

## About Padmasambhava



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Historical Narratives and  
Later Transformations of Guru Rinpoche

edited by  
Geoffrey Samuel and Jamyang Oliphant of Rossie



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## 6 Branching from the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the Extensive Life of Ye shes mtsho rgyal

Jue Liang

This paper discusses the role of Padmasambhava in a newly-discovered *Life*<sup>146</sup> of his foremost disciple and consort, Ye shes mtsho rgyal. I argue that the theological logic of this *Life* is to endorse her as an enlightened master by placing equal emphasis on her and Padmasambhava and making their relational aspect the literary focus.

As the most prominent cultural hero for rNying ma Buddhists, Padmasambhava not only plays a central role in his own hagiographies, he also often features in the life stories of his disciples, foremost among them Ye shes mtsho rgyal. Through an examination of the literary role of Padmasambhava in a recently discovered full-length *Life* (*rnam thar*)<sup>147</sup> of Ye shes mtsho rgyal, this paper scrutinizes how Padmasambhava is represented in this work and discusses the theological logic underlying narratives about him. I first examine the quantitative and qualitative representations of Padmasambhava in this *Life*, then move on to discuss its “theological logic” along with examples of Ye shes mtsho rgyal’s

146 Here I follow Schaeffer in rendering the Tibetan term *rnam thar* as *life*, that is, “an edifying story of a religiously significant person, or simply the story of a saint.” Schaeffer 2004: 5.

147 Anonymous manuscript. It is also included in a collection of *Lives* of Buddhist women with some editorial corrections, bLa rung aryā tA re’i dpe tshogs rtsom sgrig khang 2013: vol. 6, 5-179.

placement in the wider narrative of Padmasambhava and his twenty-five disciples (*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*). Then follows an analysis of the intimate relationship between Padmasambhava and Ye shes mtsho rgyal – an aspect rarely seen in his own life stories. I conclude by presenting three distinct literary functions Padmasambhava has served in the work and argue that the relational personhood of Ye shes mtsho rgyal is a key component in the “theological logic” of this *Life*.

## Is Ye shes mtsho rgyal the Protagonist in Her Own *rNam thars*?

As the foremost disciple and consort of Padmasambhava, full-length *lives* of Ye shes mtsho rgyal started to appear around the same time of the flourishing of Padmasambhava legends. In addition to two other *Lives* about her, revealed respectively by Dri med kun dga'/Padma gling pa and sTag sham Nus ldan rdo rje,<sup>148</sup> this paper introduces a hitherto unstudied hagiography, entitled the *Extensive Life and Liberation Story of Ḍākinī Ye shes mtsho rgyal (mKha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal gyi skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas pa*, hereafter the *Extensive Life*). The *Extensive Life* is the longest *rnam thar* of Ye shes mtsho rgyal so far. Its colophon contains a prophecy of its place, time, and person of discovery, disclosing that the Treasure scroll (*gter shog*) shall encounter a person named rDo rje drag po rtсал in

148 The earliest *Life* of Ye shes mtsho rgyal, revealed by gTer ston Dri med kun dga' (b.1347?) consist of seven chapters and has been discussed in Gyatso 2006. Elizabeth Angowski at Harvard University is currently completing her dissertation on the ethical teachings imparted by this work, titled “Care of the Self and Others: Reading the Literary for the Moral Life in an Early Biography of Yeshé Tsogyal.” Dri med kun dga's revelation is nearly identical to another Treasure revealed by Padma gling pa (1450-1521), contained in his gTer ma cycle *bLa ma nor bu rgya mtsho*. These two texts will be collectively referred to as the Dri med kun dga' and Padma gling pa version hereafter. See, for example, Dri med kun dga' [n.d.] and Padma gling pa 1975-76. Another well-known *Life* of Ye shes mtsho rgyal is revealed by sTag sham Nus ldan rdo rje (b. 1655), referred to hereafter as the sTag sham version. See, for example, Nus ldan rdo rje 1972.



