



Literature and the Moral Life: Reading the Early Biography of the Tibetan Queen Yeshe Tsogyal

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Literature and the Moral Life:
Reading the Early Biography of the Tibetan Queen Yeshe Tsogyal

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Committee on the Study of Religion

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

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ABSTRACT

In two parts, this dissertation offers a study and readings of the *Life Story of Yeshé Tsogyal*, a fourteenth-century hagiography of an eighth-century woman regarded as the matron saint of Tibet. Focusing on Yeshé Tsogyal's figurations in historiographical and hagiographical literature, I situate my study of this work, likely the earliest full-length version of her life story, amid ongoing questions in the study of religion about how scholars might best view and analyze works of literature like biographies, especially when historicizing the religious figure at the center of an account proves difficult at best.

In my readings, I advocate a hermeneutical approach that engages the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* self-understanding as a work that is both an authentic *terma* (*gter ma*), that is, a "treasure text" or "revealed scripture," and a *namtar* (*rnam thar*), here understood to be a narrative of an individual's pursuit of spiritual realization. Following a consideration of the work's genre, I examine two of its dominant literary features: intertextuality and dialogue. Through its use of intertextuality, I suggest that the *Life* seeks to cultivate a reader who is ever eager to find more—more information, but above all, further significance—in the text. The reader who reads intertextually is apt to gain both facility and comfort with the work, and even, ideally, the ability to see the work as persistently relevant to their own life. Through its use of dialogue, I find that the story works to familiarize the reader with Yeshé Tsogyal in ways that extend beyond the capacities of diegesis alone. For its dialogic qualities both among texts and between persons, I understand the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* to be a work of literature that seeks not only to account for the spiritual progress of Yeshé Tsogyal, but also to enliven her amid the religious landscapes of Tibet and Bhutan.

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NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

The Tibetan sources to which I most often refer by English titles throughout the body of this thesis are listed below for ease of reference. Paired with the English is a shortened form of a work's Tibetan title in Wylie transliteration. Complete titles of these works in Wylie transliteration can be found in the notes and the Asian-Language Sources bibliography.

English Translation

Copper Island Biography

Essence of Flowers: A History of Buddhism

Golden Garland Testimonial Record

Great Treasury of Precious Revelations

Lama, Jewel, Ocean

Life of Drimé Künden

Life of Yeshé Tsogyal

Testament/Testimony of Ba

Testimonial Record of Padmasambhava

Wylie Transliteration

Rnam thar zangs gling ma

Chos 'byung me tog snying po

Bka' thang gser phreng

Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo

Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho

Dri med kun ldan gyi rnam thar

Mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar

Dbā' bzhed (a.k.a. Sba/Rba bzhed)

Pad ma bka' thang

Tibetan proper nouns have not been translated. Rather, they have been phoneticized to approximate Lhasa dialect pronunciation. Transliterations for proper nouns have been indicated in parentheses or in the footnotes. Tibetan technical terms have been dealt with variously. Upon the initial use of a term, I follow a phoneticized rendering of the term with a Wylie transliteration in parentheses. After that, I may use either the phoneticized term or its rendering in English. The words *tertön* (*gter ston*), i.e., "treasure-revealer," and *terma* (*gter ma*), i.e., "treasure," are good examples of this practice.

I began this project with access to four sources for the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*: one faded photocopy of an incomplete xylograph copy, scans of two handwritten manuscript copies, and one modern eclectic edition. Presently, however, I count fourteen sources: one xylograph copy,

ten manuscripts, and three modern editions. Since one finds a great many orthographical and grammatical variations across these sources, I have opted not to note every difference among the texts as I translate. Following Kurtis Schaeffer (2004), I reserve extensive notation for difficult passages or for those that are interestingly different from others in some way. For my translations, I follow James Gentry (2017) in allowing comparative readings of all the sources available to me to inform my editorial choices. In doing so, I produce what can be called "critical" translations. All translations from non-English-language sources are my own unless otherwise noted.

In my notes, I most often refer readers of Tibetan to passages from the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as they appear in the two Lhasa 2013 print editions of the work. I do so for several reasons. First, these texts, one attributed to Drimé Künga (DK 2013) and the other to Pema Lingpa (PL 2013), have been printed one after another in a single volume which is presently accessible online via the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). Therefore, the texts are publicly available and easily comparable. The reader of Tibetan interested in tacking between a Drimé Künga- and a Pema Lingpa-attributed version would do well to consult this volume. Second, the Pema Lingpa-attributed *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* therein is an especially good edition. It appears to be representative of Pema Lingpa-attributed versions in general, and even after the relatively recent windfall of sources, this edition offers one of the most complete and carefully edited versions of the work on the whole. Pending a critical edition of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, I recommend this source to readers for its overall clarity. Further discussion on the matter of creating a critical edition of the work will appear in chapter two.

INTRODUCTION

THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE IDEA OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL IN HISTORY AND LITERATURE

What We Talk About When We Talk About Yeshé Tsogyal

Writing in 1987, on the heels of two newly published English translations of what was then thought to be the sole full-length version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story,¹ Rita Gross described the work's titular figure in this way:

Yeshé Tsogyal, probably Tibet's most influential and famous female religious teacher and one of the world's most significant female religious exemplars, lived in the eighth century CE. An important teacher in her own right, she was also, in her early life, the student of Padmasambhava as well as one of his principal consorts until he left Tibet.

For those of her readers who may be unfamiliar with Padmasambhava, Gross adds, "Padmasambhava is a semi-legendary figure, the first great tantric master to come from India to Tibet to teach Vajrayāna Buddhism."² In many contexts, however, Padmasambhava—long hailed as Tibet's "Great Cultural Hero"—would require no further introduction. Only Yeshé Tsogyal would need additional fleshing out.

Although she offers the brief portrait of Yeshé Tsogyal above as a matter of fact, Gross goes on to state that this female Buddhist exemplar's life story is told, and should therefore be read, on at least two levels: (1) the "mythic" level that narrates a "life of a great human religious teacher;" and (2) the level of "sacred history" that demonstrates how "the emergence of

¹ See Keith Dowman's translator's introduction to *Sky Dancer: The Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyal* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), xiii. This view persisted in scholarship until 2006 with the publication of Janet Gyatso, "A Partial Genealogy of the Lifestory of Ye Shes Mtsho Rgyal," *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 2 (August 2006): 1–2.

² Rita Gross, "Yeshe Tsogyal: Enlightened Consort, Great Teacher, Female Role Model," *The Tibet Journal* 12, no. 4 (Winter 1987): 1. In this article, Gross refers to the translations by Tarthang Tulku and Keith Dowman (published in 1983 and 1984 respectively) of the seventeenth-century life story of Yeshé Tsogyal attributed to Namkhai Nyingpo and Gyalwa Changchub (ca. 8th century) and revealed by Taksham Nüden Dorjé (alias Samten Lingpa, b. 1655), about whom I will speak at length in a later section of this thesis.

primordially enlightened mind" manifested as a phenomenal reality. In Gross's understanding, the mythic, or exoteric level, is about Yeshé Tsogyal the human woman of yore: the real as it pursued and eventually touched the ideal. The sacred-historical, or esoteric, is about how, like myriad Buddhist exemplars before her, a female individual proved an embodied instance of enlightenment. The Yeshé Tsogyal of sacred history is, in that sense, the ideal as it inhabited the real.

For her part, Gross says that she is above all else interested in the "difficult and provocative" seventeenth-century work under her review as "hagiography," a genre she leaves largely undefined save to point to its relationship to inspiration. As a historian of religions, feminist theologian, and practitioner of Vajrayāna Buddhism, Gross tells her readers that she "will be using [the work] in the way the hagiography traditionally functions—as inspiration to student practitioners who look to the great teachers as role models."³ The implication is that she will not be turning to the text before her as documentary evidence of events past or persons formerly existent. The real Yeshé Tsogyal, whoever she was, shall remain for her obscured.

I begin with the above excerpt from Gross somewhat arbitrarily. It is true that she is among the first scholars to write on "Tibet's most influential and famous female religious teacher" at length, yet one could do just as well to introduce Yeshé Tsogyal by citing any one of many similar, more recent descriptions of our subject, three of which I will in fact offer below. Nevertheless, Gross's words were among the first I encountered when I learned about Yeshé Tsogyal as an undergraduate, and they struck me then, as they do now, as both an invitation and a challenge.

³ Gross 1987: 1.

Simply stated, the invitation stands, as ever, to learn more about a remarkable female Buddhist figure often referred to, among other epithets, as "Yeshé Tsogyal" or, when translators opt for an English rendering of her name, "Victorious Ocean of Wisdom." The prospect of doing so seems wide open and exciting to me still, especially now as new (albeit centuries-old) materials have come to come to light and "old" sources, technically available for decades, are made more accessible to scholars and translators around the world.

The challenge remains a matter of comprehending the scope and articulating the force of Yeshé Tsogyal's legacy. One must not only take stock of it, but also decide how to view it and, in my case, how to represent it. How should one write about Yeshé Tsogyal, the individual in history, as well as Yeshé Tsogyal, the exemplary ideal—a meaningful figure for Tibetan, Bhutanese, and rather recently (and it would also seem increasingly) Western Buddhist practitioners over generations?

Ultimately, what I have found is that to seek out Yeshé Tsogyal is to face a problem well known to scholars of the history of religions broadly speaking, whatever one's area of focus or tradition of expertise. Here, as one speaks of an individual who lived a life larger than most, which is to say, if she ever lived at all, one encounters the problem of how and whether to distinguish fact from fiction, history from myth, or the "real" from the "true." In such cases, epistemological problems loom larger than the ontological questions which precede them. Beyond the barest of facts—the *whos*, *whats*, *wheres* and *whens* of Yeshé Tsogyal—should we even be so lucky to establish them, what can anyone really claim to know about a figure who flourished in so distant a time from our own?⁴

⁴ Gross's descriptions of Yeshé Tsogyal help us see the problem of seeking her out as a normative issue as well. Whatever we can say, what then *should* we say about Yeshé Tsogyal? Who was or is she such that she can be deemed not only one of the most influential female religious teachers in Tibet, but also one of the most significant

Whatever one makes of Gross's assessment of Yeshé Tsogyal and her hagiography, the biographical outline she offers appears in secondary literature written by scholars, practitioners, and scholar-practitioners alike again and again. In the introduction to their 1999 Tibetan-to-English translation of the same seventeenth-century work that Gross had at her disposal, the Padmakara Translation Group writes:

Yeshé Tsogyal was, as the text makes plain, a key figure in the introduction and consolidation of the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. She was the disciple and assistant of Padmasambhava, the Lotus-Born Guru, the Indian master invited by the king Trisong Detsen to subdue by tantric means the hostile forces that were hindering the propagation of the Doctrine. So closely was she involved in this work that the story of her life is practically coterminous with the foundation of Buddhism in her country, specifically the teachings of the tantras.⁵

Model audiences for Yeshé Tsogyal's life are, once again, Buddhist practitioners who seek "instruction and encouragement for the long and arduous path of inner transformation."

According to the Padmakara Group, the devout can expect to find in Yeshé Tsogyal an image of sublime attainment, and her life story offers doctrinal content and inspiration at one and the same stroke.⁶

We find similar such appraisals alive and well today. Among a 2017 series of reflections on Yeshé Tsogyal by scholars and Buddhist practitioners, Judith Simmer-Brown writes:

Evidence that Yeshé Tsogyal was a historical woman, a principle disciple of Guru Rinpoche [i.e., Padmasambhava], living from 757–817 C.E., grounds the rich lore of her life example for contemporary women practitioners... Her deep faith and

female exemplars in the world? That is, when we look to Yeshé Tsogyal, who, or what, ought we to see? What should a world-class exemplar be?

⁵ Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo, *Lady of the Lotus-Born: The Life and Enlightenment of Yeshe Tsogyal*, trans. Padmakara Translation Group (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), xiv. The work was earlier translated into French and published as Gyalwa Tchangchoub and Namkhai Nyingpo, *La vie de Yéshé Tsogyal, souveraine du Tibet* (Paris: Éd. Padmakara, 1995). Both translations are based on the text "discovered" by Taksham Nüden Dorjé in the seventeenth century, the printed edition of which is Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje, *Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989).

⁶ Padmakara Translation Group 1999: xiii.

stamina in the practice provide tremendous inspiration for practitioners in the intervening centuries, as her enlightenment was not granted by miraculous means. She did it the hard way; she earned it.⁷

While for the Padmakara Group the historical existence of Yeshé Tsogyal is "beyond question,"⁸ Simmer-Brown moves on from what she states above to acknowledge that the question of her existence remains an open one. Like Gross, she chooses to maintain that Yeshé Tsogyal was a historical person, whatever the details of her life.⁹ However, in her notes, she alerts her readers to a 2006 article in which Janet Gyatso addresses outright the matter of whether the "Yeshé Tsogyal" to which written records refer was, in fact, a historical person or not.¹⁰

In her work, Gyatso examines sources from the ninth century onward, seeking mention of either a "Yeshé Tsogyal" or a "Kharchen Za," Yeshé Tsogyal's clan title.¹¹ She concludes that even though sources that do mention either name exhibit relative consistency about her status and identity over time, scholars "are still not in a position to assert *without doubt* that there was

⁷ Judith Simmer-Brown, "Mother of the Victorious Ones," in *The Life and Visions of Yeshé Tsogyal: The Autobiography of the Great Wisdom Queen*, trans. Chönyi Drolma (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017), 20–21.

⁸ Padmakara Translation Group 1999: xiii.

⁹ Prior to this 2017 reflection by Simmer-Brown, Gross and Simmer-Brown co-authored a primer on Yeshé Tsogyal and a post for the *Shambhala Times* in which they state, "As an historical, real woman, Yeshé Tsogyal is important as an enlightened role model for women in a context that often seems lacking in female role models. Yeshé Tsogyal was chosen by the Sakyong [i.e., the head of the Shambhala lineage] precisely because she was a real Tibetan woman, rather than an abstract non-human symbol like Tara or Prajnaparamita." See Rita Gross and Judith Simmer-Brown, "Yeshé Tsogyal: Woman and Feminine Principle," *Shambhala Times Community News Magazine* (blog), August 19, 2009, <https://shambhalatimes.org/2009/08/19/yeshe-tsogyal-woman-and-feminine-principle/>.

¹⁰ Janet Gyatso, "A Partial Genealogy of the Lifestory of Ye shes mtsho rgyal," *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies* 2 (August 2006): 2–3. In her later work, Gross also alerts readers to the fact that modern scholars are not wholly convinced that Yeshé Tsogyal actually existed. See Rita M. Gross, "Gender and Religion: Gender and Buddhism," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 5 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 3330–3335.

¹¹ Rather than retrace each of Gyatso's steps here, I refer readers directly to the article cited in the note above. Gyatso also discusses her findings in brief in "Ye shes mtsho rgyal (Yeshe Tsogyal)," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 14 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 9881–9882. Although some of my own findings emend or build upon certain points Gyatso makes in "A Partial Genealogy," they pertain not to the question of Yeshé Tsogyal's existence in history, but to the nature and circulation of the fourteenth-century biography of Yeshé Tsogyal discussed therein.

an early Tibetan female master of tantric yoga called Yeshé Tsogyal or even Kharchen Za."¹²

After all, neither designation appears in contemporary (i.e., eighth-to-ninth-century) epigraphy, and it may be that references to "Kharchen Za Tsogyal" in textual sources predating the twelfth century were, in fact, absent from the earliest strata of those works.¹³

Perhaps for this reason, Gyatso is more careful to speak of the legend or the story evoked by the name Yeshé Tsogyal and to do so in a way that brings present-day, scholarly conceptions of her together with conceptions articulated by the devout:

Yeshé Tsogyal is the foremost female figure of the Nyingma tradition [of Tibetan Buddhism]. She shares with Machik Lapdrön (tenth-eleventh century) the position of pre-eminent female exemplar with whom Tibetan Buddhist women have been identified, but she far exceeds Machik in significance for Tibetan national self-conception. Her legend has it that she became queen of the pivotal Yarlung king Tri Songdét sen, only to be bestowed in turn as a gift to the Indian master Padmasambhava in exchange for the master's tantric teachings to the royal court. As consort of Padmasambhava, however, Yeshé Tsogyal becomes a master in her own right. In some versions of the story she achieves a veritable independence, in addition to serving as a key mediatrix between Tibetans and their Indian guru in the post-eleventh-century mythology surrounding Tibet's transformation into a Buddhist land.¹⁴

¹² Gyatso 2006: 3, my emphasis. I change Wylie transcriptions of Tibetan names in quotations (e.g., Ye shes mtsho rgyal and Mkhar chen bza') to the phonetic renderings for the sake of consistency throughout my thesis and for the ease of readers unfamiliar with Tibetan.

¹³ Ibid. Here I am summarizing Gyatso's findings regarding the so-called *Chronicle* or *Testament of Ba* (*Sba/Dbal' bzhed*). For information about the dating of the *Testament's* multiple manuscript versions, see esp. Per Sørensen's introduction to Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger, *Dbal' bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000) ix–xv. More recent scholarship on this work can be found in Sam van Schaik and Iwao Kazushi Iwao, "Fragments of the 'Testament of Ba' from Dunhuang," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 128, no. 3 (2008): 477–487. Van Schaik and Iwao support Wangdu and Diemberger's conclusion that the *Testament* version they examine, i.e., the *Dbal' bzhed*, is the earliest version of the work. Wangdu and Diemberger argue that the version in their possession dates to the eleventh century at the earliest; van Schaik and Iwao find, based on Dunhuang fragments of what appear to be the same version, that the *Dbal' bzhed* (as a version) may be dated to the ninth or tenth century, prior to when the Dunhuang caves were sealed. On the topic of the insertion or alteration of proper names in *Testament* versions, see van Schaik and Iwao 2008: 483.

¹⁴ Gyatso 2006: 1–2. Tib. More on Tri Songdét sen (Khri srong lde bstan) and additional mention of Machig Lapdrön (Ma gcig lab sgron) and will follow in the first chapter.

Taken together, the descriptions offered by Gross, Padmakara, Simmer-Brown, and Gyatso suggest that if one wishes to write about Yeshé Tsogyal today, it seems by now customary to begin by hitting at least three key notes: Yeshé Tsogyal was (1) a woman who flourished in Tibet in the eighth century and (2) a disciple and a principal consort of the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava. She and her story, moreover, (3) inspire and encourage others, especially practitioners on the tantric Buddhist path. Two additions to, or nuances of, this basic outline occur frequently, though not as a rule: Yeshé Tsogyal was (4) the wife of emperor Tri Songdétse (742–ca. 800; r. 755/756–797) before both she and the emperor became disciples of Guru Padmasambhava and the three subsequently ensured the propagation of Buddhism throughout Tibet; and (5) because she is a woman, her story works to authorize and inspire female Buddhist practitioners in particular.

When scholars talk about Yeshé Tsogyal, then, it is often with respect to broader issues that figure into her story as they relate to our field: teacher-disciple relationships, gender as it relates to religious practice, and moral exemplarity. We also speak not only of Tibet's earliest religious history but also the composition of that history and historical thinking itself. With that, we contemplate what counts as evidence and what might be true of such accounts in spite of their problematic foundations in historical fact. We trouble over how to regard, and write, the real in tandem with the ideal, the historical in tandem with the true.

Before offering my own understanding of Yeshé Tsogyal amid this study—a study not of the well-known seventeenth biography by Taksham, but of a lesser-known fourteenth-century version of her life story—I wish to dwell briefly on three of the above features commonly attributed to Yeshé Tsogyal in secondary literature. The first has to do with Yeshé Tsogyal's affiliation with Guru Padmasambhava, popularly known by the epithet "Guru Rinpoché," or

"Precious Guru." The second pertains to the concern for her historicity; and the third addresses the matter of exemplarity, particularly Yeshé Tsogyal's status as what a number of authors refer to as a "role model."¹⁵ My own contributions on these points will not necessarily be new, but they are worth making explicit here as an entrée to what will be my analysis of the lesser studied account.

Striking, albeit unsurprising to anyone familiar with Tibetan religious history, is the frequency with which Yeshé Tsogyal and Padmasambhava are mentioned together, often in the same breath. This phenomenon is not unique to scholarship, a strange penchant of historians. It is an association popularly, one could even say naturally, made. When, in the course of casual conversation, I have asked Tibetan or Bhutanese people what they can tell me about Yeshé Tsogyal, they often reply with some variation of "Yeshé Tsogyal? Oh, Guru Rinpoché." The sense is not that the names Yeshé Tsogyal and Padmasambhava signify one and the same individual.¹⁶ Rather, people seem to connect these figures synecdochically. Upon hearing the name Yeshé Tsogyal one immediately recalls Padmasambhava, and yet the name Padmasambhava would seem only to contextualize the name Yeshé Tsogyal. To think of Yeshé Tsogyal is to think of Padmasambhava and his story, but whether or not one thinks of Yeshé Tsogyal and hers upon hearing the name Padmasambhava depends on the case.

¹⁵ For examples apart from the title of Gross's (1987) article, see also Gyatso 2005: 9881 and the translator's introduction to Drimé Kunga, *The Life and Visions of Yeshé Tsogyal: The Autobiography of the Great Wisdom Queen*, trans. Chönyi Drolma (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017), 60.

¹⁶ However, I leave open the possibility that identity could in fact be what some people do mean to suggest. Recently, for example, Dzongsar Khyentse wrote, "Yeshé Tsogyal is actually the voice of Guru Rinpoche. In fact, she *is* Guru Rinpoche in feminine form." (See his "Forward" in *The Life and Visions of Yeshé Tsogyal: The Autobiography of the Great Wisdom Queen*, by Drimé Kunga, vii. translated by Chönyi Drolma. Boulder: Snow Lion, 2017. Italics original.) But given that people most often proceed to answer my question with a further qualification of Yeshé Tsogyal as the consort of Guru Rinpoché, or brief account of how Yeshé Tsogyal met and came to be affiliated with Padmasambhava—not a statement about how they are ontologically related—I favor the above interpretation.

That is to say that even though Yeshé Tsogyal's hagiographies are "stand-alone" works that circulate as independent, complete units apart from sources in which Padmasambhava features as the protagonist,¹⁷ they are nevertheless very much informed and inflected by what can be deemed, broadly speaking, Padmasambhava literature. When read together, the Yeshé Tsogyal accounts and Padmasambhava accounts work in various ways to illuminate one another, but the Padmasambhava literature is decidedly vaster and more widely known among Tibetan and Bhutanese readers. Part of the task of this project will therefore be to introduce the literature in which Padmasambhava's character was developed and out of which his personality grew, for there we find the seeds of Yeshé Tsogyal's own renown.

As for the concern with Yeshé Tsogyal's historicity, I am in this regard struck by the ways in which secondary sources, especially those that do not explicitly challenge Yeshé Tsogyal's existence as a historical figure (e.g., the Padmakara Group), nevertheless express ambivalence about the issue openly or write about Yeshé Tsogyal in ways that suggest ambivalence. By turns, Yeshé Tsogyal "was," "had," "did," or "was *supposed* to have had," "was/is *said* to have done," and so on. Some accounts take pains to figure Yeshé Tsogyal's story itself an agent of its own production (e.g., "*Her legend has it that...*").

It is true enough that such qualifications quickly become tiresome to read. For some, the matter could be more about stylistics than evidence. But I take the alternation among verb tenses or the recourse to hearsay to be reflective of continued efforts to think through what I find to be less a perennial problem than a perpetually generative question: How should scholars think and

¹⁷ As I will show, Yeshé Tsogyal's fourteenth-century life story appears to have circulated independently, and it continues to do so, but it was also anthologized within Pema Lingpa's (1450–1521) *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* (*Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*) compendium of works. There it is most often situated immediately after a life story of Padmasambhava.

talk about figures who may or may not have lived but have long been and are still vivified? How, moreover, should we (modern readers) relate to them?

On that order, when I tell people that I am studying a fourteenth-century account of an eighth-century Tibetan woman's spiritual progress toward enlightenment—an account that speaks not only of relatively mundane concerns like marriage and finances, but also of demons, apparitions, miraculous healings—one of the first questions I am usually asked in response is "Do people believe it?" That is, as I understand the question, do people (in the present) think that the account of Yeshé Tsogyal's life (situated in the past) is "true," or believable, in the sense that the events it describes really happened?¹⁸ To answer this question, one could say simply, "Some do; some don't." What it means to say that some people do believe it, of course, can spur a host of qualifications. That is: it depends how we qualify the nature of "belief."

To proceed down the road of qualifying, one could, with the help of Paul Veyne, talk about "modalities of belief" or the "plurality of programs of truth,"¹⁹ and ask: what are the discursive means by which the "truth" of or in any given account is constituted at any given time? One could also draw on Aleida and Jan Assmann's writings on "mnemohistory," a subdiscipline of history concerned with the past as it is remembered, not with the past as such. This concept has proven especially useful for scholars of hagiography who wish to discuss the realities or "actualities" of their subjects wherever the "factualities" of their lives cannot be validated by historical evidence. To enlist both Veyne's notion of the plurality of truths and Assmann's regarding mnemohistorical truths: what might collective memory hold or articulate as

¹⁸ This question comes from non-Buddhists and Westerners mostly, though not exclusively. A Tibetan novelist once asked me if I believed it. His tone and countenance suggested that I should not.

¹⁹ Paul Veyne, *Did the Greeks Believe in Their Myths? An Essay on the Constitutive Imagination*, trans. Paula Wissing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

true about the life of Yeshé Tsogyal? The question of her historical existence aside, what has her construction as a historical figure meant for those who live with the idea of her actuality as part and parcel of a modality or program of belief?²⁰

Added to this, theories of genre may help us to better understand the particular conventions at work in a subject's modality (or actuality) of "believing" the text. Genre distinctions suggest not only classes or categories of a work, but also distinct modes of reader engagement. For Gross, genre definitively helps to frame the reader's belief vis-à-vis the "true" and imagined world. In this sense, the seventeenth-century account of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story offers a mythic history and sacred history. To call it "a history" alone would not only induce qualms in the modern historiographer; it would also fail to signal its richness and dimensions, its potential layers of engagement with the story. The life of Yeshé Tsogyal, it seems, has multiple histories, including mnemohistories, sacred histories, and histories which frame that life in the form of a still open question.

My own preference going forward will be to focus less on matters of belief and truth as issues in and of themselves and more on the ways in which cultural memory and genre intervene in, sustain, or otherwise frame truths and beliefs. I am above all interested in how the fourteenth-century account of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story not only memorializes her but also serves to

²⁰ The concept of "mnemohistory" is theorized across several of the Assmanns' works. See, for example, Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998. For an application of the concept of mnemohistory in a study of a saintly figure, see Christian Lee Novetzke, *Religion and Public Memory: A Cultural History of Saint Namdev in India*, Columbia University Press, 2008. On the topic of memory and history, one is also reminded of J.Z. Smith's assertion that "The scholar of religion is...concerned with dimensions of memory and remembrance—whether they be the collective labor of society or the work of the individual historian's craft" (2000: 24–25).

enliven her. How, I wonder, might we better understand the vivifying effects of this particular hagiography—both in the sense of enlivening its protagonist and in terms of exciting or inspiring its audiences?

Was Yeshé Tsogyal?

The concern with historicity common among secondary sources on Yeshé Tsogyal is typically absent from my conversations with people who grew up hearing stories about her. This is not to say, unequivocally, that the modern Tibetan and Bhutanese people with whom I have spoken take the received tradition about her for granted. Some do; some don't. However, in my conversations I find it rare for someone to speak about the issue of Yeshé Tsogyal's historicity unless I pose the question directly.

To be sure, there could be a host of reasons why people do not address the question of Yeshé Tsogyal's existence, and not all need stem from hard convictions about the matter either way. While some may take her existence for granted, others may not; some may feel ambivalent about the issue, yet still speak of her as if they do suppose she lived. Still others may take her to be active in the world at this moment. Writing about women who have been recognized as emanations of Yeshé Tsogyal, Holly Gayley reminds us that for some Tibetans, "Yeshé Tsogyal is not just a figure from the distant past; she remains an active and enduring presence." Either as Yeshé Tsogyal or as "Yeshé Tsogyal" reborn under another name, she retains the power to intervene in the lives of ordinary people to this very day.²¹

Whatever the case for any individual, though, it is true enough that the cultural script does not make questioning Yeshé Tsogyal's existence intuitive. Evoking her name in casual conversation with Tibetan and Bhutanese Buddhists does not simultaneously evoke a tradition of

²¹ Holly Gayley, "The Many Lives of Yeshe Tsogyal," *Lion's Roar* (blog), December 1, 2007, <https://www.lionsroar.com/the-many-lives-of-yeshe-tsogyal/>.

debate about her reality. If someone met my question, "What can you tell me about Yeshé Tsogyal?" with an assertion about whether or not she really lived, I would be surprised. Most people begin, as above, by making sure that they know who I mean ("*Yeshé Tsogyal of Guru Rinpoché fame?*"), and then they follow with some general statements about her relationship to Padmasambhava or an anecdote they especially like or simply recall off the bat. Although it is not always clear to me why some anecdotes are preferred over or recalled before others, what is clear is that one need not establish Yeshé Tsogyal's existence in history in order to talk about her as a reality. To dwell on the question "Did she really live?" would seem to forestall learning anything about her.

Of course, this is not to say that addressing the problem of Yeshé Tsogyal's historicity is without potential import. Discovering more about a "Yeshé Tsogyal" or a "Kharchen Za" who flourished sometime during the late-eighth to early-ninth century could aid us in not only in knowing her better, but also in imagining more judiciously and robustly Tibet's religious history and the dynamics that enabled Buddhism to travel and develop beyond the Indian subcontinent. A sustained effort at a microhistory, in other words, could—even by the slightest degree—bring the larger picture of eighth-century Tibet into sharper focus. In this regard, one wonders: What could disciplined attention to the figure of Yeshé Tsogyal help us see newly or imagine afresh about the time in which she was supposed to have lived? What, moreover, could the case of Yeshé Tsogyal tell us about religious and historical thinking from the time of Tibet's imperial period to the present? How might changes in the shape, tone, and contents of her history, not merely her *story*, be indicative of changes in the writing of histories (or memorials) in Tibet over time? Given the dearth of information about women in Tibetan history in general, I find that this

question rings out more romantic than realistic. Answers to the latter, I argue, are within closer reach.

Even if studies of Yeshé Tsogyal failed to influence the production of new histories or meta-histories, the fact remains that Yeshé Tsogyal's historicity is important to the way she is and has been understood. That is, whatever the reality of her existence in history, the very idea of her as a historical figure matters. To assert as much is, of course, to say nothing of how—to what degree, in what ways, to whom, and why—that idea matters. Primary and secondary sources yield various answers to these very questions. For example, if we look to works attributed to Nyangrel Nyima Öser (1124–1192), the figure credited with the earliest recorded elaboration of Yeshé Tsogyal as a historical individual, we find, as the excerpts above relate, that she was a disciple of Padmasambhava who served as both a receptacle for and proliferator of his tantric teachings. For what it's worth, however, we also find Nyangrel identifying his wife as an emanation (*sprul pa*) of Yeshé Tsogyal, and he himself was identified as an emanation of Tri Songdétsen, the emperor to whom Yeshé Tsogyal was supposed to have been wed.²²

Without delving too deeply into the issues of rebirth and reincarnation here, it will suffice to say that for Nyangrel, what seems likely to have mattered above all is that the figures who were said to persist in he and his wife were not only present at the time when Buddhism reached

²² For a thorough study focused on Nyangrel, his works, and the significance of his claims for the development of (1) the idea of catenate rebirth in Tibet and (2) what scholars often refer to as "the tradition" of treasure (*gter ma*) discovery, see Daniel Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2016). For references to his wife, Jobuma (Jo 'bum ma), as an emanation of Yeshé Tsogyal, see Nyangrel's *Clear Mirror Biography*: Mnga' bdag Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, *Bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i gter ston myang sprul sku nyi ma 'od zer gyi rnam thar gsal ba'i me long*, in *Bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i chos skor* (Paro: Lama Ngodrup, 1979–80), 2: 343.4–5: *slob dpon pad ma'i lung bzhin/ sgrub rten du ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi sprul pa/ jo 'bum ma zhes bya ba gcig*; and 354.5–6: *lug gi lo la ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi sprul pa/ jo 'bum ma'i lus la sku bltams/ spre'u'i lo la gsang sngags kyi sdong pol tar sku 'khrungs so*. Cf. Leonard van der Kuijp, "On the Edge of Myth and History: Za hor, its Place in the History of Early Indian Buddhist Tantra, and Dalai Lama V and the Genealogy of its Royal Family," in Bangwei Wang, Jinhua Chen and Ming Chen, eds., *Studies on Buddhist Myths: Texts, Pictures, Traditions and History* (Shanghai: Zhongxi Book Company, 2013): 140n1.

Tibet. They paved the way for its very introduction and spread and further guaranteed its dissemination in the future. And so, what emerges significant about Yeshé Tsogyal in Nyangrel is (1) the fact that she was *there* when authentic teachers and teachings came directly from the Indian subcontinent to Tibet and (2) that she herself had access to those teachings and the means to ensure their survival in perpetuity.

What was (or is) Yeshé Tsogyal?

The modern sources cited above maintain both the likelihood of Yeshé Tsogyal's historical existence as well as the significance of her intimate connection with famed Tibetan and Indian figures, particularly Padmasambhava. But to read Nyangrel in conjunction with these sources is to see a further issue come into relief, namely the question—sometimes a problem—of Yeshé Tsogyal's ontological nature. Through comparison we see concerns, implicit and explicit, not only with *if and who* Yeshé Tsogyal was, but also regarding *what* she was when she might have been. Just as in the case of the historical Buddha, of whom we can ask, "Who was he who is known as the Buddha?" (i.e., the individual in history) and "*What is a buddha?*" (i.e., the category of being), one can ask after the who and what of Yeshé Tsogyal. (One might grant, in others words, that Yeshé Tsogyal existed, but in what capacity? As what type of sentient entity?) Or, to adopt an attitude inspired by Venye, we could ask: What might be true, or discursively constituted as "true," about her being at any given time, in any given source?

One way to circumnavigate a lengthy discussion of Buddhist metaphysics and ontology here would be to say that in terms of her being and agency, Yeshé Tsogyal is taken to be a complex entity, one that is not exclusively human. Tibetan and Bhutanese cultural memory regards her precisely as such, seeing her as an individual who indeed lived in the past but as a

manifestation of the goddess Sarasvatī (Tib. *lha mo dbyangs chen ma*) as well as a *ḍākinī* (Tib. *mkha' 'gro ma*), a term used for female tantric adepts as well as for a class of enlightened female spirits.²³ Unsurprisingly, it is only when we see her spoken of as a moral exemplar in the sense of serving as a model *for* others—not solely as an instance or example, a model of—it appears that claiming her historicity as a human woman takes priority.

In other words, especially for those who emphasize her exemplarity as a moral figure, it is important to grant not just that she existed, but also that she existed *as a human woman*, an individual who stood to experience all of the hardships and joys, but especially the hardships, that all mortal women may face. Simmer-Brown's words above offer a case in point on this matter. After asserting that Yeshé Tsogyal's historical existence "grounds the rich lore of her life example for contemporary women practitioners," she goes on to say that Yeshé Tsogyal's enlightenment was not granted by miraculous means. Instead Yeshé Tsogyal "did it the hard way; she earned it."²⁴ The implication, as I take it, is that the life to whom the name Yeshé Tsogyal refers, a person whose life should (according to Simmer-Brown) be assumed to be more plausibly unenchanted than not, is the Yeshé Tsogyal to whom contemporary female practitioners, similar in kind, should look for guidance and inspiration in their own struggle for enlightenment.

²³ She is both of these things in Nyangrel's hagio-historiographical accounts. See, for example, Nyang ral 1988: 391. See also Gayley 2007 on this issue.

²⁴ Simmer-Brown 2017: 20–21. Based on the full-length accounts of her life, one could counter Simmer-Brown's words with "Perhaps Yeshé Tsogyal's enlightenment was not granted by miraculous means *per se*, but she was certainly aided in achieving enlightenment by miraculous occurrences." To name but a few events that might qualify from her fourteenth-century life story: her guru apparatuses as a youth who saves her from imprisonment as a hostage; she is transported via a flying cloth to faraway lands to witness acts of religious devotion; and the many wounds she inflicts upon herself in an attempt at bodily sacrifice are healed by a statement of no regret (or an "act of truth," Skt. *satyakriyā*) and, possibly, an anthropomorphized tigress's application of tree sap. Although it may be that Yeshé Tsogyal's accounts demand that we rethink what counts as miraculous or supernatural—if not in the world we inhabit, at the very least within the worlds of the texts—her own text-internal astonishment at certain of these events suggests to me that these happenings are meant to be viewed as extraordinary.

Chönyi Drolma speaks to a similar sentiment. In her recent (2017) translation of an eclectic edition of the fourteenth-century version of Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life*, she writes that life stories like Yeshé Tsogyal's are "not meant to be read as histories." Nevertheless, she asserts that "as a historical figure, [Yeshé Tsogyal] was a model disciple," and so she now serves as "an ideal role model" ("ideal" in the sense of exceptionally fitting, not idealized) for practitioners. Her story, Chönyi Drolma adds, is "her manual," an instructional handbook she has provided for subsequent generations.²⁵

All this is not to say that Yeshé Tsogyal cannot serve as both an instance of enlightenment (a supreme being) and a role model (a suitable example) for ordinary practitioners. It is rather to illustrate part of the challenge I spoke of at the outset of this introduction, namely how difficult it is to talk about Yeshé Tsogyal in ways that do justice to both the complexities of her purported historicity and to the received ideas about her at the same time. Problems arise when scholars seek to maintain a simplified sense of her historicity while continuing to make claims regarding her status among contemporary practitioners. And while these two modes of framing Yeshé Tsogyal are not necessarily incompatible, such views do tend to overlook contradictions incurred not by Yeshé Tsogyal herself, but by our approach to her. So, the argument goes: The information we have about Yeshé Tsogyal comes from written accounts, particularly her full-length life stories, as well as stories or anecdotes about her passed down through oral tradition. However, her written life stories, from which we gain abundant information about her, should not be read as histories (that is, presumably, in Leopold von Ranke's sense of accounts that tell of things as they "really" happened). In that sense we know that, historically, Yeshé Tsogyal was a model disciple, not least because the accounts of her life

²⁵ Chönyi Drolma (trans.) 2017: 60.

tell us as much. The Yeshé Tsogyal of history is both not who we find in her biographies and assuredly who we see reflected there. Arguments to this effect—explicitly or through implication—suggest that we must simply look more closely, or in the "right" way, if we wish to find (the right) Yeshé Tsogyal, the woman who earned it the hard, human way, in spite of other complexities regarding her non- or sacred-historical being.

Of course, the fact that many, though not all, writers who emphasize that Yeshé Tsogyal functions as a present-day role model would choose, amid their depictions of her, to focus on the non-miraculous over the miraculous aspects of her story is not surprising. This tendency to disenchant her story may reflect the hold of positivist trends in modern historiography.²⁶ The thoroughly positivist historian might downplay or altogether strip away the fantastic elements in the text in hopes of arriving at a "realistic" picture of the Yeshé Tsogyal of the past.²⁷

Apotheoses can be accounted for, but primarily under the heading of "rich lore."

²⁶ In this vein, one thinks immediately of Hippolyte Delehaye's seminal *The Legends of the Saints*. Therein, Delehaye opposes "uncritical" hagiography to "critical" history and speaks of "the complicated processes by means of which we hope to disentangle the true from the false, and to reconstruct the characteristic features of a personage or period." (Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, trans. V. M. Crawford [London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907], 66.) For both a summary of the state of hagiographical study as a field (up to 1994) and a compelling argument against distinguishing historiography from hagiography in all cases, see Felice Lifshitz, "Beyond Positivism and Genre: 'Hagiographical' Texts as Historical Narrative" *Viator* 25 (January 1, 1994): 95–114.

²⁷ In the nineteenth century, New Testament scholars popularized what Buddhist studies scholar Louis de La Vallée Poussin would later deem "the subtraction method." This method of historical criticism viewed mythological elements of an account as later additions which could be subtracted from a work to reveal the historical facts contained therein. Hermann Oldenberg (*Buddha: Sein Leben, seine Lehre, seine Gemeinde* 1881) sought to discover the historical Buddha by employing this tactic. Having rejected the theory that the Buddha was a solar hero whose characteristics were informed by Vedic and brahmanical concepts—a theory first proposed by Émile Senart (*Essai sur la légende du Buddha* 1875, 2nd ed. 1882) and later embraced in an extreme form by Hendrik Kern (*History of Buddhism in India* 1882 and 1884, 2 vols.)—Oldenberg attempted to identify the oldest stratum of Buddhist literature in order to derive from that literature the historical elements of the Buddha's life and original teachings. As Jan Willem de Jong (1987) notes, Senart's work was important for the ways in which he based his theories on emic Indian conceptions of the Buddha. Kern, however, entirely dissolved the historical Buddha into the solar god, leaving nothing of human being found in his sources behind. Later, Edward J. Thomas (*The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* 1927), while examining the structural and doctrinal relationships among various biographical fragments in the Pāli tradition, argued that biographical accounts of the Buddha should be taken as a whole." We may reject unpalatable parts [of the Buddha's biography]," said Thomas, "but [we] cannot ignore them without suppressing valuable evidence as to the character of our witness." Like Thomas, Alfred Foucher (*La vie du Bouddha* 1949) argued that the biography of the Buddha should be taken "for what it is, a mixture of history and legend, of

It strikes me, though, that assertions of Yeshé Tsogyal's existence in history paired with strong, human-centered claims about what that existence looked like have typically more to do with the desire to allow truth by way of analogy than with uncovering the "real" Yeshé Tsogyal behind any text. Why, in spite of the lack of evidence, maintain that she lived *as a model practitioner*? Would she be made to function any less as a role model if we learned tomorrow that she never lived at all? To put the question another way: Would the model practitioner to which the name "Yeshé Tsogyal" refers prove any less a model without bones? Her character would remain exemplary, surely, but what might be compromised is the "truth" that her reality authorizes for others.²⁸ Keeping Yeshé Tsogyal real, so to speak, and a real *woman* at that, implies that real women may be able to achieve what she did. If it happened that a woman achieved enlightenment in the past, it can happen again. Yeshé Tsogyal might be an ideal woman (in the sense of a paragon), but so long as she is idealized within the bounds of human capability and experience, her story might prefigure the real or yet-to-be actualized experiences of others.

In the end, my own position is that even if we can say a good deal about representations of a Yeshé Tsogyal throughout history, we cannot at present say much, if anything, historically accurate about an eighth-century woman known as "Yeshé Tsogyal" and/or "Kharchen Za." In line with the current scholarly consensus, I think it not unlikely that there was an imperial-era

truth and fiction." Foucher thought that both Oldenberg (a rationalist, focused on the Buddha as a human) and Senart (a comparative mythologist, focused on the Buddha as a god) went too far. Both were right and wrong, says Foucher (1949: 5): right in what they admitted, wrong in what they omitted. The most important thing, he argued, was "to ask neither more nor less of our sources than they can give us." For a more comprehensive summary of the different approaches to and views on the Buddha's biography, see Jan Willem de Jong's *A Brief History of Buddhist Studies in Europe and America* (Delhi: 1987).

²⁸ In their introduction to the edited volume *Women in Tibet*, Gyatso and Havenik speak to this point about authorization especially in relation to Tibet's entrenched system of *tulku* (*sprul sku*) recognition. See Janet Gyatso and Hanna Havenik, eds. *Women in Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 22. See also note no. 9 above where Gross and Simmer-Brown speak to the Sakyong's reasons for choosing to depict Yeshé Tsogyal on a banner to be hung at Shambhala Centers internationally. Cf. Gayley 2007.

Tibetan woman, perhaps even more than one, to whom such designations refer, and I grant that the accounts currently available to us might to some degree reflect the character and deeds of that figure. As in the case of the historical Buddha, it seems possible that there was a strong personality at the heart of the tales and accounts which Yeshé Tsogyal's name signifies today.²⁹ To dismiss accounts of her life as fabrications in their entirety seems hasty, if not altogether unproductive, even unwise.

And yet, because we remain at a loss for contemporary evidence that would corroborate the details we find in such accounts—the earliest of which appeared several centuries after the time in which she is said to have lived—I take my subject to be the idea of Yeshé Tsogyal, a phenomenon which may or may not overlap with a Yeshé Tsogyal of the eighth century. That is, it is my view that Yeshé Tsogyal was (is) both a historical person *and* an idea, and the idea of this figure is, at present, far more accessible.³⁰ Moreover, if one were to discover the "real" (i.e., the past-existent) Yeshé Tsogyal to have been a very different figure than who we recognize her to be today, we would nevertheless be called to contend with the proliferation of accounts of the life of Yeshé Tsogyal beyond what might be deemed the historical one. As I focus my study and analyses on one account of her life story, then, I see myself as witnessing the development, figuration, and animation of an idea, one that has had and still stands to have real effects on the worlds it inhabits. Whatever windows to a historical past such accounts may provide, I understand that what they frame most clearly are the processes by which she Yeshé Tsogyal and

²⁹ On the likelihood of the Buddha as, at the very least, a "strong personality" who founded a movement, see Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: From the Origins to the Saka Era*, trans. Sara Webb-Boin Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, no. 36. Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, Université Catholique de Louvain, [1958] 1988), 707.

³⁰ Christian Lee Novetzke (2008) takes a similar approach to his subject in focusing on the idea of the Maharastrian saint commonly known as Namdev (1270–1350), but Novetzke is willing to go further than I am with Yeshé Tsogyal to claim some core knowledge of the historical person to whom the name "Namdev" refers.

her story came to be, and they look out also, ultimately, to her future rather than solely to her past.

Chapter Outlines

By lending primacy to the idea of Yeshé Tsogyal over attempting to discover and delimit Yeshé Tsogyal the historical person, I take cues from scholars of hagiography who in their analyses treat the *vitae* of saintly or heroic figures holistically, preferring not to separate out the realistic wheat from the fantastic chaff. I also draw upon the work of scholars in the subfield of religion and literature who attempt to see how, as we find them—warts and miracles and all—saints' *Lives* work to guide their reception. From the outset of this project I presume that form is not incidental or secondary to content in any medium, literature included. Rather, I begin from the position that if one is to see how a literary work figures possible worlds or even opens up possible ways of thinking and being for its readers, then narrative form and content matter equally and should therefore be examined in tandem.

After contextualizing Yeshé Tsogyal, that is, showing where she fits in amid the Tibetan religio-historical landscape and charting how she came to be there, I then focus on one account of Yeshé Tsogyal, namely her life story as it emerged in the fourteenth century. This work, which I refer to as the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*—often simply "the *Life*" for short—is likely the earliest full-length, cradle-to-grave account that features Yeshé Tsogyal as its protagonist. It centers on her pursuit of Holy Dharma (*dam chos*) and spiritual accomplishment along a tantric Buddhist path, culminating in a testimony to her enlightenment.

Over two chapters in Part I, I build upon prior scholarship on this work, the earliest and most substantial of which was undertaken by Gyatso as exhibited in her 2006 article, "A Partial Genealogy of the Lifestory of Ye shes mtsho rgyal." Here, I trace Yeshé Tsogyal's emergence

and development in Tibetan religious and historiographical literature from the twelfth century up to the late seventeenth, all the while adding newly discovered information or information not previously detailed in Gyatso's study. I then historicize and describe the fourteenth-century *Life*, a work of which we have several textual witnesses. As I discuss the *Life*, I provide as much as much information as one can to date regarding its provenance and sources of inspiration, many of which, I argue, can be traced to origins in Indic Buddhist literature. In the process, I theorize the work's complicated nature as a source attributed to multiple authorial agents.

In the broadest terms, the *Life* is categorized as an instance of "revealed" literature. In Tibetan it is a so-called *terma* (*gter ma*), a "treasure" in textual form (hereafter a "treasure text"), and it is attributed to two "treasure-revealers," or *tertöns* (*gter ston*), one of whom modern scholars would be inclined (as I am) to call the work's author.

Where I discuss author- and revealership, however, my aim is not to attempt to settle a contest of attribution once and for all. Rather, I propose that we view the *Life* within the logics of treasure revelation. Therein, as I will show, it is allowed multiple authors/revealers and, subsequently, it is granted the potential for continually renewed relevance vis-à-vis the contexts into which it emerges. I find that if we occupy the vantage point of treasure revelation, our questions can push past text-critical issues preoccupied with authorship or origination and instead address matters of the work's place in the world and its aims in relationship to its prospective audiences (i.e., what is this work about and how does it *work*?). I will allow the *Life's* contexts of production and circulation to inform my analyses to the degree that I am able, but I aim more broadly to tend to the rhetorical effects of the *Life* on a reader unconfined to a particular era.

In chapter three, the chapter that begins Part II, I assess the thematic and formal features of the *Life* in order to situate it among other works of Tibetan literature, particularly those works that fall under the label of *namtar* (*rnam thar*), a term most often appended to works that Western literary theorists would—depending on the author and the subject matter—consider a form of genre literature with its own conventions similar to those of auto-, bio-, or hagiography. Here, I am invested in seeing how generic conventions bear meaning, not just in surveying what they are. Rather than limit myself to asking after the tale type or genre to which the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* speaks loudest, I wonder: What explanatory power might a consideration of genre grant us as we approach the *Life*?³¹ How might it help us understand the *Life's* overall purpose? Through comparisons with other *namtar*, I demonstrate that the *Life's* closest generic kin seem to be *namtar* that continue to be adapted for dramatic performance. I suggest that this may indicate a popular (intended) audience for the work, not exclusively a religious specialist or clerical one.

In chapter four, I extend analyses begun in chapter three to demonstrate the ways in which the *Life* proves a densely intertextual work, one that draws primarily on tales of the Buddha's previous births, stories that constitute what scholars call his "extended biography" as the Bodhisattva, or the Buddha-to-be. In this chapter, I look beyond theories of intertextuality that would favor the "hunt" for the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* sources over theories that advocate attention to the experiences of reading intertextually—to witnessing the effects of what Paul Ricoeur refers to as the "clash of significations" out of which intertextual works produce meaning. Here, I suggest that the *Life* encourages a synchronic reading of what constitutes its

³¹ In this regard, I follow Reiko Ohnuma, *Head, Eyes, Flesh, and Blood: Giving Away the Body in Indian Buddhist Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), especially where she contemplates genre not in terms of rules and prescriptions or rigid, taxonomic classes, but rather "in the looser terms of an 'invitation to form' for the writer and a 'horizon of expectations' for the reader (30–33).

folios alongside its intertexts, such that text and intertexts may be allowed to interanimate one another in ways that configure both the expectations and moral sentiments of the reader. In other words, the text encourages the reader to read the *Life* and the stories that inspired it together, comparatively and as mutually informative. Only then can the significance of the events of Yeshé Tsogyal's life, her actions, and her character fully emerge.

In chapter five, I analyze the *Life* in light of its extensive use of dialogue. Although the majority of the work is made up of dialogues, the first two and longest chapters are especially rich in their execution of this literary device. There we find that characters' exchanges revolve, for the most part, around the topic of what counts as religious practice and who should be allowed to engage in it. Across lengthy and intimate discussions between family members and potential lovers in Chapter I of the *Life*, the central issue seems to be whether or not Yeshé Tsogyal should be allowed to renounce lay life in favor of what she understands the pursuit of Holy Dharma to entail. Throughout, readers not only bear witness to ideas about what religious practice should or should not involve; they are also made party to the physical and emotional effects of radical renunciation on everyone implicated in an individual's decision to leave home in pursuit of the religious life. It is through these dialogues, I argue, that readers learn the most about Yeshé Tsogyal and even come to view her as a vital entity. Such an effect is achieved not only by heeding what is explicitly denoted by her and her interlocutors, but also through attention to what is connoted by the tone and tenor of hers and others' direct speech. Throughout Chapters I and II of the *Life*, Yeshé Tsogyal emerges in ways previously unheard of (or undocumented) thanks in large part to dialogue's inherent dramatic quality.³²

³² On this point, elaborated upon in chapter five, see Mieke Bal's *Narratology* (2013).

Analytical Approach

Of late, scholars of non-modern South and Southeast Asian literature have adopted Dominick LaCapra's "work-like" versus "documentary" distinction with increasing frequency, particularly as they find themselves limited in their ability to know much, if anything at all, about a textual source's reception over time.³³ As LaCapra articulates these terms in his *Rethinking Intellectual History*, the documentary "situates the text in terms of factual or literal dimensions involving reference to empirical reality and conveying information about it," while the work-like "supplements empirical reality by adding to and subtracting from it... bringing into the world something that did not exist before."³⁴ LaCapra's own encapsulation of this distinction notes that, with deceptive simplicity, we can say that the documentary "marks" a difference while the work-like "makes" a difference. We should understand the former largely in terms of its denotative capacity, while the latter proves the "critical and transformative" capacity of a work. It is the "work-like" dimension that is able to engage the reader in "*recreative* dialogue with the text and the problems it raises."³⁵

This project is no different in terms of finding LaCapra's documentary/work-like distinction useful, especially given that we can only situate the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* in history so much. In my view, LaCapra's terms remind us that we can approach our object of study from

³³ Particularly when we look to doctoral dissertations on South Asian literature broadly speaking, examples proliferate, but for specific analyses that have aided me in my approach to the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, see especially Charles Hallisey and Anne Hansen, "Narrative, Sub-Ethics, and the Moral Life: Some Evidence from Theravāda Buddhism," *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 24, no. 2 (October 1, 1996): 305–27, and Emily T. Hudson, *Disorienting Dharma: Ethics and the Aesthetics of Suffering in the Mahābhārata*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁴ Dominick LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, Language* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983), 30.

³⁵ *Ibid.* My emphasis.

multiple angles, and he shows us that an interest in the empirical valences of a text need not preclude an interest in the creative ones (or vice versa). If we wish to learn about the circumstances of the *Life's* production and circulation in history, we can examine its material iterations (i.e., its texts) as well as other works in its orbit and sources that mention or refer to it. We can look to those texts, too—their contents, forms, paratextual aspects—if we wish to know more about the development of Yeshé Tsogyal over time relative to other figurations of her. So too, such texts may also point to trends in historiographical and literary practices ca. 1300-1700 in Tibet and Bhutan. But, along with these approaches, we can engage the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as a work of literature that has not only been produced but also aims to be productive. We can attempt to discover how the *Life* came into the world; we can see what it says, observe how it takes shape, *and* we can tend to the ways in which it seeks to shape the worlds in which it dwells.

In sum, Part I of this project focuses primarily, though not exclusively, on matters documentary. First I discuss Yeshé Tsogyal the figure in history, insofar as she is framed by and made present through primary sources. I then consider the emergence of her fourteenth-century *Life* in time as one version, likely the earliest, of her biography.

In Part II, I address the *Life's* work-like or creative capacities, particularly in terms of the work-reader encounter. By "reader" it should be said that I mean what has been called the "model reader," the reader the work anticipates and attempts to instruct—the reader who would, moreover, embrace the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* own recommendations for how it ought to be read. In this way, the model reader contrasts with what Umberto Eco calls the "empirical reader," which is to say any reader who would read the *Life* according to her whims. Summing up the difference, we might say that the model reader is the reader willing, even keen, to read on the

work's terms (to take cues from it as she reads, so to speak), while the empirical reader is not necessarily inclined to do so. The empirical reader may read on terms largely her own.³⁶

According to Eco, there are two possible types, or levels, of model reader. Casually speaking, one might say that a reader of the first level "reads for plot." She reads for what happens next; she wants to know how it all ends.³⁷ The reader of the second level, however, not only lets herself be guided by the text in the process of reading, but also thinks about how the text works to help her through it. As Eco has it, the reader of the second level is one who "wonders what sort of reader [a] story would like him or her to become and who wants to discover precisely how the model author goes about serving as a guide for the reader."³⁸ The second-level reader, in other words, watches herself in the reading process. She is moreover inclined to engage in self-critical reflection about what happens to her therein.

Along with the model reader, Eco proposes a "model author." Not unlike the model reader, we find in Eco that the model author mentioned above is not an empirical entity—the living writer of the text, say. Rather, the model author is figured as the narrative strategy which guides the model reader.³⁹ It is the author with whom the work would like the reader to become acquainted through careful, possibly repeated acts of reading. It is the author who helps the reader read the work as carefully as it wants to be read.

To take cues from both Eco and LaCapra, one might say that the second-level model reader reads with an eye on and interest in how a story's work-like aspects stand to work on her.

³⁶ On this distinction, see Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 8.

³⁷ Eco 1994: 27.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

She is inclined to be aware of both the aesthetic features of and rhetorical moves made by the text. Secondary literature that employs Eco's theory variously deems this an "attentive" or a "sensitive" reader. Sometimes she is a "learned" reader. Where I add an adjective to "reader" (the second-level model reader most often implied), I tend to use the first term, "attentive," though I think each descriptor viable. However, for reasons I will elaborate upon in Part I, I do not frequently invoke the "model author." Rather, I prefer to locate agency with "the *Life*" as a work, which is to say, not as one single text, particularly when I speak of the deployment or enactment of narrative strategies and their potential effects on the model reader. For the most part, the difference is nominal. It is easier to say "the *Life* guides its readers in x, y, or z ways" than to say "the model author of the *Life* shows the reader p, q, and r."

That said, where I discuss literary praxis prior to analyses of the work-like aspects of the *Life*, I suggest several alternate ways we might understand "Drimé Künga's" compositional activity or "Pema Lingpa's" editorial or transmissional activity. Here, we can only speculate about what a historical author and/or editor of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* had hoped or intended for it. However, if want to speculate about the work's intentions, or what I prefer to call the work's rhetorical aims, then we are better served by engaging with the text the way we would a literary analysis, enlisting Eco's "model author" as the model reader's guiding agent. Still, where I theorize what it might mean to find the *Life* composed and styled in the ways that we do, I find it preferable to refer to Drimé Künga as the agent of composition—caveats about the precise nature of his role in the *Life's* production notwithstanding.

By conducting both a study of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* and offering readings of several passages from the work, I aim to do at least two things. First, I hope to add to what we know about Yeshé Tsogyal by focusing my readings and analysis on a little studied work with seminal

influence on later figurations of her, a prominent female protagonist in the Tibetan and Bhutanese tantric Buddhist imaginaire. Second, I aim to demonstrate some of what this work does in relation to its audiences. In this case, I am interested in (1) what the *Life* can tell us informationally, whether we look around or within the work itself for insight into who Yeshé Tsogyal was, (or, rather, is thought to have been) and how this work came to be seen as an instantiation of her as an idea. I am subsequently interested in (2) how the work then implicates itself in the cultivation of readerly selves and religious subjectivities.

I am inclined to address the work-like aspects of the *Life* in conjunction with the documentary for several reasons. Many concern my own intellectual commitments to the notion that works of literature can and do function as agents of change in the world. But I am emboldened above all by the ways in which the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* itself articulates its overall purpose. In more than one witness, we find the *Life* claiming outright that it stands to influence, even transform, its readers along Dharmic lines: "This detailed biography of Yeshé Tsogyal," it says, "is narrated in order to spark future beings' interest in Dharma."⁴⁰ More on the context for and possible translations of this statement will follow in my fourth chapter, but suffice to say here that at its outset, the *Life* recognizes itself to be about more than just imparting information about one woman's past. Not solely a reference, it styles itself a catalyst—a literary work that is as much about depicting the growth of one moral subject in detail as it is about influencing similar growth in others in perpetuity. The *Life*, in short, understands itself to be about distinguishing Yeshé Tsogyal *and* making a difference in the lives of readers.

⁴⁰ *ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba bskyed pa'i phyir gsungs so*. PL 2013: 262.

How the work aims to accomplish this change is the question that motivates the inquiries of Part II. In choosing to focus on the narrative devices of intertextuality and dialogue, I allow myself to be guided by the *Life*. Because these two features of the work dominate across its textual iterations, I pay close critical attention to them—how and when (in what story-contexts) they are employed, what forms they take, and to what ends they aim, both in part and in view of the work as a whole.

What I find in the reading process is that both intertextuality and dialogue work in tandem to bring the reader closer to the *Life* as a literary work and to its protagonist as a moral exemplar and aid. I understand "closeness" both in the sense of familiarity, i.e., mutual knowledge and/or understanding of, as well as comfort with, perhaps not just in the sense of facility, but also in the sense of solace thanks to and even affection for. To me, closeness suggests a particular rapport between readers, texts, and the lives they ostensibly vivify. While aspects of closeness might in fact be observed in relation to *any* biographical work, I maintain that it is a quality attributable here to the *Life* to an exceptional degree. Differently cast, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* could easily have left its readers feeling alienated by its contents and form(s); with that, it could have situated them at a great distance from its protagonist both in terms of understanding and affection as well as in time and space. Constituted and understood as it is (i.e., as a *terma*), however, the *Life's* readers are apt to conjure Yeshé Tsogyal's presence in the here and now.

For this reason, I suggest that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* demands of its model readers what I call a hermeneutics of intimacy. By that, I mean an interpretive stance that not only seeks ever-increasing familiarity with the *Life* and with Yeshé Tsogyal, but also looks for ways to

integrate the work into one's own ways of knowing and being.⁴¹ Important to developing this argument will be the understanding of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as a work of revealed literature, a treasure text that purports to meet the needs of beings at every moment in time when it (re)enters the world. And so, while Part I will elaborate on the work's place in Tibetan history and religion, Part II will align itself with studies that inquire into the ways in which narratives function to convey meaning and cultivate subjectivities. There, I ask how the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* "does what it does," and how, through its narrative strategies, it stands to impact its audiences in ethically significant ways.⁴²

⁴¹ My use of the phrase "hermeneutics of intimacy" is most immediately inspired by Rita Felski (*Uses of Literature* 2008, *Limits of Critique* 2015) who, writing not only of model readers but also of scholars, advocates for alternatives to what Christopher Castiglia refers to as "critiqueness," the attitude of knowing skepticism that is wary, even adversarial, in its approach to works of art. Across several of her publications, Felski argues that a hermeneutics of suspicion need not adopt the negative, skeptical, and paranoid attitudes currently associated with critique. Returning to Paul Ricoeur's original thinking on hermeneutics, she reminds us that suspicion is not the only option. As Ricoeur proposed, we might explore other interpretive modes like "a hermeneutics of trust, of restoration, of recollection." See Felski 2015: esp. 3–4, 9, 53, 188, and Christopher Castiglia, "Critiqueness," *English Language Notes* 51, no. 2 (2013): 79–85. In addition to Ricoeur, Felski's work on this topic is deeply indebted to Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, particularly Sedgwick's arguments in "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading." See *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Series Q (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), chap. 4. My own thinking on this topic has benefitted greatly from conversations with Kirsten Wesselhoeft.

⁴² This question also animates Hudson (2012: 6–7) who asks it of the *Mahābhārata*.

PART I: SITUATING THE *LIFE OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL*

CHAPTER ONE

THE LITERARY APOTHEOSIS OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL

The World(s) of Yeshé Tsogyal:

The Religious and Literary Contexts in which Her *Lives* Emerged

Emic historical and hagiographical sources afford Yeshé Tsogyal a distinguished place among Tibetan Buddhism's founding figures.⁴³ Beginning with Nyangrel Nyima Öser's twelfth-century writings, we find Yeshé Tsogyal's strengths as a disciple of Padmasambhava elaborated, albeit in brief, and we are introduced to her as a concealer of "treasures," or *terma* (*gter ma*)—often objects and teachings which, with her aid, stood to be revealed by *tertöns* (*gter ston*), that is, "treasure revealers," like Nyangrel himself.⁴⁴

Prior to turning to what Tibetan sources offer on Yeshé Tsogyal specifically, however, it is worth offering a general sense of the socio-political and religious context into which she is said to have been born. Here we might also see how emic historiographical accounts of Tibet's imperial era write and rewrite the figure of Padmasambhava, for it is in his apotheoses that we begin to see the roots of Yeshé Tsogyal's own.

⁴³ My focus here is primarily on narrative literature rather than ritual or liturgical sources, though I do highlight such sources where they contain passages in which Yeshé Tsogyal appears in more than name only. For a survey of narrative, ritual, and liturgical sources in which Yeshé Tsogyal is mentioned or plays a role, I turn readers to Gyatso 2006. Newly surfaced information not covered in Gyatso can be found in my summary above or in my notes below.

⁴⁴ See Nyang ral, "Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba: rnam thar zangs gling ma," in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, vol. ka/1, ed. 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (Paro: Ngodrub and Sherab Drimay, 1976), 116.2–4; and *ibid.*, *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud* BDRC W7972 (Lhasa: Bod rang skyong ljongs spyi tshogs tshan rig khang gi bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 1988), 342, 350, 386, 391–392, 485.

Emplotting Tibet's Buddhist History

Treating political and religious history in tandem, traditional Buddhist accounts of Tibet's history divide it into four periods. The first is Tibet's ancient or pre-historical era, popularly deemed a "barbarous" time now more or less lost to the ages. Tibetans describe their prehistorical ancestors as "wild" (*dmu rgod*)—or "untamed" (*ma dul ba*), as many sources have it—and ignorant, especially with respect to the teachings of the Buddha. With the reign of Emperor Songtsen Gampo (d. ca. 649) in the late seventh century, however, Tibet entered its second period, an imperial golden age of military might and religious fervor. At the outset of this era, Tibetans were "tamed" by the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, who, manifest as the emperor, introduced Buddhism to the plateau and centralized the Tibetan government in what would eventually become Lhasa. Several generations of Songtsen Gampo's successors subsequently ensured Buddhism's spread until the mid-ninth century when a supposedly anti-Buddhist emperor known as Langdarma (a.k.a. Tri Üdumtsen, r. 838-842) came to power. His reign is said to have ushered in a veritable "dark age" or, less disparagingly, an "age of fragmentation"⁴⁵ during which Buddhists faced state persecution, and many were forced to flee lest they could find ways to practice the Dharma in secret.⁴⁶ The fourth period, Tibet's Buddhist "renaissance," began about one hundred years later in the late tenth century. Monastics who had survived in the

⁴⁵ Jacob P. Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 7–8.

⁴⁶ Recent scholarship suggests that Langdarma (Glang dar ma a.k.a. Khri 'u dum bstan) may not have been hostile to Buddhism and Buddhists *per se*. Rather, it may be that he cut or curtailed state funding to monastic institutions in an effort to sustain the central government and its military operations financially. See Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 65–66. See also Matthew Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11–12, 52.

provinces outside of central Tibet sustained Buddhist teachings and practices and helped them, once again, to be embraced by powerful authorities.⁴⁷

When the four-fold scheme above is collapsed into two eras and Buddhism is brought even more to the fore, the imperial period beginning with Songtsen Gampo's reign is described as the "early diffusion" (*snga dar*) of the Buddha's teachings.⁴⁸ The late-tenth-century rebirth of Buddhism in Tibet and its subsequent flourishing is, in turn, called the "later diffusion" (*phyi dar*) of the teachings.⁴⁹ Both the two- and four-fold schemes focus on politico-religious developments as they happened more or less within the bounds of Ü-Tsang, the central-western region of Tibet. Frequently unaccounted for are events that happened concurrently among Tibetan peoples in provinces farther afield.

These schemes—the four-part and the two—function primarily as literary topoi that lend narrative coherence to events that occurred over the course of hundreds of years. The factors that

⁴⁷ Summaries of the four-part scheme in secondary literature are many. The above is adapted from Kapstein 2000 (*passim*) and Rolf A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, trans. J. E. Stapleton Driver (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 54. For more on indigenous periodization schemes and variations on the four-part division in general, see also Brian J. Cuevas, "Some Reflections on the Periodization of Tibetan History," in *The Tibetan History Reader*, eds. Kurtis R. Schaeffer and Gray Tuttle (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 49–63.

⁴⁸ Accounts credit the wives of Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po), particularly the Tang princess referred to by her title as Wencheng Gongzhu (Tib. pron. Mūnsheng Kongcho, d. 680), for his patronage of Buddhism. Questions remain as to how religious or influential she really was. On this issue, see Hugh E. Richardson, "Mun Sheng Kong Co and Kim Sheng Kong Co: Two Chinese Princesses in Tibet," *The Tibet Journal* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 3–11. For information on Songtsen Gampo's reign according to both traditional accounts and current scholarship, see Kapstein 2000: *passim*. A translation of a detailed, normative account relating primarily to the events of Songtsen Gampo's life, i.e., *The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* (*Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*) composed by Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltzen (1312–1375), can be found in Per K. Sørensen, *Tibetan Buddhist Historiography: The Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies: An Annotated Translation of the XIVth Century Tibetan Chronicle: rGyal-rabs gsal-ba'i me-long* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1994). Sørensen's work is especially useful for his thorough annotations which relate the *Mirror* to earlier and contemporary Tibetan historiographical writings.

⁴⁹ There are also sources which employ three-fold schemes that include an "interim spread" (*bar dar*) between the early and later disseminations of Buddhism. The earliest use of this scheme may be found in a thirteenth-century work, the *Ornamental Flower of the Buddha's Teaching* (*Thub pa'i bstan pa rgyan gyi me tog*) authored by the Kadampa scholar Chomden Rikpé Reldri (1227–1305) in 1261. See Cuevas 2013: 52 and 52n7.

led to Tibet's political unification, subsequent fracturing, and reformation, as well as to Buddhism's rise, fall, and rebirth, were, of course, many and complex. Tibetan writers have not shied away from providing details that bear such complexity out, and modern scholars have long complicated the standard, religion-centered narrative both as a whole and in part.⁵⁰ Yet the broad-strokes, romantic emplotment of Tibet's early history—and the romanticization of the imperial period in particular—persists.

It is during this period that Yeshé Tsogyal is said to have lived and served as a key agent in the early spread of Buddhism, but we also find her "active" during Buddhism's renaissance, the later spread of the Buddha's teachings. At that time, she comes to be credited with facilitating the discovery of imperial-era treasures, many of which were supposed to have been concealed by her and/or her guru in anticipation of perilous times during which the Buddha's teachings would stand to be misinterpreted or altogether lost.

When exactly Yeshé Tsogyal began to be Yeshé Tsogyal, however, remains an open question. It may be that at relatively early stages of the renaissance, particularly among practitioners with a special interest in the figure of Padmasambhava and his role in Buddhism's initial promulgation, she began to emerge as the guru's consort and aid. But to what extent her "backstory," as it were, was elaborated prior to twelfth century is difficult to say. We can imagine that even if people were not interested in who Yeshé Tsogyal might have been as an individual on her own, they might, at the very least, be interested in knowing how she came to be Padmasambhava's consort. Whoever she was, how did she and Tibet's Precious Guru meet? Complicating the received answer to that question—i.e., at Tri Songdétsen's court—are

⁵⁰ Challenges to the idea that "prehistorical" Tibetans were barbarous (e.g., Stein 1972: 59) as well as nuances of the extent to which Tibet experienced a "dark age" of Buddhism immediately following the death of Langdarma (e.g., Davidson 2005: *passim*) immediately come to mind.

disagreements among some of the earliest accounts of Padmasambhava, particularly who he was (if he was) and how exactly his relationship to the late eighth-century Tibetan emperor took shape.

The Imperial Era (Seventh to Tenth Centuries)

Following Songtsen Gampo's reign, his successors patronized Buddhism to varying degrees. The emperor Tri Düsöng (d. 704), known primarily for his military exploits, commissioned a Buddhist temple in far eastern Tibet, and his son, Tri Desuktsen (r. 705-755/756) promoted Buddhism and Chinese culture among the Tibetan nobility thanks in no small part to the influence of one of his wives, the Tang princess known as Jincheng Gongzhu (Tib. pron. Kimsheng Kongcho, d. ca. 739).⁵¹ Upon her death, however, already strained relations among the nobility grew, and anti-Buddhist sentiments prevailed. This resulted in Buddhism's suppression, and, eventually, in Tri Desuktsen's assassination.⁵² Amid a relatively brief period of clan conflict, the next emperor, Tri Songdétsen converted to Buddhism (ca. 762) and subsequently went on to become Tibet's preeminent Buddhist ruler.

Among his efforts to promote his newly adopted foreign religion, Tri Songdétsen backed translation projects on a grand scale. Indian Buddhist teachings composed primarily in Sanskrit were rendered in Tibetan so that they might be accessible to more people than ever before, especially a newly established clergy. And with that, the emperor also commissioned the construction of Samyé monastery, the first Buddhist monastic complex to be built in Tibet.

⁵¹ A timeline of imperial successions can be found in Kapstein 2002: xvii–xviii. Kapstein (*passim*) also provides information on Jincheng Gongzhou's efforts to promote Buddhism, particularly Buddhist funerary rites. See also Richardson 1997.

⁵² For these events translated from the *Testament of Ba*, see Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 37–38.

As the most popular accounts have it, Tri Songdétsen invited Śāntarakṣita⁵³ to consecrate Samyé and oversee the ordinations of Tibet's first monks. As the abbot of Nālandā, a renowned Indian monastic complex in present-day Bihar, Śāntarakṣita seemed an ideal choice for the task. Local spirits proved hostile to the monastery's founding under his direction, however, and the havoc they caused was enough to sabotage the project outright.

Śāntarakṣita, who had been moved to acknowledge his own limitations in dealing with such forces, then in turn asked Tri Songdétsen to invite Padmasambhava—a widely renowned tantric adept skilled at subduing demons—to Tibet so that he might be the one to facilitate Samyé's consecration. The emperor agreed. As Padmasambhava made his way from his native Oḍḍiyāna⁵⁴ to Tibet, he quelled a number of hostile forces along the way, and soon after he arrived, he subdued the Samyé-area spirits, ultimately converting them to Buddhism with Śāntarakṣita's help. Samyé's consecration then proceeded as planned, and Padmasambhava went on to spread tantric teachings throughout the empire. Consequently, he became known as the "Second Buddha" (*sangs rgyas gnyis pa*) and he is hailed among Tibetans as their Precious Guru, i.e., Guru Rinpoché.

Today, Tri Songdétsen, Śāntarakṣita, and Padmasambhava are linked as the three men responsible for Tibet's conversion. Padmasambhava stands out among them as *the* bringer of tantric teachings to Tibet, and notably, teachings that feature the fierce deity Vajrakīlaya (known as Dorjé Phurba in Tibetan), a deity with whom Yeshé Tsogyal comes to be closely associated.⁵⁵

⁵³ Tib. Zhi ba tsho; phon. Zhiwatso, a.k.a. Khenpo Bodhisattva

⁵⁴ Tib. O/U rgyan. Variants include Uḍḍiyāna, Udyāna, Oḍyāna, Uḍḍayana, and Oḍḍayana for a region taken to be in the Swat valley of what is now Pakistan. See Hirshberg (2016: 7n10) for a list of sources that treat the topic of Oḍḍiyāna's location relative to present-day national borders.

⁵⁵ The Sanskrit name for this deity is properly Vajrakīla, but more commonly in Tibetan transliteration it appears as Vajrakīlaya. Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer have written extensively on the Vajrakīlaya cult in relation to early depictions of Padmasambhava. For a summary of theirs and others' findings to date, see Cathy Cantwell and Robert

And especially for the Nyingma, the "old" or "ancient" school of Tibetan Buddhism in which treasure revelations feature prominently, Padmasambhava remains preeminent. Written accounts of Padmasambhava's life from the twelfth century on teem with details of his exploits not only in Tibet, but also across the Himalayas and throughout the Indian subcontinent.⁵⁶ That this Indian guru came to Tibet is viewed as a tremendous act of kindness, one without which Tibetan Buddhists would not be who they are today.

And yet, in early, less widely relayed accounts of Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet, he is expelled not long after he arrives. According to the *Testament of Ba*, the earliest portions of which may date to the tenth century, Padmasambhava does, immediately upon his arrival, subdue gods and *nāgas* who had been wreaking havoc in and around Lhasa.⁵⁷ He even manages to bind them by oath once—but not the necessary three times—such that they temporarily halt the floods, fires, and epidemics they had been causing.⁵⁸ Not long after this success, however, royal ministers convince the emperor that Padmasambhava, fearsome thaumaturge that he is, poses a threat to the throne. He is therefore banished before he can officially consecrate Samyé or introduce tantric Buddhism to the Tibetan people.⁵⁹ Daniel Hirshberg puts it well when he says

Mayer, "Representations of Padmasambhava in Early Post-Imperial Tibet," in *Tibet after Empire: Culture, Society and Religion Between 850–1000*, ed. Christoph Cuppers, Robert Mayer, and Michael Walters (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2013), 19–50. See also Kapstein 2000: 157–159.

⁵⁶ The seeds of such accounts were likely sown even earlier, however. Although the twelfth-century writings attributed to Nyangrel are the earliest in which we find robust depictions of Padmasambhava and his activities, textual fragments found at Dunhuang suggest that tantric cults related to him sprung up as early as the tenth-century. See Kapstein 2000: esp.158–161 and, more recently, Cantwell and Mayer 2013: 22, 39. Earlier scholarship on the literature and cultic activity related to Padmasambhava (and Avalokiteśvara) can be found in the works of Anne-Marie Blondeau 1977, 1980, and 1992.

⁵⁷ Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 8; 53–55. On the elaboration of Padmasambhava's activities in Tibet in later recensions of the *Testimony*, namely in the *Sba bzhed*, see Hirshberg 2016: 15–17.

⁵⁸ Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 52–53.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*: 57–59. Several tenth-century texts found in Dunhuang's library cave refer (or may refer) to Padmasambhava's demon-taming activities, namely Pelliot tibétain 44 and 307, and IOL Tib J 644. For concise summaries these works, and references to additional works attributed to Padmasambhava, see Jacob Dalton,

that "Padmasambhava is cast only as a tangential figure in the *Testimony of Ba* rather than as its protagonist, a chance contributor perhaps but not the catalyst primarily responsible for Tibet's conversion and certainly not the *Second Buddha*."⁶⁰ Prior to the twelfth century, Padmasambhava is, assuredly enough, a tantric adept to be reckoned with, but he is not yet Tibet's great cultural hero.

The Renaissance (Beginning in the Late Tenth Century):

Nyangrel Nyima Öser and the Elaboration of the Padmasambhava Literature

While in its earliest form the *Testament of Ba* speaks of Padmasambhava, albeit "shorn of his familiar glamour," it offers nothing at all on Yeshé Tsogyal.⁶¹ She is neither the consort and aid of Tibet's soon-to-be great cultural hero, nor is she a queen of Tri Songdétšen. Later recensions of the *Testament* will acknowledge her as the latter and deem her a practitioner.⁶² But

"Padmasambhava," Treasury of Lives, last updated June 2015, <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Padmasambhava/7442>.

⁶⁰ Hirshberg 2016: 14, my emphasis. Cf. Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 13.

⁶¹ Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 13.

⁶² Later strata of the *Testament of Ba* (i.e., the *Sba/Rba bzhed* rather than the *Dbas' bzhed*) do contain references to a Kharchen Za Tsogyal toward the end of the narrative's coverage of the construction of Samyé. (See Gyatso 2006: 3.) There we find the statement that among Tri Songdétšen's five wives, both Chim Za Lhamotsen and Kharchen Za Tsogyal were engaged in spiritual practices. Therefore, both "lack *chakri*" (*phyag ris med*), i.e., they either "lack inscriptions" or, as in later histories, they "lack legacies" in the form of temples. See Sba Gsal snang [Ye shes dbang po, attr.], *Sba bzhed ces bya ba las sba gsal snang gi bzhed pa*, ed. Mgon po rgyal mtshan, BDRC W20000 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1982), 54. (Cf. *Rba bzhed phyogs bsgrigs*, ed. Bde skyid, BDRC W1KG625 [Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2009], 40). Gyatso (2006: 3) notes that we find this reference repeated in the *Biographies of the Three Ancestral Dharma Lords*, a history of Tibet's three imperial-era Buddhist rulers. The work has been attributed to Nyangrel, but recent scholarship by Lewis Doney calls this attribution into question. For the reference in the Tibetan, see *Chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum gyi rnam thar rin po che'i 'phreng ba*, BDRC W23934 (Paro: Ugyen Tempai Gyaltzen, 1980), 227.3–4. For Doney's argument about this work's attribution, see his "Transforming Tibetan Kingship: The Portrayal of Khri Srong lde brtan in the Early Buddhist Histories" (PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2011), 73–88. On this topic, see also Hirshberg 2016: 167.

We also find this statement about the lack of *chakri* in other histories and hagiographical sources, some of which further specify that Chim Za Lhamotsen and Kharchen Za Tsogyal were offered to Padmasambhava as consorts (*gzungs ma*) and/or as compensation (*yon*) for conferring empowerments (*dbang*) on the emperor. See Sørensen's translation of the *Mirror Illuminating the Royal Genealogies* (369n1200; 373nn1228–1231) in which he provides cross references to Ne'u Paṇḍita's *History of Buddhism* (dated to 1283) and Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa's (1504–1566) *History of Buddhism in Lhodrak*, more commonly known as his *Scholar's Feast*. For the reference in the modern edition of *Scholar's Feast* consulted for this thesis, see Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas*

it is not until Nyangrel elaborates Padmasambhava's role in Tibet's conversion that Yeshé Tsogyal's own familiar glamor begins to dawn on the literary horizon.

In truth, Nyangrel's accounts do not offer much on Yeshé Tsogyal, certainly not in the way of depicting a strong personality behind a text. Two of the most well-known historiographical works attributed to him, the *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava* and the *Essence of Flowers: A History of Buddhism*,⁶³ do in fact single Yeshé Tsogyal out among Padmasambhava's eight main disciples (*rje 'bangs brgyad*) while also situating her among his female disciples in general. But as with the *Testament of Ba*, earlier strata of those works may have less to say than their later iterations. The *Copper Island Biography* may serve us as a case in point. In the version included in the *Great Treasury of Precious Revelations*, a nineteenth-century compilation among which we find treasure texts and biographies of their revealers, Padmasambhava takes Kharchen Za Tsogyal to serve as a consort during his stay in Chimphu:

pa'i dga' ston, BDRC W1PD96069 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2005), 184. For the *Mirror*, see Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, BDRC W00KG09730 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 206. As Sørensen notes, a variation of *phyag ris med* is (*lha khang*) *phyag rjes med*, i.e., without a legacy in the form of temples. Apart from the *Rba bzhed* cited above, we also find the phrase *phyag rjes med* in, e.g., "Chos rgyal bod kyi rgyal rabs," in *Sa skya'i chos 'byung gces bsdus*, BDRC W1PD90704, vol. 3 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 135–136. Tāranātha (1575–1634) specifies that Chim Za Lhamotsen and Kharchen Za Tsogyal were the consorts offered (*mchod pa'i gzungs ma*) to Padmasambhava for a *maṅḍala* offering instead of two of Tri Songdētsen's other wives, namely Tshépong Za Metog Drön and Dro Za Tri Gyalmo Tsün (a.k.a. Jomo Changchub Jé). After that, he continues, Chim Za Lhamotsen and Kharchen Za Tsogyal gave up mundane activities and engaged in spiritual practice (*sgrub pa mdzad pa*). See Tāranātha, "Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam par thar pa gsal bar byed pa'i yi ge yid ches gsum ldan," in *Gsung 'bum* (Dpe bsdur ma): *Tāranātha*, vol. 38, 45 vols. (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2008), 58–59. Notably, we also find a variation of the statement in Guru Chöwang's (1212–1270) *Eight Pronouncements*. Whereas all other instances that pair Chim Za Lhamotsen and Kharchen Za Tsogyal list Chim Za first, Guru Chöwang lists Kharchen Za first, and rather than end by saying that these women lack inscriptions/legacies because they were engaged in spiritual practice (i.e., *sgrub pa mdzad pas phyag ris med*), he says that they "were not received at court [i.e., not taken as wives!] because they were sent off to just do Dharma" (*khab du ma bzhes tsam la chos la btang*). See Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug, "Ghu ru chos dbang gis rnam mthar bka' rgya brgyad ma," in *Gu ru chos dbang gi rang rnam dang zhal gdams*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Paro: Ugyen Tampai Gyaltzen, 1979), 138.3–4.

⁶³ Most often, I refer to the *Essence of Flowers* and the *Copper Island* as Nyangrel's accounts, implying authorship or "discovery" as the case may be. But questions remain about his role as an author (or discoverer) of these works. On this point, see Hirshberg 2016 and Lewis Doney, *The Zangs Gling Ma: The First Padmasambhava Biography. Two Exemplars of the Earliest Attested Recension* (Andiastr, Switzerland: International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, 2014).

Having taken Kharchen Pelgyi Wangchuk's daughter, Kharchen Za Tsogyal as his consort—[she] who, kindred of wisdom *ḍākinīs*, was sixteen years old and looked like a daughter of the gods—Master Pema Jungné resided in Chimphu's Trégu Cave in the assembly hall of *ḍākinīs* as he contemplated the profound secret mantra [teachings].⁶⁴

And later, also in Chapter 19, as Padmasambhava confers empowerments on his disciples, Kharchen Za receives tantras and *sādhana*s related to the deity Vajrakīlaya.⁶⁵

When we turn to the earliest extant manuscripts of the *Copper Island*, however, we find Padmasambhava in the Trégu Cave on his own. Although the two recensions reproduced by Lewis Doney name a Tsogyal among Padmasambhava's disciples, neither say, as above, that she stayed with him at the Trégu Cave.⁶⁶ Likewise, while the *Copper Island* in the *Great Treasury* cites Yeshé Tsogyal's ability to raise the dead, this information is absent from the manuscripts in Doney.⁶⁷ In all cases, however, Yeshé Tsogyal is said to possess the power of total recall (*mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob*) such that she can remember everything she has learned from and about her guru. Where this ability is cited in texts' colophons, the implication is that Yeshé Tsogyal, having recorded the text based on her flawless memory, has provided future generations with an accurate account of what she herself had heard and witnessed during her lifetime.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ *slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyis mkhar chen dpal gyi dbang phyug gi bu mo/ mkhar chen bza' mtsho rgyal zhes bya ba/ ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro ma'i rigs can/ lo bcu drug lon pa lha'i bu mo lta bu zhig yod pa de/ bsgrub rten gyi phyag rgya mor khrid nas/ mchims phu bre gu dge'u ru/ mkha' 'gro ma'i tshogs khang du gsang sngags zab mo'i dgongs pa la bzhugs so.* Nyang ral 1976: 116.2–4. Note that in the passage translated above, we see Kharchen Za Tsogyal referred to as the daughter of Pelgyi Wangchuk. In later histories, we also see Pelgyi Wangchuk referred to as Yeshé Tsogyal's brother. (On this point, see Gyatso 2006: 4n14.) In the seventeenth-century version of her life story, Yeshé Tsogyal's father is indeed known as Pelgyi Wangchuk, but her father's name differs in and varies across versions of the fourteenth-century story.

⁶⁵ Nyang ral 1976: 121.5–6. See also the *History and Commentary on Vajrakīlaya*, i.e., the *Phur pa'i chos 'byung dang rgyud 'grel phyogs bsgrigs*, Sngags mang dpe tshogs 18 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 11.

⁶⁶ Nor is Guru Padmasambhava contemplating the secret mantra teachings. Rather, he simply abides in contemplation (period) in the cave. See Doney 2014: 174 (= 73b.4) and 284 (= 60a.5); on Trégu Cave, see *ibid.*: 171 (= 71a.2–3) and 282 (= 57b.4–5).

⁶⁷ Nyang ral 1976: 122.6 and Doney 2014: as above.

