

Geometry in Movement - The Vajra Dance of Space, Khalong Dorje Kar

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An Interview with Prima Mai



Photo by Marco Almici

The Mirror: A lot of people don't know about the Vajra Dance of Space, *Khalong Dorje Kar*, or the study groups working on this Vajra Dance. Can you tell us about its origins?

Prima Mai: This Vajra Dance is called *Khalong Dorje Kar*. 'Kha' meaning space, 'long' dimension or universe, 'dorje' the Tibetan term for *vajra*, and 'kar' meaning dance. So it is the 'Vajra Dance of Space' or the dimensional, magical 'Vajra Dance of the Universe'. We also have the 'Vajra Dance of Space of the 12A', which Chögyal Namkhai Norbu also received in a separate dream, all around 1991.

Rinpoche's first dreams of the *Khalong Dorje Kar* of the Song of the Vajra started, to my understanding, in 1991 and then in the following years. In 1993 or 94 Rinpoche had more dreams of this dance on his pilgrimage to India and also Tso Pema, India. All these dreams of clarity were

connected with Rinpoche's personal retreat of Mandarava practice, so these dances are very much connected to this practice.

In 1997 or 98, Rinpoche gave a photocopy of the text of the root *tantra* of this Dance of Space to Adriano Clemente and me. It was written in his handwriting, which Adriano is able to decipher, so for many years it was in our hands but there was no translation. Then in 2013 Adriano and I met in Tashigar North and he decided that he would directly translate the text. So I helped with the diagrams and the digital formatting to help him understand the text, and we went ahead like this. So by 2013, we had more or less translated the root text.

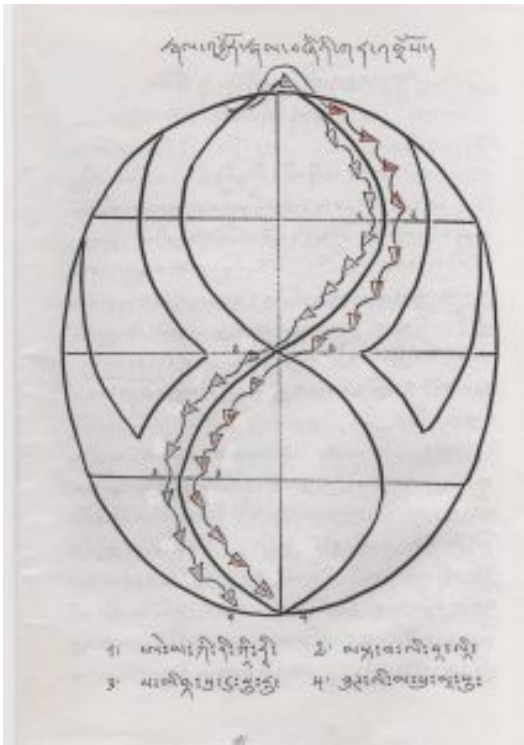
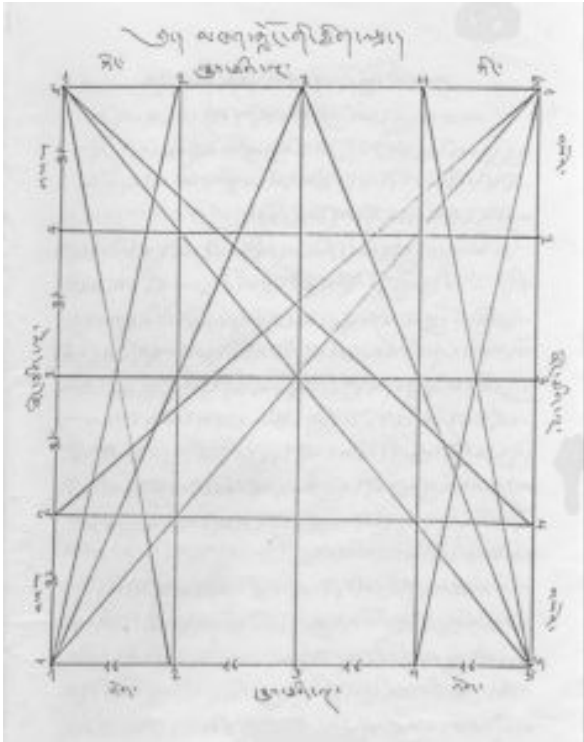
M: I came to the recent study group held at Merigar West June 26-29, 2017, and was quite amazed to see this enormous *khalong mandala* on which the dance is performed. Can you talk about that and also about the fact that more than 12 dancers can dance on it at the same time.

