

Conceiving the Mother of Tibet:  
The Life, *Lives*, and Afterlife of the Buddhist Saint Yeshe Tsogyel

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## Abstract

How do narratives about the past create shared identities in religious communities? And how do gendered symbols and languages function in these narratives? This dissertation traces the literary traditions surrounding the first and foremost matron saint of Tibet, Yeshe Tsogyel. She is said to have lived in eighth-century Tibet; however, literary accounts about her did not flourish until some six hundred years later. The dissertation examines how an origin narrative with her as one of the core personas emerged during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as Tibetan Buddhists traced their religious pedigree and defined what counts as authentic Buddhism.

Keeping in mind the dual focus of representations of female religiosity and the creation of an origin narrative for the Treasure tradition, chapters in this dissertation look at three aspects of the role of Yeshe Tsogyel: a disciple, a consort, and a khandroma or *dākinī*. After an introduction to Yeshe Tsogyel, the Treasure tradition, and Tibetan Buddhist history in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Chapter One, “The Story of Yeshe Tsogyel,” outlines available early written information about Yeshe Tsogyel. It also introduces the primary sources used in the following chapters and the various genres at work in her literary tradition. Chapter Two, “The Disciple Yeshe Tsogyel,” queries her role as one of the foremost disciples of Padmasambhava. This chapter discusses the distinctive use of *zhus lan* texts or dialogues that adopt the Indian canonical dialogical style to authenticate lineages of Treasure teachings. These dialogues are also rich venues to explore the issue of female inferiority and women’s access to Buddhist teachings. Chapter Three, “The Consort Yeshe Tsogyel,” explores the consort relationship between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava. In Treasure literature, the relationship between tantric partners, the identity of a consort, and the goal of consort practice are all elevated to be operating on the enlightened plane and different from secular intimacy. The fourth and last chapter, “Khandroma Yeshe Tsogyel” highlights the particular significance of the khandroma, a type of female divinity that came to outshine all others and became the goddess par excellence in the Treasure context. By reading khandroma narratives as myth, I argue that the indeterminate nature of the khandroma is the site in which paradoxical identities of Buddhist women are negotiated.

This study provides a new way of understanding sainthood and its formation as well as a new model of constructing female religious eminence in Tibetan Buddhism. It also presents the practice of material and immaterial revelation as a distinctively Tibetan way of theorizing the past and writing histories.

Key words: Buddhism, Tibet, Treasure, Yeshe Tsogyel, gender, narrative, history, transmission, tradition

*To the memory of Hao Yichuan (1985-2015)*



## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	II
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	V
CHARTS, TABLES, AND IMAGES .....	VII
ACKNOWLEDGMENT .....	VIII
A NOTE ON LINGUISTIC CONVENTIONS .....	X
INTRODUCTION .....	1
0.1 THE QUESTION OF WHEN, WHERE, AND WHO .....	11
0.1.1 <i>Place and Time: Central Tibet in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries</i> .....	11
0.1.2 <i>Life Writing in Tibet</i> .....	16
0.1.3 <i>Revelation and Remembrance of an Imperial Past</i> .....	21
0.2 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	24
0.3 THEORY, METHODOLOGY, AND ETHICS .....	30
0.3.1 <i>Contextualizing Gender in Tibet</i> .....	31
0.3.2 <i>Theological Logic and Literary Actors</i> .....	35
0.3.3 <i>Liberation Philology</i> .....	38
0.3.3.1 Why Philology? .....	38
0.3.3.2 Why Liberation? .....	40
0.4 CHAPTER OUTLINE .....	43
CHAPTER ONE THE STORY OF YESHE TSOGYEL .....	47
1.1 FROM THE MARGIN OF BUDDHIST HISTORIES: EARLY MENTIONS OF YESHE TSOGYEL .....	50
1.1.1 <i>Pre-fourteenth century histories</i> .....	52
1.1.2 <i>Nyangrel Nyima Özer</i> .....	57
1.1.3 <i>Yeshe Tsogyel in Colophons</i> .....	59
1.1.4 <i>Guru Chöwang</i> .....	62
1.1.5 <i>Piecing Together the Early Story of Yeshe Tsogyel</i> .....	67
1.2 SOURCES USED IN THIS DISSERTATION .....	69
1.2.1 <i>The Two Earlier Lives of Yeshe Tsogyel</i> .....	69
1.2.1.1 The Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus .....	70
1.2.1.2 <i>The Extensive Life</i> .....	86
1.2.1.2.1 Structure of the Extensive Life .....	88
1.2.1.2.2 The “Theological Logic” of a <i>Rnam thar</i> .....	93
1.2.2 <i>The Chronicles (Bka’ thang)</i> .....	101
1.2.2.1 Padma Kathang or the Chronicle of Padmasambhava (Padma bka’ thang yig) .....	101
1.2.2.2 The Chronicle of the Queens ( <i>Btsun mo bka’ thang yig</i> ) .....	102
1.2.3 <i>Other Texts Used</i> .....	104
1.2.3.1 Yeshe Tsogyel in Colophons .....	104
1.2.3.2 <i>Zhus lan</i> or Question-and-Answer Texts .....	108
1.2.4 <i>Visual Representations of Yeshe Tsogyel</i> .....	109
1.5 THE NAMES OF YESHE TSOGYEL .....	115
CHAPTER TWO THE DISCIPLE YESHE TSOGYEL .....	122
2.1 DESCRIPTION OF YESHE TSOGYEL AS A DISCIPLE .....	125
2.2 THE CONTEXT WHICH IS THE FORM: ZHUS LAN AS SCRIPTURE .....	127
2.2.1 <i>Texts and Genres in the Treasure Tradition</i> .....	131
2.2.2 <i>Early Treasure Zhus lans</i> .....	135
2.2.2.1 Pre-fourteenth Century <i>Zhus lans</i> .....	135
2.2.2.2 Collections of <i>Zhus lans</i> in Rigdzin Godem’s Revelations .....	140
2.2.3 <i>Zhus lan as Scripture: Shared Stylistic Features with Mahāyāna Scriptures</i> .....	146

2.2.4	<i>Dialogues Discontinued: The Zhije Zhus lan Collections</i> .....	151
2.2.5	<i>Dialogue Reinvented: What Is New with Treasure Dialogues?</i> .....	158
2.3	THE CONTEXT WHICH IS FORMALIZED: QUESTIONING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO BUDDHIST TEACHINGS ....	162
2.3.1	<i>Lamenting Women's Inferior Birth</i> .....	165
2.3.2	<i>Female Inferiority as a Real Concern</i> .....	174
2.3.3	<i>Female Inferiority as a Performance: Women's Access to Teachings and Practices</i> .....	181
2.4	CONCLUSIONS .....	185
<b>CHAPTER THREE THE CONSORT YESHE TSOGYEL .....</b>		<b>189</b>
3.1	THE PRELIMINARIES: DEAL WITH YOUR EX BEFORE YOU BECOME A CONSORT .....	194
3.1.1	<i>The Story</i> .....	196
3.1.2	<i>Indian Precedents and the Gendered Aspect of Becoming a Renunciant</i> .....	204
3.1.3	<i>Sublimating Worldly Intimacy</i> .....	207
3.2	THE IDENTITY: CONSORTS AS NUNS .....	212
3.3	THE GOALS: SOTERIOLOGICAL, HERMENEUTICAL, AND THERAPEUTIC .....	222
3.3.1	<i>Consort Practice as a Vehicle to Liberation</i> .....	224
3.3.2	<i>The Role of Consort in Treasure Revelation</i> .....	228
3.3.3	<i>The Healing Power of Consort Practice</i> .....	232
3.4	CONCLUSIONS: TOWARD A THEORY OF TREASURE CONSORTSHIP .....	241
<b>CHAPTER FOUR KHANDROMA YESHE TSOGYEL .....</b>		<b>247</b>
4.1	DEFINING THE KHANDROMA .....	249
4.1.1	<i>Indian Precedents</i> .....	252
4.1.2	<i>Tibetan Developments: Khandroma in the Nyingma Religious Landscape</i> .....	255
4.1.2.1	The Rise of the Khandroma .....	256
4.1.2.2	A Taxonomy of Khandromas .....	264
4.2	THE KHANDROMA MYTH .....	268
4.2.1	<i>The Demoness that No Longer Needs Subjugation: Three Stories</i> .....	270
4.2.2	<i>An Agent Without Agency?</i> .....	275
4.2.3	<i>A Childless Mother</i> .....	280
4.3	FUZZY FEMININITIES AND MUDDLED MEMORIES: IN LIEU OF A (NEAT) CONCLUSION .....	284
<b>EPILOGUE YESHE TSOGYEL LIVES ON .....</b>		<b>288</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>		<b>294</b>
PRIMARY SOURCES .....		294
<i>The Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Corpus</i> .....		294
<i>Other Tibetan Language Sources</i> .....		295
SECONDARY SOURCES .....		300
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>		<b>322</b>
APPENDIX I PARA- AND INTRA-TEXTUAL COMPARISON OF THE DRIME KUNGA/PEMA LINGPA CORPUS .....		323
1	<i>Chapter Structure and Titles</i> .....	323
2	<i>Incipits and Explicits</i> .....	327
3	<i>Intra-Textual Comparison of Yeshe Tsogyel's Birth Episode</i> .....	341
APPENDIX II SYNOPSIS OF THE EXTENSIVE LIFE .....		357
<b>LIST OF TRANSLITERATED TIBETAN PROPER NAMES .....</b>		<b>374</b>

## Charts, Tables, and Images

FIGURE 1	FRONT ENTRANCE TO TSOGYEL LHAKHANG .....	3
FIGURE 2	TSOGYEL LATSO, THE SOUL LAKE OF YESHE TSOGYEL .....	4
FIGURE 3	TSOGYEL LASHING, THE SOUL WOOD OF YESHE TSOGYEL .....	5
FIGURE 4	NATURALLY-ARISING WOODEN POLE USED BY JIGME LINGPA .....	5
FIGURE 5	STELE A, LEFT SIDE OF THE DOOR OF TSOGYEL LHAKHANG .....	6
FIGURE 6	STELE B, RIGHT SIDE OF THE DOOR OF TSOGYEL LHAKHANG .....	7
FIGURE 7	ENTRANCE TO TSOGYEL DRUPHUK, MEDITATION CAVE OF YESHE TSOGYEL, IN CHIMPHU .....	9
FIGURE 8	INSIDE OF TSOGYEL DRUPHUK .....	9
FIGURE 9	ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RESEARCH ON TIBETAN RELIGIOUS WOMEN, 1989-2019 .....	25
FIGURE 10	ENGLISH-LANGUAGE RESEARCH ON TIBETAN RELIGIOUS WOMEN 1989-2019, DIVIDED BY METHODOLOGY .....	26
FIGURE 11	CHAPTERS IN THE DRIME KUNGA/PEMA LINGPA CORPUS .....	78
FIGURE 12	TEXT GROUPS WITHIN THE DRIME KUNGA/PEMA LINGPA CORPUS .....	83
FIGURE 13	PERCENTAGE OF NARRATIVE AND SPEECH ELEMENTS IN THE <i>EXTENSIVE LIFE</i> .....	89
FIGURE 14	DISTRIBUTION OF NARRATIVE AND SPEECH ELEMENTS IN THE <i>EXTENSIVE LIFE</i> .....	91
FIGURE 15	WORDS SPOKEN BY YESHE TSOGYEL AND PADMASAMBHAVA IN THE <i>EXTENSIVE LIFE</i> .....	92
FIGURE 16	COLOPHON RECORDS IN THE SEMINAL HEART OF THE KHANDROMAS .....	107
FIGURE 17	INITIATION CARD: YESHE TSOGYEL (FRONT) .....	111
FIGURE 18	INITIATION CARD: YESHE TSOGYEL (BACK) .....	112
FIGURE 19	MURAL: YESHE TSOGYEL .....	114
FIGURE 20	COMPARISON OF NARRATIVE FRAMEWORKS IN SUTRA, TANTRA, TREASURE AND ZHIJIE ZHUS LANS .....	156
FIGURE 21	SUMMARY OF DIALOGUE WITH SEVEN FEMALE DISCIPLES .....	178
FIGURE 22	STRUCTURE OF PADMASAMBHAVA'S CONVERSATION WITH FEMALE DISCIPLES .....	184
FIGURE 23	COMPARISON BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD CONSORTS .....	221
FIGURE 24	FEMALE SPIRITS OR DEITIES IN THREE COLLECTIONS OF BUDDHIST WRITINGS .....	261
FIGURE 25	TYPOLOGY OF KHANDROMA .....	266
FIGURE 26	KHANDROMA OF THE FIVE FAMILIES .....	266
FIGURE 27	SINMO DEMONESS OF TIBET .....	273

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## **A Note on Linguistic Conventions**

All Tibetan names are rendered phonetically; a Wylie transliteration is provided after the first occurrence of the term. All phonetics, except where quoted from other sources, will follow the Tibetan and Himalayan Library's scheme for Simplified Phonetic Transcription of Standard Tibetan. A list of Tibetan proper names is provided at the end for reference.

I use the pinyin system to transcribe Chinese words and only add the Chinese original in the bibliography.

Diacritical marks for Pāli and Sanskrit terms are included.

## INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2016, I was on a research trip to Lhokha (Lho kha), the heartland of the Tibetan Empire, which existed from the seventh to the ninth centuries. It was also a hub for religious and literary creations of the Nyingma (Rnying ma) School from the eleventh century onward, during the so-called later dissemination (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet. On the last day of my trip, I arrived at Ngadrak (Rnga sgrags), a village on the northern bank of the Tsangpo River, about twenty miles to the west of Samye and Chimphu. This village is said to be the birthplace of Yeshe Tsogyel (Ye shes mtsho rgyal), usually referred to as Drag (Grag or Sgrags) in written sources.

Ask any Tibetan Buddhist who the most important Tibetan Buddhist woman is, and the answer is likely going to be Yeshe Tsogyel. She is most venerated in the Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism, but is also held in high esteem by other schools, even the Bön tradition. She is known as the disciple of and consort to the Indian master Padmasambhava, who, along with the Buddhist scholar Śāntarakṣita, is said to have been invited by the Buddhist king Tri Songdetsen (Khri srong lde btsan) to Tibet in the eighth century and have converted it into a Buddhist land. As one of the most important disciples of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel also lives on in the cultural imagination of Tibet as a Buddhist land and the Tibetans as a Buddhist people. All over Tibet (and the greater Himalayas), there are sacred sites marked with her remains or legends that she had traveled or practiced there. She appears in people's dreams and visions century after century. Many later Buddhist women also claim to be her emanations, constituting an unbroken

lineage of enlightened female Buddhists, sometimes all the way back to the Buddha's foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī.

At Ngadrak, I wanted to visit Tsogyel Lhakang (Mtsho rgyal lha khang), or the Tsogyel Temple (fig. 1). The Temple is located just on the side of a dusty country road, a short walk from the village. Not many monastics live there—there are a couple of nuns, and a *khenpo* (*mkhan po*, the highest degree in a Nyingma Buddhist monastic education)<sup>1</sup> who told me he was only visiting. Right in front of the temple structure is a small pond said to be the soul lake or *latso* (*bla mtsho*) of Yeshe Tsogyel (fig. 2). Her soul wood or *lashing* (*bla shing*) stands next to the right of the temple (fig. 3).<sup>2</sup> There is a protuberance on the wall next to the door to the shrine room; it is said to be a naturally-appearing wooden pole<sup>3</sup> that was used for load carrying by Jigme Lingpa ('Jigs med gling pa, 1730-1798), a renowned Nyingma master and Treasure revealer (fig. 4). What is perhaps most curious is the steles standing on each side of the entrance (fig. 5 and 6). The *khenpo* told me that they were erected by Lama Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndru Drakpa (Bla ma zhang G.yu

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<sup>1</sup> Before the 1980s, it was impossible for female monastics to receive such a terminal degree in their learning. The *khenmo* (*mkhan mo*, the female equivalent of a *khenpo*) began in the 1980s at Larung Gar in Kham (Khams) in Eastern Tibet. I have prepared an article with Andrew Taylor on the *khenmo* project, see Liang and Taylor, "Tilling the Fields of Merit: The Institutionalization of Feminine Enlightenment in Tibet's First *Khenmo* Program."

<sup>2</sup> The belief that a person's soul (*bla*) resides in or could extend to significant places and objects is already found in pre-Buddhist Tibet. Kapstein 2006, 38-39. In this case, the lake and wood trunk are considered to be sites where Yeshe Tsogyel's soul remains after the passing of her physical body.

<sup>3</sup> Many sacred objects are considered to be naturally-arising or -appearing (*rang 'byung* or *rang byon*). Therefore, they bear witness to the superhuman or enlightened power of the Buddhist master and can be used to engender faith in ordinary people. These include footprints (*zhabs rjes*), handprints (*phyag rjes* or *lag rjes*), backprints (*rgyab rjes*), or imprints left behind by objects used by an enlightened master.



brag pa Brtson 'grus grags pa, 1122-1193), a religious leader from the Kagyu (Bka' brgyud) School, and that they are only recently moved from a nearby location to Tsogyel Lhakhang.<sup>4</sup>



*Figure 1      Front Entrance to Tsogyel Lhakhang*

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<sup>4</sup> The inscriptions and iconographical features of the stele, such as the six-syllable mantra, the four-armed Avalokiteśvara (fig. 4.9), and homage to the Kagyu lineage master, all suggest that its time of production to be around the twelfth century. Therefore, it is possible that the stele is indeed connected to the famous Buddhist leader Lama Zhang and that it is originally located in one of the seven spiritual retreats (*grub gnas bdun*) founded by him, two of which are located within the Drag valley. I am preparing an article with Wang Ruilei on these two steles and their possible provenance. For a study on Lama Zhang, see Yamamoto 2012.



*Figure 2      Tsogyel Latso, the Soul Lake of Yeshe Tsogyel*



Figure 3      *Tsogyel Lashing, the Soul Wood of Yeshe Tsogyel*



Figure 4      *Naturally-Arising Wooden Pole Used by Jigme Lingpa*





*Figure 5      Stele A, Left Side of the Door of Tsogyel Lhakhang*



*Figure 6        Stele B, Right Side of the Door of Tsogyel Lhakhang*  
 (Photographs by Jue Liang, July 2016)

This array of objects one finds in Tsogyel Lhakhang stands as a fitting metaphor of how the literary tradition of Yeshe Tsogyel came about. In these texts, the “soul” of Yeshe Tsogyel is considered still active in its animate and inanimate forms, extending herself to the physical surroundings; the reverberations from later Nyingma personages add to her layered presence. In the meantime, there are also idiosyncratic additions that did not even originate from within the Nyingma school and may or may not be of genuine antiquity, whose provenance is lost to us forever.

I could tell another story from this trip that happened during my visit to the meditation cave of Yeshe Tsogyel in Chimphu. The site of Chimphu is a short hike from Samye Monastery, where Padmasambhava was first invited to Tibet because demonic forces were obstructing its construction. The caves at Chimphu are also frequently mentioned as meditation sites for Padmasambhava and his disciples. There are many caves in their namesake; one of them is dedicated to Yeshe Tsogyel (fig. 7). The Tsogyel Druphuk (Mtsho rgyal sgrub phug) is located close to the top of the hill; it is an unassuming small rock shelter that only allows a few people inside at one time. Inside the cave, the most prominent statue is one of Padmasambhava, with Yeshe Tsogyel standing to his left and Mandarava to his right (fig. 8, the same layout of Padmasambhava being flanked by Yeshe Tsogyel and Mandarava is also found in her own Lhakhang). When I went in, a senior monk was sitting in the cave and reading. I struck up a conversation with him, asking him where he was from, and what he was doing here. He told me that he came for pilgrimage from Amdo (A mdo), a region thousands of miles away from Ngadrak, and that the *pecha* (*dpe cha*, a Tibetan style book) he was reading was the *Life* of Padmasambhava.





*Figure 7      Entrance to Tsogyel Druphuk, Meditation Cave of Yeshe Tsogyel, in Chimphu*



*Figure 8      Inside of Tsogyel Druphug*

(Photographs by Jue Liang, July 2016)

The peripheral status of Yeshe Tsogyel in her own meditation cave also reminds us of how her apotheosis is intimately linked to that of Padmasambhava. Not only is her success always presented as a result of her study and practice with Padmasambhava, her literary tradition is also largely composed or revealed by male Buddhists, and, perhaps, read (or not read, as the case of the monk in Tsogyel Druphug illustrates) by a largely male audience. Women started to claim themselves to be reembodiments of Yeshe Tsogyel at a much later time. Only until recent years is there an effort by Tibetan Buddhist women to compile and publish writings by and about women, or to write about Buddhist women themselves.

Keeping in mind the two caveats of dealing with literature about the past from a later perspective and writings about women in largely male circles, this introduction serves three purposes that prepare us for a journey into the literary world of Yeshe Tsogyel. First, it will orient the reader by providing the necessary context in which the literary tradition of Yeshe Tsogyel emerges. This includes the times, places, and communities most closely associated with writings about Yeshe Tsogyel. Second, it will situate the current study in the context of previous scholarship and suggest its distinctive contributions and value. Third, it will introduce key analytical categories and methodologies that are operative in my reading of the life, *Lives*, and afterlife of Yeshe Tsogyel. I also present a brief outline of the four chapters at the end of the introduction.



## ***0.1 The Question of When, Where, and Who***

Who is writing about Yeshe Tsogyel? Where are they writing? And when? To understand the growth and blossoming of the literary tradition of Yeshe Tsogyel, I introduce in this section the background against which such textual creation took place. While Yeshe Tsogyel is said to have lived in eighth-century Tibet, writings about her did not appear until a much later time. The first full-length *Life*<sup>5</sup> of her was only revealed in the fourteenth century in Central Tibet, with a later expansion to Southern Tibet. This is a time when the genre of life writing had taken off in Tibet. The religious group most intimately associated with her literary image is the Nyingma School, in particular the Treasure, or Terma (Gter ma) tradition.<sup>6</sup> For the Treasure tradition, Yeshe Tsogyel is one of the core personalities that was active during the golden era of the Tibetan Empire, and a quintessential link to this glorious past from its much-troubled present.

### ***0.1.1 Place and Time: Central Tibet in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries***

Our journey begins in Central Tibet in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Coming after some three hundred years of economical, cultural, political, and religious “renaissance,” these two

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<sup>5</sup> Here I follow Schaeffer and translate the Tibetan literary genre *rnam thar* (or *rnam par thar pa*, literally “accounts of full liberation”) as *Life*. For a discussion on using European medieval saint’s *Lives* as a heuristic device for Tibetan *rnam thars*, see Schaeffer 2004, 6-7.

<sup>6</sup> The tradition of Treasure revelation did not originate in Tibet, nor is it only confined within the Nyingma School; other Tibetan Buddhist schools and the Bön tradition all engage in revelatory activities. More on the Treasure tradition in 0.1.3 “Revelation and Remembrance of an Imperial Past.”

centuries witnessed a time of stability, development, as well as a reflection on what had been revived. The period of Tibetan renaissance is characterized by the following four themes: the weaving-together of a Tibetan religious system heavily influenced by late Indian Tantric Buddhist ideologies; textualization of Tibetan culture through translating the massive corpus of Indian (or Indic) materials—both religious and secular; central Tibet replacing India “as the preferred source of international Buddhist ideology;” and the rise of monastics as a new form of aristocracy.<sup>7</sup> In the fourteenth century, while the third and fourth themes (the rise of central Tibet and monasticism) continued to exert a strong influence, the first two themes of infusion and translation of Indian sources have subsided and the focus of religious creativity and inspiration shifted to more indigenous Tibetan materials.

It is a time of power shifting place. As Changchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan, 1302-1364) became the de facto leader of central Tibet in 1354 and the Yuan Dynasty fell in 1368, the Tibeto-Mongol preceptor-donor relationship (*mchod yon*), headed by the Sakya (Sa skya) School came to a halt.<sup>8</sup> The renewed patronage between Tibetan religious leaders and the Ming rulers preferred the Phagmodru (Phag mo gru) regime and conferred many titles on Tibetan lamas.<sup>9</sup>

It is also a time when things Tibetan gained currency. After settling the decades-long conflict with

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<sup>7</sup> Davidson 2005, 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Petech 1990 provides a history of the Mongol-Tibetan interactions during the Yuan Dynasty. Seyfort Ruegg 2013 discusses the content of this preceptor-donor relationship in the thirteenth century, and its potential Central Asian and Indian precedents.

<sup>9</sup> See Sperling 1980 for a study of the early history of Sino-Tibetan interactions in the Ming Dynasty.

the Sakyas in Tsang (Gtsang), Changchub Gyaltsen started to lay out his own plan for a truly Tibetan government. He replaced Mongol laws with a new system based on the old legal codes from the Tibetan Empire; he also gave the old Yuan administrative system of myriarchs (*khri skor*) a makeover by putting into use a new organization scheme of grand prefectures (*rdzong chen*) and districts (*rdzong*).<sup>10</sup>

There were also many other movements that were influential and contributed significantly to doctrinal innovations at the time,<sup>11</sup> even if later denounced and suppressed by the eventually dominating Gelug (Dge lugs) School, or subsequently falling into oblivion for other reasons. Following the catalog made by Jomden Rigpai Raldri (Bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri, 1227-1305) at Narthang (Snar thang) Monastery, scholars began the compilation of Tibetan Buddhist canons. The results are two sets of authoritative translations of Indian Buddhist scriptures and treatises, known as the Kangyur, or “[Collection of] Translations of [the Buddha’s] Words” (*Bka’ ’gyur*) and the Tengyur, or “[Collection of] Translations of [the Buddha’s] Teachings” (*Bstan ’gyur*).<sup>12</sup> This compilation was also a trans-sectarian effort, as both Buddhist and non-Buddhist canons—for example, the Bonpo Kangjur (*Bon po bka’ ’gyur*)—began to take shape.<sup>13</sup> For the Nyingma

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<sup>10</sup> van der Kuip 1994, 2003.

<sup>11</sup> For example, the Gandenpa (Dga’ ldan pa), the predecessor of the now Gelug School, one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, was founded by Tsongkhapa Lobsang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419). Other schools developed during this time including the Jonang (Jo nang) School, by Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen (Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292-1361); the Bodong (Bo dong) School by Bodong pañchen Chokle Namgyel (Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1376-1451); and the Zhalu (Zhwa lu) School, by Buton Rinchendrub (Bu ston rin chen grub, 1290-1364).

<sup>12</sup> Harrison 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Kværne 2013. Also see Martin, Kværne, and Yasuhiko 2003.

Treasure revealers who were active in their literary creation, an authoritative, closed canon means that in theory, all subsequent revelations are viewed as suspect, and that proving their authenticity as enlightened teachings will be challenging, if not downright impossible.

Not only were Indian religious and literary works translated and rearranged into Tibetan, Tibetan authors also started to lay claim for their own works and write about distinctly Tibetan concerns — its people, history, and geography.<sup>14</sup> Translation works were supplemented by exegetical texts and instructional manuals as the central concern for Tibetan scholars. This century witnessed some of the most prolific writers throughout the history of Tibetan Buddhism, such as Longchen Rabjampa Drime Özer (Klong chen Rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer, hereafter Longchenpa), Buton Rinchendrup, Ngorchon Kunga Zangpo (Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, 1385-1456), and Bodong Pañchen Chokle Namgyel. They are also unabashed in claiming their authorship, even for works

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<sup>14</sup> Some of the key texts composed during this period include Dolpopa's *Mountain Teachings: Ocean of Definitive Meanings* (*Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*), his own exposition on the system of the Three Turning of the Wheel of Dharma, that is, the three phases of development of Buddhist doctrines; Longchen Rabjampa Drime Özer's (Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer, 1309-1364) *Seven Treasuries* (*Mdzod bdun*), a vast collection of treatises on virtually all aspects of Nyingma Great Perfection or Dzogchen (Rdzogs chen) theory and practice; Buton Rinchendrup's *Treasury of Precious Jewels, Lineage of the [Buddha's] Words: History of the Dharma that Elucidates the Teachings of the Sugata* (*Bde bar gshegs pa'i bstan pa'i gsal byed chos kyi 'byung gnas gsung rabs rin po che'i mdzod*, hereafter *History of the Dharma*), Tsongkhapa's the *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* (*Lam rim chen mo*) and *Great Treatise on the Stages of Mantra* (*Sngags rim chen mo*); Bodong pañchen Chogle Namgyel's the *Compendium of Emptiness* (*Dpal de kho na nyid 'dus pa*); and Ogyen Lingpa's (O rgyan gling pa, 1323-c.1360) the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava* (*Padma bka' thang yig*) and the *Five Chronicles* (*Bka' thang sde lnga*), two extensive narrative accounts about the activities of Padmasambhava and the constellation of Buddhist masters, kings, queens, and disciples surrounding him in the Tibetan Empire.

that are supposed to be revelations authored by enlightened buddhas.<sup>15</sup>

The content of Tibetan literature has also shifted from being predominantly Buddhist to include secular topics. For example, the autobiographical account of Changchub Gyaltsen, the *Testament of the Situ* (*Si tu bka' chems*), is hardly an account of how a devout Buddhist lived his life; nor is it an inspiration for those embarking on the Buddhist path.<sup>16</sup> Rather, the *Testament of the Situ* commemorates the secular endeavors of Changchub Gyaltsen and the Lang (Rlangs) clan: the ongoing feud between the Phagmodru and the Yazang (G.ya' bzang) myriarchs; how this feud caused various lawsuits, minor conflicts, and even wars; how Changchub Gyaltsen fought for Phagmodru and led it to prosperity; and a summary of his experience of governing central Tibet. Historical writings are also a popular genre. These include a number of histories of Buddhism (*chos 'byung*)<sup>17</sup> and histories of India, China, and other neighboring countries. Life stories of Tibetan figures, past and present, are also composed, copied, and disseminated. I will discuss the tradition of life writing in Tibet in the next section.

The life story of Yeshe Tsogyel is said to take place in Central Tibet or Ü (Dbus) in the eighth century, and literary creations about her—and Tibetan Buddhist authors and their writings in general—before the fifteenth century also seem to center around this area. Many important

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<sup>15</sup> For example, although in most cases following the standard scheme of Treasure revelation, that is, assigning the author of a text as one of the semi-historical figures, usually from the Tibetan Empire, Longchenpa occasionally signs off with his own name at the end of a work in his Treasure cycles. Germano, “Mysticism and Rhetoric in the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen).”

<sup>16</sup> Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan 1989a; it is translated into Chinese in Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan 1989b.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Buton's *History of the Dharma*.

Buddhist teachers, practitioners, and translators are active in Central Tibet. It is the geographical base of Changchub Gyaltzen's political power as well as the religious activities of many eminent religious personas. These include important Nyingma figures such as Longchenpa, Ogyen Lingpa (O rgyan gling pa, 1323-1360), Karma Lingpa (Karma gling pa, 1326-1386), Rigdzin Gödem (Rig 'dzin rgod ldem, 1337-1409), Sanggye Lingpa (Sangs rgyas gling pa, 1340-1396), Dorje Lingpa (Rdo rje gling pa, 1346-1405), as well as non-Nyingma figures such as Tsongkhapa, the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (Kar ma pa rang 'byung rdo rje, 1284-1339), Tsarpa Situ Kunga Dorje (Tshal pa si tu Kun dga' rdo rje, 1309-1364), among many others.<sup>18</sup>

### 0.1.2 Life Writing in Tibet

The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is also a time when life writing has become a popular literary practice in Tibet. While the earliest evidence of hagiographical writings or *Lives* can be traced back to the life stories of Atiśa Dīpaṃkāra (980-1054), allegedly composed by his disciple Dromton Gyalbai Jungne (Brom ston Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas, 1004-1064)<sup>19</sup> and that of Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 980-1055), written by his disciple Pel Yeshe (Dpal ye shes);<sup>20</sup> the

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<sup>18</sup> Tsang, or Western Tibet, is another center for religious innovation for Buddhists masters from the Jonang or Sakya at this time.

<sup>19</sup> This work is called *Jo bo rje'i rnam thar lam yig chos kyi 'byung gnas zhes bya ba 'brom ston pa rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas kyis mdzad pa*, bearing Dromton's name in its title. However, by citing the Muslim conquest of Eastern India, an event took place around 1200 CE, its composition cannot be dated before that, and Dromton could not possibly be the author, see Eimer 1982, 41-42.

<sup>20</sup> Gangnegi 1998. Autobiographies (*rang rnam* or *rang gi rnam thar*) have appeared quite early—the abbot of Tsalgungthang (Tshal gung thang), Lama Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndru Drakpa,

practice of writing hagiographies did not flourish until at least the thirteenth century. The length of a *Life* increased significantly in the thirteenth century:<sup>21</sup> the longest one in the twelfth century is only 62 folios long, while the longest one in the thirteenth century reached an impressive 310 folios—for comparison, the longest one in the fourteenth century is 396 and in the fifteenth 598.<sup>22</sup>

Life writings in Tibet in the fourteenth century present nascent developments of features, tendencies, and traits that developed fully in later centuries. For Nyingmapa (especially Terma) authors from the twelfth century onward, their literary recreation of the past has always been an important concern. These Treasure narratives about past persons, places, and events also differ in content and in function from hagiographies from other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The subjects of Terma hagiographies are usually semi-historical figures from the time of the Tibetan Empire, instead of historical characters of the present. As for their function, besides establishing an unbroken lineage, inspiring disciples for personal transformation, and providing an exemplary life for others to emulate—the conventional services proffered by the composition and spread of a *Life*—Treasure hagiographies construct a narrative about the Imperial period and the identification of Treasure revealers with Imperial figures.

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has composed a life story of his own, called [*My*] *Own Life Story as Requested by Sherab Drupa* (*Nyid kyi rnam thar shes rab grub pa ma*), see Yamamoto 2012, 37.

<sup>21</sup> While not all *pecha* or Tibetan-style books share the exact same folio size or layout, they are largely within a given range. Printing and copying practices also remain relatively constant in medieval Tibet.

<sup>22</sup> Schaeffer 2010 charts the numbers of *rnam thars* composed during each century and their respective sizes based on works that have been identified by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC, previously Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center or TBRC). However, the BDRC's collection is not exhaustive and could ideally be complemented by newly available databases and collections, the Endangered Archives Programme of British Library, for example.

Of these Imperial figures, the most famous one is the Indian master Padmasambhava. The first full-length *Life* about him, the *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava* (*Padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar zangs gling ma*, hereafter the *Copper Island Biography*), is revealed<sup>23</sup> by a twelfth-century Treasure revealer, Nyangrel Nyima Özer (Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, 1124-1192).<sup>24</sup> In addition to Padmasambhava, Nyangrel revealed another narrative about the famous three religious kings of the Tibetan Empire, Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po), Tri Songdetsen, and Tri Ralpacan (Khri Ral pa can). It is titled *Garland of Precious Jewels: Biographies of the Three Ancestral Dharma Kings, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattvas* (*Byang chub sems dpa'i sems dpa' chen po chos rgyal mes dpon rnam gsum gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba*).<sup>25</sup> Nyangrel also included another collection of writings that has a prominent narrative component in the transmission lineage of the *Hundred Thousand Mañi Teachings* (*Ma ñi bka' 'bum*). This work is said to be composed by Songtsen Gampo, the first Buddhist King of Tibet, and is discovered as a Treasure by Druptop Ngödrup (Grub thob dngos grub), Nyangrel, Śākya Ö (Śākya 'od, fl. 13th

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<sup>23</sup> According to Hirshberg 2016, the revelation of narrative Treasures was rare before the time of Nyangrel, but gradually gained currency after the discovery of the *Copper Island Biography*.

<sup>24</sup> All but the first five chapters of this life story of Padmasambhava is also repeated in Nyangrel's *Honey Nectar, the Essence of Flowers: A History of Buddhism* (*Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*). The different recensions and the transmission history of the *Copper Island Biography* are discussed in Doney 2014. He introduces two exemplars of the *Copper Island Biography* found in the Nepal-German Manuscripts Cataloging Project (NGMCP) which are possibly the earliest exemplars; he also discusses the textual variations and relationships between these two and the ten other later recensions. Nyangrel's history of Buddhism, the *Honey Nectar*, is also brought in for comparison.

<sup>25</sup> Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer 1980. The attribution to Nyangrel remains unclear, it could also be one of his disciples.



century), and Guru Chöwang (Gu ru chos dbang, 1212-1270) consecutively.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of Nyangrel Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang, the genre of a *Life* has not been separated from that of historical writing (*lo rgyus*)—the inclusion of the *Copper Island Biography* in Nyang ral's history of Buddhism is one example. At the turn of the fourteenth century, writing hagiographies began to become an independent practice separated from writing history. Historical writings proper bloomed in this period, starting with Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltzen's (Bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, 1312-1375) *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* (*Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*).<sup>27</sup> Histories and genealogies of not only Tibet, but of China, India, and Mongol are produced, as well as biographical and autobiographical writings. Almost every important master and scholar of this time had a *Life* written about him or her; the subject matter also extended beyond Buddhist teachings and practices.<sup>28</sup>

As a disciple and consort of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel also became a subject of hagiographical interest from the fourteenth century onwards. The earliest full-length *rnam thar* of Yeshe Tsogyel we know so far, comprised of seven chapters, was composed during this time by a

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<sup>26</sup> Kapstein 1992, 79-93. For a study specifically on the *Ma ñi bka' 'bum* revealed by Guru Chö wang, see Phillips 2004.

<sup>27</sup> This work has been translated into English by Per K. Sørensen. Sa-skyapa Bla-ma Dam-pa Bsod-nams-rgyal-mtshan, and Per K. Sørensen, 1994.

<sup>28</sup> For example, disciples of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen, Karmapa Rangjung Dorje, Buton Rinchenchup, and Tsongkhapa have all penned hagiographies of their teachers. We also have a rare hagiography of a nomad woman named Sönam Peldren (Bsod nams dpal 'dren, 1268/1328-1312/1372), written by her husband Rinchenpel (Rin chen dpal) during this time, Bessenger 2016. More on the *Life* of Sönam Peldren in my discussion of publications on Tibetan religious women.

Treasure revealer named Drime Kunga (Dri med kun dga', b.1347).<sup>29</sup> This *Life* has many reverberations over the following centuries: a version of it appears in a Treasure cycle of Pema Lingpa (Padma gling pa, 1450-1521), titled *Lama Jewel Ocean* (*Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*),<sup>30</sup> while another was included in a trilogy of hagiographies of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel (here she is referred to by her clan name, Kharchenza), and Vairocana the translator.<sup>31</sup> Besides Drime Kunga's standalone *Life*, Longchenpa included in his *Precious History of How the Treasure [Tradition] Came into Being* (*Gter 'byung rin po che'i lo rgyus*) an extensive account of Yeshe Tsogyel's life, recounting her birth, early life, marriage to the Tri Songdetsen, and her study and practice with Padmasambhava.<sup>32</sup> Dorje Lingpa has also composed a short life story qua supplication to Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>33</sup>

In the Tibetan social, religious, and literary sphere, the fourteenth century is a time of turning away from India and back to Tibet. Not only are Indian teachings being digested and commented on by Tibetan authors, Tibetan figures themselves have also become to a greater extent primary subjects of literary creation. It is a time when a Tibetan leadership was reasserted and Tibetan identity reevaluated. It is increasingly a norm that Tibetan authors write about Tibetan history and people

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<sup>29</sup> For an introduction to Drime Kunga and his *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, see Gyatso 2006. More on this *Life* in Chapter One, "The Story of Yeshe Tsogyel."

<sup>30</sup> For example, Padma gling pa 1975-1976, 1: 169-275.

<sup>31</sup> Blo gros mtha' yas 2006, 154-191.

<sup>32</sup> Dri med 'od zer, 1975-79, 7: 86-109.

<sup>33</sup> This work is titled *Tambura of Affliction and Devotion: A Supplication according to the Brief Liberation Story of the Noble Lady of the Ḍākinīs, Yeshe Tsogyel* (*Mkha' 'gro'i gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus sgo nas gsol ba 'debs pa mos gus gdung ba'i tambu ra*). Rdo rje gling pa 1999, 1: 198-211.

of their time. In the case of the Nyingma School, the hagiographical traditions continued to evolve, with significant growth in volume and increased varieties. However, it differed from the other schools in that the central interest of Treasure narratives lies not only in contemporary personalities, but also in the galaxy of charismatic individuals surrounding Padmasambhava, who has been later elevated as “the second Buddha.”

### ***0.1.3 Revelation and Remembrance of an Imperial Past***

The keen readers might have already noticed that in my discussion of literary creations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, I teeter between the verb “to compose” or “to write” and “to reveal,” when discussing the attribution of a given text. For those texts that are “revealed,” they belong to a particular genre of Buddhist literature, called Terma or Treasure.

Treasures are sacred texts and objects that are said to be buried during the time of the Tibetan empire, and subsequently rediscovered by later generations.<sup>34</sup> The practice of revelation or discovering precious objects finds many precedents in Indian Buddhist, Tibetan non-Buddhist,

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<sup>34</sup> For a most recent overview on Terma, see Gyatso 2015b, 398-404.

and Chinese sources.<sup>35</sup> However, it is only in the Treasure tradition<sup>36</sup> that revelation becomes an essential source for Tibetan canonical literature, revealed texts are produced on a mass scale, and the continued revelatory activities sustain a widespread and continuous lineage in Tibet.

Treasures are not supposed to be written or composed by their revealers (at least most revealers do not make such explicit claim).<sup>37</sup> Their provenance is traced back to the time of the Tibetan empire. The most popular source of Termas is the Indian master Padmasambhava, although in earlier Treasure revelations, other Imperial figures, for example, Vimalamitra, are also credited with having composed Treasures.

The Treasure tradition is an ingenious reaction to the doctrinal innovations of the New Translations (*gsar 'gyur*) schools.<sup>38</sup> With a continuous stream of newly translated and newly composed Indian

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<sup>35</sup> For example, Harrison 2003 discusses the modes of discovery in Mahāyāna Buddhist texts. In China, Daoism also has its own form of Treasure discovery and its subsequent decoding process, see Steavu 2009. Mayer (2019, 144-179) offers a summary of the many potential sources of Tibetan Terma and suggests twelve possible alternative sources that could serve as future venues of exploration. These include anthropological study of Treasure in a cross-cultural context; the historical background in Tibet when Treasure revelation first came into being; pre-Buddhist and/or non-Buddhist local traditions of worshipping mountain deity, funerals, and burial of precious substances for mundane needs and purposes; influences from Mahāyāna and early tantric Buddhist traditions, especially Nyingma tantric texts prior to the renaissance period; and, last but not least, extra-Buddhist sources such as the contemporaneous Śaiva tradition in Kashmir and early Bönpo Termas.

<sup>36</sup> In the following discussion, unless otherwise noted, I use “Treasure” to refer to both the Nyingma Terma tradition and the sacred texts or objects discovered by Nyingma Treasure revealers.

<sup>37</sup> The exception here is Longchenpa, who occasionally identifies himself as the author of his Treasure revelations. See Germano, “Mysticism and Rhetoric in the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen).”

<sup>38</sup> Davidson 2005, 211-2.

Buddhist texts pouring into Tibet, the Nyingma school that prided itself as the scion of the Imperial Buddhist lineage faced new challenges of its time: how to respond to the burgeoning literature from other schools, to the growing prestige of mass institutionalized monasticism, and most importantly, to the critiques of the authenticities of the Treasures that never subsided.

Treasure writings celebrate a “double system of apocryphal attribution”—both the texts being revealed and the person executing the revelation are attributed to personalities back in time—revealed Treasures authorize new (or renewed) Nyingma teachings and practices, connecting their lineage back to the golden age of Tibetan history.<sup>39</sup> By inhabiting this compounded identity, the Treasure revealers could make claims with the authoritative voice of Buddhist masters from the Imperial period, and at the same time address contemporary concerns and crises. By claiming to be the reincarnations of these very Imperial figures, Treasure revealers inhabit actual characters in the past, making their message more authentic and compelling. Their narrativization of the past is not different from history, and writing about the past is not different from writing about the present, for the Treasure revealers themselves are the subject and the author at the same time.

In the fourteenth century, Treasure revelations became a less unconventional practice and grew steadily over time. Composing hagiographies of Imperial personalities such as Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, and Vairocana reasserted the authenticity of their own tradition of Old Translation. These narratives also evoked a sense of community and shared identity among Nyingma practitioners. By weaving together different genres of Treasure literature such as historical

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 225.

accounts, hagiographical narratives, ritual instructions, and pilgrimage guides, the Treasure tradition managed to create a world of their own, where religious teaching, historical narrative, ritual action, personal identity, and sacred geography of the past and present all come together.

## **0.2 Literature Review**

The past twenty years have witnessed a significant growth of research on Tibetan religious women. Compared to the relative lacunae lamented by scholars at the beginning of the millennium, many recent publications have taken concrete steps in building our knowledge of women's religious involvement in Tibet. They celebrate the life and *Lives* of these Tibetan women (and women who have traveled to Tibet), whether they be a religious leader, a nun, a previously unknown yogi, a Treasure revealer, a *ngakma*, or a *delog* ('*das log*), someone who has returned from death. With a focus on English language-based research scholarship in the field of religion,<sup>40</sup> I have sketched the development in the field of Tibetan religious women over the past three decades (fig. 9), and

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<sup>40</sup> This leaves out many standalone translations of Tibetan women's *Lives* and anthologies that contain a significant portion on Tibetan women. These include Allione 2000 (1984), Dawa Drolma 1995, Bsam-gtan-gling-pa 1998, Nam-mkha'i-snying-po et al 1999, Ma-gcig Lab-sgron 2003, Dri med kun dga' 2017, O-rgyan-'jigs-med-nam-mkha'-gling-pa, and Tā-re Bde-chen-lha-mo 2019, and Karma Lekshe Tsomo 1999, 2014.

It also excludes research on Tibetan religious women in Chinese, German, French, and Tibetan (for example, Baimacuo 2011, 2015, Dejizhuoma 2003, 2014, Herrmann-Pfandt 1992, Madrong Migyur Dorje 1997, Ra se dkon mchog rgya mtsho 2003, and Schneider 2013) and many other works on the literary, social, or political lives of Tibetan women.

the methodologies adopted by these studies (fig. 10). Included here are anthologies (only counted once), articles, monographs, and dissertations (a book based on a dissertation is only counted once as a book) with a significant focus on Tibetan religious women.<sup>41</sup>

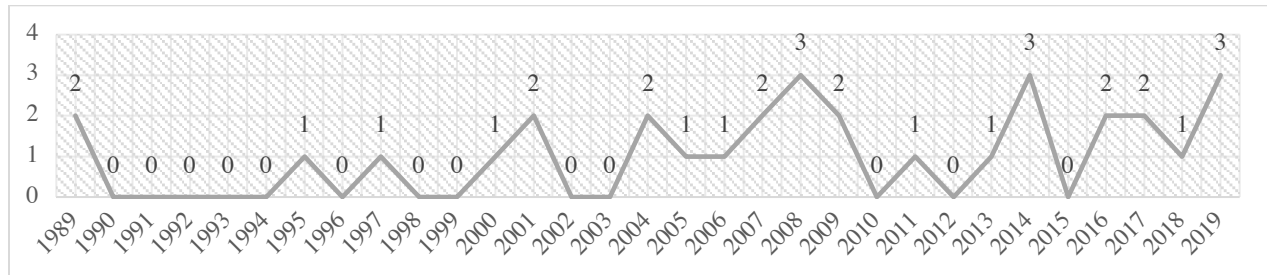


Figure 9 *English-Language Research on Tibetan Religious Women, 1989-2019*

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<sup>41</sup> These publications include (in chronological order): Willis 1989, Havnevik 1989, Klein 1995, Herrmann-Pfandt 1997, Germano and Gyatso 2000, Simmer-Brown 2001, Vargas-O'Bryan 2001, Gutschow 2004, Schaeffer 2004, Gyatso and Havnevik 2005, Gyatso 2006, Makley 2007, Diemberger 2007, Bentor 2008, Rossi 2008a, Rossi 2008b, Jacoby 2009a, Jacoby 2009b, Prude 2011, Sorensen 2013, Melnick 2014, Jacoby 2014, Schaeffer 2014, Prude 2016, Bessenger 2016, Bessenger 2017, Gayley 2017, Gayley 2018, Angowski 2019, Havnevik 2019, and Joffe 2019. I should also note that Pete Faggen and Khamokyit are both completing their dissertations, focusing on the Amdo Gurung Khandroma and the Tibetan female delogs respectively.

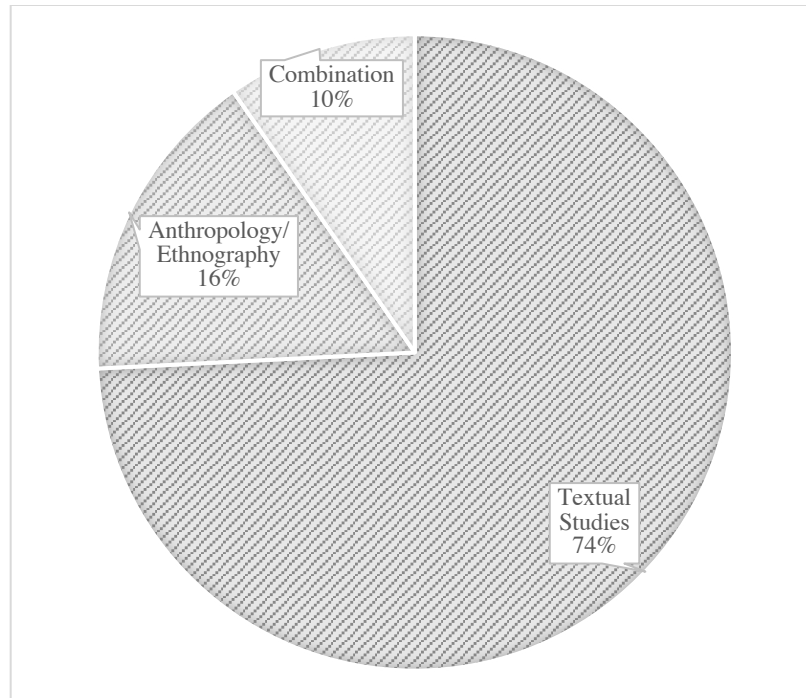


Figure 10 English-Language Research on Tibetan Religious Women 1989-2019, Divided by Methodology<sup>42</sup>

Before 2000, there are only a few books and articles dedicated to the religious lives of Tibetan women; after 2000, there is a steady growth of literature, averaging at two to three studies a year.<sup>43</sup> The majority (74%) of these studies use textual approaches, while others are anthropological or ethnographical works. These studies are the conversation partners for the current dissertation.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> The category “Combination” refers to either anthology of research articles (Willis 1989, Gyatso and Havnevik 2005) or a monograph that combines different approaches (Gayley 2017).

<sup>43</sup> I should also note that in recent years, there are more books or dissertations than articles, which also suggest a growth in terms of depth of the study. Of the eighteen publications before 2010, nine are books or dissertations, nine are articles; after 2010, eight are books or dissertations, only five are articles.

<sup>44</sup> While studies on hagiographies of Tibetan male masters also offer us useful frameworks in discussing life writings in Tibet as well as points for comparison, they are not discussed here to save space for monographs and dissertations that have chosen the *Lives* and life stories of Tibetan



They approach the literary traditions and lived lives of Tibetan Buddhist women from the time of the Tibetan Empire to monastic communities today. For those studies of the *Lives* of Tibetan Buddhist women, their subjects include Gelongma Palmo, a Kashmirian nun said to have initiated a lineage of fasting practice in Tibet;<sup>45</sup> Machig Ladron (Ma gcig lab sgron), the female founder of the *chö* (*gcod*) practice lineage;<sup>46</sup> a self-made Buddhist master, Sönam Peldren (1328-1372);<sup>47</sup> one of the first female reincarnationa in Tibet, the Samding Dorje Phagmo (Bsam sding rdo rje phag mo, “the Thunderbolt Sow of Samding”), Chökyi Drönma (Chos kyi sgron ma, 1422-1455);<sup>48</sup> Ogyen Chökyi (O rgyan chos kyid, 1675-1729), a Buddhist nun from Dolpo;<sup>49</sup> the female Buddhist leader who rebuilt the Mingdroling tradition, Mingyur Peldrön (Mi ’gyur dpal sgron, 1699-

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religious women as their subject. A few notable examples include Templeman 2002, Bogin 2013, and Quintman 2014. Templeman chooses the two hagiographies of Kṛṣṇācārya to demonstrates how structural arrangements in life writings can be used for pedagogical purposes; while Bogin’s study of the autobiography of Yolmowa Tenzin Norbu (Yol mo ba bstan ’dzin nor bu, 1598-1644) how the manifold self-representations of a Buddhist master is illustrated by both his own writings and paintings. In his study of the biographical tradition of Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1028/40–1111/23), Quintman provides a comprehensive overview of life writing in Tibet, and suggests a way of reading Tibetan Buddhist *Lives* that goes beyond separating “fact” from “fiction.”

<sup>45</sup> Vargas-O’Bryan 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Ma-gcig Lab-sgron 2003 and Sorenson 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Bessenger 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Diemberger 2007. The earliest (but unfortunately discontinued) female reincarnation lineage known to us is the Khandro Drowa Zangmo (Mkha’ ’gro ’Gro ba bzang mo, n.d.), consort to Götsangpa Gönpö Dorje (Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje, 1189-1258), and her reincarnation Rema Zhigmo (Ras ma zhig mo, ca. 1260-after 1339), see van der Kuijp 2004, 307n23.

<sup>49</sup> Schaeffer 2004.

1769);<sup>50</sup> and two contemporary female Treasure revealers and Buddhist leaders, Sera Khandro (Sera mkha' 'gro, 1892-1940) and Tāre Lhamo (Tā re lha mo, 1938-2003).<sup>51</sup>

Discussions on these female saints's *Lives* span the themes of womanhood, gender, body, and social relations in the Buddhist world. For example, bodily illness and fasting are seen as a means of redemption in the hagiographies of Gelongma Palmo. The Buddhist teaching of non-attachment is exemplified by her physical suffering from leprosy, her isolation from society and loss of social status, and her recuperation to bodily completeness, social identity, and human agency through a fasting practice called Nyungne (*smyung gnas*, “the state of fasting”). This is the most common function of hagiographies: to depict a life that epitomizes transcendental wisdom and virtue.<sup>52</sup> Different aspects of European medieval sainthood—miraculous activity, asceticism, good works, worldly power, and evangelical activity—could be used as heuristic frameworks to understand Buddhist women's *Lives*.<sup>53</sup> The issue of gender and relatedness is also discussed in the *Life* of Chökyi Drönma. The female gender features prominently in her writings and teachings; it influences how she formed and maintained social relations on worldly, monastic, and esoteric levels.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Melnick 2014.

<sup>51</sup> Jacoby 2014 and Gayley 2017.

<sup>52</sup> Vargas-O'Bryan 2001, 157-85.

<sup>53</sup> Schaeffer 2004, 6-12. Chapters 3, “Sorrow and Joy,” discusses expressions and experiences of emotions as seen in Orgyan Chökyi's *Life*; Chapters 4, “Women, Men, and Suffering” illustrates the gendered reality she lived in and how that reality impacted her religious and social life; Chapter 5, “Religious Practice,” deals with a number of issue in woman's religious life such as body, fasting, place, space, and experience.

<sup>54</sup> Diemberger 2007, 102-48.

For more recent studies, Bessenger makes use of the religious biography of Sönam Peldren to demonstrate how both literary genre and hagiographical agenda shaped the production of her *Life*;<sup>55</sup> while Melnick presents the *Life* of Mingyur Peldrön as documentation to the sectarian history of Mindröling (Smin grol gling) and as a site where her female gender complicates her voice as a religious leader.<sup>56</sup> Jacoby's *Love and Liberation* expands the horizon of life writing by adding the definition of relational selfhood into its definition.<sup>57</sup> Her study on Sera Khandro deals with the recurring issue of a female inferior body and its subtle subversion.<sup>58</sup> She also examines how the "utilitarian" Vajrayāna theology of the union of skillfulness and insight is rendered in emotional expressions like longing and love.<sup>59</sup> In her study of Tāre Lhamo's life, Gayley moves across genres such as life writing, letter, and ethnography, in order to show how gender and cultural memories manifest in narratives and narrativized identities. She foregrounds how Tibetan modalities of agency, with karmic actions as its basis, are used to address and rationalize communal memories of trauma.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bessenger 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Melnick 2014. For example, Chapter 3, "Incarnation and Identity" discusses how Mingyur Peldrön's previous lives and her female gender impacts her role as a religious leader; Chapter 4, "Hearing Mingyur Peldrön's Voice" highlights quotations directly from Mingyur Peldrön in this male-authored *Life* and the complications it has brought about to the voices of this work.

<sup>57</sup> Jacoby 2014, 12-14.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 131-187. Also see Jacoby 2009a, 115-150.

<sup>59</sup> Jacoby 2014, 21, 249-318.

<sup>60</sup> Gayley 2017, 19.

Despite the flourishing of scholarship on Tibetan women and their *Lives*, it bears remembering that writing hagiographies or auto-hagiographies for a woman remains a rare endeavor. Unlike Europe during the Middle Ages, where we have a cluster of female religious figures from all walks of life; the sample for female *Lives* in pre-modern Tibet is too limited for generalization. While it might be difficult to speak of common trends or shared features across a relatively small sample, no other Tibetan women have more of a claim to be the prototypal female Buddhist than Yeshe Tsogyel. She is most widely represented in different genres across traditions, holds constant emanations through time, and manifests in many women's lives and visions. Her life, *Lives*, and afterlife exemplify women's social status, relational lives, and agency in Tibetan Buddhist narratives.

### **0.3 Theory, Methodology, and Ethics**

In this section, I introduce the two guiding theoretical concerns for the dissertation, the methodology I use, and ethical concerns associated with it. For a discussion on the literary tradition of Yeshe Tsogyel in medieval Tibet, I find it particularly useful to consider how we conceptualize and contextualize the heavy mediation present in these texts. These texts are composed by male authors about a female subject; they are projected to be revealed teachings from a past time (or from a timeless reality), but addressing specifically timely concerns; the continued identity through reincarnation and emanation also blurs the lines between past and present, India and Tibet, male and female, and human and divinity. To arrive at a more nuanced

understanding of gender, authorship, and discourse, I suggest that we take into consideration the two levels on which gender is discussed, the theological and the social, that we look for what texts *do*, not what they *say*, and that we be self-reflexive of our own disciplines and bring ourselves into the conversation.

### ***0.3.1 Contextualizing Gender in Tibet***

The usefulness of gender as a heuristic category in the study of literature and history is hardly news. A gendered recontextualization of the research subject enables us to shift away from the default male perspective and forms of religiosity and refocus on the female one as well as other underrepresented perspectives and forms. Gender is the site where social relationships and power representations influence and shape each other. Examining how gender interacts with other social categories such as class and race also illuminates how these categories become the elementary concepts that ground our thinking.<sup>61</sup> In the context of analyzing gender relationships in religious traditions, gender identity also intersects with the boundary of personhood, that is, what makes the human and the non-human. In the Buddhist world, not only are human beings

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<sup>61</sup> Scott 1986, 1053-1075. For Scott, the core concept in her definition of gender is the mutual influence social relationships and power representations had on each other. It is comprised of four integral aspects: (1) “culturally available symbols that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations;” (2) “normative concept” that set boundaries on the representations of the aforementioned symbols; (3) relationship with politics and social organizations; and (4) subjective identity that could be a reflection of or in conflict with social institutions and power relationships. For the fourth aspect, subjective identities, biography and life writing proves to be a rich embodiment and prime venue of study.

gendered, gods,<sup>62</sup> demi-gods, demons, animals, and hell-beings are also usually assigned a gender. To speak of gender and womanhood in Buddhism, one needs to start with how Buddhism (in the case of this dissertation, Tibetan Buddhism) views gender.

When we talk about gender in Tibetan Buddhist vocabularies, there are at least three levels to our analysis.<sup>63</sup> The first is biological sex. This might be the most straightforward one.<sup>64</sup> In the human realm, there are three sexes: male (*pho*), female (*mo*), and neuter or hermaphrodite (*ma ning*).<sup>65</sup> The male and female sexes are viewed as the normative ones, while the third sex is considered the anomaly. Those who are considered *ma ning* are generally marginalized in society and denied ordination into the Buddhist sangha. The second level is social gender. For medieval Tibetan materials, our subject of study, the social gender by and large agrees with biological sex. While it would be extremely interesting to see a pre-modern account of Tibetan Buddhists identify themselves to be of a gender different than assigned at birth, I have yet to see such a

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<sup>62</sup> This applies to only gods with visible forms. For a discussion on the different types of beings in Buddhist cosmology and their respective sexuality, see Cabezón 2017, 17-77.

<sup>63</sup> In his history of sexuality in South Asia, Cabezón (2017, 334-360) examines the categories of biological sex, gender, and sexual orientation. With the largely heterosexual orientation of tantric materials in which Yeshe Tsogyel is discussed, I find it more productive to further divide different levels in which gender is discussed than to discuss the gendered object of sexual desire in this dissertation.

<sup>64</sup> Recent research has shown us that the binary system of male and female sexes remains an unsatisfactory understanding of human sex. The sexual difference might be best understood in terms of a spectrum with many subtle degrees of variations, rather than a rigid two- or three-fold division, Ainsworth 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Gyatso 2015a, 322-328. The Tibetan word *ma ning* is translating the Sanskrit *paṇḍaka*, while the latter category also includes people who engage in unorthodox sexual activities, see Zwilling 1992. Zwilling and Sweet 1995 also presents a fascinating case of a Jain text in which sexual differences are said to vary across the realms of demigods, humans, and hell beings.

claim.<sup>66</sup> The third level is theological gender. This refers to the gender identities of enlightened qualities that do not necessarily function in an embodied manner. The theological gender, in many cases, corresponds to the linguistic gender. For example, the two most important liberative qualities in Mahāyāna Buddhism, wisdom and method, are gendered female and male respectively.<sup>67</sup> The Sanskrit word for wisdom, *prajñā*, is gendered female, and that for method, *upāya*, is linguistically male. These enlightened qualities also reflect social gender roles in some cases. Wisdom is venerated as the mother of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, the source of all liberative qualities; while compassion or method determines the pedigree of practices, as is usual in a patrilineal succession.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, in our discussion of gender in Tibetan Buddhism, it would be more helpful to resist the tendency to essentialize either the male or female gender as of a fixed, absolute nature, but to recognize the interpolation of theological and social gender. In this case, the distinction between theological and social gender is a more constructive heuristic framework than that between biological sex and social gender. In my analysis of the literary tradition surrounding Yeshe Tsogyel, I identify the sites where the theological gender is projected onto social gender, where social gender functions independently of theological gender, and where the two sets of gender norms entangle with each other and create a paradoxical identity for Buddhist women. In the first

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<sup>66</sup> Tenzin Mariko (1997-) is the first openly Tibetan transgender woman (and a former monk). For a short piece on her life, see Gandhi 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Cabezon 1992b, 186-189.

<sup>68</sup> The association of wisdom, learning, or sacred speech with the female gender has a long history in pre-Buddhist beliefs in South Asia. I discuss this in the fourth chapter, “Khandroma Yeshe Tsogyel.”

case, one might see claims that as a woman, Yeshe Tsogyel is not inherently lacking in her enlightened capacities; the second case is exemplified by the lamentation of Yeshe Tsogyel (and many other Tibetan women) about the unfortunate destiny that befalls them; while the third scenario is most richly expressed in the many contradictions of what makes her a khandroma.

This picture becomes more complicated with the ethical aspect of gender and reincarnated identities. From a Buddhist perspective, gender is not value-neutral.<sup>69</sup> Being born in a woman's body means having inferior karma and encountering more difficulties in this life; while being born as a man means having more freedom and independence.<sup>70</sup> However, a relational identity and the mechanics of rebirth makes gender fluidity possible. While one is born into a given gender based on past deeds, gender in this life is not the final verdict: current actions could bear fruit in future lives, including changing to a more favorable gender. It is common to recount one's previous births in a *Life*; a male master could be born as a woman multiple times in his previous birth, or vice versa.<sup>71</sup> If that is the case, is gender still an determining factor in Buddhist practice or social status in general? Many Tibetan Buddhist women, Yeshe Tsogyel included, made prayers that they may be reborn as a man. Is this wish to become a man necessarily

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<sup>69</sup> This only applies to biological gender or social sex, but not theological gender. This is because enlightened virtues are always seen in a positive light.

<sup>70</sup> This notion may come from an androcentric root that recognizes the male body as a superior body, but it also shows awareness of women's disadvantaged position in life. I discuss the representations of female inferiority in Chapter 2, "The Disciple Yeshe Tsogyel."

<sup>71</sup> For example, of the seven previous lives of Pema Lingpa, as reviewed in his *Life*, three of them are women. These seven are: Princess Pemasel (female), Rikma Sanggyekyi (Rig ma Sangs rgyas skyid, female), Jomo Pemadröl (Jo mo Padma sgrol, female), Ngakchang Rinchen Drakpa (Sngags 'chang rin chen grags pa, male), Pema Ledretsel (Padma las 'brel rtsal, male), Longchenpa, and a Tökar. Padma-gling-pa 2003, 31-39. Herrmann-Pfandt 1986 and 2000 also discusses the previous births of Machig Labdrön, especially one in which she takes a male birth.



discounting the female gender? Or could it be understood as an aspiration to be able to enjoy the benefits of their virtuous actions in this life?

### 0.3.2 *Theological Logic and Literary Actors*

In addition to querying the theological gender in the *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel, I also question the theological logic of these narratives. According to historian Gabrielle Spiegel, the “social logic” of a text is its “site of articulation and its discursive character as articulated ‘logos,’” that is, what are the effects in its readers that the composition sets out to achieve, and what methods and formal features are used to achieve said effects. To understand the social logic of a text is to read it in its “local or regional social context of human relations, systems of communication, and networks of power,” and to understand texts in its dialectic relationship with the social world it is situated in.<sup>72</sup> To account for the particular liberative concern required of a *Life*, which makes it distinctive from a secular biographical account, I interrogate the “theological logic” behind composing a *Life* and the purpose this composition serves.

Generally, the composition of a *rnam thar* or a *Life* implies that its protagonist (male or female) has attained enlightenment, for the genre name *rnam par thar pa* itself means “complete liberation.” The theological logic for writing a *Life* requires accumulating favorable materials adding to its subject’s prestige and building up a narrative from the usually miraculous birth to the

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<sup>72</sup> Spiegel 1990, 77-78; also see Clark 1998, 5-14, also 30-31.

point of liberation. It is from this perspective I propose to examine the representations of Yeshe Tsogyel in her *Lives*.

Different from what is normally considered biographies or hagiographies in a non-Buddhist context, from a theological perspective, *Lives of Tibetan Buddhist masters* at the same time claims and negates individuality. They negotiate the conflict between the Buddhist doctrine of “no self” (Skt. *anātman*) and an implicit “self” or active agent that is present in any biographical accounts, by applauding the unique life story of one person and stressing her or his extraordinary characteristics, but at the same time situating individuals with the broader network of personal relationships, past reincarnations, and karmic consequences.<sup>73</sup> The notion of individuality is complicated by the relational and interdependent personhood of its subject. Moreover, individuality or the pretense of individuality could also be a deliberately disguised act. To bring about spiritual maturation and final liberation for her disciples, a teacher inspires by acting out an exemplary life. Furthermore, based on the history of Buddhist practices in Tibet, the emphasis on experience (both psychological and physical) in Tantric Buddhist practices might also be taken as the main reason for the blossoming of life writing in Tibet. This is because such practices offer reflections on individual experiences that provide valuable insight into personal transformation.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> The relational aspect in hagiographical or biographical accounts is not a uniquely Tibetan phenomenon. Jacoby considers the relational selfhood as “an alternative register” usually found in Western autobiographies of women. She argues that this relational selfhood is also characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist *Lives* and is commonly represented by multiple voices present in the *rnam thar*. Jacoby 2014, 12-14, 92-100.

<sup>74</sup> Gyatso 1992, 476-477. She also considers the impulse behind writing a Buddhist autobiography as an interest in historical change as individuals and the use of a readily available “script for life” in her study of the autobiography of Jigme Lingpa, see Gyatso 1998, 109-114.

A *Life* stands at the threshold between an ordinary person and an enlightened being, and it is all about crossing that threshold. For a female master's *Life* in particular, the gendered aspect of this transformation becomes more prominent. The *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel contain rich details of both the social gender norms that operate in the everyday world, and the theological gender that enables a definitive departure from this world. It is a site where contested views on gender and womanhood are mediated within the same embodiment.

To address the issue of historicity—there might never have been a real woman whose name is Yeshe Tsogyel, who had lived in eighth-century Tibet, and who performed all the deeds that were recorded in various later narratives—I propose that we move beyond the historical concern, and read the role of Yeshe Tsogyel in her *Lives* primarily as a literary actor or actant. An actor or actant, in the “minimal, secular, nonpolemical” sense, is defined as “an association of humans and nonhumans,” whose members act, or, more precisely, “modify other actors.”<sup>75</sup> With this definition, an actor needs not be an actual human being or a community of human beings, rather, its role in social actions is measured by its degree of participation and influence in relation to other actors. Language is also seen not only as mimetic, but as generative. In this sense, the way out of the “linguistic turn” is to account for the problematic nature of representations and the social function of them.

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<sup>75</sup> Latour 2004, 75.

Reading Yeshe Tsogyel's *Lives* is to understand how literary accounts about her reveal people's thinking about Buddhist women and lineage transmission during that time. By seeing Yeshe Tsogyel as an actor in the history of the Terma tradition, we can discuss her role in the tradition, especially its literary imagination, from a relational perspective, without being burdened by the historical question of whether she had actually lived in eighth-century Tibet. Yeshe Tsogyel does not need to be a real human woman to become the mother of Tibet.

### **0.3.3 Liberation Philology**

#### **0.3.3.1 Why Philology?**

Having established that a Tibetan Buddhist theory of gender and agency is needed when we read the *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel, I wish to now return to how I read the texts themselves. Much is at stake when we read and try to make sense of a text. Not only is language the vehicle to transport the subject of our study, it also reflects on us as researchers, our own situatedness and concerns. This dissertation is a study of textual sources. The methodology I employed in the dissertation also centers on how to read a text. The first step is to identify narratives that say something about Yeshe Tsogyel and find out what they say about her; and the second is to understand what they mean when they say it. Philology is helpful in both regards.

My way of reading these source narratives about Yeshe Tsogyel is based on the three goals of a new form of philology, as outlined by Sheldon Pollock. 1. the “textual meaning;” 2. the

“contextual meaning;” and 3. the “philologist’s meaning.”<sup>76</sup> The textual meaning requires one to determine what the text is, and what it says. The contextual meaning provides a corrective to an obsession with the “true meaning” of a text, a potential pitfall if we only concern ourselves with searching for the textual meaning. Understanding the contextual meaning requires the scholar to “see things their way,” that is, to look beyond the text and at the tradition itself, and to ask what available resources and commentaries can be drawn there. For the first two meanings, Pollock argues for the following objects for philological investigation and theorization:

The history of manuscript culture and what I once called script mercantilism; its relationship to print culture and print capitalism; the logic of text transmission; the nature and function of commentaries and the history of reading practices that commentaries reveal; the origins and development of local conceptions of language, meaning, genre, and discourse; the contests between local and supralocal forms of textuality and the kinds of sociotextual communities and circulatory spheres thereby created ...<sup>77</sup>

Of the fields of inquiry listed here, I find the questions about modes of transmission, local conceptions of textuality, and sociotextual communities to be the most productive in a discussion about Terma, Terma literature, and history. In my discussion on tantric consortship in Chapter 3, I also rely on traditional commentaries as well as contemporaneous sources for a contextual understanding of consort relationship in Treasure communities.

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<sup>76</sup> Pollock 2009, 950-958.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 949.

Still, the first two meanings leave behind a key player in the act of interpretation: the reader (or the philologist). The philologist's meaning, Pollock argues, is for the philologist to acknowledge her conditioned role in the act of reading and interpretation, and to let herself become an active conversation partner in the process. In reading the literary tradition of Yeshe Tsogyel, I find it particularly useful to maintain self-reflexivity in my analysis of gender. Following the liberation theologians who call for social awareness and acts of faith that brings about the fulfillment of human beings,<sup>78</sup> I call this methodology liberation philology.

#### 0.3.3.2 Why Liberation?

Liberation philology aims at helping us to understand texts and convey meanings in a way that fulfills the need for a more just scholarship and, by extension, a more just society. The liberation goes both ways. It is the emancipation from imposing a liberal-progressive interpretive framework onto traditions in which this framework holds little explanatory power; it is also the uncoupling with the historical baggage of Buddhist androcentrism or philological colonialism.

The need for a liberation came from my uneasiness in dealing with the literary and lived traditions of Buddhist women. The attitudes toward the lives and *Lives* of Buddhist women seem to be divided into two camps. One sees Buddhism as a largely androcentric (if not downright misogynistic) tradition that has done little to promote gender equality in its many historical emanations, and its tantric form especially exploitative. Or, for others (usually coming from

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<sup>78</sup> For a brief introduction to liberation theology, see Gutierrez 2007, 19-38.

within the tradition), the Buddha's teaching has always been about doing away with dualistic distinctions—gender included—and this in agreement with gender equality.

In the former stance, the critique of some Buddhist teachings and practices is based on an implicit presupposition that they do not fit the current progressive agenda. This critique, while not unjustified, adds little beyond making a tautological statement that a non-progressive or non-liberal discourse is not liberal or progressive. In moving away from a limited vocabulary of secular agency, individuality, and empowerment, and asking what other interpretative frameworks could make for constructive discussion, I find Saba Mahmood and Nirmala Salgado particularly useful. Mahmood defines her goal in dissecting Muslim women's piety movement in the mosques in Cairo as to "develop a language for thinking about modalities of agency that exceeds liberatory projects (feminist, leftist, or liberal)."<sup>79</sup> More recently, Salgado's work on Sri Lanka and Tibetan nuns questions the transplantation of a secular, liberal vocabulary into the everyday practice of Buddhist nuns.<sup>80</sup>

One also needs to acknowledge the historical baggage that comes with the discipline of philology and how "religious studies" and "history of religions" came to be.<sup>81</sup> A much welcome corrective

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<sup>79</sup> Mahmood 2012 [2005], x.

<sup>80</sup> Salgado 2013.

<sup>81</sup> Masuzawa argues that the genealogy of "world religions" is intimately intertwined with the history of philology. Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Confucianism, Daoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam—the "great religions of the world" as we know today, are identified from the perspective of the European West, their differences demarcated with criteria that predispose a way of thinking about religion that is already found in the person(s) making such distinction. Further, their classification is largely the result of nineteenth-century philological research. The three distinct language groups recognized at this time—Semitic, Aryan, and Turanian—also correspond with

in recent years comes from the field of Indigenous studies. The discussion on the ethics of research and the colonial history associated with it echoed my discomfort with the lack of theoretical contribution from Buddhist Studies (and Asian Studies) to the wider field of Religion Studies. Language always comes as the first barrier in textual study; all of us spend years wrangling with the intricacies of a foreign tongue. But the language in which the research is presented in can also be problematic. Language plays a central role in constructing a research framework that foregrounds the epistemological knowledge of its subject of study, as our thinking and our language cannot be separated.<sup>82</sup> While hyphens, dashes, and parentheses are used to mark nuances in the English language, how do we identify the hidden meanings and micro-resistances in a language without the hyphen, dash, or parenthesis, or present them in non-verbal forms (cadence, gestures, or facial expressions)?

To overcome the seemingly impenetrable alterity caused by language barriers and reach beyond the mere acknowledgment of the plurality of cultures and religious traditions, we need a philology that is rigorous and responsible in its historical understanding but at the same time oriented toward creating a more equitable academic world in the future. I also find inspiration from the threefold principles proclaimed by Donald Davis—to care first, to learn from, and to

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major religions in the world; linguistic genealogies match sectarian developments in religious traditions. Masuzawa 2005, see especially Chapter 5, “Philology and the Discovery of a Fissure in the European Past” and Chapter 7, “Philologist out of Season: F. Max Müller on the Classification of Language and Religion.”

<sup>82</sup> In her introduction to Indigenous methodologies, Kovach (2010, 59-61) situates these methodologies in the larger context of qualitative research and academia and discusses the importance of language in centering tribal knowledge.



connect histories—particularly useful.<sup>83</sup> I am not advocating that a free pass to interpret Buddhist texts in whatever progressive way we see fit, or to stick with obtuse commentaries in fear of a liberal-progressive hermeneutics. What I am suggesting in a liberation philology is to take the act of reading responsibly. The starting point of a liberation philology is always the text. But while reading the text, one should always keep in mind the persons and actors that made this text possible, and the possibilities that comes with the act of reading.

#### **0.4 Chapter Outline**

Keeping in mind the dual focus of representations of female religiosity and the creation of a Terma origin narrative, chapters in this dissertation look at three aspects of the role of Yeshe Tsogyel: a disciple, a consort, and a *khandroma* or *dākinī*. Not unlike the threefold distinction of outer (*phyi*), inner (*nang*), and secret (*gsang*) in Tibetan scholasticism and literature, which represents the worldly, doctrinal, and visionary levels of teachings,<sup>84</sup> the three aspects of Yeshe Tsogyel represent her role in the lineage transmission, in a tantric heterosexual relationship (in theory as well as in practice), and as a fully transformed, divine being. This threefold division does not reflect an actual divide in how Yeshe Tsogyel is imagined in the Treasure tradition. Rather, these

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<sup>83</sup> Davis 2015.

<sup>84</sup> Quintman 2013, 8.

aspects overlap with one another and are to be used only as heuristic techniques that reveal how transmission, community, and gender are conceived of in Terma.

After an introduction to Yeshe Tsogyel, the Treasure tradition, and Tibetan Buddhist history in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Chapter One, “The Story of Yeshe Tsogyel,” outlines all available, early written information about Yeshe Tsogyel, gleaned from the first known reference to her in twelfth-century religious histories to full-fledged life stories of her in the fifteenth century. I then discuss the primary sources to be used in the following chapters and the various genres at work in her literary tradition.

Chapter Two, “The Disciple Yeshe Tsogyel,” queries her role as the foremost disciple of Padmasambhava. From the thirteenth century onward, Yeshe Tsogyel is always among the few most important disciples of Padmasambhava. As evidenced in numerous Treasure colophons from revelations stemming from Padmasambhava as well as in the stylized meta-narratives of question-and-answer accounts, she is responsible for receiving and transmitting his teachings to future generations. This chapter discusses the distinctive use of *zhus lan* texts or dialogues in Treasure cycles as a deliberate effort to adopt the canonical dialogical style in order to authenticate a lineage of teachings. This effort also contributes new methodologies for literary reinvention through the creative process of reincarnation and the shift of the geographical center for scriptural creation away from India to Tibet. In addition to using a scriptural format to authenticate Treasure teachings, these dialogues are also rich venues to explore the issue of female inferiority and women’s access to Buddhist teachings.

Chapter Three, “The Consort Yeshe Tsogyel,” explores the consort relationship between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava and suggests that her heterosexuality and Tibetan identity are two key aspects that have contributed to her apotheosis. Because of the crucial role a consort plays in deciphering Treasures and connecting lineage transmissions, there is a felt need for the Treasure literature to defend tantric sexuality as operating on the enlightened plane and different from secular intimacy. The relationship between tantric partners, the identity of a consort, and the goal of consort practice are all sublimated to be soteriologically (and only soteriologically) oriented and circumscribed within the context of liberation only.

The fourth and last chapter, “Khandroma Yeshe Tsogyel” begins with a review of what is a *dākinī* in the context of Indo-Tibetan tantric Buddhism. It then moves on to discuss the particular significance of this type of semi-divine beings in Tibet. In Nyingma literature, khandroma has outshined all other female divinities and became the goddess par excellence. By reading khandroma narratives as myth, I argue that the indeterminate nature of the khandroma is where paradoxical gender identities are negotiated. As a khandroma, Yeshe Tsogyel represents the land of Tibet that needs no more subjugation. As an agent without agency and a childless mother, Yeshe Tsogyel also represents the interpolation of two sets of gender norms—the theological and the social.

Becoming a khandroma marks the completion of Yeshe Tsogyel’s apotheosis. She has been rescued (or rather reimagined?) from the margin of religious history and become a permanent member of the Nyingma pantheon. At last, I conclude with a discussion on the later emanations of

Yeshe Tsogyel, both literal and physical, and how she matters in the lives of Tibetan Buddhist women.

## CHAPTER ONE THE STORY OF YESHE TSOGYEL

The most well-known life story of Yeshe Tsogyel is attributed to a Treasure revealer<sup>85</sup> named Taksham Nüden Dorje (Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje, b.1655). This life story is widely circulated and printed at various locations, and has been translated into French, English, and Chinese.<sup>86</sup> In this story, Yeshe Tsogyel is hailed as the most supreme consort of Padmasambhava, “the only sun to rise above Tibet’s dark land,” “the only mother of Tibet,” and “the mother of all Buddhas past, present, and to come.”<sup>87</sup> However, virtually no evidence can be found of someone named Yeshe Tsogyel in sources that date back to the imperial period. The name Tsogyel, or her clan name, Kharchenza (Mkhar chen bza’), began to pop up in Buddhist histories and narrative accounts around the twelfth century. The first full-length life story of Yeshe Tsogyel appeared a little over one hundred years later in central Tibet.

How do we account for the literary lacuna from the time when Yeshe Tsogyel is said to have lived to the time when her name is first brought up by Tibetan Buddhist authors, and to the time when she is regularly celebrated as the matron saint of Tibet? How do we negotiate the many different

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<sup>85</sup> More on what Treasure and Treasure revealer are in the next section, “Revelation and Remembrance of an Imperial Past.”

<sup>86</sup> Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje 2013. There are three English translations of this work: Nam-mkha’i-snying-po 1983, 1996, and 1999. For the French translation, see Gyalwa Tchangchoub and Namkhai Nyingpo 2005; for the Chinese translation, see Nankainingbo 2011.

<sup>87</sup> For example, Nam-mkha’i-snying-po 1999, 4, 5, 182, 186.

stories these literary accounts tell about her? This chapter traces the literary history surrounding Yeshe Tsogyel, and provides an overview of the sources used in the dissertation. Yeshe Tsogyel is, first and foremost, known by her association with Padmasambhava, a tantric master who has visited Tibet in the eighth century and is credited to have transformed Tibet into a land of Buddhism. Yeshe Tsogyel is listed as one of his twenty-five Tibetan disciples; in some cases, she and Tri Songdetsen are singled out to be his two principal followers. She is also recognized as the disciple with perfect memory, who has committed all of Padmasambhava's teachings to writing.

Yeshe Tsogyel is said to have had a felicitous birth—her parents had auspicious dreams before she was born. During her birth, there were also auspicious omens like celestial sounds and rainbow light. Her parents's names were Kharpup (Mkhar phub) and Bedrön (Sbas sgron), Sanggye Yeshe (Sangs rgyas ye shes) and Getsoma (Dge mtsho ma), or Dorje Drenpa (Rdo rje dran pa) and Selgyi Döndrup (Gsal gyi don grub). They were king and queen of a small kingdom named Kharchu (Mkhar chu), or Yuru Drak (G.yu ru sgrags), most possibly in central Tibet, on the north bank of the Tsangpo (Gtsang po) River. Her birth year is either a Wood Bird Year (745) or a Male Earth Mouse Year (748). As an infant, her body was encircled with light. She could speak when she was just born. As a small child, Yeshe Tsogyel is said to have performed many miraculous deeds characteristic of an emanated master. She also grew faster than ordinary children. At the age of eleven, she already started giving teachings and empowerments to others; she also expressed her wish to leave home and practice Buddhism then.

Her journey to become a practitioner is not at all smooth sailing. Her parents and relatives were not supportive of her goal. Their reasons range from wanting her to be married to a prince in a

nearby kingdom to a general suspicion of women's capacity to endure hardship and practice. In addition to convincing her parents to let her go, she also had to get away from aggressive suitors. Different sources disagree on how she began her study and practice. In the later, more well-known life story of hers, to resolve the dispute between her suitors, the king Tri Songdetsen summoned her to be one of his queens. For the purpose of receiving transmission on the secret mantra, he then offered her to the Indian master Padmasambhava, whom he had invited to Tibet for the propagation of Buddhism. In the earlier stratum of Yeshe Tsogyel's *Lives*, her meeting with Padmasambhava took place without any intermediaries. It is either that she called out to Padmasambhava at a moment of desperation, when she was held hostage by a prince, such that he manifested in front of her and took her away, or that she left her family behind, traveled on foot to Samye (Bsam yas), and began her learning with Padmasambhava there.

Yeshe Tsogyel's transformation from a human woman to an enlightened goddess was set in motion henceforth. She studied and practiced extensively with Padmasambhava, from exoteric instructions on meditation to the utmost secret practice of tantric union. She also attained infallible memory (*mi brjed gzungs thob*) and was entrusted with the task of writing down Padmasambhava's teachings, encoding them into a secret language, concealing them all over Tibet, and ensuring their transmission to future generations. Her life story is also furnished with many other impressive feats. She and Padmasambhava defeated the schemes of an evil queen of Tri Songdetsen and her brother. She traveled to hell to rescue an evil minister who had mistreated her in the past. She also recruited disciples of her own and placed them on the path to liberation. After Padmasambhava left Tibet, she consoled his disciples, who are dispirited at his departure, and ultimately led them to Padmasambhava's Pure Land, the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain (Zangs mdog dpal ri).

