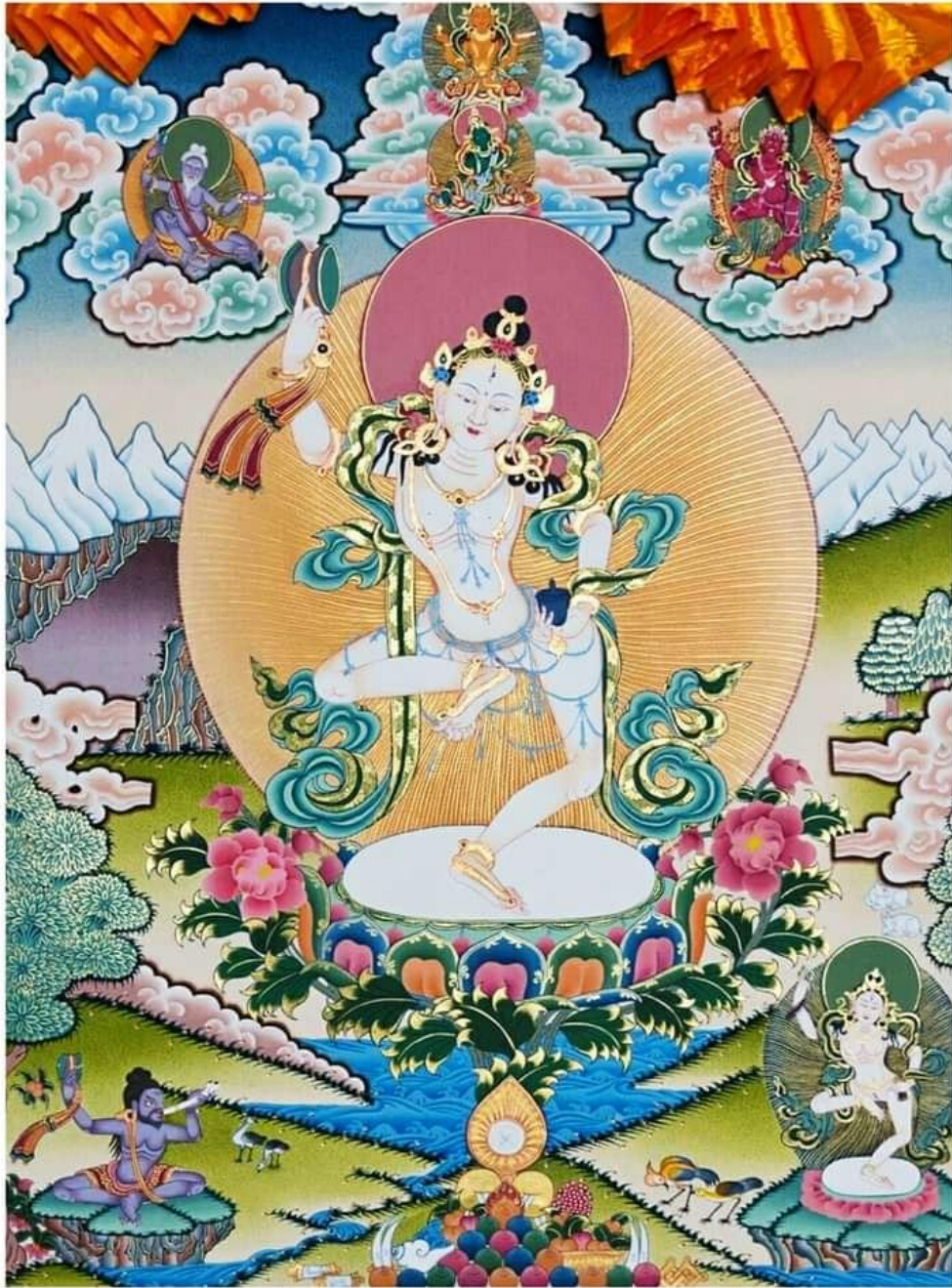


BEGGAR'S BODY BANQUET: ORAL INSTRUCTIONS

གདམས་ངག་ཀྱི་སྒྲ་ལིའི་ཚཱལ་གསོག།

BY JE JIGTEN SUMGON



Translated and edited by Adele Tomlin

Translator's Introduction

This Kusāli gathering the accumulations is unrivaled by a hundred efforts at gathering accumulations. This practice of the red and white feasts is unrivaled even by a hundred banquets. Carrying away heaps of flesh and blood is unrivaled even by a hundred healing ceremonies. The charnel ground dwelling place cannot be rivaled even by a hundred monasteries. The benefactors of the gods and demons of appearance and existence cannot be rivaled even by a hundred actors. A primordially pure view free from extremes cannot be rivaled even by a hundred dharmas. This profound dharma that cuts through mārās (demons) cannot be rivaled even by a hundred pith instructions.

