

## The Practice and Characteristics of Significant Mantras at the Vajrakilaya Drupchen Ritual in Malaysia

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### Abstract

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This paper reports an observation on the chants used in Dudjom New Treasure Buddhist Society Ipoh, Malaysia. Vajrakilaya Drupchen is performed with the main intention of benefiting the well-being of the world community as a whole for world peace and harmony. The purpose is to provide better understanding of one of the most important Buddhist ceremonies, Vajrakilaya Drupchen (the Great Accomplishment Ritual), through the musical practices of the ritual ceremony. As most of the mantras were orally transmitted, this article looks into a root mantra and two significant mantras of Vajrakilaya ritual. These mantras were transcribed in which the characteristics and musical element were analysed and discussed. Attention will be given to the structure, motivic ideas and pitch of chants. The characteristics of these mantras in comparison with other schools in the same lineage will also be highlighted.

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**Keywords:** Buddhism, Bhutan, Vajrakilaya Drupchen, mantra, practice

### 1. Introduction

Buddhism originated in India in the sixth and fifth century BCE with the beliefs of the enlightened Siddharta Gautama, the Buddha. It was transmitted from the north-eastern region of India throughout Central, East and Southeast Asia. Bhutan is one of the countries where Buddhism is the state religion, and Vajrakilaya Drupchen is one of the many rituals held annually in Rangjung Monastery, Bhutan. This puja is performed with the main intention of benefiting all the well-being of the world community as a whole for world peace and harmony. One of the denominations of Buddhism in Malaysia came from Bhutan, though this is less well known than Mahayana, Theravada and other sects of Vajrayana. Vajrakilaya Drupchen is similarly performed in Malaysia but is not conducted annually as in Bhutan. This article documents the root mantras and two significant mantras observed in the five-day Vajrakilaya Drupchen ritual in Ipoh, Malaysia. Although repetition in pitch and motives are common features in religious recitation, this article highlights a few characteristics in the root mantra practised in this ritual. Similar mantras are also different in terms of motivic ideas and construction of pitch for different lineages of the same ritual. Vajrakilaya is the *yidam* or deity who symbolises the Activity of all Enlightened Beings. During the ritual, all the participants make offering to all beings and visualisations, singing Dharma songs. There are also Vajra Dances performed by monks and nuns. Mantras are recited twenty-four hours a day during the five-day ritual with the purpose of overcoming obstacles and sickness. It is believed that these few days of Drupchen ritual are equal to a few years of solitary retreat.

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## 2. Buddhism in Bhutan

According to history, Buddhism in Bhutan appeared in the seventh century. Padmasambhava, who was also known as “lotus-born”, was a master of the Vajrayana tradition, spreading teachings throughout the Himalayan region (Berthold, 2005).

Vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism, the state religion of Bhutan, is also known as the third turning of the Wheel of Dharma. The earliest and most well-known historical site which can be found in Bhutan is evidence of the link between Bhutan and Tibet. The story of these temples, *Jampay Lhakang* in Bumthang and *Kyichu Lhakang* in Paro, which were built by King of Songsten Gampo (605-650AD) (Phuntsho, 2013) the 33<sup>rd</sup> Tibetan King (Tamding, 1998), is well-known to the Bhutanese. Both temples had a vast influence on Bhutanese religion as the spread of this Buddhism overtook *Bon*, the native religion of Tibet and Bhutan before the introduction of Buddhism (Tamding, 1998). Although the Tibetan King built temples in Bhutan, this does not presuppose Tibetan rule over Bhutan.