What I have given above is an abridged version of Yeshe Tsogyel's life story, as it is told in the two earlier *Lives* of her and other contemporaneous sources that contain significant biographical information of her. Even this relatively short account of Yeshe Tsogyel's life story did not emerge fully formed without any uncertainties. Different sources record various birth dates, places, and names for her parents. She may or may not have been a queen of Tri Songdetsen. She is not always present in the earliest accounts of Padmasambhava. While we have more details about her life and activities in standalone hagiographies of her, they do not always agree on what kind of activities she was engaged in, which textual transmission she received, or whether she traveled to hell to liberate beings there.

To understand the blossoming of concerted literary creations about Yeshe Tsogyel, which began at the second half of the thirteenth century, we need to look back to the very beginning of her literary tradition. This chapter provides an overview of literary accounts about Yeshe Tsogyel from the eleventh to the fifteenth century, starting with passing mentions of her in Tibetan religious histories and hagiographies. Her life story was gradually fleshed out with the growth of Treasure literature, especially with narratives concerning the origin of Treasures.

### ***1.1 From the Margin of Buddhist Histories: Early Mentions of Yeshe Tsogyel***



Multiple voices have played a role in creating the literary image of Yeshe Tsogyel. For the emerging Treasure tradition, the need to trace an unbroken lineage transmission back to the Tibetan Empire in the eighth century requires its members to construct a shared history of their revealed teachings. This glorious past comes either from the transmission lineage of the tantric master Padmasambhava, or from the monk Vimalamitra. As a part of Padmasambhava's retinue (and later the most important personage in this group), the name Yeshe Tsogyel shows up in narratives about his activities in Tibet. However, her role as the sole trustee of Padmasambhava's teaching only become standard in later times, as Padmasambhava becomes the preferred source of teachings for Nyingma Treasure revealers and the narrative of Yeshe Tsogyel's infallible memory gains popularity. This section provides an inventory of the multiple accounts about Yeshe Tsogyel before the fourteenth century, and highlights the many literary hands who have shaped her image.

Although Yeshe Tsogyel is considered to have lived in eighth-century Tibet, to date there are no extant textual records of her that date back to the Imperial period. In the earlier narratives, Yeshe Tsogyel is usually referred to by her clan name, Kharchen Za, or "lady of Kharchen," sometimes in combination with the name Tsogyel. Before the early 2000s, very little was known about the early accounts of Yeshe Tsogyel in modern scholarship.<sup>88</sup> It is only in recent years that several works that belong to the early strata of Yeshe Tsogyel literature resurfaced and were made public. In the first section, I examine religious histories from both Nyingma and non-Nyingma sources for the existence (and absence) of Yeshe Tsogyel.

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<sup>88</sup> Janet Gyatso's introduction to a previously unknown *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel has provided us with some of the earliest historical as well as religious narratives about her, Gyatso 2006.

### 1.1.1 Pre-fourteenth century histories

In the early religious histories that mention the name Tsogyel or Kharchenza Tsogyel, she is either associated with the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava or the Tibetan king Tri Songdetsen. One of the earliest Tibetan sources that mention the name Tsogyel is the *Testimony of Ba* (*Dbā’/Rba/Sba bzhed*) corpus.<sup>89</sup> However, not all editions in the corpus contain the same information. Yeshe Tsogyel is nowhere to be found in the *Dbā’ bzhed*, usually considered the earliest complete edition of the corpus or containing the most ancient textual layers.<sup>90</sup> In the later editions, a Tsogyel is mentioned as one of the queens of King Tri Songdetsen (742-c.800):<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> The *Testimony of Ba* corpus presents a particularly thorny case for determining textual transmission. There are at least five text recensions in this corpus (Sun 2015):

1) *Dbā’ bzhed*: see Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger 2000. This book also includes a translation of the Tibetan text.

2) *Sba bzhed*: Mgon po rgyal mtshan 1980.

3) *Rba bzhed*: this is copied by Pawo Tsuklak Trenngwa (Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag ’phreng ba, 1504-1566) in his religious history (Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag ’phreng ba 1986, 293-406).

4) *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*: this is the manuscript copied and edited in Stein 1961. This text is also translated into Chinese in Tong and Huang 1990.

5) *Chos ’byung yi ge zhib mo*: “Chos ’byung gi yi ge zhib mo” in Bde skyid 2009, 159-236. This collection edited by Dekyi (Bde skyid) also contains a print version of the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*, *Sba bzhed*, and *Dbā’ bzhed*.

For a discussion on the textual relationships between these editions, see Doney 2013 and Sun 2015.

<sup>90</sup> First, *Dbā’ bzhed* retains many archaic terminologies and does not contain “legendary materials” that are more typical of later sources on Tri Songdetsen and Padmasambhava (Pasang Wangdu and Diemberger 2000, 11-14). There are also two fragments from Dunhuang that correspond only with *Dbā’ bzhed*, rather than later editions, see van Schaik and Iwao 2008, 477-488.

<sup>91</sup> On the date of King Tri Songdetsen, see Dotson 2007, 15 and Dotson 2009, 123, 128-9.

Of the five queens of [Tri Songdetsen], the Lady of Chim (Mchims), Lhamotsen (Lha mo btsan), and the Lady of Kharchen, Tsogyel, because they were engaged in meditative practices, they did not leave behind any monuments.<sup>92</sup>

Considering that the *Dbā' bzhed* is the edition that has the least favorable description of Padmasambhava, it is understandable that this edition also did not say much about Yeshe Tsogyel. However, it is worth noticing that even in later editions of the *Testimony of Ba* corpus, she is only depicted as one of the queens and not associated with Padmasambhava in any way.

Yeshe Tsogyel is also known to some Tibetan historians in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The *Extensive History of Buddhism in India and Tibet* (*Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*) by Khepa Dewu (Mkhas pa lde'u, thirteenth century)<sup>93</sup> lists her as one of five disciples who have received empowerment from Padmasambhava, alongside Tri Songdetsen. Here, Yeshe Tsogyel assumed a more prominent role. She was recognized by Padmasambhava as a wisdom *ḍākinī* who can travel to Akaniṣṭha heaven. When the king raised doubts about the master's skills, she acted as the messenger between the two. In the end, Tri Songdetsen was assured of Padmasambhava's

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<sup>92</sup> Mgon po rgyal mtshan 1980, 54: *jo mo lnga khab tu bzhes pa lal mchims bza' lha mo btsan dangl mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal gnyis sgrub pa mdzad pas phyag ris med doll*

This record is also found in *Rba bzhed* (Dpa' bo Gtsug lag 'phreng ba 1986, 360), *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma* (Stein 1961, 46), and *Chos 'byung yi ge zhib mo* (Bde skyid 2009, 198; also 40, 131). These different versions of the *Testimony of Ba* only contain spelling variations. In Dekyi's reproduction of *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*, Yeshe Tsogyel's name is written as *'tsho rgyal*; in "Chos 'byung gi yi ge zhib mo," her clan name was *'khar rje za* rather than *Mkhar chen bza'*.

<sup>93</sup> Leonard van der Kuijp has proposed the date of Khepa Dewu's *Chos 'byung* to be the second half of the thirteenth century. Note that there is another history of Buddhism composed by Dewu Jose (not to be confused with Khepa Dewu's work, although these two are possibly drawing from "a common store of information" and "written in a similar cultural ambiance"), which will be discussed below. See van der Kuijp 1992, 468-91. Also see Karmay 1998, 291-292 and Dotson 2007, 7n8.

abilities and requested his help in the construction of Samye Monastery.<sup>94</sup> Later in the text, she is again listed as one of the eight queens uninvolved in political matters.<sup>95</sup>

The religious history of Nelpa/Newu Paṇḍita Drakpa Mönlam Lodrö (Grags pa smon lam blo gros, thirteenth century?)<sup>96</sup> mentions a Queen Kharchenza as one of the three queens who became ordained after the first seven monks (*sad mi bdun*).<sup>97</sup> Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen's (1312-1375) *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* (*Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*) records a somewhat different story between Padmasambhava, Tri Songdetsen, and Yeshe Tsogyel. She is still recognized as one of the queens to Tri Songdetsen, but in the interlinear notes<sup>98</sup> she is said to be given to Padmasambhava as the required offering for the king's empowerment (*dbang yon*), which caused all the ministers to be displeased.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Mkhas pa lde'u 1987, 347-348.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 379: *srid mi zin pa'i jo mo brgyad lal ljang mo khrid btsun snyen steng snyen ma lodl 'bro bza' ma khang gsing ma lodl tshe spong bza' khri ma gung rgyall 'bro btsun khri mo legs! mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyall zhang zhung bza' sngo bzher lig tig sman! 'chims bza' dang brgyad bang sor brtsigs soll*

<sup>96</sup> Helga Uebach places the date when Nelpa Paṇḍita completed the composition for this work in 1283, a Female Water Sheep Year, Uebach 1987, 15-17.

<sup>97</sup> Grags pa smon lam blo gros 1985: 20: *de las gyes nas btsun mo gsum* 'khar chen gza' btsan mol byang chub rje btsan mol 'chims gza' lha mo btsan! *gyi dbu byas pa'i 'bangs ral pa can sum brgya dus gcig la rab tu byung!*

<sup>98</sup> Per K. Sørensen identifies these interlinear annotations as made by “some anonymous glossarist” (possibly more than one) other than the author and puts their date before the blockprint edition, i.e., from 1369 to 1478, Sørensen 1994, 37.

<sup>99</sup> Bsod nams rgyal mtshan n.d.: 85a: *rgyal po la ji ltar 'dod pa'i dngos grub ster bar khas blangs nas! rgyal pos klu'i ngo chen mdzad nas thugs dam blang ngoll yang slob dpon gyis ngam shod kyi bye thang thams cad ne'u thang du gtang bzhed nas! blon po ngan pa rnam kyis rgyal po la zhus tel slob dpon gyis rgyu 'phrul yin pas ring du mi gnas shing mi rung ngo zhes zer te mdzad par ma zhus! gzhan yang* *slob dpon gyis rgyal po'i btsun mo mkhar chen bza' 'tsho rgyal dbang yon du khab tu bzhes pas! blon po thams cad ma dga' bar! rgyal po la bsnyan 'phra zhus nas! rgyal pos slob dpon gyi zhal la ma nyan pas 'dzol pa chen po gsum byung zer ba la sogs dang* *slob dpon mthu che bas rgyal srid la gnod par nges! slob dpon yul la gshegs par zhu zhus soll*

In the aforementioned histories or religious histories, someone named Kharchen Za Tsogyel is recorded as a queen to King Tri Songdetsen. She is a Buddhist, but her connection with Padmasambhava is only attested in the *Extensive History of Buddhism in India and Tibet* and the interlinear notes of *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*. Not all of these accounts recognize her as a character in the event of Tri Songdetsen inviting Padmasambhava to Tibet or in the Nyingma lineage transmission at this time.

In religious histories with Nyingma affiliations that also associate their transmission with the Indian monk Vimalamitra, the name Yeshe Tsogyel was nowhere to be found. For example, although the theme of entrusting secret teachings to *ḍākinīs* as well as a narrative of the construction of Samye Monastery are present in the *Great History of the Seminal Heart of the Great Perfection (Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi lo rgyus chen mo)* by Zhangtön Tashi Dorje (Zhang ston bkra shis rdo rje, 1097-1167),<sup>100</sup> a history of the transmission of Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) teachings, the name Yeshe Tsogyel does not appear in this work.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> On the date of Zhangtön, see Karmay 1988, 209, 211. Note that Franz-Karl Ehrhard considers only the last part of this work (i.e., the section titled *Gang zag snyan brgyud*) composed by Zhangtön Tashi Dorje, Ehrhard 1990, 105.

<sup>101</sup> For example, Śrī Siṃha is said to have entrusted teachings to an unnamed *ḍākinī*; there are also two *ḍākinīs* who are responsible to guard concealed teachings in Tidro (Ti sgro) and Kongpo (Kong po) respectively. Zhang ston bkra shis rdo rje 1982-1987, vol.45, 603-604, 630. This work is also found in many editions of the *Bi ma snying thig* in *Snying thig ya bzhi*.

With Vimalamitra as the eponymous hero in this Treasure cycle, Padmasambhava only makes two appearances in the text and does not play a role in the narrative of the construction of Samye, *ibid.*, 692, 655. For the account of the construction of Samye, see 635ff.

In Rog Bande Sherab Ö (Rog Ban de Shes rab 'od, 1166-1244) the *Text that Explains the Beliefs of the Different Philosophical Schools, the Great Dharma History and Doxography: A Lamp of the Teachings* (*Grub mtha' so so'i bzhed gzhung gsal bar ston pa chos 'byung grub mtha' chen po bstan pa'i sgron me*),<sup>102</sup> Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel are not recognized as the power couple as they are in later times. His name is only mentioned twice in the entire text and hers none at all.<sup>103</sup> Another history of Buddhism composed around this time, *Victorious Banner of Teachings: A Great History of Buddhism* (*Chos 'byung chen mo bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan*) by Dewu Jose (Lde'u jo sras),<sup>104</sup> also does not record the name Yeshe Tsogyel or Kharchen Za.<sup>105</sup> A contemporary of Dewu, Jomden Rigpai Raldri (1227-1305), also composed a history of Buddhism. This work only very briefly touches on Tri Songdetsen's invitation of Śāntarakṣita and

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<sup>102</sup> This is one of the earliest Tibetan doxographical works extant. There are two editions available: (1) The Ladakh version: Rog ban de Shes rab 'od 1977; (2) The *Bka' ma* version: this is included in the *Rnying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, Rog ban de Shes rab 'od 1999, vol.114, 105-316.

<sup>103</sup> Cabezón suggests that this reticence on Padmasambhava as well as the Treasure tradition could be a deliberate attempt on Sherab Ö's part to distance himself from them. Alternatively, it is possible that the Padmasambhava cult "had yet to become a distinctive marker of Nyingma identity." Cabezón 2013, 32-33.

In both cases in which Padmasambhava was mentioned, he was listed among a number of masters who either brought out the Ancient Tantras or form a group of pundits on those tantras. Rog ban de Shes rab 'od 1977, 37, 117; Rog ban de Shes rab 'od 1999, 137, 209; also see Cabezón 2013, 86, 156.

<sup>104</sup> On the date of the two Dewu histories, see note 88 above.

<sup>105</sup> This work does mention three other queens of Tri Songdetsen who had constructed monuments at the site of Samye: Queen Changchubje (Byang chub rje), Queen Tsebongza Metokdrön (Tshe spong gza' Me tog sgron), and Poyongza Gyelmotsun (Pho yong gza' Rgyal mo btsun). Of the three, Changchubje also served as the supervisor (*lag dpon*) of the three hundred monastics. Lde'u jo sras 1987: 130-131.

Padmasambhava but does not mention the name Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>106</sup> For later, non-Rnying ma historians in the fourteenth century, Yeshe Tsogyel is not necessarily recognized as one of the imperial figures present when Padmasambhava came to Tibet. The *Religious History of the Lord of Yarlung* (*Yar lung jo bo'i chos 'byung*) records Padmasambhava's miraculous activities in Tri Songdetsen's court (with serious reservation) but makes no reference to a Tsogyel.<sup>107</sup>

### 1.1.2 Nyangrel Nyima Özer

Nyangrel Nyima Özer (1124-92) is considered the first among a group of five “Treasure Kings (*gter ston rgyal po lnga*).”<sup>108</sup> He is also the main architect for the apotheosis of Padmasambhava, who shared a significant part of his activities with Yeshe Tsogyel during his stay in Tibet.<sup>109</sup> Nyangrel revealed the first full-length *Life* of Padmasambhava, the *Copper Island Biography*.<sup>110</sup> This work contains narrative elements about Yeshe Tsogyel. However, its different recensions contain varying degrees of biographical details. In the earliest (and the shortest) recension, as well as another work by Nyangrel Nyima Özer, *Honey Nectar, The Essence of Flowers: A History of*

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<sup>106</sup> Bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri n.d., 20a. I thank Kurtis Schaeffer for sharing a digitized edition of this work with me.

<sup>107</sup> Shākya Rin chen Sde n.d., 37b ff.

<sup>108</sup> The five Treasure kings are: Nyangrel Nyima Özer, Guru Chöwang (1212-1270), Dorje Lingpa (1346-1405), Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po, 1820-1892). 'Jam dbyangs Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po 1972, 41.

<sup>109</sup> For Nyangrel's role in raising the profile of Padmasambhava as the central figure for the Treasure tradition, see Hirshberg 2016, 177-201.

<sup>110</sup> For example, Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer 1989. Doney 2014 is a study of two earlier textual recensions of this *Life* of Padmasambhava. Yeshe Tsogyel is represented slightly differently in the earlier and later exemplars, which I discuss below.

*Buddhism* (*Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*),<sup>111</sup> Yeshe Tsogyel is first listed among the twenty-five disciples (*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*) who have received empowerment as well as prophecies regarding their attainments from Padmasambhava.<sup>112</sup> This episode was described in more detail in the later recension of the *Copper Island Biography*.<sup>113</sup> Here each disciple throws a gold flower into the *maṇḍala*, and, according to where the flower lands, their affiliation with a deity and subsequent practice is determined. Because her flower landed in the *maṇḍala* of Vajrakīlaya (*Rdo rje phur ba*), Yeshe Tsogyel was given the tantra and *sādhana* associated with Vajrakīlaya.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1988. Doney considers *Honey Nectar* to be based on the same earliest recensions of the *Copper Island Biography*, Doney 2014, 31.

<sup>112</sup> Here her name is recorded as “Jo mo 'tsho [sic] rgyal.” *Padma bka' chems brgyas pa*, 73b; *Bka' thang zangs gling ma* (NGMCP manuscript): 60a. These two manuscripts are reproduced in Doney 2014: 174, 284.

*Honey Nectar* records “Jo mo Bkra shis mtsho rgyal” instead of “Jo mo Mtsho rgyal;” it also adds six consorts of Master Padma with good qualities to the list. These six women are also record as having a conversation with Padmasambhava in another *zhus lan* or dialogue attributed to Nyangrel. I discuss this texts in the next chapter. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1988: 341-342: *dri med zla shar snyags dznyā na ku ma ra dangl shel dkar bza' rdo rje mtsho dangl 'bros bza' he pa ma dangl ru yong bza' 'thing ma dangl mchims bza' rin chen sa le 'odl mer gong bza' gsal le la sogs pa*.

<sup>113</sup> For a detailed list of the different exemplars we have of the *Copper Island Biography* to date and a proposed stemma of these exemplars, see Doney 2014, 42, 59-77.

<sup>114</sup> Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, 116-117. Here only eight disciples of Padmasambhava (*rje 'bangs brgyad*) was listed: King Tri Songdetsen, Nub Namkhai Nyingpo (Gnubs Nam mkha'i snying po), Nub Sanggye Yeshe (Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes), Ngenlam Gyelwa Chokyang (Ngen lam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs), Jomo Kharchenza (Jo mo Mkhar chen bza'), Drokmi Pelgyi Yeshe ('Brog mi Dpal gyi ye shes), Lang Pelgyi Sengge (Rlangs Dpal gyi seng ge), and Vairocana (Bai ro tsa na). We do not see the addition of the names of other consorts of Padmasambhava that appeared in *Honey Nectar*.



Yeshe Tsogyel was one of the key personalities who aided Nyangrel in his Treasure revealing activities. For example, in one of his Treasure revelations, he was first approached by Padmasambhava in a vision, informing him of the Treasures concealed at Khoting ('Kho 'thing) Temple and Sinpo Barje (Srin po sbar rjes) Cliff. Then, with the help of Yeshe Tsogyel, he was able to retrieve a Treasure chest at Sinpo Barje Cliff.<sup>115</sup> After his first successful recovery of Treasure at Sinpo Barje Cliff, his second attempt at retrieving Treasure in the Pearl Crystal Cave at Juniper Ridge (*Mu tig shel gyi spa ma gong*) was also accompanied by a group of ḍākinīs, headed by Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>116</sup> It is worth noting that Nyangrel considered his wife, Jobumma (Jo 'bum ma), an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyel, while he claims to be the reincarnation of King Tri Songdetsen.<sup>117</sup>

### 1.1.3 Yeshe Tsogyel in Colophons

Yeshe Tsogyel remained only a somewhat insignificant persona in the early Padmasambhava lores. It is her frequent appearance in Treasure colophons that established her as the most important

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<sup>115</sup> Myang ston rig 'dzin Lhun grub 'od zer 1979, vol.2, 335-339.

<sup>116</sup> Chos kyi 'od zer, Myang ston bsod nams seng ge, and Mi 'gyur rdo rje 1978, 99-100. For a discussion of the Treasure recovery narratives in the *Stainless Proclamations* (*Sprul sku mnga' bdag chen po'i skyes rabs rnam thar dri ma med pa'i bka' rgya chan la ldeb*), one of the *Lives* of Nyang ral himself, see Hirshberg 2016, 111-125, especially 122-123 for a discussion on the image of eroticism in Treasure revelation associated with Yeshe Tsogyel and the ḍākinīs, evident in Nyangrel's Treasure revelation narratives. More on the eroticism in these Treasure encounters in the third chapter.

<sup>117</sup> However, even as an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyel, Jobumma is not featured prominently in Nyangrel's *Lives* and does not seem to command great respect from him. In one instance, Nyangrel referred to his son with the honorific *sku* but uses the non-honorific *lus* for his wife. Gyatso 2006: 5.

disciple of Padmasambhava with a central responsibility for the transmission of his teachings. A narrative about how the Treasures came into being was crafted at this time; it featured Yeshe Tsogyel at the center of the action. It is said that because of her infallible memory, she is assigned the role of recording, concealing, and ensuring the transmission of Padmasambhava's teachings to future generations. In other words, like the role she had assumed between King Tri Songdetsen and Padmasambhava in Khepa Dewu's religious history, here she becomes once again the intermediary between Padmasambhava and his disciples. Only in this case, she is required to mediate between personalities as well as space and time.<sup>118</sup> For example, Yeshe Tsogyel features in the narrative frame qua colophon of the *Copper Island Biography*:

The emanation of Sarasvatī, Queen Mother Tsogyel has attained the *siddhi* of infallible memory. For the sake of future generations, she has written down the mind transmission of the Master, the royal testament of King Tri Songdetsen, and the virtues of the Great Compassionate One. Having buried them as precious Treasures, she concealed them for the sake of [future] fortunate ones. [She] applied three layers of seals on them. Seal of Treasure. Seal of Concealment. Seal of Entrustment. Ithi.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> I discuss this aspect of Yeshe Tsogyel's identity as an intermediary in the fourth chapter, "The Khandroma Yeshe Tsogyel."

<sup>119</sup> *Padma bka' chems brgyas pa*, 122b-123a: *ma jo mo mtsho rgyal dbyang chen* [sic] *ma'i sprul pal mi rjed ba'i gsung thob pa del phyi rabs don dul slob dpon gyi thugs brgyudl mnga' bdag khri srong lde'u btsan gyi bka' chems thugs rje chen po'i yon tan yi ge ris su bris tel rin po che'i gter du sbas nasl bskal ldan las can gyi don du bzhas gollrgya rim pa gsum gyis btab toll gter rgyall sbas rgyall gtad rgyall ithill*

Also see *Bka' thang zangs gling ma* (NGMCP manuscript), 100b-101a. Here Yeshe Tsogyel was referred to as *Ma cig mkhar chen gza' mtshor* [sic] *rgyal*. Other exemplars of the *Copper Island Biography* vary on whether she was mentioned as an emanation of Sarasvatī and what kind of teaching was transmitted (in a manuscript titled *Slob dpon padma'i rnam thar dri ma med pa* from the Library of the Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente in Rome, only this *Life* of Padmasambhava was named as the teaching being buried as Treasure). Later recensions also add details on the Treasure revealer, viz. Nyangrel Nyima Özer. Doney 2014, 57-58, especially n141, 142, and 143.

This narrative contains several elements that will later become commonplace in a standard Treasure narrative: (1) Yeshe Tsogyel was the designated trustee of Padmasambhava's teachings; (2) For the sake of future generations, she wrote down these teachings and concealed them as Treasures; and (3) Yeshe Tsogyel was assigned this role because of her attainment of infallible memory. This third one is a common element, but is not shared by all versions.

However, not all of the Treasure writings at this time agree with this narrative that foregrounds Yeshe Tsogyel's role as the trustee for Padmasambhava's teaching. Another Terma cycle revealed by Nyangrel, the *Eight Teachings of the Sugatas* (*Bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*), clearly considered the Tibetan emperor Tri Songdetsen and the translator Vairocana, rather than Yeshe Tsogyel, as the transmitter of teachings. In the following two colophons from this cycle, Vairocana serves as a co-translator with Padmasambhava, while King Tri Songdetsen does the concealment.

The Learned One from India, Great Master Padmasambhava and me, the Tibetan Translator Vairocana, translated and requested [this], it is settled down [in writing].<sup>120</sup>

The Indian Scholar, Great Master Padmasambhava, and the Translator Vairocana translated and requested [this], it is settled down [in writing]. King Tri Songdetsen concealed his personal copy as a precious Treasure.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> "Rtsa ba'i brgyud kyi rgyal po," in Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1979-1980, 1: 83: *rgya gar gyi mkhan po slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas dang/ bod kyi lo ts+tsa ba bdag bai ro tsa nas bsgyur cing zhus te gtan la phab pa'o//*

<sup>121</sup> "Nges par 'byung ba phyi ma'i rgyud," *ibid.*, 104: *rgya gar gyi mkhas pa slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas dang/ lo tsa ba bai ro tsa nas bsgyur cing zhus del gtan la phan pa'o// rgyal po khri srong lde btsan gyi phyag dpe/ rin po che'i gter du sbas ba'o//*

Similar statements can be found in other texts within the cycle, such as *Phyi ma'i rgyud*, *Phyi ma phyi ma'i rgyud*, *Phyi ma'i phyi ma sngags kyi rgyud dam ma tshang ba kha skong ba'i rgyud*, and *Ma tshang ba kha bskong ba'i rgyud*.

The *Seminar Heart of Vimalamitra* (*Bi ma snying thig*), another early Nyingma Treasure cycle most possibly redacted by Zhangtön Tashi Dorje in the twelfth century,<sup>122</sup> does not even mention Yeshe Tsogyel's role in concealing and transmitting Treasures. Rather, it is the Indian monk Vimalamitra and his teaching lineage that are highlighted. Although the language of concealment and entrusting Treasures to local guardian deities is present, we do not find any disciple of Padmasambhava (or Padmasambhava himself, for that matter) involved. This cycle identifies Vimalamitra as the main composer, transmitter, or redactor of these teachings. In the process of concealment, the text only occasionally specifies names beyond generic terms like “protector king for mantras (*sngags sring gi rgyal po*)” or *ḍākinīs*.<sup>123</sup>

#### 1.1.4 *Guru Chöwang*

In the Treasure texts associated with Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (*Gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug*) or Guru Chöwang, another one of the five Treasure kings, Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, and Tri Songdetsen are regularly being worshipped and praised as a triad of religious heroes. Consider the

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<sup>122</sup> See Germano, “Appendix One, Chronicle of the Early Seminal Heart Transmission,” in *Mysticism and Rhetoric in the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen)*. In keeping with the focus on Vimalamitra rather than Padmasambhava as the origin of his teaching lineage, Zhangtön's history of Buddhism does not mention Yeshe Tsogyel or Kharchen Za at all.

<sup>123</sup> For example, the colophon of *Shog tshad nges pa kha byang* claims itself to be the composition of the Great Scholar Vimalamitra and entrusted to Ekajati as the guardian. The colophons of *Dung yig can rgyud kyi khong dun bsdus pa sgron ma snang byed* and *Gsang ba yi ge ma ru'i yang tig*, on the other hand, only mention unnamed *ḍākinīs* whom Vimalamitra assigned to be the protectors of teachings. Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol. 1: 47, 294, vol. 2: 115.

following prayer in Guru Chöwang's own *Life*, the *Great Collection of Maṇi Teachings* (*Ma ṇi bka' 'bum chen mo*):

May we never be separated from the Dharma Body, Amitābha,  
And forever in his company!  
Om Maṇi Padme Hūm Hrīḥ

May we never be separated from the Enjoyment Body, the Great Compassionate One,  
And forever in his company!

May we never be separated from the Emanation Body, Padmasambhava,  
And forever in his company!

May we never be separated from the Singular Mother, Yeshe Tsogyel,  
And forever in her company!

May we never be separated from the Dharma King, Tri Songdetsen,  
And forever in his company!<sup>124</sup>

In his own *Life*, Guru Chöwang is frequently guided by ḍākinīs in his Treasure revelation.<sup>125</sup> His instructions extend to male and female students alike.<sup>126</sup> He is also considered to have penned

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<sup>124</sup> Gu ru chos dbang 1981, 50: *chos sku snang ba mtha' yas de dangll gtan tu mi 'bral 'grog par shogll om ma ṇi pad me hūm hrīḥll longs sku thugs rje chen po de dangll bstan du mi 'bral 'grog par shogll sprul sku padma 'byung gnas de dangll bstan du mi 'bral 'grog par shogll ma gcig ye shes mtsho rgyal de dangll bstan du mi 'bral 'grog par shogll] chos rgyal khri srong lde btsan dangll bstan du mi 'bral 'grog par shogll*

<sup>125</sup> For example, Phillips 2004, 142.

<sup>126</sup> Phillips 2004 (345-346) records a list of audience Guru Chöwang engaged with in his *Life*. This list includes his female companies, noblewomen, a group of male and female disciples, Mistress Tsetsha Tsunema (Btsad tsha btsun ne ma), and his own secret consort, Semo Chönyi (Sras mo Chos nyid).

possibly the earliest standalone *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, although to date we have had no luck locating such a work.<sup>127</sup>

Guru Chöwang is also said to be associated with the revelation of another Treasure cycle with a medical focus, titled the *Vase of Deathless Ambrosia* (*'Chi med bdud rtsi bum pa*).<sup>128</sup> Set against

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<sup>127</sup> Gyatso 2006, 5, 12. A Chöwang is mentioned in two of the full-length *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel as a potential discoverer of her life story.

The first one is a *Life* discovered first by Drime Kunga (b.1347?) and then later by Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), I discuss this *Life* in detail in the next section about sources used in the dissertation. In this work, Padmasambhava bestowed the following prophecy to Yeshe Tsogyel before he departs Tibet: “At that time, because sentient beings do not have a place of refuge, the emanations of Mtsho rgyal and Padma will protect them and establish them onto the path of maturity and liberation. Specifically, there will be five people born in the Snowy Land, who bear the significant karmic connection and will be the successor of my profound teaching as well as your liberation story. [One] is this present-day Dharma King Tri Songdetsen. After many lifetimes, his last lifetime of activity will be at the border of Lho and Mon. He will be known as Chökyi Wangchuk. He will benefit sentient beings and that will be his last lifetime before enlightenment” (DK1: 259). Here, the final reincarnation of King Tri Songdetsen before he reaches enlightenment is going to be someone with the name Chökyi Wangchuk, he is also one of the five future holders of Padmasambhava’s teachings as well as Yeshe Tsogyel’s *Life*.

The second *Life* is the more well-known one, discovered by Taksham Nüden Dorje and titled *Lute Song of the Gandharvas Revealing the Secret: The Deeds and Liberation Story of Yeshe Tsogyel* (*Yeshe Tsogyel gyi mdzad tshul rnam thar gab pa mngon phyung dri za'i glu phreng*). The following prophecy is given by Yeshe Tsogyel herself in response to the request of a group of her disciples (Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje 2013, 143):

In particular, this life story [of mine] has nine auspicious connections:  
First, if one with the name Chöwang takes out the Treasure,  
Its fame and benefit will spread to all kingdoms,  
Eventually reaching the border regions as far as China.

Here, a Chöwang is named as the first among nine future revealers of this *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel. The other personalities mentioned are a Tashi (Bkra shis) from Latö (La stod), a Dorje (Rdo rje) also known as Pawo (Dpa' bo), a Radza (Ra dza) from the region of Shampo (Sham po), a Dorje from Puwo (Spu bo), a Kunga (Kun dga'), and three women without names.

<sup>128</sup> I thank William McGrath for bringing the *Vase of Deathless Ambrosia* to my attention and sharing with me his own works on this text.

the backdrop of the Mongol invasion of Tibet in 1240, the root tantra of this cycle records a conversation between Padmasambhava and Kharchenza Tsogyel.<sup>129</sup> She asked the master:

Emaho! Great master Padma  
 Who is endowed with supreme clairvoyance!  
 In the degenerate time, in the bodies of sentient beings,  
 Will the affliction of plague spread?  
 Will the barbarians descend on the people of the central land?  
 How much of the Buddha's teaching will persist?  
 It is indeed the time for me to receive the prophecy.  
 I humbly request your teaching for the sake of future generations.<sup>130</sup>

In reply, the master confirmed that indeed such a time will come and explained that it is due to the growth of mental and physical negativities, such as the five poisons (*dug lnga*) and the ten non-virtues (*mi dge sdig bcu*).<sup>131</sup> She further asked about the causes and conditions of these diseases, Padmasambhava then unfolded the teachings of this root tantra. In the end, she was entrusted with this teaching and asked to deliver it to a predestined being at the appropriate time.<sup>132</sup> This story is similar to the narrative of entrusting and concealing Treasures in Nyangrel's *Copper Island*

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<sup>129</sup> “‘Chi med bdud rtsi bum pa’i rtsa rgyud,” in *Slob dpon pad byung gi sman yig gces btus* 2006, 1-9. For a discussion of the history and transmission lineage of this text, see Simioli 2019, 221-227. McGrath 2018 provides the historical context of this concern with plagues and epidemics during this time.

<sup>130</sup> “‘Chi med bdud rtsi bum pa’i rtsa rgyud,” 2: *e ma ho ngo mtshar che l slob dpon padma chen po lagsl nyid ni mngon dus gsum mkhyen pa’i shes che dang ldanl snyigs dus sems can mi lus lal nad kyi gnod pa dar mi darl mtha’ mi dbus su lhung mi lhungl sangs rgyas bstan pa ci tsam gnasl mkha’ ’gro’i lung bstan mkha’ ’gro’i thob pa du tsam mchil ma ’ongs don du bstan par zhul zhes yum gyis zhus soll*

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 9.

*Biography*; it also adds the element of Yeshe Tsogyel requesting prophecies (*lung bstan*), which will also become a standard component in later Treasure narratives.

In Guru Chöwang's apologetic history of Terma, the *Gter 'byung chen mo*, he aimed to situate the activity of Treasure revelation firmly in the lineage of Mahāyāna Buddhism,<sup>133</sup> rather than making a case for the particularity of the Tibetan tradition. This is done by citing precedents of revelatory practices in Buddhist history and offering a generous definition and a somewhat liberal taxonomy of what a Treasure is.<sup>134</sup> He divides Treasures into outer, inner, secret (including body, speech, and mind), and "the perfect core of the definitive thusness," "the root of all Treasures." Interestingly, in his discussion of the secret tantric Treasures, where the Tibetan Terma will presumably fit, Padmasambhava (and by extension, Yeshe Tsogyel) were not recognized as important characters in Treasure transmission.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, in the *Illuminating Lamp: A Grand History of Terma* (*Gter 'byung chen mo gsal ba'i sgron me*) revealed by Ratna Lingpa (Ratna gling pa, 1403-1478), Yeshe Tsogyel was only mentioned a few times in passing and mostly in the context of her bodily relics. Her staff marks the sign of Treasure in a cave west of Gungthang (Gung thang); ten statues (*sku tshabs*) of her were found as part of a Treasure revelation; along with Garab Dorje's sacred medicine, Śrī Siṃha's elixir, and Padmasambhava's sacred medicine,

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<sup>133</sup> More on the continuities between Terma and Mahāyāna Buddhist canonical literature in Chapter Two, "The Disciple Yeshe Tsogyel."

<sup>134</sup> Guru Chöwang identifies the essence of all Treasures as the all-encompassing Ground (*kun gzhi*), the enlightened mind (*byang chub gyi sems*). Chöwang also includes Bonpo Treasures into his taxonomy; his strategy can be best summarized as "making everything into Treasure." Gyatso 1994, 276, 279.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 277-279.



remains of her nose blood was retrieved as a Terma.<sup>136</sup> This is in keeping with Ratna Lingpa's intention of demonstrating the similarities between Tibetan Treasure and Indian Mahāyāna literature.<sup>137</sup>

### 1.1.5 Piecing Together the Early Story of Yeshe Tsogyel

What does this host of strata in the earliest biographical sources about Yeshe Tsogyel say of her? As seen above, a few biographical details are shared among these accounts. A Kharchenza Tsogyel is commonly listed among the queens of King Tri Songdetsen (the *Testimony of Ba*, Khepa Dewu's *Extensive History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, Nelpa/Newu Paṇḍita's history, and Lama Dampa's *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*).<sup>138</sup> Her connection with Padmasambhava was not uniformly recorded by historical accounts. Neither the *Testimony of Ba* nor the *Nelpa chos 'byung* has her as a disciple of Padmasambhava; only the interlinear notes in *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* mention that she was offered to the master as a fee for the

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<sup>136</sup> Ratna gling pa 1977-1979, 115-116, 145-147, 151, and 155. Garab Dorje, Śrī Siṃha, and Padmasambhava are part of the Great Perfection Seminal Heart (Rdzogs chen snying thig) transmission lineage.

<sup>137</sup> Doctor 2005, 33-38.

<sup>138</sup> In mentions of Yeshe Tsogyel by Nyangrel and Guru Chöwang, she is referred to as either “Jo mo mtsho rgyal” or “Mkhar chen bza’ mtsho rgyal.” Although there is no direct mention of her as the queen to Tri Songdetsen, it is reasonable to assume that the terms *jo mo* and *mkhar chen bza’* here indicate her implicit status as one of his queens.

On the contrary, the earliest known *Life* of her, discovered by Drime Kunga in the fourteenth century, does not provide this detail of her as Tri Songdetsen's queen. More on this *Life* in the following section on sources.

king's empowerment.<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, Khepa Dewu's history of Buddhism contains a detailed story of Yeshe Tsogyel. This episode depicts Yeshe Tsogyel as a crucial go-between of Padmasambhava and Tri Songdetsen, a wisdom *dākinī* or *khandroma*, and as someone who seems to share a special connection with Padmasambhava (although she is not said to be his disciple here). She is recognized as one of Padmasambhava's main disciples in both Nyangrel Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang's writings.

In the early Treasure revelations by Nyangrel and Guru Chöwang, Yeshe Tsogyel began to take on a more prominent role as the designated disciple who has received all of Padmasambhava's teachings, especially the Vajrakīla practices.<sup>140</sup> More importantly, her central role in the concealment of these teachings as Treasure and their subsequent transmission become well-attested in the colophons of Terma cycles at this time. Associated with this intermediary role also comes her ability of infallible memory and to traverse spatial as well as temporal boundaries. In later sources, it would be inconceivable to write a *Life* of Padmasambhava without mentioning Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>141</sup> Independent works dedicated to the life story of Yeshe Tsogyel also began to appear at this time.

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<sup>139</sup> This story is later reiterated in Longchenpa's *Precious History of How the Treasure [Tradition] Came into Being*, Dri med 'od zer 2009, 6: 365-366. Here Tsogyel is said to be the daughter of Ruza Gyelmo (Ru bza' Rgyal mo mtsho). After being offered to Padmasambhava, she became his consort or karmamudrā (*las rgya*) and accompanied him wherever he went. More on her identity as a consort in this work by Longchenpa in Chapter 3, "The Consort Yeshe Tsogyel."

<sup>140</sup> However, one needs to be cautious about dating Yeshe Tsogyel's connection with the Vajrakīla teachings, as it is only mentioned in the later recensions of the *Copper Island Biography*.

<sup>141</sup> I have only seen one later, nineteenth-century *Life* of Padmasambhava where Yeshe Tsogyel is not featured prominently. This work is titled *Seizing the Depth of the Miraculous Ocean: An Account of the Previous Lives of the Victorious One, the Lake-Born Immortal Being* ('Chi med

## 1.2 Sources used in This Dissertation

In the following section, I introduce the Tibetan sources that I draw on for the discussion of the literary representations of Yeshe Tsogyel in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These texts come from a variety of narrative genres, including hagiographies or life stories (*rnam thar*), chronicles (*bka' thang*), question-and-answer accounts (*zhus lan* or *dris lan*), oral instructions (*zhal gdams*), empowerment rituals (*dbang*), and paratextual sections such as colophons.

### 1.2.1 The Two Earlier Lives of Yeshe Tsogyel

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*mtsho 'khrungs rgyal ba'i rtogs pa brjod pa ngo mtshar rgya mtsho'i 'jings snam*). There are two versions of this text, Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs 195? and 2007. The editor for the 2007 version, Lodrö Gyatso (Blo gros rgya mtsho), identifies Sönam Gyatsö Drayang (Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs) as a monk from Pelyul (Dpal yul) in Kham who lived in the nineteenth century (Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs 2007, 8).

In this work, the name Yeshe Tsogyel is only mentioned in the opening verses of homage as an emanation of Sarasvatī (*bsgyur mkhas dbangs can mtsho rgyal 'dud*) and as a dākinī/khandroma whose wisdom appears in the ocean of being's minds (*'gro blo'i chu mtshor snang mkhas mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal*). Rather, it is the Zahor consort Mandarava who was praised alongside Padmasambhava. Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs 2007, 1, 2.

### 1.2.1.1 The Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus

The Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus is the earliest full-length *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel to date and is attributed to Drime Kunga (b.1347?) and Pema Lingpa (1450-1521).<sup>142</sup> Beyond the versions attributed to Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa, this work also emanates in different length in later Treasure literature, which will be discussed below.

Not much is known about the life of Drime Kunga. According to the few brief biographical accounts about him, he is an emanation of Sanggye Yeshe; his father's name is Peljor Zangpo (Dpal 'byor bzang po) and his mother Dzompa ('Dzoms pa). He was born in a place named Drachi Khangmar (Gra phyi khang dmar) in the Lhokha region (today Shannan), between Gyeltse (Rgyal rtse) and Dromo (Gro mo). His activities are also primarily in Lhokha area, especially along the Tsangpo River valley.<sup>143</sup> He was born on the tenth day (Guru Padmasambhava Day) in a fire pig

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<sup>142</sup> This work has been translated into English by Anne Holland in *Dri med kun dga'* 2017. The translation is based on the DK2 edition, to be discussed below.

<sup>143</sup> Khyenrab Gyatso's (Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho) *Precious Garland: Question-and-Answers on the History of the Buddha's Teaching* lists Drime Kunga's birthplace as Drachi Khangmar, while other sources have the name Drachi Dakhyungmar (Gra phyi'i mda' khyung dmar) or Drachi Dakhangmar (Gra phyi'i mda' khang dmar). Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho 1981, 391-93; Kun bzang nges don klong yangs 1976, 129a-130b; Gu ru bkra shis n.d., 2: 736-42; and Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 1976, 1: 529-532. Angowski (2019 56n92) also adds two later biographical accounts of Drime Kunga, found in Karma Mingyur Wangyel's (Karma Mi 'gyur dbang rgyal, 1823-1883) *Gter bton* [sic] *gyi lo rgyus gter bton* [sic] *chos 'byung* and Dragkar Daso Trulku Chökyi Wangchuk's (Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug, 1775-1837) *Emanation of Master Sanggye Yeshe, Tertön Drime Kunga (Slob dpon sangs rgyas ye shes kyi skye ba gter ston dri med kun dga')* respectively.

year, most possibly 1347.<sup>144</sup> He was said to be born with the auspicious physical mark of a impressive thumb-sized protrusion on his head (*dbu la gtsug tor mtheb gang gi rnam par mdzes pa*). He has spent his life studying, practicing, and revealing Treasures in the form of both texts and precious objects.<sup>145</sup> Very few of his works remained. In addition to this *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, we only have one other *sādhana* text attributed to him in a miscellaneous collection of Terma teachings, titled the *Most Excellent Secret Sādhana of the Great Compassionate One, Yeshe Ö* (*Thugs rje chen po ye shes 'od mchog gi gsang sgrub*).<sup>146</sup>

Pema Lingpa was born in the Ura valley of Bumthang in today's Bhutan, close to the southern border of Lhokha. During his lifetime, Pema Lingpa made multiple trips to Lhokha. This *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel was discovered by him in Lhodrak Mendo (Lho brag sman mdo') in Lhokha in 1483.<sup>147</sup> The respective date (b.1347 and 1450) of these two Treasure revealers makes it unlikely

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<sup>144</sup> Not all the biographical accounts we have about Drime Kunga agree on an exact birth year. Of the five prophecied recipient of this *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, he came last, after Guru Chöwang (1212-1270), Ogyen Lingpa (1323-1360), Drime Özer (Longchenpa, 1308-1363), and someone named Padmavajra. Considering that he also predates and does not overlap with Pema Lingpa (1450-1521), Drime Kunga's birth date is most possibly the fire pig year of 1347, not 1407. Gyatso 2006, 8n33.

<sup>145</sup> At the meditation cave of Yeshe Tsogyel at Samye Chimphu, he is said to have extracted Treasure texts as well as sacred objects, such as jewels, *stag sha* (a type of medicinal herb), *de ba* (also medicinal herb), and a piece of turquoise that has been worn around Yeshe Tsogyel's neck. Gu ru bkra shis n.d., 2: 736-42: *ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi mchims phu brag sna nas gter bzhes rgyu'i kha byang dngos su gtad/ ... gzhan yang nor bu stag sha de ba dang/ mtsho rgyal mgul g.yu sogs gter rdzas kyang mang du gdan drangs/*

<sup>146</sup> This is a manuscript written in *dbu med* script, housed in Tsamdrak (Mtshams brag) Monastery in Bhutan. The entire collection is titled *Thor bu gu ru ananta's gter ma sogs* (Guru Ananda is Drime Kunga's secret name, or *gsang mtshan*). It also contains Treasures from other revealers and is digitized through the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP). For an introduction to the EAP, some of the manuscripts and their filming process, see Karma Phuntsho 2006.

<sup>147</sup> Aris 1989, 217.

that they have met each other. A connection may be established through Karpo Kunga Drakpa (Dkar po Kun dga' grags pa, fl. 15<sup>th</sup> century), an “actual disciple” (*dnegos slob*) of Drime Kunga who has met with Pema Lingpa and transmitted to him Drime Kunga’s Mahākaruṇika teachings. It is possible that Pema Lingpa is made aware of Drime Kunga’s *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel through his meeting with Karpo Kunga Drakpa.<sup>148</sup>

This corpus is first made known in Gyatso 2006, in which she referred to three manuscripts she accessed in Lhasa in the 1990s.<sup>149</sup> Two textual exemplars from the corpus, attributed to Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa respectively, were reproduced in the sixth volume of *Garland of White Lotuses: Liberation Stories of Great Female Lives in Tibet* (*'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*).<sup>150</sup> I was able to locate further exemplars from manuscripts scanned by the Endangered Archives Programme (EAP) at British Library and from other extant sources.<sup>151</sup> Below is a list of all the textual exemplars I have located:<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Angowski 2019, 70n131.

<sup>149</sup> Gyatso attributes all three Lhasa manuscripts she was able to photocopy to Drime Kunga. However, one of them might be better attributed to the Pema Lingpa text group, as it contains a key variation of the name of Yeshe Tsogyel that differentiates the Pema Lingpa text group from the Drime Kunga one. Gyatso 2006, 7-8, n30. More on these two text groups below.

<sup>150</sup> This is a sixteen-volume collection of *Lives* of great Buddhist women, compiled and edited by the Aryatāre Editorial and Publishing House at Larung Gar (Bla rung sgar), Bla rung aryatāre'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013. For a complete description of the texts and female figures featured in this collection, see Cape and Liang 2015.

<sup>151</sup> I thank Elizabeth Angowski for bringing to my attention an incomplete version of the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus in Tashi Tobgyel's *Life* of Padmasambhava.

<sup>152</sup> For a physical description of all currently available textual exemplars, including woodblock print edition found by Janet Gyatso in Lhasa in 1996, see Angowski 2019, 307-332.

<b>DK1</b>	Drime Kunga, <i>Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun ma</i> , <sup>153</sup> a modern computer-input book edition that is a reproduction of DK4.
<b>DK2</b>	Drime Kunga, <i>Mkha' 'gro gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi mthun min nang gi brda don gsang ba'i rnam thar chen mo</i> , <sup>154</sup> a modern computer-input pecha edition.
<b>DK3</b>	Drime Kunga, <i>Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis [sic] rnam par thar pa</i> , <sup>155</sup> a manuscript from Dongkarla Monastery in Bhutan (EAP570/1/2/13).
<b>DK4</b>	Drime Kunga, <i>Mkha' 'gro mas [sic] bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyis [sic] skyes rabs le'u bdun pa</i> , this is a manuscript reproduced in Kham. <sup>156</sup>
<b>PL1</b>	Pema Lingpa, <i>Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa</i> , <sup>157</sup> a modern computer-input book edition.
<b>PL2</b>	Pema Lingpa, <i>Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa</i> , <sup>158</sup> a manuscript from Drametse Monastery in Bhutan (EAP 105/1/3/113).
<b>PL3</b>	Pema Lingpa, <i>Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar</i> , a manuscript from Drametse Monastery in Bhutan (EAP 105/1/3/132).
<b>PL4</b>	Pema Lingpa, <i>Mkha' 'gro gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar</i> , a manuscript from Ogyen Choling Monastery in Bhutan (EAP 105/2/1/8).
<b>PL5</b>	Pema Lingpa, “Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas bar bkod pa” in <i>Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che</i> , <sup>159</sup> this is a reproduction of a set of manuscripts from Gangten (Sgang steng) Monastery in Bhutan.

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<sup>153</sup> Bla rung aryatāre'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013, vol. 6, 180-261.

<sup>154</sup> This edition is based on the Lhasa woodblock print edition found by Janet Gyatso (the original woodblock print edition is unavailable). The editors have mentioned that they compared their versions with that of Pema Lingpa's, corrected “numerous spelling mistakes,” and filled in some of the missing lines, DK2: 1-2.

<sup>155</sup> It is digitized by EAP and is written in *dbu chen* script. The colophon writes “[this is] the revealed Treasure of Drime Kunga” (*dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o*, DK3, 99b-100a).

<sup>156</sup> Dri med kun dga' in *Khams khul nas 'tshol bsdu zhus pa'i dpe rnying dpe dkon*, vol. 15, 3-238.

<sup>157</sup> Bla rung aryatāre'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013, vol. 6, 262-331.

<sup>158</sup> PL2, PL3, and PL4 are all EAP manuscripts.

<sup>159</sup> Padma gling pa 1975-1976, vol. 1, 169-275.

<b>PL6</b>	Pema Lingpa, “Mkha’ ’gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas pa” in <i>Padma gling pa’i gter skor</i> ; <sup>160</sup> this is a reproduction of a set of manuscripts from Manang, Nepal.
<b>KT</b>	Excerpt from Tashi Tobgyel’s <i>Ocean of Perfect Wonder</i> ; <sup>161</sup> a reproduction of a Sikkimese blockprint edition.
<b>BKR</b>	<i>Rnal ’byor ma’i grub thob ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar nas sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba nas ston tshul gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam</i> in a modern computer-input collection of return-from-death ( <i>’das log</i> ) stories. <sup>162</sup>
<b>KDMG</b>	“Mkhar chen bza’ mkha’ ’gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar” in <i>Bka’ thang dri ma med pa’i rgyan</i> , a modern computer-input book version which is collection of three life stories of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, and Vairocana. <sup>163</sup>

As seen above, in addition to works attributed to Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa, the same text also emanates, in part or full, in a *Life* of Padmasambhava, two other narrative collections, and an excerpt in a return-from-death narrative collection. This *Life* is preserved in the fourteenth chapter of Tashi Tobgyel’s (Bkra shis stobs rgyal, 1550-1603) *Ocean of Perfect Wonder: Life Story of the Knowledge-Holder, the Accomplished Great Lord Padmasambhava* (*Rig ’dzin grub pa’i dbang phyug chen po padma ’byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar phun sum tshogs pa’i rgya*

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<sup>160</sup> Padma gling pa 1975-, vol. 4, 207-338.

<sup>161</sup> Byang bdag bkra shis stobs rgyal 1976: 491-552. *Ocean of Perfect Wonder* contains chapters 1, 2, and 5 of the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus, but does not include chapters 4 and 7. It also presents a somewhat condensed version of chapters 3 and 6.

<sup>162</sup> Bya bral kun dga’ rang grol n.d., 371-84. For a possible date of Jadrel Kunga Rangdrol, see Cuevas 2008, 16, and 149-150, n20.

<sup>163</sup> Yeshe Tsogyel, Bai ro tsa na, Nus ldan rdo rje, and Blo gros mtha’ yas 2006: 146-183. This *Life* is sandwiched between a *Life* of Padmasambhava and another of Vairocana, attributed to Taksham Nüden Dorje and Jamgön Kongtrul Lodro Thaye (’Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas, 1813-1899) respectively. Yeshe Tsogyel et al 2006, 145: *zhes pa ’di gter ston stag sham rdo rje’i phyag bris gnang ba’i smon lam las phyag bris kyis bu dpe rang las ’di nyid zhal bshus pa’oll*. Also 219: *’chi med bstan gnyis g.yung drung gling pa la dngos grub tu thob pa’oll*. Unfortunately, the *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel itself does not have a colophon, without further evidence, its revealer or author cannot be determined at this point.



*mtsho*), with some parts of the narrative missing. It is also seen in a collection of hagiographies of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, and Vairocana, titled *The Stainless Ornament Chronicles* (*Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan*). Here we found another version of this corpus; in this case, our heroine is called by her clan name, Kharchenza. The third example of textual migration is seen in a collection of return-from-death narratives edited by Jadrel Kunga Rangdrol (*Bya bral kun dga' rang grol*, 19<sup>th</sup> century). This collection repeats almost verbatim the fifth chapter in the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus, an account of Yeshe Tsogyel's journey to the hell realms in search of the evil minister Shantipa.<sup>164</sup>

To establish a possible stemma of all thirteen exemplars, especially those attributed to Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa, I look at this corpus from two perspectives. First, by comparing the paratextual information of this corpus, including chapter structures, incipits, and explicits, we get to understand what part of the text is available in each version. I also examine the content of these versions through a line-by-line comparison of one key episode, the setting and sequence of events during Yeshe Tsogyel's birth, across the entire corpus. The aim of this comparison is also to project a possible source text for KT and KDMG, since we do not have any intratextual clue as to which text among the corpus Tashi Tobgyel and the compiler of KDMG based their work on.

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<sup>164</sup> This episode is also alluded to, albeit very briefly, in the later Taksham *Life*. Here, Shantipa is the minister of the king of Kharchu, who asked Tsogyel's father for her hand in marriage. When her father asked the two suitors to compete and declared that whoever catches her first will be her husband, Shantipa was quick to grab Tsogyel by her hair and dragged her with him. When she resisted, he beat her with a thorny whip. Later, when Yeshe Tsogyel was recounting the difficulties encountered during performing extreme austerities, she related that Shantipa, due to his previous evil doings, was reborn in the hell called Extreme Heat (*rab tu tsha ba*, in the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa version this hell is called *mnar med pa*, the Incessant or Avīci Hell, see, for example, DK1, 253). Filled with compassion, she went down to hell and extracted him from there. Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje 2013, 9, 110.

With the exception of a few incomplete works (to be discussed below), all versions in this corpus share a similar seven-chapter structure:<sup>165</sup>

- Chapter One, The Princess Leaves the Kingdom behind (*lha lcam gyis rgyal srid spangs pa'i le'u ste dang po*), or Teaching the Way in Which the Princess was Born (*lha lcam gyi sku 'khrungs pa'i tshul stan pa'i le'u ste dang po*);
- Chapter Two, The Princess Visits the Land of Ogyen (O rgyan) (*lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi yul rnams bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa*);
- Chapter Three, The Princess Requests Ogyen<sup>166</sup> for Advice in Verses (*lha lcam gyis o rgyan la gdams pa glu'i tshigs su zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa*);
- Chapter Four, The Princess Requests Teachings on the Nine Vehicles in the Presence of Ogyen (*lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi drung du theg pa rim dgu'i chos lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa*);
- Chapter Five, Teaching the meaning of the Princess Going to the Hell Realm (*lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i gnas nas 'gro don bstan pa'i le'u ste lnga pa*), or The Princess Extracts Beings from the Hell Realm (*lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i kham nas 'gro ba bton pa'i le'u ste lnga pa*);
- Chapter Six, The Princess Receives Prophecy (*lha lcam gyis lung bstan thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa*);
- Chapter Seven, The Princess Spreads the Teaching Far and Wide (*lha lcam gyi bstan pa sa phyogs kun tu rgyas pa'i le'u*).

All the textual exemplars, especially the Bhutanese manuscripts, present serious differences from each other. There are variant readings, scribal mistakes, missing or added words, phrases, and sentences. In some cases, entire pages or folios are missing. Five texts in this corpus are not complete. KT does not include chapters 4 and 7 and presents a somewhat condensed version of chapters 3 and 5. KDMG seems to be missing pages between chapters 1 and 2, and again between

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<sup>165</sup> For a comparison of variations in the chapter titles, see Appendix I.

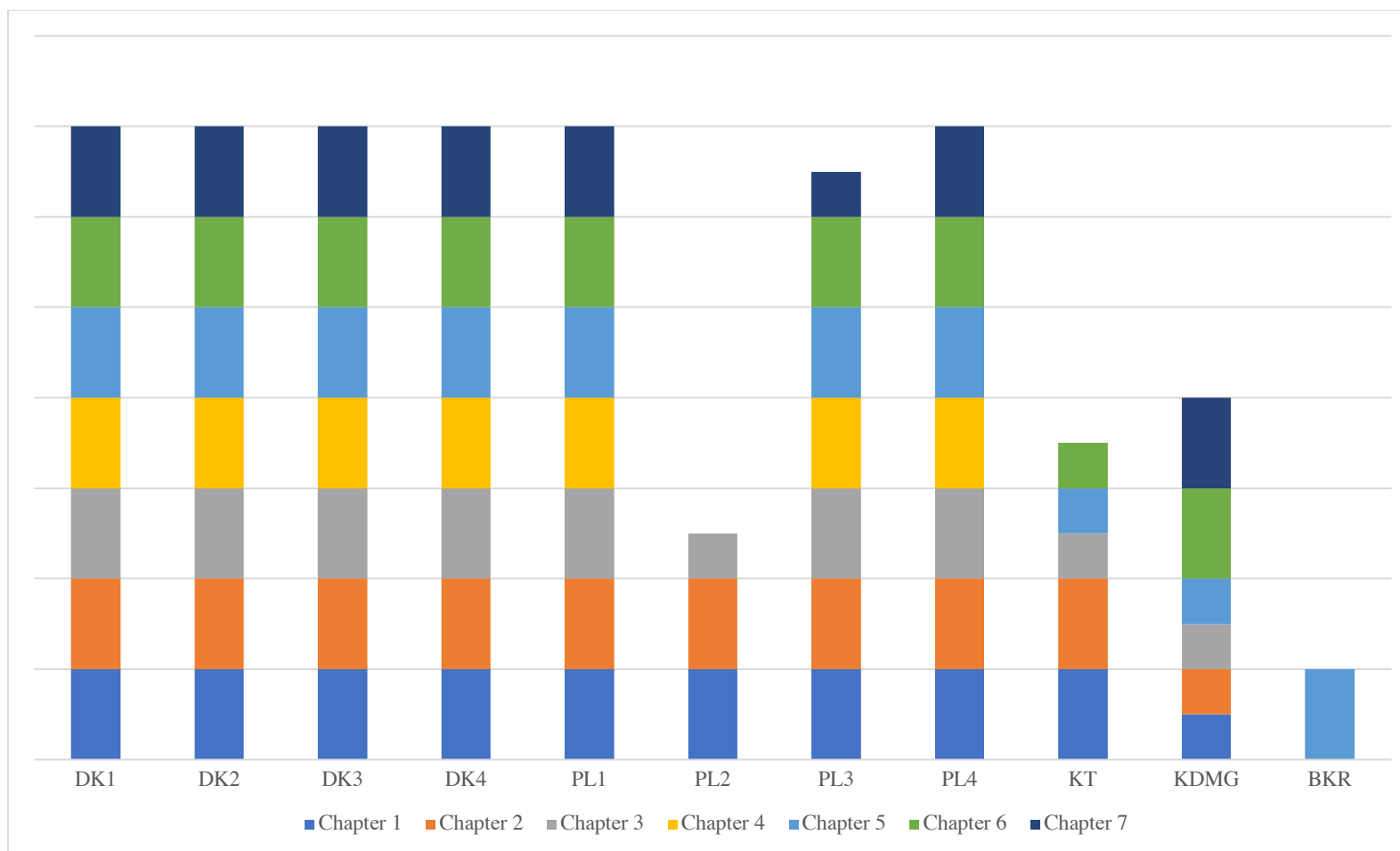
<sup>166</sup> In these narratives, Padmasambhava is commonly referred to as Ogyen, the name of the place where he came from.

chapters 3 and 5. PL2 is incomplete and its pages end before chapter 3 concludes. It also gives a separate colophon, suggesting that the compiler or scribe of this manuscript for some reason considered these two and a half chapters to be an independent work.<sup>167</sup> The folios in PL3 seem to be mixed up—from folio 84 on, its content changes into a hagiography and collections of songs (*mgur*) of Milarepa (*Rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar dang mgur 'bum*), and later on yet again switches to an account of the life of Nangsa Öbum (*Snang gsal* [sic] *'od de* [sic] *'bum*). The following chart shows how different texts within this corpus present each chapter, either in its entirety or just partially:<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> PL2, 76b: *dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa mol ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis* [sic] *rnam par thar pa rdzogs so// sa ma yā// rgya rgya rgya//* [ḍākinī scripts]

<sup>168</sup> PL5 and PL6, the two reproduction from Pema Lingpa's *Lama Jewel Ocean* are not included here for comparison because of their close resemblance with the PL1.



*Figure 11 Chapters in the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Corpus*

Moreover, by reading paratextual information like the incipits and explicits within the corpus, we could assess the claims about author, provenance, and transmission history in each version. DK1 and DK4 have the longest and most distinct incipit, including an identification of the text as Drime Kunga's Terma.<sup>169</sup> DK2, PL1, PL2, and KDMG share a similar incipit which offers homage to Padmasambhava and gives the authorial pledge (*dam bca' ba*) for its composition.<sup>170</sup> As for explicits, almost all texts that have colophons share a common part with only a few variant readings.<sup>171</sup>

Wonderful! This liberation story of me, Yeshe Tsogyel, is requested faithfully by the monk Sanggye Yeshe; therefore, there is no offense. For the sake of the fortunate ones, it is put down into words; for the sake of future generations, it is buried as a Treasure. It shall be kept secret from unsuitable receptacles; any alteration will result in the corruption of the tantric vow of secrecy.

May the four classes of *ḍākinīs* guard it successfully! When the time comes, entrust it to that lord! Provide! Entrust! Samaya.

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<sup>169</sup> DK1, 181 and DK4, 117a-117b. Also see Appendix II for a full comparison of all incipits and explicits.

<sup>170</sup> For example, DK2, 4: [*ḍākinī* scripts] *na mo gu ru dhewa ḍākkini yel/ bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag tshal lo// chos sku snang ba mtha' yas// longs sku thugs rje chen po// sprul sku padma 'byung gnas// sku gsum 'gyur med kyi lha la phyag 'tshal lo// mi brjed gzungs thob dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba skyed pa'i phyir gsungs sol/*

Also see PL1, 262, PL2, 1b, and KDMG, 146. Minor variations are noted in Appendix II. However, sharing the same incipit does not necessarily mean that these four texts should be grouped together or that PL1, PL2, and KDMG should be considered to be based on DK2, as an intratextual comparison will soon suggest otherwise.

<sup>171</sup> PL2 contains a different colophon: "This completes the liberation story of Yeshe Tsogyel, the emanation of Sarasvatī, Samaya! Seal! Seal! Seal!" (*dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa mol ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis [sic] rnam par thar pa rdzogs sol/ sa ma yā// rgya rgya rgya//*, PL2, 76b)

This colophon seems to be added to mark the conclusion of this particular exemplar, as it only includes two and a half chapters from the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus.

Seal of Secrecy. Seal of Concealment. Seal of Confidentiality. Seal of Profoundness.  
Khatham!<sup>172</sup>

This is a generic description of how this Treasure text came into being and how it will be rediscovered in the future. However, all three texts attributed to Drime Kunga make a clear claim right after this passage that it is the revealed teaching of Drime Kunga,<sup>173</sup> while PL1 inserts the same place that it is Pema Lingpa who had extracted the text from Lhodrak.<sup>174</sup> It could be that Pema Lingpa indeed rediscovered this Treasure texts in Lhodrak; or that he simply added his own signature at the end of the Terma teaching.

While it is inconclusive as to how these texts are connected judging from their incipits and explicits alone, a comparison with the *Life* might shed further light on this matter. A comprehensive comparison of all versions of the corpus would be beyond the purview of the dissertation, here I limit the discussion to one intra-textual comparison with the episode of Yeshe Tsogyel's birth. It shows that there are clear, systematic differences in terms of sentence structures, proper names, and content across the corpus. A complete comparison of this episode is provided in Appendix I; I only present some key observations here.

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<sup>172</sup> DK1, 260: *e ma ho// mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di// ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis// mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma ldog// skal ldan don du yi ger bkod// phyi rabs don du gter du sbas// snod min rnams la gsang bar bya// bab bcol smras na dam tshig nyams// mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs// khyu mchog de la dus su gtod// gnyer ro gtad do sa ma ya// gab rgyal// sbas rgyal// gsang rgyal// zab rgyal// kha tham//*

For other versions, see Appendix I.

<sup>173</sup> For example, *mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar! o rgyan dri med kun dga' gter nas bton* [sic] *pa'o//* (DK1, 260)

<sup>174</sup> PL1, 331: *bdag 'dra rig 'dzin padma gling pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag seng ge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drangs pa'o//*

In the passage describing the names of Yeshe Tsogyel's parents and her miraculous birth, a few major differences between these exemplars are worth mentioning. First, all texts attributed to Drime Kunga, and KT, PL3, and PL4 list the name of Yeshe Tsogyel's father as Dorje Drenpa and that of her mother Selgyi Döndrup; while PL1, PL2, and KDMG have her father's name as Sanggye Yeshe and her mother's Getsoma. According to PL1, PL2, and KDMG, Yeshe Tsogyel is said to be born on the morning of the fifteenth day of the first spring month in a Bird Year (*bya'i lo dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bco lnga'i snga dro*). All other exemplars have her birth date on the morning of the tenth day of the first spring month in a Male Earth Mouse Year (*sa pho byi ba'i dpyid zla ra ba'i tshe bcu'i snga dro*).<sup>175</sup> After the birth of Yeshe Tsogyel, PL1, PL2, and KDMG add a detail that her growth in one day is even greater than that of others in a month, and her growth in a month is greater than others' growth in one year.<sup>176</sup> This description is not seen in other versions. To account for the more nuanced differences between all texts attributed to Drime Kunga, KT, PL3, and PL4, one notices that while the Drime Kunga texts and KT offer more information on the Yeshe Tsogyel's miraculous achievements before she reaches the age of sixteen, PL3 and

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<sup>175</sup> These two dates can be easily mistaken in the copying process, as a Bird Year (*bya'i lo*) and a Mouse Year (*byi ba'i [lo]*) only differ in a vowel, and the first *lnga* in “the morning of the fifteenth day (*tshe lco lnga'i snga dro*) could elide into “the morning of the tenth day” (*tshe bcu'i snga dro*) in the hand of a less meticulous scribe. While these two mistakes do not immediately point to different textual transmissions, their persistence in several texts but not others can be indicative of two different recensions.

<sup>176</sup> For example, *gzhan gyi zla skyed las mo'i zhag skyed mtho bar gyur/ gzhan gyi lo skyed bas mo'i zla skyed che bar gyur te/* (PL1, 262).

PL4 are briefer or even silent on these matters.<sup>177</sup> Three conclusions can be drawn from this comparison:

- 1) In general, DK1, DK2, DK3, DK4, and KT are very similar in content, barring some occasional alternative spellings and scribal mistakes;
- 2) PL1, PL2, and KDMG are also quite similar and differ from the aforementioned group of five exemplars systematically;
- 3) PL3 and PL4 agree with each other in most cases; compared to PL1, PL2, and KDMG, they resemble DK1, DK2, DK3, DK4, and KT more closely.

Thus, these nine texts can be grouped into the following three recensions (fig. 12): (1) the Drime Kunga Group: this group includes all texts that are attributed to Drime Kunga and Tashi Tobgyel's reiteration of this *Life*; (2) The Pema Lingpa Group: this includes two texts attributed to Pema Lingpa and KDMG; and (3) the "In-between" Texts: this group contains PL3 and PL4, the two texts attributed to Pema Lingpa according to editors from the Endangered Archives Programme,

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<sup>177</sup> DK1, DK2, DK3, and KT mention that when Yeshe Tsogyel was one year old, she granted the little girls and boys surrounding her the empowerment of the Highest Pure Land; when she was eight, she demonstrated many signs of accomplishment (for example, DK1, 182-183: *lo gcig bzhangs pa'i dus nal/ gzhon nu pho mo 'khor mang po bsdus nas 'og min gyi bkod pa la sogs pa dbang bde chen rol pa'i spyod pa skyong bar mdzad do// dgung lo brgyad bzhes pa'i dus nal mngon par shes pa dang rdzu 'phrul gyi rtag tu ma nges pas don ston par mdzad do//*). PL1 and PL2 contain an abridged version; while PL3 and PL4 do not speak of such achievements.

Later, while PL1 and PL2 provide only a short sentence on Yeshe Tsogyel's deeds at age eleven (for example, PL1, 263: *bcu gcig lon nas bla med chos gsungs/ yid kyis spyod lam skye bo dbang du sdud/*), the Drime Kunga texts, PL3, and PL4 offer more detail (for example, DK1, 183: *dgung lo bcu gcig bzhes pa'i dus nal/ rgyud sde bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsung ba dang/ yid spyod bde ba'i spyod pa mang pos yul gyi skye bo mang po dbang du bsdus sol/*; and PL3, 24a: *lo bcu gcig lon pa'i dus su/ rgyud bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsungs pa dang/ yid kyis spyod lam bde bas yul mi'i skye bo dbang du b[s]dus/*).



possibly due to their physical presence in Bhutanese monasteries with close association with Pema Lingpa.<sup>178</sup> PL3 and PL3 agree with the Drime Kunga group on key information in the hagiography, including names of Yeshe Tsogyel’s parents, and her time and place of birth. However, these two versions show a greater degree of variation from the first group.

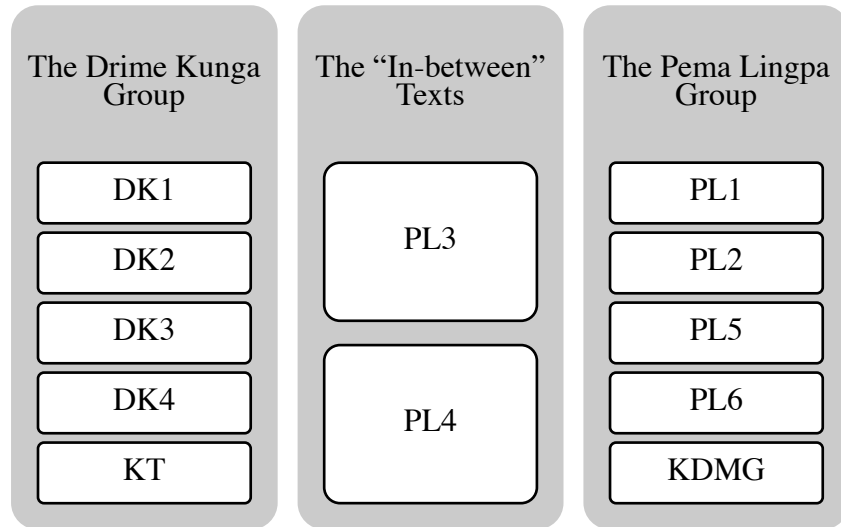


Figure 12 Text Groups within the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Corpus

To summarize, we now could conclude that the four texts attributed to Drime Kunga and KT should be categorized under the same sub-group within the bigger corpus. KDMG, the anonymous work in *The Stainless Ornament Chronicles*, is based not on the Drime Kunga version, but rather the textual transmission from Pema Lingpa. Lastly, a closer look at two of the Bhutanese manuscript originally attributed to Pema Lingpa reveals that this attribution might be worth reconsidering, as these two in-between texts align more closely with the Drime Kunga Group.

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<sup>178</sup> Drametse Monastery is found by Ani Choten Zangmo, the granddaughter of Pema Lingpa; Ogyen Choling is located in Bumthang, where Pema Lingpa had retrieved Treasures.

These two in-between texts could represent a later reiteration of the Drime Kunga transmission; they could also be a prototype of Pema Lingpa’s version of this *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, before the more prevalent Pema Lingpa Group took its shape. In terms of paleographic information contained in the manuscripts themselves, it is possible that they are brought from central Tibet to Bhutan, since the headless (*dbu med*) script PL4 is written in is not popular in Bhutan. PL3 is likely copied into Uchen (*dbu chen*) script (more commonly used in Bhutan) by someone not very experienced at reading condensed letters (*bsdus yig*), a common scribal feature in manuscripts written in headless scripts.<sup>179</sup>

The Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus as a whole presents a rich example of a Buddhist woman’s life story traveling from the place of its supposedly original composition to another place previously considered “peripheral,” and was again disseminated, copied, studied, and recognized for its significance. The insertion of a *Life* into another, and excerpts from a life story being compiled into another set of thematic narratives also remind us of the fluidity of textual transmission as well as literary genres. Although we do not have information on when the earliest woodblock print edition of Yeshe Tsogyel’s *Life* was produced, we do know that the collected

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<sup>179</sup> For example, PL3, 23b writes ***theg chen smon lam dbang gyis yab yum sbyor ba’i lhum su zhugs te*** (“because of her [Yeshe Tsogyel’s] prayer of the Great Vehicle, she entered [her mother’s] womb while [her] parents were having intercourse,” emphasis added by me), while DK1, DK2, DK3, DK4, KT, and PL4 all have ***thugs bskyed smon lam*** (“prayer [due to] having generated the resolve to become enlightened,” emphasis added by me), which reads better given the context. The *bsdus yig* for “thugs bskyed” in PL4 is as follows:



(PL4, 2a)

and may be mis-reconstructed as “theg chen” by a novice scribe.

works of Pema Lingpa was commissioned on woodblocks by the sixteenth century,<sup>180</sup> and that woodblocks of Ogyen Lingpa's *Life* of Padmasambhava were also in circulation around the same time in Mangyul Gungthang (Mang yul Gung thang) in Western Tibet.<sup>181</sup> On the other hand, there are also scattered evidence for women's active involvement in literary creation. By the fifteenth century, Tibetan Buddhist women have already formed an interconnected work of literary productions. These productions take the form of composing and compiling texts, sponsoring the copying and disseminating of manuscripts or woodblocks, among many others.<sup>182</sup>

Another word might be said about the geographical location of many of the early literary sources about Yeshe Tsogyel. While the life story of Yeshe Tsogyel takes place in Central Tibet in the eighth century, literary creations about her before the fifteenth century seem to also center around this area. These works bear evidence to the distinct local concerns of their authors who lived in the same area. Both Nyangrel Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang were born in Lhodrak and conducted most of their Treasure revelation among Imperial ruins and in the Lhokha area.<sup>183</sup> Longchenpa

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<sup>180</sup> The earliest woodblock of Pema Lingpa's *Collected Writings* (*Pad gling bka' 'bum*) is most possibly produced shortly after his passing at Kunzangdrak (Kun bzang brag) in Bhutan. The woodblocks are produced under the supervision of Thugse Dawa Galtzen (Thugs sras Zla ba rgyal mtshan), one of the sons of Pema Lingpa (Dorji Gyeltsen 2016, 379-382). I do not have access to the woodblock prints at this moment, so I cannot confirm whether this *Collected Writing* contain his *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel.

<sup>181</sup> Ehrhard 2000, 16.

<sup>182</sup> Diemberger 2016 (267-308) studies women's roles as writers, patrons, and editors for printing projects since the very beginning of such projects in the fifteenth centuries. These women include nuns, royal women, and the originator of the first female reincarnation lineage, Chökyi Drönma (Chos skyi sgron ma, 1422-1455).

<sup>183</sup> Hirshberg 2016, 111-130; also see Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, 755-770.

began his study at Samye and spent most of his productive years in central Tibet and Bhutan.<sup>184</sup> Ogyen Lingpa is said to be born in either Chumophag (Chu mo phag) in Lhodrak, or Yarje (Yar rje) in Lhokha; the main area for his activity also lies in Southern Central Tibet.<sup>185</sup> For the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa *Life*, Southern Central Tibet serves as its geographical center, echoing the abundant literary activities by and about women in the Himalayan regions (rather than the plateau) in medieval Tibet.<sup>186</sup>

### 1.2.1.2 The *Extensive Life*

Another previously-unknown, full-length *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel is also included in the *Garland of White Lotuses: Liberation Story of Great Female Lives in Tibet*, entitled *the Extensive Life and Liberation Story of Ḍākinī Yeshe Tsogyel* (*Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas pa*, hereafter the *Extensive Life*).<sup>187</sup> Ranging over almost two hundred folios, it is the longest *rnam thar* of Yeshe Tsogyel so far. Its colophon contains a prophecy of its place, time, and person of discovery, disclosing that the Treasure scroll (*gter shog*) shall encounter a person named

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<sup>184</sup> Germano and Hillis 2005, 5191-5195.

<sup>185</sup> Bradburn 1995, 168-169.

<sup>186</sup> Schaeffer 2014.

<sup>187</sup> Bla rung aryatāre'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013, vol.6, 5-179. The manuscript version of this text is recently made available on TBRC both as an individual manuscript and as part of a collection of rare Nyingma texts from Khams, NTGP and *Khams khul nas 'tshol bsdu zhus pa'i dpe rnying dpe dkon*, vol. 65, 3-380.

Dorje Drakpotsel (Rdo rje drag po rtsal) in a bird month and be revealed later in a dog month.<sup>188</sup> However, there is no further information on the year of its revelation; I have not been able to locate a Dorje Drakpotsel associated with the composition of this *Life*. The name Dorje Linggyi Phab (Rdo rje gling gi phab, the descendent of Rdo rje gling [pa]?) also comes up later in the colophon.<sup>189</sup>

In this *Life*, Yeshe Tsogyel is not listed as one of the queens of Tri Songdetsen, a narrative element usually found in the later stratum of her hagiographical tradition.<sup>190</sup> Rather, her karmic connection with Padmasambhava was predestined.<sup>191</sup> The author of the *Extensive Life* seems to be aware of the events happening around Padmasambhava, as recorded in the fourteenth-century hagiographies

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<sup>188</sup> NTGP, 189b: *spre'u zla'i rgyal nya 'dzoms pa'i shog 'dril phebs nas/ bka' srung la gtad nas/ dag pa'i gnas la lcags ri'i mdun drung nas yong pa// e ma hol/ gnas skyong bstan pa'i thabs shes 'dren mdzad pa/ bsgrub pa'i ming ni rdo rje drag po rtsal/ bya'i zla ba'i dus tshod gter shog phrad/ bka' rgyal/ gnyan rgyal/ brda thim/ zab rgyal/ sbas rgyal/ gsang rgyal/ gtad rgyal/ gter rgyal/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgyal/ zla ngo gnyis kyi bar du bka' rgya bsdam/ bka' rgya mang po med pa yi/ dus skabs tsha rnam ni skyol cha med pa/ khyi'i zla ba'i dus su gter shog zheng sor bzhi/ dkyil mtho gsum la zhal bshus so//*

<sup>189</sup> The BDRC has listed it as the revelation of the Tertön Dorje Lingpa (Rdo rje gling pa, 1346-1405). However, this work is not found in other sources attributed to him, nor is there an extant reference. Angowski 2019, 54 n88 also makes a similar argument against this attribution.

<sup>190</sup> For example, the earlier Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa versions do not contain information of Yeshe Tsogyel becoming King Tri Songdetsen's wife. She did try to escape from aggressive suitors, but her rescue by the king was not part of the story. Instead, after suffering from multiple assaults, Yeshe Tsogyel made a desperate supplication and Padmasambhava directly manifested in front of her. This story is also related in the first chapter of the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus.

<sup>191</sup> Their first encounter happened in the following manner: thinking about practicing, Yeshe Tsogyel made a supplication to Padmasambhava, asking for the opportunity to practice and expressing her wish to be his future companion (*gros*). Padmasambhava then miraculously appeared from the sky and asked Yeshe Tsogyel about her intention. She requested the “method of enlightenment within this life,” Padmasambhava gave her the mantra “Om ā hūṃ badzra guru padma siddhi hūṃ” and then disappeared from the sky. NTGP, 10b-12a.

of him. However, elements of the Padmasambhava narratives in the *Extensive Life* do not exactly correspond to the details in other sources. Judging from its content and combination of narrative and non-narrative elements (both to be discussed shortly below), I suggest that the *Extensive Life* could represent the initial stage of efforts to weave together the many literary representations of Yeshe Tsogyel and elevate her status to that of an enlightened master, a status that has not been securely established during its composition.

#### **1.2.1.2.1      Structure of the Extensive Life**

The *Extensive Life* is not structured by chapters or sections. Rather, the majority of this work is dedicated to Yeshe Tsogyel's conversation with Padmasambhava on various topics.<sup>192</sup> Major characters in the narrative sections are Yeshe Tsogyel, Padmasambhava, King Tri Songdetsen, and his queens and ministers. These events take place in Samye or at the king's court. There, Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel subjugated evil spirits, cured the king's illness, and fought against the evil plot of the Bonpo (Bon po) ministers.<sup>193</sup> The following chart (fig. 13) shows the percentage of narrative versus non-narrative or speech elements in terms of word count in the *Extensive Life*:<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Chapter Two, "The Disciple Yeshe Tsogyel" will discuss in detail the significance of the dialogical format in this *Life* as well as in other Treasure texts.

<sup>193</sup> For example, NTGP, 29a-b, 36b, and 56b ff.

<sup>194</sup> The non-narrative elements include long conversations between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava, songs of experience (*mgur*) sung by them, and lengthy instructions or teachings from Padmasambhava to Yeshe Tsogyel.

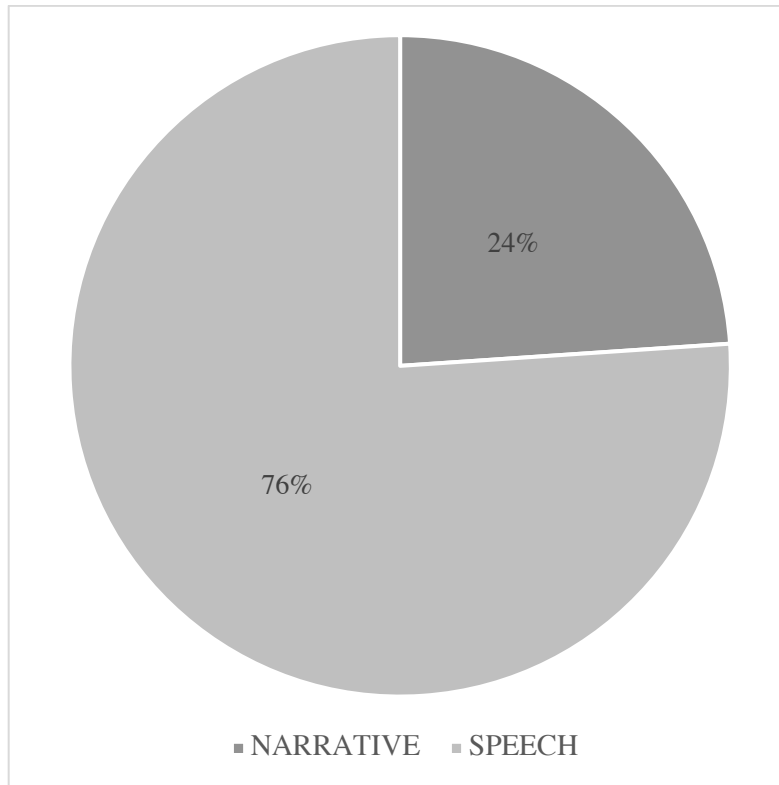


Figure 13 Percentage of Narrative and Speech Elements in the *Extensive Life*

In terms of internal arrangements, narrative elements in the *Extensive Life* are intersected by quotations or direct speech elements (fig. 14). The main body of this text alternates between narratives and quoted speeches. As seen below, the *Extensive Life* begins with providing biographical details about the birth and early life of Yeshe Tsogyel, but the narrative section is soon replaced by lengthy dialogues between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava, with occasional interjections from other characters like King Tri Songdetsen and Mandarava. While the narrative section sketches out events in Yeshe Tsogyel's life in chronological order, the speech sections

enrich the narrative by adding the content of conversations, praises, supplications, as they are spoken by various characters in the *Life*.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Appendix II, “Synopsis of the *Extensive Life*,” provides a summary of the content of these narrative and speech elements in this *Life*. I also plan to translate the *Extensive Life* in full in the future.



