



## Article

# Other-Emptiness in the Work of an Unknown Mystic Illuminating the Path to Freedom by Jamyang Sarma Sherab Özer

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**Abstract:** In this article, we investigate the previously unstudied life and works of the late-12th/early-13th century Tibetan polymath Jamyang Sarma Sherab Özer ('Jam dbyang gsar ma shes rab 'od zer), an important Buddhist master in the Dro lineage of the Kālacakra Tantra. We will focus on his unique syncretic work, *Illuminating the Path to Freedom (Thar lam sgron me)*, and provide an overview of his surviving literary output. Jamyang Sarma predates Dölpopa Sherab Gyeltsen (Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292–1361) in the use of the term 'other-emptiness', or 'extrinsic emptiness' (*gzhan stong*), in his writings, as opposed to the well-known view of Madhyamaka on 'self-emptiness' (*rang stong*). While conventional historiography has predominantly attributed the earliest systematic deployment of the technical term *gzhan stong* to Dölpopa, whose writings indeed represent the most comprehensive theoretical exposition within the Jonang tradition, current philological evidence suggests more complex lines of transmission through earlier Tibetan masters. This essay will shed new light on this issue by looking into Jamyang Sarma's *Illuminating the Path to Freedom*.

**Keywords:** other-emptiness; extrinsic emptiness; *gzhan stong*; 'Jam dbyang gsar ma shes rab 'od zer; Great Madhyamaka



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## 1. Introduction

The concept of *gzhan stong* (other-emptiness, extrinsic emptiness) represents one of the most unique and controversial developments in Tibetan Buddhist philosophical thought. While the *rang stong* (self-emptiness, intrinsic emptiness) view dominated much of the Tibetan scholastic discourse following Tsongkhapa's (1357–1419) influential articulation of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, the *gzhan stong* view offered an alternative interpretation of ultimate reality that gained significant traction, particularly within the Jonang and Kagyu Schools.

Other-emptiness is a significant philosophical development particularly associated with the Jonang school and its prominent figure, Dölpopa Sherab Gyeltsen (1292–1361). It contrasts with the more widely accepted Tibetan philosophical view of self-emptiness, which posits that all phenomena, without exception, lack inherent existence (Skt. *svabhava*; Tib. *rang bzhin*). While the conceptual forerunners of *gzhan stong* may be traced to the Indian Mahāyāna tradition, particularly with certain interpretations of Yogācāra thought, caution must be exercised in retroactively applying Tibetan categorical distinctions to the Indian sources.<sup>1</sup> It was in Tibet that the term was first coined, and this view received its most systematic articulation, primarily through the works of Dölpopa. Dölpopa's radical reformulation of the doctrine of emptiness centered on the distinction between what is

empty of its ‘own nature’ (*rang stong*) and what is ‘empty of other’ (*gzhan stong*), namely empty of any adventitious defilements. He argued that while conventional phenomena are indeed empty of inherent existence, the ultimate nature of reality—buddha-nature or *tathāgataḡarbha*—is only empty of fortuitous stains but not of its enlightened qualities. This view challenged the prevailing Madhyamaka interpretation that emptiness meant the absence of inherent existence of all phenomena, including enlightenment itself. It became the hallmark of the Jonang School which Dölpopa referred to as Great Madhyamaka (*dbu ma chen po*).

While conventional historiography has predominantly attributed the earliest systematic deployment of the technical term *gzhan stong* to Dölpopa, whose writings indeed represent the most comprehensive theoretical exposition within the Jonang tradition, recent philological evidence suggests more complex lines of transmission.<sup>2</sup> In the following study, we will be looking at the life and works of an overlooked figure in the lineage of the Jonangpa, the late-12th/early-13th century Jamyang Sarma Sherab Özer (‘Jam dbyang gsar ma shes rab ‘od zer; hereafter Jamsarpa). We will specifically focus on Jamsarpa’s unique philosophical work, *Illuminating the Path to Freedom* (*Thar lam sgron me*, hereafter PF), where he utilizes the distinction between *rang stong* and *gzhan stong*. By examining his available writings, it will be shown that the PF is a singular work where Jamsarpa employs this distinction discoursing on the Two Truths of Madhyamaka. The ease and matter-of-fact way he situates the *rang stong*–*gzhan stong* distinction in his text suggests that it would have been a current trope of philosophical exegesis in his times.

From the biographical narratives, Jamsarpa emerges as a complex figure distinguished by scholarly rigor, a profound commitment to esoteric Buddhist practice, and unwavering dedication to teaching his disciples. The narratives vindicate the Tibetan ideal of the *mkhas grub*, the scholar-adept, who, despite having experienced a life marked by considerable adversity, endured all hardships in his pursuit to realize an “ultimate truth empty of other nature” (*don dam bden pa gzhan gyis stong pa*).

## 2. Historical Sources on Jamsarpa

To date, there is no singular biographical source on Jamsarpa. However, as will be briefly discussed, since Jamsarpa holds a notable presence in the early stages of the Dro lineage of the Kālacakra transmission, several historical works on, or related to, the history of the Kālacakra Tantra in Tibet provide accounts of his life. Among the earliest biographical sources is a text composed by his own student, Changsem Gyalwa Yeshe (Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes, 1257–1320), entitled *Biographies of the Lineage Masters: the Jonang Tradition of the Kālacakra* (*Dpal ldan dus kyi ‘khor lo jo nang pa’i lugs kyi bla ma brgyud pa’i rnam thar*). A succinct section of this text focuses on Jamsarpa’s life, detailing his training under various Buddhist masters, his teaching career, and his practice of the Kālacakra Tantra, particularly the sixfold vajra-yoga (*sbyor drug*).<sup>3</sup> Changsem’s account appears to have served as a key reference for subsequent historians who cited it in their respective works while elaborating on different aspects of his life and works. Thus, in the following account of his life, we will mainly be drawing from Changsem’s section while extracting relevant information from the following Tibetan sources:

1. Go Lotsāwa Shönu Pel (‘Gos lo tsA ba gzhon nu dpal, 1392–1481). *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*, completed in 1418).
2. Chaklo Rinchen Chökyal (Chag lo rin chen chos rgyal, c.15th century). *A Wish-Fulfilling Cluster: A Religious History of the Precious Lineage of Kālacakra* (*Dpal dus kyi ‘khor lo’i brgyud pa rin po che’i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam gyi snye ma*, published in 1436).
3. Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (Dpal bo gtsug lag phreng ba, 1504–1566). *Religious History: A Feast for Scholars* (*Chos ‘byung mkhas pa’i dga’ ston*, completed in 1564).

4. Amé Shyab Ngawang Künga Sönam (A mes zhabs ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams, 1597–1660). *The Chariot of Marvelous Faith: An Excellent Account of the Supreme Dharma of the Profound and Vast Kālacakra* (*Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos byung ba'i tshul legs par bshad pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i shing rta*, completed in 1636).
5. Tāranātha (tA ra nA tha, 1575–1634). *Condensed Collection of Essential Sources on the Kālacakra* (*Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i chos skor gyi 'byung khungs nyer mkho bsodus pa*, undated).

