Jambhala in Tibetan Ritual Contexts
Vajrayāna Practices for ‘Summoning the Forces of Prosperity’

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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.
Economy comes from the Greek word *oikonomía* (*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

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;

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.
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: Śadbhūjasītamahākāla; 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;
Vaiśravana
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 been 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. ἰχνεύμων; 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 (7th-9th 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 (10th-12th 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.
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
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.