

# Jambhala in Tibetan Ritual Contexts

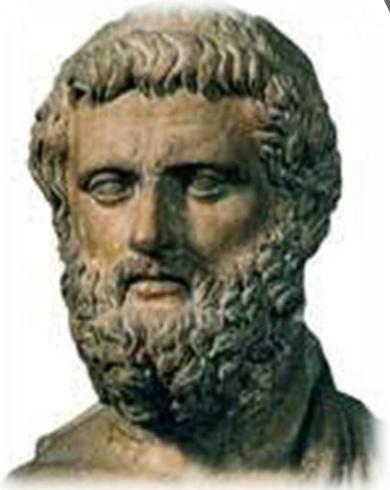
## Vajrayāna Practices for ‘*Summoning the Forces of Prosperity*’

Georgios T. Halkias, Centre of Buddhist Studies, HKU



International Conference on Buddhist Economics:  
“Buddhist Values and Economics: Investing in a Sustainable Future,”  
April 13-14, 2019, The University of Hong Kong

# Solon's *Hymn to the Muses* (13.1-16)



Solon (Σόλων; c. 638–c. 558 BC)

Shining children of Memory and Olympian Zeus,  
Pierian Muses, hear me as I pray: Grant me to have  
wealth from the blessed gods and from all men always  
to have good repute...I want to have money, but I do not  
wish to come by it unjustly, for justice always comes  
later. Wealth which the gods give remains with man,  
steadfast from the deepest foundation to the top, but  
that which men acquire by improper means does not  
come with proper order, but persuaded by unjust  
deeds does not follow willingly, but mixes with  
calamity.

# Oikonomia



Marble statue depicting the goddess Tyche (goddess of luck) holding the infant Plutos (god of wealth) in her arms, 2nd century CE, Istanbul Archaeological Museum.

Economy comes from the Greek word *oikonomia* (οἰκονομία) (= «οἶκος» + «νέμομαι»). It basically means the management or *nemo* «νέμω» (verb) of the *oikos* (household); how to best distribute, allocate and assign the necessary goods and support materials to run a healthy household.

For the Greeks, economy was centred on the basic block of economy the household. Prosperous, healthy and self-sufficient households would make for a prosperous economy for larger units such as the village, town, city-state, nation-state, corporate-state, and so on.

# The notion of wealth in Buddhism

Wealth is both **material and spiritual** and in both cases the aim is to alleviate suffering.

Material wealth alleviates poverty and spiritual wealth transforms one from a state of ignorance to a state of realization.

There are seven types of noble wealth (Skt. *sapta ārya dhanāni*; Tib. *'phags pa'i nor bdun*; seven riches of the noble beings; the seven noble riches):

- (1) Wealth of faith in wholesome moral qualities;
- (2) Wealth of moral practice;
- (3) Wealth of learning the dharma;
- (4) Wealth of giving;
- (5) Wealth of decorum;
- (6) Wealth of modesty;
- (7) Wealth of wisdom that ascertains reality as it is;

Working  
with  
deities  
in  
Vajrayāna  
Buddhism

- *Archetypes of wisdom.* i.e., Compassion → Avalokiteśvara/Kuan Yin; Wisdom → Mañjuśrī; Prosperity → Jambhala.
- *Divine/gods.* Symbolic forms of different powers, dispositions, and celestial qualities;
- *Heroic.* Embodied paradigms for inspiring and supporting specific regimes of spiritual practice.

# Four prominent wealth-deities in Tibetan Buddhism

- Vaiśravaṇa (Tib. Rnam thos sras), one of the heavenly kings, protector king of the north (wealth corner of the house); his identity as a wealth god is attributed to his consort, the princess of a nāga king brought the *norbu samphel* (*nor bu bsam 'phel*);
- Jambhala (Skt. Kubera; Tib. Dzam bha la), equivalent of Plutos, the Greek god of wealth;
- Mahākāla (Skt: Ṣadbhūjasītamahākāla; Tib. Mgon po yid bzhin nor bu), white six-armed Mahākāla, the wish-granting protector; a popular deity especially among the Gelugpa school;
- Guru Urgyen Norlha (Tib. Bla ma u rgyan nor lha), a manifestation of Padmasambhava;

Vaiśravaṇa  
Riding  
a  
Horse

The  
Lokapāla  
of  
the  
North



# *White Mahākāla*



# Guru Norla (*bla ma nor hla*), The Wealth-Guru.

Nyingma School, Terma Cycle, Chokgyur  
Lingpa Lineage

A good number of indigenous shamanic rituals are associated with Padmasambhava, who is often seen as the embodiment of skilful means the Guru of Gurus.



# *forms of Jambhala*

# Jambhala

## The Personification of Prosperity

Jambhala (*dzam bha la*) is the old Indian god of wealth and king of the *yakṣas*, the ancient spirits of nature. Together with his consort Vasudharā or Vasundharā (Tib. *nor rgyun ma*), goddess of wealth and abundance, he was appropriated by Buddhism. Like in Hinduism, the deity is not only a guardian of treasures, but also of the northern direction. The aspect of wealth deity is known by the name Jambhala in the south, while the guardian of the north is called Vaiśravaṇa.





