

Article

History and Myth: Mahāmudrā Lineage Accounts in the 12th-Century Xixia Buddhist Literature

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Abstract: Mahāmudrā—an Indo-Tibetan phenomenon of Buddhist spirituality—constitutes in its systematic presentation a path that maps out the mystical quest for direct experience of ultimate reality. Despite the post-15th century bKa’-brgyud attempts at a codified Mahāmudrā genealogy, the early Tibetan sources speak little with regards to how the different Indian Mahāmudrā threads made their way over the Himalayas. To fill this gap, the article investigates, via philological and historical approaches, the lineage accounts in the 12th-century Xixia Mahāmudrā materials against the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist landscape. Three transmission lines are detected. Among them, two lines are attested by later Tibetan historiographical accounts about Mahāmudrā, and thus belong to an Indo-Tibetan continuum of the constructed Buddhist yogic past based upon historical realities—at least as understood by Tibetans of the time. The third one is more of a collage patching together different claims to spiritual legacy and religious authority—be they historically based or introspectively projected. Not only does the Mahāmudrā topography, jointly fueled by these three transmissions, reveal the Xixia recognition and imagination of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist legacies, it also captures the complexities of the multi-faceted picture of Mahāmudrā on its way over the Himalayas during the 11th/12th century.

Keywords: Mahāmudrā; religious history of tantric Buddhism; Buddhist siddha; Tibetan Buddhism; Xixia Buddhist literature; Chinese tantric Buddhist literature

1. Introduction

Mahāmudrā (Great Seal) constitutes in its mature and systematic presentation a Buddhist path that maps out the mystical quest for direct experience of ultimate reality. To trace *mahāmudrā* back through a chronology of Indian Buddhist Tantra, one observes a semantic line towards interiorization and gnostication coupled with an increasingly soteriological and ontological valence. A topic of analysis rhetorically detached from—yet practically indebted to—the tantric matrices, Mahāmudrā came to be received in the Buddhist siddha environment as a gnostic index of ultimacy defined by the luminous nature of the mind. In Roger Jackson’s terms, *mahāmudrā* “had become a crucial Buddhist term that could describe the nature of reality and of the mind, a ritual or meditative procedure for seeing the nature, and the enlightenment ensuing from that realization.” (Jackson 2005, p. 5597).

Up to the 11th century, Indian tantric Buddhists—yogic and monastic—had devised and articulated a variety of approaches to the realization of Mahāmudrā. A number of such threads came to be known and received by Tibetans roughly around the same time, along with the tide of the most cutting-edge yogic techniques and tantric doctrines flooding over the Himalayas. In Tibet, Mahāmudrā is most closely associated with the bKa’-brgyud tradition, whose founding father sGam-po-pa (1079–1153) is shown to have taught Mahāmudrā approaches either rooted respectively in sūtra and tantra, or beyond both (Jackson 1994, pp. 14–28). sGam-po-pa’s multi-faceted picture of Mahāmudrā was systematized by later bKa’-brgyud teachers into more coherent presentations. A classic example is Kong-sprul Blo-gros-mtha’-yas’s (1813–1899) threefold

classification of Mahāmudrā into the *sūtra*, *mantra*, and essence modes (*mdo sngags snying po'i lugs*) (Mathes 2015, pp. IX–X).

As much as we should be cautious against reading too much later taxonomy and interpretations back into earlier doctrinal layers, Kong-sprul's scheme indeed reveals three major strands of inspiration bKa'-brgyud teachers had drawn from the India Buddhist tantric and siddha discourses in crafting their Mahāmudrā edifice. In short, the bKa'-brgyud Mahāmudrā topography is primarily made up of the tantric mode represented by the Six-Teaching (*ṣaḍdharma*, *chos drug*) praxis traced to Tilopa (988–1069), the sūtric mode by the Sahajayoga (*lhan cig skyes sbyor*) praxis of four *yogas* (*rnal 'byor bzhi*) traced to Atiśa (982–1054), and the essence mode by the *dohā* and Amanasikāra (*yi la mi byed pa*) cycles traced to the Saraha-Maitrīpa circle. Weaved together by the unifying thread of Mahāmudrā, all the three interconnected strands combined to make the core of the bKa'-brgyud curriculum.

Of the three Mahāmudrā strands already present in sGam-po-pa's collected works,¹ only the tantric Mahāmudrā lineage was emphasized at the start of the bKa'-brgyud institution. The orthodox bKa'-brgyud lineage accounts tended to valorize the Six-Teaching transmission in combination with the Mahāmudrā content as its primary experiential referent. The normative succession runs from Vajradhara through Tilopa, Nāropā (1016–1100), Mar-pa (1012–1097), Mi-la-ras-pa (1028/40–1111/23), and sGam-po-pa, and then branches into subsectarian descents.² It was only after the 15th century that the Saraha-Maitrīpa branch of essence Mahāmudrā came to be reinforced along the bKa'-brgyud lines, probably as a response to criticisms leveled against the Mahāmudrā beyond the tantric context initially advocated by early patriarchs such as sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang (1123–1119) (Jackson 1994, pp. 82–83; Zhang 2016, pp. 598–99). It remains in scholarly debate whether it was a genuine rediscovery of Maitrīpa's importance in sGam-po-pa's non-tantric Mahāmudrā teaching or merely a retroactive projection of the later bKa'-brgyud outlook back onto their predecessors.³

As such, despite the post-15th century attempts at a codified Mahāmudrā genealogy, the extant early bKa'-brgyud materials remain vague with regards to their specific transmissions—that is, how each Indian thread made its way over the Himalayas and tangled with each other. To fill this gap, the article investigates the Mahāmudrā lineage accounts preserved in the Xixia Buddhist literature pertaining to the Tibetan subject matter,⁴ a corpus of Tangut and Chinese texts which constitutes a

¹ For a synoptical introduction of sGam-po-pa's collected works, see (Kragh 2015, pp. 200–689).

² For the early accounts about the orthodox bKa'-brgyud succession of the six teachers from Vajradhara through sGam-po-pa, see, for instance, Zhang brTson-'grus-grags-pa's two prayers to the bKa'-brgyud teachers, the *bKa' brgyud kyi gsol 'debs dang po* (*gSol skor*, ff. 4b3–5b2) and the *bKa' brgyud kyi gsol 'debs gnyis pa* (*gSol skor*, ff. 5b2–6a4); c.f. (Yamamoto 2012, pp. 84–85). Elsewhere in his *brGyud pa sna tshogs*, Zhang ascribes this line of succession to the Mahāmudrā and Six-Teaching (*phyag rgya chen po dang na ro'i chos drug*) transmission he received; see the *brGyud sna*, ff. 94b4–95a1. Worthy of note is that Zhang lists in his *brGyud pa sna tshogs* more than one transmission either containing “Mahāmudrā” in the title or related to it, which—besides the Six-Teaching Mahāmudrā transmission—are the Sahaja (*lhan cig skyes pa*) transmission which includes Cakrasaṃvara's consort *Jñānaḍākinī (*bcom ldan 'das dpal 'khor lo bde mchog gi yum ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro ma*), Maitrīpa (*a wa dlū ti pa*), Vajrāsana (*rdo rje gdan pa*), and Abhayākaragupta, the Instantaneous Mahāmudrā (*phyag rgya chen po thog babs*) transmission which includes Bodhisattva Matiratna, Śavaripa and Vajrapāṇi, and the *Dohā* Commentary (*do hā'i 'grel*) transmission which includes Vajradhara (*rdo rje 'chang*), Saraha, Śavaripa (*ri khrod dbang phyug sa ra ha*), Maitrīpa (*mai tri pa*), and Vairocana-vajra; see the *brGyud sna*; c.f. (Yamamoto 2012, pp. 356–360). The *Dohā* Commentary line—nested within a complex of tangled transmissions not particularly bKa'-brgyud-pa in affiliation—is closest to the Mahāmudrā transmission sketched out in the *Blue Annals* in that both pass through the Saraha-Maitrīpa circle and contain a “Vairocana” transmitting the teaching to Zhang. Through tracing Zhang's spiritual tree based on his lineage accounts, (Yamamoto 2012, pp. 79–137) describes and discusses the processes within the bKa'-brgyud institution whereby “the impossible complexity of religious influence is streamlined into a more manageable model of inheritance,” and the Six-Teaching line which started off as “a solitary lineage” had gained “hegemonic status through appropriation and consolidation at the material and symbolic/ideological levels, and through institutionalization at the social level.”

³ Klaus-Dieter Mathes has written a series of articles (e.g., 2006 and 2007) to argue for the Indian origin for the bKa'-brgyud not-specifically-tantric Mahāmudrā by building a doctrinal connection with the Amanasikāra cycle composed by Maitrīpa and his disciples. (Kragh 2015, pp. 73–78)—as much as he acknowledges the doctrinal resemblance—denies the historical connection between sGam-po-pa and Maitrīpa. He points out a missing link to Mathes's line by arguing that sGam-po-pa as an innovator had not so much inherited from Maitrīpa, which is evidenced by the absence of the latter in the former's works.

