


Indian *nidhi*, Tibetan *gter ma*, Guru Chos dbang, and a *Kriyātantra* on Treasure Doors: Rethinking Treasure (part two)¹

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Introduction

umerous ethnographic studies have shown that cultures of treasure discovery exist all over the world: in island Greece (Stewart), Bulgaria (Valtchinova), Bolivia (Taussig), Mexico (Foster), Turkish Armenia (von Bieberstein), the pre-modern Islamic world (Cooperson), western esoteric traditions (Wheeler), 19th century USA (Bushman), contemporary Buryatia (Bernstein), historical Mongolia (Franke), Zanzibar (Walsh), West Africa (Sarro), the Philippines (Kelly), the many treasure phenomena in China (Seidel, ter Haar, Grebnev, et. al.), etc.

As with other widespread cultural phenomena (e.g. ancestor worship or animal sacrifice), while each of these treasure cultures have their own particular features, ethnography has nevertheless identified recurrent cross-cultural patterns: mythic narratives of fabulous hidden wealth, whether spiritual or material; national revival movements; inspirational historical narratives around treasure discoveries that nail

¹ This paper continues the series begun with Mayer, Robert, 2019. "Rethinking Treasure (part one)", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 52, Octobre 2019, pp. 120-185. As with 'part one', the research included here in 'part two' was financed by the German DFG for the research project Cathy Cantwell and I did with Carmen Meinert from 2017–2019 at the Center for Religious Studies (CERES) of the Ruhr-Universität Bochum, *Nyang ral's Codification of rNying ma Literature and Ritual* (ME 2006/3–1). Considerable intellectual stimulation to write this paper came out of the interdisciplinary seminar series on treasure discovery convened in Oxford by Anna Sehnalova, Yegor Grebnev, and myself, initially at Merton College, but continuing, after Hilary Term 2019 at Wolfson College. We are grateful to the Tibetan & Himalayan Studies Centre at Wolfson for financial support. I must also acknowledge the immense help of several persons, without whom I could never have written this paper: in alphabetical order, Aleksandra Wentz, Anna Sehnalova, Cathy Cantwell, Dan Martin, Dylan Esler, Joanna Bialek, Jonathan Silk, Natalie Gummer, Ophira Gamliel, P. Ogyan Tenzin Rinpoche, Reinier Langelaar, Ulrike Roesler. In particular, I have to thank my colleague Dylan Esler, and my *kalyāṇamitra* P. Ogyan Tenzin Rinpoche, whose help in producing this paper were exceptionally generous.

together the past with the present towards hopes for the future; the idea of holy books or icons buried long ago for recovery today; secret languages and scripts and other mysterious ancient objects; prophesied and destined treasure finders; a moral ambivalence adhering to improper treasure recovery; a cosmology encompassing territorial spirits who guard hidden treasures in the earth; the potentially dangerous nature of the treasure-guarding spirits; the economic need for material resources; an often shared vocabulary with minerology and mining; a cosmological understanding that encompasses both broader economic wellbeing and specific treasure discovery; and so forth. Each of the ethnographic studies referred to above encompasses at least one, and in most cases several, of these recurrent themes.

A major consideration for us in approaching these various treasure cultures, not least those of both India and Tibet, is classification: what we moderns might deem buried treasure need not conform at all with pre-modern classifications. Treasure seeking has had a venerable history. Perhaps from as early as the Chalcolithic, and certainly from the Bronze Age onwards, humans have depended economically on locating underground ores of minerals such as copper, tin, iron, gold, and silver, or deposits of valuable gemstones such as lapis lazuli, jade, or rubies; but these have never been the only valuable items recovered from the earth, and they do not even begin to sum up the entirety of the earth's bounty. For us moderns, minerology, water-divining, identifying fertile locations, archaeology, or revealing through visionary guidance long-buried religious texts and objects, might appear altogether different specializations, yet in pre-modern thinking, they could be (and often were) different aspects of the same or related skill sets.² Likewise, a surprisingly good harvest or the sudden booming of a local trade economy could be explained as the manifestation of a previously hidden treasure, through its guardian deity. Such occurrences could be understood through the same or closely related cosmological explications as the discovery in the ground of sacred books, precious gems, lucrative mineral deposits, mysterious buried antiquities, or underground waters. Even the entombment of one's ancestors could (and did in Tibet) implicate these same cosmologies.

India and early Tibet were no exceptions to global patterns. Both had their own highly complex understandings of treasure. I share with most Tibetologists the rather uncontroversial view that to achieve the

² In our familiar subject matter of Tibet, for example, there is a considerable convergence of the vocabulary of mineral hunting with the vocabulary of treasure hunting, going back to the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* and possibly even earlier. Hence, we have such terms as *gter kha*, *gter rāzas*, *gter khul*, and even the word *gter* itself, which belong simultaneously to the vocabularies of the mineralogist and the Rnying ma *gter ston*.

goal of understanding the emergence of the Tibetan and especially the Rnying ma *gter ma* traditions, we need first to understand something about each of these treasure cultures individually, and then look at their interactions.³ We need to approach the tasks through historical, anthropological, and textual lenses, to understand how the various treasure cultures and practices coalesced into what we now know as *gter ma*. Since we already have excellent data on some of the early Tibetan notions of treasure from scholars such as Davidson (2005, 2006) and Hazod (2009, 2010, 2016a, 2016b, 2018, 2019), and now too from some younger scholars such as Bialek (2015, 2018, 2019), Langelaar (2017, forthcoming), and Sehnalova (forthcoming), I feel the time is ripe to begin researching some of the Indian Buddhist ideas about treasure that we can be certain came to Tibet with Buddhism, because these are not so far known to Tibetology. I shall also necessarily look at the reception of these Indian ideas about treasure in Tibet. When I have made further progress in understanding the latter topics, I will return once again to a yet more concentrated study of indigenous Tibetan ideas (not least the funerary practices), and then try to see in more detail how the Tibetan and the Indian cultures interacted. It is in this spirit that I offer the imperfect translation on treasure-finding from the Indian *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* below, along with some more general Indian ideas about treasure, and an introduction to the early reception of these Indian ideas in Tibet.

In a recent publication, "Rethinking Treasure (part one)", originally published in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 52, Octobre 2019, I presented a preliminary roadmap outlining twelve so far underexplored research avenues that might contribute towards a deeper understanding of the historical origins of *gter ma*. In the present paper, I concentrate specifically on the seventh of the twelve, the early tantric Buddhist *Kriyātantras*, although space does not permit me to repeat some basic observations about treasure practices in *Kriyātantra* made previously (Mayer 2019: 161-167).⁴ However, *Kriyātantra* treasure practices themselves cannot possibly be understood without some contextualization within the wider field of Indian treasure beliefs. Thus, I include in this paper a brief introduction to the vast and diverse treasure-finding traditions of India, very little of which has so far been studied by Tibetologists. In addition, the significance of all of the above towards the formation

³ Perhaps to this already complex task, we might have to add a little historical consideration during the 13th to 14th centuries of the powerful ancestral treasure traditions of the Mongol emperors, which were quintessentially political in nature, but not simply adopted from the Chinese (Franke 1978).

⁴ As far as I am aware, the only other mention of these so far within a Tibetological context comes in some peripheral comments contained in my 2007 study of Asura caves and *pātālas*. The present paper deals with very different issues and sources.

of Tibet's *gter ma* traditions cannot be understood without at least some reference to their reception in Tibet, so that I also enrich my discussion with a study of the writings of Guru Chos dbang, himself an accomplished practitioner of the Vajrapāṇi tantras, through which deity so much of the Indian ideas about *nidhi* entered Tibet. Nevertheless, the reader should be aware that this paper purports only to address very specific strands contributing to the emergence of the complex and syncretic *gter ma* traditions of Tibet: it certainly does not purport to give a comprehensive account, which could only (in my opinion) be achieved once all the research avenues outlined in "Rethinking Treasure (part one)" (and more!) have been addressed.

In 1994, Janet Gyatso published an extremely valuable study of Guru Chos dbang's (1220-1270) *Gter 'byung chen mo*, the earliest known comprehensive presentation of *gter ma* preserved in Tibetan. As Gyatso points out, this substantial work, written by Myang ral's famous dharma heir, is the earliest treatise dedicated solely and specifically to the explication of what *gter ma* actually is (by contrast, previous mentions of *gter ma* from earlier sources such as the students of Gnubs, or Myang ral, discuss *gter ma* only in passing, or within particular contexts). I too had the great good fortune to enjoy many hours in Sarnath in 2017-18 studying the *Gter 'byung chen mo* with the learned P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche.⁵

One of the most salient points mentioned by Gyatso in her groundbreaking study was the surprisingly wide breadth and scope of what could constitute *gter* in Chos dbang's understanding. As Gyatso remarked, for Chos dbang, *gter* could include the natural resources of the earth such as timber or bodies of water, building materials, geographical locations such as hidden valleys, Buddhist scriptures of all kinds, *stūpas* invisible to ordinary mortals, texts on calculation or astrology, medicine, arts, architecture, or magic, Bon texts, sundry ritual objects and objects of power, medicines, wish-fulfilling jewels, riches of gold and jewels, the Buddha Nature, and more. As Gyatso (1994: 276) writes, "We almost begin to suspect that Guru Chos dbang is going to argue that everything is a kind of Treasure", and "Guru Chos dbang's study is exceptional in the breadth of what he stakes out for inclusion under the rubric of Treasure: not only are virtually all Buddhist scriptures so categorised, but also a wide variety of worldly

⁵ The *Gter 'byung chen mo* does not come out of the Chos dbang materials preserved and redacted at Mindroling in the 17th century. Rather, it comes from a rare manuscript that was discovered in Bhutan in the library of one Khenpo Choedak, and reproduced by the late H. H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, who included it in Chapter 9 of his *Rin chen gter mdzod chen po'i rgyab chos*. For several reasons (of provenance, of internal contents, archaic language, etc.), I concur with Janet Gyatso's conclusions that it represents an authentic survival of Guru Chos dbang's actual work.

materials and techniques for achieving secular aims".⁶ My readings in this text with P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche concur with Gyatso's conclusions. Furthermore, as Andreas Doctor (2005: 26) points out, the next major work of this genre, Ratna gling pa's (1403-78) *Gter 'byung chen mo gsal ba'i sgron me*, follows Guru Chos dbang in this respect.

What is less well known in Tibetological circles is that in casting such a remarkably inclusive net for his definitions of treasure, Chos dbang and his successors were very much in accord with well-established and widely prevalent Indian understandings of Treasure (*nidhi*) that had entered Tibet along with Buddhism. Gyatso (1993:26) has already very accurately remarked on the 'overarching Buddhist perspective from which Guru Chos-dbang presents the Treasure tradition': what we can now add to Gyatso's excellent account is that there is also clear textual evidence that Chos dbang was in some degree cognisant of Indian Buddhist understandings of treasure, and made some actual use of them in his attempt to construct his Buddhist account of *gter ma*. In the pages below, I shall therefore enrich my discussions of Indian treasure beliefs and texts with illustrations of their influences on the *Gter 'byung chen mo*, and show how its author combined Tibetan and Indian ideas to create that unique mélange which became Rnying ma *gter ma*.

The Indian term that Tibetans consistently translated into *gter* was *nidhi*. In her groundbreaking study of the *nidhivādins*, the typically tantric specialised treasure hunters of medieval India, the French philologist Nalini Balbir observes that consulting the standard dictionaries alone cannot offer us a sufficient account of the full life and extent of the relevant terminology, and that a survey of narrative literature is needed to demonstrate its true reality. Might their perhaps modest lexicographic representation be related to the low status that treasure finders and their art can sometimes have, even when their discoveries might be important?⁷ But even if not fully sufficient, the existing dictionaries do nevertheless have something to offer us, and are still worth consulting. The Sanskrit *nidhā* derives from the verbal root *ni+√*

⁶ Gyatso 1994: 279.

⁷ 'Les dictionnaires usuels rendent insuffisamment compte de leur vitalité, mais des sondages opérés dans la littérature narrative montrent qu'elle est réelle.' Balbir 1993: 19. Regarding their sometimes low status, Balbir cites a few examples, (pages 22-25) and Dagmar Wujastyk informs me (personal communication, 23rd January 2022) the *Rasārnava* (11th or 12th century) presents *khanya-* and *nidhivādins* as somewhat inferior to *rasavādins*. The sometimes low status of treasure finders, even when their discoveries might be important, is widely attested in the cross-cultural ethnographic record. A striking example is offered in Stewart 2012, where one of the most important pilgrimage sites of contemporary Greek Orthodoxy, Kóronos, issued from the miraculous religious treasure discoveries of low status free-lance emery miners, who still remain disparaged by the clerical hierarchy.

dhā, with a primary meaning of 'to put', or 'to place', or 'to set down', and has secondary meanings that include 'to give, impart to, deposit with', 'to bury, conceal, or hide (as under ground)', 'to lay up, treasure up'.⁸ Thus the noun *nidhi* has such meanings as 'receptacle', 'store-house', 'treasury', 'a treasure, store, hoard (for the nine treasures (*navanidhi*) of Kubera)', 'an epithet of Kubera (*nidhinātha*)', 'the art of finding treasure (*nidhivāda*)', etc.⁹

In contrast to the ancient and very widely attested usages of the Sanskrit term *nidhi*, it is interesting that there are no known occurrences of the Tibetan word *gter* in surviving Old Tibetan texts, outside of Buddhist usage.¹⁰ At my request, Joanna Bialek has very kindly tried to establish the possible early meanings of the word *gter*. Bialek informs me that the word-family is weakly preserved, and *gter* and *ster* are only seldom used in Old Tibetan texts, so it is very difficult to reconstruct their early history. She does however suggest that since *g-* is a nominalising prefix inherited from Proto-Trans-Himalayan, an original meaning of the verb root *√ter* might have been something like *"to accumulate; to heap, to pile"*. Her analysis, which still remains provisional, runs to two pages, too much to reproduce here, and includes a study of the entire word family, several cognate languages, etc. But she also writes: "Since we don't have any non-Buddhist attestation of *gter* in OT (as far as the sources at my disposal show) it could be that the term was deliberately coined to render Skr. *nidhi/nidhāna*".¹¹ To Bialek's

⁸ From Apte's dictionary s.v. निधा *nidhā* 3 U. 1 To place, put, put or set down; शिरसि निदधानोऽञ्जलिपुटम् *Bh.3.123; R.3.50,62;12.52; Si. 1.13.* -2 To confide, or entrust, commit to the care of; निदधे विजयाशंसां चापे सीतां च लक्ष्मणे *R.12.44;15.36.* -3 To give, impart to, deposit with; दिनान्ते निहितं तेजः सवित्रेव हुताशनः *R.4.1.* -4 To put down, lay, allay, restrain; सलिलैर्निहितं रजः क्षितौ *Ghaṭ.1.* -5 To bury, conceal or hide (as under ground); ऊनद्विवाषिकं प्रेतं निदध्युर्बान्धवा बहिः *Ms.5.68.* -6 To fix or direct the thoughts upon; cf. निध्मै. -7 To determine, resolve. -8 To direct one's labours, endeavour. -9 To appoint. -10 To remove, relinquish. -11 To lay up, treasure up. -12 To remember, keep or bear in mind. -13 To end, close.

⁹ From Apte's dictionary s.v. निधिः *nidhiḥ* [नि-धा-आधारे कि] 1 Abode, receptacle, reservoir; जल°, तोय°, तपोनिधि &c. -2 A store-house, treasury. -3 A treasure, store, hoard (for the nine treasures of Kubera, see नवनिधि). -4 The ocean. -5 An epithet of Viṣṇu. -6 A man endowed with many good qualities. -7 the science of chronology; *Ch. Up.7.2.1.* -Comp. -ईशः, नाथः an epithet of Kubera; *Bhāg.10.50.56.* -वादः the art of finding treasure. -वासः the town of *Newāsā* on the *Pravarā* river in the *Ahmednagar* District; Cf. निधिवासकर-परमा- नन्द-प्रकाशितायां... संहितायां1 Colophon of *Śiva. B.2.*

¹⁰ I am aware of it only in the *De ga g.yu tshal smon lam*, PT 16 31r2, and in the Buddhist compendium of magic, IOL Tib J 401, which has a *nidhi* finding rite.

¹¹ Personal communication, Joanna Bialek, 1st June 2021. As clarification to a further question of mine, Bialek explained that the mere fact that the word-family has only a few members need not in itself tell us very much about Tibetan social history.

speculation, I tentatively add one of my own: that the Tibetan term *gter* might have had a pre-Buddhist history in the terminology of mining (see note 2 above).

1. *Nidhi as a cultural category in Indian thinking*

The manifold cultural, economic, and religious, interpretations and performances regarding *nidhi* were certainly not obscure in 8th-13th century India, in the centuries in which Buddhism was transmitted from there to Tibet. They were well-known, then as now, and still remain widespread across a broad range of popular Indian literature, as well as in more recherché religious or learned texts. Perhaps the single best-known example of *nidhi* in Indian culture is the famous list of nine treasures (*navanidhi*) primarily and normally associated with the popular wealth deity, Kubera, who is king of the *yakṣas*, the guardians of wealth (but more rarely these nine treasures can also be attributed to several other figures, such as Hanuman, or *Cakravartin* monarchs, etc). As a boon from Brahmā, Kubera owns all the riches of the earth, including not only all the minerals and jewels that can be mined out of the ground, but also all the riches that humanity could possibly possess, whether manufactured, agricultural, or commercial. According to the influential traditions of Amarasimha's *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana* lexicon, usually known as the *Amarakoṣa* or *Amarakośa*, (perhaps Buddhist in origin, probably dating from somewhere between the 5th to 7th centuries), these nine *nidhis* are named: *Padma* (Lotus), *Mahāpadma* (Great Lotus), *Śaṅkha* (Conch), *Makara* (Crocodile), *Kacchapa* (Tortoise), *Mukunda* (a gemstone?), *Kunda* (Jasmine), *Nīla* (Sapphire), and *Kharva* (Dwarf).

Discussions regarding what precisely each of these nine mysteriously named treasure categories might actually contain have been

Words going in and out of use over time is absolutely normal in any language. "Word-extinction" need have no social bearing (unless otherwise bound to social changes). Hence there is no need to infer from this that, for example, indigenous cosmologies of treasures, resources, or wealth linked to territorial deities did not exist before Buddhism. Yet here the change in terminology might also be linked to cultural and social change. With Buddhicisation, indigenous traditions of offering the territorial deities animals and items linked to *g.yang* such as bundles of wool, seem to have been augmented with and perhaps sometimes even replaced by Indian Buddhist traditions with a similar purport. In these Indian Buddhist traditions, treasure vases (*gter bum*) were buried to pacify and win over potentially dangerous spirits of the landscape (see note 78 below). This particular change to an important ritual practice might have been a driver of new vocabulary, ushering in increased usage of the translational word *gter*. On a different note, Bialek further observes that terminological questions remain about the implications of the suffix *-ma* and how meanings of *gter* and *gter ma* might have been differentiated (personal communication, 7 September 2021).

endless, and different sources have arrived at numerous and varied conclusions. Indeed, they are not always even counted as nine.¹² As Norman concluded (see below), *nidhi* had such a long history in so many diverse Indian traditions that its understandings became profuse and variegated with the passing of time. But the predominant interpretations very typically included not only specific riches such as gemstones and gold that we might commonly think of as treasures, but also the wider natural resources of the earth, techniques for achieving secular aims, personal qualities both mundane and sublime, sacred texts, magical techniques, and much, much, more.

To illustrate this point, it might be helpful to consider one example (out of a many) that we know were current and influential in India during the period when the Tibetan *gter ma* tradition emerged. As Norman (1992: 184-5) describes, a set of nine *nidhis* were described by the famous Jain author, Hemacandra (1088-1173), in his *Triṣaṣṭiśālākāpuruṣacaritra*, who explained that [1] the *nidhi Naiṣarpa* is the origin of the building of camps, cities, villages, mines, towns approached by land or sea, and isolated towns; [2] the *nidhi Pāṇḍuka* is the origin of all bulk, weight, and height, and of all numbers, and of grains and seeds; [3] the *nidhi Piṅgala* is the origin of the whole business of ornaments, for both humans and animals; [4] the *nidhi Sarvaratna* is the origin of the Cakravartin's jewels; [5] the *nidhi Mahāpadma* is the origin of all clothing; [6] the *nidhi Kāla* is the origin of knowledge of the past, present and future, also of labour such as agriculture, and the arts [7] the *nidhi Mahākāla* is the origin of coral, silver, gold, pearls, iron, etc. and their mines; [8] the *nidhi Māṇava* is the origin of soldiers, weapons, armour, the sciences of fighting, and the administration of justice; [9] and the *nidhi Śāṅkha* is the origin of poetry, concerts, dramatic arts, and musical instruments.¹³

In some accounts, the *nidhis* could appear to become personified as deities and worshiped, whilst keeping their essential meaning of riches or treasures, because Buddhist, brahmanical and Jain traditions alike gave the same names to the deities who protected the *nidhis*, as to the *nidhis* themselves.¹⁴ The *nidhis*, and/or their protecting deities, could signal particular qualities in persons connected with or marked by them, as described in Purāṇas such as the *Garuḍa* (Chapter 53) and the

¹² Although K.R. Norman (1992: 185, note 12) observes that the nine-fold structure was so widespread (even if the names and qualities of the nine were not standardised) that the word *nidhi* could be used in inscriptions simply to indicate the numeral '9'.

¹³ Hemacandra's list is based on a canonical Jain text, the *Ṭhānaṅga-sutta*, while his famous lexicon or dictionary of synonyms, the *Abhidhānacintāmaṇi*, also has an entry for *nidhi*. See Norman 1992: 184.

¹⁴ Norman 1992: 185, 187.

Mārkaṇḍeya (Chapter 68), both of which share a similar list of eight (rather than nine) *nidhis* belonging to Kubera. In later tantric cults, personified *nidhis* or *nidhi* protectors appeared within the entourage of Lakṣmī, the Goddess of Wealth.

In other accounts, the *nidhis* can take on more spiritual aspects in parallel to their original worldly aspects. As well as describing *nidhis* as inexhaustible sources of jewels, the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* also likens the Buddhas themselves to inexhaustible treasures;¹⁵ similar juxtapositions of comparatively inferior worldly with more superior spiritual versions of *nidhi* occur also in several other Buddhist texts, such as the *Āryasāgaramatipariṣcchāsūtra*¹⁶ and the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*.¹⁷ Likewise, in a contemporary Sikh teaching, meditation on the guru is said to attract parallel lists of the nine worldly *nidhis* and the nine spiritual *nidhis*, where the former are named according to the *Amarakoṣa* (see above) and interpreted here to mean (1) offspring, (2) jewels, (3) foods, (4) military prowess, (5) clothes and grains, (6) gold, (7) successful trade in gems, (8) arts, and (9) riches of all kinds; while the latter are (1) faith, (2) devotion, (3) contentment, (4) detachment, (5) acceptance, (6) equipoise, (7) delight, (8) joy, and (9) awakening.¹⁸

¹⁵ Chapter 6 describes "a house in which there are always four inexhaustible treasures, replete with all kinds of jewels, which never decrease, although all the poor and wretched may partake of them to their satisfaction" (translation from 84000) (*khyim 'di na rin po che thams cad kyis gang ba zad mi shes pa'i gter chen po bzhi yod de/ de'i mthuis sems can dbul zhing phongs pa thams cad kyis khyer te dong yang zad mi shes te*) (Sde dge 176, Vol 60, 212b). Chapter Seven (217a-b) describes how the Buddhas can transform themselves into treasures, to enable impoverished beings to generate bodhicitta (*sems can dbul po rnam la ni/ zad mi shes pa'i gter du gyur/ /gang la sbyin pa byin pa yang / /de dag byang chub sems bskyed btsud/*). In Chapter 11 (234b), we read that "Those living beings who understand correctly this teaching of the Dharma will obtain the precious treasure of the Dharma" (*chos kyi rnam grangs 'di gang dag gi sug par thob par gyur pa de dag kyang chos rin po che'i gter rnyed par gyur ro*).

¹⁶ See for example the sustained analogy between the treasure of Dharma (*chos rin po che'i gter chen po*) and a great worldly treasure (*gter chen po*), described in Chapter Eight of this text. Sde dge 152, Vol 58, 72a-73a.

¹⁷ In Part One of this text, an analogy is made between mining ever deeper into the earth to extract increasingly precious minerals (*gter chen po*), finally arriving at the wish-fulfilling gem (*yiḍ bzhiṅ gyi nor bu rin po che'i gter chen po*), and 'digging' ever deeper within one's own mind, finally to arrive at the non-conceptual. Sde dge 142, Vol 57, folios 4a-4b.