a bird month and be revealed later, in a dog month.<sup>149</sup> However, there is no further information on the year of its revelation; I have not been able to locate a rDo rje drag po rtsal associated with the composition of this *Life*. The name rDo rje gling gi phab (descent of rDo rje gling [pa]?) also comes up later in the colophon.<sup>150</sup> In this *Life*, Ye shes mtsho rgyal is not one of the queens of Khri Srong lde brtsan (a narrative element usually found in the later stratum of her literary tradition);<sup>151</sup> rather, her karmic connection with Padmasambhava was predestined.<sup>152</sup> Judging from the contents and the combination of narrative and non-narrative elements, which will be discussed shortly below, I suggest that the *Extensive Life* could represent the initial stage of efforts to weave together the many literary representations of Ye shes mtsho rgyal and elevate her status to that of an enlightened master, a status that has not been securely established.

149 Anonymous manuscript: 189b: spre'u zla'i rgyal nya 'dzoms pa'i shog 'dril phebs nas/ bka' srung la gtad nas/ dag pa'i gnas la lcags ri'i mdun drung nas yong pa// e ma ho/ gnas skyong bstan pa'i thabs shes 'dren mdzad pa/ bsgrub pa'i ming ni rdo rje drag po rtsal/ bya'i zla ba'i dus tshod gter shog phrad/ bka' rgya/ gnyan rgya/ brda thim/ zab rgya/ sbas rgya/ gsang rgya/ gtad rgya/ gter rgya/ sa ma ya/ rgya rgya rgya/ zla ngo gnyis kyi bar du bka' rgya bsdam/ bka' rgya mang po med pa yi/ dus skabs tsha rnams ni skyol cha med pa/ khyi'i zla ba'i dus su gter shog zheng sor bzhi/ dkyil mtho gsum la zhal bshus so//

150 The Buddhist Digital Resources Center (BDRC) has listed it as the revelation of gTer ston rDo rje gling pa (1346-1405). However, this work is not found in other sources attributed to him.

151 For example, the earlier Dri med kun dga' and Padma gling pa version does not contain information of Ye shes mtsho rgyal becoming King Khri Srong lde brtsan's wife. She did try to escape from aggressive suitors, but her rescue by the king was not part of the story. Instead, Ye shes mtsho rgyal directly encounters Padmasambhava after making a desperate supplication. This story is found in Chapter One of the Dri med kun dga' and Padma gling pa version.

152 Their first encounter happened in the following manner: thinking about practicing, mTsho rgyal made a supplication to Padmasambhava, asking for the opportunity to practice and expressing her wish to be his future companion (*gros*). Padmasambhava then miraculously appeared from the sky and asked mTsho rgyal about her intention. She requested the "method of enlightenment within this life," Padmasambhava gave her the mantra "Om ā hūm badzra gu ru padma siddhi hūm" and then disappeared from the sky. Anonymous manuscript: 10b-12a.

The *Extensive Life* is not structured into chapters or sections. Rather, the majority of this work is dedicated to Ye shes mtsho rgyal’s conversation with Padmasambhava on various topics. The following chart shows the percentage of narrative versus non-narrative elements in terms of wordcount in the *Extensive Life*:

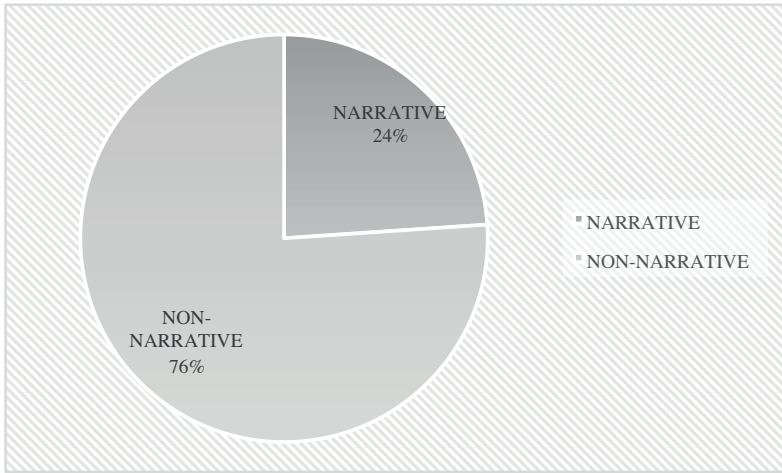


Fig 6.1: Percentage of Narrative and Non-Narrative Elements in the *Extensive Life*

