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The Early History of Ganden Monastery and the Construction of the Geluk Tradition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
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by

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ABSTRACT

The Early History of Ganden Monastery and the Construction of the Geluk Tradition

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This dissertation is a study of the early history of Ganden (Dga' ldan) Monastery in Tibet and the ways in which that history impacted the construction of the Geluk (Dge lugs) tradition. Founded by the prominent Tibetan Buddhist monk Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419) in 1409, Ganden Monastery was the seat of Tsongkhapa's nascent Gelukpa sect, and of the Ganden Tripa (khri pa), the heads of the Geluk tradition. It is also the first of the "three seats" (*gdan sa gsum*) of the Geluk tradition, large and influential monasteries with extensive social, political, and economic power that became prestigious centers of education.

Despite its importance to both the broader history of Tibet and the development of the Geluk tradition, Ganden's early history has received little scholarly attention. Existing studies of Ganden Monastery are partial or treat it in passing. Existing studies of the Geluk tradition are heavily focused on its texts, doctrines, and institutions, leading scholars to characterize it solely as a clerical, rational, and bureaucratic tradition. This has distorted our understanding of its early history. As a corrective, the bulk of this dissertation focuses on the importance of charisma, prophecy, and pilgrimage to the growth of the tradition.

This dissertation is based on the translation and critical examination of classical Tibetan texts from a range of genres: broader political and religious histories, individual biographies, epistles, encomia, and monastic catalogs and pilgrimage guides particular to Ganden. Where useful, I also incorporate art historical evidence into my analyses.

One main focus is the influence of Lhodrak Drubchen Namkha Gyeltsen (Lho brag grub chen nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, 1326-1401), an important figure and *mahāsiddha* whose importance has been minimized in Gelukpa historical accounts. In chapter one, I describe his role in endorsing Tsongkhapa as his spiritual heir. The importance of charisma to earning patronage is common in tantric religious contexts and I also argue for the importance of charisma—or Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha*—to stimulating early patronage for the tradition. As an oracle, Lhodrak Drubchen also communicated important prophecies. In chapter two I examine the social context, function, and later adaptations of these prophecies. In chapter three, I examine a text from the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs (Mkha' 'gro snying thig) cycle of teachings within the Nyingma tradition of Dzogchen (Rdzogs chen) that was received from Lhodrak Drubchen by Tsongkhapa but adapted and excluded by Geluk editors.

The last two chapters describe Ganden Monastery as a pilgrimage site. In chapter four, I describe Ganden's charismatic beings and power objects. In chapter five, I describe Ganden as a numinous place. Contrary to popular explanations that describe the rise of the Gelukpa solely in terms of rational activities, I argue it was the popularization of Ganden as a pilgrimage site that played a major role in the growth of the tradition and the Tsongkhapa devotional cult.

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Introduction

In 1409, the prominent Tibetan monk Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357-1419, hereafter Tsongkhapa) established two institutions that would come to define religious life in Tibet for hundreds of years: the annual Great Prayer Festival (Smon lam chen mo) in Lhasa, and the monastery of Ganden (Dga' ldan), some forty kilometers northeast of the city. Celebrated annually to mark the Tibetan New Year, the Great Prayer Festival became one of Tibet's most popular festivals and was performed without fail for nearly six hundred years. Its inaugural celebration in 1409 is said to have attracted an unprecedented number of lay and monastic devotees to Lhasa.[1] Founded later that same year, Ganden Monastery was the seat of Tsongkhapa's nascent Gandenpa (and later Gelukpa [Dge lugs pa]) sect, and of the Ganden Tripa (Khri pa), the heads of the Geluk tradition. Its founding is a seminal moment in Asian history, as the Gelukpa—under their most famed figures, the Dalai Lamas—would come to form a wealthy and powerful "religious empire," controlling a vast "network of monasteries stretching from Ladakh to Lake Baikal, from Beijing to the Caspian Sea."[2]

It was at the conclusion of the first Great Prayer Festival that Tsongkhapa's disciples requested that he settle down in a monastery (either an existing one or a new one they would build). Tsongkhapa chose the mountain of Drok Riwoché ('Brog ri bo che) as the site of his

[1] According to Thupten Jinpa, various sources report that the course of the fifteen-day festival saw more than eight thousand monks and ten thousand laypeople gather; "never before had the holy city of Lhasa witnessed such a congregation of so many people at the same time." Thupten Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa: A Buddha in the Land of Snows* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2019), 243-49.

[2] Brenton Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire: Tibetan Buddhism, Bureaucracy, and the Rise of the Gelukpa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 1.

new monastery.[3] This mountain lent itself to Ganden's full name, Drok Riwoché Ganden Nampar Gyelwéling (Dga' ldan rnam par rgyal ba'i gling), abbreviated as Ganden Namgyeling, Riwo Ganden (Ri bo dga' ldan), or simply, Ganden Monastery (Dga' ldan dgon pa).[4] The alternate name Geden (Dge ldan) is frequently used as a substitute for Ganden.[5] It is because

[3] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Rje btsun bla ma tsong kha pa chen po'i ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i rnam par thar pa dad pa'i 'jug ngogs* (hereafter *Gateway to Faith*) (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995), 95. For more on the choice of this mountain, see chapter three.

[4] The term "Riwo" in Riwo Ganden is ambiguous. As one possibility, Thupten Jinpa suggests that Riwo Ganden is an alternate name for the mountain on which Ganden is located, stating: "Ever since the founding of Ganden on the slopes of [Wangkur Mountain], the mountain itself came to be known also as Geden Mountain and Tsongkhapa's followers 'those of Geden Mountain' (Riwo Gedenpa)." Thupten Jinpa, Rosemary Patton, and Dagpo Rimpoché, trans., *Stages of the Path and the Oral Transmission: Selected Teachings of the Geluk School* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2022), 1. However, Riwo Ganden could also be read as a simple abbreviation of Drok Riwoché Ganden Nampar Gyelwéling. The reading of Geden Mountain becomes less convincing when applied to the similar phrase "Riwo Gelukpa," as I'm unaware of any reference to a "Geluk Mountain." In addition, as Jinpa himself notes and as I discuss in chapter three, the mountain is generally not referred to as Ganden/Geden Mountain, but as Drok Ri (and variations) and Wangkur Ri. For more on the adaptation of "mountain" themes to Ganden as a monastic pilgrimage site, see chapter five of this dissertation.

[5] The provenance of the name Ganden (Sanskrit: Tuṣita) from a prophecy is discussed in chapter three of this dissertation. According to one Geluk historian, since the name Ganden was prophesied, and since the name Geden occurs in authoritative texts (such as colophons of Tsongkhapa's works and an authoritative biography of Tsongkhapa), both names are acceptable. Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, "Dga' ldan shar rtse nor gling grwa tshang gi chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan mdzes par byed pa'i legs bshad dpyad gsum rnam dag nor bu'i phra tshom" (hereafter *Shar rtse chos 'byung II*), in *Dga' ldan shar rtse'i chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan* (Mundgod, Karnataka: Dga' ldan shar rtse slob grwa, 2010), 148. For references to other authors suggesting the alternate names Gerluk (Sger lugs) or Galuk (Dga' lugs), see Sonam Tsering, "The Role of Texts in the Formation of the Geluk School in Tibet during the Mid-Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 2020), 5, n. 1. According to Tsering, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po, 1820-1892) asserts that the former name Galuk was changed to Geluk for reasons of euphony (*brjod bde ba*). A similar claim is made by Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima (Thu'u bkwan blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1737-1802), who asserts that "calling [Tsongkhapa's] tradition 'the system of the Ganden Dharma lord' (*chöjé gandenpai luk*) is based on his permanent residence there later in life. When people tried to pronounce the abbreviation of that phrase, Galuk, it was not easy to say, so it has consistently been called the Geluk." Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima, *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems: A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought*, ed. Roger R. Jackson, trans. Geshé Lhundub Sopa, E. Ann Chavez, and Roger R. Jackson (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2009), 215. A more striking version of this claim is made by Charles Bell, who asserts (without citation) that the name was changed from Galuk because that name "seemed to suggest the way of pleasure" (!). Charles Bell, *The Religion of Tibet* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 96. However, Sonam Tsering's assertion that Geden (and not Ganden) is the "original name" of the monastery is not accurate, as the prophecy bestowing the name of Ganden for Tsongkhapa's monastery-to-be is found in a text predating the founding of the monastery and Tsongkhapa's use of the term Geden.