There are four main schools in Tibetan Buddhism; *Nyingma*, *Kagyü*, *Sakya* and *Gelug* (Zablocki, 2016; Berthold, 2015). In 1965 His Holiness the Dalai Lama organised a conference where all the leaders of these four schools gathered and discussed how to preserve the ancient teachings of Tibet (Dongyal, 2008). This explained how religion in Bhutan came from and was influenced by Tibet and so is known as Tibetan Buddhism. Nyingma Buddhism, also the oldest among the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, dominates in Bhutan. Although it originated from Tibet, Buddhism in Bhutan differs significantly in terms of rituals, liturgy and also monastic organisation according to different particular lineages. Among many Buddhist rituals practised in Bhutan, one of the important rituals is The Great Accomplishment of Vajrakilaya Drupchen. This term of Vajrakilaya was founded by H. H. Dudjom Rinpoche when he first went to Paro Taktsang, Bhutan (known as the Tiger’s Nest Monastery) to perform a retreat (Dongyal, 2008). The practice of this ritual prays for world peace and harmony. It is also believed that it can purify all negativity, remove obstacles and provide immense benefit and merit for all the participants who attend the prayers.

## 3. Buddhist Chant and Music

Buddhist chant has been studied in many different contexts, categorised as Buddhist chant, Buddhist devotional songs and commercial Buddhist music (Chen, 2005). Greene et al. (2002) examined cross-cultural perspectives in both Buddhism and Buddhist music which show that each literature on music and Buddhism has distinct characteristics.

Research on chant and instrumental music used in various Buddhist rituals in Bhutan can be found in studies conducted by Holland (1976), Yonneti, (2011), Cupchik (2015) and Ellingson (1979) on the function of instruments and ritual music. Cupchik (2015) indicates that melodies and rhythm enhance the meditation process by evoking the practitioners experiencing deep understanding in a ritual. Ellingson (1979) examines Tibetan cymbals, *rolmo*, the most important instrument used in Tibetan ritual, played in a complex mathematical organisation of rhythmic structure designed to cultivate the performers’ mental ability. In general, this instrument is used to maintain the tempo during the chanting session and also perform cadences (Yonneti, 2011). As Yonneti discussed, music is just a tool used as an offering to Gods. Therefore, music plays a significant role according to the various types of ritual. The notation of the repertoire for instruments is different for each instrument and does not contain any prescriptive character. No notation is used in most of the rituals, as most chanting and instrumental playing were transmitted orally. The monks are expected to play by heart and from memory (Yonneti, 2011; Vandor, 1975). Similarly stated by Chen (2005), most Chinese Buddhist chants are taught, learned, and performed orally, and there are no notations of vocal melody in liturgical books.

Generally, most of the liturgical textbooks (*sadhana*) for each ritual are written in Tibetan language. The contents of the *sadhana* include the vocal for the chants and also instrumental notation similar to that discussed by Vandor (1975). The notation for the vocals and instruments (bells, cymbals, drum) with dynamics is represented in a graphical form. This graphical representation is difficult for ordinary people to learn, especially the vocal graphics, and it takes several years for the monks and nuns to master. Learning vocals and instruments is part of their studies in the monasteries. As Rose (2009) states, the spelling is the absolute basic necessary to chant fluently. Therefore, most of the *sadhana* where the original meaning remains have been edited, reprinted and translated with phonetic representations for each Tibetan syllable so that the practitioners are able to chant.

These reprinted *sadhana* do not contain any graphical representation of notation and vocals as did the original Tibetan *sadhana*. During the ritual, a chanting master will lead the vocals and instruments. Although there was a graphical representation form of notation in the original *sadhana*, the instrumental parts were transmitted orally. Vandor (1975) stated that after the repertoire was learnt, the copy of the pieces would be taken away and burnt and only an original copy would be kept in the monasteries.

#### 4. Buddhism in Malaysia

As the second largest population, the Chinese in Malaysia since its migration as early as 15th century maintain some of their cultural practises and art such as lion dance (Loo & Loo, 2017), Chinese orchestra, theatre and opera (Tan, 2000; Loo & Loo, 2012; Loo & Loo, 2013; Loo & Loo 2014). Buddhism is the second largest religious tradition in Malaysia after the official religion, Islam. Samuel (2016) examines the early evidence of Buddhism in Malaysia. The spread of Buddhism to Malaysia can be traced in the state of Kedah where archaeologists have found Buddhist sculptures (Yeap & Trembath, 2008). 23.4% of Malaysia's population is Chinese (from the Department of statistic Malaysia in 2016) and Buddhist practice is rather strong in some areas, including Kinta Valley around Ipoh. The most renowned cave temple in Ipoh (Mahayana Buddhist) is *Sam Poh Tong* (三寶佛洞), built around 1890 and still in use today (Hobbs, 2012). *Sam Poh Tong* is one of the signature places representing the existence of Buddhism.

