

**An Examination of the Relationship between
the Religious Heritage and the Natural Environment
of the Tibetan Buddhist Hidden Land called Pemakö**

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Declaration

The candidate confirms that the submitted work is her own and that she has given appropriate credit where reference has been made to the work of others.

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This thesis is dedicated to my Dad.

Abstract

Environmentalists often turn to the world's religions for guidance in conservation theory. Buddhism is frequently viewed as a religious tradition that embraces attitudes conducive to the preservation of nature. In contribution to scholarly dialogue, my doctoral thesis explores Tibetan Buddhist perspectives on the treatment of the natural environment. My research focusses on the Tibetan Buddhist religious culture of the sacred geography known as Pemakö.

My thesis is guided by two principal research questions: the first asks about the nature of the relationship between Pemakö's religious narrative and its environment. In response, I initially explore how practitioners have related historically to the region's landscape with an analysis of the Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* and other relevant scripture. Through ethnographic research I then study the narratives of recent pilgrims to the region. The second research question enquires about the implications of this relationship for Pemakö's environment, and whether the Tibetan Buddhist theory that supports the religious tradition could have any influence on conservation of Pemakö's ecosystems.

My research reveals that planned construction of hydro-electric dams and existing trans-boundary tensions in Pemakö could conceivably cause widespread damage to the environment. The most immediate threat to Pemakö's ecosystems, however, stems from local Tibetan Buddhist communities' farming, hunting and poaching practices. Unlike contemporary Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist discourse that accentuates compassion in environmental activism, my study demonstrates that practitioner faith in the mythology surrounding Pemakö defines the spiritual relationship to the landscape. I show that this belief serves soteriological aims rather than instilling any inherent reverence for nature. I turn to two conservation projects from China and India that focus on the endangered snow leopard to demonstrate that a civic environmentalist approach to local conservation could incorporate Pemakö's religious narrative to inform the region's continued existence as a sacred geography.

Table of Contents

Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	iv
Table of Contents	v
Note to the use of Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pāli Language	xi
List of figures	xii

Introduction

Background to this Thesis and Guiding Research Questions	1
Setting the Context for a Study of Pemakö: The Scope and Concepts of this Study ...	5
Conclusion	18

Chapter One: Research Methodology and Methods for my Study of Pemakö

Introduction	20
Phenomenology of Religion: Consensus, Contentions and my Study of Pemakö.....	21
Etic-Emic Debates in Religious Studies	27
Methods	31
Translation and Analysis of <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	31
Conducting and Analysing Interviews with Pemakö Pilgrims	34
Conclusion	37

Chapter Two: Pemakö's Natural Environment and Prevailing Environmental Threats

Introduction	38
The Data Collection Process for this Synthesis	39
Pemakö's Natural Environment	40
Geography	40
Topography	42
Climate	44
Flora	45
Fauna	46
Environmental Threats in Pemakö	47
Hydro-electric Dam Construction on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Pemakö ..	47
Trans-boundary Disputes	50
More Recent Developments	51
Infrastructure Expansion	52
The Effects of Dams and Disputes on Pemakö's Environment	53
The Human Factor as a Significant Environmental Threat in Pemakö	55
Conclusion	57

Chapter Three: Setting the Context for an Analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö*

Introduction	59
The Tibetan Landscape and Territory	59
Tibet's Pre-Buddhist Population	61
Territorial, Political and Religious Developments in Tibet from the Eighth to the Seventeenth Centuries CE	62

The Life and Times of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, Revealer of <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	66
The Tibetan Buddhist <i>Gter ma</i> Tradition: Theory and Practice of Treasure Revelation .	69
History of the Treasure Tradition	69
The Transmission Process and Classification of Treasure Texts	71
The Role of the Treasure Revealer	72
The Mythology and Politics of Hidden Lands	76
Hidden Lands in the Bon and Tibetan Buddhist Traditions	76
Spiritual Significance of the Tibetan Buddhist Hidden Land Narrative	77
Hidden Lands as Political Haven and Missionary Objective	79
Treasure Revelation and the Hidden Land of Pemakö:	
The Historical and Literary Context	80
Innovations in the Conception of Pemakö as a Hidden Land	80
Treasure Revealers and Treasure Texts Affiliated with Pemakö	82
Conclusion	88
Chapter Four: An Analysis of <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>: <i>A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö</i>	
Introduction	89
Primary Sources that Support this Analysis	90
The Role of Prophecy in <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	91
The Text-Immanent Setting: Padmasambhava and his Audience in <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	98
The Role of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rjein <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	101
Descriptions of Pemakö at the Levels of Ordinary Perception in <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	105
Geography and Sacred Sites	105
Topography	109

Flora and Fauna	114
<i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i> and the Perception of Pemakö through <i>Dag Snang</i> , or Pure Vision	117
The Message of Pemakö in <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing</i>	126
Conclusion	127

**Chapter Five: Guidebooks, Sacred Geography and Pilgrimage Ritual
in Contemporary Pemakö**

Introduction	128
The Importance of Tibetan Pilgrimage Literature in Modern Practice	128
The Contemporary Role of Hidden Lands in Tibetan Buddhist Culture and in Pemakö	132
Pilgrimage Sites in Pemakö: Then and Now	134
Perceptions of the Environment in Pemakö: An Account of Recent Pilgrimage Experiences	142
Interviews: People and Procedure	142
Stories of Landscape	144
Reflections on Pilgrimage	149
Spiritual Interpretations	151
Faith as Foundation: Conviction in the Power of Padmasambhava	154
Conclusion	155

Chapter Six: Tibetan Buddhist Environmentalism in Pemakö

Introduction	157
The Nature of the Relationship between the Religious Culture and the Natural Environment in Pemakö	159
What Scripture and Ritual Reveal about Attitudes towards the Environment in Pemakö: The Role of Faith	159
Research on Recent Treatment of the Environment in Pemakö	163

Tibetan Buddhist Environmentalism	168
Religious Environmentalism: Why Buddhism?	168
Tibetan Buddhist Environmentalism: Teachers, Activism and the Role of Compassion	170
The Problem with Compassion in Religious Environmentalism and the Myth of Primitive Ecological Wisdom	173
The Compassion of Religion and Environmentalism	173
Buddhism as a Source for Environmentalism: The Myth of Primitive Ecological Wisdom, Green Tibetans and the ‘Ecologisation’ of Buddhist Theory	175
Faith, Compassion and Environmentalism in Pemakö	179
Top-Down Strategies, Grassroots Movements and a Civic Environmentalist Approach to Conservation in Pemakö	182
Top-Down Strategies versus Grassroots Movements in Environmentalism: Trends in India and China	182
Civic Environmentalism: A Case for Pemakö	186
Conclusion	189
 Conclusion	
Introduction	191
Achieving Research Aims Phenomenologically	191
Research Questions and Conclusions	195
Contributions of this Study	201
Research Limitations and Challenges	202
Areas of Future Research	203
Final Thoughts on the Pemakö Mythology and Ecology	204

Bibliography

Primary Sources	205
Secondary Sources	207

Appendices

A: Additional Primary Sources	230
B: Interview Information Sheet – English	231
C: Interview Information Sheet – Tibetan.....	232
D: Participant Consent Form – English.....	233
E: Participant Consent Form – Tibetan.....	234
F: Interview Record Sheet.....	235
G: <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö</i> English Translation	236
H: <i>Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö</i> Tibetan Text	250
I: Glossary and Pronunciation Guide	284

Note to the Use of Tibetan, Sanskrit and Pāli Language in the Thesis

I have opted for the following strategy in the use of Tibetan terminology in this thesis:

Most Tibetan terms and proper names have been written in the Wylie format. This includes Tibetan Buddhist terminology, Tibetan colloquial language, places, authors of primary and some secondary sources and titles of works. Many terms in the thesis are first indicated in English followed by the Wylie format of the Tibetan word in parentheses. For Tibetan language terms and names that are more familiar to English speakers, I have used the common English spelling (for example, ‘Karmapa’ or ‘Pemakö’, rather than ‘Karma pa’ or ‘Padma bkod’). In Chapter Five, I have opted for an English spelling of interviewee pseudonyms to facilitate easier pronunciation. In referencing Tibetan authors, I have adopted the spelling of their name used in the source material.

I have included a glossary for Tibetan terminology in Appendix I. Here I indicate first the Wylie spelling, then spelling to facilitate English pronunciation and the English translation. As part of the glossary, I have included a pronunciation guide for Tibetan proper names with the Wylie form of Tibetan proper names found in the thesis. The Wylie form is followed by their English rendition.

Sanskrit or Pāli terminology is written using the appropriate diacritical marks for each language. These are also included in the glossary in Appendix I next to their Tibetan and English translation where appropriate.

Any translations from Tibetan into English are my own, unless otherwise referenced.

List of Figures

Figure One:	Map of Pemaikö in China and India	41
Figure Two:	Map of the Pemaikö Region	42
Figure Three:	Map of the Pemaikö Topography	44
Figure Four:	Map of Dam Construction in Pemaikö	50
Figure Five:	Map of the Tibetan Territory	61
Figure Six:	Treasure Revealer and Pilgrimage Areas in Pemaikö	141

Introduction

Background to this Thesis and Guiding Research Questions

This doctoral thesis contributes to scholarly dialogue about the relationship between environmental conservation theory and practice. Among the religious traditions said to offer ‘green’ guidance, Buddhism has often been promoted as particularly environmentally friendly (Badiner, 1990). Nevertheless, whether Buddhist theory prescribes any environmental ethic remains a topic of debate (Keown, 2007). The sanctity of human and animal life, as well as the moral requirement of Buddhist lay practitioners and monastics to honour sentient beings, are evident across the array of Buddhist teachings. The biological processes of ecosystems that emphasise the interdependence of “biological diversity . . . and the understanding that animate and inanimate beings are parts of a whole” have been compared to Buddhist ontology and epistemology (Ogyen Trinley Dorje, 2011, p. 1094; Waldron, 2000). Buddhist spiritual leaders, such as the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa (Ogyen Trinley Dorje, 2011, p. 1094), emphasise how the impetus behind this knowledge, in part also understood as ‘wisdom’ in Buddhist thought, is in fact compassion for all living beings. Compassion is frequently viewed as a foundation for environmentally friendly behaviour, as is evident in the viewpoints of numerous contemporary Buddhist teachers (GBCCC, 2015, p. 1).¹

My research in this doctoral thesis focusses specifically on the potential of Tibetan Buddhist ideals, such as wisdom or compassion, to contribute to the development and implementation of environmental conservation policy. As Tomalin (2009, p. 5) cautions, part of current religious environmentalism is the “myth of primitive ecological wisdom”, or the often romanticised belief that religions encompass guidelines for the preservation of a believer’s natural surroundings. This assumption that religions prescribe environmentally

¹The GBCCC is the Global Buddhist Collective on Climate Change.

friendly behaviour has contributed to misinterpretations of spiritual attitudes towards the natural surroundings. This supposition, in turn, hinders effective approaches to the integration of religious ideals with conservation strategies. Loy (2015, p. 76) suggests that “One of the big challenges for contemporary Buddhism is to determine in what ways its fundamental worldview . . . can contribute to . . . that developing [environmental] story”. Within the realm of Tibetan Buddhism, however, I question the viability of compassion, for example, as a realistic, comprehensive foundation for ecological management. In my view, a generalised endorsement of this ideal as a means to environmental protection offers neither a culturally sensitive nor scientifically tangible strategy for global or even localised environmental concerns.

My personal interest in Tibetan Buddhism is grounded in the tradition’s practical relevance to contemporary socio-political issues. For example, an understanding of the dynamics of a Tibetan Buddhist interpretation of wisdom and compassion offers a potential framework for ‘emotionally intelligent’ interaction with other human and non-human beings. Still, are there ideals in Tibetan Buddhist doctrine and practice that have a wider application to humanity’s current circumstances, such as the deterioration of the Earth’s environment? For example, is there a historical or contemporary relationship between Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and their natural environment that illustrates deliberate preservation of surrounding ecosystems? If there is, what does this look like and what would be the implications of such a relationship for environmental conservation?

In investigation of these queries, my research in this thesis includes a study of a specific Tibetan Buddhist group of practitioners in order to determine how the members of that group actually relate to their surrounding natural environment through their religious beliefs. In addition, I would like to explore whether these religious beliefs consider the ecological well-being of the landscape to which they relate. I have chosen to focus my research on an area in

the eastern Himalayas known as Pemakö, which is one of the most famous geographies deemed ‘sacred’ in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, and is also understood as a ‘hidden land’. Legends of the Indian pandit known as Padmasambhava form the basis of the region’s religious culture. The Tibetan Buddhist narrative describes how, in the eighth century CE, Padmasambhava travelled through many areas of the Himalayas on his way to Tibet on a quest to subdue earthly spirits considered an impediment to the cultivation of Buddhism (Snellgrove and Richardson, 2003, p. 97). He is said to have spent time in Pemakö, and Tibetan Buddhist practitioners believe that his spiritual potency imbues the region’s natural setting. Furthermore, this ‘energy’ in Pemakö allegedly ensures swift enlightenment to anyone who ventures there (Rig ‘dzin Bdud ‘dul rdo rje. 1615–1672b, vv. 363–365). Since the revelation of Pemakö as a ‘hidden land’ in the 1500s, the region has provided a haven for Tibetan political refugees, Buddhist masters and pilgrims alike (Grothmann, 2012, pp. 29, 30, 34).

Pemakö is nestled in the eastern Himalayan syntaxis of the Namche Barwa Massif.² The Yarlung Tsangpo River cuts through the region in a sharp curvature known as the Big Bend. Water, mountains and valleys create a dramatic geophysical and topographical landscape that is home to some of the world’s most biodiverse ecosystems (Xu et al., 2009, p. 521). In recent years the Yarlung Tsangpo has been the subject of efforts to harness its power through hydro-electric dams. The river’s steepest inclines are in Pemakö, where two Chinese dam projects could be the world’s largest (Next Big Future, 2012). The Pemakö region straddles the Sino-Indian border, which has long been the subject of dispute between the two nations (Lamb, 1966). Tensions have resulted in the breakdown of political relations and the build-up of territorial infrastructure (Gao, 2014; GOIMHA, 2014, pp. 8–11; Lang, 2014).³ In the face of

²A syntaxis is the junction of mountain ranges at a single point (Yan et al., 2004, p. 197). A massif is a “large topographic feature” such as a group of mountains (Allaby, 2013).

³GOIMHA is the Government of India: Ministry of Home Affairs.

extensive environmental transformation, the ecosystems and Buddhist tradition native to the region could undergo significant alteration.

Concurrent with my earlier queries concerning the potential of Tibetan Buddhist theory to inform environmental conservation efforts, the following questions guide the course of my research on Pemakö:

1. What is the nature of the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist culture and the natural environment in Pemakö?
2. What are the implications of this relationship, if any, to the conservation of the Pemakö landscape?

Because I locate the answers to these questions in the field of religious studies, as I detail in **Chapter One**, I rely on a methodology that seeks to explore the way an object appears to an individual or community. Tibetan Buddhism incorporates an experiential understanding of its religious concepts – for example, an experiential understanding of ‘the nature of reality’ supersedes any conceptual posturing; thus, I apply a phenomenological approach to the analysis of primary data that exemplifies the perspective of Tibetan Buddhists as they relate spiritually to Pemakö’s environment. My methodological strategy in this thesis, then, explores Tibetan Buddhist scripture and ethnographic research to discover the essential character of practitioner attitudes towards the Pemakö landscape.

Chapter Two of my thesis is a synthesis of data about Pemakö’s natural environment and current ecological challenges. As I describe in this second chapter, this information contextualises my study by illustrating the environmental background against which to envision the development of the region’s religious culture. In addition, Chapter Two offers descriptions of environmental threats to Pemakö; familiarisation with these issues is necessary for my discussions surrounding the second research question concerning the potential influence Tibetan Buddhist thought in Pemakö may have on the preservation of its natural environment.

In the subsequent chapter section, I explain in more detail my conceptual outline of thesis chapters; however, before doing so, I will explain how Chapters Three through Six respond to my research questions. In **Chapter Three** I begin my investigation of the first research question by locating Pemakö's hidden land status within its historical, socio-political development. In **Chapter Four** this study is followed by an analysis of scripture that is specific to the Pemakö religious narrative. As such, I also provide a historical picture of the region's landscape. I expand this view in **Chapter Five** by evaluating interviews with contemporary Tibetan Buddhist practitioners that have personal experience in Pemakö. The information from these three chapters provides insight into the dynamics of the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist culture and Pemakö's natural environment.

In answer to my second research question, in **Chapter Six** I consider concepts I have already briefly discussed in this introduction: does Buddhism offer a 'superior' approach to environmental conservation as compared to other religious traditions and avowed to by many religious environmentalists? More specifically, is the Tibetan Buddhist vision of wisdom and compassion enough to motivate believers to find innovative approaches to protect and nourish their natural surroundings? Do Tibetan Buddhists embrace environmentally friendly behaviour simply by virtue of their religious beliefs? Is this evident in Pemakö? These are some of the queries I consider in Chapter Six in my analysis of the implications of any relationship between Tibetan Buddhist ideals in Pemakö and the environment. The following review of literature elaborates upon the concepts that have guided my study, as well as how these ideas find resonance with other scholarly investigations of similar subject matter.

***Setting the Context for a Study of Pemakö:
The Scope and Concepts of this Study***

As I have indicated earlier, Chapter One outlines the methodological perspective I apply to this thesis; Chapter Two summarises literature pertaining to Pemakö's natural environment. I do

not include a synopsis of these chapters in this section, but begin by summarising the scope and concepts of **Chapter Three**. The purpose of the chapter is to set the background against which I conduct my analysis in Chapter Four of the Tibetan Buddhist text entitled *Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö*. Chapter Three reviews literature that contextualises the study of this scripture about Pemakö, and includes concepts that guide the progression of my thesis. For example, in the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, Pemakö's natural environment is considered a mystical Pure Land. Historically, the Tibetan Buddhist view of the environment finds many elements in common with the ancient Bon tradition, believed a precursor to the introduction of Indian Buddhism to Tibet. Bon is infused with elements of shamanistic belief and ritual, characteristics also found in Tibetan Buddhism (Samuel, 1993, pp. 437–439). The Tibetan plateau presents a harsh, and in many places, uninhabitable landscape. Bon practitioners view nature as a force to be subjugated, with a pantheon of resident deities to either placate or conquer (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1956, p. vii). Likewise, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition maintains that the topography is the abode of ethereal beings both ferocious and placid. Ramble (2007, p. 133) asserts that uncultivated nature is tamed and rendered divine, however, only “once it has been included within the sphere of Buddhist (or Bon) influence”. As I point out in Chapter Three, perhaps the original attraction of Pemakö as a sacred geography was its natural savageness and the level of spiritual purity required to subdue any resident, unearthly presences.

A second concept I consider in Chapter Three is the development of sacred geography legends grounded in stories surrounding the original ‘tamer’ of these lands, the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava.⁴ Reynolds ([n.d.], p. 31) states that shamanistic aspects of Tibetan

⁴Tantra appeared in India in the early eighth century (Powers, 2007, p. 252). When tantric ritual was first introduced to Tibet in the late eighth century, it was transmitted from an already well-established Indian tradition. Generally, tantra has various stages of externally and internally oriented meditative practices that are thought to accelerate the practitioner's pursuit of complete enlightenment.

Buddhism root human existence in nature. Bernbaum (1989, p. 31) explains that Tibetan attitudes towards the environment “accept the miraculous and the supernatural as part of the natural order of things”. As a result, Tibetans tend to be open to the real possibility of not only mysterious forces in a landscape deemed sacred, but also the influence of religious symbolism perceived in the topography. Tibet’s mundane geography is considered intensely meaningful due to its association with important symbols found in tantric Buddhism (Huber, 2007, p. 239). Padmasambhava’s tantric ‘magic’ was an intrinsic part of the process of designating the mountains, caves, water and other earthly sites in specific geographies as elements of an invisible, esoteric landscape (Bernbaum, 1989, p. 139). The idea of these hidden lands, or *sbas yul*, became an indelible part of the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, and one that offered secular and spiritual refuge to practitioners. Furthermore, sacred geographies connected practitioners to memories of an era that supposedly embraced the spiritual solace offered by Guru Padmasambhava.

If, however, a traveller ventured to such a remote region without adequate clarity of mind, a sacred geography would appear barren with no exceptional qualities. Another concept in Chapter Three appears in my exploration of how an important class of religious experts known as Treasure revealers fostered the disclosure of such landscapes to others. Found in both the Bon and Tibetan Buddhist traditions, their supposed clairvoyance allowed them to not only ‘see’ these landscapes, but also to divulge ‘secret’ information about them. Hidden scripture, also known as Treasure literature, is an essential part of this revelatory tradition (Reynolds, [n.d.], p. 9). As Huber (2007, p. 235) describes, Treasure texts, or *gter ma*, in the form of guidebooks to these hidden lands advertised the sanctity of sites; in the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, this scripture also promoted the faith that played a significant role in controlling and shaping the lives of believers. Chapter Three details the process that designates Treasure

revealer and revealed, one that again dates the originator of this Tibetan Buddhist tradition back to Guru Padmasambhava.

'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899) was a Tibetan Buddhist scholar who, in his vast compilation of Treasure texts, lauded the abilities of many gifted Treasure revealers (Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye, Yeshe Gyamtso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2011). Still, as Huber (2007, pp. 240–241) points out, there are problems in the interpretation of sites an adept may have deemed holy: are they to be understood as temporary manifestations of the mind, or permanent projects of a celestial abode on Earth? More importantly, why are only a significant few privy to the perception of these sacred realities and to their designation as such? Considering the political ramifications generated through the identification of hidden lands by Treasure revealers, closer examination of this question sheds light on the natural environment in terms of a sacred geography narrative. Ramble (1995, p. 93) specifies that temporal power may indeed provide a vehicle for religious interests in a particular area; nevertheless, spiritual authority over key sacred sites may also be translated into political clout. Thus, as I demonstrate in Chapter Three, the revealers of invisible territories may have devoted their efforts to these locations because of the 'space' offered to legitimise their own religious beliefs and to substantiate their political power within a specific socio-geographical sphere of influence.

These concepts found in Chapter Three guide my study of the developmental trajectory of religious attitudes towards the Pemakö landscape, and lay the foundation for ideas woven throughout my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* in **Chapter Four**. This chapter begins by examining the role of prophecy in Tibetan Buddhist scripture. Most of the primary sources used in my thesis, including *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, have elements of predictions about the future of Tibet. Gyatso (1996, p. 151) theorises that the practice of concealing these texts is traceable to earlier Bon customs, in which valuable information was hidden as a protective

measure against looting. This process may have then been integrated into the Padmasambhava narrative, in which teachings were said to have been concealed and predestined for rediscovery during ‘degenerate times’. Revelatory ritual gradually became more dramatic, and the simple act of digging up the Treasure was accompanied by “visionary inspiration [and] memories of past lives” (p. 152).

Even though Treasure literature is usually overlaid with the fantastical, some scholars emphasise that the accounts are important for understanding surrounding historical events (Gyatso, 1986, p. 11; Hirshberg, 2016, p. 139). Thus, in the context of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, prophecy statements are a window through which to view perceptions of the environment in Pemakö during the time of the revealer, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje. As I detail in Chapter Four, he likely used revelations to legitimise his religious and secular positioning in relation to his peers and rivals. This idea is also evident in the text immanent setting, which includes mention of Tibetan Buddhist adepts that connect to Bdud 'dul rdo rje's contemporaries with significant religio-political influence. Scholars have argued that the Treasure tradition was a response to a desire for reconnection to Tibet's Imperial Age during the eighth century CE, exemplifying another link to Padmasambhava (Tucci, 1949, p. 112).

Chapter Four then turns its focus to the historical experience of Pemakö ‘spirituality’ based on the descriptions of the environment in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. I first examine how this *gter ma* illustrates the physical characteristics of Pemakö. I support these examples through citations from similar scripture that include commentary about the region's landscape. My analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is complementary to scholarly research about, for example, the role of symbolism applied to features of the Pemakö landscape such as its mountains or lakes (Diemberger, 1997; Huber, 1999a, 1999b). In addition, as demonstrated in studies by Kvaerne ([n.d.]) and Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), I explore the influence of traditional perceptions of ethereal beings as they present themselves in Bdud 'dul rdo rje's

account. These concepts exemplify the extensive interconnection between religious thought and perceptions of the environment that were common at the advent of the Pemakö hidden land narrative. They also reflect my earlier reports in Chapter Three of how these perspectives developed.

The subsequent section of Chapter Four mirrors the subtle interpretation of Pemakö's ethereal landscape presented in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. I first discuss the meaning of Pure Vision and Pure Appearance in the context of Tibetan Buddhism: the removal of mental obscurations is said to allow an observer to perceive the 'secret essence' of the natural surroundings, a quality attributed to the advanced spiritual prowess of Treasure revealers. I then exemplify through textual reference how the invisible Pemakö landscape has appeared to Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje. In correspondence with ideas about the spiritual authority wielded by alleged Treasure revealers, the *gter ston* presents Pemakö as an earthly yet subliminal representation of the path to enlightenment. Research shows that Tibetans' relationship to their natural surroundings is grounded in a belief in the sanctity of holy beings and their presence in a specific area, be it a mountain, lake or cave (Bernbaum, 1985, pp. 110–118; McDougal, 2016; Stutchbury, 1999, p. 156). I show how *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* advocates this understanding by extolling on the pure virtues of its topography, flora and fauna perceptible only to the blessed, and representative of tantric ideas about the path to complete enlightenment. A core concept within this entire Tibetan Buddhist narrative is the requisite faith in the entire Padmasambhava mythology that promotes these interpretations.

Chapter Five shifts from the examination of historical perceptions of Pemakö's environment to contemporary interpretations. I first examine the role of guidebooks in current Tibetan Buddhist culture and how their content mirrors modern interpretations of sacred geography. For example, Sga rje khams sprul rin po che (1927–present) is a Treasure revealer from Khams, who during his escape from Tibet in the 1950s, led pilgrims through holy sites in

upper Pemakö ('Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009). He revelled at the beauty and richness of the natural landscape, and pondered the power of resident deities supposedly inhabiting the region (pp. 187–205). In addition to revealing his 'own' compositions, Khams sprul rin po che 'rediscovered' Treasure revelations originally composed by the Treasure revealer known as Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870). Mchog gyur gling pa also 'authored' guidebooks about Pemakö that delighted in the mystical qualities of the landscape.⁵ A subsequent *gter ston* named Drag snags gling pa (1871–1929) revealed Treasure texts specifically about lower Pemakö.⁶ Mchog gyur gling pa provided visionary information about Pemakö to believers, as illustrated by Khams sprul rin po che in his autobiography. Drag snags gling pa gave insights into the natural environment that have been interpreted by Tibetan Buddhist adepts such as O rgyan bstan 'dzin rin po che (1950s–present), who regularly leads his followers through holy sites in Pemakö (Esler, 2007). Themes found in the interpretations of the environment in these texts are similar to those of revelations from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: the environment of Pemakö is abundant in natural wealth, permeated by deities good and evil and completely infused with the esoteric energy of Padmasambhava. The guidebooks that lead the faithful still instil followers with wonder at these miraculous qualities and, moreover, with conviction in the Pemakö narrative.

Ramble (2007, p. 133) has summarised how “a site becomes sacred thanks to the action of a saint or wonder worker”. In Chapter Five, I estimate the revelatory areas of several Pemakö Treasure revealers, which encompass holy destinations these adepts were said to have opened. Generally, the guides composed by these *gter stons* have a much deeper meaning than to show the exact geographical location of sites and routes alone: in the interplay of written guide and oral traditions, a conscious effort is made to show the beneficial effects of a victorious Buddhist

⁵See primary sources: Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870a, b and c.

⁶See primary sources: Drag snags gling pa, 1871–1929a and b.

tradition over older demons and deities (Van Spengen, 1998, p. 38). This ideal of triumph becomes apparent in my geographical outline of the ‘sphere of influence’ of the various Treasure revealers in relationship to their personal backgrounds. I also demonstrate how the flexibility of the Treasure and hidden land narratives allowed for the expansion of sacred areas and renewed designation of holy sites in Pemakö depending upon a revealer’s contemporaneous socio-political circumstances. Still, even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the revealed guidebooks and the hidden lands to which these texts referred facilitated a view towards an environment over which Padmasambhava presumably had and still has a mystical jurisdiction.

Pilgrimage through these sacred sites is a personal endeavour meant to purify sin and accumulate merit, and one that is equally personal in its interpretation. MacDonald (1998, p. ix) also emphasises that “what is in the relevant guidebooks is not always an adequate account of the local landscape, . . . nor is it a reliable guide to pilgrims’ ritual behaviour”. Texts must be adjusted to the cultural context of their creation and their use. McKay’s (1998, p. 3) research has also shown that sacred destinations become subject to meanings in dependence upon individual situations. The pilgrims, their experiences and understandings of their journey, as well as pilgrimage sites themselves, must be seen against an ever-changing backdrop of politics, economics and issues of power and authority. The pilgrim is part of a religious phenomenon, but also of a socio-religious and political system in constant flux (pp. 2–3).

It is therefore difficult to formulate generalisations about pilgrims’ religious experience at any given site. For example, Havnevik (1998, p. 86) reports that the female pilgrim Lo chen rin po che (1865–1951) prioritised communication with what she conceived as sacred during her journeys. Van Spengen (1998, p. 49) maintains that the vital experience of pilgrimage is the vulnerability that arises through subjection to adverse political, geographical and material conditions facing the pilgrim. The interviews I conducted with Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims to

Pemakö spanned a diverse group of lay practitioners and monastics, which fostered an assortment of different viewpoints. The latter half of Chapter Five recounts their individual interpretations of their experiences in Pemakö, which simultaneously reflected traditional and contemporary versions of the landscape. What presented itself as a core characteristic of their experience was not the influence of their socio-religious or political situation, or the sanctity or vulnerability of pilgrimage ritual, but the belief in the entire Pemakö narrative because it is grounded in Padmasambhava's mythology.

In **Chapter Six** I focus on possible responses to the second research question: what are the implications of the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist culture and the natural environment in Pemakö, if any, to the conservation of the region's landscape? In answer to this question, I begin the chapter with a summary of what scripture and ritual have revealed about the nature of the relationship between the religious culture and environment in Pemakö. My research on the historical Pemakö narrative has revealed that faith in Guru Padmasambhava is the impetus behind the spiritual connection to the region's environment. Believers are convinced of his power that permeates the landscape, hidden lands are the repository of his ancient teachings and the topography is home to deities he has tamed into obedience. Historically, then, the Pemakö landscape has offered hope to Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in search of secular and soteriological refuge based on Padmasambhava's alleged promises to "reveal a hidden land, within which all things are completely extraordinary" (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 10–11). I also note how in Chapter Five, I have shown that the element of faith is evident in contemporary pilgrimage ritual to Pemakö, and how this influences practitioners' interactions with the region's landscape.

Tibetan literature about the role of faith in Tibetan Buddhism maintains that it is the doorway to refuge in the Buddhist teachings (Patrul Rinpoche, 2011, p. 171). Religious instructions advocate "utter delight in spiritual masters" and "the devoted interest to follow

[their] ideals” (Chos dbyins stobs ldan rdo rje and Ngawang Xangpo, 2015, p. 121). I maintain that faith in Padmasambhava is the core characteristic of the relationship between the spiritual tradition and natural environment in Pemakö. It was, in fact, the conviction in his persona that allowed the entire hidden land and Treasure mythology to arise.

I then return to my summary in Chapter Two of the most recent data about Tibetan Buddhist interaction with the environment in Pemakö. Congruent with arguments made by Tomalin (2009) and Milton (1996), the hunting and poaching exercised by residents of the region does not exemplify any inherent environmental friendliness. In Chapter Six I offer possible explanations for this apparent deviation from ‘Buddhist behavioural norms’, and tentatively conclude that their actions are perhaps based on their faith in the power of Pemakö. In other words, because Padmasambhava has promised that anyone who enters the region, or even takes seven steps in its direction, is sure to reach enlightenment, there is consequently no real need to take heed of compassionate action towards the natural surroundings. One who has ventured to Pemakö in a sense becomes impervious to the consequences of negative actions such as killing or causing the death of other sentient beings.

I continue this chapter by focussing on the development of religious environmentalism. The link between religion and ecology began its development in the mid-twentieth century. As Berry (2013, p. 454) summarises, the ideas of scholars during this era brought attention “to the role of myth in shaping environmental behaviors” and “to the bearing of religious thought on the articulation of an environmental ethic”. Religious environmental discourse has progressively encouraged a “culturally sensitive” and “ethically grounded” relationship to the earth (Tucker, 2015, p. 956). In his seminal paper on the roots of the current environmental crisis, Lynn White, Jr. (1967, p. 1206) proposed that Christianity has incited the exploitation of nature “in a mood of indifference”. He (1967, p. 1207) has suggested, “What we do about

ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship”. The world religions may indeed have important contributions to make to these efforts (Tucker and Grim, 2016, pp. 1–3).

Historically, religions have both limited and influenced social change, largely based on sets of ‘moral guidelines’ within their respective doctrines. These instructions may or may not comment explicitly on the treatment of the environment. Nevertheless, secular environmental activists often concur with White’s conclusions about Christianity as the source of modern environmental crises, consequently orienting their environmental theory towards eastern religious traditions (Callicott and Ames, 1989, p. 7). This diversion away from Christian orthodoxy assumes that ‘other’ religions embrace a lifestyle that is inherently ‘Earth-friendly’. As I have described earlier in this introductory chapter, the existence of ‘nature religions’, or spiritual traditions that allegedly value the intrinsic sacredness of nature, is typically taken as proof that certain communities are inherently environmentally friendly (Tomalin, 2009, p. 5). According to Milton (1996, p. 109), this assumption, however, is an interpretation based on “an unquestioning acceptance of ‘the myth of primitive ecological wisdom’”. The disadvantage of these perspectives is that they limit any understanding of the ways in which people actually interact with their environment (p. 133).

Buddhism is one religion from which western environmentalists have taken inspiration. As I note in Chapter Six, scripture in both early Buddhism and later Mahāyāna literature describes attitudes and behavioural guidelines encouraging respect for sentient beings and appreciation for the interconnected wonder of the natural environment.⁷ The Mahāyāna

⁷There are two basic Buddhist paths, or *yānas*, available to those seeking liberation from *samsāric* existence: the Lower Vehicle, also known as the *Śrāvakayāna* path, advocates the pursuit of *arahant*-ship. The final objective of the *arahant* is the attainment of *nibbāna* for one’s personal liberation. These groups relied on the earliest teachings of the Buddha. Teachings were later transcribed using the Pāli language, hence forming the Pāli Canon. References to the *Śrāvakayāna* in this thesis will also be as the ‘Pāli tradition’ or ‘Early Buddhism’. The Mahāyāna path, or Great Vehicle, developed after Early Buddhism; it is the basis for the spiritual approach of Tibetan Buddhism. This path incorporates the *bodhisattva* ideal as a means to becoming a *samyaksambuddha*, or completely enlightened Buddha. Mahāyāna Buddhism propounds that in order to become a fully enlightened Buddha, the wisdom of

tradition also embraced the teachings of the Four Immeasurables initiated in early Buddhist thought, and has specifically emphasised the concept of compassion included in these ‘Sublime Attitudes’. Buddhist environmentalist discourse has proclaimed the interrelatedness of all life, and therefore the need to identify with the suffering of the world (Da Silva, 1990, p. 18; Sivaraksa, 1990, p. 176). Buddhist spiritual leaders, such as Ajahn Chah and Roshi Suzuki, have focussed on the need for compassion for all beings (Ajahn Chah, 2007, p. 13; Roshi Suzuki, 1968). In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa (Ogyen Trinley Dorje, 2011, p. 1095; Tenzin Gyatso, 2007b) encourage the generation of compassion as a foundation for ecological action. Current environmentalist activism in the name of Buddhism has sought to alleviate the suffering of humans and non-humans, as well as protect the integrity of numerous landscapes; compassion is advocated as a significant motivator of ecological projects.

I contend, however, that there are certain complexities in advocating compassion as a general attitude from which to create an environmental ethic. In *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, Padmasambhava points to his compassion towards his followers by reminding them of the reason he revealed the solace of Pemakö in the first place: “Due to my great compassion, I, Padmasambhava, will find their suffering unbearable” (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje 1615–1672b, v. 9). He also tells his followers that “immeasurable compassion will lead all sentient beings to happiness” (vv. 295–297). As described in Tibetan Buddhist scripture, it is the “benefit of faith [that] increase(s) . . . all positive qualities” (Chos dbyins stobs ldan rdo rje and Ngawang Xangpo, 2015, p. 127). In the case of Pemakö, perhaps this faith in the Tibetan patron saint Padmasambhava could act as motivation to practise compassion in pursuit of Buddhahood, something that he also exemplified towards his followers. Nevertheless, other

insight into the true nature of reality must be balanced by compassion towards the innumerable beings that suffer as a result of a lack of this insight.

questions challenge the viability of compassion as a foundation for environmentalist conservation theory: is the ideal of compassion universally homogenous, or does it require definition in the context of different cultures? How would scientists interpret compassion, especially in the allocation of limited resources to seemingly innumerable conservation projects? Or, is compassion even necessary for environmentalism?

In this light, the final section of Chapter Six discusses environmentalist efforts in Pemakö, and whether top-down or grassroots conservation programmes would be more effective. Wilock (1995, p. 252) suggests that government intervention in environmentalism arises in the absence of other initiatives. Generally, the Chinese government has shown a lack of transparency in its conservation efforts, and Indian environmentalist programmes have shown a lack of tenacity (ACEF, 2013; CBIK, 2001; SLT, 2016; GOIMEF, 2009).⁸ I also point out in this chapter that despite the noble intentions of compassion, it is not an ideal that is likely to be incorporated into the Sino-Indian concerns of trans-boundary disputes or hydro-electric dam construction in Pemakö. Grassroots initiatives could apply the compassionately motivated efforts of local communities to their immediate environmental concerns more effectively. This approach is already evident in efforts such as the The Lhundrup Topgye Ling Ngakpa Dratsang School or the Pemakö Health Initiative (OCL, 2016; GFH, 2013)⁹. Nevertheless, financial, infrastructural and time restraints have shown to limit their efficacy and exposure.

I end Chapter Six by suggesting a third approach to conservation known as “civic environmentalism” (DeWitt et al., 2006, p. 46). This strategy involves mobilising resources from both government agencies and community-level organisations. In particular, civic environmentalism involves the determination of conservation efforts by the community itself

⁸The ACEF is the All-China Environment Federation, the CBIK is the Centre for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge, the SLT is the Snow Leopard Trust and the GOIMEF is the Government of India: Ministry of the Environment and Forestry.

⁹OCL is Ogyan Chokhur Ling; GFH is the Global Force for Healing.

based on its cultural priorities. In Pemakö, for example, government proposals and localised endeavours could complement each other to form a scientific-religious approach to environmentalist activism in the region. In theory, the faith in the sanctity of the landscape could motivate practitioners to rely on compassion as the spiritual foundation of conservation efforts. Research on rural Tibetan Buddhist communities has demonstrated, however, that Tibetan Buddhist thought is often interpreted differently across varied groups of practitioners (Coggins and Hutchinson, 2011; Pirie, 2006; Woodhouse, 2015). Thus, rather than prescribing a normative analysis of religio-environmentalist strategies appropriate to Pemakö, as Schaller (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 32) indicates, I suggest that any conservation efforts ought to include close collaboration between the appropriate agencies and the community in question in order to represent as fully as possible local interests and perspectives.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has provided the background, chapter content outline and conceptual trajectory of this thesis. The last chapter and conclusion of the thesis summarises how my methodology has informed the collection and analysis of my research data. I include a discussion about the contributions this thesis makes to the field of religious studies, and especially to Tibetan Buddhist studies. I also address the limitations of this project, and how these limits set the foundation for future investigations of Pemakö's spiritual and environmental heritage.

Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656), one of the earliest Treasure revealers to make declarations about Pemakö, quotes the autobiographical words of Padmasambhava: “I, Guru Rinpoche, am supreme among all emanations, the moon of the sky centre, the jewel of jewels; whatever happiness or sorrow you encounter, think of me” (Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying

po, 1585–1656, pp. 17–18).¹⁰ In Chapter One I outline the methodology I use in my thesis to explore the great Guru’s legacy in Pemakö from the perspective of the faithful.

¹⁰De nas sprul pa'i nang nas yang sprul yin; Nam mkha'i nyi zla'i dkyil nas snying po yin; Nor bu'i nang nas dgos 'dod kun 'byung yin; Skyid sdug ci byung o rgyan dran par gyis..

Chapter One: Research Methodology and Methods for my Study of Pemakö

Introduction

In Chapter One I outline and justify the methodology underpinning the investigations I have conducted for my thesis. As I have indicated in the thesis introduction, I broadly locate my work within the field of religious studies because of my focus on the implications of religious theory on environmental conservation. More specifically, my research contributes to the narrower field of Buddhist studies, understood here as the academic study of Buddhism. As I describe in the first section of this chapter, I place my methodology within the phenomenological study of religion. Here I also acknowledge critiques and limitations of this approach.

I maintain that phenomenology of religion is an appropriate methodology for my thesis because it allows the researcher to understand personal accounts of events as the primary context within which human beings ground their attempts to understand their surroundings. In my study of Pemakö's religious culture, I draw upon the Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö* and interviews I conducted with Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims to Pemakö as the two main primary sources that provide narratives of 'lived experience' in the region. In my research on the historical and contemporary perspectives of the faithful, a phenomenological strategy allows me to respond to my query about the nature of the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and the Pemakö's natural environment from the historical and contemporary perspective of the faithful.

Linked to discussions of how one studies religion, it is not only necessary to examine the nature of the object to be investigated, but also the role of the researcher in the study. I therefore consider debates concerning the use of emic and etic concepts in terms of insider-

outsider challenges facing scholars of religion. Here I reflect upon my positionality in this thesis as both researcher and Tibetan Buddhist practitioner. The remaining sections of this chapter outline the methods I employed in the translation and exegesis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. I then summarise the methods I applied in carrying out interviews in Nepal with Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims to Pemakö. In my descriptions, I demonstrate how I integrate a phenomenological approach to the study of religion with both my research methods and my analysis of data.

***Phenomenology of Religion:
Consensus, Contentions and my Study of Pemakö***

In this section I address scholarly arguments for and against phenomenology as a legitimate methodology for the study of religion, and my reasons for choosing this approach for my study of Pemakö. In its development as an academic field, the study of religion has met with significant criticism. One of the most important debates voiced by scholars of religion concerns the relationship between theology and religious studies. Theology is seen to emphasise “the deepening of personal religious belief” as its implicit purpose (Sharpe, 1983, p. 1). Although theology is applicable to the study of all religious traditions, it is often associated with an approach to the study of religions from a Christian perspective. Generally, though, theology is considered an ‘insider’ strategy motivated by a personal quest for understanding one’s own belief system. One implication of this approach is a lack of objectivity towards the object of study; another is the intention of the researcher to either negatively or positively influence the interpretation of findings. Yet another is the tendency to focus on the ‘magical’ or ‘miraculous’ qualities of a religious tradition. Religious studies, however, seeks to discover “objective facts and subjective meanings” (Waardenburg, 1978, p. 10). As a methodology, it focusses on both empirically verifiable and abstract, or intuitive, data that appear to the observer of expressions of religion. As Flood (1999, pp. 19–20) summarises, the dichotomy between the two is found

in their respective discourses: “. . . the language of theology is a language which *expresses* religion whereas the language of religious studies is a language *about* religion”.

In response to a perceived need for academic objectivity, social scientists of the early 1900s called for a ‘scientific’ methodology for the study of religion. Unlike theologians, many anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and philosophers recognised the value of religious pluralism without promoting one tradition over the other. They offered factual definitions for the nature and function of religion rather than focussing on mystical explanations of religious experience. Their overall objective in the study of religion was to describe, compare, interpret and explain religion based on a methodical, cross-cultural, historical perspective. By doing so, the social sciences greatly expanded the body of knowledge about the world’s religious traditions. Still, despite their contribution to the study of religions, these fields were criticised for their reduction of religion to singular anthropological, sociological, psychological or philosophical causal elements.

The social sciences were also charged with marginalising the study of religion and not recognising religious studies as a specialised field of knowledge (Cox, 2006, p. 97). Scholars wanted to find a way of studying religion as an autonomous, academic topic that avoided promoting or accepting the truth claims of a particular faith, as in theology, or reducing the religious experience to a singular cause, as in the social sciences. In addition, religious scholars sought to understand and report on religious meaning from the perspective of practitioners as neutrally as possible; thus, a methodology was needed to impartially study any religious tradition on its own terms from the viewpoint of the experiencer without reducing subjective accounts to a naturalistic explanation. Phenomenology of religion developed as a response to this quest.

Phenomenology of religion is a methodology that examines the experiential aspect of religion from the perspective of the faithful. Based on researcher “neutralist subjectivity” about

the object of observation, this approach is a pursuit in its own right in the field of religious studies (Smart, 1973, pp. 6,7). Phenomenology of religion advocates the acknowledgement of intersubjectivity between the observer and the observed, the necessity for a researcher to separate from *a priori* knowledge and the empathetic recognition of the subjective meaning of religious phenomena to the experiencer of those phenomena. Furthermore, in spite of its objective of identifying a fundamental characteristic of religious experience, phenomenology of religion remains anti-reductionist.

Phenomenology of religion, however, is not without its critics. Cox (2006, p. 211) situates one problem of this methodology as “the subject-object dichotomy”. This is reminiscent of the debate between scholars of theology and religious studies, in which one of the central arguments concerns the neutrality of the researcher towards the subject of investigation. Phenomenologists of religion accept that there is a level of subjectivity inherent in any scholarly investigation; however, they address this issue by claiming that their methodology has as its primary goal the study of a religion on its own terms, “rather than on the terms of the theologian or the social scientist” (Erricker, 1999, p. 83).

In support of this objective, phenomenologist neutrality is maintained through bracketing, also known as *epoché*. This strategy asks the researcher to consider his or her natural stance, or personal history and presuppositions, and somehow neutralise them. This impartial position is then tempered by empathy, a quality Smart (1973, p. 74) endorses as “the affective side of the phenomenologist ‘entering into’ the world of another religious culture”. A scholar can then transcend personal culture as well as avoid alignment with the values of the tradition under study. Nevertheless, as much as phenomenology seeks to cultivate this stance, critics contend that researcher objectivity is impossible. As Flood (1999, p. 97) argues, “. . . this bracketing is sometimes mistakenly taken to be the suspension of subjectivity, which is hard to understand in a system which places such great emphasis on [subjectivity]”. In addition,

bracketing may alienate the observer as much as empathy may engender bias in favour of the subject.

Embedded in phenomenology of religion's claim for researcher neutrality is the assertion that the phenomenologist uncovers the 'essence' of religious phenomena, or what I label a 'core characteristic' or 'feature' of a religious phenomenon. Also known as 'eidetic vision', this is a process through which the observer intuitively discerns an underlying meaning to religious experience. By describing the core meaning of religious experience from the perspective of the practitioner, the phenomenologist also personalises the spirituality of others. Critics, however, challenge this position: first, because of the apparent acceptance of the claims made by believers, the neutrality of the observer is put into question. In fact, the acceptance of truth claims may implicitly support a non-naturalistic explanation for religious phenomena, rendering the phenomenologist complicit with the aims of a theologian (Fitzgerald, 2000, p. 7). More importantly, distinguishing a foundational characteristic of religious experience ignores the context within which religious practices occur (Cox, 2006, p. 214). As McCutcheon (1997, p. 22) summarises, "The implications of exclusively constructing religion in this one manner . . . segments people from their complex socio-political and historical relationships".

So why have I chosen phenomenology of religion to study the relationship between Pemakö's religious culture and the region's natural environment? As I demonstrate in my analysis of text and ritual in Chapters Four and Five, Tibetan Buddhist perception of the Pemakö landscape is largely based on the interpretation of religious experience as a result of the natural environment's perceived mystical qualities. Like Sharpe (1983, p. 245; 1986, p. 2), I maintain that the phenomenological approach holds an ideal of impartiality that strives to understand this experience objectively, a concept that aligns phenomenology to the separation of discourse and object in the field of religious studies. And as Smart (1973, pp. 32, 75) notes, phenomenology of religion fosters this neutrality through its emphasis on bracketing *a priori*

knowledge. Through bracketing, the researcher reignites a fresh inquisitiveness towards the object of study, which in turn supports clarity of observation.

As Hufford (2014, p. 295) states, “If we obtain the appearance of objectivity by leaving ourselves out of our accounts, we simply leave the subjective realities of our work uncontrolled”. As I have presented in an earlier section of this chapter, opponents of phenomenology of religion have argued that researcher objectivity is not possible; however, bracketing is a reflective process that does not claim to completely neutralise researcher subjectivity. I maintain that this process bolsters researcher awareness of possible assumptions about the researched because “pure observer-neutrality exists as an ideal only” (Donovan, 2014, p. 236). For example, in a subsequent chapter section, I consider my own role as a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner conducting research on a Tibetan Buddhist phenomenon. My reflections on my positioning in relation to Tibetan Buddhist practitioners that believe in the Pemakö mythology has allowed me to identify my presumptions about this phenomenon and as far as possible, suspend any judgments I have made about this facet of Tibetan Buddhist culture.

I also concur with phenomenology of religion’s emphasis on empathy with the object of study as a means to identify the ‘experiencer’s experience’ without appraisal. In fact, as a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner investigating Pemakö’s religious culture, I maintain that my personal affiliation with the tradition has facilitated an openness to the perspectives of the faithful that has enriched my understanding of their relationship to the region’s environment. Contrary to the claims that empathy may lead to researcher identification with the phenomenon under study, the process of bracketing has allowed me to discern an imbalance in this empathy that has the potential to lead to bias in favour of the research subject.

I also contend that phenomenology of religion does not isolate religious phenomena from their historicity, but seeks to identify and understand them in context. In other words, a phenomenological approach need not be committed to regarding religion as *sui generis* in the

sense of being dissociable from other aspects of human social life. As I explain in Chapter Three, the background to the development of the Pemakö narrative supports this objective: it is not easy to appreciate the spiritual experience of Pemakö's natural environment without a view of the developmental trajectory of the region's religious culture. In fact, phenomenology of religion may be an appropriate methodology for many studies of Tibetan Buddhism because the religious narrative is so deeply enmeshed in almost all aspects of Tibetan culture. Tibetans that are Tibetan Buddhists very often relate to their experience of the world and the interpretation of these experiences through the lens of their religious beliefs. Phenomenology would be a useful methodological tool in Tibetan Buddhist studies as a means to highlight, for example, the concept of circumambulation around a sacred object as an accumulation of merit. As I exemplify in Chapters Four and Five, the experience of this practice is highly personal, and often part of Tibetan Buddhist soteriology. Phenomenology of religion supports an examination of core elements of practitioners' experiences of circumambulation as it appears in their particular circumstances – in the case of my thesis, as the act of circumambulation would transpire in the mountains or jungles of Pemakö.

I can also appreciate that any fundamental feature of religious experience is likely fluid in nature: what may be 'true' or 'essential' to one practitioner or group of practitioners in Tibetan Buddhism may differ to others because of their socio-cultural and historical background within the Tibetan cultural territory, both on the Tibetan plateau itself and across the Tibetan diaspora. This concept becomes evident in Chapter Six, where I illustrate the flexibility in interpretation of Tibetan Buddhist theory across rural Tibetan Buddhist communities. A phenomenological methodology accentuates practitioners' different viewpoints, bringing them to light both objectively and subjectively. In the case of my study on Pemakö, a phenomenological approach allows me to observe variations in practitioner perceptions through the minimisation of bias and concentrate on the common element of these

experiences. In later sections of this chapter, I explain how phenomenology of religion has informed my study of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* and interviews with Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims. For now, I turn to considerations about my role as researcher in this project.

Emic-Etic Debates in Religious Studies

The discussion about phenomenology as a significant methodology in religious studies has drawn attention to the importance of bracketing personal history and viewpoints in researching and narrating religious phenomena. This segregation of one's natural stance ultimately fosters methodological rigour. If one is a member of the religious tradition under investigation, however, is it possible to attain impartiality? Moreover, in a so-called phenomenological study of religion, does the scholar-practitioner still risk diversion to theological rather than non-theological pursuits? Phenomenology of religion has claimed to bridge this gap through the minimisation of all personal preconceptions. As a Tibetan Buddhist scholar-practitioner conducting a Tibetan Buddhist study, I feel it imperative to reflect upon not only my natural stance, but also my positioning in relationship to my research. I do so to ensure a commitment to methodological rigour, which requires researcher transparency in the light of what Knott (2005, p. 245) calls the "dialogical nature of scholarship". Consequently, in this section of the chapter, I address my background, my insider-outsider positioning within this study and my thoughts on researcher objectivity.

I identify myself as a Westerner, who qualifies as a 'Third Culture Kid' having grown up in numerous countries speaking several languages. My education and professional background originate in the West. I am a student and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. I speak colloquial Tibetan in the Lha sa dialect and translate religious texts from Tibetan into English. I have many Tibetan friends and acquaintances, and I feel very comfortable in the Tibetan community. I receive Buddhist instruction from various Tibetan spiritual adepts. As an

academic researcher in Tibetan Buddhist studies, I closely follow the socio-religious and political events within the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the Tibetan diaspora. I therefore qualify myself as a partial insider to the ‘world of Tibetan Buddhism’.

Conversely, these qualities have also accentuated my position as an outsider. My life as a student and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism covers the short span of eleven years. My Buddhist practice began within the Dge lugs tradition, whereas the main traditions native to Pemakö are the Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud.¹¹ Although the fundamental tenets of these three traditions are very similar, their presentation and meditative practices differ significantly. My experience with the Tibetan people has been solely with the society-in-exile – I have never been to Tibet. My image of Pemakö is limited to a two-week visit to its southern extremity in Arunachal Pradesh. I am relatively fluent in Tibetan, but only in one dialect. My friendship with Tibetans remains intact when I am in physical proximity to Tibetan settlements; however, much like my colloquial Tibetan language skills, these relationships fade without daily interaction. Consequently, despite my affinity to Tibetan Buddhism, I would then in these respects qualify myself as a partial outsider to Tibetan Buddhist culture.

Still, in view of my background, is it possible for me to remain neutral towards my Tibetan Buddhist subject? In support of a bracketed natural stance balanced by empathy, I see advantages to each aspect of my positioning in relation to this study. My experience, relationships and linguistic ability have been an asset to my research since these factors have eased navigation through the labyrinth of Tibetan culture. Scholars have also argued that the emic approach to religious studies is the only way to gain a clear view of the researched object (Ferber, 2006, p. 176). Allen (2005, p. 199) argues, however, that it is not the personal commitment of faith to a religious tradition that is a precondition for accurate

¹¹There are four principal Tibetan Buddhist sects, of which the Rnying ma trace themselves back to the earliest Buddhist tradition in Tibet. The others are the Dge lugs, the Bka' brgyud and the Sa skya.

phenomenological descriptions, rather “it is a commitment to religious phenomena, manifested in terms of intellectual curiosity”. This curiosity is what LeVasseur (2003, p. 419) has described as a brief suspension of assumed preunderstandings cultivated through reflection. As I have mentioned, I am not familiar with the Tibetan Buddhist traditions predominant in Pemakö, and my interactions with Tibetans have certain limitations. Nevertheless, another advantage of my partial insider positioning is that it ignited my curiosity towards the Tibetan Buddhist narrative characteristic of Pemakö; my partial outsider positioning fostered an openness towards the subject of research due to my lack of familiarity with this aspect of Tibetan Buddhist culture.

External events have also reminded me of my researcher positioning in relationship to this project. During my fieldwork in Nepal in 2013, a Tibetan Buddhist monk self-immolated in the town centre.¹² My partial insiderness afforded me no advantage in the light of this tragedy: I was an outsider with little access to the Tibetan community as its members unified in communal grief. Thus, boundaries as an observer proved quite fluid and changed in accordance with the situation at hand. This process of repositioning challenged my assumptions about Tibetan culture and appealed to my neutrality towards my research on Pemakö. Nevertheless, as Knott (2005, p. 254) describes, the distinction between insider and outsider eventually becomes indeterminate when we recognise that all those who participate, whether of the faith or not, contribute to the co-construction of the story. I have found that this understanding has fostered empathy with the research subjects. In assuming this empathy,

¹²In addition to conducting extended interviews, I had also designed a general survey about Pemakö to carry out among the Tibetan refugee community in Boudha, Nepal. The intention of this research was to contextualise the significance of hidden lands, awareness of the Pemakö narrative and any concern for environmental issues in contemporary Tibetan Buddhist culture among a sample population that had not been to the region. I attempted to initiate this survey several days after the self-immolation; however, because of the political nature of this event, national unity in the Tibetan refugee community had strengthened (Gurubacharya, 2013). Tensions had also developed out of fear of potential backlash from the Nepalese government. Consequently, the Tibetan community rejected any of my efforts at conducting the survey and I was forced to abandon this part of my fieldwork.

however, I as the phenomenologist am not necessarily affirming the ‘realness’ of religious phenomena as they appear to me or to my research subjects.

I have often wondered about the importance of establishing one’s positionality in relation to social research. Jensen (2011, p. 46) maintains that the emic-etic distinction is contrived and does not merit any distinct methods or theories. He (p. 46) does contend, however, that it is a very “potent social mechanism” for understanding positioning and its potential for bias. Consequently, insider-outsider perspectives should be deconstructed to uncover researcher dynamics. Throughout the research process I have frequently addressed my positioning through reflection upon the guiding query of this thesis: does the religious culture of Pemakö hold any potential foundation for environmental conservation efforts in the region based on the relationship between the two? Although grounded in prior exposure to Tibetan Buddhist culture, my exploration of this question has not been a theological exercise meant to clarify or advertise a religious agenda, but a study based on curiosity about Tibetan Buddhist ideals and their relevance to contemporary socio-cultural issues in an increasingly globalised world.

All aspects of academic research are subject to subjectivity; in my position as a Tibetan Buddhist scholar-practitioner examining the Tibetan Buddhist phenomenon of Pemakö, phenomenology of religion provides a methodology that accentuates as much researcher neutrality as possible. In recognition of part of my natural stance, I have considered my personal history as it relates to this research. In consideration of LeVasseur’s suggestions, its bracketing could be as simple as cultivating a curiosity for the unknown. This inquisitiveness has indeed guided my research questions, choice of methodology and methods as well as the reporting of results. Nevertheless, I acknowledge the influence my personal views and experience could have on this research – my background has the potential to impact perception, motivation and narrative, rendering the final product a normative account of my findings. But

I also maintain that my positioning facilitates intuitive empathy and clarity of description. My emic-etic status offers the advantages of both distance and proximity.

Methods

Translation and Analysis of Self-Liberation upon Hearing

Finally, the last section of this chapter outlines the research methods I have applied to the collection, analysis and reporting of data derived from my two primary sources, scripture and interviews. In this section I explain the translation and exegesis of the Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. In the subsequent section I clarify the process of conducting interviews with Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in Nepal. Each of these descriptions exemplifies my use of phenomenology throughout the course of my research.

The *gter ma* entitled *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* constitutes the main material for my first source of primary information about Pemakö. I chose to focus on this Treasure text because it provides a detailed representation of both Pemakö's natural environment and spiritual heritage, a quality within a single composition that I felt provided a comprehensive representation of attitudes towards the Pemakö landscape. In my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* I also rely on information extracted from other *gter ma* about the region. These supporting texts do not include as much thematic variety as *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. In Chapters Three and Four I explain the authorship of and background to both *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* and supporting *gter ma*. Because the composition of these scriptural sources is interwoven with the historical evolution of Pemakö as a sacred geography, the descriptions I provide demonstrate the context within which attitudes towards the natural environment in Pemakö developed. The historicity of these texts is a key factor in discerning core concepts of the region's religious culture.

