po sngo
thu zhing brtags pa dang/ gnyis pa skam shing spel ba/ gsum pa brdung shing byin gyis
brlab pa/ bzhi pa ci ltar sbyar ba/*

wealth will be hard to obtain, and for those living a religious life livelihood will be difficult; there will be no time to practise because of the preoccupation of procuring food. Hence this special *bcud len* which is easy to carry out, and with little effort swiftly gives beneficial results. We request you to give us, in a few words, concise advice for removing the obstacles to the attainment of long life.' To this request the great master replied: 'Very well, all of you faithful people will carry out important deeds in the future. Hence I will teach you. Listen! For this you should practise the profound *bcud len*. First, I will present the *bcud len* endowed with light. Five main points pertain to it: the first, on gathering and examining the herbs; the second, on how to dry and mix them; the third, on beating and blessing them; the fourth, on how to compound them;

f. 138 *lnga pa las tshogs bza' bza' thabs su bstan pa'o/ dang po brtag pa ni/ skye
ba'i yul ni/ byin gyis rlabs pa'i gnas su skye ste/ gangs ti se 'bras mo lung/ zam bu lung/
spa gro/ khum bu/ gro ma lung/ rgyal gyi rtsib ri/ lho brag mkhar chu/ mkhan pa ljongs/
bum thang/ shing sgo/ stag sgo/ tsa ri/ ko ro/ rgya la/ bu chu la sogs rnams su yod
kyang/ me tog lnga ni/ 'bras mo gshong dang/ mkhar chu min pa na med/ phal cher ni
ser po mang ngo/ sngo kun la med kyang de la zil pa 'od dang ldan pa yod do/ 'od ldan
no/ sbrang bu ser po de la 'dud zhing/ surya'i dros tshe'i dri ngad dang ldan pa/ yon
rtan brgyad dang ldan yang za mkhan med/ ces ngus pas rtag tu ngu zhes bya'o/ de nas*

*thu ba ni/ sran ma me tog skya gsal le'i dus sam/ spang rgyan 'ong ba'i dus su/ bu sprel
lo/ bu mo bya lo bcu drug lon pa'i nyer gcig la sogs*

The fifth, on the method of consuming them as a karmic *ganapūjā*. First, as for the examination. The herbs grow in sacred places such as Gangs ti se,⁴ 'Bras mo lung,⁵ Zam bu lung,⁶ Paro, Khum bu,⁷ Gro ma lung,⁸ Rgyal gyi rtsib ri,⁹ Mkhar chu,¹⁰ Mkhan pa ljong,¹¹ Bum thang, Shing sgo,¹² Stag sgo,¹³ Tsari, Ko ro, Rgya la, Bu chu¹⁴ and so on. Although the herbs can be found in all the abovementioned places, the five flowers can be found only in Sikkim and Kharchu. The majority of these flowers are yellow. Although these plants are not everywhere, they have dew light. Yellow bees are attracted to these plants and when the sun warms them they are fragrant. Although endowed with eight qualities, nobody eats them. Because they therefore cry they are called the 'ever weeping'. Next, as for the gathering: either at the time when pea flowers are bright or when gentians are in flower, take a sixteen or twenty-one year old boy born in a Monkey year and a girl born in a Bird year,

f. 139 *pa'i grogs khrid la/ rang sems bskyed dang ldan pas/ spyen ras gzigs sam
phag mor bskyed la/ om sa ye padma sa le si li swa hā/ ces tswa lo me tog dang bcas pa
btu'o/ gnyis pa skams shing spel ba ni/ nyi ma'i dros tsam bya ste/ nyi ma dang rlung*

⁴ Kailash.

⁵ Sikkim.

⁶ A holy place in Tsang.

⁷ Solu Kumbu, district in north-eastern Nepal.

⁸ In northern Tibet.

⁹ Victorious Tsibri in central Tibet.

¹⁰ Kharchu monastery in Lho 'brag near the Bhutanese border.

¹¹ Khenpa valley, a secret place in Bhutan.

¹² Land of the Wooden doors, a sacred place in Sikkim.

¹³ Secret hidden valley in Lhatse Dzong, upper Tsang.

¹⁴ Kongpo Buchu temple.

*bu bsing zhing skam mo/ gsum pa brdung zhing byin gyi brlabs pa ni/ lo gsar pa'i tshes
gsum rab/ yang na zla stod tshes grangs bzang po la/ gtun gzhong 'khtag mor btag go/
sman rnams kyang so sor ma 'dres par btag go/ de la sbyar pa'i sman ni/ a ru ra rgya
gar ma phal pa/ bzang drug/ ju gang/ kha che/ ka ra ra mo shag/ cong zhi/ sha chen/
bur sbrang/ ru rta/ shing mngar/ sbrul sha/ dbang lag/ grub thob kyi bdud rtsi rnams
bsags/ de tsam ma lcogs na/ a ru ra bzang drug/ cong zhi/ bur sbrang de rnams la yang*

with you and visualize yourself with *bodhicitta* mind either as *Spyan ras gzigs* or as [Rdo rje] *phag mo* and recite [. . . mantra . . .]. You should pick grass blades, flowers, and so on. Secondly, as for drying and mixing: when the sun is slightly warm, dry the herbs in the sun and wind. Thirdly, regarding the beating and blessing, the third day of the new year is excellent, otherwise [do it on] the good dates in the first half of the month (8th, 10th, 15th). You should grind them using a hard pestle and mortar. Each of the medicines should be ground separately, without mixing them. As for the medicine that should be added: *a ru ra*, the six excellent substances, saffron, sugar, calcite, human flesh, molasses, honey, *ru rta*, liquorice, snake meat, *dbang lag*, the nectars of obtainment. If you have no time to gather all these, it will be enough to utilise *a ru ra*, the six precious substances, calcite, molasses, and honey.

f. 140 *sbyar du rung ngo/ de nas sbyar ba la/ thabs su sbyar ba dang/ thabs shes
zung 'jug tu sbyar ba'o/ dang po thabs su sbyar ba ni/ sman rnams 'bru lngas mtshan/
rigs lnga bkug bstim bya/ 'bru gsum bzlas la byin gyis brlabs/ de nas thams cad gcig
tu bsdus te/ ye shes kyi bdud rtsir bsam/ tshogs 'khor bya/ bkra shis brjod/ de nas 'bras
chang ngam/ chang gang yod kyis sbrus de/ rang gi dri chu bar ba 'khyor gang la 'o
skol tsam du sbrel lo/ de nas rtsi mar dang bur sbrang bzhu ba'i nang du btab la/ chu
chod par dkrug cing/ rang yi dam du gsal ba'i thugs ka nas nyi zla ga'u kha sbyor gyi*

*tshul du 'phros/ sman la phog/ sman yang 'od du zhu/ de yongs su gyur pa las/ sman gyi
lha mo mdzes mar bsam ste/ rang dang sbyor ba byas pas/ sbyor mtshams nas 'od zer
lnga ldan du 'phros/ sman la phog/ ye shes kyi bdud*

As for their use, utilise method or combine method and wisdom. First, as for the application of method. All the medicines are symbolized by the five grains. Having summoned the five families you should dissolve them [into the five grains] and, reciting the three syllables [OM ĀḤ HŪM] bless the grains. Then having gathered them all together imagine them as a nectar of wisdom. Perform a *ganapūjā*, and recite auspicious [verses]. Then mix a handful of the middle passage of your own urine in rice alcohol or any other alcohol, stirring it. Add the same amount of boiled milk. Then add melted butter, brown sugar, honey and stir until the water evaporates. Visualize yourself as a luminous yidam. From the heart, [lights] radiate from a sun and moon locket and strike the medicine, and the medicine dissolves into light. Imagine that it is completely transformed into a beautiful medicine goddess. As a result of your union, from the point of your union a five-hued light radiates and strikes the medicine.

f.141 *rtsir gyur par bsam/ me ran zhing chod par dkrug la/ de nas ril bu sha ba'i
ril ma tsam/ gla ril lam/ shug 'bru 'am gang yang rung ba byas ste bza 'o/ bur sbrang
nyung ngu byas de skam nas btags ste 'gam phye byas kyang rung ngo/ de nas thabs
shes zung 'jug tu sbyar ba nil shin tu zab ste/ yum mtshan nyid dang ldan pa gnyis yi
dam du bskyed la/ mkha' gsang byin gyis brlabs la snyom par zhugs te/ thig le bha gar
phab la/ me long gis blangs te/ thig le sran ma tsam dang/ yum gyi de tsam gcig dang/
gong bzhin sbyar na yon tan dpag tu med de/ tshe gcig gis rdo rje 'chang gi sku 'grub
rig 'dzin 'thob bo/ bla ma yi dam mkha' 'gro zhal mthong lung ston par gyur ro/ de ni
brdung zhing byin gyis brlabs pa 'o/ bzhi pa ril bu bya zhing bza' ba ni/ sha ba'i ril ma
tsam byed na gsum gsum du bza'/'*

Imagine that the medicine transforms into the nectar of wisdom and stir it over a suitable fire until the water evaporates. Then make pills about the size of the droppings of a musk deer, or a juniper berry, or whatever is appropriate, and then consume them. After preparing a small amount of jaggery and honey, you may also turn it into an edible flour (*gam phye*) after drying and grinding it. Effecting the union of wisdom and method is a very profound matter. Visualize [yourself and] a consort who has the right qualities, both [together] as the *yi dam* and enter the state of equanimity. Having ejaculated in the female organ, with a mirror scoop out a pea-sized amount of sperm and about the same amount of the consort's secretions, compounding it as aforementioned. The benefits are immeasurable: you will obtain the Vajradhāra body and will become a *vidyādhara* within a single lifetime, and it is prophesied that you will see the faces of the lama, *yi dam* and *ḍakinī*, and will give spiritual instructions. Then, grind it and bless it. Fourth, on making and consuming pills: if you make pills of the size of deer droppings, consume them in sets of three.

f. 142 *gla ril tsam byed na lnga lnga/ shug 'bru tsam byed na bdun bdun bza'*
'o/ zla ba gcig nas bcud len nas tsam pa rang 'gags la 'gro/ gegs la rtog snang che na/
nam mkha' nas bdud rtsi na ra ra byung bar bsam la zhub zhub ces nam mkha' rub cing
mchil ma mid la rlung thub stong bzung/ mi thub pa dang dal bus sna nas btang/ bsrag
pa phebs nas ma thung gi bar du bya 'o/ blo bcad ni/ kon mchog dpang du btsugs la 'chi
ba srog la bab kyang dam bca' mthar mi 'don re zhe bcad blos chod par bya 'o/ des na
rtog snang med cing me re kheng pa snyams byed pa 'byung ngo/ mgo 'khor na dang po
skyod tsha lan re 'i chu bskol te btung/ 'byams na lar tshig tsam bza'/ rlung 'jams rlung
bag re bzung/ des gegs rnams mi 'byung ngo/ 'di ltar zla drug bstan na lus yang/ stobs
glang po che dang mnyams/ bang rta bas mgyog/

If you make the pills the size of musk deer droppings, consume them in sets of five. If you make the pills juniper berry-sized, consume them in sets of seven. After one month of practising *bcud len* you will automatically stop eating tsampa. If you encounter major obstacles and doubts, imagine that nectar is trickling down from the sky. Uttering the sound *zhub zhub*, inhale the sky and swallow your saliva, holding your breath for a thousand counts. As soon as you are no longer able to hold (your breath), slowly exhale through the nose. After the *bsgrab pa* (?) arrives and until (you reach) *ma thung* (?), carry on practicing. As for the commitment, swearing on the triple gem you should pledge from the depths of your heart not to breach your oath, even at the cost of your life. Consequently you will have no more doubts, and will feel that you are completely full and your arrogance will be diminished. Should you feel dizzy, each time have some of the liquid from the boiled broth and later eat a little butter, perform the ‘gentle breath’ exercise and hold it for a while. By doing that, obstacles will not occur and if you perform this [practice] steadily for six months your body will become lighter, your strength will be like that of an elephant’s and you will be faster than a horse.

f. 143 *rig pa dangs/ 'phur 'dod snyam pa byed/ shes rab 'bar/ mkha' 'gro thams cad sha rul la sbrang ma 'du ba ltar 'gyur ro/ lo drug bsten na skra dkar 'bud/ gnyer ma sang/ se'u skye/ 'khrul pa 'gag/ mngon shes 'char/ bla ma yi dam mkha' 'gro'i chos ston/ 'chi med tshe yi rig 'dzin thob par 'gyur te/ mdor na yon tan brjod las 'das so/ yang zas rgyun du mi gcod kyang/ gong bzhin du ril bu lto stong la/ lnga bdun gsum sogs rtag tu brten pas tshe yi rig 'dzin thob/ dbang po gsal shing shes rab che/ lus la nad mi 'gyur/ rig pa dangs/ mkha' 'gro 'du/ bde stong gi ting 'dzin rtsol med du skye/ lus stobs che zhing bkrag mdangs bzang po la sogs yon tan dpag tu med do/ lnga pa las tshogs 'thor bur bza' ba ni/ de nas gang la gang 'dul bzas thabs rim pa brtan par bya/ rtag ngu a ru cong zhi dang/ ra mo shag*

Your mind will be very clear and, imagining that you wish to fly, your wisdom will ignite. All *dākinīs* will be drawn to you like flies attracted to putrid flesh. If you practice for six years, white hair will vanish, wrinkles will disappear and a ‘conch tooth’ will grow. Misconceptions will cease and foresight will arise. The lama, *yi dam* and *dākinī* will bestow teachings on you. You will become a vidhyādhara, achieving the status of one who holds the knowledge of immortality. In short, the qualities are beyond description. Now, although you may not relinquish food completely, as mentioned previously, use the pills as food and relying regularly on these in sets of five, seven or three, you will achieve the status of one who holds the knowledge of immortality. Your faculties will clarify and you will become very wise. Your body will suffer no illness and your mind will be clear. *Dākinīs* will be mesmerised by you, and meditative experiences of blissful emptiness will arise effortlessly. Your body will have great strength, and a lovely lustre: the qualities are incalculable. Fifth, on the yogic activities and sporadic eating. Now, according to the potential of the trainee, I will expound on the stages of the method of eating. For six months, eat *rtaṅ ngu*, *a ru ra*, calcite and *ra mo shag*.

f. 144 *sbyar zla drug gsol/ rtsal stobs seng ge dag dang mtshungs/ rtaṅ ngu bzang drug tsha ba gsum/ bur dkar sbyar zos lus drod kyi/ sha dkar stobs ldan gzhon sha chags/ rtaṅ ngu bya rgod lug sha skam/ sbyar te lo gsum zos pa na gso mi dgos shing ting 'dzin 'phel/ sbrang mar a ru sha chen dang cong zhi bdud rtsi sbyar zos na/ blo gsal stobs ldan lha 'dre 'du/ sbrul sha a ba cong zhi dang/ mgron bu gsum dang sbrang mar sbyar/ zla gcig zos na mig gsal 'gyur/ phag dom khyi nag bya rgod mkhris 'ug pa dred mong wa'i mkhris/ sbyar nas zla gsum zos gyur na/ nyin mtshan kun tu 'jig rten khams/ thams cad sgribs med rgyun du mthong/ mchil ba'i sha dang ratna lnga/ brdar*

*la thod pa bzang por byug/ nyi zla g.ya'yi zin dus su/ rta mgrin snangs bzlas zla drug
zos/ lha 'dre mi gsum dbang du 'du/ a ru sbrul*

Your agility and strength will equal that of a lion. Compound the *rtag ngu*, the six excellent substances, *tsha ba gsum* (ginger, long pepper, black pepper), and pieces of rock sugar and eat them, and as a result of your bodily heat you will have a fair complexion, possess strength and your skin will become youthful. If you eat a compound of *rtag ngu* and dried vulture and sheep meat for three years, your *samādhi* will increase without any need to cultivate it. If you eat an amalgam of honey, butter, *a ru ra*, human flesh, calcite and nectar, you will be endowed with a clear mind and strength and will attract gods and demons. A mixture of snake flesh, *a ba* (*Carex sp.*), calcite, three cowry shells, honey and butter, if eaten for a month will produce clear eye [sight]. A compound of the biles of pig, bear and black dog and of the biles of vulture, owl and fox, if eaten for three months, will allow you constantly to see the whole world clearly day and night, without any obstruction. If you rub sparrow flesh on the five precious gems and apply this thoroughly to your forehead, at the time of a solar or lunar eclipse, reciting the mantra of Hayagrīva and eating the compound for six months, you will gain perfect mastery over gods, demons and humans.

f. 145 *sha zho re re/ sbrang dang 'bri mar bzang po sbyar/ zla gnyis zos na lus
stobs 'phel/ tshe ring mig gsal dbang po 'khrang/ de la yon tan bsam mi khyab/ cong
zhi phul gang ru rta dang/ ka ra lto stong thur mgo re/ lto stong gam phye lo gcig
bsten/ stobs ldan mig gsal pho gsal 'dra/ dā ki 'du zhing lo brgya thub/ men ngag zab
mo'i lug cig la/ gong gi thams cad 'tshogs pa'i tshe/ rang gnyid lhar gsal thugs ka nas/
'jam dbyangs ral gri phyar ba bsgom/ gri des glo snying rtse mo bcad/ rtsa rnams sbu
gu stong nge ba/ song bar bsam zhing thur gang 'gam/ rtsa rnams bdud rtsi skya mer*

*bsgom/ gong gi brag pa 'i kha bcad bsam/ rlung bzung dmigs med ngang la bzhag/ nyin
re thun mgo re brten cing/ skabs su tshogs 'khor zas rgyun bcad/ de 'i rdo rje sku thob
'gyur/ thun mong yon tan brjod mi lang/ 'di*

Pound [together] *a ru ra* and snake flesh, an ounce of each, and honey with good quality *'bri* butter. If you eat this for three months your strength will increase, you will gain long life, clear sight, and stable faculties of the senses. Thus, these qualities are beyond comprehension. For one year rely on a handful of calcite and the tip of a spoon (*thur mgo*) of each of [the following] on an empty stomach: *ru rta*, sugar, as well as tsampa (*gam 'phye*) on an empty stomach, and your strength and sight will be like those of a youth, *ḍākinīs* will gather and you will live one hundred years. According to one profound system, when you have gathered all the aforementioned substances, visualize yourself clearly as a deity, and imagine that Mañjuśrī, wielding a sword, emanating from your heart, cuts off the tip of your heart and lungs with the sword. Visualize all your channels becoming hollow and empty and eat a spoonful [of the compound]. Visualizing all the channels as full to the brim with white nectar, think of the previously uttered resolution, retain the air and abide in an unfocussed state. Each day rely on one session, periodically refraining from eating food from the *gaṇacakra*. This way you will obtain the *vajra* body. There is no time to discuss all its ordinary qualities.

f. 146 *ltar nyams su sus blangs pas/ dngos grub lo zla tsam gyis thob/ lto gos
gnyis kyis g.yeng ba bral/ bdag 'dra padma 'byung nas kyis/ kun kyis bcud bsdus zab du
dril/ ma 'ongs don du gter la sbos (sbas so)/ ces gsungs/ shin tu zab pa 'i bcud len rdzogs
so/ sa ma yā/ rgya rgya rgya/ yang zhus pa/ bya sla zhing tshig chung ba bdud rtsi bza'
thabs ci ltar bgyi zhus pas/ gu rus gsungs/ rnal 'byor pa tshe 'di blos btang nas chos
byed na/ bdud rtsi 'di ni bcud len gyi mchog ste/ bza' ba 'i thabs ni 'di ltar bya ste/ rang*

*dang bla ma mched grogs dam tshig can gyis bdud rtsi bstan te/ de ma yin pa phal pa
dang dam med kyi bdud rtsi ni dge sbyor 'grib pas spang ngo/ de yang lus la nad med
pa/ sngo rngad la ngo zas ngan ma zos pa'i bdud rtsi g.yam pa'i steng du brdol te/ nyin
re la skam thag chod par byas na ni grib mi 'byung ngo/ de ltar skam nas/*

Whosoever practices in this manner will obtain the *siddhis* in a matter of mere months or a year, without the distractions of having to acquire food and clothing. I, the Lotus Born, and others like me have brought together here, in a profound manner, the concentrated essence of everything and have concealed this treasure for the benefit of future beings. He spoke thus. This is the completion of the very profound *bcud len*. *Samaya* . A further request was made: 'How should we partake of the elixir in an easy and effortless manner?' The Guru replied: 'Yogin, if you dedicate this life to practicing the Dharma, since this nectar constitutes the supreme *bcud len*, the manner of partaking of it is as follows: the lama and your *vajra* brothers, who have a sacred bond with you, will show you the elixir. Other than this one, renounce all elixirs from ordinary people and those with whom you do not share samaya, as these will obscure your virtuous efforts. [Once you have taken it], your body will be free of illness.

'The nectar from the harvest vegetables and the rotting uneaten food left for the dead: spread it on top of a flat rock, and if you dry this nectar thoroughly every day, defilements will not arise. Once you have dried it thus,

f. 147 *yod na/ chang ngam med na sing po'am/ rang gi dri chu 'thor la sbrul te
bskam (brkam)/ yang na chang sing ngam rus khu la btsos te skam/ de nas zhib tu btang
la/ gam phye byed na phye sum cig/ bdud rtsi gsum gnyis bsres la/ skyo tsha dang dpag
go/ zan du byed na de ltar bya'o/ zlum 'dag byed na/ gong ltar phye sum dang bsres te/
chang sing rlangs thon tsam bsres te/ rdza'i zo bar blug te bsnyal na/ zhag gcig gnyis*

*nas chang lang pa dang bca'o/ chang sing med na chu dron la sbyar te phab btab ste
gong bzhin no/ ril bur bza'na rtag ngu'i sman sbyar te bza' 'o/ sna tshogs 'thor bur
bza'na yang/ rtag tu ngu yi sbyor ba ltar byas pas/ yon tan rnams kyang 'od ldan dang
mtshungs so/ dam tshig du gdongs grib srung zhing grib zas mi za/ nyon mongs pa'i
bsam pa skyer mi gzhus/ bla ma la gsol ba gdab rtswa a wa/ sbrul sha/ dbang lag/ shing
tsha lo*

bring it into contact with some sprinklings (*'thor*) of chang if you have it; and if you haven't got any, then with the third straining of chang, or otherwise with your own urine and then dry it, or else cook it in weak beer or bone soup, and then dry it. Then grind it finely and it in a ratio of one-third powder to two-thirds nectar. With [added] warm broth, it will become a dough (*dpag go*), and if you want to use it as the basis of a meal, this is how to do it. If you take it as a paste, as above mix it in a proportion of one-third powder with weak chang just until it starts to steam, pour it into a clay pot, and let it sit. After a day or two, drink it as soon as the chang ferments. If you have no weak chang, blend it with warm water, add yeast and do as above, [letting it rest for two days]. If you want to take it in the form of pills, you should eat it with the *rtag tu ngu* medicinal compound. Even if you take it in various ways, by using the *rtag tu ngu* compound the benefits are similar to those of the *'od ldan*. Do not eat any food that has been contaminated by spiritual obscurations. Do not allow troublesome thoughts to arise. Invoking the lama, thoroughly grind *a wa* [possibly a variant name for *ko sha*] snake flesh, *dbang lag*, cinnamon leaf,

f. 148 *sha'i [sha rnying lo lon na mchan] phye rnams zhib tu btag la lto stong la
skabs su dum re 'gam/ des sgo phye ba dang/ mig shad la mi gnod de/ gegs sel bog 'don
ni/ dang po/ ma 'dris ring phye dang/ bdud rtsi phyed [1S] tsam bya/ de nas phyed sum*

*chu/ bcud len bro pa rnyed nas/ mgo sdud tsam gyis chog go/ gzhan gegs mi 'ong/ bog
 'don bla ma la gsol ba gdab/ snying rus dang zhe bcad/ 'chi ba srog la bab kyang mthar
 mi 'don/ re'i go cha gyon par bya ba ni/ gnad kyis man ngag go/ lar snyigs ma'i mi
 rnams snying rus chung ba'i/ bcud len mi nus na zas kyis dkor grib med pas/ dge sbyor
 ngang gis 'phel/ sangs rgyas lo zla tsam gyis 'grub pa'i dgos pa yod gsung/ der phyag
 dang bskor ba mang du byas so/ bdag 'dra mkhar chen mtsho rgyal gyis/ ma 'ongs don
 du yi ger btab/ da lta ma spel gter du sbas/ nam zhig rtsod ldan rnying ma la/ las can*

old meat which has been seasoned for a year, and once in a while eat a portion of it on an empty stomach. This will open the door and not harm your eyesight. For enhancing the removal of obstacles; first of all, as long as you are unfamiliar with in a ratio of about half powder and elixir, and one third of water. After you have discovered the taste of *bcud len* it will be sufficient just to bow your head. No harm will come to you from others. Offer prayers to the lama who gives you guidance. With perseverance and dedication, even in the face of death, death will not come about. Wearing the armour of hope is the pivotal advice. Generally, as people of these degenerate times are less diligent, they are unable to practice *bcud len*. By not accumulating obscuration through eating food meant for the sangha virtuous activities will spontaneously occur. It has the benefit of aiding the achievement of enlightenment within mere months or a year', he said. Then many prostrations and circumambulations were performed.

I, Khar chen Mtsho rgyal, and people like myself, have recorded this in writing for the sake of posterity. It is not to be disseminated at present, but hidden as a treasure. One day, in the strife-ridden Kali Yuga times, may

f. 149 *gcig dang 'di 'phrad nas/ bsgrub pa byed pa dpag med/ 'gro don dpag med
 'byung bar shog/ rgya rgya rgya/ zab rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ Zathi / mantra/ gu*

*yahya/sha ma tha sha tha rtsa sprul sku ratna gling pa'i dmyal smad dge ri'i brag nas
gdan drangs pa'o/manga lam/*

someone with the appropriate karma find this text and, practising it relentlessly, may he benefit countless beings. Supreme. Mantra. *Guyha* (secret) *sha ma tha sha tha rtsa*. Retrieved from Ratna Lingpa's virtuous mountain cave of Dmyal smad. Blessings (*manga lam*, lit. *bkra shis*).

4.4 Water *bcud len*

4.4.1. Introduction

Water plays a central role in Tibetan medicine; in fact it is said by a contemporary Buddhist teacher that the first illness ever to strike man was indigestion, and the first ever prescribed cure was boiled water (Rechung Rinpoche, 1973: 8).

