Throughout most of the first millennium of the common era, the wealthy trading town of Dunhuang was a crucial point of commercial and cultural exchange on the Silk Route. At the Buddhist cave complex near the town, Buddhism was enriched by a cross-fertilization of religious traditions from India, China, Tibet, and various Central Asian centres. One particularly fruitful period for this cultural interaction was the ninth and tenth centuries.

Dunhuang was under Tibetan control between 786 and 848, and its loss in 848 was just one aspect of the wider disintegration of the ruling Tibetan dynasty. Already a few years earlier, Tibetan imperial patronage of Buddhism had become untenable and the monasteries of Central Tibet had been closed. According to traditional Tibetan historical sources, the collapse of royal patronage signalled the beginning of a 'dark period', a time when Buddhism went into severe decline. According to these accounts, it was only with the resurgence of a centralized political power in the late tenth century that Buddhism began to recover. Against this view, more recent scholarship has suggested that the dark period was in fact a crucial stage in the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism. With no controlling religious authority, Tibetans were able to develop their own Buddhist traditions, drawing upon those of their neighbours in China and India, as well as their own cultural concerns. Tibetans living in Dunhuang after it was regained by China loyalists were particularly well situated to absorb these various influences.

Thus any Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts from Dunhuang dating from the so-called 'dark period' might be expected to show signs of cross-cultural interaction or even deliberate conflation of religious practices from different sources. Reasoning from both factors just mentioned (Dunhuang’s position on the Silk Route, and the disappearance of the central Tibetan religious orthodoxy) one might expect such interaction and syncretism to be commonplace. However, significant examples of this kind of activity remain few.

In the course of our researches into Tibetan tantra at Dunhuang, a group of five manuscripts has come to our attention. Taken together, they reveal an unusually clear example of a Buddhist author active in tenth-century Dunhuang, combining techniques from two normally distinct traditions: the Chinese lineages of Chan (from the Sanskrit dhyāna, 'contemplation', and 'Zen' in Japanese), and the yogic meditation practices of Mahāyoga, derived from the Indic tantras. The manuscripts combine these techniques in complex and innovative ways, with technical terminology that reveals an extensive knowledge of both traditions. In fact, the degree of syncretism seen in these manuscripts is unique. A few other Dunhuang manuscripts assert the equivalence of Chan and Mahāyoga, but such claims have so far seemed largely rhetorical. The identification of this group of manuscripts reveals a remarkably sophisticated merging of traditions, a syncretism on a level
one might expect in a vibrant and multicultural religious centre like Dunhuang.

The five manuscripts first caught our attention because of their distinctive handwriting. Closer examination confirmed that all five pieces were almost certainly penned by the same hand. (For the reader’s benefit, the first folio of each manuscript is reproduced here — see Fig.1.) In addition to their more obvious orthographic similarities, all five manuscripts open with a similar decorative marker; each line ends with a punctuation dot (tsheg) before the end-of-clause marker (shad). Any partial or blank lines, as at the end of a text, are filled with a series of double-shad markers; and all five manuscripts are decorated with red ink, the shade of which is identical in four.

Having identified these five works as a cohesive group, we still needed to determine the nature of their relationship to each other. Just because they share a single scribe, they are not necessarily by the same author; it remained possible that the five manuscripts were simply the results of one scribe copying the works of various authors. In fact, three of the texts are almost certainly the work of a single author. As will become clear, the contents of PT626, PT634, and PT699 reveal a very close relationship. PT808 is probably also by the same author, while the authorship of PT322 remains uncertain.

Only one of these five manuscripts has received any attention in modern scholarship. In 1979, Okimoto Katsumi identified PT699 as a commentary to another short work found elsewhere in the Dunhuang collections and ascribed to the Chan patriarch Bodhidharma. Okimoto's brief study has recently been supplemented by Carmen Meinert. Meinert emphasizes the syncretic character of PT699, arguing that it is a Great Perfection (rdzogs chen) commentary on a Chan text. The Great Perfection — a system of immediate access to enlightenment derived from the Mahāyoga tantras — was certainly known to the author of our manuscripts. However, we will argue that PT699 is better understood as a Mahāyoga commentary on a Chan text.