¹⁸ 'Meditate on Guru Teg Bahadar and the Nine Treasures shall come running to you'. *Sikh Dharma International* website, accessed 28th June 2021: <https://www.sikhdharma.org/guru-teg-bahadar-nine-treasures/>. Although this is a contemporary text, it usefully captures traditional Sikh thinking on the nine *nidhis* (*nav nidh*), which seems to be a greatly favoured topic in Sikhism. There are more than a hundred references to the nine *nidhis* in the Sikh holy book, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, many attributed to the first of their ten gurus, Nānak (1469 -1539): for example, on page 149, line 13; 220 line 19; 352 line 19; 356 line 6; 438 line 11; 473 line 3; and more. As one would expect from a tradition so committed to the

Whilst following the same general ideas about *nidhi* as brahmanic and Jain texts, one should note that according to Norman (1992: 187), Indian Buddhist texts do not usually reflect the widespread nine-fold structure of the other Indian traditions. While resembling brahmanic and Jain sources in seldom agreeing very exactly on what the various *nidhis* are, Buddhist texts across a wide range of genres and periods do generally agree in preferring a four-fold structure. It seems that the four-fold enumeration became somewhat emblematic of being Buddhist. This could be because the fourfold *nidhi* structure has very ancient origins in Buddhism. Pāli texts speak of the four *nidhis*, describing them as having great size, and being contained in pots. In the Pāli tradition, as Norman (1992:188) points out, the four *nidhis* were also included among the seven co-natals (*saha-jāta*) that appeared spontaneously when a Buddha was born (others co-natals included his mount Kanthaka, his spouse Yaśodharā, his charioteer Chandaka, the Bodhi tree, etc.). Perhaps with this tradition as the point of departure, as Norman points out (1992:187), the *Divyāvadāna*, the *Mahāvastu*, and even the Khotanese *Book of Zambasta*, list where the four *nidhis* are located; the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* states that the four *nidhis* are filled with jewels and are inexhaustible (see note 15 above); and the Chinese version of the *Maitreyavyākaraṇa* has four *nidhis* that are filled with gold, silver, *maṇi*, and *vaiḍūrya*. Norman's list is not exhaustive: the *Karmaśataka* for example also describes a merchant as rich as Vaiśravaṇa, in front of whose house four great treasures appeared, brimming with jewels that never seemed to increase or decrease, even if hundreds or thousands of them were removed (Sde dge 340, volume 73, F.93.b). According to Norman, the *Divyāvadāna* names the four *nidhis* as *Pāṇḍuka*, *Piṅgala*, *Śaṅkha*, and *Elāpatra* and it should be noted that these are also the names of the four great *nāga* kings (*mahārāja*) who guard them, and who are famous in several texts of Indian Buddhism.¹⁹ The *Mahāvastu* names them similarly but with *Paduma* instead of *Pāṇḍuka*.

K. R. Norman's study of the nine *nidhis* was specifically focused on their important role within the mythology of the Cakravartin monarchs, but he also examined a range of related materials. One of his

religious lay life, both spiritual and worldly wealth are encompassed. Thus one finds in the Guru Granth Sahib: "The nine treasures of the Naam are within, O my soul; the Great Guru has made me see the unseen Lord" (Guru Ram Dass, page 539, line 9) and "Only then can the soul-bride obtain the nine treasures of her Beloved" (Guru Nānak, page 750 line 17); as well as "Wealth, the supernatural spiritual powers of the Siddhas, and the nine treasures come to those who meditate on the Lord" (Guru Arjan Dev, page 534, line 4) and "The nine treasures, riches and the miraculous spiritual powers of the Siddhas cling to the feet of the Lord's humble servant." (Guru Arjan Dev, page 679, line 10.) Regarding the above page references, note that every copy of the Guru Granth Sahib has 1,430 pages, and every copy is identical.

¹⁹ Vogel 1926: 107, 210-211.

conclusions is that since *nidhi* occurs from a very early date and in broadly parallel but rather differing forms across such a very wide range of Jain, Buddhist, Epic, Purāṇic, and sundry other materials,²⁰ *nidhi* was probably a very old category of Indian folk religion that had become differently transformed within these diverse traditions over very long periods of time.

For it is indeed the case that *nidhi* is very typically, and was from the earliest literature onwards, associated with *yakṣas* and *nāgas*, traditionally constructed as local deities of the landscape, whose worship was undoubtedly very ancient. Despite any specialised elaborations of their roles over time, one can see from numerous sources that *yakṣas* and *nāgas* remained nature spirits of the Indian landscape, who often owned and guarded the treasures buried in their soil, especially at the roots of their trees, in their fields or ant heaps, or in their waters. In this, it seems they approximately resembled their Tibetan counterparts, the many classes of Tibetan territorial deities or *yul lha*, who have innumerable names and a varying terminology (e.g. *gzhi bdag*, *sa bdag*, etc.), but whom in this paper, I am rather arbitrarily going to refer to as *yul lha* (for those, like *yakṣas*, mainly connected with land) and *klu* (for those, like *nāgas*, particularly connected with waters). In Tibetan thinking, such *yul lha* and *klu* owned and guarded the *gter* treasures buried in the territories that they patrolled. In Tibet, the very idea of *yul lha* and *klu* often doesn't fully make sense without the treasures that they guard within their territories, and it seems that a similar view pertained in India regarding *yakṣas* and *nāgas*: although, like Tibetan *yul lha* and *klu*, they had many other aspects too, guarding or controlling treasure was certainly of their essence.

I am not suggesting anything like uniformity between these Tibetan territorial deities and their Indian counterparts: on the contrary, they surely were and still remain endlessly differentiated both internally (within Tibet, and within India,) and cross-culturally (between the Tibetan and Indian cultural fields). Such territorial deities must surely have had innumerable and often quite different natures and meanings to their local populations. For example, one important Tibetan pattern (albeit of yet unascertained prevalence) was to revere and worship *yul lha* as ancestors, thus giving them a very specific type of reverence, honour and importance, and also intersectionality with human populations, that I am not so far aware of from Indian sources. Such ancestral Tibetan *yul lha* and *klu* could be guardians of treasure, either directly, or indirectly through a subordinate deity. By contrast, although *yakṣas* and *nāgas* were often revered, especially when

²⁰ It is regrettable that Norman was not able to include in his typically excellent and erudite study the considerable body of Indian tantric materials on *nidhi*.

converted to Dharma protectors or acting as benign territorial deities, Indian treasure-finding texts themselves can be quite dismissive of or even abusive towards the deities who guard the treasure, in a way that is probably not so typical of Tibetan treasure-finding practices.²¹ Such-like variations in the natures of the treasure-guarding deities seem to have contributed to differences between the various Indian and Tibetan treasure cults, a complex and largely anthropological theme that I hope to explore further in a subsequent paper in this multi-part series 'Rethinking Treasure'.²²

Yet despite any such differences, however great they might be, to the systematising eye of clerical Buddhism there was one important thing many of these various Indian and Tibetan territorial deities had in common: they could often be shoe-horned into a particular set of niches within the learned Buddhist cosmology, and thereby rendered controllable and even useful. It is noteworthy that within many Indian texts, not least Buddhist ones, the categories of *yakṣas* and *nāgas* are typically worldly (*laukika*), and thus susceptible to taming or conversion by more transcendent deities. That is not to say that the *yakṣas* and *nāgas* were restricted to 'popular religion' and ignored in the religion of the monks. As scholars such as DeCaroli (2004) have pointed out, when converted to Buddhism, such worldly deities quite clearly became just as important to monastic Buddhism as to the laity, and were

²¹ Respect for the treasure-protecting deities, and the need to offer them compensatory substitutes (*gter tshab*), seems less in evidence in the Indian *Kriyātantra* sources. Thus from the the *Vajrakumāra Tantra* in Chinese (probably citing translated Indic materials) (**Kaṅkrodha-vajrakumāra-bodhisattva-sādhana-vidhi*, *Sheng jiani fennu jin'gang tongzi pusa chengjiu yi gui jing*, T1222a [XXI] 102c10–12) "If the guardians of the treasure obstruct him, then they will be burnt in a mass of fire. They will come screaming to the mantrin and bow before him vanquished..." and also (T1222a [XXI] 107c1–3): "If you need to expel the gods who guard the treasure....take a slab of rock...or some mustard seeds...and cast it at the treasure. The obstructor on the treasure will withdraw..." (Hodge, unpublished). Or from the *Amoghapaśākalparāja* (Sde dge 686, Vol. 92-1-138a): "...as long as you live, the treasure protector will do work for you. Wherever you send it, whatever work you command it, all will be done." Likewise the translated excerpt from the *Ārya-vidyottamamahātantra* below mentions destroying those who obstruct the treasure seeker, piercing the [obstructing] hawks and making them faint, etc. Perhaps also illustrative of this attitude are the many Indian agricultural rituals described in the *Vajratuṇḍasamayakalparāja*, where *nāgas* are typically bullied and overpowered (Hidas 2019).

²² Another difference is that in the densely wooded terrain of ancient India, *yakṣas* were typically associated with the forested landscape and trees, whence the archaic Indian practices of worshipping and making offerings at tree shrines, and then the idea of a wish-fulfilling tree; whilst in Tibet, *yul lha* were typically connected with features within the mountainous landscape. The overlapping similarities between *klu* and *nāgas* are well known.

inscribed within the textual canons of Indian monastic Buddhism at every level, serving as dharma protectors.²³ No doubt, Tibetans would have recognised a parallel here with familiar local patterns, where the categories of *yul lha* and *klu* controlling the *gter* of the natural environment were increasingly seen as converted to Buddhism, and thus extremely useful as dharma protectors, and incorporated into Buddhist ritual. In short, just as the *nidhi* concepts of India were often connected to *yakṣas* and *nāgas* constructed as often localised and comparatively worldly spirits that were subject to Sanskritisation, conversion, and incorporation, by the greater transcendent deities, so also were the *gter* concepts of Tibetan popular belief (I am not here talking about Buddhist *gter ma*) envisaged to be connected with indigenous *yul lha* and *klu* that were subject to Buddhicisation.

In brahmanic myth, the Sanskritisation of the *yakṣas* was often mediated by the mythology of Kubera, a.k.a. *Nidhipati*, *Nidhinātha*, *Nidhīśvara* or *Nidhiguhyakādhipa*, the king of the *yakṣas* who won from Brahmā the boon of lordship over all the treasures of the earth (*nidhi*) and a flowery aerial chariot (*puṣpakavimāna*) drawn by *guhyakas*.²⁴ In Tibet, according to legend, the *yul lha* and *klu* were almost but not completely tamed by Padmasambhava, but enough that he could entrust to them guardianship of his tantric *gter*, which they then protected alongside their original environmental *gter*.

But especially in Indian Buddhist *Kriyātantras* and *Caryātantras*, building on earlier Buddhist mythology, it was often Vajrapāṇi, himself an actual *yakṣa* in so many Buddhist texts and commonly known (like Kubera) as *Guhyakādhipati*, who had mastery over all the *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, and *guhyakas*. This is why Vajrapāṇi became the presiding deity in so many Buddhist tantric rites relating to *nidhi*, one of which I will introduce below. The evolution of Vajrapāṇi in Buddhist thought over the ages has already earned the attention of scholars such as Lamotte and Snellgrove, but undoubtedly a very great deal more still remains to be said. In relation more specifically to those Buddhist texts received

²³ See Robert DeCaroli's *Haunting the Buddha: Indian Popular Religion and the Formation of Buddhism*. Or simply consider the prominent role and great devotion shown to *yakṣa* deities in numerous monastic rituals, such as those of the Medicine Buddha, Jambhala, etc., and their remarkable prevalence in Indian Buddhist sculpture from the earliest times onwards.

²⁴ Misra 1981: 5: 'The Guhyakas were the attendants of Kubera, the lord of concealment, and, as such, they possessed mysterious powers over hidden treasures. For instance, in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Rāma is represented as capable of looking at what was hidden because Kubera, through a Guhyaka, had made available to him an eye-ointment. The *Mahābhāshya* of Patanjali mentions Kubera as Guhyakādhipati [Lord of Guhyakas]...There appears to be a complete identity between Yakshas and Guhyakas insofar as appearance, possession and concealment of riches, and offering service to Kubera are concerned.'

in Tibet, Vajrapāṇi himself is sometimes straightforwardly identified as a *yakṣa*.²⁵ At other times, for example in Sde dge 498, the *Bhagavan-nīlāmbāradhara-vajrapāṇitantra* (*The Tantra of the Blue-Clad Blessed Vajrapāṇi*), and some other scriptures related to it, Vajrapāṇi is invoked more because of his power to subdue the *nāgas* and *yakṣas*, to acquire the wealth they guard (which does not preclude his own *yakṣa* origins). As the translators of this text into English explain:

The text begins with the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi requesting the Buddha Akṣobhya to teach a tantra that can tame all evil spirits that live beneath the ground. The notion that an underworld exists in which various forms of evil spirits flourish was well developed in Indian Buddhism since the very early days. Both of the two other *Caryātantra* tantras on Blue-Clad Vajrapāṇi (Toh 499 in seven chapters and Toh 501 in five chapters) share the same theme, unfolding as Vajrapāṇi requests the Buddha to teach the rituals that can tame the *nāgas* and *yakṣas* below the ground and, in the process, accomplish the wealth that they guard and repel the disease that they inflict on humans. These two other tantras thus appear to be slightly condensed (or perhaps earlier) versions of *The Tantra of the Blue-Clad Blessed Vajrapāṇi*.²⁶

²⁵ See e.g. the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* section of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin vinaya*, 7.213-7.214, where we find the following discourse: "The Blessed One then said to the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi, "Vajrapāṇi, let us go to the northern region to convert the *nāga* Apalāla." "Certainly, O Honored One," replied the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi to the Blessed One. Thereupon, the Blessed One, along with the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi, flew from there across the sky by means of his magical powers. When the Blessed One saw a green forest rising in the distance, he asked the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi, "Vajrapāṇi, do you see that green forest rising?" "Yes, I do, O Honored One..." etc. (this translation by 84000). Vajrapāṇi was in fact defined as a *yakṣa* in most of Indian Buddhist history. He appears as such in diverse sources including the *Vinaya*, the *Jātakas*, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the *Lalitavistara*, the *Mahāmāyūrī*, and many more. The *Mahāmāyūrī* is particularly important for identifying numerous *yakṣas* as local deities of specific places in India, and it describes Vajrapāṇi as the *yakṣa* protector of the important Buddhist location of Rājagṛha (Misra 1981: 167). For an easily accessible example, see page 205 of Conze's *Perfect Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*: "Furthermore, Vajrapāṇi, the great Yaksha, constantly and always follows behind the irreversible Bodhisattva."

²⁶ Introduction section i4, in the version produced by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee for 84000. I would elaborate slightly on the wording of this tantra by pointing out that in other sources, *yakṣas* dwell as much upon the ground as under it, and that elite *yakṣas* even inhabit a city in the sky, which has the same name as Vajrapāṇi's pure land. It is interesting to compare the *nidānas* of Sde dge 498, the *Bhagavan-nīlāmbāradhara-vajrapāṇitantra*, and Sde dge 499, the *Ārya-vajrapāṇi-nīlāmbāradhara-vajrapātāla-nāma-tantra*. In the former, the Buddha dwells in Alakāvati and addresses Vajrapāṇi and entourage (/ 'di skad bdag gis thos pa dus gcig na/ bcom ldan 'das mi bskyod pa rdo rje 'i rigs kyi sangs rgyas lchang lo can gyi pho brang na byang chub sems dpa' phyag na rdo rje [158b] dang / rdo rje sde dang / rdo rje kun tu 'dzin pa dang / rdo rje rab tu 'dul byed dang / rdo rje mi bzad 'joms dang / rdo rje gdug pa kun 'dul dang / rdo rje dbyings las rgyal ba dang / rdo rje dgyes gnas skyob la sogs pa 'i 'khor bye ba phrag snyed rnam dang thabs cig tu bzhugs so/ (Sde dge bka' 'gyur Vol 87, folios

Related themes pervade other tantras too, such as the *Bhūta-dāmaratantra*, in which Vajrapāṇi is invoked for his power over the *guhnyakas*, and the *Ārya-vaṅjra-pātāla-nāma-tantra-rāja* ('Phags pa rdo rje sa 'og gi rgyud kyi rgyal po)²⁷ which, as its name suggests, is concerned with attaining the subterranean worlds of *pātāla*, abodes of the *nāgas* and *asuras*, to acquire the desirables found therein. Above all, it should not be forgotten that the great bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's pure land is called Alaka or Alakāvati (Lcang lo can), which in ancient Indian mythology is none other than the name of the abode of the *yakṣas* and their king, Kubera.²⁸

If Vajrapāṇi is thus so often the presiding deity in the numerous Buddhist *Kriyātantra* and *Caryātantra* systems for finding *nidhi* or subduing *yakṣas* and *nāgas* to control their treasures, in the wider scope of Indian Buddhist tantrism, his role seems to have evolved a step further. In most traditions, he also becomes the guardian of the entire treasury of secret tantric texts taught by the Buddha but concealed into the care of Vajrapāṇi for later dissemination. In this context, he thus becomes Lord of the Secrets (*Guhyapati*), more than Lord of *guhnyaka* spirits (*Guhyakādhipati*). Yet this new role is still consonant with his original *yakṣa* heritage, since the *yakṣas* are the guardians *par excellence* of *nidhi*, a category which in Mahāyāna literature can include scriptural texts (*dharmanidhi*).²⁹ There is even a major Indian tradition that describes the Mahāyāna scriptures too as guarded by Vajrapāṇi, as well as the tantric scriptures (see the citations from Haribhadra and Dorji Wangchuk below). Seen through this lens of Indian cosmology, it is hardly surprising that some later Tibetan exegetes with an enthusiasm for *gter ma* came to envisage so much of Buddhist literature as *nidhi*: for if so many of the tantras, and all the *Perfection of Wisdom* scriptures, and other Mahāyāna scriptures too, were for a while entrusted to the care of Vajrapāṇi or of the *nāgas*, this should, by definition, make

158a-b). In the latter, the Buddha dwells in *pātāla*, the land of the *nāgas*, and addresses an audience of *nāgas*: 'di skad bdag gis thos pa dus gcig nal' bcom ldan 'das sa 'og rim pa bdun klu'i rgyal po'i gnas na rin po che'i khri la bzhuḡs te/ klu'i rgyal po dga' bo dang nye dga' bo dang / rigs ldan la sogs te klu rnam dang / byang chub sems dpa' phyag na rdo rje la sogs pa rnam dang thabs cig stel [Sde dge bka' gyur Vol. 87, folio 167a]

²⁷ Sde dge 744, Stog 697, Peking 403, and Ulan Bator 767.

²⁸ Sutherland quotes citations of Alaka as the city of Kubera and his *yakṣas* from the *Kathāsaritsāgara* (page 147), and from Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta* (pages 150, 151). For a further identification of Alaka as the home of Kubera and the *yakṣas*, see also Stella Kramrisch's *The Presence of Śiva*, page 137.

²⁹ Hidden scriptural texts protected by landscape deities and described as *dharmanidhi* occur in Mahāyāna scriptures, and also in commentarial texts such as Śāntideva's *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (see Mayer 2019, p.156). *Dharmanidhi* can be protected by *nāgas* as well as by *yakṣas*.

them a kind of *nidhi*.

I mentioned above that the *Mahāvastu*, as well as the *Dīvyāvadāna*, give the four *nidhis* the same names as the great *nāga* kings who protect them: *Pāṇḍuka*, *Piṅgala*, *Śaṅkha*, and *Elāpatra* (who are known also in other Indian traditions both as *nidhis* and as *nāgas*).³⁰ This interrelatedness of *nāgas* and *nidhis* by their very names and intrinsic natures, found already in such comparatively early Indian Buddhist texts, underlines the long, profound, and integral nature of the connection between *nidhi* and *nāgas* in Indian Buddhism. Indeed, as Norman (1992: 190) observes, 'there cannot be any doubt that the origin of the *nidhis* is to be sought in the *nāga* cult'.³¹

The narrative arc of *nāgas* and their *nidhis* in Indian Buddhism is thus far too long and varied to describe here, appearing as it does in so many *jātakas* and *avadānas*, Mahāyāna texts, Tantric texts, and more. But one should mention that across this voluminous literature, the understandings of what kind of *nidhis* the *nāgas* might guard is every bit as long and varied as Guru Chos dbang's, which I will describe below. As we have seen, in some Pāli texts, the *nāgas* guard the great co-natal *nidhis* of the Bodhisattva; as Vogel describes at length (1926: Chapter III) in other *jātakas* and *avadānas*, such as the *Śaṅkha-pāla-jātaka*, *nāga* kings inhabit magnificent subterranean palaces full of incomparable gold, jewels, fruit trees and beautiful women, which were sometimes but rarely accessible to humans; in the *Bhūridatta-jātaka*, a *nāga* gives a wish-fulfilling gem as a gift; in the Buddhist foundation myth of the

³⁰ These *nāgas* are well known in other Indian traditions too. See Vogel 1926: 207-14; 215 ff; 205; 191.

³¹ By contrast, Coomaraswamy seems almost to privilege *yakṣas* in this respect (2001 part II: 14). My own impression is that the question might be a mistaken one. As Ophira Gamliel informs me (personal communication 4th September 2021), many contemporary temples in Kerala place *nāga* and *yakṣa* images close together, always near a banyan tree, and outside the main complex, where they receive turmeric powder offerings in exchange for worldly boons. Gamliel adds that this practice is believed by many local people to be Buddhist in its remote history. Some aspects of the iconography are described in Ambily, Kumar, and Pancharath 2015, who present several images of combined *nāgas* and *yakṣas* that are popularly worshipped in contemporary Kerala as nature spirits. Cosmologically, conceptually, and even ritually, *nāgas* and *yakṣas* thus inhabit the same universe, and have done so for a very long time. Both (but especially *yakṣa*) are broad and inclusive terms, and both are nature spirits, although *nāga* implies the specialised function of protecting water sources. For our purposes, they should no more be separated than their Tibetan equivalents *yul lha*, *bzhi bdag*, or *klu*. Hence I am not certain that we can too easily say that *nāgas* were the origins of *nidhis* rather than *yakṣas*. Similarly, in Tibet, despite their special characteristics and classifications, *klu* can act as *yul lha* or *bzhi bdag*, and the categories *yul lha* and *bzhi bdag* of course include many different types of deities. In short, treasure bestowing or guarding *yakṣas* and *nāgas* are closely related by occurring within the same cosmological understandings of wealth and treasure.

Oḍḍiyāna region (a story found also in the *Bhaiṣajya-vastu* section of the *Mūlasarvāstivādin vinaya*), Buddha and Vajrapāṇi subdue a *nāga* named Apalāla who controls the Swat [Suvāstu] river, and who continued after his subjugation to control the waters and hence all the agricultural wealth of the region;³² in the *Lalitavistara*, the *nāgas* of the Nairāñjanā River at Bodhgaya were denied by Indra the privilege of guarding the Buddha's golden bowl, but were able to retain custody of his throne;³³ as both Faxian and Xuanzang reported, *nāgas* guard *śarīra* relics of the Buddha in a *stūpa* known as Rāmagrāma,³⁴ while elsewhere, as Xuanzang reported, they guard a tooth relic of the Buddha;³⁵ in Mahāyāna mythology, the *nāgas* guarded the sacred scriptures of the *Perfection of Wisdom*, which were recovered by Nāgārjuna; in the *sūtra* of that name, the Buddha gives the teachings of the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi* to *nāgas* (among other deities) to guard as *nidhi* (*gter*) until their future recovery;³⁶ and many Buddhist *Kriyātantras* specify the subterranean or watery *nāga* worlds of *pātāla* as a prime location for procuring many kinds of *nidhis*, including wealth, beautiful women, longevity, magic, medicines, and much more.

2. *Guru Chos dbang, nidhi, and gter ma.*

Before proceeding to my translation from the *Āryavidyottamamahātanta*, I would like to make some brief comments on the reception in Tibet of the Indian conceptions of *nidhi*. In this instance, I will largely restrict my observations to Guru Chos dbang's *Gter 'byung chen mo*, for the reasons mentioned above.³⁷

First and foremost, we must be aware of what Chos dbang was trying to do: Chos dbang was attempting to construct a Buddhist framework for an existing Tibetan *gter ma* tradition that was to his own

³² Vogel 1926: 121. As far as I am aware, Tibetologists have not yet considered the potential significance of this Oḍḍiyāna myth, which is known to us via Xuanzang. The centrality of the myth for the Oḍḍiyāna region is further evidenced by its frequent representation in surviving artworks. Versions of the myth occur also in the *Divyāvadāna* and the *Mūlasarvāstivādin Vinaya*. The potential interest for Tibetologists lies in the light it might shed on passages from the *Dbā' bzhed*, where Padmasambhava engages in *nāga*-taming activities.

³³ Vogel 1926: 97.

³⁴ Vogel 1926: 127-29.

³⁵ Vogel 1926: 130.

³⁶ Harrison 1978 and 1990, 13 K v.9.

³⁷ I would like to thank one of the anonymous peer reviewers of this article, who made the excellent suggestion that I publish a separate full-length study of Guru Chos dbang's reception of Indian ideas about *nidhi*. This is an excellent idea, and no doubt I shall be returning to the topic in more detail in future publications, but in the meantime, I shall present just a few salient points here in somewhat preliminary fashion, to give readers some inkling of the issues.

perception, a fully Buddhist system based on Indian precedents, but incorporating Tibetan elements in suitably converted manner. Although it has occasionally been suggested over the last seventy years of Tibetological writing that *gter ma* might be a predominantly indigenous Tibetan notion deriving from the royal burial cults, it needs to be emphasised that any such derivations are not at all evident in Chos dbang's work. As I have already pointed out elsewhere, if we as modern scholars deduce, etically, that indigenous practices relating to grave goods and the storing of documents might have played a significant part in the subsequent affinity of Tibetans for treasure, and the morphology of the Tibetan *gter ma* traditions, this is despite the dearth of emic references to them in texts such as Chos dbang's, and not because of any such references. It is clear that Chos dbang preferred to evolve his categories out of Buddhist ideas, rather than out of indigenous Tibetan ones. For there is only one fleeting and uncertain reference to the past emperors, and references to burial practices are conspicuous by their absence. Nor is his complex edifice in any way derivable from the *gter* categories of the popular indigenous *yul lha* or *klu* cults, even though such ideas are indeed quite prominent in the narrative parts of his text, and in much the same way that they still persist today. Janet Gyatso (1993:26) has already highlighted the "overarching Buddhist perspective from which Guru Chos-dbang presents the Treasure tradition". The following paragraphs seek to complement Gyatso's accurate observation by identifying some of the specific Indic ideas (or ideas he saw as Indic) that Chos dbang adopted in attempting this. I shall approach this complex question under three headings: (i) lexical, (ii) classificatory, and (iii) cosmological.