they were based at Geden that Tsongkhapa's tradition was termed the "tradition of the Gedenpa" (*dge ldan pa'i lugs*), which was then shortened to "Riwo Gelukpa."[6]

By whatever name it is known, Ganden is greatly extolled by Geluk historians. As the first monastery of the Geluk tradition, it is considered "the sole mother-monastery of all Riwo Gedenpa monasteries in all regions of India, Tibet, China, Nepal, Mongolia, and so forth."[7] As Tsongkhapa's home for the last decade of his life, its main and prized hallmark (*rtsa chen khyad chos gtso bo*) is that Tsongkhapa wrote and taught many of his compositions there.[8] As the site of Tsongkhapa's teachings, Ganden is also described as "the birthplace of ten million scholar-adepts," as well as the "origin of benefit and happiness for all beings."[9] Lastly, because Ganden is where Tsongkhapa is said to have attained enlightenment at the time of his passing, it is said to be equivalent to Bodh Gayā, "a supreme abode worshipped by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, men, *gandharvas*, and so forth."[10]

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[6] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shar rtse chos 'byung II*, 148. A similar account is given by a recent pilgrimage guide to Ganden, which states: "In accord with the prophecy made by Lhodrak Khenchen Namkha Gyeltsen [Lho brag mkhan chen nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, 1326-1401], the seat was named 'Geden.' As a result, from that time all those who upheld the tradition of this seat were given the moniker "upholders of the tradition of Geden" (*dge ldan ring lugs 'dzin pa*)." Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gdan sa chen po dga' ldan rnam par rgyal ba' i gling gi gnas yig mdor bsdus pa = Gandan si jian zhi* (hereafter *Gnas yig mdor bsdus*), trans. Kezhuqunpei (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2012, 12. Notably, such emic explanations do not correspond with a common characterization of the term Geluk as a "System of Virtue," one "in accordance with its reformist orientation [i.e., a reformation of lapses in monastic ethics]." John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, revised edition (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 467.

[7] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shar rtse chos 'byung II*, 172.

[8] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gnas yig mdor bsdus*), 32. The author lists twenty such works. For an account of this period in Tsongkhapa's life and of some of the most notable works, see Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 257-312.

[9] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gnas yig mdor bsdus*, 18. Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 1.

[10] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, "Chos sde chen po dga' ldan gyi dkar chag" (hereafter "Dga' ldan gyi dkar chag") in *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (Mundgod, Karnataka: 'Bras spungs bkra shis sgo mang dpe mdzod khang, 2015), 30.

In more prosaic terms, Ganden's significance is that it is the seat of the Ganden Tripas, the heads of the Geluk tradition. These include the second and third Ganden Tripa, Gyeltsabjé Darma Rinchen (Rgyal tshab rje dar ma rin chen, 1364-1432, hereafter Gyeltsabjé) and Khedrubjé Gelek Pelsang (Mkhas grub rje dge legs dpal bzang, 1385-1438, hereafter Khedrubjé). Along with Tsongkhapa, these three comprise the *jéyabsé* (the "trinity of the Lord [Tsongkhapa] and his [two chief] spiritual sons" [*rje yab sras gsum*]), three founding fathers and towering figures for the Geluk tradition.[11] It is also the first of the "three seats" (*gdan sa gsum*) of the Geluk tradition, large and influential monasteries with extensive social, political, and economic power that became prestigious centers of education.[12] These three seats would go on to become the largest Buddhist monasteries in the world.[13] And as the site of Tsongkhapa's reliquary *stūpa* containing his bodily remains, Ganden became one of the most important sites of pilgrimage in Tibet.[14] It is as the site of Tsongkhapa's later activities and

[11] For a study of how this triumvirate took shape, see Elijah S. Ary, *Authorized Lives: Biography and the Early Formation of Geluk Identity* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2015).

[12] The other two seats are Drepung Monastery ('Bras spungs), founded in 1416 by Tsongkhapa's disciple Jamyang Chöjé Tashi Pelden ('Jam dbyangs chos rje bkra shis dpal ldan, 1379-1449), and Sera Monastery (Se ra), founded in 1419 by Tsongkhapa's disciple Jamchen Chöjé Shākya Yeshé (Byams chen chos rje shākya ye shes, 1354-1435).

[13] As Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee note, one source attests that in 1698 "Drepung had more than 4,200 monks, Sera about 2,800 monks, and Ganden about 1,100 monks." Furthermore, they note that although a "well-known oral tradition states that Drepung had 7,700 monks, Sera 5,500, and Ganden 3,300…these figures are quite old and do not reflect actual densa enrollments in the mid-twentieth century. By that time Drepung had over 10,000 monks on its rolls, Sera upward of 8,000, and Ganden about 5,000." José Ignacio Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee, *Sera Monastery* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2019) 9, 143.

[14] For instance, it has been described in the modern pilgrimage guide by Keith Dowman as the "principle place of pilgrimage" along the highway connecting Lhasa to eastern Tibet, "one every pilgrim to Lhasa must make." Keith Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide* (New Delhi: Timeless Books, 1996), 96.

charismatic presence that Ganden is best understood as "in some sense the spiritual home of the Geluk tradition."[15]

However, despite its importance to both the broader history of Tibet and the development of the Geluk tradition, Ganden's early history has received minimal scholarly attention. To my knowledge, there are no serious book-length studies of Ganden Monastery in any European language. As an attempt to fill this void, this dissertation is intended as a contribution to both our understanding of the early history of Ganden Monastery, and of how that early history contributed to the construction of the Geluk tradition.

Existing Studies of Ganden Monastery

In general, the early history of Ganden has been treated in brief, in passing, or in a fragmented fashion. Alexander Berzin and Serkong Tshenshap Rinpoche II's short article on Ganden Monastery is typical of brief treatments of the subject, one that simply lists its main features in a cursory fashion.[16] These include some relevant prophecies, the history of its founding, the institution of the Ganden Tripas, Ganden's subdivisions into colleges (*grwa tshang*) and regional houses (*khang*/*khams tshan*), its educational curriculum, and its annual ritual calendar. Also typical of this approach is John Powers' textbook presentation of the topic.[17]

[15] Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee, *Sera Monastery*, 192.

[16] Alexander Berzin and Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche II, "Gelug Monasteries: Ganden," *Study Buddhism*, 1991, https://studybuddhism.com/en/advanced-studies/history-culture/monasteries-in-tibet/gelug-monasteries-ganden.

[17] John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, revised edition (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 467-477.

There have been some noteworthy fragmentary studies of Ganden. One of these is Turrell Wylie's study of monastic patronage in the fifteenth century in Tibet.[18] Another is Guntram Hazod's study of Ganden Monastery as a potential site in the "Lhasa Maṇḍala," the "geomantic classification of the Lhasa valley…[marking] the outer boundary of a protective zone around the central shrine" of Lhasa.[19] A third is a series of informative articles on the "Old Ganden Print Editions" (Dga' ldan par rnying), the oldest print editions of Tsongkhapa's works.[20] I have relied on these articles to complement my study of Ganden.

It is also common for the early history of Ganden to be treated in passing. For instance, José Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee, David DiValerio, and Brenton Sullivan all devote a few pages to the topic before progressing to the main purpose of their respective works.[21] In a similar vein, authors of broader histories often describe the history of Ganden Monastery in passing, choosing to give more sustained attention to accounts of political upheaval, the activities of the Dalai Lamas, and the Ganden Podrang (Pho brang) government of the Dalai Lamas.[22]

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[18] Turrell V. Wylie, "Monastic Patronage in Fifteenth-Century Tibet," in *The Tibetan History Reader*, ed. Gray Tuttle and Kurtis R. Schaeffer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 266–77.

[19] Guntram Hazod, "The Ruins of LDan: Ancient Places in the Eastern Zone of the Lhasa Maṇḍala," *The Tibet Journal* 29, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 25.

