

# Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines



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# Dzogchen, Chan and the Question of Influence

Sam van Schaik  
The British Library<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Introduction

*I said before that, in my opinion, Ch'an did not completely disappear from Tibet and that traces of it can be found in the rDsogs c'en, a branch, as is known, of the rÑiñ ma pas.*

– Guiseppe Tucci,  
*Minor Buddhist Texts II*

**G**uiseppe Tucci, one of the founders of the Tibetology, made the above statement in 1958, and though the specific arguments he offered to support it are no longer taken seriously, the idea that Dzogchen was influenced by Chan continues to exert a fascination for contemporary scholars.<sup>2</sup> Partly this is because Tucci was not articulating an original theory, but recasting an old polemical argument with roots deep in the Tibetan tradition itself.<sup>3</sup> Partly it is simply that texts from these two genres often look similar — both are meditation traditions based on the direct access to one's own enlightened nature. Yet similarity does not equate to influence, and the issue continues to haunt us because various attempts to establish the matter one way or another have failed to do so.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was made possible by a Research Development Award from the British Academy.

<sup>2</sup> The quote is from Tucci 1958: 60. See also pp. 64, 102, 110. Tucci's main argument for the influence of Chan on Dzogchen was the pro-Chan sections of the fourteenth-century *Minister's Edict*. But since then it has been shown that these sections were lifted from *The Lamp for the Eyes of Contemplation*, a tenth-century work written with the contrary aim of showing the differences between Dzogchen and Chan (see Karmay 1988: 89–99 and Tanaka and Robertson 1992). Thus the *Minister's Edict* tells us only that its redactor had a positive attitude to the Chan teachings that he had encountered in the *Lamp for the Eyes of Contemplation*. Given that the *Minister's Edict* was his main source, it is puzzling that Tucci (1958: 110) also stated that “there was a continuous tendency, even among the rDsogs c'en themselves, to conceal as far as possible their connection with a teaching which was said to have been condemned by a king considered to be the founder of Tibetan Buddhism and the patron of their chief master Padmasambhava.” In fact, the redactor of the *Minister's Edict* was attempting to forge, rather than conceal such a connection. Other influential Nyingma writers, including Longchenpa and Jigmé Lingpa, far from attempting to conceal anything, occasionally made positive statements about Chan (see van Schaik 2003).

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion of these polemics in van Schaik 2004a: 14–16. As mentioned there, the most explicit identification of Dzogchen with Chan came from the Gelug school, beginning with Khedrup (1385–1438). On other forms of controversy around Dzogchen in the Tibetan tradition, polemics directed against the Great Perfection are discussed in Karmay 1988, pp. 121–33, 178–84, 186–89, 195–97.

<sup>4</sup> Since Tucci, there have been several counter-arguments pointing out where Chan and Dzogchen literature diverge. Yet, like the argument from influence which they attempt to refute, they are essentially following a pattern laid out by the Tibetan tradition itself.

When questions prove unanswerable, there are two possibilities. One is that we need more data, and better ways of processing that data; the other is that the question is a bad one, that it is not answerable in the terms in which it has been stated. Now, it is true that we have frustratingly few sources from the time in which Chan is supposed to have been exerting its influence on Dzogchen (the eighth and early ninth centuries), but I think this is not the only problem. I do think the question 'was Dzogchen influenced by Chan?' is a bad one, for this reason: it entails an ahistorical reification of the entities 'Dzogchen' and 'Chan'.

Both 'Dzogchen' and 'Chan' are terms that represent a sprawling, messy complex of textual material, spanning centuries of historical development. A question like 'was Dzogchen influenced by Chan?' elides this, implying that we can point to an essence in both that can serve as the basis for comparison. Any attempt to isolate such an essence is by nature highly selective, and thus the result of the comparison will depend on the sources that we choose for the purpose.<sup>5</sup> We can make such a comparison more feasible by limiting the historical scope of our enquiry; for Dzogchen and Chan, it makes sense to look at the time when the influence is supposed to have taken place, the eighth and early ninth centuries. Yet we are still looking at a varied complex of textual material in both cases.

And there is another reason why a direct comparison of Dzogchen and Chan as two entities remains dubious. During the eighth and ninth centuries, neither Dzogchen nor Chan had yet developed an identity that would allow them to be considered in separation from the cultures of Buddhist praxis in which they were embedded. Recent studies have shown how the meditation instructions of Chan were closely associated with the practices of what became the Tiantai school, were embedded in the Chinese Yogācāra transmissions, and incorporated esoteric Buddhist practices.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, recent work on Dzogchen has shown that it cannot be considered in separation from its relationship with Mahāyoga sādhana practice.<sup>7</sup>

The reification of 'Chan' and 'Dzogchen' as independent entities is something that has happened in the tradition itself. Both realms of discourse were gradually separated from their scriptural and doctrinal basis in the

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When critics of Tucci's approach write that "for Ch'an the fundamental root is to be sought, while for rDzogs-chen the intrinsic awareness is spontaneous," they are also treating Chan and Dzogchen as ahistorical entities. See Tanaka and Robertson 1992: 78; the argument for the differences between Chan and Dzogchen in this article is drawn from the *Lamp for the Eyes of Contemplation*. See also Norbu 1994, which contains a similar argument.