--Machig Labdron

Here, for the first time translated and published in the English language, are the *Oral Instructions on the Beggar's Body Banquet* written by Je Jigten Sumgon. I received the empowerment, transmission and instructions on this Drikung Kagyu practice from H.E. 8th Garchen Rinpoche and Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche.

Beggar's Feast (Kusāli Tshog Sog) – meaning of Kusāli

The name Kusāli is often taught by Tibetan Buddhist lamas as meaning 'beggar'. For example, In *Words of My Perfect Teacher*¹, Patrul Rinpoche says²:

The word "Kusāli" means a beggar. To accumulate merit and wisdom, yogis who have renounced ordinary life-hermits who live in the mountains, for instance - use visualization to make offerings of their own bodies, having no other possessions to offer.

However, according to a Sanskrit scholar I asked:

The word is pronounced in different ways, suggesting different spellings (kusali, kusuli, for example). The word as it stands is simply not a possible Sanskrit word, as far as I can tell - the stem needs to be in -in, and then the masculine singular 1 vibhakti will be in -ī, and that is how (I suspect) one gets the Tibetan word "kusali/kusāli"....None of the Sanskrit words I am aware of, that could actually mean "beggar" etymologically, are even vaguely similar to kusali/kusāli."

It is probable that the Tibetan Buddhist teachers are not really intending to explain its etymological meaning in Sanskrit, but more the conventional referent of the word as used within that tradition. I asked a European scholar who specializes on Drikung Kagyu this question, who told me that Jigten Sumgon seems to say that, the ideal Kusāli is a monastic who follows the twelve special ascetic practices.³

Thus, a Kusāli is mainly characterized by not being attached to anything at all. Others have interpreted it to mean that just as a beggar does not have much to offer, they offer their body, which is actually considered to be more valuable than any material offering in any case.

As for the other Tibetan words, *tshog* mean pile/mass/feast and *sag/sog* means to gather/accumulate. As this practice is about offering the 'feast' of one's body, I have translated it (less literally) as *Beggar's Body Banquet* (*body banquet* having repetition of similar sounds, like *tshog sog*). It could also be translated as the *Beggar's Pile (or Feast) of Merit!*

The text does not explicitly use the word 'Chod' (gcod) but as it is an offering of the body to all beings of the six realms, it is normally cited as a Chod practice⁴. There are other *Kusāli Tsog Sog* practices within the Kagyu, Nyingma and Sakya lineages, by Mipham Gyatso⁵, Ogyen Jigme Chokyi Wangpo (Patrul Rinpoche⁶ and Karma Chagme⁷ and the more recent female practitioner, Sera Khandro⁸. In some of these, the form of Vajrayogini is the wrathful black, Khroda Kali (Throma Nagmo), such as in the Namkhai Norbu Chod. Which leads onto the next point, is *the Kusāli Tsgog Sog* actually a Chod practice? Sorensen briefly alludes to this issue (2013: 35-36)⁹:

It is often claimed that Chod is found in all four of the dominant schools-- Kadam (both alone and in relation to Geluk), Sakya, Nyingma and Kagyü. However, there is scant evidence for a "Sakya Chod," unless one wants to draw parallels between Sakya *Ku sā li'I tshogs bsags* practice and the Chod offering of the aggregates. Even if one were to do this, it appears that this practice of the Kusāli offering probably began with Che Tenzin Trinley (Lce Bstan 'dzin phrin las), who was born in the 18th century and composed the text, *Nā ro mkha' spyod ma'i ku sā li'I tshogs bsags dang 'brel bar gnyis 'dzin 'khrul ba gcod pa'i man ngag*. The *Sa skya Ngor chos 'byung* does mention Chod, but its dates are difficult to determine since it was composed between the 16th and early 18th centuries (it was published in 1705).

Sorensen (2013) then cites the *Kusāli Tshog Sog* versions in Phagmo Drupa Kagyu, in the Sakya, Nyingma of Mipham Gyatso and Ogyen Chokyi Wangpo¹⁰. It is likely that the Drikung Kagyu version came from Phagmo Drupa.