⁴ I would use “Xixia literature” or “Xixia texts” to refer to texts in either Tangut or Chinese scripts which pertain to the Xixia regime or to its immediate aftermath. I follow most Tangutologists' practice of using Chinese graphs to present the Tangut content through a semantic rendering. The reconstruction, if not a confirmed correspondence (e.g., “释迦” as the Chinese

window into the 12th-century Tibetan attempts to assimilate and systematize the latest Indian Buddhist thoughts and praxes through the tantric axis. The Mahāmudrā lineages contained in the Xixia materials sheds new light on the Tibetan recognition of the Saraha-Maitrīpa branch in that it presents a case as early as the 12th century.

2. An Overview of the Xixia Mahāmudrā Materials

A geographical nexus in which multiple vectors of cultural influences intersect, the Hexi Corridor has facilitated transfers of Buddhist teachings and praxes in a complex web of historical dynamics and cross-cultural exchanges.⁵ As the area came under the Tangut Xixia domination (1038–1227), the Buddhist religion continued to impact and shape the local religio-cultural landscape of both intra- and inter-national levels. By the turn of the 12th century, Tibetans had begun to institutionalize their own Buddhist systems and initiate international outreach to secure patronage and extend institutional networks. As such, in an effort to build spiritual and political connections with the Tangut royal house, Tibetan masters brought to the Xixia Kingdom the cutting-edge yogic techniques of Buddhist Tantra and advanced Mahāyāna doctrinal developments.⁶

Embracing a variety of Buddhist yogic transmissions as well as a range of doctrinal topics imported from Tibet, the Tibetan-inspired Xixia Buddhist corpus of Tangut- and Chinese-language texts span the Vajravāhī, Cakrasaṃvara, Six-Teaching (*chos drug*), Mahāmudrā, and *Lam 'bras* systems and topics.⁷ Scholarly knowledge of these yogic transmissions had advanced thanks to the rediscovered Xixia importance evinced by the *Dacheng yaodao miji* 大乘要道密集 (*The Secret Collection of Works on the Essential Path of Mahāyāna*, “DYM” hereafter), a collection of Chinese translated texts of Tibetan tantric teaching compiled no earlier than the late-14th century.⁸

The Xixia Mahāmudrā collection comprises Tangut-language texts and fragments scattered across approximately 15 inventory numbers originally assigned by the Institute of Oriental Studies to the Khara Khoto collection, and Chinese ones—most of which have Tangut equivalents—included in the DYM.⁹ Presented below is a collated list of Xixia Mahāmudrā titles provided in sequence and clusters

equivalent of “ ”), will be marked with an asterisk (*). Phonetic reconstruction (in Gong Hwang-cherng’s system) will be provided for the Tangut term considered to be phonetic transcription from another language, be it Chinese, Sanskrit, or Tibetan (e.g., *śjikja* as the transcription of *śākya* or *shijia* 释迦).

⁵ The Hexi Corridor, as part of the trade route networks conventionally designated as the Silk Road, runs northwest from the bank of the Yellow River up till the nowadays Xinjiang-Gansu border and is flanked by the Tibetan Plateau and the Gobi Desert to the south and the north, respectively. For a multi-disciplinary and transcultural vision for Buddhism in Central Asia as a driving force for the historical and cultural processes, see (Meinert 2016).

⁶ (Sperling 1987) compiles the later Tibetan historical sources to identify two bKa’-brgyud masters sent to serve in the Tangut court as “imperial preceptor” (*dishi* 帝师), namely gTsang-po-pa dKon-mchog-seng-ge (?–1218/1219)—disciple of Karma-pa Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa’s (1110–93)—and his successor Ti-shri Sangs-rgyas-ras-chen (1164/5–1236) from the ‘Ba’-rom bKa’-brgyud subsect. Furthering this line of inquiries, (Dunnell 1992, pp. 102–3) comments that it was during about the 1170s that Emperor Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1139–93) had established spiritual relationships with the Tibetan bKa’-brgyud sect. From the Xixia sources in both Tangut and Chinese there could be identified several personas potentially of Tibetan origin active during the period from the mid-12th to the early-13th centuries; for details of these figures, see (Dunnell 2009).

⁷ For discussions on the transmission history of these tantric teachings and praxes which came from India to Xixia through the Tibetan medium, see (Sun 2014b; Solonin 2015a, pp. 429–41).

⁸ Back in the early half of the 20th century, Lv Cheng (1896–1989) first applied the modern academic approach of historical-philological analysis to studying the DYM (Lv 1942). It is Chen Qingying who first noted an intimate Tangut Xixia connection in the DYM (Chen 2003). Shen Weirong further builds a textual connection between the DYM and the Chinese translated tantric texts from the Khara Khoto collection and ascribes most of the DYM titles to the Xixia and Yuan translations (Shen 2007). For more detailed examinations of the transmission history of these Tibetan tantric teachings from Tibet to Xixia based on both the Khara Khoto Buddhist texts pertaining to the Tibetan subject matter and the DYM Chinese translated texts, see (Sun 2014b; Solonin 2015b).

⁹ (Nishida 1999, pp. XXXVIII–XLVI) first noticed a few titles with the term “Mahāmudrā” contained therein, among others, from the Khara Khoto collection of Tangut Buddhist texts pertaining to the Tibetan subject matter and makes preliminary studies about the content and transmission of these texts. (Solonin 2011, 2012) gives a more detailed overview of the Tangut Mahāmudrā textual tradition. (Shen 2007, pp. 288–89) identifies for certain DYM Chinese titles Tangut equivalents from the Khara Khoto collection. (Sun 2014a) further makes a comparative study of several Mahāmudrā texts extant in both Tangut and Chinese. For a recent publication containing the transliteration, translation, and DYM Chinese equivalent (if any) of the Tangut Mahāmudrā texts and studies of their transmission history, see (Sun and Nie 2018).

as reflected in the bibliographical organizations shared by both the Khara Khoto collection and the DYM (Tibetan equivalent title will be provided if located):

#1. The *Keypoints-Notes* cluster:¹⁰

#1.1. *Keypoints of Mahāmudrā as the Ultimate* (*Phyag rgya chen po mthar thug gi gnad bsdus; “Keypoints”):

Khara Khoto: *大印究竟要集 (345#824, 345#2526, #2876), Agent: compiled by Dehui 德慧

#1.2. *Notes on the Keypoints of Mahāmudrā as the Ultimate* (*Phyag rgya chen po mthar thug gi gnad bsdus kyi zin bris; “Notes”):

Khara Khoto: *大印究竟要集记 (I: 345#2858, 345#7163, 427#3817; II: 427#3817; X: 345#2851)

#2. *Upadeśa on the Uncommon Meaning of Mahāmudrā in Accordance with Scriptural Instructions* (*Phyag rgya chen po thun mong ma yin pa’i don lung dang mthun pa’i man ngag; “Uncommon”):

DYM: *Xinyi dashouyin bugongyi peijiao yaomen* 新译大手印不共义配教要门, Agents: compiled by Maitrīpa; narrated by Huixian 惠贤, i.e., State Preceptor Xuanzhao 玄照; translated by Huichuang 惠幢

#3. *Guided Meditation* (*定引导):¹¹

#3.1. *Upadeśa on the Immediate Approach to Mahāmudrā* (*Phyag rgya chen por cig car ’jug pa’i man ngag; “Immediate Approach”):

Khara Khoto: *大手印顿入要语 (297#2530, 346#892, 346#7216)

DYM: *Xinyi dashouyin dunru yaomen* 新译大手印顿入要门, Agents: narrated by Huixian; translated by Huichuang

#3.2. *Direct Guidance on the Mahāmudrā* (*Phyag rgya chen po’i dmar khrid; “Direct Guidance”):

Khara Khoto: *大手印赤引导 (297#2530, 346#7216)

DYM: *Dashouyin yin ding/chiyindao* 大手印引定/赤引导

#3.3. *Transmission of the Mahāmudrā Upadeśa* (*Phyag rgya chen po’i man ngag gi brgyud pa; “Transmission”):

Khara Khoto: *大手印要语师次 (346#7216)

DYM: *Dashouyin jiatuozhi yaomen* 大手印陁支要门

¹⁰ Tang. 345 contains the *Keypoints* in xylography (inv. 2526) and manuscript (inv. 824), and the first (inv. 2858 and inv. 7163) and final (inv. 2851) volumes of the *Notes* in manuscript; c.f. (Kychanov 1999, pp. 582–83). A separate copy of the *Keypoints* is found in Inv. 2876 (not included in Kychanov 1999), which, however, misses several folios and is somewhat misarranged. The first two volumes of the *Notes* is also seen handwritten on the back of the xylographic text (Kychanov 1999, p. 614) identifies as “*次智佛請” (Tang.#inv. 427#3817). (Nishida 1999, pp. XLI–XLV) offers a preliminary study of the *Keypoints* (#35) and the *Notes* (#37) with partial structural analyses and Chinese transcriptions. (Solonin 2011, pp. 284–305; 2012, pp. 243–63) examines in specific the lineage, authorship, and content of the *Keypoints* and compares its philosophy with counterparts in other Xixia Mahāmudrā materials. (Solonin 2012, pp. 248–62) also provides the Tangut original and Chinese transcription and translation of the versified biographies of Śākyamuni plus eight lineage patriarchs of the *Keypoints* and compares the *Keypoints* accounts with that in the *Chengjiu bashiwushi daoizhu* 成就八十五师祷祝 (*Prayers to the Eighty-five Siddhas*) included in the DYM. For a critical edition and Chinese translation of the *Keypoints*, see (Sun and Nie 2018, pp. 295–335).

