

Taranatha



THE LIFE *of*
Padmasambhava

Translated and edited by
Cristiana de Falco

The Life of Padmasambhava

A Biography of the Great Master Padmasambhava

Taranatha

Translated from the Tibetan and edited by

Cristiana De Falco



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In the country of Oddiyana[1], on the North-west border
On the stamens of a lotus flower,
You who obtained the *siddhis*[2], supreme wonder,
Known as ‘the Lotus Born’
Surrounded by a court of Dakinis[3],
Since I follow your path
Please empower me!
GURU PADMA SIDDHI HUM![4]
May the power of Guru Padmasambhava
Continue to manifest in the world,
To help human beings in this troubled age
And to spread the teachings!
May he be present every time anyone
Reads the words of his biography!

Preface

The text contained in this book is a biography of Padmasambhava, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism and the main originator of its introduction and diffusion in Tibet. There are many biographies in Tibetan of this great *yogi*, some of which have been translated into Western languages.

As I will explain in more detail in the Introduction, there are biographies of Padmasambhava in both of the main traditions of Tibetan sacred literature related to the Nyingma school: *terma* and *kama*[5]. Most of the biographies that are known nowadays, especially the *terma* ones, in spite of their beauty, expressive perfection and great value as far as the deepening of the studies of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism is concerned, do not provide data that could be of much relevance to a contemporary Western historian.

For instance, most of these texts introduce Padmasambhava as a being who was not born of a woman, but who suddenly appeared - in a miraculous way - in the shape of an eight-year-old boy sitting on a lotus flower in the middle of a lake, an account which could stimulate in a modern Westerner the wish to get to know more about the language of this culture that is not restricted by rationalism. Or these texts could help one to make contact - through their symbolic language - with those planes of reality which are at present neglected in the Western world, but which are still alive and meaningful to Tibetans as well as to other peoples who have not been conditioned by the process of technological development, and which were and are the foundation of all knowledge in 'traditional' cultures. But this aspect of the matter does not fulfil the need of the modern historian for data relating to time and space.

Taranatha (1575-?), the author of the biography contained in this book, is one of the major Tibetan historians of his age. His testimony is still considered reliable by Tibetans, and the source of his writings is in the *kama* tradition. In this work he deals with the history of Padmasambhava as a modern historian would, wishing to satisfy a need for objectivity, using the most reliable sources available to him and making accurate references to them in his text, so as to dispel any doubts regarding the authenticity of his account.

At this point, I would like to stress that my purpose here is not to belittle the value of the *terma* tradition to which so many fundamental teachings of Tibetan Tantric Buddhism belong. To raise doubts about this tradition or about the historicity of Padmasambhava, who was himself the author of many *terma* texts, would be like doubting the existence of a Tantric tradition in Tibet altogether. Rather, my purpose is to point out that there are different versions of Padmasambhava's life story, and that this one says something new, in that - relying on sources that are so different from those of the *terma* biographies and having different aims - it shows a more historical and human side of this great being. This is a very important contribution, since the whole transmission of the Tantric teachings is based on one very important thing: the human figure of the guru, or 'spiritual teacher'.

The literal meaning of the word Tantra^[6] is 'continuity', which also expresses the fact that the only possibility of acceding to the Tantric teachings is by receiving them from a qualified guru, who himself received them from another master, so that there is an unbroken continuity in the transmission from teacher to disciple. Since it was Padmasambhava who brought Tantric Buddhism to Tibet, he is the most important guru in its lineages. Therefore, any reliable testimony regarding his life is extremely valuable for those who study and practice these teachings in the Western world.

Also in this biography - as well as in Tibetan culture in general - there are elements that a rationally educated Westerner might hurriedly dismiss as popular superstition, such as the existence of deities and demons and the many accounts of miraculous deeds. Discussing them may lead to speculations about the differences between Eastern and Western mentalities, or between religious and rational approaches to reality. Such themes deserve to be discussed by specialists, so it is not

my intention to deal with them here. Instead I shall simply try to analyse the contents of the biography from the viewpoint of Tibetan culture and mentality and, in doing so, try to highlight its particular characteristics and point out the reasons why the knowledge that it intimates can still be valid and useful for the modern world.

I am profoundly grateful to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, who is a very important spiritual teacher in the lineage of Dzogchen, my own root-guru and also a scholar whose knowledge is deep, vast and truthful, for having suggested to me to translate this text and also for the help and inspiration he gave me during my work.

This work was originally my thesis in Tibetan Literature at the Istituto Universitario Orientale in Naples, which I discussed in 1985 and later elaborated.

I am also grateful to Adriano Clemente, Robin Cooke, Enrico Dell'Angelo, Alison Duguid, Cheh Goh, Elio Guarisco, Nina Robinson, Prof. Ramon Prats and Dr. Nida Chenagtsang for their collaboration at different stages of this work.

Cristiana De Falco
Arcidosso, July 19th, 2002
Day of Padmasambhava

Notice

To help in the reading of Tibetan terms, I decided to use a phonetic transcription everywhere except for notes. In the notes I used the Wylie transliteration, except for some person or place names, which are commonly known in their phonetic transcription. All the words in phonetic transcription have been listed with their corresponding Wylie transliteration in the Index at the end of the book.

Introduction

Biographies of Padmasambhava

The tibetan word *namtar*, which is usually translated as ‘biography’, literally means ‘complete liberation’, because Tibetan biographies are essentially the life-stories of spiritual masters or enlightened beings. Thus the account itself can be an aid on the path that leads to complete liberation and an example of spiritual perfection.

Regarding the Tibetan concept of biography and historiography, it is worthwhile to quote here some excerpts from the ‘Translator’s Introduction’ to Dūdjom Rinpoche’s history of the Nyingma School^[7]:

(...) The Tibetan historian acts very much as a compiler or anthologist of material that has been handed down by his or her tradition. It would be wrong, however, to see in Tibetan religious historiography merely an uncritical repetition of old stories, for its canons are most certainly not those of modern Western historiography, and any attempt to judge the former in terms of the latter will always lead to the conclusion that Tibetan historiography is defective in the same way as its pre-renaissance counterpart in the West.

(...) However, another observation forces itself upon us: many of these stories, which certainly do treat of historical figures, their studies, meditations, and actions on behalf of the Buddhist religion, function as allegorical accounts of the specific spiritual tradition in which they are written.

(...) Viewed with sufficient sensitivity to the tradition it becomes clear that the spiritual paths taught abstractly in doctrinal texts are here mapped concretely through the lives of individuals. These accounts thus tell us as much of Tibetan religious beliefs, values and insights as any other available sources. History, as understood in the contemporary West, is here clearly subservient to a spiritual end, but this should not prevent our appreciating these biographies as sources of inspiration and practical guidance for those who pursue the spiritual path outlined in them, and equally as a record of their world.

(...) The text should therefore be explored with receptivity to the many levels on which it is written, abandoning rigid preconceptions of what history should or should not be.

It is difficult to know how many biographies of Padmasambhava actually exist. Some Tibetan sources speak about a very high number, such as ten thousand nine hundred. Pawo Tsuglag, a Tibetan historian who lived in the 16th century, claims to have personally seen fifty of

them.[8] Some have already been translated and published into Western languages. The most famous ones are: *The Word of Padma*,[9] *The Necklace of Jewels*,[10] *The Golden Necklace*,[11] *The Wish-fulfilling Tree*,[12] but there are also some brief ones.[13] They all have similarities but they also differ in some points, such as whether or not Padmasambhava was born in a miraculous way, the account of his stay in India, the length of his stay in Tibet and whether or not he succeeded in completely freeing Tibet from all negative influences, or whether he only consecrated the ground where the monastic complex of Samye would be built, or if he actually consecrated the whole of it after it was finished.

But Tibetans have a very interesting point of view about this: they think that since Padmasambhava was an enlightened being, beyond birth and death, he had the power of manifesting himself at will. Such beings may show themselves where there are disciples who are ready to receive their teachings, remaining hidden or invisible to others. So the different accounts found in the biographies may all be true, because to some people he may have manifested in one way, to other people in another, according to their capacity. For some disciples he may have seemed to have stayed in Tibet only for a short time and for others for a very long time, because he may have reappeared to them at a later date. Some people, because of their karmic obstacles, may have found that he did not succeed in completely eliminating all negative influences, while others may have found that he did indeed do so.[14] Regarding the activity of enlightened beings, Dūdjom Rinpoche says:

So it is that great accomplished masters may make themselves disappear from the view of ordinary disciples and then, after a long time has passed, they may make themselves reappear, and then remain present for a long time. They may be invisible in some places and visible in others simultaneously. In one place they may demonstrate transference (of consciousness at death), and in another, the act of taking birth. In these and other ways their manifestations are infinite.[15]

Padmasambhava - like Vimalamitra, another great master who gave teachings in Tibet - is said to have realised the Great Transference,[16] i.e. the total re-integration of his physical body into the subtle dimension of light, in this way going beyond the necessity of dying and taking rebirth. Therefore he is thought to be still present - not in a material body but in a body of light - so that practitioners who have developed enough

capacity to perceive this dimension can see him. Anyway he can still manifest - not necessarily in a visible form - to those who invoke him with devotion and recite the Seven Line Prayer[\[17\]](#) that he himself gave to the Tibetans. He promised - upon leaving Tibet - to be present in the human world particularly on every tenth day of the waxing moon, and especially on the tenth day of the fifth month, the Tibetan month of the Monkey.[\[18\]](#) For this reason, Tibetans make offerings and pray to him particularly on these days.

Historical Background

It is difficult to outline the historical background of Padmasambhava's life, partly for the reasons given in the previous paragraph and partly because he travelled through so many countries, some of which it is even difficult to identify today. It is commonly accepted that he was born in Oddiyana or Uddiyana,[\[19\]](#) a country on the north-western border of India. Most Western scholars identify Oddiyana with the Swat valley, in Pakistan. But there is no real evidence of the exact location of the borders of Oddiyana. It could well have been the name of a kingdom much larger than the Swat valley, or indeed it could have referred to the Buddhist countries to the north-west of the Indian peninsula, such as Kashmir, Afghanistan and Pakistan. There does not seem to be much archeological evidence of this, but one must consider that the Muslim invasion that came afterwards swept away Buddhism from most of the countries where it had flourished in the previous centuries. Anyway, it seems that Oddiyana had its own language - as we know from some Tantric texts that often report words and spellings in both Tibetan and the language of Oddiyana. This is also called 'the language of the Dakinis',[\[20\]](#) because Oddiyana was the place where many Tantric teachings were first communicated to the Mahasiddhas, who then spread them in India, and it was also the place of origin of the Dzogchen teachings. These teachings are often said to have originally been transmitted by non-human beings, such as Dakinis. It seems that the Oddiyana language showed some similarity to Sanskrit, as in the expression 'Santi Maha' that corresponds to the Sanskrit 'Maha Santi' and to the Tibetan Dzogpa Chenpo.[\[21\]](#) It also seems that Oddiyana had its own writing, since often in the texts the words in Oddiyana language are written in characters which are different from Tibetan or Sanskrit.

Padmasambhava is said to have stayed in India and Nepal after

leaving Oddiyana. At that time, as one learns from the biographies of the Mahasiddhas,[22] Buddhism was most widespread in India, especially in its Tantric form, although its existence was already threatened by Hindus and Muslims. Padmasambhava with his magical powers helped Buddhists to overcome the problems that were arising from these two adversaries.

At that time Tibet was the only non-Buddhist country in an area where Buddhism had developed and flourished. The most common versions of the account of the spreading of Buddhism in Tibet relate that it made its first appearance during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo (627-649), who married two Buddhist princesses: one Chinese and one Nepalese.[23] But it seems that there had been previous contacts with Buddhism, as one learns from a very well known legend that says that during the reign of King Lhatotori, who supposedly lived in the 3rd century A. D., a Buddhist book, a golden *stupa*[24] and a wish fulfilling jewel fell from heaven, and a voice, also from heaven, was heard, predicting that after five generations someone would come who would understand their meaning. This seems to be a reference to King Songtsen Gampo, who ruled exactly five generations after Lhatothori.[25]

During Songtsen Gampo's reign Tibet was very powerful and its military power was feared even by the Chinese. Tibet had also annexed the neighbouring kingdom of Shang Shung. So it was quite inevitable that Tibet, opening and developing its communication with the surrounding Buddhist countries, came into contact with Buddhism and developed some interest in it. But it was not until Trisong Detsen's reign, which seems to have lasted from 755 to 797,[26] that Buddhism became the official religion of Tibet. King Trisong Detsen was sincerely interested in the Buddhist teachings, and invited the Indian Buddhist monk Shantaraksita[27] to teach its basic doctrines. But it seems that most of the Tibetan aristocracy - as one learns from the chronicles of that period - was fiercely hostile to the introduction of Buddhism. So Shantarakshita himself advised the king to invite Padmasambhava, who at that time was renowned as the most powerful *yogi* in the world, to overcome all obstacles and help Buddhism to spread and become established in Tibet.

Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen

Padmasambhava introduced his Tibetan disciples to many teachings belonging to the Tantric tradition - especially to Mahayoga Tantra - and to the Upadesha series of Dzogchen, in particular the series of teachings called *Heart Essence of the Dakinis*.[\[28\]](#)

Therefore it is useful to give here a brief outline of the three Buddhist paths to realization, Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen, mainly focusing on the latter two.[\[29\]](#)

These three paths have different methods, thus the practitioner works in different ways with his/her own mind. The reason for this is that individuals have different capacities, so the best method for each person is the one that corresponds to his/her capacity. No doctrine is in absolute better than any other. But it is a very common belief that the Tantric doctrine is higher than Sutra, and that Dzogchen is even higher. This means only that the latter two paths are more direct, and that if one has the capacity to understand them, then the way to realization is shorter. But, if one has no capacity, there is no point in practising them. To practise 'higher' doctrines involves already having a good mastery of the 'lower paths'. This means that to practise Dzogchen one has to have already the capacity to understand and apply Sutra and Tantra.

Sutra

The *sutras* are the teachings that were given orally by Buddha Shakyamuni and were later written down by his disciples. The principle of the Sutra doctrine is renunciation, which means controlling oneself to avoid circumstances that may generate negative emotions. There are rules to observe for monks and nuns and also for lay people. The Sutra teachings are based on the doctrine of the 'two truths': relative and absolute. Relative truth is what the mind of an ordinary person normally

perceives as 'reality'. This 'reality' is actually an illusion, which constantly continues because of the interdependent connection of all phenomena. Recognising that everything is nothing but mere illusion is the first indispensable step towards spiritual realisation. Absolute truth is free from mental concepts and beyond duality of subject and object: it is pure emptiness, which is the essence of all phenomena. In emptiness there is no distinction between relative and absolute truth, everything is free from conceptualisation, but on the conventional level such a definition is necessary because it gives the practitioner a guideline to the right action in any circumstance.