<sup>5</sup> An inevitable objection to my argument here is that there is an essence shared by the two traditions, and this essence is the actual experience that Dzogchen and Chan texts both point towards. However, such appeals to experience can be made to serve many different ends. As Robert Sharf (2000: 286) has written, "The category experience is, in essence, a mere place-holder that entails a substantive if indeterminate terminus for the relentless deferral of meaning. And this is precisely what makes the term experience so amenable to ideological appropriation."

<sup>6</sup> On the relationships between Chan and other meditation systems, see the papers in Gregory 1986. See also the discussion of the early Chan lineage text, the *Lidai fabao ji* in Adamek 2007 (esp. 275–276, 337–338). On the 'syncretic' tendencies evident in the Chinese Dunhuang manuscripts, see Sørensen 1989.

<sup>7</sup> On the early development of Dzogchen, see especially Karmay 1988 and Germano 1994. In my own work I have tried to show how Dzogchen initially emerged as a way of practising deity yoga – see van Schaik 2004b.

sutras and tantras, respectively. Modern teachers in both traditions – here I am thinking particularly of D.T. Suzuki and Namkhai Norbu – have also done much to engender a popular view that both traditions transcend their cultural contexts.<sup>8</sup> In the second part of this article, we will look at both Chan and Dzogchen in the context provided by the Dunhuang manuscripts, and looking at them as forms of praxis, we will see that they both came to be applied to the practice of deity yoga. This, I would argue, is where we might be justified in saying that Chan and Dzogchen did come together. Thus what we see, looking at this earliest documentary evidence, is not a case of influence, but one of convergence.

## 2. The uses and abuses of terminology

*The source of Rdzogs chen teachings in Tibet is one of the mysteries of early Tibetan Buddhism – the later Tibetan tradition and Indic-oriented modern scholarship both predictably claim that Rdzogs chen originated in Indian Vajrayāna sources.*  
– Jeffrey Broughton, *Zongmi on Chan*

Arguments for and against the influence of Chan and Dzogchen have often been based on comparing specific technical terms found in their texts. Such a practice encourages us to extract both kinds of text from their contexts, in order to resolve the issue of influence to a straightforward  $x = y$  equation. It is easy to highlight similarities or differences between Chan and Dzogchen texts, depending on one's agenda; we need not even be consciously aware of the selective nature of our reading. Take for example the following passage, a teaching attributed to the Indian master Haklenayaśas which is found in several Dunhuang manuscripts:<sup>9</sup>

There are many methods of contemplation in the Mahāyāna. The ultimate among them is the instantaneous approach to the Madhyamaka. The instantaneous approach has no method. One meditates upon nature of reality like this: phenomena are mind, and mind is uncreated. In that it is uncreated, it is emptiness. Since it is like the sky, it is not a field of activity for the six sense-faculties. This emptiness is what we call *vivid awareness*. Yet within that vivid awareness there is no such thing as vivid awareness. Therefore without remaining in the knowledge gained from learning and studying, meditate upon the essential sameness of all phenomena.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See for example Suzuki 1949 and Norbu 1989.

<sup>9</sup> There are three copies of this text. In IOL Tib J 709, the name of the teacher is given as 'Gal na yas. As far as I am aware this name has not previously been connected to Haklenayaśas, the 23rd patriarch in the list of 28 that appears in the *Platform Sutra* and elsewhere. The Tibetan version of the name, which seems to have undergone some corruption in the form we have it in this manuscript, comes via the Chinese *Helenayeshe* 鶴勒那夜奢. In another copy, Pelliot tibétain 812, the scribe has garbled the name further as 'Gal ya nas; subsequently, this has been 'corrected' to Ma ha yan, which led Luis Gomez (1983: 123–4) to include this text among the works of Moheyan (though he noted that the attribution was doubtful). The third version, in IOL Tib J 706 verso, seems to be embedded in a longer text, and there is no attribution on the fragment of the manuscript that has survived.

<sup>10</sup> IOL Tib J 709, 42v: \$/:/mkhan po 'gal na yas bs[am] g+tan gI snying po bshad pa'// theg pa chen po'i bsam gtan gI sgo yang mang ste// de'I nang na dam pa nI don dbu ma la cig car 'jug pa yIn te// clg car 'jug pa la nI thabs myed de// chos nyId kyI rang bzhIn la bsgom mo// de la chos nI sems sems [sic] nI ma skyes pa 'o// ma skyes pa nI stong pa

One might pick up a number of terminological similarities with early Dzogchen texts here; for example, the emphasis on the mind and its emptiness, the imagery of the sky, and the valorization of the direct connection with the ultimate over the scholastic path. Yet there are also significant differences. Most important perhaps is the term “vivid awareness” (Tib. *tshor*, Ch. *jue* 覺), which plays a key role in many Tibetan Chan texts, including those of Moheyan 摩訶衍, but does not appear in Dzogchen texts. The same term, *tshor ba* frequently appears in Tibetan Buddhist literature as a translation of a completely different term, *vedanā*. Similarly *jue* 覺 is sometimes used in Chinese texts for *vedanā*, in other contexts. It seems that the argument for identifying Dzogchen and Chan texts through terminology is dependent upon how one selects the terms for comparison.