Nevertheless, acknowledging the unique historiographical value of later sources pertaining to Jamsarpa's biography, we employ them in instances where they provide additional information that Changsem either leaves unaddressed or omits. Any substantive discrepancies between these sources and the principal text are duly noted in the footnotes.

### 3. Jamyang Sarma's Life

#### 3.1. Early Life

Jamyang Sarma, better known as Jamsarpa, was born in Kyurpo (Skyur po) in the middle of Nyang region in southern Tibet. Traditional sources remain silent about Jamsarpa's chronology, including the dates of his birth and death. However, the timelines of two of his most prominent students, Künkhyen Chöku Özer (Kun mkhen chos sku 'od zer) and Changsem, are established: the former was born in 1214 (Wood Dog Year) and died in 1292 (Water Dragon Year), while the latter lived from 1257 (Fire Snake Year) to 1320 (Iron Monkey Year).<sup>4</sup> Based on their lifespans, we can surmise that Jamsarpa lived in the latter part of the 12th to the early part of the 13th century. His father, Lopön Palchenpa (Slob dpon dpal chen pa), is said to have had two sons, Jamsarpa being the youngest. According to the Jonang scholar Tāranātha (1575–1634), Palchenpa and his family adhered to the teachings of the Nyingma School.<sup>5</sup> For Changsem, Jamsarpa's father was a learned Buddhist adept, particularly skilled in esoteric systems. After receiving Mahāmudra teachings from a master referred to as Lama Loksukpa (Bla ma log sug pa), whose identity remains undetermined at this stage, he is said to have obtained profound realization (Changsem 2004, p. 51).

Jamsarpa's initial name was José Lodé (Jo sras glo bde).<sup>6</sup> Very little is documented about his early life, and it is highly likely that his father played a key role in his early schooling. Changsem has us believe that, from an early age, he proved himself to be intellectually sharp and able to read treatises on secular ethics (*mi chos kyi bstan bcos*) and in the arts of magic (*mig 'phrul*). He demonstrated exceptional interest in the study of the Ornament of Realization (*Abhisamayālaṅkāra*), engaging with this Indian classic through the lens of a commentary authored by Tsangnakpa Tsöndrü Sengé (Gtsang nag pa brtson 'grus seng ge, 12th century), a direct disciple of the eminent logician Chawa Chökyi Sengé (Phywa ba chos kyi seng ge, 1109–1169). We are told that he also studied Buddhist epistemology and logic, relying on Tibetan commentaries, but it is unclear who was his mentor at this point.

#### 3.1.1. Monastic Education at Chumik Lung

The tragic and abrupt demise of his father and older brother had a profound and lasting impact on him, engendering a profound sense of disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the transient nature of "worldly life". Consequently, he decided to take monastic ordination under Sangyé Lampa (Sangs rgyas lam pa) at the monastery of Chumik Lung (*chu mig lung*) in the upper region of Nyang in Tsang. From his master, he was given the name Sherab Özer (Shes rab 'od zer), receiving religious instruction and teachings on the Cakrasaṃvara Tantra and Mahāmudrā. It is said that he devoted a substantial amount of time and energy to train with his physical body (*lus sbyong*), which probably refers to the practice of yoga involving the visualization of inner channels and the manipulation of

winds and drops. Under the guidance of another master named Sémarpa (Bse dmar ba), he continued with his studies on the *Ornament of Realization*, focusing on what Changsem calls the “short commentary” (*‘grel chung*).<sup>7</sup> Changsem offers an interesting glimpse of how Jamsarpa applied himself to the task of learning. He often debated with others during the day, immersed himself into contemplation at twilight, and memorized the text at night. However, this vigorous intellectual pursuit faced a standstill, following his affliction with a disease attributed to an evil spirit (*gdon ‘dre*).<sup>8</sup> At that time, he requested a sūtra-based Vajrapāṇi transmission (*phyag rdor mdo lugs*) from Sémarpa. After obtaining its transmission, he conducted a retreat and practiced it without sleep, except for a short nap at dawn. After a month, he is said to have recovered from this illness.<sup>9</sup> He resumed his studies, and by the time he was nearing twenty years of age, he had become proficient in Prajñāpāramitā and the system of Pramāṇā, earning an exceptional praise from Sémarpa. He also started to study Abhidharma under a master known as Zhang Dritsam (Zhang ‘bri ‘tshams).<sup>10</sup> Yet, Jamsarpa was unsatisfied with his progress. Therefore, he considered leaving for Sangphu Neuthok Monastery (Gsang phu ne’u thog), a famous center of scholastic training in Tibet at the time. Changsem notes that Sémarpa persuaded him to stay at Chumik Lung longer and teach. Nonetheless, his determination to attend Sangphu never faded away.

### 3.1.2. His Education and Activities at Sangphu

Eventually, he made his journey to Sangphu, where he met Nyal Shyikpa Jampé Dorjé (Gnyal zhig pa ‘jam pa’i rdo rje), one of the most erudite scholars of his times. The Sakya scholar Shākya Chokden (ShAkya mchog ldan, 1428–1507) shares an intriguing anecdote regarding this master. When the young Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyeltsen (Sa skya paN+Dita kun dga’ rgyal mtshan, 1182–1251) arrived at Sangphu, he recognized Nyal Shyikpa’s vast expertise as a Buddhist scholar but found it difficult to get along with him. As a result, he refrained from forging any spiritual bond with him.<sup>11</sup> That was not the case with Jamsarpa, who studied under Nyal Shyikpa Dharmakīrti’s *Ascertainment of Valid Cognition* and is also said to have attended his classes on the *Ornament of Realization* and the Prāsaṅgika-Svātantrika Madhyamaka systems. Meanwhile, he received many tantric empowerments and teachings from Paṇḍita Dānaśīla (12th century?), including Cakrasaṃvara, Raktayamāri, and others. Having developed confidence in the exoteric subjects, he was ready to debate, especially with scholars from Sangphu’s counterpart, the Sakya Monastery. The sources lack clarity regarding the specific opponents he engaged with and the topics over which he debated. As the account goes, he prevailed over almost all his interlocutors.<sup>12</sup> Yet, he returned with a slight sense of dissatisfaction. Interestingly, Changsem reports, he decided to engage in a debate with his own master Nyal Shyikpa. However, he found it somewhat embarrassing to express his intention. Someone acquainted with Nyal Shyikpa suggested that he raises challenging questions during class, which could eventually lead to a public debate. And so, on a separate occasion, they debated for three days on the theme of the characteristics of a given position (*paḥṣadharmatva; phyogs chos*), a crucial topic in Indian Buddhist logic. At the end of the debate, Jamsarpa emerged victorious, and Nyal Shyikpa offered him a meal of appreciation, remarking thus:

nga ‘jam dpal dang mnyam pa yin te/nga bas kyang khyed shes rab che bas/‘jam dpal rang du’dug pas/ngas kyang rgyal ja bkol ba yin gsung nas dar yug bskyang ste/de nas dpal gсар mar grags te/kyi shod kyi ston pa rnam kyi thog chod