⁶⁸ For examples, see Doney 2014: 223 (= 122b.3–5) and *cf. ibid.*: 325 (= 100b.3–5).

Readers in search of Yeshé Tsogyal fare a bit better when they look to Nyangrel's *Essence of Flowers*. Across its extant versions, the *Essence* provides more and more consistent information about her, though that information is still rather thin. In the *Essence*, we find that Yeshé Tsogyal is not only a recipient of the Vajrakīlaya teachings and skilled at recall, she is also able to raise the dead (*bsad pa'i mi ro slong*) and live for a hundred years (*mi lo brgya thub pa'i dngos grub brnyes*). Moreover, she possesses subtle, supersensory cognition (*mngon par shes pa phra mo mnga' ba*), a power sometimes rendered in English as "clairvoyance."⁶⁹ In one instance in which the *Essence of Flowers* mentions her exceptional memory, the text adds that she is an emanation of the goddess Sarasvatī, though her title and name in that case is rendered Machik Jomo Tashi Tsogyal.⁷⁰

In sum, in whatever way her name appears, Yeshé Tsogyal is but briefly described in Nyangrel's works. Though Padmasambhava emerges from Nyangrel's pen a multi-dimensional character who subdues demons and confers teachings upon students far and wide, Yeshé Tsogyal, for all of her talents, has yet to be fleshed out. A reader steps away from the *Copper Island* and the *Essence* with the ability to list some of her special skills and attributes, but a robust sense of what she thinks, says, or does remains at bay.

One might expect to find help in other works attributed to Nyangrel where she appears. A collection of texts referred to as *Lady Tsogyal's Catechism* sounds promising, to be sure. Yet

⁶⁹ See Nyang ral 1988: 342 on raising the dead and living for hundreds of years as well as page 350 on memory and supernormal cognition or clairvoyance.

⁷⁰ Whether there was an early lack of consensus about the elements of Yeshé Tsogyal's name or merely multiple renderings is unclear. In Nyangrel, at least, "Tashi Tsogyal" and "Kharchen Za Tsogyal" appear to refer to the same person. For example, a "Tashi Tsogyal" who had obtained Yeshé Tsogyal's now characteristic talent for total recall is named on page 386 of the *Essence* (Nyang ral 1988), though on page 350, a figure with the same ability is simply "Tsogyal." Perhaps where the *Essence* refers to a Tashi Tsogyal (Bkra shis mtsho rgyal) among Padmasambhava's female disciples immediately before a Drokmi Pelgyi Yeshé ('Brog mi dpal gyi ye shes), elements of these women's names were combined. See also Nyang ral 1988: 341, 348, and 391.

even there, where we see Yeshé Tsogyal take on an active role as a poser of many questions related to tantric views and practice, we remain at a loss for who she might be beyond a mouthpiece for the model reader, an eager and curious practitioner.⁷¹ Like Padmasambhava in the earliest *Testament of Ba*, Yeshé Tsogyal is thus far more of a tangential figure than a central one. She is certainly not yet, as she would eventually come to be known, the "Mother of All Buddhas."⁷²

Padmasambhava Literature in Nyangrel's Wake

It was thought that things remained more or less this way in the written record for some time, which is to say, for approximately five-hundred years. Several treasure revealers writing within three centuries of Nyangrel's death do venture beyond the inclusion of Yeshé Tsogyal in ritual, *sādhana*, or catechistic (*zhus/dris lan*) texts to offer summary accounts of her life or highlight noteworthy episodes. Until the turn of *this* century, however, scholars took the seventeenth-century *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal revealed by Taksham Nüden Dorjé (b. 1655) to be the only full-length, cradle-to-grave account of Yeshé Tsogyal. Although Taksham himself notes that prior stories of Yeshé Tsogyal influenced his version, a point to which I will later return, no comprehensive accounts presented themselves to scholars as obvious antecedents.⁷³ Summary

⁷¹ Part of this collection, referred to as the *Jomo Zhülen* (*Jo mo'i zhus lan*, lit. *Answers to the Lady's* [i.e., *Lady Tsogyal's*] *Questions*) or as the *Jomo Dampa* (*Jo mo la gdams pa*, lit. *Instructions to/for the Lady* [*Tsogyal*]), has been translated in Erik Pema Kunsang, trans., *Treasures from Juniper Ridge: The Profound Instructions of Padmasambhava to the Dakini Yeshe Tsogyal*, 3rd edition (Hong Kong: Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 2008). The collection in Tibetan is forthcoming on BDRC under RID W3CN1359. In addition to the question-and-answer session with Lady Tsogyal in Nyangrel (and in her respective full-length biographies, we also find works of this genre in which Princesses Mandārava and Pemasel are the interlocutors. More on this topic follows in chapter two of this thesis.

⁷² For an example of the use of this epithet within the *Life*, see PL 2013: 326.

⁷³ See Gyatso 2006: 11n40 for a list of references, some of which my own research will elaborate upon. And as I will show in my section on the *Life's* witnesses (pp. 128–137), as early as the late 1970s, Western scholars actually had access to several publications that include the contents of the fourteenth-century *namtar*, either in whole or in part. These include versions of Pema Lingpa's (1450–1520) *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* (a.k.a. *Lama Norbu Gyatso*, Tib. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*) as well as the early-nineteenth-century history by a figure most often referred to as Guru

accounts and single episodes variously reported spoke to a potentially larger body of knowledge related to Yeshé Tsogyal, but where exactly that body lay, if not primarily in oral tradition, remained to be seen.

To put it another way: rather than a carefully constructed bridge, stepping stones of various shapes and sizes seemed to connect Nyangrel's twelfth-century works to Taksham's seventeenth. Even today, what we see of these stones may be merely the surfaced facets of otherwise submerged boulders. Not long after Nyangrel, for example, Guru Chöwang (1212-1270), a student of Nyangrel's son and a treasure-revealer who claimed to be Nyangrel's reincarnation, continued to uphold Yeshé Tsogyal's role alongside Padmasambhava in the concealment and revelation of imperial-era treasures. Yet if the prophecies appended to the xylograph print version of what I refer to the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* hold any water as a valid lineage for the work (or works of its kind), Guru Chöwang may have also been the first to produce a full-length *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal. Such a work attributed to him, if one exists, has yet to come to light, however.⁷⁴

And so it goes for the next few figures who, according to prophecy, were supposed to have revealed the *Life* in one iteration or another. Both Longchen Rabjampa Drimé Öser

Tashi (Gu ru Bkra shis, b. late eighteenth century). While Pema Lingpa-attributed versions are complete, in Guru Tashi we find a version of the *Life* whose Chapters III–VII are condensed.

⁷⁴ This claim, i.e., that Guru Chöwang was the initial author/revealer of what I refer to as the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, is included in the prophecy at the end of the block print version of the work titled *Mtsho rgyal dbu*, the production of which I speculate dates to the seventeenth century. Gyatso (2006: 11n41) lists the prophesied revealers, including Drimé Öser (i.e., Longchenpa) and Orgyan Lingpa (there Otiyana Lingpa), addressed above. I take the claim that each of these figures were revealers or tradents of one or more full-length *Lives* to be plausible for a number of reasons which I will discuss in the coming sections of this chapter, but in keeping with the context here, I will note Chöwang's elaboration of rituals related to Padmasambhava and his interest in famed female adepts. For Padmasambhava-related rituals, one should look to his *Lama Sangdü* (*Bla ma gsang 'dus*). On female adepts, see the collection titled the *Autobiography and Instructions* (*Gu ru chos dbang gi rang nam dang zhal gdams*) where he refers to Yeshé Tsogyal as well as Machig Lapdrön (ca. 1055–1149), the female practitioner famed as the originator of *chöd* or "cutting" practice (e.g., at 128.5, 495.7, and 497.2).

(hereafter Longchenpa, 1308–1364) and Orgyan Lingpa (1323–?) recount incidents that bear out Yeshé Tsogyal's ability to revive the unconscious, if not quite raise the dead, and both summarize her life to greater and lesser degrees.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, no lengthy accounts can today be found across their *oeuvres*.

Overall, in terms of both length and substance, we fare better when we turn to Orgyan Lingpa over Longchenpa. Although Yeshé Tsogyal appears in different capacities in several of Longchenpa's works, nowhere is her biography paid considerable attention. On the other hand, Orgyan Lingpa's well-known *Testimonial Record of Padmasambhava*,⁷⁶ a versified hagiography of its titular figure, contains what we might call a *précis* of her life at the outset of its final chapter. This chapter, the auspicious 108th, follows on the heels of Padmasambhava's departure from Tibet, a protracted affair during which Tri Songdétsen's successor, Mutik Tsenpo (a.k.a. Mutri Tsenpo, r. 804–815) and his subjects plead with their guru to remain among them, ultimately to no avail.

Framed as Yeshé Tsogyal's direct speech, Chapter 108 offers, by and large, a rueful monologue, equal parts memorial and lament. Throughout, Yeshé Tsogyal appears by turns to be sad, wistful, grateful, confused, and even angry at Padmasambhava for leaving Tibet. Many of

⁷⁵ The account in Longchenpa's *oeuvre* can be found in the *Birth Successions and Prophecy of Pema Ledrétsel* and in his *History of Precious Treasures*. Compare Dri med 'od zer, "Padma las 'brel rtsal gyi skyes rabs dang lung bstan" in *Gsung 'bum: Dri med 'od zer*, BDRC W1KG4884, vol. 6, 26 vols.: 124–134 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009); and *ibid.*, "Gter 'byung rin po che'i lo rgyus" in *Gsung 'bum: Dri med 'od zer*, BDRC W1KG4884, vol. 6, 26 vols.: 318–388 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 367–375. On pp. 365–366, Longchenpa notes that Tsogyal asked if she could practice Dharma, and so the king offered her to the Master (i.e., Padmasambhava). Subsequently she acted as his consort (*las rgya bgyis*) and became herself accomplished. In Orgyan Lingpa, see Chapters 89 and 90 of the *Testimonial Record of Padmasambhava*. Orgyan gling pa, *Pad ma bka' thang*, (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006), 438–449, but esp. 440 and 449. At the end of Chapter 90, we see Orgyan Lingpa refer to Longchenpa (there Drimé Öser) as a renowned *tertön* in lower Bumthang, a region in present-day central Bhutan.

⁷⁶ Tib. *Padma bka'i thang yig*. This work is also known as the *Crystal Cave Biography* (*Rnam thar shel brag ma*) after its place of discovery in 1352. See Martin 1997: 56, record no. 87.

her lines conclude with verbs or verb phrases that convey a sense not only of loss, but also of abrupt, unjustified abandonment. Padmasambhava has not simply gone (*bzhud*). He has vanished (*yal*), leaving his faithful Tsogyal and every one of his disciples behind (*shul du bzhag*).⁷⁷ To his credit, the guru had been clear about his plan to depart for some time. He made his thoughts of leaving Tibet known nine chapters earlier, and in the penultimate chapter, he mentions his leaving again and again as if to convince the Tibetan people that it is really the case. For over thirty consecutive lines in that chapter, Chapter 107, his dominant verb is *dro* ('gro), "to go," and he utters a refrain that states in no uncertain terms that he is going away.

Even so, Yeshé Tsogyal cannot overcome her disbelief. She appears stunned not so much that Padmasambhava would leave Tibet to carry on his demon-taming activities elsewhere, but that he would leave *her* behind to hide the treasures that will constitute his legacy. The many lines of Chapter 108 in which she speaks to collective grief—e.g., "Alas...the lama did not stay for the benefit of future sentient beings;" "In whom do we place our hope now?" "The entire kingdom, fatherless (*pha med*), is filled with orphans (*dwa phrug*);" "Endlessly, beings' tears fall like blood"—are eclipsed by expressions of her own individual pain. Stricken (*gdung ba*) by her guru's departure, she has cried out in every direction, yet her sorrow has not been allayed. With the knowledge that her lord will not return to the human realm (*mi yi gnas*) even for an instant, Yeshé Tsogyal despairs, "Whoso is more anguished than I?"⁷⁸

As she builds to this question, Yeshé Tsogyal utters eight lines in which she identifies herself within the context of her guru's arrival and stay in Tibet. Since this passage may offer the

⁷⁷ O rgyan gling pa 2006: 576–577. Yeshé Tsogyal concludes many of her lines with the verb *bzhud* and verb phrase *shul du bzhag*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: 578–579.

earliest outline of her biography currently at our disposal,⁷⁹ I translate it below along with several additional lines that reiterate familiar depictions of Padmasambhava and convey a sense of the chapter's tone on the whole. To recall the scene, at the end of Chapter 107, Padmasambhava has departed and his disciples, the Tibetan people, are in mourning. Chapter 108 begins:

Then the woman Yeshé Tsogyal said:

"E ma ho! O Lotus-Born one who is festooned with many good qualities,
For countless eons, you have upheld the ways of the buddhas,
Transferred to manifestations over many births.
Prior to birth in this life, born as Māirāja
Was the King of Jambudvīpa, Tri Songdésen.
An emanation of Mañjuśrī, he invited you to this Pure Land of his.
So you came to Tibet, and after thirteen years had passed,
To a father named Drakpa Namkha Yeshé,
And a mother named Nübmo Gewabum,
In a wood-hen year, I, Tsogyal, was born.
In a fire-hen year, I met you, O Lord.
I obtained the *dhāraṇī* of total recall, and all the things required of a disciple.
For eighty-five years, I carried out service to you.
I had no male or female children whatsoever;
I was a nun (*dge slong ma*), untainted by worldly imperfections.
Three-bodied lama, Pema Jungné—
You gazed upon the whole of the Tibetan landscape and suffused it with
compassion.
You were extremely gracious to the king and all his subjects;
You blessed every rocky mountain hermitage;
You showered Dharma down upon every fortunate being.
To the wise, you taught every vehicle;
To every vessel you conferred instructions thoroughly;
Upon the devout you made blessings shine like the sun;
And to those with felicitous karma, you foretold the future.
O Lotus-Born, he whose compassion is unbiased,
You departed for Ngayab Ling (*rnga yab gling*; Skt. Cāmaradvīpa) to tame its
demons (*srin po*; Skt. *rākṣasa*),
On the tenth day, when the heroes and *ḍākas* gather.
Like a cloud or a rainbow, you have vanished into the sky.
From your devoted Tsogyal, what distance have you created?
The refuge and protector of the degenerate age, Pema Jungné, has gone (*bzhud*)!
Without a refuge in the world, sentient beings have been left behind (*shul du bzhag*).
The Second Buddha, Pema Jungné has departed (*bzhud*)—

⁷⁹ A text-critical study of all of the currently available sources for Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record* remains outstanding, and so I emphasize the fact that this *may* offer the earliest biographical outline.

Faithful Tsogyal is left behind (*shul du bzhag*)!"⁸⁰

It should be noted that just as we find in Yeshé Tsogyal's later stand-alone life stories, both the fourteenth- and seventeenth-century versions, the narrative point of view here proves slippery. I have translated the majority of the passage above in the first-person singular given that the initial clause "Then the woman Yeshé Tsogyal [said]" is followed by self-descriptions. But while in some instances, it is clear that Yeshé Tsogyal speaks about herself from the first-person perspective, in others, the reader can choose the first or the third where neither is indicated. And as we see in the last five lines, even within quoted, direct, self-referential speech, Yeshé Tsogyal is not always "I" or "me." She is sometimes "Tsogyal."

Apart from assuming the elision of the first-person pronoun in the Tibetan, a "pro-drop" (i.e., pronoun-omitting) language, one can imagine many reasons why this might be the case. When we recall that Yeshé Tsogyal is styled the figure who remembers, records, and reveals treasures like the text of the *Testimonial Record*, we can take shifts in narrative point of view to reflect shifts among her roles as the imputed author, the narrator, and a character. Yeshé Tsogyal

⁸⁰ Orgyan gling pa 2006: 576–577. Cf. Chapter 106 of Sangyé Lingpa's (1340–1396) *Golden Garland Testimonial Record*. Although it does not devote an entire chapter to Yeshé Tsogyal's lament but rather joins her lament to that of the king and his subjects, this work offers a nearly identical passage, save for a few details (e.g., Yeshé Tsogyal's mother is there "Bumo Dakma" [Bu mo dag ma], not "Nübmo Gewabum"). See Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Bka' thang gser phreng*, BDRS W1PD83975 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2007), 481–484. Sangyé Lingpa's *Golden Garland* frequently appears to follow Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record* closely in prose rather than verse, but there are differences, and a full-scale comparison of the two works remains a *desideratum*. As he puts it, Doney "sets the scene" with his recent work on the *Golden Garland* exemplars. See Lewis Doney, "A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the *Padma bka' thang*," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 37 (December 2016): 69–97. Therein he also examines other *Padma-vitae*, namely those attributed to Dorjé Lingpa and Padma Lingpa (1450–1521). (More on both figures will follow in this thesis.) Notably, for our purposes, initial mention of Yeshé Tsogyal (as Kharchen Za Tsogyal) in the *Golden Garland* seems to me to draw from recensions of Nyangral's *Copper Island Biography* that state that she dwelt with Padmasambhava at Trégu Cave. (See note 65 above and the *Golden Garland* pp. 352–355 for references to Yeshé Tsogyal that agree with Nyangrel's *Copper Island*.) Nowhere does Orgyan Lingpa offer this detail. (At pp. 357–358, Chapter 86 of the *Golden Garland* again parallels Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record* Chapter 89 on the death of Princess Pemasel.) Because Sangyé Lingpa includes the statement about Trégu Cave which identifies Kharchen Za Tsogyal as the daughter of Kharchen Pelgyi Wangchuk, the *Golden Garland's* summary of her life later in the text contradicts the name for her father, who is there, as in Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial*, "Drakpa Namkha Yeshé."

is situated at once inside and outside of the story, so to speak. Consequently, she may occupy more than one subject position at any given moment in relation to the events being described. As a narrator, she may be describing events in which she was/is not involved, either as an agent or a witness; as a narrator-character, she may be both describing, possibly also reflecting upon, events as she witnesses them or as she witnesses *and* participates in them; or, as in Chapter 108, she may be recalling and reflecting upon her own thoughts and experiences, words and deeds. Yeshé Tsogyal may be quoting herself and describing herself as she speaks and thinks about and describes herself, as it were.

When she refers to herself in the third person within quoted speech about herself—again, granting that first-person pronoun elision is not unlikely but need not always be the case—one could argue that this signals a level of distance, even purposeful dissociation, from the events at hand. That Yeshé Tsogyal would step in and outside of herself at a moment of profound loss strikes this modern reader as a viable possibility. Should the text wish to simulate movements in and out of body, or between internal here and external there, this effect can be achieved mimetically by a single voice's adoption of multiple self-referential terms. That is, as Yeshé Tsogyal moves from the first-person "I" to the third-person "Tsogyal" and back, the reader accompanies her as she inhabits different vantages with respect to her own state of being.

Alternatively, though on a related note, Yeshé Tsogyal may be expressing her grief with the knowledge that she is a hurt individual (*I, me*) who is part of a despondent collective (*we, us*), and also a type (*her, she, this/that one*), namely the type of the devoted servant. Her articulations of personal pain can be read, at the same time, as normative moral claims. Yeshé Tsogyal tells Padmasambhava, "I am sad that you left *me*," but with that she also argues implicitly, "One

should not leave someone *like me*, a long-faithful disciple." She speaks for herself and "the devout," too.

In short, in Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record*, Yeshé Tsogyal regards herself and speaks from different points of view. That we find a character doing so in a work of literature of any era is hardly surprising. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that Yeshé Tsogyal obtains any perspective at all, let alone the capacity to inhabit more than one perspective in relationship to herself and her circumstances. It may be that biographical works by Guru Chöwang and Longchenpa did precede Orgyan Lingpa's treatment of Yeshé Tsogyal in the *Testimonial Record*, or in his own no-longer-extant work about her.⁸¹ But without such works available to us today, the *Testimonial's* 108th chapter seems to take Yeshé Tsogyal from little more than a name to a personality of considerable depth.⁸²

Following the excerpt translated above, Yeshé Tsogyal continues to speak for nearly one-hundred lines. Her self-expression, both how she speaks and what she says, expands the reader's sense of her well beyond what one might have been able to glean from amassing scattered references to her and her talents. What she herself offers up in the way of autobiographical data

⁸¹ Orgyan Lingpa's other extant historiographical works, grouped together as the *Fivefold Collection of Testimonial Records* (*Bka' thang sde lnga*), name or briefly describe Yeshé Tsogyal, but it is only in the *Testimonial Record of Padmasambhava* that she describes herself and speaks at length. In the *Testimonial Record of the Kings*, she receives Vajrakīla tantras and *sādhana*s and the empowerment of the "creative expression of compassion and awareness" (*thugs rje rig pa rtsal gyi dbang*), and she possesses the ability to raise the dead. In the *Testimonial Record of the Queens*, Kharchen Za Tsogyal is listed second among Tri Songdétse's queens. See Orgyan Lingpa, *Bka' thang sde lnga*, BDRC W1KG18255 (Lhasa: Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang, 2010), 117, 124, 126, and 137 on empowerments; 127 on raising the dead; and 235 on Tri Songdétse's queens. I take the "creative expression empowerment" to refer to the empowerment detailed in a treasure-text of Rigdzin Gödem (Rigdzin Gödemchen Ngodrup Gyaltsen, 1337–1409). See Rig 'dzin Rgod kyi ldem 'phru can, "Rig pa rtsal gyi dbang zab mo," in *Snga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, BDRC W2PD17457, vol. 1, 15 vols. (s.l.: Byang gter dpe sgrig tshogs chung, 2015), 385–406.

⁸² Given that she is featured as Padmasambhava's primary interlocutor in certain catechistic works (i.e., *zhus/dris lan*), one might expect to find in them something of Yeshé Tsogyal's personality. Issues of doctrine and practice are foregrounded in these works, however, and to such a degree that even Padmasambhava, for all of his advice, appears rather thinly drawn.

adds to our portrait of her—or, better, to our knowledge of what several key elements of her biography may have been by the mid-fourteenth century.

But the *Testimonial Record's* real payoff is in Yeshé Tsogyal's animation. Not only can Orgyan Lingpa's readers now round out her profile further, adding elements like birthdate, parents' names, clerical status, and years of service to her guru. They can also answer questions about what she might have been like. Beyond knowing where she is from, which clan she belongs to, what tantric initiations she received, and so on, one can, for example, know something about how the figure of Yeshé Tsogyal behaves in the throes of profound sadness. We can say something about what she thinks about her guru, not just that she served him. We can say that she feels hopeless upon his departure—not just because she says it herself, but because she speaks in ways that conjure an individual bereft of hope.

Our first substantial introduction to Yeshé Tsogyal in the extant literature is then, in the end, a somber one. We meet her as she gives voice to grief both publicly and personally felt. Strikingly, over the course of her speech, she utters verses that laud Padmasambhava amid those that express her despondency and depict a forsaken Tibet. The chapter undulates as a result, perhaps in reflection of Yeshé Tsogyal's own emotional ups and downs, and as it does so, it cultivates a sense of loss as much as it portrays one. While her mournful cries set the tone, Yeshé Tsogyal's recurrent praise of Padmasambhava heightens the significance of what is now gone. By its end, the *Testimonial Record's* final chapter offers a recapitulation of what *everyone* has lost—that is, if they have not missed out on it entirely. Rather than merely pity Yeshé Tsogyal in her grief, readers are encouraged to join her in longing for the guru's presence while feeling his absence acutely.

The fact that Yeshé Tsogyal herself remains in Tibet strikes me as undoubtedly no small comfort. Not only has she accompanied the reader through the tumult of Padmasambhava's departure (even re-presented it to them, so to speak), she has also been granted every one of his teachings without exception.⁸³ The Precious Guru may be gone, but Yeshé Tsogyal, bearer of his teachings, is not. Still, to look to Orgyan Lingpa for robust information about how, exactly, she came to inherit Padmasambhava's Dharmic legacy is to come up short. For that, our earliest and best recourse is to the source at the heart of this study, namely the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* attributed to the treasure-revealer Drimé Künga (b. 1347), a junior contemporary of Longchenpa and Orgyan Lingpa alike.

The Renaissance amid a Degenerate Age

Before we consider Drimé Künga's own biography and literary output, it is worth providing a general sense of the Tibet into which he was born, most likely in the year 1347.⁸⁴ Politically speaking, mid-fourteenth century Tibet was in a state of significant upheaval. Through the final decade of the thirteenth century and into the early fourteenth, Tibet had been experiencing relative stability under Mongol-Sakyapa rule. Under that theocratic government, the religious elite of the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, dominated by members of the Khön family line, oversaw both ecclesiastical and secular-administrative matters locally while the Mongol-founded Yüan dynasty (1271–1368) court exercised its authority from afar. By the mid-1340s, however, Tibet was in the middle of a civil war. Having suffered losses of territory and

⁸³ O rgyan gling pa 2006: 578–580.

⁸⁴ Secondary literature exhibits some disagreement about Drimé Künga's birth year. Gyatso (2006: 8n33) prefers 1347 over 1357, and my findings support this date. Matthieu Ricard, in his *Life of Shabkar* (1994: xxviii42), dates Drimé Künga's birth to 1404, but it is unclear to me why. The year of his death appears to be unknown to each of his biographers.

status under the Mongol-Sakya regime, the Lang clan, patrons of a Kagyü lineage known as the Pakmodrupa, challenged Sakya political hegemony in Tibet. Their ambitious and tenacious leader, Jangchub Gyaltzen (1302-1364), inheritor of the Pakmodrupa myriarchy in 1322,⁸⁵ led the Pakmodru to political control over Central Tibet by 1354. By 1358, the Mongol court officially recognized Jangchub Gyaltzen as the *de facto* ruler of Tibet, though the Sakya theocracy, stripped of any real power, remained formally in place.⁸⁶ At this time, Jangchub Gyaltzen was conferred the title Tai Situ (*ta'i si tu*; Ch. *ta ssu t'u*), "Grand Preceptor," a Chinese designation for high-ranking government officials. And although the Yüan still technically controlled Tibet, the Pakmodru government was becoming increasingly independent of Mongol rule by the late 1350s. In 1365, Jangchub Gyaltzen was succeeded by his nephew Jamyang Śākya Gyaltzen (1340-1373), and just a few years after that in 1368, the Yüan dynasty collapsed and Mongol rule over Tibet effectively came to an end.⁸⁷

Drimé Künga would have just entered his twenties at that time. Because he was born in Drachi, south of Samyé across the Tsangpo river and west of Nêdong where the Pakmodru was headquartered, and because he went on to commence his treasure-revealing career in the area of

⁸⁵ For more information on Jangchub Gyaltzen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan), see Leonard van der Kuijp, "Fourteenth Century Tibetan Cultural History 1: Ta'i-Si-Tu Byang-Chub Rgyal-Mtshan as a Man of Religion," *Indo-Iranian Journal* 37, no. 2 (1994): 139–49, as well as his "On the Life and Political Career of Ta'i-Si-Tu Byang-Chub Rgyal-Mtshan (1302–1364)," in *The History of Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 425–466. The latter was originally printed in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Geza on his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. E. Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991), 277–327. Interesting for our purposes is the fact that Jangchub Gyaltzen sponsored the Tibetan version of Kṣemendra's (fl. 1050 CE) *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* (AvK) See van der Kuijp 1994: 434n55 and 2003: 139. More on this work can be found in chapter three.

⁸⁶ One the matter of Jangchub Gyaltzen's relationship to and rank via-à-vis the Sakya theocracy, see esp. van der Kuijp 2003: 432.

⁸⁷ For the remarkable, thoroughgoing history of the Pakmodru rise to power from which I draw my summary, see especially Chapter V, "The Downfall of Yüan—Sa-skyia Rule," of Luciano Petech, *Central Tibet and the Mongols: The Yüan Sa-Skyia Period of Tibetan History* (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1990), 85–139.

Samyé Chimphu, he would have no doubt experienced the effects Sakya-Pakmodru conflict firsthand. Knowing this much, one may read the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* passages on the "dark" or "degenerate times" (*snyigs ma'i dus*) predicted by Padmasambhava as more than speculative accounts. To whatever degree raging fires, widespread famines, and inter- and intra-family battles may have been becoming generic signifiers of a society in peril by the time of his writing, it seems unlikely that Drimé Künga would have had only a vague or abstract sense of what it meant to be alive during a precarious age.

One can say the same about Longchenpa and Orgyan Lingpa, the senior treasure-revealers discussed above, as well as an exact contemporary of Drimé Künga by the name of Dorjé Lingpa (1346–1405), to whom another recently discovered life story of Yeshé Tsogyal has also been attributed.⁸⁸ Not only did these men share a sectarian affiliation with Drimé Künga,

⁸⁸ On Dorjé Lingpa's life and works, see Alexander Gardner, "Dorje Lingpa," *Treasury of Lives*, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Dorje-Lingpa/8750>. A recently surfaced manuscript of a life story of Yeshé Tsogyal has been attributed to him by the editors of the Arya Tāre series in which we also find the *Life* as it is attributed to Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa. However, I have yet to find convincing evidence for the editors to have done so. Given his affiliations, interests, and geographic spheres, Dorjé Lingpa does seem to me a good candidate for a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* revelation. He is at least as likely to have revealed such a work as Longchenpa and Orgyan Lingpa. Nevertheless, I have not (to date) found a reference to his discovery of a stand-alone Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*, nor have I seen anything that resembles one in his extant works. Moreover, the supposition that he was a revealer/tradent of the work is not, as with Longchenpa and Orgyan Lingpa, based on relatively clear indications in either of the prophesies (i.e., the lineages of revealers) that accompany the stand-alone texts by Drimé Künga and Taksham.

Further complicating the Arya Tāre editors' Dorjé Lingpa attribution is the fact that Dorjé Lingpa also seems to have been referred to as "Pema Lingpa." See, for example, Rdo rje gling pa, "Bstan pa dar zhabs kyi chos glu" in *Gter chen rdo rje gling pa'i zab chos phyogs bsdebs*, BDRC W1KG2118, vol. 11, 14 vols.: 535–540 (Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin and Lama Thinley Namgyal, 2009), 526.5. This fact is also attested on page 6 of Samten Karmay, "Dorje Lingpa and His Rediscovery of the 'Golden Needle' in Bhutan," *Journal of Bhutan Studies* 2, no. 2 (2000): 1–37. The "Dorjé of Puwo" to whom Taksham (1989: 238) refers could indeed be Dorjé Lingpa. Still, one wonders if it could instead be Düddul Dorjé (Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672) who is commonly associated with Puwo/Powo (Spu/Spo bo) and was Taksham's teacher. As with Dorjé Lingpa, I have not found a stand-alone *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* among Düddul Dorjé's extant works, but in his collected treasures we do find several Yeshé Tsogyal *sādhanas* and a biography of Padmasambhava that is much shorter than but undoubtedly modeled after Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record*. (For the biography, see Bdud 'dul rdo rje, "O rgyan nman thar yang gsang dri med shel gyi phreng ba," in *Gter chos: Bdud 'dul rdo rje*, BDRC W3PD1098, 1 [s.l.: Kahthog drung pa rin po che, 2014], 151–267.) When we compare Chapter 49 (pp. 258–264) of Düddul Dorjé's *Exceptionally Secret Immaculate Biography of Padmasambhava* with Chapter 108 of the *Testimonial Record*, for example, we find Yeshé Tsogyal similarly in mourning, but rather than open with a few lines in praise to Padmasambhava, she begins straight away with her own biographical outline.

namely the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, each flourished in proximate regions. Taken together, their movements spanned a range from Samyé through Lhodrak, down to what is now present-day Bumthang in central Bhutan. Moreover, like Nyangrel and Guru Chöwang before them, all four were invested in reviving (or reinforcing, as the case may be,) the sense of Tibet's imperial era as a golden age.

Living amid what Kapstein describes as the "decadence and factiousness of contemporary hegemonic leadership," first of Sakya, then of the Pakmodru Kagyü, they also sought to reclaim some of the religious, if not political, landscape for the Nyingma.⁸⁹ The result of their efforts was not just a profusion of hagio-historiographical literature, ritual texts, and sacred objects, but the mounting of a powerful polemic.⁹⁰ As it had been in the twelfth century with Nyangrel, the focus was on the enthusiastic, needless to say undisputed, imperial-era acceptance of Padmasambhava and his teachings, and with that, the special efficacy of Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*), or "Great Perfection," teachings in particular. The need to breathe new life into these themes—that is, the need to reassert them as valid, important, and relevant in the fourteenth century—emerged under

Here we might note just a few other interesting differences from the *Testimonial Record*. Recall that in Orgyan Lingpa's work, Yeshé Tsogyal states that her parents are Drakpa Namkha Yeshé and Nübmo Géwabum. In Düddul Dorjé, her mother's name, Gétshoma (Dge mtsho ma), is similar to her mother's name in the *Testimonial Record* insofar as it retains "Gé," but her father's name appears as Kīrtijñāna (*yab kyi mtshan la kī ti dznyā na*), the Sanskrit for *grags pa* (homophonous with Sgrags pa) + *ye shes* (Skt. *kīrti* [sic] *jñāna*), in which case it should read Kīrtijñāna. Moreover, Yeshé Tsogyal specifies that she met Padmasambhava at age sixteen (*bcu drug lon nas...mjal*), i.e., age fifteen if we subtract the "year" of her gestation in the womb. (Recall that this detail is included in Nyangrel's *Copper Island*.) And finally, Düddul Dorjé prefers repetition of the phrase *shul du bor* over *shul du bzhas*, perhaps to lend it slightly more emotional force. That is, in his *Secret Stainless Biography*, Padmasambhava's disciples were "discarded" (*bor*) rather than "left" (*bzhag*, lit. "put") behind.

⁸⁹ Kapstein 2000: 165.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

the long shadow of doubt cast over Nyingma-favored tantric texts, texts which newer schools of Tibetan Buddhism took to be of spurious, that is to say, non-Indic, origin.⁹¹

The Treasure-Revealer Drimé Künga

The biographical information available to us on Drimé Künga is meager, though we do have access to several sources that offer a basic outline of his life.⁹² The earliest of these, the *History of the Buddha's Teachings* attributed to Düldzin Khyenrab Gyatso (fl. 16th century),⁹³ appears to have been major source of inspiration for all subsequent biographers of Drimé Künga, yet we do see divergences from his account on certain points. Some of these departures

⁹¹ On controversies surrounding the authenticity of treasure texts during the eleventh and the fourteenth centuries, see Janet Gyatso, "The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition," *History of Religions* 33, no. 2 (November 1, 1993): 97–134, esp. 98n1, and, more recently, Andreas Doctor, *Tibetan Treasure Literature: Revelation, Tradition, and Accomplishment in Visionary Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion 2005), chap. 2. Therein, Doctor also summarizes the arguments put forth by Guru Chöwang and Ratna Lingpa (1403–1479) in defense of treasure revelation.

⁹² In chronological order of composition where the source numbered one is the earliest, I list the available narrative sources that contain biographical information on Drimé Künga below. (Non-narrative sources like records of teachings received are noted elsewhere.) This list adds two sources (nos. 2 and 4) to those provided by Gyatso 2006: 8n31.

1. 'Dul 'dzin Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho, *Sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung dris lan smra ba'i phreng ba*, BDRC W22146 (Gangtok: Dzongsar Chhentse Labrang, Palace Monastery, 1981), 391–393.
2. Karma Mi 'gyur dbang rgyal, *Gter bton gyi lo rgyus gter bton chos 'byung*, BDRC W19709 (Darjeeling: Taklung Tsetrul Pema Wangyal, 1978), 239.6–245.6.
3. Gu ru Bkra shis stag sgang mkhas mchog ngag dbang blo gros, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*. BDRC W20916 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang, 1990), 465–467.
4. Brag dkar rta so Sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug, "Slob dpon sangs rgyas ye shes kyi skye bad gter ston dri med kun dga," in *Gsung 'bum: Chos kyi dbang phyug*, BDRC W1KG14557, vol. 13, 13 vols. (Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin, 2011), 616.5–622.4.
5. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, "Zab mo'i gter dang gter ston grub thob ji ltar byon pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsodus bkod pa rin chen baiḍūrya'i phreng ba," in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*. BDRC W20578, vol. 1 (*ka*), 111 vols. (Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, 1976–1980), 529.6–532.4.
6. Kun bzang Nges don Klong yangs, *Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur gyi bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar nor bu'i do shal*, BDRC W19708 (Dalhousie: Damchoe Sangpo, 1976), 129b.5–130b (pp. 250–252).

⁹³ Tib. *Sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung*. Possibly composed in 1557, this work is sometimes also referred to as the *G.yag sde'i chos 'byung* (i.e., *Yakde's History*) as it is in Guru Tashi's *History*. Martin (1997: 91, record no. 174) notes that until further research is conducted on Khyenrab Gyatso and his works, his dates as well as the date for the *History of the Buddha's Teachings* are tentative.

contribute to a more or variously nuanced sense of their subject. Others make for a less enchanted life story overall. Notably, Guru Tashi (fl. 18th century) points readers of his *History* to Khyenrab Gyatso if they are interested in knowing the details of the wondrous circumstances that surrounded Drimé Künga's birth, details that Guru Tashi is not alone in choosing to leave out of his account.⁹⁴

Today, Drimé Künga is grouped as one of the so-called "Three Drimés" (*dri med rnam gsum*) along with Drimé Öser (i.e., Longchenpa) and Drimé Lhünpo (b. 1352), each of whom flourished in the fourteenth century.⁹⁵ Although Longchenpa experienced some persecution under Pakmodru rule, we have no evidence to suggest that Drimé Künga was a controversial figure during his lifetime. In what little remains of his once extensive *oeuvre*, we neither see him defending his own discoveries, nor do we see him acting as an apologist for treasure revelation broadly conceived. But by the sixteenth century, he was, in a manner of speaking, involved in treasure polemics. Khyenrab Gyatso's *History of the Buddha's Teachings* was composed in part as a response to the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé's (1507-1554) questions about the authenticity of certain Nyingma teachings,⁹⁶ and herein we find Drimé Künga included as an authentic treasure revealer, a *tertön* whose life and literary output supports the validity of the practice of treasure discovery on the whole.

⁹⁴ Tib. *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*. For further information on this work, likely composed between 1807 and 1813, see Martin 1997: 151, record no. 359 and Martin, "A Brief Political History of Tibet by Gu-Ru Bkra-Shis," in *Tibetan History and Language: Studies Dedicated to Uray Geza on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ernst Steinkellner (Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1991), 319–51. For the passage, see Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 466.

⁹⁵ Kong sprul 1976: 529.6.

⁹⁶ Tib. Mi bskyod rdo rje. See Martin 1997: 91, record no. 174.

According to Khyenrab Gyatso, Drimé Künga was the final birth (*skye mtha'*) of Sangyé Yeshé, that is to say, of Nübchen Sangyé Yeshé (fl. 9th century), one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five main disciples.⁹⁷ Sangyé Yeshé, famed above all for his *Lamp in the Eyes in Contemplation*,⁹⁸ a work that remains critical for our understanding of the development of Dzogchen, is said to have been the keeper of Nyingma teachings during the period between the fall of the empire and the renaissance. Tradition holds that he was born in Drak in Central Tibet in 823, and so he was a Drakpa like Yeshé Tsogyal's father in Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record*. He is taken to have been a contemporary of Yeshé Tsogyal, and, as we see in her *Life*, as Bandé (*ban de*, i.e., The Monk) Sangyé Yeshé, he is styled the figure who, apart from Padmasambhava, beseeched Yeshé Tsogyal to record her life story for posterity.⁹⁹

It might have been enough for her to reveal her story to Drimé Künga just once in the fourteenth century, but as a "rebirth" of Sangyé Yeshé, he would have effectively received her story at least twice: once in person during her lifetime, and once through a vision half a millennium later. This connection also implies that Drimé Künga (as Sangyé Yeshé) would have been a direct inheritor of Padmasambhava's teachings, and, moreover, a witness not only to the imperial age, but also to the age of fragmentation that followed.

⁹⁷ Cf. Kong sprul 1976: 529.6–530.1 where he refers to Drimé Künga as an emanation (*rnam 'phrul*) of Nübchen Sangyé Yeshé (Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes). Gu ru Bkra shis (1990: 465) calls Drimé Künga a birth (*skye ba*) of Master Sangyé Yeshé (Slob dpon sangs rgyas ye shes). For the traditional account of the life of Nübchen Sangyé Yeshé, see Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School*, vol. 1, 605–614. There Sangyé Yeshé's dates are given as 832–943. For new research into his life and a re-evaluation of his dates, see Dylan Esler, "On the Life of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 29 (April 2014): 5–27.

⁹⁸ Tib. *Bsam gtan mig sgron*. On this work and its author, see Samten Karmay, *The Great Perfection (rDzogs Chen): A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 11, Brill's Tibetan Studies Library (Leiden: Brill, 1988); Dalton, *Taming*, 51–52; and Dylan Esler "The Exposition of Atiyoga in gNubs-Chen Sangs-rgyas ye shes' bSam-gtan mig sgron," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 24 (October 2012): 81–136.

⁹⁹ See DK 2013: 250, 260 and PL 2013: 328, 331.

True to Guru Tashi's word, Khyenrab Gyatso does indeed provide a robust account of the more marvelous events surrounding Drimé Künga's birth. Although these occurrences were meant to presage the *tertön's* greatness, Khyenrab Gyatso tells us that Drimé Künga's mother had some qualms about the source and significance of the various signs she saw as her son came into the world. Thinking that they might be the conjurings of noxious spirits (*rgyal bsen gyi cho 'phrul*), she kept them secret for many years and hid Drimé Künga away until he reached the age of eight.¹⁰⁰ Though Khyenrab Gyatso does not offer the date of Drimé Künga's birth, each of our later sources agree that he was born on tenth day of a fire-pig year, most likely a fire-sow year, as Kongtrul has it.¹⁰¹ If that is the case, then he was born in 1347 in the lower part of Drachi in Khangmar, a district in south-central Tibet,¹⁰² to a mother named Dzompakyi and a father named Tashi Lhundrup *or* Paljor Zangpo.¹⁰³

Following accounts of his birth and early youth, our sources highlight different milestones in Drimé Künga's life. According to Khyenrab Gyatso, after he turned nineteen, Drimé Künga went to the Lhalung forest, having renounced domesticity, and there he took up singing "*vajra songs*" (*rdo rje'i mgur*). With that, he experienced an "outpouring" (*klong rdol*) of realization.¹⁰⁴ Guru Tashi further relates that Drimé Künga went on to Drachi Chuzang at this

¹⁰⁰ Mkhjen rab rgya mtsho 1981: 391.4-6.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Cf. Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 465; Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 240.2; and Kong sprul 1976: 530.1.

¹⁰² Tib. Grwa/Gra phyi ma'i mda' khang dmar. See 'Jam dbyangs Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po, *Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, trans. Alfonsa Ferrari (Rome: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 54–55.

¹⁰³ Though Drimé Künga's mother's name, Dzompakyi ('Dzom pa skyid), varies only slightly across sources, Gu ru Bkra shis (1990: 465), Karma Mi 'gyur (1978: 240.1–2), and Kong sprul (1976–1980: 530.1) differ entirely from Mkhjen rab rgya mtsho on Drimé Künga's father's name. They prefer Peljor Zangpo (Dpal 'byor bzang po) over Tashi Lhundrup (Bkra shis lhun grub).

¹⁰⁴ Mkhjen rab rgya mtsho 1981: 391.5–392.1.

point where he became learned in the Vinaya, i.e., monastic discipline.¹⁰⁵ At twenty-one years old, he undertook novice-monk training (*dge tshul*) in the presence of the Nyamé Chuzang Chenpo,¹⁰⁶ and he was later ordained, receiving Sherab Gyaltzen as his name in religion.¹⁰⁷ Subsequently, he began his career as a treasure-revealer at Samyé Chimphu. There he is said to have received empowerments and instructions from Padmasambhava himself.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the miraculous details it provides about Drimé Künga's birth, Khyenrab Gyatso's *History* is also unique in that it elaborates on how Drimé Künga first came to realize his status as a *tertön*. According to this account, one night, as he was dreaming, Drimé Künga found himself whisked away on a hovering throne (*lding khri*) by four groups of *dakkis* (*dhakki sde bzhis*). When they arrived at the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain (*zangs mdog dpal ri*), Padmasambhava's paradise, he met with the guru and Yeshé Tsogyal in union, and Padmasambhava conferred upon him empowerments related to the deity Cakrasaṃvara. He also received the secret name Guru Ananta (Skt. Ānanda; Tib. Kun dga' bo),¹⁰⁹ and he was given a single tanned leather case (*bse'i sgrom bu gcig*) that contained 108 practical instructions (*lag khrid*) for the discovery of yellowed scrolls (*shog ser*) and their inventories. Finally, he was also given the prophecy for the final birth of the Mahāsiddha Buddhajñāna¹¹⁰ before he was

¹⁰⁵ Tib. Gra phyi Chu bzang. There are multiple sites referred to as Chuzang. See Ferrari (trans.) 1958: 103n92.

¹⁰⁶ Tib. Mnyam med Chu bzang pa chen po. See Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 465. Cf. Kong sprul 1976: 530.2–3 and Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 241.1–2.

¹⁰⁷ Tib. Shes rab rgyal mtshan. Cf. Kong sprul 1976: 530.3 and Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 241.2.

¹⁰⁸ Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 465.

¹⁰⁹ See Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho 1981: 392.1–2. The other sources for Drimé Künga's biography do not report his secret name, though it does seem to have been in use. See, for example, *Thor bu Gu ru a nan ta'i gter ma sog*, British Library, EAP310/4/2/53, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP310-4-2-53>. An instance occurs on image no. 17, fol. 27.6 of what appears to be part of Drimé Künga's *Mahākaruṇika: Supreme Light of Gnosis* cycle.

¹¹⁰ Tib. Buddha dznyā na. Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho 1981: 392.2–3.

transported back home to his bed. As soon as he awoke, he saw the tanned leather case at the head of his pillow (*dbu sngas mgor*).

Following this experience, says Khyenrab Gyatso, Drimé Künga went on to discover the Avalokiteśvara-centered text cycle known as *Mahākaruṇika: Supreme Light of Gnosis* at Samyé Chimphu.¹¹¹ The later sources specify that Drimé Künga was twenty-six at the start of his treasure-revealing career and that he met Padmasambhava at the summit of Chimphu's Minister's Cave.¹¹² For the rest of his twenty-sixth year and the following, he went on to discover multiple treasures in addition to his *Mahākaruṇika* cycle, notably the *Daily Practice of the Guru Cintāmaṇi* and *The Great Perfection: Quintessence of the Ḍākinīs*.¹¹³ Together these three works came to be known as Drimé Künga's *Guru, Perfection, Karuṇika Triad*.¹¹⁴

Our sources also note that Drimé Künga was descended from a respected line of mantrins, or *ngakpas* (*sngags pa*), and in addition to garnering fame as an accomplished treasure-revealer, he is renowned for having founded a group of these tantric specialists at Lhundrak (Lhodrak?) in Kongpo, a region that spans part of southcentral and southeastern Tibet.¹¹⁵ Apparently, one of Drimé Künga's distinguishing marks was a crown-protrusion (*gtsug tor*; Skt. *uṣṇīṣa*) around which he wrapped his hair, and so, seeking to emulate their founder, his followers

¹¹¹ Tib. *Thugs rje chen po ye shes 'od mchog*. Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho 1981: 392.2–3.

¹¹² Tib. Blon po mgul. For a description of this site, see Keith Dowman, *The Power Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide* (London u.a: London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 231.

¹¹³ Tib. *Bla ma nor bu lam khyer*; *Rdzogs chen mkha' 'gro yang tig*.

¹¹⁴ Tib. *Bla rdzogs thugs gsum*. Other texts listed include the *Bka' brgyad gtsug rgyan nor bu*, the *Tshe sgrub rta mchog rol pa*, the *Mkha' 'gro chen mo*, and the *Mgon po 'bar chung*. Two treasure objects (*gter mdzas*) are named, the Nor bu Stag sha de ba and the Mtsho rgyal Mgul g.yu. See Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 241.6–242.1; Kong sprul 1976: 531.1; and Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 465. The two treasure objects are also listed as discoveries of Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396). See Kong sprul 1976: 456.6.

¹¹⁵ Tib. Lhun grags (= [Kong po] Lhun/Lho brag?. Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 242.5; Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 466; Kong sprul 1976: 531.2–3.

wore their hair in the same style.¹¹⁶ Perhaps beginning with Drimé Künga himself, but certainly with his chief disciple and immediate successor, Tsenden Zhönnu Sangyé (fl. 15th century), the *nakpas* also took to wearing white. Henceforth, they became known as the "white[-clad] mantra-holders" (*sngags 'chang dkar po ba*) of Lhundrak.¹¹⁷

None of our sources offer a date for Drimé Künga's death, but several provide a list of his successors. In addition to drawing members from Dakpo Tshömer, where Zhönnu Sangyé had been living, the group's members supposedly hailed from Lingta, Sakar, Gora, Natrung, Ribo Tala, and Sinbuk.¹¹⁸ In his collected biographies of tertöns, Jamgon Kongtrul (1813–1899) notes that Drimé Künga's teachings benefitted beings in Central Tibet, Bhutan, and so forth (*dbu gtsang lho mon sogs*), and he states that he himself wrote manuals (*yig cha*) on them for others.¹¹⁹ We also know that the famed nineteenth-century *tertön* Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo (1820–1892) would go on to discover several works attributed to Drimé Künga, most of which focus on the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

Drimé Künga's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*

Indeed, of all the discoveries Drimé Künga's biographers highlight, his *Mahākaruṇika* cycle stands out. Each account of the *tertön's* life ends by underscoring the importance of this

¹¹⁶ Gu ru Tashi (1990), Karma Mi 'gyur (1978), Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho (1981), and Kong sprul (1976–1980) do not offer these details about the school of matrins.

¹¹⁷ Tib. Mtshan ldan Gzhon nu Sangs rgyas. Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 466; cf. Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 243.2–244.4 and 245.1; Kong sprul 1976: 531.4–5). See also See Ehrhard (2007: 84, esp. note 15). Sørensen et. al. deem Drimé Künga an alias for Zhönnu Sangyé, but this seems to be in error. See Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod, *Thundering Falcon: An Inquiry into the History and Cult of Khra-'brug, Tibet's First Buddhist Temple* (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 32.

¹¹⁸ Tib. Dwags po mtsho mer, Gling mtha' ba, Sa dkar ba, 'Gor ra ba, Na sprungs pa, Ri bo ta la ba, Srin sbug pa. See Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 466–467. Cf. Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 245.4–5.

¹¹⁹ Kong sprul 1976: 532.4.

particular cycle of texts.¹²⁰ Apart from Kunzang Ngedön Longyang's (b. 1814) *Necklace of Jewels*, however, no other accounts mention Drimé Künga's discovery of a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*.¹²¹ Granted, one other later figure, Drakar Taso Chökyi Wangchuk (1775–1837) refers in his records of teachings received (*thob yig*) to *The Story of the Wicked Minister Shita's Rescue from Hell*, an account which he himself notes is excerpted from the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. Nevertheless, Chökyi Wangchuk does not explicitly mention Drimé Künga in connection with this work either in his teaching receipt records or in his biography of the *tertön*.¹²²

This is not to say that we are limited to a single attestation, however. If we look beyond sources that summarize Drimé Künga's life, we find two well-known seventeenth-century

¹²⁰ Mkhyen rab rgya mtsho 1981: 392.6; Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 467; Brag dkar Rta so Chos kyi dbang phyug 2011b: 622.4. See also Franz-Karl Ehrhard, *A Rosary of Rubies: The Chronicle of the Gur-Rigs mDo-Chen Tradition from South-Western Tibet*, vol. 2, 2 vols., Collectanea Himalayica (München: Indus Verlag, 2008), 68–69.

Published along with his *Mahākarūnika* cycle is a biography of Mitrāyogin the title of which is *Rgyal sras mi tra 'dzo gi'i rnam thar zab mo drung pa dkon mchog gi phyag dpe*. It is also known as *Mi tra dzo ka'i rnam thar bstan pa gsal ba'i sgron me*. See Dri med kun dga', *Thugs rje chen po ye shes 'od mchog*, BDRC W1KG10137, 2 vols. (Dalhousie: Damchöe Sangpo, 1978). For the biography of Mitrāyogin, see folios numbered 1–51. On this Indian adept, who Martin (2005: 69) refers to as "an historically shadowy but nevertheless extremely popular figure in Tibetan literature," see George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949), 1030–1034, 1041–1043 well as Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "On the Lives of Śākyaśrībhadrā (?-?1225)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 114, no. 4 (1994): 602n14. Van der Kuijp also discusses Mitrāyogin in the context of Trophu Lotsawa's (Khro phu lo tsa ba 1172–1236) autobiography in an unpublished paper "Notes on the Life of the Indian Master, Mitrāyogin (12th Century)," in *Session 79: Biography and Social History in India, Nepal, and Tibet, Association for Asian Studies* (Chicago, IL, 1997).

Interestingly for our purposes, I have found at least one instance in which a biography of Mitrāyogin is associated with a *délok* ('*das log*) or "revenant" tales, not unlike the fifth chapter of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. See, for example, Anon., *Thugs rje chen po mi tra dzwo ki'i rnam thar dang gshin rje chos kyi rgyal po'i gsung phrin*, BDRC W1KG10617 (Thabo, Himachal Pradesh: O rgyan Rdo rje, 1975). I have yet to be able to explore this connection fully. It may be because individuals active in promoting the Avalokiteśvara cult were interested in *délok* stories as well, and so, the stories came to be grouped.

¹²¹ Tib. *Nor bu'i do shal* (short title). See Kun bzang nges don klong yangs, *Bod du byung ba'i gsang sngags snga 'gyur gyi bstan 'dzin skyes mchog rim byon gyi rnam thar nor bu'i do shal*, BDRC W19708 (Dalhousie: Damchöe Sangpo, 1976), 129b.5–130b (pp. 250–252). This source is dated to 1882. See Martin 1997: 164, record no. 394.

¹²² For Chökyi Wangchuk, it may have gone without saying that the *Life* was discovered by Drimé Künga, but we cannot be sure. See Brag dkar rta so Chos kyi dbang phyug (2011a: 59.4) where he writes: *ma cig yes shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar las phyung ba'i na rag gi phan yon/ sdig blon shi ta dmyal ba nas bton pa'i lo rgyus*. This story comprises the fifth chapter of the *Life*, and it tells of how Yeshé Tsogyal descended into the hell realm in order to extract Shantipa (vars. Shita, Shanti), the minister who championed her punishment prior to her exile from her parents' palace. As we will see later in this thesis, this chapter circulated independently of the rest of the work, and it was incorporated into a compendium of tales about Buddhist revenants, or *délok* ('*das log*).

figures, namely Lhatsün Namkha Jikmé (1597–1650) and Tselé Natsok Rangdröl (b. 1608–ca. 1681?), noting that they were recipients of a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* discovered by Drimé Künga.¹²³ Lhatsün Namkha Jikmé's records include a catalogue devoted specifically to "Orgyan" Drimé Künga's treasures, and therein we find a lineage of acquisition (*thob pa'i brgyud pa*) for the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*.¹²⁴ For his part, Natsok Rangdröl mentions the Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* as well as the *Guru, Perfection, Karuṇika Triad* discovered by Drimé Künga in his autobiography.¹²⁵ To these references we might add another from roughly the same time period, vague though it may be. A "Künga from the East" is deemed a potential revealer in the prophecy attached to Taksham Nüden Dorjé's seventeenth-century *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal.¹²⁶

In sum, by the time Khyenrab Gyatso was writing his *History of the Buddha's Teachings* in the mid-sixteenth century, the name Drimé Künga (*aliases* Orgyan Drimé Künga, Sherab Gyaltzen, and Guru Ananta) evoked a founder of a lineage of *ngakpas* and a treasure-revealer who had been active approximately a century and a half earlier in southeastern Tibet. Moreover, this Drimé was taken to be a birth of Nübchen Sangyé Yeshé, the disciple of Padmasambhava

¹²³ Tib. Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med; Rtse le Sna tshogs rang grol.

¹²⁴ Lha btsun Nam mkha' 'jigs med, "O rgyan dri med kun dga'i gter chos gsan tshul," in *Gsung 'bum: Nam mkha' 'jigs med*, BDRC WIKG3654, vol. 4 (Majnu-ka-tilla, Delhi: Chos spyod Publication, 2003), 311–320.

¹²⁵ Sna tshogs rang grol, "Rang rnam drang po'i sa bon," in *Gsung 'bum: Sna tshogs rang grol*, BDRC W21019, 1 (Gangtok: Mgon po tshe brtan, 1979), 72.6–73.1. Natsok Rangdröl also refers to a *Tertön's Collected Works (Gter ston bka' 'bum)*, which is likely what Namkha Jikmé refers to as the *Collected Works of Drimé Künga (Dri med kun dga'i bka' 'bum)* in his records. See Sna tshogs rang grol 1979: 72.6–73.1 and Nam mkha' 'jigs med 2003: 318.3.

¹²⁶ Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje, *Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar*, BDRC W26741 (Kalimpong: Bdud 'joms Rin po che, 1972), 257.4. For a translation of this reference, see Dowman 1984: 177. Evidence suggests that Taksham was familiar with Drimé Künga's *oeuvre* broadly. Although he only mentions a figure "from the East, by the name of Künga" in his biography of Yeshé Tsogyal, in his biography of Mitrayogin, a biography of whom is also attributed to Drimé Künga, Taksham begins by paying homage to him explicitly. See Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje, "Thugs rje chen po 'jig rten dbang phyug mi tra snying thig las: Mi tra a nan ta dz wa ki'i rnam par thar pa smon lam 'od kyi drwa ba pad ma 'byung gnas kyis mdzad pa," in *Rtsa gsum yi dam dgongs 'dus*, vol. 7, 13 vols. (Kong po: Rdo dung dgon, n.d.), 141–243. At 142.4–5, we find: *da lta spyod dka'i byang chub spyod pa yi/ rlabs chen 'gro rnams pa'i lam ston pa'i/ dri med kun dga' dzwa ki'i zhabs la 'dud*.

who not only authored a seminal work on Dzogchen, but also beseeched Yeshé Tsogyal to record her life story so that it might serve beings well in the future. It is not until later, in the seventeenth century, however, that we begin to see some of the era's most prominent figures referring to a Drimé Künga-discovered *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal.¹²⁷

When we inquire into what the status of that Yeshé Tsogyal's *namtar* was like in the interim—that is, between the time of its discovery by Drimé Künga around, say, the turn of the fifteenth century, and its reception in the mid- to late seventeenth—things get complicated. Teaching records from the seventeenth century also alert us to a Yeshé Tsogyal life story discovered by Pema Lingpa (1450–1521), a prolific and once highly controversial *tertön* who is hailed today as the patron saint of Bhutan.¹²⁸ Today we find this *namtar* anthologized in Pema Lingpa's *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* textual cycle, a heterogeneous textual corpus that Pema Lingpa claims to have discovered in Lhodrak in 1483.¹²⁹ When we compare manuscript witnesses of this

¹²⁷ Though I suspect earlier references will surface in time, I have yet to find a reference to a Drimé Künga-attributed *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal that predates the seventeenth century.

¹²⁸ Unlike Drimé Künga, Pema Lingpa's life and literary output have received extensive treatment in scholarship, and so I do not dwell on his biography here. Readers interested in Pema Lingpa should look to Sarah Harding, *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa* (Snow Lion Publications, 2003), esp. the introduction; Michael Aris, *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1988); and Padma Tshewang, Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, Chris Butters and Sigmund K. Sætren, *The Treasure Revealer of Bhutan: Pemalingpa, the Terma Tradition and Its Critics* (Biblioteca Himalayica, Series III, Volume 8. Kathmandu: EMR Publishing House, 1995). Noteworthy for our purposes here is that the Fifth Dalai Lama lists a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* in his catalogue of teachings received from the *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle discovered by Pema Lingpa. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, "Gter ston padma gling pas lho brag mdo nas spyang drangs pa'i bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho'i skor," in *Gsung 'bum: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, BDRC W1PD107937, vol. 4 (*nga*), 28 vols.: 11–25 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 14. He does not, however, attest to a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* by Drimé Künga. See "Gter ston dri med kun dgas spyang drangs pa'i gter chos khag gi skor," in *Gsung 'bum: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho*, BDRC W1PD107937, vol. 4 (*nga*), 28 vols.: 121–150. (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009).

¹²⁹ It is not certain that Pema Lingpa himself laid claim to discovering a *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal specifically. More on this point will follow in the next chapter, but suffice to say here that his *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is situated among other works about Padmasambhava and his disciples in the *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle, a corpus which Pema Lingpa does, by title, claim to have discovered. However, while its contents seem to have been standardized by the seventeenth century complete with a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*, the original contents of the corpus have yet to be determined. See the appendix where I examine the Manang and Thimphu reproductions of the *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle. See also Harding, *Pema Lingpa*, chap. 6 and Aris, *Hidden Treasures*, *passim*. To date, I have not found an instance in which Pema Lingpa or one of his close disciples mentions his discovery of a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*,

work, that is, Pema Lingpa's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* with witnesses attributed Drimé Künga, we are faced with a conundrum. Two figures—attributed (author-)revealers—appear to tell the same story in only slightly different ways.

either as a stand-alone work or in connection with the *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle. Dr. Karma Phuntsho, an expert on Pema Lingpa, has told me that he has likewise never seen a reference to an extraction of a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* in particular. (Email communication, January 15, 2017.)

CHAPTER TWO

THE *LIFE OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL* AS A TREASURE TEXT

How might we view the conundrum with which the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* presents us, this problem of two "authors," one work? Among several possible angles, I will begin with two. The first, reliant on the logics of treasure revelation, renders the conundrum anything but. That is, the problem of two authors, one work is not a problem in the context of treasure discovery. Multiple revealers, rather than "authors" in the sense of some creation's originators, can be prophesied for the same treasure, which in our case is the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, a work whose imputed author is Yeshé Tsogyal herself. In this context, Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa are better understood as re-introducers of the work to the world—the hands by which the *Life* sees new light.

That said, we do well to keep in mind that these figures' names function in ways that authors' names do even if they are traditionally regarded as *pseudoepigraphs* and the authorship of an enlightened entity is otherwise asserted or implied.¹³⁰ One expects to see Tibetan and Bhutanese writers refer to "Drimé Künga's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*," or "Pema Lingpa's *Lama, Jewel, Ocean*," not to "Yeshé Tsogyal's *namtar* which was discovered by Drimé Künga," or "the *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* textual corpus hidden by Padmasambhava and discovered by Pema Lingpa." The elaborate phrasing may spell out the relationship of the revealer to the treasure, but it is cumbersome and for the most part unnecessary.

The second angle, reliant on historical and text-critical modes of analysis, takes up the problem of two authors, one work in ways that lead, by and large, to more questions than answers. If we acknowledge Drimé Künga to be the composer of the *Life*, that is, its historical

¹³⁰ On the issue of authorship in treasure revelation, see Gyatso 1993.

author—the first person to give it the shape in which we more or less find it today—what do we make of the later attribution to Pema Lingpa?

To answer this question, we can look immediately back to the nature of treasure revelation and observe in it the opportunity to rethink the very idea of "authorship," particularly where it suggests to us originality and ownership over an art object. Both Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa can be understood to function in authorial capacities if primacy coupled with origination is not at issue and/or if authorship extends to re-discovery (be it a figurative or literal unearthing) as well as to redaction and/or redistribution. Perhaps Pema Lingpa was the *Life's* editor? Perhaps its promoter? Whatever the case, in a word, Drimé Künga did not have our modern-day "rights" to the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, and so the work could escape his exclusive grasp. And, we should add, this is neither a bad thing, nor an unexpected one. Rather, it is the name of the game in which Drimé Künga also no doubt saw himself participating. As we will see throughout Part II of this thesis, Drimé Künga himself drew on earlier Indic and Tibetan Buddhist literature as he composed the *Life*, rendering the *Life* itself, in a certain sense, a "multi-authored" composition.

Nevertheless, for the sake of imagining the *Life's* trajectory in history, suppose we maintain that Drimé Künga authored the *Life*, that is, composed it, and suppose we grant that Pema Lingpa's relationship to the work was not one of composition. With that, the literary historian's questions abound. Apart from asking, broadly, how and why the same work came to be attributed to two *tertöns* born about a hundred years apart, one wonders about their respective relationships to the *Life* as well as their connections to one another. First we might acknowledge that without personal testimony to the contrary, the *Life* could have been attributed to Pema Lingpa, (or even to Drimé Künga!), posthumously. But, again, supposing it was not and that

Drimé Künga is in fact our earliest author, the question remains: What did Pema Lingpa actually have to do with the *Life*? Was he both familiar with and an admirer of Drimé Künga's work? Did he take it upon himself to edit it? Maybe he knew it but regarded it ambivalently, even altogether coolly. Did he sweep the *Life* into his own corpus of treasures without much thought? Otherwise, maybe the *Life* was a popular read and Pema Lingpa was an opportunist. However he felt about the *Life* personally, was he, above all, never one to miss a chance to attach his name to a revealed treasure acknowledged as such?

More generously, perhaps the fourteenth-century *Life*, though already out there in the world, could do with a *re*-discovery in the sense that one "re-discovers" a lost or forgotten work of literature today. Did Pema Lingpa effectively rediscover the *Life* because it had never quite gotten off the ground, or because after an initial burst, its popularity quickly waned? Had the work even seen the light of day before the late 1400s? Was it originally a kind of closet project, obtained by only a select few of Drimé Künga's disciples and somehow passed on to Pema Lingpa? If it had been popular, had it nevertheless lost its singular attribution such that Pema Lingpa (or one of his disciples) could claim it in his name? Was the *Life*, in others words, a sort of free-floating work among others in the same genre, the intellectual property of no one or anyone? Dare we entertain a final question at the imaginative extreme: Could Pema Lingpa have generated the *Life* of his own accord, leaving us with what looks like, *but is in fact not*, a facsimile of Drimé Künga's version? Did two nearly identical *Lives* emerge from two separate minds?

Extraordinary coincidences aside, the questions above are difficult to answer beyond an educated guess. Given his interests, affiliations, and geographic regions of activity, Pema Lingpa strikes me as a good candidate for the discovery of a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*. He could easily

stand in good company among the earlier Nyingma prophesied revealers who shared an investment in bolstering cultic activity around Padmasambhava and his disciples.

It seems unlikely that he would have produced the *Life* in ignorance of Drimé Künga's work, however. Apart from assuming that he would have inherited a socio-religious landscape wrought by earlier *tertöns*, we can draw a direct link between him and Drimé Künga via Karpo Künga Drakpa (fl. 15th century), a Drimé Künga-lineage holder who, according to Chökyi Wangchuk, was an "actual disciple" (*dngos slob*), i.e., not a disciple in name only, of Pema Lingpa, presumably after the two men met in 1505. If Pema Lingpa had not been familiar with Drimé Künga's *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal before their meeting, it may have reached him through Künga Drakpa as did Drimé Künga's *Mahākaruṇika* cycle.¹³¹ What is more, when we examine Pema Lingpa's Padmasambhava *namtar*, we see that it follows Sangyé Lingpa's *Golden Rosary Biography* and echoes, by extension, Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record*. It seems, then, that Pema Lingpa was no stranger to rediscovering works found in earlier treasure-revealers' *oeuvres*.¹³²

¹³¹ Tib. Dkar po kun dga' grags pa. See Brag dkar rta so Chos kyi dbang phyug (2011a: 544.3–4): *padma gling pa'i dngos slob dkar po kun dga' grags las/ dri med kun dga'i thugs rje chen po ye shes 'od mchog*. For mention of Karpo Künga Drakpa in Drimé Künga's lineage, see, e.g., Karma Mi 'gyur 1978: 245.1–3 and Gu ru Bkra shis 1990: 466–467. On the meeting, see Pema Lingpa's autobiography, Padma gling pa, "Bum thang gter ston padma gling pa'i rnam thar 'od zer kun mdzes nor bu'i phreng ba," in *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*, BDRC W21727, vol. 14, 21 vols. (Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975–1976), 310.5–311.3.

¹³² See Anne-Marie Blondeau, "Analysis of the Biographies of Padmasambhava According to Tibetan Tradition: Classification of Sources," in *Tibetan Studies in Honour of Hugh Richardson (Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tibetan Studies, Oxford, 1979)*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi (Warminster, UK: Aris & Phillips Ltd., 1980), 49. In his own work, Aris characterizes Pema Lingpa as an opportunist and a charlatan, and indeed Pema Lingpa faced such criticism in his own time. (See Aris 1988: *passim*. Noted also in Gyatso 1993: 122.) Whether charlatan or authentic revealer, however, the dual attribution stands. Incidentally, on the topic of the Padmasambhava hagiographical literature, Düddul Dorjé groups the three Lingpas noted above, Orgyan, Sangyé, and Pema, and refers to their *kathangs* as a unit. See fol. 7.6–8.1 of Bdud 'dul rdo rje, "Bdud 'dul rdo rje'i rnam thar gter 'byung mdor bsod pa dad pa'i mchod stong," in *Gter Chos: Bdud 'dul rdo rje*, vol. 10, 12 vols. (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1997), 1–53.

Still, all this is not to say that we need to see a problem of authorship or breach of propriety where there isn't one. Above all else, the literary historian wants to know the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* biography, so to speak. What is the story of its production and circulation? Of its discovery and rediscovery? Or, less generously, of its appropriation? To put this another way, for the literary historian, at the heart of the questions above there is less interest in settling the question of the "real" author than the desire to know more about the shape and significance of the *Life's* revelation for Drimé Künga, Pema Lingpa, and both of their respective communities in turn. What did the *Life's* "discovery" look like in each *tertön's* case, and what might it have meant for them? How did the *Life* appear to its earliest audiences, and what, if anything, did it mean to the people whose ears it might have reached?

Without much biographical information about Drimé Künga, and no personal testimony to the *Life's* discovery from either figure, *and* little else beyond mention from a few of the *Life's* recipients in history,¹³³ we must remain largely content with conjecture in this regard. Whatever the significance for Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa personally, though, it is difficult to imagine that either treasure-revealer hoped to make his name on the discovery of a Yeshé Tsogyal

¹³³ By "recipients," I mean those historical figures who note the *Life* in their records of teachings received (*thob/gsan yig/tshul*) or mention it in their autobiographies. We do find evidence of the *Life's* reception elsewhere, however. Notably, part of it is reproduced in Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal's (1550/6–1603) *Biography of Padmasambhava*. (See Bkra shis stobs rgyal, *Padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar*, BDRC W8873, [Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltsen Lama, 1976], 491.3–552.2.) Tashi Tobgyal follows the first two chapters of the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* closely, but he then condenses or omits the material that appears in the successive chapters. More on this point can be found in the appendix in the section on partial witnesses. Karma Mingyur wrote his *History of Tertöns* in the form of a commentary on Tashi Tobgyal's *Biographies of the Hundred Tertöns: Summaries and Supplications* (*Gter brgya'i rnam thar don bdus gsol 'debs*), and so it may be that Karma Mingyur, familiar with Tashi Tobgyal's works as he was, perhaps encountered part of the *Life* through Tashi Tobgyal. I suspect that Tashi Tobgyal may have attributed authorship to Padma Lingpa rather than Drimé Künga. Although he does not attribute the biographical section on Yeshé Tsogyal to any specific author, his colophon to his Padma *namtar* does acknowledge his reference to Padma Lingpa's works at the time of his writing. On this, see Franz-Karl Erhard, "An Ocean of Marvelous Perfections': A 17th-Century Padma *bka'i thang yig* from the Sa Skya Pa School," in *Tibetan Literary Genres, Texts, and Text Types: From Genre Classification to Transformation*, vol. 37 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 139–81. Cf. Blondeau 1980: 52n24.

namtar. The proliferation (or reproduction) of Padmasambhava *namtars* in the wake of Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record* makes the discovery of a Padma-biography seem like a professional requisite for *tertöns* at large. But what of the discovery of a Yeshé Tsogyal life story? Insofar as such a work could support confidence in Padmasambhava and his teachings, one wonders if a Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* would be a recommended discovery but not a required one. Would it be regarded as merely icing on a treasure-corpus cake? Or would it have enjoyed a fanship largely its own?

If Drimé Künga was in fact the first to produce a fully-fledged *Life* about Yeshé Tsogyal, the historian of religions grows even more curious about his motivations and the context in which he wrote. Why him? Why then? Did Drimé Künga have a special interest in Yeshé Tsogyal? And if so, was that interest in her as an individual more so than it was in her as a champion of Padmasambhava's teachings and his Tibetan consort? Perhaps he felt the need to address gaps in her story... The textual critic interjects: And did the *Life* circa 1400 look more or less like the *Life* circa 1500? To what degree do the witnesses we have access to today resemble the *Life* in its earliest form? Could all extant witnesses be the products of later editing and revision such that Drimé Künga's *Life* has been eclipsed to the point that he would no longer recognize it quite as his own? Here the historian of Tibetan religions rejoins: But would that matter to him? Would he acknowledge the newer iteration of the *Life* as a different but no less authentically revealed work?

Treasure Revelation in (Literary) Theory

At this point, we might invite the literary theorist to help us view the case of dual attribution from yet a third angle. For her part, she may be no less curious about the context in

which the *Life* emerged and the figure by whom it was created, but uncertainties or ambiguities in either regard need not signal to her an analytical impasse.

First, however, it should be said that names do matter. Just as today, where, how, and from whom one receives one's information and education carries meaning. Teaching receipt records testify to the importance of lineages, and prophecies testify to importance of treasure revealers' individual identities. In naming names, authenticity and status are at stake for work and author, revealer, and tradent alike, and whether they are rightfully applied or not, attributions function rhetorically.¹³⁴ To say that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was supposed to have been discovered by Guru Chöwang, Longchenpa, and Orgyan Lingpa is to say that it should be associated with figures who were esteemed by the turn of the fifteenth century. It is also to suggest (by implication) that the *Life's* subsequent revealers should be ranked among these teachers.

In short, it is not as if attributing a work to multiple revealers renders them individually insignificant, as if they were mere conduits of a text or teaching. Rather, different attributions carry with them different significations. In the case of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, one wonders about the effects of claiming to have received the *Life* via a lineage traced to Drimé Künga rather than to Pema Lingpa, or vice versa.

Nevertheless, among all of the things that the technology of treasure revelation can do—not least make names for its professed revealers—it is remarkable for the way in which it continually troubles the singularity of a name behind a literary work. By this I do not just mean that treasures, by their very nature, work to remind us that they should be thought of as products of a succession or constellation of agents rather than one single agent, though this is, in fact, part

¹³⁴ On this issue, see especially Gyatso 1993; Davidson 2005: chap. 6, and Doctor 2005: chap. 2.

of the point. Behind an individual *tertön* we may have other treasure-revealers, and behind each of our *tertöns* is Yeshé Tsogyal who works on behalf of Padmasambhava, her guru, and behind Padmasambhava stands a primordial buddha.¹³⁵ Keeping this in mind, we recall that an individual revealer occupies only one node in a treasure's trajectory. A revealer's name might then be made to function as what Michel Foucault calls "a principle of thrift"—i.e., a meaning-limiting device—both in the proliferation of authorial bodies *and* in the proliferation of meaning.¹³⁶ Where we as literary critics want to know what the *Life* is about, for example, we might evoke the name "Drimé Künga" as a way to delimit what we can or can't, should or shouldn't say. And we are apt to make use of such a principle, aren't we?

I would argue that in fascinating ways, the logic undergirding treasure revelation seems to both enjoin and resist this use of a single *tertön's* name as a principle of thrift. Again, we can see this in the reminders of complex agency that occur at the same moments when individual revealers are named (as in prophesies preceding texts' colophons). A treasure is the *tertön's* but not his alone. But we might also see this in the acceptance of (re)discoveries of the same or similar works by different *tertöns*, some of whom were active quite close on one another's heels. If we observe one of the main premises of treasure revelation, namely that which states that *terma* are revealed to qualified persons when particular teachings (or objects, hidden valleys, etc.) are much needed, we can allow (1) that the place and time of revelation and the person of the revealer are not arbitrary;¹³⁷ and (2) that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was needed ca. 1400 and again ca. 1500. Whatever the exact circumstances of its revelation during either time, the work is

¹³⁵ See Gyatso 1993: 131.

¹³⁶ See page 118 of Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *The Foucault Reader* (Pantheon Books, 1984), 101–120.

¹³⁷ Cf. Gyatso 1993: 119.

supposed to have resurfaced in order to address some issue or meet some need, namely and broadly speaking, the need for the Dharma's resurgence.

The temptation of the historian in the case of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is to say, simply, that the work appeared ca. 1400 and, for whatever reasons, it received attention again ca. 1500. It may have been ignored or altogether lost in the interim, or it could merely have eluded the figures whose writings we have access to today.

With the importance that the treasure tradition lends context, however, the matter of re-discovery stimulates theoretical inquiry and encourages greater specification. That is, speaking from the point of view of treasure revelation, it may be better to say that the *Life* that Drimé Künga revealed had special relevance ca. 1400, while the *Life* revealed by Pema Lingpa had special relevance ca. 1500. That the naked eye sees the "visible" works as essentially the same is not incorrect. Still, to the question, "Which of the *Lives* of Yeshé Tsogyal is relevant to you?" a sixteenth-century reader, fully aware that the *Life* had already been discovered roughly a century earlier, could answer, "Pema Lingpa's." In doing so, one wonders: Would that reader be referring to something equivalent to or somehow other than the Drimé Künga-revealed *Life*? Variants in orthography aside, if the works look more or less the same—if they would be read by the same reader as such—what could possibly differentiate them? Most obviously, the name and time attached to the *Life* as a revealed treasure differ, but how much should these elements determine what in or about it is meaningful?

This question is, of course, a perennial one for modern literary theorists, whatever one's era and area of expertise. The degree to which an author's biography and socio-historical context can or should be allowed to influence or guide the interpretation of a work remains an oft-contested issue. But ours emerges a trickier case of the matter than most. What of

"author/revealer" and context when we have at least two figures with around a hundred years of temporal distance between them standing behind the same work?

To explore this question from within the logic of treasure revelation, we might engage in a thought experiment along the lines of Borges's "Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*."¹³⁸ Therein we see an unnamed literary critic confronted with identical passages from *Don Quixote*, some composed by the seventeenth-century author Miguel de Cervantes, others by a twentieth-century Frenchman named Pierre Menard, recently deceased. The critic finds that Menard, his friend while alive, has left among his papers *not* copies of Cervantes's *Quixote* or reproductions of it from memory, but fragments of "the *Quixote* itself." After all, Menard's aim in life was to be the *Quixote's* author, not its scribe, and through considerable mental effort, he managed to generate parts of it not quite *ex nihilo*, but also not at all through mere recollection of another's work.

The critic acknowledges that the fragments Menard produced match passages from the earlier *Quixote* exactly. And yet, the critic esteems his friend's the richer and therefore superior work. Based on the very same lines by different hands, Cervantes appears to him to have been a romantic at home in his native Spanish. Menard he deems a pragmatist writing not only in a foreign tongue, but also in an affected, archaic style—a difficult task, to be sure.¹³⁹ In the end, the critic observes, Menard's fragments may indeed be *visibly* identical to passages composed by Cervantes three-hundred years earlier, but they were written on different terms with all of the *invisible* knowledge that Menard had of the world from the time of first *Quixote's* appearance on.

¹³⁸ Jorge Luis Borges, "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote," in *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby, Reprint edition (New York: New Directions, 2007), 36–44.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*: 43.

Simply by virtue of being born before the first *Quixote*, Cervantes could not have shared Menard's knowledge. Therefore, concludes the critic, Cervantes could not have produced the superior work.

That it matters to the critic who an author of a work was as he reviews it seems to us reasonable enough, at least initially. We can grant him the desire to orient a work in space, time, and intellectual tradition, and so the readiness to use the author as an analytical starting point. (Even if one does not begin with the author, *per se*, why eschew any information that might help contextualize a work—information that can offer a richer sense of what is it that the work presents, why it appears in the form it does, and whether or not it maintains or exceeds the bounds of its literary precedents, etc.?) When the critic suggests that one author's potentially greater knowledge could elevate one work over a *visibly identical* other, however, this strikes us as absurd. Not only should the generation of an identical *Quixote* through a kind of knowing and unknowing of the text seem impossible, the critic should find it exceedingly difficult, if not also impossible, to say what his friend *must have known* such that more and different knowledge went into the later *Quixote* than the earlier *Quixote*. True, Menard would have dwelled in and known the world differently than Cervantes, but does his being and knowledge alter the significance of what appears on the page?

As the essay proceeds, it becomes less and less a work of literary criticism and more and more an exposition of the critic's well-meaning projections. After all, one cannot know the past from within the past, and one cannot wholly know another's mind no matter where one stands in time and place with respect to another individual. These observations are common enough, but Borges throws the epistemological problem into stark relief. By the end, "Pierre Menard" demonstrates that in order to say anything at all about a work of literature, a reader cannot help

but bring their own knowledge and context to bear. Thus, depending on when and by whom a work is read, it may mean differently through the same signs.

In the end, Borges's caricature of the critic asks us ultimately to reflect on the ways in which we conceive of and engage the author—or the revealer, in our case—as a principle of thrift. The critic need not declare the author dead to him, however deceased he might be in actuality. Still, he would do well to check his access to the author's mind. (I think it hardly incidental that Menard was the critic's friend. We can imagine the critic wanting to do justice to the Menard he knew, or thought he knew, at the same time that friendship may embolden him to speak on Menard's behalf in ways he may not have spoken for other authors less intimately familiar to him.) And so, to whatever degree we can know a revealer's biography and socio-historical context, we must continually evaluate not only the degree to which that knowledge should feature in a given interpretive framework, but also the degree to which we can possess it. As Borges has us confront the limits of our knowledge and the past's knowability, he effectively asks us to consider how much voice and influence we should afford a projection, however reasonably and responsibly imagined it may be. At a certain level, the question becomes: With whom do we want to read and why? What personalities will I let accompany me, influence me, or, at the very least, cross my mind as I read?

In response to Borges's challenges, I would say that the treasure tradition would still have us consider individual revealers and their contexts as we encounter a work. Principles of thrift are not made to recede entirely into the background of their revelations. We should want to read with a Drimé Künga of the fourteenth century to some extent, difficult to know as he is. But, at the same time, treasure revelation also requires the acknowledgment of multiple author-revealers, and it calls for the recognition of a treasure's special relevance to multiple contexts.

The *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* might have been meant for contemporaries of Drimé Künga, but it was no less meant for contemporaries of Pema Lingpa. (And what of its "re-discovery" in the 1990s?) To evoke a revealer as a principle of thrift, it would seem, is to evoke the fact of past and future others, if not to recall other specific individuals outright. In the treasure tradition, then, principles of thrift appear to function as reminders of the proliferation of meaning.

Readers of Revelations: Engaging in a Hermeneutics of Intimacy

Looking ahead to analyses of the *Life* itself in Part II, I want to offer a final point in light of Borges on the nature and role of the reader. This point will be expanded further over the next several chapters, but it is worth addressing here in brief. It relates to a theory of the reader-work encounter that emerges from the premises of treasure revelation and therefore applies to treasure texts broadly. (Though to be sure, when tested, this theory may work better with some genres over others.) To wit: as a revealed work of literature that enters and re-enters the world in times of need, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, by its very nature of being a treasure text, anticipates a model reader who will interpret their own life and times in light of what it says, *and vice versa*. To put this another way, as a *terma*, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* seeks a reader who will recognize that the work and the contexts in which it is revealed are keys to one another's mutual illumination. The *Life* recognizes its significance to be in the process of becoming along with a reader.

As Borges's critic reads the two *Quixotes* at his disposal, he engages different types of texts in a different enterprise. Although he sees his times (i.e., Menard's times) reflected in the text, he does not regard the twentieth-century *Quixote* as a key to interpreting his own life. Instead, he sees Menard's *Quixote* as a product of Menard's knowledge and artistic capabilities, and so he looks for his friend behind the text as the lens through which to interpret the text.

Under the critic's scrutiny, in short, the *Quixote* is primarily a work that *speaks out of* and therefore *of* or *about* his friend Menard. It is not a work that *speaks to* or articulates him, the reader, and his life's circumstances above all.

Were the critic to shift his orientation from reader tasked with reviewing the work to lover of literature reading *Don Quixote* for pleasure, he might be more inclined to let the work speak to him, rife as it is with "timeless" themes and truths that carry from age to age. All the same, this orientation would still fall short of what treasure revelation demands vis-à-vis its works. To view a work of literature as resonant across time is not the same thing as acknowledging the special relevance it aspires to have for every one of its readers in every age in which it appears.

That is, much like Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, a work of treasure literature may be "timeless" in the sense that its themes or messages may strike a chord with us today. However, it seems to me that treasure revelation proposes something more radical for its texts than what "timelessness," in the colloquial sense, suggests. For example, I may read a compendium of medieval-era German aphorisms and find in it a saying applicable my current situation. Having done so, I might say that I have found timeless words of wisdom. Or, if I see a character in one of Shakespeare's dramas confronting circumstances akin to those that I or my family and friends have had to confront, I may say that Shakespeare tells a timeless tale, a tale as old as time. But this is to analogize, not to regard and interpret a work as a treasure text. On that order, if readers take the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* to be a revealed, they should see their lives in light of it and it in light of their lives. The model reader's task is to find the *Life* able to both speak of and answer to her condition.

In arguing as much, I draw attention above all to the *Life's* "sacred scriptural status," a status achieved when a treasure text is recognized by a community as authentic, which is to say, truly the product or "word" of an enlightened entity.¹⁴⁰ Insofar as it is acknowledged as an authentic treasure, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is in that sense a scriptural work. (This is not to say that it served as a paradigmatic example of scripture in the communities in which it circulated, however.) This may mean many things for it, but I am primarily interested in the implications of this status for the work-reader encounter. As we will see in the sections that consider its genre, I argue that keys to reading the *Life* can be found around as well as within the work, so to speak. I take up the concept of genre as one key (or a theoretical approach) to reading it, and I suggest that in what the *Life* says about itself, implicitly and explicitly, we find still other interpretive guidelines.

The even broader proposal against which we might check generic as well as text-internal hermeneutical appeals, however, is the call to be (or become) a subject willing to interpret the text in ways that bring the reader and the work—and, importantly, its protagonist—closer and closer together. As I stated in my introduction, closeness should be understood both in terms of familiarity with, as in knowledge or understanding of the work, and in terms of comfort with the work, perhaps not just in the sense of facility with it, but also solace thanks to it and even affection for it. In this regard, one might say that treasure revelation recommends a hermeneutics of intimacy, or, more precisely, a hermeneutics toward or in the service of intimacy. On whatever grounds the reading subject builds and executes an analytical framework, that framework should have greater intimacy with the work and, by extension, its protagonist as its goal.

¹⁴⁰ On this point, see Gyatso 1993: 112, 114; and Doctor 2005: 17–18, 44 *et passim*.

I recognize that this is, of course, to speak on the abstract, theoretical level. Those who read the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* may have regarded and interpreted it in very different ways from one another and from the ways in which the work itself proposes it should be read. However, I am not sure that we need to prove that anyone ever did read the *Life* with the goal of ever-increasing intimacy with it in mind in order to be able to say that treasure revelation nonetheless posits such an objective for its text-reader encounters.