¹¹ Tang.#inv. 297#2530, containing complete editions of the *Immediate Approach* (ff. 1–9) and the *Direct Guidance* (ff. 9–32), bears the title “ ” on the frontispiece of the composite; c.f. (Kychanov 1999, p. 611). In Tang.#inv. 346#7216, the *Transmission* and the *Gradual and Immediate Approaches* immediately follow the *Immediate Approach* and the *Direct Guidance*; c.f. (Kychanov 1999, pp. 561–62). I subsume all the four titles under “ ” in my listing. For a critical edition and Chinese translation of these four titles as well as comparisons against the DYM counterparts, see (Sun and Nie 2018, pp. 154–205).

#3.4. *Upadeśa on the Gradual and Immediate Approaches to Mahāmudrā* (*Phyag rgya chen por rim gyis 'jug pa dang cig car 'jug pa'i man ngag; "Gradual and Immediate Approaches"):

Khara Khoto: *大手印依次入等时入要语 (346#7216)

DYM: *Dashouyin jianru dunru yaomen* 大手印渐入顿入要门

#4. Fourteen titles plus the preceding introduction to Lazheng's 粹征 Mahāmudrā teaching by Imperial Preceptor Xuanmi 玄密 ("fourteen-title constellation"):¹²

Khara Khoto: fourteen titles plus the preceding passage "上师曰则我师粹征云..." (348#2841, 477#4977)

DYM: fourteen titles plus the preceding passage "玄密帝师云吾师粹征做如是说"

#5. Four upadeśas including the Newly Translated Golden Garland of Mahāmudrā (Xinyi dashouyin jinyingluo deng sizhong yaomen 新译大手印金瓔珞等四种要门; "four-upadeśa repertoire"):

#5.1. *Upadeśa on the Golden Garland* ("Golden Garland"):¹³

DYM: *Jinyingluo yaomen* 金瓔珞要门 ("Jinyingluo") bsTan-'gyur: *dPal udiyanar tshogs 'khor byas pa'i dus su rnal 'byor pa grub pa thob pa bzhi bcus rdo rje'i mgur bzhengs pa nyams kyi man ngag thig le gser gyi phreng ba* ("Nyams kyi man ngag thig le", D 2449)

#5.2. *Ritual of Offering the Gaṇacakra to Teachers of the Lineage* (*brGyud pa'i bla ma rnam la tshogs'khor 'bul ba'i cho ga; "Offering the Gaṇacakra"):

DYM: *Shicheng dengchu feng jilunyi* 师承等处奉集轮仪

#5.3. *Upadeśa on the Quintessential Meanings of Mahāmudrā* ("Quintessential Meanings"):¹⁴

DYM: *Dashouyin zuanji xin zhi yilei yaomen* 大手印纂集心之义类要门

sGam po gsung 'bum: *sNying po'i don lnga ldan* (sGrub snying: 5b4–6b5)

#5.4. *The Quartet Upadeśa of Ḍombi's Intention* ("Ḍombi's Intention"):¹⁵

¹² The fourteen titles run from the *Eight Methods of the Mahāmudrā Dhyāna* (大手印静虑八法要门) to the *Four Mental Withdrawals towards the Mahāmudrā* (大手印四种收心) in both Tang.#inv. 348#2841 (Kychanov 1999, p. 526) and the DYM. Tang.#inv. 447#4977 preserves an incomplete list of the fourteen-title constellation; c.f. (Kychanov 1999, p. 565). For a critical edition and Chinese translation of these fourteen small texts as well as comparisons against the DYM counterparts, see (Sun and Nie 2018, pp. 211–48). For Xuanmi's introduction to Lazheng's Mahāmudrā teaching which precedes the first title "Eight Methods," Sun & Nie wrongly identified it as the end of the *Gradual and Immediate Approaches*, probably based on the DYM placement of the passage between the two clusters of the *Guided Meditation* and the fourteen-title constellation.

¹³ (Lv 1942, pp. X–XIII) confirms the *Nyams kyi man ngag thig le* as the Tibetan equivalent of the *Jinyingluo yaomen* in the canonical collection of translated treatises (bsTan-'gyur) and speculatively identified it as an abridged version of the *Phyag rgya chen po gser phreng* (D 2454) compiled by Maitripa. He also provides critical editions of both the Chinese and Tibetan texts of the *Golden Garland* and puts them in parallel for comparison; see (Lv 1942, 17), pp. 1–16. (Sun 2012, pp. 186–87) found an alternative version of the *Nyams kyi man ngag thig le* in the *Zhi byed snga bar phyi gsum gyi skor*, a collection of Zhi-byed works dating to the 13th century. Sun further notes that the version in the *Zhi byed* collection is closer to the DYM Chinese translated work *Jinyingluo*. While the bsTan-'gyur version of the *Nyams thig le gser gyi phreng ba* quotes Tilopa/Tailopa (though bsTan-'gyur editions differ from each other in the exact name spelling, the name remains consistent in each edition) twice, both the *Zhi byed* version and the *Jinyingluo* attribute the two quotations to two different names, Telopa/唎吟浪巴 and Trelopa/丁浪巴; see the *Thig gser A*, ff. 205a6–7; the *Thig gser B*, ff. 172b7–173a1; the XDJ. For an introduction to the *Zhi byed* collection, see (Martin 2006, p. 114).

¹⁴ I thank Doctor Yang Jie from Renmin University of China for sharing with me his finding of the Tibetan original of the *Quintessential Meanings* in sGam-po-pa's *Collected Works* (gsung 'bum) as well as his comparative reading of both the Tibetan and Chinese texts.

¹⁵ A comparative reading reveals that the Chinese edition *Nami zhenxin siju yaomen* does not completely parallel either of the two Tibetan editions found from the collected works of sGam-po-pa and rJe btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan (1147–1216), respectively. The DYM edition elaborates on the four aspects of the mind, namely the threefold essence (本体), the fourfold

DYM: *Nami zhenxin siju yaomen* 那弥真心四句要门

sGam po gsung 'bum: *Slob dpon ḍoṃ bhi he ru ka'i dgongs pa* (gNas go: 29a1–b2)

Sa skya bka' 'bum: *Slob spon chen po ḍoṃ bi he ru ka'i thugs kyi man ngag yi ge bzhi pa* (*Phyag gces*, ff. 7b4–8a3)

#6. Contemplating the Mind (*观心):¹⁶

#6.1. *Upadeśa on the Mahāmudrā* (*Phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag):

Khara Khoto: *大手印要语 (167#6775), by Great Master from Tibet (*中国大师)

#6.2. *Upadeśa on Aspiring for the Yoga* (*rNal 'byor 'dod pa'i man ngag):

Khara Khoto: *瑜伽仰渴要语 (167#6775)

#6.3. *Upadeśa on the True Meaning of the Cognitionless* (*Sems med snying don gyi man ngag):

Khara Khoto: *无心真义要语 (167#6775), Bla-ma Sangs-rgyas (*明满上师)

#6.4. *Upadeśa on the Immediate Approach to the Mind-Nature of Samādhi* (*Ting nge 'dzin gyi sems nyid la cig car 'jug pa'i man ngag):

Khara Khoto: *静虑心性顿入要语 (167#6775), by Great Master from Tibet (*中国大师)

#6.5. *Summarized Guidance on the Mahāmudrā* (*Phyag rgya chen po'i dmar khrid don bsdu; "Summarized Guidance"):

Khara Khoto: *大手印定引导略文 (167#6775, 347#875)

#7. Zhang's Upadeśa on the Ultimate of the Profound Path of Mahāmudrā ("Ultimate"), Ch. 8–13:¹⁷

Khara Khoto: *śja-ṅa-ju-pji-rjar-pja (g.yu brag pa) 师所作《道究竟要语》(450#4806) *Zhang gsung 'bum*: *Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug zhang gi man ngag* (*Phyag lam*: 61b–74b)

The DYM ordering of Chinese titles preserves in one way or another the manner in which their Tangut equivalents were put together and organized. The DYM listing of titles reproduces the textual order of the two Tangut clusters—the *Guided Meditation* (#3) and fourteen-title constellation (#4)—the latter immediately succeeding the former through the intermediary passage of Xuanmi's introduction to his master's teaching. Thus, we have a reason to deduce that the DYM four-*upadeśa* cluster headed by

intrinsic nature (自性), the fourfold commitment (记句), and the threefold deviation (迷惑). The Tibetan editions, though with minor variants, agree with each other in terms of an order different from the DYM's, namely the three essences (*ngo bo gsum*), the four commitments (*dam tshig bzhi*), the three deviations (*gol sa gsum*), and the four means of settling the mind (*b[g]zhag thabs bzhi*, i.e., 心之自性分四 in the DYM). Compared to the *Sa skya bka' 'bum* edition, the *sGam po gsung 'bum* edition misses several lines under the "four means of settling the mind." The DYM and SK editions differ from each other in terms of the order of the four means. Nonetheless, this piece of Domb[-h]i Heruka's instruction seems to be quite well received across Tibetan Buddhist traditions during the 12th century. I thank Doctor Yang Jie from Renmin University and Sun Penghao from Harvard University for sharing with me the information regarding the Tibetan equivalent of the *Nami zhenxin siju yaomen* in the *sGam po gsung 'bum* and *Sa skya bka' 'bum* respectively.