“I considered myself equal to Mañjuśrī. But you are more intelligent than me, just like Mañjuśrī himself. Thus, I have prepared a victory meal for you”. He gifted him a strip of silk scarf. Ever since, he came to be known as the new Mañjuśrī, [a term] approved by all teachers in Kyishö. (Changsem 2004, p. 54)

It appears that the outcome of their competition did not affect their spiritual ties, for Tibetan historians still count him as one of the nine spiritual sons of Nyal Shyikpa (*gnyal zhig bu dgu*). As his reputation grew far and wide, he attracted many disciples. Yet, for reasons left unexplained, he faced restrictions imposed on him by several Khampa monks at the monastery. Changsem's account is very brief, but it is clear enough to indicate that somehow these monks were assigned to monitor and regulate his activities. For instance, when Jamsarpa planned to leave for Tsang to meet some teachers, the monks did not permit him and confined him to Sungphu instead. At the end, faced with no viable alternatives, he was compelled to escape clandestinely, eventually arriving at Tsang.

### 3.1.3. Disillusionment at Chumik Lung

The first place he visited was Chumik Lung, where he once had spent many years as a student. Upon his arrival, he was saddened to learn that his teacher Sémarpa had just passed away. He sold all his possessions, including his house and land, to pay for the expenses of Sémarpa's funeral. Changsem reports that he had a strong desire to go into retreat and become an accomplished meditator (*sgom chen pa*). At this point, Jamsarpa may have reflected on the experiences he had endured and, in retrospect, experienced a certain disillusionment. His closest familial relations and revered mentor had been taken from him, his personal liberty endangered should he attempt to return to Sangphu, and the resources of his inheritance entirely depleted. Considering his bleak circumstances, it is not difficult to understand his yearning to become a solitary retreator, distancing himself from publicity.

Nevertheless, his life did not progress as he had hoped. He accepted the request of some monks who pleaded that he teach them Prajñāpāramitā and Pramāṇā. As he became increasingly popular, a monk named Sétön, who had served as a teaching assistant (*zur chos pa*) at the monastery—though it is not clear to whom—became envious. According to Changsem, Sétön's jealousy led him to try to poison Jamsarpa. Not only did Jamsarpa feel deeply discouraged by Sétön's failed attempt, but he was also concerned that his continued stay there might negatively affect the monastic community. With these considerations in mind, he resolved to depart. He traveled to Tharpaling (Thar pa gling) in Tsang, the monastic residence of Chal Lotsāwa Chökyi Zangpo (Dpyal lo tsA ba chos kyi bzang po), with whom he reportedly studied Sanskrit and other Indian dialects.

### 3.1.4. Teaching Career and Esoteric Training

After some time, he settled at Kyangdur (Rkyang 'dur) and Dolchung (Gdol chung) located in the Nyang region. According to Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (2006, p. 374), at Kyangdur, he established a scholastic college (*bshad grwa*). He moved back and forth between Kyangdur and Dolchung, teaching the *Ornament of Realization* and the *Ascertainment of Valid Cognition* through his own commentaries, the *Shining Light of Reasoning: Exegetical Commentary on the Ornament of Realization* (*Mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi grel bshad gsal ba 'thad pa'i 'od 'bar*) and the *Ornament of the Ascertainment of Valid Cognition* (*Tshad ma rnam nges kyi rgyan*), which he had recently composed at these places. In the next six to seven years, his monastic community expanded significantly, accommodating two hundred and fifty monks. Despite this success, he never stopped learning. Changsem records that during breaks from his teaching schedule, he sought out tantric teachings, and instructions on *sādhana*s from several masters, such as Tropu Lotsāwa Jampa Pal (Khro phu lo tsA ba byams pa dpal, 1172–1236), the noted Kashmir scholar Śākyaśrībhadrā (1127–1225), and Nyalpa Künga Nyingpo (Dmyal pa kun dga' snying po). He also received teachings from the Khadampa Zhang Tsé Lama (Zhang tshes bla ma), Pacification (*zhi byed*) teachings from Jangmo Khüpa (Byang mo khud pa), and the Sakya 'Path and Fruit' (*lam 'bras*) from

Ko Drakpa Sönam Gyaltzen (Ko brag pa bsod nams rgyal mtsha, 1182–1261). Changsem reports that because of his diligent practice, he gained profound realization, including a direct experience of the channels in the vajra body (*rdo rje lus kyi rtsa gnas*).

A pivotal moment in his life occurred during retreat, where as reported by Changsem (2004, p. 56), he is said to have had a vision of Mañjuśrī, whom he asked three key questions: Who is the teacher destined to guide him? What personal instruction should he seek? And what meditation practice should he follow? Mañjuśrī admonished him to travel to Drongchung Monastery (Grong chung) in Tsang and seek teachings on the Kālacakra and the sixfold vajra-yoga from an accomplished Lama. After consulting with Geshé Khyung (Dge bshes khyung), he realized that the teacher indicated by Mañjuśrī was no other than Semo Chewa Namkha Gyaltzen (Se mo che ba nam mkha' rgyal mtshan). And so, he headed out for Drongchung to meet Semo Chewa who was participating in a religious ceremony called Jobum Chökhör (*jo 'bum chos 'khor*) at the time.<sup>13</sup> Changsem shares that on his way to Drongchung, he encountered many demonic obstacles, such as terrifying apparitions, magical displays of sorts, and other supernormal phenomena. He overcame these obstacles with a stable mind, remaining in equanimity undisturbed by these experiences. Irrespective of the veracity of the story, it appears to highlight the importance of his exposure to Semo Chewa, who was famous for his unique realization of the sixfold vajra-yoga and for his clairvoyance. Semo Chewa possessed a robust network of tantric affiliations, with a special relation with the Kālacakra system. He was the younger brother of Machik Jobum (Ma gcig jo 'bum), the son of Dharmesvara, and the grandson of Yumo Mikyo Dorje (Yu mo ba mi bskyod rdo rje, 1038–1117?), all of whom are credited as pioneers in shaping the Dro lineage of Kālacakra.