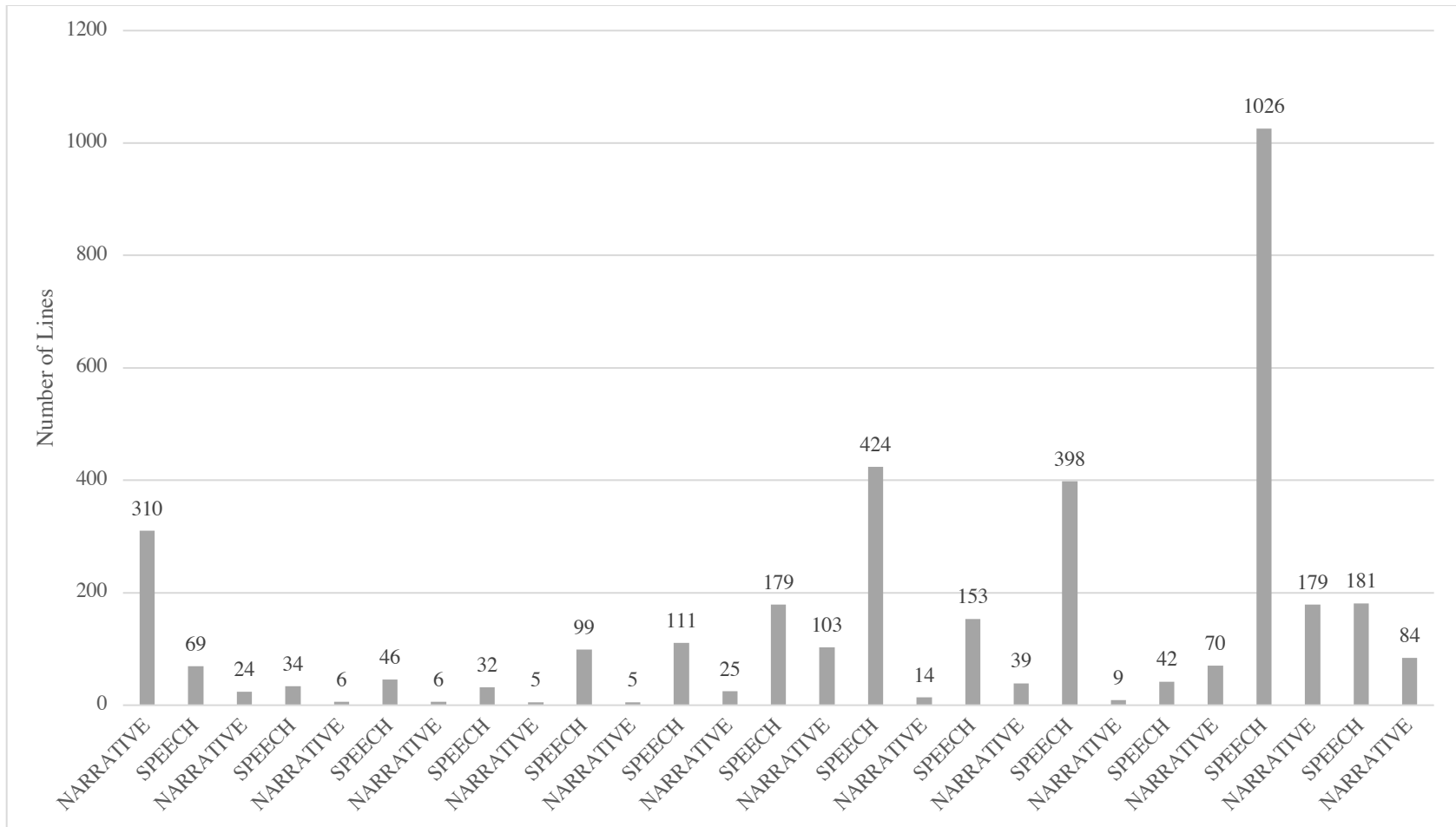


Figure 14 Distribution of Narrative and Speech Elements in the *Extensive Life*

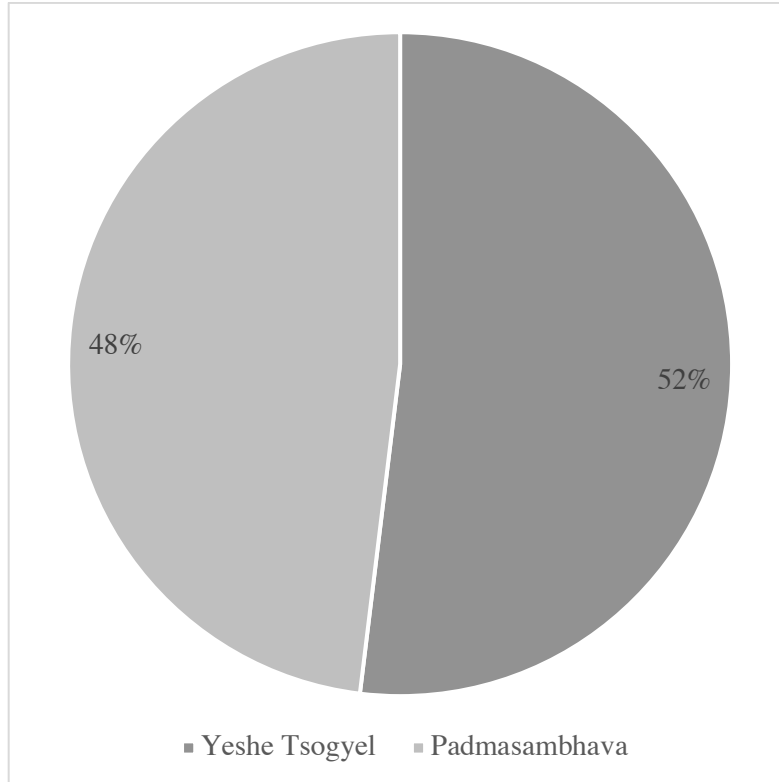


Figure 15 Words Spoken by Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life*

If we further break down the number of words spoken by Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava in the non-narrative sections, in terms of words spoken, the role of Padmasambhava is of equal importance to that of Yeshe Tsogyel (fig. 15). For comparison, the *Life* of Mandarava, another consort of Padmasambhava from Zahor (Za hor), does not emphasize as much the role of Padmasambhava.<sup>196</sup> The first twenty-five chapters take up about two-thirds of the *Life*, highlighting Mandarava's previous emanations and her inclination toward the teaching from an early age, while the remaining chapters narrate her meeting with Padmasambhava and their

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<sup>196</sup> This *Life* is revealed by Samten Lingpa (Bsam gtan gling pa, b.1871), see Bsam gtan gling pa 1973. It is also translated into English in Bsam-gtan-gling-pa 1998.

conjoined spiritual journey. Compared to the other two full-length *Lives* of her—the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus and the Taksham *Life*—the *Extensive Life* places more emphasis on the role of Padmasambhava and includes a significant amount of materials on his activities rather than only Yeshe Tsogyel’s.<sup>197</sup>

#### 1.2.1.2.2 The “Theological Logic” of a *Rnam thar*

The *Extensive Life* presents an interesting case of having Padmasambhava rather than Yeshe Tsogyel as its literary focus. What does it tell us about its purpose of composition? To account for this dominant role of Padmasambhava in this work, I inquire into the “theological logic” behind composing a *Life* and the purpose this composition serves.<sup>198</sup> The theological logic of a text refers

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<sup>197</sup> In the seven chapters of Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus, Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 7 focus on Yeshe Tsogyel’s own deeds. These four chapters take up more than eighty percent of the text, leaving a relatively small percentage for narratives about Padmasambhava or the relationship between Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel.

Although claiming to be the “liberation story” of Yeshe Tsogyel, the later Taksham version of Yeshe Tsogyel’s *Life* places equal emphasis on her and Padmasambhava. If we separate the sections in which she acts independently or as the main agent from those in which she is depicted primarily as one of the disciples of Padmasambhava and acts either according to his instructions or along with him, only half the *Life* is about her own endeavors. These sections include her previous lives as the emanation of goddess Sarasvatī, her miraculous birth, her escape from two suitors, her marriage to King Tri Songdetsen, and so on. It also narrates the story of Yeshe Tsogyel going to Nepal to find her own consort Atsara Sale (A tsa ra sa le) as well as her own undertakings after Padmasambhava left Tibet. The other part depicting the relationship between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava does not necessarily concern her directly, rather, it narrates stories and teachings of Padmasambhava, with her occasionally in the picture.

<sup>198</sup> According to historian Gabrielle Spiegel, the “social logic” of a text is its “site of articulation and its discursive character as articulated ‘logos,’” that is, what are the effects in its readers that the composition sets out to achieve, and what methods and formal features are used to achieve said effects. In the case of the *Extensive Life*, it is the theological rather than social logic behind the narrative that is sought after. Spiegel 1990; also see Clark 1998, 5-14, also 30-31.

to its intended effect on the audience and the rhetorical strategies employed to achieve that effect, rather than what is directly communicated in its content. Generally, the composition of a *rnam thar* or a *Life* implies that its protagonist has attained enlightenment, for the genre name *rnam par thar pa* itself means “complete liberation.” The theological logic for writing a *Life* requires accumulating favorable materials adding to its subject’s prestige and building up a narrative from a usually miraculous birth to the point of liberation. It is from this perspective I propose to examine the representations of Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life*.

Different from what is normally considered biographies or hagiographies in a non-Buddhist context, from a theological perspective, *Lives* of Tibetan Buddhist masters at the same time affirms and negates individuality. They negotiate the conflict between the Buddhist doctrine of “no self” (Skt. *anātman*) and an implicit “self” or active agent that is present in any biographical accounts, by applauding the unique life story of one person and stressing her or his extraordinary characteristics, but at the same time situating individuals with the broader network of personal relationships, past reincarnations, and karmic consequences.<sup>199</sup> The notion of individuality is complicated not only by the relational and interdependent personhood of its subject, it could also be an intentionally disguised act—to bring about spiritual maturation and final liberation of her or his disciples, a teacher inspires by acting out an exemplary life. Furthermore, based on the history of Buddhist practices in Tibet, the emphasis on experience (both psychological and physical) in

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<sup>199</sup> The relational aspect in hagiographical or biographical accounts is not a uniquely Tibetan phenomenon. Jacoby considers the relational selfhood as “an alternative register” usually found in Western autobiographies of women. She argues that this relational selfhood is also characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist *Lives* and is commonly represented by multiple voices present in the *rnam thar*. Jacoby 2014, 12-14, 92-100.

Tantric Buddhist practices might also be taken as the main reason for the blossoming of life writing in Tibet. This is because such practices offer reflections on individual experiences that provide valuable insight into personal transformation.<sup>200</sup>

Although it is not uncommon for masters to appear or even to take a prominent role in the *rnam thars* of their disciples as a way of legitimization, Padmasambhava's unusual importance in the *Extensive Life* may indicate something more. First, as her guru, Padmasambhava's voice authenticates Yeshe Tsogyel's progress in practice and confirms her realization; moreover, his presence also functions to introduce her into the greater narrative surrounding himself and his twenty-five disciples (*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*) as well as specifically name her as a disciple and a consort marked for greatness. Thus, the theological logic of the *Extensive Life* reflects the concern of its author to assert Yeshe Tsogyel's prominence; and this is achieved through the relational aspect of Yeshe Tsogyel's identity, especially that between her and Padmasambhava.

#### 1.2.1.2.1.1 Padmasambhava and the Twenty-Five Disciples

In the *Extensive Life*, Yeshe Tsogyel is frequently mentioned in events collectively witnessed by a group of disciples of Padmasambhava, making her an indispensable element in the story. Many of these episodes are also seen in other *Chronicle* or *Bka' thang* literature, to be discussed below. She partakes in an episode of the evil doings of Margyen (Dmar rgyan), one of Tri Songdetsen's queens, in the *Extensive Life*. This episode is reminiscent of a similar story in the *Chronicle of the*

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<sup>200</sup> Gyatso 1992, 476-477.

*Queens* (*Btsun mo'i bka' thang yig*) as well as the *Golden Rosary Chronicle* (*Bka' thang gser phreng*).<sup>201</sup> There is another account of the previous lives of Padmasambhava, King Tri Songdetsen, monk Śāntarakṣita, and the minister Bami Trizher (*Sba mi khri gzher*) as the four sons of the poultry woman who built the famous Boudhanath Stūpa, or Charung Kashor (*Bya rong kha shor*). This account is similar to the well-known Terma *Liberation upon Hearing: Legend of the Great Stūpa Charung Kashor* (*Mchod rten chen po bya rung kha shor gyi lo rgyus thos bas grol ba*).<sup>202</sup>

One time, Padmasambhava asked Yeshe Tsogyel to go to the palace and bring back some *torma* (*gtor ma*, ritual cakes made for offering). She dutifully went but was harassed by the minister Takra Lugong (*Stag ra klu gong*) and his sister Margyen at the door. Margyen offered a poisonous drink to Tsogyel, but she refused to drink it. Tsogyel then rebuked Margyen with harsh terms, calling her an “ogress (*'dre mo*)” and “a ravenous demoness (*za 'dod srin mo*).” She marked Margyen’s face with a drop of blood, went back to Padmasambhava, and inquired about the previous lives of King Tri Songdetsen, Margyen, and Takra Lugong.<sup>203</sup> Padmasambhava offered the following account:

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<sup>201</sup> O rgyan gling pa 1986, 245 and Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007, 292-3. For a translation of the *Chronicle of the Queens*, see Laufer 1911. More on this story below.

<sup>202</sup> For example, Lha btsun sngon po and Śākya bzang po 1978. This work is a Terma first discovered by Lhatsun Ngönmo (Lha btsun sngon mo) and rediscovered by Shākya zangpo (Śākya bzang po, 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century). Shākya Zangpo is considered the first person to make the literary connection between the Boudhanath Stūpa with the name Charung Kashor (Blondeau, Anne-Marie 1982, 126). A brief sketch of Shākya zangpo’s life can be found in Ehrhard 2007, 25-29.

<sup>203</sup> NTGP, 56b ff.

The Dharma King Tri Songdetsen had killed a snake in that life. Because [that snake] is queen Margyen,<sup>204</sup> now it's [his] karmic turn to be under her sway. He killed a bug [‘bu?'] while it was having its meal [i.e., sucking his blood].

I, the swineherd's son, made the prayer: “Having been involved in construction for this stūpa, may I, the miraculously-born, subjugate the three classes of being — gods, demons, and human!” In that life, [he] was me, Padmasambhava; the one who killed an ant at that time is Takra Lugong. Therefore, in this life [I] have the purpose of subduing [Takra Lugong].

The poultry keeper's son made the prayer: “Having been involved in construction for this stūpa, may I become learned and may there be no teacher surpassing me!” He had killed a black bug with his feet, who in that life was queen Margyen. This is why he needs to bow down before Margyen.

The stableman's son made a prayer of becoming a minister then. In that life, he had thrown a stone at an elephant, its karma matured on his right ribs [rtsib ma].

That<sup>205</sup> elephant made a prayer to suppress the Buddhist teaching and [used] methods for any type of non-human beings (*ci yang mi ma yin pa'i thabs*), A crow from above [the elephant] made a prayer that “I shall subdue [that elephant].” At a later time, when these animals take rebirth, there are red birthmarks on them. The one reborn as Margyen has a blood drop on her face, the one reborn as Takra [Lugong] has a black mark on his neck. [Their past lives] are like that, retain it in your memory!<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Here Margyen's name is written as *Dmar brgyan*.

<sup>205</sup> Following the Larung (Bla rung) editors, here I read *dus* as *des*.

<sup>206</sup> NTGP, 81a-b: *chos kyi rgyal po khri srong lde'u btsan yin/ de'i dus su sbrul bsad pa/ btsun mo dmar brgyan yin pa'i da lta dbang shor ba de'i lan chags/ 'bru zas zab dus bsad pa/ phag rdzi bu nga'i smon lam btab pa/ mchod rten 'di la bum pa nges btags nas/ rdzus skyes lha 'dre mi gsum 'dul bar shog/ der nga padma 'byung gnas yin pas/ de'i dus grog ma gcig bsad nas/ stag ra klu gong yin pas 'di skabs 'dul dgongs pa'i don/ bya rdzi bu'i smon lam btab pas/ mchod rten 'di la bum pa nges btags nas/ mkhan du gyur nas mkhan slob nga ba'i lhag po med pa'i smon lam btab pa yin/ rkang zhabs du 'bu nag gcig shi nas/ btsun mor dmar rgyan yod pa'i sa nas/ phyag 'tshal dgos pa'i las rta rdzi bu'i smon lam btab nas/ de dus 'phrin blon byed pa'i smon lam btab nas/ de'i dus glang du rdo brgyab nas rnam smin rtsibs ma g.yas na yod/ glang dus bstan pa bs nub pa'i smon lam btab nas/ ci yang mi ma yin pa'i thabs/ pho rog thog tu nga'i 'dul ba'i smon lam btab/ dus skabs dud 'gro sprul pa rgyab na sha mtshan dmar po 'dug/ dmar brgyan sprul pa ngo la khrag thig 'dug pa/ stag ras sprul pa ske na nag mtshan 'dug/ de 'dra ba yin te nyams su long//*

Note that here the number of sons of the poultry woman and their destined reincarnations differ slightly from the well-known legend. In *Liberation upon Hearing: Legend of the Great Stūpa Charung Kashor*, the poultry woman has four sons, the first from her relationship with a stablehand, the second a swineherd, the third a dog keeper, and the fourth a poultryman. The stablehand's son is King Tri Songdetsen; the swineherd's son Śāntarākṣita, the dog keeper's son

Despite the close resemblance of this story to the other two episodes in the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava* and the *Chronicle of the Queens*, both accounts originally have nothing to do with Yeshe Tsogyel. The story of Margyen in the *Chronicle of the Queens* is about how Margyen's unrequited love towards Vairocana led to his exile to Gyelmo Tsawarong (Rgyal mo Tsha ba rong). Major characters in the building of the Boudhanath Stūpa also do not include Yeshe Tsogyel. The *Extensive Life* ties these two tales together by adding a scene of confrontation between Yeshe Tsogyel and the evil queen Margyen, followed by an explanation from Padmasambhava of their past life connections.

#### 1.2.1.2.1.2 *Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel*

In addition to her inclusion into the close circle of Padmasambhava's disciples, interactions between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life* are more intimate. In depicting their relationship as master and consort, this work did not shy away from the secret consort practices. Not only does it openly discuss the secret union (*gsang sbyor*) in several cases, it also attributes Yeshe Tsogyel's spiritual attainment directly to these practices.<sup>207</sup> I discuss the significance of Yeshe Tsogyel's role as a consort in the third chapter, "The Consort Yeshe Tsogyel;" here I only provide one example. In their first meeting, after making proper offerings,

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Padmasambhava, and the poultryman's son minister Bami Trizher. Lha btsun sngon mo and Śākya bzang po 1978: 9-54.

<sup>207</sup> For example, the attainment of infallible memory by Yeshe Tsogyel is said to be a direct result of her secret union with Padmasambhava. NTGP, 22b-23a.



Yeshe Tsogyel asks Padmasambhava if he has a way to change her into a male body. Padmasambhava declines her request, claiming that Yeshe Tsogyel needs to be his consort to perform the proper tantric practice, so it is imperative that she remain in a woman's body:

Padma asked, "Are you going to practice the teaching that is present, or that which is beyond? Whose consort are you going to be?"

Yeshe Tsogyel said, "I am going to be your consort. You, the miraculously-born Padma, have great power. I am of the female kind. Do you have a way of changing me into a male body?"

Padma replied, "I am a master from India who transforms earth into gold. Although I can transform a body born female, the method for you to be inseparable from me requires you to be my companion."<sup>208</sup>

Unlike his own hagiographies, the *Extensive Life* presents a more compassionate and humorous aspect of Padmasambhava. He teases Yeshe Tsogyel when she becomes haughty and is curious about his other consort, Mandarava.<sup>209</sup> Another episode of the death of Yeshe Tsogyel's father also illustrates their intimate teacher-disciple relationship. After the death of her father, foretold by an ominous dream of her own, Yeshe Tsogyel made a request to Padmasambhava, asking him to bring her father back to life. After a brief teaching on impermanence appropriate to the occasion, Padmasambhava sympathizes with Yeshe Tsogyel's loss. He consoles and encourages her, saying

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<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 16b-17a: *padma'i zhal nas/ khyod 'dug pa'i chos gcig byed yin nam/ 'gro ba'i chos gcig byed pa yin/ su'i grogs ni byed pa yin/ ces gsungs pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal zhal nas kho mo khyod kyi grogs byed pa yin/ khyed rdzus skyes padma'i mthu stobs che ba kho mo'i chos byed pa bud med kyis rigs yin pa pho lus gcig bsgyur ba'i thabs e mchis/ zhus pa/ padma'i zhal nas/ nga rgyal gar bla ma sa gser la bsgyur bal bud med skyes pa'i lus bsgyur thub tel khyod bdag gi grogs byed dgos pa thabs 'du 'bral med par gda'/ ces gsungs/*

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., 53b-55b. More on this episode in Chapter Three.

that she alone could revive her father's life.<sup>210</sup> Their intimacy and mutual affection persist throughout the *Extensive Life*: When Padmasambhava told Tsogyel he is leaving, she sang a song of sadness, cried till she was choked with tears, and placed her head on his lap. He is also said to have shed tears while comforting her.<sup>211</sup> The *Extensive Life* depicts Padmasambhava as the compassionate and encouraging master and Yeshe Tsogyel as an inquisitive and determined disciple; it also gives endorsement to her identity as a disciple and a consort of Padmasambhava, with whom she shares a special connection.

The preponderance of Padmasambhava fulfills a threefold purpose in the *Extensive Life*. First, his special relationship with Yeshe Tsogyel attests to her spiritual eminence in general. His male gender is also used to complement her own female identity in their heterosexual consort relationship, as the *Extensive Life* considers Yeshe Tsogyel's role as his consort an essential part of her spiritual pursuit. Moreover, in terms of the broader image of Padmasambhava that incorporates his twenty-five disciples, including Tsogyel into this constellation of enlightened personalities and their greater narrative adds to her significance. The personality of Yeshe Tsogyel in the *Extensive Life* is constantly related to and shaped by multiple voices and identities, unique to the theological logic of Tibetan Buddhist *Lives* or *rnam thars*. The *Extensive Life* made Yeshe Tsogyel the predestined disciple and consort of Padmasambhava by bringing Padmasambhava into the story and accentuating his role in her journey.

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.: 113a ff.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 116b-118b.

## 1.2.2 The Chronicles (*Bka' thang*)

In addition to the aforementioned two *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel, I also examine her presence in the narratives about Padmasambhava, especially those about his deeds in Tibet. These include two texts, both belonging to the genre of chronicles (*bka' thang*)<sup>212</sup> and attributed to the Treasure revealer Ogyen Lingpa (b.1323).

### 1.2.2.1 Padma Kathang or the Chronicle of Padmasambhava (Padma *bka' thang yig*)

*Padma Kathang*, or the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*, is revealed by Ogyen Lingpa.<sup>213</sup> It contains one hundred and eight chapters, detailing Padmasambhava's life story from his timeless existence in the Reality Realm (*dharmadhātu, chos dbyings*) to his eventual departure from Tibet. According to its colophon, Yeshe Tsogyel is the disciple who recorded and concealed this Terma for future generations. The text is subsequently extracted by Ogyen Lingpa on a Monday, the eighth day of the fourth month of a Water Dragon Year (1352), at a location called Lotus Crystal Cave on the side of Lotus Pile Mountain, in the District of Crystal Rock in Yarlung (*yar klung shel gyi brag rdzong padma brtsegs pa'i ngos padma shel phug*).<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> The etymology of the word *bka' thang* or *bka' yi thang yig* remains unclear to me. *Bka'* as an honorific noun refers to the speech or teaching of a lama, and *thang* may be understood as a plane, flat surface, or as measure or standard. So *bka' thang* as a compound could mean “a flat surface [to write down] the lama's teaching,” or “a canon (or example) of the lama's teaching.”

<sup>213</sup> There are many different editions of *Padma Kathang*, I choose to cite from an easily accessible version (O rgyan gling pa 1987). *Padma Kathang* has also been translated into Chinese, English, German, and French (Martin 1997, 56, Luo zhujia cuo and Edongwala 1990).

<sup>214</sup> O rgyan gling pa 1987, 711.

Yeshe Tsogyel is not identified as one of the queens to King Tri Songdetsen in the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*.<sup>215</sup> However, besides being the composer of this chronicle, she makes quite a few more appearances. She is identified as one of the five main consorts of Padmasambhava;<sup>216</sup> she, along with Tashi Khyedren (Bkra shis khye 'dren), requested a teaching from Padmasambhava when he was about to leave Tibet for the land of the demons;<sup>217</sup> on the same occasion, she also led women of all ages in Tibet to Ngari (Mnga' ris) to see Padmasambhava off.<sup>218</sup> The two most noteworthy episodes are the story of Yeshe Tsogyel bringing Princess Pemasel (Padma gsal) back to life (Chapters 89 and 90), and her long supplication to Padmasambhava, constituting the very last chapter of the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*. These two narratives will be discussed in the chapters on her roles as a disciple and a consort respectively.

#### 1.2.2.2 The Chronicle of the Queens (*Btsun mo bka' thang yig*)

Another revelation by Ogyen Lingpa is a collection of narratives about the people and events during the Tibetan Empire. It is called the *Five Chronicles (Bka' thang sde lnga)* and is revealed

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<sup>215</sup> Similar to the *Dbal/Rba/Sba bzched* corpus, in the eighty-sixth chapter on the construction of Samye, three queens of Tri Songdetsen who have built temples are named, but not Yeshe Tsogyel, *ibid.*, 517-523.

<sup>216</sup> At the beginning of the text, she is listed alongside Princess Mandarava, Nepalese Kalasiddhi, another Nepalese woman Shākyadeva, and the Mönpa woman Tashi Khyedren, as the five women who have pleased the master (*ghu [sic] ru'i thugs su byon pa'i bud med lngas*) and recorded his life story in its many recensions. *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, 646-647.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, 692: *mkha' 'gro ye shes 'tsho rgyal sna drangs pa'i/ bod kyi bud med bu mo thams cad kyis/ dpal mo dpal thang skyel thung zhum ring byas/ stod kyi mnga' ris cog ge'i yul zhes pa/ brag ni srin po khros 'dra'i yul tshugs bskyal*.

in the mid-fourteenth century.<sup>219</sup> It is a collection of narrative accounts or life stories of important historical, semi-historical, or even mythical figures from the Tibetan Empire and is comprised of five parts: the *Chronicle of the Gods and Spirits* (*Lha 'dre bka' thang yig*), the *Chronicle of the Kings* (*Rgyal po bka' thang yig*), the *Chronicle of the Queens* (*Btsun mo bka' thang yig*), the *Chronicle of the Scholars and Translators* (*Lo paṇ bka' thang yig*), and the *Chronicle of the Ministers* (*Blon po bka' thang yig*).

Of these five, the *Chronicle of the Queens* provides the story of Queen Tsebongza Margyen's (Tse spong bza' dmar rgyan, she also appears in the *Extensive Life* as an evil queen who plots with her brother to harm Yeshe Tsogyel) interaction with the translator Vairocana and of Padmasambhava's marriage with another princess, Trompagyen (Khrom pa rgyan). Similar to *Padma Kathang*, here, Yeshe Tsogyel is not identified as a queen to Khri Songdetsen.<sup>220</sup> She appeared only once (and very briefly) in the fourth chapter. The *Chronicle of the Queens* lists her among Prince Mutig Tsenpo (Mu tig bstan po), Śāntirakṣita [sic], Namkhai Nyingpo (Nam mkha'i snying po), and other disciples of Padmasambhava who were present at the occasion of the completion of Samye.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> *The Chronicle of the Gods and Spirits* is translated into French in Blondeau 1971 while *The Chronicle of the Queens* into German in Laufer 1911. As with the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*, I also cite from an easily accessible version (O rgyan gling pa 1986).

<sup>220</sup> This is significant considering that the *Chronicle of the Queens* contains more ancient textual layers compared to the other three chronicles in the *Five Chronicles*, and its content is about the queens' activities during this time.

<sup>221</sup> Yeshe Tsogyel is said to be practicing the establishment of mindfulness on feelings (*tshor dran nyer gzhaḡ blangs*) at the occasion. Another consort of Padmasambhava from Zahor, Mandarava, is also listed in attendance; she sang a song about offering drinks to the noble people (*man dha ra ba'i glu ya rabs skyems gsol*). O rgyan gling pa 1986, 236-238.

While the *Chronicle of the Queens* does not directly record many of Yeshe Tsogyel's activities, it contains a number of passages where Padmasambhava discusses the innate qualities of women and how external beauty can be representative of internal virtues. These passages are situated in the context of the relationship between Tibetan Imperial ladies and Padmasambhava. While these women are not gifted practitioners or devout disciples like Yeshe Tsogyel, Padmasambhava's attitude toward and opinions about them could reveal the general attitude toward women at the time, a topic to be explored in the next chapter.

### **1.2.3 Other Texts Used**

To gather as much information as possible on the earlier stratum of the literary tradition surrounding Yeshe Tsogyel, I look beyond what is traditionally considered narrative to other sources that can be broadly conceived as belonging to the narrative genre. These include paratextual information that provides a narrative about the composition or provenance of the text body, like colophons in Terma cycles; or texts that are encased by a narrative framework, such as *zhus lan* texts or dialogues. I also refer to several important Treasure cycles as a whole, taking into consideration the intertextual links connecting narrative and non-narrative materials.

#### **1.2.3.1 Yeshe Tsogyel in Colophons**

Some of the early mentions of Yeshe Tsogyel appearing in colophon accounts of Treasure cycles date back to as early as those attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Özer. In the narratives about the concealment and discovery of Treasures, because of her infallible memory, she is the designated

trustee of Padmasambhava's teachings, who will ensure the transmission of these teachings to future generations.

This identification of Yeshe Tsogyel as the main disciple responsible for recording and further disseminating Padmasambhava's teachings only became commonplace in the fourteenth century. While Yeshe Tsogyel is listed as the trustee of Padmasambhava's teachings in Nyangrel's *Copper Island Biography*. The *Eight Teachings of the Sugatas*, also attributed to him, does not recognize her as the transmitter of teachings. Nor does the twelfth-century *Seminar Heart of Vimalamitra*. In the *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas* (*Mkha' 'gro snying thig*), a Terma cycle revealed by Tsultrim Dorje (Tshul khriṃs rdo rje, also known as Padma las 'brel rtsal, 1291-1315/17), an emanation of princess Padmasel,<sup>222</sup> Yeshe Tsogyel features prominently as the main (if not the only) disciple carrying on Padmasambhava's teaching lineage. In the *History of the Lineage of Masters of the Great Perfection of the Seminal Heart of the Khandromas* (*Rdzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig gi bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus*), she collected Padmasambhava's teachings, entrusted them to ḍākinīs, and concealed them as Treasures.<sup>223</sup> She is also identified as a holder for the teachings in the *Essential Instruction on Liberation through Touching* (*Btags grol don khrid*); however, because the time for transmission has not come, she

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<sup>222</sup> Padmasel is a previously less known figure in the constellation of characters active in Terma narrative at the time. She is mentioned first in the *Seminar Heart of the Khandromas* as the daughter of King Tri Songdetsen, who died and was brought back to life by Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel.

<sup>223</sup> Dri med 'od zer 2009, 5: 9: *bdag 'dra mkhar chen bzas bsdu pa po mdzad nas/ ma 'ongs las can gyi thugs su brgyud par byin gyis brlabs te/ dākki ma la gtad de/ rin po che'i gter du sbas so//*

concealed it for future generations.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, the *Treasure Vase of Prosperity Sādhana*s of the *Khandromas* (*Mkha' 'gro ma'i nor sgrub gter gyi bum pa*) spells out that Padmasambhava composed these teachings especially for Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>225</sup>

Overall, in the *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas*, while there are cases in which only Padmasambhava was named as the source of the text and the Terma was entrusted anonymously,<sup>226</sup> or only the future Treasure revealer was mentioned, it is Yeshe Tsogyel, not any other disciple, who became responsible for recording his teachings (fig. 16). Two of the three aforementioned key elements of Yeshe Tsogyel's identity are also present in these cases: she is appointed to be the disciple that will transfer these teachings to future generations.

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 5: 70: *ye shes mtsho rgyal la 'chang/ de lta bstan pa'i dus min pas/ bdag snying phyi rabs don du sbas/ las can cig dang 'phrad par shog/*.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 5: 218: *slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyis/ jo mo mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal gyi don du mdzad la/ mkha' 'gro ma'i nor sgrub gter gyi bum pa zhes bya ba rdzogs so/*

<sup>226</sup> For example, in the *Gnad kyi gdams pa lnga pa*, Yeshe Tsogyel does not play any role in the concealment (ibid., 5: 406-407): *de ltar gnad kyi yan lag lnga/ g.ya' ri gong gi brag phug tul o rgyan padma bdag gis sbyar/ kun la ma spel rang gis nyams su longs/*



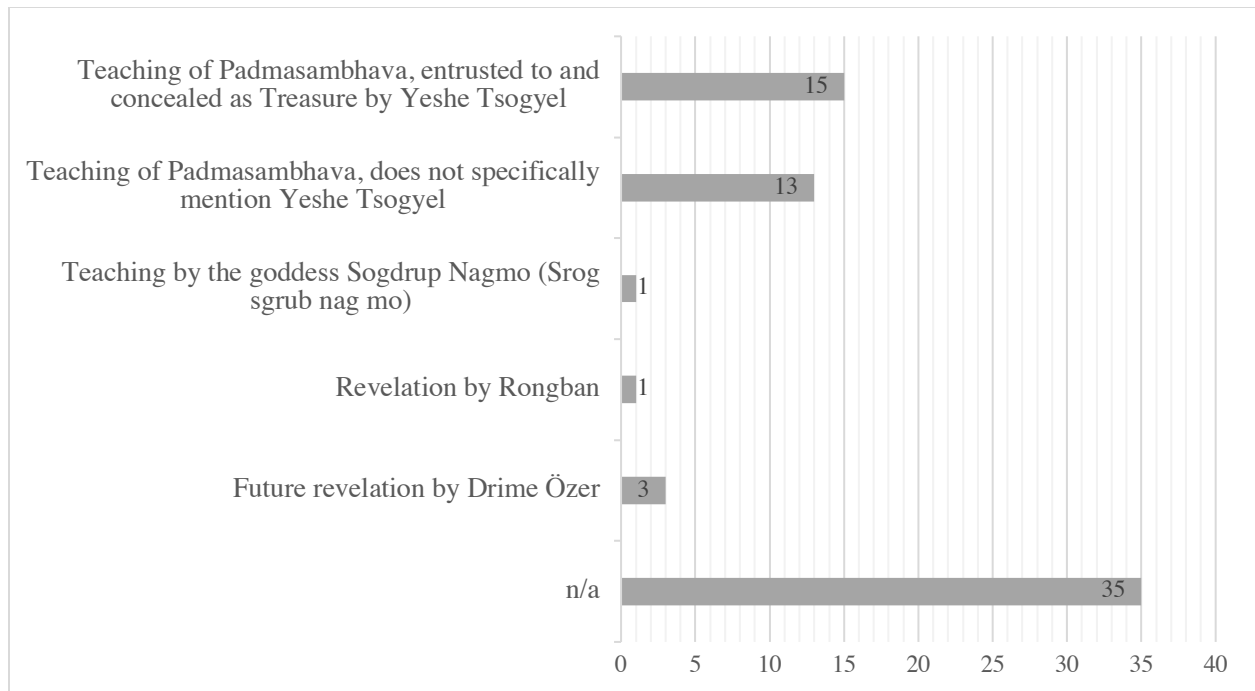


Figure 16 Colophon Records in the *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas*

Yeshe Tsogyel is frequently named as the composer of and the person responsible for the future transmission of Padmasambhava's teachings in the fourteenth and fifteenth century Terma literature.<sup>227</sup> This attribution reflects the concern to account for the Terma's origins and authenticity. Termas originate with not only Padmasambhava, but also other identifiable imperial personages who will continue to emanate in Tibet in her embodied forms in the future. To make the lineage transmission possible, Yeshe Tsogyel serves as the intermediary between the source of the teaching, Padmasambhava, and its intended recipients, the future Treasure revealers.

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<sup>227</sup> See previous sections on the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus and Ogyen Lingpa's two chronicles. She is also recorded as the trustee in the Treasure revelations of Rigdzin Godem (Rig 'dzin rgod ldem 1973, vol.5, 103: *o rgyan gyi mkhan po padma 'byung gnas kyis/ jo mo mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal la gnang/ mkhar chen mtsho rgyal gyi thugs kyi bcud bstims nas gtad pa'o/*), among many others.

### 1.2.3.2 *Zhus lan* or Question-and-Answer Texts

Another corpus of material examined in the dissertation is a group of dialogues (*zhus lan*) texts. *Zhus lan* or dialogue is named after their formal feature, viz., conversations that happened between a master and a disciple, usually Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel.

Among the earliest Treasure *zhus lans* are texts attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Özer. He is said to have revealed a collection of twenty-seven *zhus lan* texts, titled *Dialogues with the Queens* (*Jo mo'i zhus lan*),<sup>228</sup> as well as a number of individual dialogues preserved in a cycle titled *Direct Teachings from the Guru: Instructions and Dialogues* (*Bla ma dmar khrid kyi zhal gdams zhus lan skor*, hereafter *Direct Teachings*).<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> This collection is found among the person collection of Prince Yunli (1697-1738), now preserved at the Royal Library of Denmark. *Jo mo la gdams pa sogs* (original manuscript, Det Kongelige Bibliotek). Yunli is a devout Buddhist with a special interest in Nyingma Treasure teachings. For an introduction to his life as a Buddhist and his activities in translating Tibetan Buddhist texts into Mongolian, see Uspensky 1997 and Narchaoktu 2002.

Another manuscript of the same collection is reproduced in *Jo mo la gdams pa'i chos skor* (Paro, Bhutan: Konchhog Lhadripa, 1983). BDRC has recently acquired another blockprint collection titled *Gter mdzod nyang gi bla ma dmar khrid zhus lan sogs* (content not yet available) from the Asian Classics Input Project Mongolian Collection. If the content of this collection overlaps with the two manuscript editions, it could shed further light on the interesting transmission history of these *zhus lan* teachings.

<sup>229</sup> For example, “Bla ma dmar khrid kyi zhal gdams zhus lan skor,” in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* (Paro, Bhutan: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, 1976-1980), 92: 184-710.

Since *Direct Teachings* first appeared as a whole in Jamgön Kongtrul Lodro Thaye's ('Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, 1813-1899) nineteenth-century *Treasury of Precious Revealed Teachings* (*Rin chen gter mdzod*), its attribution to Nyangrel as a twelfth-century revelation is not

Tsultrim Dorje's *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas* contains a dialogue between Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel, titled the *Golden Rosary of Nectar* (*Zhus lan bdud rtsi gser phreng*).<sup>230</sup> Rigdzin Godem's (1337-1408) Terma cycle, *Dgongs pa zang thal* has a fifth volume, titled the *Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* (*Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, hereafter *Primordial Purity*). This volume primarily consists of oral teachings and sacred conversations. After a preliminary practice (*sngon 'gro*) and a supplication to the Great Perfection transmission lineage, the majority of titles within this volume are framed as either dialogues between enlightened and/or soon-to-be-enlightened figures, or oral teachings from Padmasambhava.<sup>231</sup> Not only is Yeshe Tsogyel again clearly marked as the recipient for Padmasambhava's teachings, she is also the main conversation partner with him in these conversations. These conversations usually begin with a scene-setting narrative that introduces the life of Padmasambhava, followed by a series of questions and answers. In the next chapter, I read these dialogical accounts for their formal features as well as their narrative content.

#### **1.2.4 Visual Representations of Yeshe Tsogyel**

In the fourteenth century, as her literary tradition was taking shape, iconographic representations

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unproblematic, see Hirshberg 2016, 122, no.229. However, a number of individual texts within *Direct Teachings* can be dated back to an earlier time.

<sup>230</sup> "Zhus lan bdud rtsi gser phreng," in Dri med 'od zer 2009, 5: 349-368.

<sup>231</sup> A detailed list of all titles in *Primordial Purity* is provided in Chapter Two, "The Disciple Yeshe Tsogyel."

of Yeshe Tsogyel also appeared. She is included in a series of knowledge holders (*rig 'dzin*) dating back to the fourteenth century. These knowledge holders are considered accomplished masters of tantric teachings. As one such master, Yeshe Tsogyel (fig. 17 and 18) is listed among Ācarya Huṃkāra, Namkhai Nyingpo, Garab Dorje (Dga' rab rdo rje), and Nanam Gyelwa Chöyang (Nalam [sic] Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs).<sup>232</sup> She is depicted wearing householder clothes and having long hair (a symbol for her status as a non-monastic tantric practitioner), holding a *kapala* bowl with her left hand and a ritual dagger (*kila* or *phur ba*)<sup>233</sup> with her right.

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<sup>232</sup> This teaching lineage is found in a set of twenty-two initiation cards (*tsa ka li*). The paper for these cards is carbon-dated between 1174 and 1293 CE. Himalayan Art Resources, n.d.

The presence of Yeshe Tsogyel in this set of initiation cards attested to her status as an enlightened master. This set is most likely associated with Padmasambhava, as many of the knowledge holders are either his teachers or his disciples. There is one mention of a lama from the Kagyu lineage, but he is also said to venerate Padmasambhava (*ibid.*). The names given for these twenty-two masters are: 1. Klu grub snying pa (Nagārjunagarbha); 2. Dha na sang kra'i; 3. Nyi ma rtsal (a woman); 4. Slob dpon Shan ting gar pa (Śāntigarbha); 5. Slob dpon ?; 6. Slob dpon Huṃkara (Huṃkāra); 7. Nam mkha'i snying po; 8. Slob dpon Dga' rab rdo rje; 9. Slob dpon Rnam [sic] rgyal ba mchog dbyangs; 10. Slob dpon Dpal kyis [sic] ye shes; 11. Jo mo Khar [sic] chen mtsho rgyal; 12. Slob dpo lnga [sic] bdag chen po (Tri Songdetsen); 13. Vimalamitra; 14. Slob dpon 'Jam dpal shes snyen; 15. ? (a woman); 16. Nyi ma rtsal (a woman); 17. Slob dpon Rgyal po dza (initially the scribe wrote Dga' rab rdo rje dpal, but it was crossed out); 18. Slob dpon Sangs rgyas rin chen; 19. Nyam [sic] chag skong ba'i rdo rje slob dpon; 20. Rig 'dzin chen po thod pa can (this image looks like a woman, but unspecified in the text); 21. Dmar mo dbang shi rgyal mo?; 22. ? kyi slob dpon (the part where the name is supposed to be was smudged with ink).

<sup>233</sup> Starting with the later recensions of Nyangrel Nyima Özer's *Copper Island Biography*, Yeshe Tsogyel is marked as the disciple of Padmasambhava who is responsible for the Vajrakīlaya (*rdo rje phur pa*) teaching transmission.



*Figure 17 Initiation Card: Yeshe Tsogyel (Front)*

Tibet; 14th century; ground mineral pigment on paper; 15.88x20.32cm (6.25x8in); Rubin Museum of Art; gift of the Shelly & Donald Rubin Foundation; P1998.23.11 (HAR 744)



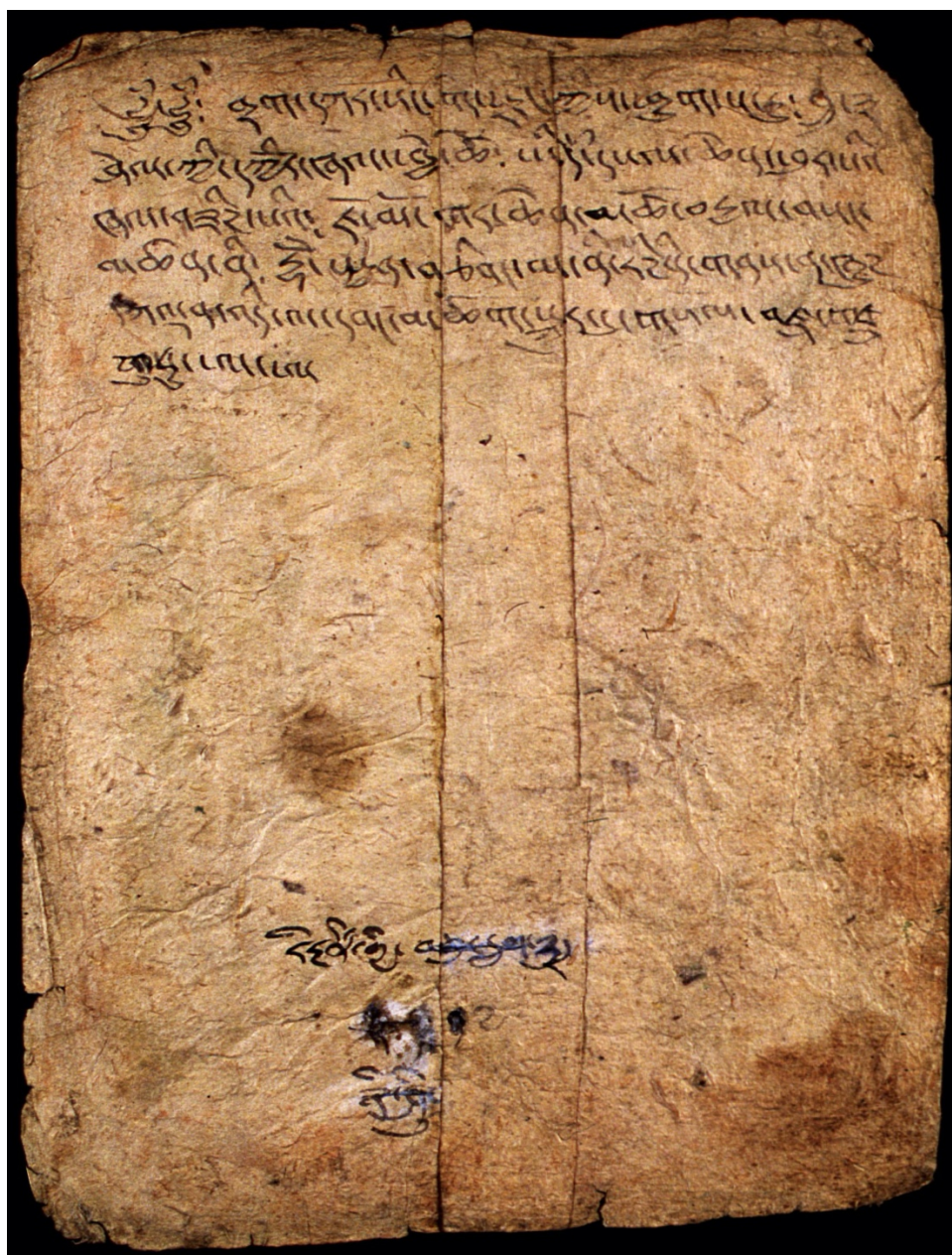


Figure 18 Initiation Card: Yeshe Tsogyel (Back)<sup>234</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Translation and transliteration of the inscription:

In the cave of (gi) Dragkar Sengge Fortress, Queen Tsogyel of Kharchen, who has visualized her tutelary deity, the Great Glorious Kila, when the door to the crystal maṇḍala of the three kind of meat is opened, her secret name is One-Eyed Vajra Goddess. She resides in the abode of Knowledge Holders. I pray that she bestows supreme empowerment to these fortunate ones! Vajra Guru Guru A A!

Three *bcu rgyal* of the Knowledge Holders. Twenty.

Another later set of images of knowledge holders including Yeshe Tsogyel (fig. 19) can be found in the murals along the circumambulation path (*bskor lam*) in Tamzhing Lhundrup Chöling (Gtam zhing lhun grub chos gling), a Nyingma monastery found by Pema Lingpa in Bumthang, Bhutan.<sup>235</sup> This collection shows Yeshe Tsogyel to be the single disciple from Padmasambhava's teaching lineage, and the direct link between the eight-century tantric master and the fifteenth-century scholar and Buddhist leader, the Seventh Karmapa Chodrak Gyatso (Karma pa chos grags rgya mtsho, 1454-1506), who was credited here as the teacher of the Treasure revealer Pema Lingpa. In the two parallel sets of images on both sides of the circumambulation path, Yeshe Tsogyel's position mirrors that of Vajrasattva (Rdo rje sems dpa').<sup>236</sup>

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[1] *brag dkar sing ge rtsong gyis phug pa tu/ sha gsum* [2] *shel kyi dkyil 'khor zhal phye tshel/ yi dam dpal chen phur pa'i* [3] *zhal gzigs pa'i/ jo mo khar chen mtsho brgyal gsang* [4] *mtshan ni/ rdo rje spyang gcig ma ni rigs 'dzin gnas na zhugs/* [5] *skal ldan 'di la dbang mchog skur du gsol badzra gu ru* [6] *gu ru a a* [7] *rigs 'dzin gyi bcu rgyal gsum/* [8] *nyi shu*

<sup>235</sup> Tamzhing Lhundrup Monastery is constructed by Pema Lingpa and completed in 1505 (Aris 1989, 61). This set of murals is located on the ground floor. For a description of the history and structure of the monastery, see Aris 1988.

<sup>236</sup> The series of personages depicted are as follows (the inscriptions were added after the composition of the murals between 1985 and 2008): 1. Pema Lingpa; 2. The Seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso; 3. Yeshe Tsogyal; 4. Guru Rinpoche, i.e. Padmasambhava; 5. Garab Dorje; 6. Vajradhara (Rdo rje 'chang); 7. Vajrasattva; 8. Amoghasiddhi (Don yod grub pa); 9. Amitābha ('Od dpag med); 10. Ratnasambhava (Rin chen 'byung ldan); 11. Vairocana (Rnam par snang mdzad); 12. Akṣobhya (Mi bskyod pa); 13. Samantabhadra with consort (Kun tu bzang po yab yum). The composition continues after Samantabhadra; however, the wall has been significantly damaged by water. I thank Ariana Maki for sharing this information as well as her photo of the mural (e-mail message to author, February 10, 2020).





*Figure 19 Mural: Yeshe Tsogyel*

Tamzhing Lhundrup Monastery, Bumthang, Bhutan; originally painted between 1503-1507, with later interventions; mineral pigment on plaster on a clay substrate; approx. size of the composition proper:

1.45x1.37m (4.75x4.5ft)

(Photograph by Ariana Maki, February 2010)

This section has introduced the different genres that are used in the dissertation. These include genres traditionally identified as narratives, such as hagiography or *Life* and chronicles. I also examine paratextual materials like colophons, and other genres not traditionally read as narratives, such as question-and-answer accounts. By reading these aforementioned sources as narratives and the stories they tell of Yeshe Tsogyel, I explore the role Yeshe Tsogyel plays in the history of Terma, in the community of Nyingma practitioners, and, as the prototypical Buddhist woman, in the theology of female liberation.



## **1.5 The Names of Yeshe Tsogyel**

The multivocality of Yeshe Tsogyel's identity is also represented in the different names used to refer to her in early Treasure literature. The fact of having a name and the act of bestowing names carry special significance. To have a name is have a place in the social and religious order, and to be denied a name suggests ostracism or outcast status. Names and the etymologies that come with them evoke shared stories and cultural memories; to receive a new name amounts to the reinvention of a new person.<sup>237</sup> Not every actor in the mythical origin of Tibet and its people is worthy of a name. The rock ogress who seduced the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara while he was a monkey, married him, and then gave birth to the first generation of Tibetan population, was never given a name.<sup>238</sup> During the reign of King Songtsen Gampo, there was another demoness who represents the landscape of Tibet and whose blood lies in the center of Lhasa. She was actively suppressed by the king with the construction of temples on that site. This demoness was not named either.<sup>239</sup> In the many Padmasambhava legends that came to flourish during the fourteenth and

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<sup>237</sup> The significance of and degrees of variation in the names for the Tibetan kings are best represented in the exhaustive list in Haarh 1969, 45-66. Dotson 2015 discusses the multiple acts of naming kings in a secular context in the Tibetan Empire.

<sup>238</sup> *Ma ñi bka' 'bum* 2013, 87-96. This text is also translated into English in Trizin Tsering 2007.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, 313-321.

fifteenth centuries, he renames demons and spirits after they have been brought under his command and vowed to become protectors of Buddhism.<sup>240</sup>

Yeshe Tsogyel's superb qualities are recognized at the very beginning of the *Extensive Life*. Shortly after birth, her mother, Bedrön asked her father Kharphub what name should be given to their newborn daughter. Kharphub offered the name Yeshe Tsogyel with the following explanation:

“[She] entered the womb at the time [stars] set at Namso,<sup>241</sup> [she] awakened when [they] set at Gyal. If I am to give a name to this person (lit. head, *dbu*), the name will be Yeshe Tsogyel. Yeshe is one of the classes of *ḍākinīs*, Tso pertains to staying in the womb during Namtso (Namso?), and Gyal relates to awakening at the time of Gyal. It is a fitting name.”<sup>242</sup>

This etymology of the name Yeshe Tsogyel spells out her enlightened identity as a *ḍākinī* or a khandroma (a wisdom khandroma, to be specific), and assigns felicitous dates to her conception and birth. Immediately after receiving her name, the baby Yeshe Tsogyel thought, *this is a*

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<sup>240</sup> For example, according to the *Copper Island Biography*, Padmasambhava gave the secret name “Great Mother of the Snowy Region, Vajra Turquoise Mist Lady (Gangs kyi yum chen Rdo rje g.yu bun ma)” to the warrior goddess (*dgra bla*) of Zhangzhung (Zhang zhung), Mutsame (Mu tsa med), and the name “Fleshless One-Eyed Vajra Lady of the White Snowy Region (Sha med gangs dkar Rdo rje spyang gcig ma)” to the goddess of Namthang (Gnam thang), Nammen Karmo (Gnam sman dkar mo). Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, 41-42.

<sup>241</sup> Here I read *nam so* as *nabs so* or Punarvasu, the fifth of the twenty-eight lunar mansions (Skt. *nakṣatra*, Tib. *rgyu skar*). This reading aligns better with the following sentence, where the sixth mansion, *rgyal*, or Puṣya, is mentioned. See Jo 2016 (189-191n397, and 312n711) for a list of the twenty-seven lunar mansions in Tibetan, Mongolian, Sanskrit, and Chinese.

<sup>242</sup> NTGP, 4b-5a: *nam so babs pa'i mngal du zhugs pal rgyal la babs (pa'i) sad pa'il dbu la ming btags nasl ye shes mtsho rgyal btagsl ye shes ni mkha' 'gro ma'i rigs yinl nam mtsho la mngal zhugs kyis mtshol rgyal la sad pa'i rgyal btags pa ming 'grigs zer bal*

*marvelous name!* She smiled and uttered the following words: “Even now, I have faith in the dharma; if I want to practice, where can I do it? I need to go.” Then she said to her mother, “Ama, I have faith in the dharma and I [will] practice now.”<sup>243</sup> Thus, the naming episode marks the beginning of Yeshe Tsogyel’s journey toward enlightenment.

In the fifth chapter of the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, Yeshe Tsogyel descends to four different levels of hell in search of the evil minister Shanti (or Shantipa), uses her meditative power to summon all the peaceful and wrathful deities, liberates him and all the hell beings and places them in a pure land, and even gains the respect from the Lord of Hell himself.<sup>244</sup> After returning to Chimphu (Mchims phu), she is praised by a wrathful being (who encouraged her to go find Shanti in the first place) and given the secret name Khandro Yeshe Tsogyel. The wrathful being explains the meaning of her name as follows:

You have perfected your realization and **traverse** (*’gro*) the **space** (*mkha’*) of reality with your wisdom (*ye shes*). Your compassion **nurtures** (*’tsho*) all beings and **vanquishes** (*rgyal*) all sufferings.<sup>245</sup> Your compassion is more forceful than all of the peaceful and wrathful conqueror-buddhas—such as me, Heruka—combined. Because of this, I bestow you the name Khandro Yeshe Tsogyel (*mkha’ ’gro ye shes mtsho rgyal*).<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 5a: *kho mo bsam nas ming btags pa mtshar bsam nas bzhad pal da yang chos la mos te byed bsam na gang du byed/ ’gro dgongs nas/ a ma nges chos la mos da chos byed zer/*

<sup>244</sup> DK1, 250-255.

<sup>245</sup> Note that here the word *mtsho* (meaning “lake” or “ocean”) in *mtsho rgyal* is glossed as *’tsho* (meaning “livelihood” or “to nurture, support”). More on the homophone *mtsho* and *’tsho* later.

<sup>246</sup> Note here that *’tsho* and *mtsho* is used interchangeably in the name of Yeshe Tsogyel. More on these two homophones below. DK1, 255-256: *khyod ni rtogs pa klong du gyur nas/ chos nyid mkha’ la rig pa ye shes shugs kyis ’gro/ thugs rjes ’gro ba sna tshogs ’tsho zhing/ sdug bsngal kun las rgyal bar gyur pa yin pas/ bdag nyid he ru ka la sogs te/ zhi khro rgyal ba kun las thugs rje’i dpung che yin pas/ mtshan yang mkha’ ’gro ye shes mtsho rgyal zhes su gsol ...*

Here, the liberative qualities of both genders—wisdom and compassion—are etymologized as part of Yeshe Tsogyel’s name, marking her perfect nondual achievement at the end of her study with Padmasambhava. It is also on this occasion that she receives the title of a *khandroma*, someone who travels the space with her wisdom and realization.

In the same *Life*, Yeshe Tsogyel has also received two other names, not from Padmasambhava, but from various knowledge holders in Uḍḍiyāna (O/U rgyan) and one mysterious wrathful being.<sup>247</sup> In the second chapter, she embarks on a visionary journey to the mythic land of Oḍḍiyāna, accompanied by a ḍākinī. There she visited many different palaces, met with knowledge holders, and received many instructions. She first received the name Dorje Dudulma (Rdo rje bdud ’dul ma) or Vajra Demon-Subduing Lady from a white-colored knowledge holder with a pleasant appearance.<sup>248</sup> Another knowledge holder called “the one with the topknot” (*rig ’dzin thor cog can*), after guiding her into the maṇḍalas and relevant empowerments, gave her the secret name Kharchen Za.<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> In the fourth chapter of the Taksham *Life*, “[Yeshe Tsogyel] Receives Teaching and Instructions” (*Chos dang gdams pa gsan tshul gyi skabs*), it is Padmasambhava who bestows Yeshe Tsogyel four secret names as she progresses with her practice: Lady Tsogyel of White Great Bliss (Bde chen dkar mo Mtsho rgyal ma), Lady Tsogyel, the Yellow Multiplier of Virtues (Yon tan rgyas byed ser mo Mtsho rgyal ma), the Liberator Yeshe Tsogyel (Sgrol byed Ye shes mtsho rgyal), and, finally, Boundless Yeshe Tsogyel (Mtha’ yas Ye shes mtsho rgyal). Bla rung aryatāre’i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013, 7: 29-30.

<sup>248</sup> DK1, 231.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 236.

If we look back at when accounts about Yeshe Tsogyel initially appeared, her full name, Yeshe Tsogyel, was not there in the first place. It is better attested in later, standalone *Lives* of her discussed above. In the earlier sources, one finds names and titles like Kharchen Za (*Nel pa chos 'byung*.), Kharchenza Tsogyel (*Sba bzhed*, *Extensive History of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, interlinear notes of *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies*), Jomo Tsogyel (Nyangrel's *Padma bka' chems brgyas pa* and *Copper Island Biography*),<sup>250</sup> or Tsogyel (spelled '*Tsho rgyal* or *Mtsho rgyal*).

Kharchen Za, or lady from Kharchen, is the family or clan name for Yeshe Tsogyel. This clan name, spelled Mkhar chen (occasionally 'Khar chen), is not found in Old Tibetan sources.<sup>251</sup> The second and possibly earlier part of her name, Tsogyel, also proves to be quite elusive. Neither '*tsho rgyal* or *mtsho rgyal* is a common Tibetan Buddhist name.<sup>252</sup> Their meanings also remain

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<sup>250</sup> Nyangrel's *Honey Nectar* has "Jo mo Bkra shis mtsho rgyal" instead of "Jo mo Mtsho rgyal." See note 107 above.

<sup>251</sup> An individual or family with the name Mkhar pa (alternative spelling: Mkhar pa', Khar ba) can be found in Dunhuang sources (for example, Pelliot tibétain 1060 l. 78, 1285 l. r26, 1286 l. 12, 1039 l. 8). *Prosopography of the Tibetan Empire* 2017.

<sup>252</sup> In twelfth-century Central Tibet, '*tsho* and *mtsho* are already homophones because the prefixes '*a* and *ma* share a similar pronunciation (Huang 2007). The word *Mtsho* is not commonly used in Tibetan names. I have only been able to locate one instance: Richardson lists a "Mtsho bzher" as one *mkhan* name (having a *mkhan* signals a certain degree of nobility and might be a title that refers to one's skill or profession) in his study of early Tibetan names (Richardson 1967, 13, 15). The name of Minister Tsozher appears five times in Old Tibetan sources (Liu 2019, 108 n67).

Czaja (2013, 97 n18, 484-485) notes two women with the name Ye shes mtsho rgyal (or Ye shes mtsho) who have lived in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries respectively. One is named Droza Yeshetso ('Bro bza' Ye shes mtsho, alias Ye shes mtsho rgyal); she is the wife of Sangs rgyas skyabs and gave birth to a son named Drakpa Tsöndru (Grags pa brtson 'grus, 1203-1267), who took over the mantle of leading the monastic center Densathil (Gdan sa mthil) in Central Tibet in 1234. Another is named *lcam* Ye shes mtsho rgyal; she is the daughter of Sanggye Gyeltsen (Sangs

unusually ambiguous: *'tsho rgyal* could be translated as “victorious livelihood,” while an understanding for *mtsho rgyal* amounts to something similar to “victorious lake” or “victorious ocean,” or, if we take *rgyal* to be an abbreviation of *rgyal mo*, “queen of ocean.” The part of her name that has a stronger Buddhist flavor, Yeshe (*ye shes*, “primordial wisdom”), seems to be added only later.

The name Tsogyel also bears phonetic similarities to one of Padmasambhava’s epithets: Tsogyel Dorje (*Mtsho skyes rdo rje* or *Padmavajra*), “Lake-born Vajra.”<sup>253</sup> *Mtsho skyes* is also a synonym for lotus, commonly known in the tantric code language as a name for the vagina,<sup>254</sup> so the name Tsogyel Dorje could be interpreted to be referring to the pair of female and male sexual organs (the name Dorje/Vajra also means penis). Although I have found no textual evidence pointing directly to a connection between *m/'tsho rgyal* and *mtsho skyes*, there are abundant examples of couples of gods and goddesses sharing (parts of their) names in the South Asian tantric context. This phenomenon reveals the significance carried by and encoded in phonemes. For instance, the goddess Śakti, by infusing her vowel letter “i” into the corpse (*śava*) of the god Śiva, gives him life.<sup>255</sup> Could the latter part of Yeshe Tsogyel’s name be shared with one of the epithets of

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rgyas rgyal mtshan, 1389-1457) and is married to Pelzang Rinchen (*Dpal bzang rin chen*) and Norbu Zangpo (*Nor bu bzang po*). Her sons became patrons of Sanggyepel (*Sangs rgyas 'phel*, 1411–1485) and Goram Sönam Sengge (*Go ram Bsod nams seng ge*, 1429–1489) in Tanak (*Rta nag*).

<sup>253</sup> According to the first chapter of *Copper Island Biography*, Tsogyel Dorje is the first epithet received by Padmasambhava upon his birth. He appeared miraculously in the form of an eight-year-old boy in front of King Indrabhuti, who went out to the sea in search of a son. After being enthroned as a prince, he received the name Tsogyel Dorje. Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer 1989, 9.

<sup>254</sup> Zhang et al 1993, 2318; Rnam rgyal tshe ring 1991, 336.

<sup>255</sup> In the *Bṛhannīla Tantra*, the gods Śiva and Brahmā are quoted saying, “Without you, o great Goddess, I am the corpse mentioned earlier.” Biernacki 2013, 220-221. Padoux 1990 discusses the

Padmasambhava (Tsogye Dorje), considering that they constitute a heterosexual tantric couple? Note that the other part which was later added to her name, *ye shes*, is also a word of the female gender.<sup>256</sup> The name Yeshe Tsogyel (wisdom lotus) would then stand for the feminine principle in tantric theology, representing wisdom, “the mother of all Buddhas,” while Padmasambhava stands for the male counterpart.

The story of Yeshe Tsogyel rose in tandem with the story of Padmasambhava, as his lineage transmission became the preferred one in Treasure discourses. Like the stories about her, the many names used to refer to Yeshe Tsogyel also reveal the multiple voices and literary agents (mostly men) who have contributed to the creation of her story, each with their respective concerns. In the chapters that follow, I consider three aspects of Yeshe Tsogyel’s identity as disciple, consort, and khandroma and how they related to the literary efforts to legitimize the source of Treasure teachings, to construct a communal identity, and to account for the role and participation of women in Tibetan Buddhist community at this time.

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Hindu tantric theology in which sentiency and potent energy are associated with language, especially the word.

<sup>256</sup> The pair of wisdom-gnosis (*prajñā-jñāna* = *shes rab-ye shes*) and method-compassion (*upāya-karuṇā* = *thabs-snying rje*) in Mahāyāna Buddhist theology is gendered female and male respectively. Furthermore, wisdom is specifically associated with the mother while compassion the father, see, for example, Cabezón 1992b, 181-199.

## CHAPTER TWO THE DISCIPLE YESHE TSOGYEL

At every major and minor sacred site, including Tidro White Cliff, the site of Tsari Yagong, Shawu Takgo, the snowy region of Kungthang, the district of Taktsang Sengge, Yangleshö, the Nandanavana, the Sitavana, the Bheta Rocky Cave, and Upper Lotus Cave, I requested teachings on the Great Vehicle along with the oral instructions to my heart's content.

Wherever Ogyen himself manifests, I, the princess, also pervade that space in the form of his retinue of disciples. Whatever teaching is given by Ogyen, I, the princess, internalize that teaching in my mind. In addition to the specificities as well as breadth of each vehicles, I have also attained the definitive understanding of space and awareness, the Great Perfection. Then, I was introduced to the Reality Body of appearances and experiences.

The Lord who is the knower of past, present, and future, the teacher Padmasambhava himself, bestowed on me the entire teaching of the nine vehicles. I have then established my view on the true nature of things and was introduced to the Mother and Child Luminosity.<sup>257</sup>

This chapter examines the “outer,” or most publicly accessible, role of Yeshe Tsogyel as the foremost disciple of Padmasambhava. She is widely known as and regularly listed among the most important disciples of Padmasambhava in Treasure narratives from the thirteenth century

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<sup>257</sup> DK1, 249: *gting sgrom [sic] (ti sgro) brag skar la sogs te/ tsa ri g.ya gong gi khrod/ sha 'ub stag sgo dang/ khung thang gangs ra dang/ stag tshang sengge'i rdzong dang/ yangs len [sic] shod dang/ dga' ba tshal dang/ bsil ba'i tshal dang/ bhe ta rdza phug dang/ padma steng phug la sogs gnas chen gnas phran rnam la/ theg pa chen po'i gdams pa man ngag dang bcas pa yid tshim par zhus/ o rgyan nyid kyi sprul pas gang du khyab pa der/ lha lcam bdag kyang zhu ba po'i 'khor du khyab par byas/ o rgyan chen po padmas gang gsungs pa de nyid/ lha lcam bdag gis khong du chud par blangs/ theg pa so so'i che ba dang spyir ldan kyang/ dbyings rig gi nges shes rdzogs pa chen po la thob nas/ snang sems chos nyid kyi sku ru 'phrad do// dus gsum mkhyen pa'i mnga' bdag/ o rgyan gyi mkhan po padma 'byung gnas de nyid kyis theg pa rim dgu'i chos thams cad rdzogs par gnang nas/ gnas lugs kyi rang mtshang gtan la phebs nas/ 'od gsal ma bu 'phrad par gyur/*



onward. After the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as evidenced in many Treasure colophons and in the stylized meta-narratives of the dialogical accounts, Yeshe Tsogyel is frequently cited as the disciple responsible for receiving and transmitting Padmasambhava's teachings to future generations.

To answer the questions of how her elevation of status took place, and what we can know about women's access to teachings as evidenced in these texts (as the many texts specifically present concerns of female practitioners, and the disciple asking questions, Yeshe Tsogyel, is also a woman), I present a two-pronged query into the literary genre of *zhus lan*, or dialogue, by reading them as conventionalized, performative accounts. Doing so illuminates their function of authenticating Padmasambhava and his teachings, as well as performing the culturally appropriate description of women as inferior but at the same time justifying the need to teach them. Here I borrow from the notion of "metacommunication" from folklore studies.

Metacommunication refers to "any element of communication which calls attention to the speech event as performance and to the relationship which obtains between the narrator and his audience vis-à-vis the narrative message." The focus on metacommunication provides the understanding of the frame, "an interpretative context or alternative point of view," in which the story is situated.<sup>258</sup> While the dialogical accounts themselves are traditionally understood to be vehicles of teachings,<sup>259</sup> the metacommunicative aspect of these texts reveal the theological logic of its composition, structure, intended audience, and social context.

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<sup>258</sup> Babcock in Bauman 1978, 66.

<sup>259</sup> Three collections of English translation of Treasure *zhus lan* accounts are called *Advice from the Lotus-Born*, *Dakini Teachings*, *Treasure from the Juniper Ridge* respectively (Padmasambhava

On the one hand, the Treasure dialogues reflect and address concerns about the authenticity of Treasure revelations in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Encased in a canonical narrative framework, these dialogues model themselves after the sutra format and identify the respondent in these conversations as a buddha. This identification elevates Treasure teachings as the exalted words from an enlightened teacher, effectively making the case for the texts' authenticity as Buddhist teachings and their canonical status. Their effort to adopt the canonical dialogical style is also complemented by an innovative literary strategy, that is, the creative process of reincarnation and shifting the geographical center for scriptural creation away from India to Tibet.

On the other hand, these conversations about Padmasambhava's teachings also offer a window to look into women's access to Buddhist teachings and their status in the Buddhist community at the time. The majority of *zhus lan* texts revealed during this time are asked by the female disciple Yeshe Tsogyel, or a group of women led by her. A large number of these texts also represent the (alleged) concerns of and questions from Buddhist women themselves, spoken on their behalf in a male voice. While we should not read these accounts as representing the actual concerns of female practitioners, the literary weight carried by women in these dialogues points to the views on gender and Buddhist women in the eyes of Nyingma Treasure writers. These conversations begin with descriptions of the inferiority of women by the female disciples themselves, and Padmasambhava's chastisement of women not setting their minds on the dharma and

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1994, 1999, and 2008). All of these titles emphasize the content ("advice," "teaching," and "Treasure"), rather than the dialogical narrative format, of the texts being translated.

squandering away their precious human life. Nonetheless, Padmasambhava always grants the teaching in the end. The formulaic disparagement of women discloses more than simple misogyny; rather, it demonstrates the uneasiness toward women having access to Buddhist teachings and the effort to mitigate this concern. By squaring themselves with the convention of viewing women as inferior in the beginning, these dialogues averted a radical challenge to the status quo but at the same time created a literary space for women's access to Buddhist teaching and practice.

## **2.1 Description of Yeshe Tsogyel as a Disciple**

In her literary representations, Yeshe Tsogyel's role as Padmasambhava's most important disciple is well attested. She is recorded in the later recensions of Nyangrel Nyima Özer's *Copper Island Biography* as having received the Vajrakīlaya teaching from Padmasambhava. Her status as a knowledge holder in the Padmasambhava teaching lineage is also established around this time. In the *Heart Essence of the Khandromas*, after being offered by King Tri Songdetsen to Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel followed the master wherever he went, served him, practiced with him, and gained many types of achievement.<sup>260</sup>

The Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa *Life* singles out Yeshe Tsogyel to be an exemplary woman. Their

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<sup>260</sup> Dri med 'od zer 2009, 6: 365-6.

teacher-disciple relationship did not begin in this lifetime, but was a result of positive karmic links across numerous lifetimes. During her visionary journey to Oḍḍiyāna, Yeshe Tsogyel learned that her past aspiration and service to the master have prepared her with superb qualities and caused her to become Padmasambhava's disciple in this life.<sup>261</sup> During their conversations, after each question proposed by her, Padmasambhava opened his response by first affirming her spiritual potential and her worthiness as a recipient for his teachings. He referred to her as “qualified woman (*mtshan ldan bu mo*),” “woman of noble lineage (*rigs bzang mo/ma*),” “woman of a virtuous mind (*dge sems ma*),” and “fortunate woman (*skal ldan ma*)”.<sup>262</sup> The peculiar, conversation-heavy format of the *Extensive Life* also sets Yeshe Tsogyel up to be a major conversation partner for Padmasambhava. With three quarters of its content being dialogues between her and the master, this *Life* provides not only events in the relationship between Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel, it also fills in the content of actual teachings and practices supposedly spoken and performed by them.

In the next section, I look into the less studied literary genre of *zhus lan*, or dialogical accounts, compare its formal features to classic Mahāyāna scriptures, and argue that by adopting a format similar to canonical literature, these texts reinvent themselves as scriptures and make claims for their authenticity.

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<sup>261</sup> DK1, 230-231.

<sup>262</sup> DK1, 238, 240; PL1, 312, 316.

## **2.2 The Context Which Is the Form: Zhus lan as Scripture**

From an early statement that “whatever is well said is the word of the Buddha,” to the famous teaching of *upāya*, or expedient means, the varying contexts Buddhism finds itself in often inspire new (and renewed) forms of doctrine and practice. When the Buddha of our age, Śākyamuni, has passed away into *parinirvāṇa* well over a thousand years ago, the question arises as to what counts as genuine Buddhist teaching, and who gets to decide. In the case of Tibet, with an additional one hundred years during which some transmission lineages were cut off (a time commonly called the “Dark Age” of Tibetan Buddhism), how does one claim authenticity of any newly surfaced Buddhist teachings?

After some three hundred years of economic, cultural, and religious renaissance, the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in Tibet is a time for development and further creation.<sup>263</sup> It is also a time when things Tibetan gained currency: many of the religious sects and sub-sects that remain operative even as of today were formed during this time period; efforts were made to create

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<sup>263</sup> The period of Tibetan renaissance, according to Davidson (2005, 2-3), is characterized by the following four themes: the weaving-together of a Tibetan religious system heavily influenced by late Indian Tantric Buddhist ideologies; textualization of Tibetan culture through translating the massive corpus of Indian (or Indic) materials – both religious and secular; central Tibet replacing Indian “as the preferred source of international Buddhist ideology;” and the rise of monastics as a new form of aristocracy. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the first two themes have subsided and shifted to indigenous Tibetan inspirations; while the third and fourth continued to feature prominently in the picture.

Tibetan canons, Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike;<sup>264</sup> not only are newly-introduced Indian philosophical, religious, and literary works interpreted and rearranged in Tibetan ways, Tibetan writers have also started to claim authorship for their own treatises and write about Tibetan concerns. For the Nyingma School, who claim its scriptural authority not to be from the new, post-imperial waves of imported Indian teachings, but rather from the so-called rediscovery of the old forms of Buddhism from the time of the Tibetan Empire, its priority lies in responding to new challenges: the impressive growth of literature in its rival New Translation School; the burgeoning prestige of mass institutional monasticism; and the ongoing criticism of their own practice of scriptural revelation. An important way to reclaim this ancient imperial authority is through Treasure revelation (another complementary aspect is reincarnation). These revealed Treasures claimed authenticity and authority for Nyingma teachings and practices, connected their lineage back to the “Golden Era” of Tibetan history, and helped to cement a sense of shared identity in the otherwise decentralized Nyingma communities, which is heavily tantric in its practice.

Central to the Treasure identity is the genuineness of these revealed teachings. Since their source of transmission comes from a physically inaccessible time and space, Treasure revealers have to be creative in staking their claim to authenticity. In the context of Treasure revelations, *zhus lan* or dialogues imitate a canonical narrative frame, thus qualifying themselves (and by extension,

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<sup>264</sup> For a study on the compilation of two sets of authoritative translations of Indian Buddhist texts, the *Kangyur* (*Bka' 'gyur*) and the *Tengyur* (*Bstan 'gyur*), see Schaeffer and van der Kuijp 2009. The *Collected Teachings of Bon* (*Bon po bka' 'gyur*) also started to take its shape at the same time, Kværne 2013, 183-95. Also see Martin, Kværne, and Yasuhiko 2003.

texts within the same cycle) as authentic Buddhist teachings and identifying its author, usually Padmasambhava, as an enlightened buddha.<sup>265</sup>

As the name suggests, *zhus lan* or *dris lan* takes the format of a series of questions and subsequent answers: *zhus* or *dris* means to request or to ask (*zhus* is the honorific form), while *lan* is the answer. Sometimes it is also written as *zhus len*, literally “asking [a question] and receiving (*len*) [a reply].” These questions and answers cover a wide range of topics, including detailed explanations on doctrinal points, instructions for practice, or even refutations that form a part of an ongoing polemical debate. It is perhaps precisely because of this eclectic nature, with the exception of some brief discussion on dialogues in the *Manifold Sayings of Dagpo* (*Dwags po'i bka' 'bum*)<sup>266</sup> or in association with other texts within the same corpus,<sup>267</sup> *zhus lan* or *dris*

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<sup>265</sup> Another way to authenticate questionable teachings by Nyingma apologists is to invoke a set of “three witnesses” (*dpang po gsum*) of prophecy (*lung bstan pa'i dpang po*), person (*gang zag gi dpang po*), and scriptural coherency (*lung 'brel pa'i dpang po*). As argued by Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po, 1012-1088) in the case of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, if a teaching is prophesied by someone considered authoritative by the opponent, or is associated with such a person, or corresponds in key concepts with established authority accepted by the opponent, then it should be accepted as authentic Buddhist teachings. Dorji Wangchuk 2002, 278-282.

<sup>266</sup> Kragh 2015, 301. Kragh considers *zhus lan* an emerging genre in the twelfth century that takes its inspiration from two canonical texts bearing the word *zhus lan* (*\*praśnottara*) in their titles. See below for a discussion on the content and format of these two texts: *Śrī Saraha's Dialogue with King Maitripa* (*Dpal sa ra ha dang mnga' bdag mai tri pa'i zhu ba zhus lan*, *\*Śrīsarahaprabhumaitrīpādapraśnottara*) and *The Dialogue concerning Vajrasattva* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, *\*Vajrasattvapraśnottara*), in *Bstan 'gyur dpe bsdur ma* 1994-2008, 48: 142-145, 407-421.

<sup>267</sup> Rheingans 2011 presents a case study of a single *dris lan* text by the Eighth Karma pa Mikyo Dorje (Mi bskyod rdo rje, 1507-1554) and argues that the genre provides the opportunity for authors to offer concise doctrinal points within a limited space.

*lan* as a literary genre has received little scholarly attention.<sup>268</sup> In this chapter, I analyze the literary function of *zhus lan* in the Treasure tradition and argue that in the context of Treasure literature, these texts are created with a scriptural model in mind. This creation is done by modeling *zhus lan* after the classic dialogical framework of Mahāyāna sutras (and subsequent tantras). Further, the emergence of *zhus lan* as a literary genre should be considered in connection with the theological concern for authenticating sacred texts in this post-renaissance period of Tibetan Buddhism. This is especially true for the Treasure revelatory practices that emerge as a literary response to the influx of newly transmitted teachings and texts from India by the Nyingma School, representative of the older tradition.<sup>269</sup>

By highlighting the formal similarities between Treasure *zhus lan* texts and early Mahāyāna Buddhist scriptures in the format of dialogues, I examine the Treasure dialogues' function of authenticating teachings. For comparison, I also include another two collections of *zhus lans* from the Zhiye (Zhi byed) School that are compiled around the same time. The Zhiye *zhus lan* collections are comparable to the Treasure ones in their narrative framework as well as key features that inform their self-identification as canonical scriptures. However, the Zhiye *zhus lans* did not have as a lasting effect as their Nyingma counterpart; their discontinued production is worth probing. In the last part of the first section, by comparing standard *zhus lans* in the

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<sup>268</sup> The first systematic study of Tibetan literary genres, *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* (Lhundup Sopa, Cabezón, and Jackson 1996), does not include a separate treatment of *zhus lan/dris lan* literature.

<sup>269</sup> For a discussion on the rise of Treasure revelation and its historical developments, see Davidson 2005, 210-243.



fourteenth and fifteenth century with earlier examples from Dunhuang,<sup>270</sup> I argue for their distinct legitimizing function in the Nyingma and Zhije context. Through appropriating the canonical format, these dialogues act as scriptures and authenticate revealed or newly transmitted teachings.

### 2.2.1 *Texts and Genres in the Treasure Tradition*

Treasure or Terma is a uniquely Tibetan form of scriptural revelation that locates its religious authority in Tibet's imperial past by rediscovering Buddhist teachings hidden in both material and immaterial forms. The practice of concealing sacred substances or texts in stūpas, caityas, or statues predates Buddhism and was adopted as Buddhism gained popularity in the subcontinent.<sup>271</sup> The extraction of sacred objects from hidden places is also not a new phenomenon. Nāgārjuna is said to have received Treasures from the hand of the king of nāgas, hidden since the time of the Buddha. The Tibetan Terma is distinct because it represented a systematic effort to make revealed Treasure one of the main and preferred sources for canonical texts. It designed, narrated, and enacted ways to encounter, extract, and decode these concealed

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<sup>270</sup> In her work on possibly the earliest text with *zhus lan* in its title, the *Dialogue concerning Vajrasattva* (*Rdo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*) from Dunhuang, Takahashi only made brief comments on how this “catechistic literary form” also embodies the text’s concern of bringing together the ritualistic and philosophical aspects of Mahāyoga, Takahashi 2010, 86. For a more detailed treatment on the text, see Takahashi 2009, 90-96.

van Schaik (2015, 19) lists six types of Tibetan and Chinese Zen texts, among which the second type are “treatises on Zen doctrines in the form of questions and answers.” These texts also assume the dialogue format but do not contain *zhus lan* or *dris lan* in their titles.

<sup>271</sup> See, for example, Ramachandran 1953.

teachings in a systematical manner. The personages and places involved in Treasure revelation are also included in this literary world.

In its early years, the sources for these revealed teachings are many. Treasures can be attributed to a number of imperial figures, including King Songtsen Gampo (r.617-650), King Tri Songdetsen, and two Indian teachers who visited Tibet during Tri Songdetsen's reign, the tantric master Padmasambhava and the monk Vimalamitra. One of the important early Treasure revealers, Nyangrel Nyima Özer helmed literary efforts to construct Padmasambhava as "the second Buddha" in the twelfth century. In the culmination of his apotheosis in the fourteenth century, the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava gradually replaced the two kings and the monk Vimalamitra as the central figure for Treasure transmission.<sup>272</sup> The classical Treasure legend narrates the story of how Padmasambhava converted Tibet into a land of Buddhism. Upon leaving Tibet, he is said to have conferred numerous teachings to his disciples, foremost among them Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>273</sup> She had assumed the responsibility of translating these teachings into a secret code language, concealing them all over Tibet, entrusting them to local guardian deities, and ensuring their rediscovery by future generations.

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<sup>272</sup> There are three strands for early Treasure transmissions: those transmitted from the ancient Tibetan kings, Songtsen Gampo and Tri Songdetsen, from Padmasambhava, and from Vimalamitra. For a discussion on the association of Tibetan kings and their royal ideology with Treasure discovery, see Davidson 2005, 217-224, 231. Also see Germano, "Revealing Dākinīs in 14th Century Tibet," for a discussion on the convergence of Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava's tradition in the Treasure cycles of Tsultrim Dorje and Longchen Rabjampa Drime Özer.

<sup>273</sup> Treasure *zhus lan* texts also present Yeshe Tsogyel as the ideal intermediary for Treasure transmissions to take place. This aspect of her identity will be discussed in the fourth chapter, "Khandroma Yeshe Tsogyel."

These narratives about how Treasures came about are usually preserved in the paratextual sections of Treasure texts, including Treasure certificates, colophons, and framing narratives of *zhus lan* accounts (a discussion on the literary genres in Treasure texts will follow shortly). For example, in the epilogue of the *Copper Island Biography*, a *Life* of Padmasambhava discovered by Nyangrel Nyima Özer, Yeshe Tsogyel is said to be the disciple who is responsible for the transmission of Treasures:

The emanation of Sarasvatī, Queen Mother Tsogyel has attained the *siddhi* of infallible memory. For the sake of future generations, she has written down the mind transmission of the Master, the royal testament of King Tri Songdetsen, and the virtues of the Great Compassionate One. Having buried them as precious Treasures, she concealed them for the sake of [future] fortunate ones. [She] applied three layers of seals on them. Seal of Treasure. Seal of Concealment. Seal of Entrustment. Ithi.<sup>274</sup>

Also consider the following statement from the concluding pages of Ogyen Lingpa's the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*, another life story of Padmasambhava. Here, Yeshe Tsogyel is also confirmed as the disciple who had commissioned the chronicle, preserved it in writing, and concealed it as a precious Treasure.

For the sake of future generations, the emanation of Sarasvatī,  
Yeshe Tsogyel, who has attained unfailing memory,  
Commissioned the *Chronicle of Padma[sambhava]*,  
Also known as the *Extensive Liberation Story*,  
Or the *Testament of Tri Songdetsen*.  
This register of translators and scholars, a translation colophon for the Teaching,  
[She] preserved them in writing and concealed them as precious Treasures.

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<sup>274</sup> *Padma bka' chems brgyas pa*, 122b-123a.

