Revelation and Re-evaluation: The Flourishing of Padmasambhava Biography after Yuan Mongol Decline

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Abstract
Tibetan historiography expanded and changed enormously after the twelfth century. The Mongol empire offered Tibetan Buddhists a new means of self-legitimisation and narrating the past, while the gradual decline of Buddhism in India left Tibet as a key keeper of the flame. After the fall of the first period of Mongol hegemony in Tibet (1240–1340s CE) one sees an expansion not only of the genre of historiography but also of the Padma-*vita* genre, explored philologically in this article.[1]

The main catalyst of this *florissance* was the Nyingma (*rnying ma*) master Orgyen Lingpa (*orgyan gling pa*; b. 1323) and his *Katang Dénga* (*bka' thang sde lnga*) and *Péma Katang* (*padma bka' thang*). The latter (auto)biography of the eighth-century Indian master Padmasambhava offered its readers a new vision of the protagonist as the predestined and eternally fully- enlightened saviour of Tibet. Orgyen Lingpa incorporated the twelfth- century *Zanglingma* (*zangs gling ma*) Padma-*vita* into his *Péma Katang*. Yet he also expanded the opening section to encompass a wider geographical and cosmological vista and added Padmasambhava's detailed poetic prophecies of the difficult times ahead for Tibetans under Mongol- Sakya (*sa skya*) rule. These details provide insights into the relationship between Orgyen Lingpa and the Pakmo Drupa (*phag mo gru pa*) leader Tai Situ Jangchup Gyeltsen (*ta'i si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan*; 1302/3–1364), who wrested control of central Tibet from the Sakyas. Moreover, a text- historical analysis of these themes shows how they were incorporated into numerous later

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Padmasambhava biographies and general histories as part of the wider process of creating a post-Mongol cultural outlook and re-situating Tibet in the world.

Introduction

Every age reinvents its own history to suit its audience and the changing sensibilities of its culture. Within Tibet, these changes generally take place within a framework that accepts Buddhism as the ethical source of historiographical values and provider of the preeminent analysis of time and causation (see Schwieger 2000, 2013). Yet within this wider homogeneity, adherents of different schools view their own guru or culture-hero as best expressing these ideals and this analysis. Furthermore, these devotees tend to glorify the object of their worship in the highest possible terms. This means that different competing factions within the fourteenth-century period under discussion in this article vied to convince others of their particular vision of the past; perhaps less with cited sources and carefully sifted, first-person testimony than by fixing a vivid reimagining of a lost world in the minds of their audiences (see Doney 2016). Peter Schwieger, in his fine essay on Tibetan historiography and cultural history, cites the fourteenth century as the point at which, with regard to Buddhism's status within historiography, 'we would be justified in describing [it] as "stationary"' ('eine Kultur, die man mit Fug und Recht als eine "stationäre" beschreiben kann,' Schwieger 2000: 950, 2013: 67). However, the histories discussed in this article suggest that there remained room for movement regarding who best expressed Buddhism's ideals, and that biographical works created during this period still had the power to change later historiographical literature in this respect. One central theme of this changing literature (which it shares with historiographical works on figures as far removed as Constantine and Aśoka) is the complex relationship between religious and royal figures (see especially Ruegg 1997). Focusing on Tibetan life-writing, this theme is played out in the remembered relationship between Indian masters and Tibetan emperors during the latter half of the first millennium.

The opening lines of Buddhaguhya's letter to Emperor Tri Songdétsen (*khri srong lde brtsan*; 742–c.800), which tradition ascribes to the eighth century, relate:

> You have sent [the religious envoys] Era, Aro, Mañjuśrī, and retinue, with the best of wealth—silver and gold—to seek the Holy Dharma of India, so that they might open a window to illuminate the deep darkness of Tibet.
>
> As the veritable Buddhaguhya (one who's secret is the Buddha), it gladdens my heart that the Meridian of Royal Authority in the world, the one who has straightened the crooked ways of power within his administration, the Supreme Lord in an unbroken stream of divine manifestations, the lord Trisong Detsen should order thus: 'Ride the high Plain of Dharma, human and divine!' (Peking vol. 129 pl. 284-1-6–8, quoted in Davidson 2002: 154–55)

As Davidson notes, this dialogue between religious figures and royal patrons is 'reflective of other discussions stretching back through the dialogues between kings and counsellors, the Buddha and Bimbisāra, the monk Nāgasena and the Indo-Greek ruler Menander' (Davidson 2002: 23).

A later dialogue, again attributed to the eighth century but dating from the twelfth, offers a very different depiction of the same Tibetan emperor's status with regard to another Indic religious master, Padmasambhava. This is contained in the *Zanglingma* (*zangs gling ma*) of Nyang Nyima Özer (*nyang nyi ma 'od zer*; 1124–1192). This biography of Padmasambhava has been fundamental to many Tibetans' sense of identity, since it closely ties Tibet to the Indian subcontinent where Buddhism was born and where Padmasambhava performed tantric practices before being invited to the land of snows. As will be shown below, this work gained extraordinary popularity and provided the archetypes for later Tibetan historians writing on Tibet's place in the world and its predestined relationship to Buddhism. In this sense, Nyima Özer may be seen as forging earlier elements of the Tibetan myth of imperial-period Buddhism into an enduring and influential narrative, one that was redacted by successive generations of Tibetan scholars to suit the changing requirements of its readership (Doney *forthcoming*).