There is no doubt that the writer of our group of manuscripts was aware of the Great Perfection. PT322, an extended prayer to the wrathful and the peaceful buddhas of the Mayajala mandala, mentions the term 'great perfection' three times. Furthermore the colophon to PT699 employs the term Atiyoga, another name for the Great Perfection. The passage in question describes three kinds of teachers: the teacher of Atiyoga, the teacher of the sutas, and the teacher of the tantras.

What is a master who teaches Atiyoga like? [Like] the great garuda who cuts through the sky yet is aware of all living beings, he clarifies the vehicles individually, yet cuts through space. Clarifies means he teaches the great meaning without mixing up [the vehicles]. Like the sky-soaring garuda, he draws forth the greatness of the meaning.

What is a master who teaches the sutas like? He teaches the divisions of the paths which one should traverse.

Just as the king of the realm rules directly, a master who teaches the meaning of the tantras cuts directly to the blissful union of the words. He teaches to be appropriate that which is inappropriate for the inferior scholars who [teach as if] dripping [water] onto rocks. Thus faults themselves are good qualities. In crowded places he teaches the dharma. Using common speech full of meaning, he understands its inner resplendence. He teaches with a mind that is like a hidden tortoise. Understanding the hidden secret is the quality of such a master. Thus it is said.

Thus, according to this passage, the Atiyoga teacher teaches from on high, simultaneously transcending and distinguishing all the differences at a glance. The teacher of the sutas involves himself in the details of the gradual path to enlightenment. And the tantric teacher is immersed in the mundane world while maintaining a secret majesty.

One cannot conclude on the basis of this passage that the author considers himself to be an Atiyoga teacher, and his commentary a Great Perfection text. In fact, the body of the commentary makes no reference to the Great Perfection (or Atiyoga), but does make a number of indirect and allusive references to the teachings of Mahāyoga. Thus there is a case for arguing that the author considered his commentary to be an example of the third teaching method, that of the tantric master. On the other hand, it is quite possible that the colophon is intended to show the author to be an embodiment of all three types of teacher, applying the method of each wherever appropriate. This would be in accordance with the syncretism of his text.

The extent of Mahāyoga influence in PT699 can only be fully appreciated through the lens of the author's other two major works, PT626 and PT634, which have previously gone unnoticed. Both are commentaries on the same concise Mahāyoga ritual text. The greater part of the root text is based on the practice of the three samādhis, a triad commonly associated with Mahāyoga practice. In elaborating upon the root text, both PT626 and PT634 employ key terms drawn from Chan meditation systems. This syncretism is mirrored in PT699, in which the author applies the same structural

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**Fig. 1** The first folio of five Tibetan manuscripts in the same hand.

The five manuscripts shown here display a distinctive handwriting and were almost certainly penned by the same hand. In addition to their more obvious orthographic similarities, all five manuscripts open with a similar decorative marker; each line ends with a punctuation dot (tsheg) before the end-of-clause marker (shad). Any partial or blank lines, as at the end of a text, are filled with a series of double-shad markers; and all five manuscripts are decorated with red ink, the shade of which is identical in four.

The Bibliothèque nationale de France. Pelliot Tibetain 322, 626, 634, 699, 808.
The metaphor of the sky and the use of the syllable A to mark the transition from the all-illuminating samādhi to the causal samādhi is common in early descriptions of the all-illuminating samādhi. In the causal samādhi, the visualized mandala palace is generated out of the syllables, with oneself sitting at the centre as the principal deity. Lights are projected and reabsorbed, blessing the practitioner’s mind.

This marks the end of the third samādhi and thus the development stage, though this is not made explicit here. The root text divides the remaining meditations into four further perfection stage samādhis. The first of these four is a meditation on the visualization of one’s own body, speech and mind as those of the deity. The second samādhi involves the recitation of the deity’s heart mantra. The third is a sexual practice involving the manipulation of psycho-physical energies. Finally in the fourth samādhi the visualization is dissolved, the 108-syllable mantra of the deity Vajrasattva is recited for purification, and one rests in the enlightened state. The description of the manipulation of psycho-physical energies is unusual for the Dunhuang collections and may indicate a relatively late date (given that the Dunhuang cave was sealed at the beginning of the eleventh century) for our group of manuscripts.

Chan elements in PT626 and PT634

Thus the texts of PT626 and PT634 present a detailed discussion of a Mahāyoga meditation practice in terms of the three samādhis. Despite being firmly situated in the context of Mahāyoga meditation, both texts incorporate substantial elements of Chan meditation practice. All of these elements are found in the first of the three samādhis, the thunness samādhi.