It is not only boiled water that is believed to have medical efficacy in the Tibetan medical view, where water is differentiated and put into several categories. In the second of the four Medical Tantras the qualities of various waters are described, and comments found on how the seasons affect water, and how heating and boiling change its qualities. Rechung provides a clear overview of the topic along with a description of seven different types of water: rain water, melted snow water, river water, spring water, well water, sea water and forest water. He is quite detailed in describing the various functions of the above waters and how exposure to sun, moon and wind affect the water's qualities. He also explains the differing effects of drinking hot or cold water and how to analyse water to ascertain its qualities (Rechung Rin po che 1973: 61-62).

Aside from being an important ingredient and remedy in the medical context, water features prominently in the Tibetan ritual tradition. In religious texts and practices

(including *bcud len* texts) one can find ablution rites where empowered water is sprinkled, while reciting mantras, on sacred artefacts or on initiates, with instances of water being offered to statues or poured into bowls. Also, springs are seen as places endowed with spiritual powers, and Rechung (1973:259) tells of how Gyu thog blessed 108 springs in Tibet. There follows an explanation of the preventive and curative effects of spring waters. Springs are seen as power places and *gcod* practitioners would customarily frequent them to practice. Not only springs are considered sacred and in Tibet there are numerous sacred lakes. Traditionally, Tibetans do not eat fish, and in the Tibetan psyche the *nāgas (klu)* guard the water realms of lakes, rivers, oceans and wells, and if disturbed can provoke illnesses. These can be countered through appeasing rituals.

The water *bcud len* texts, by pinpointing specific waters, reiterate the idea that distinct waters have specific qualities. Besides the text by Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339), whose translation I have set out below, in the course of my research I have found other texts where water is the main ingredient, including a text by Dri med 'od zer (1308-1364): *Rigs lnga'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*. Also, the third of Padma gling pa's list of fifteen *bcud len* practices is dedicated to water; here no specific deities are visualised but the meditator visualises syllables at the *chakra* points and flames flickering in the central channel while practising *kumbhaka* breathing. In the same text by Padma gling pa, (in the third subsection of the twelfth recipe found in text 21) one is instructed specifically to use rainwater, illustrating how specific waters are considered to possess particular qualities.

In the text titled: *Chu'i bcud len gyi snying po dngos grub kun'byung* authored by Blo bzang don grub (1696-1756) the central figure is Saraha along with several *ḍākinīs*. In this *bcud len*, one partakes of purificatory or snow water while reciting mantras.

Then, there is a text by Btsun pa Ye shes don grub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1792-1855), titled *Chu'i bcud len gyi gdams pa 'chi med rig 'dzin sgrub pa'i chu rgyun*. Vajrayoginī is the central deity and there are striking similarities to Rang 'byung rdo rje's *Chu 'thung ba'i gdams pa* that I translate in full below. In the colophon it is claimed that the text is 'based on ancient documents'. The similarity between the texts is evident and could eventually make an interesting comparative literature study on the authorship and historical development of a *bcud len* practices.

I have also found a Bonpo text (text 31) with a section on water, authored by Dkar ru grub dbang Bstan 'dzin rin chen (1801-1860) called *Theg pa chen po dmar khrid dug lnga rang drol gyi brgyud las bcud len zas kyi gdams pa*. Here, several types of water (rainwater, lake water, snow water) are used, once again illustrating how specific powers are attributed to different types of water.

4.4.2. Water *bcud len* translation

Rang byung rdo rje. *Chu 'thung ba'i gdams pa*. In *Gsung 'bum. Rang byung rdo rje*. Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, vol.11: 631 - 638.
TBRC W30541

f. 627 *Chu 'thung ba'i gdams pa bzhugs sol*//

The instructions on how to drink water.

f. 628 *bla ma rnams la phyag 'tshal lo/ dus ngan tha mar gyur pa'i tshe/ 'gro rnams zas kyi gdung pa la/ bcud len man ngag bris bar bya/ 'di'i rgyud pa ni/ dur khrod chen po dpal gyi rgyu skar rol par/ bram ze chen po sa ra has/ rje btsun dam pa rin po che la gnang/ des kun dga' la gnang/ des dam pa ze chen po sa ra has/ rje btsun*

*dam pa rin po che la gnang/ des kun dga' la gnang/ des dam pa phyags la/ des ko brag
pa la/ des dung ston dge bshes la/ des Dharma shri la/ des rnal 'byor rang byung rdo
rje la phul/ des bu sangs rgyas ye shes la/ des bdag rgyud tshul la'o/ de ni gdams pa
dngos bstan par bya ste/ ri khrod la sogs dben par song nas/ byang chub mchog du sems
bskyed nas/ gtan bde ba la 'dug cing gtor ma*

I prostrate to the lamas. In these final degenerate times, I will write the pith instructions on *bcud len* for those being who suffer from [a lack of] food.

As for the lineage, at the great cemetery of Dpal gyi rgyu skar rol par, the great Brahmin Saraha transmitted it to Rje btsun dam pa rin po che. He transmitted it to Kun dga', who transmitted it to Dam pa phyags. As for the lineage, at the great cemetery of Dpal gyi rgyu skar rol par who gave it to Ko brag pa, who gave it to Dung ston Dge bshes, who transmitted it to Dharma shri, who offered it to the yogi Rang byung rdo rje who transmitted it to his spiritual son Sangs rgyas ye shes who transmitted it down to me. Now, the main instructions: having gone to a solitary place such as a hermitage, having generated *bodhicitta*, sitting in a comfortable place, make a *gtor ma*

f. 629 *gcig bcas nas/ bla ma mkha' 'gro'i tshogs la 'bul zhing/ bdag byang chub
bsgrub pa'i mdzad du gsol ces gsol ba gtab/ de nas chu legs par brtag cing/ chu rul
ba dang/ rko mog dang/ 'khyil pa la sogs pa min pa/ gangs chu dang/ g.ya' chu dang/
'bab chu rnams la bya'o/ de nas rang gi mdun du chu bzhag cing/ swa bha was stong
par bsam/ chu yi nyes pa dag par bsam/ chu'i steng du padma dang nyi ma'i gdan gcig
bsgom/ de'i steng du bka' brgyud bla ma rnams bzhugs par bsgom/ de nas bla ma rnams
rims kyis zhu nas/ chu de ye shes kyi bdud rtsir gyur pa bsgom/ oM AH hUM sum brjod
pas/ bla ma rnams kyis kyang gsol bas*

and offer it to the host of lamas and dākinīs and supplicate: ‘Please ensure that I will achieve enlightenment.’ Then, examining the water carefully, spoiled, murky and stagnant will not do. Use snow water, purificatory water, or waterfall water. Then, place the water in front of yourself, imagine it (the water) as intrinsically¹⁵ empty, imagine that the water’s faults are purified. Imagine above the water a sun and lotus seat. Visualize the lamas of the Bka’ brgyud lineage seated on it.

Then, imagine the lamas successively dissolve. Imagine that the water, becomes nectar of wisdom. As you recite OM Ā HŪM three times, imagine that the lamas are pleased with your request.

f. 630 *mnyes par bsam zhing/ sngags 'di lan nyi shu rtsa gcig brjod pas/ chu 'i bgegs mi 'byung ba yin no/ om dza le ye swa ha/ yang sngags 'di brjod de btab pas srin mi 'byung pa yin no/ om thu de thu de ta thud ta thud swa ha/ de nas rang tha mal par gnas pa 'i snying gyen la gnas par bsgom/ rang g.yas su bdud rtsi 'i lha mo dkar mo/ phyag na bum pa bsnam pa gcig du bsgom/ rang gi rgyab phyogs su rje btsun ma dmar mo bzhengs pa gcig bsgom/ g.yon phyogs su lha mo ljang khu gri gug thod pa can gcig bsgom/ des rang gyi lus snying dang bcas pa rlad kyi bcad par bsam/ g.yas phyogs kyi lha mo des bdag gyi snying gis rtsa 'i che gsum sbu gu hrig ge 'dug pa 'i nang du bdud rtsi blug pas lus thams cad dkar mer gyis gang bar bsgom/ rgyab phyogs kyi lha mo des bdag nyid lus gtub pa de sbyar bar bsgom/ chu 'i lhag ma yar 'khyil pa las bdag gis spyi po 'i gtsug du bram ze chen po sku mdog sngon po rus pa 'i rgyan gyis brgyan pa gcig gis brlabs par bsgom zhing/ lha mo de rnams kyang rang la thim par bsam zhing/ chu phor pa re re la dmigs pa thang re re bya 'o/ de nas chu 'thung pa 'i rjes la/ lus sbyong*

¹⁵ *Svabhava* (Tib. *rang bzhin*): own-being, one’s intrinsic essential nature.

*bcu gnyis pa bya'o/ de nas gsol ba 'di ltar du btab pa'o/ pha bla ma rnams la skyabs su
mchi/ bla ma rnams kyis byin gyis rlobs/ bu'i lus*

by reciting the following mantra twenty-one times, no obstacles from the water will arise: [. . . mantra . . .]. Then, reciting the following mantra, by blowing on the water the water will not develop any parasites (worms): [. . . mantra . . .]. Then imagine that your heart, in the place it normally resides, now faces upwards. On your right, there is the white goddess of nectar, carrying a vase in her hand. Imagine a standing red goddess behind you. On your left, imagine a green goddess holding a curved knife (*gri gug*) and a skull. Imagine that she cuts your body, along with your heart, from above. Meditate that the goddess on your right pours nectar into the wide open holes of the three main arteries of your heart and your whole body is filled with white fire. Imagine the goddess behind you reunites your body which had been cut. Imagine that from the remaining water, spiraling upwards, is blessed by a great Brahmin, body blue in colour, wearing bone ornaments who is residing on top of the crown of your head. Imagine that also the goddesses dissolve into you. Visualize this once for each bowl of water. Then, after having drunk the water, do the twelve body exercises. Then recite the following supplication: 'I take refuge in the main teachers! Bless me lamas, bless your disciple's body

f. 631 *la bde bar byin gyis rlobs/ ngag nus par byin gyis rlobs/ sems la rtogs par
byin gyis rlobs/ sku gsung thugs kyis byin gyis rlobs/ bar chod zhi bar byin gyis rlobs/
de na rang gi rig pa gang du yang mi 'phro ba sel ba'i ngang mnyam par bzhag go/ chu
'thung pa'i gdams ngag khyad du 'phags pa/ rje dam pa nas brgyud pa'o/ lus sbyong
sum cu so bdun po gal che'o//*

bla ma dam pa rnams la phyag 'tshal lo/ gdams ngag 'di nyid nyams su len par
'dod pa'i bsgrub pa pos/ dad pa brtson 'grus ldan pa'i sgo nas/ mi sdod pa gsum lam
du bya ste/ ngag mi bsdod pa bla ma la gsol ba btab pa dang sngags bzlas/ yid mi bsdod
pa ting nge 'dzin la mi yengs par gsung/ de ltar nyams su blangs pas/ zhag bdun nas nus
pa rnyed/ nyi shu rtsa gcig gis bstan pa thob/ rtsam pa zla ba gcig du rbad kyi bcad par
bya'o/ 'byang pa dang/ yod pa mi spong/ med pa mi bsgrub/ gnas la mi zhen/ ched du
mi bsgrub/ de nas yon tan ni/ rtags dang ting nge 'dzin bsam gyis mi khya(p) pa 'byung
ste/ mi chags pa rnam pa gsum/ 'du ba rnam pa gsum/ 'bral ba rnam pa gsum/ bde ba
rnam pa gsum/ 'bar ba rnam pa gsum/ mnyam pa rnam pa gsum/ grol ba rnam pa gsum
ste nyi shu rtsa gcig go/ de la mi chags pa rnam pa gsum ni/ phyi

with happiness. Bless me with powerful speech! Bless my mind with realisations!

Bless me with your mind for the [attainment of] the three bodies! Bless me for the pacification of hindrances!' Then, rest your mind in a natural clear state of equanimity without wandering anywhere. These extraordinary instructions on how to drink water are transmitted from the sublime masters. The thirty-seven body exercises are important. (new subsection) I prostrate to the sacred lamas! The faithful and diligent practitioner who wishes to practice these very instructions, should practice the three 'non-abidings': the non-abiding speech, [by] supplicating the guru and reciting the mantras, [and] the non-abiding mind, [by] being undistractedly in *samādhi*, it is said. By practicing this way, after seven days you will acquire power. With twenty-one days (practice) you will receive (i.e understand) the teaching. Roasted barley (*rtsam pa*) should be abandoned totally for one month. Purifying and not abandoning what there is, not accomplishing what is not there, without attachment to the place, not practicing for a purpose, you will obtain experiences and contemplations beyond imagination. The three non-

attachments, the three gatherings, the three separations, the three joys, the three blazes [of enlightened body speech and mind], the three equanimities, the three freedoms, these are the twenty one experiences. As for the three non-attachments,

f. 632 *lus la dri ma mi chags/ nang du 'bu srin mi chags/ mi gtsang pa dang 'bu srin mi chags/ 'du ba rnam pa gsum ni/ nyin mo mi 'du/ nub mo du mkha' 'gro 'du/ nang nub zas 'du'o/ bral ba gsum ni/ sems sdug bsngal dang bral/ lus ngal dub dang bral/ ngag rdzun dang bral lo/ bde ba gsum ni/ phyi snang ba la zhen pa med de bde/ nang nyams myong gnyen po med de bde/ bar 'byung ba la cha snyoms te bde pa'o/ 'bar ba gsum ni/ lus la bde ba 'bar/ ngag la nus pa 'bar/ sems la rtogs pa 'bar/ mnyam pa gsum ni/ tshe nyi zla dang mnyam/ stobs glang po che dang mnyam/ mgyogs pa rlung dang mnyam pa'o/ grol ba gsum ni/ phyi snang ba las grol/ nang phung po las grol/ bar btang snyoms las grol ba'o/ gzhan yang khams kyi zas dang bral/ dbugs phyi nang du rgyu ba mi tshor ba dang/ gti mug gnyid dang bral ba dang/ lus shing bal gyi 'dab ma ltar yang ba dang/ mi rtogs pa'i ye shes nang nas 'char ba dang/ mngon par shes pa rgyud la 'char ba dang/ rkang mgyogs gyi dngos grub 'byung ba dang/ khyad par 'phags pa'i dngos grub ni/ phyag rgya chen po'i mchog gi dngos grub thob par 'gyur ro/ de nas bgegs sel bstan pa ni/ chu skyug pa dang/ chu tshags pa dang/ chu ldeng ba dang/ chu 'gag pa dang/ chu kha snyig ba dang lnga'o/ chu*

the body has no defilements. There are no parasites within. There will be no impurities or parasites. As for the three gatherings, people gather by day, *ḍākinīs* gather by night and food gathers always. The three freedoms are: that the mind is free from suffering, the body is free from exhaustion, and the speech is free from lies. The three joys are: the (outer) joy coming from non-attachment to outer appearances, the

(inner) joy of having no antidote to inner experience, the (middle) joy of balancing the elements in between. The three blazes are: the blazing joy of the body, the blazing power of the speech, the blazing realisation of the mind. The three equanimities are: the life-span being equal to the sun and moon's, the strength equaling that of an elephant, the swiftness equaling the wind's. The three liberations are: outwardly being free from appearances, within being free from the aggregates, in between being free from indifference. Moreover, the freedom from material food, not feeling the breath moving in and out, freedom from the slumber of ignorance, the body is as light as cotton wisps, non-conceptual primordial wisdom arises from inside, clairvoyance is born in the mind stream, you attain the *siddhi* of swift-footedness, and as the most excellent *siddhi*, you will obtain the supreme *siddhi* of *mahāmudrā*.

Now, the teaching on the clearance of obstacles, these are fivefold: vomiting water, difficulty urinating, the urine not being sufficient, urine retention, urine leaking out.

f. 633 *skyugs pa la ni khol ma thag de la (missing word) bya'o/ chu tshags tshags che ba la ni bu ram gtong/ chu 'gags pa la lga btang ngo/ chu kha snyig ba la ni (m) 'jug tu chung gis tshod ma btang ngo/ rlung long na rus khu'i tshod ma phor gang btang ngo/ dangs kha mi bde na lga btang ngo/ chu thur la byung na phye tshod phor re btang ngo/ srin gyen la byung na la phug dri snoms pas tshog/ des ma chog na/ sgog chu bag tsam btang ngo/ lus ber ber byung na sku mnye bya'o/ mgo na ba'am 'khor ba byung na rus snying dum re mur/ lga skya chu la btab la sdor dum re yod na dga'o/ chang dang 'o ma mar rnying gsum/ yon tan yar ldan yin pas yod na dga'o/ spyir ting 'dzin zas su za ba yin/ mi rtogs pa zas su za ba yin/ byin rlabs zas su za ba yin/ bdud rtsi zas su za ba yin pas/ de rnam thams cad tshang ba'o/ zas kyi bcud len longs pa dang/ mdangs*

dang dbang po gsal/ gnyen pos rkyen thub/ bza' rgyu mig gis mthong/ bcud longs pa'o/ bcud len zhag bdun 'byung na mu ge'i skal pa nas thar ro/ rtsam pa bcad pa'i tshe tha mar ting nge 'dzing bsgom/ de lta bu'i gdams nga 'di skye shi mi 'jigs pa'am/ dga' la re ba'am/ bzar med pa'i grags snyan nam/ bkur ste 'dod pa rnams la byin na/ daki'i chad pa 'ong pas mi bya'o/ skal ldan las can rnams kyis nyams su blangs na don shin tu che ste/

As soon as you feel like vomiting, take [missing word]. If passing of the urine is interrupted, take molasses. If urine is not coming, take ginger. For incontinence, take vegetables to diminish it later on. If *rlung* arises, have a bowl of bone and vegetable broth. If the urine is not clear, take ginger. If the urine is pouring downwards, have a bowl of vegetable powder. If the urine is coming upward, you can smell radish. If this is not sufficient, take a little garlic juice. If the body is sluggish apply the *sku mnye* [massage]. If you have headaches or dizziness, suckle on some bone marrow [alternatively it could mean 'suckle on an old bone']. Place white ginger in water and it is nice if you have some seasonings. Since grain beer, milk and old butter, these three, have higher qualities it is good to have these.

In general meditation is taken as food, non-conceptuality is taken as a food, blessings are taken as a food, nectar is taken as a food, by doing thus everything is completed. On completion of the *bcud len* of food, the complexion and sense faculties will be clear, through the antidotes [described] the conditions [for spiritual practice] are achieved; the eyes will only see the edible instead of eating it, this is the fruition of *bcud len*. If you practice *bcud len* for seven days, you will be freed from the fate of hunger. At the final time when roasted barley flour will disappear, meditate. If these instructions are given to those who do not fear birth or death i.e., who are not afraid of *samsāra* and don't seek liberation or those who wish for happiness or those wishing for the fame of

not eating or desiring respect etc., the *ḍākinīs* will stop helping and therefore it should not be done. If those with a fortunate karma practice this, it will be of great benefit.

f. 634 'jig rten gyi bsod nams zin pas zas nor yid la mi 'ongs ste/ mi'i ngo bsrung dang bral na yon tan bdag gis dangs ma yin/ mu ge'i nad kyi(s) sman pa yin/ ri khrod 'dag char gyi(s) cha rkyen yin/ 'di lta bu'i gdams ngag rnyed nas zas nor la chag(s) na bdud kyi(s) bslus pa yin/ gdams ngag rin po che las/ bcud len gyi gdams ngag rdzogs so//

Since the merits of the world are completed, the mind will not long for food and wealth. When you are unconditioned by men's gratitude, the qualities [of self?] are not clear of ego [?]. It is the medicine for the illnesses of famine. These are the necessary conditions (*cha rkyen*) [that are like] a purifying rain for [living in] a hermitage. If after receiving these instructions you are attached to food and wealth, you have been deceived by the demons. Here ends the instruction on *bcud len* from the Precious Instructions.

4.5 *Prāṇa bcud len*

4.5.1. Introduction

Exercises comprising retention of the breath and the contraction of muscles, often while adopting specific body postures and visualising deities or syllables, are often found in *bcud len* texts. These practices are related to *prāṇa*, the vital force circulating within one's 'subtle body'.

Prāṇāyāma breath exercises are not specific to *bcud len* texts, but are an integral part of Indian yogic exercise and as such have entered the tantric traditions, both Hindu and Buddhist. The practices related to inner breath and the subtle body occur frequently

in the *bcud len* texts in this study, even if these are devoted to other types of *bcud len*. However, some *bcud len* texts deal purely with *prāṇa*.

Such practices have received a fair amount of scholarly attention and I have mentioned relevant commentaries in section 2.2.

Since the workings of the inner body winds affect the overall health and mental states,¹⁶ proficiency in practices working with energies in the subtle body is crucial for the meditator aiming to master his mind.

Of the sixty-eight *bcud len* texts analysed, twenty-two contain instructions on *prāṇa* exercises. This indicates the importance attributed to these, and particularly to *kumbhaka* ‘vase retention breathing’, in the *bcud len* tradition. Even the shortest and most straightforward *bcud len* treatise where no deities are visualized and no substance is consumed, will exhort the practitioner to engage in air retention exercises. As discussed in the essay introducing Chapter 3 the underlying idea is to guide the movement of energies and *prāṇa* in the subtle body by using the air retained below the navel, muscular contraction and mental concentration and visualisation. By directing one’s awareness and *prāṇa* into the central channel, various meditative experiences can be generated. The effect of *prāṇa* exercises on the mind have been described in depth by Norbu (2008: 11-12) who states that *kumbhaka* helps to coordinate breathing in daily life, so that one is no longer dominated by thoughts and emotions. The correlation between the *prāṇa* abiding in the central channel and resting in a meditative state is explained at length. Vesna Wallace has also stressed the ‘interconnectedness’ of mind and *prāṇa* (2001: 174):

¹⁶ This can also be traced back to Ayurvedic notions as explored by Dominik Wujastyk (2003: 116-125) where the various wind diseases are explained.

According to the *Kālacakratantra*, the *prāṇas* are closely related to the mental states of an individual and are thus at the basis of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. *Prāṇas* give rise to mental afflictions by conveying the six elements through the *nāḍis* in the body. However, it is due to the efficacy of the six elements that constitute the *prāṇas* – namely, gnosis, air, wind, fire, water, and earth – that avarice (*mātsarya*), hatred (*dveṣa*), jealousy (*īrṣyā*), attachment (*rāga*), pride (*māna*), and confusion (*moha*) respectively arise . . . When the *prāṇas* are purified, that is, when the six elements constituting the *prāṇas* are transformed into pure gnosis, they obliterate all causes of mental afflictions and secure the bliss of liberation.

Wallace reiterates the correlation of *prāṇa* and wellbeing (Ibid.: 54):

For example, the *kumbhaka*, accompanied by the retention of regenerative fluids in sexual union, mentioned earlier with regard to the elimination of leprosy, is also seen as having a rejuvenating power. It is said that if practiced for two years, it eradicates old age and its symptoms. The primary theoretical basis of *Kālacakratantra* medicine is tantric Buddhist soteriology that focuses on the intimate relationship among the mind, body, and liberation. On that foundation rests the *Kālacakratantra*'s principal medical theory of the predominant effects of *prāṇas* on one's mental, physical, and spiritual condition.

It should be noted that Bonpo conceptions and exercises regarding *prāṇa* have been discussed in depth in Alejandro Chaoul's unpublished doctoral thesis and also in a later article.¹⁷ It appears evident that *prāṇa* has an important role in the spiritual traditions of ancient India as well as of Buddhist and Bonpo Tibet. Further research and translation work on Bonpo *bcud len* texts might shed light on Tibetan indigenous yogic practices that may be an important part of the *bcud len* tradition.

The respondents of the conversations recorded in Chapter 5 have echoed the importance of *prāṇa* exercises on meditative states, reiterating the importance of *prāṇa* exercises in *bcud len* practice.

Some of the texts I examined mention the purposes and virtues of practising *prāṇa bcud len* and, prior to reproducing my translation of a *prāṇa bcud len* text, I would like to draw attention to some.

¹⁷ Chaoul MA 2011: 297-318.

The text '*Chi med bcud len sgrub pa'i thabs mchog bdud rtsi'i bum pa bzang po* by 'Ju mi pham rgya mtso states (f. 700, line 5): 'Applying *kumbhaka* and so forth, the damaged wind element will be restored. Gathering the essence of the immortal sky, the degenerated mind will be healed.' In the first section of the *Bcud len yid bzhin nor bu* by Pad ma gling pa the author states that: 'when your body feels too hot you need to practise *rlung bcud len*.'

In the text *Bla med sngags chos kyi snying po'i bcud len lam zab bdud rtsi'i thig le* ('Nectar drops of the profound path of the *bcud len* of the supreme Dharma of mantra [i.e., Tantra]') by Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755), the power of *prāṇa* is again stated:

. . . By the power of *prāṇayama* the *prāṇa* enters, stays and dissolves in the central channel. This is done below the navel. Again, this process (entering, staying and dissolving) should be done at other, the upper and the secret, *cakras*. . . Having attained stability one can attain the first *bhūmi*. Hold [the breath] in this way; there are also separate pith instructions but many yogic masters claim that *prāṇayama* instructions are enough. . .

(f. 323; lines 1-3)

I have chosen to translate the text below by the Third Karmapa, Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339) partly because it is one of the earliest texts on *prāṇa bcud len* which I have located. To be exact it is the second, chronologically, after Sakya Paṇḍita's text on *prāṇa*. I have selected this, however, as it is richer in detail. Also, Rang byung rdo rje made an important contribution to Tibetan materia medica by introducing new ingredients (Kletter and Kriechbaum, 2001: 4); therefore it seemed apt to choose one of his works for this more comprehensive translation.

4.5.2. *Prāṇa bcud len translation*

Rang byung rdo rje. *Rlung dang rig pa'i bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Rang byung rdo rje.

Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, vol.11: 627 - 630. TBRC: W30541

f. 623 *Rlung dang rigs pa'i bcud len rang byung rdo rjes sbyar ba bzhugs so/ bhudha sang gha'o//*

This is the *bcud len* associated with *rlung*, composed by Rang byung rdo rje.