Compared with the other two full-length *Lives* about her, the *Extensive Life* places more emphasis on Padmasambhava and includes significantly larger amounts of materials about his activities rather than on Ye shes mtsho rgyal’s.<sup>153</sup>

153 Although claiming to be the “liberation story” of Ye shes mtsho rgyal, the sTag sham version of her *Life* places equal emphasis on her and Padmasambhava. If we separate the sections in which mTsho rgyal acts independently or as the main agent from those in which she is depicted primarily as one of the disciples of Padmasambhava and acts either according to his instructions or along with him, only half the *nam thar* is about her own endeavors. These sections include her previous lives as the emanation of goddess Sarasvatī, her miraculous birth, her escape from two suitors, her marriage to king Khri Srong lde brtsan, and so on. It also narrates the story of mTsho rgyal going to Nepal to find her own consort A tsa ra sa le as well as her own undertakings after

Major protagonists in the narrative sections are Ye shes mtsho rgyal, Padmasambhava, King Khri Srong lde brtsan, and his queens and ministers. Events take place in bSam yas or at the king’s court, where Padmasambhava and mTsho rgyal subjugate evil spirits, cure the king’s illness, and fight against the evil plot of Bon po ministers.<sup>154</sup> In terms of structure, the narrative elements are intersected by non-narrative elements; these non-narrative elements usually start with a question, a praise, or a supplication initiated by mTsho rgyal and are followed by Padmasambhava’s reply. The following chart shows the progression of narrative and non-narrative or speech elements throughout the *Extensive Life*:

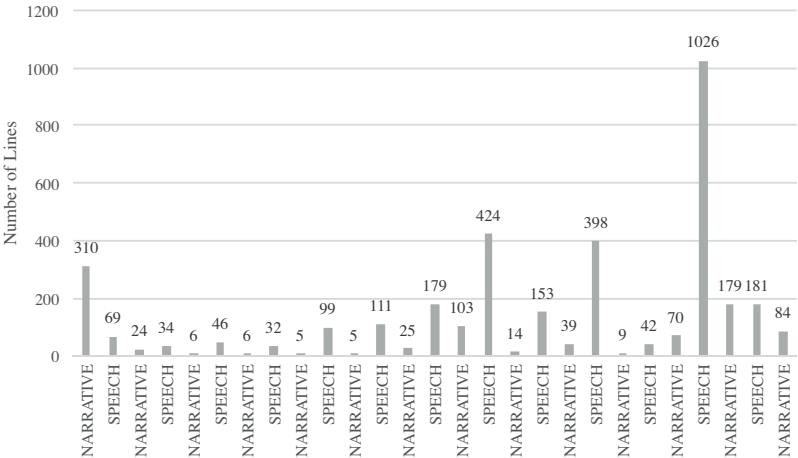


Fig 6.2: Distribution of Narrative and Speech Elements in the *Extensive Life*

the Master left Tibet. The other part depicting the relationship between Ye shes mtsho rgyal and Padmasambhava does not necessarily concern her directly, rather, it narrates stories and teachings of Padmasambhava, herself occasionally appearing in the picture. As for the Dri med kun dga’ and Padma gling pa version, it is divided into seven chapters. Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 7 relate primarily Ye shes mtsho rgyal’s own deeds. These four chapters make up more than eighty per-cent of the text, leaving a relatively small percentage for Padmasambhava or the relationship between Padmasambhava and mTsho rgyal.