[20] (1) David P. Jackson, "The Earliest Printings of Tsong-Kha-Pa's Works: The Old Dga'-Ldan Editions," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1990), 107–16. (2) David P. Jackson, "More on the Old DGa'-Ldan and Gong-Dkar-Ba Xylographic Editions.," *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions*, no. 2 (1989): 1–18. (3) Mathias Fermer, "Once More on the So-Called Old DGa' Ldan Editions of Tsong Kha Pa's Works," in *Gateways to Tibetan Studies: A Collection of Essays in Honour of David P. Jackson on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. Volker Caumanns et al., vol. One, Indian and Tibetan Studies; 12.1-2 (Hamburg: Department. of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universitat Hamburg, 2021), 253–99.

[21] Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee, *Sera Monastery*, 3-6. David M. DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen of Tibet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 121-27. Brenton Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire: Tibetan Buddhism, Bureaucracy, and the Rise of the Gelukpa* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021) 19-20.

[22] For instance, Giuseppe Tucci's classic treatment of the history of this time period omits any account of the founding of Ganden, whereas R.A. Stein devotes only one paragraph to it. Giuseppe Tucci, "The Historical Cultural and Religious Background," in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. one (Roma: Libreria dello Stato, 1949).

Taking Matthew Kapstein's *The Tibetans* as an example, a relatively brief discussion of Ganden is followed by a much longer chapter on the "Rule of the Dalai Lamas," as Ganden is commonly paid little attention to Ganden in the broader scale of Tibetan history.[23]

This mirrors the brief treatment of Ganden's history found in relevant English-language biographical works, in which the early history of Ganden is given cursory treatment.[24] Taking Robert Thurman's biography as an example, the early history of Ganden is described in seven pages and in a descriptive manner geared towards the edification of religious devotees.[25] In a similar vein, Cabezón's short biography of Khedrubjé and Janice Willis' biographies of six figures from the "Ganden Oral Tradition" (*snyan rgyud*) both make sporadic reference to

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R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, trans. J.E. Stapleton Driver (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1972), 82. In a similar vein, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* treats the early history of Ganden Monastery briefly as the preface to a broader section on "The Rise of the Ganden Government and its Bid for Cultural Hegemony." Kurtis R. Schaeffer, Matthew T. Kapstein, and Gray Tuttle, eds., *Sources of Tibetan Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 507-8.

[23] Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetans* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 120-74. The same pattern holds for Sam van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 104-45.

[24] Brief biographies of Tsongkhapa include: (a) Alexander Berzin and Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche II, "The Life of Tsongkhapa," Study Buddhism, accessed April 7, 2021, https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/spiritual-teachers/tsongkhapa/the-life-of-tsongkhapa; (b) Robert A.F. Thurman, ed., "A Short Biography," in *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, trans. Sherpa Tulku et al. (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 9-34; (c) Joona Repo, "Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa," The Treasury of Lives, accessed April 8, 2021, https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Tsongkhapa-Lobzang-Drakpa/8986; and (d) Sonam Rinchen, *The Three Principal Aspects of the Path: An Oral Teaching*, trans. Ruth Sonam (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2010). Extensive biographies of Tsongkhapa include: (a) Blo-bzaṅ-tshul-khrims and Rudolf Kaschewsky, *Das Leben Des Lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa Blo-Bzan-Grags-Pa (1357-1419), Dargestelt Und Erläutert Anhand Seiner Vita: Quellort Allen Glückes*, Asiatische ForschungenBd. 32, 2 v. (Wiesbaden: O. Harrassowitz, 1971); and (b) Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*. Biographies of Khedrubjé can be found in: (a) José Ignacio Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the STong Thun Chen Mo of MKhas Grub DGe Legs Dpal Bzang* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1993) and (b) Ary, *Authorized Lives*. The biographies of six figures in the "Ganden Oral Lineage" (Dga' ldan snyan rgyud): (1) Tokden Jampel Gyatso (Rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho, 1356-1428), (2) Baso Chöki Gyeltsen (Ba so chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1402-1473), (3) Drubchen Chöki Dorjé (Grub chen chos kyi rdo rje, d. u.), (4) Ensapa Losang Döndrub (Dben sa pa blo bzang don grub, 1505-1566), (5) Khedrub Sangyé Yeshé (Mkhas grub sangs rgyas ye shes, 1525-1591), and (6) Jetsun Losang Chöki Gyeltsen (Rje btsun blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1570-1662) can be found in Janice D. Willis, *Enlightened Beings: Life Stories from the Ganden Oral Tradition* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995).

[25] As Thurman writes, this biography is included "essentially to give the reader an idea of the many-sided marvel of the life of this great scholar, saint, and teacher-adept." Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 7.

Ganden, such as the time Khedrubjé received teachings from Tsongkhapa or the construction of a temple by the sixth Ganden Tripa there.[26] In general, these treatments are based on the translation or synthesis of Tibetan biographical works.[27] As a result, they mirror the focus of these works on the deeds of the "great men" involved.[28] In doing so, Ganden fades into the background as merely the setting for the deeds of these great men.

A similar focus is found in English-language translations of broader Tibetan historical works.[29] For instance, Thuken's wide-ranging survey of Tibetan religious and intellectual traditions couches its treatment of the history of Ganden within the intellectual history of the Geluk philosophical system. He briefly recounts the founding of Ganden, some relevant prophecies, and the origin of the tradition of wearing yellow hats. From then on, Ganden is only named when needed as the setting for the activity of an important Geluk figure.[30] And although biographies of the early Ganden Tripas are included, they are extremely concise, and their inclusion appears nominal and perfunctory. Their style is reminiscent of John McRae's characterization of Chan genealogies in China as a "string of pearls," a variant of the "great

[26] Cabezón, *A Dose of* Emptiness, 16-18. Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, 46.

[27] For information on their sources, see Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 7; Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness*, 13; and Willis, *Enlightened Beings*, xvi-xvii.

[28] As Thupten Jinpa writes, "Tibetan biographies tend to adopt what Thomas Carlyle called the Great Man theory, which emphasizes a focus on the individual heroic leader. This view is summed up by Carlyle's famous statement, 'The history of the world is but the biography of great men.'" Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 14.

[29] Such works include "religious histories" (*chos 'byung*) and "annals" (*lo rgyus*). For an overview, see Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Historiography," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 39–56.

[30] Thuken, *The Crystal Mirror*, 244, 251, 253.

man" fallacy in which the complicated historical reality of the past is explained away by a neat and tiny model of a one-to-one genealogy between master and disciple.[31]

In a similar vein, English-language translations of broader Tibetan political histories are focused on the deeds of great men from Tibet's noble families.[32] As a result, the early history of Ganden Monastery is dealt with in a nominal and tangential manner, for instance by simply naming noble patrons of the early Geluk (rather than giving explanations for their patronage). As this topic is a major focus of chapter one, I set it aside for now.

In sum, existing materials that treat Ganden Monastery are lacking for one reason or another. Some studies provide useful but fragmentary contributions. Others are translations of Tibetan language sources (or heavily reliant upon them) and reproduce the perspective of these works, whether by focusing exclusively on the "great men" of history, or by treating the genealogy of the Geluk tradition as an uncomplicated "string of pearls." Whether geared towards religious devotees or not, this state of affairs is "symptomatic of a larger trend within the field of the study of Tibetan Buddhism, in which a lack of real historical vigor has dominated for a long time."[33] In a similar vein, broader histories of Tibet describe Ganden in a rote manner, before moving quickly to other topics deemed worthy of more interest, such as

[31] As McRae writes: "Whenever we pretend to explain Chan in terms of lineal successions from one great master to another, we run the risk of committing the 'string of pearls' fallacy, in which the evolution of Chan Buddhism is described in terms of a sequence of individual masters like pearls on a string. This is a variant of the 'great man' fallacy of historical writing, in which one explains the inevitably messy details of past realities in terms of the willful endeavors of a limited number of heroic men." John R. McRae, *Seeing through Zen: Encounter, Transformation, and Genealogy in Chinese Chan Buddhism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 10.

[32] Such works include works on "royal succession" (*rgyal rabs*) and "familial succession" (*gdung rabs*).

[33] David M. DiValerio, "Subversive Sainthood and Tantric Fundamentalism: An Historical Study of Tibet's Holy Madmen" (PhD Diss., University of Virginia, 2011), 62. Regarding the lack of impartiality, DiValerio also argues that "it seems that the critical distinction of whether scholars are speaking for the tradition or about the tradition all but disappears when addressing the topic of Tibetan holy madmen." David M. DiValerio, "Subversive Sainthood and Tantric Fundamentalism," 53.

the tumultuous political climate, the lineage of the Dalai Lamas, or the Ganden Podrang government. What is sorely needed is a sustained and broad study of Ganden Monastery that uses a critical-historical approach to the development of the Geluk tradition.