1. Arrogant Expression –to warn people if they attempt to acquire wealth through unethical means, it will only lead to poverty and spiritual conflict and that their arrogance stemming from being wealthy will be short-lived;
2. Sitting in a royal posture – free from saṃsāra, he can afford to lay back and relax;
3. Fat-bellied – wealth, abundance, and opulence;
4. Holds in his left hand the *ichneumon* (Grk. *ίχνεύμων*, Tib. *ne'ule*; Skt. *na ku la*), the treasure-mongoose (Tib. *gter gyi ne'u le*) held by all wealth-deities. The Arhat Bakula who strokes and squeezes it with his right hand and vomits jewels;
5. Fruit in his right hand – propitiating him will bear fruit;
6. Right foot resting on a conch shell – the attainment of great wealth;
7. Rich golden color – growth and abundance;



## Nordrüp (Tib. *nor sgrub*), Wealth Sādhana

### Accomplishing Jambhala & attaining integral wealth

There are five Jambhalas: Yellow Jambhala (overcomes pride), White Jambhala (overcomes attachment), Black Jambhala (overcomes resentment), Green Jambhala (overcomes jealousy) and Red Jambhala (overcomes greed).

Aside from those Indian Buddhist forms, there are also Nyingma forms of Jambhala that arise from the 'Revealed Treasure' Tradition. One particular form is an expression of the Nyingma master Padmasambhava manifesting as the Wealth-Guru.

# JAMBHALA

## narratives of indigenization

### ❖ Buddhist Narratives:

- (1) From the *first diffusion of Buddhism* to Tibet (7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> CE) - Jambhala worshipped as Guru Norla, an emanation of Padmasambhava in
- (2) Nyingma texts of post-imperial times.

(II) From the *second diffusion of Buddhism* to Tibet (10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> CE) - the transformation of a mundane god Kubera to an emanation of the Bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara (Atiśa). Jambhala has come to represent the embodiment of the perfect generosity of all Buddhas and bodhisattvas in past, present and future. Many forms propitiated by the New schools.



ཕུ་གཡང་འགྲུག་

## A Tibetan Ritual for 'Summoning the Vital Forces of Prosperity'

- The *cha yang guk* (*phywa g.yang 'gug*) ritual. The compound *cha* (*phywa*; old Tibetan word with the dual meaning of divination and force of vitality, but also in reference to heavenly beings, the *genius of loci*, + *yang* (*g.yang*; 'well being'). The last term *guk* (*'gug*) as verbal action translates the notion of invoking, summoning, magnetizing, causing to arrive.
- Performed to clear the obscurations and obstacles that obstruct the flow of wealth;
- Transition from blood to bloodless offerings. Initially between meat sacrifices to bloodless sacrifice with the use of effigies in lieu of a deer, sheep, cattle.

# Pre-Buddhist animistic trends.

## The vital force of things (*yang*; Tib. *g.yang*)

- *Yang* of food (spoken as nourishing juices)
- *Yang* of cloth (the quality of warming you up and protecting)
- *Yang* of cattle (being well-fed and healthy)
- *Yang* of people
- *Yang* of the road
- *Yang* of *cha* (good fortune)
- *Yang* vase (prosperity/wealth vase)

# The yang vase, yang bum

གཡང་བུམ་



*Encountering Longevity and Yang composed by Padmasambhava from Urgyan*

- *Urgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi mdzad pa'i tshe g.yang kha sprod bsdus pa*, in *Gter chen rdo rje gling pa'i zab chos phyogs bsdebs*, Kathmandu: khenpo shedup tenzin and lama thinly namgyal, 2019.  
A treasure-text (*gter ma*) revealed by Rdo rje gling pa (1346-1405)

Unlike other *cha yang guk* texts, this text is especially significant in that it does not claim the origin of *yang* to derive from India or situated in the context of Indic Buddhist cosmology.

It stands witness to its older Tibetan/Central Asian roots.

*Encountering Longevity and Yang composed by Padmasambhava from Urgyan*

*Kye!*

Lord of life-span rise in life-span! Lord of *yang*, rise in *yang*! ...

... When people have no life-span, they are like a decayed tree, when cattle have no *yang*, they are [thin] as deer and wild asses of the high places,

When food does not have its nutritious juices,  
It is like rotten buckwheat,

When cloth does not have its warmth, it is like a greyish cotton plant,  
Therefore, let life-span and *yang* be summoned to the people....

# The *cha yang guk* ritual: summoning ‘good fortune’ (*phya*) and ‘well being’ (*g.yang*)

- Performed with an arrow by which *yang* is invited via swirling or waving gestures. Other ritual implements regularly used include *chang*, barley grains and the so-called “cushion of *yang*” or literally “basis of *yang*” (*yang gzhi*), often the full skin of a sheep.
- The ritual performances of “summoning good fortune and well-being” permeate Tibetan society. This ritual, very common among the lay communities, is performed by monks of all schools of Tibetan Buddhism, including the Bön.
- Appropriated in Vajrayāna ritual cycles of the Nyingma school in the form of treasures (*gter ma*), revealed texts; especially the Dudjom Tersar lineage, inner sādhana of Lama Orgyen Khandro Norlha, the Lama of all Jambhalas, a form of Padmasambhava.
- Despite their appropriation in Tibetan Buddhist texts such concepts are absent in Indic Buddhist texts.

## A Tibetan Buddhist concept of quintessential, all-inclusive wealth

Wealth in a wider, all-inclusive sense refers not just to transient currencies exchanged by swift hands in the marketplace, but to anything that has value in our lives and gives value to our life—the joy of vibrant health sustained by nutritious and morally responsible food; living in clean, friendly and self-sustainable environments; the prosperity that comes from the unifying and life-affirming forces of the planet with all its elements, life forms, and sentient inhabitants; and the true sense of affluence that comes from wisdom that abides in a state free of characteristics, ultimately, an inner cessation of conflict and disturbance, an all-embracing well-being for oneself and others.