Since the nineteenth century there have been a number of Chinese Buddhist Associations in Malaysia. The central body Malaysian Buddhist Association (马来西亚佛教总会) was formed in April 1959, located in Kek Lok Si, Penang (Tan, 1983). This association together with the Young Malaysian Buddhist Association (马来西亚佛教青年总会) has greatly influenced the Chinese Mahayana Association of Chinese-educated devotees (Chow, 2015). According to Tan (1983), Chinese Buddhism can hardly be found in Malaysia and the speciality is limited to some of the Buddhist temples and associations. However, Chow (2015) also stated that the Buddhist population has increased in the twentieth century and all of the Buddhist practices such as Theravada, Mahayana, Vajrayana and Zen Buddhism can be found in Malaysia.

Samuel (2016) looks into contemporary Buddhism in Malaysia, divided into the three Buddhist traditions and their origins. Tan (1983) stated that Mahayana Buddhism is the mainstream Buddhist tradition among the Chinese in Malaysia. This was the most popular denomination of Buddhism, followed by Theravada and Vajrayana, which are less well-known in Malaysia. Following Chen's (2005) categorization of Buddhist chant, research on Malaysian's Buddhist chant was also conducted in a more modern context such as from the perspective of musical theatre (Loo, Loo & Tee, 2012; Loo, 2013; Tee & Loo, 2014; Loo, Loo & Tee, 2014) and hymn competition (Loo, Loo & Lee, 2010). From a review of literature, there is a lack of research on the Buddhist chants used in the Tibetan tradition of Bhutan, specifically under the Dudjom Lineage of the Nyingma sect. The Vajrakilaya ritual held in Ipoh is strictly based on the Dudjom Lineage, from the school of Nyingma.

#### 5. Vajrakilaya

The wrathful deity of Vajrakilaya is among the many teachings which had been transmitted to devotees in the eighth century (Boord, 1993, Singh, 1989). It was brought in by the Tantric Buddhist master Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche, who visited Bhutan to spread his teachings, overcome harmful demons and meditate in auspicious caves (Nado, 1982; Berthold, 2005). Guru Padmasambhava had transmitted Vajrakilaya to different disciples on various occasions, which were divided into *kama* oral tradition and *terma* teachings (Gonpa, 2004). In order to preserve his legacy for future generations, he left secret texts referred to as *terma* in hidden places which can only be found by great masters or Tertons. Thus, the Vajrakilaya *sadhana* in this study was revealed by Dudjom Rinpoche in a sacred cave in Bhutan. Vajrakilaya, also known as Vajrakumara or Dorje Phurpa, is the deity mainly practised by the Nyingma, Kagyu and Sakya schools of Tibetan Buddhism. By practising this Vajrakilaya, it is believed that all negativity and obstacles can be removed to reach infinite compassion. In Bhutan, this ritual is held annually for ten days at the beginning of the year (January or February) in Rangjung Monastery. It involves all of the monks and nuns from Rangjung Monastery and thousands of devotees mostly from Bhutan. The monks lead the opening ceremony by chanting, playing instruments (as an offering to the deity) and also mantra recitation.

## 6. Vajrakilaya Drupchen in Malaysia

In the year 1993 Dudjom New Treasure Society was set up by a group of Rinpoche's followers in Ipoh. The Vajrakilaya ritual was held in Dudjom Dharma House, Ipoh for the first time in the year 2016 led by His Holiness Garab Dorje Rinpoche. In Malaysia, it is not feasible to hold it annually as it requires the participation of monks and nuns from Bhutan to lead the ritual. Vajrakilaya ritual in Malaysia is based on the Dudjom Lineage of Nyingma. Therefore, it is considered to be quite authentic as the *sadhana* was founded by second Dudjom Rinpoche, His Holiness Jidral Yeshe Dorje. In addition, according to tradition, it can only be held and led by a qualified master or Rinpoche. In Bhutan it was usually led by His Holiness Garab Dorje Rinpoche, the grandson of Dudjom Rinpoche who holds dharma lineage and also blood lineage of Dudjom. While this is one of the most important rituals of Bhutan Buddhism it is uncommon in comparison with Buddhist rituals of other denominations held in Malaysia, hence the documentation of the ritual is important in the field of Buddhist studies.