When Padmasambhava arrives in Tibet, he treats the emperor (by this period in the maturation of historiography referred to as a king) like any other overly proud indigenous divinity. Tri Songdétsen thinks that the foreign master should bow to him, because 'I am the ruler of

all the black-headed [Tibetans].'[2] Padmasambhava says: 'King of Tibet, you red-faced savage, your mind is bloated with worldly conceit.'[3] Both expressions contain old, indigenous appellations for the Tibetans, but while the former appellation refers to people (*mi*), the latter refers literally to bloodthirsty demons (*sinpo*; *srin po*).[4]

Padmasambhava humbles Tri Songdétsen in a humorous way: he bows to his robes of office and sets them on fire. The king then prostrates contritely to the *siddha*.[5] His magical act of irony implies that the elevated status of kingship in Tibet, symbolised by Tri Songdétsen's robes, diminishes the spiritual state of the actual king. It also accentuates Padmasambhava's state of Buddha-hood in contrast to the king. Although Tri Songdétsen is an emanation of Mañjuśrī, according to the *Zanglingma*, he is deluded by his worldly status in this incarnation.

From this point in the story onwards, Padmasambhava is always superior to Tri Songdétsen. The *Zanglingma* humanises the king as a faithful but confused disciple rather than an enlightened being. Later in the narrative, Padmasambhava also prophesies that Tri Songdétsen will meet obstacles in a future life, due to his failings as a Buddhist in expelling several Tibetan Buddhist masters. Padmasambhava says of Tri Songdétsen's reincarnation as Nyima Özer, the future discoverer of the *Zanglingma*:

> Because Your Majesty damaged your *samaya* vows by expelling Pagor (*pa sgor*) Vairocana, Nub Namkhé Nyingpo (*gnub nam mkha'i*

2 Note the use of the non-humilific *nga* for 'I': ZLh 29a2: *rgyal po'i thugs la nga mgo nag thams cad gi rje yin*.

3 ZLh 30a3: *khyed gdong dmar srin po bod kyi rje / 'jigs rten dregs pa'i kheng sems can*.

4 The 'kingdom of the black-headed Tibetans' (*bod mgo nag po'i srid*) is attested in the Zhol inscription (south face, lines 12–13, Richardson 1985: 7). On early depictions of red-faced Tibetans in history, prophecy, and art, see van Schaik's www.earlytibet.com/2007/09/18/red-faced-men (posted September 18, 2007; accessed 24 January 24, 2017). The addition of the denomination *rākṣasa* in the quote given in the next footnote—possibly on the basis that Tibet's progenitrix was a bloodthirsty demoness (*sinmo*; *srin mo*; *rākṣasi*)—still requires investigation.

5 ZLh 30b1–2. Tri Songdétsen also accepts Padmasambhava's identification of Tibet: 'I am the lord of the red-faced *rākṣasa*s, the Tibetan people are difficult to tame' (*bdag ni srin gdong dmar bod kyi rje / bod kyi mi ni 'dul ba dka'* / ; ZLh 30b4–5). This definition of Tibet allows Tri Songdétsen and Padmasambhava to use different forceful means (royal laws and magic respectively) over the course of the rest of the narrative in order to tame the Tibetans as a prelude to spreading the Dharma among them.

> *snying po*) and other religious masters at one time, as a result [in your seventeenth incarnation after this one] people will disbelieve your teachings. Even those with the strongest connections [to you] will all come to reject you at one time.[6]

This is not the only prophecy that Padmasambhava makes concerning the future decline of the Dharma in Tibet leading up to the birth of Nyima Özer, but the others are rather more general in nature.[7]

Most subsequent Tibetan histories, even to the present, share this more human depiction of Tri Songdétsen, which accords with Schwieger's excellent analysis of the shift from a royal to a religious centre of society (Schwieger 2000: 947–49 and 962–64, 2013: 66–67 and 72–74). However, the extent to which historians contrast this depiction with a perfectly enlightened Padmasambhava (or not) depends upon whether they embrace the canon of works attributed to Padmasambhava or rely instead on the more orthodox Buddhist canon that was closed around the fourteenth century. Schwieger states that those groups that followed their own textual traditions as opposed to the orthodox Tibetan canon were marginalised within an increasingly homogenous and stationary culture (Schwieger 2000: 949–52, 2013: 67–68). It appears, however, that the compelling Padma-*vita* created at exactly this time (though based on earlier sources that expressed wider Indo-Tibetan Buddhist values and analyses) allowed Padmasambhava's devotees and their quite different (but equally Buddhist) cultural norms not only to survive but indeed find expression in the later narratives of the powerful in Tibet, thereby gaining a foothold in the higher echelons of power.

Mongol hegemony

After the twelfth century, the historical consciousness expressed in Tibetan histories changed enormously. Tibet was no longer to the same extent a post-imperial culture looking to the past and to South Asia for its Buddhism. Over the following centuries, the Dharma slowly died out

6 ZLh 83a3–5 reads: *rgyal po nyid kyis pa sgor bhe ro tsa na dang / gnub nam mkha'i snying pa (=po) dang / chos kyi bdag po rnams thabs res spyugs pa'i dam tshig gi sel dang / las 'bras kyi chos la mi rnams yid mi ches / chos 'brel gang che ba thams cad sna ba thabs res ldog du 'ongs pas….*

7 Translated in Davidson 2005: 214, based on ZLa (see below for more on this version).

in India and the Mongol empire's hegemony over Tibet (1240–1340s) offered Tibetan Buddhists a new means of both self-legitimisation and narrating the past.

Between 1197 and 1206, the great library of the Nālandā Monastery burned down.[8] After the Great Fire of Nālandā, Tibetan monasteries became some of the main repositories of tantric Buddhism. Having received much of its Buddhism from the south, Tibet began to communicate its learning to the north (though there exist some precursors Tibetan Buddhists' relations with patrons in central Asia). Tibetan Buddhist schools, beginning with the Sakya (*sa skya*) in the thirteenth century, transmitted Buddhist lineages to the Mongol court. Like the earlier Tibetan emperors, these Mongols had both the wealth and requisite imperial power to patronise and further spread Buddhism outside of India (Davidson 2005: 1–10). This marked an important shift in the status of Tibetan Buddhism in Central Asia, akin to a lineage-holder's transition from disciple to guru: the pupil had become the master of a new class of students. This change in status influenced Tibetans' self-representations in their own literature. For instance, the letter from the Sakya master Pakpa (*'phags pa*) to Qubilai Khan (c.1255–1259) begins:

