The Theory and Practice of lCags-kyi-sdong-po in the Northern Treasure Branch of rNying-ma School

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1. Introduction

In this paper, I address the issue of the interpretation of Tibetan “lCags-kyi-sdong-po” for the meditative techniques described in the Longevity Practice of the Iron-Stalk (hereafter, CD). According to the hagiographico-biographical literature, the great Thang-stong fascinated all who knew him, so that six biographies written by his intimates are known so far. These accounts of the adept’s life are largely hagiographical in nature but offering enough data to reconstruct how he had attained the CD practice. The present article seeks to remain faithful to the six biographies as far as possible. Among them, my key textual witnesses are:

1. Ocean of Marvels (S), written during 1485–1517 by his direct disciple Shes-rab-dpal-ldan (TBRC#P7844).
2. Jewel Mirror in Which All Is Clear (G), completed in 1609 at Ri-bo-che by Lo-chen 'Gyur-med-bde-chen (TBRC#P644), who inherited Thang-stong’s lineage. Stearns (2007: 9) reasoned that G was ‘essentially an edited and abridged synthesis of’ the earlier five works, which is clearly shown in a variant title of G (Marvels in the Five Biographies Are All Clear). A famous example of this synthesis version of biography would be (e.g. TBRC# P7844).

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adept (महासिद्ध mahāsiddha) Thang-stong-rgyal-po (དབང་ISOString) 1361–1485? TBRC#P2778; hereafter, Thang-stong) was said to have a formidable lifespan of roughly 125 years. This incredible good fortune had been prophesied by Guru Padmasambhava (fl. ca. 8c; TBRC#P4956), who predicted that the Guru’s mental emanation (སྲུང་པོ་ རྒྱལ་པོ i.e. Thang-stong) would be born out of compassion for all sentient beings and would attain longevity as a result of his perfection of meditative techniques. One of the techniques he employed, according to detailed accounts, is the CD. Through the longevity practice (āyuḥ-śādhanā; TBRC#T27) Thang-stong perfected the attainment of immortality.
to cultivate life-long devotion to altruistic acts, e.g. building iron suspension bridges over hundreds of rivers.

Belonging to the “mind-sādhana (心續)" (Thondup, 1986: 120) cycle of the Northern treasure (北藏) branch of the rNying-ma school, this ritual is highly esoteric. The CD in fact is a hidden treasure teaching practised by Guru Padmasambhava himself to achieve immortality. The reason Padmasambhava hid the teaching was primarily practical. According to his prophecies (預言), in order to remove obstacles to achieve longevity during the period of the spread of fivefold degeneracy, he concealed the treasure formulated to benefit rGod-kyi-ldem- phru-can (噶瑪巴墀巴沃桑馬巴拉) 1337–1408; TBRC# P5254), the founder of the Byang-gter tradition. Then, rGod-kyi-ldem- phru-can, the upholder of the pure awareness (金刚持, 身法成就) of the longevity practice, gained the power to purify his ordinary body and transform it into a subtle body, which is immortal (金刚持, 身法成就).

As for the Iron Tree (The Heart Practice cycle of Gökyi Demtruchen’s treasures for sustaining the essence of life through meditation on Amitābha, Amitāyus, and Hayagrīva). Including the rGod-kyi-ldem- phru-can discovered from a cave.

The present state of my knowledge, it would be more reasonable to limit myself to mentioning only as an empowerment (灌頂, 願成) of the Heart Practice (The Eastern/The Southern/The Western/The Northern/The Central gTer-ma Cycles) occurs in various literature (e.g. 金刚持), see Thondup (1986: 115).


is one of the four levels of 身法成就, cf. TD 2282. Dharmachakra (2006: 191) explains about (knowledge holder with power over longevity): ‘This level of attainment occurs on the path of seeing, where the support present in the supreme state transforms into a clear, vajralike body, while the mind matures into the wisdom of the path of seeing and, as a result, one attains a state of freedom from birth and death’. For 身法成就, i.e. (1) (2) (3) (4) 身法成就, see TD 2685–2686; Dharmachakra (2006: 184).
The aim of this paper is to inquire into the interpretation of the phrase “X(7+k/...), as well as the meditative techniques in the literary work of the CD. I argue that it played a key role in Thang-stong’s “Iron-Bridge pathways to enlightenment (X("7+O&), later also known as the “Thang-stong tradition (X("7+O&)) or “Iron-Bridge tradition (X("7+O&)). In the Introduction (1.) I provide a summary of the literature review undertaken for this paper. I explain the context and content of the CD (1-1.) with a focus on the prophecies about CD from both the CD itself and the hagiographies (1-2.). Following this introductory section, the second chapter (2.) delineates the interpretation of the phrase “X(7+k/...” and sequentially discusses the terms “X("7+O&—” (2-1.) and the terms “X("7+O&—” (2-2.) with reference to some instances from CD, along with the related longevity practice and also from the hagiographies. Finally, after outlining the two main key factors in the phrase, I propose a concept which exposes the main set of the theory and practice of the “X("7+O&” (2-3.) in CD.

1-1. Brief Bibliographical Remarks about CD

The Longevity Practice of the Iron-Stalk (CD) belongs to the Heart Praxis revelation of the Byang-gter lineage. To the best of my knowledge this sādhana practice has not yet been critically edited, nor been translated into any European language. CD is part of the so-called gTer-ma (treasure teaching) literature, said to preserve the words of Guru

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8 This claim is already made by Kahlen (1994: 307) as “built philosophy”, physically helping the living ones to trespass rivers and canyons, and spiritually reminding of “helping to cross ignorance and other obstacles”. Depending on the hagiographies, the phrase “X("7+O&” has some variant forms (see Shinga, 2017), but the standard texts follow the term as used here.

9 Nor has it been translated into both classical and modern Chinese or Japanese. The esoteric nature of the text might provide one explanation for its neglect. Including CD, most of the longevity practice that Thang-stong had performed is compiled into very readable volumes such as X("7+O& (CD_1); X("7+O& (CD_2).
Padmasambhava. It is recognisable by the gTer-shad (བཤེོས་བོད། རྡོ་), which are sometimes ‘used improperly to mark the subsidiary commentaries and associated rituals as well’ (Gyatso, 1996: 158). As the title of the Opening Chapter (ཆོས་མོད་མ། བཤེོས་བོད། རྡོ་) shows, this sādhana practice might be well known with the variant “ཆོས་མོད་མ། བཤེོས་བོད། རྡོ་” (TBRC#T522). “བཤེོས་བོད།” appears only once in the Opening Chapter. Naturally, it seems to be a nominalised form of “བཤེོས་བོད།” so that the variant reading here may not alter the significance and meaning of “བཤེོས་བོད།”.10

As Almogi (2005: 37) explains, the Opening Chapter (ཆོས་མོད) is a Tibetan ‘genre category of lists of contents’. In fact, the འབོད། in CD methodically arranges the contents in topical outlines (གཙོ་བོ།) that constitute a complex nested hierarchy of three sādhana practices, i.e. the Outer, Inner, and Secret (ཐ་ད་ད་ན་འབོད། ཀྱི་གཙོ་བོ། ང་གཙོ་བོ།), extending into eleven sections (ཆོས་མོད་གཙོ་བོ། see Table 1).12

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10 A famous example of this nominalisation can be referred to བཤེོས་བོད། (བཤེོས་པ་ into རྡོ་) work done by Tsong-kha-pa (ཆོས་ཀྲ་བོ་ TBRC#P64).

11 “ཐ་ད་ད་ན་” or “ཐ་ད་ད་ན་” literally means “inscription above a door”, cf. TD 1186; TBRC#T4C2366.

12 CD_1 513,3; CD_2 247,3: ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་ བཤེོས་པ་འབོད། ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་འབོད། ཁོ་བོ་བོད་ The exact six chapter titles shown both in the CD_1 and CD_2 slightly differ: (#1) ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་འབོད། (#2) ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་ བཤེོས་པ་འབོད། (#3) ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་ བཤེོས་པ་འབོད། (#4) ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་འབོད།, [བཅོམ་མ།] CD_2; [བཅོམ་མ།] #5, CD_1 sequences #5 before #4) ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་ [བཅོམ་མ།] CD_2; [བཅོམ་མ།] CD_1] (#6) ཁོ་བོ་བོད། བཤེོས་པ་
In CD, both Amitāyus (passim.: 甘露妙音 “Limitless Life”) and Amitābha (CD_1 521,6; CD_2 252,4: 甘露妙音 “Limitless Light”) are thought to be the towering deities who are the objects of veneration (甘露法王). The definition for them seems to be quite similar, and thus can easily be confused. Indeed, it seems that Guru Padmasambhava does not clearly distinguish between Amitāyus and Amitābha. Nonetheless, Amitāyus appears throughout the longevity practice, and thus this peculiar doctrine easily extends to him, one of the three deities of long-life (甘露法王). Amitābha seems simply to represent one of the pañca buddhā (甘露法王), insofar as the

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13 For a recent full study on the names of Amitābha/Amitāyus, see Nattier (2006; 2007).
14 A symbolic interpretation of the three deities of long-life (甘露法王), cf. TD 2284: (1) Amitāyus (甘露妙音) (2) White Tārā (甘露妙音) (3) Vijaya (甘露法王).
Sāṃbhogakāya manifests itself in the form of the Nirmāṇakāya (see Table 2 and also Section 2-1-1. below).

1-2. Prophecies about CD

The gTer-ma literature often has gained its legitimacy by prophesying and performing practices that have been handed down from guru to disciple for many generations to this day. As I have argued elsewhere (Shinga, 2016), the *Bright Lamp of the Future Prophecy* (མི་ཕྲོན་ལྡེ་བྱུང་ནག་གསང་བྱུང་བཞིན་མེད), a biographical prophecy (མི་ཕྲོན་ལྡེ་བྱུང་ཐབས་) traditionally ascribed to Guru Padmasambhava, which is embedded in the hagiographies of Thang-stong (G), has predicted the future discoverers as ‘this longevity practice (i.e. CD) will be certainly performed by the person who ...’.

One could certainly take these prophecies as ‘the central legitimating device of the Treasure; it proves, or attempts to prove, that the cycle was not authored by the discoverer but rather was formulated by Padmasambhava in the past’ (Gyatso, 1996: 159). This purports to explain, under his/her own predestined revelation, the lives of treasure discoverers (ལོ་ཐོམ་ཤེས་) consciously or subconsciously designated by the prophecies. The point is that the prophecies have always seen reason and wisdom as to be out of compassion for the suffering beings in a degenerate age.