PM: I tried to understand the size of the *khalong mandala* from the text. It was not so easy to calculate. I had to figure out how to calculate for the human dimension, our size, how big our steps are, and how one person can do the entire dance on this *khalong*. So from that I had an idea more or less what the size could be. The proportions are very important. I still have questions about the proportions because there are some interesting numbers appearing in the root *tantra*, 16 and 18, so I was wondering if the numbers have significance.

The making of the *Khalong mandala* and digital diagrams follow the instructions given in the root *tantra* and Rinpoche's fantastic drawings. The appearance of the numbers 16 and 18 made me research more and I discovered that Rinpoche used a similar grid as is used also in ancient art to create geometrically designed compositions using divine proportions. Link:

<https://artiseternal.wordpress.com/2008/04/10/divine-proportions/>

It seems that it is all about the proportions of the universe, the earth, our body, everything. Rinpoche's original drawings are very important. His original drawings are actually more oval, and more in the direction of the 'golden ratio' [a mathematical ratio commonly found in nature – the ratio of 1 to 1.618] and I still have some questions regarding the making of the correct proportion. Rinpoche had so many dreams about Vajra Dances and it is not easy to find all the answers immediately.



M: It seems that the Vajra Dance of Space is a work in progress and you are still working on the details of the Dance with the study group?

PM: My main work now is to define the size and proportions of the *khalong* and how we can do the steps on it. A couple enters the *khalong*, one *pamo* and one *pawo*, one female and one male, and they dance mirror like through the *khalong*. The steps are very simple, mainly the *tsom* movement, and they use some *mudras*. They also sing the Song of the Vajra in a slow way, possibly more internally, probably in a low voice, not out loud.

Only one couple enters the *khalong*, but a certain point – which we are still working on – a second couple enters, then a third and a fourth and so on. We are still studying how many people can really dance on one *khalong*. For now we think that 28 people can, perhaps even more. In our next study group we will try the number 36 also because it is a number in sacred geometry and sound. We are trying to discover all these things during our work in the study groups. So the dancers dance through the *khalong* in this very simple way.

In 1991 when Rinpoche had the first dream, he talked to me about the Vajra Dance of Space, (symbolizing more inner sound or knowledge of the universe) when we were in the Gönpa of Merigar [West]. He explained that he had had this dream that there was this very big *khalong*, which is like the egg of the *garuda*. We have the universal *mandala*, which is maybe more the symbol of the Universe manifesting with the elements and *chakras*. And then we have the symbol of *Longsal*, similar looking to the *Khalong Mandala*, connecting more to the inner knowledge of the

Song of the Vajra. In all the Dances of the Vajra there are always three, the Integration of Body, Speech or Energy and Mind into instant presence or contemplation. We have three *Mandalas* symbolizing the Earth, the Solar System and the Universe, like Manifestations, and then the *Khalong*-like symbol of more inner sound and again also always integrating Body, Speech and Mind. Maybe something like this.

I think this *garuda* egg symbolizes the energy and how it manifests in everything, from where it develops. The sound is another issue, whether we should sing out loud or very low, because each couple starts singing at a different point. So far we have tried that when the first couple reaches *sa min ta* [in the Song of the Vajra] the next couple starts, and so on, and that is an interesting symphony.

M: But it will be difficult to have music with this Dance if everyone starts the Dance at a different point in the song. It will just be people quietly singing to themselves.

PM: From what I understand the sound is the potential of the energy; sound is energy and energy is movement. The sound is created by the number of dancers dancing together. We can also have a cluster of four *khalongs* together, and the dancers can dance infinitely probably through all four *khalongs*. You go from one *khalong* to the next and the one after, and there will be an immense sound coming from that. So you move from *khalong* to *khalong* as well as within the *khalong*.



Photo by Izabela Jaroszewska

The dancers all dance on different spots and sometimes we meet each other, so we have to study and determine how we pass each other. All these passages – when and where we meet, where the male is and where the female is, etc. – are complicated and simple at the same time. It is geometry in movement and it shows the energy of sacred geometry; how sacred geometry functions on another plane and how we look at sacred geometry. We have a resonance with it. This resonance is created vividly here with sound and dance and also the knowledge of it is fundamental. Being in that state.

This is a kind of essence of how everything evolves, let's say of enlightened activity, how the enlightened, pure dimension manifests. Uncorrupted, non-dual, where all is possible without following, modifying or creating, effortless, pure. So that is what this dance is about and probably what will evolve from it will be sound, a humming sound, and that sound is probably the universal sound. All the sounds are one sound and this one sound is actually the A. The A is the essence of sound and the A is all sounds. In our study we used simple music and the rhythm of one sound in C or DO in order to coordinate our movements in time and sounds together.