Lineage and Textual Sources

In terms of lineage, the Drikung Kagyu text is said to have descended from Machig Labdron. 8th Garchen Rinpoche explains reading from the empowerment text that:

In her outer aspect, she is noble lady Tārā, in her inner aspect she is the Great Mother, in her secret aspect she is Vajravārāhi, and in her innermost secret aspect, she is the black wrathful Dakini.

There are two texts said to be composed by Jigten Sumgon on the *Beggar's Body Banquet*. The colophons do not say where, when or why Jigten Sumgon composed it though¹¹. The first text is the sadhana itself. An English translation was done of the sadhana text in 1985, later published in 1995 by Khenpo Gyelsten Nyima Rinpoche. The *Instructions on the Beggar's Body Banquet* are published in the *Collected Works of Jigten Sumgon*, I have used a 2001 edition of the works.¹²

Instructions on Jigten Sumgon's *Kusāli Tshog Sog*

There are several recorded instructions on this practice from H.E. 8th Garchen Rinpoche, HE Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche, Khenpo Tsultrim and others¹³. However, these are not the pith oral instructions by Lord Jigten Sumgon translated here. In the Drikung Kagyu practice, they place more emphasis on the Mother Prajnaparamita, visualizing her at the start of the practice and then the form of red Vajrayogini (Dorje Neljorma). There is a short version of the sadhana, which is the white offering only, and there is an extended version of the sadhana, which includes the red offering and Chenrezig recitation. Also, unlike other Chod practices, there is no specific visualization or mention of Machig Labdron.

May we all attain the mental fearlessness and liberation from attachment to the body and ego-clinging like Machig Labdron!

Written and translated by Adele Tomlin, 11th November 2021. Apologies for any errors.

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BY JIGTEN SUMGON

གདམས་ངག་གུ་སྐ་ལི་འཛོམས་གསོག།

Namo Guru, in the words of the precious guru! This is a noble and unique method for abandoning clinging to a self and I, in accordance with the excellent intention of the precious guru - the mind of awakening, the *Beggar's Body Banquet* (Kusali Tshog Sog). Thus, first give rise to the mind of supreme awakening, bodhicitta.

First, separating one's material body and awareness, [imagine] oneself as the yidam deity [Vajrayogini]. Holding in her right hand a crystal sword, with which the deity severs one's body from the eyebrows to the back of the cranium [the top of one's head]. The skull-cup is then placed on a hearth supported by three heads. Think that one's body placed is inside and it [the skull-cup and body] becomes as vast as three-thousand fold universes. Reciting OM AH HUM three times, it transforms into flawless nectar.

Thinking of oneself as transformed into the yidam deity [Vajrayogini], one scoops up the nectar with the skull-cup in hand and sprinkles it over all the worldly realm of hell beings; think that it becomes the abundant mansion of the deity. By sprinkling it over the beings there, imagine they all transform into the yidam deity. Similarly, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, demi-gods, by sprinkling it over all the environment and beings, think they all become, as before, the yidam deity and the abundant mansion of the Tathagatas.

Then, think that by consuming the nectar, everything transforms into the yidam deity. By consuming the nectar, think that they are all overjoyed and delighted with it. Dedicate the root merit to awakening.

By performing it like that, all broken and degenerated samaya will be repaired. It is taught that it is important to make great effort to practice this accumulation, as all the qualities will increase more and more. Practicing the extremely profound *Beggar's Body Banquet* in the words of the precious guru is said to be important.

However, if one wonders how to practice it, with the mantra of SVABHAVA, meditate on emptiness. From within that [emptiness], separating one's material body and awareness, meditate 'in a flash' that one's awareness is Noble Vajrayogini.

Like that, meditate that in front, is your naked dead body. Then, Vajrayogini holds in her right hand a sharp razor, knife which completely severs one's body [the top of the head] from the eyebrows to the back of the cranium. In front, a syllable KAM transforms into a hearth supported by three skulls. Meditate that one's [severed] skull-cup is placed on top of it. It is white outside and red inside and becomes vast and spacious embracing the three thousand-fold universes. Think that inside is one's corpse.

With the SVABHAVA mantra, think of emptiness. Then, the wind kindles the fire, completely purifying any stains [of the corpse]. By saying OM AH HUM, think that it [the corpse] melts into overflowing red samaya nectar. After that, saying DZA HUM BAM HOH, think that white primordial-awareness nectar melts into it. Also, recite, OM AH HUM DZA HUM BAM HOH and think that the samaya nectar and primordial awareness nectar both become indivisible, with a brilliant reddish-white hue.