Buddha Saṃgha.

f. 624 *bla ma rnams la phyag 'tshal lo/ rlung dang rigs pa'i bcud len 'di/ gzhan las khyad par 'phags pa yi/ yon tan ldan phyir bshad par bya dben par 'jig rten bya ba btang/ bla med byang chub 'dod pa yi(s)/ bde ba'i stan la lus bsrang la/ dkyil dkrung mnyam bzhag phyag rgya bya/ lce rtse ya rkan drun du bzhag/ mchu so rang lugs su bzhag nas/ thog mar rlung ro bus nas kyang/ cha dang rlung la byang bar bya/ khyad par bcud len de nyid du/ steng rlung gnan la lto ba dgang/ 'og rlung drag du bsdams par bya/ steng rlung dkar la 'og rlung dmar/ ga'u lta bu kha sbyar la/ rig pa de'i dbus su gtad/ mchil ma'i dang ma mid bya zhing/ lus rnams*

I pay homage to the lamas. As for this *bcud len* associated with *rlung*, its qualities are outstanding amongst other [*bcud len*], therefore I will explain it for others. In a remote place, renouncing worldly activities, one who desires the unsurpassable enlightenment should sit on a comfortable cushion with a straight body, crossed legs, and with the hands resting in mediation *mudrā*. He should place the tip of the tongue on the upper palate and leave the lips and teeth as they are [i.e., in their natural position]. Having first expelled the stale air, he should purify what is related with the *rlung*. In particular for this very *bcud len* compress the upper *prāṇa* into the stomach, filling it, and retain the lower *prāṇa* very tightly. Visualize the upper *prāṇa* as white and the lower *prāṇa* as red, join them together like a *ga'u* and focus your mind on its center. Swallow the first/pure saliva and imagine the

f. 625 *bde ba 'i gang bar bsam/ skabs su skyo tsha btung bar bya/ de dus ting 'dzin 'di ltar bya/ snying khar hūṃ las bdud rtsi yi/ lha mo dkar mo g.yas pa na/ gri gug g.yon na bdud rtsi yi/ bum pa snams pa bsams byas la/ rang gis snying gi rtse mo bcad/ bdud rtsi blug nas khengs pa yis/ lus la bde dang ldan par bsam/ de dus skye(o) tsha btung bar bya/ lhag ma zas kyi 'du shes bcad/ de ltar zla ba drug bsgom na/ rlung dang bsam gtan zas kyis 'tsho/ mngon par shes par 'byung ba dang/ skra dkar gnyer ma med pa dang/ yon tan dpag tu med pa 'byung/ 'di la gang yang gegs mi 'byung/ thog mar rlung la 'byong ba gces/ bkres na ting*

bodies filling with bliss. Sometimes you should drink some broth. At this time you should meditate in the following manner: From the hūṃ at the tip of the heart, imagine the white goddess of nectar holding in the right hand a curved knife (*gri gug*) and in the left hand a vase of nectar. Imagine that when you cut the tip of your heart, the nectar in it flows out and fills up, thus the body is endowed with bliss. At this time you should drink some broth. Cut off the conceptions/thoughts of other foods. If you practice in this way for six months, you will sustain yourself through air and contemplation. You will become clairvoyant. You will have no white hair and wrinkles and you will gain immeasurable qualities. In this way absolutely no obstacles will arise. First of all it is essential to have mastery over *prāṇa*. If hungry

f. 626 *'dzin nan tan bya/ rlung la sku mnye bcud len bya/ 'di ni bcud len thams cad kyi/ spyi khyabs dmigs pa nyid kyang yin/ bla ma dam pa rims kyis rgyud pa yin/ bcud len kun la khyad par 'phags pa yin/ rang byung rdo rjes mthong nas ni/ gzhan la phan par bsam nas ni/ 'phri mnan med par bris pa yin/ slob dpon gsang zhing rang che 'dod/ yig ge yod nas nga mkhas zer/ don med 'chal pa 'i gang zag la/ gsang nas bsgrub pa man ngag yin/ dad ldan 'jig rten zhen pa chung/ bsgrub la brtsen zhing gdams ngag*

*la/ 'phri bsnan mi byed bstan par mkhas/ de 'dra rnams la phyogs med sbyin/ bcud len
thams cad kyi rgyal po rlung rigs pa'i bcud len rdzogs so/ stag lo zla ba bzhi pa la pho
brang chen po sta'i tu'i steng gser ba na/ lha khang chen po bzheng zhing yod pa'i dus
su bris pa'o/ bkra shis dpal 'bar 'dzam gling brgyan du shog/*

focus on meditation. Do the *bcud len* abiding in the *prāṇa*. This is the very main aspect of all *bcud lens*. This is the transmitted lineage of the eminent lamas. This is outstanding amongst all *bcud lens*. Rang byung rdo rjes has experienced this.

Thinking that this may benefit others, I wrote it without annexing or withholding anything. It is an instruction for secret practice for those who desire to be great on their own and conceal the teacher, those who proclaim to be scholars because they have [the practices] in writing, senseless confused individuals. To the faithful who have little attachment to the world, those who are diligent practitioners and those who are skillful in giving teachings without omitting or annexing, to those I give this without partiality.

The king of all *bcud lens*, the *bcud len* related with *rlung* ends here. It was written in the Tiger year, in the fourth month, in the great palace of Sta'i tu'i steng gser ba, at the time when the great shrine room was being built.¹⁸

May the world be adorned by auspicious, blazing glory!

4.6. Pill *bcud len*

4.6.1. Introduction

Historically, miraculous life elixirs have fascinated emperors and commoners alike with their promise of the acquisition of great benefits with minimal effort. Indeed, the

¹⁸ The name Sta'i tu, may well be rendered as Dadu, the name of the Chinese capital Beijing. The author was there visiting the Yuan court in 1332-34 and then again in 1338-9, so the Tiger year in question was probably 1338.

thirteenth Dalai Lama's mausoleum has a fine mural depicting his offering of a precious pill to the Chinese emperor when he visited him in 1908 (Aschoff and Tashigang; 2004: 7-8). Life enhancing pills with their empowered ingredients have by now attracted considerable interest in the West among academics and even once sceptical pharmaceutical companies.

Samuel writes that *rin chen ril bu* (precious pills) derive from the Indian alchemical tradition (2010: 221). Based on the findings of Yonten Gyatso (Gyatso: 1991), Samuel goes on to identify in O rgyan Rinchen dpal the figure at the heart of the Tibetan mercury pill tradition (Samuel 2010: 217). O rgyan pa travelled to Oddiyana (O rgyan) where he received this practice from *vajra dākinīs* and passed it on to his student Rang byung rdo rje, the Third Karmapa (author of two *bcud len* texts fully translated in the present study) There is a pill, the *rin chen ril nag* 'precious black pill', that continues to be made and empowered in the Karmapa lineage. The begging bowl of the Third Karmapa serves as the container and measure for the 'mother' pills.¹⁹

Aschoff and Tashigang (2001: 3-4) suggest that precious pills, the fruit of centuries of tradition and empirical knowledge, can heal otherwise intractable diseases, thanks to their ingredients deriving from metallic, mineral, botanical and animal sources.

Judging from the benefits claimed in the texts, the same could be said of the pills whose preparation, empowerment and way of ingesting are explained in the *bcud len* treatises I have analysed.

In the greater medical and spiritual traditions several famous Tibetan masters have come to be associated with celebrated pill formulas. Spatial constraints do not allow me to analyse them in depth, but some worthy of mention are: *vimala*, a pill said to have

¹⁹ http://www.khandro.net/karmapa_rilnak.htm.

been formulated by the eighth-century Dzogchen master Vimalamitra; the *rin che ril nag* ‘precious black pill’ developed in the Karmapa lineage and the *zla shel bdud rtsi ma* ‘moon crystal nectar’, an elixir whose formula was said to have been transmitted by a *dākinī* to ’Ju Mi pham during his practice. Thangtong Gyalpo is often depicted in paintings and statues holding a long-life pill. He is renowned for his miraculous *grub thob ril dkar*, ‘white yogic pill’, used to counteract poisons.

Ril bu, a general term for what could be the condensation of an amalgam of ingredients, can serve a variety of purposes. One of these goals is balancing the three humours, where for example *vimala*, is considered efficient in balancing the wind humour and Mañjuśrī pills developed by ’Ju Mi pham for sharpening the intellect. There are also numerous deities said to be at the source of the recipe or to be the generating force of the pill’s powers, such as Vajrayoginī or Amitāyus.

Several categories of pills exist and whether they are deemed purely medicinal, for longevity, or to provide a more general ‘blessing’, they are an important aspect of the Tibetan medical and spiritual tradition. Pills are partially defined by the ingredients they contain, for example Gerke (2013c: 121) reproduces a quote on how *btso thal* ‘cooked ash’ was considered the indispensable base material for most *rin chen ril bu* pills. Besides the actual ingredients contained in a medical formula, empowerment is deemed very important, as shown in the complex rites and visualisations found in the texts in the compendium. Medicine empowerment (*smān grub*) rituals have received scholarly attention, particularly in the context of the g.Yu thog snying thig. Noteworthy Western-language scholarship on the topic includes Franz-Paul Erhard (2007) and Garrett (2010).

Many questions remain unanswered concerning the pills' complex preparation procedures, the precise philosophical and medicinal knowledge necessary to prepare and empower them, and the secrecy of the oral tradition of explaining specific ritual procedures.

As Aschoff and Tashigang (2001:11-12) explain, 'it often is difficult or even impossible to understand why, over the course of centuries, and from what motives the composition of the jewel pills has been supplemented, expanded, or altered with respect to individual components. From one century to the next, the writings of a famous physician may suddenly give the recipe in a slightly modified version without giving any explanation for this change.'

Yet sometimes mystery is not all that mysterious and it might be fruitless to engage in excessive speculation over the presence or absence of specific ingredients, whether they correlate with others or if they are somehow mystically connected to certain deities. Their presence may depend on much more pragmatic reasons, such as cost or availability. For example, 'Ju Mi pham the author of the *ril bu bcud len* text translated below, was known for developing his medicinal preparations with only herbal ingredients in order to reduce the cost, for the sake of the poor in his society (Aschoff and Tashigang 2001: 36).

Regarding the instances of *ril bu bcud len*, of the texts examined twenty-six mention pills, whether with regard to the whole process of fabricating and empowering them or just their ingestion.

In some instances (as in text 71, a Mandarava *bcud len* recipe) it is optional to take the substance either as a paste or it can be made into pills. Other texts have different instructions on how to ingest the pill; for example in the text by Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin

nor bu: *Me tog bcud len skal bzang rna rgyan gyi lhan thabs dngos grub mchog ster* it says the best way to take the pill is with water, the second best with bone soup or black tea, the third best with roasted barley. We can also see that alternative ways of taking pills are suggested for practitioners of differing capacities in the text: *Rdzogs pa chen po sku gsum rang shar las sku gsum bcud len thar pa'i rgyags phye* (Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan). Here there are three versions of the practice; the superior one is feeding on air, while, secondly, the average practitioner may use water and a pill containing *ra mnye* and so forth. Finally the 'inferior' way is with hot water and calcite pill. As we can understand from this, there are different ways of practicing *bcud len* with pills. Of interest is the occurrence of human flesh used as an ingredient, mentioned in texts: 8, 18, 20, 23, 39 and 45.

Now let us move on to the translation of a text that is representative of some of the many aspects of the rich Tibetan *ril bu bcud len* tradition. This particular text was authored by 'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho, a figure who perfectly embodies the combination of medical knowledge derived from study and from meditation. His medical knowledge was renown, as exemplified by his medical writings as well as by his *bcud len* texts found in this compendium. As well as a propensity for scholarship, he was also blessed with an ability to connect with the divine while meditating, such as in the aforementioned instance where he received the *Zla shel bdud rtsi ma* pill recipe from a *ḍākinī*.

4.6.2. Pill *bcud len* translation

'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho. *'Chi med bcud len sgrub pa'i thabs mchog bdud rtsi'i bum pa bzang po*. In *Gsung 'bum rgyas pa sde dge dgon chen par ma*. Paro, Bhutan 1984-1993, v. X, 691-702.

f. 691 *'Chi med bcud len sgrub pa'i thabs mchog bdud rtsi'i bum pa bzang po*

The perfect vase of elixir; the supreme method of *bcud len* for achieving immortality.

f. 692 *Om swa sti/ 'chi med padma rgyal po ye shes sku/ 'jam pa'i dpal ste gzhon nu'i gzugs ldan pa/ /bde chen mkha' 'gro'i sprin phung gtibs pa des/ /rdo rje'i tshe dang lang tsho stsol bar mdzod/ /rdzas dang dmigs pa sngags kyi rten 'brel las/ /bdud rtsi ra sa ya na sgrub pa'i thabs/ /rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro'i tshogs kyi zhal lung bzhin/ deng 'dir bkod pas kun la ban gyur cig/ rdo rje'i rten mchog ring du gnas pa ni/ dngos grub kun gyi gzhi yin 'dod pa'i don/ /phul byung 'di la dga' bar mi byed su/ /de phyir brtson pas sgrubs shig skal bzang rnams/ /*

'byung lnga'i dvangs ma a ham srog gi zungs/ /brtan po'i rgyu ni las dang bsod nams ste/ /rten ni lus kyi 'byung ba che la gnas/ /de slad bsod nams spel phyir dkar chos dang / /mchod sbyin gang 'grub khyad par tshogs 'khor bya/ /

tsho spel 'byung ba snyoms shing bcud 'phel phyir/ /bdud rtsi sman gyi bcud len bya ba ni/ /bdud rtsi 'od ldan cho ga bzhin du btu/ 'bras gsum bzang drug rdo gnyis cong rtsi bzhi dang / shug 'brum ba lu mtshe ma khan / ra mnye nye shing ba spru dbang po lag /thal ka rdo rje me tog lug mig pa/ /shu dag dkar po bu ram

May the wisdom body of the immortal lotus king [Guru Rinpoche], who is Mañjuśrī, possessing a youthful form, surrounded by clouds of great bliss *ḍākinī* kindly grant me indestructible life and youthfulness.

By virtue of the tantric auspicious influence of material objects and thoughts, may the method of the practice of the *rasāyana* nectar corresponding to the oral instructions of the hosts of vidyādharas and *ḍākinīs*, as I have completed it here now, be beneficial to all.

Making this supreme *vajra* vessel last long is the basis of all attainments. Who would not wish for this excellent object of one's wishes? Hence, practice with diligence fortunate ones!

The *A ham* is the vital force and the pure essence of the five elements. In order for it to be firm, there are two factors, karma and merits. Its support consists of the four main elements of the body. For this to happen you must enhance merit by acting virtuously and, to the extent you can, present offerings and gifts. In particular you should perform the *gaṇacakra*.

To extend life, balance the elements and to increase the essence you should practice the nectar medicine of *bcud len*. In accordance with the 'lustrous nectar' ritual, collect the 'bras gsum, the six excellent substances, calcite, the four nectars (*rtsi bzhi*), *shug 'bru*, *ba lu*, *mtshe*, *mkhan pa* (*Artemisia sp.*), *ra mnye*, *nye shing*, *ba spru*, *dbang po lag*, *thal ka rdo rje* (*Cassia tora L.*), *me tog lug mig* (*Aster sp.*), *shu dag dkar po* (*Acorus gramineus*), molasses and honey, and combine all of them.

f. 693 *sbrang rtsis drill/ nang khams dang bstun sbyar tshad lag len dang / /sbyor
snon bcas pa zhal las mnyan byas te/ /rgyal dang phur bu'i dus bzang dge ba la/ /bdag
mdun many+dzu shrIr gsal ba yis/ /'od kyi 'khor 'das bcud bsdus sngags kyis sgrubs/ /
dngos nyams rmi lam mtshan ma mthong bar bya/ /*

*de nas dus bzang nas zung dus rgyun du/ /tho rangs ril bu bza' zhing de yi tshe/ /
lus kyi cha bsrangs rlung ro lan gsum bsal/ /nad gdon bar chad ma lus dag par bsam/ /
rang nyid lhar gsal thugs ka'i 'od zer gyis/ /'khor 'das dvangs bcud rigs lnga'i
bdud rtsi bkug /lus kyi nang gang snyigs ma'i cha dag nas/ /'od sku rdo rje'i lang tsho
grub par bsam/ /*

*bum can bdun nam nyer gcig brgya bar 'bad/ skabs dang skabs su dmigs pa gsum
dang ni/ /sngags gsum bya ba gsum po dgu phrugs su/ /go rim med par ji ltar nus par
'bad/ /*

*de la dang po dmigs pa gsum po ni/ /zla ba'i bdud rtsi btung dang nam mkha'
gza' / /snying gi dpyid spel ba dang gsum yin te/ /dang po rang gi spyi bor zla gdan la/ /
rgyal kun ye shes rdo rje ngo bo / rnam snang ngo bo oM yig dkar po bsam/ /de las*

According to the practitioner's state of health, formulate the strength of the dosage and the composition as you have heard it in the oral instructions. On an auspicious and meritorious day such as during the twelfth lunar month, on a Thursday, visualize in front of you a clear image of Mañjuśrī. From the rays emanating from Mañjuśrī, attained through the mantra, gather the essence of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. You may actually realize it or signs will come in dreams.

From an auspicious time onwards, at daybreak regularly take a pill while keeping the body straight, expelling the stale air three times. Imagine that without exception all illness, evil spirits and obstacles are purified.

Visualizing yourself as the deity, lights emanate from your heart and gather the elixir comprised of the five pure essences of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Imagining that all impurities within your body are purified, you obtain an indestructible youthful body of light.

Strive to do seven, twenty-one or up to one hundred *kumbhaka* breathings. From time to time strive to apply these nine: the three-fold visualisation, the three mantras²⁰ and the three actions, in any order, to the best of your ability.

²⁰ The *vidyā*, *dhāraṇī* and *gūhya* mantras.

Now, regarding the three-fold visualisation, that is: drinking the essence of the moon, eating the sky and delighting the heart. As for the first, imagine, on a moon seat at the crown of your head, a white letter *om*, the aspect of Vairocana.

f. 694 'od 'phros srid zhi'i dvangs ma bkug/ oM la bstims nas bdud rtsi dkar po'i rgyun/ /babs pas lus gang bcud mchog grub par bsam/ /'di ni skad cig gis kyang mdangs ldan zhing / /tshe dang lang tsho'i bcud len 'grub par byed/ /thun mthar zla ba oM dang bcas pa ni/ /bdud rtsir zhu ste rang gi lus la bstim/ /tho rengs la sogs nam grub yang yang bskyar/ /

gnyis pa nam mkha' rgya cher mthong ba'i sar/ /lus gnad bsrangs la thob mar rlung ro bsal/ /chos dbyings nam mkha'i khams kun bdud rtsi ni/ /dkar po la sogs gang 'dod rnam par zhu/ /kha nas sid kyis rngub pa'i rlung dang sbyar/ /rang gi lus dang dvangs mar sbyar gyur par bsam/ /bum can bzung la 'byin rngub dang sbyar te/ / de 'dra'i dmigs pa yang nas yang du bya/ /goms pa'i tshe na bdud rtsi'i kha dog ni/ / gang ltar dmigs pa de bzhin rnal 'byor lus/ /de 'dra'i 'dangs dang ldan par 'gyur zhes gsungs/ /thung gcig dmigs kyang tshe nyams gso ba dang/ /khyad par rnam shes khams nas nyams pa gso/ /legs par goms na zas sogs zhen pa 'chad/ 'chi med tshe dang lang tsho mchog grub ste/ /nam mkha' bzhin du 'pho 'gyur med par gnas/

Imagine that the light emanating from that syllable gathers the essence of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* and dissolves into the *om* obtaining the supreme essence as your entire body is filled by a stream of white nectar flowing down from there. In just one instance, you obtain the *bcud len* of a radiant complexion, longevity and youthfulness. At the end of each session visualize that the *om* and the moon throne liquefy into nectar that dissolves in your body. Whenever you can, for example before dawn, practice it again and again.

Second, in a place where you can see the vastness of the sky clearly, expel the stale air in an upright posture. Visualize the entire space of the *dharmadhātu* melting into nectar, white or in whatever colour you wish. Mix (the nectar) with air inhaled, quickly and through the teeth, imagining that your body becomes purified. Holding *kumbhaka*, whilst breathing in and out repeat the visualisation again and again. It is said that once one gets accustomed to this, the colour of the yogi's body will accord with the colour of the nectar chosen. A single session has the benefit of healing your diminished longevity. In particular, your lessening intellectual faculties will be revived. If you become well-acquainted with this practice, your appetite for gross food will disappear. By obtaining the supreme *siddhi* of immortality and youthfulness, you will remain as changeless as the sky.

f. 695 *gsum pa rang nyid 'jam pa'i dbyangs su gsal/ 'thugs kar dhu ti'i dbus su zla steng na/ /dhi yig dmar ser nyin byed ltar 'bar bas/ /'od 'phros snang srid thams cad khyab byas pas/ /kun kyang bde ba chen po'i rang bzhin gyur/ /de kun 'od lnga ye shes bdud rtsir zhu/ /lus nang rtsa khams kun tu khyab pa yis/ /nad sogs snyigs ma'i cha rnams sangs kyis sbyangs/ /gser 'gyur rtsi ltar rtsa khams rlung gi cha/ /thams cad ye shes bdud rtsir gnas gyur pa'i/ /dvangs ma dhIH yig mi shig thig ler thim/ /'od kyi lus la bde chen ye shes thugs/ /'od zer nyi ma 'char kha'i mdangs lta bu/ /srid zhi kun khyab de 'dra'i dmigs pa la/ /yang yang rtsal sbyangs 'jam rlung bum can 'bad/ /'di ni rags lus dvangs mar 'gyur ba dang/ /bde chen ye shes mchog kyang tshe 'dir 'grub/ /snyigs ma'i cha dag sgrib bral lha yi lus/ /'jig rten gsum na nyi lta lham mer 'gyur/ /*

nyin mtshan ris med gang der ril bu bza' / /dmigs pa 'di dang sbyar bas rnal 'byor des/ /rdo rje sems dpa'i tshe dang lang tsho 'grub/ /

*sngags gsum dang po ma ma ki'i sngags kyi/ /srod dang tho rengs la sogs nam
bde bar/ /srung ba bya ste rang nyid ma ma ki/ /sngon mo dar dang rin chen rgyan gyis
brgyan/*

Thirdly, visualize yourself in the form of Mañjuḥṣa. On the top of a moon disk, in the middle of the central channel at the heart level, is the orange syllable *DHĪH*, blazing brilliantly like the sun, so that its rays pervade all phenomenal existence and all obtains the nature of great bliss. Everything merges in light of five colours which dissolves into the nectar of the five wisdoms. As it spreads throughout the *nāḍi* system of the body, the unclean aspects such as illnesses are cleansed and purified, as if turned into gold. All parts of the *prāṇa* in the *nāḍis* rest in the luminous essence (*dwangs ma*) of the nectar of wisdom, and the letter *DHĪH* dissolves into the indestructible drop (*thig le*). Within this luminous body, the mind is blissful primordial wisdom. Visualize that, like the hue of sunrays at sunrise, it pervades *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Practice again and again the smooth breathing vase retention (*kumbhaka*). In this way, this gross body will become radiant and you obtain the supreme blissful wisdom in this life. Remaining impurities are purified, you are freed from impurities and your god-like body will shine bright in the three worlds like the sun.

Whenever, day and night, eat the pill. The yogi who is immersed in the visualisation will achieve Vajrasattva's life and youth.

As for the three mantras, the first mantra is that of Mamakī. In the early evening and in the early morning, whenever possible, diligently recite the mantra and transform yourself into Mamakī, blue in colour, adorned with silks and jewel ornaments,

*f. 696 pad zla'i gdan la phyed skyil gyis bzhugs shing / /phyag g.yas rdo rje rtse
lnga me 'bar gdengs/ /autpal sngon po'i zhags bcas sdigs mdzub g.yon/ /thugs kar zla*

*steng maM las sngags phreng bskor/ /de las 'od zer sngon po mkha' khyab 'phros//
 phyogs bcu'i rgyal ba sras dang bcas pa yi/ /gsang gsum byin rlabs 'od sngon rnam par
 bsdus/ /rang la thim pas rang lus rdo rje yi/ /rdul phran las grub gzhom du med pa la/ /
 ye shes me lce 'bar bas nad gdon sogs/ /mi mthun bar chad thams cad bsregs par bsam/
 /oM shaM ka re shAnti ka re gha Ta ghu Ta ghu Ta ni ghe ta ya gha ta ya ghuTTi ni
 svA hA/ bdun dang brgya la sogs pa gang 'grub bzla/ /'dis ni tshe dang bcud len sgrub
 pa la/ bar du gcod pa'i bgegs kun rmang nas zhi/ dran pa tsam gyis bar chad ma lus
 'joms// de phyir rgyun dang khyad par bar chod kyi/ /lhas dang 'jigs pa'i dus su lhag
 par bzla/ /*

gnyis pa spyen ma'i sngags kyis gso ba ni/ /rang nyid sangs rgyas spyen ma sku
 mdog dkar/ /phyag g.yas 'khor lo mig 'bras kyis mtshan pa/ /g.yon pas pad ma dkar po
 legs par bsname/ /dar dkar na bza' rdo rje'i skyil krung gis

sitting in half lotus position with her left leg stretched out.

The right hand holds a five-pointed blazing *vajra*, the left hand holds a garland of
 blue *utapala* flowers in the 'threatening' mudra. At the heart, on top of the moon there
 is a *MAM* around which the mantra rotates. From it blue light rays expand pervading
 all space. From all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, the three secrets
 and blessings all gather as blue light and dissolve into your own body, which is made
 of *vajra* particles and is indestructible. In it, the wisdom fire is blazing and you imagine
 that all illness, harm, obstacles and so forth are burned. You recite [. . . mantra . . .]
 seven or one hundred times or as much as you can. Life and all hindrances impeding
 the practice of *bcud len* are pacified from their basis. By merely thinking of them, all
 hindrances without exception will be dispelled. Therefore one should recite the mantra
 continuously, especially in cases of danger due to gods that create obstacles (*bar chod
 kyi lha*).

