

STUDIES IN INDIAN AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM

REASONS AND LIVES IN BUDDHIST TRADITIONS

Studies in Honor of Matthew Kapstein

Edited by
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The *Treasury of Kagyü Mantra*: A Nineteenth-Century Collection of Marpa's Tantric Teachings

Cécile Ducher

IN 1976 IN Kathmandu, the Sixteenth Karmapa transmitted a major set of empowerments, the *Treasury of Kagyü Mantra* (*Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod*, henceforth *Treasury*), to an assembly of a thousand followers. Among the few Westerners gathered in the Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery (*Bka' rnying bshad sgrub gling*) for the occasion was a young American devotee, Upāsaka Kamalaśīla, also known as Matthew Kapstein. He and another American, Vajranātha (John Reynolds), together wrote an unpublished, thirty-three-page “Introduction to the *Kadjy Ngakdzø*,” explaining in great detail where this set of initiations comes from, the meaning of the various phases of empowerments, and the visualizations of the deities the collection contains. Forty years later, this Kamalaśīla—by then the Directeur d'Étude at the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris—directed the present author's dissertation on the history of the Ngokpa Kagyü (*Rngog pa Bka' brgyud*) lineage, which relies heavily on the *Treasury*. In the course of the defense of that dissertation, Professor Kapstein stated that since he had had the great privilege of receiving these empowerments in 1976, all his work on tantrism and Tibetan rituals had been like footnotes to that experience. Although, as is common in the case of Tibetan literature, some degree of hyperbole cannot be excluded (as witnessed by the breath of Professor Kapstein's oeuvre), it is nonetheless a great pleasure for me to honor him with the following thoughts on the *Treasury*'s significance in Tibet's religious history, which includes a short overview of its contents.

Secret Mantrayāna occupies a central role in Tibetan Buddhism. Most Tibetan lineages are constituted by the transmission of empowerments, which are considered the entrance door to the Vajrayāna. Among the four main Tibetan orders that developed in Tibet, the Kagyü lineage traces back to a Tibetan translator, Marpa (Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, 1002?–1081?), famous for having received in India the transmission of several major highest yoga



Matthew Kapstein in Bodhgaya in 1976 for
the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod* empowerments.
Photo by Edward Henning

tantras (*niruttaratantra*, *bla na med pa'i rgyud*) from two of the most important masters of the time, Nāropa and Maitripa, and for having brought back to Tibet empowerments and instructions for these major tantras.¹ Marpa had four main disciples. One of them, Mi la ras pa (1028?–1111?), was followed by Sgam po pa (1079–1153), and from the latter all the Kagyü sub-orders developed.² Despite the preeminence of these Kagyü traditions today, Marpa's tantric teachings were also preserved by his other disciples, chief among them Rngog Chos rdor (1023–90) and Mtshur ston Dbang nge (eleventh century).³ Their lineages, however, did not survive as independent orders for more than a few centuries and, as a result, are not very well known. Because of this, several tantras that Marpa brought to Tibet and that were originally propounded

1. See Ducher 2017a, 301–6, for references to Marpa's lifespan.

2. Except for the Shangs pa Bka' brgyud, which comes from Khyung po rnal 'byor. See Sheehy article in the present volume for details.

3. For details on the Rngog lineage, see Ducher 2017b, especially pages 186–206, for an account of the life story and transmissions received by each of Mar pa's four main disciples.

by Rngog and Mtshur ston were on the verge of extinction by the nineteenth century. It was to avert their loss and to spread once more Marpa's traditions that the great nineteenth-century polymath Jamgön Kongtrul ('Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, 1813–99) compiled the *Treasury*. Thanks to Kongtrul's efforts and the subsequent continuation of his lineage, particularly in the Karma Kagyü and Drikung Kagyü orders, most of Marpa's traditions remain alive today, although some of them are very seldom practiced.

