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# A Collection of Kanjur Folios with Four Illustrated Pages from a Rnying ma Tantra

Matthew Kapstein

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# Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions

The Written Word and Its  
Media within the Tibetan Culture Sphere

Edited by

Orna Almogi



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES 4

Hamburg • 2016

Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universität Hamburg



# **Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions**



INDIAN AND TIBETAN STUDIES

Edited by Harunaga Isaacson and Dorji Wangchuk

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To the Tibetan scholars, scribes, and carvers  
of the past, present, and future





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## Preface

Textual scholarship, including text and book cultures, has a long and rich history throughout the Tibetan cultural sphere. Since the development of the Tibetan script—according to traditional sources sometime in the 7<sup>th</sup> century—tens (or perhaps hundreds) of thousands of texts, be they of Indic origin or autochthonous Tibetan, have been written down on Tibetan soil. Consequently, a much greater number of books, be they in the form of manuscripts or xylographs, were produced, transmitted, and further reproduced throughout the centuries. Tibetan textual scholarship thus becomes highly interesting and relevant for all of us who strive to gain a nuanced and well-founded knowledge of Tibetan intellectual culture, intellectual history, religion, philosophy, textual criticism, literature, or language.

In recent years we have been witnessing a growing interest in Tibetan textual scholarship—including Tibetan text and book cultures—that goes beyond the mere textual and contentual matters. Issues concerning material and visual aspects of Tibetan book culture—including writing materials, economical and logistical aspects of production, patronage, codicology, palaeography, technology, craftsmanship, artistry, and art—and such concerning Tibetan text culture—including traditional textual scholarship in general and compilatory processes and editorial policies in particular—have come to the forefront of Tibetan Studies. Religious and sociological aspects of Tibetan book culture have likewise been increasingly addressed—particularly those focusing on the book as being a ritual or reverential object, an artefact possessing magical powers, a prestigious item to be owned, a merit-accruing object, or a piece of art.

With the conviction that a better understanding of these aspects will advance and enhance Tibetan textual studies as a whole, a conference on “Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions within the Tibetan Cultural Sphere: Regional and Periodical Characteristics” was held at the Universität Hamburg in May 15–18, 2013. As the title suggests, the conference aimed at discussing and identifying regional and periodical characteristics of various manuscript and xylograph traditions within the Tibetan cultural sphere. The present volume contains twelve of the papers presented at the conference along with

an introductory essay, which all together cover many of the above-mentioned issues regarding Tibetan manuscripts, xylographs, and legal handwritten documents, stemming from different periods of Tibetan history and from various regions within the Tibetan cultural sphere, including such that had been under its influence in the past. Although the volume is far from addressing neither all traditions of text and book cultures within the Tibetan cultural sphere nor all issues concerning them, it is hoped that it nonetheless will be a modest contribution to the advancement of research in this field along with several other recent publications with a similar or related focus.

I would like to particularly thank Dorji Wangchuk for his cooperation and assistance in organising the conference and in making it possible through the financial support of the Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship (KC-TBTS), and likewise for his support in various ways during the editing of the present volume. Special thanks are also due to the Khyentse Foundation whose financial support of the KC-TBTS enabled both the conference and the publication of the present volume. And last but not least thanks are also due to Eric Werner for his help in solving some last-minute technical problems during the preparation of the final version of the volume.

Orna Almogi

Hamburg, July 30, 2016

# A Collection of Miscellaneous Kanjur Folios including Four Illustrated Pages from a rNying ma Tantra *in statu nascendi*

Matthew T. Kapstein

## 1. Introduction to the Collection

Shortly after a talk on Tibetan manuscripts that I gave in Berkeley in early 2012, Ms. Vicki Shiba, a California-based collector of Asian Art who had attended, kindly sent to me the photographs of several hundred Tibetan manuscript pages that she had acquired as a single lot.<sup>1</sup> The majority of these are Kanjur folios evidently culled from several different sets of the canon dating from as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century and as late as perhaps the 16<sup>th</sup>. With the prominent exception of a large number of pages from a single copy of the *brGyad stong pa* (the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, though not the same ms. as in fig. 1), the pages are illustrated, which no doubt explains why they were bundled together for sale. Many are very severely damaged and may have been found among trash left after the destruction wrought by the Cultural Revolution.



Fig. 1: folio from an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript. 12<sup>th</sup> cent. (?)

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Ms. Vicki Shiba for graciously making available the documents studied in the present article and Dr. Bruce Gordon for his attention to the photographic images. With the exception of fig. 11, rights to all illustrations in the present article belong to the Vicki Shiba Collection. I am grateful, too, to Amy Heller for thoughtful comments on points of iconography and their implications for dating, helping to improve this essay throughout.

Tibetan Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions



Fig. 2: illustrated fragment of the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*. 12<sup>th</sup> cent. (?)



Figs. 3–5: Three fragments of about the 13<sup>th</sup> cent. The elaborate throne (top) merits comparison with several of the Nesar (Dolpo) manuscripts studied in Heller 2009 (cf. figs. 81 & 84), though in the present case the realisation is notably less refined. The sheet is also of interest for the *dbu med* annotations in the last three lines, which record the results of an inventory of the collection of which it was part. The three-quarter profiles of the *arhat* (lower left) and teacher (right) perhaps reflect Pāla influence, as does the architectural structure surrounding the *arhat*.



Figs. 6 & 7: Fragment of an *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* commentary by an unidentified disciple of Nyang 'Jam dbyangs (perhaps Nyang stod 'Jam dbyangs mgon po, early 13<sup>th</sup> cent.<sup>2</sup>). The calligraphy is notably similar to that found in many of the early scholastic manuscripts, presumably originating at gSang phu, that have been published in the *bKa' gdams phyogs bsgrigs* series.<sup>3</sup> The miniature, depicting a so-far unidentified *mkhan po* (one reads *khan po ba phyog...*), closely resembles 13<sup>th</sup> century portraits of teachers known above all from the central Tibetan bKa' gdams and bKa' bgyud lineages.<sup>4</sup>

The miniatures adorning many of the items in the collection display considerable variation in terms of style, quality of execution, and probable dating, as the examples shown here will suffice to make clear. The collection includes, moreover, a number of sheets that do

<sup>2</sup> bSod nams rgya mtsho & Nor bu sgrol dkar 2000: 201, gives the birth of this figure in the Fire Dragon year (= 1196), but the *Blue Annals*, p. 676, gives Earth Dragon (= 1208). Though primarily affiliated with the Lower 'Brug pa (*smad 'brug*) Tantric tradition, Nyang stod 'Jam dbyangs mgon po seems also to have had some scholastic background, including studies with scholars connected with gSang phu (*Blue Annals*, p. 678), so it is not implausible that he might be the figure mentioned as “Nyang 'Jam dbyangs” in our fragment.