**Overview of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*:
Formal Features, Dominant Themes, and Chapter Summaries**

From a sense of what it means to be a recognized treasure text in the abstract, we might move on to contemplating the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* itself so that we can gain a better understanding of what a reader, whatever their era, actually stands to encounter. Recall that Drimé Künga (b. 1347) is the earliest revealer to whom extant manuscripts of the *Life* are attributed. For all intents and purposes, I take to him to be the historical "author" of the *Life* and I call the *Life* a fourteenth-century work, though I hold open the possibility that all or parts of it may be earlier, and that earlier figures like Guru Chöwang (1212–1270), Longchenpa (1308–1364), and Orgyan Lingpa (b. 1323) may have been prior revealers of the *Life*, either as we find it, or in some iteration resonant with the work as we find it today.

Whatever the case with its earlier discoverers, however, at present we also have witnesses of the *Life* attributed Pema Lingpa (1450–1521), a figure who was Drimé Künga's junior by approximately one-hundred years and likewise active in southern Tibet, though he is associated most closely with the region today known as Bumthang in central Bhutan. Although Pema Lingpa does not describe a discovery of the *Life* personally, others in history attribute a *Life of*

Yeshé Tsogyal to him amid inventories of his *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle, and the versions of the work to which we find his name attached are, in essence, the same work we find attributed to Drimé Künga. A great many smaller-scale variations appear across sources, but the story on the whole does not change.

It may be that Pema Lingpa—the more renowned of the two revealers—had the work folded into his *oeuvre* posthumously, his fame acting as a kind of vortex for many a treasure text, not just the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. But it is also entirely possible that with or without acknowledgement of Drimé Künga, Pema Lingpa claimed the *Life* for himself and/or exerted some influence over it. How that influence may have manifested exactly (re-discovery? editing? anthologization?), however, we cannot be sure. In acknowledgement of the tradition's attribution of the *Life* to him, whatever his influence over it in reality, I refer to Pema Lingpa as an attributed author (read: author-revealer). Where I refer to "Drimé Künga's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*," I mean to indicate the story as we find it attributed to both figures. If I want to draw attention to a particular witness or edition of the *Life*, I note the figure to whom the specific text is attributed. In general, however, I prefer to locate agency with the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* itself. This approach foregrounds the *Life's* rhetorical maneuvers and narrative strategies without undue deference to what any figure behind it might have intended. Especially when we recall that Yeshé Tsogyal herself occupies the position of imputed author, authorial intention seems all the more elusive a specter with which to contend as we contemplate the *Life's* aims.

General Features of the Work

In the Introduction, I noted that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* attributed to Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa appears to be the earliest full-length hagiography of Yeshé Tsogyal currently at our

disposal. As recently as 1996, scholars took the seventeenth-century life story of Yeshé Tsogyal attributed to Taksham Nüden Dorjé (b.1655) to be the only account of the entire life of an eighteenth-century noblewoman known primarily as Kharchen Za Tsogyal, a figure who is supposed to have been an imperial-age empress, a tantric adept, and the Tibetan consort of the famed Indian guru Padmasambhava.¹⁴¹ The fourteenth-century *Life*, however, appears to have been one among several inspirations for the seventeenth-century account, and although the former's influence on the latter is palpable, the works differ considerably in both form and content.

Like Taksham's account, the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is most often designated a *namtar* (*rnam thar*), a genre label upon which I will comment extensively in the next chapter. Here it will suffice to say that I take the term above all to mean "hagiography" or "life story." In combination with the term *namtar* or on its own, however, we occasionally see the work labeled a *kyérab* (*skyes rabs*; Skt./Pāli *jātaka*), a genre designation for the story of a previous life or, literally, a "birth" of an individual, typically a bodhisattva (or the Bodhisattva) on the path to enlightenment. Especially across Pāli *jātaka* tales, we often find a story being told within a story such that this structure emerges a type of generic convention. Before readers read a birth story set in the past, they encounter the Bhagavan, Gotama Buddha, as he is about to tell that story to an audience in the narrative present, and at the end of the story, readers see him return to reveal the identities of the characters in the past as individuals who are in attendance at the sermon being told in the narrative's now.

The *Life* also employs this framing device, but not in the usual present-past-present way. Although technically speaking the *Life* is a story within a story, that fact is likely to take some recollecting on the reader's part. That is to say that Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life*, the story of its

¹⁴¹ Gyatso 2006: 7.

protagonist's final birth, only engages the *jātaka* story-within-a-story framing device to a minimal degree. A reader who is not already predisposed to take Yeshé Tsogyal to be the narrator would not find strong text-internal encouragement to do so at the story's outset, nor would they encounter much prompting to do so throughout. Just as we saw in the last chapter of Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record*, the third-person point of view eclipses the first such that one could easily take the narrator to be someone other than Yeshé Tsogyal.¹⁴² It is not until the very end of the account when Padmasambhava bids her record her life story that the reader senses a definitive temporal shift to one of multiple narrative presents and realizes that Yeshé Tsogyal could have been the narrator of the story all along. Moreover, the "fourth wall," the conceptual barrier separating the story world and the world of the audience, remains unbreached in Drimé Künga (as in Orgyan Lingpa). The narrator does not speak to a "you" who is the reader directly. Even when the reader reaches the metadiscursive passages in which it is acknowledged that the story is a story being told, the reader does not hear herself addressed in the second person.

The *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* itself spans seven chapters, each of which has its own title. The first chapter begins with Yeshé Tsogyal's conception and moves quickly through her birth and youth, during which time she is known as Princess Pema Cham (*lha lcam padma lcam*). The action of this chapter centers around Yeshé Tsogyal's refusal of two royal suitors, one a prince from a region referred to as Bheta, located somewhere on the Indian subcontinent, and the other a more local Tibetan from a region known as Zurkhar.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Translations of the Taksham Nüden Dorjé version of her life story bear this out. Tarthang Tulku (1983) and the Padmakara Group (1999) opt for a third-person omniscient narrator, while Dowman (1984) prefers to translate the narratorial voice in the first person.

¹⁴³ Names for both of these regions vary across sources for the *Life*. For Bheta, we also see Beta, Betala, Bhetala, Bhirya, and Bhidzara. (The last is perhaps a rendering of the Skt. *viḥāra*). For Zurkhar, short for Zur mo mkhar, we also see Zung/Zungs mo mkhar. Bheta/Betala is widely attested in Tibetan literature (e.g., Roerich 1949: 391, 394)

Throughout, her family and court ministers attempt to convince her not to renounce domestic life, but she remains adamant about pursuing ascetic practice in an uninhabited region (*mi med yul*). As a result, she is exiled from her parents' palace. After some further tribulations, notably a kidnapping, she meets her guru, Padmasambhava, referred to most often as Orgyan Pema Jungné (*o rgyan pad ma 'byung gnas*, i.e., the [guru from] "Oḍḍiyāna, Born of a Lotus"). Chapter II tells of Yeshé Tsogyal's extensive travels throughout the regions of Oḍḍiyāna, Padmasambhava's homeland, where she witnesses demonstrations of faith and devotion that she herself must cultivate if she hopes to progress on the path to enlightenment. In Chapter III, Yeshé Tsogyal beseeches Padmasambhava to sing to her songs of experience (*nyams kyi glu*) such that she might receive further advice on how to succeed on the path of the secret mantra (*gsang sngags*), which is to say the Vajrayāna Buddhist path. Chapter IV offers a catalogue all of the teachings of the so-called "Nine Successive Vehicles" (*Theg pa rim pa'i dgu*, i.e., from *śravakayāna* to Atiyoga) that Yeshé Tsogyal received from Padmasambhava. Chapter V, a chapter that circulated independently of the rest of the *Life*, recounts Yeshé Tsogyal's descent into the depths of the hell realm in order to rescue Shantipa, the wicked minister who had condemned her to torture and death for her refusal to marry. Chapters VI predicts the ways in which Yeshé Tsogyal will continue the work of Padmasambhava by concealing treasures, including her own life story. And Chapter VII predicts a future dark age when such treasures will prove necessary to ensure Buddhism's future efflorescence throughout Tibet.

as a southern region of India, and we see it often in Padmasambhava biographical sources. See, e.g., Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje, "Sing ga la dang bhe ta'i rgyal kham su chos 'khor bskor ba'i le'u ste so dgu pa," in *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan*, BDRC WIPD83974 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2006): 81–82. It has been variously mapped onto modern Indian subcontinental borders by scholars.

When we examine the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* at the chapter level, at least two aspects of the work immediately stand out. The first has to do with what I refer to as the *Life's* "excerptability," a general feature unrestricted to any one of its levels. Although the chapters transition from one to the next in ways that flow, they may be regarded as more or less self-contained, or containable, parts of a whole. (The same can be said of many stanzas, whether in sets or alone.) That is to say that I think that each of the seven chapters, not just the fifth, could circulate independently of the *Life* as a more or less coherent unit. However, if they were split apart, some chapters would undoubtedly drift toward a home outside the typical bounds of "life story," i.e., *namtar*, the parent genre.

The second striking aspect of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, then, is its compositional variety. Although most chapters are dominated by dialogue, verbal exchanges do not look the same in all cases. Chapters I and II are narratives dominated by interpersonal dialogues in which characters ask questions of and respond to one another at length. Chapter III is effectively a *zhülen* (*zhus lan*), a question-and-answer session about doctrine and practice akin to a catechism. Here Padmasambhava does the majority of the talking while Yeshé Tsogyal asks questions pertinent to the understanding and practice of the Great Perfection. Chapter IV, the outlier, offers a catalogue of teachings and their location of receipt. And in Chapters V, VI, and VII there is a shift between question-and-answer sessions and slightly more robust exchanges. In Chapter V we see Yeshé Tsogyal inquire after Shantipa and the fate of other beings in hell, while in Chapters VI and VII, Padmasambhava offers her prophesies.

Stylistic variation of this sort in Tibetan literature is not unique to the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, but it does generate a number of questions about the shape in which Drimé Künga found his sources. After observing the *Life's* excerptability and reading Chapters III and IV

especially, one begins to wonder what counts as a "life story" of Yeshé Tsogyal such that a *tertön* can be said to have revealed it. Must it be a cradle-to-grave (or at least to-old-age) narrative, or could it have been a *zhülen*, a record of teachings received, instructions for a ritual or spiritual exercise, or something else? That is, to what degree might we have to adjust our conceptions of certain genres in order to affirm the claims that Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* was discovered by Drimé Künga's predecessors? In the end, it may be that in order to be deemed a revealer of the *Life*, individuals like Guru Chöwang, Longchenpa, and Orgyan Lingpa need not have revealed the text in a form we might expect.

That said, even though they differ stylistically, each of the chapters is written primarily in verse, which is to say metrically regulated composition,¹⁴⁴ and we can say that generally, though with the exception of Chapter IV (the list of teachings received), each chapter favors dialogue as a means of fleshing out the *Life's* characters and advancing the plot. Although diegesis is certainly employed throughout the *Life*, one steps away from reading the text with the feeling that its contents—thanks in large part to the very fact of its extensive use of dialogue—have been more mimetically than diegetically conveyed.

The effects of this narrative structuring on the reader will be argued for in subsequent parts of this thesis,¹⁴⁵ but here it is worthwhile to note that this is one of the several ways in which the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* differs from the seventeenth. When we examine the *Life* against Taksham's Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*, composed of eight chapters in a more balanced mixture of prose and verse, the diegetic/mimetic relationship appears to be inverted, though this observation warrants some qualification.

¹⁴⁴ Roger R. Jackson, "'Poetry' in Tibet: Glu, mGur, sNyan Ngag and 'Songs of Experience,'" in *Tibetan Literature: Studies In Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1996), 368–392.

¹⁴⁵ More on this topic will follow in chapter five.

To wit: it is true that Taksham employs both narration and dialogue in his version of Yeshé Tsogyal's *namtar*, but on the whole, diegesis eclipses mimesis. There is a great deal of direct and reported speech throughout the text. However, even where characters do not just speak out (as in praise or prayer) but speak to one another at some length, the pacing of such moments lends them the feel of a series of monologues rather than of interpersonal exchange. Generally, I think about the difference between the works in terms of their overall narrative modes in the following way. If a playwright approached me and asked which work would be easier to adapt for the stage in less than twenty-four hours, I would recommend the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* without hesitation. That version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story seems to anticipate a moment in the spotlight.

In terms of what each work has to say—in addition to how things are said—a reader of both the fourteenth- and seventeenth-century *namtars* immediately notices that the first two chapters of the earlier work appear in Taksham's later version in quite different iterations. For example, the extensive dialogues leading up to Yeshé Tsogyal's exile in Chapter I of Drimé Künga's *Life* are reduced in Taksham to just a few lines, and Taksham merely cites Yeshé Tsogyal's travels throughout Oḍḍiyāna, effectively omitting the bulk of Drimé Künga's Chapter II.¹⁴⁶ Taken together, the first two chapters of the fourteenth-century *Life* make up roughly seventy percent of the work, whereas in Taksham, the lines that refer to their contents could be easily confined to just a few folios.

Other notable differences in content include the almost complete absence of Emperor Tri Songdétsen and Atsara Salé from the fourteenth-century text. Absence of the former figure is especially surprising to readers familiar with Yeshé Tsogyal's story as it is traditionally

¹⁴⁶ See Taksham 1989.

received.¹⁴⁷ In Taksham, Tri Songdétsen famously rescues Yeshé Tsogyal from an unwanted suitor. For his part, Atsara Salé becomes her Nepalese consort. In Drimé Künga, Padmasambhava does the rescuing, and the emperor's name appears only in Chapter V where he is designated a previous birth of a Chökyi Wangchuk, presumably Guru Chöwang.¹⁴⁸ And while several witnesses of the fourteenth-century *Life* list an Atsara Salé among Padmasambhava's primary male disciples, that is the most we hear about a person by that name.¹⁴⁹ As Drimé Künga has it, then, Yeshé Tsogyal neither becomes an imperial queen nor a practitioner who engages in tantric sexual union with her own consorts.

Moreover, although we find a "bandit scene" in both works, Taksham's version includes a grave element either absent from or only implied in the *Life* attributed to Drimé Künga. In the fourteenth-century version, seven thieving bandits (*chom rkun gyi jag*) happen upon Yeshé Tsogyal as she engages in solitary meditation. They steal her meager rations and then proceed to ask her why she, such an attractive woman, would choose to live a harsh life alone in a forest. As they bid her join them instead, she meditates on her guru and preaches to them. Following what amounts to a call to spiritual practice and an admonition not to harm others, each bandit,

¹⁴⁷ For more on this point than what I provide immediately above, see the previous chapter where I discuss the popular Buddhist history of Tibet's imperial age.

¹⁴⁸ DK 2013: 259. An exception to the single mention of Tri Songdétsen in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is the *incipit* of the Larung Gar manuscript upon which the 2013 Lhasa edition is based. For both mentions of the emperor in that witness, see U rgyan Dri med kun dga', *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun pa*, BDRC W8LS19942 (uploaded in the fall of 2017), 1b–4b.2; 115a.4–5. The Lhasa edition prints this manuscript's *incipit* out of order, however, and it omits folio 2 of the manuscript altogether such that initial mention of Tri Songdétsen (2b.3–4) is also omitted. (N.B. The manuscript is also currently out of order on BDRC. See pp. 135–136 below and the appendix on witnesses for more on this witness and a transliteration of the *incipit* in the correct order.)

¹⁴⁹ His name would seem to vary, however. Or he may have been mistaken for or conflated with another figure, Atsara Pelyang, also known as Atsara *Yeshé* Pelyang. Nevertheless, several witnesses include an Atsara Salé among the disciples of Padmasambhava. To wit: in the Drimé Künga Larung Gar manuscript, for example, we find an Atsara Yeshé (not Salé) mentioned early in Chapter V, 103a.2 (cf. DK 2013: 250), but the Pema Lingpa Lhasa edition (2013: 322) reads Atsar Salé (A tsar sa le) in the same context.

thoroughly ashamed of his behavior, becomes a devout practitioner of Dharma. Yeshé Tsogyal then travels with them as a band of ascetics. In Taksham's account, the bandits are similarly converted, but not before they steal Yeshé Tsogyal's possessions *and* rape her.¹⁵⁰ Remarkably, in a song she sings to them upon this violation of her person, she reframes the situation such that it no longer reads as an assault. Instead, Yeshé Tsogyal constructs it a sanctioned tantric sexual practice. By their lustful acts, she tells the bandits, they have effectively entered upon a secret path to liberation by chance—a path that *must* have been practiced "unconsciously" (*thug 'gyel*), which is to say "unwittingly" for it to have worked.¹⁵¹

Both in terms of Yeshé Tsogyal's affiliations with Emperor Tri Songdét sen and Atsara Salé and her encounter with the bandits, one wonders whether Drimé Künga and Taksham drew on different circulating accounts, or if one or both figures chose to diverge from tradition.¹⁵² Interestingly, Taksham breaches the narrative fourth wall several times throughout his version in order to address his readers directly and tell them that if they want to know more about a certain episode in Yeshé Tsogyal's life, they should look elsewhere. In this way, Taksham self-consciously styles his work as one among many potential sources of information on Yeshé Tsogyal. Since Drimé Künga's text, on the other hand, does not employ this device, it may be

¹⁵⁰ Taksham (1989: 160) reads *de nas sham po gangs su bzhugs pas/ jag pa mi bdun byung nas jo mo'i chas rnams phrog/ jo mo la sbyor ba byas pas/ jo mos dga' ba bzhi ngo sprad pa'i mgur 'di gsungs so*. "Then, when she was living in Shampo Gang, seven bandits appeared and stole the Lady's things. When they forced themselves on the Lady (*jo mo la sbyor ba byas pas*, lit. "did join to her," i.e., engaged in coitus), the lady uttered this song which introduced them to the Four Joys [of Tantric Practice]." Cf. translations by Tarthang Tulku (1983: 139), Dowman (1984: 113), and the Padmakara Group (1999: 125). With its talk of passion or lust (*chags pa*), the song that follows in Taksham supports the translation of "*sbyor ba byas pa*" as "rape." However, the scene in the fourteenth-century *Life* is not so sexually charged on paper. Although the bandits in Drimé Künga's *Life* remark upon Yeshé Tsogyal's beauty, they don't appear to assault her physically, and her song focuses on their deplorable behavior as thieves and their general lack of civility and moral cultivation. See DK 2013: 234–235. Cf. PL 2013: 307–308.

¹⁵¹ Taksham 1989: 160.

¹⁵² Whatever the precise case, it strikes me that if the *Life* circulated more widely in Bhutan than in Central Tibet, this could in part account for the absence of Tri Songdét sen as well as the lack of interest, as we will see shortly below, in Tibet-specific, Buddhist-Bön religious conflicts.

that there was a relative dearth of (written) sources about Yeshé Tsogyal during his time. That is to say that his would have been the definitive full-length account. Otherwise, it may be that other sources notwithstanding, Drimé Künga chose an approach opposite Taksham's in an effort to *style* his discovery the definitive, comprehensive source on Yeshé Tsogyal. Or, possible still, Drimé Künga simply did not see a need to direct readers elsewhere. Perhaps it occurred to him not at all, or perhaps it was well enough known that other sources did or did not exist.

Dominant Themes in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*

Elsewhere in this thesis, I will discuss the differences between Yeshé Tsogyal's earlier and later *Lives* further, both in terms of content and structure. For now, however, we might limit ourselves to accounting for one more particular difference, namely a preoccupation with religious conflict in Taksham that we do not find in Drimé Künga. This difference will move us into a summary of some of the dominant themes of the *Life*, particularly *dharma*, in the sense of one's "duty" or "moral obligation," or "morality" in general, versus Dharma as the Buddha's teachings or "religion" more broadly; as well as sex and gender; and Dzogchen, or the "Great Perfection" teachings, along with Guru Padmasambhava as those teachings' champion.

Dharma, *dharma*, d/Dharma?

The seventh chapter of Taksham's Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* retells the "classic" story of Padmasambhava's arrival and early days in Tibet, albeit with a somewhat unusual focus on the religious conflict that Tri Songdétsen was supposed to have inherited upon his ascent to the throne. While other accounts may depict royal ministers as wary of Padmasambhava given his supernatural powers, Taksham's life story of Yeshé Tsogyal emphasizes court opposition above

all to the Buddhist teachings that the guru espouses. A cadre of ministers who are adherents of Bön, a tradition characterized within the text as the religion of Tibet prior to the arrival of Indian Buddhist thought and practice, are thoroughly villainized, and we see Tri Songdétsen moved to organize a debate to resolve the growing conflict.¹⁵³

What historians of Tibet often refer to as the "Samyé Debate" or the "Council of Lhasa/Samyé," ensues, though in many accounts this event revolves around a debate between Hashang Mahāyāna, a Chinese monk and an advocate of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, and Kamalaśīla, an eighth-century disciple of Śāntarakṣita and a champion of Indian Buddhist doctrine. Taksham, however, depicts the debate not as a contest between adherents of a Chan "sudden" approach to enlightenment versus an Indian "gradual" approach,¹⁵⁴ but rather, as a question of whether Buddhism or Bön should be acknowledged as Tibet's national religion. In Taksham, certain Bön ministers¹⁵⁵ and Indian and Tibetan Buddhist masters pair off and take turns attempting to best one another intellectually and in terms of their respective magical talents. Named among the Buddhist adepts present at Tri Songdétsen's court are Padmasambhava, Atsara Pelyang, Vimalamitra, Vairocana, and Nüb Namkhai Nyingpo.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ What may have constituted "religion" in Tibet prior to Buddhism's arrival is the subject of much scholarly debate. Rather than delve into this issue here, I turn readers to Zeff Bjerken, "Exorcising the Illusion of Bon 'Shamans': A Critical Genealogy of Shamanism in Tibetan Religions," October 2006, 4–59 as well as Samten Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle: Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet* (Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point, 1998).

¹⁵⁴ Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 20–21; 78–87.

¹⁵⁵ Taksham's text distinguishes between "perverse" or "erroneous" Bönpos (*log bon rnams*) and those who were Buddhist Bönpos (*bon nang pa*), i.e., those who accepted that Bön's founder, "Teacher" Shenrab Miwo (Ston pa gshen rab mi bo), was really a manifestation of Śākyamuni Buddha.

¹⁵⁶ Where we hear about Nüb Namkhai Nyingpo elsewhere in the text, we find that he is the main figure credited with recording the Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* revealed by Taksham. Although Taksham also includes details about Padmasambhava's disciple, Nüb Sangyé Yeshé, the figure who, in Drimé Künga's *Life*, requested Yeshé Tsogyal's story, his version claims to be a treasure text recorded/concealed by Lasum Gyalwa Changchub (La gsum rgyal ba byang chub) and Nüb Namkhai Nyingpo (Gnubs nam mkha'i snying po). See Taksham 1989: 252.

By contrast to Taksham's story, the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* appears utterly unconcerned with Buddhist-Bön polemics, or with intra-religious conflict for that matter. Although it is true that for nearly all of Chapter I, Yeshé Tsogyal faces opposition to her desire to practice Holy Dharma (*dam chos*), this opposition has primarily to do with her wish to live as an unmarried ascetic rather than as a religiously-observant householder (*khyim thab*). The ministers of her father's court who are "hostile to the Dharma" (*chos la gnag pa*) appear above all to be hostile to the way in which Yeshé Tsogyal presents its requirements for her way of life. They do not state a preference for some alternative set of beliefs or practices. Instead, diplomacy is foremost on their minds, and with that, they mean to ensure that Yeshé Tsogyal agrees to take on the domestic roles that a woman of her station would be expected to fulfill in marriage. In short, they would prefer to see her do her *dharma*—her domestic duty—rather than practice Dharma (whatever she thinks that entails) at her duty's expense. Where Yeshé Tsogyal's suitors weigh in, they advocate a balance between *dharma* and Dharma. They acknowledge that virtuous deeds can be undertaken as one fulfills the duties of a householder (or a married forest-dweller), and so they, for their part, argue with Yeshé Tsogyal over the form that Dharmic practice should take, not whether or not the Buddha's teachings should be observed at all.¹⁵⁷

In this regard, the first chapter of the *Life* resonates with the final birth story, famous throughout the Buddhist world, of the Buddha as we find it in Aśvaghōṣa's (2nd cent. CE) *Life of the Buddha* (Skt. *Buddhacarita*),¹⁵⁸ particularly where he abandoned domestic life to study at the

¹⁵⁷ The *dharma*/*Dharma* debates that ensue recall stories from the Indian epic tradition as well as myriad works of Buddhist literature. On the topic of *dharma*, its scope and its demands, one thinks immediately of Arjuna's dialogues with Kṛṣṇa in the *Bhagavadgītā*. On *dharma* versus *Dharma*, of Siddhartha's words to Śuddhodana in the *Buddhacarita*. On the limits of *Dharma*, or on virtue in excess, of King Sañjaya's conversations with his ministers about his son Vessantara. On the problem of marriage—not only of marrying, but also of marrying a child *off*—many a story comes to mind. This theme will be treated briefly on pp. 99–100.

¹⁵⁸ Tōh. 4156. Aśvaghōṣa, *Life of the Buddha*, trans. Patrick Olivelle, Clay Sanskrit Library, 33 (New York: New York University Press, 2008). For the dating of the *Buddhacarita's* Tibetan translation (ca. 1260s or 1270s), see

feet of various gurus. As that story goes, Prince Siddhārtha Gautama's family would not prevent him from retreating to the ascetic grove in old age (as appropriate according to the *āśrama* system), but his insistence on doing so as a young man, a move that would be in violation of the normal brahmanical order, caused everyone close to him profound dismay. Similarly, Yeshé Tsogyal rejects alternatives to full-fledged, solitary asceticism. She wishes neither to partner with her childhood friend such that they may retreat to the forest together,¹⁵⁹ nor does she agree to marry the Zurkhar prince, even though he tells her that with him, she may be allowed to revere lamas, treat servants kindly, give to the poor, and so on.

Remarking upon Taksham's life story of Yeshé Tsogyal, Gross observes that anyone who is "familiar with the basic mythic outline of the hero's life and with the life of Siddhārtha Gautama and other great Buddhist exemplars will immediately recognize that Tsogyal's life-story manifests those patterns."¹⁶⁰ The same holds true for fourteenth-century *Life*. While neither story follows the outline of the Buddha's final birth straightforwardly, both can be said to resonate with it from start to finish. Still, a reader sensitive to the *jātaka* genre would notice that the Buddha's extended biography—that is, his biography as it encompasses his previous lives—asserts an even greater presence in the fourteenth-century *Life* than the seventeenth. Drimé Künga's version makes use of not one but several framing or "structuring" texts, at least three of

David Jackson, "On the Date of the Tibetan Translation of Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita*," in *Aspects of Buddhism: Proceedings of the International Seminar on Buddhist Studies*, eds. Agata Bareja-Starzynksa and Marek Mejer, (Warsaw, Poland: Oriental Institute, 1997).

¹⁵⁹ On the forest-dweller (*vanaprastha*) stage, the *Law of Manu* (6.3), stipulates that a man should either entrust his wife to his sons or let her accompany him into the forest. See Patrick Olivelle, *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmaśāstra*, ed. Suman Olivelle, South Asia Research (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 98.

¹⁶⁰ Gross 1987: 1. On the idea of a "basic mythic outline of a hero's life," Gross refers to Joseph Campbell's theory of the "monomyth" of the hero, a schema that, as Campbell finds it, transcends culture. See Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008 [1949]).

which are about the Buddha as the Bodhisattva on the path to enlightenment. Some of these texts exert their influence subtly, others overtly.¹⁶¹ Two of these works, the birth story of Prince Vessantara (Skt. Viśvantara) and the Story of the Starving Tigress, will be analyzed in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

Dzogchen: The Great Perfection

While the *Life* does not begin with much substance on the nature of the Dharma one should be practicing, the text builds gradually from a few statements about the inescapability of karma and the importance of non-harm in the first two chapters to a lengthy exposition of the Tibetan tradition of Dzogchen, or the teachings of the "Great Perfection." Though notoriously difficult to summarize given its internal diversity,¹⁶² within the *Life*, the Great Perfection seems above all to be about the integration of teaching and practice. (See the summary of the *Life's* Chapter IV below for more on what precisely this entails within the work.) In order to succeed on the tantric path, one must come to know what one must know experientially, not just intellectually. Among Padmasambhava's words of encouragement to Yeshé Tsogyal as she meditates on the non-duality of appearances and mind, he continually reminds her that teachings and insights born thereof should be absorbed into her way of being. One must integrate view and

¹⁶¹ I thank Beatrice Chrystall for helping me think through the way to phrase the idea of an intertextual relationship in which one work appears to take cues from another in terms of its patterning where the "structuring" text may or may not be referred to explicitly within the text for which it provides a frame or pattern. Chrystall uses this terminology in her doctoral dissertation "Connections without Limit: The Refiguring of the Buddha in the *Jinamahānidāna*" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2004).

¹⁶² On this issue, see Kapstein 2000: 167. For a helpful summary that takes into account the "astonishingly varied array of traditions" that are referred to under "Great Perfection," see David Germano, "Dzogchen," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., edited by Lindsay Jones, 2545–2550. Vol. 4. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. Gale Virtual Reference Library (accessed April 4, 2017).

conduct, he asserts, and with that, one must stay vigilant with regard to the level of one's commitment to one's practice.¹⁶³

Along with the exposure to religious practice and experiential learning she gains in Chapter II, Padmasambhava's statements to this effect contrast with Yeshé Tsogyal's earlier assumptions about what constitutes Dharma and Dharmic practice. Throughout Chapter I, she wishes to meditate alone in the forest as an ascetic, thinking that this act in itself is Holy Dharma, yet that is about as far as her knowledge extends. Here a reader familiar with Mahāyāna polemics might view her as limited to the *śrāvaka*, i.e., the "hearer's" or "disciple's" path, whereas her encounter with Padmasambhava places her on the (Mahāyānically preferable) "bodhisattva" path to spiritual success. The story of the *Life* is thus not only one of Buddhism's adoption and advocacy, but also of the spiritual maturation of the protagonist in a ways that follows the "progression" from a limited sense of what it means to do Dharma (and for whom) to a much grander scope. On this order, whatever one's familiarity with Buddhism's history in India and beyond, reading Chapters I and II together, one develops a general sense of the story as a *Bildungsroman*, especially where the generic term evokes the moral development or spiritual cultivation of a youthful protagonist into adulthood.

Sex and Gender

In conjunction with proving an exemplar along Buddha lines, Yeshé Tsogyal and her story are also what folklorists like Vladimir Propp would deem "typified" in other ways, namely those that serve above all to underscore her gender. That is to say that while hers is a tale of progress on the Buddhist path toward liberation from cyclic existence—an "Instance-of-

¹⁶³ DK 2013: 243; PL 2013: 315.

Enlightenment Story"—Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* might be rightly characterized as an instance of other "tale types" as well, particularly those to do with beautiful women who thwart suitors, confound royal parents, and escape (or die by) execution in pursuit of their own, non-normative ideals.¹⁶⁴

Such tales abound the world over, though the *Life's* closest thematic kin beyond the Himalayas and the Indian subcontinent strike me as those stories of noblewomen who, citing their desire to observe Christ's teachings or to imitate Christ outright, refuse proposals of marriage. Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* finds especially good company among *vitae* in which a protagonist even goes so far as to threaten self-harm or suicide lest she be permitted to practice as she sees fit, which is to say as a consecrated virgin, or, in Yeshé Tsogyal's case, as a tantric consort of a qualified guru but not the wife of a householder. On the Christian side, the story of Thecla immediately comes to mind, though we might observe even more similarities in the *vita* of Margaret of Hungary (fl. 13th century), a Dominican saint who threatened to cut off her nose and lips rather than marry Ottokar II of Bavaria (ca. 1233–1278).¹⁶⁵

When we return to Indian and Tibetan literature, we see that a number of what we might call "Refusal-to-Marry" tales resonate with the *Life*, yet one in particular stands out.¹⁶⁶ In

¹⁶⁴ Here I am referring to Propp's classification system developed in his *Morphology of the Folktale* and elaborated in *Theory and History of Folklore*. See Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics 10 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1958), and *ibid.*, *Theory and History of Folklore*, ed. A. Lieberman, trans. A.Y. Martin et al., *Theory and History of Literature* 5 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983). On the Aarne-Thompson-Uther (ATU) "Tale Type Index," the *Life* would likely fall between numbers 850–999, i.e., "Realistic Tales" where many tales of princesses reside.

¹⁶⁵ I thank Travis Stevens for alerting me to Margaret of Hungary's *vita*. Female Christian saints' *vitae* that are thematically similar to Yeshé Tsogyal's in this way are many. Even a cursory thematic search turns up a number of "noblewomen who threatened self-harm or were martyred for refusing to marry against their parents' wishes," e.g., Dymphna, Eurosia, Winefride, and Philomena.

¹⁶⁶ One thinks immediately of the story of Lakṣmīnkarā, one of the eighty-four *mahāsiddhas* often known as "the mad princess" who is, incidentally, said to be Padmasambhava's aunt. See no. 82 in Abhayadatta, *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*, trans. James B. Robinson (Berkeley, CA: Dharma Publishing, 1979), 250–

Princess Mandāraḅa, Padmasambhava's Indian consort, we find a counterpart to Yeshé Tsogyal, one whose early-life trials bear an uncanny resemblance to what the Tibetan princess endured.

As several Padmasambhava *vitae* have it, Princess Mandāraḅa was an exceptionally beautiful daughter born to the king of Zahor.¹⁶⁷ Because of her great beauty, when she turned thirteen, she drew the attention of suitors (*'dod mi/'dod mkhan*) far and wide. Although such interest in one's daughter would ordinarily be a boon, Mandāraḅa's extensive draw posed a diplomatic problem for the king. (Not infrequently, a shift in character focus could easily render the "Refusal-to-Marry" tale a "Vexed-Royal-Father" tale.¹⁶⁸) Since he could not marry her off to more than one suitor, the king risked making enemies of those suitors who would inevitably be spurned. After consulting with his interior ministers about the matter, they concluded that the decision about whom to marry must be put to the princess herself. Of course, when questioned, Mandāraḅa refuses to marry at all, preferring instead to pursue the Dharma in a non-householder

253. On this figure and her story's potential influence on other biographies of Tibetan female adepts, see Hildegard Diemberger, *When a Woman Becomes a Religious Dynasty: The Samding Dorje Phagmo of Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 90, 99. One also thinks of the Pāli *Therīgāthā*, an early Buddhist anthology of poems voiced by female elders, or *therīs*. Several translations of this work into Western languages exist. See most recently: Charles Hallisey, trans., *Therīgāthā: Poems of the First Buddhist Women* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2015).

¹⁶⁷ Tib. Lha lcam MandA ra ba. For an overview of Mandāraḅa's life story, see Sarah Jacoby, "Mandāravā," Treasury of Lives, accessed April 14, 2016, <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Mandarava/9>. We find her story told over several chapters in Padmasambhava biographical literature by Orgyan Lingpa, Sangyé Lingpa, and Pema Lingpa. For a cradle-to-grave account, we have a seventeenth-to-eighteenth-century *namtar* translated into English in 1998 and attributed to Samten Lingpa, i.e., Taksham Nüden Dorjé. See *The Lives and Liberation of Princess Mandarava: The Indian Consort of Padmasambhava*, trans. Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 1998). Note that "Mandāraḅa" is also rendered "Mandāravā," as in Jacoby above. On this issue of the possible rendering of her name in "Zahorian" versus Sanskrit, and on the region of Zahor (*za/sa hor*), see Leonard van der Kuijp, "On the Edge of Myth and History: Za Hor, its Place in the History of Early Indian Buddhist Tantra, and Dalai Lama V and the Genealogy of its Royal Family," in *Studies on Buddhist Myths: Texts, Pictures, Traditions and History*, ed. Bangwei Wang, Jinhua Chen, and Ming Chen (Shanghai: Zhongxi Book Company, 2013), 114–164.

¹⁶⁸ The story of Ekaśṛṅga immediately comes to mind, for there we begin with the same trope of a father deciding how and to whom he should marry off his daughter. On this story, also commonly known as the *Nalinī-* or *Nalinikājātaka*, see Giacomo Benedetti, "The Story of Ekaśṛṅga in the Mahāvastu with Its Parallels," *Journal of Asian Civilizations* 38, no. 1 (July 2015): 1–51. It occurs to me also that in Yeshé Tsogyal's name as a youth, i.e., Princess Pema Cham (*padma lcam*), there may be a telling slippage with *Nalinī* (Tib. *padma ldan*).

capacity. When she explains this to her father, he encourages her to think about it for three days. She is then barred in the topmost, empty part of the palace, and there she reflects on her station in life and the urgency she feels with respect to living out the Buddha's teachings.

Though her suitors block all of the main doors, Mandāraḅa eventually escapes through a secret door along the palace's eastern wall. When she arrives at a spot still within earshot (*rgyang grags*; Skt. *krośa*) of her home, she removes all of her finery, and in a gesture that recalls Prince Siddhārtha's parting with his manservant Chanda,¹⁶⁹ she tells a female servant who followed after her to take all of her belongings and return thither. The woman tells her to go back inside the palace, but Mandāraḅa refuses. The princess then rips up the clothes she is wearing, tears out her hair, and dons discarded, tattered skins.¹⁷⁰ Her servant finally relents and retreats. When the woman alerts Mandāraḅa's parents of what has happened, the royal parents lament in turn. Mandāraḅa's suitors are then notified by letter (*shog 'phrin*) that the princess preferred the pursuit of Dharma to the life of a householder, and that there would be no persuading her otherwise.¹⁷¹

Although in Drimé Künga, Yeshé Tsogyal refuses only two suitors, not one from every direction,¹⁷² she also declines marriage altogether (initially via post) when given her choice of men, and as she is escorted into exile for her insolence, she similarly discards her finery and passes a jeweled ring off to a childhood companion.¹⁷³ Both Mandāraḅa and Yeshé Tsogyal

¹⁶⁹ See Olivelle 2008: 167.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Abhayadatta 1979: 251.

¹⁷¹ O rgyan gling pa 2006: chaps. 38–39 (2006: 196–205). Cf. Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: chaps. 44–45; and Padma gling pa 1977: chaps. 34–35 (= 279.5–291.5).

¹⁷² The fourteenth-century *Life* has two suitors, but Taksham's version refers to suitors from every direction prior to a narrowing to two.

¹⁷³ More on this figure, who I refer to as Karṇa, will follow in my final chapter. Suffice to say here that arguably, this character could be read as male *or* female in the *Life*, though I think that the character is more likely meant to be read as male across the extant witnesses. Although Chönyi Drolma (trans. 2017) reads the character as female, a reading that is in keeping with the other stories of departure noted above in which servants of the same sex as their

threaten suicide (*lceb pa*), citing the hope that they might be born in capacities better suited to the Dharma, which is to say that they look forward to future lives in which they obtain male bodies (*pho lus*), ideally of the human variety. This way, they would be freer to undertake religious practice in whatever way they see fit.¹⁷⁴

The stories of Mandāra and Yeshé Tsogyal overlap in a number of other ways, not least in that both women become consorts of Padmasambhava. But their experiences appear to be most closely aligned where they face problems as women intent on achieving liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth. While sex and gender norms no doubt factor into the objections to Prince Siddhārtha's departure from home—a young *man* like him ought to remain a husband and father, and eventually take the reins of his father's kingdom, not preemptively retreat to the forest—such norms are not brought into relief and explicitly thematized in the Buddha's biography.¹⁷⁵ That is, what it means to be a man is not at the center of the discussions about why the Bodhisattva should or should not, or can or cannot, renounce home and find success as a renunciant. Mandāra and Yeshé Tsogyal, on the other hand, are accused of shamelessness,

royal charges try to accompany them or dissuade them from renouncing, I take it to be a male character based partly on what the character says, but primarily on text-internal evidence that suggests that the term *khye'u*—i.e., the term by which the character is often described—indicates a male youth, or a "lad," rather than a female youth or "maiden." Though I have seen the term used mostly for males in my own research, it is technically a gender-neutral term for a youth. (One of our witnesses indeed bears this out. See BDRC W8LS18309, 18b.4: *khye'u pho mo lnga brgya'*, "five-hundred male and female youths.") However, girls or maidens in the *Life* are more consistently referred to by the term *bumo* (*bu mo*), and we see *khye'u dang bu mo*, i.e., "lads and maidens," more often than not. (See, for example, EAP105 1/2/132, 13a.1: *khye'u dang bu mo lnga brgyas*.) It strikes me that if the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* were performed as a drama, Karṇa's gender could be adapted to be male or female depending a performer's or troupe director's preference.

¹⁷⁴ PL 2013: 271. Cf. O rgyan gling pa 2006: 199; Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: 142; Padma gling pa 1977: 282–283.

¹⁷⁵ This is not to say that the Buddha's masculinity (or androgyny, as the case may be) goes everywhere unremarked upon such that gender is of no consideration in depictions of his life and teaching career. Quite the contrary. On this topic, see John Powers, *A Bull of a Man: Images of Masculinity, Sex, and the Body in Indian Buddhism*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

stupidity, and arrogance precisely for being women who would shirk the expectation of marriage in the name of renunciation.

As in the Buddha's biography, family members experience great sadness at the thought of these royal youths living lives of hardship, but gender considerations further complicate Mandārava and Yeshé Tsogyal's parents' feelings. If it seems unusual for a high-caste man to renounce home before he reaches old age, it appears to be doubly unheard of for a woman of the same status to do so at all. Especially in Yeshé Tsogyal's case, we see the decision to renounce described as a dangerous and self-serving move. By doing so, claims her father's court, she won't just be putting herself in the path of roving thugs and wild beasts. She will put the whole kingdom at risk of military invasion.¹⁷⁶ Plus, certain parties venture, what good can come of a woman like her practicing Dharma anyway?¹⁷⁷

At the heart of the first chapter of the *Life*, then, we find the issue of *dharma* versus Dharma: Should one do the duties with which one has been charged (*bskos pa*), namely the duties of a royal householder (*khyim thab rgyal srid [chos]*), or should one pursue Holy Dharma (*dam chos*)?¹⁷⁸ The reader may wonder: Can't one do both? Or, can one *really* do both such that Dharma practiced as a householder leads to enlightenment in a single lifetime? In the second chapter, the chapter in which Yeshé Tsogyal travels throughout the valleys of Padmasambhava's homeland, Oḍḍiyāna, the question becomes: What is Holy Dharma? Precisely what kinds of attitudes and practices should one cultivate if one wants to succeed on the Vajrayāna Buddhist

¹⁷⁶ On this very real concern about ensuring political stability (and safety) through marriage alliance, see Diemberger (2014 :37–38) where she discusses the realities which informed the biography of the first Samding Dorjé Phagmo (Bsam sding rdo rje phag mo), the princess Chökyi Drönma (Chos kyī sgron ma, 1422–1455).

¹⁷⁷ PL 2013: 270.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

path? Answers to both of these questions, broadly conceived—Should one do *dharma* or Dharma? and What is Dharma?—are contingent upon answers to yet further questions about what it means to be born and to live life as a woman in relationship to others in society.

Whatever their particular aims, modern scholars and practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism have long been interested in Yeshé Tsogyal precisely because she is a female figure who inquires about the capacities of her sex and, in doing so, throws into relief Buddhist troubles with gender. Taksham's life story has drawn the attention of various audiences in this vein: feminist historiographers seeking to write a recuperative histories of women (or of representations of women) in Tibet and in Buddhist cultures more broadly; gender theorists and comparativists looking for instances of non-modern, non-Western, potentially feminist or "proto-feminist" thought; and Buddhist practitioners for whom female representation matters. Although one might, in part, attribute this gender-focused attention on the case of Yeshé Tsogyal to trends in Western scholarship and feminist thought, it is nevertheless true that accounts of Yeshé Tsogyal consistently compel attention to gender issues. That is, scholars do not dwell on Yeshé Tsogyal's sex/gender arbitrarily or solely out of presentist, feminist concerns about the status of women in Buddhism. Rather, prompted by "her own" self-descriptions and existential preoccupations in this regard, they tend to what appears to have long been a concern in Buddhist societies, namely *What about women?*

This is to underscore that amid a veritable sea of stories about male spiritual adepts and their respective hardships and triumphs, accounts of Yeshé Tsogyal not only offer depictions of the non-male experience. They also include scenes in which gender norms are openly weighed and challenged. Both Yeshé Tsogyal and her male guru call into question assumptions about women's capacity for spiritual advancement, and the conclusions born of their exchanges are, on

the whole, positive, even if they do not quite exceed the bounds of an androcentric society. In the end, for anyone who has wondered whether or not women can achieve enlightenment embodied as they are, Yeshé Tsogyal would seem to offer affirmation. I would stipulate that such affirmation does not reach us in an unqualified manner, however.

Readers familiar with Taksham's version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story will wonder whether the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* offers us anything substantially different on the topic of enlightenment and gender than we see in Taksham's later version. The short answer is not really, though this is, of course, to speak generally. Perhaps not least because Taksham likely drew from Drimé Künga's work for his account, the fourteenth- and seventeenth-century life stories communicate similar things about women and their purportedly inherent strengths and weaknesses. In both works, Yeshé Tsogyal uses the same or similar language around her womanhood and her personal capacities for spiritual advancement.

Self-deprecating on the whole, she repeatedly tells her guru that she lacks faith, courage, humility, knowledge, wisdom, and so on—all the qualities a practitioner would need to succeed in becoming a buddha. Such self-assessments could be rooted in the androcentric language about women that Yeshé Tsogyal and her male authors would have inherited; or in her own honest opinions about herself personally, not about women *per se*; or they could be uttered in deference to the ultimate authority of her guru, Padmasambhava, a figure whose good qualities Yeshé Tsogyal takes to be greater than hers in every way.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ One finds expressions of modesty or humility, even harsh self-criticism, common in Tibetan literature styled as autobiographical. See, for example, Janet Gyatso, *Apparitions of the Self: The Secret Autobiographies of a Tibetan Visionary: A Translation and Study of Jigme Lingpa's Dancing Moon in the Water and Dākki's Grand Secret-Talk* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 105 and 234.

We can imagine the character of Yeshé Tsogyal (and even a Yeshé Tsogyal of the past) speaking from each of these subject positions to some degree. And yet, again, in both versions of her life story, she also speaks or acts in ways that contradict her self-deprecatory statements. Though a woman (*skye dman*), a *kyémen*—one who is literally "born low"¹⁸⁰—she says that she holds herself in high regard. Though personally lacking in faith and courage, she chooses to leave behind the comfort of her parents' home to meditate alone in wild territory. Though "dull-witted" (*dbang po rtul ba*), she is "intellectually sharp" (*bsam mno*) enough to secure her exile to the very sort of place she had always hoped to practice. Though "helpless" or "powerless" (*dbang med*), she persistently vies for her independence so that she might pursue the Dharma.¹⁸¹

Instances where Yeshé Tsogyal's words and/or actions run up against the negative self-assessments she utters encourage readers to revisit her language, and, importantly, to contemplate whether or not to reread her words about herself against the grain. At a given turn, she may believe herself to be as lowly as she says she is; though, one finds that after she has said or behaved otherwise, perhaps she may not. In truth, Yeshé Tsogyal may at times openly betray herself as disingenuous. Particularly when men insist on "befriending" (*'grog pa*) or partnering with her, for example, she deems herself as unworthy of them for being a woman of a "low caste" (*rigs ngan*)—a pejorative and patently false way of describing herself, a princess, but true enough insofar as she has reimagined herself a simple forest meditator who, raggedly clad, keeps the company of wild animals. Either way, however, whatever position one finds evidence for in a particular instance of the narrative—lowly or high, helpless or empowered—one must concede

¹⁸⁰ On this term, see Barbara Nimri Aziz, "Moving Towards a Sociology of Tibet," in *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*, ed. Janice D. Willis (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1987), 79, as well as Gyatso and Havenik 2005: 9.

¹⁸¹ PL 2013: *passim*, but see, e.g., 286.

that Yeshé Tsogyal is astute and often more clever than her interlocutors. Time and again, her character emerges acutely aware of the paradoxical way in which self-deprecating words can provide licensure to speak at all, let alone in ways that challenge the norm.

To be sure, one might say as much about many a heroine throughout literature's history, up to and including female protagonists of the present day. It is therefore easy enough to demonstrate kinship—to highlight the ways in which stories about women like Yeshé Tsogyal and Mandārava echo one another and other tales of their "type," either cross- or intra-culturally. The greater challenge, then, is to show how resonances among stories of a type, or about a type, might affect a reader willing to acknowledge both the typical and the exceptional within a given form.

As I read the fourteenth-century *Life* along with Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record* on Mandārava, my sense is that Drimé Künga was also reading Orgyan Lingpa on Mandārava as he wrote Yeshé Tsogyal. The stories in the two works are not just similarly constructed around similar issues and events; at times, their language and syntax nearly match or reach identity. Recognizing this fact, one could say simply that Drimé Künga created Yeshé Tsogyal as a variation on a theme, namely that of the princess who refuses to marry, and/or the royal (female) Buddhist renunciant whose tenacity knows no bounds (even if she claims to lack diligence), and one could stop there. But at what cost? What deeper insights about our subject and her legacy do we stand to gain when we tend to the intersections among affiliate stories and characters? What might it mean for Yeshé Tsogyal to be both like and unlike other Buddhist paragons of virtue? What is the significance of this and not that difference, or that but not this similarity? And what happens when x, y, or z character and their story is allowed to loom over the text, or dwell in the background, or be so bold as to walk across the page? To offer answers to these questions here is

to get ahead of ourselves. Several will follow in Chapters Four and Five. For the time being, we might instead continue on with our overview of the *Life* itself so that we have a robust sense of its contents and material instantiations.

The *Life* as Work and Text

At present, we have at our disposal multiple sources for the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. Some of these are attributed to Drimé Künga, others to Pema Lingpa. Still others are unattached to any specific revealer's name. Whatever the iteration of the *Life* and its attribution (or lack thereof) to a particular treasure-revealer, however, the reader encounters the same characters, and the same events that those characters cause or experience are related in the same order. For this reason, I have been distinguishing the "work," which is in my understanding the story that the *Life* tells—the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as one might rightly refer to it irrespective of authorial or discoverer attribution—from the *Life's* "text(s)," which are its material witnesses, the "finite, structured whole[s] composed of signs" that manifest the story for readers. Simply put, a story is the content of a text,¹⁸² and in our case, the story is one while the texts are many.

Below I offer summaries of the *Life's* seven chapters—the *Life's* contents—as we find them organized and expressed in complete witnesses, i.e., the texts. Over the course of Part II, I discuss the significance of where certain details vary across sources, but here I offer a sense of the *Life* as a reader of any of its material manifestations might recount it.

¹⁸² The above is quoted and summarized from Bal 2013: 5. Bal would no doubt specify further that the *Life's* events (i.e., the *fabula*, what she also deems its "elements") are caused or experienced by "actors," not just what might be deemed the "characters," for un-anthropomorphized entities may also instigate and undergo a story's action. I opt for "characters" above, however, because I focus primarily on the sentient personalities depicted in the story.

The Work

Life of Yeshé Tsogyal: Chapter Summaries

Chapter I: The Princess is Born and Renounces Royal Life

The title of the first chapter of the *Life Story of Yeshé Tsogyal* varies across manuscript witnesses. It is either the chapter that describes "the manner in which the princess was born" (*lham gyi sku 'khrungs tshul*) or the chapter that tells of how the princess "renounced royal life" (*rgyal srid spangs pa*). In truth, Chapter I encompasses both of these events, but the matter of Yeshé Tsogyal's renunciation receives the most attention throughout.

Following several lines of homage, the narrator of the story, traditionally Yeshé Tsogyal herself, albeit at a temporal remove from the events at hand, begins by gradually focusing in on the setting. She moves from a wide-angle shot of Tibet, the Land of Snows, to a region known as Drak, to a large village known as Tshalungkhar within Drak, a place, we are told, that is equal to the Indian subcontinental region of Bhetala and encircled by groves of fruit trees. In the center of that, amid abundant flowers, there is a charming place called Tshellukor,¹⁸³ an area so named, no doubt, for the surrounding vegetation (*tshal*). In that area, there is a luxurious palace, home to King Sangyé Yeshé and Queen Gémo Tshoma.¹⁸⁴ Yeshé Tsogyal, who at this point in the story is referred to as Princess Pema Cham, is born the youngest of nine children, two princes and seven princesses. The narrator tells us that she appeared outwardly as a *ḍākinī* incarnate (*gzugs pa'i mkha' 'gro ma*); inwardly, as Dorjé Phagmo (*rdo rje phag mo*);¹⁸⁵ and secretly as the play of Samantabhadrī (*kun tu bzang mo*).

¹⁸³ Proper nouns tend to vary across witnesses. The locales, in order of appearance, are generally Tib. Sgrags, Tshalung mkhar, Bhe ta la (vars. as above in note 143), and Tshal lu skor.

¹⁸⁴ Tib. Sangs rgyas ye shes; Dge mo tsho ma.

¹⁸⁵ The tantric deity Vajravārāhī. On this figure, see esp. Diemberger 2007: 50, 151, 185, *et passim*.

Notably, the chapter describes the events leading up to Yeshé Tsogyal's birth in ways that echo accounts of the birth of the Buddha. Just as Siddhārtha Gautama chose the circumstances of his birth, Yeshé Tsogyal elects to be born as a princess for the benefit of all beings,¹⁸⁶ and upon entering her mother's womb, many wondrous events occur. The queen has psychic visions (*nyams snang*) and dreams in which differently colored women—white, blue, yellow, red, and green—ritually bathe her, scatter flowers, diffuse incense, adorn her, and circumambulate her. Villagers rejoice and frolic as her gestation progresses. Then, on the fifteenth day of the first month of spring (*dpyid zla ra ba*) of a bird year (*bya'i lo*; var. *sa pho byi ba'i lo*, an earth-male rat year), after nine months and ten days, Yeshé Tsogyal is born at dawn. She advances in physical growth and intellectual maturity more quickly than other children, and by the time she reaches sixteen, she is without equal in terms of her grace, beauty, and charm. Yeshé Tsogyal is also by this time especially keen with respect to religious matters. While at court all eyes are on her, but she herself proves singularly focused on pursuing Holy Dharma.

As Yeshé Tsogyal's interest in Dharma develops, her family grows invested in seeing her married off. She is given her choice between two viable suitors—one foreign, one local—yet in light of her religious aspirations, she refuses to marry at all. Upon her refusal, extensive discussions among family members and court officials ensue. While the king along with his sons and foreign ministers advocate marriage to the Indian Bheta prince, the queen and the interior ministers vie for the bid of a prince from the neighboring region of Zurmokhar.¹⁸⁷ Yeshé Tsogyal, all the while, remains steadfast in her longing to leave the palace in order to practice

¹⁸⁶ Some witnesses say that Yeshé Tsogyal was inspired by the compassion of the buddhas to be born a princess for the benefit of all beings. Others say that the Victor (*rgyal bas*) took birth as a princess (*lha lcam du skye ba bzhes pa*). See, e.g., PL 2013: 263.

¹⁸⁷ Tib. Zur mo khar (vars. Zung/Zungs/Gzungs mo mkhar).

Dharma, literally, "in a people-less place" (*mi med yul du*), a description of she repeats frequently. She is so desperate to pursue Dharmic practice that she ultimately threatens suicide should her parents deny her the opportunity. The king meets his daughter's insolence with torture and the threat of execution. Yeshé Tsogyal is only spared by the intervention of an interior minister who argues for her exile on the grounds that a father should not condemn his own beloved child to death.

As she is conveyed by a large entourage to Shingrong Nakpo (*shing rong nags po*), the dark, desolate forest where she will spend her exile, a youth emerges from the crowd to profess his love for her. Yeshé Tsogyal refuses his companionship even after he reminds her of their shared karmic history and his willingness to join her in her Dharmic pursuits. Later, the previously spurned Zurkhar prince seeks her out in hopes that his looks and finery will dazzle her. Yet he is rejected by Yeshé Tsogyal (once again, this time face-to-face) as well. As with her parents, her commitment to practicing Dharma alone somewhere uninhabited remains steadfast throughout her exchanges with both characters, though Zurkhar's henchmen don't take no for an answer. They drag her away from the clearing in which they came upon her meditating, convey her back to their camp, and then make their way back to their homeland. At a day's journey away from his palace, the prince's people welcome Yeshé Tsogyal with an elaborate feast. Everyone but the princess eats and drinks to excess before falling contentedly to sleep (*blo bde bar nyal lo*).

Yeshé Tsogyal would no doubt take this opportunity to escape had she not been bound by iron chains and imprisoned in a pit. Instead, she laments her bad karma and prays for freedom. With that, Padmasambhava appears before her as a white lad (*khye'u dkar po*) with a top-knot and a turquoise vase in his hands. In disbelief that she beholds a human being, Yeshé Tsogyal

asks Padmasambhava whence he has come, what his name is, and what his intentions are. He neither confirms nor denies that he is human, states that he has come from a place called Oḍḍiyāna, speaks of myriad disciples in India, and notes that three years have passed since he arrived at Samyé Chimphu in Tibet.

Praising her for her faith (*dad pa*) and telling her that she should regard her misfortune as a friend, Padmasambhava then gives Yeshé Tsogyal a ring that seems to release her shackles as she puts it on. After that, he tells her to follow him out of the Zurkhar camp, all the while contemplating him at the crown of her head. She does so, and in an instant, the pair find themselves in Samyé Chimphu. Upon waking and realizing that the princess is gone, Zurkhar assumes that her father, the king of Tshalungkhar, or her suitor from Bheta had kidnapped her. Before a battle between the Zurkhar and Tshalungkhar armies ensues, Padmasambhava projects two identical princesses, presumably identical to Yeshé Tsogyal. One appears among the people of Tshalungkhar; the other in Zurkhar. Both projections, we learn, are said to have brought to their respective lands good fortune, happiness, and religion.¹⁸⁸

If the first chapter of Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* demonstrates anything, it that renunciation can be an emotionally fraught and even physically painful experience for everyone involved, not just the renunciant herself. Apart from straining her relationships with her family members and distressing the kingdom's subjects, Yeshé Tsogyal's decision to renounce also shatters the hearts (*snying tshal par 'gas*) of two of her suitors, one a childhood friend, the other the Zurkhar prince.

¹⁸⁸ Apart from recalling the Buddha's miracle in which he doubles himself, i.e., the "Twin Miracle" performed at Śrāvastī, Padmasambhava's tripling of Yeshé Tsogyal interests me as a literary device that stands to authorize multiple versions of her story. Whether or not this was Drimé Künga's intention is unclear, of course. Nevertheless, more than one Yeshé Tsogyal of the eighth century is here imagined. In Taksham (1989), the two alternative brides are Yeshé Tsogyal's older sisters.

The parallels with the Buddha's biography are striking in this regard. During Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with her parents, we might recall the distress that Śuddodhana, the Buddha's father, expressed at the thought of losing his son to the ascetic grove. And as Yeshé Tsogyal speaks to her suitors, we might think in turn of Yaśodharā, the Buddha's wife, especially where accounts depict her frustration and hurt at being abandoned by her husband—ultimately denied the partnership she was promised when they vowed to pursue enlightenment together.¹⁸⁹ And finally, as it pairs the motif of exile as the penalty for excessive virtue with that of the wronged parent and/or abandoned partner, the *Life* recalls the story of Vessantara (Skt. Viśvantara), which itself resonates with the Hindu tale known as the *Rāmāyaṇa*.

Chapter II: The Princess Tours the Lands of Oḍḍiyāna

Chapter II opens on Yeshé Tsogyal addressing Padmasambhava in the Samyé Chimphu charnel ground. Though earlier she thought privately of herself as low-born and dull-witted, hardly wise and subject to mishaps,¹⁹⁰ now she speaks aloud about herself aloud in similar terms. She beseeches Padmasambhava to impart to her some Dharma that will hasten her progress toward enlightenment. Padmasambhava responds by telling her that she has faith (*dad ldan*) and a virtuous mind (*dge sems*), yet being born in a woman's body (*bud med kyi lus*) does indeed make things difficult. "Both the body of a male leper and that of a determined woman are good, but both have a moral deficiency," he tells her. "Nevertheless," he continues, "if one possesses

¹⁸⁹ Regarding accounts to this effect and for a translation of two Sinhala works, see especially Ranjini Obeyesekere, *Yasodharā, the Wife of the Bōdhisattva: The Sinhala Yasodharavata (The Story of Yasodharā) and the Sinhala Yasodharāpadānaya (The Sacred Biography of Yasodharā)* (SUNY Press, 2009). See also John S. Strong, "A Family Quest: The Buddha, Yaśodharā, and Rāhula in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*," in *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*, ed. Juliane Schober (Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2002), 113–28.

¹⁹⁰ PL 2013: 286.

faith and perseverance, even a low-born being can achieve enlightenment."¹⁹¹ In order to realize that goal, Padmasambhava bids Yeshé Tsogyal remain in the Samyé Chimphu charnel ground for twelve years, practicing his instructions all the while. He in turn tells her that he must make a swift trip to India and back while she strives for spiritual accomplishment.

Yeshé Tsogyal subsequently undertakes meditation in earnest in one of Chimphu's caves. At the one-month mark, however, a white woman with a crystal staff knocks on the entrance to her chosen spot. After an exchange about the purity of Yeshé Tsogyal's faith, the woman says that she will show her what faith entails. She then grabs the princess's hand and whisks her away to a white region. Yeshé Tsogyal and the woman subsequently travel to three other regions, each a single color as depicted on a *maṇḍala*. In every place, Yeshé Tsogyal witnesses the religious activities of local villagers, and she asks her companion why the people there do what they do.

In the white region, people practice "pure perception" (*dag snang*). They venerate a seemingly callous and violent king by offering him everything they have, including their own family members. Even though the king commands them to chomp on stones and drink poison, and he even goes so far as to slaughter his subjects and consume their flesh, blood, and bones before donning their skins, his people obey his every command. Each time a stunned Yeshé Tsogyal asks the woman about what she sees, the woman tells her that the people of the region view their ruler as infallible, and so they do everything he asks and give him their belongings out of respect. Soon enough, the woman brings Yeshé Tsogyal directly before the king and he questions her faith. In the end, the king explains to her the terms of unquestioning reverence, but she finds that she has yet a long way to go in terms of cultivating that level of devotion to any worthy object.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.: 289.

This pattern of witnessing, inquiring, and ultimately finding herself less devout and/or virtuous than the people she meets by comparison continues as Yeshé Tsogyal and her companion press on. In the next place, a yellow valley, they observe a hurried woman—so much in a rush as to forgo putting on clothes—as she engages in a range of virtuous activities as if it was her final opportunity to practice each. The king of that region, too, makes haste to sacrifice his own flesh to his people. While chastised for her lack of pure perception in the white valley, here Yeshé Tsogyal is made to recognize that human life, precious as it is, is fleeting (*tshe la long med pa*), and that she must therefore live as if there is no time to spare on anything but spiritual cultivation. Indeed, the reader may be surprised to find Yeshé Tsogyal singled out for her lack of urgency with respect to religious practice. (If nothing else, hasn't she been unfailingly eager to undertake Dharmic practice most of her short life?) But by contrast with the naked woman and the panicked king, she is made to feel her laziness acutely.

Next Yeshé Tsogyal and her companion arrive in a blue-green valley where the princess is made to contemplate her own lack of fortitude (*snying rus*) when it comes to practicing Dharma. After she and her companion are initially denied entry into the valley's palace because neither wishes to shoulder the necessary offering—an iron vessel filled with corpses—they venture out into the town square and see the townspeople nearly crushed under the weight of the bricks of gold (*gser gyi pha gu*) they must offer their king's mother for their daily rations (*de ring gi dro*). Inspired by this scene to insist on entry into the palace, they return to the gate, gain entry, and witness the royals within doling out liberative pills (*ril bu*) to the *ḍākinīs* who abide there. Yeshé Tsogyal asks the queen for a pill, thinking it will allow her to circumvent Dharmic practice on the path to enlightenment. For her earlier lack of determination when it came to bearing the iron vessel, however, the queen denies her request. Thereafter, Yeshé Tsogyal and

her companion arrive at the topmost part of the palace. The *yoginīs* who abide there recognize Yeshé Tsogyal's companion as their chieftess (*gtso mo*) who has just returned from her travels in Tibet. At that, the woman tells Yeshé Tsogyal that she will remain in the blue-green valley's palace while Yeshé Tsogyal must persevere and continue on without entertaining any doubts.¹⁹²

From there, a reluctant Yeshé Tsogyal reaches a red valley in the west which houses five palaces, a rainbow one in the center and a solid-colored one at each of the four cardinal points. The eastern palace is white; the southern, yellow; the western, red; and the northern, green. As she approaches the eastern gate, tall, dark women harass her and beat her until she loses consciousness. When she awakes, they demand to know where Yeshé Tsogyal has come from and why she is there. The princess then recounts how she was led from Samyé Chimphu through the different regions of Oḍḍiyāna, finally arriving at their valley in hopes of making spiritual progress. One of the *yoginīs* promises passage if Yeshé Tsogyal makes her an offering. When the princess offers her own flesh, however, the *yoginī* counters with a demand for tiger's meat.

A daunted Yeshé Tsogyal journeys into the forest in hopes of finding an already dead tiger's carcass so that she might be spared the negative karma of killing an animal herself. She spots a live tigress and her cubs, however, and notices that the mother is in great distress. At this point, Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* parallels a multi-form story generally referred to as the Story of the Starving Tigress or the *Tigress Jātaka*, i.e., the tale in which the Buddha, in a previous life, feeds his body to a starving tigress and her cubs. Chapter four of this thesis analyzes this scene in detail, but it is worth noting here that even if, on the whole, the stories bear an uncanny resemblance, Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* radically reimagines the *jātaka*'s typical ending. Where the bodhisattva is devoured by the tigress he meets, Yeshé Tsogyal is healed by the one she

¹⁹² Ibid.: 300.

encounters. The tigress in the *Life*, moreover, leads Yeshé Tsogyal to another tigress's carcass so that Yeshé Tsogyal might still bring tiger flesh back to the *yoginīs* who guard the palace.

After Yeshé Tsogyal appeases the *yoginīs*, they allow her to enter the palace marketplace. There she asks the townspeople if she might be granted an audience with their king. A red woman (*bud med dmar po gcig*) appears and offers to guide her to the sovereign. When the pair reach the palace gallery, Yeshé Tsogyal looks around her and observes a chaotic scene. She sees people being born, flying into the sky, walking backwards, feasting. Some have the heads of animals; others quarrel. Everything appears topsy-turvy. The red woman, endowed with extra-sensory perception (*mngon par shes pa dang ldan*), explains to Yeshé Tsogyal that her *nāḍīs* and channels are out of whack, and so her perceptions are skewed. She then tells Yeshé Tsogyal a story about a woman who, like her, was the youngest princess of seven. This princess lived at the dawn of time and possessed supreme faith and determination. One day, she sought out fragrant and delicious dew from a sandalwood tree in order to offer it to her lama. Unable to find dew on the branches and leaves of a tree, she cut into its trunk and found a white goddess there wielding a skull cup full of nectar. The goddess told her that her attempts to venerate her lama would be rewarded, and thus encouraged her to make an aspiration. The princess then prayed that she might act for the benefit of all beings without remainder and that she along with all other beings might reach the pinnacle of spiritual accomplishment quickly.

The red woman then reveals to Yeshé Tsogyal that she is that same princess reborn after countless lifetimes of venerating her lamas and aspiring to benefit all beings. Nevertheless, says the woman, because of the womb's defilement (*mngal gyi grib*)—that is, being born of her mother's womb—Yeshé Tsogyal's vital forces continue to be disturbed. The woman recommends a meditation practice that enables her to see the villagers as the heroes and *dakas* they really are.

From there, Yeshé Tsogyal and the red woman move around the cardinal points clockwise, encountering white, yellow, red, and blue *vidyādharas* (*rig 'dzin*), or "knowledge-holders," who confer empowerments upon them both and assign Yeshé Tsogyal secret names.¹⁹³ When they reach the palace at the center of the cardinal points, they find amid groups of heroes and *dakas* a large *maṇḍala* surrounded by eight charnel grounds. At the edge of that *maṇḍala*, they see the Unexcelled King of Dancers (*bla med gar dbang gyi rgyal po*) in an embrace with a consort, a red *dākinī* who wields a hooked knife and a skull cup of blood. The king confers the highest empowerment, the Four Groups of Goddesses, and assigns Yeshé Tsogyal the name by which she is most often referred: Yeshé Tsogyalma.

The king then informs Yeshé Tsogyal that it has been more than eleven months since she arrived in Oḍḍiyāna, and now she must return to Tibet. He hands her a skull cup that will generate her rations for the trip. Yeshé Tsogyal credits her female companion with helping her receive the numerous empowerments and asks if she can stay in Oḍḍiyāna, for in Tibet, she suspects that she will face more misfortunes (*rkyen ngan*). The woman tells her that since there is no way to break Padmasambhava's command, she must go back to Tibet. As Yeshé Tsogyal then recalls the Chimphu charnel ground, she arrives at her retreat cave there in an instant.

After a year passes, seven thieving bandits appear and steal three *dré* of Yeshé Tsogyal's barley flour rations. They ask her what she is doing there, who her family is, and what will happen now that she lacks provisions. They tell her that her she is good looking and that it is a shame that she resides in the unpopulated, empty valley, so she should go along with them.

¹⁹³ Ibid.: 305–306. In order, the regions, their colors, the empowerments, and secret names for Yeshé Tsogyal are: East, white, Twenty-One Vase Empowerments of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (*zhi khro bum pa'i dbang nyi shi rtsa gcig*), Dorjé Dündulma (*rdo rje bdud 'dul ma*); South, yellow, Eleven Empowerments of Amitāyus's Nectar (*tshe dpag tu med pa'i bdud rtsi'i dbang bcu gcig*), Dorjé Tshewang Tselma (*rdo rje tshe dbang rtsal ma*); West, red, Empowerment of the Great Illusion (*sgyu 'phrul chen po'i dbang*), Dorjé Garwangma (*rdo rje gar dbang ma*); North, blue, Empowerment of the Four Delights of Great Bliss (*bde chen dga' ba bzhi'i dbang*), Dorjé Draktselma (*rdo rje drag rtsal ma*).

Yeshé Tsogyal takes this opportunity to exercise *bodhicitta* and she prays that the Buddhas might see fit to provide her with the means to ward off the thieves. She meditates on Padmasambhava and directs compassion toward the bandits. She tells them that her lineage is a lowly one of meditative absorption and experience in contemplation; her parents are low caste (*rigs ngan*); and without food and drink, she will eat the flowers of trees. "Since I am a low-caste woman," she says, "we should not associate." They are of different minds, she continues, and, moreover, she has no attachment to the barley they stole. Since all things (*dngos po thams cad*) are dreams and illusions, Yeshé Tsogyal says, they should listen as she explains what that means. From here, she tells the bandits about the benefits of spiritual practice, and she concludes by offering them her own flesh and blood to eat.

Filled with shame and regret (*gnong zhing 'gyod*), the bandits resolve not to behave badly in the future. They become ascetics, vowing to meditate in the Chimphu charnel ground for seven years. Then, after seven months, on the morning of the tenth day, many groups of women gather and asked the princess and the thieves if they would go for the tenth-day celebration (*tshe bcu*) to Oḍḍiyāna. The princess says no since they made a vow to practice in Chimphu. The women then tell everyone to sit on a silk cloth, and the women then carry them up into the sky.

They arrive in a place called Dzagé Ling (*dza gad gling*) where they find someone known as "the *vidyādhara* with a topknot." His body radiant, he is dressed as a mantrin, and before him, many groups of *dakas* gather. He confers empowerments on the group and designates Yeshé Tsogyal Kharchen Za.¹⁹⁴ The bandits vanish into light, and Yeshé Tsogyal and the *vidyādhara* spend one day erotically engaged. To the *ḍākinīs*, the *vidyādhara* says that Yeshé Tsogyal is the queen of Oḍḍiyāna, and they prostrate to her and toss flowers. The *vidyādhara* adds that since

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.: 309.

she is blessed by all of the Victors, she is certain to bring about the benefit of sentient beings. He gives her a white skull cup full of nectar to carry, and by recalling the place where she had been staying, i.e., the Chimphu charnel ground, she returns there instantly. She continues her practice, all the while generating ardent compassion as she gazes upon the suffering of sentient beings of the six classes. Thereby she expresses many truths in the form of aspirational prayers for all beings.

Chapter III: The Princess Requests that Oḍḍiyāna Compose Verses of Songs of Advice

The third chapter begins when Padmasambhava returns from India as he had said he would at the outset of Chapter II. After Yeshé Tsogyal welcomes him back to Tibet, she informs him that in the twelve human years (*mi lo bcu gnyis*) he was away, she practiced the Great Perfection and toured the many regions of his homeland, Oḍḍiyāna. Moreover, she states that she has accomplished much in the way of cultivating compassion for sentient beings and developing confidence in the Dharma. Yet she remains unsure of the depth to which she comprehends all of the teachings that she must. Her only recourse is to ask Padmasambhava to assess her progress. What follows is a question-and-answer session in which Padmasambhava elaborates the intricacies of Vajrayāna belief and practice.

Padmasambhava tells Yeshé Tsogyal that she still has far to go if she is to show signs of fully comprehending the path of the secret mantra (*gsang sngags*), and with that, he initiates a "song of experience" (*nyams kyi glu*) that elaborates the attitudes and understandings she still needs to cultivate. His heartfelt advice (*snying gtam*) revolves around at least two critical points. The first synthesizes the exhortations of two of the kings in the previous chapter. Above all, says Padmasambhava, one must guard against laziness (*le lo*). Death is nigh, and after rushing to

practice in light of this fact, diligence (*brtson grus*) must be maintained. Perseverance (*snying rus*) must triumph over doubt and procrastination (*phyi bshol*). Secondly, but no less crucially, knowledge of the Dharma must be integrated with actual practice. If one does not internalize the teachings through assiduous (*nan tan*) physical and mental effort, espousing the Dharma merely amounts to "parroting" (*ne tso'i kha...bshad*) what one has heard. To achieve this integration and thus attain liberation quickly, says Padmasambhava, one should retreat to mountain hermitages, "protect" (*skyongs*)—i.e., guard in one's heart—the liberative deeds of qualified lamas, and practice the Holy Dharma of the Great Perfection (*dam chos rdzogs pa chen po*), the path that is not for those who merely intellectualize (*rtog ge [ba]*; Skt. *tārkika*).

Yeshé Tsogyal's follow up questions concern the nitty-gritty of executing and sustaining the endeavor to achieve enlightenment. How should she begin, she asks, and on whom she should rely for guidance and assistance? Moreover, what should one's daily practice entail? Regarding the first question, Padmasambhava reiterates the importance of retreating to secluded, even desolate, places if one is to realize the nature of reality. On the kinds of lamas and companions, or consorts (*grogs*), Yeshé Tsogyal—or any practitioner—should seek out, he lists myriad virtues. Among other qualities, lamas must hail from good lineages and be themselves compassionate and accomplished practitioners who are not only knowledgeable, but also versed in the empowerments and practices that will foster their disciples' progress. One's companions should possess a host of virtues, some of which we might expect: faith (*dad pa*), forbearance with respect to suffering (*sdug sran*), great compassion (*snying rje che*), steadfast devotion, purity of *samaya* vows (*dam tshig gtsang*), minimal distractions, little anger or pride, and so on. Interestingly, though, and perhaps in keeping with his distaste for sophistry, Padmasambhava also recommends that one's companions be those who eschew the conventions of debate (*tshig*

rtsod tha snyad).¹⁹⁵

For the main Great Perfection practice, Padmasambhava describes the ways in which Yeshé Tsogyal should visualize *ḍākas*, *ḍākinīs*, deities, and buddhas at the various chakras of her body. On the topic of methods for enriching (*bogs 'don pa'i thabs*) that practice, he elaborates on practice with a consort, outlining both what that entails and what characteristics a consort should possess. Extensive descriptions of the results of these practices follow, and after that, Padmasambhava details what happens to Great Perfection practitioners upon death (*dbugz bral*). Those who are least accomplished will be liberated in the intermediate state (*bar do*) between death and rebirth; the middling will achieve liberation at the moment of death (*'chi kha ma rul gro*); and the most advanced will be liberated in a way untainted by samsaric conditions.¹⁹⁶

Toward the close of the chapter, Yeshé Tsogyal asks Padmasambhava a series of questions that would no doubt be on the mind of many a novice practitioner: What if one doesn't know how to meditate? Will problems occur or not? Do beings really have a range of faculties? Are the appearances of things and mind one? Is there a length of time it takes to achieve success? In response, Padmasambhava first describes a simplified form of meditation. He then reassures Yeshé Tsogyal that the practice of the Great Perfection is for everyone, no matter their particular capabilities (*dbang po bye brag cir yang rung*). Appearances and mind are indistinct, he says, and there is no set length of time it takes for spiritual success to be achieved. He concludes, by way of summary, with a final exhortation for Yeshé Tsogyal to meditate on the Great Perfection unfailingly with faith and diligence.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.: 310–315.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.: 316–318.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.: 320–321.

Chapter IV: The Princess Requests the Transmission of the Teachings of the Nine Successive Vehicles in Oḍḍiyāna's Presence

This chapter offers a comprehensive list of the teachings that Yeshé Tsogyal received from Padmasambhava. Each teaching is paired with a particular place. For example, we find that at the secret Gégong Cave (*ge gong gi gsang ba phug*) in Chimphu, Yeshé Tsogyal requested the entirety of the Great Perfection teachings; at Samyé's Trukhang Ling (*bsam yas khrus khang gling*) chapel, she requested several texts related to monastic discipline; in the Samten Ling (*bsam gtan gling*) chapel, she requested teachings related to *kriyātantra*; and so on. The chapter culminates in Yeshé Tsogyal's personal testimony to having absorbed all of the teachings that her guru imparted.

Chapter V: The Princess Benefits Beings in the Hell Realm

Although the majority of the fifth chapter details Yeshé Tsogyal's descent into the depths of hell in order to rescue an evil minister named Shanti, the chapter begins at the Gégong Cave in Chimphu where, one evening, a group of women have gathered to learn how to attain enlightenment quickly. Apart from Yeshé Tsogyal, ten other women are named.¹⁹⁸ After arranging heaps of turquoise on seven golden *maṇḍalas*, in unison, they appeal to Padmasambhava: "O great Oḍḍiyāna, for as low as women like us are born, even higher is our

¹⁹⁸ The names of these women vary across versions, though not drastically so. In the Lhasa edition of the *Life* from Pema Lingpa's *Lama, Jewel, Ocean*, the list follows: Princess Trompa Gyen (Lha lcam khrom pa rgyan), daughter of the king of Samyé; Pema Sel (Padma gsal); Nüjin Selek (Nus sbyin gsal legs); Lekjin Zangmo (Legs spyin bzang mo); Shelkar Dorjétscho (Shel dkar rdo rje mtsho); the court priestess Chokro (Lcog ro mchod gnas ma); Dromza Rinchen Pema ('Brom bza' rin chen padma); Chokro Rinchen Tsuk (Cog ro rin chen gtsug); Rinchen Salé Ö (Rin chen sa le 'od); Ruyong Za Mati (Ru yong bza' ma ti); and many other qualified women. (PL 2013: 321; cf. DK 2013: 249–250.) Here Princess Trompa Gyen is named as the daughter of the king of Samyé, but Pema Sel is typically the named daughter of Tri Songdésen, who is presumably the king of Samyé. It may be that a plural is implied such that Trompa Gyen and Pema Sel are daughters of the king.

self-esteem. Since our lineages are bad and our knowledge minimal, we beseech you speak few words full of significance, the instructions for quickly attaining enlightenment."¹⁹⁹ Following his instructions related to the path of the secret mantra, each of the women meditate for one month and achieve spiritual success. On the evening of Yeshé Tsogyal's seventh day of practice a fierce, blue-bodied entity (*khro bo sku mdog sngon po*) wielding a hooked knife and holding a skull cup of blood appeared in front of her practice chamber. After acknowledging that Yeshé Tsogyal had realized all of her own aims (*rang gi don*), he asked her if she is yet able to help others.

When she affirms that she is indeed ready to help others, the fierce entity challenges Yeshé Tsogyal to go to the hell realm and descend to the lowest level where she will find Shanti, the evil minister who is supposed to have attempted to thwart her pursuit of Dharma. The entity then leans a white ladder down a pitch-black hole and points Yeshé Tsogyal downward. As Yeshé Tsogyal descends the ladder into lower and lower levels of hell, she witnesses different gruesome forms of torture being inflicted on hell denizens by armies of demons (*'dre'i dmag*) known as *dré*. At each level, she asks a member of the torturers at work what the people being tortured had done to deserve their fate. She also inquires after Shanti, the minister who advocated for her execution. Shanti, she finds, resides in the level of hell reserved for beings who attempted to prevent others from practicing the Dharma. Though she offers to take on Shanti's suffering, the king of the hell in which he resides informs her that this is not possible, for Shanti must endure the effects of his own karma. Instead, says the king, if she knows a ritual for emptying the hells (*na rak dong sprugs kyi cho ga*), she should perform it. Yeshé Tsogyal creates a *maṇḍala* of peaceful and fierce deities, and her veneration of those deities saves numerous hell beings, including Shanti. At this, the king of the hell realm acknowledges that Yeshé Tsogyal's

¹⁹⁹ PL 2013: 321.

compassion exceeds that of all previous buddhas.²⁰⁰ When she ascends back up to the Chimphu charnel ground, she informs the fierce entity that she was successful in saving many beings from hell. Before the entity is absorbed into Yeshé Tsogyal's heart, he praises her and dubs her "Yeshé Tsogyal."²⁰¹

Where the third chapter offers an exposition of the virtues that a tantric practitioner should cultivate, the fifth outlines the unwholesome deeds that one must avoid, particularly killing, stealing, harming buddhas, failing to guard one's *samaya* (i.e., tantric) vows, and harboring perverse views. This chapter also firmly establishes Yeshé Tsogyal's status among—even beyond—that of buddhas whose compassion extends to, and stands to liberate, all beings. As Padmasambhava extols Yeshé Tsogyal at the end of the chapter, he deems her "the mother who birthed all buddhas,"²⁰² and he even goes so far as to say that "the good qualities of someone like me, Padmasambhava, didn't come from me; they came from you. For you are the woman who occasions all good qualities."²⁰³ Until *samsāra* is emptied of its suffering beings, the reader is here assured that Yeshé Tsogyal's compassion will be their aid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.: 326.

²⁰¹ Ibid. The entity's words leading up to his announcement that he praises her as "Yeshé Tsogyal" (*ye shes mtsho rgyal*; typically translated as "Victorious Ocean of Wisdom") is not billed as a precise etymology, though the elements of her name can be heard in what he emphasizes in his praise. He says that the princess proceeds with *gnosis* (*ye shes*, pron. *yeshé*) and that her compassion "sustains" or "nurtures beings" (*'gro ba 'tsho*, pron. *drowa tsho*). Moreover, that compassion has made her victorious (*rgyal bar 'gyur ba*, pron. *gyalwa gyurwa*) over all suffering. The verb "*tsho*" above is homophonous with the "*mtsho*," i.e., the noun "ocean," which appears in the epithet that the entity utters and is indeed more commonly used in her name.

²⁰² *mtshan nyid ldan pa'i mkha' 'gro khyod/ rgyal ba kun yang bskyed pa'i yum*. PL 2013: 326. Lit. "You are a *ḍākinī* who possesses the [right] characteristics, and the mother who birthed/will birth (*bskyed pa*, p. and fut. of *skyed pa*) all Victors."

²⁰³ Ibid.: 326–327.

Chapter VI: The Princess Obtains Prophecies

The shortest chapter of the seven, Chapter VI, recounts the prophecies that Padmasambhava imparted to Yeshé Tsogyal. The emphasis here is on the ways in which Yeshé Tsogyal will continue to aid sentient beings in perpetuity—that is, until every last one of them is liberated from cyclic existence. To do so, she will manifest in whatever way beings need her to and wherever they need her to, no matter how remote the place of their birth. Padmasambhava himself sums up the points he makes in this regard by telling Yeshé Tsogyal, "In short, until the pit of *samsāra* is churned out, there will be no limit to your emanations."²⁰⁴ He further predicts that her emanations will appear in different regions of Tibet especially during times when the Buddha's teachings are at risk of being diminished or altogether lost. For them, she should conceal the instructions she has requested and the profound teachings she has received as treasures (*gter*) such that they will benefit beings when her emanations appear. In the end, Padmasambhava informs Yeshé Tsogyal that after she has exhausted all remaining obscurations attendant this life, she will achieve spiritual success. After maintaining her youthful body for sixty years more, she will abide in the *nirmānakāya* realm (*sprul pa sku'i zhing khams*) before becoming completely enlightened (*mngon par rdzogs par 'tshang rgya*) in the expanse of undefiled great bliss (*zag med bde ba chen po'i dbyings*).

Chapter VII: The Dissemination of the Buddha's Teachings in Every Direction

The final chapter reiterates the importance of Yeshé Tsogyal's efforts to catalog and conceal the teachings she has received as treasures to be revealed to future generations. Among the teachings that Padmasambhava bids her conceal is her own life story, which had been

²⁰⁴ Ibid.: 327.

requested from her by one Bandé Sangyé Yeshé (*bande sangs rgyas ye shes*), i.e., Nübchen Sangyé Yeshé, elsewhere listed among Padmasambhava's main eighth-century male disciples.²⁰⁵ As above, Padmasambhava foretells the coming of an era when the Holy Dharma will be critically endangered (*nyams dma' ba*). Using metaphors that would be familiar to readers of Tibetan historical and hagiographical literature that predates Drimé Künga's work, Padma states that his teachings will reemerge when the golden yoke of royal law (*rgyal khrims*) will have been broken; the silk knot of religious law (*chos khrims*) undone; ministerial law's lamp of deliberation (*bgros kyi sgron me*) dimmed; and the mortal law (*mi chos*) that is the rope that binds people together like stalks of wheat (*sog ma'i phon thag*) cut.²⁰⁶

By the end of the *Life*, the reader emerges with the sense of it having been both Yeshé Tsogyal's story and part and parcel of the story of Padmasambhava, particularly his efficacy as a teacher of Vajrayāna Buddhism. That is to say that one can view it both a hagiography of Yeshé Tsogyal and a work in support of, even propaganda for, the Padma cult as it grew throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Interestingly, however, and especially when we compare the *Life* to the seventeenth-century *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal by Taksham, Padmasambhava is not what one would call a well-developed character. True enough that readers familiar with Padma-centered hagiographical precedents could be counted on to bring to Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* a rich

²⁰⁵ Within the *Life*, Bandé Sangyé Yeshé is named earlier in Chapter V. See PL 2013: 322 where he is Bandhé Sangyé Yeshé (Ban dhe Sangs rgyas ye shes).

²⁰⁶ Certain of these analogies can be found in Sakya Paṇḍita's *Elegant Sayings*. See, e.g., p. 529 of Sa skya paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, "Legs bshad 'phrul gyi dra ba," in *Gsung 'bum: Kun dga' rgyal mtshan* (Dpe bsdur ma), BDRC W2DB4570, vol. 1 (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2007), 529–37. We also find iterations in O rgyan gling pa (2010: 104; 447) on kings and ministers. *Lde'u's History* seems to come the closest, but does not include the ministerial law among the royal law (*rgyal khrims*), religious law (*chos khrims*), and "subject's law" (*'bangs khrims* rather than *mi chos khrims*). See Lde'u jo sras, *Lde'u chos 'byung*, BDRC W20831 (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1987), 142.

body of knowledge about him, and so perhaps Drimé Künga would not have seen the need to flesh out the guru as we find him here. Nevertheless, I would argue that Padmasambhava works primarily as an authorizing device in the *Life*. He emerges far less as a personality in his own right than as an agent who occupies an auxiliary role even if Yeshé Tsogyal is here, as elsewhere, styled his assistant or helper.