In this article, an analysis of root mantra and two significant mantras of this ritual are used to understand the Vajrakilaya Drupchen ritual from an ethnomusicology perspective. The analysis and interpretation of the chant in this study were conducted through field work, observation and analysis. This fieldwork was located in Dudjom New Treasure Buddhist Society, Ipoh, over five days. All the observations from field work were recorded for analysis.

Considered to be a very auspicious and grand event, this ritual lasted for five days in Dudjom Dharma House, Ipoh, mostly participated in by local disciples. The main activity involved chanting which was conducted throughout the day and night for all five consecutive days. It was divided into four sessions during the daytime and three sessions during the night-time. Below is the table that listed the chanting schedule.

TIME	SESSION
9.00AM- 11.30AM	First Session
11.30AM-1.00PM	Lunch Break
1.00PM-3.00PM	Second Session
3.00PM-3.30PM	Tea Break
3.30PM-5.30PM	Third Session
5.30PM-7.30PM	Dinner Break
7.30PM-9.00PM	Fourth Session
TIME	SESSION
10.00PM-12.00AM	First Session
12.00AM-12.30AM	Break
12.30AM-3.00AM	Second Session
3.00AM-3.30AM	Break
3.30AM-6.00AM	Third Session

**Table 1 Chanting Schedule**

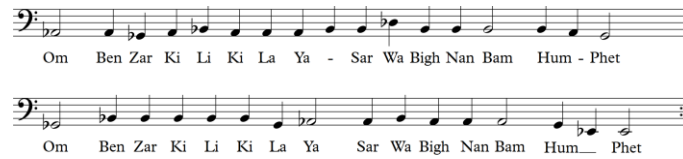
The number of sessions, duration of chanting and *sadhana* used were the same every day and the average duration of each session was about two hours. According to the chanting schedule in table 1, the first, second and third session involved only chanting according to the *sadhana* provided while the fourth session was the *Vajra* Dance, a masked dance performed by monks and nuns, and invocation of blessings accompanied by musical instruments such as *gyaling* (trumpets), *dungchen* (long horn), *rolmo* (cymbals), *dungkar* (small trumpet), conch shell trumpet and drums. During the last day of the ritual there was the addition of a *fire puja*, a ritual which is believed to remove all obstacles and negativity.

## 7. Analysis and Discussion of the Mantras

### 7.1 Description of Root Mantra, Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra and Seven Line Prayer

Liturgical texts are performed through intonation and chant. Although chant masters utilised the notated text they rely mainly on their predecessors regarding the chanting melodies and instruments used (Liu, 2016, p.139). As there are various mantras in the *sadhana*, only the root mantra and two selected mantras of Vajrakilaya ritual was chosen to be analysed in this article which includes *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra*, *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra* and *Seven*

*Line Prayer.* Transcriptions of the three mantras are based on the ritual conducted at Dudjom Dharma House, Ipoh on 6 -10 December 2017. All of the selected mantras are among the important prayers in Nyingma Tradition and were chanted during the five-day ritual. Not only the functions and structure of the chants will be analysed; the text and pitch will also be examined by comparing with different traditions.



**Figure 1. Vajrakilaya Root Mantra**

During the five days' ritual, *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra* (Figure 1) is the main or known as the heart mantra and it is also a continuous recitation in Dudjom Dharma House Ipoh by disciples taking turns to chant holding a Vajra connected to the mandala tied with five-colour strings which it was believed could receive immense blessing directly from the mandala. The sound of this mantra vibrates and is said to be similar to the sound of a disturbed bee-hive (Cleland, 2001; Doctor, 2005). This recitation primarily invokes the mind of the deity of this ritual. "One should recite clearly, distinctly, calmly with a continuous voice" (Doctor, 2005). Khenchen Rinpoche (2009, p.86) explained, "Do not recite too loudly or too softly, too quickly or too slowly, and do not omit syllables or add extra syllables." The recitation of the mantra needs to be clear and precise and at a reasonable speed.