May they encounter those with fortunate karmic connections!<sup>275</sup>

By the fourteenth century, the innovative practice of Treasure revelations had grown steadily over time. Treasure texts continued to grow in volume as well as variety. A typical Treasure cycle includes many different text genres. The first text is usually the *kha byang* or *byang bu*; these are short texts that convey brief notes on the name, clan, and region of a prophesied Treasure revealer, and the ways in which this revealer will retrieve the Treasure at a predicted time.<sup>276</sup> The *kha byang* is followed by an account of lineage masters (*bla ma brgyud pa*), religious history (*lo rgyus*), dialogues (*zhus lan*), instruction on practice (*don khrid*), advice (*gdams pa*), empowerment (*dbang*), evocation ritual or *sādhana* (*sgrub thabs*), commentary (*'grel pa*), hagiography (*rnam thar* or *skyes rabs*), and supplications (*gsol 'debs*).<sup>277</sup> These texts share a central figure or a group of central figures. They can be Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, or kings of the Tibetan Empire. These texts can be roughly divided into three categories: instructional (for example, instruction on practice, advice, or commentary), ritual (empowerment, evocation ritual, or supplication), and narrative (account of lineage masters, religious history, and hagiography). In the case of *zhus lan*, it does not fit neatly into one of these

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<sup>275</sup> O rgyan gling pa 2001, 574: *dbyangs can sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis/ mi brjed gzung thob ma 'ongs phyi rabs don/ padma bka' yi thang yig ces kyang bya/ rnam thar skyes rabs rgyas pa zhes kyang bya/ khri srong lde'u btsan bka' chem zhes kyang bya/ lo paṇ dkar chag chos kyi 'gyur byang 'di/ yi ger btab nas rin chen gter du sbas/ skal ldan las 'phro can dang 'phrad par shog/*

<sup>276</sup> A *kha byang* or *byang bu* provides the certificate for Treasure revelatory activities. This is done in the form of prophecies by Padmasambhava. Prophecies can also be independent narrative texts and record the sayings of Padmasambhava or other buddhas and bodhisattvas. Gyatso 1993, 126ff.

<sup>277</sup> Tulku Dhondup 1986 (116-118) contains a list of text genres and types of scriptures according to the Treasure tradition itself.

three categories. *Zhus lan* texts are named after their formal feature, viz., dialogues that happened between a master and a disciple, usually Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel. However, Treasure dialogues also share a particular narrative framework that is more stylized than non-Treasure ones. We begin our examination of these sacred dialogues from early attestations of Treasure *zhus lans*.

## 2.2.2 Early Treasure *Zhus lans*

### 2.2.2.1 Pre-fourteenth Century *Zhus lans*

Among the earliest Treasure *zhus lans* are texts attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Özer. He is said to have revealed a collection of twenty-seven *zhus lan* texts, titled *Dialogues with the Queens*,<sup>278</sup> and a number of individual *zhus lans* preserved in a cycle titled *Direct Teachings from the Guru: Instructions and Dialogues* (hereafter *Direct Teachings*).<sup>279</sup> Although the provenance of both collections cannot be directly traced back to their alleged time of discovery, their relative antiquity can be proved by intertextual evidence. Some texts in the *Dialogues with the Queens*

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<sup>278</sup> See note 223 above.

<sup>279</sup> For example, “Bla ma dmar khrid kyī zhal gdams zhus lan skor,” in ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas 1976-1980, 92: 184-710.

Since *Direct Teachings* first appeared as a whole in Jamgön Kongtrul Lodro Thaye’s (‘Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas, 1813-1899) nineteenth-century *Treasury of Precious Revealed Teachings* (*Rin chen gter mdzod*), its attribution to Nyangrel as a twelfth-century revelation is not unproblematic, see Hirshberg 2016, 122n229. However, a number of individual texts within *Direct Teachings* can be dated back to an earlier time.

are also found in fourteenth-century Treasure cycles revealed by Rigdzin Godem (1337-1408).<sup>280</sup>

Individual texts in *Direct Teachings* can also be located in literary sources from the twelfth century onwards, either by title only or reproduced in full.<sup>281</sup>

A typical *zhus lan* between Padmasambhava and his disciples usually begins with a narrative of the time, location, and retinue for the occasion of the teaching. Sometimes this is prefaced by a brief account of how Padmasambhava came to Tibet, ranging from a few sentences to a separate passage that lists his achievements. After introducing Padmasambhava as one “who was born miraculously from a lotus, untainted by a womb,” an untitled *zhus lan* records a conversation that took place between him and seven female disciples. Having prepared flowers, a golden *maṇḍala*, and made a feast, each woman initiates a question to the master, starting with Yeshe Tsogyel:

The Great Master known by the name Padmasambhava, who was born miraculously from a lotus, untainted by a womb: when he was invited by the powerful king of Tibet, he tamed the ground of Samye. At this time, he was residing at the Juniper Ridge of Crystal

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<sup>280</sup> For example, “Treasure from the Lotus Crystal Cave: Direct Instructions from Śrī Siṃha (*Padma gshel phug gi gter ma śrī sing ha'i dmar khrid skor*)” (*Jo mo la gdams pa sogs* n.d., 600-612) is also present in the fourteenth century Treasure cycle the *Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* by Rigdzin Godem, which will be discussed below shortly. In Godem's revelation, this text is titled *Introduction to Natural Awareness and Natural Luminosity* (*Ngo sprod rang rig rang gsal*).

<sup>281</sup> In *Direct Teachings*, “Pointing-out Instruction to the Old Lady (Rgan mo mdzub btsugs kyi gdams pa)” (‘Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas 1976-1980, 92: 467-474) is listed among the teachings requested by Godrakpa Sönam Gyeltsen (Ko brag pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, 1170-1249) to his teacher and master of Langkor (Bla ’khor). Stearns 2000, 34-35.

Many other titles from *Direct Teachings* are also found in Sanggye Lingpa's (Sangs rgyas gling pa, 1340-1396) *Gathering the Guru's Intentions*. For example, A rough correspondence to “Instructions on Descending Views (*Lta ba yas phub kyi zhal gdams*)” (*Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, 92: 405-418) can be found in Sangs rgyas gling pa 1972, 5: 703-712.

Pearls. These exceptionally noble women — Lady of Kharchen, Yeshe Tsogyel; Lady of Shelkar, Dorje Tso; Lady of Cokro, Pelgyi Chone; Lady of Dro, Matingma; Lady of Margong, Rinchen Tsuk; Lady of Chims, Sale Ö; and Lady of Ruyang, Mati —altogether seven, prepared turquoise flowers as the seven royal treasures<sup>282</sup> in the middle of a cubit-sized golden maṇḍala. Having made a feast of thick rice wine and various food offerings, they made the following request:

“Great master! Pray confer on us your immaculate body, your pristine speech, and your mind which is free from conceptualization!”

Queen Tsogyel, Lady of Kharchen, made the following question to Master Padma:

“A disciple like me, who is a woman with little wisdom and a dull mind; I have limited understanding and am narrow-minded. May I request an oral instruction on enlightenment in this lifetime with a female body, a teaching that is easy to know, to grasp, to understand, and to realize!”<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> The seven royal treasures are the precious possessions of a universal monarch. They include: the precious wheel (*'khor lo*), jewel (*nor bu*), queen (*btsun mo*), elephant (*glang po*), minister (*blon po*), horse (*rta mchog*), and general (*dmag bpon*).

<sup>283</sup> “Untitled,” in *'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas* 1976-1980, 92: 474-475: *slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas zhes by abal sku mngal gyis ma gos te padma las rdzus skyes su 'khrungs pa del bod kyi lha sras btsan pos spyang drangs nasl bsam yas kyis gzhi gtul ba'i dus sul mu tig shel gyi spa ma gong du bzhugs pa lal bud med khyad par du 'phags pa mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal dangl shel dkar bza' rdo rje 'tsho dangl cog ro bza' dpal gyi mchod gnas dangl 'bro bza' ma ting ma dangl mar gong bza' rin chen gtsug dangl mchims bza' sa le 'od dangl ru yang bza' ma ti dangl bud med bdun gyis gser gyi maṇḍala khru gang pa zhig la g.yu'i me tog rin chen sna bdun gyi tshul du byasl 'bras chang ding pa dangl zhal zas sna tshogs la tshogs 'khor mdzad nasl slob dpon chen po lagsl dri med kyi skul rnam dag gi gsungl spros bral gyi thugs! gnang bar mdzod ces zhus soll*

*slob dpon padma lal jo mo mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal gyis zhus pal bdag bud med 'dra ba shes rab chung la blo brtull go ba chung la sems rgya chung bal shes blal bzung slal go slal rtogs sla bal bud med kyi lus 'di la brten nas tshe 'di la sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag zhig zhu 'tshal loll*

This text is also translated by Erik Pema Kunsang (Padmasambhava 2008, 111-120).

Padmasambhava replied with a teaching on the true nature of the Buddhist teaching.<sup>284</sup> Then, each female disciple, in succession, beseeched him to give an oral instruction and received teachings from Padmasambhava. The text concludes with the conferral of this teaching to Yeshe Tsogyel and its concealment by her:

The seven ladies rejoiced in the master's teachings, made prostrations to him, circumambulated him, and prepared extensive feast offerings. The queen, Lady of Kharchen, with the intention of benefitting future generations, recorded [the teaching] in writing at that very time, at the Juniper Ridge of Crystal Pearls.<sup>285</sup>

Other dialogues are also found in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Treasure cycles. Another important early Treasure revealer, Guru Chöwang, includes in his autobiography a visionary conversation between him and Padmasambhava, titled *Dialogue with the Retinue* (*Nye 'khor zhu len*).<sup>286</sup> Here he inquired of the master about his fellow disciples in his previous birth as king Tri Songdetsen.

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<sup>284</sup> “Untitled,” in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas 1976-1980, 92: 475.

<sup>285</sup> Ibid., 493-494: *grub thob kyi bud med bdun gyisl slob dpon la rjes su yi rang nasl phyag dang bskor ba byasl tshogs 'khor chen po byas soll jo mo mkhar chen bzas phyi rabs kyi don la dgongs nasl mu tig shel gyi spa ma gong dul dus de nyid du yi ge btab boll*

Also see above 1.1.3, “Yeshe Tsogyel in Colophons” for a standard narrative of Treasure concealment.

<sup>286</sup> Gu ru chos dbang 1979, 2: 498.3-498.7. Also see Phillips 2004, 172-73.



Another influential Treasure collection for the prospering cult of Padmasambhava, the *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas* (*Mkha' 'gro snying thig*), discovered by Tsultrim Dorje, also contains a dialogue between Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel, titled the *Golden Rosary of Nectar* (*Zhus lan bdud rtsi gser phreng*).<sup>287</sup> The opening passage shares a similar structure with the *zhus lan* texts in *Direct Teachings*:

Homage to the great master Padmasambhava! Orgyen Padma Jungne, emanation of the Buddhas of Past, Present, and Future, the All-Knowing One, the Vajra-like Vidyādhāra, was invited to Tibet by the powerful king [Tri Songdetsen]. During his stay in Tibet, I, Tsogyel, served as his karmamudrā (*las rgya*) and attendant. While he was meditating in the cave of Zhodö Tidro, he introduced me to the meaning of the *Most Secret, Most Excellent Seminal Essence of Great Perfection*. I have gained certainty about the nature of existence by directly seeing it without any analytic thinking.

Struck by its wonder, I, Lady of Kharchen, asked:

“Ema! Great master, since all the key points in the *Seminal Essence of the Secret Tantra* are held within the three key aspects of essence, nature, and capacity, are there any deviations from these three or not?”<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> “Zhus lan bdud rtsi gser phreng,” in Dri med ’od zer 2009, 5: 349-368. This *zhus lan* is translated in full by Erik Pema Kunsang (Padmasambhava 1994, 44-60).

<sup>288</sup> Dri med ’od zer 2009, 5: 349: *o rgyan padma 'byung gnas zhes bya bal dus gsum sangs rgyas thams cad kyi sprul pa thams cad mkhyen pa rdo rje lta bu'i rig 'dzin chen po del mnga' bdag btsad pos bod du gdan drangs nasl bod du bzhugs ring lal bdag mtsho rgyal gyis las rgya dang zhabs tog bgyis tel gzho stod ti sgro brag la sgrub pa mdzad pa'i dus sul yang gsang bla na med pa rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi don ngo 'phrodl gnas lugs yid dpyod du ma lus par mngon sum du lta bas thag chod nas de la ngo mtshar skyes te bdag mkhar chen bzas zhus pal e ma slob dpon chen po lagsl gsang sngags snying thig gi gnad thams cad ngo bo rang bzhin thugs rje gsum du 'dus 'dug pas 'di gsum la gol sa mchis sam ma mchis zhus pasl*

After receiving the answer from Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel continued with a series of eight more questions and answers. They start with the three key points in the Seminal Essence teaching — the essence, nature, and compassion — and end with teachings on abandoning thoughts on food, clothing, and body. Similarly, this text concludes with Padmasambhava exhorting Yeshe Tsogyel to record and conceal these teachings for the benefit of future generations.<sup>289</sup>

#### 2.2.2.2 Collections of *Zhus lans* in Rigdzin Godem's Revelations

Perhaps the most dedicated use of *zhus lan* as a vehicle for establishing textual authority is found in a later Great Perfection Treasure cycle. Entitled the *Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen, Primordially Pure Great Perfection (Rdzogs chen ka dag rang byung rang shar)*, this Treasure cycle is discovered by the Treasure revealer Rigdzin Godem and consists of primarily sacred conversations between various enlightened figures.<sup>290</sup> After a preliminary practice and a

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<sup>289</sup> Dri med 'od zer 2009, 5: 367-368.

<sup>290</sup> Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem phru can, 1979b. It is a reproduction of a manuscript originally housed at Tsamdrak (Mtshams brag) Monastery in Bhutan. This cycle is later included as the fifth and last volume of an anthology of Great Perfection teaching cycle, collectively titled the *Unimpeded Realization of Samantabhadra (Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal)*.

Two versions of *Unimpeded Realization* are available to us: (1) the Adzom (A 'dzom) version: *Dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor* (Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem phru can 1973). This is a reproduction of blockprints prepared by Adzom Drugpa Rinpoche (A 'dzoms 'brug pa rin po che, 1842-1924) in his own monastery in the early 1900s; (2) the Nechung (Gnas chung) version: *Dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor* (Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem phru can 1979a). This is a reproduction of blockprints prepared by the eleventh Nechung Tulku Śākya Yarpel (Gnas chung sku rten Shākya yar 'phel, 19th century).

supplication to the Great Perfection transmission lineage, the majority of titles within this volume are framed as either dialogues between enlightened and/or soon-to-be-enlightened figures, or oral teachings from Padmasambhava:<sup>291</sup>

- I. *Key Points in the Precious Preliminary Practice: The Five Nails/Ka dag skor las sngon 'gro rin po che gnad kyi gzer lnga* (Sngon 'gro gnad kyi gzer lnga ldeb): a preliminary practice;<sup>292</sup>
- II. *Supplication to the Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen, Primordially Pure Great Perfection Lineage/Rdzogs pa chen po ka dag rang byung rang shar kyi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* (Rang shar brgyud 'debs ldeb);
- III. *Notes on the Key Points of Dialogue Coming from the Eastern Conchshell Treasury/Zhus lan gnad kyi yi ge shar dung mdzod nas byon pa* (Zhus lan gnad kyi yi ge): a dialogue between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava;
- IV. *The Precious Spike Testament/Zhal chems rin chen gzer bu ldeb*: an oral instruction from Padmasambhava;
- V. *Stages of Guidance on the Points of the Path: Distilling the Quintessential Elixir, Light Dispelling Darkness/Ma rig mun sel sgron ma: Snying po bcud bsodus lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa byon* (Ma rig mun sel sgron ma): a dialogue between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava;
- VI. *Distilling the Quintessential Elixir: Wisdom Empowerment/Snying po bcud bsodus rig pa'i dbang*;
- VII. *The Ten Steps of the Profound Key Points/Zab mo gnad kyi them bsod*: a dialogue between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava;<sup>293</sup>
- VIII. *Introduction to Natural Awareness and Natural Luminosity/Ngo sprod rang rig rang gsal*: a dialogue between Padmasambhava and Śrī Sīṃha;

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The Nechung version does not include this *Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen, Primordially Pure Great Perfection* volume. In the Adzom version, the text titled *Rdzogs pa chen po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud las byung ba'i man ngan gsal ba'i sgron me* is not included. On the other hand, this version contains two extra texts: a *zhus lan* between Padmasambhava and Namkhai Nyingpo (Nam mkha'i snying po), titled *Sku gsum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*, and an oral teaching by Padmasambhava, titled *O rgyan padmas mdzad pa'i zhal chems sgron ma rnam gsum*.

<sup>291</sup> Schapiro 2012 (66-75) provides an overview of the *zhal gdams* or life-advice genre.

<sup>292</sup> When applicable, I list in parentheses the short form of titles used in the table of contents for this volume.

<sup>293</sup> Turpeinen 2018 (164-175) provides a detailed analysis of this texts as a narrative of Yeshe Tsogyel's experiences and transformations when she undertook the Direct Transcendence (*thod rgal*) training with Padmasambhava.

- IX. *Treasury of Precious Gems that Remove Obstacles/Gags* [sic] *sel nor bu'i bang mdzod*: a dialogue between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava;
- X. *Illuminating Lamp: Oral Instructions from the Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Great Perfection Tantra/Rdzogs pa chen po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud las byung ba'i man ngan gsal ba'i sgron me* (*Man ngag gsal ba'i sgron ma*): an oral teaching from Padmasambhava;
- XI. *The All-Liberating Vajrasattva Tantra/Kun grol rdo rje sems dpa'i rgyud*: a tantra in the form of a conversation between Vajrapāṇi and Vajrasattva;
- XII. *The Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Great Perfection Root Tantra/Rdzogs pa chen po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud* (*Rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud*): a tantra in the form of a conversation between Vajrasattva and Samantabhadra;
- XIII. *Introduction to the Five Intermediate States/Bar do lnga'i ngo sprod*: a dialogue between Tri Srongdetsen and Padmasambhava.

The arrangement of titles in this volume can be read as an enlightenment narrative in itself. It begins with an introduction: *Key Points in the Precious Preliminary Practice: The Five Nails* is a preliminary practice text; while *Supplication to the Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen, Primordial Pure Great Perfection Lineage* is a supplication to the lineage masters. These are customarily placed at the beginning of a volume. Except for the first two texts, all other titles in the collection assume the format of conversations or oral instructions. These conversations are the majority in this volume. They take place between buddhas and bodhisattvas, teachers and disciples, with their locations ranging from mythical abodes to human realms, from India to Tibet. *Introduction to Natural Awareness and Natural Luminosity* is a dialogue between Padmasambhava and his teacher, Śrī Siṃha; while all other accounts are teachings from Padmasambhava, the cultural hero for Rigdzin Godem's Treasure activities. These are conversations between Padmasambhava and his two disciples (Tri Songdetsen and, most frequently, Yeshe Tsogyel<sup>294</sup>) or oral teachings

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<sup>294</sup> These two disciples (with the addition of Namkhai Nyingpo) are already considered the main disciples who were responsible for transmitting Padmasambhava's teachings in the earlier Treasures of Guru Chöwang. Turpeinen 2015, 33-34.

from him.<sup>295</sup> The location of sacred conversations then moves up to the divine realm, represented by *The All-Liberating Vajrasattva Tantra* and *The Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Great Perfection Root Tantra*, two tantras that form the basis of the primordial purity teachings. The volume closes with *Introduction to the Five Intermediate States*, a text on the five after-death intermediate states, or *bardos*.

Similar to those attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Özer and Tsultrim Dorje, these dialogues also start with a scene-setting narrative about the life of Padmasambhava, followed by a series of questions and answers. Consider the following opening passage from *Notes on the Key Points of the Dialogue Coming from the Eastern Conchshell Treasury*:

While Master Padmasambhava was residing at Samye Chimphu, Lady of Kharchen, Tsogyel, was slightly distracted regarding worldly appearances during the day. One night, deeply immersed in her dream, she dreamed that on the side of a massive rocky mountain, a boy [with a body] of light was sitting on a throne of precious jewels. He was surrounded on all sides with brilliant flower stalks of various color. [Tsogyel] was very happy and set out to walk there. She went there and encountered a fearsome large snake: then she was scared and became unconscious.<sup>296</sup>

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Tri Songdetsen's dialogue with Padmasambhava is the last text in the cycle, titled *Introduction to the Five Intermediate States*. Texts III, V, VII, and IX are all Yeshe Tsogyel's questions to Padmasambhava. She features as the disciple asking questions in most *zhus lan* accounts; these are also usually the longest ones.

<sup>295</sup> For example, Text IV, *The Precious Spike Testament*, does not belong to the dialogue genre. Judging from the use of phrases like "Listen (*nyon cig*)!" and the scene-setting narrative in the beginning, they are still first-person voice teachings given by Padmasambhava to his disciples.

<sup>296</sup> "Zhus lan gnad kyi yi ge shar dung mdzod nas byon pa," Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem phru can 1979b, 42-43: *slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas bsam yas mchims phu na bzhugs pa'i tshel jo mo mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal nyin mo 'jig rten gyi snang ba la bag tsam yengs/ nub cig rmi lam gyi 'khul snang dul brag ri chen po gcig gi ngos na rin po che'i khri gcig la 'od kyi khye'u zhig 'dul de'i mtha' ma thams cad me tog gi sdong po kha dog sna tshogs bkrags mdangs dang*

Yeshe Tsogyel then descended into a crack that opened in the mountain, went through many types of sensory experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant, and finally arrived at a whirling lake with a sky-reaching tree trunk in the center, fire ablaze at the root, various flowers on the branches, and pure fruits hanging in the air. Having woken from the dream, she approached master Padmasambhava and asked him about the causes and conditions that gave rise to this dream. The master replied with a teaching on the emptiness of the external world and sentient beings inhabiting it (*phyi snod nang bcud*). He then went on to explain the practice of eradicating delusional appearance by upholding the fortification of natural awareness.<sup>297</sup> In the end, Yeshe Tsogyel received the full textual transmission of the *Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* from Padmasambhava:

The great master Padmasambhava, for the sake of Lady of Kharchen, Queen Tsogyel, according to the profound yet concise *Great Perfection Tantra of Self-Arising and Self-Appearing Awareness*, entrusted to her the following teachings: the eight *upadeśas*, and the two tantras, being ten altogether. Among those are:

- *Notes on the Key Points of Dialogue*;
- *The Precious Spike Testament*;
- *Light Dispelling Darkness*;
- *Distilling the Quintessential Elixir: The Wisdom Empowerment*;
- *Quintessential Steps of the Profound Instruction*;<sup>298</sup>

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*ldan pas bskor nas 'dug pa lal shin tu dga' ste 'gro bar chas nas phyin pasl lam du sbrul chen po 'jigs su rung ba zhig dang phrad nas sngangs te brgyal loll*

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., 48-53.

<sup>298</sup> This title refers to *Ten Steps of the Profound Key Points* (*Zab mo gnad kyi them bcu*) in this cycle.

- *Introduction to Natural Awareness and Natural Luminosity*;
- *Treasury of Precious Gems that Remove Obstacles*;
- *Illuminating Light of Instructions*;<sup>299</sup>
- *The All-Liberating Vajrasattva Tantra*;
- *The Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Root Tantra* —

These ten, along with proceedings of offering to the Treasure protectors, amount to eleven.

[He] bestowed them to Lady of Kharchen, Queen Tsogyel. Tsogyel, having been liberated from delusory appearances on her own, for the sake of later generations, hid all the instructions in a white clockwise-turning conch treasure inside a dark maroon chest made of rhinoceros hide, on the waist of a rocky mountain like a pile of poisonous snakes, in the northern region of Thoyor Nakpo.<sup>300</sup>

In this case, not only is a dialogue used as a vehicle in itself to transmit Padmasambhava's teachings, it also extends outward to other titles within the same collection and gives validation to these titles as well. By including titles of texts within the same cycles, this dialogue authenticates not just itself, but all the text mentioned within as genuine teaching transmissions from Padmasambhava. It also spells out its place of concealment and subsequent revelation, which can be used to validate the retrieved texts from the same location.

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<sup>299</sup> This title refers to *Illuminating Lamp: Oral Instructions from the Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Great Perfection Tantra* (*Rdzogs pa chen po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud las byung ba'i man ngan gsal ba'i sgron me*).

<sup>300</sup> “Zhus lan gnad kyi yi ge shar dung mdzod nas byon pa,” Rig ’dzin Rgod kyi ldem phru can, 1979b, 53-54: *slob dpon chen po padma ’byung gnas kyisl jo mo mkhar chen bza’ mtsho rgyal gyi don dul zab la ’dus pa rdzogs pa chen po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud la brten nasl man ngag brgyadl rgyud gnyis dang bcu yodl de la zhus lan gnad kyi yi gel zhal chems rin chen gzer bul ma rig mun sel sgron mal snying po bsdu pa rig pa’i dbangl gnad tig zhal gdams zab mo’i themsl ngo sprod rang rig rang gsall gegs sel nor bu rin po che’i bang mdzodl man ngag gsal ba’i sgron mal kun grol rdo rje sems dpa’i rgyudl rang byung rang shar rtsa ba’i rgyud dang bcul gter bdag mchod pa’i las rim dang bcu gcig goll jo mo mkhar chen bza’ mtsho rgyal la gtad del mtsho rgyal ’khrul pa’i snang ba rang sar grol nasl man ngag thams cad phyi rabs kyi don dul byang tho yor nag po’i yull brag ri dug sbrul spungs ’dra’i skedl bse sgrom smug po’i nangl shar dung mdzod dkar por sbas soll*

### 2.2.3 *Zhus lan as Scripture: Shared Stylistic Features with Mahāyāna Scriptures*

As seen above, the narratives framing these dialogical accounts share a common structure, which can be summarized as follows:

- Padmasambhava was residing at [place];
- Description of the time, location, and retinue;
- A disciple (usually Yeshe Tsogyel) raises a question;
- Padmasambhava answers that question;
- (Another question is brought up and answered);
- End of the teaching: entrusting and concealing Treasures.

For anyone familiar with the narrative structure of classical Buddhist scriptures, the resemblance is evident. A few more detailed observations can be made of this narrative structure. It contains the five elements or “perfect conditions” (*phun sum tshogs pa lnga*)<sup>301</sup> under which a Buddha-voiced teaching (*sangs rgyas kyi bka’*, Skt. *buddhavacana*) takes place: the teacher, the time, the location, the audience or retinue, and the teaching. Conversation or dialogue is a format adopted by the Buddha at the beginning of his teaching career and became the literary convention for

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<sup>301</sup> In a specifically Mahāyoga generational stage ritual context, these five perfection conditions could also be: the place, the principal practitioner, the retinue, the requisite substances, and the time. See Mayer and Cantwell 2010, 8n10.

This fivefold trope continues in the Treasure tradition. For a Treasure revelation to successfully take place, five “auspicious connections” (*rten ’brel*) need to come together. According to the Third Dodrupchen, Jigme Tenpai Nyima (Rdo grub chen ’Jigs med Bstan pa’i nyi ma, 1865-1926), these five are: the right person or Treasure revealer, the right place, the right time, meeting with the holder of these teachings (*chos bdag*), and encountering the right consort or ḍākinī. Jacoby 2014, 206-207.



Buddhist canonical literature. Dialogues take place between the Buddha and his disciples, between the Buddha and other deities, and among disciples themselves. Dialogues also are used to address concerns for skeptics, to defend doctrinal positions, and to propagate new teachings and practices.

A sutra usually starts with the phrase “Thus have I heard, at one time, the Buddha was residing in [a certain place], accompanied by [a retinue of various classes of beings].”<sup>302</sup> Then a disciple or a bodhisattva will stand up and raise a question, initiating the sequence of a sacred conversation. In the end, the retinue invariably rejoices at this most excellent teaching and resolves to commit it to practice. Consider the following example from the *Mahānidāna Sutta* or the *Great*

*Discourse on Cause*, an early teaching by the Buddha:

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Exalted One was staying among the Kurus in a town called Kammāsadhamma. Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Exalted One. And having approached him, he greeted him respectfully and sat down to one side. When he had sat down to one side. Ānanda said this: “It is wonderful, sir. It is marvelous how profound this dependent arising is, and how profound it appears! And yet it appears to me as clear as clear can be!”

“Do not say that, Ānanda! Do not say that! This dependent arising is profound and appears profound. It is through not understanding and not penetrating this doctrine that this generation has become like a tangled ball of string, covered with blight, tangled like coarse grass, and unable to pass beyond states of woe, ill destiny, ruin, and the round of birth-and-death.”<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Here the omission of the phrase “Thus have I heard” from Treasure *zhus lans* can be explained by the fact that these accounts are considered to have been taught by Padmasambhava in person and recorded in writing while he was still in Tibet.

<sup>303</sup> Holder 2006, 28.

The Buddha asked Ānanda a few rhetorical questions during the conversation to make sure Ānanda correctly understood his meaning. Ānanda continued his dialogue with the Buddha for a few more rounds. In the end, he is said to have perfectly understood the teaching and rejoiced in what the Buddha had just taught. The Buddha also encourages his disciples to ask about his teachings should they feel perplexed. Another Mahāyāna scripture, the *Mahāvaiṣṭya Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*, is one example:

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying on the Vulture Peak near Rājagṛha in the lecture hall of a many tiered pavilion built of fragrant sandalwood. He had attained buddhahood ten years previously and was accompanied by an assembly of hundreds and thousands of great monks and a throng of bodhisattvas and great beings sixty times the number of sands in the Ganges River. *[description of the retinue, omitted here.]*

At that time, the Buddha sat up straight in meditation in the sandalwood pavilion and, with his supernatural powers, put on a miraculous display. *[description of the miraculous display, omitted here.]*

But at that point the World-honored One realized why the bodhisattvas were perplexed, so he addressed Vajramati (“Adamantine Wisdom”), saying, “O good son. If there is anything in the Buddha’s teaching that perplexes you, feel free to ask about it.” Bodhisattva Vajramati knew that everyone in the whole assembly was perplexed, and so addressed the Buddha, saying: “O World-honored One, why are there conjured buddha images in all of the innumerable flowers? And for what reason did they ascend into the heavens and cover the world? And why did the buddha images each issue forth countless hundreds of thousands of rays of light?” Everyone in the assembly looked on and then joined his hands together in respect. *[Vajramati repeats his question in verse, omitted here.]*

At that time the World-honored One spoke to Vajramati and the other bodhisattvas, saying, “Good sons, there is a great vaiṣṭya-sūtra called the ‘Tathāgatagarbha.’ It was because I wanted to expound it to you that I showed you these signs. You should all listen attentively and ponder it well.” All said, “Excellent. We very much wish to hear it.”

The Buddha said: *“[teaching on the Tathāgatagarbha, omitted here].”*

Then, when the World-honored One had finished expounding this sūtra, Vajramati, together with the four groups of bodhisattvas, the gods, the gandharvas, the asuras, and the

rest, rejoiced at what they had heard the Buddha explain, and they practiced it as they had been told.<sup>304</sup>

Again, the content of the Buddha's teaching (in this case on Tathāgatarbha) is encased in and introduced by the narrative frame of a dialogue. New teachings are continuously incorporated into the canon—the reinvention of Buddhist canon is perhaps as old as the Buddhist scriptures themselves—but with the same dialogical format. Modifications to the strict definition of Buddhist scripture as *buddhavacana* came as early as when the first collection of sutras were settled and agreed upon. Even for sutras from the first assembly after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, not all of them are considered to be preached by the Buddha – some teachings are given by his disciples. In the case of *pratibhāna* or inspired utterances, the Buddha also invites his disciples to give a spontaneous sermon or to offer versified reflections on the spot, which he then affirms, stamping the sermon with his authority.<sup>305</sup>

The person qualified for teaching a Buddha-voiced text continues to expand. In his discussion on the origin of Mahāyāna scriptures, Seishi Karashima proposed a possible precursor for the term “Mahāyāna.”<sup>306</sup> According to him, this word comes from *\*vedulla*, a Middle Indic form corresponding to the Sanskrit *vaitulya*, “unusual” or “peerless.” Buddhaghosa defines *vaitulya* as “[a]ll the *suttantas* requested to be preached in accordance with repeated attainment of wisdom and delight,” that is, sutras that start with a question from A, then an answer from B to A's question;

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<sup>304</sup> Grosnick 1995, 92-106.

<sup>305</sup> For a discussion on this canonical genre of spontaneous, inspired utterances that extends the authorship of Buddhist scriptures beyond the Buddha, see MacQueen 1981 and 1982.

<sup>306</sup> Karashima 2014, 133-138.

then A, being pleased with the answer, raises another question, and so on. Moreover, the status of A and B are usually differentiated—one is considered inferior and the other superior. The characters engaged in these dialogical exchanges can be the Buddha and a disciple, a god or bodhisattva and a disciple, or among disciples themselves. The Mahāsāṃghikas are the ones credited with establishing this new *vaitulya* genre. This new format of continuous exchange in the form of questions-and-answers allows the introduction of new developments in Buddhist doctrines and addresses concerns or issues raised in this new Buddhist literature.

A similar imitation of the sutric narrative style can be found in the tantra genre. The beginning chapter of *Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas* (*Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*) presents a reimagination of the enlightenment narrative of Prince Sarvārthasiddhi or Siddhārtha, the future Buddha. Here, instead of proceeding with his *samādhi* and attain enlightenment, he was instructed by all the Tathāgatas that the process of awakening includes self-visualization and the chanting of mantras, starting with “Om! I penetrate the mind! (*Om cittaprativedhaṃ karomi*)”. It is only after doing so that he can attain perfect enlightenment and realize the true nature of all the Tathāgatas.<sup>307</sup> Here again, the narrative follows the established framework of a Buddhist sutra (interestingly, the *Tattvasaṃgraha* also refers to itself as a *sūtra* rather than *tantra*), but recast in decidedly tantric terms.<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>307</sup> For a translation of the opening scene in *The Compendium of Principles of All Tathāgatas*, see Giebel 2001, 19-24.

<sup>308</sup> Weinberger 2003, 49ff. Note that Hindu tantras are also commonly formed as conversations between gods and goddesses.

With this long-standing and continuous tradition of canon expansion in mind, Treasure *zhus lans* adopt a similar dialogical format and serve to effectively elevate the status of Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel as part of the enlightened pantheon in Tibetan Buddhism. Through Padmasambhava's voice, the teachings transmitted in these dialogues are also recognized as authentic. Yeshe Tsogyel is given the responsibility to memorize and transmit his teaching lineage, much like Ānanda, the faithful disciple of the Buddha. The list of titles bestowed to her in the aforementioned *Notes on the Key Points of the Dialogue Coming from the Eastern Conchshell Treasury* is one example.

#### **2.2.4 Dialogues Discontinued: The Zhije Zhus lan Collections**

This appropriation of a scriptural format in Treasure *zhus lans* is hardly original; so are their functions of authenticating new teachings and expanding the Buddhist pantheon. The true creativity of Treasure *zhus lan* texts lies in its regenerative ability to make continued revelation over the next millennium possible. This new feature in scriptural creation is better appreciated when we look at a parallel example, the Zhije (Zhi byed) School. It is a contemporaneous, and in many aspects comparable, Tibetan Buddhist school to the Nyingma tradition. Like Padmasambhava, the legendary founder of the Zhije School, Dampa Sanggye (Dam pa sangs rgyas, 11th cent. - 1117),<sup>309</sup> is also said to have come from India. He is one of the active actors in the renaissance of Tibetan Buddhism, sharing the stage with early Nyingma Treasure revealers and their New Translation School contemporaries. His disciples have also composed dialogues to

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<sup>309</sup> For a brief sketch on Dampa Sanggye's life, see Martin 2006, 111-114.

record his teaching. These texts from the Zhije tradition follow a somewhat similar initial trajectory with the Nyingma Treasure *zhus lans*.

*Zhus lan* accounts can be found in at least two collections of Zhije teachings, respectively titled *The Early, Middle, and Late Pacification Corpus* (*Zhi byed snga phyi bar gsum gyi skor*, hereafter *The Corpus*)<sup>310</sup> and *The Collected Teachings of the Early, Middle, and Late Pacification School* (*Zhi byed snga phyi bar gsum gyi chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, hereafter *The Collected Teachings*).<sup>311</sup> *The Corpus* contains a bundle of dialogues with the collective title *Six Dialogues on the Truth with the Black Ācārya* (*A tsa ra nag po'i don gyi zhu lan drug*).<sup>312</sup> *The Collected Teachings* include a total of five dialogues, three of them are teachings by Dampa Sanggye and the other two by Dampa's foremost disciple, the female Buddhist master Machig Labdrön (1055-1149).<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Thugs sras kun dga' and B. N. Aziz 1979. The manuscript basis for this collection can be dated back to mid-thirteenth century, see Martin 2015, 340n8.

<sup>311</sup> The last volume of this collection contains a discussion of the compilation process. Texts were gathered from old manuscripts in the main temple to Phadampa Sanggye in Tingri (Ding ri), *Gdams ngag mdzod*, and collections of Chö or Cutting teaching by Machig Ladron. However, no information was given with regard to specific texts within the collection. Dam pa sangs rgyas and Ma cig lab sgron 2012-2013, 13: 433-439.

<sup>312</sup> "The Black Ācārya" refers to Dampa Sanggye.

<sup>313</sup> The three attributed to Dampa Sanggye are: *The Instruction of Phadampa Sanggye to Bodhisattva Ānanda Regarding Prophecies for Future Times* ("Pha dam pa sangs rgyas kyis byang chub sems dpa' kun dga' la ma 'ongs pa'i dus lung du bstan pa'i zhal gdams," Dam pa sangs rgyas and Ma cig lab sgron 2012-2013, 2: 573-582); *The Account and Dialogue with the Twenty-Four Ladies* ("Jo mo nyi shu rtsa bzhis zhus lan dang lo rgyus," *ibid.*, 3: 663-688); and the *Hundred Thousand Explanations on the Mirror of Mind in Dialogue: A Garland of Perfect Views on the Profound Meaning* ("Zhus lan thugs kyi me long gi bshad 'bum zab mo'i don nram par gzigs pa'i 'phreng ba," *ibid.*, 4: 1-544).

The Zhije *zhus lan* collection also opens with a scene-setting narrative. Additionally, following the convention of translated canonical texts in the Kanjur and Tenjur, it begins with listing both the Sanskrit and Tibetan titles of the text:<sup>314</sup>

In Sanskrit, [the title] is *Paramabuddhoktānandabodhisatvānāgatakālavayākaraṇāvavāda*; in Tibetan, *The Instruction of Phadampa Sanggye to Bodhisattva Ānanda Regarding Prophecies for Future Times*.

Homage to the Guru! Homage to the Precious Excellent Buddha, Dampa Sanggye!

At that time, it is said that Dampa had been crying for a while. Kunga asked, “Excellent [Teacher]! Why are you crying?”

“I am crying at the impending disappearance of the Buddhist teachings.”

“When will the teaching disappear?”

“Not many years from now.”

“What kind of signs will there be [for the disappearance of the teachings]?”

“At the end of times, there will be few good people, while evil persons hold their heads high and seek vice in the virtuous. People are biased toward evil magic. Food goes to haughty people. Bad behavior goes wild while kind heart falls down. Plenty means of livelihood becomes barely enough. Big averts to small. Women domineer over men. Bad overpowers good ... By the time when the world is filled with those signs, the Teaching disappears.”<sup>315</sup>

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The two attributed to Machig Labdrön are *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag yang tshoms zhus lan ma* and *Zab mo bdud kyi gcod yul gyi zhus lan rdo rje'i rol pa*. Ibid., 7:191-214.

<sup>314</sup> This kind of bilingual title is only occasionally found in Treasure cycles.

<sup>315</sup> “Pha dam pa sangs rgyas kyis byang chub sems dpa' kun dga' la ma 'ongs pa'i dus lung du bstan pa'i zhal gdams,” in *Dam pa sangs rgyas and Ma cig lab sgron* 2012-2013, 2: 574-575, 577: *rgya gar skad dul paramabuddhoktānandabodhisatvānāgatakālavayākaraṇāvavādonāma bod skad dul pha dam pa sangs rgyas kyis byang chub sems dpa' kun dga' la ma 'ongs pa'i dus lung du bstan pa'i zhal gdams zhes bya bal na mo gu rul dam pa sangs rgyas rin po che la phyag 'tshal loll dam pa sangs rgyas de dus re zhig na bshum gyin gda' skadl kun dgas dam pa ci la bshum pa*

Another conversation between Phadampa Sanggye and his twenty-four female disciples also lists its title in both Sanskrit and Tibetan:

In Sanskrit, [the title] is *Caturviṃśatyāryāpraśnottaraitihāśasahitaṃ*; in Tibetan, *The Account and Dialogue with the Twenty-Four Ladies*.<sup>316</sup>

The Sanskrit title was dropped in *zhus lans* taught by Machig Labdrön, perhaps because of her Tibetan, not Indian, identity. After a brief homage to her, without any of the scene-setting narrative, the text starts directly with the first question, “Why is obtaining a human life precious?” and proceeds with Machig’s answers.<sup>317</sup> Since *zhus lan* texts in the Zhije collections do not identify themselves as revealed teachings, they end not with a narrative of Treasure concealment, but general concluding prayers. Their authenticity lies in the Indian identity of the teacher, Dampa Sanggye, and by extension the alleged Indian origin of his textual transmission, since the Sanskrit titles suggest that these texts are first composed in Sanskrit and then translated into Tibetan (while in reality, they are more likely Tibetan creations).

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*yin zhus pasl thub pa'i bstan pa nub la khad la ngul nam nub lags zhus pasl da lo mang po tsam med gsungsl rtags ci yod lags zhus pasl nam phug na mi bzang bzang grangs nyungl mi ngan mgo langsl yon tan can la skyon tsholl ngan byed kyi kha 'dzin chel ngo pho che ches zas rnyedl byed pa ngan ngan rgod la 'chorl bsam pa bzang bzang dma' 'babl phyi tshis che che la gyong bskurl che kha chung gi bsgyurl pho bas mo kha dragl bzang po bas ngan pa dbang chel ...de 'dras gang ba'i dus de'i dus su bstan pa nub 'gro ba yin gsungs sol l*

<sup>316</sup> “Jo mo nyi shu rtsa bzhis zhus lan dang lo rgyus,” *ibid.*, 3: 664.

<sup>317</sup> “Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag yang tshoms zhus lan ma,” *ibid.*, 7: 192.



The following table (fig. 20) offers an overview of the narrative framework in sutras, tantras, Treasure *zhus lans*, and Zhijie *zhus lans*:

		<b>SUTRA</b>	<b>TANTRA (SARVATATHĀG ATATATTVASAM GRAHA SŪTRA)</b>	<b>TREASURE ZHUS LAN</b>	<b>ZHIJIE ZHUS LAN TAUGHT BY DAMPA SANGGYE</b>	<b>ZHIJIE ZHUS LAN TAUGHT BY MACHIG LABDRÖN</b>
<b>NARRATIVE ELEMENTS</b>	Setting the Scene	“Thus have I heard,” ...	“Thus have I heard,” ... <sup>318</sup>	Brief narrative about Padmasambhava	Sanskrit and Tibetan titles of the text; homage to the teacher	Homage to the teacher
	First Four of the Five “Perfection Conditions”	Description of the teacher, time, location, and retinue	Description of the teacher, time, location, and retinue	Description of the teacher, time, location, and retinue	Description of the teacher, time, location, and retinue	Description of the teacher, time, location, and retinue
	The Fifth “Perfect Condition:” The Teaching	A disciple or a bodhisattva raises a question	Aroused by All the Tathāgatas, the future Buddha asks them how he should practice	A disciple (usually Yeshe Tsogyel) raises a question	A disciple of Dampa Sanggye raises a question	A disciple of Machig Labdrön raises a question
		The Buddha, a bodhisattva, or a senior disciple answers the question	All the Tathāgatas answer his question	Padmasambhava answers that question	Dampa Sanggye answers that question	Machig Labdrön answers that question
		(Another question is brought up and answered)	(Another question is brought up and answered)	(Another question is brought up and answered)	(Another question is brought up and answered)	(Another question is brought up and answered)
	End of the Teaching	Rejoicement at the teaching and resolution for practice	Binding the teaching with seals of secrecy and verses of praise	Entrusting teachings and concealing Treasures	Concluding prayers	Concluding prayers

Figure 20 Comparison of Narrative Frameworks in Sutra, Tantra, Treasure and Zhijie zhus lans

<sup>318</sup> This is found in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha Sūtra*, but not necessarily other tantras. For example, the later *Cakrasamvara Tantra* begins simply with an homage to Śrī Cakrasamvara; while the *Hevajra tantra* begins with “Thus have I heard ...” See Gray 2007, 155; and Snellgrove 1959, 47.

As seen above, except for the scene-setting narratives and endings (these two elements vary in different contexts but are nonetheless indispensable components of the genre), exoteric sutras, esoteric tantras, and *zhus lans* in the Treasure and Zhije traditions all provide the required five perfect conditions and use them to frame the transmitted teachings. Unlike the buddhas or bodhisattvas, who reside on a timeless plane of enlightened activities, the Indianness of Padmasambhava and Dampa Sanggye does not remain unchallenged and requires authentication. In carving out a space for its doctrinal and historical authenticity, both Treasure and Zhije traditions employ the formal features of canonical dialogue with some modifications to fit their own contexts. They identify the founders of their respective lineages as masters from India—the origin site of Buddhism—and further claim them to be enlightened buddhas. Like Padmasambhava, whose epithet “the second Buddha” (*sangs rgyas gnyis pa*) began to emerge at this time,<sup>319</sup> Dampa Sanggye is also referred to as “the second Buddha.”<sup>320</sup>

The unrealized potential for the Zhije *zhus lans* compared to the prosperous Treasure dialogue literature reveals further innovations on the Treasure tradition’s part. Both traditions have

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<sup>319</sup> Gyatso (1993, 114) discusses the role of Padmasambhava in Treasure transmissions not as a buddha, but as “part of the authoritative pantheon that confers legitimacy on the discoverer’s revelation.” The epithet “second Buddha” alone may not offer sufficient ground to celebrate Padmasambhava’s prestige; however, when combined with his elevation of status in these dialogical narratives as the single source of authentic teachings, effectively substituting the Buddha, his apotheosis has reached its peak. The role of a “middlewoman” or “codifier” is assumed by his disciple, Yeshe Tsogyel, who was responsible for ensuring that Treasures were ciphered, concealed, and, in later times, rediscovered.

<sup>320</sup> For example, “Zhus lan thugs kyi me long gi bshad ’bum zab mo’i don nam par gzigs pa’i ’phreng ba,” Dam pa sangs rgyas and Ma cig lab sgron 2012-2013, 4: 3.

apotheosized an Indian master and canonized his teaching through the hand of a Tibetan female disciple.<sup>321</sup> The process of canonization, in both cases, involves emulating the well-established sutra format and elevating the status of the speaker to an enlightened Buddha. Compared to the continued revelation of many more dialogical accounts after the fourteenth century, the composition of *Zhije zhus lans* came to a halt after the time of Dampa Sanggye and Machig Labdrön. Why did the Zhijepas stop producing sacred conversations? It is possibly due to their lack of mass popularity and marginalized status in later centuries. It is also possible that because Dampa Sanggye's followers consist of mainly women, they would be less popular as leaders of religious communities and therefore less likely to continue his tradition in an institutional setting.<sup>322</sup> The reason for this interruption could also be the lack of a sustainable model for continued canon production in the Zhije School. Without the logic of Treasure revelation, which allows reincarnations of enlightened personalities and rediscovery of allegedly previously concealed texts, it would be difficult to continue engaging in scriptural creation after the departure of their founding father.

### **2.2.5 Dialogue Reinvented: What Is New with Treasure Dialogues?**

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<sup>321</sup> Teachings and literature attributed to Dampa Sanggye straddle the line between canonical and extra-canonical, for some of them (for example, his tantric verses) are included in the Tengyur section of the Tibetan Buddhist canon as well. Schaeffer 2007, 7-9.

<sup>322</sup> Dan Martin (2005, 74-9) recognizes that many of female religious leaders and practitioners that we know of from the eleventh and twelfth centuries are in contact of Dampa Sanggye or his close disciples.

The last thread in this discussion of *zhus lan* as scripture is to go back to the earliest texts with “zhus lan” in their titles.<sup>323</sup> These include works from the Dunhuang collection and canonical texts. In the Dunhuang texts, there are three copies of the same work, all titled *Dialogues Concerning Vajrasattva*.<sup>324</sup> It is composed in verse by the scholar Pelyang (Dpal dbyangs) from the early ninth century. The same title is also included in the *Tengyur*.<sup>325</sup> Here, the identity of the questioner and the respondent are both unspecified. Their conversation is situated in the general context of one student asking questions to a teacher (*slob mas dge ba'i shes la dris*).<sup>326</sup> Another canonical *zhus lan*, *Śrī Saraha's Dialogue with King Maitripa*, has the questioner as King Maitripa and the respondent Śrī Saraha. However, it does not begin with a narrative setting, but with an homage to the timeless reality (*ye yin yang dag don*) and a declaration of the intention

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<sup>323</sup> I have left out contemporaneous or later non-Treasure and non-Zhije texts bearing *zhus lan* or *dris lan* in the title because unlike the Treasure *zhus lans*, these texts merely employ the bare dialogical format without adding any scene-setting narratives in which the real or purported dialogues have taken place. This genre (not the Treasure *zhus lans*) is similar to catechisms in format as well as function.

<sup>324</sup> These are IOL Tib J 470 and IOL Tib J 578/Pelliot tibétain 819, and Pelliot tibétain 837. Dalton and van Schaik 2006, 214-216, 279-280. The format of dialogues is also found in three other Dunhuang texts that do not identify themselves as *zhus lan*: IOL Tib J 76, IOL Tib J 419, and IOL Tib J 705. They cover a range of Mahāyāna topics.

There is another Chinese Dunhuang text, titled *Twenty-Two Dialogues on Mahāyāna Buddhism* (*Dasheng ershier wen*) that adopts the format of dialogues but does not emphasize the narrative framework. The conversation partners are King Tri Songdetsen and the Chinese monk Tankuang (705-790); its content resonates with the famous Samye debate. In the form of twenty-two question-and-answers, the Chinese monk explained the theories and practices of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism to the king, Pachow 1979.

<sup>325</sup> See note 270 above.

<sup>326</sup> *Shes* here should be short for *bshes gnyen*, “teacher.” For a critical edition and a complete translation of the text, see Takahashi 2010, 114-140.

for composition, more typical of a Tibetan scholastic treatise, where these elements are customarily required.<sup>327</sup>

In its inception, *zhus lan* or *dris lan* as a literary genre may not have the expressed ambition of taking on the role of a scripture. In the Nyingma Treasure and Zhije traditions, the addition of a canonical narrative framing the dialogues enables two important transformations. The first is a subsequent identification of the respondent in these conversations as an enlightened buddha; the second is the fulfillment of the required five perfections, the basic narrative elements for any Buddha-voiced teachings. In the Zhije collections, presenting the title in both Sanskrit and Tibetan also helps to make a *zhus lan* text more closely resemble a scripture.

In addition to being a part of an innovative effort to expand the Buddhist canon, Treasure texts also contribute new methodologies for literary reinvention through the creative process of reincarnation. By inhabiting and interacting with enlightened figures in the past, Treasure revealers are able to sustain their revelatory activities with a virtually inexhaustible source of scriptural reserve, generation after generation. By breaking through the boundaries between the transcendental presence and the historical absence, Treasure revealers managed to create a world of their own, where religious teaching, historical narrative, ritual action, personal identity, and sacred geography of the past and present all come together.

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<sup>327</sup> “Dpal sa ra ha dang mnga’ bdag mai tri pa’i zhu ba zhus lan,” *Bstan ’gyur dpe bsdur ma* 1994-2008, 48: 142. Schaeffer 2005 (28, 193-194n46) also makes note of the narrative element in this text as a “hagiographic invention” to Great Seal teachings.

Another new development in *zhus lan* texts is the shifting of the sacred landscape. In the framing narratives for Treasure *zhus lans*, the geographical center for scriptural creation shifts away from India to Tibet. In the many legends and tales about him, Padmasambhava resides on snowy mountain peaks, meditates in rocky caves, and bestows teachings on his disciples at Samye Chimphu, where he helped to construct the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. The venue in which scriptural narratives take place, likewise, is no longer bound in the Indian cultural milieu.

Also evident in these new “scriptures” is the interactive dynamic between Treasure revelatory activities and the Padmasambhava cult. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is a time when Treasure revelation flourished with a large number of full-length life stories of Padmasambhava being revealed.<sup>328</sup> On one hand, in terms of content, the Treasures revealed during this time celebrate the miraculous life of Padmasambhava and declare his teachings authentic Buddhist teachings; on the other hand, they also consciously adopt the already established format of Buddhist scriptures to further strengthen their argument for authenticity. Moreover, it is because of this elevation of the status of Padmasambhava that we come to see more dialogues attributed to him and thus more new teachings being included in the Treasure canon. These new revelations further expanded the doctrinal, narrative, liturgical, and commentarial literature previously discovered. Ultimately, they also blended together (especially through narrative) a collective past of how Treasure came into being and why it should be considered authentic Buddhist teachings with Indian roots. Yeshe Tsogyel is also intimately woven into this process as the disciple with infallible memory and the one responsible for the teaching transmission. Not only has she become

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<sup>328</sup> For two recent study on the literary history of Padmasambhava *Lives*, see Hirshberg 2016 and Doney 2016.

a part of the golden Imperial past and her presence a permanent fixture in the Nyingma canon, her female gender also offers us a window into how Buddhist women are viewed and depicted in Treasure literature at this time, as we will see in the next section.

### ***2.3 The Context Which is Formalized: Questioning Women's Access to Buddhist Teachings***

In the previous section, I have shown how the formal feature of canonical dialogues is adopted by the Treasure tradition in its effort to authenticate revealed teachings. This section presents a discussion that reverses the form and the context. In almost all of the dialogues between Padmasambhava and his female disciples, their conversation invariably begin with a lamentation of their unfortunate birth by the female disciples themselves, or a criticism of women's shortcomings by Padmasambhava. After listing some representative examples from these conversations and analyzing different categories of female inferiorities, I ask, beyond confirming that women are considered second-class citizens in the Buddhist as well as secular world, what else these conversations tell us about women's access to Buddhist teachings and their status in the Buddhist community at the time. I argue that the placement of these derogatory remarks or lamentations should be taken into consideration. Altogether, the procedure in which these conversations unfold represent a formalized context that pays lip service to the unfavorable attitude toward women at this time, and paves the way for access to teachings for these female students of Padmasambhava.



The majority of the *zhus lan* texts revealed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are dialogues between Padmasambhavam and Yeshe Tsogyel, or a group of women led by her. The *zhus lan* texts consulted in this section are selected from the Treasure cycles discovered between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, a time during which the Treasure tradition wove together an origin narrative about its unique form of revelatory practice.<sup>329</sup> These include a series of conversation-style teachings (both dialogues and first-person instructions) with the collective title *Collected Teachings of the Great Master, the Emanation Body Padmasambhava* (*Slob dpon chen po sprul sku padma 'byung gnas kyi bka' 'bum*), attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Özer,<sup>330</sup> Tsultrim Dorje's *Heart Essence of the Khandromas*,<sup>331</sup> Rigdzin Godem's *Self-Emergent, Self-Arisen Primordial Purity*, and two other Treasure dialogues between Padmasambhava and two other female disciples, Pemasel and Trompagyen.<sup>332</sup> I also include excerpts from the two earlier *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel that are stylistically similar to *zhus lan* accounts. The third chapter of the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, "The Princess Requests Ogyen for Songs of Instruction" (*Lha lcam gyis o rgyan la gdams pa glu'i tshigs su bcad pa zhus pa*), is structured in the format of a dialogue.

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<sup>329</sup> Doney 2018 examines the flourishing of *Lives* of Padmasambhava, in particular those revealed by Ogyen Lingpa (b.1323); he also discusses how Treasure revealers channel the Tibetan imperial past through narratives of scriptural revelation. By personally inhabiting imperial personalities in the current time and space, and by recovering imperial teachings in the form of Treasure revelations, they speak to an audience of their day and addresses concerns for Treasure's legitimacy.

<sup>330</sup> This collection is found in the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas 1976-1980, vol. 92. Although the collection does not as a whole pre-date the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, individual texts within it are found in earlier writings not long after Nyangrel's time. For example, a *zhus lan* titled "Rgan mo mdzub btsugs kyi gdams pa" is listed among the teachings requested by Godrakpa Sönam Gyaltzen, see note 274, 275, and 276 above.

<sup>331</sup> Dri med 'od zer 2009.

<sup>332</sup> These two dialogues are found at the beginning of Pema Lingpa's *Lama Jewel Ocean*. For example, Padma gling pa 1975-1976, vol.1, 289-370.

Another *Life* of potential antiquity, the *Extensive Life*, also consists of primarily Yeshe Tsogyel's conversation with Padmasambhava on various topics.<sup>333</sup>

The disciple who most frequently asks questions of Padmasambhava in these dialogues is Yeshe Tsogyel. Another two important disciples of Padmasambhava, King Tri Songdetsen and Namkhai Nyingpo, only make occasional appearances. Since these dialogues are usually asked to a male master by a female disciple or a group of women, and since many of the questions asked by them discuss concerns particular to women, they provide a venue in which we can explore the richness of Tibetan Buddhist conceptualization of gender and sexuality, especially in the Nyingma Treasure context.

In my reading of these dialogical accounts, I review the attitude toward women and gender difference, and ask how these accounts place women both in a Buddhist community as well as within the larger Tibetan society.<sup>334</sup> Do these accounts consider men and women to have different spiritual potential? Are women given equal access to teachings and practices? What kind of gender situation is represented in these texts, and what kind of teachings do women ask for? Most importantly, reading these dialogues as stylized, performative accounts rather than actual

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<sup>333</sup> For more details on the literary format of the *Extensive Life*, see Liang forthcoming.

<sup>334</sup> These questions are inspired by Peter Harvey's (2000, 353) list of issues on sexual equality in the religious context. I am especially interested in the first four issues he has raised: "(1) access to religious teachings and practices, and encouragement to follow them; (2) images of man and women's spiritual potential; (3) opportunity with regard to specialist religious roles, and status within them; (4) status, authority, and respect within the family." I choose to leave out other issues concerning legal, economic, and political status as well as actual achievement of equality, as they are not best represented in *zhus lan* literature.

conversations, I look at what these dialogues *do*, not what they *say*. Indeed, being born as a woman is depicted in decidedly unfavorable terms in these texts, but if we read them as a part of the customary context in which women could receive instructions from Padmasambhava, or a literary gesture that has to be made before moving on to the teaching proper, these remarks on the inferiority of the female gender, in their function, do not bar women from accessing teachings and practices, but only consist of a necessary hurdle to be cleared on their way to become Buddhist practitioners.

### 2.3.1 *Lamenting Women's Inferior Birth*

One of the most common sentiments among female disciples of Padmasambhava is lamenting the unfortunate destiny of being born a woman, a sentiment shared by many other Tibetan Buddhist women.<sup>335</sup> In a dialogue titled *The Pointing-out Instruction to the Old Woman* (*Rgan mo mdzub btsugs kyi gdams pa*),<sup>336</sup> an old lady from Dön (Ston) asks Padmasambhava for an instruction that

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<sup>335</sup> For example, watching a mare suffer from giving birth, Ogyen Chökyi (1675-1729) sings the following song of lament (Schaeffer 2004, 142):

When I ponder our female bodies  
I am sorrowful; impermanence rings clear.  
When men and women couple—creating more life—  
Happiness is rare, but suffering is felt for a long time.  
May I not be born again in a female body.  
May the mare not be born as a mare.

Sera Khandro (1892-1940) also laments her unfortunate destiny (Jacoby 2009, 132):

Because of my inferior female body (*lus dman*), it is difficult for me to benefit beings in the world. Hence, having abandoned this body, if I try to attain a man's body, I wonder if I will benefit beings?

<sup>336</sup> “Rgan mo mdzub btsugs kyi gdams pa,” Kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas 1976-1980, vol. 92, 467-474. This text is translated into English by Erik Pema Kunsang in Padmasambhava 2008, 21-26.

“requires little effort, is easily intelligible and applicable, but profound in meaning.”<sup>337</sup> She makes this request because she is, first of all, born of the lower status as a woman. Even though she had accumulated some good merit, she does not have the acumen to recall the teaching. Moreover, she has an inferior intellect in general and her mind is no longer clear due to old age. In response, Padmasambhava praises her as having greater faith than King Tri Songdetsen. He then teaches her how to reflect on the nature of one’s mind and how to be fearless at the time of death, reassuring her that the causes for buddhahood are not deficient in women.<sup>338</sup>

The literary trope of the female inferior body also appears in the conversation between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life*. On many occasions, Yeshe Tsogyel refers to herself as being inferior in body (*lus*), mind (*sems*), and knowledge and intellect (*rig pa* or *shes rab*).<sup>339</sup> At the same time, she also sets herself apart from ordinary women as someone destined to become the companion of not just Padmasambhava, but also of future Treasure revealers. When asked by Padmasambhava why there are no other Tibetan women who are willing to leave home or are devoted to Buddhist teachings, she replied that she alone is faithful and devoted; future women will still be tied up in domestic affairs.<sup>340</sup> Later in their conversation, Padmasambhava praised her explicitly, saying, “There are no other women like you. Being tight-lipped in nature, you remain faithful to the teaching. Your mind is firm. You are very learned and have enduring

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 468: *tshegs chung ba go sla ba/ nyams su blang sla la don che ba/*

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 468-470.

<sup>339</sup> For example, NTGP, 9a: *rig pa dman na(m) snying rus che//*; 11b: *kho mo lus dman sems dman chos byed 'dod//*; and 21b: *kho mo shes rab dman la spros pa che// kho mo rig pa dman na brtson 'grus che*.

<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 37b: *ma 'ongs bud med khyim pa dang ldan pa bral ba med pa yin/*

fortitude.”<sup>341</sup> Yeshe Tsogyel also talked about herself as someone who, despite being born in a woman’s body, still nurtures learning. Although she is of the female gender, she is still devoted to the teaching.<sup>342</sup> The *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life* also singles out Yeshe Tsogyel as an exemplary woman. After each question proposed by her, Padmasambhava begins his response by first affirming her spiritual potential and her worthiness as a recipient for his teachings.

The description of women as possessing an inferior body is echoed in another conversation between Padmasambhava and seven of his female disciples, led by Yeshe Tsogyel. This untitled text (hereafter *Dialogue with Seven Female Disciples*) is attributed to Nyangrel.<sup>343</sup> Having paid homage and offered golden *maṇḍalas* to Padmasambhava, each disciple asked him for an instruction specifically catered to their limited capacities as a woman:

[Yeshe Tsogyel:] A disciple like me, who is a woman with little wisdom and a dull mind; I have limited understanding and am narrow-minded. May I request an oral instruction on enlightenment in this lifetime with a female body, a teaching that is easy to know, to grasp, to understand, and to realize!<sup>344</sup>

[Shelkarza Dorjetso (Shel dkar bza’ Rdo rje ’tsho):] A disciple like me, who is a woman with inferior motivation and lacking diligence, may I request an oral instruction on

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 50a: *gzhan gyi bud med dang khyod ’dra ba yang med pa/ gtam nyung nas chos la mos pa/ blo brtan pa/ rig pa che ba/ snying rus bzod dka’ yod pa/*

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 44b.

<sup>343</sup> “Untitled,” Kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas 1976-1980, vol. 92, 474-494. This text is translated into English by Erik Pema Kunsang in Padmasambhava 2008, 111-120.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid., 475: *bdag bud med ’dra ba shes rab chung la blo brtul/ go ba chung la sems rgya chung ba/ shes sla/ bzung sla/ go sla/ rtogs sla ba/ bud med kyi lus ’di la brten nas tshe ’di la sangs rgya ba’i gdams ngag zhig [sic] zhu ’tshal lo//*

enlightenment through indolence!<sup>345</sup>

[Jokroza Pelgyi Chöne (Cog ro bza' Dpal gyi mchod gnas):] A disciple like me, who is a woman dominated by the five poisonous emotions, may I request an oral instruction on enlightenment that does not require ridding oneself of these emotions!<sup>346</sup>

[Drozama Padma ('Bro bza' ma pad ma):] A disciple like me, who is a woman and has much to do and is easily distracted, may I request an oral instruction on enlightenment that does not require abandoning worldly activities!<sup>347</sup>

[Margongza Rinchentsul (Mar gong bza' Rin chen tshul):] A disciple like me, who is a woman and has bad karma, may I request an oral instruction on enlightenment so that I will not take on another life as a woman in the future!<sup>348</sup>

[Chimza Sale Ö (Mchims bza' Sa le 'od):] A disciple like me, who is a woman with a dull mind, may I request an oral instruction on enlightenment in a single word!<sup>349</sup>

[Ruyangza Mati (Ru yang bza' Ma ti):] Since I am of little diligence, may I request a teaching that is effortless!<sup>350</sup>

Instead of a generic statement that “women are inferior,” the questions posed by these female disciples reveal the complex situations that have contributed to the inferior status of women. The feeling of inferiority is shared by other female disciples of Padmasambhava. Pema Lingpa's *Lama*

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 477: *bdag bud med kyi bu 'dra ba rgyu ngan pas rtsol sgrub mi nus pas nyal nas nyams su blangs pas/ sangs rgyas gdams ngag cig zhu 'tshal/*

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 478-479: *bdag bud med kyi bu 'dra ba/ dug lnga shas che bas/ dug lnga spang mi dgos pas sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag cig zhu 'tshal/*

<sup>347</sup> Ibid., 481: *bud med kyi bu 'dra ba/ bya ba mang la g.yeng ba che bas/ bya ba ma spangs par sangs rgya ba'i gdams ngag cig zhu 'tshal/*

<sup>348</sup> Ibid., 482: *bud med kyi bu 'dra ba las ngan par gda' bas phyi ma la bud med kyi tshul 'di blang mi dgos pa zhig zhu 'tshal/*

<sup>349</sup> Ibid., 484: *bdag bud med kyi bu 'dra ba/ blo brtul bas/ gdams pa tshig gcig gis sangs rgya ba zhig zhu 'tshal/*

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 485: *bdag rtsol ba chung bas byar med kyi chos zhig zhu 'tshal/*

*Jewel Ocean* also includes two other dialogues between Padmasambhava and two princesses, Pemasel and Trompagyen.<sup>351</sup> In her dialogue with Padmasambhava, Princess Pemasel described her female birth in the following way:

A disciple like me, a woman with an inferior birth and insufficient means, who is dull in speech and cannot recollect the teaching, who works as a servant for half of her life, who has accumulated little merit—a woman like me, please let me become a disciple of you, the lama, and do not cast me away into the swap of saṃsāra! I have practiced a little bit, please grant me the method of becoming enlightened within this life!<sup>352</sup>

In his reply, Padmasambhava confirmed that a female birth is indeed undesirable and unfitting for Buddhist practice, saying that women are involuntarily thrown into the prison of saṃsāra by their parents, and need to take care of various errands. They constantly live in the state of being attached to their egos, working without payment as a housemaid, and wasting their life away. In the end, they will definitely go into a bad transmigration.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> “Lha lcam padma gsal gyi zhus lan gser gyi yang zhun,” “Lha lcam khrom pa rgyam gyi zhus lan,” in Padma gling pa 1975-76, vol. 1, 289-352, 353-370. These two texts are translated into English by Sara Harding in Padma-gling-pa 2003, 51-85, 87-98.

<sup>352</sup> Ibid., 290: *bdag bud med kyī bu ’dra ba/ skye ba dma’ ba/ ’khor kha chung ba/ khas nyen pa/ chos mi dran pa/ mi lus phyed la mi’i bran byed pa/ tshogs ma bsags pa bdag ’dra ba la/ rje gu rus thugs rjes bzung nas kyang/ ’khor ba’i ’dam du mi gtong zhing/ bdag gis chos shig byas nas kyang/ tshe ’di la sangs rgyas pa’i thabs shig zhu/*

<sup>353</sup> Ibid., 291: *dbang med pha mas ’khor ba’i btson dong du bskyur zhing/ gyes rgyug gi kha ngo blta dgos/ mi tshe bdag ’dzin gyi ngang la gnas shing/ mi g.yog gla med byed dgos/ mi tshe stong zad kyī ngang la bsdas nas/ mthar ngan song du ’gro’o*

Another princess named Trompagyen<sup>354</sup> provides an even more detailed account of her plight as a woman in her dialogue with Padmasambhava. Having made her offering to Padmasambhava in exchange for his teaching, she opened her request with a long list of the difficulties in the life of women:

Women like me have particularly accumulated bad karma in previous lives and are born with the inferior female body.

With a lower body like this,  
I have no place of hope but my father—  
But he does not hold me dearly.  
I have no source of compassion but my mother—  
But mothers and daughters must part their ways.  
I care for no one but my brother—  
But my brother auctions me off like merchandise.  
The discussion of my father, mother, and brother,  
Throws me into saṃsāric existence.  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

My mind goes to the pure dharma,  
But as a woman, I cannot come and go at will.  
In fear of legal disputes,  
I have to stay with an evil spouse.  
Trying to fend off slander,  
I sank into the swamp of saṃsāra.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

In my youth, I did not recall the teaching,  
But engage with bad deeds as a householder.  
In old age, even though I recall the teaching,  
My bodily functions have deteriorated.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

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<sup>354</sup> In the *Chronicle of the Queens*, Trompagyen is praised to be the exemplary faithful woman and is married to Padmasambhava.



Being deceived by demons,  
I made mistakes wherever I go.  
Being driven by the wind of bad karma,  
I sank into the swamp of saṃsāra.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

As a woman, my mental perception is limited,  
And have to ask others for counsel.  
Rare are the heroic, righteous companions,  
So no one could guide me to the teaching;  
Great is the evil, degenerate force,  
So I take everyone's ill advice to heart.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

I have to leave my happy homeland,  
And stray into the remote region of my husband.  
Although I have accumulated some wealth,  
It is left behind to the enjoyment of the new wife.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Even when I am in despair and weary of saṃsāra,  
No one could teach or inspire me.  
Even when I am crying helplessly,  
People say it is me faking it.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Even though I am deeply disillusioned with the world,  
No one shows me any kindness.  
Even though I am determined to go and practice,  
Doubts sneak its way in my mind—  
There is no way for me to access the teaching!  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Because I am immensely ignorant as a woman,  
I cannot come to an understanding of the teaching.

Because I harbor much rage as a woman,  
My mind is occupied with deceit, hypocrisy, and pretense.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Distracted by secular obligations,  
I did not get to meet a lama.  
Even if I stay with my lama,  
His wife will slander and scorn me.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Even when wandering in isolated, rocky regions,  
I encounter enemies of heinous form.  
Even when I take the teaching into my experience,  
Calamities and obstacles befall me.  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Because of the ripening of previously accumulated karma,  
I am trapped in this inferior body.  
Please, Great Father Ogyen Padma,  
Close the door to rebirth as a woman!  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Having obtained a male body in my next life  
I will become my own master.  
I will exert myself in the teaching,  
And attain the resultant enlightenment!  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,  
I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!

Please consider what I have said,  
And hold me with your compassion!  
May I escape from suffering and afflictions,  
And be emancipated from the swamp that is saṃsāra!  
Ogyen Padmasambhava,  
Please hold me with compassion and love,

I beseech you from the bottom of my heart!<sup>355</sup>

As seen above, the voices of women in these dialogues generally agree that they are born with a less desirable karmic lot. Women possess an inferior body, their mind is not sharp, their intellect

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<sup>355</sup> Padma gling pa 1975-76, vol.1, 354-358: *sgos bu mo nga ni tshe sngon las ngan bsags pas/ skye dman 'dra ba'i lus blangs/ lus ngan 'di 'dra thob dus/ re sa pha las med kyang/ bu mo snying du ma sdug/ byams pa ma las med kyang/ ma smad gson bral byas byung/ bsam pa ming po yin kyang/ sring po zong du btsongs byung/ pha ma ming po gros byas/ bu mo 'khor bar bskyur rol/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ rang sems chos la dkar kyang/ bu mo 'gro dbang ma byung/ kha mchu byung gis dogs nas/ gtan grogs ngan kyang bsdad doll/ mi kha gtam la 'dzems pas/ 'khor ba'i 'dam du tshud doll/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ gzhon dus lha chos ma dran/ las ngan khyim thabs byas pas/ rgas dus lha chos dran kyang/ 'byung ba'i dbang po nyams sol/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ 'gro sa bdud kyis bslus pas/ bu mo'i gom pa nor rol/ las ngan rlung gis bdas nas/ 'khor ba'i 'dam su tshud byung/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ bu mo blo rtsal chung bas/ gros phug mi la dris sol/ yar 'gro'i dpa' grogs dkon pas/ chos la khrid mkhan ma byung/ mar 'gro bdud dbang che bas/ kun gyi 'khrul gtam bslab nyan/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ pha yul skyid po bzhas nas/ mi yul sa mtha' bskor dgos/ nor rdzas rang gi bsags kyang/ shul du gna' mas spyod doll/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ yi mug skyo shas byung kyang/ gtam 'dun bslab mkhan ma byung/ mchi ma dbang med shor yang/ bu mo'i khram dus yin zer/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ skyo shas snying nas skye kyang/ snying rje byed mkhan ma byung/ chos la 'gro sems byas kyang/ the tshom sems la zhugs pas/ chos la 'gro sa ma 'byung/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ skye dman gti mug che bas/ chos la go rtog ma rnyed/ bu mo zhe sdang che bas/ g.yo sgyu khram gsum dran gda'/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ 'jig rten bya bas g.yengs nas/ bla ma mjal rgyu ma byung/ bla ma'i drung du bsdad nal/ jo mos mi kha sdang 'ong/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ gnyan sa ri khrod 'grim kyang/ lus ngan dgra dang 'phrad doll/ nyams len chos la byas kyang/ rkyen ngan bar chad 'jug gis/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ sngon bsags rnam smin de yis/ da lta'i lus ngan blangs zin/ pha mchog o rgyan padmas/ skye dman skye sgo chod mdzod/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ phyi ma pho lus thob nas/ rang la dbang yod byas nas/ chos la 'bad pa byed cing/ sangs rgyas 'bras bu thob mdzod/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/ don de thugs la dgongs la/ bdag la thugs rjes zungs shig/ nyon mongs sdug bsngal 'dzom la/ 'khor ba'i 'dam las drong shig/ o rgyan padma 'byung gnas/ thugs rje brtse bas zungs dang/ snying nas gsol ba 'debs sol/*

is also limited. While later Buddhist women like Ogyen Chökyi and Sera Khandro connect the female body to *samsāric* suffering and thus argue they have a unique perspective on the first noble truth, effectively transforming the female body “from a vice to a virtue;”<sup>356</sup> most female disciples of Padmasambhava do not seek to directly counter the negative gender stereotype themselves.

### 2.3.2 *Female Inferiority as a Real Concern*

What are we to make of these depictions of women being inferior? And exactly *how* are women considered inferior in every way? In the next two sections, I consider the two sides of female inferiority as presented in the dialogues. On the one hand, the extremely detailed list of female woes points not to superficial misogyny, but to a genuine reckoning of women’s unfortunate lot in time. The fact that most (if not all) of this literature is attributed to male teachers or Treasure revealers also means that these men are at least aware of (if not sympathetic to) women’s daily struggles. On the other hand, the sequence in which these dialogues take place also suggest that the lamentation about or denunciation of women might be no more than a rhetorical device. It is a necessary step to take before continuing with the more important task of giving women teachings.

Many aspects of a woman’s life are examined in these self-deprecatory remarks by Padmasambhava’s disciples or criticism by Padmasambhava himself. In the aforementioned

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<sup>356</sup> Schaeffer 2004, 103; Jacoby 2009, 145. Jacoby 2009 provides an illuminating discussion on Sera Khandro’s consistent self-description as an inferior woman. She argues that this description should be understood as both a “literal internalization of misogynist views” and at the same time “a rhetorical device that enabled her [Sera Khandro] to make extraordinary claims about herself” as a religious authority (144).

*Dialogue with Seven Female Disciples*, each disciple requests an oral instruction that is particularly suited to their inferior capacities. Padmasambhava responds to their request with appropriate teachings.<sup>357</sup> At the end of each response, he adds an admonition to these women (such admonitions are not found in his instructions to male disciples like Tri Songdetsen), reminding them that women are still much encumbered by their karmic conditions and their chances of success are slim:

[In response to Yeshe Tsogyel,] this difficult teaching hardly works for women, so don't deceive yourself but practice with extreme attention!<sup>358</sup>

[In response to Shelkarza Dorjetso,] I have never seen a woman who has perfected the teachings; if you want to persevere, you should still exert yourself in practice!<sup>359</sup>

[In response to Jokroza Pelgyi Chöne,] still, women like you, in whom the five emotional poisons are burning like fire and whose evil dispositions flow like water, indulge in adultery. Due to dualistic conceptions, their desire for husbands is like the turbulent wind. They act as if with unstable and obscured knowledge, like a pile of dust. Not thinking about the Teaching but only themselves, they deceive. Because the five poisons run the risk of becoming wild, rely on your practice!<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> For example, to Yeshe Tsogyel, who asked for a teaching that is “easy to know, to grasp, to understand, and to realize,” he taught the realization of the true nature of suchness that is beyond conceptualization. To Jokroza Pelgyi Chöne, who asked for an instruction that does not rid oneself of poisonous emotions, he taught the empty nature of these emotions and how to properly recognize them. “Untitled,” Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas 1976-1980, vol. 92, 475, 479.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid., 477: *bud med kyi chos 'di dka' bar gda' bas/ rang gis rang la rdzun ma byed par/ nyams len bag drag tu mdzod cig/*

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., 478: *ngas bud med kyi chos la mthar phyin pa tsam ma mthong na/ rem la da rung chos la nan tan skyed cig/*

<sup>360</sup> Ibid., 480: *lar khyed bud med kyi bu 'dra ba/ nyon mongs pa dug lnga rang gi rgyud la me ltar 'bar/ bag chags ngan pa chu ltar 'bru ba nas 'dod pa la g.yem/ gzung 'dzin gnyis kyis khyo'i 'dod pa rlung ltar 'tshub/ spog sgrib gnyis po khrol sogs byas nas sa ltar gsog/ chos la mi sems bdag 'dzin sems zhing g.yod pas khyer/ dug lnga rmu rgod du 'chor nyen yod pas/ nyams len rgyud la khol mdzod dang gsungs/*

[In response to Drozama Padma,] still, women like you have limited mental capacity due to your inferior birth. Your body works against you so that you cannot approach the dharma, and so you lead a householder's life. Because of your evil karma, you have a lot of work and cannot recall the Teaching. Indeed, for women there is little Teaching, so let your determination grow!<sup>361</sup>

[In response to Margongza Rinchentsul,] still, women like you have little Teaching because of your mental capacity. You fail to accomplish much because you are not armed with diligence. You are narrow-minded, so it is difficult to teach you the meaning of the nature of the Teaching. You are weak in determination, so you cannot accomplish much. Because the Teaching indeed rarely appears to women, increase your perseverance, and rely on your practice!<sup>362</sup>

[In response to Chimza Sale Ö] still, women like you have an incorrigible mind filled with doubt. You cannot heed the master's instructions; you are difficult to discipline because you are dominated by afflictions. Few of you can perfect the Teaching. If you practice, honor the instructions from your teacher and be ready to overcome a few difficulties!<sup>363</sup>

[In response to Ruyangza Mati,] still, women like you are completely senseless, no matter how I teach, you will not understand. Even if I point out the Dharma Body, you won't recognize it. Even if I introduce you to enlightenment, you can't see it. Even if I teach the single stroke of nonaction, it will be difficult for you to realize. Women will misunderstand the teaching a lot, so arm yourself and don't be carried away by the demon—your husband! Don't give birth to children. Although it is difficult, remain in solitary practice!<sup>364</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Ibid., 482: *lar khyed bud med kyi bu 'dra ba/ skye ba dman pas snying rtsal chung/ lus la dgra yong pas chos la mi 'gro khyim thabs byed/ las ngan pas bya ba mang bas chos mi dran/ bud med la chos 'ong ba nyung bar gda' bas snying rus skyed mdzod gsungs/*

<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 483-484: *lar khyed bud med kyi bu 'dra ba shes rab kyi rtsal gyis chos mi 'ong/ brtson 'grus kyi go cha med pas sgrub mi nus/ blo chung bas chos nyid kyi don bstan dka'/ snying stobs chung bas sgrub mi nus/ bud med kyis chos 'byung ba nyung bar 'dug na/ brtson 'grus skyed la nyams lan rgyud la khol mdzod gsungs/*

<sup>363</sup> Ibid., 484-485: *lar khyed bud med kyi bu 'dra ba blo sra ba la the tshom za/ bla ma'i gdams pa mi thub/ nyon mongs pa shas che bas gdul ba dka'/ chos mthar phyin pa nyung/ chos byed na bla ma'i gdams ngag gtsigs su gyis la/ dka' thub bag re gyis dang gsungs/*

<sup>364</sup> Ibid., 485-486: *lar bud med kyi bu 'dra ba 'di gti mug shas che bas ji skad bstan kyang go ba med/ chos sku ngos 'dzin bstan kyang 'dzin mi shes/ sangs rgyas ngo sprod bstan kyang mthong ba med/ byar med chig chod bstan kyang rtogs pa dka'/ bud med kyi chos 'di 'khyogs mang bar gda' na/ go cha cher mdzod la khyo ga'i bdud kyis ma khyer bar gyis/ lus la bu ma skyes par nyams len gcig pur sdod la gyis dang ste dka' bar 'dra na gsungs/*

The following table lists the different types of concerns mentioned by these seven disciples, the types of teachings requested by them,<sup>365</sup> Padmasambhava's criticism of women's particular deficiencies, and his concluding advice (fig. 21). While Padmasambhava's attitude toward women's ability to practice Buddhism remained largely negative, he nonetheless encouraged them at the end of their conversations. He also recognized that women are bound by their householder life in his reply to Drozama Padma, and identified the major difficulties women will encounter in their lives, that is, the confinement of domestic labor exemplified by marriage and motherhood. In the last conversation with Ruyangza Mati, he even suggested that women should not be seduced by their husbands—the demon—and should not give birth to children, lest they become obstacles on her path to liberation.

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<sup>365</sup> Padmasambhava's responses are too long to be included in the current discussion.

<i>Name of Disciple</i>	<i>Specific Concerns</i>	<i>Type of Teaching Requested and Received</i>	<i>Padmasambhava's Criticism</i>	<i>Final Advice from Padmasambhava</i>
<b><i>Yeshe Tsogyel</i></b>	Limited intellect and narrow-minded	Easy to understand, to grasp, and to realize	The difficult teaching can rarely be understood by women	"[D]on't deceive yourself but practice with extreme attention"
<b><i>Shelkarza Dorjetso</i></b>	Lacking motivation and diligence	Teaches enlightenment through indolence	"I have never seen a woman who has perfected these teachings"	"[I]f you want to persevere, you should still exert yourself in practice"
<b><i>Jokroza Pelgyi Chöne</i></b>	Dominated by the five poisonous emotions	Does not require ridding oneself of emotions	Women are indeed consumed by negative emotions	"[R]ely on your practice"
<b><i>Drozama Padma</i></b>	Having much to do and easily distracted	Does not require abandoning worldly activities	Women are not only encumbered by their inferior intellect, but also by the demands of householder life	"Indeed, for women there is little dharma, so let your determination grow"
<b><i>Margongza Rinchentsul</i></b>	Having bad karma	Ensures no more rebirth as a woman	Women have limited mental capacity, less diligence, and are weak in determination	"[I]ncrease your perseverance, and rely on your practice"
<b><i>Chimza Sale Ö</i></b>	Dull-minded	Teaches enlightenment in a single word	Women are filled with doubt and dominated by afflictions	"If you practice, honor the instructions from your teacher and be ready to overcome a few difficulties!"
<b><i>Ruyangza Mati</i></b>	Having little diligence	Effortless	Women have a hard time understanding the teaching	[A]rm yourself and don't be carried away by the demon—your husband! Don't give birth to children. Although it is difficult, remain in solitary practice!

*Figure 21 Summary of Dialogue with Seven Female Disciples*



Princess Trompagyen's lamentation provides an even more detailed account of how women are disadvantaged in all aspects of life. Her account differs from the conversation between Padmasambhava and his seven female disciples in that it discusses women's difficulties less in terms of innate abilities (or the lack thereof), but of external circumstances. A woman has no place in her birth home: her father does not care much about her, her mother is powerless, and her brother only views her as commodity. In her marriage, she also lacks independence and cannot move about freely. She does not have any external help; no one provides guidance for her or supports her practice. Even when she finds a teacher, she still suffers from his scornful wife. The only free time she has is when she is old, but by then her body will have already become frail. Even when Trompagyen talked about her own deficiencies (she is "trapped in this inferior body," is "immensely ignorant," and "harbor much rage,"), she still framed them in the context of karmic retribution. She was born into this female body and faces the struggles because of past negative deeds. She said, if she could become a man in the next life, "I will become my own master, I will exert myself in the teaching, and attain the resultant enlightenment."