As we have seen, the first samādhi is typically a meditation on the emptiness of the mind and phenomena. The presentation of the first samādhi in PT626 and PT634 is unusual in that it draws as much on Chan terminology and practices as on Vajrayāna sources. Specifically, the two commentaries as well as the root text associate the first samādhi with the practice of ‘viewing the mind’ (sams la lta). This is an internally-directed analysis with the aim of establishing that there is no actual object of the referent ‘mind’. Thus the mind is examined for features like shapes and colours. Such techniques are not unique to Chan Buddhism, but the association of the techniques with the phrase ‘viewing the mind’ (Ch. kan xin 看心) is distinctive of the Northern Chan schools. These techniques are frequently discussed in the Dunhuang Chan manuscripts, including the fragments attributed to the Chan master Heshang Moheyan and尚摩诃衍.17

While a certain degree of conceptualual examination is clearly required for the practice of viewing the mind, in PT626 and PT634 the goal is a lack of mental activity. This is implied by the statement that viewing the mind is the means (thabs) and the mind’s non-abiding is wisdom (shes rab). The state resulting from viewing the mind is described as non-thought (mi bsam), non-conceptualization (mi rtog), and not engaging the mind (yid la mi byed pa), three
central terms in Tibetan Chan, particularly in the texts attributed to Moheyan.18

Other possible references to Chan teachings in PT626 and PT634, less clear though still suggestive, appear in the three pairs of metaphors discussed above. In one metaphor the practice of mindfulness is compared to a watchman spotting a thief. The metaphor of the thief appears in the teachings attributed to Moheyan, as a symbol for the distractions of the six senses. The metaphor also appears in the writings of Shengxiu 神秀 (606?-706), exponent of the Northern Chan doctrines and the teacher of Moheyan’s teachers.19 Finally, the metaphor of a butter lamp, used in PT634 to illustrate the practice of insight meditation (lhaṅ mthong),20 also appears in the Shenzhi’s writings on insight meditation, and is suggestive of the ‘inner illumination’ (Ch. fan zao 返照) taught by Moheyan.21

Once the discussion of the thusness samādhi is concluded, there is no further drawing upon Chan practices and teaching techniques. As we have seen, there is a great deal of overlap between the Chan elements of PT626 and PT634 and the teachings of Shengxiu and Moheyan. While Shengxiu is representative of the Northern Chan, the position of Moheyan is usually taken to be a later development which combined the Northern Chan practices with elements from other strands of Chan.22 The Chan affiliations of the author of our own texts are further elucidated in his other work, PT699.

Chan elements in PT699

Like the two commentaries discussed in the previous section, PT699 is based on a short root text, but in this case the root text appears in several other places. It is quoted in the Chan chapter of the Lamp for the Eyes in Contemplation (Bsam gtan mig sgron) under the title Brief Precepts (lung chung). It also appears elsewhere in the Dunhuang manuscripts on its own (ITJ689),23 in a Chan compilation (PT121) and in an incomplete and previously unnoticed manuscript, where it appears in the company of some notes on the Vajrayāna (ITJ774).24 We can conclude that the text enjoyed some popularity throughout Tibet in the ninth and tenth centuries.

The Brief Precepts is a series of instructions on the practice of contemplation. It begins with an evocation of the compassionate motivation to end the suffering of all sentient beings. Then the meditation proper is discussed, beginning with the practice of viewing the mind, and moving on quickly to the instruction not to obstruct or suppress concepts. The meditator is instructed to remain in an unmoving samādhi, while the meditative experience becomes increasingly subtle, peaceful and clear. The Brief Precepts concludes with the following statement: ‘This dharma was entrusted to the great Kāśyapa. Dharmatālā meditated in this way.’25 Thus the author of PT699 would have been aware that the subject of his commentary was firmly based in the lineages of Chan.

