



Buddhism and State in Seventeenth-Century Tibet: Cosmology and Theology in the Works of Sangyé Gyatso

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Buddhism and State in Seventeenth-Century Tibet:
Cosmology and Theology in the Works of Sangyé Gyatso

A dissertation presented

by

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Abstract

This dissertation studies works of the Desi Sangyé Gyatso (1653–1705), a prolific and influential Tibetan statesman. Its main sources are texts by Sangyé Gyatso and, to a lesser extent, by the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617–82). The Dalai Lama was the highest authority of the Ganden Phodrang government, founded in 1642. Sangyé Gyatso was his lieutenant and took control upon the latter's death. During his tenure as ruler, Sangyé Gyatso made major intellectual and practical contributions to this Tibetan Buddhist state. He wrote at length about the ruler's authority and the goals of the state. His ideas developed in close conversation with Buddhist texts, concepts, and practices, leading to novel reformulations of well-traveled ideas, while also informing court practices, rituals, and architecture.

Though famous as a politician, Sangyé Gyatso's thinking about Buddhism and state has received less attention in scholarship. This project sheds light on several of his texts, both in the interest of fostering further study and to suggest alternative possibilities for thinking about religion and politics, beyond exposing the mechanisms of power. Over six chapters, this dissertation highlights three major productions of Sangyé Gyatso's rule: a model for public speaking, a holiday to commemorate the Dalai Lama, and a new palace built in Lhasa. It argues for the direct participation of cosmological and theological discourses and their related practices in the work of situating, articulating, and realizing a Buddhist state.

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TECHNICAL NOTE

All Tibetan names in the dissertation are spelled phonetically. The bibliography and bibliographical references, and technical terms in parentheses, are transliterated using the Wylie system. Tibetan texts that recur frequently are referred to with English titles corresponding to their abbreviated titles (usually after convention). Full transliterated titles of all Tibetan works and authors are given in the bibliography. For the reader's convenience, the most frequently consulted texts by Sangyé Gyatso are listed here, along with their short transliterated titles:

Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama (Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho'i rnam thar)

Bouquet of Pearls (Mu tig chun po)

Clear Mirror (Dwangshel me long)

Dukūla (Supplement to the Autobiography of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Du kū la'i gos bzang)

Elixir for the Ear (Rna ba'i bcud len)

Lhasa Circuit Survey (Lha sa skor tshad)

New Year's Speechmaking (Lo gsar 'bel gtam)

Prayer for a Marvelous Age (Rmad byung bskal pa ma)

Tomb Inventory ('Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag)

Worship Assembly Instructions (Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs)

Yellow Vaidurya (Vaidūrya ser po)

CHAPTER ONE.
BUDDHISM AND STATE AS A STUDY OF COSMO-MORAL ORDER
TOPIC AND OVERALL APPROACH

This dissertation is a study of Buddhism and state in seventeenth-century Tibet, especially as documented and enacted by the ruler Sangyé Gyatso (1653–1705). Its main sources are texts authored by Sangyé Gyatso; as well as a smaller number by his predecessor and mentor, the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617–82). It focuses on three major productions in which Sangyé Gyatso played a leading role: a new model for official public speaking, a new holiday to commemorate the fifth Dalai Lama, and a new palace built in Lhasa to house the Dalai Lamas.

The fifth Dalai Lama was the first ruler of the Ganden Phodrang government, begun in 1642. Sangyé Gyatso was the scion of a local aristocratic family, groomed for rule from an early age by the Dalai Lama himself. In 1679, he was designated as “Desi” (*sde srid*), the highest office of the Tibetan government under the Dalai Lama's authority. During the latter's decline, Sangyé Gyatso increasingly assumed responsibility for all aspects of governance. He took complete control upon the Dalai Lama's death in 1682 and oversaw the selection and upbringing of the sixth Dalai Lama, Tshangyang Gyatso (1683–1706?). He is especially famous (or infamous) for having lead the conspiracy to conceal that death, ostensibly following the fifth Dalai Lama's own instructions, and with approval of the state oracle as well. Sangyé Gyatso's influence reached its apogee in the waning years of the seventeenth century. Almost immediately afterwards, everything very quickly came apart. One by one, he fell out with the Qing court, the Tibetan government's Qośot Mongol patrons, and even with the sixth Dalai Lama. Eventually he was ousted from power and killed.¹ Lhasang Khan, leader of the Qośots, assumed

¹ On the life of Sangyé Gyatso, see Richardson 1980; Wang 1980 (in Chinese); Yamaguchi 1999; Nor brang O rgyan 2006: 233–41 (in Tibetan); and on the aftermath of his death, Sperling 2014. For Sangyé Gyatso's own words on the circumstances of his birth and his deeds in life, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 818–39; for a brief biography of Sangyé Gyatso by one of his contemporaries, see Dza ya Paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las 1981, vol. 4: 165b–74b.

control in Lhasa (with Qing support) and launched a tumultuous new era of Tibetan government, effectively marking the end the Ganden Phodrang's first flourishing and confident (perhaps overconfident) independence under the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso.

In the roughly two decades between his ascent to power and eventual downfall, Sangyé Gyatso's literary output was immense. That literature calls for scholarly attention because many of these texts were closely tied to major productions of Sangyé Gyatso's reign. They dictated or described new practices, ceremonies, and buildings, and enacted particular ways of speaking and writing about government. Moreover, they remain almost entirely unstudied in scholarship. Sangyé Gyatso's corpus has factored only incidentally in major narratives about seventeenth-century Tibetan political history—narratives which, in general, have not been reticent to discern motives behind the fifth Dalai Lama's and Sangyé Gyatso's deeds, nor to pass judgment about the usefulness of Buddhism for the project of rule. The focus here will be on a select number of texts authored in the years after the Dalai Lama's death and before the enthronement of the sixth Dalai Lama in 1697. These texts offer an incredible resource for thinking about Buddhism and state in both theoretical and practical dimensions. They balance deep and at times critical engagements with a received tradition (including texts, concepts, and practices) alongside authoritative and prescriptive statements on government. They reference scriptures, prophecies, prayers, and rituals; speak of doctrinal concepts like karma, myriad realms of existence, and goals like bodhisattva-hood and buddhahood; and employ techniques and tropes based in traditions of scriptural interpretation and commentary. They also envisioned the Ganden Phodrang as a Buddhist state, discussing the nature of the ruler, the aims of rule, and the formal characteristics and values of political order. Moreover, their production was closely tied to new events, practices, and buildings. The task of this dissertation is to explore this evident co-determination of Buddhism with a specific political project. More precisely, it is to read Sangyé Gyatso's texts to think about cosmological and theological discourses, and the works they informed, in the light of one another.

The scope of attention is therefore narrow: this study restricts itself to a few aspects of one Buddhist state at one moment in its history. However, the conclusions drawn on that basis are meant to have a longer reach. They may showcase some unique or unexpected refractions of ideas and concerns that are well-traveled—implicating basic questions about the nature and source of authority; the relationship between the office and person of ruler; the criteria for evaluating success; and the aspirations of an ideal state. At the same time, it is hoped that these soundings in Tibetan history may occasion reflection on the reading practices and theoretical presuppositions that inform thinking about Buddhism more generally.

TWO APPROACHES TO STUDYING BUDDHISM AND STATE

From the outset it is important to clarify my intentions regarding the title of this dissertation. Its terms are meant both constructively and critically. The aim is not just to learn about Sangyé Gyatso's thought in a narrow historical context, but to let it speak to our thinking about Buddhism, meant here in the specific sense of what Frank Reynolds and Charles Hallisey have called "the scholar's unique vision of Buddhism as a pan-Asian tradition."² Buddhism, in this sense, is hardly static or monolithic and exhibits patterns that transcend boundaries of culture, language, and region. Indeed, rulers across Asia have thought and acted "Buddhistically," one might say, about the nature of the ruler and the goals of rule. What we find in seventeenth-century Tibet is very much part of that conversation. At the same time, a government like the Ganden Phodrang and a ruler like Sangyé Gyatso participated uniquely in the larger life of the Buddhist tradition precisely because of the context-dependent imperatives of their thinking politically about it. Reading Sangyé Gyatso's texts, one encounters many familiar ideas, but also novel formulations that may help us to see such patterns better, or differently.

² Reynolds and Hallisey 1987: 5.

Of course, the challenge is to remain self-conscious of how “Buddhism” itself, as an organizing convention with importance for our own conversations, shapes or even limits what we stand to learn by studying the texts and practices of another world. Recognizing that challenge is less a matter of definition, than a call for sensitivity to the practices that cluster around the concept and determine how one sorts and interprets the data. Here I confess that I find the adjective less problematic than the noun, in terms of the influence each exerts on reading and interpretation. In that spirit, I will indeed speak of a “Buddhist state” as a historical phenomenon, but invoke “Buddhism” only in reference to our own academic discourse, in the sense just described (“the scholar’s unique vision”). My reservations mainly involve the narrower usage of Buddhism to name a species of religion (hence something categorically opposed to politics). There are of course other ways that Buddhism is productively invoked in a more general cultural or civilizational sense; but for the purposes of this project I have found that another term—“cosmo-moral order”—fits my aims better. It is through attention to cosmo-moral order that I seek to learn about Buddhism and state, as will be discussed below.

To clarify: I think we may cautiously but helpfully speak of a Buddhist state by the very basic criterion that it perceived and conducted itself in terms of some relationship to the person or the idea of a buddha. In the case of Sangyé Gyatso's works, that relationship is impossible to miss. When it comes to “Buddhism” on the other hand, at this point one hardly needs to rehash the limitations of reducing it to a single ordering principle (like religion), nor the legacy of the world-religious concept standing behind the academic field of Buddhist Studies.³ My hesitation stems from a more specific reason, one

³ The contours of the basic problem, the importance of retaining a general sense of cumulative tradition in scholarship, and an overview of various strategies that scholars have adopted, are succinctly stated in Reynolds and Hallisey 1987: 3–6. Regarding the so-called invention of the category of “Buddhism,” I only wish to add that acknowledging the truth of that history is not automatically to concede that Buddhism is entirely a European phenomenon, nor to say that Tibetans, like many others, did not have their own ways of conceiving and theorizing it as well—even with lines of filiation into our own understanding. But a history of the concept would be a very different project. One recent example for how to perform intellectual history in a way that remains attentive to the valences of “Buddhism,” including both its usefulness in a general sense, and as a concept in conversation with myriad forms of knowledge in Tibet, is Gyatso 2015, especially 34–39, 64–80, 96–102, 403–7.

which, again, regards how such choices enable and constrain our own practices. The risk in speaking of Buddhism and state is of circumscribing the possibilities in advance by the far narrower task of studying “Buddhism” as it relates to the political project. Such would be to delimit Buddhism and then explain its precise *role* in this other arena—what it is, what it is good for, what is accomplished by using it, and by whom, with what motivations. While such questions can be interesting and informative, they are limiting in other respects, as I will discuss below. Above all the aim is to avoid being boxed in by this instrumental logic.

My starting position is simply to agree—as is basically undisputed—that ideas, rituals, practices, texts, symbol systems, etc., tied to buddhas have long been a resource for rulers of Tibet, including this Ganden Phodrang government, especially during the roughly sixty years of efflorescence from its founding up to Sangyé Gyatso's death. One cannot talk about this era of Tibetan history without also somehow coming to terms with Buddhism. But does that obligation necessarily entail delineating an object and defining its role within the world we are studying? Very often, doing so means speaking of religion and politics and above all the interactions between the two. Indeed, the impression that the Ganden Phodrang is best explained by some conflation of religion and politics is nearly as old as this government itself. The Jesuit missionaries Grueber and D'Orville, who reached Lhasa in the lifetime of the fifth Dalai Lama and produced some of the earliest notes from a foreign perspective, immediately compared the Dalai Lama to the Pope and cast the Ganden Phodrang as a sort of “Romish” caesaropapism.⁴ The Jesuits might have objected more to the worship of a false god; but it is the apparent takeover of state by church that became this government's definitive feature (or problem). The label has never entirely come unstuck. It is said that a “confusion between two types of power,” the religious

⁴ Thus: “veneration due only to the vicar of Christ on earth, the Pope of Rome, is transferred to the heathen worship of savage nations, like all the other mysteries of Christianity. The Devil does this with his natural malevolence.” In Kircher 1987: 66. See also the remarks on the Jesuit mission in Astley's *Collection of Voyages*, as recorded in Markham 2010 [1876]: 297.

and the political, defined this government from its founding all the way through the Chinese invasion and takeover in the mid-twentieth century.⁵ Why there need have been any confusion is less clear.

Instead of parsing data according to some prior separation of religion and politics, I advocate an approach to studying Buddhism and state that thinks in terms of what I will call “cosmo-moral order.” This choice opposes what I will generally call an “instrumental” approach, which depends upon that separation and reinforces it in turn. The characteristic of an instrumental approach is that it engages with Buddhism in that specific capacity of doing something to, or being used for, some other, more basic element of reality. Hence the image of an instrument wielded by some motivated agent. Despite offering much explanatory power in a single direction, an instrumental approach teaches very little in other respects. It can speak confidently about Buddhism but only by relegating the concept to a secondary status, insofar as the aim is to look through this data to uncover a more fundamental project, like acquiring and securing power. As I will repeatedly demonstrate, signs of an instrumental approach are pervasive in thinking about Buddhism and state in Tibet, though often in the form of a habit or a casual preference rather than a self-conscious method.

A study of cosmo-moral order is at its heart a constructive project. In simplest terms, it starts from a question of where, not what: where one is standing when they think and act, not what Buddhism is and what it is good for. The aim is to ask how ideas, texts, and practices were situated within their world, how they articulated intelligible and purposeful courses of action within that world. The advantage of thinking in such terms is to add clarity and complexity. It demands sustained attention to the intricate details of texts and practices, to an extent that exceeds the capacities (or interests) of an explanation built upon utilitarian or functionalist assumptions. Indeed, what I am calling an instrumental approach resembles a variety of functionalism in that it reduces cultural forms to ulterior

⁵ Pommaret 2003: xiii.

agendas (albeit motivated agents rather than unconscious social benefits, biological necessity, economic determinants, and so on).⁶ Both categories of religion and politics also share a commonsense proclivity for a motivational framework. By now it is well known, as Donald Lopez and Robert Orsi among others have pointed out, that religion has a long history of being construed in terms of belief. Nor is it hard to see how politics (as what Paul Ricoeur deems “the sum total of man’s relations in connection with power”) lends itself to notions of utility and calculated decision-making.⁷ The two terms work hand in hand, granting a neat symmetry to the idea of Buddhism as the natural handmaiden of political power and its agendas. Political subjects would then be cast in the role of pious believers; and their rulers, the calculating political agents who manipulate them (or at best, believers themselves—in which case politics defers to those behind the throne). As a result, a government’s appeals to concepts, symbols, rituals, objects, practices, and so on, appear as efforts to harness belief towards the acquisition and securing of legitimate domination. Once parsed and classified in this way, the data more or less explains itself. All that is really left to do is connect the dots.

From a certain point of view, the choice to emphasize “cosmo-moral order” may therefore seem like a categorical refusal of “Buddhism” or “religion” as the right concepts for naming and explaining the data. That is not wrong, at least insofar as I will try to avoid using those terms functionally. More to the point, this dissertation is not a study of the usefulness of Buddhism for political projects. But nor does it demonstrate how Tibet’s seventeenth-century rulers constructed or deployed concepts of their

⁶ My criticisms are influenced primarily by Sahlins 1976, which addresses itself to a much greater scope of Marxist and utilitarian theories of culture within anthropology and the social sciences. Sahlins grouped such theories under the heading of “practical reason;” the critique of instrumental logic is a recurrent theme. I am also acknowledging a distinction between instrumentalism and functionalism in the spirit of the latter’s narrower Durkheimian sense, which could not be instrumental insofar as it depends on misrecognition, a point I take from Mary Douglas; see Douglas 1986: 32–43. For reasons that would require lengthier discussion, anthropological and sociological functionalisms of the sort that Sahlins and Douglas engaged have made less of a mark on the study of Tibet than perhaps on other areas of Asia. Hence my focus only on the instrumental approach (and its pet term, legitimation).

⁷ Lopez 1998; Orsi 2011; Ricoeur 2007: 91

own which we might justifiably call “Buddhism” or “religion” (however interesting that project would be). More modestly it asks how these rulers situated themselves and their works within a certain kind of world. Its primary concern, therefore, is how best to understand those works in the light of the texts through which they are studied, and above all in close conversation with the attentions, arguments, concepts, and intellectual practices encountered in those texts. Nevertheless—indeed, for that very reason—the choice to think in terms of cosmo-moral order is meant exactly to pose an argument about religion: how it ought (and ought not) to be studied, and even more importantly, why it is crucial in thinking about a Buddhist state not to instrumentalize or otherwise explain away so-called religion as supervenient on politics. It may not even be going too far to say that the whole point is to argue for the utter centrality of the *study* of religion to the study of Buddhism and state. For the alternative I am advocating demands close attention to data that is otherwise historicized, instrumentalized, or avoided altogether, for the very reason that it appears religious rather than political. Where an instrumental approach names and demarcates religion, it does so only to eliminate it or rewrite it on other terms. To study cosmo-moral order is to insist on the irreducible and untranslatable participation of cosmological and theological discourses and practices in the very work of situating, articulating, and realizing the ideals and imperatives of a Buddhist state.

This term “cosmo-moral order” is borrowed from the work of the Indologist Ronald Inden.⁸ Inden not infrequently invoked this idea in a sustained effort to better understand the knowledges and imperatives according to which agents (both individual and complex) in medieval India actively participated in the making and remaking of their world. That concept of the “active” is also important for our considerations here (and hopefully one can already see how a conception of Buddhism—or religion—as *instrument* shuts down that possibility from the outset). Inden was responding to a variety

⁸ Inden 1990; Inden 2006. Another influence has been Stanley Tambiah's reflections on cosmology and its relationship to ritual; Tambiah 1970: 32–52.

of predominant functionalisms in Indology, which in his view failed to “take seriously” what agents had to say about their own world-ordering activities and their purposes.⁹ He argued that actions such as the writing of texts, the performance of rituals, the building of temples, the reading of omens, and so on, were not determined by—hence *expressive* of—one or another fixed essence (such as a caste society, a form of kingship, or an essentialized Hinduism). These were active, not expressive, processes.¹⁰ They involved situated knowledge of an order which they endeavored to constitute within their world. For understanding, Inden pointed especially to theological and cosmological discourses accessible in texts but dismissed by many social-scientific methodologies.

In this spirit, my own study of Sangyé Gyatso's texts and works likewise endeavors to see an active rather than a merely expressive world: a world in which humans situate themselves, understand themselves, reflect on what is possible and desirable, and act effectively in the aim of ordering their world. To think in these terms is to try to see the data within its own world, and all that comes with it, rather than explain it according to universal concepts (of history, ontology, agency, etc.)—a lesson I have also taken from Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*.¹¹ A cosmo-moral order may be structured by metaphysical and moral principles; it may also be enchanted, populated by other realms and nonhuman beings. The notion of “order” denotes more than a passive background or inert nature, but less than a rigid structure or fixed and all-determining static cosmology. It conveys a dual sense of

⁹ Inden 2006: 207–8.

¹⁰ In this regard, Inden (1990) employed “agency” as a critical term, albeit not in the same sense as others who characterize their work as an effort to “restore” agency—which often implies, among other things, moving away from political centers and hegemonic discourses, and towards geographically or socially “peripheral” objects of study (Elverskog 2006 is a good example). Inden focused on the study of polity (including the works of kings) and opposed agency to “essence.” Thus, he wished to avoid “displacing agency on to essences.” Agency denotes, in his words, “the realized capacity of people to act effectively upon their world and not only to know about or give personal or intersubjective significance to it. That capacity is the power of people to act purposively and reflectively, in more or less complex inter-relationships with one another, to reiterate and remake the world in which they live, in circumstances where they may consider different courses of action possible and desirable, though not necessarily from the same point of view.” Inden 1990: 23.

¹¹ See e.g. Chakrabarty 2000: 28–29, 74–76.

both *situatedness* and *intelligibility*: the capacity to know where one is standing, in relation to what, and to develop meaningful courses of action on that basis. One last caveat: if cosmo-moral order is represented, known, and produced through human discourses, it may also exceed them. It is also imperative to recognize the larger openings within which humans situate themselves, in negotiation with which they also come to terms with their own limitations and possibilities. Hence my attention throughout to discourses that invoke worlds and forms of life irreducible to the human; hence also the centrality for this project of the theoretical resources of the study of religion.

The term “cosmo-moral order” covers some of the same terrain as concepts perhaps more familiar to the discipline, such as Charles Taylor's notions of “background” and “social imaginary,” or Pierre Bourdieu's theory of “doxa.” Both authors point to something before, behind, or beneath the concrete manifestations of religion and politics—not an inert, materialist world of nature, but a naturalized world of symbolic action, one whose principles shape thoughts and practices even as they are shaped by them in turn. Taylor speaks of “the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others...and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations,” beyond which, he adds, “stands some notion of a moral or metaphysical order, in the context of which the norms and ideals make sense.” Both call attention to the relationship between a contingent political order and the broader conceptual or symbolic schemes that it manifests. Bourdieu insisted that “the theory of knowledge is a dimension of political theory because the specifically symbolic power to impose the principles of the construction of reality—in particular, social reality—is a major dimension of political power.” He pithily described doxa as “answering 'yes' to a question I have not asked.” (I will come back to this intriguing idea at the end of this chapter.) Just like Inden, these authors wished to do justice to the world already at work before something like politics or religion takes shape; and

whose “ideals and norms,” as Taylor put it, are embedded in and reproduced through practices.¹² Both authors also demonstrate—at times critically—how ways of life that may differ greatly from our own could have been intelligible and even desirable. Another crucial point of overlap is that all three authors emphasized (albeit in different ways) the major role in history of elite or hegemonic discourses for shaping broader understandings—in the general spirit of Marx's dictum that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.”¹³ Taylor highlighted intellectuals like Grotius and Locke for their role in shaping an entire social imaginary; whereas Bourdieu argued for the “state construction of the principles of construction that social agents apply to their world.” Both designations are apt for Sangyé Gyatso. He was a formidable intellectual who moved in a learned and courtly milieu; he also wielded considerable power for more than two decades. He was ideally positioned to articulate and enact ruling ideas in the interest of Tibet as a collective whole. And articulate he did, across thousands of pages of text, and with human bodies, gold and grain, and brick and stone.

To be sure, acknowledging this hegemonizing aspect of cosmo-moral order also raises the question of how an order expressed and manifested by a ruling elite ought to be understood as a form of ideology. Indeed, my appeal to Marx seems to bring us full circle back to the instrumental approach I started by criticizing. Once the connection to power is acknowledged, it is a short jump to conclude that Buddhism simply offered the register of distortion for those wielding power over the pious masses. I wish to acknowledge the intimate link between order and ideology, but without making that jump. There may be alternative theoretical possibilities for thinking about ideology in ways inextricable from the efforts of rulers to situate themselves and act intelligibly and effectively within their world—hence also entangled with critical and aspirational possibilities, as I will repeatedly demonstrate. For now let

¹² On the social imaginary see Taylor 2004: 23–30. On Bourdieu's understanding of *doxa* in general see Bourdieu 1977: 164–71; and regarding the state in particular, Bourdieu 2014: 173–75, 182–85.

¹³ Marx 1970: 64.

me simply end by saying that I prefer to think with Inden's term, although it has received relatively less attention in the study of religion,¹⁴ both because of the affinities between Indian and Tibetan cosmologies and the basic moral and metaphysical order they describe, and also to acknowledge the degree to which his thinking influenced my own, and the continuing relevance of his critical interventions for bringing the study of religion to bear on the study of politics in Asian history.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

This study consists of five chapters (not including the current introductory chapter). They focus on three major contributions of the early Ganden Phodrang government that were the direct result of Sangyé Gyatso's rule, alongside their affiliated texts. These are the introduction of a new model for public speaking; the institution of a new holiday commemorating the fifth Dalai Lama; and the construction of the Potala palace, which housed the Dalai Lamas (live and dead) as well as many of the administrative and ceremonial operations of the Ganden Phodrang government.

Chapter Two, “Celebrating the World,” studies Sangyé Gyatso's model for public speaking in an official capacity. Speeches were a frequent occurrence at the Tibetan court. They were closely tied to scenes of celebration, most emblematically within the great hall of the new palace. I read this practice as one example of how an ideal order could be not only named and insisted upon, but indeed made visible, en-vised, within a controlled environment. Studying speeches calls attention to some specific ideals and norms of Sangyé Gyatso's government, albeit in their distance from actual life (life outside this space of celebration, that is) and not simply as “founding assumptions,” to borrow an expression from Michael Puett.¹⁵ That productive tension between the world as it might be, and as it is, will be a recurring theme. In studying speeches, we encounter two major cosmo-moral concepts: the

¹⁴ Examples of work in this vein include Davis 1991, Hevia 1995, and Zito 1997.

¹⁵ In Das et al. 2014: 221.

vital dispensation (*bstan srid*), and the Perfected Age (*rdzogs ldan*). “Dispensation” names the waxing and waning (*dar nub*) of a buddha's legacy in a finite and corrupting human world. I argue that this concept played a central role in ordering the world under Ganden Phodrang rule: it was a way to define, evaluate, and relate polities to one another. The Perfected Age was an eschatological ideal, the first of four ages of time whose succession was marked by moral decline and decreasing quality of life. A Perfected Age corresponded to the flourishing of the vital dispensation. It was equally a state of peace and a mood of festivity and pleasure. This ideal became most perceptible precisely in the exuberant atmosphere that eloquent speechmaking occupied and helped conjure into being.

Chapter Three, “How to Purify a Dead God,” explores the theory and design of the Great Worship Assembly (*tshogs mchod chen mo*). Sangyé Gyatso conceived and designed this week-long official holiday to commemorate the fifth Dalai Lama's death and purify his karma by an act of collective worship. This holiday furnishes us with the perfect opportunity to consider Sangyé Gyatso's theory of Buddhist kingship, in both its divine aspect (buddhas and bodhisattvas) and human nature (as conditioned by karma), but above all in the incongruity between those two. Again, such ideas about divinity are to be treated not so much as founding assumptions, but as normative ideals self-consciously contrasted with ordinary lived experience. We will look especially at the elaborate procession (*ser phreng*) that concluded this holiday. Every detail of that procession was carefully set down in Sangyé Gyatso's text justifying and prescribing this holiday (summarized here as an appendix). I place those details into conversation with their theoretical foundations, to assess how this holiday participated in envisioning the Dalai Lama as somehow both divine ruler and mortal man.

Chapters Four, Five, and Six turn to the Potala palace. The reason for so many chapters is that the palace was built in two stages, first under the fifth Dalai Lama, then under Sangyé Gyatso. The two portions differed not only in the circumstances of their production, but also architecturally and, I will argue, symbolically. To understand Sangyé Gyatso's contribution it is also crucial to situate it in the

longer history of the site and the idea. Given the palace's name and location, there is widespread consensus that it played a major symbolic role for this government. The palace clearly had much to do with that core idea of a relationship between the Dalai Lama and the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (who resided on a mountain called “Potala”). I wholeheartedly agree, but take that assumption in a different direction. In Chapter Four, “Making Sense of the Palace,” I assess past scholarship and the history of the site, both as physical destination and object of literary attention. I argue that the palace has been too readily interpreted as an instrument of political legitimation: a real physical foundation of power onto which an imaginary religious meaning was grafted to secure domination and ensure compliance. This sort of interpretation bases itself on a stark separation of the palace's material and symbolic dimensions. I am more interested in the symbolic capacities of materiality itself. To that end, the last two chapters study the earlier and later portions of the palace, known as the “White Palace” and “Red Palace,” respectively. Chapter Five asks how the White Palace was imagined, designed, and used. It introduces some of the fifth Dalai Lama's own writings on the palace, alongside its actual physical arrangement. Chapter Six turns to the Red Palace that Sangyé Gyatso planned and built to house the fifth Dalai Lama's reliquary monument and the young sixth Dalai Lama. Based on Sangyé Gyatso's own writings, I will show how this extension of the palace both literally and figuratively displaced its predecessor, elevating the Dalai Lama into the palace's organizing principle.

To sum up, I will ask why these acts, rituals, and buildings were put together the way that they were. In other words, I treat them as situated and intelligible acts, participants in cosmo-moral order, ordered and ordering. The wager is that doing so will increase our knowledge of the Ganden Phodrang government by thinking beyond the narrow scope of political machination. It will raise questions about goals and aspirations, the problems to which this government responded, the order it envisioned, and how it went about realizing that order in its world. In the process it will reveal a good deal of specific information about what rulers like Sangyé Gyatso thought and did in their own texts and practices.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the present chapter will be devoted to sketching out in more detail some of the ramifications of my theoretical and methodological commitments. We will continue to explore what it would mean to take the study of cosmo-moral order as the basis for studying Buddhism and state, and why I see shortcomings to any approach that separates religion and politics from the outset. This will be capped by a brief case study, in the form of a careful reading from one of Sangyé Gyatso's early texts. That example will flesh out my approach and showcase some of the major themes that will recur throughout the remaining chapters.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS 1: STUDYING SANGYÉ GYATSO

The benefits of turning to Tibet to think about Buddhism and state, and by extension the larger categories of the religious and the political, are those that come from studying another world to think differently about our own. I mean “another world” literally. Unlike Sangyé Gyatso, I do not live on the continent of Jambudvīpa, nor do I parcel time into epochs of a buddha’s dispensation; I never make offerings to spirits called *dākiṇīs* nor do I trust omen and prophecy to measure the fit of my actions to an invisible karmic ideal. Despite these radical differences, we may say, after Lorenzo Simpson, that his world is “orthogonal” to our own, that it shows us “differences from which we can learn.”¹⁶ We also have more than a little in common: like Sangyé Gyatso, I too am deeply interested in the world's propensity for appearing other than it is; the aims of human knowledge and creativity; the reality of ritual and performance; and the limits of human life in relation to what exceeds it. I read these texts from Tibet as an edifying example that speaks directly, if sometimes strangely, to issues that are close to home, and which implicate our thinking about religion and how to study it.

¹⁶ Simpson says, “the importance of the humanities in our civic culture is due to their revealing...the full measure of worlds and epochs that are orthogonal to ours, worlds that represent differences from which we can learn and that provide a perspective from which our own strangeness can come into view, enabling a more reflective and critical awareness of who we are.” Quoted in Roberts 2013: 16.

A more direct and tangible contribution is simply to add to our burgeoning understanding of Tibetan history and Tibetan Buddhism. Reading Sangyé Gyatso's texts immediately puts us on new terrain. The Ganden Phodrang government itself is still understudied, including its earliest manifestations, before the tumultuous conquests and reconquests and changes in leadership that marked the early eighteenth century, and the sustained Chinese involvement at the highest levels thereafter. There is simply so much more to learn that the subject will long remain wanting of further attention, not just in the study of religion but also economy, society, and material culture (just to get us started). The same holds for Sangyé Gyatso, a standout figure who made massive intellectual and practical contributions to his world but has received limited attention in the histories of Tibet written over the last century, which often emphasize conflict, conquest, and succession over particular ideas and works. As a politician, Sangyé Gyatso is certainly a famous figure; but beyond the broad strokes of his rise and fall it is hard to gain a clearer picture. He is somehow all too well known and yet remains elusive.

I can think of a few reasons why this might be the case. The dearth of attention is due in no small part to the scanty circulation of many of his texts (most were carved and printed in the print-house in Zhol, the government micro-city attached to the Potala palace).¹⁷ The restricted reproduction of his corpus probably had not a little to do with his ignominious defeat. He was effectively making blueprints for a state henceforth run by other people, some of them his opponents. It probably also doesn't help that he was a layperson rather than a monk, nor that many of these texts do not rest squarely within conventional Tibetan genre labels. Another obstacle lies in the myriad knowledges required for their careful study, well above and beyond the doctrinal, philosophical, and ritual (i.e., largely monastic rather than lay) knowledges that have long constituted the mainstream of the field of

¹⁷ An important early survey of many of his writings, based mainly on nineteenth-century Tibetan bibliography, is Lange 1976. See also Schaeffer 2006 for a list of some major texts and their dates of composition. For one of Sangyé Gyatso's own lists of his major compositions, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 828–29.

Tibetan Buddhist studies (at least with respect to religion). The intellectual ground covered in Sangyé Gyatso's texts includes—in addition to doctrinal matters—administration and “government-ese” (*gzhung skad*); astronomy, astrology, and mathematics; practical and theoretical discourses of healing; poetics and related literary subdisciplines; material culture and iconometry; Kālacakra tantrism (which, in my limited experience, merits a field of knowledge unto itself); arrangements and measurements of time and space; and so on.¹⁸ Some of his texts emphasize just one or the other, but the encyclopedic *Tomb Inventory* (*Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag*), to cite just one example, includes all of the above and more. I do not claim to be expert in any of these knowledges. Far from it. I have struggled greatly with his writings and have not yet been able to incorporate some of them into this project for want of the necessary time and experience to make sense of all their details. Sangyé Gyatso's field-changing works on medicine and astronomy, and to a lesser extent his contributions to theories of knowledge and aesthetics, are now becoming clearer thanks to excellent recent scholarship.¹⁹ I hope to make some contribution regarding his role in government and the thinking that accompanied it, primarily by introducing information from several texts, all authored during his tenure as ruler, that have received virtually no attention. I do so with a slant that some may find much more religious than

¹⁸ It is acknowledged that in many cases Sangyé Gyatso leaned heavily on the work of predecessors (such as Darpa Lotsāwa for poetics, or Khedrup Norsang Gyatso for Kālacakra exegesis) even while keeping most of the credit for himself. Whether this is sufficient ground for questioning, as some have, if Sangyé Gyatso was the “actual author” of his own texts (so too the fifth Dalai Lama), I have some reservations. (See Smith 2001: 243; also Smith 1969, vol. 1 addenda: 102 and passing remarks therein). Any such claim requires careful consideration of the idea of authorship itself. The Dalai Lama and the Desi certainly moved in a coterie of intellectuals who were less famous but no less skilled in poetics, grammar, medicine, astronomy, and so on, who were their teachers, and by whose ideas they were probably influenced (as with any teacher-student relationship). It is certainly true that a great deal of what we now call plagiarism is on display. The Desi borrowed liberally, not just from his own writings (as an aside, the fact that identical arguments appear in texts utilizing very disparate forms of knowledge belies the notion that each separate text was authored by one or another disciplinary specialist). For instance, Gyatso (2015) uncovers some shameless cribbing from Zurkhar Lodrö Gyalpo in his medical texts. Still, unattributed borrowing is one thing, ghostwriting another. Even if specific doctrinal arguments were the intellectual property of others, then what about verses of poetry, choices about arrangement, comments on quotations, introductions and colophons, and so on? In some of the Desi's texts, a good portion may consist of quotations, which may indeed have been hunted down by a larger team of assistants (a practice our own institution uses too), but that very fact again suggests that authorship here may have less to do with what is said *per se* than with how the pieces are put together, and to what ends.

¹⁹ On medicine see Gyatso 2015, and on his famous astronomical text *White Vaidurya*, Maurer 2009. For his thinking about knowledge production, see Schaeffer's chapter, “New Scholarship in Tibet 1650–1700,” in Pollock (ed.) 2011.

political (a distinction I reject), in that I am rather reluctant to dismiss out of hand those large swaths of text that seem not to have anything do with more distinct and dramatic instances of victory or defeat. I am inclined to let Sangyé Gyatso's own choices and attentions guide mine.

In talk of politics especially, Sangyé Gyatso is often portrayed as a kind of power-hungry arch-politician, a veritable Frank Underwood of Lhasa. True or untrue, this assessment crowds out other facets of his literary and intellectual persona. At the very least, it has not included (or called for) any demonstrable engagement with the myriad texts in which he outlined his arguments, methods, and priorities, including the aforementioned *Tomb Inventory*, as well as other texts we will consider here, namely, the *New Year's Speechmaking* (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*), the *Worship Assembly Instructions* (*Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*), the *Elixir for the Ear* (*Rna ba'i bcud len*), the *Prayer for a Marvelous Age* (*Rmad byung bskal pa ma*), the *Lhasa Circuit Survey* (*Lha sa skor tshad*), and the *Yellow Vaidurya* (*Vaidūrya ser po*). We are still building up a basic picture, if not of what he thought, at least of what he put in writing, what he chose to say, and how he chose to do so. But I will readily concede that it has certainly not helped Sangyé Gyatso's legacy that his spectacularly unsuccessful efforts to manage the transition between the fifth Dalai Lama, himself, and the young and rebellious sixth Dalai Lama, may have been doomed from the outset by their inauspicious entanglement with the inexorable ascent of the ambitious and vastly more powerful Qing empire. In the Yuan and Ming eras, Tibetan lay and monastic authorities had long sought allegiances with adjacent Mongol polities in Central Asia (conceptualized on the basic paradigm of lay patronage of a Buddhist sangha). Indeed, the Ganden Phodrang government owed its victories in large part to earlier sixteenth-century alliances between the Gelukpa monastic community and Tümed Mongols, elevating the Dalai Lama institution (in tandem with the Oirat line of Altan Khan, and on the model of the thirteenth-century relationship between Phakpa and Qubilai Khan) to a position of great prestige. In the early seventeenth century, more immediate credit was due to the farsighted acumen of the young fifth Dalai Lama's chief minder, the Chakzö (*phyag*

mdzod) Sönam Rabten (who would become the first Desi), and the sweeping military victories of their own powerful patron, the Qośot Mongol ruler Guśri Khan. By the time the seventeenth century drew to a close, the Kangxi emperor's westward expansions into Central Asia and imperial ambitions towards Dzungar, Qośot, and Khalkha polities had embroiled the Ganden Phodrang government and Sangyé Gyatso personally in a web of shifting allegiances among various factions, including within Tibet itself, where Mongol princes lived, studied, worshiped, and became monks.²⁰ Sangyé Gyatso probably did not do himself any favors by how he took sides in these conflicts; nor by how he dealt with the sixth Dalai Lama's heartfelt rejection of the entire institution of sovereignty prepared for him; nor by his handling of the fifth Dalai Lama's death, long kept secret and in blatant disregard of Kangxi; nor by his rivalry with Lhasang Khan, which extended even to debating points of Buddhist doctrine.²¹ The details of Sangyé Gyatso's downfall have been informatively studied by Petech, Yamaguchi, and most importantly Oyunbilig. To make a long story short, Sangyé Gyatso's defeat and execution by Lhasang Khan (with Qing approval) and the latter's takeover of the Dalai Lama institution, after deposing and disappearing the apostate sixth Dalai Lama, followed by decades of occupation and regime changes, threw a giant wrench into the complicated machinery Sangyé Gyatso had spent his entire political career assembling. Some contributions, like the Potala palace, were more capable of withstanding these turbulent forces than others (though it too was sacked by the Dzungars). Sangyé Gyatso's works on

²⁰ Ahmad 1970; Perdue 2005; Shakabpa (tr. Maher) 2010; Schwieger 2014.

²¹ The biography of Jamyang Zhepa includes a revealing anecdote about a quarrel between the Desi and Lhasang Khan, stirred up sometime in 1704, over whether or not Tsongkhapa had accepted the doctrine of a “sambhogakāya endowed with five certainties” (*longs sku nges pa lnga ldan*). The Desi insisted that he did; the Khan insisted that he did not. They put the question to Jamyang Zhepa, who agreed with the Desi's interpretation, to the latter's delight (though also tactfully conceding that the point was only implicit in Tsongkhapa's *Abhisamāyālaṃkāra* commentary, the *Legs bshad gser phreng*). See Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1989: 110; Ngag dbang bkra shis: 94a.

medicine and astronomy especially lived on, but many other texts, carved and printed in Lhasa, faded from the view of all but the most assiduous bibliographers (others also lived on in translation).²²

Another stumbling block is that in the eyes of Chinese authorities, Sangyé Gyatso was (and still is) a villain. Kangxi accused him of double-crossing (欺) the Dalai Lama and ruining (壞) Tsongkhapa's religious tradition; one eighteenth-century account credited him with "throwing Tibet into turmoil" (亂藏).²³ Though this legacy may have been partly of his own making—especially if he was responsible for poisoning Lhasang Khan, as many records suggest—in any case Sangyé Gyatso ended up on the losing side of history.²⁴ The official word in the *Veritable Records of the Qing* is most unfavorable:

When the Dalai Lama died, the Depa hid this matter and conspired to make the Khalkhas and the Oirats kill one another and disturb and harm living beings. He also installed a false (假) Dalai Lama to deceive the public. Moreover, he tried to poison Lhasang [Khan], and drove him out again when he did not die.²⁵

²² For nineteenth-century bibliographical attention to Sangyé Gyatso's texts, see A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho 1974, vol. 7: 420, 497–516; and Klong rdol bla ma Ngag dbang blo bzang 1973: 1400ff. For a 1957 catalog of printed texts kept in Lhasa, see Ngawang Gelek Demo 1970: 169–243.

²³ *Qing sheng zu shi lu* 清聖祖實錄, Kangxi year 35, month 8, jiawu day (Sept. 6, 1696). In *Qing shi lu zang zu shi liao* 清实录藏族史料, vol. 1: 139–40. The latter sentiment is seen e.g. in the 1792 edition of the *Xizang zhi* (西藏誌), apropos the tale of the Samding Dorjé Phakmo, Tibet's oldest and highest female incarnation line, embodying the bodhisattva Vajravārāhī. (The deity was said to have transformed herself into a pig and gone to Tibet in response to the political chaos of the early eighteenth century.) Tibetan accounts attributed that chaos to the Dzungar takeover of Lhasa; earlier Qing accounts blamed Lhasang Khan; here on the other hand it was "when the Dieba Sanjie threw Tibet into turmoil" that the deity went to Tibet (牒巴三節亂藏時, 化借遯去藏地). I owe this reference to Arya Moallem.

²⁴ On the attempted poisoning as reflected in Manchu sources, see Oyunbilig 2008. A crucial Tibetan account is found in the biography of Jamyang Zhepa, then head of Drepung Gomang, who was allegedly able to curtail the illness of the Khan and his countrymen (one later died) using rituals and blessed water. As his biographers have it, Jamyang Zhepa was summoned before the Desi, who appeared nonplussed (*bzhin bsgyur*) and interrogated him curtly: "Some people are saying that the Khan's illness was a poisoning, and that it is now severe; while others are saying that although it was indeed poison, a Gomang lama cured him with initiations and blessed water. What do you know about this?" According to his biographer, Jamyang Zhepa responded with much tact and innuendo: "What sort of illness this was, I do not know. I performed some services, and they say he got better. Whatever the case, if it has happened that the tacit plans and subtle aims (*thugs zur spyan zur*) of buddhas and bodhisattvas [like you] have been marred by the ignorance of an ordinary being like myself, then I beseech you to have patience." The Desi, evidently, did not reply. See Ngag dbang bkra shis: 97a–b; also Dkon mchog 'jigs med dbang po 1987: 114.

²⁵ *Qing sheng zu shi lu* 清聖祖實錄, Kangxi year 45, month 12, dinghai day (Jan. 6, 1707). In *Qing shi lu zang zu shi liao* 清实录藏族史料, vol. 1: 185.

After expelling the Dzungars from Lhasa in 1720, the Qing government insinuated itself directly into the Dalai Lama institution by authorizing the young seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso, and installing him in the Potala. By an act of willful forgetting, they initially tried to number him the “sixth” rather than seventh Dalai Lama, thus denying the “false” Tshangyang Gyatso, by association hanging the blame for corrupting the institution on the Desi's neck. More subtly, they gestured to the “Great Fifth” Dalai Lama as a paradigm of Tibet's longstanding and harmonious cooperation under the aegis of Qing rule. Subsequent Dalai Lamas were exhorted to act just as this Great Fifth had once acted. There seems to have been a wish for everyone's memory to simply jump from 1653 (the year of the fifth Dalai Lama's embassy to China) to 1720, with no gap in between. One implication is that Sangyé Gyatso was branded a traitor not just to the Qing, whom he publicly opposed, but also—and more insidiously—to this rewritten Dalai Lama institution, towards which (at least by the evidence of his own writings) he appears to have devoted a major portion of his life's energies (and a good deal of state revenues as well). At least the sixth Dalai Lama acquired a literal second life as a vagabond hero and tantric poet-savant, one of the most beloved figures in Tibetan history. It probably didn't help Sangyé Gyatso's cause that, in a far cry from the romantic sixth Dalai Lama, he is also remembered as having an arrogant demeanor and a tendency to self-promotion. The latter at least is hard not to miss in his writing if one is looking for it. For instance, he was not unwilling to speak of himself in the first person as a bodhisattva, or to egregiously insert what we now call “shout-outs” to himself in prayers and eulogistic texts, among other examples of seeming self-aggrandization. On this point I will simply caution that it is not at all clear that our understanding of this literary milieu and its practices is sufficiently advanced to easily distinguish sense from authorial intent. At any rate, it is not only in China but in the West as well that he has come to be viewed as a self-serving schemer. The Jesuit missionary Ippolito Desideri reached Lhasa a little more than a decade after Sangyé Gyatso's death (thus during the period of Lhasang Khan's martial rule). He saw the Khan as a “courageous prince,” but

wrote disparagingly of the Desi (he calls him the “king of Lhasa”) as “plotting” and “treacherous,” a suspicious man driven by “envy and political jealousy.”²⁶ For all the historical inaccuracies of Desideri's account, we find more or less the same view two centuries later, when Tucci identified the Desi as a “crafty” manipulator who “wished to become the actual master of the State,” with a yen for power, desiring to “emerge from the shadow and...transform the Tibetan State into a really absolute government,” a master of intrigue who ruled as “absolute lord of the country.”²⁷ Tucci does not specify the sources by which he arrived at this portrait, but other major historians have followed his lead.²⁸

True or untrue, this sort of pigeonholing—whether from Tibet, China, or the West—warps reading practices and exacerbates the cynicism with which the study of religion and politics is so easily tainted. Such assessments rebound back onto the sources, as if to furnish evidence for the very instrumentalist assumptions that may have encouraged them in the first place. Let me aver that this dissertation is emphatically not a character study of Sangyé Gyatso nor an attempt to divine what he truly intended or believed. It is more modestly an effort to read Sangyé Gyatso's writings and enter into dialogue with them. I confess I am not all that interested in whether he was a likable person or not. I am interested in Sangyé Gyatso as an intellectual, in what he wrote, the way he posed and solved problems, the knowledges he drew on and shaped in turn. In this regard there is ample space for contribution.

²⁶ Desideri 2010: 243. The most recognizable oversight in Desideri's historical account is that he seems to conflate Guśri Khan's 1642 unification of central Tibet with Lhasang Khan's activities in Lhasa in the early eighteenth century.

²⁷ Tucci 1949: 74, 136.

²⁸ I am fully aware that we stand on Tucci's shoulders. The very fact that his *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* is still widely cited is testament to how good so much of it was. I have chosen Tucci to make my point for that very reason. His sometimes overconfident assessments still hold currency not only among Tibetologists but also Sinologists as well. Petech credits Tucci for his somewhat more modest appraisal of Sangyé Gyatso as “an astute and energetic statesman” who ruled Tibet “with a strong hand;” Petech 1972: 9. Perdue, in his own magisterial work on Qing China, gets his version of Sangyé Gyatso verbatim from Tucci; Perdue 2005: 227–28.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS 2: STUDYING A TIBETAN BUDDHIST STATE

My basic approach, to repeat, is that a study of Buddhism and state should begin from a study of cosmo-moral order, rather than asking how some Buddhism relates to (is used in, expressed by, appropriated for) some political project. Now let us build up this position a little by admitting some of my own assumptions and then seeing where they take us.

The first assumption is that the discourses of a Buddhist state are inextricably caught up in certain ways of thinking about where one is standing, including how the world is ordered and what it means to be human. Knowledges of ruler and rule are always *situated* knowledges. One does not simply rule. One rules here on the continent of Jambudvīpa, at a certain moment in time—in this case, within a degenerate era that ought to turn back over into a new age of fulfillment. My second assumption is that such ideas are not set in granite, that there is more than one way to come to terms with one's situation. In other words, these processes must already involve what Sahlins called “symbolic reason,” which “takes as the distinctive quality of man not that he must live in a material world, circumstances he shares with all organisms, but that he does so according to a meaningful scheme of his own devising... which is never the only one possible.”²⁹ My third assumption is that in this case, as with so many other worlds in human history, that “meaningful scheme” was articulated in cosmological and theological terms. To speak of a state of rule, in other words, entailed speaking of the world in which rule took place, which necessarily included phenomena exceeding the actionable realm of governance, to say nothing of the entire realm of appearances, though they might permeate that realm. And to speak of the ruler entailed speaking of a chain of being including various gods, supernatural beings, and other entities not contained by the world, but which could still exert agency upon it. We may also mention that this government was also demonstrably invested in practices and experiences that we could call

²⁹ Sahlins 1976: viii.

“impossible,” such as visions, omens, prophecies, spirit-posessions, and such ways of acting and knowing likewise irreducible to the human.³⁰ Clearly the terrain I am roughly sketching out here—other worlds, gods and invisible forces, omens, and so on—falls recognizably within the historical purview of the study of religion.

Now let us provisionally accept, for the sake of argument, that it is possible to look at all this data and separate and label the “religious” stuff on one side, and the “political” stuff on the other. It would then appear, based on what I have just described, that the Tibet of this era had thoroughly mixed up the two. Religion got its fingerprints all over the stuff of politics. It is only a small step from there to conclude that something or someone must have worked to bring them together. The evidence starts to look like the result either of strategic manipulation, or else a kind of well-intended but ultimately confused piety. Either a political matter of utility, or a religious matter of belief, depending on one's sympathies. But posing that choice—crafty politicians or gullible Buddhists—tells us very little. It leaves us ill-equipped to understand how texts and the actions they described and prescribed were ever intelligible within their world, beyond just being a weapon or an accident. Sahlins spoke of a “functional blindness to the content and internal relations of the cultural object.”³¹ To study cosmological order is to think about content and internal relations, to pursue what Inden calls “the exploration of these activities in their own right.” In the words of R.G. Collingwood (whom Inden read closely), the aim is to treat the evidence “as something with a positive function in human history, and therefore not a mere evil or error but a thing with its own proper value in its own proper place.”³²

³⁰ The term “impossible” is Jeffrey Kripal's (2010).

³¹ Sahlins 1976: 76. He continues: “The content is appreciated only for its instrumental effect, and its internal consistency is thus mystified as its external utility. Functionalist explanation is a kind of bargain made with the ethnographic reality in which content is exchanged for an ‘understanding’ of it. But a theory ought to be judged as much by the ignorance it demands as by the ‘knowledge’ it affords.”

³² Inden 1990: 21; Collingwood 1946: 77.

It may seem as if this idea-heavy way of approaching an apparently dyadic topic like Buddhism and state grants far more weight to the former term than to the latter. That impression may be unavoidable, because our knowledge of Tibet is largely mediated by the lengthy and intricate contents of texts, and what the texts have to say has everything to do with stuff now largely bundled under the label of Buddhism (especially as a species of religion): deities, other realms, numinous forces, scriptures, rebirth eschatologies, rituals, symbol systems, terms of art, techniques of interpretation, and so on. This dissertation largely consists of the careful reading of texts, sometimes down to the level of the meaning and syntax of words and sentences, meaning that it is also indirectly the product of the philological heritage that has largely shaped our subfield, including my own education in it. Yet when it comes to Tibetan politics (unlike, say, Tibetan philosophy) the arcane details of texts are not always assiduously picked apart under a microscope, but sometimes set aside as irrelevant to worldly concerns of *Realpolitik*, or in a pinch, as unnecessarily ornate cover for some more straightforward off-stage political agenda. Luciano Petech, one of the best Tibetan historians of his generation, lamented that one of his central sources for eighteenth-century history (a biography of the seventh Dalai Lama) was “concerned strictly with religion and its ceremonial,” which made it “rather disappointing for the Western scholar.”³³ For a proper political history, his words suggest, religion is dead weight. I cannot agree. But I must stress that rejecting that view does not entail arguing for the reverse, as if the point were only to reveal that what we thought was political was really religious all along. Thinking in terms of cosmo-moral order dissolves this pseudo-problem by assuming a texture that cannot slice neatly along the joints into categories that are the mirror-image of our own.

One of the main reasons for pedantic insistence on theoretical reflection—on ground already well covered across multiple disciplines—is just that the assumptions from which I am dissenting often

³³ Petech 1972: 2.

circulate at an apparently pre-theoretical or commonsense level. It is rare to come across an explanation of this time and place that lays bare its assumptions about religion and politics or relates them to a larger tradition of thought. More often we are dealing with fragments: passing comments, brief explanations, or confident assertions nevertheless loaded with theoretical commitments. As I see it, one real danger of an instrumental approach is that it encourages this trend. It can masquerade as common sense without rising to the level of an argument that must be named, sourced, and defended. (Less so within the study of religion, where it has eloquent defenders; I will address one below.) One reason for this blitheness may simply be that, as secular moderns, we are predisposed to compartmentalize religion, so that when it turns up where it ought not, it may feel natural to seek out some alternative explanation. Also, at least in America, it can sometimes feel as if cynicism—especially about politics—is something of a default position in our present moment. Whatever the reasons, instrumentalist assumptions also help themselves by hiding and reproducing in the cracks of other projects. They require little sustenance and survive comfortably even at the level of the sentence. Even a straightforward assertion that a certain agent has done certain things, and so accomplished certain results, can end up making all sorts of insinuations about causation and intentionality and hence about political uses of religion. Power, for its part, seems to furnish its own motivation and can justify any number of different means. A relevant example of this sort of innuendo concerns the fifth Dalai Lama's famous identification with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. That relationship between human and divinity was indeed a foundational principle of this government and the order it endeavored to realize. The point is hardly in dispute—though I contend that we do not adequately understand what it meant or what was at stake (see Chapter Three). Nor does anyone doubt that the Dalai Lama successfully retained his position atop the Ganden Phodrang government from its inception in 1642 until his death in 1682. But when those two facts—his divinity, and his evident political success—come together in

the form of a narrative, they start to look like means and end. Consider this brief and altogether benign statement (from an essay aptly titled “Tibetan Buddhism”):

[The fifth Dalai Lama] also consolidated his power mythologically... By identifying himself with Avalokiteśvara, the Dalai Lama became the human manifestation of the cosmic Bodhisattva of Compassion. He was, in short, no longer just another Geluk tulku [i.e., a recognized reincarnation]. He was a divine king.³⁴

I do not think it would be an overstatement to say that this passage summarizes the consensus view on the topic. I have singled out this example because it was addressed to an audience of non-specialists, representing Tibet for historians of Qing China interested in incorporating Tibet (or Buddhism; the difference is not always clear) into their study of a multiethnic empire. So this is also the theoretical form in which our particular expertise is being offered to others. None of the individual clauses seem controversial or even factually inaccurate. But joined together they communicate a very strong message. An amazing transformation takes place, starting with a politically interested human and ending with a powerful god-king. (Granted, we ourselves, perhaps unlike those Tibetans, probably agree that the proposition “he was a divine king” is false.) Built into the very structure of that description, as I am reading it, is an assertion that Buddhism, here in the form of a myth or symbol (the bodhisattva, the name “Avalokiteśvara”) has been strategically deployed to achieve some other goal. The verbs and their agents are especially telling (“he consolidated his power;” “by identifying...he became...”). It is hard to read this passage and not come away with a sense that it is quite clear what the Dalai Lama was up to, and more importantly, what Buddhism really had to offer politically. Obviously it is not the business of a short review essay to wander off into the theoretical tall grass. But it is precisely when we remain at the pre-theoretical level, on the bare ground of what “everybody knows,” that the most rigid theoretical commitments are introduced, or reinforced.³⁵

³⁴ In Millward (ed.) 2004: 26.

³⁵ “Everybody knows” is Gilles Deleuze's watchword for marking those places where theoretical intervention was most necessary, or as he puts it, where philosophy sneaks in “subjective presuppositions.” “When philosophy rests its beginning

One watchword of this way of thinking is legitimation. This is a term sprinkled liberally all over scholarship on Buddhism, especially for Tibet and most of all for the Ganden Phodrang government. The idea has remarkable range and flexibility. It pops up pretty much everywhere and can be used to explain just about anything. However valuable it may be for calling attention to power, or for correcting—where it still exists—a rose-colored view of the past or a romantic sensibility about religion, nevertheless legitimation is a volatile and unwieldy concept that easily bloats into a one-size-fits-all solution. There is not a single subject in this dissertation that has not already been explained as a legitimizing device. An exploration of other ways of thinking is more than called for.

We might instead linger a little longer at the scene, rather than jumping straight to the expected results. Taking this same example of the divine king, an approach that began as an inquiry into cosmological order would first open up the question of what it could have meant to “identify” a human with a particular deity. What sort of deity? What form of relationship? Perhaps we should be asking not “what?” but “where?” In which sort of world? In relation to what other sorts of beings? Pursuing that line of thinking would mean exploring the frameworks within which that relationship was situated and according to which it became intelligible. It might implicate structures and dynamics of time and space; the chain of being on which human and bodhisattva were situated; the systems of value accompanying the bodhisattva concept; and the relationships between reality and appearances that govern how a bodhisattva engages with our world. Only thus could some humanity and some divinity together acquire the shape and texture to be differentiated and then related to one another in some fashion. We would also ask about practical courses of action which responded to that knowledge and manifested it in concrete forms in the world, as in architecture or in ritual. Each subject of this dissertation will follow this general pattern.

upon such implicit or subjective presuppositions, it can claim innocence, since it has kept nothing back... The philosopher takes the side of the idiot as though of a man without presuppositions.” Deleuze 1994: 129–30.

That many accounts elide this laborious and ostensibly diversionary work is, as I have already suggested, largely a byproduct of common sense or expedience. It may also speak to tacit choices of historiographical method. For if one's goal is to represent the major events, tying known actions (like a ruler's identification with a bodhisattva) to known outcomes (like a government coming into power), then so long as a plausible link between them can be established, there would not seem to be much gained by delving any deeper, save as a scholastic exercise. An instrumental approach provides precisely that link by explaining actions and outcomes according to its logic of utility, means and ends. Insofar as political history in the narrow sense, emphasizing gains and losses, is basically a narrative of ends, or what Fernand Braudel called “instants in history,” then once the general means are found and named it hardly matters any more whether they took one particular form or another.³⁶ Consequently we end up missing a clear sense of many of the particulars (in the sense of an oversight) but never really missing them (in the sense of a felt lack). This is where the study of religion can make a meaningful advance, if only by bringing the narrative to a grinding halt, going back to a scene that has already been described to look again and with an eye sensitive to other sorts of data. That is what I meant above by saying that studying cosmo-moral order restores clarity and complexity. It is to ask why a ceremony was put together the way it was, or how a palace could have actually expressed (or, better, realized—and problematized) some relationship between human and bodhisattva. The critical aspect of this approach is a natural byproduct of that slow, constructive work.

Over nearly a quarter-century of rule, Sangyé Gyatso's output was immense, including thousands of folios on subjects pertaining to the Dalai Lama and his rule, as well as contributions to palace architecture, city planning, monastic observances, and public ceremonial. He played a major role in

³⁶ This appraisal echoes the *Annales* group's criticism of narrative history as the history of past politics in terms of dramatic “instants.” In the words of Fernand Braudel, “Life, the history the world, and all individual histories present themselves to us as a series of events, in other words of brief and dramatic acts. A battle, and encounter between statesmen, an important speech, a crucial letter are instants in history.” Braudel 1980: 10. See also White 1987: 31–32.

shaping the legacy of the Dalai Lama institution and deserves to be called one of the principal architects of this government. I read his intellectual and practical contributions together as evidence for a sophisticated way of thinking about, as well as a systematic interpretation of, the reality in which he lived and acted. His writings are hegemonic in that they were enunciated from a position of authority, speak on behalf of the whole of Tibet, and in some cases correspond directly to official actions that ramified throughout the domain (such as instituting a new holiday). They also situated themselves within and responded to a pervasive background understanding, including discourses on metaphysics, discourses on the nature of divinity, and scholarly practices of citation and exegesis. Sangyé Gyatso was either incredibly well-read in Buddhist literature, or surrounded himself with capable researchers (maybe both); either way he cared greatly about his participation in a far larger, older, and in most cases very well-traveled, Buddhist tradition. He never cited one source when he could cite them all. In spite of (or because of) that thorough grounding, his works do not passively express a static set of fixed tenets or an unchanging tradition, for they also set themselves apart in certain respects, as we will see.

Coming to terms with his texts and practices also means situating them within an enchanted and excessive world. Others have similarly advocated for widening our perspective in thinking about history. “I take gods and spirits to be existentially coeval with the human,” writes Dipesh Chakrabarty, “and think from the assumption that the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits.”³⁷ As such, we must attend both to the specificity of Sangyé Gyatso's arguments (such as his precise labeling of the fifth Dalai Lama's divinity in the identity of the *sdom brtson rgyal po* or “renunciate king”),³⁸ and just as importantly, to the conceptual frameworks according to which those arguments were posed. Take, for instance, his habit of framing arguments in terms of a distinction

³⁷ Chakrabarty 2000: 16.

³⁸ This crucial concept is derived from a prophecy excerpted from the thirty-sixth chapter of the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* (*Jam dpal rtsa rgyud*, Tōh. 543). See Chapter Two, note 113.

between “the way things are” (*gnas tshul*) and “the way things appear” (*snang tshul*). The language suggests a world somewhat out of joint from the sort of naturalistic cosmo-moral order commonly assumed today. In some cases, his distinction invoked a mundane-supermundane divide, as when he insisted that ultimately, as things really are, the fifth Dalai Lama was omniscient; even though “as he appeared to people” he needed an education and even sometimes got things wrong.³⁹ Elsewhere Sangyé Gyatso applied the same scheme to deities, too. The bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was likewise split: in the way things are, its complete and perfect buddhahood was an established fact; but in the way things appear, it was a buddha-to-be that must serve living beings by sending human and nonhuman projections into the world.⁴⁰ It would be incorrect to simply equate the category of “the way things are” with the real or material, and “the way things appear” with the merely imaginary or symbolic. It would be worse to map that distinction onto one between an immanent domain of politics and a transcendent domain of religion. Sangyé Gyatso stood in a world that recognized its own capacity for distortion (as the incongruity between those two categories), but in such a way that being human and being divine cut across both. Nor is either level reducible to the other, as by a doctrine of materialism or idealism. Their relationship is at once complementary and antagonistic. Both must be thought together.

Doing so takes us some distance from the discrete, tangible forms of everyday politics: who did what to whom, who won the battle, who authored the edict, who took power next, and so on. Obviously knowing what happened and when is crucial. I mean to supplement—not supplant—that hard-earned scholarship, built on the labor of earlier generations of scholars like Tucci and Petech, and which in the case of seventeenth-century Tibet is slowly achieving granularity, thanks to new attention not just to Tibetan but also Chinese, Manchu, and Mongolian archival documents such as edicts, memorials, and

³⁹ *Lha sa skor tshad*: 26a.

⁴⁰ See e.g. *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 362.

correspondence.⁴¹ Recent advances in historical understanding also owe much to the cross-fertilizations of knowledge enabled by movements in the academy such as New Qing History, advocating a multilingual and multicultural approach to the study of empire; and to the accelerating exchange of persons, texts, and ideas between Western institutions and those of Tibet, China, and Mongolia. But if those developments have partly dislodged Tibetan studies from its long entrenchment (in America, that is) within departments of religion, and increasingly found a home for it within the historicizing and sometimes nationalist agendas of area studies, it is no less true that the study of Tibetan history cannot disavow the attentions of its sources and consequently cannot do without the study of religion. It cannot deny the complex, often obscurely technical and even redundant doctrines, cosmologies, rituals, symbols, literary techniques, and uses of scripture that permeate the political but which on my view are never convincingly explained in the latter's terms. It needs this attention not least because such abstractions also took concrete forms such as the arrangement of rooms in a palace whose occupation and uses can be documented, or the ordering of bodies in a ceremony whose enactments can be dated and expenses calculated. "After all," Chakrabarty insists, "gods are as real as ideology is—that is to say, they are embedded in practices."⁴² A cosmo-moral order generates hard data too.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS 3: STUDYING RELIGION AND POLITICS

By this point it should be clear that I am interested in more than just putting religion at the service of political history. My interest is also in considering Sangyé Gyatso's thought *per se*, the problems and solutions occasioned by thinking Buddhistically about the meaning and aims of government, and how by thinking politically one might participate in the life of a Buddhist tradition.

⁴¹ Oyunbilig 2008 (in Chinese) and Schwieger 2014 are exemplary.

⁴² Chakrabarty 2000: 78.

Above I mentioned that one trademark of Sangyé Gyatso's writing was to portray one complex reality in two complementary but antagonistic registers: hence “the way things appear” versus “the way things are.” Even more frequently, he invoked the analogous interpretive dichotomy of “true sense” (*nges don*) and “indirect sense” (*drang don*) (more on these terms below). Such distinctions not only put a “frame,” so to speak, around the experiences of lived reality; they also make it possible to think in terms of interactions and incongruities between what falls inside and outside of that frame. This language immediately calls to mind Charles Taylor's notion of the “immanent frame,” his term for the historical condition of our own self-enclosed and buffered secular world. Indeed, the stuff of politics seems to find its natural home within such an immanent frame. At the same time, the secularist practice of separating the categories of the religious and the political is itself a product of, and equally a way of articulating, our immanent frame. It is what makes it possible in the first place to stage that false opposition of either acting out of a religious conviction in some transcendent power, or else out of this-worldly political motivations—what Bruno Latour calls the “two forms of dupery.”⁴³ Of course Taylor was using the term “frame” just to capture this historical process of secularization, hiving off a self and a world that used to be “porous,” over a long transformation of cosmo-moral order that he refers to as the “great disembedding.”⁴⁴ Still, the basic idea of the frame—situating lived experience in terms of some difference in kind—is helpful for speaking in general about the interactions others may have staged in other worlds. More broadly, we can invoke this idea to describe techniques of introducing and reflecting on opposition, especially between human life, including all that one could perceive and know as such, and whatever larger openings encompass or exceed it. Sangyé Gyatso's dualisms described above would be one example. My point, again, is that it is crucial to think about the *interactions* and

⁴³ Latour 2011: 47. He writes, “the Moderns... see all other peoples as naive believers, skillful manipulators, or self-deluding cynics. Yes, the Moderns refuse to listen to the idols; they split them apart like coconuts and from each half they take two forms of dupery: you can deceive others, and you can deceive yourself.”

⁴⁴ Taylor 2007: 146–58.

incongruities that become possible on the basis of a frame: the contingent ways of posing problems and envisioning possibilities according to the terms that order one's world. To mark a difference, in other words, is also to produce thought—an idea I take from J.Z. Smith.⁴⁵

This idea is not as far-fetched as it might seem. Consider the logic of the classical Weberian notion of religious legitimation, which assumes a frame of its own. Appeals to religion (as by directly or indirectly appealing to the transcendent) are harnessed to authorize political power (which is won by force but cannot secure itself by those means) to establish the lasting consent of those believers ruled by it. In Weber's own words, all forms of domination are insufficient as such; “in addition every such system attempts to establish and to cultivate the belief in its legitimacy.”⁴⁶ For a fruitful application of this principle to the history of religions, we have Bruce Lincoln's oft-repeated maxim that religion “invests specific human preferences with transcendent status by misrepresenting them as revealed truths, primordial traditions, divine commandments and so forth.”⁴⁷

This is entirely plausible, but by its own terms I think only half right. For what this is suggested is precisely that we treat acts of political self-understanding (such as understanding a king as divine) as a human effort to engineer a point of contact between two opposing registers: the “specific human” (read: immanent) and the “transcendent.” That immanent/transcendent frame is basic to the critical project of studying religion advanced by Lincoln and others. How it introduces a kind of dialectic between “religions” and “history of religions” can be seen from his popular “theses on method,” for instance thesis number three:

History of religions is thus a discourse which resists and reverses the orientation of that discourse with which it concerns itself. To practice history of religions...is to insist on discussing the temporal, contextual, situated, interested, human, and material dimensions of

⁴⁵ See e.g. Smith 1987: 103–111.

⁴⁶ Weber 1978: 213.

⁴⁷ Braun and McCutcheon 2000: 416; Lincoln 2003: 55. This maxim has since made inroads into Tibetan Studies (in reference to Sangyé Gyatso no less!) in Schaeffer 2009: 88.

those discourses, practices, communities, and institutions that characteristically represent themselves as eternal, transcendent, spiritual, and divine.⁴⁸

I disagree with how this statement is using the term “human.” I also question the implied equivalence between “reversing” and “resisting,” given that to reverse is also to reaffirm.⁴⁹ This critical framework brokers only one mode of interaction, namely, representation, which is unilateral. Hence it embeds a secular humanist theory of agency. If we used it to analyze Sangyé Gyatso's statement mentioned above, that the Dalai Lama is all-knowing (a characteristic of a buddha, obviously also a desirable quality for the state), we would conclude that Sangyé Gyatso misrepresented the Dalai Lama as a god (“eternal, transcendent, spiritual, and divine”) in order to invest his own specific, “interested,” human preference (say, a preference to remain in control) with the unassailable, belief-securing status of transcendence. Where I find common ground with this approach is that I agree that appeals to the transcendent, or more cautiously, claims which resituate the knowable, actionable world with respect to some larger opening, are undeniably part and parcel of human efforts to order their world and naturalize a certain state of affairs within it. Humans, that is, seem to share a basic capacity to speak and think back upon themselves from a vantage that exceeds them. I agree that this capacity is often (but not only) manifested in the form of hegemonic, ordering discourses, which in turn secure power, perpetuate inequality, and therefore deserve critical attention.

However, because of that capacity for reflection occasioned by such distancing, I do not think it is possible to posit any frame whose mode of interaction is unilateral—as the concept of representation implies. The unspoken assumption is that all the agency and influence lie on the side of the human being and their specific (i.e. positive, hence recoverable by us) preferences. They are then free to use or

⁴⁸ Lincoln 2012. For a programmatic guide to this approach to studying religion, see Braun and McCutcheon 2000.

⁴⁹ I can think of no better way of making that point than the one given by Estraven in le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*: “To oppose something is to maintain it... if you turn your back on Mishnory and walk away from it, you are still on the Mishnory road.”

abuse the transcendent as they see fit (some of them, at least.) To avoid circularity, at least some of those preferences must arrive pre-formed and in advance of this staged encounter with the transcendent. I suspect that is how power is being understood here. But even on the most resolutely secularist reading, if one wants to introduce an idea like the transcendent at all (even in the most minimal sense, like a paper-thin membrane of distortion) then one has to concede that specific preferences, and more drastically, the meaning of “human” itself, are inescapably going to be shaped by that difference and the ways of thinking it enables. Moreover, the specific form of any appeal to the “eternal, transcendent, spiritual, and divine,” is underdetermined by whatever specific preferences we somehow succeed in recovering. What other assumptions, desires, expectations, impulses, aspirations, or relationships, were already in place, such that those specific preferences determined just those specific forms of misrepresentation? The question recalls Sahlin's point about symbolic reason: Why was it put together this way, if this way is not the only way possible? What relations, expectations, or experiences shaped those impulses in the first place? Couldn't gods, traditions, visions, and so on, have already played some part in forming them?

Then there is the question about what happens next. Representation is like an instant caught out of time, a natural separation artificially collapsed. Then, the world changes. So what force does each bring to bear on the other? It is not as if the original distinction is dissolved once and for all. This question could be phrased in terms of the maintenance and reproduction of ideology through practice (Bourdieu's question). But here one could also think about interaction and incongruity, about ideology's effects on itself. In other words, we want to consider both the terms of relationship and the disjunctions introduced and sustained between them. Those interactions participate in constituting what it means to be human in the first place, as by defining our limitations and aspirations, while also revealing constraints or demands that human life places on the transcendent in turn. In short, every appeal to something that exceeds the human is equally an act of self-formation; every gesture of emplacement

also bears potential forms of displacement. This is what I take to be the true force of Chakrabarty's claim that “the question of being human involves the question of being with gods and spirits.” Our being with them is equally their being with us.

We have already seen that Sangyé Gyatso had his own ways of conceiving of the true, the real, and the world's capacity for distortion. Another interesting fact is that both the Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso were scholars of Daṇḍin's *alaṃkāra* system for writing ornate literature, which, more than just a way to show off their elite courtly sensibility, also furnished them with a massive and theoretically nuanced conceptual repertory for figuring relationships between disparate entities, especially humans and gods. It is hardly incidental that Sangyé Gyatso employed roughly a dozen different poetic figures to adequately portray the relationship between Dalai Lama and bodhisattva as he understood it in all its nuances. To speak of that relationship only in terms of representation (or misrepresentation—is there a difference?) is to replace a fine set of tools with a mallet.

Chakrabarty argued that it is our own tendency (or imperative) to universalize that empowers a historian to naturalize a contingent way of thinking about the world, and then apply it to the worlds being studied. From our vantage point here in Taylor's “secular age” (especially under the dogmatically disenchanted norms of academic, i.e. self-avowedly non-theological, discourse), the belief that our immanent frame must also contain and explain the whole of human existence may have predisposed us to demand the same arrangement of our objects of study—a demand satisfied by translating anything strange or discordant into more acceptable terms. I will show exactly what that transformation looks like below. It is tempting to respond that in such cases it is we ourselves who end up misrepresenting specific human preferences. In contrast, I take intelligibility as being an attribute of cosmo-moral order, therefore something human beings are capable of as a rule, though not at the expense of their capacity to do so differently from one another.

SANGYÉ GYATSO ON THE TRUE AND THE INDIRECT

Now let us consider what this approach looks like up close by briefly taking up a passage from a Tibetan text. In 1681, just two years into his tenure as the top official in the fifth Dalai Lama's government, rounding out the fourth decade of that government's existence, the young Sangyé Gyatso—not yet thirty years old—authored his first major work on government. The *Clear Mirror* (*Dwangs shel me long*)⁵⁰ was a treatise on the organization and responsibilities of major government offices. It portrayed itself as a first-of-its-kind text, collating knowledge from recent history, scattered memoranda, and Sangyé Gyatso's own observations, with frequent references to classical Indian texts of ethico-political theory, to systematize in twenty-one articles the roles and requirements of what government officials should and should not do (*blang dor*, literally “taking up and letting go,” or perhaps—it is tempting to say—“binding and loosing”). The first article concerned Sangyé Gyatso's own position at the apex of power, here named the “worldly guardian who safeguards the temporal [realm]” (*srid skyong ba'i sa skyong*).⁵¹ The noun *sa skyong* echoes the Sanskrit *bhūmipāla*, an epithet

⁵⁰ As throughout this dissertation, for convenience I use abbreviated forms of full titles, nearly always based on established literary convention. Typically, the long titles (given in the bibliography) have more descriptive and prescriptive information. The full title of this text is *Straight Clear Mirror Illuminating What Should and Should Not Be Done in Twenty-One Articles* (*Blang dor gsal bar ston pa'i drang thig dwangs shel me long nyer gcig pa*). Here I refer to the edition published in the *Gangs can rig mdzod* series, volume 7: *Bod kyi snga rabs khrims srol yig cha bdams bsgrigs*. The best published summary (in Tibetan) of the text and its relation to subsequent government policies is that of Chapel Tsheten Phuntok: “De snga'i bod sa gnas srid gzhung gi sgrig gzhi'i rtsa 'dzin *Dwangs shel me long skor rags tsam gleng ba*” (“An introduction to the *Clear Mirror*; source for the organization of the former Tibetan government”), in Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs 1993: 91–139.

⁵¹ The term *srid* is notoriously tricky. It popularly connotes both “life” and “possibility,” hence a way of speaking about temporal existence. This nominalized form *srid skyong ba* or “safeguarding the *srid*,” being the prerogative of a lay ruler, was set alongside other responsibilities that attached instead to the complementary clerical domain of *chos* (“dharma”). Here it seems not all that far from the historical meaning of “secular” in Latin Christendom—as part of a dyad that separated places, persons, and institutions into two complementary spheres of activity, according to notions of “profane” and “higher” time (on which see Taylor 2009: 1144). As a political responsibility, safeguarding the *srid* encompassed military, economic, legal, and administrative duties. We find frequent acknowledgments by both the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso of the morally corrupting effects of taking responsibility for *srid*. As a nominal suffix, *srid* can also indicate the real, vital sustenance of some abstraction; hence for the king (*rgyal po*), the term *rgyal srid* comes close to “kingship” or “rule;” and for the buddha's teachings (*bstan pa*), the term *bstan srid* similarly indicates the “life” of a dispensation or what I am here calling the “vital dispensation.” Another common dyad is *srid zhi* (literally “life and pacification”), which is a way of speaking at once of the whole of reality, including both temporal existence and its ending or transcendence—hence also sometimes a shorthand for the dichotomy of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. The Desi often spoke of the fifth Dalai Lama as *srid zhi'i gtsug rgyan*, perhaps “crown ornament of both this world and beyond.” On *srid* and related terms see also Stein 1972.

for a (human) ruler. The term “sikyong” (*srid skyong*) was used after the 1750 restructuring of government as a title for the highest governing authority other than the Dalai Lama (often translated as “regent,” and now used in the exile government to mean “president”).

In the *Clear Mirror*, the remaining twenty articles generally clarified various military and civilian positions encompassed by this “sikyong” ruler, including offices responsible for everything from waging war, law enforcement, and tax collection, to the care of livestock, the maintenance of religious sites, and administration of districts and estates. All together these activities comprised the general rubric of what Sangyé Gyatso here called the “temporal affairs” (*srid kyi bya gzhang*) of government. Stationed atop this edifice, the sikyong’s work was itself but the expression of the authoritative command (*bka' lung*) of the Dalai Lama, whose encompassing sovereignty paired together temporal (*srid*) affairs with matters pertaining to the dharma (*chos*). The optimal state was to maintain those two responsibilities in a tandem relationship (*chos srid zung 'brel*), ideally embodied in the person of the Dalai Lama. Sangyé Gyatso added that his own executive office was instituted in the first place—and only “temporarily” (*phral sel*)—as a practical concession to the difficulty of doing both.⁵² As Mary Douglas argued, many institutions, before they could become capable of reproducing themselves, first had to be founded on some analogy to the natural world.⁵³ In that spirit, the exemplar of the tandem relationship (*zung 'brel*; sometimes *gnyis ldan*) was the pairing of sun and moon in the sky (*nyi zla zung 'brel*). The Dalai Lama's (ideally) tandem authority loomed over this text, as if to illuminate it, as the sun and moon together circled Mount Meru and shed light on the human world below.

⁵² Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1989: 207.

⁵³ Douglas 1986: 45–54.

In a gesture to that higher power, the *Clear Mirror's* preamble started not with practical or historical concerns, but cosmic ones. It flings its readers out beyond the visible world: “It is the pattern of reality,”⁵⁴ the very first sentence reads,

that all great and exalted beings, for the sake of the living, show a physical form pertaining to those whom they would tame, for instance as a householder or a cakravartin king. Accordingly, all the dharma-kings who came [to Tibet] in the past were equally projections of the noble [bodhisattva] Guardians of the Three Families;⁵⁵ and even further, the era has not yet subsided in which Avalokiteśvara, great source of love, gazes compassionately upon all beings in the Snowlands. So there can be no doubt that, in the true sense (*nges don du*), he is intentionally taking birth and life [here and now].⁵⁶

The point was buttressed by two scriptural citations that prophesied the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's activities in Tibet, culminating in the fifth Dalai Lama.⁵⁷ This opening statement identifies the fifth Dalai Lama as the latest in a series of projected kings to assume life in Tibet. As the figurehead of government and the first principle encountered in this text (the same is true of its opening verses as well), this passage effectively affirms the Dalai Lama's divine origins and subsumes the temporal

⁵⁴ “Pattern of reality” reflects the Tibetan term *chos nyid*, equal to the Sanskrit/Pāli *dharmatā/dhammatā*. I choose to translate it this way in light of its usage in narrative literature to connote facts of cosmic repetition, the patterning of how buddhas and bodhisattvas act from one age to the next. A good example of this usage is the Pāli *Mahāpadāna Sutta*, in which Śākyamuni narrates the birth and career of the former buddha Vipassī, which perfectly mirrors his own. “This,” he insists time and again, “is the rule” (*dhammatā*); Walshe 1995: 199–221. The point in Sangyé Gyatso's passage, as I read it, is that bodhisattvas project in multiple human forms as a rule. The act defines them.

⁵⁵ Tib. *rigs gsum mgon po*, a formulation propagated by the Kadam tradition, yoking together three bodhisattvas (Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi) as a triumvirate. Sangyé Gyatso understood that trio as being subsumed under an encompassing, singular divinity also identified with Avalokiteśvara (albeit as a *dharmakāya* or disembodied buddha as reality-principle and *sambhogakāya* or cosmic buddha, rather than a *nirmāṇakāya*, a typically humaniform projection). One source for this idea was the story of Devarāja in the “Son Teachings” (*bu chos*) of the *Book of Kadam* (*Bka' gdams legs 'bam bu chos* 2012: 443ff). See also Chapter Three.

⁵⁶ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1989: 206.

⁵⁷ The first citation is (apocryphally) attributed to one “*Puṇḍarīka* of the Sūtra section” (*mdo sde padma dkar po*). It recounts how the Buddha predicted to Nivaraṇaviṣkambhin that, in the future, because of Avalokiteśvara's work, the dharma will rise like a sun over the “realm of the snows” (taken to indicate Tibet). Elsewhere Sangyé Gyatso acknowledged that this passage (which is not in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* or the *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* of the Tibetan Kangyur) comes from a “variant translation” (*gyur mi 'dra ba zhig*). An earlier source for it is Sönam Gyaltzen's fourteenth-century *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*; see Sorensen 1994: 97. The second citation is a prophecy from the *Mañjuśrī-mūlatantra* (*'Jam dpal rtsa rgyud*, Tōh. 543), another work frequently cited in Sangyé Gyatso's texts. The particular importance of this prophecy is that it names the identity and the source of authority of the fifth Dalai Lama's kingship, namely, as a bodhisattva who “takes the form of a renunciate king” (*sdom brtson rgyal po'i tshul bzung ba*), i.e., a bodhisattva projecting in the persona of a king who is also a vow-holding monk.

duties of government under the work of the bodhisattva.⁵⁸ The affiliation between Dalai Lama and Avalokiteśvara (still maintained today), despite numerous precedents, began in earnest with the fifth Dalai Lama and the Ganden Phodrang in the seventeenth century. As the *Clear Mirror* opens with this cosmic appeal before moving on to its main subject matter, so too is thinking about government rooted in a gesture to something that exceeds the time and space of our own world, to a force that is more than human, with the will to act as it wishes upon our world.

In both poetry and prose it is a trademark of Sangyé Gyatso's writings that no subject, however quotidian, can be broached without first situating it within a larger order that includes and is shaped by forces irreducible to the human. Any attempt to understand this Tibetan government must in some way account for that excess. (One option is simply to ignore it or explain it away functionally.) The *Clear Mirror* is a good limit case for setting out the terms of the problem because, perhaps more than any other work considered here, its topic and the bulk of its attentions are by self-admission concerned strictly with the worldly concerns of an avowedly human political project. So why begin with that grand gesture, with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and his magical repetition of apparently human forms in Tibet? One answer is to regard such statements as efforts to ground immanent political rule in an appeal to the transcendent. The point would be to claim that this government is founded on divine authority, full stop. Then the text can leave religion behind—effectively dumping it in the preamble—and get down to its real business. For those accustomed to thinking in instrumental terms, this reasoning may seem self-evident. Giving a work on governance this back-story about the world-altering powers of an incarnating being would grant it the sanction of an infallible higher power,

⁵⁸ I have omitted consideration of the opening verses only for the sake of brevity. The first stanza, employing the maximum twenty-three syllables per line, names the Dalai Lama as both “second buddha” and a world-conquering ruler of the “four quarters” (*sde bzhi*), and a “lord of this world and beyond” (*srid zhi'i dbang phyug*). The remaining verses, which progressively decrease in meter from twenty-one-syllable lines to nine-syllable lines, step down a chain of being from buddha to bodhisattva to desire-realm gods to worldly protector-deities to the text itself. In that fashion the human world is situated against its cosmic background.

presumably one everybody already recognized and believed in. The Desi may have been the real executive, but in name he ruled at the command of the Dalai Lama, who was just divinity in the flesh, hovering behind all worldly exercising of power, exactly like this preamble with its flowery cosmic imagery sits behind the main, didactic, “straight and clear” (*drang thig dwangs shel*) body of the text.⁵⁹ This logic is neatly expressed in Jürgen Habermas' dictum that religion “owes its legitimating force to the fact that it draws its power to convince from its own roots.”⁶⁰ The theological always shadows the political, according to Habermas, because the latter by definition cannot furnish the basis of its own authority (short of absolute domination). Whether religion is really always that “convincing” to the persons who live it, I set aside. But I am not inclined to disagree that in a country whose conversion narratives portrayed it as Avalokiteśvara's chosen lot, who hallowed the kings of their bygone halcyon empire as emanations of that very deity, there could be no more obvious candidate for making sense of an emerging power than this particular bodhisattva. The fact takes on the nature of a banal truism; any other choice would have been more remarkable.

Now back to the *Clear Mirror*. After making this first statement about the cosmic source of the Dalai Lama's authority, Sangyé Gyatso immediately brings us down to earth:

However, in an indirect sense (*drang don du*), Tibet, this great land with its three *chölge* or thirteen myriarchies, together with the six ranges of Dokham, was utterly conquered—along with other petty kingdoms—by the military strength, the steadfast might⁶¹ which elevated the force of his merit, of the Dharma-King Who Upholds the Dispensation [Guśri Khan],⁶² a lord of heaven and earth who is distinguished in his devotion and his courage. Out of a vast

⁵⁹ As Sangyé Gyatso himself puts it in his colophon, the aim of this text (as a “mirror”) was to cast a complete reflection, illuminating legibly and intelligibly and without hiding anything, all the major operations of government (*blang dor gang ci nag po 'gro shes kyi tshul du gab sbas med par gsal por ston pa'i drang thig dwangs she me long*); Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1989: 280.

⁶⁰ In Butler et al. (eds.) 2011: 17.

⁶¹ Tib. *dbu rmog btsan po'i dpung shed kyi*... The archaic term *dbu rmog btsan po*, literally “strong helmet,” is a deliberate call-back to a common appellation used in textual and epigraphical accounts of the former Tibetan empire to describe the power of Tibetan rulers (i.e., the same “dharma-kings” of yore named as past incarnations of Avalokiteśvara in the preceding quotation).

⁶² “Dharma-King Who Upholds the Dispensation” (*bstan 'dzin chos kyi rgyal po*) was the title that the fifth Dalai Lama bestowed upon Guśri Khan. In our Tibetan sources, Guśri Khan is almost always named by this title.

and superlative will to awakening,⁶³ [manifested] at once in his own body and spirit and in his retinue and attendants, he made an offering [of these conquered territories] as a donative estate of subjects under the authority⁶⁴ of His Holiness [the fifth Dalai Lama], peerless refuge and protector, great and all-knowing Lord of Victors.⁶⁵

Here, Sangyé Gyatso shifts to a portrait of Tibet and its government which, behind all the florid euphemisms, is entirely this-worldly. It satisfies the secularist parameters of our own cosmo-moral order: instead of that feathery state apart from which the bodhisattva envisions and engages the human world, the unfathomable time and space across which it unfurls its cosmic activities, now the reader is grounded on the familiar terrain of a space that can be mapped and a temporality that is homogeneous and empirical. Consider that we can immediately interpolate dates from our own calendar (1642) without in any way compromising the overall sense of the passage. The same is true for the places described: Sangyé Gyatso named two political geographies of Tibet, both instituted under the joint Mongol-Sakya administration started by Qubilai Khan and Phakpa: the three *chölge* or macro-regions,⁶⁶ and the thirteen myriarchies or “ten-thousand districts”⁶⁷ apportioned to local hegemonies and their affiliated monastic institutions. Both denote the same underlying terrain, which we could pinpoint

⁶³ The term “will to awakening” (Tib. *thugs bskyed*) refers to the generation of *bodhicitta*, the spectacular resolve of a human who aspires to be a bodhisattva (in the sense of forestalling awakening and dedicating myriad future lives to the salvation of others), which in narrative literature about the careers of bodhisattvas is typically generated (in one of their past lives) in the presence of a buddha.

⁶⁴ The term “donative estate” (*mchod gzhis*) indicates a gesture of worship (*mchod pa*), as from a king to a buddha, or from a layperson to the sangha. The paradigm would be the granting of lands for monastic use. In Tibet, that act would have entailed also granting the tenants (*mi ser*) who worked the land and hence became “subjects under the authority” (*mnga' 'bangs*) of the overseeing institution supported by their yield. The founding of the Ganden Phodrang government is therefore being portrayed as both a gigantic act of meritorious giving, and a bestowal of authority over its subjects, i.e., sovereignty.

⁶⁵ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 1989: 206–7.

⁶⁶ Tib. *chol kha* < Mong. *chölge* (= Ch. 路). Elsewhere the Desi attributed this apportionment to the time of Qubilai Khan and Phakpa Lodrö Gyaltzen and named the three *chölge* as: (1) Ü and Tsang, “*chölge* of the dharma,” which extends from Gungthang in Upper Ngari all the way to Sokla Gyawo (*sog la skya bo*); (2) Dotö or “Upper Do” (*mdo stod*), “*chölge* of the black-headed people,” which extends from Sokla Gyawo all the way to Machu Khukpa (*rma chu khug pa*); and (3) Domé or “Lower Do” (*mdo smad*), “*chölge* of beasts and horses,” which extends from Machu Khukpa all the way to the white stüpa of China (*rgya mchod rten dkar po*). See Sangyé Gyatso's *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar dhag* 1990: 89; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 14b.

⁶⁷ For Sangyé Gyatso's reckoning of these thirteen (six in Ü, six in Tsang, and one in between in Yardrok) see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 89–90.

ourselves using Google Earth. In terms of agency, Sangyé Gyatso was explicit in giving credit to the personal fortitude and military victory of Guśri Khan, patron of the fifth Dalai Lama. There is no doubt about it: military superiority and a patron's benevolence made this government possible. For sure, all this talk of merit, the will to awakening, sanctimonious offerings, and so on, evokes a richly Buddhist literary and ethical sensibility. But however Buddhist we might wish to label this account, it is also entirely appropriate to characterize it as secular because of the understandings of space, time, and agency on which it depends. In Chakrabarty's language, it seems "coeval" with our own reality.

That perceived coeval-ness is precisely why this second, secular passage can be reproduced verbatim in academic vernacular and not at all seem out of place, whereas the first, cosmic passage absolutely cannot be. I submit that there is nothing incompatible between the *Clear Mirror's* version of events in the passage just quoted, and this account from a recent Western work of scholarship:

The year 1642 marks the historic reunification of Tibet under a single regime after some two centuries of intermittent civil war. In a famous symbolic gesture, significantly made in Shigatsé, in Tsang, the victorious Gūshri Khan offered the thirteen myriarchies that were the basic administrative units of Tibet under the Sakyapa-Mongol regime to his spiritual master, the Great Fifth. With this, the rule of the Ganden Palace as the government of Tibet began.⁶⁸

Now imagine doing the same with Sangyé Gyatso's first passage, quoted earlier. How absurd would it seem if a credible work of history today dared to explain these events as stemming in any way from the will of a cosmic bodhisattva! By the fact of that disparity, indeed by our reluctance (or embarrassment) about narrating the impossible, we are implicitly accusing Sangyé Gyatso of a kind of double-speak. Half of what he says makes sense right away and is allowed to pass through the gates unchecked; but the other half is deemed unintelligible on its own terms and kept at arm's length. It remains the

⁶⁸ Kapstein 2006: 137. I do not mean that there is anything faulty about this explanation. My point is rather to show how certain aspects of our sources are treated as if they fitted the same universal categories that inform our own accounts, which means that they are in a sense made coeval with ourselves. Meanwhile other aspects are not, and must be historicized.

byproduct of a distant past and must be confined to that past lest it contaminate our present. It must be read against itself, historicized.

A study of cosmo-moral order asks instead: How are we to reconcile those two attributions of agency, those two registers of reality, as articulations of the same world? In what sense could both of those dimensions together have been intelligible—or true? How were they bound to one another? What interactions or incongruities were there between them? The solution sketched out above—to admit directly those parts that seem “coeval” with our own world, and erase or historicize the rest—is unsatisfactory. It introduces an unbridgeable chasm that deforms not just one side but both. As Chakrabarty writes, “the moment we think of the world as disenchanted...we set limits to the ways the past can be narrated.”⁶⁹ A price must be paid to make other worlds intelligible on terms other than their own. It also becomes difficult to answer a basic question: why bother? To say that religion plays an important function for politics may give us a plausible reason why a ruler would invoke a bodhisattva in a text on secular governance; but not why it was done in this particular way, according to this contingent yet thorough and systematic constellation of details.⁷⁰ Nor, as I will reiterate over the length of this study, does an instrumental explanation give any traction for thinking about the related practices: how they were designed and how they could have been intelligible or purposeful as more than just instruments of a political agenda.

There is another, more important takeaway, following from my remarks above about framing. A closer look at these passages shows that what matters is how the two registers of reality stood *in relationship to one another*, by the very act of being distinguished and then put into contact. One

⁶⁹ Chakrabarty 2000: 89.