> We are happy to have heard that the Prince-Bodhisattva's noble figure is well and that his august activity extends everywhere. We, the righteous recipients of your generosity, are also well. You have looked on all with your great gracious love and have extensively acted with the intent to benefit generally both the kingdom and the Buddha's doctrine. But especially you have included even lowly persons like us into your inner circle (lit., heart's maṇḍala). Therefore, your speech has been like a stream of nectar. Moreover, as we have found the finer things, complete in all requisites, come into our possession by the power of your intention to invest us with them, our happiness has naturally increased. (Davidson 2005: 1)

While Pakpa is writing within a tradition of letters, his momentous meeting with the Khan greatly affected both Mongol and Tibetan cultures,

8 Willis 2014: 146; see Dutt 1962: 347–48 for a description of Nālandā's final days, based on the thirteenth-century account by Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal (on whom see Martin 1997: no. 52 and references given therein).

including the changing depiction of the relationship between religious and royal figures.

Fourteenth-century historiography

Foreign influence on Tibetan literature was, of course, nothing new (see most recently Sørensen 2015: 153–55); for example, the literary form of the imperial *Old Tibetan Annals* owes a debt to Chinese historiography. However, the *Annals*' entries also maintain the closest relation to everyday events in the Tibetan emperor's inner circle of any of the Tibetan sources, except perhaps Tri Songdétsen's *Explanatory Edict* (*bka' mchid*; see Doney 2017). Such proximity to events gradually gave way to a reimagining of the lost imperial period rather than the recounting of later occurrences contemporaneous to the histories' authors. These more idealised narratives also appear to have been increasingly influenced by Indic Buddhist literature rather than Chinese administrative works.[9] Yet, as Gray Tuttle (in Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle 2013: 327) points out, the thirteenth-century Tibetan translations of Chinese annalistic history rekindled a passion for the recent past and personalised accounts. This is evidenced in the newly ascendant Pakmo Drupa (*phag mo gru pa*) leader Tai Situ Jangchup Gyeltsen's (*ta'i si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan*; 1302/3–1364) *Situ Kachem* (*si tu bka' chems*).[10] Tuttle states:

> [T]he next several centuries of historical writing . . . were marked by a sharp break from the earlier focus upon Indian and imperial Tibetan history. For instance, *The Testament of Tai Situ Jangchup Gyeltsen* (*Situ kachem*) of 1350, written by the Pakmodrupa ruler who took power away from the Sakya and controlled Central Tibet from the year the book was written, is exceptional in being concerned especially with contemporary affairs. Part of the dramatic shift away from earlier traditions can no doubt be credited to the 1285 translation into Tibetan of the *Book of China* (*Gyanak depter*), an annalistic history of China. This served as a new model for Tibetan history, as evidenced byTselpa Künga Dorjé's 1363 *Red Book* (*Depter marpo*). This first

9 On Tibetan depictions of the Tibetan emperors Tri Songdétsen and Tri Songtsen (*khri srong btsan*; 605?–649), both adapting Indic narratives, see van Schaik and Doney 2007 and Mills 2012 respectively.

10 On this work, see van der Kuijp 1991: esp. 277–79. It is used extensively in Czaja 2013.

> instance of a Tibetan *depter* (using the Persian word *daftar* for 'book') pays great attention to East Asian dynastic lineages. In this account, the Chinese, Minyak (Xixia), and Mongolian royal lineages interrupt the traditional Tibetan narrative, which in previous sources had proceeded directly from Indian to Tibetan royal lineages. The Tibetan royal lineage was thus narrated not directly after that of India but in a nonchronological sequence, listing the rulers of India, China, Minyak, and Mongolia before discussing Tibetan royalty of the imperial period. . . .
>
> After the coming of the Mongols and the centralization of power in the hands of a few under their rule, there was a renewed sense that Central Tibet could and should be unified. Thus, there were constant struggles from the time of Sakya dominance until the Gelukpa took control in 1642, and many of these accounts record the competitions and assertions of authority that accompanied them. (Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle 2013: 327)

Tuttle appears to be arguing against the earlier notion (in, e.g., Tucci 1999 [1949]: 110–11) that the histories of this period reflect a unified yearning for the past after a bloody period of destruction and degradation at the hands of Mongolian overlords. Instead, Tuttle sees these works as individual attempts, influenced by the traditions imparted during Mongol rule, to bring histories up to the present and take stock of or argue for the place of (central) Tibet in the world. Each work is doing this from the perspective of certain traditions' claims to hegemony over the central Tibetan region rather than from a unified political and religious consciousness.

Some Tibetans whose schools were endowed with Mongolian patronage wrote histories legitimising their own religious lineages, such as Butön Rinchendrup (*bu ston rin chen grub*; 1290–1364) and other historians whom he references in his religious history (see van der Kuijp 1996: 46). Mongolian forms of writing also influenced works of history, such as the *Depter Marpo* (*deb ther dmar po*).[11] Its author, Tsel pa Künga Dorjé (*tshal pa kun dga' rdo rje*; 1309–1364), used Mongolian sources in

11 See Martin 1997: no. 77, van der Kuijp 1996: 44–45 and 55, Sørensen 1994: 636, Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle 2013: 337–42.

addition to older Indic and Tibetan works in his compilation, and even used the Mongolian loan word *depter* (originally from the Greek *dipthera*, lit. 'parchment'; Sørensen 2015: 159).

Other writers sought to free themselves of foreign, northern influence by emphasising Tibet's indigenous traditions and those flowing from Indic soil: for instance, the *Gyelrap Selwé Mélong* (*rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*), attributed to Lama Dampa Sönam Gyeltsen (*bla ma dam pa bsod nams rgyal mtshan*; 1312–1375; see Sørensen 1994, but cf. also van der Kuijp 1996: 52). This important history of 1368 situates itself somewhere between allegiance to the Mongols and to the Pakmo Drupa, with a religious pedigree beyond reproach, just as the above mentioned historian, Butön Rinchendrup, seems to have positioned himself in his correspondence with Jangchup Gyeltsen.[12] These interesting metamorphoses are beyond the scope of this article, but worthy of further study.