In my thesis I provide the first translation into English of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. The text was passed on to me as a handwritten copy of the exemplar from which my manuscript was copied by a Tibetan language interpreter from Nepal. He had received it from a spiritual director of a large Rnying ma monastery in Pemakö.¹³ I produced an electronic rendition using a Tibetan script word-processing programme (Duff, 2000). In the original text, the *gter shad*, a vertical single or double line, delineates each line while specifying the text as a *gter ma*. This punctuation mark does not necessarily indicate the end of a grammatically complete sentence, but it does indicate the end of a syllabic verse or a pause in reading. Thus, a single line may be a single sentence, or multiple lines may create a single sentence. For clarity, I chose to organise each of these by number, which then came to a total of 439 lines.

I have considered different issues in the translation of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. Lama Chimpa (1995, p. 18) summarises that the main purpose of translation is to transmit the author's message to speakers of other languages. Notable issues in Tibetan language translation are terminology, meaning, accuracy and appropriate style. Lama Chimpa (1995, p. 14) additionally emphasises the importance of teamwork to produce a "satisfactory translation of a classical Tibetan text". Furthermore, Napper (1995, p. 41) reminds Tibetan language translators that within the Tibetan tradition, texts are not just read but are also accompanied by commentary.

In order to address these issues in my translation of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, I first established a general overview of the Tibetan text by discussing the content with a Rnying ma-Bka' brgyud religious adept. The *gter ma* was then reviewed line per line together with Tibetan language scholars possessing a wide range of vocabulary in both Tibetan and English.

¹³In 2001, Mkhon po tshe ring rdo rje rin po che constructed a large Rnying ma monastery called Nge gsang don ngag byang chub rdo rje gling in Tuting, a small city in the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh. The Tibetan exemplar of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* from which my manuscript of the text was copied is presumably still stored there.

This procedure was repeated several times, with lengthy discussions pertaining to meaning, syntax and grammar. After completing an initial English translation, several more revisions were necessary. During the entire translation phase I also consulted with other scripture relevant to my project. The final English text was verified by two native English speakers trained in the Rnying ma tradition and experienced in Tibetan language translation.

In his paper on phenomenology in translation studies, Lü Jun (2008, p. 4) explains that a translated text risks minimising the life world of the source text. He advocates a phenomenological approach that includes translator bracketing and attention to the author's lived experience as reflected in the text. With this in mind, during the translation and analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, I applied a phenomenological methodology to examining the *gter ma* contents as opposed to a purely philological strategy often used in the translation and analysis of Tibetan Buddhist religious literature. Tillemans (1995, p. 269) describes how a significant element within a philologist's approach to scriptural analysis is a preoccupation with understanding the author's thoughts. Cabezón (1995, p. 245) adds that the purpose of philology is to restore and contextualise the text to glean the author's original intention. His (p. 263) critique of philology in Buddhist studies calls for an examination of the meaning of the text beyond merely that of what the author wishes to communicate, an adjustment that would foster "greater balance and holism" in the avoidance of "methodological isolationism". A translation and analysis of Tibetan Buddhist scripture should also reflect the interpretation of religious thought from the perspective of the faithful, rendering the study phenomenological in approach.

With this goal in mind, I was able to distinguish prevalent practitioner interpretations and experiences of the Pemakö environment as reflected in historical sacred texts. Sharpe (1986, p. 225) maintains that the phenomenologist "has not completed his task . . . [until] the material [is] comprehensible to others". I therefore aligned my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon*

Hearing with the phenomenological procedure suggested by Cox (2010, pp. 50–70): as part of the analysis, he defines how phenomena must be named and organised into categories. In my study of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, common themes such as environmental characteristics, prophecy and Buddhist practices became evident. Here I included similar textual commentary gleaned from other *gter ma* about Pemakö. Cox (p. 60) then advises the researcher to observe the interactions between themes, a process that should ultimately reveal core concerns. These become evident in my analysis in Chapter Four.

Conducting and Analysing Interviews with Pemakö Pilgrims

The interviews that I carried out with pilgrims to Pemakö constitute the second major source of primary data for this thesis.¹⁴ My aim in participant selection was to select Tibetan Buddhist practitioners who had lived experience in Pemakö as residents or visitors conducting pilgrimage in Pemakö. Political sensitivities in the region precluded my entry to China and India for the purposes of ethnographic research. The Tibetan diaspora, however, is scattered throughout Europe, North America and Asia (McConnell, 2013, p. 969; Yeh, 2007, p. 649). I chose to carry out my fieldwork in Boudha, Nepal because the town's population of approximately 20,000 Tibetan refugees provided a centralised pool of potential interview candidates (Lostumbo, 1995, p. 912). I was also familiar with this community because of my previous experience in Boudha as a language student. Fieldwork took place from May to September 2013.

To initiate the process of finding interview candidates, I first spoke with my Tibetan acquaintances who knew of other Tibetans that had either been to or lived in the region. These initial contacts introduced me to people who had experience in Pemakö. Through these

¹⁴During my fieldwork in Nepal and visit to Pemakö in India, other sources of data collected consist of informal conversations with local people about their general knowledge of Pemakö.

secondary contacts, I was also able to learn about venues to locate further interview candidates. Communal gatherings at Tibetan Buddhist monasteries take place on a regular basis. I therefore attended a variety of these meetings, where I located monastics that were familiar with the region. Here, I had also had the opportunity to address more members of the lay community.

My goal was to locate as many interview candidates as possible. I did, however, meet with some challenges: as I have described earlier in this chapter, during the period of my fieldwork, the Tibetan community experienced the self-immolation of a Tibetan Buddhist monk in Boudha. This event may have influenced the actual number of available interviewees since, as I was told by different members of the community, the Tibetans were hesitant to speak with any researchers for several weeks after this incident. In addition, during my search for interview candidates, it became evident that the concerns of refugees did not necessarily include the fate of a hidden land in the eastern Himalayas. Moreover, most of the Tibetans with whom I spoke about Pemakö were not familiar with the region. Despite these limitations, I located six interviewees that represented both visitors and residents of Pemakö. As I describe in detail in Chapter Five, their backgrounds provided a sample of diverse types of practitioners, each having conducted pilgrimage in the region. This allowed me insight into a range of possible religious experience as it related to the Pemakö environment.

As an introduction to my project, I first made participants aware of the research scope and provided them with an introductory information sheet.¹⁵ I emphasised that the purpose of my interview with them was to understand their perspective as Tibetan Buddhist practitioners conducting pilgrimage in Pemakö in light of current threats to the region's natural environment. After this initial discussion, they were informed of the interview guidelines in accordance with

¹⁵See the appendix for copies of the information and interview sheet provided to interviewees. The Tibetan translation of these documents has been written in a more simplified form to accommodate cultural differences; the entire scope of all these documents were discussed in detail with each candidate prior to the interview.

the University of Leeds ethical standards.¹⁶ I also defined the interview process itself, such as the recording of the interview, anonymity, types of questions and reporting of results. I answered any questions the potential interviewee had, and upon their agreement to speak with me about their experiences in Pemakö, we then arranged a time and venue for a meeting.

At the participants' choosing, the interviews were held at monasteries, private homes or local restaurants. I used semi-structured inquiry to guide the conversation in accordance with the parameters of my research. Several initial open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to express their personal experience as pilgrims in Pemakö. The topic would then flow into other themes as the conversation continued, which I then redirected to specific subjects about Pemakö. The interviews lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. Two interviewees spoke English; thus, our conversation was also in English. I conducted the remaining four interviews in Tibetan.

From the six interviews, I gained insight into the ways in which Tibetan Buddhist practitioners interpret their engagement with the Pemakö narrative and environment. In social research, the responsibility of the researcher is to "look for the complexity of views, rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2013, p. 301). All understanding is 'embedded' in the dialogical encounter (Cox, 2006, p. 214). Thus, dialogue becomes an internal representation of a subjective experience; consequently, the researcher's task then becomes one of externalising such representations without adding distortions. A phenomenological approach therefore requires significant reflection on textual content.

To this end, I read interview transcripts repeatedly to get a global sense of participant experiences of Pemakö. After categorising the data according to common themes, I then transformed these meaning units into a description of what I deemed either implicitly or

¹⁶Due to the sensitive nature of the Tibetan refugee political situation, the University of Leeds ethical committee also required training in interview procedures. This was effectuated through a university seminar.

explicitly significant. As an additional reflexive exercise, I felt it important at this point to examine my own positioning as a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and consciously put this aside so as not to influence my perception of interviewee descriptions. In Chapter Five, the final report illustrates a Tibetan Buddhist experience of Pemakö as it appeared in my research.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have first located my study of Pemakö in the field of religious studies, and have thereby placed my research within the non-theological study of religious phenomena as opposed to a theologically motivated investigation. I have opted for a phenomenological approach to my thesis not to imply that social scientific methodologies are not applicable to my study of Pemakö – these investigative strategies can also reveal much about religious phenomena. I maintain, however, that because the Pemakö religious culture is largely based on the spiritual perception of the region's natural environment, a phenomenological investigation that focusses on this experience is the most appropriate way to reveal core concerns of the faithful from their perspectives.

As part of this interpretation, the phenomenological process of bracketing balances researcher objectivity with empathy. This positioning is achieved through researcher reflection, which I include in this chapter in my discussion of my emic-etic perspectives as a Tibetan Buddhist scholar-practitioner in this project. I also exemplify my use of phenomenology of religion in the research methods I applied in the analysis of my two main sources of primary data. My thesis requires an appreciation of Pemakö's natural environment from which to identify key elements of religious experience that reflect a practitioner's relationship to environment in the region. Therefore, in Chapter Two I present a synthesis of data on Pemakö's environmental circumstances.

Chapter Two: Pemakö's Natural Environment and Prevailing Environmental Threats

Introduction

In this chapter I synthesise data about the Pemakö environment and the dominant threats to the region's ecological equilibrium. In the context of this thesis, these data serve as a foundation for examining the relationship between Pemakö's religious culture and its natural surroundings. For example, this chapter's survey of the Pemakö landscape supports my explanations in Chapter Three of the region's favourable conditions for Tibetan political refugees and Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims, and thereby the possible rationalisation for the historical designation of Pemakö as a sacred geography. Because sacred texts about Pemakö often refer to the region's physical environs, geographical, topographical and biological information enhances my references to and analysis of scripture in Chapter Four. These descriptions also allow the reader to better imagine the difficulties Buddhist pilgrims encounter when traversing this wilderness, as I indicate in Chapter Five (Chang, 1981; Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996).

The information about Pemakö's topography and ecosystems serves as a foundation for my analysis of prevailing threats to the region's natural landscape. In this chapter I outline India and China's plans for hydro-electric dam construction in Pemakö (APSPCB, 2009c; Dharmadhikary, 2008; Vagholikar and Das, 2010; Yanity, 2013).¹⁷ I describe the issue of Sino-Indian trans-boundary disputes, which have exacerbated political issues provoked through hydropower projects (Lamb, 1966; Walt van Praag, 1987). My examination of Pemakö's environment complements my discussion of the most immediate environmental risk – that of the local Tibetan Buddhist inhabitants (Mishra, Madhusudan and Datta, 2006; Schaller, Zhang

¹⁷The APSPCB is the Arunachal Pradesh State Pollution Control Board.

and Zhi, 2000). These descriptions set the stage for my deliberations in Chapter Six about whether the region's religious culture could possibly influence local conservation efforts. Before beginning these summaries, I first explain my procedure for locating and gathering information.

The Data Collection Process for this Synthesis

In obtaining information about Pemakö's environment, I chose to adapt an inclusionist strategy by deriving information from multiple places and sources. I consulted university and public libraries, computer databases, Tibetan, Chinese and Indian government agencies, international scientific organisations and newspaper publishers. Types of sources included academic research in peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, papers published by relevant professional organisations, media articles and personal narratives presented in books or internet blogs. Sources date from the early 1900s to 2016.

I excluded data from this synthesis if the information was deemed repetitive, incorrect or irrelevant to my study's objectives. For example, I omitted media reports publishing identical information, such as articles concerning Sino-Indian political circumstances or hydro-electric dam construction.¹⁸ I will note here that the credibility of some news reports was put into question due to recent criticisms of journalists voiced in Indian and Chinese media; I therefore cross-examined multiple reports from different authors and related state reports to verify information (Krishnan, 2017; Xu and Albert, 2017). Some information went beyond my thesis parameters, an example of which was a study on the detailed, chronological development of the Tsangpo Gorge syntaxis (Seward and Burg, 2008). Furthermore, although Chinese academics have conducted pertinent research on the Namche Barwa region of Pemakö, many

¹⁸As an example, the search terms 'Zangmu Dam Operation' results in multiple articles quoting the opening of this dam on 23 November 2014. A search for 'China-India border dispute' produced similar results.

relevant scientific articles were available in Chinese language only; I have, however, gleaned information from their English abstracts.¹⁹ Finally, data about upper Pemakö was often not available to the public. Chinese government restrictions tightly control information that could influence economic interests (T.W., 2013).

Pemakö's Natural Environment

Geography

In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, Guru Padmasambhava is thought to have delineated hidden lands throughout the Himalayas, one of which is Pemakö. Pemakö lies at the southeastern extremity of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The region, said to be shaped like a lotus, has its centre near the town of Medok (Ward et al., 2008, p. 33).²⁰ The current, political jurisdictions for Pemakö are Medok County of the Nyingchi Prefecture in the Tibetan Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. The Geling-Tuting-Singha triangle in India's Upper Siang district in the county of Arunachal Pradesh is considered the southern part of Pemakö (Arunachal Tourism, 2014). The Mishmi Hills of the Dibang Valley are also believed to touch the southeastern edges of Pemakö (Choudhury, 2003, p. 1).

Ward (Ward, Cawdor and Hunting, 1926, p. 109) estimated that the region lies within the northern parallels 29–30° and the meridians 94°3'–96°. In 2014, I visited the small town of Mechuka, located in the northern area of the West Siang district in Arunachal Pradesh. Here, local narratives insisted that Pemakö's southwestern limits extended even to this remote corner. Considering that the lotus shape of Pemakö is round, the Mechuka description would expand Pemakö's boundaries to the 28° parallel – an extension that would not correspond to available

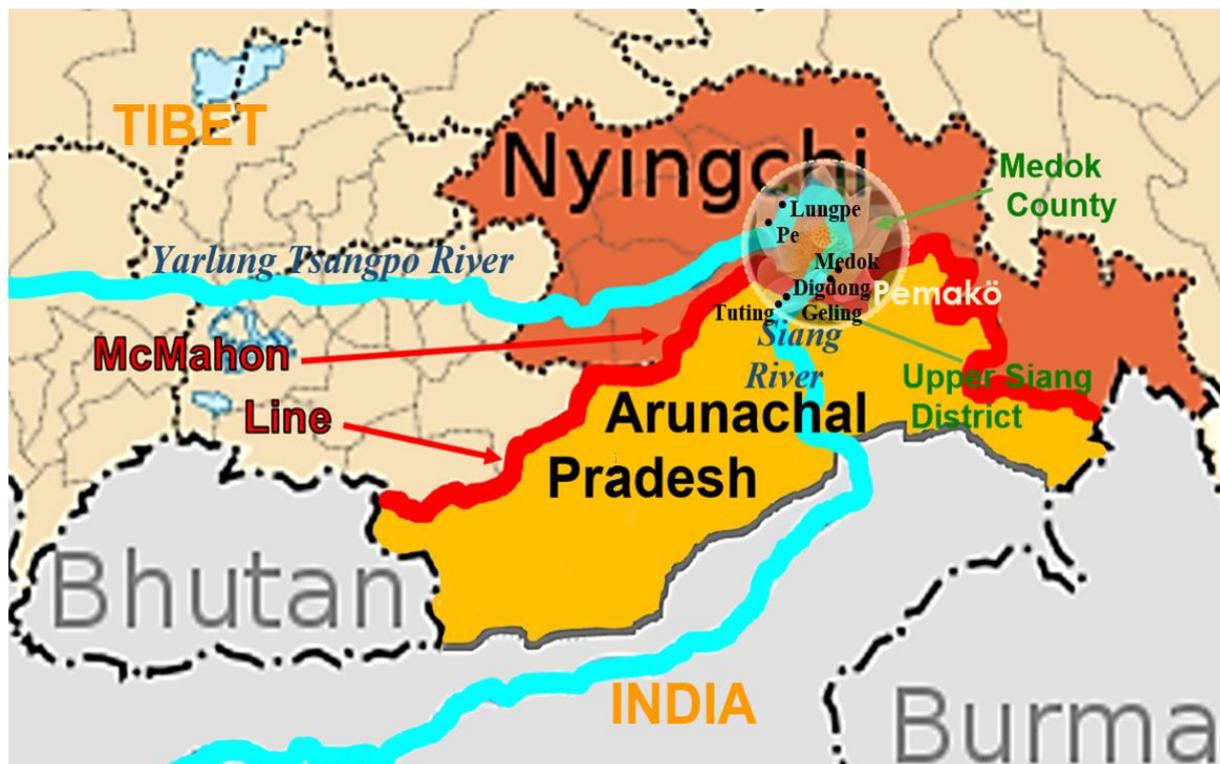
¹⁹The article *Experimental Study on Limestone Powder in Zangmu Hydropower Station Dam Concrete* by G.W. Li and C.J. Deng (2012) is an example of Chinese language data containing an English language abstract with the main content only in Chinese.

²⁰Medok is also known as Motuo in Chinese.

data. Nevertheless, Pemakö is said to cover approximately 35,000 square kilometres, although the perimeters seem somewhat fluid in local context.

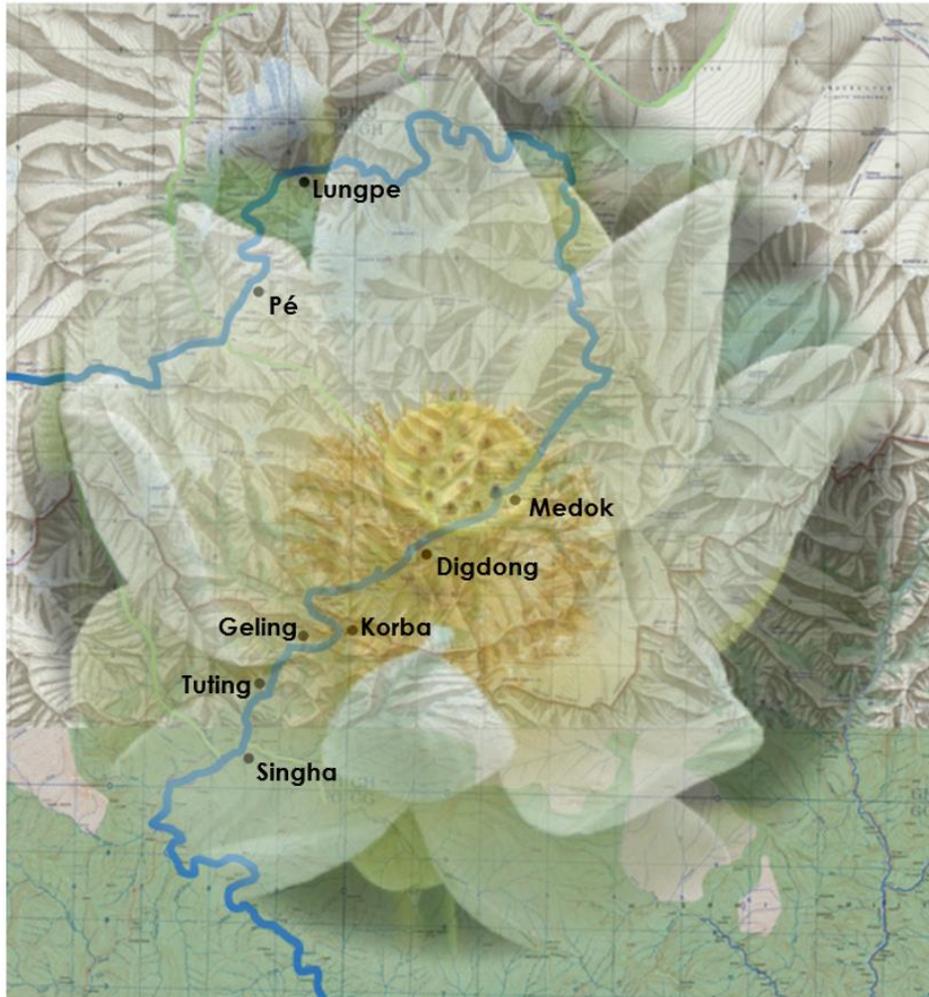
I have not found a map illustrating Pemakö as a single area. Chinese maps show Medok County and the Nyingchi Prefecture with Pemakö borders abbreviated at India. Maps of Pemakö in Arunachal Pradesh stop at the Chinese border and are not to scale. Other illustrations show only the northwestern and southern portions of Pemakö (Baker, 2006, p. iii; 'Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009, p. 153). I have, however, created a composite map presenting Pemakö's entire geographical layout.

**Figure One:
Map of Pemakö in China and India²¹**



²¹Underlying map extracted from the website The Land of Snows, 2015. Supporting information for maps has been retrieved from Anon., [n.d.]b; Anon., [n.d.]c; Bailey, 1957, pp. 121–126; Baker, 2006, p. iii; 'Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009, p. 153; I King India, 2013; Lang and Huntington, 2014, p. 146; Pascale, 2012; Travel Guide China, 2014; Yellow River Conservancy Commission on the Ministry of Water Resources, 2013.

**Figure Two:
Map of the Pemakö Region²²**



Topography

Pemakö's predominant relief features are formed by the Himalayan Namche Barwa Massif and the Yarlung Tsangpo / Siang River Basin. When the Indian and Asian tectonic plates collided several million years ago, crustal rocks of an ancient ocean were thrust upward. This formed an interface now known as the Indus-Yarlung suture.²³ The geological structure that emerged from this collision is the Himalayan Mountain Range (Zurick and Pacheco, 2006, p. 33).

²²Underlying map prepared by the United States Army Corps of Engineers, 1954a and 1954b.

²³A stretch of rock that forms the boundary between two continents that have collided together (Allaby, 2013).

Pemakö is located in the eastern syntaxis of the India indenter plate, also known as the Namche Barwa Massif. In the Namche Barwa Massif, gorges of up to 7,000 metres deep alternate with soaring mountains (p. 5). The significant peaks in Pemakö are Gyala Pelri at 7,294 metres and Namche Barwa at 7,756 metres in altitude. These mountainous areas gradually decrease in height to merge into the lesser Himalayan ranges with altitudes at 800 metres (Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996, p. 3).

The present-day Yarlung Tsangpo River follows the Indus-Yarlung Suture (Zurick and Pacheco, 2006, p. 33). The river originates in the Kanglung Kang glacier and Kailash Range of the Himalayas in southwest Tibet (APSPCB, 2009b, p. 1). In its eastward journey through Tibet, the river traverses about 1,700 kilometres, keeping a course roughly parallel to and 160 kilometres north of the main Himalayan Mountain Range. After meeting the Gya Chu River on its left bank, the Yarlung Tsangpo enters the Pemakö region.

In Pemakö, the Yarlung Tsangpo flows in a north-easterly course for about 110 kilometres (APSPCB, 2009b, p. 2). The river then cuts through the Himalaya in a deep gorge at the mountain range's eastern syntaxis, where a crustal scale antiform becomes a dramatic, two-kilometre knickpoint.²⁴ This area is known as the Tsangpo Gorge. In the Tsangpo Gorge, Gyala Pelri Mountain flanks the left bank and Namche Barwa Mountain towers on the right. The river then drops through the gorge from approximately 2,900 to less than 500 metres in elevation over the course of 200 kilometres (Montgomery et al., 2004, p. 201). The Yarlung Tsangpo flows southward across the Indian border at Geling, where it is called the Siang or Dihang River in the northern section of Arunachal Pradesh. The Siang is a meandering river, with a slope of less than .1 per cent. The total length of Siang River is 295 kilometres until its confluence with the Dibang and Lohit Rivers. At this interface, the massive Brahmaputra is formed (APSPCB, 2009a, pp. 37).

²⁴An anti-form is an arch-shaped rock structure, which arcs upwards (Allaby, 2013).

**Figure Three:
Map of the Pemakö Topography**



Climate

The southern face of the eastern Himalayas receives abundant rainfall from the southwest monsoons (Chang, 1981, p. 32). The Namche Barwa Massif blocks these northward sweeping rains. Consequently, Pemakö's slopes receive up to 3,000 millimetres of precipitation per year (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, pp. 9–10). Seasons are divided into winter during January and February, a pre-monsoon season from March to May, the monsoon season from June to September and the post-monsoon season from October to December. Temperatures range from 29.5 and 21.4 degrees Celsius to 17.7 and 2.4 degrees Celsius in the sub-tropical humid regions and cold humid regions, respectively (Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996, p. 7). These climatic

variances have contributed to one of the most complex systems of vertical vegetation zones on Earth (Chang, 1981, p. 35).

Flora

Pemakö is covered by montane woodland and jungle that is part of the eastern and southeastern Asiatic sub-tropical and tropical forest region (Chang, 1981, p. 35). Below 1,100 metres in the Namche Barwa Massif section of Pemakö, the mountains and hills are covered by a primary level of tropical montane and semi-evergreen rain forest (p. 35). On these slopes, forests consist mainly of semi-deciduous trees. Orchids and other epiphytes are common (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 13).²⁵ The sub-tropical montane evergreen broadleaf forest zone lies at elevations between 1,100 and 2,200 metres. Heavy rainfall fosters the growth of thick mosses that fully cover both the ground and tree trunks. A sub-tropical, semi-evergreen broadleaved forest forms the subsequent vegetative section, until it reaches the upper montane dark coniferous forest at 2,800 to 3,900 metres. Here the climate is wet, cold and remains covered in fog (Chang, 1981, p. 36). Finally, a subalpine, Rhododendron shrub land and meadow zone proliferates throughout altitudes of 3,900 and 4,200 metres (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 12). Scientific research estimates that approximately 3,800 species of vascular plants and 1,400 species of nonvascular plants grow in the area (p. 10).

In the Pemakö section located in the northern echelons of Arunachal Pradesh, sub-tropical, dense evergreen occurs between 900 and 2,000 metres. Trees, shrubs, herbal plants, epiphytes and orchids compose the sub-tropical broadleaf forest. Sub-tropical pine forests arise between 1,000 and 1,800 metres. Temperate broadleaf forests exist between 1,800 and 2,800 metres, where rainfall is moderately high. Temperate coniferous forests occur between 2,800

²⁵An epiphyte is a plant that grows on a physical host, usually a tree. The plant obtains nutrients through the air rather than from the host (Butler, 2012).

and 3,500 metres altitude, and are covered by heavy snowfall during winter (Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996, pp. 18–19).

Fauna

Information on wildlife in Pemakö is limited. As I have mentioned in the previous section, Chinese researchers have conducted extensive wildlife studies in the Namche Barwa Massif, although many of these reports are available in Chinese language only (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 7). Wildlife surveys in Arunachal Pradesh have been confined to low and mid-elevation forests. Most of the high-altitude areas of the state, including the Pemakö region, have not been scientifically investigated (Mishra, Madhusudan and Datta, 2006, p. 29). I have relied on government statistics on the nearby Mouling National Park, or information pertaining to the general northern vicinity of Arunachal Pradesh (Arunachal Tourism, 2014).

According to Schaller's (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 10) estimates, in the mid-1990s there were approximately sixty-four distinct species of mammals in the Namche Barwa section of Pemakö. Primates include the Assamese and rhesus macaque, and the capped langur. Among carnivores are the yellow-throated marten, palm civet, Asiatic black bear and the red panda. Asiatic wild dogs and the Eurasian otter are also part of Pemakö wildlife. Wildcats include the snow leopard, the grey leopard, the jungle and golden cat. Near Gyala Pelri on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, tigers are said to roam at higher altitudes. Wild pig, blue sheep, serow, red goral, musk deer and takin are some of the reported ungulates (Jiang and Bleisch, 1996, pp. 39, 40; Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 17).

The section of Pemakö located in the Upper Siang region is most likely home to the same types of animals reported in nearby areas. Except for the slow lorises in the Upper Siang jungles, primate species listed in the inventory of those in this area are the same as those in the Namche Barwa region. Carnivores include the palm civet, Asiatic black bear, red panda and

the sloth bear. In addition to Asiatic wild dogs and Eurasian otters, data indicate populations of the crab-eating mongoose and the Himalayan weasel. Wildcats also include tigers, snow and clouded leopards, golden, fishing, jungle and marbled cats. Among ungulates are the hog and barking deer, red goral and takin (GAP, 2001, p. 2; Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996, p. 9).²⁶

Little information is available about bird types in the Namche Barwa region, other than an approximation of 300 species (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 14). A survey from 1996 listed several bird species in Arunachal Pradesh, of which many are most likely found in the Pemakö area. These include several types of eagles such as the Hodgeon's hawk, black, grey-headed fishing and crested serpent eagle. Also listed are the common hill partridge, kalij pheasant, red jungle fowl and the peacock. Possible species specific to the Upper Siang area are the bay owl, blue-bearded bee eater, rufous-necked hornbill, rufous wood pecker, jungle crow and fairy blue bird (Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996, p. 9). An estimated twenty-five species of reptiles, nineteen of amphibians and some 2,500 types of insects are thought to inhabit the upper Pemakö area. No information about amphibians is available for the region's lower territory in India (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 10). No data is available on aquatic animal life for either section of Pemakö. In the following sections of this chapter I address prevailing threats to these ecosystems.

Environmental Threats in Pemakö

Hydro-electric Dam Construction on the Yarlung Tsangpo River in Pemakö

In 2003, the Prime Minister of India launched a hydro-electric initiative to increase hydropower development in the country (Prem, 2014). By 2017, the programme aims to increase electricity

²⁶GAP is the Government of Arunachal Pradesh.

production to 50,000 megawatts by means of 162 projects in sixteen Indian states.²⁷ As of 2008, seventy-two of these schemes were set for implementation in Arunachal Pradesh (Dharmadhikary, 2008). A later report states that a further twenty-eight dams have been planned for Arunachal Pradesh, making the state India's "future powerhouse" (Vagholikar and Das, 2010, p. 1). In October 2010, the state's government increased the number of hydropower projects to 132 (p. 3).

The Siang River Project involves creation of run of river dams that will affect some 106 kilometres of the river (APSPCB, 2009c, p. 1).²⁸ The Upper Siang Project is about 60 kilometres from the Chinese border and within the boundaries of Pemaikö. This hydro-electric project is set to be India's largest (Sasi, 2006). Pre-construction activities began in 2009 and should enter the actual construction phase around 2018. Three more hydropower developments have been proposed for the Longong Korong tributary even further upstream and just southeast of the Siang River's flow into India at the small town of Geling in Pemaikö (Yanity, 2013, p. 475).

By the year 2020, China envisions generating 120,000 megawatts of renewable energy, of which the majority comes from hydro-electric power. The Chinese government reputedly has plans for more than twenty-eight dams on the Yarlung Tsangpo River (Watts, 2010). The Zangmu Dam was the first to be built on the river at about 140 kilometres southeast from Lhasa (International Rivers, 2014). China has made continuous assurances that these dams are run

²⁷The standard unit of electrical energy is the kilowatt hour, which represents 1,000 watts of power supplied for one hour. The energy production of large dams is normally expressed in kilowatt hours per year or gigawatt hours per year (1 gigawatt equals 1,000 megawatts) (McCully, 1996, p. 138).

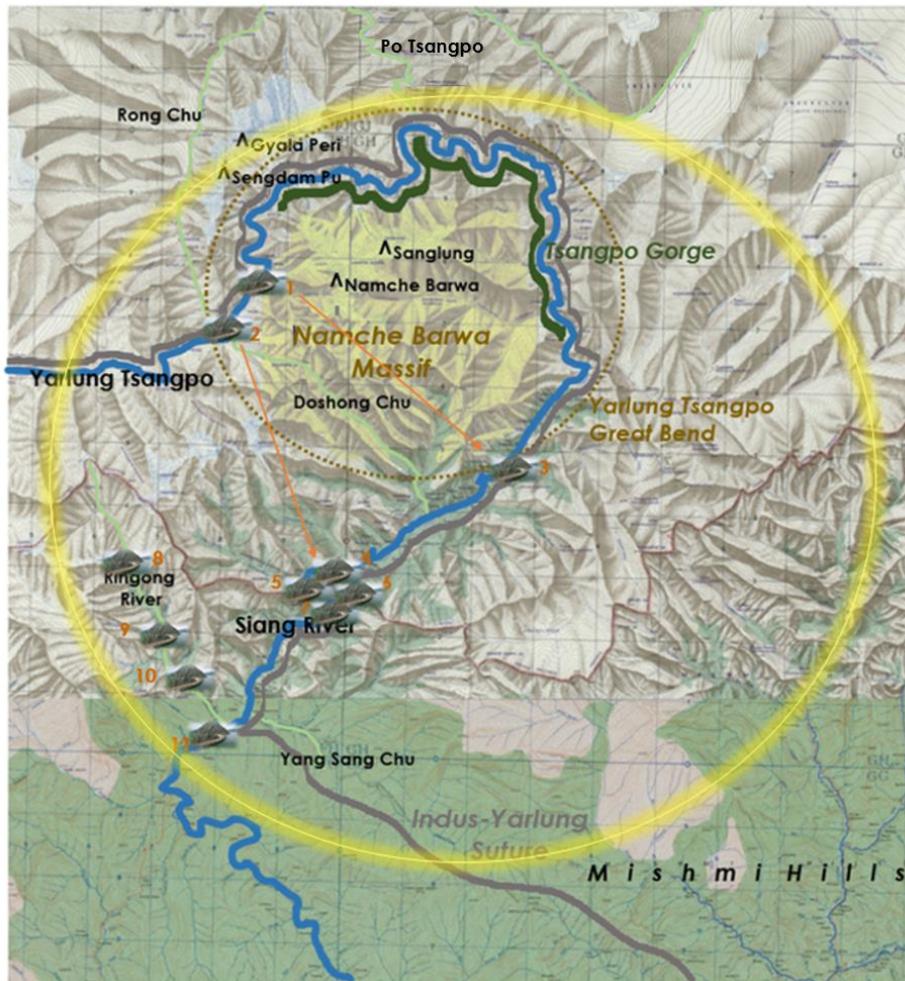
²⁸Run of river hydro-electric projects differ from traditional dams, in that the reservoir contains a minimum of water. They divert the river waters through long tunnels, pass them through a powerhouse and then release the water back into the river downstream. A run of river hydro-electric dam does not significantly alter downstream river constitution (Poff and Hart, 2002, p. 662). These projects are promoted as "environmentally benign" compared to conventional storage dams, although they do have a considerable effect on the surrounding environment (Vagholikar and Das, 2010, p. 4).

of river projects, claiming they will neither divert water nor have a major impact on downstream flows such as those in Pemakö (Krishnan, 2014).

Two further hydropower plants have been envisioned at Medok and Daduqia, another small town in Pemakö (Next Big Future, 2012). The projects conceive of carving out tunnels through the region's mountains (Yanity, 2013, p. 321). The Motuo Project tunnels would start at Lungpe and end at Medok. Tunnels for the Daduqia dam would start near Pe and end at Digidong near the Indian border. The fifteen to twenty-kilometre-long bored pressure tunnels would carry the river's flow through turbines, taking advantage of the 2,160 metre drop in altitude (Cathcart, 1999, p. 854). Either scheme would produce much more energy than any other contemporary hydro-electric dam (Yanity, 2013, p. 321). As Cathcart (1999, p. 854) states, "this unique installation would very likely be our land-based civilisation's mightiest renewable hydro-electric power producing facility".

There are ongoing studies for other potential dam sites: the Po Tsangpo, Parlung and Yiwong are Yarlung Tsangpo tributaries north of the Great Bend, waterways upon which are nine proposed dam sites. The power from these dams is supposedly intended for regional economic development, such as the mining industry (Yanity, 2013, p. 212). Another proposal for maximising the power of the river at the Great Bend advocates connecting it to the Nuijiang River via the Zayu Qu River. Two dams of 2,000 metres height could connect to tunnels much in the same fashion proposed for the Motuo and Daduqia dams (Zhang, 2013, p. 159).

**Figure Four:
Map of Dam Construction in Pemakö²⁹**



- | | | | | | |
|----|----------------------|----|-----------------------|-----|-----------------------|
| 1. | Motuo Dam head | 5. | Chinese dam – unknown | 9. | Chinese dam – unknown |
| 2. | Daduqia Dam head | 6. | Chinese dam – unknown | 10. | Chinese dam – unknown |
| 3. | Motuo Dam flow end | 7. | Chinese dam – unknown | 11. | Ringong Dam |
| 4. | Daduqia Dam flow end | 8. | Chinese dam – unknown | | |

Trans-boundary Disputes

The Pemakö region is divided between India and China by the McMahon Line. The background to this border traces back to the early 1900s with a series of talks between the government

²⁹Information available from Clean Biz Asia. [n.d.]; Hydro China Corporation, [n.d.]; Yellow River Conservancy Commission on the Ministry of Water Resources, 2013. Dams five through ten indicated by Chinese sources did not include names.

representatives of China, Tibet and British India. The objective of these meetings, known as the Simla Conferences, was to come to an agreement about the political and geographical understanding of the term 'Tibet'. Sir Henry McMahon was designated conference president at the first meeting in 1914 (Lamb, 1966, p. 477).

Because Beijing continuously rejected various proposals, negotiations ultimately continued bilaterally with Tibet. McMahon eventually "saw no alternative but to recognise the traditional and historical Tibetan frontier" (Walt van Praag, 1987, p. 55). The border, labelled the 'McMahon Line', was drawn along a line of watersheds among the valleys of the major rivers (Lamb, 1966, p. 533). This satisfied British administrative requirements along the Himalayan border, but presented no final definition of Tibetan status in international law, leaving the legal position of Tibet open to interpretation. This failure of the Simla Conference to produce a valid tripartite agreement has since contributed greatly to the present instability in Sino-Indian political relations (p. 572).

More Recent Developments

Shortly after the Chinese Communists took over Tibet in 1950, the independent Indian government increased its efforts at administering the eastern Himalayan region. The then Indian President Nehru knew that border delineations would negatively influence Sino-Indian relations (Chaudhuri, 2009, p. 851). By 1954, border skirmishes between the two nations had already begun (Brecher, 1979, p. 612). The most blatant provocations came in 1962, when the Chinese attacked India at Thagla Ridge near the Tawang Tract in present-day Arunachal Pradesh. Another border crisis occurred in 1986, further aggravating suspicions between the two nations (Garver, 1996, p. 343).

In 2009, Premier Wen Jiabao of China and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India met with the intention of preventing any further military conflict (Prem, 2014). In 2013, Indian

Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh and Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin sought to finalise a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement first initiated in 2005 (Dikshit, 2013). After yet another border confrontation between India and China the same year, the two countries finally signed an agreement to improve bilateral cooperation and maintain their economic interests in the region in 2013 (Gokhale and Ghosh, 2013). Nevertheless, skirmishes continue regularly, although these incidents remain largely unreported by the media.³⁰

Infrastructure Expansion

India and China are both building up their respective border regions near the McMahon Line. The principal expansion is the extension of road networks. In Pemakö, approximately thirty kilometres of roads meander along the Siang River from Tuting up to Geling. In 2012 and 2014, India's Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijju, announced India's plans for road construction along the international boundary in Arunachal Pradesh (GOIMDNR, 2014, p. 5).³¹ The government has also planned to develop a border block in those villages located on or within ten kilometres of the international border. Developments will include educational facilities, medical and agricultural buildings, and housing (GOIMHA, 2014, p. 8).³² An airport is planned for Along, a small city near the external reaches of southern Pemakö (Rai and Ghavate, 2013, p. 1575).

There are approximately 128 infrastructure projects planned for the Nyingchi Prefecture, of which some extend into the Pemakö region. Future projects include the Lha sa-Nyingchi Railway construction and improvements on the Yunnan-Tibet highway (Gao, 2014; Lang, 2014). The railway will stretch close to Pemakö. The Yunnan-Tibet highway passes by

³⁰During my 2014 travels through India, I met members of the Indian Army who were stationed at various outposts on the border to China. Each person reported that there were regular confrontations between the two armies – even on a weekly basis. I was told that most of these encounters were not communicated to Indian news agencies.

³¹The GOIMDNR is the Government of India: Ministry of Development of the Northeastern Region.

³²The GOIMHA is the Government of India: Ministry of Home Affairs.

the northern extremities of Pemakö at Bome where it connects to Medok at the Motuo Highway intersection (Huazhong, 2013). The Motuo Highway also includes a four-kilometre tunnel called Galong La (Tunnel Builder, 2010).

The Effects of Dams and Disputes on Pemakö's Environment

Chinese plans for hydropower projects at Motuo and Daduqia in Medok Province along with India's planned projects in the Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh position the relatively tiny Pemakö as a source of immense damming activity. Both countries are in a desperate race to establish first user rights over the Yarlung Tsangpo / Siang River in order to stake a claim to an uninterrupted flow of its waters.³³ Policymakers defend their projects in the Brahmaputra Basin, saying they are run of river hydro-electricity generation schemes with small pondage and minimal impact on water flows (Gupta, 2013); however, most of these hydro-electric projects in the Himalayan region incorporate large dams that will have inevitable repercussions on river dynamics.

Whether these projects require a large reservoir or are run of river dams, stored water could cause environmental issues in the Pemakö area. For example, the Namche Barwa Massif has proven to be extremely tectonically active. A dam reservoir could potentially exacerbate this seismicity (Tashi Tsering, 2010). Because of continuous tectonic movement, dam water would have an extreme sediment load. This would accelerate the sedimentation rate in the reservoir, affect dam technology and cause downstream riverbed stripping. Even a reservoir of modest size could impact communities upstream of the initial intake position (Yanity, 2013, p. 434).

³³In international law, first user rights are said to start upon the completion of a project. The World Commission on Dams and the International Commission on Large Dams are two organisations that seek to monitor and apply regulations to trans-boundary river dam building. These are, however, very difficult to enforce.

Debate has also centred around the issue of tunnels in the Yarlung Tsangpo Gorge (Zeitler et al., 2007). For example, to hollow out tunnels near Medok, one report stated that Chinese construction agencies conducted low-yield, subterranean atomic explosions in 2005 (Bisht, 2009; Nandy, 2013). If indeed atomic bombs, or other high explosives, are used to excavate tunnels between dam intake and output sites, this could exacerbate seismicity issues. Local wildlife would disperse to other areas not normally their habitat, upsetting the ecosystem balance. Furthermore, once functional, tunnels would contribute to large areas of dry land due to the diversion of water (Pomeranz, 2009, p. 30).

By increasing their investments in regional development, China and India reinforce their territorial claims. In the meantime, construction projects have already engendered considerable environmental damage: road construction into Medok causes thawing of the underlying permafrost and the destruction of adjacent vegetation (CTA, 2009, p. 33). Road construction in Arunachal Pradesh contributes to deforestation, eco-fragmentation, landslides and higher levels of river sedimentation. Roads facilitate entry to poachers and traffic for illegal trade in wildlife. Incoming visitors and residents increase the human population. Shops, hotels and restaurants augment the demand for natural resources and the need for waste disposal (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 31).

This infrastructure is essential to dam construction, and these hydro-electric projects further intensify regional protectionist strategies. In addition, sustaining national interest in hydro-electric power reinforces the perceived right to construct dams with little consideration for the consequences to riparian countries. Clearly, the present and potential environmental transformations in Pemakö represent complex, international issues.

The Human Factor as a Significant Environmental Threat in Pemakö

The Pemakö population represents a diverse group of ethnolinguistic origins. Hagiographies of eighteenth-century Buddhist masters reveal how exploration and settlements in the area were beginning to arrive in successive waves (Grothmann, 2012, p. 28). In the early 1900s, settlers from Tibet's eastern Khams region arrived in the Mishmi Hills of today's Arunachal Pradesh. When China invaded Tibet in the 1950s, many initial escapees sought safety in the Namche Barwa area around Medok. They also settled in the southern area of Pemakö near today's towns of Tuting, Geling and Singha in Arunachal Pradesh (p. 38).

Demographically, a large part of the population in Medok Country are Han Chinese, of which most are army members or transitory construction workers (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 18). Resident Tibetans are classified as Khampa, Kongpowa and Tshangla. The Khampa are Tibetans originating from the neighbouring Khams territory of eastern Tibet; the Kongpowa stem from a region directly north of Pemakö, known as Kong po. The Tshangla, or Memba are believed to have originated from Bhutan. Generally, residents of Tibetan ethnic origin are labelled 'Pemaköba'. Within this group are members of the Adi tribe, also known in Tibetan as the Lhoba (Yanity, 2013, p. 164). The southern areas in Arunachal Pradesh are populated by both Tibetan ethnic groups and the Lhoba.

As of 2014, Medok County had a population of about 12,000 (Yang, 2014). Medok's education system is significantly underdeveloped in comparison to the rest of China (Xiangrui, Huazhong and Daqiong, 2013). Since Pemakö's natural environment is not conducive to large communities and farmland, populations have grown along the river valleys. These have functioned as transport corridors between the Tibetan plateau and lower mountain regions; narrow trails still traverse Pemakö and connect small villages. Road infrastructure in the Namche Barwa region remains minimal (China Daily, 2011). As of 2009, only 22 per cent

of the county had electricity, with the entire population relying on a single power station (China Daily, 2013).

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh's Directorate of Economics and Statistics (2010, p. 3) 2001 census data indicate a population of 3,915 residents in the Tuting circle. Geling counted a population of 742 citizens. The region is crisscrossed by two lane roadways that wind between villages. Although monitored by the Border Road Organisation of India, these passages are narrow, under constant repair and plagued by rock and mudslides. Statistics issued by the same census estimated literacy at fifty-four per cent in the state as a whole (p. 7). Available electricity services were estimated at sixty-seven per cent of the population (p. 61).

Most households in the Medok area depend on agriculture with cultivation along relatively flat terrain in valley bottoms or on lower slopes. Farming usually stops at around 2,400 metres altitude, but may extend to 3,000 metres on cliffs and ridges (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 19). The Lhoba use seasonal slash and burn techniques, or *jhum*, for field preparation, while Tibetans have mostly permanent fields. Both techniques require extensive forest clearance (Menon et al., 2001, p. 501; Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 22). In Arunachal Pradesh, a substantial portion of the population depends on natural resource-based livelihoods. These communities each implement their own particular agricultural methods (Vagholikar and Das, 2010, p. 2). Not unlike agricultural methods in upper Pemakö, *jhum* cultivation is commonly implemented, promoting widespread destruction of agricultural fields and forests (Sundriyal, 2008, p. 8). Residents of both areas rely on hunting for food, trade and cash income (APSPCB, 2009d, pp. 85–86).

In spite of Pemakö's elevated status as a hidden land, scientific data illustrate that the area's mostly Buddhist inhabitants have contributed to widespread animal species endangerment. Although many large mammals in the Namche Barwa Massif are protected, subsistence hunting threatens their survival. In fact, a large proportion of research was

conducted through analysis of animal skins and trophies in local residences (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, pp. 14, 28). At least twenty-three species were reported to be actively hunted, mostly for local meat consumption. Macaques are often killed to prevent crop damage. Carnivores like the red panda and smaller cats such as the leopard cat and clouded leopard are valued for their skins; these are traded among the locals. Wild pigs are slaughtered for their meat and to prevent crop damage. Snow leopards and tigers are destroyed as a preventative measure against livestock depredation. Marmots are killed for the supposed medicinal value of their skin and fat. Himalayan black bear and musk deer are hunted for their gall bladders and musk pods respectively, catering to the demand for illegal wildlife products. In upper Pemakö, goods are sold to Chinese middlemen, and in lower Pemakö, to Bhutanese, Indian and Chinese dealers (Mishra, Madhusudan and Datta, 2006, pp. 3–4; Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, pp. 21, 28, 31).³⁴ In a few of the lower valleys, the villagers were reported to pool money to reward hunters for killing wild predators. Wildlife trophies are gifted to politicians and government officials, or used as barter with soldiers. Artefacts are made from barking deer antlers and serow horns are sold in government run handicraft shops (Mishra, Madhusudan and Datta, 2006, pp. 3–5). Thus, although dam construction and peripheral infrastructure expansion have the potential to cause considerable damage to Pemakö region, the most immediate threat has, until now, proven to be the local inhabitants.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a summary of environmental circumstances in Pemakö, and also highlights matters that require further investigation. Pemakö's ecological environment remains

³⁴Illegal wildlife trade is a global phenomenon; the final destination of contraband from Pemakö is uncertain, although wildlife trade is exceptionally active in certain places. These 'wildlife trade hotspots' include China's international borders, southeast Asia, eastern and southern Africa, eastern Europe and Mexico (Traffic, 2008).

widely unexplored and undocumented, hindered by Chinese and Indian government restrictions. Other than knowing the approximate position of dams on the Yarlung Tsangpo in the Namche Barwa Massif, detailed information about their structure or progress is unknown; nor is there much public information about the status of dam construction on the upper reaches of the Siang River near Geling. In addition, ethnographic research is hindered by regional political tensions. Nevertheless, this chapter provides a background against which to explore the relationship of Pemakö's environment, and threats facing that environment, to the region's religious culture. In support of these investigations, in Chapters Three through Five I examine Tibetan Buddhist culture in Pemakö through the lens of scripture and ritual.

Chapter Three:
Setting the Context for an Analysis of
Self-Liberation upon Hearing:
A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö

Introduction

Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö is a Tibetan Buddhist Treasure text that describes various aspects of this hidden land's environment and religious culture. In this chapter I set the context of this *gter ma* by beginning with a brief summary of Tibet's geography and its early indigenous population. This account establishes a background against which I then portray the integration of Buddhism in Tibet, and show how territorial and political ambitions were enmeshed with religious objectives.

I continue this chapter's historical survey with the biography of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, the revealer of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. I explore the development and practice of the Tibetan *gter ma* tradition. Within this framework, I include a review of Tibetan Buddhist *sbas yul* theory as it relates to Treasure mythology. I then turn my attention to innovations in the conception of Pemakö as a hidden land, and discuss *gter ston* and Treasure texts relevant to the region. Each of the inquiries in this chapter demonstrates how Tibetan Buddhism incorporated the natural environment in the idealisation and propagation of its religious narrative, especially in the hidden land of Pemakö.

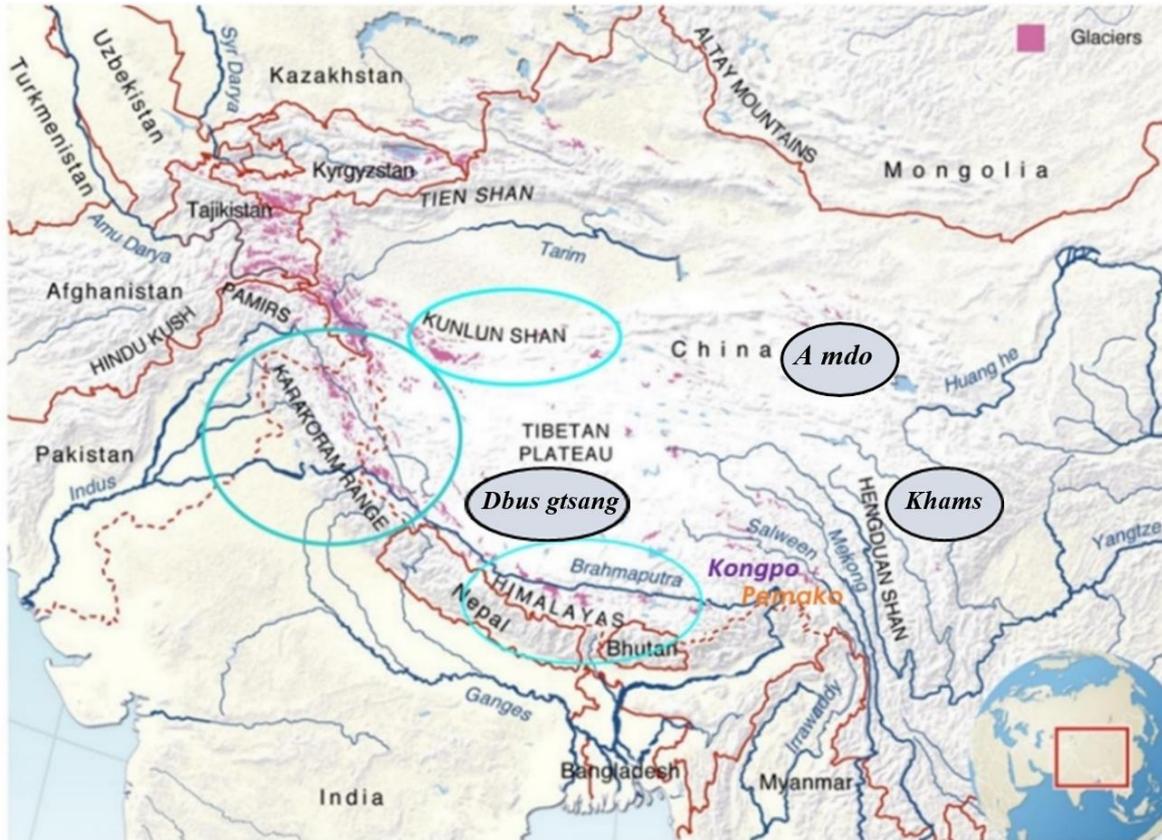
The Tibetan Landscape and Territory

Kapstein (2006, p. 1) asserts that "It is impossible to consider [the cultural and historical Tibet] apart from the distinctive geographical and ecological zone formed by the Tibetan plateau". My aim in this section, therefore, is to provide the reader with a general overview of the land

area understood as Tibet as of the eighteenth century, a timeframe that is the most relevant to my study of Pemakö.

Geographically, the Tibetan landscape can be loosely defined as the Tibetan Plateau. This enormous landmass is bordered on three sides by mountain ranges: the Karakoram extend along the west, the Kunlun stretch through the north and the Himalayas line the south. The eastern outline is mostly vast flatlands traversed by the Mekong, Salween and Yangtze Rivers (Powers, 2007, p. 138; Stein, 1972, p. 20). The Tibetan territory as it generally existed in the eighteenth century was comprised of the three main provinces of central Dbus and Gtsang, northeastern A mdo and eastern Khams. Dbus gtsang still forms the traditional Tibetan heartland. Its northern high plateau, called the Byang thang, is a dry, spacious expanse dotted with salt lakes. Dbus gtsang is bordered in the south by the Himalayan Range. A semi-circle of fertile grasslands and forests begins in A mdo, descends through Khams and continues westward through the Yarlung Tsangpo River basin (Kapstein, 2006, pp. 6, 10). Adjacent to this area in Tibet's southeast are the districts known as Dags po, Kong po and Spo bo, known for sub-tropical landscapes (Lazcano, 2005, p. 42).

**Figure Five:
Map of the Tibetan Territory³⁵**



Tibet's Pre-Buddhist Population

The ancestral origins of the Tibetan people are mostly lost to the past, and their religious culture has been the subject of much scholarly debate (Snellgrove, 2002, p. 390). Stein (1972, p. 191) labels the early system of religious practices in Tibet “the nameless religion”. Tucci (1988, pp. 163, 213) identifies Tibet’s indigenous spiritual tradition as “the folk religion” and equates this term with the more widely recognised Bon religion. Samuel (1993, p. 7) uses the term “shamanic” to define societies that “communicate with a mode of reality alternative to . . . the world of everyday experience”, a concept that is also associated with Bon. Snellgrove (2002,

³⁵Underlying map: Anon., [n.d.].a.

p. 390) disputes these claims, and contends that Bon may have been a form of Buddhism from traditions originating as far west as Persia.³⁶ The evolution of Bon, however, most likely involved an intricate synthesis of an archaic Tibetan shamanic tradition interwoven with Buddhist ideals introduced primarily from India (Kapstein, 2000, p. 13).

An implication of the dynamics of the early Tibetan spiritual tradition(s) is the significance these practitioners attached to the natural environment. Mountains were dwellings of the gods, spirits hovered in streams and rivers, and rocks and boulders bore the traces of religious masters (Samuel, 1993, p. 158). Innumerable protector deities were associated with specific locations in the environment, with whom human agents interacted (Kapstein, 2006, p. 46). Spiritual ‘adepts’ even used their powers to control the weather (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1956, p. 553). As I describe in this and subsequent chapters of the thesis, these and other beliefs are recognisable in Tibetan Buddhism, suggesting the assimilation of shamanic theory, ritual knowledge and traditions that have merged into a Tibetan system of Buddhist culture (Namkhai Norbu, Clemente and Lukianowicz, 1997, pp. xvii–xviii).

Territorial, Political and Religious Developments in Tibet from the Eighth to the Seventeenth Centuries CE

Cuevas (2006, p. 46) states that “organizing the past is necessarily an exercise in interpretation”, and that the understanding of Tibetan history should also “bear in mind this flexibility”. Since my research emphasises a Tibetan Buddhist perspective, I will therefore consider how Tibetan history has largely been expressed in Buddhist terms in accordance with “Tibetan indigenous schemes” (p. 46). In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, the developmental trajectory of Buddhism in Tibet is often divided into four phases: the first is characterised by the ‘pre-Buddhist’ indigenous cultures.

³⁶Kvaerne (2010, pp. 172–173) has argued, however, that there is not enough evidence to support any claims that the Bon tradition was indeed influenced by religious theory originating from Iran.

The subsequent phase is that of the reign of initial ‘pro-Buddhist’ kings from approximately 600 to 850 CE, also dubbed the ‘Imperial Age’ in Tibet’s history (pp. 46–47). Until the mid-700s, despite attempts by previous ruling parties to introduce Buddhism to Tibetan society, the central government had largely rejected Buddhist thought. Hostility towards the religion arose predominantly among members of Tibet’s Bon faith in response to widespread persecution.

In 756 CE, Khri srong lde btsan (c. 742–797) was enthroned as Tibet’s ruler, and he declared Buddhism the state religion (Van Schaik, 2011, pp. 27, 30). It may have been a genuine spiritual conversion that motivated his endeavours; however, Khri srong lde btsan’s assimilation of Buddhism was also a catalysing force that solidified his political stature and consolidated the dispersed Tibetan regions (Kapstein, 2006, pp. 67–68). In the hopes of strengthening his efforts at establishing Buddhism’s foothold in the country, Khri srong lde btsan is said to have invited the Indian Mahāyāna master Śāntarakṣita (725–788) to Tibet from India (Powers, 2007, p. 148).

More reinforcement from India came with the arrival of Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche. Typical of Tibetan folklore, Guru Rinpoche has been described as a deft performer of demon quelling rituals and of magical feats (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 513). The Padmasambhava mythology, however, diverges considerably from what recent research indicates about his existence in Tibet. In fact, as Hirshberg (2016, p. 3) attests, “the primacy of Padmasambhava’s agency in Tibet’s conversion is uniformly unattested in early sources”. Moreover, no content can be definitively ascribed to the period within which Padmasambhava allegedly began his career in Tibet, or even prior to his arrival from India (Cantwell and Mayer, 2011, p. 39). Early biographical information about Padmasambhava is thought to have evolved during the 900s. In later centuries, Padmasambhava became the single most important figure in Tibetan narratives of their early conversion to Buddhism (Dalton,

2004, p. 759). From the Tibetan perspective, he is considered the patron saint of Tibet, the founder of the Rnying ma tradition and a driving force behind the proliferation of Buddhism in Tibet (Powers, 2007, p. 371; Williams, 1989, p. 188).