Tantra

Tantra means 'continuity' referring - as previously mentioned - to the continuity in the transmission of the teachings from master to disciple, without interruption. The Tantric path is also known as the 'path of transformation', as opposed to the 'path of renunciation' of the Sutra teachings. In Tantra one does not cut off negative emotions but rather transforms them into wisdom. Ordinary vision is considered to be 'impure vision', whereas 'pure vision' is the perception of oneself as a deity and of the external world as the dimension of a deity, which is called *mandala*.[\[30\]](#)

This is a further development of the doctrine of voidness that is found in the *sutras*. Voidness is actually the starting point in the Tantric teachings. In this context voidness is not 'nothing', it is rather the real nature of all things - beyond all concepts - which has its movement, its energy. This energy manifests as form and sound. So a Tantric practitioner works with this level, by visualising his body not as an 'impure' material body of flesh and bones, but rather as the 'pure' luminous, transparent body of a deity, and by reciting *mantras*, which are sounds connected with the pure dimension. In this way he/she tries to integrate him/herself with this pure dimension, which is by no means just fantasy or mental construction. It may happen that, through their practice, Tantric *yogis* develop powers, *siddhis*, which enable them to perform

‘miracles’, actions that are inconceivable on the ordinary level. Tibetan literature is full of examples of this. *Siddhis* are possible because Tantric practitioners work with the subtle energies that are at the root of material manifestations, but they are only a side effect of practice and by no means its goal. Real Tantric practitioners never use them for selfish reasons or to demonstrate their powers but only to benefit sentient beings. *Siddhis* can also be of great help in overcoming obstacles on the path, such as illnesses, etc.

Dzogchen

Dzogchen, or Great Perfection, is also called the ‘path of self-liberation’. It differs from Tantrism in that there is neither a concept of transforming something into something else, nor of pure and impure vision. If one is in the state of Dzogchen one is beyond concepts and everything has just ‘one flavour’. The symbol frequently used to represent this state is the capacity of the mirror which can reflect anything. Whether the thing reflected is beautiful or ugly, pleasant or unpleasant, it does not change the nature of the mirror, its clarity and capacity to reflect. This mirror-like nature is the real nature of all sentient beings. But if one does not find oneself in this nature - that is beyond duality, like a mirror and its reflection - then the perception of reality in terms of subject and object arises and continuously creates what is called ‘karmic vision’, which keeps beings constantly in *samsara*, the endless cycle of death and rebirth. The goal of Dzogchen teachings is to discover this potentiality in oneself and develop it, progressively integrating it with the whole of existence. The only way to cut karmic vision is by discovering one’s own real nature and trying to find oneself in it. This is what one learns in Dzogchen.

In Dzogchen as well as in Tantrism the figure of the Guru is very important, since these are not teachings that can be understood by the intellect alone; one has to experience them on all levels of existence. This is possible only with the help of somebody who has already gone through this experience successfully, and has perfectly realised its meaning. Such

a teacher is able to transmit his state to those students who are capable of understanding it and to provide instruction that enable them to overcome all different kinds of hardship that they may meet on the path. This transmission takes place through the Guruyoga practice. Guruyoga means ‘union with the guru’, and is a way to find oneself in the same state as the master. There are many different methods of Guruyoga, which need not be detailed here. In Dzogchen it is the most important practice, because it helps to develop one’s understanding of the teachings beyond the limitations of words and physical presence, just being in the same state as one’s teacher. Since a Dzogchen teacher always finds him/herself in the state of Dzogchen, by practising Guruyoga the disciple develops an understanding of it.

The Nyingmapa School

The followers of Padmasambhava were later called Nyingmapa, ‘the Ancient ones’, and their doctrines were then organised as the system of a school. The above mentioned general view regarding Sutra, Tantra and Dzogchen is

reflected in the Nyingmapa classification of all Buddhist teachings in ‘nine vehicles’[\[31\]](#), which are:

1. Shravakayana
2. Pratyekabuddhayana
3. Bodhisattvayana
4. Kriya Tantra
5. Ubhaya or Carya Tantra
6. Yoga Tantra
7. Mahayoga
8. Anuyoga
9. Atiyoga

The first three vehicles correspond to the Sutra teachings, the other six correspond to the Tantra. Kriya, Ubhaya and Yoga Tantra are called Lower Tantras or External Tantras, since they are based on the visualisation of a deity as an entity that is external to the practitioner. The

last three are called Higher or Inner Tantras, since in this case the practitioner visualises his own person as the deity, without any separation. The vehicle of Atiyoga ('primordial yoga') in the Nyingmapa School includes the Dzogchen teachings, but this does not mean that these teachings are exclusive to the Nyingmapa School. There are Dzogchen masters and practitioners in all schools of Tibetan Buddhism as well as in Bön, the religious tradition that existed in Tibet a long time before the introduction of Buddhism. But, as we learn from the texts, Dzogchen teachings are extremely ancient, even more ancient than Bön. In fact the Dzogchen treasury of knowledge deals with the innermost nature of reality, so it cannot be considered as exclusive to one school or tradition.

Different Modes of Transmission of The Teachings

In the Nyingmapa school there are three modes of transmission of teachings: *terma*, *kama* and *tag nang*. Many teachings of Padmasambhava belong to the *terma* tradition, although there are also *terma* teachings that were transmitted by other masters.

Terma

The word *terma* means 'treasure' and it refers to a teaching that has been concealed so that it may be discovered in the future, when the time is appropriate and that particular teaching is needed.[\[32\]](#)

In this way many teachings have been preserved from the danger of being destroyed during the periods of chaos that Tibet had to go through. Padmasambhava himself, helped by Yeshe Tsogyal, a *yogini* who was his consort,[\[33\]](#) concealed most of the *terma* texts in many different areas of Tibet and predicted places and circumstances where their

finders would be born. A discoverer of a *terma* is called a *tertön*, ‘discoverer of treasures’. The most important *tertöns* are reincarnations of the twenty-five main disciples of Padmasambhava who made an aspiration to be reborn in the future to rediscover the teachings that he had concealed, but there are also many others.[\[34\]](#)

There are two main kinds of *termas*: *sater* and *gongter*. *Sater* means ‘treasure of the earth’, since these teachings are found in material places, such as in a cave, in a statue, in a pillar of a temple, etc.[\[35\]](#) One characteristic kind of *sater* is the ‘yellow scrolls’ (*shogser*), scrolls of yellow paper that contain a text, often written in ‘symbolic writing’ (*dayig*) which does not resemble any commonly known writing. Only the *tertön* or a highly realised practitioner can understand it. Often the *tertön* finds nothing but a few syllables of this script, from which the whole text develops while he is deciphering it, because this script has the power to change while the predestined person is reading it. Also a sacred object, such as a statue, can be a *sater*.

Gongter means ‘treasure of the mind’. This refers to teachings that are not hidden in a material place, but in the nature of mind of realized practitioners, who at the right time will discover them through dreams or visions.[\[36\]](#)

The lineage of transmission of a *terma* is a short one, because in this way a teaching is transmitted directly by Padmasambhava - or another master - to a *tertön* who comes to this world many centuries later.

Kama

Kama means ‘word’, ‘pronouncement’. This refers to a mode of transmission of the teachings in an uninterrupted succession from master to disciple, for generations from the origins of that teaching. An example of a teaching of Padmasambhava that belongs to this tradition is *The Garland of Views of the Secret Methods*.[\[37\]](#)

Tagnang

Tagnang means ‘pure vision’, which refers to teachings that are transmitted, through dreams or visions, to highly realized practitioners directly from enlightened beings, divinities or masters who lived in the past. It shows some similarities with the *gongter*, but in this case the teaching is transmitted at that time for the first time, instead of being hidden and then rediscovered.

Different Kinds of Birth in Relation to the Terma and Kama Traditions

There are two different versions of Padmasambhava’s birth, that of a supernatural birth and that of a birth from the womb.[38]

The supernatural birth version is more or less the same in most of his biographies: it relates that the Buddha Amitabha, who is red in color and resides in the pure dimension of the west, called Sukhavati, out of compassion for human beings who needed a guide to overcome suffering, emanated a red ray of light that took the shape of an eight-year-old boy, who appeared within the petals of a lotus flower, in the middle of the Dhanakosha lake, in Oddiyana. At that time King Indrabodhi[39] was already old and had no son to become heir to his kingdom. One of his ministers saw the boy and told the king about the miraculous apparition. The king, understanding that the boy had a divine nature, took him to the palace, to be his adoptive son and heir to the throne. He was named Padmasambhava[40] or, according to other versions, Padma Akara,[41] both of which mean ‘Born from a Lotus Flower’. As he grew up, he manifested the will to abandon worldly life and dedicate himself to spiritual practice. So he left the court and started his training as a monk and then as a Tantric practitioner, travelling through many countries to spread the Dharma and protect it from its enemies.

The lotus is a very important symbol in all of oriental cultures. It is

very widespread in Tibet, Persia, India, China, Japan and Thailand. Many Tibetan deities are represented sitting or standing on a lotus flower, or holding one in their hands. This symbol is adopted in Buddhism because a lotus flower, although it is born from mud, is not tainted by it, just as Buddhahood, present in all beings, is not sullied or altered by the cycle of conditioned existence.

It seems that most of the *terma* biographies of Padmasambhava that are presently known report the version of a magical birth, whereas those belonging to the *kama* tradition report that of a human birth or both.

Among these *terma* texts there is one exception: the one discovered by the *tertön* Pamkal Mugpo, who lived in the 12th century, which, on the subject of the birth of Padmasambhava relates as follows:

[\[42\]](#)

Regarding this teaching, we are now going to remember
One who came as a supreme marvel
And became a refuge for the whole world, Padma Gyalpo[\[43\]](#),
One who, as regards his birth, was born to the king of Oddiyana
One who in India eliminated all doubts (about the Doctrine)
And at Shitavana[\[44\]](#) obtained the two kinds of *siddhis*[\[45\]](#),
One who spread the Doctrine in Tibet
And subdued the Rakshasas at the south-western border[\[46\]](#),
Only spiritual guide of those who have not overcome the condition of suffering, Supreme Vajra
Heruka[\[47\]](#) of the three bodies[\[48\]](#),
Spiritual teacher of the three times[\[49\]](#) equally.

The version of the *kama* tradition is probably less known. Taranatha's biography relates that he was the son of a member of the royal family of Oddiyana, called Srado in Oddiyana language and Srigdhara in Sanskrit. Sogdogpa Lodrö Gyaltzen (1552-?) in his history of the cult of Vajra Kilaya,[\[50\]](#) written in 1609, almost contemporary with Taranatha's text, says:

In general this great Guru Padma is considered to have been born in a miraculous way, but, in order to spread this teaching of the *Purpa of Action*,[\[51\]](#) he manifested through a noble birth from the womb. The reason for this is that it is not possible for someone who was born in a miraculous way to convert beings born from the womb, therefore even Buddhas must manifest through conception.[\[52\]](#)

About Taranatha

Taranatha,[\[53\]](#) whose real name was Kunga Nyingpo (Skr. Ananadagarbha), was born in 1575 at Kharag Khyungtsun. He was one of the major scholars of his age, for which reason he was known as ‘revered’ Taranatha.[\[54\]](#) This title was often applied to major authorities in the doctrinal and religious field.

Taranatha was also one of the main representatives of the Buddhist school known as Jonangpa,[\[55\]](#) which was famous for its peculiar philosophical outlook known as *shentong*, ‘voidness of heterogeneous factors’, which postulates the existence of an absolute and stable reality: any factor that is extraneous to it, or heterogeneous, is void.

This doctrine was not in accordance with the Madhyamika doctrine of *rangtong*, the officially accepted doctrine of the Gelugpa school[\[56\]](#) in Tibet, which postulates that all reality is in itself void. For this reason the Jonangpa doctrine was strongly opposed, even though many famous and learned masters adhered to it.[\[57\]](#)

Another reason for criticism was that the Jonangpa school founded its doctrine on both Sutra and Tantra. In fact its main doctrinal and theoretical foundations draw from *sutras*, such as the *Tathagatagarbhasutra*, and *tantras*, such as the *Kalachakra Tantra*.

The Jonangpa School originated in Tsang.[\[58\]](#) It is named after the homonymous locality and monastery where it started.[\[59\]](#) It was founded by Dolbupa Sherab Gyaltsen (1292-1361), who was known as The Omniscient.[\[60\]](#) He was a disciple of Yumo Mikyö Dorje, who in his turn was a disciple of Chandranatha,[\[61\]](#) a pandit from Kashmir. The Jonangpa school was strongly opposed by the Fifth Dalai Lama: many Jonangpa texts were destroyed and its main centres, such as Jomonang, were transformed into Gelugpa centres.

The lineage of reincarnation to which Taranatha belonged moved to Mongolia, where the Jetsun Tamba Khutukhtu[\[62\]](#) Losang Tenpai Gyaltsen (1635-1723) was born. He was considered to be the subsequent reincarnation of Taranatha, the seventeenth in the lineage. This is a reference point regarding the date of Taranatha’s death, which is still uncertain.

Taranatha received teachings from the oral tradition, which was passed down directly from the Indian Siddhas. The authenticity of such teachings is fully demonstrated in all of his writings. His main guru was Buddhaguptanatha, a direct disciple of the Mahasiddha Shantigupta.[\[63\]](#)

Taranatha's major works are: a collection of biographies of the main Indian Siddhas, *The Seven Instruction Lineages (An Account of the Lineage Histories of the Seven Instructions, which can be Likened to a Marvelous Vein of Jewels)*,^[64] written in 1660, and a history of the cult of Tara, *The Account which Clarifies the Origin of the Tara Tantra, which is Similar to a Golden Necklace*.^[65] His most important work, written in 1608, is *The Book which Fulfills All Wishes, which Shows Clearly how the Precious and Sacred Teaching, Source of Glory, Spread in India*, a history of Indian Buddhism.^[66] Taranatha - together with Putön - was one of the few Tibetan historians who dealt with Indian Buddhism as the main subject and not just as reference material for the history of Tibetan Buddhism.

Taranatha, who is one of the few sources of information regarding the final period of Buddhism in India, also wrote a history of the *Kalachakra Tantra* as well as two auto-biographies, a longer one and a shorter, 'secret' one. In 1610, at the age of thirty-six, as stated in the colophon, he completed the biography of Padmasambhava which is the subject of the present study.

About The Text

The text^[67] was written with the aim of shedding light upon the countless stories regarding the life of Padmasambhava, which, according to Taranatha, were not always reliable.^[68] It is subtitled 'in the Indian style',^[69] since Taranatha mostly relied upon Indian sources, such as the Indian oral tradition of the Mahasiddhas, as transmitted to him by his guru Buddhaguptanatha. He also consulted the main texts of the *kama* tradition, i.e. *The Garland of Views of the Secret Methods* and the series of texts on Vajra Kilaya and Hayagriva,^[70] comparing them with each other and with the Tibetan historical documents that were available to him, such as the *Bashe*.^[71] It resulted that the *kama* texts mostly agree with each other and with the *Bashe* regarding the account of Padmasambhava's birth and sojourn in Tibet.

The edition of the text that has been used here is a reproduction of

a 19th century reprint of some printing-blocks from Dege, in Eastern Tibet. This reprint came from the Riwoche Jedrung library of Padma Kōd, and was published in 1974 by the Tibetan Nyingmapa Monastery, A.P. (India), with the title of *Five Historical Works of Taranatha*.