The Texts

The *Life's* Sources: Manuscript Witnesses and Modern Editions

Like so many a dissertation project, this study of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* begins and ends *in medias res*. But nowhere am I more aware of being still very much in the middle of things than in the process of seeking out and evaluating the *Life's* source texts. When I began my research for this project, I thought that I would have access to four complete (or nearly complete) life stories and one partial witness. These sources included: (1) a photocopy of a xylograph print from the Public Library in Lhasa labeled simply *Tsogyal Ü* (*Mtsho rgyal dbu*); (2) a modern, computer-input edition based on the xylograph copy and published digitally in 2008; (3) a reproduction of an *umé* (*dbu med*, i.e., cursive or non-cristated) manuscript from Manang in central Nepal; (4) a reproduction of an *uchen* (*dbu can*, i.e., cristated) manuscript from Gangtey Monastery (a.k.a. Gangteng Monastery) in Bhutan; and (5) another xylograph-print photocopy from the Lhasa Library that tells the story of Yeshé Tsogyal's descent into hell, as we find in Chapter V of the *Life*.

The first source, *Tsogyal Ü*, is attributed to Drimé Künga. The second and third, to Pema Lingpa as part of his *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle. The fourth, the modern edition, is based primarily on the Lhasa xylograph copy attributed to Drimé Künga, though its editors say that the

text was checked against and supplemented by a Pema Lingpa version. (Which Pema Lingpa-attributed version the editors referred to is unclear. No bibliographical details are provided for this source.) And the fifth, the partial witness, is unattributed.²⁰⁷

Over the past several years, however, research teams in Bhutan and editorial groups in Tibet have undertaken projects that have brought several more sources to light.²⁰⁸ Not including partial witnesses, at present, I count fourteen "complete" sources that are publicly available, either digitally or in print. Among these are one xylograph copy, ten manuscripts, and three modern editions.²⁰⁹ The number of sources available may very well be increasing as I write, however. Since there are scanning, cataloguing, and editing projects still underway, anyone wishing to pursue further research on Yeshé Tsogyal and her related literature would do well to reassess this number from the first moment that they, too, step into the middle of things.

Specialists wishing to know the details of each currently available source are encouraged to turn

²⁰⁷ Gyatso (2006: 8–9) takes this source to be attributable to Drimé Künga, which I see no reason to dispute. However, it is technically unattributed.

²⁰⁸ For details on these remarkable efforts and the projects of which they are a part, please see the appendix on witnesses and editions.

²⁰⁹ Gyatso (2006: 7n30) mentions two other sources that she saw in 1998 and took to be cursive (*dbu med*) manuscripts of the Lhasa block print version. I have been unable to gain access to these library holdings in order to determine whether or not this is the case. For details about each of the sources I have been able to view to date, see the appendix on witnesses and editions. N.B. The editors of the Arya Tāre series have recently published a new (i.e., 2017) multi-volume series of stories about women. At present, I have yet to receive a copy of the volume devoted to *namtars* of Yeshé Tsogyal, but I have been able to view the volume's table of contents. (I wish to thank Jue Liang for scanning this table and sending it to me, and also for alerting me to the 2013 series soon after it came out.) While the editors appear to have reprinted the life story of Yeshé Tsogyal as it is found in a version of Pema Lingpa's *Lama, Jewel, Ocean*, they did not reprint the *Life* as attributed to Drimé Künga. (One can easily imagine several reasons why they may have chosen not to do so, not least because the Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa versions tell the same story. Readers who are uninterested in comparing sources may not care to see the same story printed twice.) One of my hopes for any newly published edition of Drimé Künga's *Life* based on the Larung Gar manuscript, however, is that the *incipit*, printed out of order in the 2013 edition, would be corrected. Compare volumes 6 and 11, respectively, of Bla rung aryā tA re'i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang (ed.), *Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs: 'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*, 16 vols. (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2013) and *ibid.*, *Mkha' 'gro'i chos mdzod chen mo*, 53 vols. (Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2017). A full list of titles for each volume of the 2017 series can be found at <https://www.tibetanbookstore.org/updates/2018/04-2018-second-update/>

directly to the appendix. Readers who would prefer a brief overview will find one immediately below, beginning with the bibliographical information for the four complete sources I just mentioned above:

1. Dri med kun dga'. *Mtsho rgyal dbu*. Xylograph copy of 63 folia, obtained from Lhasa Public Library in 1996, n.d.
2. ———. *Secret Symbolic Biography of the Queen of Dakinis, Yeshe Tsogyal (Mkha' 'gro'i gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi thun min nang gi brda don gsang ba'i rnam thar chen mo bzhugs so)*, Revealed by Tertön Drime Kunga. edited by Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Anna Orlova. Boca Raton, FL: Sky Dancer Press, 2008.
3. Padma gling pa. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas pa (ca)*. In *Collected Gter-ma Rediscoveries of Padma Glin-pa: A Reproduction of a Rare Manuscript Collection from Manang*. vol. 4. BDRC W00EGS1017093. New Delhi: Ngawang Topgay, 1975: 207–338.
4. ———. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa*. In *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*. vol. 1, BDRC W21727. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975-1976: 169–275.

The first source I listed above, the woodblock print discovered and photocopied by Gyatso and Dalton at the Lhasa Library in 1996, is sixty-three folios long and attributed to Drimé Künga.²¹⁰ The carving itself seems to have contained numerous spelling mistakes, and the copy suffers from a duplication of folio 3a such that what would be folio 3b is missing. Moreover, the copy fades along the right-hand edge of many folios such that words needed to be traced over or entirely written into the text after it was photocopied. This text served as the basis for the modern edition completed by Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoché and Anna Orlova and published by Sky

²¹⁰ See Gyatso 2006: 1–27. In the appendix, I (tentatively) suggest a late-seventeenth-century *terminus post quem* for the text upon which the carving was based.

Dancer Press in 2008 as *The Secret Symbolic Biography of the Queen of Dakinis, Yeshe Tsogyal*.²¹¹

In the English introduction to this text, Orlova notes that she and Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoché compared this text "line-by-line with Pema Lingpa's version" in order "to correct numerous spelling mistakes and fill in missing lines while making every possible effort to preserve the authenticity of the original *terma*."²¹² The editors do not specify which text they consulted as a representative of "Pema Lingpa's version," but based on my own comparison, I take it to be the reproduction of the text from Gangtey Monastery, which was published by Kunsang Tobgay among other Pema Lingpa-attributed texts in Thimphu the mid-1970s. Whatever the case, their work can best be described in text-critical terms as an eclectic approach to reconstructing Drimé Künga's text. Both the Thimphu and Manang reproductions are attributed to Pema Lingpa as part of his *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle. The Thimphu reproduction appears to have been carefully edited, while the Manang, published by Ngawang Tobgay in 1975, contains, on the other hand, a number of orthographical mistakes and many interlinear notes and corrections.

The partial witness, also discovered and photocopied by Gyatso and Dalton in 1996, is a seven-folio xylograph copy of a text titled *From the Life Story of the Yogic Adept Yeshé Tsogyal: A Brief Story of the Way the Wicked Minister Known as Shanti was Rescued from Hell* (hereafter *Shanti's Rescue*).²¹³ The contents of this text mirror those of Chapter V of the *Life* wherein Yeshé

²¹¹ This is the editors' own English title for the text, the Tibetan for which they provide *Mkha' 'gro'i gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi thun min nang gi brda don gsang ba'i rnam thar chen mo*, literally: *The Great Life Story of Yeshé Tsogyal, Chieftess of Dākinīs, [A Story] whose Secret, Internal Symbols are Extraordinary*. This is not a title by which the *Life* refers to itself, and I am not sure why, exactly, the editors decided upon it.

²¹² Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoché and Orlova (eds.) 2008: 2.

²¹³ Tib. *Rnal 'byor ma'i grub thob ye shes mtsho rgyal kyi rnam thar nas sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba nas ston* (sic: *btan*) *tshul gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam zhig*. On the discovery of this story, see Gyatso 2006: 9.

Tsogyal descends into the lowest level of hell in order to extract the minister named Shanti(pa) who was supposedly responsible for her condemnation to death. Interesting about this tale is that its premise does not seamlessly harmonize with the rest of the *Life*. In Chapter I, foreign ministers convince the king, Yeshé Tsogyal's father, to condemn his youngest child to death for refusing to marry, but none of these ministers is singled out and referred to by name. However, in Taksham's seventeenth-century version, a minister named Shanti does appear early on in the story to admonish Yeshé Tsogyal, though he does not go so far as to encourage her father to allow her to be tortured and executed.²¹⁴ It may be that Taksham, reading Drimé Künga's version, recognized that Shanti went unmentioned where he should have been initially and therefore wrote the minister into the beginning of the story. Or it is also possible that Taksham had access to sources that spoke of Shanti where Drimé Künga did not. Whatever the case, *Shanti's Rescue* does not contain an authorial attribution, nor does it offer a date for its carving. The text does, however, reiterate that it was in fact excerpted from a *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal.²¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, Drakar Taso Chökyi Wangchuk attests to this excerpted story as a stand-

²¹⁴ Drénakara, the pious interior minister who saves Yeshé Tsogyal is named, but the foreign ministers act as an anonymous unit. On this issue, see pp. 179–180 here and Gyatso 2006: 11.

²¹⁵ *Shanti's Rescue*, 7a: *zhes pa 'di ni mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar 'bring po nas zur du bskrun nas nyung ngur bsdus pa'o*. Lit. "This quoted [material], having been printed separately from the middle[-length] life story of Tsogyal, is a short excerpt."

alone tale,²¹⁶ and Jadrel Künga Rangdröl includes it in his 1888 "Kashö Karka" anthology of or *délok* ('das log), i.e., "revenant," stories.²¹⁷

The visually clearest, most complete, and least orthographically erroneous source with which I began, then, was Kunsang Tobgay's 1975–1976 reproduction of Pema Lingpa's *Richly Detailed Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* from Gangtey Monastery.²¹⁸ Initially, my intention was to

²¹⁶ See Brag dkar rta so Sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug, "Gnyis pa lung a nu yo ga'i skor la rgyud kyi lung ni sngar ltar las," in *Gsung 'bum: Chos kyi dbang phyug*, vol. 2, 13 vols. (Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin, 2011), 57–66. At 59.4: *ma cig ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar las phyung ba'i na rag gi phan yon/ sdig blon shi ta dpyal ba nas bton pa'i lo rgyus*. While Taksham (1972: 199.6–200.1) does not refer his readers to a specific text, he says that one should look elsewhere for a more detailed account of Yeshé Tsogyal's descent into hell than the one he provides. For a translation of this passage, see Dowman 1984: 135.

²¹⁷ See Bya bral Kun dga' rang grol, "Rnal 'byor ma'i grub thob ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar nas sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba nas ston tshul gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam," in *Das log skor gyi chos skor phyogs sgrigs*. BDRC W1AC224 (Lhasa: Gser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang, n.d.): 375–384. On the Kashö Karka (*Ka shod mkhar kha*) collection and its compiler, Jadrel Künga Rangdröl, see Bryan J. Cuevas, *Travels in the Netherworld: Buddhist Popular Narratives of Death and the Afterlife in Tibet* (Oxford University Press, 2008), esp. 16, 134, and 149–150n20. This work is also cited in Rolf Alfred Stein, *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet* (Presses universitaires de France, 1959): 401n13. See also Jacques Bacot, "Titres et colophons d'ouvrages non canoniques tibétains," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient* 44, no. 2 (1951): 275–337. Like Stein, Bacot (p. 282, no. 15) lists a work with the title *Bya bral kun dga' rang grol dang sprang byang chub seng ges gcas chos kyi rgyal pos bka'i 'phrin lon pa skya bo pho mo'i rnam thar dang phyogs mtshungs snyon 'gro'i chos mchan bcas kyi dkar chag*, which he translates as the *Histoire d'un couple laïque, homme et femme, soumis aux commandments du Roi de la Religion et des ascètes Kun-dga' rañ-grol et Sprañ byañ-čhub señ-ge, avec l'index des noms des précurseurs de même secte* (*The Story of a Lay Couple, a Man and a Woman, Subject to the Commands of the King of Religion and the Ascetics Künga Rangdröl and Trang Jangchub Sengé, with the Index of the Names of Predecessors of the Same Sect*). This work, not presently available through BDRC, but held at the University of Washington's East Asia Library, also contains the stories of Nangsa Öbum, Changchub Sengé, Karma Wangzin, Lingsa Chökyi, and Guru Chöwang. It is titled *Rnal 'byor ma'i grub thob ye shes mtsho rgyal kyi rnam thar nas sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba nas ston tshul gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam zhig*. On the topic of women in revenant tales, see Alyson Prude, "Women Returning from Death: The Gendered Nature of the Delog Role," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 36 (October 2016): 69–92. Prude does not refer to any such tales featuring Yeshé Tsogyal.

²¹⁸ Padma gling pa 1975–1976: 169–275. Although ostensibly available to scholars along with the Manang reproduction since the late 1970s, this source has been almost entirely ignored in scholarship on Yeshé Tsogyal until very recently. Gyatso's (2006: 8 and 8n35) reference to a "partial" and "incomplete and simplified paraphrase" of Drimé Künga's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* by Pema Lingpa appears to me to be the first reference in Western scholarship to a Pema Lingpa-attributed life story of Yeshé Tsogyal, whatever the comprehensiveness of the work.

To be fair, it may be that even though two *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* witnesses were reproduced in publication over forty years ago, the cycle could have remained difficult for scholars of Tibetan and Bhutanese Buddhism to access until fairly recently and thanks to online libraries like the Buddhist Digital Resource Center. But even if that was the case, given Pema Lingpa's fame among treasure revealers, it nevertheless seems curious to me that scholarship has remained almost entirely ignorant of a full-length life story of Yeshé Tsogyal among his discoveries. One would think that that a Yeshé Tsogyal biography alternative to Taksham's would have been remarked upon in scholarship prior to the twenty-first century. This oversight is perhaps testimony to lingering androcentrism in the field as well as a reminder of just how little we know about the output of even some of the biggest names in treasure revelation.

compare Drimé Künga's *Tsogyal Ü* to that work while using the Manang reproduction as a supplementary aid to understanding if need be. To Google is to chance finding more and more material with which to contend, however, and the rewards of doing so in my case were many. Even at present, two of the top five hits for the search terms "Ye shes mtsho rgyal archive" include links to the British Library's Endangered Archives Programme (hereafter EAP), launched in 2004 as an effort to support local researchers in the documentation of rare and endangered texts and objects worldwide.²¹⁹

Among the British Library's EAP holdings, we find the following six manuscripts from Bhutan, listed below in order of the text's parent project creation date.²²⁰ The bibliographical information I have provided includes author, title, date of copy, the British Library's cataloguing information, the original text's current location, the institution that provided support for the text's digitization, and the date of the parent project's creation:

1. NA. *Mkha' 'gro gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar*, n.d., British Library, EAP105/2/1/8, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP105-2-1-8>. Original held at Ogyen Chöling Manor Library, Bumtang, Bhutan. Digitized by the Aris Trust Centre, Oxford University, 2006–2007.
2. NA. *Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa*, n.d., British Library,

²¹⁹ More information about the Endangered Archives Programme can be found here: <https://eap.bl.uk/about>. The EAP's holdings are vast and growing annually, and I highly recommend it to Buddhist studies scholars in search of primary source material that may not be otherwise found online.

²²⁰ I would prefer to list the sources by the date when they went live on the EAP's website so as to offer the most accurate sense of when these sources became publicly available, but based on project descriptions, it is not always clear. In a given case, we may find a project "award date," and/or "creation date," the date range from start to finish, and the date(s) when archival holdings may have been catalogued, which in some instances may mean photographed or uploaded. We do not always, in short, have clear information about a date of online publication. For certain projects, this may be because projects are still ongoing or undergoing revision. The archives of Ogyen Chöling (part of EAP Project 105) are a good case in point. Ogyen Chöling's texts were catalogued by Samten Karmay in 2003 (*The Diamond Isle*, now available on BDRC: W1KG16738), and the texts are now also catalogued under EAP105 "The digital documentation of manuscripts at Drametse and Ogyen Chöling," which shows a creation date of 2006–2007. Notes to this project say that the files were received from Dr. Karma Phuntsho between July 2007–June 2008, but when they first went live on the EAP site is not stated. Moreover, all of the Ogyen Chöling manor holdings, including the texts, were being re- or newly documented upon my visit in August 2017.

EAP105/1/3/113, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP105-1-3-113>. Original held at Drametse Monastery, Bhutan. Digitized by the Aris Trust Centre, Oxford University, 2006–2007.

3. NA. *Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar*, n.d., British Library, EAP105/1/3/132, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP105-1-3-132>. Original held at Drametse Monastery, Bhutan. Digitized by the Aris Trust Centre, Oxford University, 2006–2007.
4. Padma gling pa. *Bla ma nor by rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam thar bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs sto*, in *Phurdrup Gonpa Thor bu Nor rgyam chos skor*, British Library, EAP310/3/3/11, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP310-3-3-11>. Original held at Phurdrup Gonpa, Bhutan. Digitized by the Loden Foundation, 2009.
5. ———. *Bla ma nor by rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam thar bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs lags sto*, 1707–1708, in *Thor bu Bla ma nor rgyam chos skor*. British Library, EAP310/4/2/12, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP310-4-2-12>. Original held at Tshamdrak Monastery, Bhutan. Digitized by the Loden Foundation, 2010.
6. Dri med kun dga'. *Mtsho rgyal rnam thar*, n.d., British Library, EAP570/1/2/13, <https://eap.bl.uk/archive-file/EAP570-1-2-13>. Original held at Dongkarla Temple Archive, Bhutan. Digitized by an Independent Researcher, 2012.

With the exception of number five, a copy of Pema Lingpa's *Lama, Jewel, Ocean* cycle, the above sources are undated. Project descriptions suggest that archival holdings at these sites may date to the twelfth century, but most manuscripts are likely a few hundred years old.²²¹

Interestingly, a few of them have what appears to be blue ball-point pen ink writing in their margins. (For example, see EAP105/1/3/113 fols. 22a, 35b, and 36b.) Some notes in pen add omitted words or lines; others expand contractions and elaborate abbreviations in the Tibetan.

²²¹ See, for example, the project details for EAP 105, <https://doi.org/10.15130/EAP105>.

Who might have made these notes and why, exactly, is unclear, though this suggests to me that at least some copies of the *Life* were being handled and read in the twentieth century.²²²

To these sources, we can add two more manuscripts, scans of which were recently uploaded by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC):

7. Dri med kun dga'. *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun pa*. BDRC W8LS19942. [s.l.]: [s.n.], [n.d.].

8. [Dri med kun dga']. *Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas pa le'u bdun pa*. BDRC W8LS18309.[s.l.]: [s.n.], [n.d.].

Both of these sources were shared with me by Kelsang Lhamo, Senior Librarian at BDRC, in the fall of 2016. Although their cover pages do not indicate as much, the files were first uploaded to BDRC in the fall of 2017. The scans for the first source (W8LS19942), an *uchen* manuscript, were obtained by BDRC from Larung Gar, where the source was used as the basis for a modern edition, number nine below. The first few folia of this manuscript are out of order in the scan, which shows 1a (title page), 2a, 1b, 2b, 3b, 3a. The second source (W8LS18309), a photocopy of an *umé* manuscript, is of an unknown provenance, and BDRC holds a scan of the photocopy that was produced in October 2016. BDRC does not currently provide data for this work's author, but folio 90a.7 states that it is a treasure text of Drimé Künga.

There are also two modern editions (in addition to the Sky Dancer Press 2008 edition) printed in Lhasa in 2013 in a single volume of a sixteen-volume series described on BDRC as "Collected biographies of great women of India and Tibet." One edition, based on the Larung Gar manuscript, is attributed to Drimé Künga, the other, which seems to me to be based on the Thimphu reproduction, is attributed to Pema Lingpa:

9. U rgyan Dri med kun dga'. *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha'*

²²² They may have been annotated as early as the last decade of the nineteenth century following the patent of the ballpoint pen in 1888, but it seems more likely to me that annotation occurred well into the twentieth.

'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun ma. In Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs: 'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba. vol. 6. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang. 2013: 180–261.

10. Padma gling pa. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa. In Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs: 'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba. vol. 6. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2013: 262–331.*

These editions were scanned for BDRC in January 2016 and made available under work number W1KG16649. The *incipit* of the Drimé Künga version is printed out of order and one entire folio's material, fol. no. 2, has been omitted in the edition. Both editions contain orthographical mistakes, sometimes in reflection of what the manuscript versions show, sometimes in the form of typos (like *nga* for *da*, for example). That these editions are printed one after the other in the same volume is quite handy for comparison, however. A reader who would like to get a sense of some of the potential differences among versions would do well enough to read the Lhasa 2013 editions in tandem.

Thinking Critically about Editions

Although I had initially hoped to produce a critical edition of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as part of this project, the relatively recent windfall of sources has complicated that task such that it will take more time than I had originally anticipated. In the meantime, I offer "critical translations," which is to say that I consult multiple witnesses as I decide upon a reading and offer a translation of certain passages of the work.²²³ That said, my comparisons among the *Life's* copies and of the *Life* with other works of Tibetan literature has made me rethink not only the

²²³ On this point, see the note on translation and transliteration at the beginning of this dissertation.

feasibility of producing a critical edition of a work of its kind, but also the suitability of doing so for the reasons that critical editions are typically produced, not least in order to determine *the* text). Where I discuss genre in the next chapter, I not only show that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* shares its closest affinities with works traditionally adapted for live performance, I also suggest that the *Life* could have begun its own life with a certain degree of adaptability in mind, even if the work was not much adapted in reality.

My research has therefore led me to regard the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as a kind of congenitally mutable work. It appears to me to be a literary creation that may very well have anticipated its own alteration from the earliest moments of its commitment to the page. If that is the case, then what should a critical edition of the *Life* look like, and what would it ultimately be for? Speaking broadly, when it comes to creating a critical edition—a text that would typically present an archetype *sans* "omissions" and "accretions"—how might we account for the fact of the *Life's* inherent mutability? What, in other words, are we after if so-called "omissions and accretions" (if "subtractions" and "additions" could even be deemed as such) might have been on the horizon from the start?

Such questions remind me in particular of Paul Ricoeur where he writes on the topic of communities' relationships to their "sacred" and/or "authoritative" texts. The distinction between sacred and authoritative need not trouble us here, though Ricoeur considers it at length in his "The 'Sacred' Text and the Community" (1995 [1979]). There his central question is whether or not a text that has been critically edited can still be deemed a "sacred" text.

Ultimately, no, it cannot, Ricoeur concludes, for the critically edited text is "no longer the text that a community has always regarded as sacred; it is a scholars' text." It is a text which

belongs to no community except that of the academic world.²²⁴ (Should we be altogether disinclined to worry over the term "sacred" in our case, a term by which Ricoeur is himself "frightened" for the immutability it suggests,²²⁵ I think we can omit it for now and say instead that a critically edited text is "no longer a/the text that a community has always regarded.") A critical edition of the *Life* would be a scholar's text, one that may not be, or at least may *not quite* be, a version of the story that a religious community has long held to be "its" version.

If the *Life* indeed began as a congenitally mutable work, however, does that matter? The scholar's text could be an acceptable, even welcome, mutation, so to speak. It might even become a text favored by a religious community. (Ricoeur takes up this very issue in light of the presumed need for critical activity and interpretation among the Bible's textual communities.²²⁶) Whatever the case, an attempt to reproduce the "original" text would result in what is effectively an ensemble of signs that could be as new as it is old—or, at least, as much news to readers familiar with some iteration of Yeshé Tsogyal's story as it is a document restored to a past (albeit perhaps lost) manifestation. Knowing this much, what should one then aim above all to produce? An eclectic text? A more honestly "new," new one?

In my efforts to think through such issues of textual criticism as they might relate to a work of literature like the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, I have been most aided by John Bryant's challenges to defining a material text as a fixed entity from its inception.²²⁷ For his part, Bryant

²²⁴ Paul Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative and Imagination*, ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 68.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*: 72.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*: 69.

²²⁷ John L. Bryant, *The Fluid Text: A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). For Bryant's own application of his theory and method, which also demonstrates some of the promise that digital programs hold for conducting and presenting critical work on dynamic texts, see *Herman*

notes that although the job of textual scholarship has long been envisioned as a process of sifting through "corruption and 'otherness' [in order to] establish an authoritative or definitive text for common use," when we inspect the causes for alterity, "we find more than just the accidents of textual transmission; we begin to envision a fuller phenomenon, tied to historical moments but always changing and always manifesting one set of interests or another."²²⁸ That textual alterity may point to different ideologies or reveal not just accidents of reproduction but the vested interests of different hands across cultures and time is of course not news to textual critics working on pre-modern literature. Still, what would happen, Bryant wonders, if scholars accepted that the "definitive text" was, at bottom, a multiplicity of texts? To reiterate a question he poses in this regard: What if Shakespeare scholars acknowledged that there were multiple *Lears* (which indeed there were) from the start?

Recounting Bryant's argument along with its strengths and pitfalls at some length is better left to a future phase of this project, but suffice to say here that he provides a compelling case for accepting textual indeterminacy or instability—or, as he prefers, "fluidity"—over determinacy, however difficult that might be to do, let alone to capture in writing. In his understanding, taking into account the dynamics of revision and treating variants as the rule rather than the exception might actually allow for "sharper vision of the evolution of texts and how writers, readers, and cultures interact."²²⁹ With multiple versions of the *Life* in mind, not just with an eye toward the earliest, I can look to material alterations, accidents of copy but also "localized fine-tunings," not merely as revisions, but as new conceptualizations of the work and

Melville's Typee: A Fluid-Text Edition [Revised 2009] (University of Virginia Press, 2006), at <http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/melville/>.

²²⁸ Bryant 2002: 2.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*: 3.

reformations of its protagonist.²³⁰ I can, moreover, pursue new lines of inquiry as they emerge from parallel readings of the "same" story.

For example, when we read them all together, we find among the patterns that emerge that certain witnesses of the *Life* attributed to Pema Lingpa lack similes present in other witnesses. These similes, perhaps not incidentally, are also commonly found in highly-ornamented works of Sanskrit love poetry. (On this topic, see chapter five.) Beyond trying to determine whether these literary devices were added to or subtracted from the text in its earliest form (At what stage of the *Life* did the similes appear or disappear?), we can read the passages in tandem to see how the *Life* may read differently with or without them. We can also inquire as to whether, if they were indeed omitted from later versions, Pema Lingpa, or someone acting in his name, was given to bowdlerization, and, if so, why that might have been the case. Did Pema Lingpa find his predecessor's work unsuited to its subject or even gauche? Perhaps for him in his time it was too flowery a work in certain respects. Maybe he fancied himself a censor. Or perhaps such turns of phrase simply lacked traction with Pema Lingpa's audiences. Was there, in Bhutan ca. the sixteenth century, a lack of interest in Sanskrit poetic tropes? Questions about editorial agenda are in our case extremely difficult to answer with any degree of confidence, of course, but the point for Bryant would be that now, with multiple witnesses taken together and put on display, such questions can be asked.

In the end, if we hope to better understand how the figure of Yeshé Tsogyal and her *Life* evolved over time and came to vary in certain respects, attempting to reconstruct an archetype of the *Life* can aid us in that endeavor. But it is my feeling that we would nevertheless be remiss to restrict her story to only one set of words on a page. At the very least, which is still

²³⁰ Ibid.: 4.

to say quite a lot, any critical edition produced from the witnesses we have access to at present would be best supplemented by extensive annotations. With the help of digital media and the relevant software, better still if one is able to create an edition whereby a reader could shift between or among witnesses and their notes with relative ease.

PART II: READING THE *LIFE STORY OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL*

CHAPTER THREE

A DIFFERENCE THAT IS ALSO A LINK: GENRE AS A CRITICAL CATEGORY FOR READING THE *LIFE STORY OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL* ²³¹

Understanding "*Namtar*" in the *Namtar of Yeshé Tsogyal*

Near the outset of only two witnesses of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*,²³² we find an ambiguous line at the conclusion of the passage that announces Yeshé Tsogyal's birth. In these texts, we learn that immediately after the princess was born, many signs appeared and instilled in others a sense of "belief," i.e., "trust" or "confidence" (*vid ches*), in her, and we find that Yeshé Tsogyal was, moreover, possessed of exceptional characteristics. From there, after a full stop, the texts seem to add further testimony to just how remarkable the princess appeared to be, even as a newborn. By her many actions or deeds, she is said to have caused people overt joy (*mngon par dga' ba*). Or is it that many *accounts* of her actions cause(d) people to feel such joy? Or, still, is it that generally speaking, many stories of the deeds of enlightened beings are known to stimulate joy "just like this" (*'di lta bu nyid*)—that is, just like this account of Yeshé Tsogyal? Or just like Yeshé Tsogyal?²³³ In short, upon scanning a line in which joy is the only thing apparent, the

²³¹ My title for this chapter is adapted from Claudio Guillén who reminds us that genre choice is "a difference deliberately made that can become a link." See *The Challenge of Comparative Literature*, trans. Cola Franzen (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), 114.

²³² DK W8LS19942, 5b.5–6a.2 and DK *Mtsho rgyal dbu*, 2b.4–5. The modern editions based on these witnesses also preserve the line.

²³³ For the complete line in context, see DK W8LS19942, 5b.5–6a.2: *mdzad pa'i rnam thar du mas mngon par dga' ba 'di lta bu nyid do*. "Many hagiographies [cause] overt joy just like this." Or, "Through [her] many deeds, [there was] overt joy just like this." The concluding phrase, "just like this," does not help us much, not least because the proximal pronoun *'di* lacks an obvious referent. Chönyi Drolma, in her recent translation of the Khenpo Sherab and Anna Orlova edited text translates the clause *'di lta bu nyid* as a complete sentence, i.e., "She had a way about her." (See *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, 75.) A literal translation of the phrase would be, as above, "just like this," or perhaps "just like her." I grant that it may have a colloquial sense, though in that regard, I would suggest one more along the lines of "and so she was."

reader is apt to wonder: As others behold Yeshé Tsogyal for the first time, is the narrator telling us about a person's actions or deeds and the joy they bring about in others, or are we here seeing the *Life* speak self-referentially about its status as a biographical account?

Put simply, in the Tibetan, the line about the joy related to Yeshé Tsogyal and/or her life story could be read in several ways. Depending in part upon our interpretation of the phrase *dzépé namtar* (*mdzad pa'i rnam thar*), it could be referring to Yeshé Tsogyal's actions or "exploits" related to her religious pursuits, or it could be part of a broad statement about the genre with which we now engage. Namtar, or *dzépé namtar* as *namtar* is rendered in the honorific, tell the "life stories" of Tibetans, typically Buddhist individuals esteemed for their virtue.²³⁴ As *The Great Tibetan Dictionary* has it, *namtar* are "texts which are stories about the deeds of superior persons, or works which are narratives of [spiritual] realization."²³⁵ Here we might also render the term *dzépé namtar* as the "liberative activity" of a superior being—that is, the "deeds" (*mdzad pa*) done by a paragon vis-à-vis the pursuit of enlightenment or "full liberation" (*rnam thar*, Skt. *vimokṣa*) from *saṃsāra*, the cycle of death and rebirth.²³⁶

Given the overall context, when I read the line in question above, I tend to favor a reading that takes Yeshé Tsogyal's behavior as a baby to be spoken of in a lofty manner, yet I see no reason why the line should not be both evocative of action within the story and a comment on the effects of the story (and stories akin to it), really. The infant Yeshé Tsogyal did things that

²³⁴ On the typically Buddhist character of the genre, see Gyatso 1998: 103.

²³⁵ *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. "*rnam thar*," (1) *skyes bu dam pa'i mdzad spyod lo rgyus kyi gzhung ngam/rtogs pa brjod pa'i bstan bcos*; (2) *rnam grol*. Alt. "(1) Texts which are stories about the deeds of holy persons or *avadānaśāstra*, [i.e., lit. treatises on noble deeds]; (2) complete liberation." Cf. Quintman 2013: 6.

²³⁶ On this term and its applications, see Gyatso 1998: 6, 281n8 as well as the elaborations of Schaeffer 2004: 5 and Quintman 2016: 6–8.

brought the people in her life joy, and so it goes with the accounts of her deeds preserved for posterity.

That said, no matter how one decides to settle it in translation, the statement still appears to be something of a redundancy, or, depending upon one's interpretation, a kind of non-sequitur, amid the earliest descriptions of Yeshé Tsogyal. It was perhaps excised from (or never included in) most extant versions of Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* for the way in which it does not quite fit with the surrounding context. Nevertheless, for our part, we might see in it the impetus to ask a host of questions about the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, questions that have above all to do with its genre classification as well as the work's overall function or purpose. Thanks to its remarkable protagonist, this account may be joy-inducing. But through what sort of medium is this joy conveyed? To what, exactly, do we refer when we refer to the *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal?

Translating *Namtar*

Tibetan titles for the fourteenth-century account of the life of Yeshé Tsogyal vary across versions, yet the majority label the work a "*namtar*" (*rnam thar*). This genre designation is alternately translated into English as "biography," "sacred biography," "spiritual biography," "hagiography," "full liberation story," or, simply, "life story."²³⁷ Efforts to capture the meaning of *namtar* in its most literal sense render it as "full liberation [story]" where "full liberation" (*rnam par thar pa*; Skt. *vimokṣa*) refers to the complete emancipation from *saṃsāra*, the recurrent cycle of death and rebirth and the suffering attendant all beings' condition. When *namtar* is less literally rendered and its contents are more broadly (and secularly) conceived, the term signifies what we today recognize as the "biography" or "life story" of an individual.

²³⁷ Discussions of the possible renderings of the term *namtar* are many. See especially Gyatso 1998; Schaeffer 2004; Jacoby 2015; and Quintman 2016.

To modify "biography" or "life story" with a term like "sacred" or "spiritual," or to designate it a "hagiography" outright, is to take something of an intervening position between choosing the most and least restrictive translations. These designations make explicit the religious dimensions of a work, and often with that, they signify the mythico-historical status of the work's subject. They do not go so far, however, as to indicate an expressly Buddhist soteriology.

Since the *Life* does indeed offer a cradle-to-grave account of its protagonist, one that focuses on certain key moments in which she makes progress along a Buddhist path—a path toward full liberation from cyclic existence—it is in that sense a "life story" that is also a "religious" or "spiritual biography" on the order of a "full liberation story." Because it is also an account which offers a received, heavily mythologized version of its subject's life, we might also take it to be a "hagiography" or "sacred biography" along the lines of William LaFleur's understanding of these overlapping terms. The *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal offers us a written account of a life of a person who is "held even today to have actually lived" and furthermore "deemed to be holy."²³⁸ Moreover, it treats its subject via a mixture of myth and biography, attesting to events and activities both ordinary and supernatural, mundane and miraculous, over the course of a single saintly life.²³⁹ Therefore, to refer to the work as *The Life Story* (or *The Biography*) of Yeshé Tsogyal, or as *A Sacred Biography* (or *A Hagiography*) of Yeshé Tsogyal,

²³⁸ Cf. the definition of "hagiography" in James B. Robinson, "The Lives of Indian Buddhist Saints: Biography, Hagiography and Myth," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion, 1996), 57–69. See also the introduction to this thesis on Yeshé Tsogyal's historical status.

²³⁹ On this point, see William R. LaFleur, "Biography," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 943–47. See also Frank E. Reynolds, "The Many Lives of Buddha: A Study of Sacred Biography and Theravāda Tradition," in *The Biographical Process: Studies in the History and Psychology of Religion*, ed. Frank E. Reynolds and Donald Capps, Originally published 1976; Im Original erschienen 1976 (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter and Co., 1976), 37–61.

or, not least, *The Story of How Yeshé Tsogyal Achieved Complete Emancipation from Saṃsāra* would be to do it differently nuanced but equally suitable justice.²⁴⁰

Thus far, following Kurtis Schaeffer (2004) and Andrew Quintman (2016) in their work on Tibetan (auto)biographical works, I have preferred to translate an abbreviated form of many of the titles, i.e., *Tsogyal gyi Namtar*, as the *Life* (short for *Life Story*) of *Yeshé Tsogyal*. In doing so, I have opted to convey "namtar" in its least restricted sense, and I have left the sacred, spiritual, or religious nature of the story implicit in my translation.

Also only implied, perhaps to too great a degree, is the form of the work. While "*Life*," as in "*life story*," might conjure, at the most basic level, a sense of the work as a narrative—a written (or oral) account of connected events—it tells us very little to nothing precise about the work's form, style, or manner of communication. We know that stories can take many shapes and find homes in multiple forms of media expression. A story is no less a story told if it is written in verse rather than in prose or in prose rather than in verse, or it is depicted in frescoes, mimed, and so on. And so, even if "life story" serves us well enough to capture the general sense of *what* is covered in and by Yeshé Tsogyal's *namtar*, the term leaves us yet with the problem of establishing *how* her life story is (or might have been) presented to its audiences and, further, of whom an audience might consist.

²⁴⁰ This is not to say that paratextual concerns related to the form of title of the work are unimportant. In order to reflect the ways in which Tibetan authors and editors might have differently nuanced the title and thereby attempted to orient readers, one might ask (1) How is each specific version of the *Life* titled in Tibetan?; (2) How do specific Tibetan titles orient the reader to the work or nuance our understanding of it?; and (3) How might English translations of those titles attempt to do the same? Here I simply wish to emphasize that the *Life* overlaps with each of the genre designations above such that it can be accurately deemed either a *Life*, a *Sacred Biography*, or a *Full Liberation Story*.

The Comprehensiveness of *Namtar*, or, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, a Lost Drama?

In a recent edited volume titled *Narrative Pattern and Hagiographic Life Writing: Comparative Perspectives from Asia to Europe* (2014), scholars from various disciplines re-examine "hagiography" as a genre designation for life stories of exemplary individuals. Above all, they question the term's usefulness as a cross-cultural category within religious studies. How well, they ask, does this genre label, used originally to refer to the *vitae* of Christian saints, serve as a designation for life writing in other major religious traditions, particularly Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism? Assessing the term's usefulness as an English equivalent for the *namtar* of Tibetan Buddhist masters in particular, Ulrike Roesler states that terms like "hagiography" (and "sacred biography") do, in fact, frequently serve scholars well as equivalents for *namtar*.²⁴¹ Generally speaking, she states, we find *Lives* of Tibetan spiritual adepts bearing many family resemblances to the *Lives* of Christian saints. Just as Western biographies of saints provide written or oral accounts of lives of persons deemed to be holy,²⁴² *namtar* can be written or oral accounts of the lives of persons deemed remarkable for their spiritual accomplishments in Tibetan Buddhist contexts.²⁴³

Early on in her article, however, Roesler contends that *namtar* is actually a more formally inclusive genre label than "hagiography." While it is true that both hagiography and *namtar* share, at the content level, investments in describing the lives of spiritual adepts, the types of

²⁴¹ Ulrike Roesler, "Operas, Novels, and Religious Instructions: Life Stories of Tibetan Buddhist Masters between Genre Classifications," in *Narrative Pattern and Genre in Hagiographic Life Writing*, ed. Stephan Conerman and Jim Rheingans, 1st ed. (Berlin: EB-Verlag, 2014), 113–39.

²⁴² See the note on LaFleur (2005) above.

²⁴³ Gyatso (1998: 103) notes that while the label "'namtar' can be used prosaically to describe any account of the events in a life, even a sinful or ignorant life," but the term usually "indicates the Buddhistic character of the narrative" to which it is applied, and it signals for the reader the spiritual accomplishments of the protagonist.

media designated "*namtar*" in Tibet may not, in Roesler's estimation, always count as "hagiography" in the West. If one were to ask, "Can 'hagiography' serve scholars well as the translation for *namtar* given the multitude of forms that Tibetan life stories can take?" Roesler's answer would ultimately be "No", or, "No, not in *every* case." Since *namtar* can include subgenres like songs, letters, doctrinal treatises—forms of writing that Roesler does not take to be typically found in Western hagiographies, it ultimately seems to her "problematic to subsume *all* [*namtar*] under the term 'hagiography', even if the majority of *namtar* has a close affinity with this genre."²⁴⁴

It may be the case that what falls under *namtar* as a genre label does significantly trouble the boundaries of "hagiography" as Roesler finds the latter term often defined in the West. Yet even in scholarship on Western religious traditions, the jury remains out on just how inclusive of different types of media expression "hagiography" as category is or should be. Presently, it is not unheard of to see paintings, pageants, and letters labeled "hagiographic" and scrutinized for biographical data on Christian saints and/or information about intellectual trends as they manifest in the writing of saints' lives.

Apart from addressing issues of translation, then, Roesler's argument does more—and quite well—to draw our attention to the formal comprehensiveness of *namtar* in itself. For our purposes here, such attention is crucial. Before any attempt to settle on what the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is in terms born of scholarship on Western religious and literary traditions, we might ask what kind of *namtar* the *Life* is within Tibetan *belles lettres*. If, as Roesler notes, *namtar* vary in form especially, one wonders, what specific *namtar* form does the *Life* take? And how can we

²⁴⁴ Roesler 2014: 117, italics original.

imagine the *Life's* form influencing the role it might have played and the space it might have occupied in its home genre ecology?

Life as Live Performance

As Roesler describes some of the ways in which written works designated *namtar* elude Western conceptions of hagiography, she notes that perhaps the most striking example of *namtar's* versatility as a genre designation is the term's use for life stories that serve as the bases for dramatic stage performances, or *traptön* ('*khra b ston*). Today, in their formal iterations, these performances are broadly known as *aché lhamo* (a [*l*]ce lha mo, or simply *lha mo*, and hereafter *lhamo*) in Tibet and commonly known as "Tibetan operas" in the West. They fall under the broader category of drama, or *dogar* (*zlos dgar*), a term made up of the words for "recitation" and "dance." Depending upon which scholar one consults, there is, traditionally, a set of eight to ten of these operas, and the stories upon which each are based circulate as written prose-verse narratives. Such narratives are most often classified as "*namtar*" in their titles.²⁴⁵ The relationship between these works and what amounts to their performances is unlike that of script-to-play or libretto-to-opera as we find these mediums paired in Western contexts, however, and so here it is worth explaining precisely how *namtar* can and do serve as bases for stage performances.

²⁴⁵ On this point, see Jeanette Snyder, "Preliminary Study of the Lha Mo," in *The Singing Mask: Echoes of Tibetan Opera*, ed. Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy and Tashi Tsering, Lungta 15 (Dharamshala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2001), 8–35. Snyder's work was first published in 1979. Many sources enumerate eight traditional operas. Snyder suggests that there are sometimes nine traditional *lhamo*; others suggest that there are nine or ten. See, for example, Marion Herbert Duncan, *Harvest Festival Dramas of Tibet* (Hong Kong: Orient Publishing Co., 1955). The operas listed by Snyder (2001) include: (1) *Gcung po don yod grub*; (2) *Chos rgyal nor bzang*; (3) *Ras chung rdo rje grags pa'i rnam thar*; (4) *Rgya bza' bal bza'*; (5) *'Das log Snang sa 'od 'bum*; (6) *Dri med kun ldan*; (7) *'Gro ba bzang mo* (or) *Ka la dbang po*; (8) *Gzugs kyi nyi ma*; and (9) *Padma 'od 'bar*. For summaries of each, see *ibid.*: 20–21.

Like many scholars writing about *lhamo* before her,²⁴⁶ Roesler notes that formally speaking, the *namtar* for a *lhamo* will not exactly resemble a text that guides the vocal performance of a Western opera or musical. Moreover, calling a *lhamo's* *namtar* a "script" as if it were the text acted out in the manner of a Western play also has its problems, says Dieter Schuh, who, in his "The Actor in the Tibetan *lha-mo* Theatre" (2001 [1976]), reminds us that a theater text upon which a *lhamo* performance is directly based is called by its own technical term, namely a *trapzhung* (*'khrab gzhung*) or simply *zhung*, "text."²⁴⁷ Further, Schuh notes, the sung double-verses within a *lhamo's* *zhung* are also referred to as *namtar*. Speaking about his specific part—what a Western opera singer would call an aria—an actor might refer to his "*namtar*."²⁴⁸

The term *namtar*, then, multivalent as it is, can refer to (1) a life story that is not traditionally performed or staged; (2) a life story in the form of a prose-verse narrative that provides the basis for dramatic performance; and (3) a particular metrical part that is sung *within* a dramatic performance. Schuh refers to the types of *namtar* that fall into the second category—i.e., the prose-verse works aimed at performance—as "written drama texts." Hereafter, I will use

²⁴⁶ For the most comprehensive bibliography of Western scholarship on Tibetan drama to date, see Erwan Temple, "Short Bibliography on Tibetan Performing Arts & Religious Dances," 2012, https://www.academia.edu/4357074/Erwan_Temple_Short_Bibliography_on_Tibetan_Performing_Arts_and_Religious_Dances.

²⁴⁷ Like Snyder, Schuh's "The Actor in the Tibetan *lha-mo* Theatre" (first published in German in 1976, translated into English and reprinted in 2001) is particularly helpful for the information it provides on the form and function of the *namtar* texts upon which a *lce lha mo* performances are based. See Schuh 2001: 100–102, esp. 102n22–24.

²⁴⁸ Throughout his memoir, *Ache Lhamo is My Life* (1999), Norbu Tsering (1927–2013), the artistic director of the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA) for many years, refers to singing "the" or "my *namtar*" when he refers to performing his part in a *lhamo*. For example, when speaking about a performance of the *lhamo Padma 'od 'bar*, Norbu Tsering states, "During the Shotön festival a play on the previous life of Padmasambhava was staged. The actor featuring the character of Padmasambhava (The Lotus Born) at the end is a small child hidden in a lotus, who later comes out as the lotus opens. So, since I was good in singing *namtar*, I was chosen to play the child Ogyen Rinpoche. I was made to sit in the lotus with a *damaru* and a bell and as the lotus opened I had to sing a *namtar*. The play concluded with my *namtar*." Norbu Tsering, *Ache Lhamo Is My Life*, ed. Antonio Attisani (Turin: Legenda, 1999).

Schuh's phrasing interchangeably with my own formulation, "dramatic *namtar*," to refer to life stories that may be adapted for the stage.

Put simply, a *namtar* that is a written drama text is not a blueprint for the staging and performance of a drama in a strict sense. To read such a *namtar* aloud, for example, would not be to recite the lines to be sung or spoken by an actor. What is contained in a dramatic *namtar* does, however, provide the material from which a blueprint, i.e., the *trapzhung* or "script," might be drawn.²⁴⁹ In what remains one of the most influential studies of *lhamo* to date, Jeanette Snyder summarizes the relationship that she observed between *namtar* and *trapzhung* texts, i.e., life stories in the form of written drama texts and performance scripts. Snyder notes that *namtar* are indeed the literary works from which individual troupes may draw inspiration, but, she continues, troupes also improvise, sometimes to a vast degree. As Snyder has it:

The play script (*'khrab gzhung*) is orally composed and sometimes written by the players themselves. The dialog verses, which are sung, are extracted from the original text (*rnam thar*) upon which the play is said to be based, and the melodies are fitted to it. The older traditional *lha mo* groups, when preparing the [*trapzhung*], stayed closer to the original text than did the newer modern groups, who used the text more as a starting point than a guide. [Further, the] theater pieces that finally result are often quite different from their literary sources.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ There is some debate as to whether certain *namtar* exist as the result of efforts to standardize dramas that were once only transmitted orally, or whether the texts might have been composed with an eye toward stage adaptation from the start. Some combination of the two seems likely—elements of oral tradition influencing composition, composition in turn influencing how the story might be take shape in perpetuity. Duncan (1955: 9) takes the former position, i.e., that written *namtars* reflect efforts to standardize performances, but Snyder's (2001) observations suggest that plays vary in how faithful they are to a base text or "standard" version and that variation is the norm.

²⁵⁰ Snyder 2001: 19. See also page 22 for more on the script/story comparison. Cf. also Henry Willis Wells, *The Classical Drama of India: Studies in Its Values for the Literature and Theatre of the World* (Bombay; New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 74 on the *Life of Drimé Künden* manuscripts available at the time of his writing: "The versions differ widely. None, so far as is known, is a conventional dramatic text; all read somewhat as a narrative, with 'he said,' and 'she said,' introducing the speeches and with an appreciative amount of pure description. Yet about ninety percent of the work is in dialogue and no doubt whatsoever exists that the reader holds a play in his hands. What he holds, to be more specific, is the groundwork for a theatrical performance, never reduced to a standard version of any sort, either in written or spoken form; the actors are invited with much license to enlarge and improve on the basis of a firm core of traditional material."

According to Snyder, a story might be even pared down or expanded upon at a troupe's discretion. Events that span several *namtar* folia could be omitted (perhaps due to time constraints), or an entirely unheard-of-before subplot could be added (perhaps to appeal to a large number of children in a given audience).²⁵¹ Whatever the case, it seems that a successful performance would depend less upon a production's faithfulness to the letter of some written drama text that inspired it than to the ability of its players to read a room. Based on Snyder's findings, it seems that *lhamo* audience members allowed for, even welcomed, variation in the tellings of particular *namtars*. Writing about the different comedic styles of two popular troupes, the Gyelkar Tsepa and the Kyormo Lungpa,²⁵² Snyder describes audience expectations vis-à-vis what we might call new adaptations of stories annually:

As the [Gyelkar Tsepa] paid faithful attention to the original text in preparing their [*trapzhung*] so they made sure their jokes and comic interludes were sophisticated and tasteful. The Tibetans used to complain, however, that they used the same jokes in the same place every year, and did not ad lib new ones as did the [Kyormo Lungpa], who used the original text as a starting point from which they developed the [*trapzhung*], adding to it a great deal of ad lib joking and broad comedy, some of it of the prat-fall variety. Although the [Kyormo Lungpa] decided on some jokes beforehand, many were ad libbed on the spot depending upon circumstances and who was in the audience.²⁵³

As I suggest above, we might think of the practice of drawing upon a life story for stage production as a practice of adaptation. To be sure, the term "adaptation" is a labile term in literary criticism, and the idiom in which it functions is rich and various.²⁵⁴ For cases in which a

²⁵¹ Snyder 2001: 22.

²⁵² Tib. Rgyal mkhar rtse pa; Skyor mo lung pa

²⁵³ Snyder 2001: 25.

²⁵⁴ Julie Sanders expands on the lability of the term and lists the others to which it might, at a given scholar's discretion, refer: "borrowing, stealing, appropriating, inheriting, assimilating... homage, mimicry, travesty, echo, allusion, intertextuality." Sanders continues, "adding into the mix: variation, version, interpretation, imitation, proximation, supplement, increment, improvisation, prequel, sequel, continuation, addition, paratext, hypertext, palimpsest, graft, rewriting, reworking, refashioning, re-vision, re-evaluation." See *Adaptation and Appropriation*, 1 edition (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

namtar is used to inspire a *trapzhung* and, with that, a performance, I use adaptation to refer to the transformation of the contents and form of one type of media, here a written literary work, for consumption in a different form of media, here that of a stage performance. Just as we might say that a novel, short story, or play can be "adapted" for film, we might say that a particular acting troupe adapts a *namtar* for the stage.

I would specify, however, that *namtar* share a more specialized relationship to their scripts and performances than contemporary novels or short stories (or headline news stories, or accounts of historical events, etc.) share with the screen plays and film adaptations they may inspire. Although successful novels, for example, are today often adapted for stage or screen, it is not intuitive to think of them as there purposefully for the begetting of another specific type of media expression. Novels and the films based on them needn't necessarily go hand-in-hand, in other words. Dramatic *namtar* and the scripts that emerge from them are innately paired, however. Written drama texts and their staged performances are therefore what we might call the companion art forms. A *lhamo's namtar*, for example, aims at the generation of another type of media expression, namely (more or less new) scripts.

While the *namtar*-to-stage/novel-to-film analogy above is one related to the practices that surround such literary works, we might also consider, in turn, the ways in which the genre of *namtar* might be analogous to the genre of the novel in terms of style and content. Toward the conclusion of the first part of her article in *Narrative Pattern and Hagiographic Life Writing*, Roesler suggests that we might think of *namtar* as a Tibetan form of novel writing. "While many life-stories are not more than fairly brief accounts of the main events in a life," she says, "others are long works of high literary standards." Such works depict heroes and heroines as "truly rounded characters" shaped by the vicissitudes of life, says Roesler, and for a Tibetan audience,

she argues, these stories are "'true' in the sense of 'historically true' and should therefore perhaps be classified as 'historical novel[s].'"²⁵⁵

This observation that *namtar* may be novel-like is not new. Long before Roesler, Rolf Stein (in 1961), writing about *lhamo namtar*, noted that such works contain themes that are also "le sujet de romans," i.e., "the subject of novels."²⁵⁶ Schuh likewise refers to written drama texts in what he calls their "unstageable" form as "Dialog-romanen," i.e., "dialogue-novels."²⁵⁷ It is Roesler's call to expand that observation as an argument—to develop the point that *namtar* might be "a genuinely Tibetan type of novel," particularly the "historical novel"—that has yet to be heeded.²⁵⁸

Although I do think that there are compelling reasons to view Yeshé Tsogyal's *Lives*, both early (ca. 14th–15th century) and late (17th century), as Tibetan instances of novel writing (ones that certainly well predate 1980s²⁵⁹), my goal here is not ultimately to argue for the *Life* as a novel or as a work of quasi-historical fiction, as the case may be. Prior to any speculation about the genre space that the *Life*, as a *namtar* attributed to both Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa, might occupy in world literature, I remain concerned with situating it within Tibetan letters. Now, with a comprehensive sense of *namtar* in mind, we might reprise our initial questions:

²⁵⁵ Roesler 2014: 118.

²⁵⁶ Rolf A. Stein, "Le théâtre au Tibet," in *Les théâtres d'Asie*, eds. J. Auboyer and A. Bake (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la recherche scientifique, 1961), 245–54.

²⁵⁷ Schuh 2001: 102.

²⁵⁸ Roesler 2014: 118.

²⁵⁹ See Roesler (2014: 118) on the common assertion that novel writing did not begin in Tibet until the 1980s, and thanks only to Chinese and Western influences.

Among what other Tibetan works is the *Life* most at home? With what other stories does it share both formal and thematic affinities, and to what Tibetan genres are those works said to belong?

Even a cursory assessment of the *Life* reveals that, stylistically speaking, it is a *namtar* more poetic than prosaic. As I noted in the previous chapter, versified dialogues among its main characters convey the bulk of the content. In that, it bears similarities to dramatic *namtar* in a general way. But how just how close is the *Life* to other works in this genre such that we might rank it among them? Below I will show how, given its extensive similarities, both thematic and structural, to one of the traditional eight Tibetan operas, namely the *Life of Drimé Künden*, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* might be best thought of as a written drama text, a *Life* whose contents stood to be adapted for performance on stage.

The Life of Drimé Künden

Both Pema Lingpa and Taksham Nüden Dorjé—Drimé Künga's successors in the Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* tradition—are said to have discovered stand-alone Tibetan tellings of the *Birth Story of Prince Vessantara* (Pāli *Vessantarajātaka*), the account of the Buddha's penultimate life as a royal youth who was so driven by his generosity that he was moved to give his wife and two children away to a cruel brahmin.²⁶⁰ The tale is multiform, and tellings of it are read and performed across Buddhist cultures, though today performances are especially popular in South and Southeast Asia.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ Padma gling pa, "Rgyal po dri med kun ldan gyi skyes rabs rnam thar," in *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*, BDRC W21727, vol. 7, 21 vols. (Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1975), 133–180; Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje, "Mi tra snying thig yid bzhin nor mchog las: 'Jig rten dbang phyug dri med kun ldan gyi lo rgyus thos grol drangs don thugs rje'i zhags pa," in *Rtsa gsum yi dam dgongs 'dus*, BDRC W4CZ1101, vol. 7, 13 vols. (Kongpo: Rdo dung dgon, n.d.), 35–142.

²⁶¹ On the continued popularity of the *Vessantarajātaka* across Buddhist traditions, see esp. Steven Collins, ed., *Readings of the Vessantara Jātaka* (Columbia University Press, 2016) as well as Katherine A. Bowie, *Of Beggars and Buddhas: The Politics of Humor in the Vessantara Jataka in Thailand* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2017).

The skeletal features of the story follow: An exceedingly virtuous son is conceived by a king and queen of a wealthy, prosperous kingdom. The prince-to-be shows signs of greatness early on, even prior to his birth. As a fetus in his mother's womb, he compels her to perform acts of generosity, and as soon as he is born, he begins to seek out his own ways to "perfect" that virtue by giving away the possessions of his kingdom. (A reader familiar with the Buddha's extended biography knows generosity to be the last virtue that the Buddha must perfect in order to achieve full enlightenment in his final birth.) He effectively empties the royal coffers, going so far as to put the kingdom's prize gem (or elephant, as the case may be) into the hands of a rival state. Without that most valued object—the charm that protects the kingdom from invasion, famine, etc.—the king's advisors suspect that all will come to ruin. They convince the king to sanction punishment for his son given his indiscretion, and after some deliberation, all parties agree on banishment as the appropriate course of action.

Despite his protests, the prince's wife insists on accompanying him into exile, and the pair bring with them their children. The family dwells happily enough in the forest until a wicked brahmin, tasked by his wife with finding her servants, approaches the prince and asks for his children. He gives them to the brahmin without regret, though in many cases, not without distress. Upon learning of her husband's act of generosity, the prince's wife is horrified, though when the brahmin returns to ask for her as well, she goes along with him willingly, ostensibly in support of her husband's efforts to succeed in virtue. Details regarding the story's resolution differ, but in every case, the prince's wife and children are saved from the cruel brahmin and his wife. Since their rescue does not violate the prince's act of giving, he is able to achieve the next level of bodhisattva-hood.

Commonly known as the *Life Story of Dharma King Drimé Künden* in its Tibetan iteration, this story of a compulsively generous prince is widely recognized as a beloved opera among traditional sets. The exact origins of the Tibetan telling of the *Vessantarajātaka* in its dramatic form are unclear,²⁶² but as I will demonstrate after summarizing the relevant history of Tibetan drama below, elements of story that we find within the *Life of Drimé Künden* can be found in the in the *Maṇi Kambum*, a vast collection of ritual, doctrinal, and mythico-historical texts compiled around the mid-twelfth century.²⁶³

Drama in Tibet, an Aside

L.A. Waddell, writing about Tibet's "sacred dramas" in *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism* (1895), appears to have been the first scholar to note an affinity between *Life of Drimé Künden* and the "Vessantara" episodes in the *Maṇi Kambum*.²⁶⁴ Curiously, though, this connection has not received much, if any, attention in subsequent scholarship on Tibetan drama in general, or even on the *Life of Drimé Künden* in particular.²⁶⁵ Given his singular focus on the

²⁶² By referring to the tale of Prince Vessantara as such, i.e., as the "Vessantara" story, I do not mean to suggest that Tibetans would have had access primarily to a version of the Pāli, the language in which the oldest extant version of the tale exists in 786 verses. (See Kabita Das Gupta, "Viśvantarāvadāna: eine buddhistische Legende: Edition eines Textes auf Sanskrit und auf Tibetisch, eingeleitet und übersetzt" [Ph.D. diss., Freien Universität Berlin, 1978], 10–11.) Rather, I follow suit with scholars of Central and South/Southeast Asia who generally refer to the story of the Buddha's penultimate birth in this way. Although different tellings of the story exist and the prince is referred to differently depending on the language in which a particular version circulates, the story, multiform as it is and broadly conceived, is most often referred to as the tale of Prince Vessantara. Details on the specific Indic sources from which I suspect the Tibetan telling draws will follow.

²⁶³ For detailed information on the dating and authorship of the *Maṇi Kambum* (*Ma ṇi bka' 'bum*), see Martin 1997: 30. Cf. Kapstein 2000. For more on the *Maṇi Kambum's* contents, see Alison Melnick and Christopher Bell, "The *Maṇi Kabum*," Tibetan Renaissance Seminar, Text Analysis Entry, University of Virginia (n.d.).

²⁶⁴ Waddell cursorily remarks that the story "generally agrees with the version in the *Manikah-bum*." (*The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism: With Its Mystic Cults, Symbolism and Mythology, and in Its Relation to Indian Buddhism* [London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1895], 543n5). This is the extent of his reference, however. In subsequent notes, Waddell indicates some of the ways in which the *Maṇi Kambum* differently denotes names and places, but he does not offer a detailed comparison between the *Maṇi Kambum's Vessantarajātaka* parallels and the *Life of Drimé Künden*.

Life of Drimé Künden, Jacques Bacot's 1914 summary and analysis of this particular drama is more extensive than the one Waddell offered among his summaries of popular opera tales.²⁶⁶ Yet for all of Bacot's interest in the Drimé Künden story's provenance, he, unlike Waddell, neither mentions nor discusses its relationship to the Tibetan tellings of the *Vessantarajātaka* that we find prior to the seventeenth century.²⁶⁷

Waddell was also among the first Western scholars to note that a number of dramas, those elevated to the status of *aché lhamo* specifically, appeared to be based all or in part upon certain Indian *jātaka* tales that pre-date the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet. In the late-nineteenth century, at the time of his writing, Waddell claimed that the Viśvantara (Vessantara) *aché lhamo* was, in fact, the *most* popular of all that were performed in western Tibet.²⁶⁸

Describing the manuscript upon which he based his summary of the text, which he says that he obtained from a company of actors from Shigatsé, a region that spans parts of western and central Tibet,²⁶⁹ Waddell writes, "The text of the story, as found in the Tibetan canon agrees generally with the Pāli and Burmese accounts,"²⁷⁰ but the text upon which the acted version

²⁶⁵ Stein (1961: 254; 1972: 278) and Snyder (2001: 20–21) note the connection between the opera *Gyaza Belza* (*Rgya bza' bal bza'*, *Chinese Bride*, *Nepali Bride*) and the stories in the *Mañi Kambum*, neither mentions the connection between *Drimé Künden* and the *Mañi Kambum*. The recent volume edited by Collins (2016) includes analyses of different tellings of the *Vessantarajātaka* that hail from across Buddhist traditions, but apart from mention by Collins himself in his introduction to the volume, the Tibetan telling does not receive treatment by any of the authors.

²⁶⁶ Waddell is not so singularly focused on Tibetan drama, but Bacot's work, at bottom, echoes much of Waddell's earlier analysis. Compare especially Waddell and Bacot (Jacques Bacot, "Drimedkundan. Une version tibétaine dialoguée du Vessantara Jātaka," *Journal Asiatique*, 11, 4 [1914]: 221–305) on the topic of the emotional force of performances of the *Life of Drimé Künden*.

²⁶⁷ I elaborate on these tellings and their potential precedents further here and in an unpublished paper "Reimagining Vessantara in Tibet: New Scholarship on the *Life of Drimé Künden*," American Oriental Society Annual Meeting, Pittsburgh, PA, March 16–19, 2018.

²⁶⁸ Waddell 1895: 539–540.

²⁶⁹ Tib. Gzhis ka rtse. See Waddell 1895: 543n3.

seems to be based "differs in several details from the canonical narrative" and it "is given a local Tibetan application, and the founder of Lāmaism, St. Padma, [i.e., Padmasambhava,] is made to appear as a reincarnation of the prince Viśvantara."²⁷¹

Beyond noting that his manuscript came from Shigatsé, Waddell does not mention a colophon, let alone specify an author. Bacot notes that neither the version of the Drimé Künden story that he himself obtained from a monastery in Mongolia in 1912 nor the nearly-identical version obtained by E. Denison Ross in Darjeeling and published around that same time indicate authorship.²⁷² The author of *Drimé Künden* is unknown,²⁷³ Bacot declares. But because one of the major themes of the drama—namely devotion in marriage—is beyond the ken of an ordinary monk, he nevertheless ventures that the text may have been composed by the Sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso (1683-1706), a figure famous not only for his poetry, but also for his "knowledge of the feminine heart."²⁷⁴ In 1925, over a decade after Bacot translated the story into French, Millicent H. Morrison translated Ross's edition of the story into English. In Morrison's introduction to her translation, she suggests that the writer could have been "some such devotee

²⁷⁰ By "canon," Waddell means the *Tengyur* (*Bstan 'gyur*) or the "translated teachings" or commentarial section of the Tibetan Buddhist scriptural canon. Āryaśūra's *Jātakamāla*, composed ca. 4th century, was translated into Tibetan by Vidyākaraśiṃha and Mañjuśrīvarman perhaps as early as the 8th century. See 'Phags pa dpa' bo (Āryaśūra), "Skyes pa'i rabs kyi rgyud," in *Bstan 'gyur* (Sde Dge), BDRC W23703, vol. 168, 213 vols. (Delhi: Delhi Karmapae Choedhey, Gyalwae Sungrab Partun Khang, 1982), 4–271; See no. 9, fols. 60.5–78.5. See also the edition supplemented by the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (Rang 'byung rdo rje 1284–1339) just prior to when Drimé Künga was born: *Skyes rabs brgya pa*, BDRC W1KG22301, (s.l.: s.n., n.d.), fols. 71.6–92.7.

²⁷¹ Waddell 1895: 543.

²⁷² See Bacot 1914: 226 and *ibid.*, *Trois mystères tibétains: Tchrimékundan, Djroazanmo, Nansal* (Paris: Bossard, 1921), 23. Cf. H.I. Woolf's translation of Bacot: *Three Tibetan Mysteries: Tchrimékundan, Nasal, Djroazanmo, as Performed in the Tibetan Monasteries*, trans. H. I Woolf (London; New York: G. Routledge & Sons; E.P. Dutton & Co., 1924), 14.

²⁷³ Bacot 1914: 226.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Tib. Tshangs dbyangs rgya mtsho.

and poet as Mi-la-ras pa," a famed eleventh-century author of yogic songs (*mgur*), but this suggestion also appears to be an educated guess along lines similar to Bacot.²⁷⁵

I myself have encountered no evidence to suggest that the Sixth Dalai Lama did in fact produce a *Life of Drimé Künden*. However, interesting for our purposes is the fact that Taksham Nüden Dorjé, who would have been the Sixth Dalai Lama's rough contemporary, testifies in his own writing to discovering a Drimé Künden story (*lo rgyus*). And while Pema Lingpa's own autobiographical writings and records of teachings discovered or received lack similar testimony, we do find a Drimé Künden *namtar* attributed to him by the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (1617-1682).²⁷⁶ Ultimately, however, neither the Fifth Dalai Lama's records nor the records provided by Drimé Kunga's biographers and lineage holders state that Drimé Kunga discovered a Drimé Künden *namtar*.²⁷⁷

Even if the Sixth Dalai Lama was not the author of a *Life of Drimé Künden*, Bacot, to his credit, may not have been far afield in suggesting a late-seventeenth-century date for the text, as that may have been the era of its popularization. While scholars agree that the origins of *lhamo* can be traced to the fifteenth century, *lhamo* grew in popularity during the late seventeenth and only then became a staple at government-sponsored annual festivals. Here, in an effort to contextualize *namtar's* relationship to the dramatic arts, I provide a brief summary of the scholarly findings on *lhamo's* history and its current manifestations, but for a wealth of information on the subject, I turn readers directly to the research collected in *Lungta 15: The*

²⁷⁵ Millicent H. Morrison, *Ti-Me-Kun-Dan, Prince of Buddhist Benevolence, A Mystery Play* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1925), 17.

²⁷⁶ See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009: 41. The 5th Dalai Lama notes that, in this same cycle, there is a *namtar* of Mitrayogin attributed to Pema Lingpa. See note 120 above on this work as well as no. 126 on the works shared among the discoverers Drimé Kunga, Pema Lingpa, and Taksham Nüden Dorjé.

²⁷⁷ See the section of this thesis on Drimé Kunga's biography (pp. 57–63).

Singing Mask: Echoes of Tibetan Opera (2001). Especially relevant are the articles by Jeanette Snyder, Dieter Schuh, Tashi Tsering, and Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy.

In his article on theater in Tibet for *Les Théâtres d'Asie* (1961), and later in *Tibetan Civilization* (1972 [1962]), Stein provides short surveys of the types of Tibetan drama or *dogar*. On the topic of *aché lhamo*, he describes some of the "ten or so plays" as "simply adaptations of famous Buddhist 'birth stories' (such as the Viśvantara and Sudhana *jātakas*) with their setting removed to Tibet." "Others," he continues, "are a kind of Lamaic *jātaka* relating the former lives of certain great Lamas." One such play, for example, titled *Gyaza Belza*, "commemorates Songtsen Gampo's marriage to the Chinese and Nepalese princesses, taking its plot from an identically named romance found in the *Ma-ṅi-bka'-'bum*."²⁷⁸ Concerning the history of Tibetan drama, says Stein, "all we know is that New Year plays were already being enacted at the court of the Seventh Karma-pa hierarch (1454–1506)," and those performances included "*jātakas* of the Buddha, stories of great magicians (*siddha*), universal kings (*cakravartin*), rulers of great countries (such as China, Tibet, or Hor), the fight between the devas and asuras, and Indra with the guardian gods of the four directions (the *lokapālas*)." ²⁷⁹

Stein concludes that the compositional inspiration for *lhamo* is largely Indian while the chanting and musical styles seem to be influenced by Chinese drama conventions.²⁸⁰ The structure of Tibetan drama, he says, "seems to be of Indian origin...But the style of the song, the make-up, the formalized gestures and the minor parts seem much closer to Chinese opera."²⁸¹

²⁷⁸ Stein 1961: 254 and *ibid.* 1972: 278.

²⁷⁹ Stein 1972: 278.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Agreeing generally with Stein, Snyder provides a more detailed account of the history of *lhamo*, both according to traditional oral and written accounts and based on her own field research. The official functions and uses of *lhamo*, she says, suggest origins related to Indian Buddhist drama and to the ceremonial and ritual spectacles and dances of the Tibetan Royal Dynastic Period (6th to 9th century BCE). However, she continues, the origins of *lhamo* and its early promulgation are traditionally assigned to several centuries after the dynastic period and to the patronage of Thangtong Gyalpo (ca. 1361 to ca.1464/1485), a figure famous for building many iron chain suspension bridges throughout Tibet and Bhutan.²⁸²

Recapitulating the account traditionally offered up as explanation for why Thangtong Gyalpo founded *lhamo*, Snyder writes:

[Thangtong Gyalpo] is famous for having built 108 iron-link chain suspension bridges (*lcags zam*) in Tibet, some of which are still in use today, to facilitate communication. Just as he built the bridges, so it is said, he started the *lha mo* in order to turn the people to religion. He felt that if Buddhist doctrine were preached directly, the people would not always listen. However, the doctrine presented through the medium of plays and music would teach religion in a way that could reach the people.²⁸³

To underscore this teaching function of *lhamo*, Snyder also cites a colophon to a modern edition of *Pema Öbar*,²⁸⁴ an opera about Padmasambhava's adventures as a youth in a previous life. The colophon first relates how itinerant story tellers known as Lama Mañipas (*bla ma ma ñi bas*), hereafter Mañipas,²⁸⁵ would use *thangkas* (what Snyder dubs "religious paintings") as

²⁸² Snyder 2001: 9. See also Tashi Tsering, "Reflections on Thang stong rgyal po as the Founder of the *a lce lha mo* Tradition of Tibetan Performing Arts," in *The Singing Mask: Echoes of Tibetan Opera*, ed. Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy and Tashi Tsering, Lungta 15 (Dharamshala: Amnye Machen Institute, 2001), 36–60, esp. 41–60.

²⁸³ Snyder 2001: 9. Cf. Stein (1972: 277) on the didactic function of *lhamo*.

²⁸⁴ Tib. *Padma 'od 'bar*

²⁸⁵ For a recent scholarship on these figures, see the paired articles in Patrick Sutherland and Tashi Tsering, *Disciples of a Crazy Saint: The Buchen of Spiti* (Oxford: Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, 2011). Tashi Tsering (2011: 93, 95–97) notes that traveling storytellers are known by different names in different parts of Tibet

visual aids during recitations of the story. Then it goes on to refer to *lhamo* performances as visual aids along similarly didactic lines. Snyder translates the colophon in the following way:

This has been the Biography of the Youth *Padma 'od 'bar*. In Tibet, the *bla ma ma ni ba-s*, putting up paintings on routes and in valleys, etc., where crowds of people assembled, created understanding through hearing of their recitations of explanations of the biography. Not only this; in addition, the *A ce lha mo bas*, who produced dance-theatrical performances (*zlos gar*) and offered these as a show to the people, created visual representations of it. By these symbolizations (*mtshon*), which demonstrated the precepts of both the Religion of the Gods and the Religion of Men to the minds of all people, it became extremely famous and widespread in Tibet.²⁸⁶

Scholars debate Thangtong Gyalpo's status as the historical founder of *lhamo*. Tashi Tsering, for example, writes in his work on the subject that "Tibetan intellectuals and *a lce lha mo* artists unanimously adhere to the *oral* tradition that *a lce lha mo* was founded by none other than Thangtong Gyalpo himself."²⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Tsering continues, he, like a number of prominent scholars before him, is ultimately unable to find written evidence dating from roughly Thangtong Gyalpo's time that would substantiate the oral accounts.²⁸⁸

and Bhutan, and these groups tell or enact stories differently. In addition to Manipas, Tsering discusses the Lochen, Joyang (Jo dbyangs), and Buchen (Bu chen). The last among these groups is the focus of Sutherland's study in the same volume, and I will elaborate on this group in later sections. Manipas, Tsering notes, trace their origins both to Thangton Gyalpo and, prior to him, to Guru Chöwang, i.e., the first individual named in the *Life of Yeshe Tsogyal* lineage of which Drimé Künga is a part. Chöwang is said to have composed many *maṇi* tales in order to popularize and to spread the practice of reciting "the *maṇi* mantra," i.e., the six-syllable mantra (*oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*) associated with the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

²⁸⁶ Snyder (2001: 9) refers to a 1959 edition of the work: *Khye'u padma 'od 'bar gyi rnam thar bzhugs so* (Kalimpong: Tibetan Mirror Press, 1959). The translated passage (87b.1–88a) reads: *zhes pa 'di yang khye'u padma 'od 'bar gyi rnam par thar pa 'di bzhin gangs ljongs su bla ma ma ni bas mi mang 'du ba'i lam mdo sogs na zhal thang thog nas nantar ngo sprod gsal 'debs byed pa go thos byung ba ma zad/ a ce lha mo bas zlos gar thog nas mi dmangs la gzigs 'bul zhus skabs mig mthong byung bas mtshon 'di nyid skye bo kun gyi yid la lha chos dang mi chos gnyis ka'i bslab ston yid bskul zhu ba sogs bod du yongs grags dar srol che ba zhig yin mod. Cf. Tashi Tsering (2001: 45) on traditional views of the teaching functions of *lhamo*. Cf. Stein (1972: 278) on traveling storytellers' uses of *thang ka*.*

²⁸⁷ Tashi Tsering 2001: 44, my emphasis.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.: 58 and 60. Cf. Stein 1959: 513–518; and Gyatso 1986: 92.

Like Snyder above, Tsering notes that oral tradition holds that Thangtong Gyalpo did indeed view *lhamo* as morally instructive. But, Tsering adds, Thangtong Gyalpo is also said to have recognized *lhamo* as no less a money-making venture, one that could help fund his civil works projects.²⁸⁹ According to traditional accounts, the dramatic performances he inspired began to be called *aché lhamo* when Thangtong Gyalpo, as he was supervising the construction of the Chubori bridge, selected seven women from among the workers to perform for local residents and other workers alike. Their performance was so wonderful that they appeared as goddesses, i.e., *lhamo*, to spectators who showed their approval by making offerings. As contemporary Tibetan musicologist Zholkhang Sönam Dargyé (b.1922) relates, tradition holds that when the Chubori bridge was being built (ca. 1444),²⁹⁰

[S]even intelligent and beautiful girls were selected from among the workers and the great *siddha* [Thangtong Gyalpo] himself taught the arm and leg movements, the songs and the dance. Later, the great *siddha* himself beat the drum and cymbals and the girls did the dancing. The spectators made generous offerings. Returning home, they said, "The girls are so beautiful, their performance so enchanting and attractive, and the songs so melodious; it is as if the celestial girl musicians are dancing. It is amazing: just as if the girls have come to earth from heaven!" Thus the term *a lce lha mo* was coined.²⁹¹

Interesting for our purposes in discussing the religious and artistic spheres from which the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* emerged and in which it might have circulated is a point Tashi Tsering later makes about where Thangtong Gyalpo is supposed to have traveled in an effort to raise capital. Tashi Tsering relates that when Thangtong Gyalpo went to beg for iron, he received the

²⁸⁹ Tashi Tsering 2001: 47, 55. Tashi Tsering cites three contemporary figures total, namely the 11th Chagzam Tulku (Lcags zam sprul sku b. 1974), Lobsang Dorjé (Blo bzang rdo rje 1893–1983), and Zholkhang Dargyé, each of whom stress that, "when Thangtong Gyalpo supposedly created *aché lhamo*, his original intention was to raise funds to build the Chu shul iron bridge."

²⁹⁰ Tib. Zhol khang Bsod nams dar rgyas. Different dates are provided by different scholars. Tashi Tsering notes that Zholkhang Dargyé offers 1444; Lobsang Dorjé, 1430.

²⁹¹ Cited in Tashi Tsering 2001: 48.

largest amount from Kongpo and central Bhutan. Recall that Kongpo is the area in which Drimé Künga, potentially a contemporary of Thangtong Gyalpo, is said to have founded his group of mantra-holders (*sngags 'chang gi sde*).²⁹² Central Bhutan is where Pema Lingpa flourished, and it is where we find the greatest number of extant manuscripts of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. Further, one of Pema Lingpa's aunts, Ashi Drubthob Zangmo, was said to have been a consort of Thangtong Gyalpo.²⁹³

Of course, this information hardly suggests anything precise about the relationships among these figures. We do not know whether Thangtong Gyalpo and Drimé Künga ever met in person in Kongpo, nor do we know how active Thangtong Gyalpo actually might have been in promoting *lhamo* in Kongpo or Bhutan as he sought the capital to build his bridges.²⁹⁴

At the very least, however, we can say that these figures moved about in the same geographic, socio-cultural, and artistic spheres. We can imagine a world in which Drimé Künga, amid or even prior to composing his *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, saw in accounts of Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* a potential for performance along the lines of what Thangtong Gyalpo and his players were promoting throughout their travels. Perhaps elements of the *Life* had even long been sung or acted out *before* Drimé Künga saw fit to compose a full-length *Tsogyal Namtar*, and his account reflects not only an attempt to narrate Yeshé Tsogyal's life in full, but also to consolidate various elements of it and standardize its performances. We can also imagine a world in which a full-length life story of Yeshé Tsogyal, composed by Drimé Künga, could have been adapted only

²⁹² On Thangtong Gyalpo in Bhutan, see Tashi Tsering 2001: 51. On Drimé Künga's lineage of mantra holders, see the section of this thesis on his biography.

²⁹³ Tib. A she grub thob bzang mo. See Aris (1988: 23 and 104) who refers to Thangtong Gyalpo as Pema Lingpa's "uncle by marriage."

²⁹⁴ Tashi Tsering (2001: 51) notes that "the *a lce lha mo* tradition never flourished in Bhutan." Yet in "eastern Bhutan, [and] specifically at Bkra shis sgang, the Me rag Sag steng *a lca* (sic) *lha mo*, and many other local song and dance traditions exist."

well after his (and Thangtong Gyalpo's) time into a *namtar* along dramatic lines, perhaps at the earliest by Pema Lingpa, as *lhamo* began to see popular demand.

Whatever Thangtong Gyalpo's specific role in the founding and popularization of *lhamo*, Tashi Tsering says that he is inclined to believe that the traditional performance of *aché lhamo* did indeed emerge in the fifteenth century around Thangtong Gyalpo's time, albeit not in the form that we see it at present. Rather, Tsering states, the decisive elements that shaped *lhamo* as we now know it reflect the gradual changes brought initially about by the pre-seventeenth-century versions of what is commonly known as the "Yogurt Festival" or Shotön at Drepung monastery prior to the Ganden Phodrang administration, as well as by other related festivals in the monasteries of Lhasa, such as Sera. After the Seventh Dalai Lama's time (1708-1757), Tsering further notes, monk officials of various ranks began to take an interest in *lhamo* performances, and as a result they then became popular in central Tibet, in Ü and Tsang.²⁹⁵

Comparing the *Life of Drimé Künden* and the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*

As I noted above, Pema Lingpa (1450-1521) is the earliest figure to be credited in written accounts with the discovery of a stand-alone *Life of Drimé Künden*. None of Drimé Künga's

²⁹⁵ So-called "yogurt" or "curd festivals" (*zho ston*) are held at the Norbu Lingka every summer on the 29th and 30th days of the sixth month (July-August), and at Sera and Drepung monasteries from the first to the fifth of the seventh month (August-September) in Lhasa. For details, see Hugh Richardson, *Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year*, ed. Michael Aris (London: Weatherhill, 1994), 97–107. The actual staging of an individual *lhamo* in its entirety can last more than a whole day. Performances include sung dialogue, chanted narration, drum-and-cymbal pieces, and occasional interludes of traditional songs. Until 1959, there was an official "theater season" that lasted about seven weeks during the late summer to early fall (coinciding with Shotön) when troupes from Central Tibet would play in and around Lhasa. Other *lhamo* groups, not among those officially recognized by the Central Tibetan government, played (and play) throughout Tibet, and according to Snyder (2001: 8–9), "[a]mateur or impromptu *lha mo* performances, played by monks or government officials without the use of special costumes or properties, were an essential part of the annual vacation camp-out of the various monasteries and governmental offices." Tibetans in general, Snyder continues, frequently sing "arias" (i.e., *namtars*) from *lhamo* as personal entertainment at parties, picnics, and other such leisure time activities. See Duncan (1955: 13–16) for further descriptions of dancing, dress, staging, and acting styles; and Schuh (2001: 103–104n27) for specific information about court theater performances at Norbu Lingka.

biographers or lineage holders testify that he composed or discovered a Drimé Künden *namtar*, or a *kyérab namtar*; nor do they say that he composed a Drimé Künden *logyü* (*lo rgyus*), i.e., a story or history (not unlike the French *histoire*), as the title of Taksham's seventeenth-century version has it. Likewise, we do not find such a work listed in available records of teachings received that catalog the discoveries of Drimé Kunga.

It may be that the basis for the extant versions of the *Life of Drimé Künden* attributed to Pema Lingpa and Taksham did originate with, or even precede, Drimé Kunga. That is, it may be that Drimé Kunga (or even one of his predecessors, or someone in his orbit) *did* compose a *Life of Drimé Künden*, and just as with his life story of Yeshé Tsogyal, his story of Drimé Künden inspired Pema Lingpa and Taksham to do the same. But it just as well may be that Drimé Kunga did not choose to write a life story Prince Drimé Künden himself, even if it seems likely, upon examining non-Tibetan tales of Prince Vessantara, that Drimé Kunga drew thematic inspiration from oral or written versions of the Indian Buddhist *jātaka* as he wrote Yeshé Tsogyal.

Still, without a Drimé Künden *namtar* actually attributed to Drimé Kunga—a text that would allow us to compare Drimé Kunga's Yeshé Tsogyal life story with "his" version of the *Life of Drimé Künden*—we might keep our speculations about the connections between the works at the story rather than at the text-critical level. We can critically compare the Pema Lingpa-attributed *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* with the Pema Lingpa-attributed *Life Story of King Drimé Künden*, however, and in doing so, we begin to see just how resonant the two works are.

The Story of Prince Jigten Wangchuk in the *Mañi Kambum*

While tellings of the Vessantara story would have reached Tibetan audiences through several sources translated from Sanskrit, particularly Āryaśūra's (ca. 4th century CE) *Jātakamālā*,

the *Saṅghabhedavastu* section of the *Mūlasarvāstivādinaya* (MSV), and Kṣemendra's (fl. 1050 CE) *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* (AvK),²⁹⁶ Pema Lingpa's *Life of Drimé Künden*, which Taksham's follows closely, seems to me to have drawn inspiration most immediately from the tellings we find in the *Maṇi Kambum*. As a whole, the *Maṇi Kambum* is textual collection considered a Tibetan treasure text, specific portions of which were consecutively "discovered" from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the thirteenth century.²⁹⁷ Although Stein and Snyder both note that the *lhamo* known as *Gyaza Belza* (*Chinese Bride*, *Nepali Bride*) has its roots in the *Maṇi Kambum*, Waddell (1895) seems to be the only scholar to observe that the *lhamo* commonly known as *Dharma King Drimé Künden* has its origins in the same source.²⁹⁸

In the *Maṇi Kambum*, we actually find two sections—not one, as Waddell suggests²⁹⁹—in which the seventh-century Tibetan emperor Songtsen Gampo recalls his birth as a prince named Jigten Wangchuk.³⁰⁰ In both sections, we are told the story of how Jigten Wangchuk was exiled by his father for having given away his kingdom's most precious object, a wish-fulfilling

²⁹⁶ On the dating, contents, and translations of these sources respectively, see Das Gupta's (1978) excellent study on the *Viśvantarāvadāna*. One should also observe in the MSV (Tōh. 1) and AvK (Tōh. 4155) the story of Prince Maṇicuḍa, similar as it is to the story of Vessantara. This tale was dramatized by Candragomin (fl. 5th century CE, according to Hahn 2004) as the *Lokānandanātaka* (Tōh. 4153) and translated into Tibetan between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. See Candragomin, *Joy for the World: A Buddhist Play*, trans. Michael Hahn (Dharma Publishing, 1987). On this tale, see also Yuan Ren, "*Maṇicūḍāvadāna*: The Annotated Translation and a Study of the Religious Significance of Two Versions of the Sanskrit Buddhist Story" (McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, 1999). On Kṣemendra's AvK and its adaptations in Tibet, see Nancy Grace Lin, "Adapting the Buddha's Biographies: A Cultural History of the 'Wish-Fulfilling Vine' in Tibet, Seventeenth to Eighteenth Centuries" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011).

²⁹⁷ Details about the development and a description of the contents of the *Maṇi Kambum* can be found in Melnick and Bell, "*Maṇi Kambum*," who also provide a comprehensive bibliography of scholarship on the work to date.

²⁹⁸ See note 264 above.

²⁹⁹ Waddell refers to *the* version in the *Maṇi Kambum* as if there were only one, but there are actually two sections or "chapters" that contain versions of the *Vessantarajātaka*. They are similar in content, but the latter is more elaborate and, with that, longer than the first. See 281.1–289.3 and 334.5–366.5 of *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum: A Collection of Rediscovered Teachings Focusing Upon the Tutelary Deity Avalokiteśvara (Mahākaruṇika)*. BDRC W19225. 2 vols. (Delhi: Trayang and Jamyang Samten, 1975).

³⁰⁰ Tib. 'Jig rten dbang phyug; Skt. Lokeśvara. On Songtsen Gampo, see pp. 34–35 of this thesis.

jewel. Further, we are told that the prince takes with him into exile his two wives and two children, both of whom he gives away to a wicked brahmin who was compelled to seek household servants at the behest of a bitter, overworked wife. After enduring the trials of forest life, the prince is reinstated in his kingdom, his children are bought back by their grandfather, and the kingdom rejoices at what everyone now recognizes to be the Jigten Wangchuk's unparalleled, unequivocally laudable generosity.