⁷⁰ Chakrabarty writes: “In the so-called religious imagination (as in language), redundancy—the huge and, from a strictly functionalist point of view, unnecessarily elaborate panoply of iconography and rituals—prove[s] the poverty of a purely functionalist approach.” Chakrabarty 2000: 78. Sahlins expressed a similar view: “One is tempted to formulate a general rule of diminishing returns to functionalist explanation: the more distant and distinct the cultural practice from the register of its purported function, the less this function will specify the phenomenon.” Sahlins 1976: 77–78.

reason that Sangyé Gyatso is good to think with is that he makes those interactions explicit. There are hints even in his benign word of transition, “however” (*yin na'ang*), which yoked together the two passages quoted above. The term acknowledges some discord between the two ideas being joined.⁷¹ You cannot simply move from one to the other without passing this threshold of uncertainty and hesitation. They stand together as if in anticipation of and in response to a problem. Here we discern the most important point, at the heart of all my investigations into the problematic foundations of hegemonic, ordering discourses of the state: *something is already wrong with the fact of their co-presence*. Why not simply state that the Dalai Lama is a deity and be done with it? Or, if both divine and human agency are to be admitted together, then why not act as if there is nothing discordant and leave the movement between them unremarked upon? Explicitly highlighting their tension hardly seems like the most efficient way to deceive. Even if it were just a cleverer way of dissembling—as if to bury the lie in its own self-admission—it still makes visible a crack in the tectonics of its world.

In true ideological fashion, the *Clear Mirror* doesn't merely acknowledge this disparity, but poses a solution for it. Discerning readers will have already noticed that Sangyé Gyatso's two variant passages were ordered according to the well-known Buddhist hermeneutic distinction between “true sense” (Tib. *nges don*, Skt. *nītārtha*) and “indirect sense” (Tib. *drang don*, Skt. *neyārtha*). That distinction pervades Sangyé Gyatso's writings. The paired terms will be familiar as a means for organizing and interpreting the vast Buddhist literature, such as to determine which of the myriad texts and doctrines are most descriptive of the truth—or of what Robert Buswell calls the “precise content” of the Buddha's enlightenment—as well as to recommend how the relationship between “word and sense” (Tib. *tshig don*, Skt. *padārtha*) ought to be negotiated in a reading practice.⁷² All the Buddha's utterances tell the

⁷¹ Goldstein calls it an “even-though clause connective;” 1991: 163.

⁷² In Lopez (ed.) 1988: 231.

truth; some do it directly, others indirectly. At issue here is not just the intrinsic difficulty of representing reality through the medium of discourse, but also the notion of a deliberate fluidity to the Buddha's teachings, wholly in keeping with a plural world of human difference. According to Etienne Lamotte, the underlying sentiment is aptly expressed in the Chinese *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* attributed to Nāgārjuna: “The dharma of the Buddhas is immense, like the ocean. Depending on the aptitude of beings, it is expounded in various ways.”⁷³ Recall also Sangyé Gyatso's assertion above that it was the *chos nyid*, the basic pattern of reality, for the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara to vary the forms it shows in the world according to those whom it would tame (*gang 'dul gyi skur ston pa*).

The terms *nges don* or “true sense” and *drang don* or “indirect sense” literally denote the difference between that which is already “definitive” or “certain” (*nges*), and that which is yet to be “drawn out” (*drang ba*, from the verb *'dren pa*). (In Tibetan, only the latter term retains its original etymology from the Sanskrit root $\sqrt{\text{nī}}$, “to lead” or “to guide.”) This sense of having to guide one's reading to the truth, or to pull the truth out from the form in which it appears, reveals the workings of a critical sensibility. We can also detect that sensibility in a famous early formulation, the eponymous “four reliances” of the *Catuḥpratisaraṇa Sūtra*:

Rely on the truth (*dharma*), not the person (*puruṣa*). Rely on its sense (*artha*), not its vehicle (*vyañjana*). Rely on its true sense (*nītārtha*), not its indirect sense (*neyārtha*). Rely on absolute knowledge (*jñāna*), not discursive understanding (*viñāna*).⁷⁴

The theme of this connected litany is suspicion: a suspicion of the ordinary, visible surfaces of everyday life, of the phenomenology of being human—the other person, the signifying mark, the rhetorical utterance, the discursive thought. Sangyé Gyatso clearly shared this critical sentiment, given the ways that he glossed indirect sense and true sense in his frequent invocations of this dichotomy

⁷³ In Lopez (ed.) 1988: 16.

⁷⁴ Translation modified after Lamotte, in Lopez (ed.) 1988: 16.

across his *oeuvre*. He variously described the indirect sense as being “common” or “shared” (*thun mong ba*),⁷⁵ but also “crooked” (*Idem po*).⁷⁶ It “accords with the way things appear” (*snang tshul dang mthun par*)⁷⁷ or “as they appear to living beings” (*'gro ba'i snang ngor*).⁷⁸ On the other hand the true sense is the “ultimate sense” (*don dam pa*, Skt. *paramārtha*).⁷⁹ It is reality “as shown to a direct perception” (*mngon sum du ston pa*),⁸⁰ but it only appears “before those with the right predisposition” (*skal ldan gyi ngor*).⁸¹ It “accords with the way things are” (*gnas tshul dang mthun pa*).⁸² The former is mediated, public, and constitutive of ordinary life; the latter is immediate, private, and difficult if not impossible to reach.

So what might Sangyé Gyatso have been implying by opening a practical work on government with this assertion, that in the true sense the bodhisattva incarnates in Tibet as he wishes, especially as a king, and yet in the indirect sense Tibet was conquered with foreign assistance and bequeathed to the Dalai Lama as a gift? Let me add that in Sangyé Gyatso's frequent use of this tandem, there is never one without the other. Where there is a true sense there is also an indirect sense, and vice versa. All the more reason to resist the historicizing split that prefers only the second passage and ignores or rewrites the first. As suggested above, the relational nature of this frame calls attention to the fact of their unstable co-presence, their incongruity. (Historicism dissolves that tension.) To juxtapose both is to occasion reflection on the constraints each places on the other. For instance, in the *Clear Mirror*, the

⁷⁵ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 106; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 18a; *Lha sa skor tshad*: 33b.

⁷⁶ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 196–97.

⁷⁷ *Vaiḍūrya ser po* 1998: 357, 362; *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 3b; *Lha sa skor tshad*: 13a; *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 1061.

⁷⁸ *Lha sa skor tshad*: 26b.

⁷⁹ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 12; *Lha sa skor tshad*: 26b, 27b.

⁸⁰ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 306

⁸¹ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 197

⁸² *Vaiḍūrya ser po* 1998: 353, 362; *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 3a.

true sense may claim some privilege in that it is introduced and encountered first. It suggests that we should care only about the ultimately real nature of things—an invisible and practically unattainable ideal. On the other hand, the fact that the text quickly moves on to other, “indirect” concerns cannot but indicate some kind of inadequacy or insufficiency to the former, some failure to tell the whole truth or the truth we need.

As far as the text is concerned, the agency of gods, however basic to this understanding of government, largely drops out of the picture. The remainder of the text's attention covers it up. It's possible to read that fact, in the light of Weber, as a sign of a this-worldly emphasis of the sort that presaged disenchantment. However, I take the *Clear Mirror* as realizing in itself a basic principle of this cosmo-moral order. That is, it embodies the knowledge that the *snang tshul*, the way things appear—in other words, all we living beings can ever ordinarily perceive—always mediates our awareness of the *gnas tshul*, the way things really are, in excess of everyday life. W.C. Smith called this “the transcendence of reality over the known.”⁸³ (I am also reminded of the concepts of human dependence and limitation in the theological writings of Rowan Williams.)⁸⁴ The emphasis on our own world of appearances, in spite of that which exceeds it, is not a dismissal of any higher truth, so much as a reminder of the possibility of looking back upon this world from a perspective other than its own. Their juxtaposition, in other words, couples together the pragmatism as well as the humility that are both occasioned by living with an awareness of excess. If this preamble situates the text's central concerns in the context of an otherworldly, perfected activity, one ultimately truer than the shared distortions of our apparent world, it also draws attention to the simultaneous desirability and inadequacy of that background, and the ordinary difficulty of keeping both in view. Championing the

⁸³ In Baird (ed.) 1975: 20.

⁸⁴ See e.g. Williams 2002.

true sense of the cosmos is simultaneously an admission of the utter dominance of the way things appear over our forms of life, and the recognition that they are, always and everywhere, exceeded.⁸⁵

This device of true sense and indirect sense is revealed as a way of thinking about politics that arrests and focuses the discordance between the world one perceives and acts upon, and truths that elude or even oppose it. Like a fixative agent, it keeps that relationship from collapsing in either direction. We should avoid collapsing it ourselves. Humans cannot invoke something that exceeds them and misrepresent it for their own purposes without also being enabled and shaped by it in turn. Sangyé Gyatso teaches us and forces us to confront that fact. The point here is hardly to launch a broadside against the very idea of legitimation, however much I am convinced that for Tibet it has become an entrenched habit of thought, a one-size-fits-all answer that needlessly limits what we stand to learn from our sources. Much less is it to champion religion as a better candidate than politics for doing history, however much the latter disavows the former to its own peril. It is a call to respond to this other world by thinking through the bulky, distracting, and seemingly redundant ideas that permeated its texts and (as we will see) were also realized in its performances, rituals, and architecture. Our attempts to make sense of this world, and the interactions it staged between human relations and what exceeds them, needs that careful attention to what Chakrabarty called “the unnecessarily elaborate panoply.”

To conclude, my attempts to reconstruct some of Sangyé Gyatso's sophisticated thinking and complex projects will occasionally gesture in this manner to ways that ordering discourses—about buddhas and kings, cosmologies and political projects of human flourishing, ultimate truths and conventional appearances—also reflect critically or aspirationally on their own situation, on the

⁸⁵ Another apt comparison here is to Augustine. In the words of Amy Hollywood (2016): “As for the boundary between Christianity and the world, in the Latin West a distinction was made early on between the 'city of God' and the 'city of humanity,' but Augustine, who most famously argues the point, insists that the former can never fully be known as long as we are residents in the latter. For Augustine, the two can never be entirely disentangled in the present time (*saeculum*, the temporal realm, as opposed to the eternal, of which we have only obscure glimpses). What this means concretely is that Christians stand in a critical relationship to the temporal realm from the perspective of hope given in things as yet only dimly known, not from the standpoint of fully present and authoritative knowledge.”

desirability of the ideal but also its distance from the actual, and the constant work it takes to close that gap. It may also be helpful to think here in terms of questions and answers: if the ideological arguments and works of a Buddhist state take the form of answers—confident statements about the true nature of the ruler, the success of this government, the shape of the world—they also assume certain questions by the very act of answering them. Here I see a way that we might constructively re-read Bourdieu's critical quip, quoted at the start, that *doxa* means “answering 'yes' to a question I have not asked.” An unasked question is a question nonetheless, albeit one fossilized into the very forms of an established order. By attempting to name and enact a vision of ruler and rule, that is, Sangyé Gyatso was also posing and grappling with questions about what it meant to be human and what kinds of success human beings were capable of achieving. His massive literary corpus is a testament to those encounters. He came up with answers to questions posed within and on the cosmological and theological terms of a Buddhist world that extended far beyond human beings. Although a political order may be intimately and ultimately connected to power, it was for the exact same reason an occasion for thought.

CHAPTER TWO. CELEBRATING THE WORLD: SPEECHMAKING AND PERFECTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter studies Sangyé Gyatso's effort to implement a new official model of public speaking. That model was articulated in his text *New Year's Speechmaking (Lo gsar 'bel gtam)*, written in 1694.¹ This text, composed at the behest of some court orators, gave a general rubric for organizing speeches for various occasions and audiences. The bulk of the text consists of a sample speech in its entirety, hypothetically to be delivered by Sangyé Gyatso himself inside the great hall of the Potala palace at the advent of the 1695 new year.

My approach is to consider public speaking as a technique for making cosmo-moral order visible. Doing so entails thinking about both the content and the form of speeches, as well as their performative quality, the settings in which they were delivered, and the ways the speaker situated this circumscribed environment in relation to a larger world. I will argue that speeches enacted the ordered state over which the Ganden Phodrang government ideally ruled. That state was tied to two important and closely related Buddhist concepts: the vital dispensation (*bstan srid*) and the Perfected Age (*rdzogs ldan*). The “dispensation” of a buddha refers to the life of their teachings. It is the form or forms that the dharma takes within the world. A dispensation is “vital” in the sense that it is subject to the same vicissitudes of growth and decay as life itself. Steven Collins, describing the cognate Pāli concept of the *sāsana*, captures the idea perfectly when he writes that “the *dhamma* can never end; *sāsana*-s come and go.”² Sustaining the vital dispensation from a center of power was a prerogative of government. It was

¹ I will cite it by this abbreviated title. The contents of this manual were briefly surveyed by Schaeffer (2006), who was the first to put this work by Sangyé Gyatso on the map and acknowledge its relevance for understanding politics and religion in the Ganden Phodrang era. My remarks here are intended to extend and elaborate on his initial foray.

² Collins 2010: 118.

therefore also a criterion for evaluating success, as well as a means for situating such a center with respect to adjacent political formations. In general, the dispensation observes a tragic history of decline, from an initial full flourishing all the way down to an age when only traces or simulacra remain. “Perfected Age” names the temporality within which that ideal state is most fully realized (more on this term below).

These concepts—which bear not just religious and political, but also moral, aesthetic, and cosmological resonances—were central to the overall vision of rule that Sangyé Gyatso promulgated. (They were also regularly invoked by the fifth Dalai Lama.) While scholars of Buddhism in South and Southeast Asia have long recognized the crucial importance of *sāsana* for Buddhist polity, for Tibet more often the emphasis has been on the famous “patron-priest” relationship (or “donor-officiant,” *yon mchod*) as the dominant framework, from the Yuan dynasty all the way up to the twentieth century.³ That relationship comports neatly with the bedrock notion—whether espoused or critiqued—of Tibet as a fundamentally religious entity, in partnership with fundamentally political neighbors. Such is not to belittle the importance of the patronage relationship, let alone the monastic order, in Tibet. For sure, this concept appeared regularly in the rhetoric of seventeenth-century Tibetan Buddhist government. However, I am arguing that the dispensation—and the closely-related cosmological ideal of the Perfected Age—were the operative concepts for situating this government and articulating the nature and purposes of rule. In fact, a comparison of the Desi’s new model with a much older template for speeches will render that difference explicit.

³ The classic study is Seyfort Rugg 1991. He takes the relationship between Phakpa and Qubilai as formative of this paradigm in Tibetan and Inner Asian polity overall. He also resists the common appellation “priest-patron” for *mchod yon*, on the grounds that the Christian origins of “priest” miscast a role better understood as that of “preceptor-officiant of a donor-prince in the Buddhist world order,” while “patron” unfittingly implies “a person placed in a position superior to the latter [officiant].” Seyfort Rugg 1991: 446.

It is appropriate to address such concepts in the present chapter, not only to put these pervasive ideas on our radar, but especially because of the participatory role of celebratory speechmaking in making that order visible. “Visibility” should be understood here on two levels. First, it can be said straightforwardly that public speaking was a way to explicitly pronounce on the nature of the world and the state of rule that ordered it. It was a means for disseminating official discourse (or propaganda, if one prefers). Second, and more abstractly, stylized rhetorical performance may also be understood as a means for bringing into being (albeit ephemerally) the cognitive and affective experience of actually knowing and occupying that ideal state. A good speech, that is, portrayed the world just as the Ganden Phodrang ought to rule it: complete peace and absolute enjoyment. If a speech is a communicative vehicle that delivers specific information, it is equally a creative act that determines how knowledge is structured and what sort of understanding results from it. It situates audiences with respect to an ideal that might not ordinarily be perceived. As such, and in keeping with the larger theoretical orientation of this dissertation, I am suggesting that we think of public speaking in both ideological and utopian dimensions together. That is to say, it participates in the project of reproducing an ideal order (a requirement of a legitimate state of rule) while also enabling critical or aspirational reflection on the distance between that ideal and the world of experience.

This choice to think in terms of order and incongruity together marks a departure from the instrumentalist approach to religion and politics critiqued in Chapter One. At first glance, the very idea of studying a regulated, official mode of discourse, like this one that Sangyé Gyatso designed and practiced, may seem to pose itself as a question about political representation. How did this government craft and disseminate its self-image? How did it try to represent (or misrepresent) itself to others? And how did it make use of Buddhism in doing so? I have no intention of denying this superficial level of analysis; I mean rather to incorporate it into a broader understanding. Hence my

insistence that the art of speaking also works at the level of *reality* and not just its representation. It was part and parcel of the very project of ordering the world.

Sangyé Gyatso's new vision for public speaking marked a major shift at the level of both content and form. For centuries, speeches in Tibet were intimately tied to the act of producing and dedicating merit—a collaborative effort between the lay and monastic components of society. The contents of those speeches tacked between the genealogies of ruling families and the history of the Buddhist monastic community. The aforementioned conceptual framework of the patronage relationship between donors and officiants—or what we might call sowers and cultivators of the “field” of merit—was directly implicated in the reproduction of that tandem socio-political ideal, as we will see. In marked contrast, Sangyé Gyatso's public speakers situated their audiences according to an order centered around a Buddhist ruler. This new model was organized according to the eschatological imperative of safeguarding and promoting the vital dispensation, not the soteriological imperative of generating and dedicating merit. It also abandoned the dichotomous lay-clerical structure of the earlier speeches, instead adopting the centrifugal pattern of a buddha presiding over a surrounding audience (which, of course, also echoed the pattern of a king and his retinue). These new speeches were highly reflexive acts: designed not only to be exquisitely learned affairs, but also to draw attention to that very learned quality and the importance of eloquence. A skillful court orator would be a dynamic figure, adaptable to any audience or occasion, conjurer of a scene of vast erudition, celebration, and enjoyment—a pleasure in knowledge and a knowledge of that pleasure.

First, we will consider a few historiographical accounts of Sangyé Gyatso's own speeches, to familiarize ourselves with the basic practice and its contexts in late seventeenth-century Lhasa. This setting of the stage will then lead us into the text of the *New Year's Speechmaking*. Our assessment of that text will focus first on the act of public speaking, especially the qualities of the speaker and the strategies for beginning and ending a speech and crafting its contents. Second, it will explore their

characteristic fivefold structure, based on the pervasive Buddhist commentarial device best known in Sanskrit and Pāli as the *nidāna*. We will then compare Sangyé Gyatso's model to what I provisionally refer to as the “standard model” for public speaking, which antedated it. The purpose of the comparison is to draw out a structural difference between these two models and connect it in turn to an analogous difference at the level of cosmo-moral order itself. At the heart of that difference are the respective organizing concepts of the dispensation and the patronage relationship, as just discussed. Recognizing that difference will enable broader reflection on my overall theme: public speaking as a technique for making cosmo-moral order visible. I conclude that the celebratory performance of a speech was a way of conjuring the cognitive and affective reality of a new Perfected Age, hence briefly collapsing (and thereby calling attention to) the distance between ideal and actual.

BEYOND PERSUASION: SANGYÉ GYATSO AS AN ORATOR

Let us now turn to the practice itself. The scene is Lhasa in the year 1697. At this moment, the long years of conspiracy were finally and fully over. The hiding of the fifth Dalai Lama's death was now an officially acknowledged fact. Publicity, rather than secrecy, was the rule of the day. The young sixth Dalai Lama, Tshangyang Gyatso, was en route to Lhasa to assume the position for which he had been born. It was certainly a high moment for the Desi Sangyé Gyatso, who (at least for the time being) had emerged unscathed from his perceived transgressions against Qinghai and Beijing.⁴ Soon this young boy, kept out of sight almost his entire life, would ascend to the peak of the Potala palace and take his

⁴ For a review of events leading up to 1697, see especially Schwieger 2014: 71–80, 91–103, with emphasis on Tibetan political documents; and Ahmad 1970: 305–23, relying on entries in the *Qing Shilu*. Generally speaking, as Schwieger (2014: 78–79) suggests, from the Chinese perspective the hiding of the Dalai Lama's death was interpreted through the lens of the ongoing conflict between Dzungar Mongols, lead by Galden Khan, and the Khalkhas of Qinghai, who had—to the chagrin of the Tibetans—ritually submitted to Kangxi in May 1691 (Ahmad 1970: 151). Namely, Sangyé Gyatso was thought to have concealed the Dalai Lama's death with the intention of misleading Galden in order to prolong the conflict towards his own ends rather than those of the Qing. Kangxi was also irked by a number of smaller slights, including the Panchen Lama's repeated refusals of his invitations to Beijing, ostensibly out of fear of smallpox, which he took as further indication of Sangyé Gyatso's meddling.

place at the epicenter of the Ganden Phodrang government as its next ruler. Like his predecessor the fifth Dalai Lama, Tshangyang Gyatso was construed as a human projection of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, once again with the specific identity of a “renunciate king” (*sdom brtson rgyal po'i tshul bzung ba*), sixth of the seven consecutive rebirths that were expected.⁵

The sixth Dalai Lama's trip to Lhasa unfolded over many months and with much fanfare. Every stage of the journey—starting from his virtual house arrest in Tshona to his ordination by the Panchen Lama at the fort of Nakartsé, to the majestic encampment set up for his reception at Nyethang, southwest of Lhasa, and finally up the slope of Marpori and through the “old” Potala into the great hall of the new Red Palace (see Chapter Six)—was accompanied by elaborate ceremonial. Through each region he passed, the boy was feted by local inhabitants of the area, held audiences with lay and clerical dignitaries of various ranks and stations, gave blessings and received lavish offerings. There was also a good amount of feasting involved. For Sangyé Gyatso, these celebrations were a prime opportunity to speak. His *Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama*, recounting the stages of the young boy's journey to Lhasa, includes detailed descriptions of two such speeches. While the practice of public speaking was hardly infrequent in Tibet, indeed accompanying many formal events, the historiographical sources usually offer few details beyond the sheer fact of a speech having taken place. On the other hand, manuals for speechmaking, as we will see, can be very specific about their subject matter and formal

⁵ The typical expression is *ngur smrig gar gyi rol pa zam ma chad pa bdun*. The Desi frequently invoked this idea of Avalokiteśvara taking only seven births as a Dalai Lama. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 8 (ja-2): 187, 199; *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 1061; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 25a; *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 367–68; and *Lha sa skor tshad*: 20b–21a. He even placed this affirmation in the mouth of the fifth Dalai Lama on his deathbed: *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 26b. The roots of the idea lie in teachings of the Kadampa. The seven Dalai Lamas were likened the seven layers of bark on the juniper tree (*shug pa'i shun grangs*) at Reting monastery, a detail plucked from the depictions of Reting in the story of Ratnadāsa (*Bka' gdams glegs bam bu chos* 2012: 179–80). In that story, the following exegesis is given: “The fact that there are seven layers [of bark] indicates a profound karmic connection, whereby in the final five-hundred-year period [of the dispensation], in answer to the prayers to assist living beings, seven consecutive Victors will give protection.” Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 8 (ja-2): 215. Sangyé Gyatso also quoted from a vision recounted in the fifth Dalai Lama's “secret” autobiography: *'gro don spyod pa'i skye ba bdun/ rim byung khyod nyid lnga pa ste*. The idea of seven Dalai Lamas was also invoked by the Jaya Paṇḍita Losang Trinlé, in his biographies of the first, third, and sixth Dalai Lamas in his *Thob yig* (Blo bzang 'phrin las 1981, vol. 3: 106a.6, 138b.2, 285b.2, 289a.6, 298b.3).

procedures. They are also peppered with performance notes, recommending ways to modify a basic template for different settings, or how to expand or contract portions of the overall speech. This discrepancy between the documentary and prescriptive evidence reveals a significant gap in our historical knowledge, a healthy reminder that much of what took place within the quotidian political and ritual environment of late seventeenth-century Lhasa remains beyond our purview.

As already discussed, there is an undeniable propagandistic element to public speaking. It afforded an excellent opportunity for showing off one's learning, for the glory of self or institution, and a means to sway a crowd and convince them of what to believe. In this spirit, it has even been claimed that “the majority of Sangyé Gyatso's writings in the mid-1690s represent various efforts to argue for the supreme and just rule of the Ganden Government,” namely by extolling the Dalai Lama.⁶ The enthronement of a Dalai Lama would have been an absolutely stellar occasion for the Desi to make his case. At this precarious moment of transition, here was a chance to circulate a preferred viewpoint among an attentive and influential audience of high lay and monastic officials, patrons, Tibetan and Mongol nobility, emissaries from the Qing court, and other members of the political elite. However, a speech did more than just impress patrons or make a persuasive case for some preferred version of events. It also reached out to its audience directly, embedding them in the world it described. There is, in other words, a level at which a speech is not so much delivering knowledge as implicating the audience in its production. It determines the *shape* and the *dynamics* of knowledge, in addition to giving the facts. We might say that a speech forges a link between the wide world “out there” and the live, controlled scene “in here.” Speaking was as much an embodied activity as a discursive one.

This tension between the suasive power of discourse and the context-dependent nature of performance is a major thread running through the long Western rhetorical tradition. According to

⁶ Schaeffer 2006: 193.

Aristotle, one of the defining features of rhetoric, as Paul Ricoeur reminds us, was being directed to the hearer: “Rhetoric is a phenomenon of the intersubjective and dialogical dimension of the public use of speech.”⁷ Yet that dialogical quality—achieved by reference to personal character (*ethos*), appeal to emotions (*pathos*), or reasoned argument (*logos*)—is generally understood as subordinate to rhetoric’s fundamental goal of persuasion. After the linguistic turn we have become more attuned to the performative and constructive capacities of speech—a means of changing not just minds but also the world itself. Language, as J.Z. Smith suggests, is “an enterprise of fabrication in both senses of the term: an affair of both building and lying.”⁸ We ought to follow Smith’s suggestion and look not only for the strategic delivery of ideological content—and what is ideology but distortion, a practice of lying?—but additionally think about how a speech could also be “an affair of building,” a creative practice. I take inspiration here from Augustine, who was both a learned participant in the rhetorical tradition and a strident opponent of persuasion as an end in itself. Augustine felt that there was bigger game afoot for the religious orator. In *On Christian Doctrine*, he argued that the creative powers of speaking are best wielded, “not that the listener may be pleased by what has horrified him, nor that he may do what he has hesitated to do, but that he may be aware of that which lay hidden.”⁹ Heeding this dispatch, I suggest we think of Tibetan public speaking as a technique for envisioning—that is to say, un-hiding—a particular vision of cosmo-moral order. Angela Zito made a similar insight in her study of Chinese cosmology and court ritual. She sought to expand the study of Qing polity beyond the positivist reconstruction of political history as a sequence of significant instances. The cosmologically-informed rituals that occupied the court were, in her words, performative techniques for making visible

⁷ Ricoeur 1977: 32.

⁸ Smith 1987: 41.

⁹ Augustine 1987: IV.11.

“the invisible discourses within which 'politics' emerges as a possible object at all.”¹⁰ We might consider Tibetan public speaking thus as a way of focusing attention, making the invisible briefly visible (and felt) within the heightened atmosphere of celebration.

We see examples of that creative quality in the two speeches Sangyé Gyatso delivered during the sixth Dalai Lama's 1697 trip to Lhasa for his enthronement. The first speech was given at the large encampment set up in Nyethang, some twelve miles from Lhasa. This miniature tent city was erected for the purpose of welcoming and preparing the boy for his ascension into the Potala palace, a kind of liminal zone and space of transformation, both in a geographical sense—between Tibet's periphery and center—as well as between two radically different states of life—the utter obscurity of the boy and the absolute centrality of the Dalai Lama.¹¹ All of the major components of the new political order, Tibetans and Mongols, lay and monastic both, took their places within the encampment.¹² Though he had spent years anticipating this moment, it was only now, on the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month (Nov. 10, 1697), that the Desi came face to face with the boy at last. After their intimate and emotional first exchange in the privacy of a personal tent, the Desi led his charge into the big three-tiered tent at the center of the campgrounds for a feast to celebrate the boy's arrival. The festivities roughly reproduced the same ordering as the miniature city, the only major difference being that the Mongolian rulers and nobility, kept outside the pure zone of the tent city, were now restored to a place of precedence over their lay Tibetan counterparts.¹³ When all entered and took their places, a massive

¹⁰ Zito 1997: 15.

¹¹ The general narrative of the sixth Dalai Lama's journey, based on Sangyé Gyatso's biography of the latter, is summarized in Aris 1988: 144–51.

¹² Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 285–87. The Nyethang tent-city was organized into three concentric tiers, prioritizing the monastic social stratum (also including monastery personnel such as clerks and kitchen staff). Tibetan regional governors and military personnel were situated in the outermost of these three tiers. The encampment was sanctioned as a pure zone forbidding tobacco, alcohol, and loose speech. Mongol patrons and other visiting guests, both lay and monastic, had to set up their own camps outside its perimeter. Aris (1988: 148–49) also gives a brief depiction in English of the encampment.

¹³ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 292–93. The innermost circle (*nang skor*) around the Dalai Lama was headed by Sangyé Gyatso and Dalai Khan (inheritor of Guśri Khan's position vis-a-vis Tibet following the death of Dayan Khan). It also

welcoming ceremony began. Every guest offered gifts, each according to their station, receiving the Dalai Lama's blessing in return. Once the formal proceedings were completed, a festive mood took over. Everyone sat as the bowls and platters were sent through the rows, likewise ordered “according to station” (*go babs dang mthun pa'i bzhugs gral*). At last, the Desi took his cue and rose to begin his long speech to the assembly.

This speech started back in the distant past, laying the deep cosmological and theological background of the present scene. The foundational idea was that the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara was not a buddha-to-be (as the concept is more commonly understood) but rather a buddha-in-disguise. (We will discuss this theory at great length in the next chapter.) Sangyé Gyatso spoke of how Avalokiteśvara had already achieved buddhahood long before adopting this bodhisattva form and giving special attention to Tibet. Consequently the Dalai Lama, being a projection of that bodhisattva, was in the “true sense” (*nges don*) already a buddha. Next, the speech narrowed its focus to describe how this buddha acting in the capacity of a bodhisattva sent a vast array of forms to the world, especially to India and Tibet, and most recently as the Dalai Lamas, six thus far and seven in total. Then, narrowing even more, Sangyé Gyatso reminded his audience of the special favor the fifth Dalai Lama had granted him, “viewing my dirt-clod form as gold,” especially by bequeathing to the Desi immediate control over all clerical and secular responsibilities of governance and entrusting the secret order to hide his death. At this point, the speech's timeline catches up and merges with its own moment. Sangyé Gyatso tells the

included also the Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama's family, and aides-de-camp such as Ngawang Samten. For the main audience, the text orders and lists attendees by their specific groups, giving a representative name or two for each. First come the clergy (*ser mo ba*), subdivided by type: reincarnate lamas (*sprul sku khag*); preceptors (*mkhan po'i rigs*); abbots (*chos rje*); headmasters of particular monasteries (*mgon khag gi bla slob dpon*), foremost being the three major Geluk institutions; and then general monastic officials (*spyi las sne*); heads of assembly (*dbu chos*); heads of regional units and subunits (*kham tshan mi tshan*); and privileged monks (*dbon chos mdzad*). After these monks, the Desi lists, in order, Mongolian princes (*sog po'i rgyal khag*); and their wives (*dpon mo*); Mongolian nobility (*sog po drag rigs*); regional governors (*sde dpon*); secretaries to high lamas at Tashilhunpo and elsewhere (*bla chen gyi phyag mdzod*); the Dalai Lama's personal staff (*nang rnam*); and government employees (*drung 'khor*), noble, middle, and common (*drag 'bring dkyus*); and military leaders, presumably head archers and cavalry (*?skya lding rta drel khag gi 'go ba*).

story of the sixth Dalai Lama, right up to his arrival in Nyethang that very same day. Spatially as well as temporally, the story and the experience of hearing it fold into one another. Seated right there in the flesh before the audience, the sixth Dalai Lama morphed from a character in the speech into part of the act of speaking it. His arrival, the speech concluded, should be understood as undeniable and inevitable, “like the rising sun which the hand cannot cover up.”¹⁴

That closing metaphor is emblematic of how the speech was structured to implicate itself. Its movements in time and space pinpointed its own occasion, the here-and-now of the celebration, the inevitable end of a continuous movement from the larger universe all the way into the event in progress. The effect is to suggest that the whole cosmos led up to that very moment. This narrowing-and-centering technique was a trademark of the Desi's model for speaking, and a point of departure from the older pattern, as we will see. The audience's gaze, first cast out to the farthest reaches, was carried inward until it found itself inside the event in progress, looking at the actual boy seated before them, the manifest validation of everything that built up to him, something obvious, visible, inevitable. There it all was, right in front of you, as undeniable as the sun's glare. (As an aside, the rising sun was also a key metaphor for the dawning of a new Perfected Age.) This speech (so says the Desi) was a great success, by which he meant both a convincing account and a source of pleasure.¹⁵ After his speech, the festivities continued from morning until night, over many sessions of tea, with Indian and Chinese music and dancing during the breaks. The audience saw rainbows span overhead and a halo

¹⁴ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 293.

¹⁵ To summarize the audience's reaction, Sangyé Gyatso quoted a wonderful verse from the fifth Dalai Lama's history of Tibet, the *Cuckoo's Song*: “The wavering arrow shot from history's straight-strung bow/ is feathered with fine speech./ It will pierce a fool's heart, but/ the learned step aside and delight to see it.” Wavering (*g.yo ba*) is the same term elsewhere used to describe the 'wagging' of the tongue in speaking. The speech-arrow gets its straight trajectory (its capacity for truth-telling) from the stabilizing feathers of eloquent and knowledgeable discourse. History is the bow that launches speech on its vector. For those who are not already well-informed, the result is to be struck with truth as if pierced by an arrow. For the wise, knowledge of the truth—and knowledge of that act of delivering the truth—also brings pleasure. The poetic figure is *guṇa-virodha*. Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 293.

form around the sun, sure signs of success and propriety. They finally dispersed under the starlight, “every wish fully sated.”¹⁶ Above all, the Desi stressed this celebratory atmosphere of enjoyment.

The second major occasion for speaking was the sixth Dalai Lama's elaborate enthronement ritual, held on the second twenty-fifth day of the tenth month of the same year (Dec. 8, 1697). The enthronement procession arrived at the Potala palace in the early morning, circling it clockwise and then entering through the central gate, climbing the long front stairway and passing through the eastern Deyang courtyard of the older White Palace (see Chapter Five). The Desi first led the young boy all the way up to his new bedroom in the Red Palace, where they halted for a quick repast of potato with clarified butter (*gro ma mar khu*)¹⁷ and pastries. In a more intimate initiation ritual, the boy was given ablutions echoing the consecration of buddhas upon their awakening. Then he was led down to the Red Palace's great hall. After the enthronement, there followed a lavish succession of gifts (headed by the Desi's own offering), organized by category and color into fivefold supports of body (white), speech (red), mind (blue), quality (yellow), and activity (green). Scholars stood up in the seated ranks to talk about the history of the eight auspicious symbols and the seven marks of kingship (both were affiliated with royal investiture; see the description of the Great Worship Assembly procession in Chapter Three). Then the Kangxi emperor's edict and gifts were delivered by his representative, the second Jangkya (Ngawang Losang Chöden, 1642–1714). Lastly, gifts were offered by many other high monastic and lay officials, Chinese, Tibetan, and Mongolian, all of whom are listed in order in the Desi's *Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama*.¹⁸ All together, he wrote, they filled to overflowing both “old” and “new” great

¹⁶ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 294.

¹⁷ *Gro ma* is a kind of wild sweet potato; *gro ma mar khu* was evidently a new year's delicacy in Kham. Thargyal 2007: 107.

¹⁸ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 321ff.

halls of the palace. At last another great celebratory feast began. When the feasting-cup was sent around (*dga' ston gyi dkar yol btang*), again the Desi rose to deliver his performance.

On this occasion he sculpted his speech around the rubric of the “five excellences” (*phun tshogs lnga*), namely, the situational categories of place (*gnas*), time (*dus*), teacher (*ston pa*), audience (*'khor*), and topic (*chos*). These five categories are familiar for their ties to the *nidāna* (Tib. *gleng gzhi*), the hermeneutic framework by which most Buddhist sūtras and some other scriptures (e.g., tantras and medical texts) secured the link between a buddha's speech act and its subsequent representation. As used to structure a speech, the five categories located the event-in-progress at the center of an encompassing world. This speech's theme was the ruler's enthronement (the event-in-progress) as the *sine qua non* of all goodness in the world.¹⁹ It concluded with prayers to the longevity of the sixth's rule and the greatness of his reign, and praises of the auspiciousness of this new Perfected Age and the glory that would follow from it. After the Desi's speech, the celebration in the latter part of the day was given over to other “ordinary orators” (*byings kyi 'bel gtam*) who gave speeches in the “age-old tradition” (*gna' bo'i lugs srol*).²⁰ The evening was capped by dancing out in the Deyang courtyard. Concluding his account, the Desi again invoked the celebratory aesthetic of speechmaking: these fine words fell upon

¹⁹ For instance, the Desi's speech quoted from the *Puñyabāla-avadāna* (*Bsod nams stobs kyi rtogs brjod*; Tōh. 347): “Bhiksus! Once a king is empowered, there will be wealth, prosperity, peace, fine crops, population increase, quelling of strife and quarrel, an end to war, thievery, illness, and famine, and there will be rice and sugarcane, cattle and buffalo, and the king will protect his regnum according to the dharma as if it were his only son, and become victorious in every direction.” The Desi added that the benefits of having any kind of king on the throne—foremost being the wealth and means for translating the buddha's word (*bka' bsgyur ba sogs*)—are so commonly known even to ordinary folk (*byings*), they should be all the more evident when that ruler is additionally a divine being playing the part of a renunciate king (*sdom brtson rgyal po'i tshul bzung ba*) such as the fifth and sixth Dalai Lamas.

²⁰ The Desi named two speakers: the Mamépa Geshé Chöphel (Rma med pa Dge bshes Chos 'phel) and the Trukché Menrampa Kunzang Gyatso (Phrug che sman rams pa Kun bzang rgya mtsho). The former was a not infrequent speechmaker in the Desi's court. He is mentioned giving speeches several times in vol. 6 (cha) of the Desi's continuation of the fifth Dalai Lama's *Dukūla* biography. They include didactic teachings to the assembly (*tshogs bshad*) summarizing the *Tomb Inventory* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 10 (ja-4): 354, 393); a discourse on the seven tokens of kingship (ibid.: 362); a celebratory speech (*'bel gtam*) during a feast in the eighth month of water-monkey (1692) on the occasion of offerings by a number of Chinese officials including an imperial emissary (*gser yig pa*) (ibid.: 380–81); and another speech to the seated rows extolling the gift of a Chinese brocade tapestry for the Red Palace great hall in the water-bird year (ibid.: 455–56; see Chapter Six).

the audience, he wrote, “as if it were the wealth of Jambhala, Lord who Keeps the Dark, celebrating among the stars, falling down to earth.”²¹

These two accounts are, to my knowledge, two of the most detailed depictions on record of the contents and contexts of actual speeches. The reason may be just that it was the Desi himself, who cared enough about speeches to write an entire text on the practice, who was speaking, and who recounted the event. More often we find a mere word or two—*bel gtam byas*, “a speech was given”—and nothing more. His accounts flesh out some of what was happening in and around speeches, not to mention the aesthetic register in which they were conducted and evaluated. They also clearly demonstrate the ways each performance was embedded in its own immediate event. In both examples, the setting was one of celebration. In a sense, to celebrate is itself a reflexive act. It is just to acknowledge a present state of enjoyment. That festive setting lends these events a self-referential quality. Formally, both speeches were crafted to focus on their immediate fact. The first zeroed in on its moment, carrying the cosmology, the characters, and the historical events into the live and present situation, all landing upon the boy seated before them. Likewise, as will be discussed below, the second speech's organizing device of the “five excellences” played a localizing function. The *nidāna*, as a rhetorical technique, was a means for tethering depictions of cosmo-moral order to an ultimately self-referential gesture, one that called attention to the perfect quality of the occasion, as harbinger of the spectacular beginning, the Perfected Age itself.

The enjoyment of a Perfected Age was a key concept for both the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso. It recurred with considerable frequency in their writings. To cite one of the earliest and most well-known examples, the fifth Dalai Lama employed this concept as the titular theme of his

²¹ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 323. For *smug 'dzin dbang po* read *rmugs 'dzin dbang po* < Skt. *Jambhala-indra*. Compare a similar passage in the *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 91a, describing the festival following the consecration of the World's Unique Ornament tomb as “stealing the glory of Indra and Jambala” (*skabs gsum pa dang rmugs 'dzin dbang po'i dpal 'phrog pa*).

celebratory history of Tibet, the *Cuckoo's Song* of 1643, written concurrently with the inauguration of his Ganden Phodrang government. The cuckoo, or “spring queen” as it was poetically named, sang to celebrate the onset of Spring. This work of history had an analogous function, celebrating the dawning of the new order in which the dispensation could again flourish. The work's full title even named it the “celebration of a new Perfected Age,” hence a paean to the start of a new “spring” season, so to speak, for the entire world. The reunification of Tibet meant that the world was turning back over from an era of degeneracy (*snyigs dus*) into a time of pleasure and peace.

Like the four seasons, the Perfected Age named the first of four ages in a larger cyclical patterning of time. As Sangyé Gyatso described it, that tragic succession of ages could be qualified in two ways: in terms of morality (*chos kyi dbang du btang ba*), as a decline of virtue and right conduct; or in terms of the quality of life (*longs spyod kyi dbang du btang ba*), as a decline of enjoyment, health, prosperity, and pleasure.²² It would be followed in turn by an “Age of Three” (*sum ldan*) and an “Age of Two” (*gnyis ldan*). Each started at the elimination of one of the four so-called “limbs” (*rkang pa*) or “roots” (*rtsa ba*) of dharma. When only one “limb” remained, the final Age of Conflict (*rtsod ldan*) would begin. By the cyclical logic, it was just this unwholesome and unpleasant state that catalyzed the dissatisfaction animating the renunciatory ideal, which in turn made a new buddhahood possible and hence a new Perfected Age. And, as the fifth Dalai Lama himself stated explicitly at the start of his *Cuckoo's Song*, the Perfected Age also depended intimately on kingship, which furnished the material precondition for the flourishing of a buddha's dispensation.²³ In addition to its aesthetic and ethical

²² *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 214ff; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 35b–36a

²³ Hence the very first sentence of the *Cuckoo's Song* announced—like a thesis statement—that the dispensation depended on a king. That fact justified why this text—as a work of history—would itself begin by narrating the genealogy of the Ikṣvāku race, the royal lineage into which the Śākyamuni Buddha chose to be born. In the fifth Dalai Lama's words: “Now, the precious dispensation (*bstan pa rin po che*) of this Aikṣvāka Victor [Śākyamuni], for whom the divine drumbeat booms all over the three realms, praising him as like a white lotus, because the truth-power (*bden stobs*) that is the exquisite force of the mighty surge of his five hundred prayers is so pure—[that dispensation] is kindred [*rtsa lag*, “roots-and-branches”] to all the goodness and peace realized materially in the good works of living beings, the gods too. The action of its emergence, development, and upward spread depends on a great king who wields authority over the vast earth. That is why even our

dimensions, the concept was also cosmological, a way of situating oneself within the patterning of time. As Sangyé Gyatso discussed at length in his *Tomb Inventory*, this doctrine of the four ages found classical articulation in canonical works like the *Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra*, Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, and the *Lokaprajñapti*, as well as tantras like the *Samvarodaya*.²⁴ The idea also featured in the Kālacakra system, which used a very different method for calculating the lengths of each of the four ages (hence also determining when the next Perfected Age would begin).²⁵

ORALITY AND TEXT: THE ETHICS OF SPEAKING

Both of the above speeches were tied to the Desi's own texts. The first corresponded closely to his *Elixir for the Ear* (*Rna ba'i bcud len*). This work identified itself as a “story of the transference of consciousness from fifth to sixth Dalai Lamas.” The Desi produced two editions of this text, one shorter and one longer, by extracting from his own continuation volumes of the *Dukūla* (the fifth Dalai

own buddha, once he beheld the five sights of his clan, country, time, lineage, and mother, took birth as the son of [king] Śuddhodhana. Therefore we must begin [this text] by briefly discussing the line of his [Ikṣvāku] race.” Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 22 (dza): 4.

²⁴ For Sangyé Gyatso's review of these and other sources, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 214–23.

²⁵ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 223–29. To give a brief summary: the Kālacakra system incorporated a sequence of a “greater” four ages (*dus bzhi chen po*) and a “lesser” four ages (*dus bzhi chung ngu*). In fact there were two instances of the latter, one after the other. The first, the “earlier propagation” (*snga dar*), spanned from the death of Śākyamuni until the future conquest of the barbarians under the Kalkī king Rudracakrī. The second, yet to come, was the “later propagation” (*phyi dar*). Both greater and lesser cycles followed the same sequence from Perfected Age to Age of Three, Age of Two, and Age of Conflict. The “greater” Age of Conflict was 432,000 years long; and each of the first three ages was, respectively, four times (1,728,000), three times (1,296,000), and two times (864,000) as long, making an entire cycle of ten portions (4+3+2+1) or 4,320,000 years total. The calculation of the “earlier propagation” of the “lesser” four ages is more complicated. It must be inferred by adding up the reigns of the kings of Shambhala (most but not all one hundred years), starting from the revelation of the Kālacakra to Sucandra three years before his death, all the way up to Rudracakrī's conquest in his ninety-seventh year (heralding the start of the next Perfected Age). In this fashion, Sangyé Gyatso adduced a total of nearly 3,304 years, which when divided by four gives 826 years per age. For the “later propagation,” Sangyé Gyatso worked backwards from the knowledge (per *Kālacakra Laghutantra* I.88) that the entire period would be 21,600 years long, or the same as the number of breaths taken over one day of the śakti gods (*nus pa*). He divided that number by four to get 5,400 years; and then divided again by twelve (for each of the twelve continents in the world) to get 450 years per continent per age. Multiplying 450 by four (for Jambudvīpa alone) gave a length of the entire “later propagation” on Jambudvīpa of 1,800 years. Adding 3,304 + 1,800 gives 5,104 years total. (Hence close but not quite equivalent to the 5,000 years or ten periods of five hundred that he derived from Daṃṣṭṛsena's Prajñāpāramitā commentaries.) 5,104 is the number Sangyé Gyatso used to triangulate his own era in terms of its distances from Śākyamuni's death in the past, and the new age to come in the future; see e.g. *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 230; and *Lo gsar 'bel gnam*: 39b.

Lama's autobiography) just those particular details relevant to this affair.²⁶ The contents and ordering of the *Elixir for the Ear* correspond exactly to the sequence of topics in that speech: the theology of the bodhisattva-as-buddha, the history of Avalokiteśvara's attention to Tibet, the bequeathing of power to Sangyé Gyatso, the demise and death of the fifth Dalai Lama, the hiding of his death, and the search for his reincarnation. In fact, if the colophons to both extant versions of the *Elixir* are to be believed, the Desi did not assemble this tale only as a desparate *mea culpa* for the unfathomable breach of protocol of making the Qing emperor and the Qośot Khan out for fools. This apologetic or propagandistic aspect of the *Elixir* has already been noted and cannot be denied.²⁷ But effects of that sort were also tied to the literary and performative capacities afforded by this shift from the longer *Dukūla* to the two shorter versions of the *Elixir*; a shift from turgid biographical accounting to the cohesive narrative flow of a “story” (*gtam*) meant to be told aloud. Indeed, Sangyé Gyatso insisted that these new versions were justified “by the expectation of their performance at the fortunate celebration upon meeting with the sixth Dalai Lama.”²⁸ He knew the sixth's arrival in Lhasa was a certainty on the near horizon, and that it would be an occasion for celebration on a major scale, hence an opportunity to speak. The

²⁶ Based on a passage in the *Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama*, Aris (1988: 143) mentions three versions of the text, a long (*rgyas*), middle-length (*'bring*), and short (*bsdus*) version. In Sarnath, I was shown a 35-folio abridged manuscript version of the *Rna ba'i bcud len* that had been photographed in Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) by the scholar Ngawang Tsepak (he has also published a transcription of the longer xylographic edition). It is possible that the former is the “short” version of the text. The colophons of this manuscript and the extant xylographic edition (110 folios) show minor differences. While Aris assumed that this xylographic edition might be the so-called “long” version, instead I think there were only *two* versions of the *Rna ba'i bcud len* itself, and they refer instead to the “short” and “middle-length” versions. The “long” version should be none other than the Desi's three-volume continuation of the *Dukūla*. This massive work, especially volume four (*nga*), contains that same story and served as the *Elixir's* source. (It repeated huge swaths of the *Dukūla* verbatim, interpolating minor details throughout.) The Desi explicitly named the *Dukūla* as the exemplar from which he extracted the “kernel” (*snying*) of the tale to produce the shorter and middle-length versions. Both colophons of the 35-folio manuscript and 110-folio print state that fact. My hypothesis is also corroborated by the relevant passage in his *Biography of the Sixth Dalai Lama* (Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 267) which reads: “...as clearly shown in the long version, which is the three-volume *Dukūla*; and the mid-length and short versions, which are versions of the *Elixir for the Ear*...” (*rgyas pa du kū la po ti gsum du mchis la/ 'bring bsdus rna ba'i bcud len le tshan du gsal ba ltar yin pas...*)

²⁷ Aris (1988: 143) says: “[The Desi] was surer in his grasp of internal politics than foreign relations, and his mastery of the former is especially evident in the way he chose to disclose the old secret to the officials and public of Tibet and to his Mongol patrons at carefully timed intervals. He composed for this purpose an official account of the whole circumstances of the interregnum from the death of the Great Fifth to the discovery and recognition of the Sixth.”

²⁸ *Rna ba'i bcud len*, ms. ed.: 35r; *Rna ba'i bcud len*, xyl. ed.: 109b.

expectation of orality informed the production of the text. In the fourth month (May/June 1697), the Desi tested out the short version (to great success, if you believe him) on audiences in the great hall of the Potala palace; he also had it read aloud at Tashilhunpo, and in Lhasa.²⁹ He even placed a copy in the hands of the envoys conveying to Kangxi his exculpatory letter about hiding the Dalai Lama's death—a point that has been overlooked in prior scholarship.³⁰

The importance of orality both as a means of communication and a creative act is even more clear in our second example, the speech at the sixth Dalai Lama's enthronement. The fact that the Desi organized this speech according to the “five excellences” indicates that he was drawing on a specific text: his *New Year's Speechmaking* (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*). This text, which we will now consider at length, is a manual for public speaking, mainly organized around a sample speech given in full, tailored to the wood pig new year (Feb. 1695).³¹ It advanced a model of speaking crafted around the five excellences, which mirrored the categories of the *nidāna*. This text was a universal guide to the art of

²⁹ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 268. The *Elixir* was read along with another text of the Desi's, a record of the Dalai Lama's funerary remains (*pur tshwa'i dkar chag*). Evidently when the text was read to the residents of Lhasa by the officials Shangdrongpa Dorjé (Zhang grong pa Rdo rje) and Shar Tashi (Shar Bkra shis), an old commoner exclaimed, “What grace! Up until this year, all worldly responsibility for human suffering and dharma in this land, where there has been no Dalai Lama, was borne solely by the Desi. Not knowing it was nighttime, now we see the sun rising!”

³⁰ This fact corrects Schwieger's (2014: 97) translation of the relevant correspondence, which misses that the Desi was talking about his text—most understandable, since there has been so little scholarship on Sangyé Gyatso's corpus. I suggest the following emended translation for the relevant portion of the Desi's reply to Kangxi, dated to October 1696: “Because the moment [foreordained for releasing the news] has come, we are giving notice to all patrons, headed by [you, Kangxi,] the Mahābrahma Emperor; and simultaneously we are also explaining it to the public. Nevertheless, the moment was clearly indicated in divination [and] prediction. The fact that until that [time] it was improper to announce it to the public, excepting key personnel, also accords with the intent of the oracle's prediction. As such details are communicated by [the two envoys] Nyithang Zhapdrung and Kyormolung Khenpo, along with a copy of the *Elixir for the Ear*, may this collection of orders and advice, respectfully imparted upon [your] all-knowing mind, as unbroken as a fine, smoothly-flowing stream, be respectfully understood.” For the Tibetan text, see *Bod kyi yig tshags phyogs bsgrigs* 1997: 184 (document 108).

³¹ In the work's colophon (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 45b–46a), Sangyé Gyatso stated that “two or three orators had required that the speech [form] be fixed for the continuous celebration here in the palace” (*pho brang chen po 'dir dga' ston zam ma chad par 'bel gtam pa'ang gnyis gsum re gtam 'jags dgos pa*). He also wrote that he only took up this task himself because two prominent court orators, the Namling Panchen Könchok Chödrak and the Drungrampa Chöphel (perhaps the aforementioned Geshé Chöphel), were both ill; the former then passed away, creating a dearth of properly-trained speakers. The request for Sangyé Gyatso himself to stand forth came from the Darpa Jedrung Losal Tenzin (Blo gsal bstan 'dzin), son of the Darpa Lotsāwa Ngawang Phuntsok (Ngag dbang phun tshogs, b. 1633), a major literatus in the fifth Dalai Lama's court. See Verhagen 1994: 154–56, 163–64, on translations made by the Namling Panchen and Darpa Lotsāwa in the Potala. The blockprint was produced later; its interlineal annotations refer to the *Tomb Inventory* and the *Yellow Vaidurya*, among other works.

celebratory speechmaking, meant to apply to every possible occasion. In fact, that flexibility and dynamism were central to how it portrayed the ideal speaker and his craft. The text is also stuffed with asides about what to say for each context, suggesting a universal rather than particular aim.

This second-order attention to what makes a good speaker is one of this text's distinctive features within the broader genre of speech manuals. Sangyé Gyatso portrayed oratory as an art unto itself, requiring its own specific skill-set:

Here [in the Potala], where so many ways of knowing come together,³² those who would hold forth from the seated rows as orators should not rely on a prearranged composition with a fixed program. Rather, they must attend to the particularities of the situation: what sort of event it is; the qualities of the people, noble or base, assembled there; the subject they are lecturing on; the lengths of the sections of their own speech; and so on. Therefore, a speaker must be someone who knows how to think intelligently, using their own wits.³³

It is this knack for quick thinking, extemporizing away from the book, which Sangyé Gyatso placed at the heart of a good orator. That infinitely dynamic speaker, capable of adapting to any scenario, mirrors the conception of public speaking itself as an infinitely accommodating act. The requirement to know how to think for oneself (*rang gi blo gros kyis dpyod shes pa zhig dgos*) implied an ability to pivot on the spot—to be more than just a mouthpiece for some fixed program. This plastic quality distinguished a good orator from other paragons of learning, whom the Desi had no qualms about dismissing:

There may be some people who have become knowledgeable as a function of time, but they wile away the days with idle pursuits and distractions. Some others are extreme Mahāyānists, going on to no end in their philosophical pursuit of deeper meaning, but since they belittle conventional subjects they are not so very learned. Some get into trouble with how they engage [the audience] or what they are going on about, etc., due to faults with their faculties or their voice, etc.³⁴ Or perhaps the few welcoming words are given in a

³² Tib. *lugs brgya'i 'dun sa chen po*, literally “great gathering-place of the hundred systems.” On this expression Dreyfus (2003: 189) remarks, “the great Indian texts are often described as ‘having a hundred ways [of being interpreted]’ (*lugs brgya ldan*).” This epithet for the Potala appears in colophons to grammatical works produced therein; see Verhagen 1994: 163–64.

³³ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 2b.

³⁴ This sentence remains unclear to me: *kha cig 'dren byed dang bgrod bya sogs dbang po dang ngag gi skyon sogs kyis gyod bcag*... There seems to be either a direct correspondence or analogy between the first pair (*'dren byed* and *bgrod bya*) and the second (*dbang po* and *ngag*). It is possible that the former are simply literary descriptions of the latter—recalling that *'dren byed*, that which leads or guides, also refers to the eyes (perhaps *bgrod bya* to the tongue).

motivating and enthusiastic way, but when there is no obvious path forward to accompany that motivation, their head starts to bob [i.e. they vamp and stall] and they end up wasting time. Or, having started, once the book they are teaching is closed and they have opportunity to think critically beyond it, they are incapable of making on-the-spot adjustments, so their tongues grow short.³⁵

This saucy takedown makes light of the wisdom of age and experience, the minute precision of philosophical acuity, the flashy spark of charisma, and the brute power of book-learning. Some of the most familiar stereotypes of scholastic excellence are undermined in favor of entirely different criteria: well-roundedness rather than specific depth; sharp, in-the-moment focus rather than deep but directionless knowledge. However important it is to warm up the crowd, demagoguery is never enough; one also needs to know how to deliver the goods. And the speaker must remain self-reliant, not tethered to any textual prop. The two major qualities depicted—a hypothetically universal span of knowledge, and an on-the-spot, in-the-moment attentiveness to the event—embody the very same world order which this model of speechmaking also communicates by its form, as we will now see.

HOW TO FRAME A SPEECH

The print of the *New Year's Speechmaking* numbers forty-six folios.³⁶ The bulk of the text (roughly folios 8–41) recreates a sample speech for the first day of the new year's celebration for the wood pig year (1695), albeit laced with myriad alternatives for other occasions and settings. The portions before and after that sample speech describe how to initiate and conclude various types of speeches. Here in the frame of the text, so to speak, we may detect some of the specific ways that the speaker's dynamism is to be fitted to the occasion at hand.

³⁵ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 2b-3a.

³⁶ A handwritten copy that is a tracing of the *Lo gsar 'bel gtam* blockprint is available through the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (resource W1CZ2489). However, the transcription is of extremely poor quality. A microfilm copy of the blockprint (photographed under the Nepal German Manuscript Project) is held by the Nepal National Archives (across two reels: NNA L30/32 and L31/1).

The text starts with eight stanzas of figurative *kāvya* verse, consisting of benedictions (*shis brjod*), homages (*phyag bya*), and a description of the topic (*dnegos po nges par bstan pa*). This ordering explicitly follows the instructions for introducing major literary works in Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* I.14 (corresponding respectively to the Sanskrit terms *āśis*, *namaskriyā*, and *vastunirdeśa*). Both the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso made frequent use of this model.³⁷ Though not explicitly stated, I suggest that this same formula which opens the text was also adapted to the general practice of public speaking it advocated. For instance, Sangyé Gyatso first set out the specific steps by which to initiate a speech. The speaker rises up from the seated rows, and “the cup will arrive from the assembly into the orator's hands.” They must first give a benediction (*shis pa brjod pa*) to initiate the event, most succinctly by the Sanskrit formula “Om svasti prajābhyaḥ!” The Desi showed how the speaker should interpret this phrase so that it translates the familiar Tibetan greeting, “Tashi Delek Kyegu Nam!” meaning, roughly, “Salutations all!” (or in our own idiom, “Cheers!”) He linked Daṇḍin's term *āśis* (Tib. *shis brjod*) or “benediction” with a kindred Tibetan term, the “auspicious remark” (*bkra shis pa*), allowing him to add alternative openings drawn from Buddhist scriptures, for instance on the auspiciousness of the Three Jewels. “As appropriate (*gang 'os*),” he wrote, “use either all or some of these auspicious remarks and benedictions.”³⁸ Next, in line with Daṇḍin's second category, the speaker equates speech itself with homage, also quoting Tsongkhapa to this effect:

The wondrous gift of a fine teaching
enraptures a lofty mind.

Just as the breeze carries the scent
of the sandalwood tree—
does not speech work in the same way?

Holy beings are worshipped with a gift of fine speech,
while the ignorant are content with material things.

³⁷ See e.g. 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 5–6.

³⁸ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 3a–4b.

The benefits of worshipping a Victor with things is scant,
but when one does so with a fine thought, they are limitless.³⁹

The fact that eloquent speech *qua* offering trumps material objects offers a point of contrast with earlier Tibetan speeches (as surveyed below), for which Meru-like heaps of offerings formed the centerpiece of the entire event, while the speaker's words were only there to describe them. Here, speaking becomes worship by its very utterance. One effect of folding this reflexivity into performance—speaking about the act of speaking—is to elicit a participatory quality. As the audience is educated into the knowledge that speech is the highest form of worship, they are simultaneously reminded that they stand amidst just such an act, indeed making it happen by playing the role of audience.

The third and final segment of the manual's introduction mirrors Daṇḍin's third imperative: stating the theme. Appropriately, the speaker is instructed: “you must make up your mind, as appropriate, about the kind of speech that is required.”⁴⁰ The speaker should also humble themselves for being too old, too young, or with insufficient learning to deserve the honor, meanwhile singing the praises of their audience. The preferred formula is: “I am weak, an inferior person with few qualities or virtues. But as I have strenuously trained in speaking, I raise my voice.” (The Desi may have copied his humilific style from the fifth Dalai Lama.)⁴¹ This homogeneity of the generic speaker, always the selfsame object of derision, contrasts with the variability of the audiences, who are to be praised:

³⁹ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 4b.

⁴⁰ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 5a.

⁴¹ See the Dalai Lama's text titled *Rgyud sde rgya mtshor rab 'byams smra ba rnams kyi bshad pa'i sngon 'gro'i mchod brjod kyi rim pa 'phang 'gro'i sgra dbyangs*. Here I will share one rather graceful passage, from which the Desi (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 5b–6a) borrowed all three of its quotations: “At this excellent time, the same date when our Ikṣvāku Buddha tamed the non-Buddhists, out of faith and reverence I offer these few words as a gift to those who are listening, to the assembly which has convened this field of good activity. Now, as it is said, 'Wherever a raincloud booms with thunder, little chicks who want the rain will cry out. They may not understand the words of the wise, but children still speak when they are near their mother.' In this way, I think that what can be said by one such as myself, though I have been held back from [attaining] the status of other master scholars, will not be faulty. But how could someone like me, who has no smarts, bear the burden of giving a teaching? Well, it is also said, 'The famous swan-kings fill the lake with the drumming of their voices. But young water-fowl also rattle their clamorous music.' In the same way, do not partake in fault-finding criticism towards whichever of my own ideas I bravely exclaim, insofar as I have understood them with my own limited intellect. And if you think these topics are spun out of my own fabrications? Not so! For it is said, 'sometimes the birds who reside on the gold mountain

In particular, if the topic you are invoking is pertinent to those who uphold the three vajra vows, you should further clarify by explaining that. Or if they are renunciants, like *prātimokṣa* [vow-observing] lamas, you should further clarify by giving an explanation in line with that. Or if they are householders, you should start with such things as the good qualities of their clan and their abbot, drawing from sources that praise householders such as the *Kalpalatā* of Kṣemendra, or from *nītiśāstra* [i.e., lay ethics and political science]. Extol your audience in this way.⁴²

Daṇḍin's suggestions for initiating a work of fine literature were thereby adapted to a live setting. The point of this parallel, as I read it, is not to textualize speech, like a book being read aloud. Rather, it reflects an effort to model the *entire event* on the example of beautiful literature. It is the collaborative celebration, not the speech *per se*, which is recognized as auspicious, as a form of homage, and as an occasion with some topical specificity. The speaker lends voice to the event so it may be understood, like a work of art, as something benedictory, something devotional, and something unique.

In selecting the topic of the actual speech, again flexibility is stressed: the speaker's words must be “made according to the requirements of the seated rows at the celebration,” and the speaker “must ascertain the situation at hand and act accordingly.”⁴³ This appeal to topical breadth is more than an empty gesture: Sangyé Gyatso provided an exhaustive list of settings and topics. It reveals, if not the actual scope of this practice, then certainly its imagined range and universal applicability. Annotations also cite sources for the speaker to consult in each case. (Nearly all are the Desi's own compositions.) Possible occasions and pertinent topics included the first and second days of the new year in the Potala; new year's speeches in Lhasa (e.g. at the main temple); speeches for varying types of assemblies (such as the Namgyal college monks or those of the tantric colleges); speeches during rituals on behalf of the

become golden themselves.' Just as the birds who live on the gold mountain become gold-colored, it is a fact (*chos nyid yin*) that merely staying in an institution of learning, study, and practice will cause one to be infected with its good qualities. But for those who still don't believe it, [my speech] is also authentic because it consists of scripture, reasoning, and direct instructions that stem in an unbroken lineage of Indian and Tibetan masters from the perfect buddha himself.” Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 15 (na): 511 ff.

⁴² *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 5a–b.

⁴³ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 6a.

Dalai Lama; or at the major monastic colleges or other smaller monasteries. Possible subjects included the three classes of Buddhist scripture; the different types of vows; the acts and miracles of the buddha; the lives of exemplars like Tsongkhapa and the Dalai Lama (or Sangyé Gyatso); the history of particular monasteries; lectures on the five major texts studied in monasteries; and so on.⁴⁴

Sangyé Gyatso also offered myriad examples suitable for what he called “common” (*dkyus ma*) events, “of no special significance” (*dmigs bsal med*), indicating a wish to spread the practice beyond the monastic assemblies to which speeches were more typically tied. This detailed list (minus copious interlineal references) is here translated in full, to give an idea of the vast scope of this vision:

For events which are common and of no special significance, you should give a general teaching from the five branches of knowledge, or poetry, metrics, synonymics, music, and so on. You may also give a specific teaching on grammar, argumentation, plastic arts, or the study of medicine. Or you may teach from the “inner” knowledges including, for Vinaya, the history of the first seven monks in Tibet and the upper and lower Vinaya traditions, and the Panchen's [i.e., Śākyaśrībhadrā's] transmission; or Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, Prajñāpāramitā, the new and old mantra traditions, or specifically the unusual doctrine of transference of consciousness (*'pho ba*).

Furthermore you may also speak on topics such as: How our buddha arose in the form of Kālacakra and turned the wheel of dharma at Dhānyakaṭaka; the history of Rudracakri, the Kalkī king; the eighty-four thousand approaches to dharma [i.e., astronomy] taught by Mañjuśrī in China; the genesis of the world and its inhabitants; karmic cause-and-effect; how the king Muné Tsenpo and his son Mutik Tsenpo and others cast off mistaken ways;⁴⁵ how bad conduct spreads; how the thousand buddhas of the Fortunate Age came; the measurements of Meru; the creation of the system of vowels and consonants; synonymics; the story of how the *Kālacakra* came from India to Tibet and was translated; the churning of the cosmic ocean and solar and lunar eclipses; the eight qualities of water and the Rishi [days of water-purification]; the origins of cakravartin kings and the seven primary and seven secondary tokens of kingship; the greatness of Phuk and Norzang;⁴⁶ the greatness of Jambudvīpa; the genesis of Tibet; different philosophical systems; the great teachers of India like Nāgārjuna and Aśaṅga and his brother [Vasubandhu]; or Atiśa and Dromtön; or the lives of the four Dalai Lamas, Gendün Drup, Gendün Gyatso, Sönam Gyatso, and

⁴⁴ *Lo gsar 'bel gdam*: 6a–7a.

⁴⁵ Recall that the Desi claimed Muné Tsenpo, son of Tri Songdetsen, as one of his past births. See e.g. *Lo gsar 'bel gdam*: 32a–33a; *Thogs med bskal pa ma*: 3a.

⁴⁶ Here he refers to Phukpa Lhündrup Gyatso and Khedrup Norsang Gyatso. The former's work on astronomy grounded the so-called “Phukpa” tradition espoused by Sangyé Gyatso. Both informed the Desi's own writings on cosmology.

Yönten Gyatso. You must choose your topic as per the situation at hand (*skabs su gang babs*).⁴⁷

The list paints with one brush a vast landscape of knowledge and the portrait of a model speaker. The global expansiveness of the former matches the exceptional dynamism of the latter.

Having summarized the myriad ways to start a speech, let us now jump briefly to the end. The concluding instructions for how to wrap up a speech (folios 41–45) vary depending on what sort of performance will follow, and whether it is to be done by the speaker himself or else some other member of the assembly. Instructions are given for how to praise that next speaker, and even some ways of stalling for time, depending on whether or not there is any delay (*thogs*) between one performance and the next.⁴⁸ Most of the Desi's attention in this section is given to cases in which the speech would be followed by someone from the audience rising up (*tshogs lang pa slong*) and initiating a debate (*bgro gleng*), the proper formula for which is, “Following upon my own speech, it will continue from the seated rows, as if to hand it off to a friend.”⁴⁹ Finally, the speech ends as it began, with benedictions. Some sample benedictions are aimed at the Desi himself and the government he ruled. For instance:

As the all-knowing Dalai Lama once said,

“Mutri Tsenpo who upholds the two systems in the Snows
wielding power with his forceful wheel over all heaven and earth
Sangyé Gyatso, everlasting—
Aho! May this upright pillar remain firm!”

⁴⁷ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 7a–b.

⁴⁸ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 41b–42a. Among the possible aftermaths are circumstances when the speaker “gives their own answer” (*rang lan 'debs*), or when another speaker takes over, “as if to form a response to an earlier question” (*sngon ma'i dri lan lta bu*). The new speaker must also properly humble himself: “someone like me, it's like following beer with water, or gold with gold-dust...”

⁴⁹ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 42a. The speaker is also taught to hype the next event by talking about the uniqueness of the Tibetan practice of debate, deriving from Chapa Chökyi Sengé and his famous “dialectical school” (*mtshan nyid theg pa*). There are suggestions for how to select an appropriate topic of debate, once again “according to the context” (*skabs su gang babs pa*). As later historiography (such as the eighth Dalai Lama's biography) shows, speechmaking was often followed by debate.

In this way, [the speaker continues,] he [Sangyé Gyatso] is a forceful cakravartin who turns the wheel of clerical and secular governance (*chos srid*) over the vast maṇḍala of heaven and earth. May his two lotus feet be stable, naturally everlasting, strong and solid! And may it be the case that by virtue of his power, as [the Dalai Lama] elsewhere said,

“May the light of sun and moon joined, clerical and secular governance of the Ganden Phodrang, great edifice victorious in every direction, shine down and clear away all darkness from the three worlds, attaining the sovereignty of that ancestor of the world, Brahma!”⁵⁰

Once the speaker has sung the praises of Tibet and its ruler and government, and their centrality to a prosperous future, the act is concluded. “Excepting special occasions,” the manual states, “keep making benedictory verses until everyone in the seated rows has drained their cups and it is appropriate to stop. In some circumstances you can add some very brief teachings on those verses. Then wrap up what you are saying, and finish.”⁵¹ The speech ends on this remark, but Sangyé Gyatso tacked on one last reminder about the qualities of an ideal speaker:

Any orator needs to be a scholar who has rhetorical courage, who speaks clearly and knows all the breaks and transitions. They will rely on the sense of what is being expressed, rather than resorting to textual recitation. And whatever one says, make sure all of it has phrasing that is beautiful, without any lapses of attention.⁵²

To recap, this model of oratory is clearly concerned with the performative context as much as this or that specific idea. Any topic remains but one of myriad possible others. The speaker must have the skill to know what is appropriate and when. What makes a good speaker, what makes a speech a speech, is not about the contents per se, but rather how each act is skillfully fitted to its own occasion. In these last remarks, for instance, the Desi stridently rejected the notion that a speaker was a mouthpiece for regurgitating a prepared message. He may have been thinking specifically of the incredible feats of recitation for which monastic scholars are famous, or the cheap strategy of winning arguments by what

⁵⁰ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 44b.

⁵¹ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 45a.

⁵² *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 45a.

we might call the 'nuclear option' of simply quoting verbatim from an authoritative text; but I think the point falls equally on the notion of speakers as passive political mouthpieces. It is “courage” (*spobs pa*), not fidelity to a script, that defines the speaker. The term (which has the secondary meaning of “eloquence”) encapsulates all the qualities described above: adaptability, quickness, range, and refinement, being dauntless regardless of what one faces. Courage lives in the frame. It is a performative and interactive quality.

CONTENTS AND LEGITIMATION

The only previous academic assessment of the *New Year's Speechmaking* focused on the sample speech's contents, all of which it boiled down to specific endpoints concerning the supremacy of the Dalai Lama and the Ganden Phodrang government. Foregrounding a single message in this way has the effect of portraying public speaking as yet another case of the instrumental relationship between religion and politics: “to establish the legitimate authority of the Ganden Government's rule over Tibet.”⁵³ It is certainly correct to aver a link between performance and legitimation. Nevertheless, this reduction of public speaking to an instrument of politics rests on three related commitments that can be challenged: first, a methodological commitment to approaching speeches as vehicles for delivering specific content; second, a reading strategy assessing that content as reducible to a fixed, punctiform message; and third, a theoretical commitment to legitimation as the motivating factor. The Desi's presentation is almost diametrically opposed to those commitments. Now, it must readily be granted that to a non-negligible extent all this talk of diversity appears to be undercut by the predictable thrust of the manual's contents, which reiterate ideas proclaimed systematically throughout the Desi's other writings. He absolutely had a particular vision in mind: the bodhisattva was already a buddha, the Dalai

⁵³ Schaeffer 2006: 188–90.

Lama was a renunciate king, the Potala was his seat, and so on. I already suggested that the dispensation and the Perfected Age were core organizing concepts of that overall vision, here as throughout his corpus. Yet on closer examination, it is imperative to recognize that the fivefold framework of the speech is a *relational* rather than a fixed construct. Therefore, contents of public speaking as a practice cannot be boiled down to a categorical statement, such as that the “excellent place” *is* the Potala; the “excellent teacher” *is* the Dalai Lama; et cetera. For the point was not to resolve the targets of those five categories once and for all. It was to determine the *shape* in which such ideas were being ordered.

On first blush this argument may go against common sense. I would counter that the inclination to look for and find unambiguous identifications, single messages, or uses of Buddhist concepts for political ends, is no less the byproduct of a preference for content over form, discourse over performance, and what is literally said over how. That preference—which may have roots in a positivist differentiation between cognition and emotion⁵⁴—meshes with a notion of ideology as a fixed set of beliefs, a curated packet of information that a ruler disseminates in the interest of power. A closer look at the text belies those commitments. This is hardly to deny an ideological dimension; on the contrary I think it strengthens the claim. There is as much or more ideological work being accomplished in the relations *between* terms, as in what the terms themselves name. It is at this background or invisible level that contingent truths about the world and how it is put together can become visible and seem natural and even desirable.

More simply, the point I wish to stress here is that the same performative, relational quality which characterized the speech's introduction and conclusion also carries over into its contents. As an example, we may consider the text's discussion of the first of the five categories, the “excellent place.” Just like the two speeches summarized above, here too Sangyé Gyatso employed scale as a narrative

⁵⁴ The idea being that only a literal sense would be granted any cognitive significance; any further sense would be merely emotive, or as Ricoeur put it, “extra-semantic.” See Ricoeur 1976: 45–46.

strategy. I will refer to this as a “localizing” order of knowledge. The discussion of “place” starts with the cosmos itself in the most absolute sense—immeasurable and unknowable, as per *Kālacakra* I.10.⁵⁵ It then steps down through the billions upon billions of universes, descending in orders of magnitude until it reaches the level of our own Sahāloka universe, our own Mount Meru, our own Jambudvīpa, our own Tibet. It surveys the different geographical and political arrangements of Tibet, zooming in sequentially on the province of Ü, the region of Kyishö, the Lhasa area, and all its major sites.⁵⁶ Here it describes the Potala at length, listing all its prized possessions. But it would be incorrect to identify the “excellent place” as a statement of fact, a fixed and final affirmation of the Potala, full stop. True, if it were a speech on the first or second (“king’s”) day of the new year, the Potala would have been the site of that celebration and hence the final place to which the speaker would refer. After this account of the Potala, the manual goes on to offer ways of speaking about the Jokhang, Ramoché, Chakpori, and Drepung and Sera monasteries (a note recommends that speakers at Drepung should leave out the parts about Sera).⁵⁷ They are all potential sites of speechmaking. Most important of all is how Sangyé Gyatso ended this entire discussion of excellent place (my emphasis): “To sum up, *wherever* you are making your speech (*'bel gtam gang du bya ba'i sa der*), you must extol and describe the qualities of *that* place.”⁵⁸ The last word is not a fixed answer but an open variable. The same point could also be illustrated using the section on “excellent time,” which ends in like fashion: “*Whenever* it is (*gang yin de*), you are to give a teaching about *that* year, month, day, planets, stars, and so forth.”

However familiar the contents, they hold no intrinsic clues to their own arrangement. There are any number of ways that the natural order of the cosmos can be reordered as a form of knowledge. For the

⁵⁵ On the importance for the Desi of *Kālacakra* cosmology, see Chapter Six.

⁵⁶ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 8a–19a.

⁵⁷ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 19b–21b.

⁵⁸ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 21a.

sake of comparison, let us note that attention to cosmology and geography was also a major concern of a closely related genre, one Gene Smith called the “compendium of knowledge” (*bshad mdzod*). By this term, Smith meant “systematic arrangements of the concepts and terms of Buddhist scholasticism comprehensible to the beginner or nonspecialist.”⁵⁹ Just like speeches, compendia spoke of the formation and order of the universe. Also like speeches, they were often directed at an audience of lay patrons, especially rulers.⁶⁰ Some texts of this compendium type even labeled themselves as “story” (*gtam*).⁶¹ Let us not forget that texts of this sort—“systematic arrangements” laying out the basics of world order, the history of dharma and the genealogies of rulers, describing themselves as a “tale” (*gtam*, Skt. *kathā*)—were hardly a Tibetan invention. Similar works appear adjacent to Buddhist rule throughout South and Southeast Asia, such as the famous *Trai Phum Phra Ruang*, the *Tribhūmikathā* of the Thai King Ruang.⁶² Smith considered the Tibetan prototype for this “compendium” genre to be the *Elucidation of Knowledge* (*Shes bya rab gsal*) by Phakpa Lodrö Gyaltzen (1235–80). Phakpa composed this work in 1278 for the edification of Qubilai Khan's son Jinggim.⁶³ Its contents covered similar ground to Sangyé Gyatso's *New Year's Speechnaking*, including attention to the formation and order of the cosmos. Phakpa utilized an Abhidharmic model (centered on Meru) rather than the Kālacakra one the Desi ultimately preferred. However, the difference between them is not just a question of doctrines, but also organization. Phakpa, taking after his source material, jumped around: he began with the smallest building blocks of matter, then worked through a systematic depiction of our world. It passed

⁵⁹ Smith 2001: 209.

⁶⁰ Smith 2001: 210.

⁶¹ For instance, the Nyingma scholar Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654–1718) of Mindröling, an intimate of the intellectual circle of the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso, not only composed a manual for speechmaking (which we will consider below), but also, in 1710, a “discourse on dharma” (*Dam pa'i chos kyi 'bel gtam*) that corresponds closely to Smith's “compendium” model (in volume 19 of his collected works). Its avowed purpose was to educate the prince of Sikkim in Buddhist basics, “easy to deliver and of appropriate length, prioritizing our own Nyingma tradition.”

⁶² Reynolds and Reynolds 1982.

⁶³ Smith 2001: 210; Hoog 1983: 5–6 (citing Smith).

through Jambudvīpa and the Himalayas, then without pause moved on to other continents, the sun and moon and planets. Then it turned back to go through the measurements of all Jambudvīpa's parts, before ascending from the Desire Realm to the Form and Formless realms. Phakpa's cosmos may have been smaller than the Desi's by not a few orders of magnitude, but where it truly differed was in the location and the movement of its gaze. Universality was a narrative strategy. The vantage is archimedean: the entire world as surveyed from a fixed point apart. The *New Year's Speechmaking*, on the other hand, organized the presentation of space teleologically and referentially, in anticipation of its mobile endpoint—itsself. Its story of the cosmos is told by someone standing on a certain spot within it. Its strategy is to *localize* from within, not *survey* from without. Much like our own GPS devices and their “locate” feature, space is thus reconceived as a process of zooming in upon oneself. It starts from the whole to end up on its own spot, that shifting index, the aptly-named “wherever you are,” “whenever you are.” I posit that the speaker's ethic of flexibility and dynamism, and the ideal multiplicity of their topics, are exact counterparts to this narrative strategy of localization, with its infinitely mobile, self-referential *telos*.

And here is the key point. The function of this knowledge is not simply to know *what is*, but also *where one is standing*. Sangyé Gyatso's model of speaking was configured to hypothetically cover the entire possible range of that variable center, always moving inwards towards “that place wherever the speech is made” (*'bel gtam gang du bya ba'i sa der*). Knowledge of the world is refigured into a story told actively by and for those within that world, rather than represented from a place apart. Speakers are not simply imparting knowledge—however guilefully—but also *determining the way that knowledge is approached and understood*. In this sense they are literally ordering the world. This type of speech structures the world around itself and brings it to life by carrying it all inwards towards that in-the-moment experience. Here it behooves us to remember that the same in-the-moment, affective quality is already a feature of celebration. There is a hypothetical point at which it becomes impossible

to distinguish whether those in attendance are witnesses to a speech event, or characters within that speech. The act of describing or hearing about the world, and the affect of living in it as a part of it, merge ambiguously into one another. The ideal becomes the actual.

THE “STANDARD” SPEECH: A COMPARISON

Recognizing this “localizing” strategy for the entanglement of ideal and actual also helps us see how the Desi's manual built upon a broader tradition of Tibetan speechmaking while departing from it in significant ways. As I mentioned above, this difference is most fundamentally that between the organizing concepts of *merit* and *dispensation*. Now we will explore that distinction by briefly considering this broader tradition. Tibetan speeches have already been the subject of an informative monograph by David Jackson, focusing on contemporary speeches or “mollas” (*mol ba* or *mol gtam*) as observed in the Mustang area of Nepal. Jackson analyzes a number of extant molla texts, tentatively dated to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, supplemented with information from living masters, as well as some other Tibetan works with related labels such as *yas gtam*, “speeches from above.”⁶⁴ Jackson's comments on the word “molla” give us a simple and accurate definition of the general form: “signifying a solemn speech or a book containing such a speech—that is recited before a religious assembly and that eulogizes the local rulers and their ancestry.”⁶⁵ Speech manuals from the fourteenth century to the present day can be remarkably constant in their overall outline, notwithstanding variations in specific contents, often to emphasize one's own doctrinal tradition. Even a recent publication of tales and stories from the once predominantly Bön region of Gyalrong (northern

⁶⁴ Jackson 1984: 59. Here he cites the Dezhung Rinpoché, who contrasts *yas gtam* with *mas gtam*, “speeches from below” delivered from within the assembly. We may also compare the description given in the first of the contemporary Gyalrong speeches collected by the scholar Tsenlha Ngawang Tsultrim, describing itself as *'bel gtam* but further bifurcated into *yas gtam* and *mas gtam*. As this speech declares: “a speech from above is a tale of the dharma (*chos kyi gtam*), while a speech from below [is about] the ways of the world. A speech from above is a history of dharma, both the coming of the buddha and the spread of the dharma” Btsan lha Ngag dbang tshul khriims 2009: 1.

⁶⁵ Jackson 1984: 25.

Sichuan), with transcriptions of speeches in local dialect, confirms the fact of that constancy.⁶⁶ So for convenience I will refer to this older form as the “standard” model for speechmaking. This standard model was tied to an ideal order organized around the concept of merit production and dedication between lay and monastic components of society. In contrast, Sangyé Gyatso's new model was organized around the concept of the dispensation, radiating outwards from a center of power.

Though capable in their own ways of flexibility and modulation, speeches following this standard template differed significantly from the Desi's manual and its narrative strategies. This distinction manifested at the level of form as much as content. The most obvious formal difference between Sangyé Gyatso's new model and the “standard” one is that his was organized around the “five excellences” and the latter was not. Let us now briefly review the salient features of the standard speech, supplementing Jackson's astute remarks with examples from three manuals, composed by authors affiliated with three different schools, but showing remarkable similarities. The first is an undated cluster of works by Śākya Chokden (1428–1507) including a speech identifying itself as a *mol gtam*, with a discussion of merit-dedication (*bsngo ba*) and a lengthy compendium of dedication formulas.⁶⁷ The second is authored by the famous Jonang polymath Tāranātha and styles itself a *yas gtam* or “speech from above.” It too includes remarks on merit-dedication.⁶⁸ The third example is another *yas gtam*, by the aforementioned Lochen Dharmaśrī of Mindröling, composed at the behest of his nephew Gyurmé Yizhin Lekdrup (1679–1718) making it roughly contemporaneous with the Desi's

⁶⁶ Btsan lha Ngag dbang tshul khriims 2009.

⁶⁷ Śākya mehog ldan 2013, vol. 8 (*nya*): 375ff. Each work has its own colophon, but they are linked under one title in Śākya Chokden's collected works: *A speech, together with prayers for dedications of various lengths, composed by the Mañjuḥoṣa Dharmarāja*. The colophon to the second work (*ibid.*: 400) names the first two texts respectively as the *Jewel Garland Speech* and the *Crystal Utpāla Lecture on the Qualities [of Dedication]* (*mol gtam rin chen phreng ba dang/yon bshad utpal do shal*). The two are accompanied by a third untitled speech, very similar to the first albeit shorter in length (*ibid.*, vol. 8: 401–413).

⁶⁸ Tāranātha 2008, vol. 70.

manual.⁶⁹ Dharmasīrī's text also devoted attention to merit-dedication, including samples for lecturing on the benefits of dedication as well as formulas for various occasions. Already the link between this standard model and the production and dedication of merit should be abundantly clear.

Put simply, the speech has three parts, as Jackson says: “an introductory mention of offerings, a historical account as the main recitation, and a concluding request for the dedication of merit.”⁷⁰

Introductions may be shorter or longer and serve to call attention to the present event. They recognize that event as a service to the buddha, dharma, and sangha, and extol the gathered assembly. For instance, both Śākya Chokden and Tāranātha gave a succinct introduction describing the three jewels and announcing their presence, not just over the world at large, but also immediately within the event itself—in Tāranātha's case, either “in this particular auspicious temple” or “this particular wondrous and marvelous palace,” which the speaker is told to specify according to the situation.⁷¹ Lochen Dharmasīrī's *yas gтам* gave a far lengthier introduction.⁷² All the speeches then undertake what Jackson calls a “formal, eulogistic depiction of the gathered assembly.”⁷³ A strict formula is utilized for this portion.⁷⁴ The speaker names, one by one, the major social groups constituting the assembly (often remarking on their distinctive qualities) and announcing for each their particular place within the seated

⁶⁹ Lo chen Dharmasīrī 1999, vol. 19: 316–17 (= 48b–49a).

⁷⁰ Jackson 1984: 39.

⁷¹ Śākya Mchog ldan 2013, vol. 8: 375, 401; Tāranātha 2008, vol. 70: 294–95.

⁷² Lo chen Dharmasīrī 1999, vol. 19: 271 (= 3a). He likewise invoked the three jewels, declaring both their general pervasiveness and how they are serviced by the present event. He painted a microcosmic image of the assembly, centered by the offerings heaped therein, reproducing in miniature the form of Mount Meru and its surrounding world. This homology between macro- and microcosm, outer world and inner event, is cited by the speaker as proof that “we sit in a place more excellent than any other.” Likewise, Tāranātha (2008, vol. 70: 304) described the assembly of monks (the *mchod gnas*, recipients of offerings) as “oceanic” (*rgya mtsho ltar bskyiil*) while the material offerings are “heaped like a mountain” (*ri ltar spungs*) in their midst—hence on the model of Meru and the encompassing ocean.

⁷³ Jackson 1984: 37.

⁷⁴ In addition to all three of my examples, Jackson (1984: 62–70) cites other speeches utilizing this seating scheme including one by Gyalsé Thokmé Pelzangpo from the early fourteenth century, and a sample speech included in the fifteenth-century *Bshad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu*, as well as two Mustang mollas.

rows (*gral*). Those rows are organized along what can be termed a “vertical” axis from the front (*dbu* or *thog*), where the presiding throne would be located, to the back end (*mtha'*); as well as along a “horizontal” axis from the middle or center (*gung*) to the periphery or edge (*zur*) on both sides. The bulk of the seated rows is described as either its “foundation” (*gzhi*) or “main body” (*gzhung*).⁷⁵ For instance Śākya Chokden's speech spatialized its assembly as follows:

Lord of the Sage's dispensation—the holy dharma—and crown jewel of the entire sangha that upholds the dispensation, a stand-in for the Aikṣvāku Buddha—this precious guru presides as the exalted crown jewel of the entire gathering.

The orb of his compassion is not obscured by any covering cloud, so that the illumination of his knowledge radiates out in all directions, from which, closely gathered in a lotus-grove of peace and well-being, as the visible condition for bringing forth a lucid faith, a supreme field for the wealth of accumulated merit, and giving off the light of the three trainings, the sangha with its two fronts keep the main part of the seated rows.

Scholars who understand the myriad treatises of the canon, venerable disciplinarians who observe the three vows, good beings who have cultivated both types of the will to awakening—the many spiritual allies lead forth the main part of the seated rows.

With the heaping Meru of their previously accumulated merit, the vast ocean holding the water of their ruled subjects, and the bright light of their impartiality towards all beings noble or base—the great laypersons press down the high-center of the seated rows.

Heroic with grammar and argument, compassionate with medicine and plastic arts, deserving of worship for their knowledges outer, inner, and secret—distinguished scholars adorn the fringes of the seated rows.

Faithful in their reverence to those deserving of worship, powerful in stacking up a heaping mountain of offerings, and crafty in how they find myriad ways of giving—all the meritorious patrons—and with them, crafty in servicing others, modest in how they sidestep the abyss of self-interest, and delightful in how they appear as rapidly as lighting, the crews who are serving the event, support the ends of the seated rows.⁷⁶

There are five basic components, six if we include the presiding lama cresting them all like a crown jewel. The bulk of the seated rows is filled up with monks, each row fronted (i.e. “vertically” at the top) by those who most epitomize the tandem qualities of intellect and morality, earning the designation of “spiritual ally.” Meanwhile the “great laypersons,” meritorious, powerful and benevolent lay rulers, occupy the “horizontal” place of privilege in the high-center (*gung*), which I take as indicating the

⁷⁵ This organizational scheme is also consonant with French's remarks about “social ideology” in Tibet (1995: 147ff).

⁷⁶ Śākya Mchog ldan 2013, vol. 8: 375–76.

choice front/middle rows along the main central aisle of the assembly.⁷⁷ Other notable scholars, defined by expertise in one or more of the five fields of knowledge, are figured as a kind of decorative element, beautifying the assembly by affixing themselves, ornament-like, along its edges. Finally, at the bottom and back are all the general patrons, along with the assembly staff, eulogized by way of their support (both literal and metaphorical) of the entire collective. We may detect a general analogy with the human body, from head to feet. In his version of this exact same formula, Dharmasrī also likened the splendor of this overall seating arrangement to the wondrous radiance of Mount Meru.⁷⁸

Equally important is the fact that each space also has a designated action. The best monks, up front, “head up” (*thog drangs*) or more literally “pull [from] the top,” as if to lead the rest by dragging them onwards. Meanwhile the “foundation” of the assembly is “kept” or “held” (*bzung ba*), as if borne in one's hands. The high-center is “pressed down” (*mnan pa*) as if sagging under the weight of power.⁷⁹ The bottom end is “supported” (*brten pa*) as if upon one's shoulders or back. The sides are “ornamented” (*brgyan pa*) with a delicate but exquisite touch. The social categories associated with each spot may vary slightly from one text to the next; in Tāranātha's and Dharmasrī's speeches it is the “spiritual allies” rather than the “great persons” who “press down” the center. But these general pairings of action to place are fixed, suggesting a pervasive, standardized structural dynamics. Taken together, these different zones and their corresponding actions constitute a living whole. Jackson calls it “an expression of both a religious hierarchy and a social order.” We may add that the verbs lend it a live, three-dimensional quality, and an imperative. Like a kind of giant soap bubble, the whole is not predetermined, but rather sustained by applying the proper forces in the proper places: propped up from below, pulled forward from above, nuanced on its sides, weighted down in its middle. Order is a live

⁷⁷ On the term *gung* see also Jackson 1984: 65.

⁷⁸ Lo chen Dharmasrī 1999, vol. 19: 272 (= 4a).

⁷⁹ Two of Jackson's examples use the similar *gnan*, “weigh down.”

quantity that must be ritually maintained. This is done precisely by taking one's proper place with respect to the whole. So rather than read the speeches as “expressive” of social order, as if they merely represented a given order constituted elsewhere, I suggest that ideal order was being envisioned and constituted precisely through this sort of assembly, named and enacted by speechmaking.

Next comes the second overall portion of the standard speech. It consisted of a sequence of distinct histories (*lo rgyus*). Again, all the manuals share a common basic outline utilizing a fixed rhetorical formula with three main sections. As a representative example, here is Lochen Dharmasrī's outline:

- 1) The base, living beings: history of human customs (*gzhi skye bo mi chos kyi lo rgyus*)
 - a) above: genealogy of rulers (*steng na rje'i gdung rabs*)
 - b) below: human history of subjects (*'og na 'bangs kyi mi rabs*)
 - c) formation of the universe (*stong sde srid pa'i chags tshul*)
 - d) description of worldly ways (*'jig rten lugs kyi rnam bzhag*)
- 2) The holy ornament that beautifies it: history of divine dharma (*de mdzes rgyan dam pa lha chos kyi lo rgyus*)
 - a) teacher: how the buddha came (*ston pa sangs rgyas kyi byon tshul*)
 - b) dispensation: how the dharma spread (*bstan pa dam chos kyi dar tshul*)
 - c) upholders of the dispensation: how the sangha came about (*bstan 'dzin dge 'dun gyi byon tshul*)
- 3) Appreciation: a history of great kindness (*byas shes bka' drin che ba'i lo rgyus*)⁸⁰

The first two categories reflect the well-known dichotomy of *mi chos* and *lha chos*, which predates the introduction of Buddhist knowledges and practices to Tibet; the terms are notoriously difficult to translate.⁸¹ In this context, the category of *mi chos* indicated human history and worldly cosmogony, while the *lha chos* was just the history of the Buddha, his teachings, and the monastic order. Their relationship is figured as “base” and “ornament,” echoing the overall verticality of the seating arrangement. Cosmos and society are organized by homologous principles. The first two subcategories of the *mi chos* are also hierarchized vertically into “above” and “below.” The former typically lists

⁸⁰ Lo chen Dharmasrī 1999, vol. 19: 272, 280, 286.