**Figure 2. Vajrasattva 100 Syllabus Mantra**

Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra (Figure 2) is one of the most important mantras in Vajrayana as Morton (2013, p.88) noted that "preliminary practices for the Vajrayana include 100,000 repetitions of the *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra*, along with 100,000 prostrations." Most of the disciples and participants were prostrating to the Vajra Master who led the ritual while chanting, as it was believed this could purify one's bad *karma*, remove obstacles and act as confession. This mantra is accompanied by the bell played by *umdze*, the chanting master. The bell is rang for every two syllables as shown in Figure 2.

Most of the participants in this ritual were from the Chinese community and the *sadhana* used was translated from the origin Tibetan language where it was reprinted and written in phonetic transcription, along with Chinese and the origin Tibetan characters. The third mantra is chanted at the beginning of the ritual which is the *Seven Line Prayer* (Figure 3) led by Lopon Tashi Gyeltshen, a chanting master. As Mipham (2007) stated, "in Nyingma school, there is no practice session, no meditation, no *sadhana* begins without the three recitations of the *Seven Line Prayer*". Being the invocation of *Guru Padmasambhava*, this mantra is a well-known mantra in Tibetan Buddhism. Before further analysis, the meaning of the three mantras are explained below.

Many scholars have written about and discussed Vajrakilaya and the meaning of the root mantra *Om Benzar Kili Kilaya Sarva Bighnan Bam Hum Phet*, including Cleland (2001), Doctor (2005) and Khenchen Rinpoche (2009). According to Cleland (2001), *Om* means the five Buddha wisdoms; *Vajra* is the uncompound nature of the three times, past, present and future; *Kilis* the energisation of the deity and *phurba*; *Kilaya* means piercing all phenomenal experience with the *phurba*; *Sarva* is the destruction of all enemies and hindering demons; *Bighnan* is subjugating of negative forces; *Bam* means to bring order when combined with *Hum*; and *Phet* is the liberation from negative forces. The first phrase in Figure 2 can be translated as "The most excellent exclamation and praise, *Vajrasattva's Samaya*. *Vajrasattva*, you whose wisdom is inseparable bliss-emptiness and whose pledge must not be transgressed, lead

me along the path you took to enlightenment”, while the second phrase in Figure 2 means "Protect the *Samaya*, may you remain firm in me." (The Thunder Sword of Vajrakilaya Puja, p.80)

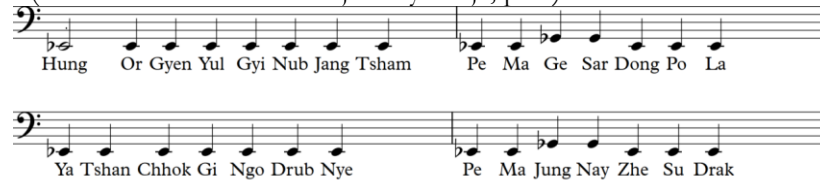


Figure 3. Seven Line Prayer

According to the Vajrakilaya sadhana (The Thunder Sword of Vajrakilaya Puja, p.1) used in this ritual, this *Seven Line Prayer* is translated as "Hung In the northwest country of Orgyen, In the pollen heart of a lotus, Having discovered the most wonderful sublime spiritual attainments, You are renowned as the Lotus Born, Surrounded by a retinue of many dakinis, Following you, I practice, Please come forth to bestow blessings."