One recent contribution that deserves special mention is Thupten Jinpa's comprehensive synthetic biography of Tsongkhapa.[34] Based upon numerous Tibetan sources and informed by Jinpa's experience as a monk at Ganden (in its reestablished form in India), it is a major contribution to our understanding of Tsongkhapa's life and the development of the Geluk tradition. In its critical-historical approach to Tsongkhapa's life, Jinpa sheds light on the ways in which Tsongkhapa's Tibetan biographies contributed to the myth-making process that led to Tsongkhapa being viewed as a fully enlightened Buddha. Such methods included locating and enumerating ever-growing lists of important prophecies related to Tsongkhapa, as well as descriptions of his mystical experiences. In doing so, Jinpa makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Tsongkhapa's life and what it means to Geluk devotees today.

That said, there are two ways this dissertation aims to supplement and extend Jinpa's work. Given that Jinpa's account of "The Emergence of the Ganden (Geluk) School" focuses heavily on the intellectual development of the school (such as its emphasis on "doctrinal purity"), this dissertation aims to present a broader picture of the early history of the Geluk tradition.[35] The second goal is based on my argument that Jinpa's work continues a long trend in Gelukpa historiography of minimizing the importance of one of Tsongkhapa's teachers,

[34] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*.

[35] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 349-56.

Lhodrak Drubchen Namkha Gyeltsen (Lho brag sgrub chen nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, (1326-1401) to the emergence of the tradition. These are two overarching themes of this dissertation that I return to below.

Existing Studies of the Geluk Tradition

According to Geluk historians, the inauguration of two institutions—the Great Prayer Festival and Ganden's main temple of Yangpachen in 1417 (or the concurrent establishment of its annual festival, the Ganden or Taktsé Drubchö [Stag rtse sgrub mchod])—are considered the third and fourth of Tsongkhapa's "four great deeds" (*mdzad chen bzhi*).[36] Remarking on this, Matthew Kapstein has noted: "Interestingly, these four acts single out Tsongkhapa's efforts at forging a strong monastic network through art, monastic ethics, and public ritual, yet do not mention his philosophical work, suggesting that he was known as an institution builder as much as an intellectual in the period immediately following his death."[37]

For Kapstein, it is remarkable to see Tsongkhapa lionized for performing deeds that aren't related to his philosophical output. In large part, this reaction is a ripple effect of the veritable ocean of English-language scholarship that has been written on the philosophical

[36] The provenance of the list of four is unclear and there are variant accounts of the four by different authors. One Tibetan account is found in Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, "Dga' Ldan Shar Rtse nor Gling Grwa Tshang Gi Chos 'byung 'Jam Dpal Snying Po'i Dgongs Rgyan Mdzes Par Byed Pa'i Legs Bshad Dpyad Gsum Rnam Dag nor Bu'i Phra Tshom," in Dga' ldan shar rtse'i chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan (hereafter *Shar rtse 'chos byung II*) (Mundgod, Karnataka: Dga' ldan shar rtse slob grwa, 2010), 25, 143, 153. Another is found in Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gnas yig mdor bsdus*, 11, 13. For English language accounts, see Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 21-30 and Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 128, 162, 248, 299. According to Kapstein, the four are: "the restoration of the old monastery at Dzingchi, southeast of Lhasa; teaching the Vinaya, the treatises on monastic conduct, at Namtseding monastery; the founding of the Great Prayer Festival in Lhasa; and the founding of Ganden monastery northeast of the city." Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 507. Although Kapstein states that the fourth great deed was the founding of Ganden itself, this is not attested in any of the sources known to me.

[37] Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 507.

doctrines of the Geluk tradition. Some of these are translations of works composed by Tsongkhapa.[38] Some of these are translations of works composed by other Geluk figures.[39]

[38] A full cataloging is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Selected translations of works by Tsongkhapa include: (a) Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*; (b) Robert A.F. Thurman, *The Central Philosophy of Tibet: A Study and Translation of Jey Tsong Khapa's Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); (c) Tsong-kha-pa, *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, ed. Joshua W. C. Cutler and Guy Newland, trans. The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee, 3 vols. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000); (d) Jeffrey Hopkins, *Tsong-Kha-Pa's Final Exposition of Wisdom*, ed. Kevin Vose (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2008); (e) Tsong kha pa, *Tantra in Tibet: The great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1977; (f) Tsong kha pa, *Deity Yoga: In Action and Performance Tantra* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1987); (g) D̄zong-ka-b̄a, *Yoga Tantra: Paths to Magical Feats*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion Publications, 2005) ; (h) Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, *Great Treatise on the Stages of Mantra: Chapters XI-XII (The Creation Stage)*, trans. Thomas F. Yarnall (New York, NY: American Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2013; (i) Glenn H. Mullin, trans., *Tsongkhapa's Six Yogas of Naropa* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996); Sparham, (j) Gareth Sparham in collaboration with Shotaro Iida, *Ocean of Eloquence: Tsong Kha Pa's Commentary on the Yogācāra Doctrine of Mind* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); (k) Tsongkhapa, *Tantric Ethics: An Explanation of the Precepts for Buddhist Vajrayana Practice*, trans. Gareth Sparham (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2005); (l) Tsongkhapa, *The Fulfillment of All Hopes: guru Devotion in Tibetan Buddhism: A commentary on Aśvaghoṣa's* Gurupañcaśīkā *entitled* Bla ma lnga bcu pa'I rnam bshad slob ma'I re ba kun skong shes bya ba, trans. Gareth Sparham (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999); (m) Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, *The Splendor of an Autumn Moon: The Devotional Verse of Tsongkhapa*, trans. and ed. Gavin Kilty (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001); (n) Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, *A Lamp to Illuminate the Five Stages: Teachings on Guhyasamaja Tantra*, trans. Gavin Kilty (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2013); (o) Tsongkhapa, *Illuminating the Intent: An Exposition of Candrakīrti's "Entering the Middle Way,"* trans. Thupten Jinpa (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2021); and (p) Tsong Khapa Losang Drakpa, Illumination of the Hidden Meaning, trans. David B. Gray (New York: American Institute of Buddhist Studies; Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2019).

[39] A full cataloging is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Selected translations of works by Gyeltsabjé include: (a) David Seyfort Ruegg, Candrakīrti., and Rgyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen, *Two Prolegomena to Madhyamaka Philosophy : Candrakīrti's* Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛttiḥ *on* Madhyamakakārikā *I.1, and Tsoṅ Kha Pa Blo Bzaṅ Grags Pa / Rgyal Tshab Dar Ma Rin Chen's* Dka' Gnad/gnas Brgyad Kyi Zin Bris *: Annotated Translations* (Wien: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien, Universität Wien, 2002); (b) Rgyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen, Sonam Rinchen, Ruth Sonam, Āryadeva, and Rgyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen, *Āryadeva's* Four Hundred Stanzas on the Middle Way: *with Commentary by Gyel-Tsap* (Ithaca, N.Y: Snow Lion Publications, 2008); and (c) Asaṅga and Rgyal-tshab Dar-ma-rin-chen, *The Sublime Continuum and Its Explanatory Commentary* (Mahāyānottaratantraśāstravyākhyā ; Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos dang de'i rnam par bshad pa), trans. Bo Jiang (New York: The American Institute of Buddhist Studies, Columbia University Center for Buddhist Studies, Tibet House US, 2017). Selected translations of works by Khedrubjé include: (a) Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness*; (b) Mkhas-grub Dge-legs-dpal-bzaṅ-po, Ferd. Lessing, and Alex. Wayman, *Introduction to the Buddhist Tantric Systems*. 2nd ed. New York: S. Weiser, 1980); and (c) Tenzin Namdak and Tenzin Legtsok, *Freedom through Correct Knowing: On Khedrup Jé's Interpretation of Dharmakīrti's* Seven Treatises on Valid Cognition, trans. Tenzin Namdak and Tenzin Legtsok (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2022. Other notable book length translations of works by Geluk figures include: (a) Nor-bzaṅ-rgya-mtsho, Thupten Jinpa., and Gavin Kilty, Ornament of Stainless Light: an Exposition of the Kālacakra Tantra (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004); (b) Thuken, *The Crystal Mirror*; (c) Daniel Cozort and Craig Preston, *Buddhist Philosophy: Losang Gönchok's Short Commentary to Jamyang Shayba's Root Text on Tenets* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2003); (d) Panchen Sonam Drakpa, *Overview of the Buddhist Tantras*, trans. Martin Boord and Losang Norbu Shastri (Dharamsala: LTWA, 1996); (e) Sangs-rgyas-rgya-mtsho and Gavin Kilty, *Mirror of Beryl : a Historical Introduction to Tibetan Medicine* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010); (f) Kirti

Some of these are works elucidating Geluk doctrines and drawing out their philosophical implications; others bring these doctrines into conversation with non-Tibetan traditions of philosophy.[40] As is evident, the philosophical doctrines of Geluk thinkers have received a huge amount of scholarly attention.