While meeting Semo Chewa at Drongchung, he is said to have perceived him as an actual emanation of Vajrapāṇi. Initially, Semo Chewa taught him the sixfold vajra-yoga, which he had received from his sister, Machik Jobum. After practicing the first yoga of the six vajra-yogas for two nights, known as withdrawal (*pratyāhara, so sor sdud pa*), he started to experience its powerful efficacy.<sup>14</sup> This deepened his faith in his master and his instructions. As documented by Changsem, Semo Chewa engaged in tantric rituals over a period of thirteen nights, during which he transmitted to Jamsarpa the entirety of teachings associated with the Kālacakra, including its exegetical commentaries. Afterwards, Semo Chewa explained that he would generally keep these teachings secret, as they require many years of study. However, in this case, he believed that Jamsarpa's mind was sufficiently mature to receive all the teachings at once. He even recommended that students interested in the Kālacakra Tantra should seek explanations from Jamsarpa.<sup>15</sup> All things considered, this brief yet transformative encounter with Semo Chewa enabled him to apply his knowledge in practice under the guidance of his destined teacher. As a result, many of his previously acquired theoretical views on Buddhism evolved into empirical realization, which, in Chaklo's words, "likens to a [tree] shedding its bark (*spun skogs bzhin du bud*)".<sup>16</sup>

### 3.1.5. The Public Dissemination of Kālacakra

According to the sources, Jamsarpa traveled to Mount Wutai (五臺山, *rgya nag ri bo rtse lnga*) in China with one of his students, probably Künkhyen Chöku Özer, without informing others (Chaklo 2010, p. 70a; Amé Shyab 2000, p. 90). It is likely that the association of Mount Wutai with Mañjuśrī and Jamsarpa's personal connection with the bodhisattva of wisdom, contributed to his decision to go for retreat for several years before returning to Tibet at the insistence of his students. Upon his arrival at Kyangdur [Rkyang 'dur] in Tsang, he dedicated significant time to teaching, focusing especially on the Kālacakra. For students theoretically oriented, he taught the Kālacakra going through its extensive scholastic commentaries, while for practitioners, he taught the sixfold vajra-yoga. Chaklo

and Amé Shyab report that Jamsarpa announced his intention to conduct a public Kālacakra event.<sup>17</sup> During the ceremony, he included teachings from the commentarial tradition, as well as empowerments and meditation instructions. This event attracted a huge audience from various regions, which Chaklo and Amé Shyab described “as an ocean-like assembly” (*tshogs pa rgya mtsho lta bu*). And this was his last, for after this, he is said to have taken his last breath. As a result of his efforts, the Kālacakra became accessible to a wider audience.<sup>18</sup>

#### 4. Jamsarpa’s Literary Output

The following is a general survey of Jamsarpa works, including a brief introduction to their contents and colophons.

1. PF will be discussed later.

2. *Eight Phenomena of an Equal Taste: A Spiritual Song* (*Chos brgyad ro mnyam gyi mgur*) is a short, four-stanzas-long composition. Changsem, Chaklo, and Amé Shyab include it in the records of his life. He wrote it on his way to meet Semo Chewa for the very first time. The song conveys a profound state of equanimity, free from dualistic appearances, thoughts, and emotions.

3. *Letter of the Beryl Garland* (*Spring yig bai DUr+ya’i phreng ba*) is six-page-long (modern edition) and written in verse. It forms part of Jamsarpa’s biography by Changsem, Chag lo, and Amé Shyab. Another version of the letter is listed in the *Collected Works of the Kadam* (*Bka’ gdams gsung ’bum*). The colophon informs us that Jamsarpa wrote it to inform the monks and patrons at Kyangdur of his decision to conduct a solitary retreat at Mount Wutai until he attained a certain level of realization. Changsem recounts that Jamsarpa affixed the letter to the pillars of Kyangdur and Dolchung, noting that before achieving this spiritual objective, any effort to bring him back to Kyangdur would be fruitless. The contents of the letter attempt to justify the necessity of this retreat, starting with his dissatisfaction with his current life. He utilizes various metaphors to underscore the notion that without savoring the benefits of practice, mastery in composition and exposition would ultimately be meaningless. The essential practices he discusses in the letter are the Kālacakra and the sixfold vajra-yoga, which he considers the most important teachings across all systems of Vajrayāna.

4. *Stirring Oneself: The Golden Iron of the Precious Fruit* (*Bdag nyid la bskul ba gser lcag rin chen gyi ’bras can*) is a short text spanning only two pages in a modern book edition. The colophon confirms Jamsarpa as the author, and at the end of the text the modern editor notes that the original source is an old manuscript. As the title suggests, the text is written in rhetorical tone to remind oneself of the urgency of practicing the Buddhist teachings.

5. *The Final Testament of Precepts* (*Bslab bya zhal chems kyi yi ge*), composed entirely in verse, is another small letter included in his biography written by Chaklo and Amé Shyab. Like the *Letter of the Beryl Garland*, Jamsarpa posted it on the pillars of Kyangdur and Dolchung before he set out for Mount Wutai. This text is a kind of monologue which, for the most part, addresses his sacrifices and the challenges he faced in pursuit of Buddhist knowledge. He reflects that even his enemies would be sympathetic to him if they knew the difficulties he encountered along his spiritual journey. The text also shares his daily practice routines: for instance, in the morning, he engaged in chanting and supplications; in the afternoon, he studied the commentarial literature; and in the evening, he performed prostrations and offered sacramental offerings.

6. *Instruction on the Sixfold Vajra-yoga* (*Sbyor drug gi man ngag*), is a prose work consisting of twenty-three folios. Like PF, it is part of the *Great Anthology of Kālacakra* (*Dus ’khor phyogs sgrig chen mo*). According to the colophon, this text is edited by his close disciple, Ga Lotsāwa Namgyal Dorjé (Rgwa lo tsA ba nman rgyal rdo rje, 1203–1282), prob-

ably in 1234. This work elaborates on the sixfold vajra-yoga practice, structured into three main parts: the purpose (dgos pa), the method (mnyam su blangs tshul), and the outcome ('bras bu).

7. *Exegetical Commentary on the Ornament of Realization: A Shining Light of Reasoning* (*Mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi grel bshad gsal ba 'thad pa'i 'od 'bar*) is a comprehensive analysis of the *Ornament of Realization*, a text he diligently studied from a young age. His commentary is preserved in the Collected Works of the Kadam. In the colophon, he states that his motivation for composing this work is to counter erroneous perspectives held by his opponents. As is the case, the work adopts a slightly polemical tone, drafting critical responses to scholars who significantly influenced the study of the *Ornament of Realization* in Tibet, including Dré Sherab Bar (Bre shes rab 'bar, 11th century), his student Ar Changchub Yeshe (Ar byang chub ye shes), Gyamarpa Changchub Drak (Rgya dmar ba byang chub grags 11th century), and Jamsarpa's own teacher, Nyal Shyikpa.

Regrettably, the following three works are only known by their titles and are no longer available.

8. *The Vajra Garland of Valid Cognition* (*Tshad ma rdo rje phreng ba*).

9. *Ornament of the Ascertainment of Valid Cognition* (*Tshad ma rnam nges kyi rgyan*).

10. *A Thousand Topics on Perfected Tantric Action* (*Rgyud stong thun las rdzogs*).

## 5. The Text

### 5.1. Authorship and Editions

PF is a short text written in cursive script, consisting of seventeen stanzas. There are no references to this text in the available biographical material on Jamsarpa, but there is no doubt that he was the author, as he is explicitly identified in the final verse of the text.

sde snod rgyud sde'i zab don snying po dang//  
 dpal ldan bla ma'i gsung dang ma 'gal bar//  
 'jam dbyangs gsar ma bdag gis go tshod mams//  
 bris pa'i dge ba gang yin nam dag 'dis//  
 'gro kun rdo rje'i theg la 'jug gyur cig/

Without contradicting the profound meaning of the collections of sūtras and tantras, and without acting contrary to the words of the glorious teacher, I, Jamyang Sarma, wrote it to the best of my understanding. Whatever merit arises from this writing, may it guide all beings to enter the vehicle of the vajra.