## 7.2 Repetition

“Recitation of sacred texts is the monotonous repetition of sacred hymns or mantras for long periods of time,” (Castillo, 1985, p.399). Most of the mantra is a sequence of syllables which are chanted repetitively. According to Morton (2013), in esoteric Buddhism mantras are the repetition of sacred words uttered millions of times. The repetition of each mantra is chanted according to the number of times written in the *sadhana*. Different sects or schools have different numbers of repetition. In *ngondro* practice, one repeats this *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra* one hundred thousand times (Powers, 2007, p.304). Several forms of repetition from a musical perspective were highlighted amongst the root mantra in this study, which include melodic ideas and pitch.

### Melodic ideas

Mantras of the same lineage of schools can often be recognized through melodic figures or other significances. Despite the repetitive elements mantra, some motive ideas could be identified. The melodic range of these mantras is restricted with a steady melodic contour and always presented in a two-phrase structure.

#### (a) Vajrakilaya Root Mantra



#### (b) Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra

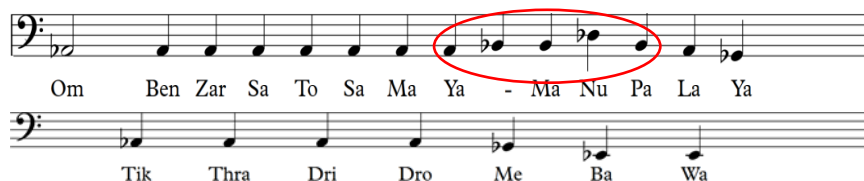


Figure 4. Melodic Idea in Vajrakilaya Root Mantra and Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra

The first example can be noticed from the first phrase of *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra* and *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra*. Referring to figure 4, a similar motivic idea can be seen (a) “*ya-sar wa bigh*” (Ab BbBbDb Bb), and (b) “*ya - ma nu pa*” (Ab Bb Bb Db Bb). This motivic pattern usually ascends to the highest pitch of these mantras. It has a similar ending in the first phrase of these three mantras which are in a descending scale order.

Another example is at the end of the second phrase in which the pitch is getting lower towards the end of the mantra with a descending melodic idea, as shown in Figure 5. The three-note figure also forms an interval of a third. In general, the melodic range of these mantras is within an octave using pentatonic scale.

(a) Vajrakilaya Root Mantra

Sar Wa Bigh Nan Bam Hung - Phet

(b) Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra

TIK THRA DRI DRO ME BA WA

**Figure 5. Second phrase of Vajrakilaya Root Mantra and Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra**

### Pitch

Although the repetition of pitch is observed in reciting mantra, a few characteristics of this repetition can be noticed in *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra*, *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra*, and *Seven Line Prayer*. The second phrase is always chanted in a lower pitch than the first phrase (Figure 1 and 2).

Another common feature is that the chanting master sustains a long note at the end of a second phrase as a sign to conclude a chant. It can also be seen that it always begins with a longer note such as “Om” and this is a general character in this ritual. This means that both phrases are flanked with longer notes to signify the starting and ending of the phrase. Except for *Seven Line Prayer*, the first and the last note in all mantras also formed a perfect 4<sup>th</sup> interval.

According to Mabbett (1993, p.25), “monotonously repeated sounds often figure in repertoire, and it is here that we need to notice the incessant repetition of chanted mantras as an important tantric technique that spread wherever the Vajrayana tradition was carried”. The repetition of mantras and words are able to focus the mind (Gordon, 2009). In this ritual, Figure 6 shows the repetition of a single pitch of “Eb” in *Seven Line Prayer* and Figure 7, pitch “Ab” in *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra*.

Hung Or Gyen Yul Gyi Nub Jang Tsham

**Figure 6. Seven Line Prayer**

Om Ben Zar Sa To Sa Ma Ya - Ma Nu Pa La Ya

**Figure 7. Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra**

The repetition of this pitch during the Vajrakilaya ritual thus reflects a monotonous character. *Seven Line Prayer* has a constant pitch throughout the chant. Although *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra* has some changes in pitch, it is with a rather steady melodic contour where the melodic range is restricted with major second and minor third intervals as shown in Figure 7.