CD_1 512,2; CD_2 246,2: This *Longevity Practice of the Iron-Stalk* (ཆོས་གྲུབ་ སྤྱི་སྦྱི་ཁྱོད་ནི CD) was concealed by nobody other than I (མ་འབྲོག་མ་), Guru Padmasambhava, for the merit of the future one who has the aptitude [for cultivating this practice. ...] The secret consort of Guru Padmasambhava, whose secret name was “Goddess Cañḍālī (ཆོག་གས་)”, came and wrote the Heart-Sphere of Padmasambhava (ཐོག་མཐོང་ཆོས་བོད་དྭགས་) in the symbolic

15 See CD_1 516,4; CD_2 248,5 (the following renders only with a custom format and omits the variant elements): གུལ་བའི་དྲི་བར་གས་པོ་བཞིན་གཉིས་དུས་ རེ་བཞིན་མཚན་ནས་སྤྱི་སྦྱི་ཁྱོད་ནི CD

16 Note that ‘the great majority of Treasure discoverers were men, as far as we know. One female discoverer was Jo mo sMan mo (thirteenth century)’ see Gyatso (1996: 163n10).
language of the dākinīs. At the waist (ि) of a rocky mountain coiling like poisonous snakes in the Northern Tho-yor Nag-po (ि), [the treasure text] is hidden (ि) in a casket of maroon rhinoceros hide. During the spread of fivefold degeneracy, the awareness holder rGod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can, the destined (ि) secret yogin, will appear in the East of Ri-bo bKra-bzang. This treasure (i.e. CD) will be certainly performed by him (i.e. rGod-kyi-ldem-'phru-can). E-ma-ho! The fortunate son of Guru Padmasambhava.17

This passage clearly implies that the CD was concealed (ि) by Guru Padmasambhava for the person who would perform the treasure teaching (ि) during the spread of fivefold degeneracy.18 Most probably aimed at maintaining the blessing powers afresh, the gTer-ma literature was written in the symbolic language of the dākinīs, so that it well preserves distinctive features of the “Heart-Sphere (ि)” (Gyatso, 1996: 149) of Padmasambhava.19

17 CD_1 512,2; CD_2 246,2: मणिले नमस्कारवांगसतीश्वरे के दुर्गासुंदरी कृतिशशी | द्वारा कीमती बैरोदिक | न दाड़ी बाँटाये बाँटे नियामक | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृतिशशी | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृतिशशी | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुं�री कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1 | कृति दुर्गासुंदरी कृति | [क्रोधी] 2; क्रोधी 1

18 For the five defilements (cf. MVy#2335: पाणिका काशायाḥ; 五濁名目) of the world, cf. भूमिका (385–433) 譯『菩薩地持經 (*Bodhisattvabhūmi-sūtra)』 T1581.30.928c21–23: 所謂五濁。一曰命濁。二曰衆生濁。三曰煩惱濁。四曰見濁。五曰劫濁。The fast (ि) occurs when the lifespan of human beings becomes limited to a hundred years (928c23–24: 謂今世短壽人極壽百歲。是名命濁). The eidos of the world is quite common to the Buddhist perspective, especially the world in the “end-age (ि)”. Thondup (1986: 236n122) gives us an intriguing interpretation of this ‘The present time of war, disease, famine and emotional struggles might be a golden age for science and technology, but to spiritual eyes it might be the end-age’.

19 As for the Eight Pronouncements (ि) of Padmasambhava: (1) वरजें | वरजें (2) तद्भवं (3) कृत्रिमात्माः (4) सुनिश्चितं (5) विश्वासहृदयं. }
Just as predicted, the awareness holder (रिङ्ग्रजै’lla’ vidyādharā) rGod-kyi-ldem-’phru-can (1337–1408) appeared in the East of Ri-bo bKra-bzang, where Thang-stong was bestowed the CD from the Great Anchorite (gter-ston) Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan. Withdrawn from the secular society, both the secret yogin (gter-ston) rGod-kyi-ldem-’phru-can and the religious hermit rGod-kyi-ldem-’phru-can left us few sources that describe their accomplishments. We are left to deduce about what types of transmissions need to be made for the above figures in detail. It may suffice here to say that, according to CD and G, Guru Padmasambhava intended to bestow this Byang-gter practice to the gTer-stons most certainly through the Mind-mandate Transmission (bka’-’gter). Because he recognised the CD as his Heart-Sphere. The particular of the authenticity and transmission has been studied by Thondup (1986: 101–110), who devotes considerable attention to gTad-rgya as the Guru recognised the gTer-stons ‘as his own regents and blessed them to tame the beings of the end-age’ (Thondup, 1986: 103; 236n121–122). The biographical literature (gter-ston) of Thang-stong supports this point in many places. In fact, G can be based on provenance of the CD, which makes it distinctive and relevant to the purpose of this discussion.

Table 3: A rough lineage

| Guru Padmasambhava | rGod-kyi-ldem-’phru-can | Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan | Thang-stong |

20 Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan seems to have played a special role from a very early time in Thang-stong’s life. The Great Anchorite not only attended Thang-stong’s birthday celebration but also gave him the name “Khro-bo-dpal-Ldan (ख्रो-བོ-དཔལ-ཐླན)”, see Shinga (2017).
When the Great Anchorite Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan was living at the sacred place (གནོད་བཞིན་) of Ri-bo bKra-bzang, in an evening (ཞིན་), many treasure-owners (སྦྱངས་པའི་འབྲིང་།) such as Ekajati [deity] and others actually came right before the Great Anchorite Hermit (གཞལ་བྲེས་རིག་པ་) performing the tenth day rituals (ཆེན་པོ་). [They] told [Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan]: ‘The owner of the Dharma (ཆོས་རྣམས་) i.e. Thang-stong) is coming to get (འཇིག་རྟེན་བྱེད་པ་) [the Dharma], so give (དེ་དག་) [him] absolutely everything in the texts (བོད་དཔེ་དགུ་བསྟན་པ་)’.

In the middle of the night, Rishi Rāhula (རྒྱལ་ཏུ་མཐའ་) appeared and (སྡེ་བསྡུར་) announced: ‘A noble man [called] “the Great Magician (སྲུང་ཁྱེང་),” the Iron-Bridge Man (ཁྲུང་བུར་འཚབ་)” who is a mental emanation (ཁྲུང་བུར་འཚབ་) of the [Teacher of] Uddiyāna, is coming smoothly (ངོ་བོ་) to to

For Ekajati (G_3 49,1; G_4 47,19: ཡ་ཁ་མ་), MVy#4277 gave ‘Eka-ja-ti; གས་(‘) གཅིག་ལ་’ རྱེ་བདག་; ཤབ་བདག་’, see also BHSGD 152; MW 228 (Ekajatā). Stearns’ interpretation of the word provides more detail about the deity: ‘Ekajati (E ka dza ti) is the main protectress of the Great Perfection teachings and is considered to be an emanation of Samantabhadrī (Kun tu bzang mo). A treasure-owner (སྦྱངས་པའི་འབྲིང་།) is a deity who has been entrusted with a hidden treasure (སྦྱངས་པའི་འབྲིང་།), see Stearns (2007: 503n396). The Ekajatā/Ekajati is a ferocious form of Tārā, see Getty (1962: 125): ‘Ekajatā, the blue Tārā, is the most powerful of all the goddesses, for even to listen to her mantra repeated destroys all obstacles, brings good luck and intense religious enjoyment ... [Ekajatā] is one of the most terrifying manifestations in the Mahāyāna pantheon’.

G_4 48,2: In the middle of the night, Rishi Rāhula (རྒྱལ་ཏུ་མཐའ་) appeared and (སྡེ་བསྡུར་) announced: ‘A noble man [called] “the Great Magician (སྲུང་ཁྱེང་),” the Iron-Bridge Man (ཁྲུང་བུར་འཚབ་)” who is a mental emanation (ཁྲུང་བུར་འཚབ་) of the [Teacher of] Uddiyāna, is coming smoothly (ངོ་བོ་) to
this sacred place on the tenth day of next month. [You (Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan),] prepare well (་གསལ་བཤད་པ་ནི་གནོད་དུ་)

G_3 49.2; G_4 48.5: At about daybreak (་བོད་ཀྱི་དྲི་ལྷ་), the Great
[Teacher of] Uddiyāna with bright white crystals (སྒྲོན་དྭངས་གཅིག་བོད་ཀྱི་) surrounded by many dākinīs (མྱེ་བྱེ་བོད་ཀྱི་) appeared, and said: ‘It’s me who hid (་བོད་ཀྱི་) the Dharma teachings you (Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan) have as
treasures. I (Guru Padmasambhava) am staying (ཁོ་) in this land of Tibet for
up to (་བོད་ཀྱི་) 180 years to support (སྤྲོལ་) disciples. Hand over (སྤྲོལ་) the
Dharma treasures to me (my incarnation, i.e. Thang-stong).’ [After telling this
to Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan, Padmasambhava] vanished (ལགས་པ་)

G_3 49.4; G_4 48.9: [Then Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan] told [his] attendants (དོན་
དབང་མཚན་): ‘The fully ordained monk (དཔེ་བཞི། གློག་) [with the holy name of]
“brTson-'grus”28 is now swiftly (སྐད་ཀྱི་) coming here (མོ། བླ་བོ་བློ་) to
receive the treasure teachings. He (brTson-'grus = Thang-stong) [will become]
an upholder of the pure awareness of longevity (དབྱེ་བོད་) by the
excavation (དབྱེ་བོད་) of this treasure (དབྱེ་བོད་) [called] Longevity Practice of
the Iron-Stalk (CD). [Thang-stong’s myriad of] followers (དབྱེ་བོད་) as number
of stars will gather [before Thang-stong, and they] will offer (བཛུལ་བདེ་འབུར་) [him] boundless possessions (དབྱེ་བོད་)’29

26 G_4 48.2: འཇིགདབུས་གྱི་གཉིས་པ་ལྷན་ལ་གྱི་བརྡ་དྲག་ཚུ། ཆུས་པ་ལྷན་ལ་གྱི་བརྡ་དྲག་ཚུ། གུར་མོ་相符་བཤད་པ་ནི་གནོད་དུ་

27 G_3 49.2; G_4 48.5: ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་[སོ་དོན་་] G_3; ཁེ་ོན་ G_4 ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་[སོ་དོན་་] G_3; ཁེ་ོན་ G_4 ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་[སོ་དོན་་] G_3; ཁེ་ོན་ G_4 ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་[སོ་དོན་་] G_3; ཁེ་ོན་ G_4 ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་ལྟའི་སོས་སོགས་[སོ་དོན་་]

28 Thang-stong owed his full ordination (S_2 30.1: དཔེ་བཞི་ upasamīpād) to a Sa-skya
monastic, i.e. dPal-'byor-shes-rab, “the Master of the Five Scriptures (བསྡུས་བྱུང་དུ་)” who
bestowed upon him the bhikṣu (དཔེ་བཞི་) name of “brTson-'grus-bzang-po”, see Shinga
(2017).

29 G_3 49.4; G_4 48.9: དཔེ་བཞི། འཇིགདབུས་གྱི་གཉིས་པ་ལྷན་ལ་གྱི་བརྡ་དྲག་ཚུ། ཆུས་པ་ལྷན་ལ་གྱི་བརྡ་དྲག་ཚུ། གུར་མོ་相符་བཤད་པ་ནི་གནོད་དུ་
Within the pure conduct of a fully ordained monk, the great adept (Thang-stong) then arrived at the sacred place of Ri-bo bKra-bzang on the tenth day. ‘Great Anchorite (Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan)!’ [Thang-stong] requested (བཤད): ‘Please take into account to completely bestow (གཉིས་བབས་ནི།) upon me the profound Dharma of [both] the scriptures and rediscovered texts (བཟོལ་དཔོན་ཞིབས།). To practice the Dharma, I will perform meditation at this sacred place for three years.’

[Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan replied to the request from Thang-stong:] ‘Because you (Thang-stong) are the Great [Teacher of] Uḍḍīyāna himself (ཉོན་མེར་ཐང་བློས་), [you] probably don’t need to perform meditation.’ [Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan] explained the detail that at ‘Am-phu (བཤེད་)’31 in the entire night (སྐྱེན་པ་དང་) of the tenth day of last month, pure appearances (གསུམ་པོ་བཞིན་) that were a mixture (དོན་པོ་) of dream and clear light occurred [to Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan. With that, he] said: ‘Certainly (ཤེས་) I will offer the owner of the Dharma (Thang-stong) whatever [Dharma] I have.’

[Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan] thoroughly bestowed (བཤད་པར་) [Thang-stong] the Magical Web (ཉོན་མེར་)33 and so forth of the [rNying-ma

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30 G_4 48,13: "Within the pure conduct of a fully ordained monk, the great adept (Thang-stong) then arrived at the sacred place of Ri-bo bKra-bzang on the tenth day. ‘Great Anchorite (Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan)!’ [Thang-stong] requested (བཤད): ‘Please take into account to completely bestow (གཉིས་བབས་ནི།) upon me the profound Dharma of [both] the scriptures and rediscovered texts (བཟོལ་དཔོན་ཞིབས།). To practice the Dharma, I will perform meditation at this sacred place for three years.’

31 ‘Am-phu (བཤེད་) or ’Am-bu (བཐེད་)?

32 G_3 49,6; G_4 48,17: "Because you (Thang-stong) are the Great [Teacher of] Uḍḍīyāna himself (ཉོན་མེར་ཐང་བློས་), [you] probably don’t need to perform meditation.” [Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan] explained the detail that at ‘Am-phu (བཤེད་)’ in the entire night (སྐྱེན་པ་དང་) of the tenth day of last month, pure appearances (གསུམ་པོ་བཞིན་) that were a mixture (དོན་པོ་) of dream and clear light occurred [to Don-yod-rgyal-mtshan. With that, he] said: ‘Certainly (ཤེས་) I will offer the owner of the Dharma (Thang-stong) whatever [Dharma] I have.’

33 The so-called Magical Web (ཉོན་མེར་) is known by various names. As Stearns (2007: 503n400) has clearly pointed out, ‘The text in this case is probably Śrīguhyagarbhatattva-viniscaya’ (སཱྱི་ཧྱ་པ་པའི་དཔའེི་གཞལ་བ་བཅའ་) P455; D832). There are also a number of the commentaries in the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, e.g. GuṇavatīŚrī-mahāmāyakā (སྐྱེན་པ་བྱེད་པ་སྐོི་མ་ལྷ་ཞིབས་) P2495; D1623) by
canonical] scriptures (སྒྲས་མི), and the initiations (གཉིས་), the reading transmissions (བོད་), and the oral instructions (བཤད་) of the Dharma treasures of the awareness holder rGod-sgro-can.34

2. Interpretation of the Terms “མ་ར་” and “མ་པ་”

2-I. The Term “མ་ར་/མ་པ་”—

The general notion of the Tibetan term “མ་ར་” is widely understood as an iron element (cf. MVy#5983: loha; 达; Das 396: iron), a chemical element with symbol “Fe (Lat. ferrum. CLD 245)”.35 Although by the Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (BHS) loha doesn’t seem to be given, MW (908 under the heading of loha) has remarked mainly the metal.36 From the Vedic literature, metallic terms are classified, e.g. híranya- (precious metal); áyas- (base metal). Iron is often referred to as the latter owing to its having a higher melting point than híranya-
Generally, the primary meaning of अयस्त्र is “iron”, and thence figuratively “robust”. Nonetheless, it is a catchall term so there exist almost as many adjectival notions as there are contexts in which it is used. In ancient Tibet, the Iron Age spans the period from approximately 900 BCE to 100 BCE (Bellezza, 2014: 78). Snellgrove & Richardson (1968: 49–51) reports that Tibetans (in eastern Tibet in particular) possessed their own local traditions of metal work (e.g. arms and weapons) in a still-earlier period.

Thang-stong’s hagiographical literature records intriguing stories of how he had successfully built iron suspension bridges over hundreds of rivers (e.g. G.4...

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37 For the अयस्त्र- (iron) in contraposition to the हिरण्य- (gold), cf. ŚB XIV 2,2,54. For more details, see Yamada (2017: 277).

38 The English “iron” is usually taken to mean: (1) a metal, the most abundant and useful of those used in the metallic state; very variously employed for tools, implements, machinery, constructions, and in many other applications. (2) In figurative uses, as a type of extreme hardness or strength. (3) An instrument, appliance, tool, utensil, or particular part of one, made of the metal, cf. OED 78–83, which etymologically goes back to the Middle English یرن, cf. EDEL 308; Goth. ˈaiz; Skt. अयस्त्र, cf. ODEE 285; Iron is probably a Celtic contribution to English, but the borrowing took place in the prehistoric period, before the Germanic dialects separated, and so English shares the word with German (ˈeisen), Dutch (ˈijzen), Swedish (ˈjärn), etc. The prehistoric Celtic form from which these all ultimately came was *ἰσαρνόν, which some have linked with Latin *aes bronze and Sanskrit *īsira- ‘strong’. The ancient Indo-European peoples had already split up into groups speaking mutually unintelligible tongues by the time iron came into general use, so there was never any common Indo-European term for it, cf. BDWO 304; Iron has been conjectured that the Proto-Germanic *ἰσαρνόν was borrowed from Venetic Illyrian *eisarnon rather than from Proto-Celtic *Isarno- with its initial short i-, cf. BDE 544. All resources refer to the etymology of English “iron” here are only available with Sasaki Takayuki (佐々木孝幸), Lecturer in English, Sophia University.

39 Bellezza (2014: 113) offered a succinct survey of the Metal Age in Upper Tibet as it entered relatively late as compared to other ancient civilizations such as those of China or Persia. ‘The introduction of the forging of iron in Upper Tibet may have occurred right on the heels of innovation in copper smelting, but this remains to be proven’.
Concerning the production of iron from iron ore, Tibet still had no furnaces (སྟེ་ལོ་) until at least until the 20th century. The iron used in Thang-stong’s bridges was probably forged by blacksmiths (cf. G. 4 166,15; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་གཙུག་གི་འརྟོག་) at the local level. It may not be fanciful to see his iron-bridges as created by a sustainable manufacturing enterprise that relied on the local production. At least the processes minimised negative environmental impacts while conserving energy and natural resources. In this regard, I agree wholeheartedly with the suggestions made about the “A-Ice-lha-mo (ལྭ་ཐོ་མོ)” by Stearns (2007: 2; 23). Although Thang-stong is ‘said to have created as entertainment for the people while his iron bridges were being built’, it is worth noticing that the opera performances are ‘not mentioned in any of Tangtong’s biographies’.42

Iron (especially རྒྱལ་མཚན) has played a crucial role as a ritual implement (e.g. རྒྱལ་མཚན་ཀྲ་ལ། as well as in psychiatric medicine throughout the Himalaya. When we read G, there is certainly nothing to describe a negative

40 For རྒྱལ་མཚན cf. MVy#4346: agni-kunda; 火供[I] TD 1146: ཀྲ་ལ།
41 For the iron-bridge expedition to dPal Ri-bo-che (དཔལ་རི་བོ་ཆེ) in 1988, see Kahlen (1994: 306–307). For a detailed metallographic investigation of the iron chains of the Bhutanese suspension bridges by the ETH, Zürich, see Epprecht (1981: 150). The blacksmithing process concerning "loess doll (Jap. 高師小僧 = Takashi-Kozō; limonite” will be discussed in my future dissertation. G provides us a number of derivatives as for the term “སྟེ་ལོ་” (I must omit the locorum for lack of space): ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་མཚན iron chisel; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་སྒྲུབ་པ་ iron work; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ iron hook; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་སྒྲུབ་པ་ blacksmith; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ ironclad boat; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ iron gate; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ [iron] shackles; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་ iron tools; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་iron spikes; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ iron bowl; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ powdered coal; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ ironclad ferry; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་ fence; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་དྲུག་པ་ a place where many people were working with iron; ཨ་སྟོད་ཀྱི་铁 flint. In most of the cases iron (སྟེ་ལོ་) is referred to as being “precious (ཉིད་ཉོ་སྟེ་ལོ་)”.42

42 This is also discussed by Gyatso (1980: 111; 115n6); Gyatso (1986: 92f); Dollfus (2004: 10). I shall return to his charismatic activities of building bridges below, that will argue the “ཉིད་ཉོ་སྟེ་ལོ་” had facilitated the local people to be involved in discussing their local affairs.

43 The རྒྱལ་མཚན ‘made of iron, or of copper, gold, turquoise, conch-shell, of sandal-
notion on the term “སྣ་མ་ (iron)”. It denotes variables, the positive sequence components: a very rich deposit of iron (G_4 140,18: འསྲིས་བུད་ཤེས་སྣ་མ་); iron is rare in Tibet (141,17: སྣ་པོ་དབུ་བརྟེན་); precious iron (passim.: གྲི་མེད་སྣ་མ་).44

“སྣ་མ་” is also found in place names. For example, Das mentions ‘a place eight miles to the south-east of Tashi-lhunpo in Tsang’ (Das 396); and G provides some proper names such as “སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གུ (Chakpori Hill)”; “སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གནོད (the sMal-lcags Mountain/Hill)”45

However it may be, as far as Thang-stong is concerned, “སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གནོད (iron bridge(s))” or “སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གནོད (Iron-Bridge Man)” are the two most significant uses of “སྣ་མ་”.46 I can here only sketch out the three lines of “སྣ་མ་” from CD

wood and even of leather (ཁྲུག་ཁ། ཇླ་)’ (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1975: 18). Trying to apply this variable notion of “སྣ་མ་”, I must offer the Four Tantras (སྭད་དཔལ་) for an instance. The most basic text of Tibetan medicine incorporating Indian, Chinese and Greco-Arab medical systems has explained the inherent qualities of iron as ‘སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གནོད་སྟེང་པོ་དུ་་གཏོགས་ཁྲི་ (iron cures hepato-toxicity (སྟེང་པོ་དུ་)), ophthalmic disorders (གཏོགས་ཁྲི་) and generalised edema (སྟོབས་), see GZ 202. Shown in the pt. 2 (ཤིས་ཀྱི་ཐོབ་, Akhyata), ch. 20 (སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གནོད་ལས་, The Efficacy of Medicinal Substances), this explanation consists of the eight pharmaceutical materials (སྟོབས་). In fact iron is in the Treasure Material (ཐུན་པོ་དེ་) with the other nine treasures: (1) gold (བཟང་) (2) silver (ཞུ་) (3) copper (བཅུ་) (4) iron (5) turquoise (ལྣུ་) (6) pearl (བདུན་) (7) oyster shell (ཟྲིྨ་) (8) conch shell (བྲོག་) (9) coral (དྲོ་) (10) lapis lazuli (ཁྲུག་). I would like to extend my gratitude to Yasushi Ogawa (小川康) for his helpful remarks on GZ. For the latest article on the Northern School/Tradition (སྭད་དཔལ་) of Tibetan medicine in the 15th and 16th centuries in Ngam-ring, see Hofer (2007).