The Imperial Age of relative peace continued in the Tibetan domain until the reign of Glang dar ma (c. 800–841) began in 838. Allegedly a Bon adherent, he is held responsible for the near complete destruction of Tibet’s newfound spiritual allegiance to Buddhism (Walter, 2009, p. 52). Scholars have argued, however, that the traditional stories surrounding Glang dar ma are fictitious. Another theory for the demise of Tibetan Buddhism during his reign states that severe weather changes in Central and East Asia were responsible for the fall of several empires, although this disintegration could have also been due to political instability throughout the Tibetan territory (Walter, 2009, p. 52; Yamaguchi, 1996). After his supposed murder in 841, Tibet experienced a third phase of development, also known as the ‘phase of chaos’ and political upheaval (Powers, 2007, p. 155; Stein, 1972, p. 54). Still, it was during this time that “Buddhism in Tibet was free to become Tibetan Buddhism” without the constraints of “imperial decree” (Hirshberg, 2016, p. 19).

In the late 900s, a renaissance of Tibetan Buddhism began, marking the fourth phase of its development (Cuevas, 2006, p. 47; Stein, 1972, p. 54). The Rnying ma tradition gained momentum among the Tibetan population through transmission of the old translations of Indian Buddhist literature. The ‘New Translation’ orders of the Sa skya, Bka’ brgyud and Dge lugs schools were vying for majority patronage to their respective institutions. Strife between rivalling factions continued in the country throughout the 1100s. By the mid-1200s, the Mongol leader Kublai Khan (1215–1294) had established authority over Tibet (Khan, 1996, p. 126).

He did so with the help of the Sa skya Paṇḍita's nephew, 'Phags pa (1235–1280).³⁷ The shared control over Tibet was thus both secular and religious, and became known as the *mchod-yon* or priest-patron relationship (Walt van Praag, 1987, p. 5). Life for Tibetans under Mongol rule proved financially exploitative, violent and disempowering (Van Schaik, 2011, pp. 81–82).

In the mid-1300s, the Tibetans gained independence and the country returned to an imperial style of governance (Van Schaik, 2011, p. 89). Still, discord between religious factions prevailed and the Mongols once again began to take advantage of the squabbles between the smaller kingdoms scattered around the Tibetan plateau. In 1574, Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543–1588), the abbot of the powerful Dge lugs 'Bras spungs Monastery, was invited to visit Altan Khan (1508–1582) in his Mongolian court (Powers, 2007, p. 164). They entered into a partnership similar to that of 'Phags pa and Kublai Khan in the 1200s. Bsod nams rgya mtsho was awarded the title of 'Dalai' or 'Ocean' Lama, and dubbed the third in line to the lineage of Dalai Lamas as the rebirth of two previous incarnations. This alliance with the Mongols afforded the Dge lugs school the momentum to ultimately become the most powerful Buddhist sect in Tibet (Samuel, 1993, pp. 443, 545; Van Schaik, 2011, p. 116).

After an ineffectual leadership by the Fourth Dalai Lama, the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682), was enthroned in 1622. By virtue of his position as the secular and spiritual leader of Tibet, however, he also found himself entangled in politico-religious rivalries. In 1642, Gushri Khan (1582–1685), leader of the Khoshot Mongols, overcame Tibetan territorial conflicts on behalf of the Dge lugs pa (Kapstein, 2000, p. 130; Samten Karmay, 2005, p. 12). Under the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the vast Tibetan territory was finally unified, experiencing an upsurge in cultural innovation and economic strength (Stein, 1972, p. 84).

³⁷The Sa skya Paṇḍita was a leader of the Sa skya sect of Tibetan Buddhism. He was appointed the official Tibetan representative to the Mongols in 1249 (Snellgrove and Richardson, 2003, p. 7).

Upon construction of his new palace at Lha sa in Dbus, the Fifth Dalai Lama was deemed the embodiment of the consummate compassion of the deity Avalokiteśvara (Powers, 2007, p. 168). The Dalai Lama was passionate about Buddhist philosophy, and is remembered as one of the most mystical of this line of incarnations and a Treasure revealer in his own right. He studied under the famous Buddhist adepts of the era, additionally devoting his time to poetry, linguistics and astrology (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 821–823). Unlike the Dalai Lamas before him, he practised Old and New Translation school doctrines, writing extensive commentaries on both (Mullin, 2013, pp. 255–256). Despite his political ambitions in favour of the Dge lugs school, he initiated a religious tolerance that extended even to the Bon tradition (Samten Karmay, 2005, p. 13). Consequently, the stature of the ‘Great Fifth’ has been viewed as unparalleled by any Tibetan ruler before him (Walt van Praag, 1987, p. 11).

***The Life and Times of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
Revealer of Self-Liberation upon Hearing***

Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's lifespan corresponded approximately to that of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Although the Great Fifth is remembered as a spiritual master and astute politician, Tibetan historiography minimises the less favourable effects of his governance. He ruled in great part through his regents, who were imperative, for example, to the orchestration of Gushri Khan's territorial conquests (Richardson, 1980, p. 329; Samten Karmay, 2005, p. 12). Granted, these events may have formed part of a greater plan to unify and strengthen the Tibetan nation; however, like other political measures of the day, they were not effectuated without human degradation or sacrifice (Williams, 1989, p. 164). Bdud 'dul rdo rje is remembered as a prolific revealer of Treasure texts; however, his biography reveals that he too could not avoid the secular and religious transformations characteristic of the Fifth Dalai Lama's reign.

Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje was born in 1615 in the small town of Dngul phu in Khams. At six, he began to have spiritual visions, after which he was sent to study at Sde dge state monastery, Lhun grub steng in Khams. Bdud 'dul rdo rje studied first under Kun dga' rgya mtsho (seventeenth century), who trained him in Sa skya and Rnying ma theory and practice. Later, Bdud 'dul rdo rje practised exclusively in the Rnying ma tradition, after which he ventured to Dbus gtsang for teachings from various Buddhist masters (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], p. 485).

He returned southeastward to the mountains of Spo po where he met with the *gter ston* Rig 'dzin Rje btsun Snying po (1585–1656) for further spiritual instruction. Legend has it that during this time, Padmasambhava himself gave Bdud 'dul empowerments, instructions and prophecy about his role as a *gter ston* (Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye, Yeshe Gyamtso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2011, p. 251). In addition, Rje btsun Snying po introduced the budding Treasure revealer to nearby Pemakö as the ultimate hidden land (Sardar-Afkhami, 1996, p. 2).

In Spo bo, Bdud 'dul rdo rje began revelation of the four major *gter ma* cycles he would discover during his lifetime.³⁸ Throughout his wanderings as a *sngags pa*, or tantric lay practitioner, he is said to have unveiled over 100 different *gter ma*. Bdud 'dul rdo rje's fame as a *gter ston* reached his preceptor Kung dga gya mtsho in Sde dge. Even the Great Fifth in Lha sa began to take interest in the *gter ston*'s prophecies about the Tibetan kingdom. Supposedly predestined to spiritual leadership, Bdud 'dul rdo rje then returned to his former monastery of

³⁸Gyatso (1996, p. 148) defines Treasure 'cycles' as sets of texts that constitute "complete ritual and doctrinal systems". Practitioners regard them as authoritative collections of teachings that act as alternatives to existing scriptural systems. The four cycles of teachings credited to Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje are the *Dam chos dgongs pa yongs 'dus* (*Gathering of the Entire Sections of the True Doctrine*); the *Dam chos sprul sku snying thig* (*True Doctrine as the Innermost Spirituality of the Body of Emanation*); the *Zab don gsag ba snying thig* (*Profoundly Significant, Secret Innermost Spirituality*); and the *Tshe yang phur gsum* (*The Three Innermost Spiritualities*) (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], pp. 483–486; Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672a, pp. 463–466).

Lhun grub steng in Khams in 1656 (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], pp. 486–487; Ronis, 2006, p. 175).

Bdud 'dul rdo rje acted as intermediary and advisor to the secular and religious powers in Sde dge, reminiscent of the *mchod-yon* relationships in Tibet. It is said that he was even honoured with the construction of a temple in his name (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], p. 486). Historical records, however, paint a different story of his ‘success’. Khams remained under the influence of a decentralised past composed of petty state rulers, pastoralists and “wild bandit areas” (Samuel, 1993, p. 82). Nevertheless, the Khams territory was increasingly populated by monasteries of the predominant Tibetan Buddhist sects (pp. 74–78). Upon Bdud 'dul's arrival in Sde dge, the monasteries' survival and prestige no longer relied on the presence of a charismatic religious leader's relationship to the local nobility – the dynamics had shifted to the authority of the monastic community (Ronis, 2006, p. 176; Stein, 1972, p. 92). Through a series of miscalculations in a ‘professional strategy’ aimed at justifying his relevancy to the ruling establishment, Bdud 'dul seems to have lost favour with both the secular and religious forces in Sde dge. In addition, the Great Fifth accused the *gter ston* of inventing false revelations, which irrevocably sealed Bdud 'dul rdo rje's exclusion from Tibet's national monastic reign (Ronis, 2006, pp. 179–183).

Religious accounts of Bdud 'dul rdo rje's life fail to mention his defeats, ignoring the “broader religio-political paradigm ushered in by the Fifth Dalai Lama” (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.]; Ronis, 2006, p. 179). The *gter ston* returned to his former haunts in southeastern Tibet, and is said to have continued teaching. Among his many students count the famous masters Rig 'dzin Klong gsal snying po (1625–1692) and Rdzogs chen padma Rig 'dzin (1625–1697) (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], p. 482; Dudjom Rinpoche and

Gyurme Dorje, 1991, pp. 736, 813).³⁹ Bdud 'dul rdo rje is also said to have recognised the importance of Pemakö and 'opened' up many doors to the hidden land. He remained near Pemakö until his death in 1672 at the age of 58. Perhaps as a testament to his significance to the religious tradition and to the immensity of his spiritual accomplishments, it was reported in his biography that "unimaginable rays of light and showers of blossoms appeared" at his cremation (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], p. 487). As research about the trajectory of the Guru Rinpoche mythology attests, religious narratives develop normative consistency perhaps as an indirect result of the continuously evolving circumstances within which they are created. This process is also evident in the life story of Bdud 'dul rdo rje, who, during the course of the tumultuous religious developments surrounding the *gter ston*, expanded upon the remarkable Padmasambhava legend through his contributions to the Pemakö narrative.

***The Tibetan Buddhist Gter ma Tradition:
Theory and Practice of Treasure Revelation***

History of the Treasure Tradition

The roots of the Tibetan Buddhist Treasure tradition possibly date to much earlier practices in Bon culture. In Bon history, there were at least two phases of sacred text concealment: according to legend, well before the rise of the Tibetan Buddhist kings, the eighth Tibetan king Gri gum btsan po (c. third century CE) is said to have persecuted members of the Bon tradition. Consequently, Bon adherents hid scripture to preserve them for future generations. Centuries later, when King Khri srong lde btsan sought to undermine the influence of Bon followers in the government, these practitioners were either exiled or forced to convert to Buddhism. Again,

³⁹Tibetan religious history recounts that Rig 'dzin Klong gsal snying po and Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje together rebuilt the Rnying ma-Kha thog Monastery in Khams that had fallen into disrepair (Nyoshul Khenpo, 2005, p. 650). Rdzogs chen padma Rig 'dzin founded Rdzogs chen Monastery in Khams at the behest of the Fifth Dalai Lama and under the patronage of the then ruler of Sde dge, Sangs rgyas ten pa (p. 656).

Bon texts were concealed in caves, underground or within temple walls for later rediscovery and dissemination (Kvaerne, [n.d.], p. 9; Tsering Dhundup, [n.d.], p. 4).

In Tibetan Buddhism the concealment of religious texts is mostly attributed to Padmasambhava (Kapstein, 2006, p. 109). Padmasambhava is said to have advised the faithful to “hide the written Treasure, because in the future beings will be difficult to subdue; only by virtue of these scriptures will the Buddha’s doctrine be able to flourish again” (O rgyan gling pa, 1323–1360, p. 268).⁴⁰ The Tibetan Buddhist tradition of hiding texts could also be attributed to preserving religious thought in the face of persecution. For example, according to some early Tibetan sources, the phase of alleged persecution under the reign of Glang dar ma includes the first instances of Buddhist treasure burial (Hirshberg, 2016, p. 90).

As I have described in an earlier section of this chapter, Padmasambhava’s legend is said to have flourished during the ‘dark period’ of Tibetan history that followed the demise of Glang dar ma in the ninth century (Cantwell and Mayer, 2011, p. 22). During the ‘era of fragmentation’, Tibetans were integrating Buddhist thought into their culture thereby making “Buddhism their own” (Dalton, 2004, p. 759). Then in the eleventh century, Treasure text revelation began, likely in response to the rise of the New Translation schools during the same period. Tibet’s first recorded *gter stons* Sangs rgyas bla ma (1000–1080) and Grwa pa mngon shes (1012–1090) paved the way for the older Rnying ma tradition to reassert itself among the rivalling Bka’ gdams and Bka’ brgyud sects (Powers, 2007, p. 382–383). This aligned Padmasambhava’s legacy and prophecy with the timely appearance of revealers and revealed, bridging new influences with glorified memories of the Imperial Age.

⁴⁰Yi ger bris nas gter sba yis; Dus mtha’i sems chen ’dul dka’a ba; Gter chos spang du ga la rung; ’Di ni bris pa tsam gyis kyang; Sangs rgyas bstan pa ’phel bar ’gyur.

The Transmission Process and Classification of Treasure Texts

The Rnying ma narrative describes the process of Treasure transmission in six stages, from transporting teachings from their origins in a *dharmakāya* realm through to the physical realm of practitioners (Gyatso, 1996, p. 151).⁴¹ The first three stages involve transmissions of tantric material. The remaining three stages are specific to Treasure revelations and are called prediction of the transmission, entrustment to the *ḍākinīs* and empowerment by aspiration.⁴² According to the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, Padmasambhava predicts the circumstances of the teaching's reappearance after concealing it. He then entrusts it to fierce spiritual protectors who watch over the Treasure until the appropriate time comes for it to be revealed. Empowerment by aspiration means Padmasambhava's actual instruction to a suitable spiritual recipient in a future incarnation, who then must also demonstrate his or her understanding of the teaching (Doctor, 2005, p. 19).

Tibetan spiritual adepts did not seek to gain an overview of the different varieties of these texts until many years after the tradition's initial development (Doctor, 2005, p. 20). The earliest known attempts to categorise Treasure literature date from the thirteenth century by the Rnying ma master Chos dbang (1212–1270).⁴³ Later, the Ris med master 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899) categorised the texts primarily as Earth and Mind Treasure (pp. 23–24).⁴⁴ Earth Treasures, or *sa gter*, are discovered in a physical location such

⁴¹The *dharmakāya* is the invisible form of a Buddha representing enlightened wisdom; the *dharmakāya* realm is considered the abode of this form of an enlightened being.

⁴²In Tibetan religious culture, *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs* are the male and female versions of esoteric beings known as 'sky dancers', or literally as 'sky goers' (*mkha' 'gro* or *mkha' 'gro ma* in Tibetan).

⁴³Chos dbang's four main groups were: 1) Ordinary material Treasures, 2) especially purposeful Treasures, 3) the supreme Treasures of the three doors and 4) the definitive Treasure of suchness. Ordinary material Treasures are composed of supreme, special and ordinary Treasures, which relate to ritual substances, valleys, water, building materials and magic tricks. Especially purposeful Treasures refer to truthful speech, astrology, medicine, handicrafts and magic. Body, speech and mind Treasures belong to the category of the supreme Treasures of the three doors. Finally, definitive Treasures of suchness include the realisations of all the Buddhas (Doctor, 2005, p. 22).

⁴⁴'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas was an influential Tibetan scholar from Khams. He practised in the Bka' brgyud tradition, and he was also a *gter ston*. He made it his life's mission to

as in the ground or a rock. This group also includes rediscovered Treasures in which earlier teachings are hidden to be revealed at a later, more propitious time. The *sa gter* can be a buried or concealed text, but these Treasures are also characterised as jewels, religious statues, images or ritual objects thought to be receptacles of religious content (Kapstein, 2006, p. 71; Phuntsok Tsering, 2012, p. 5). A Mind Treasure (*dgongs gter*) is thought to be first planted in the disciple's mind by Padmasambhava to be awakened at a later date for transmission to others (p. 21). A sub-division of Mind Treasures are known as Pure Vision teachings, or *dag snang*. These are received by highly realised lamas in visions, experiences or dreams deemed communicated to them by holy beings (Samuel, 1993, p. 461). As I describe in the following sub-section, the revelation of Mind Treasures follow a specific procedure that 'converts' the sacred knowledge into textual form.

The Role of the Treasure Revealer

Central to the process of Treasure revelation is the role of the revealer, or *gter ston*, Padmasambhava is believed to have chosen these Treasure revealers from his contemporaneous disciples, sealing their destiny to fulfil their sacred task in a future incarnation (Van Schaik, 2011, p. 96).⁴⁵ They are born one after another to different types of families and under varying circumstances. A *gter ma* revelation of Rat na gling pa (1403–1479) proclaims that “in each great land there will be a great *gter ston* [and] in each small place there will be a minor *gter*

classify and compile Buddhist literature, and is famous for his work the *Shes bya kun khyab* (*Compendium of All Knowledge*). He was an advocate for the non-sectarian Ris med movement in Tibet (Smith, 2002, pp. 247–250).

⁴⁵According to legends surrounding Padmasambhava, these were the original followers of Guru Rinpoche who each had unique, individual attributes: King Khri srong lde btsan could subdue men with his resplendent appearance; Nam kha'i rnying po could ride on the sun's rays; Sangs rgyas ye shes could shatter rocks with his *phur ba* (ritual dagger); Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs could neigh like a horse from the crown of his head; Ye shes mtsho rgyal could resurrect dead men; Dpal gyi dbang phyung could cause death by fever by raising his *phur ba*; Rdo rje bdud 'joms could move unhindered like the wind; Vairotsana could compel people to do his will (Dowman and Lha dban rgya mtsho'i blo gros, 1973, p. 83).

ston” (Leschly, 2007; Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye, Yeshe Gyamtso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2011, p. 72).⁴⁶ Samuel (1993, p. 296) elaborates that *gter ston* are somewhat like the Tibetan folk shamanic practitioners and reminiscent of the Bon tradition, with their sometimes antinomian behaviour representing the wildest extreme of Tibetan Buddhist practice.⁴⁷

The revelations are experienced as a direct transmission from Padmasambhava, even if features of the traditions in which the *gter ston* has trained are evident in the new composition (Cantwell, 2015, p. 244). Before the *gter ston* makes a discovery, spiritual guides instruct the revealer about their status, disclose detailed information about the Treasures to discover, and name those people who will support the quest (Tulku Thondup Rinpoche and Talbott, 1986, p. 73). In accordance with the guide’s advice, the *gter ston* must perform preparatory practices consisting of prayers, meditations and ritual performances.

When the time for discovery of an Earth Treasure has arrived, for example, the *gter ston* goes to the place of concealment to retrieve it. Sometimes the discovery is held in public and sometimes in secret. The process can be fraught with great hardship or progress relatively smoothly (Tulku Thondup Rinpoche and Talbott, 1986, p. 76). Once retrieved, an Earth Treasure will contain the physical form of a yellow scroll with a message written in symbols that range from coded sentences to a single character (Gyatso, 1986, p. 17). Sprul sku O rgyan

⁴⁶Rat na gling pa was a prolific Rnying ma *gter ston* who was extremely active during the fifteenth century. He compiled the seminal work known as the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* (*Collected Tantras of the Rnying Mas*) (Powers, 2007, p. 378).

⁴⁷I will note here that although the Treasure tradition may appear to be dominated by male adepts, there were also notable female Treasure revealers. The most famous of these is Padmasambhava’s consort Ye shes mtsho rgyal (eighth century), who is said to have revealed and hidden many Treasure texts at the behest of her guru (Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo, 1999, p. xxxvi). Others include Jo mo sman mo (1248–1283), who revealed *gter ma* cycles about meditative practices on the female deity Vajravārāhī. These revelations were allegedly rediscovered centuries later by the Tibetan Buddhist adept and scholar, 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros (1896–1959) ('Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros, 1896–1959). Another female *gter ston* was Ma gcig kun dga' 'bum (fourteenth century), who was a prominent figure in Tibet’s Dbus gtsang area (Bradburn, 1995, pp. 171–172). Centuries later, Se ra mkha' 'gro (1892–1940) was a female Treasure revealer also greatly influenced by the Vajravārāhī mythology (Jacoby, 2009, p. 118).

rin po che (1920–1996), a contemporary master from the Rnying ma tradition, described how his grandmother allegedly witnessed the retrieval of an Earth *gter ma*.⁴⁸

When the rock opened up, it looked like the anus of a cow; the rock became soft and just poured out to reveal a cavity containing the *terma*. Often the *terton* would take a *terma* out in the presence of more than one thousand people; thus, there was no basis for doubt. As the rock opened and the interior became visible, we saw it was filled with scintillating rainbow light. Chokgyur Lingpa often brought brocade cloth along to place the precious articles upon. Many of them got burn marks because the *termas* were so hot. No one other than him could hold them.⁴⁹

(Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche and Schmidt, 1994, p. 16)

The revelation and transmission of a *dgongs gter* follows a different trajectory, as Terrone describes in his personal experience of a *gter ston*'s discovery of a Mind Treasure:

In 2001, on a warm and sunny August afternoon, the Treasure revealer [Dechen Ösel Dorje] asked me to help him get up from his bed and accompany him outside. We stepped outdoors where he sat down under the cobalt blue sky. He sat in silence surrounded by a group of nomads who had come to visit him and his disciples. His eyes gazed into the sky in rapture. Suddenly [he] addressed one of his pupils ordering him to get pen and paper to write down what he was going to say. In the following hour [he] calmly and rigorously revealed the full text of a mental Treasure that he had just seen transferred to him in a vision.⁵⁰

(Terrone, 2010, p. 9)

After the *gter ston* finds the *gter ma*, a traditional period of secrecy is maintained during which the teaching is transcribed (Tulku Thondup Rinpoche and Talbott, 1986, p. 86). Ye shes mtsho rgyal (eighth century), one of Padmasambhava's consorts, extends further instructions to future revealers:

⁴⁸Sprul sku O rgyan rin po che, a contemporary of both the Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud lineage, was known for his spiritual strength as well as his relaxed style of teaching Buddhism (Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche and Kunsang, 1981).

⁴⁹Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa (1829–1870) was a famous *gter ma* revealer from Khams, and contemporary of 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (Orgyen Tobgyal, 1988, p. 3).

⁵⁰De chen 'od gsal rdo rje (1921–present) is one of the oldest living Treasure revealers still living in Tibet (Terrone, 2010, p. 155).

I advise you not to present a doctrine that you don't know yourself.
Keep a low profile because bragging provokes jealousy in others.
After discovery and attainment, the doctrine must be practised for three years.
If these Dharma Treasures are dispersed carelessly,
Disciples will misunderstand them and get confused.⁵¹

(O rgyan gling pa, 1323–1360,
p. 472)

Some discoveries would have considerable influence on the Rnying ma School while other *gter ma* contained comparatively minor instructions. A major *gter ma* cycle contains empowerment rituals, preliminary practices, historical and philosophical texts as well as large numbers of individual *sādhana*, or prayer sets. If a *gter ma* cycle of this kind was popular, it became the subject of commentarial literature and could be extended by subsidiary *gter ma* of later *gter ston*. The resulting corpus could be comparable in size and content to the texts associated with an individual tantric lineage and if effectively disseminated, just as influential (Gyatso, 1986, p. 7; Samuel, 1993, p. 301).

The Rnying ma perspective on the Treasure tradition can be defined not uniquely by a belief in the authenticity of the texts, but as Doctor (2005, p. 17) summarises, “in its institutionalisation of such spiritual discovery”. I have demonstrated how the Treasure tradition served as a connection to the glorified depiction of both Padmasambhava and Tibet's Imperial Age. As an example of the institutionalisation of concealed scripture, the proto-Mahāyāna *sūtra* entitled the *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra* (100 BCE) recounts how upon completion of a sermon, the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni, asks his disciples to preserve his teaching. They replied, “When the Buddha has passed into *parinirvāṇa*, later, in the age of disorder, together

⁵¹ Rang gis nyams su ma blangs chos ma bsten; Ngom pa sngas na gzhan gyi phrag dog 'ong; Su ngo che yang mi ston snying gtam yin; Bsgrub pa'i dus su lo gsum ma 'bungs par; Gter chos thon nas bcal du bgram pa na; Slob ma mgo log mngan bgrang skur 'debs 'ong.

we shall personally preserve and keep the volumes of this sutra and perpetuate the Buddha's Way" (Lokakṣema and Harrison, 1998, p. 49).⁵²

Furthermore, the practice of scriptural revelation beyond the initial utterances of Śākyamuni was not necessarily a novel idea specific to the Rnying ma. The *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra* was among a number of the doctrinal innovations in the Mahāyāna tradition that rationalised the existence of Śākyamuni beyond his *parinirvāṇa*.⁵³ This heralded the appearance of ever more teachings, not just from the Buddha, but also from other celestial beings existing in timeless realms and infinite forms. Within this context it would be entirely possible, therefore, that those recognised as spiritual prodigies, such as Treasure revealers, could also unveil soteriological truths. Thus, considering the fluidity of Indian Buddhist compositions and the Tibetan concern for their preservation, it is understandable that the Rnying ma pa could include revelatory scripture as part of their religious canon.

The Mythology and Politics of Hidden Lands

Hidden Lands in the Bon and Tibetan Buddhist Traditions

In the Bon tradition, a hidden land is a physical part of the world, with an ontological status that is accessible only to realised beings. The sacred geography exists in a spiritual dimension other than any ordinary worldly existence, which renders it indestructible. Legends of these spiritual realms likely originated with the account of 'Ol mo lung rings. This is the earthly location where the founder and original Buddha of the Bon tradition, Ston pa gshen rab, descended from the celestial spheres. It is said that he took up incarnation among human beings

⁵²Proto-Mahāyāna *sūtra* do not self-identify strictly as a Mahāyāna teaching, although as they were later transcribed and translated, they were indicated as such in the title. They contain some elements of Mahāyāna theory, although they are recognisable by the coincidence of both non-Mahāyāna and Mahāyāna ideals. They are generally dated between 100 BCE and 150 CE.

⁵³This *sūtra* focusses on the recollection of the Buddha's attributes, and introduces the prospect of the meditator actually communicating with other Buddhas existing in celestial realms.

in 'Ol mo lung rings, although the esoteric nature of the region is an unseen pure dimension (Reynolds, [n.d.]b, pp. 20, 23).

As I have described in the introduction to this thesis, Tibetan Buddhist *sbas yul* are believed to have been established by Padmasambhava during his travels through the Himalayas. He is thought to have taken almost every route through the mountains that connects India to Tibet and China, specifying some 108 geographical locations along the way as 'hidden', including Pemakö (Charleux, 2002, p. 189). Padmasambhava designated these sacred spots as such to provide a geographical and spiritual haven to those facing political and religious persecution in Tibet.⁵⁴

Human intervention thought required to balance the heavens, the natural landscape and the lower realms was a prominent feature in the narrative of sacred geographies and hidden lands. Bon practitioners believe the physical world represents psychic and spiritual power that links heaven, earth and a lower realm (Reynolds, [n.d.]b, p. 21). Stein (1972, p. 41) explains how environmentally, the Tibetan Buddhists saw the sky as an eight-spoked wheel, one of the oldest symbols of Buddhism; the earth represented an eight-petalled lotus that rested upon a mysterious underworld. The implications of this belief system is found in the spiritual relationship that developed between believers and nature.

Spiritual Significance of the Tibetan Buddhist Hidden Land Narrative

Like the Bon tradition, the Tibetan universe is permeated by spirits dwelling in the sky, on the earth or underground. The malevolent entities are capable of inflicting physical, environmental and societal difficulties, thus a prevalent concept found in Tibetan religion is the necessity of pacifying them. Tantra became a method of subjugating these beings and mapping them onto

⁵⁴Among some of these hidden lands are Rong shar, Kyi rong and Khem ba lung in Tibet, 'Bras mo ljongs in India, Nubri, Rolwaling, Solukhumbu and Yolmo in Nepal, all located in or near the Himalayas.

the topography, as exemplified by Padmasambhava during his sojourn in Tibet (Dalton, 2004, p. 760). The Tibetan landscape is dotted with sacred sites where the Guru is said to have overpowered and converted the local ethereal troublemakers. His success was marked by their loyalty to him, and their promise to protect their former haunts. This included the designated hidden lands, within which mystical forces could manifest as mist, poisonous water, a snowstorm, mudslide or a vicious animal (Huber, 1999b, p. 63).

Sbas yul are overlaid with religious significance because their ethereal nature is thought visible only to those with the necessary karmic inclination. This ideal is also central to the realisation of the Buddhist interpretation of the true nature of all phenomena. Because of their physical and metaphysical secretiveness, hidden lands are famous as repositories for *gter ma* (Charleux, 2002, p. 189). Padmasambhava is especially linked to the geographical features of the landscapes, particularly to mountains, lakes and caves where he is said to have meditated. Thus, the hidden land physicality is permeated by his subliminal ‘energy’, which renders the environment the perfect abode for wandering *sngags pa* and unconventional *gter ston* seeking spiritual mastery.

Because of this esoteric potency, *sbas yul* represent physical destinations to which Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims can travel to enhance their progress on the various stages towards enlightenment (Stutchbury, 1999, p. 175). Huber (1999b, p. 15) states that Tibetans view pilgrimage as one of the fundamental methods for purifying mental obscurations and developing the positive momentum required to sustain the path towards Buddhahood. This, of course, depends on the practitioner’s level of achievement, so that an accomplished *yogin* might see the countryside as heavenly and someone with many mental obscurations might view it as a living hell. Nevertheless, the pilgrimage experience is one of ritual ‘cleansing’ and plays an integral part of Tibetan Buddhist practice (p. 102).

The Himalayan *sbas yul* are often naturally centred around a site deemed the abode of the regional deity, or a *gnas*. The meaning surrounding this central focus is maintained with ‘subjugating devices’ dispersed throughout the landscape (Samuel, 1993, p. 159). In fact, as detailed by Cantwell (2005, p. 19), the objective of tantric “Earth rituals” is to integrate and radically transform the physical environment into an esoteric vision of reality. Devices include temples, meditation halls, stacked rocks, *mantras* carved on stones and reliquary monuments with the remains of great lamas.⁵⁵ Here the practitioner has the opportunity to venerate the landscape and its subduing agents through circumambulation, prostration and prayer.⁵⁶

Hidden Lands as Political Haven and Missionary Objective

Ramble (1995, p. 84) comments that although Tibetans may walk around mountains because they want to purify their negative karmic accumulations, given the landscape of Tibet, “in most cases when Tibetans walk around mountains it is because the mountains are in the way”. Consequently, the religious connotation of a supposed sacred geography should not be exaggerated. There are a variety of places sacred to the Bon tradition, for example, of which one of the most significant is Kong po (p. 98). According to Bon legend, the Buddha Ston pa gshen rab visited Kong po in prehistoric times (Reynolds, [n.d.]c, p. 86). The earthly manifestation of the eighth Tibetan king, Gri gsum btsan po, is said to have been buried in the region (Powers, 2007, p. 142). The Bon Mountain of Kong po became a sacred *gnas*, and was ‘opened’ as such in 1330 by the A mdo lama Ri pa 'brug gzas (Ramble, 2007, p. 146). As Ramble (p. 134) states, however, “in purely secular terms the impetus that originally ‘empowered’ this place was . . . probably the historical importance”.

⁵⁵The Tibetan terminology for these are respectively: *lha khang*, *dgon pa*, *lha btsas*, *sngags* and *mchod rten*.

⁵⁶The Tibetan terminology for these words are *skor ba*, *phyag 'tsal* and *smon lam*.

The example of Kong po in the Bon tradition supports the geographical, political and religious development of Tibetan Buddhist hidden land narratives. Kong po came under the rule of the Yarlung Kingdom during the time of Gnam ri slon mtshan (570–629), the father of the first Buddhist King, Srong btsan sgam po (604–650) (Stein, 1972, pp. 52, 57). This was a period in Tibetan history when the Bon were facing increasing persecution under a Tibetan government that was turning to Indian Buddhism. Kong po was at the edge of the Tibetan empire near the Himalayan Mountains, and just far enough away from the political harassment that came to follow Bon adherents. It is feasible that the region's sacred history substantiated its potential as a political refuge for Bon practitioners.

In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, Thang stong rgyal po (1385–1464) was a Tibetan tantric *yogin* who opened the route to the holy places of Tsa ri, a region located at the southern outskirts of Kong po (Stein, 1972, p. 79). It seems likely that similar to the Bon, the wandering *sngags pas* would eventually seek spiritual solace and relevance away from the prevailing religious dynamics on the Tibetan plateau. Perhaps Kong po was just not far away enough from the religious conflict between the New Translation schools for the Rnying ma pas, and the deeper Himalayas, such as the Pemakö region, offered more promise for religious protection and proselytism via Tsa ri.

***Treasure Revelation and the Hidden Land of Pemakö:
The Historical and Literary Context***

Innovations in the Conception of Pemakö as a Hidden Land

In the case of Pemakö, Kong po's notoriety may well have directed *gter ston* to the greater potential of the more isolated jungles lying further south. In fact, in the 1600s, the *gter ston* Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po supposedly ordered Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje to convert the indigenous tribes in Pemakö to Buddhism, which would have rendered the area safer for

missionary endeavours and ultimately for political asylum seekers (Sardar-Afkhami, 1996, p. 2). Already during his sojourns throughout the Himalayas in the 700s, however, Padmasambhava is said to have predicted the revelation of a great hidden land known as Pemakö (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 10–11). Later, Dngos grub rgyal mtshan (1334–1449), better known as the prolific *gter ston* Rig 'dzin Rgod ldem, foretold the location of various hidden lands, one of which was most likely Pemakö (Boord, 2013).⁵⁷ Theoretically then, why would Pemakö have been singled out as one of the most sacred above all hidden lands so far ahead of its ‘discovery’ centuries later?

At first impression, the superficial appearance of the region’s landscape would likely inspire wonder in even the most discriminating observer. In fact, as indicated in the research synthesis in Chapter Two, fundamental terrestrial elements of Pemakö’s topography are under constant metamorphosis. The Namche Barwa Massif itself is extremely seismically active (Zeitler et al., 2007, p. 2). Continuous tremors within this mountainscape have provoked immense landslides that regularly change its surface profile. Water is a source of constant fluctuation in Pemakö, shaping the landscape through torrential monsoonal rains, flooding, waterfalls and glacial movement. These geological, meteorological and topographical processes actively exemplify the transitory nature of the Earth, and dispute impressions of any terrestrial stability.

Pemakö offers diverse ecosystems within ecosystems that would provide the discerning *yogin* ample material for meditative introspection on, for example, impermanence. The region’s flora and fauna point towards a vision of evolutionary development in which organisms

⁵⁷*Vidyādhara* Rgod ldem was thought to be the reincarnation of Sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms (eighth century), a minister to King Khri srong lde btsan who formed part of the group that invited Padmasambhava to Tibet (Mandelbaum, 2007b). Rig 'dzin Rgod ldem is also known as the ‘Vulture-quilled Awareness-holder’ because at the age of twelve, three vulture feathers grew from the crown of his head signalling his extraordinary qualities as a realised being. He is credited with having revealed the famous Northern Treasures (Byang gter) that are considered major tantric Buddhist cycles (Boord, 2013; Bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 780).

are inseparably intertwined with their surroundings. Any attempts to separate these dimensions would be an exercise that obscures as much as it edifies. Pemakö's landscape offers the opportunity to focus on the dynamics circulating among biological and non-biological phenomena, which in turn could facilitate an understanding of the veritable workings of the universe itself if, for example, a practitioner was to contemplate interdependence.⁵⁸

Thus, Pemakö's uncultivated wilderness could have provided the initial impetus behind its declaration as a sacred geography. It is difficult to prove whether Pemakö was a true abode of Guru Rinpoche, and scientifically impossible to ascertain how a landscape could be infused with his 'power'. Perhaps spiritual adepts thought they could genuinely perceive a vital energy within Pemakö's transitory nature. Or perhaps the fiercer the environment, the fiercer the reputation of localised destructive deities and therefore the more esoteric effort required to subdue them, substantiating evermore grandiose legends about the region's soteriological potential. Realistically, however, Pemakö's decisive claim to fame was most likely the refuge Tibetans found in the region's almost impenetrable mountainscape.

Treasure Revealers and Treasure Texts Affiliated with Pemakö

The seventeenth through nineteenth centuries saw an influx of Treasure revealers in Pemakö (Pad bkod 'chi med rig 'dzin, 2016, pp. 30–32). Some of their revelations were complete tantric cycles or commentaries thereof. Most that are relevant to Pemakö can be classified as *gnas yig* or *lam yig*, meaning 'pilgrimage guide' or 'travelogue', respectively. The texts serve as commentaries on landscapes deemed sacred in the Tibetan Buddhist narrative. Both serve as guidebooks intended to lead the political refugee or religious pilgrim to physical or spiritual safety (Wylie, 1965, p. 18). The text is usually indicated as a *gnas yig* or *lam yig* in the title;

⁵⁸Impermanence and interdependence are crucial subjects of contemplations in Buddhism, as a means to develop wisdom, or an understanding of 'reality'.

however, the differences between the two types are almost indiscernible. Both can include prophecy statements about Tibet and Pemakö, descriptions of *gnas*, auspicious practices, accounts of lamas having visited the area, depictions of the natural landscape and explanations of the various local ethereal beings.⁵⁹ I list several titles of Treasure texts related to Pemakö in this chapter, and include others in Chapter Four.

Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's own teacher, the *gter ston* Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po is credited with one of the first Treasure texts about Pemakö entitled *Sbas yul padma bkod kyi lam yig* (*A Place Letter for the Hidden Land Pemakö*). He also revealed *Rdo rje gro lod rtsal gyi sgrub skor* (*A Collection of Sādhanas about the Powerful Rdo rje gro lod*), which included route descriptions and prophecies about the region (Ehrhard, 1994, pp. 10, 16; Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po, 1585–1686).⁶⁰ Rje btsun Snying po studied tantra in each lineage, and eventually tutored disciples from Dbus gtsang and Khams in the Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud traditions (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, pp. 809–811).

Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1655–1704), also known as Dga' ba lung gter ston or Bsam gtan gling pa, was a *gter ston* originally from Spo bo. Nus ldan rdo rje was particularly well-

⁵⁹Many of these texts are available as hard copies in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in Tibet, India or Nepal. Others are available through academic institutions in the same countries or in the West, such as the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamshala, India or compilations available through universities such as the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Germany or Harvard University in the United States (I am referring here to *A Collection of Prophecies of Things to Come and Accounts of Padma bkod*; see primary sources). Others are available as part of academic articles, such as in McDougal's (2016) *Drakngak Lingpa's Pilgrimage Guides and the Progressive Opening of the Hidden Land of Pemakö*, or books such as 'Jam dbyangs don grub's ('Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009) autobiography entitled *Memories of Lost and Hidden Lands: The Life Story of Garje Khamtrul Rinpoche*. The Buddhist Digital Resource Center is also an invaluable resource for locating Tibetan language information about Pemakö. In the context of this thesis, I have included both references to texts about Pemakö that I have accessed personally either as a hardcopy or as an electronic version, or those that were relevant to my research and mentioned in secondary sources. See the thesis bibliography for a complete list of primary sources. Primary sources that I have mentioned in this thesis, but have not consulted or seen have been listed in Appendix A.

⁶⁰Ehrhard (1994, p. 16) directs the reader to the following text for further information about Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po's revelations indicated here: *Bstan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi 'byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam kyi rol mtsho* (*The Skilfully Explained Teaching, the Ocean of Enjoyment, which Clarifies the Definitive, Profound and Very Secretive Religious Essence*). See Gu ru bkra shis, c. 1800–1900, in Appendix A.

known as a ‘crazy wisdom holder’, or *zhig po*, who practised ‘divine madness’. His tutelary deity was Vajravārāhī, a wrathful female *dākinī*. Some *yogins* of India worshipped fierce divinities, who were usually thought of as the male or female form of the Hindu gods Śiva or Devī. Vajravārāhī is a sow-headed goddess associated with the malevolent Hindu deity Śambara (Snellgrove, 2002, p. 158). To the Tibetans, she is known as Rdo rje phag mo, a destructive female deity tamed by Padmasambhava, and representative of the manifestation of the non-conceptual quality of mind (Simmer-Brown, 2001, p. 68).

The origin of Pemakö’s identification with Rdo rje phag mo is unclear; however, Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje brought about the cycle of teachings called *Yi dam dgongs 'dus rta mchog rol pa* (*The Complete Intention of the Tutelary Deity, Manifestation of Hayagrīva*), which provided detailed information about the sacred sites in Pemakö according to the physical layout of Vajravārāhī. Many of these were identified and discovered by other religious adepts entering the Pemakö territory (Ehrhard, 1994, p. 9).⁶¹ Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1729) mentions Rdo rje phag mo during his travels to Pemakö in 1729. He refers to the Pemakö landscape as containing five of her *cakras*.⁶² These represented entire sections of the Yarlung Tsangpo Gorge and aligned the Yarlung Tsangpo River as the central channel (Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1729). The alleged reincarnation of Chos gling gar dbang 'chi med was Kun bzang 'od zer gar dbang chi med rdo rje (1763–?). He was reputedly from a Pemakö indigenous tribe known as the Mon pa. He continued to develop the teachings of his predecessor, and is said to have opened the head and throat *cakras* of Rdo rje phag mo (Sardar-Afkhami, 1996, pp. 6–7). The *gter ston* Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa (1829–1870) later revealed the following about Vajravārāhī’s physical positioning in Pemakö:

⁶¹According to Ehrhard (1994, p. 9), this information has been extracted from the *Spo bo lo rgyus* (Anon. [n.d.], p. 144); see Appendix A for further information about this source.

⁶²The *cakra* points are energy centres in the human body, each connected to a central energy channel coursing from head to the lower trunk. They play an important role in tantric meditative practices (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, p. 2615).

The hidden land of Pemakö is supreme. It is renowned as the Lotus Display because it looks like a blossoming lotus. In the middle of India, Mongolia, Dbus, Gtsang, A mdo and Khams, the incredible body of Vajravārāhī has risen. Her head is at Mount Rgya la dpal ri, her throat at Padma rdzong and the cave O rgyan phug, her heart at Bde chen lhun grub pho brang and her navel at Brag dkar bkra shis rdo rje'i rdzong, her secret place at Mount Padma shal ri. Her three channels and five *cakras* flow across the landscape.⁶³

(Mchog gyur gling pa,
1829–1870a, p. 404)

The topographical position of her *cakras* is not always clear; however, generally her subdued bodily form is said to be held in place by strategically placed religious structures. *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* as one of the earlier *gnas yig* about Pemakö makes no mention of Vajravārāhī's aspects, which could indicate that her local mythology was not yet fully developed. However, her earthly layout proclaimed by Treasure revealers not only elevates Pemakö's territorial significance as the representation of ethereal potency, but also their own status as legitimate and influential members of Tibet's secular and religious powers.

Rig 'dzin Chos rje gling pa, also known as 'Dzam gling rdo rje rtsal, lived from 1682–1720. He was abbot of a Bka' brgyud monastery of Ras chung phug in the Yarlung Valley.⁶⁴ When the Mongolians invaded Tibet again in 1717, he announced that it was time to escape to Pemakö. He was a revealer, although not of any information about Pemakö. Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje had predicted to Rig 'dzin Chos rje that the latter would, however, open certain *gnas* in the hidden land (Erhard, 1994, p. 6; Sardar-Afkhami, 1996, p. 5). During his lifetime, the *gter ston* Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1729) travelled through Pemakö with the aim to 'open' the hidden

⁶³Kun gyi nang nas mchog tu gyur par ni; Sbas yul padma bkod ces padma kha phyas 'dra; Rgya sog dbus gtsang mdo khams yul dbus su; Ngo mtshar rdo rje phag mo'i sku lus shar; Dbu ni rgya la dpal gyi ri bo bzang; Mgrin pa padma rdzong dang o rgyan phug; Snying kha bde chen lhun grub pho brang dang; Lte ba brag dkar bkra shis rdo rje'i rdzong; Gsang ba padma shal gyi ri bo ste; Rtsa gsum 'khor lo lnga yi bkod pa yod.

⁶⁴Ras chung phug Monastery is a Bka' brgyud monastery where Ras chung pa (1085–1161) is said to have written a biography of his teacher, the Buddhist *yogin* Rje btsun Mi la ras pa (c. 1052–1135). Rje btsun Mi la ras pa is one of the most important figures within the Bka' brgyud tradition.

land. He describes his adventures in his text *Gnas mchog padmo bkod du bgrod pa 'i lam yig dga' byed bden gtam* (*A Travelogue of a Journey to Pemakö: Delightful True Words*) (Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje, 1729, pp. 389–483). He was also concerned with the placement of Vajravārāhī and her various energy points. Contrary to earlier revealers, he identified Rin chen spungs pa as the heart of the deity, Brag dkar bkra shis rdzong at her navel and Namche Barwa mountain as the principal place between the above two (Ehrhard, 1994, p. 8).

In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, Rig 'dzin Rdo rje thogs med (1746–1797), Sgam po pa o rgyan 'gro 'dul gling pa (1757–?) and Chos gling gar dbang 'chi med rdo rje (1763–?) are renowned as the three Buddhist adepts who opened the secret land of Pemakö as a place of pilgrimage (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 957; Ehrhard, 1994, p. 5). Rig 'dzin Rdo rje thogs med, who lived from 1746–1797, discovered an introductory list of hidden lands. Born in Kong po, Rdo rje thogs me is reputed to have shown exceptional qualities from a very young age. He discovered a number of *gter ma*, among them a text called *Sbas gnas kun gyi rgyal po padma bkod kyi gnas srung gi gsol kha 'jug 'ga' zhig 'di nas yod* (*This Text Includes Libation Practices for the Protector of the Sacred Place of Pemakö, King of All Hidden Lands*) (Rdo rje thogs med, 1746–1796, pp. 427–438). He also founded a hermitage named Byang gling btsan phyugs in Pemakö, where he later died (Ehrhard, 1994, p. 5). In 1757, the Fifth Sgam po pa o rgyan 'gro 'dul gling pa was born. From the Bka' brgyud lineage, he conducted missionary work among the indigenous populations in Pemakö. Under the patronage of the king of Spo bo, O rgyan 'dro 'dul gling pa removed numerous *gter ma* from the temple of Bu chu and attempted to open various hidden sites in Pemakö (Ehrhard, 1994, p. 5; Lazcano, 2005, p. 49). Born in 1763, Chos gling gar dbang 'chi med rdo rje revealed several Treasures in Pemakö and together with Sgam po pa, discovered various sacred sites in the region.

Several Treasure revealers continued the legacy of Pemakö discoveries in the 1800s. Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa (1829–1870) is regarded as one of the major Treasure revealers

in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. He was born in Khams, and received his early religious instruction from within the Bka' brgyud lineage. Mchog gyur gling pa was gifted from a young age, but was persecuted by his contemporaries upon his claim as a *gter ston* (Orgyen Tobgyal, 1988, p. 3). The Treasure revealer Sga rje khams sprul rin po che (1927–present) rediscovered two of Mchog gyur gling pa's *gter ma* about Pemakö (Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870a, b). In the late nineteenth century, Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929) produced additional revelations about Pemakö (Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa, 1871–1929a, b; Pad bkod 'chi med rig 'dzin, 2016, p. 21). Meanwhile, another wave of political unrest was sweeping through the country, reigniting the idea of hidden lands. In 1902, hundreds of Tibetan nomads from Khams escaped to the upper valleys of Pemakö. In 1903, British India launched an invasion of the reclusive Tibetan nation, and thousands more Tibetans set off to the region (Walt van Praag, 1987, p. 29).

After the Chinese People's Liberation Army invasion of Tibet beginning in 1949, many more Tibetans fled to the 'Lotus Promised Land' (Grothmann, 2012, p. 36). The desire to flee was further justified by another ancient prophecy by Padmasambhava, wherein he allegedly states how Tibetans should seek safety in Pemakö particularly during the 1950s (Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal and Stuenkel, 2008, p. 13). During this time, the People's Liberation Army established prison camps throughout Tibet, one of which was close to Pemakö. Numerous Tibetans escaped into the protection of Himalayan jungle areas.

In 1959 under the spiritual rule of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho (1935–present), China lay claim to Tibet as Chinese territory. What followed was a violent takeover and the ensuing persecution of the Tibetan people. Shes rab rgya mtsho (1884–1968) had been a close attendant to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama (1876–1933), yet later switched his allegiance to the cause of Chinese communism in Tibet. He was appointed by the Chinese to convince his fellow Tibetans of the merit of this form of government. Prophetic Treasure

revelations about the refuge offered in Pemakö became one of the monk-politician's greatest obstacles (Sonam Dorje, 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of how Tibetan secular and religious aims were intertwined with beliefs about the natural environment. This is evident in the historical trajectory of Buddhism in Tibet, a process that has influenced the cultivation of the Treasure text and hidden land traditions in Tibetan religious culture. The chapter also points to *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* as part of a long tradition of *gter ma* about Pemakö. To this extent, as I demonstrate in my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* in Chapter Four, the text becomes especially pertinent to an appreciation of the relationship between the region's religious culture and the natural environment because of its context, authorship and focus on the merits of the Pemakö landscape.

Chapter Four: **An Analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*:** ***A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö***

Introduction

In this chapter I turn to a study of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. This analysis is in partial response to my principal research question that asks about the nature of Tibetan Buddhist culture as reflected in scripture about Pemakö, and how this religious tradition relates to the region's natural environment. I have contextualised *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* with a review of the contemporary status of Pemakö's natural environment in Chapter Two and a summary of the text's historical background in Chapter Three. In the present chapter I demonstrate how conventional and esoteric perceptions of Pemakö's environment are perceived as symbols of Tibetan Buddhist ideals in scripture. My approach to data analysis in this study is based on a phenomenological viewpoint, which emphasises not only the message of the author, but also the perspectives of the faithful and their interpretation of the Pemakö landscape.

I begin with an explanation of the role of prophecy in Tibetan Buddhist literature, the Treasure tradition and *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. This sets the framework within which I then describe Padmasambhava, his audience and Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje as they are portrayed in this text. The subsequent section then examines the ordinary appearance of Pemakö's environment. This is followed by an account of how *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* mirrors the Pure Appearance of Pemakö as an earthly and esoteric *maṇḍala* according to Tibetan Buddhist theory. As I indicate below, my analysis also draws on other *gter ma* texts about Pemakö to complement Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's presentation.

Primary Sources that Support this Analysis

Although the focus of this chapter is *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, I refer to alternative *gter ma* texts as a comparative source of information about the Pemakö environment. I have limited my choice of texts to those that provide a sample of various perspectives about the role of the environment within the Tibetan Buddhist narrative in Pemakö. Each composition includes commentary on the region's topography and biology, with some Treasure texts focussing more on secular prophecy. Moreover, their range of composition from the late 1500s until the early 1900s illustrates the interpretations of Pemakö's physical and ethereal landscape across some three hundred years.⁶⁵

As I have explained in the previous chapter, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's own teacher, Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po, is thought to have revealed one of the earliest Treasure texts specifically about Pemakö. In my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, I integrate parts of his text entitled *Sbas yul padma bkod kyi lam yig dang: Sku tshab padma bshes nyen 'gro 'dul dang skye bdun dkar chags (A Place Letter for Pemakö and Guru Rinpoche's Emissary, the Master 'Gro 'dul, the Pure One [Born Seven Times as a Brahmin])*, which contains an early prophecy about the region as a haven during degenerate times. Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po's text and others, such as Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje's last testament, *Skyabs gnas kun 'dus padma 'byung gnas kyis lnga brgya'i i dus mtha' la gzigs nas ma'ongs lung bstan gsungs ga (A Prophecy by Padmasambhava about the 500-Year Degenerate Times and Place of Refuge)*, and Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa's *Rtsa gsum dgongs pa kun 'dus las: Yang gsang pad shri gnas yig ma rig mun sel sgron me (The Account of the Most Secret Crystal Lotus: The Lamp Which Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance from the Unity of All Sacred Thoughts of the Three*

⁶⁵Consecutive timeframes for these revelations are: Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656); Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672); Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704); Rdo rje thogs med (1746–1796); Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870); Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929).

Roots) offer similar information about the fate of Tibet and the appearance of Pemakö as political and spiritual refuge.⁶⁶ I also utilise Drag snags gling pa's revelation entitled *Gnas mchog pre ta pu ri'i gnas yig shel dkar me long bzhugs so* (*A Crystal Mirror Guide to the Supreme Sacred Realm of Pretapuri*) for prophecy statements.

Rdo rje thogs med's *Sbas gnas kun gyi rgyal po padma bkod kyi gnas srung gi gsol kha 'jug 'ga' zhig 'di nas yod* (*This Text Includes Libation Practices for the Protector of the Sacred Place of Pemakö, King of All Hidden Lands*) writes vividly about ritual offerings to the guardian deities of Pemakö's topography, a subject that also finds resonance in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. Mchog gyur gling pa made substantial contributions to revelations about Pemakö in the guidebook *Sbas yul padma bkod du bsgrod pa'i dus rtags bstan pa dang gnas kyi bkod pa lam yig zhib tu bshad pa thos pa tshe yi sprod ces bya ba bzhugs so* (*A Detailed Explanation of the Signs of the [Right] Time to Travel to Pemakö and a Detailed Map of the Layout of this Holy Place*), and in the prophecy and guidebook included in the root text *Bla ma'i thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel las: Srung ba rdo rje pha lam yi ge 'bru lnga pa* (*From the Guru Sādhana 'Dispeller of Obstacles', entitled 'The Five Seed Syllables of the Diamond Protector'*). His proclamations exemplify the virtues of the natural environment, and complement the descriptions of Pemakö's environment made by Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje.

The Role of Prophecy in Self-Liberation upon Hearing

Because this *gter ma* literature about Pemakö is related directly to Padmasambhava's predictions about this hidden land, I begin my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* by

⁶⁶For the purposes of this thesis I have consulted with two texts by Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje: *Skyabs gnas kun 'dus padma 'byung gnas kyi lnga brgya'i dus mtha' la gzigs nas ma' ongs lung bstan gsungs ga* (*A Teaching and Prophecy by Padmasambhava about the 500-Year Degenerate Times and Place of Refuge*) and *Padma bkod ces bya ba'i gnas mchog ni* (*The Holy Place of Pemakö*). The transcriber of these texts, Rdo rje mtsho, has indicated both as the last testament (*zhal chem*) of Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje. The second text is shorter than the first, although for the most part the contents of each are nearly the same. The first, and longer text, does not include the *gter tsheg*, a punctuation mark that identifies it as a *gter ma*; however, the abbreviated text quotes the longer text using the *gter tsheg*.

describing the role of prophecy in the Tibetan Buddhist narrative and Treasure texts relevant to the region. Prophetic statements found in Tibetan Buddhist literature align with Buddhist ideas concerning ‘degenerate times’. The different Buddhist traditions hold similar theories concerning the future material and moral decline of humanity, during which even Buddhism disintegrates. Bdud joms rin po che (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 406) describes these temporal phases as when “. . . the sun of the Conqueror's teaching is almost concealed by gathering black storm-clouds of disorder”. These descents eventually improve, but only after incalculable eons, or *kalpas*.⁶⁷ According to these cyclic models, which have also been integrated into Tibetan Buddhist thought, humankind is now experiencing the lower reaches of decline (Nattier, 1991, p. 16).

Not all Buddhist scriptures dealing with the demise of humanity discuss the reasons for these situations. In the Mahāyāna scheme of events, however, causes include invasions by foreign, non-Buddhist powers and governmental overregulation of both monastic and lay practitioners (Nattier, 1991, p. 26). The stated purpose of Tibetan Buddhist Treasure literature is to conceal Padmasambhava’s eighth-century wisdom for rediscovery at an appropriate time in the future, particularly when Tibetans are facing dire circumstances. In one *gter ma* revelation, for example, Ye shes mtsho rgyal is said to have announced that “Upon the mainstay of the . . . Mongolian hordes, Tibet will be partitioned into bits and pieces” (Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo, 2002, p. 190). Her statement would place these invasions initially sometime in the thirteenth century. She predicts that “the Lotus-Born’s activities will then appear as karma” and “the doctrine will be spread throughout Tibet”, which likely refers to the appearance of Treasure texts that arise as the result of the alleged karmic ripening of the

⁶⁷The Tibetans adopted a 5,000-year timetable of decline beginning after the earthly passing of Śākyamuni, or his *parinirvāṇa*. Another reference to the ‘end times’ is the *Kālacakra Tantra*, or *Wheel of Time*. This text, believed first composed in the eleventh century CE, extends this degenerate progression to 5,140 years. The *Kālacakra Tantra* indicates that after a defeat of Muslim adversaries by Buddhist forces in approximately 2,425 CE, the Dharma will rise again but eventually fade from the world completely (Nattier, 1991, pp. 24–27, 61).

respective revealer (p. 190). Paradoxically, however, Ye shes mtsho rgyal's prophecy was allegedly discovered as a Treasure in the seventeenth century by Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje, some four hundred years after the fact.

In his revelation about Pemakö, Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 4) foretells the destruction of Nepal, Tibet and China and the chaos that ensues.⁶⁸ Although Tibet was experiencing sectarian strife during his lifetime, Tibet and its immediate neighbours nevertheless remained mostly intact as separate territories. The contents of this *gter ma* are generally vague, but seem to refer to a distant future with no indication of specific troubles encountered before or during the reign of the Great Fifth. Rje btsun Snying po does accentuate the “degenerate times” when he directly quotes Padmasambhava's counsel to rely on the Guru for spiritual advice (pp. 12–13).⁶⁹ He speaks of how in Tibet, the afflictive emotions will be so numerous making it impossible for anyone to find any kind of happiness (pp. 2–3).⁷⁰ He announces the existence of sixteen, special hidden lands of which Pemakö is like a pure valley (pp. 3, 8).⁷¹ Pemakö's magnificent qualities are cited, making it the supreme place to which Buddhist practitioners should go for temporal and spiritual refuge (pp. 13–14).⁷²

⁶⁸Ti sa'i gangs la sha bung blo bur 'byung; Mnga' ris yul khams thog dang ser ba'i bshig; Bod dang rgya nag phyogs su sa gyos 'jigs; Bal yul mu stegs bsten pa mang du 'phel; Dbus gtsang bdud dang dam sri 'byung ngo 'dul; Mdo khams phyogs su me yi 'jigs pa 'byung.

⁶⁹Dus kyi 'pho 'gyur byung dus su; Rgya nag 'jags dang klo kong bzhi; 'Bros na de ru bros pa'i 'tshing; Rang rang so so'i sa ris yod; La chu brag gi gdams nas yod; 'Khrugs cing 'thab pa'i dog pa med; De tso gu ru'i sprul pa yong; Lam rnams rim gyis ston par byed; Dus kun o rgyan dran par gyis; Gu ru padma siddhi srong.

⁷⁰The afflictive emotions are those based on attachment, aversion and ignorance. Rje btsun Snying po's Tibetan text reads: 'Dod chags la gyur mu ge bkres pa dang; Zhe sdang las gyur dmag 'khrugs dar ba dang; Gti mug las gyur nad yams sna tshogs 'byung; Dug gsum cha mnyam sdug bsngal sna tshogs 'byung; De dus sems chen bde ba'i go skaps med.

⁷¹Sbas pa'i gnas lugs che chung bcu drug yod; Des nas sbas lung chen po bcu drug yod; Khyad par gnas chen padma bkod pa ni; Bsam yas shar na dag po lung pa zhes.