In a similar vein, there are numerous studies of the Geluk monastic educational curriculum. One notable study is Georges Dreyfus' account of Tibetan scholastic practices and the social world of a monk based on his own experience at Drepung and Sera.[41] Dreyfus also provides a detailed description of several aspects of the Geluk educational curriculum, including memorization, debate, the function of commentarial literature, and the role of orthodoxy in the tradition. Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee's recent work on Sera Monastery also

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Tsenshap Rinpoché, *Principles of Buddhist Tantra: A Commentary on Chöjé Ngawang Palden's* Illumination of the Tantric Tradition: The Principles of the Grounds and Paths of the Four Great Secret Classes of Tantra, trans. and ed. Ian Coghlan and Voula Zarpani (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2011); (g) Jinpa, Patton, and Dagpo Rimpoché, *Stages of the Path and the Oral Transmission*; and (h) Jeffrey Hopkins, trans. 2003. *Maps of the Profound: Jam-yang-shay-ba's* "Great Exposition of Buddhist and Non-Buddhist Views of the Nature of Reality" (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2003).

[40] A non-comprehensive list of monographs includes: (a) Thupten Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa's Quest for the Middle Way* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002); (b) Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, revised ed. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1996); (c) Roger. R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible? Dharmakīrti and rGyal Tshab Rje on Knowledge, Rebirth, No-self and Liberation* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1993); (d) Guy Newland, The Two Truths: In the Madhyamika Philosophy of the Gelukba Order of Tibetan Buddhism (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1992); (e) Anne C. Klein with oral commentary by Geshe Belden Drakba [and others], Knowing, Naming, and Negation: A Sourcebook on Tibetan Sautrāntika (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1991); (f) Anne Klein, Knowledge and Liberation: Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology in Support of Transformative Religious Experience (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion, 1998); (g) Donald S. Lopez Jr., A Study of Svātantrika (Boulder: Snow Lion, 2016); (h) The Cowherds, *Moonshadows: Conventional Truth in Buddhist Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), (i) The Yakherds, *Knowing Illusion: Bringing a Tibetan Debate into Contemporary Discourse, Volume I: A Philosophical History of the Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021); (j) Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent Arising and Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1989); and (k) William Magee, *The Nature of Things: Emptiness and Essence in the Geluk World* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1999). A few relevant journal articles include: (a) C. W. Huntington, Jr., "A 'Nonreferential' View of Language and Conceptual Thought in the Work of Tsoṅ-kha-pa," *Philosophy East and West* 33.4 (1983): 325–39; (b) Michael M. Broido, "Veridical and Delusive Cognition: Tsong-kha-pa on the Two Satyas," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 16 (1988): 29–63; and (c) Thupten Jinpa, "Tsongkhapa's Qualms about Early Tibetan Interpretations of Madhyamaka Philosophy," *The Tibet Journal* 24.2 (1999): 3–28.

[41] Georges B.J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003).

provides a wealth of information on the educational system at Sera, grounding it within the broader Indian and Tibetan culture of learning and history of monasticism.[42] To these two broad studies can be added a number of works that focus on narrower aspects of the Geluk educational system.[43]

And in keeping with Tsongkhapa's status as an institution builder, there have been a number of recent studies on Geluk monastic institutions. Along with Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee's mammoth work on Sera, Dreyfus has composed a useful overview of Drepung.[44] Paul Nietupski has studied the eastern Tibetan monastery of Labrang, arguing that the social, economic, and political context of Labrang in Amdo region is what gives it some of its unique features, such as its cosmopolitanism and close connections with the Qing court.[45] And in his dissertation, Brenton Sullivan studied the growth of the Geluk monastery of Gönlung Jampa Ling, which he characterizes as an early manifestation of a Gelukpa "mega monastery," characterized by the concomitant cultivation of associated branch monasteries, and the standardization of liturgies and teachings throughout.[46] This focus on Gelukpa mega

[42] José Ignacio Cabezón and Penpa Dorjee, *Sera Monastery*.

[43] For an overview of the Geluk curriculum, see Sherpa Tulku, Khamlung Tulku, Alexander Berzin, and Jonathan Landaw, "The Structure of the Ge-lug Monastic Order," *The Tibet Journal* 2.3 (Autumn 1977): 67-71.For an in-depth study of Tibetan Buddhist debate, see Daniel E. Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1992). For a study of the logic underlying Tibetan debate (*rtags rigs*), see Katherine Rogers, *Tibetan Logic* (Boston, MA: Snow Lion, 2009). For an overview of Geluk use of "debate manuals" (yig cha), see Guy Newland, "Debate Manuals (*Yig cha*) in dGe lugs Monastic Colleges," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, eds. José I. Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 202-216.

[44] Georges Dreyfus, "Drepung Monastery," Mandala Collections, accessed April 9, 2021, https://texts.shanti.virginia.edu/subcollection/drepung-monastery.

[45] Paul K. Nietupski, *Labrang Monastery: A Tibetan Buddhist Community on the Inner Asian Borderlands, 1709–1958* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011).

[46] Sullivan, Brenton, "The Mother of All Monasteries: Gonlung Jampa Ling and the Rise of Mega Monasteries in Northeastern Tibet," PhD Diss., (University of Virginia, 2013).

monasteries—or the related practice of "mass monasticism"—is considered one of the defining features of the Geluk tradition.[47]

Roger Jackson has suggested that the Geluk tradition is best known as a "politically powerful, socially and religiously conservative, and highly scholastic tradition."[48] It's political power and conservatism largely derives from its later period, particularly after the rise of the Ganden Podrang government in 1642. A number of studies have been performed on the rise of the Ganden Podrang government and its effect on recent Tibetan history; however, the history of the Geluk tradition in the Ganden Podrang era is largely outside the bounds of the current study.[49]

In contrast to this ocean of work, a relative droplet has been written on aspects of the Geluk tradition that one might describe as explicitly non-clerical.[50] One of these is Jörg Heimbel's study of a dispute between Khedrubjé and a rival from the Sakya tradition, one that is revealing of "the important role that sorcery played in the dispute [between them]."[51] Another is Daniel Berounsky's study of the use of Tsongkhapa's *migtsema* (Dmigs brtse ma)

[47] See: (a) Melvyn C. Goldstein, "Tibetan Buddhism and Mass Monasticism," The Center for Research on Tibet, n.d. www.case.edu/affil/tibet/currentStaff/goldstein.htm; and (b) Rachel M McCleary and Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419-1642," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69, no. 1 (February) (2010): 149–80.

[48] Roger R. Jackson, *Mind Seeing Mind: Mahāmudrā and the Geluk Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2019), 133.

[49] For information on the time period covered by this study, see the section "Textual Sources and Chapter Outline" in this introduction.

[50] On the use of the terms "clerical" and "shamanic" in the context of Tibetan Buddhism, see the next section.

[51] Heimbel, Jörg Heimbel, "The Dispute Between mKhas grub rJe and Ngor chen: Its Representation and Role in Tibetan Life-Writing," in Fifteenth Century Tibet: Cultural Blossoming and Political Unrest, eds. Volker Caumanns and Marta Sernesi (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2017), 276.

prayer in magical rites.[52] Third are a pair of works by Bryan Cuevas, which highlight the importance of magical rites and magical warfare to the ascendancy of the Gelukpa, as well as the use of magical warfare as a legitimate expression of political action.[53] The importance of magical rites to garnering early patronage for the Gelukpa is the focus of chapter one of this dissertation.