Not only new historical works but also the redaction of existing historiographical traditions in this period would reward further investigation. Olaf Czaja recently noted that the fourteenth-century (or later) redaction of the *Lang Poti Séru* (*rlangs po ti bse ru*; Martin 1997: 47, no. 65) includes prophecies on the part of its legendary discoverer, Jangchup Dréköl (*byang chub 'dre bkol*; 960s?–1076). These prophecies come once from his own mouth and once in a scroll found in his reliquary, and concern the future prosperity of his clan and the rise to power of Jangchup Gyeltsen respectively (Czaja 2013: 15, 29–30).

Czaja also suggests that Jangchup Dréköl is depicted in the *Lang Poti Séru* as 'similar to Padmasambhava, whose mind incarnation he is said to be' (Czaja 2013: 15).[13] Given that the notion of mind incarnation (*tuktül*; *thugs sprul*) does not appear to be prevalent in the eleventh or even twelfth centuries, I would suggest that this is a fourteenth-century identification, one that ties in to our discussion of Padmasambhava and his status in the Pakmo Drupa tradition (see below).

Furthermore, as R.A. Stein points out, Jangchup Dréköl therein meets the mythic Ling Gésar (*gling ge sar*), who acts as his patron (*yöndak*; *yon bdag*) and is himself identified as an incarnation of Tri Songdétsen (Stein 1962: 83). It is noteworthy that most details of the extant redaction

12 His letter, probably dating to 1330, is translated in Tucci 1999 [1949]: vol. 2, 673–74; it is reproduced and prefaced in Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle 2013: 348–51.

13 This argument is pursued in Czaja 2013: 65–68; see also Stein 1962: 79, 83.

appear to have been faithfully reproduced from earlier recensions, including indigenous ritual elements in the cosmogenesis narrative that have merely been augmented with Indic mythographical elements, such as the 'Gods of Clear Light' (*'od gsal lha*, *abhasvaradeva*) (Czaja 2013: 14, 31–32) to reflect Buddhist cosmology.

The *Lang Poti Séru* styles itself as a treasure (*ter*; *gter*): part of a literary tradition (discussed below) of works that claim to be written a long time ago, usually in the eighth century, and then buried to be found by later generations. In the case of (auto)biographical treasure literature, the logic of this burial implies that the narrative should relate events within the life of the supposed author, only narrating later history as prophecy (though exceptions exist). Any interpolations should also maintain this first-person perspective. The treasure text tradition is distinct from other historiographical traditions (such as the *Testimony of Ba*; see Doney 2013), which write in the third-person, historical voice. When elements are interpolated into these traditions, they tend to add narrative in the same third-person voice and are thus able to describe events that no eighth-century protagonist could have seen. In the tale of the *Lang Poti Séru*, Jangchup Dréköl is himself the treasure revealer (*tertön*, *gter ston*), the one who discovers the text rather than the one who interred it. Yet this addition to the treasure text is still written in the first-person. Therefore, although he clearly had to die in order for the prophecy to be found in his reliquary, this event itself is not recounted as part of any treasure text he interred—because he could not have written an account of it after his own death.

Expansion of the Padmasambhava biography

The tradition of treasure should be briefly explained in this context. The treasure biographies are also written from the third-person perspective. The major difference of the treasure tradition is the method of its revelation. These texts are said to have been discovered centuries after they were completed, often buried in the ground or deposited in sacred statues, or at sites of religious power such as temples or meditation caves that the imperial-era creators of these texts frequented or helped to establish. These sites themselves form a potent link with the past and help legitimise the proposed authenticity of the texts found there by later religious masters. The narratives of the burial and later

discovery of such treasures are retold in a terse manner in the colophons of some of the early treasure texts (Doney 2014: 15–19), but the nature of the act itself is ineffable and is bound up with the more general ineffability of the enlightened nature of the creator-interrer and the discoverer-disseminator of the treasure history. The *Zanglingma* claims to be a treasure text, and even prophesies the coming of its purported discoverer, Nyang Nyima Özer, at a time of dire straits for Tibetan Buddhism. The *Zanglingma* is said to be just one of Nyang Nyima Özer's many treasure revelations, which would turn the tide for the Dharma in Tibet and offer enlightenment to its people once more.

The *Zanglingma* account of Padmasambhava, his buried treasure and future prophecies, was so popular that the work was copied and redacted by generations of Tibetans (for example, the above-mentioned *Lang Poti Séru*). All extant versions of the *Zanglingma* recount the same basic narrative, but some provide more detail in certain places, and since this has a bearing on the fourteenth-century flourishing of the Padma-*vita*, I shall briefly outline their variety: these can roughly be categorised into three recensions—*ZL*1, *ZL*2, and *ZL*3 (Figure 1; for more detail, see Doney 2014: 25–30). Recensions *ZL*1 and *ZL*2 contain extra information not found in *ZL*3 (the white and grey bars respectively, interspersed among the black that represents the shortest and earliest attested narrative). Whereas *ZL*1's novel content is spread throughout its narrative, that found in *ZL*2 is clumped together in three different places: the beginning of the text, the middle, and toward the end. Importantly, the extra information in *ZL*1 is not included in *ZL*2, and vice versa. This means that each of these redactions was almost certainly made independently and by interpolating narratives into a similar base text: one that resembled what is now *ZL*3, rather than into other recensions. Whereas recension *ZL*2 does not appear to influence later Padmasambhava biographies, *ZL*3 forms the basis for the *Péma Katang* (*padma bka' thang*) supposedly discovered by the famed treasure revealer Orgyen Lingpa (*o rgyan gling pa*; b. 1323). In contrast, *ZL*1 was relied on by his contemporary, Sanggyé Lingpa (*sangs rgyas gling pa*; 1340–1396), in the creation of his quite similar *Katang Sertreng* (*bka' thang gser phreng*; see Doney 2014: 33–38). One of the most important ways in which the two fourteenth-century biographies differ from the *Zanglingma*, for our purposes here, is in the addition of much more specific prophesies that Padmasambhava gives