The Collection

The original volumes of the *Treasury* were xylographed in Dpal spungs, Kongtrul's monastery in eastern Tibet. There remain today in the old Dpal spungs printing house some woodblocks dating to that period. The collection was then organized in three bulky volumes. A copy of this original edition is now available in the Namgyal Institute in Gangtok (Sikkim, India). The volumes were divided into two and first republished as six volumes in India in 1974. A few years later, a calque of the Dpal spungs xylograph was ordered by Dil mgo Mkhyen rtse Rin po che, and this new edition was published in 1982 in eight volumes.⁴ This version, abridged here as *Treasury*, is the one described in the present article as it is the most widespread in the Tibetan and academic communities and has been reordered according to Kongtrul's catalogue, thus reflecting accurately the form Kongtrul intended to give to his work.⁵

As in his other treasuries, Kongtrul gathered many sources for his collection. The *Treasury* thus contains texts composed by Kongtrul, reprints of previous works by identified authors, and anonymous works. In the catalogue, Kongtrul states that his first sources are Indian texts. This refers to the tantras themselves as well as to the commentaries and rituals elaborated by Indian masters. These texts gave rise to various Indian traditions that were imported to Tibet and became the sources of the ensuing traditions. Marpa received his main tantric transmissions from several masters (the Padmavajra tradition of *Hevajra* from Nāropa, the Ārya tradition of *Guhyasamāja* from Jñānagarbha, the Kukuripa tradition of *Mahāmāyā* from Śāntibhadra, and so on) and again with key instructions from Nāropa and Maitripa. In the catalogue, Kongtrul

4. The last two volumes are additions by Dil mgo Mkhyen rtse on the transmission of Vajrapāṇi.

5. See a description of the various editions of the *Treasury* in Ducher 2017b, 74–77. Kongtrul's catalogue is 1:1–53. Other sources used in order to assess the collection are the records of teaching received by Mdil mgo Mkhyen rtse (*Gsung 'bum*, 25:48–66, TBRC.org ID: W21809) and Bdud 'joms Rinpoche (*Gsung 'bum*, 20:253–78, W20869).

then classifies his Tibetan sources in five chronological stages. His description reads as follows:⁶

1. First are the earliest Tibetan texts such as the *Mdo sbyar* and the *Gur gyi srog shing* by Marpa [commentaries on *Hevajra* and *Pañjara*]; the manuals composed by Rngog Mdo sde as well as his commentary on the *Hevajratantra*, called *Likeness of a Precious Ornament* (*Rin chen rgyan 'dra*); the *Collected Works* of Mgar and Rtsags [Rngog Mdo sde's main disciples]; the *Old Ngok Maṇḍalas* (*Rngog dkyil rnying*), manuals compiled by later Ngokpas such as Kun dga' rdo rje (1145–1222), Thogs med grags pa (1108–44), and Rin chen bzang po (1243–1319).⁷
2. The manuals composed by the Third Karmapa (1284–1339) on *Hevajra*, *Cakrasaṃvara*, *Guhyasamāja*, *Mahāmāyā*, and so on, and by his successors the Sixth Karmapa (1416–1453), the Seventh Karmapa (1454–1506), the Eighth Karmapa (1507–54), the Great 'Jam dbyangs from Mtshur phu (fourteenth to fifteenth centuries),⁸ and so on, represent the main Kam tshang tradition, in which many manuals on most tantras of the Mar Ngok tradition were composed.
3. The *Manuals on Ngok Maṇḍalas* (*Rngog dkyil yig cha*) composed by Lo chen Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1424–82) provide outlines and clarify practices on the basis of the *Old Ngok Maṇḍalas*. Based on them, the manuals of the Fourth Shamar (Zhwa dmar Chos grags ye shes, 1453–1524) have a wise vision endowed with the two forms of knowledge that thoroughly remove the stains of errors.
4. Tāranātha (1575–1634) cleaned the general hybridations and cross-overs in the Ngok practices and composed manuals that purely and unmistakably expound the Indian root texts and Marpa's interpretation.
5. Karma Chags med (1613–1618) summarized the extensive initiation

6. *Treasury*, 1:6–7. See transliteration in Ducher 2017b, 71–72. In the present translation, I use the widespread version of the authors' names rather than the alternative titles or names given by Kongtrul.

7. For details on the identity of these masters of the Rngog lineage, see Ducher 2017b, chap. II.3, pp. 222–327.

8. 'Jam dbyangs Don grub 'od zer, the abbot of Mtshur phu for forty-five years, was a disciple of the Fifth Karmapa (1384–1415) and a master of Lo chen Bsod nams rgya mtsho (Ehrhard 2002, 45–46).

texts of the *Old Ngok Maṇḍalas* and unified the self- and front-generation stages, thus speeding up the empowerment.