A recent attempt to reinvigorate the argument for the influence of Chan on Dzogchen has come from Jeffrey Broughton, who points to the terminology found in a précis of Shenhui's teachings in two Dunhuang manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> It is quite entertaining to see, in the passage quoted above, the old polemical issue of whether Dzogchen ‘originated’ in India or China being recast here as a dispute between Indologists and Sinologists. Perhaps there is something in Broughton's suggestion that the study of Tibetan Buddhism has a bias towards Indian sources, but this objection alone will not suffice if Dzogchen has a much more evident genealogical connection to those Indian sources.<sup>12</sup>

But Broughton argues, in the most recent example of the method of comparing terminologies, that the earliest Dzogchen texts are clearly drawing on terminology from Chan texts – in particular, from a text summarizing the teachings of the founder of the ‘Southern school’, Shenhui 神会 (684–758). In choosing this particular text, by a teacher who strongly rejected all gradualist language and the discussion of meditation techniques, Broughton seems to tacitly acknowledge that the texts that form the bulk of Tibetan Chan are dissimilar to Dzogchen. For the Tibetan Chan texts, both translations and original compositions, contain much discussion of specific meditation practices, especially those that cluster around the idea of “viewing the mind” (Tib. *sems la bltas*, Ch. *kanxin* 看心).<sup>13</sup>

Shenhui's rejection of specific meditation instruction as a hindrance to engaging with the uncaused state of enlightenment does find echoes in many Dzogchen texts. But Broughton makes an ambitious claim for this particular Shenhui text, stating that “all the major points of early Rdzogs chen teaching as found in both the *Rig pa'i khu byug* (*Cuckoo of Awareness*) and the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* (*Lamp of the Eye of Dhyana*) are found in this

---

ste// dper naM ka dang 'dra bas// dbang po drug gl spyod yul ma yin bas na// stong pa de nl tshor ba zhes bya 'o// tshor nas nl tshor ba nyld kyang myed de// de bas na thos pa dang bsam pa'i shes shes [sic] rab la/ ma gnas par chos mnyam pa nyId la sgoms shig ces bshad do// ://

<sup>11</sup> Broughton 2009: 225–226 n.125.

<sup>12</sup> Broughton's treatment of the subject is brief, only appearing in an endnote to his monograph on Zongmi (Broughton 2009: 225–226, n.125). The argument that the Indic influence on Tibetan Buddhism has been overemphasized was also made in an earlier work (Broughton 1983: 2–3).

<sup>13</sup> On the practice of “viewing the mind” in the work of Shenxiu, see McRae 1986: 196–218, and Faure 1997: 58–67.



*Chan Book of Master Shinho.*” It therefore seems worth our while to have a look at this short text in full, to see if it does clarify the issue:

Accomplish the sign of truth, which is to be always without recollection. What does this mean? The nature of thought is primordially a non-resting essence. It is not to be obtained, nor can it be fixated by mental clarification or meditative absorption. It cannot be fixed as “it is thought” or “it is not thought” or good or bad, or thought as colour and shape. Nor can it be fixed as having limits or not having limits, as having size or not having size, as having a place or not having a place.

Do not fixate on any of the characteristics of mental activity. If by doing this you do not rest upon thought, then that primordial non-abiding in the essence of thoughts's sameness is reflexive awareness. *Awareness* means coming to rest in non-resting. For example, a bird flying through the open sky goes without resting. If it did rest in the open sky, it would fall. In the same way, it is not possible for there to be no awareness. Without awareness you would fall into the extreme of emptiness.

Therefore non-resting is the primordially peaceful essence. Through the wisdom of the patriarchs you are able to be aware of the essence of this rare peace. If you apprehend this directly, there is no mental activity in that apprehension. If you see it directly, there is no mental activity in that seeing. This is the total perfect dharmakāya, equivalent to the dharmadhātu, the same as the sky. Since it is by nature nonabiding, its qualities are limitless and spontaneously perfected.<sup>14</sup>

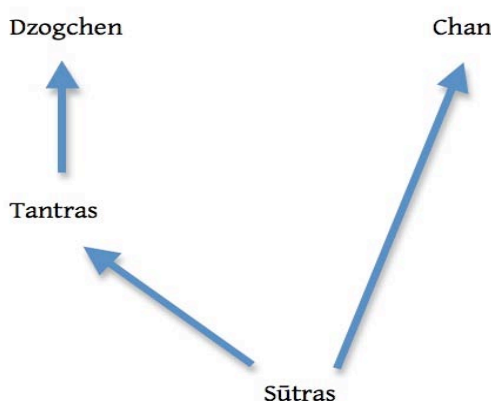
It is clear that Broughton has made a good choice of text here; unlike many of the Dunhuang Chan texts there is no discussion of techniques like viewing the mind, and there is some overlap of terminology with Dzogchen texts. Broughton points out a number of key terms that he believes link Shenhui's teachings to Dzogchen:

- awareness (*rig pa*),
- reflexive awareness (*rang gis rig pa*),
- the peaceful essence (*zhi ba'i ngo bo nyid*),
- no mental activity (*nyid la bya ba myed*),
- spontaneous perfection (*lhun kyis rdzogs pa*).