Secondly, as for the healing mantra of Locanā, visualize yourself as Buddhalocanā, white in colour, dressed in white silk, sitting in the lotus position on a lotus moon throne, in the right hand a wheel characterised with eyeballs while her left hand elegantly holds a perfect white lotus,

f. 697 *zla ba'i gdan bzhugs thugs kar zla steng lam de yi tha mar sngags phreng dkar pos bskor/ /de las 'od 'phros rgyal ba sras bcas kyi/ /byin rlabs mchog dang brtan g.yo'i dwangs ma kun/ /'od zer bdud rtsi dkar po'i rnam par bkug /rang lus gang bas nyams pa kun gsos nas/ /gzhom med rdo rje'i lang tsho grub par bsam/ /oM ru ru saphu ru dzva la tiSTha sithi lo lo tsa ni sarba aar tha sa dha ni s'a h'a/ ji 'grub bzla bya 'dis ni tshe dang bcud/ nyams pa kun gso shi ba slong bar byed/ /nad rnams ma lus zhi ba'i mchog yin te/ /bzlas pa tsam gyis rdo rje'i lang tsho 'grub/ /*

gsum pa gos dkar mo yi gsang sngags kyis/ /rdo rje'i tshe dang gzi mdangs sgrub pa la/ /rang nyid yum chen gos dkar sku mdog dmar/ /g-yon pa'i phyag gis brla g-yon steng du ni/ /padma dmar po 'dzin cing phyag g-yas kyis/ /thugs kar padma de yi kha 'byed cing / /lte bar gnas pa'i nor bu dmar po la/ /gzigs pa'i tshul can stod g-yogs dkar po sogs/ /dar dang rin chen rgyan ldan skyil krung gis/ /pad zla'i steng bzhugs thugs kar mdog dmar ba'i/ /padma kha sbyor dbus su zla ba la/ paM yig sngags phreng bcas pa'i 'od zer gyis/ /sras

At the heart, on top of the moon there is a *LAM* syllable. At its edge a white mantra garland rotates. From there rays radiate and all the victorious ones' supreme blessings and all the luminous energy of the inanimate and animate world are drawn in in the form of white nectar light rays. Whatever your body has lost is regenerated. Now you must think that you achieve indestructible youth [as firm as] a *vajra*. Recite the mantra [. . . mantra . . .] as often as you can: this is for healing all decline of life and

essence, it can bring one back from death, and it is supreme for pacifying all bodily illnesses without exception. Merely through its recitation you will attain the *vajra* youthfulness.

Thirdly, through the secret mantra of Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, *vajra* life and bright radiance will be obtained. You transform into the great mother, the body red in colour, dressed in white. The left hand rests on the left thigh, holding a red lotus. The right hand is at the heart, holding a partially opened lotus, at the navel there is a red jewel, the gaze is directed to the navel. Sitting in the lotus position on a lotus and moon [disc], she is dressed in silk with white upper-garments and jewel ornaments. At the tip of the heart, red-coloured lotuses face each other, between them on a moon disk with a letter *BAM* and a garland of mantra [syllables]. Visualise that by its rays

f. 698 *bcas rgyal ba khams gsum snod bcud kyi/ /tshe dang gzi brjid bde chen
bdud rtsi ni/ /dmar po'i rnam pas rang lus gang bar dmigs/ /aoM ka Te bi ka Te ni ka
TaM ka Te sva H'a/ ji 'grub bzla ste 'dis ni tshe zad kyang / /nges par gso zhing 'chi
med tshe dbang 'grub/ /gzi byin nyi ma lta bur lham mer byed/ /sdig sgrub ma lus rtsa
sbur mes bzhin 'joms/ /de phyr tshe mchog sgrub pas 'di la 'bad/ /*

*bya ba gsum gyi dang po zas skom kun/ /bdud rtsir byas nas zos pas nad 'joms
shing / /tshe dang lang tsho 'grub par byed pas na/ /bza' btung thams cad baM yig yig
dkar po las/ /bdud rtsi'i rang bzhin nyid du dmigs byas la/ /de la 'khor 'das brtan g-yo'i
bcud bsdus nas/ /bdud rtsi byin rlabs sngags bdun btab la bza' / /*

*gnyis pa nyin re bzhin du tshe gso ba/ /bde chen thig le bcu drug dbyangs kyi
gzugs/ /g-yas g-yon lus kyi cha ru 'pho ba yin/ /gnas de dkar dmar thig le'i dbus su ni/
/so so'i yi ge bsgom la de'i 'od zer/ /phyogs bcur 'phros pas brtan g-yo'i dvangs bcud*

*bkug /gnas der thim pas tshe dang 'byung ba'i bcud/ /'phel zhing rgyas pas lus kun
khyab par bsam/ /zhud mar bdud rtsis der byugs mnye zhing bsrub/ /dbyangs*

all the Buddhas, bodhisattvas and all beings of the three realms, their life and lustrous great bliss nectar is filling your body. Recite as often as you can [. . . mantra . . .]. Then, even if the length of your life is exhausted, you will certainly heal the defect and your life will be prolonged. Like the radiant sun's blazing flames, all defilements and obscuration are thoroughly burnt away, like straw in fire. Therefore one who wants to have supreme life needs to practice diligently.

Of the three actions, the first one is 'food and beverage'. Visualize that whatever you eat and drink is nectar coming naturally from the white *BAM* syllable. Partaking of it expels sickness and you accomplish life and youthfulness. Also, the essence of inanimate and animate beings of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* is gathered. Recite the mantra seven times, bless the nectar and eat it.

Secondly, 'daily life healing'. (Visualize) sixteen great bliss drops (*thig le*) in the form of the *ali*²¹ moving around both sides of your body. At the centre of the white and red *thig le*, meditate that each of their own letters has rays emanating in the ten directions and the luminous energy of inanimate and animate beings are extracted and dissolve there. Imagine that the essence of life and the [bodily] elements develop and grow, spreading throughout the body. Anoint and apply nectar of melted butter. Recite the auspicious essence of the Sanskrit alphabet's vowels and consonants and blow (on the butter).

f. 699 *gsal rten 'brel snying po brjod cing btab/ /khyad par spyi bor gnas tshe tsan
dan dkar/ /gla rtsi zhun mar sbyar bas der byugs la/ /nya gang zla ba'i 'od la bde ba*

²¹ The vowels of the Sanskrit alphabet

*dang / /stong la dza ti 'bru mar sna tshogs dang /sbrang rtsi rkang mthil byugs la nyi
mar bsro/ /des ni tshe dang gzi mdangs bde ba 'phel/ /khams snyoms rdo rje'i bcud len
myur du 'grub/ /*

*gsum pa spyod lam bde bar bya ba ni/ /bza' btung gos brgyan gnas grogs yo byad
sogs/ /ji ltar mthun par bde zhing bag phebs par/ /brten la de kun lnga snags phyag rgya
yis/ /'dod yon rdo rje'i lha mo drug nyid du/ /byin gyis brlabs shing rang nyams bde bar
sbyar/ /gang snang bde ba chen po'i ngang du sbyangs/ /'khor 'das bde chen bdud rtsi
dkar dmar gyi/ /rnam par 'od zhu rang la bstims byas te/ /gnyug ma'i thig ler ro mnyam
ngang bzhag la/ /'dod yon bde stong chen por lam khyer bya/ /khyad par srod kyi dus la
sogs par ni/ /rang lus lha skur gsal zhing aa haM gi/ /'bar 'dzag bde ba bsgoms shing
rlung sbyor bcas/ /bde chen bdud rtsi dkar dmar 'od 'bar bas/ /rtsa gnas kun tu khyab
par bsam zhing dgram/ /skabs su 'khrul 'khor bya zhing rigs*

In particular, apply the melted butter together with white sandalwood and musk to the crown of the head. It is good to do this in the full moon's light.

During the waning moon, apply nutmeg, various red seeds, butter, and honey on the soles of the feet and expose them to the sunshine: then life, radiance and happiness will develop. Your elements will be balanced and you will swiftly obtain the *vajra bcud len*.

Thirdly, 'the path of good behaviour'. Use whatever food, drink, clothes, ornaments, place, friends, accessories, and so forth, suit you, so that you are at ease and feeling harmonious. Through the deity, mantra and *mudrā* blessings, the sensual objects are transformed into six Vajrayoginī and you imagine sexual union. Whatever appears, perceive it as great bliss. *Saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* dissolve into light in the form of blissful red and white nectar and dissolve into you. Abide in the state of equanimity of the

primordial *thig le*. One should proceed along the path of the great bliss and emptiness of sensual enjoyments. Especially in the early evening time and so on, meditate that your body is a divine body. As the fire melts the *A HAM*, meditate that you are pervaded by bliss along with the gathering of *prāṇa*. The nectar of great bliss, red and white rays, radiates and spreads throughout all the channels. Sometimes do *'khrul khor* (*yantra* yoga) and with a qualified partner strive to practice the method of enhancement of bliss.

f. 700 *ldan gyi/ /grog bcas bde ba spel ba'i thabs la 'bad/ /des ni rdo rje'i tshe dang gzhom med kyi/ /lang tsho mchog dang bde chen ye shes 'grub/ /de ltar ra sa ya' na'i rdzas mchog gang / /brten zhing rlung dang sbyar ba'i dmigs pa ni/ nan tan bya ba dngos gzhir byas nas su/ /de yi grogs su thabs dgu brten byas la/ /brtson pas nyams su blang na zla gcig nas/ /brgyad cu'i mthar thug rgas shing 'khogs pa yang / /'dam gyi nang nas padma gzhon du bzhin/ /bcu drug lang tsho gsar du 'char byed cing / /snyigs ma'i cha rnams rim gyis dag nas su/ /lha lus yid 'ong 'jig rten kun gyi mchog /ny'i zla gnas pa srid du 'tsho bar byed/ /tshogs dang gtor mas rtsa gsum srung ma bskangs/ /'dod pa'i don la 'phrin las rgya cher bcol/ /*

gzhan yang chu sna'i bcud dang 'o ma sogs/ /btung ba'i bcud blang khrag gi khams gso zhing / rdo sna'i bcud kyis rus pa sra bar byed/ /me tog sna tshogs bcud blang mdangs dang ldan/ /drod sman 'bar 'dzag sbyor bas drod nyams gso/ /bum can sogs kyis rlung khams nyams pa 'phel/ /'chi med nam mkha'i bcud blang yid nyams gso/ /kun gyis tshe 'phel 'byung ba kun kyang gso/ /de phyir ji ltar rigs par brten par bya/ / rten 'brel zab mos

Through that, you will obtain *vajra* life and supreme indestructible youth and the wisdom of great bliss. Whichever sublime *rasāyana* substances you use, practice diligently combining visualisation and *prāṇa*. Having made this the core practice, make

efforts in the nine methods that aid the practice. By doing that, after one month even a decrepit old person over eighty years old will regenerate as radiant as a sixteen year old, like a fresh lotus rising from the mud. All of the remaining impurities are gradually purified. Your divine body will be the most beautiful in the whole world and live as long as the sun and the moon exist. Gratify the three roots and guardians by offering *ganapūjās* and *gtor ma* and ask extensively for their activity to obtain your desires.

Besides this, extracting the essence of various water and milk and so forth, the blood elements are healed. With the essence of various rocks, the bones strengthen. Extracting the essence of various flowers, the complexion will be radiant. The warm medicines are melted and prepared to heal malfunctioning heat. Applying *kumbhaka* and so forth, the damaged wind element will be restored. Gathering the essence of the immortal sky, the degenerated mind will be healed. All of these will increase the life span and heal the elements. Therefore one should rely on the method that is suitable [in a specific case].

f. 701 *thabs rnams sna tshogs pa/ /dus dang dus su ji ltar rigs pa brten/ /lha sngags dmigs pa zab mos tshe sgrub nas/ /dngos grub 'dod dgu yid bzhin 'jo bar bya/ /kun kyang rang bzhin ma grub sgyu ma yi/ /ngang tshul shes nas thams cad lam du khyer/ /khyad par rang sems ye nas 'od gsal ba/ /dmigs med rgya yin chen po'i rang bab pa/ /bla ma'i man ngag lam gyis yid ches nas/ /mnyam par bzhag pas mchog gi dngos grub che/ /gnyug ma rdo rje'i srog la dbang thob 'gyur/ /de phyir snying rje che ldan lhag bsam gyis/ /snyigs ma'i dus su bstan 'gro'i khur khyer ba/ /don gnyis sgrub par nus pa'i sbas pa can/ /shes rab mchog gi rtsal 'chang de rnams la/ /yid bzhin nor bu las kyang lhag pa yi/ /gdams pa zab mo 'di ni gnyer du gad/ /des kyang don chen nyid du shes pa yis/ /yal bar ma dor brtson pas nyams su longs/ /mi bshu nges pa rgyal ba rig*

'dzin gyi//bka' lung bzhin du dngos grub dga'ston myong //tshul 'di legs par spel ba'i
 bsod nams kyis//bstan 'dzin tshogs rnam zhabs pad brtan pa dang //de yi mthu las
 rgyal ba'i bstan pa dar//'gro kun phan bder 'god pa'i bkra shis shog// ces pa

You should apply the various profound methods on each occasion as it is suitable. Through the profound mantra and visualisation of the meditation deity you will obtain life, and whatever *siddhis* are desired will be obtained. All things lack an inherent existence; practice, knowing their illusory nature. Especially, let your own mind rest in the primordial clear light in the focus-less space. Having faith in the lama's profound path of instruction, through meditative equipoise one will obtain the power of the life force of the primordial *vajra*, the supreme *siddhi*. Therefore with great kindness and a pure intention, you will bear responsibility for the teachings and for sentient beings in the dark age. Those who possess the ability to fulfil the wishes of both [self and other] and power of supreme wisdom, I request you to retain these profound instructions, which are more precious than jewels. Knowing that these have great meaning, do not lose or neglect these teachings, and practice with diligence. In accordance with the unfaltering instructions of the Buddhas and knowledge holders, you will experience the joy of all *siddhis*. Through the merit of this good behaviour, may Dharma practitioners have long lives and may the noble Dharma flourish through their power.

May it bring happiness and benefit to all beings, may it be auspicious!

f. 702 'di rab chos lcags yos khrum zla'i dmar phyogs kyi tshes bcu'i nyi dros kyi
 thun skabs su mi pham rnam par rgyal ba'am 'jam dpal dgyes pa'i rdo rjer grags pas
 shar mar spel ba dge'o// mang ga lam// //

This was composed unimpededly by Mi pham rnam par rgyal wa, also known as 'Jam dpal dgyes pa'i rdo rje, during the morning session on the tenth day of the waning moon of the eighth lunar month in the year of the Iron Hare (1891).

Maṅgalam (May it be auspicious).

CHAPTER 5: CONVERSATIONS WITH CONTEMPORARY BCUD LEN ADEPTS AND PRACTITIONERS

In this chapter the project extends to an investigation of contemporary *bcud len* practice. This section contains the views of religious figures, monastic scholars, traditional doctors and *bcud len* practitioners. All of these statements resulted from private meetings with the speakers, except for the contribution of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, which is taken from an introductory talk that he gave at the beginning of a two week long *bcud len* retreat. These observations of acknowledged adepts and practitioners of the *bcud len* tradition were recorded, transcribed, translated and edited and incorporated in the study.

The accounts below emphasise the continuation of the *bcud len* practice in general, with more specific reference to its more esoteric spiritual aspects – where the practitioner actively ‘extracts the essence’ through actions that accompany the partaking of the pills or substances – and contain a description of the revelation of a *bcud len* teaching through a *gter ma*.

In presenting these oral statements I have followed the style of the *testimonio* school of oral history, which suggests that rather than annexing continual burdening comments it is best to let the stories speak for themselves and to preserve the authenticity of the informant’s lexical resources (Beverley 2004). Only where the speaker’s meaning is unclear have I exercised editorial discretion and amended their wording.

The *testimonio* approach, now standard among oral historians, attempts to preserve the respondent’s original speech as far as possible without imposing stylistic

‘improvement’. These statements are intended to contribute to a more accurate portrayal of traditional *bcud len* practice and to offer insights into contemporary attitudes toward the practice.

An important point to emerge from the conversations is the current status of *bcud len* practices and traditions. *Bcud len* is actively practised by students of the Dzogchen master Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. *Em chi* Nida Chenagtsang is teaching *bcud len*’s medical aspects to Western audiences and *em chi* Tenzin Sherab is producing a variety of *bcud len* formulas.

Dzongsar Khyentse speaks of the various benefits of *bcud len*, but notes that few practitioners remain in Bhutan, partly because food is more easily available. He refers specifically to ‘sexual energy *bcud len*’ and the dietary restrictions in place when it is practiced. No such parallels with dietary restrictions appear in the sexual practices found in the compendium Text 29 and Text 34. He stresses the value of subtle body exercises, balancing the elements and of harnessing *prāṇa* to the central channel, as described in the *kumbhaka* exercises in several texts. He claims that an essential part of *bcud len* is diminishing attachment to normal food, and by ‘deconstructing’ our notions of typologies of food we become less distracted.

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu reiterates the idea of three levels of *bcud len* practice, describing their particular features and suitability. He mentions the example of the Dzogchen master Nyagla Pema Dudul, author of Text 45, who gradually ascended to the higher form of the practice, eventually attaining the rainbow body. He points out how breath can become the sole source of nourishment for the advanced practitioner.

Tenzin Sherab, the Bhutanese physician to the illustrious Nyingma lama Kyabje Chatral Sangye Dorje prepares *bcud len* medicinal compounds for Chögyal Namkhai

Norbu from his *gter ma* recipe. Dr Sherab interestingly speaks of pills that can prevent disturbances from malevolent sources, such as the *nāga* for example, but stresses that they are more effective when empowered by meditation and specific visualisations. Like Chögyal Namkhai Norbu he refers to ‘higher practitioners’ using ‘higher *bcud len*’, suggesting that while a binary division between ‘medical and spiritual’ *bcud len* may not be fruitful, hierarchical distinctions are made, sometimes even in offering the same teaching in different forms as in certain texts in the compendium. In his remarks on ritual empowerment he points out the different types of the *kapāla*, a powerful component in ritual and warns against its indiscriminate use. The *kapāla* is mentioned in several texts as a ritual implement in which *bcud len* substances are empowered.

Elio Guarisco echoes the statements of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Dr Tenzin Sherab on the importance of empowering substances and the value of pills for the first two levels of *bcud len* and the connection between mastery of *prāṇā* and the ‘highest’ form of *bcud len*.

Curiously, Sangye Tsering states that in his view the individual practitioner may enjoy a certain freedom in approaching *bcud len* practice through his own personal *yi dam*, an unusual concept as most texts explicitly mention specific deities.

Dr Nida makes a more clear cut distinction between ‘spiritual’ and ‘medical’ *bcud len*. In the latter, he attributes most importance to the substance itself. In his terms, medical *bcud len* is for ‘nonpractitioners’. He alludes to certain pills that should not be widely distributed, implying that these are for those advanced in practice. His mention of *kumbhaka* breathing retention exercises at the heart, throat and other *cakras* has not been spotted in the instructions in the texts in the collection. Perhaps such details were transmitted orally to the practitioner.

Jacobella Gaetani's account of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's *gter ma* on the Mandrava *bcud len* practice is interesting in that the revelation did not occur in a single moment as the rediscoveries described in the texts seem to suggest. She recounts how the teaching came to him in separate dreams at different locations in a gradual unveiling.

The following conversations offer interesting personal accounts of *bcud len* practices that at times present us with insights and information not contained in the compendium.

5.1 Jamyang Khyentse Norbu (Dzongsar Khyentse), Tibetan spiritual teacher and filmmaker

Oxford, UK, 9 November 2010

Interlocutor: Rinpoche, have you ever practised *bcud len*?

D.K.: Yes, many years ago – an oral transmission my grandfather Sonam Zangpo received from Togden Shakya Shri.

I: Do you know of other *bcud len* practices?

D.K.: Yes, especially in the Nyingma School. There is a very important *bcud len* connected with the Eight Heruka practice. Mahorta Chemchog is the supreme, central deity, who has forty-two heads. In the practice of *bcud len*, *bdud rtsi* is very important. Real *bdud rtsi* is the nondual aspect of everything; there is no dualism and everything is equal in the state of *amṛta*. In one of the *bdud rtsi* Tantras, Buddha said: Gods and Brahmins eat clean food, I never declared that they achieve enlightenment. Pigs and dogs eat dirty food and I never claimed they attain enlightenment. Because of this everything can be beneficial or harmful.

One must remember the five elements (sky/earth/water/wood/fire). In reality these are nondual emptiness and clarity; Samayatara and other four *dākinīs* corresponding to the five elements. Having this premise of nonduality we can use this as a source of nutrition to sustain ourselves. For us, who are so far from having a correct balance of the elements, it is a very important practice.

There are *bcud len* related to various elements. *Sa'i bcud len* – flowers, stone, roots – are all linked to the earth. The positive side effect of this *bcud len* is good health, and when the five elements are coordinated, clarity arises. In Bhutan these transmissions are still alive but few people are practising because of the easy access to food. At public rituals or initiations the *amṛta sman sgrubs bdud rtsi* is commonly given out.

Then there are sexual energy *bcud len*; here you eat no bitter things and particular fruits and flowers. There are particular visualisations one must do and the partner must have particular characteristics. The best *dākinīs* and consorts are not at all appealing in a classical way.

The path of *bcud len* is one of losing attachment to normal food and stepping toward clarity and emptiness. By gradually understanding the essence of phenomena as being *mahā amṛta* (Great Bliss), it will deconstruct our notions of various typologies of food and we will be less distracted and judge less.

The *tshogs* is one of the most important *bcud len* (nowadays it has become a sort of feast), so let me tell you a story of the famous Terdag Lingpa from Mindrolling:

He dozed and in his visions or dreams he dreamt of a huge *gaṇacakra* where his guru was the guest of honour and there were tons of fruits, foods, wine. He was really enjoying and circumambulating the place. He saw a round house with a round wall and

a single door. He wanted to enter it as he heard lots of noise of an even bigger party in there. He tried to get in, but two wrathful deities stopped him. He prayed to his guru and managed to get in. Inside, there were creatures with two heads and many arms. The main VIP there was Guru Rinpoche. Then he saw an even more innermost section but there was no door. He asked how he could get in there and someone told him only those who know how to go can get in. He asked his guru for a blessing and got in. There was pus, shit and blood everywhere and everybody in there was naked. The main guest in there was Vajrayoginī.

Practising *bcud len* will break through tons of hang-ups and inhibitions. Through austerities we overcome them. All our emotions and enjoyments are nothing other than our wisdom. Balancing of the elements is very important in Buddhism and Vajrayana since death comes with the dissolution of one or more of the elements.

In Anuttara Tantra there is an emphasis on air/energy. The belief is that the mood is always dominated by the winds that go through the central channel. The best is if they are in the central channel.

You are like a movie projector, projecting many movies simultaneously and one is involved only with some of them. When all 'air' is in the central channel, *dbu ma*, then all impure visions disappear.

5.2 Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, Dzogchen master, teacher and practitioner of *bcud len*

Tenerife, Spain, 5 December 2013

N.N.: Substance (*bcud*) is like the essence for maintaining the body, so everything like food and including our physical body is based in the five elements. The combination

of the essence of the five elements is related to *bcud len*. There exist different types of *bcud len*: *bcud len* of *sambhogakāya*, *dharmakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*.

Dharmakāya is the most essential, as our real condition is. We cannot see or touch our real condition, but we possess it. It is a bit like the essence of our life. This is connected with the five elements. Even the essence of the five elements we cannot see or touch but we can feel how the function of our energy is. This is called the *sambhogakāya*, like a more concentrated physical level. So when we take *bcud len* there is a more material aspect, but you can understand that if we are eating some food, like lunch or dinner, there are many dishes, prepared in different ways, this is related to our material aspect. In Sanskrit we call this *nirmāṇakāya*. When we talk of *sambhogakāya* it is the essence that maintains the substance. When we do *bcud len*, there are many ways of preparing *bcud len* pills, or drinks and food. You can see the difference between taking normal food and a *bcud len* pill. For example if you feel hungry you need food or you suffer from that lack; this is our ordinary condition. It is not sufficient to just eat a pill that is the substance of food. If you are able to do this, then you have already made some progress; many practitioners live long periods of time relying just on *bcud len* pills.

When we talk of *nirmāṇakāya*, that is our ordinary dualistic condition. For *sambhogakāya* all we need is a pill and a mere drop of water. This can help you overcome thirst and the need for water. For eating we have a different type of pill, which has the essence of the five elements. If it is prepared well and empowered with mantras it can really work. Practitioners can use this and not become dependent on food.

Nyakla Pema Dudul spent a large part of his life relying on *bcud len* pills. First he did *nirmāṇakāya bcud len*, using pills but also eating food. Every day you eat less,

combining with *bcud len* pills you can progress that way. Nyakla Pema Dudul did three years of *nirmāṇakāya bcud len*, and he arrived at the point where he was taking just *bcud len* pills. He entered the *sambhogakāya* level this way. There are many teachers who did it this way, also the Dzogchen master Longchenpa, who was following the teaching; for many months he lived, studied and practiced while doing *sambhogakāya bcud len*, where one is totally not dependent on food.

There are various types of *bcud len*. For example the *bcud len* of Nyala Pema Dudul who manifested '*ja' lus*'. When he realized *sambhogakāya bcud len* he spent the rest of his life practising *sambhogakāya bcud len*. The last few years of his life he spent a lot of time practising *dharmakāya bcud len*. In the beginning you [still] drink water. How do we stay alive without eating or drinking? By combining *bcud len* with breathing. Breathing is life, if we stop breathing there is no life. We combine our visualisation with breathing. We understand intellectually that the five elements have five colours. When we develop the practice more, then visualisation is sufficient. Breathing helps you understand the *bcud len* of *dharmakāya*. Nyakla Paema Dudul lived some years in the latter part of his life with *dharmakāya bcud len*. *Bcud len* is very important to attain '*ja' lus*'. Rainbow body means that the substance of the physical body enters its real nature; if we do *dharmakāya bcud len* in a perfect way it becomes a secondary cause for achieving the rainbow body. The *gter ma* teaching of Nyakla Pema Dudul has three types of *bcud len*, which he applied for his whole life. In the end, he attained the rainbow body and was aware he would at the time of his death. . . His students knew this meant he would pass away and manifest the rainbow body. After seven days, rainbows and other signs appeared in the area; they opened the tent and Nyakla Pema Dudul had disappeared – only hair and nails remained. Everyone who

manifests the rainbow body leaves behind nails and hair; these are impure. Manifesting the rainbow body means that the physical body enters (into) pure nature; impure things do not.

5.3 Dr Tenzin Sherab, physician expert in the preparation of *bcud len* substances

Kathmandu, 14 October 2013

Interlocutor: In several texts I have found instances of advocating the use of human flesh as an ingredient. Why?

T.S.: *Sha chen* ('the great flesh') is used for two reasons. One is *brten brel* 'interdependence'; on the other hand, high protein. *Brten brel* means our human to human connection is empowered. It is *rigs gcig pa* 'one type'. It is also good for *rlung* humour and for spiritual advancement.