154 For example, see Anonymous manuscript: 29a-b, 36b, and 56b ff.

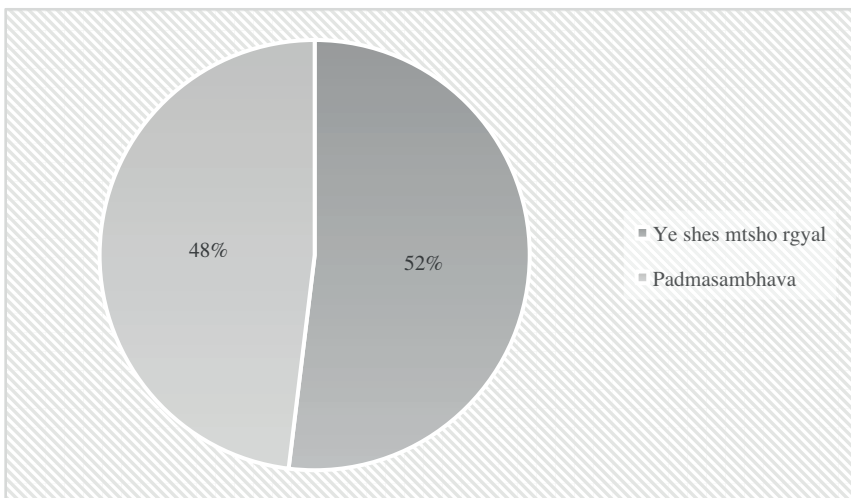


Fig 6.3: Words Spoken by Ye shes mtsho rgyal and Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life*

If we further break down the words spoken by Ye shes mtsho rgyal and Padmasambhava in the non-narrative sections, we can see that in terms of words spoken, the role of Padmasambhava is of equal importance to that of Ye shes mtsho rgyal (fig. 6.3). In comparison, the *Life* of Mandarava, the other main consort of Padmasambhava hailing from Za hor, does not emphasize Padmasambhava's role as much. The first twenty-five chapters take up about two thirds of the text, highlighting Mandarava's previous emanations and her inclination toward the teachings from an early age, while the remaining chapters narrate her meeting with Padmasambhava and their conjoined spiritual journey.<sup>155</sup> In order to account for the dominant role of Padmasambhava in Ye shes mtsho rgyal's life, we need to ask the reason behind composing a *Life* and the purpose this literary genre serves.

155 This *Life* is revealed by bSam gtan gling pa (b.1871?), see bSam gtan gling pa 1973. It is also translated into English in bSam gtan gling pa Phrin las 'gro 'dul Las rab bde ba rtsal, Chonam, and Sangye Khandro 1998.

## The “Theological Logic” of a *rNam Thar*

As seen above, the *Extensive Life* presents an interesting case where Padmasambhava, rather than Ye shes mtsho rgyal, is the main subject of literary focus. What does it tell us about its purpose of composition? Historian Gabrielle Spiegel suggests that one look at the “social logic” of a text, that is, its “site of articulation and its discursive character as articulated ‘logos.’”<sup>156</sup> In the case of the *Extensive Life*, the theological rather than social logic behind the narrative is sought after. Generally, the protagonist, or heroine, of a *rnam thar* has attained enlightenment, for the genre name *rnam par thar pa* itself means “complete liberation.” The theological logic for writing a *rnam thar* or a life requires accumulating favorable materials adding to its subject’s prestige and building up a narrative usually starting from a miraculous birth up to the point of liberation. It is from this perspective that I propose to examine the representations of Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life*.