<sup>14</sup> PT 116: [v.60]: //bsam brtan gyi mkhan po shin ho'i bsam brtan gyi mdo las 'byung ba// rtag tu dran ba myed pa'i bden pa'I mtshan ma bsgrub bo// de yang gang [v.61] zhe na// sems kyi rang bzhin ye nas myi gnas pa'I ngo bo nyid nI// thob par bya ba myed de sems dangs ba dang ting nge 'dzin du dmyigs pa myed/sems la yin ba dang/+ ma yin ba dang/ bzang ba dang/ ngan dang/ sems la kha dog dang dbyibs su yang dmyigs pa myed// sems la mtha yod pa dang/ mtha' myed pa dang/ tshad yod pa dang/ tshad myed pa dang/ gnas yod pa dang/ gnas myed pa 'ang dmyigs pa myed de// yld la bya ba'i mtshan ma thams cad myi dmylgs so// de ltar sems la gnas myed par gyur na// sems kyi mnyam ba'I ngo bo nyid ye nas myi gnas de ni// rang gis reg [sic] pa yin [v.62] no// rig pa zhes bya ba ni myI gnas pa'i gnas su phyIn pa'o// dper na bya ni bar snag nam ka la myi gnas par 'gro ste// gal te nam ka bar snang la gnas par gyur na ni ltung bar 'gyur ro// de'i phyir rig pa myed pa yang ma yin no// rig pa myed na stong pa'i mthar ltung ngo// de bas na myi gnas pa nI ye nas zhi ba'I ngo bo nyid de// phyI mo'i ye shes kyis na zhi ba dka' ba'I ngo bo nyid rig par nus so// de bas na mngon sum du shes na yang/ shes par yid la bya ba myed// mngon sum du mthong na yang// mthong bar yid la [v.63] bya ba myed pa de ni yongs su rdzogs pa'I chos kyi sku ste// chos kyl dbyings dang 'thung bas nam ka dang mnyam ste// ngo bo nyid kyis myi gnas pas// yon tan dpag tu myed pa<s> lhun kyis rdzogs par 'gyur ro//. The other version is PT 813: 2v.4-3v.1.

For those familiar with Dzogchen literature, it is clear that this list will not establish the influence of Chan on Dzogchen once and for all. First of all, not all the terms are characteristic of Dzogchen texts. The “peaceful essence” is not found in the early Dzogchen literature that I am aware of, and the term “no mental activity” is rare. And rather than “spontaneous perfection,” the usual formulation in Dzogchen texts is ‘spontaneous accomplishment’ (*lhun kyis grub pa*). Secondly, and more importantly, all of these terms are found in scriptural texts that would have been familiar to the writers of both Chan and Dzogchen texts. Look for example at the two terms that are popular in Dzogchen texts, *rig pa* and *rang gis rig pa*. Both appear throughout the *Lañkāvatāra*, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, and many other popular sūtras. Moreover, they are also found throughout some of the most influential tantras, including the *Sarvatāthagata-tattvasaṃgraha* and, crucially for Dzogchen texts, the *Guhyagarbha*.<sup>15</sup>

It is not necessarily that the writers of Chan and Dzogchen texts were drawing on exactly the same sources. As we know, much of the terminology of Dzogchen discourse is also found in the tantras, rather than the sūtras, particularly the *Guhyagarbha* and other tantras of the *Māyājāla* class.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, much of the Tibetan Chan literature of Dunhuang makes its roots in the sūtra literature very explicit. Where there is a convergence of terminology between Dzogchen and Chan, this is because the tantric sources for Dzogchen literature (like the *Guhyagarbha*) are themselves steeped in the terminology of the sūtras that inform Chan discourse (like the *Lañkāvatāra*). Thus many of Dzogchen's key terms are also found in the sūtras. A very simple diagram of the transmission of technical terms would be this:



<sup>15</sup> For the *Guhyagarbha* instances, see D.834, f.202b, 233b. Likewise, ‘spontaneous perfection’ (*lhun kyis rdzogs pa*) is found in the *Guhyagarbha* (D.834, f.217a). In fact, all of the Tibetan terms Broughton cites linking Dzogchen to Chan appear in popular scriptural texts like the *Lañkāvatāra* and *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, thus forming the common stock of terminology that could be drawn upon by both Chan and Dzogchen teachers. The phrase ‘no mental activity’ (*yiḍ la bya ba med*) is particularly popular in the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, especially the *Śatasāhasrikā* and *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*. The term ‘peaceful essence’ (*zhi ba'i ngo bo nyid*), which is, as I mentioned, not characteristic of Dzogchen texts anyway, also appears in the *Śatasāhasrikā* (D.8, f.9a), as well as the *Pitāputrasamāgamana* (D.60, f.109a) and *Sāgaranāgarajapariprcchā* (D.153, f.193b).

<sup>16</sup> See Karmay 1988, Germano 1994, and van Schaik 2004b.

If there is one thing in the précis of Shenhui that might give us pause, it is the repeated contrast between thought (*sems*) and awareness (*rig pa*), which is similar to the use of these terms in Dzogchen literature. However, this raises another issue. We have no reason to think that the Shenhui précis is particularly early, as the manuscripts containing it are probably from the tenth century. The version of Shenhui's teachings presented here may have been written by a Tibetan who was familiar with the language of Dzogchen texts. This being so, we cannot conclude any influence running from Chan to Dzogchen (as against the other direction) in the appearance of similar terminology in such texts.