<sup>3</sup> This is most evident in the treatment of the *ya-btags* and the considerable elongation of the final stroke of *ga*, *na*, *sha*, etc. An example of the calligraphic style to which I refer is seen in the manuscript of the *Grub mtha' chen mo* of Bya 'Chad kha ba Ye shes rdo rje (1101–1175), given in *bKa' gdams phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 11, and studied briefly in Kapstein 2009, though there are many other instances throughout that collection.

<sup>4</sup> For pertinent examples, refer to Jackson et al. 2011.



not derive from Kanjur volumes at all, such as the four folios that will be my major topic later in this essay. Among these heterogeneous sheets, we also find a 15<sup>th</sup> century (?) illustrated xylographic page that I have described at length elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> a charred fragment of what appears to have been a very beautiful copy of an otherwise unknown commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṅkāraśāstra*, and an annotated page from the *Hevajratantra*. The provenance of these materials is of course unknown. Although many of the canonical folios in the collection likely stem from West Tibet or adjacent regions of Nepal, the printed page is almost certainly Central Tibetan, and so too the burnt page of commentary.

Among the leaves in the collection that seem most pleasing aesthetically are the several derived from a single manuscript on blue-black tinted paper, with alternating lines in gold and silver and finely drawn miniatures accentuated by the use of flashy red pigments contrasting sharply with the dark ground. The text appears to be an anthology of *dhāraṇīsūtras* and other short, possibly apotropaic scriptures, genres often seen in gold-on-black manuscripts. Of particular interest in the present case is the sometimes asymmetrical placement of miniatures on the page, a feature that perhaps suggests close collaboration between artist and scribe. The unusual, almost playful depiction of the standing Buddha attended by a disciple—perhaps the “Śākya youth” bZhin rab gsal (\*Prasannamukha or \*Prasannavadana), mentioned in the text—is particularly suggestive of the Newari style that characterises the painting of all of the surviving folios of this manuscript, which may be assigned to about the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Given the strongly Newari-influenced stylistic register, the question of provenance is somewhat clouded. West Tibet or western Nepal are, of course, among the possibilities, but, given the broad diffusion of the Newari style from the Yuan-period on, other regions should perhaps not be excluded.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Kapstein 2013. Although I was somewhat hesitant in my estimation of the dating of the printed sheet studied there, the materials reproduced in dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib ’jug khang 2013 and its accompanying DVD convince me that it is indeed a Central Tibetan print of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, though the exact provenance remains uncertain. In any case, the letterforms appear to merit close comparison with those of the mChing ru gnam mdun edition of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, dated 1422 (dPal brtsegs 2013: 12–14).

<sup>6</sup> As Jackson 2010 shows, the Newari style (*bal ris*) embraces a widely diffused and highly varied family of stylistic registers. Be this as it may, the



Figs. 8–10: Three leaves from a collection of *dhāraṇīs* and short canonical texts (from top to bottom): a part of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* illustrated with the goddess *Uṣṇīṣavijayā*; the conclusion of the *Ekagāthādhāraṇī* and the beginning of the *Gāthādvayadhāraṇī*, marked by the smaller Buddha image to the lower left; a folio from the *Ārya-daśadigandhakāravidhvaṃsana-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*

## 2. Four Folios from the *Dri med bshags rgyud*

In an article published a few years ago, I sought to show that one of the prominent ritual cycles belonging to the *rNying ma bka' ma* traditions, the *Na rak dong sprugs*, or *Churner of the Depths of Hell*, was beginning to develop during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, as was

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figures of the standing Buddha and his disciple in the last folio strike me as exemplary: cf. the 1367 *Prajñāpāramitā* from Nepal, now in the Indian Museum, Kolkata, illustrated in Pal & Meech-Pekarik 1988: 107.

demonstrated by Dunhuang documents either clearly belonging to that cycle or bearing an evident affinity to it.<sup>7</sup> The surest indication of this was found in a document from the Stein collection in London, IOL Tib J 584, which could be firmly identified with certain passages from the main *tantra* of the *Na rak* cycle, the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, the *Tantra of Taintless Contrition*. My hypothesis was that, although this *tantra* was probably not yet in existence in anything closely resembling its present form, the confessional liturgies that would later be incorporated within it had certainly begun to take shape, as was proven by the Dunhuang manuscript in question. Moreover, as the editors' colophons of both the *Dri med bshags rgyud* and one of the major rites of the *Na rak* cycle plainly state, the relevant texts that were available to them were in a state of disorder, so that we can conclude that the *Na rak* cycle as known at present is at least in part the product of editorial interventions, some as recent as the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Kapstein 2010.

<sup>8</sup> The colophon of Lo chen Dharmasīrī's edition of the *Khrom dkrugs cho ga* is given with translation in Kapstein 2010: 171–172, n. 7. The colophon of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* is also given there, p. 206, but as that transcription contains one small but significant typographical error and was left untranslated, I take the opportunity to provide a corrected version with translation here:

The Indian *upādhyāya* Vimalamitra and the Tibetan translator gNyags Jñānakumāra translated, corrected, and definitely established [the text]. At a later time, because the transmission of the text was corrupted, the *bhikṣu* mTsho skyes bzhad pa—who had compared the errors with ancient, reliable exemplars, and had examined, without personal contrivance, the oral transmissions of the forebears and the meaning of the text—thoroughly corrected word and convention and so has promulgated a reliable model. May it be virtuous and auspicious!