**A Biography of the Great Master Padmasambhava
Called the Document Which Clarifies, Possessing a Threefold
Reliability**

Which is also called

**A Biography of the Master Padma According to the Indian Style
(sLob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa gsal
bar byed pa'i yi ge yid ches gsum ldan)**

Om svasti. [This is the] biography of the great Master[72] Padmasambhava, called *The Document which Clarifies, Possessing a Threefold Reliability*. [73]

I pay homage to the Guru.[74] I bow with devotion to Padmasambhava, manifestation of the voice of the Victorious Ones, an ocean of melodious sound, which sometimes takes the physical form of a Master, filling all directions with the light of the sacred teachings, which at times manifests numberless *mandalas*[75] in the forms of *samsara*, and which never moves from the heart of the Vajra of the clear light.[76] I shall write his life story using all available sources and leaving out whatever is false.

At the time when the fruit of the doctrine of Buddha, whose purity was perfect, was most widespread in India, King Devapala[77] reigned over Magadha,[78] the most excellent country, and King Hayalila ruled Oddiyana in accordance with the Dharma. At that time in Oddiyana there lived a scholar of rhetoric, a member of the royal family, who was very devoted to the Three Jewels.[79] His name was Srado in the Oddiyana language and Srigdhara, 'the one who wears a flower garland' in the Indian language. He had a son who had bodily marks[80] such as: a rosy complexion, the figure of a lotus on his ring finger, eyes and lips which looked like perfectly blooming lotus flowers, the figures of an Utpala flower,[81] a hook, a lasso[82] and many other signs of virtue. So after his birth a great ceremony was held. Some Brahmans, examining the marks, predicted that he would become king; others said that he would

become a prince of the country, while others said that he would renounce his royal birth and live in cemeteries. There were many predictions good, bad and uncertain, but they all agreed on the fact that hardly anybody would have power over him. A very experienced *yogi*, who had come there, was asked about the child and this was the answer he gave, “This boy will become the highest practitioner of Tantra and, since he has all the characteristics of the Padma family, he will receive his power from Amitabha. Therefore his name will be Padma Avabhasi, in a shorter form Padmavabhasi!”

As he grew up he was taught writing, dialectics, medicine, handicrafts, the ‘eight proofs’[\[83\]](#) and so on. and received instructions in all the minor arts without any difficulty. He took refuge with a monk, in the temple of a town called Shamraksha, where he took the five basic vows[\[84\]](#) and listened to many teachings on Abhidharma and the origins of Sutra.[\[85\]](#) He requested an Acharya practitioner of Tantra named Shantigupta to give him the initiations to many *mandalas* of the Kriya, Ubhaya and Yoga Tantras, and all the flowers that he threw fell only on the divinities of the Padma family.[\[86\]](#)

In the same way he listened to all of the teachings bestowed by the son of a chief-merchant, a great Siddha named Sukhadeva, who had realised himself as Avalokiteshvara, without duality. He also listened to the teachings given by a prostitute[\[87\]](#) named Sukhadhari, who was herself a great realised being, embodiment of Vajradhara, and who had just arrived in Oddiyana. From them he received many instructions on the secret inner *tantras*.

Later, while he was practising approach, complete approach, attainment and great attainment[\[88\]](#) in a park, first a terrible noise was heard and then many terrifying signs were seen, such as a fire that destroyed many houses. Many other bad omens manifested, but he did not stop his meditation and kept reciting the *mantras*.[\[89\]](#) After this he had dreams of many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who were all transforming into the main Tathagata, Amitabha. Also the king of the wrathful deities, Hayagriva, appeared to him as if he were real, surrounded by a retinue of Dakinis and minor spirits.[\[90\]](#)

Not long afterwards the time came for him to devote himself to the family activities. He would often go to the royal palace to do the same work as his father and the Brahman ministers, occupying himself with

politics. He would also predict the future, with the help of astrology.

At that time Akshalila, the son of King Hayalila, had just started ruling and, since he wished to establish the Dharma in his kingdom, he himself set a great example of virtue. He even built a temple and a monastery in the middle of the park, surrounded their borders with *stupas* and gradually built walls around them.

During this period a feeling of hostility arose in one of the king's scribes and in two of his ministers and, after they had secretly discussed on how to take possession of the country, the scribe said to the king, "This Padma Avabhasi wants power. He and his monks, who are about a thousand, skilled at making war and valorous in battle, are pretending to transform the park into a temple but in reality they have built the strong walls that surround them and everything else in order to fight against the king." The king consulted the other ministers, who agreed with them, partly because of what their colleagues had said and partly because of the power of jealousy.

So the king sent an army to Padmasambhava, headed by those two ministers. Since at that time in Oddiyana there was no law about killing kings, brahmans, monks and pundits, the ministers only reported the king's orders to the Master, "You and your honourable monks, leave behind all your possessions and go away!" So the monks left. After the Master had also left, the ministers said, "If we don't kill him, he will cast a spell on us!" And they sent after him many executioners. But when they tried to tie him with ropes and chains, he with the power of *mantras* cut the ropes and broke the chains. They threw him daggers and he drove them elsewhere, so that they could not harm him, and broke their swords in thousands of pieces. They tried to set fire to him, but he was not burned; they threw him into water, but he skated on it as if he were a little bird; they hurled him down a precipice, but he did not get hurt; they dug the earth and buried him, but he emerged from a hole a little further off. Finally they could not even reach him.

After this the Master did not head for the city, but enjoyed himself wandering around cemeteries from one country to another, and the spirits and Rakshasas living there helped him. The king's scribe, the two ministers and the executioners all died, some in a fire that destroyed their houses and some by committing suicide, so that within a few weeks not even one of them was left. The king also died, killed by a poisonous

snake.[91]

Dwelling for a long time in cemeteries, the Master made friends with spirits, Rakshasas, flesh-eating demons[92] and Dakinis whose powers were great. He dedicated himself diligently to reciting *mantras*. He had visions of all the Victorious Ones of the Three Realms,[93] of Yamantaka[94] and of the Vajra Krodhayas[95] and he heard them speaking. He spoke to Mahakala,[96] to the Seven Mamos[97] and to other divinities as if they were human beings. He overcame all the evil Nagas[98] and Yakshas[99] and obtained great power through hundreds of wrathful-action *mantras* of worldly and other-worldly deities.[100] At that time, thanks to the magical powers that he had obtained reciting *mantras*, on many occasions he travelled, together with powerful non-human beings, through the eight great self-originated cemeteries of the world.[101] There he also met with eight Acharyas of the deities, who were realised from the beginning,[102] and obtained all the common *siddhis*: in the cemetery of Ghorandhakara, where the Acharya Dhanuskṛta lived, he obtained the *siddhi* called ‘Dagger’;[103] in the cemetery of Tsangtsing Trigpar, where the Acharya Sai Pu lived, he obtained the *siddhi* called ‘Pill’;[104] in the cemetery of Barwa Trigpa, where the Acharya Nyimai Pu lived, he obtained the *siddhi* called ‘Medicine for Eyes’;[105] in the cemetery Jigiyed Töpa, where the Acharya Amritaprabha lived, he realised the *siddhi* called ‘Shoes’;[106] in the cemetery of Attattahasa, where the Acharya Shivamkara lived, he obtained the *siddhi* called ‘The Medicine that Conquers the Boundaries of Illness’;[107] in the cemetery of Palgyi Ne, where the Acharya Bararuzi, who in Tibetan was named Chogse, lived, he realised the *siddhi* called ‘Taking the Essence of Immortality’;[108] in the cemetery of Cha Cho Chen, where the Acharya Cher Pu lived, he realised the *siddhi* called ‘The Vase of Treasure’;[109] in the cemetery of Tumdrag, where the Acharya Nganpong lived, he obtained the *siddhi* called ‘The Essence that Transforms into Gold’.[110] Accomplishing these *siddhis* he became a Vidyadhara.[111]

After this he had in mind to realise the state of Buddha by making use of these actions. But Buddha Amitabha appeared to him in a dream and warned him in this way, “You do not see the absolute and using wrathful actions of power, without possessing real knowledge, you are creating many obstacles to the realisation of that which you wish. You will

not realise Mahamudra[112] with this alone. Therefore meditate according to what the Acharya Buddha Shrijñana[113] - with whom you have a karmic connection - will teach you!”

Then, examining himself, Padmasambhava understood that, although he had obtained great powers, he was damaging the real state of contemplation on the absolute. So he went to Maga-dha, in the centre of India. At that time King Dharmapala[114] had been ruling the country for a long time. The Master arrived there when the Acharya Buddha Shrijñana, having realised himself, had just started to teach his disciples. In the monastery of Chökyi Myuku, of which he was the abbot, Buddha Shrijñana ordained Padmasambhava in the lineage of the Mahasanghika[115] school and on becoming a monk the Master perfected the vows. He at once listened to all the many series of Vinaya, as explained by a monk, and understood their meaning. There he received the teachings of Prajñaparamita[116] from the Acharya Shrijñana and his view became like space. The Master effortlessly succeeded in accomplishing all the teachings of which he had received the initiations, whereas other disciples usually met with many difficulties. As a disciple of the Acharya Shrijñana he also received from Buddhaguhya[117] the initiations to the following *tantras*: *The Assembly [of Secrets]*, *The Net of the Magical Manifestation*, *The Essence of the Secret Moon*, *The Tantra of the Unification of the Buddhas*, *The Garland of Actions*, or the so called ‘five classes of Inner Tantras’[118] and he listened to the complete collection of Tantras and Secret Methods.[119]

There he was also introduced to the wisdom of the initiations and stabilised his deep and clear understanding. Having reached the absolute, he asked Acharya Shrijñana, “What shall I do now?” The Acharya answered, “To the east, in the country of Bhangala,[120] in the northern part of a city called Panduva, in the forest named Parsi, there is a hill: stay there for a while and meditate on the Heruka!”

He went there and found, also without any effort, a consort[121] with the characteristics of the Padma family and for six months they trained in the union of creative visualization and inner *mandala*,[122] practising for the great attainment. While he did this many Buddhas of the ten directions appeared to him in person and spoke to him. After a while he realised the supreme Mahamudra and manifested the Vajra Body.

[123] Then he thought, “Now I want to act for the benefit of sentient beings!”

In the north [of India], in the country of Tirahuti, in the kingdoms of Tharu, Kamaru, Nepal and so on, for a few years Padmasambhava taught the Dharma to many fortunate beings. He increased the life span and wealth of many people through the teachings of the ‘Essence that Transforms into Gold’ and ‘The Medicine for Taking the Essence’. He accomplished many actions, such as giving water to those who did not have it and making it go back into the earth where there was too much of it. In the country of Tharu, in the direction of Tsampa, in the country of Khasya and so on,[124] even today it is possible to see traces of the water obtained by the practice of this Master, and traces of the water that he made go back into the earth. In the vicinity of Tsamparna[125] he caused a big river called Bhati to be reabsorbed in less than one day, and two others in about half a day.

At that time at Trimala, near Trilinga,[126] in the south of India, in a sandalwood forest, near Laksha Man, there was a self-arisen *shivalinga*[127] called Shivastana, a few cubits tall. Every day it was necessary to sacrifice many living beings in order to make blood-offerings to it. From that place, with black magic, the Tirthikas[128] were sending countless epidemics and illnesses to the Buddhist communities. Trimala was a country of devotees, where many Buddhists lived. Most of the offerings made to Otantapuri[129] used to come from Trimala, and many negative influences, coming from that self-arisen *linga*, were experienced there.

Also to the east, near Bhangala, to the south-west of Balendra, in the country of Bagala, in a small lake that had just emerged, there was an evil Naga who was helping the non-Buddhists, who used to offer *tormas*,[130] gold, silver, pearls and huge amounts of precious things to the lake to honour its deity. The Tirthikas, whose power depended on these offerings, had founded many new schools in five eastern countries, and much disturbing magic, coming from that Naga, reached the Buddhist communities. In Rajagrha,[131] in Magadha, many non-Buddhist spirits had established themselves in a big crystal rock. The Tirthikas venerated them as deities, so they did not need to perform difficult rituals in order to obtain clairvoyance or faculties of superior hearing, nor was it necessary for them to know divination and astrology,

because these spirits would give them all the necessary information.

It did not take long for the Master to desire to subdue these spirits. After he had founded a meditation place in Bodhgaya[132] he opened six big *mandalas* of the divinities of knowledge. As a result of his practice of the *mantra* of Arya Heruka[133] he had twenty-one signs of attainment, such as manifestations of flames and sounds of laughter. Of the three stable *purbus*[134] that manifested the Master took that of the wrathful ‘Victorious over the Three Worlds’ and instantly, magically, he arrived in Trimala, in the south. As soon as he got there he drove it with one blow into the trunk of a tree next to the *linga*, in this way setting fire to the whole forest around it and burning to ashes more than half of the *linga*. After this no more disturbances came to the Buddhists and the cult of Otantapuri was restored.

Then he drove the ‘Wrathful Purbu Containing Nectar’ into the ground near the lake, and took a *yogini* named Ngentsulchen as his consort[135] in the *mandala*. By doing so, he burned the Naga and his retinue to ashes. Within seven days the lake was dried up too and the non-Buddhist were destroyed.

After this the Master invited a *yogi* from Kamaru, named Ratnashila,[136] to be his assistant in the practice, and drove the smallest of the *purbus* into the big crystal rock of Rajagrha, breaking it into fragments. This action also was very helpful to the Buddhists. These two assistants, after having realised themselves as Vidhyadharas, disappeared and later were able to manifest in whatever Nirmanakaya form they chose.

The Master stayed for a while in Trimala, where he carved a figure of Avalokiteshvara in sandalwood. He also carved one in Vikramashila, [137] in a small temple of Tara. Afterwards he went to the glorious country of Oddiyana, where he joined a multitude of fortunate disciples, and together they built a temple.

At that time the Buddhist communities had spread and were flourishing in Oddiyana and in the nearby country of Katstsha, where even the king was an Upasaka *pundit*. [138] The king of Pagada, a city in the country of Molatana, who was a Muslim,[139] had subdued Katstsha with his army, destroying some Buddhist schools and conquering the remaining ones. His army had arrived as far as Kekyi kab by boat and by swimming in the river Nila. From the bank of the river the

Master, by using the ‘fierce gaze’[\[140\]](#) and by pointing his index finger strongly towards them[\[141\]](#) sank their seven big boats and five hundred small boats made from only one piece of wood, together with all the men who were swimming. All those fearless Muslims died and afterwards no more disturbances came from that quarter for many generations.

Now, the Master’s name as a monk was Padma Akara, in Tibetan Padma Jyungne, and his secret name, which he received with the *mandala* initiation, was Padmasambhava, in Tibetan Padma Jyungden. In ancient times among the people of Oddiyana he was commonly known as Pakamalakulisha, in Tibetan Padma Dorje. Besides, since he had the natural signs of a perfectly blooming lotus and a *vajra* between his eyebrows, as a child he had been given the name of Padma Avabhasi, in Tibetan Padma Öserden; his disciples respectfully named him Shri Mahasukha, in Tibetan Pal Dewa Chenpo. Later on, when he returned to Oddiyana, he was known as Padmavajra, since he performed actions similar to those of the ancient Pal Dewa Chenpo Padmavajra, and so the local people gave him that name.[\[142\]](#)

In the eastern, western, southern and central regions of India, the main ones of which have already been mentioned, he benefited sentient beings in many different ways, in particular in the regions north of the Ganges, up to Nepal, and also in Droding,[\[143\]](#) of which he was the first conqueror. Ever since then there have been many pure followers of his word.