¹⁶ (Kychanov 1999, pp. 463–64) lists five titles under the "Contemplation of the Mind." I adjust Kychanov's Chinese reconstructions, and English translations are all mine. In the Xixia Buddhist materials in both Tangut and Chinese, the expression "middle kingdom" (中国) makes frequent appearances in notations as an indicator of people's geographical origin. Both (Shi 2002, p. 40) and (Nie 2005, pp. 7–8) confirm that this "middle kingdom" refers to Tibet, not China. (Chen 2003, p. 104) has a different theory, arguing that the *zhongguo* present in the DYM is the self-designation applied by the Tanguts themselves. However, based on several cases that people with the "middle kingdom" appended to their title have a confirmed Tibetan origin, the term should point to Tibet. (Shen 2007, p. 293) further speculates the "middle kingdom" might literally transcribe the Tibetan *dbus yul*.

¹⁷ Doctor Zeng Hanchen from Shaanxi Normal University noticed this Tangut text and located its Tibetan original in Bla-ma Zhang's *Collected Works*. I thank her for sharing this piece of information with me.

the *Jinyingluo* (#5) also preserves the original organization of how the Tangut equivalents were wrapped into a textual composite, though they are unfortunately missing from the Khara Khoto collection.

3. A Chronology Inside the Xixia Mahāmudrā Materials

A rough chronology in this textual corpus can be established based on the colophonic information. The *Keypoints-Notes* cluster (#1) was produced during around the mid-12th century. It presents a line starting from the Buddha through a list of Indian teachers down to a Tibetan person named brTson-'grus (*精进).¹⁸ It was brTson-'grus's disciple Dehui (德慧) who—after attending his master's Dharma lectures in 1152—compiled the teachings into the text *Keypoints*.¹⁹

Those having Chinese translated titles in the *DYM*—no matter whether the corresponding Tangut edition is extant or not—came up a bit later towards the end of the Tangut Xixia regime. Both the *Guided Meditation* (#3) and the four-*upadeśa* constellation (#5) clusters contain complete lineages ending with State Preceptor Xuanzhao who, at the same time, taught the *Uncommon* (#2) to its translator Huichuang. The short piece *Transmission* (#3.3) under the *Guided Meditation* records a lineage through the Saraha-Maitrīpa line as well. After Maitrīpa, it proceeds to the Tibetan bKa'-brgyud patriarchs Mar-pa Chos-kyi-blo-gros (1012–1097), Mi-la-ras-pa (1028/40–1111/23), and probably sGam-po-pa (1079–1153).²⁰ Entering the Xixia domain, the line then reaches Imperial Preceptor Xuanmi 玄密, Master Dabao 大宝, and State Preceptor Xuanzhao.²¹ Xuanmi could be a Tibetan residing in Xixia.²²

¹⁸ After an opening praise to the Buddha Śākyamuni (*śji-kja* 释迦), the *Keypoints* presents a succession of eight versified biographies of Vimalakīrti (*wji-mo* 维摩), Saraha (*sja-rjar-xa*), Nāgārjuna (龙树, Klu-grub), Śavarīpa (*山墓, Ri-khrod[-zhabs]), Maitrīpa (*慈师), Jñānakīrti (*智称, Ye-shes-grags-pa), Vāgīśvara (*语主, Ngag-gi-dbang-po), brTson-'grus (*精进). See the *Keypoints* (inv. 2526, ff. 1b1–4b8; inv. 824, ff. 1b1–4b3); c.f. (Sun and Nie 2018, pp. 296–301). For a survey of these figures, see (Solonin 2011, pp. 285–88; 2012, pp. 248–62). The succession line from Saraha, Śavarīpa, to Maitrīpa is well received in Tibet as the common origin of the Mahāmudrā transmissions; see, for instance, the *Deb sngon* (vol. 2, p. 985.1–6): *rgyal ba shākya thub pa'i bstan pa 'di la phyag rgya chen po zhes lam phul du phyung bar mgo 'don mkhan bram ze chen po sa ra ha gda' ba bu | de'i lugs 'dzin pa rgya gar na rje ri khrod zhabs yab sras yin | ... yab ri khrod zhabs kyi lugs sras me tri bas gzung nas slob ma rnam phyag rgya chen po'i lam la bkod pa las dzam bu'i gling du khyab par gyur pa yin no | |*.

¹⁹ According to the *Notes* (I, f. 4a5–6), brTson-'grus's Dharma lectures took place in a *renshen* 壬申 year, either 1152 or 1212. Based on Dehui's career year, which had ranged through the reign of Renzong (1139–1193), (Solonin 2015a, p. 428) dates the work to 1152. For Dehui's identity and career, see (Dunnell 2009, pp. 47–49). Moreover, (Solonin 2012, pp. 245–46) translates the *Notes'* colophon (X, ff. 26a1–27b4) which describes Dehui's experience of studying with brTson-'grus in Tsong-kha (*tsow-ka*), the northeastern area of Tibet bordering the Tangut Xixia.

²⁰ Without knowledge of the *DYM's* Xixia import, (Lv 1942, p. XII) identifies Lazheng 粹征 in the *DYM* lineage as Bla-ma Blo-chen, a disciple of 'Phags-pa (1235–80). (Shen 2007, p. 282) speculates that the Chinese name *lazheng* phonetically transcribes the Tibetan *lha rje*, the title for sGam-po-pa bSod-nams-rin-chen (1079–1153) who is at the same time Mi-la-ras-pa's disciple. The phonetic reconstruction of *lazheng's* Tangut equivalent as *lhja-dzjij* corroborates Shen's assumption.

²¹ See the *Transmission* and the *DJY*. While the Tangut lineage lacks the three last persons due to the paper damage, the Chinese version is complete. The whole lineage, with both the Tangut and Chinese names included, runs as follows: the Buddha (i.e., Samyaksambuddha; *DYM*: 真实究竟圆满), Bodhisattva Matiratna/Blo-gros Rin-po-che (*DYM*: 菩提勇识大宝意解脱师), Saraha (*DYM*: 萨罗曷师), Śavarīpa (*sja-rjar-pja*; *DYM*: 萨罗巴师), Avadhūtipa (*ja-wa-dwu-tji-pja*; *DYM*: 亚斡诺帝巴, alias Maitrīpa), Bla-ma Mar-pa (*lja-mja-mja-pja*; *DYM*: 粹麻马巴), Mi-la-ras-pa (*mji-zji-lja-rjar-sja-pja*; *DYM*: 铭移粹罗悉巴), Bla-ma Lha-rje (*lja-mja-lhja-dzjij*; *DYM*: 粹麻粹征), Imperial Preceptor Xuanmi ([]*[无比]; *DYM*: 玄密帝师), Bla-ma *Rin-chen (*DYM*: 大宝上师), State Preceptor Xuanzhao (*DYM*: 玄照国师). C.f. (Solonin 2011, pp. 283–84; 2012, p. 240; Sun and Nie 2018, pp. 195–96).

²² Xuanmi first came to modern scholarly attention in (Lv 1942, p. III) as the transmitter of the *DYM* Chinese translated work *Jieshi daoguo yulu jingangju ji* 解释道果语录金刚句记, a partial commentary on the *Lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i gdams ngag*. (Nishida 1977, p. 24, #076) lists its Khara Khoto Tangut equivalent *道果语录金刚句之解具记 (Tang. 251), with the same notation lines containing Xuanmi as the transmitter. (Kychanov 1999, pp. 487–88) reproduces this entry in the *Catalogue*. (Chen 2000) investigates the life and Buddhist activities of Xuanmi and identifies him with Master Wusheng, the biographical subject of the *Wusheng shangshi chuxian ganying gongdesong* 无生上师出现感应功德颂, a long verse composition included in the *DYM*. Chen's identification based on the existence of the honorary title "*xuanmi*" appended in front of the "*wusheng shangshi*" 无生上师 (Master Wusheng), however, is hardly acceptable; c.f. (Shen 2007, p. 275–76; Dunnell 2009, p. 69). (Nie 2005, p. 245) brings to attention a Tangut notation in a Cakrasaṃvara text Tang.#inv. 128#2838 (Kychanov 1999, p. 545) reading as "中国大乘玄密帝师沙门慧称" (Imperial Preceptor Xuanmi of the Mahāyāna from the Middle Kingdom (i.e., Tibet), Śramaṇa *Prajñākīrti/Shes-rab-grags-pa), which gives Xuanmi's religious name and points to his Tibetan origin. In addition to Tang.#inv. 128#2838, Wei Wen in his descriptive catalogue of the Xixia Cakrasaṃvara texts records another text Tang.#inv. 126#2521 (Kychanov 1999, p. 544) bearing the same notation; see (Wei 2013, p. 40), #5; 43, #11. For more discussions on Xuanmi, see (Dunnell 2009, pp. 26–36).