### 3. Chan, Dzogchen and the tantras

*According to the texts of Chan, Sūtra and Mantra, the view is non-fixation.*  
– Dunhuang manuscript, 10th century

The anonymous writer of this line, from a treatise on Mahāyoga, shows that for some, at least, there was a point at which the texts of the sūtras, the tantras, and Chan teachers converged: the 'view' (*lta ba*), that is, the philosophical position or general attitude to be adopted. This was not an idle observation. Recent studies of Chinese Chan show a great deal of overlap between Chan and esoteric Buddhism during the eighth to tenth centuries.<sup>17</sup> A striking example of this is the manuscript Pelliot chinois 3913, an 87-folio book written in the early tenth century. The book is a compilation serving as a manual for the ritual of entering the maṇḍala of the buddha Vairocana. The text gives two lineages of transmission for its teachings, and these are both unmistakably lists of Chan teachers.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, the title of the work implies that it is intended for the a ritual on an ordination platform (*jietan* 戒壇). The ritual of initiation into Chan held on ordination platforms was ubiquitous in early Chan lineages, to the extent that, as Wendi Adamek has put it, "Chan can be said to have been born on the bodhisattva precepts platform."<sup>19</sup> Manuscripts like Pelliot chinois 3913 suggest that the ordination platform used in Chan lineages came to be regarded as coterminous with the tantric maṇḍala.<sup>20</sup> It is not very useful to call this 'syncretism', a term implying the conjoining of two distinct entities.<sup>21</sup> Rather, what we are seeing is the transmission of texts and teaching lineages without the firm distinctions imposed by the later traditions. An illuminating example of this trend from the Tibetan manuscripts is found in Pelliot tibétain 996, a treatise on a Sino-Tibetan

<sup>17</sup> See for example Tanaka 1981 and Sørensen 1989.

<sup>18</sup> On Pelliot chinois 3913, see Tanaka 1981. On this and many other manuscripts concerning maṇḍalas, see Kuo 1998.

<sup>19</sup> Adamek 2011: 33. See also Adamek 2007 for a detailed discussion of the historical development of the precepts ceremony in China, with regard to Chan lineages.

<sup>20</sup> Kuo Liying (1998) has investigated the maṇḍala diagrams of Pelliot chinois 2012, showing how they depart from normative tantric maṇḍalas, and how they were used for the three rituals of consecration, confession, and ordination. Though she does not suggest it, the unusual forms of these maṇḍalas and their uses suggest that they may also have been developed in Chan lineages.

<sup>21</sup> On critiques of syncretism, and recent attempts to rehabilitate the term, see the introduction to Stewart and Shaw 1994.

Chan lineage. Towards the end of the manuscript there is a poem attributed to the Tibetan teacher Namkai Nyingpo, titled *In Praise of the Path of Yoga*.<sup>22</sup>

Non-abiding, equality — this is the path of ultimate yoga,  
 Unchanging, unproduced and unceasing from the start.  
 That which appears is like a bird's path through the sky:  
 Impossible to objectify it with a view, or express it in words.  
 Those noble beings with the wisdom-mind of reflexive awareness,  
 Understand and master this freedom from objectifying concepts.  
 Homage to the treasury of the tathāgatas themselves,  
 The tradition that is the source of noble beings.  
 The path of the sages in equality from the beginning,  
 The maṇḍala of non-objectification and sameness,  
 The equalization without arising or cessation  
 Which is the wisdom of the Vajradhātu.  
 Those who have mastered bodhicitta  
 Can perform the summoning of an immovable mind.  
 The mudrā that liberates the children of the Conqueror,  
 Is the supreme form, sameness itself — to cultivate it,  
 Is to be the dharmakāya, complete and perfect.  
 This, it is said, is the supreme siddhi.<sup>23</sup>

The presence of terminology drawn from the tantras is unmistakable here – the *maṇḍala* of the *vajradhātu*, the *bodhicitta*, the *mudrā* and the characterization of realization as ‘the supreme *siddhi*’. All of this, especially the allusion to the vajradhātu maṇḍala, points to an association with the tantric literature like the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgrāha*. The way Namkai Nyingpo's verses weave together allusions to concepts from the sūtras and tantras suggests an audience familiar with both Chan discourses and tantric practices.<sup>24</sup>

This allusive language is intriguing, but does not tell us how Chan meditation techniques might have been applied to tantric sādhana practice. For this, we can turn to a couple of manuscripts which seem to be written by the same scribe. Pelliot tibétain 626 and 634 are instructions for meditation in

<sup>22</sup> There has been some discussion about whether the author of these verses is the same Nam mkha'i snying po known to the later Tibetan tradition as a disciple of Padmasambhava and exponent of Dzogchen. Samten Karmay (1988: 98–99) argued that these were two different people, because Pelliot tibétain 996 at one point gives the name as Tshig tsha Nam ka'i snying po, whereas the figure known to the traditions is Gnubs Nam mkha'i snying po. However, unlike Gnubs, Tshig tsha is not a known clan name, and could even be a corrupted form of *cig car*, ‘instantaneous’. The question should probably remain open.