PT699 explains the practice of meditation with the instruction to arrange the body in meditation posture, to turn away from the objects of the six senses, view the mind, and remain in non-thought and non-conceptualization. The process of viewing the mind is described as an intellectual enquiry, similar to the method of PT626 and PT634, but with considerably greater detail. This is the longest section of commentary. The same injunction to turn away from six senses and to view the mind is found in the teachings of Moheyan.26

Turning to the practice of non-thought and non-conceptualization, the author of PT699 employs the Chan teaching of the ‘three phrases’, attributed in the Lidai fabao ji 歷代法寶記 to Wuxiang 無相. Wuxiang (684–762) was an exponent of the Baotang school of Chan based in Chengdu in southwestern China. This school seems to have exerted a direct influence on Tibetan Chan, which has been described as a dovetailing of late Northern and Baotang.27 In our commentary, PT699, the three phrases (man ngag gsum) are mentioned by name: non-mind (mi sens), non-mindfulness (mi dran) and illusoriness (sgyu ma). The original Chinese phrases of Wuxiang (wu nian, wu yi, wu wang 無念無義無忘) differ in that the last means something more like ‘non-forgetting’.28 This difference is clarified somewhat in other Tibetan Chan texts, where the third phrase is rendered as ‘the illusory mind not emerging’ (sgyu ma'i sens mi 'byung ba).29

PT699 also ties the direct experience of the mind as nonexist­ent to the practice of the ‘single-method samādhi’ (ting nge ’dzin tshul cig).30 This may be a reference to the similar term (yi xing san mei 一行三昧) which appears in the Platform Sutra. There, it appears in passages criticizing the Northern Chan, indicating that the single-method samādhi was associated with that school.31

PT699 does not employ the richness of metaphors found in PT626 and PT634, but we do see again the metaphor of the sense objects as thieves and the awareness of them as a watchman. Here the Brief Precepts refers to ‘being aware of the arisings’ (byung tshor).32 The commentary compares the arisings (byung) to thieves, and awareness (tshor) to a watchman. This rather compacted discussion is clarified by a passage attributed to Moheyan in which he explains that, just as when one is aware of a thief, the thief cannot enter one’s home, so when one is aware of the arising thoughts and concepts, one is liberated from them.33 The wording of this passage is very similar to our commentary. Of particular note is PT699’s use of the word tshor in the sense of ‘aware’. The term has a specific meaning in Chinese treatises and translations of Chinese sutras from this period; rather than standing for the Sanskrit vedanā (‘feeling’ or ‘sensation’) as it does in translations of Sanskrit texts, it stands for the Chinese jue 覺 meaning ‘to understand, to be aware, to wake up’.34

This wakeful awareness is described in PT699 as ‘the antidote to the śrāvakas’ pacification’.35 The pacification practice of the
śrāvakas, meditators seeking a personal peace without the bodhisattva's wider motivation, is used in many Chan texts as a symbol of one extreme in meditation practice. Unsurprisingly then, it appears more than once in the writings attributed to Moheyan.\(^{36}\)

The author's position within Chan

As we have seen in the above discussion, there are many points of similarity between the Chan doctrines presented in our three works — PT626, PT634 and PT699 — and in other Dunhuang Chan manuscripts. The great compilation of Tibetan Chan material PT116 is a rich source for similar terminology. Interestingly, most of the points of similarity in PT116 occur in a discrete section of the manuscript that is framed as a treatise written as an aid to Mahāyoginis, a term usually used to refer to tantric practitioners. This is not the only instance of the use of the term Mahāyoga in manuscripts otherwise entirely Chan in character, a phenomenon we will return to in the conclusion.\(^{37}\)

Another Chan compilation, PT121, exhibits even stronger links to our group of documents. PT121 contains five works, of which the third is a copy of the Brief Precepts. The fourth is a discussion of the three phrases of Wuxiang, and the fifth is an analysis of the meaning of the three jewels (dkon mchog gsum). The third and fourth texts are clearly linked thematically to PT699. The fifth is similar to another of our group of manuscripts, PT808, which is also a discussion of the three jewels. The two discussions of this topic differ in certain details, but use much of the same terminology. Thus we can infer that the compiler of the PT121 collection moved in the same Chan circles as the author of our group of documents.\(^{38}\)

The many links with the teachings of Heshang Moheyan, in the Tibetan Dunhuang documents ascribed to him and in the Chinese record of the Samye debate, make it quite clear that the author of our texts was following a tradition similar to that of Moheyan, if not the actual lineage of this famous teacher.\(^{39}\) In short, the Chan background of our author is what one would expect of a Tibetan Chan teacher: late Northern Chan with elements of Baotang.