(i) Lexical: I mentioned above Joanna Bialek's hypothesis that the Tibetan word *gter* looks like it might have been deliberately coined to render the Sanskrit *nidhi* / *nidhāna*. This still remains open to further investigation, but if it proves correct, it would certainly go a long way to make sense of Chos dbang's presentations of *gter*, because his own definitions would then ultimately have been based on the underlying Indian lexical ones, rather than on a long history of entirely separate indigenous Tibetan usage. For as we shall see, the otherwise inexplicably wide-ranging aspects of Chos dbang's ideas about treasure, which have puzzled several contemporary readers, find an easy explanation when understood as an attempt by him to remain true to the original Indian lexical definitions behind the translated Tibetan term.

As we have seen above, following Apte, the Sanskrit verbal root *ni+√ dhā* has the meanings 'to put', or 'to place', or 'to set down', with secondary meanings that include 'to deposit with', 'to bury, conceal, or hide (as under ground)', 'to lay up, treasure up'. Thus, the noun *nidhi*

has the meanings 'receptacle', 'store-house', 'treasury', 'a treasure, store, hoard (for the nine treasures of Kubera)', 'the art of finding treasure', etc. Throughout his work, Chos dbang defines as *gter ma* whatever can be described in the above terms. More specifically and most frequently, he focuses on one particular permitted Sanskrit lexical understanding of *nidhi*: items of value that were concealed (*sbas pa*) for a period but later made manifest. These above all else counted for Chos dbang as *gter ma*. Hence my suggestion is that Chos dbang might have had the original Sanskrit-derived lexical definitions in mind when composing his text. Let us look at some examples (many of which have already been mentioned by Gyatso):

(1) the treasures of special substances are the treasuries of all the kinds of precious things [hidden in the environment].³⁸

(2) For future generations of people who want to practice and live in isolated places, many [currently undiscovered] lands and small valleys exist hidden as treasure.³⁹

(3) To help countries in times of drought, [previously undiscovered] water sources exist hidden as treasure.⁴⁰

(4) For those times when an old temple is in need of repairs but there are concerns about a lack of available compressed earth, [previously unknown] lime deposits [for use as plaster] exist hidden as treasure.⁴¹

(5) To renovate temples at the time when forests will have been depleted, hidden treasures of wood exist.⁴²

(6) For temples anxious about running out of offerings, there are many great caches of hidden wealth, which have been taught as extremely numerous.⁴³

(7) All medicine and calculation have arisen as *gter ma*, because the compassionate Buddha manifested as Mañjuśrī, within whose heart all kinds of astrology and medicine were initially concealed, from which they were subsequently revealed.⁴⁴

³⁸ Page 81 line 7: *khyad par gyi rdzas gter ni rin po che'i rigs kyi gter thams cad.*

³⁹ Page 81 line 7-page 82 line 1: *ma 'ongs pa'i chos byed rnam dbyen [=dben] par 'tsho bar bya ba'i phyir yul dang lung 'phran mang por [sic] gter du sbas pa.*

⁴⁰ Page 82, line 1: *nam zhod bri ba'i tshe yul mi sdad par bya ba'i phyir chu gter du sbas pa.*

⁴¹ Page 82, lines 1-2: *gtsug lag rnying pa gso ba'i dus su sa zhag can smin pa zad kyi dogs pa'i ched du thigs pa bzhal [em. > zhal] ba'i gter sbas pa.* Thanks to Dan Martin for explaining the meaning of *zhal ba / gzhal ba / zha la*.

⁴² Page 82, line 2: *dus mthar nags zad dus su gtsug lag khang gso ba'i phyir shing gi gter sbas pa.*

⁴³ Page 82, lines 2-3: *gtsug lag khang gi skor [em. > dkor] zad kyi dogs pa la dgongs nas nor chen po mang po sbas pa la sogs pa shin tu mang par bshad do.*

⁴⁴ Page 84 lines 1-7: *don gnyis pa phyi'i 'byung pa gso byed rtsis kyi gter byung tshul ni....up torgya gar du gsungs pa'i rtsis dang/ rgya nag gi rtsis dang/ dus 'khor rtsis*

(8) In his great compassion and wisdom, the Buddha manifested as Viśvakarman [craftsman to the gods in Indian mythology], from the play of whose intelligence all the tantras of arts and crafts (*bzo rgyud*) arose as *gter ma*, namely the *Patraka chen po'i rtsa rgyud*, the *Caraka phyi ma bshad rgyud*, and various other texts; and also all the arts of sewing and using cloth, the arts of building temples and royal palaces, traditions of making relief figures of buddha forms, traditions of making murals, the correct measurements for buddha forms [*rten*], various measurements and methods for writing dharma lettering, the skills of making *stūpas*, vajras, bells, etc., the arts of making various shrine objects, measurements of various hearths and utensils [for *homa*], the arts of making seats, etc., the skills of making ornaments and clothing for horses and elephants, and ornaments for gods and humans: according to Chos dbang, the knowledge of all these (and more, I have abbreviated the list) arose as *gter ma*.⁴⁵ These arts and skills count as *gter ma* because they were once hidden in the mind of Viśvakarman, who subsequently revealed them to us.

(9) In his great compassion and wisdom, the Buddha manifested as Maudgalyāyana, within whose heart the Sugata had concealed as *gter ma* various treatises on magic, which had the power to transform peoples' fixations. There follows quite a long story about the re-concealment and rediscovery of these texts, involving Bhadrāpāla (*bzang skyong*) and the king *rgyal po bde spyod* (perhaps, Sadvāhana for Śātavāhana, or maybe Udayanabhadrā);⁴⁶ as well as further explanations of magic traditions as *gter mas*.⁴⁷

(10) The natural power of the Buddha's compassion arises within the perception of beings to be tamed in accordance with their faith, thus arising as the various Buddha forms to tame those beings, and then again disappearing as *gter ma*. Hence all naturally arising forms of the Buddha are *gter* hidden in the *dharmadhātu*.⁴⁸

(11) All *sambhogakāya* and even *nirmāṇakāya* forms, such as those of

dang/ zhang zhung rtsis dang/ urgyan rtsis dang/ za hor rtsis dang/ bru sha'i rtsis la sogs pa rnams gter nas phyung pa yin no/.

⁴⁵ Page 85 line 7- page 86 line 6: *ston pa bde gshegs thugs rje che la thabs mkhas pas/ bi sho karma sprul pa'i thugs la rigs pa'i rtsal / bzo rgyud la gab pa'i thugs gter bka' ru byon pa ni/ pa tra ka chen po'i rtsa rgyud dang / rtsa ra ka phyi ma bshad rgyud / rtsa ra ka phyi ma'i phyi ma man ngag gi rgyud dang /up to gos stan la sogs pa'i bzo dang / rta dang glang po chas rgyan dang / lha dang mi la sogs pa'i brgyan dang / bzo rig gi gter rnams byung ngo/.*

⁴⁶ Thanks to Ulrike Roesler for advice on the Sanskrit equivalent for Bde spyod (*bzang po*).

⁴⁷ *me'u gal gyi bur ...thugs la gab pa'i gter ..*For the full narrative, see page 86 line 6 - page 87 line 5.

⁴⁸ Page 87 line 7- page 88 line 1: *rang bzhin bde gshegs sku'i gter...up to.....chos kyi dbyings na gab pa'i gter/.*

Vairocana or the Eight Close Sons Bodhisattvas, and even the eight charnel grounds and the land of Uḍḍiyāna, and numerous places for accomplishment such as mountain caves and trees, and the many Rājagrhas, all exist as *gter*, because the occasion of their arising [out of emptiness] is only when needed to achieve the benefit of beings.⁴⁹

(12) All manufactured Buddha images, whether drawn, painted, engraved, cast, sculpted, or moulded, are *gter ma*, because prior to their revelation at the hands of an artisan (the condition of their arising, *rkyen*), they remained concealed within the materials such as silk, wood, metal, stone, or even earth and mud, from which they were made (the basis of their existence, *rgyu*).⁵⁰ After manufacture, Buddha images can again become *gter ma*: for example, the Lhasa Jowo was twice concealed as *gter ma*, once during a war in India, and again when the Dharma declined under Glang dar ma.⁵¹

(13) All dharma texts are *gter mas* of enlightened speech. Just as the hidden treasure (*gab gter*) of a drumbeat remains concealed until the condition arises (*rkyen*) of the drum being hit with a stick, so too the utterances of dharma remain hidden treasure (*gab gter*) in the Victor's heart, until invoked by the condition (*rkyen*) of the karmas of those to be tamed. Thus, the limitless dharma doors of all the vehicles which tame whoever is suitable, have all arisen as *gter ma*.⁵²

(14) Chos dbang devotes five entire pages⁵³ to explaining, one after another, how each of the nine *yānas* arose as *gter ma*. His explanations and historical narratives are too lengthy to reproduce here, and many have already been summarised by Janet Gyatso.⁵⁴ What one can chiefly observe is that Chos dbang defines as *gter ma* anything of substantial value that is first hidden and then revealed, and that this process of concealment and revelation can occur at both transcendent and mundane levels alike, and can also happen repeatedly. Thus the vinaya was first concealed in the mind of the Buddha; but after being taught and written down was buried in a stūpa by some arhats to avert a decline in the teachings; Śākyaprabhā, and Guṇaprabhā later recovered these texts to teach them, but then reconcealed them in Vikramaśīla;⁵⁵ after

⁴⁹ Page 88 lines 1-4: *rang byung sku'i gter ... up tosprul sku du ma byon pa phal kyang gter du bzhugs te / gnas skabs kyi 'gro don mādān pa'i phyir ro /*.

⁵⁰ Page 88 lines 4-6: *gang zag bzhengs pa'i sku'i gter kha du ma.... up to.... bzo bo mkhas pa'i phyag gis gter phyung...*

⁵¹ Page 88, lines 6-7: *lha sa'i jo bo shakya'i sku yang rgya nag gi dmad byung pa'i tshē dang / glang dar mas chos snubs dus gter du lan gnyis sbas te.*

⁵² Page 88 line 7 - page 89 line 5: *...gsung gter bka' yi ge bstan pa'i gter byung tshul... up to mtha' thug med du brdol te gter 'byung pa yin no / de'i lung yang rnan rol mdo lung sku'i skabs su bstan pas nges pa'ol /*

⁵³ Page 89 line 5 to page 94 line 7.

⁵⁴ See Gyatso 1994: 276-277.

⁵⁵ Page 90 line 2: *ka ma la shi la'i gtsug lag khang du sbas; em. ka ma la > vi kra ma la.*

which the learned Sendhaba opened that library⁵⁶ to teach the arhat discipline for the benefit of beings.

(15) Even human progeny are *gter mas*, because they were once hidden in their mother's wombs as foetuses. Thus, Chos dbang reprimands his learned critics: "If you really want *gter ma* to be abandoned, [bear in mind that] you yourself were hidden [as a *gter ma*] in your mother's womb before being evicted. So, what are you going to do about that? Commit suicide?"⁵⁷

There is plenty more that could be said, but it must wait for my future dedicated study of Chos dbang's work. Suffice it for now to say that Chos dbang's range of *gter ma* items is extremely diverse, ranging from plasterer's lime to the sublime *saṃbhogakāya* forms of the Buddhas; from simple treatises on sewing to the highest Buddhist teachings on the nature of mind; from humble timber beams for building to the spontaneously arisen symbols of Buddha mind in Akaniṣṭha, like cosmic diamond vajras with the white syllable 'a' at their centres.⁵⁸ Surely the only thing these hugely disparate items all share in common is a conformity to one of the main permitted Sanskrit lexical definitions of *nidhi*: all are items of utility or value that were concealed for a while, and then revealed. As Janet Gyatso has pointed out, Chos dbang's main concern in his *Chos 'byung chen mo* is to construct a Buddhist explanation of *gter ma*. One of the most effective ways he found to do so was to define it within terms of the Sanskrit lexicon.

(ii) Classificatory: A second way in which Chos dbang constructs his Buddhist explanation of *gter ma* is by conforming to Indian Buddhist classifications of *nidhi*. We have seen above how the Pāli tradition understood the four *nidhis* as one of the seven co-natals (*saha-jāta*) that appeared spontaneously when a Buddha was born, and that subsequent Indian Buddhist literature, whether Mahāyāna or Śrāvakayāna, continued this fourfold structure. Thus, a list of four *nidhis* appear in many famous texts. As K.R. Norman has observed, the nine-fold enumeration of *nidhi* was normative outside of Buddhism, in brahmanism and Jainism for example.⁵⁹ Hence, it would appear that the Buddhists' contrasting preference for their own distinctive four-fold enumeration of *nidhi* functioned as a marker of Buddhist identity. As I have pointed

⁵⁶ Page 90 line 2: *sen dha ba'i mkhan po.....dpe mdzod phye...* There has been some academic discussion of *Sen dha ba*, little of which I have yet read. I understand (via Dan Martin) that they are often seen as Buddhists hostile to Vajrayāna.

⁵⁷ Page 108, line 1: *'on te gter spang na khyod rang kyang ma'i mngal na gab sbas mngon du phyung pa dang lceb bam ci tshugs byed/.*

⁵⁸ Page 95, line 4- page 96 line 1: *'og min gsang pa yang gsang yan lag mchog gi gnas su....up tokhyab pa'i bzhin du gab pas gter rol/.*

⁵⁹ 1992: 185, note 12.

out above, over time, Buddhist texts varied the names, natures, and identities, of the four *nidhis*, but liked to keep the four-fold enumeration. Guru Chos dbang also subsumes all the many kinds of *gter* he recognised into four major named categories, thereby upholding this ubiquitous and venerable Buddhist tradition. In Chos dbang's classification, the four were called: [1] Ordinary material treasures (*phyi thun mongs rdzas kyi gter*); [2] inner treasures with particular qualities (*nang khyad par yon tan gyi gter*); [3] supreme secret treasures of enlightened body, speech and mind (*gsang ba mchog gyur sku gsung thugs kyi gter*); and [4] the definitive treasure of suchness (*yang dag snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i gter*). As Andreas Doctor points out, Ratna Gling pa also maintained a fourfold structure, but changed their names, just as O rgyan Gling pa had done before him.⁶⁰ Adherence to the age-old Indian Buddhist tradition of a fourfold enumeration of *nidhi* might thus have been an easy way for Chos dbang (and his successors) to identify the Rnying ma *gter ma* tradition with Indian Buddhist precedents.

There is also a further way in which the *Chos 'byung chen mo* follows Indian classifications of *nidhi*: Chos dbang manages to include within his work most of the categories of *nidhis* listed within the often nine-fold enumerations common to general Indian thinking, which seem to have remained popular from the early middle ages until today. For example, if we are to follow the above Sikh interpretation of the nine *nidhis* deriving from the much earlier traditions of the *Amarakoṣa* (see note 18 above), Chos dbang includes certainly seven and quite possibly eight of them. Likewise, if we follow Hemacandra's 12th century interpretation of the nine *nidhis* of the canonical *Thāṇaṅga-sutta* that he presents in his *Triṣaṣṭīśalākāpuruṣacaritra*, we again find that Chos dbang includes certainly seven and quite possibly eight of them. In each case, where Chos dbang clearly differs from his non-Buddhist Indian counterparts is by conspicuously omitting anything connected

⁶⁰ Doctor 2005: 26: "Ratna Lingpa presents a Treasure category termed "outer variegated Treasures" (*phyi sna tshogs pa'i gter*) referring to the elements, valleys, wealth, etc. Next are the "inner Treasures bestowing eminence" (*nang mchog stsol ba'i gter*) comprising the specifically Buddhist Treasures of body, speech, and mind. Third are the "secret, naturally appearing, naturally concealed, and naturally realized Treasures" (*gsang ba rang byung rang gab rang rtogs pa'i gter*). This category is not further defined by Ratna Lingpa but we may reasonably assume that it refers to the realization of the buddhas classified by Chos dbang as "the definitive Treasure of suchness." Last in the group of four is the category of "indefinite variegated Treasures" (*ma nges sna tshogs pa'i gter*), which refers to the arts of medicine, astrology, magic, and handicrafts." As Doctor further points out (p.23), O rgyan gling pa in his *Padma bka' thang* likewise adheres to a four-fold classification: "The Chronicle of Padmasambhava presents four main Treasure categories: "ancestral Treasures" (*mes gter*), "filial Treasures" (*sras gter*), "magistral Treasures" (*dpon gter*), and "essential Treasures" (*yang gter*), each containing 18 different kinds of Treasure (each one again subdivided 18 times!)."

with warfare, the military, or weaponry (the fourth *nidhi* in the Sikh list and the eighth *nidhi* in Hemacandra's list).⁶¹ Instead, Chos dbang (n.d p.86-87) includes a substantial section on magic, which he specifies as purposed for taming heretics.⁶² It is also clear that both Hemacandra's list and the first Sikh list have lay communities in mind, while Chos dbang is predominantly focused on religious communities. Hence where the two Indian authors focus on foods and grains in general (Hemacandra's second *nidhi* and the Sikh list's third), Chos dbang focuses only on supplies of necessities for monastic communities (*dkor*).⁶³ Likewise, where Hemacandra is concerned with opening up new settlements suitable for commerce and trade (the first *nidhi* on his list), Chos dbang is more interested in finding new locations suitable for the practice of dharma.⁶⁴ So in these cases, it is debatable if Chos dbang is differing from his Indian counterparts or not. But taken as a whole, I concur with Janet Gyatso's observation that it is difficult to understand Chos dbang's list other than as an attempt to conform with Indian usages. Surely it is for this reason that he includes such unexpected items as the making of ornaments and clothing for horses, elephants, gods, and humans (cf. Hemacandra's *Piṅgala*), all the myriad worldly skills taught by Viśvakarman (cf. the Sikh list's interpretation of the Amarakoṣa's *Mukunda*), sewing and cloth work (cf. Hemacandra's *Mahāpadma*, also the Sikh list's interpretation of the Amarakoṣa's *Kacchapa*), and human progeny (cf. the Sikh list's interpretation of the Amarakoṣa's *Padma*). While we do not yet know which precise Indian sources Chos dbang was influenced by (perhaps the *Amarakoṣa* list is a reasonable place for initial investigation), it does look like he was influenced by them.

A third way in which Chos dbang associates his classificatory system with that of his Indian counterparts is by including both worldly and spiritual categories alike as *gter ma*. From the start, Indian Buddhist narrative had always associated the *yakṣas* and *nāgas* with the guardianship of both worldly and spiritual treasures. We have already seen above the *nāga* Apalāla who controlled the waters and thus agricultural wealth of the Oḍḍiyāna region,⁶⁵ and throughout Indian literature, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, *yakṣas* and *nāgas* are by their very nature routinely and even primarily associated with worldly treasure, such as agricultural fertility, jewels, and minerals. At the

⁶¹ Yet Hirshberg mentions that Chos dbang's predecessor Myang ral did discover deadly weapons as *gter ma*: "...mechanized slingshots, long-range arrows..." (Hirshberg 2016: 117).

⁶² Page 87 line 2: *rtag rta'i mu stegs can mang po brtul nas..*

⁶³ Page 82, lines 2-3.

⁶⁴ Page 81 line 7-82 line 1.

⁶⁵ Vogel 1926: 121.

same time, Indian Buddhist narrative frequently describes them as guarding spiritual treasures: thus, as already mentioned above, in the *Lalitavistara*, the *nāgas* of the Nairāñjanā River at Bodhgaya were denied by Indra the privilege of guarding the Buddha's golden bowl as their treasure, but were able to retain custody of his throne; as both Faxian and Xuanzang reported, *nāgas* guarded *śarīra* relics of the Buddha in a *stūpa* known as Rāmagrāma (Vogel 1926: 127ff), while elsewhere, as Xuanzang reported, they guarded for a time a tooth relic of the Buddha (Vogel 1926: 130). Mahāyāna literature went on to develop the category of *dharmanidhi* or *dharmanidhāna*, which were Buddhist scriptures entrusted to the care of deities such as *nāgas* and *yakṣas*.⁶⁶ Thus the *nāgas* guarded the sacred scriptures of the *Perfection of Wisdom*, while in Tantric Buddhism, the *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi, later known as Vajradhara, whose Buddhafield Alakāvati (Lcang lo can) still has the same name as the abode of his associate the worldly-wealth conferring *yakṣa* king Kubera, guarded the innumerable tantric scriptures (and in some accounts, the Mahāyāna scriptures too). Various non-Buddhist sources too, such as the Sikh list given above, which is contemporary but based on much older traditions (see note 18 above), also understand *nidhi* as having both worldly and spiritual connotations, so that it presents parallel lists of nine of each. A parallel pattern can be found in many theological interpretations of the *Aṣṭalakṣmī*, the eight manifestations of Lakṣmī, who are sources of wealth both material and spiritual.

Thus, we can see Chos dbang associates himself certainly with the Indian Buddhist traditions, and also with the wider Indian non-Buddhist traditions, by doing likewise: his lists of *gter ma* include both gold, silver, jewels, and all worldly wealth, alongside Buddha statues, cosmic vajras, and Buddhist texts.

(iii) Cosmological: A third way in which Chos dbang associates his explanations of *gter ma* with Indian Buddhism is by reference to cosmologies. There are two arenas in which he approaches this: firstly, cosmological understandings in his general account of treasure in India and the wider Buddhist world,⁶⁷ and secondly, cosmological

⁶⁶ See for example the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, Chapter 13 section K verse 9 in Harrison's edition and translation (Harrison 1978 and 1990), where the *sūtra* being hidden for a future recovery (*gter*) is sealed in a casket (*sgrom bu*) and buried in a *stūpa*, the earth, within rocks, or on a mountain, after being entrusted to the care of deities (*lha*) and *nāgas* (*klu*). See also note 29 above.

⁶⁷ Occasionally, Chos dbang reminds us that he envisages *gter ma* as a widespread Buddhist phenomenon. For example, see page 85 line 4, where he mentions medical *gter ma* recovered from Nepal (*bal yul shing kun...*) and China *rgya nag 'go'u de shan phug la...*

understandings in his specific accounts of his own *gter ma* revelations in Tibet. As a more general point encompassing both, it should be made clear that Chos dbang's understanding of *gter ma* did not in any way whatsoever require it to be intentionally hidden by someone, such as Padmasambhava or the Buddha. On the contrary, exactly like the *nidhi* in Indian thinking, it could just as easily be naturally concealed within a natural environment, be it terrestrial or divine. This is of course a quality that persists into later Rnying ma understandings.⁶⁸

It is clear that Indian Buddhism accorded with other Indian traditions in accepting the general Indian cosmological understandings of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* as guardians of *nidhis*, whether mundane or religious. In general, Chos dbang sought to associate these imported Indian Buddhist cosmologies with indigenous Tibetan cosmologies inhabited by *klu* and the many other types of *yul lha*, who performed equivalent functions in Tibetan cosmology. This was not necessarily very difficult to do, because many underlying ideas seemed already to be quite close. However, the clearest evidence of Chos dbang's attempts to realise this occur in the narratives of his own *gter ma* recoveries, so I will describe them in the section below.

Treasures of dharma scriptures in Indian Buddhism tended to be guarded or concealed in the worlds of the *nāgas*, by the Buddhist *yakṣa* Vajrapāṇi in his abode of Alakāvati (Lcang lo can), or in *stūpas*.

The most famous example of a dharma scriptural treasure guarded by *nāgas* is surely the *Perfection of Wisdom*; this narrative is so well known that it is not necessary to elaborate on it here.

It is also too well known to need any elaboration here that the Tantric Buddhist scriptures were frequently described by Indian Buddhists as being guarded by the *yakṣa*-bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. As Dorji Wangchuk (2020:117) puts it, "Tantric sources for the idea that Vajrapāṇi is the *saṃgītikṛt* of Tantric teachings are abundant." It is perhaps less well known that Mahāyāna dharma treasures were also believed by Indian Buddhists to be guarded by the *yakṣa*-bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. As Wangchuk (2020: 113) again writes, "Vajrapāṇi is believed to be the *saṃgītikṛt* of the teachings of the thousand *buddhas* (*sang rgyas stong gi bka'i bsdu ba po*) (of the fortunate aeon). Tibetan scholars often mention the *Tathāgatācintyaḡuhyānirdeśasūtra* and *Vajrapāṇyabhiṣekatantra* as sources, not always directly but sometimes, it would seem,

⁶⁸ It is precisely because *gter ma* does not have to be intentionally hidden by anyone that a major function of the Rnying ma *gter ston* has always been to 'open' sacred sites (*gnas*) or hidden lands (*sbas yul*) that were concealed naturally in the landscape, but not yet known to humanity. There are also other duties of the *gter ston* that indicate the category of *gter ma* is not restricted to the idea of something having been intentionally concealed by someone in the past, such as finding water sources, or gold.

via Haribhadra's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, as Bu ston Rin chen grub, for example, clearly does". He continues (2020: 117), "it goes without saying that from the perspective of the general Mahāyāna, Vajrapāṇi is usually regarded as the *saṃgītikṛt* of the (Mahāyānic) *Sūtrapitaka*." Wangchuk goes on to summarise one of Haribhadra's sources, the *Tathāgatācintyaḡuhyānirdeśasūtra*, a third-turning Mahāyāna sūtra:

The principal interlocutor beseeches Vajrapāṇi to have the readiness-cum-confidence (*pratibhāna: spobs pa*), so to speak, to reveal "secrets of the *tathāgatas*" (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i gsang ba*) and "secrets of the *bodhisattvas*" (*byang chub sems dpa'i gsang ba*), for he has been a close attendant of the Buddha, and no one else, not even *śrāvakas* or *pratyekabuddhas*, let alone other ordinary sentient beings (*sems can tha mal pa*), possesses such secrets. Vajrapāṇi silently consents. Śāntimati then requests the Buddha to authorize Vajrapāṇi to do so. The Buddha does authorize Vajrapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi, in turn, expresses his willingness.⁶⁹

Here then we can see in an Indian Mahāyāna source a key passage that Chos dbang could take as support for his belief that all Mahāyāna teachings are treasures. For according to this *sūtra*, the Mahāyāna *Sūtrapitaka* was entrusted to Vajrapāṇi as secrets for him to guard, thus fulfilling Chos dbang's lexical definition of *gter ma* as something once secret that is later revealed, while simultaneously referencing the Indian tradition of the *yakṣa*-bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi guarding treasuries of dharma scriptures in the *yakṣa*-connected domain of Alaka or Alakāvatī.