I: What can you tell us about the medicinal properties and the use of mantras to empower *bcud len*?

T.S.: There are three aspects: *rdzas*, *sngags*, *ting nge 'dzin* (ingredients, mantras and meditation). These are used to increase powers of *bcud len*.

I: What is the purpose of using wrathful mantras and invoking wrathful deities?

T.S.: To be rid of black energy and to increase power. *Bcud len* can also help with provocations like *nāga* problems. Pills can purify and cure problems caused by *nāgas* and *sa bdag* (earth owners). For example *klu bdud 18* is a pill for clearing *nāga* problems. *Dngul chu 18* is for *nāgas* and demon disturbances and lymph disorders connected with *sa bdag*. There is always a psychological/spiritual aspect. For example

we use Vajrayoginī or Garuda deities. When one practises meditation properly, then the medicines are more effective. The *gnad* (crucial points) and *rtsa rlung*, the *nāḍis* and energy: visualising Vajrayoginī hacking open the channels with her knife, we open the channels and purify them. This is not wrathful; it is pure love. This is cutting off *ma rig pa* (ignorance) and the three poisons. Desire is *rlung*, anger is *mkhris pa*, ignorance is *bad kan*. These three are symbolised by the three animals [rooster, snake, pig].

I: How widespread is *bcud len* in Tibetan medicine? Traditionally was it mainstream or reserved for a few practicing yogins who lived in solitude and had to prevent and cure illnesses on their own?

T.S.: Actually *bcud len* has both medicinal and yogic purposes; of course in ancient times yogins and practitioners were using it. They were practising without food and using *bcud len*, for example, *rdo yi bcud len* and *samādhi bcud len* and *shug pa* (juniper). For example *rdo yi bcud len* was sucking on stones, not even eating them. For normal people, this is difficult. Higher practitioners were using higher *bcud len*. I studied in Bhutan in Pajuding College and we had a retreat centre above it. It was 1985 and the retreat leader was always sitting in meditative posture. At the time we didn't have a heater or electricity. And from his retreat hut we saw no smoke from the fire stove. We got worried and went to see. He was sitting and staring at a *shilajit* (bitumen) rock. Now we have many medicinal *bcud len*, like butter *bcud len*, the three fruits *bcud len*; all of these we swallow and eat.

I: What *bcud len* do you practise or make recipes for?

T.S.: Right now, many. Before I was making *rtsa ba lnga* (five roots), *metog sna tshog* (various flowers). Right now it is hard to get ingredients. Now I am making one for

Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. He has seven different recipes. I am also making *dbang lag bcud len*. *Rtsa ba lnga*. These three I am making now.

Mandarava *bcud len* is especially for Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and his students. *Dbang lag* is for energy; for example, now many people ask how to get energy so I make it. With *rtsa ba lnga gi bcud len* my focus is to help vegetarian people, also for youths and children because there are many vegetarian children and I am making these as supplements.

I: How important is visualisation and mantra for empowering substance?

T.S.: Really important, doing all this together makes the substance more powerful.

Rdzas, *sngags*, *ting 'dzin*, all give a blessing and make it more important. Otherwise it would just be like fried rice. It is not just power from the ingredients.

I: Very often in *bcud len* texts there are breathing exercises with breath retention, especially *bum pa can*. What is the relationship between breathing exercises and physical and mental health?

T.S.: Many different breathing exercises. The Medicine Buddha said that one should exercise so as to perspire just a little bit. People ask me how many hours they should exercise. It is not about quantity of minutes, but depends on their humours. For people with *bad kan*, I would say one hour. For *mkhris pa* and *rlung*, I'd say fifteen or thirty minutes. It is not about time; it is about when you start to sweat. For some, sweat comes quickly. I often recommend *lung ro dgu krhugs*, the nine breathing exercises, using the Vairocana position and doing the breathing exercises. *Kumbhaka*, *yoga*, *prāṇayama* are all important. How to do them depends on the place, on the environment and on the person. If one has instructions from the teacher, one can work with *rtsa rlung*. Our

bodies depend on this; the practice can help to open channels and for *rlung 'khor*, the *prāṇa* flow. If they practise properly it is very good; otherwise, there are problems with *prāṇa* energy and they can go crazy. So it is very important to have a proper teacher's instructions. In this way, the three humours are balanced, as is kidney energy and everything you do has a good result. If one humour is misbalanced, the others suffer. All is related to the five elements. For example, *sa* and *chu* are related to *bad kan*: fire to *mkhris pa: rlung* with *rlung*: and *nam 'mkha* to all three. If the *rtsa rlung* practice is good then the humours are balanced and our energy increases. *Kumbhaka*, *rtsa lung*, *prāṇayama* are all connected.

I: Are breathing exercises often used when taking other medicines or substances (that are not *bcud len*)?

T.S.: *Sman grub* and *tshe ril* have different ingredients; different practices bring different benefits. The same with precious medicines. All are different, they have medical or spiritual benefits. For example *smān grub* is for black energy, sore throat, headache, and they put *smān grub* in water and drink it. People carry it when travelling to avoid misfortunes like landslides, earthquakes. So many lamas often carry *smān sgrub*. There are many different *smān grub* (Vajrasattva, Vajrakilaya, Guru Rinpoche). There are many different traditions and *gter ma*, but many of the ingredients are often similar. Long-life pills are for when people are sick or when they have a divination and life is said to be short, then they want long-life pills.

I: Do certain *bcud len* exercises, through the potencies of the substances or the mantras and visualisations, help to clear or activate the energy channels?

T.S.: Mantras help to increase blessing. People talk about purification of energy or blockages; there are many types of this *sgrib*, black energy. *Nyams sgrib*, *srog sgrib* and others exist. When many people gather, you can feel many different types of energy from others. When you see good people and feel good energy you feel energised and you have positive feelings from people. At other times, after meeting people you feel heavy. It is not just psychological; it is a form of energy. You can eat pills or burn them in fire to purify this energy. For example the ingredients Twenty-five and Twenty-six are different; each medicinal herb with different powers and potencies can purify everything. The main thing is to believe in the power of deities.

I: What is the correlation between having balanced elements and energy channels and meditative mental states? What is the effect on the mind of causing changes in the energy channels?

T.S.: If out of balance, all is related to our mind. The main imbalance is *rlung* imbalance, which affects the mind most. Our mind is really important and of course also liver or stomach pain means our mind cannot concentrate. But once the organ or stomach pain eases, then you can mentally relax. But if there are wind disorders, then since *srog 'dzin rlung* is connected to mind and heart this imbalance affects our mind. In our medicine texts we say that in our brain there are paths of wind circulation, so this is why wind imbalance affects our mind. *Snying rlung* affects one a little; then if it reaches the *srog 'dzin* level one really goes crazy. *Snying rlung* means one is more angry, can't sleep, can't concentrate, has no peace, a shaky mind, tension. Breathing exercises can help with this. Our whole body depends on *rtsa* and *rlung*. These depend on our five elements. So we need to keep all these balanced. *Rtsa rlung* is a high practice and very important.

I: Do you think *bcud len* practice can really bring significant changes in the physical body? You who have been the physician of (at least) two elderly lamas (Chögyal Namkhai Norbu and Kyabje Chatral Rinpoche) who practise *bcud len*, did you notice anything different in their constitution compared to other men of a similar age that could be attributed to the practice?

T.S.: *Bcud len* can help everyone. Of course a high practitioner who does *bcud len* for months and months will really increase his energy compared to the simple level of an average person eating it and getting power from its ingredients. High practitioners will gain a different benefit. A normal person cannot live months on *bcud len*, as high practitioners can. They know how to really use the substance. Our Tibetan medicine practice books mention that winter time is *bcud len* time. Also, the new moon is a good time to practice because of the waxing moon; it is as if the *cakras* and also all the inner workings are linked with astrology. The inner things are working, so it is a good time. This is all interconnected. Also, for precious pills, this is a good time. On Guru Rinpoche day, Buddha day, sacred days.

I: Often *bcud len* texts suggest a *kapāla* should be used to empower substances, why?

T.S.: The *kapāla* itself has power. Sometimes people think they want to use a *kapāla* when they see their gurus doing it. There are hundreds of pages about the qualities and also personal connections with the *kapāla*. There are many different types of *kapāla* in Tantrism. Some attract wealth or inner power. In Secret Mantra practitioners use a *kapāla*. But we need to know how to use one correctly and to know if its quality and inner connection is good or not.

5.4 Elio Guarisco, a non-Tibetan initiate and instructor in *bcud len* practice

Tuscany, 27 May 2014

Interlocutor: Could you please tell us about your practice of *bcud len*, where you learnt it, and how long have you been practising?

E.G.: I first heard mention of *bcud len* and *bcud len* practice in the discourses of several lamas for whom I acted as a translator back in the mid-seventies. I had the chance of meeting a real practitioner of *bcud len* when I visited Dharamsala, in north India, in 1981. That year, in spring, I accompanied my Tibetan teacher of philosophy who was residing in Switzerland, for a month-long stay in India. In Dharamsala, my teacher was a guest of Lama Yeshe in a retreat place located just above Mcleod Ganji. I stayed in a small house, five minutes' walk away from where my teacher was staying. The small house had served as a place where my teacher himself spent several years in solitary meditation, not far away from the residence of Ling Rinpoche, one of two tutors of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. The small house, located on a terrace in the forest, had two rooms. I was staying in one room, and in the other stayed a student of my teacher called Geshe Champa Wangdu.

Geshe Champa Wangdu had a somewhat turbulent life in Tibet. In fact he belonged to a class of monks called *ldob ldob*, or police monks, a monastic fraternity that existed in Gelug monasteries. The *ldob ldob* monks had an ambiguous status and were generally less academic than other monks, and had an interest in sports, fighting and other worldly matters. Once he arrived in exile in India, Geshe Champa Wangdu underwent a radical change. From a warrior monk who took part in dishing out beatings, he became an exceptionally gifted meditator. The monk was small and roundish, but very quick in anything he did and totally devoid of ceremonious manners. He seemed

like a ball in continuous and uninterrupted motion that stuck to nothing. When he was walking to the village, the people showed considerable respect for him, but he did not seem to care, and after having answered waving or with a courteous smile he would not stop but go right ahead. Western people were talking a lot about him saying he had attained the *śamata* meditation, or even the first levels of the ten levels of realisation of bodhisattvas. He had received the teaching on the *bcud len* practice from a renowned Gelug lama in Tibet. He was also a well-known exorcist. Geshe Champa Wangdu treated me well because I was accompanying his teacher.

Several years later, I accompanied a group of Westerners to Dharamsala acting as their tour guide. One late afternoon I went up to the mountain alone and I reached his house when it was already dark. When I called him, I felt he was reluctant to come out and had some difficulty in recognising me. I greeted him and asked if I could bring the people I was guiding to pay a visit to him sometime in the next few days. I told him that these people were interested in learning something about the *bcud len* practice. The next day, in the afternoon, I went to his house with the group. The monk was in retreat at that time; however, he explained to us the composition of the *bcud len* pills and the practice of *bcud len* in a general way, but in a very direct fashion without any hesitation. The people of the group were very surprised to meet such a hermit. At the end of our meeting, the other people left and I remained alone with him. He began to speak to me, and it took some time for me to realise that he was actually giving some personal advice. He also gave me the text on the preparation of the flower pill *bcud len*. He was known to have been successful in his practice of *bcud len*, although when I met him he was eating normally. A few years later, when still relatively young, Geshe Champa Wangdu passed away; his body remained unchanged for three days before starting to decompose. Later,

I received detailed instructions on the *bcud len* linked to the practice of Mandarava and that related to the practice of Amitāyus, a *gter ma* of Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul. And I had the opportunity to put into practice, in a small way, the instructions on *bcud len* whenever I did long-life practices.

I: You have led retreats of *bcud len* practice around the world, please tell us about your experiences and insight regarding *bcud len* practice. Why practise and what are the effects of practising *bcud len*?

E.G.: I have led numerous retreats of long-life practice around the world, combined with the practice of *bcud len*. Successful practice of *bcud len* will gradually lead to the power to live without consuming any coarse food; but this is not the main aim. One of the temporary benefits of the practice of *bcud len* is to detach oneself from the usual compulsory attachment to coarse food. But detachment from food is not the primary aim of *bcud len* practice either. When one reduces the quantity of coarse food, and one's body remains strong and healthy, one can experience more easily the subtle energy structure of the body, a level of existence of which we are usually unaware. As a result of this, one becomes more sensitive to hidden events both within and without the body; the state of mind becomes crystal clear, and awareness of dreams can be awakened.

The subtle energy structure of the body consists of channels, energy winds, and vital essences that represent the subtle level of the coarse body, voice and mind. This energy structure is of a nature halfway between the material and the immaterial. In that sense, it is still influenced by food, behaviour, breathing, emotions and so forth. As one reduces the intake of coarse food, this subtle level of the body becomes apparent and can be used as a way to contact the extremely subtle level of ourselves that is our real nature.

I: I seem to understand one can practise *bcud len* in stricter or looser ways, for example with or without dietary restrictions and partaking of smaller or larger quantities of food.

If dietary restrictions are not the main point, then what are the main aspects of *bcud len*?

E.G.: Dietary restrictions are always part of *bcud len* practice. For ordinary people, not well-grounded in the recognition of their real nature, the dietary restrictions are of benefit to both the health and to the spirituality of the person. Of course the dietary restrictions are applied according to the circumstances of one's own life; this and individual capacities account for the quantity of food consumed.

I: How important is the breathing aspect of *bcud len*?

E.G.: It is particularly important in the highest form of *bcud len*, known as *dharmakāya bcud len*. This "immaterial" *bcud len* is applied by encapsulating the vital essences of the universe within the very centre of one's body through the practice of a special holding of the breath known as *kumbhaka*. Moreover, karmic inner energy wind is the source of the movement of thoughts, judgements and illusions that often condition heavily our state of mind. By binding the breathing it is possible to still the emergence of brilliant thoughts and illusions, within the very centre of our body and activate what is known as wisdom energy wind. For this reason the *bcud len* of the *dharmakāya* often unifies in itself these two aspects; absorbing the essence of the universe and stilling the karmic wind in the state of the wisdom wind.

I: How important is taking the substance (the pill)?

E.G.: The pills of *bcud len* are important in the first two kinds of *bcud len* practice, that of the *nirmāṇakāya* and that of the *sambhogakāya*. There are no pills to be taken in the context of the highest form of *bcud len*, that of the *dharmakāya*. But even in the forms

of *bcud len* that make use of pills made with different kind of substances, the pill is only one part of the practice which is composed of different aspects, such as the intention, the diet, the visualisation and so forth. The main substances used in the *bcud len* practice are the same that are used in the tonic preparations called *sman mar* in traditional Tibetan medicine. Thus, in themselves, if unaccompanied by the other aspects of the *bcud len* practice they only work as a tonic, in a way hardly different from organic supplements.

I: How important do you think mantra recitation is?

E.G.: The mantra recitation in the context of the *bcud len* practice is mainly intended to empower the pills in conjunction with the appropriate visualisation for each empowering. Such empowerment is considered to be an important factor in the *bcud len* practices that rely on material substances.

5.5 Sangye Tsering, senior monk from Shechen Monastery, Kathmandu

14 August 2014

S.T.: When you approach the practice of *bcud len* first of all you must have a pure motivation and eagerness. Also, you must have total faith, not a blind one but faith coming from your own wisdom and experience. To approach Tantra you must have a solid base of Sūtra and knowledge of the nonexistence of self.

Basically there are four types of *bcud len*.

Rilbu bcud len: you need the lama's blessings, various flowers and substances that are not polluted. You mix them all together and make a pill. Then you visualise the *yidam*, recite mantras and blessings. Then you take the pill periodically, it could be once a day, or every three days, weekly or whatever.

Me tog bcud len: not all flowers (are suitable); use medicinal ones. You need a knowledgeable doctor to gather the flowers. Visualise *yidam*, mantra, blessings. Then put flowers in the water and drink periodically.

Rdo bcud len: gather specific stones from rivers. Lay them on a table. Visualise deities and all powers merging into the stone.

Rlung gi bcud len: one visualises that the air that we breathe and the wind surrounding us has the same nutrition as food. Bless it, then inhale. When the sun rises, face east and swallow as if eating food, inhaling through the mouth.

I: Are there specific deities linked to specific *bcud lens*?

S.T.: No specific deities; it depends on one's personal *yidam*. *Bcud len* is linked with subtle tantras: Drolma, Jampelyang, Chenrezig *bcud lens*. One must be aware of the nonexistence of self. Once I used to practise it, but now food is abundant and readily available so there is no need to practice *bcud len*.

I: If someone wants to practise *bcud len* how should he or she go about it?

S.T.: Learn the theory well before getting into the practice. When I first requested *bcud len* my lama questioned my intentions. I said I wanted to be prepared for unforeseen circumstances; for example, if I must escape the Chinese army and hide in a forest.

I: I heard about *bcud len* being linked with the attainment of long life – for example there are links with Guru Rinpoche in the Nyingma school. Is one of *bcud len's* goals to obtain a long life?

S.T.: *Ril bu bcud len* is different; it is to not have to rely on food for years so one can dedicate oneself completely to practice and not waste time gathering food and pleasing

benefactors. There are eight types of *dngos grub*; most are for obtaining fame or minor *siddhis*. The *rilbu'i dngos grub* is to prolong one's life and the *chi med pa'i dngos grub* is to obtain immortality.

I think the important thing in *bcud len* is to concentrate on one text or practice and do it properly, rather than gathering many texts. Confusion and expectations will arise and one will not obtain results from any one text and just try to do several in a wrong way. With experience of *bcud len* one can benefit others. If you have no experience and talk about *bcud len* then it will give others a wrong impression of *bcud len*.

If one practises *bcud len* in a proper way, then the results will be concrete. There is a story of a yogi in Tibet who was tricked in the market place and was living off a sack of sand. He lived off the sand and had no problem till he realized what he'd been eating and died of shock. In Ladakh, some years ago, there was a big snowfall and people were stuck and faced problems. People thought that everyone trapped by the snow had died and they did a practice for the dead, where you mix *tsam pa* with other things and burn it in the fire. This way, the dead go more easily, accompanied by the smell of food. When the snow melted, all the people who were thought dead returned and said that when they were trapped they had smelt the food from the practice offerings and thanks to that smell they felt full.

I personally think the *rlung gi bcud len* is the most accessible one, as fragrances can be used to help with the visualisation of food; it is the power of suggestion working in the mind.

5.6 Dr. Nida Chenagtsang, Medical Director of the International Academy for Traditional Tibetan Medicine, leads *bcud len* retreats

London, 20 October 2014

Interlocutor: How widespread is *bcud len* in Tibetan medicine?

N.C.: In Tibetan medicine *bcud len* is used for two different reasons. For the prevention of illness or for anti-ageing. Some doctors practise or use *bcud len* pills a lot and some use it less.

I: Traditionally was it mainstream or reserved for the few practising yogins who lived in solitude and had to prevent and cure illnesses on their own?

N.C.: There are two types of *bcud len*, spiritual and medical. The spiritual is only for yogins, but the medical one is for everyone, for the prevention of illnesses and anti-aging. At times, yogins would take *bcud len* recipes and medicines while doing spiritual retreats, so this would be like a healing retreat as well. In spiritual *bcud len* one aims for spiritual development and enlightenment; however, obstacles can manifest on the way. So the main aim of spiritual *bcud len* is enlightenment, but if one gets sick on the way there are remedies suggested for the yogin in retreat. These medical recipes are like methods on how to remove obstacles (illnesses) blocking the road to enlightenment.

I: As a widely known Tibetan doctor, how much practice of *bcud len* do you see currently in the Tibetan medicinal world?

N.C.: In recent years, I have really focused on *bcud len*. I am teaching and guiding groups with medical *bcud len*. I think, in our time, prevention and anti-aging are very important, and *bcud len* is a perfect way to do so.

I: What is the goal of *bcud len*?

N.C.: To prevent acute and chronic illness and stay fit and young. The goal of spiritual *bcud len* can be seen in two ways; a relative aspect and an absolute goal. Also, the relative aspect can be subdivided. For example, to avoid starving, Longchenpa and other great masters did *bcud len* to replace food. Also *bcud len* as a healing practice, it affects the body and then the mind; for example if we have less *mkhris pa* we have less anger. The ultimate goals are the ultimate higher spiritual transformation, including rainbow transformation and rainbow body and cutting attachment to solid food in a very strong way.

I: Are you preparing and distributing *bcud len* remedies to patients?

N.C.: Yes, more and more.

I: Would you say *bcud len* is more important for physical well-being or for spiritual advancement?

N.C.: Yes, it is good for physical health and very beneficial for spiritual people as well, but we should not mix up the two types of *bcud len*.

I: In *bcud len* practice how important is the actual substance? Is it more the power of visualisation, mantra, or the ‘internal alchemy’ happening with *rtsa rlung* and *kumbhaka* that sparks the effect of the practice? Without the empowerment, visualisation, mantras and so on, how much medicinal efficacy would the essences have?

N.C.: I would say substances are most important among things. First the power of substances, second the power of mind, third the power of mantra.

Substances have a power through taste. The six tastes each have an effect on physical bodies. The eight potencies (including light, heavy, hot, cold) and seventeen qualities are the ways herbs have an effect on us. The three humours, *rlung*, *mkhris pa* and *bad kan*, have twenty characteristics. This is the substance way.

Then comes the power of mantra; it functions through vibrations; mantras work through the meaning, the deity blessings. Mantra is like a pure vibration and our energy is also a vibration.

The mental part is the power of visualisation. The mind is engaged with a subtle wind energy. When you are using your mind energy it is like the horse, the mind is like the horse rider, if you master these it has an effect on the body.

Why do we need visualisation? Because it is a method to deal with our mind aspect. We use our mind because it is our human condition, we do these practices and visualisations to train our mind but it is said that when one is advanced in meditation and contemplation, visualisations are no longer needed, like in Dzogchen practice. We do these visualisations because they match how we think. Why do we visualize inviting Buddha? He doesn't need offering bowls, and so forth, so this is just reflecting how we think. For example we offer *rakta* in a *kapāla*, which is the solar energy and also we offer *smān*, which is like the lunar offering. These are the solar and lunar aspects. These are very important; where is our life coming from? Oxygen. The sun creates oxygen through plants, so we consider it essential. Our essence comes from sun and moon, so we refer to white and red substances.

I: Some substances are considered very auspicious – how important is actual substance?

N.C.: Generally speaking 70% of power comes from substances, 20% from mantras,

10% from mind. But if we talk about *prāṇa*, if we use *rlung bcud len*, we are using *kumbhaka* or *bar rlung*, then it is different. Let us say 70% is working on *rlung*. Later, *nam mkha' bcud len* is based on mind power.

I: How beneficial do you think it would be to take *bcud len* substances/pills for someone who is not practising the meditation or breathing exercises associated with the practice?

N.C.: Medical *bcud len* is for nonpractitioners; so they just take the *bcud len* pills like other normal pills, but the Vajrayana one should not be taken by nonpractitioners. These are designed for practitioners; it is like food for yogins. If you want to help with pure intention, compassion, it could be okay, but texts do not say to distribute the pills.

I: Why is *a ru ra* considered so important as a substance?

N.C.: Because it has six tastes, eight types of powers and seventeen qualities. The Medicine Buddha holds it. It is called the king of medicines; Yuthok is holding it.

I: Very often, in *bcud len* texts, there are breathing exercises with breath retention. What do breathing exercises activate within the subtle body?

N.C.: You are talking only about the spiritual ones; the medical ones are not like that. Spiritually, we talk about body, speech and mind. Mentally, we use meditation; bodily, we use posture. To work with energy and speech, *kumbhaka* is the best; we work on the roots of energy/speech. In Vajrayana we talk about transformation. Here medically pills are to transform a body into a healthy body. *Bcud len* is a transformation from a sick to a healthy body, and from a healthy body to a very vital body or even rainbow body. I think *bcud len* is essential for the rainbow body. *Kumba can* is essential to transform one's energy. Mentally you do transformation into deities. Also, for speech we chant mantras.

Doing *kumbhaka* is like chanting mantras. The most powerful way to chant mantras is while performing *kumbhaka*.

Kumbhaka is transforming karmic wind into wisdom wind. It means that it can transform you from mortal to immortal, an energy transformer. We have roughly 72,000 channels. When we do *kumbhaka*, all these 72,000 channels flow into the central channel where we have only wisdom wind. If we send all karmic wind into the central channel, then the karmic *prāṇa* transforms into wisdom *prāṇa*.

Vajrayana's main goal is transformation, to transform body, speech and mind. In Dzogchen there is no need to transform anything, but in Vajrayana we transform these.

There are different types of *kumbhaka*. Basic *kumbhaka* – inhalation, feeling, churning, exhalation: we believe this is Saraha's *kumbhaka*. Other *bum pa can* focus on the heart and throat and elsewhere. This *bum pa can* generates lots of heat. There is also *bum pa can* happening in other chakras. When you have a lot of strong visualisation and mantra chanting I'd say it's more related to a development stage. More towards the completion stage there is *kumbhaka*, yoga and *gtum mo*.

When karmic wind enters into the central channel there are ten signs; *bzhugs* (entering), *gnas* (staying), *thim* (dissolving). The three-year, three-month, three-week retreat is designed for this; this is designed mathematically. In this system it is said that we could live 100 years and that we need to extract *jñāna prāṇa*. If you hold and churn, you get the essence. In Vajrayana things are very systematic.

I: What is the relationship between breathing and health?

N.C.: Breath is energy; to work with energy is the basis for balance of body and mind.

I: What is the relationship between balanced energy – the three humours and the mental state?

N.C.: In Tibetan medicine we talk about two things, typology and pathology. Typology is the way you are. Pathology is a problem to be solved.

We have *rlung*, *mkhris pa*, *bad kan*, attachment, anger and ignorance respectively, connected with our emotions. Some medicines can help using specific herbs, minerals, metals, and animal parts. When the three humours are balanced we reduce the mental poisons. The sutras say to reduce the causes of the three poisons, the tantras say to transform them, Dzogchen says to know their true nature.

I: What is the correlation between the energy channels and meditative mental states?

N.C.: Channels are like roads, energy is like the car and mind is the person driving. When the road is blocked, the person is in trouble [laughs].

I: Do you think *bcud len* practice can bring altered states of consciousness?

N.C.: Spiritual ones, yes. Medical ones are for a calm and clear mind, balanced energy.

I: Are you familiar with *bcud len* involving sexual practices?