The Chinese translated text *Jinyingluo* under the *DYM* four-*upadeśa* constellation preserves a slightly divergent lineage which bypasses the bKa'-brgyud patriarchs after Maitrīpa, but in its Xixia part reaches Xuanmi and ends with Xuanzhao as well.²³ The *Offering the Gaṇacakra* within the same constellation of texts records the identical line of figures, except the substitution of Xuanmi for Master Zhan 喇嘛瞻 and the omission of Xuanzhao in the end.²⁴

Probably having risen from the position of state preceptor (国师), Xuanmi obtained his imperial preceptor (帝师) title no earlier than 1194,²⁵ which dates this textual group produced through Xuanzhao possibly to the turn of the 13th century. The fourteen-title constellation (#4), though without any colophonic information, should be considered to belong to the same textual group in terms of transmission since it preserves Xuanmi's introduction to his master's teaching.

From among the texts and textual constellations charted above, the *Keypoints-Notes* (#1) represents an earlier layer of Xixia Mahāmudrā works produced by Dehui during the mid-12th century, while the *Uncommon* (#2), the *Guided Meditation* (#3), the fourteen-title constellation (#4), and the four-*upadeśa* constellation (#5) belong to the relatively later textual production by Xuanzhao at the turn of the 13th century. An interesting connection between these two textual groups lies in the recorded collaboration between Dehui and Xuanmi towards the last decades of the 12th century. As shown in the colophonic information from the Khara Khoto collection, Dehui had translated at least two tantric texts of the Cakrasaṃvara and Six-Teaching praxes taught by Xuanmi.²⁶ In the notation, Xuanmi holds his imperial preceptor title and Dehui bears the title "State Preceptor Zhizhao from Mountain Lan" (*兰山智昭国师), which he started to hold around the 1180s.²⁷ This again dates the texts to the turn of the 13th century.

Besides the two textual groups produced through Dehui and Xuanzhao, respectively, the composite *Contemplating the Mind* (#6)—which contains a few titles either containing "Mahāmudrā" therein or pointing to the Mahāmudrā subject matter—and the Tangut translated work *Ultimate* (#7) originally authored by Bla-ma Zhang's (1123–1193), however, lack verifiable information for proper dating.²⁸ Nonetheless, the date of the *Contemplating the Mind* might be proximate to that of the *Guided Meditation* since the former contains a summary of the *Direct Guidance* (#3.2), while the *Ultimate* should date to no earlier than 1164, supposedly the time around which its Tibetan original was composed.

Another issue concerns the Tibetan original. Although the Tibetan originals of the *Golden Garland*, the *Dombi's Intention*, and the *Ultimate* still exist, it still remains uncertain whether all of the Tangut texts were direct translations from Tibetan, or indigenous composition based on orally received Tibetan teachings, as well as whether each of the *DYM* Chinese texts directly translated from Tibetan or Tangut. To solve the issue requires closer historical-philological analyses of the relevant texts in the immediate temporal context of their production at both intra- and inter-corpus levels.

²³ See the XDJ. The *Jinyingluo* lineage, which is not seen in the Tibetan edition, runs as follows: Śavaripa (萨斡哩巴), Maitrīpa (铭得哩斡), Vajrapāṇi (金刚手), the Nepalese Asū (巴彼无生), Vajraguru (末则嚶二合孤嚶), Imperial Preceptor Xuanmi (玄密帝师), *Jñānavajra (智金刚), and State Preceptor Xuanzhao (玄照国师).

²⁴ See the SFJ.

²⁵ Xuanmi appears with the state preceptor title "in Renzong's preface to an 1189 Chinese edition of the *Guan mile pusa shangsheng doushuaitian jing* 观弥勒菩萨上升兜率天经, and in a colophon by Empress Dowager Luo, his widow, to an 1194 Tangut edition of the 'Humane King Sutra';" see (Chen 2000, p. 8) and (Dunnell 2009, p. 69).

²⁶ Dunnell (2009, p. 49) lists "three tantric yoga works" Dehui had translated in collaboration with Xuanmi, which are the two Cakrasaṃvara texts (Tang.#inv. 126#2521, 128#2838) also listed in Wei Wen's descriptive catalogue (#5, #11) and one Six-Teaching text titled *风气入于心 (Tang.#inv. 425#3708, *Lung sems la 'jug pa, The Wind entering the mind). All the three texts bear the notations: *中国大乘玄密帝师沙门慧称传 and *兰山智昭国师德慧译. Probably due to the discursive writing style of 425#3708, (Kychanov 1999, p. 542) wrongly records for Xuanmi's notation as *中国大师帝师沙门慧自在 (the Great Master from Tibet, Imperial Preceptor, Śramaṇa *Prajñeśvara/Sheś-rab-dbang-po).

²⁷ As Dunnell mentions, Dehui started out as a "Juexing Dharma Preceptor 觉行法师," "had been promoted to Lanshan Juexing State Preceptor" by 1167, and "appears with the title of Lanshan Zhizhao State Preceptor 兰山智昭国师" by 1184; see (Dunnell 2009, p. 48).

²⁸ (Martin 1992, p. 254) dates the composition of Zhang's *Lam zab mthar thug* to the period around 1161 to 1164. The Tangut translated work should be dated after that time.

4. The Mahāmudrā Transmissions from the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Landscape to the Tangut Xixia

I chart below the three different, yet related, complete lines of Mahāmudrā transmission extracted from the Xixia materials (Table 1):

Table 1. Mahāmudrā transmissions in Xixia.

<i>Keypoints (#1.1)</i>	<i>Transmission (#3.3)</i>	<i>Jinyingluo (#5.1)</i>
Śākyamuni	Samyaksambuddha	
Vimalakīrti	Bodhisattva Matiratna	
	Saraha	
Nāgārjuna		
	Śavaripa	
	Maitrīpa	
Jñānakīrti	Bla-ma Mar-pa	Vajrapāṇi
Vāgīśvara	Mi-la-ras-pa	Bal-po Asū
brTson-'grus	Bla-ma Lha-rje	Vajraguru
Dehui	Imperial Preceptor Xuanmi	
	Master Dabao	*Jñānavajra
	State Preceptor Xuanzhao	
	State Preceptor Xuanzhao	

It is obvious that all the three lines—no matter what mythological origins each appears to have—share claims to descent from the Saraha-Matrīpa circle, one arriving at the person of Dehui and the other two at Xuanzhao.

4.1. The Mahāmudrā Transmission in Tibetan Accounts

The *Blue Annals* (comp. 1476–1478) seems to be the earliest extant historiographical source to sketch a Mahāmudrā transmission initiated in India by this Saraha-Maitrīpa circle. The line started off with Saraha, the Great Brahman (*bram ze chen po*), and then reached consecutively through Śavaripa and Maitrīpa. Maitrīpa had received a multitude of disciples, including the four senior (*che ba bzhi*), seven medium (*'bring bdun*), and ten junior (*chung ba bcu*) ones. The four senior disciples include Sahajavajra (*lhan cig skyes pa'i rdo rje*), Devākaracandra (alias Śūnyatāsamādhi), Rāmapāla (*dga' ba skyong ba*), and Vajrapāṇi (*phyag na rdo rje*).²⁹ The *Blue Annals* further notes that the transmission of Mahāmudrā from India to Tibet had undergone three lines of translation activity during the early, the middle, and the late periods (*snga phyi bar gsum*). The early translation (*snga 'gyur*) was carried out by Nirūpa who obtained the teaching from Kāropa. The middle translation (*bar 'gyur*), branching into the upper and lower transmissions (*stod smad gnyis*), was carried out by Vajrapāṇi and the Nepalese Asū, respectively. The late translation (*phyi 'gyur*) was undertaken by a mNga'-ris-pa Nag-mo-she-dad, who had obtained the teaching during his encounter with the old Vajrapāṇi in India. In addition, there was Mar-pa's side transmission (*zur 'gyur*), which entered Tibet slightly earlier than these three transmission lines. This side transmission actually was initiated by Atiśa (*jo bo chen po rje lha gcig*), who allegedly studied the *Uttaratantra* treatises and the *dohās* with Maitrīpa. Temporally mediating between Mar-pa's side transmission and Nirūpa's early transmission was Paṇḍita Vairocanarakṣita,

²⁹ The *Blue Annals* (Deb sngon, pp. 986.14–16; Roerich 2016, vol. 2, p. 840) mentions in passing an alternative quadripartite list consisting of the “four heart-disciples” (*thugs kyi sras bzhi*) Kāropa, Vajrapāṇi, Mar-pa, and the Nepalese Śrīlabharo.

who is said to have translated Saraha's "Three Cycles of *Dohā*" (*do hā skor gsum*) and received Bla-ma Zhang as his disciple.³⁰