Apart from the fact that the *Maṇi Kambum* tellings of the *Vessantarajātaka* are much shorter and more prosaic than the *Life of Drimé Künden*, and apart from certain details (for example, Drimé Künden has only one wife, not two like Jigten Wangchuk), these tellings share the same basic story throughout. Importantly, the *Maṇi Kambum* contains details about the deliberations around the prince's punishment that are otherwise absent from the Sanskrit-to-Tibetan versions, and so in this respect, it resonates most closely with both the *Life of Drimé Künden* and the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. I will return to this point in my analyses of several passages below.

Thematic Similarities between the *Lives* of Drimé Künden and Yeshé Tsogyal

Based on the skeletal summary of the Vessantara story I provided above, we can detect several broad themes shared by both the *Life of Drimé Künden* and the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. Along with the overall focus on a royal youth renowned for their beauty and Buddhist virtue, we find (1) court opposition to the youth's moral proclivities; (2) punishment for virtue in excess; (3) exile; (4) the insistence on accompaniment into exile by an intimate; (5) happiness in forest dwelling; and (6) the intrusion upon that happiness by a villainous figure.

For Prince Drimé Künden, the cruel brahmin's intrusion proves auspicious straight away in that it allows him to continue to pursue the perfection of generosity even after he is dispossessed of his material riches. For Yeshé Tsogyal, the Zurkhar prince's intrusion seems almost to thwart her spiritual progress. (Recall that she is forced away from her meditation clearing by the henchmen of this brash, lustful householder.) In the end, however, her kidnapping facilitates her meeting with Guru Padmasambhava, and so it may be read as an ultimately auspicious event, albeit a despicable one in and of itself.

Although the wish-fulfilling gem, one of the primary actants around which the story of Drimé Künden hinges, appears to be absent from the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, I would argue that Yeshé Tsogyal herself emerges as the charm's analogue in her story. When we compare the language around her with the language used to describe the elephant and/or the jewel in Vessantara tales, we find that she is styled the crown's protective talisman in senses far more literal than figurative. It is true that in certain instances, we also find Vessantara referred to as a wish-fulfilling being in himself, for he is someone, the mere sight of whom, sates every onlooker. And with his giving, he exceeds the needs of his subjects.³⁰¹ Yet with Yeshé Tsogyal, the objectification and charmification is even more pronounced. She is the sole thing that sates the desires of and protects her father's kingdom. When certain parties argue for her to marry a local, they do so on the grounds that losing her to a foreign land will result in the blanching of Tibet's earth, the starvation of its people, their slaughter by hostile armies, a seeping of their national merit, etc. Yeshé Tsogyal's presence, in short, assures for her people all the safety and prosperity attributed to Drimé Künden's gem.³⁰²

³⁰¹ See, for example, the *Āvadānakalpalatā*, verses 19 and 21.

³⁰² For example, see PL 2013: 265.

All this is not to say, however, that the Yeshé Tsogyal's *namtar* is an iteration or adaptation of a "Vessantara" story through and through. After the *Life's* first chapter, the stories diverge considerably. Prince Drimé Künden proceeds into the forest with his family; Yeshé Tsogyal insists on dwelling alone. In Chapter II of the *Life*, she then travels throughout the regions of Odḍiyāna, witnessing myriad expressions of devotion and acts of spiritual accomplishment. What's more, she herself endures trials unheard of in any Vessantara's case. The *Life's* closest thematic affiliations with the *Vessantarajātaka* and its Tibetan telling in the form of the *Life of Drimé Künden* occur, then, in what I refer to as the stories' respective pre-departure scenes. It is also in these scenes that we see these *namtar* parallel one another along structural lines.

Structural and Verbal Similarities between the *Lives of Drimé Künden* and Yeshé Tsogyal

In keeping with *namtar* as written drama texts in general, both the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* and the *Life of Drimé Künden* combine prose and verse throughout.³⁰³ In both life stories, varying numbers of seven- or nine-syllable lines³⁰⁴ are followed either (1) by short phrases or sentences that are not versified (e.g., "said the king" or "after the queen said this, the minister

³⁰³ While the majority of print and manuscript versions of these respective works that I have seen do not separate out verse from prose narrative in their formatting, a recent dual-language, Tibetan-Chinese publication of the *Life of Drimé Künden* formats prose and verse differently, making the distinction between the two apparent to readers of this edition. See *Rgyal po dri med kun ldan gyi rnam thar* (赤美更登) (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2013).

³⁰⁴ Scholars typically state that these seven- or nine-syllable lines are said to be made up of *trochees* and *dactyls* where a trochaic foot equals one long, one short syllable, and a dactylic foot equals one long and two short syllables. J. Vekerdi (1952), basing his remarks on Pavel Poucha's *La vers tibétain* (1950), however, notes that "shortness or length of syllables cannot play any part in Tibetan versification, since classical Tibetan does not distinguish between long and short vowels." See J. Vekerdi, "Some Remarks on Tibetan Prosody," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 2, no. 2/3 (1952): 222. In addition to Vekerdi and Poucha on prosody, see Victoria Sujata, *Tibetan Songs of Realization: Echoes from a Seventeenth-Century Scholar and Siddha in Amdo*, Har/Com edition (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004). As part of her work, Sujata synthesizes and elaborates on previous scholarship on Tibetan prosody beyond Poucha.

replied"); or (2) by short, often single prose paragraphs that provide insight into a character's thoughts, describe a scene, or move the action of the plot forward.

Each foot of the verse lines consists of a strong (i.e., stressed) and a weak (i.e., unstressed) syllable position. The lines in both the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* and the *Life of Drimé Künden* are most often in periodical meters, which is to say that each verse exhibits the same mapping of strengths (or stresses) onto the metrical pattern. Strength is, moreover, frequently neutralized in the last syllable of every verse. At the end of each line, two weak/unstressed syllables are mapped onto the weak position, resulting in *synalepha*. In both stories, we most often find metrical lines of four or five feet with a single *synalepha* in the last foot. The syllable scansion for (1) a typical four-foot, seven-syllable metrical line and (2) a typical five-foot, nine-syllable metrical line in both works follows:

1. / x / x / x / x x

2. / x / x / x / x / x x

In order to illustrate this, I will reproduce and translate below six passages (in three sets of two) for comparison between Pema Lingpa's Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar* and the Drimé Künden life story also attributed to him. Where appropriate, I will also note and translate select passages from the *Mañi Kambum* in order to show how that work resounds with either or both texts. With these passages, we not only see examples of the metrical structures above, we also see whole lines and expressions shared among the works.

First, I summarize in brief the context for each of the passages. Then I reproduce the passages in Wylie transcription, and finally, I provide my own English translation. In the footnotes below, I have included some possible alternative translations. While translating, I have found that a number of problems can be resolved not only by cross-checking for variants in other

witnesses, but also by considering homophonous or nearly homophonous words or phrases in Tibetan. It is possible that these works were recorded based on oral transmissions of the stories, or that they were written down according to a listener's understanding of a work as it was performed. In either case, certain variants could reflect a syllable, word, or phrase misheard. If the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was orally transmitted and/or performed and recorded based on recitation or performance, difficulty in listener comprehension could account for some of the misspellings in and variants across texts.³⁰⁵ Otherwise, variants on the syllable- and word-level may just as well reflect, apart from scribal error, differences in regional spellings and pronunciations of the same or similar words.

The first passage from the *Life of Drimé Künden* cited below follows on the heels of what is at once Drimé Künden's most condemnable and praiseworthy act of generosity prior to his departure. He has just given away his kingdom's most prized possession, a wish-fulfilling jewel, to a brahmin envoy of an enemy king. His father, the king, has not yet heard this news, and so a minister known as Dharadzéden ("Handsome Dhara") approaches the king to inform him of his son's transgression. The king responds to the accusation against the prince as follows:

1A. *rgyal po'i zhal nas/
de ltar e bden mi shes dhara mdzes ldan/
dri brda skam thag gcod long da dung 'ong/
blon pos mi shes chung zongs (=mchu zung?) tshig la sgom/
smras pa'i gtam yang phyed bden phyed mi bden/
zhes gzungs te*³⁰⁶

The king said,

³⁰⁵ Writing about the difficulties one faces in understanding a *lhamo* while viewing it, Isabelle Henrion-Dourcy (2001: 125) notes that singing in dramas "entails a pronunciation very remote from ordinary speech, with excessive elongation of a few syllables, then a compression of other syllables, and also the addition of interpolations (*tshig-lhad*)." The ability to speak rapidly is also a quality cultivated by certain actors for particular roles in non-*lhamo* performances. See Tsering (2011) on this point.

³⁰⁶ Padma gling pa 1975–1976: 147.3–5. Taksham's version (n.d.: 53.2–3) follows Pema Lingpa's closely, though it corrects the syllable count in the line referring to Dharadzéden by name by omitting the final *ldan*.

"I wonder whether you know, Dharadzéden, if that is truly the case?
 There is still time to resolve [what seems to you] a completely dried up matter.³⁰⁷
 A minister should not talk about what he does not know. Reflect on your words!
 The story told is perhaps half true, half untrue," he said.

When we compare the above passage to the point in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* when the interior minister, Drénakara, tells the king that his daughter is being tortured outside of the palace, we find Yeshé Tsogyal's father in a similar state of disbelief:

1B. *rgyal pos gsungs pa/
 kyi hud nang blon khyod kyis smras pa'i gtam/
 rdzun du ma bshad drang por brtags la shod/
 thos tshad gtam las phyed bden phyed mi bden/*³⁰⁸

The king said,
 "Alas, O interior minister, the account you've given
 Should not be spoken falsely; tell me about the matter honestly!
 Among all the stories heard, half are true, half aren't true."

Again, when we turn back to the life story of Drimé Künden, we find that after the king learns that it is indeed true that the prince gave away the precious jewel, the king tells his son:

³⁰⁷ This line is difficult in both Pema Lingpa and Taksham, who both include "*dri bdra skam thag gcod*." A preferable reading may be found in EAP749/2/1/3, images 60 and 61 (60.4–61.1): *yab kyi zhal nas/ tshig de bden nam blon po ta ra mdzes/ dri rtog brdar sha da dung byed long yong/ blon pos rdzun dang phra ma ma byed cig/ thos pa'i gtam la phyed bden mi bden/* "The royal father said, 'Are those words true, Minister Tarazé? There is still time to examine the matter in detail. A minister should not lie nor speak divisively. Half of what one hears is true; half isn't.'"

The unattributed manuscript published by Ross (1912: 12) reads: *rgyal po 'di skad ces gsungs soll gtam de bden nam blon po ta ra mdzes// thos pa'i gtam la phyed bden phyed mi bden// dri rtog bdar sha da dung byed long yong// blon pos phra ma rdzun tshig ma byed cig// dpung 'joms dgra la ster rang mi phod dam// ces gsungs pa dang*. Cf. p. 12 of the 2013 edition of the Drimé Künden *namtar* edited by 'Phrin las chos grags and Phun tshogs don grub (Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang) which reads the same as Ross except for the final syllable (*do* instead of *dam*). Perhaps *dri brda* or *dri dang* = *dri brtag*, as they might be nearly homophonous based on regional pronunciations or in song. In that case, it could be "Investigate the matter; there is still time to settle it." In his dictionary, Dan Martin notes that *gdar sha* (and the possibly more correct spelling, *bdar sha*), which means "membrane" or "integument," is frequently used in Dzogchen (and elsewhere) as metaphor. He notes also that *gdar sha gcod pa* means to solve something through testing and investigation. This sense is borne out in Bacot (1914: 44), who, potentially working with a witness that varies slightly from Ross's, translates this passage in the following way: "Ce que tu dis, est-ce vrai, intendant Taradzès?/ Des paroles qu'on entend, la moitié est vraie,/ la moitié est fausse./ Il est encore temps, interroge de nouveau et examine plus soigneusement,/ Intendant, et ne dis pas faussement des calomnies."

³⁰⁸ PL 2013: 275.

2A. *bdag gis bur bzung gces par bskyangs na yang/
log pa'i 'dun mas rgyal srid stongs su bcug/
dpung 'joms med pa'i dgra bo khyod kyi ni/
bdag la dgos med do khrims la skyon/³⁰⁹*

*zhes smras nas/ rgyal bu'i srog ni blon po rnam la gtad do/ de nas log
pa'i gshed ma mang pos Drimé Künden thub par bzung/ lus gcer bur phyung/
phyag gnyis rgyab tu bcings/ mgul la thag pas btags te pho brang gi phyir khrid
do/³¹⁰*

"Even though I held you as a boy and nurtured you,
Your misguided aims have bankrupted the kingdom.
Of you, an enemy who lacks the [Wish-fulfilling,] Army-Conquering
[Jewel],
I have no need. Submit to the law!"³¹¹

Having said that, the prince's life was handed over to the ministers. Then, many corrupt executioners seized Drimé Künden, stripped him naked, bound his hands behind his back, and, after they put a rope around his neck, they led him outside the palace.

Compare the above scene with the scene in which the foreign ministers in the *Life of*

Yeshé Tsogyal restate the case against the princess, and her father permits her punishment:

2B. *de nas phyi blon chos la gnag pa rnam kyi rgyal po la
zhus pa/ rgyal po khrims kyi sdom po yin pa la/ nyes na mchan gyi
bu yang gsod dgos na/ lha lcam 'di yi gtong sar mi 'gro zhing/*

³⁰⁹ Cf. EAP749/2/1/3, image 67, lines 4–5: *yab kyi zhal nas/ bu ru gsos nas gces par kyangs (=bskyangs) na yang/
log pa'i mdun mas rgyal sa stongs su bcug/ rin chen dpung 'joms ming (med?) pa'i dgra bo khyod/ bdag la dgos pa
med do khrims la sbyor.* "The royal father said: Even though I took care of you, having nurtured you as a boy, your misguided aims have depleted my kingdom. Of you, a jewel- and army-less enemy, I have no need. Submit to the law!"

³¹⁰ Padma gling pa 1975–1976: 150.3–5.

³¹¹ Previous translators unanimously prefer an appositional relationship between *khyod* and *dgra bo*, suggesting that the king calls Drimé Künden an enemy. (See Duncan 1967: 84; Woolf 1914: 40; and Bacot 1914: 246). For example, Woolf has "Since as an enemy, thou hast destroyed the Jewel..." and Duncan reads "You were like a foe losing the wish-fulfilling gem." I also favor the appositional relationship above, but the larger context could suggest an alternative. In Pema Lingpa's version, it was the rival king who was formerly described as "*dpung 'joms med pa*," i.e., jewel- and therefore "army-less." Padma gling pa (1975–1976: 150.1) also has a separate instance of the phrase with "*rin chen*" added: "*rin chen dpung 'joms med pa'i dgra bo khyod*." In this case, the whole phrase, "*rin chen dpung 'joms*" could be an alternate or shortened epithet for the jewel, elsewhere called "*nor bu dgos 'dod dpung 'joms*." Perhaps the above "*dpung 'joms*" reflects an even more abbreviated title, i.e., "You [are now] an enemy who lacks the [Wish-fulfilling,] Army-Conquering Jewel," or "You [gave the Jewel to] an enemy who lacked a [Wish-fulfilling,] Army-Conquering Jewel." I favor the latter sense given the context, but since such a translation asks that one supply quite a bit more than the text bears out, and the king does in fact now view Drimé Künden as an enemy of the state, I maintain the appositional relationship between "*dgra bo*" and "*khyod*" above.

*bzhag sar mi sdod rgyal po'i bka' bcag pas/ da ni khrims la sbyor
zhes zhus pa dang/
rgyal pos gsungs pa/ khrag tshogs mig thon sgyid pa chod/
pags pa bshus zhes bkas (=bka') gnang ngo/
de nas phyi blon sdig can rnams kyis/ lha lcam bzung nas
rgyab lag bcings/ gcer bur phyung/ ske la thag pa btags/ lus la
tsher lcag gis brab cing drud de pho brang gi mtha' la bskor³¹²*

Then, the foreign ministers who were hostile to the Dharma beseeched the king. They said, "O king, under what are the terms of the law, if a he is a criminal, even a darling child must be killed. Since this lady's refusal to go where she is sent breaks the king's command, [she is] now subject to the law."

And so, the king spoke. He commanded, "Strain her blood, gouge out her eyes, sever her knees, and flay her skin!"

Then, the evil foreign ministers, having grabbed the lady, bound her hands behind her back. They stripped her naked and put a rope around her neck. While whipping her body with thorns, they dragged her around palace borders.

Finally, we might compare the two instances in which pious ministers appeal to the respective kings on behalf of each of their children, the prince and the princess. In Pema Lingpa's *Life of Drimé Künden*, an interior minister named Dawa Zangpo intervenes to see the prince spared:

3A. *de nas blon po rnams kyi nang nas shin tu chos la mos pa/
nang blon zla ba bzang po zhes bya ba des smras pa/
kyai/ blon po'i tshogs rnams gson cig/
de 'dra'i las rang ga na rung/
khyed rnams kyis smras pa de ga na yin/
rgyal po la gdung gcig las med pa la/
sngar byas pa'i brdungs thag 'di rnams kyang ha cang thal
ba'i khar/ da gsod par byed pa shin tu ches pa yin pas bdag gis ni
'di lta bu'i sdug bsngal lta bar yang mi bzod pas/ 'dzam bu gling gi
phyi mtha' la 'gro bar bya'o/ zhas dang/
yang ngu ngag gis smras pa/.../ grong khyer skye bo rgan
gzhon thams cad kyang/ rgyal bu nyid la blta zhing mya ngan
byed/ rgyal bu'i glud mo byed pa'i mang po dga'/ rgyal bu thongs
la nyid cag gsod cig zer/ bdag gis rgyal po blta bar ma bzod na/ da
rung dgongs dang rgyal blon 'khor bcas rnams/ gsod cig bya ba su
yis phod pa yin/ nor bu sbyin par btang ba'i chad pa yang/ sngar
gyi des chog da ni btang du gsol/ zhes phyag 'tshal zhing³¹³*

³¹² PL 2013: 274.

³¹³ Padma gling pa 1975–1976: 153.5–154.6.

Then, from among the ministers, one who had utmost faith in the Dharma, namely the interior minister known as Dawa Zangpo, said:

"Hail! Listen groups of ministers! How are such actions appropriate? What have you all said? The king doesn't have more than one heir. Even the beatings inflicted [upon Prince Drimé Künden] earlier were on the verge of going too far. Now, because you actually [intend to] execute him, I suffer so. Since I can't even bear to look, I shall repair to the edges of the earth!"

Again, he spoke as he wept... "The townspeople, both young and old, see the prince and grieve as well. Many who would see the prince redeemed are uplifted. They say, 'Release the prince and kill us instead!' If I, O king, could not bear to look, consider [the matter] further; and, O retinue of royal ministers, you who say, 'Kill him!'—Who dares? The punishment of having given the jewel away was enough already. Now, I pray you release him," he said, paying homage to the king.

In Pema Lingpa's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, the interior minister Drénakara calls for an end to the torture of the princess, and he beseeches the king to exile her instead:

3B. *blon po bres sna dkar ra zhes chos la mos pa zhig gis/
rgyal po'i drung du song ste/ 'di skad ces zhus pa/
kye ma rgyal po khyod la thugs dgongs ci 'dra 'tshal/ sha
las chad pa'i bu mo 'bangs la gtad/ snying rje med pa'i bdud blon
gshed ma byed/ sha tsha'i lha lcam gcer bur phyung nas dga'
mdzes byed lus la tsher lcag brab pa dang/ 'jam mdzes mgul la sro
ma'i (=srog med?) thag pa btags/ de 'dra mthong bas mi bzod skyo
ba skye/ yul mi rnams kyang lha lcam lta zhing ngu/ blo yod can
rnams dran pa med par brgyal/ bya dang ri dwags kun kyang phyi
la 'brang/ gzugs med mkha' 'gro lha 'dre sgra skad 'don/ 'byung
ba'i kham's 'khrugs nyi zla'i 'od kyang 'grib/ de 'dra'i las de su la
srid/ dgra la yin kyang ha cang ches pa yin/ rgyal pos sras la de
'dra phod bzod na/ 'brangs blon khirms med rnams la bka' gnang
nas/ sha las chad pa'i lha lcam srog dang 'bral ba bas/ mi med yul
du spyug par zhu/ zhe zhus so³¹⁴*

A minister named Drénakara who was inclined toward the Dharma went before the king and said these words:

"Hail! O king, I bid you, what are your intentions? The girl who is cut from your flesh should be handed over to the people. Wicked ministers who are merciless are acting as executioners. After the maiden who is dear to you has been stripped naked, her beautified body is to be whipped with thorns—a noose has [already] been tied around her smooth, lovely neck! To see her like that is unbearable and saddening. The people of the country also look at the lady and

³¹⁴ PL 2013: 274–275.

weep. Rational beings lose consciousness and faint away. All the birds and game animals chase after her. In the formless realm, *dakas*, gods, and demons emit sounds. The elements are disturbed and the sun and moon dim. Who could do such a thing? It's too much even for an enemy! The king can bear doing such a thing *to his child*? Because you have granted permission to lawless ministers, the lady cut from your flesh will lose her life. Since that is the case, I beseech you banish her to a desolate land!"

Interestingly, there is one instance among the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* passages cited above that seems to follow the longer *Vessantarajātaka* adaptation within the *Mañi Kambum* more closely than it does Pema Lingpa's *Life of Drimé Künden*. This instance might help shed light on the surprised (and surprising) reaction that Yeshé Tsogyal's father has upon being told that his daughter is being tortured. Reading the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, one is apt to wonder why the king reacts in disbelief when the minister Drénakara tells him that Yeshé Tsogyal is, in fact, facing physical punishment. After all, didn't the king himself command his foreign ministers to "Strain her blood, gouge out her eyes, sever her knees, and flay her skin!"³¹⁵ When it is uttered, the command may strike the reader as abrupt, even uncharacteristic on the king's part. Until this point in the story, he has been deeply conflicted about what to do in the wake of his daughter's refusal to marry.

When we turn to the *Mañi Kambum*, however, we find that this command may be an interpolation based upon what the king's ministers, not the king himself, demand as punishment for Prince Jigten Wangchuk.³¹⁶ The passage follows below:

Then, after prince Jigten Wangchuk's four thousand ministers and sixty vassals had heard, "He gave away the jewel," everyone collapsed, unconscious.

³¹⁵ *rgyal pos gsungs pa/ khrag tshogs mig thon sgyid pa chod/ pags pa bshus zhes bkas (=bka') gnang ngo*. PL 2013: 274.

³¹⁶ I grant also that rather than harken here to the *Mañi Kambum* directly, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* could echo versions of the *Life of Drimé Künden* that themselves follow the *Mañi Kambum* more closely at this point in the story.

Then, after they regained consciousness, they had a discussion. Since they repeated [the account] to the royal father, he [too] fell from his throne, unconscious.

Then, after cold sandalwood water was sprinkled [on him], he came to and asked, "Is it true that the prince has given away my jewel which grants whatever one desires to an enemy?" The ministers replied, "It is true." The royal father wept, and the five-hundred queens cried as well.

The prince's mother said, "What good is crying? I bid you discuss it with the royal ministers." After she said that, they discussed the matter with the ministers. They said, "First, cut out the tongue of the messenger. [Then] cut off the hands of he who took the precious jewel. Cut off the head of he who gave it [away]! Gouge out the eyes of he who showed the way!"

Upon hearing that, the royal father was displeased. "Since this son of mine was inclined to do good and was upholding the lineage of the bodhisattvas, he should not be expelled from his station as prince. He shouldn't be punished."³¹⁷

This suggests to me that Drimé Künga, short of authoring the *Life of Drimé Künden* himself, had either or both the *Maṇi Kambum* and the *Life of Drimé Künden* in mind as he wrote the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*.

The *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as Poetic Narrative, or *Lhamo*, Broadly Conceived

In addition to the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*'s structural and thematic parallels with the written drama text of the *Life of Drimé Künden*, a further aspect of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* in itself suggests performability, albeit perhaps not on any official stage. That is to say that even if the

³¹⁷ *de nas rgyal bu'i 'jig rten dbang phyug gi blon po bzhi stong dang/ rgyal phran drug cus nor bu byin zhes bya ba thos nas/ thams cad 'gyel te brgyal lo/ de nas thams cad brgyal ba sangs nas gros byas te/ yab rgyal po la bzlas [343.1] pas yab khri kha nas lhung ste brgyal lo/ de nas tsan dan gyi chu grang mo gtor nas brgyal ba sangs te/ rgyal bu la nga'i nor bu ci 'dod 'byung ba de dgra la byin pa de bden nam byas pas/ blon po rnam na re bden zer ro/ yab rgyal po bshums te/ btsun mo lnga brgya yang ngus so/ sras kyi yum na re ngus bas ci la phan/ rgyal blon gros bya bar 'tshal lo gsung nas/ blon po rnam 'ang gros byas pas/ dang po 'phrin zer ba'i lte chod/ rin po che len pa de'i lag pa chod/ ster mkhan de'i mgo bo chod/ lam ston pa de'i mig 'don par 'tshal lo/ yab rgyal pos de ltar thos pas ma dga' ste/ bdag gi bu 'di ni legs pa'i don la mos/ byang chub sems dpa'i gdung rgyud 'dzin/ rgyal bu gdan sar 'don dgos pas/ chad pas bead pas mi 'ong zer. Ma ṅi bka' 'bum 1975: 342.5–343.4. Above, as in the Pāli *Vessantarajātaka*, it is the king himself who recognizes his son's behavior as virtuous, though excessively so, and he is the one to propose exile, not torture. (No torture is recommended in the MSV or AvK versions.) Moreover, note that prior to *Drimé Künden*, none of versions of the *Vessantarajātaka* in question have a pious minister intervene on behalf of the prince in order to advocate exile over execution.*

Life never circulated amid the repertoires of *lhamo* actors proper, it may have nevertheless lent itself to performance by traveling storytellers. Recall that the colophon which Snyder translates from version of the *Life of Pema Öbar* states that the biography was, in addition to being performed by *lhamo* players, recited by Manipas who used *thangkas*, i.e., painted cloth scrolls, as visual aids when they told the story.³¹⁸ The same is true for other *namtar* that are also adapted into *lhamo*, including the *Life of Drimé Künden*.

One invaluable source which contains several *namtars* that have traditionally been dramatized by traveling story tellers is the British Library's Endangered Archive's Programme (EAP) Project Number 749 and its pilot project, EAP 548. Both projects, jointly titled "The narrative and ritual texts, narrative paintings and other performance related material belonging to the Buchen of Pin Valley, India," make available materials from the archives of so-called "Buchen" private collections. Described by Patrick Sutherland (2011) as "performers of specialist rituals, traveling actors and disciples of the 14th/15th century 'crazy saint' Thangtong Gyalpo," the Buchen (*bu chen*) reside in the culturally Tibetan Pin Valley in Spiti, North India.³¹⁹ Although this valley and the fourteen Buchen villages within it are roughly 800 miles northwest of the areas in which Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa flourished respectively—Tashi Tsering notes that a number of the Buchen villages seem linked to Tringön Sangnak Choling, a monastery which follows the Nyingma traditions of Pema Lingpa.³²⁰

While Buchen are most widely known as ritual specialists who perform an elaborate, three-hour-long exorcism called the Ceremony of Breaking the Stone (*pho bar rdo gcog*),³²¹

³¹⁸ Snyder 2001: 9. Cf. Stein (1972: 278) on traveling story tellers' use of *thang ka*.

³¹⁹ Sutherland and Tashi Tsering 2011.

³²⁰ Tashi Tsering 2011: 89–90. Interestingly, Guru Chöwang is also a patron of Buchen and is sometimes referred to as the "King of Buchen." See *'Das log skor gyi chos skor phyogs sgrig*.

they, like Manipas and other Manipa-like groups, also chant *mani* and enact dramatizations of popular folktales.³²² Wandering from village to village in small parties, the Buchen all the while tell edifying stories, dance, and perform "an impressive ritual in which a heavy stone is crushed upon the chest of a man in order to destroy the demon which has taken abode in it."³²³ In Sutherland's (2012) words, these figures "spread the teachings of the Buddha through entertainment," and this role, he continues, "links them to a wider Tibetan tradition of lay religious performers called lama manipa, who retell the life stories of Tibetan saints whilst pointing out key scenes on narrative painted cloth scrolls (*thangkas*)." While this storytelling practice is largely extinct in Tibet, Sutherland (2012) and Tsering (2011) note that it still exists in Bhutan.³²⁴

EAP 548 contains two holdings, both labeled "The story of Gyalpo Drimet Kundan" which date from the mid-nineteenth century. These texts appear to be identical versions of the *Life of Drimé Künden*, though the project overview makes it clear that final two folia of EAP548/3/1 were replaced with handwritten text, perhaps copied from EAP548/3/1/4 or its same source. While the texts and *thangkas* in that archive were found in the Buchen of Pin Valley in northern India, the colophons of the texts indicate that these versions come from Lomön Bumthang, i.e., present-day southeastern Tibet/central Bhutan.³²⁵

³²¹ On this ritual, see Roerich (1932). For a social and economic exploration of Buchen life, see Pascale Dollfus, "The Great Sons of Thang stong rgyal po: The Bu chen of the Pin Valley, Spiti," *Tibet Journal* 29, no. 1 (2004): 9–32.

³²² See the EAP 548 overview. Cf. Dollfus 2004.

³²³ Dollfus 2004: 9.

³²⁴ See Sutherland (2012) under the EAP 584 project overview at http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_project.a4d?projID=EAP548. Cf. Tashi Tsering (2011: 91) where he speaks generally about the use of visual aids by traveling story tellers in Tibet.

³²⁵ See image no. 141 of 142 under EAP 548/3/1/3 and image no. 143 of 147 under EAP 548/3/1/4, line five in both texts.

Notably, at the end of these versions where the narrator identifies each of the characters *jātaka*-style as a figure who was also notable in another life or incarnation, Princess Zendé, the wife of Drimet Kundan, is said to be an incarnation of Yeshé Tsogyal.³²⁶ These archives of Tibetan performance-related materials also hold a number of *thangkas* associated with different stories, both *lhamo*- and non-*lhamo* or non-dramatic *namtar* alike. As in the case of the *Life of Drimé Künden thangka* noted below,³²⁷ the paintings depict a central buddha or a deity, like Avalokiteśvara, Drölma (*sgrol ma*; Skt. Tārā), or Tamdrin (*rta mgrin*; Skt. Hayagrīva).

There are no *Tsogyal Namtar* texts to be found in the Buchen collections labeled EAP 749 and 584, nor do we find any *Tsogyal Namtar*-inspired *thangkas*. It may not be out of the question that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, if it was recited, was recited with the accompaniment of a visual aid, however. It strikes me that if one were to illustrate Chapter II of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, for example, one would be compelled by the text to reproduce her path through differently colored valleys along a *maṅḍala* scheme. Recall that after leaving her father's palace and traveling through a dark forested valley, the *Life* has Yeshé Tsogyal journey first to a white region (*yul kha dog dkar ba gcig*), then a yellow valley (*lung pa ser stong nge ba gcig tu*), then a blue-green one (*lung pa sngo ljang*), and finally a vast and spacious red valley full of rainbow-colored tents (*lung pa yangs shing rgya che ba/ kha dog dmar 'ja' 'od lnga'i gur phub pa*). Within the red valley, she sees a central castle surrounded by four others: a white palace to the east, a yellow palace to the south, a red one to the west, and a green one to the north.³²⁸ We see this

³²⁶ Ibid.: lines 2–3: *kha 'gro yes shes tshogs rgyal* (= *mkha' 'gro yes shes mtsho rgyal*), i.e., Dākinī Yeshé Tsogyal.

³²⁷ EAP 749 and EAP 584 contain several scroll paintings from the early nineteenth century to the twenty-first. For example, see EAP 749/23/1/3: "Common Title Drimet Kunden: a narrative thangka illustrating the story of Drimet Kunden," dated to the late-nineteenth to early twentieth century. Cf. EAP749/5/1/1: "Common Title Nangsa Od 'bum" and EAP749/5/1/2: "Common Title Padma Odbar (?)," both early nineteenth-century *thangkas*, and also two late-twentieth century *thangkas*, EAP749/1/2/1 and EAP749/4/1/1, both labeled "Drowa Zangmo Thangka."

³²⁸ DK 2013: 224–225.

color-directional mapping in *maṇḍalas* associated with several tantric deities, including Dorjé Phurba (i.e., Vajrakīla/ya), the deity with whom Yeshé Tsogyal is traditionally associated. Even without a *thangka* that depicts scenes from the *Life* explicitly, then, a story teller could have still indicated Yeshé Tsogyal's travels on a *thangka* that depicts a *maṇḍala* with a similar schematic layout.

It is also possible that storytellers could have pointed out scenes from at least one chapter of *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* on a *nyalwa* (*dmyal ba*; Skt. *naraka*) *thangka*, i.e., a scroll that depicts the torments experienced by beings reborn in the various Buddhist hells. Sutherland (2012) notes that of particular interest among the Buchen archives was "old *thangka* illustrating the judgement of the dead and the processes through which sinners are tortured in the 18 Buddhist hell realms."³²⁹ We know that the fifth chapter of the *Life*, the chapter in which Yeshé Tsogyal travels through several levels of hell in order to save the evil minister Shantipa, circulated independently of the rest of the work and found its way into twentieth-century collections of tales about figures who had returned from hell. It may be that this portion of the story was itself illustrated, or that *thangkas* used as visual aids for certain revenant stories could have also been put to use in ways that helped audiences visualize Yeshé Tsogyal's descent into hell as well. Tashi Tsering (2011) emphasizes that among *Maṅipas*, favorite stories to perform indeed include those about *délok*, i.e., individuals who have died but return from hell to advocate religious observance.³³⁰ Telling

³²⁹ See the EAP 548 project overview and EAP 548/3/2/2: *Thangka of Nyella/ Hell* [c. 1850].

³³⁰ He mentions the story of *Délok Lingza Chökyi* ('Das log Gling bza' chos skyid) in particular. Others include that of *Nangsa Öbum* (Snang sa 'od 'bum) as well as *Karma Wangzin* (Karma dbang 'dzin) and *Sangyé Chözom* (Sangs rgyas chos 'dzom). Cf. Dollfus 2004: 7. Note that one of the manuscript witnesses, the unattributed EAP105 1/3/132, mixes up folios of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* with the *Story of Nangsa Öbum*, which is performed both as an opera and as a revenant tale. For more on this point, see the appendix, no. 13 (section 4) on EAP105 1/3/132.

these stories, Tsering states, the Manipas "recount in a melodious voice, either from memory of from a text, the lessons we may learn from [*délok's*] exemplary lives."³³¹

This is all to say that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as we have it—in the form of what Schuh would call an "unstageable dialogue-novel"—may aim, at the very least, in the direction of performance. Whether or not a performance of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was ever realized on Tibetan or Bhutanese staging grounds on a scale either grand or small remains an open question. It does not seriously undermine the plausibility of this line of speculation, perhaps, that no written script for a Yeshé Tsogyal drama circulates, especially if, as Snyder and J. Ross observe, *trapzhung* are most often, to this day, orally composed.³³² It is also not surprising, disappointing though it may be, that we are also without any written testimony to the *Life's* performance in records that span the fifteenth century to the present. Considering (1) the *Life's* sparse mention in the historical record (period), and also (2) the infrequency with which historical figures seem to write about witnessing dramatic performances, one would not expect to find much, if anything, that refers to a staging of the *Life*.³³³ We are left with the fact that performances of it could have eluded written testimony, or that it may never have been performed at all. What seems clear, however, is that Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life*—structurally similar to written drama texts that we know to have been traditionally adapted into *lhamo* scripts and/or recited by traveling storytellers—possesses stage potential. Perhaps performances of it are still yet to come.

³³¹ Tashi Tsering 2011: 81.

³³² Snyder 2001: 19; and J. Ross 1995: 30.

³³³ On the lack of writing about *lhamo*, see Tashi Tsering 2001.

Summary and Conclusion

When we read the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* together with the *Life of Drimé Künden*, we find a number of thematic and structural similarities between the works. In terms of structure, they are both written in a mixture of prose and verse. Narrative portions of their texts occur between versified dialogues. The verses are typically comprised of four- or five-foot, seven- or nine-syllable metrical lines that end in *synalepha*. The narrative, prose portions are often short, and frequently transitional. They conclude a sung monologue and introduce a response in kind, or they describe a scene, or impart a character's internal thoughts.

The prose-verse structures that we find shared by the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* and the *Life of Drimé Künden* are common across *namtar* that are adapted into scripts and performed as *lhamo* by state-recognized "official" acting troupes or by "unofficial" acting troupes and small groups of players. Such prose-verse structures are also found in *namtar* that have not been traditionally adapted into *lhamo*, yet many of these *namtar*, in whole or in part, are nevertheless enacted by traveling storytellers. These story tellers, most widely known as Mañipas but also referred to by different regional designations (like Buchen, Lochen, Joyang) may simultaneously indicate, with iron pointers called *chakda* (*lcags mda'*), scenes from the story that have been painted on a cloth or paper scroll. Or they may employ other three-dimensional visual aids, like *mañi* wheels or portable *tashi gomang* (*bkra shis sgo mang*)—*stupas* with multiple doors (*sgo mang*), behind which narrative scenes are illustrated and/or miniature figures are carved.

Though we know that the *Life of Drimé Künden* remains a popular *lhamo*, and that it has specially-designed *thangkas* that pair with it, we are as yet without corroborating evidence that would indicate that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was ever actually performed by *lhamo* players or recited with or without visual aids by Mañipas. Although the story of Yeshé Tsogyal could be

indicated on a *thangka* that depicts certain tantric deity *maṇḍalas* or the Buddhist hell realms, no specially-designed *thangka* depicting specific scenes from the story itself has surfaced. And whether certain figures attribute authorship of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* to Drimé Künga or Pema Lingpa, none of our sources elaborate upon the context in which they themselves encountered the story.

In the pre-departure and departure scenes in both of the *Lives*, we find structural-thematic and verbal similarities that suggest that, at the very least, the author of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was deeply familiar with Tibetan tellings of the *Vessantarajātaka*, either through transmissions of the *Maṇi Kambum* and/or through extant versions of the *Life of Drimé Künden*. It is not hard to imagine why Drimé Künga would model part of Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* on what might have been an already popular work. However, it is not clear that the *Life of Drimé Künden* (i.e., the work itself, not the Vessantara story it tells) predates Drimé Künga's *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. If we date the *Life of Drimé Künden* to our earliest *attributed* discoverer, i.e., Pema Lingpa, then the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* would instead predate the *Life of Drimé Künden*. But since it seems likely that the *Life of Drimé Künden* predates Pema Lingpa (just as the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* predates him), we might allow that these stories could have been composed by the same author, perhaps Drimé Künga.

If these *namtar* were in fact composed by the same author, we might also allow that they could have been drafted at roughly the same time. They could have been written concurrently, or close on one another's heels. If either scenario proved the case, we might do better to imagine a cross-pollination between the *Lives*,³³⁴ or, with the decidedly earlier, twelfth-century *Maṇi*

³³⁴ The notion that certain intertextual relationships, particularly those that share an unclear or not definitively linear temporal relationship, are better thought of along the lines of "cross-pollination" is borrowed from Sanders 2005: 13.

Kambum serving as the starting agent, a kind of inter-leavening of the works. A stricter linear development from the pre-departure scenes in the *Maṇi Kambum* to the one in *Drimé Künden* to the one in *Yeshé Tsogyal* is certainly plausible, but it is also possible that these works grew up together under the same roof. One might have been the slightly older, more successful (and therefore more influential) sibling who the younger sought to emulate. But the success and popularity of one would not have precluded formative dialogues between them.

Above all else, one wonders about the commitments that influenced Drimé Künga's decision to write a full-length life story of Yeshé Tsogyal in the first place, let alone write a *Life* that echoes, in parts, the *Life of Drimé Künden*. As we consider the performance potential of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, we might think of Drimé Künga's activities along the lines of those of Tsangyön Heruka (1452–1507),³³⁵ the figure who composed the canonical *Life of Milarepa*. Describing the rhetorical, structural, and hermeneutic innovations that Tsangyön Heruka brought to Milarepa's *Life* and songs, Andrew Quintman (2013) notes that Tsangyön's *Life of Milarepa* did not so much replace earlier biographical writings as re-present them with new clarity. In doing so, Quintman writes, Tsangyön attempted to direct his works to a far wider audience than previously attempted. While early biographical writings about Milarepa were intended for a circumscribed community of readers, particularly those readers who were initiated into the traditions of the aural transmissions, Tsangyön aimed to produce "a narrative that would appeal to all levels of Tibetan society, from the religious and political elite, to the meditator in retreat, to the uneducated and largely illiterate population of the Tibetan countryside."³³⁶ Tsangyön hoped

³³⁵ Tib. Gtsang smyon He ru ka.

³³⁶ Quintman 2013: 152.

to address a non-literate audience, says Quintman, by distributing visual depictions of Milarepa's life story that would later be used by Manipas who wandered from village to village.³³⁷

Unfortunately, we gain no insight into Drimé Künga's motivations for writing Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* nor do we learn of his intentions for it based on his own writings or testimony of his successors. Pema Lingpa is likewise silent in this regard. But if indeed the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was a life story composed along the lines of the *Life of Drimé Künden*—a *namtar* performed by travelling acting troupes and/or Manipas for entertainment and educational purposes alike—its authors may have set their sights on wide appeal. We can imagine that Drimé Künga (and Pema Lingpa after him) aimed his work at a broad and far-reaching audience—not only educated and religious elites or his own group of *mantrins*, but also non-literate members of the communities in which he lived. His may have been an effort to bring the story of Yeshé Tsogyal closer to the people of his time.

From here, we will move on to think more specifically about what it might have meant for Drimé Künga to reimagine, adapt, and/or incorporate into the *Life* elements of Indic tales that told of the Buddha's extended biography. Whatever his own motivations for composing the *Life* in the first place, we can see how the story, once fully formed, stood to draw readers, listeners, or spectators into a much wider literary world. The *Life* evokes a rich literary past, and as it does so, the signifying field appears vast as a result. To recognize in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* the influence, even copresence, of other works like the *Life of Drimé Künden* is to expand the potential meanings available to the attentive reader.³³⁸ Yeshé Tsogyal becomes not just a Dharmically-inclined royal youth who must confront a slew of naysayers. She is a Dharmically-inclined youth like the once

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Sanders 2005: 7, 77.

young, Dharmically-inclined figures Vessantara and Siddhārtha. Her life, from its outset, parallels at least two well-known iterations of the Buddha's past, and with that, her life story is at once familiar and new to us. What Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* invites us to recall about the Bodhisattva's life story is also, in part, what her authors ask us to learn and remember about her own.

With the *Life of Drimé Künden*, we moreover see the *Vessantarajātaka* transposed to a new setting, one more culturally Tibetan than Indian. Through a "movement of proximation," to borrow Gerard Genette's phrasing,³³⁹ the story of the Bodhisattva as Vessantara is brought closer to a Tibetan audience's frame of reference in temporal, geographic, and social terms. With the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, we witness not just a movement of proximation away from the settings of the *Buddhacarita* and the *Vessantarajātaka* so much as a doubling—though not a duplication, pure and simple—of particular themes within those stories. Going forward, we might ask, which themes endure across temporal, geographic, and cultural boundaries? And what are these themes examinations of? Why, moreover, bring Yeshé Tsogyal in close connection with the Bodhisattva along these lines? What effects might this have on the reader?

³³⁹ Genette 1998: 304.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PRINCESS AND THE TIGRESS: INTIMACY THROUGH INTERTEXT

In my introduction, I noted that the *Life Story of Yeshé Tsogyal*, not unlike many a *namtar*, plainly states its overall purpose. After several lines of homage, it explains, "This detailed *namtar* of Yeshé Tsogyal is narrated in order to spark future beings' interest in Dharma."³⁴⁰ Notably, the word *trowa* (*spro ba*), which I have translated above as "interest," also communicates a sense of "enthusiasm," "joy," or "delight" such that one would be no less correct to take the *Life's* objective to be to generate enthusiasm, bring about joy, or produce delight in its readers with respect to Dharma as well as the characters and events described therein. It would appear, then, that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* stands to uplift as much as it aims to inspire. But just how does it set out to accomplish this goal? How does it seek to affect its readers—not only in an effort to elevate them spiritually or interest them in the Dharma in some general way, one wonders, but also to engender their confidence (*vid ches*) in Yeshé Tsogyal and the particular religious path she pursues?

Soon after stating its aim, the *Life* proceeds in a way that works to conjure for the reader a host of literary associations. Prominent among them are tales of the Buddha's previous births, which is to say stories about his lives as the Bodhisattva, that is, the Buddha-to-be. By transitioning out of its statement of purpose in this way, the *Life* would appear to be encouraging its audiences not only to think continually about the Bodhisattva as they read, but also to sustain the sense that behind or even within Yeshé Tsogyal's life story are the stories of other lives. In Yeshé Tsogyal we may see an instance of enlightenment manifest in the world, but in her *Life* we hear echoes of other instances of enlightenment. Such instances may appear to greater or lesser

³⁴⁰ *ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba bskyed pa'i phyir gsungs so*. PL 2013: 262.

degrees—which is often to say in more or less explicit, or more or less overt ways—within the work. But whatever the case, at every turn, other lives have the potential to exert a pull on the significance of Yeshé Tsogyal's *namtar* for the reader attentive enough to heed them.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the *Life of Drimé Künden*, the telling of the *Vessantarajātaka* in Tibetan, resonates thematically with the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, especially across the earliest portions of both works leading up and into the royal youths' respective exiles. At certain points, we even see several lines shared between the works such that the stories not only run parallel in terms of some of their motifs. They also overlap with one another at the structural and verbal levels. As we enter the second chapter of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, the story diverges from its resonance with the story of Vessantara and his forest exploits, but connections with the Bodhisattva continue on from there, and at one point they do so to an intense degree. In its second chapter, the *Life* goes so far as to put Yeshé Tsogyal in the place of protagonist in what is usually a tale of the Bodhisattva's bodily sacrifice to a starving beast of prey.

This story, referred to in a generic way by scholars as the *Tigress Jātaka* or the "Story of the Hungry (or Starving) Tigress,"³⁴¹ is, like Vessantara's birth story, what folklorists call multiform. Although details vary across its iterations in various languages, the tale's basic elements make it recognizable as a telling of the story in which the Buddha, as a prince or an ascetic in a previous lifetime, fed his body to a tigress in order to prevent her and her cubs from dying. A summary of the story that touches on the details of several versions follows:

³⁴¹ See, for example, John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 57–58; and Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path According to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugrapariprcchā): A Study and Translation* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 144. Strong refers to "the *jātaka* of the hungry tigress," and Nattier to the "'Hungry Tigress' *jātaka*."

One day, the Bodhisattva as a prince (or an ascetic) ventured out into the forest (either alone, or with two brothers, or accompanied by an attendant). He happened upon an emaciated tigress who was starving to death because pregnancy- and birth-related pains had rendered her unable to hunt. Without food for herself, her milk had dried up, and so her newborn cubs stood on the cusp of death by starvation as well. The cubs persisted in approaching their mother in order to nurse, even though, each time they drew near, she met them with hostility and a desperate gaze.

As the Bodhisattva watched the tigress eye her own cubs hungrily, he resolved to prevent her from devouring them. If, in a particular version, he has company, he sends his companion(s) away, either (as he says) because he wishes to do something privately in the forest, or so that they might split up to find food for the tigress. Where he suggests the latter plan, the Bodhisattva grants that food may in fact be found, but ultimately, tasking others with departing is strategic. Alone, without the risk of protest from anyone else, he knows that he will be free to feed his own body to the tigress. He then either slices into his flesh with a sharp branch before the tigress or throws his body off a cliff such that it lands in front of her. She subsequently tears into him and is sated. He dies, but with that, he spares the animals death by starvation. In some cases, it is said that thanks to the Bodhisattva's sacrifice, the tigress is moreover prevented from violating a particular law of nature, namely a mother's inherent love for and will to protect her offspring.

The story is widely popular and oft-depicted throughout Buddhist cultures.³⁴² Drimé Künga may have encountered it via a number of Tibetan sources, and I will offer some details on

³⁴² For short summaries of this story and references to its various tellings, see Ohnuma 2007: 2–3, 9–14, *et passim* as well as, more recently, Junko Matsumura, "The *Vyāghrī-Jātaka* Known to Sri Lankan Buddhists and Its Relation to the Northern Buddhist Versions," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu)* 58, no. 3 (March 25, 2010): 1164–72. Famous depictions that immediately come to mind are those at Namō Buddha Stupa (a.k.a. Takmo Lujin) outside of Kathmandu, Nepal, and the Shashin Shiko Zu (a painting on wood) at the Horiyūji Temple in Nara, Japan. Incidentally, the story makes its way into the Western literary canon through the works of Edwin Arnold (*Light of Asia* 1879) and T.S. Eliot (*Ash Wednesday* 1930).

those that could have inspired his work below. But even as I show which version(s) of the Bodhisattva's birth stories the *Life* appears to favor across its own folios, it is best to keep in mind that these stories circulated in many versions and were communicated by multiple types of media. That is, although a reader might determine which among the many versions of the *Tigress Jātaka* the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* employs as a structuring text, I think it more important to see how—and ask why—it might participate in the "Hungry Tigress" story form broadly conceived.

And so, from whatever sources he drew inspiration for his rendering—what is effectively the "Story of the Starving Tigress" starring *not* the Bodhisattva, but instead Yeshé Tsogyal—the reader's curiosity may be piqued: Why this tale? What about the *Tigress Jātaka* so appealed to Drimé Künga that he would compose a version of it with Yeshé Tsogyal at its center? (Are we to believe that Yeshé Tsogyal's life paralleled the Bodhisattva's to the extent that she endured a nearly identical test of virtue?) From a literary-analytical standpoint, how, moreover, might we understand and describe Drimé Künga's compositional activity in this regard? (Is it best understood as a revision, an adaptation? An homage, a parody?) With that, what might be the implications of bringing the stories of the Bodhisattva and Yeshé Tsogyal together in this way? It is clear that the protagonists are made to overlap, but what might that mean for the reader's experience of both or either figure going forward from their encounter with the text?

The Princess and the Tigress

Recall that in Chapter I of the *Life*, Yeshé Tsogyal rejected first an Indian and then a Tibetan suitor, stating publicly that she would prefer to live a life of ascetic hardship rather than that of a wealthy householder. For her refusal to marry, she was tortured and subsequently exiled

from her parents' palace. Exile proves a boon, however, for away from the palace, she is free to do exactly as she had been hoping to do all along: practice Holy Dharma in a desolate valley.

By the time we meet her in Chapter II, Yeshé Tsogyal, having at this point rejected a third individual's offer of companionship *and* having escaped captivity under her Tibetan suitor, is engaged in a conversation with her guru, Orgyan Pema Jungné (i.e., Padmasambhava) about how difficult it might be for her to practice religion as a woman. She articulates her concerns in terms and tropes common across her *Lives*. Although royal, she describes herself as low born (*skye ba dman*), and she recognizes herself to be very selfish (*rang 'dod che ba*), wild (*rgyud la ngan pa*), and, among other things, lacking in faith and diligence (*dad pa dang snying rus med*).³⁴³ Padmasambhava tells her that even though she is indeed in a difficult situation, all things considered—but especially her female-ness—her enlightenment is nevertheless assured as long as she manages to develop the very attributes she says that she lacks, faith (*dad pa*; Skt. *śraddhā*) and diligence (*brtson 'grus* or syn. *snying rus*; Skt. *vīriyam*). In the scenes that follow, we find that these two qualities are particularly important, albeit difficult, for Yeshé Tsogyal to cultivate. The virtue of giving (*sbyin pa*; Skt. *dāna*), however, seems to come easily to Yeshé Tsogyal. It is just as if she entered the world with all the right intuitions about how to benefit others in this way.

When he is finished reassuring her about her potential, Padmasambhava goes on to tell Yeshé Tsogyal to remain in the Samyé Chimphu charnel ground for twelve years so that she might attempt to achieve spiritual success all the while. He then departs for India, promising that he will return soon. Accepting the challenge, Yeshé Tsogyal spreads out a straw mat in a Chimphu cave and commences her meditation. After one month passes, however, she is

³⁴³ DK 2013: 212; PL 2013: 289.

interrupted by the mysterious appearance of a white woman who bangs on the cave door with a crystal staff, and exclaims, "Princess, what are you doing?" To this, Yeshé Tsogyal, as she opens the door, replies, "I'm practicing intense concentration (*ting 'dzin*; Skt. *samādhi*)." In turn, she asks the woman, "Do you have faith?" The woman then neither confirms nor denies her own personal faith in response, but instead tells Yeshé Tsogyal: "That faith of *yours*—it's not genuine faith (*yang dag pa'i dad pa ma yin*). Real faith exists in my country."³⁴⁴

In light of this accusation, Yeshé Tsogyal thinks to herself, "That faith which views Orgyan [i.e., Padmasambhava] as a real buddha, isn't there no single greater faith than that?" But the woman intuits Yeshé Tsogyal's thoughts and tells her that she must follow her if she wishes to see what true faith *really* entails. Seizing Yeshé Tsogyal's hand, the woman leads them first to a white-colored region, then a yellow valley, then a blue-green one.³⁴⁵ In each place, Yeshé Tsogyal is made to witness people engaging tirelessly and unquestioningly in various acts of devotion and merit-making. Ultimately, her travels not only inspire her to undertake self-reflection. They also motivate her to work harder to develop each of the qualities she witnesses in turn.

At a certain point, Yeshé Tsogyal's companion insists that she must part ways with her, but before she does so, she instructs Yeshé Tsogyal to press on alone toward yet another location where she might obtain spiritual realization. And so, without a guide and ever intent on proving herself devout and diligent, she finally arrives in a vast red valley. The mountains surrounding it blaze upward like flames. The ground sprawls out like a skeleton (*keng rus*), and its rivers and lakes flow and pool like blood. There are palaces in each of the directions, and as Yeshé Tsogyal

³⁴⁴ DK 2013: 213; PL 2013: 291.

³⁴⁵ DK 2013: 213–220; PL 2013: 291–297.

makes her way eastward, tall, dark, multi-colored, and large-eyed women catch sight of her and shout at her, "What are you doing? Where are you going?" Then, to one another, they exclaim, "Kill her!"³⁴⁶ At that, some women grab her and beat her, and Yeshé Tsogyal passes out from the pain. When she comes to, she sees all of the women laughing maniacally at her. Once she is able to speak, she answers their questions. "I have come from the Samyé Chimphu charnel ground," she says. "Since it is said that this [red-valley] palace is a place where people come to achieve spiritual realization, I have also come here wanting to achieve realization."³⁴⁷

One of the women asks in turn, "Who told you about this place?" and so, Yeshé Tsogyal tells her about the start of her journey. "In the region of Tibet, there lives a good *yogī* named Orgyan Pema Jungné. He told me, 'Meditate for twelve years in this charnel ground.' So I settled in, and while I was sitting for practice in that place, a white woman appeared and led me away against my will. That's how I got to this region."³⁴⁸

A large *yoginī* in front of the palace door then asks Yeshé Tsogyal as she grabs her hand, "What will you give us in order to proceed into the palace?" Without hesitation, Yeshé Tsogyal offers up her own body. She responds, "I have the intention to give, but I don't have any wealth. If you want the flesh of my limbs, after cutting them up, I'll give that to you." But the *yoginī* does not want Yeshé Tsogyal's flesh. Instead, she tells the princess that she must slay a tigress and offer *that* being's flesh to the fearsome *yoginīs* who block her way.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁶ DK 2013: 224–225; PL 2013: 300.

³⁴⁷ DK 2013: 225; PL 2013: 301.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

This poses a dilemma for Yeshé Tsogyal. "If I kill a tigress," she thinks, "a lot of evil would come to pass." But "if I don't kill a tigress, it seems I won't obtain spiritual realization. If I don't have tigress meat, the *yoginīs* won't let me pass into the palace. But what else am I supposed to do? I won't achieve spiritual success. No matter how I try to achieve success, it doesn't seem to work out."³⁵⁰

Weary and dejected, Yeshé Tsogyal ruminates about the problem day and night until it occurs to her that there could possibly be an *already* dead tiger cub somewhere in the forest. With that thought, she sets out from the midst of the red valley to find out. When she enters the forest she sees that there are indeed eighteen (*bco brgyad*)—alive, but just barely—tiger cubs sheltered by their mother.³⁵¹ She decides to approach the tigers, and as she does so, she sees that the cubs have emptied their mother's teats and so they no longer have a reason to suckle. The whole lot are on the verge of death, and the mother, the narrator tells us, has herself wasted away to skin and bone.

Witnessing this distressing sight—so many helpless beings suffering at once—Yeshé Tsogyal, driven by compassion for the tigers, thinks, "I will offer as a gift (*sbyin pa*) this body of flesh and blood." But when she approaches the tigress and lays down on her back, the tigress proves a hard sell. She refuses to eat, and instead, she and her cubs smile (*'dzum 'dzum byed*).³⁵²

³⁵⁰ DK 2013: 226; PL 2013: 301.

³⁵¹ Although it is an auspicious number, the number eighteen in this case is curious. As Matsumura notes (2010: 49), the number of cubs to which the tigress gives birth has been among the most decisive aspects of the story for scholars who wish to identify the written versions upon which pictorial renderings of the story may be based. Though not always specified in written accounts, when it is, the number of cubs is often two or seven, though one also sees five cubs in some versions of the *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* (see Hino 2014) and five are sometimes depicted in paintings (see, for example, "The Starving Tigress," Buryatia, 1800–1899. Buddhist lineage, ground mineral pigment on cotton. Collection of Buryat Historical Museum), but I have never seen eighteen elsewhere written or depicted.

³⁵² DK 2013: 226.

Undeterred by their friendliness, Yeshé Tsogyal brakes off a sandalwood branch and begins scraping at her own flesh and cutting it up into bits so that her body might be *dāna* for the animals. After considerable scraping, she herself appears as a skeleton and, like the tigress, arrives at the point of death. Once the tigress's health is restored—how it is restored is not made explicit, but presumably by eating Yeshé Tsogyal's scraps of flesh, she is revived—she then recognizes Yeshé Tsogyal as a woman from a noble family. With that, she gathers up sap and nectar from the branches and flowers of a sandalwood tree to apply to Yeshé Tsogyal's wounds. Throughout the scene, the tigress is so moved by Yeshé Tsogyal's self-sacrifice that tears fall like rain from her eyes.³⁵³

Not surprisingly, Yeshé Tsogyal had lost consciousness during her ordeal. At the very moment she wakes up, however, she witnesses the tigress's sorrow. The narrator observes that Yeshé Tsogyal experiences astonishment at the fact that an animal can show gratitude, and that such a being could not only feel love for people who are kindly (*byams pa'i mi la sems brtse*), but also see fit to help. Yeshé Tsogyal thinks to herself, "Suppose I died. The tigress and her cubs certainly would have perished, having been overcome with sorrow." And at that thought, she generates great compassion. Grabbing onto a sandalwood branch, she tells the tigress that their meeting was auspicious, and from there, she narrates her experience of the events, concluding her words with an "Act of Truth" (Skt. *satyakriyā*).³⁵⁴ First, she commands the animals' attention, "O, fortunate tigress mother and cubs!" she says, and then:

Through the power of karma, you and I coincided.

³⁵³ DK 2013: 226–227; PL 2013: 302.

³⁵⁴ As Ohnuma (2007: 65) puts it, an "Act of Truth," which is "a common motif in Indic narrative literature," is "a ritualistic act in which a person enunciates some truthful statement and then ritually draws upon the power of this truth to make some desired consequence occur." Such statements may follow an if/then pattern, or simply utter what is "true" in the case of a being's experience. In Yeshé Tsogyal's case, what is true is that she does not regret having attempted to feed her body to the tigress.

With a beneficent mind, overwhelmed by compassion,
Unconcerned about my life, I cut away my flesh and offered it
For the sake of your life.
I, the princess, have no regrets.
O, tigress, don't be sorrowful!
By this [Act of] Truth, one that is sincere, it is impossible for me to die.³⁵⁵

The narrator states that the tigress seemed to understand the words "just a little bit" (*cung zad stag mos go ba*), and as a result, she became cheerful (*ngo dkar ba*). After a day, Yeshé Tsogyal's wounds heal, and she looks just as healthy as (or, depending on the version, even better than) before.³⁵⁶

Witnesses variously anthropomorphize the tigress at this point. In some cases, the tigress then thinks to herself, "I wonder if it's possible that a companion of mine (*bdag gi rogs gcig*) has died," and she leaves to explore the woods in hopes of returning with a tiger's corpse for Yeshé Tsogyal to bring to the *yoginīs*.³⁵⁷ In others, the tigress, having seen a companion's carcass (at what exact point in time relative to the story's present, the reader does not know), acts out many signs with her legs and arms (*rkang lag gis brda mang du byed*) to communicate the fact to Yeshé Tsogyal.³⁵⁸

How the tigress was able to intuit that Yeshé Tsogyal had gone to the forest in hopes of finding tigress meat remains a mystery. (Yeshé Tsogyal never tells the tigress about the

³⁵⁵ DK 2013: 227 and PL 2013: 302. Unless one is familiar with *jātakas* in which the Bodhisattva utters a statement of truth, translating the final line translated above can be tricky. (In DK 2013, it is *bden pas mi bslu bdag ni 'chi mi srid*; in PL 2013, *bden pas mi slu 'chi mi srid*.) The line resonates with instances in which the Bodhisattva will say something about how his statement of truth in x or y case is uttered so that he may pass beyond death, i.e., eventually attain *nirvāṇa/parinirvāṇa*. See, e.g., Robert Alexander Neil and Edward B. (Edward Byles) Cowell, eds., *The Divyāvadāna: A Collection of Early Buddhist Legends, Now First Edited from the Nepalese Sanskrit Mss. in Cambridge and Paris* (Cambridge U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1886), 478.

³⁵⁶ DK 2013: 227; PL 2013: 302.

³⁵⁷ E.g., PL 2013: 302.

³⁵⁸ E.g., DK 2013: 227.

motivation for her journey into the forest, at least.) In any case, Yeshé Tsogyal recognizes the boon. She thinks, "Now this seems to be a way for me to obtain realization! Having carried the tigress meat, I'll go to the palace door. Then, after I give it to the *yoginīs* who guard the door, I must continue on in order to find realization inside of the palace." Yeshé Tsogyal thereby cuts the head off of the tigress corpse, and out of sandalwood, she makes a rope. Having loaded the burden on her back, and having gone back to the palace door, she presents the tigress head to the *yoginīs*, and says, "Here you have the tigress flesh that you wanted. Let me pass into the palace!" To this demand a large *yoginī* replies, "When you proceed into the palace, I'll lead the way. You obtained the tigress head—well done." From there, Yeshé Tsogyal is escorted to a large bazaar, and the tigress scene, along with its framing action, concludes.³⁵⁹

As I noted in chapter two, we do not find this scene recounted in the later, seventeenth-century life story of Yeshé Tsogyal by Taksham Nüden Dorjé. Taksham's reasons for omitting it could be many, but one reason may have to do with both his overall stylistic preferences and a presumed (or, we might allow, a rhetorically effected) availability of sources that did contain the scene. In terms of style and speaking broadly, when one reads Taksham's work alongside Drimé Künga's, one finds a preference for stating what has already happened rather than depicting action, experience, and thought in the narrative's real time. That is to say that while Drimé Künga prefers to display the ways in which Yeshé Tsogyal undertakes actions, thinks about her circumstances, feels about and responds to her trials, etc., Taksham is more inclined to tell readers about what she has already endured. If one posits Yeshé Tsogyal as the narrator of her life story according to Taksham, the story reads largely as an extended reminiscence—a recounting of one's experiences in retrospect, a memoir. If one takes the narrator to be a third-

³⁵⁹ DK 2013: 227; PL 2013: 302.

person, omniscient party, the story rings as reported by someone with knowledge of past events, not someone who is there as a witness to them.

Moreover, and building to the point about source availability, Taksham not only abbreviates previously recounted events, he often simply alludes to what is supposed to have happened or transpired between Yeshé Tsogyal and the other characters with whom she interacts. This is true not just for the tigress scene, but for the whole of Yeshé Tsogyal's travels throughout the valleys of Oḍḍiyāna as well as myriad other events of her life. At one point in Taksham's seventh chapter, for example, the narrator states that Yeshé Tsogyal gave whatever parts of her body that were needed to any and all, including predators (*gcan gzan rnams*)—some tigers, perhaps—but that is all we hear about that.³⁶⁰ In Taksham, we do not find the story behind that testimony played out. A more completely rendered tigress scene is perhaps "missing" from Taksham in the end because, as he repeats throughout his Yeshé Tsogyal *namtar*, a reader interested in the extended version of this or that event could, and should, seek out a fuller account elsewhere.

Why Taksham ultimately chose to relay Yeshé Tsogyal's trials differently than his predecessors remains an open and interesting question. Perhaps he thought it necessary to fill in what he perceived to be prior accounts' gaps, and along with that, he may have also seen fit to condense story elements that were, according to his standards, too elaborate.³⁶¹ Or some recorded

³⁶⁰ See Taksham 1989: 184: *gzhan yag gcan gzan rnams la lus sbyin pa*. A translation of the passage in which this statement occurs can be found in Dowman 1984: 130.

³⁶¹ Taksham's version includes a number of asides voiced by the work's author function (though they can be read in the voice of the narrator) that tell the reader to look for more information on certain events in Yeshé Tsogyal's life elsewhere, for Taksham's own aim is to tell her story in brief. For example, in the fifth chapter of his account—the chapter in which Taksham describes Yeshé Tsogyal's travels to different realms and sites throughout Greater Tibet (*bod yul spyi'i gnas*), he states, "Since the ways [Tsogyal] saw this and other vast realms [described] here is recorded elsewhere, out of concern for prolixity (*yi ge la 'jigs nas*, lit. "out of fear regarding letters") here, I omitted [those details]" (1989: 89). And "Some [of these places] are elaborated on below. Concerned about wordiness, though, I omitted the details" (*ibid.*: 124).

events may have simply struck him as already well-enough-known and therefore well-enough-trodden narrative territory. It may just as well be that as Taksham wrote, der was in fact circulating in such a way that individuals who were interested in its protagonist could have found it relatively easy to read both *namtars* together, using, as Taksham suggests, this among other accounts to supplement his own.

For our purposes here, however, I am above all interested in thinking through Drimé Künga's choices over Taksham's—not just why Drimé Künga elected to retell the story of the tigress (a question to which we can only offer speculative answers), but what his decision to have done so might mean for (1) our conceptualization of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as a literary work and (2) for the reader's encounter with it and the figure of Yeshé Tsogyal in tandem. In the section that follows, I therefore offer, first, a theoretical consideration of the literary practices or processes in which Drimé Künga may be said to have engaged as he brought the *Tigress Jātaka* to bear on his composition of the *Life*. I follow that with an analysis of the ways in which reading Yeshé Tsogyal's tigress encounter in light of the *Tigress Jātaka* might mobilize in the reader certain, perhaps otherwise mute, expectations vis-à-vis the protagonist and the path she pursues.³⁶² To recast Yeshé Tsogyal as the protagonist of a widely popular Buddhist tale—originally some other paragon's birth story, namely the Buddha's—strikes me not as a curious or whimsical move on Drimé Künga's part. Rather, I view it among the most creative and provocative in his work. By thinking critically about his creative endeavor at length, I hope not only to clarify the relationship between the stories, but also to see how they might dynamize one another—how through their "clash of significations," new significations may be made to

³⁶² Ricoeur 1995: 161.

emerge.³⁶³ From there, we will move on to consider a concurrent process of dynamization that, as I argue, stands to occur between the *Life* and its model reader.

Resignifying the *Tigress Jātaka*

As they discuss the topic of characters who appear in multiple guises across early South Asian religious narratives, Brian Black and Jonathan Geen note that there is "a general and observable intertextual orientation in South Asian religious literature."³⁶⁴ By intertextual orientation—"intertextuality"—they state that they mean "the phenomenon whereby texts contain characters, motifs, metaphors, incidents, direct quotations, and other features that are known to come from other texts."³⁶⁵ "But," as Black and Geen further acknowledge,

it is often not possible to know for certain what an ancient South Asian audience might have known, and even when we can trace a reference in one text back to an earlier source, we cannot know for sure if this was the same text that our composers had in mind. To complicate matters further, we often do not know the chronology of the textual sources that we have, and are often confronted with references to sources that are no longer available to us.³⁶⁶

Black and Geen's words are true enough generally speaking. Luckily, though, in the case of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, we are not entirely in the dark about its potential influences, especially not on the tigress front. Apart from granting that Drimé Künga may have heard oral accounts of the Bodhisattva's tigress encounter and/or that he may have seen depictions of the story in *thangkas* or on cave and building walls, by the time of his writing, he and the *Life's*

³⁶³ Ibid.: 148, 157, 161, also 171.

³⁶⁴ Brian Black and Jonathan Geen, "The Character of 'Character' in Early South Asian Religious Narratives: An Introductory Essay," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 1 (March 1, 2011): 21.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

audiences could have learned this story from several textual sources, not least (1) *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*; (2) the "Vyāghrīparivarta," i.e., the eighteenth chapter of the twenty-one chapter *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* (wherein there are two tigress encounters); (4) Āryasūra's *Jātakamālā*; or, finally, (5) Kṣemendra's *Āvadānakalpalatā*, particularly the longer of the two tigress stories represented there (i.e., story no. 51 rather than no. 95).³⁶⁷ Which of these tellings Drimé Künga had in mind as he wrote is unclear, though the fifty-first *jātaka* in the *Āvadānakalpalatā* seems to me a good candidate given not only its similarity in detail, but also the popularity that the work came to enjoy in Tibet over time.³⁶⁸

That said, to an even greater extent than in the previous chapter, I wish to avoid limiting my analysis here to a hunt for sources. As Yigal Bronner observes, ever since Julia Kristeva (1969) declared poetic language always "at least double," intertextual analyses have often been reduced to "hunting down a work (or set of works, or a significant author) that can be identified as a later text's 'source'."³⁶⁹ Such "source hunts" are of course valuable for doing histories of a literary object's formation and reception. Nevertheless, as Patrick Geary warns us in relation to hagiographical works in particular: to focus too intently on the hunt is to risk deconstructing a

³⁶⁷ Tib. *Mdo mdzangs blun*, Tōh. 341; Tib. *'Phags pa gser 'od dam pa mdo sde'i dbang po'i rgyal po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*, Tōh. 557; Tib. *Skyes pa'i rabs kyi rgyud*, Tōh. 4150; Tib. *Byang chub sems dpa'i rtogs pa brjod pa dpag bsam gyi 'khri shing*, Tōh. 4155. Refer to Matsumura (2010) for short summaries of each version and notes about their translations and the differences among them. For what Matsumura and Eun Hino refer to as the *Vyāghrī-jātakas* in the *Suvarṇa*, see Eun Hino, "The *Vyāghrī-Jātaka* in the Extant Versions of the *Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra*," *Journal of Indian and Buddhist Studies (Indogaku Bukkyogaku Kenkyu)* 62, no. 3 (March 25, 2014): 1194–98.

³⁶⁸ On this point, see Lin, "Adapting the Buddha's Biographies," 2011. Ohnuma (2007: 9–13) translates *Āvadānakalpalatā* nos. 95 and 51 in that order. We also find an allusion to the *Tigress Jātaka* in the *Inquiry of Rāṣṭrapāla*. On this work and its parent compilation, the *Ratnakūṭa*, see Nattier, *A Few Good Men*, and esp. Daniel Boucher, *Bodhisattvas of the Forest and the Formation of the Mahāyāna: A Study and Translation of the Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā-sūtra* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008). The history of the Tibetan translation (titled *Yul 'khor skyong gis zhus pa'i mdo*, translated in the early ninth century) is addressed on pp. xviii and 109 in Boucher. The allusion is translated on p. 132.

³⁶⁹ Yigal Bronner, *Extreme Poetry: The South Asian Movement of Simultaneous Narration* (Columbia University Press, 2010), 258. Bronner is here in part recapitulating a point originally made by Jonathan Culler (1976).

work into its "constituent literary and rhetorical echoes" until little of that work itself remains.³⁷⁰ In other words, amid the search for what went into the making of a literary object, scholars can lose sight of their original object of study and its own potential to prove a source of influence, both artistically and ethically speaking.

In my view, observing intertextuality has as much to do with recognizing themes in common and the same or similar ensembles of signs across texts as it does with contemplating how sources put sharedness to work. An attentive reader may see that characters, motifs, quotations, etc. appear in the *Life* "from elsewhere" (or just as they do elsewhere),³⁷¹ and she may know exactly where else such elements occur. But the identification of antecedent or concurrent discourses hardly ever, if ever, seems to be the only task of interpretation demanded by an intertextual work of literature. In terms of a work's rhetorical effects, often much more is at stake than the hope that a model audience member will be able to emerge from a reading encounter with the ability to say that Work X draws upon, adapts, incorporates, refers to, quotes, parodies, etc. Work Y.

To put this point another way, we know that the *Life* evokes anterior discourses in a dialogical fashion, but demonstrating as much does not, by extension, tell us to what ends those discourses are evoked or how such evocations might prove significant in the grander scheme of things. We can say that Drimé Künga knew, or that the *Life* "knows," the *Tigress Jātaka*, but so what? What does that mean when we contemplate the entire work? What could it mean for the reader and her relationship to Yeshé Tsogyal? To get at meaning, we need to think of the *Life's*

³⁷⁰ Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), 10.

³⁷¹ Black and Geen 2011: 21. Cf. Greg Bailey, "Intertextuality and the Purāṇas: A Neglected Element in the Study of Sanskrit Literature," in *Composing a Tradition: Concepts, Techniques and Relationships* (Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1999), 179–198.

evocations in the broader context(s) of the work as well as in the context of the reader-work encounter. As he summarizes Ricoeur on Biblical exegesis, Mark Wallace's words can help orient us in this regard. On the topic of how Ricoeur views the matter of interpreting intertextuality in the Bible, Wallace states:

Whatever the status of the recounted events in the Bible as historical occurrences, these events now enjoy a textual existence at some remove from their antecedent origins. Their meaning is now a product of their inscription within a network of texts that alternately support and displace one another in an intertextual whole. Whatever their original *Sitz-im-Leben*, it is now the mediation of these events through the *Sitz-im-Wort* of various literary genres that constitutes their present-day significance. Historical criticism can helpfully reconstruct the probable historical "occasions" that generated later literary traditions, but only a synchronic study of the interanimating conjunctions and dislocations between various modes of discourse can explain the complexities of meaning within the Bible.³⁷²

Finely grained comparisons between stories of the starving tigress in Tibetan translation with the *Life* might help us further determine which exact sources Drimé Künga had at his disposal, and through such efforts, we might be allowed a glimpse into his own and his community's reading practices. But the determination of Drimé Künga's favored sources as an end in itself would only take our understanding of the *Life* so far. We may come to know better what specific knowledges or discourses fed into the work, but emergent as it was from those discourses and subsequently present to a reader, what, moreover, does it do? How do its "interanimating conjunctions and dislocations," to borrow Wallace's phrasing, produce and help us explain what the *Life* is about?

The Tigress, the Tertön, and the Literary Analyst

When we considered the thematic, structural, and stylistic similarities between the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* and the *Life of Drimé Künden*, I noted that Yeshé Tsogyal's life story is not a

³⁷² Ricoeur 1997: 24.

"Vessantara story" through and through. Even though a reader can detect in the *Life* the influence of the story of the Bodhisattva as a prince who was generous to the extreme, one would not say that Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* is *Vessantara* retold; nor one would one say, pure and simple, that *within* the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, we find Vessantara's story embedded and reinscribed, albeit with a new and differently gendered protagonist. In terms of trials endured and virtues tested and proved, Yeshé Tsogyal ultimately emerges in ways similar but not wholly identical to "Vessantara" manifest as Prince Drimé Künden.

To be sure, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is also not a starving-tigress story through and through. After it tells of how Yeshé Tsogyal attempted to save a suffering tigress and her cubs, the *Life* goes on to detail myriad other events and situations. The tigress "scene," in that sense, is just that—one narrative episode, one unit of story action among many.

Compared to the *Life of Drimé Künden*, however, the tale of the Bodhisattva as tigress-savior appears a more conspicuous source of inspiration. Although their stories share certain lines outright, and Prince Drimé Künden and Princess Yeshé Tsogyal resemble one another as character types—both are royal youths (among still others) who have a problem of virtue in excess; both face punishment in the form of exile for their righteousness; and both find even greater opportunities for self-cultivation in that exile—Yeshé Tsogyal and the Bodhisattva of tigress-saving fame approach identity as they share what is, in effect, a whole story. That is to say that in the case of the *Tigress Jātaka*, a reader might rightly say that one does find it *within* the *Life*. It is embedded there, albeit retold with a new protagonist. For a moment, Yeshé Tsogyal's story and the story of the Buddha-to-be are not just similar. They (just about) the same. What might we make of this congruity?

While examining the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* in tandem with its more or less apparent intertexts, the literary analyst is tempted to say, in brief, that Yeshé Tsogyal's encounter with a starving tigress was appropriated (taken up) and adapted (modified, transformed, transmuted) from an earlier source, namely the multiform story about the Bodhisattva and the starving tigress. Isolated from the framing story, Yeshé Tsogyal's tigress encounter appears an example of Genette's "text in the second degree," that is to say a work derived from, though not derivative of in the negative sense, a prior one and received in relationship to that previous work.³⁷³

Why, exactly, Drimé Künga may have selected this popular tale, incorporated into Yeshé Tsogyal's story, and altered it to make it about our heroine must remain a mystery, though off the bat, we can imagine for him a number of possible motives: He could have adapted the story as a kind of *homage*—perhaps the tale was a regional, or even a personal favorite of his; perhaps he admired the contents as well as the structure of the version he had at his disposal, and so he challenged himself to emulate it. Or, perhaps he sought to challenge the story itself by way of emulating it. (Must a bodhisattva-protagonist be male? Must he die in the end?) Still, it could be that fresh from reading a collection of *jātakas*, Drimé Künga simply had tigers on the brain. Perhaps composing and recomposing *jātaka* tales was, during his time, the thing to do.³⁷⁴ Or maybe he knew of a local acting troupe that had tiger masks to spare...

Our thoughts could trail on. Whatever the impetus, though, calling the tigress scene within the *Life* an "adaptation" strikes me as not quite right, or not quite precise enough when left on its own. At the very least, the word, typically understood as both a process and the product of

³⁷³ Genette 1997: 5.

³⁷⁴ On the writing of *jātakas* during the fourteenth-century, see p. 782n102 of Matthew Kapstein, "The Indian Literary Identity in Tibet," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 747–802.

alteration, bears some fleshing out if we are to capture just how thought-provoking this endeavor might be. After all, we are not here dealing with mere repetition, but rather with a story's adoption followed by its deliberate modification. (Granted, repetition itself may never be "mere" as it tends always toward variation.³⁷⁵ But it is clear that what we have in the tigress scene is decidedly beyond duplication.) As Linda Hutcheon puts it, for being "a creative and interpretive transposition of a recognizable other work or works, an adaptation is a kind of extended palimpsest and, at the same time, often a transcoding into a different set of [formal] conventions."³⁷⁶ The definition is applicable enough in our case. A recognizable work has been transposed (relocated, rearranged), changed. Yet the task of articulating what that amounts to in the *Life's* case remains.

Notably, within the *Life*, there is no explicit acknowledgment of the Bodhisattva's prior act of generosity in the form of bodily sacrifice (*lus sbyin pa*; Skt. *dehadāna*), what Reiko Ohnuma calls "gift-of-the-body" *dāna*, along parallel lines. There is no reference to Yeshé Tsogyal as similar to the Bodhisattva; no "*And just like the Buddha in one of his previous births, Yeshé Tsogyal sliced into her flesh and attempted to feed herself to the tigress.*" That is to say that the *Life*, at the closest level of reading, might have the reader take the story on its own terms, however much her prior, external knowledge of *jātakas* might bubble up to the surface of her consciousness and seek to exert influence over her thoughts. (A worthwhile thought experiment in this regard might therefore be to try to inhabit the mind of an audience member who has never encountered a telling of the *Tigress Jātaka*. How might such a reader engage with the scene as

³⁷⁵ See p. 28 of Yigal Bronner and David Shulman, "A Cloud Turned Goose': Sanskrit in the Vernacular Millennium," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 43, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 1–30.

³⁷⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2 edition (Routledge, 2013), 33.

we find it within the *Life*?) Nevertheless, given the religious and literary contexts in which the *Life* emerged, it is likely that the parallel went without saying. The *Life*, in this instance, anticipates a model audience largely made up of members who would have been already familiar with the Bodhisattva's own encounter with a desperate predator.

Progressing through this scene, then, we find that the reader is not only apt but encouraged to make a connection between Yeshé Tsogyal and the Bodhisattva, especially in terms of their generosity. Both protagonists are willing to sacrifice their own flesh to sustain another being. Both would go so far as to harm themselves in that effort rather than let their intended recipients decline. And neither regrets their giving, not even for the most fleeting of moments. To be sure, we can think of Drimé Künga's move here as a blatant, if not somewhat heavy-handed, attempt at equation. Simply put, the *Life* shows us that when it comes to the virtue of giving, Yeshé Tsogyal is tantamount to the Bodhisattva.

Yet even if this were the major and only point to be gleaned through the stories' connection (and we could leave it at that), for me, stylistic questions remain. Above all: Why write a scene so similar to the "Story of the Starving Tigress"? Drimé Künga need not have written a Yeshé Tsogyal's *dehadāna* scene parallel to any precedent, of which there are many.³⁷⁷ He could have composed a new one entirely, and, for a moment in the *Life*, he seemed to be on the verge of doing so. Had Drimé Künga wanted to convey Yeshé Tsogyal's absolute willingness to give, even if it meant self-sacrifice, he need not have moved beyond her initial offer of her flesh to the wrathful women she meets in the red valley. Just as she did, Yeshé Tsogyal could have stated her willingness to offer her own flesh as *dāna* for the *yoginīs*. Then, instead of refusing, they could have eagerly accepted. She could have next cut herself up only to be healed

³⁷⁷ On this point, see esp. Ohnuma 2000 and 2007.

by them and/or by an Act of Truth, her statement of no regret, and her expression of generosity could have ended there. Were this the path that the *Life* took, Yeshé Tsogyal would still emerge a Bodhisattva-like character. So why, in the end, bring a starving tigress into all of this?

The least charitable analyst wonders: Could Drimé Künga not have imagined a story about Yeshé Tsogyal's generosity on his own? Did he almost succeed with the *yoginī* scene only to pull his punches? Was he simply lazy, or, for whatever reason, unwilling to be inventive in this regard? True, it may be that Drimé Künga inherited a tradition in which Yeshé Tsogyal's life was said to have run almost exactly parallel to one of the previous lives of the Buddha for the span of a day or so. No invention may have been needed on his part. (Unless, of course, he was like Pierre Menard, writing, in a sense, his analogue to the *Quixote*.) Yet the more generous analyst who grants Drimé Künga creative responsibility for the scene may regard his a rather bold move. Yeshé Tsogyal did not just act like the Bodhisattva in some general or obscure way. She behaved just as he did when confronted with the same circumstances.

And so, whatever Drimé Künga's reasons for choosing to emulate the *Tigress Jātaka* in particular, and however one feels about such a choice, let us contemplate the broader act of composition in which he engaged. What does it mean to write a scene that is very much like another famous scene in literature and have the world of the text present that scene without explicit reference to the prior account? More precisely than calling the tigress scene a process and product of "adaptation," one that brings into high relief the *Life's* overall intertextuality, how might we describe Drimé Künga's activity in this regard?

Taking the story of the tigress to be earlier, we might say that Yeshé Tsogyal's actions within her story constitute mimicry. For her part, Yeshé Tsogyal "mimics"—without the sense of caricature—the Bodhisattva, though we cannot say whether or not she herself consciously

knows that she does so since the narrative is silent in this regard. For his part, though, what was Drimé Künga up to when he drafted this scene?

The respective tigress stories are too close plot-structure- and content-wise for us to say that the *Life* "samples" the *Tigress Jātaka*. It is not as if we find a version of the tigress story reused or quoted in such a way that we can, by isolating one narrative level, listen to it "on its own." To be sure, we can excerpt the Yeshé Tsogyal-driven tigress scene from the *Life*, but we cannot separate out the Bodhisattva-driven tigress scene, for that tigress story is not copresent in the *Life* as itself or in and of itself.³⁷⁸ That is, the prior tigress account is not integrated into the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* in such a way that it maintains its own integrity either as a whole or in part. Elements of it do not merely punctuate a scene within the *Life*. It is not broken up and/or recombined and then woven through the *Life's* plot such that it surfaces here and there. Nor, we might add, is it merely alluded to ("*And just like the Bodhisattva...*"). Better overall to think of the tigress story as altogether there, though shifted, wholesale.

Drimé Künga's effort here appears, then, to be something stronger than what we today would consider sampling or citing. Yet even though the story is "all there" in some sense, one is loath to say it was copied or, with that, to entertain that it was what we today would call plagiarized, however.³⁷⁹ Apart from changing the grounds for the action of a story as well as some of the details and the ending, if you expect—even encourage—your audiences to recognize

³⁷⁸ On intertextuality as a matter of the "copresence" of texts, see Genette 1997: 1–2.

³⁷⁹ Scholars of ancient and premodern South Asian religious and philosophical literature (Buddhist and non-) debate the usefulness of the modern concept of "plagiarism," which in Genette's (1997) terms is an "undeclared but still literal borrowing," with respect to widespread intertextuality and what is lately deemed "reuse" or "adaptive reuse" across written works. (See e.g., Freschi and Cantwell 2017 and Freschi and Maas eds. 2017.) Suffice to say here that debates frequently conclude with a statement to the effect that our modern sense of plagiarism does not generally carry as we examine works composed in the past. We may find some instances of "plagiarism" that meet our modern standards, but for the most part, premodern literary practices call for a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes both authorship and originality vis-à-vis textual sources.

the story as akin to a popular one about another protagonist, is that plagiarism? We might therefore say that like Yeshé Tsogyal vis-à-vis the actions of the Bodhisattva, Drimé Künga's own actions as a writer can be deemed mimicry or imitation (as in the Dionysian sense of *imitatio*, wherein one author imitates the work of another) rather than plagiarism in our modern sense, *per se*. Drimé Künga imitates the story of the Bodhisattva in his work, but he does not offer up a copy of a particular telling of it outright, nor does he attempt to present some version of the tigress-and-Bodhisattva tale as his own original composition.

Yeshé Tsogyal's encounter with the tigress in the *Life* could then be thought of as a type of parody—that is, if we understand "parody" in line with literary theorists who argue that the term need not necessarily imply satire or the treatment of "light" subjects.³⁸⁰ The *Life's* tigress scene is by no means a satiric pastiche in relationship to the *Tigress Jātaka*.³⁸¹ The account of Yeshé Tsogyal attempting to feed her body to the tigress she meets does not seek to subvert entirely or mock outright the tale where it features a prince or male ascetic. However, the ending of Yeshé Tsogyal's tigress encounter does turn an arguably tragic story into a comic one, that is, at least insofar as it ends happily. The Bodhisattva is devoured, but Yeshé Tsogyal is not. While he dies, she is healed and helped along her way by a friendly beast of prey.