It appears that someone proofread the text twice, since at the bottom of the final folio of the manuscript it is written in smaller cursive script: "it was proofread" (*zhus dag*), and again "proofreading was also completed twice" (*nyis zhus kyang grub*). PF is included in the *Great Anthology of Kālacakra* published in Lhasa between 2012 and 2014. A large collection of manuscripts was unearthed from the library of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) at Néchu Temple of Drepung Monastery. In 2014, as part of the *Collection of Jonang Texts* (*Jo nang dpe tshogs*), all Jamsarpa's extant writings, including the PF, were compiled and reprinted in a typeset edition by the Nationalities Press.<sup>19</sup> The editors of the collection note that the original manuscripts were collected from Néchu Temple. Thus, it is plausible that the PF in the *Collection of Jonang Texts* was compiled based on the PF in the *Great Anthology of Kālacakra*. For our translation, we primarily relied on the edition of the *Great Anthology of Kālacakra*, as it represents the oldest and comparatively more reliable manuscript.



### 5.2. Literary Apparatus and Thematic Content

In the opening of the PF, Jamsarpa reveals his motivation and purpose for composing this work. He interprets the given subject in conformity with the teachings of his master, to whom he appears to have profound reverence.

thar lam sgo bzhis 'gro ba'i yid 'dzin pa//  
 drin can bla ma spyi bo'i gtsug na bzhugs//  
 rang gzhan gnyis la phan par bya ba'i phyr//  
 thar lam sgron me bdag gis bri bar bya//

Through the Four Gates of Liberation guiding the minds of beings,  
 The benevolent guru abides above the crown of my head.  
 For the benefit of both self and others,  
 I will compose Illuminating the Path to Freedom.

He refers to his Buddhist master as “benevolent guru” (*drin can bla ma*), and in accordance with tantric practices, he visualizes him seated atop the crown of his head. This, however, raises an important question: Who is the master mentioned in his text? In answering this question, it is reasonable to exclude his exoteric teachers, as the PF clearly presents itself as a tantric text in nature, albeit not confined to one specific tantric system. As previously discussed, among his esoteric masters, the one whom Mañjuśrī reportedly prophesized for him to study with and with whom he achieved a deeply transformative interaction, was no other than Semo Chewa. The “four gates of liberation” (*thar lam sgo bzhi*) refer to four types of understanding in Kālacakra through which one can meditate on emptiness, namely through signlessness (*mtshan nyid med pa*), wishlessness (*smom pa med pa*), emptiness (*stong pa nyid*), and the lack of composition of all phenomena (*mngon-par 'du mi-byed-pa*). Notwithstanding, the impact of Semo Chewa on the contents of the PF remains uncertain due to the unavailability of any works attributed to him.

PF follows the classical Buddhist framework of Ground (*gzhi*), Path (*lam*), and Fruit (*'bras bu*), featuring the essential elements of Buddhist thought and practice in compelling philosophical language. Central to the text is its integration of the esoteric and exoteric systems by explicating on the one hand an “ontologically undividable unity” between bliss (*bde ba*) and emptiness (*stong pa*), and appearance (*snang ba*) and emptiness, while positing an *epistemic dualism* between relative truth (*kun rdzob*) and ultimate truth (*don dam*), sentient beings (*sems can*) and buddhas (*sangs rgyas*), and primordial gnosis (*ye shes*) and ordinary consciousness (*rnam shes*). Jamsarpa demonstrates that the Ground, referring to the innate nature of the subjective agent, is primordially pure but adventitiously obscured by the stain of afflictions and ignorance. The path to liberation from this stain is to realize how supreme bliss and emptiness are inseparable from one another, much like the relationship between snow and a snow mountain. Ultimately, one attains the realization of the supreme fruit—dharmakaya—which is the inexhaustible source of profound bliss, resembling the phenomenon of water never apart from its inherent moisture. He emphasizes dharmakāya as a permanent quality that pervades the minds of all sentient beings, devoid of external attributes such as suffering, conceptual constructs, and relative truth.

### 5.3. Self-Emptiness Versus Other-Emptiness

A striking feature of the PF is its use of the contentious philosophical language between “self-emptiness” (*rang stong*) and “other-emptiness” (*gzhan stong*). It is well known that Dölpopa is famous for making a clear distinction between the two philosophical concepts, as well as credited for being the most influential exponent of the philosophy of other-emptiness.<sup>20</sup> Be that as it may, Dölpopa would not recognize himself as an innovator of the

concept of other-emptiness. In his work, *Sun Illuminating the Two Truths* (*Bden gnyis gsal ba'i nyi ma*), he cites the following passage:

rje so ri pas/kun rdzob bden pa rang gis stong pa dang//  
 don dam bden pa gzhan gyis stong pa ste//  
 bden gnyis stong tshul de ltar ma shes na//  
 rdzogs sangs rgyas la skur ba btab nyen gda'o//

As Jé Soripa states:

Relative truth is empty of self-nature  
 and ultimate truth is empty of other-nature.  
 If one fails to know how the two truths are empty in such a way,  
 There is a danger of denigrating the Fully Enlightened One.<sup>21</sup>

As is seen, Dölpopa attributes this distinction to a master called Jé Soripa (Rje so ri ba) or Jé Poripa (Rje pho ri ba),<sup>22</sup> though this figure has remained undocumented in Tibetan historical records. Stearns (1999, pp. 49–51) has shown that the term other-emptiness was employed in contrast to self-emptiness in the biography of Ra Lotsāwa Dorje Drakpa (Rwa lo tsA ba rdo rje grags b. 1016) written by the oldest grandson of his nephew, Ra Yeshe Sengé (Rwa ye shes seng ge), who lived from in the late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries. Yet, Stearns (1999, p. 51) challenges the authenticity of the source: “There are, however, quite definite grounds on which to conclude that this biography was extensively reworked in the seventeenth century, and so the occurrence of the term *gzhan stong* is probably not significant.”

Even if we assume that Ra Yeshe Sengé did use these terms, he was contemporary of Jamsarpa. It is very unlikely that Jamsarpa borrowed this idea from Ra Yeshe Sengé, as there is no evidence of any interactions between the two. The PF may be among the earliest textual evidence in Tibetan literature where these terms are contrasted with each other in their philosophical and esoteric contexts but held to be non-contradictory.

## 6. Illuminating the Path to Freedom

\* English Translation of the Tibetan text in Appendix A.

Namo guru, buddha, bodhisattva *sarva mahābhya namaḥ*.

(verse 1)

Dressed in the finest aspiration,  
 Inlaid with the precious gems of Vajrayāna practice,  
 I sing my praise for the profound essence of the Two Truths,  
 Dancing in the rhythm of the Four Immeasurables.

(verse 2)

Through the Four Gates of Liberation guiding the minds of beings,  
 The benevolent guru abides above the crown of my head.