<sup>23</sup> Pelliot tibétain 966: 3r.4–3v.4. mkhan po nam ka'I snying pos/ rnal 'byor gi lam la bstod pa/ myI gnas mnyam pa rnal 'byor nges pa'i lam/ ye nas skye med 'gag par myI 'gyur te/ ji ltar bar snang bya lam rjes bzhIn du/ blta ba'I dmyIgs myed tshIg gls brjod myi rung/ 'phags pa rang rIg ye shes blo ldan bas/ dmyIgs pa'I rtog bral mkhas shIng shes pas rIg/ 'phag 'tshal de bzhIn gshegs pI nyld kyI mdzod/ de ni 'phags pa'I byung gnas lam srol te/ ye nas mnyam pa drang srong chen po'i lam/ dmyIgs myed mnyam pa dkyIl 'khor te/ skye 'gags myed par snyoms pa nI/ rdo rje dbyIngs kyI ye shes so/ byang chub sems ldan mkhas pa yls/ myI g.yo yid la zlos byed pa/ rgyal sras grol ba'I phyag rgya ste/ gzugs mchog mnyam nyld 'dI bsgoms pas/ rdzogs pa yang dag chos kyI sku/ 'dI ni dngos grub mchos ces gsungs/

<sup>24</sup> Another early example is Or.15000/494, a manuscript from the imperial-period fortress of Miran. The manuscript contains a Chan text on the verso, and a tantric text on the recto.

the Mahāyoga practice of deity yoga.<sup>25</sup> The writing style of the manuscripts is similar to that of many other tantric manuscripts that almost certainly date to the latter part of the tenth century.<sup>26</sup>

The striking feature of these two sādhanas in particular is that they apply to the practice of deity yoga techniques of viewing the mind normally found in Chan instructions.<sup>27</sup> Meditation in the Mahāyoga sādhanas tends to proceed along the structure of the three concentrations (*ting nge 'dzin*, Skt. *samādhi*), and this is what we see in Pelliot tibétain 626 and 634.<sup>28</sup> These three are: (i) The concentration on suchness (*de bzhin nyid*), (ii) the concentration on total illumination (*kun tu snang ba*), and (iii) the concentration on the cause (*rgyu*). It is in the first of these that we find the technique of viewing the mind described.

Regarding the phrase 'viewing the mind' – the method is looking at one's own mind, and the knowledge is to neither abide in nor conceptualize it. 'Not being anything' means settling the mind, which is taught in two methods: the method for examining the mind, and the method for settling. Regarding the method for examining: to look at the mind with the mind is a method for realizing that the entity *mind* is without any colour or shape whatsoever. Regarding the method for settling: one should settle the mind without thinking of anything.<sup>29</sup>

The mental state resulting from this concentration is described in these two sādhanas in terms of non-thought (*mi bsam*), non-conceptualization (*mi rtog*), and not engaging the mind (*nyid la mi byed pa*), a trio seen elsewhere in Tibetan Chan texts, including those attributed to Heshang Moheyan.<sup>30</sup> The resulting state of mindfulness is also described using a series of metaphors,

<sup>25</sup> This discussion is based on van Schaik and Dalton 2004, with some new suggestions. See also Meinert 2002 and 2007, which discuss Pelliot tibétain 699. The latter, which is written in the same hand, is a Chan text accompanied by a commentary. The argument of van Schaik and Dalton 2004 is that this commentary places the Chan text in the context of Mahāyoga sādhana practice, as a mirror image to Pelliot tibétain 626 and 634. In Meinert 2002 and 2007a, on the other hand, the commentary is identified as coming from the position of Atiyoga. In fact, given that Atiyoga was understood as an approach to sādhana practice in this period, both interpretations are correct. This is made particularly clear by the citation in Pelliot tibétain 699 of the *Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, a treatise on Mahāyoga practice that takes a position usually identified with Atiyoga.

<sup>26</sup> They may be compared to many of the tenth century Tibetan manuscripts listed in Takeuchi forthcoming.

<sup>27</sup> On the practice of "viewing the mind" in the work of Shenxui, see McRae 1986: 196–218; Faure 1997: 58–67. On related works by Wolun, and their influence on Tibetan Chan, see Meinert 2007b.

<sup>28</sup> For an extended discussion of the three absorptions, see van Schaik 2008b. Among the Dunhuang manuscripts, see also IOL Tib J 437, 552, 553, 554, 716; Or.8210/S.95/7; Pelliot tibétain 42 (26–29), 283.