Along with a restricted sense of parody, then, one could also think of the *Life's* tigress scene as parasitic upon the *Tigress Jātaka*, though here again, some qualifications are in order. That is, the *Life's* tigress scene may stand to feed off of the cultural cachet of the *Tigress Jātaka*, but this is not to say that it would do so at its counterpart's expense. Mutualism, the biological phenomenon in which two entities both benefit from their association, could prove a useful

³⁸⁰ Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* serves as an example in this regard.

³⁸¹ On "parody," its origins and semantic range, see esp. Genette 1997: *passim*.

analogy, but even better might be the term "para-site" broken down into its constituent parts, and with that, the emphasis placed on the prefix. The tigress scene in Yeshé Tsogyal's *Life* might be thought of as a *para* site where *para* suggests something "analogous or parallel to," but nevertheless still "separate from or going beyond, what is denoted by the root word,"³⁸² i.e., "site," here understood to be the earlier location in Buddhist discourse of the Bodhisattva's bodily sacrifice to a tigress.

Fundamentally, it is this sense of parallel-but-beyond-ness of Yeshé Tsogyal's tigress encounter to which I wish to draw attention. One way to describe the scene in relationship to the "Story of the Starving Tigress" as it features the Bodhisattva would be to say that it is the same but variant and more. (I recognize that "same but variant and more" rings oxymoronic, but bear with me.) We know that apart from alterations in detail, the entire context for the attempt at bodily sacrifice is changed—it is embedded within a larger life story, and furthermore in that capacity, it "ends" differently as the *Life* transitions into a new segment of Yeshé Tsogyal's journey. And yet the tigress scene in the *Life* is still recognizable as *a* story of a starving tigress, one both at home with others and with one foot out the door. To add a metaphor: It is the newest star in the *Tigress* constellation, occupying space just at the constellation's edge. In that capacity, it shines among but also beyond the reach of its brethren.

Apart from scholarship focused on intertextuality and its effects, especially useful to me in my thinking about the mechanisms of the creative endeavor at hand here has been the growing body of cultural and literary theory related to digital mimetic phenomena, particularly images

³⁸² "para-, prefix1." OED Online, Oxford University Press, June 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/137251 (accessed June 7, 2017).

and textual sources referred to as internet "memes" (from *mimeme* via the Greek *mīmēma*),³⁸³ as well as secondary literature on the writing of fan fiction. Though certainly not without caveats, I think we can view Drimé Künga's larger effort to write the story of Yeshé Tsogyal—to tell or to imagine outright her backstory, to bolster cultic activity around her—as akin to the efforts of fans to flesh out beloved or hated characters' backstories such that those characters receive what is believed to be their due (or at least fitting) attention.³⁸⁴ Similarly, I take Drimé Künga's effort to rewrite the story of the Bodhisattva and tigress specifically be akin to meme-making, or "meme-ery" as the activity is sometimes called.

By invoking the concept of a meme, I do not mean to suggest that Drimé Künga would have shared our modern concepts of viral communication and marketing. (Though on the topic of marketing, I think it would be naïve to suggest that the promotion of Yeshé Tsogyal as a moral paragon and an important figure in the shaping of Tibet's Buddhist history *wouldn't* have crossed his mind as he wrote the entire *Life*, not just the tigress portion.) But rather, by contemplating the *Life* in light of our contemporary senses of what constitutes a meme—a hotly debated term, but one increasingly to do with the deliberate replication and adaptation of popular media with the intent to signify and resignify, simultaneously, a unit of cultural discourse—I wish to underscore that Drimé Künga's mimetic literary product, ultimately a relationship forged

³⁸³ Use of the term technically predates him, but the coinage of "meme" is typically attributed to Richard Dawkins who uses it to refer to "self-replicating" cultural phenomena, namely "unit[s] of imitation" (cited in Hutcheon 2012: 32). Here I am not using "meme" in Dawkins's sense, at least not straightforwardly. Rather, I use it as it has come to be understood over approximately the past three decades to refer to popular media (texts, images, videos) deliberately imitated and altered. Compelling on the topic is Limor Shifman, "Memes in a Digital World: Reconciling with a Conceptual Troublemaker," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 18, no. 3 (April 1, 2013): 362–77. Hutcheon (2012: 32, 167, 177 *et passim*) also entertains the usefulness of thinking about literary adaptation along the biological analogy of memes, but her suggestion in this regard is not much elaborated.

³⁸⁴ The "big tent" of scholarship on the genre would likely accept the above assertion, but the "little tent" of scholars committed to the idea that fan fiction is best understood in its relationship to web communities may not. (Elizabeth Minkel, personal communication, 2/16/18.)

between two works and figures, stood not only to exert a reciprocal influence on the material that inspired it, but also to assert a place amid the religious landscape, and, along with that, to vie for space in cultural memory.

One wonders above all what the *Life's* audiences would have made of the parallel between or the outright overlap or identity of Yeshé Tsogyal and the Bodhisattva. How would they have received it? Reading a portion of the *Life* wherein Yeshé Tsogyal moves through not just similar but effectively the same story elements and events as the Buddha-to-be once had, would readers then be motivated to view Yeshé Tsogyal and the Bodhisattva as indeed equivalent in terms of their virtue? Would Yeshé Tsogyal be regarded in the sense of *imitatio Buddha*, or would she appear a bodhisattva of her own making? When she is miraculously healed in her case while the Bodhisattva dies in his, by that, does Yeshé Tsogyal emerge the technically more successful adept (as she certainly might from a Mahāyāna standpoint) for being able to live on to achieve buddhahood in one lifetime?

Moreover, would audiences who have read the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* subsequently experience earlier *Tigress Jātakas* differently? Particularly in terms of encounters with both the *Life* and the visual depictions of the Bodhisattva-tigress story, one wonders about the extent to which readers might then take the religious visual landscape to be resignified. Now, where one sees a depiction of the Bodhisattva feeding his body to a tigress, does one also see—or at least contemplate—Yeshé Tsogyal?

In the context of discussing film adaptations of popular literature, Hutcheon asserts that "palimpsests make for permanent change."³⁸⁵ The moment that one sees a director's representation of some fictional thing, say an orc or the game Quidditch—anything previously

³⁸⁵ Hutcheon 2012: 29.

unillustrated and confined to the written word—she says, one may not be able sustain one's initial idea of that thing off the page. The image in one's mind is forever affected. If not entirely supplanted, one's original mental picture is still asked to square with the entity as it has been imagined by another individual and represented for the public's gaze.

Hutcheon's point where we might take it up in relation to the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* tigress scene is that an adaptation, as a new rendering of a story, perhaps in a different type of media, can affect or even thoroughly alter an audience's encounter with temporally prior or adjacent story forms, both in terms of what they depict and how they depict it. Once one knows different renderings of a story together, the new and the old (or simultaneously composed) cannot help but be related and contemplated in light of one another. Readers may be vexed by changes to an earlier form or pleased by those changes and the skill with which they are wrought, but either way, there stands to be a difference in readerly conceptualization. There will inevitably be revisions in how one or more story formulations and their contents are thought.

Bodhisattvas, Tigers, and their Readers

Ultimately, in rewriting the *Tigress Jātaka* as Drimé Künga did, or, better, in representing the tigress story as the *Life* does, it seems to me that the work stands to have what is at least a threefold impact on the reader along imaginative and interpretive lines. One impact has primarily to do with the reader's understanding of the *Life* as a literary work on the whole; one with the reader's conceptualization of Yeshé Tsogyal; and one with the reader's relationship to the story, its protagonist, and herself (i.e., the reader herself) as she engages in the process of becoming a subject in front of the text.

To the first point: It seems to me that the tigress scene has the potential to orient an empirical reader—she who is not yet a model reader but invested in becoming one—to the *Life* on the whole as an intertextual work of considerable depth. Thanks especially to the tigress scene, an apparent product of another work's creative transposition, one finds that the *Life* is not alone. That is, where it reveals itself a literary work that reimagines others, the reader comes to understand that the *Life* may not signify or work to cultivate what it does entirely on its own. The moment it presents us with a starving tigress, it stakes a claim as a knower and an employer of a network of texts, sources with which any reading and interpretation of it might be asked to reckon.

To the second point, and in light of the assertion that palimpsests make for permanent change: the tigress scene stands to orient (or reorient) the reader to Yeshé Tsogyal as she appears both within the world of the text and outside of it. From her encounter with the tigress and her cubs, Yeshé Tsogyal emerges more than a practitioner in need of guidance and more than one instance of potential enlightenment among many. She is indexed to the Bodhisattva—not just *a* buddha-to-be but *the* Buddha-to-be who achieved enlightenment of the first order. Rendered as it is, then, the scene not only buttresses the reader's sense of the *Life's* protagonist as an instance of bodhisattva-hood in the world among others. It also disposes her to Yeshé Tsogyal as the inheritor of *the* Bodhisattva's legacy of ethical conduct. She is that legacy's re-presenter and the extender of it across the Himalayan landscape into the future.

To the third point regarding the reading process, I would argue that the tigress scene aims to effect in miniature what the entire *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* hopes to achieve vis-à-vis the total Dharmic activity of its protagonist. That is, the scene works to stimulate interest in or enthusiasm for, and especially joy with respect to, Yeshé Tsogyal's deeds in its audience members. As we

see delight manifest in the tigress and her cubs—as they smile and become cheerful at Yeshé Tsogyal's act of *dehadāna*—the scene reminds the reader of the terms by which she should be gauging her relationship to the whole story. (*Have I so far been delighted by this story, these acts?*) Not only that, it also models for her the proper attitude toward Dharmic activity of this kind in general. Upon Yeshé Tsogyal's willingness to feed her body to the tigers, the animals are uplifted, but they should not be the only beings to experience wonderment and delight. The reader should be rapt as well.

My suggestion that the *Life* would have the reader's perspective and sentiments align with that of the tigers may seem a stretch. It is, to be sure, unconventional. But I think that evidence for such a reading is borne out by the text not only when we read it as consistent with itself, but also when we read it intertextually. To wit: at the end of several tellings of the *Tigress Jātaka*, a voice (or voices)—either a character within the story or a disembodied narrator—will frame the Bodhisattva's deed within the grand scheme of enlightenment's achievement and all beings' salvation. The voices respond to the Bodhisattva's death by *dehadāna* by exclaiming that they, just as all beings should, feel glad, awed, and grateful. Such statements of gratitude amount to text-internal commentary, and they work rhetorically to guide the reader in cultivating the "right" response to the Bodhisattva's virtuous deeds. At the moment of realizing that the tigress has in fact eaten the Bodhisattva's flesh, one may feel sad that the Bodhisattva has died. Feelings of sorrow and loss should be swiftly eclipsed by feelings of gratitude, however.

We have no such commentary in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* save for the tigress's analogous reactions. She is decidedly a wild animal, but anthropomorphized as she is across witnesses, she comes to inhabit the standpoint of a human disciple. Interestingly, we find that the tigress is moreover the only character (or actant) to have felt delight at Yeshé Tsogyal's deeds, at

least since the very beginning of the story where we find testimony that people experienced overt joy at the princess's behavior as a baby.³⁸⁶ Up to this point in the story, other characters have been vexed by her, enamored with her, stricken with grief by her words, or inclined to guide, teach, or challenge her, but only the tigress delights in Yeshé Tsogyal's attempt to do Dharma.

To elaborate on these points roughly in order, I can begin by referring to my own initial reading experience. When I first approached the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, I did so with the expectation that it would be to some degree patterned on the Buddha's life story in his final birth as a prince who left home intent on achieving liberation from cyclic existence. (Whether the story would draw upon a particular antecedent work like Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacarita* or plot itself along the lines of the Buddha's biography in a general way remained to be seen.) Because many *namtars* are structured along Buddha-life-story lines, this seemed to me a reasonable expectation, and so I was prepared to hear in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* echoes of the Buddha's biography. When I found myself presented with a passage that was overtly reminiscent of an extended-biography story, namely the *Tigress Jātaka*, however, I was motivated to revisit the earlier portions of the *Life* up to the point of Yeshé Tsogyal's act of *dehadāna* to see if I had missed cues to observe influence by or intersection with stories other than that of the Buddha's final birth. At that, I witnessed not just the sweeping thematic resonances with, but also the structural parallels to and the lines shared with the story of Vessantara as Prince Drimé Künden. These were intertextualities that I may have missed altogether had I not been prompted by the tigress scene to become a reader who would *re-read* in order to see how the *Life* might understand and interpret itself in dialogue with certain other *Lives*.

³⁸⁶ In some versions. See p. 141 of this thesis on this point.

This is of course not to say that I, or some reader like me, would have been unable to find meaning in the *Life* without seeking knowledge of its intertexts. Borrowing a favorite among Genette's examples on the topic of what it means to read intertextually or not, we know that one can find meaning in Joyce's *Ulysses* without having read Homer's *Odyssey*.³⁸⁷ Not to notice allusions to or shadows of other stories in a story is not to fail to read altogether or to read in a way utterly insufficient. Nevertheless, signposts even beyond the title of Joyce's work appear, and they direct us, again and again, back to Homer and Odysseus if we wish to know more and better about what is at stake for Leopold Bloom in twentieth-century Dublin. Similarly, if we wish to know more and better about who Yeshé Tsogyal is and what is at stake for her as she departs from home in pursuit of Dharma, we might rightly heed what signposts there are that point us, again and again, back to birth stories of the Bodhisattva.

I grant that a reader more learned, more ready and able to perceive the *Life's* intertexts than I had been from the start may *not* have missed the depth of connection between the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* and the *Life of Drimé Künden* upon her initial pass. Nevertheless, I can imagine that that reader, too, would, at every intertextual turn she perceived—every signpost, the tigress included—be keen to revisit and rethink what she had already read. She would likewise be inclined to consider if, by re-reading and reading behind and around the *Life*, she could know the story better for discovering in it more over time.

To be both willing to bear witness to intertextuality and to attempt to determine what Ricoeur calls the "scale of intimacy" among works in this regard—that is, to try to see how closely texts interact or play on the semantic fields of one another; to inquire after the degree of intensity with which their discourses and structures collide; and to wonder over and over again

³⁸⁷ Genette 1997: 6.

what, exactly, collides and why—is to be drawn in to the work and made to engage with it as an active interpreter.³⁸⁸ It is also to regard *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as the work would have itself be viewed, namely as a life story whose meaning is not exhaustible upon a single or isolated reading. Each of the *Life's* intertextual resonances, not just the tigress scene, advances a sense of the *Life* as a work of considerable, perhaps not entirely fathomable, depth.³⁸⁹ At the very least, the work seems to say, the model reader should recognize herself as in deep with respect to what it is that I stand to reveal. At times, the reader may even feel out of her depth in her attempts to perceive all that I have to offer—and that is precisely the point.

As it works to cultivate this sense of depth not wholly perceptible or exhaustible, I do not take the *Life* to be warning off those who would attempt to know its pages and protagonist better. (The task is constructed as a complex but not impossible one.) Rather, I view the construction of depth in this vein as a matter that advocates, above all, for a reader's own self-reflection and self-reimagining. That is, as the *Life* reveals itself to be a multi-layered work, the product of multiple "voices" (or narrative discourses), it calls the reader to rethink her own capacities as a knower or perceiver of all that it puts before her, all that it speaks to and has to say. In other words, because of its intertextuality, the *Life*, at bottom, encourages the reader to view it as a work that contains more than meets the eye. With that, it seeks to situate the reader in a place of uncertainty with respect to her own epistemological status. The model reader emerges as a reader who should, when faced with the *Life* as intertextually layered, question what, exactly, she sees (or knows)

³⁸⁸ Ricoeur 1997: 161.

³⁸⁹ "Depth" is a metaphor that Yigal Bronner and David Shulman (2006) use to characterize both literary complexity borne of authorial innovation as well as the intensity or richness of a reading experience (i.e., "depth of experience" that can potentially come of reading literary works in light of their intertexts).

and what she herself is able to see. A reader should wonder whether there is, at every turn, something more that might be allowed to meet her gaze.

Some (empirical) readers may not wish to address the issue of uncertainty at all, preferring simply to know that there is probably more or something else to be seen here or there. But ideally, the model reader, one who *is* inclined to confront her uncertainty head on, may do so via a number of different strategies. She may simply reread the *Life* to see if there are allusions she has missed. (After all, there may be things she already knows and can discover upon a closer look.) She may revisit some of the works with which she has recognized the *Life* to be in conversation and then reread it. (Perhaps there are things that she once did not know or only vaguely knew, but now, after reading around the *Life*, she will be primed to see.) Or she can read around and *beyond* the *Life*, extending her gaze not only out into the orbit of the intertexts she has perceived but also to works akin or alluded to by those intertexts. (Again, in this way, things once unknown and imperceptible, now known or knowable, may appear through rereading.) Finally, she may simply wait before returning to the *Life* later in her own. As her circumstances change, as she ages and comes to view things differently, the *Life* may read differently as a result. Whatever the tactics chosen in the end, though, should a reader want to see more in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, she would do well to revisit it while heeding the voices out to which it calls.

Amid her readings and rereadings, the model reader will also do well to recall that the *Life* advocates her stance and the interpretive process precipitated by it in the service of generating interest and/or joy with respect to Dharma. If a reader hopes to realize fully these sentiments—feelings that the *Life* deems itself able to bring about—she must continue to revisit the text, assured by moments of insight and inspiration that the *Life* will make good on its initial

proposition. The results of the model reader's efforts could, of course, be many apart from the experience of interest or joy. At the most fundamental level, however, the goal would seem to be to build and sustain a relationship with the work, one in which the reader's facility with and proficiency in it steadily increases as it aims at an ever-receding target of expertise. Working toward greater facility, one becomes a subject before the text, one who would question what and how one knows and feels in light of what the *Life* has said, and one who would look back to the *Life* for answers.

Summary and Conclusion

The *Life's* tigress scene is an important one for our understanding of both Yeshé Tsogyal and her *Life* as a work of religious literature for several reasons. At the most basic level, it aids readers in understanding who Yeshé Tsogyal is—i.e., who the model reader should take her to be—by illustrating her exceptional virtue. Any reader, whether a reader-for-plot or a second-level model reader, should step away from the tigress scene with a sense that Yeshé Tsogyal is an extraordinarily compassionate and generous being. Attentive readers—readers aware of and sensitive to the Buddha's extended biography—however, would immediately recognize that to exhibit compassion and generosity in the way that Yeshé Tsogyal does is to behave as an advanced bodhisattva. Even if she believes herself to be struggling amid her quest to develop her faith (and to find out what, exactly, faith should entail), the tigress scene reveals that benefitting others comes easily to her. In terms of knowing when and how to express *dāna*, at least, Yeshé Tsogyal is hardly in need of another's assistance or additional self-cultivation. She gives intuitively, without hesitation or regret.

Further, by incorporating a scene that models itself on the *Tigress Jātaka* rather than offering up a newly conceived story or reimagining a lesser-known tale of self-sacrifice, the *Life* effectively doubles down on its will to render Yeshé Tsogyal a high-level bodhisattva. That is to say that thanks to the tigress scene, the *Life* does more than convey to the reader that she is one bodhisattva among many others who would practice *dāna*. It links and thereby likens her to a specific figure, namely *the* Bodhisattva as he was on the path to becoming Śākyamuni Buddha. It would seem then, that where Yeshé Tsogyal emerges from later chapters (III-VII) of her *Life* aligned with Padmasambhava, the "Second Buddha," and his Great Perfection teachings, she emerges from the early chapters (I and II) akin to the first Buddha in terms of her moral outlook and capacity for ethical action.

Beyond encouraging readers to associate Yeshé Tsogyal with the highest of buddhas-to-be, the tigress scene also asks its readers outright to situate the *Life* itself among a vast network of Indian Buddhist literature. While similarities to the *Life of the Buddha* and the story of Vessantara are subtly conveyed, the tigress scene calls out openly—one could even say loudly—for recognition as "from elsewhere." Presenting the tigress scene as it does, then, the *Life* simultaneously evokes and constructs for itself a particular literary heritage, one devoted to Buddhism's founder in all his iterations. In this way, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* moves to draw from a deep well of literary significance as it presents an account of one paragon's lifetime.

Finally, the tigress scene is important for the way in which it harks back to the *Life's* earliest folios where we find the work stating its overall purpose, that is, to spark the reader's interest in and/or beget their joy with respect to Dharma. Apart from learning something about Yeshé Tsogyal's character—she is expert at giving and keen to benefit beings—readers find that they are called to witness and experience joy at the sight of a being so willing to address the

extreme suffering of another. By rewriting a tigress that delights rather than devours, the *Life* not only allows Yeshé Tsogyal to press on within the story to achieve enlightenment. It also models the perspective toward her and her actions that it aims to cultivate. Furthermore, it creates a curiosity in the prior tale, one with implications for the reader's orientation to both Yeshé Tsogyal and her Dharma: Why couldn't the Bodhisattva go on living? How is it that Yeshé Tsogyal did? While we may be delighted by both figures' willingness to self-sacrifice on another's behalf, we may also be especially interested in the Dharma of Yeshé Tsogyal as she managed to emerge differently from similarly dire circumstances.

In sum, in rewriting the story of the tigress, it seems to me that Drimé Künga found himself a way—both expedient and ingenious—to launch his protagonist into an already rich story landscape. A well-known, widely depicted tale with such visceral imagery would, undoubtedly, be a good choice as a means to broadcast Yeshé Tsogyal's virtuousness, and with that, her advanced bodhisattva status. Where depictions of the Bodhisattva and the tigress appeared in art and literature, so too, then, might it be possible for Yeshé Tsogyal to be conjured up in all her generous glory.

But beyond that, intertextuality in the *Life's* case works to encourage a process of continual return to and rethinking of what the work itself presents. In the end, "adapting" the *Tigress Jātaka* winds up a matter of ontological significance for Yeshé Tsogyal and soteriological significance for the model reader. If a reader is indeed moved to revisit the *Life* again and again, she will also always be revisiting Yeshé Tsogyal. To know her *Life* better is to get to know her and the full import of her deeds better. It is also to be reminded again and again that beings are not without help in the degenerate age. Padmasambhava may depart and return only to depart once more. But Yeshé Tsogyal remains, and whatever her level of faith at a given

junction in the story, the *Life* seems to say, one can rest assured that her willingness to aid others is without question.

CHAPTER FIVE
DHARMIC ASPIRATIONS, POETIC CONVERSATIONS:
SPEAKING ABOUT THE MORAL LIFE IN THE *LIFE OF YESHÉ TSOGYAL*

Namtars in Dialogue: An Introduction

Rather than plunge directly into an analysis of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* dialogues, I wish to begin the body of this chapter obliquely, allowing a detour through secondary literature on the *Life of Drimé Künden* to set the stage. Over the course of my own readings, I have found that much of what has been said about *Drimé Künden*—one of *Yeshé Tsogyal's* generic kin and primary intertexts—rings true for other bio- and hagiographical works of its kind, namely life stories that rely primarily on characters' dialogues to communicate their themes and advance their plot. I recognize that prior scholars' findings on the *Life of Drimé Künden* are unlikely to be wholly applicable to dialogue-heavy *namtars* across the board. Nevertheless, they help orient us more fully to the nature and features of the subgenre, and in doing so, they not only provide us with analyses upon which we might build or against which we might check our examinations of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. They may also pave the way for new and further insights into the experience of reading (or witnessing) such works.

And so, let us begin not with Yeshé Tsogyal but with Jacques Bacot, who, as he was writing in 1914 on the Tibetan telling of the story of Prince Vessantara, seemed to be, if nothing else, eager to communicate to his readers that the power *Drimé Künden* lies in its ability to depict emotionally rich scenes. These scenes—representations of tender, sorrowful, vexing, and joyful moments shared between husbands and wives and among parents and children—never failed to elicit from their audience members emotional responses in kind. Like Ralston and Waddell

before him,³⁹⁰ Bacot maintained that the *Life of Drimé Künden* was a work that could be all but blithely encountered. Whether one read it, heard it recited, or saw it brought to life in a performance off the page, Bacot states that his Tibetan informants told him that no one they had ever met went unmoved. Even those men and women who fancied themselves unflappable could not help but shed copious tears at the story of a prince exiled for virtue too immense to be contained.³⁹¹

Throughout "Drimekundan, une version tibétaine dialoguée du *Vessantara Jātaka*," we find that Bacot himself is somewhat at pains to stake historical claims about the work in light of these tears. Such emotional depth in a work of religious literature proves for him at once evidence of the *Life of Drimé Künden's* great artistic merit and a problem for the historian who might come to know the provenance of the work better. Were *Drimé Künden* not so emotionally rich, so heart-rending in its depictions of the bonds of familial affection, Bacot seems to say, it would be a less estimable work of art. However, a flatter, less full-of-feeling narrative might be easier to attribute to an artist—if not a named individual, then at the very least a familiar author type: some member of the male monastic elite who was well-acquainted with popular tales of Indian literature and keen to try his hand at poetic composition in his native tongue.

Faced with a sparse colophon appended to an abundant text, Bacot ultimately concludes that the author of the *Life of Drimé Künden* must remain unknown to us. He does not shy away from some speculation on the matter, however. Perhaps, he says, if one still wishes to seek out the author of the text, "one is allowed to take as one's authority the knowledge of the feminine

³⁹⁰ See Ralston's introduction to F. Anton von Schiefner, *Tibetan Tales, Derived from Indian Sources*, trans. William Ralston Shedden Ralston, Trübner's Oriental Series (London: Trübner & Co., 1882), lvii; Waddell 1895: 541.

³⁹¹ Bacot 1914: 224.

heart in this work, [a knowledge] which exceeds the experience of an ordinary monk."³⁹² The suggestion is not subtle. To discover *Drimé Künden's* author behind its folios, Bacot advises, we must look beyond the monastery walls, for perhaps the author himself ventured outside of them.³⁹³ Or he never entered them in the first place. After all, what would a celibate, unwed, childless cleric know about women, marriage, children, or love?

We might take Bacot's characterization to be a bit tongue-in-cheek rather than a naïve maintenance of the monastic ideal. It seems true enough that the work's author wasn't quite ordinary, for extraordinary was his skill in retelling the story of Vessantara on Tibetan terms. But his monastic status seems neither given nor precluded by the emotionality of the text. One need only conjure an individual, monastic or lay, with the capacity to imagine richly and express movingly (if not experience outright) the feelings attendant romantic, filial, and parental love. What's more, and no doubt Bacot would agree, we might do just as well to speak of a composite author, a bevy of authorial personalities behind a text that grew gradually and grows still, even now as multiple parties tailor the work for new contexts and changing tastes.

Whatever the case—whoever the figure(s) behind it—the degree to which *Drimé Künden* moves its audiences is a point that becomes a refrain for Bacot, one taken up with gusto by scholars of Tibetan literature writing in his wake. It is a work that describes as much fainting and breast-beating as it causes and as much joy and devotion as it inspires. Audiences are given, by

³⁹² Ibid.: 226. Bacot notes that the text has been attributed without basis to the Sixth Dalai Lama, Tsangyang Gyatso (late seventeenth century), who Bacot describes as "a light poet, enamored of the arts and of beauty in all its forms, especially the feminine." Elsewhere we find the work speculatively attributed to Milarepa. (See Morrison 1925.) Bacot's own relationship to this hypothesis is unclear in the French (i.e., "It has been attributed [by me/by other scholars/in oral tradition?] without basis to the Sixth Dalai Lama..."). We find the suggestion persisting after Bacot, but Wells (1963: 72), who notes that the *Life of Drimé Künden* is ascribed to the "sixth Talelama," a "poet and general dilettante," states that the play is certainly older than that ascription.

³⁹³ In fact, Drimé Künga, the author of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, was himself ordained as a monk before he took on the mantle of *ngakpa*, or *mantrika*. See pp. 35–36 above.

turns, to laughing and weeping at it with equal ease. *Drimé Künden's* pathos is perhaps most vividly captured by a line from Bacot himself where he states, "[People] say that some strong minds claim to read it without crying. Put to the test, [however,] they keep good countenance until the fifth page, grimace up to the seventh, and burst into tears by the tenth."³⁹⁴ Where the major plot points of the *Life* fall in any given copy is of course beside the point. Those familiar with the tale can picture the early third of the story moving from a joyful account of Prince Drimé Künden's conception and birth, to the tense exchanges between the prince and his father on the matter of his unwelcome penchant for emptying the palace coffers, to the moment of his punishment and exile for failing to heed the censure of the king's court. Tears may begin to flow from readers' eyes well before the Drimé Künden gives away his children, his wives, and his eyes to the brahmins he meets in the forest.³⁹⁵

After summarizing and evaluating the contents of *Drimé Künden*, Bacot then begins to describe the formal aspects of the work. Here he adds a clause to his refrain, one that highlights the work's extensive use of versified dialogue. The *Life of Drimé Künden* is an incredibly moving work of Tibetan religious literature, he notes, but more specifically, it is an incredibly moving dialogue *namtar*. This leads to his subsequent claim regarding the unity and equal import of content and form. In Bacot's estimation, the *Life of Drimé Künden* owes its emotional force to the fact that it is written almost entirely in dialogue. The exchanges between characters are direct and personal rather than allusive and abstract. Their love for one another is heartfelt, and their

³⁹⁴ Bacot 1914: 224, my translation from the French.

³⁹⁵ Notably, *Drimé Künden* diverges from the basic "Vessantara" story in that adds this eye-giving element along the lines of the *Śibi/Sivijātaka*. As I showed in the previous chapter, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* contains a rendering of the *Tigress Jātaka* which Yeshé Tsogyal, not the Bodhisattva, offers her body to a starving tigress. We also see the *Valāhassajātaka* (i.e., the story of Balaha, the horse) adapted in the *namtar* known as *Pema Öbar*. It may be that *jātaka* incorporation and adaptation in *namthar* of the dramatic variety was a common practice, especially after Shongtön and Lakṣmīkara translated Kṣemendra's eleventh-century *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*.

pain at a beloved's loss searing. At one point, Bacot even goes so far to assert that the Tibetan Vessantara story matches, perhaps even surpasses, works of Indian literature for the very fact of expressing more sentiment directly between characters. Concluding his words on the work's form, he states, "All of the originality and the true beauty of the *Life of Drimé Künden* is in the dialogue—in the truth of the characters and the feelings. There is not the richness in images, the ideal and somewhat cold form of Indian narratives, but there is more emotion."³⁹⁶ In other words, what *Drimé Künden* lacks in imagery, in visual decadence, it makes up for in emotional expression, in communication of feeling. For Bacot, this constitutes a special virtue rather than a flaw that stands out on the literary world stage.³⁹⁷

Whether or not one agrees with Bacot's conclusions, including his sweeping assessment of Indian narratives (whichever he may mean), the suggestion that dialogue is a vital, or even singular form which imparts affective expression and emotional force to a text is worth exploring, not least because much of what Bacot has to say about *Drimé Künden* in this vein might also be said of a number of the other works he lists: *Norzang*, *Drowa Zangmo*, *Nangsa Öbum*, *Dondrup*, *Pema Öbar*, *Sukyi Nyima*, *Guru Chöwang*, and *Gyaza*.³⁹⁸ The exact degree to

³⁹⁶ Bacot 1914: 224, my translation from the French. See also W. Baruch, *Un Mystère Tibétain: La Dame Tchodkyid de Ling*, Cahiers du Sud 35, 1948, esp. p. 310 on *mise-en-scène* (or the scarcity of) in Tibetan dramas. Bacot does not elaborate on what he means when he calls Indian narratives "ideal" and "cold"—terms as vague here as they may be undue—but Wells, writing almost fifty years later on the similarities and differences among Tibetan works like the *Life of Drimé Künden* and Indian dramas, articulates a view, perhaps prevailing among turn-of-the- to mid-twentieth-century scholars of Indian literature, that late medieval Sanskrit dramas (*nāṭya*) suffered for being too abstract and pedantic. See Wells, *Classical Drama of India*, 72. Cf. Ralston in his introduction to his translation of von Schiefner (1882: lvii) where he states that the Viśvaṅtara story has "more of human interest than such narratives generally contain." What Ralston means by "such narratives" (dramatic works or *jātakas* generally speaking?) is unclear.

³⁹⁷ At roughly the time of Bacot's writing through the middle of the twentieth century, Western authors and literary theorists debated the desirability of emotional involvement of the reader and the ideal degree of "aesthetic distance." On such distance, see Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (University of Chicago Press, 1983), 119–123.

³⁹⁸ These titles are phoneticized versions of the titles Bacot lists. (For the titles of these works in Wylie, see chapter two, note 245.) A few are better known by alternative forms of the titles, e.g., *Dondrup* = *Donyo Dondrup*; *Aché Gyaza* = *Gyaza Belza*.

which these stories elicit tears when compared to *Drimé Künden* aside, we find them each in their own way invested in representing interpersonal dynamics via direct speech in addition to or in lieu of narration which tells of those dynamics. Moreover, in each story, where we find such personal exchanges, we also often find affections expressed and the nature, scope, or significance of affect itself.

The Issues at Stake

In the case of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, as in *Drimé Künden* and several of the works listed above, dialogue emerges as the preferred medium of expression for familial and romantic love *and* debates about religious life, often in the same stroke. Throughout the first chapter of the *Life*, moral arguments are made based on characters' ties to and feelings for one another.

Whoever is speaking—a parent, a dear friend, a suitor—the central question posed to Yeshé Tsogyal is the same: How can you choose the religious life over me, someone who loves you, someone who cares for you deeply? Answering that question proves not only a matter of framing for her interlocutors what it means, at bottom, to care for or love others, but also what it means to practice religion.

Readers know that in Yeshé Tsogyal's mind, these tasks are not mutually exclusive. Most characters within the *Life*, however, assume her to be advancing precisely that position. Her idea of Dharma and its pursuit entails separation from her loved ones, to be sure. Yet the goal of that pursuit as Yeshé Tsogyal envisions it is to benefit *all* beings—not just her immediate loved ones, but her immediate loved ones just the same. To her parents, for example, Yeshé Tsogyal articulates her wish to practice Dharma in this way:

Hail, O gracious father and mother who reared (*bskyangs pa*) me kindly!
O two parents who love (*brtse ba*) me tenderly (*gdung sems*),
Do not fret about Holy Dharma.

If I definitely practice it without violating your wishes, then all parents (*yab yum kun*)
[everywhere] will be happy (*blo sems bde*), too.
I beseech you, don't stop me from doing Holy Dharma—grant me your permission!
If I were trained in states of meditation, the blessings of that would likewise be auspicious
for the lord and his subjects.
I beseech you, permit me to roam an unpopulated (*mi med*), empty valley (*lung stong*)!³⁹⁹

Such words are representative of her appeals to others on the subject of religious practice in general. Again and again, Yeshé Tsogyal acknowledges that her interlocutors care about her and so must be well-meaning in their efforts to advise her. When she is urged to marry, she knows that many people speak in part out of concern for her welfare personally and the prosperity of her kingdom entirely. And even when the reader knows that a character's interests and intentions are questionable (and Yeshé Tsogyal presumably knows as much, too), in the space of direct conversation with any individual, she will describe their words back to them as spoken well from a place of genuine consideration.⁴⁰⁰ Granted, when she discusses other characters with a particular conversation partner—like her parents with a suitor—we find that she may state openly that she thought others "callous" (*phangs med*) or "feckless" (*go ma chod pa*).⁴⁰¹ She is not naïve. Back to a given speaker directly, however, Yeshé Tsogyal will reframe their words and motivations as wholesome, as always in line with some version of the good.

³⁹⁹ From PL 2013: 269. Cf. DK 2013: 188. *Dri med kun dga'* (2013) varies in the first three lines especially, with the major qualitative difference in the second. There Yeshé Tsogyal states that the utmost kindness (of anyone) is to act as a friend (*grogs mdzad*) who pursues Holy Dharma. The suggestion in this context is that while her parents were kind to her throughout her childhood, they would be most kind now—short of taking up Dharmic practice with her—to let her practice the Dharma as she sees fit.

⁴⁰⁰ For example, as the Zurkhar prince speaks of passion and out of lust in the passages that will follow in this chapter, Yeshé Tsogyal calls his words "pure," his thoughts "luminous." See p. 284 below.

⁴⁰¹ See p. 286 below.

One might chalk this reframing activity on her part up to conversational convention. Put simply, Yeshé Tsogyal may not want to be rude. Perhaps that is why she does not tell her interlocutors that they are in fact, at times, speaking callously. Beyond that, however, we might view it as part and parcel of a broader strategy to secure her freedom, which indeed the *Life* tells us it is. More than one voice within the work, namely Yeshé Tsogyal's and that of the Zurkhar prince's ministers (as a unit), states that persistence in verbal appeal is an effective means by which one can obtain what one wants.⁴⁰² Privy to Yeshé Tsogyal's thoughts, readers know that she decides to ask her parents persistently or insistently (*zhu ba nan*) again and again (*yang yang*) for permission to do Dharma with the understanding that she must do so by means of great cunning (*g.yo che ba'i sgo nas*).⁴⁰³ Where she articulates their motives and redescribes what other characters have said, it would seem that she hopes, in part, to put the right thoughts and words into her interlocutors' minds and mouths.

We know that Yeshé Tsogyal does eventually succeed in obtaining her freedom in Chapter I, but one would be hard-pressed to argue that she did so solely by convincing anyone within the text of the righteousness of her path. Even Drénakara, the interior minister who persuades Yeshé Tsogyal's father to put an end to her torture, appears to be more appalled by the court's treatment of the princess than wholly assured that she should be allowed to practice Dharma. The dialogues, then, I would argue, are not meant merely to showcase and affirm Yeshé Tsogyal's determination and rhetorical prowess. Nor are they simply aimed at exhibiting something like her general graciousness and willingness to see

⁴⁰² E.g., PL 2013: 271. On Zurkhar's ministers, see also EAP105 1/3/132 15b.6: *ngang bsrings nas gros cher byas na nyan du 'ong byas pas*. Other characters seem to share this sentiment implicitly.

⁴⁰³ PL 2013: 271.

the best in everyone. Rather, they function to ally the reader with Yeshé Tsogyal—to offer her privileged access to and the company of a paragon who repeats that she would, ironically, prefer to be alone.

Taken together, the dialogues of Chapter I depict a royal youth's pursuit of religion against myriad odds, not least, social entanglements, they play out scenes familiar to communities in which the abandonment of domestic life could be a relatively commonplace yet still emotionally fraught affair. By not only offering a voice to Yeshé Tsogyal, but also to those around her, the reader is encouraged to view radical renunciation from multiple perspectives. Parents are sad to see their child leave home; they and their subjects are concerned about her welfare and that of their society in tandem; friends are confused as to why she would choose hardship over ease; suitors are hurt at the prospect of losing their preferred partner; and a Dharmically-inclined individual, sickened by cyclic existence, feels compelled to escape it at all costs. One or more vantage point may prove compelling over others depending on whom an empirical reader actually is—a parent; a slighted lover; the subject of a prosperous kingdom; a would-be monastic—but the fact remains that the *Life* continually elevates the perspective of Yeshé Tsogyal and works to align the reader with it.

The effects of this alignment are potentially multiple. On the one hand, Yeshé Tsogyal's words could work to authorize, even persuade, some readers to leave behind domestic life. She might serve as a "role model," as several secondary sources on Yeshé Tsogyal suggest, and her arguments in favor of renunciation could provide others with the impetus and language to speak to parents, friends, or partners about their own desire to renounce. If one wishes to argue one's own case for taking up the religious life now rather than later or in a future rebirth, one might, in other words, seek guidance and support in the

Life of Yeshé Tsogyal. On the other hand, for those who are not inclined to renounce but face the prospect of a loved one doing so, the *Life's* dialogues may work to model the right and wrong reactions to another's ascetic inclinations. In addition to offering up Yeshé Tsogyal as a sympathetic character, the *Life* provides several models for how *not* to respond to an individual's decision to leave home. Insofar as a reader would not wish to identify with characters who are portrayed as callous towards others or misguided about the very nature of reality, she will not want to be someone who would dare prevent another's pursuit of Dharma, whatever the emotional cost.

That all said, apart from aiming to cultivate an interest in renunciation for oneself, or modeling a kind of salutary attitude to renunciation in general, throughout its first chapter, I read the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* as invested above all in positioning readers with respect to Yeshé Tsogyal as a kind of spiritual friend *and* devotee.

How, exactly, the *Life* attempts rhetorically to do so is obvious in certain respects. Yeshé Tsogyal occupies the central position in the story. She is its focus, and so a reader who sticks with the *Life* agrees to focus on her. Moreover, other characters continually praise her for her beauty, elegance, charm, intelligence, and so on, and they claim that no one can get enough of beholding her or hearing her speak. Everyone wants to be in her company, in short, and in that company, everyone is moved to praise her. By implication, the reader should want and do these things, too. Yet we find that the reader is made to surpass all the other characters in one important respect. Time and again within the text, Yeshé Tsogyal rejects all companionship, yet the reader is not only encouraged but compelled to accompany her. Only the reader can be the right companion for her, the *Life*

would seem to say. Only she can see Yeshé Tsogyal through the trials of the palace and the dangers of an otherwise desolate valley.

Before taking a closer look at how the text accomplishes this, I wish to situate the dialogues and provide several reasons for focusing on dialogue as a formal feature of the *Life* in and of itself, for it is not intuitive that one would do so at length, whether in relationship to the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* or any work of literature that puts extensive conversations between or among characters before its audiences.

A Literary-Ethical Perspective on the Dialogues

Until recently, scholars of pre-modern South Asian literature have largely approached dialogues as especially productive spaces to examine negotiations of religious-doctrinal or philosophical difference. They have also been interested in dialogues as expositions of teaching and debate norms as they appear across time and place.⁴⁰⁴ To be sure, through dialogically structured debates, we stand to gain insights into the ways in which traditions have imagined themselves and the stakes of their particular claims throughout history. We know that where voices articulate and argue issues important to them in contrast to other, competing trends in thought, we might learn about the substance of movements as well as the construction of rhetoric as a skill in itself.

⁴⁰⁴ For an array of analytical approaches to dialogue forms in South Asian literature, see the articles in Brian Black and Laurie Patton, eds., *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Traditions* (Farnham, Surrey, England ; Burlington, VT, USA: Routledge, 2015). Pages 2–3 discuss the relative lack of focus on dialogue as a compositional feature until recently. See also p. 3n4 for a list of sources on the topic. Other notable recent examples of dialogue analysis include Xi He, "Experiencing the Graceful and the Joyful: A Study of the Literary Aesthetics and Religious Emotions of the *Lalitavistara*," (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012) and Barbara Hendrischke, "Dialogue Forms in the *Taiping Jing* (Scripture on Great Peace)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 137, no. 4 (2017): 719–36.

Questions put to debate-driven dialogues are therefore generally about what is argued and how, or who has been imagined to be supreme in argument and why. Where the tone of a dialogue is more protreptical—that is, instructive or encouraging—than argumentative, as in a dialogue between a teacher and a student, inquiries may follow along similar lines: What is taught and by whom? How does the teacher teach? To a lesser degree have scholars been interested in examining how dialogues—whether debate- or instruction-driven or not—situate the reader with respect to what is spoken and how things are being said. Less often, in other words, do we ask about the effects of the dialogue form more broadly and holistically speaking.⁴⁰⁵ How, we might wonder, does a dialogue and all that it takes to create one—a place, a time, characters, actants, patterns of action, moods—meet a reader, and, at the most basic level, set out to organize a relationship, whether in an larger effort to teach, persuade, or something else? That is to say that even prior to assessing them as compositional forms bent on instructing or convincing, we might first think about dialogues as forms invested in both representing and creating meaningful relationships. In dialogue, characters engage with other characters, and as they do so, readers are positioned with respect to those individuals. In asking after dialogue, therefore, we might ask how it is that characters and their readers are made to relate.

Such questions expand upon Mark Jordan's work on what he deems "scenes of ethical instruction" in ancient and pre-modern Christian sources, some of the earliest of which hearken

⁴⁰⁵ This is not true only of scholarship on pre-modern, non-Western literature. Even in modern Western literary theory, there seems to be a consensus that dialogue as a compositional form is widely under theorized and under analyzed. See, e.g., Bronwen Thomas, *Fictional Dialogue: Speech and Conversation in the Modern and Postmodern Novel* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012). It strikes me that this is perhaps because, for many literary critics, it is (1) enough to label dialogue as such before tending to what is taken to be more the purview of critical analysis, namely what is said and how meaning is conveyed; and/or (2) dialogue is almost *too* mimetic. That is, the immediacy simulated by dialogue somehow shoves off or defers analysis, at least until a reader can, in a manner of speaking, get (back) out of it, i.e., effect some subjective distance from it.

to scenes staged in the literature of Graeco-Roman philosophic traditions. Describing what he means by such representational forms, Jordan writes:

Scenes display, perform, and address characters. Some ethical characters, the most obvious, are held up for praise and blame. Be like this! Don't be like this! Exemplary characters have always been more consequential in lived Christian ethics than principles, rules, or cases. But often more important than the characters given as examples in a scene are the characters that inhabit it—the learner, the teacher, and, frequently, witnesses or bystanders. *The relations enacted by the characters inhabiting a scene are both the means and the substance of ethical teaching.* Their relations make ethical teaching significant and effective. They also make it interesting.⁴⁰⁶

Though he does not focus on dialogues explicitly, Jordan's words nevertheless underscore for us the fact that, within a text, statements uttered in the process of verbal exchange may be only minimally informative (or instructive, persuasive) in and of themselves. Far more than what is said factors into what is communicated, meant, felt, and understood. So, too, may readers who witness a story's action be made party to larger contexts—whole scenes, and in them, whole relationships—as they engage a dialogue-heavy work. One does not only learn the stuff of the moral life by being told what it is. One may also learn it by witnessing the interpersonal dynamics through which it is conceived. By the very fact of its formulation as a dialogue-heavy *namtar*, the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* would appear to be affirming that dialogue is an effective means by which the moral formation and spiritual success of its protagonist can be depicted. It would also seem to be suggesting that this is the way by which Dharma and its pursuit can be made interesting.

⁴⁰⁶ Mark D. Jordan, "Missing Scenes," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 38 (Summer/Autumn 2010), <https://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/summerautumn2010/missing-scenes>. My italics.

A Historical, Literary-Ethical Argument

Why, exactly, Drimé Künga chooses to employ dialogue to the degree that he does is not clear. However, just as in our analysis of intertextuality within the *Life*, we can venture some theories. For one thing, the *tertön's* historical context may have motivated his decision to compose poetic dialogues by way of encouraging widespread interest in classical Indian literary forms, including dialogue-driven genres like drama. From the thirteenth century on, works of Sanskrit "high literature" or *kāvya*—a term applied to various genres and compositional styles that make extensive use of figurative language—have captured the attention and efforts of Tibetans wishing to occupy a place in learned society. Roughly a century prior to Drimé Künga's birth in the mid-1300s, poetic excellence began to emerge as "the touchstone of moral and intellectual refinement" such that by the fourteenth century, any Tibetan writer worth his salt would be apt to try his hand at *kāvyaic* composition.⁴⁰⁷ Drimé Künga's preferred sources of inspiration for his own writing may have been poetic works that put characters into conversation.

From Namkha Jikmé's list of the works included in Drimé Künga's *oeuvre*, we know that Drimé Künga was interested enough in *kāvya* to have composed at least one work of *nyenngak* (*snyan ngag*), the Tibetan rendering of the term. And although the form and contents of his *Garland of Literary Gems* is at present unknown to us,⁴⁰⁸ the fact of its existence suggests that Drimé Künga may have been educated in Indian literary and aesthetic theory. We know that Sakya Paṇḍita Künga Gyaltsen's (1182–1251) *Gateway to Scholarship* with its elaborations on

⁴⁰⁷ Kapstein 2003: 777 and esp. 782. See also p. 600 of Dan Martin, "Indian Kāvya Poetry on the Far Side of the Himalayas: Translation, Transmission, Adaptation, Originality," in *Innovations and Turning Points: Toward a History of Kāvya Literature*, ed. Yigal Bronner, David Shulman, and Gary Tubb (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2014), 563–608.

⁴⁰⁸ For the list of works attributed to Drimé Künga, see Nam mkha' 'jigs med 2003. The work's title in Tibetan is *Snyan ngag nor bu'i 'phreng ba* (*Kāvyaṃaṇimāla* if rendered in Sanskrit).

Daṇḍin's (7th century) *Mirror of Poetry*, and Shongtön Dorjé Gyaltzen's (13th century) translation of Daṇḍin's work in full were popular during Drimé Künga's era. It seems plausible, then, that he would have read one or both of these works.⁴⁰⁹ And not incidental to our analysis at present is the observation that Sakya Paṇḍita's *Gateway* may have been inspired by the *Treatise on Dramaturgy* (ca. 3rd cent. CE), a renowned and authoritative work of Sanskrit aesthetic theory attributed to a figure known as Bharata Muni.⁴¹⁰

More on how the influence of these works might be felt within the *Life* will follow in subsequent sections of this chapter, but suffice to say here that even if we cannot know for sure what Drimé Künga's access to and interest in sources on Indian literary composition had been during his lifetime, any reader familiar with the conventions of *kāvya* will recognize its influence over the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. If not an expert in it, the *Life's* author seems still very much aware of *kāvyaic* character types and tropes commonly employed by Indian authors. One also senses an effort on the *Life's* part to conjure, if not cultivate outright, certain of the sentiments or affect-states (*nyams 'gyur*; Skt. *bhāva*) that skilled *kāvis* would seek to elicit from their audience members.⁴¹¹ A reader generally familiar with Indian aesthetic theory and elaborations of the traditional moods (*rasa*; Tib. *nyams*⁴¹²) could argue based solely on the themes of the work and the actions of its characters that the *Life* aspires to *kāvya* heights. In its first chapter, for example,

⁴⁰⁹ Tib. Sa skya paṇḍi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *Mkhas pa 'jug pa'i sgo*. On *kāvya* in Tibet and the influence of Daṇḍin's *Mirror of Poetry*, see Leonard van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Belles-Lettres: The Influence of Daṇḍin and Kṣemendra," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies In Genre*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezon and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, N.Y: Snow Lion, 1996), 393–410 as well as Kapstein 2003 and Martin 2014 and Jackson 1996, wherein we also find Tibetan song (*mgur, glu*) treated. Cf. Don grub rgyal 1984 and 1985, treated further below.

⁴¹⁰ That is, the *Nāṭyaśāstra* by Bharata "the Sage." On the potential influence of the *Treatise on Dramaturgy* (*Nāṭyaśāstra*) on *Gateway to Scholarship*, see Kapstein 2003: 781.

⁴¹¹ On *rasa* theory, see, e.g., Lawrence J. McCrea, *The Teleology of Poetics in Medieval Kashmir* (Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 2008).

⁴¹² On how the term *rasa* has historically been translated into Tibetan, see Martin 2014: 579n31.

one could say it starts out heroic (the heroic sentiment, *i.e.*, *vīrarasa*, being, perhaps, the *Life's* dominant mood); it then shifts to express the piteous or pathetic sentiment (*kāruṇarasa*) where Yeshé Tsogyal is tortured and exiled for her virtue; then it presents one or more subcategories of the romantic-erotic sentiment (*śṛṅgārarasa*) where Yeshé Tsogyal asserts the necessity for separation from her would-be lovers based on her passion for Dharma.

A reader learned in Indian poetics might even discover in the work some concrete evidence that it vies for *kāvya* status. It is true enough that whatever else Drimé Künga may have been trying to do in the *Life*, he was keen to incorporate into it various literary "ornamentations" (*rgyan*; Skt. *alaṃkāra*) common in *kāvya*, especially similes (*dpe*; Skt. *upamā*) aimed at capturing physical and natural beauty. (A point to which I will return below.) And as I showed in the previous chapter, the *Life* also speaks of "delight" at its outset—a sentiment pertinent to *kāvya*, though one meant to be cultivated by any work that aspires to entertain. Delight as it is generally conceived is not, in other words, one of the eight to nine traditional emotional states enumerated by Sanskrit theorists. Interestingly, however, one could indeed take the *Life's* particular flavor of delight to be an element of one of the traditional moods, or *rasas*. Recall from chapter four that Drimé Künga chooses the term *trowa* (*spro ba*) to state that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* will cultivate a sense of something with the semantic range of "joy," "happiness," "interest," "enthusiasm," or "energy." (The reader of the *Life* stands to be "uplifted," "invigorated," "en-joyed," or "energized," in other words.) To advocate "delight" *sans* a further dimension of vigor, perhaps, Drimé Künga could have used the term *gawa* (*dga' ba*), which would more closely approximate *prīti*, the Sanskrit term that Indian theorists prefer to use for the

"delight" or "pleasure" borne of entertainment.⁴¹³ However, by electing *trowa*, the Sanskrit equivalent of which is *utsāha*, often "energy,"⁴¹⁴ Drimé Künga evokes a sentiment that serves as the underlying emotional state (*sthayibhāva*) of the heroic mood.⁴¹⁵

As I assess and analyze the features of dialogue in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, I contemplate these and other insights drawn from Indian aesthetic theory. I do so not with the intent to determine what it was about *rasa* and *alamkāra* that the *Life's* author knew. Rather, I aim at enriching our readings of a story that emerged in a *kāvya*-charged milieu. For the same reason, I keep Jordan's characterization of scenes of ethical instruction broadly in mind as well. Whatever the formal aspects of the work, they contribute to the sentimental and moral cultivation of the *Life's* readers. While I treat Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with her parents to some extent, I focus especially on her interactions with two of her suitors. Although these exchanges would, at first, seem to shift the text to an erotic or amorous mood from a pathetic one, they nevertheless extend the overall senses of loss and despair cultivated by the dialogues that Yeshé Tsogyal had earlier in the story with her parents. In terms of their content, domestic life versus a life spent practicing asceticism in the forest remains the central topic at hand, and the deepest emotional wounds continue to be incurred by those who think that the princess's sights can be set on anything other than Dharma.

⁴¹³ On this point, see esp. Anand Amaladass, "The Concept of 'Vyutpatti' in Indian Aesthetics: Does Aesthetic Delight Bring about a Change in the Person Experiencing It?," *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Südasiens / Vienna Journal of South Asian Studies* 36 (1992): 261–71.

⁴¹⁴ See the *Mahāvīyutpatti* (entry no. 2100), which also provides *utsūḍhiḥ*; *utsṛcitah* (entry no. 1789). On *utsāha*, see NŚ 7.21. Translations of the Sanskrit (MW) also include "power," "strength," "strength of will," "resolution," "perseverance," and "joy" or "happiness."

⁴¹⁵ That said, like many a Tibetan author writing in Sakya Paṇḍita's wake, Drimé Künga does not appear to be concerned with evoking moods with same rigor demanded of Sanskrit theorists. (On this point and on *rasa* theory and its application to Tibetan poetic compositions historically, see Jackson 1996: 4. Cf. Don grub rgyal 1985: 348–351.) I would argue that apart from the instances at which we witness the use of specific Indian poetic ornamentations, the *Life* springs from a general sense of what an estimable work of *kāvya* should entail.

Through consideration of the form, content, and intratextual resonances of these exchanges, I will address how the dialogues work to effect the stated aim of the *namtar* on the whole. Adapting a question posed by Caryl Emerson in her preface to Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, I ask, what kind of dialogue do we readers establish with a work whose key device is dialogue?⁴¹⁶ How does the extensive use of dialogue in the *Life* situate the reader with respect to its central figure and to the text itself?⁴¹⁷

Dialogue in Focus

Why examine the use and features of dialogue in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*? First, we might examine dialogue—direct speech between two or more characters, what the *Treatise on Dramaturgy* defines as "utterance and counter-utterance"⁴¹⁸—for the very fact that it pervades the work. After the first few folios of narrative description, dialogue emerges as the *Life's* dominant means of communicating the story and moving the action forward. Insofar as the work itself asks its readers to encounter it in this particular way, namely as a series of direct-speech exchanges, we might think critically about what that looks like at any given juncture in the story and why that might be.

⁴¹⁶ Emerson's original question is about Bakhtin himself: "What kind of dialogue do we establish with a writer whose key idea is dialogue?" Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxx.

⁴¹⁷ In a future iteration of this project, I hope to test what I find here against works similar in structure and aim, not only (1) to discover how the *Life* may be commenting upon or inflecting the generic repertoire structurally and thematically—participating in the making and remaking of what Inden (2000: 13) calls "a living, changing scale of texts," but also (2) to begin to bring into relief, however tentatively, a Tibetan (though Indian-based and inflected) literary theory of dialogue. Ronald Inden, "Introduction: From Philological to Dialogical Texts," in *Querying the Medieval: Texts and History in South Asia*, ed. Ronald Inden, Jonathan Walters, and Daud Ali (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3–28.

⁴¹⁸ *Nāṭyaśāstra* 24.54. Here dialogue is *samlāpa*, but elsewhere, as Black and Patton (2015: 2) note, one frequently finds *samvāda*. Both terms convey "talking together" or "speaking with."

Moreover, when we consider the aim of the work, that is, to positively dispose beings toward Dharma, and we find, subsequently, that much of the work is written in dialogue form, we might attempt to draw out a connection. As in the case of intertextuality, there is, it would seem, a question posed and answered implicitly at the very outset of the work: "Q. How does one (i.e., an author) generate (readerly) interest in or enthusiasm for Dharma? A. One composes a life story rife with dialogue."⁴¹⁹ Further questions pertaining to what constitutes dialogue in each case, and, especially, how dialogues prove interest-generating, delight-inducing, etc., remain for us, of course, but they will be bracketed until a later section of this chapter.

How and why the *Life* employs dialogue at any given instance in the story demands close scrutiny, in short. Viewed from the widest angle, however, even before one begins to home in on individual exchanges, I take the use of dialogue throughout the work to be a tactic aimed at animating or dramatizing—one could say "enlivening"—Yeshé Tsogyal's life story and the characters within. In Chapter 3, I argued for the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* classification among the subgenre of *namtar* that modern scholars of Tibetan literature alternately deem "dialogue novels," "pseudo-dramas," and "written drama texts." Although indeed nothing in the historical record indicates that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* was staged for a live audience, we might nevertheless group it with texts deemed "dramatic" for being a *namtar* full of dialogue. That is to say more precisely that across witnesses of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, the "embedded" dialogues between characters eclipse in quantity the "primary" level of narration communicated by the

⁴¹⁹ To be sure, dialogue can take multiple forms, and people engage in different kinds of verbal exchanges in different ways for various purposes. Although my focus in this chapter is dialogue where it takes the shape of conversation between characters about a particular topic, at times reaching the tenor of debate, the *Life* exhibits a range of types of direct-speech exchanges.

narrator. And dialogue, as a non-narrative form of embedded text,⁴²⁰ is inherently dramatic. As

Bal has it:

Dialogue is a form in which the actors [i.e., the characters] themselves, and not the primary narrator, utter language. The total of the sentences spoken by the actors produces meaning in those parts of the text. Such embedded texts share that characteristic with dramatic texts. In dramatic texts the whole text consists of the utterances of actors who together, in their interaction, produce meaning. Except, of course, the stage directions in the paratext. The dialogues embedded in a narrative text are dramatic in kind. The more dialogue a narrative text contains, the more dramatic that text is.⁴²¹

Recall from chapter three that Tibetan *namtars* traditionally adapted for performance lack stage directions. Directors and set designers might take cues from descriptive passages uttered by the narrator to create *mises-en-scène*, but explicit instructions on how to do so are absent from the texts themselves. Such is the case with the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*. The *Life* is a *namtar* with narrative portions that describe and comment on scenes and characters, orient the reader in time and place, and relate events, but it is best categorized as a "dialogue *namthar*" given how much of the story relies on inter-character verbal exchange to communicate its themes and move its action forward.

Throughout the dialogues, speech tags are used sparingly. When speech tags do occur, rarely do they extend beyond "he/she said" to qualify how a character's words are spoken. (Exceptions are tags that indicate despair, e.g., "he said *with two tear-filled eyes*.") There is, in

⁴²⁰ For my purposes here, I base my understanding of what is "narrative" and "non-narrative" on the ways in which Bal (2013) elaborates these terms. This is not to say that a story cannot be related narratively *within* a dialogue—as we will see in the case of Karna below—or that story-able meaning cannot be conveyed through dialogue. Rather, dialogue is a textual form distinguishable from narration in its use of direct speech between characters (or, as Bal prefers, actors/actants) within a story.

⁴²¹ Bal 2013: 64. Cf. Gustav Flaubert who, writing on *Madame Bovary*, said that he had hoped "to achieve dramatic effect simply by the interweaving of dialogue and by contrasts of character." Letter to Louise Colet, October 12, 1853. Cf. also Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 73, on the dramatizing effects of dialogue; and Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 77, on the "drama of speech."

other words, a relative lack of narratorial intervention, and the reader's access to the story's action feels direct and unmediated. From the story's perspective, in a manner of speaking, it appears that there is little to no need for a "teller" to intervene, and without a "teller" the reader becomes less a listener and more a viewer. She occupies a space between ear witness and eye witness, to adapt an observation made by Michel Riffaterre.⁴²² Moreover, story time and discourse time are rendered nearly equivalent. That is, the time it takes to read the dialogues is roughly equivalent to the time it would take for the action of the dialogues to unfold within the story.⁴²³ Exchanges do not happen now so much as they are happening *in the now*, as past events are newly played out again. Through the meta-dialogic statements about the ways in which the characters speak to one another, we also learn of a commonality among them, one that might also be read as an internal commentary on the importance of the form of the text. However else they might be alike, these are several youths who believe in the power of persuasion through conversation.

A second reason to focus on dialogue is that speaking is itself thematized within the text. Characters utter meta-dialogic statements (e.g., "Your voice is melodious." and "Listen to me, [speaking] with words as well-spoken as yours!") that continually draw attention to the fact that they are speaking to one another and that this is a dialogue. As characters talk, we are therefore treated to multiple views on what it means to speak—to speak well or mellifluously, to speak persuasively, to speak truly with an eye toward another's benefit, and to venture speaking up or talking back. With her suitors especially, Yeshé Tsogyal is given to uttering highly ornamented

⁴²² Michael Riffaterre, "Interpretation and Descriptive Poetry: A Reading of Wordsworth's 'Yew-Trees,'" *New Literary History* 4, no. 2 (1973): 229–56.

⁴²³ On the approximation of story time to discourse time, see Genette's concept of scene in Gérard Genette, *The Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 87. Genette would emphasize that the dialogues, always stylized as they are and (often) unable to account for pauses in discussion, are still indeed only approximations of (not isochronies with) discourse time.

speech that is idealized, not naturally occurring. In that regard, the dialogues do not seem to seek only to capture idioms of their day. In part, they also testify to a poetical trend. Comments about how well someone is speaking are therefore loaded with text-internal as well as text-external significance.

Further, where the matter of speaking is explicitly addressed, we find a shared preoccupation with being not only heard but also heeded. That is, through the meta-dialogic statements about the ways in which the characters speak to one another, we also learn of a commonality among them, one that might also be read as an internal commentary on the importance of the form of the text. However else they might be alike, these are several youths who believe in the power of persuasion through conversation. Everyone wants to be listened to on his or her own terms, and yet others fail or openly refuse to do so time and again. There may be acknowledgement of what another has said (often indicated through repetition or summation) and/or the observation that another has indeed spoken well, but verbal assent that suggests or indicates a change of heart or mind is rare. The power of words to persuade is consistently presumed but not guaranteed. Conscious as they are of the risks entailed in stating one's case, particularly the failure to be heeded, the *Life's* characters nevertheless continue to do so. Viewed from a certain angle, then, one might even say that the Chapter I of the *Life* is, on the whole, as concerned with the potentials and perils of verbal exchange as it is with the primary topic about which everyone actually speaks, namely the matter of renunciation.

A third reason to focus on dialogue turns us back to Bacot and his contemporaries' observations that at least one exemplar of the "dialogue *namtar*" genre expresses and (presumably thereby) engenders a lot of emotion. In secondary literature on dialogue-heavy primary texts, from whenever and wherever they hail, this observation—that dialogue as a

literary form can be, and often is, especially emotion-filled and emotion-engendering—is not uncommon. For example, Stuart Blackburn, on the topic of puppet theater adaptations of Kampan's twelfth-century *Irāmāvatāram*, a Tamil retelling of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, remarks that the shift to dialogue "allows puppeteers to express emotions that remain mute in Kampan." ⁴²⁴ (Note Blackburn's suggestion that the emotions are *there* in Kampan's narrative, but they are silent, unvoiced.) Similarly, Carol Newsom, in her work on the Book of Job, proposes that when compared to the narrative portions of the text, one notable feature of the Joban dialogues is that they reveal Job to be "emotionally intense." ⁴²⁵

Neither Blackburn nor Newsom go so far as to argue that dialogue is an especially apt form for the expression of emotion *over* narrative, as if dialogue were an obviously superior form in this regard. But both do characterize dialogue as a form enabling or revealing in ways that narrative is not—or is not commonly required to be. Why might an author choose to supplement (or supplant) narrative with dialogue? In the case of the Book of Job, at least, the pairing of diegetic and dialogic forms may serve, says Newsom, to make palpable what each form "hides from itself when it is allowed to be the only voice." ⁴²⁶ In light of this assessment, we might ask how the shifts from narrative to dialogue in the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* could prove revelatory.

⁴²⁴ See p. 162 of Stuart Blackburn, "Creating Conversations: The Rama Story as Puppet Play in Kerala," in *Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, ed. Paula Richman (University of California Press, 1991), 157–71.

⁴²⁵ Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81. There are many other examples of scholarship that suggests that dialogue reveals and/or intensifies emotion. A further example will suffice in Tatelman who, speaking of another Buddhist story depicting exile, states that "dialogue intensifies the poignancy of the scene" in which the tale's protagonists are driven from home. See Joel Tatelman, *The Glorious Deeds of Purna: A Translation and Study of the Pūrṇāvadāna* (Routledge, 2000), 107.

⁴²⁶ Newsom 2009: 89.

Prior to any evaluation of the degree to which the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* contributes to a sense of dialogue as, if not a superior, albeit still perhaps a particularly conducive form for the expression and/or elicitation of emotion, it is worth bringing into relief something implied in Blackburn and Newsom, namely the fact that stories can be told in more than one way. Insofar as an historical author is at liberty to select the genre, form, and contents of a story, the reliance on dialogue in the *Life* is the result of deliberation about how to configure the story in light of its aims. (Why more dialogue than narrative?) We might focus on the dialogues—their contents as well as their formal aspects—then, not only because the *Life* answers the question of how to interest or uplift its audiences by serving up a mass of dialogues, but also because things could have easily been otherwise. The *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* needn't have been written in the mixed prose-verse (though largely verse) and the mixed narrative-dialogue (though mostly dialogue) form in which we find it. The story of Yeshé Tsogyal could have been, and indeed later was, written in a form more diegetic than dialogic.

Here I am once again referring to Taksham Nüden Dorjé's seventeenth-century version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story. In Taksham, we find a number of the same fabula related in a chronologically parallel manner to those included in the *Life*, but those elements are, by and large, communicated through narration rather than expressed via dialogue. As I noted in the previous chapter, when compared to the *Life* on the whole, the tone of Taksham's version rings more retrospective, historical. As the narrator describes, reports, comments on things—events as well as individual character's thoughts, feelings, and utterances—her role as addresser is rarely overtaken by an embedded textual form. The story is never out of the narrator's hands (i.e., voice), so to speak, at least not for long. By contrast, amid the *Life's* dialogues, the narrator's interjections are minimal. At times, they are even apt to come as a surprise.

Thanks in large part to the prevalence of the narratorial voice with its authoritative tone, the reader of Taksham's version is, by extension, rarely made party to what feels like a real-time verbal exchange. In a word, the action of the story as the reader experiences it is not "live" in Taksham. It was lived. The reader is regularly reminded, upon the narrator's intercession, of the narrative now's definitive pastness relative to her own situation in time. Put another way: Taksham's work does not encourage the reader to lose track of the past temporal aspect of the story. Reading the fourteenth-century *Life*, however, one can easily lose track of the teller of the tale and, by extension, the story discourse's temporal location.

Taking liberties with a popular injunction often aimed at aspiring writers, one might sum up the formal difference between the two full-length accounts of Yeshé Tsogyal's life this way: where the *Life* attributed to Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa prefers to *show*, Taksham's *namtar* prefers to *tell*.⁴²⁷ In the latter, the diegetic is privileged over the mimetic, or, in Genette's terms, the narrative mode is privileged over the "scenic."⁴²⁸ To be clear, dialogue is not absent from Taksham's work, but it is considerably pared down compared to what we find in the *Life*. For example, early on in Taksham's telling, the narrator relays Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with her parents and her father's court officials via narration in the third person, and he does so with a

⁴²⁷ See chapter three on this issue.

⁴²⁸ Genette 1997: 287. See also Genette 1983: 162–166, on the topic of "distance" created or mitigated by "pure narrative" versus "*mimesis*." While Plato (*Republic*, Book III) distinguished between "pure narrative" (*haplé diégésis*), i.e., where the speaker does not suggest that anyone else but he or she is speaking, and "*mimesis*," i.e., "direct speech in the manner of drama," Aristotle (*Poetics*) renders pure narrative and direct-speech representation two varieties of *mimesis*. Genette (1983: 164, ital. original) reminds us that in contrast to dramatic representation, no narrative can wholly "show" or "imitate" the story it tells. "All it can do is tell it in a manner which is detailed, precise, 'alive,' and in that way give more or less the *illusion of mimesis*," he says. That is to say that the representation of direct speech in narrative is still and always representation. As Genette puts it, "The truth is that *mimesis* in words can only be *mimesis* of words. Other than that, all we have and can have is degrees of *diegesis*" (1983: 164–165). Showing through direct speech, in short, is still a way of telling, but it is nevertheless a way of telling that approaches the imitative extreme rather than the narrative extreme. On dramatic representation as ever-mediated, see also Booth 1983: 149.

great economy of words. Conversations that play out over tens of folios in both the Drimé Künga- and Pema Lingpa-attributed versions of the *Life* about whether or not and whom Yeshé Tsogyal will marry are reduced in Taksham to a few lines:

At that time, the royal father, mother, and subjects—all three [parties]—held council, and having all together agreed that apart from a petition from the emperor of Tibet, [the maiden should not be betrothed]. Since one [suitor] would be displeased at an offer to another, and since this would be the basis for great turmoil, everyone was dispatched, each [back] to his own [land], and the girl was not given to anyone.⁴²⁹

From there, the narrator reports the events that followed, quoting some of Yeshé Tsogyal's words of protest and her father's messages to her suitors, but omitting almost entirely the lengthy back-and-forths we witness between father and daughter, mother and daughter, and the king and his ministers throughout the first half of Chapter I.

Yeshé Tsogyal does, in Taksham's version, engage in a brief exchange with the evil minister Shantipa at this same point in the story. (Shantipa, the villain who does not appear in any significant way until Chapter V of the fourteenth-century *Life*, here speaks four lines of verse in reply to four lines uttered by Yeshé Tsogyal.) But what is perhaps most strikingly different in Taksham's telling of the events surrounding Yeshé Tsogyal's refusal to marry is the total omission of Drénakara, the minister disposed (*mos pa*) to Dharma who convinces the king to call off his daughter's execution. Without him and his exchanges with the king, moral outrage at Yeshé Tsogyal's treatment by her family is also conspicuously absent among voices within the text. To be sure, one can argue that Taksham's work reaches out to readers in its own ways. Therein, however, we do not find a question parallel to Drénakara's "Who dares?"—an address to the king, the court, and the reader that invites disgust and dissent. Without this question, the

⁴²⁹ Taksham 1989: 17.

reader lacks the opportunity to respond with a "Not I" that would configure her relationship to Yeshé Tsogyal going forward in the text.

In sum, we might focus on dialogue for its prevalence throughout the work; for the text-internal interest in the shapes and possibilities of direct verbal communication; and for an inquiry into what, as a key device, dialogue enables, be it emotional expression and elicitation or something else. In examining dialogue for the work it might do when compared to alternative renderings of the same story events, I take cues from Martha Nussbaum where she emphasizes that "Conception and form are bound together" such that "if the writing is well done, a paraphrase in a very different form and style will not, in general, express the same conception."⁴³⁰ Where it aids us in bringing into relief what dialogues may say and do differently from possible narrative renderings of the same story events (whether that saying or doing has to do with expressing conceptions, generating interest, or eliciting feeling), I will continue to refer to Taksham's seventeenth-century version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story.

For the most part, however, I will tend closely to the set of exchanges that occur on the heels of Yeshé Tsogyal's exile, namely those with Karṇa Sheltöchen and Prince Norbu Karsel of Zurkhar. Immediately below, I will first characterize the dialogues on the whole so that we might establish a clear sense of the types of direct-speech interchanges we find throughout Chapter I of the *Life*; then, in the following section, I will offer a translation of Yeshé Tsogyal's dialogues with her suitors so that we can thereafter examine the contents and formal features of some of these exchanges in detail.

⁴³⁰ Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 5.

Characterizing the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal's* Dialogues

The *Life's* direct-speech exchanges begin in earnest after the narrator describes the initial setting of the story, the palace at Tshalungkhar, and then relays information about Yeshé Tsogyal's conception, birth, and attributes, both mental and physical. In the very first wave of exchanges, the king consults his ministers about what to do with his youngest child, a daughter now of marriageable age. It is unanimously decided that she should marry a prince, but the court is divided on one question: Should the princess marry a foreign or local, Indian or Tibetan royal youth? The queen and princes, Yeshé Tsogyal's two older brothers, subsequently join the debate and argue, contra the king's foreign ministers,⁴³¹ that Yeshé Tsogyal should marry a local youth. The king's interior ministers agree. Yeshé Tsogyal is then summoned to the scene to express her choice, but as soon as she enters the discussion, the topic turns quickly from the question of whom to marry to whether to marry or not. Debates about the nature and import of dharma as one's "duty" ensue, and here we see royal sovereignty (*rgyal srid chos*) paired with domestic duty (*khyim thab chos*) and opposed to Holy Dharma (*dam chos*). At this point in the text, as Yeshé Tsogyal understands it, the latter Dharma is best pursued through solitary ascetic practice.

Notably, though perhaps unsurprisingly, when characters in the *Life* argue with (or about the fate of) intimate others, bonds of kinship and affection are repeatedly evoked. Both the royal parents and Yeshé Tsogyal, for example, use the phrase *shaléché* (*shas las chad*), i.e., "descended from [me/you]" but literally "cut from [my/your] flesh," to remind one another of their ties by blood. Likewise, the minister Drénakara and the lad (*khye'u*) Karṇa use this expression as they narrate for the king and Yeshé Tsogyal respectively what has happened to the

⁴³¹ It depends on the witness which side Yeshé Tsogyal's brothers take, but often, they seem to favor a local suitor. See, e.g., PL 2013: 264.

princess from their points of view.⁴³² In his protest against Yeshé Tsogyal's torture and execution, Drénakara underscores for the king the fact that the sovereign has condemned his own child, a girl cut from his flesh (*sha las chad pa'i bu mo*). And Karṇa, for his part, reminds Yeshé Tsogyal that she was exiled by her parents—again, even though she was cut from their flesh (*sha las chad kyang*).⁴³³

The phrase *shaléché* achieves slightly different rhetorical ends depending on the time and circumstances of its utterance. When Yeshé Tsogyal and her parents say *shaléché* to one another before she has been condemned by official decree, the phrase evokes a normative claim about how one should (or should not) imminently behave in light of familial bonds. When Drénakara and Karṇa use it, it serves as an indictment of past actions in the present: How could the royal father and mother have acted as callously (*phangs med*) as they did given their relationships to such a princess? But whatever the force of *shaléché* at a particular moment in the story, it advances the same broader sentiment: Moral decisions should not be made apart from a consideration of context. In this case, that means that characters must tend especially to the nature and dynamics of their personal relationships. Such a claim, we may recall from chapter two, runs directly counter to the foreign ministers' citation of royal law, particularly that clause which would see even a "beloved child" (*mchan gyi bu [phrug]*) put to death were he to prove a criminal.⁴³⁴

Belovedness is, of course, not incidental to this or any argument in the *Life*. That is to say that in addition to evoking the fact of their biological connection, we also see parents and

⁴³² For examples of this phrase, see PL 2013: 272, 274, 275, 278.

⁴³³ See PL 2013: 274 and 278 respectively.

⁴³⁴ See chapter three, p. 176, passage 2B.

children continually refer, amid their debates about the moral life, to their affection and care for one another. For example, one of the king's appeals to Yeshé Tsogyal begins as follows:

Hail, O marvelous, noble, comely princess!
When you were little, I happily raised you with love;
Now you've grown up and gained your independence.
If you didn't [want to] break your father's command, [you would go] to a beautiful
city in the land of India.⁴³⁵

For her part, Yeshé Tsogyal responds to her parents just as we saw, or in ways akin to what we saw, above: "Hail, O, gracious father and mother who reared me kindly! / O, two parents who love me tenderly..."⁴³⁶ The term *dungsem* (*gdung sems*; also *dung sems*), part of what I have translated as "tenderly" in the context of Yeshé Tsogyal's response to her father, is uttered by many characters. In addition to suggesting tender or loving thoughts, it also refers to a feeling of being "pained," "distressed," or "stricken," as with longing or grief, or troubled because one is "sympathetic." Note that Yeshé Tsogyal tells her parents that she recalls their care for her as a child, and she knows that they love her even now. Yet she also recognizes that concomitant with their love, there must be—must have always been, since she was born—feelings of worry, pain, and grief either experienced because of her or felt along with her. As her appeals mount and she continues to refuse their counsel, she acknowledges their growing anxiety.

In a similar fashion, Yeshé Tsogyal's suitors cite their love and prospective care for her as grounds for accepting their advice and demands, and *dungsem* in the sense of feeling anguished or stricken in light of one's love for another comes even more to the fore. Whatever reasons Yeshé Tsogyal's suitors offer as to why she should abandon her notion of Dharma, the intensity of their longing and affection for her would appear to them to be reason enough. Picking up

⁴³⁵ PL 2013: 269. Cf. DK 2013: 188.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

where her parents left off, both Karṇa and Zurkhar effectively ask the same thing of the princess again and again: How can you do this to me when I love you? Each in his own way subsequently tells her that if she chooses Dharma over partnering inseparably with him, he will be miserable and heartbroken. Could she, they ask, really bear doing such harm?

Throughout Chapter I, then, whomever is speaking—parents or suitors—we find that the dialogues about *dharma* versus Dharma are not coolly, abstractly engaged. Where intimate others are involved, the personal and personally felt is leveraged in argumentation. Verbal exchanges on such matters of moral import are as much about the subject at hand as the actual subjects involved in the discussion.

As witnesses to this, readers actually learn very little about what motivates Yeshé Tsogyal to take up Dharma, and we gain only a superficial sense of what Dharma is or what Dharmic practice entails. From her declarations to her father, brothers, and the foreign ministers, we know that Yeshé Tsogyal has a keen perception of karma. She is awed by its relentlessness such that she recognizes the preciousness of a human birth and feels acutely the urgency not to waste it. It would appear that this attitude is conducive to doing Dharma, which in Yeshé Tsogyal's estimation, as we know, means enduring hardship in solitary meditation. Despite this, a more robust sense of what her ascetic toil might look like remains at bay. To his credit, the Zurkhar prince aids us a bit in understanding what Dharma practiced at home might involve: one reveres the Three Jewels and lamas, gives to the poor, treats servants well. Yet that is about all we gain in this regard. What we certainly do learn—for we are exposed to the fact repeatedly—is that conversations about renunciation can be difficult, perhaps even harrowing affairs. In the case of the renouncer, one finds that they may have to break some hearts in order to escape *saṃsāra*. This may sound trite, or like the stuff of melodrama, but when we look to Indian and Tibetan

Buddhist literature, it would seem to be a problem that calls out perennially for serious, thoughtful address.

The Suitor Dialogues in Light of Indic Literary Theory

And so, after the point of Yeshé Tsogyal's exile in the story, the *Life* continues to focus on two interconnected themes. The first theme, dharma or Dharma, protracts (though does not much elaborate) the debates along the same lines that dominated earlier dialogues. The second theme, separation from one's loved ones or beloved, likewise extends the textual investment in earlier concerns about the degree to which the feelings attendant intimate relationships should influence the decisions and actions of moral agents.

In a word, the suitor dialogues intensify earlier matters, nuancing the significance of what it means to choose to act against, or in the face of, bonds of affection. Here the *Life* offers up two ostensibly blameless—or, at least, anything but callous—characters who would see Yeshé Tsogyal's desire to practice Dharma come to fruition so long as they might partner with her as she pursues some conception of that endeavor. And yet she simply cannot envision them as partners in her quest for salvation. Rather than an out-and-out rejection of both offers, however, the *Life* has Yeshé Tsogyal and her suitors engage in exchanges on the order of lovers' quarrels, or, better: poetic disputes about partnership versus separation.

In Sanskrit poetic traditions, such separation (*viraha*; Tib. *'bral ba* or *spong ba*)—i.e., separation from one's lover—is elaborated upon under the erotic mood (*śṛṅgārarasa*; Tib. *sgeg pa'i nyams*), one of the eight or nine moods or sentiments classified by Sanskrit literary theoreticians.⁴³⁷ Given the asymmetry of the relationships depicted—both Karṇa and the Zurkhar

⁴³⁷ Although Daṇḍin lists only eight moods, Sakya Paṇḍita, derives nine (the preferred number of certain Skt. theoreticians) from the *Hevajra Tantra*. The ninth he includes is the "tranquil" or "peaceful" (*śānta*, Tib. *zhi ba*)

prince long for Yeshé Tsogyal's affection, yet she remains uninterested in partnering with either of them—these dialogues would appear to echo, more specifically, works of Indian literature that aim to cultivate the "frustrated" or "unfulfilled erotic mood" (*vipralambha śṛṅgārarasa*) rather than its opposite, the "fulfilled" (*saṃbhoga*).⁴³⁸ The *Treatise on Dramaturgy*, one of the earliest extant works to treat the erotic mood, discusses the distinction between *vipralambha* and *saṃbhoga śṛṅgārarasa* amid its definition of *śṛṅgārarasa* as follows:

[The erotic sentiment] proceeds from the dominant state of love (*rati*) and it has as its basis (lit. soul) a bright attire; for whatever in this world is white, pure, bright, and beautiful is appreciated in terms of the dominant state of love (*śṛṅgāra*). For example, one who is elegantly dressed is called a lovely person (*śṛṅgārin*). Just as persons are named, after the custom of their father or mother or family in accordance with the traditional authority, so the sentiments, the states and other objects connected with drama are given names in pursuance of the custom and the traditional authority. Hence the erotic sentiment has been so named on account of its usually being associated with a bright and elegant attire. It owes its origin to men and women and relates to the fullness of youth. It has two bases: union (*saṃbhoga*) and separation (*vipralambha*). Of these two, the erotic sentiment in union arises from determinants like the pleasures of the season, the enjoyment of garlands, unguents, ornaments [the company of] beloved persons, objects [of senses], splendid mansions, going to a garden, and enjoying [oneself] there, seeing the [beloved one], hearing [his or her words], playing and dallying [with him or her].⁴³⁹

Shortly we will see the extent to which the exchanges with her suitors might fit the *śṛṅgāra* literary bill.⁴⁴⁰ (Brightly and elegantly attired as he is, the Zurkhar prince, at least, would seem to

mood. See Jonathan C. Gold, *The Dharma's Gatekeepers: Sakya Paṇḍita on Buddhist Scholarship in Tibet* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2008), 173.

⁴³⁸ This distinction between the fulfilled and unfulfilled erotic can be found in *Nāṭyaśāstra* VI: 45.

⁴³⁹ I quote Ghosh's (1951: 108–109) translation of *Nāṭyaśāstra* VI: 45–48, but I edit him where he capitalizes the first letter of certain words (e.g., "Erotic Sentiment," "Dominant State"). For the Sanskrit, see Bharata Muni, *The Nāṭyaśāstra of Bharata Muni*. Bombay: Nirnaya-sagara Press, 1894, 63–64. From this point, the *Treatise on Dramaturgy* goes on to detail the ways in which the two divisions of the erotic should be represented through actors' attitudes and physical gestures on stage.

⁴⁴⁰ Insofar as the dialogues with her suitors (1) protract discussions of love and partnership over several stanzas, and (2) reveal the interlocutors to be equally matched in terms of their eloquence and wit, these exchanges may further strike readers as reminiscent of the sung repartee that occurs at Tibetan weddings. Songs, *lu (glu)*, of "banter" or

emerge a *śṛṅgārin par excellence*.) But for the moment we might continue with the *Treatise's* explication of the mood, for its narrator anticipates a question readers of the *Life* might have upon witnessing Yeshé Tsogyal's refusals of her suitors and their subsequent heartache. To wit: Should the mood of the exchanges be viewed, overall, as erotic or pathetic? Feelings of desire and despair abound, but which wins the day?

After enumerating the histrionics that should accompany either the frustrated (*vipralambha*) or fulfilled (*sambhoga*) sense of *śṛṅgāra*, the *Treatise* states, "Now, it has been asked, 'If the erotic sentiment has its origin in love, why does it [sometimes] manifest itself through pathetic conditions?'" The reply speaks further to the matter of separation in particular:

The pathetic sentiment relates to a condition of despair [(*niropekṣabhāva*)] owing to the affliction under a curse, separation from dear ones, loss of wealth, death or captivity, while the erotic sentiment based on separation relates to a condition of retaining optimism [(*sāpekṣabhāva*)] arising out of yearning and anxiety. Hence the pathetic sentiment and the erotic sentiment in separation differ from each other [in terms of the level of optimism]. And this is the reason why the erotic sentiment includes conditions available in all other sentiments.⁴⁴¹

"sport"—which, in eastern Tibet, may be referred to as *lushak* (*glu shags*), or fall, in central and western Tibet, broadly under the category of *lushé* (*glu gzhaz/bzhad*)—differ from what we find here, however, primarily in terms of their metrical structure, though they also diverge in content. While *lu* typically contain verses of even-numbered syllables, Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with her suitors are made up of odd-numbered syllable lines. Further, lofty religious concerns seek to overtake worldly ones. On this matter, see esp. Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Folk Songs from Gyantse and Western Tibet*, 2nd, revised and enlarged edition, Artibus Asiae. Supplementum 22 (Ascona: Artibus Asiae Publishers, 1966), 15. Suffice to say here that although religious motifs are not absent from *lu*—indeed, there are *lu* associated with religious ceremonies—Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with her suitors exhibit greater overlap with the category of *gur* (*mgur*), or "religious songs," and, as I mentioned, they appear to aspire to the status of *nyemngak* (*snyan ngag*, Skt. *kāvya*), or ornate poetry modeled on works composed by writers in the classical Indian tradition. Kapstein (2003: 773) briefly observes the resemblance of yogic songs to poetic recitations and oral performances that continue to be practiced at weddings. For examples of *lu*, see especially Don grub rgyal 1985: 22–23. For song types and their descriptions, see Per K. Sørensen, *Divinity Secularized: An Inquiry into the Nature and Form of the Songs Ascribed to the Sixth Dalai Lama*, Wiener Studien Zur Tibetologie Und Buddhismuskunde 25 (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 1990), 17–22 and R. Jackson 1996. On the question of the proper spelling of *glu bzhes/bzhad* and to what, exactly, the term might refer, see Tucci 1966: 15. On Tibetan metrics (*sdeb sbyor*, Skt. *chanda*), see also Poucha 1950: 188–189.