Besides this, he especially did a lot for the benefit of Tibet: that is to say that among all beings, human and non-human, living in that country, from ancient times up to today, it seems that there is not even one who did not become his disciple, even if one considers only one of his names and physical manifestations. Also, as far as his disciples are concerned, nobody can set a limit to their biographies, since they realised the *sungjug*.[\[144\]](#)

The main action peculiar to this Master was the overcoming of non-human beings, even in the minor continent of Ngayab.[\[145\]](#) Hundreds and thousands of years are a short time for some of the beings in these

minor worlds, therefore it is difficult, as far as they are concerned, to measure time and identify places and individuals.

Regarding these actions of conquest, according to the Indian historical records he went to the area of Mount Kailash, where he conquered all the evil Nagas and Yakshas, and it is said that he also converted Gyalpos[146] and other beings with his magical powers, but these records do not appear to contain any long account of his journey to Tibet. Also, it is not very clear whether he stayed in Droding before or after staying in Tibet. Tibetans say that from Tibet he went to the continent of the Rakshasas, while the inhabitants of Droding say the opposite, but he might well have manifested two physical forms at the same time, which did not exclude each other. If one considers the time when some of his disciples, and disciples of his disciples, went to Droding to perform actions for the benefit of sentient beings, it seems that he went in Droding after staying in Tibet. There are plenty of famous histories of his coming to Tibet in the *namtars* and *tangyigs*,[147] but I will omit many of them.

It seems that the teachings known as Nyingma *kama*, such as *The Garland of Views of the Secret Methods*, the Kilaya Cycle, the Hayagriva Cycle and others agree with each other, having a more or less similar basis, which one can consider to be true, but they show many differences, too. There are also many diverse opinions: some say that the Master was born in a miraculous way and some do not, while regarding the length of his sojourn in Tibet, some texts report that it lasted three years but most of the *termas* say a hundred years or more. There is also another interpretation, which considers the pure vision of his disciples, according to which he is still alive, because he has the capacity of appearing continuously and contemporaneously in all dimensions.

Therefore one may get a different opinion from each point of view, but it is not possible to establish the time of his earliest manifestations, because to estimate this it would be necessary to be capable of seeing the common vision of people of that period.

Then, consulting the three versions of the testament of the king, known as the ‘true *Bashe*’ (to the first edition of which was added an appendix compiled by a Kadampa[148] scholar), the *Lashe* and also some ancient historical documents summarizing the contents of the *Gyalshe* (some of which are longer and some shorter), I found that they

say mostly the same things. All the greatest holy scholars also consider them as three reliable sources. Regarding the accounts of Master Padma's deeds, it seems that the above listed texts in general agree with most of the *kama* histories. *Washe* (*dba bzhed*) and *Bashe* (*rba bzhed*) are two different ways of spelling, but their meaning is the same. By coordinating all these versions something credible results, anyway.

Meanwhile the king-emanation,[\[149\]](#) the powerful Lord Trisong Detsen, wanting to spread the sacred teaching in Tibet, invited the Acharya Dharma Shantighosha, also named Shiwe Tso, renowned as the Acharya Bodhisattva,[\[150\]](#) and gave him hospitality in a silken tent set on the roof of the palace called Lungtsug. For four months the Acharya explained the Dharma, starting with the ten virtues,[\[151\]](#) the twelve interdependencies[\[152\]](#) and the eighteen *dhatu*s.[\[153\]](#)

The evil spirits, becoming angry about this, sent a flood that swept away the palace of Pangtang, thunderbolts that fell on the top of the Marpori,[\[154\]](#) epidemics that spread through the country among men and animals, as well as a great deal of freezing and hail storms. The entire population of Tibet said, "This is the answer to the introduction of Buddhism," and tried to hinder it. The king, together with Ba Salnang[\[155\]](#) and five Buddhist ministers, went to the Acharya, bringing him as a present a small amount of gold dust. After they had gone to him thus three times, the Acharya said to the ministers, "Go to Nepal for some time: while you are away the king will convince the Tibetans that it is indispensable to apply the divine teachings, and will offer them a reward". The ministers asked, "After having pacified the *shang*[\[156\]](#) ministers with tricks, when it is possible to practise the Dharma again, will the king invite us back to Tibet?" The Acharya answered, "To overcome the evil spirits and Rakshasas of Tibet it will be necessary to invite Padmasambhava, the practitioner of Tantra who is now the most powerful on earth". Then he took a handful of gold, advising them to present it to the sovereign of Nepal, and gave back the remainder to the king. The ministers left as if they had been expelled. Langdro Nara and Salnang went to Nepal. On his return Ba Salnang was entrusted as a protector of the Dharma and thirty officials left for China, as ambassadors for the cause of Buddhism.

Meanwhile all the *shang* ministers had a meeting and decided to now allow the practice of Buddhism. Before the Master was invited, all

the ambassadors were with great pleasure appointed lords of China, and the Tibetan king was presented with a magnificent gift of ten thousand silken robes and other goods. Then Salhang and the Acharya left for Nepal, to invite Padmasambhava.

In reference to this the *Bashe* says, “The Acharya Bodhisattva, the Master Padmasambhava and an expert in the construction of temples set off for Tibet.” And then, “The Acharya Bodhisattva walked swiftly along the path, the Master Padmasambhava and the expert (who was also a sculptor of Nepalese stone) followed him. The Master subdued the non-human beings of each country and went ahead, examining the places.”[\[157\]](#)

On the other hand, the *Lashe* says that the Acharya Bodhisattva addressed the king in this way, “We must go quickly to Drensang[\[158\]](#) and invite Padmasambhava, because if we invite him he will subdue the hostile deities and Rakshasas, and that will be good for us.” The king asked Ba Mangje Salhang and Sengo Lhalhungzig, together with an escort of five men, to go and invite the Master, and it is said that by then the Master, knowing of their mission,[\[159\]](#) had already arrived in Mang Yul.[\[160\]](#)

Of these diverse versions, the first is the most acceptable.

While Padmasambhava was crossing Kyirong[\[161\]](#) the deities and Rakshasas of Tibet sent a heavy rain and here and there snow, which stopped his retinue, so that it was left behind, but the Master managed to go on through a narrow passage and bound those deities to an oath. He then left, conquering all the non-human beings that he found on his way.

Invited to cross the Brahmaputra,[\[162\]](#) Padmasambhava made a boat and sailed across the river, landing near Oyug. Then he continued his journey, saying: “If I cross this pass, where there are many hell beings whose life is ephemeral,[\[163\]](#) I will perform actions of compassion.” Since some of those beings were plunged in boiling water, by the power of his concentration the Master made the water stop boiling, in this way allowing them to get out of it. This is a manifestation of how powerful the strength of this *yogi's* love was.

But in general it is said that even a Buddha cannot change the bad karma of beings, so, when he stopped concentrating, the water started boiling again as before.

The Master headed towards Rutsam, where the local deity

Gangkar,[164] being afraid of him, fled away. Arriving at Nam,[165] the Master said: “Now I must subdue Tanglha!”[166] and set off in that direction. When he got on the spot he began to cook the meat of a sheep and a donkey in a big pan. Someone named Lutsa asked him what it was, and the Master explained it all to him. Lutsa said, “Ha, ha, let’s see how you will subdue the Yaksha!” and the Master replied, “The big Yaksha does not like to eat meat and blood!” and kicked the pot, spilling its contents. This made Tanglha furious, and so he generated a tremendous roar that resounded throughout the glacier, covering it with black clouds and causing uninterrupted thunder, lightning and hail - all so strong that an ordinary person could not have borne them. Then the Master pointed his index finger towards the mountain, melting a great amount of snow, and Tanglha left because of this.

It seems that in front of that place there was an evil Naga who did not allow people to practise Buddhism. The Master decided to subdue him and the Naga fled away to the Ocean. The Master made five *mandalas* in a cave and there he meditated for three days, after which the noise and the snow-storm stopped. The country became peaceful and the Naga and Tanglha swore to be faithful to Buddhism.

After subduing the local divinities and spirits of Namtso, Gangkar as well as numberless Rakshasas, Padmasambhava arrived at Lashö. He did not go in person to Penyul,[167] to the valley of Banlung, which is said to look like the open mouth of a dead horse, but he bound with an oath the local spirits and came down from Tölungi Yaralmo. Pointing his index finger towards a landslide he made it to go back. He saw a long-haired Tirthika, who seemed to be dancing, on the top of Tsunmo Prang and said, “If I do not cut the top of that mountain, Tibet will be filled up with Tirthikas!” and so he cut it.

At Shongwa[168] he told all the merchants[169] to stop and cook. They answered that there was no water, then the Master hit the ground with his stick and seven springs arose, which are known as the ‘divine water of Shongwa’.[170]

Then the Master said, “This Karnag is an evil Lutsen,[171] I shall do something in order to subdue him!” He carved a figure of Vajrasattva in the rock, and the Nepalese sculptor who was with him, wondering whether it would be possible to do so with the Tibetan stone, carved the form of a deer. The Master arrived at Ngamshö and, after he had built

five stone *stupas* on the final stretch of Zurkar, he empowered them.

After this the Master went to the tamarisk forest of the palace of Dragmar,[\[172\]](#) where a messenger instructed him about his coming meeting with the king and asked him to prostrate. The Master replied, “The king could not bear my prostration!” and so saying he prostrated before a big rock, which split. He prostrated before some garments and objects belonging to the king and they went up in smoke. So it was the king who had to prostrate before the Master.

The next day, at Dragmar Drensang, they had just finished building a temple, which was similar to the Chinese temple of Wu t'ai shan.[\[173\]](#) Since it had not yet been consecrated, they invited the great Master to do it. The king and the prime minister were not there, whereas all the dignitaries and attendants had run up to see. The Master made all the statues of the deities become like real people, and performed a ritual to invite them to the site of the ceremony. Since the attendant people did not believe that they would come, at midnight they all went to have a look, bearing lamps: the inside of the temple was completely desert, there was not even one statue left there. They even searched for them, poking with their sticks,[\[174\]](#) but since they could not feel anything they decided that the statues were not there. The next morning, peeping through a crack in the door, they saw that the statues were all back in their places, as before, and the Master Padma was making offering to them, who were eating and talking to him directly. On that day incense and lamps lit up by themselves; one could hear all kinds of music although no-one was playing; bells were ringing by themselves; if one hung up five silk ribbons[\[175\]](#) they would become five hundred; if there was only one handful of grapes in a plate, it would multiply so that all the people assembled there could eat from it and it would not diminish. A feeling of wonder arose in everybody.

That morning the Master had an attendant named Lhalthung Tsog Shernyenleg be the base for a *tra* rite,[\[176\]](#) and the deity Öserchenma[\[177\]](#) manifested and spoke, listing the names of all the evil Nagas of Tibet and revealing that Shampo[\[178\]](#) was causing floods and thunderbolts at Pangtang; Tanglha was sending thunderbolts at Marpori; the twelve Tenmas were causing epidemics among men and cattle; and nine Tibetan Nyens[\[179\]](#) were sending freeze and hail. The next day the Master again made the *tra* of the four Gyalchens,[\[180\]](#) and Yakshas and

fire divinities appeared in person to many children of noble families, listing the names, places and habits of all the evil deities and Nagas. Then, in order to have the king and ministers believe it, the Master made some evil spirits appear before them, he threatened and tormented them and then, after explaining the Dharma, he bound them with an oath. So they offered their heart *mantra* and evocation rituals to the Master.

Padmasambhava also performed fire ceremonies[181] and other rituals for those who had not yet been subdued, conquering them in various ways. He did that twice, then said, “From now on you will practice any sacred teaching, as you please. Build a temple, as you please! So far I have tamed divinities and Nagas twice: I will do so once more.”

After this he went to the forest Zurpud Kyangpu, near the palace, and there he subdued Zichen, the Naga of Madro,[182] and other beings. Zichen told him, “On the surface of the earth Trisong Detsen is great, under the ground I am great: we shall make friends. I will offer fourteen mule-loads of gold dust to help build the king’s temple.” As promised, he had the gold fetched from Kunglangpona, and the gold arrived.

The Master also conquered the Gyalpo Bekar.[183] While Padmasambhava was making the *mandala* to subdue him, Bekar came to have a look. The Master then drove some *purbus* into his eyes and, since he tried to listen to the *mantras*, he drove other *purbus* into his ears. Since Bekar tried to make fun of the Master who was reciting the *mantras*, he drove more of them into his tongue. Then Bekar tried to escape and the Master drove more *purbus* into his limbs in order to stop him. Then the Master shouted, “Now I’m going to burn you!” And Bekar, terrified and tamed, submitted to the promise.

Afterwards, as the Master was going to conquer Yarlha Shampo, the deity poured dirty water on him but he, brandishing the *vajra*, which he had pulled out of his mantle, sent the water back and poured it into the pond of Lhabam. Then, casting the *vajra* into the pond, he made the water boil and so he melted about one third of the snow of the Shampo. The deity sat on the top of the glacier and said, “You bothered me by doing this!” And the master replied, “You also bothered me. If from now on you don’t submit to the promise, I will burn you!” And the deity, prostrating at the Master’s feet, promised, “Since I belong to a class of

negative forces, I'm not capable of practising the Dharma, but at least from now on I won't disturb you."

In this way in about six months Padmasambhava bound most of the non-human beings to the promise of being faithful to Buddhism. Then he said, "I shall perform a big fire ritual for the government and the people of Tibet". Afterwards they held a big ceremony, in which the king's hair was to be washed. The Acharya Bodhisattva said that on the north side of Mount Kailash[184] there was a spring called Tagtunang; if the king's head is washed with that water the king will have a long life, his descendants will multiply and the kingdom will expand. When he was asked who would be capable of getting the water, he replied, "An Acharya practitioner of Tantra can do that." And he addressed the Master asking him to do it.

The Master covered a golden vase with white silk, put it in the middle of the *mandala* and, reciting *mantras*, threw the vase into the sky. The vase went higher and higher until it could no longer be seen and, after about the time that it takes to have a meal, it fell at the Master's feet. He opened it, inviting the ministers to wash the king's head, but then he looked inside and saw that the water was a yellowish colour, a sign that something must have been added. So he ordered the assembly of ministers to throw it away, since it might have been a substance capable of causing madness. The water was thrown away so even this attempt did not have any effect.

In the following period of time the Master gave to the king and to the most fortunate of his subjects the initiations to the Kriya Tantra and the Inner Tantras, he explained to them the *Garland of Views of the Secret Methods*, the *Vajra that Tames Everything*, [185] the *Hundred Thousand Series of Purbu*, [186] as well as a great many other methods for realisation. Then he announced that he would remain there for a long time, to make all Tibetans happy, but this did not come true because of the evil karma of posterity and the negative circumstances created by the ministers, who had been influenced against him by the evil deities and Rakshasas. After this statement the king's testament does not report anything else, to avoid speaking openly about the history of the Inner Tantras. As a matter of fact, it seems that when referring to initiations one would say, in code, that they were performed 'gradually', since in the ancient times not only the names of the initiations to the Inner Tantras

were kept secret, but even the names of the most common ones. So in many ancient texts one finds the word ‘gradual’.