⁸¹ Jackson 1984: 76–81. On *mi chos* see also especially Stein 2010: 117–190; also Stein 1970: 192ff (including remarks on the relationship of *mi chos* to Bön storytelling and riddles, *sgrung* and *lde'u*); and Tucci's (1980) concept of “folk religion.”

famous kings and rulers of India and Tibet; the latter makes general remarks on different races or classes (*rigs*) of humans and then gives the speaker some leeway to extemporize on the genealogy of their own patrons.⁸² The third and fourth subcategories of the *mi chos* are also bifurcated with respect to one another. They reproduce another familiar dichotomy of *snod* and *bcud*, or “the vessel and its contents.” The former covered cosmogony/cosmology and geography, such as the description of Mount Meru or the broader billion-world system of the Sahāloka universe, and the formation and ordering of Jambudvīpa; the latter was a tragic history of human degeneration from an initially perfected state, including topics like the emergence of modesty and the invention of moral codes.⁸³ The second overall section, the history of the dharma, is subdivided according to the three jewels: the story of the buddha, the story of how he taught the dharma, and the story of the development of the monastic community. The last section, the history of “appreciation,” consisted of short individual histories of notable individuals particularly deserving of recognition. Typically it began with buddhas and bodhisattvas, then went through famous scholars of India and Tibet, especially those of the speaker's own school or tradition, and ended with one's own mother and father.

To review up to this point: like the Desi's speeches above, these standard speeches also focused on the immediate context of the event and its audience, even including some degree of flexibility and modulation. Nonetheless there are major differences concerning how the organization of knowledge impacts the speech's references to its own immediate context of production. A simpler way to put it is to consider the fit between the ordering of a text and the world order it communicates. These standard speeches imposed a rigid homologous structure. The vertical conception of world and society is

⁸² For instance, Śākya Chokden ended by having his speaker name the clan in attendance and describe their lineage by “drawing upon their own personal documents” (*rang rang gi cha sgo yig tshang rnams brjod*). Śākya Mchog ldan 2013, vol. 8: 377–78.

⁸³ In this sense these two categories resemble the inverse relationship between the trajectories of cosmogony and human (de-)evolution described by Tambiah based on his reading of the creation story in the *Aggañña Sutta* (1976: 11–18).

isomorphic to the seated assembly itself. The activities of kings and various other peoples, all the way down to this or that local patron, together with the materiality of the physical world, altogether make up the “base.” Affixed to that base is the “divine dharma,” *lha chos*, here standing for Buddhism in its three aspects of the buddha, the dispensation he created and entrusted, and the renunciate community that maintains it. These separate lay and religious histories observe their own internal laws of development. Each occupies its own narrative time and space. Because of the predetermined structure of those two separate histories, the speaker’s movements are predetermined. They jump forwards and backwards in time and across various scales of space at fixed transitions in the overall speech. Such is precisely the difference between a merely local, and what I above called a “localizing,” depiction. These standard speeches were still indelibly tied to their own contexts and occasionally referred to their own audiences. Nonetheless such appeals were arrested within a fixed structure. The relationship between event and world is mimetic: the one mirrors the other. On the other hand, in the Desi's manual, they are continuous. The immediate event becomes a destination, a centerpoint towards which all the speech’s contents lead, around which they organized themselves.

MERIT AND DISPENSATION

The key to understanding this difference lies in the last section of the standard speech: merit dedication. Dedication involved powerful verbal formulas by which the merit produced by assembling together in an act of patronage is willed towards any number of worldly or soteriological ends, for the bettering of self, community, and world. The act was performed by the speakers themselves. Performance notes, pointing out what to say and when, predominate in this portion of the standard manuals. All three authors devoted more length to the dedication process than the rest of the speech together. The speaker should explain not only how to mentally and physically approach the act of dedicating merit, but also just what it is that is being dedicated, and how the act can be known to produce its own stated results,

from the “situational” (*gnas skabs*) to the “final” (*mthar thug*), or from the worldly (*'jig rten pa*) to the liberative (*thar pa*), culminating in buddhahood.⁸⁴ The gist is that all positive results—from immediate necessities and pleasures, to higher rebirths, to complete awakening, are consequences of merit. The entire chain of being, every role and goal of life from the most mundane to the most transcendent, is envisioned in terms of the production and redirection of merit. Dedication in all its variety is intrinsic to the fact of general assembly and should be understood as the primary objective of this entire rhetorical form. Tāranātha even suggested several ways in which the speaker could abridge the historical portion or remove it entirely, proceeding directly from extolling the assembly (as above) to performing the dedication.⁸⁵ Therefore I suggest that the standard speechmaking model, both in content and form, was tied to an ideal socio-political order with merit as the organizing principle.

Merit makes the world. The speaker first turns the assembly into the charged space within which this merit-world and its ordinarily invisible processes can be rendered and conceived as a living whole. All the necessary social elements come together to play their parts, at least within the controlled ritual space “in here,” if not always “out there” in the ordinary world. How each component participates in the overall project defines their role and their position relative to the others. Just as this standard speech splits human history and dharma history into separate tracks, so too is the basic social-symbolic division of labor starkly bifurcated along a lay-monastic split, below and above, the former planting the roots of merit in the ground and the latter cultivating and properly directing its growth.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Śākya mchog ldan 2013, vol. 8: 383–84; Lo chen Dharmasrī 1999, vol. 19: 295–303 (= 27b–35b).

⁸⁵ Tāranātha 2008, vol. 70: 305–6. He first suggests making a transition from extolling the assembly directly to stating the purpose of dedication without giving any history (*lo rgyus mi byed par mtshams sbyor bsdus pa tsam byed na*). Tāranātha also allows that if one intends to give some lecture but must shorten it (*gtam bshad byed la cung zad bsdus par byed pa'i skabs yin na*) they can narrate only the *mi chos* portion. Finally, he also provides an alternative, greatly abridged version of the *lha chos* portion of the history.

⁸⁶ Jackson (1984: 52–53) similarly describes merit as a co-constitutive project: “Although lay patrons as a rule did not consider themselves capable of performing the dedication (they entrusted that task to the men of religion), they still were responsible as the creators of the thing to be dedicated: a “root of merit” ...Dedication of merit, then, was the patrons’

Narrative time finds a certain ordering according to this merit sociology. It follows what we might call a *soteriological* orientation: present—past—future. The present draws on the past in order to cast a wish about the future. This soteriological orientation is even embedded in the speech-act of the merit-dedication formula. First, that formula begins in the present by invoking those who are creating merit; second, it invokes the past by reference to their prior “accumulations,” drawing on what was previously built up to enable and undergird the present act; and third, all of this accumulated merit is cast towards any number of wishes for the future, from health and well-being to social productivity and peace, to the elimination of all obstacles, the attainment of higher rebirths, and ultimately liberation from cyclic existence and awakening into buddhahood. It is therefore entirely fitting that the three sections of the standard speech—eulogy, history, dedication—perfectly mirror this soteriological temporal organization of the dedication formula itself: present—past—future. This standard model of speechmaking made visible such analogies between dedication, society, and cosmos.

The fact that Sangyé Gyatso eschewed not just the form of the standard speech, but also the entire practice of merit creation and dedication that was its *raison d'être*, should also lead us to expect a corresponding shift in how the relationship between knowledge and the socio-political world was enacted. Indeed, central Tibet in the seventeenth century faced a rather different political reality. Consider that the sort of polity depicted in the “standard” speech, as described above, was characterized by a form of rule for which authority was founded primarily on lineage rather than overlordship.⁸⁷ That fact may help explain the major role of chronological (*rgyus*) and genealogical (*rabs*) narrative forms, both of which emphasize lineal succession.⁸⁸ In that ideal socio-political

request. They did their part by making a virtuous offering, and at the conclusion the monastic assembly was expected to do its part, which was the actual dedication of merit through prayers that entailed a special frame of mind.”

⁸⁷ Stein 1972: 74–76; Carrasco 1959: 20–22; Samuel 1993: 115–16, 149–50.

⁸⁸ Admittedly, *lo rgyus*, as with other historiographical terms like *rgyal rabs* and *chos 'byung*, vary in practice. As van der Kuijp remarks, “The expression *lo rgyus*, literally 'tidings of year[s],' is only very occasionally rendered best by 'annals.' It is far more often the case that works with this term in their title do not fulfill what is promised by such a rendition, that is to

context, patronage, dedication, and lineage were interdependent, mutually affirming concepts. They reflected not so much the strategic cooperation of two separate forms of power constituted *a priori*, as a single complex system of authority made up of multiple but ideally co-constitutive modes of succession, for which we may apply Sørensen's and Hazod's apt phrase “monastic-hegemonial polity.”⁸⁹ The idea is crystallized by the famous concept of the patronage relationship, between the monk (bearer of the dispensation, *bstan 'dzin*, over time) as the locus of offerings (*mchod gnas*), and the patron (bearer of the ruling line over time) as their provider and protector (*yon bdag*).

There are two basic ways to read this *mchod yon* dyad. One is as a hierarchical relationship of purity or power.⁹⁰ The obligation for the ruling class to patronize the sangha is seen as a demand for one side to pay allegiance to the other (implying a sacerdotal hierarchy). This view may be accurate for Tibet in some eras. At least in modern history, many Tibetans or their supporters have evoked the patronage relationship as an alternative explanation of Tibet's historical relationship with China (though I think this is playing the game on the opponent's terms). Viewing the *mchod yon* concept in the light of speechmaking suggests a second way of thinking. The concept then reveals itself as a concise articulation of the ideal conditions for the overall sustenance and proper use of merit, hence of the entire merit-driven cosmo-moral order. It is overly reductive to read it strictly in terms of a unilateral hierarchy making the lama superior to the lay official who submits to them as an object of worship. What is really at stake is the collaborative effort of cultivating, sustaining, and directing merit—in other words, ordering the world. Merit maps the cosmos, all the different states of being attainable within it, and their relative locations too, and it gives a logic by which human life and its goals can be

say, they do not at all give a year-by-year account of their subject-matter, but rather present a narrative of events, historical, quasi-historical, or even ahistorical, in rough chronological sequence.” In Cabezon et al. (eds.), 1996: 42–43.

⁸⁹ Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 41.

⁹⁰ See e.g. Hevia's interpretation of the meeting between the fifth Dalai Lama and the Shunzhi emperor, 1995: 38–48.

understood. Indeed, in the history of monastic-hegemonial polity, the two roles of lay ruler and presiding monastic official were often originally co-constitutive. The same patriline would ideally give both the descent of lay rulers and the heads of the monastery (or monasteries) they patronized, linking abbot and lord as paternal uncle and nephew.⁹¹ As Sørensen writes, “only in the case of strong and entrenched clan-based structures...do we see entities that would stand the test of time.”⁹² We ought to view these two major social roles as co-constitutive aspects of a well-defined whole whose authority, like merit itself, transcends and encompasses both.

Sangyé Gyatso at least did not espouse the same view of patronage reflected in that standard speechmaking model. One sign of that shift was how the patronage relationship was frequently displaced *below* the ruling office of the Dalai Lama, suggesting that his own authority was not based in any patronage relationship but superseded it.⁹³ Nor was succession maintained by the same means. By the seventeenth century, the long ascendant but now increasingly important “dharma-kings” from Mongolia, as foreign rulers lending military and financial support from near and far, corresponded to a rhetorical shift in emphasis for the concept of patronage, from generating “roots of merit” by giving, to

⁹¹ Stein 1972: 106f. Many lasting institutions in the post-imperial period of Tibetan history began with a charismatic founder whose authority then bifurcated into a ruling line of direct descent and an abbatial line linked horizontally to the same clan (i.e. as sons and nephews). Perhaps the first instance of this kind was the Tshalpa lineage begun by Lama Zhang (1122–1193) which bifurcated into the *bdag po* rulers at Tshal Gungthang and the abbots of Yangön, both defining themselves by descent from Lama Zhang as his sons and nephews, a structure eventually dominated by the Gar (Mgar) clan (Sørensen and Hazod 2007). The Khön family furnished Sakya monastery with the nephew-abbots Drakpa Gyaltsen, Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen, and Phakpa Lodrö Gyaltsen (Davidson 2005: 267–74, 338–50). The monastery of Thil (Mthil/Theil) founded in 1158 by Phagmodrupa Dorjé Gyalpo (1110–1170) became the abbatial seat of the Phagmodru, coupled with the myriarch's political seat at Ne'udong, both under the Lang (Rlangs) clan; among the Lang myriarchs the two roles were sometimes recombined into a “hybrid monk-ruler” (*bla dpon sbrags*) (van der Kuijp 1991: 286ff; Petech 1990: 56). A bifurcation of the Kyura (Skyu ra) family gave the abbots at Drikung monastery and the lay rulers known as the Drikung Gompa (*'bri gung sgom pa*), sometimes coalescing in the same manner (Sperling 1987).

⁹² Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 11.

⁹³ One example is the depiction of the groundbreaking for the White Palace, described as a *yon mchod* relationship between Sonam Rabten and the dharma-king Guśri Khan (Karmay 2014: 195; Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Lo gsar 'bel gam*: 18a). Other examples of how the *mchod gnas* relationship was subordinated, from evidence in political documents, are given by Schwieger (2014: 57–58). In this respect Ruegg's claim (1991: 449–50) that the definitive concept of the Ganden Phodrang government, namely *chos srid zung 'brel* (what I am calling tandem clerical and secular governance) also reflects the exact same “special relationship between the two functions—the temporal and the spiritual” as *mchod yon*, both indicators of these two “contrastable social and political functions,” must be re-evaluated.

another sort of dharmic work: conquest, power, and wealth. Thus, when the model speech in the *New Year's Speechmaking* named patrons in its concluding benedictions, it used the exhortation, “May the great patrons of the dispensation, such as the royal families of China and Mongolia, increase their dominion (*mnga' thang*) and their wealth! (*'byor pa*).”⁹⁴ The latter constituency were also construed as projections of the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, a “lord of forceful might” (*mthu stobs kyi dbang phyug*).⁹⁵ In this political landscape, increasing centralization also marked a shift away from the earlier status quo of dominant families ruling over large compact territories, who had consequently emphasized hereditary succession over titles awarded by any central government.⁹⁶ Van der Kuijp remarks on the tendency during the earlier Ming era for appointed titles such as *ta'i si tu* (< Ch. 大司徒) and *khri dpon* (“myriarch”) to become hereditary titles.⁹⁷ On the other hand, the Desi's manual avoided genealogy and spoke instead of “race” (*rigs*), perhaps because it addressed a multicultural audience, including not only Tibetan aristocracy, but also Mongol and Chinese polities. Meanwhile, the increasing hegemony of the Gelukpa monastic order, with its promotion of succession by reincarnation, meant that monastic leadership need no longer be co-determined alongside a ruling house.⁹⁸ As Carrasco noted, these

⁹⁴ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 43b.

⁹⁵ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 34a.

⁹⁶ Carrasco 1959: 22; Tucci 1949: 24–27, 33–34.

⁹⁷ Van der Kuijp 1991: 277n1.

⁹⁸ Granted, where abbatial succession and political succession were once linked by ordaining second sons, the concept of reincarnation had its own potential aspirations to be virtually knitted together with a line of lay ruling patrons, as in the famous case of the fourth Dalai Lama Yönten Gyatso, most fortuitously discovered among the ruling family of Altan Khan. While such occurrences are often read as cynical religious ploys for political allegiance (see e.g. Tucci 1949, vol. 1: 50), it would be no less speculative to add that just this sort of connection would have already been anticipated, insofar as the intertwining of lay and monastic succession was already part and parcel of the inherited cultural concept of patronage. It is also good for us to recall that rebirth was (and is) a self-avowedly strategic practice: taking birth just as one wishes (*bsams bzhin skye ba bzhes pa*; see e.g. *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 4b) was central to the theology of reincarnation. Whether or not we wish to believe in it ourselves, awareness of that fact would have informed the expectations of those tasked with confirming the process. It is tempting to surmise that it would have been far stranger if a rebirth of a high lama was completely random, than for it to occur at an obviously strategically significant place. Rebirth in a ruling family is a smart choice for a self-aware soul! At any rate, perhaps a history of the semantics of rebirth is a future desideratum; I merely wish to remind us that our own incredulity of a system is not automatic proof of it having been exclusively a prop for ulterior motives all along.

phenomena were closely related to one another: “the connection with the Gelukpa hierarchy is established with the nobility as a whole and not with any particular family.”⁹⁹ In other words monastery and clan, each authorizing itself genealogically, were no longer knitted together by mutually reinforcing uncle-nephew bonds. Instead, “nobility as a whole” became a more abstract social grouping, authorized in relation to the center, not solely by its own internal logic of succession.

It should come as little surprise, then, that in Sangyé Gyatso's new model for public speaking, space was no longer constituted diarchically as the collaborative lay/monastic reproduction of the merit-world. Nor was time ordered soteriologically after the logic of the dedication formula. Furthermore, the standard speech's mimetic micro/macroc cosmic model (the event “in here” mirrors the reality “out there”) was replaced by Sangyé Gyatso's “localizing” model, in which the outer world flowed continuously into the inner one, and everything built up to the present moment. Lastly, in terms of society, Sangyé Gyatso's speech overcoded the definitive lay-monastic dichotomy of the standard model with the spatial arrangement of the *nidāna*, whose principle was the central teacher and their encircling retinue or audience. The latter fill out the periphery, always in relation to the center. Theirs was not a relationship of supporter and supported, as in the vertical structure of the standard speech, but a role of surrounding, facing, being spoken to.

Viewed in this light, Sangyé Gyatso's manual suggests an alternative to that ordering principle of merit and the ideally merit-driven world those standard speeches envisioned. As discussed at the start of this chapter, I suggest that the new ordering principle was the *dispensation*, fostered and spread from divine centers of power. We will end this chapter by exploring some ramifications of that idea.

⁹⁹ Carrasco 1959: 24.

CONCLUSION: DISPENSATION AND BUDDHIST RULE

Consider first the ways that space and time are handled in the *New Year's Speechmaking*. Unlike the soteriological procession (present—past—future) of the standard speech, it follows a linear (or, I prefer to say, radial) temporal progression: past—present—future. In other words, it progressed narratively from the past towards the present, all the way up to the live moment-in-progress, which is like the cutting edge of the future. Concurrently, it organized space into a centripetal, or what I above called a “localizing” form, tending inwards towards its own central event. Both movements are thus inextricably tied to the act of celebration, the here-and-now within which such a speech occurred, and which it fostered. To repeat, celebration is almost definitionally a reflexive act of self-identification (one way of partying is to shout “party!”). We can think of it as a way of manifesting the future right at the epicenter of the present. With merit-dedication, the future was off on the far horizon (one's next life, eventual buddhahood, etc.). In celebration—and we must remember that a celebration also marked the start of a new “Perfected Age”—the future begins, in the words of Van Halen, Right Now.

As already discussed, the notion of a Perfected Age as a state of celebration (*dga' ston*) was very frequently invoked to express the rule of the Ganden Phodrang.¹⁰⁰ The fifth Dalai Lama not infrequently suggested that the advent of Ganden Phodrang rule be understood as the onset of a new Perfected Age. Sangyé Gyatso made the point in a more academic fashion. The fact of their success was proof that such a state now obtained, even if the official timing was a little off. The speaker stresses this point within the model speech:

¹⁰⁰ To give but a few examples close at hand: we have already seen that the Desi's speech during the sixth Dalai Lama's enthronement ended with praises of the auspiciousness of experiencing the glory of a Perfected Age (*rdzogs ldan gyi dpal spyod pa'i shis brjod*). In the *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*, the Desi similarly quoted another verse of the fifth Dalai Lama's as a fitting way to end a speech: “May the Buddha's dispensation flourish! May the king's laws be forceful! May the entire world have everlasting peace and happiness! May there be the auspiciousness of directly experiencing the celebration (*dga' ston*) which ushers in a new Perfected Age! (*rdzogs ldan bskal pa gsar du dang shar pa*).” See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 24: 185. Quoted in *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 44a. We will come across more examples in later chapters.

It has been 2,575 years since our buddha took on his sambhogakāya form in the city of Kuśinagara [i.e., “died”]. So we are now seventy-five years into the sixth [of ten] five-hundred-year periods [of the dispensation], and the Perfected Age (*rdzogs ldan*) has ended...¹⁰¹

...Meanwhile, according to the Kālacakra system, the Perfected Age, the Age of Three, and the Age of Two have passed, and now eighty-one years¹⁰² of the Age of Conflict have passed. The Perfected Age which will start when Rudracakrī conquers the barbarians [and the subsequent three ages] will go on for 2,529 years.¹⁰³

But in the true sense (*nges don du*), whenever a buddha and a cakravartin king come to the world, it must be a Perfected Age.

Therefore, insofar as the feet of the great all-knowing leader of this world and beyond, the Dalai Lama, a holy noble being who already attained buddhahood immeasurable eons ago; and this forceful cakravartin and Mañjuśrī-as-a-Human Lord, [Sangyé Gyatso], who is never apart from him [in their rebirths] (*gang dang dbyer ma mchis pa*), are manifestly flourishing (*mngon par bkra bas*), therefore it must be a Perfected Age. It is the moment of an excellent celebration for the start of the wood pig year of the twelfth cycle (1695) ...¹⁰⁴

This incredible statement reaches out and grasps the incongruity between the Perfected Age as a cosmological norm, and as an attainable ideal. There is an explicit tension between the rhetoric and the actuality of Ganden Phodrang rule. It's simply much too soon for a Perfect Age, at least by any

¹⁰¹ This reckoning follows the system elaborated by Daṃṣṭṛsena in his Prajñāpāramitā commentaries. See *Lo gsar 'bel gdam*: 36a. Namely, the vital dispensation is divided into ten periods of five hundred years; the first nine are subdivided into three sets of three periods each. The first set is defined by the results attained. In the first period, the goal of arhat-ship predominates; in the second, that of non-returner; and in the third, the once-returner or stream-enterer. The second set (periods four, five, and six) is defined by the predominant form of training: vipaśyanā or prajñā (insight) in the fourth; śamathā or samādhi (meditation) in the fifth; and śīla (discipline) in the sixth. The third set (periods seven, eight, and nine) is defined by the predominant form of scripture used: Abhidharma for the seventh; Sūtra for the eighth; and Vinaya for the ninth. The tenth period stands alone as the utterly degenerate time in which only a “mere semblance” (*rtags tsam*) of dharma remains. Hence Sangyé Gyatso is suggesting that $1,500 + 1,000 + 75 = 2,575$ years have passed since the parinirvāṇa, landing him in the sixth period, that of “discipline.”

¹⁰² The math is confusing to me here. The xylograph of the *Lo gsar 'bel gdam* unambiguously reads *gya gcig* (81) but perhaps this is an orthographic error. There should be 826 years for each of the four ages of the *snga dar*; according to Sangyé Gyatso's reckoning. Multiplying that by three gives 2,478 years. Hence if we are dating from Śākyamuni's parinirvāṇa, the date of this speech (1695) would be ninety-seven years into the Age of Conflict. Compare the parallel reckoning that Sangyé Gyatso gave in the *Tomb Inventory* (apropos the start of the construction of the Red Palace in 1690). There he suggested that ninety-two years of the Age of Conflict had transpired, and 734 years remained ($92+734 = 826$). As this was five years prior to the model speech in 1695, indeed we should expect ninety-seven here, not eighty-one. See *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 230.

¹⁰³ This number is easier to adduce. Recall (see note 25) that according to the Kālacakra system, there would be two successive “lesser four ages” (*dus bzhi chung ngu*), an “earlier” and a “later propagation.” The former was calculated at 3,304 years long, and the latter (on Jambudvīpa) at 1,800 years, thus giving a total of 5,104 years. Subtracting 2,575 (the number of years that transpired since Śākyamuni's parinirvāṇa up to 1695) gives us the remaining 2,529 years to go until the conclusion of that later propagation on Jambudvīpa.

¹⁰⁴ *Lo gsar 'bel gdam*: 39a–b.

conventional understanding. Sangyé Gyatso reverses the logic: it is truly the presence of buddha and king that make the Perfected Age a reality, not the other way around. The implication is that in the “true sense,” at least, a Perfected Age can be actively brought into being—at any time. But the hypothetical creation and sustenance of that ideal stands in explicit contrast to the actual world outside, the “indirect sense” of the world of appearances, in which the cosmic cycle goes steadily on.

As I read it, there is a close connection between this emphasis on actively starting a Perfected Age, and the structural rubric of the five excellences. As discussed, the excellences were a means for calling attention to the present moment. By the very fact of their eponymous “excellence,” the knowledge that we are presently standing in a Perfected Age is also identified and enjoyed. The link between this formal feature of speechmaking and the aesthetic of celebration can be seen from how the Desi characterizes the five excellences:

When we speak in terms of the five excellences of place, teacher, audience, time, and topic, the Sanskrit term *lakṣmī* or “phuntsok” in Tibetan means “free from every fault and endowed with every quality.” Now, the *jñānakāya*, the wisdom-body, possesses all three forms of excellence, namely “excellent abandonment,” “excellent gnosis,” and “excellence in serving others.” It provides the predominant condition for the body which is excellent in serving others, which is just to say the Teacher [i.e., the buddha in human form]. The dharma he taught, including most tantras and the *Prajñāpāramitā* and so on, was set into texts by compilers distinct from that Teacher. In the Indian texts, there occurs the phrase *evam mayā śrutam ekasmin samaye*, or in Tibetan, *'di skad bdag gis thos pa dus gcig na*, “This I heard at one time.” The phrase is to be explained in terms of the five excellences: “This” is the excellent topic. “I” is the excellent audience. “Heard” is the excellent teacher. “One time” is the excellent time. And “at” should be interpreted as the form of the seventh grammatical case, indicating the site of an action, thus denoting the excellent place... Hence it is said: In an excellent place, an excellent teacher gives, to an excellent requestor of teachings or excellent audience, on a day which is an excellent time, this excellent teaching.¹⁰⁵

The concept of “excellence” plays two related roles: first, it guarantees that the event described is centered around the presence of a buddha. Second, it aestheticizes the event in terms of the literary

¹⁰⁵ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 7b–8a. In the elided portion, the Desi accommodated the same formula to tantric and medical texts which instead begin, “This I taught (*bshad pa*) at one time,” on which see Gyatso 2015: 159ff.

concepts of “quality” and “fault.” These were the same terms that Indian literary theorists like Daṇḍin used to evaluate the excellence of literature.¹⁰⁶ Such an affective sensibility seems most appropriate for the state of utmost celebration in a Perfected Age, which is as much a phenomenological experience as a state of rule—a concern of aesthetics as much as politics. Reminiscent of how the speaker also began with Daṇḍin's opening formula, here too the structure of the five excellences reproduces within each speech-event the circumstances surrounding a buddha's teaching, which are just those of a moment of absolutely perfect excellence (and eloquence). As the Desi stated above, the presence of a buddha and the existence of a Perfected Age are concomitant signs.

Lastly, let us consider how hierarchy could be construed according to this model. These “excellences” also do ideological work as a rubric for recognizing, naming, and situating different socio-political elements with respect to that ideal state of affairs. That the five categories render the social whole in terms of the event of a buddha's teaching immediately suggests a conception of ruler as a central buddha with a surrounding retinue. Other sociological designations are subordinated to that teaching-event. In the Desi's sample speech, references to other political agents are redistributed mainly within the category of “place,” with its spatial references to adjacent kingdoms, and especially the category of “audience.” The latter category lumped together several types of authority. It began by listing Mongolian and Chinese rulers (or their representatives in attendance) as descendants of the “asura race” (*lha ma yin gyi rigs*) and the “nāga race” (*klu'i rigs*), respectively.¹⁰⁷ The Mongolians were subdivided into the Qośots in Guśri Khan's line, and the Khalkhas, portrayed as a Chinggisid polity. Chinese court emissaries (*gser yig pa*) were extolled as “imperial envoys of the Mañjuśrī emperor of

¹⁰⁶ Specifically, in *Kāvyaḍarśa* I.40ff.

¹⁰⁷ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 34a-b. Here the notion of *rigs*, “family” or “type,” replaces that of lineage (as in the term *rgyud* and cognates such as [*lo*] *rgyus*).

the royal seat of China, that kingdom which is the field-to-be-tamed of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.”¹⁰⁸ Next were couriers (*bya ma rta*, Skt. *avacaraka*) from “the Indian Mahārāja” who descends from the clear-light gods (i.e., desire-realm gods on the second bhūmi and above); and envoys (*mi sna*) from minor kingdoms such as Nepal and Jumla (*nai pa la* and *'dzum lang*, maybe referring to Newars and Gurkhas respectively). After naming these other powers, the speaker proceeded, with no break or mark of transition, to praise varying positions in the monastic hierarchy, including abbots, reincarnate lamas, preceptors and tantric masters; the monks of Namgyal College in particular; and Tibetan aristocratic government officials, identified by their “Precious Ornamentation” costumery (*rin chen rgyan cha*), referring to the “traditional” garb instated by the fifth Dalai Lama in 1672.¹⁰⁹ This account ended with regional governors (*sde dpon*), courtiers (*nang rnam*), and nobility (*drung 'khor*).¹¹⁰ The ordering of this list is of a piece with the assemblies described earlier in this chapter.

As discrete social roles were thus rewritten under this basic teacher-audience framework, the notion of “teacher” bespeaks its own conception of authority. The Desi was aiming for something beyond a simple sacred kingship conflating god and man. We will dwell on this issue at much greater length in the next chapter; but in anticipation, let us state here that the model speech also discussed this relationship between buddha, bodhisattva, and king. To wit: Avalokiteśvara was not merely a bodhisattva, but in fact already became a buddha many hundreds of ages ago.¹¹¹ Avalokiteśvara worked as both part and whole. As the whole, it also encompassed other bodhisattvas as one single being. As the model speech puts it:

¹⁰⁸ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 34b.

¹⁰⁹ On the *rin chen rgyan cha/sprod* and the relevant passages in the fifth Dalai Lama's corpus, see Chapter Five.

¹¹⁰ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 34a–35b.

¹¹¹ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam* 21b–22a. Specifically, Avalokiteśvara was supposed to have already become a tathāgata named Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭarāja (*'Od zer kun nas 'phags pa dpal brtsegs kyi rgyal po*), nine hundred and ninety-one mahākalpas ago.

all [these bodhisattvas] are projections from out of the singular nature of the dharmakāya and sambhogakāya, with no distinction from one another, except that they appear differently before the beings they are to tame. For that very reason it is certain that they are all projections of this noble being [Avalokiteśvara] alone.¹¹²

The five excellences, which organize the event around the concept of a buddha teaching, harmonize with this notion of rulers as bodhisattvas and political domains as their fields-to-be-tamed, and the second-order notion of a singular buddhahood underlying all those multiple bodhisattvas. As we saw above, it is the manifest presence of a buddha teaching (the shape of the *nidāna*) which heralds the presence of a Perfected Age. So the excellent teacher is the buddha; but the buddha always acts as bodhisattvas; and the bodhisattvas included the fifth Dalai Lama...and the Desi Sangyé Gyatso...and the emperor of China...and the Mongolian kings of Qinghai. Recall that in the benediction quoted above, China also had the distinction of being granted its own “field-to-be-tamed,” corresponding to the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, hence its own type of divine ruler in the person of the Qing emperor. So too was divinity attributed to the Mongol lords, linked with the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. Grounding bodhisattva-hood in buddhahood, the former’s diversity stemming from the latter’s singularity, granted an incredible amount of flexibility in the identities that a ruler could take within the same overarching conception of polity. Not all divine rulers were created equal. That is why it is so important to heed the specificity with which they were consistently described: the Qing emperor is the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī as a king (*rgyal po*), whereas the fifth Dalai Lama is always the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara “in the form of a renunciate king” (*sdom brtson rgyal po'i tshul bzung ba*).¹¹³ As Sangyé Gyatso ruled over such a

¹¹² *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 23a. The underlying idea is of the singularity of the buddha despite the multiplicity of its projections, which resemble multiple reflections of a single moon in water (see also *Yellow Vaidurya* 1998: 358–59). Among passages this speech cited in support are *Abhidharmakośa* VII.34, *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* IX.82-85, comparing bodhisattvas to buddhas as multiple streams to a single ocean, and *Uttaratantra* II.53, on the singularity of the dharmakāya and variety of its projected forms.

¹¹³ This crucial concept is derived from a prophecy excerpted from the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* (*'Jam dpal rtsa rgyud*, Tōh. 543). For examples of Sangyé Gyatso's citation and exegesis of this prophecy, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 150; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 23b, exegesis at 24b; *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 366–67. It must be noted that in its original Sanskrit *yatayo rājyavṛttinaḥ*, the phrase may have meant something more along the lines of “monks getting involved in politics” or as Jayaswal (1934: 75) puts it, “Buddhist recluses connected with the state.” Davidson's remark (2002: 359n1)

field, it made sense that he would be a bodhisattva too: he was Mañjuśrī, not as king but as “human lord” (*mi rje*) or “human ruler” (*mi bdag*), with the persona of a “forceful” (*stobs kyis*) or “householder” (*khyim pa*) cakravartin.¹¹⁴ All are ultimately derivative of Avalokiteśvara *qua* buddha, directly or indirectly, hence of a kind with what we could call the deity's ‘main line’ of projections, most recently the expected seven Dalai Lamas. Surely the umbrella of Ganden Phodrang governance (*chos srid gdugs dkar*) was not expected to fold up quite so quickly! The inclination to see in the Tibetan state the absolute apotheosis of the Dalai Lama as its “caesaropapist” ruler *ad infinitum*—even if pertinent for later eras—is inaccurate for this earlier moment, which envisioned a form of authority that encompassed, rather than was encompassed by, the Dalai Lama institution.

These various ruler/bodhisattvas were not ranks to be compared to one another on a single yardstick. Nor is there any such thing here as a simple dichotomy between a secular and a sacred authority, begging the question of which outranks the other, priest or king, and on which terms, purity or power. In fact, it is less the particular form of a ruler's identity *per se* which grounds their authority, so much as the confirmation that they rule over a field-to-be-tamed, which precisely names a bodhisattva's domain where the vital dispensation flourishes, be it as lay king, renunciate king, householder lord, and so on; or else that they aided some such field from afar, as did Vajrapāṇi (as the Mongol rulers) by application of force.¹¹⁵ In sum, for this particular iteration of the Ganden Phodrang government, if not for later iterations in the aftermath of Sangyé Gyasto's precipitous downfall, it was the Buddhist concept of the dispensation (*bstan pa*) that furnished the core concept of order.

that the Tibetan translators may have mistaken *rājya* for *rāja* is convincing. However, it is absolutely clear that Sangyé Gyatso understood this prophecy as foretelling the coming of a “vow-observing king.” No term is more central to his portrayal of the fifth Dalai Lama's identity; it recurs more times than can be counted.

¹¹⁴ See e.g. *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 24b, 30a, 39a, 39b, 43a.

¹¹⁵ Instructive in this regard is the speech's parsing of quotations from the *Daśabhūmika sūtra* to emphasize only its description of the ten bhūmis as a scale of sovereignty (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 28a–29b). Also quoted in support of this identification of bodhisattva and cakravartin is *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, verse 20.3: “Bodhisattvas are forever becoming householder cakravartins” (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 28a).

The dispensation determined the world. Geographical knowledge basically boiled down to those places where the dispensation existed, and those where it did not. Just like merit, the dispensation is a living thing that humans must nurture. It is born, grows, moves, changes shape, and dies. The model speech lamented that India, the font of dharma, had been overrun by Turkic invaders and “is no longer as it once was;” whereas in Kashmir and Nepal, irrevocably mixed with non-Buddhist systems, “there is now nothing of the Buddha's dispensation as it should be.”¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, those areas where the dispensation persisted could be evaluated with respect to one another in terms of its vitality there. Places where the dispensation thrived indicated fields-to-be-tamed and hence the bodhisattva-cakravartin activity any such field implies.¹¹⁷ Other, minor regions were capable of being incorporated into those fields, as when the speaker boasted of how Sangyé Gyatso, as ruler, brought the areas of Yarkhand and Ngari under the Tibetan umbrella (*gdugs dkar*).¹¹⁸ The vitality of the dispensation overlaid a Buddhist orientation upon the physical terrain of Jambudvīpa: thus the speaker insisted that by geographical reckoning (*sa tshigs*) India would always be the center of that continent, whereas by a dharmic reckoning (*chos tshigs*), Tibet had taken its place as the center.¹¹⁹ The reason is nothing other than the dispensation: “because the living core, so to speak (*srog rtsa lta bu*) of the buddha's precious dispensation, where it endures untainted, has dwindled down to Tibet alone.”¹²⁰ No such preeminence

¹¹⁶ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 13b.

¹¹⁷ In the *Tomb Inventory* (*'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 80) the Desi named India the field-to-be-tamed” (*gdul zhing*) of Vajrapāṇi, China that of Mañjuśrī; and Tibet that of Avalokiteśvara. Perhaps it is because of the supposed decline of the dispensation in India that Mongolia replaced India in that triad.

¹¹⁸ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 33b. The Desi was euphemistic: “the minor kingdoms like Yarkhand and Ngari have gathered of their own accord as our political subjects” (*ngam shugs kyi mnga' 'bangs su sdud pa*). It is important to recall how this language echoes one of the main features of celebration itself, namely the karmic connection of various peoples gathering together of their own accord, as when the speaker exclaims, “Here, on this occasion, the fact (*chos nyid*) is that external and internal forms of connection have come about by their own arrangement (*rang 'grig tu 'byung*). The external connection is expressed in the saying, 'swans gather in the lotus lake, bees gather in fragrant flowers.' So too it is now a time for enjoying pleasure, for which all of these people have come together naturally (*rang bzhin du 'du*) without having to be deliberately convened (*ma bsdus par*).” *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 40a.

¹¹⁹ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 14a.

¹²⁰ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 13b–14a.

was afforded to China, which in spite of being its own “field” with its own bodhisattva ruler, was still derivative of that “living core.” Its distinction was that it harbored that subsection of the dispensation pertaining to astronomy, namely the eighty-four thousand “gateways” opened by Mañjuśrī at Wutai Shan. (A knowledge that, not insignificantly, Sangyé Gyatso—another Mañjuśrī himself—also claimed mastery of, hence potential dominion over.)

Dispensation, like merit, cannot be reduced to the status of either a strictly religious or secular concept, let alone the mark of a theocracy. It makes rule intelligible and situates each ruler with respect to other political agents. It furnishes a method for distinguishing self and other; for locating a center; and for justifying the rightness of a state of affairs (hence also the success or failure of a ruler). So, to reiterate, the state of rule envisioned by Sangyé Gyatso and constituted in this sort of speech was not fundamentally a lama-patron dichotomy, however much it retained a role for patronage relationships. It was more like a map of the dispensation and its various fields, a map whose ideal spatial logic is exactly that of a buddha teaching to an audience at some place and time. Consider the full text of the speech's closing benediction, already quoted above:

May the lotus-feet of the all-knowing great Dalai Lama, who has become the glory of the entire dispensation, remain as firm as an unbreakable vajra. And may the life and deeds of this very person [Sangyé Gyatso], Mañjuśrī-as-a-Ruler of Men, who is one [lit. “not two”] with that protector and the upholder of the dispensation, increase like the waxing moon! And may word of our great fame pervade everywhere on the earth! May the great patrons of the dispensation, like the royal families of China and Mongolia, increase their dominion and wealth! And may this very dispensation, the buddha's dispensation in general and in particular the tradition of Tsongkhapa which has become [its] pure essence or lifeline, the clerical and secular governance (*chos srid*) of this heavenly-appointed Ganden Phodrang, endure for as long as the sky does not change its form! May it be auspicious!¹²¹

Note that patronage is construed here not in terms of making offerings to lamas, but by service towards the dispensation as a whole. This passage clearly shows that rule (in both its secular and clerical

¹²¹ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 43b–44a. The Desi claimed to have adapted this benediction from a shorter one he attributed to the meeting of Altan Khan and the third Dalai Lama.

responsibilities) and dispensation are the same idea. The dispensation at its strongest and most pure *is exactly* the Ganden Phodrang government (*dga' ldan pho brang gi chos srid bstan pa 'di nyid*). The two terms—dispensation and government—are appositional. They describe the same thing.

To end: this overview of the theory and practice of speechmaking has asked how cosmo-moral order can be variously constituted through performance—the arrangement of bodies, the engagement with one's audience, the manipulation of basic situational categories such as time and space. Speeches are an excellent example of the concrete techniques by which an invisible ideal and a local environment—the “as-if” and the “as-is,” respectively—are brought to bear on one another. However much this sort of orator would have been promoting the ideals of his government, the performance itself was also part and parcel of the effort to realize those ideals, to actually make that celebratory state and its ordering principles perceptible, in and through the circumscribed space of a speech. The affective state of celebration and enjoyment was also a cosmological ideal closely associated with the Perfected Age, the cosmic new beginning, marked by perfectly peaceful rule and the rejuvenated flourishing of the dispensation. This was precisely the order that this new state anticipated on its imminent horizon, like a rising sun, hopefully even already underway.

Such clear vision of the cosmos and one's place in it, known cognitively and felt affectively in the performance of a good speech, tapped into a level of meaning not ordinarily visible. For one thing, knowledge of where one stood in space and time, and against the cosmic patterning of history, was expert knowledge. To really do it right, one had to know, among other things, details of the buddha's passing and the logic for organizing different periods of the dispensation. Sangyé Gyatso covered such topics at length, here as elsewhere in his textual corpus.¹²² The problem also invoked specialized knowledges about peculiarities of the lunar and solar cycles, landmarks and geographical orientations,

¹²² For a lengthy discussion of how to periodize the dispensation (*bstan pa'i gnas tshad*), see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 197–214.

and so on. Not incidentally, this was all information that Sangyé Gyatso's model speaker conveyed in their speech (thus demonstrating, if nothing else, their own expertise in such knowledges). But there were also other ways of being situated that were presumably far more readily intelligible, involving not so much rational as aesthetic self-awareness. Such awareness might involve recognizing the presence of a center or an efflorescence of learning; or (if one was fortunate enough) experiencing a festive state of near-heavenly enjoyment; it might also involve the pedagogy of learning how to notice, read, and evaluate such signs. Such clarity was also ordinarily invisible, albeit in different sort of way. The celebrations at which speeches were typically delivered—including holidays, state functions, embassies, enthronements and other rites of passage, and so on—did not, obviously, go on forever, as wished of this state itself. Still, they manifested the excellence that this government proclaimed as its end: an order of peace and well-being radiating out from the center. It is probably not too much of a stretch to venture that this ideal of pleasurable peace would have been ordinarily belied by the opacity and ambiguity of everyday life, which, needless to say, would have been, for most of the people most of the time, emphatically not something to celebrate. Yet one goal of government—a goal that is at once ideological and utopian—is to articulate a vision of order and endeavor to make that order a reality. It is to traffic in the gap between ideal and actual, between a perfect order that takes constant work to realize, and a world of caprice and ambiguity within which one carries out that work. That gap marks the incongruity between the promise of the hoped-for Perfected Age that this government claimed (or wished) to have inaugurated, and the lurking suspicion that the so-called degenerate era, the end-times Age of Conflict, had not yet relinquished its grasp on Tibet and the larger world of Jambudvīpa. It is exactly the point of performative speech to briefly close that gap, creating the space within which one might indeed confirm that this government was truly restarting the cosmos itself.

CHAPTER THREE.
HOW TO PURIFY A DEAD GOD: THEORY AND DESIGN OF THE GREAT WORSHIP ASSEMBLY
THE PROBLEM OF BUDDHIST KINGSHIP

In the early months of 1682, Sangyé Gyatso watched the aging fifth Dalai Lama succumb to illness and die. The ritual responses to that death, conducted in secret by an inner circle of attendants, began immediately.¹ The death itself was not publicly announced for years, although those persons in the know kept up the appropriate services each year. The news became official in 1696, just prior to the sixth Dalai Lama's enthronement. By this time, Sangyé Gyatso had already spent years elevating the fifth Dalai Lama's death into a public fact of monumental significance. Most visibly, it was enshrined in the incredible golden tomb that would become the centerpiece of the newly-expanded Potala palace (see Chapter Six). In 1694, a year before construction started on the palace, he also rolled out an extensive new holiday for commemorating the anniversary of the Dalai Lama's death. This event, known as the Great Worship Assembly (*tshogs mchod chen mo*), consisted of several day-long assemblies in Lhasa's central temple, attended by thousands of monks from Lhasa and its environs. It was capped by a noisome procession around the entire city. Both projects together—tomb and ceremony—were justified and designed as necessary services for the deceased Dalai Lama. That need was articulated in terms of the purification of the Dalai Lama's karma.²

To be sure, these bombastic government projects probably elevated the grandeur of the fifth Dalai Lama and the Ganden Phodrang by the sheer fact of their existence. Beyond the formidable power of spectacle, they may have also justified in more subtle ways the vast resources and special knowledges

¹ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgribs*: 21a; *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 37a.3ff. Sangyé Gyatso acknowledged on several occasions in the latter text that these services were greatly abbreviated due to the need for secrecy (e.g., *sku gdung rin po che'i sku mdun du ha cang rgya che ba gsang khog gis ma thub kyang mchod pa sna tshogs bshams*).

² Regarding the tomb, the argument about its purificatory purpose is laid out in the second chapter of the *Tomb Inventory*; see e.g. 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 188ff.

of this ruling elite, while reinforcing the overall impression of the Ganden Phodrang as a Buddhist state with a benevolent divinity at its center. But what is even more interesting about these works is that they did not shy away from the problems that their existence raised. In fact, they confronted those problems head on. What deity needs purification? What human does not? Just what is a bodhisattva king and how are they like or unlike the rest of us?

The underlying issues of kingship and succession, and of divinity and its relationship to humanity, go beyond Tibet. The problematic ideal of an enlightened but also engaged kingship has been a durable theme in the Buddhist world. Authors across Asia have explored affinities and aversions between ruler and bodhisattva. From one angle, it is not difficult to ascertain interests common to both. In text as much as in polity, it has been acknowledged that bodhisattvas projected themselves onto the continent of Jambudvīpa precisely to rule as king. A verse from Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-sūtra-alaṃkāra* stated this as a rule: “Bodhisattvas are forever becoming cakravartins; as householders, they serve living beings in every birth.”³ Kingship offered a plausible way—maybe even a signature way—for a bodhisattva to practically engineer the widespread change in the human world that was, by many accounts, their sworn mission and *raison d'être*. What better vehicle could there be for acting on behalf of people *en masse* than the institution of sovereignty? In the same spirit, the *Daśabhūmika Sūtra*, describing the powers of a bodhisattva ascending the eponymous ten levels, also made a point to map this spiritual progress onto the expanding dominion of a cakravartin ruler. As a bodhisattva advanced, so too could the scope of their reach as a world-conquering king, from a single continent all the way up to an entire Sahāloka universe of one billion worlds.⁴ At the same time, we may also discern a longstanding awareness in some literature that the closer the ideals of kingship come to approximating those of the

³ This is verse 20.3: *bodhisattvā hi satataṃ bhavantaścakravartinah/ prakurvanti hi sattvārthaṃ gr̥hṇaṃ sarvajanmasu//*

⁴ Chapter Thirty-One of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* (*Phal po che*, Tōh. 44). The passages about cakravartins are excerpted in *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 124–26; and *Lo gsar 'bel gdam*: 28a–29b.

dharma—for instance, ideals like renunciation and liberation—the more that affinity would undermine the responsibilities of rule. Āśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacārīta* thematized that concern as an opposition between “force” (*daṇḍa*) and “calm” (*śama*).⁵ We might put it more broadly by speaking of engagement and withdrawal with respect to a corrupted and corrupting world. Kingship, as an ideal, encompasses both a necessary attraction to the world, and a necessary desire to exceed or supercede it, in the effort to raise the world to a state of perfection beyond itself (as in the ideal of the Perfected Age, discussed in the previous chapter). The same attractions and aversions characterized Sangyé Gyatso's thinking about the fifth Dalai Lama and informed works like the Great Worship Assembly.

The problem of death brings such issues into focus. Death precipitates questions about how these opposing tendencies come together and apart. What are the reasons for commemorating a ruler's demise when the source of their authority should be incorruptible? How ought the massive resources of the state be used to secure authority as well as honor the king, if those two aims are suddenly at odds? How best to affirm the office and, in the same breath, acknowledge the vulnerability of the person wielding it? As Ernst Kantorowicz demonstrated, questions of this sort were central to the political theologies developed in late medieval Europe, articulated in the legal, philosophical, and theological discourses of their world. He documented the direct and indirect routes by which Christian doctrines of the *corpus mysticum*, the mystical body of the Church with Christ as its head, were appropriated and adapted into the famous “king's two bodies,” the mortal king and the crown that never dies.⁶

Tibet faced the same problem of reconciling the person and the institution of rule. Here, it took shape within a different cosmo-moral order. Instead of God and Church, it implicated buddhas and

⁵ See *Buddhacarīta* IX.48-49: “The dharma of release, where calm prevails,/ And the dharma of kings, where force prevails—how far apart are they!// If a king delights in calm, his realm falls apart,/ if his mind is on his realm, his calm is destroyed...” Olivelle (tr.) 2009. We will see another formulation of this same theme in the Tibetan *Pillar Testament*, discussed in Chapter Four.

⁶ Kantorowicz 1957.

bodhisattvas, and questions of agency and vulnerability within a world conditioned by karma. How does the utter perfection of the *samyak-sambuddha*, the wholly perfected being, relate to the highly advanced, albeit less than perfectly complete, powers of the bodhisattva, who engages directly with the living world? What are the capacities and limitations of a human *nirmāṇakāya*, a projected person who, though divine, is still vulnerable to temporal processes, at least in appearance if not also in being (but what is the karmic world if not a world of appearances)? And what are one's responsibilities towards a deity who exhibits signs of suffering and death? We will see that Sangyé Gyatso confronted and came up with novel answers to these questions. He did so in the act of producing this official response to the fifth Dalai Lama's death. Therefore, in the spirit of this entire study, to assess that response in practice we will think of it in terms the cosmo-moral order in which it was situated and which it participated in realizing upon its own world.

The Great Worship Assembly, the commemorative holiday that Sangyé Gyatso instituted on behalf of the deceased fifth Dalai Lama, was held for the first time at the end of the second month of the wood dog year (April 1694), and repeated annually on the same dates thereafter. Our main source for understanding the Great Worship Assembly is its foundational text, known by the abbreviated title *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*, or *Worship Assembly Instructions*.⁷ (I will refer to it simply as the *Instructions* for short.) Sangyé Gyatso conceived this project in the preceding water bird year (1693) and wrote up his plan over a period of eleven days during the last month of that year (February 1694). It was proofed by several readers before the inaugural ceremony, some two months later, but the final text was only edited and completed towards the end of 1694,⁸ and its woodblock prints finished in

⁷ The full title of the text is: *Mchod sprin nam mkha' mdzod kyi rgyun btsugs pa'i tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs 'byung khungs mdo rgyud shar ri nas drangs pa'i byang chen nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor* (“Instructions for organizing the Worship Assembly, to initiate the continuous flow of the offering-cloud, the sky-treasury: A sun-disk of awakening rising from the eastern mountains of authentic sūtras and tantras”).

⁸ The colophon of the *Instructions* specifies that it was prepared and used for the inaugural ceremony in April 1694, but not actually finalized until the ninth month of the wood dog year (October 1694).

1697, in connection with the sixth Dalai Lama's enthronement.⁹ This disparity between composing and printing complicates historical questions such as who knew about the Dalai Lama's death and how soon. The *Instructions*, for its part, made no effort to hide the truth of that death. The *New Year's Speechmaking* also referred to the inaugural Great Worship Assembly in euphemistic terms that implicitly, if not explicitly, acknowledged the ruler's passing.¹⁰ Roughly a dozen persons assisted directly in staging the 1694 ceremony and proofing and editing the draft text, including resolving questions about difficult passages that were apparently quite clear to the author but less so for his readers.¹¹ The print is one hundred folios in length.¹² Overall, the text had two main objectives: to justify the necessity of this ceremony, and to describe with exacting detail how it should be conducted, especially the concluding procession around Lhasa.

I suggest that we think of the Great Worship Assembly as a ritual response to the problem of Buddhist kingship. What I mean by “problem of kingship” is the basic political paradox that a ruler's authority must both imbue him but also exceed him, so that it can justify his rule but also endure where he does not. Here it found articulation in terms of doctrines of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and karma, as we will see below. The importance of thinking in terms of ritual is to recognize the event as an act of *clarifying*—not *collapsing*—the incongruity between a perfect deity and a flawed human ruler. That

⁹ See A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho 1974, vol. 7: 420. Akhu may have taken this detail from the teaching records of the Dzaya Paṇḍita Losang Trinlé; see Dza ya paṇḍita Blo bzang 'phrin las 1981, vol. 3: 291b. The *Instructions* include a few references to the *Tomb Inventory*, specifically regarding how it drew up accounts of wages for labor. So perhaps the colophon itself (and possibly other parts of the *Instructions*) was finalized only during the preparation of the print edition.

¹⁰ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 39a. There the Great Worship Assembly is described as an “unprecedented” offering for the purpose of ensuring that the fifth Dalai Lama (or, more properly, the bodhisattva standing behind him) would unceasingly turn the wheel of dharma (i.e., keep being reborn as ruler), and for the purification of first-bhūmi bodhisattvas.

¹¹ Sangyé Gyatso writes: “There were a few particular questions [on matters] which were, for me, easy to understand from the sources...and on that basis we explicated the difficult points, etc., [and] set them down [in this text].” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgribs*: 98b.

¹² The text ends on folio 99 and this is the number recorded in early accounts such as Longdöl's registry of texts. However, its enumeration duplicates one number, perhaps to re-insert a page from the source manuscript that was originally overlooked in the woodblock-carving process, albeit after pagination had already been assigned; hence there are two folios numbered 29, the first marked “upper” (29 *gong*) and the second “lower” (29 *'og*).

insight is borne out both by the intellectual arguments we find in the text, and—I aim to demonstrate—in the particulars of the event itself. My argument, then, is that not only did this ceremony *not* erase the distinction between immaculate god and fallible human, as if to superimpose one atop the other by an act of distortion or misrepresentation. On the contrary, it acquired its purpose and form by insisting on the ambivalent truth of their ultimate irresolvability. Consequently, this elaborate ceremony would indeed have been a means for affirming and naturalizing the ruler's divinity, hence for legitimizing his government. Still, that ideological function must also incorporate the distance opened up between a perfected state, in which a bodhisattva's service is being realized concretely through the project of political rule, and the recalcitrant experience of a lived reality in which a king appears no less flawed and no less mortal than any other human being. The real question is how to live within both of these realities, how to see each in terms of the other.

OVERVIEW OF THE GREAT WORSHIP ASSEMBLY

The Great Worship Assembly was a thoroughly scripted, multi-day affair. Its avowed objective, as its name suggests, was to stage a performance of “worship” (*mchod pa*). That worship involved the propitiation of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other nonhuman beings like *dākiṇīs*, by gathering, offering, and celebrating. Worship was tied to the display of wealth and the production of pleasure. In the *Instructions*, Sangyé Gyatso described a vast cosmic audience for this ceremony: its “recipients of worship” (*mchod yul*) were said to “fill oceanic amounts of infinite realms.”¹³ The main benefactor was the deceased fifth Dalai Lama, a human being. The ceremony was scheduled to line up with the anniversary of his death, beginning on the twenty-fifth day of the Phālguna (*dbo zla*) or second month (by “Hor” reckoning) of the Tibetan calendar.¹⁴ Its first five days of observances matched the five days

¹³ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 94b.6.

¹⁴ That the ceremony should properly begin on the twenty-fifth day of the month is based on the account in the *Instructions*, which also mentions that due to certain calendrical technicalities involving the difference between lunar days (*zhag*) and

during which the Dalai Lama, in 1682, remained in the limbo state of dying; or, in technical terms, while his inner luminosity-in-death was coursing in the experience of the deep reality of the dharmakāya (*'chi ba 'od gsal chos sku'i nyams bzhes bskyang*).¹⁵ On the thirtieth, the new moon day (*nam gang*), honoring the successful resolution of that death process, the Great Worship Assembly culminated with its capstone event: a procession around the city of Lhasa. This procession was made up of hundreds of performers who lined up in a predetermined order and toured the city in a “worship circuit” (*mchod skor*) bearing objects, implements, costumes and regalia, plants and animals, or their simulacra, while chanting, singing, gesturing, and dancing.

The amount of detail that Sangyé Gyatso put into the design of this procession is staggering. Not only the precise ordering of the participants, but also all its material specifications, and in many cases scripted actions including verses to intone, dance steps, percussive rhythms, and music, were derived from and meant to reflect specific texts and practices. A lengthy reconstruction is provided here as an appendix. The basic logic behind this parade was to amalgamate and perform as one all major varieties of worship, including offerings (*'bul ba*), praises (*bstod pa*), and acts of investiture (*mnga' ba* or *mnga' 'bul*), as if to harness them all towards a single goal. A vibrant mural of the 1694 procession snaking around the city (albeit on a reduced scale) was painted on the south side of the great hall in the new Red Palace, which also housed the fifth Dalai Lama's golden tomb. A twentieth-century record of the ceremony, written by a former Tibetan official, also mentions a giant illustration of the procession's precise ordering, evidently also produced by Sangyé Gyatso, that government officials would unfurl

solar days (*tshes*), the event could also start on the twenty-fourth rather than the twenty-fifth, much as the fortnightly *upośadha* rites could sometimes fall one day earlier. This is what happened in 1694. *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 37b–38a. Some modern accounts have the holiday starting on the twenty-third, or as early as the nineteenth (Richardson 1993: 60). Shankawa Gyurmé Sönam Topgyal noted that one day each was appended for the seventh and eighth Dalai Lamas; Shan kha ba 1997: 43. See also Kun dga' 1985: 88. Tsepak Rigzin (1993: 21-22) gives an account in English that reads as if based on the latter.

¹⁵ See e.g. *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 191; and for longer reflection on the ontology of death and the fifth Dalai Lama's five-day dying process, *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 29a–36a, 40b–42b.

along an office wall and study closely in preparation for the event.¹⁶ (I have heard anecdotally that this scroll is now kept in the Lhasa archives.)

Like many of the Desi's works, the Great Worship Assembly was upset by the turmoil of the early eighteenth century. It appears to have been suspended during the foreign occupations of Lhasa after Sangyé Gyatso's execution in 1705.¹⁷ However there is sporadic evidence that it endured in some form through subsequent changes of leadership and was again a fixed part of the holiday season by the mid-eighteenth century at the latest. The Jesuit scholar Ippolito Desideri, stationed in Lhasa from 1716–20 (during Lhasang Khan's tenure) briefly mentioned a “fine and impressive procession” on the third new moon of the year—which would indicate an interesting ritual continuity between Sangye Gyatso's rule and that of his nemesis.¹⁸ We find in the biography of the seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso that the ceremony was conducted in 1722; and the next year, in a modification that might have left Sangyé Gyatso turning in his grave, its services were co-opted to honor the recent death of the Kangxi emperor.¹⁹ There is also passing mention of it during the early 1730s under Pholhané's leadership, in the years when the seventh Dalai Lama and his father were serving out their term of exile in Sichuan.²⁰ It was held again regularly from 1736 onwards, upon his return. The giant brocade tapestries hung from

¹⁶ Shan kha ba 1997: 47–48.

¹⁷ Richardson (1993: 61) suggests it was suspended from 1705 until 1735 (which was also the year of the seventh Dalai Lama's return from exile in Garthar). This statement must be reevaluated in light of evidence from contemporary sources.

¹⁸ Desideri 2010 (tr. Sweet): 321. However, the procession that Desideri described was said to process only around “the Labrang in its entirety, which is a rather considerable circuit.”

¹⁹ The seventh Dalai Lama is described as giving advice for how to cope with a surge in attendance for the 1722 Great Worship Assembly (Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010, vol. 1: 148–49). On the death of Kangxi and the use of the Great Worship Assembly in 1723 to offer prayers for (and confirmation of) his fulfillment in death (*dgongs rdzogs*), see *ibid.*: 160. The event was observed up through 1727; in 1728 Lhasa was riven by the clash between members of the ruling council, resulting in Pholhané's ascent and the exile of the Dalai Lama and his father to Garthar.

²⁰ A brief line in the biography of Pholhané mentions both the Mönlam Chenmo and the Great Worship Assembly being conducted in 1731, with roughly 12,000 monks gathering for the former, and the level of service to the sangha on these occasions—such as the quality and quantity of tea and butter—increasing “year by year” (*lo re bzhin*), perhaps an indication that at least from this date the event may have been a regular occurrence (Mdo mkhar zhabs drung Tshe ring dbang rgyal 2015: 549). For 1738 and 1739, see Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 427–28, 450. Excepting a few years, the seventh Dalai Lama is described observing the ceremony annually through the 1740s.

the Potala during the procession were restored for the 1738 ceremony, and the objects and costumes used for the procession, which had by this time become tattered (*hrul skyon*), were repaired the following year. Again in 1779, another effort was made to restore the ceremony to its former splendor, this time under the authority of the Nominhan Ngawang Tshültrim (1721–91), who held the chief office of sikyong (*srid skyong*) during the minority of the eighth Dalai Lama. This intervention came at the personal request of the young Dalai Lama, who insisted on following the specifications set forth in Sangyé Gyatso's *Instructions*.²¹ In the twentieth century, the Great Worship Assembly and its procession (often referred to simply as the “sertreng” after *ser phreng*) was witnessed by foreign visitors like Hugh Richardson, Heinrich Harrer, and Alexandra David-Neel.²² A rich description of behind-the-scenes preparations is given in Shankhawa Gyurmé Sönam Topgyal's (1896-1967) survey of official holidays.²³ Photographs by Chapman, Bell, and other British residents from that era, now in the collection of the Pitt Rivers Museum, also show festivities in front of the Potala palace and even an elephant owned by the thirteenth Dalai Lama and used in the procession.

It was also a very costly undertaking. For the rollout performance in 1694, the outlay just for the new costumes and other materials for the procession ran to a total of 45,529 and one-half *srang* of silver.²⁴ Sangyé Gyatso used a standard valuation of one *srang* of silver at eighteen *khal* or pack-loads of grain (in the early twentieth century, one *khal*, which also served as the unit of measure for cultivable property, was variously estimated at around 14 kg. or 30 lbs. of grain). So this was the

²¹ The relevant passage from the eighth Dalai Lama's biography shows an obvious debt to Sangyé Gyatso's textual and intellectual legacy; it describes the Dalai Lama in precisely those theological terms that Sangyé Gyatso introduced, as discussed in this chapter. Blo bzang thub bstan 'jigs med rgya mtsho 2010: 147–48.

²² Harrer 1996: 267. Richardson 1993: 60–61. David-Neel 20005 [1927]: 302–3. Harrer describes it as the “Small Prayer Festival,” lasting ten days. The observance of a “sertreng” in the second month at Labrang monastery is recounted in Makley 2007: 157.

²³ Shan kha ba 1997.

²⁴ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 80a.6–80b.

equivalent, as Sangyé Gyatso wrote, of 819,531 *khal* of grain—enough wealth to hypothetically seed hundreds if not thousands of estates. In addition to his specificity in matters of doctrine and scripture, the Desi was also meticulous in his bookkeeping. More than ten percent of the *Instructions* is accounting alone. The event's other expenditures included distributions (*'gyed*) of money, food (such as fine teas), and gifts (such as various scarves and textiles, even a gun for the Panchen Lama) to the participants in each day's assemblies, all carefully ranked according to varying occupations and levels of seniority within the monastic institution, not to mention general provisions to keep them all fed. Thus the 1694 Lhasa assembly required an outlay of 120,000 *khal* of tsampa or roasted barley flour, 15,000 *khal* in wheat flour (*gro zhib*), 2,250 *khal's* worth of oil (*snum*), 375 *khal* in salt, 10,000 *khal* of butter, and (presumably for the non-monastic crowds) 146,250 *khal's* worth of beer (*chang*). Sangyé Gyatso reckoned the overall cost for everything involved in that year's Lhasa assembly at just under 245,310 *srang* of silver.²⁵ Nor was the event limited to Lhasa: a matching ceremony was conducted at Shigatsé in Tsang, headed by the Panchen Lama and involving approximately 3,500 monks covering 204 residences, and costing just under 92,619 *srang* of silver.²⁶ Corresponding observances were conducted across the realm—a collaborative statewide gesture of worship and purification. The budget-slashing small-government supporters of our own time would be aghast at how brazenly the Desi held this extravagance as a point of pride. He boasted of how “inconceivable” was the overall amount expended in the name of the fifth Dalai Lama's legacy. The full title of the *Instructions* figuratively depicted the event as a “worship-cloud” that would unleash the torrent of the “sky-treasury” (*mchod sprin nam mkha' mdzod kyi rgyun btsugs pa*). Not even buddhas and bodhisattvas, Sangyé Gyatso insisted, had the right language to describe these towering heaps of offerings.²⁷ In this world, to be so

²⁵ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 82a–b.

²⁶ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 82b–83a.

²⁷ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 89b.

extravagant and expensive as to confound reason, exceed language, and stupefy the gods—at least in the name of worship—was very much a good thing.

GENERAL PURPOSE AND DESIGN

In its original design and stated purpose, the Great Worship Assembly shared aspects of a holiday and a funeral. Sangyé Gyatso explicitly associated it with a Buddhist tradition of holidays started in India and imported into Tibet. The Great Worship Assembly was designed to be repeated annually on the same date and throughout the realm. Like a funeral, on the other hand, it was also a local event tied to the body of the fifth Dalai Lama and the area of Lhasa. This was especially true of the final procession. The long train of monks started from the Tsuglakhang, Lhasa's central temple, and marched clockwise with a steady gait—not too fast or slow—over the “turquoise bridge” (*g.yu zam*) and westward to the Potala palace, where two absolutely massive scrolls of the buddhas Amitābha and Vairocana were unfurled. After decamping here for prolonged festivities, later in the day they would process onwards to Ramoché temple, finally ending up back in the old town, thus circumscribing the major landmarks of Lhasa.²⁸ There were more than seven hundred participants in the procession by the Desi's own reckoning for the 1694 event. The palace mural portrays the procession as a circuit completed: the five sets of colored banners at its vanguard have returned all the way back to the starting point, while the last elements—the twelve *yakṣa* generals and four guardian kings—are only just leaving the preaching courtyard on the Lhasa Tsuklakhang's south side.²⁹

²⁸ Evidently there was some debate as to whether the Potala was too far from the Jokhang to be practical. On the planned route see *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 29 (*'og*); and on the ideal marching speed and spacing of the participants see *ibid.*: 39a. The Desi himself did not participate in the procession but stood atop the granary (*nas khang*, in Zhol village beneath the Potala) from which he conducted a sequence of worship using his own text *Prayer for a Marvelous Age*. See also *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 800ff.

²⁹ Photographs of the murals are published in *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 122–23.

The Great Worship Assembly was the necessary ritual response to the fifth's Dalai Lama's death. More than simply honoring his memory, it had a serious objective: to succeed in karmically purifying his person. Recall that the initial ritual response to the death began immediately and in secrecy under Sangyé Gyatso's supervision and was tacitly repeated every subsequent year.³⁰ The Great Worship Assembly was the culmination of that solution, the full and final public expression of this initially covert response. How can a performance of worship also be an act of karmic improvement? “Accumulating merit” and “purifying obscurations” are familiar phrases in the basic soteriology of human perfection, a practical means by which to eventually overcome the karmic cycle of rebirth. Projects of self-transformation feature both in exoteric sūtra-based systems, delineating an aspirant bodhisattva's gradual cultivation over many ages; as well as in the more immediately efficacious varieties of esoteric ritual articulated in tantras. The Great Worship Assembly's titular compound, *tshogs mchod*, corresponds to the Sanskrit *gaṇa-pūjā* and is related to *gaṇacakra* (Tib. *tshogs 'khor*), the so-called “tantric feast,” often called simply “Tshok” for short. As Snellgrove and others explained, Tshok observance gains merit and purification not through assiduous practice, study, and moral cultivation, but instead by feasting and worshiping within an assembly of nonhumans such as *dākiṇīs*.³¹ Though often linked to peripheral sites like charnel grounds, Tshok practice in Sangyé Gyatso's era was also tied to the calendar and observed regularly as a special date (*dus bzang*). Sangyé Gyatso specified the so-called “two tenth days,” or ten days after the new and the full moons (i.e. the tenth and twenty-fifth of each month), as reserved for Tshok observances.³² The twenty-fifth, the same date on which the

³⁰ In the *Instructions*, Sangyé Gyatso kept track of the accumulated costs of these tacit services; *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 21a–b; see also *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 191–92; and *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 50b–51a.

³¹ On worship offerings and their liturgies see Beyer 1973: 148ff. On *gaṇacakra* see Snellgrove 1987: 160ff.

³² On the tenth as a special date, see Schwieger 1997: 851–55.

fifth Dalai Lama began to die, was the “special date of *dākiṇī*-gathering” linked to the “mother tantras” (*ma rgyud*), hence a fitting occasion for this large-scale, worship-centric event to begin.³³

But why was a response even necessary? The fifth Dalai Lama's human life, so the *Instructions* asserted, had been inescapably ensnared—all divine perfection notwithstanding—by its own karma. The underlying conceit is that despite (or rather, as we will see, *because of*) his undisputed spiritual advancement, by virtue of being a human projection of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara—here in the identity of a renunciate (i.e., vow-observing) king—the ruling Dalai Lama became subject to corrupting forces beyond his control. His existence was necessarily enmeshed in the grinding machinery of life. He felt pain, grew sick, and died. The obvious problem is that these mundane sufferings are typically evidence not just that one is alive, but also that one's progress towards perfection is yet incomplete. In doctrinal terms, it is proof of unripened karma: entanglements with past actions that have not yet borne their inevitable fruits. Yet this text emphatically denies that such could be the case for the fifth Dalai Lama. For one thing, a bodhisattva, a highly advanced being, is supposed to have mastered the techniques of birth and death and be no longer subject to their caprice, save as a matter of choice. For another thing, a perfect buddha—and the Dalai Lama was indeed a perfect buddha—was a finished product by definition. One should not even be able to speak of their karma. So we have a weird situation: the text affirms in no uncertain terms the divine perfection of the Dalai Lama, but in the same breath it insists that the fact of his illness and death is an absolutely real problem. He is no less human, that is, for being a god. Both are somehow true.

Hardly just a mirage or a manner of speaking, this problem had to be dealt with by an appropriate ritual response. The challenge was to reconcile that higher perfection with the limitations placed on it by the stubborn grip of human life. The Great Worship Assembly was the necessary resolution of a

³³ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 21a.3.

problem that was, in another sense, already solved. What this means is that it is precisely in and through the ruler's death that his buddhahood comes to be perceived. Sangyé Gyatso also turned to Buddhist scriptures to articulate a theory of divinity in line with this ambivalent double reality. Again we cross paths with a theme that runs throughout this dissertation: each register takes on meaning only in relation to the other. That co-positioning extends humanity in the direction of something further, giving it force; but by the same act it renders divinity opaque. To borrow an expression from Paul Ricoeur (reading Mircea Eliade), the one is bound to, as well as bound by, the other.³⁴

PAST APPROACHES TO TIBETAN BUDDHIST CEREMONIAL

This approach to the Great Worship Assembly and the *Instructions*—a text which has received no attention in scholarship—automatically calls into question some prior assessments of official ceremonial in Tibet. Hugh Richardson, who had the unique fortune to witness the Great Worship Assembly in person during his residency in Lhasa, gave an invaluable rich description of the sights as he observed them. When it came to making sense of the proceedings, however, he was curt in his overall assessment: “the assembly...appears to have been a political device for the benefit of the Gelukpa church, to enhance the prestige of the Dalai Lama and consolidate the position he acquired in 1642 as head of Church and State.”³⁵ It would be unfair to fault Richardson (or other observers) for making the most of their resources in explaining complex events like the Great Worship Assembly. They may have had little information about the event beyond what they saw with their own eyes (or the eyes of their informants). The same is true of eighteenth-century Chinese accounts, like the one given

³⁴ Ricoeur 1970: 31. “Symbols are bound in a double sense: *bound to* and *bound by*. On the one hand, the sacred is *bound to* its primary, literal, sensible meanings; this is what constitutes the opacity of symbols. On the other hand, the literal meaning is *bound by* the symbolic meaning that resides in it; this is what I have called the revealing power of symbols, which gives them their force in spite of their opacity.”

³⁵ Richardson 1993: 60.

in the *Xizang Zhi* (西藏誌) which lost even the connection to the fifth Dalai Lama and was transfixed by the spectacle itself.³⁶

We are in a far better position today to examine at our leisure the minutiae of such intricate government projects and their underlying ideas. I call attention to Richardson's assertion because, as should by now be clear, the submerged theoretical assumptions about religion and politics are not his alone. They betray the same “functional blindness to the content and internal relations of the cultural object” of which Marshall Sahlins spoke (see Chapter One).³⁷ In other words, the explanation obtains equally well irrespective of how the procession was actually put together. What this indifference reveals is that the real interest lies in the superficial effects of the ceremony on political subjects, and the tacit motivations of those who benefit from it. It is essentially an instrumental “device” whose point was to deliver a political message. Surely it communicated a great deal, as we will consider at the end of this chapter; but we must also recognize that the purpose of this event, the principle by which it was designed, was not to make a statement but to change something about its world.

Although Richardson was one of only a few scholars to write about this event, he is hardly alone in holding this general opinion of ritual and ceremonial in seventeenth-century Tibetan government. Tucci wrote dismissively of the fifth Dalai Lama's reign that

evidently religion and ceremonies were a pretext: the assemblies bearing the character of military reviews meant to keep in touch with the choice part of Tibetan population, because control of the convents meant domination over the whole of Tibet; thus even monks of other sects were attracted and induced by such a display of power to accept the triumph of the new [Gelukpa] school as a *fait accompli* and to bow before its will.³⁸

³⁶ In *Xizang Zhi* 西藏志 1982: 21–22.

³⁷ Sahlins 1976: 76.

³⁸ Tucci 1949, vol. 1: 69.

Once more we find that the whole point of “religion and ceremonies” was just a “display of power.” Though these remarks are now quite dated, the thesis (religion as pretext) has not gone out of fashion. In adjacent settings we also see the same direct link averred between the so-called religious activities endorsed by the Ganden Phodrang and a political master project of legitimate domination.³⁹ We will see even more examples of this approach in the next chapter, regarding the Potala palace. Already, the Great Worship Assembly's overwhelming attention to its own purposes, details, and design, should make us stop and think. Why bother? Did it really require that level of attention to convince the masses (or ruling elites) to fall into line? Would anybody even know the difference? Can we really say that it was all only a pretext, all about *use*? The amount of detail built into the procession is mirrored by the depth of intellectual engagement in the text that instituted it. Upon reading the *Instructions* it immediately becomes apparent that here is a work which thinks at length and with complexity about the nature of its world, drawing on and creatively arranging received traditions of knowledge to develop specific justifications for how to act upon it. I argue that if the Great Worship Assembly played a crucial role for this government, it was not just as a device, or as so much spectacle, but also as something active and creative. It was a karmically efficacious process that acted upon and changed its world, based on knowledge about that world. Our first task must be to try to understand how this could be true.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT AND THE PROCESSION

The general outline of the *Instructions* demonstrates the balance of its attentions. The work begins with twenty-nine stanzas of *kāvya* verse (namely, verses in a descending meter deploying figurative

³⁹ For instance, regarding deity-worship it has recently been claimed that the fifth Dalai Lama “used the deities, or rather the power attributed to them, to legitimize his power, insofar as the celebration of their cult was also a celebration in honor of the political regime.... Tibetans in general and the Fifth Dalai Lama in particular, beyond the purely religious function of the worship, used the cult of protective deities in the process of establishing and the maintaining of political power.” In Pommaret (ed.): 81, 98.

ornaments after the Indian literary tradition) (folios 1b–6a). The stanzas are organized by the same Daṇḍin-inspired tripartite model that Sangyé Gyatso also used elsewhere. Roughly the next quarter of the text (through folio 28) deals with ideas. It lays down the intellectual background against which its practical instructions are to be understood. We will discuss those ideas below. Then the text shifts to describe the ceremony itself. It begins with the necessary preparations, starting on the twenty-fourth day of the second Hor month, and the specific assemblies and liturgies to be performed on those initial days (28b–35; see Appendix). It includes an extremely detailed seating chart for assembling in the Lhasa Tsuklakhang and its environs, naming and placing well over one hundred participating monasteries in various parts of the main courtyard, upper stories, and other areas like the “preaching courtyard” (*gsung chos rwa ba*) on the temple's south side. The text also dictates the route that will be taken by the procession around the city and how to make ready for it (35–38b), for instance by removing loose stones, keeping away animals, and cleaning up any urine or excrement (a clear path, it is said, makes it possible to proceed with pure intentions).⁴⁰

This brings us to the heart of the work: the detailed description of the procession and all the textual sources on which it is based (39a–80b). For every component part of the procession, relevant portions of its source text (or texts) are quoted in the *Instructions*, gradually building up a queue of bodies, objects, and behaviors. Often much more information is given too: Sangyé Gyatso devoted long passages to explaining how he was interpreting a certain source; or justifying the propriety of monks singing and dancing; or giving the dimensions and physical features of some ceremonial object like a vase; or determining Sanskrit equivalents of Tibetan terms; or even to discuss some adjacent topic left out of the procession, like the lists of birds and beasts from the *Kālacakra Tantra*. Roughly speaking,

⁴⁰ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 36b–37a.

the procession subdivides into five major categories, each of which is described in turn in the *Instructions* (folio numbers in parentheses):

- Vanguard with flags, banners, pennants, parasols, musical instruments, etc. (39a–40b)
- Censers, offering-vessels (*mchod bum*) and maṇḍala offerings (41a–45a)
- Exoteric worship from sūtra literature (45a–51a)
- Esoteric worship from tantra literature (51a–73b)
- Royal and auspicious worship (73b–80b)

There are many subdivisions, especially among the tantric sources, which comprise the bulk of the procession. They subdivide into worship common to all four classes of Sarma (“newer”) tantra; then worship specific to each of the three higher classes of Sarma tantra, namely the kriyā, yoga, and anuttara-yoga systems, the latter including mother and father tantras and the nondual Kālacakra system; and lastly both Nyingma (“older”) tantra collections of *kama* and *terma* (i.e., “oral” and “treasure” text-traditions). What I have termed “royal and auspicious worship” (the text has no encompassing term of its own) includes a number of different forms of worship pertaining to the investiture (*mnga' bskur*) of a ruler, including symbol-systems like the seven tokens of cakravartin kingship and the eight auspicious signs, as well as groups like the twelve yakṣa generals (from the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra*) and the four great kings arrayed around Mount Meru.

The end of the text (80b–95b) gives the aforementioned accounting for the material distributions (*'gyed*) to ritual participants of varying ranks; the costs associated both with the Great Worship Assembly and related rituals and events performed in other locations throughout the state, including both central Tibet (Ü and Tsang) and Ngari (west) and Kham (east); and tallies of how many times all the relevant texts or prayers were recited over the course of this event and over the entire year. For example, the *Prayer for the Marvelous Age*, Sangyé Gyatso's own petition-prayer to the past lives of

the fifth Dalai Lama, which was also incorporated directly into the procession, was recited 178,404 times during the Lhasa ceremony, 2,589,872 times over the course of the year, and 2,687,804 more times between Tsang, Ngari, Sikkhim, and Barkham. Finally, the text concludes with twenty-three more stanzas of verse and an author's colophon describing the circumstances of its production.

To end this overview, and to anticipate my conclusions at the end of this chapter: the procession's design is characterized above all a formal ambivalence, regarding its inclusiveness and theatricality. What is meant by “inclusiveness” is that the procession is meant to incorporate each and every appropriate source of worship. In that sense it becomes a kind of meta-worship: the act of aggregating all forms of worship somehow constitutes another act of worship in itself. What is meant by “theatricality” is that this procession translated practical procedures into a sequence of things, bodies, and gestures. It turned an act into the representation of the act—or, to put it another way, it replaced the deed with its sign. Where a source text portrayed worship by bathing and toweling off the body of a buddha, to name but one example, the procession will have a monk carrying a washbasin and another with a towel. They are not doing the deed, so much as signaling to it. One might say they perform the performance of worship. All together as a whole this somehow constitutes a single efficacious act, one whose aim was to purify the karma of the fifth Dalai Lama. So there is a constitutional ambivalence built into the procession. Recall here the theological ambivalence of a king who dies because he is already perfected; whose karmic purification is necessary because it is already *not* necessary; whose worship must be repeated because it has already succeeded at accomplishing its aim. So I hypothesize a connection between the procession's formal ambivalence about the efficacy of worship, and the ambivalence at the heart of Sangyé Gyatso's theory of divine kingship, to which we now turn. The event anticipates and responds to the world that it also constitutes in itself.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE GREAT WORSHIP ASSEMBLY

Now it is time to dive into the text and explore its arguments. In general, there are three key components. The first is Sangyé Gyatso's fundamental thesis that Avalokiteśvara, typically understood as a bodhisattva, is already a wholly perfected buddha. The notion of the bodhisattva, as a form of divinity that engages diversely with the human world, is refracted through that new understanding. The second component hinges on the relatively obscure Buddhist concept of karmic leftovers (Tib. *las kyi lhag ma*, Skt. *karma-avaśeṣa*) or what I will call "afterkarma," in the same sense that we speak of an earthquake's "aftershock." Sangyé Gyatso extracted this concept from a very old narrative, the *Anavatapta-gāthā*, embedded within the vast Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya corpus. Afterkarma is what frames the inevitable tension between immaculate divine existence and corrupted human existence. It is the vehicle for articulating the capacities and limitations of each in terms of the other, albeit in a way that never subordinates one to the demands of the other. It spells out what this sort of divinity looks like in the world, and why. In the same stroke it names our responsibilities towards it within the domain of human life. Those responsibilities cluster around a notion of repeated worship, which forms the third and final component of Sangyé Gyatso's argument and gave the Great Worship Assembly its purpose. Worship assumes and answers the problem of kingship as posed by afterkarma.

1. DIVINITY

The first topic is complex itself. It consists of multiple related claims. Let us begin from Sangyé Gyatso's atypical assertion that Avalokiteśvara is *already* a buddha (*sangs rgyas zin pa*). He was most insistent on this point. The claim appears in every one of his texts that spoke of the fifth Dalai Lama, usually right up front.⁴¹ We find a good overall synopsis at the end of the *Instructions*:

⁴¹ For instance, the idea is stated in the first line of both the *Prayer for a Marvelous Age* and the *Conquering the Four Demons* (*Bdud bzhi rab bcom ma*); as well as in the first stanza beginning the *Elixir for the Ear* and the *Lhasa Circuit*

This great being is by nature at the same level of attainment as every buddha; but beyond that, as he appears before others, in the purview of those he is to tame, as the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara he puts on performances that accord with whomever he is taming; of which, using the garb of a renunciate king, for the sake of beings for whom the five forms of degeneracy are spreading, he has projected and intentionally taken rebirth [as the Dalai Lamas]; in which respect, since all advanced beings have uprooted the sources of affliction, consequently their effects, like birth, aging, illness, and death, do not occur, and therefore the gradual process of accumulation and purification is not necessary in the true sense; however in the indirect sense, the Vinaya text *Bhaiṣajyavastu* narrates how the weave of karma influenced even our own buddha [Śākyamuni]; and as proclaimed in texts like the *Ratnakūṭa*, it has been taught that there may be some amount of afterkarma that needs purification.⁴²

The passage is most unwieldy. So too the fifth Dalai Lama's divinity! I have deliberately translated it as one long sentence to convey the original's run-on style, which makes a metaphysical point. The subject-object-verb syntax of Tibetan is well suited to this equivocal ontology, building up a complex entity that can be spoken of as being more than one thing at a time. It suggests fluid connections that are hard to capture in legible English sentences which displace the verbs and add stops and pronouns. At one end of this chain is a perfect buddha, and at the other end, a human being whose karmic residue needs purifying. It begins with an assertion of fact and ends with an obligation.

Let us put it back into clearer terms: “Dalai Lama” is just one particular human form projected by one particular bodhisattva. In this life, the chosen persona is “renunciate king,” or a ruler who also keeps monastic discipline.⁴³ That persona is just one possibility among others; but so too is this bodhisattva (call him “Avalokiteśvara”) just one form of that buddha. The buddha's divinity is already perfect, as much as any buddha's can be. So why revert to this other, lesser divine form? The answer seems to be just to (re)acquire that capacity to project into the world and act upon it. In other words, “bodhisattva” is the means for becoming “apparent to others” (*gzhan snang*). That implies getting

Survey; and in the second stanza of the *Tomb Inventory* and the *Instructions* (their first stanzas praise the buddha Jñānaketu, before whom Avalokiteśvara generated *bodhicitta* en route to that buddhahood; on which see below).

⁴² *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 97b.2

⁴³ On this incredibly important term *sdom brtson rgyal po*, see Chapter Two, note 113.

tangled back up in the “weave” of karma—another term of art from the *Anavatapta-gāthā*.⁴⁴

Consequently, this being, though impervious to karma, is susceptible to afterkarma, which in turn creates the demand for purification, at least from our own human perspective.

To justify the first point—the bodhisattva's already being a buddha—Sangyé Gyatso expended about six folios of the *Instructions* to muster the following basic criteria. First, it must be understood that the famous bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara is not in fact a bodhisattva but has “already become, in the true sense, a buddha” (*sangs rgyas nges don du zin*).⁴⁵ The full name of that buddha, in Sanskrit, is Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja (Tib. *'Od zer kun nas 'phags pa dpal brtsegs rgyal po*).⁴⁶ Second, that buddha made a strategic decision to revert to bodhisattva form, by pretending to be “born” as Avalokiteśvara in Amitābha's pure land Sukhāvātī. Third, acting as this provisional “bodhisattva” named “Avalokiteśvara,” and engaging directly with the human world, it projected many lives there, first in India and subsequently in Tibet.

Now, the unwieldy name of this buddha is familiar from several sūtras, notably the fourth chapter of the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra*.⁴⁷ In that text, the name falls under a far larger set of predictions (including the thousand buddhas of our own Bhadrakalpa age) that the buddha Ratnagarbha proclaimed to the king Araṇemi and his sons, and to the brahmin Samudrarenu (who was that buddha's own father, and who would become our buddha Śākyamuni) and his thousand disciples. Ratnagarbha told Araṇemi

⁴⁴ Although the Tibetan term *las kyi rgyu ba* might be simply translated as “the influence of karma,” here it corresponds to the Sanskrit *karmaploti*, as Richard Salomon and Sally Cutler have shown. Salomon 2008: 7–8, 54; Cutler 1983. Following Jonathan Walters, the corresponding Pāli term, *kammāpiloti*, has the sense of loose “strands of karma,” rather than an overall “fabric” of cause and effect. In that usage, like stray threads, *kammāpiloti* actually seems to come quite close to the way *karma-avaśeṣa/las kyi lhag ma* is used in the *Anavatapta-gāthā*; for instance, when Dhammapāla (commenting in his *Udāna-aṭṭhakathā*) ascribed the Buddha's present suffering to the effects of deeds from a former life, which he names as “karma strands” (*kammāni pilotikāni*). See Walters 1990: 85.

⁴⁵ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 7a.3.

⁴⁶ Apropos the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, Yamada offers the variants Samantaraśmyudgata-, as well as Samanāraśmyudgata-, and the Chinese variants 遍出一切光明功德山王 and 光明普至尊積德王. Yamada 1968, vol. 2: 117ff.

⁴⁷ *Snying rje chen po padma dkar po'i mdo*, Tōh. 112.

that he would become the buddha Amitābha, while his eldest son, the prince Animiṣa, would become Avalokiteśvara, and then eventually attain buddhahood as Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-srīkūṭa-rāja.⁴⁸ On the other hand, that buddha-name does not occur in the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, another major source on Avalokiteśvara’s works and his famous six-syllable mantra.⁴⁹ It is mentioned in passing in a few places in the Tibetan *Maṇi Collection* (*Ma ṇi bka' 'bum*), a famous work that was a kind of Tibetan Avalokiteśvara omnibus and which included a version of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*. These slight connections prompted Sangyé Gyatso to speak as if all three texts—the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha*, and the *Maṇi Collection*—were of a piece in their overall vision. But it is primarily based on the latter text, specifically its sub-section on the life of the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo, that he built his main case.

The long account of Songtsen Gampo in the *Maṇi Collection* includes a short story of the king's former birth as a prince named, appropriately, Lokeśvara (*'Jig rten dbang phyug*). Sangyé Gyatso cited this story as evidence that Avalokiteśvara had long since achieved the main condition (*bdag rkyen*) for becoming a buddha, namely, making the signature pledge, “generating the will to awaken” (*thugs bskyed*) before another buddha. In a concession to the disparate literature on the subject, Sangyé Gyatso acknowledged that this so-called “Avalokiteśvara” probably committed that pledge several different times and before several different buddhas.⁵⁰ However, he stressed that it was this past-life as Lokeśvara, who generated the will to awakening before a buddha named Jñānaketu (*Ye shes tog*), that was the most important (*gtso bo*) or even the first (*dang po*) time. He dated it to nine hundred and ninety-one *mahākalpas* or “great ages” before our own age, during a time known as the “Dharaṇa Age” (*bskal pa 'dzin pa*). Clearly this is a synthetic reading, and no one source gives the whole story as

⁴⁸ The name also occurs in a few other sūtras such as the *Mayopamā-samādhi sūtra* (*Sgyu ma lta bu ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo*; Tōh. 130) which are quoted elsewhere in the Desi's corpus.

⁴⁹ *Za ma tog bkod pa'i mdo*; Tōh. 116. See Studholme 2002.

⁵⁰ Examples are listed in e.g. *Vaiḍūrya ser po* 1998: 349–51.

Sangyé Gyatso told it. Although the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra* has the name of that “Dharaṇa Age,” as well as Avalokiteśvara's eventual buddha-name (in the form of a prophecy), it used the future tense (you *will* become that buddha, *'tshang rgya bar 'gyur*). As already mentioned, the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra* does not mention that buddha's name at all, though it narrates Avalokiteśvara's bodhisattva activities at length. As for the *Maṇi Collection*, another subsection known as the “Great History” (*Lo rgyus chen mo*), which also reiterates swaths of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* and cites other sūtric sources on Avalokiteśvara, twice mentions that buddha-name, and in passing describes Avalokiteśvara as already being a buddha. However, those references are only citations of another text. The majority of the *Maṇi Collection* does not dwell on the idea of Avalokiteśvara already being a buddha.⁵¹

Another hitch is that the *Maṇi Collection* includes *two* separate versions of the same prince Lokeśvara story. The gist of this story is that the prince was so zealous in his perfection of giving that (with shades of Vessantara) he offered away the entire wealth of his father's kingdom, including the magic gem that was a source of its power. He was exiled by his father for twenty-five years to a barren demon-land, but perfected his practice, gathered disciples, and ultimately regained his kingdom. Of the two versions of the story in the *Maṇi Collection*, the first serves as prelude to a set of linked past-life stories of Songtsen Gampo (each tied to one of the ten perfections). In each life the protagonist meets with a particular buddha, among whom are five buddhas typically listed among those preceding

⁵¹ Following the Sde dge xylographic edition of the *Maṇi Collection*, chapter twelve of the *Lo rgyus chen mo* recounts how Śākyamuni taught Avalokiteśvara the “twenty-one sūtras and tantras” (*mdo rgyud nyi shu rtsa gcig*) pertaining to this bodhisattva, allegedly among those texts that Thumi Saṃbhota translated into Tibetan during Songtsen Gampo's reign. One of those twenty-one texts was the “Thousand-Armed, Thousand-Eyed Sūtra” (*Phyag stong spyang stong gi mdo*) which, according to this passage in the *Maṇi Collection*, taught how, “though already a buddha named Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja, he first made a prayer with the love and compassion he had established that he would serve sentient beings in endless [realms of] saṃsāra with the practices of a bodhisattva” (*sangs rgyas 'od zer kun nas 'phags pa dpal brtsegs rgyal po bya bar sangs rgyas kyang/ thog mar byams pa dang snying rje bsgrub pa'i smon lam gyis 'khor ba mtha' med du/ byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pas sems can gyi don byed par gsungs*). Then, chapter thirty-five of the *Lo rgyus chen mo* summarizes Avalokiteśvara's qualities as depicted in each of those twenty-one sūtras and tantras in turn, and apropos the same dhāraṇī text, it states that Avalokiteśvara “already attained buddhahood back in a past *asaṃkhyeya kalpa*” (*'das pa'i bskal pa grangs med pa'i pha rol nas sangs rgyas zin pa yin*), known as the bhagavan tathāgata arhat samyaksambuddha Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja (58b).

Śākyamuni (namely Vipāśyin, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa). Here, Lokeśvara was born in the dispensation of the buddha Jñānaketu, but it is dated to just *ninety-one* mahākālpas prior to our own Bhadrakālpa age, not *nine hundred ninety-one*. The number ninety-one, perhaps, is not arbitrary: it resonates with the timeline of Śākyamuni's bodhisattva career, hence with the narratives of buddhas before Śākyamuni.⁵² The second, more detailed version of the Lokeśvara story is a stand-alone episode. It moves the event back to nine hundred and ninety-one mahākālpas ago, and that is the number Sangyé Gyatso used for his own argument. It may be that he preferred this larger number because only this second version of the story also named Avalokiteśvara as becoming the buddha Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja. Sangyé Gyatso also linked this tale (and the number 991) with the “Dharaṇa age” mentioned in the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, even though that age is not mentioned in either version of this story. It could hardly be said that this buddha receives any major emphasis in the *Maṇi Collection* except as a kind of bookend for Avalokiteśvara's bodhisattva career, which occupies the bulk of that text's attentions. Sangyé Gyatso granted this buddha both temporal and ontological precedence over Avalokiteśvara the bodhisattva. The buddha now comes first in every sense.