⁴⁴¹ Ghosh 1951: 109, italics mine.

Here, then, the predominant mood is determined by whether or not a character experiences a state of ultimate despair (*nīropekṣabhāva*) or retains a sense of hope (*sāpekṣabhāva*) with respect to uniting with the object of their affection. Both the pathetic and the erotic moods may take separation as their subject, but there is, in short, no hope in the pathetic.

Interestingly, Daṇḍin's own characterization of the erotic mood in his *Mirror of Poetry* touches upon feelings of loss and longing caused by separation. As Erin Epperson observes in her work on the late-fourteenth-century Tibetan translation of Kālidāsa's *Cloud Messenger*,⁴⁴² the most easily accessible example of *śṛṅgārarasa*, or *gekpé nyam*, for Tibetan scholars would have then been an instance that referred to separated lovers.⁴⁴³ The example Daṇḍin uses to illustrate the erotic mood follows:

She is dead. I considered dying, departing to go with her;
How did I find Avantī here, in this very life?⁴⁴⁴

Ratnaśrījñāna's commentary (ca. tenth century) on Daṇḍin's *Mirror* explains this example in a way that may refer to the hope of which the *Treatise* speaks: "Unable to bear the separation (*viraham*) from her, because of being very enamored, he [i.e., the speaker] became convinced that the way to meet with her was to follow [her] in death."⁴⁴⁵ "Hopeful" or "optimistic" may not be quite right to describe the lover's outlook here, but we can see the *possibility* of reunion, albeit in death, held out, and so there may be hope for fulfillment yet.⁴⁴⁶

⁴⁴² Skt. *Meghadhūta*; Tib. *Sprin gyi phyo nya*.

⁴⁴³ Erin Epperson, "Kālidāsa in Tibet: Messenger Poetry in Translation" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2017), 69.

⁴⁴⁴ See Daṇḍin 1957: 163. For alternative translations of this example, see Eppling 1989: 1120; Gerow 1971: 239; and Epperson 2017: 69.

⁴⁴⁵ With minor emendations, I favor Epperson's (2017: 69) translation of the Sanskrit: *sa ca tadvirahamasahamāno 'tiraktatayā 'anumaraṇaṃ tatsaṅgamavartma vyavasasau*. Daṇḍin 1957: 163.

⁴⁴⁶ Epperson finds that most treatments of *gekpā* in Tibetan premodern exegetical commentarial works on poetics are invested in describing the fulfilled erotic over the unfulfilled. Moreover, she observes, the "erotic"—in the sense of

In light of Ratnaśrījñāna's commentary, we are apt to wonder whether Yeshé Tsogyal's valedictions to her suitors about meeting in a future life in a Buddha realm really offer them any hope for a (re)union with their beloved.⁴⁴⁷ Would they feel optimistic at the thought of joining her in a celestial abode, even if that meant that they could not partner with her as they wish? Would it simply be enough for them to see her again? In other words, the question remains: Are the exchanges between Yeshé Tsogyal and her respective suitors chiefly erotic or pathetic? What of Yeshé Tsogyal's own position, a position that seems to thwart the erotic, only sparingly indulge the pathetic, and advocate above all for the religious? How might we factor in the pious? To this, one could answer that perhaps Yeshé Tsogyal experiences *dharmasṛṅgāra* (Tib. *chos kyi sgeg pa*), which is to say, "passion for *dharma*," an intense feeling for or sensitivity in relation to virtue, or a reverence for good conduct.⁴⁴⁸

Whatever position one takes on the erotic/pathetic issue in the end, though, the fact remains that the *Life* actively takes up themes and tropes prevalent in Sanskrit love poetry, particularly the theme of separated lovers. And by the conclusion of the first chapter, we see that the erotic mood, whether or not it is overshadowed by the pathetic, has not been engaged only for its own sake.

passion for or sexual attraction to *another person*—tends to be downplayed. For example, Sakya Paṇḍita, in his *Gateway*, treats the erotic/passionate mood in a way that elaborates, by and large, "outer passion" (*phyi'i sgeg pa*), i.e., the mind's arrest at witnessing beauty, specifically beauty as it is apprehended in the external, natural world. The internal-erotic (*nang gi sgeg pa*) is defined in brief, but it is not elaborated, and the separated-lovers theme is entirely absent. See where Epperson (2017: 69–70) cites Gold 2008: 173–174. The *Life* might, then, be a relatively early instance in which the separated-lovers theme was actually taken up by a Tibetan author writing a *kāvya*-inspired work, even as the poetical tradition downplayed the inter-personal erotic.

⁴⁴⁷ See, e.g., PL 2013: 266.

⁴⁴⁸ On this topic, see Anthony Kennedy Warder, *Indian Kāvya Literature*, vol. 3, 8 vols. (Motilal Banarsidass Publ., 1989).

The Suitor Dialogues Summarized

While the previous chapter discussed exchanges among Yeshé Tsogyal and her guru as well as some of the characters she encounters on her journey through Oḍḍiyāna, we will now consider exchanges that appear earlier in the text. Here we meet two of Yeshé Tsogyal's three suitors,⁴⁴⁹ namely the youth Karṇa Sheltöchen and the Zurmokhar prince, Norbu Karsel.⁴⁵⁰ Recall that because she is wedded to the idea of practicing Dharma in an unpopulated land (*mi med yul*), Yeshé Tsogyal has refused, after much pleading on the part of her parents and court officials, to marry either a prince from Bheta, a region of the Indian subcontinent, or a more local, Tibetan royal youth from Zurkhar. For that, she is bound, beaten, and sent to the gallows.

Since, as she puts it, she would be inclined to commit suicide (*lceb pa*) if she were prevented from practicing Dharma anyway, she resigns herself to this fate. But a pious minister named Drénakara intervenes on her behalf and advocates that she instead be banished to (conveniently) an unpopulated valley. Her father agrees after the minister appeals to the king's parental affection for his child, and Yeshé Tsogyal is escorted by young men and women from the palace partway to Shingrong Nakpo, the dark, dense forest where she will spend her exile.

⁴⁴⁹ As I noted in chapter two (p. 102n173), this character is referred to as "*khye'u*," a term which may technically refer to youths either male or female. Within the *Life*, however, *khye'u* seems to refer to young males, and so I take Karṇa to be male in this chapter. That said, my overall sense with this character is that it can slip between male and female, perhaps depending upon a particular storyteller's tastes. Karṇa is reminiscent of several other characters in Indic and Tibetan literature who, whether male or female, are always a figure who tries to accompany the protagonist into exile. Karṇa may not be properly a "suitor" in the same way that the Bheta and Zurkhar princes are, but his character speaks and acts in ways that recall paragons' beloved friends (e.g., Chandaka, the maidservant in Mandārava's story) as well as spouses (e.g., Yaśodharā, Maddī, Sītā), though I would argue that the *Life's* tilts Karṇa in the direction of a slighted spouse overall.

⁴⁵⁰ Personal names and/or titles for these characters vary to different degrees across witnesses. The Zurmokhar prince is consistently Norbu Karsel (Clear White Jewel, or "Zhönnu Karsel" i.e., "Young Karsel"), but as I noted above (note 143), the locale "Zur/Zurmo" varies as "Zung mo" and "Zungs mo" are also used to refer to his place of origin. I take the rendering in Pema Lingpa (2013: 277) for Karṇa Sheltöchen, but this figure's name varies. Depending on the spelling of the first syllable, usually either *gar* or *kar*, the figure could be interpreted as either a Gar-clan youth (with a crystal crown ornament, rather than an earring or earrings) or a character inspired by Karṇa of the *Mahābhārata* who is said to have been born donning armor and earrings (Tib. *rna cha*; Skt. *kuṇḍala*).

Among the members of her convoy we find the youth Karṇa Sheltöchen, who, the narrator relays, had previously been someone beloved by the princess. Unwilling to part with her, he grabs onto her robes, and with tears streaming from his eyes, he begs her not to leave him behind.

The term *yidzaba* (*yid mdza' ba*)—i.e., "close" or "intimate" as in a "close/intimate" friend—is used to describe Karṇa in relationship to Yeshé Tsogyal, and her responses to his pleas for her to either stay in the palace or run away with him reflect a sense of the pair's history and genuine affection for one another. Compared to Yeshé Tsogyal's earlier correspondences with the Bheta and Zurkhar princes, these dialogues are considerably more tender and pathetic, both in the sense of expressing (and stirring) emotions and for being made up of utterances that are pitiable in their own right. Karṇa's words may move Yeshé Tsogyal to feel compassion for him, but they do not change her mind. As the youth departs brokenhearted, a powerful sense of loss lingers over the scene.

The narrative then separates the dialogues between Karṇa and the Zurkhar prince with details about the new setting in Shingrong Nakpo, well beyond the walls of the palace. This is one of the work's lengthier descriptive passages uttered by the narrator rather than one of the characters, and it offers details about the dark wooded ravine that make it sound paradisiacal rather than its previous renderings as uninhabited save for its malevolent spirits. There, Yeshé Tsogyal sustains herself on the fruits of wild rose plants (*se ba*) and she uses their leaves to make drinkable concoctions, clothes, and cushions. She furthermore frolics with the fowl and game animals of the wood, and "keeps company with them in the manner of mother and child" (*ma dang bu yi tshul du 'grogs*). Treetop songbirds sing to her sweetly, and the trees themselves undulate in her direction; water pools around her wherever she dwells; new, never-before-seen

flowers sprout up from the earth; pleasant sounds issue forth without a perceivable source; non-human beings salute and circumambulate her; fragrant smells perfume the valley; and many other wondrous signs occur.⁴⁵¹

Reminiscent of Indian literary re-descriptions of supposedly terrifying, inhospitable forests as, upon closer inspection, welcoming and abundant, this passage not only reframes the setting, it slows the action of the story, and, with its ongoing list of lovely features, lulls the reader into a sense of calm and comfort as Yeshé Tsogyal might experience it. The palace emerges by contrast as the truly inhospitable place—abundant in riches but wanting in opportunities to practice religion; full of family and friends but devoid of genuine care. At this point in the story, Yeshé Tsogyal has secured the life for herself that she always wanted, even at the expense of family support. She is not without companionship thanks to the creatures of the forest, but she is nevertheless alone, as she had hoped, and so there is nothing to distract her from her practice.

It is all the more jarring, then, when the scene shifts to the Zurkhar court, where the royals have just heard tell of Yeshé Tsogyal's exile. The narrator relays to us that upon hearing this news, Prince Norbu Karsel assembles his ministers. He then plies them with food and drink, and he begs their advice about how to win the princess over. Is it advisable, he asks, to send a convoy to ask the princess's father for her hand,⁴⁵² or should he mount an army and kidnap (*phrog*) her? Or, he continues, would it be better for him, bedecked with ornaments and

⁴⁵¹ PL 2013: 279.

⁴⁵² Part of this section in PL 2013: 280 seems confused about who is speaking (or should speak) to whom. The sense is that the prince and his ministers are consulting about a plan to obtain the princess, however.

elegantly dressed, to attempt to entice (*'khrīd par 'thad*) her—stunned as she will no doubt be by how attractive he is?⁴⁵³

The ministers discuss the matter among themselves and tell him that it would be preferable for the prince himself to go to the princess to try to seduce her. They remind Norbu Karsel that Bheta's prince, even though he is a descendant of the Śākyaś and his proposal was accepted by Yeshé Tsogyal's father, nevertheless failed to obtain the princess. Surely, they think, seduction through direct address is the way to go. They tell Zurkhar to dress in his finery, go to Yeshé Tsogyal, and appeal to her insistently so as to overwhelm her. He in turn tells the ministers that first they must obtain permission from Yeshé Tsogyal's father. The Tshalungkhar king again agrees to hand over his daughter, but he also advises the prince to approach the princess himself, for, he says, seduced by the prince (*rgyal bu brid na*), she might actually heed the call to marry.⁴⁵⁴

Prince Norbu Karsel then ventures out to Shingrong Nakpo with his entourage. Unlike Yeshé Tsogyal, he finds the valley an actively hostile environment, a wilderness in the true sense of the word. Beasts of prey refuse to grant him and his men passage; wind and heavy rain assail them; and jungle growth proves tenacious. The party eventually clears a spot in a meadow and build around it a walled encampment. From there, the prince leads two of his men through the brush to search for the princess. They are unable to find her until a day later when they spy birds and monkeys carrying fruits to an aquifer at the upper part of the valley. They follow after the animals until they reach an opening amid an enclosure of thickets. There they see Yeshé Tsogyal sitting with her back resting against a tree, absorbed in meditation.

⁴⁵³ PL 2013: 280.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

The Suitor Dialogues Translated

First, we will examine the exchanges between Yeshé Tsogyal and Karṇa Sheltöchen. Then we will turn to the dialogues between Yeshé Tsogyal and the Zurkhar prince Norbu Karsel before comparing Yeshé Tsogyal's interactions with both youths. Here more than anywhere else in the story, we see textual versions differ in the amount of detail they contain. The fabula remain consistent across witnesses, yet comparison brings authorial and editorial choices that seem to be about, above all, the extent to which the story ought to employ figures of speech, or poetic ornamentations (*rgyan*; Skt. *alamkāra*) to the fore.

Karṇa

A reader examining manuscript witnesses and editions side by side will notice almost immediately the difference between witnesses attributed to Drimé Künga and those attributed to Pema Lingpa in this vein. Generally speaking, the former contain more figures of speech, the latter fewer. To exhibit this difference, I translate from two editions of Drimé Künga- and Pema Lingpa-attributed versions printed in the same volume, noting (1) where certain lines are present in one but not the other version (or whole sections are differently ordered), and (2) where the actual figures of speech differ in kind. We will see that Karṇa's initial verses differ only slightly across texts, while variants begin to abound as soon as we reach Yeshé Tsogyal's reply.

Recall that upon her exile, a convoy of youths escorts Yeshé Tsogyal from the palace to Shingrong Nakpo, a dark, densely forested area unpopulated apart from its malevolent spirits. After her friends reach the lower part of the Tshalungkar valley, they turn to depart for home. The narrator tells us that as they depart, they collectively look back at Yeshé Tsogyal, and with tears dripping from their eyes like blood (*mig nas mchi ma khrag tu 'dzag*), they lament their bad

karma for having to part ways with her.⁴⁵⁵ Out from that crowd of tearful faces appears Karṇa, a childhood friend of the princess. He lingers, clutches her garments, with tears in his eyes, too, he states:⁴⁵⁶

- Your body is beautiful and your speech melodious;
Your mind's focus is the benefit of others.
In your beloved (*grog*s), you inspire love.⁴⁵⁷
Your youthful body, with the nubility of a sixteen-year-old—
[5] Has a hue which is similar to that of a *punḍarika* flower,
and the fragrance of lotuses white and red-green.
The wrap on your head is adorned with vermillion flowers.⁴⁵⁸
Your two eyes resemble blue *utpala*;
Your eyebrows are hazy, like mirages in the sky;
[10] Your two ears, like the hue of *sala* tree flowers;
And the tip of your nose is quite round and ruby-hued.
With the smile of a lotus your face beams—⁴⁵⁹
Your teeth are cream-colored, like an unsullied conch;
Your tongue: a supple, soft cushion—an unfurled lotus leaf.
[15] The texture of your body, velvety as plush satin.
Your neck bears aloft a victory banner.⁴⁶⁰
Your waist is lovely and slender in the manner of a peacock[’s feather].
Your feet amble with the leisure[ly gait] of a young golden goose.
Your lovely smile is like the autumn moon.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁵ PL 2013: 277.

⁴⁵⁶ To aid readers, I have numbered the lines in the left margin, but the numbers do not reflect the lines as they might be counted continuously within any given text. Line numbering accounts for the phrase connectors or close-quotation markers "he/she said" (e.g., *ces smras*) that occur at the end of each individual's statement, but because each statement also begins with a variation on the speech tag "he/she said," I have omitted quote-closing phrase and inserted a blank line to avoid redundancy in my translation.

⁴⁵⁷ This line capitalizes on the polyvalence of the term *grog*s, i.e., "friend," "companion," but also "lover" and in tantric contexts, "consort."

⁴⁵⁸ *dbu la thod bcings me tog li khri'i brgyan*. PL 2013: 277. At this same line, some versions describe Yeshé Tsogyal's hair instead. See DK 2013: 197, for example: *dbu skra mthon mthing lcug ma'i lo 'bras 'dra*, i.e., "Your blue-black hair is like fruit of the vine." One can easily imagine a slippage between the nearly homophonous *töching* (*thod bcing*), i.e., "head wrapping," and *tönting* (*mthon mthing*), i.e., "blue-black" or "deep blue."

⁴⁵⁹ *zhal gyi 'od zer padmo'i 'dzum dang ldan*. PL 2013: 277. I have taken some liberties with this line since it is one of the more awkward in its literal English rendering, i.e., "The light rays of your face are endowed with the smile of a lotus."

⁴⁶⁰ That is, the creases of a woman's neck are said to make it resemble a tiered silk, cylindrical banner (Skt. *dhvaja*).

⁴⁶¹ Lines differ across versions, though in each, Yeshé Tsogyal's smile is describe to a greater or lesser degree. Cf. DK (2013: 197) at this point in the text which reads:

Your feet—beautified by a thousand wheels, lotus-rimmed—amble leisurely like a young golden goose.

- [20] Wherever you dwell is encircled by a full fathom of rainbow light.
 The sight [of you] ravishes my mind; the thought [of you] excites me.
 If I had the chance to be your companion, I would radiate admiration [for you].
 Until now, we have just been linked by our aspirations:
 We have a mental connection, but we have not had the opportunity for a
 physical connection.
- [25] In my thoughts, I hope for the power to be with you!
 Now, because of the wicked minds of the ministers,
 You were involuntarily banished from your parents, though cut from [their] flesh,
 [to] that unpopulated land, frightening and sorrowful.
 That land of Shingrong has many vicious wild animals;
- [30] In that desolate valley forest, there are very cruel gods and demons.
 Screeches—the various cries of birds—pain the mind.
 To a place like that, one does not dare send a princess.
 Even though you cannot remain in the palace,
 Since it is good to dwell in another comfortable abode,
- [35] I beseech you, O princess, partner with me inseparably!
 Because there won't be the king and his ministers, you'll feel happy someplace else.⁴⁶²

In the first three lines of this passage, we find Karṇa mapping his assessment of Yeshé Tsogyal along the common tripartite schema of body, speech, and mind (*lus, ngag, yid*). In the most straightforward terms, we hear again what we have heard from other characters several times before: Yeshé Tsogyal body is beautiful, her speech melodious, and her mind altruistic.⁴⁶³

Karṇa's emphasis in the fourth line lands decidedly on Yeshé Tsogyal's body, however. With that, he transitions from a means of describing the princess through factual statements (*rang bzhin brjod pa'i rgyan*; Skt. *svabhāvokti alaṃkāra*) to embellishment through figurative

-
- [20] At night, you go to sleep late, and rise early the next morning.
 Your conduct leisurely; your disposition friendly and happy.
 There's a smiling expression on your face; the sidelong glances of your eyes are beautiful;
 And wherever you dwell, your countenance is encircled by a full fathom of light.
 Pleasing to behold, comely, and with a beautiful smile,
- [25] Like the smile of a *pingka* (var. *bim pa*, "peach"); like the round pith of a lotus;
 O, comely beauty, you, young lady/princess!
 In whatever place you dwell, that place is encircled by a full fathom of rainbow light.

⁴⁶² PL 2013: 278; Cf. DK 2013: 197.

⁴⁶³ Compare PL 2013: 262 where the narrator earlier describes Yeshé Tsogyal, there referred to as Princess Pema Cham (*lha lcam padma lcam*), in many of the exact terms we find used by Karṇa and the Zurkhar prince.

speech (*dpe* and *gzugs can gi rgyan*; Skt. *upamā* and *rūpaka alaṃkara*). The focus shifts from Yeshé Tsogyal's countenance as it is broadly viewed to a concrete focus her physical attributes. In that regard, we are first treated to a consideration of her body in general—nubile, *puṇḍarika*-hued, smelling of lotus flowers—and then to a fine-grained, physiological analysis of her head and facial features. From details about her eyes, eyebrows, ears, nose, teeth, and tongue, our gaze is drawn (perhaps outward to the whole, but likely downward) to her skin's velvety (*snum*, lit. "oily") texture, then to her neck, her slender waist, and her feet. From there, it is back up to her smile, and out again, now beyond even her body's complexion to the rainbow light that infuses the space around her.

Where textual versions differ among one another, they do so in some of the details. Elsewhere we find Yeshé Tsogyal's hair described as blue-black (*mthon mthing*) as a particular fruit,⁴⁶⁴ her feet beautified by wheels and lotus-rimmed (*padma khyud*), and her glances sidelong (*zur mig*)—an especially prevalent characteristic of beautiful, coquettish women in Sanskrit *kāvya*—but the movement of the verses remains the same. That is to say that however Yeshé Tsogyal's features are elaborated upon, in each version, Karṇa's words take us from an overall, gross assessment of Yeshé Tsogyal as an embodied individual to a focus on her very body, one that scans her physical features top to bottom, head to foot.

The reader is asked to frame, even punctuate, the process of taking in the parts with moments of regarding the whole, that is, her entire physical being. At the start, we consider, with Karṇa, Yeshé Tsogyal's voice, complexion and scent, and, at the end, we gaze not *at* but *around* her, our eyes drawn to her aura. The eye is captured and made to focus, compelled to conjure an

⁴⁶⁴ *mthon mthing lcug ma'i lo 'bras*. DK 2013: 197. This could refer to musk mallow (*Abelmoschus moschatus*), because it had dark seeds. But it seems more likely to me that it could refer to jamun/jambolan fruit (*Syzygium cumini*) or a type of grape. For the use of the word *lcug ma* in reference to various plants, see Pasang Yonten Arya, *Dictionary of Tibetan Materia Medica*, trans. Yonten Gyatso (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998).

image of Yeshé Tsogyal piece by piece, feature by feature as each resembles or partakes of the essence of beautiful things in the natural world. We might imagine this process useful for visualizing her as one would a deity. But Karṇa's aim, at least, is decidedly that of circumscribing his beloved, both in the sense of depicting her visually and marking off some of the bounds of her character.

After the line about Yeshé Tsogyal's youthfulness—a line that mirrors the first and third as it links its elements with a coordinating particle (here *la*)⁴⁶⁵—we see that the verses favor connections based on visual resemblance, similarity in qualities or attributes, or likeness in terms of behavior. Whichever the case, simile, or *pé* (*dpe*; Skt. *upamā*), is the order of the day. Relationships between the subject of comparison (*dpe can*; Skt. *upameya*) and the objects of comparison (*upamāna*) are indicated by semantic units that refer to similitude explicitly. Tibetan terms for "like," "similar with/to," and "resembling" (*'dra*, *dang 'dra*, *bzhin du*, *lta bu*) appear throughout, with the term *'dra*, simply "like," doing most of the connective, comparative work.⁴⁶⁶

The most prevalent form of simile that appears above and throughout Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with the youths would appear to be the simile of objects, *vastūpama* (Tib. *dnogs po'i dpe*),⁴⁶⁷ in which two things are likened based on a single shared quality, with the quality implied

⁴⁶⁵ *mdzes pa'i lus la snyan pa'i gtam smra ba/ yid kyi spyod pa gzhan la phan sems can* (var. *che*)/ *mdza' ba'i grogs la brtse ba'i sems byed mal/ gzhon nu'i lus la bcu drug lang tsho can* (var. *rgyas*). PL 2013: 278. The second line disrupts what would be an otherwise consistent rhythm punctuated by the *la don*-s (i.e., the *la*-s) in ABAB. One might expect to see the line rendered as "*yid kyi spyod la gzhan pa'i phan sems can/che*," which would make for three beats before the *la don* (and the same basic conceptual sense), but the phrase *gzhan la phan* occurs in Tibetan far more often than the alternative.

⁴⁶⁶ Apart from the repeated use of *'dra*, one also notices the prevalence of *dok* (*mdog*), an abbreviation of *kadok* (*kha mdog*, var. *kha dog*; Skt. *varṇa*), which means "appearance," "color" or "hue," or "complexion." The repeated use of this word, which I render primarily as "hue" above, keeps the reader's gaze on the visually perceptible surface of things, particularly how they appear to Karṇa's ravished mind (*yid 'phrog*).

⁴⁶⁷ On the types of *upamā* elaborated in the *Kāvyaḍarśa*, see especially Eppling 1989: 408–539.

(e.g., "Your two eyes [which are blue, implied] resemble blue *utpala*."), but we also find metaphors (*rūpaka*; Tib. *gzugs rgyan*) in which identification rather than mere similitude is evoked (e.g., "Your tongue [*is*] a supple, soft cushion—an unfurled lotus leaf."⁴⁶⁸ Notably, in addition to evoking *puṇḍarika* and *utpala* flowers in Sanskritized Tibetan, Karna likens Yeshé Tsogyal's smile to the autumn moon (*zla bas ston ka*; Skt. *śaracchandra*), a favorite metaphor, simile, and *epitheton ornans* for a young woman's face (*bzhin ras*, *zhal ras*, *gdong*) in classical Indian poetry.⁴⁶⁹

Although the *upamā* above (i.e., "Your two eyes resemble blue *utpala*.") is easily identified as an object simile because it directly echoes the example offered by Daṇḍin in his *Mirror*, generally speaking, without a clear reference to a theoretical text like Daṇḍin's (or the aid of a commentary on such work), attempting to classify similes and metaphors written (or uttered) in Tibetan using in Sanskrit literary terms can be tricky business. For example, one might identify the latter example—"Your tongue [*is*] a supple, soft cushion—an unfurled lotus leaf."—as a *mālārūpaka* (garland metaphor), i.e., a non-complex metaphor that identifies the subject with successive objects (cushion *and* leaf). But if we change the inflection of the translation, we might thus find in the line a complex metaphor, one that qualifies Yeshé Tsogyal's tongue *and* the cushion as leaf-like simultaneously: "Your tongue—a supple, soft cushion—[*is*] an unfurled lotus leaf."⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ At 2.16 in the *Kāvyaḍarśa* we find: "Your face is like a lotus; [your] eyes like blue *utpala*.' This is the simile of objects (*vastūpamā*), for the common attribute is to be inferred." *rājīvamīva te vaktraṃ netra nīlotpale iva / iyaṃ pratiyamānaikadharmā vastūpamaiva sā*. Tib. *khyod kyi gdong padma ni bzhin/ mig dag utpala sngon po bzhin/ zhes pa chos gcig rtogs byed pa/ da ni dngos po'i dpe nyid do*. See Anukul Chandra Banerjee, ed., *Kāvyaḍarśa: Sanskrit and Tibetan Texts* (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1939), 56.

⁴⁶⁹ For more on the use of the moon as an object of comparison or identification for a woman's face in Indian-inspired Tibetan poetics, see Sørensen 1990: 44–45.

⁴⁷⁰ See Gerow 1971 for a comprehensive description of *upamā* and *rūpaka*.

Scrutinizing every simile in the *Life* until each might be definitively classified could prove a stimulating exercise for the student of *alamkara*, but it strikes me that to dwell too long on this endeavor would be to miss the forest for the trees. Given the difficulty of determining the type of simile or metaphor one encounters at every turn—an undertaking that, I would argue, the *Life* does not really encourage anyway—we might speak instead to how the similes and metaphors work both individually and in conjunction with one another to engage the reader in the story in particular ways.

In the *Life*, it may be that the use of stock embellishments works, first, to suggest literary sophistication (attributable both to the *Life* itself as a composition and to certain characters within it), and second, to prime the reader to expect a set of exchanges that either follow suit with or upend other poetic exchanges that track heavily in the same or similar figures of speech. It may be, in short, less important to categorize a given simile or metaphor than it is to recognize it as a one that cuts across various texts and contexts. As Karṇa speaks of Yeshé Tsogyal's beauty and good qualities using similes and metaphors common to poetry in the erotic mood, the text signals a thematic, perhaps even an internal generic, shift to matters of romantic love, as I suggested above, and it encourages expectations for fulfillment or frustration. What sort of beloved figure will Yeshé Tsogyal end up being? How will her relationships with others unfold? Given the larger themes of the work, the reader might expect an unexpected—which is to say, an unconventional—resolution to the *Life's* erotic interludes, and so she may likewise take pleasure in the experience of watching them play out.

For thinking about how the various similes might work on the reader amid this process, Anne Blackburn's observations about the ways in which figures of speech serve as "ruminative triggers" are especially illuminating. In her work, Blackburn finds that similetic and metaphoric

figures of speech in Buddhist commentaries function as "stylistic characteristics of [a] text that draw the text and the reader more closely together and thus intensify the quality of the reader's reflective experience."⁴⁷¹ They inspire questions like: To what degrees and in exactly what ways does x or y object relate to its object of comparison? How, we might ask, is Yeshé Tsogyal's smile like the autumn moon and/or a blossomed lotus? And how, by extension, is it different from these objects? Moreover, such figures of speech encourage reflection on the rhetorical force of the connections they make. Why describe Yeshé Tsogyal's gait as the leisurely gait of a young golden goose? It may be that her gait *is* similar to that of a goose in Karṇa's estimation, and so that is one reason to choose this image and all that it suggests about grace, leisure, etc. But, a further reason: the image of the golden goose links the *Life* and its protagonist with classical Indian works that describe other figures who amble in such a fashion. In short, similes and metaphors can not only prompt questions about the appropriateness of their use vis-à-vis the objects they connect. For the attentive reader steeped in a vast corpus of Indo-Tibetan literature, such figures of speech may also evoke, as we saw earlier, intertextual resonances that inflect the reader's understanding and experience of who Yeshé Tsogyal is.⁴⁷² To the attentive reader, Yeshé Tsogyal is not just someone who ambles in a leisurely manner like a goose. She is also someone who ambles like other literary figures who amble in that way.

Before offering further analyses along these lines, let us continue on with translations of Yeshé Tsogyal's exchanges with her suitors so that we may gain a richer sense of the themes addressed and the tone of the exchanges on the whole. Immediately below we will see how

⁴⁷¹ Anne M. Blackburn, *Buddhist Learning and Textual Practice in Eighteenth-Century Lankan Monastic Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), 158.

⁴⁷² See *ibid.*: 164 on contexts of wider reading in which it is natural for a monastic reader to make associations among texts, "and to read one with the echoes of another in his ears."

Yeshé Tsogyal mirrors the progression of Karṇa's words. First, she comments upon his attractiveness and acknowledges the beneficence in his words. Then, just as Karṇa speaks of their shared aspirations, their mental, though not yet physical, connection (*sems 'brel; lus 'brel*), and his desire to partner with her inseparably (*'bral med 'grog par*), she turns also to the subjects of longing (*gdung ba*), connection (*'brel*), and separation (*'bral ba*; Skt. *viraha*). In response to his plea to flee with him to a comfortable place, Yeshé Tsogyal tells Karṇa:

- O, young lad, attractive and mature,
 [40] With a smiling expression like a blossomed lotus,⁴⁷³
 Your speech is eloquent and you are saying things which are beneficial.
 Even though the intensity of your longing (*gdung ba'i shugs*) compels you to hold on,
 [Exile] is the command of my parents, and I cannot go against it.
 Past karma or bad karma (*sngon gyi las sam las ngan*), whichever is [the cause],
 [45] In this unpopulated, empty valley—a dark land of malevolent spirits—
 I will perform some ascetic practices and dedicate [the merit] for a future birth.
 Though banished to an unpopulated land, I have no cause for regret (*'gyod*).
 I will go on living in this empty valley for a few years.
 Until then, lad, remain in good health!
 [50] I pray that we meet [again] soon, without any problems [along the way].

Again, the lad spoke:⁴⁷⁴

- Since we are connected by karma and infatuated [with one another],
 O beautiful and comely princess, you *must* listen!
 [55] If you won't listen to the words I've said,

⁴⁷³ DK versions tend to include considerably more about Karṇa's appearance in Tsogyal's response. For example, DK 2013: 198 reads:

- [40] Like a lotus in full bloom, you have a round (*zlum* perhaps = or a pun on *'dzum*, smiling) face,
 Your body exhibits the major and minor marks of Vairocana (*rnam snang*),
 Your radiant complexion resembles (*lta bu*) [that of] Amoghapāśa (*don yod zhags pa*),
 You have minor marks in the beautiful shapes (*dbyibs*) of precious jewels.
 [45] From whatever angle of perception, its outline (*dbyibs*) is that of a spherical flower (*me tog zlum pa*).
 Your scent is medicinal, like a lotus stem,
 Your speech is eloquent and you instruct in gentle terms,
 Your disposition easy-going and roads you travel leisurely.
 You are like the *udumbara*, and you have the hue of the body of a *kalapingka* bird.
 [50] The brilliance of your smile ravishes the lucid mind.
 Especially in terms of your features, O lad, you are without compare!
 Though you speak, out of longing, for my benefit...

⁴⁷⁴ EAP570 1/2/13 (the Dongkarla Temple ms.) varies from the rest of the versions which state the above in that it specifies that Karṇa sings his response to Yeshé Tsogyal. See EAP570 1/2/13 24b.5: *yang khye'us lha lcam la glu 'di long ngo*. It looks like "*glu 'di long ngo*" was written in after the original verb/verb phrase had been smudged or erased. The verb *long* = *len pa* (i.e., *glu len*), i.e., "to sing."

- And you won't go to another comfortable place,
 [But proceed instead] to the unpopulated land of malevolent spirits, Shingrong Nakpo,
 Because you say, 'It is previous karma and I go without pretense (*zol med*),'—
 If that's the case, O princess, then I will follow you.
- [60] O princess, if I don't see you,⁴⁷⁵ my heart will break (*blo snying stor*)!⁴⁷⁶
 If I am separated from you, I will be miserable.
 O princess, if I might be separated from you one day,
 The world could be filled with gold, but my heart would be empty.
 Everything I ever needed and wanted could be piled up,
 but I would [still] be unhappy.⁴⁷⁷
- [65] Compared to that, better still is [living in] an unpopulated land of malevolent spirits.
 So wherever the princess ends up, that is where I will live [too].
 With anguished thoughts I pray, let us not be separated for one single moment!"

And the princess said:

- [70] Handsome youth, although that's quite true,
 There's no reason (*don med*) for two to suffer on account of one!
 Because of my previous karma, there was my parents' decree;
 And I, a princess, was subjected to the ministers' law.
 Since I incurred blame, I bear responsibility for my shame.
- [75] Lad, why would you come [with me] to a desolate land?
 Better you go back into the palace.

⁴⁷⁵ Most versions are like PL 2013: 278, i.e., *lha lcam ma mthong*, but EAP105 1/3/113 21a.3 has *lha lcam mi 'thong* [sic. *thong?*]. "Princess, don't send (imp. *thong* from *gtong ba*) me away!" also makes good sense contextually.

⁴⁷⁶ DK 2013: 199 has:

- [60] Not seeing you, O princess, my lungs and heart are empty!
 Separated from you, my mental faculties will fail (*dran pa nyams*),
 So I pray that we are always inseparable, forever.
 O you, smiling lady, if it is possible that we separate one day,
 I, a lad, will be oblivious (*dran med*) and miserable (*snang ba skyo*).
- [65] Like a mother whose only child has died, I will suffer.
 Since I feel [this way??] (*cha chod* = var. *khyad chos?* *khyed chod?*), I will roam the empty valley.
 Over a pleasure grove, a lush canopy extends;
 [Where] the sprouts of lotuses like (*'dra udumbara* flowers grow,
 With leaves, pith, flowers, and pollen,
- [70] And bees who communicate by buzzing about.
 [There] the wind stirs the branches and leaves of wish-fulfilling trees;
 And those trees have a sweet aroma,
 And daughters of the gods drink (*'thul = 'thung*) the nectar of [their] flowers.
 [In] place like that, one can live in leisure and contentment,
- [75] But, if it were without you, O princess, it would be like [a garden of] flowers wilted away by frost.
 Compared to that (*de bas*), whether it is an unpopulated land of *'dre* [or whatever else],
 If that place is where you are, I'll live there, too...

⁴⁷⁷ In Dri med kun dga'-attributed versions, rather than talk about having everything he wants and still being unhappy, Karṇa says that he will be as sorrowful as a mother whose only child has died (*bu gcig shi ba'i ma ni sdug bsngal ltar*) if he and Yeshé Tsogyal are separated. See line 65 directly above and, e.g., BDRC W8LS19942 30a.2–3 and BDRC W8LS18309 21a.5–6.

- In your own land, amass attendants and riches.
 [There] charming, beloved friends will honor you.
 [Just as] the lord together with his subjects and attendants, come together there [to make] merit,
- [80] You, lad, will also feel happy there.
 If you dare not let go of your thoughts for me,
 And if you find yourself feeling love and affection (*mdza' ba'i yid dang brtse ba*)—
 This ring of mine with its row of jewels,
 O lad, let it serve as your memento (*yid kyi sems rten*⁴⁷⁸)!
- [85] The riches which are loaded up on the backs of horses and mules (*rta drel*⁴⁷⁹),
 I offer to your attendants and subjects in order to eliminate their poverty.
 I have neither attachment nor clinging (*chags zhen*) to anyone or anything.
 To be in accord with Dharma is the highest [form] of contentment and happiness.
 Without grasping, not attached, I pray that we meet face to face in the *dharmadhātu*.

Notable, of course, is the fact that in the Drimé Künga-attributed versions of the exchange between Karṇa and Yeshé Tsogyal, we have considerably more in the way of figurative speech from both youths. For example, in Yeshé Tsogyal's first reply to Karṇa's pleas to remain with him, she begins as she does in the Pema Lingpa-attributed versions with "O, young lad, attractive and mature," but then she goes on to detail for Karṇa what makes him so attractive beyond his "smiling expression like a blossomed lotus."⁴⁸⁰ Further, after Karṇa tells Yeshé Tsogyal that she will break his heart, he adds several lines that conjure for her an image of the "comfortable place" in which he hopes they will dwell together.

Whatever the degree of ornamentation from either party, however, we find Karṇa continually emphasizing connection while Yeshé Tsogyal vies for separation. Interestingly, she

⁴⁷⁸ This gesture calls to mind (1) the moment in the *Buddhacarita* when the Bodhisattva gives his crown jewel to his groom Chandaka to bring back to king Śuddhodana (see Olivelle 2008: 167), and (2) the moment in Orgyen Lingpa's *Testimonial Record* when Princess Mandāra removes her ornaments upon her departure from the palace and gives them to a maidservant to bring home. See O rgyan gling pa 2006: 202. Cf. Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: 144; and Padma gling pa 1977: 288.2–3.

⁴⁷⁹ DK versions favor elephants (*glang chen*). See EAP105 1/3/32 14b.5; EAP570 1/2/32 26a.1; DK 2013: 200/BDRC W8LS19942 31a.4; and BDRC W8LS18309 22a.4.

⁴⁸⁰ PL 2013: 278.

never explicitly confirms nor denies that she feels affection or longing for Karṇa, too. That is, Karṇa describes their relationship as if his experience of it were also true for Yeshé Tsogyal, but she does not express or describe reciprocal feelings, at least not unambiguously. After his reply to her initial response, in which he emphasizes, among other things, that he will be miserable upon their parting (lines 53–67 above), Yeshé Tsogyal offers what might seem like an affirmation of her feelings. She states, "Handsome youth, although that's quite true..." Yet what is "true," exactly, remains open to interpretation. Is it true for Yeshé Tsogyal as well that she and Karṇa are infatuated with one another—does she here acknowledge her own longing to be together?—or is it true, generally speaking, that it is better to live in a desolate land of malevolent spirits than a palace full of riches if one's heart proves empty in the latter? Perhaps Yeshé Tsogyal intends, simply, to acknowledge that Karṇa will indeed feel miserable without her. The reader is allowed to wonder, in other words, which statements made by Karṇa are in fact validated by Yeshé Tsogyal. (All, some, only one?) At this juncture, we can imagine Karṇa hearing his affection reciprocated just as we can imagine Yeshé Tsogyal effectively avoiding the matter of her feelings for him altogether.

One thing is certain, though: where Karṇa would have them speak of love and longing, what falls under the topic of *kāma* in Sanskrit, Yeshé Tsogyal makes karma rather than *kāma* the focus of their exchanges. She continually articulates her bad karma as both grounds and cause for separation. Karṇa, on the other hand, in his attempts to argue on her terms, articulates an understanding of karma as a connecting force. To Karṇa's claim that they are not only karmically linked but also infatuated with one another, Yeshé Tsogyal tells him that she is compelled by past karma or bad karma (*sngon gyi las sam las ngan*) into lonely exile (lines 42–44). And at his offer to accompany her, she states "There's no reason for two to suffer on account of one! /

Because of my previous karma, there was my parents' decree; / And I, a princess, was subjected to the ministers' law. / Since I incurred blame, I bear responsibility for my shame" (lines 71–74). Whatever the force of Karṇa's karma (or the pair's shared karma), it seems, Yeshé Tsogyal would yield to the effects of *her* karma above all else.

Much as she did in the exchanges with her parents, Yeshé Tsogyal bids Karṇa farewell with the hope that they will meet again either soon (perhaps in this lifetime) or at some unspecified time, presumably in a future birth, in another realm. The exchanges then end on a note bittersweet. One feels badly for Karṇa, captivated as he is by such a ravishing, virtuous figure, and it is difficult for us to see how, pained as he is, he will find the happiness Yeshé Tsogyal envisions for him back in the palace. But why, after all, couldn't he accompany her into Shingrong Nakpo? Would it inhibit her practice? Karṇa's company might, by implication, be detrimental to her, but as she frames the problem, it is more an issue of personal responsibility. She would not see "two suffer on account of one" (*gcig phyir gnyis*), for she alone must bear responsibility for her actions. And yet here, finally, is hope for Yeshé Tsogyal. With her parents and the court ministers now at a distance, she will be able to live as she pleases.

If we step back and consider the relatively short exchange with Karṇa as a whole, striking is the way in which it effectively retells Yeshé Tsogyal's story up to this point in the *Life*. Excerpted, the exchanges with Karṇa could serve as the story of Yeshé Tsogyal's renunciation in miniature. (It functions in a way similar to the *precis* we saw in Chapter 108 of Orgyan Lingpa's *Testimonial Record*, though it only relays part, and a different part, of Yeshé Tsogyal's story.) When Karṇa recapitulates the events that led to her torture and exile, we are reminded of the degree to which Yeshé Tsogyal has just suffered for failing to comply with the wishes of others; and when she herself refers back to her parents' command, she and the reader are made to revisit

the carelessness with they treated her. That said, Yeshé Tsogyal's argument—that she must obey her parents' decree and meet the demands of her karma—is apt to strike us as more of a strategy than an affirmation of her filial piety at this point in the text. In her exchanges with the king and queen, she did not once capitulate. Why the sudden desire to uphold their wishes if not because they result in the outcome for which she had been angling all along?

Zurkhar

The exchanges that follow with the Zurkhar prince, Norbu Karsel, are more extensive and more heated than those Yeshé Tsogyal had with Karṇa. The overall theme of union and separation continues along similar lines, but the language about union intensifies, perhaps because he is more of a suitor proper. Overall, Zurkhar emerges the brashest, most aggressive of any of the men interested in partnering with Yeshé Tsogyal. Not only is he willing to dispense with any initial propitiatory verses extolling the princess's beauty, intelligence, and benevolence, he speaks most of all and frankly about his own feelings of sexual desire. In what are mostly Drimé Künga-attributed versions, it is not until the second time Norbu Karsel speaks that he makes any attempts to sound like a *kāvi*. In Pema Lingpa, it is only Yeshé Tsogyal (and only late in the exchanges) who describes pleasure groves full of buzzing bees and dewy lotuses, stock objects and images of *kāvya* in the erotic mood.⁴⁸¹

Recall that when the Zurkhar prince finally finds her, Yeshé Tsogyal is in the midst of meditating in an opening in a thicket, her back against a tree, Buddha-like in her repose.⁴⁸² The

⁴⁸¹ On bees and lotuses as objects which refer metaphorically to male and female lovers in classical-Indian-inspired Tibetan poetry to this day, see, for example, Lama Jabb, *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature the Inescapable Nation* (Maryland: Lexington Books, 2015), 138 and 195.

⁴⁸² The scene calls to mind the moments before the Bodhisattva reached enlightenment, particularly the assault of Māra's hordes and the seduction attempted by his daughters. See Dg.T. *Skyes rabs* (ge) 49b.5–7.

narrator tells us that just seeing (*mtshong ba tsam*) the princess exhilarated (*yid kyang spro*) the prince, and his agitation in this regard sets him at odds with the tranquil princess before they even meet face-to-face. Longingly, Zurkhar gazes at her and says:

Hail, O princess, the sight of you ravishes my mind (*yid 'phrog ma*)!
I look at you and my inner feelings are exposed (*bag chags shar*).
Thinking about what must have happened based on what I heard moved me.
Since you are constantly on my mind (*sems la 'phreng bas*), thinking of you [like this]
makes me feel sad.

- [5] To see you [this way] in reality, I am in disbelief.
Out of anguish (*gdung ba'i sems kyis*), I forget about food and clothing.
O princess, while my mind is on you, I am distracted (*dran pa g.yo*)!
Physically elated, my channels, winds, and essences blaze.
With just the thought [of you], passion wells up (*bag chags skyes*) in me.
- [10] When I hear you, it is like a dream.
When I see you, my lust (*sems kyi bag chags*) is satisfied (*ngoms*⁴⁸³)
I am convinced that you will quell my feelings of desire.
I request to meet with you and to talk just a little.

- [15] The princess, looking at the prince, said:
O, handsome youth, like the stalk of a lotus!
With your speech melodious, words pure, and thoughts luminous,
You speak out of your longing for me (*nga la gdung bas smra*),
But in this unpopulated, empty valley—a land of malevolent spirits—
- [20] O youth, there are no men like you.
You are the trick of gods and spirits, adept at causing confusion.
I, an outcast (*rigs ngan*), wander this uninhabited, desolate land.
I don't understand the meaning of the words with which you greet me.
O youth, what are you saying? There's nothing for you here.
- [25] I, a maiden, keep company with rock demons and birds.
Unclean like a fawn, you should avoid me.
You and I should not pair up (*mi sdeb*); we should be on our own!

The prince replied:

- [30] O comely beauty, O princess, you must listen!⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸³ As a v.t., *ngom pa* means "exhibit" or show off; as a v.i., it means "to be satisfied." Here it may play on both senses. Above the prince states that his feelings are exposed, but now that he sees Yeshé Tsogyal, perhaps his desire for her is (at least partially) sated.

⁴⁸⁴ PL 2013: 282. Dri med kun dga'-attributed versions include several lines before the prince says, "O comely beauty, O princess, you must listen!" E.g., DK 2013: 203–204:

- [30] O young [maiden] with a comely and delightful body and a smile,
[Your body] velvety and soft as a white swan's; like the silhouette of a flower;
And sweet-smelling with a leisurely gait.
You exhale a pleasant voice, and ravish the minds of others.

- I am the lad Norbu Karsel.
 I am a human, not the conjure of gods and spirits.
 I set off swiftly from Zu[r]mokhar,
 And, out of love, I traveled a long way;
 [35] Unconcerned about my life (*srog la mi phang*), I braved packs of wild beasts,
 And after I crossed mountain passes and valleys, I came to you, O princess!
 I am a hygienic man, free from impurities and endowed with the aroma of incense.
 O princess, why can't you and I, the two of us, be together?
 I bid you, [let's] speak of passionate love (*vid la chags pa'i dga' ba*)!
 [40] After you have left a desolate, uninhabited valley such as this one,
 Come to [my] luxurious palace!
 Together, you and I can do as we please.

The princess responded:

- [45] O youth, you have spoken truly.
 But I, a princess, won't go anywhere else from here.
 By my feckless parents,⁴⁸⁵ I was banished to a desolate valley.
 They did not cherish me (*sems la ma gces*, var. *ma brtse*), and sent me to a land of spirits.
 You are of noble lineage, the son of a king,
 [50] And I prefer to keep company with wild animals.
 However grand the luxuries in a king's palace,
 Grander is the increase of my virtue in an uninhabited, desolate valley.
 However stately the service of your subjects and servants,
 So exalted are the monkeys and rock demons who serve [me in] meditation.
 [55] Your ornaments and finery may be the fine hues of gold and turquoise,
 But [by donning] the leaves of trees, lessened is the ripening of evil deeds.⁴⁸⁶
 The meat and *chang* you consume is indeed delectable to your palate (*kha la zhim mod*),
 But for the body's bliss[ful heat], better are the fruits of trees [to eat].⁴⁸⁷

-
- [35] O princess, you are unforgettable; I am inspired by the thought of you (*dran pas bskul*).
 I, a youth, am stuck on you (*vid la bcag*), O princess,
 So come, let's make haste to Zungmokhar!
 Because of love, I have traveled a long way.
 Unconcerned about my life,
 I braved packs of wild beasts,
 [40] I traversed mountain passes and valleys to come before you, O princess!
 I am a child of man, not the trick of malevolent spirits...

⁴⁸⁵ PL 2013: 282 reads *go ma chod pas pha mas* (= *go ma chod pa'i pha mas*?). Lit. parents who are "useless" (*go ma chod pa*) "incapable," perhaps alt. "unsympathetic."

⁴⁸⁶ PL 2013: 282 reads *sdig pa'i rnam smin chung*. Here the play may be on *smin*, which can mean "ripe" or "maturation," but can also mean "bright." That is, the line may be translated as above or as "Gold- and turquoise-colored ornaments and finery are good/pretty, but leaves are less dulled (*smin chung*) [by] aspects of evil."

⁴⁸⁷ None of the Tibetan configurations of this line rhyme within it or between it and the previous line. Nevertheless, the lines are easy to rhyme in English. Alternatively: "The meat and *chang* you consume is indeed delicious, / But for the body's blissful heat, tree fruits are more [nutritious]."

- Although you race around on that Gyiling steed (*gyi ling rta*⁴⁸⁸),
 [60] Channels, winds, and *nadis* hasten me on the path of liberation.
 Great is your ancestry; you are the son of a king—
 But greater is spiritual attainment; it is the fine jewel of Dharma practice.⁴⁸⁹
 I bid you, because I don't care for (*snang ba ma dbyung* [= 'byung?] *bas*) worldly
 attitudes,⁴⁹⁰
 O youth, don't hinder my accomplishment of Holy Dharma!
 [65] O prince, I implore you to practice (*mdzad par zhu*) Holy Dharma, too!

Again, the prince spoke these words:

- Comely princess, you must listen to these words I'm saying!
 By all means, if you're keen (*vid smon*) on religion,⁴⁹¹
 [70] Embrace palace life and delight [yourself] with Dharma, too—
 Serve lamas,
 Revere the Jewels,
 Be kind to slaves and servants,
 And give generously to the humble and poor!
 [75] With your body, [you can] pay homage and circumambulate;
 With your speech, [you may] chant and take refuge;
 With your mind, cultivate *samādhi* and enlightened mind.
 Once you know that, you can, better than most other Dharma practitioners,
 Practice virtue as a householder.⁴⁹²
 [80] Since these instructions I have imparted
 Are tender (*sha tsha*) and beneficial words from the heart (*snying gtam*),

⁴⁸⁸ Tucci (1966: 116) suggests that this is a type of Amdo horse renowned for speed.

⁴⁸⁹ DK BDRC holdings, similar to EAP570 1/2/132, add here:
 However lofty the reign of your lineage (*rigs kyi btsun pa rgyal srid mtho na'ang*),
 A lowly position (*dma' ba'i sa ni*) is a happier state for my mind (*sems gnas lugs bde*).

⁴⁹⁰ PL 2013: 283.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. One could also take the prince to be saying "if you're interested in morality. Lines 70–80 vary slightly across PLs and DKs. E.g., DK 2013: 204–205:

- Comely, beautiful princess, O you, young [maiden],
 Listen with love to the words I'm saying!
 [70] By all means, O princess, if you wish for religion,
 In the palace, you won't be made to go against Dharma (*chos la 'gal' mi 'gyur*).
 With devotion to the kingdom's lords, I bid you venerate [them];
 I bid you care for subjects, servants, attendants and slaves alike;⁴⁹¹
 With your hands, I bid you give food and drink to the extent that you're able (*lag gis lcog/bcogs na = lag
 gis lcogs na*)
 [75] With your body, I bid you circumambulate objects of worship to the extent that you're able;
 With your speech, please instruct us in ways conducive to harmony (*mthun rkyen*) as you're able;
 With your mind, I bid you be as compassionate and benevolent (*snying rje phan sems*) as you can.
 Once you come to understand (*shes par gyur na*) [it this way], you can practice whatever Holy Dharma
 [you like]!

⁴⁹² PL 2013: 283 reads *shes na byed phal che bas/ khyim pa dge ba sgrub pa che*.

O princess, if you don't come to the palace,
Even greater than the virtue, will be the moral wrong.
I beseech you, no matter what (*cis kyang*⁴⁹³), to listen to me!

[85]

The princess said:

O prince, your advice is well articulated.
That religion taken up by householders *is* good, but I won't do it (*nga mi byed*).

O prince, listen [to me] with words as well-[spoken] as yours!

[90] On the shore of the sea, there is a place bright and cheerful (*dwangs shing spro ba*⁴⁹⁴),
There are groves of flowers and medicinal herbs across alpine pastures,⁴⁹⁵

With ambrosia sweet to taste and nectar with a sweet aroma,
And bees, six-legged, emit a pleasant buzz,⁴⁹⁶

With the smell of incense, it is an uninhabited, isolated spot.

[95]

If, in such a place, you and I, the two of us,

Came together, it would seem like we could satisfy our desire;⁴⁹⁷

However, if we don't behold [the scene as just] an exhibition of our minds,⁴⁹⁸

We won't be happy; it would [just] be the cause of delusion.

Not attached to anyone or anything, I wander this empty valley.

[100]

O prince, don't resent me (*ma 'khang zhig*), a princess!

It's not fitting for me, an outcaste, to be the wife of a prince.

A prince of a noble family is a reverend one in his own land.

Rule over your kingdom in accord with the Dharma!

⁴⁹³ Typically, in the *Life*, *cis kyang* seems to mean "by all means," "anyway," or "whatever the case may be." Here, however, it seems to have an emphatic sense, as in "no matter what" or "you really must."

⁴⁹⁴ Other pairings could be "limpid and joyful," "lustrous and warm," "bright and radiant," or even "bright and sunny" where "sunny" in English conveys literal brightness/radiance, brightness of spirit (i.e., cheerfulness), and warmth. Each sense is within the range of *spro ba*.

⁴⁹⁵ Some Dri med kun dga'-attributed (e.g., 2013: 205) add a line between "On the shore..." and "There are groves":
On the shore of the sea, there is a place bright and cheerful,
An island where attachment to precious things is non-attached, faultless.
There are groves of flowers and medicinal herbs across alpine pastures...

Only in EAP105 1/3/132 does a line about songbirds follow this one (and precede the next line about ambrosia). See 18b.1: *skad snyan bya rigs sgra ni snyan pa sgrogs*. Lit. "The sounds of species of songbirds are sweetly crooned."

⁴⁹⁶ DK (2013: 205) elaborates on the bees and includes further lines about rain and lotuses:

The six-legged ones who are swarms of bees, [have] a manner which delights.
The wind of their gently fluttering wings rustles and stirs [the air].
And they emit pleasant sounds, buzzing as they hover in the air.
Drops of water, sparkling and unclouded (*snyog med*), fall,
And splendid (*zil mo*) rain showers imbue (*'thul*) the sky with flowers.
That pleasure grove (*skyed mo*) is a place of lotus plants (*a mo ljon pa*, var. *u mud ljon pa =ku mud ljon pa?*).

⁴⁹⁷ *Ihan gcig tshogs na 'dod pa tshim tshim 'dra*. PL 2013: 283.

⁴⁹⁸ *Ibid.*: *sems kyi ltad mo ma mthong na*. Lit. "if we don't see the image/drama/show of the mind..."

- Along with your entourage, return to your own land.
 [105] We are not destined to be partners in this life;
 So I pray to meet you in Akanīṣṭha in the next!⁴⁹⁹

The prince said:

- Your advice is quite heartfelt,
 [110] O princess, and you are beautiful to me!
 If you won't satisfy my desire,
 I'll appear a wise man, but I'll [really] be a fool.
 O comely, beautiful princess,
 If you will not become my wife,
 [115] Then whatever I say is like an echo!
 Still, listen, and, O beauty, keep [this] in mind!
 In this uninhabited, empty valley—a dense jungle,⁵⁰⁰
 A place of birds, monkeys, tigers, and leopards—
 O princess, this is not a place for you to live!
 [120] To my luxurious palace,

⁴⁹⁹ From line 103 above until the end, DK 2013: 206 reads:

With faith in accord with Dharma, rule your kingdom with Dharma;
 Why won't you listen to these words of mine?
 My heartfelt advice is loving aid!

⁵⁰⁰ DK (2013: 206) differs beginning at line 117 and exceeding no. 125 above. I leave the following unnumbered to avoid confusion.

You are situated in a valley thicket, near snow mountain ranges,
 Where clay and slate [rebound] dismal (*snang ba skyo*) echoes.
 Seen through the dense wilderness in an enclosed clearing,
 Are trees with extended branches and leaves;
 And flowers with piths that have sweet scents,
 [Myriad] colors, and nectar gathered by bees.
 Under a cool, live canopy (*bsil yab gson na*, var. *dkyil na*),
 Where small birds (*'jol*) emit their chirps (*rang skad 'don*),
 And *kalapinka*: sounds of pleasant chatter (*ca co*).
 Cuckoos and parrots (*khu byug ne tso*) collect the juices of fruits,
 There is the distinct sound (*lhang lhang*) of a spring, sparkling and unclouded.
 Amid sandalwood and wild rose trees,
 Are monkeys, rock demons, deer, and young birds (*gzhon nu'i bya*).
 It is melancholy, this uninhabited, empty valley—
 A place where outcasts who practice meditation live.
 O beauty, it is not a place for you!
 O comely lady, you should be a queen in a palace.
 There is time to think about the words I've spoken about peace and happiness (*zhi bde*, var. *zhi dal*).
 I can't help it; I act out of love.
 Together, let's go to my palace.
 Don't be so defiant, and don't speak [so] willfully!
 O young maiden, you will be like a flower in the palace,
 And I like the pure essence (*dwangs ma*) of a canopy of sweet nectar.
 Why can't we be together, as one and inseparable?
 I won't hinder your virtuous deeds;
 At all costs, let's set out on our journey straightaway!

You must come along, out of love for me (*bdag la brtse ba'i sems*).
Don't be so stubborn and don't turn away (*u tshugs ma che ngo ma ldog*)!
Let you and I be inseparable!
I won't hinder your virtuous deeds.

[125] Now, at all costs, come along already!"

The prince, having grabbed onto the princess with his two tear-filled eyes, [then] said:
If you won't come away from here no matter what, O princess,
My heart, here and now, will shatter to pieces (*tshal par 'gas*)!

[130] When such a threat to my life has occurred, how can you be happy?

Following this declaration, the exchanges between Norbu Karsel and Yeshé Tsogyal finally conclude when two members of the prince's entourage, saddened by what they have witnessed, decide that Yeshé Tsogyal's rebuff poses a sufficient enough threat to their lord's life (*sku tshe la bar chad byed par 'dug*) such that they ought to intervene. Therefore, they seize her and utter:

Just as a flower, its nectar, and its scent
Are joined together by aspirations and karma,
So is it with the prince and you, O Princess; you two,
Combined, will become the best of the best.
Now, come with us straight away!⁵⁰¹

At this, Yeshé Tsogyal cautions the prince's attendants:

O, two great ministers who were appointed by karma (*las kyis bskos pa*),
Endowed with strength similar to that of a wild man,
So cruel and harsh like bandits.
To not act as friends who aid Dharma practice,
It is bad karma, O ministers, and great moral wrong!
You are quite wicked.
Harm done to others ripens for you.
It is the cause of suffering in one's next life.
Therefore, do not harm me.
Let me stay in this uninhabited land!⁵⁰²

With that, she clutches the ground and a tree branch, kicks the rocks around her, and cries out.

⁵⁰¹ PL 2013: 284.

⁵⁰² Ibid.: 285.

But again, the two attendants, as they are whipping (*brab cing*) the princess's body with thorns just as her father's ministers had, demand that she come with them. Finally, they succeed in hauling her away.

To quote Anne-Marie Blondeau's summary of the *Life of the Child Pema Öbar*, "all of nature grieves" at the seizure of the story's protagonist.⁵⁰³ As the prince's henchmen drag Yeshé Tsogyal away, the forest animals chase after her, gale-force winds rage, flowers wither, and the valley's luster fades (*lung pa'i mdangs yal*). When the search party reunites with the rest of Zurkhar's entourage, princess in tow, everyone is thrilled. They praise Yeshé Tsogyal in chorus, telling her how gracious she is to become their prince's queen. Again, voices within the text speak of the princess's wondrous physical attributes—her radiant smile, youthful body, pale complexion, leisurely gait, etc.—and she is offered clothing and ornaments worthy of her station.

Exchanges with the Youths Compared

Crude as he is, it may be difficult for the reader to feel pity for the Zurkhar prince to the degree his attendants do. By his own estimation, however, his state, like Karṇa's, is nevertheless a pitiful one. Distracted by thoughts of his beloved, he says that he forgets about food and clothing (a problem commonly faced in separated-lovers *kāvya*). Caring not about his own life, he relays that he braved treacherous landscapes and wild beasts only to be spurned; and without the object of his affection, he says, he will die of a broken heart. Yeshé Tsogyal's response to Zurkhar echoes her words to Karṇa in that she tells him that she is not attached to anyone or anything; that she cares not at all for *samsāra*'s trappings.

⁵⁰³ Anne-Marie Blondeau, "The Life of the Child Padma 'od-'bar from the Theatre to the Painted Image," in *Zlog-Gar: Performing Traditions of Tibet*, ed. Jamyang Norbu (Dharamsala, H.P., India: Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, 1986), 38

But her argument about why they, the prince and princess, cannot be together not only takes a different tone, it also offers up a different line of reasoning. With Karṇa, Yeshé Tsogyal emphasizes that she cannot break her parents command, and that it is karma, whether one takes it to be the result of her own past actions or the accident of fortune, that has led her to such a fate.⁵⁰⁴ It is, as Yeshé Tsogyal has it, fate that keeps her and Karṇa apart. With Zurkhar, however, fate is hardly to blame. In response to his solicitations, Yeshé Tsogyal first cites her low, outcaste status as prohibitive of their union (see lines 22–27 of the Zurkhar exchange; i.e., they cannot marry because of their now starkly disparate ranks), but shortly thereafter (in lines 46–50) she again identifies herself as a princess, says herself that her parents failed her, and claims that it is her own preference to live in exile among the company of wild animals (*ri dwags grogs la dga'*). In short, where Yeshé Tsogyal earlier claimed to be resigned to her fate with Karṇa, now, with Zurkhar, we see her assert greater agency and ownership over her situation. At lines 100–101 she is, again, both a princess (*lha lcam*) and an outcaste (*rigs ngan*), but by this point in the text, Tsogyal's avowed incompatibility with Zurkhar seems less a matter of their disparate ranks than a problem of conflicting ideals.

The most striking difference between the exchanges with the respective youths, of course, is that Yeshé Tsogyal and Zurkhar debate questions about the nature of Dharma, not just whether to do Dharma or not. Both put forth some ideas of what constitutes it and how it might be well practiced. Their dialogue on the matter here echoes the points made by each party in their correspondence prior to Yeshé Tsogyal's exile. When he first sought her hand, Zurkhar told his ministers to remind the princess that she could still exert intense effort (*rtsol ba rab*) in pursuit of

⁵⁰⁴ With this line, Yeshé Tsogyal echoes the earlier claim by the pious minister Drénakara who tells her that is not her past actions (*sngon las ma yin*) that have led her to the gallows, but a fleeting circumstance (*'phral gyi rkyen*) or misfortune. See PL 2013: 275 where it reads *sngon las ma yin 'phral gyi rkyen las byung*.

Dharma however she wished (*gang bsam*) as a royal householder; plus, he added, as a woman of rank and status, she would have the benefit of being able to put her subjects and servants on the path of liberation (*thar pa'i lam*).⁵⁰⁵ Yeshé Tsogyal's concise response included a statement of her disagreement (*mi mthun*), a plea for Zurkhar not to hinder her path, and a concluding summary of her plan followed by her usual valediction about meeting in the highest pure realm in the future. "I, a princess," she said, "having practiced asceticism (*dka' spyad*) as my religion (*nga yi chos*), pray to meet you in the next life in Akaniṣṭha ('*og min*)!" she concludes.

We see the major points of those brief exchanges elaborated at 51–88 in the Zurkhar section above. There we find Yeshé Tsogyal resignifying worldly luxuries by engaging in a series of comparisons, and Zurkhar's idea of household Dharma is fleshed out. At Zurkhar 51–62, Yeshé Tsogyal has virtue exceed the riches of a palace; monkeys and rock demons equal royal servants in exaltedness; tree leaves outshine gold and turquoise; tree fruits exceed meat and *chang* in delectability; the channels, winds, and *nadis* overtake a fine, swift steed; and spiritual attainment trump noble ancestry. Zurkhar responds at 69–79 with a plan alternative to forest asceticism, however framed, which advocates partaking of all that palace life affords while serving lamas, revering the Jewels, being kind to servants, giving to the poor, etc. Notably, the prince's argument concludes with a personal appeal. Since he has spoken tender (*sha tsha*) words from the heart (*snying gtam*) with her benefit in mind, he says, if she continues down her chosen path, even greater than the virtue (*dge ba*) Yeshé Tsogyal will cultivate, will be the harm or moral wrong (*sdig pa*). She will not only make him seem a fool if she does not return with him to his palace, her refusal will shatter his heart.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.: 266.

The vulnerability Zurkhar expresses and the subsequent despair he feels upon failing to persuade Yeshé Tsogyal not to renounce is by now quite familiar to readers—so familiar as to approach redundancy. Although Zurkhar nuances the argument against renunciation by elevating the Dharma practiced by householders, his principal claim is one we have heard uttered often and in so many words before: "If you renounce, you will hurt me." A sentiment earlier couched in concerns about the political ramifications of Yeshé Tsogyal's decision is here, as with Karṇa, baldly exposed as a concern for one's own personal happiness.

Insofar as a reader may still, in the end, be interested in determining the dominant mood (*rasa*) of the suitor dialogues, one might embrace Zurkhar's final expression of emotional (and physical) vulnerability as key to reading them on the whole. In the end, his would-be lovers' exchange, like Karṇa's, rings out more pathetic than erotic. Although one might argue that Yeshé Tsogyal offers each figure hope for reunion with her in a future life, her own desire to reunite with her suitors as they wish, which is to say as lovers, seems to be nil. To suggest in her valedictions that they may meet in Akaniṣṭha is, rather, to aspire for each of them to reach the highest of the pure realms. And although Yeshé Tsogyal herself does not offer any detailed sense of what Akaniṣṭha signifies or what occurs there, even readers who do not bring to bear text-external knowledge of Buddhist form realms would, based on her earlier words, understand Akaniṣṭha as a realm one reaches once the mundane is transcended.

One might, of course, moreover read in Zurkhar's speech a cue to reflect further on questions about Dharma's most efficacious form. How does the Dharma practiced by an ascetic really compare with that of a householder? Is it true, after all, that more harm than good can come of renouncing household life? But neither resolving the mood, nor the question of how best to practice Dharma strikes me as the point of formulating and presenting these exchanges as

such. A reader interested, more broadly, in how the dialogues work on the whole might wonder why, on the heels of the lengthy exchanges between the princess and her parents, have we just been treated to two more dialogues that end in despair? What do further dialogues in this vein achieve?

Both in terms of content and form, if one were to view Chapter I of the *Life* as advancing a single argument up to the point of Yeshé Tsogyal's capture by the Zurkhar prince, it would be that renunciation is a profoundly life- and, more specifically, relationship-altering decision.⁵⁰⁶ As individual characters within the world of the text call for attention to what they have to say, readerly attention may indeed be drawn to focus on the particular issues they debate at any given turn. But no matter which specific issues attract our attention and interest, the greater demand at every turn is that we witness the interrelational effects of renunciation, effects no doubt difficult for many individuals to abide. In scene after scene, we find renunciation's propriety called into question, and with every renewed sense of commitment to asceticism and Dharma that Yeshé Tsogyal asserts, we see family members, friends, and potential lovers left in pain. Especially where characters have not themselves wronged Yeshé Tsogyal, such scenes are, moreover, especially painful to watch.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ On this theme, see also Jonathan Geen, "The Power of Persuasion: The Use of Dialogues to Justify and Promote 'Early' Renunciation in the Jaina and Hindu Traditions," in *Dialogue in Early South Asian Religions: Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain Traditions*, ed. Brian Black and Laurie Patton (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT, USA: Routledge, 2015), 191–206.

⁵⁰⁷ One wonders about the reader who, reading the *Life*, is made not only to witness Yeshé Tsogyal's renunciation, but also encouraged to recall their own decision to renounce.

Structure as Rhetorical Strategy, Dialogue as Revelatory

It is this slippage between the abstract representations of narrative and the presentational encounters of dialogue—a slippage between reading and witnessing—that accounts for the questions I presented at the start of this chapter. If Taksham's seventeenth-century version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story loses anything by paraphrasing or omitting the extensive dialogues we find in Chapter I of the *Life*, it is a more affective sense of what was at stake for the princess during her marriage negotiations. (In fact, in the earliest chapters of Taksham's version, any sense of Yeshé Tsogyal's personal agency is so diminished that the text does not present her as advocating for herself or her renunciation much, if at all.) Comparing the fourteenth-century *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* with Taksham's version, we find that to state or argue that Yeshé Tsogyal endured certain trials is much different from demonstrating the ways in which this might have been so.

One of the major positions I have been taking throughout Part II of this thesis is that, to paraphrase Flaubert, a story interwoven with the dialogue of contrasting characters achieves a dramatic effect. What a dramatic effect is, exactly, and why an author would aspire to create it—and, moreover, what appears to be at stake in achieving it in any given instance—is not always obvious nor the same in every case, to be sure. To offer up but one sense of what dialogue can do for readers as our entrée into analyzing its effects, though, we might consider the case of the mid-twentieth-century British novelist Henry Green, whose art tended "toward pure dialogue and physical notation—a refusal of narrative explanation."⁵⁰⁸ Reflecting on his *oeuvre*, Green noted that his was usually a project of "trying to write something which has a life of its own, which is

⁵⁰⁸ Adam Thirlwell, "The Many Moods of Henry Green," *The Nation*, February 2, 2017, <https://www.thenation.com/article/adam-thirlwell-on-the-many-moods-of-henry-green/>.

alive," and which would, in turn, prove vitalizing for his audiences. The aim was ever to "create life in the reader," said Green, via "dialogue [that could] mean different things to different readers at one and the same time."⁵⁰⁹ Integral to achieving that aim was, as we see in his words above, minimizing the authorial (or narratorial) voice, a voice that might explicitly or implicitly try to diminish multivalence.⁵¹⁰

Dialogue is often depicted by literary critics in the senses captured by Green. That is, it is said to be "alive" as well as "enlivening." It is alive or "live" for being a "present-making" strategy, a device that not only mimetically simulates real-time action in the text, but also draws a reader close to that action.⁵¹¹ Thanks to dialogue, the action in a story may be made to run up against, even coincide with, a reader's own temporal present. Newsom's summary of the distinction between reading the narration of a story event and reading a dialogue in which two characters oppose one another is helpful in this regard: "Instead of being asked merely to follow plot and character, the reader [reading a dialogue] is more like a bystander *caught up* in a quarrel."⁵¹² The degree to which any given text makes a reader feel like a bystander who is caught up becomes the question. In a story rife with dialogue, to what extent and in what senses are we made to feel present at any instant? Moreover, what is a bystander and how is such a figure positioned with respect to the verbal event by which they stand? Among other things,

⁵⁰⁹ Henry Green, "A Novelist to His Readers: Communication without Speech," *The Listener* 44 (November 9, 1950): 505–506.

⁵¹⁰ Interview with Terry Southern, "The Art of Fiction XXII. –Henry Green," *Paris Review*, 5 (Summer 1958). I understand Green's avowed resistance to the authorial voice as a resistance to text-internal determination—to stating in a monological fashion what it all means. For Green, inconclusiveness spurs his desired level of readerly engagement.

⁵¹¹ See Thomas (2007: 80) for one example where dialogue is described with words that emphasize its vitality and mimetic potential.

⁵¹² Newsom 2009: 23, my emphasis.

readers may be situated as neutral witnesses, potential mediators, judges—or, in each case, potential interlocutors. If potential interlocutors, they may be aligned with an already articulated side or free to verbalize either, or even a new or further, viewpoint.

How close in time, space, and intellectual and emotional investment the reader is made to feel in relation to the verbal exchange varies case-by-case, in other words, and the implications are not always the same. As Green suggests, I take dialogue to be broadly enlivening, or at least thought-activating, for the reader because it inevitably makes interpretive demands.⁵¹³

Particularly where characters' statements and, by extension, their stances might be ambiguous and/or multiple viewpoints are presented as viable positions on some matter at hand, the reader is "activated" in the sense of being hermeneutically engaged. Because neither meaning nor "truth" may reveal themselves clearly on their own in the space of conversation (or as one witnesses a conversation), one must work them out. In the case of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*, as in that of many a *namtar*, one could argue that the truth of the story—whatever it all means—simply reveals itself through its protagonist. Whatever is true or right will be connected to or uttered by her, she upon whom the *Life* most often compels us to focus. Fair enough. But even discovering what Yeshé Tsogyal means, or what is true in relation to her and through her words, is not always a simple or straightforward endeavor.

Newsom's assessment of the two distinct genres—didactic narrative and wisdom dialogue—that together make up the Book of Job supports this sense of dialogue being a technique that is reader-activating and demanding (or, better, reader-activating for being demanding). "In contrast to the passive, childlike role assigned the reader in the [Joban] didactic narrative," she says, "more is required [in the wisdom dialogue portion]." There readers are not

⁵¹³ Bakhtin's (1983: 315, 324) work shows that dialogue needn't be "dialogic," i.e., anathema to merely answering one statement with a corrective or a demand to adhere to a single point of view.

only asked to engage with complex metaphors and rhetorical devices. They are also asked to judge voice against voice without "an evaluative narrator to tell the reader what's what, no plot to award victory to one position over another."⁵¹⁴ In David Shulman's words as he discusses the "dialogic and agglutinative" character of the *Mahābhārata*, we find there, too, a kindred sentiment about voice against voice and what it can do for the reader:

[The *Mahābhārata*] is not a text that presents a single, unambiguous truth; rather, as one finds in the "purāṇic" genre generally, it brings a variety of often conflicting viewpoints into play, studies their points of congruence and tension, and usually fails to resolve them into a unilateral position...At the same time, the endless dialogues tend to feed into the structure of ongoing dilemmas, a structure that is amazingly supple and absorptive, to the point that the world itself is seen as held within this frame. Should one live within the world or, rejecting it, seek to transcend it? Is the latter possibility real? Are human actions free or totally determined? In either case, can one choose to fight for an earthly kingdom? Can we ever know truth?⁵¹⁵

Note Shulman's shift from the third-person pronoun "one" to the first-person plural "we" as he draws out some of the text's central dilemmas. It is not just the characters within the *Mahābhārata* who have these questions. We, as witnesses to their exchanges, come to ask these questions of our circumstances in time as well. In the end, both Newsom and Shulman suggest how, absent an authoritative voice that states outcomes or truths to be known—as we might find in a didactic prose tale—readers enter a freer situational frame, one that does not demand wholesale assent or rejection of what has been stated, but nevertheless demands engagement with multiple, sometimes competing, claims.⁵¹⁶

⁵¹⁴ See, for example, Newsom 2009: 18.

⁵¹⁵ See pp. 28–29 of David Shulman, "Toward and Historical Poetics of the Sanskrit Epics," in *The Wisdom of Poets: Studies in Tamil, Telugu, and Sanskrit* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 21–39.

⁵¹⁶ Bakhtin 1983: 342–343.

Finally, and partially to points made by Bacot et al. as I reiterated them earlier, dialogue is also said to enliven a story's characters, to make them and the stakes they feel seem real. Voice representation, in other words, can provide the reader with a sense of a character as a vital personality with certain habits, attitudes, thoughts, emotions, and, perhaps especially, specific patterns of speech. It can also tell us a great deal about characters' relationships with one another, with or without narrative intercession. That is, where diegetic frames are at a minimum in a story, the reader comes to learn about characters only through how they speak and what they say intersubjectively. Where diegetic elements do characterize the actants in a story, direct speech interchanges might add to, nuance, or contradict what the reader has come to know about a character apart from any dialogue. At times, we find that what is significant about a character might be communicated only in and through processes of speech.⁵¹⁷

In cases where the narrative and dialogue contain elements that conflict or contradict, even further interpretive demands are made on the reader. As they speak, we may find that characters are not who we thought they were. (A character described by a narrator as "kind," for example, may nevertheless speak to or about another unkindly or describe their own being and actions as unkind. At that, one is asked to reconcile narratorial and self-description.) Further, characters may not always mean what they say. They may lie, or speak ironically. They may even contradict themselves. In Yeshé Tsogyal's case, for example, we know that she describes herself as alternately capable and incapable. She says she is lacking in all the characteristics that would ensure her spiritual success, yet she remains committed to Dharma's pursuit and indeed succeeds in her endeavors. Situated as they are amid diegetic passages, then, particularly those

⁵¹⁷ On character exposition through speech, see Alter 1981: 66, 74–77.

that are character descriptive, the dialogues also allow the reader to assess, even challenge, dialogue-external characterizations of the figures within the text.

In short, to whatever degree they add to, nuance, or differ from prior narratorial descriptions, the descriptive elements each character offers about themselves and one another inform us further about who they are, how they appear, and how they relate to others. Through the suitor dialogues, we learn more about what makes Yeshé Tsogyal physically beautiful and about how others perceive her, visually as well as morally. What is especially visual—Yeshé Tsogyal's physical attributes we cannot "see" but through our mind's eye— is elaborately described for us, meted out in similes. The moral, or behavioral, however, is more borne out for us than diegetically described. That is to say that we learn a great deal about each figure from their interactions with one another, not just the explicit statements about their character. When Yeshé Tsogyal is said to be beautiful, we must take every other character's word on the matter. But when she is said to be focused on the benefit of others, or even infatuated, we might take not only her word(s) into account, but also the way in which she converses to be evidence for or against such characterizations.

Given explicit *and implicit* say in who they are, what they think, and what matters to them adds dimensionality, and life, to the characters. Helpful, too, for assessing characters in this particular case is the contrast we see between Yeshé Tsogyal's interactions with Karṇa and Zurkhar respectively. We learn, in other words, not only about the characters through their individual interactions with one another, but also through comparing the ways in which they speak and behave towards different others throughout the text. Multiple dialogues on the topic of her ties to beloved others and her commitment to Dharmic practice allow us to ask: Who is Yeshé Tsogyal with someone like Karṇa? Who is she with someone like Zurkhar? Does she

behave the same way with similar character types, or does she reveal different aspects of her self depending on who her interlocutor is, how he behaves, and what he has to say?

Had the author of the *Life* omitted the dialogues entirely, he may have had the narrator nevertheless cover them with a passage like: "As Yeshé Tsogyal reached Shingrong Nakpo, she parted with Karṇa, once her beloved who remained desperate to be with her forever. He tried to persuade her to run away with him, or let him join her in exile, but she refused his pleas, bade him well, and gave him her ring to remember her by. Then she met the prince of Zurkhar who also tried to persuade her to go away with him, but she refused him as well, told him of her preference for exile, bade him do Dharma in his kingdom, and prayed that they would meet in a future life. At the sight of the prince's dejection, two of his entourage members seized Yeshé Tsogyal in spite of her pleas not to do so." Lacking here is, of course, a robust sense of who anyone is beyond their name and circumstances. We do not know how, exactly, the two youths were refused, nor do we have a sense of how they reacted. Everyone's emotions remain mute. The narrator might provide more information in the passage I have imagined by way of adding adjectives and adverbs to nuance the scene (e.g., "Yeshé Tsogyal graciously refused the pitiable Karṇa. After he made several, increasingly desperate pleas, he departed dejectedly..."), but the reader would still be unable to assess the tone and tenor of the scenes of refusal for themselves, essentially because they are not there.

In short, dialogue authorizes the reader to pose questions to the narrative frame, questions that not only seek to discover Yeshé Tsogyal as a character, but also to assess the *Life* as a medium for information about her as a moral agent. Dialogue may, then, work to actively engage the reader in a dialectical relationship with the text. Insofar one gains a more robust sense of the characters and their own regard for what they say (and for what is said about them), the reader

becomes a more adept investigator/interpreter of the text. One discovers, above all, that what is true about and for Yeshé Tsogyal may not always be stated, or it may not always be stated plainly, but it can nevertheless be accessed. Through her manners of speaking and relating to others, one comes to know Yeshé Tsogyal in ways elsewhere unaddressed.

Conclusion

That the dialogues continue on for as long as they do suggests to me that the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* is aware that Buddhist literature, particularly life-story literature like itself, may never be done talking about the problem of renunciation. The issue calls out for careful, always renewed consideration, for solutions to the moral dilemmas it poses are not obvious. In *namtars* like the *Life*, readers certainly encounter ethical questions about paragons: Should they have hurt their loved ones as they did in pursuit of personal attainment for, ostensibly, the greater good, or should they have heeded intimate others' advice? But readers are also encouraged to put questions to themselves: Should I try to emulate this paragon? Would it be enough to revere them? Feel awed by them? Appreciate their aid?⁵¹⁸ Who a moral exemplar should be, and who everyone else, readers included, should be in relation to them are questions that generate lifetimes of ethical thinking.

My sense in reading the *Life's* first chapter is that it aims less to inspire thoughts of renunciation in the reader—how could it, when the choice seems to be only physically and emotionally punishing?—than it seeks to pair readers with a tenacious renunciant, namely Yeshé Tsogyal. We may, in the process of reading, receive a taste of what it is like to declare the

⁵¹⁸ On these questions vis-à-vis moral exemplars, see John Stratton Hawley, "Introduction: Saints and Virtues," in *Saints and Virtues*, ed. John Stratton Hawley, vol. 2, *Comparative Studies in Religion and Society*, 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), xi–xxiv.

intention to renounce, but we are above all made party to that decision in ways that would have us be its only viable champion. The model reader should emerge supportive of Yeshé Tsogyal, in other words. She is the party who would accompany Yeshé Tsogyal as no one else did or could—as a friend in Dharma, the only type of intimate other that Yeshé Tsogyal seems to lack.

In the end, direct speech exchanges allow readers to witness whole scenes, which is to say lengthy representations of interpersonal dynamics that reveal aspects of Yeshé Tsogyal's personality never before seen. It also exposes emotionality, or, rather, makes space for emotional expression. Voice is given to what might have been allowed to remain mute in other literary forms. In turn, the dialogues encourage the reader to weigh in affectively. That is to say that through their treatment of the emotions attendant separation by Dharma, let's say, the dialogues work to authorize the reader to encounter the issue as both an intellectual *and* emotional one. The reader is asked not just to consider what position they think is right—what a character like Yeshé Tsogyal should do, or should be allowed to do. They are also made to contemplate what she *does* do, and what sentiments they themselves feel in light of the choices she made.

CONCLUSION

This study of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* contributes to our knowledge of the development of the idea of Yeshé Tsogyal as a paragon of Buddhist virtue and an ideal tantric devotee. It traces the emergence of Yeshé Tsogyal as a figure in Tibetan literature from the twelfth century through the seventeenth, not with the hope of discovering new information about the empirical reality of an important woman in Tibetan religious history, but with the aim of breaking new ground in our understanding of how and when the "Mother of All Buddhas" began to be the individual one thinks of when one hears the name Yeshé Tsogyal today. With that, this thesis demonstrates the critical and transformative capacities of one version of her story, likely the earliest full-length account of her life. I argue that in its work-like aspects, this fourteenth-century story brings into the world several things that may not have existed before. Not only does the *Life* offer the first (as we know it) truly robust and rounded conception of Yeshé Tsogyal in its depiction of her as a multidimensional character thoroughly aligned with Indic Buddhist exemplars. It also seeks to make a difference in the lives of its readers by drawing them into an intimate relationship with the Tibetan princess turned tantric practitioner.

In chapter one, I summarized the historical context in which Yeshé Tsogyal was supposed to have lived, and I charted her development as a religious figure and personality in literature from the time of Nyangrel Nyima Öser's writing in the twelfth century up to the late-fourteenth. I also provided some preliminary information on the context out of which her fourteenth-century *namtar* emerged. This was a world in which Nyingma authors, writing in Nyangral's wake, were invested in bolstering cultic activity around Padmasambhava and in asserting the special efficacy of his "Great Perfection" teachings in particular. It was also a world in which doubt continued to loom over the authenticity of Nyingma-favored sources, and

controversy surrounded treasure-revealers who claimed to discover objects and texts concealed by Padmasambhava and Yeshé Tsogyal during Tibet's imperial Golden Age.

Chapter two centered on the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* itself, a work which we find attributed to two treasure-revealers, Drimé Künga and Pema Lingpa, *tertöns* born roughly a century apart. I began by addressing several of the issues that both the historian of Tibetan Buddhist literature and the literary analyst stands to confront as she encounters the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* not simply as a hagiography of an imperial-era woman, but as a so-called *terma* or "treasure" text, that is, a work granted authentic scriptural status. In my analysis, I included comparisons to certain other *Lives* also regarded as treasures, particularly the story of Princess Mandāra and the well-known seventeenth-century version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life attributed to Taksham Nüden Dorjé.

In chapter three, I examined the *Life* as a work of religious literature more closely, responding to the question, what type of written work is the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*? Although the title of the work often bears the Tibetan genre designation "*namtar*" or "life story," I argued that the details of that designation bore fleshing out. After engaging scholarship on *namtar* in Tibet and inquiring into the genre's overlap with "hagiography" as a genre designation and analytical category in scholarship on Christian religious figures' *vitae*, I presented a formal analysis of the *Life* aimed not at a reconstitution of the redactional levels of the work, but at questions pertaining to the potential uses of and model audiences for the work in Tibetan and Bhutanese Buddhist communities. There, in short, I treated the question of genre designation not solely as a matter of classification of the work, but also as a matter of orientation to the work—as, in part, a theory about how the *Life* should be encountered by the model reader.

Chapter four elaborated on the ways in which the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* reveals itself to be a densely intertextual work of literature. In this chapter, I sought ultimately to move beyond

source and influence criticism to analyze what might be the morally formative aspects of intertextual layering or integration. To achieve the task of moving beyond "the hunt for sources," I asked how and on what themes do certain aspects of these works focus readerly attention, and I argued that one of the main tasks of the narrative strategy of intertextuality is to increase the "scale of intimacy" that the reader experiences with the story itself.

My focus in this case was on what I refer to as the "tigress scene" in Chapter II of the *Life*, a scene only alluded to in the later, seventeenth-century version of Yeshé Tsogyal's life story by Taksham. Beyond demonstrating that this scene works to sustain the reader's sense of a strong parallel between Yeshé Tsogyal and the Bodhisattva (begun in Chapter I as the story parallels the *Life of the Buddha* and tellings of the *Vessantarajātaka*), I argued that when taken together with other intertextual elements within the *Life*, the scene contributes to a sense of the work as a vast signifying field, hardly exhaustible in terms of its meaning and, by extension, its potential relevance. It emerges a work to which the model reader ought to return continually to find further insight and inspiration.