The ancient accounts of the *Garland of Views of the Secret Methods*, the analytical study of the *Vajra Kilaya* made by Ödrenpal and various branches of history all report more or less similar versions of the same fact: that is that, while the Master was ‘gradually’ giving the initiations to the king, his two most important queens, Tsepongsa Metog Dön and Drosa Tri Gyalmo Tsun (who later was known by her nun’s name, Jomo Changchubje) requested to be the consorts of the *mandala* offering.[187] The Master replied, “You do not seem to have the necessary characteristics at all”. Then he announced that Chimsa Lhamo Tsen and Kharchensa Tsogyal[188] would be suitable instead. Someone asked how that would be possible, since they lived far away, and the Master replied that it was not difficult. Then he started to meditate and they instantly arrived on the border of the *mandala*. Later they quit all worldly actions and dedicated themselves to spiritual practice, since the understanding of the spontaneously perfect[189] state had arisen in them.

This is also expressed clearly in the three versions of the king’s testament, that say, “Those two *yoginis* dedicated themselves to practice from their youth, but still there is no trace of temples built for them”.

After he had finished giving initiations, the Master explained the Dharma to an attendant of the king named Machocho and to the *shang* ministers, but they would not believe him, thinking that such a great power did not exist.

To prepare the ground where the king’s temple was to be built it was necessary to find the two most beautiful Tibetan virgins to pull the threads of the *mandala*. [190] At that time they did not know who were the most beautiful virgins in such a big country as Tibet. So somebody said: “If the practitioner of Tantra really has the great power he claims to have, let’s ask him!” The Master remained in meditation and after a while Chogrosa Puchung Men and Chogrosa Lhapu Men arrived there - nobody knew from where. The Master made the divinities of wisdom descend into them and guide them while they were pulling the threads. Then all the Tibetan men present acknowledged that no girl had ever come there who was more beautiful than they were.

On that occasion the ministers discussed in secret the possibility that this practitioner of Tantra might try to hand over to India all the wealth

and marvellous things of the Tibetan people. Again a minister, Kyungpo Tagtse, who was very hostile to Buddhism,[191] was plotting to burn the Master together with Dragmar Drensang.[192] In the presence of the people and ministers the Master asked him if that was what he had in mind. The minister went outside and said, “This son of the border-land of Mön[193] knows everything!”

The minister We Dongzig also strongly hated Buddhism, so the Master said, “In a while he will be powerful and won’t let the Dharma spread, therefore the time has come to eliminate him.” Padmasambhava meditated for an instant; right then all the minister’s blood drained out of his body, so that he died.

Because of the Master’s power of conquest over human and non-human beings, sooner or later all of the ministers had evil thoughts or did bad actions towards him, so he became afraid of staying there and, while starting to think of how to return to India, he said to the king, “Sir, I will improve your country. I will turn the sand of Ngamshö into gardens and pastures; I will make water spring forth between Dra, Döl, Tala and Yulpoche, for those who do not have it; then I will turn all the marshes into fertile ground, and so make Tibet live. Taking the wealth of Vaishramana[194] I will set in Tibet the source of all of the riches that exist in the world. I will channel the water of the Tsangpo, since I have already done so with an even bigger river, and all the kings of China, Mongolia and so on will become allies of powerful Tibet!”

After this great speech, he asked to be allowed to try and see whether he would succeed or not. After building a *mandala* he meditated for a whole morning and then in a desert area, at Dragmar, a big river - later named Ludzing - gushed forth. Wondering what else was left to do, the Master transformed the sand of Tsomo Gurdar, again at Dragmar, into green pastures. That evening a big forest - which was later called Lawe Tsal - instantly appeared on the mossy surface of the mountain. The next morning he kept meditating and at Zungkar, where there was no stream, he made one come out which was wide and continuous. Then he asked where there was still land to be made fertile, and it turned out that all the country had been transformed. The ministers, after a brief council, declared, “The fertile land of Yarlung is sufficient. This practitioner of Tantra has improved our country and now wishes to set off for India. Let us now stop his work, since it is good to send this

son of the border-land of Mön back to his country”.

The most powerful of the ministers unanimously said to the king, “Only Lord, this son of the border-land of Mön is endowed with strong magical powers and has turned the king’s soul towards Buddhism. This Indian, after having usurped the leadership, is going to leave.” They pronounced this slander together with many others, trying to contradict whatever the Master had previously said, and kept asking the king again and again to give a reward to the Acharya practitioner of Tantra and to ask him to return to India.

In this way the ministers presented their request to the sovereign, who became very sad. He then offered the Master a handful of gold dust, prostrated before him and circumambulated him.[195] And the Master, explaining his intention, said to him, “I was not motivated to come here by desire for gold; I came here to make Tibetans happy, by making their country become fertile, and to spread the teachings, conquering all the evil spirits and Rakshasas of Tibet’s barbarous borders. If I had desired gold, it would have been sufficient to do this!” And as he touched the stones around about with his hand they turned into gold.

Anyway, as a sign of respect for the king, he took a handful of the gold dust and said, “I will offer this in Bodh Gaya.” He gave the remainder back to the king, saying the following words, “Good intentions are having negative consequences; when compassion gets stale it generates anger; the ministers are the leaders of the king; the spirits [that they honour like deities] are evil; sentient beings are performing negative actions and even the power of the Buddhas is weakened.” After saying this, he did what the ministers had asked.

He chose five manifestations of Avalokiteshvara as the king’s Yidam,[196] for which reason the king later built a statue of Hayagriva in the temple dedicated to the five deities.[197] This Hayagriva of the Aryapalo temple[198] neighed and the sound was heard throughout two thirds of the world. Even *The Net of Magical Manifestation*[199] refers to this statue.

At that time the Master was explaining the rest of *The Garland of Views of the Secret Methods* and, to summarize its meaning, he said, “The view of my teaching must be in accordance with the Dharmakaya, but the conduct must be in accordance with the attitude of a Bodhisattva.

If the conduct followed the view, a way of seeing would result, which would be without consideration of good and evil, and it would then be difficult to remedy. If the view followed the attitude, one would be conditioned by material things and in this way unable to liberate oneself. [\[200\]](#)

In my teachings on the nature of the mind [\[201\]](#) there is more on the aspect relative to the view. In the future the main points of what I have been teaching will be known but, since many people will not have a chance to experience them directly, it is possible that they will make mistakes. So I came here, motivated by a desire to benefit sentient beings.”

He could not finish explaining the Secret Methods, and he had still to do a fire ritual, to increase the power of the royal dynasty. Nor did he succeed in subduing the hostile deities and Nagas for a third time. But, since he could foresee the future, he transmitted to his disciples many *mantras* of wrathful actions and hid many others in the earth, together with many texts on the teaching. In general it is said that through his magical manifestations he hid altogether a hundred and eight treasures of teachings and other riches in different countries.

Then he pronounced many times this invocation, “May those who make an offering of their ego and all perishable things enjoy - in this or in another existence - the fruit of the Great Vehicle of Yoga in the supreme sacred place called Ogmin!” [\[202\]](#)

He gave a great deal of advice personally to each single disciple and then suddenly departed. Two faithful ministers, Lote Gunagong and Shang Nyensang accompanied him on horseback on his return through Rulag up to Mangyul.

Some of the ministers said, “That practitioner of Tantra has great power, if we don’t kill him he will cast a spell on Tibet!” and secretly sent after him eighteen ruthless executioners on horseback. Meanwhile the Master had reached Mangung. The next day the eighteen assassins arrived at Dongbab Trang and with weapons in their hands they got ready to attack him. Then the Master showed a ritual gesture and all of their bodies became as rigid as statues, so that they could not even speak. Later the Master and his escorts left and, while they were crossing some mountain passes that were on the way back, the Master said, “It was necessary to subdue the spirits, Rakshasas, deities and

Nagas of Tibet three times: it should have been done once more. If I had succeeded in doing it, the king would have had a long life, the kingdom would have been great, the royal dynasty very powerful and the teachings would have lasted long, remaining impressed in people's souls. Instead, the wheel of the Dharma will turn once more and then there will be great strife and the teachings will go through a period of decadence. The hearts of Nagas and Gyalpos will be full of negative feelings and the royal dynasty and laws will break into pieces. Throw these at those who yesterday tried to harm me!" And he gave [his escorts] a handful of white mustard seeds.[203]

Then everybody saw him leaving, saying, "I am going to subdue the Rakshasas at the southwestern border". He flew into sky riding his horse, waving his stick and soaring up by means of his robes. They say that in that area of Tibet, named Gung-tang,[204] lightning was seen. This happened beyond Dongbab Trang, where there is a mountain that marks the border between India and Tibet.

The two escorts went back. The executioners at whom they threw the white mustard seeds could move and speak again. The two ambassadors reported to the king the Master's words, and in the king's heart a great feeling of remorse arose. They say that then the king - in order to listen to the teachings of the Master that he had not yet heard - invited the *pundits* Vimalamitra and Shantigarbha. Following the order of events reported in the *Bashe with Appendix*, it seems that the king built his temple after this. It appears instead that all the ancient documents, which report ancient oral traditions, unanimously confirm that the Master empowered the Aryapalo temple and performed the consecration rite of the ground of Chökor Samye. I think that this version is acceptable. The account of when he pulled the threads of the *mandala* and so on, as a preparation for the building of the temple, is also found among the accounts relative to the Aryapalo temple. In the *Bashe* it is said that he remained in central Tibet for eighteen months, the *Bashe with Appendix* says the same thing, in the *Lashe* the number of months is not clear and in the ancient texts, which are said to summarize the contents of the *Gyalshe*, it is said that he stayed at Dragmar, in central Tibet, for eighteen months. Therefore, as far as the amount of time he spent in Tibet is concerned, the main texts agree, except for some minor details.

But also in many sources of the ancient written documents, which

report ancient oral traditions, it is said that he in person completed the consecration of Chökor Samye, and the great scholar Putön[205] also agrees with them.

[Regarding Padmasambhava's deeds], one should also consider that it is not possible to penetrate with one's mind all the miraculous manifestations that he showed of himself, because nobody knows how many disciples had the capacity of seeing him. It is even possible that within a short period of time he was in all of these places, gave many teachings in person, hid numerous treasures, went to each country, stayed there and left, and that he showed many manifestations at once - which is inconceivable by mind - since he had the ability to perform miracles. Later he may have manifested in the common vision, with body and voice, for one or many fortunate beings, and it is even possible that he himself went back to the countries where a great many of them were grouped.

In India he went many times to Virupa, Luyipa and Jalandari[206] and there have also been more recent manifestations of him.

In the middle of the ocean there is a small island, named Damidodvipa that one can reach from southern India by sailing straight towards the west. It was once called Damido, in Tibetan Drodng, because it was inhabited by Rakshasas and Dakinis, beings who fly in the sky.[207] At that time most of the local women practised various *mantras* of evil Dakinis, and so they were called *ngagchangmas*. [208] There were also many male spirits, who had taken human form. Padmasambhava, wanting to tame these local inhabitants, settled in a cave on the island. He meditated and with the power of his concentration he subdued the sixty-four *mamos*, rulers of the country, who were magical emanations of the sixty-four *ngagchangmas*, wives of the king. He tormented them with *mantras* and *mudras* of wrathful actions, so that they fell to the ground, losing consciousness and becoming rigid, then he struck their hearts and made them feel some very powerful sensation. He threatened them, saying, "Now I'm going to burn you in the *sangkhang!*" [209] So they promised - having been subdued by then - to

obey everything the Master ordered them to do. All of the other main *ngagchangmas* joined them and the Master, after having assembled them, explained the Dharma to them, in this way accomplishing its first diffusion.

On one occasion the Master went into town and saw that many *ngagchangmas* were taking away some men, to devour them. So once again he built a big *mandala* of the wrathful deities in a cave. Having made all the *ngagchangmas* completely powerless, he threatened them, and when they tried to escape he stabbed their limbs with *purbus*. Later on they swore that they would not try to harm the men anymore. He made them take a *semkyed*,[\[210\]](#) in this way accomplishing the second diffusion of the teaching.

Another time, arriving at an inn, he saw many women, who were boiling water in their pots: some of them were transmuting it into blood, others into fat, others into semen, others into human flesh, or liquid butter, molasses, boiled wheat, beer. He asked them what they were doing and, not recognizing the Master, they replied, “We are taking the body-substances of the men and the substances of food.” The Master asked, “Did you take an oath with Master Padma Akara or not?” They answered, “The most important of us did, but we didn’t”.

Again, in the same cave as before and with the same *mandala*, he is said to have summoned one million two hundred thousand *ngagchangmas* all at once: the main ones and their retinues. He took possession of the life-*mantra* and ritual of evocation of each of them and bound the main ones to the *mandala*, imposing a *semkyed* on the others. Binding all of them under an oath, in this way he accomplished the third diffusion of the Dharma.

He also subdued the wrathful Yakshasas, Rakshasas and Nagas of the country. There was a Preta[\[211\]](#) called Parbara who was the very evil *polha*[\[212\]](#) of the king of that country, but the Master knew that to subdue him and spread the doctrine of Buddha he should first conquer the king.

Thinking that it would be necessary to convert the people of that country too, he settled in a forest near the royal palace. There, by the power of his concentration, he gradually summoned all the queens to have them be the consorts of the *mandala* offering. The king noticed that they were not in their place and that - having made themselves look like

common women - they were surrounding the Master. So the next day the king, with an army brandishing weapons, went to subdue the Master, who threw white mustard at the soldiers and the arms and equipment of the king caught fire and all the men's blood ran out of their limbs, so that they became rigid, dumb and mad. They remained like this for three days. Then, as they were about to die, the men invoked him and he revived them by sprinkling them with some water that he took from a vase. Then they prostrated at his feet and did what the Master ordered them, and in this way he spread the Buddha's doctrine.

Then they invited from Magadha, in the centre of India, an expert in the Vinaya, an expert in the Sutra and an expert in Abhidharma, called Vidha, Adha and Sudha, who built three temples, which the Master later consecrated. Then he explained the Tripitaka and established a firm basis for it. In that country he did not explain anything other than the Sutra vehicle [publicly]. He gave the king and his retinue much advice on the teachings and explained six *tantras*, many kinds of *dzogrim*[\[213\]](#) and various kinds of action to six elect disciples, who realised themselves.

He is said to have built all at once, in one hour, five small temples in each place where he went. He remained in Droding for twelve years and in the end he flew away, using his robes as wings. Turning himself into a bird, he headed towards the south-west, to Ngayab, the continent

of the Rakshasas. I think it is probable that these were twelve half-years.

The way in which the *tantra* *The Essence of the Secret Moon*[\[214\]](#) is at present explained and practised in Droding is totally in accordance with Padmasambhava's system, and that is also true of *The Great Tantra of the Vajra Essence Ornament*,[\[215\]](#) *Vajrapani*,[\[216\]](#) *Vajra Gandari*,[\[217\]](#) *Yamantaka*,[\[218\]](#) *Hayagriva*,[\[219\]](#) *Mahakala*,[\[220\]](#) *The Seven Mamos*[\[221\]](#) and others, as we learn from the many short explanatory texts [of these *tantras*]. And it seems that in the country of Mahagani there was a community of disciples of the Acharya Shrijiñana. It is said that he and four of his disciples were very expert in astrology. They liked the system of Master Padmasambhava, and spread widely the *tantras* *Hevajra*[\[222\]](#) and *The Supreme Glorious First Tantra*,[\[223\]](#) besides those already named. It also seems that Shrijiñana wrote the commentaries to those *tantras* and some *Secret Instructions on the Assembly of Secrets* [*Tantra*].[\[224\]](#)

The place where the first diffusion of the teaching to the Dakinis[225] was accomplished was called Lampastha, and there one finds a fireplace hand-carved in the rock. The place where the two further diffusions of the teaching were accomplished was called Alpastha. There one finds thousands of imprints of the *purbus* that were thrown at the Dakinis. Those *purbus* that had been used for practising did not remain at the disposal of ordinary people, the ones that were left disappeared, but one is still there, to help future beings to believe. They say that the ‘wisdom *purbu*’[226] integrated with the Master’s body, and that the material one was left. The material it was made with cannot be identified: it is neither stone, nor wood, copper, iron, etc. It does not even look as if it were made by human hands, instead it looks as if it were self-originated, and it is three times as big as a human body.