A Mahāyoga interpretation of a Chan text: PT699

Thus in writing his commentary to the Chan text known as the Brief Precepts, the author of PT699 was clearly drawing on a specific tradition of Chan teachings, and it is quite possible to read the text as a straightforward Chan commentary. Yet when read alongside PT626 and PT634, certain references to Mahāyoga practice become apparent, suggesting that the author also had in mind the three samādhi structure when composing this commentary. That is to say, his commentary interprets a Chan text in terms of Mahāyoga ritual techniques.

There may have been some precedent for this. Some brief notes on the Vajrayāna are appended to the version of the Brief Precepts found in ITJ1774 (Fig. 2). The notes mention three well-known Mahāyoga teachers by name: Ācārya Buddhagupta, Fig. 2 The Brief Precepts.
The Brief Precepts is a Chan or Zen text. Some of the versions found at Dunhuang, such as the one in Tibetan shown here, mention Mahāyoga teachers which suggests that the text may have enjoyed popularity among tantric practitioners in this area.
The British Library, IOI. Tib J 1774
Srīmāñju (= Mahjuśrīmitra) and Hūṅkara. This suggests that the Brief Precepts may have enjoyed a wider popularity among the Mahāyoga practitioners around Dunhuang.

In the first part of PT699 the author discusses the nature of ignorance. Among several definitions, ignorance is said to be ‘not seeing the face of the deity and the master.’ The reference to seeing the face of the deity carries a strong implication of the presence of Vajrayāna practice. This is no more than a hint by our author, but it sets the scene for the meditation instructions which follow.

At the beginning of the section on meditation, in describing the posture to be assumed for viewing the mind, the author uses the system of the five mādras. We have already observed these same five instructions in PT626 and PT634, where the author discusses the posture to be assumed for the practice of the thusness samādhi. Similar posture instructions are found in many Tibetan Chan texts, but not this set of five. On the other hand, the same five appear in other Dunhuang Mahāyoga texts, as the posture to be assumed for performing the three samādhis. Thus these five mādras seem to be derived from Mahāyoga practices of this period.

Having assumed the physical posture for Mahāyoga practice, PT699 instructs the meditator in the Chan method of ‘viewing the mind’. As we have seen in PT626 and PT634, this method is also applied by our author in the context of the thusness samādhi. The ‘three phrases’ of Wuxiang which appear in this section of PT699 have an analogous triad in PT634, where the three pairs of metaphors are arranged into: (i) the entrance, which is means and wisdom; (ii) the remedy, which is mindfulness and alertness; (iii) the method for settling the mind, which is calm abiding and insight. The position of this triad in PT634 mirrors the position of the three phrases in PT699: both come immediately after the emptiness of mind has been established. It seems then that the three phrases of Wuxiang are employed as a suggestive allusion to the three pairs of metaphors.

Having discussed the three phrases of Wuxiang, PT699 goes on to compare meditation to the reflections of the sun and moon. Similarly PT634, after discussing the analogous triad, calls attention to the reflective quality of meditation, like reflections of the moon and the stars in water. In PT634 this image bridges the thusness samādhi to the all-illuminating samādhi, symbolizing the transition from the empty aspect of the mind to the luminous aspect of compassion.

A few lines further on, PT699 states that ‘any further changes are equal in the mere A’. The significance of this syllable A is not explained, but is easy to identify when cross-referenced with PT626 and PT634, in which a white syllable A signifies the pure consciousness, and represents the transition from the general luminosity of the all-illuminating samādhi to the detailed visualizations of the causal samādhi. We have seen that the white A (or in some cases Om) is commonly used in Dunhuang Mahāyoga texts as the initial visualization in the causal samādhi.

The author of PT699 does not suggest that the meditator go on to perform the tantric visualizations. This would be rather a stretch when the root text, the Brief Precepts, remains firmly on the theme of non-conceptual meditation right to its end. However, the commentary does build one further bridge across to the world of Mahāyoga (before the final explicit syncretism of the colophon discussed in the introduction). After a statement that equality (cha snyom) requires a full abandonment of self, the author asks, ‘where is this shown?’ In Tibetan treatises this rhetorical question is usually followed by a citation intended to validate the position of the author as not mere personal opinion. Here, the citation is from a Chan text, but from the Mahāyoga treatise Questions and Answers on Vajrasattva (rdo rje sems pa’ zhis lan) which was known in Dunhuang. This suggests that PT699 was aimed at an audience both interested in Mahāyoga meditation and familiar with the main texts of the Tibetan Mahāyoga traditions.