Although the empowerments and reading transmissions of the latter three are uninterrupted, I mainly based my renderings on the writings of the Fourth Shamar and of Tāranātha, which are unmissaken as to the meaning and have a majestic blessing.

Among the sources used by Kongtrul, many are now available and can thus be compared to the version included in the *Treasury*. For most maṇḍalas, the first texts written were the versions of rituals and commentaries composed within the Ngok lineage, that is to say by the descendants of Rngog Chos rdor, especially his son Rngog Mdo sde. They were the most prolific commentators of Marpa's tradition and are considered the main holders of his "exegetic lineage" (*bshad brgyud*), as opposed to Mi la ras pa's "practice lineage" (*sgrub brgyud*). Several volumes of commentaries and practice rituals composed by members of the Ngok family were found in the concealed library of 'Bras spungs's Gnas bcu Temple and have been published.⁹ The second phase is represented by various works dispersed in the collected works of the Karmapas. The third phase is represented by the writings of Lo chen Bsod nams rgya mtsho. He was a student of 'Gos Lo tsā ba, himself one of the major students of the last important Ngok master, Byang chub dpal (1360–1446). Lo chen was responsible, with his master 'Gos Lo tsā ba and the former's disciple, the Fourth Shamar, for the successful transition of the transmissions from the Ngok family to the other Kagyü lineages.¹⁰ Although stored in the Gnas bcu Temple, Lo chen's complete works have not been published yet. The writings of his disciple, the Fourth Shamar, are available and contain several rituals and commentaries related to the Ngok traditions, as are those of Tāranātha and Karma Chags med that similarly contain Ngok traditions. Among these, Kongtrul considers that the most appropriate cycles (that is to say the texts containing everything necessary for the practice of a specific tantra—empowerment ritual, main *sādhana* and related rites, as well as commentaries and explanations) are the ones by the Fourth Shamar and Tāranātha because they are loaded with spiritual influence, have the appropriate length, are easy to use, and are free of errors. He therefore used those as references, sometimes including the original documents in the *Treasury*, sometimes editing them in order to compose texts of his own.

9. Ducher 2017b, 40–47.

10. Ehrhard 2002, Fermer 2017, and Ducher 2017b, chap. II.4.

Its Contents

The contents of the six volumes of the *Treasury* can be divided into three groups that Kongtrul calls, respectively, the “initial virtue,” “middling virtue,” and “concluding virtue.” The main source of my presentation is Kongtrul’s catalogue of the *Treasury*—previously described in my dissertation on the Ngok history—as well as fieldwork in Bodhgaya undertaken in early 2018 that allowed me to witness the way the collection was handed over, thus combining textual and anthropological analysis.¹¹

For twenty days, Be ru Mkhjen rtse Rinpoché (b. 1947) led the actual transmission of this set of empowerments in his monastery.¹² Although the event was mainly dedicated to his son, the Fourth Kongtrul (born 1995), approximately seventy lamas and monks as well as forty Western and Asian disciples were in attendance. Be ru Mkhjen rtse prepared the empowerment of the day every morning, starting around 6:00 a.m., and transmitted it to the assembly in the afternoon. The transmission of the whole cycle started with the “initial virtue”—that is to say, the authorizations of practice for Marpa’s three special deities—on the first day. The empowerments for the fifteen major maṇḍalas of the collection, the “middling virtue,” began on the second day, with the preparation (*rta mgon*) for the Hevajra empowerment, the first of the yoginī tantras, followed on the next day by the actual transmission of Hevajra. The subsequent yoginī tantras were then transmitted each on one day, without a specific preparation day. Another day was dedicated to the preparation of the empowerment of the first mahāyoga tantra, the Guhyasamāja. It was followed by the actual empowerment of the Guhyasamāja and the other mahāyoga tantras on the following days. Authorizations of practice for Vajrapāṇi and other protectors were given on the penultimate day, and long-life deities on the last, thus combining in two days seven authorizations from both the “initial” and “final” virtues, the latter term referring to protectors. On some days reading transmissions (*lung*), generally related to the empowerment of the day, were

11. *Treasury*, 1:1–53. See the content of the collection in Ducher 2017b, 437–43, and a more detailed description of its history and content on pages 69–84 of the same.