Thereafter, because the textual transmission that had earlier been distributed in the regions of Khams and Tibet had omissions or interpolations of some words or syllables, the venerable dGe [rtse] Paṅ[ḍita], on the occasion of the printing of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*, carefully corrected it, made it fit to be relied upon, and then had it copied. *Siddhir astu!*

*rgya gar gyi mkhan po bi ma la mi tra dang | bod kyi lo tsā ba gnyags jñā na  
ku mā ras bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa'o || dus phyis yi ge  
rgyun 'phyugs pas ma dag rnams sngar gyi dpe rnying khungs thub dag la  
gtugs shing gong ma'i gsung rgyun dang | gzhung don la dpyad de rang bzos  
ma bslad par dge slong mtsho skyes bzhad pas brda tshig gnyis ka dpyis*

It is with this background in mind that four leaves found among the collection introduced here are of particular interest, for, like IOL Tib J 584, they are distinctly related to the text of the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, but, although they represent a much fuller version of the work than we find in Dunhuang, they are not quite identical to the *tantra* in its current form either. Very likely, they may be taken as exemplifying the sort of manuscript that may have troubled the *tantra*'s editors, the otherwise unknown and undated dGe slong mTsho skyes bzhad pa, and the famous master of Kaḥ thog monastery, dGe rtse Paṇḍita 'Gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub (1761–1829).<sup>9</sup> Before considering the text's contents, however, several of the formal features of the manuscript merit comment.

The four folios at our disposal are numbered 29 (*nyre [= nyer] rgu* [= *dgu*]), 32 (*so gnyis*), 33 (*so gsum*), and 42 (*zhe gnyis*). Although there are some apparent section breaks (at fols. 29a4; 32a1; 33b1; 42b3), as indicated by the repetition of the *nyis shad* (double *shad*) with an intervening space, there are no chapter titles in these pages, nor do we have a title page or final colophon.<sup>10</sup> Despite the evident congruence with the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, therefore, we cannot say whether the manuscript bore any such title. However, the frequent use of the expression *na rak dong sprugs*, and, indeed, an explicit reference (at 33a1) to the main ritual of that cycle, the *Na rak dong sprugs spyi khrus*, the *General Cleansing to Churn the Depths of Hell*,<sup>11</sup> confirms beyond reasonable doubt that the work belonged to a version of the *Na rak dong sprugs* cycle, as does the *Dri med bshags*

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*phyin par zhus dag par bgyis te yid brtan du rung ba'i phyi mor bsngags pa  
dge zhing bkra shis par gyur cig* ||

*slar yang khams dang bod phyogs su sngar nas yig rgyun so sor gyes pas  
tshig 'bru 'ga' re chad lhag 'dug pa rnams dge paṇ zhabs nas rnying rgyud  
spar gyi skabs zhib par bcos te yid brtan du rung bar mdzad pa las zhal  
bshus pa siddhi ra stu* ||

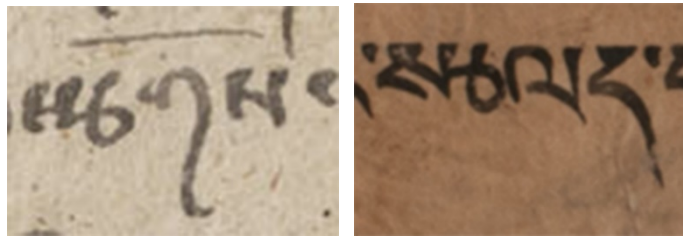
<sup>9</sup> It should be emphasised that other versions of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* are preserved as well. The Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu manuscript of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* preserved in the British Library, for instance, conserves two versions in vol. *dza*, one of which was corrected by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

<sup>10</sup> None of the chapter breaks of the present edition of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* fall within the parts of the text preserved in the manuscript; the contents of all four folios of the latter are found in the *tantra*'s third chapter, titled *Nyams chag dang rtog sgrib sbyong ba'i bshags pa*.

<sup>11</sup> Refer to Kapstein 2010: 175, n. 14.

*rgyud* today. The fact that the text contained at least 43 folios suggests that it was not less than about half the length of the current edition of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* as given in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa*, where it covers 61 folios.<sup>12</sup>

The text is written in neat, well-proportioned *dbu can* characters, with very few departures from standard forms. The most notable exception to this occurs in the stacked consonant clusters *rts* and *sts*, where the cluster resembles the form it takes in some 10<sup>th</sup> century Dunhuang manuscripts written in what we might term a 'semi-cursive' script (figs. 11 & 12).



Figs. 11 & 12: left: the syllable *stsogs*, from the 10<sup>th</sup> century Dunhuang manuscript IOL J Tib 318, from folio 1b3; right: the syllable *stsald*, from folio 32b2 of the *Na rak dong sprugs* manuscript

The ductus of the cluster in these cases is remarkably similar, with the key difference being that in the *Na rak* manuscript the *dbu can* form of the *sa* is retained. Though it is not yet quite certain that the manner of writing these particular clusters can be taken to be an archaicism, I suspect that indeed it is. For the modern forms in both *dbu can* and *dbu med* scripts are altogether distinct in their treatment of the element *-tsa*, which here appears almost as the 'Arabic' numeral 6 written with a single clockwise stroke beginning from centre left.

Orthographically, the text is remarkable for its close adherence to the norms of what we now think of as Classical Tibetan. The notable variants are, as is common in West Tibetan canonical manuscripts, the retention of the *da drag* (e.g., *'dzind*, *'byord*, *stsald*, *stond*, *bstand*) and the addition of the *ya btags* to *ma* when the vowels used are *i* or *e* (*myi*, *myed*). On a small number of occasions the 'a' is used as a final in syllables ending with a vowel, for example, *dpe'* (33b3).

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<sup>12</sup> Here, one must take into account that, in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa*, there are about 180 syllables per folio side, whereas the manuscript has not more than 120 syllables per folio side.

Where Classical Tibetan uses *la sogs pa* (“et cetera”), we find instead *las stsogs pa* (33b4), as we do throughout the Dunhuang manuscripts. There is also at least one clear instance of the reversed *gi gu* (*kyI*, at 33b3). For the ‘genitive’ and ‘ergative’ particles, *gi(s)* may be used following all final consonants; *kyi* and *gyi* seldom occur, though *gyis* is sometimes given as the ‘ergative’ following final *-l* and *-m*, and once erroneously after *-s* (33b5). None of these features seems clearly indicative of the dating of the manuscript, though they cohere well with the archaic features of handwriting noted earlier. On one occasion (29a5) *skras* is given where the reading should clearly be *stras*, together with a small number of other errors or orthographical peculiarities: *ljag* for *ljang* (29a2), *’tshul* for *tshul* (29a5, 29b1), *sta* for *rta* (29b5), etc.