A third place in which Buddhist cosmologies placed dharma treasures was in *stūpas*. Perhaps the best-known example of this is the myth of an Iron Stūpa in South India, from which Nāgārjuna was said to have extracted the *Yogatantras*. This narrative plays a particularly central role in the tantric Buddhism of Japan, and although largely associated with East Asian Buddhism, it is likely to reflect South Asian beliefs.⁷⁰ For a much earlier Mahāyāna example of *sūtra* scriptures hidden

⁶⁹ Dorji Wangchuk 2020: 113. As Lamotte earlier observed, the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* of Haribhadra described Vajrapāṇi as the compiler of Mahāyāna *sūtras*: "The adherents of the Mahāyāna make him [Vajrapāṇi] a bodhisattva and attribute the compilation of Mahāyānasūtras to him...". This is of interest because Haribhadra was a student of Śāntarakṣita, who shaped Rnying ma attitudes to the origins of Mahāyāna. See Lamotte 1988: 688, where he cites for this not only the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* itself, but also Bu ston and Tāranātha. Karl Brunholzl clarifies: "Haribhadra's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* indeed says that the position that Vajrapāṇi was entrusted with the teachings of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*, passing them on to other bodhisattvas such as Maitreya, is 'the explanation of earlier masters.' Immediately following this, however, he says that others hold that the *sūtras* were entrusted to Ānanda." Personal communication, 14th August 2021.

⁷⁰ Gray 2009: 12.

as treasure in a *stūpa* for future recovery, see the reference to the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* in note 66 above.

All of these South Asian cosmological beliefs are reflected in Chos dbang's work. He mentions Nāgārjuna's recovery of the Perfection of Wisdom *sūtras*,⁷¹ and in addition has Nāgārjuna recover the *Kriyātantras*.⁷² He has Vajrapāṇi conceal the *Mahāyoga* tantras in Lcang lo can as *gter ma*.⁷³ He also cites *stūpas* as the sites for burials of dharma treasures, for example, he tells us that the *Ubhaya* and *Caryā* tantras were hidden as *gter ma* in Kaṇiṣka's *stūpa*.⁷⁴ There are also numerous other ways in which Chos dbang references Indian cosmologies: locations linked with revelation in Indian mythology such as Mt. Malaya, Uḍḍiyāna, Varanasi, the Cool Grove Charnel Ground, and so forth, and the Buddha fields of various enlightened beings. In these ways, Chos dbang refers repeatedly to Indian cosmologies when presenting his general theory of the revelation of dharma treasures in India.

Chos dbang's presentation of cosmological understandings in his specific accounts of his own *gter ma* revelations in Tibet is much more complex, because here he mixes the Indic with specifically Tibetan religious histories, and with the indigenous deities. In regard to Tibetan religious history, it is only at this juncture, where Chos dbang begins to enlarge on his own personal *gter ma* discoveries, that he introduces Padmasambhava as a major player. Previously, when expounding his general account of treasure in India and the wider Buddhist world, Padmasambhava was largely irrelevant, even in the section on the revelation of Buddhist scriptures and texts. As Janet Gyatso (1994:277-8) has pointed out: "Let us note, at this juncture, the striking fact that in Guru Chos dbang's entire discussion of Buddhist-materials-as-Treasure in section three, no mention whatsoever has been made of the burial of Treasures in Tibet by Padmasambhava."

Still, in relation to his own *gter ma* revelations Padmasambhava looms large, as one would expect from such a famous Padmasambhava devotee. Indeed, the presence of Padmasambhava in the accounts of Chos dbang's own *gter ma* revelations are so plentiful and rich, so full of visionary encounters and inspirational anecdotes, that they warrant a comprehensive study in their own right, which I cannot

⁷¹ Page 90 line 3 to page 91 line 1.

⁷² On page 92 line 4, Chos dbang has Nāgārjuna recover the *Kriyātantras*, but in the Far Eastern traditions, Nāgārjuna recovers the *Yogatantras*. See Orzech 1995 and Rambelli 2017.

⁷³ Page 93, line 4.

⁷⁴ Page 92 lines 5-6. For Far Eastern sources on the recovery of tantras from *stūpas*, see Orzech and Rambelli as cited above.

hope to offer here.⁷⁵

Regarding the indigenous Tibetan deities, his strategy here is to associate the world of Tibetan local deities with Indian categories, while not erasing Tibetan local identities. The outcome is a degree of multivalence, allowing simultaneous interpretation through both Indic and Tibetan lenses. Take for example an event during Chos dbang's description of his own first *gter ma* excavation: three girls approach him and say, "Are you taking out a *gter ma*? Anyway, you have filled the pathway with charcoal [through your excavations]. We are very afraid." The girls went on to tell some people from the local village, a group of whom then approached and told Chos dbang, "If you take out the *gter*, the essence will be lost from the soil [*sa'i bcud shor*], and [crop-withering] frosts [*sad*] and cold winds [*lhags*] will ensue [*sad lhags 'ong zer*]."⁷⁶ Later, the deity protecting the *gter ma* punished the villagers for their negative attitude, but not before punishing the naive young Chos dbang, who had omitted to leave them a suitable offering as compensation for the treasure he had removed (*gter tshab*).⁷⁷

On the one hand, this narrative comes straight out of popular

⁷⁵ The presence of Padmasambhava in the accounts of Chos dbang's own *gter ma* revelations are far too plentiful and rich to be described in this short article. As just a few examples, on page 120 line 7, describing the *kha byang* that sets him off on his career as a *gter ston*, the 13-year-old Chos dbang explains how he has 'met with Padmasambhava's own writing' (*u rgyan phyag ris nga dang 'phrad*). His first *gter ma* revelation included a 'Guru Padma thugs *gter* in three sections' (page 132 line 3: *guru pad ma'i thugs gter skor tsho gsum du bshugs tshul*). His father subsequently describes his young son's discoveries as 'the teachings of Ugyan [Rinpoche]' (page 135 line 5: *u rgyan gyis bka'*). To confirm the teachings he has found as *gter ma*, Chos dbang has several major visionary encounters with Padmasambhava (page 141 line 6 ff, page 143 line 7 ff), and his visit to *Zangs mdog dpal ri* to receive teachings on his *gter ma* was experienced as lasting for twenty-one days (page 142 line 3: *zhag nyer gig song pa'i snang pa shar*). Considerable weight is also given to Chos dbang's discovery of a *sku tshab* statue of Guru Rinpoche (page 146 line 5 ff). And so on.

⁷⁶ Page 126, lines 2-3. Citing a different part of the *Chos 'byung chen mo*, Gyatso (1994: 278) has already observed how Chos dbang believed that buried *gter mas* 'confer blessings on the localities where they are concealed'. This still remains one of the most important points of intersection between popular and indigenous Tibetan cosmologies, and those of the Buddhist *gter stons*. The fear that *gter ma* removal will diminish the earth's essences (*sa'i bcud*) has remained a persistent issue throughout the long history of *gter ma* in Tibet. See for example Dudjom Rinpoche's account (Dudjom 1991: 811) of the great *gter ston* 'Ja' tshon snying po (born 1585) having to overcome armed men trying to prevent his *gter ma* recovery for exactly that reason. Likewise Hirshberg (2016: 123-4) translates a passage from Myang ral's biography in which the ruler of Samye tries to prevent Myang ral from removing his *gter*: "don't open the gates! If he takes out the treasures, the vitality of the place will be lost."

⁷⁷ The narrative of the *gter bdag* punishing Chos dbang for failing to leave a *gter tshab* is long and dramatic (see especially pages 127-130) and serves to edify his readers on the importance of *gter tshab* throughout the work.

indigenous Tibetan beliefs about *gter*, in which all the *gter* in the land is owned or controlled by the local *yul lha*, so that its removal will both annoy the *yul lha* and deplete the fertility of the land. On the other hand, this can also to some extent be read through an Indic lens, in which Tibetan local deities become associated with Indian *yakṣa* lore. *Bcud*, to which the villagers above referred, is a central term in the indigenous Tibetan *yul lha* cosmology, but significantly, Tibetans also used it to translate the Sanskrit term *rasa*, which is an equally central and closely equivalent term in the Indian *yakṣa* cosmology. As A. K. Coomaraswamy pointed out, *Yakṣas* control agricultural and biological fertility precisely because they control *rasa*, which is 'not so much the waters as mere waters, but that essence in the waters which is one with the sap in the trees...and the seed in living beings'. As the life-giving essence that pervades whatever is fruitful, *rasa* is close in conception to *bcud*.⁷⁸

While there might be some Indian cosmological parallels to the popular Tibetan practice of offering *gter bum* to the *yul lha* to please the

⁷⁸ Coomaraswamy 2001, Part II, page 14. This multivalence already in evidence in Chos dbang has persisted into later Tibetan Buddhism. The popular offering of treasure vases (*gter bum*) can be read as partaking of an indigenous Tibetan cosmology of *g.yang*, *yul lha* and *klu*, and works fully within the idiom of indigenous cosmology. At the same time, it has clear Indic readings. So far, I have only looked at one such ritual, written by Karma Chags med in the 17th century, but what is striking is that five of its eight mantras are taken from Indian sources directly related to specifically *yakṣa* deities and the best-known *yakṣa* maṇḍalas. Buddhists can convincingly claim to derive the practice of *gter bum* from sources such as the prologue of the Indian Vajrapāṇi scripture, *Bhagavan-nīlāmbaraḍhara-vajrapāṇi-tantra* (Sde dge 498, Vol 87, 159b) which is dedicated to controlling *yakṣas* and *nāgas* to benefit from their wealth, and which teaches the offering of treasure vases to such deities of the landscape to pacify them: "Next, purify gold and so forth, the seven precious things, And place these in a jewelled vessel or clay pot. Recite 108 mantras. Resorting to the true utterance of the Three Jewels, Give an oblation to the *bhūtas*. Bury it in firm ground wherever they abide, And the *bhūtas* and evil *nāgas* will be pacified." (translation from 84000). I have not yet been able to research this fully, beyond noting that there are further occurrences of this type of ritual in other tantras. However, it does appear at first sight to be an Indian parallel to the Tibetan idea of having to place a *gter* into the ground to pacify the *yul lha* and thereby replenish the soil's fertility and vitality, because such fertility and vitality is in the gift of the Tibetan *yul lha* and the Indian landscape's *bhūtas*, *yakṣas*, or *nāgas* alike. Vasudeva (2012: 274) suggests, without giving any precise citation, that the fourth and final chapter of siddha Śrīkaṇṭhasambhu's *Nidhipradīpa* is devoted to the concealing of *nidhi*, but that reading has not been self-evident to some other scholars. What is certain is that the standard iconometric shape and form of *gter bum* used in contemporary Tibetan Buddhism derives from Indian sources (compare for example with the treasure vases depicted in images of Vasudhārā, in Indian sources associated with the earth, consort of the prominent *yakṣa* deity Jambhala, and herself a *yakṣiṇī*: see Misra 1981: 71, 72, 73, 79, 116). Nevertheless, such practices in many cases remain simultaneously readable as indigenous practices of making offerings to *yul lha* and are in many cases primarily understood that way.

yul lha and thus persuade them to increase the fertility of the landscape, I am not yet clear if this entailed *nidhivādins* in India offering some kind of equivalent to the Tibetan 'treasure substitute' or *gter tshab*, after removing a landscape deity's treasures. While their underlying cosmological understandings might have rendered this a possibility, an alternative might simply have been the total subjugation of the landscape deities, which seems to be hinted at in some Indian texts. Tibetan deities of the landscape had an importance in local and clan identity that does not seem to have been evidenced in the Indian landscape deities, hence my impression is that Tibetan landscape deities were considerably more highly respected than their Indian equivalents, except perhaps where the latter had become converted into Buddhistised or Sanskritised deities in their own right.

The deities who protected Chos dbang's *gter ma* (*gter bdag*) were sometimes mounted on bulls vaguely suggesting Indian deities such as Yamāntaka,⁷⁹ but other times appeared as yaks,⁸⁰ which might well (but need not) suggest indigenous Tibetan deities. By punishing both Chos dbang and the villagers for their various bad attitudes, the deities are both conforming to local expectations of *yul lha*, but also to Buddhist ideas about dharma protectors. Indeed, it is only when Chos dbang achieves a selfless mind (reminiscent of *gcod* practice) that the deities stop attacking him, implying that they could be seen as Buddhist dharma protectors all along (behaving here much like the *yakṣa* dharma protectors of India, as described by authors such as DeCaroli).⁸¹ When Chos dbang finds his first *gter ma*, he first encounters containers shaped like a fish and a frog,⁸² and the actual *gter ma* casket (*sgrom bu*) within which his treasure is contained is shaped like a nine-headed snake with vajra crests,⁸³ on the one hand, these are symbols associated with Indian *nāga* cults, yet these could equally be described as associated with Tibetan *klu*, and Chos dbang uses the term *klu bdud*. Like the *nidhis* of the Indian narratives, Chos dbang's treasure caskets

⁷⁹ Page 123 line 7 - page 124 line 1: *kho glang nag po la shon nas nub na phar...*

⁸⁰ Page 128 line 3: *g.yag tsho yid la ram ram ...*

⁸¹ Page 128 lines 4-7, and again on page 129. See DeCaroli 2004, especially Chapter 6, and page 125. The niche occupied by *yakṣas* in Indian Buddhism seems to have been close enough to the niche occupied by the deities of the landscape in Tibetan Buddhism that I believe authors like Chos dbang could probably have reconciled major differences when required. Undoubtedly Tibetan Buddhists had constructed the cosmological niches within which they confined their local indigenous deities, with these long-established Indian precedents as a template.

⁸² Page 122 line 2: *bse'i sbal pa chen po nya byung nas*, etc.

⁸³ Page 125 line 5: *gzugs klu bdud mgo dgur can rdo rjes gtsug rgyan*. *Gter ma* being contained in *nāga*-shaped containers has always been a standard trope in Rnying ma, and numerous other *gter ston* have similarly recovered their *gter ma* from *nāga*-themed containers. Rig 'dzin rgod ldem, for example, discovered the great *Byang gter* cache within a *nāga*-shaped container. See Boord 2013: 41.

were enveloped in charcoal;⁸⁴ yet I expect this was also a practice in Tibetan burials of valuables. To find his *gter ma*, Chos dbang had to be guided by location lists (*kha byang*), which in his cosmology were disclosed by the Three Roots, mediated by the often bewildering and unpredictable play of enlightened *ḍākinīs*, a factor which underlines that the *gter ma* only exists because of the Buddhas, and that the Buddhas are in ultimate control of the entire cosmological scene.⁸⁵ Yet while the

⁸⁴ Page 103 line 2, when describing how to bury *gter ma*: *...sol sgrom gyi phyi rdzes byas la sba'o/*; also page 125 line 4, when describing the discovery of his own *gter ma*: *sol ba shar de*. For mentions of charcoal protecting buried treasures in Indian texts, compare with Balbir (1993) page 44, where she cites a Jain text, the *Upamitibhava-prapañca Kathā* of Siddharṣi; for a Śaiva equivalent, see Śrīkaṇṭhasāmbhu's *Nidhipradīpa* (Chapter 4, verse 50). Note also that the numerous sūtra mounds that were buried in 11th-13th century Japan often used charcoal. As Li 2017: 286 describes, 'In order to prepare for the Final Dharma, Japanese devotees built sūtra mounds all over the country... In these mounds, they buried sūtras .. in the hope of preserving them through the Dark Age. They always placed the sūtras in sūtra containers, many of which had outer cases, to protect them. At some sites, they sealed the pit with stones and charcoal, which succeeded in keeping some texts intact for a thousand years.' It might prove interesting to contrast and compare more carefully Chos dbang's reasons for and instructions on burying *gter ma* texts with those of his Japanese contemporaries as described by scholars such as Max Moerman (2010, 2018) and Yiwen Li (2017). Also directly relevant here is Cécile Ducher's work on early Bka' brgyud treasure text concealments (Ducher 2016). Chos dbang advises that the dharma texts can be buried in monasteries, temples, or rocky crags, or rivers, or even in the inexhaustible mind; they should be written on fine silk, Chinese paper (*rgya shog*), birchbark (*gro ga*), or palm leaf (*ta la'i lo ma*); the calligraphy must be precise and clear; it should be written in Nāgarī script (*na ga ra pa'i yi ge*); one must make one's own ink, and the water for making the ink should be purified with a Ketaka jewel; to signal the profundity of the texts, *visargas* should be used; the manuscripts should be sealed with seals of authenticity and secrecy; then the manuscripts have to be enclosed in high quality watertight and bug-proof containers of valuable materials, which are embedded in charcoal, and then buried; and finally, prayers and aspirations must be made that the right person will rediscover the buried texts in the future. *Ḍākinīs* and *dharmapālas* and treasure protectors (*ḍa ki chos skyong gter bdag*) are ordered to protect the *gter ma* and give it only to the genuine destined person. See page 102 line 1 to page 103 line 3, the section of his work entitled *spyi don brgyad pa gter ji ltar sba thabs kyis gter chud mi gsan par bstan pa*.

⁸⁵ To be more precise, Chos dbang held that inferior kinds of *gter ma* can be found without prophetic *kha byang* issued by the Three Roots via the activity of the *ḍākinīs* (*bla ma yi dam mkha' 'gro lung bstan nas rnyed pa*) but not the transcendent Buddhist teachings of important *gter ma* such as his own. Less prestigious ways of finding *gter ma* without *kha byang* include such methods (page 115 lines 1-4) as divination (*mo ma'i mig mthong gis rnyed pa*), or by luck and fortune (*'khar rje stegs dbang*). It is impossible to exaggerate the centrality of *kha byang* to Chos dbang's understanding of *gter ma*, and the centrality of the spontaneous playfulness of the Buddhist *ḍākinīs* in the miraculous appearances and even disappearances of these *kha byang*. Certainly, in the case of superior tantric *gter ma* such as Chos dbang's, *kha byang* are never disclosed by the local deities who protect the *gter ma*, but only by Buddhist

idea of *dākinīs* guiding yogins to receive secret tantric teachings is quintessentially Indic, as far as I know, the institution of the written paper *kha byang*, which was so important to Chos dbang, has not been reported from Indian sources, so it might well be indigenous to Tibet, or a Tibetan adaptation of something that existed in a different way in India.⁸⁶ Finally, sometime after discovering his profound *gter ma* teachings buried in the ground, Chos dbang makes a visionary journey to Padmasambhava's paradise of the Copper Coloured Mountain (*Zangs mdog dpal ri*), where Padmasambhava gave Chos dbang instruction on the teachings he had discovered as *gter ma*, travelling some of his journey on a shield (*phub*).⁸⁷ On the one hand, this references Buddhist traditions such as Asaṅga's reception of teachings from Maitreya after his visionary journey to Tuṣita; on the other hand, it is highly reminiscent of indigenous Tibetan 'shamans' flying on their flat drums to the palaces of the *yul lha* atop ancestral or otherwise revered mountains. At other points, Chos dbang appears to accept indigenous local deity practices unchanged, except that these deities function as protectors of his Buddhist *gter ma*: for example, he makes offerings of yaks and pigs to a *gter ma* protector (*gter srung*) called *Mkha' ri gnyan phra*.⁸⁸

Finally, should we be surprised that Chos dbang was able to find Indic materials to use in his quest to show a Buddhist nature of *gter ma*? On the contrary, I believe it would seem most unlikely that someone of Chos dbang's learning, particular interests, and geographical location in 13th century Lho brag, could remain ignorant of the many references to *nidhi* in the Indian texts translated into Tibetan by his time. These will have included sundry *Kriyātantras* such as the *Amoghapāśa*,⁸⁹ the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* (some of which I translate

dākinīs. Repeated references to such *kha byang* appear throughout the autobiographical sections of his text.

⁸⁶ The nearest equivalent I am so far aware of from India are the two 'index scrolls' among the Senior mss. reported by Salomon 2009: 25, but these are from an earlier period in Buddhist history, and their function is not yet understood. All we know is that they are contents lists or inventories of some collections of Buddhist scriptures that were buried in *stūpas*.

⁸⁷ Page 139 onwards.

⁸⁸ Page 147, line 1: *gter srung mkha' ri gnyan phra g.yag dang phag kyis mchod...* Is animal sacrifice being suggested?

⁸⁹ *Amoghapāśakalparāja* (IHan dkar ma 316), Tibetan: Sde dge bka' 'gyur 686, Vol. 92-1-138a, Sanskrit: Taisho University Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai, codex unicus from China. This text has several *nidhi* rites, for example at folio 73a 5-6. "Then, if you wish to dig up some treasure, at the place where you suspect the treasure is, make a maṇḍala of cow dung; strew it with flowers, cense it with guggul incense, offer the three kinds of tormas, that is, offer pure tormas, meat and blood tormas, and dough, fruit and lotus tormas. Offer them to Ārya Avalokiteśvara. Do ten thousand recitations. When the ten thousand recitations are completed, there at the place which has the treasure, the treasure guardian will actually become present, and

below), the *Āryavajrapātāla*,⁹⁰ and the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*,⁹¹ more esoteric tantras such as the *Āryatārākurukullākālpa*,⁹² the *Amarakoṣa* and

the treasure will be made to appear. Offer a torma and drinking water to the treasure protector, and as long as you live, the treasure protector will do work for you. Wherever you send it, whatever work you command it, all will be done." /*de nas gter brko bar 'dod pas gnas gang na gter yod par dogs pa'i gnas der ba'i lci bas maṅdal byas la/ me tog gtor zhing gu gul gyi bdug pas bdug cing / gtor ma gtsang ma dang / sha dang / khrag gi gtor ma dang / phyed zan dang 'bras bu dang / pad+ma'i gtor ma dang / gtor ma rnam pa gsum sbyin par bya'ol / 'phags pa spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug la mchod pa bya'ol / stong phrag bcu bzlas brjod bya'ol / stong phrag bcu tshang ba dang gnas gang na gter yod pa'i gnas der gter srung ba mngon du 'byung zhing gter 'byung bar 'gyur ro/ / gter srung ba la gtor ma dang / mchod yon sbyin par byas na gter srung ba de ji srid 'tsho'i bar du las byas pa por 'gyur ro/ / gang du mngags pa dang / gang bsgo ba'i las de thams cad byed par 'gyur ro/ / . atha nidhānam utpātayitukāmena yatra sthāne nidhisamkā bhavati / tatra sthāne gomayamaṅdalakam kṛtvā puṣpāvaktṛnam kṛtvā gugguladhūpan datvāt troidhibaliṃ dadyāt śuklabali māmsarudhirabaliḥ saktuphalapadmabalin dātavyam / āryāvālokiteśvarapūjāṃ karttavyaḥ / daśasahasrāṇi japatāḥ samāpte daśasahasrāṇi yatra sthāne nidhir bhaviṣyati / tatra nidhipālam uttiṣṭhati / nidhānam utpatati / nidhipāla bali.argham nivedayitavyam / sa ca nidhipāla yāvajjīva karmakārakā bhavati yatra preṣayasi yam āññāpayasi tat sarvākarmāṇi kariṣyati /*

⁹⁰ *rDo rje sa 'og gi rgyud kyi rgyal po*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur 744, rGyud 'bum Tsha (Vol. 94), folio 258a /*yang na gter 'don par 'dod pas lcags las byas pa'i phur bu bzhi la lan nyi shu rtsa gcig bzlas te/ phyogs bzhir btob la gsang sngags bzlas par bya'ol / de nas der gter 'byung bar 'gyur ro/*

⁹¹ *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur 543, rGyud 'bum, Na (Vol. 88). This text has numerous *nidhi* rites, notably the fourteen *nidhi* rites in its final chapter, the *hemasādhana*, but apparently the *hemasādhana* was not translated into Tibetan. Nevertheless several other *nidhi* rites within this compendious tantra were translated into Tibetan, for example, at folio 231.a: "[With One Syllable,] one can also unveil a treasure trove. One should go to where the trove is, take a white jar, smear it with 'all fragrances,' fill it with water infused with white sandalwood, incant it with the mantra one thousand and eight times, and deposit it where the trove [is supposed to be]. If the trove is there, the earth will burst open. If it is at the depth of a human height, one should sprinkle the area with water—one will be able to grasp it after digging one cubit [*hasta*] deep." (Translation by 84000) /*de nas gter 'byin par 'dod na gang du gter yod pa der song la/ rtsa ba mi gnag pa'i bum pa blangs nas dri zhim po thams cad kyi lde gus byugs te/ tsan+dan dkar po dang chu'i nang du bcug ste/ stong rtsa brgyad mngon par bsngags pa byas nas gal te gter yod na sa de rang bye bar 'gyur ro/ / gal te gter de mi gang tsam na yod na chus gtor la khru gang tsam brkos la blang bar bya'ol/*

⁹² *Āryatārākurukullākālpa*, Sde dge bka' 'gyur 437 rGyud 'bum, Ca (Vol. 81) folios 41a-b: "If, having recited the mantra fifty times, one places one's foot on the ground / In pursuit of treasure within it, / And the foot thus put down then vibrates, / It should be understood that a treasure is present there. / If the upper part of the foot twitches, it is nearby; / [F41.b] If it is the sole that twitches, it is far away. / Relying first on hearsay, / The knowledge holder should look downward every day." (translation by 84000) /*sngags 'di brgya phyed rkang pa sar bzhag nas/ / sa yi nang na yod pa'i nor btsal na/ / rkang pa gang du bzhag pa g.yo 'gyur ba/ / de na gter dag yod pa shes par bya/ / rkang pa'i bol 'gul na ni nye bar [081-41b] 'gyur/ / rkang mthil 'gul na ring na gnas pa yin/ / gang na gter yod zer bar mngon byas nas/ / rig pa 'dzin pas nyin bzhin 'og tu blta/*

its commentaries,⁹³ various Mahāyāna scriptures such as the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi*,⁹⁴ and the *Sarvapuṇya-samuccaya-samādhi*,⁹⁵ and Mahāyāna commentarial texts such as the *Śikṣāsamuccaya*.⁹⁶ More importantly perhaps, *nidhis* played prominent and even central roles in the mythologies of Indian figures popular in Tibet, such as the wealth gods Kubera, Jambhala, and Vaiśravaṇa, the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, and other mythologically important figures including *yakṣas*, *nāgas* and *Cakravartin* monarchs, so that anyone interested in Indian culture might hear of *nidhi* from many different sources of Indic knowledge. Chos dbang claims he himself revealed a *yakṣa* cycle,⁹⁷ and we know from the biographical literature that Chos dbang was an accomplished adept of Vajrapāṇi,⁹⁸ the deity who is most concerned with *nidhi* in the Buddhist tantras and whose scriptures focus

⁹³ Lists of the nine *nidhis* occur in virtually all Tibetan lexicons, generally as follows: *gter la pad ma can dang/ dung can/ pad ma chen po/ chu srin can/ rus sbal can/ rnga can/ dga' ba can/ sngon po/ 'dzin byed ces dgu yod pas grangs ka dgu mtshon/*. I have not yet ascertained the source for this list, but it might be linked to the *Amarakoṣa*. Dan Martin's *TibVocab* gives *sbyin byed* in place of *'dzin byed*.