Then there is the problem of how to reconcile that knowledge with the far more well-known accounts of Avalokiteśvara's career as a bodhisattva. Here is one example of how Sangyé Gyatso balances these two levels in the *Instructions*:

The *Maṇi Collection* and other sources say that in an age known as the “Dharaṇa Age,” nine hundred and ninety-one mahākālpas before our own Bhadrakālpa, when the buddha Jñānaketu was in the world, he [Avalokiteśvara] offered [that buddha] flowers and gold coins and then generated the will to awakening; and he fulfilled his accumulations before meditating on the nature of reality and becoming the tathāgatha-arhat-samyak-sambuddha

⁵² The *Abhidharmakośa*, among other accounts of seven past buddhas, stated that a bodhisattva, as a rule, requires three *asamkhyeya* kalpas or “uncountable ages” to complete the requisite accumulations, after which they need a further one hundred *mahākālpas* or “great ages” to finally become a buddha. However, our own buddha Śākyamuni managed to reduce that number by nine. Hence ninety-one *mahākālpas* ago would exactly mark the end of the Śākyamuni-to-be’s third uncountable age of training, the last buddha of which would have been Vipāśyin, who pops up here in the seventh of the *Maṇi Collection's* ten past-life stories. So there is some logic in dating the story of Lokeśvara and his contemporary buddha Jñānaketu to earlier in that same uncountable age as Vipāśyin, ending ninety-one great ages before our own Śākyamuni era.

named Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja; thus in the true sense he has already become a buddha. And yet: the *Detailed Rites* [for the thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara, *Cho ga zhib mo*] says that “by the force of his compassion and his prayer, in order to benefit beings he will appear in the form of a bodhisattva,”⁵³ and likewise the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* taught that Animiṣa, son of the king Araṇemi, will become the attendant of Amitābha in Sukhāvātī, and will then attain buddhahood.⁵⁴

That little note of hesitation (*kyang*, “and yet”) is the seam between these different pieces of cloth.

Avalokiteśvara is already a buddha. And yet: this buddha still had to take the form of a bodhisattva in order to accomplish anything in the world. He did so by performatively “taking birth” in Sukhāvātī as a spiritual “son” of sorts to the buddha Amitābha. There is an interesting interpretive move here.

Bodhisattvas acting as humans are often associated with the deployment of “skillful” (*thabs mkhas*) approaches to their ministry, including adopting strategic modes of self-presentation, even pretending to suffer the same inconveniences as human beings. Now, *mutatis mutandis*, the same is true of the “bodhisattva,” refigured as a perfect buddha's own strategic method of crooked self-presentation.

By such circumlocutions, Sangyé Gyatso justified his overall claim about buddhahood “in the true sense,” in tandem with the famous stories of Avalokiteśvara as an attendant of Amitābha, taking (and breaking) his vow and so forth, which by consequence must now be treated only “in the indirect sense” or “in the way things appear.”⁵⁵ What those texts truly mean must be other than what they say. This is hardly a trivial matter. No narratives are held to be more central to Tibetan Buddhist kingship than the tales of Avalokiteśvara and Songtsen Gampo, and the *Maṇi Collection* was one of their foremost sources. No-one better capitalized on that legacy of divine kingship than the fifth Dalai Lama and his Ganden Phodrang government. Here we find Sangyé Gyatso, one of the most prolific and productive authors in that very government, who may have done more than any other single individual to burnish

⁵³ Tōh. 691. For the quoted line, see *Bka' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, rgyud 'bum tsa (vol. 93): 205.

⁵⁴ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 7a.

⁵⁵ As stated succinctly, for instance, in the *Yellow Vaidurya*: “In the way things appear, he presents himself as having adopted the manner of a bodhisattva who is yet to attain buddhahood in the future.” *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 357.

the Dalai Lama institution, insisting that we take those same stories with a grain of salt. They just aren't telling the truth. In light of already being a perfected buddha, there is now a sense in which none of Avalokiteśvara's bodhisattva career was ever true, however real it might still be.

All the more so for the subsequent deeds in our world of Jambudvīpa and in Tibet. A critical sense of hidden perfection underscores the ambivalent multiplicity of this being's worldly forms. The bodhisattva's identities in Tibet are an extension of a larger pattern of continuous and variform projection.⁵⁶ As I read it, this signals a significant reworking of the concept, insofar as there is no longer any overarching salvific purpose to the bodhisattva project. Commonly a bodhisattva is thought to engage with the world so that by bringing others to salvation, a more complete level of buddhahood might ultimately be attained (as opposed to a liberation “for oneself” of the sort allegedly attained by a so-called Hīnayana practitioner like a *śrāvaka* disciple or self-taught *pratyekabuddha*). Now it turns out that all those boxes have already been checked. What is done in Tibet and elsewhere is a definitively non-soteriological mode of engagement: it may bring other beings closer to salvation, but the savior's own buddhahood is not going to be affected one way or the other by that outcome. A perfectly enlightened being becomes a bodhisattva exclusively in order to act upon the world. They do not act upon the world to become a bodhisattva and thence a perfectly enlightened being.

We could say here that divinity must be many to be effective in the world, and in order to be many it must already be one. To speak of a bodhisattva in the world is to speak in terms of a multiplicity, but it must always be thought with and against an underlying notion of unity, which simultaneously grounds it and undermines it. (As an aside, it is then logical, I think, for Avalokiteśvara's operations in

⁵⁶ For instance, Sangyé Gyatso writes: “Whether as a bodhisattva, a pratyekabuddha, a śrāvaka, Brahma, Indra, gandharva, yakṣa, maheśvara, cakravartin king, and so on and so forth, wherever and for whichever disciples, he has done vast amounts of work in the service of sentient beings—so it is taught. In that way, he served sentient beings by taking ever so many births, as exemplified by the thirty-six [births] he took in Trāyastriṃśa, in the land of the Āryas [India], in Oḍḍiyāna [Svat], and so on.” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 7b.

Tibet to be presented as numerous and diverse. In fact it would have been more noteworthy, on this understanding, if he did *not* show up over and over and in myriad forms. Thus, it makes sense to expect that kings, whose own work on behalf of subjects so clearly overlaps with the bodhisattva project as to make a comparison all but inevitable, would wish to call attention to that same fact of multiplicity in their effort to make the nature of their own kingship intelligible. My point is simply to caution against restricting our explanations in advance to the cruder logic that more past lives equals more power.)⁵⁷

Next, Sangyé Gyatso pivoted to the famous stories of Avalokiteśvara's mission in Tibet. In the *Instructions*, he singled out the most important of Avalokiteśvara's projections, including several human beings associated with two other bodhisattvas, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. That disparity was not a problem because those two bodhisattvas were also absorbed under the Avalokiteśvara umbrella, thanks to the notion that all three form a triumvirate known as the “Three Family Guardians” (*rigs gsum mgon po*). Being bodhisattvas in this new sense (as multiplicity grounded by singularity, rather than distinct buddhas-to-be) entailed that different bodhisattvas may all stem from the selfsame buddhahood. Sangyé Gyatso insisted that all ought to be considered derivations of Avalokiteśvara (as we briefly discussed in Chapter Two). This way of speaking had roots in the “son teachings” (*bu chos*) of the *Book of Kadam*.⁵⁸ For instance, in the “Devarāja” story, five different bodhisattvas, all tied to kings of the Tibetan empire, were yoked to Avalokiteśvara, either directly (*dngos su*) or indirectly (*phyogs su*), either as “projections” (*sprul pa*) or “projections of projections” (*sprul pa'i sprul pa*).⁵⁹ That theology

⁵⁷ A succinct statement of which is offered in, e.g., Cuevas and Schaeffer (eds.) 2006: 134. “In general, through the construction of such a lineage, the doctrinal legitimacy and personal charisma of some particular current figure can be created or fortified by appealing to the luster of previous personalities.”

⁵⁸ See e.g. the quotations at *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgribs*: 8a.4; *Lo gsar 'bel gnam*: 23a; *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 139; and *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 365. For the source passage, see Bka' gdams glegs bam bu chos 2012: 453.

⁵⁹ In the Devarāja story, it is prophesied that Avalokiteśvara would be exhorted four times by four different bodhisattvas to serve Tibet as king. The bodhisattvas are Nivaraṇaviṣkambhin, Samantabhadra, Mahākāruṇika, and Mañjuśrī; the kings are Nyatri Tsenpo, Lha Thothori, Songtsen Gampo, and Tri Songdetsen. Upon hearing this story about his own past, Dromtön sings a long song elaborating on the relationships between these beings. He adds a fifth episode in which the bodhisattva

differs considerably from what we find in the *Mañi Collection*, which focused in large part on Avalokiteśvara's relationship to Songtsen Gampo. In the *Book of Kadam*, that king played no special role and was just a token of a general type. Instead it is the overall activity of the bodhisattva, by both direct and indirect routes, that matters. As a bodhisattva, “Avalokiteśvara” is one among other parts; but as a buddha, it is also the whole that contains those myriad parts.⁶⁰

By treating multiple bodhisattvas as a mediating element between a singular buddhahood and myriad human projections, Sangyé Gyatso introduced several folds into the tapestry of the fifth Dalai Lama's past lives. One fold came from that possibility for both direct and indirect projections of Avalokiteśvara. In the *Instructions*, for instance, Sangyé Gyatso used two ways of counting the number of times that Avalokiteśvara was king of the old Tibetan empire. First, he claimed that *all forty-six* members of the dynasty should be considered Avalokiteśvara.⁶¹ But then he went on to insist that *only ten* of those kings were the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's “actual rebirths” (*sku'i skye ba dngos*).⁶² So what is the difference? Sangyé Gyatso did not specify in the *Instructions*; but in the *Yellow Vaidurya*, for instance, he remarked that all forty-six Tibetan kings may be considered Avalokiteśvara only “if one is not distinguishing between births and projections.”⁶³ What this means, in short, is that one single

Vajrapāṇi requests to become the Tibetan king Ralpachen. That is how the “Three Family Guardians” (Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi) come to be incorporated. See *Bka' gdams glegs bam bu chos* 2012: 471–72, 476–80.

⁶⁰ Sangyé Gyatso also elaborated on the same idea elsewhere in his corpus. For instance, in the *Yellow Vaidurya* he claimed of Avalokiteśvara that “in the true sense, that of a singular essence, according to the way things really are (*ngo bo gcig pa'i nges don gnas tshul dang mthun par*), he occupies the great principle place of the maṇḍala, for instance in such [maṇḍalas] as Guhyasamāja, Mañjuvajra, Lokeśvara, and so on. And in terms of the way things appear (*snang tshul*), in the form of a bodhisattva he sends out a multitude of projections to work on behalf of sentient beings.” See *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 362.

⁶¹ After a common formulation: the seven rulers named “Tri” of the sky, the two named “Teng” of the middle, the six named “Lek” on the earth, the eight named “Dé,” and the five named “Tsen;” and then all remaining eighteen kings from Tri Nyenzungtsen (Khri Gnyan gzung btsan) up through Ralpachen. See the same idea in e.g. *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 139-40; *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 365.

⁶² The ten kings who were “actual rebirths” of the fifth Dalai Lama, according to the *Rmad byung bskal pa ma*, are: (1) Gnya' khri btsan po; (2) I sho legs; (3) Lde 'phrul Gnam gzhung btsan; (4) Lde rgyal; (5) Khri Sgra dpung btsan; (6) Tho tho ri nyan btsan; (7) Srong btsan sgam po; (8) 'Dus srong mang po rje; (9) Khri srong lde btsan; and (10) Ral pa can. These are preceded by thirty-six births in India, starting with the prince Lokeśvara (the same from the *Mañi Collection*).

⁶³ *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 365.

coherent series of births may also incorporate multiple “sources of projection” (*sprul gzhi*). Sangyé Gyatso elaborated on this difference in an important though admittedly difficult passage in volume four of the *Dukūla*.⁶⁴ The gist is that lives may be collected together on account of all being projections from the same source, or else they may stem directly from different sources of projection (*sprul gzhi*) but still be considered indirectly as a coherent whole.

One corollary is that this sense of Avalokiteśvara *qua* buddha versus Avalokiteśvara *qua* bodhisattva works like a political theology. The same original force is shown to stand behind each and every occasion of rule over time. The story of rule *per se* is nothing other than the story of Avalokiteśvara. This divinity operates in two registers at once. One is universal and may be spoken of the office of kingship as a whole; the other is particular and may be spoken of the Dalai Lama (and a handful of others) as persons. We may invoke Kantorowicz’s language of “office” and “person:” the general role that the buddha plays for the office is not reducible to the particular role that the bodhisattva plays for the person, and vice versa. In one sense, the Dalai Lama was part of a larger unity that transcended him, while in another sense he stood in exclusive company and was even special in himself. For in that second, narrow sense, Avalokiteśvara *qua* bodhisattva also acquired a special significance with the fifth Dalai Lama, among that elite company of so-called “direct” births. Here we see the second fold in the cloth: even the direct births of Avalokiteśvara could fork in separate directions. The basis for this idea came from a revealed text known as the *Testament of Ministers* (*Blon po'i bka' thang*). It foretold of five separate rebirths stemming from the eighth-century king Tri

⁶⁴ Here is a tentative translation, with points where my reading is in doubt acknowledged using bracketed interpolations: “This is the basic difference between rebirth (*skye*) and projection (*sprul*): “Rebirth” names the next [life] taken with respect to a prior series of lives that comprise a set. “Projection” names all those other series of lives revealed from [different] sources of projection that do not form a set. The former [i.e., “rebirth”] must definitely be a single continuity (*rgyud gcig pa*), but it is possible for them either to be, or not to be, projections. For instance, the prince Siddhārtha was a rebirth [and] projection (*skye ba sprul sku yin*), but the brahmin's son *Prabhakara (Snang byed), who is in the same continuity as him, was a rebirth [but] not as a projection (*skye ba sprul skur mi 'gyur ba*). The latter [i.e., “projections”] form a single continuity, but it is not definite that the basis for projection will be the same [in each case].” In Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 8 (ja-4): 216 (= Lhasa blockprint folio 134b-135a).

Songdetsen, corresponding to his body, speech, mind, quality, and activity, respectively.⁶⁵ The first four were recognized as Nyingma masters: Nyangral Nyima Öser, Guru Chöwang, the Ngari Panchen Pema Wangyal, and Wangpodé Tashi Topgyal. Alongside that set, Sangyé Gyatso added an alternative version, consisting of the first four Dalai Lamas in order: Gendün Drup, Gendün Gyatso, Sönam Gyatso, and Yönten Gyatso. But this second set did not replace the first one. Rather, each set unfolded according to its own chronology. Both were reunited in the person of the fifth Dalai Lama, as the projection of Tri Songdetsen's activities, like a railroad track that split apart and finally came back together again. Because of occupying this unique position, there was indeed something extra special about the fifth Dalai Lama, who merged these two separate lines of rebirth—an esoteric or “Mantra Vehicle” line, and an exoteric or “Perfections Vehicle” line—into a single coherent future.⁶⁶ That unique synthesis may be why Sangyé Gyatso made a special point of recognizing the “particular distinctiveness of his aspiration” (*thugs smon gyi khyad par du 'phags pa*), which is a way of saying that even among this most elite company, the fifth Dalai Lama still stood apart.⁶⁷

2. AFTERKARMA

With this theory of divinity in place, now we move to the second major theoretical topic: the problem of the fallible human being. To reiterate, the text posed this problem in the following terms: though truly a buddha, moreover a buddha performing as multiple bodhisattvas to engage with the world, in spite of all that power, the fifth Dalai Lama remained fatefully twisted up in the weave of karma. To make this point stick, Sangyé Gyatso again invoked the distinction between true sense and indirect

⁶⁵ The fifth Dalai Lama wrote in his autobiography of how he was made aware of this prophecy by one of his own Nyingma teachers, the Rigzin Tulku of Drojé Drak. The prophecy was also significant because it made mention of Zahor, to which he traced his family line. See Karmay 2014: 224. The relevant lines are quoted in *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 8b.3; *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 367–68; and *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 24a–25b.

⁶⁶ Sangyé Gyatso clarified those associations in e.g. *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 4a.

⁶⁷ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 8a.6.

sense. In the true sense, “a buddha in the Lotus Family named Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja uses the manner of a bodhisattva-in-training to serve beings.”⁶⁸ The term “bodhisattva-in-training” explicitly indicates someone on the way to becoming a buddha—another reminder that such a state of spiritual incompleteness is not definitive of the bodhisattva, but rather a dramatic persona that a finished buddha chooses to adopt. In the true sense, advanced beings have no need to purify any such taint (*sgrib sbyongs mi dgos pa*). Nevertheless, in the indirect sense, Sangyé Gyatso insisted, that same being may still be susceptible to ongoing karmic perturbations (*las g.yo*).

This gets right to the heart of the matter. For how can a being both have power over birth and death and also lack the ability to do anything about them? How can the former claim retain any force in the face of the latter, without being reduced to a mere platitude? We may also approach this problem from the other direction: how could the things that happen in the human world retain their sting in the face of such a higher power? It is a delicate balance. On one side the human aspect stubbornly resists the divinity that is bound to it, and constantly threatens to render that divinity opaque; while on the other side, the divine aspect risks overpowering the human bound by it. There is no merely rhetorical resolution of this problem. To claim that karma still has real punch—and needs real purification—is not at all the same as suggesting that these advanced beings, disguised as humans, play-act their death like a sleight-of-hand trick. It is a practical concern, not a semantic one.

This is utter surmise, but I would not be surprised if there were an element of hard-eyed realism in Sangyé Gyatso's reluctance to treating a living bodhisattva's apparent death as only a manner of speaking. It is one thing to talk of sickness as a clever ruse when one is referring to a distant past or another universe; it's quite something else to come up with a workable explanation of a loved one's skillful transformations when you have yourself witnessed that person suffering and not been able to do

⁶⁸ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 9a.3.

anything about it. After all, however much we may be inclined to view Sangyé Gyatso as a canny political player, or to reinterpret his stated views and actions in terms of some agenda, it is hard to write off his own frequent admissions that the decline and death of his master, mentor, ruler, and surrogate father figure, the man who almost single-handedly made him what he was, who “saw gold in this dirt-clod,” as Sangyé Gyatso often put it, hit him on a personal level.⁶⁹

Whatever the motivation, Sangyé Gyatso's decision to build his case around a back-shelf bit of doctrine like “afterkarma” points to an acute awareness of the theoretical and ritual problems that this death posed. Afterkarma was one way to make more of sickness and death than a mere ruse or rhetorical ploy. It also seems to be a rather unique intervention: I am not aware of any other example of Buddhist kingship built upon this concept, although the idea itself is a very old one. Afterkarma can be thought of as an elaboration on the simple eschatological principle that higher and lower births (as in heavens or hells) as well the attainment of buddhahood, are the effect of the ripening of one's past karma (*las kyi rnam par smin pa*; Skt. *karma-vipāka*). The new twist is that even full ripening may not countermand every possible consequence of the underlying karmic cause, even though—as strange as it sounds—it closes the basic cause-effect circuit. Sometimes a secondary force lingers on, inevitably making itself felt at some future time; not, strictly speaking, as effect, so much as aftereffect. There is something inherently unjust about the idea. One might even say that afterkarma is precisely a way of naming injustice. It points to an experience that is emphatically one's own, but that one did not really earn, and yet still cannot ever escape. Not even a perfect being, someone who has already paid for all their crimes, so to speak, can avoid it.

Sangyé Gyatso's source for the notion of afterkarma was a text called the *Anavatapta-gāthā* or *Songs from Lake Anavatapta*. This was a series of stories in which the buddha Śākyamuni and five

⁶⁹ See e.g. *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 28a, 36a–37b, 49a.

hundred of his disciples gathered at the eponymous lake and took turns narrating their past fortunes and misfortunes in terms of the ripening of past karma. Some misdeeds had leftover karma that spilled into the present life, posterior to discharging the effects of that initial act (as by a lower rebirth). The *Anavatapta-gāthā* was part of the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* (*Sman gyi gzhi*) or “section on medicine” in the *Vinayavastu* (*'Dul ba gzhi*) of the Tibetan Mūlasarvāstivāda corpus.⁷⁰ Sangyé Gyatso focused primarily on the last of its thirty-seven chapters, concerning the Buddha himself.

This text, elements of which also appeared in the Pāli canon and in Chinese as well as Tibetan translation, was first studied by Bechert and then Hofinger, and more recently, with emphasis on the Gilgit fragments of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, by Richard Salomon. Salomon identifies the concept of *karmāvaśeṣa* as central to the overall purport and message of the text: “it would appear that [the *Anavatapta-gāthā*] was in large part intended to address what must have seemed to pious Buddhists of the time a difficult moral problem: why do enlightened beings, including not only the Buddha's disciples who are arhats but even the Buddha himself, continue to suffer?”⁷¹ The same argument also sparked debate in the Pāli tradition, for which Jonathan Walters dubbed it the “karmic explanation” for the Buddha's suffering—namely, that the Buddha's own karma must be to blame.⁷²

⁷⁰ Namely, in the “story portion” (*gtam du gyur pa'i sde tshan*) beginning in volume *kha* of the *Bka' 'gyur dpe bsdur ma*, just before the start of section (*bam po*) forty-eight of the encompassing *Vinayavastu*. On the relationship between the *Anavatapta-gāthā* and the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, see Salomon 2008: 51–57.

⁷¹ Salomon 2008: 7–13. Salomon suggests that the *Anavatapta-gāthā* probably existed in a form that was similar, if not identical, to later recensions by the early second century A.D.; however he also considers it a near certainty that this text was a source for the Pāli *Apadāna*, not the other way around; in which case the *Anavatapta-gāthā* might even trace as far back as the second or first-century B.C. (though Salomon makes clear that this is speculation). Dharmarakṣa's translation into Chinese was completed in 303 A.D.; a translation corresponding roughly to the final chapter on the Buddha (*tathāgata-varga*) titled 佛說興起行經 was made by Kang Mengxiang 康孟祥 around the second century A.D.; it is unclear whether that portion should be considered separately as predating or postdating the rest of the text.

⁷² Walters 1990. A late canonical source, the *Pubbakammaṭṭhi*, perhaps with ties to Sarvāstivādin communities of interpretation, advanced the thesis that the Buddha's past karma could still have effects in this lifetime, all spiritual perfection notwithstanding. According to Walters, the *Pubbakammaṭṭhi* is the only Pāli canonical text to explain the Buddha's sufferings as the result of his own bad karma, although the idea was picked by commentators like Dhammapāla.

The issue was whether the Buddha can or should truly be held responsible for his own evident suffering—his backaches, splinters, stubbed toes, diarrhea, even being insulted or slandered. According to Walters, the debate in the Pāli sources posed two alternatives: either the Buddha's past karma did have some effect on him, or else mishaps like his aching back must be attributable to other causes, for instance someone else's bad karma, or an immediate physiological reason like sitting for too long (as Buddhaghosa proposed). We cannot make any judgment here about the Pāli tradition; but I think that this dichotomy overlooks the important distinction between *karma-vipāka* and *karma-avaśeṣa*, between the ripening of past karma and the aftereffects of what has *already* ripened. That difference makes it possible to speak of situations where effects are still attributable to one's own past karma, but without necessarily implying the presence of yet-unripened karma—which is precisely the shortcoming that Walters found with the so-called “karmic explanation.”⁷³ There should be three pieces to the karmic machinery, not just two. In the *Anavatapta-gāthā*, the trio of action, ripening, and later symptoms—or cause, effect, and aftereffect—patterned the tripartite narrative structure of each tale: (A) past misdeed, (B) past karmic ripening, and (C) present afterkarma. The initial cause has ripened consequences that are eschatological, whereas any subsequent afterkarma is felt corporeally and within a lifetime. It is the difference between being reborn in hell (*vipāka*) and getting a splinter in your foot (*avaśeṣa*). The point is that afterkarma does two things: it proves that present sufferings can be explained in terms of past karma; but it can also be a sign that the original karma has already ripened and taken effect. That lets the Buddha off the hook by keeping his karmic ledger clear.

Sangyé Gyatso quoted at length from the *Anavatapta-gāthā* to recount ten times in Śākyamuni's life when he suffered some minor injury or slight. There are many different versions of this list, and

⁷³ Walters 1990: 90. For instance: “Dhammapāla's rebuttal [advocating the karmic explanation] does not answer the concern which we have suggested motivated these denials [of the karmic explanation], namely the worry that, since karma is sure to bear fruit, the Buddha's bad karma would necessitate a conclusion that his Buddhahood was somehow incomplete.” My point is that *karmāvaśeṣa* is *exactly* an answer to that concern.

even the prose and verse portions of this text differ from one another.⁷⁴ Some of these stories also appeared in other texts like the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra* and the *Avadāna-śataka*.⁷⁵ To buttress his case, Sangyé Gyatso added supporting evidence from those texts and others like the *Sutra of the Wise Man and the Fool*, and, for individuals other than Śākyamuni, several stories from the *Karma-śataka*.⁷⁶ The point is that what happened to the fifth Dalai Lama—who also suffered from joint pain—was of like kind to Śākyamuni’s own ailments and inconveniences.⁷⁷ They signal the presence of afterkarma, thus confirming an already-accomplished perfection.

The difference between how the same stories are interpreted in the *Anavatapta-gāthā* and in the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra* is instructive for our purposes. It offers some traction as to why this doctrine of afterkarma might have been preferred over an alternative explanation like the latter's skill-in-means. In the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra*, the stories of apparent harm visited upon the buddha are read as evidence of an enlightened being's adroitness at manipulating reality for some desired effect. They are signs of a motivated choice, something the buddha does, rather than something that is done to a buddha. And just as Walters suggested with respect to Pāli sources, here too we may detect a lingering sense of unease about even bringing up the subject of a buddha's karma—a fragility of buddhahood in the face of anything that might threaten its porcelain perfection. In that fashion, the “skill-in-means” approach has been explained as a stark rejoinder to the evidently unpalatable idea that bad things happen to buddhas for good karmic reasons. As Tatz writes of the alternative “karmic” explanation, “that scholiastic

⁷⁴ Those differences are discussed in Salomon 2008: 54–56. See *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 10a and following

⁷⁵ *Thabs mkhas pa'i mdo*. Tōh. 261; *Rtogs pa brjod pa brgya pa*, Tōh. 343. For a survey of texts and stories relating to the *Anavatapta-gāthā* see Salomon 2008: 28–37. A nearly identical list to Sangyé Gyatso's is also found in the “nine calamitous ripenings” (*nava-apatti-vipāka*) recounted in Chapter Fourteen, part VI (*juan 9*, 121b–c) of the Chinese *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*, which corresponds exactly (albeit in different order) to the list used by Sangyé Gyatso (omitting the story of dysentery). Lamotte 1981: 507ff.

⁷⁶ *Mdo mdzangs blun*, Tōh. 341; *Las brgya pa*, Tōh. 340.

⁷⁷ See e.g. *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 156–57, where Sangyé Gyatso mentions headaches (*mgo bo na ba*), joint pain (*yan lag nying lag na ba*), and bad dreams (*rmi lam ngan pa*).

[“karmic”] explanation seems to have been unacceptable to the masses of Buddhists of an age that virtually deified the founder in literature and art.”⁷⁸ He implies that the Sanskrit *Anavatapta-gāthā* and the Pāli *Mahāpadāna* advanced a much less “deified” portrayal of the Buddha, perhaps even one that undermined divinity; skill-in-means was a redress to that insufficiency, meant to reassert the buddha's divinity. Reading Sangyé Gyatso, I must disagree. Sangyé Gyatso was clearly mobilizing the idea of afterkarma *in service of* deification, not against it. That a buddha becomes human and then suffers does not undermine buddhahood; rather it shores up the idea of perfection by buffering it from the human suffering to which it is connected. The existence of afterkarma confirms an already ripened, already perfected karma. Therefore, afterkarma is not just about how buddhas suffer, as Salomon put it. It can also be about how buddhas are already perfect.

I see three possible consequences of dredging up a concept like afterkarma from deep in the Vinaya literature. The first, already mentioned, is that here we have a way of thinking about karma and human life and its perfection that does not make light of pain. It strikes me as a very humanist interpretation. Pain and death are not a choice, even if in some true sense they still do not and cannot apply to such an advanced being. The upshot is that buddhas and bodhisattvas who act as human beings are not pulling their punches. Indeed, by disentangling these two levels of being from one another, it is possible to allow what pertains naturally to each to be understood straightforwardly, on its own terms, in a way that needs no dissembling. One need not make excuses for pain—or for being human. When a divine being becomes human and submits itself to human experience, it feels this *as* human, not as a deity's trick. The second consequence, anticipated by the first, is that the idea of afterkarma makes such limitations incontrovertible. Persons are subjected to them against their will. To treat the human as human, even in this limit case of a buddha, makes a strong claim about the limits of our own agency in

⁷⁸ Tatz 1994: 2.

the face of a world we cannot wholly make as we see fit, and our vulnerability to forces over which we have no control.⁷⁹ That might be simply a *sine qua non* of any attempt to posit the divinity of a living person, but it finds clear articulation here. A third consequence of the afterkarma doctrine is that thinking in terms of a trio (cause-effect-aftereffect) resonates very well with Sangyé Gyatso's theology that puts buddhahood behind us, so to speak. To be in the age of the leftover (*lhag ma*) is to be in the post-effect era, the consequent moment in which the karma has already been ripened. So that temporality dovetails very nicely with Sangyé Gyatso's insistence, discussed above, that when we talk about bodhisattvas in our own world we are talking about a buddhahood already accomplished. And here, at last, is the point: the fact of living in an era after buddhahood is key not only to the concept of divinity underscoring this Buddhist state, but equally to the Great Worship Assembly itself, which confirms those truths by virtue of responding to the problems they create.

For if afterkarma gives a vocabulary for understanding the fifth Dalai Lama's conjunction of divine perfection and human impurity, it also raises the question of what to do about it. Recall that the avowed purpose of the Great Worship Assembly was to purify karma. Admittedly, this reasoning is hardly self-evident. Either someone suffers, or they don't. They are pure, or impure. A response is either necessary, or not. How could it be both? In what is arguably the most conceptually dense portion of the *Instructions*, Sangyé Gyatso cited no less than twenty separate texts to build his case for this need to purify afterkarma. His sources included sūtras and śāstras, works by Tibetan authors, Nyingma tantras, and all four classes of Sarma tantra. The passages he selected cover thorny technical issues such as the

⁷⁹ In fact, Sangyé Gyatso even used the *Upāya-kauśalya Sūtra* to bolster this point (he referred to it by an alternate name, *Jñānottara-bodhisattva-paripṛcchā Sūtra*). He stepped entirely over that titular idea of skill-in-means to derive another lesson: that karma cannot be controverted in any way whatsoever (*gang gi'ang zlog tu med pa*). In support he cited its famous story of the powerful Maudgalyāyana's futile, world-shaking efforts to move the thorn out from under the buddha's descending foot. The lesson is that not even the world's strongest arhat can do anything to stop karma from having its way. The thorn must go in. *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 12b.

possibility of instantaneous purification (*yud tsam gyis sbyangs pas dag pa*), as by a headache;⁸⁰ how the ten levels of the bodhisattva are traversed and when and how their karmic obscurations are finally purified; and, as some tantras suggest, whether and how primordially pure (*ye dag*) buddhas partake of the causative, gradualist activities more commonly associated with an unfinished bodhisattva, including accumulation and purification.⁸¹ It is as if Sangyé Gyatso were threading the idea of afterkarma—which is not, to my knowledge, an operative concept in any of those other sources—back through this broader body of learning, to prove that these adjacent discussions were all in accord on the issue. For brevity's sake we must leave these matters aside. But as a taste, here is how Sangyé Gyatso concludes:

It is not possible for a noble being who reaches the Path of Seeing to be constitutionally well or unwell, and so on. But those of lesser wisdom (*blo chung ba*) may see the truth of reality and thereby reach the first bhūmi, which is the path of a noble being without outflows (*zag med*, Skt. *anaśrava*), yet they will remain incapable of using the fires of gnosis (*ye shes*) to purify their degenerate body, so it will bear aftereffects (*lhag ma dang bcas pa*). For that reason, even though they have already relinquished their grasping of the *kleśas*, which is the foremost cause of saṃsāric existence, nonetheless, like the stink that lingers in a musk-vial, even though they will no longer [unwillingly] take a future life for themselves, it will seem for a time as if they still possessed the three sorts of outflows that are the source of a physical body; and consequently it is even possible there will be some very minor indications (*snang cha phra mo tsam*) of pleasure and pain.⁸²

This is a remarkable statement from our author. It demonstrates the depth and complexity behind the idea that the Dalai Lama “is” a bodhisattva. It is also deeply critical, however carefully crafted. Even victory over the cycle of rebirth is not in itself necessarily a victory over karma *tout court*. Even

⁸⁰ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 15a-17a. Among the sources quoted on this point are the story of Maitrakanyaka from the *Avadānaśataka* (see Appleton 2014); Śākyamuni's compassion in a past life as an oxcart-driver in hell, told in the *Thabs mkhas pa drin lan bsab pa'i mdo* (Tōh. 353); and purification-by-headache, as discussed in Bhāviveka's *Tarkajvāla* (*Tog ge 'bar ba*, Tōh. 3856) and Tsongkhapa's *Lam rim chen mo*; and other canonical texts like the *Amogapāśa* (*Don yod zhags pa*, Tōh. 682), *Mahāmokṣa Sūtra* (*Thar pa chen po'i mdo*, Tōh.264), *Caturdharmanirdeśa Sūtra* (*Chos bzhi bstan pa'i mdo*; Tōh. 249); the *Kālacakra Langutantra* (verse IV.131), and the *Mahāvairocana-abhisambhodi* (*Rnam snang mngon byang*) among other sources.

⁸¹ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 17b.6-20a. Sangyé Gyatso's principal source on the teachings of primordial purity is the *Guhyagarbha* (*Gsang ba snying po*) corpus and its commentaries. These include the *G.yung ṭika* by Yungtön Dorjé Pal; the commentary *Rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po dpal gsang ba'i snying po'i 'grel pa* by Lalitavajra; and the commentary *Phyogs bcu mun sel* by Longchenpa.

⁸² *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 19b.3.

advanced bodhisattvas, that is, can still be differentiated from one another in terms of their intelligence and their fate. In that sense, the perfect Dalai Lama is also incomplete and insufficient: “in the true sense, once a first-bhūmi bodhisattva reaches the Path of Seeing, they have not even a sesame seed's worth of obscuration yet to be purified—but in the indirect sense there is still a need to purify obscurations.”⁸³ Purification is a necessary problem, but fortunately one that can be solved. Sangyé Gyatso also pointed out that this interpretation corroborated a key experience of the fifth Dalai Lama himself, who linked his own senescent aches and bad dreams with a visionary experience of past misdeeds:

In the earth pig year, in the fourth Hor month on the third day (May 24, 1659) ...I had a vision of the noble one [Avalokiteśvara] in the *cittaviśramaṇa* (“resting in the nature of mind”) [posture],⁸⁴ who spoke of the karmic ripening of my having once dismembered a criminal in a lifetime when I was a king in Benares in India.⁸⁵

Sangyé Gyatso took this event as portent of the fifth Dalai Lama's own chronic joint pain (*phyag zhabs su ltem gzhi*). Many of the afterkarma stories from the *Anavatapta-gāthā* also used this kind of sympathetic logic, whereby the leftover pain somehow mirrors the original crime. As he was once a king and executed the law (presumably including punishments of dismemberment and even death), so posterior to the ripening of that karma, he would suffer a corresponding pain to his own limbs and life, i.e., afterkarma. As Sangyé Gyatso puts it, “according to that prediction it is proven (*grub*) that in the indirect sense, these types of obscurations [and] transgressions of his, such as pains in dreams, etc., still

⁸³ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 20a.2. For a comparable passage, see *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 166.

⁸⁴ Tib. *sems nyid ngal gso*. Sangyé Gyatso commissioned a statue of Avalokiteśvara in this form to be placed in the Past Lives Chapel in the “Red” Potala palace. See Chapter Six.

⁸⁵ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1972. The passage is contained in the fifth text (titled *bum pa'i rgya can*); the date is given at *ibid.*: 97, describing the visions on a weeklong retreat in the Lokeśvara Chapel (in the Potala) to perform divinations for the well-being of Tibetan subjects (*bod 'bangs bde thabs sogs kyi brtag pa*) at the urging of the Nechung oracle, on the third day of the fourth Hor month. The actual retreat started on the eighth and lasted a week; this vision happens on the twelfth (*ibid.*: 106–7). The episode is quoted in *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 20b.5.

require accumulation and purification.”⁸⁶ Afterkarma holds two otherwise paradoxical claims together: because purification has already taken place, so purification is necessary. Pain becomes proof of perfection. Accumulation and purification (i.e., the Great Worship Assembly) are necessary, just in the sense that afterkarma is still felt, is no less real for having already been unplugged from the engines of saṃsāra. It is only true in the “indirect sense,” yet it is wholly real, and requires a response in kind.

3. WORSHIP

Now we turn to the question of just why it takes a Great Worship Assembly to accomplish, in the indirect sense, this aim of purification. What is it that makes worship work? Sangyé Gyatso characterized the Great Worship Assembly ceremony as the appropriate response to the fifth Dalai Lama's death, the requisite means for accumulating and purifying his karma. The immediate services were conducted secretly, under the pretense of doing a stabilizing ritual appropriate for someone still living. In truth, Sangyé Gyatso and a small coterie of attendants were dealing with death, conducting a rich program of rituals based on both sūtra and the old and new tantras, including recitations, chanting, offerings, and ritual objects or “supports” of body, speech, and mind. Perhaps in an effort to demonstrate his sincerity, Sangyé Gyatso tallied all the expenses for sustaining this ritual work of accumulation and purification over the twelve intervening years, as if guaranteeing that the right steps were taken.⁸⁷ He may have also wished to instill an impression that such efforts were the true forerunners for the Great Worship Assembly ceremony. Perhaps he anticipated some suspicion because of that delay and was ensuring that this newfangled ceremony was not created *ex nihilo* but only continued a process already long underway.

⁸⁶ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 21b.6.

⁸⁷ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 21b.2.

What kind of thing was the Great Worship Assembly? In a passage describing its founding, we can see how the two main terms—*tshogs* and *mchod*—relate in the context of its name:

[Starting] from the wood dog year of the twelfth sexagenary cycle (1694), so as to purify the Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso's own obscurations and downfalls and then petition him to perform great waves of activity for the sake of living beings by turning the wheel of dharma, etc.—just like [Avalokiteśvara promised when] generating the will to awakening—and also that I, his disciple Sang-Gyampa, might purify my own karmic obscurations and then become inseparable from him in every lifetime, as prophesied and as he personally attested; therefore, in order that we and all those who have been our mothers may use the force of well-performed offerings of worship (*mchod 'bul*), following after the Great Prayer Festival, so as to complete a massive wave of unsurpassed collection (*tshogs*) to purify all the thick obscurations of karma and affliction held by the Great All-Knowing One [the Dalai Lama], so we have instituted this special holiday, consisting of both deity worship (*lha mchod*) making reverential offerings to the oceanic host (*tshogs*) of buddhas, and human worship (*mi mchod*) exemplified by giving to beggars and so forth, and which is to be known as the Worship Assembly (*tshogs mchod*).⁸⁸

The term *tshogs* here is captured in the myriad related senses of “collection” (as of merit, or of the masses of deities in a maṇḍala, monks in a ritual, or guests at a celebration). It specifies the purpose of the ceremony: completing the fifth Dalai Lama's accumulation of merit and purifying his “thick” obscurations (with respect to afterkarma, that is). The term *mchod* gives us the means: a worship by serving (*bsnyen bkur*) gods and humans, especially as a holiday for making offerings. (Readers will note that Sangyé Gyatso slipped himself into these proceedings as well, as if to claim a sort of collateral benefit. He wished for his spiritual fate—like his political one—to remain tethered to the fifth Dalai Lama's; on which see Chapter Six.)

The term “special holiday” (*dus ston khyad par can*) located this ceremony within a larger Indian and Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Our word “holiday” captures a cluster of related Tibetan terms that convey an idea of seasonally or calendrically repeated time (*dus*). For instance, there are significant dates (*dus chen*) corresponding to major events in the life of the buddha Śākyamuni, such as his

⁸⁸ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 21b.6–22a.3.

entrance into his mother's womb or his awakening. There is also a notion of anniversary festivals (*dus ston*) that commemorate the date of some important event and its initial celebration, as in the *cūḍā-maha* or “hair festival” that repeats the initial celebration in the Trāyastriṃśa heaven of the buddha's hair-cutting; or the “bowl holiday” (*vol go'i dus ston*) to honor the bowl that Sujātā used to serve the buddha milk-rice. Sangyé Gyatso also gestured to an agrarian tradition of festivals tied to each season (*dus*) and its activities, like mid-spring (plowing the fields) or mid-summer (breaking the irrigation channels to flood the fields). Finally, there was a notion of repetitive worship (*dus mchod*), such as the “Sūtra worship” and “Vinaya worship” thought to have been introduced at Samyé monastery by the king Tri Songdetsen and his son Muné Tsenpo.⁸⁹ Sangyé Gyatso described them all in considerable detail, one rhetorical effect of which is to perform his own participation in a much longer tradition that resonates equally with Śākyamuni in India and with the Buddhist kings of the old Tibetan empire.

His interesting discussion of these matters is a noteworthy display of technical knowledge and textual exegesis, raising and attempting to answer multiple problems, for instance having to do with reconciling the Indian calendar (the source for dating the Indian Buddhist holidays) and the “Hor” calendar (tied to the progression of seasons and hence to the agrarian holidays) in order to correctly match the holidays to their appropriate seasonal months. He also raised a number of concerns about accurately dating events of the buddha's life, as well as problems with the early history of holidays in Tibet, on the basis of an important passage about Muné Tsenpo in the so-called *Zhabs btags ma*, an augmented fourteenth-century version of the famous *Sba/Dbal/Rba bzhed*.⁹⁰ Some of these digressions

⁸⁹ These events at Samyé trace to a version of the *Sba bzhed*. Sangyé Gyatso held that these festivals never really involved worship of those particular “baskets” of the Buddhist canon; rather they took their names from the sources for their proper dates and observances. He also ventured that a fourth celebration drawn from “Secret Mantra” (*gsang sngags kyi mchod pa*), was added by the king to placate the matrilineal (and Bön-affiliated) ministers. See *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 22b and following.

⁹⁰ For instance, Sangyé Gyatso tried to explain why the *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma* described the fifteen-year-old Muné Tsenpo as instituting “four major holidays of worship” (*dus kyi mchod pa chen po bzhi*) when it then only narrates three: a so-called “abhi” worship, *mngon pa'i mchod pa*, in the “month of awakening” (Vaiśākha or *sa ga zla ba*, the fourth Hor month) which is linked to the “plowing” worship; a “sūtra” worship in the mid-summer month, the time of entering the

feel very academic, which is to say irrelevant to the Great Worship Assembly ceremony. What could it have possibly done, for instance, to know that the “Sūtra worship” at Samyé should be in the sixth Hor month rather than the fifth (which is when it was celebrated in Sangyé Gyatso's own time, to his chagrin), or that Śākyamuni's turning of the wheel of dharma (another major holiday) must have happened on the fourth day of the Āṣāḍha month, not when its holiday was celebrated on the fifteenth, since it is known that the buddha was awakened on the full moon (fifteenth) of Vaiśākha but sat for forty-nine days (thus, 15 + 30 + 4) before teaching? These are but two of the issues Sangyé Gyatso took up with a flourish. But if they are, practically speaking, beside the main point, they also bear witness to an underlying concern for the very fact of repetition. There is a rather state-like emphasis on setting the record straight. Those who are uniquely situated to have the awareness and the resources to determine and dictate the practices of their subjects also bear the capacity and the responsibility to reorder the world in the correct fashion and for all. By this combination of knowledge and power, they establish the requisite conditions for the wholesale production of merit—which, after all, was the goal of the state in ushering in an age of perfection. So one good reason for Sangyé Gyatso wasting so much paper on getting the dates right is just to demonstrate how much getting the dates right matters (and that he should be the one to do it).

Holiday-based worship is thus portrayed as something that draws its power from the very fact of precise repetition. We might recall Mircea Eliade's idea of repetition as a way of abolishing time. The

summer retreat, and linked to the destruction of irrigation channels; and a “vinaya worship” for the “minor miracles” (*cho 'phrul chung ba*, which the Desi takes as the buddha's “descent from heaven” or *lha babs*) in the late-fall month (the tenth Hor month; which poses a further problem because that holiday is typically in the ninth Hor or Āśvina month). He interpreted the terms “abhi”, “sūtra,” and “vinaya” in terms of the Tripitaka sources from which information about those holidays was drawn (rather than having been objects of worship themselves) and to make a case for why a fourth major buddha-holiday, that of the “major miracles,” is implicit in this passage (because it mentions “minor miracles,” that implies knowledge of the “major” miracles too). For the relevant passage in the *Zhabs btags ma*, see *Rba bzhed phyogs bsgrigs* 2009: 57–58. For a corresponding passage in another version of the text recovered from Sa skya monastery and referred to as the *Chos 'byung gi yi ge zhib mo*, see *ibid.*: 215–16. The earlier (11th CE?) version known as *Dbal' bzhed* does not include these passages on Muné Tsenpo.

chronological, linear temporal distance of “historical time” between one repetition and the next is briefly canceled out and erased, as if each successive case were unfolding within the “higher time” of the selfsame event. Here Eliade quoted Hubert and Mauss: “These periodic recurrences are almost enough to prove that the dates themselves bring back the same happenings.”⁹¹ We can take the idea even further. By repeating, an equivalence is introduced which collapses all these iterations into one another. The effect is of a single abstract event, a hypothetical whole that includes all its repetitions—truly a higher time. Consequently, the foundational event is refigured too, as if it were the *repetition itself* that becomes the primary thing, not the original instance that it repeated. In that spirit, Charles Péguy quipped that we should really think of the storming of the Bastille as the first Bastille Day, celebrating all future Bastille Days in advance. Gilles Deleuze, citing Péguy, called this “the paradox of festivals: they repeat an unrepeatable.”⁹² They suggest thinking of the fifth Dalai Lama's death and the initial response as anticipating all Great Worship Assemblies in advance—an event that *is* all of its repetitions, “raised,” as Deleuze would say, “to the n-th power.” As obscure as it all may sound, that repetition-forward way of thinking actually fits the stated purposes of the holiday rather well, given the first premise of an already-perfect buddhahood. Sangyé Gyatso frankly confronted the same paradox: isn't purification already finished? Why repeat an unrepeatable? When if ever could that work be completed? Or is it not already complete?

As these authors variously suggest, one answer is to see repetition as a resonating whole, not a cumulative process. The Great Worship Assembly was supposed to purify the Dalai Lama's afterkarma but still had to be done over again on the same date every year. Shouldn't it hit the target eventually? Alternatively, if its work is never finished, doesn't that undermine the divinity of the Dalai Lama? Now

⁹¹ Quoted in Eliade 1996 [1958]: 392.

⁹² Deleuze 1994: 1.

we can see that this pseudo-problem only emerges if we are thinking of it like a fund-raiser whose thermometer chart inches ever closer to its final goal. Worship does not repeat so as to gradually approach success. Rather, to repeat *is* to succeed. Sangyé Gyatso's own basic definition is succinct: “Worship is a meritorious action in which one propitiates an exalted object.”⁹³ To “propitiate” (*mnyes par byed pa*) means to cause pleasure, as in a buddha.⁹⁴ The centrality to worship of the production of pleasure explains why the mood should be celebratory and theatrical, and why an aesthetic of abundance and completeness is crucial to confirmation of success. Sangyé Gyatso went on to say:

Generally speaking, the essential thing about worship is this: it is the virtuous use of all three of body, speech, and mind, by way of the excellent intention to reverentially worship those exalted fields constituting the object of worship; and also propitiating [that object of worship] by way of proffering material things. Etymologically, as derived from the [Sanskrit] term *pūjā* [sic], it is known that “to worship” means making an offering to a source with the aim of first having generated, and then again and again generating, pleasure, and showing reverence.⁹⁵

Worship as the production of pleasure is linked to repetition. Abstracting worship in this way furnishes the logic for the Great Worship Assembly and its constitutional ambivalence. Recall that the procession is built by aggregating and festively displaying the signs of each and every kind of worship. To perform worship is not to follow a step-by-step process, upon which the desired result springs into being fully formed. Worship is not like baking a cake or casting a spell. Success is a function of the very fact of

⁹³ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 25b.

⁹⁴ The *Mahāvīyūtpatti* gives the Sanskrit equivalent *ārāgayati* and Edgerton suggests a close affinity with *ārādhayati* (1993 [1953]: 103). He suggests that the causative form *ārāgayati* is peculiar to Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit, for which it is “probably actually formed as a pendant and opposite to *virāgayati*... [offends, displeases, turns away -ijm] with which it is often associated.” He suggested two definitions: (1) attains, gets, acquires; (2) propitiates, gratifies, pleases. In the latter case the object is almost always buddha(s).

⁹⁵ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 25b–26a. In Tibetan: *mchod yul du gyur pa'i zhing dam pa rnam blor bkur zhing mchod pa'i bsam pa phun sum tshogs pa'i sgo nas lus ngag yid gsum gyi rnam par dge ba'i bya ba dang/ dngos po yo byad stob pa'i sgo nas kyang mnyes par byed pa yin la/ nges tshig ni/ pū ja'i sgra las drangs na, sngon du bskyed pa dang/ yang nas yang du dgyes pa bskyed pa dang/ bkur ba'i don gyi gnas su stob par byed pa'i don gyis mchod pa zhes grags. This is a somewhat difficult passage and the orthography in the blockprint is not entirely legible. If the questionable *sngon du bskyed pa* should actually read *sngon du bskyod pa* it could mean “going before” [the source of one's offering] although in that case *gnas* would be the expected object, which is tricky given the syntax. Either way the object of that clause is not clear to me. I am taking *dgyes pa* as the implied object of *sngon du bskyed pa*.*

worship taking place (as repetition) and the confirmation of that fact (as pleasure and abundance).

Hence redundancy is not a concern, and comprehensiveness and superfluous excessiveness are desired.

THE PROCESSION: DESIGN AND IMPLICATIONS

Let us now end this chapter by bringing these insights to bear on the procession itself. My thinking here builds off three basic assumptions. The first is that the procession's design was the logical extension of the ideas just described. It is certainly clear in the *Instructions* how the one follows directly upon the other. It made sense to do it this way, given what was held to be true. The second assumption is that the procession was deemed capable of succeeding at its stated aim. It is hardly our task to decide whether it truly did succeed or not, but we should proceed on the understanding that success was a real possibility. It was designed to work, and not—or not only—as an elaborate exercise in cynicism (*pace* instrumentalist explanations) nor wholly the byproduct of some determinative essence like social structure (*pace* functionalist explanations). The third assumption is a counterweight to the first two. I am assuming that there would have been a gap between the exquisite details and intellectual complexity of the thinking behind this event, and whatever it may have communicated about itself in practice. The point is to avoid the error of treating the one as equivalent to the other. Of course, I have repeatedly stressed that it was not designed to communicate, but to do. Still, communicate it certainly did regardless. Clearly some caution is required: we ourselves stand at a distant remove from this cosmo-moral order and it is hard to say what would be taken for granted, or easily understood, or more or less well-known. I wager that it would be nigh impossible for any but the most informed scholar to extract by observation alone anything resembling the depth of information in the *Instructions*. The system of worship common to all four classes of Sarma tantra, for instance, involved four specific types of water: *argham* for guests (*mchod yon gyi chu*); *pādya* for washing feet (*zhabs bsil*), *ācamana* for washing the face (*zhal bkru ba'i chu*), and *prokṣaṇa* for oblations (*'thor 'thung*). Who would know this,

and who could possibly tell by looking? As far as the practical aims are concerned, this gap is hardly a problem. Confirmation of successful worship came not through knowing the theories and the details themselves, but in recognizing the signs and omens of their success—a point that both the mural captions, as well as records of the event's performance in the *Dukūla* and the *Tomb Inventory*, confirm. But let us not be so obtuse as to deny that there was anything more going on here. We should consider what other communicative capacities it may have had, intentionally or in spite of itself. I suggest that it indeed embodied an aura of ambivalence—and also of power.

The reader is referred to the appendix for a detailed reconstruction of the original design of the procession. Here I will emphasize the two basic themes announced at the start: inclusivity and theatricality. The identifying mark of the former is redundancy; the latter announced itself in several ways. As already mentioned, the procession basically consisted of a long and noisome vanguard and then a series of roughly two dozen different self-contained systems of worship from various scriptural sources. Exact numbers of participants are difficult to ascertain, for many reasons. A rough count suggests that for the inaugural year, there were about three hundred persons in the vanguard and four hundred and fifty in the main body of the procession—not far off from the “more than seven hundred” the Desi described in the *Dukūla*. As mentioned earlier, the bulk of the procession corresponds to the tantras. The single largest section was for yoga tantra. Certain generic subsets like the groups of goddesses (*mchod pa'i lha mo*, *rig ma*) recurred multiple times, albeit with variations in number, name, and appearance (including colors, gestures, and implements). Other items, like incense or banners, also appeared over and over. Individual items ranged from the tiny ear-cleaner to the large horse and elephant. There were also intangibles like *samādhi* (a state of meditative absorption) and massive forms like a mansion or a pleasure grove which had to be drawn on a placard. In the text, most systems are accompanied by a liturgy or “sequence of worship” (*mchod phreng*), a series of verses to be recited in

the actual ritual.⁹⁶ The verses often name the items or furnish participants with information to exclaim as they processed. (We might speculate that this could be one way that the performance would have communicated information about itself, insofar as that person was basically announcing, for anyone who could hear and understand it, who they were and what they were doing.)

So let us now think in general terms about this ordering and some of the meanings it encodes. The procession aimed for the optimal and maximal manifestation of worship on the grandest, most inclusive, ergo most effective scale. Infusing it all was that aforementioned ambivalence of acting in a way that is at once necessary and unnecessary. The human king needs to be karmically purified because the divine kingship does not need to be karmically purified. As for worship, one does not repeat the act in order to complete it, but rather it is because the act is already completed that it must be repeated. The procession bears its own formal ambivalences: it is somehow only the aggregation of various systems of worship, but it accomplishes worship itself; and it is somehow only a representative, as-if display, but it is thereby also an actual, as-is practice. That is what is meant by inclusivity and theatricality.

On the first of those two topics, one aspect that immediately stands out is what I have termed redundancy. This needs more clarification: clearly there are some respects in which redundancy and superfluousness are still to be avoided. A good example is the subsection where six individuals are named to carry six separate types of maṇḍala-offerings, or heaps of grain set up as cosmograms. In the *Instructions*, Sangyé Gyatso reviewed different traditions for how to count the number of “heaps” in the maṇḍala, based on various ways of counting Mount Meru and the continents and other elements of the basic Meru cosmology (like the sun and moon). The aim was for the procession to include one of each possible type of maṇḍala.⁹⁷ The hitch was that the proper model for the “outer” Nyingma maṇḍala

⁹⁶ For translated examples of such offering verses, see Beyer 1973: 148ff.

⁹⁷ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 43b.4 and following. See Appendix for the details.

ought to have been a seven-heap maṇḍala, which would double up a design already used in the procession. To avoid that redundancy, Sangyé Gyatso furnished an alternative fifteen-heap design.⁹⁸ So the goal in this subsection was to attain a kind of “one-of-everything” exhaustiveness. Within any one category, the procession should manifest the range of the varieties of that category.

But in the overall procession, between its subsections, redundancy is everywhere. Such overlapping of individual pieces is a direct consequence of the overarching imperative to incorporate one of each type of system and source. For example, there are eight different mirrors. The procession also had eleven parasols, not even counting the thirty hoisted at the front of the vanguard. There were four different sections of the procession that specified an elephant. (Multiple elephants can be seen in the palace mural.) One effect of redundancy is that it communicates inclusivity. It shows that the whole is made up of parts. We could say that the whole only becomes efficacious in itself by aggregating each and every part. Which, in turn, entails some disinterest about how the component parts relate to one another. Each subsection is disinterested in whatever else might be going on in front of or behind it. In that sense there really is no synthetic “whole” over and above its parts—just a collection of parts *as parts*, not collaborating to form any new, combined thing. The whole is like a topography of worship: it maps out the complete space occupied by different systems. The redundancy of individual elements is a readily visible feature which could directly convey a basic awareness of inclusivity. Redundancy, that is, draws attention to itself. It is possible to see that different systems are being brought together even without knowing much about what those systems are.

The theatrical quality of the event is also not difficult to discern, even for our hypothetical uninformed viewer. For starters, things are not offered so much as simply carried around and displayed prominently. Whereas a source text may lay out the steps of a practical liturgy, here the main point is

⁹⁸ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 44b.5–45a.1.

just to render whatever things that liturgy described in a sequence of discrete, tangible forms. It turns a fluid process into a segmented list of things. At the end of each year's event, the things get put back in their boxes so that it can all be taken out and done over again the next time. It is pageantry, and at times it becomes almost allegorical. To march by holding a flower would not mean actually *offering this flower in particular*, so much as signalling to the idea of *offering flowers in general as this particular system dictates*. To give another example: the sūtra portion begins with the seven-part sequence of worship derived from the *Bhadracaryā-praṇidhāna*. The source text includes these verses:

Supreme flowers, a supreme garland,
 percussion, unguent, excellent parasol,
 excellent lamps and supreme incense—
 With these, we give worship to all the Victors!

Supreme garments, excellent scented [water],
 As much incense powder as Meru itself,
 and all the other excellent items specially arrayed—
 With these, we give worship to all the Victors!

These two stanzas exemplified the second of the seven parts, namely, making offerings. (Sangyé Gyatso also lined them up against a corresponding verse from his own *Prayer for a Marvelous Age*, which included seven verses corresponding to the same seven-part worship.) After quoting these verses, Sangyé Gyatso translated them into a precise sequence: one monk carries flowers, another a garland. (He noted that either real flowers or artificial ones are fine.) For “percussion,” whereas commentaries list the entire range of musical instruments, here a single monk is dispatched to carry just a *tūrya* drum to stand in for the set. Three more monks carried unguent, parasol, and lamp. “Incense” was split into two varieties, namely, airborne incense (*lding spos*) and hard incense (*spos reng*), carried by two more monks. On it goes. At the end, Sangyé Gyatso also added a variant translation by Zhalu Lotsāwa, and then turned *that* version into a sequence of twenty-one more monks, some carrying items, others performing acts like full-body prostration or spell-chanting (*gzungs 'don*).

What Sangyé Gyatso has effectively done here is parse the text so as to enlist a cast of performers to recreate it. In some cases, the thing offered and the body that bears it are distinct. Then the homogeneous, uniformed monk is more like a passive backdrop against which these splendid items seemingly come to life themselves. One thinks of the candlesticks and cutlery marching about in *Beauty and the Beast*. We might imagine these items getting up and spreading themselves around, as if turning the city into their altar. In other cases, like prostration or devotion, the thing and its bearer overlap, creating an interesting double effect. There is no physical object, no miniature “prostration” that one can somehow tout about in their hands. The sign of the thing (doing a prostration) is equivalent to the act it signifies. Is this monk literally prostrating himself, or is he a vehicle for signifying the general idea “prostration”? Or is that distinction itself blurred? In other cases, the signifying effect is more obvious. I have already mentioned the use of illustrated placards for anything too large—or simply not enough of a coherent thing—to assume objective form, such as forests, groves, pools, palaces, and in one case what the source text simply calls a “pleasing spot” (*vid du 'ong ba'i sa phyogs*), represented by a picture of a floor strewn with petals. For worship by requesting the buddha to turn the wheel of dharma, the procession has four monks holding little wheels. The wheel itself is hardly the point; it is the sign of an abstract idea. An entire range of such ambiguities is threaded throughout the procession, all in one way or another revolving around that general ambivalence between the act and its representation. And yet for all this theatricality, mimicry, substitution, and scaling, the reality of it all can also bleed through, just like that prostrating monk. How different really is an offering liturgy conducted at one's personal altar, and the same offering liturgy signified on a grand scale, exploded into dozens of pieces and festively displayed in public? How would we go about justifying the one as a really efficacious offering, a sincere ritual, and the other as a simulacrum? Isn't the doing already there in the displaying? Recall that worship works by the collaborative effort of

material thing and mental idea. Which is more real? What is all this pageantry but the maximal display of things, the large-scale stimulation of imagination?

So these are the two principal forms of ambivalence which, on my reading, resonate with the theoretical underpinnings of the Great Worship Assembly and its stated objectives. Still, it must also be granted that this event could indeed have borne communicative capacities irrespective of its own purposes. One such feature is hierarchy. Not only can component parts be distinguished in the murals, but so too might basic conclusions be inferred about their relative ordering. Note that the procession ranks its components in a manner parallel to the classificatory structures that organized Buddhist knowledge itself: from the most exoteric to the most esoteric. The procession is fronted by the vanguard, then moves from sūtra to tantra. The latter moves from Sarma to Nyingma materials, and in the former category, in turn through the four classes of tantra, ending on the “nondual” Kālacakra. The last component (I have descriptively dubbed it “royal and auspicious worship”) takes rule for its theme: it deals with kings and other human and nonhuman rulers. So in basic terms we have a set of nested dichotomies: the first splits the procession between dramatic song-and-dance and actual textual models of worship; then, the latter category is itself split between the monastic (sūtra then tantra) and what might be deemed the secular or political. We could treat this hierarchy as prioritizing scripture-based worship over simple celebration; but also prioritizing tantra over sūtra, and Kālacakra and Nyingma over the other tantras; and lastly, prioritizing the king over the saṅgha. From another perspective, the weight of the procession's attentions rest squarely in the middle, while the beginning and end offer a kind of framing and support: the heralds announce what is coming and the king supports the conditions for the production and sustenance of the Buddhist dispensation as well as the renunciate career. Buttressing the event at either end with regalia might this communicate that the point of rule is not just to be the highest link on a chain and the final principle of authority, but also to be the advocate and the necessary means for that bulky middle, the religious world it embraces and makes possible, in which

the real work of worship is accomplished. Both the superiority and responsibilities of rule are encoded in this hierarchy. A final idea is that there may be an ideological effect enabled by the very distance between the procession as an observable event, and the procession as detailed in the text of the *Instructions*. Because details build the procession, they also attach to its bodies. It is possible to notice detail-in-general without understanding any of it. What is readily communicated are not specific details *per se* but something like the fact of a surplus of attention. Detail, like redundancy, calls attention to itself. It communicates the expertise behind the arrangement of all these parts—an expertise probably not accessible to most. It is a reminder that there are things that other people know and we do not. It hints at the vast knowledge behind these tangible forms in all their minute specificity, and the expertise needed to master them and pull off a successful act of worship on this scale.

CONCLUSION

I have tried to indicate the specific depth and general contingency of the knowledge and understanding, the concerns and desires, that built this event and gave it form; and the ways it went beyond a merely expressive function and did real work on its world. I have also situated this ceremony in terms of theoretical and practical concerns about kingship and succession. Such concerns go well beyond Tibet but found articulation in a Buddhist idiom of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and karma. Lastly, I have pointed out some of the most basic qualities the procession could have demonstrated even to an observer. They touch on simple principles like the ambiguity between parts and whole, or between doing and performing; and also embody social hierarchies and elite expertise. It seems uncontroversial that the event clearly could have played a legitimating role towards those who saw it or participated in it (as Richardson claimed). Witnessing the procession, one confronts the raw power of spectacle, the subtle reinscription of social order, and the simultaneous exposure to and distancing of elite knowledges. But this elaborate production need not only be explained instrumentally. For worship itself is already an

ambivalent practice, one that resonates, moreover, with the ambivalence of divinity. And that was precisely the problem to which it responded: the karmic deficiencies of an already-perfected being, a king whose authority must endure when he, like all humans, dies.

So ought these constitutive qualities and visible features be understood as specifically political or religious? A better question would be: should we look at them as something the event accomplished in spite of itself (as through deception or strategic calculation), or were they already part and parcel of the work it set out to accomplish? Ought they be read critically, against the grain of this thing we study and seek to explain? Or restoratively, as part of what gave it meaning and value on its own terms and for its own cosmo-moral order? The alternatives themselves start to break down. The very effort to purify karma by worship is already ideological because it is precisely how the Dalai Lama's divinity comes to be known and naturalized. The procession implicated thousands of persons in the collective act of a massive gesture of worship. Its success was predicated on awareness of the inevitability of a ruler's death, and the power of karma, inevitable, inexorable, unjust, over human life. The aim of purifying the fifth Dalai Lama's flaws, and that of affirming his divinity, are complementary, not opposing, objectives. To succeed at one is to succeed at the other. If this event did ideological work, which I think it must have, reproducing certainty in the just and divine authority of the Ganden Phodrang, then the success of that ordering function also had everything to do with the success of worship in the face of death. This ceremony defends, extolls, and upholds the perfection of the Dalai Lama and the state which took his divinity as the source of their authority and the key to their overall project of bringing peace and pleasure and hence the flourishing of the dispensation. It does so by insisting that divinity is bound to humanity. It responds to the certainty and the necessity of karma as a limiting force of human existence, the inevitability of a ruler's death, and the enduring need for a collaborative acknowledgment of and response to that fact—the necessity of everyone knowing that necessity. The act joins human limitation and divine perfection, each revealed by way of the other.

CHAPTER FOUR.
MAKING SENSE OF THE POTALA PALACE
PALACE AS SYMBOL

The subject of this chapter and the next two is how to make sense of the Potala palace and how to locate it in our thinking about Buddhism and state. The focus will be on the seventeenth-century Potala palace, in the two stages of its initial construction. Both were closely tied to the fifth Dalai Lama: the earlier “White Palace” (built 1645–48) to house him in life and the superadded “Red Palace” (built 1690–95) to enshrine him in death. Relatively speaking, not a great deal has been written about the Potala palace, although there are many excellent general descriptions of it, not to mention photographs of the building and its contents.¹ Nevertheless there is certainly broad consensus about the palace's central importance—ideologically as well as geographically—for this Tibetan Buddhist state. A basic tenet of that consensus is that this grand and imposing structure was far more than just an impressive pile of bricks. It was also, somehow, redolent with meaning. How to make sense of that meaning—and what it reveals about our own theoretical commitments—is our main concern here.

The revealing title of Anne Chayet's informed historical review of the palace sets the tone for this exploration: “The Potala Palace: Symbol of the Power of the Dalai Lamas.”² The point appears to speak for itself. It also raises several questions. How exactly is a building also a symbol? What does it mean to claim there is something symbolic about a palace? How does the site where a ruling power is housed actively contribute to the idea and image of rule itself?

¹ The best summaries in English are Meyer 1987 and Chayet 2003; the best studies of the palace as a whole are *Bu da la gong* 2011 (in Chinese) and *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994 (in Tibetan); for images, see also Phuntsok Namgyal 2002; Henss 2014; and on the palace murals, *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000; see also Chayet and Meyer 1983 on the “dharmarāja” chapel, and Okuyama 1992 on the Red Palace. See also the third issue of the Tibetan-language journal *Nang khul lo phyed dus 'debs*, devoted to studies of particular cultural and artistic aspects of the Potala palace, titled simply “Pho brang po ta la” (December 2014).

² Pommaret (ed.) 2003: 39–52.

The first and most obvious implication of this claim is that the palace communicated (and created) power by its very being and presence. It was huge, imposing, strong. It dominated the Lhasa landscape, looming over the nearby city, which has since grown up around it. The majesty and splendor of the structure draws the eye even from a distance. Reaching a towering height of 117 meters above ground level, its shimmering golden rooftops were the first thing a traveller saw on the horizon when approaching Lhasa, as so many foreign witnesses have attested.³ Whether this first glimpse from afar was always literally true, or more like a narrative trope—or maybe a little of both—the ideological force of the idea lies in its suggestion that to see the Potala is just to see Lhasa itself. Such metonymy surely would have been fitting for a sovereign authority proclaiming its might and majesty at the center and apex of the Tibetan nation.

However, this sort of phenomenal encounter with majesty is not so much symbolic (in the sense of a double meaning, demanding interpretation) as it is merely signifying (a meaning tied to some phenomenal content).⁴ The palace's physicality is a sign of power. That physicality also extends to the building itself, whose sheer walls extended the loftiness and sturdiness of the hill on which it was built. In this regard, scholars have pointed out the obvious structural affinities of the earlier, “White” Palace with the great fortresses or “dzong” (*rdzong*) that dotted the medieval Tibetan landscape for centuries before the Ganden Phodrang government. The dzong ensconced the power of the (typically lay) regional hegemony across central Tibet. Notable examples included the Samdrupsé Dzong, seat of the

³ See e.g. Huc and Gabet 1928, vol. 2: 167; Chapman 1951: 231; Das 2001: 160; Waddell 1906: 328–29, 387–88; Markham 2010 [1876]: 255; David-Neel 2005: 261.

⁴ Here I rely on Paul Ricoeur's basic distinction between a broader signifying function and a narrower symbolic function. Signification has to do with meaning produced either as *sense* or *reference* (for the former, by the duality of sign and signification; for the latter, by the duality of signification and thing signified). Symbolism goes beyond signification to interpretation. It produces what Ricoeur called “a relation of meaning to meaning... double- or multiple-meaning expressions whose semantic texture is correlative to the work of interpretation that explicates their second or multiple meanings.” Ricoeur 1970: 9–13.

Tsangpa Desi; the Gyantsé Dzong; and the Gongkar Dzong, not far from Lhasa, briefly considered as a possible seat for the Dalai Lama.⁵

To call the Potala palace a symbol in this sense gestures to something above and beyond that signifying capacity. It suggests further meaning, on top of raw physical might and the power it communicates. It shifts attention from material considerations to imaginative ones. Indeed, we do find a corresponding shift in academic attention from the palace's physicality to its location and name. The connotations are well known: the hill on which the palace sits, Marpori (literally “Red Hill”), is the same site as a fabled palace of Songtsen Gampo, whom historical memory credited with having been Tibet's first Buddhist king. The palace's name, “Potala,” is the same as that of Avalokiteśvara's own mountain abode, usually thought to be on an island somewhere southeast of India.⁶

Such material significations and symbolic affinities make it all too easy to leap to conclusions about the Potala palace's role at the nexus of politics and religion. We have its physical strength, on one hand, and its meaningful associations, on the other. It is fortress and symbol both: built of bricks,

⁵ For a topographical comparison of some Tibetan forts see *Budala Gong* 2011: 44–55. See Ryavec 2015 for maps showing dzong established during the reigns of the Phakmodru (Map 29) and as administered by the mature Ganden Phodrang (Map 35). There is a line in the fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography which mentions rejecting Gongkar as a future home because it was too far from Lhasa city and the three big Geluk monasteries.

⁶ The literature on Mount Potala is vast and goes far beyond Tibet. Notably, the Tibetan *Tengyur* includes a “Guidebook to Potala” (*Po ta la'i lam yig*), for which the reader is referred to Tucci's study (“A propos Avalokiteśvara,” 1951). Sangyé Gyatso's *Tomb Inventory* referenced a number of popular stories about travellers to Mount Potala, including a long account of an Indian lay Buddhist named Śāntivarman, which Sangyé Gyatso attributed to the *Khro phu brgya rtsa* (*'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 101–4); the same story appears in chapter twenty-three of Tāranātha's *History of Indian Buddhism*. Sangyé Gyatso also mentioned the tale of Buddhasānti and Buddhaguhya (*Sangs rgyas zhi ba dang gsang ba gnyis*) who reached the mountain but found there only an old cowherding lady, a young shepherd girl, and a stone statue, in lieu of the goddesses Tārā and Bhṛkūṭī and the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, respectively (*'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 104). He referred in passing to an account attributed to the Manlung Guru Sönam Pal (Man lung gu ru, b. 1239); this is the *Rmi lam rdzun bshad sgyu ma'i sgra dbyangs chen po*, also known as the *Man lung gu ru'i lam yig*; the account of Mount Potala is given therein in chapter two. (Its mention of the Yongle emperor suggests Manlung could not have been the author; I owe this correction to Leonard van der Kuijp.) Sangyé Gyatso placed the mountain off the south coast of the Indian subcontinent, past the realm of Pāṇi-Maṇḍala. Tāranātha also wrote about his own peripatetic master Buddhagupta having traveled to Mount Potala. Tucci studied those travels in an early essay (1931) in which he proposed Madagascar; he later emended that conclusion and suggested instead some island east of Sumatra, possibly Borneo (op. cit. 1951: 187–88). Xuanzang in book ten of his *Datang Xiyuji* 大唐西域記 famously described a “Mount Potalaka, east of the Malaya mountains” (秣刺耶山東有布坦洛迦山); see Beal 1884, vol. 2: 233; and on the relation of this mountain to the island Putuo Shan off China's Zhejiang coast, Bingenheimer 2016.

named with loaded concepts. That assumed collaboration between being and meaning calls other dualisms to mind: reality and imagination, force and consent, secular and spiritual. It is precisely in this dualistic way that the Potala palace has been explained. The gist is that in its dzong-like structure and imposing self-presentation, the palace was a sign of real physical power, vast and unassailable. But in its placement and in its name, it also added a further, imaginative, symbolic power, rooted in divinity and tradition. As Pommaret remarks,

the Dalai Lama had, therefore, in the eyes of the Tibetan world, double religious and historic endorsement. The symbols were entangled for the greater glory of the Dalai Lamas, the Gelukpa school and Lhasa. Seldom was such merging more successful.⁷

The Potala palace was the cornerstone for those core symbolic associations with divinity and tradition. Hence the palace is made truly central to our thinking about Buddhism and state. It is rendered as an instrument for expressing and legitimizing a human being as both the embodiment of divinity and the rightful inheritor of the past. As plausible as this explanation sounds, I am suggesting that it may be our own thinking about symbols which has got itself entangled here. Have we really understood what it means for a building to be a symbol, merely by pointing out the obvious connotations of its name and placement? How precisely is such power manifested, and to what end? What *is* the symbol, really? What are its consequences? On closer inspection, such claims actually teach us little about the palace itself, however much they purport to explain its central political importance. In fact, all they really do is sanction a predetermined narrative about the political uses of religion. The palace is simply the representation of that narrative to us.

What enables this reduction is the fact that the palace's material and symbolic dimensions—in a word, what it *is* and what it *means*—have been so starkly separated. Doing so is hardly a recent innovation: foreign observers have been thinking about the Potala in that way for about as long as they

⁷ Pommaret 2003: xiv.

have been speaking about it. Then as now, this dualistic approach restricts us to thinking of the palace in starkly dichotomous terms: a secular political structure onto which a religious significance was subsequently grafted. It limits our ability to think about the palace as symbol because it turns the palace into an allegory for the legitimation process itself. This distinction between allegory and symbol is instructive. As Ricoeur commented, allegory is didactic: “a rhetorical procedure that can be eliminated once it has done its job.”⁸ In the same spirit, once the palace teaches us this political lesson about how the state used religion to acquire and secure their power, its work for us is basically done.

In contrast, a symbol is productive of meaning precisely in the relationship between interpretations it holds in tension. We might speak of sameness and difference. When one or another explanation of the Potala palace alleges a “power” borne by its nominal associations, that power depends on an assertion of sameness: sameness with tradition, in the case of its location, and sameness with divinity, in the case of its name. Some scholars, as we will see, take that idea to an extreme, going so far as to suggest that living in a place called “Potala” automatically *made* the Dalai Lama into the bodhisattva, or made his home the bodhisattva's mountain—and that this transformation legitimized his rule in turn. The Tibetan authors are subtler than this. Yet even in less overt cases, the magic power of sameness is simply taken as a matter of fact and left to explain itself. After all, what else could it possibly mean to call it “Potala,” than to claim identity between this palace and that other one, hence identity with the bodhisattva too? Quite a bit, in fact. To speak of the palace as symbol, we must begin by acknowledging that gestures of sameness were accompanied by a recognition of difference.

As for the buildings themselves, it is also important to note at the outset that neither of those other two referents—the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's abode on Mount Potala, or the king Songtsen Gampo's fictional palace on Marpori—furnished the model for the Dalai Lama's new one. We will look at the

⁸ Ricoeur 1976: 56.

story of the Marpori palace below. Both the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso were fully aware of those other palaces and described them in multiple texts. Of course, given the new White Palace's clear affinity with the dzong, such physical departures from its models have not been considered much of a problem. But the question remains: are the palaces the same, or not? How the same, how different? What sort of link was there, what continuities or ruptures, between Songtsen Gampo's palace and the Dalai Lama's? Between both and the bodhisattva's Mount Potala? How, in what form, was the bodhisattva encountered or manifested in each?

Bringing a sterile symbol back to life hardly prevents one from recognizing the Potala palace's ideological function. I agree that the palace was active in constituting the relationship between Avalokiteśvara and Dalai Lama. Thinking about the palace as symbol may help us to avoid the undesirable consequences of overstating the case. Such is the effect of reducing the palace to an allegory for legitimation. It suggests a kind of magic, surely not the intent. For it is hard in that case to avoid the impression that the symbols these rulers “systematically deployed” to foster belief in their legitimacy—above all the Potala, symbol of the power of the Dalai Lamas—somehow worked everywhere and all at once.⁹ As if the palace's name carried a spiritual charge activated by the very act of naming, as if its placement activated a potency that one could tap into by standing on that place oneself. Never mind what sort of thing was built there—identifying it as a fortress and a sign of physical force is deemed sufficient—or how anyone actually made sense of the name. The materiality of the palace and its symbolic significance, the imposing fortress and the significant identification, are kept at arm's length from one another. De-materializing the symbolic thus allows it to float free: immaterial, ahistorical, always there ready and waiting to be utilized by a farsighted politician. Anthony Giddens offered a blunt retort: “it is ludicrous to suppose, as those making use of...Marx

⁹ This language for describing the fifth Dalai Lama (apropos his use of the *Mañi Collection*) is from Kapstein 2000: 162.

sometimes have done, that religious belief is no more than the non-material aspect of class domination.”¹⁰ Below we will see consequences of that free-floating symbolism (and the assumptions about religious belief that shadow it) for thinking the history of the site. Oddly it is only when politics enter our field of vision that the magic suddenly happens. After all, significant names are everywhere in Tibet (the nearby monasteries of Ganden and Drepung immediately come to mind) but it is hardly claimed, with anything like the degree of confidence we see regarding the Potala, that occupants of those monasteries ever insisted on, let alone succeeded at, being understood as living in the Ganden heaven, or being a Kalki king incarnate. So how is it that this other site, Marpori, sometimes called Potala, generated so much more power? Why was this one name so literal, so real, so powerful?

Such assessments should be re-evaluated in terms of what people like the Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso actually had to say about the palace, coupled with at least some appreciation for how it was actually put together, moved through, encountered. That would be a giant project in its entirety. In these chapters, I will offer only broad strokes and first takes. Theoretically, I suggest we ought to think of the symbol in terms of sameness and difference both. Reading such authors on their own terms actually puts the bodhisattva at something of a distance. For to take their world seriously is also to recognize how it was mediated. The fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso did *not* live in Songtsen Gampo's palace, did *not* occupy the bodhisattva's abode, even if (or just because) they still moved within the same cosmos as them. The Dalai Lama's palace was built by human hands and it housed a government led by humans, and he explicitly acknowledged these facts and incorporated them into his own interpretations of the palace's further meanings. It is incumbent on us to see how these different truths were sustained in relationship with one another—which is just to ask how symbolic knowledge was produced. The new Potala palace bore tense relationships with tradition and with divinity. It did not

¹⁰ Giddens 1985: 72.

simply draw tradition and divinity around itself like a mystifying cloak, effectively collapsing all distances into its own apotheosis. Ironically it may end up being the critical secular reading of the palace that is the most magical, whereas the more enchanted approach I am advocating will, hopefully, help us to better see the human beings standing there amidst it all.

Our exploration of this topic will start from the first iteration of the Potala palace, the portion retrospectively known as the “White Palace” (*pho brang dkar po*) or sometimes simply the “old” part (*rnying pa*). The White Palace was constructed from 1645–48, under the leadership of the fifth Dalai Lama's astute chief executive Sönam Rabten—the first to hold the office of Desi, but more often going by the title Chakzö (*phyag mdzod*), indicating his original role as manager of the Dalai Lama estate at Drepung monastery. The layout of the new palace was supervised by Padma Rabten from Drongsar. The later “Red Palace” (*pho brang dmar po*) that Sangyé Gyatso built, beginning in 1690 and consecrated in 1695, housed the fifth Dalai Lama's tomb and provided a home for the young sixth Dalai Lama. It will be discussed in Chapter Six. Even though the distinction between these first and second layers of the palace is very well known, it has not always factored into totalizing assessments of the palace's symbolic significance, which obscures some very meaningful differences between the two.

The present chapter will briefly review past scholarship on the Potala to show how deeply entrenched this stark separation of the material and the symbolic has been in academic discourse. Then it will step through some basic history of Marpori, the hill on which the palace stands. There are two important lessons to draw from that history. The first is to dampen enthusiasm around the idea that there was a lasting and pervasive significance carried by the name “Potala.” That idea, and the ahistorical sense of the symbolic it fosters, has encouraged an overstatement (in my opinion) of Marpori's intrinsic importance over the roughly four centuries prior to the ascent of the Ganden Phodrang. My concern is that an exaggeration of the historical significance of site and name feeds itself back into assessments of the symbolism of the Dalai Lama's new Potala palace. I will gesture to a few

key moments and look critically at some of the main evidence. The second and perhaps even more important lesson is to underscore the crucial importance of its association with sandalwood statues of Avalokiteśvara, purported to be the tutelary supports (*yi dam gyi rten*) of Songtsen Gampo himself. We must say “statues” here because there were actually two such objects: an eleven-headed Mahākāruṅika (*thugs rje chen po*) made from “snakeheart” (*sbrul snying*) sandalwood, and a lotus-holding Lokeśvara (*'jig rten dbang phyug*) made from “hari” sandalwood (*ha ri sdong po*), one of four “kindred” statues (*mched bzhi*).¹¹ Both were said to have been procured from abroad in the seventh century, as part of Songtsen Gampo's project of becoming a dharmarāja, a king who rules in accord with the dharma. The strongest claim I will venture here is that the statue is still a missing piece in our thinking about the Potala palace as a symbol. An overeagerness to draw direct connections between human and deity (perhaps in the interest of telling a story about power) has overshadowed the statue's historical, literary, and practical role as a mediating object. It features prominently at every turn: in the history of Marpori and its perceived relationship to Mount Potala; the memory of Songtsen Gampo's palace; the founding of the fifth Dalai Lama's new palace; and perhaps even also in its internal organization. (It also featured for Sangyé Gyatso's Red Palace, if only negatively and by way of his efforts to supplant it with an alternative organizing principle and accordingly an alternative symbolism.) This chapter ends with a close reading of the literary account of Songtsen Gampo's remembered seventh-century palace on Marpori. I argue that this story is more productively read as a work of literature than as a historical document; and will offer an interpretation of some of the basic ideological principles animating that palace's organization and this narrative of its construction. The purpose of this reading exercise is to set us up for the subsequent chapter.

¹¹ For a basic introduction to the stories of these statues, their subsequent fates, and relevant Tibetan sources, see Sørensen 1994: 189–95; 543n533.

BETWEEN BRICKS AND WORDS: POTALA IN SCHOLARSHIP

Thomas Manning was among the first representatives of the British empire to reach Lhasa. The Potala palace immediately commanded his attention. On his arrival in 1811, Manning wrote, “my eye was almost perpetually fixed on the palace, and roving over its parts, the disposition of which being irregular, eluded my attempts at analysis. As a whole, it seemed perfect enough; but I could not comprehend its plan in detail.”¹² The Potala attracted him by the very fact of its presence. Yet he struggled to find any meaning to it, beyond that raw, attention-grabbing physicality. He admittedly failed to see it as anything more than a nakedly material expression of power. In a revealing footnote, Manning spun this frustration into a general theory:

The least deviation from symmetry and correctness in certain parts of architecture, and where the mass of building is not enormous, soon destroys the effect of the most magnificent plans, and reduces them to mere gingerbread buildings. That severe and correct accuracy which we Europeans inherit from the Greeks is unknown, I believe, in Asia. When the mass is very great and compact, whatever defects there may be in the detail, the effect of the whole is always, I believe, grand and imposing. This is the case with the palace of the Grand Lama, which has no beauties or symmetry in detail, but as a whole has a striking and grand effect.¹³

What he is effectively arguing here is that the lack of any discernible logic (“beauties or symmetry”) meant a lack of communicative capacity, the absence of any grammar, so to speak, to the palace's material existence. Physically, the palace's only quality was physicality itself, sheer magnitude (“grand and imposing”). It was like a senseless grunt, forceful but inchoate. Let us duly acknowledge that Manning's interpretation was constrained by his greatly restricted access and general lack of information about the palace. Nevertheless it is striking how it anticipates a longstanding tendency to strictly hedge off a material dimension from a symbolic one. The same impulse to treat the edifice as an

¹² Markham 2010 [1876]: 256.

¹³ Markham 2010 [1876]: 255.

expression of force was also echoed about a century later by Alexandra David-Neel, albeit in slightly more appreciative language (my emphasis added):

Better than any description, pictures can give some idea of the gigantic edifice, but even the best photograph will fail to convey a true idea of its imposing appearance, as it stands, a red palace capped with golden roofs, uplifted high in the blue sky, on a shining pedestal of dazzling white buildings. With the riches contained in that enormous cluster of habitations, rising one above another, *without any order or plan*, on the slope of the Tsi Potala, there could have been built a real wonder-palace, but Thibetan architects never were artists. The most precious materials when handled by their rough hands, *succeed only in expressing might and wealth and fail to reach beauty*. Yet that barbaric treatment of silver, gold, and precious gems gives the temples and palaces of Thibet a peculiar character, in harmony with the rough scenery in which they stand. And *this, in itself, makes a powerful impression*.¹⁴

David-Neel comes right out and says it: the raw physical spectacle of the palace stands opposed to any discursive understanding of it. Like Manning, David-Neel isolated materiality—the “powerful impression,” the “might and wealth” of the fortress—as definitively non-symbolic. The palace was “without any order or plan.” The fact that it “fails to reach beauty” I take to imply a failure of meaning.

The hard split between material and symbolic suggests a representationalist metaphysics, calling to mind the early Marxian distinction between human practices as they really are, versus how they subsequently appear as represented in imagination.¹⁵ The gist is to separate some real material basis from the unreal meanings that subsequently distort it. That metaphysics fits neatly with the desire to see politics first and religion second, or real human preferences underlying imaginary religious distortions. Consider this succinct assessment of the Potala palace: “Although the Potala was always called a palace, the Dalai Lama had designed it intentionally as a fortress, the base of his secular rule. Only later were the buildings added that were used for religious purposes only.”¹⁶ To be fair, the author is probably only pointing out the distinction between the earlier White Palace—which, as we have

¹⁴ David-Neel 2005: 265–66.

¹⁵ Marx and Engels 1970: 46.

¹⁶ Schwiager 2014: 52.

already noted, adopted the visible form of the dzong—and the later Red Palace, which housed many chapels in addition to the fifth Dalai Lama's (and his successors') golden reliquary stūpas. That distinction is certainly subject to challenge: we cannot definitively characterize the one portion as strictly religious in a way that does not implicate the other as well. So too for any secular or political function. The Red Palace was the base of operations for Sangyé Gyatso and the sixth Dalai Lama much as the White Palace was for the fifth Dalai Lama. Both had a great assembly hall, both had chapels, and both had other, more intimate locations in which ceremonies of state were conducted and audiences held with officials and emissaries. But more revealing, and more problematic, are the undertones of a theoretical, not merely chronological, progression from “secular rule” to something “religious.” For to agree with such an assessment is also to tacitly consent that rule is first and foremost *secular* rule. Whatever is meant by the religious, in any case it is supervenient upon rule itself.

When the palace and its occupying power are construed as intrinsically secular, the reasons for building it can be treated as political too, meaning strictly non-religious. This is exactly what is averred in the *Budala Gong*, the major Chinese survey of the Potala, referring to a famous Tibetan prophecy:

the *Padma Kathang* records Padmasambhava as having predicted that someone would build palaces atop Marpori hill in Lhasa, Chuwori hill in Chushur, and at Hepori hill at Samyé, and so rule over the four quarters [of central Tibet]. Yet the Dalai Lama and his affiliates opted to build a palace only atop Marpori Hill, or Potala, in Lhasa. The true reason is that it was really about political exigency.¹⁷

“Political exigency” (政治需要) opposes another, clearly non-political and implicitly religious reason: the pious obligation to follow the letter of prophecy. (Incidentally, neither the fifth Dalai Lama nor the Desi Sangyé Gyatso had any qualms about quoting this same prophecy as support for their project, which undermines the assumption of a necessary contradiction between *Realpolitik* and scriptural

¹⁷ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 47. The prophecy in question was in fact revealed by Ratna Lingpa and is referred to as “Ratna Lingpa's general prophecy” (*ra tna gling pa'i bstan pa spyi lung*). The relevant lines of the prophecy read, in Tibetan: *dbus gtsang thams cad sku yi chab 'og 'dus/ rdzu 'phrul mthu ldan bstan pa'i bdag po 'byung/ lha sa dmar po ri dang chu bo ri/ has po ri dang dbus ri de gsum la/ pho brang byas nas dbus g.yor mtha' gsum sdud*.

dictum.)¹⁸ This politics-first approach still finds a use for religion. As already mentioned, Marpori hill in Lhasa offered obvious ideological as well as practical advantages that lent the site a singular appeal: it was already tied to Songtsen Gampo, remembered as Avalokiteśvara incarnate, and also to the bodhisattva, by way of Marpori's acquired name "Potala." It was with these two associations in mind that a "double religious and historic endorsement" was invoked above. So now we see the form of the general idea: the palace was material first and symbolic second, political in its basic motivations but religious in its outward expression. It was an imposing fortress corresponding to a fundamentally secular power, and then recourse to objects of Buddhist devotion granted that power constancy and security in the eyes of some anonymous and reliably religious Tibetan public. It should be clear that on this explanation the palace becomes an allegory for the logic of legitimation.

This two-pronged approach is pervasive. Even Meyer's excellent account of the Potala's construction and design, which is more attentive to the materiality of the structure, keeps the material and symbolic entirely apart from one another. First, the palace as a fortress signifies raw physical power: "The fifth Dalai Lama's power, although still very recent, was to be expressed in the monumental architecture of the palace."¹⁹ On top of that (and, formally speaking, many paragraphs later) the palace as a symbol tapped into an altogether different sort of power:

It was also tempting to take advantage of Red Mountain's religious and historical significance... Clearly, the location was fully appropriate as a future site for the palace of the first ruling Dalai Lama, and, when the pontiff took over the temporal heritage of the past monarchs who had ruled over a vast and unified Tibet, he visibly expressed his nature as Avalokiteśvara...in coming to dwell on his mountain.²⁰

¹⁸ This long prophecy was referred to or quoted by both the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso; e.g. in the former's history of Tibet (Ahmad 2008: 154) and his poem about the Potala (discussed in the next chapter); also *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 24a-b; and exegesis at 25b-26a; *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 153–55; *Vaiḍūrya ser po* 1998: 372–73.

¹⁹ Meyer 1987: 15.

²⁰ Meyer 1987: 16.

The palace's "monumental" stature as an index of force is kept distant from its "religious and historical significance," in other words its symbolic function. Indeed we are led to understand that the Dalai Lama acquired his authority just by cross-wiring the two. Hence also the language of intentionality ("to take advantage"). The ruler's true aim is thereby exposed: to use the palace as a tool to "express his nature" as the deity. To occupy this building was to "dwell on his mountain." If the ends are religious, the motivation remains political. Once it has been explained according to this instrumental logic, the Potala may then stand in for the entire project of Buddhist government. It becomes the smoking gun in our detective work:

The erection of a new seat for the Dalai Lama's government on Marpori Hill, a site that according to tradition was once crowned by a palace of Songtsen Gampo, Tibet's first king, and the naming of that seat "Potala," the name of the mythical mountain that served as the residence of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, *clearly demonstrates the Dalai Lama's intention to act as the sacred ruler of Tibet.*²¹

To suggest that living in a place called "Potala" invokes some connection to Avalokiteśvara is not controversial, indeed basically a truism. The subtext here is that the palace is a clue to a deeper truth: that the Dalai Lama used religion to misrepresent himself for political gain. Ishihama, whose oft-cited essay on the fifth Dalai Lama's identification with Avalokiteśvara is practically canonical for seventeenth-century Tibetan history, made that argument explicitly. Her study painted the deeds of the Ganden Phodrang government against the backdrop of a struggle for power: the fifth Dalai Lama's associations with Avalokiteśvara and Songtsen Gampo thus became deliberate efforts to increase his own political standing. "It is beyond doubt that the faith engendered in the minds of both the nobility and the general populace as a result of the Dalai Lama's actions served to gradually enhance the power of the Dalai Lama."²² Again, the Potala expresses that political truth: "taking up residence here was *no*

²¹ Schwieger 2014: 52. Emphasis added.