For the benefit of both self and others,

I will compose *Illuminating the Path to Freedom*

(verse 3)

The primordially purity of the ground of being is shrouded by transient stains,  
 Just as snow is entwined with its snow-clad summits.

To tread the path to enlightenment, one must meditate upon  
 the indivisible union of bliss and emptiness.

(verse 4)

Just like water is suffused with wetness and moisture,  
 the supreme fruit is [suffused with] inexhaustible bliss.

The ultimate view is to act in accordance with the meaning of the spontaneous,

unmediated luminosity of the nature of phenomena.

(verse 5)

The pinnacle of meditation is to remain in the state of unobstructed clear light, bliss and emptiness, free from elaboration.

Beyond all characterizations and fabricated concepts, arising undistracted action is the pinnacle of conduct.

(verse 6)

The supreme path of awakening is undistracted empty awareness.

Some say, when body and mind are unmoving, it is called meditation.

When the true nature genuinely manifests, that is clarity.

Relative phenomena are clear to all sentient beings.

(verse 7)

Supreme emptiness is the blending of bliss and emptiness into one.

The no-thing of emptiness is like a rabbit's horns.

When the spontaneous present nature of reality appears,

That is supreme appearance.

The conventional arising of the four elements is apparent even to dogs.

(verse 8)

Supreme bliss is thoroughly good, inexhaustible great bliss.

For śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas who abandoned the sufferings of samsara, the unity of appearance and emptiness into one is indivisible,

even if they may assert that if appearance exists emptiness does not.

(verse 9)

How could being and non-being ever become one?

It is impossible for consciousness and pristine wisdom to be the same.

Sentient beings and buddhas cannot be identical.

It is impossible for the relative to be equal to the ultimate.

(verse 10)

That which is known primordially, from the beginning,

though it is called wisdom, it is in fact the dharmakāya.

Thus, how could obstructions, afflictive thoughts, and discursiveness ever be equal to wisdom?

(verse 11)

Sentient beings of the three realms lack happiness.

Perfectly enlightened ones lack suffering.

The sufferings of all sentient beings are incalculable,

while the bliss of those enlightened is inconceivable.

(verse 12)

Therefore, sentient beings and buddhas are not the same.

Relative phenomena are empty of self-nature, devoid of intrinsic essence.

Ultimate phenomena are empty of other-nature, devoid of mental projection.

Relative reality is impermanent, like an illusion.

(verse 13)

The ultimate nature of reality is indestructible, like space.

Therefore, the relative and ultimate are not one and the same.

For example, from the side of luminous dharmakāya

bliss is inexhaustible, it is the greatest fruit.

(verse 14)

Since there is not even a moment of suffering, cyclic existence is abandoned,

Since it is always indestructible, it is permanent,

Since it is always without change, it is a supreme permanence.

It is endowed with excellent qualities: well-formed, with wondrous color, pleasant sound, sweet fragrance,

(verse 15)

delicious taste, and soft touch,

without seer and the seen, the heard and the hearer, and so forth.

The non-duality of the apprehender and the apprehended is the singular dharmakāya.

The light of the lamp of wisdom is illuminated by itself.

(verse 16)

The dharmakāya is unitary, pervading all directions and times,

free from the sufferings of the three realms of existence.

Its modalities are beyond count if described,

Thus, in summary, such is the presentation of the ground, the path and fruit.

(verse 17)

Without contradicting the profound meaning of the collections of sūtras and tantras,

and without acting contrary to the words of the glorious teacher,

I, Jamyang Sarma, wrote it to the best of my understanding.

Whatever merit arises from this writing,

may it guide all beings to enter the vehicle of the vajra.

[note by the editor/s]

It was proofread. *Maṅgalaṃ bhavantu*. Proofreading was also completed twice.

## 7. Conclusions

As we have seen Jamyang Sarma Sherab Özer, an important master in the Dro lineage of the Kālacakra Tantra, featured in the genealogical tree of the Jonang as an exponent of esoteric teachings and a proponent of the unity between intrinsic emptiness (*rang stong*), rooted in the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka tradition, and extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*) associated with the Jonang School. While for the former, emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is a non-affirming negation, negating inherent existence without positing an alternative reality, for the latter, emptiness is an affirming negation in positing that ultimate reality is empty of adventitious defilements but not empty of its own luminous and unchanging nature. Jamsarpa writes in the PF: “relative phenomena are empty of self-nature, devoid of intrinsic essence” and “ultimate phenomena are empty of other-nature, devoid of mental projections”. He goes on to explain how ‘ordinary consciousness’ (*rnam shes*), ‘relative truth’ (*kun rdzob*), phenomena (*chos*), and samsara are all *rang stong*, while ‘ultimate truth’ (*don dam*), nirvāṇa, and ‘primordial wisdom’ (*yes shes*) are *gzhan ston*. His approach to differentiating *rang stong* and *gzhan stong* appears to resonate with the main Jonang position.<sup>23</sup> The available philological evidence suggests the circulation of such currents in the intellectual milieu of the late 12th century and a gradual crystallization of *gzhan stong* thought rather than a sudden innovation by Dölpopa. Jamsarpa’s importance lies in being counted as one the earliest scripturally attested proponents of *gzhan stong*, systematizing and explicitly articulating ideas that had been developing within certain strands of Tibetan Buddhist thought, particularly at the intersection of a novel interpretation of the philosophical view (*lta ba*) of Madhyamaka and Kālacakra esoteric practices.

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### Appendix A. The Tibetan Text of the *Thar lam sgron me*