N.C.: Yes, Karma Mudra *bcud len*. According to Bzhad pa'i dorje, eating sperm is revitalizing. Most Karma Mudra texts say not to lose sperm, but there are three or four cases where it is okay: during empowerment, if making a medical substance, for having kids, for making offerings. In Bzhad pa'i rdo rje's text you can lose it but then you eat it again and it is recycled. In *Nyi zla bcud len* [the male and female fluid mixed together], you are eating the essence of sun and moon. Everything is recycled so it is as if you do not lose it, and you experience an anti-aging body transformation. In the Atiyoga style

of Karma Mudra, you don't lose it because the bliss is integrated into *rigpa*. This was said by Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje.

5.7 Iacobella Gaetani, translator of *The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Ḍākinī Mandarava* and witness to Chögyal Namkai Norbu's revelation of a Mandarava *bcud len* practice in Maratika, Nepal, in 1984

Tuscany, Italy, July 2014

I.G.: The process of the revelation of the text entitled *The Sphere of the Life Essence of the Vajra or The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Ḍākinī Mandarava*, by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, took place during a journey and retreat in the holy cave of Maratika in Nepal. Before going to Maratika, Rinpoche was invited by Lama Tandzin and his son Tsultrim to give teachings at Thar gling *dgon pa* (Tholu Gonpa), their small family monastery, in the region of Solukhumbu in East Nepal. From Lamidanda, the nearest airport, it took four full days walking to reach the monastery. As he was approaching the monastery, on horseback, crossing through a forest he recognized the place as a hidden valley that he knew from a previous dream. The dream was connected to Tara. In fact, before leaving Nepal, Chögyal Namkhai Norbu gave Tsultrim a statue of Tara to be kept in the temple.

In Tolu *dgon pa*, while giving Byang chub rdo rje's teaching called *Bla ma zab don*, and later on the way to Maratika, he had a series of dreams foretelling the opening of the mind treasure of the *The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Ḍākinī*. Every morning at breakfast he told me and his sisters about these dreams, which are narrated in the text I translated called a *Bouquet of Lotus Flowers*. So, in a way, we were not taken by surprise when later, in Maratika, Rinpoche gave us the copy book with the

Mandarava *dgongs gter* to guard. Rinpoche didn't ask us to do any special practice, but we were all attending his teachings, firstly, as I mentioned, *Bla ma zab don* at Tolu *dgon pa* and, afterwards, in Maratika the *Long-Life Practice of Amitāyus*, a *gter ma* of Nyagla Padma Dundul. The actual *bcud len* practice was discovered by Rinpoche a year later in Conway, also in a dream. On that occasion I was present when, in the morning at breakfast, he started to write down on a napkin the *bcud len* text called *The Practice of Absorption of the Essence of the Dakini of Immortality*.

I think that the *bcud len* practice is fundamental in the Mandarava teaching because, already in the original *dgongs gter* rediscovered by Rinpoche in Maratika, there is the section called *Man ngag srog thig* where one absorbs the vital essence of the elements through breathing in the *dharmakāya bcud len*. The subsequent text, rediscovered in Conway (Massachusetts) called *The Practice of Absorption Bcud len of the Essence of the Dakini of Immortality* mentions the seven elixirs that are necessary for the realisation of the body of light. Therefore it is complimentary to the main text.

Translating *The Long-Life Practice of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava*, which includes *A Bouquet of Lotus Flowers*, *The Invocation of Ekajati* and the *bcud len* practice has been, for me, a way to deepen my understanding of the practice, and it has been very important. From my experience, also having been in Maratika recently, I would agree that the long-life practice of Mandarava and its *bcud len* reinforces and balances one's elements, increases one's clarity, and protects one's vital energy.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The texts analysed here, most of which were previously untranslated, are by no means a complete collection of writings in the tradition, but represent an early attempt to gather and analyse some scattered and unexamined evidence of an important aspect of Tibet's spiritual and medical culture.

The first question underpinning this project regarded the 'independence' of the Tibetan *bcud len* tradition. This reflected the preoccupation of Tibetan scholars, notably Samten Karmay, Yang Ga and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, with establishing an indigenous cultural and historical identity. This would include a medical tradition that was not derived completely, or almost so, from India, as most historians long believed. Yang Ga's evidence of the existence of considerable Tibetan medical knowledge prior to the arrival of the *Rgyud bzhi* in Tibet enabled him to affirm that only a relatively small portion of that work came directly from India. The relatively sparse documentation on the practice of *bcud len* and the complications of establishing authorship allow us less certainty on its origins. A consensus is now forming that the so called three rivers influencing Tibet's medical history (the Indian, Chinese and Galenic contributions) merged with the native Bon knowledge to create a 'melange', in Yoeli-Tlalim's term. This does not, however, make continuing enquiry into its influences redundant. While India may have been the source of and provided the model for many texts, this does not mean that a distinct form of essence extraction has not evolved on the Tibetan plateau.

In the texts collected here, the Indian imprint on the framework of the practices appears to predominate. Points in the arguments stressing this connection to India, discussed in the observations that follow Chapter 3, are the deities invoked or visualised

in the practices that reflect Indian influence. References abound to such figures as Kālacakra, Vajrayoginī and Amitāyus, and Orissa appears to be the probable place of origin of practices in at least one instance. Many of the teachings and lineages are said to derive from Padmasambhava. It has been pointed out that the *Rgyud bzhi* itself contains *bcud len* instructions that Emmerick showed were translated word by word from Sanskrit. Many ingredients found in recipes, such as *utpala* and *arura*, also are thought to derive from India. The *Rasāyana* fasting retreats were a possible influence on the development of *bcud len*, while many of the exercises to master the subtle body very probably had Indian counterparts: the Tibetan term *bum pa can* is a translation of the Sanskrit *kumbhaka*. Several rituals described in this collection to empower nectars are strikingly similar to Indian Vajrayoginī practices. There is even an example of a Hayagrīva dance to subjugate negative spirits, a further indication of a transfer of Indian practices.

Chinese influences are harder to evaluate, or at least to be attributed directly. As Carla Nappi points out, our notions of ‘Chinese-ness’ remain somewhat naïve; reflecting a tendency to overlook changing boundaries with Tibet, regional variations and distinct chronological phases. We know of extensive transfers of knowledge through diplomatic contacts between China and India and China and Tibet, long before the twelfth century when the *Rgyud bzhi* is believed to have appeared in Tibet, but unravelling the reciprocal influences at play is a task that will probably require extensive collaboration between Chinese, Indian and Tibetan experts. The early Daoist sexual exercises predated and may have influenced Indian practices, as Geoffrey Samuel has suggested, but tangible evidence of this has yet to be found.

The second question that I posed at the outset regarded the parameters of the study and what might legitimately be termed *bcud len* practice. The search for an answer has helped to identify salient features that evolved in Tibet and thus helps to clarify the extent to which the practices may be regarded as Tibetan in nature. It would appear that while Tibetan longevity practices stemmed from Indian tantric traditions, indigenous features soon were incorporated to form the basis of a 'Tibetan' set of teachings. The use of compounds of particular substances, usually in the form of pills, is a common feature of *bcud len* and perhaps pills are the most common association with *bcud len* practice. Of the texts scrutinised in this collection, twenty-six elixirs mention pills, while others indicate broth or paste as alternative ways of ingesting the substances. The inclusion of highly specific ingredients in making pills and nectars (such as certain plants only found in the Himalayan region and yak meat) also suggests that Tibetan makers of compounds developed their art into a distinctive one. However pill making and ingesting is but one part of *bcud len*.

Since *bcud len* is fundamentally 'essence extraction', the practices found in the texts suggest the need for a broader definition than has often been applied. From the evidence, the attempts to extract essence include not only the ingestion of medicinal compounds, but the use of breathing techniques to refine and master the workings of the subtle body, *phrul 'khor* exercises, preliminary rituals and invocations, sexual union both actual and imagined, contemplation and mantra recitation.

The third research question regarded the respective potencies of the ingredients of the medicinal compounds themselves and their empowerment through consecrating ritual. The texts I have analysed and translated show a significant diversity in the instructions; almost all of these have considerable detail on the consecration of

substances. This suggests that even in practices with the most fundamental medical aims, such as relieving stomach problems, the efficacy of the substance taken was also deemed to depend on empowerment. Other texts ask the practitioner to use specific mantras and visualisations or even to go to a certain place to practise, and it is hard to reconcile these instructions with standard notions of what is strictly ‘medical’.

In Dr Tenzin Sherab’s explanation (Conversation 5.3), the power of *bcud len* has three aspects: ingredients, mantras and meditation. He indicates the metaphysical powers of *bcud len* by stating that pills can play a part in purification and clearing problems created by the *nāgas*. Similarly, on the question of the intended beneficiaries of *bcud len*, Dr Nida Chenagtsang stresses that its practices are not restricted to the medical realm. From this compendium we can detect a fusing of pragmatic medical and spiritual aims which often complemented each other within the same text. Medical references provide insights into common preoccupations of the time. At the end of several texts, the earliest example being Text 4, recipes to overcome illnesses that may arise in the practitioners are listed extensively and said to offer solutions to ailments ranging from blood pressure, nerve-related illness, sinus blockage, and constipation to parasites (references to which occur in several texts, suggesting that parasites were a major problem for solitary meditators). The presence of such lists alongside instructions on meditation suggest that certain texts may have been intended for hermits, far from doctors, needing self-medication. However not only yogins are interested in the empowered substances and *smān sgrub* public gatherings continue to attract large crowds in Bhutan according to Jamyang Khyentse Norbu. This bears testimony to the non-elitist nature of the long life aspect of pill practice, which is not restricted to initiated practitioners.

As regards the efficacy of the substances themselves, Dr Chenagtsang attributes more importance to the practices involving compounds to the substances themselves (70%), and particularly to their power through taste, than he does to the power of mind (20%) or mantras (10%). He acknowledges a difference where *prāṇa bcud len* is practised, where he estimates 70% of effectiveness is derived from working on *prāṇa*. Dr Sherab makes the point that while pills eaten or burned in fire may have the capacity to purify and dispel negativity, their potency depends greatly on a belief in the deities.

In establishing a broader definition of *bcud len*, it is important to remember that there exist forms of the practice that do not require the ingestion of substances, and researchers should not feel bound to limit their investigation to pill making and the more accessible medical usages. The texts themselves and the comments of the contemporary adepts indicate that in the advanced forms of practice no substance but *prāṇa* is needed for sustenance.

Another research question at the outset concerned the contribution to and the involvement of specific Tibetan schools in *bcud len*. At times it can be unexpectedly difficult to establish authorship of some teachings and prior to stating which school has the greatest number of *bcud len* practices further research into the Bon tradition of *bcud len* would be necessary. The evidence of this compendium suggests several texts can be traced to Padmasambhava, suggesting a strong *Rnying ma* imprint in *bcud len*. Of the texts traced back to Guru Padmasambhava several of them came about through *gter ma* revelations. Teachings transmitted in the *gter ma* chain of transmission could be regarded as one of *bcud len*'s salient characteristics. *Bcud len* was never institutionalised, but both the text colophons and contemporary authorities confirm that it has been practised in other schools. Jamyang Khyentse Norbu speaks of *bcud len* as

mostly associated with the *Rnying ma* and Chögyal Namkhai Norbu reminds us that the Dzogchen masters Klong chen pa and Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul were advanced *bcud len* practitioners. The translator Elio Guarisco recalls meeting an active *bcud len* practitioner from the *Dge lugs* school.

Examination of the visualisations and rituals in the collection indicates that Vajrayoginī and Amitāyus are the deities most often connected to *bcud len* practices, as discussed in Chapter 3. These deities however were not strictly associated with one school of Buddhism and their inclusion in one school's set of practices by no means indicates exclusive use. The universal appeal of certain deities is clear; for example, Vajrayoginī is found in *Rnying ma*, *Bka' rgyud* and *Sa skya* texts, as well as in a text authored by the Second Dalai Lama.

A further question at the start of this project concerned the present vitality of the *bcud len* tradition. Gerke's recent fieldwork findings have demonstrated a wide interest in Tibetan holistic healing. She has recounted the development of a significant commercial production in India of *bcud len* tonics.

My own conversations on *bcud len* with doctors in Nepal and with lamas and medical practitioners in the West confirm the growing appeal of *bcud len*. Mandarava *bcud len* practice as taught by Chogyal Namkhai Norbu is now regularly practised by thousands of adepts on six continents. Dr Chenagstang regularly leads seminars on rejuvenation across the world and Dr Sherab is producing several *bcud len* formulae for export. The increasing interest in both medical and spiritual forms of *bcud len* suggests that this ancient tradition is experiencing an unforeseen revival and dissemination.

Given the multifaceted nature of the tradition, the question of whether *bcud len* should be regarded as a spiritual or medical practice is not particularly useful.

Academic discourse has by now created more nuanced enquiries and simplistic divisions are no longer acceptable. As historians search for ever more refined interpretations, research may effectively raise as many questions as it answers.

The present study, for all its limitations, suggests possible avenues for future research. To help identify more Tibetan elements in *bcud len*, further investigation of Bon rituals and the sources of *phrul 'khor* practices will undoubtedly enhance our understanding of Tibetan features in the practices and rituals. The work of Chinese scholars on cultural interaction with Tibet may well produce interesting evidence of connections between subtle body practices and similarities in the quest for longevity or even immortality. Ideally, interdisciplinary teamwork will be the trend in future research as too few individuals are equipped with sufficient linguistic and medical knowledge. Knowing the very high percentage of *gter mas* amongst the *bcud len* texts, we may well also hope for further revelations of texts in the future.

The wide range of techniques and benefits of *bcud len* practice thus appeal to all, from the Tantric meditator or the celibate monk, to the sick or infirm or simply the lay man or woman seeking an amelioration of health and life force. Whether the tangible benefits of the whole spectrum of practices can be tested in a Western medical context, as *phrul 'khor* has been in Alejandro Chaouls's project, remains to be seen. I have heard *bcud len* both touted both as a possible cure for obesity and indicated as the most rapid path to the attainment of the rainbow body. It is clear therefore that a comprehensive definition of the practice is called for. In my reading of this collection of texts, *bcud len* is best thought of as a set of practices of composite origins with a strong early Indian imprint that may include the ingestion of substances empowered by ritual and subtle body exercises; these may include yogic respiratory exercises working with *prāṇa*,

visualisations, mantra recitation and union with a consort. The purported benefits of the practice can range from the riddance of wrinkles to the supreme attainment of *'ja lus*, the rainbow body.

It is my hope that the translations, classification and commentaries in this study, limited as they are, can help draw attention to these long ignored treatises that are important in both broadening and refining our understanding of Tibet's unique heritage and its vibrant medical and spiritual culture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

- Ba ri lo tsa ba rin chen grags. *Man ngag zab mo ga. Ba-ri lo-tsa-ba Rin-chen Grags kyi Be'u Bum*, Delhi 1974 (PL 480), 487-496.
- Bdud 'dul rdo rje pad ma rgyal mtshan. *Dam chos sprul sku snying thig las bstan srung chen po legs grub rdo rje yab yum gyi 'chi med tshe'i bcud len zab mo bzhugs so Bstan srung chen po legs grub rdo rje yab yum gyi 'chi med tshe'i bcud len zab mo*. In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'dul rdo je. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997, 5, 555 -561. TBRC W22123.
- *Dam chos sprul sku'i thig las: 'gro don las tshogs zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*. In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'dul rdo rje. Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997, 11, 475 – 490. TBRC W22123.
- Bdud 'joms gling pa. *Dag snang ye shes draw ba las/ 'chi med tshe yi bcud len dngos grub gter gyi 'byung gnas bzhugs*. In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'joms gling pa. Thimphu, Bhutan: Lama Kuenzang Wangdue, 2004, 15, 202 – 207. TBRC W28732.
- *Zab gsang mkha' 'gro'i snying thig las/ thugs sgrub ye shes nyi ma'i skor/ bcud len 'od gsal snying po yi/ rtsa rlung byin rlabs chos nyid sprin phung bzhugs so*. In *Gter chos*. Bdud 'joms gling pa. Thimphu, Bhutan: Lama Kuenzang Wangdue, 2004, vol. 7: 153 - 157. TBRC W28732.
- Blo bzang byang chub bstan pa'i sgron me. *Me tog bcud len gyi khrid gnang skabs kyi brjed byang*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Byang chub bstan pa'i sgron me. Sku 'bum: Sku 'bum byams pa gling, 1999, 3, 353-364. TBRC W29200.
- Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma. *Me tog bcud len gyi gdams pa bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma. Lhasa: Zholpar khang gsar pa, 2000, 5, 153-162. TBRC W21507.
- Blo bzang don grub. *Bcud len rdo rje'i chu 'thung*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang don grub. Chengdu: Lho nub mi rigs par khang, 2006, 2, 371-379. TBRC W11128.
- Blo bzang nor bu shes rab. *Rdo rje phag mo bcu gsum ma'i sgrub thabs dang rde'u bcud len gyi gdams pa gnyis*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang nor bu shes rab. Beijing: Yellow Pagoda, 1996, 2, 307 - 321. TBRC W23471.
- Blo bzang rta mgrin. *Rje bla ma tshe lha sku gsum la brten pa'i tshe sgrub pa'i bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Blo bzang rta mgrin. New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, 1975-1976, 6, 25 – 29. TBRC W13536.
- Btsun pa ye shes don grub bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan. *Chu'i bcud len gyi gdams pa 'chi med rig 'dzin sgrub pa'i chu rgyun zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. In *Gdams ngag mdzod*. Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1979-1981, 17, 311- 318. TBRC W20877.
- Bya bral ba Dge 'dun rgya mtsho dpal bzang po. *Bcud len gyi gdams pa rim pa lnga pa bzhugs so*. In *Gdams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: Shechen Publications, 1999, 17, 303-309. TBRCW23605

- Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. *Nam mkha'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thur ma zhes bya ba bzhus*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. Leh: T. Sonam & D.L. Tashigang, 1983-1985, 6, 173 – 176. TBRC W22130.
- *Lha gcig nyi ma gzhon nus dag snang du stsal ba'i thabs kyi lam mchog nyi zla'i bcud len dang brgyad 'debs*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. Leh: T. Sonam & D.L. Tashigang, 1983-1985, 12, 363–370. TBRC W22130.
- *Bden tshig smon lam 'chi med grub pa'i bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Bzhad pa'i rdo rje. Leh: T. Sonam & D.L. Tashigang, 1983-1985, 3, 471- 473. TBRC W22130.
- Dbyangs can grub pa'i rdo rje. *Bde mchog dkar po'i sgo nas tshe ril sogs bsgrub cing longs spyod pa'i tshul 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len zhes bya ba bzhus so*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Dbyangs can grub pa'i rdo rje. Dngul chu bla brang, 1999, 2, 157-163. TBRC W22334.
- Chögyal Namkhai Norbu. *'Chi med mkha' 'gro'i bcud len rgya*. In *The Practice of Long Life of the Immortal Dakini Mandarava*. Iacobella Gaetani (trans.) Arcidosso: Shang Shung Edizioni, 1999.
- Dharma bha dra. *Bcud len gyi ril bu bsgrubs nas spyod thsul dang zhabs brtan srub 'jug*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Dharma bha dra. New Delhi: Tibet House, 1973-1981, 2, 425 - 431. TBRC W20548.
- Dge 'dun grub pa. *Dngul chu'i bcud len gyi man ngag*. Dge 'dun grub pa. In *Gsung 'bum*. Bkra shis lhun po: Bkra shis lhun po gzhung, 1996, 6, 330-331. TBRC W24769.
- Dkar ru grub dbang bstan 'dzin rin chen. *Theg pa chen po dmar khrid dug lnga rang grol gyi brgyud las bcud len zas kyi gdams pa zhugs*. This manuscript belongs to the cycle of *Dmar khrid dug lnga rang grol*, (3827-3838). The manuscript was found in Mustang by Charles Ramble and has not as yet been made widely available.
- Gar dbang rdo rje. *Zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal las: bcud len rdo rje'i chu 'thun*. In *Rdor sems thugs kyi me long dang zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal*. New Delhi: *Rta rna bla ma*, 1974, 427- 432. TBRC W30347.
- Gter chen kar ma. *'Chi med gnyug ma'i gsang mdzod zhes. lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor gyi rig 'dzin thugs tig padma'i srog/ bcud len bdud rtsi'i gdam zab las/ gzhun don cha lag mdor bsdus bzhus*
 — *'Chi med gnyugs ma'i sangs mdzod lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor las/ yi dam 'khor lo bsdoms pa yab yum gyi sgrubs thabs dang a dkar bcud len kyi gdam pa rlung khrid dang cas pa bzhus so/ A gter ma* text discovered by Gter chen kar ma in Mtsho pad ma. It was given to me by Charles Manson from the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. The folios were loose and Charles was not able to identify their place in any larger collection.
- Gter slob Sangs rgyas chos 'phel. *Mi g.yo ba'i nam mkha'i bcud len gyi zin bris bltas chog tu bkod pa phyogs med ri khrid khrod 'grim pa'i cha rkyen blo gtad gcig chog log 'tsho'i zhen pa rang grol*. In *Mchog gling gter gsar*. Paro: Lama Pema Tashi, 1982-1986, 11, 459 -465. TBRCW22642.
- Gter ston rang rig rdo rje. *Pad ma longs sku tshe mtha' yas kyi sgrub thabs bcud len dang 'brel ba 'chi med grub pa'i sgrom zhes bya ba bzhus so*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 27, 611 – 624. TBRC W1PD289.

- *Bla ma bka' brgyad zab pa gten mdzad las/ bcud ldan zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len rdzas tshogs bsdu thabs kyi man nag gzer ti ka*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 19, 455 – 458. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Tshe yi dngos grub la zab pa 'jam dpal gzhin rje'i gshed sku'i sgrub pa la brten pa'i zag med rdo rje'i bcud len 'chi med rang grol shes bya ba bzhugs*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar Rin po che Thub bstan Nyi ma, 2005, vol. 21: 619 – 630. Accessed through TBRC W1PD289.
- *Bla ma bka' brgyad zab pa gter mdzod las: bcud ldan zag med bdud rtsi'i bcud len gyi ril sgrub yid bzhin gter mdzod*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyima, 2005, 19, 453-459. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Tshe dbang rdo rje'i srog sgrubs ril bu'i sgrubs pas cho ga tshe'i bcud len zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 27, 689 - 701. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig las/ sprul sku'i bcud len gsal rang grol bzhungs*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 28, 555 - 565. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las/ longs sku'i bcud len bde chen rang grol bzhugs*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 28, 539 - 550. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las / mi 'gyur rdo rje'i bcud len ka dag rang grol bzhugs*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 28, 571 - 582. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las/ mngon par byang chub bcud len 'ja' lus rang grol bzhug so*. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 28, 589 – 599. TBRC W1PD289.
- *Gsang chen 'od gsal snying gi thig le las/ chos sku'i bcud len dri bral rang grol bzhugs*. Rang rig rdo rje. In *Gter chos*. Rang rig rdo rje. Khreng tu'u: Gzan dkar rin po che thub bstan nyi ma, 2005, 28, 519 - 531. TBRC W1PD289.
- 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. *Bdud rtsi sman sgrub mdor bsdus bya tshul 'chi med rtag pa'i bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten, 1977-1980, 16, 215 - 223. TBRC W21807.
- *Nye brgyud tshe khrid sgrub thabs dbang chog bcas pa 'chi med rdo rje'i bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.13, 135-167. Gangtok: GonpoTseten,1977-1980, 13, 135-167. TBRC W21807.
- *'Chi med bcud len gyi man ngag bkra shis zho yi snying po*. In *Sgrub thabs kun btus*. Kangra, H.P.: Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Literature Publisher, Dzongsar Institute for Advanced Studies, 10, 699-715. TBRC W23681.

- *Tshe sgrub zhag bdun ma'i nyams len gyi rim pa 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*. In *Sgrub thabs kun btus*. Kangra, H.P.: Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Literature Publisher, Dzongsar Institute for Advanced Studies, 1, 495 - 400. TBRC W23681.
- 'Jigs med gling pa. *Sku gsum bcud len*. 'Jigs med gling pa mkhyen brtse 'od zer. *Sku gsum bdud rtsi'i bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. 'Jigs med gling pa. A 'dzom par ma 'brug spa gro la bskyar par brgya pa, 10, 303-305. TBRC W7477.
- 'Ju mi pham rgya mtso. 'Chi med bcud len sgrub pa'i thabs mchog bdud rtsi'i bum pa bzang po. In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho, 4, 691-702. Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi. TBRC W5062.
- *Bcud len gyi cha lag rin chen za ma tog bzhugs so*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Vol. 4: 185-199. Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi. TBRC W5062.
- *Bcud len sgrub pa'i tshe bka' srung mchod thabs bdud rtsi'i char 'bebs*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Khreng tu'u: Gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs, 2007, 28, 202 - 203. TBRC W2DB16631.
- *Bcud len sgrub thabs mandzu shri ra sa ya na sa dha ni*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Mi pham rgya mtsho. Paro, Bhutan: Lama Ngo drup and Sherab Drimey, 1984-1993, 5, 177 - 180. TBRC W23468.
- Kha tog rig 'dzins tshe dbang nor bu. *Bla med sngags chos kyi snying po'i bcud len lam zab bdud rtsi'i thig le*. In *Gdams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: Shechen publications, 1999, 15: 315-326.
- Klong chen rab 'byams pa dri med 'od zer. 'Byung ba rdo'i bcud len. Dri med 'od zer. In *Snying thig ya bzhi*. Delhi: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1975, 11, 205-211. TBRC W12827
- *Rigs lnga'i bcud len bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*. Dri med 'od zer. In *Snying thig ya bzhi*. Delhi: Sherab Gyaltzen Lama, 1975, 9, 299-320. TBRC W12827.
- Kun dga' blo gros. *Dpal rdo rje nag po chen po gur mgon dkar po'i tshe sgrub 'khor 'das bcud len*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Kun dga' blo gros. Boudha, Kathmandu: Sa skya rgyal yongs gsung rab slob gnyer khang, 2008, 5, 303-311. TBRC W24054.
- Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med. *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub las ril bu'i bcud len zag bral 'chi med bdud rtsi'i dwangs bcud 'od gsal gyi myu gu bcud du len pa'i dmigs rim zab mo bzhugs so*. In *Rig 'dzin srog sgrub*. Delhi: Chos spyod dpar skrun khang, 2000, 1, 191 - 197. TBRC W13779.
- *Rdo rje snying po las cong zhi'i bcud len bla ma'i snyan brgyud dri ma med pa bzhugs so*. In *Rdo rje snying po sprin gyi thol glu*, 2, 747 - 751. TBRC W13780.
- Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu. *Me tog bcud len skal bzang rna rgyan gyi lhan thabs dngos grub mchog ster zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu. Kathmandu: Ngagyur Dongak Choling Monastery, 2004, 7, 321-329. TBRC W29036.
- Nyag bla padma bdud 'dul. *Bka' gsang zab chos mkha' khyab rang grol las man ngag sku gsum bcud len 'ja' lus rdo rje'i sku brnyes bzhugs so*. In *Nyag bla pad ma bdud 'dul gyi gter chos skor* 2, 219-237. TBRC W23695.