While chapter four considered the ways in which intertextuality works to encourage the deepening of readerly intimacy with the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* (i.e., the story itself) as a whole, chapter five examined the use of dialogue as a literary device aimed at increasing readerly intimacy with the figure of Yeshé Tsogyal herself. There, I not only examined the ways in which certain features (motifs, tropes, metaphors) shared across Indian and Tibetan works stand to inter-animate one another, I also suggested several ways in which dialogue, broadly conceived, orients the reader and draws her into a particular relationship with the protagonist as she undertakes her renunciation.

Although there is a growing interest in exploring the ways in which dialogue features in South, Southeast, and East Asian works of religious, philosophical, and historical literature, many, if not most, analyses that discuss dialogue to date focus on the contents of debates. Few analyses tend more generally to how dialogue as a literary form may engage readers in various types of relationships with different voices or characters as they speak to one another within texts. This final chapter adds especially to scholarship in that vein as it examines not only what, exactly, Yeshé Tsogyal argues as she vies for the right to do Dharma over her *dharmā*, but how she expresses her position, and how the *Life* situates the reader with respect to her and her interlocutors as they engage in verbal exchange.

There is, of course, much more that can be said about the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* than what I have offered here. At present, I see several directions for further research in the areas of Tibetan studies, Buddhist studies, and the study of religion. In the immediate future, I plan to conduct a more comprehensive analysis of the poetic and potentially dramatic features of the work. This study will focus on (1) the ways in which the *Life* draws upon Indian poetic traditions for inspiration, both technically and thematically, and (2) how it compares to several other *namtars* that are formally akin to it. Examining more closely the *Life's* use of Indic literary motifs and ornamentations of speech could hone our understanding of the extent and depths of *kāvya's* influence in fourteenth-century Tibet. It might also help us see how authors like Drimé Künga innovated as they chose to address Tibetan Buddhist themes and concerns with tools and insights born of Indic literary and aesthetic theory.

Comparing the *Life* to other formally similar *namtars* (including *délok* accounts) might, for its part, give us a clearer sense of its generic profile. Beyond that, however, it could help us see how, if at all, the *Life* speaks together with other works of its kind in particular ways about

the path to salvation along tantric Buddhist lines. It may also aid us in gaining deeper, more nuanced insights into how Tibetan Buddhist literary works like dialogue-heavy *namtars* offer up theories about their own value, necessity, and potential to prove salvific.

The next iteration of this project will speak further to the ways in which the *Life* seeks not only to enliven Yeshé Tsogyal, but also to create a world in which she and her life story are desperately needed. While I remain committed to contextualizing the work more thoroughly in history—indeed, so many questions remain about the sources upon which Drimé Künga may have drawn; about whom may have read the *Life* and in what contexts; about the *Life's* circulation in southern Tibet and Bhutan; and so on—I am ultimately interested in better understanding what the *Life* hopes to do for itself and the religious subjectivities who engage it. Throughout this project, I have taken the position that works of literature do not exclusively depict worlds and represent moral challenges. They also work on the worlds they encounter to bring about intellectual, emotional, and social change. A work like the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal* not only sheds light on a particular moral and psychological world of the past. It may also stand to illumine ethical possibilities for contemporary lives, including our own.

APPENDIX

Descriptions of the Manuscript Witnesses and Modern Editions of the *Life of Yeshé Tsogyal*

Key to the Descriptions⁵¹⁹

For each of the versions below, I list the following information:

- 1) Title of the text
- 2) Publication and/or location details
- 3) Physical description of the text
 - a. Number of folia or pages and lines per side or page
 - b. Descriptions of the paper and script
 - c. Description of illustrations
 - d. Use of red ink
 - e. Use of *shad* marks
 - f. Method of creating chapter breaks
 - g. Interlinear notes
 - h. Transliteration of any unique *incipit* and of the colophon and any unique *explicit*
- 4) Remarks on dating, errors, and general remarks about relationships to other witnesses

First I describe versions of Ye shes mtsho rgyal's life story that are attributed to Dri med kun dga' (b. 1347) and Padma gling pa (1450–1521). Then I describe texts technically unattributed to but associated with Padma gling pa. I also note in brief three partial witnesses, texts that are neither complete nor stand-alone biographies of Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

VERSIONS ATTRIBUTED TO DRI MED KUN DGA'

1. DK *Mtsho rgyal dbu* (Late 17th Century?)

- 1) *Mtsho rgyal dbu*
- 2) Version discovered by Janet Gyatso with the help of Jake Dalton in Lhasa in 1996. See Gyatso, Janet. "A Partial Genealogy of the Lifestory of Ye shes mtsho rgyal." *Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies*, no. 2 (August 2006): 1–27.
- 3) Description of the text:

⁵¹⁹ This key follows Doney's (2014: 59) example in his work on the *Zangs gling ma*. Following Doney, I do not italicize the transcriptions of the *incipits* and colophons and *explicit*s.

- a. 63 folia; 6 lines per side except for the title page (1 line), 1b (4 lines), 2a (5 lines), and 63b (5 lines); folio 3a is repeated and the contents of what would have been 3b are omitted.
- b. With the exception of folio 1b, which appears to have been handwritten, this version is a photocopy of an *dbu can* block print. It is fairly clear, but there are several instances in which the photocopy is difficult to read either because the copy is too light or the print is stained or smudged. A note in pen indicates that folio 63a was a little ripped at the right edge, and the final folio (63b) is extremely dark and difficult to read in copy. Where the edges of the folia have been cut off in copy, handwritten words appear in blue pen ink, and the folia numbers likewise appear in blue or red pen ink. Where the copy is too light to be read, certain letters or whole words have been traced in blue ink (see, for example, folio 39b).⁵²⁰
- c. The text contains four illustrations, two flanking the text of 1b and two flanking the text of 2a. The depiction on the left of 1b seems to be an image of Padmasambhava, but the text below the illustration is largely unreadable. On the right of 1b, Amitāyus (*tshe dpag med*) is depicted and the text below the illustration reads "*mgon po tshe dpag med la na mo.*" On the left of 2a, Mandāra is depicted and the text reads "[*lha lcam*] *maṅ dha ra ba la na mo.*" The text under the illustration on the right of 2a is largely torn away, though "*mkha' 'gro ye*" appears below what appears indeed to be a depiction of Ye shes mtsho rgyal.
- d. The photocopy itself is in black ink. Whether or not red ink may have been used is unclear.
- e. The block cutter (and scribe of folio 1b) uses *shad* marks at the beginning and end of phrases to separate them and double *shad* marks (i.e., *nyis shad*) at the beginning and end of each chapter. Terma marks (i.e., *gter tshag*) appear in one of the chapter seals and in part of the colophon.⁵²¹
- f. Except for chapter four in which the "seal" following the chapter is broken up by a *gter tshag*, and chapter two in which the number of the chapter is separated from the title by a *shad*, each chapter ends with the chapter title and number, *nyis shad*, a space, then *nyis shad* marks at the beginning and end of the chapter seal, another space, and a *nyis shad* at the beginning of the next chapter. For example:
 - i. *lha lcam gyi sku* [*'khrungs tshul*] [26b] *bstan pa'i le'u ste dang po'o// // sa ma ya rgya rgya rgya//*
 - ii. *lha lcam gyis o ṭi ya na'i yul bskor ba'i le'u ste/ gnyis pa'o// // sa ma ya rgya rgya rgya//*
- g. There is a note carved at the top of 27b and one also at the bottom of 54b. Comparison with other witnesses suggests that both notes reflect corrections of initial omissions by the carver. The text also has handwritten notes in '*khyug yig*' at the bottom of folio 11a and folio 22a. These notes now appear to reiterate the text carved directly above, but they may have once offered editorial corrections that were later carved or inked in.
- h. *Incipit* (1b.1) *gu ru dhe wa ḍakki ni ye/ bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo/*

⁵²⁰ In my transcriptions of the *incipit* and colophon and *explicit* below, I use square brackets to indicate where a word or phrase has been handwritten on a folio because the text did not transfer in copy. Instances in which certain letters or words have been traced in blue pen ink are also indicated in square brackets.

⁵²¹ I represent *shad*, *gter tshag*, and *nyis tshag* marks in normal *shad* sigla in my transliterations. Where a *sbrul shad* or *rgya gram shad* is used, I indicate these by name in square brackets.

Colophon and *explicit* (62b.6–63b.5): e ma mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ ban dhe [sangs rgyas] ye shes kyis/ mos zhing zhus bas ngo ma lh[o]gs/ skal ldan d[o]n du y[i] g[e]r [btab]/ [phyi] [r]abs [do]n [du gter du sbas]/ [snod min rnam la gsang bar phya?⁵²²/ bcas bcas smras?] tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par bsrungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gtad [do] gny[er] [ro sa] ma ya/ gtad [rgya]/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ kha tham/ [dri med kun] dga'i gter ma'o// e ma mdangs ldan dri zhim rgya mtsho 'khyil pa'i dbus/ 'dab stong mdzes pa'i ge sar ze'u 'bru'i steng/ hrīḥ las byung ba'i rgyal ba thugs rje can/ [padma 'byung] gnas 'gro ba'i mgon po de/ rtse pas mi 'dor bu la rab? dgongs nas/ dam chos bdud rtsi gter gyis sa steng gang/ nyid dang dbyer med bde stong lhan bskyed ma/ bzang mo[i] dbyings] rtsa la snang ba shar pa'i yum/ pha rol phyin ma'i dgongs pa mthar son nas/ rang 'byung ma 'gags stong ba'i bdag nyid can/ rgyal yum 'phags ma bud med tshul bzung nas/ padma'i thugs kyis gsang mdzod rab bzung nas/ 'gro la 'phan pa'i dam chos dpag yas zhus/ snyigs mar bka' drin che ba'i sgröl ma khyod/ bstan dang 'gro la rtse ba'i bu mchog [skyod?]/ mtsho rgyal rnam thar mi zad bdud rtsi 'char/ dpal byang sbar gyi sprin phreng rol pa 'di/ rgyud [lung 'byung gnas dpal ldan] rtse le yis/ rigs grol 'dus pa'i ['byor chab?] mtsho'i dbus/ thar lam rgya chen bsgrub par rab dmigs nas/ padma'i gsung 'dzin pūnye bi dza dang/ bstan pa'i sbyin bdag rin chen dbang gyi [rgyal]/ o rgyan yab yum go 'pha[ngs...] phyir/ dge legs 'di nyid [rab tu rtsol] bas bsgrubs/ mkhyen rab yangs pa'i gnas nyid bkra shis bzang/ 'dul khirms lung [sbyin] 'dzin pa bkra shis byang/ rnam [gnyis...?] zhu dag lan mang bgyis/ yi ge'i 'dus byed stag rdor zhes pas byas/ rkos kyi byed po nang gi dha ra dang/ bsam yas gnyis kyis rab tu bsgrubs byas shing/ [gzhan yang rkang?] la mkhas pa du ma yis/ legs par bgyid de 'dran zla bral mang mchis/ dge ba 'di yis pha mas gtso byas pa'i/ 'gro ba mtha' dag sangs rgyas rab thob shog/

- 4) The short title of the text, *Mtsho rgyal dbu*, may seem a bit mysterious until we note that EAP105 1/3/113, PL EAP310 3/3/11, and PL EAP310 4/2/12 described below share "*dbu phyogs*" in their respective titles. In terms of dating the blocks, we might look to the named pair of editors (*zhu dag*) of this version, "Bkra shis bzang" and "Bkra shis byang," for clues. Individuals named Bkra shis bzang po and Bkra shis byang chub are also named as a pair of editors in the colophon of Tāranātha's (1575–1634) *Sgröl dkar yid bzhin 'khor lo*.⁵²³ Interestingly, this version's calligrapher (*yi ge'i 'du byed pa*) is named as one Stag rdor, a possible abbreviation for Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje (b. 1655), the seventeenth-century discoverer of a Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar*. If the figures who were active in the production of blocks of Tāranātha's works are indeed the same ones named here, this could suggest a late-seventeenth century *terminus post quem* for the carving.

⁵²² Above and throughout the following descriptions, I transliterate without making any corrections to the text so that readers can assess the similarities among the *incipits*, colophons, and *explicit*s for themselves. Likewise, I have transcribed the question marks that were written in blue pen ink in order to indicate where the note marker was unsure of what a word was in copy.

⁵²³ See 904.1–2 of Tāranātha, "Sgröl dkar yid bzhin 'khor lo'i chog sgrigs legs par bkod pa ngag 'don rab gsal," in *Gsung 'bum: Tā ra nā tha (Rtag brtan phun tshongs gling gi par ma)*, vol. 11, 17 vols. (Leh: C. Namgyal and Tsewang Taru, 1982), 859–914.

2. DK *Mtsho rgyal dbu* Sky Dancer Press Edition (2008)

- 1) *Mkha' 'gro'i gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi thun min nang gi brda don gsang ba'i rnam thar chen mo*
- 2) Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Anna Orlova (eds.). *Secret Symbolic Biography of the Queen of Dakinis, Yeshe Tsogyal (Mkha' 'gro'i gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi thun min nang gi brda don gsang ba'i rnam thar chen mo bzhugs so)*, Revealed by Tertön Drime Kunga. Boca Raton, FL: Sky Dancer Press, 2008. This version, available online at <http://www.skydancerpress.com/ebook/tsogyal.html>, is an edition based primarily on the block print described above. It was supplemented with text from an unspecified Padma gling pa version. For further information on editorial decisions, see the preface to the text.
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 145 pages input in folio format, numbered sequentially beginning after a preface on page 3 and ending on page 148; 5 lines per side except for the title page (1 line) and the final page, 148 (3 lines)
 - b. A very clear *dbu can*, digitized (i.e., computer-input) version of the *dbu can* block print, *Mtsho rgyal dbu* that is easily readable.
 - c. The editors have included two images which match two of the illustrations included in the *Mtsho rgyal dbu* block print, namely that of Padmasambhava (labeled Gu ru Rin po che) and Ye shes mtsho rgyal. These are located at the center of pages 4 and 5 respectively.
 - d. Red ink is used for the *incipit* homage on page 4, lines 1–2.
 - e. The editors chose to use *gter tsheg* marks at the end of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences throughout the body of the *rnam thar*. They use single and double *shads* in the colophon and *explicit*. Odd-numbered pages show an *om* symbol followed by a *gter tsheg* and space in the top left corner prior to the beginning of the first line.
 - f. Each chapter ends with the chapter title and number, a *gter tsheg*, a space, *sa ma ya* and a *gter tsheg*, a space, then *rgya rgya rgya* and a *gter tsheg*, a space, "handwritten" (digitally penned) Tibetan letters that transliterate a Sanskrit mantra and a *gter tsheg* followed by a space before the start of the next chapter.
 - g. There are no interlinear notes in this version, but the editors made a number of "corrections" to the *Mtsho rgyal dbu* block print based on a line-by-line comparison with an unspecified Padma gling pa version. Where folio 3a was repeated and its verso 3b omitted in the block print *Mtsho rgyal dbu*, the inputter and editor have input the corresponding text from the Pad ma gling pa version.
 - h. *Incipit* (4.12) *dākinī* script is followed by: na mo gu ru dhe wa dakki ni ye/ bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo/ chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul pa padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med kyi lha la phyag tshal lo/ Colophon and *explicit* (143.5–148.3): e ma/ mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/ ban de sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos shing zhus bas ngo ma ldog/ skal ldan don du yi ger btab/ phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/ bcas bcas byas na dam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gtad rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ kha tham/ dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o//

e ma/ mdangs ldan dri zhim rgya mtsho 'khyil ba'i dbus/ 'dab stong mdzes pa'i ge sar ze'u 'bru'i steng/ hrīh las byung ba'i rgyal ba thugs rje can/ padma 'byung gnas 'gro ba'i mgon po des/ brtse bas mi 'dor bu la rab dgongs nas/ dam chos bdud rtsi gter gyis sa steng bkang/ nyid dang dbyer med bde stong lhan bskyed ma/ bzang mo'i dbyings rtsa la snang ba shar ba'i yum/ pha rol phyin ma'i dgongs pa mthar son nas/ rang 'byung mi 'gags stong pa'i bdag nyid can/ rgyal yum 'phags ma bud med tshul bzung nas/ padma'i thugs kyi gsang mdzod rab bzung nas/ 'gro la 'phan pa'i dam chos dpag yas zhus/ snyigs mar bka'? drin che ba'i sgrol ma khyod/ bstan dang 'gro la brtse ba'i bu mchog skyong/ mtsho rgyal rnam thar mi zad bdud rtsi 'char/ dpal byang spar gyi sprin phreng rol pa 'di/ rgyud lung 'byung gnas dpal ldan rtse le pas/ rig grol 'dus pa'i 'byor chab rgya mtsho'i dbus/ thar lam rgya chen bsgrubs par rab dmigs nas/ padma'i gsung 'dzin pūnye bi dza dang/ bstan pa'i sbyin bdag rin chen dbang gyi rgyal/ o rgyan yab yum go 'phang thob pa'i phyir/ dge legs 'di nyid rab tu rtsol bas bsgrubs/ mkhyen rab yangs pa gnas nyid bkra shis bzang/ 'dul khirms lung sbyin 'dzin pa bkra shis byang/ rnam pa gnyis kyis zhu dag lan mang bgyis/ yi ge'i 'du byed stag rdor zhes pas byas/ rkos kyi byed po nang gi dha ra dang/ bsam yas gnyis kyis rab tu bsgrubs byas shing/ gzhan yang mkhyen ldan mkhas pa du ma yis/ legs par bgyis te 'gran zla bral bar mchis/ dge ba 'di yis pha mas gtso byas pa/i/ 'gro ba mtha' dag sangs rgyas rab thob shog/

om swa sti/ chos sku yum chen sher phyin kun bzang mo/ longs sku nges pa lnga ldan wā ra hi/ sprul sku rje btsun sgrol ma nyi shu gcig/ yang sprul dbyangs can ye shes mtsho rgyal 'dud/ 1 gangs ljongs rmongs mun 'khrigs pa'i gdong dmar gling/ med dbon gsum dang mkhan slob chos gsum gyis/ rgyal bstan lung rtogs bstan pa'i 'od brgya pa/ 'dren pa'i grogs su ma khyod bod du byon/ 2 ma khyod 'khor ba'i rang mtshangs mdzub ston slad/ dang po rigs gzugs dpal mtho'i khab tu 'khrungs/ bar du sdug bsngal rgya mtsho'i rlabs 'khrugs bstan/ tha ma nges 'byung dben sar gshegs tshul bstan/ 3 kun rmongs ches yangs rab 'byor sgrags grong khab/ sred len tshor snang mtho ba'i rgyal btsun mo/ tshogs brgyad rnam shes rab gzhon sras sras mo/ nyon mongs kun nyon snang 'byor dpal rgyas bzhugs/ 4 dbu byed lang tsho dar babs 'phags bod sras/ srid pa'i gzugs che glang chen lnga rgya la/ las kyi kun nyon sna tshogs gces nor bkal/ ngom med dbang don lnga brgya phrag brngan brdzangs/ 5 sdug bsngal kun nyon gzung 'dzin bro ra'i ngogs/ chags pa'i zur mig zhags 'phen lus phra stong/ sdang mtshon bskyod la mi ngal khye'u stong/ snyems mtho phrag dog re dogs mdzes gar bsgyur/ 6 yum chen khyed kyi mkhyen brtse'i me long ngogs/ mi srid srid snang snod bcud sgyu 'phrul 'bum/ gang shar rig stong ka dag chos sku'i klong/ shar grol khregs gcod mtshon gyis lhag med gtub/ 7 dad pa chen pos sangs rgyas padma mjal/ brtson 'grus chen pos nyin mtshan bar med bsgrubs/ dran pa chen pos zab rgyas chos mdzod bzung/ ting 'dzin chen pos nyams rtogs sa lam bgrod/ 8 shes rab chen pos 'khor 'das 'ching ba bkrol/ snying rje chen pos bdud blon dmyal nas drangs/ byams pa chen pos rgan rgon bu shi bslangs/ thabs mkhas chen pos jag chom thar par bkod/ 9 mdor na yun chen khyod kyi sku gsungs thugs/ yon tan phrin las nam mkha'i mtha' dang mnyam/ khyad par gangs ljongs bstan 'gro'i bde skyid spel bdag rkyen khyed yin shes so ma gcig kye/ 10 rdzogs chen shing rta dga' rab rdo rje'i sras/ 'jam dpal bshes gnyen bod du sgyu 'phrul gar/ gangs ljongs phur thogs yongs kyi che ba'i mchog/ gsang chen snga 'gyur bstan pa'i bka' babs che/ 11 gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes rnam par 'phrul/ gter ston chen po dri med kun dga' yis/ zab gter mtsho rgyal thun min gsang rnam 'di/ bod yul bstan bsnuks ming tsam lhag nye'i skabs/ 12 a ri'i nang pa'i snga 'gyur mkhas dbang mo/ je ne rgya mtshos bod nas dpe rnying thob/ phran la stsal

son byung bas shin tu spro/ 'on kyang ldeb bu kha yar tsam ma tshang/ 13 gnubs ban gyis zhus mtsho rgyal rnam thar 'di/ gter ston chen po dri med kun dga' dang/ gter chen padma gling pa gnyis ka la/ gcig dpe gcig bcad lta bu bzhugs yod slad/ 14 kho bo rnying mkhan dpal ldan shes rab kyis/ padma gling pa'i mtsho rgyal rnam thar las/ mtshangs kha bkang nas zhib bsdur dag zhus byas/ 'di 'dra'i gter chos gzhan la'ang yod pa'i dpe/ 15 o rgyan gling pa'i padma bka' thang dang/ sangs rgyas gling pa'i rnam thar gser phreng gnyis/ rjod byed tshig la bcad lhug khyad tsam las/ brjod bya'i don la khyad par med pa bzhin/ 16 dbyangs can sprul pa mtsho rgyal rnam thar 'di/ dad mdzes a nas kam phu tar nang bcug/ lhag bsam bzang pos zhu dag nan bskul ltar/ kho bos dad spro'i dga' gus zhu dag bgyis/ 17 'dir 'bad rab dkar dge ba ma dros mtsho/ phrin las rnam bzhi kha 'babs chu bo bzhis/ dad ldan 'bum phrag gnas skabs bzhi sgrib sbyangs/ bla med sku bzhi'i rgya mtshor cher 'jug smon/ 18 lus su rags snang 'dod khams rdo rje'i sku/ ngag tu phyed snang gzugs khams rdo rje'i gsung/ yid du mi snang gzugs med thugs rdo rje/ khams gsum rdo rje gsum ngang sad par bsngo/ 19 rig stong chos sku a ma'i rang zhal mjal/ gzung 'dzin rang grol snang bzhi'i rtsal chen rdzogs/ gzhir dbyings gdod ma'i rgyal sar gtan srid zin/ 'gro khams 'khor ba dong sprugs bkra shis shog/ 20 ces 'di rnying mkhan dpal ldan shes rab kyis/ dpal ldan padma bsam yas gling dgon du/ sde bzhi'i dpyid kyid dpal yon la rol skabs/ nyis stong lnga yi zla 4 tshes 23 la bris dge/ 21

- 4) Because Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Anna Orlova note that they added to and edited this version based on a version of a Ye shes mtsho rgyal rnam thar attributable to Padma gling pa, I refer to this as an eclectic version. See the conclusion to these witness descriptions for more information about the nature of this source.

3. DK EAP570 1/2/13: Donkarla Temple Manuscript (n.d.)

- 1) *'Kha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis snam par thar pa*
- 2) This version is available online via the Endangered Archives Programme, which is under the auspices of the British Library and partnered with the National Library and Archives of Bhutan. An overview of this project, directed by Karma Phuntso, notes that the project received funding beginning in 2012 and began acquisition in 2013. It is available online through the EAP website (<http://eap.bl.uk/>). This manuscript, numbered EAP570 1/2/13 comes from Dongkarla Temple⁵²⁴ in the lower Paro valley in Bhutan, and it can be found among the manuscript archives catalogued under "EAP570/1: Dongkarla Temple Archive," a subset of the larger project labeled "EAP570: Digital documentation of Dongkala, Chizing, Dodedra and Phajoding temple archives." It was photographed and uploaded from September 21, 2012 to October 12, 2012 on the British Library's site. The project overview states that the "temple of Dongkala was first founded by two figures: Drubwang Rinchen Chodor and

⁵²⁴ The name of the temple from which the manuscripts came is alternately called "Dongkala" and "Dongkarla" on the British Library's website for the project. Above I will use "Dongkarla," following the spelling preferred by Karma Phuntso in his overview of the project and his recent work, *The History of Bhutan* (New Delhi: Random House India, 2013).

his disciple Terton Tsering Dorji [, b. 16th cent.], who were leading religious figures of their time in western Bhutan."⁵²⁵

3) Description of the text:

- a. 50 folia numbered 1–101b (one folio, no. 20, is missing); 7 lines per side, except for the title page (1 line) and the final folio, 101b (4 lines)
- b. Quite clear, handwritten *dbu can* on stained paper (type unspecified) in unbound *dpe cha* format. One folio (no. 20) is missing. An attribution to Dri med kun dga' (as Dri ma'i kun dge) on line four of the final folio seems to be written in a different hand than the majority of the text.
- c. The text contains no illustrations.
- d. Use of red ink occurs (but not in consistent ways) throughout the text. Sometimes red ink is used at beginning of or in the middle of dialogue (e.g., 69b.3: *bud med de rnams na re*), and sometimes it is used to highlight the names of people (e.g., 40a.2) or places (e.g., 66a.4: *padmo bkod pa'i gnas 'di ru*). Two lines of faint red ink set the margins on the left and right sides of each folio; red ink is used for part of the *incipit*; new chapters begin in red, some only with *de nas* in red, others with more words in red following *de nas*. Otherwise, black ink is used throughout the text.
- e. Most often, *shad* marks and *nyis shads* are used throughout the text. A *tshegs* mark precedes a *shad* often and seemingly at random, not just after *nga*. Recto folia show two, sometimes three, header marks (*yig mgo mdun ma* and *yig mgo sgab ma*) in the top left corner on the first line. There is one *gter tshegs* that follows the attribution.
- f. Each chapter ends with the chapter title, followed by a *nyis shad*, a space, the chapter number flanked by *nyis shad* marks on each side, a space, then the seal flanked by *nyis shads*, and a space before the next chapter. For example, "*lha lcam gyis u rgyan kyis gnas rnam bskor ba'i le'u ste// // gnyis pa'o// // sa ma ya// rgya rgya rgya// de nas...*"
- g. Interlinear notes can be found throughout the text (e.g., folia numbered 81a.1 and 81b.2) that indicate corrections or the additions of original omissions by the scribe. On 81a.1, for example, an incorrect word is smudged out, and *g.yung* is written above it with a trail of three dots leading to its proper placement in the body of the text. On 81b.2, a small "x" is written over a faded letter and two lines above, in the empty header space of the text, an "*x'gril ba*" is written, indicating the replacement word for the x-marked space. Some letters are crossed out to fix spelling mistakes and some letters or words are erased. See folio no. 76b.4, for examples of both types of corrections.
- h. *Incipit* (1b.1–1b.2): gu ru dhe wa takki ni/ bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo/

Colophon and *explicit* (100b.1–101.4): e ma mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos zhing zhus pas ngo ma lhogs/ skal ldan don du yi ger btab/ phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/ bcas bcos smras nad ma tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par bsungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtong/ gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gtad rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ kha tham/ dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o//

⁵²⁵ More information about Dongkarla Temple, its founding, and affiliated figures can be found in the EAP570 project overview online and in Phuntsho 2013.

e ma mdangs ldan dri zhim rgya mtsho 'khyil ba'i dbus/ pad stong mdzes pa'i ge sar za'u 'bru'i steng/ hrih las byung ba'i rgyal ba thugs rje can/ padma 'byung gnas 'gro ba'i mgon po da bstod pa'i/ skye [??] de rnam skad cig tсам gyis ni/ bde ba can dang zangs mdog dpal ri nas/ mtha' yas padma'i go 'phangs 'thob par shog/ tshe 'dir gtsug lag nyid la spyod pa dang/ nad med tshe ring dbang phyug 'thob ba dang/ bsam pa'i don kun ma lus 'grub par shog/// srba manga lam//

'kha 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal ma'i rnam thar dri ma'i kun dge gte ma'o// mangalam/ bkra shis//

- 4) This manuscript contains a number of spelling and orthographic mistakes, beginning with the spelling mistakes in the title itself, which reads '*Kha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis snam par thar pa bye bya ba bzhu so*'. In addition to the use of '*kha*' for '*mkha*', '*snam*' for '*rnam*', '*bye bya ba*' for '*zhes bya ba*', and '*bzhu*' for '*bzhugs*', prior to the word "*shes*" a *ba* prefix appears to be smudged out, as if someone made the effort to erase it. Here as elsewhere in the text, the ergative *gyis* appears where we more commonly find the possessive *gyi*. Although the project overview for EAP570 suggests that Dongkarla Temple's archives include a number of works that date as early as the sixteenth century when the site was founded, the manuscript itself is undated.

4. DK Larung Gar Manuscript (n.d.)

- 1) *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun pa*
- 2) U rgyan Dri med kun dga'. *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun pa*. Manuscript scanned from Larung Gar which serves as the basis for the edition in the *Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs* series printed in Lhasa (2013). The scan of the manuscript was uploaded to BDRC in 2017, and it is catalogued as W8LS19942. The title page shows *ka* above the title, suggesting that the text was once part of a multi-volume collection.
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 118 folia (BDRC lists 236 pages); average of 5 lines per side, except for title page and 1b (3 lines), 2a (4 lines), and 118a (7 lines); folia numbering begins with 2a and ends with 118a; first three folia currently appear out of order on BDRC: 1a (title page), 2a, 1b, 2b, 3b, 3a.
 - b. Handwritten *dbu can* on stained, reinforced paper (type unspecified) in unbound *dpe cha* format, though folia 1b–5b show circles, likely decorative by the time the text was completed, where holes would be punched for binding; high degree of clarity throughout the text. Everything appears to be written in the same hand apart from the note on 118b which advocates for care when handling the text.
 - c. Two illustrations flank the text on 1b. On the left is a depiction of Padmasambhava. The label is smudged, but it seems to say Padma 'byung [gnas] la na mo. The right-side illustration depicts Ye shes mtsho rgyal and is labeled *Mkha' 'gro ye mtsho*.

- d. The majority of the text is written in black ink, but red ink occurs throughout the text (with no consistent pattern). Most notably, the middle (i.e., the third) lines of each folio side are often in red, but other patterns occur. On 4b, for example, the second and fourth lines are in red while the third is in black; on 2a, 9a, and 11a, for example, the third line is red in the center and the fourth line is red at the left and right extremes. Two lines of faint red ink set the margins on the left and right sides of each folio; red ink is used for some *shad* marks; and red ink frequently alternates with black in the syllables of the chapter seals.
- e. Terma marks (i.e., *gter tsheg*) appear throughout the text and, frequently, a *sbrul shad* will be used at the start of new sections or paragraph breaks.
- f. Each chapter ends with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, a *gter tsheg*, a seal, and an elaborate *sbrul shad* (i.e., *sa ma ya*, a *gter tsheg*, *rgya rgya rgya*, *gter tsheg*, *sbrul shad*). The text of the next chapter begins after a space and a *gter tsheg*.
- g. Interlinear notes can be found throughout the text (e.g., folia numbered 60a, 75a, and 97a) that indicate corrections or the additions of original omissions by the scribe. On 55b.4, for example, a small "x" with a dotted line that connected to a clause written between lines 4 and 5 indicates where an omitted clause should appear. Some letters or words are crossed out to fix spelling mistakes and some letters or words are smudged out or patched over with the correction written on the patch. See 56a.4 and 71a.3 for examples of both of these types of corrections.
- h. *Incipit* (1b–4b.2): lhun grub mkha' 'gro ma la phyag 'tsha[l lo]/ mkha' 'gro bka' chen gyi thim yig 'di la/ skabs gsum gyis ston ste/ dang po lo rgyus bstan pa ni/ dur khrod 'od klung 'bar ba'i u rgyan du/ chos nyid bde chen mkha' 'gro mas/ u rgyan padma la gngang/ des kyang nub phyogs mkha' 'gro'i gling du rig/ 'dzin zag med kyi gral la snyogs/ mi lo drug stong gi bar du dam chos 'di'i 'khor lo bskor/ gnas de'i rgyal phran lhag med du 'khod pa 'bum phrag byung la/ de nas rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi nub phyogs/ u rgyan yul gyis nub byang/ dha na ko sha bya ba'i mtsho nang du padma ge sar gyi sdong po/ brdzus skyes su sprul nas rgya gar yul du mi lo sum stong bzhugs/ bla med 'di'i spyod yul gyis rgyal phran lhag med du 'khod pa nyi shu rtsa lnga byung/ de nas bod yul du byon/ mi lo brgya dang bcu gcig bzhugs/ skal ldan nyi shu rtsa lnga dang/ rgyal po khri srong sde btsan gyis bsam yas 'ching phur tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor nas bla med 'di'i spyod yul zhus pa'i/ u rgyan gyi thugs kha nas 'od lnga 'phros te/ sangs rgyas ye shes bya ba'i thugs kar thim nas/ lus 'od du zhu/ de yang slar u rgyan gyi thug kar rdzogs nas lhag med du grol lo/ gzhan yang lhag med du rdzogs pa bdun brgya tsam byung/ de nas u rgyan srin po 'dul ba la lho nub rnga yab gling du byon khar ye ge btab nas gter du sbas/ sangs rgyas ye shes kyis mtshan smon te/ chos bdag tu smon lam btab/ ming sring lcam sring la gnyer nas rgya gsum gyis gdab po/ / / gnyis pa thim yig bstan pa ni/ bka' chen thim yig dang gcig/ dbang chog smin grol dang gnyis/ gsang sgrub yang khol dang gsum/ las byang gter bum dang bzhi/ gsang khrid yang thig klong chen nag po dang lnga/ mkha' ri lcam sring gyis srog bsgrub nag po dang drug go/ 'di las mang nyung lhag chad yod pas spang bar bya/ gsum pa lung bstan gtad rgya bstan pa ni/ dus kyi snyigs ma lnga'i tshe/ chos dar la ma smin pas chos dpon log pa'i 'khrug dpon 'byung/ pha spun dme 'khrug dar bas/ sad dang ser ba mu ge 'byung/ zog po'i grong yul khengs pas khyi bsnyon mi bsnyon 'byung/ bdud sprul nag po mang bas re chos byed yi mug skyes/ de 'dra'i dus su 'gro la skyabs mgon med/ padma bdag gis ma phod theb cig bzhag/ sgyu ru sgra zhes khang dmar skya bo'i sar/ skyed mang 'dzoms bkra shis zhes pa'i pha ma la/ mos snang

tsam du dri med kun dga' zhes/ sngags 'chang sangs rgyas ye shes mchog sprul 'khrungs/
 des ni 'brel tshad mkha' spyod gnas su khrid/ chos bdag chen po bla med don gyi spyod/
 khyu mchog de drung chos 'di 'khol ba'i dbu/ 'khor gyi dangs ma rigs ldan lnga tsam
 'byung/ bdud sprul rtags ra'i sha mtshan can/ log pa'i gces de'i bskrad thabs gces/ shar
 phyogs gnas su bdud sprul kha non la/ mtshan ldan rig ma dbang po sha mtshan can/
 'brel tshad thams cad zag med dgod pa 'byung/ de'i byin rlab chos 'di dar cha yang/ shar
 phyogs u rgyan gyi thil tu 'byung ba'o/ gzhan dang mi 'dra khyad par zab chos 'di/ yang
 dag las can de dang 'phrad par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ u rgyan dri med kun dga'i
 gter ma'o/ *dākinī* script / bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo/

Colophon and *explicit* (117a.1–118a.7): e ma mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/ bsgom
 chen sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos par zhus pa'i ngos ma bzlog/ skal ldan don du yi ger
 btab/ phyi rab don du gter la sbas/ snod med rnams la gsang bar bya/ cal col smra na dam
 tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par bsrungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gtad
 do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gtad rgya/ sbas rgya/ gter rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ [*dākinī* script]
 mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar/ o rgyan dri med kun dga'i gter nas bton pa'o// //
 'khor ba'i mun nag gling rum na/ mtsho rgyal sku gsum nyi ma shar/ khams gsum sems
 can mun smag rnams/ 'od zer gcig gis gis gsal bar byas/ 'on kyang skal med chos can re/
 gsal ba'i nang nas mun pa nyul/ nyi ma shar tshe snying med sdug/ de bzhin ched 'gyings
 zur za can/ chos med 'chi kha nang par sdug/ mi lus rin chen thob pa'i dus/ dzam gling
 stong bskor ma byas nas// dam chos mdzad na legs par sems/ ci 'gal 'khrul byung na bzod
 par gsol/ mam ga lam/ bha wan tu/ shu bham/ rdzogs so// //kyai phrin las rnam dag sku
 gsung thugs/ yon tan ma lus rgya che ba/ rten bzhengs pa rnams la byin gyis rlobs/ brten
 mchog tu gyur pa'i bkra shis shog/ mi 'gyur lhun po sku'i x yan lag x mtha' bral x/ rgyal
 ba'i sku x ces so[?]/ rgya gar ban chen bod la bka' drin che/ padma las 'khrung sku la 'das
 drung med/ da lta lho nub srin pos kha gnon mdzad/ u rgyan rin po che yi bkra shis shog/
 ye shes mkha' 'gro bod la bka' drin can/ kun tu bzang mo'i dngos sprul rgyal ba'i yum/
 gsang sngags bstan pa dar rgyas mdzad pa'i ma/ yum mchog mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal kyi
 bkra shis shog //dam chos 'di bzhengs dge ba yi/ sbyin bdag bris pa thal mgos yi pha ma
 bu smad kha lag 'brel tshad dang/ 'og rta bkal mdzo bzhon ma sems can rnams/ gnas
 mchog padma 'od kyi gzhal yas na/ rgyal dbang padma 'byung gnas yab yum gyi/ zhal 'jal
 gsung thos sangs rgyas myur thob shog/ bkra shis dpal 'byor phun sum 'tshog par shog/
 dge'o// dge'o// dge'o//

Note (118b): gsung rab 'di yi gzhung la chad pa mang po yod pa gzab gzab chos[?] na
 yod do// thugs mnyes par mdzod[?]/

- 4) Of the versions explicitly attributed to Dri med kun dga', this version includes the longest and most unique *incipit* and colophon and *explicit*. The body of the text is quite close to the Dri med kun dga'-attributed versions *Mtsho rgyal dbu*, EAP570, and W8LS18309. It served as the basis for the Lhasa print edition detailed below.

5. DK Lhasa Edition (2013)

- 1) *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun ma*
- 2) U rgyan Dri med kun dga'. *Mkha' 'gro ma'i bka' chen gyi thim yig dang mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs le'u bdun ma*. In *Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs: 'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*. Vol. 6, no. 5. Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang. 2013: 180–261. This *rnam thar* appears in print as part of a sixteen-volume series titled *Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs* that was printed in Lhasa and is currently available on BDRC.org. It is described in the BDRC catalogue as "Collected biographies of great women of India and Tibet." This volume (no. 6) also contains Ye shes mtsho rgyal life stories (labeled either *skyes rabs* or *rnam thar*) attributed to Rdo rje gling pa (1346–1405) and Padma gling pa (1450–1521), the latter of which I will describe below. For access to the entire series, see *'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*. BDRC WIKG16649. 16 vols. Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2013. Comparison with the manuscript upon which this edition is based reveals that the text of the *incipit* was entered incorrectly. It follows the manuscript folios in this order: 1a (title page), 1b, 3b, 3a, 4a, 4b.2 (end of *incipit*). Folio 2, though present in the manuscript, appears to have been omitted altogether. The text of this edition's *incipit* is replicated as it stands below. For the full *incipit* with the text in the correct order, see the entry above.
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 81 pages; a maximum (and an average) of 21 lines per page
 - b. *dbu can* computer type in Western-style book format; high degree of clarity throughout the text
 - c. The text does not contain any illustrations.
 - d. The printer uses black type throughout the text. Digitally drawn *ḍākinī* script follows the *incipit* and occurs in the first line of the colophon (260.12).
 - e. The editors use terma marks (i.e., *gter tshog*) throughout the text and, frequently, a *sbrul shad* at the start of new sections or paragraph breaks. They add a *tshog* before a *gter tshog* only after *nga*.
 - f. Each chapter ends with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, a *gter tshog*, and a seal (i.e., *sa ma ya* followed by a *gter tshog*, then *rgya rgya rgya* followed by two *gter tshog* marks). The next chapter begins as a paragraph break headed by a *sbrul shad* on the next line.
 - g. There are no interlinear notes, footnotes, or endnotes.
 - h. *Incipit* (180–181.7, as it appears): lhun grub mkha' 'gro ma la phyag 'tshal lo/ mkha' 'gro bka' chen gyi thim yig 'di la/ skabs gsum gyis ston te/ dang po lo rgyus bstan chen nag po dang lnga/ mkha' ri lcam sring gyi srog sgrub nag po dang drug go/ 'di las mang nyung lhag chad yod pas spang bar bya/ gsum pa lung bstan gtad rgya bstan pa ni/ dus kyi snyigs ma lnga'i tsho/ chos dar la ma smin pas chos dpon log pa'i 'khrug dpon 'byung/ pha spun dme 'khrug dar bas sad dang ser ba mu ge 'byung/ zog pos grong yul khengs pas khyi smyon mi smyon 'byung/ bdud sprul nag po mang bas re chos byed yi mug skyes/ de 'dra'i dus su 'gro la skyabs mgon med/ padma bdag gis ma phod theb cig bzhag/ sgyu ru sgra zhes khang dmar skya bo'i sar/ skyed mang 'dzoms bkra shis zhes pa'i pha ma de

yang slar u rgyan gyi thugs kar rdzogs nas lhag med du grol lo/ gzhan yang lhag med du rdzogs pa bdun brgya tsam byung/ de nas u rgyan srin po 'dul ba la lho nub rnga yab gling du byon khar yi ger btab nas gter du sbas/ sangs rgyas ye shes kyi mtshan smon te/ chos bdag tu smon lam btab/ ming sring lcam sring la gnyer nas rgya gsum gyis gdab bo/

// gnyis pa thim yig bstan pa ni/ bka' chen thim yig dang gcig/ dbang chog smin grol dang gnyis/ gsang sgrub yang khol dang gsum/ las byang gter bum dang bzhi/ gsang khrid yang thig klong la mos snang tsam du dri med kun dga' zhes/ sngags 'chang sangs rgyas ye shes mchog sprul 'khrungs/ des ni 'brel tshad mkha' spyod gnas su khrid/ chos bdag chen po bla med don gyi spyod/ khyu mchog de drung chos 'di 'khol ba'i dbus/

'khor gyi dwangs mi rigs ldan lnga tsam 'byung/ bdud sprul rtags ra'i sha mtshan can/ log pa'i gces de'i bskrad thabs gces/ shar phyogs gnas su bdud sprul kha non la/ mtshan ldan rig ma dbang po sha mtshan can/ 'brel tshad thams cad zag med dgod pa 'byung/ de'i byin rlabs chos 'di dar cha yang/ shar phyogs u rgyan gyi mthil du 'byung ba'o/ gzhan dang mi 'dra khyad par zab chos 'di/ yang dag las can de dang 'phrad par shog/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ u rgyan dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o/

dākinī script / bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo/

Colophon and *explicit* (260.12–261.19): e ma mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/ sgom [handwritten letters] shes kyis/ mos par zhus pa'i ngos ma bzlog/ skal ldan don du yi ger btab/ phyi rabs don du gter la sbas/ snod med rnams la gsang bar bya/ cal col smra na dam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gtad rgya/ sbas rgya/ gter rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar/ o rgyan dri med kun dgas gter nas bton pa'o////

/ 'khor ba'i mun nag gling rum na// mtsho rgyal sku gsum nyi ma shar// khams gsum sems can mun smag rnams// 'od zer gcig gis gsal bar byas// 'on kyang skal med chos can re// gsal ba'i nang nas mun pa nyul// nyi ma shar tshe snying med sdug// de bzhin che 'gying zur za can// chos med 'chi kha nangs par sdug// mi lus rin chen thob pa'i dus// 'dzam gling stong skor ma byas nas// dam chos mdzad na legs par sems// ci 'gal 'khrul byung na bzod par gsol// minga lam/ bha wantu/ shu bham/ rdzogs so/////

/ kye phrin las rnam dag sku gsung thugs// yon tan ma lus rgya che ba// rten bzhengs pa rnams la byin gyis rlobs// rten mchog tu gyur pa'i bkra shis shog// mi 'gyur lhun po sku yi bkra shis shog// yan lag drug bcu'i gsung gi bkra shis shog// mtha' bral dri med thugs kyi bkra shis shog// rgyal ba'i sku gsung thugs kyi bkra shis shog// rgya gar paṅ chen bod la bka' drin che// padma las 'khrungs sku la 'das 'khrungs med// da lta lho nub srin po'i kha gnon mdzad// u rgyan rin po che yi bkra shis shog// ye shes mkha' 'gro bod la bka' drin can// kun tu bzang mo'i dngos sprul rgyal ba'i yum// gsang sngags bstan pa dar rgyas mdzad pa'i ma// yum mchog mkha' 'gro mtsho rgyal gyi bkra shis shog/

/ dam chos 'di bzhengs dge ba yi// sbyin bdag bris pa thal mgos kyi// pha ma bu smad kha lag 'brel tshad dang// 'og rta bkal mdzo bzhon ma sems can rnams// gnas mchog padma 'od kyi gzhal yas na// rgyal dbang padma 'byung gnas yab yum gyi// zhal mjal gsung thos sangs rgyas myur thob shog// bkra shis dpal 'byor phun sum 'tshogs par shog// dge'o// dge'o// dge'o//

gsung rab 'di yi gzhung la chad pa mang po yod pas gzab gzab chos nas yod do// thugs mnyes par mdzod/

- 4) Of the versions attributed to Dri med kun dga', this version includes the longest and most unique *incipit* and colophon and *explicit*. It is also the most complete. In their preface to the volume, the editors do not cite their source for this edition. The body of the text is quite close to the Dri med kun dga'-attributed versions EAP570 and *Mtsho rgyal dbu*.

6. DK BDRC W8LS18309 (n.d.)

- 1) *Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rab rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa la le'u bdun pa*
- 2) Dri med kun dga'. *Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rab rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa la le'u bdun pa*. Photocopied manuscript scanned in Oct. 2016 and uploaded to BDRC in 2017 as W8LS18309. No location details are provided for the work. BDRC notes that the author is n/a, but folio 90a.7 states that it is a treasure text of Dri med kun dga'.
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 90 folia (BDRC lists 196 pages, which includes material in excess of the *Ye shes mtsho rgyal rnam thar*); average of 6 lines per side, except for the title page (2 lines), several folia in the 80s and 90a (7–8 lines), and 83b (4 lines).
 - b. Handwritten *dbu med* on paper (type unspecified) in unbound *dpe cha* format; high degree of clarity throughout the text. The text changes hands within the *Ye shes mtsho rgyal rnam thar* at 81a/b and 83a/b, and possibly for the first folio no. 90a/b as well.
 - c. The text contains no illustrations.
 - d. Since the file is a black-and-white photocopy, the text appears in black or gray. Gray likely indicates that red ink appears in the original in the title, the three initial headers (*yig mgo*), and 1b.1, i.e., the *incipit*.
 - e. Terma marks (i.e., *gter tsheg*) and two stacked dots appear most often throughout the text. Double *shad* occur after final particles, and *nyis tsheg shad* occur sparingly, though when they do, they seem to function as a colon at the end of a phrase that introduces a character's speech, e.g., lit. "the ministers' reply:" (*blon po rnams kyi na re [nyis tsheg shad]*), or at the conclusion of speech, e.g., "[she/he] said" (*ces smras so [nyis tsheg shad]*).
 - f. Each chapter ends with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, and a *gter tsheg*. Chapters two through seven end with seals (*sa ma ya rgya rgya rgya*) followed by *dākinī* script. The text of the next chapter begins after a space and another *gter tsheg*. Chapter one ends at 36a.6; chapter two at 46a.4; chapter three at 77b.5; chapter four at 80b.2; chapter five at 86b.5; chapter six at 87b.7; and chapter seven at 90a.3.
 - g. Interlinear notes can be found throughout the text that indicate corrections or the additions of original omissions by the scribe. See 36a for examples of marginal notes meant to be read where x-es appear in the text and for an instance in which the text is corrected by strikethrough. At least until chapter five, care is taken to keep the lines of each folio side to 6. See 46a, for example, where the start of a seventh line is crossed out.
 - h. *Incipit* (1b.1) *dākinī* script is followed by: bde chen kun tu bzang mo la phyag 'tshal lo/ Colophon and *explicit* (90a.3–7): e ma mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ bhad dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyi/ mos pas zhus pas ngo log/ skal ldan don du yi ger btab/ phyi rab don du

byang[?] gter du sbas/ kha tham / gyu[??] / *ḍākinī* script / snod med rnams la gsang bar bya/ cal col smras na dam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhi'i thub par bsrung ngo[?]/ bu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gtad do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rab rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa las/ le'u bdun pa rdzogs so// sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya rgya/ gter rgya/ sbas rgya/ gter rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ dri med kun dga'i gter ma'o/ *ḍākinī* script/ //

- 4) The title is written twice on the first folio, but the first time it is subtly struck through. Contractions abound throughout the text (e.g., "yton" for "yon tan," "gzhonu" for "gzhon nu," and "blono" for "blon po"). Grammatical particles are often contracted with the word to which they apply (e.g., "yumsi" for "yum gyis" and "yulu" for "yul du"). The text changes hand on two occasions in the fifth chapter (see 81a/b, 83a/b), perhaps because these folia went missing, or because they were excerpted. After Yeshé Tsogyal's story concludes on 90.8a, the text moves on to cover Padmasambhava's travels beyond Tibet, and then, on a second folio numbered 90, it transitions into the story of Princess Mandāra. Mandāra's story proceeds from folia numbered 90–94, and these folia are followed by several more of what appear to be copies of certain folia from the fifth chapter of Yeshé Tsogyal's story, i.e., the chapter in which she rescues the evil minister Shantipa, here known as Shata (*sdiḡ blon sha ta*, see, e.g., f. 86a.3–4 and f. 86b.8). This chapter, as noted in section on partial witnesses below, circulated independently of the rest of the story. However, since the folia are here numbered in the 80s just as folia of the fifth chapter of Yeshé Tsogyal's story in this witness, they seem to be additional copies of part of the chapter, and indeed, a note on the bottom right of the final folio included in the BDRF file (i.e., 86b) indicates that these folia are remainders (*lhag ma*). Text refers to the foreign suitor as the Indian Bhiryara prince (*rgya gar bhiryara ra'i rgyal bu*) rather than the Bheta prince; the pack animals upon which Ye shes mtsho rgyal's goods are loaded are elephants (*glang po che*) rather than horses, and the first chapter is the chapter which tells of the princess's birth (*lha lcam 'khrung tshul*) rather than her renunciation of royal life. No date is provided for the copy.

VERSIONS ATTRIBUTED TO PADMA GLING PA

7. PL Manang Reproduction (n.d.)

- 1) *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas pa*
- 2) Padma gling pa. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Mkha' 'gro ye shes mtho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas pa (ca)*. In *Collected Gter-ma Rediscoveries of Padma-Glin-pa: A Reproduction of a Rare Manuscript Collection from Manang*. Vol. 4. New Delhi: Ngawang Topgay, 1975: 207–338. This text is found among Padma gling pa's collected rediscovered treasure texts (*Padma gling pa'i gter skor*) as part of the collection titled *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*, or *Lama, Jewel, Ocean*. Its BDRF work number is W00EGS1017093. Tobgay notes that he obtained the seven-volume manuscript collection from Manang, Nepal with the help of Ven. Chopgye Rimpoche. Tobgay states that this "set of manuscripts presents many problems, orthographical and in arrangement," but it seemed appropriate to him "to print the collection

as it stood without any attempt to revise the order." He also notes that this set of collected works differs from that reproduced from Thimphu.⁵²⁶

3) Description of the text:

- a. 131 pages (or 65.5 folia in *dpe cha* format with sides numbered consecutively); 6 lines per side except for the title page (1 line) and the final page, 338 (5 lines)
- b. Fairly clear handwritten *dbu med* text; digitally scanned and available through BDRC. As with *dbu med* script in general, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish *pa*, *ba*, *sa*; *la*, *ma*, and *ya*; and *da*, *ra*, and *nga*, but context often quickly resolves problems with determining which of these letters appears.
- c. The text does not contain any illustrations.
- d. The scan appears entirely in black ink; whether any red ink was used is unclear.
- e. *Gter tsheg* marks are used throughout. In the top left corner of each odd-numbered (*verso*) *dpe cha* page, there is a *rgya gram shad* followed by a *gter tsheg* prior to the start of the first line.
- f. Each chapter ends with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, a *gter tsheg*, and a seal (i.e., *sa ma ya* followed by a *gter tsheg*, then *rgya rgya rgya* and a *gter tsheg*). After chapter one, the next chapter begins on the same line immediately following *ḍākinī* script. Chapter two is followed by *ḍākinī* script and a *sbrul shad*. After three through six, there only a *sbrul shad* appears rather than *ḍākinī* script.
- g. There are a number of interlinear notes which indicate corrections to the text or the addition of text originally omitted by the scribe. A longer note in '*khyugs yig* appears at 333.6. This note is difficult to read given the small size of the writing, but it appears in the context of the prophecy about the text's future discoveries. The *dbu can* Thimphu print (described below) reads [273.6–274.1] *da lta'i ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes 'di/ nga'i thugs kar thim nas zag med du sangs rgyas kyang/ gzhan snang mos pa'i yul du/ grwa mda' khang dmar zhes pa'i yul du/ dri med kun dga' snying po zhes su grags te/ sems can mang po'i don byed do*. This, the Manang copy, reads [336.5–337.1] *da lta'i ban de ye shes 'di o rgyan nga'i thugs kar thim nas/ zag med du sangs rgyas kyang/ [note in 'khyugs yig]/ gzhan mos pa'i yul grogs mda' khang dmar zhes pa'i yul du dri med kun dga'i snying po zhes su grags te/ sems can mang po'i don byed do/*
- h. *Incipit* (208.1–3) *ḍākinī* script is followed by: *chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul sku padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med lha la phyag 'tshal lo/ mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa/ dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa/ ma 'ongs sems can chos la spro ba bskyed phyir gsungs so/ Colophon and explicit* (338.2–5): *e ma ho/ 'tsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ ban de sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma ldog/ skal ldan don du yi ger bkod/ phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/ bab col smras rnam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/ bu mchog de la dus su gtad/ gted do gnyer ro sa ma ya/ gab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/*

⁵²⁶ For more information on the Manang corpus and the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle in particular, see the preface to Tobgay (1975: vol. 1) and Harding, Sarah. *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*. Snow Lion Publications, 2003.

- 4) True to N. Tobgay's assesment, this version contains a number of orthographical mistakes. Many of them are resolved in the Thimphu version described below, however. The collection as a whole is undated.

8. PL Thimphu Reproduction (n.d.)

- 1) *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas bar bkod pa*
- 2) Padma gling pa. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas bar bkod pa*. In *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*. Vol. 1 of 21. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay, 1975–1976: 169–275. This version, BDRC work number W21727, was reproduced from the original manuscript found at Gangteng Monastery in Bhutan. Kunsang Tobgay does not include a preface to this collection, but Ngawang Tobgay notes in the preface to the Manang collection that this manuscript set reproduced from Thimphu "shows considerable divergence from our Manang manuscripts." He does not specify the nature of the divergences, but one suspects he refers mostly to structural differences, for he concludes, "Only after careful comparison of existing Padma-gling-pa collections can we make any statements about the original order and structure."⁵²⁷ In the Manang collection, the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle is located in volume four; in this, the Thimphu collection, it is volume one. Here, as in the Manang collection, the *Ye shes mtsho rgyal rnam thar* is preceded by a *rnam thar* of Padmasambhava and followed by a *Mandārava rnam thar*. At the end of each of the texts within the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle, the attribution to Pad ma gling pa is noted in smaller script. For an example of such attributions, see, in addition to this version of *Ye shes mtsho rgyal's* life story, the end of the *Padmasambhava biography* (168.6) and the end of the *Mandārava rnam thar* (288.6–7).
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 106 pages (or 53 folios *dpe cha* format with sides numbered consecutively); 6 lines per side, except for title folio (1 line); 170 and 171 (4 lines); and final folio, 275 (3 lines). BDRC includes the title page and first folio at the end of the preceding *Padmasambhava biography*. See folios numbered 169 and 170 within the same volume under the title *O rgyan rin po che'i che ba dgu'i rnam thar kun mdzes nor bu phreng ba*.
 - b. Extremely clear scan of well and clearly written *dbu can*. The attribution on the final folio (275.3) appears in smaller script than the rest of the text.
 - c. The text contains no illustrations.
 - d. The scan shows only black ink.
 - e. *Gter tsheg* marks are used throughout the text with the exception of the *nyis shad-s* at the end of the colophon. *Tsheg* marks are used only after *nga* prior to a *gter tsheg*. In the top left corner of each odd-numbered (*recto*) *dpe cha* page, there is a an *om* plus a *gter tsheg* and a space prior to the start of the first line.
 - f. Each chapter ends with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, a *gter tsheg*, and a seal (i.e., *sa ma ya* followed by a *gter tsheg*, a space, then *rgya rgya rgya* and a *gter tsheg*). At the end of chapter one (211.6), two (242.6), four (260.1), five (268.5), and six

⁵²⁷ N. Tobgay 1975, Preface.

(270.5), the next chapter begins on the same line immediately following *ḍākinī* script. The seals for chapters three (256.3) and seven (274.6) are not followed by *ḍākinī* script.

- g. No interlinear notes occur in the text, suggesting that this version was checked carefully for errors and folios with any major errors were replaced. As noted above, the attribution at the end of the text is in smaller script, but it appears to be in the same hand as the body of the text.
- h. *Incipit* (170.1–3): *ḍākinī* script is followed by: chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul sku padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med kyi lha la phyag 'tshal lo/ mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba skyed pa'i phyir gsungs so/
- Colophon and *explicit* (275.1–3): e ma ho/ mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ ban de sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma ldog/ skal ldan don du yi ger bkod/ phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/ bab col smras na dam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gnyer ro gtad do sa ma ya/ gab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ bdag 'dra rig 'dzin padma gling pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag senge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drangs pa'o//

- 4) Like the Manang collection, this version is undated. The versions are very similar save to say that the Thimphu version is the more correct orthographically.

PL EAP310: Thadrak, Tshamdrak and Nyephug Temple Manuscripts

EAP310/3: The Manuscript Collection of Phurdrup Gonpa [1600-1900]

9. EAP310 3/3/11 (n.d.)

- 1) *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam thar bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs sto*
- 2) Like the Manang and Thimphu reproductions, this version is part of Padma gling pa's *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle. It was catalogued by Karma Phuntsho for the British Library from November 20, 2009 to December 31, 2009, and it is listed as "EAP310 3/3/11: Phurdrup Gonpa Thor bu Nor rgyam chos skor." Although the overall project title for EAP310 does not include Phurdrup Gonpa in its name, the archives eventually came to include material from this site near Neyphug, Tshamdrak, and Thadrak temples, which are located to the northeast of Thimphu in western Bhutan. The project overview notes that the original collection of these manuscripts remains in Phurdrup Monastery's temple, which is now under the care of Gangteng Tulku. The manuscript which contains the *Ye shes mtsho rgyal rnam thar* is in the first of three volumes (see section *ca* of EAP310/3/3/11, part of EAP310/3/3/11–13), and the scribe and dates are unknown. The preceding and following texts within the same volume are 1) a biography of Padmasambhava titled *Orgyan rin po che'i che pa dgu'i rnam thar kun mdzes nor bu'i phreng ba*, and 2) a *zhu len* rather than a *rnam thar* of Mandāra titled *Man dha ra ba'i zhu len*.

- 3) Description of the text:
- a. 63 folia; 6 lines per side, except for title page (1 line); 1b and 2a (4 lines); and 63a (4 lines). The text begins at digital image 69 of EAP310/3/3/11 because of its inclusion in the volume, but the section's folia are numbered internally from 1-63a.
 - b. Clear, handwritten *dbu can* on paper (type unspecified) in unbound *dpe cha* format
 - c. The text contains no illustrations.
 - d. Only black ink is used for the body of the text itself. Red ink is used for the letters that mark off the different sections (*ka kha ga nga*, etc.) in the table of contents (*dkar chag*). The volume (*ca*) is written in red ink above the title and housed in red *rgya gram shad* marks. Double red-ink lines frame the title page, and the text of 1b and 2a, and create left- and right-hand margins.
 - e. The scribe uses *gter tshag* marks rather than *shad* marks throughout. *Recto* show an *om* symbol followed by a *gter tshag* and space in the top left corner prior to the beginning of the first line.
 - f. Chapters end with the chapter title and number, a space, and a seal: *sa ma yā/ rgya rgya rgya*. The seals of chapters 1 and 2 are followed by *dākinī* script.
 - g. This version has very few interlinear notes. The few that are present supply a word or words initially omitted by the scribe (see, for example, 21b.6 and 49a.2). Some corrections appear in the form of erasures (e.g., 21b.3).
 - h. *Incipit* (1b.1–1b.3): [*dākinī* script]/ otha/ chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul sku padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med kyis lha la phyag 'tshal lo/ mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa/ dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam thar/ rgyas par bkod pa/ ma 'ongs sems can la spro ba skye ba'i phyir gsungs so/
Colophon and *explicit* (62b.6–63a.4): e ma ho/ mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma log/ skal ldan don du yi ger bkod/ phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/ bab tshol smras na dam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par bsrungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su bstod/ gnyer ro gtad do sa ma yā/ gab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ bdag padma gling pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag sen ge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drangs pa'o/ [space]/dge ba bla med theg pa chen po'i sa thob shog/ dge'o/ bkra shis/
- 4) This version appears close to the version described below not only in terms of the contents of the text, but also in material appearance and style of the writing. Unlike the version below, however, it includes corrections to the text, and the final volume does not offer a date for the copy.

EAP310/4: The Manuscript Collection of the Tshamdrak Monastery [1700-1900]

10. PL EAP310 4/2/12 (1707-1708)

- 1) *Bla ma nor by rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam thar bzhuks pa'i dbu phyogs lags sto*

- 2) Like EAP310/3/3/11 above (and the Manang and Thimphu reproductions), this version is part of Padma gling pa's *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle. It was catalogued by Karma Phuntsho for the British Library from February 1, 2010 to March 31, 2010, and it is listed as "EAP310 4/2/12: Thor bu Bla ma nor rgyam chos skor." Archive details state that Tshamdrak was founded by one Shes rab Rab dbyangs, about whom nothing is known, and the site's most prominent scion was Ngag dbang 'Brug pa (1682–1748), a well-known monk scholar active during the first half of eighteenth century. According to the project overview, the books in the archive were mostly commissioned by him, though some predate him. "From the physical appearance of the books," notes the overview, "they were mostly produced in Bhutan approximately between 1550 and 1900 CE, and in the local area." The manuscript which contains the Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar* can be found, as in the record above, in the first of three volumes of the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle (see section *ca* of EAP310 4/2/12, part of EAP310 4/2/12–14). The preceding and following texts within the same volume are as above: (1) a biography of Padmasambhava titled *Nga pa la o rgyan rin po che'i che ba dgu'i rnam thar kun mdzes nor bu'i phreng ba*, and (2) *Man dha ra ba'i zhu len*.
- 3) Description:
- 57 folios, 6 lines per side except title (1 line), 1b (4 lines), 2a (5 line), and final folio, 57b (5 lines)
 - Extremely clear handwritten *dbu can* on traditional Bhutanese paper made from daphne bark
 - The text contains no illustrations.
 - Only black ink is used for the body of the text itself. Red ink is used in the volume's table of contents for the letters that mark off the different sections (*ka kha ga nga*, etc.). Double red-ink lines frame the title page, and the text of 1a-2a, and create left- and right-hand margins.
 - The scribe uses *gter tsheg* marks rather than *shad* marks throughout. *Recto* show an *om* symbol followed by a *gter tsheg* and space in the top left corner prior to the beginning of the first line.
 - Chapters end with the chapter title and number, a space, and a seal: *sa ma yā/ rgya rgya rgya*. The seals of chapters 1 and 2 are followed by *dākinī* script.
 - The text contains no interlinear notes.
 - Incipit* (1b.1–1b.3): [*dākinī* script]/ otha/ chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul sku padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med kyis lha la phyag 'tshal lo/ mi brjed pa'i gzung thob pa/ dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam thar/ rgyas par bkod pa/ ma 'ong sems can la spro ba skye ba'i phyir gsungs so/
Colophon and *explicit* (57b.2–5): e ma ho/ mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di/ ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma log/ skal ldan don du yi ger bkod/ phyi rab don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnam la gsang bar bya/ bag chol smras na dam tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par bsrungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su bstod/ gnyer ro gtad do sa ma yā/ gab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ bdag padma gling pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag seng ge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drang pa'o/ dge ba bla med theg pa chen po'i sa thob shog/ dge'o/ bkra shis//
- 4) The colophon on the last page of the third volume (see EAP310/4/2/14, folio unnumbered, image 208) says that the volumes were commissioned by Rdo rje 'dzin pa chen po Ngag dbang

rgyal mtshan, perhaps Byams mgon Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan (1647–1732). The were begun on the tenth day of the third month of a fire-female pig year (*me mo phag lo'i nag pa zla ba'i tshes bcu*) and finished at Bya khyung brag on the 25th day of the tenth month of an earth-male mouse year (*sa pho byi lo'i smin drug gi zla ba'i tshes nyer lnga*). These dates correspond in the Gregorian calendar to Monday, April 11, 1707 (when the text was begun) and Friday, December 7, 1708 (when the copy was finished).

11. PL Lhasa Edition (2013)

- 1) *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa*
- 2) Padma gling pa. *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho las: Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar rgyas par bkod pa*. In *Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs: 'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*. Vol. 6, no. 6. Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang. 2013: 262-331. This *rnam thar* appears in print as part of a sixteen-volume series titled *Arya tā re'i dpe tshogs* that was printed in Lhasa and is currently available on BDRC.org. It is described in the BDRC catalogue as "Collected biographies of great women of India and Tibet." This volume (no. 6) is preceded by *Ye shes mtsho rgyal* life stories (labeled either *skyes rabs* or *rnam thar*) attributed to Rdo rje gling pa (1346–1405) and Dri med kun dga' (b. 1347?), the latter of which I have described above. For access to the entire series, see *'Phags bod kyi skyes chen ma dag gi rnam par thar ba padma dkar po'i phreng ba*. BDRC W1KG16649. 16 vols. Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2013.
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 69 pages; a maximum (and an average) of 21 lines per page
 - b. *dbu can* computer type in Western-style book format; high degree of clarity throughout the text; *ḍākinī* script is digitally "handwritten" prior to the homage in the incipit and after the seal of each chapter (with the exceptions of chapters three and seven)
 - c. The text does not contain any illustrations.
 - d. The printer uses black type throughout the text.
 - e. The editors use *gter tsheg* marks. They add a *tsheg* before a *gter tsheg* only after *nga*.
 - f. Each chapter ends with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, a *gter tsheg*, and a seal (i.e., *sa ma ya* followed by a *gter tsheg*, then *rgya rgya rgya* and a *gter tsheg*). The next chapter begins as a paragraph break headed by digitally handwritten *ḍākinī* script.
 - g. There are no interlinear notes, footnotes, or endnotes.
 - h. *Incipit* (262) *ḍākinī* script is followed by: chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul sku padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med kyi lha la phyag 'tshal lo/ mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa 'di/ ma 'ongs pa'i sems can chos la spro ba bskyed pa'i phyir gsungs so/
Colophon and *explicit* (331.7–12): e ma ho/ mtsho rgyal nga yi rnam thar 'di/ ban dhe sangs rgyas ye shes kyis/ mos pas zhus pa'i ngo ma ldog/ skal ldan don du yi ger bkod/ phyi rabs don du gter du sbas/ snod min rnams la gsang bar bya/ bab bcol smras na dan tshig nyams/ mkha' 'gro sde bzhis thub par srungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su gtod/ gnyer ro gtad do sa ma ya/ gab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ zab rgya/ kha tham/ bdag 'dra rig

'dzin padma gling pas lho brag sman mdo'i brag seng ge'i gdong pa can nas gdan drangs pa'o////

- 4) Although the editors do not provide information about which version of the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho* cycle they chose to consult and to edit for this Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar*, the text appears closest to the Manang and Thimphu versions described above.

UNATTRIBUTED

EAP105 Drametse Manuscripts

Two manuscripts of a Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar* were found in Drametse Monastery, one of the major monasteries in eastern Bhutan. The project description notes that this site was "founded in 1511 by Ani Choten Zangmo, the grand-daughter of the famous Bhutanese saint Padma Lingpa," and its archives have been digitized and catalogued by the British Library in partnership with the National Library and Archives of Bhutan as EAP105 1/3/113 and EAP105 1/3/132. Below I will describe both in order of catalogue number.

12. EAP105 1/3/113 (n.d.)

- 1) *Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa*
- 2) This manuscript, numbered EAP105 1/3/113, was the first among the Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar* manuscripts of the Drametse Monastery Collection to be catalogued (in 2006–2007) for the British Library under the direction of Karma Phuntsho at the Aris Trust Centre, Oxford University. The project overview notes that Drametse's manuscript collection includes "the 46-volume *Rnying ma Rgyud 'bum*, sixteen volumes of *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* and about a hundred and fifty volumes of miscellaneous titles including religious hagiographies, histories, liturgies, meditation manuals and philosophical treatises," and many of the sources are written in *dbu med*. A number of *rnam thars* are included under the heading of "miscellaneous titles" (*gsung thor bu*). The full catalogue for EAP105 as well as high-quality photographs of the mss. in the Drametse-Ogyen Choling collection can be accessed through the British Library's website.
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 66 folia; 6 lines per side; except title folio (1 line) and the final folio, 66.b, which shows 3 lines continuous with the text, and then a 4th line in *dbu can* that reads (*dbyangs can ma'i sal pa mo*) and 5th line of *ḍākinī* script
 - b. Clear, handwritten text in *dbu med* on handmade daphne paper the edges of which are stained and worn away, but otherwise intact; puncture holes in the center of the left side of certain consecutive folia and holes in the top right corner of other consecutive folia (see ff. 44–66) indicate insect damage; the final folio is patched (visible on *verso* side)

- c. The text contains two illustrations that flank the text on 1b. Below the illustration on the left, an image of a man in a lotus hat, likely Padmasambhava, someone wrote in *dbu can* "*ja hor rgyal po yin.*" Perhaps it should be "*za hor rgyal po yin.*" On the left, an unlabeled image of a woman, likely Ye shes mtsho rgyal.
 - d. Double lines of red ink form a rectangular frame around the title and the text of 1b and 2a. Double red lines flank the text on the rest of the folios. Blue ballpoint pen was used to make notes (see 52a and 53a, for example).
 - e. The scribe uses *gter tsheg* marks throughout the text.
 - f. Chapters 1 and 2 end with the chapter's title, the number of the chapter, a *gter tsheg*, and a seal (i.e., *sa ma ya* followed by a *gter tsheg*, a space, then *rgya rgya rgya* and a *gter tsheg*), and *ḍākinī* script prior to the start of the next chapter. The number of the final chapter is omitted (see 66b.3); chapter 1 ends at 34b.1–2; chapter two ends at 58a.3–4. The contents that make up chapters 3–7 in other witnesses are heavily condensed in EAP105 1/3/113.
 - g. Longer interlinear notes occur on 10b, 23b, 35a, 41a. These notes supply text originally omitted by the scribe. Above the first line of 41.a, a long note appears to have been erased. There are many instances in which someone made notes in ballpoint pen in blue ink (see 35b and 36b, for several examples). These notes elaborate contracted words (*bskungs yig* or *bsdu yig*). For example, where the text shows "*chyings*" on 22a.1, someone has written above that word, "*chos dbyings.*"
 - h. *Incipit* (1b.1–5): *ḍākinī* script is followed by: chos sku snang ba mtha' yas/ longs sku thugs rje chen po/ sprul sku padma 'byung gnas/ sku gsum 'gyur med kyis lha la phyag 'tshal lo/ mi brjed pa'i gzungs thob pa/ dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa/ rgyas par bskod pa ma 'ongs sems can chos la spro ba skyed phyr gsungs so/ Colophon and *explicit* (66b.2–3): dbyangs can ma'i sprul pa mo/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis rnam par thar pa rdzogs sto/ sa ma yā/ rgya rgya rgya/ *ḍākinī* script and the addition of dbyangs can ma'i sal pa? [read le?] mo/
- 4) As in EAP310 3/3/11 and EAP310 4/2/12, the full line on the title page of this manuscript reads *Ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam par thar pa bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs sto*. Recall that the block print obtained from the Lhasa Public Library by Gyatso and Dalton in 1996 and attributed to Dri med kun dga' is titled simply *Mtsho rgyal dbu*, a designation that perhaps reflects a shortened version of or reference to the title above. In addition to displaying a number of notes and corrections, the text uses many contractions and abbreviations (for example, *gsung* is indicated by a "*sa*" with a "*ya*" subscribed; "*med*" is indicated by a backwards, hooked "*na*") and "*lha lcam*" (i.e., "lady" or "princess") is consistently spelled "*lhas lcam.*" No date is provided in the colophon.

13. EAP105 1/3/132 (n.d.)

- 1) Title page missing
- 2) Like EAP105 1/3/113 above, this manuscript comes from the Drametse Monastery Collection, catalogued in 2006-2007 for the British Library under the direction of Karma

Phuntsho at the Aris Trust Centre, Oxford University. See no. 2 in the description above for further publication and location details.

- 3) Description of the text:
- a. 78 folios in *dpe cha* format with title page, f. 76, and colophon missing; 6 lines per side
 - b. Clear, handwritten *dbu can* on paper, material unspecified. There are a number of tears in the text and indications of insect damage.
 - c. The text contains no illustrations.
 - d. Only black ink is used for the text itself. Double red-ink lines create left- and right-hand margins.
 - e. The scribe used *gter tsheg* marks rather than *shad* marks throughout the first folio, but single *shad* marks are then used throughout the text. Within the chapter seals, *gter tsheg* marks appear. After the seal and prior to the start of a new chapter, a *sbrul shad* followed by a space appears. The first line of the text is preceded by *yig mgo mdun* and *sgab ma* and a *rgya gram shad*, and the first line of *recto* sides begin with *yig mgo mdun* and *sgab ma* and a space prior to the start of the text.
 - f. Chapters 3–7 end with the title of the chapter, the chapter number, and a seal (with long-a vowels in *sāmāyā*). Then a space, *sbrul shad*, and a space follow before the start of the next chapter. For example: lha lcam gyis dmyal ba'i 'gro ba ston pa'i le'u ste/ lnga pa'o/ sā mā yā/ rgya rgya rgya/ [space + *sbrul shad* + space]// de nas... Chapters 1 and 2 are not followed by a seal. Chapter 1 ends at 46.4; chapter 2, 65b.6; chapter 3, 73b.6; chapter 4, 75b.6–76a.1; chapter 5, 80b.6; chapter 6, 82a.2–3.
 - g. The text contains numerous interlinear notes and corrections in the form of erasures and crossed-out letters or words. A long note occurs in the header space of the folio numbered 70a. Long notes in header and footer margins are preceded by x-es or *swasti* that link to line in which the text of the note should be read (see 67b.4 and 81a.1, for example). A patch extends from the folio that is numbered 91/92 in the left-hand margin.
 - h. *Incipit* (3a.1):// *bde gshogs kun tu bzang po phyag 'tshal lo/*
Colophon and *explicit*: n/a
- 4) Many folios of this version seem to have been numbered twice, once in the center of the left-hand margin and once toward the top of that same margin. For example, the eighth folio of text is numbered 8 in the top left-hand corner, but "x *sum bcu tham pa*" (i.e., 30) in the center of the same margin. (In other instances, a folio will be numbered in the top left corner, the center, and then immediately off-center. See, for example, the folio that numbered 21 as well as "x *zhe gsum*" and "x *zhe bzhi*.") This suggests that this text was initially part of a set or volume with other texts and then separated out and re-numbered. On the verso side of the folio numbered both 91 and 92 of this manuscript, the contents of the text switch to the life story of Snang gsal 'od 'bum. The transitional line (91/2b.1) reads *sal le 'od kyi skor rol/* [*sbrul shad* followed by a space]// [*yig mgo mdun ma* and *yig mgo sgab ma*]// *na mo gu ru/* ... Between the *yig mgo* and the homage, an interlinear note reads *snang gsal 'od de 'bum gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus bzhugs so//*. (It is as yet unclear to me what the case is, exactly, but perhaps the dual numbering and the confusion with the story of Snang gsal suggests that this *Life* was once part of a collection of *das log* tales.) Interestingly, where EAP105 2/1/8 (described below) reads "*stan*" EAP105 1/3/132 also reads "*stan*" but it is corrected to "*brtan*" (See EAP105 1/3/132, f. 33a.5/56a.5). Similarly, EAP105 1/3/132 reads "*stong*" for

"*gtong*," but "*stong*" is crossed out and replaced by "*gtong*" in interlinear notes. (See EAP105 1/3/132, folios numbered 33b1/56b.1 and 33b.5/56b.5), and "*gter*" is twice corrected to "*ster*" (33b.2 and 3/56b.2 and 3). These texts were perhaps copied from a similarly incorrect source (or one could have been copied from the other), but only EAP105 1/3/132 was corrected. No date is provided for the copy.

EAP105 Ogyen Choling Manuscript

12. EAP105 2/1/8 (n.d.)

- 1) *Mkha' 'gro gtso mo ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar*
- 2) This manuscript, catalogued by the British Library from 2006–2007 as EAP105 2/1/8, was discovered at Ogyen Choling,⁵²⁸ a religious center founded in the late-fourteenth or early-fifteenth century and located in central Bhutan. The project overview notes that the center (sometimes referred to as a monastery) was a seat of "two famous Nyingmapa saints, Longchenpa (1308–1363) and Dorje Lingpa (1346–1405)," and although the site was, historically, a religious establishment, "it is now a manor house of the family which claims direct descent from Dorje Lingpa." The manuscript is classified under "EAP 105 2/1: Rnying ma pa tradition."
- 3) Description of the text:
 - a. 71 folia; 8 lines per side, except for title page (1 line); the verso of the first of two folia labeled 42a (4 lines); and 71b (6 lines continuous with the text and a note in cursive, i.e., *'khyug yig*, at the bottom of the folio)
 - b. Clear, handwritten *dbu med* on paper (type unspecified) in unbound *dpe cha* format. The paper appears to me to have been reused from some other source, or, more likely, some of the folia are two pieces of paper stuck together back-to-back. The footer margin of 16b, the center of 28b, the header margin of 37a, and the header of 60a most clearly show glimpses of large letters that were printed on what is now the back of the opposite side. From 5a–33a.1, the text seems to be in a different hand. These folios could have been replacements, but given that the hand sometimes changes within folios, there may have been multiple scribes working together on the initial copy. See folio 33a and 41b for instances where this change in hand occurs on the same folio.
 - c. The text contains no illustrations.
 - d. The text is entirely in black ink. The text lines and double lines at the margins appear to be in faded red or brown ink.
 - e. The scribe uses marks that look closer to *nyis tsheg* (:) marks rather than *gter tsheg* marks given the omission of a center line between vertically stacked dots. The scribe also uses *shad*, *rgya gram shad*, and *sbrul shad*, albeit sparingly. For example, at the end of chapter 2 (49b.3), there are three *shad* marks followed by a *rgya rgam shad* and two more *shad* marks before the start of the next chapter. The *recto* sides of folia show *yig mgo* followed

⁵²⁸ Further information about the history and preservation of Orgyen Choling can be found through the Ogyen Choling Foundation's website (<http://www.oling.bt/history.html>).

either by two *shad*, or by two *sbrul shad* marks separated by a space before the start of each first line.

- f. Chapters end with the chapter's title and number, but the markers that follow differ. Chapter 1 ends at 27b.8 with a *nyis shad*, a space, and another *nyis shad*; chapter 2 ends at 49b.3 with a *nyis tsheg*, a space, a *shad*, and a *rgya gram shad* flanked by *nyis shad* marks. Chapters 3–7 end with a seal, but only chapter 3 ends (59a.4–5) with elaborate marks: ...*ste gsum pa'o// // [rgya gram shad] bsā mā yā [nyis tsheg] rgya rgya rgya rgya rgya//*; chapter 4 ends at 61b.1; chapter 5 ends at 67a.6; chapter 6 at 68b.4; and chapter 7 at 71b.1–2.
- g. A number of corrections are noted interlinearly and in the header and footer margins. See 10b.5, the bottom margin of 23b, and 61b and 62b for examples of notes that are marked with an x and dots leading to another x in the body of the text indicate where the note should be read or the correction made. See 28a.3 for an example of an instance in which *dbu can* was written over or below a word in *dbu med*. A stain makes part of the text on 61a.6–7 difficult to read. On 38b.3, a line seems to have been erased and then replaced.
- h. *Incipit* (1b.1): *bde chen skun bzang mo la phyag tshal lo [sbrul shad]*
Colophon and *explicit* (71b.2–5): *e ma ho//// [smudged mark] mtsho rgyal nga'i rnam thar 'di// bandhe sangs rgyas ye shes gyi mos pas zhus nas ngo ma ltogs// skal ldan don du yi ger bskod// phyi rab don du gter du sbas// snod med rnam la bsang par bya/ bab chol smras na dam tshig nyams/ 'kha' 'gro de bzhis [thub] par srungs/ khyu mchog de la dus su bstod/ gtod do grnyer ro sā mā [yā] gtad rgya/ sbas rgya/ gab rgya/ zab rgya/ bsang rgya/ kha tham dge'o bzhus dag kyis par byon// [Note in 'khyug yig:] sprang po dgon po ming kyi bri nams ni/ 'gro sems ma lu/*
- 4) Two folia are labeled 33a and two are labeled 42a, perhaps because of what appears to be a change in scribal hand. The scribe(s) consistently writes "*stong*" where it should be "*gtong*" and, as noted above, the symbol for "*med*" resembles a backwards "*na*" with a curved bottom; "*gsungs*" is written as a "*sa*" with a "*ya*" subscribed to it; "*lha lcam*" is consistently spelled "*lhas lcam*." Frequent contractions, such as "*bdagis*" for "*bdag gis*," "*cheno*" for "*chen po*," and "*phrong*" for "*pho brang*" occur. No date is provided for the copy.

NOTES ON THREE PARTIAL WITNESSES

Byang bdag Bkra shis stobs rgyal (1550–1602) *Padma 'byung gnas kyī rnam thar* (1611)⁵²⁹

One of the more interesting partial witnesses of the Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar* attributed to both Dri med kun dga' and Padma gling pa can be found at 491.3–552.2 of Bkra shis stobs rgyal's *Padma 'byung gnas kyī rnam thar* (BDRC W8873), completed in 1611.⁵³⁰ Following a preliminary comparison of what I refer to as the "tigress scene" in Bkra shis stobs rgyal with the other witnesses, I take it to be closer to the Dri med kun dga'-attributed versions we have rather

⁵²⁹ For information about the dating of this text, see Martin 1997: 102, record no. 203 and Ehrhard 2015: 174.

⁵³⁰ See Bkra shis stobs rgyal. *Padma 'byung gnas kyī rnam thar*. BDRC W8873. 1 vols. Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltshe Lama, 1976.

than those of Padma gling pa. Comparison supports that conclusion, and indeed, Chapters I and II follow the Dri med kun dga' versions closely. Bkra shis stobs rgyal condenses or omits what would be the successive chapters, however. The contents of what otherwise make up Chapter I of Ye shes mtsho rgyal's *Life* end at f. 515.9; chapter two ends at f. 543.3; Chapter III appears condensed, and IV is omitted. Compare *Mtsho rgyal dbu* ff. 45b-52b and DK Lhasa pp. 237-247 with Bkra shis stobs rgyal ff. 543.3-545.3. By f. 545.3, Bkra shis stobs rgyal's text transitions into material that is part of chapter five in other versions. The text that begins chapter six in complete versions begins on f. 551.7, but what follows is heavily condensed by comparison, and Chapter VII seems to be altogether omitted before the entire section ends at f. 552.2.

***Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan* (n.d.; Lhasa edition 2006)**

A four-chapter version of the Ye shes mtsho rgyal *rnam thar* that appears in the *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan*,⁵³¹ a collection of biographies of Padmasambhava, Ye shes mtsho rgyal, and Vairocana revealed by Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje (b. 1655). In the Lhasa edition (2006), the authorship attribution can be found on p. 225. A handwritten copy of a work with the same parent title (though differently organized) contains an authorship statement at f. 425.2. There we find the name Sprang ban Bsam gtan rdo rje ngas dpal. Along with the alias Bsam gtan gling pa, we also find Stag sham referring to himself as Nus ldan rdo rje ngas dpal.

***Rnal 'byor ma'i grub thob ye shes mtsho rgyal kyi rnam thar nas
sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba nas ston tshul gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam zhig***

In addition to finding the Dri med kun dga'-attributed *Mtsho rgyal dbu* version at the public library in Lhasa, Gyatso and Dalton also found a block print spanning seven folia of a text titled *Rnal 'byor ma'i grub thob ye shes mtsho rgyal kyi rnam thar nas sdig blon shan ti bya ba dmyal ba nas ston tshul gyi lo rgyus mdo tsam zhig*.⁵³² The contents of this text match those of chapter five of the Dri med kun dga'/Padma gling pa *Life of Ye shes mtsho rgyal* wherein Ye shes mtsho rgyal descends into hell in order to rescue the evil minister Shantipa (vars. Shanti, Shita, Shata). The end of the print does not contain an authorial attribution nor does it offer a date, but it does, on f. 7a, note that the text was in fact excerpted from a *rnam thar* of Ye shes mtsho rgyal. Brag dkar rta so Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775-1837), a figure I noted in the body of this thesis for his mention of Dri med kun dga's *Thugs rje chen po ye shes 'od mchog* in connection to Padma gling pa through Dkar po kun dga' grags pa (15th cent.). This Chos kyi dbang phyug (not to be confused with Guru Chos kyi dbang phyug of the twelfth century) attests that the chapter on Ye shes mtsho rgyal's descent into hell circulated independently. In volume two of his collected works, Chos kyi dbang phyug refers to it as the *Sdig blon shi ta dpyal ba nas bton pa'i lo rgyus*. We find this same text later included by Bya bral kun dga' rang grol in his 1888 anthology of 'das log stories, the *'Das log skor gyi chos skor phyogs sgrigs*.

⁵³¹ See "Mkhar chen bza' mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi rnam thar," in *Bka' thang dri ma med pa'i rgyan*, BDRC W1PD83974: 154-191, Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2006.

⁵³² See Gyatso 2006: 9.

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