⁷²Chu thig gcig dang rtsa nyag zos pa yang; Gtso nad la sogs sdug 'byung zhi bar 'gyur; Dbang po mi gsal ba rnams gsal bar 'gyur; Rgan po rnams kyang gzhon nu'i lus su 'byung; Dam chos mi dran las ngan tshan che yang; Gnas der phyin pas rang grol 'gyur; Gnas de'i sa rdo kha la spungs nas; Tshe zad mi yang tshe lo brgya stong lo ru thub; Grang na me rlung gos su sbyor ba gyon pa; Skom du bdud rtsi chu la longs spyod kyi; Rdor spras byung na shing thog 'bras bu dang; Ma rmos lo thog 'bru sna lnga la sphyod; Phi nang gsang zug sdug bsngal de na med; 'Thab rtsod le lo'i sdug bsngal der mi dgos.

An anachronistic pattern is somewhat evident in the *gter ma* by Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 473), who declares that Padmasambhava has predicted all beings will be under the power of negative influence during the “500-year degenerate age” and that Khams will be “scattered like a [trampled] anthill”, which could be mirroring contemporaneous circumstances in this province due to this region’s fluid political status (Powers, 2007, p. 182).⁷³ Nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 474) announces that outside forces will invade Tibet and rain down upon the land like an “uninterrupted river flow”, which could also be interpreted as referring to invasions by the British, Chinese or Mongolians in later centuries.⁷⁴ His predictions about Pemakö as the ultimate refuge mirror those of Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po.

Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa’s revelations are more specific about the troublesome periods in Tibet. During his lifetime in the late 1800s, in spite of increased friction with China, Tibet was experiencing relative internal stability under the reign of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.⁷⁵ In *Ma rig mun sel sgron me (The Lamp that Dispels the Darkness of Ignorance)*, Drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, p. 325) writes that “the thousand Buddhas that arise throughout consecutive eons will prophesy the reality of this earthly Pure Land”.⁷⁶ The significance of Pemakö as a secular escape for the persecuted becomes more apparent when he (p. 318) states that “. . . China, Tibet, Hor and Mongolia will each compete for territory. One country will flaunt its feather like a peacock, another will roar like a tiger, another will raise its tusks like an elephant and another will growl like a vicious, black dog”.⁷⁷ The comment about the peacock could have been referring to the British seeking entry to Tibet and that about the tiger to the

⁷³Lnga brgya'i dus mth'a bzhi bcu kha ral dus; Mi rnams phal cher bdud kyi dbang du 'gro; Bod kyi khams su grog tshang gtor ba 'dra.

⁷⁴Byi ba'i lo la mtha' dmag bod du 'byung; Dmag gi chu rgyun chad med par 'babs.

⁷⁵Despite a more centralised government at Lhasa, Tibet’s eastern Khams region was somewhat autonomous and a focus of Chinese intentions (Powers, 2007, pp. 183–185).

⁷⁶Bskal bzang sangs rgyas stong byon lung yang bstan; Bskal pa re re 'das rjes re re 'phel; De dus sangs rgyas stong byon ngas lung bstan.

⁷⁷The Five Hor States were in the area of western Khams (Powers, 2007, p. 183). Drag snags gling pa's text reads: Rgya 'gying bod 'gying hor sog 'gying dur bzhi; Rma bya gar 'gying stag mo ngar la 'gying; Glang po rwa 'gying khyi nag zug la 'gying; 'Gying bzhi stabs kyi chu bzhi sgang drug gyo.

Chinese striving for sovereignty over Tibet. Both correspond to the Treasure revealer's concurrent circumstances. The elephant may have been associated with Mongolia, which was not, however, a threatening force during Drag snags gling pa's lifetime. A growling black dog could be representative of the imposing Tibetan Mastiff's that traditionally guarded the entrances to monasteries. This might be a referral to Tibet's own internal religious factions that were regularly at odds with each other.

In Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* there are direct and indirect declarations about forces contributing to the demise of Tibetan society. Padmasambhava states that "During the degenerate era, when the convergence of the Five Degenerations is distinct, and Genghis Khan has appeared, all Tibetans will be living in a hell realm" (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 6–8).⁷⁸ Tibetans are then advised to use the "ten-syllable *mantra* of Padmasambhava" to "repel the armies of Genghis Khan and benefit all of Tibet" (vv. 306–307). Verse 361 reinforces his warnings about Genghis Khan, but also makes mention of "the dangers of enemies". It is clear, however, that Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's proclamations were made long after the initial appearance of Mongolian forces in Tibet. Although disputed by outside sources, according to Tibetan historical renditions, Genghis Khan ventured to Tibet in 1206 (Stein, 1972, p. 77). Tibet saw the end of Sa skya pa and Mongol rule during the mid-fourteenth century. The fifteenth century witnessed the emergence of the Dge lugs pa order, which was supported in the sixteenth century by the Tümed Mongol Altan Khan, and in the seventeenth century by the Khoshot Mongol Gushri Khan (Kapstein, 2006, pp. 131, 141). Thus, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's revelation of this information in the 1600s serves no prophetic purpose.

⁷⁸The Five Degenerations, or *snyigs ma lnga* in Tibetan, include the shortening of life-spans (*tshe'i snyigs ma*), the decline in the quality of material goods (*dus kyi snyigs ma*), an increase in negative emotions (*nyon mongs kyi snyigs ma*), degeneration of the virtues in the monastic community (*lta ba'i snyigs ma*) and the decline in the physical forms of humans (*nyams kyi snyigs ma*) (Rab gsal zla ba and Dil mgo mkhyen brtse, 1999, p. 50).

Later in the *gter ma*, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje identifies other enemies in his statement “The entrance [to Pemakö] will not be opened by those who follow the *vinaya*” (v. 433). He also declares that “imposters in red who behave indiscriminately and brandish their cymbals are sure to come, causing a swift decline and life in hell” (vv. 429–430). The *gter ston*'s mention of these enemies could be pointing to the Dge lugs sect, known for its emphasis on monastic discipline, or the *vinaya*.⁷⁹ Bdud 'dul rdo rje's criticism is perhaps addressing state regulation of the monastic community during the reign of the Great Fifth. He also highlighted his own white robes characteristic of the Rnying ma's *sngags pa*, a description that differentiated him from red-robed monastics of the New Translation schools, and perhaps specifically the Dge lugs school, who in his view, were mere “charlatans” (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 424–428). Due to a lack of acceptance by the contemporaneous ‘mainstream’ religious powers, the possibly disgruntled *gter ston* could have wished to diminish their spiritual credibility in the eyes of believers.

It was standard practice in Tibet for Treasure revealers to speculate about future occurrences. This was often looked upon with suspicion by many, even among the followers of the Rnying ma School (Doctor, 2005, p. 81). But part of a Treasure text's ‘authentication’ process is the indication of its origin within the scripture's contents, which also includes a prophecy about the circumstances surrounding the text at the time of its revelation. And not all prophetic Treasure literature was concerned with events already transpired. Prophecies describe people and events yet to come, as was evident in the revelations by Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po and Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje. This type of prophecy is often appropriated by

⁷⁹The *vinaya* is the corpus of monastic disciplinary regulations first formed by the early Buddhist traditions, and adopted in close form by later Tibetan Buddhist sects (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, p. 2377). Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), the founder of the Dge lugs tradition, accentuated a scholastic approach to Buddhist monastic education, and particularly adherence to monastic discipline (Powers, 2007, p. 163).

subsequent revealers, albeit at times through what Doctor (p. 211) describes as “considerable hermeneutical gymnastics”.

In modern scholarship, this anachronism found in *gter ma* points to their possible inauthenticity, a factor that is also relevant to Treasure texts about Pemakö. Cuevas (2006, p. 44) reminds us that the method of writing history is not simply the recording of a series of past events. He (p. 45) states that “all concepts of periodization, of temporal divisions, are founded on theoretical interpretations of continuity and change”. Mala (2006, p. 164) illustrates how *gter ma* prophecy made by an eighteenth-century Mongol scholar portrays Chinese history in the light of his Buddhist beliefs. Consequently, his chronicle is filled with predictions that are in fact a reflection of his own conceptions of history. Their value lies in the detailed interpretation of real events that provide later scholars with another facet of historical perspective. Tibetan Buddhist adepts may accept the authority of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's revelations, as exemplified by the praises of the *gter ston* uttered by Bdud 'joms rin po che; others may reject the *gter ston*'s declarations, as seen in the condemnation of Bdud 'dul rdo rje declared by the Fifth Dalai Lama (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 817; Ronis, 2006, pp. 182–183).

In the context of my thesis, however, what is significant about the content of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is the viewpoint of a supposed Treasure revealer about the religious meaning of the natural environment in Pemakö. Later in this chapter I discuss additional examples of suspect declarations found in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. For now, suffice it to say that his rendition of the region was contemporaneous to Tibet's socio-political circumstances during the seventeenth century and portrays how Pemakö's topography was viewed by Tibetan Buddhist practitioners of that era. As Kapstein (2000, p. 135) explains, although Tibetan Buddhist narratives acknowledge that some historical credentials were

dubious in their notions of prophecy and legitimacy, the spiritual credentials were deemed “impeccable”.

***The Text-Immanent Setting: Padmasambhava and his Audience
in Self-Liberation upon Hearing***

In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, as the legendary author of most Treasure texts, Padmasambhava would have composed *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* sometime in the eighth century. In the introduction to the *gter ma*, the scene jumps from the lifetime of Padmasambhava to that of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje in the seventeenth century, during which the Treasure revealer discovers the composition. Bdud 'dul rdo rje begins his revelation by first paying respect to various deities, among which are included the Buddha Amitābha, 'Od dpag med in Tibetan, and Avalokiteśvara, or 'Phags mchog sryan ras gzigs as is mentioned in the Treasure text (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 2–5). In correspondence with the Tibetan Buddhist differentiation between the different forms of enlightened beings, the *gter ston*'s homage to these specific entities correlates to the said enlightened forms of Padmasambhava.⁸⁰ After this initial homage, Bdud 'dul rdo rje introduces the first scene of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* as a flashback to Padmasambhava's life.

Upon his initial arrival in Tibet, Padmasambhava is said to have concluded that “Tibet was a country of malevolent savages” and out of his compassion for them, decided “to bring the scriptures from India to Tibet and translate them” (Dowman and Lha dban rgya mtsho 'i blo gros, 1973, pp. 77–78). Similarly, at the beginning of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*,

⁸⁰It is said that there are basically two bodily forms in which a Buddha can manifest: the *dharmakāya* and the *rūpakāya*. The *rūpakāya* can also be further divided into the *sambhogakāya* and the *nirmāṇakāya* (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, pp. 633, 1769). The *dharmakāya* is thought of as the enlightened mind itself, and is a sacred ‘body’ apparent to enlightened beings only. Padmasambhava is viewed as the Buddha Amitābha in this form. The *sambhogakāya* is believed to arise through the purification of mental defilements and is therefore detectable only by those whose perception has attained a corresponding level of clarity. In this form, Padmasambhava is recognised as Sryan ras gzigs. Guru Rinpoche's earthly form is his *nirmāṇakāya*.

Padmasambhava announces that his actions are motivated by his great compassion for beings struggling through grim times in the distant future. His objective is to reveal a ‘hidden land’ that will act as a place of temporal safety for persecuted Tibetans and spiritual refuge for Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 9–11).

According to the traditional Tibetan narrative, during Padmasambhava’s sojourn at Khri Song lde btsan’s court, the Guru assembled a group of twenty-five followers recognised later as his closest disciples. In *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 15–20, 29–30), the reader hears the voice of Padmasambhava enthusiastically proclaiming the virtues of Pemakö to three of them: Ye shes mtsho rgyal, the *mahāsiddha* 'Brog ban and Vairotsana the Translator. Ye shes mtsho rgyal, in alternative spirit form, is known as Vajravārāhī. Another of her manifestations is Vajrayogīnī, a semi-wrathful deity and less forceful form of Vajravārāhī (Simmer-Brown, 2001, p. 68). In her most subtle, enlightened form, Ye shes mtsho rgyal is considered an emanation of Samantabhadrī, the female counterpart of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra (Gyalwa Changchub and Namkhai Nyingpo, 2002, pp. 10.). Legend holds that Ye shes mtsho rgyal remained in Tibet for some 200 years, during which time she concealed innumerable *gter ma* throughout all parts of the country (Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye, Yeshe Gyamtso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2011, p. 45). She is said to have visited Eight Great Hidden Valleys and stayed a year in each of them, one of these being Pemakö (Dowman, 1984, p. 140). Thus, the mention of Ye shes mtsho rgyal in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* draws attention to her status as a *ḍākinī* who is relevant to Pemakö in her varied manifestations.

'Brog ban khye'u chung lo tsa ba (eighth century) was from the 'Brog mi clan of the Yar klungs dynasty. He earned the name “boy translator” because of his early mastery of Sanskrit (Mandelbaum, 2007a). Khye'u chung remained a lay practitioner, but because of his talent became one of the closest followers of Padmasambhava. He is said to have been such a

powerful practitioner that he could summon birds from the sky to land on his fingertips. Khye'u chung lo tsa ba's most notable relationship to *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is that Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje is considered his later reincarnation.

Vairotsana (eighth century) was born near the confluence of the Nyang and Gtsang po Rivers (Dowman and Lha dban rgya mtsho 'i blo gros, 1973, p. 83).⁸¹ Like Khye'u chung, he is believed to have exhibited exceptional qualities at an early age. He became one of the great Sanskrit translators under the tutelage of Śāntarakṣita and one of the three most significant Tibetan disciples under Padmasambhava. Many of his emanations and reincarnations were considered among the greatest *gter stons* in Tibet, although none seem to have any direct correlation to Pemakö; however, one of his emanations of speech was thought found in the *gter ston* Gter bdag gling pa (1646–1714). The *gter ston* Padma bde chen gling pa (1627–1713) represented an emanation of his mind (Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye, Yeshe Gyamtso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2011, p. 50). These two Treasure revealers lived during the time of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje. Gter bdag gling pa was the founder of Smin grol ling Monastery, the funding of which was in part subsidised by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Pad ma bde chen gling pa had connections to Ka thog Monastery, an institution to which Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje also had strong ties. Both were principal monasteries of the Rnying ma tradition. In view of Bdud 'dul rdo rje's history, the mention of Vairotsana in this context may have also pointed to the tension in his relationship with the Fifth Dalai Lama, despite their common efforts at advancing the Rnying ma tradition.

Thus, Guru Rinpoche's immediate audience as described in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* substantiates Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje claim as a veritable disciple of Padmasambhava that links him to the historical narrative of the Rnying ma tradition, the hidden land of Pemakö and the revealer's contemporaries. The introduction continues with the

⁸¹An alternate spelling of his name is Vairochana.

audience prostrating and making offerings to Padmasambhava. They beseech him to describe the person who discovers Pemakö, as well as his companion. At this point Padmasambhava enthusiastically responds to their request, and then begins the description of the revealer's pristine qualities. His language induces wonder at the miraculous characteristics of the Pemakö landscape. He exemplifies his spiritual mastery through proclamations about the powerful energy he has bestowed upon the region. He nevertheless tempers followers' over-exuberance by accentuating impending doom in Tibet (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 6–13).

The Role of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje in Self-Liberation upon Hearing

I have indicated earlier in this chapter that prophetic statements included in Treasure texts legitimise the *gter ma*'s status as an original pronouncement by Padmasambhava himself, in spite of any apparent errors in time placement. This practice is evident in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*'s introductory scene. In addition, prophecy in *gter ma* describes the respective Treasure revealer, which serves to dismiss any notions of anachronistic apocrypha. In view of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's contemporaneous socio-political circumstances described in Chapter Three, the pronouncements made in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* about this Treasure revealer seem to point to his credibility not only as a highly-realised Tibetan Buddhist practitioner, but also as a persecuted spiritual leader cast out by the very religious community he was originally destined to serve.

This raises questions as to why exactly Bdud 'dul rdo rje 'revealed' this Treasure and when. In the examination of this query, a possible explanation is found in the timeframe within which *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* was discovered. According to his biography, his most active period as a revealer was from approximately 1643 to 1656, after which he left for Sde dge (Ronis, 2006, pp. 174–175). *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is listed as one of his later

discoveries, which would theoretically place this revelation sometime between 1652 and 1656 (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 815). In his early revelations, from approximately 1643 to 1647, it is said that he especially criticised the Fifth Dalai Lama who had come to power in 1642. Later, in about 1650, Bdud 'dul rdo rje seems to change his mind about the Great Fifth and begins to sing the leader's praises in subsequent discoveries (Bdud 'joms 'jig bral ye shes rdo rje, [n.d.], p. 485; Ronis, 2006, pp. 181–183). As Ronis (2006, p. 182) points out, this change “did not go unnoticed”, as indicated in the Dalai Lama's autobiographical notes in 1658 that condemn the Treasure revealer as a fraud. The contemporaneous ‘powers-that-be’ could have been questioning the veracity of Bdud 'dul rdo rje's predictions for several years before he left for Sde dge. If it is true that he revealed *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* before even leaving for Sde dge, Bdud 'dul rdo rje may have already been experiencing the effects of disfavour and was anticipating future condemnation. Otherwise, the text may have been ‘discovered’ after his return to Pemakö from Sde dge in 1658 as a measure to save face in response to his rejection experienced by the communities in Khams and the Fifth Dalai Lama. Nevertheless, in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, Bdud 'dul rdo rje seems to vacillate between searching for favour with the Dge lugs tradition and disparaging its members.

Either way, *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* includes an unusual amount of autobiographical information as opposed to alternative *gter ma* texts about Pemakö. Other than an indication of authorship briefly within a text or in the colophon, none of these Pemakö Treasure texts I have examined provide such detailed information about the revealer. In *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, Padmasambhava first announces that “the person who opens the sacred door to Joyful Pemakö” called “Dharma Ar” had made aspirations to do so in his previous life as *Vidyādhara* Rgod ldem (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 31–36). In this context, Dharma Ar is a Sanskrit term that means ‘one suitable for the Dharma’, indicating a person

with the karmic propensity for practicing Buddhism at an advanced level. The subsequent mention of Rgod ldem refers to Dngos grub rgyal mtshan (1337–1408), the vulture-quilled *gter ston* who revealed the famous Northern Treasure teachings (Boord, 2013; Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, p. 782). There are no records of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje as an incarnation or even an emanation of Rig 'dzin Rgod ldem; nor have I found any information referring to Rgod ldem as having any specific connection to Pemakö other than a possible revelation of the region's existence; however, his name may have been mentioned as a connection to the Fifth Dalai Lama, who was a practitioner of Rgod ldem chen's Northern Treasure (Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal and Stuenkel, 2008, p. 298).

Self-Liberation upon Hearing continues with the mention of Bdud 'dul rdo rje's meeting with "a great being by the name of Kun dga'" (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 34–36). The revealer makes it clear that they are "close from a young age" but that they also "become the subject of all kinds of slander and gossip" (vv. 37–39). Here he makes it clear that this malevolence is a result of ignorance and afflictive emotions, which in this context is perhaps an accusation against either the Dalai Lama or the monastic leadership in Sde dge. Bdud 'dul rdo rje describes how he is an emanation of Padmasambhava, and that his "supreme companion will be an emanation of Ye shes mtsho gyal" known as Puṇye, which in Sanskrit means 'virtue' (vv. 45–46). This revelation aims perhaps to further legitimise the *gter ston*'s status as a representative of Guru Rinpoche, led only by honourable intentions. That he includes Kun dga' rgya mtsho as an equal recipient of this defamation is notable, since Kung dga' himself was a member of the Sde dge noble family. Is Bdud 'dul rdo rje trying to spread the blame for the denigration he experienced in Khams? Later in the text he specifies that "They will abuse him like a dog and commit various acts of slander against him", which suggests focus on him (Bdud 'dul rdo rje) solely (v. 65). Verses 70–72 convey how "due to pride in their own accomplishments", his "two-faced rivals" no longer see his good character and create

difficulties “for the holy man with their malicious gossip”. Finally, the *gter ston* reports that because of this persecution, “the swiftness of his Dharma activities . . . will fade” (v. 73).

The *gter ma*’s dramatic portrayal of unjust treatment is offset by a subsequent melodramatic proclamation by Padmasambhava, who heralds Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul’s sublime qualities as a Treasure revealer: “He is like the lion among clawed beasts, . . . the Garuḍa among winged creatures, . . . the *uḍumwara* vine of flowers among all flowers. In the sky, he is like the sun and the moon. Tibet’s happiness relies on this most fortunate being” (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 53–55, 58–59). This praise expounds the Treasure revealer as a prolific saviour of the Tibetan people. In the face of obstacles created by both worldly and unworldly realms, Guru Rinpoche then advises the *gter ston* and the faithful to “mingle awareness and basic space and meditate vividly on me alone” in order to “remove obstacles and reverse unfavourable conditions” (vv. 86–90). This guidance concludes the principal biographical information about Bdud 'dul rdo rje, after some seventy verses describe his mistreatment despite his divine prowess. Finally, nearing the end of the text, Padmasambhava once more describes the *gter ston*’s appearance as “dressed in white like the unborn *dharmakāya*” with “billowing clouds of *ḍākinīs* . . . float[ing] around his head” and surrounded by followers in white robes (vv. 424–428).

The revelatory timeframe of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is impossible to confirm, although it seems more likely an indication of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul’s contemporaneous circumstances rather than a prophecy. There could be several purposes for this detailed biographical account: a claim for legitimacy as a Treasure revealer in the eyes of his peers and the ruling powers, exposure of rampant corruption in secular and religious leadership, or genuine concern for the preservation of the Rnying ma lineage through glorification of Padmasambhava. The biographical information does seem to want to call the reader’s attention to Bdud 'dul rdo rje himself. Most of this information is provided at the beginning of the

composition, with the remainder of the *gter ma* vividly reflecting his viewpoint: the text acts as a mirror of the revealer's surrounding landscape and the attitudes towards the natural environment of that era. I now turn to *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*'s depiction of Pemakö's environment as a worldly and ethereal Tibetan Buddhist landscape.

Descriptions of Pemakö at the Levels of Ordinary Perception in Self-Liberation upon Hearing

In *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, Guru Rinpoche forecasts how he will look after his followers in the distant future by revealing a “hidden land, within which all things are completely extraordinary” (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 10–11). This sacred land known as Pemakö is in fact so powerful “one can attain Buddhahood through . . . [its] mere recollection” (vv. 12–13). Within the environment, the Tibetans perceive a universe that includes sacred sites and exceptional wildlife pervaded by religious symbolism. Huber (1999b, p. 57) explains that even if the earth is viewed as a bridge between the heavens and underworlds, the earth itself is not a separate dimension of reality because the ‘sacred’ is found within the ‘profane’. Samuel (1993, p. 157) summarises that the “‘sacred geography’ forms the ground in relation to which all Tibetan religious orientations have to position themselves”. As I demonstrate in the following commentary on *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, this sanctity of the natural world as a basis for spiritual positioning is exemplified in the text's portrayal of Pemakö's geography, topography, flora and fauna. In this presentation, the intersection of ordinary and mystical perception in the Tibetan Buddhist environmental narrative is easily apparent.

Geography and Sacred Sites

Rdo rje thogs med (1746–1796, p. 434) speaks of “the five extremely secret outer, inner and secret *cakras* of the great luminous Pemakö”, which likely refers to the physical and ethereal

points of Rdo rje phag mo's body in the region.⁸² *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* devotes part of its content to a description of Pemakö's physical layout in a similar fashion, beginning with a mapping of the outer regions within which the 'core' of Pemakö is located in the very 'secret' middle.⁸³

In the middle of all the sacred hidden lands, such as Ti se and Charitra, and so forth, there are hidden lands surrounding this famous and high-positioned place as follows:

In the eastern direction is G.yag lung, the Valley of the Yaks; in the southern direction is 'Bras mo ljongs, the Valley of Fruition.

In the western direction is Ariya, the Land of Noble Ones; in the northern direction is the Mkhan pa ljongs, the Valley of Adepts.

In the southeast is Sba lcags shel ljongs, the Valley of Wood Iron and Crystal; in the southwest is 'Gro mo ljongs, the Valley of the Female Migrators.

Brag gad ljongs, the Valley of Rocky Mountain Crevices, is in the northwest; Dga'bo ljongs, the Valley of Happiness, is in the northeast.

The lotus light of the land of bliss shines in the four directions onto Mañjuśrī's five peaked mountains to the southeast, Mount Malaya to the south, Charitra to the west and the land of Ma yi kong lung to the north.

In the middle of all these supreme places there is the [land] known as Pemakö.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 97–109)

Self-Liberation upon Hearing describes the actual area of Pemakö as an eight-petalled lotus, above which there is a nine-spoked wheel in the sky, which corresponds to a circular, geographical layout (vv. 242–243). These represent “the four continents and the four sub-continents. The four cardinal petals are like the four continents. The four sub-continents are

⁸²Rnam dag 'od gsal padma bkod chen po'i; Phyi nang gsang ba yang gsang 'khor lo lnga.

⁸³In the *gter ma* that I have consulted in this study, 'Bras mo ljongs, Ariya ljongs, Mken pa ljongs and Sba lcags shel ljongs are mentioned at various intervals by the *gter ston* Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, pp. 404–410). 'Bras mo ljongs corresponds to Sikkim in northern India and Mken pa ljongs is located in Bhutan. Mount Tisé refers to Mount Kailash in the far western end of the Himalayas. I have not been able to determine the location of other places mentioned in these verses from *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*.

located between the continents” (vv. 244–247). Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870c, p. 523) also describes the outline of the land as “four-sided with eight individual spaces” similar to “a lotus in bloom”.⁸⁴ Rje btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 11) details how “The five large blossoms measure 100 shoulder widths and a ten by ten area. The small four blossoms measure about thirty-five shoulder widths”.⁸⁵ Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje elaborates as follows on ‘inner’ Pemakö:

In the east there is the completely pure rainbow-coloured land. Likewise in the south lies Dpal ldan mdzes ldan bkod, the Land Endowed with Beauty. In the west lies Bde chen padma bkod legs, the Gift of Joyful Pemakö. In the northeast lies Rdzogs ldan las rabs bkod, the Pure Land of the Great Completion. The dimension of each land measures 250 hectares.

Kun gsal bkod chung, the Land of Complete Clarity, is in the southeast; Yon tan bkod chung, the Land of Excellent Qualities, is in the southwest; Sna tshogs bkod chung, the Land of Varieties, is in the northwest; Mngon bkod chung, the Land of Visible Activities, is in the northeast. They each have the dimensions of thirty-five hectares. In the centre is Rnam 'dag lhun grub, the Great Place of the Completely Pure Spontaneous Presence.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 167, 171, 173–
175, 179–180, 181–186)

The centre of Pemakö, which geographically would theoretically be located somewhere near the small town of Medok, is described in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* as follows:⁸⁶

In the east is Glang lung, Elephant Valley, which resembles an elephant. In the southern direction there is a valley called Rin chen spungs, the Heap of Jewels. Ratna Mountain, and so on, is located there. There is a rocky mountain in the west called Rma bya mjing bsnol, the Arch of the Peacock’s Neck. The valley there is called Rgya mjing lung pa, the Wide Neck Valley. All the rocky mountains of the northern direction look like blazing mountains with upraised weapons. This valley is called 'Jam pa lung, Peaceful Valley. In the southeast there is Pañci forest, within which all types of medicinal

⁸⁴Dbyibs ni gru bzhi la sogs brgyad lta bu tang; Padma 'dab ma brgyad pa brdal ba'i tshul.

⁸⁵Bkod chen lnga yi sa tsad ni; Rgyang phrag brgya dang bcu bcu ru; Bkod chung bzhi la rgyang phrag ni; Sum cu rtsa lnga'i tshad du yod.

⁸⁶Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, pp. 408–409) makes mention of Glang lung, Rin chen spungs, Rma bya mjing bsnol, Sera nya khyil and Lung nak tsub gyur.

Treasures are hidden. In the southwest in Gser nya 'khyil, the Valley of Swirling Goldfish, there are hidden Treasures of folk art. In the northeast is Rlung nag 'tshub 'gyur, the Valley of the Black Storm.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 192, 195–
196, 200–201, 205–207, 209–
212, 222)

The text continues with Padmasambhava's instructions for architectural construction in Pemakö:

Build eight monasteries in the eight heart lands as follows: Zhi khro 'i lha khang, the Temple of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, and Rig 'dzin Kun 'dus lha khang, the Temple of the Unification of all the *vidyādhara*s; Dpa'bo bcu gsum, the Temple of the thirteen Warriors, and 'Chi med tshé lha khang, the Temple of the Deathless Deities; Bskal bzang lha khang, the Temple of the Eight Buddha Teachings, and Bka'a bryad lha khang, the Temple of the Excellent Aeon. There is Rnam rgyal drag sngags lha khang, the Temple of Wrathful *Mantras* and Complete Triumph, and Sbyor sgrol lha khang, the Temple of Great Compassion.

Build eight *stūpas* at the eight secret places. Build a temple for the three turquoise deity families at the door to the sacred place that looks like a pig and snake fighting.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 298–305)

As I have explained earlier, in both the Bon and Tibetan Buddhist narrative, powerful places have required taming through religious practice and symbolism as a means to control the forces of nature (Samuel, 1993, p. 168). Huber (1999b, p. 31) also points out that sacred geographies are often deemed as such through imposing meaning onto the environment through human architectural structures. This often required an actual building and the strategic placement of a range of structures across the surface of the landscape.

In Chapter Three I detailed how the Vajravārāhī mythology in Pemakö is said to have begun with revelations by Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje sometime in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. Although *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* does not refer to the sow-headed goddess and any need to bind her to the Earth, the verses above apparently identify these

locations for the purpose of environmental subjugation. As Huber (1999b, p. 31) has illustrated, another method for identifying the sanctity of a landscape is through attaching meaning to its topographical features. The following sub-sections identify how *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* exemplifies this process.

Topography

In Chapter Two I have detailed the exceptional landscape in Pemakö. Scientific studies conduct ongoing research on the Namche Barwa Massif that still trembles over 1,000 times per year as a result of tectonic plate collision. In Pemakö, some of the deepest gorges in the world contrast sharply with some of the highest mountains in the world. The Yarlung Tsangpo River twists through the region, fed by hundreds of glacial streams and intersected by mountain-born tributaries. Glacial lakes are scattered throughout the foothills. The countryside is littered with boulders that tumble along with the movement of these icy masses. Rocky crags adorn the sides of mountain cliffs, often decorated with the spray of waterfalls that disguise entrances to obscure caves. Weather varies between extreme, dry cold and sticky, lowland humidity.

Despite this dynamic environment, the Pemakö landscape has most likely changed only superficially since the lifetime of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje. This is of course applicable to the mountains cited in *gter ma* about the region. Tibetan Buddhist practitioners traditionally venerate mountains as the home of religious deities. This environmental space, known as a *gnas*, is considered the visible embodiment of a deity. As Huber (1999b, p. 14) states, “the main implication of the né principle for ritual is that places so designated are ascribed a very high or positive ontological value”. Although a region may have many mountains, not all carry sacred status; however, if a mountain, or *ri*, is specified as a *gnas*, it becomes the focal point of religious ritual. In addition, the religious status of a region increases according to the number of designated sacred sites.

The *gnas ri* tradition also redefines nature, however, without recourse to dramatic physical alteration of the landscape (Huber, 1999b, p. 31). The initial development of this trend signalled a consolidation of secular and religious interests in territory. This tendency became more popular by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which witnessed the height of major reconsolidation of Tibetan provinces under the Fifth Dalai Lama. In its description of the mountainous features of Pemakö, *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* emphasises their importance to Tibetan Buddhism. The text does not, however, mention any particular mountain as the abode of a specific deity, which could be indicative of the revealer's personal motivations or simply of the infancy of the sacred mountain narrative in Pemakö. Bdud 'dul rdo rje writes:

The snow-covered mountain peaks resemble a white snow lioness boasting of her splendour. The mountains below, surrounded by boulders, resemble a mighty tigress baring her fangs. The mountains below, surrounded by slate and fields, resemble a female leopard bounding about playfully. The mountains below, surrounded by forest, look like the abode of blissful gods. The rocky mountains look as if they are raising weapons.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 115–122, 128)

These colourful descriptions encourage delightful visions of these peaks, of which the comparison to animal features may or may not be referring to their Tibetan Buddhist connotation. Tibetan Buddhist imagery relies upon a pantheon of animals as messengers and emissaries. Tibet's great Buddhist master Mi la ras pa (1040–1123) likened Buddhist qualities to those of a mythical snow lion. The mane symbolises mystical teachings, the four paws the four traits of love, compassion, joy and equanimity (Beer, 1999, p. 80; Powers, 2007, p. 401). The tiger, although not native to Tibet, is used in Tibetan Buddhist spiritual imagery because of its association with fearlessness and strength. It also represents desire: tiger pelts or a fabric rendition thereof often serve as the cover of meditation cushions symbolising the *yogin's* triumph over craving. Leopard spots are perceived to resemble the eyes or female sex organ; for this reason, they are often depicted in artwork with female esoteric beings. Like tiger skins,

leopard pelts are also used as victory banners or seat covers. Wild cats in general are commonly included in the retinues of animal messengers of wrathful deities (Beer, 1999, p. 78). *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*'s mention of these animals as topographical descriptors demonstrates how characteristics of the mountains are viewed as akin to those of spiritual aspirations.

Unlike other *gter ma* texts about Pemakö, the only distinct mountain mentioned in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is Ratna Mountain (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, v. 196).⁸⁷ Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 9) speaks of “luminous mountains in the east” at which “the main entrance [to Pemakö] looks like an upward stream”. He compares the mountains behind it to a “hailstone of weapons” that take the form of a blooming lotus.⁸⁸ Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, p. 406) speaks of the mountain called Jowo pal lha that looks like a lion. One peak is surrounded by “fields of rocky snow”.⁸⁹ In one text, Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929a, pp. 347–348) refers to a “sow-faced snow peak extending to the sky” as the face of Vajravārāhī. He refers to Mount Gyala Pelri as the abode of “infinite deities”.⁹⁰ In another Treasure text the *gter ston* (1871–1929b, pp. 324; 332) speaks of the mountains Padma shal ri and Bo ta'a la Mountain as “magnificent, armed warriors.”⁹¹ Because these *gter ma* appear later in the timeline of Pemakö-related discoveries, they are likely examples of an expanding *gnas ri* cult.⁹²

Self-Liberation upon Hearing also speaks of the valleys nestled between the mountain peaks. “There are 128 small valleys” or there are another forty-two or “fifty-eight small

⁸⁷This could be referring to Ratna Chuli Mountain located on the Tibetan-Nepalese border, although this location is a very far reach from Pemakö.

⁸⁸Shar phyogs ri dwags 'grog pa 'dra; Rtsa ba khyam chen gyes la brdzes pa 'dra; Rgyab ri mtson cha ser ba 'dra; Dbyibs ni me tog padma kha phye 'dra.

⁸⁹Shar lho phyogs la jo bo dpal lha zhes; Gangs ri 'gyur med seng ge 'gying 'dra yod; De dang nye bar gangs rdza 'dres pa 'i ri.

⁹⁰Gangs ri phag zhal gnam 'phyong 'dra; Phyi ltar rgya la dpal gyi ri; Sprul sku'i lha tshogs bye ba 'bum.

⁹¹De yi nub phyogs ri bo ta la ni; Ri bo lhun chags blta na sdug pa yi. De yi byang shar me tog ze'u 'bru la; Yang gsang pad shel ri po ta la'i zhing.

⁹²I have not found the exact location of these mountains.

valleys”. Only one is named and called Rin chen spungs, mentioned in an earlier part of this chapter section (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 151, 154, 160, 195). Within these and other valleys live people, ethereal beings and animals, among which the landscape hides innumerable *gter ma* (vv. 153, 156–157, 161, 178, 377–384). Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 479) refers to these landscapes in their resemblance to a “prince’s lute”.⁹³ Another *gter ston* describes seven ravines where gods and spirits assemble (Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po, 1585–1656, p. 9).⁹⁴

Again, referring to data presented in Chapter Two, water is also a significant characteristic of Pemakö’s topography: the Yarlung Tsangpo River squeezes through the region’s steep mountain facades. At many places, it tumbles over the river’s rocky edges as torrential waterfalls. Debris-laden glaciers rumble through the valleys. In the lower echelons of Pemakö, the waters widen into a glassy-surfaced mass. Tributaries and streams permeate the entire area, fed by the river, melting ice and heavy monsoon rains. Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 10) comments how “. . . the rivers sound like the Rulu *mantra*”.⁹⁵ Lakes are nestled within the various altitudes in the Pemakö landscape. Their depth and composition create radiant colours reflected upon exposure to variations in natural light. Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, pp. 330–331) comments on a “blood red-coloured lake . . . glowing like the flames of a fire”.⁹⁶

These lakes also act as repositories for *gter ma*. One Tibetan Buddhist practitioner describes his experience with a *gter ston* who supposedly extracted a Treasure text from a Pemakö lake:

. . . Pegyal Lingpa took off his clothes and went into the lake. It was a poisonous lake, so if any people or animals went into it, their whole

⁹³Gnas chen padma bkod zhes gnas mchog ni; Lung pa'i dbyib ni pi wang lta bu yod.

⁹⁴De nas rgyang phrag bdun tsam na; Lha srin 'du ba'i gnas chen cig.

⁹⁵The Rulu *mantra* could be referring to a number of sacred repetitions invoking the power of peaceful or wrathful deities. The Tibetan text reads: Chu rnams thams chad ru lu sgra.

⁹⁶De yi byang shar e k dza ti yi; Bla mtsho dmar nag rakta me 'od mdog.

body would be covered in sores. With the water spurting up into a fountain, Pegyal Lingpa disappeared underneath, and stayed under for a long time. After half an hour he emerged from the lake. . . . when he came out of the lake he was clutching something in his fist. He put what was inside his fist into the bowl. It was a black solid thing. Inside the black object there was [a *gter ma*].⁹⁷

(Levine, 1993, p. 114)

According to Tibetan Buddhist culture, similar to the belief in mountainous abodes for esoteric beings, water may also be the dwelling place for a deity thereby elevating the status of the location to that of a *gnas*.

Self-Liberation upon Hearing does not list any specific water-based *gnas*. Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672b, vv. 226–229) describes how lake colours are “of deep blue, white, yellow, red, green, and so forth”, each one “surrounded by hundreds of large lakes of the same colour”. Both Bdud 'dul rdo rje (vv. 230–235) and Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, p. 407) refer to a “mass rising up in the centre” with water streaming down on the sides.⁹⁸ *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* indicates that in the centre of one lake there is “a precious, wish-fulfilling supreme jewel, placed there by the Dharma King Indra Bhuti, who received it from the *nāga* land” (vv. 231–233). If this jewel is supplicated, instantaneous realisations are guaranteed. Because of the sanctity of this rock, a resident protective deity has likely been assigned to it as well, which would render the spot a *gnas*.

In a final topographical feature mentioned in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, numerous caves are dotted throughout the landscape (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, v. 170). In verses 171 through 187, *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* names the revealers of sub-regions of Pemakö, such as Rdo rje gangs chen mtsho and Karma gangs chen mtsho. The text states that “each teacher’s individual palace and meditative caves can be found in each land” (v. 177).

⁹⁷Pad rgyal glings pa (1924–1988) was a contemporary *gter ston* and former student of Bdud 'joms Rin po che ('Gro 'dul pad rgyal gling pa, 1994).

⁹⁸Dbus kyi dil 'bur zur bzhi ngos bzhi pa; Gyas gyon gnyis nas chu mig drag po bab.

Eight other meditation caves promote accomplishment of “common” or even “supreme *siddhis*” (vv. 239–240). There are caves that contain evidence of spiritual achievements, among which there is an extraordinary hidden cave of Padmasambhava (Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa, 1871–1929a, p. 357).⁹⁹ Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870c, p. 523) writes of how some are even “terrifying”.¹⁰⁰

Flora and Fauna

The Pemakö landscape is blanketed by montane woodland and sub-tropical jungle, a product of extreme temperature variances. As I have described in Chapter Two, the higher altitudes are famous for colourful Rhododendrons with the lower slopes bejewelled by bamboo, rare orchids and thousands of other plant species (Hajra, Verma and Giri, 1996; Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000; Sun, Zhou and Yu, 1996). In Chapter Three I proposed that anyone coming to or living in the area would presumably be astonished by not only the exceptional topography, but also by the remarkable plant life. Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 10) speaks of trees that “smell like roasted grain” that are everywhere in Pemakö.¹⁰¹ The “trees are endowed with the fragrance of aloe wood” per Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 480). He (p. 480) comments further that “there is no need for clothing since the tree leaves in the foothills provide coverage”.¹⁰² *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* mirrors this abundance found in nature: “There are palm leaves to use for making houses and shelter” (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, v. 293).

Self-Liberation upon Hearing also describes the region’s plant life, and the capacity for some plants to accelerate the quest for enlightenment, or at the very least sustain one with their

⁹⁹Bk'a rtags sgrub phug grangs las 'das; Khyad par o rgyan gsang phug dang; Ma tshogs mkh'a 'gro'i bro ra yod.

¹⁰⁰Ke'u tshang zab bu sgrub rkyen ngo mtshar chen.

¹⁰¹Shing de'i dri ni yos dri yod.

¹⁰²Shing rigs thams cad tsan ldan a ga ru; Gos ni lo 'dabs shing lo bzod mi dgos.

bounty. Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672b, vv. 332–335) declares that “There are hundreds of different kinds of powerful plants . . . and powerful, supreme medicinal herbs”. Later, Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, pp. 407) describes plants that “promote happiness”, one that “promises immortality”, helps one to “obtain realisations” or “allows you to visit [a] pure realm”. Another “fosters meditative experiences”.¹⁰³ Bdud 'dul rdo rje explains:

The green grass, forests and plants look like *srin mo* shaking their tangled hair. Whoever eats of its supreme grass, which has miraculous qualities – [he] will be like an old man who once again becomes a young boy of sixteen. Whoever eats of its supreme grass, which destroys all illusions – [he] will no longer think about food and drink and a meditative state will spontaneously arise [within him]. Whoever eats the supreme grass found in all of the grasslands – a variety of higher or lower Pure Lands will appear [to him].

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672, vv. 126–127,
261–267)

On a practical level, many of these plants can be used for medicinal purposes. In the Arunachal Pradesh area of Pemakö, for example, thousands of plant species are available to the local population. Many of these are implemented for their healing properties and general household use (Menon et al., 2001, p. 511). Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, p. 336) describes how medicinal herbs growing on the mountainside are proof of the land's pureness.¹⁰⁴

Self-Liberation upon Hearing reminds readers that “The natural, lower valleys adorned with excellent crops, grains and fruit resemble *dākas* and *dākinīs* dancing swiftly (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 123–125). Bdud 'dul rdo rje continues:

There are hundreds of edible and potable plants. There is a large variety of wild crops and fruit. Some types of barley, rice and fruit are about the size of a horse's head. Some types of wheat and barley grains are about the size of an apricot pit. There are turnips and radishes about the size of one's lap. One single wild, red potato root can satisfy the appetite of five people. The so-called Damentra fruit can satisfy fifty-five people. There are natural harvests and various fruits. There are hundreds of

¹⁰³Bde ba rgyas rtsa dkar la dmar mdangs can; De bzhin 'chi med grub pa'i rtsa mchog ni; De bzhin grub pa thob pa'i rtsa mchog ni; De bzhin mkha' spyod gshegs pa'i rtsa mchog ni.

¹⁰⁴Klu bdud rdo rje nges par skye ba'i sa.

different kinds of nutritious fruit. There are eight excellent, supreme flavours and various types of grains.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 268–276,
291, 333–334)

Similar support is voiced in *gter ma* by Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, pp. 14–15) and Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 482): “Most of the harvest of the fruit trees is about the size of a horse’s head” as well as “[nutritious] white barley sap flows” from trees in certain areas.¹⁰⁵ Drag snags gling pa (1871–1929a, p. 349) emphasises how in Pemakö “Forests are full of medicinal and perfumed trees; crops are plentiful, with many superbly sweet and sour flavours”.¹⁰⁶

Chapter Two of this thesis has provided a detailed description of the wide range of animal species currently populating Pemakö. *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* speaks of their good fortune through inhabiting the region’s landscape:

The native beasts and wild animals will accumulate merit by going to the shores of its grasslands and rivers. Thus, they will have made clear footprints in the stones upon which they have tread. All insects killed here during farming will attain the joyful celestial realm.

. . . there is no need to speak of the fortunate ones, since even beings in the forms of insects attain Buddhahood.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 367–371,
374–376)

Other Treasure texts speak of how the predatory beasts in the mountains are not dangerous because they have been tamed by *bodhicitta* (Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870c, p. 527).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po states: Shing thog nas 'bras phal cher rta mgo tsam. Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje comments: Mar khu si'u 'bru lta bu dkar po babs.

¹⁰⁶Sman spos nags tshal drwa ba sbrel; Ma rmos lo tog grangs las 'das; Kha mngar skyur ba'i ro mchog mang.

¹⁰⁷Ri gyur gcan gzan 'tshe med bga phebs pa; Byang chub sems bskyed sna tshogs ngo mtshar can.

Horses, male and female yaks and sheep provide “an inexhaustible source of milk” (Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje, 1682–1704a, p. 480).¹⁰⁸ In addition, “. . . monkeys play like the gods and birds sing beautiful Dharma melodies (Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa, 1871–1929a, p. 349).¹⁰⁹ The contemporary status of Pemakö’s bird populations is uncertain (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 10). Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje (vv. 131–133) remarks that “there are all kinds of birds made of cinnabar, gold, silver, turquoise, blue and conch shell”. Like other examples presented in this section on Pemakö’s conventional landscape, these birds are not only stunningly beautiful, their melodious songs are considered celestial expressions of Tibetan Buddhism, demonstrating the close relationship between Tibetan Buddhist thought and the physical environment (Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870c, p. 527; Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa, 1871–1929a, p. 357).¹¹⁰

***Self-Liberation upon Hearing and the Perception of Pemakö
through Dag Snang, or Pure Vision***

Until now I have illustrated how the Pemakö environment is presented and perceived at an ‘ordinary’ level; however, within the context of the Tibetan Buddhist *sbas yul* narrative, the region’s ‘secret energy’ is its most important characteristic. Pemakö’s mystical features are thought visible through the concept of *dag snang*, also known as ‘Pure Vision’. *Dag snang* is based on religious theory in Tibetan Buddhism in both its non-tantric, or *sūtra*, and tantric forms. Pure Vision aligns ontologically with the Tibetan Buddhist interpretation of the Two Truths, or *bden pa gnyis*.¹¹¹ These truths refer to two different modes of existence as a

¹⁰⁸Rgyu nor rta dang mdzo 'bri lug sogs yod; Sems can de rnam 'o ma zad med yod.

¹⁰⁹Spre'u rtse 'jo lha yi gar.

¹¹⁰Mchog gyur gling pa exclaims: Bya rigs spu sdug sgra skad dbyangs snyan pa. Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa states: Nyin du lha bya'i gsung dbyangs len.

¹¹¹Williams (1989, p. 39) states that “. . . the Mahāyāna *sūtras* were preached in one way or another by Śākyamuni Buddha, the ‘historical’ Buddha. Mahāyāna *sūtras* themselves also associate the origins of these texts not with the historical Buddha who died, perhaps, sometime in the fifth or the fourth century BCE, but rather with visionary experience of and inspiration by one of a number of Buddhas who continue to exist on a higher plane”. The meditative context of these texts should be considered because

characteristic of any given phenomenon (Tenzin Gyatso, 2007a, p. 35). One is the conventional truth (*kun rdzob bden pa*), which refers to the way ‘reality’ appears to the average mind – solid, unchanging and with some sort of inherent quality. Ultimate truth (*don dam bden pa*) reflects the supposed veritable mode of being of reality, known as emptiness. This theory claims that there is no innermost essence to anything – all ‘things’ are devoid, or empty of any intrinsic identity (p. 37).

The epistemological framework of Tibetan Buddhist thought explains the psychological processes that hide these truths from the unenlightened mind. Tibetan Buddhist psychology and theory of mind, *blo rigs*, divides the mind into a passive main mind (*gtso sems*) and active mental factors (*sems chung*); the former performs much like a screen onto which the latter project different images (Tashi Tsering, 2006, p. 5). Underlying the manifestation of mental factors is the ignorance, or *ma rig pa*, that misapprehends the true nature of phenomena. In conventional perception, a solid, inherently existing picture of outer events is projected onto the inner mental screen. The grasping at these appearances as real is believed the source of perpetual sentient misery. Adjusting perception through prayer, meditation and purificatory ritual develops an accurate understanding of all knowable phenomena and eventually the omniscience of a fully-enlightened Buddha (Berzin, 2001).

Huber (1999b, pp. 18–19) recounts that most people who visit a hidden land are considered “ordinary persons”, whose cognition is obscured by distorted views. Others are “excellent persons”, whose view is unobscured by misperceptions. The highest of these exceptional beings are those with Pure Vision because their cognitive abilities are said to allow

of how they foster psycho-religious transformation of reality. In Buddhism, a tantric text generally refers to scripture that contains esoteric teachings, often ascribed to Śākyamuni Buddha, or another buddha figure. This definition is not completely accurate because some esoteric writings do not include ‘tantra’ in their title while others that are considered non-esoteric do include the term in their title. Generally, tantra is textually defined as such based on specific elements contained within a text. These include *mantra* (*sngags*), *maṇḍala* (*dkyil 'khor*), *mudrā* (*phyag rgya*), or hand gestures, initiations (*dbang bskur*), fire sacrifices (*sbyin sreg*) and feasts (*tshogs*) for the intention of gaining mundane and supramundane powers (Buswell and Lopez, 2006, p. 2183).

them to perceive the various levels of subtle and gross existence. The ‘innermost quality’ of a hidden land is the manifestation of emptiness or its ‘Pure Appearance’ that is perceivable only through Pure Vision. Alexandra David-Neel (1868–1969) was a French explorer and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism of the early twentieth century. One of her overland journeys to Lha sa ventured through a reputed hidden land in the Himalayas. She (1927, p. 65) describes a glimpse of what she believed to be the most secret aspect of this mystical scenery as “a strange town bathed in a pale golden light” with no sounds in it other than the faint tinkling of bells. Upon her return to the same spot a day later, the landscape was nowhere to be found. Folk tales claim that Pemakö shepherds report walking into ‘another dimension’, only to return years later to their former homestead; upon their reappearance, these men wore the same clothes as when they first vanished and they supposedly had not aged.¹¹²

The Pure Vision of excellent persons, which includes Treasure revealers, is thought to allow them to recognise esoteric aspects of a sacred geography that legitimise its elevated soteriological status within the Tibetan Buddhist narrative. Mchog gyur gling pa, (1829–1870b, p. 403) reminds the faithful that upon entering a hidden land, know “that what arises does not exist truly”.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the Pure Vision of numerous *gter ston* has allegedly revealed ‘doors’ to secret locations deemed spiritually powerful, a phenomenon also prevalent in the Pemakö narrative. For example, Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870c, p. 524) writes of “a small place in the woods that is about the size of one’s head and is a black spot of special power”.¹¹⁴ As *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* emphasises, once through these entrances, a practitioner can discover innumerable *gnas*. Among these are many meditation caves, where realisations are achieved with ease (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 170, 239–241). “Supreme

¹¹²During my conversations with one of the Tibetan scholars about the translation of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, he narrated this story that had been passed on to him from his grandmother.

¹¹³Ma nges cho 'phrul sna tshogs ci 'char yang; Rang sems 'grul snang tsam las don du ni; Med par blo thog bca'd de thog rtzis su.

¹¹⁴Sol ma zhes bya'i dri ro nus pa can; Mi mgo tsam la nags tshal bcud len yod.

locations” that subdue all impediments to realisation and “palaces” abound, where those with the karmic propensity can accomplish the “rainbow body” (vv. 155, 158–159, 161, 165).¹¹⁵ Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, p. 331) also emphasises that these sacred locations are visible only through the arising of Pure Vision. He indicates that there are “many caves containing traces [of Guru Padmasambhava]”. The “Wrathful Samantabhadra's Cave of Achievement of the Great Blissful Expanse . . . for those who go there, concentration and realisation increase of their own accord”.¹¹⁶ Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje (vv. 387–388) explains that “there are many minor hidden valleys that may be visible for one month, one year, and so on”.

These areas have been ‘consecrated’ by Padmasambhava’s energy and are said to be guarded by protective entities known as *gnas srung*, also only perceptible through Pure Vision (Allison, 2009, p. 169; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1956, p. 5). The Tibetan categorisation of these beings roughly corresponds to dwellers located above, at the level of and below the earth (Diemberger, 2002, p. 108).¹¹⁷ They may manifest as severe weather, vicious animals or disease in response to a perceived threat. One *lam yig* about Pemakö warns passers-by to “offer incense and respect the deities that reside there” (Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870a, p. 405).¹¹⁸ *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* describes how Pemakö is “is a place of worldly, arrogant gods and spirits” (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, v. 152). Padmasambhava proclaims that

¹¹⁵The rainbow body, or *ja 'lus* in Tibetan, occurs when the physical body dissolves into light after the meditator has achieved the final goal of enlightenment. Some practitioners are said to leave only rainbow light behind (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, p. 945).

¹¹⁶Sgrub phug bde chen klong yangs zhes pa yod; Der bgrod ting 'dzin nyams rtogs shugs kyis 'phel.

¹¹⁷According to Samuel (1993, pp. 162–167), there are four basic groups of ethereal beings: the class of benevolent deities are the heavenly gods, such as the *lha*. The second type of entity resides among or in mountains, water or the general landscape. *Gyal po*, *lus* and *nyan* fall into this category, and are generally vindictive towards those that disturb them. In the third category are spirits living within the earth, who are considered quite malevolent. Among these are *sa dag*, *ma mo* and *srin mo*, ferocious beings that can wreak havoc in the human world with disease and calamity. Finally, there is the group of religious deities and their retinues, such as the *vidam*, who are symbols essential to tantric meditation. The *vidam* is the practitioner’s specific meditational deity, and represents the qualities to which the adherent aspires (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, p. 2500).

¹¹⁸De ru bsang dang lha srin dam bsgrags gnad.

“Like me . . . [the peaceful deities] must give empowerments, audiences and transmissions” (vv. 161–164). “There is a place in the northwest” he explains, “where millions of goddesses gather at a white rock . . .” (vv. 213–214). He goes further to describe Pemakö as special because audiences are possible with him, “*mahāsiddhas*, multitudes of *dākinīs*, Buddhas” and even the local “wrathful esoteric beings” (vv. 252–255). In these circumstances, ordinary practitioners are again advised, however, to regard any of these beings as a manifestation of emptiness appearing in worldly and unworldly forms (Thinley Norbu, 2006, p. 275).

Pure Vision allows for the discovery of Treasure texts concealed in a hidden land. Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, p. 409) describes “a collection of Treasure texts about supplication and offerings to ancestral gods” and “various Treasure collections belonging to powerful guardians of the teachings” cached in the Pemakö landscape.¹¹⁹ *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* also describes how hidden Treasures are concealed throughout the region. The *mantras* of fierce protector deities are said to protect these *gter ma* (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 156–157). Medicinal Treasures are hidden in a jungle (vv. 209–210). Twenty-five jewelled Treasures are concealed in a large “crystal boulder” (vv. 188–191). Five Dharma texts are awaiting discovery in a mountain of crystal (vv. 193–194). In a valley called the Heap of Jewels lie eighteen more Treasures (vv. 195–198). *Gter ma* that resemble beautiful handicrafts are concealed in the Valley of the Swirling Goldfish (vv. 211–212).

Yet another aspect of Pure Vision is the Pure Appearance of the Pemakö landscape as a Pure Land. Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, pp. 323, 325) states that “Because [the area] is the ultimate, earthly pure realm, it is called Pemakö, the Lotus Array. This incredible landscape . . . is an earthly Sukhāvātī, a Pure Land of Great Bliss”.¹²⁰ A Pure Land

¹¹⁹Mkha' 'gro'i sgrub skor las rim kha tshang dang; Pho lha dgra lha'i gsol mchod gter kha yod; Bstan srung mthu yi gter kha grangs med dang; Ni la tho sha la sogs gter kha yod.

¹²⁰Gnas kyi khyad 'phags bde chen padma bkod; Zhing gi khyad 'phags yang gsang padma'i khebs; Sa spyod rnam dag bde chen zhing dang mtshungs. De yi stangs kyis padma bkod zhes sgrags; Kun bsang shak thub padma 'byung gnas kyi.

is defined as a Buddha-field, which is an ethereal ‘reality’ purified of any sin and resultant suffering. It is deemed an auspicious place in which to take rebirth and continue the practices necessary for the attainment of complete enlightenment. Sukhāvātī is the most famous of these and is the abode of Amitābha, the Buddha of Infinite Life (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, p. 1675). In Pemakö, accelerated Buddhahood, of which omniscience is a component, is promised to all who enter and even to those who “take seven steps in its direction” (Rig ‘dzin Bdud ‘dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 353–355). Bdud ‘joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, p. 358) also proclaims that “by entering this Pure Land, the door to lower rebirths is closed; taking seven steps towards it guarantees rebirth in [Pemakö] in the next life”.¹²¹

The association of Pemakö to Pure Lands also combines earthly symbolism with that of the ideal of an ethereal Śambhala. The history of Śambhala begins with the Kālacakra teachings in India that referred to a worldly realm located somewhere north of the River Sītā.¹²² It has the physical shape of an eight-petalled lotus surrounded by snow mountains. The esoteric character of Śambhala takes on the attributes of a Pure Land, within which the best possible environment for attaining enlightenment is available to practitioners. These conditions resemble those of Sukhāvātī. Another development in the legends of Śambhala is the Tibetan conception of Uḍḍiyāna, the land associated with the origins of Guru Padmasambhava. Both Sukhāvātī and Uḍḍiyāna remain in this world, but embrace an esoteric existence that is accessible only through supernatural powers (Bernbaum, 1985, pp. 110–118). Much like the fantastical journeys through the lotus-petal geography of Śambhala, Pemakö mythology is similarly fashioned after this symbolic path to enlightenment.

¹²¹Gnas ‘brel re yis ‘khor ba ‘i skye sgo chod; Dad pas gom bdun bor nas shi na yang.

¹²²The *Kālacakra Tantra* is an account of a conversation between Śākyamuni Buddha and one of the first Kings of Śambhala. It speaks of the location, structure, history and prophecy of Śambhala (Bernbaum, 1985, pp. 26–27). The River Sītā is located in the current southern Indian province of Karnataka, although different versions of the *Kālacakra Tantra* moved the location of Śambhala further into northern India or towards eastern Tibet (pp. 243–244).

Ray (2001, p. 129) summarises that “given that the phenomenal world of pure appearance is beyond thought, the symbolic language that is used in [tantric Buddhism] to suggest the actual way in which the world appears is that of the mandala”. In Indo-Tibetan iconography, a *maṇḍala* is usually portrayed as a circular form that represents a sacred realm (Brauen, 1997, p. 22). In its simplest configuration, the design contains a central square surrounded by several circles. This entire space can depict a consecrated ordinary reality, a celestial palace or the whole universe as a macrocosm (Chandra and Chandra, 1995, p. 9). As Huber (1999b, p. 26) states, the *maṇḍala* is one of the most important Indian organising principles, serving as a model for the perfect city, a framework for political power or an illustration of the vital energies found in the human body.

As a tantric Buddhist icon, the *maṇḍala* symbolises the realm of a specific deity who serves as the focus of a certain set of practices. The featured tantric personality is situated at the very centre of the design. Surrounded by a square enclosure, gateways located on each side represent entrances to the celestial inner sanctum. Within the complete enclosure of the *maṇḍala* there may be hundreds of attendants, Buddhas, wrathful and peaceful esoteric creatures, symbols and landscapes characteristic of the deity’s specific powers or virtues. As Brauen (1997, p. 21) summarises, the *maṇḍala* shows the way for humans to become a “mirror of the cosmos”.

