The Imaginal Persistence of the Empire

Even a man who is fond of myths is in a way a philosopher, since a myth is made up of wonders.
Aristotle, Metaphysics, 1.2.

The Truth of Myth

Throughout this book I have steered a shifting course, tacking between systematic and narrative thought, but to put it differently, between philosophy and myth. In this final section I shall follow the same route once again, beginning in this and the following chapter with some of the mythic aspects of the rediscovered treasures and related texts, but turning later to aspects of systematic thought which they embody as well.

The relationship between philosophical and mythic modes of thought often seems problematic, and one may feel that the question "What is the relationship between philosophy and myth?" if not actually ill formed, is somehow fishy. That there does sometimes appear to be a peculiar relationship between myth and philosophical or scientific reason, however, is underscored when we turn to some now generally discredited theories of myth, for instance. Sir James Frazer's view that myth is "false science." Many, probably most, contemporary folklorists would insist that, regardless of the actual truth or falsehood of a myth, assuming that to be capable of determination even in principle, the community in which a myth is transmitted traditionally regards it to be in some sense true. Given Frazer's assumptions, we can only conclude that myths are false explanations that are nonetheless taken to be true, for if they were thought to be false they would no longer be myths. Indeed, this explains quite well a very common use of the term "myth" in contemporary English: for instance, if one says, "It's a myth that you can get AIDS from a handshake."9

While Frazer's view of myth as false explanation is no longer much adhered to by those who make it their business to specialize in the study of myth, there are nevertheless two points made in this connection that I think should be underscored here: first, that what we term "myth" may often have a special relationship to reason, above all to reasoned explanation, that neither legend nor folklore generally has; second, that we should attend carefully to the question of the truth-value of myths. An additional point that I shall seek to emphasize in this and the following chapters relates to the common characterization of myths as narratives concerned with sacred history.
In its explanatory dimension, myth engages reason by disclosing as intelligible what had otherwise seemed mysterious, and by motivating appropriate human behavior in the light of what is thus explained, at least whenever the proper ordering of human agency is part of the mystery to be made intelligible, as it is in many important myths. For example, what we may term the “myth of our technological hubris” tells us that a particular community of believers among us that the mystery of much human misery may be understood with reference to humanity’s overreach and itself and sacrificing an essential, vitalizing harmony with nature in the course of a self-defeating and obsessive drive to attain control of nature. Apart from the truth or falsehood of any particular claims advanced in this connection, the believer may assert that, in the light of this myth, much of human misery is revealed to be an intelligible phenomenon, and so he or she may be motivated to contribute to the alleviation of suffering by assisting in the effort to refrain from and limit our abuse of nature through technology. This, in turn, may or may not require that the believer master certain specific information about history or physical science.4

The same points might just as well be made with reference to traditional myth narratives. Consider, for example, one of the myths that is told in connection with the cult of Bhäätääténti, a defied minstrel couple widely worshiped by the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal:

Bhäätääténti, like Hrútt, had a taste for human flesh. But Véjir, by means of Garada, seized one of Bhäätääténti’s own beloved brood, restoring it only on the ogres’ promise to forever swear human flesh and to become instead a protector of children. It is apparent in this role that the blessing of Bhäätääténti is invoked by parents of children thought to be bewitched or to be suffering from mental or physical disease.5

So long as there is a community authorizing the authority of this myth, its members will continue to propitiate the minstrel couple to alleviate the illnesses of their children, and they will do so reasonably so long as the myth is not falsified for them in practice, as it might be if they were to conclude, for instance, that recovery of health was notably less likely for children of Bhäätääténti worshippers than among the children of other Kathmandu Newars. But this would likely be the case only if their worship precluded their recourse to other treatment, whereas in fact it may just as well motivate the search for alternatives; the discovery of the right doctor may be taken as a token of the deity’s blessing no less than a miracle cure.

Reflection upon such relationships between mythic explanation and motivated action further calls into question the truth of myths. It may seem that in a certain sense this shows truth to be essentially irrelevant here, that the open-ended potentialities for artistic interpretation render myth un falsifiable. The myths that a given community considers authoritative need not be thought to be true in the sense that they convey demonstrably true “factual” information; mythic matters seem to be more subtle than the facts of the matter, so that the truth in myth may be thought to be expressed allegorically, metaphorically or presuppositionally; or myth may be thought just to orient us towards truth so buried in mystery that no human discourse can dis- close it directly. The truth in myth is thus conceived as veiled and obscure truth, and this, of course, reinforces for some the conclusion that myths somehow stand outside of the domain of truth-value altogether.

That conclusion, however, I believe to be wrong. For myth-truth, while not factual truth, is perhaps allied to pragmatic truth in something approaching a Jamesian sense. A myth is felt to be true whenever it functions in the discourse of a community to ground action that is itself felt to bring about the success of that community or of its individual members. It may thus be said to be true to the extent that it is felt by those who yield to its authority to promote ends that are not self-defeating. This is very well illustrated by some aspects of the recent disputes within the Tibetan community concerning the status of the protective divinity Dorje Shugden, whose cult the Dalai Lama in recent years has sought to ban.6

Among the members of the Tibetan business community in Kathmandu, Dorje Shugden is widely propitiated as a divine bestower of wealth. Because Tibetans in Kathmandu have in fact flourished during the past couple of decades, growing rich through success in the tourist and crafts-export trades, the Dalai Lama’s calls to abandon the Shugden cult have caused no small degree of consternation: the deity, after all, appears to be promoting the ends for which he is propitiated. The Dalai Lama, however, regarding matters from a clerical perspective, is more focused upon the role of Shugden as a militantly sectarian protector of the Gelugpa order, and the harm that has been done to Tibetan sectarian relations by the cult’s more vociferous proponents. As sectarian strife appears to undermine the interests of the Tibetan community at large, the Dalai Lama and those who perceive the issue as he does have concluded that the cult is now a self-defeating one, and that it should therefore be set aside. This, of course, leaves some of the businesspeople who are supporters of the Dalai Lama in a position of inner conflict: their loyalty to their leader requires them to obey him, but at the same time, because they have prospered while worshiping Shugden, they find it difficult to accept that this practice has been in any sense self-defeating.

Because it is probably impossible to remove the determination of human ends and their successful fulfillment entirely from the domain of appearances, myth-truth cannot itself be more than a matter of seeming, but to say this is not to say that truth-value is irrelevant here; for the possibility of self-defeat entails that a myth may be in the course of a community’s history revealed to be false to the very community that, at an earlier time, had affirmed it. And, as we have now seen, if differing factions within the same community arrive at opposing conclusions about this, the assessment of myth may become a cause for sharp division.

The truth of myth, then, is essentially tied to a community’s history, and successful mythmakers may be said to know this. For even when, as is the case of the materials we shall examine in chapters 9 and 10, the time in which the events narrated in myth stand outside of historical time, it is nonetheless historical and lived time—whether some of its particular features or the whole thereof—that is explained and interpreted through myth. Myth is in this respect metaphorical discourse and so may sometimes emerge as a powerful medium for philosophical and scientific thought: consider here the myths of the state of nature and the social contract in political philosophy since Hobbes, or that of the primal horda in the thought of Plato.6

Myths, therefore, engage our thinking in reason, truth, and history, and so they express and constitute the thinker’s vision of these domains, and of the manner in which they are related to one another. For this reason, it seems to me to be an
error to associate mythical thinking too strongly with the "primitive" or the "archaic." Mythic discourse, as I understand it here, is part of the essential constitution of human discourse, though its precise role and value, and above all the specific manner of its articulation, may vary from one cultural-historical setting to another.

Of course, "myth," as I am using the word here, refers not exclusively to a particular discourse genre, but rather to any discourse that performs functions closely similar to those of the paradigmatic myths that do represent a type of narrative. This is a derivative way of using the term "myth," and one that I shall continue to employ from time to time, though it should not be conflated with the more primary signification of the term, which refers to a particular narrative category. In the two cases studied in the present chapter—the religious traditions that evolved in part from the earlier historical accounts of the great emperors Songtsen Gampo (c. 617–649/650) and Trï Thongt zest (742–797)—epic narratives buttressed a vast corpus of nonparanarrative literature. These included works on morals, meditation, all sorts of ritual, and Buddhist doctrine, that in turn contributed to the ongoing elaborations of the mythic constrictions to which they belonged.

The Most Compassionate King

The Mani Ma’ (bbum (Manj Kambum), a heterogeneous collection of texts ascribed to King Songtsen Gampo and primarily concerned with the cult of the bodhisattva Mahãkàrûti-Avalokiteôvara, the “Most Compassionate Avalokiteôvara,” has enjoyed a singularly long history of study in the West.1 As early as 1801, P. S. Pullis had published an account of its first chapters, and, in 1838, the inquisitive Magyar scholar Alexander Csoe de Kôs mentioned it by name among Tibetan historical works, thereby creating the false impression that the Manj Kambum might be regarded as such.1 A. I. Vostrikov, writing some one hundred years later, sought to provide a more accurate assessment of the Manj Kambum, saying that it contains much interesting material from the point of view of literature and folklore. Its fairly frequent deviations from the dominant views of Tibetan Buddhism are of great interest. As a historical source, however, it is of absolutely no value and cannot be classed under historical works.13

More recently, Ariane Macdonald has reported briefly on her investigations concerning the contents and compilation of the Manj Kambum as a prelude to the study of the legendary biographies of Songtsen Gampo found therein, for, as she observes, it is the historico-legendary aspect of the Manj Kambum that has held the attention of occidental scholars.14 These aspects of the Manj Kambum have continued to be examined by Michael Aris and others, and traditions concerning one of the key figures involved in its early compilation, by Anne-Marie Blondel.15 In the present survey of the Manj Kambum and its allied literature, I emphasize three aspects of this important body of material: the history of the Manj Kambum’s compilation; its significance for the development of a Tibetan worldview; and its peculiar approach to the problems of Buddhist theory and practice.