A relatively early date is suggested, too, by the illustrations decorating each folio. On folio 29 this is placed on the recto, but in the remaining three instances it is on the verso. It is peculiar, too, that in text surrounding the miniatures syllables have been sometimes split, rather than leaving a space between syllables, in order to accommodate the paintings. Thus, on 32b3–4 we find *’gyu\_\_r* and *rig\_\_s*, on 33b4 *gzung\_\_s*, and on 42b3 *bsha\_\_gs*.

The four miniatures depict four deities presumably associated with the *zhi khro maṇḍala* of the *Na rak dong sprugs* cycle, though their exact identification in all but one case remains uncertain.<sup>13</sup> Folio 29a is adorned with one of the twenty-eight theriomorphic goddesses of the *zhi khro* pantheon, possibly Doghead (*khyi mgo can*), who would have been mentioned on the preceding page.<sup>14</sup> (She should, however, be holding a child’s corpse (*byis bam*) in her right hand, instead of the *vajra* that appears here.) The reverse side of folio 32 depicts a red *yakṣa*-like figure offering a skull-cup, and so is perhaps representative of the *gying pa* (= *ging*; *kiṃkara*) mentioned on the recto of the same folio (32a2). On 33b we have, in close connection with the content of the text at this point, an iconographically unambiguous representation of the “lord of the clan” (*rigs bdag*) of the *zhi khro maṇḍala*, Vajrasattva (*rDo rje sems dpa’*), surrounded by a rainbow aureole typical of West Tibetan manuscript illuminations

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<sup>13</sup> The pantheon of the *Na rak dong sprugs maṇḍala* is summarised in Kapstein 2010: 178.

<sup>14</sup> In the edition of the *tantra* I am consulting, she is honoured at folio 22b2, just four lines before the beginning of the fragment represented by folio 29 of the manuscript.

of about the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries. (Fig. 1 above offers a less colourful example.) Finally, our last available folio is graced by a notably voluptuous goddess. Although, on first glance, she might be thought to resemble some images of Tārā, the fact that she is sitting upon a corpse is suggestive, rather, of Vajrayoginī. Perhaps, in the present context, she may be identified with Vajradhātṽśvarī, the consort of Vajrasattva. As such, she would at the same time be identified with the *yoginīs* among the votaries of the *maṇḍala*, who are referred to repeatedly throughout the texts of the *Na rak dong sprugs* cycle. Her features, in any case, offer some points of comparison with West Tibetan representations of goddesses dating to as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup>

In the light of the palaeographic, orthographic and artistic features noted, it is plausible to assign the manuscript to a period not later than the 12<sup>th</sup> century, though some caution about this is necessary. Given the tendencies of small, regional traditions sometimes to conserve apparently archaic elements, whether of script, spelling, or artwork, the possibility that it dates to a century or so later than estimated cannot be categorically excluded.

Turning now to the content of the text, with few variants all of the present fragments may be identified with passages in the published edition of the *Dri med bshags rgyud* to which I refer here, where they occur in precisely the same order. It may appear, at first glance, that there is somewhat more intervening space between the fragmentary passages of the manuscript and the corresponding passages of the *tantra*. This, however, may be explained not by supposing the manuscript to have contained substantial additional text, but by considering, as mentioned earlier (n. 12), that there are many more syllables per folio in the published edition of the *tantra* than there are in the manuscript. Assuming, too, that some of the missing leaves of the manuscript were also illustrated, the resulting differences in the amount of text given on any page would be sufficient to account for the disparities in foliation. In short, our manuscript fragments may be taken to be none other than part of the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, whether or not the entire content of the present edition of that work was included, and whether or not that title had yet been assigned.

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<sup>15</sup> Amy Heller comments: “The purely oval facial shape—with no delineation of cheekbones—is also found in W. Tibetan sculptures influenced by earlier Kashmiri statues.” Correspondence, 13 June 2014.

In the detailed presentation that follows, I treat separately each of the three continuous portions of the text available in the manuscript, labelling them as fragments 1–3. Under the heading of each fragment, the pages in question are reproduced, with a line-by-line transcription followed by the transcription of the same passage from the *Dri med bshags rgyud* as given in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa* and observations (referring to the manuscript by folio and line number) regarding important differences between the two.<sup>16</sup> I have not generally commented on small matters of orthography or other minor differences, which will be evident to all readers on comparison of the texts. Many of the minor changes involving the addition or subtraction of one or two syllables, it may be noted, are clearly due to the effort on the part of the editors of the *tantra* to achieve metrical regularity, for example, by removing the syllable *rtsa* from the number *nyi shu rtsa brgyad* in order to reduce the line within which it occurs from eight syllables to the seven required by the meter.

In Fragment 3, square brackets in the corresponding passage from the *Dri med bshags rgyud* enclose text that is not at all represented in the manuscript. It is of some interest that all of these enlargements of the text serve to add greater specificity to the description of the misdeeds—mostly violations of *dam tshig (samaya)*, the Tantric vows—in connection with which contrition is required. If it is indeed the case that our manuscript leaves represent, as I think they do, a relatively early phase in the history of the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, then the tendency of the *tantra* to become increasingly precise in the course of its development conforms well with the observations of Sam van Schaik in regard to the relatively unstable formulations of

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<sup>16</sup> I must emphasise that, as the *Dri med bshags rgyud* has not yet been critically edited, and given that prints and manuscripts of this work are plentiful, the present exercise cannot pretend to shed more than a small ray of light on the history of this interesting *tantra*. Because the text as found in the *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa* may be taken to be a more or less standard edition of the *tantra* in current circulation, it provides just a first point of departure for comparison. But as this is the sole comparandum consulted so far, one must remain circumspect in regard to conclusions. The particular difficulties involved in critically editing rNying ma Tantric literature, as well as the promise of such investigations, have been very richly explored in the contributions of Cantwell and Mayer (2007, 2008, 2012) to the study of Vajrakīla *tantras* and the Mahāyoga *Thabs kyi zhags pa* (which, it may be noted in passing, is closely contiguous to the *Dri med bshags rgyud* in several *rNying ma rgyud 'bums*, and is similarly attributed to the translation activity of Vimalamitra and gNyags Jñānakumāra as well).



the Mahāyoga *samayās* as known in the Dunhuang documents.<sup>17</sup> It appears that the Tantric vows were at first strictly connected with the specificities of initiation into a given ritual tradition, and only gradually generalised to create an overarching set of Tantric vows. (And, indeed, the precise tie between vows and specific initiations was never altogether forgotten.)