(folio 627) ལྷོ། མར་ལམ་སྣོན་མེ་བཞུགས།

ལྷོ། ར་མོ་ལྷ་ཅུ་བྱ་རྒྱ་སྣོན་པམ་སར་མ་ལྷན་བྱ་ན་མཆོ།  
 སྣོན་འཇུག་དར་ཟབ་མཛེས་པའི་གོས་ཀྱིས་ཀྲུབས། །བསྐྱེད་རྫོགས་ལྷ་ཏིག་རིན་ཆེན་པ་བཞོད་ཆེན། །  
 བདེན་གཉེས་ཟབ་དོན་སྣོན་པའི་ལྷ་ལེན་ཅིང་། །ཚད་མེད་རྣམ་བཞིའི་གར་བྱིད་རྣང་བོ་རྟེ། །  
 མར་ལམ་སྣོན་བཞིས་འགྲོ་བའི་ཡིད་འཛིན་པ། །དྲིན་ཅན་སྤྲོ་མ་སྤྱི་བའི་གཞུག་ན་བཞུགས། །  
 རང་གཞན་གཉེས་ལ་པན་པར་བྱ་བའི་བྱིར། །མར་ལམ་སྣོན་མེ་བདག་གིས་བྲི་བར་བྱ། །  
 གདོད་ནས་དག་པའི་དབྱིངས་ལ་སྣོན་བྱ་གྱི། །དྲི་མས་སྤྱིབ་པ་འདྲི་དག་གཞི་ཡིན་ནོ། །  
 རི་དང་ཁ་བར་འབྲལ་མེད་གངས་རི་བཞིན། །བདེ་སྣོད་གཉེས་མེད་སྣོན་པ་མར་ལམ་ཡིན། །  
 རྣོན་ཅིང་གཤེར་བར་ལྷན་པའི་ཚུ་བཞིན། །བདེ་བ་ཟད་པ་མེད་པ་འབྲས་བུའི་མཚོག།  
 ལྷན་ལྷབ་འགག་མེད་འོད་གསལ་ཚོས་དབྱིངས་ཀྱི། །དོན་ལ་སྣོད་པ་ལྷ་བའི་ཡང་རྩེ་ཡིན། །  
 འཛིན་མེད་འོད་གསལ་བདེ་སྣོད་སྣོན་བྲལ་གྱི། །དང་ལ་གནས་ན་བསྐྱེད་པའི་ཡང་རྩེ་ཡིན། །  
 མཚན་འཛིན་བཅས་མའི་རྟོག་པ་ཀྱན་དང་བལ། །ཡེངས་མེད་ལྷགས་བྱང་སྣོད་པའི་ཡང་རྩེ་ཡིན། །  
 གསལ་སྣོད་ཡེངས་མེད་བྱང་རྩེ་བལ་མཚོག་ཡིན། །ལུས་སེམས་མི་གཡོ་འཛིན་ལ་སྣོན་ཞེས་ཟེར། །  
 ངོ་བོ་ཡང་དག་གསལ་ན་གསལ་བ་(folio 628) ཡིན། །ཀྱན་རྫོབ་དངོས་པོ་འགྲོ་བ་ཀྱན་ལ་གསལ། །  
 བདེ་སྣོད་གཅིག་ཏུ་འདྲེས་པ་སྣོད་པའི་མཚོག། ཅང་མེད་སྣོད་པ་རི་བོད་རྩ་དང་འདྲ། །  
 ལྷན་ལྷབ་ཚོས་ཉིད་སྣོད་ན་སྣོད་བའི་མཚོག། ཀྱན་རྫོབ་འབྱུང་བཞིའི་སྣོད་པ་ཁྱེ་ལའང་སྣོད། །  
 ཀྱན་ལམ་ཟབ་བདེ་ཆེན་ཟག་བྲལ་བདེ་བའི་མཚོག། འཁོར་བའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་ཉན་རང་གིས་ཀྱང་སྤྲངས། །  
 སྣོད་སྣོད་གཅིག་ཏུ་འདྲེས་པ་དབྱིར་མེད་ཡིན། །སྣོད་བའོད་ལ་སྣོད་པ་མེད་པར་འདོད། །  
 ཡོད་མེད་གཅིག་ཏུ་འབྲུར་བ་གལ་སྲིད། །རྣམ་ཤེས་<sup>24</sup>ཡེ་ཤེས་གཅིག་ཏུ་སྲིད་མ་ཡིན། །  
 སེམས་ཅན་སངས་རྒྱལ་གཅིག་ཏུ་སྲིད་མ་ཡིན། །ཀྱན་རྫོབ་དོན་དམ་གཅིག་ཏུ་སྲིད་མ་ཡིན། །  
 ལྷ་གོང་གདོད་མ་ནས་ཀྱི་ཤེས་པ་ལ། །ཡེ་ཤེས་ཟེར་ཡང་དོན་ལ་ཚོས་སྤྲུངས། །  
 དེ་ལ་སྤྱིབ་བྱིད་ཉན་མོངས་རྣམ་རྟོག་དང་། །ཡེ་ཤེས་གཅིག་ཏུ་འབྲུར་བ་གལ་སྲིད། །  
 ཁམས་གསལ་འཁོར་བའི་སེམས་ཅན་བདེ་བས་དབེན། །ཡང་དག་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྐྱེད་བལ། །  
 སེམས་ཅན་ཀྱན་ལ་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་བྱངས་མི་ལང། །རྫོགས་སངས་རྒྱལ་ལ་བདེ་བ་བསམ་མི་འབྲལ། །  
 དེས་ན་སེམས་ཅན་སངས་རྒྱལ་གཅིག་མ་ཡིན། །ཀྱན་རྫོབ་རང་སྣོད་ཚོས་ནི་སྣོད་པོས་དབེན། །  
 དོན་དམ་གཞན་སྣོད་ཚོས་ནི་རྟོག་པས་དབེན། །ཀྱན་རྫོབ་ཚོས་ཀྱན་མི་རྟོག་སྤྲུམ་མ་འདྲ། །  
 དོན་དམ་ཚོས་ཉིད་འཛིག་མེད་ནམ་མཁའ་འདྲ། །དེས་ན་ཀྱན་རྫོབ་དོན་དམ་གཅིག་མ་ཡིན། །  
 འོད་གསལ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་སྤྲུ་དེ་ལྷན་མཚན་ན། །བདེ་བ་ཟད་(folio 629) མི་ཤེས་པས་འབྲས་བུའི་མཚོག། །  
 སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་སྣོད་ཅིག་མེད་པས་འཁོར་བ་སྤྲངས། །ནམ་ཡང་འཛིག་པ་མེད་པས་རྟོག་པ་ཡིན། །  
 ཀྱན་ཏུ་འབྲུར་བ་མེད་པས་རྟོག་པའི་མཚོག། དབྱིབས་ལེགས་མདོག་མཚན་སྤྲུ་སྣོན་དྲི་དང་ཞེས། །  
 རོ་མངར་རེག་འཇམ་ཡོན་ཏན་ཀྱན་དང་ལྷན། །ལྷ་བྱ་བྱ་བྱེད་ཉན་བྱ་ཉན་བྱེད་སོགས། །  
 གཟུང་འཛིན་གཉེས་མེད་གཅིག་པ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་སྤྲུ། །ཡེ་ཤེས་སྣོན་མེད་འོད་ནི་རང་འོད་གསལ། །  
 རྟོགས་དུས་ཀྱན་ལ་འབྲལ་བ་གཅིག་ལུའི་བདག། སྲིད་གསུམ་རྣམ་པ་སྲིད་པའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་བལ། །  
 དེ་སོགས་ཡིན་ལྷགས་བསྣོད་ན་བགྲང་མི་ལང། །དེ་སྣོད་གཞི་ལམ་འབྲས་བུའི་རྣམ་བཞག་འདི། །  
 སྤྲུ་སྣོད་རྣོད་སྲིད་ཟབ་དོན་སྣོད་པོ་དང་། །དཔལ་ལྷན་སྤྲོ་མའི་གསུང་དང་མ་འགས་བར། །  
 འཇམ་དབྱུངས་གསར་མ་བདག་གིས་གོ་ཚོད་རྣམས། །བྲིས་པའི་དགོ་བ་གང་ཡིན་རྣམ་དག་འདིས། །  
 འགྲོ་ཀྱན་རྫོ་རྩེའི་ཐེག་ལ་འཇུག་གྲུར་ཅིག།  
 ལུས་དག་མྱེས་ལྷན་ཉེས་ལྷན་གྲུབ།

### Notes

- 1 For a discussion of possible Indian precedents of *gzhan stong*, see Mathes (2011).
- 2 According to Tsering Wangchuk’s study of Rinchen Yeshe (13th–14th centuries) and sources in the *Collected Works of the Kadampa (Bka’ gdam gsung ’bum phyogs bsgrigs)*, the distinction between self- and other-emptiness may have been influenced by the works of early Kadampa masters (Wangchuk 2016).
- 3 The six-fold vajra-yoga is part of the completion stage (*rdzogs rim*), the most advanced phase of tantric practice.