It seems that in the beginning there were some little wooden *purpa*, which grew very much once the results of the practice had been obtained, and became as big as mind could imagine them. They were in all aspects, such as coming and going, voice and vision, similar to real divinities surrounded by flames. Right at that moment one of the main *ngagchangma* of the *tramen*[227] transformed her body, making it as big as a mountain, and was ready to flee but a *purbu* also became as big as mountain and pierced her body. The ‘wisdom *purbu*’ is said to have integrated with the Master’s body and, once the light and flames had been extinguished, the material part of it remained.

The history of this Master, as handed down by the Mahasiddha Shantigupta,[228] is quite widespread in India, and an even more detailed one was handed down to us by the Acharya Lhai Jyungden from Drodng. I personally heard these accounts from direct disciples of those two masters, and I wrote [this book] relying on many ancient texts that have been preserved and which recount, in accordance with each other, how Padmasambhava had acted in Tibet for the benefit of sentient beings. I also heard some of the oral teachings of this Master, which were passed on to me by Indian scholars who learned them in Drodng themselves. I did not personally see the Indian historical documents, but

these belong to the histories of the lineage of my teachers' teachers, who were enlightened scholars. Instead I consulted many books on the diffusion of Buddhism in the country of Drodng, and I compared them with the versions that were orally transmitted to me by some holy and venerable learned men. Therefore in this work of mine there is nothing to be diminished or eliminated at all, whereas there are many reasons to add to it some more true and amazing accounts.

Then, according to what they say in India, this Master went also to the continent of Hurmung, to Samkodhara, Dhanakosha, Rugma and so on, to benefit sentient beings [from those countries], but I could not find their histories. Instead I read many wonderful stories regarding the meaning of each of the uncommon teachings that he gave in Tibet, which I have to leave out, so as not to say too much.

But here I must say that some narrow-minded subjects have written many stories that they themselves invented, in order to make people have faith. Since most of the people are very ignorant, it is also possible to develop faith in something that does not have a real meaning or in something imperfect. But when a scholar sees or hears this he feels ashamed and starts doubting the purity of the teachings and the people. So this is a demonic action, there is nothing more harmful than this. In this case it is not too much to abandon all doubts about the wonderful stories [that I recounted]. In this way, with these few words, I triumph over the hundreds of fictions that have been assembled in big volumes full of inventions.[\[229\]](#)

May I also - by virtue of this piece of work - become realised like this Protector[\[230\]](#) and guide all sentient beings to liberation! All I have written, in a clear, pure and credible way comes directly from the power that this Protector instills in my heart.

I consider hopeless all of those who, being involved in worldly matters, build their positions on the basis of their beliefs, whereas the faith of those who follow me and my words is like nectar for the mind and ears of the scholars.

This biography of Padmasambhava, the great Master from Oddiyana - an emanation of the Vajra of the Voice of all Tathagatas - which is called [*The Biography*] *Possessing the Three Reliabilities* was composed at Jomonang, a hermitage in Nag Gyal, by the wanderer Taranatha, at the age of thirty-six, upon request of Kunga Palsang, the

‘crazy man from Tsang’, [\[231\]](#) who lives and wanders with me, and with the intention of increasing my own faith.

May it increase all good things!

Notes

[1] See Introduction, pp. 17-18

[2] See p. 23 and note 45.

[3] See note 20.

[4] This invocation to Padmasambhava is known as The Seven Line Prayer (see note 17).

[5] There is also another tradition, called *dag snang*, of which I will speak later (see Introduction, p. 28).

[6] Tib. *rgyud*.

[7] Dūdjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, Boston, 1991, translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje. Dūdjom Rinpoche (1904-1987) was the head of the Nyingmapa School, as well as one of the foremost contemporary Tibetan scholars and *gter ston*.

[8] See A. M. Blondeau, “Analysis of the Biographies of Padmasambhava according to Tibetan Tradition: Classification of Sources”, in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson. Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies*, Oxford 1979, p. 45 ff.

[9] *O rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod padma bka'i thang yig*, in 108 chapters, also known as *Shel brag ma*, from the place where it was discovered. It has been translated into French as: G. Ch. Toussaint, *Le Dict de Padma*, Paris 1933. An English version of this text, supervised by Thartang Tulku, has been published as: K. Douglas, G. Bays, *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, Emeryville, California, 1978.

[10] *sLob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba*, in 41 chapters, which seems to be the most ancient. It has been translated into English as E. Pema Kunsang, *The Lotus Born*, Boston 1993.

[11] *U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar rgyas pa*

gser gyi phreng ba thar lam gsal byed. It has been published in English as W. Y. Evans-Wentz, *The Tibetan Book of the Great Liberation*, London 1935.

[12] *Zab pa dbon las o rgyan rnam thar dpag ljong shing*, translated into English as K. Dowman, Tulku Pema Wangyal, *The Legend of the Great Stupa*, Berkeley 1973

[13] A short biography, written by Jamgön Kongtrul the First, can be found in the first volume of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. Its English version can be found in E. Pema Kunsang, *Dakini Teachings – Padmasambhava's Oral Instructions to Lady Tsogyal*, Boston 1990.

[14] On this subject see Tsele Natsok Rangdrol's Introduction to E. Pema Kunsang, *The Lotus Born*.

[15] See Dūdjom Rinpoche, *op. cit.*, pp. 473-4.

[16] Regarding the Great Transference (Tib. *'pho ba chen po*) and the Rainbow Body (Tib. *'ja' lus*) see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, pp. 158 ff., Ithaca, NY 2000.

[17] See p. 7. About the history and interpretation of this invocation, which seems to have different levels of meaning, see Tulku Thondup, *Commentary on the Seven Line Prayer of Guru Rinpoche*, Cambridge MA, 1979.

[18] The Tibetan calendar is based on a cycle of twelve animals: mouse, bull, tiger, hare, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, bird, dog and boar. Each year, month, day and hour is linked to one of these animals. Since in general the Tibetan New Year is between the end of January and the beginning of March, the fifth month is between June and July.

[19] Tib. *O rgyan* or *U rgyan*.

[20] Dakinis are manifestations of energy, beings that control its various aspects. They are usually represented as dancing, ornamented female beings, since in Tantrism energy is considered to be the feminine aspect, whereas matter is the male aspect. There are wisdom Dakinis, who are realised beings and have a deep knowledge of the teachings, so that they can transmit them or help practitioners on the path, and worldly Dakinis, who only have some power over material things but are not realised and may sometimes cause disturbances.

[21] See Sogyal Rinpoche, *Dzogchen and Padmasambhava*, Berkeley 1990, p. 1.

[22] Regarding the biographies of the eighty-four Mahasiddhas, see. K. Dowman, *Masters of Mahamudra*, Albany, N. Y., 1985.

[23] Srong btsan sgam po had five wives, one of which was a princess from Shang Shung, a kingdom situated in the region of Mount Kailash, the sacred mountain where Tibetan culture had its origin (see N. Norbu, *The Necklace of gZi - A Cultural History of Tibet*, Dharamsala 1981, p. 29. New revised edition, Arcidosso 2000, pp. 39-40).

[24] A Buddhist *stupa* was originally a receptacle of the relics of an enlightened being, and therefore it became a symbol for Buddhahood.

[25] See E. Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet*, New Delhi 1976, p. 4.

[26] See P. Cornu, *Padmasambhava – La magie de l’Eveil*, Paris 1997.

[27] He was the Abbot of Nalanda, the most famous Buddhist University in ancient India.

[28] Tib. *mkha’ ’gro’i snying thig*.

[29] About Sutra, Tantra, and Dzogchen in general see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, and *Dzogchen: the Self-perfected State*, Ithaca, NY 1996.

[30] *Mandala* (Tib. *dkyil ’khor*) in Tantrism is the pure dimension of mind, in which ordinary vision manifests as ‘pure vision’ through the luminous energy of the five colours (blue, green, red, white and yellow) that are the essence of the five material elements (space, air, fire, water and earth). Graphic symbols of this dimension, which is not accessible to a common eye, are commonly called *mandalas*. All *mandalas* have a center (Tib. *dkyil*), around which all manifestations of existence – represented as deities or *mantras* - (Tib. *’khor*) are placed and from which they spread. Each direction of the *mandala* is associated to a Buddha and to one of the ‘five Buddha families’ (Tib. *sangs rgyas rigs lnga*): Vairochana (Tib. rNam par snang mdzad) and the Buddha (Tib. *sangs rgyas*) family, Amitabha (Tib. ’Od dpag med) and the Padma (Tib. *padma*) family, Akshobhya (Tib. Mi bskyod pa) and the Vajra (Tib. *rdorje*) family, Ratnasambhava (Tib. Rin chen ’byung ldan) and the Ratna (Tib. *rin chen*) family, Amoghasiddhi (Tib. Don yod grub pa) and the Karma (Tib. *’phrin las*) family.

[31] On the views corresponding to the nine vehicles, see Chögyal

Namkhai Norbu, *The Wish-fulfilling Vase*, Arcidosso 1993, Ch. 5. See also Tulku Thondup, *The Tantric Tradition of the Nyingma*, Marion, MA 1984, and Düdjom Rinpoche, *op. cit.*

[32] Regarding the *gter ma* tradition in general, see. Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, London 1986.

[33] Her life-story is narrated in K. Dowman, *Sky-Dancer*, London 1984, and in G. Changchub - N. Nyingpo, *Lady of the Lotus-Born*, Boston 1999, two different versions of the same biography, belonging to the *gter ma* tradition.

[34] Padmasambhava himself predicted that there would be three main *gter ston*, eight great *gter ston*, twenty-one powerful *gter ston*, one-hundred-and-eight intermediate *gter ston* and a thousand minor ones. About *gter ma* and *gter ston*, see *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*, Cantos 91-4. Regarding the characteristics of a *gter ston*, see Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*, pp. 157-60.

[35] An account of the discovery of a *sa gter* is found in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, pp. 70-1.

[36] An account of the revelation through dreams of a *dgongs gter* is found in Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *Dream Yoga and the Practice of Natural Light*, Ithaca, NY 2002, pp. 95-111.

[37] Tib. *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*.

[38] Anne-Marie Blondeau studied in detail this classification of Padmasambhava's biographies in the previously mentioned article (see note 8).

According to the Abhidharma, there are four different ways of being born:

- Birth from a womb, as for human beings and many kinds of animals;
- Birth from an egg, as for birds, snakes and some kinds of insects;
- Birth from heat and humidity, as for worms;
- Miraculous birth, through spontaneous apparition, as for deities or some kinds of hell-beings or some beings that manifest in the *bar do*, the intermediate state between death and rebirth.

[39] Or Indrabhuti.

[40] Tib. Padma 'byung ldan.

[41] Tib. Padma 'byung gnas.

[42] This excerpt from the *terma*, which was pointed out to me by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, is a quotation from the *Thung mong rten 'brel sgrig byed pa'i/Lha rnam mnyes byed bsang mchod*, by Rig 'dzin rkod kyi ldems 'phru can, ed. sDe dGe, f.6/a:

bsTan pa 'di la ngo mshar rmad byung ba'i

'Jig rten skyabs gyur padma rgyal po ni
Rigs ni o rgyan rgyal po'i sras su 'khrungs
rGya gar yul du sgro 'dogs ma lus bca
bSil ba tshal du dngos grub rnam gnyis brnyes
Kha ba can du bstan pa dar bar mdzad
Lho nub mtshams su srin po'i kha gnon mdzad
Mya ngan mi 'da' 'gro ba'i gnyen gcig pu
sKu gsum che mchog bad zra he ru ka
Dus gsum mnyam nyid bla ma dus 'dir dran
(English translation by Cristiana De Falco).

[43] Padmasambhava was known also by this name, which means 'Padma the King'. It is the name of one of his eight manifestations, which are not eight different persons, but are rather manifestations of his capacity of fulfilling different kinds of needs and teaching different kinds of people (see Sogyal Rinpoche, *Dzogchen and Padmasambhava*, pp. 31-3).

[44] Tib. bSil ba'i tshal, a cremation ground near Bodhgaya, in India. Cemeteries are often used by *yogis* as meditation places.

[45] The 'common *siddhis*', that imply power over material things, and the 'supreme *siddhi*', which is total realisation, Buddhahood.

[46] According to most traditions, after residing in Tibet Padmasambhava departed for the southwestern continent of Chamara (Tib. rNga yab), which was inhabited by Rakshasas (Tib. Srin po), demons capable of devouring human beings.

[47] This is one of the 'five Herukas' (wrathful deities) or 'Herukas of the five families'. According to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu's oral instruction, Tibetan Tantric deities are usually represented according to three modes: peaceful, joyful and wrathful. These three aspects are symbols of three aspects of individual energy: peaceful forms are related to a calm state of mind, joyful forms to the experience of bliss and wrathful ones to the movement of thought. They are described in *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

[48] The three bodies (Tib. *sku gsum*, Skr. *trikaya*): Dharmakaya (Tib. *chos sku*), Sambhogakaya (Tib. *longs sku*), Nirmanakaya (Tib. *sprul sku*). These are three aspects of the state of enlightenment, which is the real condition of all beings: its essence, which is pure from the beginning (Dharmakaya); its nature, which manifests as the lights and colours of the Buddha realms (Sambhogakaya); its energy, which manifests as physical bodies in the six realms of existence (Nirmanakaya)

(see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, pp. 163-4, and *Dzogchen, the Self-perfected State*, p. 56.

[49] Past, present and future.

[50] Tib. *rDo rje phur pa*, which is one of the main teachings of the *kama* tradition, belonging to the path of transformation. A *phur pa* or *phur bu* (Skr. Kila) is a Tibetan ritual dagger with a triangular section. Vajra Kilaya is a wrathful deity, represented as having the lower part of his body in the form of a *phur pa*. Padmasambhava did this practice in Nepal, in the cave of Yangleshöd (near Parphing, a few miles south-west of Kathmandu), to overcome the terrible obstacles that some negative forces had sent to Tibet, such as drought, famine and pestilence. It is said that as soon as the texts of the practice arrived there these negativities were pacified.

[51] Tib. *'Phrin las phur pa*. The *tantra* of *rDo rje phur pa* is considered the action *tantra* of the *bka' ma* tradition of the Mahayoga *sadhanas* (see Tulku Thondup, *The Tantric Tradition of the Nyingma*, p.16).

[52] See Sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan, *dPal rdo rje phur pa'i lo rgyus chos kyi 'byung gnas ngo mtshar rgya mtsho'i rba rlabs*, in *Collected Writings of Sog bzlog pa bLo gros rGyal mtshan*, New Delhi 1975, pp.115-6 (ff.3a/b). This history includes a biography of Padmasambhava because of the very important role that he played in the diffusion of the *rDo rje phur pa* teachings. (The excerpt in the text has been translated by Cristiana De Falco.)