<sup>29</sup> Pelliot tibétain 626, ff.2v–3r: *sems lta zhes pa ni/ bdag gi sems la lta ba ni/ thabs yin la/ de la myi gnas myi rtog pa ni shes rab yin no/ cir yang myin zhes pa ni/ sems la gzhag thabs gnyis su bstan te/ de yang sems kyi brtag thabs dang// gzhag thabs so// de la brtag thabs ni/ sems la sems kyi bltas na sems kyi dngos po ka dog dang dbyibs cir yang ma yin bar rtogs pa' ni thabs/ gzhag thabs ni/ cir yang myi bsam bar blo gzhag go//.*

<sup>30</sup> For these three terms in Tibetan Chan texts see Pelliot tibétain 117 6v.3–4, and STMG 165.4–5. For Moheyan's use of them see Gomez, 1983: 152 n. 43. These three are clearly related to the 'three phrases' of Wuzhu: *no-recollection* (*wuyi* 無憶), *no-thought* (*wuxiang* 無想), and *do not allow the unreal* (*mowang* 莫妄) – see Adamek 2007: 206, 246, 338, and Broughton 2009: 183.

like that of the watchman spotting a thief, which are also drawn from the teachings of Moheyan, and before him, Shenxiu 神秀.<sup>31</sup>

Thus these two sādhanas show that the contemplative techniques taught under the heading of 'viewing the mind' – which were popular in Chinese and Tibetan Chan at Dunhuang – were adapted to the first stage of Mahāyoga meditation practice, the concentration on suchness. These sources, and the verses attributed to Namkhai Nyingpo, strongly suggest that the context for the practice of meditation instructions from Chan lineages was often a tantric one. Since by the tenth century, Mahāyoga had become the most popular form of tantric Buddhism in Tibet, it is not surprising that Mahāyoga sādhanas became one of the main settings for these Chan meditation practices.<sup>32</sup>

\* \* \*

Let us now look at the relationship between Dzogchen and tantric Buddhism. From the eleventh century and onwards, the Tibetan tradition came to separate the texts of Dzogchen from other kinds of tantric discourse, eventually assigning them their own 'vehicle'. This has obscured the way Dzogchen developed before this time. Recent work on the earliest sources for Dzogchen has shown that it emerged from the milieu of Mahāyoga tantra in the eighth century and for a long time thereafter was understood primarily as a framework for the practice of Mahāyoga sādhanas.<sup>33</sup>

Thus in the *Guhyagarbha tantra*, the term 'great perfection' (*rdzogs chen*) appears in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters, on the sexual yoga of the completion (*rdzogs*) stage and its experiential aftermath. This aftermath is expressed in terms of the spontaneous fulfillment of all aspects of enlightenment in a stage that transcends all thought. The sense here that 'great perfection' refers to the realization engendered by the stage of perfection is made explicit on a treatise based on the *Guhyagarbha tantra* and attributed to the eighth-century figure Padmasambhava: the *Garland of Views*. In this treatise, esoteric yoga is divided into three 'modes' – development (*bskyed*), perfection (*rdzogs*) and great perfection (*rdzogs chen*).

When we turn to the two Dzogchen texts preserved in the Dunhuang collections, we find them still in dialogue with Mahāyoga. For example IOL Tib J 647, a commentary on a popular six-line verse known as *The Cuckoo of Awareness*, is full of allusions and direct references to Mahāyoga practice. For example, the author summarizes the general meaning of the verse in question as 'Samantabhadra, great bliss, the mode of perfection', a direct reference to the sexual yoga of the perfection stage. After this the author writes of the 'great inner nectar', a euphemism for the sexual fluids that are tasted at the culmination of the perfection stage, saying that the method here is to 'accept the *bodhicitta*,' (another euphemism for the same thing) 'without accepting'.<sup>34</sup> The author goes on to deal with topics relevant to practitioners

<sup>31</sup> See Gomez 1983: 92, 102, 153.

<sup>32</sup> On the popularity of Mahāyoga in the tenth century, see chapter 8 of van Schaik and Galambos 2012.

<sup>33</sup> I have discussed these issues at length in van Schaik 2004b and 2008.

<sup>34</sup> IOL Tib J 647, f.3v: 'di spyi don ni/ /dpal kun tu bzang po bde ba chen po rdzogs pa'i tshul zhes bya ba'o/ ... /nang gi bdud rtsi chen po zhes bya ste/ /myi len pa'i byang chub len pa'i thabs dam pa yin pa'i phyir/

of Mahāyoga sādhanas, including the practices of ‘liberation’ and ‘union’ (ritual killing and sex).

The manuscript containing IOL Tib J 647 is from the tenth century, and we do not know how much earlier the text itself was composed. We do have one text that was later accepted into the canon of early Dzogchen scripture that can be placed in the early ninth century, thanks to its being listed in the imperial-period library catalogue, the Ldan dkar ma. This is Mañjuśrīmitra’s *Meditation on Bodhicitta*, also known as *Gold Refined from Ore*.<sup>35</sup> This text addresses the themes usually associated with Dzogchen, but makes it quite clear that this is to be applied within the context of Mahāyoga sādhanā practice:

Stabilize the three concentrations. Then bind the three symbolic mūdras. Then in the mūdra of the dharma, generate mind itself. At this point, recite the mantra and abide in meditation. To meditate on Vajrasattva is to meditate unerringly on all paths.<sup>36</sup>

What this passage shows is that the context for the experiential state evoked in these early Dzogchen texts was deity yoga (which, in Mahāyoga, was generally focussed on the deity Vajrasattva). Furthermore, we encounter here once again the three concentrations – the stages in which the visualization is developed in Mahāyoga sādhanas. As we saw in the previous section, it was here that the techniques of Chan were being applied in the tenth century. Since this had been the role of Dzogchen style teachings since at least the early ninth century, if there is an influence here, it looks like it is Dzogchen influencing the practice of Chan.