- Pad ma gling pa. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: bcud len yid bzhin nor bu zhes bya ba bzhugs*. In *Rig 'dzin pad ma gling pa yi zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975-1976, 2, 715 - 744. TBRC W21727.
- Rang byung rdo rje. *Ra mo shag gi bcud len/ dbang lag gi bcud len/ 'od ldan sngo'i bcud len/ ya ma spyi 'joms man ngag drug pa bcas*. In *Gsung 'bum*. Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, 11, 639-646. TBRC W30541.
- *Rlung dang rigs pa'i bcud len rang byung rdo rjes sbyar ba bzhugs so*. Rang byung rdo rje. In *Gsung 'bum*. Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, 11, 623-626. TBRC W30541.
- *Chu 'thung ba'i gdams pa*. Rang byung rdo rje. *Gsung 'bum*. In Zi ling: Mtshur phu mkhan po lo yag bkra shis, 2006, 11, 627-634. TBRC W30541.
- Ratna gling pa. *Yang zab tshe'i bcud len rdo rje'i phreng ba*. In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, 7, 477-484. TBRCW21730.
- *Tshe sgrub gsang 'dus las 'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len*. In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, 13, 409-503. TBRC W21730.
- *Them yig med cong zhi la sogs bdud rtsi rdo rje'i bcud len bzhugs pa'i dgu phyogs lags so*. In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, 12, 153 -159. TBRC W21730
- *Rtag ngu'i bcud len zab mo*. In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, 4, 135-149. TBRC W21730.
- *Thugs rje chen po gsang ba 'dus pa las bcud len khyad 'phags zab mo rnam bzhugs so*. In *Ratna gling pa'i gter chos*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1977-1979, 7, 135-149. TBRCW21730.
- Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang. *Bcud len sna tshogs*. Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang. In *Gsung 'bum*. Dehradun: Ngawang Gyaltzen and Ngawang Lungtok, 1970, 13, 564-568. TBRC W19975.
- Rig 'dzin 'Ja' tshon snying po. *Tshe sgrub gnam lcags rdo rje dngos grub kun 'dus las: bcud len sman gyi tshe sgrub zab mo bdud rtsi'i lcags kyu zhes bya ba bzhugs so*. In *'Ja' tshon pod drug*. Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1979-1982, 2, 299 - 307. TBRC W23757.
- Rig 'dzin rgod ldem. *Rdzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal las/ bcud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba*. Rgod kyi ldem 'phru can. In *Dgongs pa zang thal*, 2, 45-64. Simla: Thub bstan rdo rje brag e wam lcog sgar, 2000. W18557.
- Rin chen rgya mtsho. *Bcud len gyi skor*. In *'Brong rtse'i be'u bum dkar po*. Delhi: Damchoe Sangpo, 1983, 1, 99-103. TBRC W25101.
- Rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan. *Sman chen po'i bcud len bzhugs*. Grags pa rgyal mtshan. In *Sa skya''bka'bum*, 1736 Derge Edition, New Delhi, 1992, 8, 21, 140-141. TBRC W2DB4569
- Sangs rgyas gling pa. *Bcud len snying po bsdus pa dngos grub longs spyod kyi gnas drug (bla ma dgongs 'dus bcud len)*. *Bcud len snying po bsdus pa*. In *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*. Gangtok: Sonam Topgay Kazi, 1972, 7, 293-344. TBRCW18978.

- Sa skya Paṇḍita. *Lam zab mo bla ma'i rnal 'byor bzugs so. Lnga pa rlung gi bcud len bstan pa ni.*
Khecharī Sa pan. Sakya Collected Works (*Dpal ldan Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum*) Sakya Pandita, 1968,
12, 215 – 230. TBRC W22271.
- Shakya Shri. *Bcud len gyi rim pa lam gong 'phel ba'i gdams pa bzugs so.* In *Gsung 'bum. Shakya Shri.*
Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin and Lama Thinley Namgyal, 1998, 765 – 770. TBRC W23563.
- Shar rdza bkra shis rgyal mtshan. *Rdzogs pa chen po sku gsum rang shar las sku gsum bcud len thar pa'i*
rgyags phye. In *Gsung 'bum.* Bkra shis rgyal mtshan. Sde dge: Rdza steng chen dgon, 1983, 11, 384-
401.
- Thang stong rgyal po. *Gnas skor byin brlabs grub rtags bzhas cing skye ba dran pa sprul sgyur 'gro*
don mdzad/ zas rnams gang byung bcud len brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa mthar pa'i le'u ste re bdun pa.
Thang stong rgyal po. In *Gsung 'bum.* Thimphu, Bhutan: National Library of Bhutan, 1984-1985, 2,
299- 312. TBRC W23918.
- *Ma gcig gsang spyod snyan brgyud las dka' thub rde'u'i bcud len.* Thang stong rgyal po. In *Gsung*
'bum. Thimphu: Kunsang Topgey, 1976, 2, 401-414. TBRCW23919.
- Tshul khrims Rin chen. *Phyi nang bdud rtsi'i bcud len.* In *Bstan 'gyur.* (Sde dge). Delhi: Delhi Karmapae
Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982-1985, 53, 76–78. TBRC W23703.
- *Thams cad kyi dbang phyug gi bcud len nad thams cad 'joms shing lus kyi stobs rgyas par byed pa.*
In *Bstan 'gyur.* (Sde dge). Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982-
1985, 203, 34-35. TBRC T941.
- Ye shes mtsho rgyal, Bai ro tsa na, Nus ldan rdo rje, Blo gros mtha' yas. *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i*
rgyan. In *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan,* 2006, Lha sa: bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang,
25 – 117. TBRC W1PD83974.

Secondary Literature

- Achard, J.L. 2005. Kun grol grags pa and the revelation of the *Secret Treasury of the Sky Dancers on*
Channels and Winds: an inquiry into the development of the New Bon. *Tibet Journal* 30(3), 5.
Dharamsala.
- 2008. *Enlightened Rainbows: the Life and Work of Shardza Tashi Gyeltsen.* Brill's Tibetan Studies
Library 18. Leiden: Brill Academic Publications.
- Adams, V., Schrempf, M. and S. Craig (eds) 2011. *Medicine between Science and Religion: Explorations*
on Tibetan Grounds. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1-33.
- Aris, M. 1988. *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives: a Study of Pemalingpa (1450-1521) and the Sixth*
Dalai Lama (1683-1706). Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study.
- Aschoff, J.C. and Tashigang, Tashi Yangphel. 2001. *Tibetan "precious Pills", the Rinchen Medicine:*
A Tantric Healing System with Great Benefits, Some Problems, Many Secrets. Ulm, Donau: Fabri
Verlag.

- . 2004. *Tibetan Jewel Pills: the Rinchen Meditation*. Ulm, Donau: Fabri Verlag.
- Baker, I. and R. Shrestha. 1997. *The Tibetan Art of Healing*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Bates, D. 1995. *Knowledge and the Scholarly Medical Traditions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beckwith, C.I. 1979. The introduction of Greek medicine into Tibet in the seventh and eighth centuries. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99, 297-313.
- Bellezza, J.D. 2005. *Spirit-Mediums, Sacred Mountains and Related Bon Textual Traditions in Upper Tibet: Calling Down the Gods*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- Bentor, Y. 1996. Literature on consecration (*Rab gnas*). In Cabezón, J.I. and R. Jackson (eds) *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 290-311.
- Beyer, S. 1973. *The Cult of Tārā: Magic and Ritual in Tibet*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Beverly, J. 2004. *Testimonio, Subalternity and Narrative Authority*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota.
- Bickel, B. and M. Gaenszle. 1999. *Himalayan Space: Cultural Horizons and Practices*. Zürich: Völkerkundemuseum.
- Blezer, H. 2007. Desiderata in the study of the history of Tibetan medicine. Schrempf, M. (ed.) *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine Anthropological and Historical Perspectives. Proceedings of the Tenth seminar of the IATS, 2003*. Boston: Brill, Leiden.
- Boesi, A. 2006. Plant categories and types in Tibetan material medica. *The Tibet Journal* special issue, 30(4) and 31(1), 65-90.
- Boord, M. (trans.) forthcoming. Concerning [the guru's] engagement in ascetic discipline. *Dka' spyad mdzad pa'i skor bzhugs so*. In Ye shes tsho rgyal , Bai ro tsa na , Nus ldan rdo rje , Blo gros mtha' yas . *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan* In *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan*. TBRC WIPD83974. Lha sa: bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2006, 25 -117.
- Bridges D. 2003. *Fiction under Oath: essays in philosophy and educational research*. London: Kluwert.
- Cabezón, J.I. 1996. Firm feet and long lives: The *Zhabs brtan* literature of Tibetan Buddhism. In Cabezón, J.I. and R. Jackson (eds) *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 344-357.
- Cabezón, J.I. and R. Jackson (eds) 1996. *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Chaoul, M.A. 2006. *Magical Movements ('phrul 'khor): Ancient Yogic Practices in the Bon Religion and Contemporary Medical Perspectives*. Ph.D. thesis, Rice University.
- . 2011. Re-Integrating the Dharmic Perspective in Bio-Behavioural Research of a 'Tibetan Yoga' (tsalung trulkhor). Intervention for People with Cancer. In Adams, V., Schrempf, M. and S. Craig (eds) *Medicine between Science and Religion: Explorations on Tibetan Grounds*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn, 297-318.

- Chen Hsiu-fen. 2008. Nourishing life, cultivation and material culture in the late Ming: some thoughts on Zunsheng baijan (Eight Discourses on Respecting Life, 1591) *Asian Medicine* 4, 29-45. www.brill.nl/asme
- Clark, B. 1995. *The Quintessence Tantras of Tibetan Medicine*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Clifford, T. 1994. *Tibetan Buddhist Medicine and Psychiatry: The Diamond Healing*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Connor, L. and G. Samuel (eds) 2001. *Healing Powers and Modernity: Traditional Medicine, Shamanism, and Science in Asian Societies*. Westport, Connecticut; London: Bergin & Garvey.
- Cozort, D. 1986. *Highest Yoga Tantra: an Introduction to the Esoteric Buddhism of Tibet*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 119-122.
- 1996. *Sādhana (sGrub thabs): Means of achievement for deity yoga*. In Cabezón, J.I. and R. Jackson (eds) *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 33-43.
- Craig, S., Coumo, M., Garrett, F. and M. Schrempf. 2006. *Studies of Medical Pluralism in Tibetan History and Society: PIATS 2006, Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Königswinter*. - Andiastr: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2010. - 470 S. - (Beiträge zur Zentralasienforschung, 18)
- Czaja, O. 2006. Zurkharwa Lodro Gyalpo (1509-1579) on the controversy of the Indian origin of the rGyud bzhi. *The Tibet Journal* special issue, 30(4) and 31(1), 131-52.
- 2013. On the History of Refining Mercury in Tibetan Medicine. *Asian Medicine* 8, 75-105.
- Dash, B. 2007. The Rgyud bzhi and their Basic Source. In Prats, R. (ed.) *The Pandita and the Siddha Tibetan Studies in Honor of E. Gene Smith*. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 21-24.
- Davidson, R. 2008. *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Desi Sangye Gyatso, Kilty, G. (trans.). 2010. *A Mirror of Beryl: An Introduction to Tibetan Medicine*. Library of Tibetan Classics. Boston: Wisdom Publications .
- Dgav bavi Rdo rje. 1998. 'Khrungs dpe dri med shel gyi me long. Pe cin: Mi rigs dpe skun khang.
- Drungtso, T.D. 2005. *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology*. Dharamsala: Drungtso Publications.
- Dudjom, Rinpoche. 1991. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*. Dorje, G. and M. Kapstein (eds) Boston: Wisdom, 927-933.
- El-Eswed, B.I. 2006. Spirits: The Reactive Substances in Jabir's Alchemy. *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 16,71-90.
- Emmerick, R.E. 1975. A Chapter from the rGyud-bzhi. *Asia Major, Third Series* XIX(2), 141-62.
- 1977. Sources of the rGyud-bzhi. (Supplement of Deutscher Orientalistentag vom 28. Sept. bis 4. Okt. 1975 in Freiburg i. Br.). *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (Wiesbaden) III(2), 1135-1142.

- English, E. 2002. *Vajrayoginī. Her Visualizations, Rituals and Forms*. Sommerville, MA: Wisdom Publications.
- Erhard, F.P. 2007. A Short History of the *g.Yu thog snying thig*. Konrad K. and J. Hartmann (eds) In *Indica et Tibetica. Festschrift für Michael Hahn. Zum 65. Geburtstag von Freunden und Schülern überreicht*. Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 151-170.
- Fenner, E.T. 1996. The origin of the rGyud bzhi: A Tibetan medical tantra. In Cabezón, J. and R. Jackson (eds). *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*, 458-69
- 1979. *Rasayana Siddhi: Medicine and alchemy in the Buddhist Tantras*. Ph.D. thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Religion-History.
- Ploberger, F.[Hg.] 2012. *Wurzeltantra und Tantra der Erklärungen der Tibetischen Medizin* [Deutsche Übersetzung basierend auf der Men-Tsee-Khang Publikation (2008) Derx, U. Ploberger, F. Schiedlberg, Austria: Bacopa.
- Finckh, E. 1980 [1978]. *Foundations of Tibetan Medicine. According to the Book rGyud bzhi*. Volume I. London & Dulverton: Watkins.
- Garrett, F. 2005. Ordering human growth in Tibetan medical and religious embryologies. Furdell, E.L. (ed.) In *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 31-52.
- 2007. Embryology and embodiment in Tibetan literature: narrative epistemology and the rhetoric of identity. Schrempf, M (ed.) *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives. Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*. Oxford 2003. Leiden: Brill, 411-25.
- 2009. The Alchemy of Accomplishing Medicine (*sman sgrub*): Situating the *Yuthok Heart Essence* (*G.yu thog snying thig*) in Literature and History. Published online: 10 April 2009 *J Indian Philos* (2009) 37, 207-230. DOI 10.1007/s10781-009-9070-3
- 2010. Tapping the body's nectar: Gastronomy and incorporation in Tibetan literature. *History of Religions*. 49(3), 300-326.
- Gayley, H. 2003. Introduction. In Pema Lingpa, Harding, S. (trans.) *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*. Boston: Snow Lion Publications, 1-28.
- Gerke, B. 2001. The authorship of the Tibetan medical treatise *Cha lag bco brgyad* (12th century AD) and a description of its historical background. *Traditional South Asian Medicine* 6, 34.
- 2003. *Engaging the Subtle Body: Re-approaching Soul Loss Rituals with Special Emphasis on the Loss of Bla in Tibetan Traditions*. Masters Dissertation, University of Oxford.
- 2007. *Engaging the subtle body: Re-approaching bla rituals among Himalayan Tibetan societies*. *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives. Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*. Oxford 2003. Schrempf, M. (ed.) Leiden: Brill, 191-212.

- 2008. Time and Longevity Concepts of the Lifespan among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India. D.Phil. Dissertation, University of Oxford.
- 2011. Correlating biomedical and Tibetan terms in Amchi medical practice. In Adams, V., Schrempf, M. and S. Craig (eds) *Medicine between Science and Religion: Explorations on Tibetan Grounds*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 127-152.
- 2012 a Treating essence with essence: Re-inventing bcud len as vitalising dietary supplements in contemporary Tibetan medicine. *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 7, 196-224.
- 2012 b Introduction; Challenges of Translating Tibetan Medical texts and Medical Histories. Ploberger, F. (ed.) In *Die Vier Tantras der Tibetischen Medizin (1. und 2. Teil): Eine Übersetzung des Buches 'The Basic Tantra and The Explanatory Tantra from the Secret Quintessential Instructions on the Eight Branches of the Ambrosia Essence Tantra' basierend auf der Men-Tsee-Khang Publikation (2008)*, Schiedlberg, Austria: Bacopa, 17-29.
- 2012 c *Long Lives and Untimely Deaths: Life-span Concepts and Longevity Practices among Tibetans in the Darjeeling Hills, India*. Leiden: Brill.
- 2013 a 'Treating the Aged' and 'Maintaining Health': locating bcud len practices in the four Tibetan medical tantras. *JIAS Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 35, 329-362.—
- 2013 b On the 'subtle body and 'circulation' in Tibetan medicine. In Samuel, G. and J. Johnson (eds) *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*. London and New York, Routledge, 83-99.
- 2013 c The social life of Tsotel: processing mercury in contemporary Tibetan medicine. *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 8(1), 120-152.
- 2013 d Gerke, B. (ed.), *Asian Medicine: Tradition and Modernity* 8(1) Special Issue: *Mercury in Ayurveda and Tibetan Medicine*. Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers 2013. (available at <http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/15734218/8/1>).
- Germano, D. 1997. Food, clothes, dreams, and karmic propensities. In Lopez, D.S. Jr., (ed.) *Religions of Tibet in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 293-312.
- Glover, D.M. 2010. Classes in the classics: Historical change in plant classification in two Tibetan medical texts. In 'Studies of Medical Pluralism in Tibetan History and Society'. *PIATS 2006: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Königswinter, 2006*. IITBS International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 255-277.
- Goldstein, M. and M. Kapstein. 1998. *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet: Religious Revival and Cultural Identity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- 2001. Goldstein, M., Shelling T. and J. Surkhang (eds) *The new Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Graham, W.A. 1987. *Beyond the Written Word: oral aspects of scripture in the history of religion*. Cambridge UK, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Guenther, H. 1996. *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*. Leiden, New York: Brill.

- Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo. 1999. *Lady of the Lotus-Born: the Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyal*. The Padmakara Translation Group. Boston, London: Shambhala.
- Gyalwa Gendun Gyatso, Tsepak Rigzin (trans.). 1982. Extracting the essence (bCud-Len) by Gyal-wa Gen-dun Gya-tso, The Second Dalai Lama (1475-1542). *Tibetan Medicine* 5, 85-104.
- Gendun Gyatso. 1985. *Selected Works of the Dalai Lama II: Tantric Yogas of Sister Niguma*. Mullin, G.H. (trans. and ed.) Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Gyatso, J. 2004. The authority of empiricism and the empiricism of authority: medicine and Buddhism in Tibet on the eve of modernity. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24(2), 83-96.
- Gyatso, Losang. 1990. Tibet: A state or a state of mind? *Himal* Jan/Feb, 15. New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies.
- Gyurme Dorje, Meyer, F. and Y. Parfionovitch (eds) 1992. *Tibetan Medical Paintings. Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*. London: Serindia.
- Halkias, G. 2013. Aspiring for Sukhāvātī in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Entering the *dhāraṇī* and *buddhakṣetra* of Buddha Aparimitāyus. *Journal of Buddhist Studies*, JCBSSL 11, 77-110.
- Hammond, C.E. 1996. Vulpine Alchemy. *T'oung Pao, Second Series*, 82:364-380 4/5 Leiden, New York: Brill. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4528703>
- Hsu, E. 1999. *The Transmission of Chinese Medicine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hsu, E. and C. Low (eds) 2007. The experience of wind in early and medieval Chinese medicine. *Special Issue: Wind, Life, Health: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 117-34.
- Humphrey, C. and J. Laidlaw. 1994. *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual: A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Jacobson, E.E. 2000. Situated Knowledge in Classical Tibetan Medicine: Psychiatric Aspects. Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University.
- Janes, C.R. 1995. The transformations of Tibetan medicine. *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 9, 6-39.
- 2001. Tibetan medicine at the crossroads: Radical modernity and the social organisation of traditional medicine in the Tibet Autonomous Region, China. *Healing Powers and Modernity: Traditional Medicine, Shamanism, and Science in Asian Studies*, Connor, L.H. and G. Samuel (eds) Westport, Connecticut and London: Bergin & Garvey, 197-221.
- Kathog Situ Chokyi Gyatso. 2009. *Togden Shakya Shri: the Life and Liberation of a Tibetan Yogin*. Guarisco E. (trans.) Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications.
- Kapstein, M. 2000. *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- 2004. The Strange Death of Pema the Demon Tamer. In Kapstein, M. (ed.) *The Presence of Light*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 119-56.
- 2006. *The Tibetans*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Karma Phuntso. 2007. 'Ju Mi Pham Rnam rGyal Mtsho. His position in the Tibetan religious hierarchy and a synoptic survey of his contributions. In Prats, R. (ed.) *The Pandita and the Siddha*. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 191-209.
- Karmay, Samten. 1989. Vairocana and the rGyud-bzhi. *Tibetan Medicine*. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 19-31.
- 1993. The wind-horse and the well-being of man. In Ramble, C. and M. Brauen (eds) *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya*. Zürich: Ethnological Museum of the University of Zürich, 150-157.
- 1998. *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myth, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Y. Nagano (eds) 2002. *The Call of the Blue Cuckoo. An Anthology of Nine Bonpo texts on Myths and Rituals. Bon Studies 6*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Y. Nagano (eds) 2003. *A Survey of Bonpo Monasteries and Temples in Tibet and the Himalaya. Bon Studies 7*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- 2007. *The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*. Leiden, Boston: Brill.
- J. Watt (eds) 2007. *Bon. The Magic Word: The Indigenous Religion of Tibet*. New York: Rubin Museum of Art.
- Kind, M. 2002. *Mendrub: A Bonpo Ritual for the Benefit of All Living Beings and the Empowerment of Medicine Performed in Tsho, Dolpo*. Kathmandu: WWF.
- Kletter, C. and M. Kriechbaum. 2001. *Tibetan Medicinal Plants*. Stuttgart: Medpharm Scientific Publishers.
- Kohn, L. 2013. The Daoist Body of *qi*. In Samuel, G. and J. Johnson (eds) *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*. London and New York: Routledge, 16-32.
- Kongtrul, Jamgon Lodro Thaye, Barron, R. (trans.) 2003. *The Autobiography of Jamgon Kongtrul: A Gem of Many Colors*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Kunsang, E.P. 2003. *The Rangjung Yeshe Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Culture*. Compiled by Kunsang E.P., Waldo I., Valby, J., Barron, R., Hopkins, J. and M. Ricard. Boudanath, Hong Kong, Esby: Rangjung Yeshe.
- Kuriyama, S. 1999. *The Expressiveness of the Body and the Divergence of Greek and Chinese Medicine*. New York: Zone Books.
- Kvaerne, P. 1973. Bonpo Studies: The A-khrid system of meditation. Part One: the transmission of the A-khrid system. *Kailash* I(1), 19-50.
- 1973. Bonpo Studies: The A-khrid system of meditation. Part Two: the essential teachings of the A-khrid system. *Kailash* I(4), 247-332.
- 1995. *The Bon Religion of Tibet: The Iconography of a Living Tradition*. London: Serindia.
- 1987. Dualism in Tibetan Cosmogonic Myths and the Question of Iranian Influence. In Beckwith, C. (ed.) *Silver on Lapis: Tibetan Culture and History*. Bloomington, Indiana: The Tibet Society, 163-174.

- 2000. The study of Bon in the West: past, present and future. Samten Karmay and Y. Nagano (eds) *New Horizons in Bon Studies*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 7-20.
- Lalou, M. 1953. Rituel Bon-po des Funérailles Royales. fonds Pelliot tibétain 1042. Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale.
- Lama Chonam, Sangye Khandro (trans.) 1998. *The Lives and Liberation of Princess Mandarava: the Indian Consort of Padmasambhava*. Boston: Wisdom.
- Langford, J.M. 1995. Ayurvedic interiors: person, space, and episteme in three medical practices. *Cultural Anthropology* 10, 330-66.
- Leslie, C.E. 1976. *Asian Medical Systems: A Comparative Study*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Longchen Rabjam, Tulku Thondup (trans.) 1996. *The Practice of Dzogchen*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Loseries-Leick, A. 2008. *Tibetan Mahayoga Tantra: an ethno-historical study of skulls, bones and relics*. Delhi: BR Publishing Corporation.
- Lungtok, Choektsang. 2007. Les techniques de bcud len dans le monde Tibétain. Master's dissertation. Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales, Paris.
- Mahdihassan, S. 1981. Alchemy and its fundamental terms in Greek, Arabic, Sanskrit and Chinese. *India Journal of History of Science* 16(1), 64-76.
- 1991. *Indian Alchemy or Rasayana: in the light of asceticism and geriatrics*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Mayer, R. 2010. 'Authors, plagiarists, or tradents?' Posted on October 9, 2010. *Blog: kili kilaya: Discoveries and research hypotheses in Tibetan Buddhism from the Oriental Institute, Oxford University*, <http://blogs.orient.ox.ac.uk/kila/2010/10/09/authors-plagiarists-or-tradents/>
- Meulenbeld, G.J. 2003. Review of Aschoff and Tashigang. 2001. Tibetan 'Precious Pills'. *Traditional South Asian Medicine* 7, 210-216. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichert Verlag.
- Meyer, F. 1981. *Gso-Ba Rig-Pa: Le Système Médical Tibétain*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.
- 1990. Théorie et pratique de l'examen des pouls dans un chapitre du rGyud-bzhi. *Indo-Tibetan Studies: Papers in Honour and Appreciation of Professor David L. Snellgrove's Contribution to Indo-Tibetan Studies*. Skorupski, T. (ed.). Tring: The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 209-256.
- 1992. Gyurme Dorje and Y. Parfionovitch (eds) 1992. *Tibetan Medical Paintings. Illustrations to the Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*. London: Serindia.
- 2003. The golden century of Tibetan medicine. Pommaret, F. (ed.) *Lhasa in the Seventeenth Century: The Capital of the Dalai Lamas*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 99-118.
- 2007. *Tibetan medicine: gSo-Ba Rig-Pa*. Paris: CNRS Editions, (re-edition).
- Mullin, G.H. 1986. *Death and Dying: The Tibetan Tradition*. Boston, London, Henley: Arkana.
- 2005. *The Second Dalai Lama: His Life and Teachings*. New York: Snow Lion Publications.