⁹⁴ To do justice to this *sūtra*'s treatment of *nidhi* requires a reading of its entire 13th chapter, too long to reproduce here. It is excellently edited and translated in Harrison 1978 and 1990.

⁹⁵ Sde dge bga' gyur volume 56, F.96.a-b "Vimalatejā, you should understand through such accounts that for bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma, the thus-gone ones do not pass beyond suffering, nor does the sacred Dharma ever disappear. How is that? Vimalatejā, bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma with perfect motivation and devotion cause the blessed buddhas to manifest and teach the Dharma, even though they may dwell in a different world system. Vimalatejā, the Dharma treasures of bodhisattva great beings who yearn for the Dharma are found within mountains, mountain caverns, and trees. They contain *dhāranīs* and infinite gateways to the doctrine laid out in tomes yet to be discovered." (Translation by 84000, with my emendation) */dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid rnam grangs des kyang khyod kyis chos 'dod pa'i byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnam la ni nams kyang de bzhin gshegs pa mya ngan las 'da' bar [56-96b] mi 'gyur la/ dam pa'i chos kyang nub par mi 'gyur ba de ltar rig par bya' o/ /de ci'i phyir zhe na/ dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid chos 'dod pa'i byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po bsam pa phun sun tshogs pa gus pa dang bcas pa rnam ni 'jig rten gyi kham gzhana na 'dug kyang sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnam zhal ston par mdzad cing chos kyang thos par mdzad do/ /dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid chos 'dod pa'i byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po rnam kyi chos kyi gter ri dang / ri sul dang / shing dag gi nang du bcug pa dag yod del/ gzungs dang / chos kyi sgo mtha' yas pa glegs bam du byas pa dag kyang lag tu 'ong bar gyur ro/*

⁹⁶ The excerpt mainly reproduces the passage from the *Sarvapuṇya-samuccaya-samādhi* presented above.

⁹⁷ Page 115, line 7: *gter kha phye nas lta pas gnod sbyin zha 'on gyi skor...*

⁹⁸ Dudjom 1991: 762: 'In his tenth year, he studied six traditions of Vajrapāṇi according to the new translation schools, and when he propitiated that deity the water in his ritual vase began to boil'. According to his own account, Chos dbang's involvement with treasure discovery began three years later, in his thirteenth year, when he acquired his first *kha byang*: *bdag lo bcu gsum lon po'i tshe....* see page 115, lines 4-5.

precisely on controlling *yakṣas* and *nāgas* to procure their treasures (see for example the description of the *Bhagavan-nīlāambaradhara-vajrapāṇitantra* and other related Vajrapāṇi scriptures above, and also the translation from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* below). Indeed, when Chos dbang's household was attacked by the yak-horned treasure protector (*gter bdag*) for whom he had failed to leave a substitute offering (*gter tshab*, see above), Vajrapāṇi, who had been accomplished as a personal deity, was invoked in the initial attempt to control it.⁹⁹ As is known from art history and other sources, the outer tantras of *Kriyā*, *Caryā*, and *Yoga* remained popular in Tibet until around the 14th century, after which their popularity waned. But it is in the texts of these outer tantras, still popular in Chos dbang's time, that the practices of Vajrapāṇi and the rites concerned with *nidhi* are so prominent.

3. *The Āryavidyottamamahātantra, Kriyātantra, Nidhiśāstras, and Gter ma*

The Tibetan *gter ma* tradition was highly syncretic. It merged different elements from Indian religion—some related to *nidhi* and others quite unrelated—with various aspects of indigenous Tibetan beliefs.¹⁰⁰ The translation from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* below is therefore intended merely to illustrate one of the many strands in Indian and Tibetan thinking that contributed towards the evolution of *gter ma* in Tibet, albeit not an unimportant one. Moreover, although taken from perhaps the longest *Kriyātantra* description of *nidhi* that I have so far encountered, we should also bear in mind that the translation represents only one extract from one sample out of a very broad range of possible examples of its type, for there are innumerable rites for finding *nidhi* within early Buddhist tantric and especially *Kriyā* literature, and several more even within other chapters of the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* itself. Almost none of these numerous further *Kriyā* sources on *nidhi* have been studied so far, and this is merely a partial translation of only one of them. Regrettably, there are very few previous studies around this topic.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Page 128, lines 2-3: *yi dam phyag rdor bum rtags thon par snyen pa skyol ba gcig yod pa bsgom pas kyang*, etc.

¹⁰⁰ For Indian beliefs unrelated to *nidhi* but synthesised into Tibetan *gter ma*, see note 105 below. For one of the best accounts so far of indigenous Tibetan elements synthesised into *gter ma*, see Jacoby 2014, pages 76ff. I hope to deal further with these issues in a future publication in this series, with Anna Sehnalova.

¹⁰¹ More than that, as should be obvious from my discussion above, the *Kriyā* and other early Buddhist tantras represent merely one aspect of Indian Buddhism's complex engagements with the category of *nidhi*. Other important aspects, only barely mentioned in my extremely brief summary above, include the well-known and prolific roles of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* as protector deities in Indian Buddhism.

It would be naïve to expect the translation below to illustrate an exact and complete Indian precursor to the mature Tibetan *gter ma* tradition, because the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* does not pertain to the same historical period or genre as Tibetan *gter ma*. At the same time, it would be equally naïve to expect the translation from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* below to show no relation at all to the Tibetan *gter ma* traditions. It is instructive to enlarge on both these points.

The Rnying ma *gter ma* traditions largely pertain to the historically later non-dual inner tantras of *Mahāyoga*, *Anuyoga*, and *Atiyoga*, that emerged several centuries after *Kriyātantra*, which was the very earliest type of Buddhist tantra. Although evolving out of the earlier genres of *Kriyātantra*, *Caryātantra* and *Yogatantra*, and although carrying many of the categories of the earlier genres along with them, the non-dual inner tantras nevertheless developed into something different. More specifically, the non-dual inner tantras are predominantly soteriological in orientation, in particularly sharp contrast to the *Kriyātantras*, which were to a considerable degree this-worldly in orientation.

Nevertheless, perhaps because of their own preoccupation with higher soteriological themes, the non-dual inner tantras in many cases preferred to perpetuate and adapt some of their more worldly practical rituals from the existing *Kriyā* tantra heritage, rather than invent new ones of their own: for despite their soteriological orientation, they still needed the capacity to perform practical tantric activities for the benefit of beings.¹⁰² Nor did the evolution of the inner tantras entail that usage of the earlier tantric genres ceased immediately: on the contrary, the earlier types of tantra continue to exist in monastic and canonical collections, and continue to be consulted occasionally, despite having become increasingly eclipsed in Tibet by the inner tantras, a process which accelerated after the 14th century. Unsurprisingly then, while we find that the discovery and excavation of *nidhi* in the

Perhaps in due course it might also make sense to think about the so-far never analysed but in several cases seemingly close relationships of the *dharmabhāṅakas* (reciters or revealers of the *Mahāyāna sūtras*) with the deities of the landscape (*nāgas* and *yakṣas*) and the wealth they confer, for example as witnessed in one of the main extant sources on *dharmabhāṅakas*, the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama-sūtra*: see for example Chapters 10, 11, and 14. See also Gummer 2012. It is sometimes suggested that the famous narrative of Nāgārjuna recovering the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures from the *nāgas* is historically quite late, yet already in the very early *Pratyutpanna-buddhasaṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, the reincarnating *dharmabhāṅakas* are expected to recover the concealed *sūtras* specifically from the care of *nāgas* and suchlike deities, who guard them within the landscape (see sections 13 K v.9 of Harrison 1978 and 1990).

¹⁰² To give one example, the inner tantras routinely reused the fire offerings (*homa*) so typical of *Kriyātantra*, to effectuate the 'four enlightened activities' (*las bzhi*) of pacifying disturbances, increasing good qualities, magnetising the distracted, and destroying the irredeemable.

Āryavidyottamamahātantra is permeated and dominated by *Kriyātantra* themes, we also find that the discovery and excavation of *gter ma* in Rnying ma is permeated and dominated by inner tantras themes; yet some aspects or traces of the older genre remain visible in the later one, reflecting the general relationship of the inner tantras to *Kriyātantra*. This can perhaps be more easily understood through the following point-by-point comparison.

Thus, in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*, representing the historically earliest tantric genre of *Kriyātantra* which is to a substantial degree practical and this-worldly in orientation, we find that:

(i) *Nidhi* are largely practical and material, such as gold and worldly wealth (although a few mentions are also made of soteriological themes).¹⁰³

(ii) Since the *nidhi* are mundane and do not pertain to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, they require no spiritual linkage with a predestined discoverer (thus differing from the Buddha's co-natal (*saha-jāta*) *nidhi* in Theravāda and the *dharmanidhi* scriptures of Mahāyāna with their prophesied discoverers).

(iii) *Nidhi* are mainly discovered within or through the natural world, rather than within or through the yogin's mind (since the non-dual philosophical doctrines underpinning the latter ideas were not really the main concern in much of *Kriyā*'s practical magic).

(iv) Guidance to find the treasure site largely derives from ordinary and subtle signs in the natural world, discernible to any suitably capable yogin applying correct methods, as taught by Vajrapāṇi in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and other such generic *Kriyātantras* accessible to many yogins.

(v) The deity who helps the treasure seeker at the outset through dream indications is described merely as a 'treasure deity' (*gter gyi lha*), not a wisdom *ḍākinī* (since the inner tantric category of wisdom *ḍākinī* was not yet predominant).

(vi) The physical act of *nidhi* excavation requires intensive preparatory practice of the quintessential *Kriyā* rite of *homa*, which at this stage of tantric Buddhist history was a main practice in itself.

(vii) The frame narrative describes the *nidhi* in the earth being in the ultimate custody of a great this-worldly (*laukika*) god (*deva*), Brahmā.

(viii) The Indian landscape deities who guard such mundane *nidhi* were not previously inducted into the broader Buddhist community or appointed under oath to act as Dharma protectors.¹⁰⁴ Thus they need not resemble such respected beings as the protectors of the Buddha's

¹⁰³ See [D71a] below: "For people to.....perfect the *pāramitās*,"

¹⁰⁴ Although the current treasure finder might now make them his own personal servants, as an additional benefit of a successful treasure-hunt, see note 21 above.

co-natal (*saha-jāta*) *nidhi*, the *nāgas* who guarded the *Perfection of Wisdom* volumes, presumably also the *nāgas* and other landscape deities who guarded the *dharmanidhi* of the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi*, and Vajrapāṇi.

(ix) The Indian landscape deities who guard and have powerful proprietorial interests in the *nidhi* do not normally belong to a culturally respected pantheon of clan or *jati*-related patron deities playing a key role in ethnic or tribal identity and social structure.

(x) Thus little emphasis is normally placed on respectfully compensating them with substitutes for the *nidhi* removed.

(xi) *Nidhi* extracted from domesticated environments (statues, *lingams*, temples, etc.) can have simpler extraction processes than those taken from wild environments owned by deities (forests, rivers, etc.)

By contrast, in Rnying ma *gter ma*, which pertains to the inner tantras, in revisiting the same eleven topics, we find that:

(i) *Gter mas* are largely soteriological and esoteric, such as secret tantric texts and religious statues, (although some mentions are also made of this-worldly discoveries, like gold).

(ii) Since the various *gter ma* are supermundane and pertain to the Three Jewels of Buddha, Dharma and Saṅgha, each must have a specific spiritual link with a predestined discoverer (thus resembling the Buddha's co-natal (*saha-jāta*) *nidhi* in Theravāda and the *dharmanidhi* scriptures of Mahāyāna with their prophesied discoverers).

(iii) Many discoveries are made not in the earth, but in the discoverer's mind (*dgongs gter*), and even discoveries made in the earth have strong inner mental or spiritual aspects (not least the Mahāyāna-derived idea of *gtad* or *parindanā*, with all its ramifications).¹⁰⁵

(iv) Guidance to find the treasure site largely derives from an individual *gter ston* privately receiving signs in the natural world and in dream indications, and by receiving secret personalised *kha byang* containing practical instructions, unique to the excavation of each particular *gter ma*.

¹⁰⁵ As far as I currently understand it, the idea of revelation direct to the yogin's mind (*dgongs gter*) became classified as a kind of *nidhi* or *gter ma* only in Tibet. Where such ideas earlier became prominent, for example in Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in the non-dual tantric traditions of Kashmir, (Mayer 2019: 155-161 and 173-176, Sanderson 2007, Williams 2017, Nemeč 2020), they were not as far as I currently know considered part of the category of *nidhi*. Likewise, some Tibetans sometimes associate the related Mahāyāna idea of revelation by 'pure vision' (*dag snang*) with *nidhi*, which I do not think was necessarily the case in India, and indeed many other Tibetans do clearly differentiate 'pure vision' as a separate system. As for *gtad* or *parindanā* in Mahāyāna, see *Samādhirājasūtra* Chapter 18, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* Chapter 27 and 22, and many more. For *gtad rgya* as a central concept in Rnying ma *gter ma*, see Thondup 1986: 64-66.

(v) All such guidance, in dreams, signs, and *kha byang*, are granted to the *gter ston* alone, by tantric wisdom *ḍākinīs*.

(vi) The physical act of *gter ma* excavation requires intensive preparatory practice of the quintessential inner tantric rites of *sādhana* with *gaṇacakra*¹⁰⁶ (but *sādhana* rites inherit and subsume the earlier rites of *homa* so favoured in *Kriyā*).

(vii) The frame narrative describes the *gter ma* being in the ultimate custody of a great transcendent (*lokottara*) being, the 'Second Buddha', Padmasambhava.

(viii) The Tibetan landscape deities who guard *gter ma* were already long ago inducted into the broader Buddhist community, having been tamed by Padmasambhava and appointed under oath to guard his treasures. Thus, they can resemble such respected beings as the protectors of the Buddha's co-natal (*saha-jāta*) *nidhi*, the *nāgas* who guarded the *Perfection of Wisdom* volumes, presumably also the *nāgas* and other landscape deities who guarded the *dharmanidhi* of the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi*, and Vajrapāṇi.

(ix) The Tibetan landscape deities who guard and have powerful proprietorial interests in *gter ma* can simultaneously belong to respected indigenous pantheons of clan-related gods with key roles in Tibetan tribal or clan identity, social structure, and economic welfare.

(x) Thus, great emphasis is placed on compensating them respectfully with substitutes for the *gter ma* removed (*gter tshab*).

(xi) *Gter ma* extracted from domesticated environments (statues, temples, etc.) can have simpler extraction processes than those taken from wild environments owned by deities (mountains, lakes, etc.)

From the above lists, it seems reasonable to hypothesise that whether directly or indirectly, at least some underlying structures and elements of the foundational Indian Buddhist tantric heritage of the earlier *Kriyā* system of *nidhi* can still be discerned within the Rnying ma inner tantra system of *gter ma*. However, much as one would expect in light of *Kriyā*'s historical relationship to the Rnying ma inner tantras, they have now been rendered suitably inward, esotericised, and where appropriate, Tibetanised.

A more detailed scrutiny can expose these relationships with increased granularity. Locating the site of hidden buried treasures, and then extracting them, requires much practical assistance. As mentioned above, in the esoteric Rnying ma system, where the most important discoveries are secret tantric texts, such assistance comes mainly through personalised documents called *kha byang*, miraculously delivered by wisdom *ḍākinīs*, unique to each occasion, and so secret that only the individual prophesied *gter ston* can read them at

¹⁰⁶ Thondup 1986: 76-7

all.¹⁰⁷ Nevertheless, much of the information contained in the *kha byang* is down to earth and practical, including the exact location of the 'treasure door' (*gter sgo*) and useful instructions on opening it. For example, Padma gling pa received the following *kha byang*:

...East of Tharling, at a place called Chatrag, there is a rocky mountain known as Dorje Trag. Before the rocky mountain there is a river, and on its bank an oak tree. Level with the top of the tree is a flat red rock like a mirror, with a vermilion *Āḥ* in the middle of it. At a distance of one 'dom to the right, the door of the *gter ma* (*gter sgo*) will be found in the design of a swastika. In the centre of the swastika there is a hole the size of an egg, invisible from the outside. If you put a wooden dagger (*phur pa*) in the hole and push upwards the door will open. Inside is a bronze image of Vajrasattva one and a half feet high and a four inch scroll of the *sādhana* of Vajrasattva sealed by a letter *Āḥ*. You should discover them on the tenth day of the sheep month. (Thondup 1996:75)

Or, as Ratna Gling pa puts it more generally:

... a *gter ston* should identify the valley [of concealment] by relying on the general prophetic guide [*kha byang*]; he should find the spot [exact concealment place] by measurements according to the inner prophetic guide [*kha byang*]; and he should make offerings to the *gter ma* protectors and put in substitutes for the *gter ma* according to the innermost prophetic guide [*kha byang*]. (Thondup 1996: 75).

By contrast, in the more exoteric *Kriyā* system, where worldly wealth is usually the main discovery, practical assistance comes from generic tantras that any initiated yogins could read, describing subtle features of landscape and vegetation that any of them could potentially navigate, if suitably prepared. Even if the individualised dream guidance of a treasure deity is also mentioned, this plays a much lesser role than the wisdom *ḍākinī* messengers of the inner tantric Rnying ma system.

Nevertheless, it is quite noteworthy how the generic passage from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* translated below addresses so many of the very same practical concerns typical of *kha byang*: where to find, how to measure, how to make visible, and how to recognise hidden magic treasure doors or *gter sgo* (the same term is used in both traditions for this key notion), when or when not to open them, also what rituals to do before, while, or after opening them, how to manage their protectors or *gter srung* (the same term is used in both traditions), at

¹⁰⁷ *Kha byang* are often written in a symbolic *ḍākinī* script that only the prophesied *gter ston* can decipher and remain indecipherable to all other readers.

what depth behind the *gter sgo* the treasure will be found, how much will be found, how the *gter sgo* should be reclosed after the *gter* is extracted, and so on.

Continuities between the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and the Rnying ma system of *gter ma* become particularly evident if we focus on a single key concept crucial to both systems, the actual cavity from which the treasure is taken, known to both traditions as the *gter sgo*, and which I have translated here as 'treasure door'. Hence I have selected for translation below the particular section from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* which focuses on the *gter sgo*. I regret that because of the secrecy and dispersed nature of *kha byang*, I cannot mine them to compile a parallel systematic presentation from the Rnying ma system to compare with the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*, and that I must rely instead on snippets of information scattered within Tibetan biographical sources. Nevertheless, significant parallels between the *gter sgo* of *Kriyā* and the *gter sgo* of Rnying ma do seem apparent.

The *gter sgo* of Indian *Kriyā* and Rnying ma *gter ma* alike is rarely a mere hole: more typically, it resembles a magical portal to another dimension.¹⁰⁸ Thus in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* (see [D75a] below), in a description resembling other early Buddhist tantric narratives, once the *gter sgo* is open, supernatural beings (in this case *gandharvīs* and *kinnarīs*) will appear from a supernatural realm (in this case Meru), which is just the other side of the *gter sgo*.¹⁰⁹ Similarly in Rnying ma, when Gter bdag gling pa enters a *gter sgo*, he finds himself inside a tent-like cavern with crystal walls and bright frescoes, inhabited by supernatural young men and women (Thondup 1986: 78). When Padma gling pa enters a *gter sgo*, he finds himself within a large space with thrones and supernatural inhabitants (Aris 1989: 38). Such accounts are highly prevalent, in *Kriyātantra* texts and in Rnying ma *gter ma* narratives alike.

Methods of opening and closing the *gter sgo* are also very similar in *Kriyā* and in Rnying ma: for example, as we can see in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* [D73a], *gter sgo* often open magically and spontaneously, but other times iron bars or chisels are needed to smash them open. Similarly, Rnying ma *gter sgo* often open magically and spontaneously, for example when Padma gling pa withdrew his famous lake treasure, but other times, hammers and chisels are needed, for example, when

¹⁰⁸ Because of its magic portal-like nature, Dan Martin has suggested that the translation of *gter gyi sgo* as 'treasure door' is somewhat conservative, and perhaps something like 'access point' might be more apposite.

¹⁰⁹ In several *Kriyā* sources, the discovery of *nidhi* can also be conflated with *pātālasiddhi*, the attainment of *pātāla* (Tibetan: *sa 'og*), the underground worlds of *nāgas* and *asuras* (see note 120 below), which are supernatural realms filled with wondrous inhabitants, treasures, longevity, and pleasures.

Padma gling pa withdrew his cliff treasure at Gedo (Aris 1989: 49). Likewise, a *gter sgo* opened spontaneously for Bdud 'joms gling pa at Bater, but he had to smash one open with a chisel in Ngala Tagtse; ditto Yongs dge mi 'gyur rdo rje (Thondup 1986: 78, 79).

The use of a magical lamp (often of *arka* wood) can help in finding the treasure: we see this in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* below, in the Chinese translation of the *Vajrakumāra* tantra (T1222, Hodge, unpublished) and in the actions of a treasure-finding Pāsupata brahmin described in the *Kathāsagitsāgara* (see note 127 below); and likewise in the famous narrative of Padma gling pa finding his lake treasure (Thondup 1986: 79).

A *kīla* or *phur pa* quite often features in both *Kriyātantra* and Rnying ma accounts of the *gter sgo*, and also in Śaiva *nidhiśāstra* texts, as a multi-purpose tool performing a variety of different functions: sometimes they are used for opening the *gter sgo*, and sometimes for keeping the *gter sgo* sealed. There are several references to *kīlas* in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* excerpt translated below, where they serve to keep the *gter sgo* closed. For Śaiva examples, so far we can conveniently consult only one *nidhiśāstra* (treasure finding treatise), since none of the other extant manuscripts have yet been edited. But the *Nidhipradīpa* of Śrīkaṇṭhaśambhu (Sastri 1930) also prescribes *kīlas*: 'Using eight *khādīra* woods, [the treasure seeker] should plant a *kīla* endowed with spells...' (Chapter 4, verse 17).¹¹⁰ The use of a *phur pas* is widespread in Rnying ma, where they are mainly used to open the *gter sgo*. Thus, one of Padma gling pa's *kha byang* instructed him to open a *gter sgo* using a wooden *phur pa* (Thondup 1986: 75). Ogyan P. Tanzin Rinpoche also told me about a *phur pa* he knew that was specifically kept for opening up *gter sgo*, and he explained that *phur pas* are often used to dig out *gter ma*.¹¹¹ The theme of having to close the *gter sgo* after use, and its often-magical re-sealing, is found in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*, and is ubiquitous in the Rnying ma tradition too.