44 Other examples from G: འདྲི་ལྕན་མ་ thik iron needle(s); འདྲི་ལེ་ཨ་ five lumps of iron; འདྲི་ལེ་ཨ་ ཤེས་སོགས་ རྒྱུ་ this iron is good; འདྲི་ལེ་ཨ་ ཤེས་སོགས་ རྒྱུ་ hot and/or cold iron; འདྲི་ལེ་ཨ་ ཤེས་སོགས་ རྒྱུ་ a mountain of iron. The phrases with a verb: འདྲི་ལྕན་མ་ forge the iron; འདྲི་ལྕན་མ་ search for iron; འདྲི་ལེ་ཨ་ ཤེས་སོགས་ རྒྱུ་ build the iron bridge.

45 For “སྣ་པོ་དྲི་གནོད” Stearns (2007: 516n493) notes that: ‘the Malchak (sMal lcags) is the base of Chakpori (Lcags po ri), the mountain where Tangtong Gyalpo later built a temple and where the Medical College of Lhasa is located’.

46 Many of the iron suspension bridges which Thang-stong built over hundreds of rivers are still in use to this day. For such bodhisattvic selflessness done by a monk, as far as I
together with the *Glorious Grant of Immortality* ( SMBHLPJ CP) and the hagiography (G). In terms of the longevity practice, CP might be the most well known in Thang-stong’s tradition ( KB FZRFZB ). 47

2-1-1. “Iron-Lotus Petals ( SMBHLPJ ND )”

The phrase “iron-lotus petals ( SMBHLPJ ND )” is found in the Chapter of Inner Sādhana of the Iron-Stalk ( SMBHLPJ YX 2; #4).

CD. 1 521.5; CD. 2 252.3: In the very early morning ( SMBHLPJ FZRFZB ), [the practitioner] sits in the comfortable seat, all to generate the aspiration to supreme enlightenment. Firstly, [clearly imagine] an iron-lotus seat with eight petals ( SMBHLPJ ND ) [arisen] from the very condition of emptiness. Above it (the iron-lotus seat), [visualise] yourself ( SMBHLPJ ) as Amitābha with the red body, who sits in the cross-legged posture wearing complete Nirmānakāya vestments. [The Amitābha as being nondual with the practitioner] holds the long-life vase with two hands in meditative equipoise.

47 At the colophon, CP reads: ( SMBHLPJ ) Cf. TBRC#T524 ( SMBHLPJ ); TBRC#T840 ( SMBHLPJ )). Many text versions of the CP (e.g. SMBHLPJ In: TK, vol. 3, pp. 741–758) have been preserved, see Gyatso (1980: 115n15); Stearns (2007: 477n116). My text (abbreviated as CP) is from the Collection of rNying-ma sādhana ( SMBHLPJ ) (TBRC#W18). There CP was apparently classified in Amitāyus Group ( SMBHLPJ ).
The limbs of the Excellency (ཐུག་ཤིས་, i.e. Amitābha) are hard enough like stone (ཐུག་པོ་ཤིས་). [Over] the right and left shoulders, the sun and moon have emerged, [the Amitābha, i.e. the practitioner him/herself] is surrounded by the halo of five lights.\(^{48}\)

As I have mentioned earlier (see Section 1-1. above), this reference to Amitābha is unique in the CD insomuch as the figure is depicted in his Nirmānakāya (ཐུག་པོ་ཤིས་) manifestation. Being visualised to “wear complete Nirmānakāya vestments (ཐུག་པོ་ཤིས་སྤྲ་བན་མཐོང་བཞིན་)” probably denotes a value having body manifested in response to the need to teach sentient beings. In the basic doctrine, as one of the five dhyanī buddhas (see fn. 15), Amitābha has the attributes of Sambhogakāya, about which, however, there are differences of opinion in the various schools.\(^{49}\)

Here in CD, Amitābha is represented in red and in the common cross-legged position (ཐུག་པོ་ཤིས་ཚུལ་ལྔ་). The colour red attributes to whatever amṛta of the immortality, which deserves the colour of ruby red (CD_1 522,2; CD_2 252,6: རྣམ་ཐེག་པའི་དུས་ཐུབས་གཉིན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྡན་པར་བཞག). For our purposes it will be sufficient to remember that MW (908) has firstly given “red” under “loha” (see fn. 36).

The practitioner generates the aspiration for enlightenment, visualises him/herself as Amitābha in complete Nirmānakāya vestments. He/She sits on an iron-lotus seat with eight petals arisen from the very condition of emptiness (ཐུག་པོ་ཤིས་)

\(^{48}\) CD_1 521,5; CD_2 252,3: རིིིིི༔ [ཛོང]] 2: རང ཞ 1] རིིིིི༔ རྔ་ཐུབས་ཀྱི་དཔྱད་ཐུབས་ཀྱི་དཔྱད་ ། རྣམ་ཐེག་པའི་དུས་ཐུབས་གཉིན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྡན་པར་བཞག [ཚོན་] 2: རྣམ་ཐེག་ 1] རྣམ་ཐེག་པའི་དུས་ཐུབས་གཉིན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྡན་པར་བཞག [ཚོན་] 2: རྣམ་ཐེག་ 1] རྣམ་ཐེག་པའི་དུས་ཐུབས་གཉིན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྡན་པར་བཞག [ཆོས་] 2: རྣམ་ཐེག་ 1] རྣམ་ཐེག་པའི་དུས་ཐུབས་གཉིན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྡན་པར་བཞག [ཆོས་] 2: རྣམ་ཐེག་ 1] རྣམ་ཐེག་པའི་དུས་ཐུབས་གཉིན་ཆེན་པོ་ལྡན་པར་བཞག\n
\(^{49}\) CD only mentions Dharmakāya (ཆོས་ཐུབ་) twice, where it appears to be identified with the master practitioner, e.g. CD_1 537,2; CD_2 258,3: རྣམ་ཐེག་ཆོས་ཐུབ་ཆོས་ཐུབ་ (to reach a conviction that my citta is none other than Dharmakāya). However, the matter is too complex to be treated in a brief note. I intend to examine it in more detail in a future contribution.
The lotus seat (བུད་ ... ལུགས་) denotes the pedestal, where the Guru Padmasambhava sits.\(^{50}\)

The long-life vase (སྐྱིད་) to be conferred with CP designates the guru (དྲུག་) as Amitāyus (མ་དོན་གྲོ་ལྡན་) to hold the vessel (སྐྱིད་).\(^{51}\)

CP 192.2: The guru clearly manifests [himself] as Amitāyus. Into the [long-life] vase in [his] hands, [the degeneracy] would be trapped (བོད་), [and then it (the degeneracy)] would metamorphose to the nectar of immortality (ཁྲི་མེད་པ་ ཐོབ་མོ་).\(^{52}\)

As I will argue below (Section 2-1-3.), CP, the longevity practice, is performed by powerful Buddhist and Bon priests (དཔེ་བོ་དེ་བོ་དེ་) for people whose life expectancy (བུམ་མཐོང་) has been reduced (ཕྲོད་མོ་) by negative obstacles. In performing the CP, these priests are able to remove the obstacles by capturing them (བོད་) in rays of light (CP 192,1f).

2-1-2. “Iron-Life Channel (སྐྱིད་ལེགས་ཤུགས་)”

The term “life channel (སྐྱིད་)” refers literally to the initiand’s heart centre, and is also visually represented as such (Millard, 2007: 266). Following the “iron-lotus petals (སྐྱིད་ལེགས་དབྱུང་)” described above, this belongs to the Inner Sādhana of the Iron-Stalk (2; #4). The term is said to be “iron-life channel.

\(^{50}\) The image is made to appear like this very condition of emptiness in the following way according to G (G.4 49.12): ད་་ནི་ཤིན་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དེར་རིག་བཞིན་ཐོབ་པའི་ཁྲི་མེན་པོ་དེ་བོ་ཆེན་པོ་དེར་རིག་བཞིན་(Thang-stong looked up to the sky, where he] saw the Great [Teacher of] Uddiyāna on a lotus pedestal, adorned with forbidding garments, and surrounded by many spiritual heroes and dākinīs.)

\(^{51}\) Cf. the figure of “ཤུགས་ལེགས་ཇི་ཁྲི་མེན་བཞིན་བཤེན་” see Appendix, Fig. 1 from Dagyab (1991: 89) by courtesy of the author, H. H. Dagyab Rinpoche (སྐྱིད་ལེགས་དབྱུང་སྐེས་སྐྱིད་པ་མོ་ཞི་). The artwork provides us with many images of the derivatives of the word “iron”, e.g. “Eisenbehälter mit verschiedenen Krankheiten gefüllt (སྐྱིད་ལེགས་དབྱུང་སྐེས་སྐེས་སྐེས་པ་མོ་ཞི་)” see Dagyab (1991: 204).

\(^{52}\) CP 192.2: སྐྱིད་ལེགས་ཇི་ཁྲི་མེན་བཞིན་ཐོབ་པའི་ཁྲི་མེན་བཞིན་བཤེན་(སྐྱིད་ལེགས་དབྱུང་སྐེས་སྐེས་པ་མོ་ཞི་)
(གཉིས་བྱིན་ཤེས་ནི)” whose basic character entails the antrum of a live bamboo cylinder (སྒྲུ་ལེགས་).

CD_1 522.2; CD_2 252.6: [The practitioner must] keep visualising from the crown of [his/her] head ([ཨི་ཨི་དྲུ་ཏུ་]) to [his/her] secret place (དབང་བབས་), an iron-life channel (སྣྲུལ་ཨི་ཨི་) resembling an upright pillar of bamboo (སྡུག་བཟོན་). The bright light of the emptiness prevails inside [the iron-life channel], they are very refined five-coloured lights gleaming. Imagine a conch-shell coloured letter of mantra as a dew-drop outside of the life channel.