The expressions of female inferiority in these dialogues indicate a complexity that goes beyond a blanket statement that "women are inferior and cannot practice Buddhism." The reason one is born as a woman is due to past negative actions. That is, female inferiority in its root should be understood as karmic inferiority, manifesting in the form of gender.<sup>366</sup> Being a woman does not

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<sup>366</sup> There are also other forms in which karmic inferiority is manifested, including being born in other forms of lower births such as animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. Physical deformities and diseases (especially those are more visible on the outside, leprosy is one example) are also considered to be resulting from past bad karma.

mean that they are absolutely incapable of practice. It is just that Buddhist teachings are less accessible and more difficult for women. As seen above, from the perspective of Padmasambhava, these faithful disciples lack not in their potential for enlightenment, but in their conviction of themselves as worthy recipients for the teaching. He emphasizes, at the end of every conversation, that these women should exert themselves and strive to practice to the best of their abilities. At least one female disciple of Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, compares herself with other women and considers herself superior in her spiritual pursuit. For example, she sings the following song after her first visionary encounter with Padmasambhava:

Other women want a householder life,  
 I want to abandon that life and put my mind at ease.  
 Compared to other women who prefer external beauty,  
 I am certain that appearances are but endless illusions.  
 Other women fall for wrongdoings,  
 I, a lady from Khar, am a believer in virtue.  
 Other women falter in their conduct,  
 I myself watch my discipline.  
 Girls from the region of Ü and Tsang  
 Are fickle-minded and tell lies;  
 I only aspire to practice in this life, with this body!<sup>367</sup>

Moreover, when we look at the individual components that have made women “inferior,” they are quite varied, ranging from physical (being endowed with an inferior body with extra illnesses and the burden of childbirth) and psychological (limited intellect, tendency to get angry, or possessing

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<sup>367</sup> NTGP, 8b: *gzhan gyis [sic] bud med khyim thabs 'dod// kho mo khyim thabs spangs 'dod zhes blo de// gzhan gyis [sic] bud med 'phyor la 'dod pas// kho mo snang ba rdzun chen rang thag chod// gzhan gyis [sic] bud med sdig la mos// kho mo mkhar za dge la dad//gzhan gyis [sic] bud med tshul 'chol ba// kho mo bdag gyis tshul khrims bsrungs// dbu [sic] yul rtsang [sic] yul bu mo rnams// blo mang gtam pa'i rdzun tshig smras// kho mo tshe gcig lus gcig chos byed mos//*

emotional afflictions, just to name a few), to social factors (low regard from others or lack of social support for her religious life). Not only are women blamed for their inadequacy, her family, husband, people surrounding her, and the adverse social condition in general are also identified as obstructive forces. While it might be a stretch to count these remarks as social criticism, the detailed description of women's disadvantages certainly acknowledges the problematic status of women. Ultimately, women are not categorically denied access to Buddhist teachings from Padmasambhava in these dialogues, although they might need to make (or accept) a public commentary of their inferior status before receiving teachings. It is this required admission of inferiority I now turn to.

### **2.3.3 *Female Inferiority as a Performance: Women's Access to Teachings and Practices***

Even with the many deficiencies in women's psycho-physical composition and the many obstacles in their social surroundings, as recorded in the dialogues above, female disciples are still given teachings by Padmasambhava. In this section, I present a reading of these dialogues as performative accounts, and argue that its narrative framework sets up a favorable condition for Buddhist women to gain access to teachings and practices.

Despite severe warnings about their own shortcomings and the difficulties they are about to encounter, women are not discouraged from or denied access to any teaching or practice. One *zhus lan* text, the *Ten Steps of the Profound Key Points* (*Zhus lan gnad kyi thems bcu*) discovered by Rigdzin Gödem, depicts Yeshe Tsogyel's extraordinary visionary journey with step-by-step

guidance from Padmasambhava.<sup>368</sup> The ten steps outline a series of Great Perfection teachings, generally considered the most advanced system of practice in the Nyingma curriculum. It is not uncommon for *zhus lan* texts to list several titles transmitted during the teaching. The fourth chapter of the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa *Life*, titled “The Princess Requesting Teaching Transmissions of the Nine Vehicles from Ogyen” (*Lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi drung du theg pa rim pa dgu'i chos lung zhus pa*), also provides a detailed list of texts and teachings received by Yeshe Tsogyel. She alone is entrusted with all of his teachings.<sup>369</sup> The *Extensive Life* also enumerates teachings and practice received by Yeshe Tsogyel. These include practices on yogic channels and winds (*rtsa rlung*),<sup>370</sup> mantras on subjugating wrathful demons along with detailed explanation,<sup>371</sup> different types of empowerments,<sup>372</sup> an extensive prophecy regarding one hundred and eight future Treasure revealers, their names, the times and locations for their Treasure discoveries, and from which Imperial personages they are emanated.<sup>373</sup>

The Treasure dialogues between Padmasambhava and his disciples are not representative of real-life conversations. They are stylized conversations setting the stage for an enlightened teacher and his disciple(s). They are also performative accounts that list all the steps in an ideal situation

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<sup>368</sup> Rig 'dzin rgod ldem 1973, 5: 321-401. Turpeinen 2018 provides a translation of a major part of this dialogue.

<sup>369</sup> See, for example, DK1 247-250, PL1 319-321.

<sup>370</sup> NTGP, 25b.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid., 29a-30b.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid., 122a-b.

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., 152a-162a.

when teaching is requested and then received. This performative aspect becomes clear when we look at the overall sequence of events in these *zhus lans* between Padmasambhava and his female disciples (fig. 22). After the opening scene, a disciple requests some teaching from Padmasambhava. S/he will need to demonstrate a need for such teaching, usually citing the reason of their lack of realization or understanding. The required act of humility is done by Tri Songdetsen and other male disciples as well, just to a less extent than the female disciples, and not explicitly gendered.<sup>374</sup> The demonstration could take two forms: either the women themselves lament about their inferiority, or they receive criticism from Padmasambhava. The teacher then makes a concession to allow the transmission to take place, this is done by either singling out the disciple asking questions as a worthy recipient (for example, Yeshe Tsogyel), or emphasizing the difficulty but encouraging the disciples to practice nonetheless. The main body of the text is then dedicated to record the teaching.

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<sup>374</sup> While male disciples of Padmasambhava also make literary gestures of humility in their requests for oral instructions, they do not regard their shortcomings or vices as characteristic of their gender. Consider the following example, in which King Tri Songdetsen confesses his immorality and inadequacy in practice when asking for teachings from the master:

A king like me has little faith but a lot of wealth and prestige. My virtuous thoughts are limited, I am vicious and hostile to the Teaching—I am an evil person! I take pleasure in distractions and enjoyments; if I have good fortune in this life, I do not even fear the prospect of bad transmigration in the future.

“Gsang sngags kyi gseb lam: sdig po chen sngon la sangs rgya ba’i man ngag,” Kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas 1976-1980, vol. 92, 191: *bdag rgyal po ’dra ba dad pa chung ba/ khe grags che ba/ chos la gnag pa/ gdug pa/ dge sems chung ba/ sdig pa shas che ba/ chos la mi gnas pa/ g.yeng ba dang bsod nams la dga’ ba/ tshe lam ’di la bsod nams dang ldan na/ phyi ma ngan song du ’gro yang ’jigs sems med pa lags pas/*

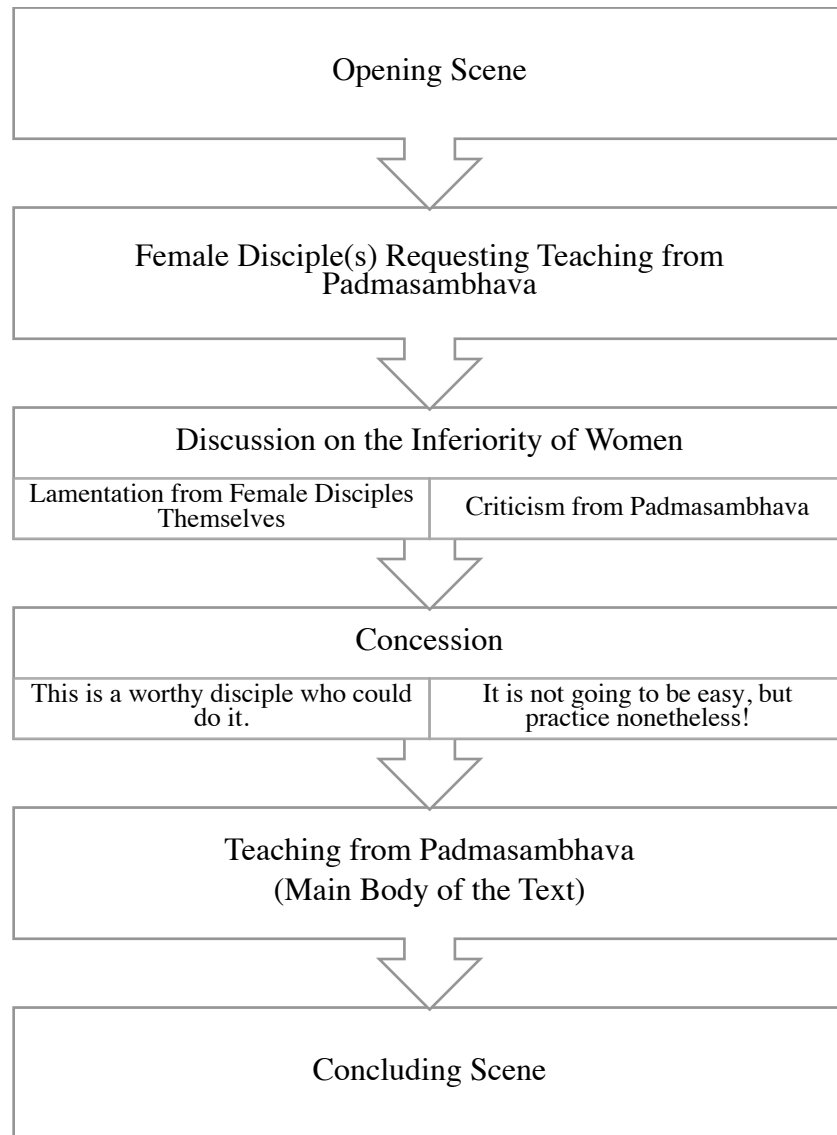


Figure 22      *Structure of Padmasambhava's Conversation with Female Disciples*

In these conversations, women are represented (and represent themselves) as generally inferior to men in many aspects of their lives. They are constantly warned that their practice will be difficult and their spiritual path treacherous. These copious comments on women's limited intelligent, debauched lifestyle, and unscrupulous inclination could be easily (and perhaps not unjustifiably) interpreted as reflection of the general misogyny in the Tibetan Buddhist context. However, it might also be worthwhile to see what these accounts achieve beyond beating the dead horse of

women's well-established inferiority, and if we can ask more of these accounts. By looking beyond what the text is saying to what it is doing and who is the intended audience, and by treating them as a conventionalized performance required of a disciple, I suggest that these texts represent an uneasiness toward—if not an implicit break from—misogynistic tendencies. If Padmasambhava (or the Treasure revealers associated with these texts) really dislikes women so much or thinks so little of them, why go through all the trouble berating them and then grant them teachings? Why not refuse to teach women altogether? An equally important takeaway from these dialogues, besides that women are considered second class citizens in Tibetan society, is that these dialogues are also evidence that women are recipients and practitioners of Buddhist teaching.

Lastly, by dividing my interpretation of female inferiority into “real concerns” and “performance,” I am not saying that the description of female inferiority in these dialogues should be read in either of the two ways—as a sympathetic acknowledgment of the difficulties women encounter in everyday life, or a rhetorical device that addresses potential criticism against granting women Buddhist teachings. Rather, these two aspects could very well function at the same time and provide some literary relief for women from their precarious situations.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

This chapter examined the literary representations of Yeshe Tsogyel as the chief disciple of Padmasambhava in Treasure *zhus lans*, or dialogues, a genre to date less examined. These are

sacred dialogues modelled after Mahāyāna and tantric canons and claiming themselves to be authentic transmissions coming from an unbroken lineage. This lineage can be traced back to Padmasambhava, who, in turn, was elevated as “the second Buddha.” These new revelations open the door to a canon only accessible through visions. The role of Yeshe Tsogyel in *zhus lan* literature (and to a larger extent, Treasure literature) is the indispensable conduit through which Padmasambhava’s teachings were transmitted to future generations.<sup>375</sup>

In most *zhus lan* texts, Yeshe Tsogyel is the disciple asking questions to the master and was further entrusted with his teachings and their transmission to future generations. On this symbolic level, it is the theological rather than social gender that enables Yeshe Tsogyel’s elevation of status. The recognition of Yeshe Tsogyel as an emanation of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and speech, may have contributed in establishing her as the disciple responsible for the teaching transmission. Much like Ānanda, the Buddha’s favorite and most intimate disciple, she is said to possess infallible memory and can retain all the teachings in her mind, write them down, and transmit them to future generations.

On a less symbolic level—also quite like Ānanda<sup>376</sup>—Yeshe Tsogyel is the spokesperson for women’s concerns. Before proceeding to reflect on how these *zhus lan* accounts place women in

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<sup>375</sup> Yeshe Tsogyel’s role as a conduit for teachings is analogous to a tantric consort, who connects the master with the disciple in a ritual context and conveys the master’s blessings, or transformative powers. I discuss her role as a consort in the next chapter.

<sup>376</sup> Ānanda is said to have campaigned on behalf of the Buddha’s foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī, for her to become the first Buddhist nun. Mahāprajāpatī wanted to become a monastic and went to ask the Buddha if he would initiate the nun’s order. The Buddha turned her down three times. Ānanda encountered the weeping Mahāprajāpatī outside the Buddha’s residence, learned about the



the Nyingma Treasure community, I would like to briefly remind the readers of the historical background of these dialogues. The period of and after the renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet has witnessed the rise to fame of several important female masters and practitioners. It is also a time that allowed for women's relatively free religious expression. These women include Machig Zhama (Ma gcig zha ma, 1062-1149), Machig Labdrön (1055-1149),<sup>377</sup> a group of female disciples of Longchenpa,<sup>378</sup> and the First Samding Dorje Phagmo (1422-1455).<sup>379</sup> Groups of unnamed female practitioners also constitute a significant part of Buddhist communities at the time.<sup>380</sup> In their lived religious lives, Tibetan women were active participants in Nyingma Buddhist communities as well as other schools.

In the literary world, although negative comments on the inferior status of a women abound in Padmasambhava's dialogues with his female disciples, they do not necessarily translate into lack of access to Buddhist teaching for women. Through an analysis of the content and style of these dialogues, I argue that the formulaic disparagement of women discloses more than simple misogyny from its composers, rather, it demonstrates the uneasiness toward women having access

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reason of her distress, and decided to ask the Buddha again on her behalf. He reminded the Buddha of his personal debt to Mahāprajāpatī, who raised him after his mother passed away. The Buddha finally agreed to ordain Mahāprajāpatī and other women as nuns. Ohnuma 2012 (94-112) presents an analysis on the importance of Mahāprajāpatī's role as a mother in the Buddha's decision to allow ordination.

<sup>377</sup> For a discussion on the importance of these two female characters for the Tibetan Buddhist renaissance, see Davidson 2005, 290-293.

<sup>378</sup> Germano and Gyatso 2000.

<sup>379</sup> For a study on her *Life*, see Diemberger 2007.

<sup>380</sup> These groups are discussed in Martin 1996, 188-189, Davidson 2005, 293, and Germano and Gyatso, 2000.

to Buddhist teachings and the effort to mitigate this concern. These negative images contain rich details of women's daily struggles, suggesting an awareness of—and perhaps sympathy with—the lower social status of women. As performative accounts, they also satisfy the requirement of demonstrating modesty from a disciple and serve as a part of a rhetoric about how teachings should be requested and then transmitted. On the exoteric level, Yeshe Tsogyel's theological gender becomes the ground for her identity as the transmitter of Padmasambhava's teachings, whereas her social gender as a woman share the many challenges faced by others (although she occasionally separates herself from other women, considering herself superior in her faith and determination). In the next chapter, I examine how a similar distinction is made between secular sex and enlightened intimacy in Yeshe Tsogyel's esoteric identity as a consort.

### CHAPTER THREE THE CONSORT YESHE TSOGYEL

Princess Mandarava, the Nepalese Kālasiddhi, the Nepalese girl Śākyadevī, the Mönpa girl Tashi Khyedren, and the woman Yeshe Tsogyel—these are the five women that captivated the heart of the master.<sup>381</sup>

Relying on the method to propagate the secret mantra, he has qualified secret consorts everywhere—from Akaniṣṭha Heaven to charnel grounds, from holy sites to secular abodes, from celestial realms to where serpent spirits and Gandharvas dwell. Their number is more than the sesame seeds that fill a four-pillared grand hall. Speaking of this world in particular, he enjoys no less than seventy thousand qualified maidens from lands like India, China, Tibet, Gen, Jang, Li, and Hor. He is especially never separated from the five emanations of Vajravarahī: the Body Emanation, Mandarava; the Speech Emanation, Yeshe Tsogyel; the Mind Emanation, Śākyadema; the Virtue Emanation, Kalasiddha; and the Activity Emanation, Tashi Chidren. Adding the Suchness Emanation, Dākinī Öchang, there are six. Among all of them, the Indian woman Mandarava and the Tibetan Yeshe Tsogyel are the foremost.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>381</sup> O rgyan gling pa 1987, 3: *lha lcam mandara ba dang/ bal 'bangs ka la siddhi dang/ bal mo shākyā de ba dang/ mon mo bkra shis khye 'dren dang/ bud med ye shes mtsho rgyal dang/ gu ru'i thugs su byon pa'i bud med lngas ...*

<sup>382</sup> Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje 2013, vol.7, 2: *gsang sngags dar bar bya ba'i thabs la brten nas 'og min nas dur khrod dang/ gnas chen dang/ mi yul lha yul klu dang dri za'i yul thams cad du mtshan ldan gyi gsang yum khang pa ka ba bzhi pa'i nang du til gyis bkang ba'i grangs las mang ba yod cing/ khyad par du 'dzam gling 'di'i dbang du byas na/ rgya gar rgya nad bod gan 'jang li hor sogs thams cad du mtshan dan gyi bu mo khri phrag bdun las mi nyung bar yod pa dang/ khyad par du rdo rje phag mo'i sprul pa lnga dang dus rnams kun tu 'bral ba med par gnas sol/ de yang sku'i sprul pa mandā ra ba/ gsungs gi sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal/ thugs kyi sprul pa shākyā de mal/ yon tan gyi sprul ba ka la siddhi/ phrin las kyi sprul pa bkra shis spyi 'dren/ de kho na nyid kyi sprul pa mkha' 'gro 'od 'chang ste/ sprul pa'i sku chen ni rnam pa drug gol/ de dag thams cad kyi nang nas rgya gar gyi mandā ra ba dang/ bod kyi ye shes mtsho rgyal gnyis mchog yin nol/*

The two passages above are included in the opening sections of a *Life* of Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel respectively. In addition to being the faithful disciple of the Indian master with perfect recall, Yeshe Tsogyel also served as his consort during his stay in Tibet. Of the many women who were Padmasambhava's consorts, she also came to be far the most important one. This chapter transitions from her outer role as the disciple who is responsible for transmitting Padmasambhava's teachings and the disciple who stands to represent Tibetan Buddhist women in the didactic dialogues, to explore Yeshe Tsogyel's role as a tantric consort in her heterosexual relationship with Padmasambhava.

Who is a consort? And what is tantra? While it would be impossible to provide a neat, comprehensive description of the cross-cultural, trans-sectarian phenomenon of tantra within the pages of this dissertation, I would like to build on two working definitions provided by scholars and point out a few aspects that are of particular importance in the Tibetan Buddhist context, and/or especially interesting for a discussion of consort. The first is given at the introduction of an anthology of translations of tantric texts. According to this working definition, "[t]antra is that Asian body of beliefs and practices which, working from the principle that the universe we experience is nothing other than the concrete manifestation of the divine energy of the godhead that creates and maintains that universe, seeks to ritually appropriate and channel that energy, within the human microcosm, in creative and emancipatory ways."<sup>383</sup> The second is given in the context of an overview of Hindu tantra, but the ideological and practical categories stay relevant in Buddhist tantra as well. In terms of its ideologies, the tantric world is "issued from, upheld and

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<sup>383</sup> White 2000, 9.

completely permeated by, divine energy (*śakti*), which is also present in the human being who can harness and use it (her, rather) for worldly as well as ritual aims for liberation.”<sup>384</sup> As for practices, the ritual worship of deities (*pūjā*), the prevalence and fundamental importance of mantras and Word (*vāc*), the profusion of rituals, and shared techniques with yoga, can all be considered typically tantric.

Both definitions identify the theoretical foundation for and the practical approaches of consort practice in tantra. It starts with a “sexed” theology in which deities are paired up with the opposite gender. Their union harnesses the female power and brings about cosmic creation (the latter is particularly evident in Hindu tantras). This theology does not remain on the symbolic plane but is also reenacted in ritual practices of mortal bodies, adapted from yogic techniques. These practices range from imagining sexual unions in visualizations, to worshipping the female sexual organ as the source of *śakti* or power, and to actual sexual intercourse and the subsequent offering or empowerment with sexual fluids produced therein.<sup>385</sup> In the context of Nyingma tantras, the goal of the practice is to manipulate the natural flow of the white, male seminal fluid (Skt. *bindu*, Tib. *thig le*) in the subtle body, and to cause it to reverse and merge with the red, female seminal fluid extracted from a consort, thus creating the experience of enlightenment. This practice is usually presented from the default, male perspective. In theory, there is no injunction that this practice not be reversed and made to work for female practitioners. In practice, women more often than not

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<sup>384</sup> Padoux 2017, 16-17.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 88-95. For a Buddhist example, see the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, translated in Gray 2007, 271-281.

serve as consorts who respond to and support male practitioners, who initiate the rites and reaps the benefit of ritual actions.

The many Tibetan names corresponding to the English word “consort” also emphasize different aspects of her identity. These names include khandroma (Skt. *ḍākinī*, Tib. *mkha’ ’gro ma*),<sup>386</sup> companion (*grog*s), reverend lady (*rje btsun ma*), neljorma (literally “female yogi,” Skt. *yoginī*, Tib. *rnal ’byor ma*); seal [woman] (*phyag rgya* or *phyag rgya ma*), action seal (Skt. *karmamudrā*, Tib. *las kyi phyag rgya ma* or *las rgya*), knowledge woman (*rig ma*), wisdom lady (*shes rab ma*), secret mother (*gsang yum*), or simply mother (*yum*).<sup>387</sup> The multitude of names points to an ambiguity in the referent herself. While a consort is sometimes referred to as a khandroma, a reverend lady, or a neljorma, these terms also refer to female deities, high-class women, or female practitioners in general. The terms “companion,” “method consort,” and “secret mother” communicate her function as the required female part in a tantric heterosexual relationship; “seal woman” or “action seal” highlight the embodied her difference from a “wisdom seal,” which is the imaginary consort in lower level practices;<sup>388</sup> while “knowledge woman,” “wisdom lady,” “messenger,” and “spell lady” emphasize the female consort’s role as a conduit of enlightened

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<sup>386</sup> I discuss this aspect of Yeshe Tsogyel’s identity in Chapter Four, “Khandroma Yeshe Tsogyel.”

<sup>387</sup> Other less frequently encountered term for a consort include “method consort” (*thabs grogs*), “[female] messengers” (*pho nya ma*), and “spell lady” (*gzungs ma*), Jacoby 2014, 207. Contemporary female consorts are sometimes called Ngakmas or Ngagkyemas (*sngags ma* or *sngags skyes ma* the female form of *sngags pa*, a mantrika), however, this gendered form only came into use very recently, Joffe 2019, 71-76.

<sup>388</sup> For example, in the Kālacakra tradition, only the highest *niruttara* yoga engages with an actual consort, i.e. the *karmamudrā*, while all other lower yogas only use imagined consorts. Geshe Lhundup Sopa et al 1991, 30.

wisdom.

A consort is revered for her sacred femininity in some cases and manipulated for her sexual energy in others. This chapter asks what we can learn about the literary image of Yeshe Tsogyel as a consort in Treasure narratives from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Following the common three-step procedure in Buddhist instructional texts, this chapter is divided into three sections, a beginning, a middle, and an end. The beginning section discusses the preliminaries that need to be completed by Yeshe Tsogyel before leaving home to practice Buddhism. She turned down marriage proposals, gave away all her worldly wealth, but most importantly, she parted ways with a former intimate friend of hers and chose a liberative relationship with Padmasambhava as the sublimation of secular love. The middle section points out one distinct feature in the identity of Yeshe Tsogyel as a consort. She refers to herself as a nun and a celibate practitioner. In connection to this discussion on what it means to be a celibate consort, I also examine a later, threefold organization of the purpose of consort practice—the soteriological, hermeneutical, and therapeutic—and ask if and how these three purposes are realized in the context of medieval Terma narratives about consort practice, as evidenced in the early *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel and other contemporaneous sources. The end section presents a preliminary theory of consortship in the sources discussed, and problematizes this ideal image of a consort as a venue where both theological and social gender find their expression.

### **3.1 The Preliminaries: Deal with Your Ex Before You Become a Consort**

Yeshe Tsogyel's journey to enlightenment starts with acknowledging the trappings of everyday life and setting the intention to leave it behind. This journey poses different challenges to men and women. While there is not a manifested need for a man to justify his wish to become a Buddhist practitioner, women face more difficulties in making that decision. The struggle of leaving behind the householder life is also reflected and has become a recurrent theme in the *Lives* of Tibetan Buddhist women. Virtually every female *Life* in Tibet begins with a drama about leaving home. Machig Labdrön had a husband and children, but their relationship was met with suspicion and rumor; Machig Zhama (Ma gcig zha ma, 1062-1150) resorted to feigning insanity so she could divorce her husband to study and practice; Sönam Peldren fought with her family to marry a groom of her choice; Chökyi Drönma wept throughout her marriage procession and decided to become a nun after her child died; Ogyen Chökyi was abused by her father and treated harshly by her mother.<sup>389</sup> The list goes on. These struggles often include abusive husbands or unwanted betrothals, as well as family quarrels of varying degrees.

The Buddha's life story also recounts his struggle of leaving home. Becoming more and more weary of and disgusted by secular life but still physically confined in the palace, he had to leave his family behind in the middle of the night, without anyone noticing. In their life stories, Tibetan women have to negotiate with their family about leaving home, and the consequences of their choice are usually graver. In the *Lives* of male Tibetan Buddhist masters, their experience before

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<sup>389</sup> Ma-gcig Lab-sgron 2003, 32, 81; Roerich 1976, 221; Bessenger 2016, 30-33; Diemberger 2007, 156-160; Schaeffer 2004, 134-135.



leaving home is usually marked with more prodigious feats and magical achievements and far fewer ongoing drama about not getting married. Therefore, while both male and female *Lives* in Tibet contain the act of leaving home (one of the twelve enlightened acts in the Buddha's life story), the first step toward detachment from the secular life, the path for women is more treacherous and her independence hard-earned. The *Extensive Life* emphasizes Yeshe Tsogyel's predestined karmic connection with Padmasambhava; her struggle in leaving the secular life behind is not complicated by intimate relationships. She did not have to deal with fervent suitors or physical assaults, which are recorded in the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*. When she left home to go to Samye to practice, she only bid farewell to her parents. She did encounter some difficulties on her way to meet the master: she was young and inexperienced in travel, so she quickly ran out of food and drink.<sup>390</sup>

In this section, I examine two episodes in the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel. This *Life* dedicates a significant portion to her experiences before becoming a full-time practitioner and discusses the negotiations and hardships she underwent, especially those that have to do with marriage and relationships. It gives an account of Yeshe Tsogyel's previous intimate relationship, and how this relationship is renounced by her and replaced by the supramundane connection between her and Padmasambhava.<sup>391</sup> It also relates the encounter between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava, after she was violated by a prince who was her suitor.

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<sup>390</sup> NTGP, 14b-15a.

<sup>391</sup> This relationship is also discussed in Angowski 2019, 268-281. Angowski argues that this exchange with Karṇa effectively recapitulates the mistreatments Yeshe Tsogyel has received so far, and makes the case for the necessity of Yeshe Tsogyel going into exile on her own. By

The first story provides a rare description of a woman's autonomous love life in medieval Tibet and casts it in a positive (but not ultimately liberatory) light. By comparing Yeshe Tsogyel's secular love with her love and devotion to Padmasambhava, this story further sheds light on what kind of relationship is considered truly worthwhile and what should be abandoned.

### 3.1.1 The Story

In the first chapter of the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus, because she refused to marry any of her suitors, Yeshe Tsogyel was exiled from the palace to a deserted land, described as a “nocturnal haunted forestland” (*bdud lung shing rong mun pa can*). She was accompanied by five hundred young men and women, serving as her attendants, as well as five hundred elephants, carrying provisions for a fourteen-day journey.<sup>392</sup> Upon bidding farewell to her friends, Yeshe Tsogyel was about to begin her exile on her own. Among these young companions is a man<sup>393</sup> called Gar Nacha

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comparing the Drime Kunga and the Pema Lingpa recensions, she also points out that the former contains figurative speech, which provides a richer literary image of love and longing.

<sup>392</sup> See, for example, DK1, 197.

<sup>393</sup> The English translation mistakenly identified this person as a young girl and Yeshe Tsogyel's escorts as all female (Dri med kun dga' 2017, 100), which is possibly due to the fact that the base version used for the translation, DK2, reads *khye'u bu mo*. After consulting all variants, *khye'u bu mo* should be understood as “young men and girls,” not “young girls” of the same sex. All versions from the PL recension read *khye'u dang bu mo* (PL1, 277; PL2, 19a.3; PL3, 35a.1; PL4, 15a.6; PL5, 193; and PL6, 237); two of the DK recension read *khye'u pho mo* (DK1, 197; DK4, 26b.5), and the other two read *khye'u bu mo* (DK2, 32; DK3, 23a.1; also KT 507). KDMG and BKR do not contain this passage. KT breaks off after the princess sending all of her attendants home and continuing with her life in the jungle, omitting the long dialogue between Yeshe Tsogyel and Karṇa Sheltöchen.

Sheltöchen (M/'Gar rna cha shel thod can, hereafter Nacha Sheltöchen).<sup>394</sup> He was an intimate friend of Yeshe Tsogyel from an early age and was unwilling to leave. He praised Yeshe Tsogyel's physical beauty and unsurpassed virtues, disclosed his affection for her, and begged her to elope with him. I translate this episode below in full.<sup>395</sup>

Among her companions, there was a young man named Gar Nacha Sheltöchen, who is of exceptional wisdom and sharp intelligence. He was an intimate friend of the princess from an early age. Unable to bear being separated [from her], he clutched her clothes and said the following:

Your body is blissful and your speech melodious;  
Your mind is also set on benefitting all beings.  
You also think lovingly of your intimate friends.

Inhabiting the youthful body of a sixteen-year-old,  
Your complexion shines like the white *punḍarīka*,  
And your scent of the white and red-green lotus.  
Your glossy black hair is like the fruit of the willow tree;  
Your two eyes resemble the budding *utpala* flower.<sup>396</sup>

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While it would be extremely interesting to have this intimate friend being a girl, raising questions concerning same-sex attraction, and female intimacy, it is unlikely the case. This is because Yeshe Tsogyel, in the ensuing dialogue, consistently addressing this person as *khye'u*, “young man”—if this friend is indeed a woman, one would expect at least a few cases in which she is addressed as *khye'u mo* or *bu mo*. Furthermore, the physical description of this friend, provided by Yeshe Tsogyel, does not seem to be female-gender specific.

<sup>394</sup> The name for this man proves quite problematic. According to PL1 (277, also PL5, 193), his name is Karṇa Sheltöchen; he is alternatively called Gar rnam shes phod can (DK1, 197), 'Gar rna cha shel thod can (DK2, 32), Dga' rnam cha shel yod can (DK3, 23a.1), Gar rna cha shes phod can (DK4, 27a.3), Gar rna shel thod can (PL2 19a.5), 'Gar sna che shel thod (PL3, 35a.2-3), 'Gar sna cha bshel thod can (PL4, 15b.1), and Gar sna shel thod can (PL6, 238). His name may indicate that he comes from the Gar (Mgar or 'Gar) clan, one of the powerful clans during the Imperial period.

<sup>395</sup> Since a detailed comparison between all recensions are already provided in Angowski 2019 (see note 152 above), I only used DK1 for my translation and consult other versions where the text proves to be difficult to read.

<sup>396</sup> *spyān gnyis utpala dung mo'i mdog bzhin lta* (DK1, 197); *spyān gnyis utpala gsar pa'i mdog bzhin blta* (DK2, 33); *spyān gnyis utpala 'dabs bzhin zur mig blta* (DK3, 23b.3); *spyān gnyis utpala*

The subtle movements of your brows are like the mirages in the sky;  
 Your two ears are like flowers with a thousand anthers (*me tog ze ba stong ldan*).<sup>397</sup>  
 The round tip of your nose shines like precious jewels;  
 Your face beams in smile like a lotus abloom.  
 The impeccable hue of your teeth is like that of a conch shell;  
 The soft, cushiony tongue of yours, as if created with (*bskyed*) lotus petals;<sup>398</sup>  
 Your body is pale, soft, tender, and smooth to the touch.  
 Your neck and throat appear like holding a silk, slender ribbon.  
 Your supple, thin waist moves as if for people's gratification;  
 Your feet tread in a youthful, leisurely manner.  
 Your beauty is like a lotus encircling a thousand-spoke wheel.

You sleep late at night and rise early in the morning;  
 You are gentle in your bearing and by nature a good friend.  
 You are always smiling and casting lovely sidelong glances;  
 Wherever you are, you are surrounded by a circle of light, an arm-span in length.  
 You are lovely to behold, attractive, possessing a radiant smile  
 Like a peach (*bil pa*),<sup>399</sup> or a round lotus stem.  
 You, young princess, are alluringly beautiful!

I am captivated by the sight of you;  
 When I think of you, your appearance excites me.  
 If I could accompany you, it would console my longing.  
 We were linked by our mutual aspirations in the past;  
 Although I have set my eyes on you,  
 I did not have the opportunity to be with you.<sup>400</sup>  
 Having wished for this,  
 We could be happy together for a long time (*bde ba ring*).<sup>401</sup>

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*snyon po bzhin du lta* (PL1, 277). Here my translation follows DK2, as *dung* (or *gdung/bdung/mdung/'dung/rdung/ldung/sdung/brdung/bldung*) *mo'i mdog* does not provide an easily comprehensible meaning.

<sup>397</sup> Or: Your two ears are of the color of the *sala* tree flower (*snyan gnyis me tog sa la'i mdog dang 'dra*, PL1, 277).

<sup>398</sup> *padma'i lo 'dab spyod* (DK1, 197); *padma'i lo 'dab bskyed* (DK2, 33); *padma'i lo 'dab bskyed* (PL1, 277).

<sup>399</sup> *bingka 'dzum 'dra* (DK1, 198); *bil pa 'dzum 'dra* (DK2, 33).

<sup>400</sup> Note that here the Pema Lingpa corpus makes a stronger case for Nacha Sheltöchen and Yeshe Tsogyel's mutual adoration. It reads: "Although our minds are together, we did not have the opportunity to be together physically" (*sems 'brel yod kyang lus 'brel dbang ma thob*). See PL1, 277.

<sup>401</sup> *bde 'am re* (DK1, 198); *bde ba ring* (DK2, 33).

Now, we are propelled by obstructing forces —  
Even though you are of [the king's] flesh,  
The evil royal ministers with sinister minds,  
Exiled you without any care  
To that wild land with large, savage spirits and demons.

It's a dark, ominous jungle:  
The howling of the birds will gnaw at your heart;  
You will also be sorry  
To have only wild beasts as your company.  
Is it reasonable for you to go to such a place?<sup>402</sup>  
Don't listen to the king and the ministers,  
Our body and mind will be happy somewhere else.  
Why don't I be your company, and we can stay together?

The princess said to the young man:

O, young man, basking in your prime age,  
Your smile is like the blossoming lotus.  
Your body is embellished with the auspicious marks of Vairocana;  
Your complexion radiant like Amoghapāśa.<sup>403</sup>  
You are proportionate, having a body like the most precious jewel —  
From all angles, you look like a plump flower.

Your scent is of medicinal herbs, [your body] like a lotus stem.  
Your speech is expressive and gentle.  
Your temperament is mellow; you move about leisurely.  
You are like an Uḍumbara flower,<sup>404</sup>  
And the glow of your body rivals the *kalapingka* bird.<sup>405</sup>

The brilliance of your smile captures my heart,

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<sup>402</sup> Or: I can't stand the idea of sending the princess to such a place (*de 'dra'i gnas su lha lcam gtong mi phod*, DK2, 33; PL1, 278).

<sup>403</sup> Amoghapāśa is a tantric form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

<sup>404</sup> The *uḍumbara* flower (*ficus racemosa*) is a common symbol for rarity and impermanence (Zhang et al 1993, 3138). One of the well-known metaphors is found in the second chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* (*Dam chos pad ma dkar po'i mdo*), in which the rareness of coming across the Tathāgata's teaching is compared to the blossoming of the *uḍumbara* flower, *Bka' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, 51: 38, 56.

<sup>405</sup> *Kalapingka* is a type of seabird known for its pleasant sound, Zhang et al 1993, 6.

O, young man, you are unrivaled in your physical features!<sup>406</sup>

Although you speak of my benefit from your anguished mind,  
I cannot defy my father's command;  
I cannot purify the past karma that separates us.  
In that desolate valley, a haunted place inhabited by spirits,  
Whatever ascetic practice I do,  
I dedicate it for the sake of my future [birth].

With my work done and my mind satisfied,<sup>407</sup>  
Even though I am exiled to an uninhabited land,  
I have few regrets!  
I am leaving for that haunted valley for a few years,  
Until then, young man, stay well!  
I pray that we shall soon meet again.

Again, the young man urged the process:

O lovely princess! You are charming and youthful;  
We are karmically linked and dear to each other.  
[However,] not listening to my suggestions,  
You said you would roam about in the desolate, haunted valley,  
Instead of going to a blissful land.  
If that is the case, I will follow you!<sup>408</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> The Pema Lingpa corpus does not contain the physical description of Gar Narcha Sheltöchen from “Your body is embellished with the auspicious marks of Vairocana” to “O, young man, you are unrivaled in your physical features!”

<sup>407</sup> The Pema Lingpa corpus does not have this line.

<sup>408</sup> From here to the end of Gar Narcha Sheltöchen's speech, the Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa corpus differ significantly. For example, PL1, 278-279:

If you say, “I will go faithfully to that haunted, desolate valley,  
“Because it is my previous karma.”  
If such is the case, [I] will follow you!  
My heart will be wrecked (*stor*) if I cannot see you;  
I will be stricken by sorrow if separated from you.  
If the time comes for me to be apart from you, O princess,  
Even a world filled with gold will leave my heart depleted,  
Even if I have all the various things I want and need,  
I will be miserable.  
Compared to that, it's better to be in that desolate, haunted place,  
O princess, wherever you go, I shall also live there.

If I don't see you, O princess, my heart will be depleted;  
If I am separated from you, my mind cannot function (*dran pa nyams*)—  
I pray we will always be together!  
If our time of separation would come, O smiling lady,  
I will fall unconscious, stricken by sorrow —  
Like a mother whose only child has died.  
I will wander through the empty valley with an erratic (*phyad phyod*)<sup>409</sup> mind,

In the Pleasure Grove (*skyed mos tshal*) where cool canopies of trees spread out,  
Where lotus sprouts like *udumbara* flower thrive,  
There are leaves, nectar, flowers, fruit, and the six-legged ones<sup>410</sup>  
Buzzing about and expressing themselves spontaneously.  
The wind stirs leaves and branches of the wish-fulfilling tree,  
Seding forth the plant's sweet fragrance.  
The daughters of the god collect (*'thu*)<sup>411</sup> the nectar from its flower.  
While one lives with delight and leisure in such a place,  
If the princess is not there, it's like a flower blighted by frost.  
Compare to that, it's better to be in that desolate, haunted place.

Wherever the princess is, I will also stay there!  
I pray with love and a tormented mind that we will not be separated!

The princess replied:

Young man, although you are speaking the truth,  
Suffering for one need not be shared by two.  
It is because of me, the princess's previous karma,  
That my father issued the decree  
And the ministers brought me under the law.  
There is no escape from my mistakes,

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With a tormented mind, I pray  
That we will not be separated for even a moment!

(*mi med 'dre yul shing rong nag po ru/ sgon gyi las yin zol med 'gro zhes na/ de 'dra yin na lha  
lcam khyod phyir 'gro/ lha lcam ma mthong bdag ni blo snying stor/ khyed dang 'bral na nga sems  
snang ba skyo/ lha lcam khyod dang nam zhig 'bral srid na/ 'jig rten gser gyis khengs kyang blo  
snying stong/ dgos 'dod sna dgu 'dzoms kyang bdag yid skyo/ de bas mi med 'dre yul yin yang  
rung/ lha lcam gar 'byon gang du bzugs pa der/ gdung sems ldan pa sems kyis 'bral med du/ skad  
cig gcig tu mi 'bral smon lam 'tshal/*)

<sup>409</sup> *cha chod* (DK1 199; DK4, 30a); *phyod phyod* (DK2, 36); *phyad phyod* (DK3, 25a).

<sup>410</sup> *rkang drug* is a synonym for bees. Zhang et al 1993, 90.

<sup>411</sup> *'thul* (DK1 199; DK4, 30b); *'thu* (DK2, 36; DK3, 25a).

I will be responsible for my own remorse.

But young man, why do you have to go to this uninhabited place?  
Go back to the blissful palace—  
It is endowed with the Five Enjoyments as well as stores of gold.  
There you will be tended by attractive and lovely companions.  
The king, his subjects and retainues accumulate merits there,  
You and your companions will also enjoy yourselves there.

While I take delight in mental purity,  
If you are feeling affectionate and cannot bear our separation,  
This ring of mine, made with fine jewels,  
With affection I offer this to you, O young man!<sup>412</sup>  
This treasury of wealth, carried by the royal elephant,  
I offer it to your retainue and clear it from my mind.

I am not attached to anyone or anything;  
My greatest delight is to be in accord with the dharma.  
Without grasping or attachment, I pray  
That we meet again in the Dharmadhātu!

Then the princess unstintingly gave [everything] along with the royal elephant endowed with perfect marks and divided them among the young man and her retainue. She released them of their duties, and they went back to the palace.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>412</sup> Or: Young man, make it a token of remembrance for you (*khye'u khyed kyi yid kyi sems rten mdzod*, PL1, 279).

<sup>413</sup> DK1, 197-200: *skyel mi rnams kyi nang nas/ shes rab che zhing rig pa rno ba'i khye'u gar rna che shes phod can zhes bya ba gcig yod pa de/ sngon gzhon nu'i dus na lha lcam dang yid mdza' ba las/ bral ma phod nas lha lcam gyi na bza' la 'ju zhing smras pa/*

*bde ba'i lus la snyan pa'i ngag smras pa/ yid kyi spyod yul kun la phan sems che/ mdza' ba'i grogs la brtse bas sems byed pa/ gzhon nus lus la bcu drug lang tsho rgyas/ punṭa [sic] ri ka'i me tog dang 'dra'i mdog/ dkar rtsi dmar ljang padma'i dri bro ba/ dbu skra mthon mthing lcug ma'i lo 'bras 'dra/ spyang gnyis utpala dung mo'i mdog bzhin lta/ smin ma rab rib nam mkha'i smig rgyu 'dra/ snyan gnyis me tog se ba stong ldan mdog/ shangs kyi rtse zlum nor bu'i ris kha mdog/ zhal gyi 'od zer padma 'dzum 'dra'i bzhad/ tshems kyi ngang mdog srin med dung 'dra'i mdog/ ljags ni mnyen 'bol padma'i lo 'dab spyod/ sku yi reg bya dkar 'jam 'bol las snum/ mgul gyi mgrin pa dar dpyangs rgyal mtshan 'dzin/ sku sked mnyen phra mi yi skang 'dra 'gul/ zhabs ni ngang sor gzhon nu dal gyi 'gro/ 'khor lo stong ldan padma khyud kyis mdzes/ nub ni nyal phyi nangs par lang ba snga/ spyod lam dal la ngang rgyud 'grogs par bde/ zhal gyi 'dzum mdangs spyang gyi zur mig mdzes/ gang na bzhus kyang zhal 'od 'dom gang 'khyil/ blta na sdug cing yid 'ong mdzes 'dzum can/ pingka 'dzum 'dra padma'i rkang zhum 'dra/ yid 'ong mdzes ma lha lcam gzhon nu khyod/ mthong bas yid 'phrog dran pas snang ba g.yo/ grogs su yod na sems kyi zhen pa tshims/ sngon chad phan du smon lam dbang gis 'brel/ mthong du yod kyang 'grogs pa'i dbang ma thob/*



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yid kyi smon nas grogs su bde 'am re/ da lta'i dus na bar chad rkyen gyis bskull/ sdug sems can gyi rgyal blon sdig pa can/ sha las chad kyang lha lcam phangs med spyugs/ mi med yul der lha 'dre gdug rtsub che/ shing rong nags kyi lung ba kha dog nag/ sna tshogs bya de skad ngan sems la gzan/ ri dwags pho mo grogs su brten pa skyo/ de 'dra'i gnas su byon par 'os lags pa/ rgyal blon mi thos snang sems gzhan na bde/ bdag gis grogs bgyid lhan du mi 'tshal lam/ zhes gsungs sol/

lha lcam gyis khye'u la smras pa/ gzhon nu khye'u lang tsho dar la bab/ padma rgyas 'dra zlum pa'i zhal ras can/ rnam snang mtshan dpe spras pa'i sku mnga' ba/ don yod zhags pa lta bu dang ba'i mdog/ rin chen nor bu'i dbyibs mdzes dpe byad can/ gang na lta zhing me tog zlum pa'i dbyibs/ sman gyi dri bro padma'i sdong pa 'dra/ ngag gi smra mkhas 'jam pa'i don rnams ston/ ngang ring rgyud dul spyod lam dal gyis 'gros/ u dum ba 'dra ka bing gzugs kyi mdog/ 'dzum pa'i 'od kyis dang ba'i yid 'phrog pa/ dpe byad rab mnga' mtshungs med khye'u khyod/ gdung ba'i sems kyis phan par smra na'ang/ yab kyi bka' yin bdag gis 'gal mi nus/ ngon gyi las yin 'phral gyis dag mi nus/ mi med lung stong 'dre yul nag po der/ dka' ba ci spyod phyi ma'i don du bsngo/ bya ba byas pa sems kyi blos long nas/ mi med yul du spyugs kyang gnong 'gyod chung/ lo shas bar du bdud lung gnas der 'gro/ de bar khye'u sku khams ci bde mdzod/ myur du zhal mjal yid kyi smon lam 'tshal/ zhes smras pa/

yang khye'u lha lcam la smras pa/ las kyi 'brel zhing yid la mdza' ba yi/ gzhon nu mdzes ma'i lha lcam mdzes ma khyed/ bdag gis smras pa'i tshig la mi gsan cing/ bde skyid zhing khams logs su mi 'gro bar / mi med 'dre yul shing rong 'grim zhes smra/ de 'dra yin na bdag kyang khyed phyir 'gro/ lha lcam ma mthong bdag gi glo snying stong/ khyed dang bral nas bdag gi dran pa nyams/ dus dang 'bral med gtan du smon lam 'tshal/ 'dzum ma khyod dang nam zhig 'bral srid na/ khye'u bdag ni dran med snang ba skyo/ bu gcig shi ba'i ma ni sdug bsngal ltar/ cha chod sems kyis snang ba lung stong 'grim/ skyed mos tshal na ldum ra'i bsil yab rgyas/ u dum ba 'dra padma'i myu gu 'khrungs/ lo 'dab snying po me tog rtsi tog dang/ rkang drug bung bas dar dir ngang gis smra/ dpag bsam yal ga lo 'dab rlung gis skyod/ ljon pa'i shing de rtsi mngar dri dang ldan/ lha yi bu mos me tog bdud rtsi 'thul/ de 'dra'i gnas de dal ngang yid spro yang/ lha lcam med na me tog sad khyer 'dra/ de bas mi med 'dre yul yin yang rung/ lha lcam gar gnas de na bdag kyang de na gnas/ 'bral med brtse bas gdung sems bdag la 'tshal/ zhes smras sol/

yang lha lcam gyis khye'u la smras pa/ gzhon nu khyod kyi bden par smra na'ang/ gcig phyir sdug bsngal gnyis kyis byed don med/ lha lcam bdag ni ngon gyi las yin pas/ yab kyis bka' byon blon gyis khrims la gtugs/ byol thal ma mchis rang gnong sems kyis khur/ mi med yul du khye'u ci la byon/ bde ba'i 'byung gnas pho brang nang du gshegs/ gser gyi bang mdzod longs spyod lnga dang ldan/ mdza' ba'i grogs kyis yid 'ong bkur sti byed/ rje 'bangs 'khor dang bsod nams de na 'dus/ khye'u 'khor bcas de na snang sems bde/ bdag la sems kyis dang bas yid spro na/ 'bral bar mi phod mdza' ba'i sems yod na/ bdag gi sor gdub nor bu'i phra can 'di/ mdza' ba'i sems kyis khyed'u khyed la 'bul/ glang chen rgyal khab rdzas kyi bang mdzod 'di/ khyed kyi 'khor la 'bul bas sems dang phrol/ bdag ni chags zhen gang dang su la'ang med/ chos mthun sems ni skyid pa'i longs spyod che/ 'dzin med ma chags chos dbying zhal mjal 'tshal/ zhes gsungs pas/ khye'u 'khor bcas la lha lcam gyis rdzogs su btag pa'i/ glang po che rgyal khab dang bcas pa thams cad so sor bgos shing/ phangs pa med par byin nas tshig gis brda bkrol te pho brang gi gnas su log go/

### 3.1.2 Indian Precedents and the Gendered Aspect of Becoming a Renunciant

This episode touches on a few themes related to our current discussion on consort relationships. First, it is interesting to notice that the physical description of the princess and her friend matches the bodily imagery frequently found in South Asian erotic literature.<sup>414</sup> The princess's pale skin, sleek black hair, supple yet slender body, and smiling face remind us of the "lotus type" woman in the *Kāmasūtra*: "The lotus-like is the best type of woman. Beautiful and with a bright smile, her body is slim and supple. Free of moles, her complexion is as fair as a sawn. She has long and shining black hair."<sup>415</sup> Teeming with lotus flowers, towering trees, buzzing bees, sweet fruits, and fragrant plants, the Pleasure Grove described by Nacha Sheltöchen can only be found in tropical or subtropical climates, not the snow-capped land of Tibet.

Aside from the South Asian secular literary tradition, this story of Yeshe Tsogyel's final departure from householder life also finds literary precedents in Indian Buddhist literature, testing to the continuity between esoteric Buddhist tantras and their exoteric predecessors. Having parted ways

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<sup>414</sup> Angowski (2019, 259-264) examines this dialogue (and other dialogues Yeshe Tsogyel had with her suitors) in light of India literary theories, so I do not elaborate on its parallelism with *kāvya* and *kāmaśāstra* literature here.

<sup>415</sup> Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, Lopez, and Thupten Jinpa 2018, 9. There are four major kinds of woman: the lotus type, the painting type, the conch type, and the elephant type (while the *Kāmasūtra* also divides men into four types—the rabbit, the stag, the bull, and the horse—physical description of Nacha Sheltöchen cannot be neatly mapped onto any one of the four). A similar typology of women is also transplanted into the consort typology in the *Sgra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*, a root tantra for the Nyingma Great Perfection school. I discuss more on the correspondences between *kāmasūtra* literature and tantric sexual practice in Section 3.3, "The Goals."

with her worldly possessions, her parents, relatives, and friends, this loving companion of hers is the last person standing between Yeshe Tsogyel and her choice to become a Buddhist practitioner. Seasoned readers of Buddhist narrative will also pick up on the similarities between Yeshe Tsogyel's giving away possessions to the famous story about generosity in the *Vessantarajātaka*, the birth story of King Vessantara.<sup>416</sup> *Jātakas* are a genre in Indian Buddhist literature that narrates the previous birth of the Buddha; the *Vessantarajātaka* is the story of the Buddha's penultimate life before he is born as Prince Siddhārtha and attain enlightenment.<sup>417</sup> In this life time, the Buddha is born as King Vessantara, who is overly fond of generosity. He gave away all his possessions, from the state elephant (Yeshe Tsogyel also gave away an elephant to her retinue, again, an unusual choice of animal considering the frigid climate in Tibet) to his kingdom. The latter deed caused him to be exiled and live in a forest with only his wife and two children. He even gave away his two children, and ultimately his wife, to a brahmin who asked for them. The brahmin is the god Śakra in disguise, who came to test him. The message is clear here: monetary possessions are, of course, unnecessary for a bodhisattva, but even blood ties and family relationships ought to be renounced, if the occasion arises.

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<sup>416</sup> This story is introduced into Tibetan by Pema Lingpa (Angowski 2019, see note 417 below) and Taksham Nüden Dorje, see Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje 1985.

<sup>417</sup> This *jātaka* is translated in English in Āryaśūra 1989. Angowski (2019, 155-178) provides an in-depth analysis of the parallelism between the Vessantara story and the first chapter of the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, I will only note that Pema Lingpa, one of the Treasure revealers credited with the revelation of this Life, is also attributed with a life story of Drime Kunden (Dri med kun ldan, the Tibetan name of Vessantara); none are known to be attributed to Drime Kunga.

The act of shedding worldly ornaments and connections also finds resonances in the story of Mandarava leaving home in Ogyen Lingpa's *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*. When Mandarava made up her mind to leave the palace, she gave all her jewelry and clothing to her maid Semshongma (Sems shong ma). When Semshongma refused and begged the princess to go back to the palace with her, she tore her clothing into pieces and threw them away. To demonstrate her determination, she further disheveled her hair, scratched her own face, and declared that for her to practice Buddhism, "it is indeed rightful to not have a body that excites the mind of men" (*pho sems 'gul ba'i lus 'di med kyang rung*).<sup>418</sup> While she did not bid farewell to a previous lover, the last worldly thing Mandarava parted with is her physical beauty, which is characterized by her as the source of lustful relationship with men. This act also commemorates the Buddha's life story, where, in addition to giving away his clothing, he cut off his tuft of hair (a symbol of fertility and sexuality) as one last thing before leaving home.<sup>419</sup>

Again, we are reminded of the gendered aspect of renunciation. When Vessantara gave away his two children, they were kicking and screaming, objecting to his decision. This has caused great torment in his mind. Later, when he was ultimately asked to give away his wife, he did so "without at all losing his composure;" his wife also acquiesced. She didn't protest or weep, but simply stood "motionlessly as a picture."<sup>420</sup> Compared to the relatively peaceful parting between Vessantara and his wife, the separations of Yeshe Tsogyel from Nacha Sheltöchen and Mandarava from her

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<sup>418</sup> O rgyan gling pa 1987, 245-246.

<sup>419</sup> This story is widely known as the sixth of the twelve enlightened acts, according to the many Tibetan retellings of the Buddha's life story. For example, Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal 2015, 44.

<sup>420</sup> Āryaśūra 1989, 69, 72.

physical beauty are more dramatic. This may reflect an unconscious distinction between men and women's roles in a marriage—it seems like men have an easier time leaving family behind while women need to make a scene and fight for it. At the same time, it could very well represent an awareness of the lived experiences of female practitioners and the real struggles they have to overcome. Unlike the Buddha's life story, where he had the help from the gods, Yeshe Tsogyel and Mandarava are left to their own means. The consensus in the *Lives* of Tibetan women is that marriage would be the biggest obstacle in one's spiritual pursuit.

### 3.1.3 *Sublimating Worldly Intimacy*

The story of Yeshe Tsogyel and Nacha Sheltöchen shows more nuance than simply rejecting worldly intimacy altogether. In addition to nodding at Indian Buddhist precedents and following the literary convention of composing the *Lives* of Tibetan saints in the same vein as the life story of the Buddha, this episode also offers us a rare case in which secular intimacy is depicted in a less unfavorable light, and provides a rich account of what factors play a role in heterosexual attraction.

Yeshe Tsogyel and Nacha Sheltöchen shared not a shallow physical attraction, but a deeper, more meaningful connection. Using honorific terms (*sku*, *gsung*, and *thugs*), he began his petition to her with a praise to her body, speech, and mind. Only after that did he comment on her relationship with him, saying that “[y]ou also think lovingly of your intimate friends.” He appreciated her physical beauty: from her complexion to her scent, her hair to her eyes, her gait to her neck, not even leaving out her ears and tongue. He also recognized her for her inner virtues: she is diligent, gentle in nature, pleasant, and glowing with a circle of light. The two were also linked karmically

from previous lives and share “mutual aspirations in the past.” He did not speak of the trappings of domestic life, but repeatedly expressed his wish to simply never be separated from her—if she would not go to the Pleasure Grove as he suggested, he was even willing to follow her to her place of exile: an empty valley haunted by ghosts and spirits.

Compared to her treatment of other suitors, where she simply turned them down by quoting her intention to renounce householder life, Yeshe Tsogyel offered an equally passionate praise to Gar Nacha Sheltöchen. In her reply, she noted his physical beauty (his smile, body, complexion, proportion, and scent) as well as his good characteristics (he is eloquent but gentle, of an even temperament, and spoke for her benefit). She admitted that she is deeply attracted to him and that they shared not just emotional but also physical bonds.<sup>421</sup> However, she explained that her father and the ministers had commanded her exile, and, on a deeper level, alluded to her own past negative karma. She cannot have any form of attachment or relationship—even the positive kind—and this is why she has to leave him and go on with her solitary asceticism. At the end of her parting words with Nacha Sheltöchen, Yeshe Tsogyel made the powerful statement that “I am not attached to anything or anyone” (*bdag ni chags zhen gang dang su la’ang med*) before embarking on her journey to enlightenment.

An important symbolic detail in the princess’s dialogue with Gar Nacha Sheltöchen is her jewel ring. She gave the ring to him as a memento at their moment of separation, marking their affection to each other and her leaving this relationship behind. Later in the story, she was given another

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<sup>421</sup> This is only seen in the Pema Lingpa corpus, see note 400 above.

ring in her first encounter with Padmasambhava at an equally emotionally charged moment.

After being exiled to a haunted land, the princess was again pursued by the prince of Zurmokhar (Zur mo mkhar). Although she turned him down, she was taken hostage by the ministers of the prince, who were eager to please him. The princess's arrival occasioned a grand celebration. At night, when everyone fell asleep, the Zurmokhar prince, overjoyed by the prospect of his marriage with the marvelous princess, also went into the brocade tent and slept with the princess.<sup>422</sup> The next morning, the princess woke up with an utterly clear recollection, she lamented her unfortunate destiny, and made the following supplication:

Hri! O compassionate primordial Conquer-Buddha,  
Kind protector, are you going to look after me or not?  
I am ignorant, I have inferior karma, someone like me —  
Who wanders in the darkness of *samsāra*,  
Will I be saved from the chronic disease of the three poisons?<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> DK1, 207-208; PL1, 285-286. The Drime Kunga and Pema Lingpa recensions differ in what the prince did. The Drime Kunga recension only mentions that the prince went into the brocade tent and happily (*blo phebs*) went to sleep (*lha lcam yid 'ong 'di 'dra ba dang lhan gcig tu 'grog dbang yod pas/ bdag gi bsam pa'i don grub bsams nas/ za 'og gi gur chen nang na blo phebs nas nyal lo*; DK1, 208; DK2, 52-53; DK3, 36a; DK4, 43b); while the Pema Lingpa recension clearly indicates that the prince was delighted and slept together with the princess in the brocade tent (*da ni lha lcam 'di 'dra ba grogs su yod pas re dga' nas bsams nas/ za 'og gur chen gyi nang du lha lcam dang lhan cig tu nyal lo*; PL1 286; PL2, 30a; PL3, 42b, *mnyam por nyal lo*; PL3, 34a, *mnyam du nyal lo*). I choose to follow the Pema Lingpa recension here because what follows indicate that something traumatic has happened to the princess so that she recalled [what happened the night before], felt desperate, and called out to lamas and *dākinīs* for help. Furthermore, the description *blo phebs par* appeared in the previous sentence describing the ministers and subjects who entertained themselves and went to sleep after the banquet. It is possible that a scribe could have copied the same phrase twice. Since we cannot establish a definitive chronology of the extant Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus, it is equally possible the Pema Lingpa texts (especially the manuscripts from Bhutan) have preserved an earlier version of this story.

<sup>423</sup> The three poisons are desire (*'dod chags*), hatred (*zhe sdang*), and delusion (*gti mug*).

Will I escape this perilous path or not?  
 Will I face the condition of bad companions?  
 I pray that you will provide me, an unsheltered woman, an asylum!  
 Kind protector, please don't be stingy with your compassion!  
 Please guide me out of the darkness of saṃsāra  
 And swiftly place me onto [the land of] supreme bliss!<sup>424</sup>

Her supplication was answered by a young man with a white body and a crystal topknot.<sup>425</sup> Holding a turquoise vase in his hand, he instructed Yeshe Tsogyel that she should not lose hope—her faith will be her aid on the path. Amazed at his physical appearance, Yeshe Tsogyel asked him who he was, where he came from, and why he was here. He responded that he was Padmasambhava from the land of Ogyen, also called the Island in the Ocean of Ḍākinīs (Mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i gling),<sup>426</sup> and that his purpose here was to become the companion of the princess (*bdag gi 'dod pa'i don lha lcam khyod kyi grogs byed du 'ongs*).<sup>427</sup> He then gave a jewel band to the princess

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<sup>424</sup> DK1, 209: *hrī/ gdod ma'i rgyal ba thugs rje can/ byams mgon spyang gyis gzigs mi gzigs/ ma rig las ngan bdag 'dra ma/ mun rub 'khor ba'i gnas na 'khyams/ dug gsum gcong nad zin mi zin/ 'jigs pa'i 'phrang la 'gro mi 'gro/ grogs ngan rkyen dang 'phrad mi 'phrad/ skyabs med ma la bskyabs tu gsol/ byams mgon thugs rje ma chung zhig/ ma rig 'khor ba'i gnas nas drongs/ myur du bde ba'i mchog la khod/*

<sup>425</sup> While this is the first time when Yeshe Tsogyel encounters Padmasambhava, the same text also records an interesting episode between Yeshe Tsogyel and an unnamed man that may actually be the first time Yeshe Tsogyel met with Padmasambhava. When the princess was first sent to marry the prince of Bhijara, the envoy was stopped at the border of India. This is because an incarnate master from Western India who is skilled in Chinese Five-Element divinations (*rgya gar nub phyogs nas sprul pa'i slob dpon spor thang rtsis la mkhas pa zhig*) told them that if they proceed, there will be geographical and elemental obstacles. He further suggested that they wait a few years and then go to India. DK1, 185 (PL1, 266 varies slightly. For example, it has *bag rtsis*, divination for marriage, instead of *spor thang* and records the master's name to be Sor thang). This incarnate master never shows up again in the story; his role seems to be stopping the princess from being sent off to India.

<sup>426</sup> Ogyen, or Uḍḍiyāna is possibly located in today's Swat Valley in Pakistan and was a popular site for Buddhist as well as Śaiva tantrism at the turn of the first millennium.

<sup>427</sup> DK1, 209-210.



and told her to slip it onto her ring finger. When the princess put on the ring, the iron chains confining her automatically released; her body also regained power (*lus kyang yang rtsal dang ldan par gyur*).<sup>428</sup> After freeing her from her shackles, Padmasambhava flew with her to Samye Chimphu in an instant. Among the people who witnessed their departure from the previous night's welcome party, the prince saw a *dāka* and a *dākinī* (*mkha' 'gro pho mo*) leaving for the direction of India, the evil ministers saw a raven<sup>429</sup> taking away a maroon-colored pigeon, and the subjects who came to welcome the princess saw a pair of vajra and bell (*dril bu*)<sup>430</sup> descending to the land of Samye.<sup>431</sup> In any case, they were clearly identified as a tantric couple.

Substituting her own jewel ring with the one given by Padmasambhava was a symbolic act. Yeshe Tsogyel gave away her own ring to her former lover and accepted a new ring from her future master and companion, Padmasambhava. This ring from Padmasambhava came at a time of distress caused by an unwanted marriage proposal and sexual assault, and represented the rescue of her value as a renewed affiance. Here, the ring is emblematic of Yeshe Tsogyel's commitment (in the sense of commitment to a secular marriage and to the tantric vow or *samaya*) and this episode illustrates a sublimation of secular relationship. It is not that mundane love is at all undesirable; while Yeshe Tsogyel turned down other suitors, she also admitted that Garna

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<sup>428</sup> DK1, 210.

<sup>429</sup> While the raven (*bya nag*) is not commonly associated with Padmasambhava, at least from the time of Nyangrel onward, he is commonly seen in iconographical representations as having a headgear that features a vulture feather. Mayer 2016, 15 (also n25).

<sup>430</sup> The vajra and bell is also a common way to refer to the male and female partners and sex organs in a consort relationship.

<sup>431</sup> DK1, 210-211.

Sheltöchen possessed an attractive physique as well as admirable qualities, and that she was deeply attracted to him. However, what Garna Sheltöchen did not have is the teaching that she desired on a higher level. Unlike Padmasambhava, he cannot become her companion in tantric practice. In order to begin her journey to enlightenment, Yeshe Tsogyel must convert her previous secular intimacy with Nacha Sheltöchen to the enlightened relationship between her and Padmasambhava.<sup>432</sup> This event also marks the end of the first chapter in the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, entitled “The Princess Leaving the Kingdom behind”, or “The Way the Princess was Born.”<sup>433</sup> In the following chapters, she moves on to become Padmasambhava’s disciple and consort. The role of Yeshe Tsogyel as a disciple has been discussed in Chapter Two; in the next section, I look at one aspect in Yeshe Tsogyel’s identity as a consort—her celibacy, or status as a nun.

### **3.2 The Identity: Consorts as Nuns**

As seen in the previous section, in the context of these early *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel, being a (qualified) consort rules out engaging in mundane love affairs and replaces them with a higher commitment. This section introduces a seemingly oxymoronic notion of a consort as a fully

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<sup>432</sup> The differentiation of secular entanglements from spiritual connections resonates in later depictions of the “villainized” lust and “valorized” love and longing. See Jacoby 2014 (262-263) for a list of the different terms used by Sera Khandro to distinguish lust from love.

<sup>433</sup> See Appendix I for the different chapter titles across the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa* corpus.

ordained nun<sup>434</sup> in the early *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel, and asks what the identity of a consort entails in this identification.

A consort is a tantric practitioner who engages in (almost always) paired heterosexual practices. While not all tantric practices make use of sexual unions (there are many other ritual forms to choose from), by definition (however vague and unsatisfactory that definition may be), to be a consort means to be paired up with another practitioner and to take part in sexual practices. It would hardly make sense to call a celibate practitioner a consort, even less so a nun. However, in the early Treasure narratives, Yeshe Tsogyel is said to have clearly renounced secular sexuality and did not willingly partake in any intimate relationships. She refers to herself and is referred to as jomo (*jo mo*), a word that means royal lady or a queen, but also an epithet for nuns.<sup>435</sup> This is

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<sup>434</sup> A fully ordained nun is rare in Tibet. While the scripture concerning nun's full ordination, the *Scripture on the Precepts for Fully Ordained Nuns* (Skt. *bhikṣuṇīprātimokṣa sūtra*, Tib. *dge slong ma'i so sor thar pa'i mdo*), is translated into Tibetan several times, and there are textual evidence pointing to female renunciant in Tibetan history who refer to themselves or are named as *gelongmas*, the tradition of full ordination for nuns is not present in Tibet. Even contemporary Tibetan Buddhist nuns who receive the same monastic education as monks are generally (with the exception of Larung Gar) prohibited from learning about the part of the canon that concerns full ordination because they lack the proper ritual status to do that. For evidence on the *gelongmas* and their activities in Tibet, see Deji Zhuoma 2003, 57, 59, Martin 2005, 72-3, Schaeffer 2003, 4.

In his comprehensive exegesis on the vinaya, entitled the *Golden Victory that Dispels Errors: Rituals Benefitting Monastics and Householders, the Roots of the Teaching, along with a Definitive Analysis* (*Bstan pa'i rtsa ba rab byung dang khyim pa la phan gdags pa'i cho ga mtha' dpyod dang bcas pa 'khrul spong rnam rgyal gser mdog*), the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682), acknowledged many verifiable cases of fully ordained nuns in the history of Buddhism in Tibet and maintained that women were justified to become fully ordained so long as they can find proper preceptors for the ceremony. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol.17: 173, 212-3.

<sup>435</sup> In Tibetan, there are a few different names for female Buddhist practitioners who have renounced family life: *ani* (*a ni*), *Jomo*, *tsunma* or *tsunmo* (*btsun ma* or *btsun mo*), *gema* (*dge ma*), *chöla* (*chos lags*), *nyama* (*nya ma*), *genyenma* (*dge bsnyen ma*), *getsulma* (*dge tshul ma*), and *gelongma* (*dge slong ma*). *Genyenma*, *getsulma*, and *gelongma* are translations of the Sanskrit

different from later sources, in which nuns do not identify themselves as consorts, and women who participate in consort practices do not recognize themselves as nuns. For example, the eighteenth-century Nyingma female Buddhist leader Mingyur Peldrön (1699-1769) turned down requests to engage in consort relationship because of her identity as a nun (*btsun ma*).<sup>436</sup> In the autobiography of the female Treasure revealer Sera Khandro, she describes herself as “neither nun nor laywoman” (*jo min nag min*), differentiating the identity of a Treasure consort from a nun (*jo mo*). She also clearly states that “I promise not to have physical relationships with layperson or frivolous monastics; other than that, I also will not become a nun.”<sup>437</sup>

There are many instances in which Yeshe Tsogyel referred to herself as a nun and expressed her wish to leave home and practice. In the first chapter in the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, Yeshe

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terms *upāsikā*, *śramaṇerī*, and *bhikṣunī*, while terms like *ani*, *jomo* and *gema* are used across different regions referring to nuns who have taken their novice vows, while the term *chöla* is the honorific form of *tsunma* that was mostly used locally, Havnevik 1989, 44. In the Ngakpa community in contemporary Amdo, ngakma or female tantric practitioners are also called *jomo* or *ama* (a ma, “mother”), Joffe 2019, 74.

The *jo mo* epithet is also seen in the title of the later, most well-known *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel, revealed by Taksham Nüden Dorje. This *Life* is called *Lute Song of the Gandharvas Revealing the Secret: The Deeds and Liberation Story of Yeshe Tsogyel*.

<sup>436</sup> Interestingly, Mingyur Peldrön is recognized as an emanation of Yeshe Tsogyel, while her father, Terdak Lingpa (Gter bdag gling pa, 1646-1714), was recognized as Padmasambhava. In her *Life* authored by her disciple Gyurme Ösel (’Gyur med ’od gsal, b.1715), her past life as Yeshe Tsogyel was recounted. Gyurme Ösel emphasized only the teacher-disciple relationship between Padmasambhava and Yeshe Tsogyel, while omitting all the details about their consortship. Melnick 2014, 101-103, 118-121.

<sup>437</sup> Se ra mkha’ ’gro Kun bzang bde skyong dbang mo 2009, vol. 1, 500, 132-133: *mi skya dang don med kyi bla ser rnams la bdag gis lus ’brel mi byed pa khas blang yod/ de min nga rang gis jo mo ma byas/*. For a discussion on the role of sexuality in Sera Khandro’s personal identity, see Jacoby 2014, 188-248. Contemporary Ngakpa (sngags pa) communities also uphold this distinction between renunciant monastics and householder mantrikas. See, for example, Joffe 2019, 79-96.

Tsogyel had to overcome many struggles when trying to leave home. Despite her protest, she was betrothed to the king of Bhijara in India. However, due to inauspicious astrological signs, her marriage was delayed. When she again refused to get married, she faced objections from her parents, brother, the ministers, was beaten savagely, and was finally exiled to a deserted valley. During her struggle to leave home, she repeatedly declared her intention to renunciate householder life, saying that she was ready to cut off ties with her parents, who were demonic forces preventing her from practice, and that she did not wish to be a part of a royal lineage or a household.<sup>438</sup>

This struggle to leave behind secular entanglements is also present in the *Extensive Life*, at the end of a long supplication for the opportunity to leave home and practice, Yeshe Tsogyel concluded by saying:

I am thinking about becoming a nun and cutting off my hair,  
Will there be a way for me to uphold my discipline?  
My hope always rests on the Three Jewels.  
May I be taken into the lineage of the Conqueror-Buddhas!<sup>439</sup>

Then, a dākinī appeared in the sky and pressed her: “Are you devoted to the Dharma, or are you devoted to the householder life? Which one is it?”<sup>440</sup> She reaffirmed her resolution by comparing herself with other women. While other women busied themselves with secular affairs, her mind

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<sup>438</sup> DK1, 191, 193.

<sup>439</sup> NTGP 11a: *kho mo jo mo byed bsam skra phud blangs/ tshul khrims bsrungs ba'i thabs kyi e yong ngam/ spyir res [sic] sa dkon mchog gsum la byedl rgyal ba bka' brgyud thugs rjes zungs/*

<sup>440</sup> Ibid.: *chos la mos pa yin nam/ khyim thab la mos pa yin nam/ ci yin dris pas/*

was set on asceticism; while other women were drawn to ornaments and mundane entertainments, her intention remained on the true Dharma. She repeated that she wanted to cut off her hair and become a nun, and that she was happy when she did not look attractive.<sup>441</sup> Later in the text, after having left home and started practicing, she referred to herself as a *jomo*; Padmasambhava also addressed her in this way, calling her Jomo Tsogyel.<sup>442</sup>

The last chapter of the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava* contains a supplication to Padmasambhava by Yeshe Tsogyel. She pleaded him to stay and expressed her profound anguish at his departure. She also briefly recalled her lifestory and her identity as a fully ordained nun in the following words:

I, Tsogyel, was born in the Female Wood Bird Year,  
I met with the master in the Female Fire Bird Year.<sup>443</sup>  
Having attained infallible memory, I have no further need for study.  
I served the master until the age of eighty-five.  
I have no son or daughter—<sup>444</sup>  
Because I am a fully ordained nun, I am not tainted by secular entanglements.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 11a-11b.

<sup>442</sup> For example, NTGP 14b, 23b, and 31b.

<sup>443</sup> If we take the date of Padmasambhava's activities during the reign of Tri Songdetsen (742-c.800), then according to this narrative, Yeshe Tsogyel is born in 745 and began her study and practice with Padmasambhava when she is twelve in 757.

<sup>444</sup> The *Extensive Life* also confirms that Yeshe Tsogyel has no children. NTGP 175a.

<sup>445</sup> O rgyan gling pa 1987, 705: *shing mo bya yi lo la 'tsho rgyal 'khrungs/ me mo bya yi lo la rje dang mjal/ mi brjed gsungs thob chos rnams slob ma dgos/ brgyad cu rtsa lnga'i bar du zhabs tog bsgrubs/ spru gu pho mo gang yang bdag la med/ dge slong ma yin 'khor ba'i skyon ma gos/*

Again, in her own words, Yeshe Tsogyel described herself as a celibate nun, having no children<sup>446</sup> and nothing to do with a householder life. Similarly, another consort of Padmasambhava, the Zahor princess Mandarava was referred to as a fully ordained nun in the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*.<sup>447</sup> Chapters 40 and 41 of the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava* record the encounter between Padmasambhava and Mandarava, the Zahor princess who will later become his consort. Previously, Princess Mandarava had taken the vows to become a nun from master Śāntarakṣita and was practicing daily in a secluded chamber in the king's palace.<sup>448</sup> Having observed Mandarava and her retinue, Padmasambhava considered her worthy of being his disciple and descended in front of her, in the form of an eight-year-old boy. Overjoyed at the appearance of the enlightened master, Mandarava invited Padmasambhava into the palace and requested him to teach. While Padmasambhava was teaching the princess, their conversation was overheard by a cowherd who happened to witness the encounter and followed them back to the palace. The cowherd started the rumor that Mandarava had abandoned her vows of celibacy and was having an affair with a foreign monk (*dge sbyong*). When being accused publicly, Mandarava had to defend herself and Padmasambhava, claiming that he was her guru, and that she was not sullied by any worldly faults (*'jig rten skyon gyis gos pa med*).<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Despite her having no children, Yeshe Tsogyel is referred to by her own disciples and disciples of Padmasambhava as a “mother.” I discuss in the next chapter how this paradox of being a childless mother is expressed in Yeshe Tsogyel's identity as a khandroma.

<sup>447</sup> O rgyan gling pa 1987, 251.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>449</sup> Ibid., 250-259.

In these early *Lives* and narratives, Yeshe Tsogyel and Mandarava, the two main consorts of Padmasambhava, are referred to as nuns in no uncertain terms. This stands in contrast with how the identity of a consort is conceived of in later times, where she finds herself in an awkward place between a householder and a renunciant. Although the sexual connection remains present in a consort relationship—the two *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel explicitly mention unions between her and Padmasambhava, physical intimacy is also what started the rumor of Mandarava’s illicit affair in the first place—it is not equated with romantic love or secular intimacy.

To better understand the distinction these texts make between romantic love and tantric bonds, we could read the aforementioned accounts in conjunction with Padmasambhava’s criticism of men and women being the main obstacles for each other on the path to liberation in the *Golden Rosary of Nectar*. In the fifth question-and-answer, Yeshe Tsogyel asked Padmasambhava whether a consort would enhance one’s practice. He replied:

A consort who actually enhances the practice is rarer than gold! You womankind are devoted to adulterous men due to your bad karma. Your pure perception is directed at your beloved ones. You offer your accumulated merit to your lover and your hardship to a householder’s life. Your compassion goes to your children but your aversion to the Sacred Teaching. You cultivate lust as your tutelary deity and vulgar talks as your heart mantra. You pay homage by making lewd gestures and circumambulate by going to places as you wish. Your determination is given up to passion and you only overcome confusion with your lower body. You take delight in copulation and repay kindness with vigorous lovemaking. You talk about desire as your experience; if you are afflicted by lust, you would take even a dog. You shamelessly choose lovemaking as your ultimate goal and prefer having sex one more time than becoming enlightened right now.

Your “faith” is but lip service and your devotion deeply perverse. You are full of greed and envy but have little faith and generosity. You have many wrong views and are full of doubt, but there are little compassion and wisdom in you. All you do is boast and hold yourself in high regard, but you have neither respect nor fortitude. You know too well how to talk back and forth but possess no correct view or mental strength.



You are unable to uphold the *samaya* or to serve the teacher. Instead of being a helper in the upward path, you are the hook that pulls practitioners down; instead of enhancing bliss, you are a lesson on negative emotions and suffering. Hoping to become liberated through desire and relying on it only becomes a cause for increasing jealousy and mental afflictions. Just by wishing to improve one's health [by taking a consort], one will end up entangled with inauspiciousness. A woman who cannot uphold the *samaya* properly is a demon for the practitioner!<sup>450</sup>

Here we find a series of descriptions of what makes a bad female consort. In his reply, Padmasambhava adopted the distinctively Buddhist language of devotion, pure perception, offering, compassion, and so forth (fig. 23), but showed that how these goals can easily be used for vulgar pleasure and base pursuits. It is not that a bad consort is unaware of Buddhist practices and terminologies, but she chooses to pervert these categories to serve a lower purpose. In doing so he again emphasized the difference between consort practice with worldly liaisons. The former sets its goal at ultimate enlightenment and benefitting others along the way, while the latter is deeply mired in secular needs and desires, and can only hamper a practitioner. When further asked

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<sup>450</sup> Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol.5, 363-4: *lam gyi bogs 'don yong ba'i phyag rgya ma de gser las dkon/ khyed bud med las ngan pas mos gus byi pho la byed/ dag snang snying sdug la byed/ tshogs gsog byi pho la 'bul/ sdug sgur khyim thabs la byed/ snying rje dgra phrug la byed/ zhen log lha chos la byed/ yi dam du chags pa bsgom/ snying por btsog gtam 'dren/ lha phyag tu lag brda' byed/ bskor ba rang dga' ba'i phyogs su bskor/ snying rus chags pa'i phyogs su 'don/ 'khrul ba ro smad nas 'jig/ zhe brod nyal po la byed/ drin lan chags pa su rem la blan/ nyams myong du chags pa'i gtam 'chad/ nyen na khyi la yang spyod du 'jug/ mi 'gyod pa'i 'dun phugs chags pa spyod pa la byed/ da lta sangs rgya ba las chags pa lan cig spyod pa la gdam/ dad pa kha nas skye/ mos gus snying nas ldog/ ser sna dang mig ser che/ dad pa dang sbyin shugs chung/ log lta dang the tshom che/ snying rje dang shes rab chung/ kha tsho dang rang rtsis che/ mos gus dang snying rus chung/ lan log dang phyir log mkhas/ dag snang dang blo snying chung/ dam tshig mi thub/ zhabs tog mi nus/ yar 'gro'i dpa' rogs mi yong bar mar 'then gyi lcags kyu byed/ bde ba'i bogs 'don mi yong bar chags sdang dang sdug bsngal gyi sna sun byed/ chags pas grol du re nas brten pas mig ser dang nyon mongs pa 'phel ba'i rgyur song/ kham rgyas pa'i rten du re tsa na nyams grib kyi thum por song/ dam tshig tshul bzhin du mi srung ba'i bud med chos pa'i bdud yin gsung/*

by Yeshe Tsogyel about what makes a qualified consort, Padmasambhava listed qualities such as being faithful to the teaching, intelligent and good-mannered, devoted and compassionate, perfected in wisdom, and respectful of her master as well as her fellow practitioners. In the end, Padmasambhava concluded that such a woman is rarely found in Tibet; maybe the Zahor princess Mandarava would be one example.<sup>451</sup> While he did not specify a consort as a nun in this dialogue, it surely is a tall order to fulfill for any woman living as a householder.

<i><b>Buddhist Category</b></i>	<i><b>A Good Consort</b></i> <sup>452</sup>	<i><b>A Bad Consort</b></i>
<i>devotion</i> (mos gus)	devoted to the teaching	devoted to adulterous men
<i>pure perception</i> (dag snang)	seeing things as they really are	seeing only her beloved ones
<i>offering</i> (tshogs gsog)	making offering to the Three Jewels	making offerings of merit to her lover
<i>compassion</i> (snying rje)	universal compassion to all sentient beings	partial compassion to her children
<i>holy teaching</i> (lha chos)	adhering to the right teaching	aversion to the teaching
<i>tutelary deity</i> (yi dam)	worshipping the right deity	lust and desire
<i>heart mantra</i> (snying po)	reciting the correct mantra	engaging in vulgar talks
<i>hand gestures</i> (lha phyag)	making right gestures in practice	making lewd gestures
<i>circumambulation</i> (bskor ba)	circumambulating sacred objects	going to wherever she wishes
<i>perseverance</i> (snying rus)	in practice and learning	in carnal passion
<i>overcoming confusion</i> ('khrul ba 'jig pa)	with wisdom	with her lower body
<i>repaying kindness</i> (drin lan)	with prayers and practice	with vigorous lovemaking
<i>cultivating experience</i> (nyams myong)	cultivating meditative experience	cultivating desire

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>452</sup> The description of a good consort is not provided in this dialogue. I have supplied the information in this section from other related passages where Padmasambhava discusses what makes a good consort.

*faith* (dad pa)

| faith in the Dharma

only paying lip service

*Figure 23      Comparison between Good and Bad Consorts*

While the side-by-side contrast between good and bad consorts again foregrounds the mutual exclusivity of secular love and enlightened relationship, one is still left wondering what is so important about the identity of a nun and the virtue of being a renunciant, that these accounts about Buddhist women prefer to depict their subjects as a celibate and honorable consort, or at the same time a consort *and* a nun. While being a professional consort gives women intimate access to tantric power and social bond, the identity as a nun offers independence from all secular ties, and a virtuous status granted by vows of celibacy. Both Yeshe Tsogyel and Mandarava emphasize their purity from worldly defilements. They are not married; nor do they have children. In order to practice, they have also renounced all secular attachments. They rejoiced at the opportunity to freely practice, a situation in which they can exercise their independence and fulfill their wishes. In these accounts, their connection with Padmasambhava was characterized not as human connections, but of a liberative kind and operating on a higher plane. They choose to describe themselves as nuns, a religious identity that is seen as more virtuous and more independent.

I should also note that this characterization of a consort as a nun is not shared by other schools of Tibetan Buddhism at this time. In the context of parallel consort practices in the Gelug School, monastics (mostly monks) are instructed to use imaginary female consorts, not human women, in their practice. As a female practitioner who is recorded to have engaged in consort practice, Machig Labdrön was also married and did not consider herself a nun. When Machig Labdrön was in Echung (E chung), she was approached by a ritual master Töpa Bhadra (Thod pa bha dra,

sometimes also called Bhadraya). They have engaged in consort practice and the affair was known and approved by people surrounding them. When she approached Lama Drapa (Bla ma Grwa pa), her teacher at the time, and presented her situation, he replied by saying that “[y]ou are not a nun, and Bhadra is not a bad person,” so there should be no problem but benefits and auspicious connections if they practiced together. After receiving prophecies from her teachers, Machig went ahead and lived together with Bhadra. They had two sons and a daughter.<sup>453</sup>

If the other schools do not recognize a consort as a nun, or to foreground her identity as a celibate practitioner, why does the Treasure tradition feel the need to say so? In order to answer this question, I now turn to the goals of consort practice, as they are outlined in the Treasure narratives sources of this time.