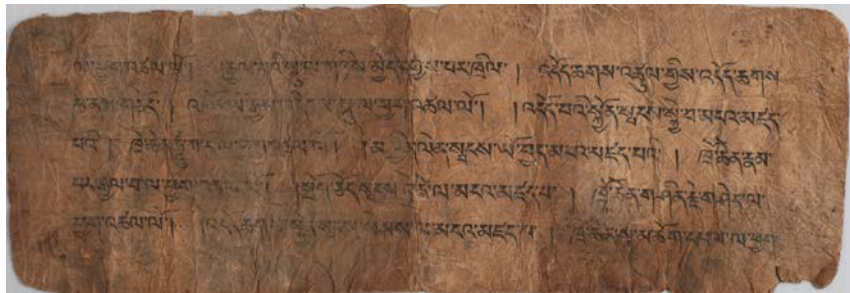


Figs. 13 & 14: Vajrasattva and consort (?).

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<sup>17</sup> See van Schaik 2010.

Fragment 1



Figs. 15 & 16, folio 29

Folio 29a

- (1) @@ | ra'i 'go la phyag 'tshal lo | rnal 'byord dmar mo lcags sgrog 'dzind | spre'u 'i 'go la
- (2) phyag 'tshal lo | rnal 'byord ljag [= ljang?] nag \_\_\_\_ dril bu 'dzind | skye ka'i 'go la phyag 'tshal
- (3) lo | dpal gi 'khor tshogs badzra a ra \_\_\_\_ li | mkha' la shugs 'gro ma tshogs dbang
- (4) phyug ma | rnal 'byord ma dbang phyug ma \_\_\_\_ nyi shu rtsa bryad la phyag 'tshal lo || rgyal
- (5) ba yab yum gnyis myed thugs kyi skras | zhe sdang 'tshul gyis zhe sdang rtsa nas bcod | rdo rje gzhon nu'i sku

29b

- (1) la phyag 'tshal lo | rgyal ba'i sku la gnyis myed dgyes par khiril | 'dod chags 'tshul gyis 'dod chags
- (2) rtsa nas gcod | 'khor lo rgyas 'debs sku la phyag 'tshal lo | 'dod pa'i skyon spangs skye ba mnga' mdzad
- (3) pa'i | khro chen hūṃ ka ra phyag 'tshal lo | ma byin len spangs yo byad mnga' mdzad pa'i | khro chen rnam

(4) par rgyal ba la phyag 'tshal lo | srog cod spangs te tshe la mnga'  
mdzad pa | khro chen gshin rje gshed la

(5) phyag 'tshal lo | 'dod chags skyon spangs sems la mnga' mdzad  
pa | khro chen sta mchog dpal la phyag

*Dri med bshags rgyud*, 22b6–23a5

ra mgo can la phyag 'tshal lo | rnal 'byor dmar mo lcags sgrog  
(23a) bsnam | seng mgo can la phyag 'tshal lo | rnal 'byor ljang nag  
dril bu 'dzin | skya ka'i mgo la phyag 'tshal lo | dpal gi 'khor tshogs  
badzra a ra li | mkha' la shugs 'gro ma tshogs dbang phyug ma |  
rnal 'byor nyi shu brgyad la phyag 'tshal lo | zhe sdang 'tshul gyis  
zhe sdang 'joms mdzad pa | rdo rje gzhon nu'i sku la phyag 'tshal lo |  
rgyal ba'i sku la gnyis med dgyes par khiril | 'dod chags 'tshul  
gyis 'dod chags 'joms mdzad pa | 'khor lo rgyas 'debs yum la  
phyag 'tshal lo | 'dod pa'i skyon spangs skye la mnga' mdzad pa |  
khro chen hūṃ ka ra phyag 'tshal lo | ma byin len spangs yo byad  
dbang mdzad pa | khro chen rnam par rgyal la phyag 'tshal lo | srog  
gcod skyon spangs tshe la dbang mdzad pa | khro chen gshin rje'i  
gshed la phyag 'tshal lo | phra ma'i skyon spangs sems la dbang  
mdzad pa | khro chen rta mchog dpal la phyag

### Observations

29a2–4: The place of *yoginī* Apehead (*spre'u'i 'go*) of the manuscript is taken by Lionhead (*seng mgo can*) in the *tantra*.

29a4: *rnal 'byord ma dbang phyug ma*. Here *dbang phyug ma* is perhaps an instance of contextual repetition, given its occurrence just above. It is omitted in the parallel line from the *tantra*.