12. Under the umbrella term *empowerment* are two kinds of transmissions. The *great empowerment* (*dbang* or *dbang chen*) matures the mind of the disciple and introduces him or her to the maṇḍala of a specific tantra by way of four initiations (vase, secret, wisdom, and name). “Authorizations of practices” (*rjes gnang*) authorize the disciple to practice a specific deity. As pointed out by Kongtrul (*Treasury*, 1:12.3–4), one cannot receive an authorization fully without having previously had one’s mind matured by an empowerment. Hence he advises to start with the Hevajra empowerment, in case the disciple has not received any empowerment yet.

offered, but the complete *lung* of the *Treasury* was not transmitted during the event.

The Initial Virtue

The first of the six volumes contains what Kongtrul considers auspicious for a beginning—that is to say, the transmissions for the long-life deities of White Tārā and Amitāyus. It also includes the cycles associated to Marpa’s three special deities—Uṣṇīṣavijaya, Green Tārā, and Vajrasattva from King Jaḥ. Although Vajrapāṇi is counted among the “thirteen highest yoga tantras” from the middling virtue, the ritual included by Kongtrul is an authorization of practice coming from the collection compiled by the Ninth Karmapa, “Knowing One Liberates All” (*Cig shes kun grol*), not a complete empowerment. The reason it figures within the initial virtue is to dispel obstacles.

Kongtrul also includes in the initial virtue a “ritual for worshiping the master” (*bla ma mchod pa’i cho ga*) in order, he says, “to open the doors of blessing.” This particular practice, composed by Gling ras pa (1128–88), is mostly constituted of praises and verses of offering and is considered spoken by Vajradhara himself. In his supplement to the text, Kongtrul states that Gling ras pa clarifies the meaning of three Indian scriptures as well as of the instructions of Nāropa and Tilopa, as they were mediated by Marpa. Thus this specific text fits as an introduction for transmissions of the Indian esoteric treasury that Marpa imported to Tibet.¹³

The Middling Virtue

Volumes 2 to 5 contain the heart of the collection: fifteen transmissions associated with “thirteen highest yoga tantras.” In traditional accounts given by Tibetan masters, these thirteen tantras are paradigmatic of Marpa’s teaching. In fact, not all of them come from Marpa, and only twelve tantras are contained in the middling virtue of the *Treasury*; the thirteenth, Vajrapāṇi,

13. *Treasury*, 1:480: *rgya gzhung gsum gyi bstan don te lo nā ro’i gdams ngag mar pa las brgyud cing gling rje ras pas gsal bar mdzad pa bla ma mchod pa’i cho ga* [...]. I thank Matthew Kapstein for pointing out to me how strange it might seem at first glance to include this particular practice in the collection (one could have expected a guruyoga of Marpa for instance) and for clarifying, a few weeks later, why, after all, it was not odd at all, substantiating his opinion by solid lines of arguments, though not the exact quotes underlying them. After ten years of studying with him, I learned this is the way of great teachers: setting the question in an enigmatic manner, letting the student look for answers, answering himself the question in a slightly less enigmatic fashion, and letting the student search further in order to understand the answer.

is only partially presented, since Kongtrul only provides the authorization of practice. It is included in volume 1, since it generally contains the initial virtue.¹⁴

The term *tantra* is the general designation of a text of (usually) Indian origin. It can be a *root* tantra (the *Two Segments* for instance, under which name the root *Hevajratantra* is known) or an *explanatory* tantra (the *Vajrapañjāratantra* for instance, which is the uncommon explanatory tantra of the *Hevajratantra*).

The same tantra can include multiple maṇḍalas, which explains why several transmissions can develop on the basis of a single tantra. For instance, the *Treasury* contains two maṇḍalas associated with the *Hevajratantra*, that of the main male deity, Hevajra, and that of his consort, Nairātmyā. Similarly, the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra* and *Catuṣpīṭhatantra* are associated with two maṇḍalas, centered on the male and female figures of these tantras.