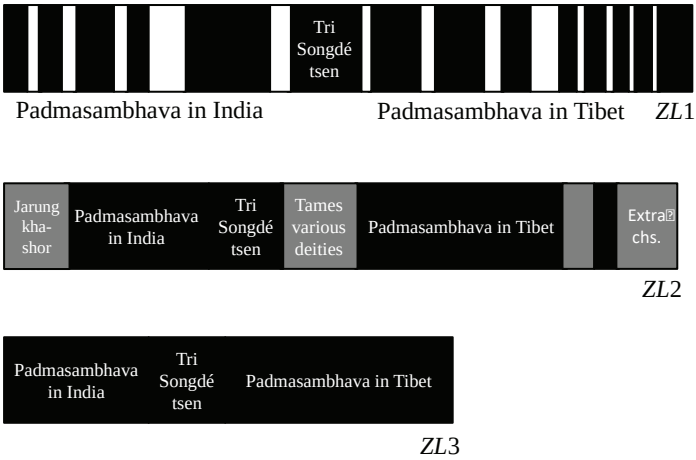

Figure 1: Comparison of extra material in *ZL1* and *ZL2* against *ZL3*.

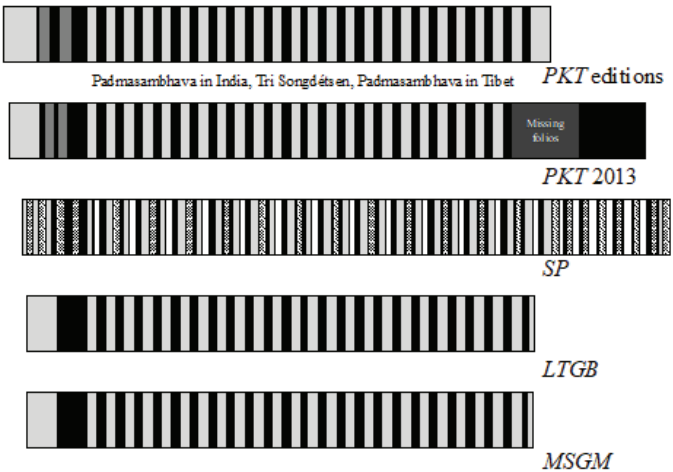

Figure 2: Comparison of most *PKT* editions against *PKT* 2013, *LTGB*, and *MSGM*.

concerning the problems that Tibet will face under Mongol and Sakya rule (see Blondeau 2000–2001: 119 and Dalton 2011: 129–32).

Therefore, while the Padma-*vita* tradition that flourished in the fourteenth century drew on the twelfth-century *Zanglingma* (and no

doubt other sources both literary and oral), it underwent a change in the scope of Padmasambhava's life and travels, and began to include new visions of both the past and present for Nyingma (*rnying ma*, 'Old School') Buddhists, as seen through the eyes of Padmasambhava and his biography. Both the expanded scope and the prophecy sections reflect many of the themes that are also displayed in contemporaneous histories. The main difference is that treasure biographies of Padmasambhava adapt these themes to legitimise the Nyingma school and the individual treasure revealers from that tradition.

The *Péma Katang* and its influence on other Padmasambhava biographies

For the Nyingma, the discovery of treasure texts marks the renewal of the blessings of the tradition.[14] In addition, some may offer a revision (or re-visioning) of the tradition itself, which like the renewal of blessings is also purportedly intended by its interrer (say, Padmasambhava) for that particular moment in the history of declining spiritual practice. Orgyen Lingpa's *Péma Katang* is, therefore, squarely aimed at a fourteenth- century audience witnessing *inter alia* the fall of Mongol-Sakya hegemony over central Tibet and the rise of the Pakmo Drupa. Overall, the *Péma Katang* follows a narrative familiar from the *Zanglingma* on the travels of Padmasambhava in India and Tibet, renewing the blessings of this central storyline, while offering a number of innovations that can be read in the light of events contemporary to its discovery (especially at the beginning but also in its prophecies). This blending of *ZL*3 and new elements is marked schematically in Figure 2 by consecutive black and light grey bars, which are only intended to give a sense of what is a much more complex mixture. The *Péma Katang* consists of 108 chapters (far more than the forty-one in *ZL*3), yet omits the seventeen chapters recording Padmasambhava's final advice to Tibetans as he departs the land of snows.

It should be noted, however, that the *Péma Katang* cannot be read on its own. This is so because it was redacted in the sixteenth century by Miwang Sönam Topgyel (*mi dbang bsod nams stobs rgyal*; d. 1594), a member of the noble house of Chonggyé (*'phyongs rgyas*) in central Tibet

14 See Schwieger 2000: 956–57, 2013: 69–70, Mayer 2013/2014 (2015): 234.

(see Czaja 2013: 273); this redaction was completed in order *inter alia* to bring it into line with the *Zanglingma* (Kapstein 2015: 180–81). Though the latter does not contain the prophetic chapters, it remains unclear what exactly was changed at the time. These uncertainties also apply to changes made prior to the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617–1682) printing of the work in 1676, the version produced in the 1730s at Dergé (*sde dge*) Monastery, and the 1755 corrected print by the imperial preceptor (*da guoshi*, 大国师), Changkya Khutugtu Rölpé Dorjé (*lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje*; 1717–1786), which seemingly pushed all earlier versions of the *Péma Katang* into the shadows. Yet recently I was fortunate enough to gain access to a manuscript from Tawang that contains a different recension of the *Péma Katang*, as well as to read in detail a number of other revealed Padmasambhava biographies that appear to have been inspired by that of Orgyen Lingpa (see Figure 2). In a recent article (Doney 2016), I analysed a few telling chapters found in these works, which describe Padmasambhava's adopted childhood home of Uḍḍiyāna and the Dhanakośa Lake, where he first emanated onto a lotus (earning him the name Padmasambhava, 'lotus-born'). These chapters are marked in dark grey in Figure 2 (not to be confused with the darkest grey in Figure 2, which marks missing folios discussed below).