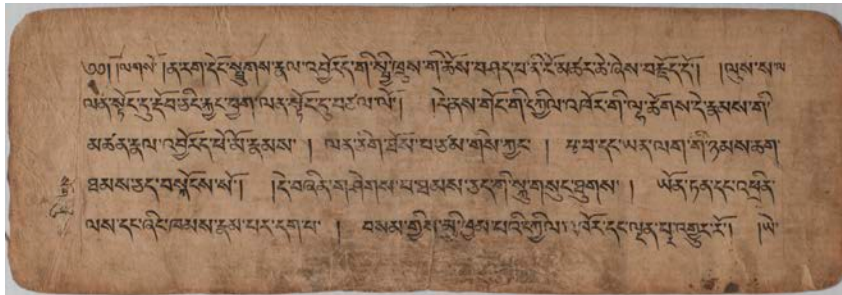
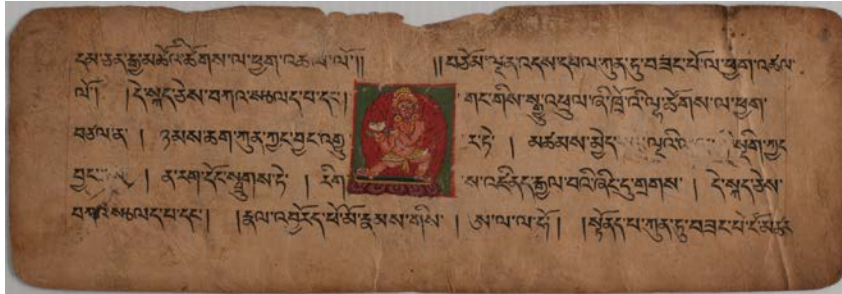
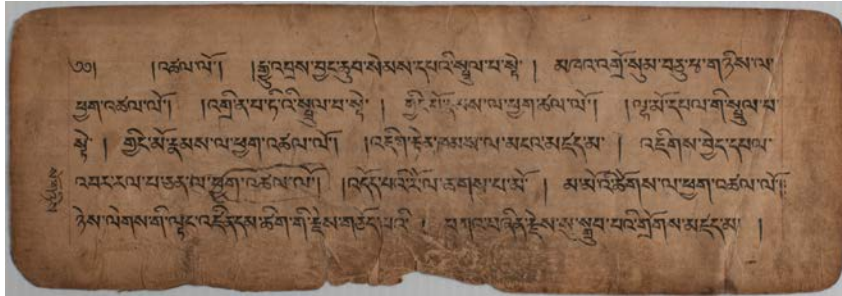
29a4–5: *rgyal ba yab yum gnyis myed thugs kyi skras* (= *sras*). This line is altogether missing from the *tantra*, though it is an appropriate description of rDo rje gzhon nu (Vajrakumāra, i.e. Vajrakīla), to whom it applies in the present context.

29b3: Although Sanskrit usage in the ms. is by no means consistent, it is of interest to note here the syllable *hūṃ*, demonstrating that the conventions for representing Sanskrit long vowels and nasalisation were known (which was by no means typically the case), even if not in all instances correctly applied.

One may also note a number of regular differences of wording: where the ms. uses *rtsa nas gcod*, the *tantra* prefers *'joms mdzad pa*.

For *mnga' mdzad pa* in the ms., we find *dbang mdzad pa* in the *tantra*.

Fragment 2



Figs. 17–20, fols. 32–33

Folio 32a

- (1) @@| 'tshal lo| rgyu 'bras byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa ste | mkha' 'gro sum bcu rtsa gnyis la
- (2) phyag 'tshal lo| 'gri na pa ti 'i sprul pa ste | gying pa rnams la phyag 'tshal lo| lha mo dpal gi sprul pa
- (3) ste | gying mo rnams la phyag 'tshal lo| 'jig rten khams la mnga' mdzad ma | 'jigs byed dpal
- (4) 'bar ral pa can la phyag 'tshal lo| 'dod pa'i ro la chags pa mo | ma mo'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo|
- (5) nyes legs gi ltang 'dzin dam tshig gi rjes gcod pa'i | bka' bzhin rjes su sgrub pa'i grogs mdzad ma|

32b

- (1) dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo|| ||bcom ldan 'das dpal kun tu bzang po la phyag 'tshal
- (2) lo| | de skad ces bka' stsald pa dang | \_\_\_\_ gang gis sgyu 'phrul zhi khro 'i lha tshogs la phyag
- (3) btsal na | nyams chags kun kyang byang 'gyu \_\_\_\_ r te | mtshams myed [erasure] lnga' 'i [erasure] sdig kyang
- (4) byang [erasure] | na rag dong sprugs te | rig \_\_\_\_ s 'dzind rgyal ba'i zhing du grags | de skad ces
- (5) bka' stsald pa dang| |rnal 'byord pho mo rnams gis | a la la ho | stond pa kun tu bzang po ngo mtshar

33a

- (1) @@| |lagso | na rag dong sprugs rnal 'byord gi spyi khrus kyi chos bshad pa ni ngo mtshar che zhes brjod do| |lus sa la
- (2) lan stong du rdob cing rkyang phyag lan stong du btsal lo| |de nas gong gi dkyil 'khor gi lha tshogs de rnams gi
- (3) mtshan rnal 'byord pho mo rnams | lan cig thos pa tsam gis kyang | rtsa ba dang yan lag gi nyams chag
- (4) thams cad bskongs so| |de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad gi sku gsung thugs | yon tan dang 'phrin
- (5) las dang zhing khams rnam par dag pa | bsam gyis myi khyab pa'i dkyil 'khor dang ldan pa, 'gyur ro| |ye

33b

- (1) ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gi sa la lhun gis gnas par 'gyur ro|| | ||de nas dus der dpal rdo rje sems dpa'
- (2) zhes bya ba | dus gsum gi de bzhin \_\_\_\_ gshegs pa thams cad gi ye shes las sprul pa |

- (3) sku mtshan gi me tog las dpe' bzung po \_\_\_\_ brgyad bcus brgyan  
pa | sangs rgyas kyI che ba'i yon tan dang |  
(4) stobs dang myi 'jigs pa dang | gzung \_\_\_\_ s dang ting nge 'dzind  
las stsogs pa | gzhan yang  
(5) rigs lnga'i sangs rgyas gyis dbang skur ba | dar kar dang po ti  
dang | rin po che'i rgyan rnam pa sna tshogs gis