The first and foremost challenge scholars of Tibetan *Lives* face is the conflict between the Buddhist doctrine of “no self” (Skt. *anātman*) and an implicit “self” or active agent that is present in any biographical accounts. From a theological perspective, Tibetan *Lives* at the same time acclaim and negate individuality. It indeed applauds the unique life story of one person by stressing her or his extraordinary characteristics. However, according to the doctrine of skillful means (Skt. *upāya*), for the sake of leading disciples onto the path of liberation, a teacher inspires by acting out an exemplary life. The notion of individuality is further complicated by the relational personhood of its subject. Jacoby considers the relational selfhood as “an alternative register” usually found in Western autobiographies of women. She argues that this relational selfhood is also characteristic of Tibetan Buddhist *Lives* and is commonly

156 Clark 1998: 5-14, also 30-31.

represented by multiple voices present in a *rnam thar*.<sup>157</sup>

There are also other explanations based on the history of Buddhist practices in Tibet. For example, Gyatso suggests that the emphasis on experience (both psychological and physical) in Tantric Buddhist practices should be taken as the principle reason for the blossoming of hagiographies in Tibet, since it offers reflections on individual experiences that provide valuable insight into personal transformation.<sup>158</sup> Although it is not uncommon for masters to appear or even to take a prominent role in the *rnam thars* of their disciples as a way of legitimization, I would suggest that Padmasambhava's importance in the *Extensive Life* indicates something more. Not only does he authenticate her spiritual progress, thus elevating her status; his presence also functions to weave her into the greater narrative surrounding himself and his twenty-five disciples as well as specifically identifying her as an outstanding disciple and a consort predestined for greatness. In the following sections, I will discuss how the *Extensive Life* adds to Ye shes mtsho rgyal's prominence by looking at the relational aspect between Padmasambhava and his disciples, especially the one between him and Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

157 Jacoby 2014: 12-14, 92-100.

158 Gyatso 1992: 476-477. Gyatso also considers the impulse behind writing a Buddhist autobiography as an interest in historical change as individuals and the use of a readily available "script for life" in her study of the autobiography of 'Jigs med gling pa, see 'Jigs med gling pa Rang byung rdo rje and Janet Gyatso 1998: 109-114.

## Padmasambhava and his Twenty-Five Disciples

In the *Extensive Life*, Ye shes mtsho rgyal is frequently mentioned in events collectively witnessed by a group of disciples of Padmasambhava, making her an indispensable element in the story. Many of these episodes are also seen in other *bKa' thang* literature. For example, an episode of the evil doings of dMar rgyan, one of Khri Srong lde brtsan's queens, in the *Extensive Life* is reminiscent of a similar story in the *bTsun mo bka' thang* as well as in the *bKa' thang gser phreng*.<sup>159</sup> There is another account of the previous lives of Padmasambhava, King Khri Srong lde brtsan, monk Śāntarakṣita, and the minister sBa mi khri gzher as the four sons of the poultry woman who built the famous Boudhanath Stūpa (Bya rong kha shor). This account is similar to the well-known *Liberation upon Hearing: Legend of the Great Stūpa Bya rong kha shor* (*mChod rten chen po bya rung kha shor gyi lo rgyus thos bas grol ba*).<sup>160</sup>

Interestingly, both accounts originally have nothing to do with Ye shes mtsho rgyal. The story of dMar rgyan in the *Btsun mo bka' thang* is about how her unrequited love towards Vairocana led to his exile to rGyal mo Tsha ba rong. Major figures in the building of the Boudhanath Stūpa also do not include Ye shes mtsho rgyal. However, the *Extensive Life* ties these two tales together by adding a scene of confrontation between Ye shes mtsho rgyal and queen dMar rgyan. One time, Padmasambhava asked mTsho rgyal to go to the palace and bring back some gTor ma, she went but was harassed by sTag ra klu gong and his sister dMar rgyan at the door. dMar rgyan offered a poisonous drink to mTsho rgyal, but she

159 O rgyan gling pa 1986: 245 and Sangs rgyas gling pa 2007: 292-3. For a translation of the *Btsun mo bka' thang*, see Laufer 1911. More on this story below.