Then, oneself [as Vajrayogini] scoops up nectar with [the skull-cup in] one's hand. Think that by sprinkling it on the 'outer environment' of the worldly hell realms, the faults and negativities [of those realms] are purified and transform into Akaniṣṭha. Also, think that by scooping the contents of the skull-cup, and sprinkling it on all the sentient beings within the hells, all their negative acts, and afflictive and cognitive obscurations are purified and they transform into Vajrayogini.

Similarly, think gradually of the worldly realms of hungry ghosts, animals, humans and demi-Gods and Gods, by sprinkling the skull-cup nectar on them, all the faults and negativities are purified and it become Akaniṣṭha.

Then think that by sprinkling the skull-cup nectar gradually on the 'inner contents'- sentient beings, all their negative acts, afflictive and cognitive obscurations are purified and they transform into Vajrayogini.

Think that in the space in front, the guru, yidam, herukas, dakinis, the three rare, supreme jewels and dharma protectors abide uprightly there. Recite the AH KĀ RO MU KHAM mantra.

Think that by sucking the nectar through their vajra tongue-holes¹⁴, these beings become delighted and satisfied. Then, reciting VAJRA MUH, they depart.

Abide spontaneously within mahāmudrā. Afterwards, dedicate the roots of virtue.

If one meditates in four sessions like that, perfecting the accumulations, then obstacles will be pacified. Also, the vajra body, absent of any mental stinginess, will become the perfected union of merit and primordial awareness. Furthermore, without any clinging-attachment to the body, or thinking of I, the obstacles of humans and non-humans will not be found. Curses, spells, fire, tornados, enemies, diseases, and so on, will not touch you.

However, if one is not able to continually practice, then commit to doing one session at dawn and evening. Like that, place it in the centre of your mind and practice.

Kusali Tshog Sog in *Collected Works of Jigten Sumgon*¹⁵. Translated and edited into English by Adele Tomlin, 11th November 2021. Empowerment and oral transmission for the sadhana practice was given by H.E. 8th Garchen Rinpoche (2019) and Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche (2016). Drupon Rinchen Dorje Rinpoche kindly provided the oral transmission of this Jigten Sumgon Instructions text.

མི་དང་ལྷ་མ་ཡིན་དང་།
ལྷའི་བར་དུ་རིམ་གྱིས་ཕྱི་སྒོད་ཀྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལ་བདུད་ཅི་ཀླ་པ་ལ་རེ་རེ་གཏོར་བས་ཉེས་སྒྲིན་ཐམས་ཅད་དག་ནས་འོག་མིན་དུ་གྱུར་པར་བས་
མཉན་བཅུད་ཀྱི་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ཡང་རིམ་གྱིས་བདུད་ཅི་ཀླ་པ་ལ་རེ་རེ་གཏོར་བས་ལས་དང་ཉོན་མོངས་པ་ཤེས་བྱའི་སྒྲིབ་པ་དང་
ཐྱིག་པ་དག་ནས་དོ་རྩལ་འབྱོར་མར་གྱུར།
མདུན་གྱི་ནམ་མཁའ་ལ་སྒྲ་མ་ཡི་དམ་དཔའ་བོ་མཁའ་འགོ་དཀོན་མཆོག་ཆོས་སྒྱིད་དང་བཅས་པ་གོང་ངེར་བཞུགས་པར་བསམས་ལ།
ཨ་ཀུ་རོ་ལུ་འི་གྱི་ཐུགས་བརྗོད་པས། དེ་ནམས་གྱི་ཐུགས་དོ་རྩལ་སྤུ་གྱུས་བདུད་ཅི་ལ་ཟུག་ནས་གསོལ་བས་མཉེས་ཤིང་ཆོས་པར་བསམ།
དེ་ནས་བཟོ་སྤྱོད་ཐེག་པ་སྤྱོད་པས། གཤེགས་སུ་གསོལ། ཐུག་གྱུ་ཆེན་པོའི་ངང་ལ་ལྷན་གྱིས་མཉམ་པར་བཞག་རྗེས་དགེ་བའི་ཚ་བ་བསྐྱོ་བ་བྱ།
དེ་ཉར་ཐུན་བཞིར་ཉམས་སུ་སྒྲ་ན་ཆོགས་རྗེས་པ་དང་བར་ཆད་ཞི་བར་འོང་།
དེ་ཡང་དོ་རྩལ་འཕང་སེམས་མེད་པར་བཏང་བས་བསོད་ནམས་དང་ཡེ་ཤེས་གྱི་ཆོགས་བྱང་འཇུག་དུ་རྗེས་པ་ཡིན།
ལུས་ལ་འཛིན་ཆགས་མེད་ཅིང་བདག་གིར་མ་བྱས་པས་མི་དང་མི་མ་ཡིན་པའི་བར་ཆད་ཀྱི་སྤྱགས་མི་རྟེན་དེ། བྱད་ལ། སྤར་ལ། རྩོར་ལ།
མེ་དག་སྒྲུང་དག་ལ་སོགས་པ་གང་གིས་ཀྱང་མི་ཚུགས།
དེས་ན་དུས་རྒྱུན་དུ་བྱེད་པ་མ་བྱང་ཡང་སོད་ཐོ་རངས་ཀྱི་དུས་སུ་དམ་བཅའ་བྱས་ནས་ཐུན་རེ་ཅིས་ཀྱང་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་དགོས་པ་ལགས་པས།
དེ་ཉར་ཐུགས་ཀྱི་དཀྱིལ་དུ་བཞག་ནས་ཉམས་སུ་ལེན་པར་བྱ་གསུང་།།