*Dri med bshags rgyud*, 24a5–25a4

'tshal lo | rgyu 'bras byang chub sems kyi sprul pa ste | mkha' 'gro  
sum cu gnyis la phyag 'tshal lo | ga ṅa pa ti 'i sprul pa ste | king ka  
ra la phyag 'tshal lo | lha mo dpal mo'i sprul pa ste | king ka rī la  
phyag 'tshal lo | 'jig rten khams la dbang  
[24b] mdzad ma | 'jigs byed dpal 'bar ral pa can | ||'dod pa'i ro la  
chags pa mo | ma mo'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo | nyes legs  
ltangs 'dzin dam tshig rjes gcod cing | bka' bzhin rjes su sgrub pa'i  
gros mdzad ma | dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo  
| ston pa kun tu bzang po yis | de skad ces ni bka' stsal pa | gang gis  
sgyu 'phrul khro bo yi | dkyil 'khor lha la phyag 'tshal na | nyams  
chags kun kyang dag 'gyur te | mtshams med lnga yi sdig  
kyang 'byang | na rag gnas kyang dong sprugs te | rigs 'dzin rgyal  
ba'i zhing du grags | zhes bka' stsal pa dang | phyogs bcu nas lhags  
pa'i rnal 'byor pho mo rnam kyis | a la la ho | bcom ldan 'das kyis  
rnal 'byor gyi spyi khros kyi chos bshad pa ngo mtshar che'o | zhes  
brjod de | lus sa la brdeb cing brkyang phyag lan stong du btsal lo  
| de nas dkyil 'khor gi lha de rnam kyi mtshan rnal 'byor pho mo  
rnam kyis thos pa tsam gis rtsa ba dang yan lag gi dam tshig nyams  
chag thams cad bskangs te | de bzhin  
[25a] gshegs pa thams cad gi sku dang | gsung dang | thugs dang | yon  
tan dang | phrin las bsam gyis mi khyab pa dang ldan par gyur te | yi  
ge 'khor lo tshogs chen gi sa la lhun gis grub par 'gyur to | | de nas  
dus der dpal rdo rje sems dpa' zhes bya ba dus gsum gi de bzhin  
gshegs pa thams cad kyi thugs rje'i ye shes kyi bdag nyid | sku  
mtshan gyi me tog las dpe byad bzang po'i 'bras bus brgyan pa | sangs  
rgyas kyi che ba'i yon tan stobs dang | mi 'jigs pa dang | gzung dang |  
ting nge 'dzin la sogs pa mnga' ba | gzhan yang dbu la rigs lnga'i  
sangs rgyas gyis dbang skur ba | dar dkar dang | pa ti dang | rin po che  
dang rgyan rnam pa sna tshogs kyis

### Observations

32a1: Where the ms. has the doctrinally problematic reading  
*rgyu 'bras byang chub sems dpa'i sprul pa ste* ("cause and fruition  
are the *bodhisattvas'* emanations"), the *tantra* offers the more

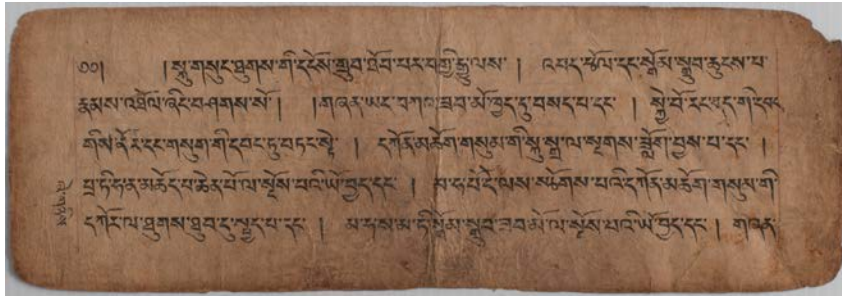
acceptable *rgyu 'bras byang chub sems kyi sprul pa ste* (“cause and fruition are the emanations of *bodhicitta*”).

32a2–3: Where the ms. reads *'gri na pa ti*, *gying pa*, and *gying mo*, the *tantra* is notably sanskritising in adopting *gaṇapati*, *king ka ra* (= *kiṃkara*), and *king ka rī* (= *kiṃkarī*).

32a3–4: For the hypermetrical *'jigs byed dpal 'bar ral pa can la phyag 'tshal lo* of the ms., the *tantra* treats *'jigs byed dpal 'bar ral pa can* as the second line in a quatrain in homage to the *ma mo*.

32b1 et seq.: This section covers a major transition within the text. Following Buddha Samantabhadra’s teaching of contrition through salutation (*phyag 'tshal ba*, *namana*) of the deities of the *maṇḍala*, concluding with *dam can rgya mtsho'i tshogs la phyag 'tshal lo*, the benefits of this practice are extolled by the assembled divinities (32b1–33b1), setting the stage for the arrival of Buddha Vajrasattva (33b1–5). In the *tantra*, this section then continues with the teaching of the purifying hundred-syllable of Vajrasattva, its practice and benefits. Though the portion of this preserved in our ms. corresponds fairly closely with the text of the present edition of the *tantra*, one notes many small, but telling, differences nevertheless. For instance, at 32b1, the ms. transitions to prose, while the *tantra* continues in verse. Here the use in the ms. of the formula *phyag 'tshal lo* addressed to Buddha Samantabhadra (Kun tu bzang po) is syntactically awkward (perhaps another instance of contextual repetition). At 32b4, the brief line *na rag dong sprugs te* is perhaps defective; the corresponding line in the *tantra*, *na rag gnas kyang dong sprugs te*, is certainly clearer. In the description of the entry of Vajrasattva (ms. 33b1 et seq.), the *tantra* regularly expands slightly. Where the ms. (33b5) enumerates one of his attributes as *po ti* (“books”), which cannot be correct in this context, the *tantra* reads *pa ti* (“lord, master”), which is no better. The intended Sanskrit is no doubt *paṭa*, here in the sense of “fine cloth.”

Fragment 3



Figs. 21 & 22, fol. 42

Folio 42a

- (1) @@| |sku gsung thugs gi dngos grub thob par bgyi rgyu las  
| 'bad rtsol dang sgom sgrub chungs pa
- (2) rnam s 'thol zhing bshags so| |gzhan yang bka' zab mo khyad tu  
bsad pa dang | skye bo rang thad<sup>18</sup> gi dbang
- (3) gis nor dang gsug gi dbang tu btang ste | dkon mchog gsum gi sku  
sgra la sngags zlog byas pa dang |
- (4) pra ti ha na mchod pa chen po la sngos pa'i yo byad dang | ma ha  
bo de las stsogs pa'i dkon mchog gsum gi
- (5) dkor la thugs thub du spyad pa dang | ma ha sa ma ti sgom sgrub  
zab mo la sngos pa'i yo byad dang | gzhan

42b

- (1) yang tshod yod bgyis nas dngos su spyad pa dang | phri gzhog  
bgyis te na rag ngan pa'i rgyu bstasgs pa rnam s

<sup>18</sup> There appears to have been a correction here and the reading is somewhat uncertain, though it seems confirmed by the *tantra*. One discerns what appears to be the lower section of a *da*, partially erased, beneath which is a mark resembling a caret (^).