Thus the author of PT699 seems to have directed his commentary on the Chan Brief Precepts toward the same audience as his Mahāyoga commentaries, an audience well-versed in tantric development stage practices. His allusions to elements of these practices, and the way in which his Chan and Mahāyoga commentaries mirror each other’s structure brings the Chan text into the realm of Mahāyoga.

**Syncretism in Dunhuang and the ’dark period’**

In a groundbreaking article on Mahāyoga texts from Dunhuang, Kenneth Eastman noted the existence of a Tibetan Chan manuscript from Dunhuang (PT1l6) that is presented as a teaching on Mahāyoga. ‘But’, he wrote, ‘there is nothing in it that suggests any direct borrowing from Mahāyoga other than its title. There is, in other words, not even a trace of any attempt at synthesizing the two traditions, but it is rather simply a Ch’an treatise masquerading as a treatise on Mahāyoga.’

As noted above, there are a number of Chan manuscripts which use the term Mahāyoga in this way, without incorporating any actual Mahāyoga terms or practices. Given the existence of the syncretism in the texts discussed above, the judgement that such treatises are merely masquerading as Mahāyoga is thrown into question. It is more likely that a number of Chan texts were in fact well studied within Mahāyoga circles. Even when such works made no explicit attempt to incorporate Mahāyoga elements, they would have been understood within the context of Mahāyoga practice, a point of view which was only occasionally made explicit in works like the ones presented here.

The kind of syncretism seen in the group of manuscripts discussed in this study contrasts dramatically with the conservatism of the later tradition. After the ’dark period’, all visible influences of Chan were eliminated from Tibetan Buddhism, and Mahāyoga and Chan were carefully distinguished from each other. This trend can already be observed in the tenth-century Lamp for the Eyes in Contemplation by the great central Tibetan scholar Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes. This influential work represented a crucial step
in the codification of Chan, Mahāyāna and the Great Perfection as distinct vehicles to enlightenment. In comparison, our group of manuscripts exhibits a remarkable freedom, blurring the lines between meditation systems which were elsewhere kept quite distinct. The system of practice set out in these manuscripts did not survive into the later Tibetan tradition. Indeed, this creative integration of meditation practices derived from both Indic and Chinese traditions could only have been possible during the earliest years of Tibetan Buddhism, when doctrinal categories were still forming, and in this sense it represents an important stage in the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism.

Sam van Schaik and Jacob Dalton both work on the International Dunhuang Project at the British Library on an AHRB-funded collaborative project with SOAS to catalogue and digitize the Tibetan tantric manuscripts from Dunhuang.
25 PT699, f. 53r, 'ad stus che la chos gdal pa/ dar ma ta la 'di bar sgom'. The author of the commentary shows that he understands the context of these lines by referring to Dharmatāla (a variant on the name Bodhidharma) as the twenty-eighth in the lineage of Indian masters.

26 PT833, recto panels 1.4–2.2 (translated in Gomez, "Direct and Gradual Approaches", 126). The description of this practice is based on the influential apocryphal Śāryāgama Sūtra (see Faure, Will to Orthodoxy, 65).

27 In "Early Ch'an Schools", 7–9, Broughton argues that Wuxiang’s direct disciple Wuzhu was the Chinese teacher who instructed Sha gsal snang. As told in the S/Dba bzhed, he was one of the first people sent by the Tibetan king Mes 'ag thoms (704–55) to bring Buddhist teachings to Tibet. See Diemberger and Wangdu, Dba bzhed, 46–52. The Chinese locus classicus for the three phrases is the influential Lidade fabao ji.

28 On the three phrases, see Yampolsky, The Platform Sutra, 44.

29 PT121, panel 41b; PT116, panels 165–66.

30 PT699, f. 3v.6, ting nge 'dzin tsha cig du bdag gsigs gcoms. Here we are reading tshul for tsha.

31 Faure, Will to Orthodoxy, 67–69.

32 PT699, f. 4r.5 (mchan 'grel).

33 PC4646, f. 147v–v (translated in Gomez, "Direct and Gradual Approaches", 153 n. 43).

34 Gomez, "Direct and Gradual Approaches", 153; Faber, "A Tibetan Dunhuang Treatise", 67, n. 41. The word tshor also appears in this context in PT116, panels 155–56.