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Compiling the Treasures

The Manj Kambum is usually divided into three “cycles” (skor):1

1. The Cycle of Sites (mdo-skor), which includes various legendary accounts of the exploits of Avalokiteôvara and of King Songtsen Gampo;

2. The Cycle of Attainment (sgrub-skor), which contains the meditational “means for attainment” (sgrub-thabs, Skt. siddhabhāja) of Avalokiteôvara in various aspects; and

3. The Cycle of Precepts (chal-gdams-ki-skor), containing some 150 short texts treating a wide variety of topics, most of which are connected in some way with the systems of meditation focusing upon Mahãkàrûti-Avalokiteôvara.16

Further, there is a small collection of texts, sometimes referred to as the Cycle of the Discourse of the Hidden (gphob-pa mongny-phayang gi skor)—after the most renowned of the works found therein—which in some reductions of the Manj Kambum is appended to the Cycle of Precepts, and in others forms by itself a fourth cycle, an appendix to the entire collection.17 This entire mass of material—usually assembled in two volumes containing about 700 folios in all—was discovered as textual treasure (gser-ma) by some three treasure-revelers (gser-stor) over a period lasting approximately one century, beginning, it appears, in the middle of the twelfth. The Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (1617–1682), himself a great contributor to the tradition of revealed treasures, has summarized its compilation in these words:

The dharma-protecting king Songtsen Gampo taught the doctrinal cycles (chos-skor) of Mahãkàrûti to disciples endowed with [appropriate propensities owing to their own past] actions and fortunate circumstances... and had the cycles set down in writing. The Great Chronicle (La-rgyas chen-mo), which comes from the Cycle of Sites, was concealed together with the Cycle of Attainment and the Cycle of Precepts beneath the feet of Hayagriva, in the northern quarter of the central hall [in the Lhasa Je-khang temple].18 Some, including the Discourse of the Hidden and the [remaining portions of] the Cycle of Sites, were concealed in the right thigh of the yaksâ Nâga-Kubera, beneath the hern of his gown.19 The glorious and great Origen [Padaṃsambhava] clearly revealed them to Lord Trï Thongt zest, saying, “Your own ancestor Songtsen Gampo has concealed such treasures in Ra-sa [Lhasa].” Therupon, [the king] gained faith and made the Means for the Attainment of the Thousand-fold Mahãkàrûti, the Disclosures of the Hidden, the Creation and Consecration of the Thousand Buddhas, the Benefits of Beholding [Songtsen Gampo’s] Spiritual Bond [that is, the Jowo Óyâma image of Lhasa], and Songtsen’s Last Testament into this [own] spiritual bond.20

Later, the siddha Ngandrub—a yogin who was taken into the following of Mahãkàrûti [by the deity himself],21 and who lived in the human world for about 300 years—drew forth the Cycle of Attainment from beneath the feet of the Hayagriva in the northern quarter of the central hall and transmitted it to Lord Nyangrég Nyingma Özer, 1124–1192,22 the incarnation of Tshangpa Lhemtset (King Trï Thongt zest). Lord [Nyain] brought the Cycle of Precepts out from beneath the feet of Hayagriva, Shêkaru,23 who is also known as Shêkaru Zangpo, a teacher from Lhasa in the central province, [later] brought forth the Cycle of Sites, as well as the Discourse of the Hidden and so on, from the yaksâ-throne. So it was that this doctrinal cycle had...
three discoverers. Nonetheless, it is renowned as the treasure of the venerable siddha Ngödrup, for he was foremost among them. For that reason, I have not here written [about the Mani Kambum] in the sections devoted to the doctrinal cycles of the other two treasure-discoverers but have placed [all their discoveries belonging to the Mani Kambum] together at this juncture.27

The Great Fifth later reinforces his case for insisting upon the preeminence of the siddha Ngödrup among the revealers of the Mani Kambum. Speaking of the Great Chronicle he tells us that the location in which it was concealed (gter-gnas, that is, under the feet of the Hayagriva image) suggests it to have been among the treasures discovered by Ngödrup.28 The attribution of the Cycle of Sūtras to Shākyaprāvī, then, must refer only four of the remaining texts in that section.29 The Dalai Lama does not mention that one of the texts forming the Mani Kambum, the Great Explanatory Commentary, the colophon of which clearly attributes its discovery to Ngödrup and which belongs to the Cycle of Attainment, also refers explicitly to the Great Chronicle.30 His hypothesis that the discovery of this latter text, or perhaps an earlier version thereof, preceded Shākyaprāvī’s discoveries may be cautiously accepted.

In sum, then, the siddha Ngödrup would seem to have discovered the original kernel of the Mani Kambum, consisting of a version of the Great Chronicle, the Great Explanatory Commentary, and at least three other texts included in the Cycle of Attainment, which are explicitly referred to in the Commentary.31 It is by no means improbable that this treasure-revealer also disclosed at least some of the remaining works of the Cycle of Attainment as well, though the evidence on this point is inconclusive.

There is perhaps no reason to contradict the tradition that Nyangrel Nyima Özer increased this original body of material with the discovery of the Cycle of Precepts.32 More problematic, however, is the contribution of Shākyaprāvī, who, as a student of Nyang’s disciple Mikiy Dorje of Lati, probably belongs to the early or mid-thirteenth century.33 One text from the Cycle of the Disclosure of the Hidden is clearly attributed to him, the colophon of which states that it is but one of several works discovered together.34 The opinion of the Great Fifth concerning his contribution to the Cycle of Sūtras has already been referred to here. Beyond that, I can only note that I have so far found no evidence that would render it impossible to ascribe the entire Cycle of the Disclosure of the Hidden, as well as the four works in the Cycle of Sūtras mentioned by the Fifth Dalai Lama, to the age of Shākyaprāvī. It is certainly possible that the general set of the texts presently included in the Mani Kambum were in existence by about 1250, though their present arrangement, in the form of a single collection, may still be the product of a later generation.35

The tale of the recovery of the works forming the Mani Kambum has few variations, reflecting the fact that most of the Tibetan historians who wrote on this topic probably did so with one and the same catalogue (dkar-chag) before them.36 The most significant variation I have encountered is found in the writings of the learned Jonang Jetsün Taranātha (1575–1634), who states:

The means for the attainment of the deity[11] [found in] the Collected Works of the King [Rgyal-po bla-'bu] and the roots of the precepts[9] appear, certainly, to have been composed by the religious king Songtsen Gampo. Therefore, they are the actual words of Aryan Avalokiteśvara and are really the ancient ancestral religion of Tibet itself. It is well known that they were concealed as treasures by master Padma(sambhava). Moreover, the history and most of the ancillary texts were composed by the treasure-discoverer, siddha Ngödrup, by Nyangrel, and by others.37

While this statement is of great interest for its critical, but not condemnatory, view of the Mani Kambum as revealed treasure—as for its assertion that it was Padmasambhava, and not Songtsen Gampo, who concealed the portions Taranātha regards as being indeed ancient—it does not otherwise alter our conception of the history of the Mani Kambum’s compilation as outlined earlier.40

Finally, we should note that it is not exactly clear when it was that this collection received the name Mani Kambum, save that it was universally known as such no later than the seventeenth century.41 Elsewhere, it is entitled the Collected Works of the Dharma Protecting King Songtsen Gampo,42 and even the Doctrinal Cycle Concerning the Six Syllable [mantra] of Mahākārulkāraṇa.43 The mediational system it embodies is usually referred to as that of Avalokiteśvara According to the System of the King,44 a phrase attested as early as the first half of the fourteenth century, when we find Karmapa III Rangjung Dorje (1284–1339) conferring its empowerment on the great Nyingmapa master, Longchen Rabjam (1308–1363).45

Cosmology and Myth

The mythical portions of the Mani Kambum develop a distinctive view of Tibet, its history, and its place in the world. Three elements that inform this view are outstanding: the belief that Avalokiteśvara was the patron deity of the Tibet, the legend of King Songtsen Gampo and his court, in which the king is represented as being the very embodiment of Avalokiteśvara, the founder of the Buddha’s way in his formerly barbarian realm; and the cosmological vision of the Tibetan Avalokiteśvara cult, whereby the king’s divinity, and the divinity’s regard for Tibet, are seen not as matters of historic accident, but as matters grounded in the very nature of the world. Though all were, at least in rough versions, current by the time the Mani Kambum made its appearance, they were much elaborated and achieved their definitive articulation within the Mani Kambum itself.