- (2) 'thol zhing bshags so | | nya stong dus \_\_\_ drug dang dus bzhi'i  
las stsags pa rnams thugs
- (3) dam du bcas pa rnams 'thol zhing bsha \_\_\_ gs so || || sgyu 'phrul  
ye shes rang snang gi
- (4) lha la rtog .. pa myi mnga yang | de'i \_\_\_ khor du rtogs pa'i ye  
shes las grub pa'i | nyes
- (5) legs gi ltang 'dzind cing dam tshig gi rjes gcod pa rnams bstand  
pa gnyan po srung ba dang | chos khor gnyan

*Dri med bshags rgyud, 29a2, 29a6–30a3*

(29a2) sku gsung thugs gi dngos grub thob par bgyid rgyu las | 'bad  
rtsol dang brtson 'grus chung ba mthol zhing bshags so | [gzhan yang  
sgrub pa khyad par gyi dam tshig nyi shu dang | spyod pa rgyun gyi  
dam tshig bzhi dang | rang bzhin lta ba'i dam tshig bzhi dang | gal  
mdo nges pa'i dam tshig gsum la sogs te nang pa thabs kyī rgyud  
gzhung las byung ba'i dam tshig rnams kyī bsrung mtshams mi shes  
shing | gzhung dang 'gal ba ci bgyis pa thams cad mthol zhing bshags  
so | ]

(29a6) gzhan yang bka' zab mo khyad du bsad de | skye bo rang thad  
kyi dbang gis nor dang gsug gi dbang tu btang ste | dkon mchog gsum  
gi

(29b) sku dgra la sngags zlog byas pa dang | pra ti ha na dus kyī  
mchod pa chen po la sngos pa dang | ma ha bo de la sogs pa dkon  
mchog gsum gyi dkor la thug thub bgyis nas spyad pa dang | sgom  
sgrub zab mo la bsngos pa la sogs pa | mchod pa'i yo byad thams cad  
la tshod yod bgyis te dngos su spyad pa dang | dbri gzhog bgyis te  
ngan song gi rgyu bsags pa mthol zhing bshags so | | [gzhan yang  
yan lag gi dam tshig stong rtsa brgyad las 'das te | ngan song 'khor  
ba'i rgyu bsags pa thams cad mthol zhing bshags so | |gzhan yang  
gsang sngags kyī sgor zhugs so 'tshal gyis | ma rig pa'i dbang gis dam  
tshig ngo ma 'tshal te | dam tshig nyams pa dang | las ngan sna tshogs  
spyad pas | sdug bsngal sna tshogs kyī rgyu bsags pa mthol zhing  
bshags so | ] nya stong dang | dus drug dang | dus bzhi la sogs pa dus  
dam du bcas pa las 'das te | dus las g.yal ba'i nyams chag thams cad  
mthol zhing bshags so | | [gzhan yang chos spyod bcu'i sgo nas | dge  
ba'i phyogs]

(30a) [bgyid par dam bcas pa las rngo ma thogs pa dang sdig pa mi  
dge ba'i las ci mchis pa thams cad mthol zhing bshags so |  
sgyu 'phrul ye shes rang snang gi lha la rtog pa mi mnga' yang |  
de'i 'khor du gtogs pa'i ye shes dang | las las grub pa'i nyes legs gi  
ltangs 'dzin cing dam tshig gi rjes gcod pa'i bstan pa gnyan po srung  
ba dang | chos skyong ba

### Observations

As has been remarked earlier, the most interesting variant we find in this section involves the several expansions of the text of the *tantra*, relative to our ms., and all involving the addition of some degree of specificity to the description of the acts for which contrition is practiced. A few additional points deserve some attention:

42a5: The ms. specifies that the object of “meditation and attainment” (*sgom sgrub*) is *ma ha sa ma ti*, presumably *mahāsamādhi*, which is dropped in the *tantra*. It seems at least plausible that this expression, *ma ha sa ma ti*, is the basis for later rNying ma explanations of the term *rdzogs chen* as a rendering of *mahāsandhi*, a phrase not, to my knowledge, attested in the Indian literature.

42b5: *ltang 'dzind*. The *tantra* conserves the orthography as *ltangs 'dzin*, whereas contemporary Tibetan orthography prefers *stangs 'dzin*.

### 3. To Conclude

It is always frustrating and sad to encounter a collection of torn and otherwise damaged manuscript folios, dispersed apart from the complete volumes that once contained them. One can only imagine how these lost books appeared when they were whole, and such ruminations inevitably bring forth a measure of longing and a sense of loss. Books have been damaged and scattered by fire and flood, revolution and war, or have crumbled in neglect without particular violence. All of this must be accepted as part of the ebb and flow of the life of the book, as of other conditioned things. What is more difficult to comprehend is the gratuitous dismemberment of the book, not owing to religious frenzy or political extremism, but solely to serve the market for decorative objects. This is, of course, a very widespread problem and by no means limited to the trade in Asian art. In New York City in the 80s and 90s, for example, I recall that antique print shops in lower Manhattan routinely augmented their stock with pages torn from the rare book collection of the New York Public Library.

There is some real value, therefore, when we find, as we do here, not just the few choice leaves, but an entire lot of manuscript folios. Though this is of course no substitute for the original books, we are sometimes nevertheless able to identify within such bundles several

parts of a single work, or patterns somehow linking diverse elements in the collection into larger coherent groupings. In this way, even a miscellaneous assortment of leaves may contribute to the growth of our historical knowledge of the Tibetan book. And when we are lucky, as was the case here, we may even find some folios that help to fill out our understanding of the development of a particular textual tradition.

As my earlier essay on the *Na rak* cycle indicated, there is some reason to believe that the cycle was codified within the Zur lineage during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. And in another study, concerning the corpus of rDzogs chen *tantras* to which the title *Bai ro rgyud 'bum* has been assigned, I suggested that it may have also had as its basis an earlier compilation transmitted through the Zur lineage in West Tibet.<sup>19</sup> Taken together, these offer hints of the role of the Zur tradition during the early second millennium in the elaboration of the corpus that later came to constitute the *rNying ma bka' ma*, together with the corresponding portions of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*. To clarify this still all too sketchy picture, however, a great deal more material relating to the early Zur lineages will need to be located. Perhaps the manuscripts and manuscript fragments from West Tibet and adjacent regions that have come to light in recent years will yield further evidence if examined critically with this in mind.



Fig. 23: Kimkara (?), fol. 32b

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<sup>19</sup> Kapstein 2008: 10.

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