M: This was the third study group of this dance [held at Merigar West at the end of June 2017]. Do you think there will be a 4th and 5th study group and when do you think you might be able to present a final version of the Dance to Rinpoche?

PM: I hope to clarify some questions with Rinpoche when possible. It is maybe still too soon to present it to Rinpoche. I still have to discover myself answers to some questions and for that we need to dance and study together. That is the only way we can discover.



Photo by Marco Almici

When I started to study this dance I immediately understood that we needed to study it in a large group in order to discover it together. It is very good to do it in large group because everyone brings valuable insights and many parts came very well from that help. There is also a little booklet from which everyone can learn.

We will have a short 4th study group at Merigar West September 21-24 applying a modified drawing of the *Khalong*, and with the help of Maurizio Mingotti who is preparing a excel simulation, it seems we can try to possibly dance with 36 dancers, 18 male and 18 female, together in one *Khalong*. We also did a short one day study group in Khandroling [Buckland, Massachusetts] with the help of Carisa, Fanni and Jerimiah who prepared a big *Khalong*. In Dzamling Gar I hope we will be able to continue our study and possibly finalize in order to present it to Rinpoche. In Dzamling Gar and also in Khandroling, we could even prepare a cluster of 4 *Khalongs* and start to study

dancing with possibly even 144 practitioners.

So my idea is that anyone who is interested in learning this dance can learn the basic movements and pathway on the *khalong*. It is not so difficult and there is this booklet to study. Then when we meet we can go ahead revealing how it manifests because we always spend a lot of time explaining the steps and pathway over and over.

Actually the dance is developing quite fast and everyone in the study group picked it up very quickly. Everyone was very excited and there was a wonderful energy. So we are in the study phase. I still cannot say for sure how we do the crossings of *pamo* and *pawo*, how many *pamos* and *pawos* there are, how we dance in the cluster of *khalongs*, etc., this can only be discovered dancing together. I think the basic pathway, which is already clear, will be easy for a single person to study, even without a course.

M: How can people who are interested in learning more about *Khalong Dorje Ka* start to study it?

PM: The working notes in the E-booklet may be helpful to familiarise people with the basic directions and movements. If Rinpoche permits and I hope to ask soon, people who wish to study the dance could make a small *khalong* at home keeping the proportions, or a ling could put it on the back of a portable *mandala* just for studying the steps. I developed a system for creating the *khalong*, and when the final possible size is defined, there will be a final module for making a *khalong* so that people can draw it easily. With the E-booklet people can start to study it and when the text has been clarified we will also make a printed copy.

One of the difficulties of the Dance is when dancers cross each other. We also have *mudras*. However, the most difficult or important thing is the movement. Rinpoche said that we should do the *tsom* movement [an open turning movement] beyond physical limitation or very harmonious and nearly magical, because, if I understood correctly, the Vajra Dance of Space is the third level of becoming an instructor. Even now many people can learn it, and I want to ask Rinpoche if the other Vajra Dance instructors can help others to learn the steps. To become an instructor of the Vajra Dance is when you have more the movement, when you know how to use the *tsom* in a particular way and understand the *mudras* well. It is a *tsom* so we should not walk it, we should really be able to dance, and manifest that dance, that energy in the movement.

This is most important to develop.



Dancing outside the Mandala room. Photo by Izabela Jaroszewska

This year I started something to help develop that with everyone dancing in circles doing the *tsom* movement to the Song of the Vajra. It is wonderful to do because everyone can do it, we simply apply the sound with the step. In general we are missing how to connect sound with this movement. We can do it more freely dancing in circles and applying the *tsom* movement integrating with the Song of the Vajra. And then, instead of following the person in front of us, we can discover our own *tsom* and play with our body and the sound and move in different ways. We can discover what is possible and the potential of our physical movement. We can also feel that movement in connection to energy, to the sound and especially to the state, and we can engage in the symbol of dance in the activity of the enlightened ones. We can find that our real potential is not separate from the potential of enlightened beings. It is already there – even there is no visualization or transformation in the Vajra Dances, but sometimes we can also use some effort to overcome mental conditions and imagine, visualize ourselves to manifest like, for example, Tara, Avalokitesvara and we can imagine that. We have this divine core, all of us, and that is what actually connects us all beyond space and time.

M: Thank you Prima Mai

Arcidosso, July 2017

Drawings by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu from the original root text “Khalongdorjeikar of the Song of the Vajra”

The E-booklet “Working Notes and Essential Diagrams for the Study of Chögyal Namkhai Norbu’s Vajra Dance of Space of the Song of the Vajra”, a restricted publication, is available at the Shang Shung Foundation online shop [<http://shop.shangshungfoundation.com/en/37-ebooks>]