### 7.3 Tonality and interval

According to Ellingson (1979), the distribution of pitch seems to be partially related to the pattern of rhythmic organization of the text syllables. In tribal song, the tonal structure is often described in the number of tones employed within an octave which can be classified as pentatonic (Kolinski, 1967). From the observation of this ritual, the chants of *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra* and *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra* are based on *Gb* pentatonic scale (*Gb*, *Ab*, *Bb*, *Db*, and *Eb*). However, these pitches depend on the chanting master. Nyenda (2016) mentioned that the tonality of the recitation changes according to the section during ritual such as invitation, offering and so on.

Nyenda (2016) also explained that the rhythm of the music and chants varies according to the nature of the deities being propitiated; the recitations are loud and intense for wrathful deity but low and pleasant for a peaceful deity. Similarly, in this ritual, Vajrakilaya is a wrathful deity, thus most of the chants are recited in a loud dynamic.

Most of the disciples and followers are required to follow the melody as chanted by the chanting master but not necessary to follow the exact pitch. However, Kolinski (1967, p.9) determined that “loudness and timbre may be disregarded as determinants of tonal structure in trial vocal music, so the only remaining property that could possibly be considered as a determinant would be pitch”.

Another characteristic is that the melodic contour of these mantras is identical and similar without large internal leaps. In this particular ritual, it was observed that the highest sounding pitch in *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra and Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra*, the highest sounding pitch is Db and lowest note is Eb, within the range of an octave. In *Vajrasattva 100 Syllable Mantra* the highest is C and the lowest note is D. These mantras have the same interval between the highest and lowest note. It can be seen that the chanting melody of these mantras is mostly made up of intervals of a major second, major third, and minor third. They also show a similar ending of a minor third.

### 8. Comparison of root mantra with Sakya and Kagyu tradition

Although Vajrakilaya is one of the main deities in Nyingma school, it is also an important *yidam* practised by the Kagyu and Sakya schools of Tibetan Buddhism. However, these differ in terms of ritual and *sadhana* used. Similar root mantras are used but chanted in a different melody.

By comparing this *Vajrakilaya Root Mantra* or the root mantrain this ritual of Dudjom Lineage from Nyingma tradition with the Sakya and Kagyu traditions of different lineage, the repetition of pitch in the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions (Figure 1 and Figure 8) is notable in comparison to the Sakya tradition (Figure 8). In turn, movement of pitch in the Sakya tradition is much noticeable. It can be seen that the Kagyu tradition by Garchen Rinpoche (Figure 9) has the lowest tone. The mantra from the Sakya tradition is based on pentatonic G# minor scale (G#, B, C#, D# and F#) while in Nyingma tradition, it is based on pentatonic scale in Gb minor (Gb, Ab, Bb, Db, and Eb).

The image contains two musical staves. The top staff is for the Sakya tradition, showing a melody in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: G#4, A4, B4, C#5, D#5, E5, D#5, C#5, B4, A4, G#4. The lyrics below are: Om Ben Zar Ki Li Ki - La - Ya Sar - Wa - Big - Gha - Nan Bam-Hung Phet. The bottom staff is for the Kagyu Tradition, also in bass clef with one sharp. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4. The lyrics below are: Om Ben Zar Ki Li Ki La Ya - Sar Wa Bigh Nan Bam Hung Phet. A small number '2' is written below the second staff.

**Figure 8. Sakya tradition (Sakya Trizin's Son)**

**Figure 9. Kagyu Tradition (Garchen Rinpoche)**

### 9. Conclusion

This study reveals the practice and some of the characteristics of the root mantra of the Vajrakilaya ritual held in Malaysia. As the chanting melodies can vary from each sect, this recitation is based on the Dudjom Lineage from the Nyingma tradition. From participation and observation throughout the ritual, it was noted that Vajrakilaya should not be practised without receiving an empowerment or reading transmission directly from a qualified lineage master. Through interviews with monks and lineage masters, it was found the learning of mantras and recitation is solely orally transmitted, where the documentation of mantras and the practice are important. The ritual also appears as one of the less common Buddhist ceremonies in Malaysia and therefore the study and documentation of these chants and musical activities contributes to the field of Buddhist research in Malaysia.

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