¹ In Tibetan *Kunzang Lamey Zhel Long* (ཀུན་བཟང་ལམེ་ཤེལ་ལུང་།).

² Here is the Tibetan text of that quote: དེ་ལ་ཀུ་སྤུ་ལེ་ཞེས་པ་ནི།

སྒྲུང་པོའི་དོན་ཡིན་པས་ཆོ་སྒོས་བཏང་གི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་རི་ཁྲོད་པ་ལྷ་བྱ་ཆོགས་གསོག་པའི་ལོངས་སྒྱིད་གཞན་མི་རྟེན་པ་ནམས་གྱིས་དམིགས་པ་ལ་བརྟེན་ནས་རང་གི་ལུས་ཀྱི་མཆོད་སྤྱོད་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན།

³ Twelve ascetic practices (sbyangs pa'i yon tan bcu gnyis; pāṃśadhūtaguṇa, Pal. Dhutanga — twelve practices of conduct pertaining to the shravaka yana that avoid the two extreme forms of lifestyle, over-indulgence in sense pleasures and excessive self-punishment. They are:

1. wearing clothes found in a dust heap,
2. owning only three robes,
3. wearing felt or woolen clothes,
4. begging for food,
5. eating one's meal at a single sitting,
6. restricting the quantity of food,
7. staying in isolation,

8. sitting under trees,
9. sitting in exposed places,
10. sitting in charnel grounds,
11. sitting even during sleep, and
12. staying wherever one happens to be.

⁴ Sorensen (PhD Columbia University, 2013) mentions that: "*Tshogs bsog mchod sbyin gyi zhal gdams (Oral Instructions on Completing the Accumulations [of Merit and Wisdom] Through Giving Homage and Offerings)*, in *Gsung 'bum*, Vol. 2, 375-382. This practice is not explicitly referred to as "Chod"; however, as Edou notes, this text "does mention an offering of the aggregates to the lamas, yidams, and to the demons, for the benefit of beings, after separating one's body and mind, thereby completing the accumulations of meritorious activity. This technique seems quite close indeed to Machig's Chod tradition" (1996, 88 n. 2). Rgod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje is mentioned in Dharma senggé's *Transmission History*, 550."

⁵ mi pham rgya mtsho . "ku sa li'i tshogs bsags/." In gsung 'bum/_mi pham rgya mtsho. TBRC W2DB16631. 29: 80 - 82. khreng tu'u: [gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs], 2007. [http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1PD45159|O1PD451592DB68475\\$W2DB16631](http://tbrc.org/link?RID=O1PD45159|O1PD451592DB68475$W2DB16631)

⁶ The Kusali Tshog is included here in the Preliminary Practices written by Patrul Rinpoche and translated into English <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/patrul-rinpoche/brief-guide-ngondro>. For Tibetan text, also see: o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po. "Inga pa/ ku sa li'i tshogs bsags/." In gsung 'bum/_o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po. TBRC W5832. 7: 459 - 477.