160 This work is a gTer ma first discovered by Lha btsun sngon mo and rediscovered by Śākya bzang po (15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century). Śākya bzang po is considered the first person to make the literary connection between the Boudhanath Stūpa with the name Bya rung kha shor, Blondeau 1982: 126. A brief sketch of Śākya bzang po's life can be found in Ehrhard 2007: 25-29.

refused to drink it. mTsho rgyal rebuked dMar rgyan with harsh terms, calling her an “ogress (*'dre mo*)” and “a ravenous demoness (*za 'dod srin mo*).” She marked dMar rgyan’s face with a drop of blood, went back to Padmasambhava, and asked about the previous lives of king Khri Srong lde brtsan, dMar rgyan, and sTag ra klu gong.<sup>161</sup> Padmasambhava offered the following account:

The Dharma King Khri Srong lde brtsan had killed a snake in that life. Because [that snake] is queen dMar brgyan [*rgyan*], now it’s [his] karmic turn to be under her sway. He killed a bug [*'bu?*] while it was having its meal [i.e., sucking his blood].

I, the swineherd’s son, made the prayer: “Having been involved in the construction of this stūpa, may I, the miraculously-born, subjugate the three classes of being — gods, demons, and human!” In that life, [he] was me, Padmasambhava; [he] killed an ant at that time, who is sTag ra klu gong. Therefore, in this life [I] have the purpose of subduing [sTag ra klu gong].

The poultry keeper’s son made the prayer: “Having been involved in construction for this stūpa, may I become learned and may there be no teacher surpassing me!” He had killed a black bug with his feet, who in that life was queen dMar rgyan. This is why he needs to bow down before dMar rgyan.

The stableman’s son made a prayer of becoming a minister then. In that life, he had thrown a stone at an elephant, its karma matured on his right ribs [*rtsib ma*].

161 Anonymous manuscript: 56b ff.



That<sup>162</sup> elephant made a prayer to suppress the Buddhist teaching, *ci yang mi ma yin pa'i thabs*. (?) A crow from above [the elephant] made a prayer that “I shall subdue [that elephant].” At a later time, when these animals take rebirth, there are red birthmarks on them. The one reborn as dMar rgyan has a blood drop on her face, the one reborn as sTag ra [klu gong] has a black mark on his neck. [Their past lives] are like that, retain it in your memory!<sup>163</sup>

## The “Human” Side of Padmasambhava

In addition to Ye shes mtsho rgyal's inclusion into the close circle of Padmasambhava's disciples, interactions between her and Padmasambhava in the *Extensive Life* are more intimate. In their relationship as master and consort, this work does not shy away from secret consort practices. Not only does it openly discuss the “secret union (*gsang sbyor*)” in several cases, it also ascribes Ye shes mtsho rgyal's spiritual attainment directly to these practices.<sup>164</sup> In their first meeting, after making proper

162 Following the editors at bLa tung, here I read *dus as des*.

163 Anonymous manuscript: 81a-b: *chos kyi rgyal po Khri Srong lde brtsan yin/ de'i dus su sbrul bsad pa/ btsun mo dmar brgyan yin pa'i da lta dbang shor ba de'i lan chags/ 'bru zas zab dus bsad pa/ phag rdzi bu nga'i smon lam btab pa/ mchod rten 'di la bum pa nges btags nas/ rdzus skyes lha 'dre mi gsum 'dul bar shog/ der nga padma 'byung gnas yin pas/ de'i dus grog ma gcig bsad nas/ stag ra klu gong yin pas 'di skabs 'dul dgongs pa'i don/ bya rdzi bu'i smon lam btab pas/ mchod rten 'di la bum pa nges btags nas/ mkhan du gyur nas mkhan slob nga ba'i lhag po med pa'i smon lam btab pa yin/ rkang zhabs du 'bu nag gcig shi nas/ btsun mor dmar rgyan yod pa'i sa nas/ phyag 'tshal dgos pa'i las rta rdzi bu'i smon lam btab nas/ de dus 'phrin blon byed pa'i smon lam btab nas/ de'i dus glang du rdo brgyab nas rnam smin rtsibs ma g.yas na yod/ glang dus bstan pa bsnuv pa'i smon lam btab nas/ ci yang mi ma yin pa'i thabs/ pho rog thog tu nga'i 'dul ba'i smon lam btab/ dus skabs dud 'gro sprul pa rgyab na sha mtshan dmar po 'dug/ dmar brgyan sprul pa ngo la khrag thig 'dug pa/ stag ras sprul pa ske na nag mtshan 'dug/ de 'dra ba yin te nyams su long//* Note that here the number of sons of the poultry woman and their destined reincarnations differ slightly from the well-known legend, see Lha btsun sngon mo and Śākya bzang po 1978: 9-54.