Let me now try to summarise my preliminary findings on the relationship between the works that appeared with the flourishing of the Padmasambhava biography in the fourteenth century. First, Robert Mayer and Cathy Cantwell kindly shared with me a very interesting manuscript exemplar, which Ngawang Tsepag photographed for them in the village of Sanggyé Ling (*sangs rgyas gling*), Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, in the summer of 2013 (henceforth *PKT* 2013).[15] It differs from the Beijing and other published editions of the *Péma Katang* (e.g., *PKT* 1987) in a way that suggests another, perhaps earlier, recension of *PKT* has survived. In general, it correlates with other editions in its mixture of old and new material, except that it contains 122 chapters rather than 108, most notably including many chapters of Padmasambhava's advice upon leaving Tibet. However, it is not certain how many chapters, since a

15 Robert Mayer (personal communication, July 1, 2015). It was photographed as part of the University of Oxford digitisation program titled *The Ancient Tantra Collection from Sangyeling* (*Sangs rgyas gling Rnying ma'i rgyud 'bum*), directed by Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer (with an award from the John Fell OUP Research Fund).

number of folios are missing just at the point when the narrative moves to this section; the foliation is also confused from this point forward.

Figure 2 shows this section in black—reflecting its dependence on *ZL*3— with its missing folios in darkest grey; though it does not show the many points where *PKT* 2013 diverges (for example in being entirely in poetry rather than prose-poetry, a trait it shares with the other *PKT*s). Oddly, its closeness to the *Zanglingma* is what one would expect of Miwang Sönam Topgyel's edited version rather than the divergent *PKT* 2013, since Miwang Sönam Topgyel claims to have edited *PKT* to bring it into line with the *Zanglingma* (see above).

Second, Sanggyé Lingpa's fourteenth-century prose rendering of the *Péma Katang*—titled *Sertreng* (*gser phreng*; henceforth *SP*)—provides another key to unlocking something akin to the original *PKT*. It consists of 117 chapters, in prose and poetry, and though it follows *PKT* and thus *ZL*3 (marked in Figure 2 by light grey and black bars respectively), *SP* also includes its own unique elements (marked with diagonal-line bars) as well as parts uniquely taken from *ZL*1 (shown in white). At the end of its narrative, *SP* includes Padmasambhava's advice (like *PKT* 2013), but once again follows *ZL*1 and in its own brand of prose and poetry (the black, white, and diagonal-line bars indicate this only as a caricature of its complexity). *SP*'s final colophon returns to being similar to *PKT*.

Third, Dorjé Lingpa's (*rdo rje gling pa*; 1346–1405?) treasure biography of Padmasambhava, the *Lotsé Gyurjang* (*lo tsha'i 'gyur byang*; *LTGB*) in 100 chapters, follows *PKT* in the majority of its narrative. Though there are certain indications that it is closest to *PKT* 2013 at the beginning, it omits Padmasambhava's final advice and its narrative is followed by a very short colophon that does not admit of conclusions. Figure 2 reflects *LTGB*'s general similarity with *PKT* in its interspersed black and light grey bars, but does not reflect its many small divergences, all of which have yet to be identified.

Lastly, Péma Lingpa's (*padma gling pa*; 1450–1521) treasure biography, the *Münsel Drönmé* (*mun sel sgron me*; *MSGM*) in 105 or 106 chapters (it is a bit unclear toward the end) is the youngest, and may be based on Dorjé Lingpa's work and, therefore, *PKT* (2013?). The content shared by *LTGB* and *MSGM*, but not found in the other works, is not represented on the graph (nor are *MSGM*'s unique elements), in order not to confuse the issue at hand, which is the light that these works shed on *the Péma*

Katang and the major trends in Padmasambhava biography taking place between the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[16] Orgyen Lingpa's treasure biography evidently inspired emulation among other treasure revealers as well as future redaction to reflect new zeitgeists. Future scholarship triangulating between these five sources could shed light on the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century positions of these important masters and some of their followers, and on the period as imagined through the prophecies of Padmasambhava; while their divergences might allow us to see possible areas of tension within this depiction.

Innovations in the biography of Padmasambhava

What light does all this shed on the changing depiction of Padmasambhava? In the following section, the importance of Padmasambhava as the archetypal *siddha* in treasure biography literature should not be forgotten, nor should the importance of Orgyen Lingpa discovering a new, greatly expanded narrative of this lay religious adept at that moment in history (followed shortly by other discoverers in their particular times and places). The end of Sakya hegemony meant the collapse of one instantiation of a wider trend witnessed from at least the eleventh century onwards in Tibet, that of the celibate monk standing for the highest ideal and centre of ruling power in central Tibet. Some Nyingma lay masters like Orgyen Lingpa may have viewed with suspicion this ideal, identified by Ronald Davidson (2005: chapter 10) as a 'neoconservative' vision, despite the Nyingma's Katok (*ka thog*) Monastery apparently having been founded in the late twelfth century. This monastic ideal, coupled with Sarma (*gsar ma*, 'New School') criticism of many religious practices that *seemed* to have no basis in Indic tradition, likely represented a threat to the Nyingma and their treasure texts' legitimacy; at least they appear this way in the eyes of the twelfth- century Nyang Nyima Özer (see Doney 2014: 8–12). Jangchup Gyeltsen, though toppling the Sakya hegemony, was also ostensibly a celibate ruler from a pro-clerical Pakmo Drupa tradition (Kapstein 2006: 120), and so the contemporary audience who read the *Péma Katang* or heard it recited may also have interpreted it *inter alia* as an alternative to his authority and the values of his school.