35 PT699, f. 41r.1, rnyan thos khi ba'i gru nyen po.

36 ITJ709, f. 4r.3–6, STMG, 46.5–66.1 (translated in Gomez, "Direct and Gradual Approaches", 111, 120).

37 PT116, panels 19–70; discussed in Eastman, "Mahāyāna Texts at Tun-huang", 58. Other Chan texts using the terms Mahāyoga (rnal 'byor chen po) and Mahāyogin (rnal 'byor chen po pa) are ITJ710/1, ITJ709/9, ITJ704/1, and (if it can be called a Chan work) ITJ705/PT818. Another version of the last text is discussed in Otokawa, "New Fragments of the Rnal 'byor chen po byag pa'i don from Tabo".

38 There is yet another discussion of the three jewels, different again, though clearly from the same tradition, found in PT812 verso.

39 With regard to lineage, it is worth mentioning the short list that appears in PT699 of people who "left no physical elements" at their death. Only two of the six figures in this list may be easily identified, Lang Dkon mchog 'byung gnas and Gnubs Nam mkha'i snying po. Both are considered by the later Tibetan tradition to have been Mahāyoga practitioners taught by the eighth-century figure Padmasambhava. Another Dunhuang document, PT996, discusses a Central Asian Chan lineage which includes a Tshig tsa Nam mkha'i snying po, active during the eighth century. In The Great Perfection, 98, Karmay argues that these two figures with the name Nam mkha'i snying po should not be identified; however, PT699 strengthens the case for making such an identification. PT996 associates Nam mkha'i snying po with a Spug ye shes dbyangs, author of a treatise on Chan called The Meaning of Meditating on Mahāyoga (PT818). Thus Nam mkha'i snying po may well have played a part in both Mahāyoga and Chan lineages. PT996 has been discussed and reproduced in Lalou, "Document tibétain sur l'expansion du dhyāna chinois".

40 ITJ774, f. 55v–5, slok pon ni 'bu ta kub ta dang/ shi ri man 'ju dang/ hung ka ra dang/. In the later Tibetan tradition, all three figures are strongly associated with Mahāyoga. The identity of Buddhagupta is discussed in Karmay, The Great Perfection, 61–63.

41 PT699, f. 2v.2, Dba dang sdom ni zhal ma mthong.

42 PT699, f. 2R.2–3.

43 PT614, f. 1R.2; PT626, f. 2V.4. The five miśras are also referred to as "the five entry gates" (jugs pa'i sgo ingo).

44 ITJ468, f. 1R.1–2 (translated in Gomez, "Direct and Gradual Approaches", 108). This passage is very similar to the instruction in the root text, the Brief Precepts.

45 Or.8210/S.95, V.3, II.4–8. See also ITJ437, f. 1V.9, where the thusness sambhāri is referred to as 'meditating on the nose' (sna la bsgom).

46 PT614, f. 2R.1.

47 PT699, f. 3V.4–6; PT634, f. 2R.1.

48 PT699, f. 4V.1 (mchan 'grel), gyur ba yang a tsam du chu mnyam.

49 PT626, f. 5R.1; PT634, f. 2R.3 (mchan 'grel).

50 ITJ331/2, f. 2R.5; ITJ437, f. 7R.6; ITJ464, f. 2R.4; Or.8210/S.95 V.3, II.4–6

51 PT699, f. 4V.2 (mchan 'grel, de tar ci bngon zhe na).

52 The canonical edition of this work can be found at P3082. In addition, two full copies are found in ITJ470 and PT837 and a partial copy in PT895. Dpal dbyangs considered his Zhus lan a Mahāyoga work, as is clear in the opening lines where he explains that he composed the work, 'for the sake of those wishing to understand with awareness the way of the supreme Mahāyoga' (rnal 'byor chen po mchog gi lugs/ rig pas shes par 'dod pa'i phyir). The lines cited in PT699 can be found in the answer to the twenty-eighth question.


54 A singular exception to this is the 'hidden treasure' (gter ma) text, the Bka' thang sde lugs. See Karmay, The Great Perfection, 90–99.

55 On Gnubs chen's role in the codification of the Great Perfection, see Van Schaik, "The Early Days of the Great Perfection".