Theory and Method

In general, Martin Mills has summarized the status of our scholarly understanding of the Geluk tradition in this way:

> The Gelukpa, however, have been characterised as the most clerical of all: the focus on mass monasticism as the basis of religious authority, the careful and systematic chaperoning of tantric practice, and the elite intellectual training provided by the vast monastic universities around Lhasa – all these seem to point to a profoundly clerical system. Moreover, the *geshe* system – producing an elite cadre of Buddhist scholars deeply versed in a highly realist mode of Madhyamaka Buddhist philosophy, only reinforces the sense of an order whose cutting edge was both rational and bureaucratic.[54]

Mills' description is grounded in Geoffrey Samuels' influential characterization of religion in premodern Tibetan societies as either clerical or shamanic. In brief, Samuels characterizes shamanic Buddhism as the preserve of the Tantric lama, who is held to have the ability to "communicate with a mode of reality alternative to, and more fundamental than, the world of

[52] Daniel Berounsky, "Tibetan 'Magical Rituals' (Las Sna Tshogs) from the Power of Tsongkhapa," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 31 (2015): 95–111. The *migtsema* is a prayer to Tsongkhapa.

[53] Bryan J. Cuevas, "The Politics of Magical Warfare," in *Faith and Empire: Art and Politics in Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Karl Debreczeny (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2019), 171–89. Bryan J. Cuevas, "Sorcerer of the Iron Castle: The Life of Blo Bzang Bstan Pa Rab Rgyas, the First Brag Dkar Sngags Rams Pa of a Mdo (c. 1647-1726)," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 39 (April 2017): 5–59.

[54] Martin A. Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism: The Foundations of Authority in Gelukpa Monasticism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 237.

everyday experience."[55] The power of the Tantric lama is gained via prolonged practice during retreat and used to benefit lay populations towards mundane ends. In contrast, the primary mode of activity of clerical Buddhism is "scholarship, philosophical analysis, and monastic discipline," a mode of activity that is also associated with political power in cultures that possess centralized, bureaucratic government.[56]

For Mills, Samuels' system evinces the influence of Max Weber, as evidenced by a parallel between Samuels' shamanic-clerical distinction and Weber's opposition between charismatic and bureaucratic authority.[57] Brenton Sullivan is one recent scholar who adopts Weber's thought explicitly in explaining the rise of the Geluk tradition. For Sullivan, the growth of this tradition is best understood via Weber's theories of rationality and bureaucratic rule. He argues that the Geluk tradition is largely uncomfortable with "institutions and practices more dependent on charismatic authority or other sources of authority apart from the legal authority of the institution itself."[58] As a result, he argues that rationalization, or "the calculability of means through the standardization of action," is what "typifies the later Geluk approach to religious life," for instance by institutionalizing Tantra, and systematizing doctrines, curriculums, and liturgy.[59] Sullivan concludes that it was the Geluk tradition's

[55] Geoffrey Samuel, *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 9.

[56] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 9-10.

[57] As Mills writes, the charismatic is "that authority seen to derive from divine election – from having some quality which marked one out as having the 'gift of grace'." The traditional is that authority derived from traditional or customary systems of allocation (e.g. by inheritance or age)." And the legal/rational is "that authority derived from a strict set of rules applied to all, such as a system of examinations or election to office." Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 235.

[58] Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire*, 17.

[59] Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire*, 15. As has been noted by Jonathan Samuels, Sullivan's study is better understood as a study of Gönlung Monastery (Dgon lung byams pa gling) and its related institutions in the

"proclivity for and excellence in bureaucracy" that was key to its expansion and staying power."[60] A similar claim is made by David DiValerio, who has also suggested that the Gelukpa emphasis on formal study meant that it was less reliant on "the charisma of a certain place or individual (living or dead) for its spiritual vitality."[61]

The inclination to portray the Geluk tradition solely as a clerical tradition appears to have had multiple causes, from a penchant for reproducing traditional Gelukpa perspectives in modern works (both its orthodox approach to doctrine and "Great Man" approach to history), to a modernist bias for rational and scholastic modes of description, to a habitual reliance on dichotomies in the history of religions.[62] In the academic study of the Geluk tradition, these discourses have constituted what Hayden White has described as a kind of "metahistorical" understructure that prefigures what can and should be written about the Geluk tradition.[63] Since the early history of the Geluk tradition has yet to receive sustained attention, clerical explanations for the rise of this tradition have largely gone unchallenged in existing scholarly

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seventeenth century and beyond, rather than the rise of the Geluk tradition as a whole. Jonathan Samuels, review of *Building a Religious Empire: Tibetan Buddhism, Bureaucracy, and the Rise of the Gelukpa*, by Brenton Sullivan, H-Buddhism, H-Net Reviews (November, 2021), https://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=56768. This is hinted at in Sullivan's use of the word "later" in this characterization.

[60] Sullivan, Building a Religious Empire, 24.

[61] DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen of Tibet*, 90.

[62] For instance, as already discussed the Geluk tradition is often considered a clerical and monastic tradition (as opposed to shamanic and lay); as rationalist (and not tantric); and as a tradition based upon a routinized system of bureaucracy (rather than personal charisma). In terms of the field, Kunal Chakrabarti notes that historians of religion have mostly resorted to applying two-tier formulas of religious interaction, such as: universal/folk, primitive/classical, universal/local, popular/institutional, great/little, and traditional/rational. Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process: The Puranas and the Making of a Regional Tradition* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 99.

[63] Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), ix-x.

accounts. Thus, much as it has been observed that the tendency to perceive Tibet as a strongly centralized state with Lhasa as the capital has distorted our understanding of Tibetan politics, the tendency to view the Geluk tradition solely in terms of its clerical aspects has distorted our understanding of the early history of the Geluk tradition.[64]

It was during its early history that Geluk figures engaged in what Catherine Bell has described as the process of "traditionalization," the construction of a tradition.[65] As Bell writes: "Tradition, of course, is not created once and then left to its own momentum. Tradition exists because it is constantly produced and reproduced, pruned for a clear profile, and softened to absorb revitalizing elements."[66] These formative elements for the tradition include the delineation of social identity, valorizing and reproducing certain aspects of the tradition (while minimizing others), and negotiating the need for both continuity and change as circumstances (social, religious, economic, and political) shift over time. One downside of the (nearly) univocal perspective on the Geluk tradition is that religious traditions and figures can become essentialized, dictating how we read, receive, and typologize Asian religious figures. For this reason, adopting Bell's perspective on the construction of tradition invites us to foreground the agency of assorted Geluk figures—both great and relatively obscure—who engaged in the messy work of winning patrons, soliciting and negotiating prophecies, editing texts, and attracting pilgrims, all in the service of constructing a tradition.

As a historian of religion, one of my guiding principles is Jonathan Z. Smith's striking assertion that "religion"—meaning the object of study for the scholar of religion—is a product

[64] Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 139.

[65] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 124, 138.

[66] Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, 123.

of the scholar's imagination.[67] Methodologically, a focus on the imagined nature of historical research suggests that the historian of religion should use any and all methods and any and all sources available in their research, in the pursuit of clearer and more compelling imaginings. However, during the ferment of the Cultural Revolution, Ganden Monastery was reduced to rubble. For this reason, my research into its early history is largely textual, based on the translation and critical examination of classical Tibetan texts. However, the multifaceted nature of my research necessitated the examination of texts from a range of genres: broader political and religious histories, individual biographies, epistles, encomia, and monastic catalogs and pilgrimage guides particular to Ganden. And, where useful, I incorporate art historical evidence into my analyses, as well as images of material objects from Ganden that survived destruction or have been rebuilt in recent years. The specific texts consulted depends on the topic and will be described within each chapter.

Given the imaginative nature of historical work, it is up to the reader whether my imaginings are compelling. My general approach to my textual sources mirrors Tillemans' philological conviction, that "by understanding in real depth the Buddhist languages, and the history, institutions, context and preoccupations of an author and his milieu, progress can be made towards understanding that author's thought and better grasping his world."[68] In the course of my research, it appeared to me at times that I could think along with my authors and perceive "what was going on in his head" when something in a historical source stood out to me as noteworthy. That said, much like Ronald Davidson, my work too is "concerned with

[67] Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), xi.