164 For example, the attainment of infallible memory by Ye shes mtsho rgyal is said to be a direct result of her secret union with Padmasambhava. Anonymous manuscript: 22b-23a.

offerings, Ye shes mtsho rgyal asks Padmasambhava if he has a way to change her into a male body:

Padma asked, “Are you going to practice the teaching that is present, or that which is beyond? Whose consort are you going to be?” Ye shes mtsho rgyal said, “I am going to be your consort. You, the miraculously-born Padma, have great power. I am of the female kind. Do you have a way of changing me into a male body?”

Padma replied, “I am an Indian master who can transform earth into gold. Although I can transform a body born female, this method is [for you to be] inseparably united (*’du ’bral med pa*) [with me], and it is necessary for you to be my consort.”<sup>165</sup>

Unlike his own hagiographies, in the *Extensive Life* we see a more human – more compassionate and humorous – aspect of Padmasambhava. For example, on one occasion, Padmasambhava summoned Mandarava to come to Tibet and meet Ye shes mtsho rgyal:

There was a rumbling sound nearby (*gam?*). Ye shes mtsho rgyal asked, “What is [that]?” “It is [the sound of] Mandarava coming.”

Ye shes mtsho rgyal said, “I have some realization, I’ll see what the Indian girl is like!” U rgyan replied, “You don’t have the realization of rainbow body which is bodiless in [common] perception.” Ye

165 Ibid.: 16b-17a: *padma’i zhal nas/ khyod ’dug pa’i chos gcig byed yin nam/ ’gro ba’i chos gcig byed pa yin/ su’i grogs ni byed pa yin/ ces gsungs pa/ ye shes mtsho rgyal zhal nas kho mo khyod kyi grogs byed pa yin/ khyed rdzus skyes padma’i mthu stobs che ba kho mo’i chos byed pa bud med kyis rigs yin pa pho lus gcig bsgyur ba’i thabs e mchis/ zhus pa/ padma’i zhal nas/ nga rgyal gar bla ma sa gser la bsgyur ba/ bud med skyes pa’i lus bsgyur thub te/ khyod bdag gi grogs byed dgos pa thabs ’du ’bral med par gda/ ces gsungs/*

shes mtsho rgyal thought, *the one who has achieved the rainbow body is better than me.*<sup>166</sup>

After Mandarava arrived, the three of them practised together for ten days. At the end of their practice, both women took turns to bow to each other. Padmasambhava inquired about Mandarava's practice. Ye shes mtsho rgyal offered half of her gold to Mandarava, they exchanged two strands of hair.<sup>167</sup> Then, Padmasambhava chaffed Ye shes mtsho rgyal about her previous conceit:

Mandarava disappeared in rainbow light and left. The master asked Ye shes mtsho rgyal: "The Indian girl and you, the mKhar Lady, these two, who is superior? You both have unwavering meditative concentration, it is indeed time for you to exchange your hair! Which one appears to be better?"