16 For a more in-depth but still preliminary comparison of all of these works, see Doney 2016.

As in the *Zanglingma*, the lay *siddha* Padmasambhava is always the key to Tibet's salvation in the *Péma Katang*. The twelfth-century work's emphasis on the *siddha* ideal is retained in the fourteenth-century text, despite the fact that Padmasambhava is ordained for a while in the *Péma Katang* (which may suggest the growing influence of the above-mentioned monastic hegemony). The work paints the contemporary ruler of Tibet, Tri Songdétsen, as professing the laudable intention of building the eighth-century Samyé (*bsam yas*) Monastery, yet this does not detract from his comparatively deluded character and inferior status vis-à-vis Padmasambhava (see Doney 2017). Lastly, it is important to imagine the ways that this narrative—discovered in 1352—would have resonated with an audience exposed to it after Samyé was destroyed a year later, and rebuilt by Lama Dampa with the blessing of Jangchup Gyeltsen. The *Péma Katang* relates at length the crucial role that Padmasambhava plays in the very existence of Samyé Monastery by taming the site for its original construction.

The innovations of the *Péma Katang* include first a large amount of detail (roughly twelve chapters) preceding Padmasambhava's appearance on a lotus in Uḍḍiyāna. Whereas the *Zanglingma* states at the outset that Padmasambhava is an emanation of the primordial buddha Amitābha and the bodhisattva of compassion Avalokiteśvara (ZLh 1b1–2), the *Péma Katang* recounts these existences at length and in so doing fixes these facts within a compelling narrative. Such a cosmogony vies with that of Avalokiteśvara as found in the *Gyelrap Selwé Mélong*, as well as in earlier narratives including the *Maṇi Kambum* (*maṇi bka' 'bum*) treasure text partially compiled by Nyang Nyima Özer (see Sørensen 1994: 14–27, 2015: 159–61). The *Maṇi Kambum* relates that Avalokiteśvara emanated as Emperor Tri Songtsen (Khri Srong btsan; 605?–649), but not Padmasambhava; whereas the *Péma Katang* does the opposite. In future, this section of the *Péma Katang* might be usefully contrasted with the *Gyelrap Selwé Mélong*'s narrative, in order to study competing views of the role this bodhisattva played in Tibet's salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*, see Schwieger 2000: 965–66, 2013: 74).

Second, Padmasambhava's travels around the Gangetic Plains of India before visiting Tibet are augmented with narratives of his journeys to or emanations in Khotan, China, Sri Lanka, Bengal, Kashmir, and so forth. Perhaps this extended peregrination is in line with the expanded

geographical awareness evidenced in other fourteenth-century histories, which recount the royal lineages of China, Khotan, and Mongolia, in addition to India, before turning to Tibet (see above quote from Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle 2013: 327). As part of this journey, Padmasambhava receives ordination under *Ānanda*, the disciple of the Buddha, and the work then refers to Padmasambhava as a 'second Buddha' (*sangs rgyas gnyis pa*), both as part of the third-person narrative and in the mouths of his converted devotees (for example, see *PKT* 2013 51a7 and 61a7). In this part of the narrative, Padmasambhava performs the majority of eleven deeds or acts, a number redolent of the Buddha's famous twelve deeds, and most likely emulating their example. Thus, Padmasambhava is not only an emanation of buddhas and bodhisattvas, but his life-story takes its inspiration from the historical Buddha's biography more than in the *Zanglingma*.

Third, specific prophecies that are included toward the end of the work bring the biography up to the date of the revelation of the *Péma Katang* itself. This innovation, which Per K. Sørensen calls 'historiographical providentialism' (2015: 161), is where the literary precedents and the influence of the times really intersect. Here, Orgyen Lingpa draws on the *Zanglingma* and other intervening works in order to legitimise the Nyingma school to which he belonged. However, this legitimisation was not always in accord with the concept of the land of Tibet as envisioned and ruled by the Pakmo Drupas. The evidence for the relationship between Orgyen Lingpa and Jangchup Gyeltsen is equivocal, yet it is difficult to tell if it was positive, negative, or mixed. Giuseppe Tucci (1999 [1949]: vol. 1, 113 col. i) states that Jangchup Gyeltsen 'was extremely devoted' to Orgyen Lingpa. Ramon Prats (1980: 257) suggests the same, but believes that the relationship went sour because Jangchup Gyeltsen was upset by Orgyen Lingpa's prophecies. Matthew T. Kapstein (2000: 165–66) has offered evidence, which he admits is rather late, suggesting that the treasure revealer was threatened by the rise in Pakmo Drupa hegemony. However, Jacob Dalton (2011: 132) suggests that Orgyen Lingpa's *Péma Katang* describes Jangchup Gyeltsen as an emanation of Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi bringing 'a little happiness' to central Tibet—though the difference between 'a little happiness' and 'little happiness' (i.e., almost none) is slight. He also makes reference to the Fifth Dalai Lama confirming the identification of the emanation of Vajrapāṇi with

Jangchup Gyeltsen (Dalton 2011: 253, n. 18). Perhaps it is rash to be too strictly exclusivist in answering such a question, looking for undeniable signs of a definite close or antagonistic relationship. It may be that Orgyen Lingpa's stance was similar to conciliatory position of Butön Rinchendrup (and perhaps Lama Dampa) between the Pakmo Drupa and the earlier Mongol rulers, discussed above. Orgyen Lingpa may have been exhibiting balance or pragmatism in his choice to not demonise the new ruler of central Tibet, and perhaps Tucci's source is right that they shared a positive bond at least at the time the *Péma Katang* was purportedly discovered. Given the mixed evidence on Orgyen Lingpa's relationship with Jangchup Gyeltsen as well as the new exemplar *PKT* 2013, it would be worth returning in future investigations to his representation of the Mongol-Sakya hegemonic period and Jangchup Gyeltsen in the prophecies of the *Péma Katang*.