Much like Chos rgyam drung pa’s (1985, pp. 133–134) comparison of the tantric journey to walking along a twisted mountain trail fraught with dangerous challenges, the *maṇḍala* provides the practitioner an overview and guide to mental transformation, proceeding from the coarsest mode of subjective experience to the subtlest view of emptiness. Ray (2001, p. 106) describes this path as one “directed to uncovering the buddha-nature within” enabling the power of Pure Vision. The *maṇḍala*’s basic principle is that ‘reality’ has its own structure different from the ordinary, unenlightened mind’s vision thereof. This reality is not something

fixed or unchanging; rather, it exists as spontaneous fluidity (p. 129). The central deity represents the state of awakening towards which one is striving. The surrounding retinue symbolises concepts relevant to the meditator's worldview as well as strategies to adjust perception to the pervasive transience of phenomena. The centre and its environs are considered interdependent and therefore empty of any inherent existence; this is the impetus behind the *maṇḍala*'s transformative potential (Simmer-Brown, 2001, p. 117). All aspects of the *maṇḍala* influence each other, so that physical surroundings, practices and perception become part of the entire progressive experience towards enlightenment.

The vision of Pemakö's Pure Appearance as an earthly yet esoteric, *maṇḍalic* Pure Land is perhaps the region's most significant symbolic purpose. Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 9) describes Pemakö as a “beautiful, blossoming lotus”.¹²³ Within its lotus petal divisions there are *maṇḍala* constructs within *maṇḍalas*, as illustrated by Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, pp. 329, 330): “To the southeast is a hidden forest, which leads to a *dākinī maṇḍala*”. The *gter ston* also speaks of the lands around the mountain as “the four directions that are a *maṇḍala* of the Four and Six Tantras, which are like a marvelous Pure Land displaying diverse, perfect emanations”.¹²⁴ Rdo rje thogs med (1746–1796, p. 430) portrays Pemakö as the “primordially pure expanse . . . the luminous manifestation, free from elaborations”.¹²⁵ Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's (1615–1672b, vv. 12–13, 134–135) revelation describes the Pure Land status of Pemakö with the words, “One can attain Buddhahood through the mere recollection of this Pure Land known as Joyful Pemakö” where “like the western Pure Land, there is no suffering of happiness or unhappiness”.

¹²³Dbyibs ni me tog padma kha phye 'dra.

¹²⁴De yi shar lho gsang chen dg'a ba'i tshal; De brgyud la phyin lung phu mkha' 'gro'i dal; Phyogs bzhi lung bzhi rgyud sde bzhi drug gi; Bkod pa rab bkra ngo mtshar khyad 'phags zhing; De yi lho phyogs kun bzang bla mtsho yod.

¹²⁵'Od gsal spros pa bral ba'i sgyu 'phrul mdangs; Sku gsum dag pa'i grong khyer padma bkod.

Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje alludes to the *maṇḍalic* path to enlightenment in his vivid descriptions of Pemakö's physical appearance that coexist with the landscape's subtle esoteric qualities; these include ethereal entities and power places. The *gter ston* (1615–1672b, vv. 363–365) further enhances his accounts with proclamations of Padmasambhava's presence in Pemakö for three and a half years, which ensures that “whoever goes there will attain perfect Buddhahood”. Guru Rinpoche affirms that he has sealed “the Joyful Pemakö” with his aspirations – no one who goes there “will descend to the lower realms” (vv. 420–423). Practitioners are advised to “meditate on empty appearances”, visualising the Guru at the crown of the head and the heart centre (vv. 406–410). Cultivation of the “unwavering natural state” and the destruction of “consciousness and false constructs” leads to the “the unity of emptiness and clarity” (vv. 283–286). The Guru further assures the faithful that he will “remove obstacles [to practice] and reveal various paths” (v. 414).

In the progression to the subtlest aspects of Pemakö, *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* directs the practitioner to *rnam dak* and *lhun grup*, or the Great Place of the Completely Pure Spontaneous Presence (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, v. 186). This is the innermost physical aspect of Pemakö, nestled deep within the very centre of its lotus layout.¹²⁶ O rgyan bstan 'dzin rin po che (McDougal, 2016, p. 14), a contemporary Tibetan Buddhist adept from Pemakö, locates this spot at Chi med yang gsang in Pemakö, which he claims is the innermost *cakra* of Vajravārāhī. As part of the most ‘secret’ quality of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, specifying the most profound aspect of Pemakö as *rnam dak* and *lhun grup* is to refer to the very basis of one of the highest tantric practice in Tibetan Buddhism known as *rdzogs chen*, or the Great Perfection. This foundation is the innate mind of clear light, or *rig pa*, within which lies the potential for complete Buddhahood.

¹²⁶*Rnam dak* and *lhun grup* are the terms used in the *gter ma* text, however their meaning corresponds to *ka dag* and *lhun grup*, terms traditionally used to express the qualities of primordial purity and spontaneous presence of the innate nature of mind, or *rig pa* (Duff, 2000).

Thus, when a practitioner transforms ordinary topographical features into the sacred geography of the *maṇḍala*, perception is understood as purely subjective whereby the experience of the landscape itself is seen as the means to effectuate this realisation. *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* intertwines dramatic descriptions of the region's topography, flora and fauna with their spiritual significance to depict an earthly and esoteric *maṇḍala*. Emptiness is seen to permeate the topography, animal and plantlife of the natural environment. In the highest level of tantra, the environment and all that inhabits it are regarded as pure, along with the mental continuum that perceives them. Therefore, everything has and will remain in an eternal state of enlightenment, which is representative of awakening and pristine awareness (Powers, 2007, pp. 260, 280; Ray, 2001, p. 152).

In this way, Pemakö is a visual symbol of sacredness to those who do not yet possess the cognitive clarity to see the region's hidden aspects; however, Padmasambhava guarantees that a visit to Pemakö will remove obstacles to this Pure Vision and allow the practitioner a glimpse of its secret nature. Thus, from the viewpoint of Tibetan Buddhist culture, there is a tangible and intangible nature embedded within the physical composition of Pemakö. A mountain is not just the result of tectonic plates pushing the earth into the air, but it is also the abode of deities, the concealer of Treasure texts, a safe haven for the persecuted and a powerful meditative haven for *yogins*. Water washes away sins, trees diffuse sacred aromas, grassy knolls remind of divine goddesses and visions of leopards portray the ferocity of raging divinities. As Beer (1999, p. 3) affirms, "As breathtakingly majestic as the external world appears, it is still but a pale reflection of the . . . visualised worlds of the paradise realms".

The Message of Pemakö in Self-Liberation upon Hearing

Ehrhard (1999, p. 227) comments that it is no longer feasible to speak of an isolated space called 'Pemakö'. Still, he (p. 228) contends that "the sacred site called Lotus Splendor

continues to harbour its secrets”. Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672b, vv. 112–113, 260), among others, describes the scintillating quality of this hidden land as “filled with the light of rainbow rays” with “no day or night”. What is striking about *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*'s depiction of Pemakö's natural environment is the eloquence used to describe a landscape thought to embody a certain luminescent quality at all levels of its physical and ethereal existence. Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's terminology evokes the majestic sanctity of the natural surroundings, relying on this approach not only for religious evangelism, but perhaps also to vindicate his role in advocating Pemakö as an auspicious Pure Land. By creating a visionary experience of the natural environment for practitioners, the landscape promises to eventually accommodate the desires of the faithful. As such, Pemakö's secrets, whatever these may be, are revealed to those who surrender to its infinite possibilities. More importantly, the message of Pemakö in Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* is perhaps a call to believe not only in the Treasure revealer's credibility as a *gter ston* appointed by Padmasambhava to lead the fortunate to secular and spiritual salvation, but also in the power of the great Guru's taming of this fierce countryside.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes my exploration of the relationship of Tibetan Buddhism to Pemakö's natural environment as portrayed in the Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. I have demonstrated how this *gter ma* illustrates this connection through my examination of the conventional and esoteric meaning indicated in scripture. By contrasting the text with other relevant *gter ma*, I have shown its place in the historical development of religio-environmental narratives about Pemakö. In the following chapter I examine how these narratives come to light in contemporary religious attitudes towards Pemakö's natural environment.

Chapter Five: Guidebooks, Sacred Geography and Pilgrimage Ritual in Contemporary Pemakö

Introduction

In the present chapter, I shift from a historical to contemporary viewpoint of Tibetan Buddhist perceptions of the Pemakö environment. I begin with a discussion of the role of *gnas yig* and *lam yig* in modern pilgrimage practice. This explanation draws on the part played by Treasure revealers in the dissemination of this type of revelatory scripture. I then elaborate on more recent examples of sacred geography and hidden lands in Tibetan culture. Here I also compare current descriptions of pilgrimage destinations in Pemakö with those indicated in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* and other *gter ma* literature relevant to the region.

This preliminary information contextualises the subsequent sections in this chapter that report on interviews I conducted with six Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims to Pemakö. As I have explained in Chapter One, my approach to data collection and analysis in this study is based on a phenomenological viewpoint. Consequently, like the methodological strategy I applied to my examination of scripture about Pemakö, in my analysis of interviews I emphasise adherents' perspectives of the region's natural environment. I present this information in accordance with themes emphasised by the interviewees.

The Importance of Tibetan Pilgrimage Literature in Modern Practice

I have described in Chapter Three how the Tibetan tradition of concealing spiritual wisdom for revelation in distant times is mostly attributed to Padmasambhava. In the eleventh century, the Rnying ma introduced *gter ma* revelation likely to assert the 'old' school's legitimacy among a variety of new Buddhist sects developing in Tibet. The Treasure tradition, however, also

became a method of reconnecting contemporaneous practitioners to ideals of relative stability in the Imperial Age, ancient religious practices, and moreover, the divine authority of Padmasambhava.

After the demise of the Sa skya and Mongol priest-patron relationship in the thirteenth century, Tibet met with further political unrest. Years of internal strife continued with the Dge lugs and Bka' brgyud sects vying for secular and religious power. In the late sixteenth through seventeenth centuries, a multitude of Treasure revealers began a flurry of *gter ma* revelations about Pemakö, many in the form of guidebooks. The Rnying ma would again attempt to reassert the tradition's legitimacy through the Padmasambhava legacy: the Pemakö hidden land mythology and corresponding *gnas yig* and *lam yig* revelations were an innovative appeal to the favour of the disenfranchised masses. As I demonstrate in this chapter, scripture about Pemakö continued this role in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Generally, some of the *gnas yig* and *lam yig* literature is structured around prophetic declarations about the state of Tibet and the world, guidance to holy sites in a sacred geography and descriptions of the divine qualities of the respective landscape. The traditional role of the *gter ston* in the presentation of these scriptures is the conveyance of the material to a relevant audience. Because the guidebooks do not include detailed information about Tibetan Buddhist spiritual practice, there is no 'cycle of teachings' to perfect in secret. These texts' descriptions contribute to the 'opening', or identification, of sacred locations through the phenomenon of Pure Vision. In theory, *dag snang* allows the revealer to lead pilgrims through the divine landscape to the various sites of reverence.

A recent example of the role of guidebooks in pilgrimage ritual is found in that of the *gter ston* Sga rje khams sprul rin po che. Born in 1927 in Khams, he allegedly manifested signs

of spiritual realisation at the age of four.¹²⁷ In 1956, he reported visions of a sacred mountain under which were powerful meditation caves; he recorded this experience in “a small book, a guidebook in verse” (‘Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009, p. 154).¹²⁸ Shortly thereafter, Khams sprul rin po che led a group of pilgrims through the upper regions of Pemakö, their journey retracing the places he had imagined earlier. In 1957, they visited the holy sites around the small village of Pe located in Upper Pemakö near the Yarlung Tsangpo River. During their travels, the entourage placed their faith in Khams sprul rin po che’s guidance through the surrounding landscape (pp. 163–165).

In 1959, Khams sprul rin po che rediscovered a *gnas yig* about Pemakö, originally revealed in the 1800s by the *gter ston* Mchog gyur gling pa.¹²⁹ A comparison of Khams sprul rin po che’s actual pilgrimage journey to the sites listed in the *gnas yig* originally by Mchog gyur gling pa does not show any similarities. Still, Khams sprul rin po che’s previous revelation through Pure Vision and the discovery of this latter *gnas yig* may have strengthened his credibility in the eyes of the faithful. This in turn could have provided some sense of stability during the Chinese invasion of Tibet at that time.

More recently, I had the opportunity to communicate with a Tibetan Buddhist master, also considered a Treasure revealer, who I will call Sprul sku Gsang sngags rin po che.¹³⁰ He currently lives in lower Pemakö near Devakoṭa in Arunachal Pradesh.¹³¹ Approximately thirty

¹²⁷In Khams sprul rin po che’s autobiography, he describes how as a child he heard “the drone of conches, horns, drums, cymbals and bells” from a small hole in a boulder. This was followed by visions of Buddhas and deities, events that would repeat themselves throughout his life and allegedly indicated that he was an adept of great spiritual prowess (‘Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009, p. 7).

¹²⁸This composition has not been published.

¹²⁹I am referring here to the *gter ma* listed in the bibliography under Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870a.

¹³⁰A *sprul sku* is thought to be either the physical manifestation of a Buddha or a highly realised spiritual adept. While studying in Dharamshala, India in 2016, I spoke to Sprul sku Gsang sngags rin po che through a Tibetan friend who is from Pemakö. She generously contacted him through an online instant chat service. He explained his background to me and reviewed a few of the pilgrimage sites near his village. He was not familiar with sites in Upper Pemakö.

¹³¹Devakoṭa is a famous pilgrimage site located in the southern extremity of Pemakö in Arunachal Pradesh, east of the Siang River.

years of age, his main responsibility is to guide the faithful in the surrounding villages. He therefore spends much of his time studying scripture, perfecting his personal religious practice and tending to the ritual needs of the community. Because he is considered a reincarnation of a previous Buddhist adept, he is viewed as an accomplished master.¹³² We did not discuss whether he had been privy to any revelations of Treasure literature about Pemakö. He explained, however, that the various religious sites in his immediate surroundings in Pemakö were already well-known. Any others had either already disintegrated or were yet to be discovered.¹³³ This information was transmitted to him through his teachers and local legend, and not directly through the study of guidebooks.

Buffetrille (2003, p. 19) notes that “pilgrimage guides play an important role in the behavior of pilgrims in the evolution of sacred sites”, as is exemplified in the narrative surrounding A myes rma chen Mountain.¹³⁴ Pilgrims are instructed to gather earth from sacred places as relics or medicine, to carry heavy stones in honour of parents or to circumambulate specific sites (pp. 14, 15). New guides are composed by local scholars, which affirms the sacred spot’s power because of the veneration that Tibetans hold for scripture. It appears, though, that the oral tradition cultivated around guidebooks also influences pilgrimage ritual. The interviewees, as well as the Tibetans I met along the way in Pemakö, conducted pilgrimage based on folkloric description of various destinations passed down through generations of monastic and lay practitioners. During my visit to Pemakö, for example, although likely the impressive remains of ancient glacial debris, the locals described numerous boulders revered as remnants of Padmasambhava’s meditative sojourns. Some were gargantuan stone masses at

¹³²As a baby, signs such as rainbows supposedly heralded him as a reincarnation of a Buddhist master. His *gter ston* status was corroborated by another Tibetan Buddhist adept.

¹³³It was explained to me that a holy site is often only temporary – sometimes it is ‘visible’ for a few weeks or years, and sometimes just a few days.

¹³⁴A myes rma chen is the name of a territorial god (*yul lha gzhi bdag*) worshiped by the inhabitants of the traditional Tibetan province of A mdo. It is also the name of a range of mountains in what is today known as the Mgo log Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, located in the Chinese province of Qinghai (Buffetrille, 2003, p. 3).

the shore of the Siang River, and others were rocks hidden away in forest oases draped with prayer flags. Another holy site was made up of two adjoining boulders under which a small crack was said to lead to the promised land should one have the courage to crawl through the leech-infested mud. It was not possible to verify whether these locations had been identified by a Treasure revealer. In the meantime, I have not found any description of these spaces in the Treasure texts at my disposal. Nevertheless, each site was considered a direct connection to the spiritual power of Padmasambhava.

***The Contemporary Role of Hidden Lands
in Tibetan Buddhist Culture and in Pemakö***

As Ramble (1995, p. 84) has emphasised, the religious role of a hidden land should not be exaggerated. Still, the migration history of Pemakö shows that the region's spiritual reputation was often the impetus behind its notoriety as a secular refuge. Diemberger (1997, p. 297) also defines the veritable purpose of sbas yul mythology as an advocate of a particular religious narrative during critical periods of Tibet's socio-political transformation. Pemakö served this purpose over the centuries, welcoming large groups of migrants from eastern Bhutan, the Tawang region, Spo yul and Khams.¹³⁵

In the early twentieth century, these numbers increased. One of the reasons for this emigration was not just protection from political unrest, but also escape from oppressive taxation at home (Grothmann, 2012, pp. 28, 29, 36). At one point, Tibetans fled to Pemakö to

¹³⁵Tawang is a town located in the western part of Arunachal Pradesh, close to the border of Bhutan. The area is noted for its Dge lugs influence and is home to a large monastery of the same tradition. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the kingdom of Spo yul was one of the least known areas of the many kingdoms and semi-independent principalities in Tibet's traditional political territory. The inhabitants of Spo yul had a reputation of being such fearful savages that most potential intruders stayed away. The region is in the eastern Himalayas, northeast of the bend of the Yarlung Tsangpo River (Lazcano, 2005, p. 41).

get away from terrible floods in a neighbouring valley (Bailey, 1957, p. 106).¹³⁶ In the 1900s, the gter ston Rje drung phrin las byams pa (1856–1922) led a group of some 2,000 followers to Pemakö that were fleeing the Chinese invasion of eastern Khams (Garry, 2007). Until the mid-1930s, Pemakö also offered a hideout for criminals (Grothmann, 2012, p. 36). Chos rgyam drung pa (1939–1987), one of the first Tibetan Buddhist masters to introduce Tibetan Buddhism to the West, recounts his own escape from Tibet in 1959. The final leg of his journey led him and 300 other refugees to Pemakö, finding safety there from the Chinese army following closely behind (Chögyam Trungpa et al., 2010, p. 244–274). When the Fourteenth Dalai Lama escaped from Tibet in the same year, thousands of Tibetans followed him into exile. On their way to India and Nepal, many settled in lower Pemakö (Grothmann, 2012, p. 37). The migratory history of current Pemakö residents is therefore diverse. Yet, as Grothmann (2012, p. 22) confirms, due to Pemakö’s religious status as a hidden land, even those of different origins who had come to the region developed a common Buddhist identity.

Again, per Diemberger (1993, p. 61), “the [secular] itinerary can be even superseded by the spiritual journey through visualization – the soteriological path to liberation”. Pilgrimage ritual is an integral part of this path, and Pemakö has long been advertised as the ultimate hidden land for practitioners. Per Buffetrille (2003, pp. 2–3), traditional pilgrimage practice is a collective process in which “a group of persons of the same family, of the same village, of the same encampment, or of the same monastery will form”. They are led by one or two monastics that inform the group as they travel along the pilgrimage route to a sacred site. As Huber (1999b, p. 4) observes, pilgrimage to Dag pa shel ri, or Pure Crystal Mountain, was among the largest mountain rituals in Tibet. Large groups of pilgrims were known to seek the blessings of the *gnas*. Slob dpon o gyan bstan 'dzin rin po che (c. 1940–present) leads his

¹³⁶In 1901, the British explorer and naturalist Frederick Marshman Bailey (1882–1967) describes how the Tralong River burst and completely flooded the Yigrong Valley in Spo yul. This in turn formed a lake that permanently submerged five villages on its banks (Bailey, 1957, p. 106–107).

Tibetan and western followers on pilgrimage through Pemakö on a regular basis (Esler, 2007, p. 1). Part of Sprul sku Gsang sngags rin po che's responsibilities include guiding the faithful to various sacred places, some within the famous *Devakoṭa*–Tuting–Singha pilgrimage circuit.

Pilgrimage through hidden lands can also be less formal without monastic or scriptural authority. One rendition of pilgrimage practice from the 1970s recounts how during visits to holy caves in the hidden valley known as Khem ba lung, lay or monastic pilgrims would go to designated sites to accumulate merit, while others instead went to gain favour from the reputed deities for more worldly purposes, such as for fertility, accumulation of wealth or relief from illness (Reinhard, 1978, pp. 9–10).¹³⁷ Levine (1993, p. 111), a western Buddhist practitioner, describes her pilgrimage journey to Pemakö, led not by religious adepts but by tourist guides guided by local hearsay. Ehrhard (1998, p. 95) explains how practitioner biographies now located in Himalayan village temples, households or library collections confirm vernacular influence on sacred geographical accounts. Clearly then, the role of hidden lands in Tibetan Buddhist culture has been as fluid in its accommodation of secular and religious refugees as it has in the designation of holy sites within its boundaries. The following comparison of revered sites in Pemakö further exemplifies how in the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, scripture as it relates to sacred geography has also been a flexible ideal across the centuries.

Pilgrimage Sites in Pemakö: Then and Now

Self-Liberation upon Hearing provides a detailed description of the outer, inner, innermost and 'secret' geography of Pemakö. Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672b, v. 101) writes of Gy'a gu lung in the east or 'Bras mo ljongs in the south, territories external to Pemakö and listed in other *gter ma* about the region.¹³⁸ He (vv. 173, 175) mentions 'inner' locations, such as Bde

¹³⁷Khem ba lung is located on the border of Nepal and Tibet.

¹³⁸G.yag lung dang dpal gyi 'bras mo ljongs (Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870a, p. 404).

chen padma bkod legs in the west or Dzoks ltan le rabs bkod in the northeast, which are not indicated in other *gter ma* I have examined. Bdud 'dul rdo rje (vv. 192, 195, 200, 211–212) signals the innermost geography at eastern Glang lung, southern Rin chen spungs, western Rma bya mjing bsnol and southwestern Gser nya 'khyil. He (v. 186) indicates Pemakö's 'secret' centre at Rnam dag lhun grub bkod chen, or “the Great Place of the Completely Pure Spontaneous Presence”. Although this is a reference to meditative attainment, it could be an actual physical site: his description of “a crystal boulder, of which each side measures twenty bow-lengths” seems to mark the spot (vv. 188–189).¹³⁹ If a geographical reference to Rnam dag lhun grub bkod chen is made according to the Pemakö landscape suggested by Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, its location would theoretically be somewhere in the vicinity of Medok.

I have clarified in Chapter Three that Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje introduced Rdo rje phag mo's supine layout in Pemakö.¹⁴⁰ Both Mchog gyur gling pa and Drag snags gling pa describe her *cakra* locations, albeit with some differences. The *gter stons* claim that Rin chen spungs correlates either to the navel or the womb *cakra* of Vajravārāhī.¹⁴¹ Research has demonstrated that the *cakras* of Vajravārāhī were identified in accordance with the area of Pemakö a lama 'opened' or inhabited, and were not necessarily identical in different descriptions (Ehrhard, 1994, pp. 9–11; McDougal, 2016, p. 7; Ramble, 1995, p. 84; Sardar-Afkhami, 1996, p. 8). Nevertheless, Bdud 'dul rdo rje's mention of Rin chen spungs as a

¹³⁹The meaning of these terms corresponds to *ka dak* and *lhun drup*, terms traditionally used to express the primordial purity and spontaneous presence of *rig pa* (Duff, 2000). The underlying basis of the conventionally existent mind is *rig pa*, or 'the innate mind of clear light'.

¹⁴⁰Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje describes the *cakras* of Vajravārāhī in *Yi dam dgongs 'dus rta mchog rol pa* (*The Hidden Intention of the Tutelary Deity Hayagrīva*). I have been unable to locate this text, although reference to it is made in Ehrhard (1994, p. 9).

¹⁴¹McDougal (2016, p. 13) indicates that O gyan bstan 'dzin rin po che has explained that “Pad ma 'bras spungs” as mentioned by Drag snags gling pa is another name for Rin chen spungs: Lte ba padma 'bras sbungs ni; Dbus su zangs mdog dpal ri'i dbyibs; Bkod pa lhun grub blta na sdug (Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa, 1871–1929a, p. 347). According to Mchog gyur gling pa (1829–1870a, p. 404): Rgya sog dbus gtsang mdo khams yul dbus su; Ngo mtsar rdo rje phag mo'i sku lus shar; Dbu ni rgya la dpal gyi ri bo bzung; Mgrin pa padma rdzong dang o rgyan phug; Snying kha bde chen lhun grub pho brang dang; Lte ba brag dkar bkra shis rdo rje'i rdzong; Gsang ba padma shel gyi ri bo ste; Rtsa gsum 'khor lo lnga yi bkod pa yod.

location demonstrates that this point in Pemakö's geography has been significant from its early history as a hidden land. This *cakra* is distinguished by Rin chen spungs Temple, which is likely still in existence and a pilgrimage destination.¹⁴²

Gter ma descriptions of sacred sites and their location are often obscure. Pemakö is scattered with lakes of varying sizes. Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672b, v. 230) also describes these, mentioning that in the centre of one lake is “a white rock” that is “shaped like a king on his throne”. He (vv. 234–235) instructs practitioners to supplicate the wish-fulfilling jewel on the top of this rock “with celebrations, prayers and offerings” to ensure spiritual attainment. Other Treasure revealers were similarly vague: Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po (1585–1656, p. 15) explains that “Many Treasures are hidden in the palaces of the valleys and passes”.¹⁴³ Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 479) states that “there are about ten trees”, “very hard and difficult to cut”; underneath them are hidden “mare diamonds”.¹⁴⁴ Again, Bdud 'dul rdo rje instructs adherents to build “eight *stūpas* at the eight secret places” and “a temple for the three turquoise deity families at the door to the sacred place that looks like a pig and snake fighting” (vv. 303–305). In a prophecy text, Mchog gyur gling pa (1820–1870b, p. 402) describes a *gter ma* lying hidden in “a stronghold of protruding rock”, yet another example of obscure holy places.¹⁴⁵ Another of his guidebooks describes a pilgrimage site as follows:

[There is] a valley that looks like a jumping, turquoise-coloured dragon. Follow this over a snowy pass shaped like the notch found at the tip of an arrow. Follow [a secret path] until you come

¹⁴²Rin chen spungs has long been home to a Tibetan Buddhist temple, and the site was also named by Schaller in his report (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 7; United States Army Corps of Engineers. 1954a).

¹⁴³La lung gtsug lag mang bo gter du sbas.

¹⁴⁴Gzhan gyi shing dang mi 'dra bcu tsam yod; Gzhan gyi shing dang sra ta mo mi chod kyi; Pha lam lcags kyi da mo sbas pa yod.

¹⁴⁵Ma 'ongs skal ldan bu yi nor skal du; Khams kyi 'bur mo rdzong la sa yi bcud; Snying shun gang bcas mkh'a 'gro'i brda ris yi; Shog ser zhing sor lnga pa mtho gang pa; Mtso rgyal mgul gyu bcas pa gter du gtams.

to an ancient shrine and two unmistakable landmarks. Here you must offer incense and golden gifts and plant prayer flags.¹⁴⁶

(Mchog gyur gling pa,
1829–1870a, p. 406)

The Department of Home of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Pemakoe Welfare Society offered a compilation of information about Pemakö to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama in 2016.¹⁴⁷ This book has provided some information regarding contemporary pilgrimage sites, with much of the data about these destinations derived from teachings by Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje. As the book explains, he declares:

There are fifty places where blood-drinking deities reside; here there are Anuyoga Treasures. The Place of the Mamo and *ḍākinīs* is a holy pilgrimage site where it is possible to attain great bliss. All mountains are pilgrimage sites (*gnas ri*); all rivers are pilgrimage sites (*gnas chu*).¹⁴⁸

(Pad bkod 'chi med rig 'dzin,
2016, pp. 19, 21)

Despite the ambiguity of the descriptions provided about these locations, some modern pilgrimage sites do overlap with scripture about Pemakö. Sga rje khams sprul rin po che's pilgrimage in the 1950s led pilgrims to one cave attributed to Padmasambhava and another to the deity Mahākāla. Both were some days walk eastwards from the village of Pe ('Jam dbyangs don grub and Lozang Zopa, 2009, pp. 162–165).

Other pilgrimage destinations currently frequented in Pemakö are described by Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa (1871–1929b, pp. 324–325): Pemakö is “the sacred montane land of Yang gsang”, home to the mountain Pad shel ri in the region's lower half.¹⁴⁹ There is also a

¹⁴⁶Lung pa gyu 'brug mkh'a la 'phyo 'dra yod; De nas bgrod pas gangs la md'a stong 'dra'i; Gyas gyon lung nas chu bo dal po bab; Dbus nas ri dwags rgyu ba'i gsang lam yod; De phyin sngar gyi la rtse rying pa dang; Mi 'gyur rtags su sman rak mtsho gnyis yod; De ru bsang dang gser skyems lha dar 'dzugs.

¹⁴⁷Refer to the following website for further information: <https://www.dalailama.com/pictures/long-life-offering-dharamsala-hp-india?r=2016>.

¹⁴⁸Grag 'thung lnga bcu'i bkod pa tsang; A nu yo ga'i gter kha yod; Ma mo mkh'a 'gro 'du ba'i gling; Mjal tsam bde chen thob pa'i gnas; Ri thams cad gnas ri; Chu thams cad gnas chu.

¹⁴⁹Yang gsang pad shel ri bo ta la'i zhing.

description of Ri Po ta la Mountain, the alleged abode of the *bodhisattva* Spyan ras gzigs (p. 325). This *gnas ri* is traditionally thought of as in northern Pemakö; however, the mountain's repositioning in its southern region further demonstrates the ambiguity of the Treasure tradition.¹⁵⁰

Sprul sku Gsang sngags rin po che was very familiar with pilgrimage sites detailed in Drag snags gling pa's (1871–1929a, p. 350) *gter ma*: “[Devakoṭa Mountain] is the unequalled pure realm of the Earth. The landscape of Pretapurī [contains] five lakes [that] are inseparable from the waters of Lake Dhanakoṣa”.¹⁵¹ As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, Gsang sngags rin po che often leads pilgrims through these areas of lower Pemakö. On pilgrimage with O gyan bstan 'dzin rin po che in the same area, Esler (2007, p. 5) describes how the *gter ston* pointed out a boulder that held a Treasure text. Thus, as a sacred site, its location is inexact. In view of O gyan rin po che's openness about the reliquary, it is likely known by the locals and revered as a pilgrimage destination.

The map below illustrates a theoretical outline of the revelatory areas of each of the *gter ston* I have described. I base these estimates on patterns in Treasure revealers' activities: the region where the *gter ston* is said to have lived, studied or practised, the alleged location of the respective Treasure discovery and / or any specific holy sites mentioned in the *gter ma*. For example, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje likely conferred with his teacher Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po in the latter's area of practice in and around the northwestern quadrant of Pemakö (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, pp. 809, 813). Bdud 'dul rdo rje spent much of his revelatory time in the northeastern region in and around Pemakö in Spo yul territory (Ronis,

¹⁵⁰As with the positioning of Vajravārāhi, there are differences in locations of some of holy sites outlined by Drag snags gling pa. McDougal (2016, p. 9) states: “[Drag snags gling pa's] néyig has further imbued the region with sanctity by placing in it several important holy sites that have long been identified at other places. Devakoṭa, Pretapurī, Lampāka and Lake Dhanakoṣa – all pilgrimage sites mentioned in the néyig – are among the 24 *pīṭha* or ‘seats’ of male and female tantric deities mentioned in scriptures of the Saṃvara and Hevajra tantra cycles”.

¹⁵¹Sa spyod zhing mchog pla na med; Nang ltar pre ta pu ri ni; Rigs lnga kun ldan bla mtsho lnga; O rgyan dha na ko sha'i mtsho; Ya mtshan ngo mtshar rmad du byung.

2006, pp. 174–175). This is where he (1615–1672b, v. 439) supposedly revealed *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. He also, however, is quite specific about the entire layout of Pemakö’s geography and indicates its possible centre near Medok. I therefore attribute a large area in the northern half and southeastern quadrant of Pemakö to his ‘opening’ of various sacred sites.

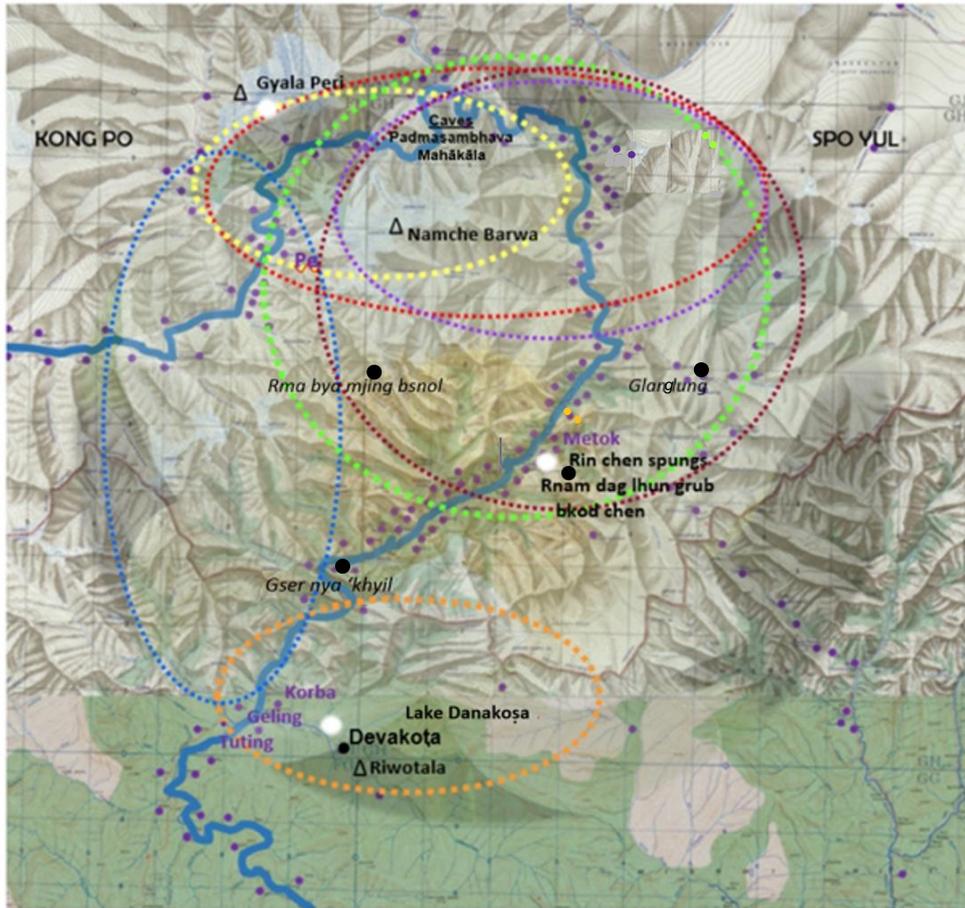
I use the same criteria for other Treasure revealers. For instance, Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po was born in Kong po. During his life he travelled to Khams, but spent most of his time in areas located in neighbouring Kong po close to the northwestern quadrant of Pemakö (Dudjom Rinpoche and Gyurme Dorje, 1991, pp. 809–811, MP 8). Born in Khams, Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (1682–1704a, p. 479) indicates that “beyond the upper hills of Kong po” is Pemakö, which could suggest familiarity with the northern area of the region.¹⁵² For years, his main practice area was in Spo yul, where it is said he revealed many different types of *gter ma* (Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Taye, Yeshe Gyamtso and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2011, p. 272). Rdo rje thogs med was born in Kong po, but also travelled to Spo yul. Later, he constructed a monastery in Pemakö where he eventually passed away (p. 297). I have not found evidence that Mchog gyur gling pa was ever in Pemakö. I have estimated his revelatory area in the region’s northwest, since he was originally from the southern part of Khams close to the Spo yul region (Doctor, 2005, p. 84). The Treasures revealed by Sga rje khams sprul rin po che, a ‘rediscoverer’ of at least two of Mchog gyur gling pa’s Treasure texts, led him through sites in northwestern Pemakö. Finally, I limit Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa’s revelatory area to lower Pemakö due to his focus on this section in *gter ma* he discovered.

As Ramble (1995, p. 84) points out “The way in which a landscape is perceived is a contextual matter”. Thus, the implication of estimating the possible range of activity of Pemakö Treasure revealers is that it points to the relationship of Tibetan Buddhism to the landscape,

¹⁵²Gnas chen padma bkod zhes gnas mchog ni; Kong po spo'i mtha'a zad dpag tshod der.

the role of Pemakö as a sacred geography and the use of scripture to indicate the region's holiest locations. The opening of these sites was likely dependent upon the respective Treasure revealer's immediate political, religious and surrounding natural environment. Within these revelatory areas I indicate names of pilgrimage sites, for which I have been able to determine an approximate physical location. The uncertainty of their positioning demonstrates a certain flexibility in the entire Pemakö mythology. This pliancy also allows for an expansion of regional oral traditions that is independent from the authority of dominant religious agendas. That Tibetan Buddhist practitioners still relate to these locations as physical symbols of ethereal power demonstrates the continuity of a religious mythology that reaches beyond a mere secular purpose. This sentiment is also evident in my interviews with pilgrims to Pemakö.

**Figure Six:
Treasure Revealer and Pilgrimage Areas in Pemakö**



Key

Dots:

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Purple | Townships as of 1954 ¹⁵³ |
| Black | Approximate locations of place names indicated in <i>gter ma</i> |
| White | Rdo rje phag mo <i>cakra</i> ¹⁵⁴ |

Circles as revelatory areas:

- | | |
|--------|--------------------------------|
| Green | Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje |
| Blue | Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po |
| Purple | Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje |
| Maroon | Rdo rje thogs med |
| Red | Mchog gyur gling pa |
| Orange | Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa |
| Yellow | Sga rje khams sprul rin po che |

¹⁵³This information was prepared based on maps from the United States Army Corps of Engineers, 1954a and 1954b. Some places common to *gter ma* about Pemakö were named on the USACE map.

¹⁵⁴I have included *cakra* locations in accordance with descriptions by Mchog gyur gling pa, 1829–1870a, p. 404. In this context, I have only been able to locate her head, navel and secret place.

*Perceptions of the Environment in Pemakö:
An Account of Recent Pilgrimage Experiences*

Roads [to Pemakö] are hard to travel – you have to carry everything on your back, like food, drinks and clothes. [But] once you get there it is very different. It is considered a blessed place, a sacred place; when seeing this place, without any control, some people experience spontaneous emotional reactions of falling tears...

Tsering Dondrup

In this section, I examine how six Tibetan Buddhist practitioners perceived their pilgrimage journeys in Pemakö. I especially focus on their interpretations of how they felt that their religious culture relates to the region's natural environment. I have reviewed general fieldwork procedures in Chapter One, but remind the reader here that these interviews took place in June and July 2013, in Boudha, Nepal. I now detail the interviewees' background, using pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity.¹⁵⁵ I follow with the data from the six interviews, which I categorise by the themes that appeared in our conversations. I conclude this chapter by explaining my understanding of the fundamental characteristic of their experiences.

Interviews: People and Procedure

Of the six interview candidates, Dechen Pema, who is in her sixties, is the only female. Her pilgrimage to upper Pemakö occurred sometime in the 1980s. At that time, she was married but did not yet have children. Originally from Lha sa, she and her husband decided it was important to at least perform two to three weeks of pilgrimage in upper Pemakö in order to “receive the blessings of the Guru”. Once completed, they continued to Nepal to escape from the political oppression at home. She has remained in Nepal ever since, raising several children and supporting the family through various odd jobs.

¹⁵⁵For ease of reading, I'm opting to use an English spelling for the Tibetan pronunciation of pseudonyms.

Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché is a reincarnate lama of the Rnying ma tradition; in his forties, he is from lower Pemakö in Arunachal Pradesh. He travels around the world teaching Tibetans and non-Tibetans about Buddhism. On his way through Boudha, I was able to speak with him about his experiences in the region. Jigmé Rinpoché leads both Tibetans and Westerners in pilgrimage to various holy sites in lower Pemakö. Two of his followers, Karma Yeshe and Tsering Dondrup, also made time to speak with me. Karma Yeshe's family is originally from Khams, but since settling in Pemakö several years ago they have made their living through a small business. Tsering Dondrup is also originally from Khams, but was reluctant to provide much detail about his personal background. As residents, both men regularly conduct pilgrimage throughout Pemakö to smaller and larger sacred sites. These were either in the traditional larger group, or sometimes among family members. They are both in their thirties.

I met with Ngawang Chögyal through a mutual *sngags pa* acquaintance in Boudha. Ngawang, who is about fifty, is the head monastic of a small Buddhist temple in Pemakö. He had been leading the community for several years and showed great enthusiasm for various sites in lower Pemakö. Finally, another interview candidate, who I will call Tenzin Sönam, is a Tibetan refugee born in Nepal. His parents were from Khams and Dbus gtsang, having escaped Tibet in the seventies. Tenzin, about thirty-five years old, is a devout Rnying ma practitioner; because of his fluency in English, he travelled as a guide on exploratory research to upper Pemakö. Thus, his initial purpose for travel to the region was professional; however, along the way, he conducted short pilgrimages to known sacred sites together with local guides.

The interviewees were from diverse backgrounds, and therefore provided a range of perspectives of their experiences. I began each interview with two or three specific questions about the candidates' pilgrimage in the region. For example, I asked about how much time they had spent in Pemakö and what types of pilgrimage had been undertaken there. I inquired about their familiarity with the Tibetan Buddhist narrative surrounding Pemakö. I also introduced the

interviewees to the Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* and asked about their understanding of *gter ma* and *gter ston*. During the interview, I addressed their impressions of Pemakö's natural environment, such as mountains, passes, vegetation or animals. I also asked about their familiarity with hydro-electric dam construction on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, the disputes between India and China or the damage local inhabitants had inflicted on the region's wildlife. The following sub-sections discuss the results of our conversations.

Stories of Landscape

Most of the subject matter of the interviews about participant experiences in this region was infused with spiritual interpretation, which mirrored the significance of Pemakö as a religious phenomenon; however, from the interview dialogues, part of the information I extracted dealt primarily with the practical, tangible aspects of life in Pemakö. These subjects include Pemakö's natural environment, physical challenges of either living in or visiting the region, environmental transformation due to hydro-electric dam construction, environmental conservation and political issues.

Data from the interviews reflected a close relationship between the perceptions of the topography and the religious culture. Interviewees indicated that sacred sites, natural springs and meditation caves were believed to be scattered throughout the region. Participants mentioned the dramatic mountain scape, high peaks covered in snow, large colourful lakes and thick forests. Some interviewees described extreme weather conditions that varied from seething heat to unbearable cold. Talk of wild animals was limited to snakes, bears and takin, describing animals as either predators or food sources.¹⁵⁶ One interviewee noted that at the time of Guru Rinpoche's sojourn in Pemakö, the mountains and valleys were devoid of humans and inhabited only by various species of flora and fauna.

¹⁵⁶Takin are small animals that resemble a combination of a goat and antelope.

A sub-theme in the descriptions of the natural environment was the emphasis placed on the abundance of caves.

So, there are many different shapes of caves. Some caves can only seat one person, while others are slightly bigger and can accommodate a few people. If people meditate and practise inside these caves, then it is possible for the place to become powerful.

Dechen Pema

Participants indicated their belief that these locations were former retreat sites of Guru Rinpoche, Princess Mandarava and Ye shes mtsho rgyal.¹⁵⁷ Caves in hidden lands are said to be endowed with the power of holy beings and accomplished Buddhist practitioners. Their meditational ‘energy’ is believed to permeate the stone walls; this then seeps into the mind stream of practitioners using these locations to develop their own spiritual abilities. Interview participants revealed an unshakeable faith in the soteriological potency of these sites. Likewise, they demonstrated a deep reverence for the mountains in Pemakö. Dechen Pema asserted that should one scale any of the summits, all the thrones of the Dalai Lamas and Karma pas would suddenly become visible.

Another sub-theme of conversations about the physical environment was the allusion to shapes when describing the topography. Interviewees used adjectives such as big, small and square, with some formations resembling a human head or the outline of a deity. These descriptors were applied to the mountains, caves, forests, lakes and rocks:

The forests are of various shapes. The mountain has a peculiar shape.
This one has a large head and this is smaller.
. . . there are square blocks of rocks . . .

Dechen Pema

¹⁵⁷Princess Mandarava (eighth century) was the Indian tantric consort to Padmasambhava before he introduced Buddhism to Tibet. She is known for her spiritual achievements as a female master of Tantric Buddhism (Bsam gtan gling pa et al., 1998, pp. 5–6).

Teta Puri itself has a lake with protruding land.
. . . the shape of the ground is like Rdo rje phag mo.

Tsering Dondrup

In fact, the shape of boulders and rocks were deemed entirely natural formations that resembled Guru Rinpoche and the thrones upon which he gave teachings. Interviewees believed that the surfaces contained the hand and foot imprints of holy beings. The interior of one stone was thought full of sacred objects separate from its natural formation, yet inherent to its structure.

Because of Pemakö's complex landscape and weather patterns, movement through the region required great physical exertion. Participants reported traipsing through snow on perilous roads wide enough for only one person. Ropes were used to climb along the edges of mountains, and narrow bridges led them across streams and rivers. There were no shelters in the forest, so rest was snatched under tree branches. Rapids and jungle made progress slow and arduous. Dechen Pema reported that by the end of the day's journey, she remembers simply collapsing into a deep sleep from pure exhaustion. It could take several days to reach a pilgrimage destination. Karma Yeshe echoed, "It will take six and a half days of travel on foot [to get there]." A circumambulation around a *gnas* could be so large that the pilgrim would have to cross extensive mountain passes; some journeys involved crawling through caves.

Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché spoke about two current points of view towards hydro-electric dam construction and infrastructure expansion in Pemakö. He reported that the younger generation seems pleased with infrastructure expansion, since this promotes easier access to other villages and amenities. Conversely, older generations are not in favour of these developments for fear of cultural degradation. According to Tulku Jigmé, both generations are aware of prevalent animal poaching and endangerment of wildlife; they are concerned that in the future, access for illegal poachers will expand and that degradation of animal species will continue. Jigmé Rinpoché indicated further that the general population had accepted the

likelihood of no boundary resolution and the continuation of technological competition between India and China. He looked at these issues as follows:

So now, from Pemakö we cannot do anything with this modern development. The modern development will continue. And as you know, the two giant Asians, India and China, competing – this will continue. On each side, there's no way to stop that. What I can do is I can take that development for good use.

Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché

Tulku Jigmé explained that the advantages to the younger generations would be their increased access to professional development. He added that the external world would have easier access to the land of Pemakö. Because of these factors, he suggested that more opportunities to introduce outsiders to the region's soteriological power would arise, as well as opportunities to export Pemakö's Buddhist wisdom to others.

When I asked interviewees about wildlife endangerment in Pemakö due to hunting and poaching practices, only two addressed the issue whilst the other interviewees explained they had no answer. Jigmé Rinpoché was quite emphatic about the contradiction of killing animals to the fundamental precept of Buddhist compassion:

Those who do killing, they're not Buddhist. For instance, we have in our village, there are only two people who kill. They are well known. One family raised pigs, and only one pig we kill on the New Year. But these people are not Buddhists at all. I mean, they may say they are Buddhist, but it doesn't mean anything for them. It's just culturally for them.

Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché

He insisted that any animal slaughter was unacceptable.¹⁵⁸ Tenzin Sönam would only divulge that he was aware of the Pemaköba's habit of killing takin. He would not elaborate any further

¹⁵⁸I found Jigmé Rinpoché's answer somewhat puzzling in that although he encouraged the community to follow vegetarianism, once a year a pig was slaughtered for everyone's consumption. I could not determine from his answers whether those who killed the pig were also Buddhists, or if they were members of the local Adi tribe who were avid hunters and meat-eaters. When I pressed the issue, he simply reiterated that 'genuine' Buddhists do not eat meat. Meat, however, is often a regular part of the Tibetan diet, and in my experience, sometimes religious consideration is given to the practice and

about the reason for killing these animals, or how this could affect the natural environment. Otherwise, even after questioning all of interviewees about the deterioration of the natural environment in Pemakö due to farming and hunting practices, none gave any response. I cannot contribute their reticence to any lack of interest in the matter because of the passion each interviewee demonstrated for the idea of Pemakö. As I describe in Chapter Six, I can at present only conclude that their silence was likely due to little if any familiarity with the concept of ecology and the consequences of environmental degradation. In view of the extreme poverty in the upper Arunachal Pradesh, considerations for environmental conservation were most likely not a priority. I also based these conclusions on previous empirical research on wildlife endangerment (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, pp. 21–23).

Two participants, Karma Yeshe and Tsering Dondrup, mentioned the division of Pemakö into two separate geographical areas. They both stated how one section lies within the Namche Barwa Massif of the Tibetan Autonomous Region and the other covers a triangular area between Devakoṭa, Tuting and Singha in Arunachal Pradesh. Both considered these sections completely different from each other, although combined they represented a part of the layout of Rdo rje phag mo's body. Tsering Dondrup stated that the general belief among Tibetan Buddhist practitioners in the Pemakö region is that this division is not due to the political boundary between India and China, but rather to the number of sacred sites located within each area. Other villages surrounding Pemakö's boundaries were an extension of the hidden land. While touring the lower Pemakö area in Arunachal Pradesh in 2014, I was able to spend a few days in Mechuka. This small town is in the West Siang district of the state, and touches the southwest reaches of Pemakö's lotus petals. The manager of the hotel at which I

sometimes it is not. I have also commented on Tibetan Buddhist views on vegetarianism in Chapter Six, and the interpretation of eating meat.

was staying explained in a conversation with me that even living at the extremities of Pemakö was thought spiritually powerful because of the resonance of Padmasambhava's energy.

Political boundaries did prevent pilgrims from reaching the Pemakö area in the Namche Barwa Massif. Tsering Dondrup found this unfortunate due to the superior number of holy sites thought to be located there. He mentioned Chikoe, where the Buddha Amitābha is thought to reside. He also explained that legends of Padmasambhava claim that the Guru resided in Pemakö for several months or even years. And indeed, four of my interviewees mentioned many of the places where it was thought he had spent time. Tetapuri was thought the site of Guru Rinpoche in his earthly *nirmāṇakāya* form. At Dhanakoṣa Lake, his palace is reputed to reside atop a protruding land mass in the centre of the lake. His *sambhogakāya* form, Sphyan ras gzigs, is believed to lie at Ri Po ta la Mountain. The mention of holy beings throughout the landscape illustrated the close association made between Pemakö's physical environment and its spiritual characteristics.

Reflections on Pilgrimage

Generally, pilgrimage of any kind is believed a method to cleanse the negative potential of past destructive actions. In Tibetan Buddhism, mental dedication of this purification process to the welfare of all beings is thought to lay the foundation for positive habits. In addition, overcoming the difficulties often encountered in pilgrimage demonstrates a practitioner's sincere devotion to this soteriological path, which further reinforces the cultivation of positive mind states. My interviewees recounted how their journeys often required extreme physical hardship. Tenzin Sönam exclaimed, "Yeah, yeah – it's very difficult. It's rapids and it's jungle. And it's very difficult. . . . and then you are changing and then you have no negative thoughts for anybody".

As I have described in Chapters Three and Four, Tibetan Buddhist pilgrimage involves travels to and circumambulation around a topographical location deemed holy. This locus of sanctity, or *gnas*, is often a mountain, although it can also be a body of water, a boulder, rock or cave. Through its circumambulation, pilgrims seek to establish a spiritual bond with both the *gnas* physical structure as well as the Tibetan Buddhist ontological meaning ascribed to the deities thought to reside therein. This relationship is formed through interpreting, interacting with and observing the landscape (Buffetrille, 1999, p. 88). Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché recounts that people have different experiences of the environment in Pemakö, and that this depends on their psycho-spiritual and physical capacities. As an interviewee recalled:

There are mountains to cross while circumambulating. It takes three, four, five, six hours to make a circle. It takes many hours. Teta Puri itself has a lake with protruding land. Although we see a protruding piece of land, it is considered Guru Rinpoche's palace. Some people have visions of temple-like images on there.

Tsering Dondrup

Because the *gnas* acts as the central focus of a given landscape, it also represents the most sacred aspect of a topographical *maṇḍala*. Consequently, the natural environment becomes a representation of the *maṇḍalic* organisational structure (Huber, 1999b, p. 26). As Ngawang Chögyal explained, "There are external, internal and secret regions." Pemakö then also becomes a three-dimensional space that offers the faithful an opportunity to interact physically, psychologically and spiritually with a sacred space. Interviewees reported how they undertook the arduous journey of circumambulating a central mountain or lake. Tenzin Sönam and Karma Yeshe described shorter pilgrimages to either boulders or groves of trees believed to be sacred abodes of either deities or the spiritual energy of former Buddhist adepts. As I describe in the following sub-section, they and my other interviewees ascribed a reverence for the Pemakö landscape based on their faith in Guru Rinpoche.

Spiritual Interpretations

The interviews also included esoteric concepts: one was the sanctity accorded to Pemakö. The main reason for this was Padmasambhava's sojourn in the region, and the resulting infiltration of his spiritual power throughout the landscape. This most hidden aspect of the land, however, was deemed visible only to those with a pure mind stream. All six participants emphasised this divine quality of Pemakö:

. . . it is considered a very holy site connected with Guru Rinpoche.

Dechen Pema

Pemakö is a very sacred site.

Tsering Dondrup

I have heard that it's very sacred.

Tenzin Sonam

And it is Guru Rinpoche's prediction that Pemakö will remain a sacred place.

Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché

People considered this as the Guru's place.

Karma Yeshe

. . . it is the sacred hidden place of the Guru.

Ngawang Chogyal

Pilgrims believed that the Treasure tradition, pilgrimage ritual, religious practices and spiritual energy of Pemakö were all connected to the power of Padmasambhava. In the course of different interviews, it became apparent that participants firmly believed in the capacity of Treasure revealers and Pemakö's role in their revelations. Ngawang Chogyal described how a monastery in Pemakö safeguarded *gter ma* revealed by the *gter ston* Mchog gyur gling pa. These texts were revered as a source of auspicious blessings, only to be removed from their container on holy days. Tsering Dondrup described how Treasure revealers are different

emanations of Guru Padmasambhava. Although each has unique qualities that influence the style of the Treasure text, every *gter ston* was thought to have a strong connection to the great Guru.

Another theme was that all the participants stressed Pemakö's role as a pilgrimage destination, and that this ritual was integral to their entire Buddhist practice. A practitioner could conduct pilgrimage as an outsider coming in to Pemakö, or as a resident journeying to various sites in areas surrounding their home villages. An important factor in undertaking pilgrimage was to either begin or complete a full cycle on auspicious days of the month, such as on the fifteenth or twenty-fifth. Within Pemakö itself, these pilgrimages involved several days of walking to holy mountains or lakes. Others who had lived in Pemakö took regular journeys to locations closer to their homes, such as a boulder, cave or a group of trees. All pilgrimages involved a complete circumambulation of a designated site, which could take only minutes, a few hours or even several days.

Along the way, *mantra* recitation focussed the pilgrims' attention on spiritual aims, prayer supplicated protector deities and offerings appeased harmful forces. Participants deemed the effect of pilgrimage as different for every practitioner. They attributed this to karmic potential. Thus, previous 'beneficial' actions would result in positive pilgrimage experiences, such as a smooth journey, pleasant weather or good health. Negative experiences encountered during pilgrimage such as sickness, mental sluggishness or getting lost, were credited to negative karmic potential. Some participants reported that they had heard of pilgrims seeing a mirage of an important lama or temple.

Some people, when on circumambulation, they are allowed to have visions such as lamas, temples in the lake and they see different things. They see temples and all these in the lake, and then all disappear.

Tsering Dondrup

These experiences were proof to them that there was indeed a ‘secret’ nature of Pemakö visible only to those with enough spiritual clarity.

Finally, all of the interviewees stated that they believed their Buddhist practice was enhanced by Pemakö’s energy. They reported that the spiritual potency of Pemakö affects those venturing within its boundaries in various ways. A skilled meditator may have spontaneous visions of Padmasambhava and different deities during meditation. Dechen Pema reported that elixir had been known to flow from practitioners’ bodies because of Pemakö’s positive influence.¹⁵⁹ Tenzin Sönam recounted how he felt a certain ‘vibe’ while he was in Pemakö. This ignited a real concern for not only his personal spiritual welfare, but also for that of others. This sense of responsibility became strong enough to motivate him to jump over a steep precipice to save the life of a friend who had inadvertently slipped on the edge. To his surprise, they both survived this ordeal without injury.

I inquired of Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché whether he thought Pemakö’s spiritual energy would diminish with the ongoing disturbances to its environmental equilibrium. He replied with an emphatic “no”, convinced that the power of Guru Rinpoche would remain in spite of dams, boundary disputes and poachers. Granted, he believed that the tradition of the wandering *sngags pa* would diminish; however, he affirmed that Padmasambhava guaranteed in his eighth century prophecies that the region would always provide a powerful haven for spiritual practice. And, even though everyone’s experience of Pemakö would be different, this was merely a reflection of the lack of any intrinsic existence of the entire storyline.

¹⁵⁹The term elixir refers to the Tibetan Buddhist belief in *amṛta* (Sanskrit), or a substance guaranteeing immortality. It is often referred to as ‘nectar’ in Tantric Buddhism (Beer, 2003, p. 232).

Faith as Foundation: Conviction in the Power of Padmasambhava

Conviction in the power of Padmasambhava was a recurring theme in all the interviews with pilgrims. Indeed, the Guru's name was woven throughout most of our conversations regardless of the subject matter. Padmasambhava's spiritual energy was thought to enhance the purification of negative karma, one of the main purposes of pilgrimage. According to the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, the act of pilgrimage cultivates positive potential based on the physical effort required to circumambulate a *gnas*, as well as through prayer and *mantra*. As Dechen Pema emphasised, "It is a very sacred place; and for that reason, it is not easy to get there." Underlying these acts is intention motivated by faith. And if someone with faith in Pemakö practised there, as I was told by Dechen Pema, "You would feel happy. Your mind would be calm and peaceful and joyful." This is seen as the result of purifying negative karma as well as the effect of Padmasambhava's energy permeating the environment.

Dechen Pema stated that the purpose of her pilgrimage was "for practice, for Dharma". She explained that because of the snow in the mountains "we couldn't climb up through the forest". As a result, she "prayed from the bottom with devotion." The difficulty of this journey and perseverance to continue in spite of adverse circumstances exemplifies an underlying faith in the pilgrimage narrative. This confidence in Pemakö's spiritual potency reinforced pilgrims' interpretation of the region's potential and perceived effects. Padmasambhava (Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche and Schmidt, 1994, p. 136) himself is believed to have stated that "Faith arises when being in painful difficulties. It is my advice to never be apart from the causes for faith to arise".

Tenzin Sönam commented on the immediate positive effects of his travels within Pemakö. He credited the region's spiritual power with enhancing his Buddhist practice, reinforcing his faith in the Buddhist worldview, strengthening his compassion for others and establishing material security. Other participants appeared to assume that because of their pilgrimage efforts, they knew implicitly that they would progress more quickly on the path to

enlightenment. The effects of pilgrimage in Pemakö were believed to be invariably positive, whether this was reflected in an immediate material improvement or a long-term spiritual quest. Again, the foundation for these claims was based on the indisputable power of Padmasambhava.

. . . this energy – I think I felt because it’s very sacred and because of the energy itself; suddenly you are being true with yourself and you are being kind [with everyone]. I mean, Pemakö is the all-seeing eye. The [resident deities] can manifest to you that [Padmasambhava’s] heart is real.