[53] Details on Taranatha's life, lineage and literary activity are given in D. Templeman, *Introduction to Taranatha's Life of Krishnacharya / Kanha*, Dharamsala 1989 and in D. Templeman, *The Origin of the Tara Tantra*, Dharamsala 1981.

[54] Tib. Jetsun Taranatha.

[55] On the Jonangpa doctrine see D. S. Ruegg, "The Jonangpas: a School of Buddhist Ontologists according to the Grub mtha' shel gyi me long", in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1963. See also P. Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism*, London and New York 1989.

[56] Founded by Tsongkapa (1357-1419). It has been dominant in Tibet since the 17th century.

[57] Two of Tsongkapa's teachers, Chyogle Namgyal and Nyawön Kunga Pal belonged to the Jonangpa school, and even though later

Tsongkapa disagreed with them, they were very respected (see D. S. Ruegg, *op. cit.*, p. 78).

[58] Central Tibet.

[59] North-west of Tashi Lhunpo, on the left bank of the Brahmaputra (Tib. gTsang po).

[60] Tib. Kunkyen.

[61] Tib. Zla ba mgon po.

[62] ‘The saint and revered reincarnated Lama’, the spiritual head of the Buddhist cult in Mongolia. The word *khutukhtu* is the Mongolian translation of the Tibetan word *sprul sku*, ‘reincarnation’.

[63] Tib. Zhi ba’i sbas pa.

[64] Tib. *bKa’ babs bdun ldan gyi brgyud pa’i rnam thar ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba rin po che’i khungs lta bu’i gtam*, translated into English as D. Templeman, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, Dharamsala 1983.

[65] Tib. *sGrol ma’i rgyud kyi byung khung gsal bar byed pa’i lo rgyus gser gyi phreng ba*. This text has two English versions: D. Templeman, *The Origin of the Tara Tantra* and J. M. Reynolds, *The Golden Rosary of Tara*, Arcidosso 1985.

[66] Tib. *dPal gyi ’byung gnas dam pa’i chos rin po che ’phags yul du ji ltar dar ba’i tshul gsal bar ston pa dgos ’dod kun ’byung*. It has been published in English as Lama Chimpa, A. Chattopadhyaya, *Taranatha’s History of Buddhism in India*, New Delhi 1990.

[67] The complete title in Tibetan is *sLob dpon chen po padma ’byung gnas kyi rnam par thar par gsal bar byed pa’i yi ge yid ches gsum ldan*.

[68] See p. 81 and note 229.

[69] Tib. *rGya gar lugs*.

[70] Tib. *rTa mgrin*, a tantric deity with the head of a horse.

[71] *sBa bzhed* or *rBa bzhed*. It is a Tibetan chronicle attributed to Ba Sahnang, a minister of King Trisong Detsen, who played a very important role in the diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet and who was one of the first seven Tibetans to be ordained as Buddhist monks. Its nucleus is the account of the building of the Samye monastery and of the main events related to it. There are different editions of this chronicle, of which the *sBa bzhed zhabs brtags ma* seems to be the official one. In this edition an appendix, probably by a Kadampa Lama of the 12th or 13th

century, has been added. The Tibetan text of the *sBa bzhed zhabs brtags ma* has been published in R. A. Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam yas: sBa bzhed, edition of the Tibetan text and summary in French* by R. A. Stein, Paris 1961.

[72]Tib. *slob dpon*, Skr. *acharya*. This term literally means ‘chief-teacher’. In this work it is translated as ‘Master’ when referring to Padmasambhava, ‘Acharya’ if referring to someone else.

[73]According to Chögyal Namkhai Norbu this is a concept analogous to that of *tshad ma gsum*, ‘the three characteristics that testify to the truthfulness of a subject’: the reliability of the *sutras* and *tantras* taught by Buddha, the reliability obtained by the understanding of one’s own personal experience, the reliability of what one has heard directly from one’s *guru* (mDo sngags bstan pa’i nyi ma, *Ita grub shan ’byed gnad kyi sgron me yi / tshig don rnam bshad ’jam dbyangs dgongs brgyan bzhugs*, Delhi 1973, p. 16).

[74]The Tibetan word equivalent to the Sanskrit *guru* is *bla ma* (Lama), which literally means ‘one without a superior’.

[75]See note 30.

[76]A *vajra*, or *dorje* in Tibetan, is the five (or sometimes three or even nine) pointed sceptre, which in Tantrism is considered to be a symbol of the enlightened state. It represents the indestructibility and clarity of this state, which is comparable to the qualities of a diamond, and its instantaneousness, which is comparable to the quality of a thunderbolt.

[77]Second king of the Pala dynasty, which ruled over eastern India from 750 A.D. until the early 10th century.

[78]Ancient realm of the middle-eastern region of India, corresponding to the present Bihar, where many Buddhist sacred places such as Bodh Gaya, Otantapuri and Nalanda were situated.

[79]Tib. *dkon mchog gsum*, Skr. *triratna*: Buddha, his teaching (Tib. *chos*, Skr. *dharma*) and its community of disciples (Tib. *dge ’dun*, Skr. *sangha*).

[80]A very common motif in the biographies of great personalities is the signs that - usually at birth - foretell an uncommon destiny. Sometimes these signs are on the body (the Buddha is said to have had some special physical features, such as big ear lobes, a protuberance on the crown of his head, called *usnisha*, and some special marks on the palms of his hands and on the soles of his feet), sometimes they manifest externally, as rainbows in the sky or an instantaneous blossoming of flowers.

[81]A variety of lotus, blue in colour, which is also used as a medicinal plant. Green Tara, one of the 21 manifestations of Tara, the female deity protectress of Tibet is represented holding an Utpala flower in her hand.

[82]A hook and a lasso are attributes of deities of power, such as Kurukulle, who are linked to the Padma family of the *mandala*.

[83]Tib. *brtag pa brgyad*. D. Templeman translates this term as ‘the eight subsidiary sciences’ (see D. Templeman, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, p. 2).

[84]The five basic vows that are taken by lay practitioners, as a sign of devotion: refraining from killing, stealing, telling lies, drinking alcohol and committing sexual misconduct. Those who take these vows are called *dge bsnyen* (Skr. *upasaka*).

[85]The whole corpus of the Buddhist doctrine is contained in the *Tripitaka* (Tib. *sde gnod gsum*), the ‘three baskets’: Vinaya (Tib. *’dul ba*), Sutra (Tib. *mdo*) and Abhidharma (Tib. *chos mngon*), respectively the rules of monastic conduct, the words of Buddha and the metaphysics.

[86]In ritual initiations one throws a flower on the *mandala*, and the area where the flower falls determines to which Buddha family one belongs.

[87]Since Tantrism does not involve limitations as far as social status is concerned, many realised beings manifested themselves as beggars, prostitutes, madmen, or just as ordinary persons, to show that the deepest nature of individuals is totally beyond human judgment.

[88] Tib. *bsnyen pa*, *nyer sgrub*, *sgrub pa* and *sgrub pa chen po*. These are quite general terms to indicate different kinds of practices in which a deity is evoked through visualisation and recitation of *mantra* (see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Precious Vase*, Arcidosso 1999, chap. 5, 2.8.10.4. and p. 215; D. L. Snellgrove, *The Hevajra Tantra*, London, 1959, vol. I. ii.22 and p. 137. See also K. Dowman, *Sky Dancer*, p. 199, note 57, and p. 245).

[89]A sign of stability in meditation.

[90]Tib. *’byung po*. This is a general term that indicates many kinds of evil spirits, such as *’dre*, *gdon* and *bgags* (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, Graz 1975, p. 53).

[91]That is, their negative karma, due to the attempt of killing a Buddha, ripened, so that they died.

[92]Tib. *sha za* (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 63).

[93]The three worlds (Tib. *kham s gum*, Skr. *trailokya*) are: the world of desire (Tib. *’dod pa’i khams*, Skr. *kamaloka*), the world of form (Tib. *gzugs kyi khams*, Skr. *rupaloka*), the world without form (Tib. *gzugs med kyi khams*, Skr. *arupaloka*).

[94]Tib. *gShin rje gshed*, a wrathful deity represented with a bull’s head.

[95]Tib. *rDo rje khro bo*, another deity with a wrathful form.

[96]Tib. *Nag po chen po*, another wrathful deity, of which more than seventy forms are known (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, chap. 3).

[97] Female deities often having a terrifying form. They are considered to provoke many diseases (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-73).

[98]Tib. *klu*, snake-deities inhabiting ponds, lakes, rivers or the sea. Tibetans consider that many diseases can be provoked by the Nagas, especially skin diseases, like leprosy. They also think that when humans pollute the water in their environment the Nagas become ill and that can provoke some kinds of human illnesses. In that case the Nagas should be healed in order to heal the humans.

[99]Tib. *gnod sbyin*, a general term indicating another class of beings that cause

disturbances for humans. They often inhabit mountain passes.

[100]Tib. *'jig rten dang 'jig rten las 'das pa*, i.e. those divinities who rule the field of mundane actions and those who are beyond this level and help beings towards spiritual realisation (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5).

[101]According to other traditions Padmasambhava lived in the cemetery of Shitavana (Tib. bSil ba'i tshal) and there he received the teachings of the *bka' brgyad*, the 'eight pronouncements' from eight great teachers who are called 'the eight wisdom-holders' (Tib. *rig 'dzin*, Skr. *vidyadhara*). According to the most commonly accepted versions, their names were: Vimalamitra, Humkara, Manjushrimitra, Nagarjunagarbha, Prabhahasti, Dhanasamskrita, Rongpu Guhya and Shantigarbha (see E. Dargyay, *op. cit.*, p. 32; see also Tulku Thondup, *The Tantra Tradition of the Nyingma*, p. 188, note 72).

[102]Who did not have to go through *samsara*, the cycle of conditioned existence.

[103]The magic sword, that cuts through obstructions (see Dūdjom Rinpoche, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 19, note 251).

[104]Pills made from herbs and minerals, which help rejuvenation and maintenance of good health.

[105] A medicine that makes one able to see things that are not usually visible.

[106]The capacity to walk extraordinarily quickly.

[107] A particular kind of medicine that suppresses disease (see Dūdjom Rinpoche, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 157).

[108]In general in the practice of 'taking the essence', or *bcud len*, the practitioner substitutes food with particular substances, derived from herbs or minerals, that help him/her to endure fasting and get most of his/her nourishment directly from light, which is the essence of the material elements. In this process one has also to apply specific kinds of breathing and visualisation. The practice of *bcud len* is closely connected with the long-life practice.

[109]The capacity of increasing wealth.

[110]This refers to a transformation on both the material and the spiritual level, similar to alchemy in the western tradition. Nagarjuna is said to have been one of the depositories of this secret.

[111]See note 101. There are four kinds of Vidyadharas: 1) *rnam par smin pa'i rig 'dzin*, who reach realisation only after death, since they are still to some extent limited by their material body. They are often compared to new-born eagles, who are ready to fly as soon as they hatch out of the egg; 2) *tshé dbang rig 'dzin*, who possess the power of long life, together with control over the elements; 3) *phyag chen rig 'dzin*, who have totally realised the 'Great Symbol' (Tib. *phyag rgya chen po*, Skr. *mahamudra*), the goal of the tantric path; 4) *lhun grub rig 'dzin*, those who have reached total integration of their own internal energy with external energy.

[112]The 'great symbol', the fruit of the path of transformation.

[113]Tib. Sangs rgyas dpal ye shes, also known as Ye shes zhabs, a disciple of Manjushrimitra, who took the vows at Nalanda, in the Mahasanghika (Tib. Phal chen sde pa) lineage. There is a biography of him in Taranatha's *bKa' babs bdun ldan* (see D.

Templeman, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, pp. 56-63; see also E. Dargyay, *op. cit.*, pp. 21-22).

[114] He was probably a contemporary of Trisong Detsen.

[115] ‘Those of the Great Assembly’. This school originated from a schism against the ‘Old Ones’ (Shtavira, Thera) that took place during the Vaishali Council (4th century B.C.).

[116] Tib. *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa*, the Sutra of Mahayana Buddhism, the collection of teachings given by Buddha Shakyamuni to his main disciples on Vulture Peak, sixteen years after his enlightenment. The subject of these teachings is the doctrine of voidness (Tib. *stong pa nyid*, Skr. *shunyata*), on which all the Madhyamika philosophy, the ‘Middle Path’, is based. The original Sanskrit text, which was translated into Tibetan later on, in the 9th century A.D., includes more than 125,000 *slokas* or verses. It is said that Buddha himself entrusted this teaching to the Nagas, to keep it in custody until human beings would be ready to receive it. Nagarjuna, in the 2nd century A.D., is said to have received the initiation to it from the king of the Nagas, below the sea, and then to have spread it on earth. Nagarjuna was the author of a very important commentary to the *Prajñāparamita*, the *Maha Prajñāparamita Shastra*, as well as of many explanatory texts regarding the Madhyamika philosophy.

[117] Tib. Sangs rgyas gsang ba, a disciple of Buddha Shrijñana, who mainly realized himself through the practice of Yogatantra (see Chimpa-Chattoadhyaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 276, 280-2, 419-20).

[118] Tib. *gSang ba 'dus pa*, *sGyu 'phrul drwa ba*, *Zla gsang thig le*, *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*, *Las kyi phreng ba*. These are five among the eighteen *tantras* of Mahayoga (see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Precious Vase*, chap. 5, 2.8.3).

[119] Tib. *man ngag*: *man* is a negative particle (more commonly *mi*) and *ngag* means ‘voice’. So it literally means ‘that which cannot be spoken about’, therefore ‘secret’. In this case the term indicates the most esoteric and secret teachings of Tantrism, whereas in a different context it is the name of one of the three series of Dzogchen, that have the same goal but different methods: *sems sde* or ‘series of the nature of the mind’, *klong sde* or ‘series of space’ and *man ngag sde*, or ‘series of the secret instructions’, also known by its Sanskrit name, Upadesha (see Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, *The Crystal and the Way of Light*, pp. 43, 171, 176-77).

[120] A region in eastern India, corresponding to the present Bangla Desh (see Lama Chimpa - A. Chattoadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 330).

[121] Tib. *phyag rgya*, Skr. *mudra*, which often means ‘symbol’, but in this case it means a *yogini* who performs Tantric sexual practices (see D.L. Snellgrove, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-37; see also K. Dowman, *Sky Dancer*, p. 194, note 17).

[122] Tib. *bskyed rdzogs zung 'jug* in Tantrism means the process of gradual creative visualisation (Tib. *bskyed rim*, Skr. *utpattikrama*) of oneself as a deity and its *mandala* and its gradual re-absorption into a point inside oneself (Tib. *rdzogs rim*, Skr. *sampannakrama*). The union of these two opposite aspects (as well as other opposites, such as masculine-feminine, solar-lunar, voidness-clarity and so on) is called *zung 'jug* (Skr. *yuganaddha*) (see K. Dowman, *Sky Dancer*, p. 230).