From Blissful Pure Land (སྐྱེས་་ཁབ་) Sukhāvatī, invite Jñānasattva (ཐེགས་པའི་སེམས་), who resembles oneself (ཨེན་པོ་) above in the sky. The longevity nectar ([ཨོབ་པ་]) exudes out of the [long-life] vase, [and then] flows into your (the practitioner’s) Aperture of Brahma (བྲ་བཞི་རང་དྲ་). [Thereby the contemplative (i.e. initiand)] becomes one with the deity who bestowed the initiation (དཔལ་བཟོན་). From [the longevity] nectar [both of] the deity and [practitioner’s] life channel (ཧྲུང་།), luminous light brightens and fulfills itself.\(^{53}\)

The term “iron-life channel (སྣྲུལ་ཨི་ཨི་)” is used here to denote ‘the central “psychic-nerve (ཐུབ་)”’ (Kvaerne, 2005: 187).\(^{54}\) We are told that it is situated at the heart centre of the practitioner’s body.\(^{55}\) Dasgupta starts his

\(^{53}\) CD_1 522.2; CD_2 252.6: མི་ཨི་བྱིན་སྐྱེས་པ་ལས་ཕབ་ཐམས་ཅད་གནོད་གཟུར་བཟོ། [གུས་པོ] 2; བྲས་ལྡན 1] ལོག་པར་བོད་[གེ་ལས] 2; བྲས་ལྡན 1] ལོག་པར་བོད་[སྤྱི་] 1; རི་ 2] མོ་བཞི་ཐོན་ཕན་གྱི་[དབང་] 2; རི་ 1] རོང་ཆོ། ཞིང་སྐབས་[སྤྱི་] 2; རི་ 1] རོང་ཆོག་རྗེ་བཙུན་བཟོད་[གེ་ལས] 2; རི་ 1] རོང་ཆོག་རྗེ་བཙུན་བཟོད་[སྤྱི་] 2; རི་ 1] རོང་ཆོག་རྗེ་བཙུན་བཟོད་[དབང་] 2; རི་ 1] རོང་ཆོག་རྗེ་བཙུན་བཟོད་[སྤྱི་] 2; རི་ 1] རོང་ཆོག་རྗེ་བཙུན་བཟོད་[སྤྱི་] 2; རི་ 1]

\(^{54}\) For སྐྱེས་་ཁབ་ (Sukhāvatī) see, བིབས་པ་ བསྟེན་ (Dharmachakra (2006: 223; 225): channel/energetic channels. While as for རང་དྲ་ (TD 2212), Dharmachakra (2006: 172) provided us a more specific definition and perspective: ‘The central channel is the main energetic channel in the body, running vertically through its center. Its upper end is located at the cranial aperture on the crown of the head, while its lower end is found in the secret place (the perineum).’

\(^{55}\) I have taken this rendering from Millard (2007: 266): ‘the ‘life channel’ (srog rtsa)
analysis of the plexus (the cakra/the lotus) system with the spinal cord, ‘widely known as the Merudaṇḍa, which is taken to be one bone from the bottom of the back up to the medulla oblongata’ (Dasgupta, 1958: 146). Dasgupta then goes ahead to analyse the nerves with “avadhūṭī (अधूती)” (cf. Jäschke 208: अधूती aorta?), ‘through which flows the Bodhicitta, and this Avadhūṭikā leads to the Sahaja-bliss’ (Dasgupta, 1958: 155).

It is held “stalk (षोंचनी daṇḍa)” and “life channel (षोंचना)” are connected by means of an intermediary substance, which is supposed to be the connection between the bright wisdom mind itself (i.e. Amitābha) and the practitioner/initiand. Iron (सीता) helps the function of making the “stalk/life channel” robust. Accordingly, we might compare this notion with a corresponding reference to “firmness” in relation to iron in Thang-stong’s hagiography.

Meanwhile, outside of the life channel, a conch-shell coloured syllable of mantra (षोंचनाष्ठीमन्त्र), which corresponds to “ḥrī (ह्री)”, is gleaming like a

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situated at the heart centre, is the location of the most important of the five winds in connection with Tibetan psychiatry, the ‘life holding wind’ (srog 'dzin rlung).

According to the body part, see also TD 2989 (षोंचना): (1) षोंचना अथवा देवी द्वारा अत्र धूपे (2) अथवा द्वारा अत्र धूपे जनम स्त्रिया दैवी दे।

56 The Merudaṇḍa is to be referred to Śrīsampuṭikā, ‘where it has been said that in the form of the skeleton-bone the great mountain Sumera remains in the body’ (Dasgupta, 1958: 147).

57 As for avadhūṭī, see BHSGD 72: ‘an artery, vein, or canal (नादि) in the body’. Jäschke (208) mentions षोंचना under the heading of अधूती that ‘in the more developed mysticism the power which meditating saints by dint of long continued practice may acquire of holding back their breath for a great length of time, by which means the air is supposed to be drawn from the देवी and दैवी (two veins, v. [i.e. see] देवी) into the अधूती (षोंचना अधूती aorta? [sic]) thus causing a feeling of uncommon warmth, comfort, and lightness inside, and finally even emancipating the body from the laws of gravity, so as to lift it up and hold it freely suspended in the air’ (Here, Tibetan citations have been provided in emended अधूती).

58 G_4 315.2: अधूती दुर्गृहा त्वमअर्जित्ताँगि श्रीपुष्पंश्रीकृत्यवेशादिकार्विषाः श्रीकृत्यवेशादिकार्विषाः (When the merchants shot [Thang-stong] many poisonous arrows from [his] front, then [his] front side of body turned to iron and [he] was not injured at all.)
dew-drop (འབྱུར་). The seed-syllable “hriḥ” means more than the seal of Amitābha. In this regard, Govinda (1983: 230) explains that ‘in the HṚHI we dedicate the totality of our transformed personality (which thus has become the Vajrakīṇa) to the service of Amitābha’.

The practitioner/initiand invites (སུན་པས་) Jñānasattva (ཤེས་པ་ལས་[དབང་]). One of the three sattvas set forth in development stage practice (ལོག་པ་དབང་བཞིན་ལེན་ལོ།), Jñānasattva is ‘visualized in the heart center of the samaya being ... It can involve visualizing a form that resembles the samaya being, ... yet it can also entail meditating on a deity with a form, color, face, and arms that are different than the samaya being, or meditating on a symbolic implement that arises from the seed syllable’ (Dharmachakra, 2006: 219).

For Jñānasattva in this CD, I am following the argument developed by Dharmachakra in assuming that Jñānasattva is indeed visualised as it is similar to oneself (དབང་) above in the sky. The wisdom (ཤེས་ jñāna) being (ལོག་པ་ sattva) is the deity in its heart centre, thereby the contemplative/initiand becomes one (འབྲས་པ་ abheda) with the deity who bestowed the initiation (དབང་པོ་). 2-1-3. “Iron-Hook (འནགས་ུན་)”

The phrase “iron-hook (འནགས་ུན་)” follows the above-mentioned “life channel (ཤེས་ཀྱི་)” located in the same chapter (2; #4).

CD_1 523,1; CD_2 253,4: [From] deep meditative absorption in mantra, luminous rays in the shape of an iron-hook (འནགས་ུན་) [illuminate] all the world

59 CD_1 533,1; CD_2 256,2 (#4, see fn. 12): བདག་པོ་[ཤེས་ བོ་] 2; འབྲས་པོ་ 1] བཤེས་པའི་དབང་པོ་ [དབང་པོ་]. Regarding the seed-syllable “hriḥ”, see Govinda (1983: 183f); Dharmachakra (2006: 112).

60 (1) Samaya-sattva (སུན་པ་ཤེས་ཀྱིས་བཞིན་ལེན་); (2) Jñāna-° (ཤེས་-°); (3) Samādhi-° (ཤེས་-°), cf. TD 2944: བདག་པོ་[ཤེས་ བོ་] རླུས་པའི་དབང་པོ་[དབང་པོ་] རྲུལ་པའི་ཤེས་ཀུན་ལེན་ [དབང་པོ་], རླུས་པའི་དབང་པོ་ [དབང་པོ་, DT 2085: རླུས་པའི་ཤེས་ཀུན་ རླུས་པའི་དབང་པོ་ [དབང་པོ་, རླུས་པའི་དབང་པོ་ [དབང་པོ་, རླུས་པའི་ཤེས་ཀུན་ རླུས་པའི་དབང་པོ་ [དབང་པོ་, རླུས་པའི་ཤེས་ཀུན་ [དབང་པོ་].
as a vessel and the sentient beings as its content (संवेदन्सतिसंयुक्त). [Subsequently,] compassionate grace (फैशक्षिकता) of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, [the fundamental quality of luminous rays,] would be condensed (निलोच्यो) into [the above-mentioned mantra, i.e.] “...siddhi (सिद्धि)”.61

The “iron hook (cf. MVy#4284: वज्र-अंकुशी; 金剛鉤; 金剛鉤)” too, is significant. It alludes to a tool that illuminates the entire bhājana/sattva-loka (बौद्धज्ञानीय; container and its contents).62 Although the luminous rays have a form similar to the robust iron-hook (EWA Bd. 1, p. 47: अंकुशा व्लाइट), the fundamental quality is said to be the compassionate grace of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. By deep meditative absorption in mantra, the grace (अंकुश-शक्ति) subsequently would be condensed (निलोच्यो) into the above-mentioned mantra (मन्त्र) i.e. CD_1 522,5f; CD_2 253,3f: भूमिक भूमिक ... लिङ्ग लिङ्ग) itself.

Hence, through the precept, the practitioner is introduced to a broad Mahāyānic philosophical perspective, which directs attention to the whole receptacle world. According to the CP, the “अंकुश” (iron)” denotes the robust firmness that primarily relates to the circular mountain range of iron (नक्षत्रपुरुषः शाळासृष्टिक्रिया *cakravāda) that encircles the universal base (नक्षत्रवल्लक), according to Buddhist cosmology (Gethin, 1998: 114–119).

CP 192,3: Furthermore (अर्थात्), the emanating light rays would strike all the realms of cognitive experience (अक्षयस्थितिनिर्होतः sarvadhātu) of the four elements.

[Among the four elements,] the earth element is defined as “all beings hard and solid”. [For instance,]
[1] the universal base (नक्षत्रवल्लक) of gold wheel (नक्षत्रवल्लकानिश्चयक *kāńcana-

61 CD_1 523,1; CD_2 253,4: भूमिक भूमिक आकृति जीवपद्धति आकृति जीवपद्धति आकृति जीवपद्धति आकृति जीवपद्धति आकृति जीवपद्धति [क्रम] 2: 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 2
62 For  इन्सक्षेत्र see TD 1601: (1) इन्सक्षेत्रीयवैज्ञानिकयादर्शकशवनुभूति (2) इन्सक्षेत्र Moralities in the Translation of the Tripitaka
[2] the *axis mundi* of Sumeru (*རྒྱ་མཚན་ཐོབ་ཕྱོགས་*),
[3] the seven golden mountains (*སྤྱོང་རྒྱུད་ཐོབ་ཕྱོགས་*),
[4] the four continents (*བྱུང་འགའ་* *caturdvīpa*) and the eight subcontinents (*བྱུང་འགའ་* *aṣṭadvīpa*)
which abide (*ལྷན་* as far as the circular mountain range of iron (*དཀར་བྱུང་* *cakravāda*) surrounds (*ཉེར་བྱུང་*).\(^{63}\)

Empowerment lights emanating from Amitāyus (CP 191,6 ... 193,2) would strike (*པ་*) all the realms of cognitive experience of the four elements (*བོད་ལ་* *catvāri mahābhūtāni*). Among the four motifs (earth/wind/water/fire), the earth element (*ལྷན་* *prthivī*) is regarded as particularly significant. This element (*ལྷན་* *prthivī*) is well defined as “all beings hard and solid (*ལྷན་པོ་* kāthina)”, and has provided the world to abide as far as the circular mountain range of iron (*དཀར་བྱུང་* *cakravāda*) surrounds (*ཉེར་བྱུང་*).\(^{64}\)

In the same Mahāyāna hermeneutical theory under consideration here, “*ལྷན་* (iron)” can be defined not only by the quality “robust”, but also by the absolute value of the magnetic. Concerning this attribute, CP refers to “iron-filings (*ལྷན་* "w," *) in terms of the mantra and *samādhi* related to a ritual of the nectar of immortality (*བོད་ལ་* *sādhistāni*).