4.2. The Transmission (#3.3) Lineage

Among the three Mahāmudrā lineages extracted from the Xixia materials, the *Transmission* lineage in its Indo-Tibetan part parallels what was meant by the *Blue Annals* as "Mar-pa's side transmission." Its extension from Mar-pa down through Mi-la-ras-pa and sGam-po-pa is shown in Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje's bKa'-brgyud Madhyamaka lineage as belonging to the Maitrīpa-Marpa line.³¹ Moreover, the *Uncommon* (#2), allegedly compiled by Maitrīpa and belonging to the same Xuanzhao-produced textual group as the *Transmission* (#3.3)—though remaining silent as regards descent from any bKa'-brgyud patriarchs—contains a threefold path structure into the provisional meaning (*fāngbiān yì* 方便义, *drang don/neyārtha*) of *pāramitā*, the definitive meaning (*juédìng yì* 决定义, *nges don/nītārtha*) of tantra, and the quintessential meaning (*zhēnxīn yì* 真心义, *snying po'i don*) of Mahāmudrā.³² This is in line with sGam-po-pa's threefold path division into the sūtric, the tantric, and the Mahāmudrā modes.³³

4.3. The Jinyingluo (#5.1) Lineage

The *Jinyingluo* lineage represents another line recorded in the *Blue Annals*. Vajrapāṇi is listed by the *Blue Annals* as one of the "four senior disciples" of Maitrīpa, and his disciple the Nepalese Asū (*bal po skye med*) had received gYor-po rLung-ston rDo-rje-bla-ma (i.e., Vajraguru in the *Jinyingluo* lineage) as a disciple when Asū was residing in Tibet.³⁴ This line is associated with the Zhi-byed tradition attributed to Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas (d. 1117) in that the Zhi-byed edition of the *Nyams kyi man ngag thig le* reveals a closer proximity to its DYM Chinese equivalent *Jinyingluo* than the

³⁰ See the *Deb sngon*, pp. 985–990 (Roerich 2016, vol. 2, pp. 839–44). That Vairocana taught Saraha's *Dohā* to Zhang is verified in Zhang's own lineage record of the multiple transmissions he received (*brGyud pa sna tshogs*); see the *brGyud sna*, f. 96b2–5; c.f. (Yamamoto 2012, p. 359).

³¹ A complete line of "Mar-pa's side transmission" continuing through Mi-la-ras-pa and sGam-po-pa is seen in the eighth Karmapa Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje's (1507–1554) introduction to the *Dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta* where he delineates two lineages serving as the sources of inspiration for Madhyamaka teachings within the bKa'-brgyud—one from Nāropā and the other from Maitrīpa. The Nāropā lineage, passing through Mi-la-ras-pa and sGam-po-pa, is certainly that of the Six-Teaching praxes. The Maitrīpa one branched into (1) the *mantra* Madhyamaka, (2) the *sūtra* Madhyamaka, and (3) the *alīkākāra-cittamātra* Madhyamaka. While the third one constitutes what the *Blue Annals* termed as the early, middle, and late transmissions of Mahāmudrā, the first and second ones belong in their entirety to Mar-pa and Mi-la-ras-pa; see the *Dwags shing*, ff. 4b5–6b3; c.f. (Brunnhölzl 2004, pp. 51–52; Seyfort Ruegg 2010, pp. 328–32).

³² See the *XDBP*. The *Uncommon*, explicitly attributed to Maitrīpa, embeds commentarial explications within the verse lines. Though not clearly specified, it should be the verses that Maitrīpa is attributed to, and the commentary should be authored by the later hands.

³³ See (Jackson 1994, pp. 24–28). In his reply to Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa's inquiries, sGam-po-pa laid out three Buddhist paths, namely the *lakṣana* mode of the *pāramitā* taking reasoning for its path, the secret *mantra* mode of the generation and perfection stages taking beneficial blessing for its path, and the *sahaja* (i.e., Mahāmudrā) mode of the luminosity taking direct perception for its path; see the *Dus zhus* (f. 62b2–4): *lam rnam pa gsum du 'gro gsung ngo | rjes dpag lam du byed pa dang | byin brlabs lam du byed pa dang | mngon sum lam du byed pa gsum yin gsung | mtshan nyid lam pha rol tu phyin pa ni rjes dpag lam du byed pa bya ba yin | theg pa chen po gsang sngags ni bskyed rdzogs gnyis la brten nas byin brlabs lam du byed pa yin | mngon sum lam du byed pa ni lhan cig skyes pa 'od gsal bya ba yin gsung*. In the immediately following dialogical thread, sGam-po-pa further comments that by the *pāramitā* mode (*pha rol tu phyin pa'i lugs*) the experiential realization (*rtogs pa*) arises through the trio of *bodhicitta* (*byang chub kyi sems*), illusion-like (*rgyu ma lta bu*), and emptiness (*stong pa*), while by the *mantra* mode (*sngags kyi lugs*) the realization arises through the trio of the body as deity (*lus lha*), the speech as mantra recitation (*ngag bzlas pa*), and the mind as *lakṣaṇa* (*nyid chos nyid*). As for his own mode (i.e., the Mahāmudrā), sGam-po-pa does not specify within the same dialogical thread what philosophy and practice it entails. But he mentions that, unlike the previous two, the third mode guarantees that one never regresses—even those of the low faculty are born as gods. See the *Dus zhus* (f. 64a2–5): *pha rol tu phyin pa'i lugs kyi | byang chub kyi sems dang | sgyu ma lta bu dang | stong pa gsum la brten nas rtogs pa rgyud la 'khrungs | sngags kyi lugs kyi lus lha | ngag bzlas pa | nyid chos nyid gsum la brten nas rtogs pa rgyud la 'khrungs | mi rtogs na 'tshang mi rgya | yu bu'i lugs kyi | chos kyi 'khyer lugs 'dis | yar la 'gro ba las mar la mi 'gro ba yin | dbang po rab 'tshang rgya ba yin | 'bring 'phags pa'i gnas lngar skye ba yin | tha ma yang lhar skye gsung |*

³⁴ See the *Deb sngon*, pp. 1005.6–7, 1007.14 (Roerich 2016, vol. 2, pp. 860, 862). (Sun 2012, p. 186) identifies gYor-po rLung-ston with Vajraguru.

bsTan-'gyur edition.³⁵ According to the *Blue Annals*, Pha-dam-pa—one of the “ten junior disciples” of Maitrīpa—and Asū had overlapped in their sojourns in Tibet, during which both were visited by a rMa-sgom Chos-kyi-shes-rab.³⁶

4.4. The Keypoints (#1.1) Lineage

Now, we are left with the last one of the three lineages present in the Xixia Mahāmudrā materials, that which is borne by the *Keypoints-Notes* cluster (#1). The *Keypoints* presents a line of eight patriarchs after Śākyamuni which traces a descending arc of spiritual accomplishments, possibly intent on a Buddhist eschatology. Below is a chart presenting the spiritual status assigned by the *Keypoints'* accounts to Śākyamuni and each of the patriarchs (Table 2):³⁷

Table 2. Spiritual status of patriarchs in the *Keypoints* lineage

Name	Spiritual Status
Śākyamuni	Buddha
Vimalakīrti	10 th <i>bhūmi</i> Dharmameghā (<i>chos kyi sprin</i>), *十地法云
Saraha	8 th <i>bhūmi</i> Acalā (<i>mi g.yo ba</i>), *八地不动
Nāgārjuna	6 th <i>bhūmi</i> Abhimukhī (<i>mngon du 'gyur ba</i>), *六地现前
Śavaripa	4 th <i>bhūmi</i> Arcismaṭī (<i>'od 'phro ba</i>), *四地焰慧
Maitrīpa	2 nd <i>bhūmi</i> Vimalā (<i>dri ma med pa</i>), *二地离垢
Jñānakīrti	1 st <i>bhūmi</i> Darśanamārga (<i>mthong lam</i>), *初地见道
Vāgīśvara	Prayoga-mārga: the <i>ūṣma</i> (<i>drod</i>), <i>mūrdha</i> (<i>rtse</i>) and <i>kṣānti</i> (<i>bzod</i>) stages, *暖顶忍位
brTson-'grus	Saṃbhāra-mārga (<i>tshogs lam</i>), *资粮道

The *Keypoints* lineage departs from the other two Xixia Mahāmudrā transmissions by its generally—thought not entirely—“sūtric” or exoteric tone. Transmissions oriented towards exoteric philosophy or non-tantric praxes tend to locate their origin in Śākyamuni—the historical, or so-called emanation body (*sprul sku*), Buddha—but this is quite rare in Buddhist yogic lineage accounts. Right after Śākyamuni, the curious placement of the mythological figure Vimalakīrti as the first patriarch further adds to the sūtric tone in the lineage presentation.³⁸ Moreover, the “Nāgārjuna” inserted between Saraha and Śavaripa might be read as the tantric “Nāgārjuna” who had studied with Saraha and was at the same time a *Guhyasamāja* expert.³⁹ However, the versified biography accorded to Nāgārjuna in the *Keypoints* only presents the master’s activities as a Madhyamaka philosopher, while remaining silent in regards to the yogic episodes later accrued in the tantric context.⁴⁰

³⁵ (Sun 2012, p. 186) speculates that the *Nyams kyi man ngag thig le* included in the *Zhi byed snga bar phyi gsum gyi skor* might be the edition Pha-dam-pa acquired directly from his teacher Maitrīpa.