²² Ishihama 1993: 54.

doubt an effective means for the Dalai Lama of impressing upon the people the idea that he was a reincarnation of Srong-btsan-sgam-po."²³ Here is a more extreme version of the same explanation that draws directly on Ishihama's thesis:

In the development of his personal cult of Avalokiteśvara, the Fifth Dalai Lama utilized the well-known motif of the connection between Avalokiteśvara and the Potalaka, a mountain said by Xuanzang to have been in southern India, upon the top of which was that Bodhisattva's court. All the Fifth Dalai Lama actually did was add the interpretation that the Dalai Lamas now ruled from a court on that mountain. This is, however, significant, in that an incarnation is now claimed to be completely equal, in power and position, to the spiritual being he incarnates.²⁴

Note the unabashedly instrumentalist language (“utilized”). This last passage offers a logical endpoint of all magical thinking about the symbol. It says explicitly what others merely imply: the fifth Dalai Lama's legitimation succeeded because the name *made* him into the bodhisattva, ruling from “that mountain” and “completely equal in power and position” to the bodhisattva. This is the problem with the entire line of thinking laid out above. The symbolic dimension of the palace, tied to its name, floats free from its material basis in the physical fortress. The Dalai Lama becomes a canny player who recognized and latched onto that durable symbolic power just by placing his home on that site and giving it this name. The symbolic power was ready and waiting; “all he actually did” was make it work for him. These two extremes, the savvy politician and the incredible symbol, ultimately undermine one another. On one hand, there is a wish to portray the fifth Dalai Lama and his coterie as agents of their own ascent. On the other hand, it is suggested that power adhered to the symbol itself, making it unclear just how much or how little the Dalai Lama (or Sönam Rabten, or Sangyé Gyatso, or whoever) actually had to do to activate it. At the extreme, they are little more than button-pushers.

²³ Ishihama 1993: 53. Emphasis added.

²⁴ Walter 2009: 224.

Let us end this brief critical review by adding that there is also a challenge on methodological grounds. The textual evidence is far from overwhelming. This explanation never really gives any account of how the palace and its world were understood from within that world. It is undeniable that, at least in broad strokes, the palace's architects were building on the form of the dzong. One learns as much simply by looking at the famous (and only) image of the original White Palace, published in Kircher's *China Illustrata* in 1667 and based on a sketch by the Jesuit missionary Johannes Grueber, who reached Lhasa from China in late 1661. Attempts to make sense of the palace—not merely to describe it, but to situate it in the context of this government and try to understand its significance and role for them—have not added much to this picture, given that we could really reach all the same conclusions from it. It hardly gets us past the outer walls and proffers little about the inner workings of the building, its logic or its aesthetics, how it was moved through, how it hierarchized its inhabitants, how it was situated within a broader world order.²⁵ Meanwhile, the textual evidence hangs on a few dozen words in the Dalai Lama's autobiography. In that text, which in other respects is excessively detailed, he was laconic on the Potala: he recalled having been persuaded by his advisors to set himself up in a strong center.²⁶ From one perspective, the biographical literature may still seem the most reliable source, insofar as it has a documentary aura. The fifth Dalai Lama's collected works also include other compositions on the Potala, which give another vantage onto the building, from which its relation to a larger cosmo-moral order is (in my opinion) far more apparent. They include instructions

²⁵ This is not to say that there have not been descriptions of its construction or even its rooms. Meyer again stands out in this regard, as does the Chinese study *Budala Gong*, which will be discussed in the next chapter. But by and large, these are descriptions for description's sake. I am concerned with interpretation.

²⁶ The main instigator was the Lingmé Shapdrung (Konchok Chöphel, 1573-1644), then throne-holder of Ganden monastery. The Lingmé Shapdrung first invoked the need for a “strong fort” (*rdzong btsan po*) in 1637; then again in 1643 he suggested the Dalai Lama install himself in an “imposing fortress of great size” (*btsan rdzong shin tu rgya che ba*); and finally in early 1645 insisted on building a centerpoint or “navel” for all the governed districts and estates (*rdzong gzhis kyi lte ba*), after the fashion of a regional hegemon (*sde dpon gyi lugs*). Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 128, 177, 189; see also Karmay 2014: 131, 182, 193. The Dalai Lama also briefly mentioned his own initial hesitancy: *de min rdzong la 'khra ba'i thugs rtsis yod mdog ma kha*, or in Karmay's translation, “It is unlikely that I have any intention of living in a fortress.”

for the palace's murals, verses of praise, and preambles for inventories of some of its chapels. They are at least as revelatory, if not more so, of how the palace was thought and talked about. We will consider some excerpts from those accounts in the next chapter.

MARPORI AND POTALA IN HISTORY

First let us review some history of the site. The main point of doing so is to question just how durable and influential the name “Potala” really was, and what it conveyed. How the palace is parsed theoretically, and how the site is evaluated historically, inform one another. There is an undesirable circularity: the assumption that the powers of name and place are autonomous and self-sustaining colors how historical events are read and explained. This history then shores up a sense of the self-evident power of the symbol. One consequence is that “Marpori” and “Potala” become ahistorical and essentially interchangeable terms, when in fact the earliest accounts never made that association.

The received history of Marpori—at least, as it mattered to the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso—began in earnest with the famous post-dynastic (circa twelfth century and later) narratives of Songtsen Gampo, the seventh-century king. This king was remembered as having established himself on Marpori, later building a large city-cum-palace there with the help of his Nepalese queen Tritsün. This tale was most likely a post hoc production. At the very least, it vastly embellished what little we can discern from earlier, dynastic-era sources like the so-called *Old Tibetan Annals* and *Old Tibetan Chronicle*. Our concern is with the legend that would ultimately be handed down, whose paradigmatic form and content Per Sørensen has aptly termed the “Songtsen Gampo *vita*,” and which crystallized in several early post-imperial works. Those works include the *Pillar Testament* (*Bka' chems ka khol ma*) and the *Maṇi Collection* (*Ma ṇi bka' 'bum*) and Nyangral Nyima Öser's (1124–92) religious history (*chos 'byung*) titled *Flower's Finest Nectar* (*Me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*). The *Pillar Testament* and the *Maṇi Collection* are both subject to a host of critical issues: neither text exists in a single

redaction, and the question of how far back they may be reliably dated, and based on what evidence, remains a debated subject.²⁷ What is undisputed, at least, is that these two crucial and related texts were major pieces of the emerging cult of Avalokiteśvara in post-dynastic Tibet. Nyangral, for his part, was a pivotal figure both in propagating the Avalokiteśvara cult, caring for the Lhasa Tsuklakhang and its environs, and redacting that Songtsen Gampo *vita*.²⁸ Sørensen has also shown how the significance of this deity was intimately linked with the local history of stewardship of the Lhasa Tsuklakhang, at least as far back as the later twelfth century, perhaps even earlier. My question is whether we can or should also assume all this had anything to do with Marpori, and when, and how.

In later centuries, the story of Songtsen Gampo's palace on Marpori was perhaps more well-known from works like Sönam Gyaltzen's (1312–75) mid-fourteenth-century *Illuminating Mirror* (*Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*) and the second Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa's (1504–1564) mid-sixteenth-century *Scholar's Celebration* (*Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*), not to mention the fifth Dalai Lama's own history, the *Cuckoo's Song*. Barring minor variations, the key components pertaining to the king's residency on Marpori are consistent throughout these different takes on the same *vita*. First, Songtsen Gampo

²⁷ For a basic introduction to these works, see Vostrikov 1970: 27–32, 52–57. For an informative discussion (in Tibetan) of the *Pillar Testament*, see Chapel Tsheten Phuntsok's essay, which forms chapter two of his longer study of the Lhasa Tsuglakhang (Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs 1993: 34–60). Chapel argued that the text's highly readable idiom, not just in narrative passages but also its political language and poetry, as well as the orthography of extant manuscripts, bear little in common with other dynastic-era sources. On dating the *Mani Collection* see Kapstein 2000: 141–62; and on the *Pillar Testament*, Davidson 2003: 64–84. Sørensen (1994) intelligently stressed the importance of place in assessing the historicity of post-imperial narratives of Tibet's kings. He maintained, contrary to most other scholars, that the Songtsen Gampo *vita* must be understood in connection to the site of Lhasa and the Jokhang temple, thus strikingly parallel to the text of the *Dbal bzhed* and its variants with respect to the site of Samyé and the ruler Tri Songdetsen. He therefore granted the further possibility of thinking historically about the story as text, and not just the words in which it was redacted.

²⁸ Sørensen (2003) carefully assembled a considerable body of evidence for studying the role of Lhasa's caretakers, with their overlapping duties of repairing and renovating the Tsuklakhang and constructing and maintaining the dikes keeping the Kyichu river from flooding into the low marshland on which the temple was built. Although Lama Zhang Yudrakpa and subsequent patriarchs of his Tshalpa tradition may be the most memorable of the early Lhasa stewards (Yamamoto 2012), Sørensen also identified a line of dike-builders (*chu rags pa*) with ties to Nyangral (to whom are also attributed termas predicting the destruction of Lhasa by water) through his son Namkha Pal (Nam mkha' dpal, ca. 1181/2–1244). Sørensen also astutely noted that the dike-builder Lhajé Gewabum (Lha rje Dge ba 'bum, ca. early 13th CE) was listed both in the transmission lineage of the *Mani Collection* (as per the fifth Dalai Lama's record of teachings received) and numbered among the Dalai Lama's own past incarnations (as did both Nyangral and Zhang).

retrieved his sandalwood statue (or statues) from India. Then he decided to establish himself on Marpori by setting a palace there (*pho brang btab*). His stated reason for that choice was that his ancestor Lha Thothori Nyantshen (usually associated with the bodhisattva Samantabhadra)²⁹ once resided there.³⁰ Then Songtsen Gampo summoned and wedded a princess from Nepal, known as Tritsün (*khri btsun*), who helped him build a massive, thousand-turreted palace-city encompassing both Marpori (with the king stationed at its peak) and the nearby hill of Chakpori.

The scholarly take on these episodes by and large has been that of the historian, rather than the reader of literature. The validity of such events, however formative for later memory, has been rightly questioned, including whether there ever was any such palace. For sure, there is little textual evidence in dynastic-era sources that Songtsen Gampo, who also resided in the Yarlung valley, had a permanent residence in Lhasa. (The *New Tang Annals* did mention some kind of walled capital there.)³¹ Dotson has argued that we cannot assume that Lhasa served as the capital of imperial Tibet “in the same sense that it did under the administration of the Dalai Lama.” Instead, he suggests, it is likely that the Tibetan kings of this era enacted a mobile court centered on the king's person, as the itinerant entries in the *Old Tibetan Annals* indeed suggest.³² We may add in passing that a recent Chinese architectural study of the Potala palace mentions a small meditation space (修法室) referred to as the “white room” (白房子) or the “retreat house” (曰初崗, probably *ri khrod khang*) on the southeast face of the hill (now incorporated into the Namgyal Dratsang, the Potala palace's resident monastic college). Local custom

²⁹ In contrast, Khempa De'u (2010: 236) identified Thothori with the buddha Kāśyapa and the bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha. He described the king residing in his castle at Yumbu Lagang (*yun [sic] bu bla sgang*).

³⁰ *Bka' chems ka khol ma* 1989: 124–25; *Ma ñi bka' 'bum* 2011: 284; Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 2010: 172; Sørensen 1994: 162.

³¹ The *Old Tang Annals* (compiled in 945) mentions the Tibetans having “walled cities” (城郭), among which they named one Luoxie (read: Lhasa) as their capital city: 其國都城號為邏些城. For a recent translation of the entire account, based on Bushell, see Kapstein et al. (eds.) 2013: 7–10.

³² Dotson 2009: 43.

holds that it dated from the imperial era and was part of the original palace structure; the customary annual whitewashing of the palace walls begins with this portion.³³ It is also possible that it was built for one of the hill's subsequent occupants at some later date (on which see below).

Below we will have occasion to consider the details of Songtsen Gampo's remembered palace, which I suggest is more productively read as a work of literature—that is, in terms of its characters, themes, language choices, and emplotment—than as a corrupted historical document. For now, let us simply call attention to an interesting contrast between earlier and later versions of that story. The fifth Dalai Lama was fully aware of the tale of that earlier Marpori palace: he not only included the story in his history of Tibet, but also had an image of the earlier palace painted inside the entrance vestibule of his own Potala, immediately visible to all who entered within. The Dalai Lama was also explicit about the relationship between Avalokiteśvara's own palace on Mount Potala, and Songtsen Gampo's Marpori palace. In a short text describing his new palace's artwork, for instance, he wrote that

the precious dispensation of Śuddhodana's son [Śākyamuni], Powerful Lord and Victor and one of the thousand buddhas to come in this Bhadrakalpa age, was sustained and spread wide across [Tibet,] this northern land encircled by snowy peaks. The supreme agent responsible is the Venerable Lotus-Holder [Avalokiteśvara], who acted out the drama of life (*srid pa'i zlos gar*) as the dharmapāla-rāja Songtsen Gampo. His “Marpori” palace was not distinct from the actual Potala.³⁴

“Not distinct” (*khyad par med*) is a formula often used to articulate the relationship between a statue and the deity it embodies. Perhaps the same is implied here for bodhisattva and king, whose relationship the Dalai Lama figures as that between an actor and their role—really a rich metaphor. It certainly grants more nuance, ambiguity, and range than the idea that divinity was an identity “impressed” upon passive and pious subjects in order to take advantage of them. But the larger point is that, unlike this version of events, neither the *Maṇi Collection* nor the *Pillar Testament*, nor Nyangral's

³³ Shwa phrug 2014: 42; *Bu da la gong* 2011: 4–5.

³⁴ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 42–50. (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 37a–43a).

Religious History or any other early source, aver any such connection between Songtsen Gampo's palace on Marpori and Avalokiteśvara's Mount Potala, however unequivocally they affirm the identity of king and bodhisattva. They make no claim for the king's palace or its seat as being “Potala” in whatever fashion. That omission is notable because it can easily be taken for granted that Marpori must have also been a (or *the*) Potala for as long as Avalokiteśvara has been associated with Tibet, as if one idea entailed the other automatically.³⁵ The assumption of a long-standing, self-evident association is belied by its conspicuous absence in the earliest narratives. This is not to suggest that the possibility of a relationship never occurred to anyone; only that making this claim was not a major concern.³⁶

This omission raises the possibility that it was not Songtsen Gampo's divinity *per se* that determined the nominal link between Marpori and Potala. It is certainly clear that by the fourteenth century, authors were not infrequently referring to Marpori as “Potala.” I raise the alternative hypothesis that it may have also been the sandalwood Lokeśvara statue itself, recovered and restored to the site in the fourteenth century, that encouraged this association. This statue would later feature prominently in the Dalai Lama's attention as well. Consider that the longest historical account the Dalai Lama offered of his new palace (repeated in several works) revolved around the story of how that

³⁵ This tendency is not limited to Western scholarship. Consider the following explanation, translated from a recent well-informed Chinese study of Lhasa, written for a general audience (my emphasis added): “Based on popular traditions and accounts of religious history, Avalokiteśvara has three sites within Jambudvīpa: Mount Potalaka in southern India, Putuo Shan in the South China Sea, and Marpori in the Land of Snows. Marpori was Avalokiteśvara's earliest home in Tibet; the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo was an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara and his two wives were incarnations of Green and White Tārā respectively; and the Marpori palace's main deity was the Lokeśvara statue. *Thus from an extremely early date Marpori became known as Mount Potala.* When in the seventeenth century the fifth Dalai Lama rebuilt a palace-fort on the foundations of the Marpori one, it was only logical for him to take the name Potala Palace.” Liao Dongfan 2008: 73.

³⁶ With one possible exception: Haarh (1969: 140), following Tucci (1949: 728), cited a “special Bön tradition” that names a “Lhasa Potala” in its history of early Tibet. This tradition enumerated “seven heavenly-appointed kings” (*gnam skos khri bdun*) somewhat analogous to the “seven 'Tri' of the sky” (*gnam gyi khri bdun*) familiar from the *Pillar Testament* and the *Rgyal po'i bka' thang* among other sources. Two of those kings in the Bön version are said to have descended from the heavens to earth by alighting upon a “Mount Potala” (*po ta* [var. *rta*] *la ri*). Tucci repeated this as a matter of fact in his *Religions of Tibet* (1980: 218). But Tucci's source, the *Gangs ti se'i dkar chag*, was authored in 1847 by Karü Wangdrup (Dkar ru dbang grub, b. 1801) (see Norbu and Prats 1989). Even were it the case that Karü was relying on far older oral or textual sources, I am more concerned with the casualness on the part of scholars like Tucci (and Haarh in turn) in automatically assuming and never questioning the equivalency of Marpori and Potala. The identity then creeps back unnoticed into the past.

Lokeśvara statue was most fortuitously returned to Lhasa and reinstalled on the hill, right in time for groundbreaking on the new palace. A scene of the statue's return was painted inside Sangyé Gyatso's Red Palace.³⁷ Whether I am right or wrong on this hypothesis, in any case it is important to notice just how easily Marpori and Potala can be collapsed and made equivalent. That oversight encourages the idea of the site's enduring and seemingly *sui generis* symbolic power.

Marpori certainly posed a problem for Tibetan historians, who had to account somehow for the disappearance of Songtsen Gampo's legendary palace. The most well-known explanation (and the one repeated in the fifth Dalai Lama's own history) is that it was destroyed by marauding Chinese troops a few decades after Songtsen Gampo's death.³⁸ The problem was studied by Hugh Richardson, who named the Tshalpa scion and famous historian Kunga Dorjé as the source for the later propagation of this tale. In his 1364 *Red Annals* (also known as the *Hulan Debther*), Kunga Dorjé wrote that a large Chinese force under the leadership of General Xue Rengui 薛仁貴 had been dispatched in retaliation for Tibetan conquests in Uighur territories of the Tang empire in the Western Tarim Basin.³⁹ The affair is known to us from Chinese sources such as the *New Book of Tang*.⁴⁰ Xue met and was defeated by a Tibetan force under Gar Tridring (Mgar Khri 'bring) at the Dafei River in Azha, an event also

³⁷ See *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 91

³⁸ We should mention in passing that there were also other stories circulating about the palace's destruction. For instance, Gö Lotsawa's *Blue Annals* (authored 1476–78) said that the mountain-deity Nyenchen Thanglha smote the palace with lightning, in his wrath at the king Tri Songdetsen's conversion to Buddhism. That story of the lightning strike (*sans* palace) also appears in the *Dbā' bzhed*.

³⁹ *Deb ther dmar po* 1981: 19. Kunga Dorjé writes: “In the iron male horse year, the Tibetan army took all of the Uighur regions at the rear of the Tang empire; consequently, the Chinese emperor sent the minister Xue Rengui (Se Bzhin khu), along with 100,000 soldiers, and they reached as far as Lhasa. With minister Gar's eldest son serving as general, they utterly defeated the Chinese army.” There are minor variations in the Gangtok 1961 edition (folio 5b).

⁴⁰ The relevant passage occurs under the first year of the *xianheng* 咸亨 reign of emperor Gaozong: 四月癸卯日，吐蕃攻陷龜茲的撥換城。撤銷安西四鎮。己酉日，李敬玄罷免宰相之位。辛亥日，右威衛大將軍薛仁貴任邏娑道行軍大總管，前去討伐吐蕃。“On April 25, the Tibetans conquered the city of Aksu in Kucha, bringing down the Four Outposts of the Pacified West [which were centered in Kucha]. On May 1, Li Jingxuan was removed from the post of Grand Councilor. On May 3, the Right August Guard's General-in-Chief, Xue Rengui, was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Army for the Lhasa Road Campaign, to head a punitive expedition to Tibet.”

corroborated by the *Old Tibetan Annals*.⁴¹ However Kunga Dorjé's history has General Xue “reaching as far as Lhasa” (*lha sa'i bar du slebs*) before his defeat. Although Kunga Dorjé said nothing therein about Xue's troops destroying the palace, his assertion that they reached Lhasa was picked up by later Tibetan historians. For instance, Sönam Gyaltzen's *Illuminating Mirror*, likely completed some years after Kunga Dorjé's text, drew a direct link between Xue's purported invasion and the familiar, tangled history of two even more famous statues: the Jowo Śākyamuni and the Mikyö Dorjé, brought to Tibet as dowry by Songtsen Gampo's Chinese and Nepalese queens respectively. According to Sönam Gyaltzen, the Chinese army was so motivated by defeat that they determined to enter Lhasa and take away the Jowo Śākyamuni statue. Fear of this outcome led the king Mangsong Mangtsen to have that statue moved from Ramoché to the Tsuglakhang, where it was hidden behind a wall.⁴²

Nearly two centuries later, in Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa's *Scholar's Celebration* (finished in 1545), we find the detail that the Chinese army, reaching Lhasa but not finding the Jowo statue, carried off the Mikyö Dorjé statue instead, only to be subdued by the guardian deity Metsek. Pawo noted in passing that the invading Chinese also “burnt the palace of Tritsé Marpo” (literally “Red Throne-Peak,” his name for Songtsen Gampo's palace).⁴³ Pawo also redescribed the same event later in the same text, saying, “They burnt Potala and the palace of Tritsé Marpo.”⁴⁴ It should also be noted that although the main text of Sönam Gyaltzen's *Illuminating Mirror* makes no such claim, its later xylographic edition

⁴¹The *New Tang Annals* reads: “Xue Rengui met in battle with the Tibetans at the Dafei river and suffered a major defeat” (薛仁貴在大非川與吐蕃交戰，大敗。) See the *Xin Tang Shu* at the first year of the *xianheng* 咸亨 reign of emperor Gaozong. The last date mentioned prior to this sentence corresponds to August 8, 670. The passage in the *Old Tibetan Annals*, for the Horse year, reads: *jl. ma. khol. du: rgya. mang. po: btungs* (In Dotson's translation: “They massacred many Chinese at Ji-ma-khol.”) Dotson 2009: 89; Beckwith 1987: 35–36.

⁴²Sørensen 1994: 347, 419n1468, 591–96. In this telling the Chinese forces number five hundred thousand troops.

⁴³*Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba* 2003: 292.

⁴⁴*Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba* 2003: 1402.

incorporated an interlineal gloss describing how the Chinese army arrived in Tibet, “put Potala to fire,” and carried away the Mikyö Dorjé statue after being unable to find the Jowo Śākyamuni statue.⁴⁵

There are several elements congealing together into a single tale, perhaps taking different routes to get there: the purported arrival of an invading Chinese force, the movements of the Jowo Śākyamuni and Mikyö Dorjé statues, and the destruction of Marpori/Potala and whatever stood on it. Scholars unravelled this knot in two ways. Richardson took a philological approach, surmising that the main thread must be the mistranslation of the Chinese source. He pointed out that Tibetan translators of Tang history probably mistook the name of Xue Rengui's “Army for the Campaign on the Lhasa-Road” (邏娑道行軍) for a statement that an army actually “went all the way to Lhasa” (*lha sa'i bar du slebs*). This seems plausible. Richardson surmised that this misreading was picked up by Kunga Dorjé when he used translated Chinese works as sources for his own history. That initial error took on a life of its own, agglomerating the fates of the two famous statues—and then, like collateral damage, the demise of the Marpori palace as well. On the other hand, Sørensen assumed a primarily historiographical imperative. Reversing Richardson's reasoning, he argued that it was probably the complicated fate of the two statues that first compelled Tibetan historians to seek out some viable external threat (like a foreign invasion) that could justify the statues' movements around or out of Lhasa.⁴⁶ Again the destruction of Marpori gets sucked into the story in the process.

⁴⁵ Sørensen 1994: 419n1468. In Sørensen's translation: “In the *Rgya'i deb-ther* it is [among other things] said that a Chinese army arrived in Tibet, [where they] put the Potala to fire. [They] searched for the Jo-bo Rin-po-che statue, but were [unable] to find [it]. [Instead they] carried the Jo-bo Mi-bskyod rdo-rje [away] [the distance] of one [full] morning-march, etc.” According to Sørensen, the so-called *Rgya'i deb ther* refers to a no longer extant Tibetan translation of a Chinese historical source, possibly based on the “Tufan” or “Tibet” section of the *Tang Shu* (Sørensen 1994: 77n135). The interlineal notes in Sönam Gyaltzen's royal genealogy likely postdate 1376, since one of them mentions Yarlung Jowo's *Religious History*, composed in that year, but must predate the carving of blocks in 1478 for the first xylographic edition, which included these interlineal notes.

⁴⁶ Sørensen 1994: 591. This hypothesis allows Sørensen to trace the tale back as far as the *Maṇi Collection* and the *Pillar Testament*, in which the Chinese princess makes several predictions about the subsequent fate of the statues, and to link it to texts such as the *Sba bzhed*, which has nothing to say about a palace on Marpori but likewise brings closure to the story of the hidden statue (or offers its initial justification) by explaining how the Chinese queen uncovered the statue, which she

One thing that has surprisingly not been mentioned is that in addition to reading about their own past, Tibetans also moved among its places, including Lhasa. Those who lived in the fourteenth century (if not earlier) may also have had to reconcile whatever they read about Songtsen Gampo's palace on Marpori, with the evidence in front of their eyes of the ruined afterlife of whatever earlier structure remained. (The fifteenth-century historian Gö Lotsawa Zhönu Pal also mentioned a late-eleventh century school built there; on which see below.) It may be that oblique references to the palace's destruction did not wholly derive from a translation error or an imagined history of the two statues. This guess is supported by important textual evidence from the life of the Tshalpa patriarch Mönlam Dorjé (d. 1346/47), father of the aforementioned Kunga Dorjé. Mönlam Dorjé was renowned as one of the many Tshalpa caretakers of Lhasa, famous for supervising the maintenance of its dikes and repairing its holy temples.⁴⁷ His biography was written by his son (the same author of the *Hulan Debther*). Listing his many charitable works of restoration, the biography mentions the remnants of a royal palace on Marpori. This important but admittedly difficult passage is here translated in full:

This precious ruler [Mönlam Dorjé] performed works such as making representations of the Three Jewels, writing and reciting scripture, making offerings to shrines, repairing temples, founding institutions for the monastic community, performing services to the monastic community, and so on. He also acted as a spiritual ally by exhorting others. Suffice it to say that the ways in which he left a legacy of safekeeping the dispensation are so extensive, one wonders how they could be captured in writing. Here is a rough outline of them:

He added great winged eaves to the Lhasa Tsuglakhang and the roof on its inner protectors' chapel. He improved the upper verandas on the four sides [and?] the Ramoché roof. He annually repaired the old Lhasa dikes, and in addition he cut a thoroughfare needed to send boats through in the summer, and then made a new, sturdy dike one “shout” long. At the Draklha Lüphuk cave [on Chakpori] he improved the cave chapel, making a courtyard, roof, and retreat hut. He improved the cave where the noble Jegom and his son beheld Avalokiteśvara.

expected to find at Ramoché, behind a wall in the Tsuglagkhang. By the fourteenth century, Sørensen writes, “clearly a need was at hand...to provide an explanation as to why the two statues had changed their place of site.”

⁴⁷ The maintenance of Lhasa and its dikes was bequeathed to the Tshalpa founder, Lama Zhang Yudrakpa, by his own teacher, the Dakpo Gompa Tsultrim Nyingpo (1116–1169). See the fifth Dalai Lama's remarks on the history of Lhasa restorations, namely the Jokhang, in his *Crystal Mirror: A Catalog of the Lhasa Tsuklakhang (Lha ldan sprul pa'i gtsug lag khang gi dkar chag shel dkar me long)*, in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 22 (dza): 181 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 14b). See also Akester's translation in Alexander 2005: 290.

In the remains of the dharma-king Songtsen Gampo's palace at Marpori which had been burned down by the army of the Chinese queen Wu Zetian, he worked on the king's palace, [and?] the Tsuklakhang [and?] extensions on the three sides of the courtyard along with their roofs, [with?] wall-illustrations of the dharma-king [Songtsen Gampo] and son with his two queens and two ministers, and pictures of the genealogy from Mahāsammata to Rāhula, the royal line from Nyatri Tsenpo to Tri Ralpachen, and the Chinese queen Kongjo with her host, with the thousand buddhas along the top.

The naturally-formed sandalwood statue of Avalokiteśvara had been misplaced among the common statues at Ramoché and could not be identified. The Ruler [Mönlam Dorjé] knew it from the fact that it had the look of a tutelary deity, and by examining signs that it was not man-made, such as that the hands and feet had a natural curve. He gilded it and brought it to be the main support for the Potala, which caused the sky to fill with rainbows.

While Dönzhakpa Tsültrim Pal, a tantric adept of Avalokiteśvara practice, was performing the incantations for consecrating the deity's chapel, in a dream he saw Avalokiteśvara coming to that chapel and alighting on its roof, saying, “No harm at all comes to those who worship this statue. Today Marpori is blessed in equal measure to the actual Potala!” All great persons will be able to recognize [this correspondence].⁴⁸

We may draw several conclusions from this invaluable passage. First, we can confidently date the Tibetan idea of a Chinese destruction of the palace at least as far back as Kunga Dorjé's own lifetime—more than a century before Sönam Gyaltzen's *Illuminating Mirror* was printed, and about two centuries before Pawo's *Scholar's Celebration* was written. If we are reading *rgya'i rgyal mo 'u ji thon* correctly, Kunga Dorjé thought that the destruction occurred during the reign of the Chinese empress Wu Zetian (r. 690–705), rather than the Gaozong emperor several decades prior (recall that Gar defeated Xue in 670). Second, Kunga Dorjé's record also tells us that by the mid-fourteenth century, Lhasa's caretakers had entirely lost track of which statue was the famed Lokeśvara of Songtsen Gampo. It is of course possible that nobody before Mönlam Dorjé had ever cared to ask. Mönlam Dorjé took it for granted that the Lokeśvara statue must exist, that it was Songtsen Gampo's tutelary support, and that it must be identifiable. In fact, he retrospectively authorized its origin story just by making the case for identification based on the evidence in that same story, which described the statue's natural or “self-originated” (*rang byon*) form. Maybe the statue Mönlam Dorjé found truly was the king's own item; or

⁴⁸ Kun dga' rdo rje, *Tshal pa drung che'i rnam thar*: 18b–19a.

maybe he succeeded in elevating some plausible candidate into a real-life exemplar of an altogether fictional object. What is certain in either case is that henceforth the sandalwood Lokeśvara statue of Songtsen Gampo would exist just as the stories described it, with its proper home on Marpori.⁴⁹ Writing his *Illuminating Mirror* only decades later, Sönam Gyaltzen confirmed in a passing remark that the Lokeśvara statue was indeed presently there on the hill, just as it had been in Songtsen Gampo's time.⁵⁰

Third, the passage lends some credence to the notion that the label “Potala” could name Marpori by way of naming the proper home of this tutelary statue—not only by the analogy of king to bodhisattva. The proper analogy is rather between Marpori and its statue, on one side, and the “actual” Potala and the deity, on the other. To worship one was as good as worshipping the other. The idea was not of bringing Potala to Tibet, so to speak, but rather that being in Tibet now afforded precisely what one used to have to go to Mount Potala to achieve.

This idea also lines up well with how the fifth Dalai Lama himself would speak of Marpori as the statue's proper home. In the aforementioned story about the Lokeśvara statue's return in 1645, as recorded in his autobiography, the Dalai Lama recounted how the statue (which a Lhasa ruler gave away in the sixteenth century to purchase military support) was auspiciously brought back just in time for the groundbreaking on his new palace. The formal reinstallation of the statue in its chapel was what

⁴⁹ For a recent picture of the statue, undressed and gilded, see Henss 2014: 102. Henss also notes that physiognomically the statue somewhat resembles another extant wood statue also in the Lotus-Holder (Padmapāṇi) form, radiocarbon-dated to the eighth century. However, he also hints at the possibility that the Potala's Lokeśvara is an “archaistic copy,” one made to look old, just like he assumes for the statues occupying the dharma-king's cave below the chapel. “Its early style may suggest a once existing *vera icon* which was copied and multiplied over a period of a thousand years, often named, after the sacred archetype, the 'Potala Pagpa Lokeshvara'” (ibid.: 103). But that idea of multiple statues is speculative; no evidence is given.

⁵⁰ The remark occurs in the context of a passage about Songtsen Gampo. Sönam Gyaltzen writes, “Then the projected bhikṣu [of Songtsen Gampo, Akaramatiśīla] installed this Ārya Lokeśvara at Potala's peak, just as it is now.” (*de nas sprul pa'i dge slong des 'phags pa lo ke shva ra 'di da ltar po ta la'i rtse la bzhugs*). Although Sönam Gyaltzen here describes Songtsen Gampo's initial acquisition of the statue, the important point is that he also inserts this remark, “just as it is now” (*da ltar*). The remark could indicate a claim of continuous presence all the way back to the seventh century (as Sørensen reads it; 1994: 195); or else—as I suspect—it could show that Sönam Gyaltzen was acknowledging that such was not always the case. This latter reading makes more sense once we know that Mönlam Dorjé had indeed just rescued the statue from obscurity at Ramoché.

ritually initiated the start of the palace's own construction.⁵¹ The Dalai Lama wrote triumphantly that “the statue of Ārya Lokeśvara, a wishing-jewel, once again returned to its own home, in the merit-field of Tibet's subjects.”⁵²

Regrettably, Ahmad completely mistranslated this passage, perhaps out of a zeal to see the palace as a direct link between bodhisattva and Dalai Lama. His bracketed interpolations are most revealing of that bias: “the Noble and Excellent image of the Lord of the Universe, the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, [I, Avalokiteśvara,] once more came back to his [my] own home.”⁵³ Ahmad assumed that the fifth Dalai Lama was speaking of himself, not a statue, and was identifying *himself* as the bodhisattva “returning to his home.” Such a misunderstanding is only possible because of a committed sense that there was a strong equivalency of human and bodhisattva, one which Marpori already symbolized from the outset. He went on to cite this statement, and the palace, as proof of the Dalai Lama's divinization:

in 1645, the Dalai Lama lays the foundation of “a fortress [as the centre] of his secular rule and the center of his domain.”⁵⁴ At the same time, Avalokiteśvara, the Chosen God of Sroñ-bTsan sGam-po—and it is essential to remember that the Dalai Lama was himself an Incarnation of Avalokiteśvara—“returned to his home.” The meaning of the act was clear. In laying the foundations of his own palace on the Po-ta-la, the Dalai Lama was doing what no ruler of Tibet had done since the Kings-according-to-the-Faith of the 7th-9th centuries A.D. Physically, as well as metaphysically, the Dalai Lama ascended to the position which Sroñ-bTsan sGam-po—or, rather, Sroñ-btsan sGam-po's Chosen God—had occupied in Tibet.⁵⁵

I quote this faulty explanation not to be pedantic, but because this episode and Ahmad's reading of it are still cited in support of the idea that the Potala was instrument and expression of the Dalai Lama's

⁵¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 190–91 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 126b–127b). For an English translation, see Karmay 2014: 194–96. See also Meyer 1987: 14–15; and Schaeffer 2005: 351–52 (utilizing Möndrowa's biography of the Dalai Lama).

⁵² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 191. In Tibetan: *'phags mchog 'jig rten dbang phyug gi sku brnyan yid bzhin gyi nor bu bod 'bangs bsod nams kyi zhing du slar yang rang gi bsti gnas su phebs*.

⁵³ Ahmad 1970: 138–43.

⁵⁴ Quoting Lingmé Shapdrung's remarks to the fifth Dalai Lama, as recounted in the latter's autobiography.

⁵⁵ Ahmad 1970: 143.

own personal divinity. Though now superseded by Samten Karmay's recent translation, which gets it right, the conclusions drawn on its basis live on.⁵⁶

One last observation from the life of Mönlam Dorjé: it is clear there was something substantial left over on Marpori. Kunga Dorjé wrote of the aftermath, literally the “traces” (*shul du*) of a destroyed Marpori palace. It is unclear just how much or little remained. Overall, this episode is a crucial link in the timeline because it faces both forwards and backwards. Mönlam Dorjé (or his son) were in direct communication with the memory of Songtsen Gampo's time (its “aftermath” was still visible) with no break in between. With one stroke, Mönlam Dorjé surmounted whatever may have remained on the site with an actual chapel, and more importantly a real statue. The site would no longer be ruins; but the story of what had been ruined, the dharma-king's palace, could now by its very absence—confirmed by the statue's rescued presence—become a veritable part of the site's history.

Gö Lotsawa and Pawo Tsuklag Trengwa number among those historians who left fleeting clues about other post-imperial uses of the site. Gö Lotsawa wrote of the years immediately following the great council in 1076 convened by the king Tsedé (*Rtse lde*) at Tabo in Spiti.⁵⁷ After the council ended, the various scholars and translators in attendance went their separate ways, some to Nepal and India, others to central Tibet. Two of them, Dakpo Wangyal and Khyungpo Draksé,⁵⁸ “gave competing teachings on Potari and Marpori. It is said that monks went back and forth between their schools (*chos*

⁵⁶ Ahmad is referenced to this effect in e.g. Henss 2014: 98, 106, 201n213; and also Schwieger 2014: 52. Both authors declare on Ahmad's authority that the phrase “came back to his own home” referred to the fifth Dalai Lama, *not* the Lokeśvara statue. The argument that this palace “clearly demonstrates the Dalai Lama's intention to act as sacred ruler of Tibet” depends on it.

⁵⁷ Petech 1980. Another notable attendee at this council was the Zangskar Lotsāwa Phakpa Sherap (Zangs dkar lo tsā ba, b. 11th CE) famous for revitalizing the Jokhang and adding a protrusion (*glo 'bur*) to the east side, likely at some point after returning from that council 1076 council. Vitali 1990: 79–82; Shastri 1997: 873–82.

⁵⁸ Khyungpo Draksé (Khyung po grags se, var. seng) was recruited to become abbot of Shalü by its third abbot, the Jé (Lce) patriarch Yuthok Dra Sersang (G.yu thog Sgra gser bzang), who had renounced his monastic vows to preserve the Jé clan's ruling line. See Vitali 1990: 96–97.

grwa).⁵⁹ Roerich, translating the *Blue Annals*, assumed that this “Potari” (Pota Hill) must mean Potala, notwithstanding the inconvenient fact that Marpori is clearly mentioned separately from it.⁶⁰ Given that Gö Lotsāwa mentioned this pairing not once but twice, it is worth noting that “Pota-ri,” if not “Potala,” could clearly be held at arm's length from Marpori without requiring any further clarification. It did not carry much weight and may not even have referred to Marpori at all.

KAGYÜ INTEREST IN MARPORI

Things picked up in the early fifteenth century, where we find evidence of direct Kagyü interest in and involvement with Marpori—although I have a hunch that their role has been somewhat overstated, as I will try to demonstrate. The reason, again, may stem from an inclination to beg the symbolic significance of Marpori as Potala. Doing so allows the site to become yet another component of what Sørensen has called an “all-pervasive” Avalokiteśvara cult infusing Lhasa as far back as the eleventh century.⁶¹ What does seem clear is that the fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shekpa (1384–1415) built a personal residence atop Marpori in 1415, intending to practice there, but quickly died *in situ*. That event was described in the *Religious History of Lhorong* (*Lho rong chos 'byung*), an important early source for the history of the Kagyü tradition, authored in 1446 by Tatsak Tsewang Gyal (ca. 1420–70).⁶² Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa later gave a much more detailed account in his *Scholar's Celebration*, a little more than a century later. Pawo's version also referred in passing to some nearby properties owned by the

⁵⁹ 'Gos Lo tsa ba 1984: 98; Roerich 1976: 71. In a later chapter, Gö repeats the story: “Khutön [i.e., Khu ston Brtson 'grus gyung drung, b. 1011] resided at Thangpoché, where he taught Prajñāpāramitā, increasing the number of monks there. Dakpo Wangyal also studied Prajñāpāramitā with him. Dakpo was confident about the extent of his mastery and so did not study under Atiśa. It is alleged that at a later time both he and the renowned Khyungpo Draksé, who was more famous for his mastery of the older system of logic and epistemology (*tshad ma rnying pa*), would give competing teachings on Potari and Marpori” ('Gos Lo tsa ba 1984: 123; Roerich 1976: 93). On the “old logic” see Smith 2001: 113–14.

⁶⁰ Cf. Davidson: “These two are said to have challenged each other...on the red hill in Lhasa, where the Potala is located” (2012: 258) and Sørensen and Hazod: “[this] suggests two sites on one and the same hill.” Scholars appear eager to iron out this wrinkle in whatever fashion.

⁶¹ Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 504.

⁶² On the contents and significance of this work see van der Kuijp 2001.

Karma Kamtshang institution since the time of the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339). Pawo also briefly mentioned that the fourth Shamar, Chödrak Yeshé (1453–1526), consecrated a building on Marpori in 1500; and the seventh Karmapa, Chödrak Gyatso (1454–1506), expressed a wish to build a monastery there in 1503. Based on this evidence, Sørensen and Hazod have claimed a sustained and substantial Kagyü attention to and presence on Marpori, going very far back indeed. They say that Marpori was gifted to the third Karmapa in 1310.⁶³ Moreover, of that building consecrated in 1500, they add that “this new residence clearly was no more than a renovation of an older institution belonging to the Karma pa that went back at least to the thirteenth century, perhaps earlier.”⁶⁴ These claims have since been repeated.⁶⁵ I find this long timeline, if not impossible, certainly ambitious considering the paucity of evidence.

In his *Religious History of Lhorong*, Tsewang Gyal described the fifth Karmapa Deshin Shekpa's visits to the Ü region after his return from China in 1411, including a trip to Lhasa in that year and a brief stay with the Phagmodru ruler Drakpa Gyaltsen at his seat of Ne'udong. Then, in 1412, Deshin Shekpa returned to Lhasa to visit the Jowo statue and stayed at the Draklha Lüphuk cave on Chakpori (which Mönlam Dorjé had also restored some half-century or so prior). Visiting nearby Tshalmin, he called on his former preceptor and teacher, Nyakphuwa Sönam Sangpo, and they had many discussions on religious matters. Finally, in 1415, the Karmapa returned to Lhasa by way of Gongkar and moved to “the peak of Mount Potala, in the vicinity of where the Jowo Rinpoché [statue] was located.” According to Tsewang Gyal, the Karmapa proclaimed that on this site he would make great strides in

⁶³ Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 174–75; and again at 354–55.

⁶⁴ Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 505n173.

⁶⁵ For instance, Henss (2014: 105) has claimed on Sørensen's authority that the third Karmapa was granted his own religious estate on Marpori.

his meditation practice and rapidly be of service to other beings.⁶⁶ Later Tibetan historians interpreted this remark as foresight of his imminent demise: later that year, he suddenly fell ill and passed away in a matter of days.⁶⁷ A century later, Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa added crucial details to this story:

[Deshin Shekpa] traveled to Tshurphu and then the Lhasa area. He bestowed a priceless pearl robe upon the Jowo Rinpoché statue. Without any sectarianism, he sponsored tea and offerings at every monastery in Ü and Tsang with upwards of five monks, and gave extensive ritual items for every temple. He gave his own preceptor, Nyakphupa [Sönam Sangpo], the donative properties of Yorpo and Döl as monastic subjects, which the Tshalpa had granted back in the time of Rangjung [Dorjé, third Karmapa]; and installed him at the great temple of Tshalmin [in Döl]. The Ne'upa estate, being lords of Kyi[shö] and Phen[yül], gifted him the Lhasa Potala, and he made a personal dwelling and stayed there.⁶⁸

Pawo also played up the popularity of the site far more than did Tsewang Gyal: “Tibetans noble and base, lay and monastic, all continuously gathered; [he] beheld the faces of Śākyamuni and Avalokiteśvara together.” Gifts arrived from the Ming court of the Yongle emperor, including a plaque of the emperor's name on a blue background, “passed through everyone's hands, carried around Lhasa's outer circumambulation route, and then laid out before the throne at Potala.”⁶⁹ Also unlike Tsewang Gyal, Pawo situated the Karmapa's move to Marpori in the broader socio-economic context of land ownership and lay donative practices. The fifth Karmapa did not merely move to Potala; he was authorized to do so by its landlords the Ne'upa, who “gifted” him the site in the age-old Buddhist practice of land-granting. Pawo also referred to an earlier donative exchange between the Tshalpa hegemon and Deshin Shekpa's predecessor, the third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé. The syntax of the

⁶⁶ Sta tshag Tshe dbang rgyal 1994: 257–59. (= folio 202a–b of the manuscript in *Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs* 2010.) The *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1976: 509–10) tersely mentioned the fifth Karmapa's move to “Lhasa Potala,” and repeated the remark about the personal benefits of the site and his subsequent death there.

⁶⁷ Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003, vol. 2: 1014. See also Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas 2013, vol. 1: 480; *Kar ma kam tshang* 1998 (Kunming edition): 552.

⁶⁸ Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003, vol. 2: 1014–15.

⁶⁹ Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003, vol. 2: 1015.

passage makes clear that he did so only to give provenance for properties at Yorpo and Döl, which the fifth Karmapa was entrusting to his own preceptor, Nyakphuwa Sönam Sangpo, as abbot of Tshalmin.⁷⁰

This episode, in Pawo's telling, seems to have furnished the basis for that scholarly claim that Karmapa ownership of Marpori/Potala went all the way back to the thirteenth century or earlier.⁷¹ To my knowledge, Pawo is the earliest author to mention a gift to the third Karmapa. And, so far as I can determine, Pawo's passage in turn was the basis for the other sources these scholars cite in support, most importantly Situ Panchen's (1700–1774) history of the Karma Kagyü. But Pawo's reference to the third Karmapa concerns *only* the donative properties of Yorpo and Döl, *not* the retreat site of Marpori, which was in Kyishö, part of the Ne'upa estate, and only in 1415 made accessible to the fifth Karmapa.⁷² Pawo's point in citing the earlier donation, as I am reading it, was just to affirm that Yorpo and Döl—valuable sources of labor in the form of their subjects (*'bangs*), in other words, property—had been continuously owned by, and providing income for, the Karma Kamtshang institution ever since they were first granted during Rangjung Dorjé's time. Now, by the authority of the fifth Karmapa, they were being placed under Nyakphuwa's stewardship, perhaps just because the Karmapa was sloughing off his institutional responsibilities to go off and meditate. I have not found other evidence linking the *third* Karmapa to any ownership of or residence on Marpori/Potala.

⁷⁰ Döl, with the seat of Tshalmin, lies south of Lhasa, more or less opposite the Tsangpo river from Dorjé Drak, on the east bank of a southern tributary. See Ryavec 2015: maps 16, 23, 29, 35; Wylie 1962: 89, 166n487; Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 173n. What is meant here by “Yorpo” (*g.yor po*) is less clear. It may derive from that quadrant of imperial-era central Tibet (*bod ru bzhi*) known as Yoru (*g.yo ru*); the *Blue Annals* often described the region of Ü (*dbus*) by the dichotomy “Ü and Yor” (*dbu g.yor*) (Roerich 1976: 702, 936, 1018, 1080), whereas we saw Ratna Lingpa's general prophecy spoke of Ü (*dbus*) as having three domains (*dbu g.yo mtha' gsum*). Note that Lhasa, in Kyishö, would be in the quadrant of Üru and not in Yoru. Sangyé Gyatso mentioned Yorpo in describing the seat of the Zahor family in Tibet, namely, in Yoru, near the ancient fort Yumbu Lhagang in Chingwa Taktse, “in Yorpo where Nyatri Tsenpo first came to Tibet;” see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 149. Therefore Yorpo may refer to the area of the Yarlung valley.

⁷¹ It is also suggested, not implausibly, that the granting of Döl to Rangjung Dorjé and his Karma Kamtshang institution may have taken place “on the occasion of the cremation ceremonies of Tshal dpon chen dGa'-bde-dpal,” an event which the main source, the *Gung thang dkar chag*, recounts. That text does indeed mention the third Karmapa's attendance at this funeral, but nothing about any land grant. Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 175, 191n463.

⁷² See also Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas 2013: 480, where Situ's phrasing—directly based on Pawo's text—makes my reading, separating those two inherited properties from the 1415 Marpori gift, even more certain.

Unlike those other two properties, Marpori presumably would not have been a workable source of income for the Karma Kamtshang institution. Does the Ne'u willingness to bequeath Marpori automatically prove that it had some special significance worthy of such a high lama? Was it simply well suited for the sort of solitary retreat the Karmapa wished to conduct there? Notwithstanding the social benefits to land-gifting between householders as the owners of property and the sangha as a “field of merit,” the specific reasons for particular choices, and what they tell us about the location in question and how it was valued, are far from self-evident. If we are talking about an inheritance, it seems like a cultivable area with some yield for the owner makes far more sense than a barren hill like Marpori. We must also stress that absolutely no mention is made, in any of these accounts, of *anything* at the site—not even the Lokeśvara statue—that would have been a draw or a source of value.

Pawo mentioned “Potala” in connection to the Kagyüpa only two more times. The first was in a single sentence about the fourth Shamar, Chödrak Yeshé (1453–1524): “In Lhasa he made worship and consecrated a new building (*khang gsar*) on Potala.”⁷³ That happened in 1500. The second time was to say that in 1503, the seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso (1454–1506) visited Lhasa, where before the Jowo statue he expressed a wish for his own “right little monastic community” (*dge 'dun gtsang hrug*).⁷⁴ It certainly would have been an opportune moment: the Karmapa's backers the Rinpungpa had recently taken control of the Lhasa area and suspended the Mönlam prayer festival instituted by Tsongkhapa and run by the Geluk ever since. In this pendulum swing of local hegemony, the seventh Karmapa may have detected a real chance to get his own foothold in an area long dominated by the three Geluk institutions, which had summarily thwarted his previous attempt in 1679 to build a

⁷³ Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003: 1142.

⁷⁴ Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003: 1105. DiValerio (2015: 136) gets the order of these two events backwards in claiming that the Shamar consecrated a building already set up by the seventh Karmapa.

monastery at nearby Sanakma.⁷⁵ His patron Donyö Dorjé, perhaps still stinging from the memory of that recent failure, balked at the suggestion as exceeding his own ambitions: “The request to set a religious institution on the slope of Potala,” writes Pawo, “the ruler felt, would be far more imposing than his own intentions.”⁷⁶ We simply do not know what connection if any existed between Deshin Shekpa's 1415 domicile, and whatever structure was consecrated by the Shamarpa in 1500—which, it bears remembering, one author mentions once and only in passing.⁷⁷ Given how tenuous these connections are, it would be safer to date the Karmapas' sustained presence at and interest in Marpori to the start of the sixteenth century (not the thirteenth!)

In fact, the scarcity of comment could just as well support the opposite reading: namely, that interest in Marpori/Potala was long sporadic and derivative, suggesting it had little symbolic importance over that time, and the added name was more like a dead metaphor. Recall that when the fifth Karmapa made his pilgrimages to Lhasa, he gave explicit attention to the Jowo statue and even to the Draklha Lumphuk cave on Chakpori, but nothing about Marpori *per se* caught his attention (or, at least, the author's). When he finally fetched up there, on Tsewang Gyal's account, the appeal of Marpori was precisely that it offered a suitable space for intensive samādhi cultivation—in other words, it was a good place to be left alone. Indeed, the only quality Tsewang Gyal saw fit to mention was its proximity (*'dabs chags su*) to the Lhasa Tsuklakhang. The latter was probably the real draw, given Deshin Shekpa's service to it on multiple occasions. Whether or not Mönlam Dorjé's fourteenth-century repairwork on Marpori, including (re)installing the sandalwood Lokeśvara statue, were still present,

⁷⁵ According to Shakabpa (Maher 2010: 294) the attempt to place a monastery at Sanakma, “above Lhasa,” occurred in 1479 and was quickly halted by the nearby Geluk monks.

⁷⁶ Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003: 1105. The sentence reads: *sde pa rang gi thugs bzhed kyis po ta la'i ri logs la chos sde 'debs par zhus pa btsan ches par dgongs*. Sørensen and Hazod (2007: 505) read *btsan ches* as “a fear that the opposition would be too powerful...concerned as he was for the dire consequences of *Realpolitik*.”

⁷⁷ Situ's account of the same event adds nothing to Pawo's.

oddly they merited no historiographical attention either as noteworthy features of the site or as destinations of intrinsic interest. For sure, the fact that Deshin Shekpa found the site of especial importance to his personal practice, and met his untimely end there, most likely augmented its prestige after the fact. It may have even furnished the seventh Karmapa with a tenable claim to the site eighty-eight years afterwards. The *Blue Annals* noted that Deshin Shekpa's cremation left behind a relic of Avalokiteśvara (but also of Saṃvara and Hevajra yoked together), while Pawo's version had the main relic taking the form of a White Tāra with an eight-year-old's body. It has also been suggested that his relics were installed permanently on site; but this claim too could use some more evidence.⁷⁸

By and large, up until the early sixteenth century, Marpori/Potala comes across as rather unremarkable. Given the ratcheting tensions in that era between Karmapa and Gelukpa groups and the rival polities in Tsang and Ü which supported them, competing interests in Lhasa surely went beyond pragmatic concerns and were also tied to its history and symbolism as a center, anchored by the Lhasa Tsuklakhang and its upkeep. That legacy was astutely recognized and discussed by Sørensen.⁷⁹ Still, I am dubious that any such symbolic importance can automatically extend to include Marpori, whose significance is conspicuously unspoken in the sources. Admittedly with so few clues all conclusions are provisional. We may be making mountains out of molehills—but that is really the point. If Marpori was

⁷⁸ Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 505. According to Pawo, on his 1503 trip to Lhasa, the seventh Karmapa made offerings of a number of supports of body, speech, and mind, including a relic of the fifth Karmapa, a sandalwood image of White Tāra as an eight-year-old child. But Pawo does not also give the provenance of these objects (Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba 2003: 1105). Sørensen and Hazod (ibid.) aver that they were kept at the same “hermitic seat” on Marpori, referring to the aforementioned *khang gsar* consecrated in 1500 (there incorrectly stated as inaugurated ca. 1480 by the seventh Karmapa Chödrak Gyatso; but the cited passage refers only to the fourth Shamar Chödrak Yeshé's consecration in 1500). Again, this is a most plausible scenario but one for which I have found no evidence. In the *Religious History of Lhorong* (op. cit.: 259) a group headed by Khenchen Sönam Sangpo (that is, Nyakphuwa) distributed the relics (*gdung mchod kha yar mdzad*) but then brought the body back on a palanquin to Tsurphu. Pawo Tsuklak (ibid.: 1017) suggested that the body was cremated in Lhasa, but he mentioned only images of Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra being fashioned from the ensuing relics (*ring bsrel las grub pa'i bde dgyes kyi sku sogs*). Pawo also specifically noted that “only a little appears to have been written on the manner and sort of offerings performed in Lhasa,” before going on to list relics, images and other materials pertaining to Deshin Shekpa kept at Tsurphu and Karma Gön, the two main Karma Kamtshang monasteries. In other words data on (and attention to) Lhasa are sparse.

⁷⁹ See especially the extensively annotated appendix, “Control Over the Lha-sa Maṇḍala Zone: Geo-political Schemes, National Monuments, Flood Control Politics and Ideological Battlefield;” in Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 401–550.

marked by pervasive cosmological and metaphysical resonances, a rooted significance in history or in devotional practice, a place of worship or a pilgrimage destination *in its own right*, one perhaps needing stewardship, and not just a nominal affiliation but a manifest and enduring legacy involving Avalokiteśvara and his mountain—in other words, exactly the sort of symbolic heft the Dalai Lama was supposed to have anticipated and harnessed for himself—then it is strange that no one felt any need to say anything about it.

THE STATUE AND THE MARPORI PALACE

Focusing our attention back on the statue can help puncture inflated assessments of Marpori and rethink the mountain's relevance for the fifth Dalai Lama in more careful terms. In the story of Mönlam Dorjé, the Lokeśvara statue was a mediating element for thinking of Marpori as another “Potala” of sorts. The statue was an independent vehicle for establishing the bodhisattva's manifest presence there, just as it eventually would be for the fifth Dalai Lama. The importance of acknowledging that mediation is to recognize that the bodhisattva's ties to this location, and the Dalai Lama's nature as a human projection of Avalokiteśvara, are not wholly reducible to, nor wholly explainable in terms of, one another. It is all the more significant, then, that we also find a similar tripartite relationship of deity, statue, and king featuring very prominently in the story of Songtsen Gampo's palace, as it was depicted in sources like the *Maṇi Collection*, the *Pillar Testament*, and Nyangral's *Flower's Finest Nectar*. The general *vita* names Songtsen Gampo as Avalokiteśvara in the flesh, born that way, and with a pristine appearance and magical powers of his own to boot. At the same time, it says that he took strides to retrieve his statue (or statues) and occupied himself in contemplation of them. It was also the statue that prompted the Marpori palace being built. Let us note here just how fitting it is that this story has the king making his own end by being “dissolved” (*thims*) back into his statue. The author (or authors) of

this tale could hardly have found a more perfect narrative closure for the problem of irreducible mediation just raised! The fifth Dalai Lama unfortunately had no such power.

Let us end by reassessing the episode of the king's Marpori palace. I suggest that the palace and the statue, as objects of literary attention, were a means of thematizing ideas about Songtsen Gampo's divinity. Reading this story will give us a useful point of departure for evaluating the symbolism of the White Palace in the next chapter. There, too, the recovered Lokeśvara statue again played a key role. We will look at the Songtsen Gampo story as it appeared in a version of the *Pillar Testament*.⁸⁰ As mentioned above, the first thing the king did was retrieve the statue of his tutelary deity by projecting a bhikṣu named Akaramatiśīla out of light-rays emitted from his brow. In some but not all versions of the tale, by this point Songtsen Gampo had already established himself on Marpori in Lhasa.⁸¹ Then he dispatched his minister to Nepal to bring back his bride. The episode of building the Marpori palace comes right after her return to Lhasa and their marriage. It is here translated in full:

The king ever remained inside his palace, before his eleven-faced Mahākāruṇika snakeheart-sandalwood deity, never apart from it by any more than a target's length. The queen thought to herself: “This king is superhuman! His physique is so incredible, I could never get tired of looking at it. If only I could ask him why he never ventures outside of his palace—but he does not understand my language, nor I his.”⁸² It could be that he is

⁸⁰ The edition I am using, the most well-known and accessible, was published in typed form in China as part of the *Gangs can rig mdzod* series. Their text is based on a manuscript kept in the Beijing *minzu tushuguan* (Tib. *mi rigs dpe mdzod khang*) and secondarily on another manuscript, in white ink on black paper, that was among the treasured possessions of Labrang Tashikyil in Qinghai. The text famously describes itself as being retrieved by Atiśa from a pillar inside the Lhasa Tsuklagkhang (an event also mentioned in the *Book of Kadam*) but many scholars doubt its antiquity. In my notes I will also refer to analagous passages, where extant, from a shorter manuscript version of the *Pillar Testament* published in the collection *Literary Arts of Ladakh*, vol. 1 (1972).

⁸¹ In the *Maṇi Collection* and the *Illuminating Mirror*, the king went to Marpori and then retrieved the statue, while in the *Pillar Testament* and Nyangral's *Flower's Finest Nectar*, he did the reverse.

⁸² Here I depart from the Gansu edition of the *Pillar Testament* (1989: 144) which reads “he understands my language; [but] I don't understand his” (*nga'i skad khong gis go ste/ khong gi skad ngas mi go*). Notwithstanding the improbability of Songtsen Gampo speaking Newari—which might be no problem for a god—in terms of the logic of the story, this reading makes less sense than that of all the other versions. The *Literary Arts of Ladakh* version of the *Pillar Testament* (folio 422.1–2) has: “‘Why doesn't he ever leave the palace gate?’ she thought. ‘It is probably that he is afraid of the armies on our borders. I would ask him, but I don't know [his] language’ (*bdag gis skad mi go*).” The *Maṇi Collection* is even more specific: “I would ask him why he never departs outside of the palace, but he doesn't understand my Nepali language, nor I his Tibetan language.” (2011: 294; = xylograph folio 175a). Nyangral (2010: 204) has the same. In Sönam Gyaltzen's version, the issue is elided as Songtsen Gampo takes the lead in building the palace (Sørensen 1994: 210).

frightened of foreign armies. I must come up with a way to put him at ease.”⁸³

She put on her jewelry, tied up a white silk headscarf, and prayed before the precious begging-bowl she had brought from Nepal. Suddenly, food appeared in it—a kind of fine nectar in all different colors. She made a gift of the nectar to the male and female violent spirits and pressed them into service as her attendants.

At Marpori they built a wall to a length of one *yojana*, its four sides made of brick, to a height of thirty-four measures of stamped earth (*gyang*), making it even with a nine-story tower, and enclosing both the Tiger Hill and the Lion Hill [Marpori and Chakpori].⁸⁴

To beautify the city, on the inside were parapets, windows, *bakula* trees, fly-whisks, decorative archways, and mid- and front-mouldings. The windows were made of silver, around the front of which were laid pearl lattice and half-lattice carvings, with turquoise mouldings on which bells chimed. In line with human custom (*mi chos*) the four gates had decorative archways. Its details matched those of the god-city of Sudarśana.

It also had features for making others afraid.⁸⁵ Within the walls they built nine hundred and ninety-nine red brick fortifications, so that including the lord's own fortification on the peak there were one thousand in total. Atop each they affixed a spear with a red silk streamer, one thousand each. Its details were identical to those of the demon-city of Lañkapuri. Just the sight of it would terrify others. Its might was such that even if kings from all four directions brought armies, the fortress could be defended by five men: one positioned atop the king's peak fortification, and one at each of the four gates on the walls to make five.

In addition, rising up on the southern side they built a nine-story fortress for the queen, modeled after a Mongolian structure⁸⁶ and level with the king's palace. They spanned a bridge made of gold and silver between the two, and the king and queen would move back and forth across it.

Viewed from within, everything was like the god's [Indra's] celestial mansion. Viewed from without, it was like the demon-city Lankapuri.

Out the eastern gate of the palace ran a path for the king's horse, deep as two men, eighteen fathoms wide and three hundred fathoms long, made of stamped clay overlaid with

⁸³ According to Sørensen's translation of Sönam Gyaltzen, the queen's justification for building the palace is not to rectify the king's apparently pacific state, but rather the opposite: “Without ever going outside [his residence and country], he certainly causes fear among the armies of the border [countries such as mine], [a fact] that necessitates that means are taken to [ensure] [a state where] no fear [prevails]” (Sørensen 1994: 210–211). However, I believe that not just the *Pillar Testament*, but all versions of the story, including the *Mani Kambum* and Nyangral's *Flower's Nectar*—as well as Sönam Gyaltzen's text—agree on this point. The king's remaining indoors fixated only on his meditative practice was viewed by the new queen as a detriment to his ability to project an image of competent and forceful rule, making him appear (and her feel) as if *he* were afraid of foreign armies, not they of him. The palace compensates for the king's immobility. The modern Chinese translator also agrees (Lu 2010: 85).

⁸⁴ The identification of “tiger” and “lion” with Lhasa's two hills Marpori and Chakpori is corroborated later in the text, when Wencheng conducts her geomantic survey of Lhasa as a site for the Lhasa Tsuglagkhang. Marpori and Chakpori (here Chakkhari, *lcags kha ri*) are likened to a tiger and a lion whose tails are entwined (*mjug ma sbrel ba*). *Bka' chems ka khol ma* 1989: 214. Cf. the variant version of this prediction in Mkhaz pa lde'u 2010: 263.

⁸⁵ Tib. *gzhan 'jigs pa'i yan lag tu*. In the *Mani Kambum*, the “beautiful features” are described using the same language: *grong khyer mdzes pa'i yan lag tu*, “features for making the city beautiful” (2011: 294). But the dichotomy is muddled in Nyangral's account (2010: 205).

⁸⁶ Tib. *sog po'i mkhar la dpe slangs pa*. This odd qualifier is absent from the *Mani Collection* but included in Sönam Gyaltzen's *Illuminating Mirror* and Nyangral's *Flower's Nectar*. Yamaguchi has suggested reading *so phag*, “brick.”

bricks and wooden planks. Along the edges were wooden lattice and half-lattice railings, painted and coated with varnish, and adorned with precious materials. It was illuminated outside and inside, and if even a single horse galloped down it, it would make the sound of three hundred horses galloping. And with that sound there also echoed the sounds of jingling,⁸⁷ hustle and bustle, verses about the Four Truths [being chanted] (*bden pa bzhi'i tshigs bcad*), and official decrees being sealed (*bka' rtags kyi phyag rgya*).⁸⁸

Within such an exceedingly lofty palace, the shelves of the storerooms were stuffed with foods and riches. They had built a great palace, a place of enjoyment and entertainment, where everything needed or desired could be had, bedecked with all sorts of artwork. There were four gates: first, a Tiger Gate (*stag sgo*) to the east; second, a Leopard Gate (*gzig sgo*) to the south; third, a Power Gate (*dbang sgo*) to the west; and fourth, a Chinese Queen's Magic Gate (*rgya mo 'phrul sgo*) to the north.⁸⁹

There are drawings of the deeds of the king and his ministers, and this manner of palace, on the mural on the western wall of the Rasa Temple.⁹⁰

It is right to question the historical validity of such accounts (their truth for historical memory is another matter). Some early Tibetan historians, like the Ne'u Paṇḍita and Khepa De'u, avoided this episode of a Marpori palace altogether⁹¹ (the latter's story of the Lhasa Tsuklakhang does make oblique references to a palace of some sort in the vicinity, like wires left dangling where the episode had been yanked out).⁹² When given the opportunity, Khepa De'u instead placed Songtsen Gampo's seat in the

⁸⁷ Tib. *ting shag*; Lu's translation suggests "the clapping of horse's hooves" (Lu 2010: 87).

⁸⁸ As I read it, this sentence renders the city's noises as signs of flourishing in four separate arenas: respectively, economy (clinking of coins), pleasure (*ur thug sil chom*, perhaps meaning the clamor of a boisterous and talkative crowd), religion (reciting bits of dharma), and rule (delivering authoritative commands).

⁸⁹ Here I am at a loss. These four gates differ from the quadripartite scheme for the overall Lhasa area, mirrored in the Jokhang, as given later in the same story by the Chinese queen during her geomantic calculations, namely: (1) to the east a gray tiger; (2) to the south a blue dragon; (3) to the west a red bird; (4) to the north a black tortoise (1989: 214). I have not yet identified a source nor inferred a logic behind this alternate gate scheme. Lu's Chinese translation is literal, suggesting that he didn't know what it meant either: for *dbang sgo*, he has 威德门; for *rgya mo 'phrul sgo*, 后妃神变门.

⁹⁰ *Bka' chems ka khol ma* 1989: 144–46. This version is probably the most elaborate of the early descriptions; the last portion, after the account of the horse path, is not found elsewhere. My own impression is that the version in the *Mani Collection* feels more polished. Nyangral (2010: 205) also places the mural in a naga-temple within the Tsuglagkhang (*de'i dpe ra sa'i 'phrul snang gi klu khang gi logs la bris yod*). On the hypothetical contents of these lost murals see Vitali 1990: 76–77.

⁹¹ Ne'u Paṇḍita 1990 (Gangs can rig mdzod 9); and Mkhas pa lde'u 2010 (Gangs can rig mdzod 3).

⁹² Mkhas pa lde'u 2010: 262–66. For instance, he mentions the Chinese queen and her attendants entering the king's palace through the east gate (*ibid.*: 264); the Nepalese queen also ascends to the peak of a palace (*pho brang rtse*) to spy on her fellow queen who is being feted on the Lhasa plain; the latter even tells her Chinese rival, "I too am a great woman, I built this very palace!" (*ibid.*: 265). Finally, De'u has the king moving from the south side of some palace (*lho ngos nas*) on his way to reach the bank of the Öthang lake (*ibid.*: 266) which could indicate Mapori, located to the northwest of where the Lhasa Temple would be built. However, he manages to avoid explicitly mentioning Marpori, let alone Potala, or the construction of any palace there.

Yarlung valley, which is consistent with earlier sources from Dunhuang.⁹³ The whole tale of Songtsen Gampo and his princesses, within which the palace's construction was a stock event, has long been a topic of debate in Tibetan studies.⁹⁴ The question of the Marpori palace is only occasionally given direct attention in the context of these larger debates. Mainly it is overshadowed by the question of who these two princesses really were, how they were brought to Tibet, and especially the subsequent construction of the Jokhang and Ramoché to house their dowry statues. Where the palace does factor, the approach has been philological, tracing acceptable names to real places while explaining away unacceptable ones as misreadings.⁹⁵ It is suggested that over time the kernel of a true historical story

⁹³ Khepa De'u 2010: 241. In the *Old Tibetan Annals*, no location is specified for Songtsen Gampo apart from his tomb, likewise at Chingwa (*phying ba*). In subsequent decades rulers had their courts at Merkhe on the upper Kyichu river, among other places (Dotson 2009: 44–45, 82–85).

⁹⁴ For instance, Tucci (1971 [1962]: 605–611) found confirmation of the Chinese princess in Dunhuang documents but doubted the veracity of the Nepalese princess Tritsün, due both to the lack of similar corroborating evidence, and because her name never appears transliterated into Tibetan, as does the Chinese Wencheng 文成, while “Tritsün” (*khri btsun*) was only a native Tibetan expression meaning simply “royal wife.” He suggested that the story was a later invention meant to furnish the necessary symmetry for the king's divinity as Avalokiteśvara with two accompanying emanations of Tārā, one to the East and one to the West. Yamaguchi (2013 [1978]) referred to the *Bka' chems ka khol ma* only indirectly through quotations in later historiography and dismissed it as “just religious legends far from historicity” (ibid.: 300n4), for instance due to its role as the originary source for later accounts of Songtsen Gampo and his queens dissolving into the eleven-headed statue to end their lives. But he provides helpful evidence on dating Wencheng from Chinese sources and, in the case of the Nepalese princess, also surveys research on dating the reign of Aṃśuvarman, sometimes claimed to be Tritsün's father. Yamaguchi doubts that claim but challenges Tucci on the historicity of Tritsün herself, whom he is inclined to see instead as the daughter of Narendradeva, whose Licchavi court was exiled in Tibet through 640. More boldly, Yamaguchi attempts to reinterpret the palace constructed with Tritsün's help as referring not to Lhasa but to Yarlung, whereas he sees the Lhasa Tsuklagkhang as the joint effort of the Chinese and Nepalese queens after Songtsen Gampo's death. Vitali (1990: 70–73) followed Yamaguchi in arguing for a strong Newari influence on the Tibetan court during this period. Vitali credited the Newars not just for the style of the Jokhang but also the Marpori palace, “basically a lay structure conceived as a Newar monument.” A footnote (ibid.: 86n51) justifies this very bold claim by noting that features such as balconies with silver and inset gems “seem definitely Nepalese.” Notwithstanding the demonstrable Newar elements of the Jokhang and the possible Nepali origin of the Lokeśvara statue, regarding Marpori I do not find this argument convincing. Surely no “influence” can be inferred from literary—not documentary—depictions postdating the event by many centuries. One might as well say Sudarśana was a Newar city too! Henss (2014: 101) must have been influenced by Vitali's idea when he asserts: “The origins of the Avalokiteshvara cult can probably be traced back to Nepalese traditions which came to Tibet with Newari artists in the 7th century or were promoted by the Nepalese King Narendradeva, who spent many years in Tibetan exile.” Finally, we will mention the views of Sørensen (1994: 23–27) with helpful references to relevant scholarship and reflections on the genesis of the cult of Avalokiteśvara in Tibet, noting for instance that there was a chapel at Samyé for another form of this deity, with murals based on the *Kāraṇḍavyūha Sūtra*. On the historicity of Tritsün herself, Sørensen is cautiously optimistic, especially with the presumed Newari influence from Narendradeva's court to Songtsen Gampo's, even if the latter's religious practices were grounded in autochthonous (or Chinese) customs as MacDonald and Stein among others endeavored to demonstrate. Thus, on the Buddhicization of the king he concludes “there are now sound reasons to assume that its imprint was already set in the later phase of the dynasty.”

⁹⁵ Notably, Yamaguchi made several linguistic emendations to salvage the story of the palace, such that his corrected version may once again “become a description of the construction, not at the fictitious capital in the classical age, but at the real

was plastered over and altered beyond recognition. Though not unmerited, this critical approach comes at the expense of reading the story on its own terms. To accuse its author or authors of misreading historical sources, or deliberately spinning up a fantastic tale, assumes anachronistically either that they were not very good historians (which may never have been their goal) or else fabricators of a false message (from our perspective).⁹⁶

On the other hand, when one reads this story as such, it is immediately clear that there is a single coherent theme, namely, the complementary opposition of within and without. This theme is seen most directly in how the passage describes particular features of the palace. Those details are bifurcated into two categories: beauty (*mdzes*) and fearsomeness or might (*gzhan 'jigs pa*, literally “making others afraid”). The city is beautiful within and mighty without. That distinction invokes a corresponding opposition between what is self-directed, and what is directed towards others (hence “making others afraid”). Beauty within is exemplified by walls, windows, doorways, and decorations; might without is exemplified by the number and height of fortifications and the spears and pennants affixed atop them. By means of these certain details, the reader is led to understand correspondence or equivalence of

capital mentioned in the Old Tibetan Annals” (Yamaguchi 2013 [1978]: 317). Relying primarily on readings of Sönam Gyalsten's *Illuminating Mirror*, Yamaguchi suggested that the word *sog kha* (as used in the place-name “Yarlung Sokha”) must have become corrupted into *sog po* (“Mongolian”) or *so phag* (brick), while the word *dma' ba* (“lower”) must similarly have been misread as *dmar po* (red) and hence eventually *dmar po ri*, “Marpori.” His larger aim was to safeguard Sönam Gyaltzen's text as a source “of considerable historical reliability” (ibid.) In this respect Yamaguchi opposed it to the earlier versions like the *Mañi Collection* (presumably also the *Pillar Testament*) which are criticized because therein “the description... becomes fantastic.” There is the onus of also explaining how the frequent and explicit mentions of Lhasa and Marpori throughout both the *Pillar Testament* and the *Mañi Collection*, as well as Nyangrel's *Flower's Finest Nectar*, all of which certainly predate Sönam Gyaltzen, must also derive from linguistic corruptions, misreadings or embellishments. The building of the Marpori palace is not an isolated event that can be read historically in extraction from the textual whole and its larger story. It is part of a deliberately plotted and internally coherent narrative. If some or all references are “fantastic,” then the same conclusion must ramify through the entire tale; and once all the “fantasy” has been stripped away one wonders whether the baby has been thrown out along with the bathwater.

⁹⁶ For instance Sørensen lamented that such sources “leave us with the indelible impression of a king recast or redressed in an outfit manufactured by his posterity in order to create a mythic figure enued with supernatural endowments as it becomes for an august monarch of national stature... True, large parts when not entire accounts are steeped in narrative ornamentations and his person has by posterity always been clothed or shrouded in an abundance of speculation throughout all the strange permutations of his biography. Sifting fact from myths in this literature is a problematic and painstaking enterprise, occasionally a forlorn hope” (Sørensen 1994: 24). The metaphor of sifting, as if extracting the good wheat of the text from its excess chaff, is regrettable.

parts (*cha mthun* or *cha mtshungs*) respectively with Indra's city Sudarśana, surmounted by its palace of Vaijayanta; and the home of the demon-king Ravaṇa on the island of Laṅka.

Neither of those two famous locations are being set up here as the organizational model for Songtsen Gampo's whole palace. To give a little background: Sudarśana was the city from which the god Indra ruled over the heaven of the thirty-three (Trāyastriṃśa) atop Mount Meru at the center of our own world.⁹⁷ It was frequently invoked in other Buddhist polities, such as those in Southeast Asia arranged according to a basic quadripartite logic subdivided into thirty-three components (thirty-two minor provinces around a center).⁹⁸ Our passage does bear some fleeting numerical resonances with Indra's city, as described in the *Divyāvadāna*, such as the latter's nine hundred ninety-nine gates (*ekonadvārasahasram*) or the fact that it too utilized a five-part defense (*devānām trāyastriṃśānām pañca rakṣāḥ sthāpitāh*). However there doesn't seem to be much in common about their respective arrangements. Likewise, with respect to Rāvaṇa's Lanka, the authors of the *Pillar Testament* were certainly versed in the *Rāmāyana*: they named none other than Hanuman as the famous monkey progenitor of the Tibetan race.⁹⁹ The nine-story tower built for Tritsün, making her accessible only to the king, may also call to mind the nine-level gateless tower where Rāvaṇa imprisoned Sītā in some versions of the Old Tibetan *Rāmāyana*.¹⁰⁰ Still, in both examples, the salient point is that each reference

⁹⁷ An elaborate depiction of Sudarśana is found in the story of king Māndhātā in the *Divyāvadāna* (Rotman 2008: 355ff).

⁹⁸ For instance, Wales describes the ancient Burmese kingdom of Pyu with its capital in Śrīkṣetra, which according to the *Glass Palace Chronicle* had thirty-two gates, “each representing one of the vassals or heads of provinces of the empire, with the king at the centre corresponding to the thirty-third god Indra.” Wales also cites the fourteenth-century Burmese kingdom of Pegu, with thirty-two provinces. The 9th century kingdom of Java was administered by thirty-two high dignitaries, while the *Mahāvamsa* recalls the king Duttagamiṇi taking prisoner thirty-two Tamil kings. Wales 1977: 137; Snodgrass 1988: 75–77. See also Heine-Geldern 1942: 19–21.

⁹⁹ *Bka' chems ka khol ma* 1989: 47–48.

¹⁰⁰ The fact of Sita being captive in such a fortress is not included in the well-known Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa*, where Sita remains under guard in a grove of aśoka trees, nor in any other version to my knowledge. J.W. de Jong (1989) has suggested the translation “nine walls” for this expression, which occurs variously as *mkhar sgo myed dgu rim*, *mkhar sgo myed rim dgu*, *mkhar dgu rim*, and *sgo myed dgu rim*. In choosing to read *rim* as “wall” de Jong followed F.W. Thomas, who described “a doorless fort with nine circular walls.” For chapter 38, de Jong departed from Thomas, who gave the reading “Ramana breaks with his arrows the nine walls of the fort in which Sītā is imprisoned and liberates her;” de Jong has the far better “The queen was in a castle with nine walls. The king shot arrows, joining each succeeding arrow-head to the notch of

was the trigger for a single affect: beauty or might. The upshot is that beauty is to might as inside is to outside. The new palace balanced the definitive qualities of those other two locations. That balance is encapsulated by the statement at the heart of the passage: “Viewed from within, everything was like the god's celestial mansion; viewed from without, it was like the demon-city of Lañka.” This vocabulary of vision is pervasive throughout the story. The king's divinity was also communicated to the reader along a metaphor of sight: “a physical form so incredible one can't look at it enough.”¹⁰¹

Once we recognize the basic structure of this theme, it is easy to see how it furnished the narrative logic as well. The theme of inside and outside drives the very plot of this episode. Tritsün's reason for having the palace built in the first place was to compensate for her king's quintessential indoor nature, his refusal to budge from the spot. The statue was to blame. Bear in mind that in the larger context of this story, the king's overall goal was to “tame” (*gdul*) the Tibetan people and “work on their behalf” (*don byed*). That was precisely Avalokiteśvara's goal as a bodhisattva (“taming” and “working on behalf of” are keywords of the bodhisattva's salvific project). Hence the narrative of this king's deeds puts flesh on the abstract idea of being a bodhisattva king and presiding over a “field-to-be-tamed.” One of the major steps Songtsen Gampo took to accomplish this goal was to obtain and make use of the sandalwood statue of his tutelary diety Avalokiteśvara.¹⁰² Once he acquired his statue, however, the king became static, unmoving, caught in a state of arrest at the elevated center on the peak of the hill.

the preceding one so as to make an uninterrupted chain. He climbed through the window and took her away” (de Jong 1989: 39–40). Given that both Hanuman and Rama have to leap up (*mchong*) or climb up (*'dzegs*) through an opening to reach Sītā, it seems far more sensible (though not beyond a doubt) that she was being held in a tower of some height rather than behind a series of walls. At any rate, the novelty of this depiction went unnoticed by Thomas and de Jong, despite their effort to note points of departure in the Tibetan tale from other versions of the *Rāmāyana*.

¹⁰¹ This trope (Skt. *asecanaka*) is frequently used to describe the sight of a tathāgatha, whose sun-like luminescence attracts viewers as moths to a flame.

¹⁰² The text repeatedly affirms this link between the retrieval of the statue and the overall project of bodhisattva kingship. For instance, after first establishing writing and laws, the king thought to himself: “Now at last it will be possible to enact the holy dharma here in my kingdom. And to enact the dharma, I need a tutelary deity...” (*Bka' chems ka khol ma* 1989: 109). Later, after he acquired his statue, the text has: “Then the king thought to himself, 'Now that I've brought the actual form of my tutelary deity back here to Snowy Tibet, I should have no trouble working on behalf of the beings here!' and he was quite pleased with the thought” (ibid.: 124).

Here is the paradox: the whole point of getting the statue was to work on behalf of others, but making optimal use of the statue ultimately meant never leaving its side. This inward-focused immobility was what prompted the queen to build the palace around him. It balanced the equation by complementing that state of arrest with an external impression of his grandeur. It reconciled this inwardly-directed divinity with an outwardly-directed presentation of kingly might.

We also find the same balance of centripetal stasis and centrifugal dynamism manifested in the palace itself: the only movements described are movements that cross its outer perimeter, like the bridge to the queen, or the gallop for the king's horses. Not only that, but we can apply the same principle to the body of the king, too. In Songtsen Gampo's immobility, the queen beheld his inner beauty. He was “superhuman” (*mi las 'das pa*), which is to say divine; but he was no less vulnerable for the fact. His divine inner beauty prevented him from looking outwardly fearful. Finally, by metonymy we might infer the same relationship (beautiful within, fearful without) applied to polity writ large, as between Songtsen Gampo's entire peaceable kingdom and its threatening facade in the face of the other kingdoms on his four borders, who were overawed just by the sight of it. By a sort of recursion, then, every level—personal, palatial, metropolitan, imperial—repeats the same pattern of a “view from within” and a “view from without.” We get a neat sequence of symbolic oppositions:

Within	Without
Beauty	Might/Fearfulness
Sudarśana	Lañka
Self-directed	Other-directed
Stasis	Movement
Centripetal	Centrifugal
Contemplation	Conquest
Bodhisattva	King

In light of this meaningful scheme, I venture that a fruitful way of thinking about this literary account is to acknowledge the thematic connection between the description of the palace and the larger question of divinity, of what it meant for Songtsen Gampo, bodhisattva and king, to be a righteous ruler in the

world. (I view that question as one running through the entire text.) The episode of the palace names and negotiates a fundamental dilemma of Buddhist kingship: Songtsen Gampo's divinity—taken as a certainty from the outset—is antithetical to his actual work as king. The story of the palace, as I am reading it, posed this dilemma in the following form: the more Songtsen Gampo strives to become the sort of divine being who works on behalf of sentient beings, the less capable of outwardly-directed, worldly activity he becomes. The more he is like the bodhisattva, the less he is like a king. This problem finds a perfect token in the statue, at the center of the palace, hence also the city and the kingdom in turn. The statue is an index of the king's own divine connection to the bodhisattva; and at the same time, it becomes the main impediment to the king's own outward self-presentation as king. It is because of the statue that he needed the palace.

To conclude, this reading sets up an interesting comparison to the case of the fifth Dalai Lama, which should similarly be thought in terms of both palace and statue. By way of comparison, we can say that the problem the Dalai Lama confronted would be the reverse of the one that this story poses. In the story, the question is: If a king was truly divine, then how could he have also lived and ruled? The authors of the *Pillar Testament* placed that question in the mind of the character Tritsün, letting us in on her thoughts (but not the elusive king's) to find her worrying that Songtsen Gampo, her superhuman divine husband, would become rooted to the spot, rendered inert as he turned ever inward towards his tutelary deity. The palace was an effort to counter that inertia, and thereby to confirm the propriety of bodhisattva and statue at the very center of this polity. The more evidently manifest the outward, royal appearance is made, the more the inward, divine being at its core can be reaffirmed. On the other hand, the Dalai Lama's situation unfolded in the opposite direction. The question is reversed: How can the one who lives and rules also be confirmed as divine? In a story, it is easy to affirm a character's perfection up front. In a living world, perfection is always on the horizon, in excess of the human capacity to know. Confirmation of it must be constructed, tested, and evaluated.

Hence the importance of the Dalai Lama's own attention to the statue, and his emphasis on recounting and interpreting its return and reinstallation in 1645, right before breaking ground for his own palace. As a sign that the deity had thereby “returned to its own home,” the event confirmed for all witnesses that this new palace, and the new rule that it would house, were indeed right and proper. In his autobiography, the fifth Dalai Lama listed all the accompanying omens that were witnessed not only by himself, but also by Guśri Khan and other attendees. So here is the reversal: in the story, Songtsen Gampo acquired the statue to make it possible to become the right kind of ruler. For the Dalai Lama, being the right kind of ruler was what made the reacquisition of the statue possible. It is no longer the presence of the signs that make up the king; it is the presence of the king that makes the signs reappear. By those signs he might reaffirm himself as truly being the right and proper ruler, and know that his actions and the actions of his government are correct.

So these will be our points of comparison as we now turn to think about the fifth Dalai Lama, his palace, his statue.

CHAPTER FIVE.
THE WHITE PALACE AS IMAGINED, BUILT, AND USED

INTRODUCTION

Now we turn to the White Palace. The last chapter set up the foundations for rethinking the palace's symbolic capacities in closer conversation with its actual design and use. There I argued that the Potala palace has been too readily reduced to a representational status, rather than assessed as a real part of its cosmo-moral order. It has been treated as the means to an end, furnishing a clue about something else, rather than a participant in ordering its own world. The reason is the predilection to separate the palace's material and symbolic dimensions from one another. How it stood as a building, and what it communicated as a symbol, are explained separately. The palace is refigured as the conjunction of a primary and non-symbolic physical force with a secondary and immaterial symbolic meaning. More simply: it represents power plus belief, or in other words, legitimation. To be sure, neither conclusion is false on its own terms. A physical palace is clearly a sign of might; and a name with so much cachet would surely suggest connections to authorizing forces like tradition and divinity. These are like the distant endpoints on a spectrum whose middle has been erased.

My position is that it is incorrect to first isolate these two extremes and then impute a logic joining them back together. It prevents us from thinking about the palace as actively symbolic. By “symbol,” we may understand two closely related capacities which help to fill in some of that evacuated space in between a purely imaginative name and a mute physical structure. These are the excess of signification in relationship, in the spirit of Paul Ricoeur; and the meaningful ordering of physical space, in the spirit of Clifford Geertz, Pierre Bourdieu, or J.Z. Smith.¹ On the first point—symbol as double meaning—I proffer that the White Palace was the bearer of multiple meanings held in productive tension. Hence

¹ Ricoeur 1970; 1976; Geertz 1980; Bourdieu 1990; Smith 1987.

there was no direct and wholesale substitution that magically transformed whomever claimed it. Rather, if the palace's naming and placement called attention to Avalokiteśvara and suggested some manner of relationship with that bodhisattva (via divinity or tradition), it did so in ways that were mediated and therefore also called attention to difference. I have already pointed to the sandalwood tutelary statue of Avalokiteśvara as having been a major material bearer of that mediation. Here we will continue to explore the statue's relevance for the fifth Dalai Lama and the White Palace. On the second point—the meaningful ordering of space—we have hardly begun to explore what it could have meant to encounter, occupy, pass through, be enabled or constrained by the physical space of the Potala palace. Sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of religion have long recognized how social, political, and cosmological order may be constituted spatially and architecturally at the level of household, temple, city, or polity. In this spirit, Clifford Geertz famously spoke of a “poetics of power, not a mechanics.” He called attention to those ordering logics whereby the relative positions of political actors “took their shape and had their meaning,” both with respect to one another as well as in terms of their relative distance from divinity.² In the light of Geertz, we can think about the organization and use of the Potala palace as a system of relationships, a structure whose component terms stood in relationship to one another and thereby constituted hierarchies of access. Hence the palace itself embodied a productive tension—a capacity to produce symbolic knowledge—not only in how it was named, but equally in its very physicality. Not incidentally, we will find that the statue played an important part in that organization. Some caution is required here: the aim in speculating about such principles is to try to understand the palace in terms of what we might call its world-ordering capacity, and not merely in an expressive sense. That is to say, this attention to the palace as symbol will resist going all the way to a full-fledged functionalist explanation, of the sort that Mary Douglas called “compensation theory,”

² Geertz 1980: 123–24.

which “treats the symbolic order as a secondary result of the social order, as purely expressive.”³ My position here is again Inden's: to situate the palace as part of and participant in cosmo-moral order. Neither the legitimating instrument of an already constituted power, nor the mere expression of some already-constituted social or political order, it was itself constitutive of order. In the words of Daud Ali, reading Inden, “it helped to form and ontologically participated in the world it sought to represent.”⁴

Let us now consider the fifth Dalai Lama's White Potala palace, not as a political prop, but from three additional angles: as an object of literary reflection; an ordered physical structure; and a backdrop for conducting affairs of state. That is, we will think about the palace as imagined, as built, and as used within its own world. For the first, I will read portions of a poem the fifth Dalai Lama wrote in praise of his new palace. This poem comprises the longest and most elaborate statement on the subject in his voluminous corpus. For the second, I turn to research by Chinese and Tibetan specialists in historical architecture and material culture. Recent excellent assessments of the building will help to build a basic image of how the Potala palace was put together (in this, its first iteration) and what principles one might detect therein. For the third, I will analyze the detailed biographical account of the 1720 enthronement of the seventh Dalai Lama, Kelsang Gyatso (1708–57). Granted, it postdated the fifth Dalai Lama's era as well as the subsequent construction of the “Red Palace.” However, the seventh Dalai Lama's enthronement deliberately restricted itself only to the earlier “White” portion (for reasons discussed below). It moved in the same spaces there from the beginning. It is therefore even more valuable, because it shows the potential durability of forms, especially in cases where modifications were also introduced. Noticing that interplay of continuity and variability will help temper the inertia of my more structural-leaning conclusions with a sensitivity to the possibility of change.

³ Douglas 1970: xiv.

⁴ Inden 2006: 5.

THE IMAGINED PALACE

The poem in question, as redacted in the fifth Dalai Lama's collected works, identifies itself as a “full expression of the qualities” of the newly-built Potala palace.⁵ He authored it in connection with the completion of the palace's construction in 1648, a detail confirmed in his autobiography.⁶ The full work is sixty-four stanzas long, so we will only look at a small bit of it here. It is styled in the Daṇḍin-inspired *kāvya* ornamental fashion of many of the Dalai Lama's works, most famously the *Cuckoo's Song*, his verse- and ornament-studded celebratory history of Tibet, written five years prior. This poem is rife with allusions to the Indic pantheon and cosmos, as well as stylized tropes and turns of phrase from the poetic imaginary and its syllabaries—like “Indra's bow” (*dbang po'i zhu*) for a rainbow or “blaze-tipped” (*mdong mtha'*) for a peacock. First, we will consider the poem as a whole, before zooming in on some individual stanzas to make a specific point. The holistic perspective can show us how the poem works narratively, how it carries the viewer's eye around its own world, thus imparting a basic formal structure onto the palace and the world in which it was situated—as we saw for the story of Songtsen Gampo's Marpori palace in the previous chapter. In contrast to that story's concentric logic, the Dalai Lama's poem first approaches the palace from afar, then glides up from the base to the Lokeśvara chapel at its peak. It carries the reader towards that summit and endpoint.

The poem starts with five stanzas of homage that descend down a chain of being from buddha to bodhisattva to deities to humans. Once alighted upon the ground, it centers the reader in space (stanzas 6–10) by narrowing its gaze from Central Tibet as a whole, into Lhasa and its Jokhang temple, then to

⁵ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 35–42. The text has no colophon, although the title which prefaces it in the collected works describes its contents and context: “Song of the fearless lion's lineage: A full expression of the qualities of the great Potala palace, whose foundations were laid in the third month of the Wood-Female-Bird year (1645), its layout designed by Padma Rabten of Trongsar, borne on the courageously laboring shoulders of the high official and governor Sönam Rabten, and completed in the Sarvadhārī [i.e. 22nd] or earth male mouse year (1648).”

⁶ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 213 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 142a–b). See also Karmay 2014: 217. Here the Dalai Lama refers to the poem as a “eulogy” (*ches brjod*), literally “expression of greatness.”

Marpori. A transitional stanza about the Jokhang's historical construction marks a shift from the spatial register to a temporal one. Then the next four stanzas (11–14) narrate the history of Marpori, praising Songtsen Gampo's rule and the construction of his palace under Tritsün's guidance, then safeguarding the site over time by later rulers:

11. He vanquished with so many magic arrows
the Asura cities, pride of kings of the four quarters,
so he is Īśvara, victorious in every direction,
unprecedented in his achievement, blue-necked Lord Songtsen.

12. The expanse of bliss and emptiness joined has one taste,
but Tritsün, doubling the non-dual,
built a fine palace, unique ornament on earth,
named “Marpori,” a second Potala.

13. The summer thunder, deeds of our forefathers
boomed langorously with majestic tones
and the peacock of the two systems danced with delight.
In the interim many great ones upheld it,

14. and in this age of strife especially, by command
of divine Desi Phakmodrupa, heaven's elect,
the Ne'upa and others were appointed
as governors guarding this great northern district,
and have kept it to the end.

Consider for a moment the twelfth stanza just quoted, which dips into metaphysical matters. It sets up several analogies: the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara's own Mount Potala stands to the king Songtsen Gampo's Marpori palace (“second Potala”) just as the nondual ground of reality (the “single taste” of affirmative bliss and negative emptiness) stands to the dualistic appearances in our own physical world of experience. This theme featured prominently in Sangyé Gyatso's thinking, as we will see in the next chapter. Another implicit analogy concerns the opposition between what is uncreated, and what is constructed by human hands (in this case, the hands of the queen Tritsün). Hence the note of hesitation, marking the tension between the fundamental ontology of the first line and the human work of the second and third lines. I will call attention to that tension below.