When tantras spread in India, they were practiced by people who gained “accomplishments” (*siddhis*), which is why they were called *siddhas*. These *siddhas* created specific rites associated with these tantras, which gave rise to “traditions” (*lugs*, also called *bka’ srol*). The practice of Hevajra, for instance, developed in eight main traditions in India. In Tibet, it flourished in the tradition that Marpa received from Nāropa and in the one that ’Brog mi Lo tsā ba received from Gayādhara, initially coming from Virūpa.¹⁵ The main traditions included in the *Treasury* are Marpa’s and are thus associated with his masters Nāropa, Maitripa, Śāntibhadra, and their own masters. These traditions are particularly famous for their pith instructions (practical instructions given from master to disciple), considered to be particularly efficient for reaching *siddhis*.

Each cycle included in the *Treasury* comprises several texts that Kongtrul chose from among a large pool of rites and commentaries penned by the authors mentioned above.¹⁶ In general, there is for each cycle an empowerment rite used by the vajra master when empowering a disciple to practice a specific tantra. The empowerment consists of several phases through which the disci-

14. This may be one of the reasons for the inclusion by Dil mgo mkhyen rtse of an actual empowerment in volume 7 of the 1982 edition.

15. Kongtrul 2008, 161–66, and Sobisch 2008, 30–49.

16. In the collection, there are 126 texts. Out of these, seventy were authored by Kongtrul (55.6 percent), thirty-seven by other identified authors (29.3 percent), two are tantras (1.6 percent), and sixteen (13.5 percent) are anonymous. Among texts by other authors, five come from Tāranātha, but none come from the Fourth Zhwa dmar or Karma Chags med. Most others were composed by Karma Kagyü hierarchs, three by Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), and eight by Rngog masters.

ple is introduced to the maṇḍala of the deities and is thus empowered by their spiritual strength. It corresponds to the *path of maturation* (*smin lam*). Once a disciple is empowered, he or she can practice the deities in question, thus following the *path of liberation* (*grol lam*). The latter is divided into two phases, the *creation phase* (*bskyed rim*) and the *perfection phase* (*rdzogs rim*).¹⁷

The creation phase is practiced by means of various ritual texts. The most common is the practice ritual called a *sādhana* (*sgrub thabs*, literally “methods of practice”); this is the text a practitioner uses to practice the deity he or she has been empowered to embody. Rituals can be of several types, depending on the aim of the practice, and can be more or less extensive. There can be further rites aimed at specific activities, such as fire offerings (*sbyin sreg*). Kongtrul includes rituals for the creation phase and instructions (*khrid*) on the perfection phase for the main transmissions associated with Marpa, excepting those related to the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra*, which, he says, are well preserved elsewhere.

According to Kongtrul, the tantras of the middling virtue are all of the highest yoga tantra class. Although many systems of teaching were introduced in Tibet by various translators and paṇḍitas, the ones gathered in the *Treasury* trace back to Marpa and his main disciples, Rngog Chos rdor (the seven maṇḍalas), Mtshur ston (Guhyasamāja and Buddhakapāla) and Mi la ras pa (Cakrasaṃvara). They were later propagated in all Kagyü schools, foremost among them the Karma and ’Bri gung.

A traditional distinction in highest yoga tantras is between tantras that focus particularly on methods (*thabs*)—called “father” (*pha rgyud*), or *mahāyoga* tantras—and those that focus particularly on wisdom (*shes rab*), the “mother” (*ma rgyud*), or *yoginī* tantras.¹⁸ Most of Marpa’s transmissions (*Hevajra*, *Cakrasaṃvara*, *Buddhakapāla*, *Mahāmāyā*, and *Catuṣpīṭha*) are yoginī tantras. These are further divided in “families” (*rigs*). The first four belong to the Akṣobhya family. The fifth, *Catuṣpīṭha*, to the Vairocana family.

The first three transmissions in the collection (the Hevajra maṇḍala with nine deities, the Nairātmyā maṇḍala with fifteen deities and the Pañjāra one with five Hevajra maṇḍalas relating to the five buddha families, hence forty-nine deities) belong to the Hevajra cycle. The perfection phase associated with it is called *merging and transference* (*bsre ’pho*). Hevajra was Marpa’s main practice and is the one expounded in most detail in the *Treasury*.