[68] Tom Tillemans, "Remarks on Philology," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 18, no. 2 (1995): 269.

evidence, testimony, doubt, probability, uncertainty, conflicting positions, and a reflexiveness on past patterns of behavior…[but] must be content with a continuing degree of uncertainty, never to claim that it has rendered the perfect decision."[69]

Textual Sources and Chapter Outline

One of my primary interests as a historian is investigating the ways in which both religious traditions themselves—and their scholarly depictions—have been constructed. In my view, the dominance of clerical presentations of the Geluk tradition has had a distorting effect on our understanding of its early history, one in which counterfactual evidence appears to have been overlooked. As a result, existing portrayals of the tradition have evinced what Christian Wedemeyer describes as a form of "methodological solipsism," such that "discourses that circulate in the secondary literature condition what people see [or look for] in the primary sources."[70] Most studies of the Geluk tradition are based on research into texts that relate to clerical aspects of the Geluk tradition or normative presentations of Geluk history.

As a corrective, this dissertation is based on the translation and critical examination of a broader range of Tibetan texts, some of which have not been previously studied. The first is a group of works connected to Lhodrak Drubchen, famed as a Drubchen (or *mahāsiddha)* from the region of Lhodrak, southwest of Lhasa. As evidenced by his epithets Chakdor (Phyag rdor) or Sangdak (Gsang bdag), which are also epithets of Vajrapāṇi, he was a charismatic lama who was considered to have the ability to communicate directly with the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, or

[69] Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 20.

[70] Christian K. Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in the Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 4.

even to be an emanation of Vajrapāṇi himself. For the Geluk tradition, Lhodrak Drubchen's importance lies in his being one of Tsongkhapa's teachers, who transmitted to him a series of teachings, including transmissions of the three Kadam lineages of "stages of the path" (*lam rim*) teachings stemming from Atiśa, and empowerments of various forms of Vajrapāṇi. Based on his charismatic access to Vajrapāṇi, he also convinced Tsongkhapa not to go to India and communicated several important prophecies to Tsongkhapa or his disciples that were formative for the early Geluk tradition.

In doing so, Lhodrak Drubchen represents an important charismatic figure in early Geluk history. In this regard, Martin Mills is one author who has argued convincingly for the importance of charisma to the Geluk tradition. For Mills, religious authority within the Geluk tradition is best understood as a system made up of three cornerstones: the monastic scholar (*geshe*), the incarnate lama (*tulku*), and the oracular medium (*lhapa* or *chosje*).[71] Most notably, he points out that "decision-making at the apex of the Gelukpa order appears to defy this rational clericism, by involving figures whose charismatic (or shamanic, as one wishes) qualities are distinct indeed."[72] In practical terms, it is the incarnate lama who is considered to have access to supramundane realities and divinities and power over spirits, being considered "above the gods."[73] This capacity is lacking in ordinary clerical monks, which Mills describes

[71] Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 237-40. Mills uses several examples to describe the relationship of mutual dependence between the three. For instance, it is oracles who identify tulkus, who are then trained by geshes. Elsewhere, the choice of the prestigious position of tutor to the Dalai Lama is performed by oracular or other forms of divination.

[72] Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 237.

[73] Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 252.

as a "trapa/tulku divide," or a divide between ordinary monks and incarnate lamas in terms of ritual authority and economic status.[74]

In my view, Lhodrak Drubchen played a formative role in the early history of the Geluk tradition as a charismatic tantric lama and oracle, one that has been thus far overlooked. There are few studies of Lhodrak Drubchen's life and works.[75] There are two existing studies examining his works to decipher his philosophical view in relation to Tsongkhapa.[76] In focusing on this philosophical dimension, the importance of these texts as social and historical documents has been neglected.[77] Also, modern Geluk interpretations of his biographical works have tended to minimize his importance in favor of Tsongkhapa.[78] In my view, such

[74] Mills, *Identity, Ritual and State*, 312-14.

[75] For two brief biographies, see: (a) Cameron Bailey, "A Feast for Scholars: The Life and Works of Sle Lung Bzhad Pa'i Rdo Rje" (PhD Diss., Wolfson College, 2017), 13-19; and (b) Samten Chhosphel, "The First Lelung Jedrung, Drubchen Namkha Gyeltsen," The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region, 2010, https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Drubchen-Namkha-Gyeltsen/2592.

[76] Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-Chen: A Text and Its Histories," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, ed. Ihara Shōren and Yamaguchi Zuihō, vol. 1: Buddhist Philosophy and Literature (Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji, 1989), 47–58. Roger R. Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as Dzokchenpa: Nyingma Discourses and Geluk Sources," *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 21 (2021): 115–50. There is also an English translation of this work in Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 199-213.

[77] Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-Chen: A Text and Its Histories," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, ed. Ihara Shōren and Yamaguchi Zuihō, vol. 1: Buddhist Philosophy and Literature (Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji, 1989), 47–58. Roger R. Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as Dzokchenpa: Nyingma Discourses and Geluk Sources," *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 21 (2021): 115–50. There is also an English translation of this work in Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 199-213.

[78] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's Secret Biography log rtog mun sel" (hereafter Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*) in *Lho brag nam mkha' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 135. This secret biography revolves around seven topics: (1) the way Las kyi rdo rje (Lhodrak Drubchen) had first produced bodhicitta; (2) in the interim, the way he showed enormous magical powers (*rlabs che ba'I rdzu 'phrul*) for the sake of beings; (3) how he had produced realizations; (4) requests for some prophecies for the future; (5) information on methods for Tsongkhapa to multiply benefits for beings and the continuum of the teachings; and (6) information for where it would be good to establish a monastery (dgon gnas). Although nominally a secret biography of Lhodrak Drubchen, it is noteworthy that the latter two questions relate solely to Tsongkhapa. In fact, Jinpa erroneously describes *all* of the questions as pertaining to Tsongkhapa: "They then asked him (1) about how Tsongkhapa first generated the

presentations have led to a distortion in the way Lhodrak Drubchen's influence has been understood.

Here is a list of works relevant to my study of Lhodrak Drubchen, which comprise the first three chapters:

1) Tsong kha pa, "Zhu lan sman mchog bdud rtsi'i phreng ba" (hereafter Tsongkhapa's *Garland*) in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, vol. Ka (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 222–40. [79]
2) Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Phyi'i rnam thar bdud rtsi phreng ba sogs" (hereafter Lhodrak Drubchen's *Outer Biography*), in *Lho brag nam mkha' rgyal mtshan gyi ggsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 14–76.
3) Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Nang ting nge 'dzin gyi nyams snang rnam thar du bkod pa snyan brgyud kyi lde mig skye ba bcu drug ma phran dang bcas pa" (hereafter Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*), in *Lho brag nam mkha' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 77–134.

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altruistic intention, (2) about how he engaged in deeds in the service of helping other beings, (3) whether he could share with them some prophecies, (4) what the best means would be to help Tsongkhapa to serve the Dharma and sentient beings effectively, and (5) what the best site would be for Tsongkhapa to found his own monastery." Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 149). On the surface, it is implausible that Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* would be completely devoted to Tsongkhapa. The name Las kyi rdo rje is also commonly used as the secret name of Lhodrak Drubchen, most succinctly in numerous colophons, which employ phrases such as, "Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan ming gzhan las kyi rdo rjes…" Finally, a simple look at the contents of the secret biography would indicate that the subject matter has no parallel with any of Tsongkhapa's biographical narratives found in other works. It is unclear whether this was a mere oversight on Jinpa's part, or if this is a contemporary Gelukpa interpretation of this work. Elsewhere, Sonam Tsering says that since Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* has some aspects related to Tsongkhapa, it can "serve as" a biography for Tsongkhapa as well. Tsering, "The Role of Texts in the Formation of the Geluk School," 68.

[79] I call it *Tsongkhapa's Garland* in order to disambiguate from another text described in Chapter Three of this dissertation. For an English translation, see Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 199-213. This work is also found in Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works. Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Zhu lan sman mchog bdud rtsi'i 'phreng ba," in Lho brag nam mkha'rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum, vol. 2 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 899–921.

4) Blo bzang grags pa, “Lho brag mkhan chen phyag rdor ba la phul ba’i zhu lan” (hereafter Tsongkhapa's *Letter* to Lhodrak Drubchen), in *Rje tsong kha pa’i gsung ’bum*, vol. Kha, 18 vols. (Pe cin: Krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2012), 303–6.
5) Lhodrak Drubchen’s *Secret Biography*.
6) Nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan, “Rje tsong kha pa dang mjal tshul” (hereafter *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*), in *Lho brag nam mkha’ rgyal mtshan gyi gsung ’bum*, vol. 1 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 153–57.