### **3.3 The Goals: Soteriological, Hermeneutical, and Therapeutic**

In the later, more developed form of tantric Buddhism in Tibet, the purpose of sexuality in esoteric practice can be understood as threefold: there are the soteriological goal of attaining enlightenment, the hermeneutical goal of Treasure discovery, and the therapeutic goal of healing and/or

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<sup>453</sup> Ma-gcig Lab-sgron 2003, 79-81.

longevity.<sup>454</sup> The first goal pertains to the subtle body practices aiming at untying the knot in all channels (*rtsa*), reversing the natural flow of seminal fluid (*thig le*), and thus attaining enlightenment. The second goal is related to the role of a consort in revelatory activities. As a necessary step in decoding of encrypted revelations, the Treasure revealer needs the help of a consort to temporarily arrive at the enlightened plane so that he can understand the meaning of the Termas. The third goal of healing and/or longevity is also achieved by training the subtle body and manipulating the flow of sexual fluids, somatic manifestations of primarily different registers of energy configuration.<sup>455</sup> Physical health can be considered a byproduct or a mark of advanced tantric achievements.

In this section, I trace the earlier literary representation of consort practice using the narratives about Yeshe Tsogyel in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, along with other contemporaneous literature. I then ask if this threefold goal provides a satisfactory framework for interpreting these sources, and if so, what can this earlier stratum of literature on consort and/or sexuality add to our understanding of the three goals.

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<sup>454</sup> Jacoby 2014, 196-222. I opted to use “therapeutic” instead of “pragmatical” for the third purpose because when exploring the possible precedent of this system in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the function of consort practice as it relates to physical health aligns more closely with curing infertility, healing ailments, and reviving death, rather than prolonging one’s lifespan.

<sup>455</sup> This is not a singular phenomenon in Buddhist tantra. Similar practices of fluid manipulation are found in Indian tantrism and Chinese Daoist practices, White 1996, 1-14.

### 3.3.1 Consort Practice as a Vehicle to Liberation

In depicting Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava's relationship, the *Extensive Life* does not shy away from the secret consort practices. Sexuality is the first (and perhaps the foremost) concern in the first in-person meeting between Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava. She offered him the maṇḍala of Maheśvāra Suvarṇadvīpa and the maṇḍalas of the five sense faculties as well as the three bodies. Padmasambhava praised her offering and further asked her to offer her secret lotus maṇḍala (*gsang ba'i padmo maṇḍala*), in other words, to have sex with him. She did that. It is only after these offerings that Padmasambhava inquired about Yeshe Tsogyel's family lineage and her intention to practice. Having expressed her wish to practice, Yeshe Tsogyel asked Padmasambhava if he had a way to change her into a male body (*pho lus*).<sup>456</sup> In his reply, Padmasambhava said:

I am a master from India who transforms earth into gold. Although I can transform a body born female, the method for you to be inseparable from me requires you to be my companion.<sup>457</sup>

He then continued to emphasize the importance of consorts in sustaining the continuity of the teaching (*bka' mi bcag pa*) and asked Yeshe Tsogyel to become not just his own companion, but a companion for future knowledge-holders (*ma 'ongs rig 'dzin*) or Treasure revealers.<sup>458</sup> After

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<sup>456</sup> NTGP, 16a-17a.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid., 17a: *padma'i zhal nas nga rgya gar bla ma sa gser la bsgyur ba/ bud med skyes pa'i lus bsgyur thub ste/ khyod bdag gi grogs byed dgos pa thabs 'du 'bral med par gda'/ zhes gsungs/*

<sup>458</sup> Ibid., 17a-b.

being asked by Padmasambhava “whose companion (*grog*s) are you going to be?” Yeshe Tsogyel replied that she would be the companion for Padmasambhava as well as future knowledge-holders. In this interaction, the only path to liberation for the aspiring Yeshe Tsogyel is to serve as Padmasambhava’s consort, and to continue as a vessel for the transmission of teachings to future generations of Nyingma Buddhists.

Before being initiated into the tantric circle, a disciple will need to receive the proper empowerments that endow him with the transformative power from the guru to embark on his own practice. The consort is a key step in the secret empowerment (*gsang dbang*) ritual. The procedure of a secret empowerment goes as follows. Having prepared the required ritual substances and requested for the secret empowerment, the disciple pays homage to a qualified teacher and offer him the gold maṇḍala. Then, after locating a consort who is properly cleansed, permeated by incense, and decorated with ornaments, the disciple makes supplication and various offerings to the teacher. In return, the master instructs him to contemplate the bodies of the teacher and the consort as his tutelary deities. The master then joins with the consort as the coupling of method and wisdom, causing his seminal drop to descend into the lotus, or vagina, of the consort. The teacher, encompassed in his meditative absorption, places this drop<sup>459</sup> onto the tongue of the disciple and utters the vajra speech for the secret empowerment three times, binding the disciple into the secret tantric oath.<sup>460</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> The drop is described as *gsang ba’i byang sems*, “the secret bodhicitta.”

<sup>460</sup> This is according to the *Precious Illuminating Lamp: Instructions on Empowerment Rituals* (*dbang khrid nor bu sgron gsal*) in the *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas*. Dri med ’od zer 2009, vol.5, 114.

Having been thus introduced into the practice, the disciple can then begin his tantric study, including engaging with a consort himself. The liberative benefits of consort practice apply not only to the male but to the female partner as well. The *Extensive Life* openly discusses the secret union and, in several cases, attributes Yeshe Tsogyel's spiritual attainment directly to these practices.<sup>461</sup> On one occasion, she attained infallible memory as well as perfect perception through her sexual union with Padmasambhava:

In the manner in which wisdom and method join together, the master and the companion had their secret union. Ugyen Padma's pale complexion turned reddish, Yeshe Tsogyel, whose body is red with blush, became pale due to her affection.<sup>462</sup> Even her hair braids became disheveled. She attained the power of infallible memory of the great knowledge. Whatever Ugyen Padma says, she understands its meaning. [People] cannot even look at the couple with their eyes. Yeshe Tsogyel said:

I have attained happiness, awakening, and perfection in compounded [things],

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Then, to generate the essence of enlightenment,  
Practice the union of the male and female principles of method and wisdom.  
Having come into contact with your sense faculties and constituents,  
Arouse them, make yourself delighted.  
Then, cause the clear seminal drop in your body  
To descend onto the *bhaga* of the consort.  
Having adopted the various types of mirror [practices],  
Apply the three sweets to where the channel is. The [lama] himself, encompassed in  
meditative concentration,  
Should place it (the seminal drop) on the tip of the disciple's tongue,  
And confer the empowerment with this Vajra Word.

*de yang buddha'i ngo bor bskyed/ thabs shes yab yum snyoms 'jug byal/ de nas khamdang skye  
mched lha/ sbyor bas bskul te mnyes byas nas/ khamdang kyid dang ma'i thig le ni/ yum gyi bha gar  
phab byas te/ me long dag gis blangs nas su/ mngar gsum rtsa ldan sbyar ba ni/ rang nyid ting  
'dzin ldan pa su/ slob ma'i lce thug bzhangs byas nas/ rdo rje'i tshig 'dis dbang bskur byal*

<sup>461</sup> For example, the attainment of infallible memory by Ye shes mtsho rgyal is said to be a direct result of her secret union with Padmasambhava. NTGP, 22b-23a.

<sup>462</sup> This refers to the mixing of red (female) and white (male) fluids.



In the flow of bliss, bodhicitta coming from the inseparable method and wisdom.  
Being a girl, whose body is lesser-than, my perception is indeed pure;  
Being a girl, whose thoughts are inferior, my display of awareness is excellent!<sup>463</sup>

In a similar way, Yeshe Tsogyel also attained the supernatural power of flying and the transcendental wisdom of blazing fire (*rig pa shes rab me 'bar ba*) through her sexual union with Padmasambhava.<sup>464</sup> For her, engaging in consort practice not only led her to various achievements, but also thoroughly transformed her perception and awareness. According to Padmasambhava's instruction to Yeshe Tsogyel in the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, relying on a consort brings forth the following accomplishments:

The fivefold yogic exercises of the channels  
Will cut off (*bcad*)<sup>465</sup> the door to grasping, which is the cause of defilements.  
Engaging with the benefit of the two seminal fluids,  
You will dissolve all desire and suffering into bliss.  
The three methods of drawing and controlling the channel  
Will put a stop to the stirring of the impure mind.  
The Five Wisdom Bodies will be kindled by blissful warmth,  
All phenomena will dissolve into the essential meaning.  
Set your resolve on the true nature of great bliss,  
And you will overcome ordinary practices.  
Vigorously complete your deity yoga and mantra practices,  
And you will move unobstructed through the five elements.

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<sup>463</sup> NTGP, 22b-23a: *thabs shes zung 'jug gis ngang nas yab yum gsang sbyor bcas nas/ u rgyan padma sku mdog dkar la cung zad dmar ba/ ye shes mtsho rgyal sku mdog dmar ba/ pho tshos dung bas dkar ba/ dbu skra lcang lo 'khyil bal rig pa che ba mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa/ u rgyan padma'i ci gsungs don la 'chang ba/ yab yum gnyis ka mig gis blta mi bzod pa 'dug/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi zhal nas/ thabs shes dbyer med byang sems bde ba'i rgyun/ 'du byed rtsal rdzogs byang chub bde ba thob/ kho mo lus chung dbang po rab dwangs ba/ sems yang dman pa'i kho mo rig rtsal che/ zhes zhus pa/*

<sup>464</sup> NTGP, 26b-27a.

<sup>465</sup> I amended *spyad* to *bcad* according to the other exemplars (for example, DK2, 113; DK3, 79b; PL1, 316; DK4, 93b adds the word *bsdams*, “to control, restrain,” under *spyad* in red ink).

Your power in clairvoyance and divine perception  
 Will reach its full display in a single instant  
 In a circle of light which is both appearance and wisdom.  
 Mixing the three yogic exercises of the channel, wind, and seminal fluid,  
 With your meditation on the ground and light—  
 This is the supreme method of enriching [your practice].<sup>466</sup>

Here, manipulating channels and seminal fluids in one's subtle body puts a stop to and dissolves unwholesome mental states. The mind is also purified of mental obstacles and filled with bliss. Supranatural powers such as clairvoyance or divine perfection will also arise. This is the first and foremost goal of tantric consort practice, to transform the subtle body and ultimately reach enlightenment.

### 3.3.2 *The Role of Consort in Treasure Revelation*

The mechanism of Treasure revelation is in itself a miniature narrative reenactment of the enlightenment process. In the procedure of revelation, the predestined Treasure revealers will first encounter (physically or in visions) a prophetic guide so that they know that they are tasked with the revelation of a certain Treasure. The guide also contains information on the predestined time and place for the revelation as well as necessary prerequisites. Enlightened beings (these can be

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<sup>466</sup> DK1, 244: *rtsa yi 'khrul 'khor rnam pa lnga/ zag pa rgyu yi 'dzin sgo spyad/ thig le gnyis kyi phan 'jug la/ 'dod chags sdug bsngal bde ba bsdus/ rlung gi 'dren khug rnams gsum gyis/ ma dag sems kyi 'gyu ba bcad/ ye shes sku lnga bde drod 'bar/ chos rnams thams cad bcud don bsdus/ bde chen ngo bo gtan la phob/ sgrub pa phal rnams zil gyis gnon/ lha dang sngags rnams shugs kyis rdzogs/ 'byung ba lnga la thogs med 'gyu/ spyang dang mngon shes rol pa'i rtsal/ snang rig gnyis po 'od gsal 'khyil/ gcig chod chen po gtan tshad phebs/ rtsa thig rlung gsum 'khrul 'khor 'di/ sgron ma gzhi dang nyams len bsre/ bogs 'don thabs kyi yang rtse yin/*

Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, dākinīs or khandromas, or local protective deities) appear in the visions of Treasure revealers and deliver the guide as encoded messages to them. After performing the preliminary rituals, the Treasure can then be retrieved from its place of concealment. This could be physical locations as well as mental depositories. At this stage, the Treasure texts are still in its encoded or highly abbreviated form. In order to fully comprehend its meaning, the Treasure revealer needs to enlist the help of a consort to achieve the state of temporary awakening, therefore realizing the true meaning of this Treasure and being able to commit it to writing when he returns to the mundane world.<sup>467</sup>

In the *Extensive Life*, not only was Yeshe Tsogyel identified as Padmasambhava's consort, she also agreed to serve as the companion for all future knowledge holders (*rig 'dzin*), another name for Treasure revealers. This is brought up in her first meeting with Padmasambhava (discussed in 3.3.1) and repeated multiple times throughout the text. In some cases, Padmasambhava also provides biographical information about these future knowledge holders, including their names, birth year, birthplace, and other identifying details.<sup>468</sup> The penultimate chapter in the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life* is also titled "The Princess Receiving Prophecies" (*lha lcam gyis lung bstan thob pa'i le'u*). This chapter specifies four future emanations of Yeshe Tsogyel who will be

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<sup>467</sup> Tulku Thondup 1986, 70-84.

<sup>468</sup> For example, NTGP, 17b: *padma'i zhal nas khyed ma 'ongs rigs* [sic] *'dzin gyis grogs e byed nam/ gsungs pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal zhus pa/ ma 'ongs dus kyi rigs* [sic] *'dzin dang/ rtsa lung 'od gsal dang/ mkhas bsgrub khyed kyis bsgrub pa'i rigs* [sic] *'dzin de rnams kyi grogs ngas byed do zhus/*. Also see 51a, 61b-63a.

born in all five directions of Tibet—Central Tibet, Tsang, Kongpo, Bhutanese border, and Khawa Tro—and aid the dissemination of Padmasambhava’s teaching at a future time.<sup>469</sup>

In the Treasure revelations of Nyangrel Nyima Özer, Yeshe Tsogyel, along with many other khandromas, has played an essential role. One particularly salient example is his encounter with a group of khandromas, headed by Yeshe Tsogyel, in the Pearl Crystal Cave at Juniper Ridge (Mutik shel gyi spa ma gong):

While practicing at Mutik Shelgyi Pamagong at dawn on the eighth day of the first month of autumn, the ḍākinīs of the four lineages arrived in vivid splendor and circumambulated Lady Tsogyal. They placed doctrines of ḍākinī transmission cycles in a red leather casket and doctrines of the seven secrets, the heart scrolls of the ḍākinīs, in a copper locker. After bending a rod of gold into a svastika, they placed it at Nyangrel’s heart. Having entrusted a book-box of 108 questions and answers to Nyangrel, he prostrated and the ḍākinīs bestowed the four vase empowerments. Having inserted their tongues into his mouth, they bestowed the four secret empowerments. Having inserted his secret vajra into their most intimate spaces, they conferred the four insight-gnosis empowerments. Having directed the threatening gesture toward his heart and thereby introduced the instructions of the precious Word empowerment, they initiated him. After bestowing prophecies, the ḍākinīs departed into the sky.<sup>470</sup>

This episode of Nyangrel receiving teachings and subsequent empowerments from Yeshe Tsogyel and other ḍākinīs again highlights the key role of sexuality in Treasure revelation. The sexual contact between Nyangrel and these women is the way for knowledge transmission to take place. By engaging in sexual intercourse with the Yeshe Tsogyel and other ḍākinīs, Nyangrel received

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<sup>469</sup> DK1, 257-260.

<sup>470</sup> Hirshberg 2016, 122-123.

the four insight-gnosis empowerments from them, as well as the qualification to claim ownership to the Treasure teaching he was just conferred to.

In many other Treasure revealers' careers, sexual union with a consort—be her in the form of Yeshe Tsogyel or an actual human woman—are rarely brought up as part of the deciphering process. The Treasure revealer Pema Ledretsel or Tsultrim Dorje is also said to have discovered Treasure. However, he died before he could meet the right consort to help to decipher it.<sup>471</sup> His immediate reincarnation, Longchenpa, preferred his own authorial voice and downplayed the importance of earth Treasures (*sa gter*). In an account where a number of female disciples of Longchenpa became possessed by female deities, we catch a rare glimpse of the arrival of these divine women, their interaction as well as conversation with the Treasure revealer, and his subsequent practice after receiving teachings and prophecies.<sup>472</sup> However, it remains unclear whether these female disciples (and their possessed forms) have actually partaken in consort activities for the sake of decoding Treasures. Pema Lingpa's Treasure revelations are guided by multiple divine agents, not just women. His first revelation began with his encounter with a monk, who handed him the Treasure scroll; later, a woman gave him the actual Treasure box.<sup>473</sup> Many of his revelations do not specify the source or how the Treasure guide came to him, only that on

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<sup>471</sup> Tulku Thondup 1986, 83. An unfortunate liaison with a woman may also have a part in his untimely death, Germano and Gyatso 2000, 244-245.

<sup>472</sup> Germano and Gyatso 2000, 251-265.

<sup>473</sup> Padma-gling-pa 2003, 40-41.

many occasions, he completed the revelation at the exhortation of various khandromas or Treasure protectors (these could be men or women).<sup>474</sup>

Compared to later sources where the role of a human consort in Treasure revelation is made explicit, the earlier *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel and narratives about on-the-ground revelatory activities seem to favor non-human khandromas to human women. The mechanism of bringing about an enlightened experience through the bliss of tantric sexual union is still important for the Treasure tradition, as enlightened vision is the only way to bypass the temporal and spatial restraints that prevent the Treasure's true meaning to be correctly understood. Therefore, this function of the consort in decoding Treasures could be understood as an offshoot of her main function of a ritual companion in liberatory practices. This is different from her third function as healing agents, on which the early tradition holds quite a different opinion than later ones.

### 3.3.3 *The Healing Power of Consort Practice*

Another goal for consort practice that is widely acknowledged in later times is to promote health and longevity. Early versions of Yeshe Tsogyel's life story do not shy away from her sexual union with Padmasambhava, nor do they omit her contribution in Treasure revelation in the centuries to come. However, these accounts are more reticent on the direct association of healing power and consort practice. In a previously cited passage on examples of bad and good consort practices,

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 41, 43, 44, 46, 47.

Padmasambhava explicitly warned that “[j]ust by wishing to improve one’s health [by taking a consort], one will end up entangled with inauspiciousness.”<sup>475</sup>

For Yeshe Tsogyel, engaging in tantric practice as a consort could engender somatic transformation and brought forth supernatural abilities like clairvoyance, flying, and infallible memory. However, these abilities do not contain or directly link to healing powers. Yeshe Tsogyel is also said to be able to bring back the dead, but this is generally attributed to her exceptional attainment, not her role as a consort in particular. While she was practicing with King Tri Songdetsen and Padmasambhava at Chimphu, Yeshe Tsogyel was said to have revived Princess Pemasel, the eight-year-old daughter of the king.<sup>476</sup> While the king was staring at the princess’s corpse and weeping, on the verge of jumping over a cliff, Padmasambhava came at his request. He explained to the king about his karmic past with this princess, and inscribed the mantra NR̥ at the heart of the princess, bringing her back to life. The master then bestowed on the princess a cycle of Great Perfection teachings and prophesied that she would be reborn as its knowledge holder.<sup>477</sup> Longchenpa’s *Precious History of How the Treasure [Tradition] Came into Being* provides a very brief recap of the story in which Yeshe Tsogyel was the person responsible for reviving the

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<sup>475</sup> Dri med ’od zer 2009, vol.5, 364.

<sup>476</sup> Kapstein (2000, 47-49) discusses the structural similarities between the revival of Princess Pemasel and the rebirth of Ba Selnang’s two children in the *Testament of Ba*.

<sup>477</sup> Dri med ’od zer 2009, vol.6, 128-134. This story is brought up again the *Precious Garland: History of the Seminal Heart of the Khandroma (Mkha’ ’gro snying thig gi lo rgyus rin po che’i phreng ba)* within the same cycle, *ibid.*, 204-206.

princess. She took a blanket made of white brocade and sprinkled on it sandalwood-infused water, causing the princess to regain her consciousness.<sup>478</sup>

In the *Extensive Life*, there are also a few instances in which Yeshe Tsogyel's healing power is demonstrated. One episode makes a reference to the collective activity of healing diseases by her and Padmasambhava. When she first arrived at Samye, King Tri Songdetsen was ill.<sup>479</sup> Later in the text, when Yeshe Tsogyel asked Padmasambhava if there is a way to cure the king, he did not answer directly, but thought that it is possible. The three of them went to Samye and practiced a *sādhana* called the Immortal Lord of Secrets (*Gsang bdag 'chi med*). In a week, the king was cured and returned to his palace.<sup>480</sup> In another episode, when Yeshe Tsogyel's parents passed away, she asked Padmasambhava if there is a way for him to bring her father back to life. He told her that there is nothing to do when the mind was separated from the body and gave her a lesson on impermanence. In the end, he told Yeshe Tsogyel that there was no need for him to do it; she could revive her father herself.<sup>481</sup> While these two episodes point to Yeshe Tsogyel's healing abilities, they do not associate this power to her role as a consort.

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<sup>478</sup> Dri med 'od zer 2009, vol.6, 307. The death of Princess Pemasel is also preserved in the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*. However, after arriving at the king's court, Padmasambhava continued with his teaching to King Tri Songdetsen on the previous lives of him and the princess. He did not order Yeshe Tsogyel, who was accompanying him at the time, to bring the princess back to life. O rgyan gling pa 1987, 535-547.

<sup>479</sup> NTGP, 16a.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 36b.

<sup>481</sup> Ibid., 115a-118a.



If we look outside Treasure literature, the treatment of bodily afflictions using consorts (or symbols of a consort) finds its earliest textual evidence in the fifteenth century. An episode concerning Machig Zhama in the *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*) contains interesting details on how failing to observe one's tantric vows could lead to physical ailment and how to cure such diseases. Machig Zhama was the disciple and consort of Ma Lotsawa Rinchenchok (Rma lo tsā ba Rin chen mchog, 1044-?). After Ma Lotsawa's passing, she experienced seven types of affliction, four of which are related to her bodily function. She suffered from a daily discharge of sperm,<sup>482</sup> her body became covered by purulent lumps and pustules; she lost her physical well-being, and was overcome by desire.<sup>483</sup> She went to Tingri to ask Phadampa Sanggye's help in this matter, who informed her that it was because she had transgressed her vow to her root lama and acted as a consort for other people that calamities had befallen her. She was told to prepare meat, wine, an egg from a black hen, seven teenage girls, a relic of the Buddha, a king's throne, and the footprint of Ma Lotsawa on a cloth. The ritual to rid her of her negative activity entailed offering the throne to Phadampa Sanggye, assuming the position of a consort to her root lama and circumambulating the Buddha relic, washing herself, offering the seven girls to the footprint, and placing the egg into her female

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<sup>482</sup> Tib. *byang chub kyi sems sran ma*; lit. a pea-sized bodhicitta; *byang chub kyi sems* is commonly used as a euphemism for semen.

<sup>483</sup> The remaining three afflictions—animals and birds refuse to take her offerings, she cannot kindle the ritual fire, and was refused entry into the company of khandromas—might also be attributed as results of her unwholesome physical state.

genital (*mtshan mar chug*).<sup>484</sup> After returning to health, she sent Phadampa many gifts, including a female consort, her own niece Tsunchungma (*Btsun chung ma*).<sup>485</sup>

The episode of Phadampa Sanggye curing Machig Zhama's diseases is significant in the following aspects. First, while consort practices can perform healing functions, breaching one's tantric vows and serving as other people's consort without the lama's approval will also cause bodily as well as karmic disturbances. Second, the type of the diseases caused by unscrupulous consortship is that of karmic diseases,<sup>486</sup> and their symptoms include the overflow of sexual fluids and desire. Last, the cure for such afflictions is through restoring the correct, ethical form of consort practice, that is, associating oneself with the root lama (and if he has already passed away, proper substitutes such as a footprint may be used). This is done through a multilayered ritual consisting of symbolic and actual consorts as well as representations of sexual acts. Here, Machig Zhama assumed the ritual role of a consort herself in relation to her lama; she offered seven young maidens to the footprint of Ma Lotsawa, and was instructed to perform a symbolic act of sexual intercourse by placing an egg in her vulva.<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Roerich 1976 (223) translated *mtshan ma* as *padma*, another name for the vulva.

<sup>485</sup> 'Gos lo tsā ba gzhon nu dpal 1984, 273-277; for a complete English translation, see Roerich 1976, 220-228. Diemberger and Hazod 1994 discusses the mythological and symbolic significance of Machig Zhama's story in the local context of Southern Latö.

<sup>486</sup> Vargas-O'brien 2001 (170-171) discusses how skin afflictions (leprosy in her discussion, and lumps and pustules in the case of Machig Zhama) are usually "more than what meets the eye" and reveal psychological sickness and inner deformities.

<sup>487</sup> Later, when Phadampa asked her to take the egg out, it had turned black and was filled with blackish blood.

The healing function of sexual practice is also evident in Tibetan medical tradition from an early time. The most important root text for Tibetan medicine, the *Four Tantras* (*Rgyud bzhi*), took shape at the end of the twelfth century.<sup>488</sup> In the *Four Tantras* (and Tibetan medicine in general), sexual practice falls under the topic of virility and fertility. Discussions related to sexual pleasure and fertility (*ro tsa*) only appear in the last two chapters in the third of the four tantras, the *Instruction Tantra* (*Man ngag rgyud*). Although these two chapters are dedicated to men and women respectively, its organization and content still reflect the default male concerns. There are methods to generate and enhance male sexual pleasure, but none for female. Infertility seems only to be a concern for women.<sup>489</sup> When a man cannot have children (literally, “the situation of being childless,” *bu med*),<sup>490</sup> he is invariably told to look for cure in the form of another woman. For older men, finding a younger woman as consort could bring them back to youth. She should be “grown up, beautiful and charming, and wearing ornaments.” Her manner also needs to be pleasing and her voice sweet and melodious.<sup>491</sup> There are three parts of the treatment of restoring male

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<sup>488</sup> McGrath 2017 traces the history of Tibetan medicine prior to the compilation of the *Four Tantras* and the formation of a Buddhist narrative about medicine. I also thank him for generously sharing with me many materials regarding Tibetan medicine used in this section.

<sup>489</sup> There are five causes for women’s infertility: demonic possession; humoral disturbance caused by deficiencies, excess, or counter-indications with respect to diet and conduct; the post-natal retention of the placenta; contraceptive medications; and sterility. Parfionovitch, Gyurme Dorje, and Meyer 1992, 121.

<sup>490</sup> Gyatso 2008 discusses in detail one philological problem regarding an auxiliary topic of the *ro tsa*, or [male] fertility chapter of the *Four Tantras*. There are internal discrepancies as to what the purpose of this auxiliary topic is—it is written sometimes as “to search for [another] woman” (*bud med btsal ba*), and in other cases as “to search for [the solution to] having no sons” (*bu med btsal ba*). She suggests that this back-and-forth could represent an ambivalence in the *Four Tantras* to the androcentric tendency of having men as the main (or even single) focus of its fertility chapter.

<sup>491</sup> Gyatso 2015a, 302-312.

virility. First are the preparations. This part includes finding a girl, courting her, and engaging her in the preliminaries. Second, the main part; this is the practice proper. Remedies include diet, conduct, medicinal compounds and external therapy (this refers to sexual intercourse as well as other non-erotic treatments like moxibustion or massage). The third and last part is a discussion on its purposes.<sup>492</sup> Like a good number of other chapters in the *Four Tantras*, this section is largely based on the Āyurvedic medical tradition, especially the *Aṣṭāṅgahrdayasaṃhitā*, with the exception of the compounding of medical substances.<sup>493</sup>

The arrangement of the virility-restoring treatment chapter and the physical descriptions of desirable consorts share many similarities with the aforementioned case of finding a consort in the tantric tradition. The physical descriptions of female consorts also find resonance in a discussion on the typology of women in *Kāmasūtra* literature. For example, in a commentary on the *Great Penetrating Sound Tantra* (*Sgra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud*) composed by Zhangtön Tashi Dorje, in order to engage in consort activities, a practitioner needs to go through the steps of examining the characteristics of a potential consort. She is said to be slender and supple, fall in an appropriate age range, and conduct herself leisurely.<sup>494</sup> The practitioner then needs to apply a series of techniques to summon her to practice with him. After successfully securing himself a companion,

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<sup>492</sup> Parfionovitch, Gyurme Dorje, and Meyer 1992 (121-122) provides a summary of the chapters on virility and sexual pleasure in the *Four Tantras* as well as illustrations of the practice. The ambivalent representation of gender in these two chapters is also discussed in Gyatso 2011 (280-283).

<sup>493</sup> Yang Ga 2010, 239-240.

<sup>494</sup> Note that here a similar physical description is found in Nacha Sheltöchen's praise of Yeshe Tsogyel as well as the *Kāmasūtra* literature.

he proceeds with preparatory procedures as well as the actual practice itself.<sup>495</sup> However, in the *Kāmasūtra* literature, the goals of sexual activities are personal pleasure and satisfactory relationships; in the context of the *Great Penetrating Sound Tantra*, the purpose of such practice is strictly limited to soteriology, not physical health.

Tibetan writers are not unaware of the secular erotic practice that harnesses the benefit of sexual activity, a long-standing tradition in India. At least one *Treatise on Desire* (Skt. *Kāmaśāstra*, Tib. 'Dod pa'i bstan bcos) was translated and included in the Tibetan Buddhist canon;<sup>496</sup> there are also Tibetan-language *kāmaśāstra* treatises composed by monastic authors.<sup>497</sup> In addition to standalone volumes dedicated to this topic, references are also made to the “sixty-four arts of love”, suggesting that Tibetan Buddhist monastics are at least familiar with the topic.<sup>498</sup> However, secular eroticism is viewed as a different set of practices with its own purpose set on worldly pleasure and happiness. While the benefits of *Kāmaśāstra* practice entails physical and psychological balance, pleasure, relationship, and “improved social standing and stability,” the goal for *karmamudrā* or consort practice is to control the movements of channel, wind, and seminal drop in the practitioner’s subtle body, to overcome afflictions, and to ultimately achieve

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<sup>495</sup> Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa 2009, vol.107, 405-411.

<sup>496</sup> This work is said to be composed by a Surūpa (Gzugs bzang). No Sanskrit version of this text is extant. Its inclusion into the Tibetan Buddhist canon can be traced back to Butön's time. Vogel 1965 contains a translation of the text and a study about its history.

<sup>497</sup> Jacoby 2017 discusses one of the earlier such treatises authored by Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyel Gyatso ('Ju mi pham 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho, 1846–1912).

<sup>498</sup> Lopez 2007, 381. However, it is not until Gedun Chöpel (Dge 'dun chos 'phel, 1903-1951) that the first Tibetan translation of the *Kāmasūtra* is made. This work is recently translated into English in Dge-'dun-chos-'phel, Lopez, and Thupten Jinpa 2018.

enlightenment.<sup>499</sup> While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a comprehensive comparison of the shared elements in tantric consort practice, the virility and sexual pleasure sections in Āyurvedic and Tibetan medical traditions, and the import of Indian secular eroticism in Tibetan *Kāmaśāstra* literature, I will note that in Treasure revelations during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,<sup>500</sup> healing functions of a consort is not considered an acceptable goal for engaging in sexual practice, at least not for any serious tantric practitioner. Despite the parallel theories and practices of sexuality in the tantric, medical, and erotic traditions, Treasure literature does not recognize the other two as correlative systems, but sets up the tantric path as the only one worth pursuing.

By tracing back the soteriological, hermeneutical, and therapeutic goals of consort practice, it is clear that in the context of early Treasure literature, soteriology prevails as the main concern, while the hermeneutical goal is presented in its inchoate forms and the therapeutic function largely absent. In the next section, I conclude by constructing a theory of Buddhist consortship in the Treasure tradition and attempting to answer the question that has been hovering over the past three sections: why does this tradition feel the need to sublimate secular intimacy, to identify consorts as nuns, and to circumscribe sexuality in the context of liberation only?

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<sup>499</sup> Chenatsang and Joffe 2018, 129.

<sup>500</sup> This is not the case outside the Treasure tradition. I have discussed the story of Phadampa Samgye restoring Machig Zhama's physical health through consort practice. Tsongkhapa also reportedly to outsource detailed techniques of tantric sexual practice to *kāmaśāstras*, admitting the connection between the secular and the liberatory art of love, Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa 2017, 21.

### 3.4 *Conclusions: Toward a Theory of Treasure Consortship*

In the previous three sections, I have provided three lines of investigation on how Treasure literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries contrasted consort relationship with secular intimacy. In terms of the preliminaries or preparations needed to become a consort, tantric bonds serve as the sublimation of worldly relationships. Even affection toward a most virtuous and loving friend is to be abandoned and replaced by devotion to the master, as we have read in the parting of Yeshe Tsogyel and Gar Nacha Sheltöchen. The identity of a consort is also on many occasions curiously identified with a nun or associated with celibacy. She is described as a virtuous, independent practitioner. As for the goals of consort practice, the texts we examined here emphasize the soteriological or liberative functions of tantric union and, by extension, the hermeneutic function of Treasure revelation, but do not justify using consorts to promote one's health.

Consort relationship is also removed from everyday human interaction; common relationship problems like jealousy and possessiveness are not part of the picture. Padmasambhava specifically instructed Yeshe Tsogyel that in finding a consort, one needs to look for a woman who is not possessive.<sup>501</sup> In the *Extensive Life*, when Padmasambhava summons Mandarava, his previous consort from Zahor, to come and join him and Yeshe Tsogyel in practice, Yeshe Tsogyel's

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<sup>501</sup> DK1, 244.

response is not jealousy, but curiosity as to what Mandarava is like, and acknowledgment of her spiritual attainments once knowing that Mandarava is more accomplished than herself.

There was a rumbling sound nearby (*gam?*). Yeshe Tsogyel asked, “What is [that]?” “It is [the sound of] Mandarava coming.”

Yeshe Tsogyel said, “I have some realization, I’ll see what the Indian girl is like.” Ugyen replied, “You don’t have the realization of rainbow body which is bodiless in [common] perception.” Yeshe Tsogyel thought, *the one who has achieved the rainbow body is better than me.*<sup>502</sup>

After Mandarava arrived, the three of them practiced together for ten days. At the end of their practice, both women took turns to bow to each other. Padmasambhava inquired about Mandarava’s practice. Yeshe Tsogyel offered half of her gold to Mandarava, they exchanged two strands of hair.<sup>503</sup> Then, Padmasambhava teased Yeshe Tsogyel, asking her who she thought was superior:

Mandarava disappeared in rainbow light and left. The master asked Yeshe Tsogyel: “The Indian girl and you, the Khar Lady, these two, who is superior? You both have unwavering meditative concentration, it is indeed time for you to exchange your hair! Which one appears to be better?”

Yeshe Tsogyel said: “Master, you know who is better! The Indian lady [hails from] a holy land. [Her] lineage is the royal lineage. She has also attained the genuine

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<sup>502</sup> NTGP: 53b-54a: *rgam khrol khrol bya ba/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis ci yin zhus/ mandha ra ba yong pa yin gsungs/ ye shes mtsho rgyal nges gcig rtogs nas rgya gar bu mo ci ’dra yin lta zhus/ u rgyan zhal nas/ khyod lta ba’i lus med pa ’ja’ lus yin pa’i rtogs med ’dug gsungs/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis dgongs nas/ ’ja’ lus thob pa kho mo bas lhag pa’i red dgongs/*

<sup>503</sup> Ibid., 54a-55b. Again, as the object of their exchange, the hair is symbolic of female fertility and sexuality.



rainbow body. I am from Tibet, the uncivilized land of red-faced demons, a land [where people are] wicked and inclined to evil deeds. My life is given by the inferior lineage of Kharchuza. My mental capacity is limited; I have little diligence. Compared to me, the Indian lady is indeed superior!”<sup>504</sup>

While one would expect some sense of rivalry or hostility in the encounter of two girlfriends of the same man, the meeting between Yeshe Tsogyel and Mandarava went ahead smoothly. Both were respectful and eager to learn from and practice with each other; they also exchanged offerings, a customary event that usually takes place between disciples and teachers, or two teachers. Although Padmasambhava praised Mandarava as the more spiritually accomplished woman, he guided the two consorts impartially.

But why do Treasure authors and revealers feel such a need to elevate the consort relationship, to the extent of denying anything human or any secular associations? One might argue that it could be a standard way to rationalize the use of sex in tantric rituals. However, there is no need to go so far as to claim consorts as nuns and making them celibate; it would be enough just to note that tantric unions happen on a higher plane and are different from regular sex. It could also be argued that this superhuman rhetoric adds to the power of tantric practice, but wouldn't it be even better to allow consort practice to serve an additional healing function as well?

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<sup>504</sup> Ibid., 55b: *mandha ra ba 'ja' 'od du yal nas song ye shes mtsho rgyal la slob dpon gyis tshig gsungs pal rgya gar bu mo dang khyed mkhar za gnyis gang du lhag! g.yo ba med pa ting lhan du khyed dbu skra rjes pa'i dus skabs mchis pal su lhag po snang gsungsl ye shes mtsho rgyal zhus pal khyed slob dpon gyi gang lhags su shesl rgya gar gyi bu mo dag pa'i sal rigs ni rgyal rigs dngos bcas 'ja' lus thob pal nga bod kyi yul sa ngan pa srin po gdong dmar! dge med sdig la dad pa'i sa nasl tsho byed mkhar chu za rigs dman pal spros pa chung bal nan tan med pal nga ba'i rgya gar bu mo lhag po 'dugl*

To understand this exaltation of sex and sexual relationships, instead of asking questions like “are people really having sex,” or “what kind of sex are people having at this time,” I would like to propose two other directions of inquiry. The first one asks what the Treasure literature talks about when it talks about sex or consort. The second asks who the intended audience is and what the intended effects are for this discourse on the transcendental nature of consortship.

While the first question is already answered in the previous three sections—the early Treasure literature we examined here defines consortship as transcendental, virtuous, and (only) soteriologically beneficial—answering the second question requires us to think of the challenges facing Treasure revealers and their communities at the time. Here we are again reminded of the doubt coming from outside the Treasure tradition about the authenticity of their revelation at this time, and the need to legitimize these revelations as authoritative teachings coming from enlightened buddhas.<sup>505</sup> While the previous chapter analyzed the literary strategy of emulating the canonical format of dialogue used in Treasure texts, this chapter argues that the discourse of consortship as more than “just having sex” serves a similar purpose. Because of the centrality of sexual union (or access to the enlightened plane provided by sexual union) in Treasure revelation, the type of sex that will bring about enlightened experience must be defended and set apart from regular intimacy, which does not benefit Treasure activity. Because tantric sexuality is embodied in the relationship with a consort, it is also necessary to assign exalted qualities to her and making her a virtuous and independent agent in the act of revelation.

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<sup>505</sup> Gyatso 1993 and Doctor 2005 (31-38) both discuss skepticism toward the authenticity of revealed Treasure from the thirteenth century onward.

Moreover, in thinking about the audience for this discourse, one should keep in mind that a purist vision, or an argument defending a is not b, suggests that there exist counterarguments saying the opposite. As a group of largely lay practitioners, the Treasure community must have felt the need to defend themselves in the face of growing institutionalized monasticism.<sup>506</sup> It is worthwhile to consider the context in which one needs to defend the elaborate, prolonged ritual use of sexual union. It is not necessary to explain to people who are not doing these practices, in other words, those who are not religious professionals. However, Treasure revealers do need to defend sexual practice as a legitimate way to enlightenment to fellow Buddhists from other schools, who may be skeptical of the relationship between sexual union and revelation. This is because this defense not only justifies consort relationship in general, but also proves the validity of Treasure teachings.

In the end, a theory of Treasure consortship is constructed based on the consort's relationship with fellow practitioners, and the Treasure tradition's relationship with other schools of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>507</sup> A Buddhist consort is independent of secular entanglements and virtuous because of her renunciation. At the same time, she is interdependent in her role as tantric companions and carries a special significance in the process of Treasure revelation. The stories of Yeshe Tsogyel and Mandarava should not be read as field reports of the actual lives of Tibetan Buddhist women,

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<sup>506</sup> Wedemeyer (2013, 177-181) argues the audience of antinomian tantric discourses are, contrary to common beliefs, not wandering tantrikas living in forests and charnel grounds, but professional renunciants living within the confine of monasteries. While his discussion focuses primarily on transgressive practices of consumption (i.e. eating the "five meats" and drinking the "five ambrosias," all of which are forbidden, impure, or ritually transgressive substances) and does not pertain to sexual practice, it does remind us of the need to defend one's practice usually takes place between religious professionals.

<sup>507</sup> My thinking of the relational aspect of consortship benefitted from John Strong's theorization of Buddhist queenship. Strong 2003, 48-51.

either in the eighth century during Padmasambhava's visit, or in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, when these stories were discovered and circulated. What they could represent is a picture of the ideal female practitioner that was meaningful to the Treasure revealers at this time. This ideal woman is endowed with many superb abilities and gifted with the optimal circumstance for her practice, such as a wealthy or noble family, high moral standards, strong devotion, and last but not the least, physical perfection. Being an achievable (if extremely rare) example of female enlightenment, she inspires those who hope to set on the tantric path with her tales of severe difficulties and extraordinary attainments. On the other hand, she also symbolizes an object of sublimated sexual desire that brings about liberation and revelation.

In the particular case of Yeshe Tsogyel, having left home to practice, she realized her role as the predestined companion of Padmasambhava and further emanated in the form of *ḍākinīs* or *khandromas* to help future Treasure revealers to decode their revelations. We have left the connections between a consort as a *khandroma* untouched in this chapter; in the next chapter, I will address the multivalent term of *khandroma*, and what she means for the Treasure tradition.

## CHAPTER FOUR KHANDROMA YESHE TSOGYEL

[Padmasambhava] stayed in Tibet for one hundred and eleven years. Three years after Ogyen's arrival at Tibet, Tsogyel became his disciple and served him until he left for the Southwest. At a young age, she was able to subdue those with perverse views. Before reaching adulthood, her mind already settled in the equanimity of bliss and emptiness.

Ultimately, she reached enlightenment and became none other than Ḍākinī Samantabhadrī.<sup>508</sup>

Yeshe Tsogyel becomes a Ḍākinī or khandroma at the end of the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*.

But just what is a khandroma? And why does she become one? Is she one of the five-colored women who surrounded her mother when she was pregnant?<sup>509</sup> Or is it the khandroma in the *Extensive Life*, who came when she expressed her wish to leave home, and asked her if she would like to choose the householder path or the renunciant path?<sup>510</sup>

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<sup>508</sup> DK1, 260: *bod du mi lo brgya dang bcu gcig gi bar du bzhugs/ mtsho rgyal gyis o rgyan bod yul du chags phebs nas/ mi lo gsum song nas/ chags phyir bsnyegs tel/ lho nub tu ma byon bar du zhabs tog mdzad dol/ gzhon nu'i dus su log rtog gi bdud btul/ lang tsho dar ba'i gong la bde stong du mnyam par bzhag/ mthar thug mkha' 'gro kun tu bzang mo dang gnyis su med par sangs rgyas so//*

<sup>509</sup> When Yeshe Tsogyel's mother was one-month pregnant, her waking, dreaming, and visionary experiences were said to be filled with khandromas. White khandromas bathed her; blue khandromas scattered flowers; yellow khandromas offered her drinks; red khandromas put adornments on her; and green khandromas circumambulated her. See, for example, DK1, 182.

<sup>510</sup> NTGP, 11a.

The khandroma is a “notoriously elusive” term in Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>511</sup> Its meaning ranges from a female divinity that can either bless you with enlightened wisdom, cause serious harm to you, or even eat you alive. The khandroma has already crept into our discussion of consorts in the previous chapter—she is sometimes a synonym for a tantric consort. The term can also be used to refer to a human woman with exceptional abilities or supernatural connections. For example, a highly achieved Buddhist practitioner, an esteemed female master, or a female oracle can all be referred to as a khandroma. To make matters more complicated, in colloquial uses, khandromas can refer to anyone from a haughty woman, a muse in artistic and literary creation, to simply a joking way to call someone’s lady friend.

Yeshe Tsogyel is referred to by many epithets, the most common being *mkha’ ’gro* or *ḍākkī* (a corrupt form from the Sanskrit *ḍākinī*). It is in the titles of many of her *Lives*; she is called a khandroma when summoned for empowerment, supplicated for teaching and protection, or brought up in narratives about the Treasure’s origins. Being a khandroma is the part of her identity that lives on in the memories of Tibetan Buddhists. This chapter deals with this aspect of Yeshe Tsogyel that is celebrated and remembered in posterity, when she has surpassed the mortal stage. In the end of her *Life*, she attained the enlightened status through her practice, a transformation that all subjects in a *Life* has to go through, as the *Life* is in itself an account of complete liberation. In the first section, “Who Is a Khandroma,” I begin with Indian *ḍākinīs*, the backdrop against

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<sup>511</sup> Herrmann-Pfandt 1992 remains the most comprehensive source to date on *ḍākinīs* in the Indo-Tibetan context. A summary of her findings is also presented in English in Herrmann-Pfandt 1992-3. Willis 1989b, Jacoby 2014, and Gayley 2017 all contain significant discussion of *ḍākinī* or khandromas in the Tibetan religious context. Jacoby and Gayley also deal with the particular context of khandroma’s role in Treasure revelations, although at a much later time than the current discussion.

which Tibetan khandromas emerge. I then trace the rising trajectory of the khandroma's prominence in Nyingma literature, and describe the particular typologies of khandromas and their significance for the Treasure tradition. The next section moves on to reading the many stories of khandromas as myth. Specifically, myth as a narrative device that comes in to mediate and negotiate paradoxical or even impossible accounts of women, a place "where philosophy proves inadequate" and doctrinal exegesis falls flat.<sup>512</sup> I argue that the identity of a khandroma is used to strategically negotiate the problematic apotheosis of women,<sup>513</sup> because her indeterminate nature provides a space for women to be both powerful yet subdued, to be active but interdependent, and to be venerated but not for her physical femininity.

#### **4.1 Defining the Khandroma**

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<sup>512</sup> In my reading of the identity of Yeshe Tsogyel (and of many other Tibetan Buddhist women) as khandromas, I am in particular inspired by Wendy Doniger's reading of the mythology of Śiva. She has commented on the role of myth as mediating the inconsistencies in metaphysical arguments and supplementing the inadequacies of philosophies in explaining the impossible. For her, it is not what myths *are* (that is, an analysis of the events, elements, or images), but what they *do* that remains important for scholars. Doniger 1969a, 301-306.

A similar understanding of the dialectical structure of myth to be serving the function of mediating or solving contradictions, not only within the story itself, but also in "basic premises of the culture" as well as social relationships, is shared in Douglas 1967, 52, 57.

<sup>513</sup> It is not a new phenomenon in Buddhism that a woman's apotheosis almost always proves to be more problematic than that of a man. I discuss the different attitude toward female enlightenment in 4.2. "The Khandroma Myth."

We begin with the Indian Buddhist *ḍākinīs*. According to a well-known “alliterative etymology” of the Sanskrit word. The *ḍākinī* is associated with the verb form  $\sqrt{\text{ḍā}}$  or  $\sqrt{\text{ḍī}}$ , which means “to fly.”<sup>514</sup> The *Sarvabuddhasamayayogaḍākinījākasamvara-nāma-uttaratantra* defines the *ḍākinī* as follows:

*Ḍā* means sky travel, and she who is directly realized in space, that is, who has achieved [the ability] to range all throughout the sky, is called the *ḍākinī*. She who is united with all buddhas by means of all *mudrā* without exception and the great bliss of all without exception is known as the *ḍākinī*. She who is the *ḍākinī* is composed of the buddha elements. The *ḍākinī* who is the self of all buddhas has achieved [the ability to] go everywhere.<sup>515</sup>

This etymology is carried on to the Tibetan translation. A *khandroma*, in the Tibetan etymology, is someone who traverses (*'gro*) the space (*mkha'*) of reality with the force of insight and wisdom.<sup>516</sup> The space is also commonly associated with or glossed as the teaching on emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*, Tib. *stong pa nyid*) and the realization of the phenomenal world as empty of self

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<sup>514</sup> Alliterative etymology in the South Asian context is a common strategy that provides syllabic exegeses or analogies to key terms in a text. This etymological explanation is not necessarily based on precise philological knowledge. The difference between alliterative and folk etymology is that the inventors of such alliterative etymology are aware of the grammatical and linguistic aspects of said word, but choose to take the creative power of speech and language seriously and delve into the mystical, hidden connections between words that share a similar sound or words that can be divided into and glossed by its syllabic parts. For example, the word *mantra* is glossed in the following way: “[a]s a result of contemplation (*mananat*), it preserves (*trayate*) (a person), therefore it is called ‘mantra’.” Yelle 2003, 45-47. In the tantric context in particular, owing to the power of language and analogy, alliterative etymologies prove to be a rich venue where creative interpretations or even the creation of new texts and practices take shape.

<sup>515</sup> Translation by David Gray (2007, 85-86). He also discusses in detail the presence of women in the context of Buddhist tantra (77-101).

<sup>516</sup> For example, NTGP 255-256: *chos nyid mkha' la rig pa ye shes shugs kyis 'gro/*



nature. For example, in a section titled “Teaching on Different Types of Khandromas and the Extent of Their Activities” (*Mkha’ ’gro ma’i las kyi mtha’ mkha’ ’gro ma’i bye brag bstan pa*), the *Great Penetrating Sound Tantra* offers the following alliterative glossary:

Kha (*mkha’*) means expanse; Dro (*’gro*) means insight; Ma (*ma*) means the reality of the Dharma. As for the extent of her activity, there are two [levels], ordinary and supreme. On the supreme level, it is the inseparability of the three—expanse, wisdom, and reality of the Dharma. If we differentiate within the ordinary level, it is too numerable to speak of. Of the one thousand and two enlightened activities of the khandroma, here in particular I only provide a brief discussion.<sup>517</sup>

The khandroma thus comes to represent the enlightened female principle and the female body a superior vehicle for Buddhist practice:

This body with which you are endowed is [the body] of a great female bodhisattva, the mother who gives birth to all Conqueror-Buddhas. It is the chariot that travels the Stage and the Path; it is the feminine foundation that enhances all those who uphold the sutras and tantras. Like the sources of river meeting on the snowy peak, owing to your compassion, you travel (*’gro*) from the expanse (*mkha’*) of the Great Secret Mother to the realm of emptiness. Your body is the ultimate source of *samsāra* and *nirvāna*. Therefore, this physical support [of your body] is the superior [vehicle to] benefit beings.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> *Snga ’gyur bka’ ma shin tu rgyas pa* 2009, vol.107, 411-412: *mkha’ dbyings/ ’gro rig pa/ ma’i chos nyid de’i las kyi mtha’ thun mong dang mchog gnyis/ de yang mchog gi dbying rig pa/ chos nyid sum dbyer med pa’o// thun mong du dbye na brjod kyi [sic] mi langs ba ni/ mkha’ ’gro ma’i mdzod stong rtsa gnyis las khyad par du ’dir mdor bsdus nas ni bshad par bya zhes pa ste/*

Interestingly, here the commentator of the *Great Penetrating Sound Tantra* continued not with the promised discussion on the general activities of a khandroma, but a series of instructions on the profound connection (*rten ’brel zab mo*) and different use of ritual substances and instruments. These instructions do not seem to be connected to the khandromas (or is everything considered to be within the limits of her activity?).

<sup>518</sup> *Se ra mkha’ ’gro Kun bzang bde skyong dbang mo* 2009, 146-147: *lus ldan gyi lus ’di sems ma chen mo rgyal kun bskyed pa’i yum/ sa lam bsgrod pa’i shing rta/ mdo sngags ’dzin pa’i skyes*

In this expanded definition, the khandroma is equated with the feminine in general, it is the female bodhisattva and the mother of all buddhas. It is the feminine foundation for all practitioners, like the glacier is the source for all rivers. It even hails the female body as superior in benefitting beings. The khandroma has taken over other female divinities, and become a uniquely Tibetan phenomenon. The complexity of her activities also resists a clear definition, making the khandroma a grab bag term for virtually any Buddhist women.

In the next two sections, I first go back to the *ḍākinī*, the Indian precedent for Tibetan khandromas. This discussion is followed by an analysis of the appearance of female deities and spirits in non-Nyingma and Nyingma, canonical and extra-canonical sources. By juxtaposing these sources, I show how the khandroma came to outshine all other female entities and become the central female figure in the Nyingma (and in particular Terma) pantheon.

#### 4.1.1 Indian Precedents

*Ḍākinīs* are considered a group of non-human or other-human female beings. They are usually associated with demonic behaviors, flesh-eating habits, and some forms of supernatural abilities, most common among which is flying. The earliest mention of *ḍākinī* is found in about 250 BC, in

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*bu spel ba'i gzhi ma/ chu mgo gangs la thug pa bzhin/ stong dbyings gsang chen yum gyi mkha' klong nas chos nyid kyi mkha' la/ thugs rje'i shugs kyis 'gro zhing 'khor 'das gnyis kyi 'byung gnas dam pa yin pas/ khyed kyi lus rten 'di'i 'gro don lhag go//* The message of the female body being a superior vehicle for practice in this passage is also discussed in Jacoby 2009a, 132.

a commentary on Pāṇinī by Kātyāṭana, although no definition of the word is given. Living in haunted locations like the charnel ground, ḍākinīs are known for their ferocious nature and their harmful activities in folk talks and collections of stories.<sup>519</sup>

Ḍākinīs also frequent Buddhist literature. The early evidence of ḍākinīs in Buddhist sources falls under the category of demons and outcast beings. The kingdom of Uḍḍiyāna or Oḍḍiyāna (possibly today's Swat Valley in Pakistan; this is also said to be Padmasambhava's birth place) is considered the land of the ḍākinīs.<sup>520</sup> In the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, a ḍākinī is usually found among the ilk of ogres (*rākṣasa* or *srin po*), tree spirits (*yakṣa* or *gnod sbyin*), flesh-eating demons (*piśāca* or *sha za mo*), or ghosts (*bhūta* or *'byung po*).<sup>521</sup> This sentiment is also preserved in the East Asian context through the translation of Buddhist texts.<sup>522</sup>

In the tantric imagination, ḍākinīs are a group of semi-divine, ferocious beings who dwell in sinister places like charnel grounds and eat human flesh. Before they have assumed significance

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<sup>519</sup> For example, Somadeva Bhaṭṭa's *Kathāsaritsāgara* mentions ḍākinīs who frequent the charnel grounds. They serve as attendants to Mahākāla, a form of Śivabhairava. Herrmann-Pfandt 1992-3, 48n22.

<sup>520</sup> This is attested in Indian as well as Tibetan source, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Tucci 1977, 25n26, Herrmann-Pfandt 1992-3, 46-47. The twelfth chapter of the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava* provides a description of the Uḍḍiyāna, O rgyan gling pa 1987, 93-96. In the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, Padmasambhava also mentions that he himself has come from Ogyen, the land of ḍākinīs, for example, DK1, 210.

<sup>521</sup> Gray 2005, 50-51.

<sup>522</sup> Ibid., 68n90.

as the female pole in *Yoginī tantra* practices, they are considered the object of subjugation.<sup>523</sup> Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* mentions a popular class of tantra called the *ḍākinī* or *bhaginī* tantras that are known for their transgressive elements, such as violent acts, sexual intercourse, and consumption of impure substances.<sup>524</sup> One text from this *Yoginītantra* category, the *Cakrasamvara Tantra*, presents a somewhat ambivalent attitude toward these female beings. *Ḍākinī* span the possibilities of being human or non-human, benevolent and malevolent. They exist in concrete or immaterial forms, and are considered all-pervasive.<sup>525</sup> They serve as companions to the aspiring practitioner, offering him encoded messages, and need to be summoned and pleased by ritual offerings.<sup>526</sup> Compared to the initial strategy of subjugating these ferocious female beings, as evidenced in the *Mahāvairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra* and other earlier tantras, in later tantras, the *ḍākinī* no longer represent a hostile force that needs to be suppressed or violently subjugated. Rather, she has been included into the Buddhist pantheon and become a friendly force, a process of reencoding "suspect entities or practices" familiar in Buddhist conversion narratives.<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>523</sup> For example, the fourth chapter of *Mahāvairocana-Abhisambodhi Tantra* lists a mantra associated with overpowering the *ḍākinīs*. *Bka' 'gyur (sde dge dpar ma)*, vol.86, 180a: *namaḥsamantābuddhānāṃ hrī haḥ/ mkha' 'gro ma rnams kyi'o/*. For an English translation, see Buddhaguhya 2003, 163.

<sup>524</sup> Gray 2005, 52. For the Sanskrit original, see Gnoli 1960, 163.

<sup>525</sup> Gray 2007, 90-92.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 289, 323, 367.

<sup>527</sup> Gray 2005, 58-60.

In the greater Buddhist tantric world, the ḍākinī remains among the ranks of other female entities. In the yoginī-tantras, the ḍākinī and the yoginī are frequently discussed together and somewhat interchangeable.<sup>528</sup> However, it is in the Treasure tradition that the ḍākinī (or, at this time, its Tibetan form, the khandroma) rises to become the singular female presence in the Tibetan Buddhist world. Their presence is no longer overshadowed by other female deities. The khandroma permeates Treasure literature, in narratives, rituals, instructions, and histories. The next section will explore the prevalence of khandromas, the highly Buddhicized typology of these female beings, and their overall significance in the Tibetan Treasure context.

#### ***4.1.2 Tibetan Developments: Khandroma in the Nyingma Religious Landscape***

While ḍākinīs and yoginīs remain largely identical in the yoginī-tantras in India and their subsequent transmission to Tibet, since the religious renaissance in Tibet, and in the Nyingma world in particular, the ḍākinī's importance has grown even more significantly. The Tibetan khandroma has become the Buddhist goddess par excellence. In this section, I first compare the overall literary presence of female spirits and deities in three collections of Buddhist writings across canonical and extra-canonical categories as well as Nyingma and non-Nyingma denominations. I then move on to a discussion of the Nyingma taxonomy of different types of

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<sup>528</sup> In his extensive review of female goddesses in Buddhism and Śaivism, Hatley (2016) discusses the overlap of definition between these two types of goddesses. In the Śaiva Vidyāpīṭha and Kaula materials, ḍākinīs are sometimes listed as a subcategory under yoginī. The rise of ḍākinī as a benevolent force reflects the “assimilation” of hostile spirits and deities in the Buddhicization of non-Buddhist/Śaiva practices. In fact, the title of the article, “Converting the Ḍākinī: Goddess Cults and Tantras of the Yoginīs between Buddhism and Śaivism,” already hints at the ambiguity and inseparability between the two terms.

khandromas and how khandromas take on a distinctly Buddhist flavor in these sources. I argue that the khandromas occupy a special space in the Nyingma literary imagination and consist of a crucial link in the transmission of Treasure teachings, a role most aptly represented by the archetypal khandroma, Yeshe Tsogyel. The many possible emanations of a khandroma also make for a particularly elusive and ambivalent identity, which will be the topic for the next section, “The Khandroma Myth.”

#### 4.1.2.1 The Rise of the Khandroma

Buddhist literature abounds with female spirits, demonesses, and deities of various kind. The *ḍākinī* in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism remains a minor deity. In her malevolent form, she is commonly found alongside a pantheon of female spirits with Indian roots, like the serpent demoness (*nāgī/nāgiṇī*, *klu mo* or *sa bdag klu mo*), the corpse-Raising demoness (*vetālī*, *phra man*),<sup>529</sup> the tree spirits (*yakṣī*, *gnod sbyin mo*), the ogress (*rakṣaṣī*, *srin mo*), the mamo or mother demoness (*mātrkā/mātarī*, *ma mo*), or the dre (*'dre*) and *dūd* (*bdud*) demonesses local to Tibet.<sup>530</sup> In her

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<sup>529</sup> *Vetāla* or *phra man* are one type of demon and demoness whose power lies in raising corpses and manipulating their movements. For a study on *vetālas*, see Huang 2009.

<sup>530</sup> The dre demoness is usually considered a female ghost or a spirit; it is also used as a derogatory remark for shrewd women. *Dūd* is a pre-Buddhist Tibetan term used to refer to demons and is later used to translate the demon *Māra* in Indian mythology, who is said to have created various obstacles to the Buddha's enlightenment. Local *dūd* demonesses are usually associated with natural elements and cardinal directions. The Earth (*sa*) *Dūd* is in the east; the Wind (*rlung*) *Dūd* north; the Fire (*me*) *Dūd* south; and the Water (*chu*) *Dūd* west. Sometimes the God (*lha*) *Dūd* is added at the center; see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993.

benevolent form, she stands next to the goddess (*devī*, *lha mo*), Tārā (Sgrol ma), and the yoginī (*rnal 'byor ma*) as non-human women who assist and benefit practitioners.

In the Nyingma literature (and in Treasure texts in particular), the khandroma rose above all other forms of benevolent and malevolent female spirits and became the single most important goddess. Her growing presence through the fourteenth century is compared to other goddesses or demonesses is documented in three collections of Buddhist writings (fig. 24): the canonical collection of Kangyur and Tengyur, the Nyingma canon of the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* (*Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum*),<sup>531</sup> and the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa.<sup>532</sup> These three collections are examples of a collection of non-Nyingma, canonical literature, a collection of classical Nyingma canonical literature (with parts of it being revealed Treasure), and a collection of Nyingma writings from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries with a heavy Treasure presence.

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<sup>531</sup> The beginning of the redaction of the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* may be traced back to as early as the eleventh century, possibly as a response to the canon-making efforts that excludes Nyingma texts. The redaction process largely concluded by the sixteenth century, although different versions of this collection were continually being produced. For an introduction to the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients*, see Germano 2002.

<sup>532</sup> The three digitized version used here are the Derge Kangyur (<http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/canons/kt/catalog.php#cat=d/k>) and Tengyur (<http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/canons/kt/catalog.php#cat=d/t>), the Peltsek (Dpal brtsegs) edition of the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* (*Rnying rgyud* 2015, also at <http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/canons/ngb/catalog.php#cat=ng>) and the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa (Dri med 'od zer 2009, also at <http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/lccw/catalog.php>). I thank David Germano for sharing with me the digitized versions of these three sets of texts.

The *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa is a problematic title, as it contains many works not composed or revealed by Longchenpa, for example, the *Seminal Heart of Vimalamitra* and the *Seminal Heart of the Khandromas*. Therefore, it is best seen as not an anthology associated with a single Treasure revealer, but a collection of Treasure writings representative of doctrinal and ritual innovations from the thirteenth to the fourteenth centuries.





TYPES OF FEMALE SPIRITS OR DEITIES		OCCURRENCES IN THE KANGYUR AND TENGYUR	OCCURRENCES IN THE COLLECTED TANTRAS OF THE ANCIENTS	OCCURRENCES IN THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF LONGCHENPA
<b>DEMONESS OR GENERALLY MALEVOLENT FEMALE SPIRITS</b>	Dre Demoness ('dre mo or mo 'dre)	2	10 <sup>533</sup>	4
	Düd Demoness (bdud mo)	10	456	8
	Nāgī/Nāgiñī or Serpent Demoness (klu mo or sa bdag klu mo)	56	181	8
	Vetālī or Corpse-Raising Demoness (phra man)	2	11	0
	Yakṣī or tree spirits (gnod sbyin mo)	94	42	5
	Rakṣaṣī or Ogress (srin mo)	141	825	23
	Mātrkā/Mātarī or Mother Demonesses/Goddesses (ma mo)	326	3116 <sup>534</sup>	102
<b>GODDESS OR GENERALLY BENEVOLENT FEMALE SPIRITS</b>	Devī or Goddess (lha mo)	1288	1875	143
	*Śrī devī or Palden Lhamo (Dpal ldan lha mo)	8	43	1
	Tārā or Drolma (sgrol ma)	267	234	65
	Samantabhadrī	3	289	49
	Sarasvatī	8	10	48
	Yoginī (rnal 'byor ma)	185	246	51

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<sup>533</sup> 3 occurrences for 'dre mo and 7 for mo 'dre.

<sup>534</sup> The spike of number of references to the Mother Demonesses/Goddesses in the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* can be explained by the fact that volumes 30 and 31 of this collection are dedicated to practices surrounding this type of goddess. They are respective titled *Tantras of the Great Accomplishments of the Protectress*, *Great Instructions of the Mother Goddesses on the Dispelling of Saṃsāra* (*Ma mo srid pa'i rdzong lung chen mo yum bzung ma'i dngos grub chen mo'i rgyud rnams*) and *Collected Root Tantras of the Mother Goddesses, Section on Thig [le]* (*Ma mo rtsa ba'i rgyud 'bum t[h]ig gi skor*). Blondeau 2002 provides a study of the Mother Demonesses in this collection.

TYPES OF FEMALE SPIRITS OR DEITIES	OCCURRENCES IN THE KANGYUR AND TENGYUR	OCCURRENCES IN THE COLLECTED TANTRAS OF THE ANCIENTS	OCCURRENCES IN THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF LONGCHENPA
Dākinī or Khandroma ( <i>mkha' 'gro</i> , <i>mkha''gro ma</i> , and variant spellings) <sup>535</sup>	418	2430	955
<i>mkha' 'gro</i>	382	2420	905
<i>mkha' 'gro ma</i>	211	751	196
<i>dā ki</i>	36	0	50
<i>ḍa ki</i>	0	30	0
Worldly Khandromas ( <i>'jig rten gyi mkha' 'gro</i> and <i>'jig rten mkha' 'gro</i> )	1	21	8
Flesh-Eating Khandromas ( <i>sha za mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>sha za'i mkha' 'gro</i> )	0	7	5
Wisdom Khandromas ( <i>ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>ye shes mkha' 'gro</i> )	6	96	40
Mantra-born Khandroma ( <i>sngags skyes kyi mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>sngags skyes mkha' 'gro</i> )	0	0	0
Sacred-realm Khandroma ( <i>zhing skyes kyi mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>zhing skyes mkha' 'gro</i> )	0	0	0
Coemergent Khandroma ( <i>lhan skyes kyi mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>lhan skyes mkha' 'gro</i> )	0	0	1
Khandromas of the Five Families ( <i>rigs lnga mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>mkha' 'gro rigs lnga</i> )	0	1	3
Vajra Khandroma ( <i>rdo rje mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>rdo rje'i mkha' 'gro</i> )	51	226	43
Ratna Khandroma ( <i>rin chen mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>rin chen gyi mkha' 'gro</i> )	5	26	34

<sup>535</sup> Here I have combined the occurrences for *mkha' 'gro*, *dā ki*, *ḍa ki*, and *dā ki*. See the last row of this table for the numbers of occurrences for the male counterpart of a khandroma, the *dāka* or *dpa' bo*. While the term khandro could in theory refer to male *dākas* and female *dākinīs*, in actual usage it is most frequently used to refer to female khandromas. The term “male and female khandros” (*mkha' 'gro pho mo*) only appeared three times in the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* and none in the Kangyur, Tengyur, or the *Collected Writings of Longchenpa*.

TYPES OF FEMALE SPIRITS OR DEITIES		OCCURRENCES IN THE KANGYUR AND TENGYUR	OCCURRENCES IN THE COLLECTED TANTRAS OF THE ANCIENTS	OCCURRENCES IN THE COLLECTED WRITINGS OF LONGCHENPA
*MALE SPIRITS AND DEITIES	Lotus Khandroma ( <i>padma mkha' 'gro</i> or <i>padma'i mkha' 'gro</i> )	0	0	3
	Karma Khandroma ( <i>las kyi mkha' 'gro</i> )	1	70	39
	Buddha Khandroma ( <i>sangs rgyas mkha' 'gro</i> )	9	10	21
	Ḍāka (the male equivalent of a khandroma, <i>dpa' bo</i> ) <sup>536</sup>	745	1341	234

Figure 24 Female Spirits or Deities in Three Collections of Buddhist Writings

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<sup>536</sup> While in theory, the word khandro can be gender neutral, a khandroma or a khandro is almost always female. The *dpa' bo* or *ḍāka*, the male counterpart of a khandroma might have received more attention in the the Kangyur and Tengyur; such is not the case in the Nyingma literature (we also need to take into consideration the case in which the word *dpa' bo* is used in its general sense of a heroic person or a warrior; the same concern does not apply to the word *mkha' 'gro*). The Sanskrit form *ḍāka* only appears once in the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* and not in the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa at all; therefore, I only count the occurrences of *dpa' bo* in these three collections. In both Nyingma collections, the female khandroma outweighs her male companion.

In the Kangyur and Tengyur that contains both exoteric and esoteric texts translated into Tibetan, ḍākinīs or khandromas make frequent appearances, but much less so than in the Nyingma literature, as evidenced in the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* and the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa.<sup>537</sup> Of the terms listed above, the most commonly invoked goddess in the non-Nyingma canon is the generic lhamo. Other goddesses, such as the khandroma, mamu, Drolma, and neljorma are all regularly mentioned. These are generally Buddhist (and benevolent) goddesses, whereas non-Buddhist or malevolent demonesses are talked about to a lesser extent. In Nyingma sources, the khandroma exceeds the lhamo goddess and all other goddesses in number of occurrences (except for the mamu or mother goddesses in the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients*, where tantras with her as the central deity dominate two entire volumes). The khandroma's prominence is even more pronounced in the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa, where she appears close to a thousand times; the lhamo and the mother goddess only appear 143 and 102 times respectively. While the yoginī or neljorma remains a familiar face in canonical sources (both Nyingma and non-Nyingma), her importance is cut back drastically compared to that of the khandroma in the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa. Unlike in the Indian yoginī- or ḍākinī-tantras, in this context, the khandroma is differentiated from and eclipses the neljorma.

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<sup>537</sup> In terms of their respective size, the Derge version of Kangyur and Tengyur contain three hundred and sixteen volumes; the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* span fifty-seven volumes; while the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa have only twenty-six volumes. Therefore, a comparison of the number of occurrences of these female deities and spirits needs to account for the difference in scale.

Another two Buddhist goddesses that became more important for the Nyingma tradition is Samantabhadrī (Kun tu bzang mo) and Sarasvatī (Dbyangs can ma). While their names are rarely brought up in the Kangyur and the Tengyur, Samantabhadrī and Sarasvatī are noticeably more important in the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* and the *Collected Writings* of Longchenpa. Sarasvatī is the goddess of arts and learning; she is also the consort to the god Brahmā. Yeshe Tsogyel is commonly considered an emanation of Sarasvatī.<sup>538</sup> Samantabhadrī is venerated as the female embodiment of wisdom and as the female counterpart to Samantabhadra, who is particularly favored in the Great Perfection tradition in the Nyingma School. She is also the Dharma Body of Yeshe Tsogyel, as is commonly seen in homages to her in the beginning of her *Lives*.<sup>539</sup>

When comparing the various types of female spirits and deities in Buddhist literature, it becomes clear that the main concern of Nyingma writings has shifted from generic Buddhist goddesses to a few female deities of special importance to the tradition. The mamo or mother goddess retains a special importance in their ritual roles, but the khandroma is the most influential and appears most frequently. She has replaced the lhamo, the neljorma, and even Tārā in terms of literary weight

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<sup>538</sup> The identification of Yeshe Tsogyel with Sarasvatī can be found in Nyangrel's *Copper Island Biography*, Ogyen Lingpa's the *Chronicle of Padmasambhava*, the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa *Life* (see Appedix I), the later Taksham *Life*, and virtually all other life stories of Yeshe Tsogyel that come after it.

<sup>539</sup> For example, DK1, 181 (*bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lol*); this is shared by most texts in the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa corpus, see Appendix I for the different incipits across all versions) and NTGP, 3a (*dang po ye grol chos dbyings kun bzang mol 'gro ba'i don la thugs rjes mnyes mdzad pa*)).

and becomes *the* goddess for Tibetan Buddhists. In the next section, I move on to examine the internal divisions of different types of khandromas.

#### 4.1.2.2 A Taxonomy of Khandromas

Despite the multiple roles played by khandromas in the Nyingma and Terma literature, one cannot easily decipher whether she means benefit or harm upon encountering a khandroma. It is also possible for a malevolent khandroma to transform in to a benevolent one. She can be subjugated by powerful tantric practitioners (such as Padmasambhava), bound under oath (*dam can*), and become a dharma protector.

Distinctions are made between benevolent and malevolent khandromas (fig. 25). The former is usually referred to as wisdom khandroma (Skt. *lokaḍākinī*,<sup>540</sup> Tib. *ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro ma*), signaling her enlightened status and altruistic intention; the latter is known as worldly khandroma (*jñānaḍākinī*, *'jig rten kyi mkha' 'gro*). A particularly frightening subtype of worldly khandroma is the flesh-eating khandroma (*piśācī*, *sha za'i mkha' 'gro ma*). As her name suggests, she consumes human flesh and is perhaps more closely connected with her Indian ḍākinī sisters.

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<sup>540</sup> Note that although Sanskrit equivalents are provided for each type of khandroma here, it does not mean that the classification can be attributed back to Sanskrit sources about ḍākinīs. Rather, the presence of Sanskrit names for the different types of khandromas would be better understood as “Indic” (that is, religious or cultural components that may not find their historical roots in India but are considered “meta-Indian” or “typologically Indian”), not “Indian” (that is, religious or cultural components that do have historical roots in India and are transported into Tibet) elements in the Tibetan Treasure literature. Seyfort Ruegg 2004, 328-329.

Compared to worldly khandromas, wisdom or supramundane khandromas are benevolent and serve the function of guiding and aiding practitioners along their path to enlightenment. Wisdom khandromas appear fairly frequently in both the *Collected Tantras of the Ancients* and the *Collected Writings of Longchenpa*.<sup>541</sup> They are the embodiment of the enlightened mind and have three aspects, or three bodies—the Reality Body (*dharmakāya*, *chos sku*), the Enjoyment Body (*sambhogakāya*, *longs sku*), and the Emanation Body (*nirmāṇakāya*, *sprul sku*). The wisdom khandromas can also be further classified into the four aspects of outer-outer, outer, inner, and secret, also known as mantra-born (*dhāraṇījā-dākinī*, *sngags skyes mkha' 'gro*), sacred-realm (*kṣetrajā-dākinī*, *zhing skyes mkha' 'gro*), coemergent (*sahajā-dākinī*, *lhan skyes mkha' 'gro*), and natural knowledge and primordial gnosis (*rang rig ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro*) (fig. 26). There is also the group of five enlightened khandromas corresponding with the five Buddha Families—Buddha Khandroma (*buddhaḍākinī*, *sangs rgyas mkha' 'gro ma*), Karma Khandroma (*karmaḍākinī*, *las kyi mkha' 'gro*), Vajra Khandroma (*vajraḍākinī*, *rdo rje mkha' 'gro*), Ratna Khandroma (*ratnaḍākinī*, *rin chen mkha' 'gro*), Lotus Khandroma (*padmaḍākinī*, *padma mkha' 'gro*) (fig. 18).<sup>542</sup> Each of the five aspects represented one of the enlightened qualities.

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<sup>541</sup> Another type of khandroma that was regularly evoked is the Vajra Khandroma, to be discussed below.

<sup>542</sup> The Conqueror-Buddhas of the Five Families (*rgyal ba rigs lnga*) are emanations of different aspects or qualities of the enlightened principle, or the Dharma Body. Each Conquer-Buddha also represent a natural element, a color, and a type of wisdom. They are commonly represented in maṇḍalas with Vairocana in the center, Amoghasiddha in the north, Amitābha in the west, Ratnasambhava in the south, and Akṣobhya in the east.

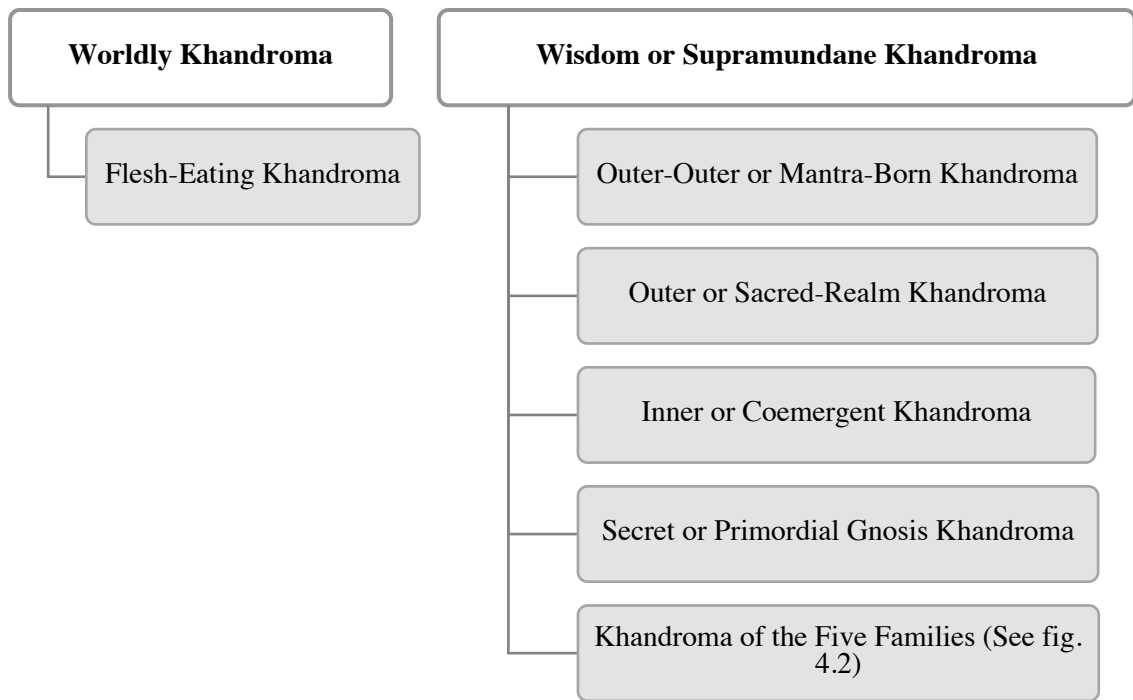


Figure 25      *Typology of Khandroma*

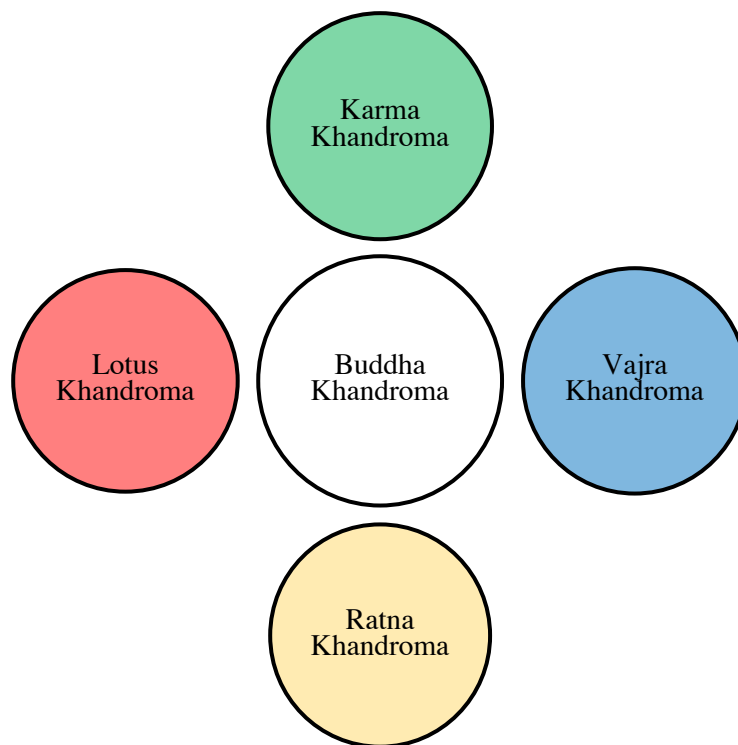


Figure 26      *Khandroma of the Five Families*



The khandromas in Nyingma literature have for a large part shedded the ferocious, menacing aspect of their identity. They are reorganized into Buddhist categories (the outer-outer, outer, inner, and secret; or the five families of Buddha, Ratna, Vajra, Karma, and Lotus) and recast as the most important female persona in the Nyingma lores. Khandromas are recognized as one of the three roots in Nyingma tantric practice, the other two being the guru (*bla ma*) and the tutelary deity (*yi dam*).<sup>543</sup>

The ubiquitous khandroma also serves many functions. In the Treasure context in particular, a khandroma can be a human woman who engages in consort practice or the tutelary deity to be visualized in meditations. Encounters with them take place in daily lives, visions, and dreams.<sup>544</sup> These interactions can be sexual in nature (like what we have witnessed with Nyangrel's interactions with khandromas in the previous chapter), but it is not always the case. Khandromas sometimes praise Treasure revealers in their capacity as lineage holders; on other occasions, they

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<sup>543</sup> The three roots in esoteric Buddhist practices are modelled after the exoteric Buddhist triad of the Three Jewels—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Here, the guru replaces the Buddha, the tutelary deity replaces the Dharma, and the khandroma assume the place of the Sangha. However, there is also a certain degree of fluidity between these three roots, and the khandroma can, in certain cases, take the spot of the guru or even the tutelary deity. Jacoby 2014, 136-137.

<sup>544</sup> Although encounter with khandromas can be found in virtually all types of narratives in Treasure literature, a particularly interesting case can be found in Lelung Zhepai Dorje's (Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1697-1740) *Mirror of Pure Crystal: Accounts of Realization of an Ocean of Khandromas and How They Took Me in* (*Mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rtogs brjod dang rjes su bzung ba'i tshul dwangs shel me long*). In this autobiographical account, Lelung recounts his encounters with hundreds of khandromas, human and non-human, in visions and in real life (Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje n.d.). Sarah Jacoby is preparing a study on this work as a part of the history of sexuality in Tibet.

can manifest in their wrathful forms, scolding their conversation partners before imparting any wisdom.<sup>545</sup> In this section, she traveled from India to Tibet and transformed her identity from a minor South Asian female deity to the quintessential Buddhist goddess for the Nyingmapas. In the next section, the many representations of the Tibetan khandroma and the paradoxical nature of her identity become the subject of our discussion.

## **4.2 The Khandroma Myth**

As the previous section has shown, the khandroma can be many things. She is the site where multiple contradictions are resolved and many differences come together: inferiority and superiority, India and Tibet, benevolence and malevolence, independence and interdependence, and, last but not least, humanity and divinity. How do we understand these contradictions, especially when they seem to reside under the same name? What feelings and reactions does the name elicit? And what kind of influences does the khandroma wield on the human, non-human, male, and female inhabitants of the Tibetan Buddhist world?

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<sup>545</sup> For example, in Guru Chöwang's relationship with khandromas in his Treasure revelation, he was praised by a khandroma as a lineage holder of the Avalokateśvara cycle of teachings, a ferious khandroma he met at Lhodrak also gave him a prophecy with his Treasure revelation. *Ma ñi bka' 'bum chen mo*, 337, 427. Also see Phillips 2004, 305-306.

In solving the ambivalent identity of Śiva, Wendy Doniger has espoused the reading of mythology as serving the purpose of resolving the two paradoxical aspects of his identity, that is, Śiva as the “erotic ascetic.” He is represented as both the chaste yogi who refrains from mundane sexuality and at the same time possessing great power of fertility (and creativity).<sup>546</sup> Unlike stories that are tied up in the concrete, everyday existence, the myth allows its characters to freely “pursue certain solutions impossible in the world of reality.”<sup>547</sup> Along the same vein, I argue that the fuzziness of the term khandroma is used to mitigate the paradoxical aspects of the female identity in Buddhism, foremost among which are the challenges presented by an enlightened woman (who overcame all the disadvantages in practice and her innate inferiority). Her myth negotiates between asceticism and sexuality (discussed in the previous chapter), and between the theological and the social gender.

As a khandroma (and perhaps the most well-known khandroma), Yeshe Tsogyel bears many paradoxes. By making use of the fuzzy meaning of khandroma, I hope to make sense of the role of Yeshe Tsogyel in the many contradictory depictions of her. There are three aspects of the Tibetan concept of khandroma that come to define who Yeshe Tsogyel is in the context of the Treasure tradition. She is, first of all, an exemplary disciple of Padmasambhava. Unlike the demoness who seduced Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and became the progenitrix of the Tibetan people, or the sinmo (srin mo) demoness who was pinned down with temples constructed by King Songtsen Gampo, Yeshe Tsogyel’s relationship with either King Tri Songdetsen or

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<sup>546</sup> Doniger 1969a.

<sup>547</sup> Doniger 1969b, 27.

Padmasambhava was not one of sexual seduction or violent subjugation, but of cordial collaboration and shared pursuit. Even though she shared the identification with the previous two demonesses as representing the land of Tibet, she no longer needs to be tamed. In her role as a messenger to predestined Treasure revealers, the khandroma works as a bridge between the timeless teaching and the contextually bound human beings. She is venerated as the embodiment of wisdom, but the question of her agency (and the larger question of Buddhist women's independency represented by her) remains unresolved. In a later stage of her life, when Yeshe Tsogyel assumed the role as a teacher, she is also affectionately called by the disciples as "mother," despite the fact that she had never married or given birth to children, and that human mothers are dismissed as trapped by inferior emotions and impurities. In all three cases, the theological gender of the feminine as embodiment of wisdom is infused into the disadvantaged social gender, making a complex representation of Buddhist women and female enlightenment.

#### ***4.2.1 The Demoness that No Longer Needs Subjugation: Three Stories***

The previous section has shown us how the Indian *ḍākinīs*, whose nature straddles the benevolent and malevolent, are gradually replaced with largely Buddhicized forms of khandromas, especially the Wisdom and Vajra variety. Among the pantheon of indigenous Tibetan goddesses, a similar process of Buddhicization is also taking place. In a triad of stories about a male Buddhist hero and a Tibetan woman or non-human female, we witness violence and involuntary seduction being replaced by willingness and collaboration.