CP 192,1: Owing to zealous conduct of material things, mantra and *samādhi* [performed] by powerful Buddhist priests and Bon priests, things which reduce [your] life expectancy (*ལྷན་* "kāthina") and so forth would be captured all at once (*ལྷན་* "w," *) by the rays of light. Just as (*ལྷན་* "kāthina") a magnet captures iron-filings (*ལྷན་* "w," *) [all at once].\(^{65}\)

\(^{63}\) CP 192,3: *བསྟན་ལྡེ་ནས་ན་མཚན་འབྲིང་པོ་བཞི་མཆོག་གསལ་བྱེད་པས་* | འབྲིང་པོ་སྨྱོང་རྒྱུད་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་བཞི་ ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་ཁྱེར་ལྷན་kh]

\(^{64}\) The rest of four motifs appears with each definition (CP 193,2: *བསྟན་ལྡེ་ནས་* kāthina) according to a precise order, see CP 191,6: *ལྷན་* *sādhistāni* 192,5: *ལྷན་* *sādhistāni* 192,6: *ལྷན་* *sādhistāni* 193,1: *ལྷན་* *sādhistāni*
According to the CP, we assume the powerful Buddhist priests and Bon priests (དཔལ་ནང་པོ་པོ་་བོན་པོ) are able to capture (བྱིབས་) some of the causes that reduce (བཤད་པ) our life expectancy (བོད་པ) by the zealous conduct (འས་པ་ "prayoga") of “material things (ཤེས་)”, “mantra (མཉམ་)” and “samādhi (ཤེས་དོན་)”. It is brought out by means of a metaphor. Suppose we compare the situation of a magnet (ཤེས་དོན་) capturing (བྱིབས་) iron-filings (བཤེས་དོན་་). Thus the assumption can be made according to the powerful Buddhist and Bon priests, an intriguing connection. In regard to this phrase, we may observe the practitioners have been primarily rNying-ma-pas and Bon-pos, because ‘these two groups had much overlap in their Treasure activity’ (Gyatso, 1996: 148). Cech (1993) has argued that the powerful Buddhist priests and Bon priests seem to share many features of their ritual environment. ‘The structure of the religious pantheon is the same and the iconographic portrayal of the deities very similar’ (Cech, 1993: 43). Nonetheless, the assumption of a connection between the Buddhist (Vajrayāna) and Bon rituals centred on this longevity practice deserves further study.66

Meanwhile, we find in Thang-stong’s hagiography that he himself once provided an understanding of the “iron hook (བཤེས་དོན་)” that takes up a more particularly Tantric worldview, as we will see shortly:

65 CP 192.1: བད་པལ་ནང་པོ་བོན་པོ་བཤེས་དོན་པོ་རང་བཞིན་ཚོས་རྫོང་བཞིན་འཛིན་བཤེས་དོན་ཕྱིར་བ་སྤེལ་བོན་པོ་བཤེས་དོན་་

66 Bon-pos had adopted the policy of imitating Buddhism, especially rNying-ma School so that ‘the beliefs of systematized and adapted Bon are consequently identical with’ (Stein, 1972: 240–241) the school doctrines. Reconstruction of the Bon religion took place with the development of the rNying-ma School, ‘by the discovery of large numbers of gter-ma texts which provided a mechanism for the gradual transformation and reshaping of the Bon religion’ (Samuel, 1993: 322). The gross of important studies (mainly done by A. M. Blondeau in 1970-80’s) of an early example of the ‘cross-pollination’ between the Buddhist and Bon-po treasure traditions are provided in Gyatso (1996: 162n3).
G_4 303,18: [After Thang-stong gave Īśvara and his consort an edict, he said:] ‘If you (Īśvara and his consort) disobey this [edict], I will drag [you] into the vast furnace of emptiness by the clear, empty and naked iron-hook (སྲོལ་ནད་).’

The hagiography tells us here that Thang-stong had valued the iron-hook as a tool for disciplining. He called the tool “clear, empty and naked iron-hook (སྲོལ་ནད་)”, which can be utilised to drag (ལོག་) people who eat the flesh and blood of humans into the vast furnace of emptiness (ཤེས་ལྡན་).

On another occasion Thang-stong had utilised the “iron hook” as follows:

G_4 129,13: [Thang-stong gave an edict in verse to the eight tribes as follows:] ‘Take your own body as an example, and do not cause harm to others! If [you] do not obey a promise of peace, [you] the harmful demons and obstructing spirits leading [people] astray, who are the delusive appearance of the latent habituated tendencies [created from] mental, physical and other things,
[#1] I (i.e. Thang-stong) will] seize (ལོག་) [you] with the iron hook (སྲོལ་ནད་) of unimpeded charismatic activities,
[#2] bind (ཤེས་ལྡན་) [you] with the noose (ལོག་) of infinite compassion,
[#3] lock (ལོག་) [you] in infallible (ལོག་) vajra shackles (ལོག་ནད་),
[#4] drive [you] mad (ལོག་) with the forceful sound (ལོག་) of ‘ḥūn’,
[#5] put (ལོག་) [you] in the vast corral (ལོག་) of emptiness, and
[#6] surround (ལོག་) [you] with the fire of self-manifesting (ལོག་) wisdom (ལོག་).’

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67 G_4 303,18: སྲོལ་ནད་ལོག་ནད་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ འོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ འོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག་ལོག
Among the six skillful means (धन्य उपाय), Thang-stong would utilise (दण्डनु) the “iron hook (कूल)" of “unimpeded, charismatic activities (अधिक क्षमता)" primarily to tame the harmful demons and obstructing spirits (नवनाम वासना). The chief characteristic of these evil creatures worthy of remark is the delusive appearance (संज्ञान) of the “latent habituated tendencies (छेदन त्रस्तता)" created from mental, physical and other aspects (पूजा स्वरुप), which can lead people astray (लक्ष्य अवशिष्य).

Hence, the edict, which is referred to as the “promise of peace (कवित्रितिक्रेय)”, suggested an interpretation of the “iron hook (कूल)" such as the “charismatic activities (अधिक क्षमता)" that has a connotation of some public works motivated by religion, for example building bridges for leading the local people to be involved in discussing their local affairs.

2-2. The Term “कुलिके / कुलिके”

All languages definitely have terms corresponding to “कुलिके”. In English there are two main candidates: (1) trunk or stem of a tree; (2) stalk of a plant (Das 720). It is intriguing therefore to speculate about which Sanskrit word is translated into the Tibetan “कुलिके”. As for “कुलिके”, MVy suggests its equivalent as गान्धा and द्रुमा.

69 See also G_4 201.9: घण्डाविस्तारितमुहुक्लाः घण्डाविस्तारितमुहुक्लाः (This decoration with two iron clasps (घण्डाविस्तारितमुहु) is the union (घण्डाविस्तारितमुहु) of method (घण्डा upāya) and wisdom (घण्डा prajñā).)

70 Different lists of the eight tribes of gods and demons (आठकालाक्ष्ण) can be found, see TD 3090–3091; Gyurme & Kapstein (1991: 158–159); Stearns (2007: 480n160).

71 DTC 1389 defining दृष्टि ज्ञान as: दृष्टि ज्ञान अयोधाय तारामण्डल द्विगुण वांछिता केवल धर्मार्थे प्रवेशः विदेशिन्यं नेतृविश्वम् केवल तारामण्डल द्विगुण वांछित्यामिनि।

72 MVy#3384: बुःपा-द्रुमा-कुसुमिता-मुकुटाः; 花樹滿髻; #3414: द्रुमा-किन्नर-राजा; 人非人王樹. For द्रुमा, BHSGD (273) gave “tree”. For गुण द्रुमा, see also TSDN 2754: (1) skandha (2) vrksah; TSDL 1322: (1) kanda (2) ganda (3) gulma (4) druma (5) nala (6) malla (7) vrksa (8) stambha.
The MVy provides many interpretations of \textit{gaṇḍa}, including that of the Sanskrit compound found in the \textit{Gaṇḍavyūha} (MVy\#1341: 大乘密嚴經).\footnote{In terms of \textit{大乘密嚴經}, the colophon of \textit{Avatānśakasūtra} (Av\_t D362a5; P237a1) reads: \textit{大乗密嚴經}, see Hori (2012: 13).} However, the meaning of this title \textit{Gaṇḍavyūha} has been studied in the literature for several decades;\footnote{Comparing with the CD, there is such an extent of notable studies on the title \textit{Gaṇḍavyūha}, e.g. Gómez (1968: lxi–lxvi); Wogihara (1972); Hara (1973); Warder (1980: 424); Sakurabe (1997); Murakami (2006); Osto (2009); Hori (2012).} as Gómez notes, the name is ‘indeed problematic, and nowhere within the text itself do we find anything which could explain or hint at the interpretation of this title’ (Gómez, 1968: lxi). In the BHS, the \textit{gaṇḍa} primarily means: (1) stalk of a plant; (2) piece, part, or portion [of something] (BHSGD 208).\footnote{As a polysemous term, the interpretations of \textit{gaṇḍa} (e.g. “cheek(s)” and “stalk”) have been concerned with many texts. For the \textit{Buddhacarita} (5.53), Johnston (1972: pt. II, p. 71) has interpreted \textit{gaṇḍa} as ‘stalk’ after many references from ‘Buddhist works’ such as \textit{Avadānāsataka} (Avś), \textit{Aupapātikasūtra}, \textit{Bodhisattvabhūmi} and \textit{Mahāvastu}. In this regard, Speyer (1958) has translated \textit{gaṇḍa} in \textit{mūla-\^pattra-(puśpa)-phala-bhaisafya} (Avś [pt. II,] 133,12) as ‘stalk’ based on the Tibetan ‘equivalent \textit{गौड़},’ see Speyer (1958: [pt. II,] 133n4). I assume it’s also worth to check the reference done by Mayrhofer (siglum EWA). It takes into consideration the derivation of the term \textit{gaṇḍa} from Dravidian, see EWA Bd. 1, p. 459. The argument put forward also by Hara (1973: 32n1).} Philological analysis also suggests \textit{“कृष्ण”} contains a notion of “core elements” or “essential part” of some property. In fact, on that note, Osto (2009) has proposed that the \textit{gaṇḍa} occurring in some compounds (e.g. \textit{gaṇḍa-śaila}) can mean “great/greatest” “big” or “massive.”\footnote{For the interpretation, Osto has proffered the \textit{Bhāgavata Purāṇa} (III.13.22), wherein the \textit{gaṇḍa} ‘appears to mean something like “giant,” “massive” or “great.” Thus once again \textit{gaṇḍa-śaila} is being used to emphasize the exceptional size of rocks.’ (Osto, 2009: 278). The \textit{gaṇḍa} of the same \textit{gaṇḍa-śaila} in the \textit{Amarakośa} (2.3.6) is also considered to ‘possibly carry even greater emphasis or a more superlative sense than simply “great,” such as “the greatest or biggest of rocks.’ (Osto, 2009: 279).} The other clue we have towards the \textit{“कृष्ण (gaṇḍa)”} as “core” “essential” may be considered with the phrase
“शुक्मनस्तु” (Das 720: Five Plants of Buddhism)” found in *Anavataptaṃdaraṇa-pārāṣeṣṭha* (Anvap.-Garaj.-Pariprc.) APS).77