I. Following the Mani Kambum and related sources, later Tibetan historians have tended to assign the inception of the Avalokiteśvara cult in Tibet to the reign of Songtsen Gampo.46 Thus, for example, one of the Gelugpa masters we met in the preceding chapter, Thukhen Chöki Nyima (1737–1802), At first, the religious king Songtsen Gampo taught the Creation and Consumption of Mahākārulkāraṇa (Thugs-rje-chos-po’s bskyed-rjeogs) and other precepts at length, and there were many who practiced them. Two of them was at first from this, that [the custom] spread throughout Tibet and Khan of praying to Aryan Avalokita and reciting the six-syllable [mantra On Manipadme Hum].47

In addition to acting as a teacher in his own right, the king is said to have encouraged and sponsored the establishment of shrines and images, as well as the translation into Tibetan of the fundamental texts of the Indian Avalokiteśvara tradition. The spiritual activity begun by Songtsen Gampo was then continued on a vast scale by his descendant Tri Songtdetsen.48
Contemporary Tibetanists have tended to be skeptical about such traditions. They point to the incomplete evidence within the most ancient historical sources on the subject of Songtsen Gampo's actual commitment to Buddhism, and the near absence of manuscript evidence from Dunhuang of a widespread cult of Avalokiteshvara in Tibet prior to the eleventh century. At the same time, the known history of the translation of Sanskrit and Chinese Buddhist texts into Tibetan does establish that canonical texts of fundamental importance for this cult were available in Tibetan by 812 or 824, the probable years of the compilation of the Denkar catalogue (Ldans-kar-ma) of Buddhist texts. One may note, too, that the "oral precept" tradition (Gzung bkha'-ma) of the Nyungmapa school, which purports to represent an unbroken lineage of teachings that were introduced into Tibet primarily during the reign of Trhi Songtsen and which likely does include some authentically ancient material, accords scant attention to Avalokiteshvara. It is, rather, with the recovery of the revealed treasure texts, above all the Mani Kambum, that the great bodhisattva assumes a role of considerable importance for the Nyungmapas. Finally, we should remark that, even among those Tibetan historians who are inclined to accept the validity of the Mani Kambum and related traditions, there are those who see evidence in it not of a flourishing Avalokiteshvara cult in ancient Tibet, but rather of a secret transmission from Songtsen Gampo to a small number of worthy adepts, family members, and courtiers, who did not, in turn, transmit the king's teachings to a subsequent generation. In short, the available evidence powerfully suggests that, while early medieval Tibet had some familiarity with the bodhisattva, the cult of Avalokiteshvara, as known to a later age, is a product not of the imperial period but of the "later spread of the doctrine" (bstan-pa phyi-dar) that began in the late tenth century.

There can be little doubt that the first great figure to actively promote the practice of meditational techniques focusing on Avalokiteshvara was Dipamkara-Srijñāna, better known as Atisa (802–1054, and in Tibet from 1042 onwards). Three major systems of instruction (khrod) on the rites and meditations of Avalokiteshvara may be traced back to this Bengal master. During the latter part of the eleventh century and the beginning of the twelfth, several other systems were propounded by Bari Lotsawa (b. 1040), by the siddhas Candrabhadra and Tshemrupa, and by Milarepa's famous disciple Rechung Dorjetshok (b. 1084). The works familiar to me that relate to these systems do not make it clear whether or not these masters regarded Tibet to be Avalokiteshvara's special field. But the following passage, attributed to the emanation of the Great Mother, Macki Labdrón (1055–1145 or 1155), and thus possibly belonging to the very period we are considering, is of much interest in this connection:

I have made both Avalokitesvara and Bhūtattāra-Tatā into special doctrines that are universally renowned. It also appears that the two are our common Tibetan ancestors, and in that they are certainly our "divine portion" (bhu-skul), infants learn to recite the six syllables at the very same time that they are beginning to speak; this is a sign that the Exalted One has actually blessed their spirits. Thus, it is truly right for all of us to make of the Exalted One our "divine portion." The tone of advocacy here is noteworthy. Are we reading too much between the lines if we see here a slight suggestion that Tibetans during the early twelfth century still required arguments that they did, indeed, have a special relationship with the ever compassionate Avalokitesvāra? During the later part of the same century, the Great Chronicle of the Mani Kambum is able to state the case with far greater assurance—as in this passage, addressed to Avalokitesvara by the dying Buddha: 

There are none left to be trained by me. Because there are none for me to train, I will demonstrate the way of nirvāṇa to those who are deathful to the doctrine and to demonstrate that what is compounded is impermanent. The snowy domain to the north [Tibet] is presently a domain of animals, so even the word "human being" does not exist there—it is a vast darkness. And all who die there turn not upwards but, like snowflakes falling on a lake, drop into the world of evil destinies. At some future time, when that doctrine declines, you, O bodhisattva, will train them. First, the incarnation of a bodhisattva will generate human beings who will require training. Then, they will be brought together as disciples by material goods [zung-zing]. After that, bring them together through the doctrine! It will be for the welfare of living beings!

So there can be no longer any doubt that the bodhisattva has been assigned to Tibet by the Buddha himself. To the assertion that the Snowy Land is Avalokitesvāra's special field, the Mani Kambum has lent a semblance of canonical authority.

2. Let us turn now to the legend of King Songtsen Gampo's having been an incarnation of Avalokiteśvara. Atiana Macdonald, in her superb study of the royal religion of this king, has argued that his religion, based in large measure on indigenous Tibetan beliefs, was most certainly not Buddhism. The belief that the king was, in fact, the bodhisattva seems then to reflect the opinion of a later age, no doubt one in which the growing community of Tibetan Buddhists sought to reinforce the precedent for its own presence in the Land of Snows. In this, of course, it goes hand in hand with the myth of the bodhisattva's role as Tibet's spiritual patron. Like this latter myth, the time of the former's origin cannot be established with great precision, though when it makes its first datable appearance in 1167—which is probably close to the time of its appearance in the Great Chronicle as well—it is presented without reservations as established history.

It is in the narrative portions of the Mani Kambum that the simple tale of the inhuman king is richly developed, so that his court becomes a veritable Tibetan Camelot. Further, it is in the form of an elaborate romance that the legend of Songtsen Gampo is restated repeatedly, in works like the apocryphal Blu-chens ka-skhol-ma (The Testament Drawn from a Pillar) and the semi-historical Rgyal-rabs gru-ba'i me-long (The Mirror Clarifying the Royal Genealogy). In this literature, including the Mani Kambum, in which the myth of Avalokītesvara's guiding role throughout the course of Tibetan history is developed, a distinct unifying theme emerges: the bodhisattva now functions as a deity ex machina of sorts, making benign incursions onto the Tibetan landscape at various critical junctures. As such, he may be projected into present and future situations, too, whenever the need for his assistance becomes known. So it is that the Great Chronicle of the Mani Kambum—looking back on the age of imperial greatness from the vantage point of twelfth century chaos and uncertainty—closes with this prophetic declaration concerning, one may safely assume, the era of its own discovery, when
demons (budu) will enter the hearts of religious teachers (ston-po) and cause them to blaspheme one another and to quarrel. Danu (dam-sri) spirits will enter the hearts of the mantra-adipats (snags-pa) and cause them to cast great spells against one another. Gongo (jong-po) spirits will enter the hearts of men and cause them to defile themselves (dne-byled) and to fight with one another. Demonesses (dvo-mo) will enter the hearts of women and cause them to argue with their husbands and to take their own lives. Thurang (thru-rang, = the'nu-rang) spirits will enter the hearts of youths and cause them to act perversely. The gods, nagas, and nyenpo (gnzan-po) divinities will be disturbed, and the rains will not come during appropriate seasons. Sometimes there will be famine. A time will come when people’s merits will decline. So, at that time, if you wish to amass happiness, then pray to Mahakārūnaka-Avalokiteśvara! Recite these six heart-syllables (ney-npo yi yi drag-pa): Om Mani padam Hrih! Because all the happiness and requirements of this lifetime come forth from this, it is like praying to the [wish-fulfilling] gem. There can be no doubt that in future lives your obscurations will be removed and that you will attain enlightenment. Harbor not divided thoughts about it! Meditatively cultivate Mahakārūnaka! Attain it! Teach it! Expound it! Propagate and spread it! In this way, the presence of the Buddha is established. The doctrinal foundation is established. 

It was during this same period that the custom of propagating the cult of Avalokiteśvara at public assemblies (khrus-chos) seems to have begun, for by the second half of the thirteenth century no less a hierarch than the renowned Karma Pakshi (see chapter 6) composed a rite for just that purpose.21

What was the result of Avalokiteśvara’s ascension to a position of such central importance in the Tibetan world, particularly during a period of grave political unrest?22 There can be little doubt that the myth of the religious king did much to support the notion that worldly affairs might best be placed in the hands of essentially spiritual leaders. And it is possible, too, that the Tibetan people came to expect their temporal woes to be set aright as before, by the timely intercession of the great bodhisattva. Can it be any wonder, then, that when Tibet finally achieved some measure of real unity during the seventeenth century—after almost eight centuries of intermittent strife—it did so under the leadership of a latter-day emanation of Mahakārūnaka residing in the ancient capital of Lhasa, and constructing for himself a hilltop palace named after the divine Mount Potalaka? It seems we are in the presence of a Tibetan twist on the Arthurian legend, whereby the once and future king becomes at long last the king, once and present. 3.

3. The Mani Kambum’s view of Avalokiteśvara’s role in Tibetan history and, in particular, his manifestation as Songtse Gampo, develops, as we have seen, themes whose general features had been well defined by the time the first sections of the collection appeared. More eclectic in their formation, and thus more resistant to efforts to understand their evolution, are the cosmology and theology of the Mani Kambum.

The notion that Avalokiteśvara might be regarded as the primordial deity, the point of departure for a unique theogony, was introduced into Tibet no later than the ninth century with the translation into Tibetan of the Karanādīyaśāstra (The Śūtra of the Cornucopia of Avalokiteśvara’s Attributes), though the theogonic theme is but slightly developed therein.23 The same sūtra presents also a vision of Avalokiteśvara in which each pore of the bodhisattva’s body is seen to embrace whole world systems, a vision that was later said to have been attained by Atisha in connection with the precepts of the Four Gods of the Kadam Dharma (Bhaiṣajya-guru).24

In the Great Chronicle, Avalokiteśvara undergoes a tremendous evolution. Though presented there as the emanation of the Buddha Amitābha, it is the bodhisattva whose own body gives rise to the myriad cakravartin kings and the thousand Buddhas of the Bhadrakāla, just as the body of the Avalokiteśvara of the Karanādīyaśāstra had given birth to the brahmaṇal pancham.25 Moreover, the Karanādīyaśāstra’s vision of the deity is now amplified by a cosmological vision widely associated in Tibet with the Asvalayanaśāstra (The Śūtra of the Bounteouness of the Buddha), but with Avalokiteśvara here occupying a position even prior to that of the cosmic Buddha Vairocana.26 It is, moreover, a novel sense of Tibet’s station in the universe that constitutes the most striking innovation:

\[\text{[After Amitābha]}\text{ has empowered the best of bodhisattvas, Ārya Avalokiteśvara, to benefit living beings, an inconceivable and immeasurable light radiated forth from his body and magically created (pranava) many fields of the buddhas’ body of rapture (samabhogakṣaṇa) in which he magically created many buddhas of the body of rapture. So it was that he benefited many sentient beings.} \]

And from the hearts of those bodhisattvas, there radiated forth inconceivably many fields of emotional bodies (āsārayukta) in which he magically created many emotionally embodied buddhas; and from the hearts of those emotional bodies, light radiated forth, which was ineffable and beyond being ineffable,27 From that light Ārya Avalokiteśvara, Bhūkhyā, and Tārā were magically created equal to the number of sentient beings. So, too, did he benefit living creatures.

Again, light emanated from his body and he magically created many world systems, as many as there are atoms in the substance of the world system that is called the “middle array.”28 And in them the innumerable Mahākārūnakas magically emanated forth to an equal number, whereby he again benefited sentient beings. Then from their bodies, there radiated forth light rays, which were immeasurable and beyond being immeasurable.29 At (the tip of) each one there was magically created a Jambudvīpa, in each of which was a VaJRatāna. To the north of each VaJRatāna there was a land beyond the pale, which was a Land of Snows, and in each of these there was a supreme horse who was a destroyer of armies, an eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara, and a Tārā, and a Heruka. In each one, King Songtse Gampo and the venerable ladies, white and green, were magically created.30 Ineffable light rays poured forth from their bodies and they magically created Mahākārūnakas and six-syllable mantras equal to the number of sentient beings. Thus they benefited living creatures.31

The enlightened activity of Avalokiteśvara, his incursion into Tibetan history in the form of Songtse Gampo, is no longer an event occurring within the Tibetan historical framework. Rather, Tibet itself is now an aspect of the bodhisattva’s all-pervading creative activity. How could the Buddha’s teaching have been artificially implanted in such a realm, the very existence of which is evidence of the Buddha’s compassionate engagement in the world? That Tibet is here referred to as being “beyond the pale” (niṅga’-khöb) is the fortuitous survival of an outmoded turn of phrase,
for it is clear that the Mani Kambum regards the Land of Snows as no less part of the Buddhist universe than the sacred land of India itself.

The Teaching of Supreme Compassion

To what end has the Mani Kambum elaborated its peculiar worldview, with its broad ramifications for cosmology, theology, and history? It is clear that the impulse to explain events in the external world is a consideration of but little importance here. The aim of the Mani Kambum’s cosmology is, rather, to propugate the cult of Mahakarunya and his six-syllable mantra—thus demonstrating that this is the most efficacious spiritual practice in any debased age, particularly for the Tibetan people. It is a measure of the emphasis of the Mani Kambum that merely one-third of its total volume is concerned with the themes we have been considering thus far, the remaining two-thirds being wholly devoted to the exposition of a unique system of meditation, which is developed throughout the Cycle of Attainment, the Cycle of Precepts, and the Cycle of the Disclosure of the Hidden. While many aspects of Buddhist metaphysics, psychology, and ritual are referred to and commented upon in these cycles, the Mani Kambum by and large eschews speculative philosophy and the elaboration of a systematic psychology. Hence, with the exception of the formal rites for the worship of and meditation upon the deity (siddhama, yar-bhutsh), which are accorded a fairly well-established pattern of exposition such as is required by the structure of siddhama itself, the doctrinal portions of the Mani Kambum exhibit much freedom in their development. Not confined by a single system, the Mani Kambum utilizes a variety of systems, calling upon them when they are needed to advance a teaching that, we are told, lies beyond them all.24 These instructions that are placed in the mouth of Songtsen Gampo touch upon such diverse topics as the nine successive vehicles,25 the two truths,26 the Great Seal, or Mahamudra,27 Great Perfection,28 the sequence of the path,29 the trio of ground, path, and result,30 the trio of view, meditation, and action,31 the three bodies of buddhahood,32 and cetera. But none of these topics is ever allowed to ascend to the position of becoming a central leitmotif that would unify, to some extent, the Mani Kambum’s diverse contents. Of this, the Mani Kambum is itself conscious. The catalogue of contents (bahr-chug) tells us that these precepts “are not all dependent on one another. They are ‘magical fragments of instruction’—each one benefits a particular individual.”33

The peculiar term “magical fragment,” which so appropriately describes the Mani Kambum’s many short precepts, is itself the subject of a detailed definition found in the Great Explanatory Commentary:

“Magical fragments” are so called because, just as magic appears variously but is without substantial existence (lung-charin med-pa), so too this doctrine of Mahakarunya is explained and taught by various means and in various aspects (shahr yun-lag ma-thangs-su bshad) but nonetheless remains the same in that it is an indivisible union of emptiness and compassion. “Fragment” means that each particular division of the doctrine suffices as the occasion for the particular development of [spiritual] experience (by a given) individual.33

So the many doctrines referred to by the Mani Kambum all serve to illustrate the single doctrine of Mahakarunya and are thus the basis for an exposition of the central doctrines of the Mahayana, those of compassion and emptiness, which, though they are indivisible as aspects of the play of enlightened awareness, must nonetheless be distinguished conventionally. It is from this latter perspective that the catalogue of contents endeavors to summarize the teaching of the Mani Kambum:

[H]owever many precepts associated with the doctrines of provisional meaning (shugs-don gyi chos-kyi shal-garms) are expounded, they are not the doctrines of Mahakarunya unless you have deliberately taken up sentient beings, having seeded the ground with loving kindness and compassion. If, because you fear the sufferings of samsara, you desire freedom, desire bliss, desire liberation for yourself alone and thus cannot create an enlightened attitude for the sake of sentient beings, then these are not the doctrines of the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. If you do not practice for the sake of all living beings, you will not realize Avalokitesvara. . . .

However many doctrines of definitive meaning (nges-don gyi chos) are expounded, you must recognize the true Mahakarunya. Reality itself (chos-rgyud don-kyi thugs-ge chen-po), mind-as-such, which is empty and is the buddhas’ body of reality (bhr-makhyun), to be within yourself (vang-la yod-po). Cultivate it! Familiarize yourself with
The enlightened activity of Supreme Compassion GROUPS BEINGS WITH A SHARE OF COMPASSION IN WHICH BUDDHAS AND SENTIENT BEINGS ARE NO DIFFERENT. IT SLAUGHTERS THEIR PAIN WITH THE WEAPON OF EMPATHY, AND DRAWS SENTIENT BEINGS TO THE LEVEL OF BLISS SUPREME.

While the great variety of the Maitreya’s teachings of doctrine and ritual and the unsystematic way in which these topics are, for the most part, presented, do not permit us to define too strictly a “central doctrine” in this case, the teaching of the Maitreya represents, by and large, a syncretic approach to the doctrines of the Nyungmapa and those of the Avalokitēśvara traditions of the new translation schools, particularly the Kadampa, with its emphasis upon “emptiness imbued with compassion.” Further, through the instructions on the visualization and mantra of Avalokitēśvara transmitted by masters of all the major Tibetan Buddhist schools, as well as by lay tantric adepts and itinerant mani-paṣ—“Om mani padme humists”—who preached the bodhisattva’s cult far and wide, it was this sympathetic teaching that became, for all intents and purposes, Tibet’s devotional norm.

The Advent of the Lotus Guru

If there is a figure in the Tibetan pantheon whose popularity rivals the ubiquitous cult of Avalokitēśvara, surely it is Padmasambhava, the Lotus-Born Precious Guru (Guru Rinpoche). Indeed, the two in many respects have tended to reinforce one another and may be considered virtual twins. Padmasambhava, like Avalokitēśvara, is an emanation of the buddha Amitābha, and Tibet is his special field. Both are strongly associated with Tibet’s glory days under the old empire. The tales of their compassionate intercession in the Tibetan world are elaborated in epic narratives that were discovered as revealed treasures (ger-ma), and in the early development of this literature the twelfth-century treasure-finder Nyangrel Nyima Özer and his successor, Guru Chöwang (1212–1270), emerge as central figures for the formation of both cults. The most striking disanalogy between the two (besides the fact that one is supposed to be a cosmic bodhisattva and the other an historical individual), is that whereas we know that Avalokitēśvara was an important figure in the Indian Buddhist pantheon, whose following had come to extend throughout much of Asia long before Buddhism ever became established in Tibet, nothing similar can be said of Padmasambhava. Indeed, the evidence for him prior to his twelfth-century apotheosis in the ger-ma traditions is so thin that some have been inclined to regard him as a rather late Tibetan invention. We shall therefore retrace here some of the ground we have already covered, following now the course whereby the Lotus Guru emerged from the margins of the old Tibetan empire to become, in effect, the royal master of the Tibetan people as a whole.

According to the tradition of the Testament of Ba, repeated with considerable elaboration in later histories, the local deities and spirits of Tibet so obstructed the foundation of the temple at Samye that the intervention of occult power in the service of Buddhism was deemed essential. At the recommendation of Sāntarakṣita, a master of曼tras named Padmasambhava was summoned, who visited Tibet briefly in order
to suppress and place under oath the restless demonic forces. Towards the end of his visit, we are told:

At the bamboo grove of Drakmar, having expounded the Man-ngag 'ba'bs phyag-\('ba\) (The Garland of Views: An Exoteric Precept)\(^{66}\) to twenty-one, including the Tuemp and his retainers, he said, "Great king! these secret mantras of mine conform with the Dharma-khyi in respect to their view and conform with the factors of enlightenment in respect to their conduct. Do not allow conduct to slip into the sphere of the view, for, if you do, it will become autonomous [lit. 'no name, no form']. That nihilistic view having arisen, there's no correcting it. But if you permit the view to follow in the way of conduct, becoming bound up in superficialities, you'll not be liberated. These mantras of mine, which are allied to the mind (sams-phyo), are very great in respect to their view. In the future, there will be many who will be confident about the words but will not have acquired confidence in the application of that view to the mind-stream, and they will descend to infernal births. Some exceptional persons, however, who will not have broken up view and conduct, will come to benefit many beings. But because, owing to the contrivances of ordinary persons, there will be many variations, the blessing will decline and there will be few who are realized. So if I conceal all these that are not corrupted, in the future they will serve well some who have a karmic connection." Saying this, he hid many books in a clay pot. Having bestowed upon the Tuemp the sequence of empowerment, he granted the transmission of the secret mantras of the Mahayana. After explaining the Phur-bu bom-\(sa\) (The Hundred Thousand [Verse] Tantra of Vajrakila),\(^{67}\) he placed the other esoteric precepts, with prayers, in the Akanishtha heaven:

"I pray that I and my patrons, whosoever, in this lifetime and wherever we are born, Practice the ritual Mahayana of Yoga, in that sacred realm called Akanishtha."

Having so spoken, he departed without completing what remained of the homa-ritual that had been begun earlier.\(^{68}\)

Towards the end of the Testament of Bu, when Tri Songdetsen enters into retirement, the master Vimalalama arrives in Tibet and the emperor receives from him the remaining teachings of Padmasambhava that he had not obtained earlier. These he practices as his personal way of meditation.\(^{69}\)

The account that we find here represents, no doubt, a version of the tale of Padmasambhava's visit to the king, developed in the century or so after the events it recounts but prior to the massive elaborations of the twelfth century and after; these elaborations begin, so far as we now know, primarily in works authored or rediscovered by Nyangrel Nyima Özer.\(^{70}\) Given the fact that the Garland of Views was certainly in circulation and accepted by some as a genuine work of Padmasambhava before the mid-eleventh century,\(^{102}\) we may posit that the great guru's cult began its ascent during the obscure period between the fall of the empire and the late-tenth-century renaissance. This finds some support in the couple of references to Padmasambhava known from the pre-eleventh-century documents found at Dunhuang, both of which may well date to the postimperial period.\(^{103}\)

An important tantric cycle of the Nyingmapa school that came under fire in later times is that of the wrathful deity Vajrakila (Rdo-rje phu-phur), the Vajra Spike or Dagger. Vajrakila embodies the ritual tent peg or spike (kila, often referred to in
English as a "magic dagger") through whose power the place of practice is, literally or metaphorically, stalked out and so rendered safe from harmful interference and obstacles. 10 For the later Nyinmapa traditions, including those handed down within the Khine family, which in the eleventh century founded the Sakyapa school, this was to be one of the most popular and widespread cults, generating an enormous ritual and exegetical literature, together with elaborate rites of dance, exorcism, yoga, et cetera. 10

The ritual traditions of Vajraulk are represented in the Dunhuang documents in PT 44, a small manuscript preserved at the Bibliotheque nationale in Paris, and in several smaller fragments. 11 The manuscript PT 44 is in most respects rather crude, and one can well imagine that it emanates from a source outside of monastic orthodoxy. There is no positive indication of its source of origin, however, or of the date of its production. 12 Its opening chapter reads as follows:

At first, there was the journey from Yang-lahshod in Nepal to the temple of Nalanda in India in order to fetch the Phay-be'i Tum-ad (The Hundred Thousand [Verse] Tantra of Vajralka): when the Nepali porters Shag kya-spar and I-so were hired and sent off, there was a tetrast of Bse goddesses who, at about nightfall, killed everyone and stole their breath. Padmasambhava became short-tempered, made as if to steal [their] breath, and caught them as they were wandering where to flee. Then he put them in his hat and departed. Arriving at Nalanda, he opened his hat and an exceedingly pretty woman appeared in the flesh. She now vowed to be a protectrice for the practice of the Kila, he empowered her as its protectrice. Because the prophetications were fine, he laughed, offered up a whole handful of gold dust, and then brought forth the Hundred Thousand [Verse] Tantra of Vajralka. After arriving at Yang-lahshod in Nepal [with it] he performed the practices belonging to all the classes of yuga from the general Ketzup through Atiyoga. He proclaimed each and every transmission of the Kila, for the purposes of all the vehicles, from the Hundred Thousand [Verse] Tantra of Vajralka, as [is affirmed] in all the secret tantras. In that way, having definitively established the transmissions concerning attainment, and having again escorted the Hundred Thousand [back to Nepal], Acarya Sambhava then performed the rites of attainment in the Avara cave with the Newari Ser-po, Indra-sgra-ta, Pra-he-so, and others. And thus he performed the rites, impelling the four Bse goddesses, whose embodied forms had not passed away. He named them Great Sceccres of Outer Splendor, Miraculous Nourisher, Great Witch Bestowing Glory, and Life-Granting Conjurors. Having performed the great attainment for seven days, he manifestly beheld the visage of Vajraulkama [the Adamant Youth, an epithet of Vajralka].

Having acquired the accomplishment of the Kila, concerning [his attainment of] the signs, Padmasambhava, having set a limitless forest afblaze, thrust [the Kila] at the blaze. Srigupta, having struck it as the rock in the region of the frontier forest of India, broke the rock into four fragments and thus "thrust it at stone." The Newari Ser-po thrust it at water and so reversed the water’s course, thereby establishing Nepal itself as a mercantile center. Such were the miraculous abilities and powers that emerged.

In Tibet Acarya Sambhava explained it to Pago Vairocana and Tse Hulamsaka. Later Dre Tshadgata and Buns Aru heard it and practiced at the cave of Samey Rock at Dragmar. Dre Tshadgata thrust it at fire. Buns thrust it at the Rock of Hepo. Then the glory of the Kila came to Chum Sakiya and Nuan Zhong Dorje-nyen. Then it was explained to Jin Yeshe-tenk.

The trio of Yeshe-tenk, Nyn Niywa Tshenbapel, and Domen Gytshssel successfully practiced at Nynong in Lhodrak. The preceptor thrust [the Kila], having set the rock of Bumshang ablaze. Nyn and Domen thrust it into wood and stone. Thrusting it thus, and displaying the signs, they attained it while maintaining the appearance of secrecy. Teaching it as a method for those who would follow, they conferred the mantra and transmission together. 13

This text offers little hint of the later destiny of the cult it describes, for Vajraulk is certainly ranked among the most widely propagated of the tutelary divinities. Nevertheless, it seems continuous with later tradition in a number of highly suggestive ways. These include its emphasis on the role of Padmasambhava and the assignment of the inception of his involvement in the Vajraulk cult to the period of his meditation in the cave of Yanglesho, near modern Pharping, a town to the south of the Kathmandu Valley. 14 Its tale of four goddesses, Padmasambhava’s scattering of gold dust, the episode of the portage of the texts relating to Vajraulk from India, and the marvelous powers attributed to its adepts—all are among the features of the account that, in one form or another, are preserved in the later traditions as well. 15

What do these relatively early texts tell us of the beginnings of the cult of Padmasambhava? I believe that, if we accept in general the historical veracity of only the most plausible of the circumstances presented in these tales, matters begin to come into focus. The two elements I should like to emphasize are: first, that part of the tradition of the Testament of Ba, according to which Padmasambhava did visit central Tibet at the time of the foundation of Samye, perhaps meeting there with the king, whether or not he was actually instructed him; 16 second, the affirmations of the Vajraulk manuscript to the effect that Padmasambhava was a charismatic tantric master with a following in Nepal and a growing group of disciples in southern Tibet, that is, in the regions of Drakmar and Lhodrak, down to Bumthang in what is today Bhutan. In short, in the early legends of Padmasambhava we may perhaps discern the recollection of a popular eighth-century guru who met with a king, rather like those among contemporary Buddhist teachers who have attracted large followings and on one occasion or another have met with leading political figures. From this perspective it becomes possible to imagine that the several lineages of lay tantric practitioners that during the late tenth and early eleventh centuries traced their antecedents back to Padmasambhava, and that were devoted to the cult of Vajraulk, would have laid great stress upon the royal meeting, whatever the facts of the matter may have been, as this alone doubt strengthened their sense of legitimacy and authority. Once these older tantric lineages started to come under attack by proponents of the newer lines of tantrism being introduced from India, the tendency would have been to insist increasingly upon recollections of Padmasambhava’s imperial connection, thereby reinforcing the ancient tradition against the upstart claims of the new teachings. Padmasambhava, a marginal Dharme master of the eighth century, in this way reemerger two centuries later as an emblem of Tibet’s imperial greatness, and a hero to a wide network of tantric cults that had taken root and flourished during this time. 17

In the preceding chapter, I argued that the phenomenon of the rediscovered treasures in Tibet must be understood in terms of the continuity of the past, the conception of a lost golden age whose retrieval came to be valued over progressive discovery. Beyond this, there was at the same time a need felt to reassess past tradition in the face of foreign novelty, while appropriating innovation under the description of
what was past. The apotheosis of Padmasambhava must be seen in this light, for he was at once ancient hero and foreign presence. However indistinctly, we may thus begin to discern how it was that he became the definitive signifier of the entire treasure phenomenon.

Hierarchy and Universality

The Tibetan cults of Avalokitesvara and Padmasambhava, and indeed the entire treasure tradition with which they are intertwined, are in interesting respects at once both hierarchical and anti-hierarchical. The dialectic between these two apparently opposed tendencies offers, I think, a valuable key to their interpretation. They explicitly share a common allegiance to the hierarchical order of the Tibetan empire of the seventh to the ninth centuries, and thus implicitly, and sometimes explicitly as well, they call into question the credentials of the various hegemonic orders that arose in Tibet during the post-imperial period. Both can be strikingly egalitarian, above all when compared with the self-conscious elitism of much of Buddhist esotericism, in that their cults are addressed to the Tibetan people as a whole, as if to one extended family. In this respect they perhaps recall that the old Tibetan empire, though hierarchi-
cal, had also stated a claim to being a universal order. The universalist dimension of the Padmasambhava cult is in evidence, for instance, in the introduction to a fourteenth-century treasure promulgating the benefits that accrue from the recitation of the guru’s mantra:

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I, the woman Yeshe Tshogyel, offered the vast inner and outer mandalas and then prayed in this way: “Great Teacher! Padmasambhava! in the past there has been no one so gracious to us, the living beings of Tibet, as you yourself have been, by exten-
sively fulfilling our needs in this and future lives; nor will one so gracious come forth in the future. Young and old, high and low, have been bestowed upon as your own siddhas as the very essence of your teaching. Therefore, even though I am just a woman, I harbor no doubts. Never-
theless, in the future, beings will have much on their minds and will become ex-
tremely wild. They will look askance at the True Dharma and, in particular, they will come to blaspheme the unsurpassed doctrine of the esoteric mantras. When that occurs, disease, famine, and strife will spread among all creatures, and, above all, China, Tibet, and Mongolia will become like a ragged army’s nest, so that the subjects of Tibet will have fallen on hard times. Though many remedies for that have been spoken of, individuals in the future will not have occasion to practice; and even those who wish to practice a little will confront formidable obstacles. Beings will be argu-
mentative, and their thoughts and actions will not be harmonious. Because such bad times will be most difficult to avert, what would be the benefits, during such times, of relying solely on your own siddhas, the Vajrayura mantra? I pray that you speak of this for the sake of the base-minded ones of the future.”

Padmasambhava’s response to her request powerfully affirms the universal presence and applicability of his teaching, and its availability to devoted persons throughout the Tibetan world: “Faithful girl! your prayer is most truthful. At such a time in the future, it will cer-
tainly benefit beings, both temporally and ultimately. I have concealed innumerable instructions and siddhas as treasures in the earth, treasures in the rocks, and treasures in the sky. But in those bad times, it will become exceedingly difficult for fortunate ones to find the means, the auspicious occasion [for their discovery]. This will be a sign that the merit of beings is exhausted. Nevertheless, even then the essential Vajrayura mantra will have inconceivable benefits and powers if it is recited at great places of pilgrimage, places of retreat, mountain peaks, the banks of great rivers, or in craggy places and ravines inhabited by deities, ogres, and spirits, or elsewhere, by adepts adhering to the spiritual commitments of the tantrics, members of the samgha adhering to their vows, faithful men, suitable women, or others, who with the vast inspiration of bodhisattvas, recite it one hundred, one thousand, ten thousand, one hundred thousand or more times. Then, all disease, famine, and strife, as well as war, crop failure, evil omens, and magical calamities will be averted every-
where; and the rains will fall and the country will prosper. In this and in future lives, and in the abyss of the intermediate state, the greatest adepts will meet me repeatedly in person, those of moderate calibre in visions, and even the least in dreams. Have no doubt about it! such persons will perfect the sequence of spiritual stages and paths and will enter the company of the male and female knowledge-holders on Camara Isle.

One who recites any mantra one hundred times daily will be well thought of by others and will obtain food, wealth, and enjoyments without effort.”

Moreover, it is stressed that the treasures have been concealed throughout the land of Tibet, so that there is no particular locality, and therefore no local hegemony, that can claim unique authority with respect to them or to the source of their authority, which must be identified with the continuing spiritual power of the old empire. As a famous passage from a fifteenth-century treasure declares:

Because, generally, I harbour great compassion
For the Tibetans, who love what is new,
And for creatures of this defiled age,
I have filled the frontier and centre with treasures…

The emerging cults of Avalokitesvara and Padmasambhava from the twelfth cen-
tury onwards thus both engendered a mythical reconstruction of the Tibetan world and set forth in their siddhas and precepts the means by which one might live in the world thus created, a way which affirmed that the same creative, spiritual ground from which the empire drew its power might be actualized within every individual. We must resist, however, the temptation to place too much emphasis upon the ap-
parently anti-hierarchical dimensions of this description. Though there is some rea-
son to suppose that there may be a correlation between these cults and the relatively egalitarian communities thriving outside of the political realm dominated by the Central Tibetan estate system,111 we must also recall that the treasure traditions did establish their own local hierarchies, which focused upon the figure of the treasure-
discoverer himself, who was thought always to be Padmasambhava’s direct rep-
sentative.112 This is very much in evidence in Ari’s study of Pemalingpa, of whose legacy in Bhutan he writes:

So prestigious was Pemalingpa’s name that his sons, grandsons, and great-grandsons became highly sought after as husbands throughout the area, . . . Thus at least ten of the most important houses headed by religious hierarchies . . . trace their descent from three of Pemalingpa’s sons . . . This aristocracy more or less supplanted the earlier one into which it had married.”

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The phenomenon that we see at work here drew its strength in large measure from the persisting presence of the old empire and from the continuing felt allegiance to it, rather than to the new and strictly local hegemon who rarely commanded much loyalty outside of their own narrow domains. Once more, it was the Fifth Dalai Lama who clearly understood this, and who systematically deployed the authority of the treasures to underpin the authority of his own regime. It is perhaps not too great an exaggeration to hold, therefore, that it is in the writings and rediscoveries of the twelfth-century treasure-finder Nyangrel Nyima Özer that we find the clearest blueprint for the later Tibetan religiopolitical construction.

Fragments from a Myth of Tibet

I do not propose to examine the historical origins of the myths of Samantabhadra and Rudra in the compass of the present chapter. Even limiting one’s field solely to Buddhist materials, it would be essential to consider an extensive body of Indian literature—above all, the many Buddhist tantras—even before seeking to elaborate peculiarly Tibetan developments. And in Tibet itself, we would have to investigate the manner in which the Indian versions of these myths were variously assimilated and transformed through the historical ramification of Tibetan Buddhism into a great number of distinct lineages and schools. My concern here, therefore, will be solely with the best-known versions of these myths as transmitted in the Nyingmapa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, for which they have a special importance. I believe that some puzzling aspects of Nyingmapa thought and practice become more readily understandable when we grasp something of the manner in which these myths are employed within that tradition.

The Nyingmapa stand in a distinctive relationship to all other religious traditions of Tibet. As their name, which literally means the “Ancients,” suggests, the school maintains that it uniquely represents the ancient Buddhism of Tibet, introduced during the reigns of the great kings of Tibet’s imperial age, in the seventh to the ninth centuries C.E. In contradistinction to the organized Bön religion, it identifies itself as a purely Buddhist school, whereas, over and against the other Tibetan Buddhist schools and in harmony with the Bön, it insists upon the value of an autochthonous Tibetan religious tradition, expressed and exalted within a unique and continuing revelation of the Buddha’s doctrine in Tibet, often in the form of “treasures” (rjes). Certain features of Nyingmapa Buddhism are particularly noteworthy in connection with the present discussion. The primordial Buddha Samantabhadra (Tib. Kun-tu bsam-gyas-po, the “Omnibenevolent”), iconographically most often depicted as celestial blue and naked, is regarded as the supreme embodiment of Buddhahood (shared with Bön). The highest expression of and vehicle for attaining that Buddha’s enlightenment (which is equivalent to the enlightenment of all Buddhas) is the teaching of the
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2. The classicist Arthur Allchin (1990), for instance, has suggested that we study, in the context of Greek thought, not the relationship between mythos and philosophia, but rather the relationship between myths and logos within philosophia. Lawrence J. Hatzib (1990, p. 293), also referring to classical philosophy, concludes: "[T]he idea of rationality versus myth is both misleading and at times simply wrong because rationality and myth can overlap...[R]ationality and myth have coexisted, can coexist and, I would suggest, should coexist." (Emphasis in original).

3. Refer to Danides 1984 for useful surveys of the leading attempts to define "myth," particularly in relation to the categories of "legend" and "folktales," and for general bibliographical background. For more recent work in this area, see especially Lincoln 1988, pt. 1.

4. In this context, readers may wish to reflect on the so-called Gaia-hypothesis of the British chemist James Lovelock, which regards our planet as forming a single organic system. In a popular review of scientific work on Gaia, The Economist, vol. 317, no. 6786/6787 (December 22, 1990), 107, commented that "the strongest resistance to Gaia comes from those whose faith is grounded in another metaphor—natural selection." Nature is not a goddess who chooses, as Darwin knew full well. But the metaphor of choice was the best way to express his views...Darwin’s metaphor provided a great insight into the workings of the world. If Gaia manages to do the same—something which looks unlikely at present, but not impossible—then the objections to Dr Lovelock’s metaphor will be forgotten, too." (Emphasis added.)


6. See, in particular, "Pragmatism’s Conception of Truth" and "The Will to Believe," both in James 1948.

7. Refer to ch. 4, n. 17, and ch. 7, n. 43. My remarks as the following paragraphs are based upon my own observations and conversations with regard to the Rdo-rgye Shاغa-dispute in recent years.

8. Besides these examples, consider Daniel 1990, where the topic investigated is the virtually ubiquitous presence of myth in early modern philosophy. Daniel’s work develops a conception of “myth” essentially similar to that which I am exploring here. In his introduction, p. 3, he writes, “What I mean by myth is a particular mode or group of functions, operative within discourse, that highlights how communication and even thought are themselves possible. Certain functions of discourse are mythic insofar as they reveal how discourse itself is possible.”

9. In this chapter I have used the published facsimile edition of the Pumaka version of the Manku bka’i-bum. The blocks for this edition were apparently carved at the request of a certain Mngag-ris grub-chen Nyag-dbang chos ’phel, the disciple of Nyag-dbang brtan ’byin-rab-rig-gyes (Manku bka’i-bum, II, 708). Dr. Michael Aris kindly informed me that while the former remains unidentified, “his master... was the fourth Brgu-du-srid (regn. 1680–1685, lived 1638–1696). He was the first in the line of the Khris-gsal or Blu-ma-khris-po (of which there have been six). The Lhis’s choj-rig-gyes makes him the first (Gyal-shab, the official stand-ins for (sometimes the incarnations of) the 1st Zhab-drung. He was one of the greatest and most effective Bhutanese rulers. There is an extremely long biogaphy by Nyag-dbang lhan-grub, dated 1720..." (correspondence, July 18, 1980). The Pumaka edition is based on an earlier edition from Gung-thang in Mngag-ris (Manku bka’i-bum, II, 617), an example of which is preserved in the National Archives of Nepal. I am grateful to Franz-Karl Elberh for calling my attention to this rare print.


16. The basic structure of the Manku bka’i-bum is revealed in its dkar-chag (Manku bka’i-bum I, 9–23). It seems that this dkar-chag is of some antiquity and is identical to the Ye’ser-dkar-chag referred to by Manku bka’i-bum’s editor (I, 19, nechan). A similar dkar-chag served as the basis for the Fifth Dalai Lama’s discussion of the contents of the Manku bka’i-bum. Legu-po’s gzung-gyi, vol. 3, pl. 130–153. Legu-po’s gzung-gyi’s discussion is, for all intents and purposes, a detailed commentary on the dkar-chag and reflects the Dalai Lama’s great personal interest in the Manku bka’i-bum. It is noteworthy that at least one group of texts listed in the dkar-chag that was not available to the editors of the Manku bka’i-bum (II, 616–617) could not be located by the Great Fifth either (Legu-po’s gzung-gyi, 149). The Dalai Lama also mentions one group of texts (Legu-po’s gzung-gyi, 139–140) that are not to be found in the dkar-chag but seem to have been in circulation in connection with the Manku bka’i-bum. For useful summaries of the Manku bka’i-bum’s contents see also Vostokov 1970, pp. 53–55; Ariane Macdonald 1968/69, pp. 527–528.

17. In Manku bka’i-bum, it forms a separate cycle (II, 619–711), where it is entitled "Phags-pa gnang-mgon phyug gi skor is given in the dkar-chag (II, 22).


20. The Tibetan titles of these texts are: Thugs-rgyur-chen-po stong-rtsa’i sgrub-shab, Gpa- pha gnang-mgon, Sangs-rgyas stong-rtsa’i bskyed-rigs, Sangs-dam mkhung-ba’s phun-po, and Srong-brom ‘dus-ka’i bka’i chen-pa.


22. In Djugdor 1991, vol. 2, p. 70, n. 995, it is argued that the correct dating should be 1324/1401. As van der Kuijg 1994 shows, however, Sakyey’s arrival in Tibet in 1204 corresponds to the consecration of Nyang-ral’s memotal statue, and not to his death. The dates 1124–1122 are therefore to be preferred.

23. Legu-po’s gzung-gyi, vol. 3, p. 130. This is a restatement of part of the dkar-chag (Manku bka’i-bum, I, 21–22). It is of interest to note that some of the masters mentioned in connection with the compilations of the Manku bka’i-bum are also mentioned in connection with the cult of the Lhasa Bo-khang. See Lhasa dkar-chag, pp. 73–79.

24. Blondéau 1984, p. 81, rightly emphasizes the uncertainty with which the Fifth Dalai Lama proposes this.


26. Rhad-grub-chen-po, in Manku bka’i-bum, I, 498, 584. A.-M. Blondéau has suggested to me that the present version of the Great Chronicle is doubtful in attribution. See Blondéau 1984, exp. n. 19.

27. Manku bka’i-bum, I, 504.

28. Ariane Macdonald has advanced the thesis that Nyin-ma’i ’od zer and Mngag-bda’ig Nyang-ral were, in fact, two distinct persons, for the latter was used as a familial title among Nyin-ma’i ’od zer’s descendants. See Ariane Macdonald 1971, p. 203, n. 59. However, the mention of the siddhas Drog-ba-grub in connection with the lineage of the bka’-brug as well as that of the Manku bka’i-bum leads me to believe that such a view may not, in this in-
stance, be tenable, though we cannot rule out the possibility that one of Nyang-ral's sons has been conflated with his father. See Giter-ston byugs-rta, pp. 371-372; Dzogchen 1991, vol. 1, p. 758; Nyang-ral, p. 501; summarizing the Byung-zla discoveries, possibly including those forming the early portions of the Mani bla-ston.

31. Enga-pa'i gsun-yig, vol. 3, p. 151, notes that he was a bhiksu. It appears that the Fifth Dalai Lama had access to some specific information about the lesser known figures in the Mani bla-ston. "Mani bka'-"bum" was the lineage.

32. Mani bka'-"bum, II, 651.

33. It should be noted that the drab-dkar seems not to have originally listed any of Shakyab-od's discoveries, but that the account of them forms an appended discussion ("Mani bka'-"bum I, 22). Perhaps the "original" Mani bla-ston consisted solely of the discoveries of Dangpo-grub and Megsag-agdag Nying, as assembled by the latter or one of his school.


35. Ba'i sgrub-thabs.

36. shad gdamo kyi rma-ba rnu-mus.

37. Phags-pa Gsuns-nal-rgyas-kyi bka'-dngos.

38. pha-ches rgyen-ma.


40. Among gser-ma, the Mani bla-ston is peculiar with respect to its punctuation: it makes use of the ordinary shad, instead of the visarga-like gser-shad. It is in interest to compare, too, Tharlamtha's mild suggestion that the treasure-discoverers composed rather, than found some parts of the Mani bka'-"bum with Sum-pa Mthar-po Ye-shes dpal-'byar's vo-ciferous remarks (Vostrikov 1970, pp. 56-57). Cf. ch. 7 bum, p. 132.

41. This is confirmed, for instance, by the Central Tibetan Enga-pa'i gsun-yig, the Bhutanese Manibla-ston, and the many references found throughout Phags-pa rgyans zung-jag. Karma Chogs-med, the author of the latter, who hailed from Nang-chen in Khams, was active during the first half of the seventeenth century.

42. The exact meaning of the title Mani bla-ston is somewhat problematic; see Vostrikov 1970, pp. 52-53 and Arians Macdonald 1968/69, p. 527. The biographies of Gnas Chos-kyi dbang-phyug (1212-1270) were perhaps the first works to use this title and may provide the key to its precise interpretation. My own rendering is similar to that of A.-M. Macdonald: "The Collected Works (Blas-blum) of King Strom-bstan sgrang-po Concerning the Six-Syllable Mantra (Om Mani padme Hum)."


44. Thugs-rje rgyal-po ye-rje dron-pa rta phyag rtsis do bka'i rnor: Mani bla-ston, I, 1, 10. This title seems to confirm the interpretation of the title Mani bla-ston given in n. 41 here.

45. Rgyal-po-lugs kyi snyan-ras-gtigs.


47. For instance, Bu-ston, in Obermiller 1931-1932, pp. 183-185. Bu-ston's account certainly has some affinity with that of the Mani bla-ston, though there is no reason to assume that he based himself on that source directly. See, too, B.c., p. 1006, and Per Sorensen 1994.

48. Mani bla-ston, I, 22, and Enga-pa'i gsun-yig, vol. 3, p. 131. According to these texts it was Padmasambhava who revealed to Khris-stong-le-btsun the works of his ancestor.

49. These issues are explored at length in Ariane Macdonald 1971 and Imaeda 1979. See also Blondieu 1970, Stais 1998a, and ch. 4 of this present book. There is considerable evidence for the Avalokiteshvara cult in the banner paintings and murals of Dunhuang, but it is difficult to interpret with certainty the ramifications for Tibet. In at least one instance, an exquisite mandala of Avalokiteshvara in the form of Amoghapasha preserved at the Musée Guimet (MG 26466, reproduced in Gils and Cohen 1995, cat. no. 283), is tentative to speculate upon a Tibetan connection, although there is unfortunately no evidence linking it positively with Tibet. More telling, perhaps, is Dunhuang cave 14, where Avalokiteshvara in his various forms is the figure emphasized, but where this is clearly due to work that post-dates the period of Tibetan occupation. The mural that remains from the Tibetan period is that of Vairocana, with whom, as I have argued earlier (ch. 4), Khris-stong-le-btsun and his successors were personally identified. I am inclined to hold that the post-eleventh-century Avalokiteshvara cult drew some of its inspiration from the earlier Vairocana cult and absorbed aspects of it, so that there may be a certain poetic justice in the transformation of Dunhuang cave 14.


51. My remarks on the byang-par bka'-ma are based on conversations with the late H. H. Paljor ' yön-rje, and with other scholars, and the views of the eight bodhisattvas in the mandala of the Gnyen-pa 'byung-blo-bzhin, which is associated with the Gnyen-par-byal-damten, and in the initiatory cycle of the Mdo dpangs-pa 'dus-pa, the foremost Ananggpha-tamten. In the latter he is also found, with Mjalpo-rje and Vajrapani, as one of the Lords of the Three Clans (tri-gsum mgon-po). Avalokiteshvara is one of Hayagriva's wrathful aspect, Hayagriva, occupies a position of great importance in the bka'-ma tradition, particularly in the bka'-bra-gyud cycle. When I state that the bka'-ma "includes an authentic ancient material," I do so with the understanding that the many threads that are woven together there cannot at present be satisfactorily sorted out. The history of the bka'-ma as seen from a traditional standpoint is recounted in Dzogchen 1991, vol. 1, book 2, p. 152.


54. See Thugs-rje chen-po don phyag-rgya chen-po zung jag ye snyan-sras sdon sby’n gnyen dangling don ba-po, in Gsungs-nal-mdzod, vol. 12, pp. 1006-1046. The Thugs-rje chen-po don phyag-rgya chen-po mdo-skyid introduced by Ras-chung-po became particularly popular among the byang-par-ma, and above all among the Karma bka’-brgyud-pa, whose hierarchs adopted it in their vr-analysis. There is also a tradition of the Thugs-rje chen-po don phyag-rgya mdo-skyid that is traced back to Miraya-sgron and is at present a specialty of the Dge-lugs-pa.

55. Phags-pa-rgyans zung Jag. p. 265. Compare the tale of I-A. D-pa mdo-skyid, given in I-A., pp. 1026-1029, who on requesting teachings in India, probably during the eleventh century, the very period with which we are here concerned, receives the six-syllabic mantra from the master Rdo-rje-gdan-po and then thinks to himself: "This mantra is repeated throughout Tibet by all old men, women, and even children. This doctrine seems to be a common one." A relatively early bka’-gdamo text, Bka’-gdam pha-ches, p. 626, also insists that Avalokiteshvara "certainly is the divine portion of Tibet" (bo-kyi bka’-bshad tshad du nger).

56. Mani bka’-"bum, I, 87.

57. See ch. 4.

60. Vostrokov 1970, pp. 28-32, 67-78. Per Sørensen 1994. The Bka'-chugs ku-khol-ma is traditionally said to have been revealed by Atis, a tradition to which Nyung-rul p. 501, already seems to refer.
63. The degree to which even acescets were affected by this unry is clearly indicated in Mani bka'-'bum, I. 1255, where the yogis is advised to equip his retreat with weaponry. Traditions relating to the Bka'-sbyod Bla ma Zhang (1122-1193; see D. Jackson 1994) exemplify the martial exploits of certain yogis. The hagiography of Gsang Chos-dbang (Dadym 1991, vol. I, p. 764-765; Gyatso 1994) also alludes to the involvement of certain gen-thos in military crews.
64. Avalokiteśvara-gnas-karma-rdo-rje-yi, p. 265. See, too, the excellent study by Regamey 1971.
65. Avalokiteśvara-gnas-karma-rdo-rje-yi, pp. 288-292. The focus classico for Atis's reported teaching of this vision is found in the bsugs-'i-bshungs don-bzhin-pa'i, the 'bsugs-'i-bshungs don-bzhin-pa'i, and in the 'bsugs-'i-bshungs don-bzhin-pa'i, and in the lha-kyis-leg-pa, where the text may be found quoted in Phyes-rgyud zangs-pa, p. 258. See also n. 53 in the present chapter.
66. Mani bka'-'bum, I. 54.
68. phreng-ba'i-kyi yig byed-brag-du-med-pa.
69. Skal-po pa-ba-ma, consisting of one million worlds of four continents each surrounding a Mount Meru.
70. dpag-ta-med-pa yang dpag-ta-med-pa.
71. ba-bka-la, from Skt. Bābālīla, the wondrous horse that served the merchant Sinhalā. See Holz 1991, pp. 49-50, for a summary of the story.
72. The green Tīra is identified with the Chinese princess of Wenqeng, while the white goddess, Bībhṛtī, is the princess of Nepal.
73. Māni bka'-'bum, I. 30-31.
74. Māni bka'-'bum, I. 511-2, I. 266-266, 279. (In notes 75 through 82, it is not my intention to provide a comprehensive catalogue of relevant passages, but rather to signal representative examples.)
76. bden-gyi-gis. Māni bka'-'bum, II. 584-586.
77. phreng-rdo rje chen-po. Māni bka'-'bum, II. 288-289, 531, 579-582.
78. mthabs pa chen-po. Māni bka'-'bum, II. 582, 582-584.
80. gnyis-lam-bras-ba gsum. Māni bka'-'bum, II. 514-519.
82. skya-gsum. Māni bka'-'bum, II. 280. More often, however, the Māni bka'- 'bum speaks of the shad-druk, six bka-stro, e.g., II. 26-27, and elsewhere.
83. mthabs pa phreng-gyi dam-ba.
84. Māni bka'-'bum, I. 18.
86. rgyan-phyi gnyis na-skam-khugs.
88. Gsang-rdo rje mthabs-ma, vol. 2, 3. 3. The intricate teaching of the Bka'-a-pa requires careful study. My statement here is a tentative one, based on the reading of such sources as those brought together by Keg-phyur in the magnificent anthology herein cited.
92. Having at one time or another attended discourses on Avalokiteśvara given by representatives of all the major Tibetan Buddhist traditions, I cannot but observe that the unifying features of this cult are far more apparent than the distinguishing features of the various lineages involved. It would seem that this unity of the cult is what moved Gsang-Le-lus-chu to give it separate treatment in Bha, pp. 1036-1046, Kang-spur to annotate it separately in Gsang-rdo rje mthabs-ma, vol. 11, and Karma Chags-med to combine freely excerpts from its different lineages in his Phya'rgyud zangs-pa, p. 258.
93. Kunsang 1990, 1993, translates selections from Nyung-rul's gser-ma-s lugs relating to Padmasambhava. Though Gsang Chos-dbang is not known to have discovered a biography or historical record along these lines, his liturgical cycle, the Bka'-ma-gsum-ba, was undoubtedly among the most influential of the early rites for the worship of the precious master.
94. Bischoff 1978 surveys some of the grounds for doubt here.
95. Paul 1982, p. 81, thus rightly remarks that "Guru Rinpoche, ... in many ways, is to be understood as the 'king' of the Sherpas, in that he plays in, a divine, symbolic way, the same ritual role that kings often play in providing the 'center' for a social-cultural system." See ch. I, nn. 61-62.
96. On this (possibly mythical) tantric, see Mayer 1996, p. 66, n. 1.
97. Skal-bzhab, p. 32. According to the remarks of Po-sangs-dbang-'dzin and Hildegarde Demberger, on the recently rediscovered Tshe-drub, Padmasambhava's role is apparently even thinner than this.
98. Skal-bzhab, p. 81.
99. Above all, the Gsang-gling-ba, translated in Kunzang 1993. This is demonstrated by the commentary of the eleventh-century master Rong- zom-pa, in Rong-zom gsum-ba.
100. Refer to Eismann 1983.
102. The history of the early Phur-po tradition within the 'Khon family is summarized in So-skyor's dgam-ba-nu, pp. 14-15.
103. This small and highly informative text was first noticed by M. Lawu and was later edited and translated by Bischoff and Hartmann 1971. I have interpreted the text somewhat differently than they have in a number of places.
104. The manuscript does include a marginal annotation specifying a tiger year, but it is not possible even to guess with which tiger year during the ninth and tenth centuries this may correspond.
105. In this and the following paragraphs, for convenience of nonspecialist readers, I have transcribed the personal and place names as pronounced, where possible using their current forms and not those of PT 44 itself. The orthography as given in the manuscript is noted in the index.
106. PT 44, 1b-12b.
108. Thus, the modern account of Dodum 1991, vol. I, p. 481, includes a reference to "four female earth spirits," surely a recollection of the fourth Rje goddess. The portage of the texts is recomposed on p. 472. The narration of the occult powers realized by the adepts (p. 714), though mentioning different persons by name, is striking in its overall similarity to the account found in PT 44: "By brandishing the kila at a brushfire in a sandalwood forest, the great master Padmasambhava restored the forest. By brandishing it at the flooding waters..."
the background of the myth in Indian religions generally, see Hildebrandt 1989. For interesting speculations on the evolution of the Samantabhadra myth, refer to Germano forthcoming.

2. For an extensive example of the traditional polemic concerning authenticity, see Dodjin 1991, vol. 1, book 2, pt. 7.
4. See, for instance, Karma Pakshi’s Rgya-mong mecha ’gsum, vol. 1, p. 402. Nonetheless, Karma Pakshi, like both Mipham’s and other, which work he is probably following, and Khyong-las’ yer-chen, is primarily interested in the symbolic dimensions of the Radra tale.
5. Lhasa-rung man-shar, pp. 4–30. He is concerned here with the variant Buddhist tantric forms of the story of the defeat of Mahādeva (Siva) by the Buddhists or members of the Buddha’s retinue, which is clearly the antecedent of the Radra episode. For a very influential version of the story that is clearly related to that of Radra, refer to Snellgrove 1987, pp. 134–141.

7. This is particularly evident in the writings of Nyang-nal Nys ma ’od ner (1124–1196) and his associates, on which see esp. Riegg 1989, pp. 74–92; Kusung 1990, 1993; Dodjin 1991, pp. 755–759; ch. 8 in this book.
9. This is very clear in the biographical accounts, such as those cited in the preceding note, and in his own poetical works: see, for instance, the colophon found in Khyong-las gsang-thar-bras, vol. 1, pp. 95, 137, 149, vol. 2, p. 622. On the influence of Sanskrit khvus in Tibet, see Kapstein in press.
10. There does exist a commentary on the Uturnarindtratna (rDg-ba blo-ma’si bstan-bcos), by one Blo gros-rnam-bzang-po, that has sometimes been attributed to him, but this attribution is doubtful. Reports have recently circulated of the discovery of a manuscript in Tibet that seems surely to be his commentary on Vajradhāra’s Pratīyogīnātīkā.

19. It is important to note, however, that the myth of Samantabhadra is not, and by the Radra-ma-pa is never taken to be, an actual creation myth: Samantabhadra is neither a creator god nor a demigod; there is no divine veneration, through which the ground is thought to give rise to the primordial buddha and to sentient beings. Whereas, in the quotation given later, the ground is itself made to speak in the voice of the original buddha, there is no evidence to suggest that the tradition has ever regarded this to be other than a metaphorical representation. Nevertheless, some contemporary Western scholars have suggested there to be a quasi-theistic standpoint disclosed in certain aspects of Radra-ma-pa discourse. See, for