Yet viewed from a wider perspective, the *Péma Katang* describes Padmasambhava as alone in offering not only salvation but also succour during these dark times. It draws again on the precedent of the *Zanglingma*, whose above-mentioned short praise implies that he still exists in the world rather than having died in the eighth or ninth century (ZLh 1b1–2). However, the *Péma Katang* goes further and has him promise to return for future generations on the tenth day of every month (an event still celebrated in today's pan-Tibetan Buddhist calendar, see Schwieger 1997). Thus, not only was Padmasambhava there at the beginning of beginningless time, but will forever remain in the world for the sake of all Tibetan Buddhists. Furthermore, just as the historical Buddha prophesies the coming of Padmasambhava in chapter 11 of the *Péma Katang*, so at its end Padmasambhava prophesies that Orgyan Lingpa and other Nyingma masters will offer salvation to Tibet due to their connection with him as disciples during their previous lives.

In this way, the *Péma Katang* incorporates the wider Indo-Tibetan Buddhist worldview (discussed in Schwieger 2000 and 2013) into its specifically Padma-centric narrative. It uses this shared basis to argue for Padmasambhava's preeminent status as a fully enlightened protector of Tibet and the Nyingma's privileged access to his salvational power, seemingly in contrast to other historiographical representations of the time.

Conclusion

Biographies and histories do more than merely educate or entertain on a local or universal level. They also attempt to persuade their readers of things the author thinks self-evident,[17] as well as win followers for their cause. Historiographical works such as treasure biographies can therefore be read (with due caution) to reveal their revealers' devotion to certain practices and the perceived patronage they seek in order to continue and spread them. This is only one of many possible readings, but seen from this perspective the *Péma Katang* is only ostensibly Padmasambhava's own testimony to the future faithful and those in need of conversion to the growing cult of the Indian master himself. In a deeper sense, it reflects Orgyen Lingpa and his Nyingma milieu's attempt at channelling the imperial period through the conduit of treasure biography in order to speak to a fourteenth-century readership, poised at the beginning of a chaotic time in Tibetan history, about the benefits of belief in the Precious Guru rather than Sarma monastic schools. Other Nyingma masters evidently agreed with his vision of central Tibet's place in the world and Padmasambhava's importance to its society, and as such sought to renew the blessings of his treasure biography by discovering their own similar versions after the fall of the Yuan Dynasty.

These treasure biographies later became extremely influential, despite legitimising the Nyingma more than any of the schools that held most of the power after the fourteenth century. Their popularity, perhaps among the Pakmo Drupa but certainly with the later Gelukpa (*dge lugs pa*) school, seems to have given the Nyingma a back-door access to the hegemonic discourse of Tibetanness. Kapstein writes about the later importance of the *Péma Katang* and *Maṇi Kambum* as follows:

> For, following the conversion of Altan Khan in 1578, though the Dge-lugs-pa emerged as the predominant Tibetan sectarian trend among the Mongols, a number of *gter-ma* [treasure] traditions were soon promulgated among them as well, above all those of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* and *Padma bka' thang*. . . .

17 Perhaps, in the context of treasure revelation and following Robert Mayer, it would be preferable to use the term 'trader' (meaning one who both transmits and contributes to the tradition of their religious lineage) rather than 'author' (in the modern sense applied to 'innovative creative writers,' Mayer 2013/2014 [2015]: 232).

> Indeed, one of the notable innovations of the Fifth [Dalai Lama]'s works, and those of his regent Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho [Sanggyé Gyatso], was their explicit political use of prophecy drawn from *gter-ma*. In this connection, the *Padma bka' thang*, with its elaborate prophecies of the *gter-ston* [treasure revealers] themselves, that is, its prophecies of the prophets, must have assumed a privileged position, the mother, as it were, of Tibetan prophetic revelations in general. (Kapstein 2015: 172–74)

The Fifth Dalai Lama was born in a part of central Tibet especially connected with Padmasambhava's activities and—like Padmasambhava—claimed to be an emanation of the bodhisattva of compasssion, Avalokiteśvara (see Kapstein 2015: 169, 173, 181). He asserted that some of the specific so- called historical references in fourteenth-century prophecies actually foretold his consolidation of power, thus setting Padmasambhava's seal of approval upon it. In fact, the prophecies were themselves created from pre-existing, vaguer twelfth-century prophecies—perhaps as a reflection of wider trends toward more detailed, up-to-date historiography. In this way, the Fifth Dalai Lama can be seen to have taken the next logical step in the increase of prophecy's political significance by interpreting these prophecies as preeminently referring to and legitimising himself and Gushri Khan (1582–1655) as saviours pre-ordained to rule (see also Schwieger 2000: 965–67, 2013: 74–75). Whatever tension may have existed during the fourteenth century between the cosmogony of the *Péma Katang* on Padmasambhava and *Maṇi Kambum* on Avalokiteśvara, it was seemingly resolved during the period of Gelukpa hegemony, and this perhaps not coincidentally (see Sørensen 2015: 160).

I have here only just begun to outline the many ways in which the *Péma Katang* influenced later Tibetan and Mongolian literature and Buddhist culture. The revelation of the *Péma Katang* was apparently of great importance not only for Nyingmapas but also Gelukpas living through these periods of great change, causing a major shift in how they conceptualised their world and history. Yet its central narrative seems to set itself in contrast (and perhaps reaction) to those expressed in other fourteenth-century histories. Beneath the surface of a largely homogenous Buddhist view of history prevalent in Tibet at the end of the Yuan period, lay different Tibetan cultural perspectives that existed

in tension with each other, and had yet to be unified. While in hindsight this period may appear as an era of unchanging and singular culture—this picture being one mirrored in Tibetan emic representations—by digging a little deeper one reveals vibrant, varied, and changing times that were not quite as static or monocentric as sometimes stated.

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