In the CD, the term “शुक्मनस्तु” appears only in its topical outlines (see Section 1-1. above). Also in G, there is no paraphrase of “शुक्मनस्तु” but some denominations, e.g., trunk of a fir tree (शुक्मनस्तु जे); trunk of a sandalwood tree (शुक्मनस्तु गुलेश्वर्त); a juniper tree (शुक्मनस्तु जुनिप). In this context, here I might have to briefly mention “शुक्मनस्तु” as a variation of the “शुक्मनस्तु”. Slightly differed from “शुक्मनस्तु”, the “शुक्मनस्तु” (MVy#6223: दन्दालि; 樹) has never been used in CD. While G has a substantial number of lines in the use of “शुक्मनस्तु”:

G_4 54,4: [During the retreat, Thang-stong had a vision of] four deep holes whose depths were difficult to comprehend. [He] set [long] jewelled ladders with a hundred rungs (शुक्मनस्तु) [into the holes], and brought many sentient beings that were inside the holes up to the surface.78

This vision of long-jewelled ladders (शुक्मनस्तु) with a hundred rungs (शुक्मनस्तु) came from the experience of his retreat (शुक्मनस्तु). In the vision, Thang-stong lowered the four-jewelled ladders into the four deep holes (शुक्मनस्तु) and rescued many living beings trapped below. In order that they may carry these sentient beings to the surface (शुक्मनस्तु वर्तकदृष्टिको शुक्मनस्तु), the precious ladders must be robust. The representation of ladders is a standing character to connect the lower forms of existence in saṃsāra to higher forms of existence. This sort of the altruistic intention can be the key to understand his construction of iron-bridges. As Stearns (2007) has pointed out, this jewelled ladder vision would inspire Thang-stong later to ‘construct unprecedented iron bridges over turbulent rivers’ (Stearns, 2007: 38).

77 APS P823.220a4; D156.212a3: (1) शक्मनस्तु (2) शक्मनस्तु (3) शक्मनस्तु (4) शक्मनस्तु (5) शक्मनस्तु

78 G_4 54,4: शुक्मनस्तु जे जे शुक्मनस्तु शुक्मनस्तु जे जे शुक्मनस्तु जे जे जे जे जे जे जे जे जे जे
The next sequence describes delving into the core formula of this vision. His teacher, the Indian master Dharmaratna (धर्मरत्न), explained the four holes as the lower forms of existence (अङ्कित *āpāyika) in depths of which are difficult to fathom (संयोग अङ्कित). The extending of the ladders to higher forms of existence (अङ्कित *sugati) is a sign (संयोग) that Thang-stong will build (संयोग) unprecedented (संयोग अङ्कित) precious iron-bridges over great rivers that are difficult to cross (संयोग अङ्कित).79

“सुरुः” is here the supportive principle, which acts upon matter as well as upon mind. In terms of the matter, for an instance Prajñādaṇḍa (धार्मिक अङ्कित) PD says:

PD vs. 92 (PD_C pp. 48–49; PD_t P149a4; D106b5): Those who always delight to benefit all sentient beings are supreme just like a precious lamp [that] has neither relied on oil, the container nor the wick (सुरुः).80

PD substantiates the particular interpretation of “सुरुः”, the wick of a lamp. In this knowledge lies the supreme value of the nītisāstra, in so far as the matter of a wick is differentiated from the precious lamp (रितकेषु लङ्कयय) [के]. Although oil, container and the wick all comprise the lamp, they are not the quintessence of that which guides all sentient beings in case they get lost.81

2-2-1. “Vase Mouth Ornament Wish-fulfilling Tree (मुख काबुली अंगुष्ठी पौधा)”
The phrase “Vase Mouth Ornament Wish-fulfilling Tree (मुख काबुली अंगुष्ठी पौधा)” configures a part of the topical outlines (1-2; #3). It locates the chapter of Outer Sādhanā of Treasure Vase (वैष्णविष्णु वस्त्र) 1; #1) with the

79 G_4 55.3: नम बुद्ध अनुतानधिकारी यथकर्मायेदासायेद्विधिर्महाराज एवं बुद्धिधारिः संयोगादिकारी यथकर्मायेदासायेद्विधिर्महाराज
d) g) h) i) j)

80 PD vs. 92 (PD_C pp. 48–49; PD_t P149a4; D106b5): नम बुद्धिधारिः संयोगादिकारी यथकर्मायेदासायेद्विधिर्महाराज
d) g) h) i) j)

81 See PD_C (Campbell, 1919) p. 48, fn. * [sic]: ‘It is believed that certain jewels have the inherent quality of emitting light’.
preceding Elixir of the Amṛta Essence ([line: 5]#2). The inner element of the Treasure Vase is described by the Elixir of the Amṛta Essence (#2); and the outer by the Vase Mouth Ornament Wish-fulfilling Tree (#3).

CD_1 524,2; CD_2 254,4: [The practitioner, you] should wrap [the long-life vase] up with a pure garment, and then adorn it with a branch of the wish-fulfilling tree (Kalpaṇa). Expand the above-mentioned mantra (Avanava) and the meditative contemplation. [Thereby] the amṛta essence (Āmṛta) would be condensed (Avanava) into the [long-life] vase, and then pervade (Avanava) [the long-life vase]. From yourself (Avanava the practitioner him/herself) luminous light spreads, and hence siddhi of long-life (Avanava) would [also] be condensed (Avanava) into [the long-life vase].

Concerning the enlightened activity of long-life (Avanava) that was illuminated by meditative stabilisation. Oh Bhagavat Nātha Jñāna Amitāyus! Goddesses who control the five elements! Please increase the long-life and fortune (Avanava) of the practitioner, [i.e.] me. Please recover (Avanava) [my] long-life (Avanava) that is scattered (Avanava), lost (Avanava), and dissipated (Avanava) among the upper and lower of 10 directions of Bhājanaloka.  

The characteristic implement of a branch of the wish-fulfilling tree (Gṛsasta kalpaṇa) is now placed into Amitāyus’ long-life vase to adorn the mouth (Avanava). The special aptitude for this Tantric accomplishment is brought into the practitioner through the ritual form of abhiṣeka.

The practitioner has invoked and invited the Jñānasattva (Avanava) see Section 2-1-2. above), so that the deity can be an inherent aspect of the Bhagavat Nātha Jñāna Amitāyus’ (Avanava), i.e. practitioner’s
own enlightened mind in reality. Together with the symbol of the longevity and good fortune (कृत्यकृमी), the Goddess (पुष्प) also plays a prominent part to control (देवसूर्य) the practitioner, who is dependent upon the body as a corporeal organism — viz, the five elements (पञ्चमाण). This is because earth/water/fire/air/space (भूकुलकहवायुस्पर्श) or wood/fire/earth/iron/water (वीणाभिभूतिभुज) embrace the practitioner’s body, by which the siddhi and the enlightened activity of long-life (सुकृत्यकृमिकृत्यकृमी) can be regulated. Among the upper and lower of the 10 directions of bhājanaloka (भाजनलोक), our natural life is said to be scattered (दुर्भवस्था), lost (लुकायता) and dissipated (घस्त्या). In this regard, the siddhi can be characterised by the whole aspect of the four fundamental sufferings (सम्पर्कोऽविचारके यात्रासन्तोषज्ञानविषयं अविश्वासः).

Here the term "कृमी" (trunk of the body)" denotes something akin to the "कुन्यरि". It alludes to the central psychic-nerve (avadhūti; अवधूत). Through the practitioner’s Aperture of Brahma (क्रमक्रमाक) the amṛta flows down, wherever the trunk has been full of siddhi. The “three essences (स्मृतिरस्तुष्ठ)’ most probably renders “शुद्धात्मिकोऽविचार/नव ज्ञेयविज्ञान”, with which the practitioner has attained the siddhi. As a result of the visualisation, the Bhagavat Nātha Vajra

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83 CD_1 525,1; CD_2 255,3: Put the long-life vase above the crown of [your (i.e. practitioner’s)] head. Siddhi [attained by] the above-mentioned three essences (स्मृतिरस्तुष्ठ) pervades (स्मृतिरस्तुष्ठ) [the long-life vase. Thereby] the amṛta flows down through your Aperture of Brahma. Imagine wherever trunk [of your] body (वृक्षता) has been full of siddhi. Through the cakra (स्मृतिरस्तुष्ठ), i.e. into your heart centre, the Bhagavat Nātha Vajra Amitāyus dissolves. Imagine [in this wise, you] have attained the siddhi of immortality.83
Amitāyus dissolves (स्वास्थ्य) into his/her heart centre (विषय). As for the cakra (कक्ष), TSDN (1156) lists “आयोमयात्मक कक्ष” as “ayomayaṅ cakram”. Through such a robust wise, the initiand has been said to attain the siddhi of immortality (सिद्धी कक्ष ब्रह्मचार्य).

2-3. The Phrase “आयोमयात्मक कक्ष”

The phrase “आयोमयात्मक कक्ष” consists of the lexemes “आयोम” and “कक्ष” joined by a “ति” a genitive case suffix (तितीति). However, it is difficult to see how “आयोम” could be linked with “कक्ष”, thus the connotation of the phrase is not necessarily immediately graspable at the lexical level. To cite a common example with “कक्ष”, Prajñādaṇḍa (प्रज्ञादान्तः PD) can be presumed ‘Tree of Wisdom’ (Campbell, 1919: [iii]) and/or ‘Staff of Wisdom’ (Hahn, 2009: 1). However, Nāgārjuna does not paraphrase the compound “prajñādaṇḍa” within the nītiśāstra itself.

There is no attested equivalent in BHS or Pāli of the “आयोमयात्मक कक्ष”. Further, the CD has only, so far as I know, been literally translated into English, and that was rendered by Stearns (2007: 130) as “The Iron Tree, the longevity practice”. Still, the exact relationship between “iron” and “tree” remains unclear: Is there necessarily the connotation of an “iron tree”? Does it intentionally denote “tree of iron”? or “something possesses iron-tree”? or “the tree [part] of iron” in the partitive genitive case? No satisfactory explanation has been given to this polysemic phrase so far.

Here, we can find a clue in the *Brahmajālasūtra (क्रमजालसुत्र) Brmj).86

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84 Cf. भूमसन्यास vs. 6; चिन्हातीत्वेन्द्रवनस्त्रकंहस्तक्षेपायस्मायस्तमाः The Tibetan genitive particles, in general, often through not necessarily consecutive with the premodifiers.

85 Although the nītiśāstra (आयोमयात्मक कक्ष) offers no paraphrase on its title प्रज्ञादान्तः the PD substantiates the particular interpretation of “आयोम” as a wick of a lamp, see Section 2-2. above.

86 Brmj (P1021; D352) is not parallel version to the Nikāya Brahmagājasūtra (DN I, pp. 1–46) or the Āgama 佛說梵網六十二見經 (T21). As for the 62 Views, Khangkar (2016) examines the Tibetan reception of the 62 mistaken views mainly taking into detailed
Brmj uses “असीमि संसारेः” in the sense of the mistaken view of eternalism. Simply because all things, even the most firm iron, are impermanent, they continue to experience birth, existence, change, and death within the संसार (i.e., जीवन).