Capping this approach from the past to the present, the newly-built palace is lastly anticipated by prophecy (stanzas 15–16). All these spatial, temporal, and prophetic approaches merge on the present-day site of Marpori and the new palace itself. The poem heralds this arrival by declaring that “the era thus predicted has come to pass” (*lung bstan ji bzhin dus su nyer babs pa*). With these words, it lifts its gaze to the new palace. Five stanzas (17–21) praise the palace's many features. The poem builds up the palace vertically: from the outer gates, to the steep fortress walls and turrets, then up its steps and in through the doors to the ornate beams and pillars and the beautiful banners arrayed within. At the culmination of this ascent stands the Lokeśvara statue. Over six more stanzas (22–27) the poem praises the myriad “supports” (*rten*) within the palace, of which the Lokeśvara is not only the most prominent but also the only one given by name. All the rest are figured as its “attendants” (*'khor*), like the members of a buddha's retinue. For instance:

22. There is the splendid chapel, like a cinching sash of clouds,
with the naturally-formed Lokeśvara and others,
statues from India, China, and Tibet
whose misty blessings roll down like rainclouds.

23. It is an inexhaustible treasury
of attainments ordinary and extraordinary,
a jeweled chain of masters from all families,⁷
bringing peace where seen, heard, remembered, or touched,
fit for compare with Akaniṣṭha Ghanavyūha.

24. Its surging smile of loving compassion
welcomes us into the city of liberation,
this naturally-formed Lokeśvara, with its retinue,
a field of sacred objects,⁸ of wisdom's self-appearance.

⁷ The Tibetan reads *rigs bral yongs 'dzin bla ma rin cen 'phreng*. Admittedly I am not entirely certain how to take *rigs bral*, “devoid of family.” Perhaps it indicates that the supports are not exclusive to one buddha-family or another.

⁸ “Sacred objects” translates the common formulation *rten dang brten*, “supports and supported,” a general way of speaking of statues, images, books, and other sacred objects as well as the chapels and larger spaces housing them.

Continuing the vertical theme, there are many signs here of an extended metaphorical comparison to Meru, the world mountain—such as comparing the Lokeśvara chapel to the clouds that gather high up around the peak, encircling it like a kind of girdle and raining down benefits onto our world below. The chapel is also placed in a metaphorical relationship (“fit for compare”) with Akaniṣṭha, highest of the sixteen Form Realm heavens stacked above our own Desire Realm.⁹ The statue itself is qualified primarily as a bringer of peace (*phan bde*), and as playing a welcoming role (*bsu ba*), like the host at a celebration. Lastly the poem's gaze soars up and out, past the chapel's golden rooftop (blazing like a second sun) and ending with four more cosmic comparisons (stanzas 28–31) that liken the Potala in turn to a heaven, a site for tantric accomplishment, a scene of festive celebration, and even a charnel ground. It is an optimal site for each and every sort of practice.

Then the poem makes a major transition: it shifts from describing the physical palace, to extolling the human activities of making, decorating, and occupying it. The poem praises the two individuals most responsible: the leader Sönam Rabten, and the architect Padma Rabten of Drongsar, who supervised its design (stanzas 32–34).¹⁰ It also praises the nobility in general, as officials of esteemed bloodline (*rigs rus*) arrayed in the ancient “Precious Ornamentation” garb (*rin chen rgyan cha*), described here as gathering and taking their seats inside the palace.¹¹ A scene gradually emerges of a large-scale gathering (*tshoms*), presumably within the palace's own great hall (*tshoms chen*). That the poem has indeed placed us inside its own hall is also confirmed by the fact that, after several verses describing a scene of celebration, the poem gives a lengthy account of the historical murals painted inside that great hall. It lauds the artists who designed them and their “Menthang” style (*sman thang*)

⁹ The exact same image is also invoked in a shorter poem by the Dalai Lama, written to accompany an inventory of the Lokeśvara chapel. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 26–29.

¹⁰ More builders and artists are described in the fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography; see Karmay 2014: 198, 228.

¹¹ This early reference to the “Precious Ornamentation” garb is noteworthy because this style of formal dress for lay officials was not instituted until years later; see note 38 below.

and names individual artists like Chöying Gyatso (stanzas 42–51).¹² It also praises particular illustrated scenes from those murals: the origins of the Tibetan race, the early dharma kings, and the activities of the bodhisattva in Tibet.¹³ This portion ends with a number of general praises of the palace's incomparable beauty and fame, its force of attraction drawing beings towards it (stanzas 52–59). Finally, the poem concludes (stanzas 60–64) with a series of exhortations: that the laws may remain strong; that the dispensation may endure and flourish; and that the cakravartin king (here probably alluding to Guśri Khan) continue to turn his wheel and prolong this Perfected Age of peace (*phan bde'i rdzogs ldan*). It ends, as it began, with a global perspective, having thus approached the palace, ascended from bottom to top, admired the statue at its peak, and then gathered and celebrated alongside its creators inside its great hall. The palace is surveyed vertically, then rendered as an occasion for elaborating and enacting broader themes of the state as a whole: enforcing law and promoting religion, broadcasting fame and attracting subjects, and above all ushering in the new Perfected Age as peaceful order and celebration. The way this poem “builds” the palace calls attention to its centrality and verticality, the paramountcy of the Lokeśvara statue as the epigone of those qualities of peace and celebration, and the palace's own role—especially its great hall—as the paradigmatic scene for enacting just that sort of festive gathering, as if to set the standard for the polity writ large.

If the palace is attributed an overarching symbolic role here, that role does not directly concern questions of identity—whether the identity of the palace *per se*, or that of the ruler occupying it. In other words, this poem simply does not dwell on the palace's status as a (or the) Potala, nor the ruler's consequent divinity. If anything, such one-to-one identities are fractured by the dozens of allusions the

¹² On the career of this artist see Jackson 1996.

¹³ The fifth Dalai Lama discussed the contents of the murals in another short text written to inform captions for the illustrations. This text is found in his collected works: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 42–50. The Dalai Lama mentioned composing this text in his autobiography at the same time as the preamble for the Lokeśvara chapel, in the fifth month of the earth mouse year (1648). See *ibid.*, vol. 5 (ca): 213. For pictures, see *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 52–82. See also Rdo rje phun tshogs 2014: 78–94.

poem makes to its encompassing world, rather than solidified into one ideological message. The aim seems to be to portray the palace as an emblem of worldly perfection and as the scene for enacting it. The palace is shown to embody many different ideals of rule. It is the physical testament to their attainment, the real space in which that multifaceted ideal becomes an actuality.

One stanza in particular seems rather out of joint from consensus theories about the palace's role in what Geertz called the “mechanics of power.” Avalokiteśvara and his Mount Potala are conspicuously absent, at best marginally relevant to the overall themes and attentions of this poem. And where Mount Potala is invoked as a model, in the seventeenth stanza, it is only obliquely:

17. In its beauty it takes after¹⁴ Indra's abode,
in its might, Lañka's little brother,¹⁵
Aḍakavatī¹⁶ by satisfying every desire,
and the actual Potala, by prolonging the celebration of peace.

Limiting Mount Potala's influence to this one stanza is one of several ways that its overall importance is mitigated. It bears repeating that the bodhisattva's abode was not the structural blueprint for the new palace. Here, its role takes the form of metonymy. The reference to Mount Potala renders it as the vehicle for isolating and emphasizing one feature. In that capacity, it is but one relationship among others. Each of the four lines communicates yet another quality of the new palace. The first pair, beauty and might, make an intertextual reference to the story of Songtsen Gampo's Marpori palace, as discussed in the previous chapter. This stanza adds two more qualities: material satisfaction (*'dod rgu'i longs spyod*) and celebrating peace and well-being (*bde skyid dga' ston*). In other words, it adds efflorescence (hence the comparison to Vaiśravaṇa, a god of wealth) and ideal governance (as the permanently pacific state of celebration, just like Mount Potala). One might argue that the latter is the

¹⁴ Tib. *rjes 'gro* = Skt. *anveti*.

¹⁵ Tib. *spun zlar*, typically elder and younger brothers.

¹⁶ Aḍakavatī (*Lcang lo can*) names the palace of Vaiśravaṇa, god of wealth, leader and northern king of Meru's four *lokapāla* world-guardians.

most important or most encompassing quality, insofar as the theme of celebration and peace typically characterized the Perfected Age in totum (hence *phan bde'i rdzogs ldan*). Celebration and the Perfected Age are invoked recurringly throughout this poem (e.g., stanzas 31, 36–38, 57, 64); and if we added the closely-linked ideal of peace (*phan bde, bde skyid* and variants), the list would grow even longer.

Regardless, Avalokiteśvara's own Mount Potala is not the model for the entire state of rule of a Perfected Age *per se*, so much as it shares the same characteristic mood. It aligns with how the Lokeśvara statue was portrayed in a “welcoming” role, like the host at the celebration, and as a bringer of peace raining down blessings from on high. Still, the palace also incorporates other qualities that beg comparisons to other parts of the cosmos. If there is one site that predominates as the overall model for polity, it would be Meru and Indra's palace atop it, which are invoked repeatedly throughout the poem.

Finally, this line also designates the bodhisattva's mountain as the “actual” (*dngos*) Potala. None of the other three comparisons here were qualified in any such way. Marpori and its new palace were not and could not *be* that other Potala, that “actual” Potala, ontologically speaking. It's possible that ontology (a claim about what the palace *is*, hence what the Dalai Lama *is*) may be barking up the wrong tree entirely. Indeed, the instrumental approach and perhaps the very idea of legitimation invoke relationships of predication: the argument is that someone in power is attempting to pass off (i.e., misrepresent) one thing (a ruler, a palace) as really being what, in truth, it is not. Such is the power attributed to the name: isn't the name supposed to make this palace *be*, in some meaningful sense, the bodhisattva's Potala? And isn't that identity supposed to ground the further claim that the Dalai Lama somehow *is* the bodhisattva? As one account had it, he “visibly expressed his nature as Avalokiteśvara...in coming to dwell on his mountain.” “Nature” means being, and “his mountain” means the bodhisattva's abode: Marpori *is* Mount Potala, ergo the Dalai Lama *is* Avalokiteśvara. In contrast, what we see in this stanza of the fifth Dalai Lama's poem is that he explicitly kept what he called the “actual Potala” at a conscious remove from his own palace. More importantly, the point of

relating them was not to make a claim about being at all. Rather it was to precipitate awareness of an aesthetic quality by juxtaposing two different objects in a metaphorical relationship. Meaning is produced by the irresolvable disjunction of holding the subject and the object of that comparison together. Recall that the power of what Ricoeur called a “live” symbol—its capacity to generate further understanding, or what he called “symbolic knowledge”—depends on that recognition of difference between the two things being compared, not the substitution of one for another.¹⁷ That is why Ricoeur tethered his thinking about symbols to a theory of metaphor:

[metaphor] is, in effect, a calculated error, which brings together things that do not go together and by means of this apparent misunderstanding it causes a new, hitherto unnoticed, relation of meaning to spring up between the terms that previous systems of classification had ignored or not allowed.¹⁸

Indeed, all the relationships invoked in this stanza were metaphors in Ricoeur's sense, governed by a number of poetic tropes whose keywords—“taking after” (*rjes 'gro*), “rivalling” (*'gran*), “like” (*bzhin*)—suggest variations on the general figure of simile (*dpe*, Skt. *upamā*) enumerated in the second chapter of Dandin's *Kāvyaḍarśa*.¹⁹ Poetic figuration allows for a range of possible relationships above and beyond predication, “is” or “is not.”

We ought to take seriously the metaphysics of the world that this poetry invokes. To object that it's all 'just poetry'—as in, just made up or unreal—misses the point. Were not these gods and places, Meru, Lanka, Avalokiteśvara, Śākyamuni, Potala, however far away or invisible or inaccessible, still part of the cosmo-moral order within which this poem located its subject? (I would also caution that the Dalai Lama's other, more purportedly empirical writings, like his autobiography or his history of Tibet, would be vulnerable to the same charge. The prose and the poetry occupy and address the same cosmos. This

¹⁷ Ricoeur 1976: 46–52; 1981: 19–24. He also pointed out that this idea of productive dissonance has been central to much theory of metaphor, as in Cohen's idea of “semantic impertinence” or Gilbert Ryle's “category mistake.”

¹⁸ Ricoeur 1976: 51.

¹⁹ See *Kāvyaḍarśa* verses II.57ff.

state was situated in the space and time of Jambudvīpa and Śākyamuni's dispensation.) Is it not rather that poetic discourse offered a most appropriate mode for engaging with these transcendent, excessive, or simply distant aspects of reality, and for articulating their connections to us? Could it not be that within this reality, some truths were best spoken poetically?

Much as Ricoeur rejected what he called a “sterile” definition of metaphor as substitution, our poem here makes no frank statement that equates or collapses any one site with any other. As I read it, the point is to refract the Lhasa palace. The poem educates a reader so that the perception of each of the palace's own qualities can spark the image of something else—another palace, city, realm, or heaven. In that sense, the Potala conjures an entire world in and through itself. To the properly cultivated sensorium it should be capable of invoking a panoply spanning horizontally across the earth and vertically into the heavens, beyond what could ever be reached by foot or perceived by the eye. The poem renders its qualities as an occasion for reflecting on that larger world. Like a multifaceted gem, abbreviated glimpses play across its surfaces. Although the whole may never come fully into view, one can know it indirectly by seeing the palace in the right way. To gaze upon the Potala palace, refracted through this poem, is to make what ordinarily remains out of sight flicker in and out of view. Crucially, the actual palace, the manmade physical structure, the one that is seen, touched, or moved through, is not dissolved by that process. It is the opposite. Thinking poetically helps a viewer see it and know it at once for itself, in all its own splendor, and simultaneously as tied to an entire world. It is this balance between the actual and the ideal, a sort of tensive relationship between the irreducibly human physical palace and the maximally hyperbolic rendering of it in imagination—and the way each can reveal or reflect back on the other—which seems to me well captured by Ricoeur's concept of symbol as live metaphor. It shows the usefulness of turning to poetry to think about real places. On one hand, the idealized image can enhance the actual building (extending it with further significance—an ideological effect). On the other hand, the actual building, stubbornly present, becomes a vehicle for briefly

glimpsing a higher and less attainable ideal (hence revealing its own limitations or possibilities—a critical or aspirational effect).

There is also a more straightforward takeaway here. We have to seriously entertain the possibility—however troubling to larger narratives about power—that Mount Potala was not all that important, let alone central to the symbolism of the fifth Dalai Lama's new palace. Needless to say, this calls into question the entire legitimation argument built up from that first premise. It is understandable if there is reluctance to incorporate such poetic language into a historical assessment of the Potala and its role as the so-called “symbol of the power” of the Dalai Lamas. Poetry is fanciful, imaginary language, rather than reliable literal description. Exactly! All the more reason why the omission of Mount Potala as a direct influence here is so glaring. It is precisely when an author like the fifth Dalai Lama chose to say something poetically that one should pay attention, especially if one’s interest is in power and ideology, hence in discursive techniques of distortion (or, less polemically, in the arts of indirect speech). Consider the scene in 1648. Central Tibet has been unified, the figurehead of this new government has recently authored a new celebratory history of his country, and after three years of work, a new palace for him has been completed and consecrated. Here, we find him extending his most eloquent tongue to write triumphantly, euphemistically, about it. This poem is the fifth Dalai Lama telling us in his own words exactly what is so great about his palace (*cher brjod*), expressing every positive quality it possesses (*yon tan yongs su brjod pa*). He could probably make any point he wished, to any degree, at any length. As someone well schooled in the repertory of figurative poetry, not to mention Buddhist cosmological and narrative literature, he was well equipped and clearly willing to engage in hyperbole, invoke comparisons, or situate his own palace with respect to a world that included gods and heavens. Poetry seems like the ideal medium for doing so. This is the same Dalai Lama who was supposed to have been intent on presenting himself as the sacred ruler of Tibet, “impressing” the fact of his divinity upon his subjects, “systematically deploying” religious motifs to

promote his brand. Some if not all of his religious and ritual activities as ruler were allegedly enacted with just that goal in mind—to satisfy “his intention to become sacred ruler of Tibet.” So then what was he thinking when he wrote this poem? Why pass up on this golden opportunity to showcase all the ways that his palace was Potala, Potala was his palace, and he was the bodhisattva?²⁰ If not here, then where? Why is that ideology so conspicuously absent? Or is the world we find simply not the one we were looking for?

ORGANIZATION OF THE WHITE PALACE

With this challenge ringing, and with a rudimentary sense of what else it was possible to think and say about the Potala palace, now it is time to get a basic impression of how it was put together. The main obstacle is that there are simply no contemporary seventeenth-century sources that provide anything like a comprehensive layout of the White Palace, or even an inventory of its rooms and their functions, as Sangyé Gyatso gave for the Red Palace in his *Tomb Inventory*. Far and away the most helpful source is a 2011 survey of the history and architecture of the site, published by a team of Chinese and Tibetan specialists and titled simply *Budala Gong* (布达拉宫, i.e., “*Potala Palace*”).²¹ The work is less successful, I think, where it starts to speculate on the intentions of historical agents and the political dimensions of Tibetan Buddhism; unsurprisingly it shows major bias whenever matters of relative autonomy vis-à-vis China are broached. Nevertheless, this study is invaluable for its intimate attention to palace construction and organization, including dozens of illustrations, charts, and photographs,

²⁰ The authors of the *Budala Gong*, who at least noticed this poem (or at least Sangyé Gyatso's reference to it in his *Tomb Inventory*), somehow draw the polar opposite conclusion from my own. They cite that same seventeenth stanza as evidence *only* of Mount Potala's influence as a model for the palace—ignoring the three other references in the same stanza. *Bu da la gong* 2011: 135.

²¹ *Bu da la gong* 2011. The work is the product of a large committee of Chinese and Tibetan researchers, under director (*zhuren*) Fu Zhenghao 付正浩, vice-director Ma Xiaoli 马晓利, and chief editors (*zong zhubian*) Mu Ya 木雅 and Quji Jiancai 曲吉建才 (probably Chökyi Gyaltzen, Chos kyi gyal mtshan).

inventories of individual rooms and exacting measurements of floor plans, pillars, shelving, statuary, beam and bracket woodwork, and so on. It adds much information to a prior survey in Tibetan, whose title might be rendered *Historical Overview of the Potala Palace (Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs)*.²² As my own thoughts on the palace are indebted to the information these scholars provide, they will be developed here in conversation with some of their own conclusions.

Our goal is to build up a first sense of basic ideological principles encoded in the overall organization of the White Palace and in the relationship between its component parts. My conclusions are admittedly speculative. I will focus on hierarchies of access and encounter. In other words, I explore how the organization of space enables, on one hand, a scale of relatively public or private spaces; and, on the other hand, a scale of relatively mediated or immediate encounters. From these basic principles, I draw two conclusions. First, in the White Palace these hierarchies were structured according to what I call an “offset” logic. We may helpfully contrast that arrangement with the concentricity of Songtsen Gampo's fictional Marpori palace, discussed in the previous chapter. A concentric system is a logic of encompassment: each successive term contains the last, and is contained in turn. They can be hypothetically collapsed or expanded on the center. On the other hand, in an offset system, the terms are juxtaposed and cannot be collapsed. What is repeated is the pattern. Hence attention is drawn from the terms themselves, which in a concentric system may substitute for one another, to the relations sustained between terms. In that regard, an offset organization is not entirely unlike a metaphor rather than a substitution. Second, I suggest that the palace's overall organization was anchored by the Lokeśvara statue at the hill's peak. We have already seen signs of the prominent role the statue played, both in the fifth Dalai Lama's historical accounts of the palace's construction,

²² *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs*. Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1991. The text was produced by the Cultural Committee of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (*Bod rang skyong ljongs rig dngos do dam 'u yon lhan khang*) and edited by Phakpa Sherap ('Phags pa shes rab).

and in the praise-poem just discussed. A tutelary statue similarly anchored the literary depiction of Songtsen Gampo's Marpori palace and its own problematic of relating bodhisattva and king. In light of their difference in organizational logic, then, and even granted that there may have been immediate practical constraints, nevertheless it is telling that the new palace grew up not so much around and encompassing the statue, as in front of it.

Now, to understand the palace's individual structure, we must also acknowledge its participation in broader cultural forms. Here we take our cue from the authors of the *Budala Gong*, who stress this point. They claim that the White Palace “was designed according to the political and religious needs (政教上的需要) of its time,” elaborated as follows:

The building's structure and especially its compositional layout were based on traditional, habitual construction styles (传统的习惯做法). For instance, it adopted characteristics of historical buildings, including royal buildings of the Tibetan empire; as well as the dzong or the hilltop structures that were seats of regional hegemony from the Ming era onwards; and some aristocratic manors or *gzhis ka*; while at the same time it directly borrowed characteristics of the Ganden Phodrang building within Drepung monastery. It then underwent further changes until it attained its current scale and form. It not only surmounted an inherited history but also influenced what came after.²³

In other words, the authors approach the White Palace as the “habitual” extension of a pervasive cultural style, from which it borrowed features to suit its “political and religious needs.” Hence the palace is portrayed as hybrid of three major models: the political dzong-fortress, the aristocratic household, and the religious Ganden Phodrang residence (the private residence of the Dalai Lamas at Drepung monastery, and this government's namesake). This tripartite classification—fortress, manor, monastery—corresponds perfectly to what these authors understand as the three major functions of the palace, namely, (1) to be a seat of political power (base); (2) to house administrative offices staffed by society's aristocratic elites (middle); and (3) to provide a personal residence for the Dalai Lama and all

²³ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 67.

the religious needs of his renunciant's life (top). This is a fine starting point for considering the basic overall arrangement and hierarchy of the White Palace. One note of caution is that the identifications of particular rooms must be historicized, since many correspond to government offices whose formal institution postdated the seventeenth century (though they may have had closely related antecedents).²⁴

What we are here calling the “base” floor is actually the third floor of the White Palace, as built up around the natural incline of the hill. One must climb up from the palace's fore courtyard, then through a vestibule, then ascend again and enter an antechamber on the third floor. The whole palace is therefore entered from the east, but that antechamber stands on the south side (i.e., the “front” of the palace as seen from down on the ground). From this room, one enters the great hall (*tshoms chen*), to which we were already introduced in the poem above. Festooned with the aforementioned murals of Tibet's origins and kings of yore, this great hall was where major assemblies and ceremonies of state were conducted. It is probably the most frequently mentioned area of the palace in the fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography. Among its myriad uses, we may mention services by the Namgyal College—typically stabilization, longevity, and death-averting rites for the fifth Dalai Lama (but sometimes also for others like the Qośot Khan);²⁵ celebrations of the new year;²⁶ the bestowal and reception of offerings, gifts, and/or recognition of great deeds of patronage like sponsoring new editions of the Tibetan Kangyur;²⁷ dramatic performances, speeches, debates, and ordination rites;²⁸ enthronement ceremonies, as for the office of Desi;²⁹ and lavish receptions for high Tibetan lamas or Mongolian

²⁴ For helpful blueprints of each floor, with individual rooms labeled, see *Bu da la gong* 2011: 327–334.

²⁵ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 223, 375, 498–99, 513 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 149a, 254a, 341b, 350a); and *ibid.*, vol. 6 (cha): 48, 67 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 34b–35a, 47b–48a).

²⁶ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 501 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 343b); and *ibid.*, vol. 6 (cha): 12, 101, 177 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 9b, 72a–b, 126b–27a).

²⁷ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 9–10, 304 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 7b–8a, 217b–18a).

²⁸ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 52 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 37b–38a).

²⁹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 117–18 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 84b).

princes.³⁰ In sum, this hall was the quintessential site for festive, learned, cosmopolitan gatherings of the upper echelons of government and society. Consider the account in the fifth Dalai Lama's autobiography of the water mouse new year (1672). He describes a robust celebration which included, in addition to Tibetans, a faction of Mongolian princes headed by the king Dalai Khan, who succeeded Dayan Khan as inheritor of Guśri Khan's title vis-a-vis Tibet,³¹ and an imperial emissary from the Qing court with an entourage of other monks and lay officials from China; envoys from the king in Kathmandu; and a mass of different languages and forms of dress that filled up the entire great hall. The celebration included benedictory speeches and learned discussions by court orators like Darpa Lotsāwa and Gyurmé of Langbu, interspersed with Indian and Chinese music.³²

Ascending to the fourth and fifth stories above, there are various administrative offices. Here is where we run into some difficulty: many of the government offices named in the *Budala Gong* postdated the turmoil of the early eighteenth century and the subsequent reorganization of the Ganden Phodrang government. Still, it is likely that they grew out of an extant bureaucratic structure rather than being created out of whole cloth. Thus the White Palace's fourth floor would eventually house rooms to the east and south for the office of finance (*rtse phyag las khungs*) and the steward's office (*'phral bde las khungs*), responsible for all matters of money, clothing, valuables, health, and so forth pertaining to the life of the Dalai Lama.³³ In the southeast corner was a suite of offices for the palace's chief of staff (*spyi khyab mkhan po*), a high-ranking position not formally instituted until the reign of the eighth

³⁰ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 133, 136, 172 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 95b, 97b, 123b)

³¹ Oyunbilig (2008) names him as Guśri's sixth son, named Dorj (多尔济) and holding the title of *hong taiji* (洪台吉) making him head of all *taiji*-s in Qinghai before ascending to Dayan's office in 1671.

³² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 177 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 126b–27a).

³³ Some Tibetan accounts treat these as the same office; for a summary of its functions see Bshad sgra Dga' ldan dpal 'byor et al. 1991: 29–31. There it is said that the highest officers were two monastic and one lay official of the fourth rank.

Dalai Lama.³⁴ An office for the kalön (*bka' blon*) occupied the eastern wing and overlooked the Deyang courtyard below. “Kalön” was a title which conventionally referred to the four ministers who headed the Kashak (*bka' shag*), the cabinet bureau instituted in 1751; although Sangyé Gyatso also used the expression *bka' blon shag* when describing the general responsibilities of a minister (*blon po*) in Article Three of his *Clear Mirror*.³⁵ Up above, on the fifth floor, the *Budala Gong* also names rooms for a caretaker's office (*shod 'gag*), a position instituted in 1757;³⁶ and for the Dalai Lama's junior and senior tutors (*yongs 'dzin*) and his chamberlain (*gzims dpon*), directly in charge of the care of his person and apartments.³⁷ Another important room on the fifth floor was the Khamsum Zilnön (*khamsum zil gnon*) or “Overwhelming the Three Realms,” a large multi-purpose room on the south side, whose windows looked down onto the Zhol village below. Among its various uses we find, for instance, that in anticipation of the water ox (1673) new year, the Dalai Lama brought forty-five of his “Precious Ornamentation” (*rin chen rgyan cha*)³⁸ lay aristocratic officials, who were responsible for planning the upcoming holiday, into the Khamsum Zilnön for a congratulatory feast.³⁹ In June 1679, the fifth Dalai

³⁴ This third-rank clerical position (in practice, the highest rank) involved overseeing all duties pertaining to the Dalai Lama's person, including mediating all correspondence to and from the Dalai Lama. See Bshad sgra Dga' ldan dpal 'byor et al. 1991: 19–22; and Gling dbon Padma skal bzang 2011: 142.

³⁵ On the *Bka' blon* and the *Bka' shag* see Gling dbon Padma bskal bzang 2011: 1–7; and Bshad sgra Dga' ldan dpal 'byor et al. 1991: 16–19. For Sangyé Gyatso's government see his *Dwangshel me long*, in *Bod kyi snga rabs khrims srol yig cha bsdams bsgrigs* 2011: 223–26; and summary in Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs 1993: 97–98.

³⁶ On the *shod 'gag*, see Bshad sgra Dga' ldan dpal 'byor et al. 1991: 28–29; and Gling dbon Padma bskal bzang 2011: 187.

³⁷ On the *gzims dpon* see Bshad sgra Dga' ldan dpal 'byor et al. 1991: 24–25; and Gling dbon Padma bskal bzang 2011: 178.

³⁸ This custom was officially instituted in winter 1672 and took after the court costumery of the Phakmodru, Rinpungpa, and other former Tibetan polities. The elaborate ornamentation included several types of earrings and jewelry, silk sashes, brocade shirts and cloaks, and a small hat. Shakapba suggests the newly-appointed Desi, Lobzang Thutop, strove to regulate apparel in response to perceived practices under the Tsangpa Desi, whose officials had worn a hodgepodge of Tibetan and Mongolian styles in various permutations as was their wont (Shakapba 2010: 364–365). The history and institution of the *rin chen rgyan sprod*, and the disarray in styles worn in his own early court, are discussed by the fifth Dalai Lama in his autobiography (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 177–80) and also briefly mentioned by Sangyé Gyatso (*Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 35a). For remarks on Tibetan court attire see also Sreg shing Blo bzang don grub, “Bod dbus gtsang khul gyi pho mo'i rgyan gos dang de snga'i sku drag shod drung ji yod skor.” In *Bod kyi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs* 23 (2003: 181–195).

³⁹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 227 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 163b).

Lama joined Terdak Lingpa of Mindröling in this room to perform the rituals and calculations for fixing the date of Sangyé Gyatso's imminent investiture as Desi.⁴⁰ In December 1694, the Desi Sangyé Gyatso himself used this room to fete imperial emissaries from the Kangxi emperor, styled as “luminaries of the dispensation” (*bstan pa gsal byed*) and thus probably monks, whereupon they delivered petitions and gifts and were met with an eloquent speech on the subject of cakravartin kings and the five fields of knowledge, delivered by Geshé Chakpa Chöphel.⁴¹ In November 1720, when the Panchen Lama came to bestow full ordination on the seventh Dalai Lama after his enthronement, he fetched up in the Khamsum Zilnön. The actual ordination and the face-to-face meetings between Panchen and Dalai Lamas took place in an even more intimate space: the latter's own personal apartments on the sixth floor above.⁴²

That top-floor suite of the Dalai Lama's apartments included areas for small audiences, sleeping, studying, small-scale rituals and personal practice, not to mention kitchens and bathrooms. The fifth Dalai Lama's apartments were sometimes called the “West Sunlight Apartments” (*nyi 'od nub*) to distinguish them from the “East Sunlight Apartments,” overlooking the fore courtyard below, which were significantly renovated under the thirteenth Dalai Lama, albeit without altering the overall structure.⁴³ The full name of the west apartments appears to have been *Nyi 'od nub bsod nams legs 'khyil*, literally “West Sunlight Merit Swirl;” in the *Budala Gong* the room is often named simply “Swirl of Merit” (福妙旋殿); but in earlier sources we find either the generic “apartments” or

⁴⁰ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 7 (ja): 190–91.

⁴¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 10 (ja-4): 278–79. This may be the same orator “Geshé Chöphel” mentioned in Chapter Two.

⁴² Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 122–23.

⁴³ *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 28–29; Phuntsok Namgyal 2002: 38–49; Meyer 1987: 19.

sometimes the abbreviation *nyi 'od 'khyil* or “Sunlight Swirl.”⁴⁴ Among the few early explicit references to these apartments, in late May 1660 the Dalai Lama had the Lokeśvara statue and another of its kindred naturally-formed statues, along with other sacred objects, brought into his personal worship space in the west apartments (*gzims chung nub ma*), whence he conducted a four-week-long retreat, on the advice of the Nechung oracle, who thought the Dalai Lama was getting too distracted by temporal political concerns (*srid skyong gi g.yeng ba*).⁴⁵ After the death of the Desi Trinlé Gyatso in early March 1668, the Dalai Lama brought twenty monks from Gyumé, the tantric college, into these apartments to perform five days of Guhyasamāja recitations and offerings prior cremating the corpse.⁴⁶ Sangyé Gyatso described giving medical treatment to the Dalai Lama in the Sunlight Swirl apartments in early 1682.⁴⁷ It was also in these rooms that the deceased Dalai Lama's body was secretly enshrined immediately after his death, after a rapid and hushed discussion on whether to cremate or mummify the body, and whether it should face northeast to beckon disciples from Mongolia and China, or southwest to ward off foes (in both cases they chose the latter option).⁴⁸ Clearly this was a space of utmost privacy. Later, in 1720, it was in these same Sunlight Swirl apartments that the seventh Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyatso conducted his more intimate enthronement and consecration rituals, following his public enthronement in the great hall below (on which see below), and also where he received his full ordination from the Panchen Lama shortly thereafter.⁴⁹ So despite the difficulty of accurately naming many specific rooms for the seventeenth century, given the scarcity of contemporary evidence and the

⁴⁴ For a description of this suite of rooms see *Bu da la gong* 2011: 63-65; and *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 31–32.

⁴⁵ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 434 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 295b).

⁴⁶ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 64 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 45b).

⁴⁷ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 8 (ja-2): 336–37.

⁴⁸ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 8 (ja-2): 349. See also *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 44b.

⁴⁹ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 118, 122–23.

major modifications to bureaucratic structure that took place in the mid-eighteenth century, still, we know for a fact that the great hall below and the Dalai Lama's apartments on top were there from the beginning. It is probably safe to speculate that if there were any administrative offices in that earlier era, such as a space for the first Desi Sönam Rabten and his successors, or for overseers of the palace's financial and practical affairs, or for attendants of the Dalai Lama and other members of his personal staff, they would likely have fallen in between the bottom and the top, just as they did in the eighteenth century and beyond. There is really nowhere else in the White Palace to put them.

As mentioned above, the authors of the *Budala Gong* are inclined to treat this basic arrangement as a hierarchy of the political/military (fortress), the political/administrative (government office) and the religious (Dalai Lama's rooms). I would rather say that the Dalai Lama and the government he headed pervaded all levels, albeit in different capacities. Each level reveals another aspect of that complex role: as presiding over large-scale ceremonies; as head authority over all government offices; and as the individual ruler whose own duties included private audiences and meetings as well as ritual services, writing, teaching, and retreat. Relative privacy of access, and relative intimacy of encounter, seem to be more productive ideas for thinking about palace hierarchy, rather than any stark binary of the political and the religious (政教). To think about the building overall, the authors of the *Budala Gong* helpfully thematize five relevant features of the pervasive Tibetan architectural style, which characterized the White Palace and much else besides:

- 1) The main building is preceded by a fore courtyard
- 2) The lower floor of the main building houses auxiliary structures (次要建筑); personal residences are on its upper floors
- 3) The fore courtyard leads directly to the second floor of the main building

- 4) The main building includes a great hall
- 5) The personal apartments include a “hall for paying court” (朝拜殿)⁵⁰

This is an informative rubric for summarizing the general formal characteristics of the White Palace. Like all generalizations, it is at once clarifying and limiting. One concern is that making the palace just another token of a universal type, an expression of fixed cultural norms, is another way of hiving off its physical organization from any effort at interpretation. Doing so only reinforces the tendency to separate the material dimension from the symbolic, then view the latter as a function of the name, no more.⁵¹ Many of the comparisons these authors make, moreover, are to buildings that postdate the Potala or bear only vague resemblance to it.⁵² Despite such misgivings, these starting coordinates are helpful: indeed the White Palace was foregrounded by an open courtyard; visitors then ascended into an assembly hall on the lower floors; and then its residential spaces were clustered in the highest part of the palace. With these coordinates in place, our next question should be about movement and orientation. How are these spaces approached and encountered? How do they orient the viewer, and how are they oriented with respect to one another?

⁵⁰ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 68–76. The authors add a sixth feature, which I have not listed because it does not concern the palace per se. Namely, they note that henceforth all major monasteries included a residential space for the Dalai Lama, one whose characteristics were modeled after his apartments in the White Palace.

⁵¹ But cf. Meyer's claim that “the modular character of Tibetan architecture encourages an impression of similarity between architectural complexes, in spite of their individuality” (1987: 16). My point is that emphasizing similarity can't explain individuality, and the latter is crucial to any claims about the unique symbolic significance of a particular structure like the Potala palace. Otherwise the only thing left capable of distinguishing it would be the meanings invoked by its location and name, which is just to fall straight back into the strict material/symbolic dichotomy critiqued in the previous chapter.

⁵² *Bu da la gong* 2011: 68–70. For instance, regarding fore courtyards, they draw comparisons to the earlier Ganden Phodrang estate at Drepung; Norbulingka (the Dalai Lama's summer palace); the old aristocratic manor of Rnam sras gling (in Lhokha across the river from Samyé monastery); Shalu monastery (in Tsang, founded in the early eleventh century); and the personal apartments or *bla brang* of the Panchen Lama at Tashilhunpo in Shigatsé. The Ganden Phodrang residence at Drepung has three courtyards and was oriented north-south rather than west-east like the Potala. I do not see all that much resemblance between the two. Norbulingka of course postdates the White Palace. And Shalu, as Roberto Vitali has shown, was originally designed as an Indian vihāra organized around an inner sanctum; later during the Yüan dynasty and under the patronage of Drakpa Gyaltzen it was enlarged according to a Chinese geomantic model. Vitali emphasized the “unconventional appearance” of Shalu, “one that is seldom encountered in Tibet at any period.” Vitali 1990: 89–122.

Consider how a hypothetical viewer would traverse the extent of the palace, from start to finish. Let us begin all the way out. Marpori was located to the west of the city, about a mile distant, and loomed above it from that place apart. (As Tucci once put it, the palace was “way out of town.”)⁵³ When Sangyé Gyatso was designing the Great Worship Assembly, as we saw in Chapter Three, there was actually some debate over whether it was appropriate for the procession to march all the way from the Lhasa Tsuklakhang to the Potala, given how far away the latter was from the heart of the city.⁵⁴ Whereas Marpori and Lhasa city are oriented west-to-east with respect to one another, the edifice itself is oriented roughly north-to-south. It is foregrounded to the south by the Zhol village, an enclosed micro-city of government facilities and services, including a print-house, prison, stables, mint, government offices, army headquarters, and so on.⁵⁵ Going north through Zhol to the foot of the hill, one climbs the large stairway that zigs and zags up the south face, turning east up the path known as the “Phuntshok Dülam” (*phun tshogs 'du lam*), passing through a portico and then turning north towards a four-story building that would later become an academy for clerical government officials (*rtse slob sgra*).⁵⁶ Moving under a two-pillar gateway, one would then reorient to face west, and issue into the large courtyard fronting the main building of the White Palace. This open fore courtyard, known as the “Deyang Shar” or “East Peace Courtyard” (*bde dbyangs shar*), stages the encounter with the east-facing facade of the White Palace itself. The courtyard was famous for the dances (*'cham*) performed there, which the Dalai Lama would observe from the window of the east apartments up above.⁵⁷

⁵³ Tucci 1956: 92–93

⁵⁴ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 29 ('og).

⁵⁵ On Zhol village, see Larsen and Sinding-Larsen 2001: 108–12; Alexander 2002; Henss 2014: 135–37; for a detailed map see *Bu da la gong* 2011: 313.

⁵⁶ This school was built during the tenure of the seventh Dalai Lama and typically housed 40–70 monks from the three major Geluk monasteries. It later burned down and was restored. See *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 32–33.

⁵⁷ For an illustration of dancing in the Deyang courtyard (circa 1695) see *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 120.

Like peeling the layers of an onion, we can already see how the same encounter is repeatedly re-staged on an increasingly intimate scale. In each case, the viewer occupies a fore space and the palace looms above and behind them. First the entire edifice of Marpori, looming off to the west, is beheld from afar from the “fore” space of the city. Next the whole palace complex with all its attendant structures, looming to the north, is encountered from the fore space of the Zhol village. Then, moving up the side of the mountain, the main building of the White Palace, oriented west-to-east, confronts the viewer standing within the Deyang courtyard. At each iteration, the encounter is closer, more intimate. In addition, the viewer is repeatedly positioned to re-contextualize what came before, in relation to what lies ahead and now commands attention. We might add that this relativizing and refocusing of successive encounters, the further one moves up and in, is also accentuated by the way the viewer's own body is repeatedly reoriented, turned and then turned again. Each “foreground,” so to speak, is also a kind of transitional space marking the movement between levels and reorienting the viewer towards their next encounter. On this point the authors of the *Budala Gong* agree. Speaking of the Deyang courtyard, they astutely observe that one of its functions was to “differentiate primary and secondary” (主次分明) elements of the palace, “thus eliciting a focusing effect” (收到突出重点的效果). To turn and enter that open space is to be recontextualized and refocused. Each foreground elicits a new attention to the “main” building, which the viewer now faces, as if confronting the palace all over again for the first time. The act relativizes one's prior experiences, back behind and lower down, which become secondary in relation to this now primary, closer encounter.

The value of their insight is confirmed by the fact that the same pattern repeats as the viewer moves within. Now reoriented from east to west, one would cross the Deyang courtyard and enter the main building by ascending first a series of stone steps and then a triple-column flight of wooden stairs,

issuing into the vestibule on the second floor.⁵⁸ On the north wall of this vestibule are paintings of Songtsen Gampo and his queens, including the original Marpori palace, with Tritsün captured in the act of crossing the bridge between her tower and the king's. The south wall would eventually be filled by the fifth Dalai Lama's famous 1679 edict, stamped with images of his hands, appointing Sangye Gyatso as regent.⁵⁹ Then, moving up to the third floor via a staircase in the southeast corner of the building, the viewer proceeds into the anteroom foregrounding the great hall. The hall is entered from the south, suggesting a formal north-to-south orientation, as the authors of the *Budala Gong* concur. However, we also find that the hall could be internally oriented west to east.⁶⁰ Roughly 717 square meters in area,⁶¹ the hall is lofted to form a kind of atrium with an inner roof, such that rooms on the fourth and fifth floors make a veranda around it. (The sixth floor effectively sits on their roof.) Continuing our pattern of alternating orientation as one moves upwards and inwards, the great hall itself can be said to lie, in like fashion, beneath and before the Dalai Lama's apartments up above and to the west. The hall thus foregrounds the apartments in the same way that the city foregrounded the mountain, Zhol foregrounded the palace, the Deyang courtyard foregrounded the main building, and the south antechamber foregrounded the great hall.

The west apartments, as this pattern predicts, are internally oriented north-to-south and foregrounded by their own small anteroom on the south side. In this sense they formally repeat the great hall below, albeit on a more intimate scale. As we have already seen, these apartments were the

⁵⁸ On the pertinence of this triple stair (*sum skas*) as a mark of distinction (the central column ideally reserved for the Dalai Lama) and compared to similar features of the Beijing imperial palace, see Meyer 1987: 28.

⁵⁹ On the edict see Richardson 1980.

⁶⁰ As in the enthronement of the seventh Dalai Lama, described below. Cf. *Bu da la gong* (2011: 57): "The Dalai Lama's throne is inside the hall on the north side."

⁶¹ *Bu da la gong* (2011: 57) lists the dimensions as 25.8 meters wide by 27.85 meters deep. Phuntsok Namgyal estimates the size at 717 square meters (2002: 30). The count of pillars varies: the *Budala Gong* says forty-four; Phuntsok Namgyal says thirty-four; the *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* says forty, including thirty-eight smaller pillars and two larger; Henss has thirty-six (2014: 106).

site of private audiences and rituals. The authors of the *Budala Gong* name it a “hall for paying court” (朝拜殿), a term with no exact equivalent in Tibetan (they suggest *mjal zhu khang* or “audience chamber”). This smaller hall was roughly 222 square meters in area.⁶² It was accompanied by a suite of personal rooms for the Dalai Lama, tucked in the spaces behind it. In addition to the examples cited above, according to the *Historical Overview of the Potala Palace*, its main uses in later centuries also included “minor services” (*mdzad sgo chung*) connected to the new year, and the Dalai Lama's “putting on his summer clothes” (*dbyar chas bzhed pa*) on the eighth day of the third month in anticipation of his move to the summer palace, Norbulingka; as well as meetings of top government officials of the third or fourth rank (i.e. the highest-ranked officials); and private audiences with emissaries of the Qing court. These authors also list a number of important government activities conducted in this and the adjoining bedrooms—named the Zurchong Rabsal (*zur 'phyong rab gsal*), the Chimé Namgyal (*'chi med rnam rgyal*), and the Ganden Yangtsé (*dga' ldan yang rtse*)—such as affixing seals and receiving reports from Kashak cabinet officials, as well as the Dalai Lama's own personal practice, writing, study, and rest.⁶³ We see again that ostensibly religious or political activities pervade the entire palace, whose hierarchies follow the principles of relative degree of access (higher ranks ascend to higher floors) and relative intimacy of encounter (as between the larger and smaller meeting halls).

Last of all, what we find standing above and behind the Dalai Lama's apartments is nothing other than the Lokeśvara chapel at the very peak of the hill.⁶⁴ As in the Dalai Lama's poem, the chapel marks the logical culmination of this entire ascent inward and upward, starting all the way back down on the ground of Lhasa city below. It is the most intimate and private space of all. As expected, it too is

⁶² Roughly 14.7 meters wide and 15.1 meters deep.

⁶³ *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 31–32.

⁶⁴ Meyer (1987: 32) writes: “Even if this chapel is not a true cave, as tradition states, but a grotto made of stucco, the fact remains that its position does correspond to the mountain's summit.”

oriented from north to south, roughly 48.5 square meters in area.⁶⁵ To enter it is to encounter the Lokeśvara statue, centered along the north wall and facing south. By this formal logic, I suggest that we consider the chapel as the White Palace's quintessentially private kernel, its summit and its destination. In the famous sketch of the White Palace reproduced for Kircher's *China Illustrata*, which predated the Red Palace and the gold roof of the fifth Dalai Lama's tomb complex (not to mention all the other gold roofs added later), we see a single chapel roof jutting up at the top and center of the structure.⁶⁶ General inaccuracies of this secondhand rendition notwithstanding, it does not seem unreasonable to guess that this was the roof was of the Lokeśvara chapel. Illustrations of the Red Palace in the midst of its construction (among the murals in that very same Red Palace) clearly show the chapel's hexagonal roof jutting up even as the walls of the new Red Palace are still being built—more evidence that it originally crested the White Palace in its first iteration.⁶⁷ We saw that the fifth Dalai Lama reckoned the Lokeśvara statue as foremost among the “supports,” in other words the myriad sacred objects, stored and used in the palace. Upon completion of the White Palace in 1648, he had eight new sandalwood statues commissioned to serve as its “retinue” (*khor*), and set up three further chapels to house different collections of sacred objects: a “lama” (*bla ma*) chapel, a “bronzes” (*li ma*) chapel, and a “Chinese” chapel (*rgya nag gi lha khang*), again perfectly in line with the poem discussed above.⁶⁸ Around the same time, he authored a brief text in verse and prose that gave a capsule summary of the chapel's history and the qualities of the statue, meant to be the introduction for an inventory of the

⁶⁵ On the internal arrangement of the chapel see *Bu da la gong* 2011: 104, 362.

⁶⁶ Kircher 1987: 67.

⁶⁷ See *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 115; and *ibid.*: 122 where both roofs of the Lokeśvara chapel and the new tomb for the fifth Dalai Lama are visible atop the completed Red Palace. On the Lokeśvara chapel roof see also *Bu da la gong* 2011: 369.

⁶⁸ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 214 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 142b). Those chapels may or may not be related to the chapels of the same name that were later part of the third floor of the Red Palace. The location of the Red Palace's own “bronzes” and “Chinese statues” chapels, basically right in between the West Apartments of the White Palace and the Lokeśvara Chapel, suggests this is not implausible.

chapel's contents.⁶⁹ He used the Lokeśvara chapel for his own personal retreats, as Sangyé Gyatso noted.⁷⁰ The priority the fifth Dalai Lama placed on this Lokeśvara statue is all the more significant in that, as we will see in the next chapter, such was emphatically not the case for Sangyé Gyatso. It was a choice, not a reflex or a foregone conclusion.

Let us quickly consider this brief text, titled the *Precious Storehouse*, which was written (circa 1646) as the introduction for an inventory of the Lokeśvara chapel. This text consists of twelve stanzas in verse and then a short prose portion which gives in broad strokes the history of Marpori and the statue up to its auspicious return in 1645. (The same events were also depicted in his autobiography as well as his inventory of the Lhasa Tsuklakhang.) The verses closely echo those in the Potala praise poem discussed above: they draw comparisons between the Potala palace and the heaven of Akaṇiṣṭha, the treasuries of Vaiśravaṇa, and the might of Laṅka. Again, the Lokeśvara chapel is singled out as the entire palace's paramount sacred site, and the Lokeśvara statue is the only object specified by name: “the naturally-formed statue of the Lotus-Holder, and the rest.” The palace, being the center or “navel” (*lte ba*) of the state over which it rules, is again explicitly tied to the onset of a new Perfected Age, freshly sprung from within an age of conflict (*rtsod dus*). The victorious Guśri Khan is figured as a cakravartin or conquering king, invited into this palace as the guest of honor at the new Perfected Age (*rdzogs ldan mgron*), again invoking the appropriate aesthetic of celebration:

Emā! Victorious over all three levels of life,
unifying all four quarters,

⁶⁹ This preamble is in the Dalai Lama's collected works: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 26–29 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 24b–26b). There it is included among short works that he authored in the fire dog year (1646) and is preceded by the label *Gangs can sa'i thig le rgyal khab chen po pho brang po ta la'i rang byon 'phags pa lo ke shwa ra'i gtsug lag khang gi rten mchod kyī deb ther rin cen bang mdzod*. If the inventory itself is extant, I do not know of it.

⁷⁰ For instance, he described a retreat there in early June 1659, and again in early November of the same year. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 399, 415 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folios 270b, 282a). Sangyé Gyatso's own remark about the Dalai Lama's use of the site later in life is found in *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 303.

in this age of conflict, the cakravartin, heaven's elect⁷¹
is called to this palace as guest of the Perfected Age.

In it, the chapel of the naturally-formed Lokeśvara,
with its wondrous love for all the world,
bearing the glory of a lord's eight qualities⁷²—
its contents are given in this text, the *Precious Storehouse*.⁷³

The palace and statue, in their beauty, might, wealth, and peacefulness, confirm the sovereignty and superiority of this newly established state vis-a-vis its neighbors. That superiority is again founded by analogy to the world itself:

When kings' hosts of China and Hor upper and lower⁷⁴
lay down their pride and obediently
touch fingertips to their hearts—
then Brahma's own power has met its match!⁷⁵

Let us note two important things in this text before moving on. The first is that the fifth Dalai Lama explicitly prioritized the Lokeśvara statue as Songtsen Gampo's main tutelary deity. As he put it, the statue “occupied the principle position in the worship-field” (*mchod pa'i zhing gi gtso bor bzhugs*) of that king. Recall that the *Pillar Testament* and the *Maṇi Collection* instead referred to the other tutelary statue, the eleven-headed Mahākāruṇika of snakeheart-sandalwood. (As discussed in the previous chapter, the further story of retrieving the hari-sandalwood Lokeśvara and its three companion statues was given in Nyangral's religious history *Flower's Finest Nectar* and later in Sönam Gyaltzen's *Illuminating Mirror*, but not in those two other versions.) It seems plausible that the Dalai Lama's

⁷¹ “Heaven's elect” (*gnam bskos*, short for *gnam gyis bskos pa*, sometimes translating 天命), a term used already in the thirteenth century (as with variants like *tshé ring gnam gyis stobs la brten pa*), was commonly used by the fifth Dalai Lama to describe the authority of the Phakmodru rulers as well as the Mongol Khans.

⁷² Tib. *dbang phyug gi yon tan brgyad*. According to the *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* these describe a body that is (1) subtle, (2) coarse, (3) pervasive, (4) fully accomplished, (5) luminous, (6) stable, (7) masterful, and (8) desirable.

⁷³ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 28 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 25b).

⁷⁴ “Upper and lower” (*hor stod smad*) probably refer to the Dzungars and Qosots respectively.

⁷⁵ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 27 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 25b).

elevation of the Lokeśvara sandalwood statue had much to do with its return in 1645 and his subsequent interest in it. Consider that in later texts like his autobiography and his inventory of the Lhasa Tsuklakhang, the fifth Dalai Lama showed familiarity with the story of how Mönlam Dorjé recovered the Lokeśvara statue at Ramoché and then installed it on Marpori; but in his earlier *Cuckoo's Song*, written in 1643 (before the new palace, and before the statue was returned) he opted not to mention that episode at all, even though he still listed Mönlam Dorjé's other major works.⁷⁶ The Dalai Lama also linked the Lokeśvara statue, in this chapel introduction as well as elsewhere in his corpus, to a prophecy attributed to Padmasambhava, proclaiming that both center and periphery would fall (*mtha' dbus 'jig pa*) if ever “Tibet's singular support” (*bod rten gcig*) were lost. The statue is portrayed as an index of political order *per se*. The presence or absence of the statue is no less than the presence or absence of order. In this respect, it attains a status not unlike many other sacred objects that stood at the epicenter of Buddhist polities, real and fictional: the tooth relic in Kandy, the rain-bringing elephant in the Vessantara Jātaka, the wealth-producing jewel in Songtsen Gampo's past-life as prince Lokeśvara. Custodianship of the object is associated with the right to govern and may even be imagined as the source from which proper governance emanates. Perhaps we can see here a deeper resonance in the Dalai Lama's choice to explicitly refer to the statue as a “wishing-jewel” (*vid bzhin nor bu*), the bountiful treasure upon which a proper state could be founded and become prosperous.

The second interesting thing about the Dalai Lama's language in this brief text is that he also invoked what I called the theme of the natural. I confess to being quite struck by this theme and will dwell on it even more at the end of this chapter. “Natural” should be understood as a referring to that which comes about of its own accord, and not (or not fundamentally) by consequence of deliberate human intervention. One emblem of that quality was the Lokeśvara statue itself—which, as the Dalai

⁷⁶ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 22 (dza): 85-86 (= Lhasa Zhol blockprint folio 62b-63a). See also Ahmad 2008: 84.

Lama always took pains to indicate, was “naturally formed” (*rang byon*) rather than (exclusively) hand-crafted. In his autobiography he often referred to it simply as the “Rangjung Phakpa,” the Naturally-Formed Noble One. We saw in the previous chapter how Mönlam Dorjé himself identified the statue precisely by its uncrafted (*bzos pa min*) quality and the natural curve (*rang gug*) of its arms and legs. The natural and the human are not mutually exclusive, but more like layers of reality. The idea is that our own choices, acts, and creations may also reveal the workings of a deeper order. Natural order exceeds the human and is irreducible to it; but also manifests in it and through it. The natural is the ideal for which the Dalai Lama aims. It is the register he uses when he wants to capture the sense of those situations in which everything went just right. In this text about the Lokeśvara chapel, we find that the Dalai Lama also found a natural order in the collaborative effort between Sönam Rabten and Guśri Khan to unify central Tibet. When these two persons joined in a patronage relationship, as sun and moon in the sky (*mchod yon nyi zla zung*), the unification they accomplished together, the Dalai Lama wrote, was “naturally and automatically established” (*rang byon du lhun gyis grub pa*).⁷⁷ The formation of this new state happened all by itself. This is a remarkable statement, most of all because it appears so jarringly false. How could he possibly be saying any such thing?

One important source for this variety of wishful thinking is the doctrine of the cakravartin or world-conquering king (*'khor lo bsgyur ba'i rgyal po*), as elaborated in texts like Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* (itself referencing works like the *Kāraṇaprajñapti*).⁷⁸ One strand of this doctrine was the utopian idea that the cakravartin “causes no harm” (*gnod pa med*) during their journey of conquest. As their power spreads from continent to continent, the sheer presence of the king is enough to cause others to willingly submit to him.⁷⁹ It makes sense to think that the fifth Dalai Lama

⁷⁷ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 29.

⁷⁸ *Chos mngon pa mdzod kyi bshad pa*, Tōh. 4090; *Rgyu gdags pa*, Tōh. 4087.

⁷⁹ At *Abhidharmakośa* verse III.96, Vasubandhu famously specified four types of cakravartin, ranked by how many of the four major continents they conquered. The greatest, a “golden” cakravartin, was also distinguished because he conquered

would have had such doctrines in mind, especially insofar as he also invoked the theme of the natural to describe Guśri Khan's conquest of central Tibet.⁸⁰ Nevertheless the question remains as to how to make sense of this most incongruous idea.

The Dalai Lama used the same term (*rang byon*) for this “natural” political unification as he used to portray the “natural” and uncrafted Lokeśvara statue. He described the statue's return in the same way. This choice is far from a denial of human agency or its capacity to create change. It is the exact opposite. It calls attention to human activity. It is more like the elevation of our innate world-making capacity to its highest expression. The fifth Dalai Lama gave credit where credit was due: the statue's return was the work of Guśri's queen, Dalai Kuñci Gyalmo. He praised her for “superbly enacting an excellent idea” (*phun sun tshogs pa'i bsam sbyor bzang po*)—surely as clear an affirmation of agency as there ever was. But her decisions also revealed “a frictionless karmic connection that came together by itself” (*rtsol bral gyi rten 'brel rang shugs kyis 'grig pa*).⁸¹ (The verb *'grig pa* is involuntary; its voluntary counterpart, *bsgrigs pa*, is used to convey deliberately staged events like planned gatherings or deeds like the editing and publication of texts.) Again, the incongruity is palpable: how could “superb decision-making” possibly create circumstances that happened all by themselves?

As I am reading him, the point of insisting that all good works come together of their own accord is not to suggest that human actors were passive instruments of destiny, unspooling like the tape from a

“by request” (*phas bsu ba*, Skt. *pratyyudyāna*; Pruden translates “by spontaneous default”), meaning that his opponents actually come to the king and ask to be part of his empire. A “silver” cakravartin has to go to his opponents (*rang 'gro*). The opponents of a “bronze” king prepare for battle (*g.yul bshams*) before submitting; and those of an “iron” king actually brandish their weapons (*mtshon brtsams pa*). In no case is battle engaged or violence done. See Pruden (tr.) 1988, vol. 3: 486–87.

⁸⁰ Sangyé Gyatso made the same point, with direct reference to Vasubandhu, in his *Yellow Vaidurya* (see *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 389). It seems important to acknowledge that Vasubandhu's commentary did not actually use any of the loaded vocabulary that we find in the fifth Dalai Lama's and Sangyé Gyatso's writings; for instance, here in the *Yellow Vaidurya*, Sangyé Gyatso interpreted the cakravartin's conquest of rival kingdoms as “natural and automatic” (*rang bzhin ngam shugs kyis dbang du 'du ba*).

⁸¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 29.

reel. When the natural manifests, it does not efface human agency. It is more like the natural is suddenly and briefly glimpsed in and through human action. The two coalesce into a single movement. In such pristine moments, suddenly nothing that human beings do is forced or compelled, artificial, or exclusively the product of human desires, intentions, or strategies. In that sense, the natural is apolitical by definition. It is the transcendence of politics: the level at which what is willed and what is proper, what is and what ought to be, become the same. Such, at least, was the wish: a natural order that manifests and makes itself known in and through the intentional actions and interactions of human beings. To recognize the signs of the natural is to confirm human acts as having been right and proper. It is important to recognize such appeals as the articulation of an ideal (rather than statements of fact). It gives us the utopian dimension that fills out this ideology placing Avalokiteśvara and his Potala at the heart of the new Tibetan state. In this respect, the absurdity of what the Dalai Lama was claiming here is precisely the point. His appeal to the natural was not the zealot's fervent clinging to a belief; neither was it the deliberate distortion and misrepresentation of what he knew was truly the case. It was a wish and an affirmation in tension with real life. It calls attention to the level to which a ruler aspired and the criteria by which he evaluated the works of his own age. The wish was for human machinations, political decisions, consciously elected courses of action, to somehow be more than themselves, signs of an even greater power.

I'll let this thought hang in the air for now. But how absolutely fitting for a naturally-formed statue to become the linchpin and literal centerpiece of a naturally-formed palace ruling over a naturally-formed state.

AN ENTHRONEMENT CEREMONY IN THE WHITE PALACE

To recap, in this brief review of the White Palace's overall organization, I have posited a basic formal logic to the palace itself. There is a simple hierarchy that links its components together as one moves

and turns inwards and upwards along a trajectory of increasing privacy and intimacy. Its spaces are offset and repeat one another. That movement tends towards the Lokeśvara statue at the summit and center. Now let us place this abstract assessment into conversation with an account of the palace's use for the enthronement of a Dalai Lama. We have seen that the palace had any number of different functions within one or another of its spaces, from the fore courtyard to the great hall to the upper apartments. The advantage of looking at an enthronement ceremony is that, just like the Dalai Lama's poem, it furnishes another glimpse of the whole, this time in terms of practice rather than imagination. Perhaps more than any other usage, enthronement brings all the parts into relation to each other, including even Marpori in relation to Lhasa. And as enthronement revolved around—indeed created, in a sense—the person and the institution of the Dalai Lama, it also seems reasonable to treat a Dalai Lama's enthronement as the use *par excellence* of the Potala palace.

As already mentioned, there is an unexpected but nevertheless illuminating hiccup in the fact that the fifth Dalai Lama's own enthronement predated the Potala palace altogether. Meanwhile, the sixth Dalai Lama's ceremonies in 1697 were moved into the new Red Palace, which supplanted the “older” palace, as we will see in the next chapter. The enthronement of the seventh Dalai Lama in 1720 was moved back into the White Palace, as if to deny that any of the Desi Sangyé Gyatso's works (including the Red Palace and the sixth Dalai Lama) ever really happened. When Kelsang Gyatso was brought to Lhasa from Qinghai under Chinese escort and installed in October 1720, this move simultaneously echoed the “great” fifth and denied the “false” sixth. In Qing-Tibet correspondence from this era we find frequent invocations for Kelsang Gyatso to act “just as the great fifth did” (*lnga pa chen po ltar*). Remarkably, when the Qing opted in early 1720 to recognize Kelsang Gyatso as Dalai Lama, the title and seal they sent him named him “sixth” Dalai Lama, not seventh. The ploy fooled no one in Lhasa.

We read of Mongol patrons clamoring for a new seal (claiming this one was “too small”) in 1723.⁸² He finally got that new seal in 1724, its wording modeled on one given to the fifth Dalai Lama.⁸³ At any rate, his enthronement ceremony was exclusively in the White Palace. It was recounted in detail by his biographer, the third Jangkya Rolpé Dorjé.

When Kelzang Gyatso at last arrived in Lhasa, he was accompanied by his Khalkha and Qośot Mongol backers from Qinghai and the Chinese host that had expelled the Dzungars occupying Lhasa since 1717. The Dzungar invasion brought an abrupt end to Lhasang Khan's rule of Lhasa, after Sangyé Gyatso's execution in 1705 and then deposing and sending away the sixth Dalai Lama in 1706. Lhasang even installed his own puppet sixth Dalai Lama (known as the Pekar Dzinpa Ngawang Yeshé Gyatso). Kelsang Gyatso was the third “sixth” Dalai Lama in a row. Though he had been identified years before, only in 1720 did he achieve recognition from the Qing court. Perhaps Kangxi saw this young boy, revered by his Khalkha minders, as a means not only for supplanting Dzungar influence in Central Tibet, but also for reclaiming and reshaping the legacy of the fifth Dalai Lama on the pattern of an encompassing Qing imperial formation. Still, one could not totally overcode the Tibetan government with other designs. That interest in Tibet, staked to the Dalai Lama institution, still had to take shape by

⁸² Katō 1993 (republished in *A Tibetan History Reader* 2013: 416). The detail comes from a memorial submitted in June 1723 by Nian Gengyao, governor-general of Sichuan and Shanxi.

⁸³ This act by the Qing court was written out of history within a generation, causing confusion for later Tibetan historians. Kelsang Gyatso's title of “sixth” was preserved in an edict and inscribed on the gold seal granted to him in 1720. That seal reads “Seal of the sixth Dalai Lama, propagator of the dispensation and guide for living beings” (*bstan pa rgyas shing 'gro ba 'dren pa'i tā la'i bla ma drug pa'i tham ka*). Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 102. Surviving government documents in both Tibetan and Chinese show the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors addressing the Dalai Lama by this title between the years 1721–23 (*Bod kyi yig tshags phyogs bsgrigs* 1997: documents 225–227, 244, 250; see also *A Collection of Tibetan Historical Archives*, documents 38–40). I have also located two witnesses of his “sixth Dalai Lama” seal in use, one photographed in a publication by Dieter Schuh (1981: 9–10) and the other on a document belonging to the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala and digitized by Bonn University (document number 0950_LTWA_162). The latter's attribution to Tshangyang Gyatso is incorrect; in addition to the evidence of the inscription itself, the date (iron ox = 1721) makes it certain that the Dalai Lama in question is Kelsang Gyatso. The early twentieth-century Tibetan official Norgyé Nangpa Wangdü Tsering misidentified this seal in his *Guide for the Blind* (*Long ba'i dmigs bu*), a history-cum-handbook of official seals (Nor rgyas nang pa 1991: 39). The intitulation on Kelsang Gyatso's new 1724 seal matched that used for the fifth Dalai Lama in his later years. See Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010, vol. 1: 172–173.

being poured, wax-like, through the mold of Tibetan Buddhist rule, including the Potala Palace. The seventh Dalai Lama's enthronement invoked a model it was ironically the first to put into practice.

His biographer, Jangkya Rolpé Dorjé (1717–86), was of Monguor origins and grew up at the Qing court, but wrote in Tibetan with an Indic literary sensibility and a studied poetic flourish.⁸⁴ His account of the enthronement shows that as an author, he was attuned to the broader thematic resonances of coronation along some of the grand tropes of South Asian kingship and aesthetics. He also cared about representing details of protocol, such as the ordering of the royal procession into Lhasa and the seating in the Potala's great hall.⁸⁵ These formal intricacies would be muddled by later historians like Sumpa Khenpo and totally passed over in modern academic accounts. Jangkya offers an excellent glimpse at some of the fine print of the White Palace's full ceremonial use, including attire and accoutrements, seating arrangements, and particular gifts and rituals, not to mention the Buddhist ideals they invoked. This event moved through and stitched together the exact same spaces in the White Palace that we have just been describing.

Jangkya wrote that Kelzang Gyatso received his title “sixth Dalai Lama” from Kangxi at Qinghai in the third month of the iron mouse year (April 1720) and arrived in Lhasa early in the ninth month (October 1720). On the fifteenth (the full moon day) the procession to the palace departed at dawn:

Lined up in the front were trumpets,⁸⁶ parasols, victory-banners, pennants, and so on; and many signs and symbols befitting a great cakravartin monarch who synthesizes clerical and secular governance, including the “Precious Ornamentation” [costumery of the courtiers] and so on; and the Lama himself was beautifully attired in the vestments of a renunciate,

⁸⁴ On his life and works see Wang 1995.

⁸⁵ Rolpé Dorjé was not at this event himself, so it is important to recall that this is not a firsthand account. I am assuming that he was not making it all up, but it is unclear whether and how he relied on testimony or other records to achieve this level of detail.

⁸⁶ The Tibetan term is *mdo dar*. Tucci, in his study of Tibetan folk songs, identified it as a variety of *rgya gling* or trumpet, which makes sense here at the front of the procession. See Tucci 1966: 45.

including the monk's robes (*sku chos*), so that the mandala of his major and minor marks was as visibly beautiful as the young sun shining with a thousand rays of light.⁸⁷

Jangkya then listed the major participants in the procession in exact order. After this vanguard, the formal procession was led (*sna drangs*) by Yanxin 延信 and Garbi 噶爾弼, the two generals in command of the north and south branches of the Qing forces for invading Tibet.⁸⁸ Jangkya figured them as *lokapāla* or world-protecting ministers (*'jig rten bsrungs pa'i blon po*). After these two military commanders, there followed the secular and clerical representatives of the Qing court. The secular representatives were high ministers (*blon chen*) whose names and/or titles are rendered in Tibetan script as *A ta ha ta* and *kho shos E cin* (the latter perhaps reflecting Manchu *gusai ejen* = Ch. 固山額真, a forerunner of the *amban*). The clerical representatives, whom Jangkya described as “luminaries of the dispensation” (*bstan pa'i gsal byed*), are named as the Thüken Qutuqtu Ngawang Chökyi Gyatso (1680–1736) and the Kangyur Dā Lama.⁸⁹

Next came the Dalai Lama's Mongol patrons, whom Jangkya carefully separated into Khalkhas of royal descent from Chinggis Khan, and Qośots of Guśri Khan's line. Unlike the god-protectors in front, these persons are figured as worldly (i.e. human) princes. Jangkya wrote that “they had much awesomeness and dignity, as if come from the Mahāsāla-Kṣatriyas, the lords of great opulence.”⁹⁰ Their ordering is also not insignificant: the first two people named in both the Khalkha and Qośot

⁸⁷ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 112-13.

⁸⁸ In 1720, the army for invading Tibet, commanded by Yunti 允禵 the fourteenth son of Kangxi, was split into two armies, one to attack Tibet from the north via Qinghai and the other from the south via Sichuan. The general for the north was Yanxin 延信 who in 1718 was appointed to Yunti's staff before being made commander of the north army with the rank of General for Pacifying the Rebels, 平逆將軍. The second general, Garbi 噶爾弼, led the south army with the rank of General for Ordering the West, 定西將軍. See Hummel 1943: 907.

⁸⁹ These two had been sent from Beijing to Qinghai to accompany the deliver of seal and title to the Dalai Lama. Petech (1972: 71–72) names the Kangyur Dā Lama (*Bka' 'gyur Tā Bla ma*) as Losang Tsültrim, abbot of Serkhok (Gser khog) in Qinghai.

⁹⁰ The expression *rgyal rigs shing sā la chen po* (Skt. *kṣatriya-mahāsāla-kulam*) is an Indian term for nobility of great wealth, fittingly exemplified by the loftiness of their great hall.

parties were then the representatives of those two factions on the six-person interim cabinet set up after the expulsion of the Dzungars.⁹¹ For the Khalkhas, Jangkya names Dondrup *wang*⁹² and *gung* (公) Cewang Norbu,⁹³ as well as one *taiji* Lhawang Gyatso (*Tha'i ji Lha dbang rgya mtsho*). For the Qośots, the list is as follows: first the *beile* (貝勒) Aboo⁹⁴ and *qinwang* (親王) Lobjang Danjin.⁹⁵ Next are the lower-ranked *junwang* (郡王) Galdan Erdeni Jinong⁹⁶ and Erdeni Erkhe.⁹⁷ These two were leaders of the left and right flanks of the Kokonor Qośots, respectively. After them came Erdeni Dalai Bośoqtu; Mergen Taiching (*Mer gan da'i ching*); Ching Hong Taiji (*Ching hong tha'i ji*), Jikché Kyap (*'Jigs byed skyabs*) who was the son of Erdeni Jinong; Erdeni Bośoqtu; Galdan Tashi (*Dga' ldan bkra shis*);⁹⁸ Daihong Taiji (*Da'i bung* [var. *hong*] *tha'i ji*); and Gelek Jinong (*Dge legs ju nang*). Bringing up the trail were officials of the Mañjuśrī Emperor [Kangxi] (*'jam dbyangs gong ma chen po'i lung las 'dzin pa*), including offices of *khiya* (perhaps a kind of royal attendant),⁹⁹ judicial officer (Manchu *jargôci* < Mong. *jaryuči*, Ch. 斷事人), and clerk (Manchu *biṭheśi* < Mong. *bičeči*, Ch. 筆帖式).

⁹¹ Petech 1966: 288–89 and Petech 1972: 74.

⁹² Tib. *Don grub wang*; var. Dondrup Dorji, d. 1743. He was son of the Khalkha Galdan Dorji, who held the successive titles of *junwang* 郡王 and then *qinwang* 親王, as Khan of the Tuśetu division of Khalkhas. See Petech 1966: 287–88.

⁹³ Tib. *Gung Tshe dbang nor bu* (d. 1732). He was adopted son of the Khalkha Todo Erdeni. Along with Dondrup Dorji he represented the Khalkha in the 1720 Tibetan provisional government. See Petech 1966: 287.

⁹⁴ Tib. *E bus pa'i li*. Aboo (d. 1739), a great-grandson of Guśri Khan, was *beile*, chieftain of the Alashan branch of the Qośot. See Petech 1966: 288–89.

⁹⁵ Tib. *Ching wang Blo bzang bstan 'dzin*, the son of Tashi Bātur and grandson of Guśri Khan. Along with Aboo he was appointed to represent the Qośot on the provisional Lhasa government in 1720. Petech 1966: 288. On his rebellion in 1723–24 see Katō 1993.

⁹⁶ Tib. *Jun Wang Dga' ldan Er te ni ju nang*. This Kokonor prince, also known as Cayan Danjin (d. 1735), the third son of Bośoytu Jinong and thus a great-grandson of Guśri Khan. He was one of the two emissaries sent from Kokonor to investigate the birth of Kelzang Gyatso in 1712. See Petech 1972: 21–22.

⁹⁷ This is Erdeni Erkhe Toqtonai, Guśri's great-grandson by way of his third son; see Petech 1966: 285–86 and Yang 1997 [1969]: 91n215. Lobzang Tenzin and Galdan Erteni Jinong ruled the left flank of the Qinghai Qośot, while Erdeni Erkhe was one of the rulers of the right flank.

⁹⁸ According to Katō, Galdan Tashi was in the lineage of Dayan Khan (Guśri's eldest son) and lived on the southern banks of the Datong River. He was given the title of *gong* in 1723. Katō 2013 [1993]: 419, 433n66.

⁹⁹ The meaning of this term is not entirely clear. Serruys wrote that “*kiya* means 'satellite, garde du corps, page, aide-de-camp’” (Serruys 1958: 92). I thank Jo Sokhyo for providing this reference.

The group started from Ganden monastery and marched down into Lhasa. En route, they were flanked by monks from the three major Geluk monasteries of Drepung, Sera, and Ganden, “who lined up with an inconceivable display of objects of worship like parasols, victory-banners, flowers and so on, as well as various musical instruments.” The final social layer—the cosmopolitan public—was added once the procession reached Lhasa city. Rooftops were bedecked with fluttering flags; horns blared; fragrant juniper smoke wafted through the air “like liquid *vaidūrya*,” and the streets were “spread abundantly about with various people from different regions, with many different types of jewelry and decorations, languages, and clothing, each worshipping in their own fashion.” The overall scene that Jangkya paints here figures the entire event as the paragon of celestial perfection manifested on earth: “They filled the earth so densely as to make jest of the glorious features of the Victor Avalokita's realm, with a welcoming reception which thus set a scene to awe even the gods of the higher realms.”¹⁰⁰ This is of course an idealization, one that leans on pervasive and intelligible tropes of rule and excellence. The city is rendered as a world in miniature and an assembly of the entire social order, from the king and his protectors and ministers down through the high clerics, the noble lords, the renunciate community, and the polyglot public, in that exact order. The participants in those social roles were also cast figuratively against the image of the cosmos itself, likened to an ascendant world-conqueror and his guardians arrayed around Mount Meru, down to the upper and lower classes of humans on earth. (The emphasis on different languages and costumes, while quite plausibly representative of the reality, is also evocative of a hypothetical world population, the subjects of an imperial world-conquering ruler.) The social whole thus constructed was then redeployed for the actual enthronement in the palace. This world-in-miniature, from the general public all the way up to the Dalai Lama, was redistributed, starting from the city and moving to the palace and then up through its

¹⁰⁰ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 113–14.

levels of increasing intimacy and privacy. First, they proceeded from the city to Marpori, ascending “in order” (*rim gyis*) up its stairs and into the “old great hall” (*tshoms chen rying pa*) of the White Palace. As we saw above, with respect to the rest of the building, the great hall is oriented north-to-south; but according to Jangkya, when the boy “placed the lotus-flowers of his feet upon the throne,” he instead faced east (i.e. towards China), “as in the astrological texts” (*gtsug lag rtsis kyi gzhung las 'byung ba ltar*). Only a select company of the public from Lhasa city would have been able to accompany them into the smaller, but still considerably large, great hall.

Within the hall, the linear ordering of the procession was translated into a two-dimensional seating arrangement, alternating between the Dalai Lama's left and right sides. To his immediate left were the nobility of the Qing court (*gong ma'i mi drag rnams*), headed by the aforementioned two generals (Tib. *tsang jun* = Ch. *jiangjun* 将军). To his right were the Thüken Qutuqtu and the Kangyur Dā Lama, the two court monks dispatched from Beijing. Next on the left were major lay officials (*drung 'khor che gnyan*), of whom only the turncoat Lhasa politician, the Taktse Desi Lhagyal Rabten, is mentioned by name.¹⁰¹ Next on the right were members of the royal lines of the Khalkha and the Qinghai (i.e. Qośot) Mongols. Behind them were the throne-holders and reincarnate lamas of the major monastic institutions, as well as other monks with high positions in the monastic establishment (such as the *dbu mdzad*, “üdzé” or chant-leader). While it seems in general that clergy appear to the right and lay officials to the left, a simple lay/clerical dichotomy is complicated by the many Mongol princes seated on the right, suggesting a different principle. The innermost stratum is the Kangxi court (military and clerical both); the next, his lay Tibetan and Mongolian vassals; and the outermost, the monastic institutions. Gifts and offerings to the new Dalai Lama were bestowed in the same order: first the

¹⁰¹ The Taktse Desi would be exposed only two months later for his conciliatory stance towards the Dzungars, and beheaded. For the time being he held a high status among Tibetan officials. Petech 1972: 74–76.

emperor's offerings and reading his edict of appointment; next the Chinese imperial nobility; then the Mongol rulers; and lastly the high officials of the Tibetan government (*gzhung phyag mdzod*) and members of the monastic establishment.¹⁰² The pecking order is clear.

Over the next seven days, the enthroned Dalai Lama held court to receive gifts from various constituencies, starting with an exhaustive list of representatives from all the major religious institutions of Tibet, and last of all, “countless faithful citizens, noble and base, who held audience and prostrated.”¹⁰³ These public audiences were capped by extensive feasting, including learned rhetorical displays by Tibetans in various branches of knowledge, recitations of poetry, and scholastic debate. These were interspersed with dance and music, which Jangkya said were meant to invoke the style of the celebratory feasts of the ancient Tibetan dharma-kings. Echoing the scene in Lhasa city, Jangkya again emphasized the cosmopolitan plurality of the audience inside the great hall, though he also noted that this encounter was far more intimate: “ever so many different peoples, from various regions, with their own distinct languages and habits of dress and so on, karmically fated to catch the attention of the mandalic face of the Dalai Lama himself.”¹⁰⁴ The celebration evidently reached such a fever pitch that some people inside the great hall became “excessively reverential” (*ha cang dud par gyur pa*) and had to be fended off by those in the Dalai Lama's vicinity, who were obliged to keep a buffer around the throne. At last, the Dalai Lama withdrew even deeper within the palace for another, more private enthronement. Once more he “placed the lotus-flowers of his feet upon the throne,” only this time the ceremony was repeated within the “Sunlight Swirl” apartments, in other words the fifth Dalai Lama's west apartments up on the sixth floor. Another consecratory celebration was observed in the upper

¹⁰² Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 115.

¹⁰³ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 116.

¹⁰⁴ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 117.

apartments for an elite company.¹⁰⁵ In the days to follow, the Chinese and Mongolian officials met daily with the Dalai Lama (presumably in his apartments or elsewhere on the upper stories) and innumerable gifts were bestowed, especially from the Mongolian factions. Finally, to wrap everything up, a prayer for the enduring stability of the Dalai Lama was publicly performed in the great hall, after which the Dalai Lama entered seven days of private retreat. During that first week, by Jangkya's reckoning, over ten thousand “faithful citizens” obtained the rare opportunity to encounter the Dalai Lama face to face in the Potala.¹⁰⁶

The resonances between this description and those conclusions I ventured above should already be apparent. We can add a few more observations. Jangkya's carefully ordered and stylized description indeed shows the order built into the whole space of the White Palace. At the same time, it reveals the plasticity of open public spaces like the great hall, within which a basic ritual form like an enthronement ceremony could be staged variously to enact one or another sort of hierarchy. The seating arrangements for this enthronement constituted the paramountcy of the Qing over their vassal states. The Dalai Lama was swallowed up in the secular and clerical authority of the Kangxi court. Nevertheless, the stylization of that open space was also slotted within the larger, unyielding structure of the palace as a whole, including even the city which foregrounded it. What went on inside the great hall was itself but one link along a longer chain, revealed by the entire progression of events comprising this enthronement. That chain moved from Lhasa city, up Marpori Hill, into the great hall, and ultimately up into the Dalai Lama's private apartments, where his enthronement was recapitulated with another, more intimate ritual; and those events were capped in turn by a private retreat.

¹⁰⁵ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 118.

¹⁰⁶ Rol pa'i rdo rje 2010: 120–21.

We also find that each level was marked by relative restriction and a kind of doubling. For instance, the events in the great hall up above echoed the earlier scene in Lhasa down below. Both were noted for their plurality as a multicultural ensemble, but the crowd in the great hall was relatively private compared to that of the city. Then in turn it would become relatively public compared to what transpired in the rooms up above. Also, the general public's glimpse of the Dalai Lama was fleeting and distant compared to those who ascended into the great hall for a more personal encounter. As Jangkya put it, the relatively privileged few inside the great hall were karmically fated (*skal pa dang ldan pa*) to catch the light of the Dalai Lama's visage up close and personal. An even more select company occupied the immediate space around the Dalai Lama, indeed maintaining the boundary (*mtshams*) between themselves and the rest of this fervent assembly. They must have been winnowed down in turn to form the even more intimate setting of the audience up in the Dalai Lama's smaller personal apartments. The Dalai Lama's lotus feet were placed upon the throne not once, but twice, and tellingly Jangkya used identical language to describe both. Even the entire seven-day public enthronement was formally doubled by the matching seven-day private retreat. At the end of it all the Dalai Lama stands alone, the final link in this unfolding chain of relations. So, beyond the simple fact of hierarchy, we may also detect a subtler effect of an offset relationship: the relative interplay of primary and secondary. A dissonance is introduced when the same events are repeated on multiple levels, when each experience is subsequently re-contextualized by a more private and more intimate reduplication of itself. Through the city and up the hill and into the palace, every element experiences the same relativizing effect. Wherever one stops, there is a sense of something further, the promise of a more select group, a more intimate encounter.

CONCLUSION: THE NATURAL AND THE CONSTRUCTED

Now let us bring all these different threads together again. In what manner should we understand the Potala palace (at least, as it was first built) as a symbol? Above all I am arguing that we should approach symbol here as relationship. Doing so compels us to think in terms of both a further meaning and an irresolvable difference. As such, we can truly say that the physical palace just described—a built space of relationships—was indeed symbolic. But here interpretation necessarily takes over, and there are any number of directions one might take. Perhaps the most obvious is to ask how such relationships might produce symbolic knowledge about divinity and the manifestation of its presence. I will reflect on divinity briefly here, because it is clearly important. There are other directions as well. In that regard, it seems equally relevant that the fifth Dalai Lama so often dwelt on that theme of the natural. I will end by thinking some more about this theme. The symbolic relationship between natural order and human activity is certainly no less relevant than the presence or absence of divinity for thinking about Buddhism and state.

On the topic of divinity, of course a palace called “Potala,” on the same site formerly occupied by a famous, nation-building dharmarāja and emanation of Avalokiteśvara, would invoke a relationship with that deity and his own mountain abode of Potala. “Relationship” is the better term than “identity” for understanding the ties between them. They constituted an irreducible tandem. One might even say that this worldly Lhasa palace was itself 'offset' from the bodhisattva's abode even as it gained power by the very fact of being bound to it. The built palace was like the 'foreground' of divinity, so to speak. So I certainly agree about its ideological capacity to invoke, in itself, some awareness of a further power. In fact, my whole reading has tried to extend that capacity to the structure of the White Palace, not just to its name. I also argued that the Lokeśvara statue at the peak of the mountain, the absolute apex and center, would have been a key element in constituting that relation to divinity. The statue posed its own

relationships in both directions—to the bodhisattva and to the human king. The Dalai Lama, needless to say, was hardly identical to the statue. He foregrounded it and stood in relationship to it. His palace was literally built up in front of it. By way of the palace's related spaces, he moved closer to or further from it, just as others moved closer to or further from him.

In one sense, we could say that it was the statue, more than the name or the Dalai Lama, that made the bodhisattva “present,” so to speak, in this location. After all it was the statue that “returned to its own home,” by analogy of the bodhisattva and his Mount Potala. Here we may also recall the Buddhologist Paul Mus and consider that a sacred buddha-image also marks an absence, or what Mus called a “trace.” He argued that we should approach such traces in *practical* rather than *ontological* terms. Thus: “recognised in principle by all Buddhists, the symbolical bodies of the Master whether in brick or stone or dharma do not denote then the stages in a spontaneous metaphysical meditation on being and non-being, although they may have provided a starting-point for it.”¹⁰⁷ I take his meaning to be that relating with statues—whether in one's worship, or as built or installed within one's environment—is exactly about entering into *relationship with divinity*—not about resolving once and for all the metaphysical or gnostic question of *knowing* a deity's presence or absence. Thus:

the supernatural is not grasped therein through the real, like a cause through its effect... but by a magical projection which leans on material objects, *not at all to try to know intellectually a reality that one would suppose hidden behind them, but only to enter practically in contact with it*, wherever it may be, without asking what it is in itself, or perhaps even if it exists, a question which is only meaningful at a level where in any case it does not exist except symbolically, by its “traces.”¹⁰⁸

This way of thinking gets away from the ontological question about whether and how the Potala and/or the Lokeśvara statue affirmed the presence or absence of Avalokiteśvara (thus, by extension, whether the fifth Dalai Lama could be known to definitively *be* or *not be* that deity). It emphasizes relating,

¹⁰⁷ Mus 1998 [1935]: 90.

¹⁰⁸ Mus 1998 [1935]: 100. My emphasis.

rather than knowing. In this light, maybe we are better off thinking of the statue as the farther (or farthest) significant point along a vector that moves through the Dalai Lama and the statue both. The statue is like a reiteration and refinement of the same basic practical relation that could also be encountered at any number of other levels. Such an understanding would fit rather well with our observations about the palace's own offset logic and hierarchies of relatively private access, relatively intimate encounter.

There is also Ricoeur's idea of symbol as “surplus of meaning” or “excess of signification.” For our purposes, the relevant point is that the symbol introduces a productive, meaningful difference by establishing a relationship between an immediate or “literal” meaning and a further or “metaphorical” meaning, and it does so *at one and the same time*. Ricoeur's argument strikes me as coming quite close to Mus's ideas about the Buddhist sacred image (my emphasis added):

This excess of signification in a symbol can be opposed to the literal signification, but only on the condition that we also oppose two interpretations at the same time. Only for an interpretation are there two levels of signification *since it is the recognition of the literal meaning that allows us to see that a symbol still contains more meaning*. This surplus of meaning is the residue of the literal interpretation. *Yet for the one who participates in the symbolic signification there are really not two significations, one literal and the other symbolic, but rather a single movement, which transfers him from one level to the other and which assimilates him to the second signification by means of, or through, the literal one.*¹⁰⁹

This language resonates with my insistence that the power of the palace as symbol still has everything to do with *itself*—not exclusively with some sacred significance beyond itself. We saw the same idea in my reading of the praise-poem. Like Ricoeur's symbol, the palace was “two at the same time,” itself and more than itself, but always “by means of, or through,” itself. Being symbolic, the palace is still no less itself, no less a built material structure, no less human. The fifth Dalai Lama, for one, seems to have been acutely aware of that fact. It would explain, among other things, why he didn't collapse

¹⁰⁹ Ricoeur 1976: 55.

Potala and Marpori, and why he saw the statue as so important. It could also help us understand why he so often turned to that theme of the natural. It is with this theme that I want to conclude. I read him as making a similar point to the authors just quoted, to wit: the thing remains stubbornly, visibly itself; but then by itself and through itself, it also reveals something further.

Natural order worked on this exact same principle. As we have already seen, the natural is detected (or wished for) by means of and through that which human beings choose, do, and create. In this case, the concern is not about whether and how the bodhisattva became present, whether and how the Dalai Lama was himself divine; instead, it is about whether and how a ruler can judge their own works as right and proper. Consider another version of the story of the Lokeśvara statue's return:

In the wood female bird year (1645), at a moment when auspicious signs were rampant for the new construction of this great palace, this very statue of the Supreme and Excellent Lokeśvara, the Jikten Wangchuk [Tibetan for “Lokeśvara”], insatiable to behold, was sent as an offering by the worldly queen Dalai Kuñci Gyälmo. Such events were not by design, but a karmic connection that came together naturally, spontaneously established; and here in the great hall of that palace, in order to reveal the progression of its linked causes and bestow a balm upon the eyes of all persons noble or base, a field of the ancestral dharma-kings and their accomplishments will be illustrated in a series of images.¹¹⁰

This passage came at the opening of the brief historical summary that the fifth Dalai Lama wrote in 1648 to inform the murals being painted inside the new palace's great hall. As above, he proceeds from a statement of observed facts, to a comment about the further meanings inferred on their basis. In other words, he was engaging with his own reality by an act of interpretation. Consider the resplendent chain of adjectives with which he qualified the subject of the overall sentence, the great hall of Potala palace: *...ma bsgrigs par ngang gis 'grig pa'i rten 'brel lhun gyis grub pa'i pho brang chen po'i tshoms chen 'dir*. The statement repeats, in different language, the same idea we saw above of a “frictionless” (*rtsol bral*) connection that came together of its own accord. Here, the Dalai Lama rendered explicit the

¹¹⁰ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 19 (ma): 42–50.

contrast between the voluntary verb *bsgrigs*, or being intentionally fitted together; and the involuntary verb *'grig*, or coming together without (or in spite of) intentionality. Hence the return of the statue and the construction of the palace (and by extension the establishment of this state of rule) were emphatically *not* deliberately constructed, *not* exclusively human machinations (*ma bsgrigs par*). They were products of a deeper pattern. For even more emphasis he added the adverbial form of *ngang*, which refers to the nature, manner, or innermost state of something. Finally, to drive this point home he added another nominal adjective, one we have already seen: *lhun gyis grub pa*, “spontaneously established.” The fifth Dalai Lama could not be clearer. The construction of the palace and the events leading up to it were right and proper, going perfectly along the grain of reality itself. They are no less human for that fact. Here is the “single movement” of which Ricoeur spoke: the transfer to the further meaning “by means of and through the literal one.” Consider that “naturally formed” objects like the Lokeśvara statue are not so-called because they spring up fully sculpted as if by magic. They are still no less the product of human hands—only those hands are guided by a natural curve already there waiting to find full expression through human work. Human hands also recognized that statue, gilded it, installed it, moved it, lost it, and returned it. The statue embodies the ideal of a world that is naturally formed, but also visibly, tangibly human, at one and the same time.

My impression is that the Dalai Lama was tapping into a deeper and more pervasive concern, one which again finds particular expression in the language, things, and practices of this particular cosmological order. The concern is that the means for attaining just rule are themselves unjust. One may strive to attain a perfect state, but not without leaving marks of the effort all over it in the process. This certainly seems like a realistic concern for someone like the fifth Dalai Lama. For how can someone know whether all that they have done, all that is done in their name, is done properly? How can it add up to anything more than so many deliberate or even selfish human intentions, self-interested and strategic choices, a struggle for power and nothing beyond? How can rule ever be more than human if

it is never anything other than human? It points to an inevitable tension in a divine or destined king who must also be the engineer of their own power. The selfsame acts by which that higher purpose is affirmed—such as the construction of a palace—indubitably bear witness to the fact of their constructed-ness. That is a helpful lesson for considering what it would truly have meant to systematically deploy the legitimizing legacy of the bygone Tibetan empire and the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara—a process that would surely exhibit signs of its own handiwork. Songtsen Gampo's kingdom does not simply rematerialize out of the mist when the right person stands in the right spot, any more than the Dalai Lama turns into a god by taking the name of one. The claim undermines itself in the claiming; the thing made retains the imprint of the hand that made it. In the fifth Dalai Lama's incongruous wish for perfection, I detect a critical sensitivity to that fact. Now, it is our own critical awareness of that very same constructed, intentional, humanist quality to legitimate religious rule that animates the academic unmasking operation: finding politics beneath what expressed itself as religion, exposing ideology for the distortion that it is. Reading the Dalai Lama's own interpretations of his reality suggests that some such impulse is already there ready and waiting in our object of study, even concomitant with the ideology itself.

CHAPTER SIX. THE RED PALACE AND THE WORLD'S UNIQUE ORNAMENT

INTRODUCTION

“Unprecedented” is the word Sangyé Gyatso used to introduce the fifth Dalai Lama's golden reliquary stūpa. He was referring both to the monument itself, named “World's Unique Ornament” (*'dzam gling rgyan gcig*), and also the edifice built to house it, a massive five-story structure superadded to the Potala Palace. This remark comes near the start of the fifth chapter of Sangyé Gyatso's *Tomb Inventory* (*'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag*).¹ This massive, 767-folio text recounted every aspect of the building's construction, plus a great deal more about the world in which it was situated.² The fifth chapter addressed the palace's design (*bkod pa*). By calling it unprecedented (*snga na med pa*), Sangyé Gyatso was boasting that his palace and its central reliquary stūpa (*mchod sdong*) were so masterfully put together that they in fact surpassed every residence ever built by Buddhists ever before.³

¹ The work's full title is *Mchod sdong 'dzam gling rgyan gcig rten gtsug lag khang dang bcas pa'i dkar chag thar gling rgya mtshor bgrod pa'i gru rdzings byin rlabs kyi bang mdzod*. For convenience, I will refer to here it by the abbreviated descriptive title *Tomb Inventory*; and in citations, following convention, as *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag*. Those citations refer to the 1990 typed edition published in Lhasa—the most readily accessible edition, although not without typographical errors. There are several extant copies of the original blockprint, including outside of Tibet: one at the Nepal National Archives (microfilm reels NNA L582–L585); one at the Tōyō Bunko (document 383-2687, see Yamaguchi 1970); and one in the Rahul Samkriyayan collection at the Bihar Research Society (now the Patna Museum; see Jackson 1989). When listing his own compositions, Sangyé Gyatso also called it “the long inventory” (*dkar chag rgyas pa*), in opposition to an “abbreviated” version of the same work (*dkar chag gi don bsdu*), for which he also gave the poetic title *Sgra 'dzin kun dga'i 'khri shing*. I am not aware of any extant texts by that title. Another text, the *Lhasa Circuit Survey* (*Lha sa skor tshad*), was basically a condensed summary of the contents of the *Tomb Inventory*. (Its first thirty-six folios review the theory of the fifth Dalai Lama's divinity, birth, and death. Folios 37–64 summarize each of the *Tomb Inventory's* thirteen topics. The remainder of the text discusses relics and worship, especially by circumambulation of the city's “circuits.”)