The first one is the origin myth of the Tibetan people in the *Hundred Thousand Mañi Teachings*, a Treasure cycle that claims to be taught by the first Buddhist king of Tibet, Songtsen Gampo. It is revealed by multiple Treasure revealers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, starting with Druptop Ngödrup and Nyangrel Nyima Özer. Its thirty-fourth chapter recounts the origin myth of the Tibetan people. The Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, having noticed that the land of Tibet is a dark place without the teaching of the Buddha, decided to descend there and benefit the sentient beings. He took an emanation as a king of the monkeys with the name Hanumañju.<sup>548</sup> While the monkey was meditating in the snowy peaks, he was approached by a rock ogress (*srin mo*). This ogress controlled the three regions of Lower Kham (*smad khams*). Driven by her desire, she made all sorts of gestures, circling and supplicating the meditating monkey. Thinking that maybe it was her ogress shape and color that were unpleasant to behold, she even transformed herself into the beautiful form of a human woman. When all else has failed, she threatened to kill all sentient beings in the land of Tibet and turn it into a country of demons, blaming all the negative karma on the bodhisattva who would not help assuaging her desire. After consulting with other bodhisattvas and heavenly beings, the monkey decided that he should marry the ogress and beget offspring. They had six sons, each bearing the characteristics from among the six kinds of transmigrations.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>548</sup> This name is associated with Hanumat, the monkey king in the *Rāmāyāna* who was known for helping King Rāma to rescue his wife Sītā from the demon king Rāvana.

<sup>549</sup> The six transmigrations are: gods (*lha*), demigods (*lha ma yin*), human (*mi*), animal (*dud 'gro*), hungry ghosts (*yi dwags*), and hell beings (*sems can dmyal ba*). The son transmigrating from the realm of gods has a gentle temperament; the son from the realm of demigods likes to fight; the son from the realm of human revel in secular pursuits, the son from the animal realm has extremely limited mental capacities; the son from the hungry ghost realm has a rapacious appetite; and the son from the hell realm was endowed with much acrimony.

All of them had red faces and enjoyed drinking blood and consuming flesh. They multiplied with other female monkeys, and eventually became the ancestor of the Tibetan race.<sup>550</sup>

Also found in the *Hundred Thousand Maṇi Teachings* is another story of how the land of Tibet was transformed into a land of Buddhism. When the Chinese princess Wencheng was on her way to Tibet to marry King Songten Gampo, the wheels of her chariot were stuck in the sand. After performing astrological calculation, she found out that the land of Tibet was in fact a supine demoness laying on her back (fig. 27). The plain of Lhasa was a palace of nāga kings. The lake of Lhasa Öthang ('O thang) was her heart blood; the three small mountains in the middle of Lhasa her two breasts and life vein (*srog rtsa*); and the mountains in the four directions her four limbs.<sup>551</sup> In the following chapter, Songten Gampo erected four district controller temples on both the left and right sides of the demoness's shoulder and hip. On her two elbows and knees he constructed the four wind controlling temples. On her hands and feet he built four further taming temples.<sup>552</sup> By suppressing the demoness who was the land of Tibet, the Buddhist king Songtsen Gampo ensured the spread of Buddhist teachings to every corner of his kingdom and established Tibet as a land of Buddhism.

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<sup>550</sup> *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum* 2013, 87-96, also see Trizin Tsering 2007, 144-151.

<sup>551</sup> *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum* 2013, 310, also see Trizin Tsering 2007, 444.

<sup>552</sup> *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum* 2013, 313-320, also see Trizin Tsering 2007, 449-458.



Figure 27 *Sinmo Demoness of Tibet*

Tibet; 1900-1959; ground mineral pigment on cotton; Rubin Museum of Art; gift of the Shelly & Donald Rubin Foundation; HAR 65719

The myths of these two sinmo demonesses have been analyzed in detail by scholars. Sinmos and sinpos (srin po) are representative of the pre-Buddhist Tibetan national character, the progenitors of the Tibetan people, and the obstructive force in the spread of Buddhism.<sup>553</sup> These stories serve as a symbolic account of Buddhism's conquest of Tibet. The domestication or the subjugation of

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<sup>553</sup> Paul 1982, 152, also see Gianotti 2010. The Sinmo Demonesses are not the only type of pre-Buddhist Tibetan deities who represent the land or earth. In a set of manuscripts associated with funerary rituals, an Earth-Protecting Royal Goddess named Tenma (Sa bdag rgyal mo lha mo brtan ma) is mentioned as the mother goddess who represents the earth or the natural world. Today there is still ethnographical evidence of worship to her in Bhutan and the Himalayas. See, for example, Bellezza 2013, 76-77. Gyatso (1995, 39-41) also discusses the prototype of a mother earth goddess.

the female demon signifies Tibet's conversion to Buddhism. Furthermore, in these two stories, the Tibetan national identity is characterized by its Buddhist conqueror as female and dangerous.<sup>554</sup> These powerful female figures were never fully eradicated. They still have the possibility for transformation into a Buddhist protective deity and then become glorified as the faithful but empowered Buddhist women—like Yeshe Tsogyel.

While the earlier sources about Yeshe Tsogyel's life do not all agree with each other, none of them portray Yeshe Tsogyel as an enemy of the teaching or unrelated to Buddhist activities at the time. She is generally regarded as one of the major disciples of Padmasambhava; her consort activities with him are also recorded. All sources agree that she is a Tibetan woman born in a valley named Drag. Her Tibetan identity remains mostly implicit in these sources (since most actors in these narratives are Tibetan, it is understandable that only non-Tibetan identities are worth spelling out). On some occasions, her connection with the land of Tibet is brought to the fore. In the first chapter of the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, as the princess, she was aggressively sought after by suitors from all directions. She was referred to by the domestic ministers at her father's court as the very essence of the land. The ministers said that if she departed, the essence of the land would be gone.<sup>555</sup> Local people also cried out, repeating the same sentiment.<sup>556</sup> They further stated that if

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<sup>554</sup> Gyatso 1995, 44, also see Mills 2009.

<sup>555</sup> DK1, 183: *gal te spyug na yul gyi bcud rnams nyams/*

<sup>556</sup> Ibid., 184: *bod du mi bzhugs rgya gar btang ba na/ yul khams kun gyi bcud rnams nyams par 'gyur/*



she leaves Tibet, all of the land's merit will go to the barbaric borderlands, and there is no way to rule the kingdom without her virtues.<sup>557</sup>

I would like to call to attention to some shared elements between this triad of narratives. All three myths illustrate the imagined past for Tibetan Buddhists after the Period of Fragmentation (*sil bu'i dus*). They tell different versions of the story of how the land of Tibet interacts with the teachings or teachers of Buddhism. The main personas in these stories are a male Buddhist hero (Avalokiteśvara in the emanated form of Hanumañju, the Dharma king Songtsen Gampo, and Padmasambhava), and a local Tibetan woman, or a non-human female (in the former two cases an ogress, and in the third case Yeshe Tsogyel). For the first two stories in the *Hundred Thousand Mañi Teachings*, the land of Tibet is depicted as female, dangerous, and in need of subjugation (the act of subjugation also contains sexual innuendos). In the third story of Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava, the need to tame or subjugate is no longer there. In this case, as the woman who is connected to the king of Tibet or representing the essence of the land of Tibet, Yeshe Tsogyel is readily offered to the Indian Buddhist master, or she herself willingly sought out to become the disciple and consort of the Indian master. In her case, the demoness is no longer a hostile force, but was transformed into a devout disciple and a partner in the Buddhicization of Tibet.

#### 4.2.2 An Agent Without Agency?

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<sup>557</sup> Ibid.: *bsod nams thams cad mtha' 'khob phyogs su 'bo/ yon tan nyams nas rgyal srid ga la zin/*

In the Chapter Three, I have discussed the goal of consort practice in tantric Buddhism in general and the role of consorts in Treasure revelation in particular. In this function, the consorts (in their human woman form or as a divine being appearing in dreams and visions) are usually also referred to as a khandroma or a messenger (Skt. *dūtī*, Tib. *pho nya ma*), another term for consort in tantra. They offer guidance and encouragement, convey teachings, or provide help in decoding the revealed Treasure texts. Association with them provides Treasure revealers with access to the enlightened wisdom, of which the khandromas are an embodied form. The khandroma in tantric rituals or in Treasure revelations can be understood as a vessel of and a conduit for the transmission of *bodhicitta*, the seminal essence of enlightenment. She is the agent that connects the guru with the disciple and convey the master's blessings, or transformative powers. In a similar fashion, as a khandroma, Yeshe Tsogyel was the messenger through whom Padmasambhava's teachings were delivered to future generations. The master entrusted her with his teachings, she encoded and concealed them all over Tibet, and when the time comes, she would again descend to the mortal plane and reveal them to their destined Treasure revealers.

One of the earliest accounts of Yeshe Tsogyel's activities highlights her role as an intermediary between King Tri Songdetsen and Padmasambhava. This story is found in the religious history of Khepa Dewu from the thirteenth century:

Then [the master] bestowed empowerment to the king, the three emissaries<sup>558</sup>, and the queen, Lady of Kharchen, Tsogyel at the Blue room in Masagong (Ma sa gong) Palace.

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<sup>558</sup> The three emissaries sent to invite Padmasambhava to Tibet are Nanam Dorje Düjom (Sna nam Rdo rje bdud 'joms), Chim Śākyaprabhā ('Chims Śākyaprabhā), and Shüpu Pelgyi Sengge (Shud phu Dpal gyi seng ge).

He said to the queen: “You are the emanation of the White Wisdom ḍakinī—your teeth are like linked conch shells and you even possess completely all the auspicious marks. I am showing you where the realm of Akaniṣṭha is.”

[Tsogyel] went and disappeared for three days. After she came back, the king asked: “Did you see the realm of Akaniṣṭha?” She replied, “I did.” The king said, “That cannot be true. Even the master cannot experience the realm of Akaniṣṭha yet. In order to see the realm of Akaniṣṭha, it requires detachment from the physical aggregates. For now, the master is still accompanied by physical aggregates.” The queen said: “I did see the realm of Akaniṣṭha. There are things like the pure lands of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, and Vaprapaṇi.”

Again, the king said: “That cannot be true. If that’s true, when the four appointed kings sought for my mother, the Chinese princess Wencheng, my mother’s magical mirror Sei Phugchung (Se’i phug chung) was lost to and remains in the hand of the king of war, Trom Gesar (Khrom Ge sar). Please go and bring it back.” As soon as the queen conveyed the message to the master, he entered meditative concentration. Then he reappeared when the king has counted his crystal mala five times.

The king said: “On top of the Mansion of Complete Victory (*rnam par rgyal ba’i khang bzang*) in the realms of the Heaven Belonging to the Thirty-three [Devas] (*sum cu rtsa gsum*) and the Joyous Heaven (*dga’ ldan*), there is the egg of the victorious Garuḍa bird. Please go and bring it back.” The queen conveyed the message to the master, he left. Before the king could start counting his mala, the master returned with the egg of the victorious Garuḍa bird.

Again, the king said: “Deep down the outer ocean, there is a precious wish-fulfilling jewel on top of the head of the Nāga king, who is called Tsukna Rinchen (Gtsug na rin chen). Please go and bring it back.” As soon as the queen conveyed the message to the master, he returned [with the jewel] before the king could start counting his mala. The king was convinced and beseeched the master for his help in building Samye Monastery.<sup>559</sup>

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<sup>559</sup> Mkhas pa lde’u 1987, 347-348: *de nas mnga’ bdag! spyan ’dren mi gsum! jo mo mkhar chen bza’ mtsho rgyal dang lnga lal ma sa gong gi pho brang gi khang sngon du dbang bskur mdzad nas! jo mo mkhar chen bza’ mtsho rgyal lal khyed ye shes kyi mkha’ ’gro ma dkar mo’i sprul par ’dug! so yang dung so ’khor mar yod! mtshan thams cad kyang tshang bar ’dug! khyod la ’og min gyi gnas ston gsungs nas! zhag gsum bzhud nas med! de nas byon nas btsan po na rel khyod kyi’og min gyi gnas mthong ngam gsungs! jo mos mthong gsungs pas! mnga’ bdag gi zhal nas de mi bden! slob dpon gyis kyang da rung ’og min gyi gnas la spyod mi nus! ’og min gyi gnas mthong ba la gzugs kyi phung po la mi chags par bzhed dgos tel slob dpon da rung gzugs kyi phung po dang ’grog! ’dug pa gsungs pas! jo mo’i zhal nas ’og min gyi gnas mthong! kun tu bzang po dang! rdo rje sems dpa’ dang! phyag na rdo rje dang kun gyi zhing khams ’di ltar ’dug byas pas! mnga’ bdag gi zhal nas de mi bden! de bden na sngon bdag gi ma rgya mo ong chung rgyal po sde bzhis ’dod pa’i dus sul khrom ge sar dmag gi rgyal po’i lag tu bdag gi ma’i ’phrul gyi me long se’i phub chung tsam zhig shor nas yod kyi de len du chug dang gsungs pas! de jo*

After Padmasambhava's arrival in Tibet, he needs to establish himself as a respectable and powerful Buddhist teacher in front of the king. In her role as a wisdom khandroma, Yeshe Tsogyel traveled to Akaniṣṭha heaven. When the king raised doubts about the master's skills, she acted as the messenger between the two. Although this brief account does not give an explicit reason as to why she has to be the messenger between the king and the master, it clearly considers her of critical importance in establishing a connection between Padmasambhava the Indian Buddhist master and Tri Songdetsen the Tibetan king.

Here, I do not plan to further recapitulate the consort's role in Treasure revelation, but to reflect on the khandroma as a conduit of knowledge and wisdom, and what it means for our understanding of the theological and social aspects of gender in the Treasure tradition. In her theological gender, the khandroma is the anthropomorphized form of wisdom. The wisdom goddess or the feminine sacred speech is certainly not a Treasure invention. Vāc, the goddess of sacred speech, has been present since Vedic times.<sup>560</sup> Sarasvatī is the goddess of learning and letters (and Yeshe Tsogyel

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*mos slob dpon la brjod pasl de ma thag tu slob dpon gyi ting nge 'dzin gyi bzhud nasl mnga'*  
*bdag gi shel 'phreng lnga 'khor ba dang log nas byung ngoll*

*mnga' bdag gi zhal nas de byung gil sum cu rtsa gsum dga' ldan lha'i yul rnam par rgyal ba'i*  
*khang bzang gi steng nal bya rgyal khyung gi sgo nga yod kyi de len du chug dang byas pasl jo*  
*mos de slob dpon la brjod pasl slob dpon bzhud nasl mnga' bdag shel 'phreng 'dren ma khom*  
*par bya rgyal khyung gi sgo nga lon byung ngoll*

*yang mnga' bdag na re de byung gil phyi'i rgya mtsho'i gting nal klu'i rgyal po gtsug na rin*  
*chen gyi spyi bo'i gtsug na yid bzhin nor bu rin po che gcig yod de len du chug dang byas pasl jo*  
*mos slob dpon la brjod ma thag tul slob dpob gyis rgyal po'i shel 'phreng 'dren ma khom par*  
*lon nas byon pasl mnga' bdag yid ches nasl slob dpon la bsam yas bzhangs ba'i grogs zhu ba*  
*phul barl*

<sup>560</sup> For a study on the history of the sacred Word *vāc*, see Padoux 1990.

is commonly recognized as her emanation). the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition also venerates Prajñāpāramitā, the goddess of Perfection of Wisdom.<sup>561</sup> in the tantric tradition, the ten Vidyā goddesses are also considered sacred knowledge incarnate.<sup>562</sup> In other non-Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist schools, khandromas also come as the messenger of insight.<sup>563</sup> The Nyingma khandromas occupy an exceedingly expansive cultural space. They appear in human and non-human forms on every corner of the street. They are at the same time a divinity and a human woman in the flesh. They have come down from the enlightened plane to interact with mortal beings. The khandromas even cohabit with human Treasure revealers as their wives (Nyangrel Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang), co-practitioners, or disciples (Longchenpa). By connecting (yet) unenlightened practitioners with the timeless teaching lineage over temporal and spatial constraints, the khandromas (and in particular Yeshe Tsogyel) are a key part for Treasure revelation and transmission. Yeshe Tsogyel's (hetero-)sexuality is also an integral part of the khandroma identity and of the emic history of Treasure revelations.

On the other hand, even with the khandroma as a critical link in the logic of Treasure revelation, her status as the intermediary begs the question of how much agency she has, and as a literary symbol, how much power she could give for women who claim her as part of their identity. If we were to seek out an independent woman in every khandroma, it might be a task destined to

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<sup>561</sup> Macy (1977, 319) provides an overview of the worship tradition associated with Prajñāpāramitā, also see Kajiya (1985, 11) for a discussion of her iconographical representations.

<sup>562</sup> For a brief introduction to the iconographical features and variations on the identities of these goddesses, see Kinsley 1997, 9-15.

<sup>563</sup> Willis, 1989b, 62-71.

disappoint. However, if we see the khandroma as an actor in relationship to other actors in a complex network of karma, reincarnation, and interdependency, she certainly wields great power.<sup>564</sup> For Yeshe Tsogyel, her authority and status comes from her divine forms as Samantabhadrī, Sarasvatī, and many other previous births; it also comes from her association with Padmasambhava, with his other disciples, and with later generations of Treasure revealers. She cannot become a khandroma independently, but others would also not be able to achieve what they are destined to do without Yeshe Tsogyel.

#### 4.2.3 *A Childless Mother*

The third paradoxical aspect of Yeshe Tsogyel's identity as a khandroma is that she is frequently referred to as a mother, despite the fact that she never had children.<sup>565</sup> In the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, she was welcomed by wild animals in the forest during her exile, and lived together with them like a mother and her children.<sup>566</sup> After she went down to hell and rescued the evil minister Shantipa, she was praised by Padmasambhava:

You, a fully qualified khandroma  
Are the mother who gives birth to all Conqueror-Buddhas.  
You are the Great Protector Mother of all beings in the six realms,

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<sup>564</sup> Jacoby 2015 discusses the relational agency of a contemporary Tibetan khandroma from Kham, Khandro Rinpoche (b.1954).

<sup>565</sup> The fact that she was never married and did not have children is also cited by Yeshe Tsogyel as part of her identity as a nun, see 3.2, “The Identity: Consorts as Nuns.”

<sup>566</sup> DK1, 200: *ma dang bu'i rnam par 'khor bzhing bsdad do//*

Who is endowed with the magnificent force of all Sugatas.  
 Even for me, Padma[sambhava],  
 My qualities come not from me, but from you!  
 You are indeed the source for all [enlightened] qualities,  
 The bestower of bliss, and the treasury of accomplishments.  
 You have become a knowledge holder with the great accomplishment of spontaneity.  
 You have perfected undefiled [existence] in this life.  
 As long as the pit of saṃsāra remains bustling,  
 The expanse of your emanation will continue to exist  
 In whatever form you take with manifest compassion.  
 You are of the excellent lineage of Samantabhadri,  
 The lady who is encompassed by spontaneous bliss.  
 I applaud you, O peerless khandroma!<sup>567</sup>

In this praise, Yeshe Tsogyel is identified as a khandroma and as the Great Mother who is the source of all enlightened qualities. The act of finding Shantipa and placing him (along with many other hell beings) onto the path of liberation is the first solo act by Yeshe Tsogyel as an accomplished Buddhist teacher. At this stage, she has fully realized her potential in practice and is able to teach and tame independently.

Similarly, in the *Extensive Life*, after Padmasambhava's departure, she remained in Tibet and became the teacher of his disciples. In their supplication to her, she was also referred to as a mother, despite the fact that she did not have any children. Mutri Tsepo (Mu khri btsad po) called her "Precious Tsogyel, the only mother" (*ma gcig mtsho rgyal rin po che*); Nanam Dorje Düjom called

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<sup>567</sup> DK1, 256: *mtshan nyid ldan pa'i mkha' 'gro khyod/ rgyal ba kun rnams bskyed pa'i yum/ bde gshegs kun gyi dpung che ba'il 'gro drug kun gyi byams mgon yum/ bdag 'dra padma'i yon tan kyang/ nga la ma byung khyed la byung/ khyed nyid yon tan kun 'byung mal/ bde bar ster ro dngos grub mdzod/ lhun grub che yi rig 'dzin rnyed/ tshe gcig 'di la zag med rdzogs/ 'khor ba dong nas ma sprugs par/ sprul pa'i zhing khams rgyun mi chad/ mdzad pa'i thugs rjes cir yang sprul/ kun bzang ma yi rigs mchog khyod/ bde chen khun grub 'khyil pa mo/ mtshungs med mkha' 'gro khyod la bstod/*

her “Khandroma Tsogyel, the only mother” (*ma gcig mkha’ ’gro mtsho rgyal*).<sup>568</sup> Other female masters were also regularly praised as mothers, regardless whether they are actual mothers or not. Machig Labdrön was addressed at the beginning of her Life as “the mother, the immortal Wisdom Khandroma.”<sup>569</sup> The first part of her name, *ma gcig*, means “the only mother,” or “the singular mother.” Other eminent Buddhist women who were given the same title include Machig Zhama and Machig Ongjo (*Ma gcig ’ong jo*, ca. 12<sup>th</sup> century).

The same *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel, in the voices of their various characters, also regularly dismiss the love of mothers toward their children or the defilement of the motherly body. In the *Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa Life*, Yeshe Tsogyel was ready to denounce her mother when she tried to stop Tsogyel from leaving home, saying “while you brag about how much you love me, you cannot bear this princess [who wants to leave home]”.<sup>570</sup> During her visionary trip to the land of Oḍḍiyāna, Yeshe Tsogyel was reminded by a khandroma that her defiled female body comes from the contamination of her mother’s womb blood.<sup>571</sup> The *Extensive Life* also records a conversation between Yeshe Tsogyel and her brother Pelgyi Wangchuk, who considered dreaming a women/mother’s dream (*ma’i rmi lam*) inauspicious and tried to stop her from practicing.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> NTGP, 177b.

<sup>569</sup> Allione 2000, 172; also see Ma-gcig Lab-sgron 2003, 57.

<sup>570</sup> DK1, 191: *sems brtse ba’i shugs kyis yus che yang/ bdag lha lcam nga la phod ma che/*

<sup>571</sup> DK1, 231.

<sup>572</sup> NTGP, 5a: *ma’i rmi lam rang rmis pa dag pa’i las ci yang med zer/*



The contradictory attitudes toward mothers found in these accounts suggests that there are different layers to the motherly identity. On the abstract theological level, the mother represents the female half of the enlightened principle and is hailed as the one who gives birth to all buddhas and cares for all sentient beings. On the human level of women's lived experience, the mother is known primarily for her selfish love to her children, as well as her association to the impure female body and the contaminating birth process.<sup>573</sup> The exalted metaphorical status of a mother represents a discomfort with womanhood on the level of social gender.<sup>574</sup> While male authors do not hold back

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<sup>573</sup> An interesting later example of a woman who can hardly be claimed as having a high degree of enlightenment but was nonetheless the subject of a *Life* or a *rnam thar* (by definition, having a *rnam thar*, “[account of] complete liberation,” requires its subject to be an enlightened being) is the mother of the Nyingma teacher Lochen Dharmaśrī (Lo chen dharma śrī, 1654-1718), Lhadzin Yangchen Drolma (Lha 'dzin dbyangs can sgrol ma, 1624-c.1659). In her incomplete *Life* of some twenty pages, there was hardly any description of her religious achievements. Right after the introductory verses that applaud her, there is an even longer section offering more enthusiastic acclamation of her son Lochen Dharmaśrī (also the author of her *Life*). Following a standard introduction of her birth and the reason why she was giving this name, a series of her religious activities is introduced: she nurtures her family members with loving kindness, she has met with many renowned lamas, she was given initiations of Niguma and Vijaya, both female consorts of Buddhist masters (*tshe dbang grub rgyal ma dang rnam rgyal ma'i rjes gnam*, but the hagiography does not specify whether she practiced as a consort or not), later in her life, she also helps building monasteries and protects them against military forces.

The most significant event in her *Life* happens when she was twenty. She received a prophecy from a girl who was the Great Bliss Queen (bu mo bde chen rgyal mo). She is recognized as the “emanation of Tso (Yeshe Tsogyel) and Drön (Machig Labdrön).” The prophecy also specifies that she will have a son “that upholds the lineage, radiant like the sun and moon” (*brgyud 'dzin sras gcig nyi zla lta bur gsal*). In her rather short-lived life of thirty-five years, she gave birth to seven children, one of which became an eminent Buddhist master, and stole the spotlight of her hagiography. The term “precious mother” (*ma rin po che*) used to address Lhadzin Yangchen Drolma has appeared a few times before her giving birth to seven brothers and sisters, but only appeared once after Lochen Dharmaśrī was born—the focus is shifted to him, rather than his mother, who is supposed to be the subject of this *Life*. *Rje btsun bla ma gter chen chos kyi rgyal po'i yum chen lha 'dzin dbyangs can sgrol ma'i rnam thar* n.d. Also see Schaeffer 2004, 95.

<sup>574</sup> Gayley (2017, 55-57) also reaches a similar conclusion, by discussing how two different terms are used to refer to achieved practitioners of different genders. A realized man is called a *drubthob* (*grub thob*), “the realized one,” while a realized woman is called a *khandroma*, whose identity as a human woman remains ambiguous at best. She suggests, “Given such examples, one

their praises for the theological, motherly principle, their attitude toward human mothers remains uncertain. Some criticize (using the voice of Yeshe Tsogyel) a mother's emotional attachment to her child, while others write life stories of a mother without her actually performing motherly actions. While the identity of a khandroma as a menacing demoness is Buddhicized and transformed into a protectress, a khandroma as an intermediary can also be claimed by human women to elevate their status, the *ma* (mother) in khandroma remains ambivalent and less favorable to real women until quite recently. In the epilogue, I discuss how a group of contemporary Tibetan Buddhist nuns skillfully adopted the praise to an abstract, enlightened mother and combined it with the compassionate quality of mothers in empirical terms to elevate real women's status in society.

#### ***4.3 Fuzzy Femininities and Muddled Memories: In Lieu of a (Neat) Conclusion***

In this dissertation, I have examined how the literary tradition surrounding Yeshe Tsogyel emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a time when full-length hagiographies of her first appeared, and how a Treasure origin narrative with her as one of the core personas emerged during the same time, as Nyingma Buddhists traced their religious pedigree and defined what counts as authentic Buddhism. Yeshe Tsogyel is chosen for this task, and is articulated as an ideal agent between immanence and transcendence. This literary creation allows the Treasure

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must wonder if there [sic] a cultural discomfort in representing an exceptional Tibetan woman *qua* woman and therefore a tendency to identify her as a *dākinī*.”

tradition to reconceive or even transform established knowledge frameworks of lineage transmission, and to explore new possibilities of women's access to Buddhist teachings and more capacious roles for women in tantric communities.

The three aspects of the identity of Yeshe Tsogyel are all entangled with the themes of gender and Treasure transmission. As a disciple, she is responsible for recording, encoding, and (in a future time) transmitting Treasures, her female gender provides ground for a recognition of her as the goddess Sarasvatī. As the foremost disciple of Padmasambhava, she asks questions concerning the challenges in Buddhist women's life in particular. She also frequently sets herself apart as the only worthy recipient of teachings. With consort practice, she perfects her practice and attains supernatural abilities; these achievements also qualify her to continue to be the companion for future Treasure revealers. As a khandroma, she embodies the continuous negotiation between theological and social gender.

As is discussed in the introduction, instead of making a definitive argument as to what femininity and womanhood entail in Tibet, or presenting a single model of understanding female eminence, I intend to offer a contextualized observation on how gender and lineage transmission is conceived of in Treasure literature at this time, with all of its intricacies. These narratives show us how Nyingma Treasure community in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries drew upon a rich repertoire of cultural memories and literary tropes to construct a communal identity and shared past. This repertoire serves as a "usable past" for the Nyingma community; it includes not only pre-Buddhist or non-Buddhist myths in their tamed form, but also narrative literatures produced in the Indian Buddhist cultural milieu. The *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel offer a particularly interesting

window to look at how gender works in the hagiographical traditions. The events taking place in the *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel (and many other female Buddhist masters) share many common elements with the Buddha's life story, including descending from the celestial realm, a magical birth, leaving home, study and practice, and preaching the dharma.<sup>575</sup> However, gender difference is evident in many of these events. Buddhist women generally have a harder time leaving home than men. They have to explicitly denounce their sexuality and make extreme gestures of humility and self-deprecation to justify their need to study and practice. While theologically speaking, female wisdom is considered the counterpart of and equal to male method, these life stories of Buddhist women also demonstrate how the social gender, which considers women to be inferior, drags down the theological feminine to a less glorified position.

In the end, it might be a useful thought experiment to conceive of a Tibet without “the mother,” to imagine a parallel universe where the Treasure tradition lives on without Yeshe Tsogyel as its preeminent female saint. Will people designate another of Padmasambhava's disciples to carry on his teaching lineage? King Tri Songdetsen and Namkhai Nyingpo were occasionally tasked with recording and concealing Padmasambhava's teachings, but neither were said to possess infallible memory. Maybe they can elect a different consort of the master to be the channel between him and future disciples? But the non-Tibetan identities of Mandarava (Zahor or “Indian”), Kālasiddha (Nepalese), Śākyadevī (Nepalese), or Tashi Khyedren (Mönpa) cannot provide ground the Indian master to the land of Tibet and, therefore, do not play favorably in constructing a local icon. How

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<sup>575</sup> In the Tibetan retellings of the Buddha's life story, there are generally twelve acts: 1. life in heaven; 2. descent to earth; 3. birth; 4. education; 5. the pleasures of his royal harem; 6. renunciation of house; 7. spiritual discipline; 8. journey to Bodhgaya; 9. battle with demons; 10. enlightenment; 11. teaching; 12. death. Bstan-'dzin-chos-rgyal 2015, x.

about the myriad of khandromas inhabiting the Nyingma universe, both literary and literal? While the fabled khandromas present themselves as having symbolic connections to sacred language and sexuality, they lack a historic (or even just semi-historic) anchor to the Tibetan past. It is the combination of her Tibetan identity, her female gender, and her association with enlightened speech and sexuality that makes Yeshe Tsogyel an ideal candidate for Treasure writers in their commemoration of a Buddhist past in Tibet and their argument as to why this past is relevant to their present.

Some further questions to ask in the future would be how the bigger picture of Tibet's imperial past was envisioned by the Nyingma Treasure community after the Buddhist renaissance. Besides Padmasambhava, Yeshe Tsogyel, and a few other renowned teachers and translators, how are the rest of Padmasambhava's retinue (later known as the twenty-five disciples) depicted in Treasure narratives? Considering the high degree of intertextuality between Treasure narratives at this time, can we identify a host of sources that contributed to the construction of a shared identity among the Treasure revealers? Furthermore, what does it mean to inhabit a personhood from the past and is gender a determining factor in this matter? For the last question, the answer may lie in historical archives, but it could also be found in the experiences of Buddhist women today, as Yeshe Tsogyel lives on, in embodied and disembodied forms, in the later lives of Tibetan women.

## EPILOGUE YESHE TSOGYEL LIVES ON

Namo! With faith and devotion, I take refuge in  
Your unoriginated Dharma Body, Samantabhadrī,  
Your unceasing Enjoyment Body, [Vajra]varahī,  
And your indivisible Emanation Body, Mother Tsogyel.  
...<sup>576</sup>

On the twenty-fifth day of each Tibetan calendar month, nuns at Larung Gar gather to chant this *sādhana* dedicated to Yeshe Tsogyel. It is to pay homage to Yeshe Tsogyel, to ask for her blessing and protection, but more importantly, to show reverence to the current emanation of Yeshe Tsogyel residing at Larung, Jetsunma Mume Yeshe Tsomo (Rje btsun ma Mu med ye shes mtsho mo, b. circa 1966), or Jetsunma Mumtso.

In her *Life*, Jetsunma Mumtso is depicted as hailing from a long, lustrous lineage of eminent Tibetan Buddhist women, all of them later emanations of Yeshe Tsogyel.<sup>577</sup> The first in this post-

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<sup>576</sup> 'Jigs med phun tshogs 'byung gnas 2002, vol.1, 155: *na mo/ skye med chos sku kun bzang mo/ longs sku 'gags med wa ra hi/ dbyer med sprul sku mtsho rgyal mar/ yid ches dad pas skyabs su mchi/*

<sup>577</sup> There are two known *Lives* of Jetsunma Mumtso, the *Champion of Faith: The Life Story of Jetsunma Mume Yeshe Tsomo, the Miraculous Emanation of Mingyur Pelgyi Dronma* (Mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma'i rnam rol rje btsun ma mu med ye shes mtsho mo'i rnam thar dad pa'i shing rta) and *Radiant Expression of Genuine Faith: The Life Story of Jetsunma Mume Yeshe Tsomo* (Rje btsun ma mu med ye shes mtsho mo'i rnam thar ma bcos dad pa'i rang mdangs). Bla rung aryatāre'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013, 12: 155-184, and 16: 1-69.

Yeshe Tsogyel reincarnation lineage is Machig Labdrön, a disciple of the Indian master Phadampa Sanggye. In Machig's *Life* (allegedly composed by Machig herself), she is identified as the Ganga Goddess (Gang ga'i lha mo), the Khandroma Sukhasiddhi (Mkha' 'gro bde ba'i dngos grub), and the lady Yeshe Tsogyel in her previous lives.<sup>578</sup> Machig is followed by Nangsa Öbum (Snang sa 'od 'bum), Mingyur Peldrön,<sup>579</sup> and Drinle Chödrön ('Phrin las chos sgron).<sup>580</sup> The depth of the personality of Yeshe Tsogyel expands as later generations of Buddhist women claim her as part of their religious identity.

For ordinary nuns at Larung Gar who perform her liturgies every month, the *Lives* of Yeshe Tsogyel also encourage and inspire them on a daily basis. The adversities these nuns face today are not so much different from the obstacles standing in the path of liberation for Yeshe Tsogyel. They all lament about the unfortunate birth as a woman and the extra burdens that come with it. While the trapping of householder life may express itself in different ways, these nuns and Yeshe Tsogyel all agree that leaving home is the right choice for someone who has set her mind on the dharma. Misunderstandings or even prejudices from other people, financial challenges, and

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The *Champion of Faith* is composed by Khenpo Nyarong Adra (Mkhan po Nyag rong a bkra) at Larung; it is also translated into English and Chinese and published as a trilingual monograph. See Nyag rong a bkra 2010.

<sup>578</sup> This *Life* is titled *Clarifying the Meaning of Chöd, A Complete Explanation of Casting Out the Body as Food* (Phung po gzan skyur gyi rnam bshad gcod kyi don gsal byed), it is translated into English in Harding 2013. According to Herrmann-Pfandt (1998, 95) and Sorenson (2013, 64), the earliest known blockprint edition of this work only dates back to the nineteenth century, although it may contain older textual layers.

<sup>579</sup> For a discussion of the reincarnation lineage of Mingyur Peldrön, in which the first three human women are Yeshe Tsogyel, Machig Labdrön, and Nangsa Öbum, see Melnick 2014, 112-131, especially 114-125.

<sup>580</sup> She is another nun in the Mindröling tradition, see Madrong Migyur Dorje 1997, 75.

difficulties in practice are all commonplace. One nun at Larung told me that, compared to the later parts of Yeshe Tsogyel's *Life*, where Yeshe Tsogyel demonstrates her magical feats and extraordinary abilities, she was more moved when reading the story of Yeshe Tsogyel's travel to Samye. This is because she also faced the same difficulties when leaving home: lack of support from her parents, doubts about her sincerity from relatives, and ridicules from her classmates—"you are not ugly, why do you want to become a nun?" Like Yeshe Tsogyel, she had to travel on foot for hundreds of miles to where her teacher was residing. Also like Yeshe Tsogyel, being young and inexperienced, she had prepared little provision and had to rely on other people's kindness to make through her trip. If she could overcome the difficulties Yeshe Tsogyel had overcome when she started practicing, she thought, maybe she could also be successful at her practice, like Yeshe Tsogyel?

The same group of nuns also articulated an innovative commentary on women's status in Buddhism and society, where the interpolation of theological and social gender continues. Their strategy is to emphasize the life-giving virtue and compassionate quality of mothers. Motherhood, in their eyes, embodies a particular ambivalence between ascribing to secular gender roles in Tibetan society and reversing a pair of gendered Buddhist terms, that is, liberative compassion and transcendental wisdom.

At Larung Gar, a few high-ranking nuns are in charge of the Āryatāre publishing house. Over the past decade, they have produced dozens of books, publications, and other multimedia materials. The most impressive of their projects is the *Great Treasury of Khandro Teachings* (*Mkha' 'gro'i*



*chos mdzod chen mo*),<sup>581</sup> a fifty-three-volume collection of works by and about important Buddhist women, spanning from the Buddha's foster mother, Mahāprajāpatī, to the current leader of Larung Gar, Jetsunma Mumtso. By combing through the teachings of the Buddha for content relevant to women and compiling them into a single collection, it effectively makes a claim as a new canon for Buddhist women.

The first sentence on the first page of the *Great Treasury* reads: "If one searches for the most precious thing that sustains humankind in this world, it goes without saying that it is the enormously powerful mother. Mothers are those who foster kindness and compassion and bestow the sweet, luscious taste of livelihood."<sup>582</sup> Although they themselves have taken a vow of celibacy, almost all the nuns express a similar reverence toward mothers. For them, to elevate women's status in society is to praise mothers as the embodiment of compassion. This discourse is a complex reworking of many existing discourses on motherhood and femininity found in Buddhist and secular sources, in which women (and by extension, mothers) could be praised as the embodiment of wisdom, the mother from which all buddhas and sentient beings are born, or looked down as fickle or subject to emotions, or even vilified as someone whose very body give testimony to inferior karma. These nuns negotiate the divide between the transcendental, praiseworthy status of mother as wisdom and the mundane, troubled situation of lived women. They elevate the nurturing qualities of the mother, well attested in a secular world, and equate them with the soteriological

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<sup>581</sup> Bla rung aryatāre'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2017.

<sup>582</sup> Ibid., vol.1, 1: *de yang spyir btang 'jig rten 'di'i 'gro ba mi'i rigs la tshe srog gi rin thang btsal tel byams brtses bskyed bsrings shing 'tsho ba'i snum mdangs kyi mngar kha sbyin mkhan ni rlabs che ba'i ma yum gyi tshogs yin pa bshad mi dgos la'*

virtue of compassion, which is considered male in linguistic and theological terms. For them, doing so amounts to promoting awareness about women's rights and raising women's status in society.<sup>583</sup>

This strategy of collapsing the theological gender into the secular gender is used by men as well as women, in exiles as well as in Tibetan communities in China. In a 2016 interview, Ogyen Trinley Dorje (O rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje, 1985-), the seventeenth Karmapa, cites his motivation for reviving full ordination for Tibetan Buddhist nuns and the reason for his involvement with the women's cause to be that "in Buddhist teachings, ... [men and women] have the same ability and the same opportunity to uphold the teachings of Buddhism."<sup>584</sup> In 2017, he presided over the ceremony that marked the beginning of full ordination for Tibetan Buddhist nuns in Bodhgaya, the place of enlightenment for the Buddha.<sup>585</sup>

Outside *pechas*, books, and monastic communities, Yeshe Tsogyel comes to life and serves as a source of contemplation for Tibetan laywomen. Her devotion to the guru and to the teaching are widely recognized and venerated. Her symbolic status as the foremost Buddhist woman inspires

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<sup>583</sup> I am preparing a second research project (tentatively titled *Who Is a Buddhist Feminist: Theorizing Gender and Religion in Contemporary Tibet*) that combines ethnographical and textual approaches and looks at the gender discourse adopted by nuns at Larung Gar.

<sup>584</sup> Butet 2016.

<sup>585</sup> At this ceremony, a group of nineteen Tibetan nuns received their novice vows (Skt. *śrāmaṇerī*, Tib. *dge tshul ma*) from five fully ordained nuns from Taiwan. They will continue monastic training and ultimately received their vows as fully ordained nuns (Skt. *bhikṣunī*, Tib. *dge slong ma*). The event was streamed live and reported on the Karmapa's official website, see Kagyu Office 2017 and "The Special Sramanerika Vow: A Historic Step for Nuns." Gyatso 2017 provides a first-person account of this ceremony.

others to explore the meaning of femininity, and to live a moral life. While not every woman will leave home and devote themselves to full-time practice, even coming into contact with Yeshe Tsogyel or dreaming of her could provide temporary relief from worldly entanglements and remind them of a higher calling in life.<sup>586</sup>

An epilogue seems to be the occasion to paint an obligatory rosy picture of the future, and there are indeed reasons to believe that Tibetan Buddhist women are leading a more fulfilling life and striving toward a higher status in the community. Even with all of its trials and tribulations, now might still prove to be a time like the formative years for Termas, when Tibetan Buddhists looked back at their own cultural and religious repertoire and constructed a response that addresses the need of the current age. Much like with Yeshe Tsogyel, the time has made and will continue to make the woman.

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<sup>586</sup> Pema Lhadzi (Padma lha mdzes), a Tibetan female writer has written an essay recounting her pilgrimage to Tsogyel Lhakhang and her visionary encounters with Yeshe Tsogyel, Baimanazhen 2018, 43-73.

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## APPENDICES



**1 Chapter Structure and Titles**

Not every version in the Drime Kunga/Pema Lingpa *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel contain all seven chapters. The versions listed below include DK1, DK2, DK3, DK4, PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, and KDMG.<sup>587</sup> I have marked the page numbers after each chapter title for easy reference.

**(1) DK1**

Chapter 1	<i>lha lcam gyi sku 'khrungs tshul bstan pa'i le'u ste dang po</i> [212]
Chapter 2	<i>lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi yul rnam bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa</i> [237]
Chapter 3	<i>lha lcam gyis o rgyan la gdams pa glu'i tshigs su bcad pa zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa</i> [247]
Chapter 4	<i>lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi drung dul/ theg pa rim pa dgu'i rgyud lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa</i> [249-250]
Chapter 5	<i>lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i kham nas 'gro ba bton pa'i le'u ste lnga pa</i> [256]
Chapter 6	<i>lha lcam gyi lung bstan thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa</i> [257]
Chapter 7	<i>lha lcam gyi bstan pa mchog tu rgyas pa'i le'u ste bdun pa</i> [260]

**(2) DK2**

Chapter 1	<i>lha lcam gyi sku 'khrungs tshul bstan pa'i le'u ste dang po</i> [58]
Chapter 2	<i>lha lcam gyis odiyana'i yul bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa</i> [102]
Chapter 3	<i>lha lcam gyis odiyana la/ gdams pa glu tshigs tu zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa</i> [119]
Chapter 4	<i>lha lcam gyis odiyana'i drung du theg pa rim pa dgu'i rgyud lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa</i> [123]
Chapter 5	<i>lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i kham nas 'gro ba don mdzad pa'i le'u ste lnga pa</i> [135]
Chapter 6	<i>lha lcam gyis lung bstan 'thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa</i> [138]
Chapter 7	<i>lha lcam gyi sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa mchog tu rgyas pa'i le'u ste bdun pa</i> [142]

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<sup>587</sup> PL5 and PL6 are not included for comparison here because they closely resemble PL1. Since KT and BKR are not independent works, they are also not included. KDMG jumps from the latter part of the first chapter into the second one without any transition (KDMG: 156). It is possible that this version is missing pages.

### (3) DK3

- Chapter 1 *lha lcam gyi sku 'khrul tshul [sic] bstan pa'i le'u ste dang po* [40a]  
Chapter 2 *lha lcam gyis u rgyan kyis [sic] gnas rnams bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa* [71a]  
Chapter 3 *lha lcam gyis odiyana la/ gdams pa glu tshigs tu zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa* [83b]  
Chapter 4 *lha lcam gyis slob dpon<sup>588</sup> drung du theg pa rim pa dgu'i brgyud lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa* [86a]  
Chapter 5 *lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i gnas nas 'gro ba bton pa'i le'u ste lnga pa* [94a]  
Chapter 6 *lha lcam gyis lung bstan 'thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa* [96a]  
Chapter 7 *lha lcam gyi bstan pa mchog tu rgyas pa'i le'u ste bdun pa* [99a-99b]

### (4) DK4

- Chapter 1 *lha lcam gyis sku 'khrung tshul bstan pa'i le'u ste dang po* [48b]  
Chapter 2 *lha lcam gyis o rgyan kyis [sic] yul rnams bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa* [84a]  
Chapter 3 *lha lcam gyis o rgyan la gdams pa glu'i tshigs su bcad pa zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa* [98a]  
Chapter 4 *lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi drung du/ theg pa rim pa dgu'i rgyud lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa* [101b]  
Chapter 5 *lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i kham nas 'gro ba bton pa'i le'u ste lnga pa* [111a]  
Chapter 6 *lha lcam gyi [sic] lung bstan thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa* [113a]  
Chapter 7 *lha lcam gyi bstan pa mchog tu rgyas pa'i le'u ste bdun pa* [117a]

### (5) PL1

- Chapter 1 *lha lcam gyis rgyal srid spangs pa'i le'u ste dang po* [289]  
Chapter 2 *lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi yul rnams bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa* [310]  
Chapter 3 *lha lcam la o rgyan gyis gdams pa glu'i tshigs su bcad pa de zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa* [319]  
Chapter 4 *lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi drung du theg pa rim dgu'i chos lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa* [321]  
Chapter 5 *lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i kham nas 'gro don bstan pa'i le'u ste lnga pa* [327]  
Chapter 6 *lha lcam gyis lung bstan thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa* [328]  
Chapter 7 *sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa phyogs kun tu rgyas pa'i le'u ste bdun pa* [331]

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<sup>588</sup> Here the phrase *o di ya na'i* seems to be erased and replaced with *slob dpon*.

## (6) PL2

Chapter 1	<i>lha lcam gyis rgyal srid spangs pa'i le'u ste dang po</i> [44b]
Chapter 2	<i>lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyis yul rnam bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa</i> [58a]
Chapter 3	n/a <sup>589</sup>
Chapter 4	n/a
Chapter 5	n/a
Chapter 6	n/a
Chapter 7	n/a

## (7) PL3

Chapter 1	<i>lha lcam gyis sku 'khrungs tshul bstan pa'i le'u ste dang po</i> [46a]
Chapter 2	<i>lha lcam gyis u rgyan gyis yul rnam bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa</i> [65b]
Chapter 3	<i>lha lcam gyis u rgyan la gdams pa glu tshigs su zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa</i> [73b]
Chapter 4	<i>lha lcam gyis/ u rgyan chen po'i drung du theg pa rim pa dgu'i lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa</i> [75b]
Chapter 5	<i>lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i'gro ba ston pa'i le'u ste lnga pa</i> [80b]
Chapter 6	<i>lha lcam gyis lung bstan thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa</i> [82a]
Chapter 7	n/a <sup>590</sup>

## (8) PL4

Chapter 1	<i>lha lcam kyi sku 'khrungs pa'i tshul stan pa'i le'u ste dang po</i> [27b]
Chapter 2	<i>lha lcam gyis u rgyan gyi yul rnam bskor ba'i le'u ste gnyis pa</i> [49b]
Chapter 3	<i>lha lcam gyis u rgyan la gdams pa glu tshigs zhus pa'i le'u ste gsum pa</i> [59a]
Chapter 4	<i>lha lcam gyis u rgyan gyi drung du theg pa rim dgu'i lung zhus pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa</i> [61a]
Chapter 5	<i>lha lcam gyi dmyal ba'i'gro ba ston pa'i le'u ste lnga pa</i> [67a]
Chapter 6	<i>lha lcam gyis lung bstan thob pa'i le'u ste drug pa</i> [68b]
Chapter 7	<i>lha lcam gyi ston pa phyogs kun tu rgyas pa'i le'u ste bdun pa</i> [71b]

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<sup>589</sup> PL2 ends before the third chapter in this corpus concludes. It also contains a separate colophon.

<sup>590</sup> From folio 84 on, the content of PL3 changes into a *Life* and collections of songs (*mgur*) of Mi la ras pa (*Rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar dang mgur 'bum*), and later on yet again switches to an account of the life of Nangsa Öbum (*Snang gsal* [sic] *'od de* [sic] *'bum*).

## (9) KDMG

Chapter 1	n/a
Chapter 2	<i>lha lcam gyis o rgyan gyi yul rnams bskor ba'i le'u</i> [172]
Chapter 3	n/a <sup>591</sup>
Chapter 4	n/a
Chapter 5	<i>lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i gnas nas 'gro ba bton pa'i le'u</i> [179]
Chapter 6	<i>lha lcam gyis lung bstan thob pa'i le'u</i> [180]
Chapter 7	<i>lha lcam gyi bstan pa sa phyogs kun tu rgyas pa'i le'u</i> [183]

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<sup>591</sup> KDMG contains a good part of the third chapter and then continues directly to the end of the fifth chapter without any transition (KDMG: 179). It is possible that this version is missing pages.

Versions listed below include DK1, DK2, DK3, DK4, PL1, PL2, PL3, PL4, and KDMG.

## 1. DK1

### (1) Incipits [180-181]

DK1 is a computer input version based on DK4. The shared incipits can be divided into three parts. The first is an account of how this Treasure came into being; the second claims that this text is the Treasure revelation of Ugyen Drime Kunga; and the third incipit offers an homage to the Great Blissful Samantabhadri. The first and second incipits are unique to these two editions; Incipit 3 are also shared by DK2 and DK3.

Incipit 1 is the longest and consists of three parts. First, a life story of Padmasambhava. It briefly relates Padmasambhava's birth, his travel to and teaching career in Tibet, and his eventual departure. Sanggye Yeshe is said to have entrusted these teachings to Dharma protectors and sealed them with secrecy. Second, a teaching on the different types of Dissolving Letters (*thim yig*).<sup>592</sup> Third, an explanation on the prophesied discovery of these texts, including the time, place, and persons associated with the discovery. Incipit 1 concludes with a prayer that this profound text may encountered one with excellent karmic connection.

#### Incipit 1

*lhun grub mkha' 'gro ma la phyal 'tshal lol/ mkha' 'gro bka' chen gyi thim yig 'di la/ skabs gsum gyi ston te/ dang po lo rgyus bstan*<sup>593</sup> *chen nag po dang lnga/ mkha' ri lcam sring gyi srog sgrub nag po dang drug gol/ 'di las mang nyung lhag chad yod pas spang bar bya/ gsum pa lung bstan gtad rgya bstan pa ni/ dus kyi snyigs ma lnga'i tshel/ chos dar la ma smin pas chos dpon log pa'i 'khrug dpon 'byung/ pha spun dme 'khrug dar bas sad dang ser ba mu ge 'byung/ zog pos grong yul khengs pas khyi smyon mi smyon 'byung/ bdud sprul nag po mang bas re chos byed yi mug skyes/ de 'dra'i dus su 'gro la skyabs mgon med/ padma bdag gis ma phod theb cig bzha/ sgyu ru sgra zhes khang dmar skya bo'i sar/ skyed mang 'dzoms bkra shis zhes pa'i pha ma*<sup>594</sup> *de yang slar u rgyan gyi thugs kar rdzogs nas lhag med du grol lol/ gzhan yang lhag med du rdzogs pa bdun brgya tsam byung/ de nas u rgyan srin po 'dul ba la lho nub rnga yab gling du byon khar yi ger btab nas gter du sbas/ sangs rgyas ye shes kyi mtshan smon te/ chos bdag tu smon lam btab/ ming sring lcan sring la gnyer nas rgya gsum gyis gdab bol/ gnyis pa thim yig bstan pa ni/ bka' chen thim yig dang gcig/ dbang chog smin grol dang gnyis/ gsang sgrub yang khol dang gsum/ las*

<sup>592</sup> The “dissolving” of letters means that the signs carrying the meaning of the Treasure have been decoded and correctly understood. Gyatso 1998, 94.

<sup>593</sup> Here DK1 mixed up the folio number in DK4 and skips to folio 3b, then 3a, then 4a. The content on folios 2a and 2b in DK4 was not transcribed.

<sup>594</sup> This is the end of folio 3b for DK4; DK1 continues with the content of DK4 3a.

*byang gter bum dang bzhi/ gsang khrid yang thig klong<sup>595</sup> la mos snang tsam du dri med kun dga'  
zhes/ sngags 'chang sangs rgyas ye shes mchog sprul 'khrungs/ des ni 'brel tshad mkha' spyod  
gnas su khrid/ chos bdag chen po bla med don gyi spyod/ khyu mchog de drung chos 'di 'khol ba'i  
dbus/ 'khor gyi dwangs ma rigs ldan lnga tsam 'byung/ bdud sprul rtags ra'i sha mtshan can/ log  
pa'i gces de'i bskrad thabs gces/ shar phyogs gnas su bdud sprul kha non la/ mtshan ldan rig ma  
dbang po sha mtshan can/ 'brel tshad thams cad zag med dgod pa 'byung/ de'i byin rlabs chos 'di  
dar cha yang/ shar phyogs u rgyan gyi mthil du 'byung ba'o// gzhan dang mi 'dra khyad par zab  
chos 'di/ yang dag las can de dang 'phrad par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya//*

#### Incipit 2

*u rgyan dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o//*

#### Incipit 3

*[dākinī scripts] bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag tshal lo//*

#### (2) Explicit [260-261]

All textual editions in the corpus that contain all seven chapters share a similar explicit (Explicit 1 here). It explains that this *Life* of Yeshe Tsogyel is faithfully requested by Sanggye Yeshe and recorded for the benefit of future generations.

DK1 and DK4 also contain a second explicit that praises Yeshe Tsogyel and Padmasambhava and expresses gratitude to them for their deeds.

#### Explicit 1

*e ma mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/  
sgom [dakini scripts] shes kyis/  
mos par zhus pa'i ngos ma bzlog/  
skal ldan don du yi ger btab/  
phyi rabs don du gter la sbas/  
snod med rnams la gsang bar bya/  
cal col smra na dam tshig nyams/  
mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/  
khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/  
gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ mkha' 'gro mtsho  
rgyal gyis [sic] rnam thar/ o rgyan dri med kun dgas gter nas bton pa'o//*

#### Explicit 2

*'khor ba'i mun nag gling rum na/  
mtsho rgyal sku gsum nyi ma shar/  
khams gsum sems can mun smag rnams/  
'od zer gcig gis gsal bar byas/  
'on kyang skal med chos can re/  
gsal ba'i nang nas mun pa nyul/  
nyi ma shar tshe snying med sdug/*

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<sup>595</sup> This is the end of folio 3a for DK4; DK1 continues with the content of DK4 4a.

*de bzhin che 'gying zur za can/  
 chos med 'chi kha nangs par sdug/  
 mi lus rin chen thob pa'i dus/  
 'dzam gling stong skor ma byas nas/  
 dam chos mdzad na legs par sems/  
 ci 'gal 'khrul byung na bzod par gsol/ minggalam [sic]/ bha wantu/ śubham/ rdzogs so//  
 kye phrin las rnam dag sku gsung thugs/  
 yon tan ma lus rgya che ba/  
 rten bzhengs pa rnams la byin gyis rlobs/  
 rten mchog tu gyur pa'i bkra shis shog/  
 mi 'gyur lhun po sku yi bkra shis shog/  
 yan lag drug bcu'i gsung gi bkra shis shog/  
 mtha' bral dri med thugs kyi bkra shis shog/  
 rgyal ba'i sku gsung thugs kyi bkra shis shog/  
 rgya gar paṇ chen bod la bka' drin che/  
 padma las 'khrungs sku la 'das 'khrungs med/  
 da lta lho nub srin po'i kha gnon mdzad/  
 u rgyan rin po che yi bkra shis shog/  
 ye shes mkha' 'gro bod la bka' drin can/  
 kun tu bzang mo'i dngos sprul rgyal ba'i yum/  
 gsang sngags bstan pa dar rgyas mdzad pa'i mal/  
 yum mchog mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi bkra shis shog/  
 dam chos 'di bzhengs dge ba yi/  
 sbyin bdag bris pa thal mgos kyi/  
 pha ma bu smad kha lag 'brel tshad dang/  
 'og rta bkal mdzo bzhon ma sems can rnams/  
 gnas mchog padma 'og kyi gzhal yas na/  
 rgyal dbang padma 'byung gnas yab yum gyi/  
 zhal mjal gsung thos sangs rgyas myur thob shog/  
 bkra shis dpal 'byor phum sum 'tshogs par shog/ dge'o// dge'o// dge'o//  
 gsung rab 'di yi gzhung la chad pa mang po yod pas gzab gzab chos nas yod do// thugs  
 mnyes par mdzod/*

## 2. DK2

### (1) Incipits [4]

DK2 shared its first incipit with DK1, DK3, DK4 that pays homage to Samantabhadri. Its second incipit is shared with PL1, PL2, and KDMG that offers a verse homage to Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmasambhava and state that this extensive *Life of Yeshe Tsogyel* is taught so that future generations could take delight in the dharma.

#### Incipit 1

[ḍākinī scripts] *na mo gu ru dhe wa ḍā kki ni ye// bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo//*

## Incipit 2

*chos sku snang ba mtha' yas//  
longs sku thugs rje chen po//  
sprul sku padma 'byung gnas//  
sku gsum 'gyur med kyi lha la phyag 'tshal lo//  
mi brjed gzungs thob dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas  
par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba skyed pa'i phyir gsungs so//*

## (2) Explicit [142-148]

DK2 shares a similar explicit (Explicit 1) with other versions. Its second explicit is shared with DK3 and contains information about the compiler, carver, and proofreader for this blockprint edition (note that DK3 is actually a manuscript, so it should be copied from the blockprint).

The third explicit is distinct to this version. It is in verse form; the verses are numbered. It is composed by Khenpo Pelden Sherab and relates not only Yeshe Tsogyel's deeds, but how the blockprint came to his hand through the generosity of Janet Gyatso. In editing this digital text, he has conferred with the Pema Lingpa version, as well as the chronicles revealed by Sanggye Lingpa and Ogyen Lingpa. This explicit is completed on April 23, 2005.

## Explicit 1

*e ma/ mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/  
ban de sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/  
mos zhing zhus pas ngo ma ldog/  
skal ldan don du yi ger btab/  
phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/  
snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/  
bcas bcos byas na dam tshig nyams/  
mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/  
khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gtad rgyal/ gter rgyal/ sbas rgyal/  
kha tham/ dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o//*

## Explicit 2

*e ma/ mdangs ldan dri zhim rgya mtsho 'khyil ba'i dbus/  
'dab stong mdzes pa'i ge sar ze'u 'bru'i steng/  
hrīḥ las byung ba'i rgyal ba thugs rje can/  
padma 'byung gnas 'gro ba'i mgon po des/  
brtse bas mi 'dir bu la rab dgongs nas/  
dam chos bdud rtsi gter gyis sa steng bkang/  
nyid dang dbyer med bde stong lhan bskyed ma/  
bzang ma'i dbying rtsal snang ba shar ba'i yum/  
pha rol phyin ma'i dgongs pa mthar son nas/  
rang 'byung mi 'gags stong pa'i bdag nyid can/  
rgyal yum 'phags ma bud med tshul bzung nas/  
padma thugs kyi gsang mdzod rab bzung nas/  
'gro la phan pa'i dam chos dpag yas zhus/  
snyigs mar dka' drin che ba'i sgrol ma khyed/*



bstan dang 'gro la brtse ba'i bu mchog skyong/  
 mtsho rgyal rnam thar mi zad bdud rtsi'i char/  
 dpal byang spar gyi sprin phreng rol pa 'di/  
 rgyud lung 'byung gnas dpal ldan rtse le pas/  
 rig grol 'dus pa'i 'byor chab rgya mtsho'i dbus/  
 thar lam rgya chen bsgrub par rab dmigs nas/  
 padma'i gsung 'dzin punye bi dza dang/  
 bstan pa'i sbyin bdag rin chen dbang gi rgyal/  
 o rgyan yab yum go 'phang thob pa'i phyir/  
 dge legs 'di nyid rab tu rtsol bas bsgrubs/  
 mkhyen rab yangs pa gnas nyid bkra shis bzang/  
 'dul khrims lung sbyin 'dzin pa bkra shis byang/  
 rnam pa gnyis zhu dag la lan mang bgyis/  
 yi ge'i 'du byed stag rdor zhes pas byas/  
 rkos gyi byed po nang gi dha ra dang/  
 bsam yas gnyis kyis rab tu bsgrubs byas shing/  
 gzhan yang mkhyen ldan mkhas pa du ma yis/  
 legs par bgyis ye 'gran zla bra bar mchis/  
 dge ba 'di yis pha mas gtso byas pa'il/  
 'gro ba mtha' dag sangs rgyas rab thog shog/

### Explicit 3

om swasti/ chos sku yum chen sher phyin kun bzang mol/  
 longs sku nges pa lnga ldan wā ra hi/  
 sprul ski rje btsun sgrol ma nyi shu gcig/  
 yang sprul dbyangs can ye shes mtsho rgyal 'dud/ 1  
 gangs ljongs rmongs mun 'khrigs pa'i gdong dmar gling/  
 mes dbon gsum dang mkhan slob chos gsum gyis/  
 rgyal bstan lung rtogs bstan pa'i 'od rgya pa/  
 'dren pa'i grogs su ma khyod bod du byon/ 2  
 ma khyod 'khor ba'i rang mtshangs mdzub ston slad/  
 dang po rigs gzugs dpal mtho'i khab tu 'khrungs/  
 bar du sdug bsngal rgya mtsho'i rlabs 'khrugs bstan/  
 tha ma nges 'byung dben sar gshegs tshul bstan/ 3  
 kun rmongs ches yangs rab 'byor sgrags grong khab/  
 sred len tshor snang mtho ba'i rgyal btsun mol/  
 tshogs brgyad rnam shes rab gzhon sras sras mol/  
 nyon mongs kun nyon snang 'byor dpal rgyas bzhugs/ 4  
 'du byed lang tsho dar babs 'phags bod sras/  
 srid pa'i gzugs che glang chen lnga brgya la/  
 las kyi kun snyon sna tshogs gces nor bkal/  
 ngom med dbang don lnga brgya phrag brngan brdzangs/ 5  
 sdug bsngal kun nyon gsung 'dzin bro ra'i ngogs/  
 chags pa'i zur mig zhags 'phen lus phra stong/  
 stang mtshon bskyod la mi ngal khye'u stong/  
 snyems mtho phrag dog re dogs mdzes gar bsgyur/ 6

yum chen khyed kyi mkhyen brtse'i me long ngogs/  
 mi srid srid snang snod bcud sgyu 'phrul 'bum/  
 gang shar rig stong ka dag chos sku'i klong/  
 shar grol khregs gcod mtshon gyis lhag med gtub/ 7  
 dad pa chen pos sangs rgyas padma mjal/  
 brtson 'grus chen pos nyin mtshan bar med bsgrubs/  
 dran pa chen pos zab rgyas chos mdzod bzung/  
 ting 'dzin chen pos nyams rtogs sa lam bgrod/ 8  
 shes rab chen pos 'khor 'das 'ching ba bkrol/  
 snying rje chen pos bdud blon dmyal nas drangs/  
 byams pa chen pos rgan rgon bu shi blangs/  
 thabs mkhas chen pos jag chom thar par bkod/9  
 mdor na yum chen khyod kyi sku gsung thugs/  
 yon tan phran las nam mkha'i mtha' dang mnyam/  
 khyad par gangs ljongs bstan 'gro'i bde skyid spell/  
 bdag rkyen khyed yin shes so ma gcig kye/ 10  
 rdzogs chen shing rta dga' rab rdo rje'i sras/  
 'jam dpal bshes gnyen bod du sgyu 'phrul gar/  
 gangs ljongs phur thogs yongs kyi che ba'i mchog/  
 gsang chen snga 'gyur bstan pa'i bka' babs che/ 11  
 gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes rnam par 'phrul/  
 gter ston chen po dri med kun dga' yis/  
 zab gyen mtsho rgyan thun min gsang rnam 'di/  
 bod yul bstan bsngags ming tsam lhag nye'i skabs/ 12  
 a ri'i nang pa'i snga 'gyur mkhas dbang mo/  
 je ne rgya mtshos bod nas dpe rnying thob/  
 phran la stsal son byung bas shin tu spro/  
 'on kyang ldeb bu ka yar tsam ma tshang/ 13  
 gnubs ban gyis zhus mtsho rgyal rnam thar 'di/  
 gter ston chen po dri med kun dga' dang/  
 gter chen padma gling pa gnyis ka la/  
 gcig dpe gcig bcad lta bu bzugs yod slad/ 14  
 kho bo rnying mkhan dpal ldan shes rab kyi/  
 padma gling pa'i mtsho rgyal rnam thar las/  
 mtshangs kha bkang nas zhib bsdur dag zhus byas/  
 'di 'dra'i gter chos zhan la'ang yod pa'i dpe/ 15  
 o rgyan gling pa'i padma bka' thang dang/  
 sangs rgyas gling pa'i rnam thar gser phreng gnyis/  
 rjod byed tshig la bcad lhug khyad tsam las/  
 brjod bya'i don la khyad par med pa bzhi/ 16  
 dbangs can sprul pa mtsho rgyal rnam thar 'di/  
 dad mdzes a nas kam phu tar nang bcug/  
 lhag bsam bzang pos zhu dag nan bskul ltar/  
 kho bos dad spro'i dga' gus zhu dag bgyis/ 17  
 'dir 'bad rab dkar dge ba ma dros mtsho/  
 phrin las rnam bzhi kha 'babs chu bo bzhis/

*dad ldan 'bum phrag gnas skabs bzhi sgrib sbyangs/  
 bla med sku bzhi'i rgya mtshor cher 'jug smon/ 18  
 lus su rags snang 'dod kham rdo rje'i sku/  
 ngag tu phyed snang gzugs kham rdo rje'i gsung/  
 yid du mi snang gzugs med thugs rdo rje/  
 kham gsum rdo rje gsum ngang sad par bsngo/ 19  
 rig stong chos sku a ma'i rang zhal mjal/  
 gzung 'dzin rang grol snang bzhi'i rtsal chen rdzogs/  
 gzhir dbyings gdod ma'i rgyal sar gtan srid zin/  
 'gro kham 'khor ba dong sprugs bkra shis shog/ 20  
 ces 'dir rnying mkhan dpal ldan shes rab kyi/  
 dpal ldan padma bsam yas gling dgon dul/  
 sde bzhi'i spyi kyi dpal yon la rol skabs/  
 nyis stong lnga yi zla 4 tshes 23 la bris dge/ 21*

### 3. DK3

#### (1) Incipits [1b]

See DK2 above.

*ghu ru dhe wa dakki ni/ bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo//*

#### (2) Explicit [99b-101a]

DK3 shares its first two explicits with DK2. It also contains a third explicit, which seems like a continuation of the second one, but is not shared by DK2. At the end of aspirational prayers, this version names Drime Kunga (spelled Dri me kun dge) as its revealer.

#### Explicit 1

*e ma mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di//  
 ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyi//  
 mos zhing zhus pa'i ngo ma lhogs [sic] //  
 skal ldan don du yi ger btab//  
 phyi rabs don du gter du sbas//  
 snod min rnams la gsang bar bya//  
 bcas bcos smras na dam tshig nyams//  
 mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par bsrungs//  
 khyu mchog de la dus su gtod//  
 gtad du gnyer ro sa ma ya// gtad rgya// gter rgya// sbas rgya// kha tham // dri med kun  
 dga'i gter ma'o//*

#### Explicit 2

*e ma mdangs ldan dri zhim rgya mtsho 'khyil ba'i dbus/  
 pad stong mdzes pa'i gser ze'u 'bru'i steng/  
 hrih las byung ba'i rgyal ba thugs rje can/*

*padma 'byung gnas 'gro ba'i mgon po de  
 brtse bas mi 'dor bu la rab dgongs nas/  
 dam chos bdud rtsi gter gyis sa steng gang/  
 nyid dang dbyer med bde stong lhan bskyed mal/  
 bzang mo'i dbying rtsal snang ba shar ba'i yum/  
 pha rol phyin ma'i dgongs pa mthar son nas/  
 rang 'byung ma 'gags stong pa'i bdag nyid can/  
 rgyal yum 'phags ma bud med tshul bzung nas/  
 padma thugs kyi gsang mdzod rab bzung nas/  
 'gro la phan pa'i dam chos dpag yas zhus/  
 snyigs mar dka' drin che ba'i sgrol ma khyod/  
 bstan dang 'gro la brtse ba'i bu mchog skyong/  
 mtsho rgyal rnam thar mi zad bdud rtsi'i char/  
 dpal byad spar gyi sprin phreng rol pa 'di/  
 rgyud lung 'byung gnas dpal ldan rtse le yis/  
 rigs grol 'dus pa'i 'byor chags rgya mtsho'i dbus/  
 thar lam rgya chen bsgrub par rab dmigs nas/  
 padma'i gsung 'dzin punye bi dza dang/  
 bstan pa'i sbyin bdag rin chen dbang gi rgyal/  
 o rgyan yab yum go 'phang thob bya'i phyir/  
 dge legs 'di nyid rab tu rtsol bas bsgrubs/  
 mkhyen rab yangs pa gnas nyid bkra shis bzang/  
 'dul khrims khur gyis 'dzin pa bkra shis byang/  
 rnam pa gnyis sgros bas zhu dag lan mang bgyis/  
 yi ge'i 'du byed stag rdor zhes pas byas/  
 rkos gyi byed po ni dgos dar dang/  
 bsam yags gnyis kyis rab tu bsgrubs byas shing/  
 gzhan yang rkos la mkhas pa du ma yis/  
 legs par bgyis ye 'dran zla bral mang mchis/  
 dge ba 'di yis pha mas gtso byas pa'i/  
 'gro ba mtha' dag sangs rgyas rab thog shog/*

### Explicit 3

*gang zhig rnam thar bar du bsgrub pa dang/  
 de dag phyogs su gang gis rab bstod pa'i/  
 skyo [?]<sup>596</sup> de rnams skad cig tsam gyis ni/  
 bde ba can dang zangs mdog dpal ri nas/  
 mtha' yas padma'i go 'phangs 'thob par shog/  
 tshe 'dir gtsug lag nyid la spyod pa dang/  
 nad med tshe ring dbang phyug 'thob pa dang/  
 bsam pa'i don kun ma lus 'grub par shog/  
 sarba manggalam// 'kha [sic] 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal ma'i rnam thar dri ma'i kun dge  
 [sic] gte [sic] ma'o// mangalam/ bkra shis/*

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<sup>596</sup> Here the folio has a hole.

#### 4. DK4

##### (1) Incipits [1b-4b]

DK4 is the manuscript version DK1 is based on. For an overview of the three incipits transcribed below, see DK1 above.

##### Incipit 1

*lhun grub mkha' 'gro ma la phyal 'tshal lol/ mkha' 'gro bka' chen gyi thim yig 'di la/ skabs gsum gyi ston ste [sic]/*

*dang po lo rgyus bstan chen pa ni/ dur khrod 'od klung 'bar ba'i o rgyan du/ chos nyid bde chen mkha' 'gro mas/ o rgyan padma la gdang des kyang nub phyogs mkha' 'gro'i rig 'dzin zag med kyi gral la snyogs/ mi lo drug stong gi bar du dam chos 'di'i 'khor lo bskor/ gnas de'i rgyal phran lhag med du 'khod pa 'bum 'phrag byung la/ de nas rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi nub phyogs/ u rgyan yul gyis [sic] nub byang/ dha na ko sha bya ba'i mtsho nang du padma ge sar gyi sdong po/ brdzus skyes su sprul nas rgya gar yul du mi lo sum stong bzhugs/ bla med 'di'i spyod yul gyis rgyal phran lhag med du 'khod pa nyi shu rtsa lnga byung/ de nas bod yul du byon/ mi lo brgya dang bcu gcig bzhugs/ skal ldan nyi shu rtsa lnga dang/ rgyal po khri srong lde btsan gyis bsam yas 'ching [sic] phur tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor nas bla med 'di spyod yul zhus pa'i/ u rgyan gyi thugs kha nas 'od lnga 'phros tel/ sangs rgyas ye shes bya ba'i thugs kar thim nas/ lus 'od du zhu/<sup>597</sup> de yang slar u rgyan gyi thugs kar rdzogs nas lhag med du grol lol/ gzhan yang lhag med du rdzogs pa bdun brgya tsam byung/ de nas u rgyan srin po 'dul ba la lho nub rnga yab gling du byon khar yi ger btab nas gter du sbas/ sangs rgyas ye shes kyi mtshan smon tel/ chos bdag tu smon lam btab/ ming sring lcām sring la gnyer nas rgya gsum gyis gdab bol/*

*gnyis pa thim yig bstan pa ni/ bka' chen thim yig dang gcig/ dbang chog smin grol dang gnyis/ gsang sgrub yang khol dang gsum/ las byang gter bum dang bzhi/ gsang khrid yang thig klong chen nag po dang lnga/ mkha' ri lcām sring gyi srog sgrub nag po dang drug gol/ 'di las mang nyung lhag chad yod pas spang bar byal/*

*gsum pa lung bstan gtad rgya bstan pa ni/ dus kyi snyigs ma lnga'i tshel/ chos dar la ma smin pas chos dpon log pa'i 'khrug dpon 'byung/ pha spun dme 'khrug dar bas sad dang ser ba mu ge 'byung/ zog pos grong yul khengs pas khyi bsnyon mi bsnyon 'byung/ bdud sprul nag po mang bas re chos byed yi mug skyes/ de 'dra'i dus su 'gro la skyabs mgon med/ padma bdag gis ma phod theb cig bzhag/ sgyu ru sgra zhes khang dmar skya bo'i sar/ skyed mang 'dzoms bkra shis zhes pa'i pha ma la mos snang tsam du dri med kun dga' zhes/ sngags 'chang sangs rgyas ye shes mchog sprul 'khrungs/ des ni 'brel tshad mkha' spyod gnas su khrid/ chos bdag chen po bla med don gyi spyod/ khyu mchog de drung chos 'di 'khol ba'i dbul/ 'khor gyi dangs ma rigs ldan lnga tsam 'byung/ bdud sprul rtags ra'i sha mtshan can/ log pa'i gces de'i bskrad thabs gces/ shar phyogs gnas su bdud sprul kha non la/ mtshan ldan rig ma dbang po sha mtshan can/ 'brel tshad thams cad zag med dgod pa 'byung/ de'i byin rlabs chos 'di dar cha yang/ shar phyogs u rgyan gyi mthil du 'byung ba'o// gzhan dang mi 'dra khyad par zab chos 'di/ yang dag las can de dang*

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<sup>597</sup> After this sentence, the TBRC scan of this manuscript flipped the recto and verso sides of the third folio, I have corrected and rearranged the content accordingly.

*'phrad par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya//*

Incipit 2

*u rgyan dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o//*

Incipit 3

*bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo//*

(2) Explicit [117a-118b]

DK4 is the manuscript version DK1 is based on. See DK1 above.

Explicit 1

*e ma mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/  
bsgom chen sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/  
mos par zhus pa'i ngos ma bzlog/  
skal ldan don du yi ger btab/  
phyi rabs don du gter la sbas/  
snod med rnams la gsang bar bya/  
cal col smra na dam tshig nyams/  
mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/  
khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/  
gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ zab rgya/ kha thaṃ/ [ḍākinī scripts] mkha'  
'gro mtsho rgyal gyis [sic] rnam thar/ o rgyan dri med kun dga'i gter nas bton pa'o//*

Explicit 2

*'khor ba'i mun nag gling rum na/  
mtsho rgyal sku gsum nyi ma shar/  
khams gsum sems can mun smag rnams/  
'od zer gcig gis gis [sic] gsal bar byas/  
'on kyang skal med chos can re/  
gsal ba'i nang nas mun pa nyul/  
nyi ma shar tshe snying med sdug/  
de bzhin che 'gyings zur za can/  
chos med 'chi kha nangs par sdug/  
mi lus rin chen thob pa'i dus/  
'dzam gling stong bskor ma byas nas/  
dam chos mdzad na legs par sems/  
ci 'gal 'khrul byung na bzod par gsol/  
maṃgalam [sic]/ bhawantu/ śubham/ rdzogs sol/  
kyai phrin las rnam dag sku gsung thugs/  
yon tan ma lus rgya che ba/  
rten bzhengs pa rnams la byin gyis rlobs/  
rten mchog tu gyur pa'i bkra shis shog/  
mi 'gyur lhun po sku yi mtha' bral rgyal ba'i sku/  
rgya gar paṇ chen bod la bka' drin che/  
padma las 'khrungs sku la 'das drung [sic] med/*

*da lta lho nub srin po'i kha gnon mdzad/  
 u rgyan rin po che yi bkra shis shog/  
 ye shes mkha' 'gro bod la bka' drin can/  
 kun tu bzang mo'i dngos sprul rgyal ba'i yum/  
 gsang sngags bstan pa dar rgyas mdzad pa'i ma/  
 yum mchog mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi bkra shis shog/  
 dam chos 'di bzhengs dge ba yi/  
 sbyin bdag bris pa thal mgos yi [sic]/  
 pha ma bu smad kha lag 'brel tshad dang/  
 'og rta bkal mdzo bzhon ma sems can rnams/  
 gnas mchog padma 'og kyi gzhal yas na/  
 rgyal dbang padma 'byung gnas yab yum gyi/  
 zhal mjal gsung thos sangs rgyas myur thob shog/  
 bkra shis dpal 'byor phum sum 'tshogs par shog/  
 dge'o// dge'o// dge'o//  
 gsung rab 'di yi gzhung la chad pa mang po yod pa gzab gzab chos nas yod dol// thugs  
 mnyes par mdzod//*

## 5.PL1

### (1) Incipit [262]

See DK2 above.

*[dākinī scripts]  
 chos sku snang ba mtha' yas//  
 longs sku thugs rje chen pol//  
 sprul sku padma 'byung gnas//  
 sku gsum 'gyur med kyi lha la phyag 'tshal lol//  
 mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par  
 thar pa rgyas par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba skyed pa'i phyir gsungs  
 so//*

### (2) Explicit [331]

See DK1 above.

*e ma ho// mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di//  
 ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis//  
 mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma ldog//  
 skal ldan don du yi ger bkod//  
 phyi rabs don du gter du sbas//  
 snod min rnams la gsang bar bya//  
 bab bcol smras na dan tshig nyams//  
 mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs//  
 khyu mchog de la dus su gtod//*

*gnyer ro gtad do sa ma ya//  
gab rgya// sbas rgya// gsang rgya// zab rgya// kha tham // bdag 'dra rig 'dzin padma gling  
pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag seng ge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drangs pa'o//*

## 6. PL2

### (1) Incipit [1b]

See DK2 above.

*[dākinī scripts]  
chos sku snang ba mtha' yas//  
longs sku thugs rje chen po//  
sprul sku padma 'byung gnas//  
sku gsum 'gyur med kyis [sic] lha la phyag 'tshal lo//  
mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa/ dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis [sic]  
rnam par thar pa/ rgyas par bkod pa ma 'ongs sems can chos la spro ba skye phyir gsungs sol//*

### (2) Explicit [76b]

PL2 contains a different explicit from all other versions. It seems to be added to mark the conclusion of this particular text, as it only includes two and a half chapters from the Drime Kunga/Padma gling pa corpus.

*dbyang can ma'i sprul pa mo/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis [sic] rnam par thar pa rdzogs sol//  
sa ma yā// rgya rgya rgya// [dākinī scripts]*

## 7. PL3

### (1) Incipit [23a]

PL3 begins on with the page number 23 and a general homage to Tathāgata Samantabhadra (not Samantabhadrī).

*bde gshegs kun tu bzang po la phyag 'tshal lo//*

### (2) Explicit

n/a.

## (8) PL4

### (1) Incipit [1b]

See DK1 and DK2 above.



*bde chen skun bzang mo la phyag mtshal lol//*

(2) Explicit [71b]

See DK1 above.

*e ma ho// mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di//  
ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyi  
mos pas zhus nas ngo ma ltogs//  
skal ldan don du yi ger bskod//  
phyi rab don du gter du sbas//  
snod min rnam la bsang bar bya/  
bab chol smras na yi dam tshig nyams//  
'kha' [sic] 'gro de [sic] bzhis thub par srungs//  
khyu mchog de la dus su bstod// gtod do grnyer ro sā mā yā// gtad rgya// rbas rgya// gab  
rgya// zab rgya// bsang rgya// kha tham dge'o bzhus dag kyis par byon// sprang po dgon po ming  
gi bri nam ni/ 'gro sems ma lu/ bkra shis/*

## 9. KDMG

(1) Incipit [146]

See DK2 above.

*chos sku snang ba mtha' yas//  
longs sku thugs rje chen po//  
sprul sku padma 'byung gnas//  
sku gsum dbyer med lha la phyag 'tshal lol//  
mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa/ dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam  
thar rgyas par bkod pa/ ma 'ongs sems can chos la spro ba bskyed phyir gsungs so//*

(2) Explicit [183]

See DK1 above.

*e ma ho//  
'tsho [sic] rgyal nga yi rnam mthar [sic] 'di//  
ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis//  
mos pas zhus pas ngo ma bzlogs//  
skal ldan don du yi ger bkod//  
phyi rabs don du gter du sbas//  
snod min rnams la gsang bar bya//  
bab chol smras na dan tshig nyams//  
mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs//  
bu mchog de la dus su gtod//  
gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya//*

*gab rgya// sbas rgya// gsang rgya// zab rgya// brda thim// lan gcig zhus dag//*

### 3 *Intra-Textual Comparison of Yeshe Tsogyel's Birth Episode*

The following comparison contains the episode of Yeshe Tsogyel's birth.<sup>598</sup> The three different groups of versions are marked in yellow (Drime Kunga Group), green (In-Between Group), and blue (Pema Lingpa Group). Significant textual differences are highlighted in red.

DK1	<i>g.yu ru sgrags kyi <b>grong mo che</b> zhes bya ba/ rgya gar gyi bhe ta dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du mas brgyan pa'i gnas/</i>
DK2	<i>bod kha ba can rgyal khams/ bod yul dbus g.yo ru sgrags kyi <b>grong mo che</b> zhes bya ba ni/ rgya gar gyi bhe ta dang mnyam po yon tan du mas brgyan pa'i gnas/</i>
DK3	<i>g.yu ru sgrags kyi <b>grong mo che</b> zhes bya ba na/ rgya gar gyi bhe ta dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du mas brgyan pa'i gnas/</i>
DK4	<i>g.yu ru sgrags kyi <b>grong mo che</b> zhes bya ba/ rgya gar gyi bhe ta dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du mas brgyan pa'i gnas/</i>
KT	<i>g.yung drung sgrags kyis <b>grong mo che</b> zhes bya ba/ rgya gar mkha' 'gro'i yul bai ta'i yul dang nyam pa/ yon tan du mas rgyan pa'i gnas/</i>
PL3	<i>g.yas tsang grag gi <b>grong mo che</b> zhes bya ba/ rgya gar bhe ha dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du ma dang ldan pa/</i>
PL4	<i>g.yas rtsang sgrogs gi <b>sgrong mo che</b> zhes bya ba/ rgyal gar bhe ta dang snyams pa/ yon tan du ma dang ldan pa/</i>
PL1	<i>kha ba can gyi rgyal khams/ bod yul dbus kyi sgrags kyi nang/ <b>tsha lung mkhar</b> zhes bya ba'i grong mo cher/ rgya gar be ha la'i yul dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du mas spras pa/</i>
PL2	<i>kha ba can gyis brgyal 'khams su/ bod yul 'bus kyis yar kyis nang/ <b>tsha lu 'khar</b> zhes bya ba'i grong mo cher/ brgya gar bhe ta la'i yul dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du mas spras pa/</i>
KDMG	<i>de yang kha ba can gyi rgyal khams/ bod yul dbus kyi sgrags kyi nang/ <b>tshal lung mkhar</b> zhes bya ba'i grong mo cher/ rgya gar bho ta la'i yul dang mnyam pa/ yon tan du mas spras pa/</i>

<sup>598</sup> DK1, 181-183; DK2, 4-8; DK3, 1b-4b; DK4, 4b-7a; KT, 491-493; PL1, 262-264; PL2, 1b-3b; PL3, 23a-24a; PL4, 1b-2b, KDMG, 146-147.