Tenzin Sönam

This faith in Padmasambhava supported their belief in the Treasure tradition. All of the participants were familiar with the *gter ma* and *gter ston* narrative. I did not detect any sense of doubt from my interviewees regarding the authenticity of the tradition. “The important thing is that to you, as you can sense it, you know, the authenticity of the *gter ma*. Your sixth sense tells you that in the depth of your heart,” exclaimed Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché. For the interviewees, after being introduced to *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, the text itself was enough evidence for the validity of Guru Rinpoche’s existence and power. In turn, it seemed that the mention of Padmasambhava in conjunction with *gter ma*, *gter ston* and Pemakö as a hidden land was sufficient validation for the authenticity of the Treasure tradition and the hidden land narrative affiliated with the region. This process concurs with Hirshberg’s (2016, p. 28) conclusion that “tradition constructs itself as an orthodoxy . . . which establishes a foundation for faith”.

Conclusion

This chapter exemplifies Pemakö’s contemporary role as a topographical refuge for Tibetan Buddhists escaping the physical dangers of secular persecution, and as an esoteric haven from the karmic consequences of spiritual degeneration. My interviews with pilgrims to Pemakö

have shown that the region's status as a hidden land and the guide books that illustrate its wonders are still relevant to practitioners today. It is clear that contemporaneous circumstances and local narratives have also influenced the development of Pemakö's legendary pilgrimage sites. As such, my research has demonstrated that Pemakö retains the same spiritual significance to contemporary practitioners as that illustrated historically: faith in Guru Padmasambhava, in his power that permeates Pemakö's natural environment, in the religious symbolism of the landscape and in the ethereal manifestations of its 'hidden' nature. Chapter Six delves further into the Tibetan Buddhist perception of the Pemakö environment and into the question of whether these religious interpretations have any relevance to current ecological issues facing the region.

Chapter Six: Tibetan Buddhist Environmentalism in Pemakö

Introduction

In this chapter I address the idea of how the religious culture in Pemakö could inform environmental conservation efforts in the area. In the initial section, and in answer to my first research question, I summarise the findings my investigations have uncovered about the nature of the relationship between Pemakö's religious narrative and its natural environment. Chapters Three, Four and Five of my thesis have shown that both scripture and ritual accentuate Padmasambhava's legacy in Pemakö. As I explain in this Chapter, I have found that conviction, or faith, in the Padmasambhava mythology is the most prominent characteristic of Tibetan Buddhists' spiritual relationship to the Pemakö landscape. I also discuss how this faith may have influenced residents' more recent treatment of wildlife in the area.

In response to my second research question regarding the implications this relationship to the natural surroundings could have on local environmental conservation, in the next section of this chapter I consider the developmental trajectory of religious environmentalism. Environmentalists have turned to religious theory and practice as a source for guidelines to conservation. Buddhist thought, and in particular Mahāyāna Buddhism, has proven a popular recourse for religious environmentalism because of the emphasis on compassion. I show how the rhetoric of compassion is prominent in contemporary Tibetan Buddhist dialogue, as it is, for example, in teachings by the Tibetan spiritual leaders the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa. I also exemplify how compassion motivates environmentalist activism in projects funded by Tibetan Buddhist organisations.

In the third section of this chapter, I argue that advocating Buddhist compassion as a generalised approach to environmentalism is problematic for various reasons. My contention

contributes to scholarly debate refuting the assumption that some religions include an inherent reverence for the environment and guidelines for its conservation. I maintain that this presumption, also understood as the myth of primitive ecological wisdom, impedes environmentalist efforts at forming effective conservation policy (Milton, 1996, p. 109). I demonstrate how a misinterpretation of the ways in which a society relates spiritually to its surrounding flora and fauna is a potential source of conflict in attempts at incorporating local religious beliefs into practices conducive to preservation of the environment. My research has shown that in the example of Pemakö, Tibetan Buddhist practitioners do not relate to the environment through compassion, for example, but through faith in the Padmasambhava mythology surrounding the region's religious narrative. This attitude challenges the premise that practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism in the region are instinctively committed to conserving their natural environment.

Is it possible, though, that faith in the Padmasambhava mythology as exemplified in Pemakö – rather than an inherent commitment to Buddhist teachings of compassion as naturally underpinning an environmental ethic – could contribute to the conservation of its landscape and wildlife? In the last section of this chapter, I contrast the effectiveness of top-down environmentalist projects and grassroots efforts. I demonstrate how a civic environmentalist approach that emphasises local knowledge and efforts is the most pragmatic option for environmental activism in Pemakö; as research on Tibetan Buddhist rural communities demonstrates, efforts would likely be successful only by incorporating regional interpretations of religious theory as it relates to the believers' natural surroundings.

*The Nature of the Relationship between
the Religious Culture and the Natural Environment in Pemakö*

*What Scripture and Ritual Reveal about
Attitudes towards the Environment in Pemakö: The Role of Faith*

I begin this section by reviewing how scripture and ritual have shaped Tibetan Buddhist attitudes towards the Pemakö landscape. Originally, as I have described in Chapter Three, Bon practitioners, and later Tibetan Buddhists, held that the world was permeated by psychic and spiritual energy. Beneficial and harmful beings were said to inhabit the sky, earth and an underworld. Destructive spirits were thought capable of inflicting serious bodily harm and creating significant impediments to social progress. Consequently, one role of Bon adepts, and subsequently of Buddhist tantric practitioners in Tibet, was to pacify these entities. In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, in eighth-century Tibet, Padmasambhava was the Indian tantric master summoned to the territory to tame unruly spirits, an endeavour at which he was allegedly quite successful. The mythology surrounding Padmasambhava after his sojourn in Tibet increased through the centuries. Consequently, he gained the reputation of an enlightened master who graced the Tibetan territory with mystical energy. Legends about the great Guru endured as influential reminders of Tibet's Golden Age as Buddhism proliferated throughout the region.

Legends also attest to Padmasambhava's miraculous achievements along his journey from India through the Himalayas to Tibet. The mountains are dotted with sacred sites where the Guru is said to have vanquished and converted ethereal troublemakers. In later centuries during secular and religious upheaval in Tibet, these natural landscapes provided physical and spiritual refuge for persecuted Tibetans. As I have detailed in Chapters Three and Four, Tibetan Buddhist masters claimed karmic designation by Padmasambhava himself as living representatives of his wisdom and compassion for the sake of the Tibetan people. These

discoverers of the Guru's secret teachings were privy to the unveiling of sacred geographies, such as Pemakö, and the guidebooks that described the spiritual virtues of both revealer and revealed.

The relationship to a sacred landscape was defined in part by scripture composed through the Pure Vision of the discoverer. In Pemakö, for example, Treasure revealers claimed evidence of Padmasambhava's presence through the myth of Vajravārāhī's body splayed through the Tsangpo Gorge along the Yarlung Tsangpo River. Concealed caves were believed to be permeated by the Guru's meditative energy and mountains were supposedly inhabited by powerful tantric deities. As I have proposed in Chapters Three and Four, the especially fierce environment of Pemakö may have reinforced its reputation as an exceptionally protective destination for Tibetans seeking spiritual or secular refuge. Pemakö's location at the southern edge of Tibet provided a haven to fortify the Rnying ma tradition's legitimacy against rival religious factions that were dominant on the main Tibetan plateau. Treasure texts such as *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* assured Tibetan Buddhist practitioners that travels to Pemakö would guarantee protection for the persecuted, the purification of sin, the accumulation of merit and a swift path to complete enlightenment. The efficacy of any journey through Pemakö was rendered possible through the sacred energy of Padmasambhava that infiltrated the landscape.

The legacy of Padmasambhava and the Treasure tradition also remains a constant in contemporary pilgrimage ritual. In Chapter Five I reviewed the influence of Treasure revealers in Pemakö, even as recently as the journeys of Sga rje khams sprul rin po che and the revelations of Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa. Tibetan Buddhist practitioners still rely on these figures' spiritual guidance, which shows the continuity of a mythology that reaches beyond the secular purpose of political asylum. As I have recounted in Chapters Three and Five, the oral tradition substantiates the fantastical elements in this mythology: stones melt to eject holy scripture, an adept remains unscathed by the toxicity of a sacred lake and ethereal knowledge

is mysteriously implanted from the sky into a *sngags pa*'s mind. In the interplay of written guide and oral tradition, Tibetan Buddhist pilgrims demonstrate a conscious effort to represent the victory of Buddhism over destructive forces. This sentiment is also evident in my interviews with pilgrims to Pemakö, who described both the physical and spiritual experience of their pilgrimage through the region. The pacification of, or even victory over, external obstacles, such as a treacherous landscape inhabited by wrathful protective deities, represents a subjugation or purification of internal negativities. Pilgrims' personal path to liberation is then enhanced by the generation of merit through devotion to the difficult journey. All six participants in my interviews emphasised the ethereal quality of the Pemakö landscape that was directly related to the energy of Padmasambhava. They believed that their soteriological path was strengthened by the Guru's blessings of the region, and their reverential attitude toward this perceived sanctity of the environment mirrored this conviction.

In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, then, the Pemakö environment represents both danger and safety, adversary and benefactor. Although the initial impetus behind the development of the hidden land mythology was likely more temporal than what is reflected in the Tibetan religious narrative, the Tibetan Buddhist Treasure tradition expounded upon attitudes towards the natural environment already evident in early Bon practices. The dangers encountered by the Tibetan terrain were attributed to resident deities; in Tibetan Buddhism, the subjugation of these entities allowed for the proliferation of religious theory, whereby the subjugator infused a pacified area with the spiritual potency necessary to transform localised malevolence into a protective force. In turn, as is evident in the Pemakö narrative, the potency of the landscape enhanced soteriological efforts should one, for example, even take seven steps in the region's direction. All the Tibetan Buddhist practitioner needed was to believe.

In my study of Pemakö, I therefore maintain that the nature of the relationship between the region's religious culture and environment as is evident in relevant scriptural sources and

pilgrimage ritual is defined by the individual and collective conviction in the Padmasambhava mythology. Within this narrative I include the belief in Padmasambhava as a tantric guru capable of miraculous deeds, the Treasure tradition built up around his alleged predestination of spiritual representatives with their capacity for discovery of his teachings, and the designation of specific landscapes as spiritually powerful refuges. In Tibetan Buddhism, faith and perseverance are essential elements of the spiritual path. The Guru himself reminded practitioners that “without faith and devotion one does not receive the essence of the oral instructions” (Tulku Ugyen Rinpoche and Schmidt, 1994, p. 42). *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* encourages trust in the strength of Guru Rinpoche to provide an extraordinary hidden land that guarantees Buddhahood to believers, to manifest in a pure emanation as Bdud 'dul rdo rje and to grant unbridled happiness within Pemakö's boundaries (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 10–13, 134–135). Tibetan Buddhists' relationship to the Pemakö environment has demonstrated that faith in Padmasambhava and his teachings is a compelling force that has enticed believers to escape secular persecution or karmic condemnation, and to find solace in the unknown depths of its valleys, caves and jungles. Moreover, should this sentiment of faith in Guru Rinpoche be removed from the Pemakö mythology, the region's entire hidden land narrative and Treasure tradition would be untenable. The great Guru even seems to chastise his followers in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* with his statement, “If there are doubts, [my] strength will weaken” (v. 319). As I demonstrate later in this chapter, however, although practitioner faith elevates the physical appearance of Pemakö's landscape to contain a divine empowerment of soteriological aims, this conviction has not necessarily provided guidelines for the conservation of the region's environment.

Research on Recent Treatment of the Environment in Pemakö

In Chapter Two's discussions of regional threats to the environment, I determined that the most immediate danger to the environment in Pemakö was a result of local human interaction with the natural surroundings. The resident Pemaköba have been largely responsible for the deterioration of wild animal populations through hunting and poaching as well as for the destruction of local landscapes through farming. The majority of the Pemakö population are of Tibetan origin, and since Buddhism is an integral part of Tibetan culture, I will assume that most would identify themselves as Tibetan Buddhist (Grothmann, 2012, p. 22).

Thus, these residents' attitudes towards their natural surroundings deserve investigation beyond the theoretical, since this information could influence potential environmental conservation efforts in the region. As Tomalin (2004, p. 265) states, and as I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, some modern environmental conservation discourse assumes that people's treatment of their natural surroundings is related to their religious beliefs. There are no data available about regional beliefs concerning the treatment of the environment in Pemakö; however, as a contribution to larger discussions about environmentalism, I investigate possible explanations as to why the Pemaköba interact with their surroundings the way they do. Their hunting, poaching and farming practices likely reflect a combination of different elements of regional interpretations of a Tibetan Buddhist worldview.

To begin, one possible explanation for environmental destruction in Pemakö is that local inhabitants are simply not aware of Tibetan Buddhist concepts of non-harming. Still, Pemakö is a centuries-old religious icon in Tibetan Buddhism so that it is probable that the local population possesses an awareness of the fundamental concept of compassion central to Tibetan Buddhist theory. This understanding would likely include consideration for the local animal population and the ecosystems that support them. Secondly, the almost impenetrable vegetation growth, high altitudes and inclement weather patterns isolate villages from each

other and the outside world. This segregation has created extreme poverty and desperate living conditions. Thus, another reason for environmental degradation is that they rely on illegal poaching and trade for economic survival, regardless of the possible negative ‘karmic consequences’ that form part of Tibetan Buddhist theory. Yet another reason for wildlife exploitation could be a sense of ‘*samsāric* fatalism’. This term refers to resignation in the face of the inevitable disintegration of this world, as prophesied in Buddhist teachings. Such fatalism could be a rationalisation to succumb to habitual *samsāric* ways of thinking and to participate in the environment’s destruction with little hope or consideration for the future. These latter two ideas suggest what Harvey (2000, p. 105) labels a “fatalistic acceptance” of karmic circumstances: a practitioner accepts the negative consequences thought to have arisen from previous actions and chooses to ‘ride out the storm’.

Another, yet more secularly-rooted possibility for the seemingly random destruction of some parts of the Pemakö landscape and wildlife is simple ignorance of the effects this behaviour has on the ecosystems. In Chapter Three I have alluded to Pemakö as a setting for wandering *snag pa* to contemplate impermanence or interdependence. The region’s complex topography and biology are in a constant flux and provide a glimpse into an earthly manifestation of Buddhist ontology. Still, farmers and hunters may not recognise this ecological aspect of the Pemakö landscape. Furthermore, environmentalism found its initial impetus within a western context, in which nature was thought to contain a “realm of purity and intrinsic value” (Tomalin, 2009, p. 6). It is perhaps unrealistic to assume that the Pemaköba also embrace this romanticised attitude towards the region’s landscape. Moreover, it would be presumptuous to maintain that they have an idea about the fragile equilibrium of highly biodiverse ecosystems such as that in Pemakö, or about the repercussions of disrupting this balance.

I also propose that Pemakö's human inhabitants may base their actions on a Buddhist worldview that is specific to the region's hidden land narrative and grounded in their faith in the Padmasambhava mythology. Research on rural Tibetan communities has shown that there are varied interpretations of Tibetan Buddhist ideals in the perception of the environment and the treatment of the landscape. One case study of an agro-pastoralist community located in the eastern Khams region of ethnographic Tibet explored the religious dimensions of people's environmental notions regarding forest use and wildlife (Woodhouse et al., 2015, p. 296). The researcher's noticed that the local relationships with the environment were "dynamic" and "plural" (p. 295). Concern with the karmic consequences of actions did not "preclude a moral understanding of relations with the natural world"; still, a local caterpillar fungus had become a valuable commodity of which the extraction from the environment was negotiated as morally acceptable, despite any conflict with the concept of compassion or any negative effects on the environment (p. 305). Other research on a village in the far western Himalayan Ladakhi region revealed that lay practitioners regard religious leaders as the elite teachers of scriptural Tibetan Buddhism. Nevertheless, the lay practitioners are "unconsciously selective about the aspects of the religion they regard as significant". This also applies to their moral decisions, and includes the ways in which they choose to interact with nature (Pirie, 2006, p. 186).

The Pemaköba are likely just as selective about their interpretations of Tibetan Buddhism. While conducting ethnographic research in Nepal, my inquiries into the Pemakö religious heritage invariably met with an affirmation to the effect that the region is a holy land established by Guru Rinpoche, guaranteeing swift enlightenment to any visitor or resident. This faith in Pemakö's soteriological potency could very well supersede immediate worldly compassion towards regional wildlife. Two passages in *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* illustrate this possibility:

All insects killed here during farming will attain the joyful celestial realm.

Even if the sinful butcher goes to this place, he will become a king of the *mahāsiddhas* that have been liberated by means of their heart essence.

(Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje,
1615–1672b, vv. 337–338,
370–371)

Adherents' faith in Pemakö's spiritual power could be understood to override even the karmic fate of an insect or an unscrupulous human. It is also possible that these practitioners believe that Pemakö's said esoteric energy could relieve them of their negative karmic potential. *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* states: "Fortunate beings born in that sacred place have benefited from previous aspirations so that they strive to attain perfect Buddhahood in one life" (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 356–357). Thus, perhaps all that is necessary is to continue to hope that the power of Pemakö will project the practitioner into a favourable afterlife or even complete Buddhahood.

My discussion here places the concepts of sanctity and defilement within a framework that disentangles sacred and secular concerns. In other words, I am juxtaposing the perceived divinity of Pemakö's landscape to the actual treatment it receives by many of its local inhabitants. Some attitudes towards interaction with holy environments indicate that there is indeed a different paradigm from which residents of a sacred geography may view intrusion upon an earthbound spiritual narrative. For example, the Ganges River in India is valued as one of the most sacred to Hindus. The waterway is worshipped as the goddess Ganga and represents the embodiment of all rivers in India. As a holy mother, she cleanses sin and magnifies goodness. Yet, the Ganges River is notoriously contaminated with human and industrial waste. Despite this immense pollution, in the eyes of the Hindu faithful, the river waters remain both spiritually pure and purificatory. As Alley (1994, p. 129) explains, "... the purity of the Ganga was an eternal sort of power" to believers. This potency is explained through religious teaching and oral narrative; the mythology is sustained more personally through confessions of faith.

Furthermore, like the compassion thought exemplified in the actions of Padmasambhava who has created Pemakö for even the worst of sinners, the floating away of pollutants in the Ganges River shows that the goddess Ganga acts like a gentle mother cleaning up after her child. Alley (p. 131) contends that any conflict between the Ganges River's purity and its pollution is settled for residents by grasping onto the water's said indestructible holiness.

The example of the Mother Ganga, as well as that of Pemakö, presents a separation between the belief in the intangible, such as the spiritual purity of a sacred landscape, and the apparent denial of or lack of concern for the material, such as the degradation of the physical environment. In as much as a resident of Pemakö can interpret the esoteric potential of the natural surroundings through conviction, is it plausible then that any changes in the physical environment could influence the manifestation of this potential? As I have mentioned in Chapter Five, when I inquired of Tulku Jigmé Rinpoche whether he thought Pemakö's potency would decrease because of environmental imbalance, he was convinced that there would be no change in Padmasambhava's energy and blessings in the region. Thus, just as Hindus maintain a tenacious belief in the purity of the Ganges River, it seems that the Pemaköba may also relate to their physical environment through an unwavering faith in the region's sacredness regardless of its material condition.

So perhaps the said 'birth right' of the Pemaköba does indeed dictate their behaviour towards the natural surroundings. In other words, if Padmasambhava has guaranteed salvation to pilgrims to or residents of Pemakö, why should they be concerned about the damage they may have inflicted on the region's environment or the supposed karmic repercussions this behaviour could theoretically engender? My conjectures requires further ethnographic research with the Tibetan Buddhist residents of Pemakö; however, the theories I have presented in the previous paragraphs could explain some of the local attitudes towards the Pemakö ecosystems and provide another perspective from which to understand interpretations of the relationship to

the surrounding environment. As I illustrate in a later section of this chapter, the Pemaköba's treatment of the landscape is in opposition to the 'myth of primitive ecological wisdom' that often appears in the justification of religious theory as an avenue to environmental conservation (Milton, 1996, p. 109). First, however, it is important to examine contemporary Tibetan Buddhist environmentalism and activism.

Tibetan Buddhist Environmentalism

Religious Environmentalism: Why Buddhism?

Contemporary environmentalism began in Europe and North America in the 1960s following the recognition that human activities were having a devastating impact on the natural environment (Carson, 1962, p. 3). While there are many different types of environmentalism, one underpinning theme within the environmental movement has been a romantic view of the preservation of the pristine wilderness that is founded upon 'ecocentrism', or a belief that all elements of the natural world are due moral consideration (Sarkar, 2012, p. 60). Such an ecocentric ethic is a linchpin of another movement popular in the 1970s known as Deep Ecology. Adherents of the deep ecological perspective embraced an ideal that accentuated the pervasive interdependence of both biological and non-biological elements of the Earth and the need to preserve an unadulterated, natural balance of the world's ecosystems (Devall and Sessions, 2017, p. 235). Such thinkers have emphasised not only that the destruction of the natural environment is detrimental to human needs, but also that any ideology based on the "importance of a well-functioning environment for human welfare" is anthropocentric in its bias toward the well-being of humankind (Sarkar, 2012, p. 38).

Accompanying the rise of ecocentrism, the 1960s also saw the rise of a critique that placed part of the responsibility for environmental crises on the anthropocentrism of Christian beliefs (White, 1967, p. 1206). As a result, some environmentalists began to turn to non-

Abrahamic religious systems for inspiration, such as Native American or Hindu traditions. These belief systems were imagined to be non-anthropocentric and in tune with ecocentrism (Tomalin, 2009, p. 204). Buddhism also became a popular source for environmentalist ideals (Badiner, 1990; Harvey, 2000, p. 156). For example, in religious environmentalist discourses, the Buddhist idea of dependent origination is applied to and taken as exemplifying the interdependence of topography and flora with sentient beings. This theory, which consists of a series of twelve-factors, is interwoven throughout early Buddhist texts and clarifies the arising, abiding and disintegration of material and immaterial objects due to the law of causality. The Buddhist environmentalist Da Silva (1987, p. 3) maintains that “. . . the law of causality operates within [each of the natural laws] as well as among them”. She (p. 3) continues: “This means that the physical environment of any given area conditions the growth and development of its biological components”. Consequently, sentient beings are seen to be supported by the well-being of their biological and non-biological surroundings.

Early Buddhism encouraged respect for human and non-human forms of life. As part of training in Buddhist ideals, the Pāli tradition cultivated the ‘Sublime Attitudes’ or the ‘Four Immeasurables’ based on teachings in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*:

. . . [one] dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without enmity, without ill will. This noble disciple, bhikkhus, who is thus devoid of longing, devoid of ill will . . . dwells pervading one quarter with a mind imbued with compassion . . . with a mind imbued with altruistic joy . . . with a mind imbued with equanimity.

(Nyanaponika Bodhi and
Bhikkhu Bodhi, 2012, p. 1542)

The Mahāyāna tradition of later Buddhism, which includes the Buddhist tradition of Tibet, also embraced the teachings of the Four Immeasurables with emphasis on the concept of compassion. Compassion is emulated in the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* ideal and is a necessary component of becoming a *samyaksambuddha*, or completely enlightened Buddha.

The Mahāyāna tradition also included the theory of interdependence. For example, the influential *Avatamsaka Sūtra* introduced the theory of interpenetration in its reference to reality as a “net of jewels” (Cleary, 1993, p. 190). Inspection of any stone in this web reveals that all are reflected in each other; these reflections are therefore infinitely interdependent. Like the theory of dependent origination, then, the arising and disintegration of phenomena are necessarily related to each other. Similarly, the interconnection between all aspects of any environment could be deemed infinite. It would follow, then, that the Mahāyāna Buddhist practitioner should extend compassion not only to all sentient beings, but also to the environment that sustains their survival (Sivaraksa, 1990, p. 176). The following paragraphs highlight how Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leaders promote this compassion in their environmental discourse.

*Tibetan Buddhist Environmentalism:
Teachers, Activism and the Role of Compassion*

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa are two prominent spiritual leaders in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition who have spoken at great lengths to international audiences on the importance of caring for the environment and the role of compassion in environmentalism. Already in his early communications with international audiences, the Dalai Lama emphasised the importance of “universal responsibility” based on compassion (Tenzin Gyatso, 1990, pp. 79–80). In his teachings, he consistently encourages people to generate this compassion for each other. He (2007b, p. 31) has accentuated the interdependence of the Earth’s environment and inhabitants, thus this wish to alleviate the suffering of others necessarily includes preserving the natural surroundings. The Dalai Lama’s (p. 32) idea of universal responsibility has also stressed that environmental conservation is not just an ethical concern, but a necessity for securing humankind’s very survival.

Likewise, the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa (Ogyen Trinley Dorje, 2011, p. 1095) has explained that “generating compassion for all living beings and turning that motivation into action is the most ecologically aware thing we can do”. He is passionate about environmental conservation, an attitude that originated during his childhood where he was taught to regard nature as a “living system” (2015). Part of the basis of the Tibetan Buddhist soteriological path, he (2011, p. 1094) claims, is the “deeply felt dedication to alleviate the suffering of all living beings”, a sentiment that should extend to care for one’s natural surroundings. In his teachings, the Karmapa has also emphasised the theory of dependent origination and its relevance to environmentalism. He (p. 1094) maintains that biological diversity in ecosystems exemplifies how “animate and inanimate beings are parts of a whole”, so care should extend to all members of this “one world ecology”. Like the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa (p. 1097) has also warned of the necessity of environmental conservation for human survival.

These spiritual leaders, along with other representatives of Tibetan Buddhism, also strive to inspire environmental activism based on compassion. The Dalai Lama has specified that the Tibetans themselves should demonstrate compassion towards animals through vegetarianism and by refraining from slaughtering them for their skins or for illegal trade (Mudie, 2006; Tenzin Gyatso, 2007b, pp. 87, 90). The Gyalwang Karmapa points to elevating community empowerment so members can care for their natural surroundings (Ogyen Trinley Dorje, 2011, p. 1096). He teaches his audiences about the importance of minimising affluence and living simply, regarding each of these strategies as a demonstration of compassionate action towards the natural environment. In 2009, the Karmapa founded the Khoryug movement, a network of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries committed to the protection of the Himalayan environment. In addition to annual conferences, the religious centres seek to educate the surrounding population about environmental issues and to implement local conservation strategies (Khoryug, 2017). Out of the organisation’s first

environmental conference was published a list of 108 actions to steer budding Buddhist environmentalists towards practical application of compassion in everyday life (Green Kagyu, 2009).

Other Tibetan Buddhist activism comes from the Environment and Development Desk of the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, India. The department promotes awareness through regular publications and online dialogue based on Buddhist principles of “simplicity and non-violence that are in harmony with the environment” (CTA, 2017). Their publications include the Dalai Lama’s statements on environmental conservation, annual newsletters and brochures addressing specific ecological concerns in Tibet. The Tibetan Youth Congress also devotes efforts to educating the world about environmental concerns in Tibet (Tenzin Thayai, 2018). The organisation regularly sponsors meetings about the need to care for the environment both locally and globally. The Tibetan Settlement Office in McLeod Ganj, India has created the Clean Upper Dharamshala Programme that actively pursues waste management in the city (TSO, 2016, pp. 3–4). Members advertise that their activities are based on the Dalai Lama’s ideal of universal responsibility and compassion for all sentient beings. There is a plethora of other environmental projects inspired by Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leaders and their emphasis on compassion.¹⁶⁰ In the next section, however, I question not only the feasibility of compassion to generate effective environmental policy at a global or even local level, but also the environmental wisdom ascribed to Buddhist theory by some religious environmentalists.

¹⁶⁰Examples include the organisation Rangjung Yeshe Shenpen founded by Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche in Nepal. Projects promote animal awareness, education for the poor, emergency aid during environmental catastrophes and medical assistance to the Nepalese (RYS, 2016). The Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahāyāna Tradition, founded in part by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, advocates regular animal release, Buddhist education for the poor and environmental conservation projects around the world (FPMT, 2017).

*The Problem with Compassion in Religious Environmentalism
and the Myth of Primitive Ecological Wisdom*

The Compassion of Religion and Environmentalism

In the context of the previous section, I have shown how the rhetoric of compassion is popular in current Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist dialogue. I argue, however, that the meaning of compassion is not as straightforward as its advocates might imply. For example, the practice of compassion towards the natural environment is context-dependent. As I have outlined in Chapter Two, some animal slaughter in Pemakö is undertaken to protect farm animals or crops meant for village consumption. This could be seen as an act of compassion for the greater good. It is also possible to view poaching in Pemakö as motivated by compassion for others' well-being within a poverty-stricken society. Consequently, the welfare of the few is sacrificed for the benefit of the many. This concept was also evident in some of my discussions about environmentalism with Tibetan Buddhists during my fieldwork in Nepal. Should, for example, hydro-electric dam construction in the Pemakö area be completed, my respondents often expressed the view that the well-being of the larger population ought to be the priority, and if some beings not directly benefiting from the dam encountered suffering in the process, this merely served as a purification of their negative karma. This contextual interpretation of compassionate action also extended to the many non-vegetarians within the Tibetan Buddhist community. Should a Buddhist decide to eat meat, I was told, this decision could be construed as an act of compassion towards the animal being eaten by a practitioner. In this case, the animal is purified of negative potential through an untimely death, a demise that served the purpose of nurturing a follower of the Dharma – a sacrifice surely fortuitous to the creation of positive potential for the animal, especially if the meat-eater was an accomplished master. Thus, an act of compassion may vary according to the circumstances.

In some ecological circumstances, compassion may prove irrelevant to the purpose of conserving a specific environment. In my study of Pemakö, for example, the Treasure text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* advertises Pemakö as the ideal place to generate compassion for all beings (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 404–405). The Tibetan Buddhist narrative in Pemakö, however, encourages subjugation of nature in support of human endeavours. This is evident in the alleged taming of wrathful entities during Padmasambhava's sojourn in Pemakö. Pilgrims in Pemakö seek harmony with their surroundings not because of some intrinsic value of the landscape or for the sake of ecological conservation for future generations. They are more concerned with the negative spiritual and physical potential engendered through traversing, disturbing or harming a natural environment that is home to both peaceful and destructive deities. The cultivation of compassion may be important for the soteriological aims of Tibetan Buddhism, but my research on the hunting, poaching and farming practices in Pemakö begs the question as to whether these actions in these areas are motivated by compassion. Compassion in the name of environmental conservation is perhaps immaterial to Pemakö's soteriological purpose.

From an ecological viewpoint, actions motivated by compassion may be inappropriate for a given landscape. Any environmentalist deed must consider the biological complexities of the ecosystem in question. Sciberras (2010, p. 6) contends that “any examination of green Buddhism needs to consider the issue of whether the core Buddhist doctrines can be reconciled with a scientific understanding of the world.” For example, the Buddhist tradition of the release of captured animals seems like a noble cause because of its outward demonstration of compassion. This practice, however, can also engender environmental threats such as invasive species and disease transmission (Schiu and Stokes, 2008, p. 191). Another challenge is the allocation of resources to support environmentalist projects (Bottrill et al., 2008, p. 649). Environmental ‘triage’ is an essential step in prioritising conservation efforts. Deciding how to

delegate programmes to specific animal or plant species is “a hard thing to ask and a hard thing to think about” (Ulrichson, 2013). Could compassion alone direct such decisions? In my conversations with the Gyalwang Karmapa, he emphasised only the immense ethical and moral dilemma presented in these queries.¹⁶¹

*Buddhism as a Source for Environmentalism:
The Myth of Primitive Ecological Wisdom, Green Tibetans
and the ‘Ecologisation’ of Buddhist Theory*

My interrogation of compassion does not intend to disregard the merits of its influence in environmentalism; nor am I implying that current Tibetan Buddhist dialogue advocates compassion as the only quality that should motivate environmentalist action. The challenges shown in the interpretation of compassion do lead my discussion to consideration of the myth of primitive ecological wisdom, or the belief that some religious traditions’ teachings inherently embrace reverential treatment of the environment for the sake of its conservation and that they provide the guidelines to do so. Milton (1996, p. 109) summarises that this myth originates in part from a romanticised version of nature that holds an ecocentric valuation of the Earth. This appraisal of the environment believes in an inherent sacredness of nature, or an innate ‘biodivinity’ (Tomalin, 2009, p. 4). The biodivinity narrative also assumes that an ‘eco-golden age’ existed at some time when people treated the environment with respect because of their religious traditions. In the case of Pemakö, however, the region’s narrative was developed around a reverence for the environment based on faith in the protective energy the landscape provided to Tibetans. It was also the soteriological potential offered by this scenario that drew believers to the region, sentiments still evident in current ritual practised in Pemakö. Furthermore, within the constructs of the Pemakö mythology, any eco-golden age would have

¹⁶¹This conversation took place in the Spring of 2016 at the Gyalwang Karmapa’s residence outside of Dharamshala, India.

begun there in the 1700s at a time when spiritual leaders were re-establishing their relevance in the Tibetan Buddhist arena through the narrative of Pemakö, and not because of any ecocentric perception of its landscape that proffered respect for the ecosystems.

In support of the myth of primitive ecological wisdom, many members of industrialised societies have considered their non-industrialised counterparts “noble savage[s]” that live in harmony with nature. In turn, the most natural ways of living are thought to be those that appear to minimally transform the environment, a lifestyle in opposition to how industrialised societies change their surroundings. The intensive agriculture of ‘modern’ civilisation has been compared to the supposed less territorial and exploitative farming practices of ‘primitive’ cultures. Furthermore, hunting practices in less advanced societies are believed to be less invasive because of their emphasis on need and avoidance of excess (Milton, 1996, p. 109). Returning to the example of Pemakö, it is perhaps easy to imagine residents pursuing a ‘natural existence’ in the region. In *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*, for example, Pemakö’s landscape has been advertised as an ‘environmental jewel’ with abundant plants to nourish, clothe and house visitors and residents (Rig ‘dzin Bdud ‘dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 289–293). Nevertheless, data have shown that farming practices in the valleys and on hillsides require clearance of thick vegetation and trees, which inevitably upsets ecosystem balance. This land is also used for farm animals, which eventually become victim to invasive predators such as the tiger and snow leopard. These animals are often eliminated because of their threat to human existence. In addition, wild animals such as the takin are hunted for human consumption, despite the animal’s protected status (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 17). Poaching has resulted in widespread endangerment of several species. These practices in the region contradict not only the notion of living harmoniously with the natural environment, but also the principle of exploiting its resources. For example, in Upper Pemakö monkey skins are sold

in abundance to traders, red pandas are almost non-existent and fish are dynamited in the Yarlung Tsangpo (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, pp. 16, 28).

As Tomalin (2009, p. 104) explains, environmentalists who subscribe to the myth of primitive ecological wisdom often use different religious ideals strategically in order to encourage people to adopt ecologically friendly behaviour. This process is usually a form of ‘bricolage’, where environmentalists borrow and combine different religious ideas deemed appropriate for specific purposes (Campbell, 2002, p. 37). Roof (1999, p. 73) details how “religious symbols, teachings, and practices are easily . . . lifted out of one cultural setting and ‘re-embedded’ into another”. Taylor (2002, p. 29) alludes to ‘radical environmentalists’ who claim that their views “cohere better with contemporary scientific understandings” of nature, parts of which have arisen through interpretation of various religious ideals. Here I cite Waldron’s (2000, p. 199) comparison of core principles in evolutionary biology to those of Buddhist theories of dependent origination. He claims that “to the extent that [these theories] forge a view of embodied interdependence and deep belonging in the universe, they may suggest a path beyond the stale dichotomy of spirit and matter that underlies so much of this alienation”.

Still, are we attributing environmentalist characteristics to Buddhist thought that aren’t there? Keown (2007, p. 97) contends that in Buddhism there is “more evidence of a negative presupposition about the value and status of the natural world”. Huber (1997, p. 103) argues in his ideas on ‘Green Tibetans’, or Tibetans who are Tibetan Buddhist environmentalists, that there is a set of essentialist representations of Tibetan people and culture that “depicts them as being in harmony with nature, non-exploitative of the natural world . . . and consciously sensitive to the complex ecological processes inherent in the physical environment”. Their religious identity as Buddhists forms a significant part of this image, and it is a representation of Tibetans that has progressively portrayed them as such. The Tibetans’ reputation as

inherently environmentally friendly is based on the role of a small number of institutions and influential individuals that are part of the exiled Tibetan political, religious and intellectual elite in Dharamsala, India (p. 106). The popularisation of this ideal, however, does not necessarily substantiate claims to any inherent environmental friendliness in practice – I have demonstrated this in my analysis of the relationship between the religious culture and environment in my study of Pemakö.

Obadia (2011, p. 316) suggests that environmentalists' and Buddhists' claims that Buddhist theory includes ecological guidelines is an ideal that is more related "to its alignment with the ideological standards of the modern world . . . initially forged in the crucible of the western industrial societies". He (p. 316) has summarised what he calls the 'ecologisation' of Buddhism, a process that has rendered the tradition an ideal prototype for religious environmentalism. Buddhism's contribution to ecology is as a source for ethical guidelines and as an example of interdependence and altruism, although it does not explicitly suggest "praxeological norms" (pp. 315, 317). As Harvey (2000, p. 178) has claimed, the "conservation of species and habitat is not something that Buddhist cultures, in pre-modern times, have had to give much attention to". As such, current eco-Buddhism reflects a redefinition of ancient cultural and religious conceptions in the context of the twenty-first century ecological crisis. Still, the point of scrutinising assumptions about Buddhist environmentalism, and especially the rhetoric of compassion so popular in Tibetan Buddhist dialogue, is not to suggest that non-industrial, or even isolated societies such as that of Pemakö, have nothing to teach the industrial world about how environmental responsibilities might be defined and implemented. The point is, rather, to critically examine the assumption that religious thought provides a set of self-evident solutions for environmental problems (Brosius, 1999, p. 278).

Religions cannot ignore modern scientific calls for ecological renewal. Tucker and Grim (2016, p. 10) contend that individual religions must in fact adapt themselves to current

social and scientific circumstances if they are to enter into environmental engagement that includes genuine contributions from religious theory. Thus, a central challenge of contemporary religious environmental discourse is to bring the world's religious traditions into meaningful, balanced discourse with existing environmental circumstances and scientific knowledge. This is a key task of any religion, including Buddhism, if it is to contribute to a sustainable ecological future on Earth (Tucker, 2008, p. 127). In the context of my thesis, this very ideal motivated me to explore what contribution the Tibetan Buddhist tradition could really make to environmental theory. In the case of Pemakö, then, the challenge is to explore how local interpretations of Buddhist theory can inform resident practitioners' care of the natural environment, should they deem this necessary in light of scientific observations about the region's ecological circumstances.

Faith, Compassion and Environmentalism in Pemakö

It is clear that should the reported environmental degradation continue because of local exploitation of the land and wildlife in Pemakö, the region's natural environment will face even greater alterations of its ecosystems. In addition, the potential ecological damage implied in the prospect of hydro-electric dam construction and the increasing infrastructure due to territorial disputes looms large over the future of Pemakö's flora and fauna. As I have indicated earlier in this chapter, Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché was adamant about the effects any physical change of the region's environment would have on its perceived sanctity:

And whether the power of Pemakö is going to decrease (because of environmental damage) – I don't think so. Lots of prayers we are doing— a lot of that. And it is Guru Rinpoche's prediction that Pemakö will remain a sacred place, a very sacred place.

Tulku Jigmé Rinpoché

I found that this sentiment was implicitly reflected in conversations with all six of my interviewees. So why should the Tibetan Buddhist culture in Pemakö take the region's

ecological well-being into consideration? If the region guarantees swift enlightenment “just by bringing the thought of [Pemakö] to mind”, why bother taking care of its ecosystems (Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, 1615–1672b, vv. 349–350)? Of what significance could this be to the future of Pemakö?

The dichotomy between ethereal and tangible is a distinctive characteristic of the perception of the Pemakö landscape, yet these opposing forces also bind each other into a single narrative: the sacred and mundane aspects of Pemakö's environment are intimately related. As an example, Mount Kailash, together with Lake Manasarovar lying in close proximity to the peak, forms one of the most well-known natural pilgrimage sanctuaries in Tibetan Buddhism.¹⁶² A Tibetan guidebook to the mountain exemplifies this same concept of the sacred and mundane in the text's description of an 'internal' and 'external' view of the mountain.¹⁶³ Externally, Mount Kailash is said to resemble Saṃvara with the surrounding minor peaks representing reverential goddesses. Its ethereal symbolism, however, is that of the tantric Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* (Huber and Tsepak Rigzin, 1999, p. 129).¹⁶⁴ The region is viewed as an “empowered and auspicious landscape”, and believers “ritually interact with it accordingly”: as stated in this guidebook, “. . . if you do one hundred circumambulations [around the great palace of Ti-se], you will attain Buddhahood in one lifetime” (pp. 125, 138).

Likewise, the physical environment in Pemakö supports its soteriological narrative with external and internal representations of religious meaning. The topography functions as a physical representation of the Tibetan Buddhist worldview that offers the practitioner the

¹⁶²Mount Kailash, also known as Ti se in Tibetan, and Lake Manasarovar, known as Mtsho ma pham in Tibetan, are important religious icons in the Bon, Tibetan Buddhist, Hindu and Jain traditions. They lie on the far western end of the Himalayas (Huber and Rigzin, 1999, p. 125).

¹⁶³This guidebook is entitled *Gangs ri chen po ti se dang mtsho chen ma dros pa bcas kyi sngon byung gi lo rgyus mdor bsdus su brjod pa'i rab byed shel dkar me long (The Crystal Mirror: An Analysis which Briefly Explains the Chronicle of Past Events at the Great Snow Mountain Ti se together with the Great Lake Ma dros pa)*. See Appendix A for bibliographic information.

¹⁶⁴Saṃvara, or Cakrasaṃvara, is a tantric deity in Tibetan Buddhism (Buswell and Lopez, 2014, p. 1862).

opportunity to benefit from the experience of the region's alleged energy: mountains are the abode of deities, caves encapsulate meditative energy and trees protect secret troves of Treasure literature. Moreover, Pemakö with all of its meteorological, montane and vegetative challenges offers not only protection from secular threats, but in the minds of practitioners, the opportunity to cultivate enormous spiritual merit through struggle and dedication along the pilgrimage journey. It seems, then, that the sustained existence of the worldly *maṇḍala* would therefore promote the continued enjoyment of its said spiritual advantages.

In more practical terms, because resident communities rely on the region's natural abundance, their well-being is also linked to the care given to the surrounding ecosystems: for example, communities depend on local vegetables, fruits and medicinal plants for their economic and physical well-being (Mishra, Madhusudan and Datta, 2006, p. 5; Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 25). From a scientific perspective, environmental studies classify various areas of the world as ecological hotspots and Pemakö is located in one such area (Xu et al., 2009, p. 521). The region's hotspot status implies a large diversity of species, an aspect of natural environments that scientists consider fundamental to the Earth's ecological balance. The Namche Barwa Massif, with its extreme gorges, waterways, flora and fauna as well as the surrounding Himalayan structures comprising the Pemakö region are considered rarities among Earth's geographies that are, to some, worthy of conservation (CTA, 2009; Xu et al., 2009). For all of these reasons, then, one could argue that the physical environment is indeed worth preserving.

What would it look like for environmentalist projects in Pemakö to incorporate the region's religious culture? In Pemakö, Tibetan Buddhists seem to relate to their natural surroundings through faith. Is it possible to integrate this faith into environmental activism in Pemakö? In Tibetan Buddhism, faith in the teachings is a prerequisite to their effectiveness (Tenzin Gyatso, 2007a, p. 256). Faith in the soteriological path is required for the complete

enlightenment of a *samyaksambuddha*, a path that necessarily includes the vitality of compassion, even in Pemakö. Could this faith, then, encourage a fuller incorporation of compassion in attitudes towards the environment? There are other ideals in Tibetan Buddhism, such as the pursuit of wisdom, that could be cultivated on the basis of faith, and perhaps integrated into some sort of environmental ethic applicable to Pemakö. Earlier in this chapter I have highlighted the penchant for ambiguity in the ideal of compassion, despite its popularity in Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist discourse. For the sake of argument, however, I am suggesting a link between faith and compassion not only because of the significance compassion plays in the Mahāyāna soteriological path, but also because of the emphasis on compassion in Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist dialogue as a motivator for more conscientious interaction with nature. Furthermore, as I explain in the next section, some environmentalist efforts in Pemakö already base their activism on this ideal, demonstrating the realistic possibility of compassion's influence on activism in the region.

***Top-Down Strategies, Grassroots Movements and
a Civic Environmentalist Approach to Conservation in Pemakö***

*Top-Down Strategies versus Grassroots Movements in Environmentalism:
Trends in India and China*

Top-down strategies in environmentalism are typically organised and directed by national governments and global bodies such as the United Nations or the World Wildlife Fund.¹⁶⁵ Such approaches give considerable authority to scientists, engineers and lawyers in government agencies while facilitating the protection of ecosystems. Top-down strategies, however, also have their drawbacks: businesses, citizens and local governments often disagree with

¹⁶⁵See United Nations projects at <https://www.unenvironment.org/regions/asia-and-pacific/our-impact-asia-pacific> and World Wildlife Fund religious environmental projects at <https://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/sacred-earth-faiths-for-conservation>.

conservation strategies initiated by larger political organisations (DeWitt et al., 2006, p. 45). Top-down management is often interpreted as narrowly functional in that it fails to adequately acknowledge the importance of ‘locality’ in rural areas (Willock, 1995, p. 253). In addition, local populations may lose their rights to use the land for hunting or farming privileges due to government controls.

In China, for example, since the 1980s the central government has issued countless pieces of environmental legislation, signed international treaties and invested in clean technology (Shapiro, 2012). In the Himalayan regions in China, including the upper Pemakö area in the Nyingchi Province, the government has made efforts to protect the snow leopard. In 2016, the Xinjiang-Tianshan Snow Leopard Conservation Forum brought together several Chinese conservation agencies to identify threats and priorities for the big cat in the Tianshan Mountains (SLT, 2016).¹⁶⁶ The project has increased scientific rigour, citizen awareness and standardisation of conservation approaches for the animal. In 2010, the Yarlung Zangpo Grand Canyon National Park was opened in the Nyingchi Province. The inauguration announcement advertised that the park would “promote the development of natural reserves as well as national parks around the Nyingchi area . . . covering a vast area with rounded ecosystems” (CTIC, 2010).¹⁶⁷ Because the Chinese government initiates majority control, however, transparency and local citizen influence are limited. And despite fervent implementation of environmental programmes, China’s environmental circumstances are only worsening. Scholars blame the government itself for this, claiming that because economic development in the country remains the national priority, contradictory incentives at central and local levels have led to persistent weakness in the enforcement of environmental protection (Zhou, 2015, p. 1).

¹⁶⁶SLT is the Snow Leopard Trust.

¹⁶⁷CTIC is the China Tibet Information Center.

India has gained the reputation “as one of the most obdurate opponents” in combatting global climate change (Betz, 2014, p. 159). Still, in the last few years government environmental initiatives have been on the increase in the country, likely as a means to improve its international reputation and economic bargaining power. The Indian government has also sponsored top-down environmentalist initiatives, but these have remained mostly ineffective due to “the apathy and corruption of [the] political class” (Guha, 2013). One initiative especially relevant to Pemakö is *Project Snow Leopard*, begun in 2009. The project seeks to implement environmental protection strategies for snow leopards in the Himalayan regions of India, including the Upper Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh. The official goal is “to promote a knowledge-based and adaptive conservation framework . . . in conservation efforts” (GOIMEF, 2009, p. 4). Although there is no mention of religious institutions, the report states that the project would target “local communities” along with “defence forces, road construction agencies [and] travel agents” based on scientific research and government initiatives (p. 14). In 2015, however, India sent no government representation to the first international steering committee meeting between twelve countries striving to coordinate conservation efforts for the snow leopard. The “initial enthusiasm to protect the species seems to have worn off”, with few efforts undertaken to even launch *Project Snow Leopard* policies in India (Lenin, 2015).

There has been increased resistance to top-down environmental management throughout the world because of these approaches’ prioritisation of ‘expert’ knowledge that often results in the alienation of local people. As a result, grassroots movements have emerged as an alternative avenue for environmental activism (Hickey and Mohan, 2004, pp. 3–4). In grassroots initiatives, citizens and organisations work independently of each other to protect ecosystems (DeWitt et al., 2006, p. 45). Communities build their own institutions that work alongside central government regulators and natural resource managers. Nevertheless, such initiatives are often hard to sustain because of the demands on individual efforts and resources

(p. 45). Individual groups or citizens must appeal to government agencies for project approval, raise money for activities, lobby their causes and oversee implementation of programmes.

China has also seen increased activism by local environmentalist groups (Shapiro, 2012). One approach that could find relevance to Pemakö's situation was described in research on the role of monastics in protecting the snow leopards of Sanjiangyuan, China. A recent study from 2009 to 2011 explored this grassroots initiative (Li et al., 2013, p. 92). Researchers systematically investigated the snow leopard habitat in correspondence with the location of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. The 336 monasteries included in the study demonstrated significant influence on the environmental behaviour in surrounding communities. For example, after conducting interviews with over 100 different households, the researchers discovered that the majority of the herders in the region did not kill any wildlife (p. 90). Approximately half of the interviewees abstained from hunting due to government restrictions. The other half refrained due to the influence of religious instructions given by monastics. Citizens wanted to avoid the repercussions of negative karma, but were also motivated by compassion for the animals (p. 92).

In lower Pemakö in India, projects include the Lhundrup Topgye Ling Ngakpa Dratsang School established in 2001. Slob dpon o rgyan bstan 'dzin rin po che, the founder, aims at “environmental conservation and committed local involvement” in educating Pemakö children (OCL, 2006).¹⁶⁸ Another initiative is the Naksang Foundation that was founded in 2014. The organisation promotes “efforts to increase awareness of environmental sustainability and cultural research in Menchukha”, a remote area on the southwestern tip of Pemakö territory (Naksang Foundation, 2014). Each group describes its primary motive as the proliferation and practice of Tibetan Buddhist culture, which includes the ideal of compassion. As in grassroots movements anywhere, individual action is the central impetus behind these projects’

¹⁶⁸OCL is Ogyan Chokhur Ling.

objectives. Given the remoteness of Pemakö, along with the region's lack of infrastructure and electricity, however, it is difficult to monitor the progress or success of these organisations.¹⁶⁹

Civic Environmentalism: A Case for Pemakö

A third approach to conservation is known as civic environmentalism. This involves mobilising resources from both government agencies and community-level organisations to collaboratively serve local goals. The movement begins when regional environmentalists and leaders develop a commitment to the well-being of their surrounding natural environment. Out of this process, an informal professional community obtains the financial backing to seek out new answers to avoid the destruction of the landscape (DeWitt et al., 2006, p. 46). The key component of civic environmentalism is the increase in local citizen participation in policy decision making. For example, community leaders in Hamugu, a small village in an area located in the northern extremity of the former Tibetan Khams region, have come together to forge environmental policy for their area based on the priorities of the constituents. Their objectives include developing a “working model for a locally managed, indigenous system of ecological resource management”, albeit in conjunction with the appropriate political and funding agencies (Coggins and Hutchinson, 2011, p. 102). Dramatic changes are possible through the collaboration of the various sources of expertise assembled in civic movements (DeWitt et al., 2006, p. 46). Nevertheless, research has shown that citizens can direct policy under certain circumstances, although their influence is not necessarily widespread among diverse projects (Abel and Stephan, 2000, p. 614). Furthermore, because of financial

¹⁶⁹During my visit to Pemakö in Arunachal Pradesh in India, the monastic community at Nge gsang don ngag byang chub rdo rje gling (approximately 200 members) followed the directives of the leading monks. Typical of Tibetan Buddhist monastic centres, the religious leadership seemed to provide guidelines for ritual and religious theory to the surrounding lay community. Other monastic communities in Lower Pemakö were very small (two to three members); their purpose appeared to be solely for prayer to Buddhist deities on behalf of the local population.

requirements to sustain such movements, sponsors have a tendency to eventually abandon these programmes.

The relevance of India's Project Snow Leopard and grassroots snow leopard conservation movements in China to environmentalism in Pemakö is that these two projects complement each other, and their combination exemplifies many aspects of a civic environmentalist strategy that could find resonance in Pemakö. Project Snow Leopard was initiated and funded by the Indian government, and offered the political means to oversee programme implementation, secure financing and enforce policy. The project also outlines the necessity for guidance from local communities to effectuate realistic environmental policies. The research in Sanjiangyuan, China suggested close cooperation between monasteries, local governments and nongovernmental conservation organisations to promote regional environmental conservation strategies based on relevant scientific and cultural data (Li et al., 2013, p. 92). Together, as a civic environmentalist approach, the example of Project Snow Leopard and Sanjiangyuan monastic communities points to an environmentalist strategy sponsored by a financial entity and monitored by government regulations, yet influenced by local religious organisations that both represent and are advised by their constituents.

In Pemakö, environmentalist activities could theoretically benefit from a civic environmentalist approach similar to the above example. Schaller (2011, p. 2014) states that "Communities must be directly involved as full partners in conservation [that] is based on beauty, ethics and religion". He (Schaller, Zhang and Zhi, 2000, p. 32) suggests that any conservation efforts in Pemakö should be "unambiguous, achievable and closely coordinated with local communities", adding that any top-down planning without the expertise of the local governments and communities is "unlikely to be successful". At the local level in Pemakö, I have suggested that the faith in the region's mythology could be linked to the compassion so often referenced in Tibetan Buddhist environmentalism. In fact, I have described grassroots

movements in Pemakö that base their concern for the environment on compassion. Civic environmentalism motivated by compassion would likely have no effect on the larger issues of hydro-electric dam construction or infrastructure build up in Pemakö; spiritual motivations, such as compassion or even faith in the Pemakö narrative, would take no precedence over the economic objectives of the Chinese or Indian government. It would be more realistic to directly address the ecological dangers of the Pemaköba's hunting, poaching and farming practices, because Pemakö's traditional Tibetan Buddhist population has until now caused the most immediate damage to the region's natural environment. As I have explained in Chapter Five, it seems that at least some of the Tibetan Buddhist population in Pemakö are aware of wildlife endangerment in the region and are concerned about Pemakö's ecological future. It is quite possible, then, that these citizens could provide the impetus for civic environmentalist movements.

My conjectures about the effectiveness of civic environmentalism in Pemakö motivated by religious ideals are only theoretical, and as I detail in the conclusion of my thesis, attitudes towards nature and environmental activism in Pemakö are subjects requiring ethnographic studies in the region itself. In this chapter I have shown that faith is the driving force behind Tibetan Buddhist perception of Pemakö's environment, a notion that has not inspired any eco-centric valuation of the environment. Tibetan Buddhism has been heavily promoted as exemplary of environmentalist thinking because of the religion's emphasis on compassion, and Tibetans themselves have propagated a reputation for inherently living in harmony with the environment. Nevertheless, research demonstrates that this is not necessarily the case and, moreover, that Tibetans negotiate their interactions with their environment based on local interpretations of religious theory.

Coggins and Hutchinson (2011, p. 99) quote a western anthropologist conducting research on sacred landscapes in the ethnically Tibetan area of the Yunnan province: he sees

local people's contemporary engagement with the environment as a "dramatic turning point in their subjective experiences of nature and themselves". Emergent engagement with Tibetan Buddhist environmentalism highlights the danger of overwriting complex religious perceptions and practice within sacred landscapes with externally generated representations of religious environmentalism (Woodhouse et al., 2015, p. 305). Likewise, my study of Pemakö shows that any model of the religious relationship to the environment conducive to its conservation, whether it be motivated by faith, compassion or another Tibetan Buddhist ideal, should not be imposed upon the region's narrative but negotiated by the local population on its own terms.

Conclusion

This final chapter of my thesis demonstrates how faith in the Pemakö mythology is a core concept of the relationship between the region's religious culture and its environment. Even though this faith in the power of Padmasambhava in Pemakö may alleviate residents' concern for the conservation of their surrounding landscape, I have argued that the religious narrative and the well-being of the Pemakö inhabitants depend on an ecologically balanced, physical environment. Current Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist discourse has popularised the ideal of compassion as an important component of ecological activism. I have shown, though, that compassion is not as straightforward of an ideal for environmentalism as it may appear to be. My contention aligns with the critiques of the myth of primitive ecological wisdom, and disputes the belief that Tibetan Buddhism naturally embraces an ecological consciousness – an example of which may be found in the residents' treatment of the environment in Pemakö.

I have also illustrated different strategies for environmental conservation in Pemakö, and advocated the possibility of civic environmentalist efforts that accentuate the perspective of the local community in the formation and implementation of environmental policy. Scholarly research on rural Tibetan Buddhist communities has shown the fluidity with which

members interpret Tibetan Buddhist theory as it relates to the treatment of the environment. Thus, in answer to my second research question about the implications of the relationship between Pemakö's religious culture and its environment, I conclude that any modern environmentalist discourse in Pemakö would do well to prioritise local interpretations of Tibetan Buddhist ideals, whether they be inspired by faith, compassion or other religious ideals, in order to establish realistic and enduring environmental activism in the region.

Conclusion

Introduction

This concluding chapter of my thesis is divided into the following sections: in the first, I review the effectiveness of my methodology in the achievement of my research objectives. I then discuss the conclusions of my study as they relate to the two primary research questions that have driven my investigations in this thesis. In the third section, I provide an assessment of the implications of my findings, especially for the study of Buddhism and its influence on environmentalism. I then turn to the limitations I faced during my investigations, which sets the background for the fifth section of this chapter where I discuss areas of future research.

Achieving Research Aims Phenomenologically

I now examine the way in which I decided to pursue my investigations; in addition, I assess the effectiveness of this methodology. In the introduction of this thesis I have pointed to the increased importance of religious thought in environmentalist dialogue, and especially the significance of Buddhist theory in its contribution to ecological conservation ideals. By focussing my study on Tibetan Buddhism, my aim in the thesis has in part been to determine “the tradition’s practical relevance to contemporary socio-political issues”, such as the deterioration facing the earth’s natural environment. I have also sought to ascertain whether there is “a historical or contemporary relationship between Tibetan Buddhist practitioners and their natural environment that illustrates deliberate preservation of surrounding ecosystems”. Furthermore, I have wanted to explore “the implications of such a relationship for environmental conservation”. I have centred my research questions around these objectives, and in the next section will discuss how these queries have guided my research. Before doing

so, I will demonstrate how I feel phenomenology of religion has helped me to pursue answers to these questions.

As I identified in Chapter One, I wanted to conduct and present this study from the perspective of the researched. More importantly, because I am a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner carrying out research on a Tibetan Buddhist phenomenon, I wanted to apply a methodology to my efforts that would also account for my insider or outsider positioning in relation to the object of study. My thesis has not been a theological undertaking that is motivated by a personal quest to understand my own belief system. Rather, I have located this study within the rubric of religious studies, since my interest lies in the applicability of Buddhist thought to contemporary global issues, such as environmentalism. Anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists and philosophers can and have categorised their research as a study of religion, with the objective of describing, comparing, interpreting and explaining religion from their respective viewpoints. Nevertheless, as I have outlined in Chapter One, these approaches do not explicitly seek to “impartially study any religious tradition on its own terms from the viewpoint of the experiencer without reducing subjective accounts to a naturalistic explanation”. I decided to take a phenomenological approach to my study of Pemakö because of the methodological focus on the perspective of the researched. In addition, phenomenology acknowledges the influence of the researcher on the perception of the object of study, and asks the scholar to identify and neutralise as much as possible any personal bias. I also argued for a phenomenological approach since it places an emphasis on the driving force behind practitioners’ religious experiences.