- Nappi, C. 2013. Surface Tension: Objectifying Ginseng in Chinese Early Modernity. In Paula Findlen (Ed.), *Early Modern Things: Objects and their Histories, 1500-1800*. New York: Routledge.
- Nebesky-Wojkowitz, de R. 1956. *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*. The Hague: Mouton and Gravenhague.
- Nishi, Y. and Y. Nagano. 2001. A General review of the Zhangzhung Studies. *Bon Studies 3: New Research on Zhangzhung and Related Himalayan Languages*. Nagano, Y. and R.J. LaPolla (eds). *Senri Ethnological Reports 19*. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Norbu, Namkhai. 1996. *Drung, Deu and Bön: Narrations, Symbolic Languages and the Bön Tradition in Ancient Tibet*. Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications.
- 1999. Gaetani, J. (trans.) *The Practice of Long Life of the Dakini Mandarava*. Arcidosso, Italy: Shang Shung Publications.
- 2006. Clemente, A. and N. Simmons (trans.) *On Birth, Life and Death*. Arcidosso, Italy: Shang Shung Publications.
- 2008. *Yantra Yoga, The Tibetan Yoga of Movement*. A Stainless Mirror of Jewels, a Commentary on Vairocana's *The Union of the Sun and Moon Yantra*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- 2009. Rossi, D. (trans.) *The Light of Kailash: A History of Zhang Zhung and Tibet*. Vol. I. Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications.
- F. Andrico. 2013. *Tibetan Yoga of Movement; the art and practice of Yantra Yoga*. Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books.
- 2014. Sanders, F. and J. Gaetani (eds) *The Temple of the Great Contemplation: the Gönpa of Merigar*. Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications.
- forthcoming 2016. Valby, J. (trans.) *The Secret Vajra Path of Total Relaxation in Primordial Purity (Ka dag khregs chod kyi dgongs pa gsal bshad klong chen 'od gsal)* Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications.
- Nyoshul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé. 2005. *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems: Biographies of Masters of Awareness in the Dzogchen Lineage*. Barron, R. (trans.) Junction City: Padma Publishing.
- O'Connor, S.J. 1985. Metallurgy and immortality at Candi Sukuh, Central Java. *Indonesia* 39, 52-70.
- Parfionovitch Y., Gyurme Dorje, Meyer F. 1996. *Klassische Tibetische Medizin: Illustrationen der Abhandlung Blauer Beryll von Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*. Übersetzt und bearbeitet von Thomas Geist, Günther Heck und Daniel Winkler. Bern, Stuttgart, Wien: Paul Haupt.
- Pasang Yonten Arya, Yonten Gyatso (trans., ed.) 1998. *Dictionary of Tibetan Materia Medica*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Pema Lingpa, Harding, S. (trans.) 2003. *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*. Boston: Snow Lion Publications.
- Prats, R. 2007. *The Pandita and the Siddha: Tibetan Studies in Honor of E. Gene Smith*. Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute.

- Phuntso, Karma. 2007. 'Ju Mi Pham Rnam RGYal Mtsho. His position in the Tibetan religious hierarchy and a synoptic survey of his contributions. In Prats, R. (ed.) Dharamsala: Amnye Machen Institute, 191-209.
- Quatrocchi, U. 2012. CRC World Dictionary of Medicinal and Poisonous Plants: Common Names, Scientific Names, Eponyms, Synonyms, and Etymology. Chattanooga, TN: CR Press.
- Ramble, C. 2008. *The Navel of the Demons: Tibetan Buddhism and Civil Religion in Highland Nepal*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rawson, P. 1978. *The Art of Tantra*. London: Thames and Hudson.
- Ray, R. 2001. *Secret of the Vajra World: the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet*. Boston: Shambhala Publications.
- Rechung Rinpoche Jampal Kunzang. 1973. *Tibetan Medicine*. London: Wellcome Institute.
- Richardson, H. 1986. *A Cultural History of Tibet*. Boston, London: Shambhala.
- 1987. *Indo Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and their Tibetan Successors*, Volume One. Boston: Shambhala.
- Ringu Tulku, Helm A. (trans.) 2007. *The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgön Kongtrul the Great: A Study of the Buddhist Lineages of Tibet*. Boston and London: Shambhala.
- Rose, C.N. 2011. *Tashi and the Tibetan Flower Cure*. New York: Lee & Low Books.
- Sakade, Y. 2007. *Taoism, Medicine and Qi in Japan* Osaka: Kansai University Press.
- Samuel, G. 1989. The body in Buddhist and Hindu Tantra. *Religion* 19(3), 197-210.
- 1993. *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*. Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- 2008. *The Origins of Yoga and Tantra: Indic Religions to the 13th century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2010. A short history of Indo-Tibetan alchemy. In *Studies of Medical Pluralism in Tibetan History and Society. PIATS 2006: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Königswinter, 2006*. IITBS International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 221-234.
- 2013. The subtle body in India and beyond. In Samuel, G. and J. Johnson (eds) *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*. London: Routledge, 38-47.
- 2013. Samuel, G. and J. Johnson (eds) *Religion and the Subtle Body in Asia and the West: Between Mind and Body*. London: Routledge.
- Schaeffer, K. 2000. The religious career of Vairocana vajra – A twelfth-century Indian buddhist master from Dakṣiṇa Kośala. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 28(4), 361-384.
- 2002. The attainment of immortality: from Nathas in India to Buddhists in Tibet. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 30, 515-533.
- 2003. Textual scholarship, medical tradition, and Mahāyāna Buddhist ideals in Tibet. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31, 621-41.
- 2009. *The Culture of the Book in Tibet*. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Scheidegger, D. 2007. Different sets of light-channels in the Instruction Series of Rdzogs chen. Paris: *Revue d'Etudes Tibetaines* 12, 33-36.
- Schiebinger, L. 2004. *Plants and Empire: Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.
- Schrempf, M. 2007. Refocusing on Tibetan medicine. Schrempf, M. (ed.) *Soundings in Tibetan Medicine: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives. Tibetan Studies. Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Oxford, 2003*. Leiden: Brill, 1-6.
- Sen, T. 2001. In search of longevity and good karma: Chinese diplomatic missions to Middle India in the seventh century. *Journal of World History*. 12(1), 1-28.
- 2003. *Buddhism, Diplomacy and Trade: the Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Shaw, M. 1994. *Passionate Enlightenment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Simmer-Brown, J. 2002. *Dakini's Warm Breath: the Feminine Principle in Tibetan Buddhism*. Boston and London: Shambala.
- Smith, E.G. (ed.) 2001. *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Tibetan Plateau*. Boston: Wisdom.
- 2001. II. The Rnying ma pa Background in The Autobiography of Mkhan po Ngag dga and III. The Origins of the Ris med Tradition in Jam mgon kong sprul and the Nonsectarian Movement. In Smith, G. (ed.) *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Tibetan Plateau*. Boston: Wisdom, 14-26 and 237-247.
- 1971. Foreword to *An Illustrated Tibeto-Mongolian Material Medica of Ayurveda of 'Jam-dpla-rdo-rje of Mongolia*, Lokesh Chandra (ed.) New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture.
- Snellgrove, D. 1961. *Himalayan Pilgrimage: A Study of Tibetan Religion*. Oxford: B. Cassirer.
- 1967. *The Nine Ways of Bon*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Sogyal, R. 1993. *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. New Delhi: Rupa & Co.
- The Tibet Journal* special issue. Winter 2005&Spring 2006. Boesi, A. and Cardi, F. (guest eds) *Contributions to the study of Tibetan medicine*, 30(4) and 31(1).
- Tokar, E. 2008. An ancient medicine in a new world: A Tibetan medicine doctor's reflections from "inside". In Pordié, L. (ed.) *Tibetan Medicine in the Contemporary World: Global Politics of Medical Knowledge and Practice*. London: Routledge Curzon, 229-48.
- Tucci, G. 1980. *The Religions of Tibet*. Samuel, G. (trans.) London: Routledge Curzon & Kegan Paul.
- Tulku Thondup. 1986. *Hidden Teachings of Tibet: An Explanation of the Terma Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism*. London: Wisdom.
- 1990. The Terma Tradition of the Nyingmapa School. *Tibet Journal* 15(4), 149-58.
- Urstein, D. 1997. No Tibetan medicine for Tibetans anymore? *AyurVijnana* 3, 25-27.
- Wallace, V. 2001. *The Inner Kālacakrantra: A Buddhist Tantric View of the Individual*. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Walter, M. 1992. Jābir the Buddhist Yogi, Part I. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 20, 425-38.
- 1996. Jābir the Buddhist Yogi, Part II: “Winds” and Immortality. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24, 145-164.
- 2003. Jābir the Buddhist Yogi, Part III: Considerations on an International Yoga of Transformation. *Lungta* 16, 21-36.
- Wedemeyer, C. K. 2007. Beef, dog, and other mythologies: Connotative semiotics in Mahāyoga Tantra ritual and scripture. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75(2), 383-417.
- White, D.G. 1984. Why Gurus Are Heavy. *Numen* 31(1), 40-73. Brill Academic Publishers.
- 1996. *The Alchemical Body: Siddha Traditions in Medieval India*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- 2009. *Sinister Yogis*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Williamson, L. and S. Young. (eds) 2009. *Body & Spirit: Tibetan Medical Paintings*. New York: American Museum of Natural History.
- Winder, M. 1981. Tibetan medicine compared with ancient and medieval Western medicine. *Bulletin of Tibetology* 1, 5-22.
- Wujastyk D. 1998. *The Roots of Āyurveda: Selections from Sanskrit Medical Writings*. New Delhi: Penguin Books.
- Wujastyk, D. 2003. On Breath and Wind: The Roots of Ayurveda. In *Selections from Sanskrit medical writings*, 116-125.
- Wylie, T. 1959. A standard system of Tibetan transcription. *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 22, 261-67.
- Yang Ga. 2010. *The Sources for the Writing of the Rgyud bzhi, Tibetan Medical Classic*. Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge MA.
- Yang Ga. 2014. The origin of the Four Tantras and an account of its author, Yuthog Yonten Gonpo. In Hofer, T. (ed.) *Bodies in Balance - The Art of Tibetan Medicine*: Rubin Museum of Art, New York in association with University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 154-177.
- Yangonpa, Gyalwa and Chen Ngawa Rinchen Den, Guarisco. E. (trans.) *Secret Map of the Body: Visions of the Human Energy Structure*. Arcidosso: Shang Shung Publications.
- Yeshe Dorje, Aguilar, O. (trans.). 2013. *The Cloud of Nectar: the Life and Liberation of Nyagla Pema Dudul*. Arcidosso, Italy: Shang Shung Publications.
- Yeshi Donden and J. Hopkins. 1986. *Health Through Balance: An Introduction to Tibetan Medicine*. Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.
- Yeshe Tsogyal, Douglas, K. and G. Bays (trans.) 1978. *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*. Emeryville, CA: Dharma Publishing.
- 1993. Kunsang, E.P. (trans.) *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava*. Boston: Shambhala South Asia Editions.
- Yoeli-Tlalim, R. 2010. On urine analysis and Tibetan medicine’s connections with the West. Garrett F. and Samuel G. (eds) *Studies in the History of Tibetan Medicine (provisional title)*. *Tibetan Studies*.

- Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Bonn 2006.*
Halle: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH.
- 2013. Central Asian mélange: early Tibetan medicine from Dunhuang. *Scribes, Texts, and Rituals in Early Tibet and Dunhuang. Proceedings of the Third Old Tibetan Studies Panel held at the Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Vancouver 2010.* Wiesbaden: Reichert-Verlag, 53-60.
- Zysk, K.G. 1993. The science of respiration and the doctrine of the bodily winds in ancient India. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113(2), 198-213.
- 2007. The bodily winds in ancient India revisited. Hsu E. and C. Low (guest eds) *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. Special Issue: Wind, Life, Health: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, 105-15.
- Zangyao zhi [Bod sman gyi rnam bshad]. 1996 [1991]; Qinghai Renmin Chubanshe, Xining, China.

Glossary

The difficulties of identifying plants and substances, and the necessity of working alongside a local doctor, have been discussed in Chapter 3. The terms listed below were selected from what appeared to be the most reliable sources, these include:

Goldstein (2001), Kletter and Kriechbaum (2001), Ploberger (2012), Pasang Yonten Arya (1998), Zangyao zhi [Bod sman gyi rnam bshad] (1996), the Rangjung Yeshi Dharma Dictionary http://rywiki.tsadra.org/index.php/Main_Page and the website <http://crossasia.org/en/service/lab/tibetanterms.html>

Key:

Goldstein (G)

Kletter and Kriechbaum (KK)

Pasang Yonten Arya (PY)

Parfionovitch et al. (PA)

Ploberger (P)

Rangjung Yeshi (RY)

Zangyao zhi (Z)

Dgav bavi rdo rje (DG)

I do not dare claim that this list of terms is definitive and substances identification could certainly benefit from further discussion with botanists and *em chi*.

Tibetan	Latin (dictionary used in brackets)	Sanskrit	English	Notes/remarks
<i>a ba</i>	<i>Carex sp.</i> (PA)			
<i>a ru ra</i>	<i>Terminalia chebula</i> (P)			
<i>ba lu</i>	<i>Rhododendron sp.</i> (P)			
<i>ba lu me tog bcas pas</i>	<i>Rhodo- dendron Capitalum Maxim</i> (PA)			
<i>ba ru ra</i>	<i>Terminalia belerica</i> (P)			
<i>ba spru</i>	<i>Mirabilis himalaica</i> (KK)			<i>a sho gan+d+ha</i> is a variant of <i>ba spru</i> (F)
<i>bar lung</i>			holding the air	continuous presence of a light kumbhaka (Norbu 2008)
<i>bdud rtsi</i>		<i>amṛta</i>	nectar	<i>bdud</i> : demon, death, evil and <i>rtsi</i> : essence, extract, juice, elixir
<i>bdud rtsi lnga</i>			the five nectars: human feces, urine, 'red bodhicitta' menstrual blood, 'white bodhicitta' semen, flesh or marrow.	at times the five ingredients listed are different. (Wedemeyer 2007:383-417)
<i>bka' shing</i>				
<i>bong nga</i>	<i>Aconitum sp.</i> (KK)			there are four types of <i>bong nga</i> : <i>bong nga dkar po</i> (white), <i>dmal po</i> (red), <i>ser po</i> (yellow) and <i>nag po</i> (black). The flower of the black Aconitum is highly poisonous whereas the others are referred to as non-toxic and are used as remedies for poison. (KK 2001:32)
<i>brag bzhun</i>	<i>Asphaltum punjabianum</i>	<i>shilajit</i>	bitumen (P)	
<i>brag zhun</i>	<i>Asphaltum punjabianum</i>	shilajeet	bitumen	
<i>bras bu gsum</i>			the three fruits: a ru ra, ba ru ra, sky ru ra	
<i>bri</i>	<i>Bos grunniens</i>		the female of the yak	
<i>brong</i>			wild yak meat	
<i>bu ram</i>			molasses (KK)	<i>bu ram dkar</i> is white molasses
<i>bum pa can</i>		<i>kumbhaka</i>	vase shaped holding of the breath, special method for holding the breath	text 41 states," to overcome desire, one controls the <i>rlung</i> of the wind element" (Norbu 2008: 12-13)
<i>bya rgod mkhris</i>			vulture bile	
<i>byang sems dkarpo</i>			white bodhicitta, semen	one of the five nectars
<i>byang sems dmarpo</i>			red bodhicitta, menstrual blood	one of the five nectars
<i>byu ru</i>			coral	
<i>bzang drug dri</i>			six excellent odours	
<i>bzang po drug</i>			the six excellent substances	nutmeg benefits the heart;bamboo pith, the lungs; saffron, the liver; cloves, the life channels; cardamom, the kidneys; large cardamom, the spleen.
<i>chang</i>			Tibetan beer brewed from barley (K)	<i>Chang</i> helps cure <i>bad kan</i> and <i>rlung</i> diseases and induces sleep. See Kletter-Kreichbaum 2001: 334.
<i>chu</i>			water	different qualities are attributed to different types of water. See 4.1
<i>chu gang</i>	<i>Bambusa arundinacea</i> (P)		bamboo pith	benefits the lungs; one of the six excellent substances
<i>cong zhi</i>			calcite (Z)	See section 4.2 for the explanation of female, male, neutral, 'god' and 'demon' calcite. 'soft', 'fat' and 'fleshy'
<i>da chu</i>			cinnabar(RY)	vermilion is the powdered form of cinnabar
<i>da lis</i>			fragrant flowers of the <i>dwarf Rhododendron spp.</i> tree (RY)	
<i>dam tshig gi rdzas</i>			samaya substance	
<i>dbang po lag pa</i>	<i>Dactylorhiza hatagirea</i> (P)		species of orchid	

Tibetan	Latin (dictionary used in brackets)	Sanskrit	English	Notes/remarks
<i>dbu ma</i>			central channel	
<i>dkar gsum</i>			the three whites	<i>zho</i> curd, <i>'o ma</i> milk, <i>mar</i> butter
<i>dkar po chig thub</i>	<i>Sorozeris sp.</i> (P)			
<i>dn̄gul chu</i>			mercury	
<i>dom kh̄ris</i>			bear bile	
<i>dri chen</i>			human feces, one of the five nectars	
<i>dri chu</i>			human urine	one of the five nectars
<i>dza ti</i>	<i>Myristica fragrans</i> (P)		nutmeg	benefits the heart; one of the six excellent substances
<i>ḡyar mo thang</i>	<i>Primula fasciculata</i> (PY)			synonym for <i>lu gu me tog</i>
<i>ga bur</i>			camphor (G)	
<i>gangs chu</i>			water from melted snow	
<i>gla r̄tsi</i>	<i>Moschus moschiferus L.</i> (P)		musk	
<i>glad pa</i>			brain (RY)	
<i>gser</i>			gold	
<i>gser dog a ru ra</i>	<i>Terminalia chebula Retz.</i> (P)		gold myrobalan	
<i>gser gyi me tog</i>	<i>Herpetospermum pedunculatum</i> (P)			
<i>gur kum</i>	<i>Carthamus tinctorius</i> (P)			
<i>gur kum</i>	<i>Crocus sativus</i> (P)		saffron crocus	benefits the liver; one of the six excellent substances
<i>gyer ma</i>	<i>Zanthoxylum armatum</i> (P)			
<i>gz̄hil ba</i>			directed holding of the breath	forcefully directing the air. (Norbu 2008: 93).
<i>ha lo dmar</i>	<i>Althea rosea</i> (PY)			
<i>ka ko la</i>	<i>Amomum sabolatum</i> (P)		black cardamom	benefits the spleen; one of the six excellent substances
<i>ka ko la</i>	<i>Amomum sabulatum</i> (P)		black cardamom	
<i>ka li ka</i>			fruit/bud of the magnolia plant (PY)	
<i>ka ra</i>			sugar (RY)	
<i>kanti</i>	<i>Aquilaria sinensis</i> (PY)		agarwood	medicinal aromatic plant, synonym for <i>a ga ru</i>
<i>kha twam ga</i>		<i>kaṭvaṅga</i>	trident	
<i>kh̄ris pa can</i>			bile' stone, type of calcite	
<i>kh̄yi nag gi mk̄hr̄is</i>			black dog bile	
<i>kon</i>	<i>Leibnitizia nepalensis</i> (Kunze) <i>Kitam</i> (KK)			abbreviation for <i>kon pa gab skyes</i> (PY)
<i>ku ma ra</i>				
<i>lca ba</i>	<i>Angelica glauca</i> (P)			
<i>lcam pa</i>	<i>Malva botka</i> (P)			
<i>li shi</i>	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> (P)			
<i>li shi</i>	<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> (P)		cloves	benefits the channels; one of the six excellent substances
<i>lug mig</i>	<i>Aster sp.</i> (KK)			three categories according to the colour of the flower (KK 2001: 161)
<i>ma dza tsa</i>				
<i>me tog gser chen</i>	<i>Trollius pumilus d. don</i> (RY)			
<i>mkhan pa gser po</i>	<i>Artemisia sp.</i> (PA)			variant <i>Tanacetum sp.</i> (PA)
<i>mngar gsum</i>			the three sweets	<i>ka ra</i> sugar, <i>bu ram</i> molasses, <i>sbrang r̄tsi</i> honey
<i>mtshal</i>			vermilion (F)	
<i>mts̄he ldum</i>	<i>Ephedra saxatilis</i> (P)		ephedra	
<i>mu tig</i>	<i>Margaritum</i>		pearl (P)	
<i>mu zi</i>			sulphur	
<i>mu zi</i>	<i>Sulphur</i> (PA)		yellow sulphur	
<i>ngul</i>			silver	
<i>ngul</i>			silver	
<i>nye shing</i>	<i>Asparagus tibeticus</i> (KK)			
<i>phag gi mk̄hr̄is</i>			pig bile	
<i>pi pi ling</i>	<i>Piper longum</i> (P)			

Tibetan	Latin (dictionary used in brackets)	Sanskrit	English	Notes/remarks
<i>ra mnye</i>	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> (P)		Solomon's seal	<i>ra mo shag</i> is a synonym of <i>ra mnye</i>
<i>ra mo shag</i>	<i>Polygonatum cirrhifolium</i> (P)			<i>ra mnye</i> is a synonym of <i>ra mo shag</i>
<i>rd'o'i tshil bu</i>			fat of the stone'	corresponds to calcite
<i>rgya skyegs</i>	<i>Butea monosperma</i> (PA)		resinous dark red lacquer from bastard teak tree	
<i>rin chen sman nag</i>			precious black pill	pills containing purified mercury. (Czaja 2013)
<i>rmongs</i>			ram meat (P)	
<i>rtag tu ngu pa</i>	<i>Drosera peltata</i> (KK)			the five types of <i>rtag tu ngu</i> have five flowers of different colours of which four correspond to different deities. (KK 2001:281) also refers to Sadaparudita, the ever weeping bodhisattva, used as an example for unwavering devotion and perseverance.
<i>rtsam pa</i>			roasted barley flour	
<i>rtsi bo che</i>			asafoetida (RY)	
<i>rtsi bzhi</i>			the four nectars are <i>shug 'bru</i> (juniper seeds), <i>ba lu me tog</i> (<i>bcas pa</i> (rhododendron flowers), ephedra (<i>mtshe</i>) and tansy (<i>mkhan pa</i>) (PA 1992: 275)	
<i>ru rta</i>	<i>Saussurea lappa</i> (RY)	Kushta	costus root	
<i>rus pa can</i>			bony' stone, type of calcite	
<i>sa'i tshil</i>			fat of the earth'	
<i>sbrang rtsi</i>			honey (PY)	
<i>sdom</i>			spider (RY)	
<i>ser gyi me tog</i>	<i>Rhus semialata</i> sp. (PA)		Chinese sumac	
<i>sha ba'i rgyu</i>			deer intestines (RY)	
<i>sha chen</i>			human flesh' stone, type of calcite	
<i>sha lnga</i>			five fleshes: human, elephant, horse, dog, ox or peacock. See Wedermeyer 2007 on identifying the substances.	
<i>shang dril dkar po</i>	<i>Primula sikkimensis</i> Hook (PY)			
<i>shi sha</i>			unidentified kind of stone	
<i>shing mngar</i>	<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> (P)		licorice	
<i>shu dag dkar po</i>	<i>Acorus calamus</i> , L. (P)			
<i>shu dag nag po</i>	<i>Acorus gramineus</i> (PA)			
<i>shug 'bru</i>	<i>Juniperus indica</i> (PA)		juniper seeds	
<i>shug pa tsher can</i>	<i>Juniperus communis</i> (P)			
<i>sin dhu ra</i>	<i>Limonite</i> (PY)			
<i>sing bu</i>			mare's milk (RY)	
<i>skyu ru ra</i>	<i>Emblica officinalis</i> (P)			
<i>sle tres</i>	<i>Stephania</i> sp. (P)			
<i>sman sga</i>	<i>Hedychium spicatum</i> (P)		medicinal ginger	
<i>smyug cu gang</i>			bamboo sap	benefits the lungs; one of the six excellent substances
<i>srin bu ka ka ru</i>			scorpion (PY)	synonym: <i>sdig pa</i> (PY)
<i>sro lo dkar po</i>	<i>Cochlearia scapiflora</i> (PA)			variants in latin nomenclature: <i>Pegaeophyton scapiflorum</i> (Hook.f.et. Thoms) Marg. et. Shaw (PY)
<i>sro lo dmar po</i>	<i>Rhodiola crenulata</i> (P)			
<i>sug smel</i>	<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i> (P)		cardamom	benefits the kidneys; one of the six excellent substances
<i>sur dkar</i>			synonym for <i>Rhododendron primulaeflorum</i> Bur. et. Franch and <i>Rhododendron nivale</i> Hook. (ba lu).	

Tibetan	Latin (dictionary used in brackets)	Sanskrit	English	Notes/remarks
<i>sur dkar me tog</i>			Rhododendron flower	
<i>thal ka rdo rje</i>	<i>Cassia tora L.</i> (PA)			
<i>tsha a wa</i>			medicinal grass change in text 4.3 medicinal <i>bcud len</i>	
<i>tsan dan dkar po</i>	<i>Santalum album L.</i> (PA)		white sandalwood	
<i>tsan dan dmar po</i>	<i>Pterocarpus santalinus</i> (P)		red sandalwood	
<i>tsha ba gsum:</i>			the three hot ones: <i>sga skya</i> , <i>pi pi ling</i> , <i>pho ba ris</i> (ginger, long pepper, black pepper)	
<i>tshan chung pa</i>	<i>Rhodiola dumulosa</i> (Franch.) <i>S.H. Fu</i>			according to Dr. Tenzin Sherab refers to <i>sro lo dmar po</i>
<i>tshan chung pa</i>	<i>Rhodiola dumulosa</i> (Franch.) <i>S.H. Fu</i> (DG)			sub term for <i>sro lo</i> , varieties of flowers include 'dre tshan (demon flower) and lha tshan (god's flower). See text 21.
<i>tshé chang</i>			long life alcohol	
<i>tshil chen</i>			human fat' stone, type of calcite	
<i>tsi tra'i khu bas</i>	<i>Capiscum annuum</i> (P)			
<i>ug chos</i>	<i>Incarvillea compacta maxim</i> (RY)			
<i>ut pa la</i>	<i>Meconopsis sp.</i> (P)		blue lotus	flowers similar to those of <i>tsher sngon</i> (KK 2001:311)