² The *Tomb Inventory* manuscript was prepared in the sixth Hor month of the fire ox year (July/August 1697); the main scribe was Chakarwa Padma Sönam (Cha dkar ba Padma bsod nams), who performed the same role for the *New Year's Speechmaking*, the *Elixir for the Ear*, and the *Great Worship Assembly Instructions*; along with Ngam Ringpa Sangyé Chödrak (Ngams rings pa Sangs rgyas chos grags), Ngözhiwa Bumkyap (Dngos gzhi ba 'bum skyabs), and Dranang Damchö Tenzin (Gra nang Dam chos bstan 'dzin). The blocks for the print edition were carved in 1701 at the Zhol printery. For the personnel involved, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 1066–68.

³ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 302.

None of the tradition's famous exemplars, Sangyé Gyatso wrote, could match up to it. Not the seven-story residence that Kalyāṇabhadra built for Śākyamuni and his disciples in Vārāṇasī, the very first Buddhist monastery.⁴ Not the Jetavana complex that Anāthapiṇḍada built in Śrāvastī.⁵ Nor any later Indian monasteries, like Odaṅṭapurī in Magadha, which legend said was founded on the endowment of a magical golden corpse.⁶ Nor even Tibet's own most famous buildings, like its first monastery Samyé, modeled after Odaṅṭapurī and arranged as a massive cosmogram of Mount Meru and the surrounding continents. Nor the beautiful nine-story pagoda that the king Ralpachen built at Ushangdo, its lower three floors of stone, the middle three of brick, and the top three of wood, with a Chinese-style roof turning like a parasol in the wind (*rlung gis bskyod tshe gdugs ltar 'khor ba*).⁷ Sangyé Gyatso described all of these sites and their stories at length at the beginning of this fifth chapter of the *Tomb Inventory*.⁸ The latter two Tibetan sites were especially prominent in historical memory. Their construction was described, among other places, in the fifth Dalai Lama's *Cuckoo's Song*, the triumphant history of Tibet he authored in 1643. They were also on display for anyone who entered the great hall of the “White” Potala palace, as their pictures featured prominently among the historical murals covering the four walls of that hall.⁹ Sangyé Gyatso's new Red Palace, built atop the White, superceded them literally as well figuratively. It now towered at the center of Marpori hill, roughly thirty-three meters high from bottom to top (closer to fifty meters including the golden rooftop

⁴ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 297–98. The story is quoted from the *Śayana-asana-vamṣa* (*gnas mal gyi gzhi*) in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, Vinayavastu (*'dul ba gzhi*) section 74. The Buddha specified that the perfume chamber and the summer room over the entrance should be seven stories; the residential areas for the monks to either side should be five stories. On this text and episode see Schopen 2000.

⁵ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 298–300. See also Schopen 2000. This story is recounted in the same Vinaya text as the preceding (sections 89–91).

⁶ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 301–2. The story of the golden corpse is recounted in chapter twenty-eight of Tāranātha's *History of Buddhism in India*; see Chattopadhyaya and Chimpa 1970: 262–64.

⁷ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 302.

⁸ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 297–302.

⁹ For pictures, see *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 74, 78.

over the fifth Dalai Lama's tomb complex). The Red Palace was positioned adjacent to the main building of the earlier White Palace, such that its own ground floor corresponded to the fifth story of the latter and could be entered from the east through the older portion. It drastically shifted the center of gravity of the whole palace, while adding dozens of new spaces, including a second great hall, many more apartments, and around a dozen new chapels. It too would be modified over the subsequent decades, most drastically to incorporate additional reliquary stūpas for later Dalai Lamas. (There is no indication that accommodating further tombs was ever part of Sangyé Gyatso's original plan.)

The new (*gsar pa*); the unprecedented (*snga na med pa*); the never-occurred-before (*sngon chad ma byung*); the unheard-of (*ma grags pa*); the utterly unmatched (*dpe zla thams cad dang bral ba*). Such is the language Sangyé Gyatso used, here as elsewhere, to capture the singularity of his own moment and the new works produced by the Ganden Phodrang government that he ruled. Foremost among them were large-scale productions like the Great Worship Assembly and above all this massive and massively expensive Red Palace. It is describing this new palace that we find Sangyé Gyatso at what may be his most grandiose:

This structure is so beautiful, it's like the buddha Maitreya's own palace Yiga Chözin, or the city of Gandhavatī, had been transferred down to earth. Go ahead and see if anything like it has ever been built here in Jambudvīpa before! Nor has any historical tale ever been poured into the cup that is my ear. I know for a fact there won't be one in the future either. It is, therefore, exceptional.¹⁰

We may note that Sangyé Gyatso has fittingly selected two further celestial models for comparison, as if to add them onto the classical pair of Vaijayanta and Lanka (for beauty and might, respectively), and the pair Aḍakavatī and Mount Potala (for wealth and peace), which the fifth Dalai Lama used in the seventeenth stanza of his own praise poem (see Chapter Five). Sangyé Gyatso compared his own Red Palace to Maitreya's residence in Tuṣita heaven (called *yid dga' chos 'dzin* in Tibetan), and the city

¹⁰ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 314.

Gandhavatī described in the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*.¹¹ (As an aside, “Tuṣita Palace” also translates the Tibetan *dga' ldan pho brang*, “Ganden Phodrang,” the name of this government.) Tuṣita was a heaven stationed much higher up in the desire realm—240,000 *yojanas* higher, to be precise—than Indra's realm atop Meru. The Red Palace, built up on top of the White Palace, carried it into the stratosphere.

At the same time, however, the connection to the past was clearly important enough to Sangyé Gyatso that he deemed it necessary to devote many pages to recounting it in exacting detail. He educated readers about each of those historical Buddhist buildings in turn, quoting long passages describing Jetavana, Samyé, and the rest, going on for nearly four whole folios before finally arriving at the point. That point comes abruptly and goes just as quickly. The reader who has worked through all this historical evidence suddenly finds the rug pulled out from under them. It turns out the Red Palace was better than all the rest. Eight pages about the past to make this one *volte-face* in favor of the present. This technique is something of a habit in the Desi's writings: he first builds up a massive and overwhelming precedent, then turns right around and relegates it all to bygones now superceded, trumped by something superior, something unique. One could say the same thing about the physical structure of the Red Palace itself: it sinks its own roots into what was already there, growing upwards as a natural extension of it; but then again it dominates what it stands upon and distances itself from it. The same as it ever was, better than ever before.

The question looms as to how to tie these pieces together. This is our problem as much as it was the Desi Sangyé Gyatso's. Was the Red Palace the same or different as the White? Is there one Potala or two? If our interpretations of the palace as symbol lead to different conclusions here than they did in the preceding chapter, should that difference be viewed in terms of rupture or continuity? Recognizing

¹¹ Tib. *spos ldan ma*; the city where Dharmodgata taught the Prajñāpāramitā, described in chapter thirty of the *Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*. See Conze 1973: 279–81

this same theme at the center of the Desi's self-understanding can give us a foothold for approaching such questions. So my answer is just to remain close to his own thoughts. He insisted on being the same by being unique, being traditional by being unprecedented. Thus did he make sense of his own contributions, in the process refiguring the past in relation to which they stood. Above all that included the fifth Dalai Lama, who became, in Sangyé Gyatso's hands, the embodiment of this core principle: at once the complete fulfillment of the past and yet unique with respect to it. It is true that Sangyé Gyatso bragged that his own works were one of a kind. It is also true that he portrayed the Red Palace as fulfilling, at last and for the first time, the same original vision towards which it had been aiming all along. Such, at least, was the wish. But again it is the wish that interests me. It introduces that further sense, the incongruity between what is and what might be. The Red Palace was visibly, undeniably different from the White; so too Sangyé Gyatso's writings and works from those of the fifth Dalai Lama. One advantage of thinking with Sangyé Gyatso, and in terms of his own attentions, is that he was aware of the same thing. To envision the possibility of repeating a tradition *by means of*—not in spite of—difference from it, change and novelty, was exactly the point.

Where we faced a shortage of contemporary documentary information in the case of the White Palace, for the Red Palace there is a glut of it. The *Tomb Inventory* is an incredible text absolutely stuffed with details of all varieties. I can only pick out a few choice passages here. Where helpful, the footnotes will refer readers to relevant discussions within the text. So far the *Tomb Inventory* has garnered more interest from scholars writing in Tibetan and Chinese than those writing in English. (For instance, one scholar to call attention to it was Nordrang Orgyan, who supplemented his review essay of Sangyé Gyatso's life and works with lengthy choice quotations from each of the thirteen chapters of the *Tomb Inventory*.)¹² I will share information mainly from its first chapter, on “space,” and its fifth

¹² Nor brang O rgyan 2006: 233–316.

through seventh chapters, respectively on “design” (*bkod pa*), “supports” (i.e. sacred objects) (*rten*), and “materials” (*rgyu*). So we will not even be able to touch, for instance, the amazing second chapter on “purpose” (*ched du bya ba*), which greatly elaborated the thesis of divine kingship discussed in Chapter Three; nor the third chapter on “time” (*dus*) which gives insight into the theme of the Perfected Age discussed in Chapter Two. Below, I will show some ways that the Red Palace and the ideas it embodied differed from the White, alongside an overview of how it was put together, in the light of Sangyé Gyatso's own basic theme of sameness and difference.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Just to be clear: it is a fact that the Red Palace drastically refigured the basic symbolic logic of the White Palace. In that regard, the one must be thought separately from the other. Perhaps nowhere is that transformation more poignantly manifested than in the way its very existence supplanted the Lokeśvara statue and its chapel. Here we encounter a corresponding *volte-face* of our own. After all, I just spent two whole chapters arguing for the centrality of this statue to the history, ideology, and construction of Marpori and Potala. The Red Palace cast aside the Lokeśvara chapel and set down the Dalai Lama's golden reliquary stūpa, the World's Unique Ornament, as the Potala's new centerpiece. One of the stated purposes of this new addition (just like the Great Worship Assembly) was the worship (*mchod pa*) and purification (*sbyang ba*) of the fifth Dalai Lama. Sangyé Gyatso insisted that this task of purification (always couched in terms of the indirect sense) was the sole guiding intention for both palace and tomb (*ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i sku'i bsag sbyang gi ched kho nar bzheng pa*).¹³ As we will see below, its design was quite literally built up around the fifth Dalai Lama—not only his remains, but equally his life and lineages and past lives and the theology behind them as well. And if choices about

¹³ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 196. For a similar statement (*sku'i bsag sbyang kho nar bgyis pas bsam pa*) see *Lha sa skor tshad*: 41a.

how to allocate state funds are any indication, the astronomically expensive golden stūpa again comes out way on top. I find it hard to resist treating that fact—the golden tomb instead of the sandalwood statue—as a convenient metaphor for Sangyé Gyatso himself and his relationship to the Dalai Lama institution. He was, perhaps, their greatest champion; but then he was hardly hesitant to steamroll over visions other than his own.

We find evidence of his disinterest towards the statue in the lists he provided, in a number of texts, counting all the most important “supports” (*rten*) kept in Lhasa in general and in the Potala in particular.¹⁴ They are subdivided by the trilogy of body, speech, and mind; the former also subdivides into the three buddha-bodies: dharmakāya (*chos sku*), sambhogakāya (*longs spyod sku*), and nirmāṇakāya (*sprul pa'i sku*). The foremost support of the dharmakāya was the fifth Dalai Lama's tomb and the eight silver “tathāgatha” stūpas that flanked it on both sides. The major support of the sambhogakāya was the Jowo Śākyamuni statue. The major supports of the nirmāṇakāya were myriad, including all of the major statues in their affiliated chapels within the Red Palace. Supports of speech included new editions of the Tibetan *Kangyur* and *Tengyur* (that is, collected translations of the buddha's Word, and explanatory treatises by later Buddhist disciples). The supports of mind included a massive three-dimensional model (*blos bslangs*) of the Kālacakra maṇḍala, housed in a chapel of its own within the Red Palace. On the other hand, the sandalwood Lokeśvara statue was lumped together with another old statue of Songtsen Gampo, called the Chaknéma (*phyag nas ma*) or “the one-made-by-hand,” along with sundry items kept in the Lokeśvara chapel and the meditation cave underneath it (presumed to be Songtsen Gampo's own cave).¹⁵ In one version of his list, those old objects (*rten*

¹⁴ See *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 18b–19a; *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgribs*: 26b–27b; *Lha sa skor tshad*: 43a–47b. The topic of “supports” merits an entire chapter (the sixth) in the *Tomb Inventory* (see also the lengthy technical discussion of iconometry for images and statues in the fifth chapter of the same work: *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 314ff).

¹⁵ On the cave, see Chayet and Meyer 1983: 82–85; also Henss 2014: 99–102.

rnying) seem to fall under the *nirmāṇakāya* category;¹⁶ in another version they were simply tacked onto the end of the list;¹⁷ and in yet another version they were not even mentioned at all.¹⁸

It proved easier to intellectually exclude the *Lokeśvara* statue, however, than to physically do so. Not only was the statue no longer an organizational principle; it was an organizational obstacle. Its very presence confronted Sangyé Gyatso with a problem, as we read in the pages of the *Tomb Inventory*. For starters, the *Desi* recognized the practical difficulty of realizing his ambitious plans, including concerns about the excessive amount of labor this new construction project would require.¹⁹ There were architectural problems, too:

If we built it so that the core of the *vihāra* was set at the center of the hill, then in the long term there would be no way, for instance, for the bottom to sit on earth. And though we found that in the short term it would at least be easy to make the design the way we wanted, still, the *Dharmarāja's Chapel* was consecrated by the *dharma-king Songsten Gampo* himself, while the [fifth] *Dalai Lama*, crown jewel of this world and beyond, used the *Lokeśvara Chapel* for his personal retreats and other things; and since this made them old and blessed, we worried that it would be inappropriate to demolish them.²⁰

Inappropriate indeed! The fact that demolition was even on the table at all is remarkable. It was a serious enough issue to have to consult a higher authority. Sangyé Gyatso conducted two *divinations* (*brtag bsgril lan gnyis*) before the fifth *Dalai Lama's* corpse, as if beseeching his master for advice from beyond the grave (why it took two attempts is left unexplained).

[The answer] came back that it would be best if the ancient part from before were left just as it was without being disturbed. Therefore, we were incapable not only of putting the main

¹⁶ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 26a–b.

¹⁷ *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 18b–19a.

¹⁸ *Lha sa skor tshad*: 43a–47b.

¹⁹ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 303. He wrote, “The thought [of building it in this way] had occurred to me more than once, but given the extreme work it would take to reach the mountaintop, since it would wear out the people, our subjects, we were contented to leave it as it was [or perhaps, “we left it flat”] (*btang snyoms su lus*).”

²⁰ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 303.

building [of the Red Palace] at the peak, [but also of] demolishing the old part. None of what we wanted could happen.²¹

This account, and the surprising candor with which it was told, shows that even in an enchanted world nothing was sacred. Avalokiteśvara himself could be a site of contestation. There may have been no question about that bodhisattva's reality, or his importance for Tibet; but the question of how to relate to this divinity, and how best to constitute that relationship in practice, could yield different interpretations, at odds with one another. The Red Palace as finally built was something of a compromise. It struck a balance between the Desi's own vision and constraints both physical and imagined. The Red Palace would not quite sit dead center on the hill. Instead it would lie directly in front of that original “navel” of the hill, where the Lokeśvara chapel would be left undamaged (*rma med du bzhaḡ*). Henceforth it would jut out on the building's north side (*byang brgyud*), attached to its surface like a barnacle.

As we might expect, this material transformation also witnessed an accompanying modification at the level of meaning. We have already seen how important for the fifth Dalai Lama was the Lokeśvara statue's auspicious return in 1645. It confirmed that this “wishing-jewel” tied to the fortunes of Tibet's political subjects would occupy the literal center of the Dalai Lama's new domain and be a beacon of the peace and celebration of the new Perfected Age. As we saw in Chapter Four, the Dalai Lama described the statue as “returning to its own home” (*rang gi bsti gnas su 'phebs*).²² The statue was a mediating element: it stood to Marpori and its new palace analogously to how the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara stood to his own Mount Potala and its palace. Sangyé Gyatso saw no need to go through the statute in order to relate Avalokiteśvara and Potala to the Dalai Lama and Marpori. Such an interpretative choice is also wholly of a piece with his theory of divinity, as already discussed.

²¹ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 303.

²² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 191.

Unsurprisingly, in relating these two Potalas—the bodhisattva's and the Dalai Lama's—Sangyé Gyatso once again framed his argument in terms of the distinction between true sense and indirect sense. He spoke of one Potala conceived in two registers simultaneously. In the indirect sense, it was the construction of a royal palace (*rgyal po'i pho brang*) in a capital city (*rgyal khab*). In the true sense, it was the celestial mansion Riwo Druzin (*gzhal med khang ri bo gru 'dzin*).²³ (*Ri bo* means “mountain,” and *gru 'dzin* rendered the Sanskrit *pota-la*, meaning, roughly, “ship's-keel.”)²⁴ Note that the Lokeśvara statue has nothing to do with establishing this relationship between the two senses. Sangyé Gyatso was erasing one sort of difference and replacing it with another.

So how is this theology relevant for reinterpreting the statue's return in 1645? When he found occasion to write of that event in the *Tomb Inventory*, Sangyé Gyatso basically copied the fifth Dalai Lama's account word for word. He also introduced a few minor but telling emendations: “The actual Supreme and Excellent Lokeśvara, like a wishing-jewel, for the glory of the merit [of] Tibet's subjects, returned to its own home, like a pigeon going back into its nest.”²⁵ The new metaphor is a good one: pigeons always know their way back home again. (Though anyone who has ever found a pigeon roosting near their own apartment might also detect a slight undertone of irritation here.) On a more serious note: the loaded adjective “actual” (*dngos*) marks another site of continuity-plus-departure from the past. The fifth Dalai Lama's version of this statement did not refer to the “actual” Avalokiteśvara returning home. The Dalai Lama kept the actual Potala apart from his own palace. Sangyé Gyatso made the two the same again. At least, the same in one way; different in another. The meaningful difference that Sangyé Gyatso invoked was that of the true sense and the indirect sense. We could say that where the Dalai Lama suggested the *same* way of talking about two *different* things (i.e., analogy), Sangyé

²³ See e.g. *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 18a.

²⁴ For his remarks on that etymology see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 98; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 16b.

²⁵ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 106; also *Lha sa skor tshad*: 39b.

Gyatso posited two *different* ways of talking about the *same* thing. His conclusions about the statue's return therefore went further than those of the fifth Dalai Lama, metaphysically speaking. Consider what he said next:

So in the true sense, the celestial mansion Druzin is eternally existent; but on top of that, in the indirect sense, a great palace in the capital city [Lhasa] was built over a period of three years [i.e., 1645–48]. And now [in 1690] the time came for our own allotted task of constructing this great tomb, which accumulates and purifies (in the common, indirect sense) the Dalai Lama's person, and which has no distinction in name or sense from the celestial mansion Riwo Druzin to the south, which exists out of wisdom's self-appearance.²⁶

The dichotomy of true sense and indirect sense relates Mount Potala to Marpori Potala just as it related the perfect Avalokiteśvara *qua* buddha to the impure Dalai Lama *qua* human. The “celestial mansion” (*gzhal med khang*) thus takes on a transcendent aura. Oddly it still is somehow locateable “to the south,” but is not really a place in the conventional sense. For one thing, it is not bound by historical time, but is “eternally existent” (*gdod ma nas grub pa*), meaning that it has truly always been there. Not just especially ancient: it transcends beginnings and endings in time. For another thing, it “exists from wisdom's self-appearance” (*ye shes rang snang las grub pa*), a gesture to the fundamental ground of reality itself. Recall that the fifth Dalai Lama made a similar remark in the twelfth stanza of his Potala praise poem: “the expanse of bliss and emptiness joined has one taste” (*bde stong zung 'jug klong du ro gcig*). His point was that despite this fundamentally nondual basis of reality, through an act of “doubling the nondual” (*gnyis med gnyis su 'char ba*), real constructions like Songtsen Gampo's Marpori palace found existence as well. The Dalai Lama did not dwell overlong in that metaphysical register. Sangyé Gyatso, on the other hand, seems to have taken the idea and run with it. “Wisdom's self-appearance” (*ye shes rang snang*) is an admittedly crude translation of far more complex ideas, to which we do not have the space to do justice here. It gestures to that same “single taste” of a

²⁶ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 106; see also *Lha sa skor tshad*: 40b.

fundamental nonduality, which—being nondual—must be spoken at once in the negative register of emptiness and the affirmative register of bliss. It is the collapse of dualistic separations of subject and object into apperceptive or self-appearing gnosis.

So to speak of Mount Potala and Marpori is now to speak of true sense and indirect sense, two distinct but overlapping aspects of the same reality. Again, the underlying implication is that a truth which exceeds human experience must still also become visible and accessible to it. The buddha must become a bodhisattva who becomes a human. For Sangyé Gyatso, the relationship between Mount Potala and Marpori manifested and confirmed this exact point:

The divine palace [Mount Potala], which exists out of wisdom's self-appearance, is eternally existent, but those who lack the right karmic fortune have difficulty seeing it, so the Ārya [Avalokiteśvara] played the part of a king—the dharmarāja Songtsen Gampo—and built the Marpori palace. In the interim it was destroyed, so apart from just the navel²⁷ it went out of sight. But then once more the great Ārya played the part of a renunciate king, the All-Knowing One, the Lord of Victors, whose white parasol of clerical and secular governance spread wide.²⁸

“Lord of Victors” refers to the fifth Dalai Lama, again in his trademark persona of “renunciate king” (*sdom brtson rgyal po*). The transcendent nature of Mount Potala furnishes the motivation for the further existence of a built, visible, tangible Marpori palace. The true sense, that is, must respond to the indirect sense. The former may be absolute, but this truth becomes its defining limitation—another example of how human life also makes demands of divinity. The true sense must be bound to an indirect sense to become effective. As for the bodhisattva, so for the bodhisattva's abode. Visibility is the keyword here. The Lhasa Potala is there to be seen (*mtshong*) where that other divine palace cannot be. Even the historical link between Songtsen Gampo's palace and the fifth Dalai Lama's new palace is construed in the register of vision: a shift from visibility to invisibility back to visibility. Potala did not

²⁷ I suspect “navel” here is a reference the Lokeśvara statue and its chapel.

²⁸ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 105. See also *Lha sa skor tshad*: 39b.

cease to exist in between the two; it merely “went out of sight” (*mi snang bar gyur*). For to truly speak of existence is to invoke the true sense, and in its true sense the palace remains eternally existent. Recall also that Sangyé Gyatso often glossed the indirect sense as “the way things appear” (*snang tshul*), opposed to “the way things are” (*gnas tshul*).

To step back, we find both points of continuity as well as points of departure between the fifth Dalai Lama's approach to Potala, and the Desi's approach. What they shared in common was a basic sense of meaningful difference, and an emphasis on the tangible, built, human palace as an irreducible part of a human world, a product of human activity. Neither author effaced that visible human dimension or attempted to misrepresent it in any way. Rather, both placed it into a relationship with something further. On Sangyé Gyatso's explanation, Mount Potala and Marpori become, in a way, the same thing. Then again, in another way they are pulled apart by the “true sense/indirect sense” distinction, slotted into an equivocal ontology. The bodhisattva's own Potala is real on its own terms but practically speaking it is inaccessible to human beings, who have not the “fortune” (*skal dang mi ldan pa*) to actually see it. The built palace compensated for that lack and furnished the visible, indirect sense to go along with that true sense. It only “is” Potala by virtue of what it *is not*: it is not, in itself, “eternally existent,” nor “existing out of wisdom's self-appearance.” In fact, it is exactly the opposite: a piece of material existence, a mode of appearance, as much a victim of corruption and disintegration as the human body of the Dalai Lama, riven by afterkarma. Human vulnerability may be a definitive shortcoming, but it is equally their greatest quality. For it entails an accessibility and visibility that is necessary to the work of a buddha, indeed the unique province of our world.

KĀLACAKRA AS MODEL

Now we turn to the construction of the Red Palace. In the *Tomb Inventory*, in addition to describing the rooms and their contents, Sangyé Gyatso also called attention to the principles behind its organization,

specifically in conversation with the Kālacakra tantric system. So before giving a room-by-room account, we must consider some implications of that influence. In short, “Kālacakra” comprises a comprehensive body of knowledges and practices traditionally said to have been revealed by the Śākyamuni Buddha to Sucandra, king of Shambhala, at the stūpa of Dhāṇyakaṭaka, and then transmitted through Sucandra's royal lineage. The “Kālacakra Tantra” is not a single text but a series of layers, including a vast, basic or “root” tantra (*mūlatantra*), not extant (if it ever existed) but glimpsed through quotations in subsequent layers. Instead we have an “abridged” (*laghu*) version of the tantra. That *Kālacakra Laghutantra* is nigh-incomprehensible without the lens of commentary, foremost being the *Vimalaprabhā* (*Dri med 'od*) attributed to a later Kalki king named Puṇḍarīka. The Kālacakra tradition (texts and practices) was transmitted to Tibet beginning in the eleventh century.²⁹ The knowledges conveyed therein included complicated discussions of human anatomy, cosmology, metaphysics, mathematics, astronomical and calendrical sciences, and ritual.

Let us acknowledge here the prior contributions of the authors of the *Budala Gong*, the recent Chinese historical and architectural survey of the Potala palace. Theirs is really the only work to extensively consult and substantially engage with Sangyé Gyatso's *Tomb Inventory*, which is hands down the single most important textual source for thinking about the Red Palace.³⁰ They also stand apart in having at least acknowledged the Kālacakra as one of Sangyé Gyatso's guiding principles.³¹ To make a long story short: in the fifth chapter of his *Tomb Inventory*, concerning the Red Palace's design,

²⁹ On the origins and transmission of the Kālacakra see Wallace 2001: 3–6; on issues of dating the Kālacakra corpus see Newman 1998; for a Tibetan historical account of its transmission, including the two main lineages stemming from the translators Ra Lotsāwa (Rwa lo tsā ba) and Dro Lotsāwa ('Bro lo tsā ba), see Roerich 1976: 753ff. On the Sakya propagation of this system and its imperial patronage during the Yüan dynasty, see van der Kuijp 2004.

³⁰ By this point there is no need to dwell on the instrumental approach any further. We may simply mention Okuyama's essay on the Red Palace. The author's conclusion should come as no surprise: “We can find there the intention of the rulers to insist on the legitimacy of the succession to the throne by the incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. In this sense the Red Palace was, as it were, a very large stage setting for maintaining the authority of this holy kingship” (Okuyama 1992: 660).

³¹ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 135–42.

Sangyé Gyatso called attention to the Kālacakra influence on that design. The Red Palace was intended to reproduce the basic organizational and aesthetic model of the Kālacakra maṇḍala.

It is also helpful to give a terse overview of this maṇḍala itself.³² The maṇḍala was a visual, physical, and/or mental construct that an initiated Kālacakra practitioner would generate in the course of their mental and physical project of ritual self-transformation. The ultimate goal was the attainment of nondual gnosis, which, again, was a state joining emptiness and supreme bliss. It was equally the fundamental ground of reality and the absolute perfection and purification of the individual—a level of truth at which that distinction between world and self no longer obtained. The maṇḍala construct had the form of a cosmogram, centered on a multi-tiered palace set upon the foundations of the world itself. The maṇḍala was also an assembly of deities, many hundreds overall, organized around a deification of Kālacakra (more specifically, its male and female aspects conjoined). The maṇḍala could be considered a technology for generating (in the aim of ultimately collapsing) detailed correspondences between the “outer” cosmos (subject of the tantra's first chapter) and the “inner” human body (subject of its second chapter), between which this maṇḍala-palace formed a provisional bridge.³³ The maṇḍala-palace consisted of three stratified levels: the maṇḍalas of body, speech, and mind. They made a square palace three stories high, with arched gateways on each of the four sides at each level. The entire palace in turn rested upon another maṇḍala (in the sense of a “disc”) made of earth and being the physical foundation of our world. Beneath it, in order, were discs of water, fire, wind, and space. (That progression follows the cosmogony: each disc was congealed in turn out of the lower one.) Underneath

³² On the construction of the Kālacakra maṇḍala, the reader may consult Brauen 1997 and Bryant 1992; for the underlying cosmological correspondences and their basis in the tantra, see Wallace 2001; and on the ritual generation of the maṇḍala, *ibid.*: 190–200; for a partial translation of the first or “world” chapter along with the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, see Newman 1987; for a translation of the fourth or “sādhana” chapter, see Wallace 2010.

³³ For Sangyé Gyatso's own notes in the *Tomb Inventory* on those cosmo-physical correspondences, see *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 33ff. Regarding the correspondence of scale, one “cubit” (*khru*, Skt. *hasta*) on the human body equaled one hundred thousand *yojanas* (Tib. *dpag tshad*) of the cosmos in totum. The proportions of the maṇḍala matched those of the ideal body and the cosmos. See Brauen 1997: 52–53 for visual representations of that formal correspondence.

and outside of everything altogether was the most fundamental ground of reality itself: the nondual wisdom or gnosis (*gnyis med ye shes*). The cosmology on which the maṇḍala was based is articulated in great detail in the first or “world” chapter of the *Kālacakra Laghutantra*, also referred to as the “outer Kālacakra.” Among many other topics, this chapter discussed the universe's formation, arrangement, and measurements. Especially relevant for world-formation were verses I.10–17. The first chapter of Sangyé Gyatso's *Tomb Inventory*, concerning the topic of “space” (*gnas*), gave a lengthy exegesis of those eight verses and their *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, in conversation with many other sources from the canonical collections of Sūtra, Abhidharma, and Vinaya, as well as a number of other tantric texts.³⁴ The same ideas were also rehearsed in abbreviated form in Sangyé Gyatso's *New Year's Speechmaking* (during the speaker's discussion of the “excellent place”; see Chapter Two).³⁵

As a work of art, the Kālacakra maṇḍala is typically a top-down two-dimensional image. It could also be constructed as a three-dimensional model (*blos bslangs*). A large model of this type, more than two meters per side, was built and installed within a chapel of its own inside the Red Palace. All of the measurements for constructing this maṇḍala were precisely calculated.³⁶ Each of the body, speech, and mind maṇḍalas had sides half as long as the preceding level, stacked one atop the other. In the two-dimensional image, each lay within (above) the larger (lower) maṇḍala, so that the center of the painting is the peak of the three-dimensional structure. The other basic principle of the maṇḍala is its color scheme: blue/black to the east, red to the south, yellow to the west, and white to the north.

³⁴ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990. The first quotation of *Kālacakra* I.10 occurs therein on page 6. The basic summary of this chapter (with starting page numbers in parentheses) is as follows: first a review of the entire cosmos in totum (ibid.: 7–10); then our own Sahāloka universe and its measurements according to various systems (10–30). Then a verse-by-verse exegesis that steps through *Kālacakra* I.10 (31); I.11 (34); I.12 (35); I.13 (36); I.14 (37); I.15 (42); and I.16 and I.17 (47). This account is followed by a progressive narrowing of scope to discuss, in turn, the continent Jambudvīpa and the career of Śākyamuni Buddha (56); Tibet, its genesis and features (80); the region of Ü, the province of Kyishö, and the city of Lhasa (89); Marpori and Mount Potala (98); and lastly the fifth Dalai Lama's new Potala Palace (105).

³⁵ See *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 8a–10b.

³⁶ On the instructions for drawing the lines of the maṇḍala see Bryant 1992: 183–92.

It can hardly be said that the Red Palace came even close to replicating the maṇḍala's complicated overall arrangement. The palace was not supposed to *be* that maṇḍala incarnate. Rather, I suggest that we view the Red Palace not as *replicating* or *representing* the maṇḍala, and all its attendant functions and powers, so much as *participating* in the cosmo-moral order that the Kālacakra system portrays, and calling attention to that fact. Closely reading Sangyé Gyatso's remarks reveals that the Red Palace adopted only two principles from the Kālacakra maṇḍala: first, the Red Palace would be built in three parts, after the fashion of the three body, speech, and mind maṇḍalas; second, it would reproduce the maṇḍala's directional color scheme.

Regarding the three-tiered structure, Sangyé Gyatso named the following basic correspondences: the Red Palace's “main building” (*dngos gzhi*) would stand in for (*tshab tu*) the deity section (*lha snam*) of the body maṇḍala; the great hall Sizhi Phuntsok (*srid zhi'i phun tshogs*) would stand for the deity section of the speech maṇḍala; and the alternating chapels and bedrooms above it (*lha khang dang gzims chung spel ma*) would indicate (*mtshon pa*) the deity-section of the mind maṇḍala.³⁷ That this correspondence is far from exact is immediately apparent if one looks at either the two-dimensional or three-dimensional versions of the Kālacakra maṇḍala. The cube-like Red Palace bears no diminution in size on its upper levels; its own rooms were not set at the center but ranged around the perimeter.³⁸ There was nothing to correspond to the gate-houses on all four sides of each of the three levels. Moreover, the Red Palace's great hall was already on its lowest floor, so it could hardly be said that the main building lay beneath it, as the body maṇḍala lay beneath the speech maṇḍala. But Sangyé Gyatso himself was aware of these discrepancies. He reconciled the issue by making a clever distinction: the first two comparisons (to the body and the speech maṇḍalas) referred to the model of a two-

³⁷ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 302.

³⁸ Granted, despite its proportionally diminishing pyramidal shape, the Kālacakra maṇḍala was indeed hypothetically a cube, of equal height to the length of its sides.

dimensional Kālacakra maṇḍala, whether drawn or created from colored sand (*rdul tshon*), whereas the third comparison (to the mind maṇḍala) referred to the three-dimensional maṇḍala. Picture a top-down view of the Red Palace, and his point is clear. Looking straight down, we would see that its great hall is centered within the main building and encompassed by the surrounding chapels on all four sides. The main building is thus “outer” with respect to the great hall, a square containing a smaller square, just like the two-dimensional body maṇḍala contains the speech maṇḍala. Meanwhile, the Red Palace's bedrooms and chapels indeed occupied its upper stories, just like the three-dimensional mind maṇḍala sits atop the speech and body maṇḍalas. The main building and the great hall were like the body and speech maṇḍalas in that they were respectively outer and inner; the chapels and apartments were like the mind maṇḍala because they were upper.

Next, the maṇḍala's color scheme was reproduced inside the great hall. It would have been a key distinguishing feature for calling attention to the Kālacakra, in that this color scheme differed from that common to most other deity maṇḍalas. The palace's great hall is not exactly square—about twenty-three meters north to south, and thirty-one meters west to east. According to modern accounts, it contains forty-four pillars: eight long pillars (*ka ring*) in the center, in two rows of four; and thirty-six shorter pillars distributed on the sides.³⁹ The center of the hall was thus lofted, and those long pillars extended up to the second story roof, whereas the shorter ones to the north and south supported the roof of the first story.⁴⁰ They gave the hall a kind of A-frame shape (akin to the White Palace's own great hall), its center topped by a triangular roof which effectively formed the interior of the building's third story, surrounded by the veranda leading into the various chapels around that floor.⁴¹ Situated atop it on

³⁹ However, at the end of his discussion of the pillars, Sangyé Gyatso seems to indicate “five groups of ten” or fifty pillars (*bcu phrag lnga*); *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 304. Perhaps he was also including the large pillars that stood within the tomb complex on the west side?

⁴⁰ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 303.

⁴¹ For a good side-view of the inside of the building, see *Bu da la gong* 2011: 352–53.

the third story was also a “worship room” (*mchod sprin khang*) filled with lamps and burning incense, effectively illuminating and fumigating the entire space (hence without damaging the nearby precious objects, *mchod rdzas rnam s thag nye dri mas nogs par mi 'gyur*).⁴² As Sangyé Gyatso writes, the great hall's pillars (*ka*), beams (*gdung*), and brackets (*phyam*) were all painted in the different colors of the four grades of precious material (*rin po che dang po*, etc.) Thus the pillars and beams to the west were coated with the first precious material, namely, refined gold (*gtso ma gser*). The brackets (*phyam*) were painted with yellow lacquer (*jo rtsi ser po*). To the north, the beams were coated with the second precious material, silver,⁴³ and the brackets painted with a “white mineral,” perhaps a mica-based paint. To the east, beams were coated with the fourth precious material, in Tibetan *ri snying* or “essence of mountain,” probably a type of bitumen or black pitch; and brackets painted a deep blue-black (*mthing kha*). To the south, the pillars and beams were coated with the third precious material, copper (*kla klo kha*);⁴⁴ the brackets were painted with vermilion red (*dmal po'i mtshal*). As such, they exactly copy the four colors of the four sides of the Kālacakra maṇḍala. Note that in visual representations of the maṇḍala, the eastern (black) side is positioned “down” on the canvas. Therefore “down” on the Red Palace would be its east side, pointing towards the adjacent White Palace. “Up” would be the west side, which held the fifth Dalai lama's tomb.

The authors of the *Budala Gong* treat this reference to the Kālacakra maṇḍala as another token of the general trend of maṇḍala topography in Tibetan architecture. (They invoke Tibet's first monastery, Samyé, modeled on Meru and the surrounding continents, and later monasteries based on it like Tholing in Gugé and Puning Si at Chengde.) Fair enough; but once subsumed under that comparison,

⁴² *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 307. The text does not describe any particular objects for this room; regarding its cost and materials, primarily the roof is discussed; see *ibid.*: 485–86.

⁴³ Sangyé Gyatso gives both Tibetan *ngul* and Sanskrit *karcūram* (which may be a mistake; the term seems to be a synonym for *suvarṇa* or gold).

⁴⁴ Literally “barbarian's face,” evidently an Abhidharmic term for copper.

the Red Palace yields to a vague religious explanation, based on the assumption of some distinctly “spiritual functional requirement” (精神功能要求), namely, eliciting personal religious experience.⁴⁵ Rather than focus on any alleged inner spiritual, cognitive, or emotional effects of maṇḍala topography as a general category, there are two other observations I wish to make, in conversation with Sangyé Gyatso's own words. The first observation is that the stated purpose of this affinity was not just internal and affective but also external and practical. Its invocation of a maṇḍala may or may not have generated an affective response for some or all of its occupants. However, conjuring an experience of the sacred may never have been the point. The palace came into existence within the very world that the Kālacakra system portrayed; so, as I read it, the point of the affinity was not to make the palace sacred by association, but to accomplish something practical on the understanding of being within that sort of world. The second observation is that the *choice* of Kālacakra also makes a difference. We must ask how else Sangyé Gyatso made recourse to this text.

On the first point: in the *Tomb Inventory*, we find that at the end of this brief discussion of the Kālacakra influence, Sangyé Gyatso revealed another subtle but important affinity. All the chapels in the Red Palace, housing its various objects, were oriented to face inwards towards the center. The palace was organized in contemplation of itself. (Nothing of the sort, to my knowledge, was said of the White Palace; nor would its offset design readily facilitate such an idea.) A chapel located on the north side of the Red Palace would thus have its doorway to the south and be internally oriented north-to-south; its statues would be stationed outwards from the center along the north wall and would look south into the great hall in the center. In light of this contemplative orientation, recall that the

⁴⁵ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 139. The authors suggest that the point of making architectural maṇḍalas, in this palace as all the other monasteries, was to fulfill the so-called “spiritual functional requirement” (精神功能要求) of Tibetan religious architecture in general, separate from any practical (使用) requirements. The Red Palace, that is, conveys a “religious conceptual content” (宗教的思想内容) the point of which is an affective influence on the persons within that space (影响人们的感情).

correspondence to the three levels of the Kālacakra maṇḍala was not actually drawn with respect to the maṇḍala as a whole, but specifically those particular areas of the body, speech, and mind maṇḍalas called the *lha snam* or “deity sections.” The deity section was like a gallery around the perimeter of each level, along which its primary deities would be stationed. They too would be gazing inwards.

Much ink has been spilled, by academics and Buddhists alike, on the myriad meanings, uses, significations, and metaphysics of the maṇḍala, from its role as a contemplative technology to that of ordering cities or even entire polities. Their own logic of correspondences also enabled near-infinite permutations of meaning. Even basic introductions to maṇḍala construction and accompanying rituals quickly overwhelm a reader by their seemingly endless refractions, associating every aspect of the maṇḍala with just about everything else great or small in the mental and physical universe. Here we need only consider one basic but definitive feature of the maṇḍala: its function as the gathering-site of a host of deities. It is this quality, I argue, that best explains the appeal of the maṇḍala for the Red Palace. Sangyé Gyatso's own words offer some support for that interpretation:

All the statue-rooms are positioned to face towards the center of the building, as an indication that the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions manifestly come and gather within the sphere of activity of the good works of all physical beings in [this] site.⁴⁶

Arranging the Red Palace to face inwards, with explicit reference to the deity sections of the Kālacakra maṇḍala, would therefore have been a way to assume for this palace the maṇḍala's own function as a site where gods come and gather, attracted by the good works of the beings within. We can also add here that Sangyé Gyatso made almost the exact same point about the Great Worship Assembly and the city of Lhasa. Recall that the aim of the Great Worship Assembly was to be an act of purificatory worship on a grand, city-wide scale. Worship succeeded by attracting and propitiating (*mnyes par byed*)

⁴⁶ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 304.

the gods. In that regard, in the *Great Worship Assembly Instructions*, Sangyé Gyatso briefly described Lhasa as becoming akin to a maṇḍala. He used very similar language:

The vast spread across which this worship-gathering is brought together, is like a maṇḍala in which all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions, and all the noble dharma-protectors, have manifestly gathered and taken their seats within a field of merit.⁴⁷

Again, Sangyé Gyatso did not invoke the maṇḍala in the sense of a political geography, a microcosm, a contemplative technology, or a sacred diagram. He meant specifically its practical function as a gathering-place, a coming-together of deities. Deities were drawn to assemble in Lhasa and “take their seats,” maṇḍala-style, precisely by the pleasing success of this Great Worship Assembly holiday and its bombastic procession around the city. With respect to the Red Palace, then, “maṇḍala” is likewise invoked to establish this palace as the sort of place to which gods can and should be drawn, in which they may behold, enjoy, and confirm the good works of humans within.

A question: how truthful is Sangyé Gyatso's statement? His references to the maṇḍala seem to tiptoe right along that edge between the literal and the metaphorical. It calls to mind the perennial religious and religious-studies concern about divine presence and belief in presence.⁴⁸ So are the gods really there in the palace or not? To put it another way: how sincere is Sangyé Gyatso being here? On one hand, the verb “indicate” (*mtshon byed*) suggests a signifying role: the point of invoking the maṇḍala would have been only to mimic it, *as if* gods could really be here. On the other hand, the powerful adverb “manifestly” (*mngon sum du*), used in both quoted passages above, makes a case that deities—real ones—could and did explicitly enter into such a space.⁴⁹ For the record, I am inclined towards the latter, affirmative interpretation: if Sangyé Gyatso said that gods would take their seats in the Red Palace, that is exactly what he meant, and we should factor that truth into our thinking about

⁴⁷ *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 27a.

⁴⁸ See recently Robert Orsi's study of what he dubs “the equivocal nature of real presence” in Orsi 2016.

⁴⁹ For *mngon sum*, Goldstein's *Dictionary of Modern Tibetan* (2001) has “real, actual, perceptible, realistic.”

how it was put together. That conclusion is not so much a matter of belief, insofar as it follows from my avowed emphasis on situatedness and cosmo-moral order. The Red Palace occupied a world that buddhas and bodhisattvas really occupied, too. Relating to them was possible and desirable. In fact, in the spirit of Inden, we really ought to say that the construction of the palace also participated in constituting and confirming that cosmo-moral order. At any rate, there is also something fishy about the question itself and the ontological register in which I posed it. (That was Paul Mus's point, quoted at the end of the previous chapter.) It's not about presence so much as practice, not knowing but relating. It is telling that Sangyé Gyatso also explicitly invoked the practical language of “good works” (*legs byas*) and “sphere of activity” (*spyod yul*). So instead of thinking about whether the gods really exist, whether they could really come here—if that was even a question being asked, and if this palace was ever meant to resolve it—we should rather think of the Red Palace and its stated affinity to the Kālacakra maṇḍala along the lines of a practical mandate. The palace constituted the ideal space for performing activities that are right and proper. It was set up to facilitate such activities, in reference to a model at hand. Proper activities called their own world to witness: they attracted buddhas and bodhisattvas to join human beings, gathering together like a great encompassing maṇḍala. The palace was built in response to that mandate and to realize it within its world.

Now for the second point: the choice of Kālacakra per se as the referent (rather than, say, Mount Meru, or whatever else). I will consider that choice in the light of Sangyé Gyatso's larger interest in the attendant Kālacakra metaphysics and cosmology (in the narrow sense of the formation, organization, and measurement of the known universe). Again, the point is to recognize that he was not simply invoking the Kālacakra to signify a nominal association with something deemed intrinsically sacred. He was acting based on knowledge of cosmo-moral order. The Kālacakra was, among other things, a comprehensive discourse on cosmo-moral order. In it we find discussions of the genesis and formation of the universe, the movements and repetitions of time, and metaphysical matters like the nature of

being itself. These were subjects that Sangyé Gyatso cared a good deal about. He made frequent and sustained engagements with the arguments in the Kālacakra, while placing it in conversation with a whole swath of other Buddhist knowledge-systems. His presentations were encyclopedic, stitching together readings from Mahāyāna scriptures like the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, Abhidharmic treatises like the *Lokaprajñapti* and Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*, and tantric cosmologies like that of the third chapter of the “father” tantra *Guhyasamāja*,⁵⁰ and the third chapter of the “mother” yoginī tantra *Dākārṇava* (*Mkha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rgyud*).⁵¹ He always gave the Kālacakra system special place of precedence with respect to all the rest. It had the first and the last word. It seems reasonable for us to expect some resonance between his attentions to this text, and his choice to call attention to it in designing the Red Palace.

Sadly, Kālacakra cosmology and metaphysics is yet another subject way too big and difficult to handle in depth here. I will focus on the simple but foundational principle of the nondual basis of reality coupled to its dualistic appearances. This is an idea with which we have already crossed paths several times. Continuing his trademark reliance on the distinction between true sense and indirect sense, Sangyé Gyatso again used these terms to frame the entire topic of cosmology. He spoke in terms of a single complex reality that must be approached on both levels: “as it really is” versus “as it appears” to living beings, or as a true sense versus an indirect sense. We saw already how Potala was explained in the same fashion: a complex construct comprising *both* the bodhisattva's mountain *and* the Lhasa palace, a complement of true sense and indirect sense, at once “eternally existent” (*gdod ma nas grub pa*) and “built palace” (*pho brang bzhengs pa*). The cosmos worked the same way. The *Kālacakra*

⁵⁰ Tōh. 442. For Sangyé Gyatso's presentation of this system, after Tsongkhapa's commentary, itself reading the *Sādhana-vyavasthāli* (*Rnam bzhag rim pa*, Tōh. 1809) by Nāgabodhi, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 26–27.

⁵¹ Tōh. 372. For Sangyé Gyatso's presentation of this system, following the commentary *Vohittha-tīkā* (*'Grel pa gru gzings*, Tōh. 1419) by Padmavajra, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 28–30.

Laghutantra was the principle source Sangyé Gyatso cited to back up this idea. To wit: even the vast expanse in its fullest expression, extended in space and time in ways one could name, arrange, and measure, is nevertheless also and at the same time, in the true sense, immeasurable. This keyword “immeasurable” (*tshad med*) doesn't just mean infinitely or inconceivably vast. Even the hyperbolic, mind-boggling depictions of the Mahāyāna scriptures—a universe with one billion worlds set up exactly like our own, and then billions upon billions upon billions of equally-sized universes in turn—all that vastness is rendered as an indirect sense over against another true sense. The word “immeasurable” was tied to the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary, specifically its topic number eight (*mdor bsdus brgyad pa*). It named a state of being for which “large” or any other physical qualification did not even apply. The very idea of an extended cosmos, however infinite, was simultaneously undermined by a fundamental ground of reality that admitted no extension in space or time.

Sangyé Gyatso presaged his entire presentation of cosmology in the *Tomb Inventory* with this major caveat, and repeated it more than once to drive home the point. Once again he took a hundred steps forward, just to take this one giant step back. He expended a huge amount of intellectual energy to describe exactly this sort of extended reality in its every detail and measurement, only then to pull out the rug again at the end, claiming that “apart from the different ways it appears to sentient beings by force of [their] karma, ultimately the worldly realm has no measure, etc.” And, “It was only in order to develop his disciples, in accord with appearances, that [the buddha] taught measurements of the world, the body, etc.” And, “apart from the inclinations of sentient beings, the world ultimately has no measure of the sort described above; although conventionally various measurements of the world have appeared.”⁵² In support of this mission statement, Sangyé Gyatso roped in similar ideas from other sources: like the Prajñāpāramitā assertion that everything in the world flows from the buddha, which he

⁵² *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 30–31.

read as affirming that the world has no definite limits to its number or shape (*'jig rten la yang grangs dang dbyibs sogs mtha' ma nges pa*);⁵³ or when he incorporated the Sautrāntika and Yogācāra denial of externality to refute any positive affirmations about cosmology (*'jig rten gyi khams phyi na yod pa 'dod pa don la gnas pa ma yin pa*);⁵⁴ or when he insisted that Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya* likewise subscribed to the idea of a universe without measure (*stong gsum de dag tu ma zad 'jig rten khams la tshad med*);⁵⁵ or when he incorporated Nāgārjuna's statement in his *Ratnāvalī* about an endless, boundless world (*'jig rten gyi khams kyang mtha' dang mu med pa*);⁵⁶ or when he read the *Lokaprajñapti* as arguing that the world could not possibly be measured (*tshad bzung mi nus pa*).⁵⁷ He sought affinities in various tantras as well. In sum, Sangyé Gyatso was looking for a common note in all the different bodies of scripture, even where the bulk of their interests lay elsewhere. All that attention to the form and measure of the world must be coupled to an insistence that there was truly no such thing. Of course, many other text traditions make any variety of kindred statements about infinitude, emptiness, limitlessness, conventional versus ultimate, and the like. Sangyé Gyatso traced his thesis to a single source: the Kālacakra and especially the *Vimalaprabhā* commentary.

More specifically, he closely followed that commentary's remarks on world-measurement (*'jig rten gyi khams kyi tshad*) apropos *Kālacakra Laghutantra* verse I.10 and following.⁵⁸ Sangyé Gyatso cited that verse and the accompanying commentary more than once in the *Tomb Inventory*, as well as in the *New Year's Speechmaking*.⁵⁹ The main thesis in the *Vimalaprabhā* is as follows:

⁵³ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 6. Referencing the start of the *Prajñāpāramitā Ratnaguṇa-samcaya-gāthā*.

⁵⁴ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 7.

⁵⁵ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 25–26. Referencing *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* III.45–58, 73–74.

⁵⁶ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 12.

⁵⁷ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 26.

⁵⁸ For an English translation, see Newman 1987: 471ff.

⁵⁹ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 6; and *ibid.*: 30–31, which references five different passages from the *Vimalaprabhā*. See also *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 8b.

Regarding this [verse I.10 of the *Kālacakra Laghutantra*]: the measurements of the worldly realm are taught and appear to sentient beings in accord with the capacities of beings who are variously disposed towards the utterly obscurative reality of the world. In the ultimate sense, the worldly realm has neither measurable span nor verticality; it is by force of the positive and negative actions of sentient beings.⁶⁰

The same point is reinforced any number of ways in the ensuing commentary.⁶¹ We see the major theme of an equivocal ontology that is measurable as it appears but ultimately without measure; hence the constraint that human existence, with its demand for appearances, places on what is ultimately real but also practically inaccessible and useless. Sangyé Gyatso took this Kālacakra system as the basis for understanding everything else as one giant and cohesive body of knowledge. He put that intellectual understanding into practice as a method. His presentation of cosmology incorporated all the Kālacakra's own affirmative arguments and measurements, alongside a vast number of other such claims, and simultaneously recontextualized them all against this fundamental *denial* of measurement. That is the signature move: excessive attention to positive features juxtaposed with a rejection of that very body of knowledge. This method of presentation also carries an implicit insistence that both of those parts (abundant affirmation, incisive denial) belong together—just as every indirect sense is bound to its true sense.

It was against that sort of double reality that Sangyé Gyatso's Potala palace (and Sangyé Gyatso's Dalai Lama) found their existence. Appearance features both as ontology and prerogative. The fundamental basis of this reality is nondual or self-appearing (*rang snang*) whereas the constructed world of our lived experience is dualistic appearance, or perceiving subject and perceived object (*bzung ba 'dzin pa*), as this same section of the *Vimalaprabhā* puts it. The prerogative lies in the fact that, as we saw above, the bodhisattva must become human, the eternal palace must become a built palace,

⁶⁰ Here I follow the edition in the *Bstan 'gyur dpe bdur ma*, vol. 11 (tha): 388.

⁶¹ For a translation see Newman 1987: 471ff.

precisely because of the call that dualistic appearance makes to invisible self-appearance, the demand that the indirect sense places on the true sense. The physical, built world exists and appears because it *must* appear, because we *need* it to appear. For Sangyé Gyatso, that demand justified the existence of the person that was the Dalai Lama and also the place that was the palace. The same demand also justified the acquisition of extensive, encyclopedic knowledge of the world—exactly the kind of knowledge encapsulated in the *Tomb Inventory* and disseminated by Sangyé Gyatso's public speakers—juxtaposed alongside the simultaneous undermining of that same knowledge. In other words, Sangyé Gyatso's practices and productions bore their own cosmological resonances, manifesting the principles of that world in which they were created.

All of this is just to recommend that Sangyé Gyatso's appeal to the Kālacakra in building the Red Palace was hardly incidental and more than just an expression of general religious sentiment or some habitual religious function in Tibetan architecture. Nor is it adequately conceived as an appeal to the sacred or a microcosmic replica of some larger cosmos. It would be better to say that it assumed and then entered a certain kind of world. It participated in constituting those same basic principles: a world that balances and binds true sense and indirect sense at the level of appearances. It makes sense for the palace itself to call attention to that order in the act of helping to constitute it.

ROOMS OF THE RED PALACE

Now at last let us leave abstraction behind and proceed through the rooms of the Red Palace. In line with the theme I announced at the start, we will detect patterns of continuity and departure at one and the same time. The Red Palace shared the White Palace's basic vertical organization: relatively public and open on the lower level and relatively private and closed at the top. It also reproduced many of the same spaces, notably the great hall at the bottom and the apartments at the top. The uses of this new great hall were the same as those of the older one: rituals, celebrations, audiences, foreign emissaries,

gifts and offerings, and formal ceremonies like enthronement. However, I would argue that the Red Palace also inverted the weighting, so to speak, of that basic hierarchy. The White Palace, as we saw in the last chapter, was set up teleologically to lead ever towards its peak. The Red Palace, in contrast, was most concentrated at its base. The emphasis is on those spaces occupying its ground floor. We see that weighting expressed in several ways: for instance, in the relative priority of attention that Sangyé Gyatso gave to the three ground-floor chapels and their statues; or in the fact that the Kālacakra color-scheme was only applied on this level. We see it above all in the fact that the ground floor held the tomb complex housing the fifth Dalai Lama's large golden stūpa, the World's Unique Ornament. The stūpa was nearly as tall from base to spire as the entire Red Palace. I have already suggested that the Red Palace effectively supplanted the Lokeśvara statue and its chapel, which occupied what was originally the peak of the whole edifice. The Red Palace crowded out the old statue and then called attention to this golden reliquary stūpa in its place. That switch confirms this basic reversal of emphasis.

The Red Palace consisted of five stories, really four stories and a rooftop level. There have been various ways of reconciling the White and Red parts of the Potala palace; for convenience I will speak of it as an independent structure, such that its ground floor becomes the “first” floor. To keep in mind the correspondence with the overall palace, the first floor of the Red Palace is level with the fifth floor overall (that is also how the authors of the *Budala Gong* refer to it). In keeping with its emphasis on the ground level, I suggest that one way to think about the Red Palace as a whole is by a very simple logic: the bottom corresponded to the fifth Dalai Lama; the middle corresponded to Sangyé Gyatso himself; and the top corresponded to the new sixth Dalai Lama (indeed it furnished him with his living quarters). This logic is far from exhaustive; but as we will see there is some sense to it. In the brief descriptions below, we will also restrict ourselves only to those rooms that Sangyé Gyatso explicitly mentioned. Here is a general breakdown of those rooms by floor (relative positions in parentheses):

- First floor:
 - Great hall (*tshoms chen srid zhi'i phun tshogs*) (center)
 - World's Unique Ornament tomb complex (*mchod sdong 'dzam gling rgyan gcig*) (west)
 - Past Lives Chapel (*khrungs rabs lha khang*) (north)
 - Lamrim Chapel (*lam rim lha khang*) (east)
 - Vidyādhara Chapel (*rig 'dzin lha khang*) (south)
- Second floor:
 - Medicine Buddha Room (*sman bla khang*) (southeast)
- Third floor:
 - Kālacakra Chapel (*dus 'khor lha khang*) (east)
 - Kadam Khyil apartments (*bka' gdams 'khyil*) (southeast)
 - Bronzes Chapel (*li ma lha khang*) (north)
 - Chinese Statues Chapel (*rgya nag lha khang*) (north)
 - Samantabhadra Worship Room (*kun bzang mchod spring khang*) (center)
 - Dharmarāja's meditation cave (*chos rgyal sgrub phug*) (far north)
- Fourth floor:
 - Victorious Over Three Levels Hall (*sa gsum rnam rgyal*) (south)
 - Lama Chapel (*bla ma lha khang*) (west)
 - Upper Worship Room (*mchod sprin steng*) (center)
 - Apartments: Ngotshar Khyilwa (*ngo mtshar 'khyil ba*), Dechen Ösal Khang (*bde chen 'od gsal khang*), Kunzang Jedro Khang (*kun bzang rjes 'gro khang*) Dögu Khyilwa (*'dod dgu 'khyil ba*), Phuntsok Delek (*phun tshogs bde legs*), Tashi Köpa (*bkra shis bkod pa*), Phuntsok Köpa (*phun tshogs bkod pa*)⁶²
 - Lokeśvara Chapel (*'phags pa lha khang*) (far north)

Much information about these chapels is found in three consecutive chapters of the *Tomb Inventory*.

The fifth chapter (“design,” *bkod pa*), already discussed, mainly concerns principles of layout and specific characteristics of its internal features (pillars, beams, brackets, woodwork, calligraphy, etc.)

The sixth chapter (“supports,” *rten*) describes the statues and other “supports” (texts, images, models, etc.) including such details as their proportions and iconography, historical background for the subjects depicted, long lists of the lineages, and so on. We also find summaries of the murals painted on the palace's interior walls. The seventh chapter (“materials,” *rgyu*) was Sangyé Gyatso's accounting chapter. It offers exhaustive room-by-room lists of each and every object, their materials (metals, gems,

⁶² Their names are given at *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 307.

etc.), and their individual and combined costs. At the end, he appended tallies of costs for building materials (wood, stone, brick, etc.) and labor (duplicating some of the information given in chapter three, on “construction,” *bzo ba*).⁶³

The ground floor was oriented around the aforementioned great hall, the Sizhi Phuntsok.⁶⁴ Four large, rectangular rooms surrounded it on all four sides, each facing the hall and entered by way of it. The entire floor could thus be circumambulated by a single clockwise circuit entering and exiting each chapel in turn via the great hall. To the north, east, and south were the palace's three most important chapels: the Trungrab Lhakhang or “Past Lives Chapel” (*khrungs rabs lha khang*); the Lamrim (“Stages of the Path”) Chapel (*lam rim lha khang*); and the Rikzin Lhakhang or “Vidyādhara Chapel” (*rig/rigs 'dzin lha khang*).⁶⁵ To the west was the hall containing the fifth Dalai Lama's golden stūpa, the World's Unique Ornament. The center of this room reached as high as the Red Palace itself, to accommodate the massive stūpa.⁶⁶ In addition to entering this hall on the ground level, one could also view the stūpa via the third floor veranda, more or less level with the bulbous “vase” (*bum pa*) portion of the stūpa and its niche (*sgo khyim*) holding the figure of Avalokiteśvara portrayed in his “sky-king” bodhistattva form (*'phags pa nam mkha' rgyal po*). In the *Tomb Inventory*, Sangyé Gyatso gave a lengthy description of a sort of cantilevered platform that extended from the third floor for direct access.⁶⁷ The golden stūpa was five stories high (*thog tshad lnga*) and made of slightly more than

⁶³ For descriptions of individual rooms in the Red Palace, see also *Bu da la gong* 2011: 97–108; and *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 40–84.

⁶⁴ For insight into the semantic resonances of this term Sizhi Phuntsok (*srid zhi'i phun tshogs*) apropos the Red Palace, namely, as invoking an aesthetic of “wondrous plenitude,” and potentially resonating with the fifth Dalai Lama's own plenitudinous past lives, see Lin 2017.

⁶⁵ Sangyé Gyatso always used the spelling *rigs 'dzin lha khang*. The Chinese translation 持明 corresponds to *rig 'dzin* = Skt. *vidyādhara*.

⁶⁶ For a general discussion of stūpa proportions, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 314–16; there is also a lengthy discussion of stūpas at *ibid.*: 355–63, and of the size of the World's Unique Ornament at *ibid.*: 366.

⁶⁷ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 305–6. See also *Bu da la gong* 2011: 92 for a hypothetical drawing of this platform. Sangyé Gyatso also invoked a comparison to a story of the Indian adept Tilopa, who used a jeweled bridge (as well as a crystal ladder and a grass key) to access the palace of Dharmagañja (*chos kyi mdzod*) in Oḍḍiyāna. Sangyé Gyatso

119,082 *srang* of gold, as well as 98 *srang* of silver and smaller amounts of copper and brass. Sangyé Gyatso spent dozens of pages recounting each and every one of the design details and inlaid gems and stones that went into each of the stūpa's myriad component parts.⁶⁸ He valued its overall cost at more than 1,041,828 *srang* of silver, or the equivalent in grain-measurement of a little more than 18,752,905 *khal*. This massive object was flanked by eight relatively smaller silver stūpas, four to each side. They were three-fifths the size of the golden stūpa, and their respective designs followed the system of the “eight tathāgata stūpas” that corresponded to eight scenes from the life of Śākyamuni Buddha.⁶⁹ (In later years, two of these silver stūpas would be moved to accommodate new reliquary stūpas for the tenth and eleventh Dalai Lamas. The seventh, eighth, ninth, and thirteenth Dalai Lamas got rooms of their own.) This room also contained dozens of other objects of worship (*mchod rdzas*), all recounted in exhaustive detail in the *Tomb Inventory*.⁷⁰

Each of the other three chapels on this level should likewise be considered as extensions of the fifth Dalai Lama. They comprised three ways that he embodied the past. The Past Lives Chapel to the north, as its name suggests, evoked his former births (*'khrungs rabs*) in India and Tibet. Sangyé Gyatso described those past lives at length in a number of sources, including the first volume of his continuation of the *Dukūla*.⁷¹ Perhaps most influentially, Sangyé Gyatso used them as the basis for his *Prayer For a Marvelous Age*, and its commentary, the *Bouquet of Pearls* (*Mu tig chun po*), which told

also reflected on the resonances of this extendable platform with the general theme of a “path” to liberation. The platform's railings (*sgroms skyor*) were described as having “the luster of a green parrot's outstretched wings which quell the branch's shaking” (*yan lag khyom pa 'jig pa'i 'jam ljang ne'u co'i sgro gshog brkyang 'dra'i mdangs dang ldan pa'i sgroms skyor*).

⁶⁸ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 451–66.

⁶⁹ For a description of the eight types, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 363–64; and on their materials and costs, 469–76. Their arrangement alternated between the right (south) and left (north) sides.

⁷⁰ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 466–69.

⁷¹ See Ahmad 1999 for an English translation; for summaries of the “son teachings” stories, see Schuh 1981b (in German).

each story in turn and explained the poetic ornaments in each stanza.⁷² Those lives were also painted along the walls of the great hall, explicitly following the account in the *Prayer For a Marvelous Age*, as we will see below.

The Lamrim Chapel to the east was for the exoteric transmission lineage of the Kadam and Geluk, namely Atiśa and his disciples. The Vidyādhara Chapel to the south was for the esoteric transmission lineage, namely Padmasambhava and his disciples. We could take the connection one step further by pointing out that each of the latter two chapels pertained to one of the two separate strands of the Dalai Lama's past lives in Tibet, exoteric and esoteric, as discussed in Chapter Three. To recap, a prophecy in the revealed text the *Testament of Ministers* (*Blon po'i bka' thang*) said that there would be five emanations from the body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity of the Tibetan king Tri Songdetsen. According to Sangyé Gyatso, the first four emanations split into two separate lines and came back together again in the fifth Dalai Lama. Hence there was an exoteric “causal” (*rgyu*) or “Perfections Vehicle” line of births, and an esoteric “resultant” (*'bras*) or “Secret Mantra Vehicle” line of births.⁷³ With respect to these chapels, then, it could be said that the fifth Dalai Lama himself embodied the coalescence of these two different practice lineages, at once in his own past lives and equally in his inheritance of the transmissions themselves.

Each chapel had its own main statue flanked by attendant statues. Three new statues were made of solid silver (*dn̄gul dkar ljang brdungs*) and set on gilded copper thrones with seat-backs (*khri rgyab*

⁷² The *Prayer for a Marvelous Age* and *Bouquet of Pearls* both were published in a typed two-volume set of prayers edited by Tashi Tsering and published by the Amnye Machen Institute in Dharamsala (its full Tibetan title is too long to print here; the t.p. verso also gives the abbreviated English title *Selected Works: Prayers to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Previous Emanations, and Long-Life Prayers to the Present Dalai Lama, His Holiness the 14th*). Tashi Tsering (ed.) 2005, vol. 1: 101–284. The *Prayer for a Marvelous Age* may be accessed more easily from the online database of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, as it was included within the collected liturgy of Nechung Dorjé Drayang Ling (*Gnas chung rdo rje sgra dbyangs gling gi 'don chog*, TBRC resource ID W00EGS1016248, vol. 1: 338–53).

⁷³ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 151–52; *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 4a; *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 25b; *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 367–68.

yo/). There was a statue of the fifth Dalai Lama himself, in the Past Lives Chapel; one of Tsongkhapa, founder of the Gelukpa sect, in the Lamrim chapel; and one of the tantric adept Padmasambhava, in the Vidyādhara chapel.⁷⁴ The Past Lives Chapel also boasted a gold statue of the buddha Śākyamuni with the proportions of a twelve-year-old, which is to say a copy of the Jowo Śākyamuni statue kept in the Jokhang (Sangyé Gyatso also referred to it as the *jo 'dra*, “[the one] like the Jo[wo]”).⁷⁵ The plans for these four statues were carefully drawn up by a committee of artists, led by one Tenzin Norbu from Lhodrak, in close consultation with new standards for iconometric proportions according to the measurements of the Kālacakra system.⁷⁶ Those standards were also compiled in an illustrated handbook of iconometric examples (*bris dpe*), summarized in the latter half of the fifth chapter of the *Tomb Inventory*.⁷⁷ These three chapels also held a number of other statues. For instance, in the Past Lives Chapel the Śākyamuni statue was flanked by statues of the eight medicine buddhas; and the statue of the fifth Dalai Lama was flanked by eight statues: Avalokiteśvara (in his “resting in the nature of mind” form, *sems nyid ngal gso*), Songtsen Gampo, the Kadampa master Dromtön, the first four Dalai Lamas, and the Sakya adept Tsharchen Losal Gyatso.⁷⁸ The Vidyādhara Chapel included, to the right of Padmasambhava, the eight vidyādharas of India;⁷⁹ and to the left, the eight manifestations of

⁷⁴ For these statues, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 369–72; for their materials and costs, see *ibid.*: 476–82.

⁷⁵ On the Śākyamuni statue see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 367–69.

⁷⁶ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 342.

⁷⁷ A manuscript of that illustrated handbook has been published: Cüppers, van der Kuijp, and Pagel 2012. For the discussion in the *Tomb Inventory*, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 315ff. The summary begins at *ibid.*: 335. Regarding the Kālacakra, Sangyé Gyatso states his preference for the commentary of the Sakya scholar Taktshang Lotsāwa Sherap Rinchen (Shes rab rin chen, b. 1405). Another major source on iconometry was the *Samvarodaya Tantra* (*Bde mchog sdom pa 'byung ba'i mdo*, Tōh. 373), particularly the commentary *Padminī* (*Pad ma can*) by Ratnarakṣita (Tōh. 1420).

⁷⁸ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 376–79. It is admittedly unclear to me why Tsharchen Losal Gyatso (1502–67), a teacher of the third Dalai Lama, was included here alongside seven past lives of the Dalai Lama. The only justification that Sangyé Gyatso gave was to quote the fifth Dalai Lama's high praises of this master. The fifth Dalai Lama also wrote a biography of him as well.

⁷⁹ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 383–86.

Padmasambhava (*gu ru mtshan brgyad*).⁸⁰ The Lamrim Chapel included sixty-eight statues of the transmission lineage (*bla brgyud*) of the stages of the path, split into its two branches: the “vast conduct lineage” (*rgya chen spyod brgyud*) tied to Asaṅga, on the right side; and the “profound view lineage” (*zab mo lta ba*) tied to Nāgārjuna, on the left side.⁸¹

At the center of these chapels was the great hall Sizhi Phuntsok (*srid zhi'i phun tshogs*) or roughly “Excellence of This World and Beyond.” It was entered from the east and oriented so that the throne stood on the west side facing east. As Okuyama pointed out, this meant that those who venerated the Dalai Lama on the throne would also be venerating the fifth Dalai Lama's golden stūpa reliquary towering behind it. During assemblies (*bzhugs gral*) the throne would be flanked by a number of ornate tapestries, including a pair that Sangyé Gyatso personally designed and commissioned from the Qing court. He sent emissaries to China in 1693 to deliver this the request and his instructions; purportedly a new textile facility had to be set up to construct them, and the finished product was at last delivered to Lhasa in 1696.⁸² One centered on the fifth Dalai Lama, the other on Tsongkhapa.⁸³

It is also important to briefly acknowledge the painted murals that enveloped the first floor of the great hall. Like the three first-floor chapels themselves, these images were intimately tied to the fifth Dalai Lama in several ways. There is a general cosmo-theological progression as one moves in a clockwise direction, starting from the west wall and proceeding to the north, east, and south walls in turn. This is also the order in which Sangyé Gyatso described their contents in the *Tomb Inventory*.⁸⁴ He

⁸⁰ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 387–89. For materials and costs see *ibid.*: 478–81.

⁸¹ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 389–92. For materials and costs see *ibid.*: 481–82.

⁸² For a depiction of this process and the personnel involved see 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 312–13.

⁸³ See *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 64–65.

⁸⁴ For descriptions of their contents see 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 403ff. For selected samples from this set of images, see *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 84–102.

took his cue from a prophecy found in the *Queen's Testament* (*Btsun mo bka'i thang yig*), another of the famous “five testaments” (*Bka' thang sde lnga*) whose discovery is attributed to Orgyan Lingpa:

I prophesy a lord of heaven and earth, named “byang,”
the projection of Tri Songdetsen's activities—
construct images in his likeness
and paint his life story on frescoes!⁸⁵

This passage was one of several within those five testaments to invoke the aforementioned five projections of the Tibetan king Tri Songdetsen.⁸⁶ As Sangyé Gyatso interpreted it, this prophecy was more than a justification for artwork; it was also a call to action, a state-forming act in its own right:

[The murals] follow this prophecy, which says that if we created likenesses of the Dalai Lama—He who is the excellent crown-jewel of this world and beyond—that were constructed from precious materials and mixtures of earth and stone, etc., and if we painted frescoes of his life story, then every source of danger to the the kingdom of Purgyal Tibet, like foreign armies in the four directions, would be utterly conquered; and then the victorious drums of peace and well-being would sound at the very peak of existence.⁸⁷

We can also assume that Sangyé Gyatso took “likeness” (*'dra 'bag*) and “life story” (*rnam thar*) in the fullest possible sense. The great hall's murals, as he described them, proceeded as follows: first, on the western side, was an image of the buddha Jñānaketu. To refresh your memory: Sangyé Gyatso tied this buddha to the core thesis of Avalokiteśvara already being a buddha. Jñānaketu featured in the *Maṇi Collection* story of Songtsen Gampo's past life as the prince Lokeśvara, nine hundred and ninety-one mahākālpas ago. Avalokiteśvara first generated the will to awakening before Jñānaketu, then himself became the buddha Samanta-raśmi-abhyudgata-śrīkūṭa-rāja. Hence the buddha Jñānaketu is always invoked at the onset of describing the fifth Dalai Lama's own buddhahood (as one can easily see by

⁸⁵ See *Bka' thang sde lnga* 2011: 230. Quoted in *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 312; 403.

⁸⁶ For Sangyé Gyatso's summary and exegesis of those prophecies see *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 24a–26a; also *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 367–71. Curiously he totally sidestepped the frequent references (as in the example quoted here) to “someone name byang” (*byang ming*). The term *byang* means “north.” In some prophecies we find *byang mi* (“northerner”) instead of *byang ming* (“named byang”).

⁸⁷ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 403.

reading the verses that begin Sangyé Gyatso's texts, including this *Tomb Inventory*). Next, on the great hall's north wall is an image of Amitābha presiding over his pure land Sukhāvātī. This second image corresponds to the second step in that cosmic progression from buddha to bodhisattva to human. For it was here in Sukhāvātī that the so-called “Avalokiteśvara” had his “birth” inside a lotus-pod and became Amitābha's bodhisattva disciple (albeit only in the indirect sense, over against the true sense of his already being a buddha). The details of that story make up this image. The third image, on the same north wall, continues this progression by showing “Avalokiteśvara” the bodhisattva (here portrayed in his “sky-king” appearance) presiding over his own abode on Mount Potala. This was the form he adopted to project himself into Jambudvīpa to serve the beings of India and Tibet. On the east wall are three of those projections, which is to say three of the fifth Dalai Lama's past lives: the dharma-kings Songtsen Gampo and Tri Songdetsen, and the prince Ratnadāsa (one of Dromtön's past lives from the *Book of Kadam*; hence linked to the Lama Chapel on this side). On the south wall, the main images are two more past lives: the king Depa Tenpa (*Dad pa brtan pa*, another life inherited from the *Book of Kadam*) and the Nyingma master Nyangral Nyima Öser. Also on this wall were painted many scenes from the fifth Dalai Lama's own life, including his patriline.⁸⁸ Indeed the likely reason for selecting the otherwise unremarkable Depa Tenpa for this prominent placement is the fact that this king was also in the Bengali “Zahor” royal lineage, to which the fifth Dalai Lama traced his family's roots.⁸⁹

Above these main images (recall that this hall was two stories high) there was another image of the fifth Dalai Lama, around whom was arrayed the entire sequence of all his past lives, painted according

⁸⁸ The fifth Dalai Lama described that “Zahor” patriline in his autobiography; Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 14–30; see also Karmay 2014: 23–38. On *za hor/sa hor* see van der Kuijp 2013.

⁸⁹ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 149. Another related reason was that Sangyé Gyatso (via Dromtön's compatriot Ngok Lekpé Sherap) also had a past life within the same story, namely, as Dépa Tenpa's father, the Zahor king *Bhaṅga (*bhang ga*); and moreover this tale in the “son teachings” of the *Book of Kadam* includes an explicit statement from Atiśa to Ngok that he would follow Dromtön closely in future lives; hence it was important for Sangyé Gyatso's idea of his own inseparability from the fifth Dalai Lama (on which see below). *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 821.

to the order in which they were listed in Sangyé Gyatso's text *Prayer For a Marvelous Age*.⁹⁰ To the west on the upper part were images of the Śākyamuni buddha and a number of characters from the *Karunāpundarīka Sūtra* (which was the main source for deriving Avalokiteśvara's buddha-name and the name of the Dharaṇa age) such as the brahmin Samudrareṇu (who would be the future Śākyamuni) and the buddha Ratnagarbha. To the east were images of Tsongkhapa and four of his main disciples.⁹¹

So the murals perfectly reproduce Sangyé Gyatso's thesis of divinity (the buddha becoming a bodhisattva becoming human) along with all the other aspects of the past undergirding the life of the fifth Dalai Lama. Everything on this level builds and feeds into the complex character of the fifth Dalai Lama. A term like “tradition” does not quite do it justice, unless we understand tradition as a braid that weaves together strands like divinity, genealogy, past lives, and lineages of transmission both exoteric and esoteric. With his tomb, the fifth Dalai Lama looms singularly in death over the multiple strands of tradition that he inherited and embodied in life. In this space he is both one and many, both unique and traditional. He literally confronts and envelops those who dwell and worship within this space. At every turn, one is confronted with the presence of the fifth Dalai Lama, isolated and elevated in death, but at the same time expanded into a complex but cohesive whole.

To continue our basic review of the main rooms in the Red Palace, Sangyé Gyatso spoke of seven more chapels (*lha khang bdun*), which are distributed between the second, third, and fourth floors.⁹² The second level is essentially the same as the first, insofar as all of those ground-floor chapels are two stories high; only it adds a small “Medicine Buddha Room” (*smān bla khang*) on the southeast corner.

⁹⁰ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 404–5.

⁹¹ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 405–6

⁹² See 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 307. In this passage it seems that he arrives at the count of seven by adding together the Medicine Buddha Chapel; the pair of Lama Chapels (*bla ma khang zung*); the Chinese Statues Chapel; the pair of Bronzes Chapels (*li sku khang zung*); and the Kālacakra Chapel. But elsewhere he mentioned twelve chapels (*lha khang khag bcu gnyis*); 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 313. Perhaps that figure is attained by taking the aforementioned seven and adding the three first-floor chapels, the tomb complex, and the offering room (*mchod sprin khang*) on the third floor.

That chapel contained a three-dimensional gilded copper model of this buddha's palace, populated by the eight forms of the medicine buddha and all the attendants in its maṇḍala; along with three hundred and ten statues made of “medicinal clay” (*sman 'dam*), depicting both the transmission lineages of the *Bhaiṣajyaguru-Vaiḍūryaprabhārāja* and Tibet's healing tradition (*gso ba rig pa*).⁹³ The murals in this room likewise depicted the full buddha-realm of the Medicine Buddha and the healing lineage.⁹⁴ The third floor of the Red Palace, as mentioned above, encircled the internal roof of the great hall to form a kind of veranda around it, with viewing access to the upper level of the golden stupa to the west. To the east (directly above the Lamrim Chapel) was the Kālacakra Chapel (*'dus 'khor lha khang*), which held the gilded bronze three-dimensional model of the full Kālacakra body, speech, and mind maṇḍalas. There were also one hundred and sixty-two clay statues portraying the two lineages of the Kālacakra tantra and the astronomical tradition (*gtsug lag spor thang*) stemming from Mañjuśrī (*'jam dbyangs bla rgyud*); but evidently these statues are no longer extant.⁹⁵ The walls depicted these same two lineages.⁹⁶ Also on this floor were a pair of rooms referred to as the “Bronzes Chapel” (*li sku khang zung*; typically called *li ma lha khang*). This was a space for statues of buddhas and bodhisattvas primarily from India and Nepal; its principle support was a statue of Śākyamuni Buddha made of something called *dzai kṣi* bronze, formerly kept at Reting monastery.⁹⁷ Next to it was the “Chinese Statues Chapel” (*rgya nag lha khang*) which presumably housed statues from China; but apart from naming this chapel, Sangyé Gyatso offered no more information.⁹⁸ According to the *Budala Gong*, these rooms are no longer extant. Finally, on the fourth floor, Sangyé Gyatso also mentioned a pair of “Lama

⁹³ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 307; on the lineage, *ibid.*: 395–98; on materials and costs, *ibid.*: 482–83.

⁹⁴ On their contents see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 410–13.

⁹⁵ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 398–403; 483–85.

⁹⁶ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 413–15.

⁹⁷ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 394–95; and on materials and costs see *ibid.*: 486–87.

⁹⁸ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 307.

Chapels” (*bla ma khang zung*); today that name refers to a single room on the west side of the fourth floor. This room mainly held statues of important Tibetan monks, including one of the sixth Dalai Lama in the proportions of an eight-year-old, along with statues of all the Dalai Lama's past lives, again based on the aforementioned *Prayer for a Marvelous Age*. There were also two clay statues within which were inserted bits of the fifth Dalai Lama's hair and teeth.⁹⁹

If that ground level basically belongs to the fifth Dalai Lama, concentrating him into the stupa and also exploding the component pieces of his being across a visual and material arrangement of space, then the upper level would likewise correspond to Sangyé Gyatso. For instance, it is on the upper-level veranda that we find a separate but no less incredible set of murals, this time depicting scenes from Sangyé Gyatso's own life, including the institution of the Great Worship Assembly, the composition of his major texts, and the construction and consecration of the Red Palace.¹⁰⁰ It is also on these upper levels that we find chapels for the Medicine Buddha and for the Kālacakra. That placement seems most fitting, as if to acknowledge that their importance was more closely tied to Sangyé Gyatso's own works, rather than part of the complex composition of the Dalai Lama. The Desi was famous for his contributions to medicine and astronomy, which included but were hardly limited to his two major works of scholarship in these fields, the *Blue Vaidurya* and the *White Vaidurya*. The Desi and his works stand on the shoulders of the fifth Dalai Lama, just like the Red Palace stood atop the White.

We can also invoke another related idea here, namely, Sangyé Gyatso's insistence—frequently expressed in his texts—on his own inseparability from (*mi 'bral ba*), or close connection with (*rjes su bzung ba*), the fifth Dalai Lama.¹⁰¹ The idea was that he and the Dalai Lama bore an especially close karmic link, one that would keep them together not just in this life, but in many past lives, and ideally

⁹⁹ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 392–93; on materials and costs see *ibid.*: 487–88.

¹⁰⁰ 'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag 1990: 406–8. For images, see *A Mirror of the Murals in the Potala* 2000: 104–39.

¹⁰¹ See e.g. *Lo gsar 'bel gtam*: 33b, 44a–b; *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 22a.

in all future lives as well. The idea had roots in the fifth Dalai Lama's own visions about the Desi, as recounted in his “secret autobiography” of those visions, the aforementioned *Sealed Secret (Gsang ba rgya can ma)*.¹⁰² Sangyé Gyatso even wrote that the fifth Dalai Lama confirmed their inseparability on his deathbed, in their last conversation together.¹⁰³ To that end, in addition to composing the *Prayer for a Marvelous Age* to extoll the fifth Dalai Lama's past lives and insert them into the liturgy of monastic assemblies, Sangyé Gyatso also wrote a shorter companion work, the *Prayer for an Unimpeded Age (Thogs med bskal pa ma)* about his own past lives.¹⁰⁴ Each was a secondary character derived from the past-life stories of the fifth Dalai Lama. Sangyé Gyatso kept coming back as the Dalai Lama's mother, father, brother, son, minister, even his horse on one occasion. In Tibet's past, he featured as more memorable individuals, like Qubilai Khan to the Dalai Lama's Phakpa, among others. He also expressed this same wish of inseparability in a shorter poem, the *Conquering the Four Demons (Bdud bzhi rab bcom ma)*.¹⁰⁵ The *Prayer for a Marvelous Age* itself included two stanzas expressing this wish for Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso to remain inseparable:

83. Over many past lives, the force of good karma
caused Sangyé Gyatso to thrive for ages,
supreme human lord, joining two systems, sun and moon,
in the open sky of his expansive intellect—

84. May he be inseparable from you, Lord, in every birth,
realize every happiness, bring peace to the dispensation and to beings,

¹⁰² Namely in the sixteenth or “thunderbolt” (*thog mda' can*) chapter. For the Desi's explanation of that vision, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 820. He also mentioned the importance of that text for the theme of inseparability in the *Mu tig chun po*; see Tashi Tsering (ed.) 2005, vol. 1: 265–66.

¹⁰³ *Rna ba'i bcud len*: 26b–27a. In Tibetan: *rgya can du gsungs pa ltar mi bslu ba yin pas rang cag gnyis byang chub bar du mi 'bral lo zhes zhal gyis bzhes so*. The same idea is then expressed in verse, in the seventh stanza following this portion of the text; *ibid.*: 27b–28a.

¹⁰⁴ A blockprint of this short six-folio work is kept in microfilm at the Nepal National Archives (document E2830/15); another copy is in the Tōyō Bunko collection (document 308-2484). It can also be found within the aforementioned collected liturgy of Nechung Dorjé Drayang Ling (*Gnas chung rdo rje sgra dbyangs gling gi 'don chog*, TBRC resource ID W00EGS1016248), vol. 1: 5–11. It was studied by Ishihama (1992).

¹⁰⁵ The relevant stanza reads: “You, too, Sangyé Gyatso, upholding clerical and secular governance, may you polish away that rusted taint of evil and defilement, may you be inseparable in every rebirth, realize all your prayers, and speedily become a buddha!” For the full prayer, see the collected liturgy of Nechung Dorjé Drayang Ling (*op. cit.*), vol. 1: 167.

stay on the prophesied path to final liberation,
and revel in the glory, the celebration of fame!¹⁰⁶

It seems fitting that here in the Red Palace as well, Sangyé Gyatso would wish to layer a piece of himself atop the fifth Dalai Lama, rendering them inseparable for all posterity. To manifest that relationship in physical space was a way of calling attention to his own singular accomplishments as much as their inseparability from and dependence on those foundations.

Finally, we may briefly mention the myriad apartments for the sixth Dalai Lama. Some were later repurposed into spaces for the reliquary stūpas of the seventh, eighth, and ninth Dalai Lamas, or turned into additional chapels for statues, portraits, plaques, and gifts, including many from the Qing court. One important bedroom, originally located on the southeast corner of the third floor, was called the “Kadam Khyil.” It was decorated with gilded pillars and, like its namesake suggests, had murals depicting past lives from the “son teachings” of the *Book of Kadam*.¹⁰⁷ This room appears to have been the sixth Dalai Lama's primary bedroom, as it was singled out for special attention in the *Tomb Inventory*. It no longer exists, maybe for the same reason. This part of the Red Palace is now occupied by two small chapels for Amitābha (*tshe dpag lha khang*) and Śākyamuni (*thub dbang lha khang*). At least some of that renovation appears to have occurred in 1797, during the tenure of the eighth Dalai Lama.¹⁰⁸ In the biography of the sixth Dalai Lama, we find that it was to this Kadam Khyil that Sangyé Gyatso first brought the young boy upon entering the Potala on the morning of his enthronement.¹⁰⁹ It was in this bedroom, about one week later, that Sangyé Gyatso sat down with his charge to deliver a long and (one would guess) rather overwhelming account of the situation that this poor boy had inherited: Sangyé Gyatso confessed all that he had done as ruler in the past fifteen years, including

¹⁰⁶ See Tashi Tsering (ed.) 2005, vol. 1: 119; and commentary at *ibid.*: 264–67.

¹⁰⁷ *Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 307; on the contents of those murals see *ibid.*: 408–10.

¹⁰⁸ See *Pho brang po ta la'i lo rgyus phyogs bsgrigs* 1994: 45.

¹⁰⁹ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 311.

keeping the fifth Dalai Lama's death a secret; and how he desired to educate this boy; what a corrupting influence the duties of rule were (*rgyal srid kyi las ci byas sdig dang 'dres pa'i gshis rang yang srid skyong ma dgos pa*); how the Desi would never be separate from the Dalai Lama in this life or any other; how much gratitude they both must have for the fifth Dalai Lama; and so on.¹¹⁰

Another important multi-purpose apartment was called the “Sasum Namgyal” (*sa gsum rnam rgyal*) or “Victory Over the Three Levels,” located on the south side of the fourth floor. It appears to have had a very similar orientation, design, and use as the closely-named “Khamsum Zilnön” (*khamsum gsum zil gnon*) or “Overwhelming the Three Realms,” which was likewise placed on the south side of the top floor of the White Palace (see Chapter Five). The Desi referred to the Sasum Namgyal as an apartment (*gzims chung*), but he elsewhere he described it as a site for the sixth Dalai Lama's religious education, for instance receiving Vajrabhairava empowerments from the Panchen Lama (who had received them from the fifth Dalai Lama) over several days in December 1697.¹¹¹ Evidently this room was also later used as the site for meetings of the highest levels of the Tibetan government.¹¹² It was later outfitted with a portrait of the Qianlong emperor (sent as a gift for the eighth Dalai Lama's enthronement). In March 1822, this room was the site of the “golden urn” procedure to select the tenth Dalai Lama.¹¹³ Next to it in the southwest corner was another bedroom known as the “Deden Khyil” or “Swirl of Peace” (*bde ldan 'khyil*), another apartment of the sixth Dalai Lama that would be repurposed into a kind of general-use chapel. (The authors of the *Budala Gong* note that the room still has traces of

¹¹⁰ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 328–30.

¹¹¹ Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho 2010: 346.

¹¹² *Bu da la gong* 2011: 83–84. For instance, they mention a type of meeting called the *bka' shag drung rtsi lhan skyes* (Ch. 噶厦仲孜). As its name suggests, this referred to a meeting of the *bka' shag* (heads of the cabinet), the *drung yig chen mo* (heads of the *yig tshang las khungs* or secretary general's office) and the *rtsis dpon* (heads of the *rtsis khang las khungs* or office of finance).

¹¹³ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 83.

the original plumbing.)¹¹⁴ In the *Tomb Inventory*, Sangyé Gyatso also listed some ten other apartments by name but offered few details about them.

Clearly we have only scratched the surface of all that could be gleaned from close attention to this text. As I suggested above, just as the lower levels were concentrated on the fifth Dalai Lama, and the space above on Sangyé Gyatso, the highest portion of the Red Palace was first and foremost designed for the occupancy and personal use of the soon-to-be-enthroned sixth Dalai Lama. To ascend to these upper reaches of the Red Palace, he would have had to step in turn through his two illustrious predecessors, the fifth Dalai Lama and Sangyé Gyatso. The palace may have been built to house this young reincarnation and all the activities that swirled around him and the government of which he was the nominal figurehead; but it also sank him knee-deep into the legacy of the fifth Dalai Lama, and its architect, Sangyé Gyatso.

CONCLUSION: THE UNIQUE ORNAMENT

At last, we will end where we began, with the forsaken Lokeśvara chapel. It would henceforth be accessible only by way of the Red Palace's fourth floor, via a short passageway on the north side. The chapel jutted out from the main building. Up on the top, its hexagonal roof was dwarfed by the three-pointed golden pagoda roof of the fifth Dalai Lama's tomb. More golden roofs would join it in later years as more tombs were added. Accordingly, the Lokeśvara chapel also received scant attention in the *Tomb Inventory*. All in all, 1,694,836 *srang* were expended to build the Red Palace, but none seems to have been earmarked for the Lokeśvara. It was simply not part of Sangyé Gyatso's vision.

We have already seen some evidence for how proud Sangyé Gyatso was of that vision, and his own ingenuity at conceiving it all and getting it all exactly right. Here he is once more, for good measure:

¹¹⁴ *Bu da la gong* 2011: 93.

All these things were constructed each according to its own specifications, and not just according to what some artists or stupid people thought would be pretty. Everything we built was [built that way] exclusively for a necessary reason. The proportions [of the statues, etc.] were properly determined along the lines of what the authentic texts said—sūtra, tantra, and so forth—and they are fault-free and possessed of good quality.¹¹⁵

This ingenuity of design numbers among the many ways that the Red Palace, like the Desi's other works, introduced something that was both entirely new and meticulously sourced in its every detail. We could call it the singularity of getting tradition exactly right. Of course, any claim to work exactly “along the lines of what the authentic texts said” would be a process of selection, inclusion and exclusion, and interpretation. (Some might even say that this fact also applies to “tradition” as a category.)¹¹⁶ The productions that Sangyé Gyatso supervised were thus creative in two ways. They created something physically new in the world—like this palace. At the same time, they also retrospectively created their own ideological conditions—the sense of tradition inherited, the concepts and principles on which they were based and through which they acquired that singular authenticity.

There are also indications that Sangyé Gyatso wished for this novelty to be seen as an act of fulfillment, not a break. Again, that wish looks both forwards and backwards. For to assert continuity of intentions—to claim to be fulfilling an original vision—is also to reinterpret the past. We saw a cutting example in his reinterpretation of the Lokeśvara statue, still memorable and meaningful but condemned to the fate of being “old” (*rnying*) and irrelevant. The Red Palace had a transformative effect on the entire Potala: it made the palace into something new, and as a result it also changed what the palace already was, or ought to have been, all along. We can make this point in a more straightforward way with another revealing passage from the *Tomb Inventory*. Sangyé Gyatso clearly read and thought about what the fifth Dalai Lama himself had to say about the Potala palace and much else besides. Quotes

¹¹⁵ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 314.