The *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* has well organised lists describing the various shapes of treasure doors, and in passages sometimes difficult to understand with any great precision, also their drawing or tracing on the ground. Vasudeva (2012: 274) reports something very similar to these drawings or tracings from the *Nidhipradīpa*, although he too says he was not able fully to understand what the passages meant. These topics too are not absent in Tibetan *gter ma*, although such systematic information is harder to find, not only because *kha byang* are personalised, but also because *kha byang* are almost never available for

¹¹⁰ Thanks to Dylan Esler for this reference,

¹¹¹ Personal communication, 3rd January 2018. Ogyan P. Tanzin Rinpoche was referring to a special *phur pa* preserved in his father's house that was said to be particularly good for digging up *gter ma*.

public scrutiny. But we do have some snippets of information from biographical sources. In a set of procedures very similar indeed to those expounded in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* below, Urgyen Tulku describes Mchog gyur gling pa drawing a design on the surface of a rock, which then spontaneously opened 'like the anus of a cow', to reveal a magic *gter sgo* (Kunsang and Schmidt 2005: 30), which was finally resealed by miraculous methods after its treasure had been removed (Kunsang and Schmidt 2005: 31). The exact location of Padma gling pa's *gter sgo* at Chatrag was marked by a swastika (Thondup 1986: 75). Urgyen Tulku describes a 'terma sign' on the ground that marked where a *gter sgo* was situated (Kunsang and Schmidt 2005: 29). Perhaps not too different in principle, the precise location of one of Gter bdag gling pa's *gter sgo* was marked by a swastika of rainbow light illuminating the ground (Thondup 1986: 78).

The general typologies of locations where *gter sgo* will be found likewise show parallels between the *Kriyā* traditions, the Rnying ma, and the Śaiva traditions too: Thondup (1986: 77) mentions such locations as 'rocks, earth, lakes, temples, statues, trees, or sky', most of which we find also in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* (rocks, earth, lakes, shrines or temples, statues, trees). The *Nidhipradīpa*, which is close to the Buddhist *Kriyātantra* traditions in so many ways, mentions in general that treasures can occur in several locations (*nidhi-sthāna*), in an aquatic environment, in a terrestrial environment, or in an aerial environment (Balbir 1993: 27),¹¹² as well as in temples, statues, and trees.

The *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*, the Rnying ma tradition, and the *Nidhipradīpa*, all agree that temples and icons are extremely important sites for finding *nidhi* or *gter ma*. The *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* specifies that shrines, temples, and Śiva liṅgams, and also images of Buddhas, Śiva, and Parvati, can conceal or indicate *nidhi*. In Rnying ma, the early *gter ston* Myang ral finds important treasures in Samye temple (Hirshberg 2016: 123-4), and within a statue of Buddha Vairocana at Khomting (Hirshberg 2016: 128). Discovery in temples and statues remains a staple of subsequent Rnying ma *gter ma* discovery, for example, the late Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche received a major *phur pa gter ma* from a Mahākāla statue in the protector temple (*dgon khang*) at Benchen monastery. Thondup (1986: 80) dedicates an entire section of his work to 'Discovery in statues and temples.' Similarly, Vasudeva (2012: 275) mentions regarding Śrīkaṇṭhaśambhu "Locating treasure in deserted temples and inside icons is a major topic in the *Nidhipradīpa*".

The *Nidhipradīpa* resembles the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* in many of its signs for *nidhi* in the natural world, for example, particular plants, unusual anomalies, and the like. Nevertheless, at such a specific level,

¹¹² It is not clearly explained exactly how treasures are extracted from the air.

the landscapes, the flora, and even the built environments, of India and Tibet are quite different, so that many of the more precise specification of the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* or *Nidhipradīpa* could never apply to Tibet. These include specific trees or plants native to India but not Tibet, as well as artifacts such as Śiva liṅgams. Likewise, the inner tantric Rnying ma traditions that locate treasures fully or partly in the mind of the *gter ston* seem, as far as I currently know, unattested in either the Buddhist *Kriyā* traditions or the *Nidhipradīpa* (although they do occur in Mahāyāna).¹¹³

Treasure-guarding deities in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and in Rnying ma certainly shared an identical classification—*gter srung*—but are interesting as much for their differences as for their similarities. Scholars such as DeCaroli (2004) and others have pointed out how Indian Buddhism exported the basic *structure* of its relationship with its native territorial deities to the other cultures it entered. Yet when Buddhism moved outside of India, many of the niches originally occupied by India's own territorial deities could instead become populated by the territorial deities of the host cultures: for example, *nats* in Southeast Asia, or *yul lha* and *klu* in Tibet. The Buddhist *saṃsāra-nirvāṇa* cosmology shaped this process: Buddhas beyond the cycle of rebirth are transcendent (*lokottara*), while deities still subject to rebirth, which includes most territorial deities, are worldly (*laukika*). However, some *laukika* deities become 'tamed' by the *lokottara* deities, to become protectors of Buddhism, and gradually ascend towards enlightenment. This structure helped Buddhist conversion in both India and abroad, by encouraging the Buddhist doctrinal vision to prevail, while still permitting an active but subservient role to indigenous religions. Thus cherished territorial deities need not be strenuously suppressed, but could retain their previous cults and characteristics, albeit at the cost of acknowledging a Buddhist ascendancy through accepting for themselves the Buddhist-defined niche of 'worldly deity'. Unsurprisingly then, despite both being classified under the same term *gter srung*, there are many striking differences between the *gter srung* of the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and those of Rnying ma, since each retained the unique characteristics deriving from their differing cultural origins. From the

¹¹³ *Dgongs gter* is a kind of *gter ma* found entirely in the *gter ston*'s mind which seems to have parallels in the non-dual Śaivism of Kashmir, and which will hopefully be the subject of a forthcoming paper in this series. *Dgongs gter* also has a probable antecedent in the Mahāyāna notion of *pratibhāna* or *spobs ba* (Mayer 2019: 155-161). By contrast, *gtad pa* or *parindanā* can be the 'entrustment' of the *gter ma* text concealed in the elements into the *gter ston*'s or *dharmabhāṅaka*'s mind during a previous incarnation, by Padmasambhava in Rnying ma, or by the Buddha in Mahāyāna. The treasure discoverer thus recovers again and again through successive reincarnations, a dharma text that has already been imprinted into his mind in previous lifetimes, by Padmasambhava or the Buddha (Mayer 2019: 155-161).

Buddhist point of view, they are functionally the same, and both occupy a similar niche in the Buddhist pantheon, hence both are legitimately deemed *gter srung*; and in recognition of this fact, Tibetan Buddhist scholars did sometimes even homologise their *yul lha* with Indian *yakṣas* and their *klu* with Indian *nāgas*. Yet nevertheless, the *gter srung* of Tibet can clearly differ considerably in character from the *gter srung* of the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and the wider *Kriyātantras*, perpetuating entirely different individual histories, inhabiting and embodying different kinds of landscapes, and reflecting very different social and cultural conditions.

While Rnying ma *gter ma* conforms to inner tantra soteriological concerns by being predominantly focused on such discoveries as texts and statues, it has not entirely lost its historical connection with the more practical discoveries of the earlier *Kriyātantra* texts such as the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*. As Dudjom Rinpoche observes, the finding of material wealth remains an important if less prestigious aspect of the *gter ston*'s role (Dudjom 1992: 746-7). Thus, the great 14th century *gter ston* Sangs rgyas gling pa revealed a copper vase filled with gold (Dudjom 1992: 786), and the great 19th century *gter stons* Mchyen brtse dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa together revealed a great quantity of gold from the *nāgas* in a lake (Gardner 2019: 250). Mchog gyur gling pa even revealed a herd of cattle as a wealth *gter ma* (Kunsang and Schmidt 2005: 30). Of course, the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and the *Nidhipradīpa* alike are mainly concerned with discovering mundane treasures, such as gold.

There are several other parallels between Rnying ma *gter ma*, non-Tibetan tantric Buddhist traditions, and the Indian *nidhivādin* traditions, which are not specifically mentioned in the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* itself. One of these is the enveloping of the treasure cache within charcoal. This is truly ubiquitous in Rnying ma: see for example, bDud 'joms gling pa's discoveries at Bater rock mountain (Thondup 1986: 78), and at Ngala Tagtse (Thondup 1986: 79), or Zur Shakya 'od's discovery at Dorje Tsheten in gTsang (Dudjom 1992: 662). For Chos dbang's identical use of charcoal, and its wider use in Buddhist East Asia, see note 84 above, where I also mention that we find this in the Śaiva *Nidhipradīpa* (Chapter 4, verse 50) and in the Jain tradition, for example, in the *Upamitibhavaprapañca Kathā* of Siddharṣi (Balbir 1993: 44).

There are also themes in Śrīkaṇṭhaśambhu's *Nidhipradīpa* that are not found in the excerpts from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* I have so far read, but which do seem to be reflected in the Rnying ma *gter ma* tradition. For example, the *Nidhipradīpa* explains that treasure seeking should not be undertaken alone, but "to achieve this, the treasure hunter needs to begin by finding an ideal assistant (*sahāya*)" (Vasudeva

2012: 273). Balbir further comments that when excavating *nidhi*, the treasure seeker of the *Nidhipradīpa* must be in the company of special assistants with particular qualities (*sahāya lakṣaṇa*) and impeccable moral standing, whose behaviour must be perfect (Balbir 1993: 26-27). This resembles a trope in Rnying ma: while *gter ma* can sometimes be revealed individually, or before a large crowd (*khrom gter*), in many other cases only carefully chosen people can be present at the discovery (Thondup 1986: 77). This idea is already found in early sources such as Chos dbang, who discovered a *gter ma* statue of Guru Rinpoche (*sku tshab*) when accompanied by eleven suitable companions (page 146 ff), and Ogyan P Tenzin Rinpoche told me of occasions when *gter ma* could not be revealed because a member of the *gter ston*'s entourage was inappropriate. It might also be worth exploring if, in the Rnying ma inner tantric system where soteriological themes and the role of wisdom *dākinīs* are so pronounced, the *nidhiśāstra*'s specially chosen assistants with particular qualities might have morphed into the Rnying ma *gter ston*'s destined tantric consorts of suitable interdependence, without whom the *gter ston* cannot reveal the treasure at all, and without whom the *gter ston*'s very life might be in danger (Thondup 1986: 82-84; for a detailed account of this, see Jacoby 2014).

Balbir (1993: 22-23) observes that treasure-hunting specialists in India were often Śaivas, notably Pāśupata ascetics who drew their knowledge from the specialised *śāstras* dedicated to treasure hunting (*nidhiśāstras*). Typically, they could also be specialists in alchemy, because alchemy was often closely associated with the *khanyavādin* (mineralogist) and the *nidhivādin* (treasure seeker) (Balbir 1993: 22, 31, 48). Lopon P. Ogyan Tenzin similarly explained to me that in a time of famine, Nāgārjuna created much gold by alchemical methods. Finding gold ore in the ground as a *khanyavādin* or uncovering a hidden store of golden coins as a *nidhivādin*, or creating completely new gold as an alchemist, are thus different ways of achieving the same ends. Little wonder, as both Balbir (1993: 23-24) and Vasudeva (2012: 272) point out, such lucrative arts could be patronised by kings.

One of the specialised *śāstras* for finding *nidhi* still extant in Sanskrit is the first of two different texts both called *Nidhipradīpika*. According to Balbir (1993: 25), it was composed by bringing together two chapters from the *Kakṣapuṭa* or *Siddhanāgārjunatantra*, which is attributed to the complex and conflated Buddhist authorial name of Nāgārjuna.¹¹⁴ This

¹¹⁴ A version of the *Kakṣapuṭa* survives in the Tibetan Tengyur, and if it contains any of the same material as the extant *Nidhipradīpika*, a combined study of them might prove fruitful. *Mchan khung gi sbyor ba*: Peking No. 2480, *rgyud 'grel*, 'a, 89b2-91a4 (vol.57, p.204); Sde dge No. 1609, *rgyud, ya* 72b1-73b5; Narthang 'a 79b3-81a1; Kinsha 484, 'a 102b1, p.53-1-1. Chieko Yamano (2013, 2014, 2015) has published some excellent editions and translations of three chapters from the *Kakṣapuṭa*, but not yet

is of interest because throughout many centuries of Buddhist history, the name Nāgārjuna has been associated with the discovery of dharma *nidhis*, including the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, the *Sarvatathāgata-tattovasaṅgraha*, and other early Buddhist tantras attribute to his discovery in East Asian tradition; and equally, with metallurgical and alchemical works. What all these different references share, as indeed the very name Nāgārjuna itself would so strongly suggest, is a clear association with the three overlapping identities of the *khanyavādin*, the *nidhivādin*, and the alchemist. It would seem, the very name Nāgārjuna was understood to refer to such a figure *par excellence*.

Indian medicine is another body of knowledge with which the name Nāgārjuna is associated. As Balbir points out, it is immediately obvious that much of the *Nidhipradīpa* (and as we can see, the *Āryavidyottamamahātāntra* alike) reflect considerable knowledge shared with the Indian healing arts (*āyurveda*) and its related pharmacology (*rasaśāstra*). In her erudite study of treasure hunting specialists in ancient and medieval India, which draws on so many Sanskrit and Prakrit sources, Nalini Balbir (1993) has shown how the occurrence of certain plants above ground was an important indicator of *nidhi* below ground, so that the specialised or professional treasure-hunter (*nidhivādin*) or mineralogist (*khanya-vādin*) needed among other skills to be learned in plant lore and botany. In addition, the treasure-seeker required expertise in the preparation of complex magical potions, since these were utilised in various ways to find the treasure. The *Nidhipradīpa* indeed resembles many aspects of the *Āryavidyottamamahātāntra* in prescribing various complex pastes based on oil or on grease and using various roots, and sprinkling concoctions on the ground to make the treasure doors become visible. Likewise, various eyedrops and ointments must be made from minerals such as orpiment and realgar, expertly mixed with many other highly specific substances. I see little of this in the Rnying ma *gter ma* tradition, even though miraculous medicines, nectars (*bdud rtsi*), and suchlike substances remain amongst the most commonly found treasures.¹¹⁵ There

of the relevant chapters for our purposes, viz. Chapter Fifteen on the *āñjana* (eye ointment) that makes buried treasures visible, and Chapter Sixteen on *nidhigrahana* (finding treasures).

¹¹⁵ For example, Myang ral found 'life-saving medicines' among his *gter ma* cache from Drak Sinmo Barje, and, as Hirshberg describes, "a veritable pharmacopeia ...with many items pertaining to the healing arts." (Hirshberg 2016: 117). Thondup (1986: 152-3) translates an entire section on the discovery of beneficial 'Terma Nectars' (*bdud rtsi*), which are described as "the best among the Terma substances" and confer both healing and liberation upon tasting. Dudjom (1991: 662-3) describes Zur Shakya 'od successfully recovering a flask containing the 'water of life' from a charcoal-filled *gter sgo*. It was sent to Emperor Qubilai Qan, who drank it, and lived for a hundred years as a consequence.

are two likely reasons for this difference: firstly, the natural environments assumed by such instructions are clearly Indian, and the plants mentioned are not native to Tibet, so the techniques were not easily transferable. Secondly, as mentioned above, followers of the Rnying ma inner tantras preferred to focus on directly soteriological themes, and also to locate their dharmic *gter mas* through the interventions of wisdom *dākinīs*, rather than mundane plant signs.

The *Nidhipradīpa* also resembles the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* in various ritual particulars, such as prescribing numerous mantras that must be recited, in prescribing that at the moment of seizing the treasure, it is essential to make suitable *bali* (Tib: *gtor ma*) offerings to the various hostile deities who will oppose the treasure-seeker's enterprise, and so on with other ritual acts. From the point of view of Tantric Buddhist scholarship, it is regrettable that no monographic studies of the *Nidhipradīpa* and the other extant *nidhiśāstras* have yet been made, so that despite the obvious fact that there is much in common, it remains too early to arrive at comprehensive and definitive conclusions about their precise relation to the Buddhist tantric texts on *nidhi*.¹¹⁶

While the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* passage I have translated has a great deal to say regarding the location and opening of treasure doors, it is not very forthcoming on the precise nature of the treasures to be found. Gold is mentioned once, but certainly does not seem to be the only treasure. Were the treasure hunters of the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* seeking fabulous troves of gems and miraculous wonders? Or more prosaic (but equally valuable) mineral ores? Or something of both? Conforming to a widespread pattern across the world, both Tibet and India showed considerable overlap in their vocabularies, cosmologies, rituals, and arts and sciences, of locating underground sources of minerals and precious gems, and those of finding quite other kinds of buried treasures, including long forgotten humanly buried hoards, or more mythic or religious treasures. As mentioned above, given that locating underground minerals has been a major human concern since the Bronze Age, that smelting ore is an apparently magical process, and that precious gems traditionally endowed with magical properties are similarly found underground, it is hardly surprising that such convergences were widespread in pre-modern cultures. The close relationship between minerology and other kinds of treasure finding (especially religious) is amongst the most salient topics of Charles Stewart

¹¹⁶ Balbir does devote a few pages to Śrīkaṅṭhasambhu's *Nidhipradīpa*, although a major part of her excellent analysis of the world of the *nidhivādin* is understandably focused on other (especially Jain) narrative sources. Vasudeva deals with the *nidhivādin* only in brief, in the context of a much broader and excellent study of Śaiva magic in general, but he does make some useful references to Śrīkaṅṭhasambhu's *Nidhipradīpa*.

(2012) and is also discussed by other anthropologists. Balbir too (1993 passim, especially 19-24) finds such a convergence among the stand-out features of her many Indian texts in both Prakrit and Sanskrit, observing that the *nidhivādin* (specialised treasure hunter) was probably a specialisation within the broader Indian profession of *khanyavādin* (mineral hunter), and that even water-divining was part of this same general skill set.¹¹⁷ Chos dbang (page 82) likewise places precious minerals of all kinds, and sources of water, side by side among his category of 'ordinary material treasures' (*thun mongs kyi rdzas gter*).

Putting aside the question of what treasures were being sought, it is clear that the basic cosmology underpinning treasure-finding in Balbir's non-Buddhist Indian texts reflects a similar pattern to the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* and *Rnying ma gter ma* alike. As the English summary appended to Balbir's work (1993: 51) puts it, "underground riches are the possession of various gods (e.g. Kubera) or supernatural beings (*yakṣas* and *nāgas*). A human attempt to take possession of them is therefore a kind of theft which as such requires precautions (recitation of prayers, offerings, etc.). In many cases these appear to be insufficient and the contact between human beings and underground powers may end in failure".

4. *The Translation from the Āryavidyottamamahātantra*

The eight folios (sixteen sides) of text I present in this translation are taken from a very long Buddhist Kriyātantra, the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* or '*Phags pa rig pa mchog* (D746, filling folios 1a to 237b of the *Sde dge bka'* 'gyur's Volume 95). Unfortunately, this text is now extant only in Tibetan translation, hence we have to guess at how some of the terminology existed in Sanskrit. This tantra was translated into Tibetan in the Imperial period, as we can tell not only from its colophons (the translators are listed as *Vidyākaraprabha* and *Dpal rtsegs*), but also because it is included in both translational catalogues that survive from that period.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Balbir 1993: 21. See note 2 above, where I mention the considerable convergence of the Tibetan vocabulary of mineral hunting with their vocabulary of treasure hunting. Vasudeva (2012) also mentions the *khanyavādin*, but his perspective is slightly different to Balbir's. While her entire study is devoted to the finding of treasures underground, Vasudeva mentions this topic only in passing, as part of a more general review of Śaiva magic. Hence Vasudeva's analytic horizons exclude the economic, social, and cosmological, contexts of the *khanyavādin*'s and *nidhivādin*'s arts that Balbir discusses alongside her descriptions of their magic. Vasudeva makes no mention of Balbir's earlier work, although she too made a study of the *Nidhipradīpa*.

¹¹⁸ It is the second text within the *Gsang sngags kyi rgyud* section of the *Lhan dkar ma* (317 in Hermann-Pfandt's enumeration), and the 14th text in the *Sngags sgo*

Rolf Giebel and now also Joie Chen inform me that the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* is unknown to the Chinese tradition. Moreover, it is self-evident from the contents and the language that the Tibetan version was translated from an Indian original, not from Chinese. The text is full of Indian idioms, and details from Indian flora, fauna, landscape, architecture, and village life, that a Chinese composition could not easily replicate. Furthermore, where no convenient Tibetan equivalents were available, several specialised items of vocabulary were left in transliterated Sanskrit, and a few perhaps even in an Indic vernacular (e.g. *bring ga ra* for Sanskrit *bhr̥ṅgaraja*, or *la tu* for a possibly vernacular *laddū* or *lāddū*). There is only one single term, *pen tse*, that might represent the phonetic rendering of a Chinese word (see note 140), but it is well known that Indian magical texts liked to employ exotic plants and substances imported from further east.

The passage I have chosen is just one amongst the very great number of *nidhi*-related passages that can be found within many different Buddhist *Kriyātantra* scriptures, and only one among several others within the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*. It is, however, the longest of them. It occurs within a section of the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra* entitled *nye ba'i snying po'i las*,¹¹⁹ which one might tentatively translate as 'Subsidiary quintessential rituals.' This section begins on folio 63b of the Sde dge text and ends on folio 82a. Much of it, from beginning to end, deals with *nidhi* related materials, for example, right near the beginning, on folio 64b, there is a discussion of *nidhi* within Asura caves (*gter dang lha ma yin gyi phug gang na yod..*),¹²⁰ and right at the end, the section ends on folio 82a with a reference to 'all the *nidhi* rites' (*gter gyi las thams cad ni*).

However, for reasons of time and brevity, I have not been able to translate all of this material. Rather, I have chosen some representative pages from the middle of it, starting on folio 70b and ending on folio

gsum section of the 'Phang thang ma, corresponding to No. 900 in Halkias's enumeration (Halkias 2004: 69-70).

¹¹⁹ The Sde dge E-edition omits *las*, but it is present in Lhasa and Stog.

¹²⁰ Vasudeva (2012: 275) makes the important point that in the particular Śaiva texts he has studied, visiting the underworlds (*pātāla*, Tib. *sa 'og*) of Asuras and Nāgas (*pātālasiddhi*, *bilāsiddhi*, *bilāsādhana*, etc.) should be disambiguated from finding treasures (*nidhi*) underground. In those particular texts, visiting the underworlds is primarily about seeking sexual gratification with Asura and such like females, or to achieve longevity. However, while these goals are typically also mentioned in Buddhist *pātālasiddhi* sources, the distinction can be more blurred in Buddhist tantras such as the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*, where the underworlds (*pātāla*, *sa 'og*) are more than once mentioned solely in the context of seeking treasures (*nidhi*, *gter*). Given that *nāgas* are archetypical guardians of *nidhi*, and that they live in *pātāla*, such an overlap is to be expected. Vasudeva himself (2012: 276) mentions similar overlaps, for example one from the *Mahābhārata*, where Kṛṣṇa recovers a diamond from *pātāla*.

78b, that deal with 'treasure doors', (*gter sgo* in the Tibetan translation, perhaps **nidhidoāra* in the Sanskrit original), and how to break them open (*gcog pa*). Thus, this selection inevitably offers only a partial snapshot of one aspect of Indian Buddhist tantric beliefs and rituals regarding *nidhi*, but one which might well have exerted some influence on the Rnying ma *gter ma* tradition.

In preparing this translation, no attempt has been made at critically editing the text. For convenience, and because it is perfectly adequate for present purposes, I have simply relied on the searchable Sde dge Kangyur e-text prepared by Esukhia (D746) as a base text, only occasionally or when it seemed necessary referring to the similarly searchable Lhasa Kangyur e-text prepared by ACIP (H691), and to the scans of the Stog Kangyur (Stog 696) made by BDRC. All these versions are instantly available on the excellent Vienna *rKTs* website.

Since I am not aware of any previous studies of texts resembling this passage from the *Āryavidyottamamahātantra*, I found few academic precedents to refer to. Nor are the rituals described here part of the regular practice of most Tibetan lamas, so that I was equally unable to find a lama experienced in them. To make matters worse, the text is full of references to plants and substances that are probably known only to a handful of specialists in early Indian ethnopharmacology, so that an ignoramus such as myself could not identify several of them. Hence the translation should be considered provisional, intended as a merely pioneering introduction to the subject, rather than as anything approaching a polished work of reference.

A special note should be made regarding my rendering of the mantras: I have avoided any attempt to 'correct' them. Rather, I have aimed to reproduce them just as the redactors of the Sde dge Kangyur imagined them. Where I deemed it useful, I have put the Tibetan term in square brackets after its translation, e.g. 'treasure door [*gter sgo*]'.

Sde dge bka' 'gyur 746, Volume 95 (rgyud 'bum Dza), folios 70b-79b (from searchable e-text produced by ESUKHIA).

[Stog 366] [D70b] If he wishes for treasure [*gter*], the *vidyādhara* should go to the place where the treasure [*gter*] is located. Without any need for auspicious days and dates, nor any need for fasting, if he offers white mustard and lotus leaves into a fire of *bilva*¹²¹ while reciting the subsidiary essence [*nye ba'i snying po*] mantra 100,000 times during the *homa*, then the treasure deity

¹²¹ *bil ba* for Sans. *bilva*, Hindi *bel*, Wood apple or Bengal quince.

[*gter gyi lha*] will give him indications in a dream. Then, [Stog 367] performing obstacle fire offerings with the *Vidyottama* [mantra?], he can get the [treasure].