Four maṇḍalas (Peaceful Cakrasaṃvara Vajrasattva from the *Saṃputatantra*, Five-Deity Cakrasaṃvara and Five-Deity Vajravārāhī from the

17. Kongtrul 2005, 203.

18. For a less traditional presentation, see Isaacson and Sferra 2015.

Cakrasaṃvara Root Tantra, and Six-Cakravartin *Cakrasaṃvara* from the *Abhidhānottaratantra*) are associated with the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra*. Their perfection phase is called the Six Dharmas of Nāropa (*nā ro chos drug*). Following in the footsteps of Mi la ras pa and many of the Karmapas, most practitioners of the various Kagyü schools rely on *Cakrasaṃvara* as their main practice, and this practice is therefore not on the verge of extinction. For this reason, Kongtrul does not include instructions on the topic in the collection.

Mahāmāyā is expounded through both the main maṇḍala with five deities and instructions on the perfection phase,¹⁹ as is *Buddhakapāla*, with a maṇḍala of twenty-five deities and its perfection phase.²⁰ As far as *Catuṣpīṭha* is concerned, there are the two maṇḍalas of Yogāmbara (the male deity) and Jñānaḍākinī (the female deity) together with the perfection phase of that tantra.²¹

After the yoginī tantras, Kongtrul includes in volumes 4 and 5 two transmissions of Marpa that belong to the mahāyoga class, namely *Guhyasamāja* and the *Nāmasaṃgīti*. Tantras in that class are distinguished according to the three poisons—desire, ignorance, and anger. *Guhyasamāja* belongs to the desire class. The cycle expounded in the *Treasury* is that of *Guhyasamāja* with thirty-three deities of the Ārya Nāgārjuna tradition, together with its perfection phase, called the Five Stages (*rim lnga*). This transmission was especially cherished by Marpa and carried a particularly high symbolic capital in Tibet in the eleventh century, as demonstrated by the fact that most of Marpa's biographies insist on his eagerness to be one of the first to spread it widely in Tibet.

The *Nāmasaṃgīti*, or *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, is one of the most central tantras in Tibet, and there exist several traditions, associated with all classes of tantras. The one in the *Treasury* is said to belong to the mahāyoga class and to be related to ignorance. Although the transmission Marpa received from Maitripa indeed belongs to that class, Rngog Chos rdor also received the *Nāmasaṃgīti* from other masters. The particular tradition he spread is called *Gsang ldan*.²² It comes from Vilāsavajra and is generally associated with the yoga tantra level.²³

Kongtrul includes two more mahāyoga cycles in order to cover the “anger

19. Described in Kongtrul 2008, 183–86.

20. Kongtrul 2008, 186–87.

21. Kongtrul 2008, 179–82.

22. The Sanskrit version of *Gsang ldan*, if one is to believe the Sanskrit title (in Tibetan letters) provided in Agrabodhi's commentary (Dergé 2584, 63:214), may be *Guhyāpanna. This is the name given in most publications. As it is not attested, the Tibetan appellation is kept here (see Ducher 2017b, 114).

23. Tribe 2016.

type,” although these transmissions do not come from Marpa. These are the cycles of Five-Deity Yamāntaka according to Virūpa’s tradition and Nine-Deity Vajrabhairava according to Mal Lo tsā ba’s tradition. Only the practice and empowerment rituals are included in the *Treasury*, without any specific perfection phase.

At the end of the fifth volume are several Marpa Kagyü rituals that do not rely on one tantra in particular but explain more general aspects of Marpa’s transmissions such as *gaṇacakras* (*tshogs mchod*, more generally called *tshogs ’khor*), consecrations (*rab gnas*), empowerments, and so on. Kongtrul does not explicitly mention these texts in the catalogue, hence they tend to be displaced or lost in the various editions.

The Final Virtue

The sixth volume contains four cycles of protective deities, two of them particularly associated with Marpa. One of these is Vajramahākāla, also called Tent Protector (*gur mgon*). *Gur*, “tent,” is a translation of the Sanskrit *pañjara* and refers to the fact that he is the protector of the *Pañjaratantra*. This transmission is also known as the “aural transmission of Marpa” (*mar pa’i / lho brag pa’i snyan rgyud*) because it was “very secret.” The other is the cycle of Dud sol ma.²⁴ Although her cult is initially derived from the *Catuṣpīṭhatantra*, she became the central protective deity of the Mar Ngok teachings, hence of most of the transmissions collected in the *Treasury*, chief among them *Hevajra*.