¹¹⁶ On tradition as sameness and difference both, see *Hollywood* 2016: 13–14.

from the fifth Dalai Lama's corpus appear frequently throughout this text. It happens that among the works that Sangyé Gyatso cited was the fifth Dalai Lama's praise poem of the Potala's qualities. (I confess that it was Sangyé Gyatso who brought this poem to my attention.) Another reason for having paid close attention to that poem in the previous chapter is this fact that Sangyé Gyatso read it and thought about it, too. He quoted five stanzas from it in the *Tomb Inventory's* “design” chapter. The quotation comes at the end of a long section in which he listed all the major design features of the Red Palace: not only the chapels and apartments, as described above, but also the pillars, beams, and brackets; the three main approaches to the palace;¹¹⁷ auxiliary buildings like the monks' quarters (*gra khang*);¹¹⁸ the “unprecedented” (*sngon med*) woodwork and stonework;¹¹⁹ design motifs and lettering; roofs and banners; and so on. From the poem, he selected those five stanzas (17–21) describing the palace's physical features, beginning from the Dalai Lama's fourfold comparison between the palace and the divine residences of Vaijayanta, Lañka, Aḍakāvaṭī, and the “actual” Mount Potala. (The selection also leaves off—perhaps not incidentally—right where the poem started talking about the Lokeśvara statue; i.e., stanzas 22–27.) After quoting it, this is what Sangyé Gyatso had to say about it: “The old palace, in the past, had only partially satisfied these words; but now I think that their meaning has been utterly and completely fulfilled.”¹²⁰

Here we see signs of the wish to which I referred at the start of this chapter. We may describe it as a wish to turn a *difference in kind* into a *difference in degree*. Such is the ideological import behind this

¹¹⁷ These were the pathways named *phun tshogs 'du lam* (going east) and the *byang chen bgrod pa'i thar lam* (going west), and an outdoor area named the *bde skyid nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor* (on the front, i.e. south side of the Red Palace).

¹¹⁸ Known by the Tibetan name “Sangak Gatshal” (*gsang sngags dga' tshal*) or “Secret Mantra Pleasure-Grove,” located on the far west side of Marpori. On its murals, see *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 415–18.

¹¹⁹ See *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 308. Wood came from forests in Nyang (probably Nyangdren, *nyang bran*, just north of Lhasa), Kong (probably Kongpo, *kong po*, southeast of Lhasa), and Charrong (*byar rong*, south of Lhasa). Stones came from Lhalung (*lha lung*, in western Lhodrak, south of Lhasa), Dikrak (*sdig rag*), Kamyung (*skam g.yung*, just south of Lhasa), and Dokdé (*dogs sde*, just northeast of Lhasa).

¹²⁰ *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 312.

language of “partial” (*phyogs tsam*) and “complete” (*yongs su rdzogs pa*), which is exactly the language of a difference in degree. The palace is not one thing and then another thing, but rather the *same* thing at varying degrees of realization. Hence the Red Palace was envisioned as being the utter and complete realization of the entire idea of the Potala palace. At last, for the first time, the palace was wholly and fully what it was always meant to be. Even so: this very act which “completed” the palace also can’t help but call attention to its own uniqueness, most assertively of all in the unprecedented, unrivaled, unrepeatable golden tomb (which I would bet was assuredly *not* the original vision all along!) Here, I think, is a key to understanding the incongruity in Sangyé Gyatso's self-presentation, his effort to move in the registers of novelty and tradition both. The point is not to have either one or the other outright, difference in degree or in kind, continuity or change. Rather, the point is that the recognition of novelty and difference might also be oriented towards this wish: that a difference in kind will, in turn, reveal a higher-order difference in degree; and that recognition and appreciation of singularity could then catalyze that further awareness of an even deeper pattern of continuity.

Of course, this appeal to the fifth Dalai Lama's words could have also sanctioned his own choices. It was certainly an act of interpretation to claim any affinity between one’s own works and some lines of poetry. For that reason, this interpretative choice can help us think about how Sangyé Gyatso ideally envisioned his own role. That we encounter this problematic of singularity and continuity should not really be all that surprising, especially in light of Sangyé Gyatso's own ambivalent standing vis-a-vis the Dalai Lama institution and the rule of the Ganden Phodrang government—at once intimately close and irresolvably apart from it, perhaps even justifiably reluctant to have his own distinctiveness dissolved away. And, at the same time, this way of thinking was not merely reflexive: it was also targeted towards re-envisioning and elevating the fifth Dalai Lama, too. This aesthetic of exceptionalism-as-fulfillment took the Dalai Lama as its main object. Like the rising tide that lifts all boats, if the Dalai Lama was exceptional, so too would the Desi himself be made exceptional too.

A final thought is that this aesthetic is also perfectly captured in the name selected for the fifth Dalai Lama's tomb: World's Unique Ornament (*'dzam gling rgyan gcig*). The Desi hardly invented this euphemism. In that Potala praise-poem, the fifth Dalai described Songtsen Gampo's remembered Marpori palace as “a unique ornament on earth” (*'dzin ma'i rgyan gcig*). He elsewhere used the same expression to refer to Ne'udong, former seat of the Phagmodru rulers,¹²¹ and to the silver reliquary stūpa for the third Dalai Lama at Drepung monastery (*dn̄gul gdung 'dzam gling rgyan gcig*).¹²² (For that matter, *decus orbis*, “ornament of the world,” was also a euphemism for persons, cities, or kingdoms in Europe.) Nevertheless, the idea seems apt for the basic theme I have tried to express above. The power of an ornament is of something that attaches and thereby reveals. It is an added decorative element, but neither entirely superficial nor exclusively self-referential. It can reveal further meaning and beauty in that body which it adorns. (“Ornament,” *rgyan*, also named the poetic figures that expand and beautify the literary “body.”)¹²³ One way to read the sentiment behind this appellation, World's Unique Ornament, is that it is something exquisite and absolutely unique, but also something added to the world which thereby beautifies the world just by way of its own beauty. That sentiment certainly qualifies the Desi's own works in themselves, which by their own unprecedented inventiveness irrevocably changed that to which they attached. It also qualifies that object towards which and for which those works were made: the fifth Dalai Lama. The World's Unique Ornament was a vehicle for enshrining and worshipping an exquisite and absolutely unique ruler, around whom was built a new palace to match. Utterly unprecedented in the entire Buddhist tradition, it is equally the inheritor and

¹²¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 5 (ca): 246.

¹²² See e.g. Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 6 (cha): 88–89 (apropos installing another stūpa for the recently deceased Desi alongside it); 115. Sangyé Gyatso called it *'dzam gling g.yas bzhag* (“placing the right foot on the world”); see e.g. *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 359.

¹²³ The classic statement in Tibetan poetics would be Daṇḍin's *Kāvyaḍarśa* I.10.

the perfect fulfillment of that past, which is to say, of that “body” which it adorns, and which it makes all the more beautiful by way of its own singularity.

The Red Palace is an appropriate place to end this entire study because it brings together in itself, both theoretically and practically, all of the different strands we have considered here. It was a quintessential scene of celebration, the ideal site for the performance of eloquent public speaking and the envisioning of a Perfected Age. It was also a quintessential act of worship and purification, the architectural complement to the Great Worship Assembly ceremony (designed to march from Lhasa to this very palace). It enshrined the fifth Dalai Lama in death against the background (literally, if we think of the murals in the great hall) of the theology of buddhas and bodhisattvas that balanced his divine perfection against his fallible human existence, the invisible true sense behind the indirect sense and its world of appearances. It was also, as we have just finished discussing, in conversation and continuity with the White Palace that preceded it. Sangyé Gyatso portrayed it as the ideal fulfillment of the whole Potala palace, extending the older building and bringing a partially realized vision to final completion. Lastly, we could also speak of the palace as the embodiment of a world of knowledge. It was a massive and all-encompassing edifice within a world that was itself defined as a realm of appearances; as such, it demanded an equally massive and all-encompassing literary representation. The palace had its perfect discursive counterpart in the encyclopedic *Tomb Inventory*, a monumental text which plumbed the depths of the Buddhist tradition to explain at length how this palace was situated in the space and time of its cosmo-moral order. So we end on the basic idea with which this study began, and which I will repeat again here: the direct and irreducible participation of cosmological and theological discourses and the practices they informed in the creative, world-ordering work of constituting, articulating, and realizing a Buddhist state.

APPENDIX: SCHEDULE OF THE GREAT WORSHIP ASSEMBLY (APRIL 1694) AND DESIGN OF THE CONCLUDING PROCESSION

Note to reader: this information is based primarily on the instructions given in the *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*, pertaining to the second Hor (Phālguna, *dbo zla*) month of the wood dog year (April 1694). Corresponding Gregorian dates (after Schuh 1973) are given in parentheses. Folio numbers in the *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs* for each day, and for each part of the procession, are also provided in parentheses. Sangyé Gyatso also briefly summarized the holiday in four more sources:

- *Lha sa skor tshad*: 53a–58b
- *Du kū la'i gos bzang*, vol. 6 (cha) = Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 10: 202–10 (= Lhasa xylograph folios 147a–152b)
- *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 798–810
- *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 475–85

Where relevant, these texts have been consulted in support.

1. SCHEDULE OF EVENTS AT THE INAUGURAL GREAT WORSHIP ASSEMBLY

24 Phālguna – 30 Phālguna (18 April – 24 April 1694) (29 ['og]–30a)

- At both Lhasa Tsuklakhang and Potala, for seven days perform inconceivable forms of worship such as the thousand-fold offering (*stong mchod la sogs pa'i mchod pa bsam mi khyab pa*)
- Corresponding assemblies, principally at Sera, Drepung, and Ganden; and across the state at four hundred and forty-one sites (*dud khag*) of all denominations, making up a sangha of approximately 40,000 monks:
 - east up to and including Ölga [Taktisé]
 - south everywhere in Ne'udong (not including the E valley),¹ Chongyé, and Gongkar, down to the Bhutanese border
 - west from Chökhör Yangtsé [at] the Gampa La² up to Tshur[phu?]
 - north up to Radreng, Lungshö, and Drikung

Morning Assemblies (with two tea-breaks)

Location: Tsuglakhang courtyard and upper levels

Three times each of:

- the *Long [Prayer] for Taking Refuge* (*Skyabs 'gro rgyas pa*)
- the *[Prayer to] Atapatra* (*gdugs*)
- the *Heart Sūtra* (*sher*)

One time each of:

¹ Tib. *E rong*; the region of E is to the east of the Yarlung valley; see Ferrari 1958: 126n257.

² Tib. *gam pa la*, a high pass near the Yardrok Lake leading to Pal Chuwori (*dpal chu bo ri*); see Ferrari 1958: 71.

- the *Threefold Prayer* (*skabs gsum pa*)³
- the *Praise of Dependent Origination*⁴
- the long version (*rgyas pa*) of the *Prayer for a Marvelous Age*⁵

Three times each of:

- the short version [of the *Marvelous Age*] and the *Conquering the Four Demons*⁶

Ten times each of:

- the six-syllable spell⁷
- the *Loving Kindness Prayer* (*Miktsema*)⁸

And:

- the *Three Aspiration Prayers* (*smon lam rnam gsum*)
- the *Lamrim Lineage Prayer* (*lam rim gsol 'debs*)
- the *Amitāyus Dhāraṇī* (*tshe gzungs*)⁹

Location: Preaching Courtyard¹⁰ (33b–34a)

- Give public teachings on the past births of the fifth Dalai Lama, based either on the *Book of Kadam* or Desi Sangyé Gyatso's *Dukūla*, volume four (*nga*). Begin with the story of how he first generated the will to awakening.¹¹ Give both a lecture (*bshad*) and a transmission (*lung*) in accord with the intellectual capabilities of the audience.

Afternoon Assemblies (with two tea breaks and two food breaks)

Three times each of:

- The *Three Realms*¹²
- The *Marvelous Age* and the *Petition Prayer*, as in the morning assembly

³ Tib. *Skabs gsum pa*; a prayer to the buddha Śākyamuni written by Tsongkhapa; see *Dge lugs pa'i chos spyod phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1: 256–60. (Henceforth references to this collection will be abbreviated DGE.)

⁴ Tib. *Rten 'brel bstod pa*; a praise of dependent origination, also written by Tsongkhapa; see DGE vol. 1: 261–68.

⁵ Tib. *Rmad byung bskal pa ma rgyas pa*. This text is Sangyé Gyatso's prayer poem for the past lives of the fifth Dalai Lama. I am assuming that references here to a “short” (*bsdus*) version denote the poem itself; and the “long” version (*rgyas*), its commentary, the *Bouquet of Pearls* (*mu tig chun po*).

⁶ Tib. *'Dod gsol smon lam bdud bzhi rab bcom ma*. A short prayer in twenty-five lines, authored by Sangyé Gyatso. It praises the fifth Dalai Lama as already being a buddha, and prays for him to continue to serve beings “in the indirect sense.” It ends with one stanza praying that Sangyé Gyatso will remain inseparable from the Dalai Lama in every life and will eventually become a buddha.

⁷ Tib. *'Dzab yig drug*; perhaps a reference to the six-syllable *om ma ñi pad me hūṃ* formula.

⁸ Tib. *Dmigs brtse ma*; a prayer originally written by Tsongkhapa in praise of his teacher Rendawa; later revised by the latter into a praise of Tsongkhapa himself.

⁹ See the Nechung Dorjé Drayang liturgy (Lobzang Tondan, ed.), vol. 1: 375–77.

¹⁰ Tib. *gsung chos rwa ba*. This is the external courtyard on the south side of the Tsuklakhang.

¹¹ This is the story of the king Lokeśvara ('Jig rten dbang phyug), past life of Songtsen Gampo, as in the *Ma ñi bka' 'bum*. Sangyé Gyatso alleged that this story (991 *mahākalpas* ago) should be considered Avalokiteśvara's most important, principal, or first generation of bodhicitta, hence also proof that he has already attained buddhahood. See Chapter Three.

¹² Tib. *Sa gsum ma*; a petition prayer to the life of Tsongkhapa by Khedrup Gelek Palzang; see DGE vol. 1: 272–78.

Thirty times each of:

- the *Six Syllables*
- the *Miktsema*

Three times each of:

- the *Three Aspiration Prayers*
- the *Beginning-to-End Prayer*¹³
- the *Heart Sutra*

And:

- one cycle of the sequence of mantras for *Siṃhamukhā* (Lion-Faced)¹⁴
- tormas offerings to local protector deities (*gzhi bdag gtor ma*)
- the *Well-Written Prayer*,¹⁵ as performed at the Great Prayer Festival
- both long and short versions of the *Marvelous Age* along with the *Conquering the Four Demons*
- alternate each day (*nyin re mos*) between the *Ten Deeds, Gathering All Wishes* (*mdzad bcu dpag bsam yongs 'du*) and, for those with a less refined intellect (*byings blo*), the *Prayer for an Unimpeded Age*¹⁶
- the invitation (*spyān 'dren*) and bathing (*khrus gsol*) [of deities] up to the verses of worship (*mchod dbyangs bar*), as in the Great Prayer Festival
- the *Secret Biography* [of the fifth Dalai Lama?]
- the *Basis for All Qualities*¹⁷
- merit-dedication (*bsngo ba*) along with the *Prayer for [Rebirth in] Sukhāvātī*¹⁸
- the *Blazing Dispensation*¹⁹
- benediction (*shis brjod*)

Evening Assemblies (34a)²⁰

- long and short versions of the *Marvelous Age* and the *Conquering the Four Demons*

¹³ Tib. *Thog mtha' ma*; a prayer to be meritorious in the beginning, middle, and end, written by Tsongkhapa. See DGE vol. 2: 211–16.

¹⁴ Tib. *Seng gdong ma'i sngags 'phreng 'khor gcig*. Cf. the prayer *Ye shes mkha' 'gro ma seng ge'i gdong can gyi zlog pa*, in DGE vol. 2: 163–66.

¹⁵ Tib. *Legs bris ma*; prayer to Green Tārā by the first Dalai Lama Gendün Drup. See DGE vol. 2: 110–15.

¹⁶ Tib. *Thogs med bskal pa ma*, Sangyé Gyatso's companion prayer to the *Marvelous Age*, in praise of twenty of his own past lives. The first is the king Sucandra (who received the Kālacakra transmission); the next eight are drawn from the *Book of Kadam*; then five former Tibetan kings, and six figures from post-imperial Tibetan and Mongolian history, from Ngok Lekpé Sherap to Altan Khan. This text has already been studied by Ishihama (1992), but as I do not read Japanese I have not yet been able to add her insights to my own readings.

¹⁷ Tib. *Yon tan gzhir gyur ma*; by Tsongkhapa.

¹⁸ Tib. *Bde ba can smon lam*; cf. the text *Bde ba can du skye ba'i smon lam* in DGE vol. 1: 217–26.

¹⁹ Tib. *Bstan 'bar ma*; a prayer for Tsongkhapa's dispensation to flourish. See DGE vol. 2: 291–93.

²⁰ The corresponding passage in the *Tomb Inventory* gives additional details about the evening tea for the 1694 assembly: “At the evening tea, we recited both the long and short versions of the *Marvelous Age*, along with the *Conquering the Four Demons* and a merit-dedication; and we conducted the offerings in the fashion of the Great Prayer Festival, prioritizing the seven-branch offering. (1990: 801).

- the liturgy for a long assembly (*tshogs yun gyi chos spyod*) along with a stabilizing rite (*zhabs brtan*); other selections as befits the situation (*skabs dang bstun*).²¹

29 Phālguna (23 April 1694)

- crossed-thread propitiation rites (*yas mdo*) to Pehar on behalf of the event's main sponsor²²
- rear services (*rgyab chos*) for the major dharma-protectors, modeled after the torna-hurling at the Great Prayer Festival

30 Phālguna (24 April 1694)

Early morning rites (34b.4)

- fortnightly renewal of monastic vows (*gso sbyong*)
- four monks recite sūtras in the four directions:
 - According to **Guhyasāmānya Tantra (Gsang ba spyi rgyud)*:²³
 - *Prajñāpāramitā* (East)
 - *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (North)
 - *Tathāgatagūhya* (West)²⁴
 - *Gaṇḍavyūha* (South)
 - According to the *Mañjuśrī Mūlatantra ('Jam dpal rtsa ba'i rgyud)*:
 - *Prajñāpāramitā* (South)
 - **Candrapradīpasamādhi Sūtra (Zla ba'i sgron me'i ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo)* (West)
 - **Gaṇḍālamkāra (Sdong po rgyan pa)* (North)²⁵
 - *Suvarṇaprabhāsa Sūtra* (East)

²¹ At this point in the *Instructions*, Sangyé Gyatso adds: “in the future, there may be some people who make requests for private services. But do not alter what has been stated above. Beyond that, you may act as each particular situation demands.” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 34a.6–34b.1.

²² This rite was justified by the precedent that similar rites for Pehar on the twenty-ninth day were thought to have been conducted at Samyé by Padmasambhava, and a similar propitiation was made by Sangyé Gyatso's prior incarnation Muné Tsenpo on account of some illness. The fifth Dalai Lama did the same on the Desi's behalf in the iron monkey year (1680). Sangyé Gyatso noted that since the Great Worship Assembly had a much larger crowd, the corresponding elemental forces would also be larger; therefore, he added additional offerings to the *ha la* [?] and *kimkara* (i.e., “servants” in the maṇḍala). See also *Dukūla* vol. 6 (= Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 10: 207); *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 801; *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 475. Sangyé Gyatso acknowledged that for this year (1694) he was himself the beneficiary; however, he instructed that in the future the rite should focus on the lead sponsor (*rgyu sbyor sbyin pa'i bdag po*). Note also that no mention is made here of the famous *Lügong (klud 'gong)* or “ransom” scapegoating ritual, later conducted on the same day; on which see Richardson 1993: 61–71.

²³ I am unsure to what text this refers. The same passage that Sangyé Gyatso quoted in support also appears in the *Vajrapānyabhiṣekha Mahātantra* (Tōh. 496).

²⁴ Tib. *De bzhin gshegs pa'i gsang ba*; perhaps the *Tathāgatācintyagūhyanirdeśa*, part of the Ratnakūṭa collection.

²⁵ Possibly a reference to the *Avataṃsaka*?

2. DESIGN OF THE PROCESSION (*SER PHRENG*)

I. Vanguard (38b.6)

1. Hoisted implements (39a.4)
 1. Fifteen banners each with colored silk tassels in the colors of the five buddha-families
 2. Thirty parasols (*gdugs*)
 3. Thirty victory-banners (*rgyal mtshan*)
 4. Thirty pennants (*ba dan*)
 5. Thirty pouches of scented powder (*phye ma'i phur ma*)

2. Musical instruments (39b.2)
 1. Wind instruments
 1. thirty white right-spiralling conches²⁶
 2. sixteen *kaling* trumpets (*ka gling*)²⁷
 3. fifteen *gyaling* trumpets (*rgya gling*)
 4. three *buhak* (*bhu* [var. *sbu*] *hag* [var. *bag*])
 5. twenty silver-coated copper conches (*dngul zangs kyi dung sna tshogs*)²⁸
 2. Percussion instruments²⁹
 1. cymbal-player (*sbug chab ba*)
 2. fifteen *duṅḍubhi* large drums (*rnga bo che*)
 3. *tāḍāvacara* drum (*phog rdob*) whose carrier wears the costume of a youthful, five-locked [gandhārva?] (*gzhon nu zur phud lnga pa'i cha byad can*)
 4. ten small drums (*rnga chung*)
 5. five small hand-cymbals (*ting shag* [var. *shags*])³⁰
 6. *mṛdaṅga* earthenware drums (*rdza rnga cha*)
 7. *murajā* single-faced large earthenware drums (*rdza rnga kha gcig pa cha*)³¹

²⁶ The *Instructions* mentions only “conches,” but this number is confirmed in the other three texts. Numbers for the other wind instruments are as given in the *Dukūla*. Compare the different numbers in the *Yellow Vaidurya* (1998: 478).

²⁷ The *Dukūla* also mentions the persons who serve as “lifts” (‘*gyogs*) for these long trumpets.

²⁸ Sangyé Gyatso adds that this type of conch is known as the “conch for inviting lotsāwas and paṅḍitas,” in relation to the tale of Jangchup Ö inviting Atiśa to Tibet.

²⁹ This list gives all the instruments listed in the *Instructions*. Compare the more specific numbers given in the *Yellow Vaidurya*: for wind instruments, thirty-two *ka ling* trumpets and conches; six *sbu hag pa*; thirty *gyaling* trumpets; and twenty conches. For percussion instruments: fifteen *duṅḍubhi*; one *tāḍāvacara* borne by someone in the five-locked youth costume; ten small drums; five small hand-cymbals; five each of *mṛdaṅga* and *murajā* drums; five lutes (*pi waṃ*, type not specified); fourteen *tambura*; four each of iron and bronze gongs; thirteen types of flute (*gling bu*); four *tāḍāvacara*; a pair (*zung*) of *mukunda* drums; two *paṭaha* war drums; two ‘*ur ting*; ten ‘*khar rnga*; twenty *tūrya* (*sil snyan*); twenty *vāḍya* drums; and ten handled drums (*rnga g.yu ba can*). Then come fifteen censers. See *Vaidūrya ser po* 1998: 478.

³⁰ At this point in the text (folio 40a.4) the particular “dancing styles” (*gar gyi tshul*) are specified with a long sequence of what appear to be rhythmic patterns, expressed syllabically, and for each of the four cardinal directions in turn. The text also specifies their use of a “*ṭāke gait*” (*tā ke'i 'gros*).

³¹ At this point in the *Instructions*, the subsequent instruments up to the *paṭaha* are listed indirectly by a set of quotations from Tsongkhapa's *Garland of Worship for Cakrasaṃvara* (*Bde mchog mchod phreng*); at the end of the second such quotation, Sangyé Gyatso simply adds the term *cha*, adding that the *paṭaha* is a war-drum but is still appropriate for a procession. It is unclear whether his instruction refers just to the *paṭaha* or to all the other instruments listed in the quotation. There is an interlineal annotation that gives a number (typical in places where the count is ambiguous) but it is too faint to read. The *Dukūla* simply has “fifty-two types of drum like the *patra* earthenware drum” (*rdza rnga pa tra sogs*

8. *tuṅava* one-stringed lute (*pi waṃ rgyud gcig pa*)
9. *vallārī* three-stringed lute (*pi waṃ rgyud gsum pa*)
10. *tambura* many-stringed lute (*rgyud mangs*)
11. *jhallarī* iron gong (*lcags kyi sil khrol*)
12. *paṇava* bronze gong (*'khar ba'i sil khrol*)³²
13. *tādāvacara* drum (*pheg rdob*)
14. *mukunda* drum (*rnga zlum zo dpangs mtho ba*)
15. *paṭaha* war-drum³³
16. *vādya* drum (*sbug chol*)
17. *tūrya* drum (*se chol or sil snyan*)
18. *vīṇā* lute (*pi waṃ*)
19. *vaṃśa* flute (*gling bu*)

3. Censers: Fifteen censers burning different sorts of natural or molded incense in bowls or clumps

II. Purificatory implements (41a.5)³⁴

1. [Thirty-three?] vessels (*bum pa*)³⁵
 1. Ten victorious vessels (*rnām rgyal bum*)³⁶
Eight silver vessels filled with “ordinary” materials (*phal rdzas*)
 1. sandalwood and other scents
 2. the three sweets
 3. curds
 4. fruits and nuts
 5. grains (e.g. millet)
 6. roasted grain
 7. non-poisonous herbs

rnga rigs nga gnyis). After this statement, the *Dukūla* and the *Yellow Vaidurya* both jump ahead to list two '*ur ting*, ten '*khar rnga*, twenty *sil snyan*, twenty *sbug chol*, and ten *rnga g.yu can*; and then the fifteen censers. The *Lha sa skor tshad* and '*Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* give only “earthenware drums, *murajā*, and other types of drum.”

³² Perhaps this item corresponds to '*khar rnga* in the *Dukūla*.

³³ No Tibetan equivalent is given for this transliterated term; it is likened to a *ḍamaru* drum with a tapered midsection and a net cover.

³⁴ The stated purpose of these implements is to “clean the stains” (*dri ma sbyangs*) that accrue to supports of body, speech, and mind (which are themselves perfectly pure) as a result of contamination from craftsmen, handling, etc., through a “ritual bathing to produce pleasure” (*bzhad pa sgrub slad khrus gsol ba*).

³⁵ The *Dukūla* and the *Yellow Vaidurya* specify “thirty-three purificatory vessels” (*khruṣ bum so gsum*). It is difficult to match this number to the *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgriṅs*, which is not wholly clear because it moves back and forth fluidly between quotations, exegesis, and instructions. The list as I have given it represents my best guess at how to differentiate the prescriptive content from the descriptive. The sources quoted for the material specifications of the vessels include the *Yugalanaddhaprakāśa* (*Zung 'jug gsal ba*, a text on *abhiṣeka*) by Rāhulabhadra; the *Kālacakra Tantra*; the *Rin po che'i dkyil chog yon tan kun 'byung* by Bu stön; the *Sngags rim chen mo* by Tsongkhapa; the *Gdong drug gi rgyud*; etc. These passages are cited to discuss the vessels' material (*rgyu*), size and shape (*tshad dbyibs*), markings (*mtshan ma*), ornaments (*rgyan*), and contents (*nang rdzas*). The '*Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* and *Lha sa skor tshad* name only ten victorious vessels, eight purificatory vessels, “and so on.”

³⁶ The *Tomb Inventory* and *Lhasa Circuit Survey* add that they are filled with the twenty-five or twenty-three liquids (*bcud*).

8. precious metals (e.g. silver and gold)

And:

9. One dhāraṇī vessel (*gzungs bum*)

10. One victorious vessel (*rnam bum*)

2. Eight offering vessels (*mchod bum*)³⁷

3. Eight soap containers (*'dag chal*)³⁸

For each, a bathing-cloth (*khrus dar*), handled mirror, small parasol, and washbasin (*khrus gzhong*)

2. Maṇḍalas (43b.4)

Six maṇḍalas of gilded copper with:

1. Thirty-seven heaps³⁹

2. Twenty-three heaps⁴⁰

3. Seven heaps⁴¹

4. Twenty-five heaps⁴²

5. Nyingma outer maṇḍala in fifteen heaps⁴³

6. Nyingma inner maṇḍala (concealed drawing)⁴⁴

III. Worship from sūtra

³⁷ The only instruction given here is to add fragrance (*dri ldan*) and affix a white neckband and yellow waistband.

³⁸ The first is bronze or a precious material; then three copper, three bronze, and another copper. Each has a different substance in it (*Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 43a.5-b.3).

³⁹ This format is taken from a system of counting the “heaps” (*tshom bu*) in the maṇḍala that is attributed to 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan. The number is arrived at as follows: First are Mount Meru and the major and minor continents (1 + 4 + 8); inside of them are a precious mountain to the east, a wishing-tree to the south, a magic cow to the west, and a crop that needs no cultivation to the north (13 + 4); inside of them, over the eight cardinal and ordinal directions, are the seven precious substances plus a treasure-vase (17 + 7 + 1); inside of them are the eight offering goddesses in the four cardinal directions (Lāsyā et al.) and four ordinal directions (Puṣpā et al.) (25 + 4 + 4); and inside of that are the sun (east), moon (west), jeweled parasol (south), and victory banner (north) (33 + 4 = 37 total).

⁴⁰ There are several sources mentioned for the twenty-three-heap maṇḍala, which typically includes Mount Meru and the four major and eight minor continents, the sun and moon, and the seven tokens of kingship (1 + 4 + 8 + 2 + 7 = 22). For the twenty-third and final element, Sangyé Gyatso listed several Indian authors who specify a treasure-vase (*gter bum*); another source, Mañjukīrti's (Jam dpal grags pa) *Sarvaguhyavidhi-garbhālamkāra* (*Snying po'i rgyan*, Tōh. 2490), has instead “one's own body” (*rang lus*). Though not totally clear it seems like Sangyé Gyatso is espousing the latter.

⁴¹ This tradition is linked to Padmasambhava; it is not specified but probably consists of Meru, the four continents, and sun and moon. Sangyé Gyatso mentioned two variations, one from the *Bla ma gsang 'dus* that adds the four pairs of minor continents to make eleven heaps, and one from the Rdzogs chen cycle of the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* that splits those four pairs (i.e. into eight parts) to give fifteen heaps total.

⁴² The source for this tradition is the *Kālacakra Tantra*; in addition to the aforementioned twenty-three it adds the “planet” Rāhu (*sgra gcan*) and its counterpart Ketu (*dus me*).

⁴³ Sangyé Gyatso mentioned that actually this too should be a maṇḍala in seven heaps, but to avoid exactly copying the other maṇḍala, he suggested instead substituting the fifteen-heap variant as described in the *Gzhal yas ma*.

⁴⁴ To symbolize this maṇḍala a monk carries a placard (*shel sgo*) that was prepared in secret and without being disclosed (*gsang skabs su ma phye bas bzhag*). The source for its contents was the fifth Dalai Lama's *Thugs sgrub kyi las byang nor bu'i cod pan*.

1. Seven-limbed worship (45a.2)⁴⁵

Sources: *Bhadracaryā-praṇidhāna* and *Prayer for a Marvelous Age*⁴⁶

1. Prostration: four prostrating bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes⁴⁷
2. Offering: four bhikṣus to sing the relevant verses (*bstod dbyangs pa*)⁴⁸
For the items offered, seventeen additional monks carrying:⁴⁹
 1. flowers in a container
 2. garland of real or artificial flowers
 3. *tūrya* drum (*se chol*)⁵⁰
 4. unguent (*byug pa*)
 5. parasol
 6. butter-lamp with scented oil
 7. airborne incense (*lding spos*)
 8. hard incense (*spos reng*)
 9. fine garment (a *saṃghāṭī* robe)
 10. scented water (*dri chab*)
 11. scented powder (*phye phur*)
 12. jeweled container
 13. jeweled garland (tied around the waist)
 14. fine cloth (*lha rdzas*)⁵¹
 15. canopy (*bla bre*)
 16. victory banner
 17. tri-point pennant (*ba dan rtse gsum*) with ribbons affixed
For the superlative offering (*bla na med pa'i mchod pa*) add:⁵²
 - four monks doing full prostration
 - four monks intoning prostration *dhāraṇīs*
 - four monks clasping hands in devotion

⁴⁵ Sangyé Gyatso extracts the seven parts of the offering from sequential verses in both of the two texts. For each pair of verses (one from each text), a person or group of people will symbolize that “limb” of worship and recite the two verses as they proceed.

⁴⁶ The relevant verses from the *Rmad byung bskal pa ma* are stanzas 85–91.

⁴⁷ The *saṃghāṭī* (Tib. *snam sbyar*) is the full outer robe. For these four monks, their instruction reads: “when in procession they clasp hands; at the right moment (*dngos kyī dus*) they prostrate.”

⁴⁸ The *Dukūla* gives: *mchod dbyangs pa bcu bdun*, perhaps in confusion with the following item, *me tog sogs mchod rigs bcu bdun*, which matches above.

⁴⁹ The first ten offering-items are those mentioned in what Sangyé Gyatso calls the “actual *Samantabhadra-praṇidhāna*” (*kun bzang smon lam dngos*); the next seven and the “unsurpassed” offerings are taken from the “newer translation” (*gyur gsar*) by Zhalu Lotsāwa.

⁵⁰ The source verse uses *sil snyan*, which here is read as metonymy for instruments in general; thus in this part of the procession the instrument being carried is supposed to symbolize a plethora of different musical instruments.

⁵¹ Glossed as *gos dar sna tshogs*.

⁵² The fact that there are four of each is indicated in the *Instructions* by three small interlineal notations of the number “4.” The *Dukūla* account mentions only four doing full prostration (*rkyang phyag pa bzhi*).

3. Confession: four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes, one each reciting a prayer:⁵³
 1. *Triskandhaka (phung po gsum)*⁵⁴
 2. *Four Antidote Powers (Gnyen po stobs bzhi)*
 3. *Hundred-syllable Mantra (Yig brgya)*
 4. *Supreme Jñānakāya (Ye shes sku mchog ma)*
4. Rejoicing: four rejoicing bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes⁵⁵
5. Requesting to turn the wheel: four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes with handheld wheels
6. Asking to not attain nirvāṇa: four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes making requests to work for living beings (*'gro don du bskul ba'i dge slong*)
7. Dedication: four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes intoning verses of dedication and sealing it with a pure dedication⁵⁶

2. Worship in three parts (47a.6)⁵⁷ (Forty-three persons)

Source: *Bodhicāryāvatāra* (henceforth *BCA*).

1. Worship with what is not owned by the patron (*bdag pos ma bzung ba*) (*BCA* II.2-5)
One monk each carrying:
 1. flowers
 2. non-poisonous herbs
 3. hill of precious metals (gold, silver, etc.)
 4. vessel of spring water
 5. hill of jewels
 6. placard with drawing of a forest⁵⁸
 7. placard with drawing of a flowering wishing-tree (*lha'i ljon pa me tog rnam par bkra ba*)
 8. placard with drawing of trees heavy with leaves and fruit (*'bras bu dang yal ga yongs su dud pa'i shing*)
 9. placard with drawing of sandalwood, myrobalan, wishing-trees, fine pools, flowers, swans, geese, etc.
2. Worship offering one's own body (*rang gi lus 'bul ba*) (*BCA* II.8)
 1. four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes⁵⁹

⁵³ The *Instructions* is explicit that each text is to be recited by one of the four. The *Dukūla* differs here: *bshags pa yig brgya dang ye shes sku mchog ma 'don mi bzhi re*.

⁵⁴ Typically, confessing misdeeds, rejoicing, and requesting the buddhas to teach.

⁵⁵ Tib. *rjes su yi rang ba dge slong snam sbyar gyon pa bzhi*. The *Dukūla* differs and is more ambiguous: it merely has: *yi rang ba dang bsngo bar bzhi re*. That concludes its remarks on the seven-limbed worship, as if to omit limbs five and six.

⁵⁶ Tib. *bsngo ba'i tshigs su bcad pa 'don cing/ 'khor gsum yongs su dag pa'i bsngo bas rgyas 'debs pa'i dge slong snam sbyar gyon pa bzhi*. The dedication is “pure” with respect to the “three zones” (*khor gsum*) of agent, action, and recipient.

⁵⁷ The “three parts” refer to a commentarial tradition of ordering the second chapter of the *Bodhicāryāvatāra*. The tripartite division that Sangyé Gyatso used was a simplified version of a six-part system attributed to Sönam Tsemo.

⁵⁸ Only after item nine does the text indicate that items six through nine should be illustrations rather than the actual items (*gong smos nags tshal nas 'di yan bzhi po ri mo yongs su gsal ba'i shel sgo re*.)

⁵⁹ There is a slight inconsistency in counting here. Following the running tally in the interlineal annotations, the first group (worship with what is not owned) ends on number nine, and the third group (worship with imagination) begins with number

3. Worship with the imagination (*blos sprul pa'i mchod pa*)⁶⁰
1. non-optimal (*bla na yod pa*) imaginative worship in twelve types (BCA II.10-20)
 1. worship by bathing. One monk each:
 1. holding a washing vessel (*khrus bum*)
 2. holding a washbasin (*khrus sder*)
 3. making the request to wash, holding a mirror
 4. holding a washcloth (*khrus dar*)
 5. with musical instruments (*rol mo sil snyan can*)
 6. holding a *paṇava* gong (*'khar rnga*)
 2. worship by dressing. One monk each:
 1. holding *saṃghāṭī* robes for a *nirmāṇakāya* buddha
 2. holding a statue-cover (*rten khebs*) for a *saṃbhogakāya* buddha
 3. worship by decorating: monks holding the implements of *saṃbhogakāya*:
 1. one holding the diadem
 2. one with the throat-ornament, long necklace (*do shal*), short necklace (*se mo do*), armband, bracelet, anklet, belt, etc.⁶¹
 4. worship by offering ointment: one monk holding a basin of sesame oil
 5. offering flowers: someone holding artificial Indian flowers (*me tog rgya bzo*)
 6. offering incense: someone holding burnable incense (*bdug spos*)
 7. offering fine foods: someone carrying a fine vessel full of divine cakes (*lha bshos*) and other types of food
 8. offering a lamp: someone carrying a gold, flower-shaped container with lamps lined up inside it
 9. offering pleasing places (*vid du 'ong ba'i sa phyogs*): someone holding a placard with a drawing of a floor strewn with petals
 10. offering a celestial palace (*gzhal yas khang*): someone holding a placard with a drawing of a palace bedecked with pearls and precious ornaments
 11. offering suitable implements (*'os pa'i yo byad*): someone holding an actual jeweled parasol (*rin po che'i gdugs dngos*)
 12. offering a general worship-cloud and musical instruments: one person each with
 1. *tūrya* drum (*sil snyan*)
 2. *tāḍāvacara* drum (*pheg rdob*)
 (There are twenty-nine total persons up to this point.)⁶²
 Then add: six singers of worship (*mchod dbyangs pa*)⁶³

ten, as if this second group (worship with the body) were never counted. Moreover, the *Dukūla* states, and the annotations in the *Instructions* confirm, that the total for all three groups together should be twenty-nine people. The only way to arrive that count is by omitting these four; perhaps they are identical to the four preceding monks. No action is specified for them.

⁶⁰ Imagined worship subdivides into “non-optimal” (*bla na yod pa*) and “optimal” (*bla na med pa*). Elsewhere Sangyé Gyatso characterized this distinction in terms of its effects/motivations: higher rebirth for the former, liberation for the latter.

⁶¹ Here the interlineal tally gives both the numbers “18” and “19” which seems like an error, for the grammar makes it seem like one person only for all these accoutrements; but we need both numbers to continue the tally correctly. So this is my guess based on the placement of those numbers.

⁶² This count is confirmed both by annotations in *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs* and by the account in the *Dukūla*.

⁶³ I have organized the instructions in this way because the *Dukūla* separates the twenty-nine previous persons from the *mchod dbyangs pa drug*.

2. optimal imaginative worship (*bla na med pa*) (BCA II.22)
 1. four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes, with no identifying items (*phyag mtshan med pa*), reciting the *dhāraṇīs* of the offering-cloud, etc. They signify the worship of successfully cultivating *samādhi*
 2. four bhikṣus in *saṃghāṭī* robes, with no identifying items, thinking about buddhas. They signify the Kadampa tradition of “image-gazing worship”⁶⁴

IV. Worship from tantra

A. Sarma Tantra

1. Common to all four classes (51a.2) (fifteen persons)

One person each carrying:

1. four types of water in conch shells
 1. *arḡham* guest water (*mchod yon gyi chu*)
 2. *pādya* foot-washing water (*zhabs 'khru ba'i zhabs bsil*)
 3. *ācamana* fragrant face-washing water (*zhal bkru ba'i chu gtsang dri zhim pa*)
 4. *prokṣaṇa* scattering water/oblation water (*'thor 'thung ngam bsangs gtor*)
2. five enjoyable items (*nyer spyod lnga*)⁶⁵

Source: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa dril bu lugs kyi phyi dkyil cho ga dpa' bo'i grong 'jug*

 1. flowers (head)
 2. incense (nose)
 3. butter-lamp (eyes)
 4. scented water in a conch vessel mixed with sandalwood, camphor, etc. (heart)
 5. fine foods with different tastes (tongue)
3. musical instruments
 1. *tūrya* drum (*sil snyan*)
 2. *vādya* drum (*sbug chol*)
 3. hand-cymbals (*ting shags*)
 4. *paṇava* bronze gong (*'khar rnga*)
 5. brass percussion instrument (*'ur ting*)⁶⁶
 6. white conch (*dung dkar*)

2. Kriyā Tantra (51b.6) (twenty-three persons)

⁶⁴ Tib. *sku blta ba'i mchod pa*. Sangyé Gyatso identified two variants of this practice. For the first, in Serlingpa's tradition, one looks at the support and thinks “this is an actual buddha” (*sangs rgyas dngos yin*). For the second, in Nāgārjuna's tradition, one looks at the support and thinks, “these images are a dream, an illusion” (*rten 'di dag rmi lam sgyu ma yin snyam pa*). Evidently the same four monks are to stand for both interpretations, and to think in these two ways (*de dag gi don sems pa*).

⁶⁵ Each is offered on/to the body part given in parentheses.

⁶⁶ Some dictionaries give “basin” but I think this must refer to a percussion instrument of some kind.

Sources: *Raśmivimalā* ('*Od zer dri med*; Toh. 510)⁶⁷ (items 1-8); *Ratnolka-dhāraṇī* (*Dkon mchog tā la la'i gzungs*, Tōh. 847)

Twenty-three persons⁶⁸ carrying each of:

1. *arghaṃ* guest-water (*mchod yon*)
2. washing vessel (*khrus bum*)
3. appropriate music (*rol mo gang 'os*)
4. scented water in a conch or similar vessel (*dri chab dung chos lta bur blug pa*)
5. flowers (*me tog*)
6. burned incense (*bdug spos*)
7. divine cakes (*lha bshos*)
8. butter-lamps (*mar me*)
9. types of flowers (*me tog gi rigs*)⁶⁹
10. airborne incense (*lding spos*)
11. types of incense (*spos kyi rigs*)
12. various garlands of flowers, etc. (*me tog sogs kyi phreng ba sna tshogs*)
13. scented powder (*phye phur*)
14. types of garment (*na bza'i rigs*)⁷⁰
15. parasol (*gdugs*)
16. various types of precious substance (*rin po che'i rigs sna tshogs*)
17. types of lotus flower (*pa dma'i rigs*)
18. various garlands of precious substances (*rin po che'i rgyan phreng sna tshogs*)
19. white victory banner (*rgyal mtshan*)⁷¹
20. red victory banner
21. yellow victory banner
22. blue victory banner
23. bejeweled parasol (*rin po che'i gdugs*)

3. Yoga Tantra (53a.4) (One hundred and twenty-eight persons)

1. Twenty-five⁷² objects of worship (*mchod pa nyer lnga*)

⁶⁷ But the passages as quoted in the *Instructions* appear to be from the *Sādhānopayikapaṭāla* (*Sgrub pa'i thabs rim par phye ba*, Tōh. 807).

⁶⁸ The description in the *Instructions* lists exactly this number, and a last annotation “23” confirms it. The *Tomb Inventory* and the *Lhasa Circuit Survey* also give twenty-three. In contrast, the *Dukūla* names twenty-five in total.

⁶⁹ An annotation adds: “no poisonous types” (*dug rigs med pa*).

⁷⁰ An annotation adds: “carrying *saṃghāṭī* robes” (*snam sbyar khyer ba*).

⁷¹ The text only mentions “victory banners in each of the four colors” (*rgyal mtshan kha dog bzhi re re*). The quoted verse specifies the colors. The next item mentioned is counted in the annotations as “23,” indicating that there were four persons carrying one banner each.

⁷² The *Dukūla* mentions twenty-seven persons for the twenty-five offerings. Perhaps two of the items on the list were held by two monks instead of by one.

Source: the “offering liturgy” (*'bul tshig*); no explicit source given.⁷³ (*Sngags rim chen mo* of Tsongkhapa and *'Dus pa'i bskyed rim* of Khedrup Gelek Pelzangpo consulted for details.)

One person holding each of the following, while doing the appropriate mantras and gestures:⁷⁴

1. eight ornaments (*rgyan brgyad*)⁷⁵
 1. diadem (*cod pan*)
 2. earring (*snyan rgyan*)
 3. necklace (*mgul rgyan*)
 4. short necklace (*se mo do*)
 5. armlet (*dpung rgyan*)
 6. bracelet (*gdu bu*)
 7. anklet (*zhabs gdub*)
 8. ring (*sor gdub*)
2. six implements (*yo byad drug*)
 1. parasol (*gdugs*)
 2. victory banner (*rgyal mtshan*)
 3. pennant (*ba dan*)
 4. tassel (*lda ldi*)
 5. flywhisk (*rnga yab*)
 6. canopy (*bla bre*)
3. six locations
 1. throne (*seng khri*)
 2. bed (*gzims cha*)
 3. circular palace (*pho brang zlum po; gzhal yas khang rtsig pa zlum po*)
 4. four-sided palace (*pho brang gru bzhi*)
 5. two-story dwelling (*khang brtsegs*)⁷⁶
 6. lunar seat (*zla gdan*)
4. five offering substances
 1. flowers (*me tog*)
 2. *vīṇā* lute (*pi wang*)
 3. scented water in a conch (*dri chab*)

⁷³ The objects are derived from a series of verses referred to only as the “offering liturgy” (*'bul tshig*). For instance, one may easily consult a helpful text titled *Mchod phreng mchod spring rgya mtsho*, included within the *Sgrub thabs kun btus* assembled by Jamyang Loter Wangpo, which includes the full verses for all of the offerings in the “yogatantra” section of the Great Worship Assembly procession (albeit with minor variations). The same set of objects also appears frequently in ritual texts that describe the *mchod pa nyer lnga*, including a number of Sarvavid rites, such as the *Kun rig gi cho ga* by the first Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan 2009, vol. 3), and another by the late seventeenth-century Tashilhunpo scholar Drakpa Shedrup.

⁷⁴ They are instructed to “actually do them” (*dnegos bsgrubs*) in order to increase the amount of merit collected.

⁷⁵ For this method of subdividing the twenty-five offerings, see the summary by Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen (2009, vol. 3: 453). In Tibetan: *mchod pa nyer lnga mdor bsod ni/ dpag med bsod nams stobs las byung ba yi/ rgyan gyi khyad par brgyad dang yo byad drug/ gnas kyi khyad par drug dang mchod pa lnga/ rgyal srid rin chen bdun dang 'dod yon lnga/ rgyal ba sras dang bcas la 'bul bar gyi/ thugs rjes 'gro ba'i don du bzhes su gsol.*

⁷⁶ The relevant line of verse mentions *gru bzhi nyis brtsegs khang*, a four-sided, two-story dwelling. The matching Sanskrit provided in the *Mchod phreng mchod sprin rgya mtsho* is *dvikūtāgāra*.

4. fine foods (*zhal zas; lha bshos*)
5. garments (*na bza'*)

2. Eight offering goddesses (55a.2)⁷⁷

Each should have the appropriate appearance (*zhal brnyan*), color, clothing, and markings, singing the relevant lines⁷⁸ and performing the worship-dance of the four secret consorts (*gsang ba yum bzhi'i mchod gar*) as described in Butön's dance manual (*gar yig*):

1. Vajralāśyā (*Rdo rje sgeg ma*): wearing white, carrying two five-pronged vajras in a haughty manner (*bsnyems pa'i tshul gyis 'dzin pa*)
2. Vajramālā (*Rdo rje phreng ba ma*): wearing yellow, holding a garland of jeweled vajras, performing the consecration of tathāgatas (*de bzhin gshegs pa rnams dbang bskur bar mdzad pa*)
3. Vajragītā (*Rdo rje glu ma*): wearing pink (*dkar dmar*), strumming a *vīṇā* marked with a vajra
4. Vajranṛtyā (*Rdo rje gar ma*): varicolored, or green, holding a three-pronged vajra and dancing
5. Vajradhūpā (*Rdo rje bdug pa ma*): wearing white, holding an incense container marked with a five-pointed vajra to satisfy (*?tshims pa*) the tathāgatas
6. Vajrapuṣpā (*Rdo rje me tog ma*): wearing yellow, holding a flower-basket in the left hand and strewing petals with the right
7. Vajrālokā (*Rdo rje mar me ma*): wearing pink, holding a lamp in both hands to worship the tathāgatas with myriad appearances (*snang ba'i tshogs*)
8. Vajragandhā (*Rdo rje dri chab ma*): wearing green, holding a conch full of scent to worship the tathāgatas with a cloud of fragrance

3. Twenty-one⁷⁹ objects of worship (*mchod pa nyer gcig*) (55b.2)

Source: *'bul tshig*

Bhikṣus in *saṃghātī* robes holding each of (or a placard of):⁸⁰

1. conch with scented water and the seven substances (*mchod yon rdzas bdun*)
2. two pieces of cotton (*ras zung*) with unfrayed edges (*kha tshar ma nyams*)
3. canopy of fine cloth (*gos bzang bla bre*)

⁷⁷ The color terms used are sometimes feminine (*dkar mo, ser mo*) but this may simply refer to the character being portrayed. I am assuming these are monks based on the murals in the Red Palace.

⁷⁸ A short formula is given for each goddess; for instance, for the goddess Vajralāśyā, the lines are: *Oṃ ba dzra lā sye hūṃ/ rdo rje rin chen bla na med/ ba dzra ra tna manu tta raṃ*, or “Oṃ, Vajralāśyā, hūṃ! The precious vajra is unsurpassed!” (the second and third lines are the same sentence in Tibetan and then in Sanskrit).

⁷⁹ The *Dukūla* mentions twenty-three persons for the twenty-one offerings.

⁸⁰ This instruction to carry placards with drawings of each (*rnams mtshon byed bris pa shel sgo*) is given at the very end of the entire list of twenty-one. This may suggest that all of the aforementioned items are drawings rather than actual objects; however I suspect it is only those items that cannot be carried, i.e., items 17–21. These monks are also instructed to chant the appropriate mantras (on which, cf. *Mchod phreng mchod sprin rgya mtsho*: 558–61).

4. pennant (*ba dan*)
5. parasol of fine silk (*dar bzang po'i gdugs*)
6. victory banner decorated with animals (*srog chags kyi mtshan mas spras pa'i rgyal mtshan*)
7. flowers (*me tog*)
8. conch with scented water (*dri chab dung chos*)
9. burned incense (*bdug spos*)
10. butter-lamp (*mar me*)
11. divine cakes (*lha bshos*)
12. *vīṇā* lute (*pi wang*)
13. dancer with implements (*gar ma chas ldan*)
14. head-ornament, earring, bracelet, necklace, sash, etc. (*dbu rgyan snyan rgyan gdu bu mgul rgyan 'og pag sogs*)
15. silk ribbons (*dar dpyangs*)
16. flower garland (*me tog gi phreng ba*)
17. palace (*khang bzang*)
18. fine steed (*rta mchog*)
19. elephant (*rlang po che*)
20. cow (*ba*)
21. *torāṇa* archway with an ornamented gate (*sgo rgyan rta babs*)

4. Sixteen consorts (*rig ma bcu drug*) (56b.3)

Source: *Mahāyoga Vajrasāekhara Tantra* (*Rdo rje rtse mo*, Tōh. 480)

Each should be singing their respective verses (“I, Vajrasattva,...” and so on) and dance as in the dance text by Zhalupa Candra, which follows the instructions given by Butön, in a tradition that stems from Zhangzhung.⁸¹ These goddesses are the consorts/female projections of the sixteen bodhisattvas:

1. Vajrasattvā (*rdo rje sems ma*): white, holding in the first three fingers of her right hand a red five-pronged vajra, facing upwards; holding clenched in the left hand at her hip a ringing bell, facing inwards
2. Vajrarājā (*rdo rje rgyal mo ma*): yellow, holding a vajra hook⁸² in both hands, to beckon the tathāgatas
3. Vajrarāgā (*rdo rje chags pa ma*): red, holding a bow marked with a vajra and an arrow fletched with an unblossomed lotus, drawn back to the ear, to pierce the tathāgatas
4. Vajrasadhū (*rdo rje legs pa ma*): green, clenching two five-pronged vajras, and snapping the thumb and index fingers of both hands, to please the tathāgatas with a gesture of approval (*legs so sbyin pa'i tshul gyis*)⁸³

⁸¹ Bu ston's text is the *Zhang zhung mang nas brgyud pa'i rig ma bcu drug gi mchod gar*; found in volume 13 of the Zhol xylographic edition of Bu ston's *gsung 'bum*.

⁸² This bodhisattva is also once referred to as *Rdo rje lcags kyu ma*.

⁸³ Sangyé Gyatso adds: “These four are the major worshippers (*mchod pa chen po*) because they offer their entire selves (*bdag nyid thams cad 'bul ba'i phyir*).” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 57a.3.

5. Vajraratnā (*rdo rje rin chen ma*): clenching in her right hand a wish-fulfilling gem marked with a five-pronged vajra and touching it to her forehead as a self-empowerment; clenching in her left hand a bell with a jeweled handle, held to the hip in a boastful manner
6. Vajratejā (*rdo rje gzi brjid ma*): sun-colored (*nyi ma'i mdog can*), right hand holding to her breast a sun-disk with a five-pronged vajra at the center, to illuminate the tathāgatas with its light; left hand facing the ground (*gdan la brten pa*)
7. Vajrakeṭū (*rdo rje rgyal mtshan ma*): blue, right hand hoisting over the shoulder a banner crested by a vajra-marked jewel, ornamented with silk and pearl strings, to recognize the perfection of giving of all tathāgatas; left hand as above
8. Vajrahāsā (*rdo rje bzhad pa ma*): white (like a conch or a lotus-root), right hand holding a garland of teeth between two five-pronged vajras, to make all the tathāgatas smile marvelously and give them pleasure; left hand as above⁸⁴
9. Vajradharmā (*rdo rje chos ma*): pink, left hand haughtily holding a stalk of flowers to her hip, right hand clenching to the heart between finger and thumb a lotus in open bloom
10. Vajratīkṣṇā (*rdo rje rnon po mo*): blue, left hand clenching to the breast a volume of prajñāpāramitā, right hand holding a sword marked with a vajra, in the manner of striking (*'debs pa*) all the tathāgatas
11. Vajrahetū (*rdo rje rgyu ma*): yellow, right hand, turning at the tip of the middle finger an eight-spoked wheel marked with a vajra; left hand on her seat (*?gdan la brtan pa*)
12. Vajrabhāsā (*rdo rje smra ba ma*): copper-colored, right hand carrying a tongue marked with a vajra, to speak with the tathāgatas; left hand as above⁸⁵
13. Vajrakarma⁸⁶ (*rdo rje las*; consort is Dhūpā, *bdug pa ma*): pink, both hands carrying an incense vessel marked with a five-pronged vajra, to fumigate the tathāgatas
14. Vajrarakṣa (*rdo rje srung ba*; consort is Puṣpā, *me tog ma*): yellow, left hand carrying a vase marked with a vajra and filled with flowers; right hand causing a rain of flowers to fall
15. Vajrayakṣa (*rdo rje gnod sbyin*; consort is Ālokā, *snang gsal ma*): pink, both hands carrying a lamp-wick marked with a vajra, to make an offering of light to the tathāgatas
16. Vajrasandhi (*rdo rje khu chur*; consort is Gandhā, *dri chab ma*⁸⁷): varicolored, left hand carrying a scented conch marked with a vajra; right hand using clouds of scent to worship tathāgatas according to their different realizations

5. Five desirable objects (*'dod yon lnga*) (59a.4)

Source: main source unspecified.⁸⁸ Supported with quotations from *Abhidharmakośa* on how to subdivide each category and best represent it.

⁸⁴ Sangyé Gyatso adds: “These four are the worship of empowerment (*dbang bskur ba'i mchod pa*) because they worship with a prostration (*phyag 'tshal ba*).” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 57a.4.

⁸⁵ Sangyé Gyatso adds: “[These four] are givers of praise in melodies that describe, with perfect expression, the hidden meanings of the buddhas (*sangs rgyas thams cad ldem por dgongs pa'i gsung yang agd par brjod pa'i dbyangs kyis bstod pa ma*).” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 57a.6.

⁸⁶ The last four consorts take different names than the male bodhisattvas that are their “basis of projection” (*sprul gzhi*). See *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 57b.1–58a.1 for the relevant discussion.

⁸⁷ Alternatively named as *Rdo rje byug pa ma*.

⁸⁸ The same verses appear in a commentary to the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (*'Jam dpal mtshan brjod*) by Līlāvajra (*Sgeg pa'i rdo rje*) titled *Mañjuśrīmaṇḍala-guṇasambhava-vidhi* (*'Jam dpal gyi dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga yon tan 'byung gnas*, Toh. 2582).

These are five feminine personifications of the five senses, holding objects specific to each. The items are common to all classes of tantra but their offering-dance (*yo ga'i mchod gar*) follows the yoga tantra system. The bearers should chant the associated verses and do the steps of the worship-dance in unison (*mchod gar gyi stang stabs phyogs gcig tu bsgyur ba*):

1. Form (*gzugs kyi rdo rje ma*): white, holding a mirror
 2. Sound (*sgra'i lha mo*): blue, holding a *vīṇā* lute
 3. Scent (*dri chab ma*): yellow, carrying a conch of scented water
 4. Taste (*ro'i lha mo*): red, carrying fine foods (*zhal zas*)
 5. Touch (*lha mo reg bya rdo rje*): green, carrying a statue-cover of fine cloth to signify the particular quality of touch (*reg bya'i khyad par mtshon pa*)
6. Fifty-three⁸⁹ offerings of investiture (*mnga' 'bul*)⁹⁰ (60a.3)

Source: An untitled *sdom/sdoms/bsdoms tshig* by Rinchen Zangpo⁹¹

Thirty-five general (*spyi*) and eighteen specific items (*bye brag*). Someone holding each of:

1. maṇḍala of precious material, signifying Meru and the four continents.
2. vase filled with scented water
(clothing)
3. *saṃghāṭī* robes, offered as clothing for a *nirmāṇakāya*
4. upper cover and lower cover (*stod g.yogs smad g.yogs*), and
5. general statue-cover (*spyir rten khebs*), both offered as clothing for a *sambhogakāya*⁹²
(eight ornaments)
6. head-ornament (*dbu rgyan*)
7. bracelet (*gdu bu*)
8. sash (*'og pag*)
9. short necklace (*se mo do*)
10. long necklace (*do shal*)
11. armband (*dpung rgyan*)
12. necklace (*mgul rgyan*)
13. earring (*snyan rgyan*)

⁸⁹ The accounts in the *Dukūla*, the *Tomb Inventory*, and the *Lhasa Circuit Survey* name only fifty-two (no list is given). My count closely follows the annotations in the *Instructions*.

⁹⁰ These offerings are identified as common both to Yoga Tantra and Anuttara Yoga Tantra; hence their placement in between the two. Sangyé Gyatso clarifies the meaning of this worship: “Both Yoga Tantra and Anuttara [tantra] agree that during consecration, when the royal line is placed in a royal seat, the ministers and the lesser kings of the domain all offer valuable things, and then request [the king] to assume authority (*mnga' gsol*) or vest [him] with authority (*mnga' bskur*); and so here, too, when someone comes of age (*chung dus ma yin pa*), we offer the ornaments of his superior authority (*mnga' che ba'i rgyan rnams 'bul ba*), known as investiture offerings (*mnga' 'bul ba*).” *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 60a.3.

⁹¹ The *Instructions* has only “*rin chen bzang po'i sdoms ltar la*.” (Other sources have the variant *bsdoms*.) The same verses are common to many texts on consecration, including the Sakya patriarch Drakpa Gyaltzen's *Ar ga'i cho ga dang rab tu gnas pa don gsal*. In its colophon Drakpa Gyaltzen mentions one *Rin chen bzang pos mdzad pa'i sdom tshigs* as a source for his own text. Sangyé Gyatso also cites another, closely related list that is given in the *Rite for the Cakrasaṃvara Maṇḍala* (*Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga mdor bsdu pa*, Toh. 1469) by Prajñārakṣita.

⁹² This way of separating offerings four and five follows the annotations in the *Instructions*. Perhaps here is one plausible explanation for the different tally given in the other three accounts.

- (five desirable objects)
14. for form, a mirror
 15. for sound, a *vīṇā* lute
 16. for scent, a conch-vessel
 17. for taste, fine foods
 18. for touch, fine cloth
- (seven precious objects of a human ruler, *mi dbang rin chen sna bdun*)
19. wheel
 20. jewel
 21. queen (*btsun mo*)
 22. advisor (*khyim bdag*)
 23. elephant (*glang po che*)
 24. horse (*rta mchog*)
 25. general (*dmag dpon*)
- (five groups of five)
26. five scents (*dri lnga*)⁹³
 27. five essences (*snying po lnga*)⁹⁴
 28. five medicinal herbs (*sman lnga*)
 29. five grains (*'bru lnga*)⁹⁵
 30. five precious jewels (*rin po che lnga*)⁹⁶
 31. an actual parasol (*gdugs dngos*) of fine cloth
 32. an actual banner
 33. an actual pennant
 34. canopy
 35. white conch
- Eighteen particular items
(investiture offerings for the body)
36. razor (*spu gri*)
 37. shears (*'dreg dpyad*)
 38. comb (*so mang*)
 39. nostril cleaner (*?sna gzer*, “nose-pick”)
 40. toothbrush (*tshems shing*)
 41. earwax-scraper (*sbabs bzhar*)
- (investiture offerings for a stūpa)
42. *yaṣṭi* axis (*srog shing*)
 43. thirteen *cakra* wheels (*'khor lo*)⁹⁷
 44. *mukūṭa* diadem (*cod pan*)

⁹³ Usually sandalwood, musk, nutmeg, saffron, and camphor.

⁹⁴ The *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* lists them as: molasses, clarified butter, honey, sesame oil, and rock salt.

⁹⁵ The *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* lists barley, rice, wheat, peas, and sesame. An alternative list has wheat, barley, peas, buckwheat (*bra bo*), and another type of barley (*so ba*).

⁹⁶ The *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* lists gold, silver, turquoise, coral, and pearl; or alternatively gold, silver, copper, iron, and tin. *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* adds gold, silver, copper, coral, and pearl.

⁹⁷ Either for attaining the ten powers of a tathāgatha and the three unimixed applications of mindfulness (*ma 'dres pa'i dran pa nye bar bzhag pa gsum*); or for attaining the eight kinds of liberation and the five kinds of wisdom.

45. ribbons (*'phan cha*)
46. *dhvaja* banner (*rgyal mtshan*)
47. *chattra* parasol (*gdugs*)
48. *mālya* garland (*phreng ba*)
49. *āsana* seat (*gdan*)
(investiture offerings for a book)
50. pedestal (*bzhugs khri*)
51. covering cloth (*rten khebs*)
52. wooden endboards (*glegs shing*)
53. sash (*sku chings*)

4. Anuttara father tantra (63a.2)

1. Twenty offerings as posited by Lalitavajra⁹⁸ (20 persons)
 1. dust curtain (*rdul g.yab* [var. *yab*], *rājāvaraṇa*)
 2. mosquito curtain (*sbrang g.yab*, *maśākāvaraṇa*)
 3. cooling fan (*bsil g.yab*, *vyajana*)
 4. gilded copper mansion (*khang bzang*, ?*viś*)⁹⁹
 5. picture of a pleasure-grove (*skyed mos tshal bris*, *upavana*)
 6. bed (*gzims cha*, *śayanāsana*)
 7. gilded copper throne (*seng khri*, *siṃhāsana*)¹⁰⁰
 8. fine horse with golden ornaments (*rta mchog*, *turaga*)
 9. an actual model elephant in a dignified pose (*glang po che'i gsob dngos nyams dod po*, *gaja*)
 10. jewel (*nor bu*, *cintāmaṇi*)
 11. wishing-tree (*dpag bsam gyi shing*, *kalpavṛkṣa*)
 12. two placards illustrated with archways (*rta babs bcas ri mos bkra ba'i shel sgo zung*, *toraṇa*)
 13. canopy of fine cloth (*gos bzang po'i bla bre*, *vitāna*)
 14. fine foods (*zhal zas*, ?*anna-pāṇi*)
 15. singing-girl with cymbals and the costume of a goddess (*glu ma ting ting shags 'khrol ba lha mo'i chas ldan*, *gītā*)
 16. dancing-girl with costume (*gar ma chas ldan*, *nṛtyā*)
 17. vase (*bum bzang*, *bhadraghaṭa*)
 18. cow with ornaments (*ba rgyan spras*, *khāmadhenu*)
 19. coral branch (?*byu ru'i rgyal lag* [var. *yal ga'i lag*], ?*ratnalatā*)

⁹⁸ I have not been able to locate a source for the verses that Sangyé Gyatso cited and attributed to Lalitavajra, reckoned as the revealer of the Yamantaka/Vajrabhairava tantras. The same verses appear in a maṇḍala-vidhi ritual text for Mañjuśrī Yamantaka authored by the fifth Dalai Lama (*'Jam dpal gshin rje'i bshed dmar po lha lnga'i dkyil 'khor mtho ris dbang gi chu rgyun*; Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 13: 128ff). Where decipherable, the Sanskrit equivalents are as given in the latter text. The system of father-tantra offerings listed in the *Mchod phreng mchod sprin rgya mtsho* is a different one, associated with Guhyasamāja. So I suspect that the father-tantra system which Sangyé Gyatso is invoking here comes from the Yamantaka/Vajrabhairava tantras rather than Guhyasamāja.

⁹⁹ The fifth Dalai Lama's transliterated Sanskrit (op. cit.: 129) reads *pī śī*.

¹⁰⁰ The fifth Dalai Lama's version of this liturgy erroneously has *khadga* (“sword”), perhaps reading *gri* for *khri*.

20. bound mudra of the sky-treasure (*nam mkha'i mdzod kyi phyag rgya 'ching ba, khagañja*)

5. Anuttara mother tantra (twenty-four persons)

1. Sixteen knowledge-goddesses (*rig ma bcu drug*) (64a.3)

Source: *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, after the Luipa tradition, as explained in Tsongkhapa's generation-stage commentary *Rnam bshad 'dod 'jo*.¹⁰¹

1. *Vīṇā* lute goddess (*pi wang ma*), in blue
2. *Vamśā* flute goddess (*gling bu ma*), in yellow
3. *Mṛdaṅgā* earthenware drum goddess (*rdza rnga ma*), in green
4. *Murajā* large earthenware drum goddess (*rdza rnga chen mo ma*), in red
5. Laughing goddess (Hāsyā) (*bzhad pa ma*), in red
6. Seductive goddess (Lāsyā) (*sgeg mo ma*), in blue
7. Singing goddess (Gītā) (*glu ma*), in yellow
8. Dancing goddess (Nṛtyā) (*gar ma*), in green
9. Flower goddess (Puṣpā) (*me tog ma*), in white
10. Incense goddess (Dhūpā) (*bdug spos ma*), in pale blue (*sngo skya*)
11. Lamp goddess (Dīpā) (*mar me ma*), in orange (*dmar ser*)
12. Scented water goddess (Gandhā) (*dri chab ma*), in pale red (*dmar skya*)
13. Vajra form goddess (Rūpa-vajrā) (*gzugs rdo rje ma*), in white
14. Vajra sound goddess (Śabda-vajrā) (*sgra rdo rje ma*), in red¹⁰²
15. Vajra touch goddess (Sparśa-vajrā) (*reg bya rdo rje ma*), in green
16. Vajra goddess of the dharma-expanse (Dharmadhātu-vajrā) (*chos dbyings rdo rje ma*), in white

2. Eight offering-goddesses (*mchod pa'i lha mo*) (64b.4)

Source: *Hevajra Tantra* (*mūlatantra*, chapter two)

five secret offerings (*gsang ba'i mchod pa lnga*)

1. Gaurī (*dkar mo*, “White one”), black countenance, carrying a skull full of semen (*byang sems dkar po*)
2. Caurī (*chom rkun ma*, “Robber”), red countenance, carrying a skull full of blood
3. Vetālī (*ro langs ma*, “Corpse”), yellow, carrying skull full of urine
4. Ghasmarī (*gha sma rī*, “Ravenous”), green, carrying skull full of feces
5. Pukkasī (*pu kka sī*, “Untouchable”), blue countenance, carrying skull full of human flesh
6. Śabarī (*lha mo ri khrod ma*, “Hermitage goddess”), white countenance, carrying a skull full of mercury

¹⁰¹ Sangyé Gyatso noted that this tradition, in which the deity has one face and four arms, is slightly unlike the other two traditions, those of Ghaṇṭapāda (Tib. Dril bu pa) and Kṛṣṇācārya (Tib. Nag po pa), which specify one face and two arms. He cited three stanzas of verse, of four lines in nine syllables each. The first stanza names the first four goddesses; the second stanza, split into two halves, names goddesses five through eight and nine through twelve; the first two lines of the third stanza name the remaining four goddesses. These verses are attributed to one *mchod phreng*.

¹⁰² The *Mchod phreng mchod sprin rgya mtsho*, otherwise the same, here has *ro* (taste, *rasa*) rather than *sgra* (sound).

7. *Caṇḍālī¹⁰³ (*gdol pa ma*, an outcaste), dark blue countenance, playing a skull ḍamaru drum
8. Ḍombhinī [var. Ḍombiṇī] (*g.yung mo*, an outcaste), green countenance, assuming a posture of copulation (*'khyud pa'i stang stabs can*)

6. Nondual Kālacakra Tantra (65a.3) (thirty-five persons)

1. Twelve offering-goddesses¹⁰⁴ seated in the deity section (*lha snam*) of the mind maṇḍala, dancing and singing:¹⁰⁵
 1. Gandhā (*dri chab ma*), blue
 2. Mālā (*'phreng ba ma*), blue
 3. Dhūpā (*bdug spos ma*), red
 4. Dīpā (*mar me ma*), red
 5. Naivedyā (*zhal zas ma*), white
 6. Phalā (*'bras bu ma*), white
 7. Lāsyā (*sgeg mo ma*), yellow
 8. Hāsyā (*bzhad pa ma*), yellow
 9. Vādyā (*rol mo ma*), green
 10. Nṛtyā (*gar ma*), green
 11. Gītā (*glu ma*), blue-black
 12. Kāmā (*'dod ma*), blue-black
2. Thirteen-part worship (*mchod pa rna pa bcu gsum*)

Source: *Kālacakra Laghutantra* III.84

One person each carrying:

1. jewel (*rin po che*)
2. gold and silver flowers (*gser dngul gyi me tog*)
3. fine cloth (*lha rdzas kyi gos*)
4. conch with scented water (*dri'i dung chos*)
5. burned incense (*bdug spos*)
6. lamp (*mar me*)
7. vajra bell (*rdor dril*)
8. mirror (*me long*)

¹⁰³ The transliterated Sanskrit in the *Instructions* is unclear; the name Caṇḍālī is taken from the set of eight goddesses in Davidson 2002: 295.

¹⁰⁴ For the names of the goddesses at *Kālacakra Laghutantra* IV.42, see Wallace 2010: 66–67.

¹⁰⁵ After naming the goddesses, Sangyé Gyatso gave a lengthy excursus (65b.1–69a.5) on the propriety of song and dance for worship; and on the seven basic and twelve secondary tones; and on how to perform the “vajra dance” (*rdo rje'i gar*), involving particular gaits and praises to these goddesses in each of the four directions. Since this full procedure would be too slow to keep up with the rest of the procession, he collapsed all four directions of praise into one. His primary source on tones and gaits is the *Dākiṇī-vajrapañjara tantra* (*Mkha' 'gro ma rdo rje gur gyi rgyud*, Tōh. 419), though he also quotes the *Amarakośa* (*'Chi med mdzod*, Tōh. 4300). On this idea that ordinarily such singing and dancing should be performed slowly, he cited the text *Phyag bzhes kyi rgyan* by Thutsün Kunga Namgyal (1432–1496). Among the praises to be sung is the first stanza of Sangyé Gyatso's own *Prayer for a Marvelous Age*, extolling the Dalai Lama for already being a buddha but performing as a bodhisattva in the world.

9. canopy of fine cloth (*gos bzang po'i bla bre*)
 10. fresh fruit (*'bras bu ma nyams pa*)
 11. pennant (*ba dan*)
 12. actual dancer with ornaments (*gar ma rgyan can dngos*)
 13. tūrya drum (*sil snyan*)
3. Ten outer offerings (*phyi mchod bcu*)¹⁰⁶

Source: *Kālacakra Laghutantra* III.155

One person each carrying:

1. conch with offering-water (*bsang gtor gyi dung chos*),
2. conch with argham water (*mchod yon dung chos*)
3. scented water (*dri chab*)
4. burned incense (*bdug spos*)
5. flowers (*me tog*)
6. fresh fruit (*'bras bu ma nyams*)
7. excellent grains (*'bru mchog*)¹⁰⁷
8. lamp (*mar me*)
9. divine cakes (*lha bshos*)
10. garments (*na bza'*)

B. Nyingma Tantras (twenty-five persons total)

1. Oral tradition (*bka' ma*)

1. Twelve offering-goddesses (71a.2)

Source: Sthiramati, *Paramālamkāra* (*Rgyan dam pa*, Tōh. 2661)

Their worship will perform its postures with the “secret charnel ground gait” (*dur khrod gsang ba mchog gi 'gros dang bcas pa'i stang stabs kyi mchod pa*).

Four inner offering goddesses (*nang mchod kyi lha mo bzhi*)

1. Lāsya (*sgeg mo ma*), white, holding two vajras, coquettish and haughty
2. Mālā (*phreng ba ma*), deep blue, bearing a garland of flowers
3. Gītā (*glu ma*), red, with hand-cymbals

¹⁰⁶ Only the ten outer offerings are specified for the procession. For the corresponding inner offerings, Sangyé Gyatso only mentioned that they include semen, etc. (*nang gi mchod pa khu ba la sogs pa bcu*). He also specified other possible offerings from the Kālacakra system, namely the “thirty-six oath offerings” (*dam tshig so drug gi mchod pa*) corresponding to the list of bodily substances at *Kālacakra* III.153, and the “seventy-two oath substances” (*dam tzig gi rdzas bdun cu rtsa gnyis*), based on the list of thirty-six animals at III.154 and the thirty-six types of bird at III.149-51. However he expressed reservations about revealing secret information regarding items used in the anuttara tantra rituals (*gsang sngags bla na med pa'i gsang ba'i chas rnam khol du bton pa'i gsang skog gi nyes par gyur dogs*); and, more practically, adding these other offerings would simply mean too many people; so they were left out (*ha cang mangs pa dang bcas bzhag*). See *Tshogs mchod bca' bsgrigs*: 70b–71a.

¹⁰⁷ Note that this one item is left out of the *Kālacakra* verse which lists only nine.

4. Nṛtyā (*gar ma*), green, with vajra bells in both hands
Four outer offering goddesses (*phyi mchod kyi lha mo bzhi*)
5. Dhūpā (*bdug spos ma*), light blue, with a vessel of incense
6. Padmā (*me tog ma*), blue, with flowers
7. Dīpā (*mar me ma*), light red, with a candle (*mar me'i sdong bu*)
8. Gandhā (*dri chab ma*), green, with a conch of scented water
Four secret offering goddesses (*gsang mchod kyi lha mo bzhi*)
9. Rūpadevī, goddess of form (*gzugs kyi lha mo*), white, holding a mirror
10. Śabdadevī, goddess of sound (*sgra'i lha mo*), blue, with a *vīṇā* lute
11. Rasadevī, goddess of taste (*ro'i lha mo*), red, with fine foods
12. Sparśadevī, goddess of touch (*reg bya'i lha mo*), green, holding robes

2. Eight offerings of the supreme samādhi worship (*lhag pa ting 'dzin mchod pa*) (71b.1)

Source: *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, chapter nine. Information on their dances and gaits drawn from Guru Chöwang's *Klu bdud lto ba'i zab chos spyang drangs pa*.

Monks in *saṃghātī* robes, acting out the eating, drinking, licking, and sucking of food and drink,¹⁰⁸ and holding each of:

1. illustration of variegated offerings (*rnam par bkra ba'i mchod pa*) including a flat checkerboard base with jewel heaps, pools of water, mansions and groves of wishing-trees
2. canopy of fine cloth (*gos bzang po'i bla bres*)
3. victory-banner (*rgyal mtshan*)
4. garments (*na bza'*)
5. parasol (*gdugs*)
6. long necklace (*do shal*)
7. armlet (*dpung rgyan*)
8. short necklace, i.e. half-length necklace (*se mo do ste do shal phyed pa*)

2. Treasure tradition (*gter ma*) (72b.3)

1. Five goddesses of body, speech, mind, quality, and activities

Source: *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, revealed by Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396)

Someone holding each of the following items:

1. Goddess of body (*sku'i lha mo*), white, with a mirror
2. Goddess of speech (*gsung gi lha mo*), red, with a *mukunda* drum (*rnga zlum*)
3. Goddess of mind (*thugs kyi lha mo*), blue, with a *vīṇā* lute
4. Goddess of qualities (*yon tan gyi lha mo*), yellow, with a *vaṃśa* flute
5. Goddess of activities (*'phrin las kyi lha mo*), green, with a *mṛdaṅga* earthenware drum

C. Generic tantric offerings (*gsang sngags spyi*) (73b.2)

¹⁰⁸ Tib. *bza' bca' btung myong bldag mur bca' ba dang bcas pas phyag mtshan du dge slong snam sbyar bas thogs pa*.

1. Eightfold offering-cloud (*mchod sprin rnam brgyad*)

Sources: *Daśacakra-Kṣitigarbha sūtra* (*Sa'i snying po 'khor lo bcu pa'i mdo*, Tōh. 239), using dances specified by Rinlungpa Ngawang Jikmé Drakpa in his *'O mtsho rnyog pa med pa* for the following types of beings:

1. joyful deva (*lha kun tu dga' ba*)
2. nāga (*klu*)
3. gandharva (*dri za*)
4. mahoraga (*lto 'phye chen po*)
5. kiṃnara (*mi'am ci*)
6. garuḍa (*nam mkha' lding*)
7. joyful rakṣa (*gnod sbyin kun tu dga' ba*)
and also:
8. swirling joy benediction (*?shis brjod dga' ba 'khyil ba*)

V. Royal and Auspicious Worship (73b.6)

1. Seven royal treasures of cakravartin kingship (*'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal srid kyi 'byor pa las gyur pa'i rgyal srid sna bdun*)¹⁰⁹

Source: *Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra* (*Mngon par 'byung ba'i mdo*, Tōh. 301) as quoted in Sangyé Gyatso's *Vaiḍūrya g.ya' sel*¹¹⁰

1. precious wheel (*'khor lo rin po che*): a pair of persons wearing god-masks (*lha'i 'bag*) and costumes, carrying an eight-spoked wheel of gilded copper¹¹¹
2. precious elephant: (*glang po rin po che*) a pair of persons with a model (*gsob*) of an elephant being lead by an ācārya, slightly larger than a yak or a lion
3. precious horse (*rta mchog rin po che*): a pair of persons dressed in a dark color, either blue or green, leading a precious horse made of some type of gold
4. precious queen (*bud med rin po che*): one person as a sixteen-year-old Indian woman, in pale blue-green (*sngo bsangs*); and one as an older Tibetan woman, in the garb of a *dākiṇī*
5. precious jewel (*nor bu rin po che*): [two persons?] carrying a pair of eight-faceted vaiḍūrya jewels, wearing *yakṣa* masks and with ornaments
6. precious minister (*khyim bdag rin po che*): for the Indian minister, someone in red with a treasury (*mdzod ldan*); for the Tibetan minister, someone in the “Precious Ornamentation”

¹⁰⁹ The *Dukūla* lists two sets of the seven tokens of kingship, one for India and one for Tibet (*rgya gar du 'khor los bsgyur ba'i rgyal srid sna bdun dang/ bod du sbyar ba'i sna bdun/ nye ba'i sna bdun...*) It appears that both of these two sets—India and Tibet—are joined together as described here in the *Instructions*. Note also that for the minister and general a third “Mongolian” (*sog po*) type is added. There do not appear to be any interlineal annotations in the text here (although the reproduction quality is very poor), making it difficult to ascertain a definite number. Taking two persons each for items one through five, and three each for six and seven, would give sixteen persons total. See also *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 808.

¹¹⁰ Sangyé Gyatso also mentioned other sources, namely, Candrakīrti's *Pradīpodyotana*; the *Lalitavistara*; the *Śmṛtyupasthāna*; the *Vinayasūtra*; the *Ratnakūṭa*; and Tsongkhapa's *Sngags rim chen mo*.

¹¹¹ They are supposed to impersonate Indra, who offers a wheel of this description in the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa*.

(*rin chen rgyan cha*) garb and a turban (*thod can*); for the Mongolian minister, someone wearing ?*gontsak* ornaments¹¹²

7. precious general (*dmag dpon rin po che*): for the Indian general, someone in black with armor of priceless jewels (*rin cen rin thang med pa'i khrab can*); for the Tibetan general, someone in the garb of an archer with bow and arrows; for the ?*maunaro* (*mau na ro*) or Mongolian general, someone dressed up in their fashion

2. Seven secondary tokens of kingship (75a.2)

Source: *Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra* (*Dran pa nyer gzhag*) (Tōh. 287)

1. precious sword (*ral gri nye ba'i rin po che*): an actual sword, of fine make, offered by someone in the disguised form (*gzugs brnyan*) of a nonhuman (*mi ma yin*) who makes as if to offer it
2. precious skin (*pags pa nye ba'i rin po che*): a [faux] serpent skin, made in a green cloth (*sbrul gyi pags pa gos ljang la bzos pa*), offered by someone in the actual form (*gzugs dngos*) of a seafaring merchant
3. precious bed (*gzims cha nye ba'i rin po che*): bedding, made of brocade (*sgo chen*), such as a sleeping-cushion (*mal stan*), a pillow (*dbu sngan*), etc., carried by someone in the garb of a palace-guarding gate-deity (*sgo lha*)
4. precious grove (*nags tshal nye ba'i rin po che*): a placard on which is drawn a grove with trees, flowers, fruits, birds, lotuses, pools, falling water, etc., hoisted by someone in the garb of a luminous forest-god (*nags tshal gyi lha kun nas 'od zer lha'i cha byad can*)
5. precious house (*khyim nye ba'i rin po che*): a placard on which is drawn a mansion with arches (*rta babs*) and coping (*pu shu*) etc., adorned with many ornaments, carried by someone in the garb of a luminous yellow household god (*khyim gyi lha kun snang mdog ser lha'i cha byad can*)
6. precious clothing (*gos nye ba'i rin po che*): an upper garment (*'gan sbyar*), carried by someone with the beautiful clothing and ornaments of a non-human (*mi ma yin*)
7. precious shoes (*mchil lham nye ba'i rin po che*): jeweled shoes with ornaments, carried by someone in the garb of a city god of merit and virtue (*grong khyer gyi lha bsod nams dge ba lha'i cha byad can*)

3. Seven precious materials (*rin chen sna bdun*) (76b.6)¹¹³

Source: *Sgron gsal* of Tsongkhapa (commentary to *Guhyagarbha Tantra*)¹¹⁴

Laid out on the form of a mountain of fine silver (?*phra dngul gyi ri bo'i gzugs la bkod pa*), carried by someone¹¹⁵ dressed as a *yakṣa*:

¹¹² The text is unclear here. It appears to read: *sog po'i khyim bdag [g]o[n] ts[a]g rgyan ldan*.

¹¹³ This section is missing in the other three accounts.

¹¹⁴ Other lists are provided from the *Pitāputrasamāgama Sūtra* (*Yab sras mjal ba'i mdo*, a Ratnakūṭa text) and the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.

¹¹⁵ The text seems to indicate that only one person is necessary to carry all seven jewels (*gnod sbyin gyi cha byad can zhig gis khyer ba*).

1. padmarāga ruby
2. indranīla sapphire
3. vaiḍūrya lapis
4. marakata emerald
5. *upala* (*rdo*) ?stone
6. muktikā (mu tig) pearl
7. vidruma (byu ru) coral

4. Goddesses of the eight auspicious signs (*bkra shis rtags brgyad*) (77a.4)
Source: an Akṣobhya sādhanā text by Jetari¹¹⁶

Eight people dressed in the garb of goddesses, adorned with the eight ornaments, and carrying each in the right order.¹¹⁷

1. knot (*dpal be'u*): *Padmavatī (*pa dma can*), in white
2. wheel (*'khor lo*): *Bhairavā (*'jigs byed ma*), white
3. lotus (*padma*): *Prabhāvatī (*'od ldan ma*), in red
4. banner (*rgyal mtshan*): *Vijayā (*rnam rgyal ma*), in blue
5. white parasol (*gdugs dkar*): *Ojā (*mdangs ldan ma*), in blue
6. vase (*bum pa*): ? (*dkar sham ma*), in pink
7. white conch (*dung dkar*): *Vimalā (*dri med ma*), in green
8. golden fish (*gser nya*): *Medhāvī (*vid gzhung[s] ma*), in green

5. Eight auspicious substances (*bkra shis rdzas brgyad*) (77b.3)

Source: The *Zhabs brtan rab brtan rdo rje ma'i chog khrigs* of the fifth Dalai Lama¹¹⁸

Carried in the fashion of the deities and villagers (*grong gzhi*) who once offered these items to the buddha:¹¹⁹

1. mirror (*me long*): it was offered by the form[-realm] goddess *Prabhādharedevī (*gzugs kyi lha mo 'od 'chang ma*), so the bearer should dress as a goddess, with ornaments

¹¹⁶ Sangyé Gyatso has *bya rgyud mi 'khrugs pa'i sgrub thabs dze tā ri'i rgya gzhung*. The same quoted passage appears in one of the Akṣobhya sādhanā texts in the Bstan 'gyur attributed to Atiśa (who studied with Jetari), namely the *Sarvakarmāvāraṇaviśodhana-nāma-maṇḍalavidhi* (*Las kyi sgrub pa thams cad rnam par 'joms pa zhes bya ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga*; Tōh 2655).

¹¹⁷ I have not been able to locate any text that includes the Sanskrit equivalents for these names; all the Sanskrit names given here are surmise. In the quoted passage the eight goddesses are also matched with eight directional protectors, i.e., the gods stationed in the four cardinal and four ordinal directions. Thus Padmā, *Prabhāvatī, *Ojā, and Vimalā are matched with Indra (east), Yama (south), Varuṇa (west), and Kubera (north); and Bhairavā, Vijayā, Dkar sham ma, and Medhāvī respectively with Agni (southeast), Rākṣasa (southwest), Vāyu (northwest), and Īśāna (northeast).

¹¹⁸ I am uncertain what text this is. There is a work in the fifth Dalai Lama's *Gsung 'bum* titled *Brtan bzhuḡs kyi chog sgrig rab brtan rdo rje'i phreng ba*, which mentions offering the eight substances but does not specify their details. Sangyé Gyatso mentions two other sources: the *Rab gnas don gsal* by the Sakya patriarch Drakpa Gyaltsen, and the *Rab gnas bkra shis rgyas byed* by Butön Rinchen Drup.

¹¹⁹ See Bentor 1996: 344–45.

2. bezoar (*ghi hong, gorocanā*): carried inside a silver vessel, which is hoisted onto a palanquin (*khyogs bteg pa*) with long poles shaped like elephant trunks¹²⁰
 3. milk-rice (*zho*): it was offered by the village-girl Sujātā, the bearer should dress as an Indian girl
 4. *dūrva* grass (*du rwa tswa*): it was offered by the merchant boy Svasti (*bkra shis*), so the bearer should dress as an Indian worker (*rgya gar ba'i skyes pa las byed pa*)
 5. *bilva* fruit (*shing tog bi lwa*): it was offered by Brahmā, so the bearer should dress as Caturmukha, the four-faced god (*gdong bzhi pa*)
 6. white conch (*dung dkar*): it was offered by Devendra, so the bearer should dress as Indra (*brgya byin*)
 7. vermillion (*li khri, sindūra*): it was offered by the brahmin *Jyotiṣarāja (*dkar rgyal*), so the bearer should dress as a brahmin, with the thread, the water-pitcher, and the antelope skin (*krṣṇasāra*)
 8. mustard-seed (*yungs kar, sarṣapa*): it was offered by Guhyakādhipati (*gsang ba'i bdag po*), so the bearer should have the blue visage (*zhal brnyan sngon po*) of Vajrapāṇi, with all the accoutrements of a wrathful deity, such as the tiger-skirt clothing (*na bza' stag sham*)
6. Twelve *yakṣa* generals, twelve *dikpāla* guardians of the directions, and four great kings (*caturmahārāja*) with their retinues after both Sarma and Nyingma systems (78a.4)¹²¹

Twelve *yakṣa* generals (*gnod sbyin gyi sde dpon bcu bzhi*)

Source: *Bhaiṣajyaguru-vaidūryaprabharāja Sūtra*¹²²

1. Ji 'jigs
2. Rdo rje
3. Rgyan 'dzin
4. Gza' 'dzin
5. Rlung
6. Gnas bcas
7. Dbang 'dzin
8. Btung 'dzin
9. Smra 'dzin
10. Bsam 'dzin
11. G.yo ba 'dzin

¹²⁰ This description reflects the offering of bezoar to Śākyamuni by the elephant Dhanapāla (*nor skyong*).

¹²¹ I am including these groups because they are explicitly listed in the *Dukūla*. In the *Instructions* and the other two texts, these groups are described, but not formally listed. Sangyé Gyatso's only instruction, at the end, is that all the performers are wearing appropriate masks.

¹²² In the *Instructions*, rather than list names, Sangyé Gyatso only cited the story in this sūtra, wherein the twelve *yakṣas* take *upāsaka* vows from Bhaiṣajyaguru and his seven companions and swear an oath to serve all beings who worship this sūtra and recite the Medicine Buddha's name. I have taken the Tibetan names from the version of the sūtra in the *Bka' 'gyur* (Tōh. 504). There is much variation in the Sanskrit names; see e.g. *Mahāyāna-sūtra-saṅgrahaḥ*, ed. P.L. Vaidya (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1961): 172; and for the Gilgit manuscripts, Schopen 1978: 67. Sangyé Gyatso also cited a Tang-era Chinese tale recounted in the *Red Annals* of Tshalpa Kunga Dorjé, in which a monk who has fallen off a cliff is saved by a *yakṣa* who identifies himself as Vaiśravaṇa's son (*rnam thos sras kyi bu*) and remarks that he and his eleven brothers have sworn to protect upholders of the Vinaya. See also *'Dzam gling rgyan gcig gi dkar chag* 1990: 808.

12. Rdzogs byed

Twelve dikpāla (*phyogs skyong ba'i lha bcu gnyis*)

Source: various¹²³

13. Indra (*dbang po*), east
14. Yama (*gshin rje*), south
15. Varuṇa (*chu bdag*), west
16. Kubera (*gnod sbyin*), north
17. Agni (*me lha*), southeast
18. Rākṣasa (*srin po*), southwest
19. Vāyu (*rlung lha*), northwest
20. Īśāna (*dbang ldan*)
21. Brahmā (*tshangs po*), above
22. Bhūmidevī (*sa'i lha mo*), below
23. sun (*nyi ma*)
24. moon (*zla ba*)

Four mahārāja-s (*rgyal po chen po bzhi*) with retinues ('khor)

Source: various¹²⁴

25. Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*yul 'khor srung*), white, with *vīṇā* (retinue: *gandharvas, dri za*)
26. Virūdhaka (*'phags skyes po*), yellow, with sword (retinue: *kumbāṇḍas, grul bum*)
27. Virupakṣa (*mig mi bzang*), red, with a snake-lasso (*sbrul zhags*) (retinue: *nāgas, glu dbang*)
28. Vaiśravaṇa (*rnam thos kyi bu*), green, with banner (retinue: *yakṣas, gnod sbyin*)

¹²³ The names of the directional protectors are not given in the *Instructions*, although those of the eight directions were named in the quotation from the Akṣobhya sādhanā, quoted in reference to the eight goddesses of the aṣṭamaṅgala several folios earlier. Sangyé Gyatso cited varying ways of counting the protectors (four, ten, twelve, fifteen, and sixteen). For the list of twelve (the four cardinal and four ordinal directions, plus above and below, and sun and moon) he mentioned a vidhi text for the *Bhaiṣajyaguru Sūtra* (*Sman bla'i mdo chog*), as well as the *Cha gsum 'bring po'i cho ga* by Śraddhakaravarman (Tōh. 3774), and the *Subāhu-pariprechā tantra* (*Dpung bzang*, Tōh. 805).

¹²⁴ Sangyé Gyatso also provided an unsourced origin-story in which during the age of the buddha Kāśyapa, two of the four kings were nāgas (Dbugs 'byin and Dbugs cher 'byin) and two were gāruḍas ('Gro ba'i dbang phyug and Gtsug gi dbang phyug) who hunted them. The nāgas went to Kāśyapa for protection, and when the gāruḍas learned of this, they did the same. The nāgas became Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Virūdhaka, and the gāruḍas became Virupakṣa and Vaiśravaṇa. For the colors of the protectors he cited one *Lho brag gter byin*. He also mentioned that their colors and iconography differ in Nyingma and Sarma text-traditions. The *Dukūla* makes explicit that both groups are to be included, totaling eight (*rgyal po chen po sde bzhi gsar rnying lugs ka gnyis re brgyad*).

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