Protect the site with *Dga' byed gdong* (**Nandīmukha*?).¹²² Using the subsidiary mantra to make a flammable torch, wrap an ox horn in *arka* wood¹²³ fibre, and with the torch flames blazing with the ghee of a yellow cow, [D71a] when you arrive at where the treasure [*gter*] is, the sound '*tshig tshig*' will arise. Another way: Wrap [the ox horn] in *srin phyas arka*¹²⁴ wood fibre, using the mantra of the vajra wrathful one, and make the torch burn with the fat of *go ta* creatures.¹²⁵ The signs will be the same, [a '*tshig tshig*' sound]. [Alternatively:] covering [the ox horn] in *nāgaphala*¹²⁶ *arka* tree fibre, wrapping it in lotus sinews, and using human fat to make the fire blaze up, is also acceptable.¹²⁷ The signs will be the same, [a '*tshig tshig*' sound], which is called the Great Essence [*snying po chen po zhes bya'o*].

Having seen the various gods, I can teach the rites of the subsidiary essence mantra: The essence of accomplishment is to have strength. So that they can perfect the *pāramitās* [*pha rol phyin pa*], on behalf of those who lack courage and whose merit is small, I should explain the attributes of the treasure doors [*gter gyi sgo*]. Bhagavān Vajrapāṇi then spoke these words: "For those

¹²² The meaning of *Dga' byed gdong* here is not clear. Elsewhere in the text (f.136b, 136b), it is the name of a female deity, perhaps **Nandīmukhā*, who is associated with *Bdud rtsi thab sbyor* (*Amṛtakundal?*) and *Gos dkar can* (*Pandāravāsini*). But at other junctures, *Dga' byed gdong* mudrās are indicated (177a, 177b, 179a, 181a). Presumably, a *Dga' byed gdong* mantra could also be intended.

¹²³ *arka* for Sans. *arka*, Hindi *āk* or *arka*, widely used in rituals, often identified with Crown Flower or Giant Milkweed.

¹²⁴ *srin phyas* not identified; perhaps some kind of insect powder?

¹²⁵ *srog chags go ta'i tshil*: meaning unclear; *go ta* might refer to Sans. *gotā*, cow.

¹²⁶ *nā ga pa la* for Sans. *nāgaphala*.

¹²⁷ Compare the making of a torch here with one of the treasure (*nidhi*) rites in the **Kaṇikrodha-vajrakumāra-bodhisattva-sādhana-vidhi*, *Sheng jiani fennu jin'gang tongzi pusa chengjiu yi gui jing*, 聖迦尼忿怒金剛童子菩薩成就儀軌經, T1222(a); K1355: "There is another rite if you wish to locate hidden treasure. Get some yogurt from a yellow cow, a snake's skin and shark oil, as well as some *arka* wood and cotton. Make a lamp with these things. Recite mantras to empower it, and then light it at night near the place where there is treasure. You will know the amount of the treasure that is there by the size of the flame." (T.1222a [XXI]107b27-c3; unpublished translation by Steven Hodge). Likewise, Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara* (Kashmir, 11th century, a Śaiva retelling of ancient stories) has a narrative about a brahmin Pāsupata who similarly uncovered *nidhis* using a lamp of human fat (see Balbir 1993: 23, citing Somadeva 1970: 6.8.69sq.).

treasure doors [*gter sgo*] to be engaged with through Brahmā and secret mantras, the ritual stages are set out definitively. People who don't have the ritual, or the strength and magical powers, will never be victorious. For people to easily attain enjoyment, and perfect the *pāramitās*, [Stog 368] and likewise so that wealth might be excellently established, this is taught by me". Bhagavān Vajrapāni also spoke these words: "Treasure doors [*gter gyi sgo*] have been excellently explained: At the edge of the earth, where it touches the ocean,¹²⁸ where there is a *pātāla* [*sa yi 'og gnas*],¹²⁹ I explained them excellently—gods, pay heed. I shall teach their: [A] colours and characteristics, [B] the secret mantras by which they can be broken into [*gzhom pa*], [C] the rites and rituals, and the [D] compounded medicines for easy attainment.

[A] Regarding their characteristics, I will further explain each one of their shapes [see below for the further explanation]: (1) triangular; (2) semicircular; (3) circular; (4) square; (5) lotus; (6) plantain [*tala*] leaf, and also (7) fan shaped;¹³⁰ (8) [one of the eight is omitted]; these are taught as the eight treasure doors. Now pay careful heed to their colours: [D71b] (1) There are treasure doors [*gter sgo*] the colour of yellowish ochre; (2) similar in colour to *karavīra*¹³¹ flowers; (3) ?like the moist reeds that grow in water; (4) the colour of liquid red lac;¹³² (5) treasure doors with a green colour; (6) with a colour like yellow orpiment;¹³³ (7) with a colour resembling bezoar;¹³⁴ (8) likewise some similar to *bhṛṅgaraja*.¹³⁵

[B] Accordingly, to clear away the obstacles for

¹²⁸ See T.1222a [XXI] 106b24-c6,, where a ritual that includes treasure discovery as one of its major results is to be performed at the seashore "If you desire to accomplish the most excellent result, you should go to the seashore during the waxing phase of a lunar [first, fifth or ninth] month..." (Hodge, unpublished)

¹²⁹ Many *kriyā* rites prescribe *pātālas*, the subterranean or underwater abodes of *nāgas* and *asuras*, as ideal places for treasure (*nidhi* / *gter*) recovery.

¹³⁰ *bsil yab 'dra* = *bsil g.yab 'dra*.

¹³¹ *ka ra bī ra* for Sans. *karavīra*, Hindi *karuvīrā* or *kaner*, oleander. Its flowers are various shades of red.

¹³² *rgya skyegs khu ba*.

¹³³ *ba bla*; orange-yellow in colour.

¹³⁴ *gi wang*; an auspicious yellow pigment is derived from bezoar.

¹³⁵ *'bring ga ra* for Sans. *bhṛṅgaraja* or *bhṛṅgarāja*, Hindi *bhāṅgrā*, false daisy; its flowers are white.

the treasure doors [*gter sgo*] whose colours have been explained thus, there are *homa* ritual procedures to destroy the obstacles dwelling above ground and below ground. Listen well to my excellent explanation, [Stog 369] the opening¹³⁶ of treasure doors by secret mantras is explained here in order:¹³⁷

namo vajrapāṇaye / namo rutrāye / namo mahābidyarājāya / birudrine svāhā / raranāra svāhā / aṅganāya svāhā / birūpini svāhā / tibhari svāhā / muktini svāhā / bimuktini svāhā / pretahe svāhā / bidariṇi svāhā / ?haurgagkho svāhā / gagane svāhā / biriṇi svāhā / aṅgarīṇi svāhā / birgaṇi svāhā / mahābarate svāhā / ruṅibani svāhā / karaparabikara svāhā / birūpi svāhā / maripa svāhā / brjajani svāhā / garjajani svāhā / mārmaṇi svāhā / kunipatina svāhā /

[C] Onto a square maṇḍala of earth, smear watery cow dung [*skyong nul*]. Strewing *kuśa*¹³⁸ grass for your seat, face east. Cleanse yourself, observe purity, and control your senses. For sustenance, drink cold water. To begin the ritual activities, follow this procedure: having set out all the deities, offer '*khur ba*¹³⁹ with auspicious [verses?] and *pen tse*¹⁴⁰ and a sandalwood fragrance to the deities of the cardinal and intermediate directions. Offering¹⁴¹ up curds and red barley meal [*dmar bag*], with the above mantras dip the *śamī*¹⁴² wood fire offering sticks into butter and offer into the fire 100,000 times.

The mantra called the cutter that causes all obstacles to be destroyed is taught thus:

namo vajrapāṇisya kuti kuti citi citi miti miti riṇi riṇi motini pramotini svāhā

Reciting this mantra over white mustard seven times, [D72a] [Stog 370] cast it in the four directions, and you will become protected:

¹³⁶ *dgod*, laughing, poetic for opening (P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche).

¹³⁷ For the present purposes, we are presenting a simple transcription of how the redactors of the Sde dge edition envisaged the Sanskrit spelling of the mantras, with no attempt to correct them further.

¹³⁸ *ku sha* for Sans. *kuśa* a.k.a. *darbha*, Hindi *dab*, *Desmostachya bipinnata*.

¹³⁹ A pastry made with wheat; P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche: resembling a deep-fried pancake.

¹⁴⁰ *pen tse* not identified; perhaps related to *big pan*, a medical salt, or *spen ma*, tamarisk, or perhaps *piñja*, turmeric or camphor. Dan Martin has suggested this might possibly be a Chinese term.

¹⁴¹ em. *sbangs* > *spangs*.

¹⁴² *sha mya* for Sans. *śamī*, a wood often used in *homa*.

*namo vajrapāṇisya amara amara marikatini talati
svāhā*

Reciting this mantra over white mustard, and throwing it over one's head, obstacles won't be able to do any mischief:

namo vajrapāṇisya kuti kuti tuti tuti hara hara svāhā

If one recites this mantra over water and pours it on the ground, fear of fire does not arise.

The obstacles for all treasure doors [*gter sgo kun gyi bgegs rnams*] are taught as eightfold:

[1] human corpses;¹⁴³ [2] dwarf spirits;¹⁴⁴ [3] sudden fearful events; [4] elephants; [5] buffalos; [6] extremely frightening *rākṣasas*; [7] tigers; and [8] birds as big as a shed:¹⁴⁵ the obstacles are taught as eightfold. To destroy them, use this mantra:

*namo vajrapāṇisya ari bari tiri miri ciri miri para pana
rati kiri kiri kali kali miri miri śiri śiri nāśani nāśani
stambhani stambhani mohani svāhā*

Reciting this king of mantras over white mustard, casting it in the four directions, all obstacles will disappear.

*namo ratna trayāya namo bhagabate prahāya kharibi
bikiri nāribanari mohanani hari hari phośāṇi svāhā*

If one recites this mantra over water, [**Stog 371**] and casts it in the four directions, all obstacles will be overcome, and disappear.

*namo vajrapāṇisya namo miri miri candrī candrī manti
svāhā/*

If one recites this secret mantra over water, and casts it in the four cardinal and four intermediate directions, the directions will become secured; those raven¹⁴⁶ forms as big as a shed will disappear, which fly in the sky, appearing huge in three ways. The directions will all become pacified.

Regarding the pattern of the treasure door [*gter gyi sgo yi ri mo ni*]:¹⁴⁷ it is understood to be like an excellent

¹⁴³ em. *mi ra* > *mi ro*; alternatively, *ku mi ra* (crocodile) might be intended.

¹⁴⁴ *mi'u thung*.

¹⁴⁵ P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche: Large bird spirits that make sounds like a bird are found in various *dhāraṇī* texts. Note also that they occur as fierce guardians of buried treasures in Śrīkanṭhaśambhu's *Nidhipradīpa* (Chapter 4, verses 33, 39, 40, 47). Thanks to Dylan Esler for this information.

¹⁴⁶ Also possibly one might em. *khwa* > *khra*, 'hawk'.

¹⁴⁷ P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche suggests, the pattern is already on the *gter sgo*.

skull. A *kīla* [*phur bu*] will appear nailed to it, with light like a curved rainbow. [D72b] As for the *kīla*: it has a glorious form. It should not be touched with the hands. When the body has been smeared with ointment [*lus ni sbyar sman bskus nas*],¹⁴⁸ then the *kīla* can be removed.

The things by which it [the *kīla*] can be made to fall to the ground: the air-born chaff of rushes,¹⁴⁹ mustard,¹⁵⁰ *nimba*¹⁵¹ leaves, realgar,¹⁵² white garlic, barley, and asafoetida,¹⁵³ should be mixed with human blood, and smeared on as ointment. Then it can fall to the ground. If this is not done, its force will remain unchanged.

*Śirīṣā*¹⁵⁴ flowers with their roots and bark, *ru rta*,¹⁵⁵ valerian,¹⁵⁶ *bruhati*,¹⁵⁷ and white mustard, in equal proportions, should be ground up with goat's urine. This ointment for smearing on the body is the best subjugator of the hawks [*khra*].¹⁵⁸

Costus and valerian, malachite¹⁵⁹ and realgar,¹⁶⁰ made with frog's grease, and nicely mixed with collyrium,¹⁶¹ [Stog 372] is the king of eye paints. It is the cleaving open of treasure doors [*gter gyi sgo rnam gcod pa yin*].

Taking *nya ri*¹⁶² and jasmine¹⁶³ bark, with *sindura*¹⁶⁴ and cow's bezoar, well fumigated with *bhringaraj*¹⁶⁵ smoke; this is the supreme ointment. Smear this ointment on the body, then the *kīla* can be removed.

However, if it appears not to work, engage with the following wisdom mantra that immobilises all the

¹⁴⁸ Perhaps implying the hand in particular?

¹⁴⁹ *nam mkha'i phub ma shu dag*: meaning unfamiliar, the translation partially a guess.

¹⁵⁰ em. *yung* > *yungs*?

¹⁵¹ *nim pa* for Sans. *nimba*, Hindi *nīm* or *nimb*, the Neem tree, Indian lilac.

¹⁵² *ldong ros*, arsenic sulphide.

¹⁵³ *shing kun*.

¹⁵⁴ *shri ri sha* for Sans. *śirīṣā*, Hindi *śirīs*, Siris tree.

¹⁵⁵ *ru rta* is complicated. According to *Bod lugs gso rig tshig mdzod chen mo* p.852, there are two types: *sha pho ru rta dangl ma nu ru rta*.

¹⁵⁶ *rgya spos*.

¹⁵⁷ *'bri ha ti*, probably for Sans. *brhatī*, Hindi *barhaṅṅā* or *birhaṅṅā*, Poison berry.

¹⁵⁸ em. *khrag* > *khra*.

¹⁵⁹ *lig bu mig*.

¹⁶⁰ *ldong ros*.

¹⁶¹ *dud pa'i mig rtsi* = *anjana*.

¹⁶² *nya ri* is unidentified.

¹⁶³ *kun da*.

¹⁶⁴ *sindu* for Sans. *sindura*.

¹⁶⁵ *bring ga*, possibly for Sans. *bhrīṅgaraja* or *bhrīṅgarāja*, as previously.

contrivances of the hawks [*khra*],¹⁶⁶ and destroys all obstacles:

*karuṅgā karuṅgi dībya/ rūpina/ kanne tumpa kagātra/
sambha bebi duluni/ kumini/ hīhīni/ hūhūhūni/ kirikiri/
kālakaraṇi/ mahābidyāde/ hara hara hara/ cala cala cala/ ra-
rara /thathatha/ śāśāśa/ stambhaya/ nāsaya nāsaya/ hiri hiri/
gini gini/ hunada hunada/ghṛnamuya/ hana brahmaṇi/
patani/ mohani/ biciri/ mabana/ thara thara/ miti miti/ siti
siti/ miri miri/ biri biri/ hiri hiri/ demyani demyani/ bitti bati/
patani patani/ haha hani svāhā/*

When you have drawn the *kīla* out, measuring [a diameter of] three arm-spans [around it], [cast] water [D73a] and mustard; any hawks [*khra*] will be pierced, and faint. Moreover, making them fall from a great distance, with this wisdom mantra, all obstacles will be conquered.

*namo badzrapāṇaye / namo rudrāya/¹⁶⁷ namo brahmāya/
gara śiri śiriri/¹⁶⁸ sisi riri / miri /babapa svāhā*

You can tie up your topknot with this wisdom mantra, [Stog 373] or also with the Paṇḍaravāsini mantra.

[The doors] by which riches can be taken:

[1 triangular] Breaking down the triangular one is as follows. Purify the perimeter, concentrate intensely, and carry out an inspection. At the centre, within the boundaries, should be a dark triangular pattern. If it [the treasure door] doesn't become visible like that, then sprinkle milk. The learned will scatter *apāmārga*¹⁶⁹ ash medicine and wipe it with conch shell powder. If they scatter this on the perimeter, and sweep it clean, when signs become visible,¹⁷⁰ they can anoint [their body] with mixed herbs. If you strike [the treasure door] with an iron rod, it will fracture, and not otherwise.

¹⁶⁶ The focus on *khra* in this text is notable. Provisionally I am understanding *khra* as a translation of Sans. *śyenah*, or less likely, *padekah*. *Syenah* has had a long and rich background in Vedic sacrificial ritual and mythology as a divine hawk identified with Agni, therefore also in subsequent Indian ritual and mythology, but I do not yet understand its significance here in specific regard to treasure discovery.

¹⁶⁷ Following Lhasa, em: *rudrwaya* > *rudrāya*.

¹⁶⁸ Following Lhasa, em. *garśa rīsi riri* > *gara śiri śiriri*.

¹⁶⁹ *a pa marga* for Sans. *apāmārga*, Hindi *circitā*, Bengali *āpāṅg*, Prickly chaff-flower.

¹⁷⁰ For a very similar procedure in the *Nidhipradīpa* of siddha Śrīkaṅṭhasāmbhu, see Vasudeva p.274: "various concoctions are smeared on the ground and a subsequent reaction, such as discoloration, reveals the precise spot where the treasure is concealed."

[2 semicircular] In the centre of a pure semicircle, an auspicious form should appear. If it does not appear, apply ash medicine [*bhasma*]. Elsholtzia leaves¹⁷¹ resembling the letter *e* should be squeezed evenly, then mixed with cow urine. Infusing it, scatter it [on the ground], and the auspicious [form] should then appear, regarding which the wise have no doubts. Then, after smearing [your body] with compounded medicine, strike [the door] with an iron rod, upon which it will fall to the ground, there can be no other outcome.

[3 circular] The ritual for breaking the circular [door] should be employed as excellently taught. Purifying the perimeter, with intense concentration, carry out an inspection. With a colour like lotus root, the pattern of an expanded snake's head should appear. But if it does **[Stog 374]** not appear, smear ash medicine [*bhasma*] [on the ground]. Compounding *ka li sha*¹⁷² seeds and red dye with cow's urine, spread this everywhere. **[D73b]** Then, when signs appear, anoint your body with the compounded medicine [*sbyar sman gyis ni lus bskus nas*], strike [the door] with an iron rod, and it will disintegrate, there can be no other outcome.

[4 square] Then the square pattern, with its four corners, is explained. If it does not appear, mix this ash medicine [*bhasma*]. Take a branch of *snuhā*,¹⁷³ squeeze evenly, and mix with cow's urine, smart people will use this to pour with. After pouring it, when signs appear [on the ground], apply the medicine to the body. If you strike with an iron staff, [the door] will fracture, there can be no other outcome.

[5 lotus] Also, in the middle of a lotus [pattern], a pure core is visible. Having smeared medicine on your body, strike [the core] with a rock. The core will be destroyed. There is no doubt about that. It is taught by me [Vajrapāṇi], thus it is particularly to be accepted.

[6 plantain leaf] The method of compounding [medicines] for [a door] shaped like a plantain leaf should be heeded. The sign that appears will be a bezoar resembling a seed. There can be two patterns, or

¹⁷¹ em. *bye'u rug* > *byi rug*.

¹⁷² *ka li sha* unidentified; perhaps an error for *ka li ka*, which is another word for *tsam pa ka*, the seeds of which are used in a great many rituals. Alternatively, em. *ka li sha* > *pha li sha*, for Sans. *phaliśa*, the Indian tulip tree.

¹⁷³ *snu ha* for Sans. *snuhī* a.k.a *sehuṇḍa*, Hindi *sehuṇḍ*, Common milk hedge.

three, even four or five; such signs can appear. But if they don't appear, [Stog 375] compound the following ash medicine [*bhasma*]: *aśvattha*¹⁷⁴ and *pa ta pa*¹⁷⁵ leaf, *apāmārga*,¹⁷⁶ and goat's urine should be mixed, and poured around the perimeter. As soon as it has been poured [on the ground], also anoint [your body] with the compounded medicine. If you then strike with an iron rod, [the treasure door] will be broken, there can be no other outcome.

[7 fan] As for a [door] resembling a fan, it will appear with a handle. ?Measuring it carefully,¹⁷⁷ look for the signs. If they don't appear, use this ash compound: mixing *indra*¹⁷⁸ tree leaf and *nirgundī*¹⁷⁹ leaf, together with horse urine, pour it around the perimeter; then signs [D74a] will arise [on the ground]. Anointing also [one's body] with compounded medicine, strike [the door] with an iron rod; it will be broken, there can be no other outcome.

Those of [the treasure doors] shaped like plantain leaves that resemble tortoise shells or vajras, cannot be broken into.

On all treasure doors [*gter gyi sgo*], one finds four kinds of *kīla*, those of Indra, Yama, Vaiśravaṇa, and Viṣṇu: these are the four kinds of *kīla*.

All treasure doors [*gter gyi sgo*] should be offered *balis* [*gtor ma*], along with this mantra. Yama should receive burnt offerings; Viṣṇu various things with fruits; Kubera soup mixtures; the Glorious One [Indra], milky rice pudding.

namo vajrapāṇisya nante sunante ghobinte riti riti miti miti [Stog 376] *moriti svāhā*

With this mantra, offer whatever *balis* [*gtor ma*] you want, and then begin the ritual activity.

The ?[preliminary] scattering mantra¹⁸⁰ is like this:

namo vajrapāṇisya/ tiśaya bitīśaya/ namo mahāśayāya svāhā/

¹⁷⁴ *a shvattha* for Sans. *aśvattha* a.k.a. *pippala*, Hindi *pīppal*, Peepal tree (Bodhi tree).

¹⁷⁵ *pa ta pa* not identified; perhaps em. > *pa da pa*, for Sans. *pādapa*, tree.

¹⁷⁶ *a pa marga*, as above for Sans. *apāmārga*.

¹⁷⁷ *gshor gyis legs par sbyang byas la/*: meaning not clear to me.

¹⁷⁸ *indra shing*; unidentified, perhaps the *pārijāta* or Coral tree, which flowers in Indra's garden.

¹⁷⁹ *nir rgun* for Sans. *nirgundī*, Hindi *nirgaṇḍī*, Chaste tree.

¹⁸⁰ *gzhor gyi sngags*, not understood. Perhaps em. *gzhor* > *gcor*?

Reciting these mantras over water to make purifying water, then begin the ritual activity.

[D] Next, for the supreme cracking open of the treasure doors [gter sgo gcog pa'i mchog], the vajras and the compounded medicines for destroying the types of hawks [khra], should be taught. *Kanaka*¹⁸¹ root and *a sha nag ta*¹⁸² bezoar and hair roots, these, plus *arka* and *dar-bha* [grass] husks, should be made into pills the size of a bean, and dried in a shady place. These breakers of all treasure doors [gter sgo thams cad gcog pa 'di] are said to be the best of ?spirits ['byung po]. Cut meadowsweets,¹⁸³ bezoar with realgar, *karavīra* roots with white *arka* bark, and *śoṇaka* bark:¹⁸⁴ mix these in equal proportions and grind them up with cow's urine. All treasure doors will be smashed [gter sgo thams cad gcog pa]. This pure compounded medicine is the best, Vajrapāṇi has taught it. *Agnimantha*¹⁸⁵ leaf and *eraṇḍa*¹⁸⁶ [D74b] root, *snuhā* milk,¹⁸⁷ white garlic, ground up with pure cow's urine: this compounded medicine for breaking treasure doors [gter sgo gcog pa'i sbyar sman] is said to be a vajra. *Karavīra* root with plantain seed, and barberry, with mustard and black *tamāla*¹⁸⁸ tree, [Stog 377] white *girikarṇika*,¹⁸⁹ ground up with pure cow's urine: this king of compounded medicines is the greatest cleaver of treasure doors [gter sgo gcog pa'i mchog]. *Vidyujjihvā*,¹⁹⁰ *moraṭā*,¹⁹¹ or similarly solomon's seal,¹⁹² or white mustard, well mixed with cow's urine, is the best cleaver of treasure doors [gter sgo gcog pa dam pa]. *Ba lung gi ni*¹⁹³ flower, with *sha la ka* seed,¹⁹⁴ and meadowsweet, milk of *snuhā*,¹⁹⁵ together with pure bezoar, ground up with

¹⁸¹ *ka na ka* for Sans. *kanaka*, a.k.a *dhattūra*, Thorn apple or Jimson weed.

¹⁸² *a sha nag ta* not identified.

¹⁸³ 'bam po.

¹⁸⁴ *sho na ka* for Sans. *śoṇaka* a.k.a *śyonāka*, Hindi *śyonā*, Indian trumpet tree.

¹⁸⁵ *agni manta* for Sans. *agnimantha*, Hindi *arnī*, used extensively in Ayurveda.

¹⁸⁶ *e ranta* for Sans. *eraṇḍa*, Hindi *eraṇḍī*, Castor oil-plant.

¹⁸⁷ *snu ha ga shi ri*, as above for Sans. *snuhī* + *kṣira* (the milky juice of Milk hedge is used medicinally).

¹⁸⁸ *ta ma la* for Sans. *tamāla* or *tamālapattra*, Hindi *tejpat*; Indian cassia.

¹⁸⁹ *gi ri kar ni* for Sans. *girikarṇikā* a.k.a *aparājita*, Hindi *aparājit*; Clitoria, Butterfly pea.

¹⁹⁰ *bidyud dzi hwa* perhaps for Sans. *vidyujjvālā*, flame lily plant.

¹⁹¹ *mo ra ti* for Sans. *moraṭā* a.k.a *mūrōā*, Hindi *garbhedarō*, perhaps Frangipani?

¹⁹² *ra mnye' u* perhaps Solomon's Seal?

¹⁹³ *ba lung gi ni* not identified; maybe moringa?

¹⁹⁴ *sha la ka* uncertain; A. Wenta suggests for Sans. *śālāka*, myna tree.