Ye shes mtsho rgyal said: "Master, you know who is better! The Indian lady [hails from] a holy land. [Her] lineage is the royal lineage. She has also attained the genuine rainbow body. I am from Tibet, the uncivilized land of red-faced demons, a land [where people are] wicked and inclined to evil deeds. My life is given by the inferior lineage of mKhar chu za. [My] mental capacity is limited; I have little diligence. Compared to me, the Indian lady is indeed superior!"<sup>168</sup>

166 Ibid.: 53b-54a: *rgam khrol khrol bya ba/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis ci yin zhus/ mandha ra ba yong pa yin gsungs/ ye shes mtsho rgyal nges gcig rtogs nas rgya gar bu mo ci 'dra yin lta zhus/ u rgyan zhal nas/ khyod lta ba'i lus med pa 'ja' lus yin pa'i rtogs med 'dug gsungs/ ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis dgongs nas/ 'ja' lus thob pa kho mo bas lhag pa'i red dgongs/*

167 Ibid.: 54a-55b.

168 Ibid.: 55b: *mandha ra ba 'ja' 'od du yal nas song ye shes mtsho rgyal la slob dpon gyis tshig gsungs pa/ rgya gar bu mo dang khyed mkhar za gnyis gang du lhag/ g.yo ba med pa ting lhan du khyed dbu skra rjes pa'i dus skabs mchis pa/ su lhag po snang gsungs/ ye shes mtsho rgyal zhus pa/ khyed slob dpon gyi gang lhags su shes/ rgya gar gyi bu mo dag pa'i sa/ rigs ni rgyal rigs dngos bcas 'ja' lus thob pa/ nga bod*

At first, mTsho rgyal was not impressed by Mandarava, but she was quick to acknowledge Mandarava's abilities upon seeing her excellent accomplishments. We see a less formal and deified aspect of both Padmasambhava and Ye shes mtsho rgyal: mTsho rgyal is aware of her rivalry with Mandarava but still earnestly appreciates her spiritual attainment; Padmasambhava is being kind and occasionally playful; He guides these two consorts in an impartial way but still teases mTsho rgyal when Mandarava has left.

Another episode of the death of Ye shes mtsho rgyal's father also illustrates their intimate teacher-disciple relationship. After the death of her father, foretold by an ominous dream of her own, Ye shes mtsho rgyal made a request to Padmasambhava, asking him to bring her father back to life. After a brief teaching on impermanence appropriate to the occasion, Padmasambhava sympathized with Ye shes mtsho rgyal's loss. He consoled and encouraged her, saying that she alone could revive her father's life.<sup>169</sup> Their intimacy and mutual affection persist throughout the *Extensive Life*: When Padmasambhava told mTsho rgyal he is leaving, she sang a *mgur* of sadness, cried till she was choked with tears, and placed her head on his lap. He is also said to have shed tears while comforting her.<sup>170</sup> These representations of Padmasambhava as the compassionate and encouraging master and Ye shes mtsho rgyal as an inquisitive and determined disciple give endorsement to her identity as a disciple and a consort of Padmasambhava, with whom she shares a special connection.

kyi yul sa ngan pa srin po gdong dmar| dge med sdig la dad pa'i sa nas| tsho byed mkhar chu za rigs  
dman pa| spros pa chung ba| nan tan med pa| nga ba'i rgya gar bu mo lhag po 'dug|

169 Ibid.: 113a ff.

170 Ibid.: 116b-118b.

## Concluding Remarks

The preponderance of Padmasambhava fulfills a threefold purpose in the *Extensive Life*. First, his special relationship with Ye shes mtsho rgyal attests to her spiritual eminence in general. His male gender is also used to complement her own female identity in their heterosexual consort relationship, as the *Extensive Life* considers Ye shes mtsho rgyal's role as his consort an essential part in her spiritual pursuit. Moreover, in terms of the broader image of Padmasambhava that incorporates his twenty-five disciples, by including mTsho rgyal into this constellation of enlightened personalities and their greater narrative, it adds to her significance. The multiple voices in the *Extensive Life* attest to her relational selfhood, which is a unique aspect of the theological logic of Tibetan Buddhist *rnam thars*. It is by bringing Padmasambhava into the story and accentuating his role in her journey that Ye shes mtsho rgyal is made the predestined disciple and consort of Padmasambhava and, ultimately, the “mother of Tibet.”

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Part Three:  
Padmasambhava: Other Aspects



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