Another cycle, not particularly related to Marpa, is that of the wisdom-protector Four-Armed Mahākāla with thirteen deities. It comes from the tradition of Rgwa Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (twelfth century) and is one of the main Karma Kagyü protectors. Closing the collection are a few texts related to the five Bkra shis Tshe ring ma, a group of female protectors particularly associated with Mi la ras pa and the “lineage of practice.”

Legacy

Kongtrul completed the first version of the *Treasury* in the summer of 1854.²⁵ He then revised the collection several times (in 1856, 1881, and 1886), enriching it with the new transmissions he was receiving from various masters. He transmitted it completely for the first time in the spring of 1860 to the Fourteenth Karmapa (1798–1868) and again to the Fifteenth Karmapa (1871–1922) in his

24. Her name in Sanskrit is Dhūmāṅgārī (see Ducher 2017b, 110n385).

25. All the data in this paragraph comes from Barron 2003.

hermitage of Tsa 'dra in 1887. On the latter occasion, so many lamas came to receive the transmission that the hermitage was completely full. Another occasion was in 1882, when 'Jam dbyangs Blo gter dbang po (1847–1914), the abbot of Ngor Thar rtse Monastery, sojourned in Tsa 'dra for several months, also receiving Kongtrul's *Treasury of Instructions* (*Gdams ngag mdzod*) and several other transmissions. Blo gter dbang po was a disciple of 'Jam dbyangs Mkhyen rtse dbang po (1820–92). Together they compiled a massive collection of rituals, the *Compendium of Sādhana*s (*Sgrub thabs kun btus*), and Blo gter dbang po later collected an even more massive set of tantric transmissions, the *Compendium of Tantras* (*Rgyud sde kun btus*). Both collections rely on the *Treasury of Kagyü Mantra* for Marpa's traditions, reproducing the commentaries and rituals authored by Kongtrul.²⁶ In all, Kongtrul transmitted the complete collection on seven occasions, thus ensuring its diffusion and playing an instrumental role in the revival of Tibetan Buddhism in eastern Tibet. He describes in his *Autobiography* how during his life he actively collected and practiced all transmissions available, many of which were on the verge of disappearance. He systematized them in his *Five Treasuries* and taught them widely and repeatedly to those that requested them. Thanks to these colossal efforts, many traditions, including Marpa's, were effectively saved. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, many Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya masters from Kham fled Tibet. Some, like the Sixteenth Karmapa (1924–81), Bdud 'joms Rin po che, and Dil mgo Mkhyen rtse Rin po che, held these traditions and transmitted them in exile to fellow Tibetans and to Westerners and also republished the precious sets of texts they had brought with them. Thus Marpa's tradition even survived the tribulations Tibet suffered in the twentieth century.

Despite the importance of the *Treasury* as the representative of Marpa's teaching, it is far from being well known today. No Western study goes beyond a general outline of contents, and very few individuals practice the central transmissions of the collection, *Hevajra* and *Nairātmyā*, let alone other cycles such as *Mahāmāyā* and *Catuṣpīṭha*. The present contribution is a mere scratching of the surface of the oceanic wealth contained in the collection. Fruitful future endeavors may include clarifying the specificities of Marpa's transmissions, particularly when compared to those developed by Mi la ras pa, Sgam

26. Blo gter dbang po commissioned a set of paintings of the 139 maṇḍalas of the *Rgyud sde kun btus*. Hiroshi Sonami—the Ngor abbot who brought these paintings into exile in the 1960s—and Musashi Tachikawa published schemas of these maṇḍalas in 1989 and 1991, and Tachikawa, together with Ragu Vira and Lokesh Chandra, also took part in the publication of line drawings of the 139 maṇḍala in 2006. These reproductions are helpful tools to visualize the specificities of the Rngog transmissions as they are codified in the *Treasury* (see, for instance, Bsod rnam rgya mtsho and Tachikawa 1989).

po pa, and their heirs on the one hand and, on the other, to those traditions of the same deities whose lineage did not go through Marpa.

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