As I maintained in Chapter One, “phenomenology of religion is an appropriate methodology for my thesis because it allows the researcher to understand personal accounts of events as the primary context within which human beings ground their attempts to understand their surroundings”. I first chose to fulfil my objectives from both an historical and a

contemporary perspective to get as broad a picture as possible of the Tibetan Buddhist religious culture as it related to the environment in Pemakö. To this aim, I first translated the Tibetan language Treasure text *Self-Liberation in Hearing* in full, and integrated relevant sections of other Tibetan Buddhist scripture into my analysis of historical, religious perspectives on the Pemakö landscape. By first studying the development of the mythology surrounding Pemakö, as I demonstrated in Chapter Three, I was able to analyse the contents of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* contextually and understand the purpose of Pemakö's hidden land narrative. I presented this information thematically in Chapter Four, drawing attention to the symbolism attached to the various characteristics of the landscape.

Phenomenology of religion does take into account the context of a phenomenon, and my attention to the developmental trajectory of Pemakö in Chapter Three highlighted the reasons behind the creation of a hidden land narrative. The biography of Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje helped me to understand the likely motivations behind the content of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. It was also important to me to illustrate how the Pemakö environment was perceived through the development of its mythology, an effort that was enhanced through comparison of descriptions of Pemakö's environment across different exemplars of scripture about the region. Buddhist studies often relies on textual analysis that focusses on the intended meaning of the author; I felt that a phenomenological methodology allowed me to not only understand Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje's perspective on Pemakö's environmental significance, but also gain an appreciation for the faith that is a core characteristic of how practitioners relate to the region.

In order to obtain contemporary, religious perspectives on Tibetan Buddhists' relationship to the Pemakö environment, I interviewed six Tibetan Buddhist practitioners who had been on pilgrimage in the region. In a later section of this chapter I address limitations to my research, one of which was finding a larger number of participants who had gone on

pilgrimage in Pemakö. I was somewhat disappointed to not have found more interviewees; however, the advantage to my research was also their range of backgrounds so different from my own. They had firsthand knowledge of a region of the world of which I had little or no knowledge. It was difficult for me to imagine the dedication, determination or even the faith these practitioners placed in the Padmasambhava narrative and the soteriological path to which they ascribed their pilgrimage efforts. My *a priori* knowledge was challenged by the historical accounts of Pemakö in scripture and by the interviewees who seemed to pick up on the same thread offered by these accounts through their renditions of contemporary pilgrimage. Scripture and ritual, history and modernity, tangible and esoteric were concepts woven through a mythology deftly crafted over several centuries to oblige the contemporaneous secular and religious needs of the Tibetans. A phenomenological approach to my research has fostered an appreciation for the Tibetan Buddhist experience of Pemakö despite its apparent paradoxes to my western mind.

Research Questions and Conclusions

My thesis was guided by two prevailing queries: my first research questions asks “What is the nature of the relationship between Tibetan Buddhist culture and the natural environment in Pemakö?” I felt that in order to sufficiently answer this question, I needed to portray not only the historical and contemporary relationship of Pemakö’s religious culture to its landscape, but also to detail the characteristics of the environment itself. To this end, in Chapter Two I presented a synthesis of data about the geography, geology, topography, flora and fauna in Pemakö. This depiction not only illustrated the dramatic landscape in the region, but it also set the stage for my contextualisation of scripture and my exploration of pilgrimage experience in Pemakö. Because my thesis examines religious environmentalism, and I wanted to explore the implications of a sacred geography’s religious culture on environmental conservation, in

Chapter Two I also surveyed threats to Pemakö's ecosystems. Here I highlighted the impending threats to the environment through hydro-electric dam construction and infrastructure build-up. I also focussed on the most immediate threat of farmers, hunters and poachers in the region. Until now, it seems that the Tibetan Buddhist residents of Pemakö have inflicted the most immediate ecological damage through these practices.

The image of the Pemakö environment that I created in Chapter Two set the stage for the historical development of the region's narrative that I presented in Chapter Three. As I initially described in this chapter, the Bon tradition of early Tibet believed the earth's heavens, surface and sub-terrain were inhabited by ethereal beings thought capable of both good and evil. Tibetan Buddhism later incorporated these concepts, to which Indian tantra proposed the methods to subdue the harmful entities. In the Tibetan Buddhist narrative, the Indian tantric master Padmasambhava subjugated nature itself in his taming of malevolent forces. Centuries later, the hidden land narrative developed based on Padmasambhava's alleged predictions of their existence. In addition, the Treasure tradition allowed for both person and document to attest to the great Guru's compassion for secular and spiritual refugees in the establishment of one of the most glorious sacred landscapes known as Pemakö.

In Chapter Four, my analysis of *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* exemplified the historical relationship Tibetan Buddhism established to Pemakö's landscape. I expanded upon the descriptions this text provides of the religious culture that surrounds the area by including relevant extracts from other similar writings about Pemakö. In my analysis of the text, I presented a thematic arrangement of concepts that I separated into the earthly appearance of Pemakö's landscape on the one hand, and its esoteric appearance on the other. Some of the recurring themes were the natural beauty of Pemakö's scenery, the effervescent sacred energy found in Pemakö's topography through Pure Vision and the blessings the landscape can supposedly provide not only to residents and pilgrims, but also to those evoking merely the

thought of Pemakö. Woven throughout all of the texts is the glory of Padmasambhava in his compassion shown to the Tibetan people. From the perspective of the faithful, the relationship to the environment is one of conviction in its legends and its promises of soteriological achievement. Upon closer analysis, however, *Self-Liberation upon Hearing* also shows the extent to which the said revealer of the text, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje, used the impetus of the times and the influence of Treasure literature to establish himself as a legitimate representative of the Rnying ma tradition. Moreover, the text exemplifies his wish to attain authority among the powerful religious and secular leaders of the day.

In Chapter Five I turned to contemporary relationships to Pemakö's environment as they present themselves in pilgrimage ritual. As I have mentioned in my review of my methodological approach, I had the opportunity to interview six Tibetan Buddhist practitioners who had conducted pilgrimage in Pemakö. Throughout the fieldwork process, I paid close attention to my own preconceptions about the religious culture. This was at times a somewhat precarious endeavour due to the enthusiasm for Pemakö exhibited by my participants. Their belief in the sacred energy thought to permeate the region was ignited by their passion for the holiness of the great Guru. Nevertheless, through careful attention to detail I gleaned various themes in our conversations that I grouped into either the physical appearance of the region or the ethereal interpretation of Pemakö's mystical landscape. Of these themes, the same thread of conviction that was apparent in scripture was woven throughout my participants descriptions of their experiences in the region: Pemakö is eternally sacred due to the power of Padmasambhava.

My examination of the nature of the relationship between the religious culture and environment in Pemakö in Chapters Four and Five then linked to my response to the second research question that asked, "What are the implications of this relationship, if any, to the conservation of the Pemakö landscape?" I dedicated Chapter Six to answering this question. I

began with my chief argument, that although there were different aspects of the spiritual relationship to Pemakö's environment based on religious and secular aims, I ultimately concluded that faith in the Pemakö mythology was the most prominent theme, especially because the Pemakö mythology could not be sustained without this element of conviction. This faith shaped believers' perspective and action, motivation and hope. I exemplified these concepts in my analysis of contemporary treatment of the environment by Pemaköba. In Chapter Six I considered different motivations for this behaviour, given that residents are mostly Tibetan Buddhists that necessarily embrace the merits of compassion because of the religion's basic tenets. I determined, then, that specific to the religious culture of Pemakö is this same faith in the region's ethereal power that guarantees salvation regardless of sin.

In Chapter Six, though, I also linked my assessment of Pemaköba behaviour to contemporary Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist dialogue. I showed first how environmentalism has set its sights on religious theory as a means to inform what is not only a scientific problem, but also a sociological issue. Environmentalism is seen primarily as a western invention in response to industrialist destruction of nature. Buddhist theory has gained popularity, in part due to western rejection of Abrahamic religious theory, and in part due to its apparent emphasis on the interconnectedness of all phenomena and the necessity of compassion to all living beings. Because my thesis focusses on Tibetan Buddhist thought, I then highlighted how compassion has become a significant part of the environmentalist rhetoric of prominent Tibetan Buddhist leaders such as the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa. These and other influential voices in the Tibetan Buddhist arena laud the benefit of compassion in attitude and action.

It is here, however, that I turned my focus to the complexities of compassion and the dangers of its oversimplification. I claimed, for example, that compassion is contextual, at times irrelevant to an environmental scenario and occasionally scientifically inappropriate.

These factors highlight the necessity of Buddhist compassion to be scrutinised in relation to the biological needs of an ecosystem. In other words, if compassion is a motivating factor in environmental activism, it should be appropriate to the ecological circumstances. My examination of the merits and faults of compassion as a generalised approach to environmentalism then led to my discussion of the myth of primitive ecological wisdom.

The myth of primitive ecological wisdom arose within a western environmentalist venue that had a romantic view of nature. Nature was to be valued for its inherent purity and beauty, an attitude that inspired environmentalists to turn to non-western cultures' religious beliefs for guidelines to the treatment of and integration with the landscape. Anthropocentric industrialism was seen to have no regard for the natural surroundings, yet non-western 'primitive' societies were thought to coexist more harmoniously with their landscape. I have demonstrated that the compassion that has frequently brought Buddhist thought to the forefront of environmentalist dialogue does not necessarily offer the optimal way to manage an ecosystem. Furthermore, as I have also shown through the example of Pemakö, treatment of the environment based on religious beliefs is not necessarily aimed at its conservation, but used for soteriological purposes instead. Moreover, I have suggested that the Pemakö religious culture relates to the environment through faith. This faith does not offer any guidelines for the beneficial treatment of the environment. On the contrary, if there is any truth to my conjecture about Pemaköba hunting, poaching and farming practices, this conviction in the said soteriological energy of the region assures the Tibetan Buddhist residents that they will be propelled towards complete Buddhahood regardless of any harm they may inflict on other sentient beings in the region.

In summary, the relationship between the religious culture and the natural environment in Pemakö does not point to any guidelines pertaining to the environmental conservation of the region. In Chapter Six, I do, however, suggest that because compassion is an integral part of

both the Tibetan Buddhist soteriological path and environmentalist dialogue, the faith in the region's sanctity could be complemented by the cultivation of compassion. Even though Tibetan Buddhists believe that Pemakö would not be affected by any transformation of the environment, I contended that the physical environment remains integral to both the religious culture as well as the well-being of current and future residents.

I ended Chapter Six, then, with a review of two conservation programmes aimed at the endangered snow leopard native to the Himalayan regions. Project Snow Leopard is an Indian government study of threats to the animal, and possible venues for its protection. Another project undertaken in China looks at the influence of Tibetan Buddhist monastic communities on hunting practices of lay followers. Given the top-down approach of Project Snow Leopard and the grassroots strategy of monastic efforts, I have suggested a combination approach to environmentalism in Pemakö. I concluded that it is not likely that religious thought would dictate larger government operations in Pemakö such as hydro-electric dam construction or trans-boundary infrastructure development – political interests in China and India are motivated by economic prosperity. Still, because the most immediate negative effect on the environment has occurred through the local populations, should they deem it necessary to conserve the natural heritage in Pemakö, a combination approach of government intervention and local religious influence could possibly integrate the faith of the local spiritual culture into a conservation programme based on both science and compassion. The Tibetans and Buddhism are deeply intertwined; I suggested, then, that perhaps a civic environmentalist strategy is an avenue for maintaining Pemakö's environmental equilibrium.

Nevertheless, research has shown that rural Tibetan Buddhist communities interpret Buddhist ideals differently, which reflects a certain flexibility in their application to interactions with nature. Although Tibetan Buddhism has undergone a 'green transition' because of assumptions made about its alleged ecological consciousness, I suggested that like

the ideals of civic environmentalism, Tibetan Buddhist communities would respond more readily to environmental issues if members could incorporate local knowledge of the environment as well as perceptions of Tibetan Buddhist ideals in conservation policy. This approach would perhaps be the most beneficial in Pemakö.

Contributions of This Study

The research that I have conducted for my thesis and the conclusions that I have drawn from the data have contributed to the field of Buddhist studies, and necessarily to the field of religious studies, in varied ways. I have indicated throughout the thesis the manner in which Tibetan Buddhists relate to the Pemakö environment. I also shed light on the possibility of their attitudes towards nature to inform regional environmental conservation. I have questioned the viability of the rhetoric of compassion in Tibetan Buddhist environmentalist dialogue, and compared this to the faith that seems to direct much worldly and religious activity in Pemakö as residents and pilgrims interact with their landscape.

In the data collection process during the course of this study, I have combined a historical and contemporary approach to understanding the spiritual relationship to nature in Pemakö. This has been a challenging endeavour, during which I have balanced scriptural analysis and ethnographic research in order to glean a common thread in attitudes towards the environment in Pemakö. I have turned to phenomenology of religion as an interpretive methodology to do so, which is also an example set for future research projects in the field of Buddhist studies.

Another contribution to the field of Buddhist studies is my translation and analysis of the *gter ma* text *Self-Liberation upon Hearing*. The text is perhaps not exceptional as far as guidebooks about Pemakö are concerned; however, supported by data from other similar scripture, it does offer a lens through which to examine the region's religious heritage. My

analysis sets the stage for further studies of primary literature pertaining to Pemakö in accordance with its soteriological objectives.

The ethnographic research I conducted with Pemakö pilgrims is a further addition to Buddhist studies. This fieldwork provided a viewpoint through which to better understand the experience of pilgrimage in hidden lands, as well as the interpretation of Tibetan Buddhist theory in the *sbas yul* narrative. My interviews allowed insight into the indelible faith placed in the legend of Padmasambhava; conversations echoed the power of this narrative over the ambitions of believers to achieve complete enlightenment. These data encourage an appreciation for the dynamics of pilgrimage, whether it be a four-day journey around a mountain *gnas*, or a five-minute circumambulation around a boulder deemed the former abode of an accomplished *yogin*.

This thesis also contributes to empirical studies of Pemakö. I provided a summary of the region's contemporary environmental circumstances and highlighted the most prevalent danger to its ecosystems. The synthesis on larger disruptions to the Pemakö's ecosystems fosters an overview for the confusing events surrounding hydro-electric dam construction and trans-boundary disputes. I also created a composite map of Pemakö based on empirical data and information presented in religious literature. This is the first complete map of Pemakö that includes the entire area surrounding its alleged centre around Medok.

Research Limitations and Challenges

The contributions of this study also highlight its limitations. Pemakö is notoriously difficult to investigate. Its geophysical and topographical characteristics alone defy the hardiest of field researchers. The region's vegetation creates an almost impassable web of trees, bush and vines. Within this jungle, thrive deadly snakes, carnivorous wildlife and rainfalls of leeches. Weather conditions permit exploration for only a few months out of the year. Travel is expensive and

arduous. In addition, Sino-Indian political tension induces the governments to restrict foreign tourism. Ethnographic research was therefore limited to formal interviews with Tibetan nationals in Nepal. The information they provided was a valuable support to my inquiry into the nature of the Tibetan Buddhist culture in Pemakö; nevertheless, I would have also appreciated the opportunity to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in the Pemakö region itself.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of scientific data. According to some of the available scientific research, it seems that Chinese government agencies and privatised Chinese companies have conducted many studies of the Namche Barwa Massif. These reports are not always made public, although some scholarly research does get published in Chinese language. Current data on Chinese dam construction is not accessible. Chinese intentions surrounding border area buildup are shrouded in mystery. Furthermore, there is still much research that the Indian government, academics and scientists could undertake in Pemakö. Indian media provide some information about technological events in lower Pemakö; however, these data are sometimes based only on speculation. As a result, although my study of Pemakö relies on a significant array of information, my research still allows for only a partial picture of the region's actual circumstances.

Areas of Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this doctoral thesis, I can recommend different areas of future research. For example, the Chinese government has recently opened the Namche Barwa Massif to its citizens. This should encourage more extensive fieldwork in the region, and permission to research will hopefully be extended to international scholars. Should the Chinese give permission to observe progress on the Motuo and Daduqia dams, other governments could benefit from China's engineering skills. In addition, because the Namche

Barwa Massif is so tectonically active, open research on the Earth's movements in the area could inform earthquake safety measures in other Himalayan countries like Bhutan or Nepal.

Because my composite map of Pemakö indicates that the territory extends eastward of the region's centre at Medok, studies could widen to include this area. I can envision exploration of the Pemakö religious culture in the northeastern area of the region. In-depth ethnographic research in the Upper Siang region and within Medok County could add to the social understanding of the hidden land phenomenon. In my travels through India, I learnt of Tibetan Buddhist scripture about Pemakö scattered among a few collectors around the world. In continued exploration of Tibetan Buddhist religious history, it could be an extended project to assemble as many of these documents as possible, translate them and add them to existing collections of Tibetan religious literature.

Final Thoughts on the Pemakö Mythology and Ecology

There is still much to be learnt from the story of Pemakö. This thesis has led me to explore my fundamental question about the effectiveness of Buddhist thought to current secular challenges in the world. It has also shown me that there is not one simple answer, such as compassion, to resolve the complexity of issues involved in, for example, environmental conservation. In my study of Pemakö, however, I have provided a unique window into the creation of a narrative that responded to contemporaneous secular concerns through religion. I have illustrated how circumstances can dictate the most important aspects of religious experience, such as faith as it appears in the Pemakö mythology. I have also shown that religious faith or compassion do not necessarily embrace a reverence for nature or concern for its conservation. Nevertheless, much like the historical development of the Pemakö mythology has demonstrated, religious thought evolves in accordance with its worldly circumstances. If this same trajectory continues in the future in Pemakö, the region will provide ample material for further investigations of the

contributions a religious culture has to make towards the ecological well-being within which it is located.

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Appendix A

Additional Primary Sources

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Appendix B

Interview Information Sheet – English

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project about Pemakö. First I would like to explain to you more about this research project. Please kindly take some time to read the following information or listen to the explanation I will give. If you have any questions, please ask me. You can then decide if you would like to participate.

I am a doctoral student at the University of Leeds in England. My research project is investigating the experiences of people that have conducted pilgrimage in Pemakö. I am inviting you to participate in an interview in order to tell me about your personal experiences in Pemakö. This interview will be recorded.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please tell me. If you decide during the interview that you no longer wish to participate, please tell me.

If you do agree to participate, I will ask you to give consent. You may do so by signing this sheet, or recording your consent at the beginning of the interview. Your actual name will not be used in this research.

The interview will take about an hour. I will ask you a few questions about your background and your experiences in Pemakö. I will then ask you to describe your personal experiences in Pemakö.

When the interview is finished, it will be translated from Tibetan into English if necessary, and then transcribed in English. The information from the recording of this interview will only be used for this research project. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. Your name will not be connected to this research.

Appendix C

Interview Information Sheet – Tibetan

བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ།

བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་གི་རིག་གཞུང་དང་འཁོར་ཡུག་དུ་ག་ནང་བཞུགས་ཆོས་ལུགས།

༄༅། བོད་ལ་ཐོས་ལུས་མང་པོ་ཡོད་རེད། བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་གི་ཐོས་ལུས་དེ་ས་ཆ་གསལ་ཆེན་པོ་རེད།
ཐོས་ལུས་འདི་རྒྱ་གར་དང་བོད་ཀྱི་ས་ཆ་མང་པོ་ཡོད་རེད།

བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་ས་ཆ་མང་པོ་ཡར་ལུང་གཙང་པོ་འབྲིས་ལ་ཡོད་ཅང་དེང་སང་སྲིད་དོན་གི་གནས་ཚུལ་དེ་མགོ་
རྒྱུ་ལོ་ཆགས་ཡོད་རེད། རྒྱ་གར་དང་རྒྱ་ནག་གི་གཞུང་དེ་ཆོས་ཡར་ལུང་གཙང་པོ་ལ་སློབ་གྲྭ་མང་པོ་
འཇུགས་སྐྱུན་བྱས་ཀྱི་ཡོད་རེད། བྱས་ཅང་བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་འཁོར་ཡུག་མ་ཟད། རིག་གཞུང་དང་ཆོས་ལུགས་ལ་
ཡང་ཉེན་ཀ་ཡོད་རེད།

དབྱིན་ཇིའི་ལུང་པའི་སློབ་གྲྭ་ཆེན་མོ་ལ་ང་མཁས་དབང་གི་སློབ་སྦྱོང་བྱེད་གི་ཡོད།
སློབ་སྦྱོང་འདི་བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་གི་སློབ་ལ་རེད། བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་གི་རིག་གཞུང་དུ་ག་ནང་བཞུགས།
བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་འཁོར་ཡུག་སྐྱུང་སློབ་གྲྭ་ལག་གི་ཐབས་ཤེས་བྱེད་གི་ཡོད།

དང་ལྷོད་རང་ལ་བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་གི་སློབ་ལ་དྲི་བ་ལ་ཤས་དྲི་ན་འགྲིགས་གི་རེད་པས།
ལྷོད་རང་བསྐྱོད་གོ་དོ་གི་སློབ་ལ་ཁང་མ་ཤེས་ན་ཡང་ལན་གཅིག་རྒྱབ་ན་དགའ་པོ་ཡོད་གི་རེད།

Appendix D

Participant Consent Form – English

Transcript I.D. _____

Title of research project: History, Culture and Religion in Pemakö

Name of researcher: Layne Mayard

Contact information: Hotel Norbu Sangpo, Boudha, Nepal

Date: May – September 2013

If you agree to participate, I will ask you to give written or verbal consent. If you would like to give written consent, you may do so by initialing this sheet. You will receive a copy of this consent.

If you prefer, I will read the following questions out loud to you, and you may answer verbally with yes or no for each one.

1. I confirm that I have read or heard read aloud, and understand the information sheet dated that explains the above research project. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. _____
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time from the project before its submission. _____
3. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials and I will remain anonymous. _____
4. I understand that the information from the recording of this interview will only be used for this research project. No other use will be made of them without my permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings. _____

Appendix E

Participant Consent Form – Tibetan

མཉམ་ཞུགས་བྱེད་པ་པོས་མོས་མཐུན་འགྲུབ་ཤོག་།

སྐྱ་ཡིག་མང་ :

ཉམས་ཞིབ་ལས་གཞི་འགོ་བརྗོད་ :- སང་མ་གོད་ཀྱི་ལོ་རྒྱུས་རིགས་གཞུང་དང་ཚོས་སྒོར།

ཉམས་ཞིབ་པ་ :- ལེ་ནི་མ་ཡང་།

འབྲེལ་བ་བྱེད་ས་ :- ཝོར་བུ་བཟང་པོ་མཚོན་ཁང་།

དུས་ཚོད་ :- ཕྱི་ཟླ་ལྷ་བ་ནས་དབུ་བ་བར།

- གལ་སྲིད་བྱེད་རང་འཚོ་མཉམ་ཞུགས་གནང་ཡིས་མོས་མཐུན་ཡོད་ན་ངས་ཡིག་ཐོག་ཡང་ན་ངག་ཐོག་ནས་བྱི་བ་དྲིས། གཞན་ཡིག་ཐོག་ནས་གནང་རྒྱུ་འོས་མཐུན་ཡོད་པ་ཚོར་གཤམ་གྱི་འགྲུབ་ཤོག་ནས་འགོ་མཚུགས་གནས་ཡིས་དང་བྱེད་རྒྱུ་ལས་འདིའི་འདྲ་དཔེ་ཞིག་སྤེལ།
- གལ་སྲིད་བྱེད་རྒྱུ་ལས་འདོད་པ་ཡོད་ན་ངས་གཤམ་གྱི་དྲི་བ་རྒྱུ་མཚོན་གསལ་དོད་པོས་ངང་ནས་སྐད་ལྟགས་ཐོག་སྒྲོགས་རྒྱུ་དང་རང་ཚོས་ངོས་ནས་ཡིན་དང་མིན་གྱི་ལན་སྤེལ་རོགས།

༡༽ ངས་གོང་གི་ཡི་གེ་རྒྱུ་ལས་ཐོག་ནས་དོན་ཉོགས་པ་མ་ཟད་ཉམས་ཞིབ་ལས་གཞི་འགོ་བརྗོད་པ་ལྟར་གནས་ཚུལ་རྒྱུ་ལས་གཞི་འགོ་བརྗོད་པ་བྱུང་། དེ་བཞིན་ང་ལ་ཉམས་ཞིབ་ལས་གཞི་འགོ་བརྗོད་པ་བྱེད་ཡིས་གོ་སྐབས་ཡོད་པ་མཐུན། ()

༢༽ ངའི་མཉམ་ཞུགས་བྱེད་པ་འདི་དུགས་སྐངས་ཡིན་པ་ངོས་འཛིན་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཡོད། དེར་བཞིན་ངས་ལས་གཞི་འགོ་བརྗོད་པ་ལྟར་ལམ་མཐུན་བར་དུ་ལས་ལའང་བྱི་ལུང་རྒྱག་མཚོག་པ་མཐུན། ()

༣༽ ངས་ང་རང་གི་མིང་འདི་ཉིད་ཉམས་ཞིབ་ལས་རིག་འདི་ཐོགས་འབྲེལ་བ་མི་བརྗོད་པའི་རེ་བ་དང་ང་རང་མིང་གསལ་མེད་པ་ལྟར་མཐུན་ཡོད། ()

༤༽ ཉམས་ཞིབ་ལས་བཞི་འདི་ཐོག་སྐྱེ་འདུག་ནང་གང་ཞོད་ཡོད་པའི་བཅར་འདྲི་གནས་ཚུལ་ལོ་ན་བེད་སྟོན་བྱེད་མཚོག་པས་ངས་ངོས་འཛིན་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཡོད། ལས་གཞི་གཞན་གྱི་ཐོག་ངས་ཚོག་མཚན་མེད་པར་སྤྱོད་པར་ལྟར་བཞིན་བཞིན་མི་ཚོགས་པ་མ་ཟད་དེ་བཞིན་ལས་གཞི་གཞན་གྱི་ལས་འཆར་འབྲུང་ལུངས་རྒྱུ་ལས་ཡང་འདྲེལ་ཞུགས་བྱེད་མི་ཚོགས། ()

Appendix F

Interview Record Sheet

Reference Information

1. Interviewee identification: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Birthplace: _____
4. Year of leaving Tibet: _____
5. Length of Interview: _____
6. Language: _____
7. Interviewer: Layne Mayard
8. Recorder: Layne Mayard

Interview procedure and questions

1. Review of interview information sheet
2. Verbal confirmation of participant consent form
3. Guiding Questions:
 - When were you in Pemakö?
 - How long were you in Pemakö?
 - What were some of the religious traditions that you remember about the area?
 - Can you describe the village where you were in Pemakö?
 - Can you describe some things about the plants and animals there?
 - Did you ever see the Yarlung Tsangpo River?
 - How did you practice Buddhism when you were there?

Appendix G

Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö

English Translation

- 2 – 5. To the Buddhas, the supreme, primordial guardian Samantabhadra and his consorts, to Vajrasattva, Amitābha and 'Pags mchog sbyan ras gzigs, the protector of sentient beings, I pay homage.
- 6 – 8. “During the degenerate era, when the convergence of the Five Degenerations is distinct, and Genghis Khan has appeared, all Tibetans will be living in a hell realm.
9. Due to my great compassion, I, Padmasambhava, will find their suffering unbearable.
- 10 – 11. Therefore, for their sake, I will reveal a hidden land, within which all things are completely extraordinary.
- 12 – 13. One can attain Buddhahood through the mere recollection of this Pure Land known as Joyful Pemakö.
14. There is no need to mention the benefit for the fortunate ones having a karmic connection.”
- 15 – 20. Then, the *ḍākinī* Ye shes mtsho gyal, the *mahāsiddha* 'Brog ben and the translator Vairotsana respectfully offered the nine-fold prostrations, placed before Padmasambhava a precious golden *maṇḍala* with the seven types of precious stones, and requested the following from him:
- 21 – 24. “Oh! Great *Vidyādhara* Padmasambhava, this holy being who will have the good fortune to open the door of the sacred Joyful Pemakö – in your benevolence [please tell us] from whence he shall come!
25. Who will be his companion?”
26. As such they asked in unison.
- 27 – 28. The great *Vidyādhara* Padmasambhava then responded as follows with delight:
- 29 – 30. “Ye shes mtsho gyal, *mahāsiddha* 'Brog ben, and so on, and all the fortunate ones who have gathered here – listen carefully!
- 31 – 32. The person who opens the sacred door to Joyful Pemakö will come from the eastern area of Khams. His name will be Dharma Ar.

33. Even in childhood he will already be free from delusion.
- 34 – 36. As a result of aspirations made in a previous life, in his last rebirth as Rig 'dzin rgod ldem, he will meet with a great being by the name of Kun dga.
37. They will be close from a young age.
- 38 – 39. Due to two of *māra*'s emanations, they will become the subject of all kinds of slander and gossip.
40. This will create disturbances in the Three Realms, through which they will aimlessly wander.
- 41 – 43. I myself, Padmasambhava, will emanate as one called *Vidyādhara* Bdud 'dul rdo rje, commonly known as Padma dwang chen rtsal.
44. Monks, he (*Vidyādhara* Bdud 'dul rdo rje) will open the door to the hidden Treasure found in the face of a salt rock mountain.
- 45 – 46. His supreme companion will be an emanation of Ye shes mtsho gyal. Her name will be Puṇye.
47. This *ḍākinī* will come from the sphere of unborn primordial wisdom.
- 48 – 49. She will come from the wrathful, secret Dags po lineage, within which I, Padmasambhava, have a special meditative role.
- 50 – 51. In regard to Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje: He is the principal Treasure revealer among all Treasure revealers.
52. I, Padmasambhava, am the heart treasure among the Holy Dharma.
53. He (Bdud 'dul rdo rje) is like the lion among clawed beasts.
54. He is like the Garuḍa among winged creatures.
55. He is like the *uḍumwara* vine of flowers among all flowers.
56. He is like the most potent among the supreme medicines.
57. He is like the wish-fulfilling jewel among all jewels.
58. In the sky, he is like the sun and the moon.
59. Tibet's happiness relies on this most fortunate being.
- 60 – 62. During the degenerate times, because of having succumbed to the power of temporal *vidyādharas*, people will lose their self-confidence.

- 63 – 64. Even though this fortunate person will have brought joy to the world, no one will acknowledge the potential benefits of his kindness.
65. They will abuse him like a dog and commit various acts of slander against him.
- 66 – 68. The one of spontaneous and miraculous birth sustains others' temporal and ultimate happiness with food, clothing and Dharma.
69. Those who are hypocritical, disreputable and solitary have broken their *samaya* vows.
70. Due to pride in their own accomplishments, they will be blind to his (Bdud 'dul rdo rje) good qualities.
- 71 – 72. They will become two-faced rivals, creating difficulties for the holy man with their malicious gossip.
73. Consequently, the swiftness of his Dharma activities, which are like sunbeams, will fade.
74. The Buddha's teachings are close to the western mountain.
- 75 – 77. Even though the 3,000 teachings of the Buddha will have been perfected in this world, those who have broken their *samaya* vows, and are like emanations of *vidyādhara*s, will be miserable and endure the various sufferings of the lower realms.
- 78 – 79. Their life force will be out of balance and their capacity to distinguish between good and evil will decrease.
- 80 – 82. The lion-faced deity and his consort, and the guardians of the *vidyādhara*s, will invoke the destruction of those who have broken their *samaya* vows. They will definitely be released.
- 83 – 85. When all the auspicious outer and inner conditions are present, Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje will open the sacred door to Joyful Pemakö.
- 86 – 89. Fortunate Son, at that time, the gods above, the *nāgas* below, the spirits of the middle realm, humans existing as form, ghosts without form, and so on, will begin to create obstacles for you.
90. Then mingle awareness and basic space and meditate vividly on me alone.
91. Rest in the all-embracing state that transcends ordinary mind.
92. There is no doubt that this will remove obstacles and reverse unfavourable conditions [to spiritual practice].

- 93 – 96.** I, Padmasambhava, will give a brief explanation of the inexpressible qualities and manner of abiding of the supreme Joyful Pemakö, which is inseparable from the western Pure Land.
- 97 – 100.** In the middle of all the sacred hidden lands, such as Ti se and Charitra, and so forth, there are hidden lands surrounding this famous and high-positioned place as follows:
- 101.** In the eastern direction is G.yag lung, the Valley of the Yaks; in the southern direction is 'Bras mo ljongs, the Valley of Fruition.
- 102.** In the western direction is Ariya, the Land of Noble Ones; in the northern direction is the Mkhan pa ljongs, the Valley of Adepts.
- 103.** In the southeast is Sba lcags shel ljongs, the Valley of Wood Iron and Crystal; in the southwest is 'Gro mo ljongs, the Valley of the Female Migrants.
- 104.** Brag gad ljongs, the Valley of Rocky Mountain Crevices, is in the northwest; Dga'bo ljongs, the Valley of Happiness, is in the northeast.
- 105 – 107.** The lotus light of the land of bliss shines in the four directions onto Mañjuśrī's five peaked mountains to the southeast, Mount Malaya to the south, Charitra to the west and the land of Ma yi kong lung to the north.
- 108 – 109.** In the middle of all these supreme places there is the [land] known as Pemakö.
- 110 – 111.** All the doors to the lower realms of *samsāra* will be closed to anyone whose ears hear this name.
- 112 – 113.** During the day, all of the mountains and valleys of these sacred places are filled with the light of rainbow rays.
- 114.** At night, they appear like a mass of fire.
- 115 – 116.** The snow-covered mountain peaks resemble a white snow lioness boasting of her splendour.
- 117 – 118.** The mountains below, surrounded by boulders, resemble a mighty tigress baring her fangs.
- 119 – 120.** The mountains below, surrounded by slate and fields, resemble a female leopard bounding about playfully.
- 121 – 122.** The mountains below, surrounded by forest, look like the abode of blissful gods.
- 123 – 125.** The natural, lower valleys adorned with excellent crops, grains and fruit resemble *dākas* and *dākinīs* dancing swiftly.

- 126 – 127. The green grass, forests and plants look like *srin mos* shaking their tangled hair.
128. The rocky mountains look as if they are raising weapons.
- 129 – 130. All the sounds of the rivers, and so forth, resemble the *mantras* of Padmasambhava and of wrathful and peaceful deities.
- 131 – 133. There are all kinds of birds made of cinnabar, gold, silver, turquoise, blue and conch shell.
- 134 – 135. Like the western Pure Land, there is no suffering of happiness or unhappiness.
- 136 – 138. Therefore, all beings, both male and female, abide in a state of perfect compassion, becoming like the Bo ta la Pure Land.
- 139 – 140. Because they attain the state of immortal *vidyādhara*s, it is like the blissful Padma 'od [Padmasambhava's palace on Copper Coloured Mountain].
- 141 – 142. Because the channels of insight have been opened, and the skills of wisdom and compassion have been cultivated, they become like the Five Mountain Peaks.
- 143 – 144. Those who have travelled there obtain the potential for physical and mental prowess, and resemble the supreme sacred place of Lcang lo can.
- 145 – 146. Having accomplished the non-transforming rainbow body, they are equal to the great Akaniṣṭa, the highest of the pure realms.
- 147 – 148. There are rainfalls of edible and drinkable sustenance, and delights to the heart's desire, so the enjoyment of this bliss is equivalent to that of the gods.
- 149 – 150. It is a sacred place where Buddhahood is obtainable in one life without the need for meditation, practices, and so forth.
151. There are 128 small valleys at its exterior.
152. It is a place of worldly, arrogant gods and spirits.
153. There are Treasures of the wrathful, razor-like *mantra* of Phutrika.
154. There within are fifty-eight small valleys.
155. These are sacred, supreme locations for the fifty-eight blazing *herukas*.
- 156 – 157. There are wrathful, potent *mantras* of the *herukas*, and in Phutrika there are innumerable profound *gter ma*.

- 158 – 159. Any fortunate ones who have been there will have pacified all obstacles and attained the supreme and common *siddhis*.
160. There within are forty-two large valleys.
161. These are the palaces of the forty-two supreme, peaceful deities.
- 162 – 164. Like me, the *Vidyādhara* Padmasambhava, and all the *vidyādhara*'s assemblies of *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs*, they (the peaceful deities) must give empowerments, audiences and transmissions.
165. The fortunate ones who have gone there will achieve the rainbow body.
166. This Joyful Pemakö resembles a lotus in bloom.
167. In the east there is the completely pure rainbow-coloured land.
168. The one who reveals it will be like me, the *Vidyādhara* Padmasambhava.
169. He will be known as the guru Rdo rje gangs chen mtsho.
170. There abide innumerable, magnificent palaces, meditation caves, and so on.
171. Likewise, in the south there is Dpal ldan mdzes ldan bkod, the Land Endowed with Beauty.
172. Its revealer will be Ratna gangs chen mtsho.
- 173 – 174. In the west is the Bde chen padma bkod legs, the Gift of Joyful Pemakö, whose revealer will be Padma gangs chen mtsho.
175. In the northeast is Rdzogs ldan las rabs bkod, the Pure Land of the Great Completion.
176. Its revealer will be Karma gangs chen mtsho.
177. Each teacher's individual palace and meditative caves can be found in each land.
178. There are myriad, wonderful assemblies of gods and profound *gter ma*.
- 179 – 180. The dimension of each land measures 250 hectares.
- 181 – 184. Kun gsal bkod chung, the Land of Complete Clarity, is in the southeast; Yon tan bkod chung, the Land of Excellent Qualities, is in the southwest; Sna tshogs bkod chung, the Land of Varieties, is in the northwest; Mngon bkod chung, the Land of Visible Activities, is in the northeast.
185. They each have the dimension of thirty-five hectares.

- 186.** In the centre is Rnam 'dag lhun grub, the Great Place of the Completely Pure Spontaneous Presence.
- 187.** The revealer of these places is Rnam snang gangs chen mtsho, an emanation of Padmasambhava himself.
- 188 – 189.** There is a crystal boulder, of which each side measures twenty bow-lengths.
- 190 – 191.** Twenty-five great hidden Treasures of the sacred Dharma lie there within, of which five are jewel Treasures.
- 192.** In the east is Glang lung, Elephant Valley, which resembles an elephant.
- 193.** The mountain there is made of pure crystal and silver.
- 194.** A hidden Treasure of five Dharma texts lies there within.
- 195.** In the southern direction there is a valley called Rin chen spungs, the Heap of Jewels.
- 196.** Ratna Mountain, and so on, is located there.
- 197 – 198.** Here eighteen profound Treasures are hidden, where merit, glory and wealth promote lineage transmissions.
- 199.** That snow mountain is made of gold, silver, copper and iron.
- 200.** There is a rocky mountain in the west called Rma bya mjing bsnol, the Arch of the Peacock's Neck.
- 201.** The valley there is called Rgya mjing lung pa, the Wide Neck Valley.
- 202 – 204.** Various types of consecrated ambrosia, countless collections of profound captivating activity and innumerable *ḍākinī* Dharma Treasures can be found there.
- 205 – 206.** All the rocky mountains of the northern direction look like blazing mountains with upraised weapons.
- 207.** This valley is called 'Jam pa lung, the Peaceful Valley.
- 208.** There are many hidden Treasures that are associated with wrathful guardian *mantras*.
- 209 – 210.** In the southeast there is Pañci forest, within which all types of medicinal Treasures are hidden.
- 211 – 212.** In the southwest in Gser nya 'khyil, the Valley of Swirling Goldfish, there are hidden Treasures of folk art.

- 213 – 214. There is a place in the northwest where millions of goddesses gather at a white rock that resembles a broad china bowl.
- 215 – 216. Here are all of my outer and inner tantric ritual substances of secret *mantra*.
217. In reference to the thirteen Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*:
- 218 – 219. There are relics around the size of an egg, which will preserve and promote the lineage.
220. In reference to Ye shes mtsho gyal: There is a silver vase filled with turquoise.
221. This silver vase has three levels and it is adorned with her crown turquoise jewel.
222. In the northeast is Rlung nag 'tshub 'gyur, the Valley of the Black Storm.
- 223 – 224. There are many Treasure places providing black magic as a means to defeat the heretics, causing them and the Mongolian troops to retreat.
225. It has the Treasure place of all profound, supreme salt.
- 226 – 228. There are amazing lakes of deep blue, white, yellow, red, green, and so forth, in that supreme, holy place.
229. Each one of these is surrounded by hundreds of large lakes of the same colour.
230. In the middle thereof, shaped like a king on his throne, sits a white rock.
- 231 – 233. On the throne of this white rock is a precious, wish-fulfilling supreme jewel, placed there by the Dharma King Indra Bhuti, who received it from the *nāga* land.
- 234 – 235. If supplicated with celebrations, prayers and offerings, one can attain the supreme and common *siddhis* and thereby fulfil all wishes.
236. To the south [of this rock] there is a vase filled with the water of everlasting life.
237. Whoever comes into contact with it will attain the *vidyādhara* of life.
238. All the mountains are made of gold, silver, copper and iron.
239. There are eight meditation caves where one can accomplish the supreme *siddhis*.
240. There are countless meditation caves where one can accomplish the common *siddhis*.

241. There is no doubt that at least one *siddhi* is attainable in each of these caves.
242. The whole area resembles an eight-petalled lotus.
243. It looks like there is a nine-spoked wheel in the sky above.
- 244 – 245. The land resembles an eight-petalled lotus representing the four continents and the four sub-continents.
246. The four cardinal petals are like the four continents.
247. The four sub-continents are located between the continents.
- 248 – 249. The Eight Auspicious Substances, the Seven Possessions of Universal Monarchs and the Eight Auspicious Symbols are clearly visible.
- 250 – 251. Therefore, since *yogīs* and *yogīnīs* can attain Buddhahood there without effort, [the region] is special.
- 252 – 255. [The region] is special because audiences are possible with Padmasambhava, *mahāsiddhas*, multitudes of *ḍākinīs*, Buddhas and assemblies of wrathful and peaceful deities.
- 256 – 258. [The region] is special because oceans of Buddhas and *bodhisattvas*, and Victorious Ones, great assemblies of *vidyādhara*s and *ḍākinīs* have blessed the area.
259. It is special because there are no summers or winters.
260. It is special because there is only clear light, no day or night.
- 261 – 262. Whoever eats of its supreme grass, which has miraculous qualities – [he] will be like an old man who once again becomes a young boy of sixteen.
- 263 – 265. Whoever eats of its supreme grass, which destroys all illusions – [he] will no longer think about food and drink and a meditative state will spontaneously arise [within him].
- 266 – 267. Whoever eats the supreme grass found in all of the grasslands – a variety of higher or lower Pure Lands will appear [to him].
268. There are hundreds of edible and potable plants.
269. There is a large variety of wild crops and fruit.
270. Some types of barley, rice and fruit are about the size of a horse's head.
271. Some types of wheat and barley grains are about the size of an apricot pit.
272. There are turnips and radishes about the size of one's lap.

- 273 – 274. One single wild, red potato root can satisfy the appetite of five people.
- 275 – 276. The so-called Damentra fruit can satisfy fifty-five people.
277. It needs no seasoning and has the supreme essence of nectar.
278. It has enough potency for the inheritance of the blissful deities.
- 279 – 280. Oh, my son the fortunate one, the great *Vidyādhara* Padma bdud 'dul!
- 281 – 282. You lead the fortunate ones and compassionately protect the humble who are without protection.
283. Come to a resolution regarding *khregs chod*, Cutting Through, which is the unwavering natural state.
- 284 – 286. Attain the state of *thod rgyal*, Direct Crossing Over, in which consciousness and false constructs are destroyed; this is the natural state that is beyond conception, embracing no thought and no phenomena, and the state of the Great Perfection, which is the unity of emptiness and clarity.
- 287 – 288. *Dākas* and *dākinīs* who have practised the Three *Cakras* Practice, become the *dākinī*'s children who inherit my emanation.
289. There are two kinds of clothing, one of wood and one of plants.
290. In the future, share these with others and you will share what is mine.
291. There are natural harvests and various fruits.
292. In the future, share these with others and you will share what is mine.
293. There are palm leaves to use for making houses and shelter.
294. In the future, share these with others and you will share what is mine.
- 295 – 297. The royal and Dharma conduct of *bodhicitta* and immeasurable compassion will lead all sentient beings to happiness, as if they had been summoned by a great drum.
298. Build eight monasteries in the eight heart lands as follows:
299. Zhi khro 'i lha khang, the Temple of Peaceful and Wrathful Deities, and Rig 'dzin kun 'dus lha khang, the Temple of the Unification of all the *vidyādharas*;
300. Dpa'bo bcu gsum, the Temple of the thirteen Warriors, and 'Chi med tshe lha khang, the Temple of the Deathless Deities;

- 301.** Bskal bzang lha khang, the Temple of the Eight Buddha Teachings, and Bka'a brgyad lha khang, the Temple of the Excellent Aeon.
- 302.** There is Rnam rgyal drag sngags lha khang, the Temple of Wrathful *Mantras* and Complete Triumph, and Sbyor sgröl lha khang, the Temple of Great Compassion.
- 303.** Build eight *stūpas* at the eight secret places.
- 304 – 305.** Build a temple for the three turquoise deity families at the door to the sacred place that looks like a pig and snake fighting.
- 306 – 307.** The ten-syllable *mantra* of Padmasambhava, its assembly and retinue, will repel the armies of Genghis Khan and benefit all of Tibet.
- 308 – 309.** Rdo rje gro lod, the unification of all peaceful and wrathful deities, is related to the deities of youthful life, who are of excellently accomplished *vajra* life.
- 310.** Continuously cherish the deity's (Rdo rje gro lod's) accomplishments as well as amendments and confession.
- 311.** Offer body and life for the benefit of others by cutting attachment to one's own benefit.
- 312 – 313.** In this worldly realm, human and domesticated animal disease, famine and war will be pacified.
- 314 – 316.** If it is possible to establish the power of speech among the masses, while endangering one's own life in order to benefit others, this will forcefully subdue the black guardian *māra*'s in the south.
- 317 – 318.** It (Pemakö) will become like the charnel ground called Ro thang nag po, the Black Place of Corpses, putting an end to the enemies of the Buddha's teachings.
- 319.** If there are doubts, Padmasambhava's strength will weaken.
- 320 – 321.** If the barbarians from Rgyal ljongs and Kong po escape to Pemakö, they will find happiness there.
- 322 – 324.** If fortunate beings from Spu bo, Lho tsa and Mdo khams run there, they will be freed from all sufferings and attain happiness.
- 325.** They will undoubtedly attain the level of the three *kāyas*.
- 326.** Each separate area is beautiful in appearance.
- 327 – 328.** I, the one of miraculous birth, will clear those paths obstructed by rivers and rocks.

329. There is no need to fear discomfort and challenges on these paths.
- 330 – 331. There are hundreds of springs endowed with eight limbs in this sacred land of Joyful Pemakö.
332. There are hundreds of different kinds of powerful plants.
333. There are hundreds of different kinds of nutritious fruit.
334. There are eight excellent, supreme flavours and various types of grains.
335. There are hundreds of powerful, supreme medicinal herbs.
336. There are hundreds of supreme fragrances.
- 337 – 338. Even if the sinful butcher goes to this place, he will become a king of the *mahāsiddhas* that have been liberated by means of their heart essence.
339. It is possible to attain physical liberation in the pure light body after staying there for six weeks.
- 340 – 341. A person visiting for the first time can reach the celestial realm without abandoning this illusory body.
342. A person visiting for a second time can attain the *sambhogakāya* of the intermediate state.
- 343 – 344. A person visiting subsequent times thereafter will achieve Buddhahood in the next life.
345. A person whose life is near the end will live another 100 or 1,000 years.
346. The elderly will regain their youth.
347. The chronically ill, with diseases like leprosy, will heal.
348. Clouded faculties will clear.
- 349 – 350. A person can attain Buddhahood in one single lifetime just by bringing the thought of this place to mind.
- 351 – 352. A person will not be reborn in the lower realms, but attain perfect Buddhahood just by prostrating seven times to this supreme, sacred place.
- 353 – 355. At the time of death, a person will be reborn [in a Pure Land] just by having taken seven steps towards this sacred place.
- 356 – 357. Fortunate beings born in that sacred place have benefited from previous aspirations so that they strive to attain perfect Buddhahood in one life.

358. Make aspirations for the flourishing of the Buddha's teachings.
359. Make aspirations for world peace.
360. Make aspirations for the happiness of all beings.
361. Make aspirations to repel the dangers of enemies and Genghis Khan.
362. There is no doubt that whatever the aspiration, it will be fulfilled.
- 363 – 364. As for me, Padmasambhava, I have spent three years and six months in this sacred place cultivating aspiration and *bodhicitta*.
365. Therefore, whoever goes there will attain perfect Buddhahood.
366. Non-virtuous obscurations accumulated for many aeons will most certainly be purified.
- 367 – 368. The native beasts and wild animals will accumulate merit by going to the shores of its grasslands and rivers.
369. Thus, they will have made clear footprints in the stones upon which they have tread.
- 370 – 371. All insects killed here during farming will attain the joyful celestial realm.
- 372 – 373. Even those who have broken their *samaya* vows, who are sinful and like dogs and pigs – if they have gone [to Pemakö], rainbows and the five types of relics will appear at the time of their death.
- 374 – 376. Unlike all other hidden lands, there is no need to speak of the fortunate ones, since even beings in the forms of insects attain Buddhahood.
- 377 – 378. In G.yag lung, the Valley of the Yaks, there are hundreds of people and animals, and there are shallow valleys of glorious fruit.
379. In Ariya ljongs, the Land of the Noble Ones, there are about 1,000 people and animals.
- 380 – 381. In Sba lcags shel ljongs, the Valley of Wood, Iron and Crystal, there are 5,000 [people and animals] and in Dro mo ljongs, there are 500.
382. In Mkhan pa ljongs, the Land of the Fragrant Ferns, there are 1,000.
383. In Spu bo phrag gad ljongs, the Land of Split Hairs, there are 300.
384. In Go bo ljongs, there are 100.

- 385 – 386.** Moreover, Rong mo gding, the Land of Omnipresent Female Confidence, Pad 'od ljong, the Land of Lotus Light, and Ljon lung, the Land of Trees, have fifty each.
- 387 – 388.** There are many minor hidden valleys that may be visible for one month, one year, and so on.
- 389.** I and my emanation will appear there at the right time and lead fortunate beings to the *vidyādhara bhūmis*.
- 390 – 392.** The appropriate material conditions already exist there, so there is no need to bring anything other than mules and donkeys.
- 393 – 396.** Fortunate beings should not bring companions such as families with bad omens, lepers, black widows, those who have broken their *samaya* vows, or their secret *mantra* vows, those who are enemies to monastics or those who worship destructive spirits.
- 397.** At that time, avoid holding grudges and creating odours that smell like something burnt.
- 398.** It is a supreme, sacred place where *siddhis* are bestowed upon fortunate ones.
- 399.** The unfortunate ones will have shortened lives.
- 400.** Anyone with devotion to the gurus will generate cognition of the *dharmakāya*.
- 401.** Secret *mantra samaya* vows should be cherished more than the love for life.
- 402 – 403.** All those who have no devotion to the Guru, are without realisations, have wrong perceptions and one-sided knowledge – they will definitely have shorter lifespans.
- 404 – 405.** Generate *bodhicitta* for the benefit of all sentient beings who were at one time your mother, and undergo hardships that risk your life.
- 406.** Meditate on empty appearances as being me in my wrathful form as Rdo rje gro lod.
- 407.** Visualise Padmasambhava at the crown of your head.
- 408.** Generate Gsang bdag seng sgrog at your heart centre.
- 409 – 410.** Whenever any happiness, suffering or bad karma arises, focus on them at the crown of your head, in front of you or at the centre of your heart.
- 411 – 412.** Make clear supplications and recite the heart *mantra* of Guru *Siddhi*.
- 413.** I will then appear vividly to you.

414. I will remove obstacles [to practice] and reveal various paths.
415. Do not discontinue the potent melody of supplications.
- 416 – 417. Ask me, Padmasambhava, the place of refuge, and I will be swifter with my compassion than other Buddhas.
418. You will see me in this life and purify the sufferings of the intermediate state.
419. Everyone’s hearts’ desires will be spontaneously fulfilled.
- 420 – 422. I myself, Padmasambhava, will have spent three years and six months in this supreme place called Joyful Pemakö, sealing it with my aspirations.
423. Therefore, no one will descend to the lower realms and [each person] will definitely attain Buddhahood.
- 424 – 425. When my emanation opens the door to this sacred place, he will be dressed in white like the unborn *dharmakāya*.
426. All his attendants and disciples will be wearing white robes.
- 427 – 428. Billowing clouds of *ḍākinīs* will float around his head, and his long locks will flow down like melted snow from a lotus.
- 429 – 430. Imposters in red who behave indiscriminately and brandish their cymbals are sure to come, causing a swift decline and life in hell.
431. Their lives will be shortened if they are insincere in their individual or group practice.
432. So, above all else, cherish good conduct and *samaya*.
433. The entrance [to Pemakö] will not be opened by those who follow the *vinaya*.
- 434 – 435. At the end times and at the transformation of boundaries, may the people and the land meet my emanation, my heart son [Bdud 'dul rdo rje].
436. Vajra *Samaya*!
437. Seal, seal, seal! Seal it as Treasure! Seal it as hidden! Seal it as profound! Seal it as secret!”
438. Discovered by someone like me, Bdud 'dul rdo rje padma dbang chen.
439. Discovered in Spu bo mdong chu Lake, which was Padmasambhava’s place of spiritual practice.