- 4 Go Lotsāwa (1984, vol. 2, pp. 903, 905) provides their dates of birth but does not mention their dates of passing. However, Chaklo (2010, pp. 71a, 75a, 83b, 84b) offers complete dates for each of them. The subsequent sources corroborate Chaklo's dating; see also Sheehy (2009, pp. 223–24).
- 5 Tāranātha (BDR: MW22276, vol.2), p. 195.
- 6 Chaklo (2010, p. 265b) and Amé Shyab (2000, p. 82) spell his name as Jo sras blo bde.
- 7 Although the sources do not provide any clues on the authorship of the small commentary, it is likely that it refers to Haribhadra's commentary on the *Ornament of Realization*, the *Clear Meaning* (*Sphuṭārthā*), which is known as a small commentary in comparison to his large commentary, the *Exposition on the Eight-Thousand-Line Perfection of Wisdom* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāvākyā*).
- 8 The sources are inconsistent regarding his ailment. For instance, Chaklo (2010, p. 66a) and Amé Shyab (2000, p. 83) regard leprosy being the source that caused him severe suffering.
- 9 Chaklo (2010, p. 66a) and Amé Shyab (2000, p. 83) state that after practicing the Vajrapāṇi for a year and six months, he gained direct vision of the deity and fully eradicated his disease.
- 10 The sources give alternate spellings to his name. Chaklo (2010, p. 66a) refers to him as Zhang 'bri 'tshams, Amé Shyab (2000, p. 83) gives Zhang 'brig 'tshams, and Changsem (2004, p. 53) 'Bri 'tshams Zhang. Yet, those names have not been attested in other historical works. Since Zhang is a popular surname in Central Tibet, the names by Chaklo and Amé Shyab seem more plausible.
- 11 For further information concerning this story, see Shākya Chokden's (2018, vol. 3, p. 350) *Music of Wonderful Stories: A Brief Account of How the Great Ngok Lotsāwa Disseminated the Teachings* (*Rngog lo tsA ba chen pos bstan pa ji ltar bskyangs pa'i tshul mdo tsam du bya ba ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mo*).
- 12 According to Drongbu Dorje Rinchen (1999, pp. 87–94), Jamsarpa debated with Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyeltsen but lost the debate. His master, Nyal Shyikpa, was disturbed by this outcome and sent another student, U Yukpa Sönam Sengé ('U yug pa bsod nams seng ge, 13th century), to debate with Sakya Paṇḍita. However, he too lost and eventually became his student, studying Buddhist epistemology and logic under him.
- 13 Chaklo (2010, p. 67a) and Amé Shyab (2000, pp. 84–85) report that this ceremony was held by his sister Machik Jobum, who was preparing to leave for a place called Khachö (Mkha' spyod), which may refer to Uḍḍiyāna where she is said to have eventually traveled. There is some confusion here caused by Tāranātha (MW22276, vol. 2, p. 195). Like Changsem, Tāranātha states that after having a vision of Mañjuśrī, Jamsarpa went to meet Semo Chewa to seek teachings as recommended by Mañjuśrī. However, when describing Jamsarpa's journey, the person he was supposed to meet turns out to be U Yukpa, not Semo Chewa. U Yukpa's mention here appears without a plausible reason. U Yukpa and Jamsarpa were contemporaries, and they both studied under Nyal Shyikpa. However, he is not known for delivering tantric instructions to Jamsarpa.
- 14 For more on the practice of the six-fold vajra-yoga as taught by the Indian master Vajrapāṇi; see Wallace (2012, pp. 204–22).
- 15 It should be noted that the biography by Changsem stops here. The following biographical information is based on Chaklo and Aamé Shyab.
- 16 For more information, see Chaklo (2010, p. 67b).
- 17 Jamsarpa's biographical sources fail to provide any explanation for his intention of conducting such a massive public esoteric event. However, one can speculate that it relates to his ostensible belief that the Kālacakra is the tantric system capable of leading one to enlightenment within a single lifetime. In his *Instruction on the Sixfold Vajrayoga* (*Sbyor drug gi man ngag* 2014, vol. 35, p. 467), Jamsarpa observes: *re shig lam 'di la 'jug dgos pa dang/ lam 'di nyams su blang tshul dang/ nyams su blangs pa'i 'bras bu'ol/ dang po nil/bras bu rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i sangs rgyas dus kyi 'khor lo dang/dang po sangs rgyas rtsa 'grel/ 'di dang mthun pa kho nas 'thob kyi/ bskyed rim la sogs pa dang/ rgyud gzhan gyi sgra dang/ thad pas mi thob par bstan tel/ rdo rje' i tshig sbas nas bstan pa'i phyir ro*. "To begin with, [the text is organized in this way]: the benefit of entering the path, the way of practicing the path, and the fruit from practicing the path. As for the first (the benefit of entering the path), it is taught that only teachings that accord with the fruit of the exalted omniscient state of Buddha Kālacakra, its root scripture and its exegetical commentary on the primordial Buddha can result in the attainment (buddhahood), and not through the practice of the generation stage, the instructions of other tantras, as their vajra words are taught in a hidden way".
- 18 Tāranātha (MW22276, vol. 2, p. 195) states: *grub thob se mo che ba yan chad/ dus 'khor la shin tu bka' dog gnyan cha che ba yin/ chos rje 'jam gsar nas gzung cung zad bka' yangs su song*. "Up until [the times of] the accomplished master Semo Chewa, the Kālacakra had been kept extremely secret. From the [times] of Dharma master Jamsarpa onwards, it has become somewhat widespread". Contrary to Tāranātha's statement, Sheehy (2009, p. 223) purports that "from the time of Jamyang Sarma onwards, the precepts and personal instructions on the Kālacakra completion stage practices in the Dro lineage are considered to have been kept extremely strict".
- 19 For a scholarly assessment on this topic, see Ducher (2020).
- 20 For a comprehensive analysis of this topic, see Stearns (1999), Sheehy and Mathes (2019).
- 21 Cf. Dölpopa (2007–2009), p. 3.
- 22 Note that there are two ways of spelling the name of this person. In the recent edition of Dölpopa's *Sun Illuminating the Two Truths* (*Bden gnyis gsal ba'i nyi ma* 2011 vol. 7, p. 111), it reads Rje pho ri ba instead of Rje so ri ba.

- <sup>23</sup> For various interpretations of the *gzhan stong* by Tibetan scholars, see Burchardi (2007).
- <sup>24</sup> The PF in the *Collection of Jonang Texts* mistakenly reads *rnam dag*.

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