We can see here two different semantic lines in the use of “असीमि संसारेः”:

1. The heretical view of permanent objects of eternalism (cf. TSDN 1764: नित्यावदहः; saśvatavadah) criticised in such Mahāyāna scriptures as the Brmj; and
2. The doctrine of immortality as seen in such longevity practices as CD and CP. The later type considers the practitioner’s life (संसार jīva; अयु अयु) can become eternal, indestructible, which is metaphorically likened to “an iron tree”. If one knows that we are deathless, he/she will also realise the birthless. The cyclical samsāric pattern of death and re-birth merely occur as ‘a rite de passage: the deceased leaves behind the familiar vicissitudes of human life and enters into a new modality of being beyond’ (Holt, 2005: 147).

CD itself does not directly mention “संसारेः” in the above eternalistic views. In the text, the term refers to specific sorts of substances such as simple positive “robust iron”. Meanwhile, within the biographical literatures of Thang-stong, we must find his voice in order to be freed from these “tight iron shackles of satkāyadrṣṭi.

87 Brmj_t P75b7; D73a7: असीमि संसारेः एवेऽ जीवनम् असीमि संसारेः एवेऽ जीवनम्। जीवने असीमि संसारेः एवेऽ जीवनम्। संसारे जीवने असीमि संसारेः एवेऽ जीवनम्।

88 Stearns (2007: 28) argues that: ‘[CP] is a ritualized version of the original visionary teachings of Tangtong Gyalpo that focus on the realization of immortality. These methods are for the achievement of longevity, but the ultimate aim is to realize that “death” is a mistaken concept. If one knows that the mind is birthless, one will also realize that it does not die’.
(སྐོར་བརྡ་རོལ་)”, which literally shackles all sentient beings (མེ་ལོག་) to sanśāra, the cycle of transmigration through birth and death.

Thang-stong used the tight “iron shackles (ས་སྒྲ་)’” in the dichotomous way of a “subject and object (ཤིང་སྒྲ་ཞིག་པ་ སྡེ་བསྡུན་པ་)”. The character of grasper and grasped explains specifically the reason why sentient beings are experiencing suffering in the horrible dungeon (དོན་དམིགས་ནས་བཅོག་པ་). To go back to the “iron-hook (ས་སྒྲ་)’” (see Section 2-1-3. above), the tool which Thang-stong called “clear, empty and naked iron-hook (ས་སྒྲ་ནི་གཞིག་པ་ སྡེ་བསྡུན་པ་)’” or “iron hook of unimpeded charismatic activities (ས་སྒྲ་ནི་གཞིག་པ་ སྡེ་བསྡུན་པ་)’” provides an illuminating solution against the fallacious perspective.

The shackles/fetters (སཕྱོགས་པ་; རབ་རྩ་) is a well known Buddhological jargon with references to the three/five/nine/ten bonds (Gethin, 1998: 72–73; 193–194). All entanglements can bind us to the world, cause to rebirth.90 They are also said related to “ཕྱོགས་”:

G_3 233,2; G_4 233,3: [The three prisoners] vehemently called [Thang-stong] out for the salvation (བཞིན་པ་བཞིན་པ་བཞིན་པ་): ‘Master, great adept, see [us] with your compassion!’ Thereby iron (སོགས་) that bound the three prisoners fell off by themselves. Even the doors of the jail and the staff room (ཐུབ་) opened
by themselves, [they all] went out [from the jail] freely (དཔེད་པ་). By releasing [the prisoners, the great adept (Thang-stong) actually] liberated [them] from the sufferings of death.91

For this metaphor, there may be no need to postulate further representation. The three prisoners (སེམས་པར་བོན་) eloquently express ourselves who have been enchained by iron (སྤྱན་) in the jail (སྤྱན་བརྙན་), i.e. samsārasaṁśrī (sām-ṣṛ). By the ultimate act of compassionately releasing (ཕན་པ) the prisoners from the jail, Thang-stong actually liberated them from the sufferings of death (བོད་སྙིང་བསྟན་).

3. Conclusion

I should perhaps conclude by remarking that the notion of “སྤྱན་པོ་དྲུད་པར།” can be translated as “iron-like (i.e. firm/robust) stalk (avadhūṭi)” in the Longevity Practice of the Iron-Stalk (ཆུས་ཀྱིས་སྤྱན་པོ་དྲུད་པར། CD). The āyuḥsādhana clearly specified itself as a treasure teaching (བན་པར) concealed by Guru Padmasambhava (fl. ca. 8c) for the person who would perform the treasure teaching during the period of the spread of fivefold degeneracy. Just as prophesised in the treasure teaching, the awareness holder rGod-kyi-ldem-’phru-can (1337–1408) appeared. This is the key statement behind the Northern treasure (དབུང་གི་) of CD, which had been performed by Thang-stong-rgyal-po (1361–1485?) owing to the fortune of meeting the Great Anchorite Don-yodrgyal-mtshan.

“སྤྱན་” (iron)” occurs in three different collocations in CD. The first is “iron-lotus petals (སྤྱན་པོ་དྲུད་པར་)”, above which the practitioner would visualise him/herself as Amitābha (མིན་པོ་ཆེན་) who holds the long-life vase (ཆུས་ཀྱིས་). The second, “iron-life channel (སྤྱན་པོ་དྲུད་པར་)”, denotes the iron-like
central psychic-nerve, which the practitioner must also keep visualising from the crown of his/her head (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན) down to the secret place (ཨེདབོག གུན). Thus it resembles an ♂♂ of a live bamboo (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན), which looks like an upright pillar (གཙིས་བིུ གུན). This iron-like robust “life channel (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན)” bears a similarity with “stalk (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན)”, an intermediary substance. They both play an indispensable role in relaying the bright light of the emptiness (ཨེདབོག གུན) to the practitioner/initiand. For both the “life channel (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན)” and “stalk (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན)”, “iron (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན)” has the function of establishing their firmness.

The third example, “iron-hook (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན)”, which alludes to a tool that illuminates the entire bhājana/sattva-loka (ཨེདབོག གུན). Although the luminous rays have a form similar to the robust iron-hook (aṅkaśa vaṅc), the fundamental quality is said to be the compassionate grace of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Hence, through the precept, the practitioner is introduced to a broad Mahāyānic philosophical perspective and his/her attention is directed to the whole receptacle world.

For more connotation of the term “ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན (iron)”, I required another Longevity Practice; the Glorious Grant of Immortality (ཨེདབོག གུན དིས) CP as well. The CP explicitly references iron, which denotes the robust firmness of the cakravāda (ཨེདབོག གུན དིས) which encircles the universal base of Buddhist cosmology. Furthermore, in the same Mahāyāna hermeneutical theory under consideration here, “ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན (iron)” can be defined not only by its robustness, but also as the absolute value of the magnetic. It can attract all beings in the environment, so that consequently the “iron-hook” can grapple with the fivefold degeneracy (ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན དིས paṅca kaśyāḥ) and put them into the long-life vase.

Meanwhile, there is only one reference to “ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན” in CD, i.e. “ཨེདབོག གུན (branch of the wish-fulfilling tree)”. According to the passages, a branch of the kalpavrkaṣa should be placed into Amitāyus’ long-life vase to adorn the mouth (ཨེདབོག གུན). The special aptitude for this Tantric accomplishment is brought into the practitioner through the ritual form of abhiṣeka. Furthermore, “ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན (trunk of the body)” denotes something akin to the “ཨེདཔོ་ལྕན”. It alludes to the central psychic-nerve (avadhūt; ཀྲོ་བོ). Through the practitioner’s Aperture of
Brahma (ब्रह्म) the amrita flows down, wherever the trunk has been full of
siddhi. As a result of the visualisation, the Bhagavat Nātha Vajra Amitāyus
dissolves (मिल्ले) into his/her heart centre (धिन्त), in this wise, the initiand has
attained the siddhi of immortality (मिल्ले उपयोगी).

Another implication of the phrase “iron stalk (कुटुंबीय जूका)” is that it
may mark the heretical view of eternalism (महायानसूत्र) found in the
*Brahmajālasūtra (ब्रह्मजालसूत्र) Brmj). In this regard, we saw two
different semantic lines in the use of “कुटुंबीय जूका”: (1) the heretical view
of permanent objects of eternalism (महायानसूत्र) criticised in such Mahāyāna
scriptures as the Brmj; and (2) the doctrine of immortality as seen in such
longevity practices as CD and CP. The later type considers the practitioner’s life
(संसार jīva; अयु अयु) can become eternal, indestructible, which is metaphorically
likened to “an iron tree”. By the consecration (धार्मिक अभिषेक abhiṣeka), the
practitioner becomes undifferentiated with the deity who is the object of
veneration (निम्नलिखित अभेद). For such inseparability (निम्नलिखित abheda), the
“कुटुंबीय जूका” acts as a metaphor for the “iron-like robust life channel” to lead
the siddhi from Amitāyus to the initiate.

As I have illustrated with several examples, the practitioner experiences to
be free from the cyclical saṁsāric pattern of death and re-birth merely occur as a
rite de passage; therefore, he/she should be spontaneously abiding in the so-
called “birth and death-transcending Great Bliss (CD_1 523.5; CD_2 254.1:
मिल्ले उपयोगी अभेद वेदिका)”. While seemingly fragile, yet against the
inevitable fact of life, the channel maintains an umbilical cord like esoteric
firmness in the heart of the Nirmāṇakāya’s (Amitāyus/Amitābha) bounty.
Appendix

Fig. 1: སོགས་རྩེ་སེམས་དཔའ་མ་རླུང་ (Dagyab, 1991: 89) by courtesy of the author, H. H. Dagyab Rinpoche (རྲུལ་སྐུགས་མིང་གྲུབ་པའི་རླུང་སྒྲིག་པོ་).
Bibliography

A. Texts and Abbreviations

APS *Anavataptaṇāgarājaparipṛcchā. P823 (vol. 33, p. 129f, 213b7–260b7); D156 (vol. 12, p. 244f, 206a1–253b7).


Av Avatāraskasūtra.

Av_t Av. अवताराकसूत्रविलेखनार्थ कुसम्बोत्रज्ञानिणी जय विजयी जनार्दनजीवीं प्रवीण्यस्त्रियाँ P761 (1b1 (vol. 25, p. 1f)–253a6 (vol. 26, p. 321)); D44 (vol. 8, p. 1f, 1b1–363a6).


Brmj *Brahmajālāsūtra.

Brmj_t Brmj. ब्रह्मजालासूत्रम् P1021 (vol. 40, p. 285f, 72b8–88b8); D352 (vol. 15, p. 456f, 70b2–86a2).

CD दलितकी धर्मावलोकन अध्याय


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DTC तद्गुढ़ वाक्य विविध अर्थः (1927–1997; TBRC#P1161). तद्गुढ़ वाक्य अर्थः 2002.


G गात्रिच लोक योरे को चर्चा (1540–1615; TBRC#P644). गात्रिच लोक योरे को चर्चा.


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PD_C PD. See Campbell (1919).

PD_t PD. गुणोत्तरं सर्वे भवेऽन्निलोकोक्तां विकृतां प्रकृतां *P5821* (vol. 144, p. 2f, 145a4–156b7); *D4329* (vol. 51, p. 299f, 103a7–113a4).

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