DK1	<i>phun sum tshogs pa'i grong khyer de'i byang phyogs nas/ shing tsan dan dkar dmar/ a ka ru'i nags kyis bskor ba'i ra ba na/ rtswa byang chub myu gu skyes pa'i skyed mos tshal/</i>
DK2	<i>phun sum tshogs pa'i grong khyer chen po de'i byang na/ phyogs kun shing tsan dan dkar dmar dang a ka ru'i nags kyis bskor ba'i rwa ba na/ rtsa byang chub myu gu skyes pa'i skyid mo'i tshal/</i>
DK3	<i>phum sum tshogs pa'i grong khyer chen po de'i byang phyogs na shing tsan dan dkar dmar/ a ka ru'i nags kyi skor ba'i ra ba na/ rtswa byang chub myu gu skyes pa'i skyed mos tshal/</i>
DK4	<i>phun sum tshogs pa'i grong khyer de'i byang phyogs nas/ shing tsan dan dkar dmar/ a ka ru'i nags kyis bskor ba'i ra ba na/ rtsa byang chub myu gu skyes pa'i skyed mos tshal/</i>
KT	<i>phun sum tshogs pa'i grong khyer chen po de'i byang phyogs na/ shing tsam dan dkar dmar a ka ru'i nags kyis bskor ba na/ rtsa ba byang chub myu gyu skyes pa'i skyed mos tshal/</i>
PL3	<i>de'i byang phyogs na shing tsan dan dkar dmar dang/ yang a ka ru nag po'i dra bas skor ba/ byang chub kyi myu gu skyes pa'i tshul/</i>
PL4	<i>de'i byang phyogs na shing rtsan tan dkar dmar dang/ a ka ru nag po'i ra bar skor ba/ byang chub gyi myu gu skye ba'i mtshal/</i>
PL1	n/a
PL2	n/a
KDMG	n/a

DK1	<i>me tog kud mu ta dang/ pun dha ri ka la sogs pa'i ljongs kyi dbus na/ yid 'ong du mas spras pa'i pho brang ljongs kyi tshal lu skor zhes bya ba gcig yod dol/</i>
DK2	<i>me tog ku mud ta dang/ punḍa rī ka dang bcas pa'i ljongs kyi dbus na/ yid 'ong du mas brgyan pa'i pho brang/ ljongs kyi tshal lu mkhar zhes bya ba gcig yod de/</i>
DK3	<i>me tog u mud ta dang/ pun dha ri ka dang/ bcas pa'i ljongs kyi dbus na/ yid 'ongs du mas brgyan pa'i pho brang/ ljongs kyi tshal lu bskor zhes bya ba gcig yod de/</i>
DK4	<i>me tog kud mu ta dang/ pun dha ri ka la sogs pa'i ljongs kyi dbus na/ yid 'ong du mas spras pa'i pho brang ljongs kyi tshal lu bskor zhes bya ba gcig yod dol/</i>
KT	<i>me tog ku mud ta dang/ pun da ri ka la sogs pa'i ljongs kyis dbus na yid 'ongs du mas spras pa'i pho brang ljongs kyis tshal lu skor zhes bya ba zhig yod dol/</i>
PL3	<i>me tog ku mu ta dang/ pun dha ri ka skyes pa'i ljongs kyi dbus na/ yid du 'ong ba'i 'tshams su skor zhes bya ba yong ngo//</i>
PL4	<i>me tog sku mu sta dang phun rta ri ka skye ba'i ljongs gyi dbus na/ yid du 'ong gi 'tshams su skor zhes bya ba yod dol/</i>
PL1	<i>rtsi shing nags tshal gyis bskor ba/</i> <i>me tog ku mu ta dang/ punḍa ri ka skyes pa'i dbus/ yid du 'ong ba'i tshal lu skor zhes bya ba yod pa/</i>
PL2	<i>de'i dbus su rgyal po'i pho brang lta na sdug cing nyams dga' ba/</i> <i>ci shing nag 'tshal gyis bskor ba/</i> <i>me tog ku mu ta dang/ pun dha ri skya ba'i dbus/ yid du 'ong ba'i tsha lu bskor bya ba yod/</i>
KDMG	<i>de'i dbus rgyal po'i 'pho brang lta na nyams dga' ba/</i> <i>rtsi shing nags tshal gyis bskor ba/</i> <i>me tog ku mutta dang panta ka ri ka skye pa'i dbus/ yid du 'ong ba'i tshal skor zhes bya ba yod pa /</i> <i>de'i dbus su rgyal po'i pho brang bltas shing nyams dga' ba/</i>

DK1	<i>de nas longs spyod ni gsum cu rtsa gsum gyi gnas dang mnyam pa/ 'du tshogs mi'i 'khor g.yog ni mtha' las 'das pa zhig 'dug nas/</i>
DK2	<i>de'i longs spyod ni gsum cu rtsa gsum gyi lha dang mnyam pa/ 'du tshogs mi'i 'khor g.yog ni mtha' las 'das pa zhig 'dug nas/</i>
DK3	<i>de yi longs spyod ni sum cu rtsa gsum gyi lha dang mnyam pa/ 'du tshogs mi'i 'khor g.yog ni mtha' las 'das pa zhig 'dug nas/</i>
DK4	<i>de nas longs spyod ni gsum cu rtsa gsum gyi gnas dang mnyam pa/ 'du tshogs mi'i 'khor g.yog ni mtha' las 'das pa zhig 'dug nas/</i>
KT	<i>de na longs spyod ni gsum cu rtsa gsum gyis gnas dang mnyam zhing/ 'du 'tshogs kyang ma'i 'khor g.yog mtha' las 'das pa zhig 'du ba/</i>
PL3	<i>de na longs spyod lha dang snyam// 'du 'tshogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa cig na//</i>
PL4	<i>de na longs spyod ni lha dang snyam/ 'du 'tshogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa gcig na/</i>
PL1	<i>longs spyod bsam gyis mi khyab pa lha'i 'byor ba ltar yod pa/</i>
PL2	<i>longs spyod bsam gyis mi khyab pa lta ba'i 'byor pa yod/</i>
KDMG	<i>longs spyod bsam gyis mi khyab pa lha'i 'byor ba ltar yod pa/</i>

DK1	de rnams kyi rgyal po ni btsad po <i>rdo rje gdan pa</i> zhes bya ba/ btsun mo ni <i>gsal gyi don grub lcām me</i> zhes bya ba/ <i>rigs btsun zhing mnga’ thang dang ldan par bzhugs so//</i> rgyal po yab yum rnams gnyis de la sras rgyal bu gnyis dang/ lha lcām dang <i>gsum</i> yod pa las/ kun gyi chung ngu de lha lcām padma lcām zhes bya ba/
DK2	de rnams kun gyi rgyal po ni btsan po <i>rdo rje dran pa</i> zhes bya ba/ btsun mo <i>snang gsal gyi don grub lcām mo</i> zhes bya ba <i>rigs btsun zhing mnga’ thang dang ldan par bzhugs so//</i> rgyal po yab yum rnams gnyis de la sras rgyal bu gnyis dang/ lha lcām bdun yod pa la/ bdun gyi chung ba de lha lcām padma gsal zhes bya ba
DK3	de rnams kun gyi rgyal po ni/ rtsad po <i>rdo rje dran pa</i> zhes bya ba/ btsun mo ni <i>gsal gyi don grub lcām me</i> zhes bya ba/ <i>rigs btsun zhing mnga’ thang dang ldan par bzhugs so//</i> rgyal po yab yum rnams gnyis de la sras rgyal bu gnyis dang/ lha lcām bdun yod pa la/ bdun gyi chung shos lha lcām padma lcām zhes bya ba
DK4	de rnams kyi rgyal po ni btsad po <i>rdo rje gdan pa</i> zhes bya ba/ btsun mo ni <i>gsal gyi don grub lcām me</i> zhes bya ba/ <i>rigs btsun zhing mnga’ thang dang ldan par bzhugs so//</i> rgyal po yab yum rnams gnyis de la/ sras rgyal bu gnyis dang/ lha lcām dang <i>gsum</i> yod pa las/ kun gyi chung ngu de lha lcām padma lcām zhes bya ba/
KT	de rnams kun gyis rgyal po ni/ gtsang po <i>rdo rje dran pa</i> zhes bya ste/ btsun mo ni <i>gsal gyis dron grub</i> zhes bya ba <i>rigs btsun zhing mnga’ thang dang ldan par bzhugs so//</i> rgyal po yab yum rnams gnyis la sras rgyal bu gnyis dang/ lha lcām bdun yod pa las/ kun gyis chung shos lha lcām padma lcām zhes bya ba/
PL3	yul de’i rgyal po’i bu mo rtsang bu <i>rdo rje dran pa</i> bya ba yong ngo// btsun mo <i>gsal gyi don grub</i> bya ba yod dol/ sras ni rgyal bu gnyis dang lha lcām bdun yod pa las// de rnams kyi chung shos lha lcām pad ma lcām zhes bya ba
PL4	yul de’i rgyal po rtsad bu <i>rdo rje dran pa</i> bya ba yod dol/ rtsun mo <i>bsal gyi don grub</i> bya ba yod dol/ sras ni rgyal bu gnyis dang lha lcām bdun yod pa la/ de rnams gyi chung shos lha lcām pad cam zhes bya ba/
PL1	de’i yul gyi rgyal po <i>sangs rgyas ye shes</i> zhes bya ba dang/ btsun mo <i>dge mtsho ma</i> zhes bya ba gnyis la sras ni rgyal bu gnyis dang/ lha lcām bdun yod pa/ de rnams kyi nang nas sras mo chung ba lha lcām padma lcām zhes bya ba
PL2	de’i yul gyis rgyal po <i>sangs rgyas ye shes</i> bya ba dang/ brtsun mo <i>dge mtsho ma</i> zhes bya ba gnyis la/ bsras ni rgyal bu gnyis dang lhas lcām bdun yod/ de rnams kyi nang nas bsras mo chung ba/ lhas lcām padma ltsal zhes bya ba/
KDMG	de’i yul gyi rgyal po <i>sangs rgyas ye shes</i> zhes bya ba dang/ btsun mo <i>dge mtsho ma</i> gnyis la/ sras rgyal bu gnyis dang lha lcām bdun yod/ de rnams kyi nang nas sras mo chung ba/ lha lcām padma lcām zhes bya ba

DK1	ngang ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ <i>spyod pa lhun zhing ngag snyan pa/</i> lta na sdug cing yid du 'ong ba/ <i>sku gzi mdangs dang ldan pa/</i> gsung snyan ngag tu smra ba/ thugs snying rje'i ngang rgyud dang ldan pa/ mtshan dang dpe byad du mas spras pa zhig yod do//
DK2	ngang ring zhing shes rgyud dul ba/ <i>spyod pa btsun zhing ngag snyan pa/</i> lta na sdug pa/ yid du'ong ba/ <i>sku gzi mdangs dang ldan pa/</i> gsung snyan ngag tu smra ba/ thugs snying rje'i ngang rgyud dang ldan pa/ mtshan dang dpe byad du mas spras pa zhig yod do//
DK3	ngang ring zhing shes rgyud dul ba/ <i>spyod pa lhun zhing ngag snyan pa/</i> blta na sdug pa yin du 'ong ba <i>sku gzi mdangs dang ldan pa</i> gsung snyam ngag du smra ba/ thugs snying rje'i dang rgyud dang ldan pa/ mthan dang dpe byad du mas spras pa zhig yod do//
DK4	ngang ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ <i>spyod pa lhun zhing ngag snyan pa/</i> lta na sdug cing yid du 'ong ba/ <i>sku gzi mdangs dang ldan pa/</i> gsung snyan ngag tu smra ba/ thugs snying rje'i ngang rgyud dang ldan pa/ mtshan dang dpe byad du mas spras pa zhig yod do//
KT	ngang rgyud ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ <i>spyod pa lhun zhing ngag snyan pa/</i> lta na sdug cing yid di 'ong ba/ <i>sku gzi brjid dang ldan pa/</i> gsung snyan ngag tu smra ba/ thugs snying rje'i rang rgyud ldan pa/ mtshan dang dpe byad du mas spras pa cig yod do//
PL3	ngang rgyud ring zhing rgyud dul ba// lta ba mdzes shing yind du 'ong ba// <i>sku mtshan dang ldan pa//</i> gsung snyan ngag smra ba// thugs ting nge 'dzin byang chub sems dang ldan pa zhig yod de//
PL4	ngang ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ lta na mdzes shing yid du 'ong ba/ <i>sku mtshan dang ldan pa/</i> sgra snyen ngag du smra ba/ thugs ting nge 'dzin byang chub sems dpa' dang ldan pa zhig yod de/
PL1	ngang ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ mdzes shing yid du 'ong ba/ <i>sku la mtshan dang dpe byad kyis spras pa/</i> <i>ngag snyan smra ba la mkhas pa/ thugs la ting nge 'dzin ni rgyun la 'char ba/</i>
PL2	ngang ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ mdzes zhing yid du 'ongs ba/ <i>sku la mtshan dang dpe byad kyis spras pa/</i> <i>ngag snyan sgra ba la mkhas pa/ thugs gting nge 'dzin rgyud la 'byar ba/</i>
KDMG	ngang ring zhing rgyud dul ba/ <i>sku la mtshan dang dpe byad kyis spras pa/</i> <i>ngag nas smra ba la mkhas pa/ thugs la ting 'dzin ni rgyud la 'char ba/</i>



DK1	<p><i>lha lcam de ni mtshan dang ldan pa'i bu mo zhig yod pa/</i>  <i>phyi ltar du gzugs sprul mchog gi mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>nang ltar du rdo rje phag mo'i mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar du kun tu bzang mo'rol pa'i mkha' 'gro/</i></p>
DK2	<p><i>lha lcam de ni mtshan nyid dang ldan pa'i bu mo zhig yin tel/</i>  <i>phyi ltar du gzugs sprul sku mchog gi mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>nang ltar du rdo rje phag mo mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar du kun tu bzang mo'i rol pa'i mkha' 'gro/</i></p>
DK3	<p><i>lha lcam de ni mtshan nyid dang ldan pa'i bu mo zhig yin tel/</i>  <i>phyi ltar du gzugs sprul sku mchog gi mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>nang ltar du rdo rje phag mo mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar du kun tu bzang mo'rol pa'i mkha' 'gro/</i></p>
DK4	<p><i>lha lcam de ni mtshan dang ldan pa'i bu mo zhig yod pa/</i>  <i>phyi ltar du gzugs sprul mchog gi mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>nang ltar du rdo rje phag mo'i mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar du kun tu bzang mo'rol pa'i mkha' 'gro/</i></p>
KT	<p><i>lha lcam de ni mtshan dang ldan pa'i bu mo zhig yin tel/</i>  <i>phyir ltar na gzugs sprul mchog gi mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>nang ltar du rdo rje mkha' 'gro/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar na kun tu bzang mo'rol pa'i mkha' 'gro stel/</i></p>
PL3	<p><i>lha lcam de yang phyi ltar gzugs sku mchog gi mkha' 'gro ma//</i>  <i>nang ltar rdo rje pha mol/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar kun tu bzang mo'rol pa'i mkha' 'gro ma//</i></p>
PL4	<p><i>lha lcam de yang phyi ltar bzugs sku mchog gi mkha' 'gro ma/</i>  <i>nang ltar rdo rje phag mol/</i>  <i>bsang ba lta kun tu bzang mo'rol pa'i mkha' 'gro ma/</i></p>
PL1	<p><i>byang chub kyi sems dang ldan pa'i lha lcam de yang/</i>  <i>phyi ltar na gzugs kyi mkha' 'gro ma/</i>  <i>nang ltar na rdo rje phag mol/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar na kun tu bzang mo'i rol pa/</i></p>
PL2	<p><i>byang chub kyis sems dang ldan pa/ lha lcam de yang</i>  <i>phyi ltar na gzugs kyis mkha' 'gro ma/</i>  <i>nang ltar rdo rje mkha' 'gro phag mol/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar na kun tu bzang mo'i rol pa/</i></p>
KDMG	<p><i>byang chub kyi sems dang ldan pa/ lha lcam de yang</i>  <i>phyi ltar na gzugs kyi mkha' 'gro ma/</i>  <i>nang ltar na rdo rje phag mol/</i>  <i>gsang ba ltar na kun tu bzang mo'i rol pa/</i></p>

DK1	lhun grub sku gsung thugs dang ldan pa'i mtshan ldan gzhon nu de/ dgongs pa chos nyid kyis dbyings na bzhugs nas kyang/ gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad pa/ rgyal ba'i thugs rjes skul ba dang/ <i>thugs bskyed smon lam gyi dbang gis/ yum gyi bde ba'i</i> lhums su zhugs tel/
DK2	lhun grub sku gsum dang ldan pa'i mtshan ldan gzhon nu stel/ gdongs pa chos nyid kyis dbyings na bzhugs kyang gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad par rgyal ba'i thugs rjes bskul ba dang/ <i>thugs bskyed smon lam gyi dbang gis yum bde ba'i</i> lhums su zhugs so//
DK3	lhun grub sku gsum dang ldan pa'i mtshan ldan gzhon nu stel/ dgongs pa chos nyid kyis dbyings na bzhugs kyang/ gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad par rgyal ba'i thugs rjes bskul ba dang/ <i>thugs bskyed smon lam gyi dbang gis yum bde ba'i</i> lhums su zhugs tel/
DK4	lhun grub sku gsung thugs dang ldan pa'i mtshan ldan gzhon nu de/ dgongs pa chos nyid kyis dbyings na bzhugs nas kyang gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad pa/ rgyal ba'i thugs rjes bskul ba dang/ <i>thugs bskyed smon lam gyi dbang gis/ yum gyi bde ba'i</i> lhums su zhugs stel/
KT	lhun grub sku gsum dang ldan pa'i mtsahn ldan bu mo de dgongs pa chos nyid kyis klong na bzhugs kyang/ gzugs sku rnam gsum gyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad bar rgyal ba'i thugs rjes bskul ba dang/ <i>thugs skyed smon lam gyi dbang gi yum bda ba'i</i> lhum su zhugs tel/
PL3	sku gsum mtshan dang ldan pa'i bu mo de yang// dgongs pa chos nyid ngang la bzhugs kyang// gzugs sku gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad par rgyal ba rnam kyis skul ba dang// <i>theg chen</i> <sup>599</sup> <i>smon lam sbang gyis yab yum sbyor ba'i</i> lhum su zhugs tel//
PL4	sku gsum gyi mtshan dang ldan pa'i bu mo de yang/ sgongs pa chos nyid kyis ngang la zhugs kyang/ bzugs sku gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdad par brgyan ba rnam kyis skul ba dang/ <i>thugs bskyed smon lam dbang gyis yab yum spyod pa'i</i> lhums su zhugs tel/
PL1	<i>rgyal bas gang la gang 'dul du sprul nas/ 'gro ba'i don du lha lcam du skye ba bzhes pa/</i> de lta bu'i lha lcam de yang thugs chos dbyings na bzhugs kyang/ gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad par dgongs nas/ <i>btsun mo gsal byed sgron ma'i</i> lhums su zhugs so//
PL2	<i>rgyal bas gang la gang 'dul du sprul pa/ 'gro ba'i don du lhas lcam du skye ba bzhes pa ni/</i> de lta bu'i lhas lcam de yang thugs chos dbyings na bzhugs kyang/ gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don byed par dgongs nas/ <i>brtsun mo gsal byed sgron ma'i</i> lhums su zhugs so//
KDMG	<i>rgyal bas gang la gang 'dul du sprul nas/ 'gro ba'i don du lha lcam du skye ba bzhes/</i> de lta bu'i lha lcam de yang thugs chos dbyings na zhugs kyang/ gzugs sku rnam gnyis kyis 'gro ba'i don mdzad par dgongs nas/ <i>btsun mo gsal byed sgron ma'i</i> lhums su zhugs/

<sup>599</sup> Possibly a mistake from deciphering the “condensed letter” (*bsdus yig*) for *thugs bskyed* in the Umed script.

DK1	<i>sa pho byi ba'i lo'i dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bcu'i snga dror sku bltams nas/  mdzad pa'i yon tan gyis rtags mang du grub pas/ the tshom dang bral te mtshan nyid  dang ldan par yid ches so//  mdzad pa'i rnam thar du mas mngon par dga' ba 'di lta bu nyid do//</i>
DK2	<i>sa pho byi ba'i dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bcu'i snga dro bltams nas/  mdzad pa yon tan gyi rtags mang du grub pas the tshom dang bral te mtshan nyid  dang ldan par yid ches so//  mdzad pa'i rnam thar du mas mngon par dga' ba 'di lta bu nyid do//</i>
DK3	<i>byi ba'i dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bcu'i snga gro sku bltams nas/  mdzad pa yon tan gyi rtags mang du grub pas/ the tshom dang bral te mtshan nyid  dang ldan par yid ches so//  mdzad pa'i rnam thar du mas mngon par dga' ba 'di lta bu nyid do//</i>
DK4	<i>sa pho byi ba'i lo'i dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bcu'i snga dro sku bltams nas/  mdzad pa'i yon tan gyis rtag mang du grub pas/ the tshom dang bral te mtshan nyid  dang ldan par yid ches so//  mdzad pa'i rnam thar du mas mngon par dga' ba 'di lta bu nyid do//</i>
KT	<i>sa pho byi ba'i dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bcu'i snga dro sku ltam nas/  mdzad spyod rnams la yon tan gyis rtags mang du grub pas/ the tshom dang bral te  mtshan nyid ldan pa yid ches so//  mdzad pa'i rnam thar du mas rnam par dag pa 'di lta bu nyid do//</i>
PL3	<i>sa po byi ba'i lo/ sbyid [spyir] zla ra ba'i tshes pa co lnga la sku ltams so//</i>
PL4	<i>sa pho byi ba'i lo/ spyid zla ra ba'i tshes bco lnga'i lnga gro sgro ku stams so//</i>
PL1	n/a
PL2	n/a
KDMG	n/a

DK1	yum gyi lhum su zhugs nas zla ba gcig gi ngo lon pa'i tshe na/ yum gyi snang ba la nyams sam dngos su bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/
DK2	yum gyi lhum su zhugs nas zla ba gcig gi ngo lon pa'i tshe na/ yum gyi mnal lam dang nyams sam dngos su/ bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/
DK3	yum gyi lhum su zhugs nas zla ba gcig gi ngo lon pa'i tshe na/ yum gyi sna la lam dang nyams sam dngos su/ bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/
DK4	yum gyi lhum su zhugs nas/ zla ba gcig gi ngo lon pa'i tshe na/ yum gyi snang ba la nyams sam dngos su bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/
KT	yum gyis lhum su zhugs nas zla ba cig gi ngo lon po'i tshe na/ yum gyis snang ba la bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/
PL3	<i>de yang gzhan dang mthu stobs dang yon tan gyi khyad par ni//</i> yum gyi lho bar zhugs nas zla ba gcig na <i>yum gyi nyams snang rmi lam du//</i> bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos rang la khrus gsol ba dang//
PL4	<i>de yang bzhan dang mthu stobs dang yon tan gyi khyad pa rtags ni/</i> yum gyi lhum(?) bar zhugs nas zla ba gcig nas <i>yum gyis nyams su snang rmi lam la/</i> bud med dkar mo'i tshogs mang pos mo rang la khrus bsol ba dang/
PL1	<i>de'i dus su ngo mtshar ba'i ltas mang po byung ngo// de yang nam mkha' nas dngul</i> <i>dkar gyi dril bu spyi gtsug tu thim pa dang/</i> yum gyi lhum su zhugs nas zla ba gcig na/
PL2	<i>nyams snang dang rmi lam du</i> bud med dkar mo mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/ <i>de dus su ngo mtshar ba'i rtags mang po byung ngo// nam mkha' nas dngo dkar kyis</i> <i>dril bu gcig spyi grtsugs du thim pa dang/</i> yum gyis lhum su zhugs nas bzla ba gcig la/
KDMG	<i>nyams su snang dang smi lam du</i> bud med dkar mo mang pos 'khrus gsol ba dang/ <i>de'i dus su ngo mtshar ba'i rtags mang po byung ngo// nam mkha' nas dngul dkar</i> <i>gyi dril bu gcig spyi thog tu thim pa dang/</i> yum gyi lhum su zhugs nas zla ba gcig na/ <i>nyams snang dang rmi lam du</i> bud med dkar mo mang pos khrus gsol ba dang/

DK1	<p>sngon mo'i tshogs mang pos me tog 'thor ba dang/  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang/  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos rgyan 'dogs pa dang/  ljang mo'i tshogs mang pos bskor ba byed pa dang/  gzhon nu bcu drug ma lang tsho rgyas pas nub srod kyi dus su/ thun mi bcag par  gsol 'debs kyi sgra sgrogs pa byung ngo//</p>
DK2	<p>sngon mo'i tshogs mang pos me tog 'thor ba dang/  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang/  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos rgyan 'dog pa dang/  ljang mo'i tshogs mang pos bskor bas bskor ba dang/  bzhon nu bcu drug ma mang po lang tsho rgyas mas bskor ba/ nub mo srod kyi dus  su thun mi chag par gsol ba 'debs pa'i sgra sgrog pa byung ngo//</p>
DK3	<p>sngon mo'i tshogs mang pos me tog 'thor ba dang/  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang/  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos brgyan 'dogs pa dang/  ljang mo'i tshogs mang pos bskor ba bskor ba dang/  gzhon nu drug ma mang po lang 'tsho rgyas mas bskor ba/ nub mo sgong kyi dus su  thun mi chag par gsol ba 'debs pa'i sgra sgrog pa 'byung ngo//</p>
DK4	<p>sngon mo'i tshogs mang po'i me tog 'thor ba dang/  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang/  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos rgyan btags pa dang/  ljang mo'i tshogs mang pos bskor ba byed pa dang/  gzhon nu bcu drug ma lang tsho rgyas pa'i/ nub srod kyi dus su/ thun mi bcag par  gsol 'deb kyi sgra sgrogs pa byung ngo//</p>
KT	<p>sngon mo'i tshogs mang pos me tog mthor ba dang/  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang/  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos rgyan 'dogs pa dang/  ljang khu'i tshogs mang pos skor ba bskor ba dang/  gzhon nu bcu drug lang mtsho rgyas pas/ nub kyis dus su thun mi 'chag par/ gsol  'debs kyis sgra sgrog pa byung ngo//</p>
PL3	<p>sngon mo'i tshog mang pos me tog gtor ba dang//  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang//  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos rgyan 'dogs pa dang//  ljang khu'i tshogs mang pos [b]skor ba byed pa dang//  <i>khye'u bcu drug lon pa mang pos gsol ba 'debs pa rmis sol//</i></p>
PL4	<p>sngon mo'i tshogs mang pos me tog stor ba dang/  ser mo'i tshogs mang pos bdud rtsi 'dren pa dang/  dmar mo'i tshogs mang pos brgyan rtogs pa dang/  ljang mo'i tshogs mang ps skor ba byed pa dang/  <i>khye'u bcu drug lon pa mang pos bsol ba 'debs pa rmis sol//</i></p>
PL1	<p>sngon mo tshogs nas me tog 'thor ba dang/  ser mo tshogs nas spos dud 'thul ba dang/  dmar mo tshogs nas rgyan 'dogs pa dang/  ljang mo tshogs nas skor ba byed pa dang/  <i>khye'u tshogs nas gsol ba 'debs pa dang/ yum gyi lus kyang 'od dang ldan par gyur  te/</i></p>

PL2	<p><i>sngon mo tshogs nas [2b.5] me tog gtor ba dang/</i>  <i>ser mo tshogs nas spros dung thul ba dang/</i>  <i>dmar mo tshogs nas brgyan 'dogs pa dang/</i>  <i>ljang mo tshogs nas [2b.6] bskor ba byed pa dang/</i>  <i>khye'u tshogs nas gsol ba btab pa dang/ yum gyis lus kyang 'od dang ldan pa 'gyur</i>  <i>rol/</i></p>
KDMG	<p><i>sngon mo tshogs nas me tog gtor ba dang/</i>  <i>ser mo tshogs nas spos dud 'thul ba dang/</i>  <i>dmar mo tshogs nas rgyan 'dogs pa dang/</i>  <i>ljang mo tshogs nas bskor ba byed pa dang/</i>  <i>khye'u tshogs nas gsol ba btab pa dang/ yum gyi lus kyang 'od dang ldan par gyur</i>  <i>tol/</i></p>

DK1	<i>sku btsas nas zla ba gcig lon pa'i ngos na sku la 'od 'dom gang ba/ gsung la chos kyi rang sgra/ thugs kyang 'od gsal mnyam bzhag dang ldan/ sku btsas nas zla ba brgyad lon pa na/ nyin gyi dus su 'ja' dang 'od kyi gur nang du bzhugs pa dang/</i>
DK2	<i>sku btsas nas zla ba gcig lon pa'i ngo na/ sku la 'od 'doms gang ba dang/ gsung chos kyi rang sgra dang/ thugs 'od gsal mnyam gzhag dang ldan no// sku btsas nas zla ba brgyad lon pa na/ nyin mo'i dus su 'ja' dang 'od kyi gur khang nang na bzhugs/</i>
DK3	<i>sku bcas nas zla ba gcig lon pa'i ngo na/ sku la 'od 'dom gang ba dang/ gsung chos kyi rang sgra dang thugs 'od gsal mnyam bzhag dang ldan no// sku btsas nas zla ba brgyad lon pa na/ nyin mo'i dus su 'ja' 'od kyi gur khang nang na bzhugs/</i>
DK4	<i>sku btsas nas zla ba<sup>600</sup> brgyad lon pa'i pa na/ nyin gyi dus su 'ja' dang 'od kyi gur nang du bzhugs pa dang/</i>
KT	<i>sku btsas nas zla ba cig lon pa'i dus na/ sku la 'od 'doms gang tsam 'phro zhing/ gsung gi chos kyis rang sgra sgrog pa dang/ thugs kyis 'od gsal mnyam nyid mchog dang ldan no// sku btsas nas zla ba brgyad lon pa na/ nyin gyis dus su 'ja' 'od kyis gur nang na bzhugs pa dang/</i>
PL3	<i>bu mo sku 'khrungs dus 'od 'dom kyang gang pa dang/ gsung chos kyi rang sgra/ thugs 'od gsal gyi nyams rtogs dang ldan pa/ zla ba brgyad lon ci na/ mngon shes dang/ rdzu 'phrul bsam gyis mi khyab pa ston no//</i>
PL4	<i>bu lo sku 'khrungs pa'i dus 'od 'doms gang pa dang/ snga chos kyis rang gra/ thugs 'od gsal mnyam bzhag dang ldan no// zla ba rgyad lon rtsam na/ mngon shes dang rdzu 'phrul bsam gyi mi khyab pa ston no//</i>
PL1	<i>zla ba brgyad lon pa dang/ nyin mo 'ja' 'od kyi gur phub pa dang/</i>
PL2	<i>bzla ba brgyad lon pa dang/ snyin mo 'ja' 'od gyis gur phub pa dang/</i>
KDMG	<i>zla ba brgyad lon pa dang/ nyin mo 'ja' 'od kyi gur phub pa dang/</i>

<sup>600</sup> Here the manuscript seems to be missing a line and skipping ahead (*gcig lon pa'i ngo na/ sku la 'od 'dom gang ba dang/ gsung chos kyi rang sgra dang thugs 'od gsal mnyam bzhag dang ldan no// sku btsas nas zla ba*).

DK1	<i>nub kyi dus su mkha' 'gro ma gzhon nu'i sku tshogs mang po dang rol rtsed mdzad dol//</i>
DK2	<i>nub kyi dus su mkha' 'gro ma gzhon nu'i tshogs mang po dang rol par mdzad dol//</i>
DK3	<i>nub kyi dus su mkha' 'gro ma gzhon nu'i tshogs mang po dang rol bnad mdzad dol//</i>
DK4	<i>nub kyi dus su mkha' 'gro ma gzhon nu'i sku tshogs mang po dang rol rtsed mdzad dol//</i>
KT	<i>nub kyis dus su mkha' 'gro gzhon nu'i tshogs mang po dang rol rtsed mdzad dol//</i>
PL3	n/a
PL4	n/a
PL1	<i>nub mo gzhon nu tshogs nas rol rtsed mdzad pa dang/ de nas zla ba dgu ngo bcu lon nas/ bya'i lo dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bco lnga'i snga dro nyi shar du su sku bltams sol// gzhan gyi zla skyed las mo'i zhag skyed mtho bar gyur/ gzhan gyi lo skyed bas mo'i zla skyed che bar gyur tel</i>
PL2	<i>nub mo gzhon nu tshogs nas rol brtsed mdzad pa dang/ de nas bzla ba dgu ngo bcu nas bya'i lo/ spyid bzla ra ba'i tshes bcu mang gro nyi ma shar dus su bltam sol// gzhan gyis bzla bskyed las mo'i zhag bskyed 'tho ba gyur/ gzhan gyis lo bskyed las mo'i bzla bskyed 'tho bar 'gyur rol//</i>
KDMG	<i>nub mo gzhon nu tshogs nas rol rtsed mdzad pa dang/ de nas zla ba dgu ngo bcu lon nas bya'i lo/ dpyid zla ra ba'i tshes bco lnga'i snga dro nyi shar dus sku bltams sol// gzhan gyi zla bskyed las mo'i zhag bskyed mtho bar gyur/ gzhan gyi lo bskyed bas mo'i zla ba bskyed che bar gyur tol//</i>



DK1	<i>lo gcig bzhangs pa'i dus na/ gzhon nu pho mo 'khor mang po bsdus nas 'og min gyi bkod pa la sogs pa dbang bde chen rol pa'i spyod pa skyong bar mdzad dol/ dgung lo brgyad bzhes pa'i dus na/ mngon par shes pa dang rdzu 'phrul gyi rtag tu ma nges pas don ston par mdzad dol/</i>
DK2	<i>lo gcig song ba'i dus su gzhon nu pho mo'i 'khor mang po 'dus nas 'og min gyi bkod pa la sogs dbang bde chen rol pa'i spyod pa skyong bar mdzad dol/ dgung lo brgyad bzhes pa'i dus su mngon par shes pa dang/ rdzu 'phrul gyi rtags du mas nges pa'i don bstan par mdzad dol/</i>
DK3	<i>lo gcig song ba'i dus su gzhon nu pho mo'i 'khor mang po zhus nas/ 'og min gyis bkod pa la sogs dbang bde chen rol pa'i spyod pa skyong bar mdzad dol/ gung lo brgyad pa zhes pa'i dus su mngon par shes pa dang/ rdzu phrul gyi rtags du mas nges pa'i don ston par mdzad dol/</i>
DK4	<i>lo gcig bzhangs pa'i dus na/ gzhon nu pho mo 'khor mang po bsdus nas 'og min gyi bkod pa la sogs pa dbang bde chen rol pa'i spyod pa skyong bar mdzad dol/ dgung lo brgyad bzhes pa'i dus na/ mngon par shes pa dang rdzu 'phrul gyi rtag tu ma nges pas don ston par mdzad dol/</i>
KT	<i>lo cig bzhes pa'i dus su gzhon nu pho mo'i 'khor mang po sdus nas/ 'og min gyis bkod pa la sogs pa/ dbang bde chen rol pa'i spyod par mdzad cing/ dgung lo brgyad bzhes pa'i dus su yang mngon par shes pa dang rdzu 'phrul gyis rtags du mas nges pa'i don brtan par mdzad la/</i>
PL3	n/a
PL4	n/a
PL1	<i>lo gcig lon nas gsang chen rol pa'i padmor spyod/ lo brgyad lon nas mngon shes rdzu 'phrul ldan/</i>
PL2	<i>lo cig lon nas dbang chen rol pa'i pad mo spyod/ lo brgyad lon nas mngon shes rdzu sprul ldan/</i>
KDMG	<i>lo gcig lon nas dbang chen rol pa'i dpal mo spyod/ lo brgya lon nas mngon shes rdzu 'phrul ston/</i>

DK1	<i>dgung lo bcu gcig bzhes pa'i dus na/ rgyud sde bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsung ba dang/ yid spyod bde ba'i spyod pa mang pos yul gyi skye bo mang po dbang du bsdus sol/</i> <i>dgung lo bcu drug bzhes pa'i dus su/ rgya gar bhi rya'i rgyal bus btsun mo blang du btang ba'i mi byung stel/</i>
DK2	<i>dgung lo bcu gcig bzhes pa'i dus su rgyud sde bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsungs pa dang/ yid spyod bde ba'i spyod pa mang pos yul gyi skye bo mang pos dbang du bsdus sol/</i> <i>dgung lo bcu drug bzhes pa'i dus su/ rgya gar bhi dza ra'i rgyal po'i btsun mor slong ba'i bang chen btang stel/</i>
DK3	<i>gung lo bcu cig zhes pa'i dus su rgyud sde bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsungs pa dang/ yid spyod bde ba'i spyod pa mang pos yul gyi skye bo mang pos dbang du bsdus sol/</i> <i>gung lo bcu drug bzhes pa'i dus su/ rgya gar bhi dza ra'i rgyal po'i btsun mor slong ba'i mi btang byung stel/</i>
DK4	<i>dgung lo bcu gcig bzhes pa'i dus na/ rgyud sde bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsung ba dang/ yid spyod bde ba'i spyod pa mang pos yul gyi skye bo mang po dbang du bsdus sol/</i> <i>dgung lo bcu drug bzhes pa'i dus su/ rgya gar bhi rya'i rgyal bus btsun mo blang du btang ba'i mi byung stel/</i>
KT	<i>dgung lo bcu gcig bzhes pa'i dus su rgyud sde bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsungs pa dang/ yid spyod bde ba'i spyod pa mang pos yul gyis skye bo mang po dbang gu bsdus sol/</i> <i>dgung lo bcu drug bzhes pa'i dus su rgya gar bir bhya ra'i rgyal po'i btsun mor slong du byung stel/</i>
PL3	<i>lo bcu gcig lon pa'i dus su/ rgyud bla na med pa'i chos mang du gsungs pa dang/ yid kyi spyod lam bde bas yul mi'i skye bo dbang du bsdus/</i> <i>lo bcu drug lon pa'i dus su rgya gar bhe ha'i rgyal pos btsun mor [gtor] stong dgos ser ba'i mi byung stel/</i>
PL4	<i>lo cig lon pa'i dus su/ rgyud bla na med pa'i chos mang du sung pa dang/ yid skyi spyod lam bde bas yul gyi ske bu dbang du 'dus/</i> <i>lo bcu drug lon pa'i dus su rgya gar dang bhe rta'i rgyal pos btsun mor stong sgos zer ba'i mi 'byung stel/</i>
PL1	<i>bcu gcig lon nas bla med chos gsungs/ yid kyis spyod lam skye bo dbang du sdud/</i> <i>bcu drug lon nas chos kyi bsam pa skyes/ de dus rgya gar be ha la'i rgyal pos nga'i btsun mo la lha lcam ster dgos zer ba'i bang chen pa btang stel/</i>
PL2	<i>bcu gcig lon nas bla med chos mang gsungs/ yid kyis spyod lam skyob dbang bskur/</i> <i>bcu drug lon nas chos kyi bsam pa skyes/ de dus rgya gar bhe ta la'i rgyal pos/</i> <i>nga'i btsun mo la lhas lcam btong dgos zer ba'i bang chen pa btang stel/</i>
KDMG	<i>bcu gcig lon nas bla med chos gsungs/ yid kyis spyod lam skye bo dbang du sdud/</i> <i>bcu drug lon nas chos kyi bsam pa skyes/ de dus rgya gar bho ta la'i rgyal pos/ nga'i btsun mo la lha lcam gtong dgos zer ba'i bang chen pa btang stel/</i>

## Appendix II *Synopsis of the Extensive Life*

There are two identical photocopies of the Umed manuscript. One is reproduced as a single work (TBRC W8LS19260) and the other included in volume 65 of a collection entitled *Old and Rare Books Collected from Kham* (*Khams khul nas 'tshol bsdu zhus pa'i dpe rnying dpe dkon*, TBRC W3PD982). This work is also included in volume 6 of *Garland of White Lotuses: Liberation Stories of Great Female Lives in Tibet* (*'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*, TBRC W1KG16649) as a computer input version.

Here I provide a content synopsis of the *Extensive Life*, marking the page and folio numbers in the manuscript as well as the computer input version,<sup>601</sup> and note whether it belongs to the category of narrative or speech.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
5.1-6.19	1-4a.1	Narrative	A first-person versed praise by Yeshe Tsogyel to Padmasambhava in verse; also a brief summary of their activities together.
6.20-7.1	4a.1-4a.3	Narrative	Biographical details about Yeshe Tsogyel's birthplace (Mkhar chu), names of Yeshe Tsogyel's father (Rgyas sras mkhar phub), mother (Rtsang [sic] za sbas sgron), and brother (Dpal dbang phyug).
7.2-14	4a.3-5a.1	Narrative	Birth of Yeshe Tsogyel. She entered the womb in the 8th month of the Wood Bird Year (745), when the star is at Namso; she was born in the 4th month (next year? 746), when the star is aligned at Gyel. Both her mother and father had auspicious dreams and decided to name her Yeshe Tsogyel.
7.14-8.1	5a.1-5b.1	Narrative	Yeshe Tsogyel felt devotion in Dharma and wanted to practice; she had a dialogue with her mother, father, and brother, who had doubts about her intention.
8.2-13	5b.2-6a.5	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel sang a song ( <i>mgur</i> ), lamenting her inferior female birth and adverse situation for practice.

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<sup>601</sup> The folio numbers in the two reproductions of the manuscript are the same.

<b>PAGE NUMBER</b>	<b>FOLIO NUMBER</b>	<b>GENRE</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>
8.14-8.21	6a.5-6b.4	Speech	Her father still had doubts. To address her father's doubt, Yeshe Tsogyel sang another song, stressing that she was qualified to practice.
9.1-5	6b.5-7a.1	Narrative	Local people thought the girl was marvelous. Yeshe Tsogyel had a dream of the stars spreading out and the sun sets at dung; but was dismissed by her brother as bad karma.
9.5-10.5	7a.1-8a.4	Speech	Thinking about practicing, Yeshe Tsogyel made a supplication to Padmasambhava, asking for the opportunity to practice and expressing her wish to be his future companion. Padmasambhava appeared from the sky and had a conversation with Tsogyel. He then gave her the mantra "Om ā hūṃ vajra guru padma siddhi hūṃ" and disappeared from the sky.
10.5-19	8a.5-9a.2	Speech	Thinking that she did not get to hear the dharma, Tsogyel sang another song, comparing other women with herself. Her father praised her for her resolution to practice.
10.20-11.10	9a.2-9b.4	Speech	Another song expressing Ysogyel's wish to practice and comparing other women with herself.
11.10-12.16	9b.4-11a.4	Speech	Her brother and mother asked where she would go for practice, Tsogyel sang another song, comparing other women with herself, regretting her inferior female birth. She was thinking about becoming a nun and asking Padmasambhava to take her as a disciple.
12.17-13.11	11a.4-12a.2	Narrative	A khandroma appeared from the sky and inquired about her faith in dharma. Tsogyel again stressed that she is different from other women, and asked her "are you going to help me or hinder me?"
13.12-14	12a.2-12a.5	Narrative	The khandroma told Tsogyel when she reaches thirteen, she should go to Samye and promised to help her. Then she disappeared.
13.15-15.1	12a.5-14a.1	Narrative	Yeshe Tsogyel (now thirteen) prepared to leave for Samye, her parents asked her if she needs food or clothing, but she refused, saying there was no need. Her parents promised to give her whatever she wants, but she again refused food, clothing, or wealth. Yeshe Tsogyel left and had her last conversation with her parents.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
15.1-13	14a.1-14b.2	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel made a supplication to the guru, lamenting the female body and praising herself for her perseverance, faith, and intelligence.
15.13-16.9	14b.2-15b.3	Narrative	While on the road, Yeshe Tsogyel experienced difficulties of not having food, she became depressed and did not know what to do. Again, she encouraged herself to persevere.
16.10-17.1	15b.3-16a.6	Narrative	A rainbow appeared in the direction of Samye and Tsogyel's hair became the color of rainbow light. On her way, she met a person coming from the direction of Samye, noting her strange appearance, that person asked where she is going. After answering his (?) question, Tsogyel gave him (?) blessing. This person inquired about her lineage and birth, she also answered.
17.2-18.14	16a.6-17b.1	Narrative	When Tsogyel arrived at Samye, the king was also sick. She made maṇḍala offerings to Padmasambhava, who in turn asked her reason to come here and her family lineage. She explained and requested teaching. Padmasambhava asked whose companion she was going to be, she first asked to be changed into a male body, but when Padmasambhava explained that she needs to remain in a female body for them to be inseparably united, she expressed her resolution to be his companion as well as future knowledge-holders.
18.14-19.8	17b.1-18b.6	Speech	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel what kind of emanations she would have, Tsogyel answered that there are five: body, speech, mind, virtue, and action. He again asked whether she will be the companion for future knowledge holders, she confirmed and mentioned that Padmasambhava and her will meet in a female bird year.
19.8-14	18b.6-19a.3	Speech	Padmasambhava explained to Yeshe Tsogyel his five emanations.
19.15-20.18	19a.3-20a.7	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel requested Padmasambhava to explain her dream to her. It was about signs appearing in different directions (east—sun, south—golden stupa, west—peacock, north—water, center—flower), Padmasambhava explained this as a good dream (east—sun—Padmasambhava himself, south—golden stupa—future knowledge holders, west—peacock—

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
			good speeches, north—river—teaching descending to all beings, center—flower—future great son of the end of obstructions). Tsogyel was happy and asked about another dream.
20.18-22.11	20a.7-22a.6	Speech	A praise of Padmasambhava by Tsogyel, she also asked for teachings and prophecies.
22.12-20	22a.6-22b.5	Speech	Padmasambhava agreed and told her she will be inseparable from him and gave her the uncontaminated method.
22.20-23.3	22b.5-23a.3	Narrative	The master and Tsogyel were united in the secret way, she attained infallible memory.
23.4-8	23a.3-23a.5	Narrative	Tsogyel confirmed her attainment, Padmasambhava asked if she will be the companion for future knowledge holders and she agreed.
23.8-19	23a.5-23b.7	Speech	Padmasambhava asked if she had pure knowledge and wisdom, she confirmed and sang a song celebrating her achievement and asked for some teaching.
23.20-1	23b.7-24a.2	Speech	Tsogyel asked about Padmasambhava's parents, He explained his miraculous birth.
24.2-10	24a.2-24b.1	Speech	Padmasambhava gave a teaching on suffering and the power of supplication.
24.11-14	24b.1-24b.3	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the way to practice and learn together with Padmasambhava, he asked her to meditate on the deities. She did and experienced immense liberation.
24.14-25.14	24b.3-25b.4	Speech	Tsogyel requested to give this method to future beings, Padmasambhava asked her to not have attachments. Her reply included a praise of him and mentioned a few female deities and their emanations, including Machik Labdrön. She also said she will meditate and keep the master in her mind.
25.15-20	25b.4-26a.1	Narrative	Then Padmasambhava said she should move on to the practice of channels and winds ( <i>rtsa rlung</i> ). They practiced tantric union together and obtained the realization of outward and inward luminosity ( <i>phyi gsal nang gsal rtogs pa</i> ), Tsogyel attained infallible memory and the ability to fly.
25.21-26.7	26a.1-26a.7	Speech	Padmasambhava asked if she can practice greater wisdom, Tsogyel confirmed and asked for all that

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
			he knows about the method ( <i>thabs</i> ). Padmasambhava answered that his method is one that is neither <i>pha rgyud</i> nor <i>ma rgyud</i> , and asked Tsogyel to think about benefit others.
26.7-27.1	26a.7-28a.3	Speech	Again, Tsogyel asked teachings on benefitting patrons and the faithful, Padmasambhava gave the teachings, took out a Treasure scroll, and gave her instruction on meditation.
27.2-13	28a.4-28b.5	Speech	Tsogyel sang a song in praise of the guru and asked him to hold her with compassion.
27.14-28.1	28b.5-29a.4	Speech	Padmasambhava gave her another coded letter for practice. Tsogyel asked who the holder of this teaching will be, Padmasambhava said it will be Namkai Nyingpo's emanation called Sanggye Lama.
28.1-6	29a.4-29b.1	Narrative	Tsogyel asked Padmasambhava if he was afraid of king Bekar (Pehar?), he said he is not afraid of anything. He (pehar?) emanated as an evil being but was eliminated by Padmasambhava with a mantra.
28.7-29.6	29b.1-30b.1	Speech	Tsogyel asked for further explanation of this mantra, Padmasambhava explained it. Tsogyel recorded the teaching in symbolic letters.
29.7-10	30b.1-30b.4	Speech	Tsogyel asked when this teaching will spread, Padmasambhava gave her a prophecy where he mentioned the name "Ratna."
29.10-17	30b.4-31a.1	Speech	Tsogyel again asked for an explanation of her another dream about a full-fledged bird in the womb. Padmasambhava said it was a good dream.
29.17-30.1	31a.1-31a.5	Narrative	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel to get wood and water to perform a protection ritual, she wasn't able to do it, then Padmasambhava performed a miracle and made it happen.
30.1-10	31a.6-31b.5	Speech	Tsogyel praised the lama.
30.11-31.10	31b.5-32b.5	Speech	Padmasambhava offered to give the teaching on combining atiyoga and the generation stage practice. He asked Tsogyel to remember his teachings well and give it to future generations and then gave her instruction on meditation practice.
31.10-32.16	32b.5-34a.6	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel mentioned herself and Mandarava as the only women who have true faith in the Dharma, and no one else can be

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
			Padmasambhava's companion except her. She also mentioned her emanations, including Machik Labdrön. She was happy just practicing and asked for the guru's compassion.
32.17-33.3	34a.6-34b.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked if there is anyone else like Padmasambhava, who has obtained the rainbow body and mastery over the four elements. Padmasambhava mentioned Samantabhadra and his lineage, including himself.
33.4-33.16	34b.5-35a.7	Speech	Padmasambhava mentioned he has the teaching on Buddhahood without meditation ( <i>ma bsgom sangs rgyas</i> ), and asked Tsogyel to take note. He explained the different tantric transmissions of the <i>pha rgyud</i> , <i>ma rgyud</i> , <i>sras rgyud</i> , <i>bka' rgyud</i> , and <i>gter rgyud</i> .
33.17-34.1	35a.7-35b.4	Speech	Tsogyel promised to be the companion of future faithful ones, she requested teaching on Atiyoga. Padmasambhava agreed and asked her to put it down on paper.
34.2-13	35b.5-36a.6	Speech	Tsogyel praised the lama.
34.14-17	36a.6-36b.2	Speech	Bodhisattva [Śāntarakṣita] asked her if she will benefit future beings, she confirmed that she will.
34.17-21	36b.2-36b.5	Narrative	Tsogyel asked if there is a cure to the king's disease. Padmasambhava, Tsogyel, and Tri Songdetsen went to Chimphu. The king recovered and went back to the palace. Padmasambhava and Tsogyel stayed at Chimphu.
34.21-35.11	36b.5-37a.6	Speech	Tsogyel asked for the teaching on the Vajradhara tantra, Padmasambhava gave Tsogyel another mantra "Om vajrapāṇi chinda mahāraśana hūm phaṭ" and explained it.
35.11-16	37a.6-37b.3	Speech	Tsogyel asked about future holders of this teaching, Padmasambhava mentioned it will be the emanation of Pemasel and is from Bumthang.
35.17-20	37b.3-37b.7	Speech	Padmasambhava asked about why no other Tibetan woman acts like Tsogyel. Yeshe Tsogyel replied that it is because of her faith.
35.20-37.2	37b.7-39a.4	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel asked about the future emanation of these Lotsawas, Padmasambhava gave names of one hundred and eight different emanations, including his twenty-five disciples.
37.3-38.14	39a.4-41a.1	Speech	Tsogyel made a supplication and confession to the lama.



PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
38.15-39.20	41a.1-42b.1	Speech	Tsogyel asked teachings on the means of compassion, Padmasambhava gave her another mantra and asked her to put it down in symbolic writings.
39.21-40.3	42b.1-42b.4	Speech	Tsogyel asked where and when will they be rediscovered. Padmasambhava gave the prophecy regarding a person named Ugyen Rigdzin.
40.4-7	42b.4-42b.7	Speech	Tsogyel thanks the master for his compassion to her and the Kharchu lineage. Padmasambhava encouraged her to continue benefitting others.
40.8-41.12	42b.7-44a.7	Narrative	Padmasambhava told Tsogyel he has to leave for India, Tsogyel sang a song of sadness. He came back, explained that he was going to subjugate a demon there, and asked her not to be sad. Tsogyel stressed that she had no place of hope ( <i>re sa</i> ). Padmasambhava told her the place of hope is the method of reality, i.e., himself; then he gave her further teachings.
41.12-43.3	44a.7-46a.6	Speech	In her reply, Tsogyel stressed her mental strength despite having a female body, saying that all bad things are due to her karma, and that she is only happy because of Padmasambhava's kindness.
43.3-45.13	46a.6-49a.2	Speech	Padmasambhava promised to bless beings. Tsogyel asked about the method of benefiting evil ones, Padmasambhava replied with teachings on not conducting evil deeds and inferiority of the female body. He asked her to lead the lineage of Kharchu, to make supplications, and to look after beings after he is gone.
45.14-46.2	49a.2-49b.2	Speech	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel if she will practice and what kind of practice she will do. He also mentioned the king and the vicious queen Margyen. Tsogyel answered and requested teaching and prophecy.
46.3-16	49b.2-50a.5	Speech	Padmasambhava gave the teaching, praised Tsogyel ("there is no other woman like you"), and encouraged her to practice.
46.16-47.5	50a.5-50b.5	Speech	Tsogyel promised she will do as Padmasambhava says and wanted to be his servant. Padmasambhava praised her virtues.
47.5-11	50b.5-51a.3	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the nine stages of Atiyoga and the Great Perfection.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
47.11-13	51a.3-51a.4	Speech	Tsogyel buried this as treasure and asked when it would be discovered. Padmasambhava prophesied a time of civil war and someone named Rigdzin.
47.13-18	51a.4-51a.7	Speech	Tsogyel asked for teachings on the most excellent path for liberation and received the teaching from Padmasambhava.
47.19-48.9	51b.1-52a.2	Speech	Tsogyel offered a praise and asked him to protect and teach the future generation.
48.10-49.2	52a.2-52b.5	Speech	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel if she will stay in Samye for this life, what she will do, and in what ways will she teach all sentient beings. Tsogyel answered with her six perfections.
49.3-16	52b.5-53b.1	Speech	Tsogyel requested teaching on the paths ( <i>gzhi'i lam</i> , <i>sa lam</i> , <i>stong lam</i> , <i>mthong lam</i> , <i>bsgom lam</i> , <i>bla na med pa'i lam</i> , and <i>rdzogs pa'i lam</i> ) and Padmasambhava gave her the teaching.
49.17-50.21	53b.1-54b.4	Narrative	Tsogyel asked when it is a good occasion for practice here (Samye), Padmasambhava said anytime is good here in the Dregu Tsulhakhang. Padmasambhava brought up Mandarava and asked her to come. After Mandarava arrived, they practiced together.
50.21-52.3	54b.4-55b.6	Narrative	Padmasambhava had a conversation with Mandarava, inquiring about her deeds. Yeshe Tsogyel offered half of a measure of gold she brought from Kharchu to Mandarava, asked her to leave a strand of hair here. They exchanged hair and Mandarava disappeared.
52.4-16	55b.7-57a.7	Narrative	Padmasambhava asked Yeshe Tsogyel who she thought was better, Tsogyel answered Mandarava was better and mentioned her dream of Mandarava. Padmasambhava said it is a good dream.
52.17-54.16	56a.7-58b.3	Narrative	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel to go to the palace in Samye to bring some torma, Tsogyel went and met Takra Lugong. Takra Lugong and Margyen tried to interfere, but Tsogyel refused to drink the poison. Tsogyel addressed the king, reminding him of the blessing of Padmasambhava. she also addressed Margyen, saying Margyen cannot compete with her.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
54.17-55.7	58b.3-59a.4	Narrative	Tsogyel marked Margyen's face with a drop of blood. She returned to Padmasambhava and reported what happened.
55.7-16	59a.5-59b.4	Narrative	Padmasambhava gave a teaching on the knowledge of torma. The two practiced secret union surviving only on molasses. Their bodies underwent transformation; Tsogyel attained infallible memory.
55.17-57.16	59b.4-61b.7	Speech	Tsogyel sang a praise of Padmasambhava, she also recalled her own life.
57.17-59.6	61b.7-63a.7	Speech	Padmasambhava in turn gave Tsogyel a praise, mentioned her different emanations. He also prophesies that there will be someone named Zhonnu who will be his future emanation. Tsogyel promised to be his companion.
59.7-62.9	63a.7-66b.3	Speech	Tsogyel praised the guru in his different epithets: Śākya sengge, Padmasambha[va], Dorje Trolöd, Padme Thödrenqtsal, Loden Chogse, Nyima Özer, Sengge Drasog, Dewa Rinpoche, Wangdrak Heruka, and so forth. She mentioned that three years have passed since they met and asked for the lama's compassion.
62.10-64.17	66b.3-69a.3	Speech	Tsogyel requested the teaching of the six tantras. Padmasambhava gave her elaborate instructions for practice.
64.18-70.16	69a.3-75b.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked for a concise teaching, Padmasambhava gave her the mantra "Om ā hūm vajra guru padma siddhi hūm" along with explanation and its benefits. He asked Tsogyel to bear this in mind.
70.17-71.5	75b.5-76a.4	Speech	Tsogyel thanked the master and promised she will carry out his command.
71.6-20	76a.4-76b.7	Speech	Tsogyel sang a praise of Padmasambhava.
71.20-72.15	77a.1-77b.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked if there is a way of liberation for women in the future. Padmasambhava replied that if they are not like her, they won't be able to be enlightened.
72.16-73.5	77b.5-78a.6	Speech	Tsogyel asked if there is a way of liberation for Tibetan people in the future. Padmasambhava told her there will be disasters in the future and beings will just practice harm to each other.
73.5-19	78a.6-79a.1	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the lineage of <i>go cha lha lnga</i> from the beginningless time,

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
			Padmasambhava gave her the cosmogeny story and told her to keep it in mind.
73.20-74.17	79a.1-79b.7	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the birth of Samantabhadra, Padmasambhava explained to her the story as well as the triad of Samantabhadra-Heruka-Yamantaka. He asked her to conceal this teaching as a Treasure.
74.18-75.3	79b.7-80a.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the essence of conventional and ultimate meaning. Padmasambhava framed his answer with the six perfections.
75.3-8	80a.5-80b.1	Speech	Tsogyel asked how the three bodies become perfected and received Padmasambhava's answer.
75.8-20	80b.1-81a.2	Speech	Tsogyel made a supplication to the master.
75.20-76.12	81a.2-81b.4	Narrative	Padmasambhava related the previous lives of King Tri Songdetsen, Queen Margyen, and her brother Takra Lugong. Because of the past karmic retribution of the king killing a snake, his power was lost to queen Margyen and her brother Takra Lugong. The sign of Margyen is she has a red mark on her face, that of Takra Lugong is that he has a black mark on his neck.
76.13-77.2	81b.4-82a.5	Speech	Padmasambhava encouraged Tsogyel to meditate. Tsogyel promised to memorize and spread the teaching.
77.3-9	82a.5-82b.2	Speech	Tsogyel lamented about Tibet being the land of demon, Tibet; Padma encouraged her to practice.
77.10-18	82b.3-83a.2	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the relationship of Padmasambhava and Tri Songdetsen in their previous lives. Padmasambhava told her the story of Jarung Kashor and their previous lives as the four brothers of a poultrywoman.
77.19-79.18	83a.2-85a.6	Speech	Tsogyel offered a praise to the lama and asked him to look after her.
79.18-81.6	85a.6-86b.4	Speech	Padmasambhava commended Tsogyel as an extraordinary woman, gave her instructions on meditation and different empowerments.
81.7-82.5	86b.4-88b.4	Speech	Tsogyel asked about the hierarchy of the generation and completion stages. Padmasambhava told her it should be the union of these two. Then he related the story of Queen Margyen deceiving King Tri Songdetsen.
82.5-17	88b.4-89a.6	Speech	Tsogyel told Padmasambhava she was there when he was at Sitavana and became the leader

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
			of <i>ḍākinīs</i> . Padmasambhava gave her the mantra “Om ā hūm guru deva dhākki siddhi hūm” and taught her how to visualize it.
82.17-83.9	89a.7-90a.3	Speech	Then Tsogyel requested and received the method to liberate harmful beings.
83.10-14	90a.3-90a.6	Speech	Tsogyel requested teaching on receiving disciples and received it.
83.14-20	90a.6-90b.3	Speech	Tsogyel made a praise of the lama. Padmasambhava promised to take her in with compassion.
83.21-84.6	90b.3-90b.7	Narrative	Padmasambhava gave Tsogyel a Treasure scroll, they went to Lhodrak. The master asked her to conceal treasures. Padmasambhava subjugated King Bekar (Pehar?) by hitting him on the head. The king was bound by oath.
84.6-10	90b.7-91a.3	Narrative	Tsogyel asked the guru to benefit beings, he said that it would be easy if there are faithful ones.
84.11-85.9	91a.3-92a.2	Narrative	Padmasambhava thought about what Tsogyel was going to do if he went to India. After he disappeared, Tsogyel sang a song of lamentation and cried a lot.
85.9-13	92a.2-92a.5	Narrative	Padmasambhava came back, asking her to not be unhappy. Tsogyel told him that she had no one to rely on but him.
85.13-16	92a.5-92b.1	Narrative	Someone from Kharchu brought Tsogyel some gold. Tsogyel offered it to the guru for the sake of future disciples and asked him for a teaching that makes easier understanding.
85.17-88.11	92b.1-95a.5	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel spoke at length, recounting Padmasambhava’s kindness, boasting her own mental strength, lamenting the impurities of being born as a woman, asking for teachings, and comparing other women with herself.
88.12-89.12	95a.5-96a.6	Speech	Padmasambhava responded by giving her the teachings that only he had and promised that the power of just recollecting was strong.
89.13-96.3	96a.6-105a.2 <sup>602</sup>	Speech	Tsogyel made another praise to Padmasambhava, lamenting the inferiority of being a woman and requesting teachings for the sake of future beings.

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<sup>602</sup> Folio 100b was left blank with the writing *yig gi ’tshams zhus so*.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
96.4-103.18	105a.2- 112b.5	Speech	Padmasambhava reassured Yeshe Tsogyel that she is not inferior and asked her to practice for the sake of future beings. Then he spoke at length, made supplications to Tsogyel and himself, recounted his own life story briefly, and asked Tsogyel to bear his teachings in mind and transmit them to future generations.
103.18- 104.5	112b.5- 113a.3	Narrative	Tsogyel received some gold offerings from people, she returned to Padmasambhava and made a Tenth Day Ritual ( <i>tshes bcu</i> ). Padmasambhava had a vision of Avalokitesvara. Avalokitesvara spoke to him, saying that Songten Gampo is his emanation and Tsogyel should hear the teaching for the sake of beings.
104.6- 105.12	113a.3- 114b.1	Speech	A praise of Padmasambhava by Avalokiteśvara.
105.13-17	114b.1- 114b.4	Speech	A praise of Avalokitesvara by Padmasambhava.
105.17- 106.5	114b.4- 115a.3	Speech	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel to conceal the teaching cycles of Avalokiteśvara. Tsogyel asked about how these Treasures will be discovered, Padmasambhava gave her a prophecy.
106.5-14	115a.3- 115b.2	Narrative	Yeshe Tsogyel had a dream that her father died. Padmasambhava told her that there is nothing to do when the mind is separated from the body. Then two men from Kharchu came, bringing the news that Kharpup, Tsogyel's father, had indeed passed away. They offered gold to Padmasambhava, who in turn gave them protection.
106.15- 108.17	115b.2- 117b.3	Narrative	Tsogyel requested Padmasambhava's consideration on her father's liberation. Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel if her father was bad to her, Tsogyel briefly recounted their relationship and asked the lama a favor for her father.
108.18- 109.12	117b.3- 118a.6	Narrative	Padmasambhava gave her a lesson on impermanence and told her there is no need to for him bring her father back to life, she herself can do it.
109.12- 110.12	118a.6- 119a.5	Speech	Tsogyel thanked and praised the lama. She asked Padmasambhava why one should make supplication, Padmasambhava taught her the benefits of recalling the guru.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
110.13- 112.7	119a.5- 121a.2	Speech	Padmasambhava related his own deeds on the tenth day of each month.
112.8-19	121a.2- 121b.2	Speech	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel to practice the mantras. Tsogyel asked about empowerments and the generation and perfection stages. Padmasambhava gave her teachings as a response.
112.20- 113.7	121b.2- 122a.1	Speech	Tsogyel asked for the lama's compassion and not to be scolded; Padmasambhava reassured her and asked what she was thinking to benefit beings.
113.8-14	122a.2- 122a.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked about different types of empowerments and Padmasambhava replied.
113.14- 114.16	122a.5- 123a.6	Speech	Tsogyel thanked the lama. Padmasambhava told Tsogyel the benefit of the mantra.
114.17- 115.7	123a.6- 124a.1	Speech	Tsogyel made a confession to the guru, Padmasambhava asked whether she wanted the householder or the renunciant life.
115.7- 116.15	124a.1- 125a.6	Speech	Thinking that she is to be scolded, Tsogyel made a sad supplication, lamenting her female body and asking the guru for teaching.
116.16- 117.5	125a.7- 125b.7	Speech	Padmasambhava told her there was no need to be sad and that he would look after her.
117.6- 118.14	125b.7- 127a.7	Speech	Then Tsogyel sang a praise of him and offered gold.
118.15- 119.3	127a.7- 127b.7	Speech	Padmasambhava asked Tsogyel to bear his teaching in mind and have no doubt.
119.4- 125.10	127b.7- 134a.5	Speech	Tsogyel made a wish-fulfilling supplication to the guru. She compared Padmasambhava and herself to many different pairs of deities.
125.11- 126.7	134a.5- 135a.4	Speech	Padmasambhava agreed to give blessings and asked Tsogyel to offer praise to the five disciples, king and subjects.
126.8- 128.15	135a.4- 137b.4	Speech	The pair practiced tantric secret union. Yeshe Tsogyel praised the twenty-five disciples and requested teachings.
128.16- 132.11	137b.4- 142a.1	Speech	Padmasambhava gave her instructions for visualization; he listed the teachings he had and gave them to Tsogyel. He assured she will attain enlightenment.
132.11- 133.15	142a.1- 143a.4	Speech	Tsogyel was very happy and asked for empowerment of the <i>thabs lam</i> and received it.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
133.16- 134.4	143a.4- 143b.4	Speech	Tsogyel asked if she would be able to lead her consciousness from her body. Padmasambhava answered her question.
134.5-21	143b.4- 144b.1	Speech	Tsogyel asked for teaching for the sake of beings, Padmasambhava gave her the teaching.
134.21- 136.17	144b.2- 146a.6	Speech	Tsogyel made a supplication to the guru.
136.17- 138.3	146a.7- 147b.5	Speech	Padmasambhava gave Tsogyel some teaching and a mantra.
138.4-14	147b.5- 148a.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked for a teaching on the Father Tantra; Padmasambhava explained it to her. Tsogyel asked him to summarize, the lama gave her the mantra “Om guru buddha dharmā sarva hūṃ.”
138.15- 139.16	148a.5- 149a.5	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel paid homage and praised the master.
139.16- 140.3	149a.5- 149b.4	Speech	Padmasambhava showed his aspect of Dorje Thödrengtsal and gave Tsogyel the teaching on it.
140.4-142.3	149b.4- 152a.3	Speech	Tsogyel made offerings of gifts to the lama.
142.4-143.2	152a.3- 153a.6	Speech	Padmasambhava gave her teachings on a Treasure scroll and instruction to conceal them.
143.3-18	153a.6- 154a.3	Speech	Tsogyel asked where to conceal the Treasure and whom to entrust them. Padmasambhava gave her general instructions on burying and entrusting.
143.19- 153.5	154a.3- 164a.5	Speech	Tsogyel asked about future holders of teachings and when they will come. Padmasambhava gave her a lengthy description of the time, location, name of one hundred and eight treasure revealers and who they are emanated from.
153.6-157.7	164a.5- 168b.4	Speech	Tsogyel thanked the master and offered gold to him. Padmasambhava continued to tell Tsogyel about different types of treasures and warn her against fake treasure revealers. He then told her he was leaving to tame demons in the southwest.
157.7-158.3	168b.4- 169b.3	Narrative	Tsogyel asked him to stay. He told her the places he will stay (Lhodrak, Samye, Kongpo, Yarlung, Dagpo, Tildö, and Khongdong) and promised that he would come back after a year.
158.4-18	169b.3- 170a.6	Narrative	Feeling sad, Yeshe Tsogyel sang a song and requested teachings. She wept and put her head at his lap.



PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
158.19- 159.15	170a.6- 171a.3	Narrative	Padmasambhava asked her not to be sad and to recall him in her mind. Yeshe Tsogyel did so and Padmasambhava cried. Tsogyel again asked Padmasambhava to stay and requested teachings.
159.16- 160.16	171a.4- 172a.5	Narrative	Padmasambhava made a supplication, telling Tsogyel she would also be leaving within a year after burying Treasures. He asked her to protect the Tibetan people and she in turn asked him to think about her.
160.16- 161.8	172a.5- 172b.7	Narrative	Padmasambhava again asked Tsogyel to recall him and to benefit future beings. Tsogyel asked what she should do.
161.9-17	172b.7- 173a.6	Narrative	Padmasambhava told her to not be sad, she should bury Treasures and then go to the land of the demons.
161.17- 163.8	173a.6- 176a.3 <sup>603</sup>	Speech	Yeshe Tsogyel again asked the location to conceal treasures and the names of treasure revealers. Padmasambhava mentioned someone named Dorje Lingpa. He also addressed his other disciples (Mutri Tsanpo, Namkhai Nyingpo, Jokro Gyeltsen, and so on), asking them not to be sad.
163.8-164.2	176a.3- 176b.6	Narrative	Tsogyel lamented that she did not have any kids and that she cannot live without Padmasambhava.
164.2-7	176b.6- 177a.3	Narrative	Tsogyel and the other disciples collapsed on the ground; Padmasambhava came back and consoled her. Then he disappeared again.
164.8-13	177a.3- 177a.7	Narrative	The disciples became powerless from day to night, Tsogyel thought to herself that she should practice and be inseparably united with Padmasambhava.
164.13- 165.1	177b.1- 177b.7	Narrative	Mutri Tsepo asked Tsogyel what to do, Tsogyel consoled him and asked him to recall the master.
165.1-20	177b.7- 178b.6	Narrative	Nanam Dorje Dujom asked Tsogyel what to do, Tsogyel consoled him and urged the disciple to practice.
165.20- 166.13	178b.6- 179b.1	Narrative	Tsogyel consoled other disciples and encouraged them to practice.
166.13- 167.15	179b.1- 180b.2	Speech	Tsogyel made a supplication, lamenting that she cannot serve the master.

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<sup>603</sup> There is no folio 175.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
167.16- 175.5	180b.2- 175a.1 <sup>604</sup>	Speech	Then she gave teaching to various people, including treasure revealers, mantra holders, meditators, sculpture makers, doctors, and so on. She gave advice to women in particular, telling them that she also planned to go and asked them not to worry and practice. Queen Margyen and Vairocana's story are also told here.
175.6-12	175a.1- 175a.6	Narrative	Padmasambhava reappeared and reminded Tsogyel it is time to leave for Gongthang. Yeshe Tsogyel thought that Mandarava had an assembly of five hundred people and was sad. She asked the master not to leave her behind.
175.13-16	175a.6- 175b.1	Narrative	Padmasambhava asked her not to be sad and to travel to Gongthang. The disciples escorted him. Tsogyel was sad.
175.16- 178.11	175b.1- 189b.7 <sup>605</sup>	Narrative	Yeshe Tsogyel recounted her life story.
178.11- 179.2	189b.7- 190a.6	Narrative	Yeshe Tsogyel entrusted the Treasures to protective deities, sent them to the lower hells, and made one last supplication about her wish to go to the Copper-Colored Mountain.
179.2-3	190a.6	Narrative	After the supplication, Yeshe Tsogyel attained rainbow body, and went to the Copper-Colored Mountain. The king and subjects, about half of them also left for the Copper-Colored Mountain after changing bodies.
179.3-10	190a.6- 190b.3	Narrative	*colophon: <i>spre'u zla'i rgyal nya 'dzoms pa'i shog 'dril phebs nas/ bka' srung la gtad nas/ dag pa'i gnas la lcags ri'i mdun drung nas yong pa// e ma ho/ gnas skyong bstan pa'i thabs shes 'dren mdzad pa/ bsgrub pa'i ming ni rdo rje drag po rtsal/ bya'i zla ba'i dus tshod gter shog phrad/ bka' rgya/ gnyan rgya/ brda thim/ zab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ gtad rgya/ gter rgya/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ zla ngo gnyis kyi bar du bka' rgya bsdam/ bka' rgya mang po med pa yi/ dus skabs</i>

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<sup>604</sup> After the end of folio 187, the page number switched to 175 (this folio number was missing before).

<sup>605</sup> The number of folios returned to 188 and continued on after the inserted folio number 175.

PAGE NUMBER	FOLIO NUMBER	GENRE	CONTENT
			<i>tsha rnams ni skyol cha med pa/ khyi'i zla ba'i dus su gter shog zheng sor bzhi/ dkyil mtho gsum la zhal bshus so//</i>

## LIST OF TRANSLITERATED TIBETAN PROPER NAMES

Karma Lingpa (Karma gling pa)  
Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso (Karma pa chos grags rgya mtsho)  
Karmapa Rangjung Dorje (Kar ma pa rang 'byung rdo rje)  
Karma Mingyur Wangyel (Karma Mi 'gyur dbang rgyal)  
Kunga (Kun dga')  
Kunzangdrak (Kun bzang brag)  
Godrakpa Sönam Gyeltsen (Ko brag pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan)  
Kongpo (Kong po)  
Longchen Rabjampa Drime Özer (Klong chen Rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer)  
Karpo Kunga Drakpa (Dkar po Kun dga' grags pa)  
Kagyu (Bka' brgyud)  
Tashi (Bkra shis)  
Tashi Khyedren (Bkra shis khye 'dren)  
Tashi Tobgyel (Bkra shis stobs rgyal)

Kham (Khams)  
Tri Ralpacan (Khri Ral pa can)  
Tri Songdetsen (Khri srong lde btsan)  
Trom Gesar (Khrom Ge sar)  
Trompagyen (Khrom pa rgyan)  
Khenpo Nyarong Adra (Mkhan po Nyag rong a bkra)  
Kharchu (Mkhar chu)  
Khandro Drowa Zangmo (Mkha' 'gro 'Gro ba bzang mo)  
Kharchenza (Mkhar chen bza')  
Kharpu (Mkhar phub)  
Khepa Dewu (Mkhas pa lde'u)  
Khyenrab Gyatso (Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho)  
Khoting ('Kho 'thing)

Guru Tashi (Gu ru bkra shis)  
Guru Chökyi Wangchuk (Gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug)  
Guru Chöwang (Gu ru chos dbang)  
Gungthang (Gung thang)  
Goram Sönam Sengge (Go ram bsod nams seng ge)  
Drachi Khangmar (Gra phyi khang dmar)  
Drachi Dakhangmar (Gra phyi'i mda' khang dmar)  
Drachi Dakhyugmar (Gra phyi'i mda' khyung dmar)  
Drakpa Mönlam Lodrö (Grags pa smon lam blo gros)  
Drakpa Tsöndru (Grags pa brtson 'grus)  
Druptop Ngödrup (Grub thob dngos grub)  
Dromo (Gro mo)

Gedun Chöpel (Dge 'dun chos 'phel)  
Gandenpa (Dga' ldan pa)  
Garab Dorje (Dga' rab rdo rje)  
Getsoma (Dge mtsho ma)  
Gelug (Dge lugs)  
Gar (Mgar/'Gar)  
Gyurme Ösel ('Gyur med 'od gsal)  
Götsangpa Gönpo Dorje (Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje)  
Gyelmo Tsawarong (Rgyal mo Tsha ba rong)  
Gyeltse (Rgyal rtse)  
Gangteng (Sgang steng)  
Drag (Sgrags)

Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho)  
Ngenlam Gyelwa Chokyang (Ngan lam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs)  
Ngorchen Kunga Zangpo (Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po)  
Ngari (Mnga' ris)  
Ngadrak (Rnga sgrags)  
Ngakchang Rinchen Drakpa (Sngags 'chang rin chen grags pa)

Jokroza Pelgyi Chöne (Cog ro bza' Dpal gyi mchod gnas)  
Jomden Rigpai Raldri (Bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri)

Chökyi Drönma (Chos kyi sgron ma)  
Chim (Mchims)  
Chimphu (Mchims phu)  
Chimza Sale Ö (Mchims bza' Sa le 'od)  
Chim Śākyaprabhā ('Chims Śākyaprabhā)  
Chumophag (Chu mo phag)

Jonang (Jo nang)  
Jomo Kharchenza (Jo mo Mkhar chen bza')  
Jomo Pemadröl (Jo mo Padma sgrol)  
Jobumma (Jo 'bum ma)  
Jamgön Kongtrul Lodro Thaye ('Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas)  
Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po)  
Jigme Lingpa ('Jigs med gling pa)  
Jigme Tenpai Nyima ('Jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma)  
Ju Mipham Jamyang Namgyel Gyatso ('Ju Mi pham 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho)  
Jetsunma Mume Yeshe Tsomo (Rje btsun ma Mu med ye shes mtsho mo)

Nyingma (Rnying ma)  
Nyangrel Nyima Özer (Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer)

Tāre Lhamo (Tā re lha mo)  
Tidro (Ti sgro)

Tamzhing Lhundrup Chöling (Gtam zhing lhun grub chos gling)  
Terdak Lingpa (Gter bdag gling pa)  
Tanak (Rta nag)  
Takra Lugong (Stag ra klu gong)  
Taksham Nüden Dorje (Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje)  
Dön (Ston)  
Tenma (Brtan ma)

Thugse Dawa Gyeltsen (Thugs sras Zla ba rgyal mtshan)  
Thöpa Bhadra (Thod pa bha dra)

Dampa Sanggye (Dam pa sangs rgyas)  
Tingri (Ding ri)  
Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen (Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan)  
Drime Kunga (Dri med kun dga')  
Drime Kunden (Dri med kun ldan)  
Densathil (Gdan sa mthil)  
Dekyi (Bde skyid)  
Dorje (Rdo rje)  
Dorje Lingpa (Rdo rje gling pa)  
Dorje Linggyi Phab (Rdo rje gling gi phab)  
Dorje Drakpotsel (Rdo rje drag po rtsal)  
Dorje Drenpa (Rdo rje dran pa)  
Dewu Jose (Lde'u jo sras)

Namkhai Nyingpo (Nam mkha'i snying po)  
Norbu Zangpo (Nor bu bzang po)  
Namthang (Gnam thang)  
Nammen Karma (Gnam sman dkarm mo)  
Nechung (Gnas chung)  
Nub Namkhai Nyingpo (Gnubs Nam mkha'i snying po)  
Nub Sanggye Yeshe (Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes)  
Nanam Gyelwa Chöyang (Sna nam Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs)  
Nanam Dorje Düjom (Sna nam Rdo rje bdud 'joms)  
Nangsa Öbum (Snang sa 'od 'bum)  
Narthang (Snar thang)

Pema Lingpa (Padma gling pa)  
Pemasel (Padma gsal)  
Pema Ledretsel (Padma las 'brel rtsal)  
Pema Lhadzi (Padma lha mdzes)  
Pawo (Dpa' bo)  
Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa (Dpa' bo gtsug la 'phreng ba)  
Pelyang (Dpal dbyangs)  
Peljor Zangpo (Dpal 'byor bzang po)  
Peltsek (Dpal brtsegs)

Pelzang Rinchen (Dpal bzang rin chen)  
Pelyul (Dpal yul)  
Pel Yeshe (Dpal ye shes)  
Puwo (Spu bo)

Phagmodru (Phag mo gru)  
Poyongza Gyelmotsun (Pho yong gza' Rgyal mo btsun)  
Phadampa Sanggye (Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas)  
Drinle Chödrön ('Phrin las chos sgron)

Vairocana (Bai ro tsa na)  
Buton Rinchendrub (Bu ston rin chen grub)  
Bodong (Bo dong)  
Bodong pañchen Chokle Namgyel (Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal)  
Jadrel Kunga Rangdrol (Bya bral kun dga' rang grol)  
Charung Kashor (Bya rong kha shor)  
Changchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan)  
Changchubje (Byang chub rje)  
Dragkar Daso Trulku Chökyi Wangchuk (Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug)  
Dromton Gyalbai Jungne (Brom ston Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas)  
Langkor (Bla 'khor)  
Lama Drapa (Bla ma grwa pa)  
Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen (Bla ma dam pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan)  
Lama Zhang Yudrakpa Tsöndru Drakpa (Bla ma zhang G.yu brag pa Brtson 'grus grags pa)  
Larung (Bla rung)  
Larung Gar (Bla rung sgar)  
Lodrö Gyatso (Blo gros rgya mtsho)  
Ü (Dbus)  
Drozama Padma ('Bro bza' ma pad ma)  
Droza Yeshetso ('Bro bza' Ye shes mtsho)  
Drokmi Pelgyi Yeshe ('Brog mi Dpal gyi ye shes)  
Bami Trizher (Sba mi khri gzher)  
Bedrön (Sbas sgron)

Machig Zhama (Ma gcig zha ma)  
Machig Ongjo (Ma gcig 'ong jo)  
Machig Labdrön (Ma gcig lab sgron)  
Masagong (Ma sa gong)  
Mangyul Gungthang (Mang yul Gung thang)  
Margongza Rinchentsul (Mar gong bza' Rin chen tshul)  
Mingyur Peldrön (Mi 'gyur dpal sgron)  
Milarepa (Mi la ras pa)  
Mutri Tsepo (Mu khri btsad po)  
Mutig Tsenpo (Mu tig bstan po)  
Mutsame (Mu tsa med)  
Margyen (Dmar rgyan)

Ma Lotsawa Rinchenchok (Rma lo tsā ba Rin chen mchog)  
Mindröling (Smin grol gling)

Tsongkhapa Lobsang Dragpa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa)  
Tsang (Gtsang)  
Tsangpo (Gtsang po)  
Tsukna Rinchen (Gtsug na rin chen)  
Tsetsha Tsunema (Btsad tsha btsun ne ma)

Tsalgungthang (Tshal gung thang)  
Tsalpa Situ Kunga Dorje (Tshal pa si tu Kun dga' rdo rje)  
Tsultrim Dorje (Tshul khriims rdo rje)  
Tsebongza Metokdrön (Tshe spong gza' Me tog sgron)  
Tsebongza Margyen (Tse spong bza' dmar rgyan)  
Tsamdrak (Mtshams brag)  
Tsogye Dorje (Mtsho skyes rdo rje)  
Tsogyel Druphuk (Mtsho rgyal sgrub phug)  
Tsogyel Lhakang (Mtsho rgyal lha khang)

Dzompa ('Dzoms pa)

Zhangtön Tashi Dorje (Zhang ston bkra shis rdo rje)  
Zhangzhung (Zhang zhung)  
Zhalu (Zhwa lu)

Zahor (Za hor)  
Zurmokhar (Zur mo mkhar)

Öthang ('O thang)

Yarje (Yar rje)  
Yeshe Tsogyel (Ye shes mtsho rgyal)  
Yeshe Ö (Ye shes 'od)  
Yolmowa Tenzin Norbu (Yol mo ba bstan 'dzin nor bu)  
Yazang (G.ya' bzang)  
Yuru Drak (G.yu ru sgrags)

Radza (Ra dza)  
Ratna Lingpa (Ratna gling pa)  
Rema Zhigmo (Ras ma zhig mo)  
Rikma Sanggyekyi (Rig ma Sangs rgyas skyid)  
Rigdzin Gödem (Rig 'dzin rgod ldem)  
Rinchenpel (Rin chen dpal)  
Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po)  
Ruyangza Mati (Ru yang bza' Ma ti)  
Ruza Gyelmo (Ru bza' Rgyal mo mtsho)



Rog Bande Sherab Ö (Rog Ban de Shes rab 'od)  
Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po)  
Lang Pelgyi Sengge (Rlangs Dpal gyi seng ge)  
Lang (Rlangs)

Latö (La stod)  
Lochen Dharmaśrī (Lo chen dharma śrī)

Shampo (Sham po)  
Śākya zangpo (Shākya bzang po)  
Śākya Ö (Shākya 'od)  
Śākya Yarpel (Shākya yar 'phel)  
Shüpu Pelgyi Sengge (Shud phu Dpal gyi seng ge)  
Shelkarza Dorjetso (Shel dkar bza' Rdo rje 'tsho)

Sakya (Sa skya)  
Sanggyekyab (Sangs rgyas skyabs)  
Sanggye Lingpa (Sangs rgyas gling pa)  
Sanggye Gyeltsen (Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan)  
Sanggyepel (Sangs rgyas dpal)  
Sanggye Yeshe (Sangs rgyas ye shes)  
Sera Khandro (Se ra mkha' 'gro)  
Semshongma (Sems shong ma)  
Sei Phugchung (Se'i phug chung)  
Semo Chönyi (Sras mo Chos nyid)  
Sinpo Barje (Srin po sbar rjes)  
Sogdrup Nagmo (Srog sgrub nag mo)  
Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po)  
Lelung Zhepai Dorje (Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje)  
Selgyi Döndrup (Gsal gyi don grub)  
Samten Lingpa (Bsam gtan gling pa)  
Samding Dorje Phagmo (Bsam sding rdo rje phag mo)  
Samye (Bsam yas)  
Sönam Gyatsö Drayang (Bsod nams rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs)  
Sönam Peldren (Bsod nams dpal 'dren)

Lhamotsen (Lha mo btsan)  
Lhatsun Ngönmo (Lha btsun ngon mo)  
Lhadzin Yangchen Drolma (Lha 'dzin dbyangs can sgrol ma)  
Lhokha (Lho kha)  
Lhodrak Mendo (Lho brag sman mdo')

Amdo (A mdo)  
Atsara Sale (A tsa ra sa le)  
Adzom (A 'dzom)  
Adzom Drugpa Rinpoche (A 'dzom 'Brug pa rin po che)

Echung (E chung)  
Ogyen (O rgyan)  
Ogyen Lingpa (O rgyan gling pa)  
Ogyen Chökyi (O rgyan chos kyid)  
Ogyen Trinley Dorje (O rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje)