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Cover illustration: Fig. 12a. Arrival of foreign envoys; riderless camel and animals aligned awaiting sacrifice; ritual tent and laceration, Panel II (see article Amy Heller)

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INTRODUCTION

When the subject of this conference was first mooted, one of the invitees expressed the concern that such an enterprise was hardly possible: not enough was known about the period to enable a viable seminar. By the time the conference had ended, even this doubter was converted, and was happy to admit that the period was indeed a worthwhile topic of study, and the conference a success. The inescapable reality is that even if our evidence is still at this stage somewhat fragmented, localised, or even hazy, the tectonic changes this period undoubtedly witnessed make it so significant that we simply cannot ignore it. Besides, hazy or fragmented evidence is not the same as no evidence, and we do indeed have plenty of suchevidence to mull over. But there are no grounds for complacency, and there is no doubt that tremendous uncertainties still persist. The areas of uncertainty are legion. Some are methodological: How do we date the various Dunhuang texts and other finds? How reliable are the various rock inscriptions? How should we interpret the various Chinese sources? Other questions are substantive: What exactly caused the Tibetan Empire to fall? What economic changes marked the period? Which ethnic identities and political subgroupings were significant? What impacts might there have been from global forces outside of Tibet? A particular sub-set of questions concern religion and culture: What relation did the burial tumulus tradition have with the later Bon? Exactly how and when did Tantric Buddhism become so popular? How did intellectual systems like Tibetan medicine and astrology develop in this period? Finally there are interpretive questions: should we envisage a cataclysmic change, or should we envisage change as process, with differential rates within different sub-systems of society? To such questions, numerous others could be added, and none of them have so far been conclusively answered.

Because the evidence is so imprecise and so open to interpretation, completely contradictory views presently prevail, even amongst scholars who might otherwise think alike. In such circumstances of general disagreement, the convenors thought it best to put very few conceptual constraints on the participants, other than that their contributions should bring something useful to the table. It seemed still too early in the debate on this most important of historical periods to be too prescriptive regarding frameworks or themes. Hence one of the convenors' original ideas, of focussing more narrowly on the very distinctive propagation of Buddhism in this period (nowadays nick-named the *bar-dar*), proved unsuitable at such an early stage.

Yet this creative chaos has born fruit, and out of the conference discussions, a number of promising threads were seen to emerge, including two that have the definite potential to break the impasse currently existing in our understandings by presenting entirely new data for analysis. Both of these might develop, over the next

few years, into important Tibetological sub-disciplines with a considerable duration ahead of them, and both depend, one way or another, upon China. First is the opening up of Tibet to serious scientific archaeology, which, despite current constraints and obstacles, will hopefully flourish eventually. Second is the growing awareness of a much greater quantity than was previously realised of contemporaneous or near contemporaneous Chinese sources on post-Imperial Tibet.

While three of the conference papers directly addressed these promising new avenues (Hazod, Heller, Horleman) others showed that there is still a very great deal that can be fruitfully gained by a finer analysis of more traditional sources. A few previously unknown or unread documents are still appearing (Karmay, Vitali), new views can still be taken and new conclusions drawn from already known documents (Blezer, Cantwell & Mayer, Dotson, Hill, Martin, Mathes, Schuh, Tanzin, Walter), and fresh contextualising perspectives can be explored (Iuchi, Meinert, Schuh, Szanto).

Henk **Blezer** offers a very valuable overview of some of the salient findings of his Three Pillars of Bon research program at Leiden, which is amongst the largest and most significant research projects so far ever conducted into Bon. One of the most important of his findings emerges from his following up the initial clue offered by Anne-Marie Blondeau into the importance of the rMa clan. Blezer showed with repeated examples that Bon lore and literature developed or were formatted in the post-Imperial period, but now he also presents strong indications that a remarkable proportion of this took shape under the specific influence of the rMa clan, who were highly conversant with Buddhism. Nevertheless, later Bon tradition erases this fact from their histories, in the cause of disguising its diachronic transformations.

Cathy **Cantwell** and Rob **Mayer's** paper is one of two that analyse myth in early indigenous literature, and the manner in which its traditional patterns of usage continued to impact on Buddhist era texts. Their focus is the Dunhuang textual sources for Padmasambhava. Extending a theme begun in their contribution to Samten Karmay's festschrift,[1] they point out that all three proven Dunhuang sources for Padmasambhava—PT44, IOLTibJ321 and PT307—are self-evidently ritual texts, and that their narrative passages are in the cases of PT44 and PT307 Buddhist appropriations of the traditional ritual device of *smrang* or *rabs*, or in the case of IOLTibJ321, ritual verses of praise later appropriated by Nyang ral nyi ma'i 'od zer for his Zangs gling ma hagiography. Once such ritual contexts are systematically analysed, the texts yield historical conclusions often diametrically opposed to prevailing suppositions about them. Likewise, they show that the dyadic narrative

1 Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer, "Enduring myths: smrang, rabs and ritual in the Dunhuang texts on Padmasambhava", in *Tibetan Studies in Honor of Samten Karmay*, ed, Pommaret & Achard, Dharamsala 2009.

myths of Padmasambhava's 'womb' and 'miraculous' births take on an altogether different significance, once their embeddedness in tantric ritual is understood and analysed.

Brandon **Dotson's** contribution is the second paper looking at myths in early literature. It is an exploratory attempt to analyse and classify different genres and types within such myths. They occur very widely within early indigenous Tibetan literature, yet they function far beyond their mere narrative content, in addition providing complex internal conceptual and ritual structuring that is no longer very easy to understand. Looking at three different sources, the *Old Tibetan Chronicle*, the apocryphal Buddhist text the "History of the Cycle of Birth and Death" (*Skye shi'i lo rgyus*), and a document appended to the *Dba' bzhed* narrating a debate between advocates of Buddhist and Bon burial rites called the *Zas gtad kyi lo rgyus*, all of which make structural use of myth, Dotson makes a distinction between what he terms the 'ritual antecedent tales' and the 'catalogue of ritual antecedents', and also between 'antecedent tales' and 'charter myths'. He raises the question of the relationship between such old indigenous forms and later literature, with especial focus on their transformations.

Guntram **Hazod**'s article is one of two that addresses the exciting new field of Tibetan archaeology, and builds on his pioneering expertise in the Tibetan tumulus tradition, the elaborate but still little-understood burial cult that prevailed between the 4th and 10th centuries. Its terminus came with the plundering of the venerated royal tombs in the civil strife of the 9th and 10th centuries, a trauma interpreted by Tibetans as emblematic of the lawlessness and decline of their times. Hazod presents the account of the plundering from the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, analysing it within the context of other sources of knowledge, to address questions of the local historical milieu in the period concerned, the identities of the clans who did the plundering, some characteristics of the Imperial funeral tradition, and questions of chronology.

Amy **Heller**'s presentation is the other of the two addressing the new archaeology. She brings us many illustrations from the tumuli excavated at Dulan in Amdo, notably the painted coffin panels, and a discussion of current theories about these still mysterious artefacts. These extraordinarily important discoveries are still in the process of publication by Chinese and Tibetan archaeologists who have authorized Heller to consult their data. She is able for example to confirm a Sogdian cultural influence in several of the artefacts and details of the painting, and highlight repeated themes that are found in different coffin panels, as well as evidence of animal sacrifice. Her illustrations bring home to us the remarkably high level of craftsmanship and artistic expertise found even in these comparatively modest tumuli.

Nathan **Hill** offers a meticulous and exhaustive analysis of the terms 'come as lord' (*rjer gshegs*) and 'the black headed' (*mgo nag*). These are both components of a larger mythic formula 'he came from among the gods of heaven to the narrow earth to be ruler of men (the black headed) and owner of yaks (the bent)'. The term *mgo nag*, 'black-headed,' is often found in Old Tibetan (and later) texts, to describe the Tibetan human population. Hill shows how in every known occurrence, this brief term refers synechdocally to the myth of the descent of the Tibetan Emperor from the heavens to take loving charge of the 'black-headed' Tibetan peoples. A classificatory differentiation between the god-like Emperor, his 'black-headed' human subjects, and the 'bent and maned' yaks and animals is in all cases being expressed, so that the term 'black-headed' cannot be taken simply as a synonym for *myi* ('man'), but must also be understood to refer in addition to humans *qua* subjects of the emperor. Nor is such a usage unique to Tibet: 'black-headed' (*ṣalmāt qaqqadi*) for example occurs in the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary as 'a poetic term for mankind as a totality, created by the gods and kept in safe pastures by the kings.' Similar usages are found in Tangut and Chinese sources.

Bianca **Horleman**'s contribution opens the doors to a much greater quantity of contemporaneous Chinese sources than has so far been widely known about or utilised. She offers us a comprehensive and analytic bibliographic essay on the surprisingly substantial quantities of T'ang dynasty sources on Tibet, including internet-based research tools, which have now become available. In addition, she presents a select bibliography of contemporary Chinese scholarship on the Tibetan empire, as well as many items of Western scholarship that deal with the T'ang in a manner potentially useful to the study of early Tibet. Her bibliography is highly analytic, enabling the reader to see at a glance what topics each item deals with, and she also offers English translations for the Chinese titles.

Maho **Iuchi** opens up a very promising new approach to understanding the post-Imperial period by focusing on a specific location and its local histories. This location is 'Dan ma or 'Dan khog in Khams, which was where Atiśa's three main disciples, Khu ston Brtson 'grus g-yung drung (1011-1075), Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, and 'Brom ston pa Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1005-1064), gained most of their education prior to Atiśa's arrival in Tibet. 'Dan ma was thus very influential in the establishment of the Bka' gdams school. For example 'Brom ston, its most important founder, spent a full twenty years there, studying mainly under Se btsun Dbang phyug gzhon nu and secondarily under the Indian Smṛtijñānakīrti. Se btsun himself was famous for his visit to India, and 'Brom ston learned Madhyamaka, the Old Tantras, and other teachings from him. Se btsun was a monk, who had received the *smad 'dul* vinaya ordination from Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan, who in turn had been ordained directly by Dgongs pa rab gsal himself.

Samten **Karmay** presents a previously unknown *rnam thar* of Lha Bla ma Ye shes 'od recently discovered at the gNas bcu lha khang in Drepung Monastery, simply entitled *Lha bla ma ye shes 'od kyi rnam thar rgyas pa*. Although the text seems to be cobbled together from assorted fragments, its author clearly did have access to some important old documents. Karmay presents a summary of its contents, which include chronology, Lha bla ma's encounters with 'bad' teachers, his two wives and three children, his royal genealogy, how the Bon religion once prevailed in Zhang zhung, his ordination as a monk in later life, and some descriptions of Rin chen bzang po. This *rnam thar* also cites, without acknowledgement, from Ye shes 'od's already well-known Decrees. The founding of mTho gling temple in 996 is described, as well as Ri Cho 'phrul rmad byung temple, and its decoration by Kashmiri artists. The passing of various laws is also described. The colophon mentions one Grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, a resident of mTho gling, but the text itself also references much later figures such as Sapan (1182-1251) and 'Gro mgon Chos rgyal 'phags pa (1235-1280).

Dan **Martin** strives to illuminate the little-known and comparatively short-lived Highland Vinaya lineage (*Stod 'Dul*), by reconstructing from its two surviving fragments a complete12th century text by Zhing mo che ba Byang chub seng ge, a champion of the *Stod 'Dul*. There seems little doubt that monastic ordinations occurred in Western Tibet before the return of the ordained men of Central Tibet from their ordinations in Amdo, Rin chen bzang po himself being a prime example. Varying uses of the term *Stod 'Dul* are disambiguated however, and Rin chen bzang po's ordination did not count as *Stod 'Dul* by a strict definition, which should include only those lineages descending directly from Dharmapāla, whose lineage came between 997 and 1024, a bit later than the Lowland Vinaya (*sMad 'Dul*). While clearly championing his own *Stod 'Dul* over all others, Zhing mo che ba was not so much concerned about *vinaya* ordination lineages *per se*, but rather in their traditions of explicating the major *vinaya* texts. Thus it is clear that vinaya studies were already in his day sufficiently developed to create complex differences of interpretation, with all their resultant debates.

Klaus-Dieter **Mathes** revisits the issue of Sa skya Paṇḍita's critique of bKa' brgyud Mahāmudrā, already the subject of debate in the 1980's between David Jackson and Michael Broido, but which Mathes can now approach with a quantity of decisive new evidence from Indian texts. Sa skya Paṇḍita feared that during the *bar dar*, influences from Chinese Ch'an had got mixed with genuine Indian Mahāmudrā, leading to what he saw as a mistaken belief that Mahāmudrā could be achieved simply through guru devotion and the suspension of discursive thought, but without the full gamut of prior Tantric practices and empowerments. While it is true that the earlier rNying ma master Vimalamitra had held such views, and he might have been open to Chinese influences, Mathes can now show that a range of Sanskrit texts by respected scholarly authors also supported this position, and they cannot have been Chinese-influenced.

Carmen **Meinert** opens an extremely interesting new perspective through a comparative study of the reception of Indian *ābhicāraka* rituals in China and Tibet, that is, tantric rites using violent imagery. She makes special reference to the *Guhyasamājatantra*, which occurs both in Chinese and Tibetan, including a Tibetan witness from Dunhuang. She shows how the Chinese translation of the *Guhyasamājatantra* by Dānapāla under the auspices of the Northern Song was censored: it was intended forthe Imperial use of Buddhism for diplomatic purposes, so that translators like Dānapāla were compelled to produce texts 'tactful' for diplomatic purposes, with scant regard for the soteriological needs of China's Buddhists. Thus the soteriological symbolism of *abhicāra* was never realised in China, and instead it was eventually taken up as a purely worldly black magic. By contrast, Tibetan translation, especially during the *bar dar* and at remote locations like Dunhuang, was free of such constraints, and *abhicāra* became fully integrated into soteriological practice, notwithstanding occasional abuse.

Dieter **Schuh** contributes a study of great significance for our understanding of the origin of divination practices in Tibet as well as the nature of religious belief in early Tibet. The study begins with an overview of the eventual Dge-lugs-pa recognition of these methods as acceptable to Buddhism. He then analyzes illustrations in Dunhuang manuscripts that demonstrate their relationship with the later, established teachings on *nag rtsis*. We thus gain for the first time a diachronic view of popular methods by which Tibetans have long dealt with uncertainty. The material from Dunhuang extends this tradition to a period likely immediately after the Btsan-pos. Schuh's thorough knowledge of these subjects and the literature around them allows him to go even further, however. By presenting extensive lists of texts asserted to have been composed both during and after the Empire, Schuh provides the background for answering an important question most others have not even thought to ask: *Why* have these methods for dealing with troublesome spirits, etc., been so popular among the Tibetan peoples for so long? The answer lies in part in a mass of texts mentioned in standard Tibetan Buddhist sources. The very presence of these lists is a basis for the acceptance of their practices as 'Buddhist' by, in particular, the 5th Dalai Lama and Sde-srid Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho. If only some of these titles existed at such an early time as the 9th-10th centuries, the universal acceptance of their practices in Tibet is easily explained. Just as significantly, Schuh concludes that these texts may be evidence of a cultural alternative to Buddhism which arose after the fall of the Imperium. The author has provided us with both a vision and a challenge that we must take up if we are to understand Tibetan culture and religion in the Bar dar.

Péter-Dániel **Szántó** likewise opens up new vistas with extremely interesting contextualising and comparative observations. He points out firstly that the Pāla Empire, Nepal and Kashmir were themselves experiencing a 'Dark Age' of political collapse that co-incided almost perfectly with the Tibetan 'Time of Fragments', and

with many of the same symptoms, notably the cutting off of state patronage to Buddhism, and a dearth of surviving historical sources. Just as in Tibet this period saw the dramatic proliferation of tantric literature, so did it also in India and the Pāla Empire. Not only that, but the modes of composition of such tantras in India and Tibet could be strikingly similar: in both cases, fresh composition of ostensibly scriptural tantras could take a predominantly anthological mode, creating new sacred scriptures by weaving together passages from a range of existing texts, both anonymous (scriptural), and authored (commentarial). In Bengal, for example, the *Sampuṭatantra* was anthologised using fragments from a range of existing texts, which are listed in considerable detail.

Lopon P. Ogyan **Tanzin** is one of the leading *sngags pa* students of the late Dudjom Rinpoche. Here he presents the six greatnesses of the Early Translations (*snga-'gyur*) as formulated by the great scholar Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (11th century). These are: the greatness of the patrons; the greatness of the scholars; the greatness of the translators; the greatness of the places where the translations were made; the greatness of the doctrines translated; and, the greatness of the offerings made as a support for requesting the doctrine. While Rong zom Mahāpaṇḍita properly belonged to the later period of Buddhism's diffusion in Tibet (*phyi-dar*), and hence formulated these six greatnesses after the period concerned as a means to distinguish the Early from the New Translations (*gsar-'gyur*), they have remained an important element in the self-presentation of the *rNying-ma-pas* to this day. Nevertheless, despite various reports to the contrary, their actual provenance is in fact unclear, since they cannot be found amongst Rong zom's extant works, not even in his *dKon-mchog 'grel*, as claimed for example by Dorje and Kapstein (1991). It seems more likely then that they simply circulated amongst rNying ma lamas, from at least as early as Longchenpa's time, in the form of a list linked by oral tradition to Rong zom.

Roberto **Vitali** focuses very fruitfully on post-Imperial Khams, and like Maho Iuchi, finds strong evidence for the unbroken continuation of religious culture in that region throughout the period. He looks first at the political transformations concomitant with the fall of Empire in the Khams regions, and then at the consequences of this for religion. His hitherto untapped sources include materials preserved in the writings of Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang norbu and Karma Chags med, as well as Dunhuang materials such as PT 849. He presents rare evidence for the emergence of the four Eastern regional kingdoms known as the *ka bzhi*, and their relation to the territories previously coming under Yum brtan or 'Od srung. As well as elucidating the political changes, he is able to show that despite stereotypical claims to the contrary, religious life in fact continued effectively enough in the Eastern regions after the fall of empire to provide a basis for later revival, and that evidence even exists for some debate between competing interpretations of Buddhism, and for the study of sophisticated topics such as Abhidharma (cf. Dan Martin's paper on vinaya disputes in far-off West Tibet).

Michael Walter presents the first part of a detailed analysis of PT016/IO751, the *'De ga G.yu Tshal* document'. While this first part focuses on its language and culture, the next part will present a translation with commentary. The only significant political document often believed to date from the reign of Ral pa can (r. 815-836), Walter subjects PT016 to detailed paleographic analysis, followed by analysis of its nominal/ adjectival vocabulary, verbal constructions, postpositional terms, and adverbials. Walter's meticulously detailed stylistic analysis then identifies PT016 as a pastiche, redacted from separate peices written at different times.He concludes it did not after all achieve its finished form during the reign of Ral pa can, nor is the work as we have it a simple transcription of Imperial-period documents. Rather, it seems to have been created to give models to Sanghas when offering confession rites at courts and to important officials in a post-Imperial world. Thus we obtain a picture of this pastiche as an early 'bar dar' document, the product of an independent Sangha preparing for service to rulers whose legitimacy was based on the aura of the last long-reigning *btsan po*.

REPRESENTATIONS OF PADMASAMBHAVA IN EARLY POST-IMPERIAL TIBET

CATHY CANTWELL AND ROB MAYER

Introduction

When did the person of Padmasambhava first become incorporated into tantric ritual, and when did the exalted status for which he is now so well known first become evident? For Tibetan tradition, the answers are simple. Padmasambhava was a peerless guru with the vidyādhara's control over lifespan, who became revered in Tibet after the emperor Khri Srong de'u btsan (r. 755/6-797) invited him there in the late eighth century—by which time he had already been a living legend in India for many centuries. Modern academics are of course denied such beautiful and easy answers. In general, we are permitted to accept as valid evidence far less data than traditional Tibetan historians, and in few places is this felt more acutely than in the history of Padmasambhava. In the usages of modern scholarship, the admissible historical evidence for the person of Padmasambhava, or even for his representations, is very slight indeed. Fortunately however, following the digitisation of the Dunhuang texts over the last decade, we have recently seen a small augmentation of the available early evidence for the representations of the great guru in tantric literature, even if not for the enigmatic master himself. Part of this augmentation has come from the discovery of a new Dunhuang textual source, and part from a more intensive analysis of already known Dunhuang textual sources. However, we are not convinced that the implications of the new source have so far been fully appreciated, nor that the bigger picture as it should now stand has been properly assessed. In this paper we present a more thorough interrogation of the new source of evidence, together with a further investigation of the already known sources, to arrive at a more complete depiction of what we can now know about the prehistory of Padmasambhava's early representation, if we put all the available evidence together. Some of our thinking on Padmasambhava in the Dunhuang sources has already been published elsewhere, so that we will only recapitulate it briefly here, while other material will be presented here for the first time.[1]

The most convenient summary of how the historical Padmasambhava looked to modern scholarship before the digitisation and wider dissemination of the Dunhuang

1 See Cantwell, C. and R. Mayer. 2008b; 2009; 2010; 2012.

texts comes from Matthew Kapstein.[2] Writing in 2000, the only admissible evidence then available to him was fourfold:

i) The early historical text, the *Testament of Ba*,[3] which presents Padmasambhava visiting Tibet.
ii) The 10th century Dunhuang text PT44, which narrates Padmasambhava bringing the Vajrakīlaya[4] tradition to Tibet.
iii An early text attributed to Padmasambhava, the *Man ngag lta 'phreng*, and a commentary on it by the eleventh century rNying ma sage, Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (exact dates unknown).
iv) The *gter ma*s of Nyang ral (1124-1192) and Guru Chos dbang (1212-1270), which presented fully-fledged apotheoses of Padmasambhava as a fully-enlightened Buddha.

Based on this evidence, Kapstein concluded that:

i) The *Testament of Ba* shows Padmasambhava quite likely did visit Tibet during Khri Srong de'u btsan's reign.
ii) PT44 indicates followers of his tantric teachings were active in post-Imperial Tibet.
iii) Rong zom's commentary and the few Dunhuang references show that the Padmasambhava cult began its ascent during the 'time of fragments', between the end of Empire in the mid- 9th century and the start of the *gsar ma* period in the late 10th century.
iv) Nyang ral and Chos dbang's treasure texts suggest the most massive elaboration of Padmasambhava's cult developed from the 12th century.[5]

Since Kapstein published that in 2000, there have been two further developments. Firstly, a new Dunhuang source mentioning Padmasambhava, PT307, was felicitously discovered by Jacob Dalton in the course of his cataloguing work for the British

2 Much of the most important work on Padmasambhava was done at the EPHE in Paris over many years by Anne-Marie Blondeau, who has now been succeeded by another scholar with an interest in Padmasambhava, Matthew Kapstein. See Kapstein 2000: 155-160.

3 This famous early history comes in various different redactions, and also has different spellings, notably *dBa' bzhed, sBa bzhed,* and *rBa bzhed*.

4 While the correct Sanskrit name is *Vajrakīla*, the tradition acquired a new take on its Indic name in Tibet: from the tenth century Dunhuang texts until today, Tibetans have normatively and consistently referred to it in transliteration as *Vajrakīlaya*, and only rarely as *Vajrakīla*. Even that arch Indophile and Sanskritist, the famous Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251), used the form *Vajrakīlaya* rather than *Vajrakīla* in his seminal edition of the short *phur pa* tantra that was included in the Kanjur (*rDo rje phur pa rtsa ba'i rgyud kyi dum bu*; all editions we have been able to consult are agreed on *Vajrakīlaya*). Hence, when referring to the greatly expanded Tibetan branch of the tradition as opposed to the smaller Indian tradition, one may advisedly employ the Tibetan name Vajrakīlaya, rather than the Indian name Vajrakīla.

5 Kapstein, op.cit. p. 157

Library. Dalton subsequently published an article on PT307 and on another Dunhung text, TibJ644.[6] Secondly, the present authors have completed a much more detailed analysis than has hitherto been attempted of the evidence for Padmasambhava from the Dunhuang text IOLTibJ 321, looking at it more carefully than Eastman's short note from the 1980s, Dalton's brief summary in 2004, or van Schaik's small blog entry in 2007 (Cantwell and Mayer 2012: 87-98). It is largely these two sources of evidence that will inform the present article, together with a reassessment of the already well-known sources PT44 and the *Testament of Ba*.

However, we must first digress upon a quick disambiguation. Those who have read his work will be aware that Jacob Dalton had initially hoped that he had found two new Dunhuang references to Padmasambhava, not merely one, and proposed a further text, IOLTibJ644, as a description of Padmasambhava in the Asura Cave at Pharping (Dalton, op.cit). Unfortunately however, as Dalton himself points out, IOLTibJ644 nowhere mentions Padmasambhava by name, and as we have shown elsewhere, there are further grounds to doubt that it is necessarily referring to Padmasambhava at all. For present purposes, we are best advised to leave it aside, pending further investigation.[7]

So what can the new and fully admissible evidence tell us that is different from what Kapstein wrote in 2000? It is a tribute to the discipline of his historical reasoning, and the restraint with which his analysis neither exceeded nor underrated the scanty evidence, that the advances we can now report consist more of filling in additional details, rather than revising his basic outlines. Kapstein wisely attempted no definite dates for any particular aspect of the Padmasambhava cult, which he portrayed as a gradual process developing throughout the post-imperial period, coming to some sort

6 See Dalton 2004.

7 For a discussion of these issues, see Mayer 2007. Dalton was right in saying that the relevant passage does occur within the general type of literature within which one might expect to find mentions of Padmasambhava, since it deals with the *vidyādhara* levels of the different *yāna*s as later enumerated by the rNying ma pa. Yet the actual passage in question pertains specifically to a *vidyādhara* level attained through Kriyā tantra known as the *sa la gnas pa'i rig 'dzin*, and is of a type found in other Kriyā tantra passages. Its themes of Vajrapāṇi, asura caves, miraculously-linked divine rivers flowing between Meru and the *asura*'s and *nāga*'s miraculous underground of *pātāla*, and magic sacraments of immortality, were popular in Kriyā tantras and other Indic literatures of that time, appearing also in Chinese texts. So this passage, expounding Kriyātantra terminology and nowhere mentioning Padmasambhava, might simply be a generic Kriyā tantra description, and might have nothing to do with Padmasambhava at all. Dalton's identification was based on the assumption that the mention of an asura cave and the magic springs of Aśvakarṇa (a mountain or range in Abhidharma cosmology) should most likely signify Padmasambhava, since the Padmasambhava narratives in the *dBa' bzhed* and in PT44 have similar motifs. But there remains some risk that his analysis did not take sufficient account of the fact that these types of motifs are widespread in Buddhist Kriyā tantras both Indic and Chinese, as also in Hindu purāṇic literature, for example, so that until a better analysis is achieved, the passage cannot be reliably taken as evidence for Padmasambhava.

of culmination with Nyang ral three centuries later. What is new is that we now have much stronger evidence that reverence for Padmasambhava, his incorporation into ritual, and—it seems—even his apotheosis, began closer to the beginning of the lengthy time frame Kapstein suggested than to its end. Our new evidence suggests that Padmasambhava already figured in religious myth and ritual, and was probably even seen as the enlightened source of tantric scriptures, as many as two hundred years before Nyang ral. In other words, when portraying Padmasambhava in his famous hagiographical and historical writings, it seems clear that Nyang ral was developing existent themes, as much as inventing new ones. With the benefit of hindsight, such an early inclusion of Padmasambhava in myth and ritual does not really seem surprising: as the figure *par excellence* who tamed and controlled all indigenous deities in the name of Buddhism, Padmasambhava is by the same token the figure who made it safe for converts to abandon their ancestral gods without fear of divine retribution. If Padmasambhava had not existed, it could be that some one performing a similar role might have to have been introduced. An important proviso is that we have not yet ascertained if the new evidence bears witness to a widespread cult of Padma in the tenth century, or something far narrower, followed only by a few. This is because the evidence currently available suggests two differing views of Padma, even within the comparatively narrow confines of the early proto-rNying ma tantric sources:

- Firstly, in the context of the possibly early- or mid-10th century[8] rDzogs chen-oriented *bSam gtan mig sgron* of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes, he is cited as a great teacher and even mythologised, but no more so than his peers such as Vimalamitra, and there is no sign of his integration into ritual (although that might not be expected in a text of this genre).
- Secondly, in the Mahāyoga manuscripts from Dunhuang that were probably calligraphed in late tenth century but which might or might not represent significantly earlier compositions, he is mythologised, incorporated into ritual, and elevated above his peers, even apotheosized. The available versions of the *Testament of Ba* seem broadly to concur with this.

Jacob Dalton has in the last five years emerged as a much cited interpreter of the early rNying ma pa, and is widely renowned as a highly enterprising, thought-provoking and imaginative scholar. He has recognised, as many others such as Blondeau and Kapstein did before him, that there is real evidence for Padmasambhava from the 10th century or earlier. However, as we have pointed out elsewhere, Dalton's work in this instance (Dalton 2004) reproduces or even multiplies the oversight of some previous scholarship in not taking adequate account of the domain of ritual, including the quite explicitly ritual functions of much of the Dunhaung material relating to

8 The dates of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes are still a matter for debate. We currently prefer the later dates as supported by Karmay 1988: 101.

Padmasambhava. As a result, he did not notice the extraordinary continuities that these Dunhuang texts on Padmasambhava have with contemporary Padmasambhava ritual—yet it is these continuities in the realm of ritual which in fact constitute amongst their most important data for historians.[9] One cannot fully understand the historical significance of these texts without understanding two things: (i) that they themselves quite explicitly pertain to ritual, and (ii) the striking way in which their narratives and themes persist into the later ritual tradition, even into many of its very most popular modern expressions. Dalton did not really appreciate either of these two points. By approaching them once again merely as historical narratives rather than as texts from the domain of ritual, thus failing to notice their remarkably close continuities with later and contemporary Mahāyoga ritual, Dalton arrived at some conclusions that we believe are inaccurate. In particular, he largely misconstrued the evidence to support his central yet flawed theses, that these specific Dunhuang texts were fundamentally discontinuous in narrative structure with the later Tibetan tradition, and that in them, Padmasambhava was not portrayed as a uniquely important figure. While we entirely agree with him that Padmasambhava's role expanded over time, we do not agree with him that the two texts under consideration, PT307 and IOLTibJ321, are discontinuous in narrative structure with the later tradition, nor that they show Padmasambhava in anything other than an already thoroughly glorified ritual role. It could be argued that some of the more historically oriented modern scholarship on tantrism has perhaps been insufficiently informed by an appreciation of ritual practice, including some of the previous work on the Dunhuang sources.[10] The potential ritual evidence for the Padmasambhava cult in the Dunhuang sources is in fact considerably more significant than has so far been recognised, and also suggestive of rather different historical conclusions than have hitherto been drawn.

9 See Cantwell and Mayer 2009: 296ff.

10 An influential strand within anthropology, a primary discipline for the understanding of ritual, has from the outset taken as fundamental to its methodology the minute study of ritual performances and the practice of participant observation. Anyone who was really familiar with contemporary popular rNying ma ritual would swiftly recognise the remarkable and unmistakeable continuities between the Dunhuang Padmasambhava texts and modern ritual—yet it took modern scholarship decades to make this connection, preoccupied as it was with the historiographic record. Tantrism is primarily a ritual system, and ritual is essentially performative in nature, so that much of the most significant data about tantrism is recorded largely in its ritual record. It follows that an appreciation of tantrism's performative aspects is indispensable to its understanding. Much the same can also be said about Mahāyāna Buddhism, so that Paul Harrison of Stanford University learned the *Diamond Sūtra* by heart and recited it daily to introduce into his philological research on that text a much needed performative understanding. In similar spirit, philologists and historians of tantrism will benefit if they study ritual manuals in great detail, attend occasional performances of rituals, and perhaps even participate in them now and again to gain a more complete and nuanced understanding.

IOLTibJ321, the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* and its commentary

Let us begin with IOLTibJ321. One of the most remarkable finds from Dunhuang, this manuscript in eighty-five folios[11] comprises a complete rNying ma Mahāyoga tantra embedded within its commentary, further embellished with many marginal notes. The tantra is a famous one, still a mainstay of the rNying ma canon and found also in several Kanjurs, called *The Noble Noose of Methods, a Lotus Garland Synopsis* (*'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng gi don bsdus pa*). We have been editing and studying the tantra and its commentary since 2006 (see Cantwell and Mayer 2012). Current palaeographical opinion locates the Dunhuang manuscript to the latter half of the tenth century, although our critical edition can demonstrate with reasonable certainty that an archetypal ancestor was older than the Dunhuang text by two copyings at the very least (Cantwell and Mayer, in press: 32-33).[12]

The Dunhuang manuscript mentions Padmasambhava four times: once in the marginal notes at the beginning, twice in the marginal notes near the end, and once within the main text of the commentary itself, also near the end. The references are somewhat enigmatic, and we have published on them at greater length elsewhere (Cantwell and Mayer 2012:91-98), so here we will only review our findings in brief. Eastman, in the 1980s, was the first to look at these references, and tentatively suggested they might be presenting Padmasambhava as the human author of the commentary. Dalton and van Schaik follow him in taking much the same line, albeit more strongly.[13] However, despite the difficulty of the materials and the complicated way in which the root text, commentary and marginal notes cross-reference one

11 The folios are numbered up to 84, but there is an extra unnumbered folio so there are eighty-five folios in total.

12 There is evidence relating to the actual document—the anomolies in chapter numbering and in the presentation of marginal notes—which show the manuscript must have been copied more than once. There is also evidence from the textual content. The Dunhuang ms. already has numerous scribal errors, some of them shared indicatively with specific strands of the extant transmission, others not. The density and layering of such scribal errors in the Dunhuang ms. indicate some transmissional distance from the archetype, but of course it is in most cases logically unsound to attempt any but the most trivial temporal conclusions purely from transmissional distance; two copyings could occur in a month, or over a century or more. The very old local Kanjurs or Kanjur fragments of Hemis and Bathang provided key testimony to our stemmatic analysis of the root text, as did the Tawang O rgyan gling Kanjur of 1699, and the three South Central Tibetan NGB editions of gTing skyes, Rig 'dzin and Kathmandu. See Cantwell and Mayer, 2012.

13 Eastman himself expressed some caution, finally concluding, "It *appears*... that we have one of the few surviving works of Padmasambhava" (1983: 50, our emphasis). In their catalogue, Dalton and van Schaik, however, simply list Padmasambhava as the author of IOL TibJ 321, with no equivocations. See Dalton and van Schaik 2006: 51, or the online version of the catalogue at http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL Tib J 321. This unequivocal assertion of authorship by Padmasambhava then continues throughout Dalton and van Schaik's further individual writings on IOLTibJ321 as well.

another, none of the above scholars could afford the leisure to study the text in much depth or for very long, and none have written more than a few pages on it on any one occasion. After a much more laborious study, it now appears altogether uncertain that Padmasambhava is being represented as the human author of the commentary. Rather, there is a distinct emphasis on portraying him as a sublime realised being with exceptional access to the tathāgata's secret teachings, and quite possibly even as the source of the root tantra itself.

The references the manuscript makes to Padmasambhava are not entirely clear and unambiguous, since they assume the reader already knows such information, but what is clear and unambiguous is that these are references to an exceptional, mythologized being, and not to an ordinary human teacher. At its end, the main text of the commentary lavishly praises Padmasambhava as *Padma rgyal po*, the 'Lotus King', in verses which the accompanying marginal notes explain are being addressed by Śāntigarbha to Padmasambhava. It is fascinating that these verses use a precise form of laudatory words picked up two centuries later by Nyang ral Nyi ma'i 'od zer and the wider hagiographical tradition in their own praises of Padmasambhava, and Nyang ral again specifically links these particular words to *Padma rgyal po*, a form which still remains canonical as one of the famous *Eight Aspects of Guru Rinpoche* (*gu ru mtshan brgyad*). [See figure 1][14]

Final Verse of the Commentary to the *'Phags pa thabs kyi zhags pa padma 'phreng gi don bsdus pa* (Dunhuang manuscript IOL Tib J 321 [Ms], f.84r; *bsTan 'gyur*: Golden [Gt] *rgyud 'grel* Bu, 78321, Peking [Qt] *rgyud 'grel* Bu, 129b, sNar thang [Nt] *rgyud* Bu 228)	Nyang ral, Nyi ma 'od zer *Slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs chos 'byung nor bu'i phreng ba zhes bya ba, rnam thar zangs gling ma* (based primarily on the Kathmandu National Archives manuscript in *dbu med* (IMG_1670+1671, reel E2703/10, f.16r.5-16v.l). [14]
།དངོས་གྲུབ་མཆོག་བརྙེས་ཡ་མཚན་ཆེན་ཞོ་ཡི་ས་[Ms ཉ]	དངོས་གྲུབ་མཆོག་བརྙེས་ཡ་མཚན་ཆེན་ཞོའི་སྒྲུ།

14 Lewis Doney of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, has worked on critically editing Nyang ral's Guru Padma hagiography. He argues convincingly that the earliest and historically most influential recension is that represented by two manuscripts in the National Archives in Kathmandu and two manuscripts from Bhutan, which he classifies as ZL3. The version of ZL3 used here is Lewis Doney's discovery in the Kathmandu National Archives. We have emended *rtog* in line 2 to *rtogs*, found in all the other witnesses of ZL3. The Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo version (Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, Kyichu Monastery, 1976, Volume Ka: 25), which has more recently become the most widely used version, incorporates later material. It gives a variant second line (*rtogs ba bla med mchog tu gyur pa yis/*) for this verse.

།འཇིག་རྟེན་མ་འགྲུབ་[Ms དམ་གྱུར་] པདྨའི་ [Ms པད་མ་] རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡིས་	རྟོགས་པ་བླ་མེད་པདྨ་རྒྱལ་པོའི་སྐུ།
།དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་མན་ངག་གསང་ཆེན་རྣམས།	དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་མན་ངག་གསང་ཆེན་རྣམས།
།ཏྲོ་ [Ms གྲུང་] ནས་བཀོལ་མཛད་དེ་ལ་ཟུག་འཚལ་ལོ།	ཀྱོ་ནས་སྤོལ་མཛད་ཕྱིད་ལ་ཟུག་འཚལ་བསྟོད།
(I) prostrate to he who has attained the supreme siddhi, of great wonder,	(I) prostrate to and praise the (buddha) body who has attained the supreme siddhi, of great wonder,
Padma('i) rGyal po [The Lotus King] (who) is not worldly;	the body of incomparable realisation, Padma rGyal po [The Lotus King];
(he who) unravels from the expanse	you (who) unravel from the expanse
the tathāgata's great secret pith instructions.	the tathāgata's great secret pith instructions.

The verses say that Sam bha ba is "*he who has attained the supreme siddhi, of great wonder, Padma rGyal po* [*The Lotus King*] (*who*) *is not worldly;* (*he who*) *unravels from the expanse the tathāgata's great secret pith instructions*". The marginal notes attached here are slightly ambiguous, explaining that after examination, Śāntigarbha finds either Padmasambhava himself, or his teachings, flawless, and is praising him.[15] Right at the start of the text, the marginal notes already told us that while the Buddha has condensed [the meanings] of the root text (*'bu tas bsdus*), it was Sambhava who produced or made [them] (*sam ba bhas byas*)—a similar meaning to Śāntigarbha's praise of him here for unravelling the secret great pith instructions of the *tathāgata* from the expanse. Finally, right at the end of the root tantra, a marginal note might possibly explain that what has gone before, namely the speech of the tantra, was revealed by Padmasambhava without any personal fabrication or *rang gzo*, and there follows an explanation of how, when a noble being speaks with pure awareness, the resulting utterance is tantra.[16] Thus, Padmasambhava is closely involved with the

15 *slobs dpon shan ting gar bas brtags nas ma nor nas/ sam ba bha la stod pa 'o/* (f.84r.5)

16 (*pad ma sam ba bhas rang gz[or?] byas pa ma yin bar ston*, 83v.6). We presently think that since this comment follows the end of the root text, it might be commenting on Padmasambhava's relation to the root text rather than merely the final line in the text relating to the maṇḍala dissolution, especially since the commentary goes on to link the final teaching on natural emanation and reabsorption to the production of the tantra (*given this natural emergence out of sameness, when, with pure awareness, the noble being speaks, the sound is tantra...).* So it may be suggesting that the speech of the tantra is naturally emanated rather than idiosyncratically produced by Padmasambhava, although it has to be said that the comment is certainly not unambiguous, and might well refer to the process of natural emanation and reabsorption of the maṇḍala deities.

Buddha's original teaching of the tantra, in terms that go some distance to making him sound like a treasure revealer of some kind.[17] This has caused us to speculate that the name 'Padma' in the titles of the texts might conceivably be considered to refer to Padmasambhava; yet, if such an interpretation is in fact intended by the commentary (let alone the root text), it is certainly never stated explicitly.

Next we should look at Śāntigarbha, [See figure 2] the one who utters the praise. Who is he? Dalton begins his discussion by saying that rather little is known about Śāntigarbha, and then concludes that his uttering the praise here in IOLTibJ321 indicates how comparatively insignficant Padmasambhava must have been at that time: for had Padmasambhava been as significant then as now, it would not be appropriate for someone as inconsequential as Śāntigarbha to praise him. Dalton sums up his thinking in the following words: 'From the perspective of the later Tibetan tradition, it is remarkable that the opinion of a relatively insignificant figure like Śāntigarbha would have any relevance for one with the stature of Padmasambhava' (Dalton 2004: 768). This is surely one of those junctures at which Dalton has not related the Dunhuang text to its Mahāyoga ritual context, for in Mahāyoga myth and ritual, in what Dalton is referring to here as 'the later Tibetan tradition', Śāntigarbha is a very major name indeed, and not in any way relatively insignificant, precisely because he is considered in much of the hagiographical and ritual literature as one of Padmasambhava's most important tantric gurus, as well as one of his closest spiritual colleagues. [See figure 3] A conclusion Dalton should have drawn is that these well-known contemporary structures of Mahāyoga narrative and ritual connecting Padmasambhava so closely with Śāntigarbha show interesting signs of already being adumbrated in some way in the Dunhuang texts, and this possibility needs further investigating. It should also be pointed out that if Śāntigarbha is his guru, or spiritual colleague of any sort, Padmasambhava being lavishly praised by him is not at all anomalous in the way Dalton suggests. In Mahāyoga thinking, even the greatest of gurus must of necessity have their own gurus, and gurus are always prone to praise their best disciples, especially if, as might be the implication here, the student's realisation greatly exceeds that of the guru. Alternatively, Śāntigarbha might simply be praising Padmasambhava as a spiritual colleague. But which ever way one looks at it, we believe Dalton cannot be right in describing Śāntigarbha as relatively insignificant, and if only Dalton had studied the ritual record as well as the historiographical

17 The principle of treasure revelation was quite probably known in Tibet at the time. The Tibetan version of the *Pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthitasamādhisūtra*, as cited by Kamalaśila in his *Bhavanākrama*, has the revelation of treasure of this type as a main theme (the Chinese version is different and does not). It explains that the Buddha is the one who conceals the treasure scriptures, while the treasure revealer is a layman who has had the teaching imprinted on his mind in a previous life by the Buddha, and who in the future life is reawakened to them by encountering a reminder of them in a buried casket guarded by spirits. See Paul Harrison 1990, especially Chapter 13. References to treasure also occur in the Kriyā and Yogatantra genres, several texts from which were translated in the early period.

record, surely he would have come to a diametrically opposite conclusion. In later Mahāyoga ritual classification, Śāntigarbha is counted as one of the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad*, the eight great vidyādharas who are the Indian founding fathers of the Mahāyoga tradition. In later rNying ma literature, these eight vidyādharas were the first recipients in this world of the eight main Mahāyoga *yi dam* deities, the *bKa' brgyad*, at their initial revelation to the human realm by the ḍākini Las kyi dbang mo che in a cemetery south west of Bodhgayā.[18] These eight deities are the main *yi dam* cycles of the rNying ma pa, and Nyang ral's *bDe gshegs 'dus pa*, that huge and seminal early *gter ma* cycle, was built around them, as is the central doxographic structure of the Mahāyoga sections of the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum itself. According to later legend, Padmasambhava was present alongside the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad* in the cemetery when the *bKa' brgyad* were revealed, as the first recipient of their transmissions from each of the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad* in turn, so that Padma is himself sometimes counted as one of the eight. Thus the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad*, Śāntigarbha included, are seen by the later tradition as Padmasambhava's own tantric gurus, from whom he received his main tantric initiations. Like Padmasambhava, they are seen not as ordinary human beings, but as direct manifestations of the great tantric deities themselves, often said to reside mystically in the eight great cemeteries of India.[19] [See figure 4] It is interesting that several of the names associated with the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad* feature quite prominently in Dunhuang tantric texts: [1] Mañjuśrīmitra in IOLTibJ331.1 and in IOLTibJ1774 [2] Prabhahasti (*Pra be se*) in PT44 (Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 60), [3] Śāntigarbha in IOLTibJ321; [4] Vimalamitra (*Bye ma la mu tra*, f.1) in IOLTibJ688 (on rosaries) and in IOLTibJ644; [5] Hūṃkara (with Mañjuśrīmitra, and Buddhagupta [= Buddhaguhya]) in IOLTibJ1774 (*slob pon nI 'Bu ta kub ta dang / ShI rI Man 'ju dang/ Hung ka ra*).]. This list is not exhaustive, and more such references might turn up. Clearly these figures were already seen in the Dunhuang texts as great masters, and it is important to recall that gNubs'*bSam gtan mig sgron* also presented some of them in highly mythologised terms, including some stories that persist into the modern tradition.[20] It is hard to assess how far back the mythologisation of these

18 This famous narrative can be found throughout rNying ma literature. For an accessable and influential recent rendering, see Dudjom 1991: 457-83 (and especially page 483).

19 See, for example, the main liturgy of 'Jigs med gling pa's *Rig 'dzin 'dus pa*, the *nang sgrub* or 'Inner sādhana' from his *Klong chen snying thig* cycle, which is generally said to be the most popular and widely practised Padmasambhava sādhana of the last few centuries (see its central visualisation as depicted in the *thang ka*, Figure 4). The very name of this sādhana is a reference to the Eight Great Vidyādharas, who are envisaged as inseparable from the *bKa' brgyad* and visualised as encircling Padmasambhava as his most immediate retinue. Rlang dPal gyi seng ge (see section below on PT307) also occurs prominently in this sādhana and its *thang ka*, as one of Padmasambhava's twenty five senior disciples, who later reincarnate as the great *gter ston*s.

20 Of course, no one has (or even could, given the paucity of current witnesses!) critically edit the *bSam gtan mig sgron* to the point of recovering its original readings with any confidence, so we

figures goes. As we know from contemporary history, charismatic religious figures of their type can often acquire mythologisation in their own lifetimes, let alone one or two centuries later, and yet such mythologies, once established, can persist for many centuries. It is therefore not inherently impossible that they were already seen by the authors of the Dunhuang texts in a general manner not utterly different from that of the later tradition, and, more pertinently to the current discussion, the evidence from IOLTibJ321 certainly invites us to investigate if Śāntigarbha was already seen as one of Padmasambhava's gurus or tantric brethren.[21]

To move away from rNying ma legend and into the more prosaic light of modern history, we can also say that Śāntigarbha is described in the preamble to the sole surviving witness of the 'Phang thang ma catalogue as the consecrator of bSam yas monastery. However, we are not entirely sure if this preamble was part of the original 'Phang thang ma or a slightly later addendum.[22] Śāntigarbha was also well known to Bu ston as a major imperial-period translator of Yogatantra texts, notably the influential *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasya arhato samyaksaṃbuddhasya kalpanāma*, a tantra concerned with post-mortem rites which played quite an important role in the conversion of Tibet.

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can never be quite sure what its earliest versions said. But this from Dylan Esler, who is currently preparing a PhD on the *bSam gtan mig sgron* at Louvain, including an edition of the text as far as extant resources will permit: Chapter 6, 277: *slob* (277.5) *dpon chen po byi ma la bod yul du 'da' ba'i tshul bstan nas // rgya gar yul na ma 'das par bzhugs pa dang / padmo 'byung gnas gting srin po 'dul du* (277.6) *bzhud pa la stsogs pa rgya gar gyi mkhas pa la grangs med na / mnga' ris bod kyi rgyal khams su yang grangs med par rig 'dzin du gshigs so //* 'When the great master Vimalamitra revealed the manner of passing away in Tibet, he nevertheless continued to dwell in India, as if he had not passed away. Padmasambhava later departed to tame the rākṣasas. There are innumerable sages in India as well as in the mighty Tibetan empire who went to the [abode of] awareness-holders.' And so on, regarding other great masters. Might gNubs' reference to Padmasambhava departing to tame the rākṣasas adumbrate the Zangs mdog dpal ri or Camaradvīpa mythology subsequently connected with Padmasambhava?

21 In the versions we have so far seen of Nyang ral's *Zangs gling ma* as identified recently by Lewis Doney to represent most closely its early strata Zl3 (i.e. Zlh, Zli), Padmasambhava is certainly represented as going from one guru to another, in a list that includes many of the expected names of the *Rig 'dzin gyi slob dpon brgyad*, but Śāntigarbha is missing. His niche so familiar to modern readers from the *Rin chen gter mdzod* version of *Zangs gling ma*, is in Zl3 occupied by Rombuguhyadevacandra, who in these versions teaches Padmasambhava the *Ngan sngags* and the *Drag sngags* relating to the dharma protectors. In later versions of Zangs gling ma [e.g., *Rin chen gter mdzod*], Rombuguhya teaches Padmasambhava the *'Jig rten mchod bstod*, while Śāntigarbha teaches *Ngan sngags*, as he does also in the *bDud 'joms Chos 'byung* (op. cit.).

22 See *dKar chag 'phang thang ma/ sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* (Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Pe cin, 2003: Plate 2, f.1v.6-7; p.2: *rgya gar gyi slob dpon bsam yas kyi rab gnas mkhan shaṃ ting gar bha*). We discuss these issues at greater length in Cantwell and Mayer, 2012.

PT 307: Padma and Rlang dPal gyi seng ge tame the goddesses later known as *brTan ma*

The next Dunhuang text we must look at is PT307. Dalton has already written on this at length (Dalton 2004), and made some excellent observations, but as we have pointed out elsewhere (see Cantwell and Mayer 2009: 296 ff, and also Cantwell and Mayer 2010), we feel he also misconstrued some of the evidence and came to mistaken conclusions. To recapitulate our arguments in brief, we made a clear identification of PT307 as the earliest known evidence for the ubiquitous rNying ma rite of the *brTan ma bcu gnyis*. PT307 describes Padmasambhava and Rlang dPal gyi seng ge binding by oath and administering samaya water to seven goddesses, whom Dalton had identified as a Tibetan version of the Indian *Saptamāṭṛkā*, even though Dalton also remarked that some had the same names as the modern *brTan ma* goddesses. Yet although they are seven in number, and therefore might at first glance be expected to coincide with the category of *Ma mo mched bdun*, whose name is a Tibetan equivalent of *Saptamāṭṛkā*, as Ehrhard has already pointed out, the names and other characteristics of the PT307 deities do not in fact seem to coincide with the *Ma mo mched bdun* (Ehrhard 2008: 15ff). As we discuss elsewhere (Cantwell and Mayer 2010: 298), PT307 seems instead to indicate a prototype of the *brTan ma bcu gnyis* category. This hypothesis is suported by two pieces of evidence. [1] We have located within later listings of the *brTan ma* all but one of the names found in PT307: in PT307 each goddess has two names, but in later texts the two names are taken as two separate goddesses, which accounts for the numerical discrepancy between the seven goddesses of PT307 and the twelve goddesses of the later *brTan ma* category. [2] The duo scenario, with Padmasambhava working in tandem specifically with Rlang dpal gyi seng ge, is typical of numerous later rNying ma *brTan ma* rituals.[23] In numerous modern *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rituals, of which we gave several examples (Cantwell and Mayer 2009:299), it is typically exactly the same scenario that is enacted: with the specific assistance of his famous disciple Rlang dPal gyi seng ge, Padmasambhava binds the *brTan ma* goddesses by oath and makes them take the samaya water. We argued that PT307 thus provides strong evidence that early versions of, or prototypes for, the well known *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rituals were already existent at the time PT307 was written, and that these rituals were then (as now) indicative of Padmasambhava veneration.

Dalton however came to diametrically the opposite conclusion: unaware of its striking continuities with the modern *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rituals, he argued instead that PT307 was quite discontinuous with the modern rNying ma tradition and

23 Nevertheless, as we also pointed out, deities of this sort, their *lo rgyus* texts, and their classifications, are typically quite protean, especially in the hands of a creative *gter ston*, so that further secondary permutations of the narrative and secondary associations with later categories can also emerge.

moreover disproved the existence of Padmasambhava veneration, primarily because it juxtaposed Padmasambhava with Rlang dPal gyi seng ge. He summed up his reasoning as follows:

> 'The presence of such an obscure figure [as Rlang dpal gyi Seng ge] alongside Padmasambhava is unusual. In later traditions Padmasambhava stands in a class by himself, as the lone conqueror of Tibet's local spirits during the imperial period. PT 307 suggests that Padmasambhava's role in the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet may have expanded over time, so as to eclipse others (notably a native Tibetan) acting around him. In the Tibetan imagination, Tibet's pre-Buddhist landscape required the expertise of a foreigner to tame it. The important role played by a native Tibetan was inconsistent with later narratives and so was forgotten.' (Dalton 2004: 768).

It seems to us his argument took insufficient consideration of the explicitly ritual nature of PT307 and its striking continuities with the modern ritual tradition, and was moreover based on two self-evidently mistaken assumptions that he made: firstly, that Padmasambhava was in later tradition usually portrayed alone in action, unsupported by any surrounding maṇḍala of disciples; and secondly, that Rlang dPal gyi seng ge was an obscure person whose involvement in taming these goddesses was largely forgotten by later tradition. On the contrary, Padmasambhava is normally shown surrounded by his disciples in the great majority of later ritual narratives and visualisations, while Rlang dPal gyi seng ge is extremely well known to the later tradition, both through his recurring presence in the *brTan ma bcu gnyis* rites, and even more so, through his ubiquitous classification as one of Padmasambhava's closest disciples. Rlang dPal gyi seng ge is in fact regularly counted among the famous category of Padmasambhava's twenty-five main disciples (*rje 'bang nyer lnga*), among whom he was famous for his control over Tibet's local spirits.[24] [See figures 4, 5 and 6]

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24 Although wrongly describing Rlang dpal gyi seng ge as obscure, Dalton does nevertheless correctly connect him to the deity *'Jig rten mchod bstod*, one of the deities he is indeed often associated with. But without citing any source, Dalton then inaccurately describes *'Jig rten mchod bstod* as one of three mundane deities that were tamed by Padmasambhava (ibid 768). This is a misunderstanding of the traditional rNying ma Mahāyoga category of the *'Jigs rten pa'i sde gsum,* or the *Three Deities of the Mundane*, of which *'Jig rten mchod bstod* is one. Far from being mundane beings in themselves, these three deities are in fact classified as members of the exalted *bKa' brgyad* described immediately above in our discussion of the Eight Great Vidyādharas, the other five being the *Five Wisdom* Deities, or *ye shes kyi lha lnga*. Despite the distinction, both categories are equally considered to be aspects of Heruka, albeit the one category conferring wisdom and the other category conferring protection. So, despite the ostensibly worldly-sounding name, *'Jigs rten mchod bstod* is normatively seen as a form of Buddhist Heruka, a *yi dam* in his own right, who protects the Dharma by coercing local spirits. Thus *'Jigs rten mchod bstod* is not himself a mundane deity tamed by Padmasambhava, as Dalton believes. Quite the reverse, he is an important form of Heruka, an aspect of enlightenment with which Padmsambhava yogically identified himself, or manifested himself as, in order to

PT44: Padma tames the *bSe* goddesses and appoints them *phur srung*

The best-known Dunhuang text on Padmasambhava is PT44. PT44 has been studied a number of times already, and there is no need to repeat what is already known.[25] However, as we have already pointed out elsewhere, just as with PT307, we were unconvinced that the ritual context and nature of PT44 had yet been adequately appreciated by previous scholars. In brief, we argued that like PT307, PT44 includes a *smrang* or *rabs*-like narrative that nowadays persists intact within the *phur pa lo rgyus* texts. This narrative describes Padmasambhava bringing the *phur pa* tantras from Nālandā, comprehensively redacting them to extract the practice systems he wanted, above all taming the *bSe* goddesses at Yang le shod and appointing them the guardians of the *phur pa* tradition (*phur srung*), and then successfully transmitting the *phur pa* teachings to Tibet. In particular, PT44 includes the earliest known witness to the section of the *phur pa lo rgyus* that nowadays underpins the practice of the *phur srung* or *phur pa* protectors, who play a small but integral role in most of the general rNying ma protector liturgies for daily recitation, and who of course play a much more central role in the Vajrakīlaya sādhanas.

So, since PT44 is like PT307 clearly a text created with ritual in mind,[26] it follows that Padmasambhava was at the time of its composition already mythologised, already integrated into several ritual structures. This, in turn, implies that he was not seen as an ordinary teacher, but rather as a person of exceptional tantric power, since most gurus do not so easily become such a prominent part of general tantric rituals. Tantric gurus are of course revered by their own circle of disciples, although the evolution of the formal practices now known as *guru-yoga* is not yet understood. Even today, such *guru-yoga*s need not be full tantric practices, and need not require empowerment,

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tame the mundane deities. Hence rNying ma pa tradition maintains that it was by practising this *yi dam*, taught him by Padmasambhava, that Rlang dpal gyi seng ge came in turn to be served by the local spirits of Tibet (which perhaps helps explain his uniquely prominent presence in the *brTan ma* rites). The same general principles apply to the other two of the *Three Deities of the Mundane,* namely *Ma mo rbod gtong* and *dMod pa drag sngags*: they too are not considered mundane deities tamed by Padmsambhava, but rather, enlightened forms of Heruka by which Padmasambhava tamed mundane deities. Our thanks to Changling Rinpoche and especially Gyurme Dorje for their detailed and learned exegeses of these issues.

25 For the most recent study of the contents of PT44 and our re-analysis of the material, see Cantwell and Mayer 2009, and 2008: 41-68. The previous study of its first section was Kapstein 2000: 158-159. Wangdu and Diemberger, without citing their evidence, try to describe PT44 as a dynastic source (Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 13). Yet from their purely codicological analyses, Takeuchi 2004 and Akagi 2011 have dated PT44 to the second half of the tenth century, thus contradicting Wangdu and Diemberger, but supporting A.M. Blondeau's tentative dating of it in her famous 1980 article on Padmasambhava's biographies. Finally, the first published study of PT44 was, as far as we are aware, F.A. Bischoff and Charles Hartman 1971.

26 As we pointed out in our previous publications, both texts are quite explicit about their ritual natures and intentions, but this can be missed if one approaches these texts merely to extract particular passages.

although they sometimes do if done in a more elaborated form. However, Padma is in PT307 and PT44 seemingly integrated into rituals that are not *guru-yoga*, but much more generic, which could form part of almost any elaborate tantric practices of the Mahāyoga and Anuyoga types linked to *yi dam*, *tshogs* and protector rituals. They therefore form a part of general tantric practice, not the *guru-yoga* of a single master and hence not necessarily the province merely of a narrow circle of devotees. This is striking because, in what we have read so far from Dunhuang, we are not yet aware of any other tantric masters becoming integrated into any tantric ritual of any kind. As far as we can see from our readings so far, not even Vimalamitra, Mañjuśrīmitra, Hūṃkara, or Śāntigarbha get such treatment in their several mentions among the Dunhuang texts. It is true that in PT44 and PT307, some of Padma's entourage also get a mention, but they only appear because they are members of his entourage and recipients of the transmission he gives, and would surely not otherwise have featured. So, Padmasambhava's insertion as main protagonist into tantric rituals which are not even his own *guru-yoga* seems to make him ritually more prominent than his contemporaries. In a similar vein, IOLTibJ321 affords Padma a mythic status as a source of tantric dharma not given to Śāntigarbha, and not in fact matched by any other named figure in the Dunhuang tantric literature, as far as we are aware. By the same token, if future research can show that other named gurus within Dunhuang's proto-rNying ma tantric literature are, in fact, incorporated into ritual in just such a way, then of course our hypothesis could be falsified.

The second point we made concerns the quality of Padmasambhava's ritual deeds as described in PT44. According to as yet undated but probably old testimony from the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum, these were not routine yogic acts. Padmasambhava did not merely tame the *bSe* goddesses in a conventional manner, or merely establish some kind of ritual tradition. More than that, with these legendary deeds Padma actually brought the *bSe* goddesses into the official rNying ma pantheon for the first time and thereby introduced significant textual innovation into the actual canonical tantras themselves. After this moment in mythic time, the canonical rNying ma tantras began to include within their chapters rites for and descriptions of these *bSe* goddesses that Padmasambhava had tamed. To have such an impact on the canonical tantras is not the kind of thing an ordinary guru could do, and once again it shows Padma as someone of particular importance to tantric literary tradition. Thus, in some later rituals, but not all, the goddesses now appear as wisdom deities within the main maṇḍala, and hence on the initiation cards currently widely used in the Dudjom tradition (apparently printed in Taiwan).[27]

27 In the *gNam lcags spu gri* as redacted by bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, the goddesses are said to be placed in the surrounding courtyard of the main maṇḍala (a courtyard outside the inner cemetery palace but within the great *gzhal yas khang* or immeasurable palace), so that in short, they can be considered to have become part of the main tantric deity's wisdom display (*gnam lcags spu gri las byang* Volume Tha: 105; *gnam lcags spu gri bsnyen yig* Volume Da:

They seem clearly to be enjoined in the *rTsa ba'i dum bu*, the brief *phur pa* text that Sa skya Paṇḍita included into the Kanjur, and which we have good reason to believe is very old indeed. A number of lines of the *rTsa ba'i dum bu* invoke a series of divine helpers for the rites, and three of these lines use the well-established names for the three groups of protective goddesses of which the *bSe* goddesses–the *sa bdag chen mo*–are one. The commentary by A myes zhabs (p.396) is explicit that the recitation indeed refers to these goddesses.[28] However, a lengthier witness for this canonical inclusion of the *bSe* goddesses is a famous tantra called the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*, in which the *bSe* are indicated clearly in chapters thirteen, fifteen and nineteen as an integral part of the tantra itself (see also Mayer 1996: 128-132). A *Phur pa bcu gnyis* is mentioned in Dunhuang,[29] so we know it is quite an old title. The *Phur pa bcu gnyis* is one the *rGyud bco brgyad* or Eighteen Main Tantras of Mahāyoga, and hence doxographically situated at the very doctrinal and historical core of rNying ma Mahāyoga; for not only are these eighteen tantras traditionally defined as the main root texts of all Mahāyoga, but in addition they are the ones most frequently cited and witnessed at Dunhuang. Sadly, only two out of the eighteen tantras have left us complete witnesses at Dunhuang, namely the *Thabs zhags* that we have just discussed and the *Guhyasamāja*, but what is striking about those two is the fact that their texts have remained virtually unchanged to this day. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure if the same was true of the *Phur pa bcu gnyis*. We have as yet no way of knowing if the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* cited in TibJ321 had the same text in the tenth century that it has today. If, however, it did resemble the *Thabs zhags* and the *Guhyasamāja* in remaining historically stable, then by the time the Dunhuang cave was closed it will have already included its sections on the *bSe*, who were first tamed by Padmasambhava at Yang le shod.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely we will ever get direct evidence for the state of the *Phur pa bcu gnyis* in the tenth century. We have critically edited its text, but so far

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105). This is not the case in the *Sa skya Phur chen*, where the fifty-one deities of the main maṇḍala do not include them, and they do not appear to be depicted within Sa skya Phur pa maṇḍala representations we have seen. However, it is not clear whether they are always excluded. Certainly, one of the twelfth-to-thirteenth century Grags pa rgyal mtshan's Phur pa texts (*rdo rje phur pa'i mngon par rtogs pa*) mentions the full set of twelve guardian goddesses after the main maṇḍala deities, saying that they should be meditated upon as present, three at each of the maṇḍala's corners (*Sa skya bka' 'bum* Volume 4: 179, f.362v; *srung ma bcu gnyis kyang gzhal yas khang gi zur bzhin gsum gsum bsam mo/*).

28 A myes zhabs' work is not specifically a commentary on the *rTsa ba'i dum bu* but rather on the *Phur chen* practice. However, this sādhana incorporates the *rTsa ba'i dum bu*, so the traditional Sa skya interpretations of the words are clear: "Furthermore, by reciting that the time has come for the four *bse* queens, who are Great Earth Mistresses, emanating as the female offspring of Rudra's mistress, the earth mistresses are enjoined" (*yang ru tra'i byi mo sras mor sprul ba'i sa bdag chen mo/ bse'i rgyal mo bzhi'i dus la bab ces pas sa bdag ma rnams bskul/*, 'Jam-mgon A-myes-zhabs, Ngag-dbang-kun-dga'-bsod-nams 1973: p.396.)

29 The Dunhuang version of the *Thabs kyi zhags pa* commentary refers both to a *ki la ya bcu gnyis* and a *phur pa bcu gnyis* (IOL Tib J 321: f.64v, 70v).

bifidity prevents the reconstruction of an archetype.[30] Nevertheless, we can say that all extant versions do include an indication of the *bSe* goddesses, so there is a good likelihood that they were present in the earliest ancestor of the extant texts. Conversely, the title *Phur pa bcu gnyis* has been applied to more than one text, so it is not impossible that today's version is different from the one envisaged in the tenth century. Nevertheless, we can say with certainty that PT44 is the earliest known version of the part of the *phur pa lo rgyus* that underpins the practice of the *Phur pa* protectors, and that a well-developed *phur pa* ritual and scriptural tradition was undoubtedly attested at Dunhuang. It is therefore prudent to put forward as a hypothesis for testing that Padmasambhava might here once again be associated with the act of canonical innovation, as we think he might have been with the *Thabs zhags*. At the very least, we can be certain from PT44 that the flourishing *Phur pa* literature evidenced at Dunhuang took 'Sambhaba' as the founder of their practice lineage, tamer and appointer of their protector deities, and possibly even the redactor of their tantric scriptures. Perhaps it is these factors that might have combined over time to make him a more important ritual figure than his colleagues: as we have argued else where, Padmasambhava's rise in Tibet is in no small part connected to the rise of Mahāyoga.[31] Finally, we should briefly observe that Padmasambhava's inclusion in rituals as we find in PT44 and PT307 raises very interesting questions about tantric ritual as a whole, which we cannot approach here. However, were Indian gurus ever integrated into rituals in quite this way, or is this a Tibetan innovation?

Padma in the *Testament of Ba*

For the final part of this article, we must briefly revisit the *Testament of Ba* narratives. Like most Tibetan historical literature, these are composite texts reconstructed out of often pre-existing parts. We cannot yet know very much about how old the various parts are, but thanks to van Schaik, we know that at least some fragments of these texts exist among the Dunhuang finds. The *Testament of Ba* narratives have sometimes been cited as evidence that Padmasambhava was widely considered a less than major figure when these texts were written. This is surely inaccurate: both texts portray Padmasambhava as a preeminent tantric, so that a better inference might simply be that devotional extravagances linked to Mahāyoga's pure vision practices (e.g *bKa' thang* hagiographies such as O rgyan gling pa's) were probably not yet current as a literary genre when the earliest strata of the *Testament of Ba* were written—but even if they were, an avowedly historical text such as the *Testament of Ba* would hardly be the place for them anyway.[32] Yet all versions of the *Testament of Ba* unequivocally

30 See Mayer 1996.

31 Cantwell and Mayer 2008: 277-314.

32 The *dBa' bzhed* refers to itself as a *bKa' mchid* (royal discourse), while the *sBa bzhed* refers to itself as a *bKa' gtsigs* (royal edict). Both titles thereby indicate that their proper context is the sphere of state, not the sphere of religious devotion or ritual.

show Padmasambhabva as a unique and extraordinary being. The *dBa' bzhed* is usually considered the earliest. In the *dBa' bzhed* narrative, Padma is invited by the Emperor at Śāntarakṣita's instigation; the latter describes him as the most powerful tāntrika in India. When in Tibet, Padma demonstrates spectacular miracles and shows unequalled mastery over local deities and spirits, including the politically potent deity Thang lha, whom he binds by oath to serve the dharma. Padma demonstrates so much magic power that the Emperor panics, and humbly circumambulates Padma, respectfully offers him many bags of gold, and begs him to go home. But Padma is disdainful. He picks up a sleeveful of sand from the ground, and instantly turns that into gold, revealing his total mastery over mundane appearances. Terrified of the awesome power of the foreigner, thinking he could seize the state if he wished, the Tibetan ministers now try to kill him by stealth, even though he is on his way home. But Padma has miraculous insight, and knows without being told exactly what is in store. When the time comes, he makes the twenty assassins lying in ambush freeze like figures in a painting, and just walks by. Being compassionate, he revives his would-be murderers as soon as it is safe to do so, but sorrowfully foresees that, although Tibet will never be threatened by non-Buddhists, its own Buddhist communities will fight amongst themselves. The Emperor for his part is miserable at the sorry way things turned out between himself and Padma. How are we to assess this narrative? Wangdu and Diemberger approach it in a perhaps slightly un-nuanced fashion: since it does not show the devotional extravagances of the later *bKa' thang* literature, they conclude it shows 'a Padma shorn of his familiar glamour'.[33] We do not think they expressed themselves exactly correctly. In fact, it is not Padma himself who is shown lacking in glamour, but rather the language describing him; it is not yet couched in the devotional extravagances connected with tantric pure vision that later readers have become habituated to, in the wake of the well-known *bKa' thang* hagiographies. Nor of course is the Empire portrayed in the *dBa' bzhed* as rNying ma tantrism's "golden age" presided over by a predestined Emperor who is Padmasambhava's pre-eminent disciple and an emanation of Mañjuśrī, as we find in the writings of Nyang ral, who believed himself to be Khri Srong de'u btsan's reincarnation (Doney 2011:140ff). But when it comes to tantric accomplishment or siddhis, the author(s) of these passages of the *dBa' bzhed* put Padma very firmly in a class of his own. No one else in the *dBa' bzhed* shows anything like such mighty powers. Surely such mighty powers, from the greateast tāntrika of India, were glamorous enough to post-Imperial Tibetans! In short, the nature of the language and several of the narrative episodes might differ substantially from the later hagiographies with their historical triumphalism, but Padma is certainly here portrayed as an extraordinary being.

Above all, we must not forget that the *dBa' bzhed* is attempting to create and preserve an historical record. While it surely integrates material from the tantric

33 Wangdu and Diemberger 2000: 13.

religious sources, it can be considered a rather different category of literature, so we would not expect the same kind of language to be used. Anne-Marie Blondeau (1980) has described how the traditional narratives of Padmasambhava exist in parallel and complementary 'womb-birth' (*mngal skyes*) and 'miraculous birth' (*rdzus skyes*) versions, and she mentions Kong sprul's association of the 'womb-birth' accounts with the *bKa' ma* rather than the *gTer ma*, and in particular, with the Phur pa transmission accounts (*phur pa'i lo rgyus*). Blondeau suggests that the account given in the *Testament of Ba* is more commensurable with the traditional *bKa' ma* transmission of the 'womb-birth' version of Padmasambhava's life. Thus, to make a comparison with Nyang ral's familiar hagiography, which is the source for the 'miraculous birth' version, or with the even more elaborated *bKa' thang*s, would be to miss the point (Blondeau 1980:48).[34]

In fact, we can go further than Blondeau, and suggest that one would need caution also in over-interpreting contrasts between an account such as the *dBa' bzhed*, seeking to report historical events, and the traditional mythological stories of Padmasambhava found in the context of religious transmissions, whether of the 'womb-birth' or of the 'miraculous birth' type. The 'womb-birth' stories found in the transmission of the Phur pa teachings are not only integrated with the 'miraculous birth' accounts, but they are embedded within tantric deity teachings and practices, in which their presentation by the guru on any specific occasion is designed to generate guru devotion and a pure vision (*dag snang*) of all phenomena as the tantric maṇḍala. Thus, like the 'miraculous birth' accounts, the stories are highly symbolic and connected with the tantric imagery, and so do not necessarily represent a more 'rationalist' strand of thinking. For example, Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshen's *Phur pa lo rgyus*[35] forms part of the cycle of texts for the Rong zom Phur pa tradition. Its focus on a 'womb-birth' may be seen as expressing a Mahāyoga visionary perspective equating the physical body with the tantric deity. In this account, the Guru is born in a physical body which is none other than the Phur pa deity and his maṇḍala: his waist is a knot like the middle section of a *phur pa* ritual implement, his lower body triangular in shape, again like the *phur pa*, while his hair is reddish brown like that of the Phur pa deity, and his eyes and mouth are semi-circular, thus resembling the three semi-circular shapes outlined by a circle around the central triangle in many Phur pa maṇḍalas.[36] In the 'womb-birth' account given in the apparently very old

34 See her well-known article, Blondeau 1980. While Wangdu and Diemberger do cite this article, they give no clear sign of having considered this point in their analysis. As Blondeau points out, we do not know exactly when the formalizing of the distinction between 'womb-birth' and 'miraculous birth' Padmasambhava biographies began, but we do know that the categories of 'womb-birth' and 'miraculous birth' derive from the abhidharma, and we also know that both types of Padmasambhava narratives share a very long parallel history in Tibet.

35 *dpal rdo rje phur pa'i lo rgyus ngo mtshar rgya mtsho'i rba rlabs*.

36 The full description: "Called, Śāntarakṣita, (he) had a complexion of white with (a tinge) of red, the sign of the Lotus family, and his head perfected every wondrous ability. His waist was a

Bum pa nag po, a major source for all the Phur pa *bKa' ma* transmissions, the accounts of the two types of birth are given together (bDud 'joms bKa' ma version, Volume Tha: 221-225; Boord 2002: 113-115). First, the 'womb-birth' is presented, with a slightly different version of the features of the Guru's body from Sog bzlog pa's, equally replete with potent tantric symbolism, and then there is a variant of the same story of his early years which is given in the following 'miraculous birth' story. The two accounts merge for the Guru's later deeds. A myes zhabs' Phur pa *lo rgyus*, given within his commentary on the Sa skya Phur pa practice,[37] also discusses the two types of birth together. He draws a rather Levi-Straussian symbolic opposition between the two. In this case, the womb birth is said to have taken place in the eastern region of the country of Zahor, while the miraculous birth took place in the western region of the country of Urgyan, so that the residents of the two both held the Guru to be the son of their King. He stresses that there is no contradition, since both types of birth are examples of an inconceivable array of enlightened emanations which accord with the beings to be tamed.[38]

In contrast to the traditional *lo rgyus* accounts which remain part of the contemporary religious transmission, it is unclear how to assess the Padma sections of the *dBa' bzhed*, since we do not yet know who wrote them or when. To our imagination, some parts of them invoke a moment in the time of fragments (*sil bu'i dus*), when aristocrats were beginning to articulate a fading of hopes for the old centralised imperial ways, and reinvent themselves as independent princely tantric lineage holders, even while engaged in civil wars that pitched Buddhist against Buddhist. But what is clear is that Padma is shown here as the mythic role model for aspiring aristocratic lay mantrins. Described by Śāntarakṣita as the greatest mantra adept in India, he can turn dirt to

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knot, his upper body shaped to go inwards, while his lower body was triangular. His mouth and eyes were semi-circles, and his hair was reddish brown. (He was thus) born as one disfigured, (but) endowed with the phurpa's characteristics." (*śānta rakṣi ta bya ba kha dog dkar la dmar ba'i mdangs dang ldan pas padma'i rigs kyi mtshan dang ldan zhing/ sgyu rtsal thams cad rdzogs pa mgo dang sked pa rgya mdud/ ro stod bcum gzhogs/ ro smad zur gsum/ kha dan mig zla gam/ skra kham pa ste/ mi sdug pa phur pa'i mtshan nyid can zhig skyes so/*, p.12)

37 A myes zhabs, *bCom ldan 'das rdo rje gzhon nu'i gdams pa nyams len gyi chu bo chen po sgrub pa'i thabs kyi rnam par bshad pa 'phrin las kyi pad mo rab tu rgyas pa'i nyin byed*.

38 *shar phyogs za hor gyi yul mngal skyes kyis 'dul bar gzigs nas/ grong khyer gzi brjid ldan zhes bya ba na/ yab rgyal po thor cog zhes bya ba la btsun mo gnyis yod pa las/ btsun mo nges ma zhes bya ba la sras thod gtsug can zhes bya bar sku 'khrungs par bzhed/ brdzus skyes ltar na/ nub phyogs urgyan gyi yul brdzus skyes kyis 'dul bar gzigs nas/ dhana ko sha'i gling du padma'i sdong po las brdzus te 'khrungs par bzhed/ de ltar mngal skyes dang brdzus skyes kyi lo rgyus mi 'dra ba las/ shar phyogs za hor ba dang/ nub phyogs urgyan ba gnyis mi mthun te/ za hor pa na re/ slob dpon padma nged kyi rgyal po'i sras yin/ mngal skyes yin zhes zer/ urgyan pa na re nged kyi rgyal po'i sras yin brdzus skyes yin zhes zer te/ sprul pa'i bkod pa yin pas gnyis ka bden pa yin te/... 'dir gang la gang 'dul du sprul pa'i bkod pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa bstan pa yin pas/ de'i yon tan gyi rnam par thar pa phyogs re tsam mthong ba la brten nas/ lo rgyus 'chad tshul mi 'dra ba rnams 'byung ba yin te/ gang ltar yang 'gal ba med do* (A myes zhabs: 33-34).

gold, foresee the future, know the minds of others, bind Tibet's deities under oath with all the political implications of that, and contemptuously withstand anything the old Tibetan Empire can throw at him. In addition, he is kind, compassionate and wise. This is no ordinary guru. Undoubtedly the *dBa' bzhed* account is consistent with the existence of a powerful Padma mythology at the time it was written; and even if we cannot yet be sure of the age of these strata of the *dBa' bzhed*, its Padma narratives do seem to have archaic features that differ from the later ones. So our conclusion is that while it seems that Nyang ral so creatively gave a new devotional, narrative and literary shape to the Padma cult in Tibet, we must also be aware of the extent to which Nyang ral was also building on themes already present, rather than merely inventing something largely new, as Dalton's interpretation of the Dunhuang sources might lead one to conclude.

Postscript

Finally, we must return to our initial caveat that the evidence is complex and inconsistent. For example, we have no evidence of Padma from Sanskrit sources, which could (but need not) indicate that he did not have much of a profile in India.[39]

39 We probably have no record of Padma from Indian sources, unless we are to believe the doubtful story that Buddhagupta's testimony to Tāranātha really referred to a trace of the Padmasambhava tradition surviving in sixteenth century Konkan. How are we to interpret this dearth of traces from India? We put this question to an Indological colleague in Oxford, Mr. Péter-Dániel Szánto of Merton College. His extended response was as follows: while we can surmise that *heruka* type texts were being produced in the late eighth century in the wake of the *Sarvabuddhasamāyoga*, nowadays it is hard to put a name to a single author of them. In other words, most of the major figures of the genre from that period remain difficult to identify today. There are a number of known *Guhyasamāja* authors, like Padmavajra who wrote the *Guhyasiddhi*, but *Guhyasamāja* is slightly older and more respectable, and both its Ārya and Jñānapada traditions of exegesis have as central deity a buddha or bodhisattva form rather than a *kāpālika* style *heruka*. Unless he is later, as many now think, we might have Vilāsavajra, to whom is attributed a commentary on **Guhyagarbha*, but his authorship of this commentary is often seen as doubtful, and he is anyway probably largely known because of his other works on the more exoteric *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. There is Vilāsavajra's reputed maternal uncle Agrabodhi, but Agrabodhi's work was definitely not of the *heruka* type. Ānandagarbha did write a *herukasādhana* based on the *Buddhasamāyoga*, but many think he was from the ninth century, not the eighth. There are famous authors of the Yoga tantras, like Buddhaguhya, but these are not the same kind of tradition at all. There is Jñānabandhu, but his work was on the Kriyā text, the *Susiddhi*, and does not contain heruka or kāpālika style esotericism. Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasiddhi* defends antinomian tantric practices, but Śāntarakṣita's fame is undoubtedly rooted in his *Madhyamaka* work, not in his passing comments on tantrism. Besides, as Ernst Steinkellner has shown, there are extremely serious doubts this text is by Śāntarakṣita at all. It is possible we may also have one Śrīkīrtipāda, disciple of Pālitapāda: the latter was perhaps the same as Jñānapāda's teacher on the Konkan (bSrung ba'i zhabs in Vaidyapāda's narrative of Jñānapāda's travels in his commentary to the well-known *Mukhāgama*). Above all, we must be aware that only the names of authors survive, not the names of gurus. In other words, even if Padmasambhava had been

Likewise, although gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes's *bSam gtan mig sgron* does mythologise Padma, mentioning his departure to tame the rākṣasas, it equally mythologises many others like Vimalamitra, and puts no special emphasis on Padma at all. In the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, Padma is clearly only one great teacher among many–such as Vimalamitra, Śrī Siṃha, Mañjuśrīmitra, Buddhagupta/guhya, dGa rab rdo rje, etc. Moreover, the *bSam gtan mig sgron* does not see Padmasambhava as a rDzogs chen teacher: he is cited only in connection with Mahāyoga and the *Man ngag lta 'phreng* (the *bSam gtan mig sgron* itself is largely connected with rDzogs chen). We need to examine gNubs's other works before we can be certain, but this surely suggests that Padma's importance was at the time comparatively narrower, emphasised more in some tenth century contexts than others, perhaps largely in those connected with *Phur pa* and other Mahāyoga cycles rather than Atiyoga.[40]

well known in India, he would not be alone among his peers in leaving no trace to modern research.

40 Of course, PT44 speaks of all the yānas, and specifies atiyoga as well as the others. The later tradition that Phur pa integrates the yānas (this is also said in the *'Bum nag*, see Boord: 138-142) seems suggested here, even if the Phur pa tantras are generally classified as Mahāyoga.

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Figure 1: Padma rGyal po, as depicted in the *Ritual Dance of the Guru's Eight Aspects* (*gu ru mtshan brgyad 'chams*), Jangsa Monastery, Kalimpong, 2009. (Photo by Cathy Cantwell.)

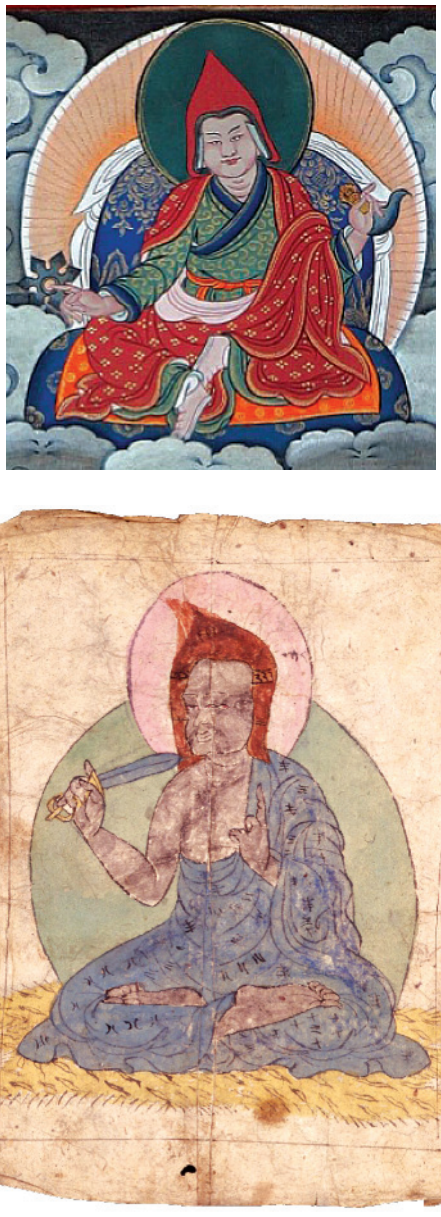

Figure 2: Śāntigarbha [shan ting gar pa'] from a modern set of the Eight Vidyādharas (courtesy of Rigpa Shedra Wiki (rigpawiki.org) and in an initiation card set from the 12-13th century (as established by carbon dating and style (item n. 737, courtesy of Rubin Musem; the writing on the back of this card clearly specifies Śāntigarbha).

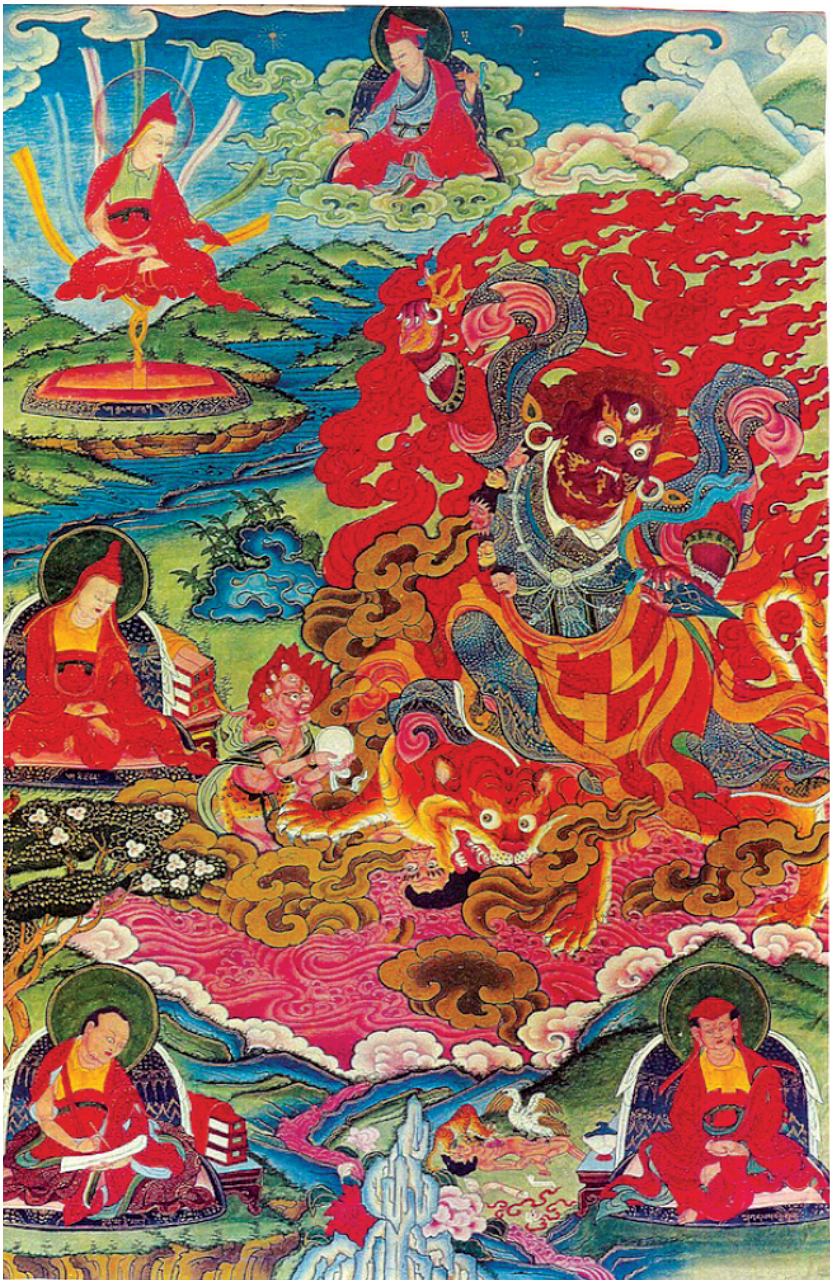

Figure 3: Padma in the wrathful form of rDo rje 'gro bo lod, with his Guru Śāntigarbha sitting above, centre. From Yeshe Tsogyal 1978 Part II: 437, Plate 30 (Courtesy of Dharma Publishing).

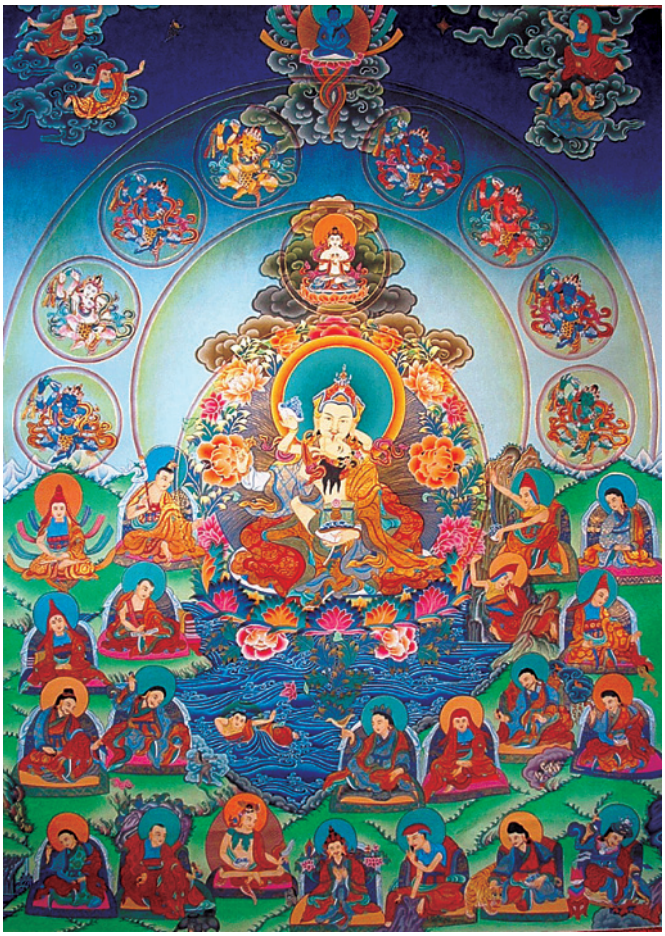

Figure 4: Padmasambhava with the Eight Great Vidyādharas overhead

Śāntigarbha is one of the stylised Eight Great Vidyādharas, shown in the circle around Padmasambhava (he is second from the right). Detail from a thangka of the Rig 'dzin 'dus pa, the most popular of contemporary Padmasambhava rites, revealed by 'Jigs med gling pa (1729-1798). The very name of this sādhana refers to the Eight Great Vidyādharas. Rlang dPal gyi seng ge is also represented, possibly in the second row from the bottom at the extreme right, as one of the twenty five leading disciples of Padmasambhava(*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*) (Thanks to the Maha Siddha Nyingma Center (mahasiddha.org), who, despite their disagreement with the tenor of this article, graciously allowed the use of their illustration on condition that it be treated with respect.)

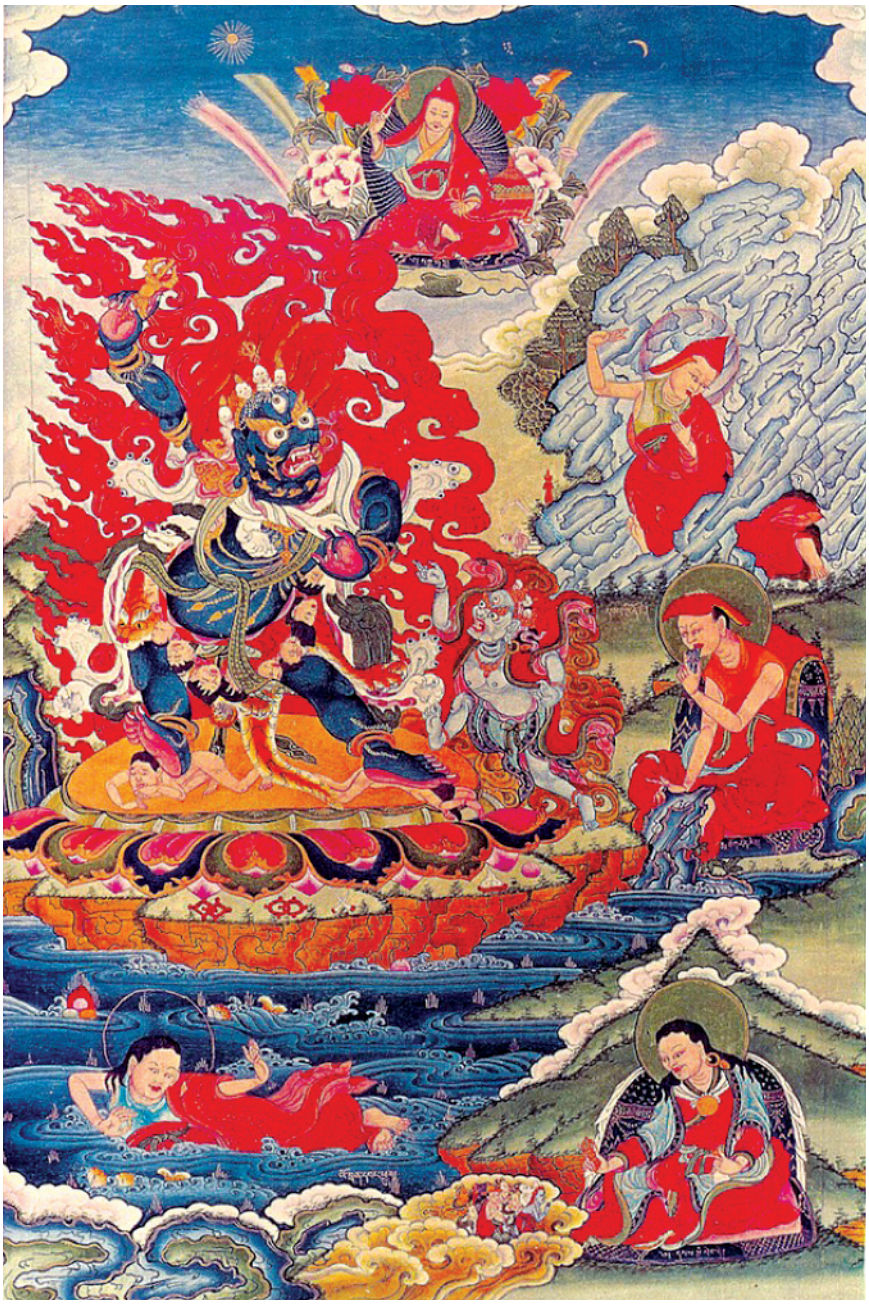

Figure 5: Padmasambhava's wrathful form of Seng ge sgra sgrogs, with his disciple Rlang dPal gyi seng ge below right. From Yeshe Tsogyal 1978 Part II: 439, Plate 31 (Courtesy of Dharma Publishing.)

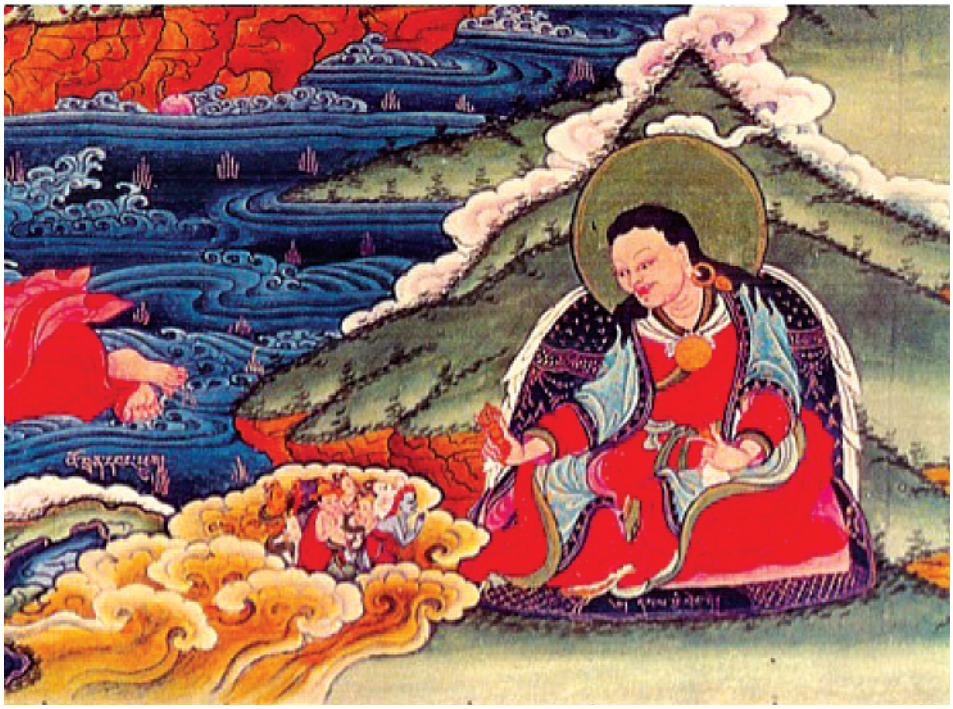

Figure 6: Detail of figure 5 above, showing Rlang dPal gyi seng ge taming Tibetan deities. From Yeshe Tsogyal 1978 Part II: 439, Plate 31
(Courtesy of Dharma Publishing.)