Appendix H

Self-Liberation upon Hearing: A Guidebook to the Joyful Land of Pemakö

Tibetan Text

༄༅ བད་ཚེན་པར་བཀོད་གྱི་གནས་ཡིག་ཐོས་པ་རང་གྲོལ་བཞུགས་སོ།

2. བཀོད་མའི་མགོན་མཚོག་ཀུན་བཟང་ཡབ་ཡུམ་དང་།
3. རྗེ་སེམས་དཔའ་རྒྱལ་བ་སྤང་མཐའ་ཡས།
4. འགྲོ་བའི་མགོན་པོ་འཕགས་མཚོག་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།
5. ཉག་ཅིག་དོན་གྱི་ལྷ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ལོ།
6. དུས་ངན་ཐ་མ་ལྔ་བདེ་རྩུབ་འགྱུར་དུས།
7. བོད་ཁམས་སྤྱི་འགྲོ་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀུན།
8. རིང་འདུར་ལྷགས་ནས་དམྱལ་ཐག་གཅོད་པའི་དུས།
9. པད་འགྱུར་བདག་གིས་ཐུགས་རྗེས་མ་བཟོད་ནས།
10. འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་དུ་སྤྲོས་ཡུལ་འདི་ལྟར་ཡོད།
11. ཀུན་གྱི་སྤྱན་མོང་མ་ཡིན་པ།

12. བདེ་ཆེན་པདྨ་བཀོད་ཅེས་རྒྱལ་བའི་ཞིང་།
13. སྐད་ཅིག་བྲན་པས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཐོབ་པའི་གནས་།
14. དེ་སྲིད་སྐལ་ལྷན་པོ་མོ་སྒྲོམ་ཅི་དགོས་།
15. ཞེས་གསུངས་པའི་ཚེ་།
16. རྒྱུ་ཡི་ཤེས་མཚོ་རྒྱལ་དང་།
17. ལྷུ་ཆེན་འབྲོག་བཞུགས་ལོ་རྒྱུ་རྣམས་གྲིས་ནི་།
18. ལྷུ་གུས་ཕྱག་ནི་དགུ་ཕྱགས་ཕུལ་།
19. རིན་ཆེན་གསེར་གྱི་མཚུལ་ལ་།
20. རྒྱ་སྐྱ་བདུན་བཀོད་ནས་འདི་སྐད་ལྷུས་།
21. ཨོ་མ་རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོ་པདྨ་ཐོད་ཕྱིར་ལགས་།
22. གནས་མཚོག་བདེ་ཆེན་པད་བཀོད་གྱི་།
23. གནས་སྒོ་འབྲུང་པའི་ལས་ཅན་ནི་།
24. སྐྱེས་བུ་དམ་པ་གང་ནས་འོང་།

25. ལས་ཅན་དེ་ཡི་གོ་གས་གང་ལགས།
26. ཞེས་མགིན་གཅིག་ཏུ་ཞུས་པའི་ཚེ།
27. རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོ་པདྨ་ཐོད་ཕྱེད་གིས།
28. དགུས་པའི་རྩལ་གྱིས་འདི་སྐད་གསུངས།
29. ལེགས་པར་གསོན་དང་མཚོ་རྒྱལ་འབྲོག་བན་སོགས།
30. འདིར་འདུས་སྐལ་ལྷན་ཕོ་མོ་ཀུན།
31. བདེ་ཆེན་པད་བཀོད་གནས་སྒོ་འབྱེད་པའི་སྐྱེས་བུ་ནི།
32. མདོ་ཁམས་ཤར་གྱི་ཕྱོགས་ནས་རྣམ་ཅམ་གྱི་མིང།
33. གྱིས་པའི་དུས་ནས་སྡོན་སྦྱངས་བག་ཆགས་སད།
34. ཆོ་སྡོན་སྡོན་ལམ་གནས་འབྲེལ་གྱིས།
35. རིག་འཛིན་གོད་གྱི་ལྷེམ་འཕུའི་སྐྱེ་བའི་མཐར།
36. ཀུན་དགའི་མཚན་འཛིན་སྐྱེས་ཆེན་གཅིག་དང་འཕྲད།
37. དེ་ཚེ་རྒྱུད་ནས་མཛེལ་དང་གོ་གས་བསྐྱུས་ཤིང།

38. དམ་ཉམས་བདུད་སྤྱལ་བྱུང་གིས་རྒྱུན་བྱས་ནས།

39. འབར་ཤ་སློ་སྤྱར་ཅལ་སློགས་སྤྲོ་ཚོགས་འོང།

40. ཁམས་གསུམ་འབྲུགས་ནས་ཕྱོགས་ཀུན་འབྲམས།

41. ཕད་འབྱུང་ང་ཉིད་དངོས་སྤྱང་སྤྱུ་མའི་གར།

42. རིག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོ་བདུད་འདུལ་རྩོུ་ཞེས།

43. པདྨ་དབང་ཆེན་ཅལ་དུ་བྲགས།

44. བན་རི་ཚ་བྲག་ངོས་ནས་གཏེར་སློ་འབྱེད།

45. ལས་ཅན་དེ་འགྲོགས་མཚན་ལྡན་ནི།

46. མཚོ་རྒྱལ་ཡོན་ཏན་ནམ་སྤྱལ་དུ་རྒྱུ་མིང།

47. རྒྱུ་མེད་ཡེ་ཤེས་དབྱིངས་ཀྱི་རྒྱུ་མ།

48. ང་ཡི་སྤྱལ་གནས་ཁྱད་པར་ཅན།

49. དུགས་རིགས་གསང་བ་གཉན་གྱི་མགུལ་ནས་འོང།

50. རིག་འཛིན་བདུད་འདུལ་རྩོུ་དེ་ཉིད་ནི།

51. གཏེར་སྟོན་ནང་ནས་གཏེར་སྟོང་ཡིན།
52. དམ་ཚེས་ནང་ནས་ང་ཉིད་སྟོང་གཏེར་ཡིན།
53. སྒྲིབ་ཆགས་ནང་ནས་སེང་ཚེན་ཡིན།
54. འདབ་ཆགས་ནང་ནས་ཁྱེད་ཚེན་ཡིན།
55. མི་ཉོག་ནང་ནས་ལྷ་དྲི་ལྷ་ར་ཡིན།
56. སྒྲིན་མཚོག་ནང་ནས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་ཡིན།
57. རོར་བུའི་ནང་ནས་ཡིད་བཞིན་དབང་རྒྱལ་ཡིན།
58. རམ་མཁའི་དགྲིལ་ནས་ཉི་ཟླ་ཡིན།
59. བོད་ཁམས་བདེ་སྐྱིད་ལས་ཅན་སྐྱེས་བུར་རགས།
60. དེ་ཚེ་སྐྱེ་འགྲོ་ལས་ངན་དབང་བཅོན་ནས།
61. སྐོ་བུར་བདུད་ཀྱི་དབང་སོང་ནས།
62. རང་གིས་རང་ཡིད་མི་ཚེས་དུས།
63. ལས་ཅན་སྐྱེས་བུས་འཇམ་གླིང་བདེ་བཞེད་ཀྱང་།

- 64. ཕན་རྒྱན་ཡོན་ཏན་མི་མཐོང་ཞིང་།
- 65. བྱི་བཞིན་སྤང་ནས་སློབ་སྤྲོད་སྤྲོ་ཚོགས་བཏབ་ཅེ་།
- 66. རང་འཁོར་བརྩམས་པའི་གང་ཟེག་གྲང་།
- 67. གནས་སྐབས་མཐར་ཐུག་བདེ་བའི་གནས་ཅེ་།
- 68. ལྷོ་གོས་ཚོས་ཀྱིས་པར་སྤྲོད་གྲང་།
- 69. ཁ་ཚོས་ཞེ་བྲམ་འབྲེལ་ཡུང་དམ་ཉམས་འགས་ཅེ་།
- 70. རང་དོན་ཁངས་ནས་ཡོན་ཏན་མི་མཐོང་ཞིང་།
- 71. རྒྱབ་བསྟན་དོ་གཉིས་ལབ་བཤད་ཀྱིས་ཅེ་།
- 72. ཐུགས་དགུགས་ངན་སྤྲོས་སྤྲོ་ཚོགས་བཏབ་ཅེ་།
- 73. འགོ་དོན་འཇུག་འདྲན་འགོ་དོན་ཉི་ཟེར་འགྲིབ་ཅེ་།
- 74. སངས་རྒྱས་བསྟན་པ་རུབ་རིར་ཉེ་།
- 75. དམ་ཉམས་བདུད་སྤྲུལ་དེ་ཚམས་ནི་།
- 76. སངས་རྒྱས་སུམ་སྤོང་བསྟན་པ་རྫོགས་གྲུར་གྲང་།

- 77. བདེ་མེད་ངན་འགྲོའི་སྤྱག་བསྐྱེད་སྣ་ཚོགས་སྤོང་།
- 78. ཚོ་འདིར་མི་རུང་སྣ་ཚོགས་པ།
- 79. ལེགས་ཉེས་སྤངས་འཛིན་མཁན་གྱི་རྗེས་གཙོད་དང་།
- 80. ལྷན་པར་བདུད་མགོན་སང་གཏོང་ཡབ་ཡུམ་ནི།
- 81. དམ་ཚིག་ཉམས་པའི་གཤེད་ཡིན་པས།
- 82. ལྷུང་བསྐྱེད་འདི་ལ་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད།
- 83. རིག་འཛིན་བདུད་འདུལ་དོ་རྗེ་ཡིས།
- 84. བདེ་ཆེན་པད་བཀོད་གནས་སློའ་འབྱེད་པ་ཡི།
- 85. ལྷི་ནང་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་བསྐྱིགས་པའི་ཚོ།
- 86. ལྷོང་ལྷ་འོག་གྲུ་བར་གྱི་ལྷ་མ་སྟེན།
- 87. གཟུགས་ཅན་མི་དང་གཟུགས་མེད་ལྷ་འདྲེ་སོགས།
- 88. དམ་ཉམས་བདུད་རིགས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀུན།
- 89. ལས་ཅན་བྱེད་པར་ཆད་སྣ་ཚོགས་བརྩམས།

90. དེ་ཚོ་དབྱིངས་རིག་བསྐྱེས་ལ་ང་ཉིད་ལྷུ་མ་མེད་བསྐྱོམ་མེད།

91. བྱུང་བ་དེ་ལ་སློབ་པ་ལ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ་ལོ།

92. བར་ཆད་རྒྱུན་པར་བསྐྱོད་པར་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད།

93. ལྷུ་བ་སྐྱོགས་བདེ་བ་ཅན་དང་དབྱེར་མེད་པའི།

94. བདེ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞུགས་པའི་མཚོན་གཞི།

95. བརྗོད་པར་མི་ལྷུ་མེད་པའི་ཡོན་ཏན་དང་།

96. ཆགས་ཚུལ་ལྟར་ཅམ་པར་འབྱུང་བའི་གཞི་བཞུགས་པའི།

97. ཉི་མེ་ལྷ་རི་ལྷ་ལ་སོགས་པའི།

98. བཞུགས་པའི་སྐྱེས་པའི་ལྷུ་བ་ལྷུ་བའི།

99. མངོན་པར་བརྗོད་ཅིང་མངོན་མཐོ་བའི།

100. བཞུགས་པའི་དེ་ལོར་སྐྱེས་པའི་ལྷུ་བ་ལྷུ་བའི།

101. ལྷུ་བ་སྐྱོགས་བཞུགས་པའི་སྐྱོགས་པའི་ལྷུ་བའི།

102. ལྷུ་བ་སྐྱོགས་ལྷུ་བ་སྐྱོགས་པའི་ལྷུ་བའི།

- 103. ཤར་ལྷོ་སྤྲ་ལྷགས་ཤེལ་ལྷོངས་ལྷོ་རྒྱབ་གྲོ་མོ་ལྷོངས།
- 104. རྒྱབ་བྱང་བྲག་གད་ལྷོངས་དང་བྱང་ཤར་དགའ་བོ་ལྷོངས།
- 105. བདེ་ཆེན་པད་འོད་ཤར་ལྷོ་རྒྱབ་བྱང་དུ།
- 106. ཤར་ལྷོ་རི་བོ་ཚེ་ལྷ་ལྷོ་ཕྱོགས་མ་ལ་ཡ།
- 107. རྒྱབ་ཕྱོགས་རྩ་རི་ཅ་དང་བྱང་ཕྱོགས་མ་ཡི་ཀོང་ལྷང་སོགས།
- 108. གནས་མཚོག་དེ་དག་ཀུན་གྱི་དབུས།
- 109. བདེ་ཆེན་པདྨ་བཀོད་ཅེས་གྱི།
- 110. འགོ་ཀུན་མཚན་འདི་ན་བས་ཐོས་པས་ཀྱང།
- 111. འཁོར་བ་ངན་སོང་གནས་ཀུན་སྒོ་ཁེགས་འགྱུར།
- 112. གནས་དེའི་རི་ལྷང་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀུན།
- 113. ཉིན་མོ་འཇམ་ཟེར་འོད་གྱིས་ཁེངས།
- 114. མཚན་མོ་མེ་ཡི་ཕུང་པོར་གྱུར།
- 115. རི་མགོ་ཐམས་ཅད་གངས་གྱིས་བསྐྱོར་བས་ན།

116. སྐྱོད་དཀར་མོ་འགྲིང་བ་དང་འདྲེ།
117. དེ་ལོག་གི་རི་ཐམས་ཅད་བྲག་གིས་བསྐྱོར་བས་ནུ།
118. ལྷག་མོ་ངར་བ་དང་འདྲེ།
119. དེ་ལོག་གི་རི་ཐམས་ཅད་རྩ་སྤང་གིས་བསྐྱོར་བས་ནུ།
120. གཟིག་མོ་མཚོང་འཇུག་བྱེད་པ་འདྲེ།
121. དེ་ལོག་རི་ཐམས་ཅད་ནགས་རིས་བསྐྱོར་བས་ནུ།
122. སྤྱོད་མོས་ཚལ་སོགས་བདེ་ཆེན་ལྷ་གནས་དང་འདྲེ།
123. དེ་ལོག་གཤིས་ཀྱང་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀུན།
124. ལོ་ལེགས་ཕྱི་ཉོག་ཤིང་འབྲས་ལེགས་བརྒྱན་པས།
125. དཔའ་བོ་དཔའ་མོས་གར་སྟབས་འབྲུག་པ་དང་འདྲེ།
126. ཕྱི་ཤིང་ནགས་ཚལ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀུན།
127. སྤྱིན་མོས་རལ་པ་གསིག་པ་དང་འདྲེ།
128. བྲག་རི་ཐམས་ཅད་མཚོན་ཆ་གཟིངས་པ་འདྲེ།

129. ལྷ་སོགས་འབྱུང་བའི་སྐྱ་སྐད་ཀྱི་ནུ།
130. ལྷ་རྩ་སྐྱོ་ཞི་ཐོའི་ལྷ་སྐྱ་སྐྱོགས་ལྷོགས་ལྷོ།
131. དེ་ནས་བྱ་རིགས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ནུ།
132. མཚལ་སོགས་གསེར་དངུལ་གཡུ་མཐིང་དང་།
133. རྩང་ལས་བྱུབ་པའི་བྱ་རིགས་དཔག་མེད་ཡོད་ལོ།
134. བདེ་དང་མི་བདེ་ལྷག་རྩ་མེད་པས་ནུ།
135. ལྷ་སྐྱོགས་བདེ་བ་ཅན་དང་མཉམ་ལྷོ།
136. དེ་སྐྱོར་སྐྱོ་འགྲོ་མོ་མོ་ཀྱི་ནུ།
137. རྩང་སོམས་སྐྱིང་རྩེ་ཚད་མེད་ངང་གནས་པས་ལྷོ།
138. རི་བོ་རྩ་ལ་དག་དང་མཉམ་ལྷོ།
139. འཆི་མེད་ཚོ་ཡི་རིག་འཛིན་བརྟེན་པས་ནུ།
140. བདེ་ཚེན་པརྩ་འོད་དང་མཉམ་ལྷོ།
141. རིག་པའི་རྩ་ཁ་འབྱེད་ཅིང་ཤེས་རབ་རྩ་ལ་སྐྱོད་པས་ལྷོ།

142. རི་བོ་ཚུ་ལྟ་དག་དང་མཉམ་མཁུགས།
143. དེར་ཕྱིན་མཐུ་སྟོབས་རྣམས་པའི་དབང་ཐོབ་པས།
144. གནས་མཚོགས་ལྟར་ལོ་ཅན་དང་མཉམ་མཁུགས།
145. དེར་ཕྱིན་འཕེ་མེད་འཇའ་སྐྱར་འགྲུབ་པས་ན།
146. འོག་མིན་ཚོས་གྱི་དབྱིངས་དང་མཉམ་མཁུགས།
147. བཟའ་བརྟུང་ལོངས་སྟོན་འདོད་དགུ་ཆར་འབབས་པས།
148. དགའ་བདེ་ལོངས་སྟོན་ལྟ་དང་མཉམ་མཁུགས།
149. སྒོམ་སྐྱབ་ལ་སོགས་ཅི་ཡང་མི་དགོས་པར།
150. ཚོ་གཅིག་སངས་རྒྱས་ཐོབ་པའི་གནས་མཚོགས་ཡིན།
151. ཕྱི་རུ་ལྷུང་ཕྱན་བརྒྱ་དང་ཅུ་བརྒྱད་ཡོད།
152. དེ་ནི་འཇིག་རྟེན་ལྷ་སྟོན་དེགས་པ་ཅན་གྱི་གནས་ཡིན་པས།
153. ལྡོག་རུ་བཀའ་གཉན་དག་སྐྱབས་སུ་གྱིའི་གཏེར་ཁ་ཡོད།
154. དེ་ནང་ལྷུང་ཕྱན་ལྟ་བུ་ཅུ་བརྒྱད་ཡོད།

155. འབར་བ་ཁྲག་འཕྱང་ལྲ་བཅུ་ཅུ་བརྒྱད་གནས་མཚོག་ཡིན།

156. དཔལ་ཆེན་གྲོ་བོ་བྲག་སྒྲགས་སོགས།

157. ཟབ་མེའི་གཉེར་ཁ་དཔག་མེད་ཡོད།

158. གནས་དེར་ཕྱིན་ཚད་སྐལ་ལྷན་པོ་མོ་ཀུན།

159. བར་ཆད་ཀུན་ཞི་མཚོག་སྲུན་དངོས་གྲུབ་ཐོབ།

160. དེའི་ནང་ལུང་ཆེན་བཞི་བཅུ་ཅུ་གཉིས་ཡོད།

161. དེ་ནི་ལྷ་མཚོག་ཞི་བ་བཞི་བཅུ་ཅུ་གཉིས་པོ་བྲང་ཡིན།

162. བདག་འདྲ་རིག་འཛིན་པ་སྒྲ་འབྱུང་གནས་དང།

163. རིག་འཛིན་མ་ཚོགས་དཔའ་བོ་མཁའ་འགྲོ་ཀུན།

164. དབང་བསྐྱར་ཞལ་མཇལ་ལུང་བསྐྱན་ཐོབ་པར་འགྱུར།

165. དེར་ཕྱིན་སྐལ་ལྷན་པོ་མོ་འོད་སྐྱར་འགྲུབ།

166. བདེ་ཆེན་པ་སྒྲ་བཞོད་ཅེས་པ་སྒྲ་ཁ་ཕྱིས་འདྲ།

167. ཤར་དུ་རྣམ་དག་འཇའ་ཚོན་བཞོད།

168. དེ་སྟོན་བདག་འདྲ་རིག་འཛིན་པད་འབྱུང་ནིཿ
169. སྟོན་པ་དོ་རྗེ་གངས་ཆེན་མཚོཿ
170. ཕོ་བྱང་སྐྱབ་ཕྱག་ལ་སོགས་ལ་མཚན་དཔག་མེད་བཞུགསཿ
171. དེ་བཞིན་ལྟོ་རུ་དཔལ་ལྡན་མཛེས་ལྡན་བཀོད་དངཿ
172. སྟོན་པ་རྒྱ་གངས་ཆེན་མཚོཿ
173. རུབ་རུ་བདེ་ཆེན་པརྗེ་བཀོད་ལེགས་དངཿ
174. སྟོན་པ་པརྗེ་གངས་ཆེན་མཚོཿ
175. བྱང་ཤར་རྗེ་གས་ལྡན་ལས་རབས་བཀོད་དངཿ
176. སྟོན་པ་ཀམ་གངས་ཆེན་མཚོཿ
177. དེ་དག་རྣམས་སུ་སྟོན་པ་རང་རང་གི་ཕོ་བྱང་རེ་དང་སྐྱབ་ཕྱག་རེཿ
178. ལ་མཚན་ལྷ་ཚོགས་ཟབ་གཏེར་དཔག་མེད་བཞུགསཿ
179. བཀོད་ཆེན་རྣམས་ཀྱི་རྒྱ་ཚད་ནིཿ
180. རྒྱང་གྲགས་ཉིས་བརྒྱ་ལྷ་བཅུ་རེཿ

- 181. ཤར་ལྗོ་ཀུན་གསལ་བཀོད་རྒྱུ་དང་།
- 182. ལྗོ་རྒྱལ་ཡོན་ཏན་བཀོད་རྒྱུ་དང་།
- 183. རྒྱལ་བྱང་སྣ་ཚོགས་བཀོད་རྒྱུ་དང་།
- 184. བྱང་ཤར་མངོན་སྲོད་བཀོད་རྒྱུ་ཡོད་ཅེས་།
- 185. དེ་རྣམས་རྒྱ་ཚད་རྒྱུང་བྲགས་སུ་མ་ཅུ་ཅ་ལྟ་ཡོད་ཅེས་།
- 186. དེ་ཀུན་དབུས་སུ་རྣམ་དག་ལྷན་གྱུར་བཀོད་ཆེན་ཡིན་ཅེས་།
- 187. ལྗོན་པ་པད་འབྱུང་རྣམ་སྣང་གངས་ཆེན་མཚོ་།
- 188. དེ་རྒྱལ་ཤེས་དཀར་པ་ལྟར་ནི་།
- 189. ལོགས་རེ་གཞུ་འདོམ་ཉི་ཤུའི་ཚད་ཙམ་ཡོད་ཅེས་།
- 190. དེ་རྒྱལ་པ་ཚོས་ཀྱི་གཏེར་ཆེན་ཉེར་ལྟ་ཡོད་ཅེས་།
- 191. རོར་གཏེར་ལྟ་ཡོད་ཅེས་།
- 192. ཤར་ལྗོགས་སྤང་ཆེན་འདྲ་བའི་སྤང་ལུང་ཞེས་ཅེས་།
- 193. སྤེ་དེ་ཤེས་དབུས་དག་ལས་གྲུབ་ཅེས་།

194. དེ་ན་ཚོས་གཏེར་ལྔ་ཡོད།
195. ལྷོ་ཕྱོགས་རིན་ཚེན་སྤངས་ལུང་ན།
196. རྒྱ་ལ་སོགས་རི་བོ་ཡོད།
197. དེ་ན་ཚོ་བསོད་དཔལ་འབྱོར་རིགས་བརྒྱད་སྟོལ་བྱེད་གྱི།
198. ཟབ་མེའི་གཏེར་ཁ་བཙོ་བརྒྱད་ཡོད།
199. རི་བོ་དེ་ནི་གསེར་དངུལ་ཟངས་དང་ལྷགས་ལས་གྲུབ།
200. ལྷུ་ཕྱོགས་གྲག་རི་མ་བྱ་མཇེང་བསྟོལ་བྱ་བ་ཡོད།
201. དེ་ལ་རྒྱ་མཇེང་ལུང་པ་ཟེར།
202. དེ་ན་བདུད་ཚི་ཚོས་སྤོན་སྤོན་ཚོགས་དང།
203. ཟབ་མེའི་དབང་གི་ལས་ཚོགས་དཔག་མེད་དང།
204. མཁའ་འབྲེའི་ཚོས་གཏེར་དཔག་མེད་ཡོད།
205. བྱང་ཕྱོགས་གྲག་རི་ཐམས་ཅད་ནི།
206. མེ་རི་འབར་དང་མཚོན་ཆ་གཟེངས་འདྲ་ཡོད།

- 207. འཇམ་པ་ལུང་ཞེས་བཟེང་།
- 208. བསྟན་སྲུང་བྲག་སྒྲགས་གཏེར་ཁ་དཔག་མེད་ཡོད་ཅེ།
- 209. བར་སྟོ་པ་ཕྱི་ནགས་ཚལ་ན་།
- 210. སྒྲན་རིགས་ཀུན་ཚང་གཏེར་ཁ་ཡོད་ཅེ།
- 211. ལྷོ་རྩལ་གསེར་ཉ་འབྲིལ་ལུང་དུ་།
- 212. བཟོ་རིགས་སྒྲ་ཚོགས་གཏེར་ཁ་ཡོད་ཅེ།
- 213. རྩལ་བྱང་ལྷ་མོ་བྱེ་བ་འདུས་པའི་གནས་ཅེ།
- 214. བྲག་དཀར་ཡོལ་བ་རྒྱང་འདྲ་རུ་།
- 215. བདག་འདྲ་རིག་འཛིན་པསྒྲ་ཡི་།
- 216. གསང་སྒྲགས་ཕྱི་ནང་སྒྲུབ་རྗེས་ཐམས་ཅད་དང་།
- 217. སངས་རྒྱས་དཔའ་བོ་བཅུ་གསུམ་གྱི་།
- 218. འཕེལ་གདུང་སྒྲོ་ང་ཅམ་གཅིག་ལ་།
- 219. མང་དུ་འཕེལ་བའི་རིང་བསྐེལ་དང་།

220. དདུལ་བུམ་གཡུ་ཡིས་བཀང་བའི་མཚོ་རྒྱལ་གྱི།
221. གཙུག་གཡུའི་ཁ་རྒྱན་བྱས་པ་དདུལ་བུམ་སུམ་བརྟེགས་ཡོད།
222. བྱང་ཤར་རྒྱང་ནག་འཕྲོབ་འགྲུར་ལུང་དུ།
223. སྐྱ་སྒྲིགས་ངན་སྒྲིགས་ཉོར་དམག་བསྐྱོག་ཐབས་སུ།
224. སྤང་བྱེད་ངན་སྒྲིགས་གཏེར་ཁ་དུ་མ་ཡོད།
225. ཟབ་ཀུན་བཅུད་མཚོག་ཚུ་ཡི་གཏེར་ཁ་ཡོད།
226. གནས་མཚོག་དེ་ན་ཤིན་ཏུ་ཡ་མཚན་གྱི།
227. མཚོ་ཚེན་མཐིང་ག་དཀར་པོ་སྒྲོན་པོ་དང་།
228. སེར་པོ་དམར་པོ་ལྗང་གུ་ལ་སོགས་པ།
229. རང་རང་མདོག་མཚུངས་མཚོ་ཚེན་བརྒྱ་རྩ་ས་བསྐྱེད།
230. དབུས་སུ་བྲག་དཀར་རྒྱལ་པོ་གདན་ལ་བཞུགས་འདྲ་ཡོད།
231. དེ་རུ་ཚོས་རྒྱལ་ཨིན་བྱུ་ཉིས་སྐྱ་ཡུལ་ནས།
232. གདན་བྲངས་ཡིད་བཞིན་ལོར་བུ་མཚོག།

233. རོར་བུ་དགོས་འདོད་ཀྱི་འབྱུང་བསམ་པ་ཀྱི་འབྱུང་བཞུགས།

234. མཚོད་ཚོགས་བཏང་ནས་གསོལ་བ་བཏབ་གྱུར་ན།

235. མཚོག་ཐུན་དངོས་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་ཅིང་བསམ་པ་འབྱུང།

236. དེའི་ལྷོ་ནས་འཆི་མེད་ཚེ་ལྷ་བུམ་གང་བཞུགས།

237. དེ་ལ་སྤྲུལ་རིག་ཚེ་ཡི་རིག་འཛིན་བརྟེན།

238. རི་བོ་ཐམས་ཅད་གསེར་དངུལ་དང་ཟངས་ལྷགས་ལས་གྲུབ་ཡོད།

239. མཚོག་གི་དངོས་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་བརྒྱུད་ཡོད།

240. ཐུན་མོང་གི་དངོས་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་པའི་སྐབས་སུ་དཔག་མེད་ཡོད།

241. གང་གི་ནང་དུ་སྤྱིན་ཀྱང་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཐོབ་པར་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད།

242. ས་ལ་པརྐ་འདབ་བརྒྱུད་ཚུལ་དུ་ཆགས།

243. གནམ་ལ་འཁོར་ལོ་ཕྱི་བས་དགའི་ཚུལ་དུ་ཡོད།

244. ས་ལ་པརྐ་འདབ་བརྒྱུད་ཚུལ་དུ་ཡོད་པ་ནི།

245. དཔེར་ན་གླིང་བཞི་གླིང་སྤན་གྱི་ཚུལ་དུ་ཡིན།

246. ཕྱོགས་ཀྱི་བཀོད་ཆེན་བཞི་ནི་གླིང་བཞི་ཡིན།
247. མཚམས་བཞི་བཀོད་རྒྱུང་བཞི་ནི་གླིང་ཕྱན་བཞི་འེ་ཚུལ་དུ་ཡོད།
248. བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྗེས་བརྒྱད་རྒྱལ་སྲིད་སྣ་བདུན་དང་།
249. བཀྲ་ཤིས་རྟགས་བརྒྱད་ལ་སོགས་གསལ་བར་ཡོད།
250. དེ་ཕྱིར་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ཕོ་མོ་ཀུན།
251. སྒོམ་སྐྱབ་མི་དགོས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཐོབ་པས་བྱུང་པར་འཕགས།
252. ཉིང་འཛོན་རང་ལྷགས་རྒྱུད་ལ་སྐྱེ་བས་བྱུང་པར་འཕགས།
253. བད་འབྱུང་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་མཁའ་འགོ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་།
254. རྒྱལ་བཞི་ཁྲིའི་སྣ་ཚོགས་དང་།
255. མངོན་སུམ་མཇལ་རྒྱ་ཡོད་པས་བྱུང་པར་འཕགས།
256. སངས་རྒྱས་བྱང་སེམས་རྒྱལ་བ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་དང་།
257. རིག་འཛོན་མཁའ་འགོ་རྒྱ་མཚོའི་ཚོགས་རྣམས་ཀྱིས།
258. མངོན་སུམ་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབས་པས་བྱུང་པར་འཕགས།

259. དབྱར་དགུན་བྱ་བའི་མིང་ཡང་མེད་པས་བྱད་པར་འཕགས།

260. ཉན་མཚན་གཉིས་མེད་གསལ་འོད་འབྲིགས་པས་བྱད་པར་འཕགས།

261. ལྷ་འཕུལ་ལྷན་པའི་ཙུ་མཚོག་སུས་ཟོས་པ།

262. སྐས་པོ་བཏུ་དུག་ལོ་ཚོད་ལྷ་བུར་གྱུར།

263. ཉན་མོངས་ཀུན་བཅོམ་ཙུ་མཚོག་སུས་ཟོས་པ།

264. བཟའ་བཏུང་ཉོགས་པ་ཡིད་ལ་མི་སྐྱེ་ཞིང་།

265. ཉིང་འཛོན་རང་ལྷགས་རྒྱད་ལ་སྐྱེ་བར་འགྱུར།

266. ཙུ་ཁ་ཀུན་ཙུ་མཚོག་སུས་ཟོས་པ།

267. མཐོ་དམན་ཞིང་ཁམས་སྐྱ་ཚོགས་མཐོང་བར་འགྱུར།

268. བཟའ་བཏུང་ཉན་པའི་ཤིང་ཐོག་བརྒྱ་ཙུ་ཡོད།

269. མ་རྩོས་ལོ་ཐོག་འབྲས་དུ་སྐྱ་ཚོགས་ཡོད།

270. རྐས་འབྲས་ཤིང་ཐོག་ཤེས་འགའ་ཏྟ་མགོ་ཚམ།

271. རྒོ་ནས་སོ་བའི་རིགས་ནི་ཁམ་ཚོག་ཚམ།

272. ཉུང་མ་ལ་ཕུག་མི་ཡིས་པང་རྒྱགས་ཚམས།
273. བློ་མ་དོག་པོ་གཅིག་གིས་ཀྱང་།
274. མི་མགོ་ལྲ་ཡི་ལྷོ་འཛོང་ངེས་པར་ཡོད།
275. ཤིང་ཐོག་ཏུ་མེན་ཏུ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཡིས།
276. མི་མགོ་ལྲ་ལྲའི་ལྷོ་འཛོངས་ཡོད།
277. ལྷ་སྒྲོལ་མི་དགོས་བདུད་རྩིའི་བཅུད་མཚོག་ལྡན།
278. བདེ་བ་ལྷ་ཡི་པ་འབབ་ལྷས་སྒྲོབས་ལྡན།
279. ཞེ་མ་ལས་ཅན་ང་ཡི་བྱ།
280. དུག་འཛིན་ཆེན་པོ་པརྩ་བདུད་འདུལ་གྱིས།
281. བཀང་བཟག་ལས་ལྡན་ཕོ་མོ་དེར་བྲིད་ལ།
282. ཉམ་རྒྱུང་རྒྱབས་མེད་ཐམས་ཅད་སྤིང་རྗེས་སྐྱོང་།
283. བཀས་ལུགས་གཡོ་མེད་བྲིགས་ཚོད་བཀྱན་ལ་ཕོབ།
284. ཤེས་ཉམས་རྩུན་ཕུག་ཤིག་ལ་ཐོད་ཀླལ་ངང་།

- 285. ལྷོ་ཟད་ཚོས་ཟད་ལུབ་རྒྱུ་ལྷོ་འདས་ངང་།
- 286. ལྷོང་གསལ་བྱར་རྫོགས་ཚེན་པོའི་ངང་ལ་ཞོག།
- 287. གནས་གསུམ་མཁའ་འགྲེའི་འབྲི་ཕོ་འབྲི་ཕོ་ཀུན་།
- 288. རྒྱུང་ནས་གསོས་ལ་ང་སྐྱལ་བུ་ཡི་ནོར་སྐལ་གྱིས་།
- 289. ལྷིང་རས་ལྷུ་མ་རས་རྣམ་པ་གཉིས་ཡོད་པས་།
- 290. མ་འོངས་ང་སྐྱལ་བུ་ཡི་གོས་སྐལ་གྱིས་།
- 291. མ་རྫོས་ལོ་ཏོག་ལྷིང་ཏོག་སྣ་ཚོགས་ཀུན་།
- 292. མ་འོངས་ང་སྐྱལ་བུ་ཡི་ཟས་སྐལ་གྱིས་།
- 293. ཏ་ལའི་ལོ་མས་ཁང་གུར་ཉན་ཡོད་པས་།
- 294. མ་འོངས་ང་སྐྱལ་བུ་ཡི་ཁང་སྐལ་གྱིས་།
- 295. བྱང་སེམས་སྡིང་རྗེ་ཚད་མེད་གྱི་།
- 296. རྒྱལ་བྱིམས་ཚོས་བྱིམས་ལུགས་གཉིས་རྩ་ཚེན་གྱིས་།
- 297. ལྷོ་འགྲོ་སེམས་ཅན་ཐམས་ཅད་བདེ་ལ་བཀོད་།

298. ས་སྒྲིང་བརྒྱད་ལ་གཙུག་ལག་ཁང་བརྒྱད་ནི།
299. རིག་འཛིན་ཀུན་འདུས་ཞི་བོའི་ལྷ་ཁང་དང་།
300. དཔའ་བོ་བཅུ་གསུམ་འཆི་མེད་ཆེའི་ལྷ་ཁང་དང་།
301. བསྐྱལ་བཟང་ལྷ་ཁང་བཀའ་བརྒྱད་ལྷ་ཁང་དང་།
302. ལྷགས་ཆེན་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་དྲག་ལྷགས་སྦྱོར་སྦྱོལ་ཁང་རྣམས་དང་།
303. ས་གནད་བརྒྱད་ལ་མཚོད་རྟེན་གནད་གཟེར་གདབ་།
304. གནས་སློལ་ལྷ་ཁང་ལྷ་ཁང་འཛིང་འདྲ་ལ།
305. གཡུ་ལྷ་རིགས་གསུམ་ལྷ་ཁང་བཞེངས་།
306. རིང་འདུར་དམག་བརྒྱུག་བོད་ཁམས་ཀུན་ལ་ཕན།
307. ལྷ་རྩ་སི་རྩི་ཡིག་བཅུ་ཚོགས་འཁོར་དང་།
308. ཞི་བོ་ཡོངས་འདུས་དོན་གྲོ་ལོད་དང་།
309. ལེགས་གྲུབ་དོན་ཆེ་ལྷ་གཞོན་ལྷ་ལ།
310. ལྷ་སྐྱབ་བསྐྱང་བཤགས་རྒྱན་མི་ཆད་པར་གཅེས།

311. རང་དོན་འཁྲི་ཆད་ལུས་སྲོག་གཞན་དོན་སྦྱིན།
312. འཇིག་རྟེན་ཁམས་འདིར་མི་ནད་སྤྱགས་ནད་དང་།
313. སྤྱག་བསྐལ་དུས་འབྲུགས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཞི་བར་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད།
314. ལུས་སྲོག་འབེན་བཅུགས་གཞན་དོན་སྦྱོང་བའི་ཚེ།
315. གནས་དེར་དཔུང་ཆེན་ཁས་བཙན་དབང་བཅུགས་ན།
316. བདུད་མགོན་ལྷོ་བཙན་ནག་པོ་བྲག་ཏུ་བསྐྱལ།
317. དུར་ཁྲོད་རོ་ཐང་ནག་པོ་ལྷ་བུར་འགྱུར།
318. བསྟན་དག་རུ་ཏུ་མ་ལུས་ཆམ་ལ་འབེབས།
319. འདི་ལ་ཐེ་ཚོམ་བྱང་ན་པད་འབྱུང་ཞན།
320. རྒྱ་འཇར་ཀོང་པོ་སློ་པ་ཀུན།
321. གནས་དེར་བྲོས་ན་བདེ་བ་ཐོབ།
322. སྤྱོད་ལྷོ་ཚ་མདོ་ཁམས་ཀྱི།
323. སྐལ་ལྷན་པོ་མོ་དེར་བྲོས་ན།

324. ལྷུག་བསྐལ་ཀུན་བལ་བདེ་ཐོབ་ཅིང་།

325. ལྷུག་སྐུམ་སར་ཕྱིན་ཐོ་ཚོམ་མེད་།

326. རང་རང་ས་བགོས་ལེགས་པར་ཡོད་།

327. ལམ་རྣམས་ལ་ཚུ་བྲག་གིས་བསྐྱམས་།

328. ང་སྐལ་སྐྱེས་བྱས་རིམ་པར་བཏོན་།

329. མི་བདེ་འབྲུགས་ཚེད་འོང་དོགས་མེད་།

330. བདེ་ཆེན་པད་བཀོད་གནས་འདི་རྩེ་།

331. ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་ལྷན་ཚུ་མིག་བརྒྱ་ཅུ་ཡོད་།

332. ངར་ལྷན་སྡོ་རིགས་བརྒྱ་ཅུ་ཡོད་།

333. བཅུད་ལྷན་ཤིང་ཉོག་བརྒྱ་ཅུ་ཡོད་།

334. རོ་མཚོག་བརྒྱད་དང་འབྲུ་རིགས་སྐྱ་ཚོགས་ཡོད་།

335. རྩུས་ལྷན་སྐྱེས་མཚོག་བརྒྱ་ཅུ་ཡོད་།

336. རྩི་ལྷན་སྐྱོས་མཚོག་བརྒྱ་ཅུ་ཡོད་།

337. གནས་དེར་འན་པ་སྒྲིག་ཅན་སྤྱིན་གྱུར་གྱང་།
338. ལྷོང་གྲོལ་གྲུབ་ཐོབ་རྒྱལ་པོར་འགྱུར་།
339. གནས་དེར་རྒྱ་དྲུག་སྤོང་ན་ཕུང་པོ་འོད་སྐྱར་གྲོལ་།
340. གནས་དེར་དང་པོ་སྤྱིན་རྣམས་ཀུན་།
341. ལྷུ་ལྷུས་མི་སྤང་མཁའ་སྤོང་གནས་སུ་གཤེགས་།
342. བར་དུ་སྤྱིན་རྣམས་བར་དོར་འོངས་སྐྱར་འགྱུབ་།
343. མ་འོངས་རྟིང་མ་སྤྱིན་རྣམས་ཀུན་།
344. ལྷེ་བ་རྟིང་མར་མངོན་པར་སངས་རྒྱས་འགྱུབ་།
345. ཚོ་ཟད་རྣམས་ཀྱང་ཚོ་ལོ་བརྒྱ་སྤོང་ཐུབ་པར་འགྱུར་རོ་།
346. སྐས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་གཞོན་ལྷུར་འགྱུར་རོ་།
347. མཛོ་དང་གཙོང་ནད་ཐམས་ཅད་ཞི་བར་འགྱུར་རོ་།
348. དབང་པོ་མི་གསལ་ཐམས་ཅད་གསལ་བར་འགྱུར་།
349. གནས་འདི་ཡིད་ལ་སྐྱད་ཅིག་བྲན་པས་ཀྱང་།

- 350. ཚོ་གཅིག་ཉིད་ལ་སངས་རྒྱལ་ཐོབ་པར་འགྱུར་རྟོ།
- 351. གནས་མཚོག་འདི་ལ་ཕུག་ལན་བདུན་འཚལ་བས།
- 352. ངན་སོང་དུ་མི་འགོ་ཞིང་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱལ་ཐོབ་པར་འགྱུར་རྟོ།
- 353. གནས་འདིའི་ཕྱོགས་སུ་གོམ་པ་བདུན་པོར་ན།
- 354. ནམ་འཆི་བའི་ཚོན་ཡང་།
- 355. གནས་དེར་སྐྱེ་ཞིང་སངས་རྒྱལ་པར་འགྱུར་རྟོ།
- 356. གནས་དེར་སྐལ་ལྷན་པོ་མོ་རྣམས་།
- 357. ཚོ་གཅིག་མངོན་སངས་རྒྱལ་པའི་སྣོན་ལམ་ཐོབ།
- 358. སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་པ་དར་བའི་སྣོན་ལམ་ཐོབ་ཅིག།
- 359. ཡང་སངས་རྒྱལ་ཁམས་བདེ་བའི་སྣོན་ལམ་ཐོབ་ཅིག།
- 360. སྐྱེ་འགོ་བདེ་ལེགས་འབྱུང་བའི་སྣོན་ལམ་ཐོབ་ཅིག།
- 361. དགྲ་བགོགས་ཇིང་འདྲར་བསྐྱོག་པའི་སྣོན་ལམ་ཐོབ་ཅིག།
- 362. སྣོན་ལམ་གང་བཏབ་འབྲུབ་པར་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད།

363. བདག་འདྲ་པར་འབྱུང་གནས་ནི།
364. གནས་འདིར་ལོ་གསུམ་ལྷ་དྲུག་འདུག་ནས་སློན་སེམས་ཀྱིས།
365. གནས་འདིར་སྤྱིན་ཚད་རྗེ་གས་སངས་རྒྱས་པར་འགྱུར།
366. དེ་སྤྱིར་བསྐྱལ་པར་བསགས་པའི་སྤྲིག་སྤྲིབ་དག་པར་ངེས།
367. གནས་འདིའི་དྲུ་འགྲོ་འདྲུགས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱང་།
368. ཚུ་རྒྱུ་ཁར་སྤྱིན་བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱིས།
369. གར་སོང་རྩོལ་ཞབས་རྗེས་གསལ་བར་ཡོད།
370. གནས་འདི་ལ་སོ་ནམས་ཚོ་ན་འབྱུ་སྤྱིན་འཆི་ཚད་ཀྱན།
371. བདེ་ཆེན་མཁའ་སྤྲོད་འགྲུབ་པར་འགྱུར།
372. དེ་སྤྱིན་དམ་ཉམས་སྤྲིག་ཅན་གྱི་ཕག་ཡིན་ཀྱང་རུང།
373. འཆི་ཚོ་འཇའ་རྒྱུག་གདུང་རིགས་རྣམ་ལུ་འབྱུང།
374. ལུས་ཀྱི་འབྱུ་སྤྱིན་རྣམས་ཀྱང་སངས་རྒྱས་འགྲུབ་པ་ལ།
375. གང་ཟག་སྐྱལ་ལུན་རྣམས་ལ་སློམ་ཅི་དགོས།

376. དེ་ནས་སྐྱེས་ཡུལ་གཞན་རྣམས་ལེ།

377. གཡག་གུ་ལུང་ནང་མི་དུད་བརྒྱ་སྤྱག་གཅིག་ལེ།

378. དཔལ་གྱི་འབྲས་གཤོང་འབྲམ་ཚོ་བཅུ་དུག་ཆགས་ལེ།

379. ལྷ་སྤྱོད་ས་སུ་སྤོང་སྤྱག་གཅིག་ལེ།

380. སྤྱ་ལྷགས་ཤེལ་སྤོང་ས་སྤོང་སྤྱག་ལེ།

381. ལྷོ་མོ་སྤོང་ས་སུ་བརྒྱ་སྤྱག་ལེ།

382. མཁན་པ་སྤོང་ས་སུ་སྤོང་སྤྱག་གཅིག་ལེ།

383. སྤྱ་བོ་སྤྱག་གད་སྤོང་ས་སུ་བརྒྱ་སྤྱག་གསུམ་ལེ།

384. ལྷོ་མོ་སྤོང་ས་སུ་བརྒྱ་སྤྱག་གཅིག་ལེ།

385. གཞན་ཡང་རོང་མོ་གདིང་དང་པད་འོད་སྤོང་སེ།

386. ལྷོ་ན་ལུང་རྣམས་ལ་ལྷ་བཅུ་རེ།

387. སྤྱས་པའི་ལུང་སྤྱན་མང་ཡོད་ཀྱང་།

388. ལོ་ཐུབ་རྒྱ་ཐུབ་ལ་སོགས་མང་རབ་ཡོད་ལེ།

389. རྟམ་ལ་བབས་ཚོང་སྐྱལ་རིམ་བཞིན་འབྱུང་ཅེ།
390. སྐྱལ་ལྡན་པོ་མོ་རིག་འཛོལ་ས་ལ་འགོད་ཅེ།
391. མཐུན་རྒྱན་ལོངས་ ོད་ཚོར་རྫས་ནི་ཅེ།
392. བོང་དྲིའུ་མ་གཏོགས་སྣ་ཚོགས་བྱིར་ཅེ།
393. མཉམ་འགྲོགས་སྐྱལ་ལྡན་པོ་མོ་ནི་ཅེ།
394. མི་ནལ་མཛོ་པོ་ཡུག་ས་དང་ཅེ།
395. གསང་སྒྲགས་དམ་ཉམས་སྣོམ་ཤོར་དང་ཅེ།
396. བན་དགྲ་འགོང་པོའི་རིགས་རྣམས་ཁྲིད་མི་རུང་ཅེ།
397. དེ་རྟམ་འཁོན་དང་ཐབ་གཞོབ་ཤིན་ཏུ་འཛོམ་ཅེ།
398. སྐྱལ་ཡོད་དངོས་གྲུབ་སྟེར་བའི་གནས་མཚོག་ཡིན་ཅེ།
399. སྐྱལ་མིད་ཚོ་སློག་ངེས་པར་བསྐྱུང་བར་འགྱུར་ཅེ།
400. རྒྱ་མ་ལ་གྲུས་ཚོས་སྐྱའི་འདུ་ཤེས་བསྐྱེད་ཅེ།
401. གསང་སྒྲགས་དམ་ཚོག་མི་སློག་སྟིང་ལས་གཅེས་ཅེ།

402. རྒྱ་མར་མི་གྲུས་མ་རྟོགས་ལོག་རྟོག་སྤོགས་རྟོགས་ཀྱིན།

403. ཚོ་སློག་སྦྱར་བསྐྱར་ཐེ་ཚོམ་མེད།

404. མ་གཞན་སེམས་ཅན་དོན་དུ་སློབ་བསྐྱེད་ལ།

405. ལྷུས་སློག་འབེན་བཅུགས་དཀའ་བ་སློབ་ཏུ།

406. རང་ཉིད་དོན་གྱི་ལོད་སྤང་སློབ་བསྐྱོམ།

407. འོ་བོར་པར་འབྱུང་གནས་བསྐྱོམ།

408. ལྷིང་གར་གསང་བདག་སེང་སློག་བསྐྱེད།

409. ལྷིང་རུང་སྦྱག་རུང་ལས་ངན་ཅི་བྱུང་ཡང།

410. འོ་བོའི་གཙུག་གམ་མདུན་ནམ་ལྷིང་དབུས་བསྐྱོམ།

411. ངག་ནས་གསོལ་བ་སྤྱང་སྤྱང་ཐོབ།

412. ལྷིང་པོ་གྲུ་རྩི་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད།

413. དེ་ཚོར་ཉིད་སྦྱུང་མེད་ལོང།

414. བར་ཆད་སེལ་ཞིང་ལམ་སྤྱོད་སྤྱོད།

415. གསོལ་འདེབས་གདུང་དབྱངས་རྒྱན་མ་ཆད།
416. རྒྱབས་གནས་པད་འབྱུང་བདག་ལ་ལུས།
417. སངས་རྒྱས་གཞན་ལས་བདག་ཉིད་ཐུགས་རྗེ་སྤྱད།
418. ཚོ་འདིར་ཞལ་མཇལ་བར་དོའི་སྤྲུག་བསྐྱེད་སེལ།
419. རང་རང་ཅི་འདོད་འདོད་དགུ་ལྷན་གྲུབ་འགྱུར།
420. བདེ་ཆེན་པལླ་བཀོད་མཚོག་དེར།
421. བདག་འདྲ་རིག་འཛིན་པད་འབྱུང་ཉིད།
422. ལོ་གསུམ་རྒྱ་རྒྱུག་བར་དུ་བསྐྱེད་ནས་སྤོན་ལམ་རྒྱས་བཏབ་མཐུས།
423. ངན་སོང་མེད་ཅིང་སངས་རྒྱས་ཐོབ་པར་དེས།
424. ང་སྤྱལ་བུ་ཡིས་གནས་སློའ་འབྱེད་པའི་ཚེ།
425. རྒྱན་ཆས་ཚོས་སྤྱ་སྤྱི་མེད་དཀར་ཆས་ཀྱིས།
426. འཁོར་སློབ་ཐམས་ཅད་དཀར་ཆས་ལ།
427. དབུ་ལ་རྒྱུ་སྤྱིན་ཕུང་དང།

428. པ་རྒྱའི་གངས་ལྷ་ལྷ་བ་ཆེན་བསྐྱེད།

429. ལྷ་མིན་ལྷ་འདྲ་དམར་པོ་ཆ་ལང་སོགས།

430. ཡ་ཟུང་སྤྱོད་པ་ཆལ་ཆོལ་ན།

431. ཆོ་སྤོག་སྤྱུང་དུ་བསྐྱུང་བ་ངེས་པར་འོང།

432. ར་ལམ་དམ་ཚིག་གཙོ་བོར་གཅེས།

433. འདུལ་གྲིམས་རབ་བྱུང་ཅན་གྱིས་སྒོ་མི་འབྱེད།

434. དུས་ངན་རྩལ་འགྱུར་མཐའ་ལ་བྱུག་པའི་དུས།

435. ང་སྤྱལ་སྤིང་གི་བྱ་དང་འཕྲད་པར་ཤོག།

436. བརྗོ་ས་མ་ཡ།

437. རྒྱ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ། གཏེར་རྒྱ། སྤྲས་རྒྱ། ཟབ་རྒྱ། གསང་རྒྱ།

438. བདག་འདྲ་བདུད་འདུལ་བསྐྱེད་དབང་ཆེན་གྱིས།

439. ལྷ་རྩའི་སྤྱོད་གནས་སྤྱོད་མདོང་རྩལ་གདན་དངས་པའོ།

Appendix I

Glossary and Pronunciation Guide

General Terminology Tibetan / Sanskrit / Pāli

Wylie Transliteration	English Pronunciation	Sanskrit	Pāli	English Equivalent
bden pa gnyis	denpa nyi	-	-	Two Truths
blo rigs	lorig	-	-	mind and reasoning
byang gter	changter	-	-	Northern Treasure
dag snang	dagnang	-	-	Pure Vision
dbang bskur	wangkur	-	-	initiation
dgon pa	gompa	-	-	monastery
don dam bden pa	döndam denpa	-	-	ultimate truth
dus kyi snyigs ma	düki nyigma	-	-	material degeneration
gnas	né	-	-	abode of a deity
gnas chu	néchu	-	-	water abode of a deity
gnas ri	néri	-	-	mountain abode of a deity
gnas srung	nérung	-	-	protective deity
gnas yig	néyig	-	-	place letter
gongs gter	gongter	-	-	mind treasure
gter ma	terma	-	-	treasure text
gter shad	tershé	-	-	punctuation mark
gter ston	tertön	-	-	treasure revealer
gtso sems	tsosem	-	-	passive main mind
'ja 'lus	jalü	-	-	rainbow body
ka dag	kadag	-	-	primordial purity
khregs chod	thekchö	-	-	practice of Cutting Through
kun rdzob bden pa	kündzob denpa	-	-	conventional truth
lam yig	lamyig	-	-	path letter
lha khang	lakhang	-	-	temple
lhun grup	lundrup	-	-	spontaneous presence
lta ba'i snyigs ma	tawé nyigma	-	-	degeneration of monastic virtue
ma rig pa	ma rigpa	-	-	ignorance
mchod-yon	chö-yön	-	-	priest-patron
nyams kyi snyigs ma	nyamki nyigma	-	-	human physical degeneration

nyon mongs kyi snyigs ma	nyönmong ki nyigma	-	-	impurity of afflictive emotions
phur ba	phurba	-	-	ritual dagger
phyag 'tsal	chagtsel	-	-	prostration
ri	ri	-	-	mountain
rig pa	rigpa	-	-	pure awareness
rnam dak	namdak	-	-	primordial purity
sa dag	sadag	-	-	benevolent nature spirit
sa gter	sater	-	-	earth treasure
sbas yul	beyul	-	-	hidden land
sbyin sreg	chinreg	-	-	fire offering
sems chung	semchung	-	-	mental factor
skor ba	kora	-	-	circumambulation
slob dpon	lopön	-	-	religious teacher
smon lam	mönlam	-	-	prayer
sngags pa	ngagpa	-	-	tantric lay practitioner
snyigs ma lnga	nyigma nga	-	-	Five Degenerations
srin mo	sinmo	-	-	wrathful female deity
thod rgyal	thögyal	-	-	practice of crossing over
tshe'i snyigs ma	tshé nyigma	-	-	lifespan decrease
tshogs (kyi 'khor lo)	tshog (ki khorlo)	-	-	feast
yid kyi dam tshig	yidam	-	-	tutelary deity
zhal chem	zhelchem	-	-	testament
zhig po	zhigpo	-	-	crazy practitioner
-	-	Akaniṣṭa	-	heavenly Pure Realm
-	-	amṛta	-	nectar
-	-	arhat	arahant	foe destroyer
-	-	bodhicitta	-	aspiration to enlightenment
-	-	bodhisattva	-	aspirant to complete enlightenment
-	-	bhūmi	-	stage on the path to enlightenment
-	-	cakra	-	wheel
mkha' 'gro	khandro	ḍāka	-	male sky goer
mkha' 'gro ma	khandroma	ḍākinī	-	female sky goer
-	-	dharmakāya	-	truth body
-	-	Garuḍa	-	mythical winged being
-	-	heruka	-	wrathful being
-	-	kalpa	-	eon
-	-	mahāsiddha	-	tantric master
-	-	Mahāyāna	-	Great Vehicle
dkyil 'khor	kyil khor	maṇḍala	-	circle

sngags	ngag	mantra	-	religious recitation
-	-	māra	-	demon
phyag rgya	chagya	mudrā	-	hand gesture
-	-	nāga	-	snake being
sprul sku	tulku	nirmāṇakāya	-	emanation body
-	-	nirvāṇa	nibbāna	nirvana
-	-	parinirvāṇa	-	final passage into nirvana
-	-	pīṭha	-	seat
-	-	puṇye	-	virtue
-	-	rūpakāya	-	physical body
-	-	sādhana	-	prayer set
-	-	samaya	-	vow
-	-	sambhogakāya	-	enjoyment body
-	-	samsāra	-	samsara
-	-	samyaksaṃbuddha	-	perfectly enlightened buddha
-	-	siddhi	-	spiritual attainment
-	-	Śrāvakayāna	-	lower vehicle
mchod rten	chöden	stūpa	-	reliquary structure
-	-	sūtra	-	sermon
rgyud	gyü	tantra	-	tantra
-	-	udumwara	-	auspicious flower
rdo rje	dorjé	vajra	-	thunderbolt
rig 'dzin	rigdzin	Vidyādhara	-	keeper of knowledge
-	-	vinaya	-	monastic code
-	-	yogī / yogīnī	-	advanced Buddhist practitioner

Pronunciation Guide

Tibetan Proper Names

Wylie	English Pronunciation
A mdo	Amdo
Ariya ljongs	Ariyajong
Bde chen 'od gsal rdo rje	Dechen Ösel Dorjé
Bde chen padma bkod legs	Dechen Pemakö Leg
Bdud 'joms drag snags gling pa	Dudjom Drangak Lingpa
Bdud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje	Dudjom Jigdrel Yeshe Dorjé
Bka' brgyud	Kagyü
Bka'a brgyad lha khang	Kagyé Lakhang
Bon	Bön
Brag dkar bkra shis rdo rje 'i rdzong	Drakar Tashi Dorjé Dzong
Brag gad ljongs	Draké Jong
'Bras mo ljongs	Drémojong
'Bras spungs dgon pa	Drépfung Gönpa
'Brog ban khye 'u chung lo tsa ba	Drokpen Kyéuchung Lotsawa
Bsam gtan gling pa	Samten Lingpa
Bskal bzang lha khang	Kalsang Lakhang
Bsod nams rgya mtsho	Sönam Gyatso
Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho	Tenzin Gyatso
Byang gling btsan phyugs	Changling Tsenchuk
Byang thang	Chang Tang
'Chi med tshe lha khang	Chimé Tsé Lakhang
Chos dbang	Chöwang
Chos dbyins stobs ldan rdo rje	Chöchin Tobden Dorjé
Chos gling gar dbang 'chi med	Chöling Garwang Chimé
Chos rgyam drung pa	Chögyam Trungpa
Dag pa shel ri	Dakpa Shelri
Dags po	Dakpo
Dbus	Ü
Dga' ba lung gter ston	Gawalung Tertön
Dga' bo ljongs	Gawo Jong
Dge lugs	Gelug
Dngos grub rgyal mtshan	Ngöndrup Gyaltsen
Dngul phu	Ngulpu
Dpa'a bo bcu gsum	Pawo Chusum
Dpal gyi dbang phyug	Pelgyi Wangchuk
Dpal ldan mdzes ldan bkod	Pelden Zéden Kö
Drag snags gling pa	Dragngak Lingpa
'Dzam gling rdo rje rtsal	Dzamling Dorjé Tsal
Glang dar ma	Langdarma
Gnam ri slon mtshan	Namri Löntsen
Go bo ljongs	Gowo Jong
Gri gum btsan po	Drigum Tsenpo
'Gro mo ljongs	Dromo Jong
Grwa pa mngon shes	Drapa Ngönshé
Gser nya 'khyil	Sernya Kyil
Gter bdag gling pa	Terdak Lingpa
Gtsang	Tsang

Gtsang po	Tsangpo
Gu ru bkra shis	Guru Tashi
G.yag lung	Gyalung
'Jam dbyangs don grub	Jamyang Döndrup
'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros	Jamyang Chökyi Lodrö
'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas	Jamgön Khongtrül Lodrö Thayé
'Jam pa lung	Jampa Lung
Jo mo sman mo	Jomo Menmo
Jo wo pal lha	Jowo Pela
Karma gangs chen mtsho	Karma Gangchen Tso
Kha thog	Khathog
Khams	Kham
Khem ba lung	Khembalung
Khri srong lde btsan	Trisong Detsen
Kong po	Kongpo
Kun bzang 'od zer gar bang chi med rdo rje	Kunzang Öser Garwang Chimé Dorjé
Kun gsal bkod chung	Kunsal Köchung
Kun dga' rgya mtsho	Kunga Gyatso
Kyi rong	Kyirong
Lcang lo can	Jang Lochen
Lha bdan rgya mtsho'i blo gros	Laden Gyatsö Lodrö
Lha sa	Lhasa
Lhun grub steng	Lhundrup Teng
Ljon lung	Jönlung
Lo chen	Lochen
Ma gcig kun dga' bum	Machig Kunga Bum
Ma yi kong lung	Mayikong Lung
Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa	Chogyur Dechen Lingpa
Mgo log	Golok
Mkhan pa ljongs	Khenpajong
Mkhan po tshe ring rdo rje	Khenpo Tsering Dorjé
Mngon bkod chung	Ngönkö Chung
Mon pa	Mönpa
Mtsho phu nor bu bkod pa	Tsophu Norbu Köpa
Nam kha'i rnying po	Namkhai Nyingpo
Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho	Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso
Nge gsang don ngag byang chub rdo rje gling	Ngésang Döngag Changchub Dorjé Ling
Nyang	Nyang
O rgyan bstan 'dzin rin po che	Orgyen Tenzin Rinpoché
O rgyan gling pa	Orgyen Lingpa
O rgyan phug	Orgyen Phug
'Od dpag med	Ö pagmé
'Ol mo lung rings	Olmo Lungring
Pad bkod 'chi med rig 'dzin	Pekö Chimé Rigdzin
Pad 'od ljong	Peöjong
Padma bde chen gling pa	Pema Dechen Lingpa
Padma bkod	Pemakö
Padma bkod ba	Pemaköba
Padma gangs chen mtsho	Pema Gangchen Tso
Padma 'od	Pema Ö
Padma rdzong	Pema Dzong
Padma shal ri	Pema Shelri
Pe	Pé

'Phags pa	Pagpa
Ras chung pa	Réchungpa
Ras chung phug	Réchung Phuk
Rat na gling pa	Ratna Lingpa
Ratna gangs chen mtsho	Ratna Gangchen Tso
Rdo rje bdud 'joms	Dorjé Dudjom
Rdo rje gro lod	Dorjé Trolöd
Rdo rje gangs chen mtsho	Dorjé Gangchen Tso
Rdo rje phag mo	Dorjé Phagmo
Rdzogs chen	Dzogchen
Rdzogs chen padma rig 'dzin	Dzogchen Pema Rigdzin
Rdzogs ldan las rabs bkod	Dzogden Lerab Kö
Rgya la dpal ri	Gyala Pelri
Rgya mjing lung pa	Gyajing Lungpa
Rgyal ba mchog dbyangs	Gyalwa Chogchang
Rgyal ljongs	Gyaljong
Ri pa 'brug gsas	Ripa Drugsé
Ri Po ta la	Ripotala
Rig 'dzin	Rigdzin
Rig 'dzin Bdud 'dul rdo rje	Rigdzin Dödül Dorjé
Rig 'dzin Chos rje gling pa	Rigdzin Chöjé Lingpa
Rig 'dzin Klong gsal snying po	Rigdzin Longsel Nyingpo
Rig 'dzin kun 'dus lha khang	Rigdzin Kündü Lakang
Rig 'dzin Nus ldan rdo rje	Rigdzin Nüdan Dorjé
Rig 'dzin Rdo rje thogs med	Rigdzin Dorjé Thokmé
Rig 'dzin Rgod ldem	Rigdzin Godem
Rig 'dzin je btsun Snying po	Rigdzin Jetsün Nyingpo
Rin chen spungs pa	Rinchen Phungpa
Ris med	Rimé
Rje btsun Mi la ras pa	Jétsün Milarepa
Rlung nag 'tshub 'gyur	Lungnag Tsubgyur
Rma bya mjing bsnol	Macha Drangak Lakang
Rnam rgyal drag sngags lha khang	Namgyal Drangak Lakang
Rnam snang gangs chen mtsho	Namnang Gangchen Tso
Rnying ma	Nyingma
Ro thang nag po	Rothang Nakpo
Rong mo gding	Rongmo Ding
Rong shar	Rongshar
Sa skya	Sakya
Sang gyas gling pa	Sangyé Lingpa
Sangs rgyas bla ma	Sangyé Lama
Sangs rgyas ten pa	Sangyé Tenpa
Sangs rgyas ye shes	Sangyé Yeshé
Sba lcags shel ljongs	Barjag Shel Jong
Sbyor sgrol lha khang	Chordrol Lakang
Sde dge	Dergé
Se ra mkha' 'gro	Sera Khandro
Sga rje khams sprul rin po che	Garché Khamtrul Rinpoché
Sgam po pa o rgyan 'gro 'dul gling pa	Gampopa Orgyen Drodül Lingpa
She rab rgya mtsho	Sherab Gyatso
Sle lung bzhad pa'i rdo rje	Lelung Shébé Dorjé
Sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms	Nanam Dorjé Dudjom
Sna tshogs bkod chung	Natshog Köchung

Spo bo	Powo
Sprul sku O rgyan rin po che	Tulku Orgyen Rinpoche
Spu bo mdong chu	Puwo Dongchu
Spu bo phrag gad ljongs	Puwo Tragé Jong
Spyan ras gzigs	Chenrezig
Srong btsan sgampo	Songtsen Gampo
Stag sham nus ldan rdor rje	Tagsham Nüdan Dorjé
Ston pa gshen rab	Tönpa Shenrab
Thang stong rgyal po	Thangtong Gyalpo
Ti se	Tisé
Tsa ri	Tsari
Yang gsang	Yangsang
Yar klungs	Yarlung
Ye shes mtsho rgyal	Yeshé Tsogyal
Yon tan bkod chung	Yönten Köchung
Zhi khro'i lha khang	Zidrö Lakhang