³⁶ See (Sun 2012, pp. 186–87). Sun Penghao identifies Kṛṣṇa the Junior (*nag po chung*) listed under Maitrīpa’s “ten junior disciples” with Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas and further notes the connection of this transmission with Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas’s Zhi-byed tradition.

³⁷ The spiritual hierarchy goes from the tenth *bhūmi* of the first patriarch, consecutively through the eighth, sixth, fourth, second, and first *bhūmis* of the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth patriarchs respectively, up to the *prayoga* and *saṃbhāra* stages of the seventh and eighth patriarchs; see the *Keypoints* (inv. 2526, ff. 1b1–4b8; inv. 824, ff. 1b1–4b3). The *Daśabhūmikasūtra* constitutes a systematic and methodical presentation of the ten *bodhisattva bhūmis*, correlating each with seminal doctrines of Buddhism; see the *DBh*.

³⁸ Vimalakīrti does not gain as wide a popularity in Tibetan Buddhism as in the Sinitic Buddhist milieu. In Xixia, however, the figure seems to gain a certain degree of valence. (Solonin 2012, p. 251) notes another Tangut case of Vimalakīrti’s presence: the composite “*Instructions on the Dhyāna Meditation*” (*禅修要论, *bSam gtan gyi gdams ngag; Tang.#inv. 291#4824), which consists of several short titles, is attributed to the collective composition of Vimalakīrti (*wji-mo-khijj* 维摩诘) and Avalokiteśvara (*观音). For a detailed study of this “*Instructions on the Dhyāna Meditation*,” see (Yuan 2016) which further confirms that the work was transmitted by Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas.

³⁹ For a tantric account (mixing with the “sūtric” episodes) of the life and Buddhist activities of Nāgārjuna as one of the 84 Indian tantric Siddhas, see the *Grub lo*, ff. 49–54 (Robinson 2014, pp. 75–80). For a general survey of the Siddha Nāgārjuna, see (Downman 1986, pp. 112–22).

⁴⁰ The mixed accounts combining the lives of the 2nd-century Madhyamaka philosopher Ārya Nāgārjuna and the 9th-century *Guhyasamāja* expert Ācārya Nāgārjuna are in line with the phenomena of name appropriation inside the Buddhist tantric

Appearing like a patchwork of discrete personalities nested within a complex of interconnected transmissions, the patriarch line does, however, find itself based in the Tibetan tantric historiographical tradition. The succession from Saraha through Nāgārjuna, Śavaripa to Maitrīpa in the *Keypoints* is paralleled by Tāranātha's (1575–1634) presentation of the Mahāmudrā lineage as one of the seven yogic transmissions in the *bKa' babs bdun ldan*. According to Tāranātha, the Mahāmudrā transmission started with Rāhula (i.e., Saraha) and then proceeds through Nāgārjuna to Śavaripa. Śavaripa first received Lūyipa as his disciple and later Maitrīpa.⁴¹

Jñānakīrti, who succeeds Maitrīpa in the *Keypoints*, is a little-detailed figure in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist yogic lineage accounts.⁴² The currently available sources at my disposal show that only Tāranātha's *bKa' babs bdun ldan* places this figure in a Tantra exposition lineage (*rgyud kyi bshad pa'i brgyud pa*) ahead of Ratnākaraśānti.⁴³ If Tāranātha's account is reliable, the only possible connection Jñānakīrti has with Maitrīpa—his predecessor in the *Keypoints* lineage—is the latter's experience of studying with Ratnākaraśānti before meeting Śavaripa.⁴⁴

The last Indian personality Vāgīśvara, attributed by the *Keypoints* as a Nepalese (**pja-po* 國人, *bal po*) expert in the sixty-two deities (**六十二佛*) Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* praxis, could almost certainly be identified with the 11th-century Nepalese Thang-chung-pa (who later acquired the name “Vāgīśvara” because of his spiritual accomplishment). He was born into the Pham-thing family and, together with his elder brother Abhayakīrti (*'jigs med grags pa*), played an instrumental role in the Cakrasaṃvara transmission from India to Tibet.⁴⁵ Based on the fifth Dalai Bla-ma Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho's (1617–1682) recorded list of teachings (*thob yig*) *Gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, Vāgīśvara, and Abhayakīrti had acted as the nexus where multiple Indian lineages of Cakrasaṃvara teachings converged and further made their ways into Tibet.⁴⁶ Among the nine lines of lineage from the Lūipa tradition of the Sixty-two Deities Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* praxis which purifies the egg-born proclivity (*rnal 'byor dbang phyug lu hi pas sbyang gzhi sgong skyed sbyong byed ltar legs par 'gal ba'i he ru ka'i rigs dpal 'khor lo sdom pa lha drug cu rtsa gnyis kyi ris bris kyi dkyil 'khor chen po*), the Sa-skyā line (*sa lugs*) and Mar-pa line (*mar lugs*) overlap in terms of lineage segment from the originator Vajradhara through the Pham-thing brothers (*pham thing sku mched*) Vāgīśvara and Abhayakīrti. Both lines in their shared part

circles, which reflects a tendency to project identities of tantric masters back to those of earlier Madhyamaka scholars; see (Seyfort Ruegg 1981, pp. 105–6). For an early biographical account of Nāgārjuna which retains only the “sūtric” episodes, see Kumārajīva's (344–409/413) translation titled “*A Biography of Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna*” (Longshu pusa zhuan 龙树菩萨传, T no. 2047, vol. 50). For a survey of Nāgārjuna's biographical accounts in Tibetan and Chinese sources, see (Walleiser 1922).

⁴¹ See the *bKa' bdun*, ff. 181b5–189b6 (Tāranātha 1983, pp. 2–14).

⁴² Jñānakīrti, also known as Ye-shes-grags-pa in Tibetan, left only two works in the Tibetan bsTan-'gyur: the *De kho na nyid la 'jug pa* (*Tattvātāra, D 3709) and the *Pha rol tu phyin pa'i theg pa bsgom pa'i rim pa'i man ngag* (*Pāramitāyānabhāvanākramopadeśa, D 3922=4542). (Mathes 2006, pp. 206, 223–24) points out that gZhon-nu-dpal in his *Blue Annals* (*Deb sngon*, vol. 2, pp. 846–48) refers to Jñānakīrti's **Tattvātāra* in arguing that sGam-po-pa's *pāramitā* Mahāmudrā is in line with Maitrīpa's assertion, and further analyzes the content of the **Tattvātāra* as an Indian case of the *pāramitā* mode of approach to Mahāmudrā.

⁴³ See the *bKa' bdun*, f. 225a5–6 (Tāranātha 1983, p. 66); c.f. (Lu 2018, p. 151). For further discussions regarding Jñānakīrti's active years, see (Lu 2018, pp. 152–53).

⁴⁴ (Tatz 1987) draws on a Sanskrit account of Maitrīpa's life in a Nepalese Sham Sher manuscript as an early version of the master's biography, against which he checks later Tibetan accounts. For Maitrīpa's interaction with Ratnākaraśānti, see (Tatz 1987, pp. 698–701).

⁴⁵ For a detailed survey of Vāgīśvara's religious activities as well as the relevant Tibetan historical records, see (Wei 2013, pp. 69–84). According to the Tibetan historiography about the Cakrasaṃvara teachings, Vāgīśvara had visited Tibet in person and closely connected with Tibetan *lo-tśā-bas* such as Mar-pa-do-pa and Klog-skyā; see, for instance, rJe-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's (1374–1432) historiography of the Lūipa Cakrasaṃvara tradition (*bDe lo*, ff. 10a3–12a1). The Tibetan bsTan-'gyur preserves five of his translated works in collaboration with Tibetan translators. Vāgīśvara translated Kuśālipada's *dPal 'khor lo sdom pa'i snying po'i de kho na nyid bsdu pa* (D 1505) and dGe-ba'i-mgon-po's *dPal 'khor lo sdom pa'i gnyis su med pa'i bsam gtan gyi man ngag rnal 'byor gyi gtum mo* (D 1508) in collaboration with Mar-pa-do-pa, and the *rDo rje phag mo'i mdor bsdu pa'i bstod pa* (D 1595), the *Seng ge sgra'i gzungs* (D 704), and the *Seng ge sgras dam bcas pa'i gzungs* (D 912) with Klog-skyā Lotsāba, and his own ritual manual *gSang ba 'dus pa'i dbang bskur ba'i cho ga mdor bsdu pa* (D1887) was translated by Mar-pa-do-pa (Wei 2013, p. 71).

⁴⁶ See the *Zab thob*, pp. 247–60; c.f. (Wei 2013, pp. 28–31, 70).

reproduce the Saraha-Nāgārjuna-Śavaripa succession between Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi and Lūipa.⁴⁷ In this way, our *Keypoints* lineage is echoed by at least one branch of the Cakrasaṃvara transmissions mediated by the Pham-thing family from India through Tibet.