¹⁹⁵ *snu ha ga shi ri* as above for Sans. *snuhī* + *kṣira*.

pure goat's urine: this is the supreme vajra conqueror. *Kośātaka*¹⁹⁶ seeds and *ko bi ra*¹⁹⁷ fruits, and *du ru ska*¹⁹⁸ leaves, ground up with pure cow's urine, left to lie for forty-nine days, is the best of vajra conquerors. *Pārijāta*¹⁹⁹ root and *suvarṇā*,²⁰⁰ and *ta ka*²⁰¹ and tamarisk leaf;²⁰² honey with black pepper²⁰³ compounded with a pure bezoar: this is the best of treasure door breakers [*gter sgo gcog pa'i dam pa*]. These the best of compounded medicines are said to be vajra conquerors.

Now listen to me about hand ointments for those wishing to acquire gold [*gser rnams*]: Costus and valerian, *lac*²⁰⁴ and *moraṭā*, are the supreme hand ointment; it is a fearsome blazing vajra. Geranium seed,²⁰⁵ and black *tamāla* fruits,²⁰⁶ mixed with pure cow's urine, is a hand ointment that causes bliss. Lotus root with valerian, [**Stog 378**] *sa rakṣi*²⁰⁷ with hair, well mixed with goat's urine, is a hand ointment that causes bliss. *Ka gan 'dzi* seed,²⁰⁸ *karnikara*²⁰⁹ flower, *priyaṅgu*,²¹⁰ and valerian, *surabhi*²¹¹ [= any sweet-smelling scent] and white sandalwood, with pure bezoar, is a hand ointment that causes bliss. When touching the door panel [*sgo glegs*]²¹² with your hands, [**D75a**] the [door's entire] outline will become separated.²¹³ To keep it fixedly [separated like

¹⁹⁶ *ko sha ta ka* perhaps for Sans. *kośātaka*, perhaps some kind of gourd?

¹⁹⁷ *ko bi ra* not identified, perhaps for Sans. *kovidāra*, orchid tree.

¹⁹⁸ *du ru ska* perhaps for Sans. *turuṣka*, olibanum; alternatively, the same as *du ru ka*, nowadays identified with Sans. *agaru*, Hindi *agar*.

¹⁹⁹ *pa ri dzā ti* for Sans. *pārijāta*, Hindi *pārijāt*, Indian Coral tree.

²⁰⁰ *su barṇa*; possibly another name for *indravāruṇī* (colocynth), but A.Wenta points out that *suvarṇā* can be many things, including resin of guggul tree, indian hemp, bitter cucumber, mallow plant, etc.

²⁰¹ perhaps for *haritaka*, a form of myrobalan?

²⁰² *spen ma*.

²⁰³ em. *shing kru* > *shi kru*.

²⁰⁴ *a li ta* for Sans. *ālita*.

²⁰⁵ *zhim thig le*.

²⁰⁶ *ta ma le* for Sans. *tamāla*, Hindi *tamāla*. The juice of the *tamāla* fruit is often used to make sectarian marks on the forehead.

²⁰⁷ *sa rakṣi* not identified.

²⁰⁸ *ka gan 'dzi* unidentified, perhaps a type of millet.

²⁰⁹ *kar ṇi ka ra* for Sans. *karnikara*, unidentified, perhaps Golden shower tree?

²¹⁰ *pri yang ku* for Sans. *priyaṅgu*, Hindi *priyaṅgu*.

²¹¹ *su ra bi* for Sans. *surabhi*.

²¹² *sgo glegs*; P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche suggests door handle; alternatively, something akin to panel or face might be intended.

²¹³ P. Ogyan Tanzin Rinpoche suggests that initially the door was mainly invisible, with only the handle visible, but now the whole outline comes into view.

that], use this wisdom mantra:

namo vajrapāṇisya tiri tiri miri svāhā

Recite this wisdom mantra seven times over water, and if you throw it onto the surface of the door panel, it [the door's entire outline] will become stabilized [in visibility], and easy to grasp. This wisdom mantra can be applied to all treasure doors. Having the virtue of immobilising and stupefying, it [the following mantra] controls all obstacles; Brahmā himself created it. To confuse [the treasure seeker] at the [treasure] door threshold, *gandharva* goddesses and *kinnaras* will come through from Meru, and make him excellent offerings. To subdue and overawe them, the great intelligent one endowed with divine form [Brahmā], taught this wisdom mantra.

*kili kili piṅga lākṣi ha ha bhi maṅgi/ ha na ha na/ śū le na
bi dā ra ya badzra ṅa/ ki li ki li/ śāpde ṅa/ stambha ya ru tre
na/ de na ha na ha na/ śakti na/ ki ri ki ri/ tsi ri tsi ri/ mi ri
mi ri/ na ru ti na ru ti/ tha ra tha ra/ tha tha/ ra ra²¹⁴ pa ta
ya pa ta ya/ stambha ya stambha ya/ pa ta ya pa ta ya/ garja
garja/ marja [Stog 379] marja/ tarja tarja/ kiṅki ni kiṅki
ni/ dundu bhi dundu bhi/ śukla daṁṣṭraka rā lā na ne/ ka na
ne dīpya rūpe/ ca ma bi dus saṃ ma dā/ dī pya bra be/ ba śa
ne/ ka ha ka ha/ khaḍga ha ste/ tri ne tre/ ru drā ya neśma śā
ne/ ya dā kri da se/ glo pa gle bā ga gleṃ ba yurpa ra ṅi/ andha
kā re swa yaṃ ke śa ki mu ku ṭa/ canhrām ka/ śiṣṣhe/ de ba
gandharba/ yakṣa bidyā/ da ṛee acite/ supūjite/ drembā
drembā/ thi thi/ ma ba pa spaṣa ma ba/ ha ha ma pa/ ka kam
pa/ cittre/ hana hana/ stambhaya stambhaya/ mahābidyā ca-
turmukha/ ājñāpayati svā hā/*

Through this wisdom mantra—when used with white mustard, water, ash, and whatever is suitable, being cast in the four directions along with its recitation—all obstacles will be paralysed, and even hawks [*khra*]²¹⁵ will be conquered. Use it to kill, [D75b] put to sleep, or blind; to force to dance, sing, and play music, etc. Whatever invisible sentient beings there might be, whatever visible sentient beings there might be, whatever obstacles or misleaders there might be, even if they come from a royal palace, or are harm doers from a cemetery,

²¹⁴ The E-version gives *ra Ra*. (= *ra ṛa*), but the TBRC scan of the Sde dge print (and Lhasa) has simply *ra ra*.

²¹⁵ Alternatively, following Stog and Lhasa, one could em. *khra* > *dgra*, enemies.

or are in bondage to serpents; or whatever other harmful beings there might be: all of these will be conquered and blinded."

Thus were these words spoken by Bhagavān Vajrapāṇi.

If you want gold [*gser*], Vajrapāṇi taught this supreme wisdom mantra as good for *homa*: **[Stog 380]**

namo vajrapāṇisya bibetāya svāhā / tistem sukha la hāya svāhā / kumbaṣṭenayā baranti asta nāya svāhā / nidrādhipātaye svāhā / śaye yurbāyu svāhā / libigraretāya svāhā / bahuyakṣāya svāhā / ya svāhā / gaṇāya svāhā / gaṇapatāya svāhā / kāmarūpāya svāhā / kanglini svāhā / byāghrāya svāhā / byāghrādhipātaye svāhā / rākṣasāya svāhā / rākṣasādhipātaye svāhā / khadgāya svāhā /

khadgādhipātaye svāhā / rudrāya svāhā / yamāya svāhā / baruṇāya svāhā / kuberāya svāhā / prithibiyai svāhā / matribiyai svāhā / brahmāya svāhā

Whoever with these secret mantras offers *śamī*²¹⁶ wood fire sticks into the *homa* eight hundred times, will conquer all obstacles. This is taught by Vajrapāṇi. Also, do the *homa* with the subsidiary mantra that destroys all *yantras* [*khruḥ* 'khor].²¹⁷ Otherwise, do the subsidiary mantra alone. If you don't do it, you will be destroyed.

Then Indra asked Bhagavān Vajrapāṇi: "Lord of great power, who overcomes others: for the benefit of humans, I want to hear, please tell me, explain how many types of hawks [*khra*] there are, how great is their magical power and energy? **[D76a]** Address these uncertainties of mine!" In accordance with these statements, the great Vajra-holding lord, having heard Indra's words, [replied]:

[Stog 381] "Great resplendent Indra, these hawks [*khra*] are explained by Brahmā. In the past, there were always many treasures [*gter rnamṣ mang po*] upon the surface of the earth. To protect these treasures [*gter*], Brahmā himself brought the hawks [*khra*] into existence. The hawks [*khra*] are taught as eightfold; their zeal and power is great. According to Vajrapāṇi's supreme speech, they are classified as eightfold.²¹⁸ Their *bali* (*gtor*

²¹⁶ *sha ma* for Sans. *śamī*, as above.

²¹⁷ 'khrul 'khor = Sans. *yantra*. This term can refer to various contrivances, machinations, and black magic.

²¹⁸ em. *brgyar* > *brgyad*.

ma) offering mantras, exactly as they are, will be explained.

They are well known as: [i] black ones; [ii] white ones; also [iii] red ones; and the [iv] blue-throated; as the [v] *kapiñjara*;²¹⁹ as [vi] red-eyed; as having [vii] variegated feathers; and having [viii] crystal eyes.

[i] The black ones amongst these are held to be Yama deities.

[ii] The white ones are held to be Brahmā deities.

[iii] [red missing in Sde dge, Lhasa, and Stog]

[iv] Similarly, the blue throated ones are held to be Kārtikeyya deities.

[v] The *kapiñjara* are held to be Viṣṇu deities.

[vi] The red eyed are held to be Kubera deities.

[vii] Similarly, the variegated feathered ones are held to be Indra deities.

[viii] Those with crystal eyes are held to be ?Bhūmi / ?Pṛthvī [*sa' i lha*] deities.

These hawks' colours and characteristics are taught by me; their colours and physical appearance will be explained in order.

[i] The ones with black forms, aptly described as powerful, are very dark in colour. Their bulk is large and frightening. Even at a *yojana*'s distance, they can be heard making sounds like a bell. [Stog 382] Hoping to receive *bali* offerings, again and again, even continuously, they make this sound. Now, to explain by which foods they can be pacified: cooked meat and fried food should be offered to this lord of birds. Immediately add the mantra, and also offer the *bali*. [D76b] *namo vajrapānisya kṛṣṇa yakṣaya kṛṣṇa adhipataye svāhā* Consecrate the *bali* with this mantra, and then offer it.

[ii] The ones which have white forms, aptly described as powerful, circle in the sky. With the colour of waterfowl, they arrive by the power of their plumage. Continuously circling around, the powerful sound of their feathered wings makes a thunderous noise. As they circulate the place where you are, once, twice or

²¹⁹ *ka piñdza ra* for Sans. *kapiñjara*, a type of bird. According to Dhammika 2015: "Grey Francolin, sometimes *kapiñjara*, also *vattaka*, *Francolinus pondicerianus* (Ja.I,212; VI,538; Vin.III,48). About half the size of the domestic chicken, this bird has a blotched-chestnut back, wings and tail, a lighter-coloured breast and a rufous throat circumscribed by a black line." A. Wenta suggests a black-and-white Jacobin cuckoo.

three times, up until the evil forces have completed a third turn, for as long as that, offer them *bali*. *Balis* of nutmeg,²²⁰ parched rice, and pure ghee, should be offered. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya śodhaya śodhaya pataya śopadhi pataye svāhā*

[iii] The ones which have red forms, aptly described as powerful, make cries like swans, excellently uttering deep sounds. By their fifth honk, they will have swiftly arrived; as long as they are still making their fifth honk, for that time, offer them their *balis*. They should be made from red perfumes and red flowers, [Stog 383] *pūpalikā*,²²¹ edible food and *laḍḍū*²²² and sesame paste. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya rakte raktakṣe rāktādhipataye svāhā*

[iv] The ones which have blue throats,²²³ aptly described as powerful, rip with their talons. They utter sounds like a raven. By the time they have made their seventh call, they will have arrived swiftly. Offer them *bali* immediately, also remembering the mantra well. Offer unsalted meat along with the *homa* fire sticks. By means of these *bali* rites, they will swiftly be made to fall. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya nīla gaśo nīla tejo nīlādhipataye svāhā*

[v] The ones with *kapiñjara* forms, aptly described as powerful, [D77a] repeatedly make great cries like an owl. Swiftly, swiftly, they will make their cries, and by the time they have repeated their call three times, they will have arrived nearby. At that moment, they must be offered food, while doing the secret mantras. They should be given offerings that are literally full of blood, like fish and raw meat. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya karāli pīkarāli karālādhipataye svāhā*

[vi] The ones which have red-eyed forms, aptly described as powerful, make calls like a horse. They repeatedly make sounds like a gong,²²⁴ in that way making a great noise. [Stog 384] They issue blazing flames from their mouth. Without hesitation and swiftly, they

²²⁰ *sna ma*: *Bod lugs gso rig tshig mdzod chen mo* p.440 confirms *dzā ti* or *dzā ti'i me tog* for *sna ma*.

²²¹ *pu pa li ka* for Sans. *pūpalikā*, a sweet cake fried in ghee.

²²² *la tu*, probably for Indic *laḍḍū* or *lāḍḍū*, a spherical sweet made from flour, fat, and sugar.

²²³ *mgrin pa mthon ka* = *nīlagrīva*, blue-necked.

²²⁴ Following Lhasa, em. *khar* > 'khar.

should be offered *balis*. Offer them raw meat, and also a vessel filled with alcoholic drinks. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya raktakanetro raktaniba raktādhipataye svāhā*

[vii] The ones with variegated feathers, aptly described as powerful, make a sound like thunder, and also, when they approach, from their bodies, and their feathers as well, the resemblance of streams of lightning become visible. In the manner of camels [in line in a caravan], or ducks [flying in formation], again and again, giving their call eight times, they will swiftly arrive. Then offer them the *bali* and do the secret mantra. Give them as food, molasses mixed with curd. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya citra citrakṣo vicitra adhibataye svāhā*

[viii] The ones which have crystal-eyed forms, aptly described as powerful, cover the sky. They arrive slowly. They make sounds like elephants and stir the air with their feathers. The wind from the feathers create coolness. When they have given calls two times, they slowly arrive.²²⁵ [D77b] At that moment, offer them a *bali*, and also do the secret mantra. In this way, they should be offered ghee mixed with barley as their food. They should be satiated with cow's ghee, and meat as well, [Stog 385] and sweetened beer. The mantra: *namo vajrapāṇisya kekarakṣa kakara dṛṣṭi kekarādhipataye svāhā*

Regarding these hawks [*khra*]: For those to whom the rituals have each been clearly explained, who rely on the mantra rituals for the black hawks [*khra*] at the beginning of their activity, for them, not even the slightest fear whatsoever will arise. Thus, mix honey with milk. Those who do the rites otherwise, will themselves be destroyed. But if a great being makes offerings to these hawks [*khra*], they will be repulsed, Vajrapāṇi has said so. The secret mantras for all of the hawks [*khra*] should be combined with the special [divine] sight and the king of awareness mantra. The hawk-conquering wisdom mantra [*khra gzhom pa'i rig sngags*] was spoken by Brahmā. It has been taught by me, so you should engage in it and do the rites. To pulverise all the hawks [*khra*], I have also taught an unbearably fierce wisdom mantra, which sounds like the fall of a thunderbolt onto

²²⁵ em. 'od > 'ong.

the top²²⁶ of a rock that will smash it into a hundred pieces: *namo vajrapāṇisya mahā cande cande cinta namna camane stambhani jambhani mohani hi hi gakare bareye svāhā*

Repelling all the hawks [*khra*], use white mustard.

Then, if you wish to destroy the *vajra* adhesive [*rdo rje 'byar byed*],²²⁷ what you must do is offer praises to the Vajra Wrathful One himself, while staring at the *vajra* adhesive. These medicines are to be scattered: horsegram juice,²²⁸ *śrūṣā* root,²²⁹ burnable neem oil,²³⁰ *soma*,²³¹ [**Stog 386**] *taba-soma*,²³² and *jātī-soma*.²³³ These should be mixed, and water poured over them, then left to bake in the sunlight. Where sun is not available, a jewel fire-stone [lens] should be used.

Then, if you want to break down the constructed *vajra* adhesive,²³⁴ take ?*svarṇamākṣika* ash,²³⁵ and ?cal-trops,²³⁶ and *gandhaka*,²³⁷ [**D78a**] and *ab yag*²³⁸ and *dunti ka* ash,²³⁹ and mixing these together, it will break up and vanish.

Then, if you want to [re-]make the constructed *vajra* adhesive,²⁴⁰ take two *tulā*²⁴¹ of mica,²⁴² one *tulā* of

²²⁶ em. *thog thog* > *thog tog*.

²²⁷ *rdo rje 'byar byed* This unfamiliar term seems to refer to an adhesive which keeps the treasure door closed.

²²⁸ *rgya sran gyi khu ba*. *Bod lugs gso rig tshig mdzod chen mo* p.151 gives long description of *rgya sran*, how it differs from *sran ma*, and its medicinal potencies, etc. Dan Martin identifies it with Sans. *kulattha*, horsegram.

²²⁹ *sru sru* for Sans. *śrūṣā*, according to Monier Williams the Kasunda tree, *Cassia esculenta*.

²³⁰ *'om bu bsregs pa'i khu ba*; preparations of neem oil are widely burned as insect repellants.

²³¹ *so ma*, for Sans. *soma*, precise meaning here unknown, can often refer to alcohol.

²³² *ta ba so ma* for Indic *taba-soma*, perhaps similar to (Hindi) *tabasheer*, = (Sans.) *tvakṣīra*, a milky liquid derived from bamboo widely used in Ayurveda.

²³³ *so ma dza ti* for Sans. *somajātī*, nutmeg *soma*.

²³⁴ *bcos ma'i rdo rje 'byar byed*: I am not entirely sure what this implies.

²³⁵ *swa ri ka thal ba*, perhaps for Sans. *Svarṇamākṣikabhasma*. *Svarṇamākṣika* (chalcopryrite) *bhasma* (ash) is widely used in Ayurvedic *rasaśāstra*.

²³⁶ *gze ma*, sometimes identified with the medicinal plant *Tribulus terrestris*, yet in this context, perhaps some other substance known to Ayurvedic *rasaśāstra* is intended.

²³⁷ *kanta ga* for Sans. *gandhaka*, sulphur, widely used in Ayurvedic *rasaśāstra*.

²³⁸ *ab yag*: unidentified; Lhasa reads *ang yag*.

²³⁹ *dunti ka*: unidentified. Stog reads *kunti ka*.

²⁴⁰ Perhaps to close the treasure door (*gter sgo*) again?

²⁴¹ *srang*.

²⁴² *lang tsher*, Sans. *abhraka*, a sheet silicate mineral used in *rasaśāstra*, probably mica.

somarāji seeds,²⁴³ half a *tulā* of orpiment,²⁴⁴ two *tulā* of *māṣa* powder,²⁴⁵ two dram²⁴⁶ of sand, two drams of *sa ma dza ti*,²⁴⁷ two drams of *kuṭaja*,²⁴⁸ two drams of *ka la pa ta* seeds,²⁴⁹ and mixing these all together, make them into a fine powder. Also, grind some mica; mix it together with burned *ka tsa pa la*²⁵⁰ water, neem, and burned *indravr̥kṣa*²⁵¹ water. Put it into a vessel smeared with *ma thang*,²⁵² and leave it for one month. Strike it with *kra kanti*²⁵³ and sulfur powder; then these *vajra* adhesives will become pure. Smear it on the door panel or side of wall or whatever you want to coat,²⁵⁴ and the *vajra* adhesive will turn red, like an *aśoka* flower.²⁵⁵ All rituals should also be done with the approach mantra.

At these treasure doors [*gter sgo*] explained by me, [Stog 387] treasures [*gter rnam*s] exist, it is taught. To definitively understand their true signs, please listen. The measure and quantity of the [treasure] materials I shall explain in every case.

[1] At treeless places with crevices, ?like a *sa la tha* tree,²⁵⁶ of white and perfumed appearance: there, at

²⁴³ *so ma ra tsa*, possibly for Sans. *somarāji*, a plant used in Ayurveda; sometimes identified with musk okra, sometimes with cannabis sativa.

²⁴⁴ *ba bla* = Sans. *haritāla*, yellow orpiment or arsenic, widely used in Ayurvedic *rasaśāstra*.

²⁴⁵ *mon sran gre'u*, possibly black gram, widely used in Ayurveda.

²⁴⁶ *zho*.

²⁴⁷ *sa ma dza ti* is unidentified; Lhasa has *sa ma dzā ti*, resembling Sans. *samajāti*, equal in kind; possibly a building material; or possibly em. *sa ma dza ti* > *so ma dza ti*, nutmeg, as above.

²⁴⁸ *ku ta dzi* for Sans. *kuṭaja*, Hindi *kuḍā*, Kurchi, Tellicherry bark, or Conessi tree, used both in Ayurveda and as a wall additive in construction. Omitted in Sde dge, but present in Lhasa.

²⁴⁹ *ka la pa ta* unidentified; A. Wenta suggests possibly from Sans. *kāla* (black) and *paṭṭa*, the tossa jute plant.

²⁵⁰ *ka tsa pa la* uncertain; there are various botanic terms *kaccha* and *kakṣa*, while *kaccha* can also mean, land contiguous to water.

²⁵¹ *indra brikṣa* for Sans. *indravr̥kṣa*; According to Monier-Williams, *indravr̥kṣa* = *indradrū* = the trees *Terminalia Arjuna* (Arjun tree) and *Wrightia Antidysenterica*.

²⁵² *ma thang* is unidentified. *Bod lugs gso rig tshig mdzod chen mo* p.611 gives *zangs rtsi dkar po'i 'bru*; D. Esler suggests, perhaps goosegrass (Lat. *galium aparine*).

²⁵³ *kra kanti* unidentified, A. Wenta suggests possibly for Sans. *kākāṅgī*, a medicinal plant with dark and bitter leaves.

²⁵⁴ em. *btun* > *gtum* cf. 'thum.

²⁵⁵ *a sho ka* for Sans. *aśoka*, Hindi *aśok*; Ashoka tree.

²⁵⁶ *sa la tha yi shing 'dra ba*, also occurring in following lines as *sa la tha la'i 'bru 'dra ba*, *sa la ta la'i shing 'dra ba*, *sa la ta yi mig 'dra ba*, and *sa la'i khri 'dra ba*. The translation remains uncertain. In the equivalent passages of the *Nidhipradīpa* as described in Balbir (1993: 26-28), it is tree suckers that play the key role in indicating the depths

twice the depth of a standing man, are 60,000 riches. Such a place has *nāgas*.

[2] In various wooded places, resembling a lotus petal and having the fragrance of a great lotus, at twice the depth of a standing man, there are 65,000 riches. Such a place has *rākṣasas*.

[3] Unwooded places, ?like a *sa la tha la* fruit,²⁵⁷ with the fragrance of *tāla* [coconut?], at a depth of twice a man's height, have over 100,000 riches. They have *yakṣas*. [D78b]

[4] Treeless places, ?like a *sa la ta la* tree, with a single fragrance, at a depth of three standing men, have as much as ten million riches; they are also the dwelling places of Vaiśravaṇa.

[5] In unwooded places, ?like a *sa la ta* eye,²⁵⁸ which are white and fragrant, at a depth of three standing men, are 46,000 riches. Indra is in such places.

[6] In unwooded places, ?like a *sa la* throne,²⁵⁹ measuring four feet, with the fragrance of *ketakī*²⁶⁰ flowers, [Stog 388] are ten million [riches]. Such places have *nāgas*."

The text continues with many more signs above ground that indicate the presence of *nidhis* below ground. Several of them resemble the treasure signs in the *Nidhipradīpa* described by Balbir and Vasudeva. There are incongruities, e.g. where natural enemies such as snakes and mongooses stay together. There are trees with specific shapes, e.g. with roots like an umbrella, or a trunk like a vase. There are trees with plentiful tree suckers. There are trees with anomalies, such as fruits out of season, milk-less trees that give milk, thorned trees that lose their

and quantities of treasures (tree suckers are shoots sent up from tree roots which, if left alone, will turn into another plant). Yet here, the locations are specifically described as treeless. At the moment, I can only make vague guesses as to the meaning. Might the first syllables, *sa la*, simply mean 'upon the ground'? In which case *tha la* or *ta la* might be for *sthala*, a mound or hillock on the ground. Alternatively, it might mean a treeless spot but with a single palm tree, thus for Sans. *tāla*, or *tāladrūma*, the Palmyra, or coconut, palm. Buddhist scriptures often mention the *tāla* tree as a measure of height, with phrases like "as high as eight *tāla* trees," etc. Here however, height is measured in the lengths of a man (*mi 'greng tsam*). It could also intend the Sans. *sāla*, the sal tree.

²⁵⁷ *sa la tha la*'i 'bru 'dra ba.

²⁵⁸ *sa la ta yi mig 'dra ba*, perhaps a knot in a tree?

²⁵⁹ *sa la*'i *khri 'dra ba*.

²⁶⁰ *ke ta ka ti* for Sans. *ketakī*, pandanus.

thorns, or magnificent fruit trees without fruit, etc. Ant heaps are another sign. Images of Buddhas, Śiva, Parvati, or Śiva liṅgams, also shrines to these deities, can also conceal or indicate hidden treasures. Lakes, ponds, rivers, and wells are also mentioned. And so on and on, for a great many pages. A further investigation, perhaps especially one that systematically compares the many *nidhi* rites contained in various Buddhist *Kriyātantras*, with the surviving *nidhiśāstras* such as the *Nidhipradīpa*, and the Rnying ma *gter ma* systems, would be of great interest, but is well beyond the scope of this limited study.

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