[123] Tib. *rdo rje'i sku*. The realisation of the Mahamudra entails the attainment of

the Vajra Body, that is the realization of the material dimension as the dimension of the deity. The word *sku*, ‘body’ in this case should be understood as ‘dimension’. According to H.V. Guenther and C. Trungpa, “in the Tantric tradition it is said that

the discovery of the Vajra-body - that is, the innate nature of Vajra (indestructible being) - within one’s physical system and within one’s psychological system is the ultimate experience” (see H.V. Guenther and C. Trungpa, *The Dawn of Tantra*, Berkeley 1975).

[124] Countries of the northeastern part of India. The population of Khasya is considered to be Himalayan (see Lama Chimpa - A. Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51, note 12).

[125] A city situated not far from the present Bhagalpur, in the region of Anga, in eastern India (see D. Templeman, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, p. 113, note 132).

[126] According to Taranatha (see Lama Chimpa - A. Chattopadhyaya, p. 333), Kalinga is included in Trilinga, so it can be located in the middle-eastern area of India.

[127] Phallus of Shiva. In many sacred places in India and neighbouring countries *lingas*, in which Indian Tantrism identifies the inexhaustible creative energy of the god Shiva, are objects of cult. They are often made of stone.

[128] Tib. *mu steg pa*. This is a general term indicating all the followers of non-Buddhist doctrines.

[129] The seat of one of the most famous Buddhist monastic universities, in Magadha.

[130] Skr. *bali*, ritual cakes made of butter and barley flour (Tib. *tsam pa*), that are used as offerings in many kinds of rites

[131] Tib. rGyal po’i khabs.

[132] Tib. rDo rje gdan.

[133] Tib. dPal he ru ka, a general name that can be referred to different wrathful deities.

[134] i. e. the *purbus* that manifested through the practice. ‘Stable’ because they stayed also after the practice, they did not disappear.

[135] In the text it is *gzungs ma*, “that which seizes or holds”. In this case it has the same meaning as *mudra* (see note 121). This term also indicates a woman endowed with an extraordinary memory, such as the *yogini* Yeshe Tsogyal.

[136] A disciple of Vaidyapada, one of the Indian Siddhas of whom Taranatha wrote a biography (see D. Templeman, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, p. 63).

[137] The seat of another famous Buddhist University, in Bengal.

[138] See note 84.

[139] In the text it is *tu ru shka* or *stag gzig tu ru shka*. *Stag gzig* is the ancient Tibetan term for Persia, *tu ru shka* literally means ‘Turkish’.

[140] Tib *lta stangs*, Skr. *drsti*. The *yogi’s* power is concentrated into his gaze, by which he is able to perform wrathful actions. Snellgrove mentions ‘four kinds of gaze’ (see D.L. Snellgrove, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 84-87).

[141] Tib. *sdigs mdzub*. In this case the power is activated by a ritual gesture

instead of the gaze.

[142] Taranatha also refers to this in the *bKa' babs bdun ldan* (see D. Templeman, *The Seven Instruction Lineages*, p. 63).

[143] According to some sources, this probably corresponds to the region of Dramila (Tamil), in Southern India, or to that of Dravida (Coromandel). See H. A. Jaschke, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 100; and S. Chandra Das, *Tibetan-English Dictionary*, p. 300. In this text Taranatha states that it is an island to the south-west of India (see p. 75 of the text), inhabited by non-human beings (Rakshasas).

[144] Such *yogins* and *yoginis* can extend their life span and manifest as they like, without limitations of space and time.

[145] According to some sources it could be an island south-west of 'Dzam bu gling (Skr. Jambudvīpa), which is the human world in Buddhist cosmology (See K. Dowman, *The Sacred Life of Tibet*, San Francisco 1997, chap. 1).

[146] Another class of demons, who are considered to be responsible for some kinds of madness (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 128).

[147] Some biographies of Padmasambhava are called *rnam thar*, others *thang yig* or *bka' thang*, 'decree', 'order'.

[148] The *bKa' gdam pa* school was founded by 'Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1003-1063), a disciple of Atisha.

[149] Trisong Detsen was considered an emanation of Avalokiteshvara.

[150] Better known as Shantarakshita (see G. N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, Delhi 1976, p. 324).

[151] The three virtues of the body: refraining from killing, stealing and sexual misconduct; the four virtues of the voice: always speaking in a gentle way; refraining from lying, from provoking discord with one's speech and from senseless talk; the three virtues of the mind: refraining from desiring other's goods, from desiring to damage others and abandoning wrong ideas (such as believing that the law of cause and effect does not exist).

[152] The twelve causal links (Tib. *rten 'brel*, Skr. *pratitya samutpada*), through which the cycle of conditioned existence is perpetuated; ignorance of one's real condition, association or impression, consciousness, name and form, the six sense organs (Tibetans include also the mind within the sense organs), contact, sensation, desire, sexual intercourse, conception, birth, old age and death).

[153] Tib. *khams bco brgyad*, i.e. the six sense organs: eyes, nose, ears, tongue, body, mind; their objects: form, smell, sound, flavour, touch, existence and their consciousnesses (Tib. *rnam shes*, Skr. *vijñāna*).

[154] 'The red mountain'. This is the name of the hill where the Potala palace – the historical residence of the Dalai Lama – was later built. It has been the site of the royal palace from 637 A.D. until the reign of Trisong Detsen, during which it is said to have been destroyed by a thunderbolt (see A. Ferrari, *mK'yen-brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, Rome 1958, p. 88, note 47).

[155] The minister who played a very important role in the diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet. He was ordained as a monk by Shantarakshita, with the name of Yeshe Wangpo.

[156] The word *shang* in general indicates the maternal uncle. It is possible that it

has been extended to the ministers, always on the basis of such relationships (see R. A. Stein, *La Civilisation Tibétaine*, Paris 1962, p. 82).

[157] See R. A. Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam yas: sBa bzhed*, pp. 18-20

[158] This place is often quoted as mGrin bzang.

[159] Because of his omniscience.

[160] A region of western Tibet on the border with Nepal.

[161] The valley where the homonymous river flows, in Mang yul.

[162] Tib. gTsang po.

[163] Beings who are condemned by their karma to be born in some of the hell realms where life lasts a very short time, such as one day, so that they can experience over and over the suffering of dying and being born.

[164] According to other sources Padmasambhava subdued this female demon by means of a ritual gesture that detached her flesh from her bones. Ever since then she has been renowned as Gangs dkar sha med, 'the fleshless deity of the white snow' (see K. Dowman, *The Sacred Life of Tibet*, chap. 1).

[165] This probably refers to the area of the gNam mtsho lake, which is situated near to the highest peak of the mountain chain of gNyen chen thang lha, where the homonymous deity resided (see K. Dowman, *The Sacred Life of Tibet*, chap. 1).

[166] See note 165.

[167] North of Lhasa.

[168] West of Lhasa, in the lower area of the sTod lung valley.

[169] Probably merchants that he met on his journey.

[170] Tib. Zhong ba lha chu.

[171] A class of beings that have characteristics of both Nagas (Tib. *klu*) and Tsens, spirits inhabiting rocks.

[172] Behind the place where later the Samye temples would be built.

[173] 'Go'u de shan in the text. This is a massif with five peaks, situated in the Chinese district of Shanxi. It is a place consecrated to Manjushri, the Bodhisattva of wisdom, and it is the seat of many temples (see K. Dowman, *The Sacred Life of Tibet*, chap. 1).

[174] Thinking that Padmasambhava might have made them invisible.

[175] Tib. 'phan, coloured silk ribbons used as decorations of pillars in Tibetan temples.

[176] *Pra* or *pra men* or *phra men* is a divination rite in which the response is given through a mirror. In general a young boy or girl is the 'support' of the *pra* (*pra brten*), allowing the evoked deity to take temporary possession of his/her body and to speak through his/her mouth.

[177] Skr. Marici, a female deity yellow in colour, seated cross-legged with a sun disk behind her.

[178]Yar lha sham po, inhabiting the homonymous mountain, in Yarlung, south-west of Lhasa, where the first legendary kings of Tibet are said to come from.

[179]Beings who are said to reside in the space between sky and earth (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 265).

[180]The four 'great *gyalpos*'.

[181]Tib. *sbyin sreg*, Skr. *homa*, a fire-ritual where offerings are burnt with the purpose of pacifying negativities, subduing evil spirits, attracting good things, healing illnesses and so on.

[182]A lake, residence of Nagas.

[183]Also spelt: Pe har, dPe kar, Pe dkar, sPe dkar, dPe dkar, Be dkar, dPe ha ra and Pe ha ra, the most important of the *rgyal po* spirits. After his conversion to Buddhism he became a Dharmapala, a protector of the Dharma (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 94-133).

[184]Ri rab in the text, The Supreme Mountain. It is also known as Ri bo Ti se and Gangs rin po che, 'precious snowy mountain', sacred to Buddhists, Hindus and Bönpos. It is still an object of continuous pilgrimages. Four great rivers spring from there, among which the Indus and the Brahmaputra. The ancient kingdom of Shang Shung - of which some archaeological evidence is left, such as Khyung lung, a village completely carved out in rocks - was situated in the Kailash area. Shang Shung has been for many centuries the centre of Tibetan civilization, which later moved to Yar lung. The kingdom of Shang Shung used to have its own writing, from which modern Tibetan writing might have been originated (see K. Dowman, *The Sacred Life of Tibet*, chap. 2 and 5).

[185]Tib. *rDo rje rnam 'joms*.

[186]Tib. *Phur bu 'bum sde*.

[187]The *mandala* offering is symbolically the offering of the universe, which can be done using some material objects, or simply through visualization. The offering can be external, internal or secret.

[188]Yeshe Tsogyal from mKhar chen (see note 33), one of Trisong Detsen's queens, who was offered by the king to the *guru* as a sign of devotion (see K. Dowman, *Sky Dancer*, chap. 3).

[189]Tib. *lhun grub*.

[190]The operation of pulling the threads so that they follow the most auspicious direction - thanks to the help of the divinities that descend into and guide the person who pulls them - is part of the preliminaries to the construction of a *mandala*, which in this case was the ground on which the temple was to be built.

[191]The ministers who were favourable to Buddhism and those who were against it are listed in R.A. Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam yas: sBa bzhed*, p. 27.

[192]Because it was one of the main retreat places of Padmasambhava.

[193]The area called Mön corresponds to the northwestern area of Bhutan, on the border with Tibet. 'Son of the border-land of Mön' in this context indicates a foreigner belonging to a non-Tibetan ethnic group.

[194]A deity of wealth, of which different forms are known (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-81).

[195] Tibetans consider circumambulation (Tib. *'khor ba*) a sign of great respect. They do it above all around *stupas*, temples and sacred places such as Mount Kailash.

[196] The word *yi dam* literally means 'sacred mind'. In Tantrism it designates the deity that one visualizes in the practice.

[197] Hayagriva is the wrathful form of Avalokiteshvara.

[198] The monastic complex of Samye, which represents the cosmic *mandala*, is formed by a central body (*dbu rtse*) around which four main temples (*gling bzhi*, 'the four continents') and eight minor ones (*gling phran*, the 'minor continents') are situated. The Aryapalo temple (Tib. Arya palo'i gling), dedicated to Avalokiteshvara, is one of the four main ones and is situated to the south of the main temple. According to the *rBa bzhed* it was built before the others (see R. D. Stein, *Une chronique ancienne de bSam yas: sBa bzhed*, p. 31).

[199] Tib. *sGyu 'phrul drwa ba* (see note 118).

[200] The view of those who follow the highest teachings should be like Dharmakaya, without limits, but their attitude should be ethical like that of a Bodhisattva. This is a very important distinction, since those who make their behaviour conform to the view do not consider good and evil, while those who make their view conform to the behaviour are limited by ethical parameters. To follow Padmasambhava's way one should be aware that relative reality and the physical body set limits that one should respect until total realization, but at the same time one should understand that the absolute reality, Dharmakaya, is completely free from limits.

[201] Tib. *sems phyog*, synonymous with Atiyoga (see E. Dargyay, *op. cit.*, p. 60).

[202] Skr. Akanishta, the highest of the Buddha realms.

[203] Stones or iron dust or white mustard seeds are cast away to drive away negativities (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, p. 357).

[204] Region of western Tibet, where the homonymous mountain-pass is situated. Padmasambhava left Tibet through this mountain pass.

[205] Bu ston Rin po che (1290-1364), from the monastery of Zha lu, in gTsang. His main work has been to organise and classify the Indian commentaries to the words of Buddha in the *bsTan 'gyur*, of which he also made a catalogue.

[206] Three of the most famous Indian Siddhas, whose lives are narrated in Taranatha's *bKa' babs bdun ldan* (see note 64).

[207] The Sanskrit word *Dakini* comes from a verbal root, *di*, which means 'to fly' (see D.L. Snellgrove, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 135) and its Tibetan equivalent, *mkha' 'gro*, literally means 'she who flies in the sky'.

[208] Literally 'practitioners of *mantras*'.

[209] A kind of fireplace where cypress leaves and other herbs, which are considered healing and purifying as well as aromatic, are burned. The smoke that is produced purifies individuals and their environment from negativities and illnesses.

[210] Skr. *chittopada*, the altruistic commitment to practise the Dharma in order to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment, never abandoning *samsara* until it has been

completely emptied.

[211] Tib. *yi dwags*, a class of beings who are condemned by their karma to suffer from hunger and thirst. They are represented with huge stomachs and extremely narrow throats, so that not even the smallest particle of food or drink can pass through them. The karmic cause of this reincarnation is attachment to what the mind erroneously considers to be real.

[212] One of the deities that are considered to be the protectors of humans and their families, in particular the protector of the male force (see R. de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 237, 256).

[213] See note 122.

[214] Tib. *dPal zla gsang thig le*, see note 118.

[215] Tib. *rDo rje snying po rgyan gyi rgyud chen mo*.

[216] Tib. *Phyag rdo* or *Phyag na rdo rje*.

[217] Tib. *rDo rje ganda ri*.

[218] Tib. *gShin rje gshed*.

[219] Tib. *rTa mgrin*.

[220] Tib. *Nag po chen po*.

[221] Tib. *Ma mo bdun*. All the *tantras* mentioned in this paragraph are listed in the catalogue of the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*, the main collection of Nyingmapa *tantras*.

[222] *dGes rdo rje* in the text, but it is more commonly known as *dGyes rdo rje*.

[223] Tib. *dPal mchog dang po*.

[224] Tib. *gSang ba 'dus pa'i man ngag*.

[225] Tharanata is talking about worldly Dakinis, in this case.

[226] Tib. *ye shes pa*, the immaterial *phur bu* created by the Master's meditation.

[227] See note 176.

[228] Tib. *Zhi ba sbas pa*.

[229] Taranatha may be referring to texts written by someone not qualified enough or to false *termas*. Padmasambhava himself predicted that besides the authentic *termas* there would be false ones as well. With respect to this in G. Changchub - N. Nyingpo, *op. cit.*, note 105, it is stated, "It is said (see Tulku Thondup, *Hidden Teachings of Tibet*) that sometimes false *termas* are discovered, the product of evil-intentioned persons in the past who made powerful aspirations to corrupt the *terma* teachings. It also happens that other people, without spiritual accomplishment but inspired by evil influences, produce apparently great and beneficial works, which nevertheless are incapable of leading to enlightenment. In Tibet, all newly discovered Treasures were for this reason verified and checked by acknowledged masters.

[230] i. e. Padmasambhava.

[231] A Lama of the bKa' bryud pa tradition.





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