5. Conclusions

Not only does the Mahāmudrā topography, jointly fueled by these three transmissions, reveal the Xixia recognition and imagination of the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist legacies, it also captures the complexities of the multi-faceted picture of Mahāmudrā on its way over the Himalayas during the 11th/12th century. Both the *Transmission* and the *Jinyingluo* lineages are attested by later Tibetan historiographical accounts about Mahāmudrā, and thus belong to an Indo-Tibetan continuum of the constructed Buddhist yogic past as based upon historical realities—at least as understood by Tibetans of the time. Unlike these two, the *Keypoints* lineage represents an ahistorical linking of diverse selected lineal segments into moments of a “structured totality” through a distinctively Xixia recognition and imagination.⁴⁸ More of a collage than a homogeneous line of reality, it patched together different Indo-Tibetan claims to spiritual legacy and religious authority—be they historically based or introspectively projected. Primarily based on the classical Saraha-Maitrīpa Mahāmudrā line, the *Keypoints* lineage appropriated a Cakrasaṃvara succession of the Lūipa tradition. The addition of the personality Jñānakīrti—unseen elsewhere in other Mahāmudrā lineages—is probably due to considerations of both the teacher’s expertise in the Mahāmudrā thoughts and his potential overlap with Maitrīpa, which again reinforces the constructed nature of the lineage. Meanwhile, in situating the succession of eight patriarchs into a spiritual hierarchy structured by both the Five Paths (*pañca-mārga, lam lnga*) and Ten Grounds (*daśa-bhūmi, sa bcu*) schemes, the lineage accounts do not so much simply paraphrase the pre-existing legends relating the masters’ religious activities and spiritual accomplishments as give expressions to a structured path of Buddhist soteriology across both the sūtric and tantric registers.

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Abbreviations

1. Sigla

D	sDe-dge bKa’-’gyur and bsTan’gyur. Numbering based on: Hakuju Ui et al., ed. <i>A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons (Bkaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥgyur)</i> . Sendai: Tōhoku Imperial University, 1934.
DYM	<i>Dacheng yaodao miji 大乘要道密集. The Secret Collection of Works on the Essential Path of Mahāyāna: A compilation of early Chinese translations of Tibetan tantric Buddhist texts</i> . 4 vols. Beijing: Peking University Press, 2012.
GS	<i>Khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po dpal mnyam med sgam po pa ’gro mgon bsod nams rin chen mchog gi gsung ’bum yid bzhin nor bu</i> . 4 vols. Kathmandu; Delhi: Khenpo S. Tenzin and Lama T. Namgyal, 2000.
MS	<i>dPal rgyal ba karma pa sku ’phreng brgyad pa mi bskyod rdo rje’i gsung ’bum</i> . 26 vols. Lhasa, 2004.
SK	<i>Sa skya bka’ ’bum</i> . 15 vols. Kathmandu: Sachen International, 2006.
T no.	Numerical listings of the Taishō canon. In Demiéville, Paul, Hubert Durt and Anna Seidel, eds. <i>Répertoire du canon bouddhique Sino-Japonais: Edition de Taishō. Hōbōgirin</i> , appendix volume. Paris: L’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, Institut de France, 1978.

⁴⁷ See the *Zab thob*, pp. 247–48, 251. For an earlier lineage presentation of the Lūipa Cakrasaṃvara tradition by Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, see the *bDe lo*.

⁴⁸ See (Yamamoto 2012, pp. 24–28, 90–96) methodological discussions on Bla-ma Zhang’s *hegemony-building* project through the case of the lineage as a “discursive formation.”

- The numbering system used in Gorbacheva & Kychanov 1963 (*Tangutskie rukopisii ksilografiy*, Moscow: Izdatatel'stvo Vostochnoi Literatury) for the Khara-khoto Tangut texts housed in the archive of the Institute of Oriental Studies in St. Petersburg. Each Khara-Khoto fragment under a numbered title (tang.) was originally assigned an inventory number (inv.).
- ZhNgBPh *Zhi byed snga bar phyi gsum gyi skor*. 5 vols. Thimphu: Druk sherik parkhang, 1979.
- ZhS *dPal ldan tshal pa bka' brgyud kyi bstan pa'i mnga' bdag zhang g.yu brag pa brtson 'grus grags pa'i gsung 'bum rin po che*. 9 vols. Kathmandu: Gam-po-pa library, 2004.

2. Primary Sources:

2.1. Tangut Works:

- Transmission* *Upadeśa on the Mahāmudrā Transmission* (*大手印要语师次), Tang.#inv. 345#7216: f. 23.
- Notes I* *Notes on the Keypoints of Mahāmudrā as the Ultimate* (*大印究竟要集记), vol. 1 (commentary on the first part of the DJY from the beginning till the end of Nāgārjuna's biography), Tang.#inv. 345#2858 (manuscript, 22 folios), Tang.#inv. 345#7163 (manuscript, 34 folios), and Tang.#inv. 427#3817 (manuscript, the first 29 folios on verso).
- Notes X* *Notes on the Keypoints of Mahāmudrā as the Ultimate* (*大印究竟要集记), the final volume (commentary on the final part of the DJY which is missing in the currently available texts) and colophon, Tang.#inv. 345#2851 (manuscript, 26 folios).
- Keypoints* *Keypoints of Mahāmudrā as the Ultimate* (*大印究竟要集), Tang.#inv. 345#2526 (xylograph, 27 folios, incomplete), Tang.#inv. 345#824 (manuscript, 20 folios, incomplete) and Inv. 2876 (manuscript, 24 folios, incomplete). In (Sun and Nie 2018, pp. 295–335) (Tangut text and Chinese translation, based on #2526 and #824).

2.2. Tibetan Works:

- bDe lo* rJe-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, *bDe mchog lū hi pa'i lugs kyi bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus*. In SK: 527–551, vol. 7.
- bKa' bdun* Tāranātha Kun-dga'-snying-po, bKa' 'babs bdun ldan gyi brgyud pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba rin po che'i khungs lta bu'i gtam. In the rGya gar chos 'byung dang slob dpon chen po spyod 'chang dbang po'i rnam thar sogs. Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1974, pp. 361–499.
- brGyud sna* Zhang brTson-'grus-grags-pa, *brGyud pa sna tshogs*. In ZhS: 293–307, vol. 1.
- Deb sngon* 'Gos-lo gZhon-nu-dpal, *Deb ther sngon po*. 2 vols. Chengdu: Si-khron-mi-rigs-dpe-skrun-khang, 1984. In (Roerich 2016) (English translation).
- Dus zhus* sGam-po-pa bSod-nams-rin-chen, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhus lan*. In GS: 103–288, vol. 2.
- Dwags shing* Karma-pa Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, *dBu ma 'jug pa'i rnam bshad dwags brgyud grub pa'i shing rta*. In MS: 1–975, vol. 14.
- gNas go* sGam-po-pa bSod-nams-rin-chen, *gNas lugs gnyis kyi man ngag dang go cha gnyis kyi man ngag*. In GS: 403–502, vol. 3.
- Grub lo* Abhayadatta, *Grub thob brgyad cu rtsa bzhi'i lo rgyus*. Dharamsala: Bod-kyi-dpe-mdzod-khang, 2010.
- gSol skor* Zhang brTson-'grus-grags-pa, *gSol 'debs bstod pa'i skor*. In ZhS: 49–112, vol. 1.
- Phyag gces* rJe-btsun Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan, *Phyag rgya chen po gces pa btus pa'i man ngag*. In SK: 461–500, vol. 9.
- Phyag lam* Zhang brTson-'grus-grags-pa, *Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug zhang gi man ngag*. In ZhS: 78–149, vol. 4.
- sGrub snying* sGam-po-pa bSod-nams-rin-chen, *sGrub pa snying gi ngo sprod*. In GS: 235–268, vol. 3.
- Thig gser A* dPal udiyanar tshogs 'khor byas pa'i dus su rnal 'byor pa grub pa thob pa bzhi bcus rdo rje'i mgur bzhengs pa nyams kyi man ngag thig le gser gyi phreng ba. P 3277.
- Thig gser B* dPal u rgyan du tshogs 'khor byas pa'i dus su rnal 'byor pa grub pa thob pa bzhi bcus rdo rje'i 'ghur bzhengs pa nyams kyi man ngag thig le gser gyi phreng ba. In ZhNgBPh: 341–50, vol. 1.
- Zab thob* Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho, *Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun las glegs bam dang po*. In NgS: 1–600, vol. 1.

2.3. Indian Works

DBh *Daśabhūmikāsūtra*. In ((Rahder 1926)and Société belge d'études orientales) (Sanskrit text).

2.4. Chinese Works

DJY *Dashouyin jiatuozhi yaomen* 大手印伽陀支要门. In *DYM*, vol. 4.

SFJ *Shicheng dengchu feng jilun yi* 师承等处奉集轮仪. In *DYM*, vol. 4.

XDBP *Xinyi dashouyin bugongyi peijiao yaomen* 新译大手印不共义配教要门. In *DYM*, vol. 4.

XDJ *Xinyi dashouyin jinyingluo yaomen* 新译大手印金瓔珞要门. In *DYM*, vol. 4.

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