⁷ bstan 'dzin phrin las, byams pa rin chen mkhyen brtse dbang po. "nA ro mkha' spyod ma'i ku sa li'i tshogs bsags dang 'brel bar gnyis 'dzin 'khrul ba gcod pa'i man ngag ." In gsung 'bum/_byams pa bstan 'dzin 'phrin las. TBRC W30152. 1: 376 - 383. kathmandu: sachen international community, 2005.

⁸ kun bzang bde skyong dbang mo . "rnal 'byor lam 'khyer ku sa li'i tshogs bsags:." In gsung 'bum/_kun bzang bde skyong dbang mo/. TBRC W1PD108254. 3: 310 - 315. khreng tu'u: si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa/ si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009. And kun bzang bde skyong dbang mo. "rnal 'byor lam 'khyer ku sa li'i tshogs bsags:." In gter chos/_kun bzang bde skyong dbang mo/. TBRC W21888. 2: 375 - 382. kalimpong: dupjung lama, 1978.

⁹ Sorensen says: "The Buddhist Chod tradition transmitted by Machik Labdrön is consonant with conservative movements in the period, in that it is grounded in orthodox Buddhist teachings, particularly an explicit dependence on the *Prajñāpāramitā* corpus. Chod was also heterodox in its organization, with a non-partisan orientation toward the significance of the lived experience of the practitioner. Chod is often connected with the Zhijé teachings of the South Asian teacher, Padampa Sangyé, probably due to the fact that some historical materials suggest that Machik

Labdrön received teachings—although not necessarily Chod—from Padampa Sangyé. By the time it became popular to refer to the Eight Great Chariots of the Practice Lineages (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*), Zhijé and Chod were considered linked. These “chariots” are the following lineages: 1) Snga ‘gyur Nyingma; 2) Kadam; 3) Kagyü; 4) Zhangs pa Kagyü; 5) Sakya; 6) Zhijé and Chod; 7) Dus ‘khor or Sbyor drug (Kālacakra); and 8) Orgyan bsnyen sgrub. Unfortunately, the origins of this classificatory schema are somewhat obscure. The taxonomy is popularly considered to be a means for identifying the various lineages of teachings that were transmitted from India to Tibet; however, this transmission aspect seems to be a somewhat later development. The arrangement is often identified with Jamgön Kongtrül’s editing schema as featured first in the *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya kun khyab*)³³ and also used as an organizing principle for the *Treasury of Instructions*. In the *Treasury of Knowledge*, Jamgön Kongtrül credits the Nyingma treasure revealer, Phreng bo gter ston Shes rab ‘od zer (aka. Prajñāraśmi, 1517-1584), for the initial classification of schools. Unlike several of these lineages, most notably the schools of Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya and Kadam, Chod did not retain its independent status.” (2013:35-36).

¹⁰ “The Ku sa li’i tshogs bsags versions I have located are as follows: ku sA li’i tshogs gsog by Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po (1110-1170, Phag mo Bka’ rgyud); nA ro mkha’ spyod ma’i ku sA li’i tshogs bsags dang ‘brel bar gnyis ‘dzin ‘khrul ba gcod pa’i man ngag by Lce Bstan ‘dzin phrin las (b.18th c., Sakya); Ku sa li’i tshogs bsags by Dpa’ sprul O rgyan ‘jigs med chos kyi dbang po (1808-1887, Nyingma); and Ku sa li’i tshogs bsags by Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho (1846-1912, Nyingma).” (Sorensen 2013: 36: fn.36)

¹¹ According to Sobisch, the absence of such contextual information is actually normal with the majority of Jigten Sumgon works.

¹² ‘jig rten mgon po. “gdams ngag ku sA li’i tshogs gsog.” In gsung ‘bum/_‘jig rten mgon po. TBRC W23743. 8: 502 - 508. Delhi: Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001.

¹³ For transcripts of these teachings, see: <https://dakinitranslations.com/2021/11/11/beggar-s-body-offering-chod-with-mother-prajnaparamita-and-vajravarahi-instructions-on-drikungpa-kusali-tshog-sog-by-je-jigten-sumgon-and-commentary-by-drupon-rinchen-dorje-rinpoche/>

¹⁴ This is said to be a bit like a ‘drinking straw’.

¹⁵ Source text is in *Jigten Gonpo’s Collected Works*. “gdams ngag ku sA li’i tshogs gsog.” In gsung ‘bum/_‘jig rten mgon po. TBRC W23743. 8: 502 - 508. Delhi: Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001.