#### 4. Conclusions

*I have written at length because of my concern about the errors that may be caused by the similarities between the doctrine of sudden enlightenment and Dzogchen.*  
– *The Lamp for the Eyes of Contemplation*

It seems to me quite valid to suggest that the use of Chan meditation techniques in the context of practising Mahāyoga sādhanas is a case of Chan being influenced by Dzogchen. But I also think it might be better to replace the idea of influence with the better-suited concept of *convergence*. From the eighth century, teachers of Chan texts in China, and Dzogchen texts in Tibet, were engaged with esoteric Buddhism. By the tenth century, these parallel developments converged, at least in the context of Tibetophone Buddhist practitioners, when both Chan and Dzogchen were being practised in the context of the three concentrations of Mahāyoga sādhanas.

The fact that Chan texts came to have a parallel function to Dzogchen texts helps to clarify the motivation behind the composition of the *Lamp for the Eyes of Contemplation* – that is, it explains why the apparent similarities between Chan and Dzogchen had become problematic. The passage cited

<sup>35</sup> The Tibetan names as *Byang chub sems sgom pa* and *Rdo la gser zhun*. On the Ldan dkar catalogue, see Lalou 1953: 333–334. This text occurs in a section of the catalogue on meditation texts, including one that may be a Chan text, entitled *Bsam gtan gi yi ge*.

<sup>36</sup> D.134: 4a.

above suggests that by the tenth century Chan and Dzogchen lineages had come to occupy the same space in Tibetan Buddhism, and this was perceived, at least by those promoting Dzogchen lineages, as a threat.<sup>37</sup> Sangyé Yeshé's solution was to create a four-stage hierarchy, in which the two sūtra-based approaches of gradual and instantaneous awakening were placed lower than the two tantra-based approaches of Mahāyoga and Dzogchen. With this hierarchy Sangyé Yeshé attempted to show, for once and all, that only Dzogchen had the authority to function as a framework for Mahāyoga.<sup>38</sup>

As we have seen, Chan meditation continued to be practised at Dunhuang after Sangyé Yeshé. Indeed, Tibetan Chan lineages seem to have still be alive in the eleventh century, when the Amdo master Aro Yeshé Jungné is said to have held both Chinese and Indian lineages.<sup>39</sup> Still, such marks of influence became fewer and fewer. By the thirteenth century Chan came to be represented in the Tibetan imagination primarily in the narrative of the debate held at Samyé between the Chinese Chan teacher Moheyan and his Indian opponent Kāmalaśīla. The classical forms of this narrative present a caricature of Chan as an extreme quietism, and represent Moheyan as losing the debate, resulting in the banning of all Chinese teachings from Tibet. Once Chan had become stigmatized in this way as a heretical teaching, it was easy for those who distrusted Dzogchen to attempt to identify the one with the other, beginning the tradition that was revived in modern scholarship by Tucci.

I suggested earlier that 'was Dzogchen influenced by Chan?' is a badly-phrased question, one that cannot lead to a satisfactory answer. Yet the temptation to phrase the question in this way is influenced by the traditional portrayals of Dzogchen and Chan as autonomous entities, transcending their own Buddhist context. Though a study of the history of both traditions undermines such portrayals, they seem to have a strong hold on the imagination; as Ludwig Wittgenstein put it, "a picture held us captive."<sup>40</sup> It might be better for us to turn away from this particular picture, to stop trying to compare ahistorical essences, and look instead for specific historical moments of dynamic interaction.

<sup>37</sup> *Lamp for the Eyes of Contemplation*, 186: rnal 'byor mig gi bsam gtan gyi skabs 'dir/ ston mun dang/ rdzogs chen cha 'dra bas gol du dogs pa'i phyir rgyas par bkod do//.

<sup>38</sup> On the way Sangyé Yeshé distinguishes Chan from Dzogchen see Dalton and van Schaik 2003. Incidentally, Sangyé Yeshé was, at the same time, making a more distinct separation between Mahāyoga and Dzogchen than had previously been the case. See van Schaik 2005: 195–199. On the doctrinal stratification of sūtra and tantra in Buddhism, and its roots in Indic Buddhism, see Davidson 2005: 286–287. Of course, scheme like these were also developed in China in the process of the "Sinification of Buddhism" (Gregory 1991). Sangyé Yeshé's hierarchy has a similar function to those of Zongmi, compartmentalizing and ranking a diversity of Buddhist approaches, and can certainly be seen as part of the "Tibetanization of Buddhism" even though Sangyé Yeshé's particular system was not directly influential on the later Tibetan tradition.

<sup>39</sup> *The Blue Annals*: I.211: yang ldan glong thang sgron mar a ro ye shes 'byung gnas zhes bya ba grub pa'i skyes bu zhig byung ste/ de la rgya gar bdun brgyud dang/ rgya'i hwa shang bdun brgyud kyi gdams na mnga' zhing/. In English, Roerich 1996 [1949]: 167. See also the discussions of Aro in Karmay 1988: 93 n.42 and Davidson 2004b: 75. The dates of Aro Yeshé Jungné are uncertain, but he is most likely to have been active in the early 11th century.

<sup>40</sup> Wittgenstein 1973: §115.



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