The focus of chapter one is a reevaluation of the early patronage of the Gelukpa in Tibet in the fifteenth century. As a result of the dominant clerical depiction of this tradition, existing accounts of this patronage emphasize the importance of Tsongkhapa’s virtue and erudition, leading some scholars to conclude that charisma and magical power were inconsequential to the growth of the tradition. Instead, I argue that Tsongkhapa’s status as a *mahāsiddha* or “great adept” of Buddhist Tantra was a primary factor in his gaining patronage from the political elites of the Pakmodrupa (Phag mo gru pa) Dynasty. This status was mediated by the endorsement of Lhodrak Drubchen and then popularized in later biographical works (as well as within Tibetan paintings) as the “five visions of the Lord [Tsongkhapa]” (*rje gzigs pa lnga ldan*). This status also stimulated continuing patronage of the tradition, even after Tsongkhapa’s passing. In Mills’ tripartite categorization of Gelukpa authority, Lhodrak Drubchen played the role of the charismatic Tantric lama for the early tradition.

In chapter two, I describe the role of Lhodrak Drubchen’s prophecies in the early Geluk tradition. Functioning as a charismatic tantric lama and oracle, Lhodrak Drubchen communicated several of the earliest prophecies that influenced the early Geluk tradition. In addition, I examine the important social context surrounding the composition of the

biographies that contain these prophecies. Lastly, I trace the fate of these prophecies synchronically, as Geluk writers employed a range of strategies to subvert, modify, or deemphasize Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies. In doing so, they were also seeking to minimize Lhodrak Drubchen's authority over the tradition.

This theme continues in chapter three, where I engage in a case study of the construction of Geluk orthodoxy. Focusing on *A Garland of Supreme Medicinal Nectar*, I demonstrate how this text was systematically edited to create a variant edition of this Dzogchen text that was stripped of numerous allusions to Dzogchen terminology and practices (in particular, sexual practices). I also point to another editorial practice that involved stripping the prophecies away from *Tsongkhapa's Garland* in order to create a new text that was not connected to these heterodox teachings. In doing so, I argue that this text is an early, fifteenth century datum for the construction of Geluk identity and orthodoxy.

Shifting gears, chapters four and five focus on a hitherto unexamined group of works describing Ganden Monastery as a pilgrimage site. Ganden Monastery is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Tibet. It has been described as the "principle place of pilgrimage" along the highway connecting Lhasa to eastern Tibet, "one every pilgrim to Lhasa must make."[80] Given both the overlapping nature of monastic networks, pilgrimage networks, and trade networks in Tibet—as well as Lhasa's importance as a sacred place and trans-regional site of pilgrimage and trade—this meant that Ganden too attracted throngs of pilgrims, necessitating the construction of rest houses for visitors.[81] Ganden's importance as

[80] Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide*, 96.

[81] "In Tibet, as the Buddhist monasteries became larger, they naturally 'emerged as nodes of political and economic activity.' Patronage was, to be sure, not the sole impetus to economic involvement—nomads and

a pilgrimage site continues to the present day, as attested by the recent publication of a dual Tibetan-Chinese language pilgrimage guide to Ganden that asserts that hundreds of thousands of people visit each year, carried by sixteen dedicated transport vehicles that have never had a single car accident![82] However, this aspect of the monastery has yet to receive any scholarly attention.

This portion of the dissertation is based on the following textual sources (arranged chronologically):

1) the first Jamyang Shepa's ('Jam dbyangs bzhad pa ngag dbang brtson 'grus, 1648-1721/2) *Catalog of the Great Monastery* Ganden (hereafter *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*) (ca. 1700-1707?);[83]

2) the chapter on Ganden Monastery in the First Purchok Ngawang Jampa's (Phur lcog ngag dbang byams pa, 1682-1762) *Garland of White Lotuses: How the Four Great Monasteries, Gyutö, and Gyumé were Formed* (hereafter *Purchok's Garland*), 1744;[84]

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farmers, e.g., used the monasteries, with their recurring cycles of festivals, as sites of exchange—but patronage ensured that no lama, however powerful, could ignore the imperatives of trade and economy. Thus, the spatial distribution of Buddhism across the Tibetan landscape came to be strongly affected by the large degree of overlap between the monastic networks, the pilgrimage networks, and the trade networks." Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence*, 263. "Lhasa as the supreme focus of pilgrimage in the Tibetan Buddhist world, harbouring its highest incarnation, the Dalai Lama, attracted pilgrims from all over Tibet and even beyond. Particularly at the time of a major festival, such as the great Monlam Prayer following the Losar or New Year celebrations, the population of Lhasa, which at the beginning of this century was perhaps between fifteen and twenty thousand, swelled to four or five times this number." Wim van Spengen, "On the Geographical and Material Contextuality of Tibetan Pilgrimage," in *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), 38. On the presence of rest houses, see: Giuseppe Tucci, *To Lhasa and Beyond: Diary of the Expedition to Tibet in the Year 1948* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1983), 148.

[82] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 115-16.

[83] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, "Chos sde chen po dga' ldan gyi dkar chag," in *Kun mkhyen 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 1, (Mundgod, Karnataka: 'Bras spungs bkra shis sgo mang dpe mdzod khang, 2015), 19–37. This work is both undated and unfinished, leaving off abruptly when describing some of the objects in Yangpachen Temple. My tentative dating to 1700-1707 is based on his tenure as abbot of Drepung Gomang Monastery, as this was a period when he composed numerous texts and would have had the stature and opportunity to visit Ganden and compose a catalog. The year 1707 also witnessed a serious schism between Purbuchok Ngawang Jampa and Desi Sangyé Gyatso, leading to Ngawang Jampa stepping down from the abbacy of Drepung Gomang, and perhaps explaining the unfinished work of this text.

[84] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Grwa sa chen po bzhi dang rgyud pa stod smad chags tshul pad dkar 'phreng ba* (Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1989).

3) Sera Mé Drakpa Khedrub's (Se ra smad grags pa mkhas grub, b. 18th century) *Ornament to Jampel Nyingpo's Intention: A History of Ganden Shartsé Tösam Norbuling College* (hereafter *Shartsé History* I), 1814;[85]

4) Dze Mé Losang Pelden Tenzin Yargyé's (Dze smad blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, 1927-1996) *A Trimming of Jewels of Pure Threefold Analysis, Elegant Words to Beautify* "*Ornament to Jampel Nyingpo's Intention,*" *History of the College of Ganden Shartse Norling* (hereafter *Shartsé History II*), 1975;[86]

5) *Annals of Ganden Monastery and Dragyerpa* (hereafter *Annals of Ganden*) 1994;[87]

6) Ganden Ngawang Tenjung's (Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, b. 20th century) *An Abridged Guidebook to the Great Seat Ganden Nampar Gyelwé Ling* (hereafter *Abridged Guidebook*), 2011.[88]

This chapter's focus on the study of Ganden as a pilgrimage site is largely based on pilgrimage guide literature for a few reasons. Firstly, Ganden Monastery was reduced to rubble during the ferment of the Cultural Revolution, meaning that much of the material evidence was lost. Secondly, with a few scattered exceptions, there are few first-hand travelers' accounts of visits to Ganden from before the modern era. Given this state of affairs, the pilgrimage guide literature is the best source of information available for understanding the construction of Ganden as a pilgrimage site.

However, as is evident, all of these texts date from the early eighteenth century onward. It is unclear why there are no earlier surviving Ganden pilgrimage guide works, nor the degree

[85] Grags pa mkhas grub, *Dga' ldan shar rtse'i chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan* (Mundgod, Karnataka: Dga' ldan shar rtse slob grwa, 2010).

[86] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, "Dga' ldan shar rtse nor gling grwa tshang gi chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan mdzes par byed pa'i legs bshad dpyad gsum rnam dag nor bu'i phra tshom," in *Dga' ldan shar rtse'i chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan*, 127-172. This work is a sequel to *Shartsé History I*.

[87] *Dga' ldan dgon pa dang brag yer pa'i lo rgyus* (Lha sa: Grong khyer lha sa'i khul, 1994).

[88] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gdan sa chen po dga' ldan rnam par rgyal ba' i gling gi gnas yig mdor bsdus pa* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2012).

to which these authors were drawing from existing traditions, whether oral or textual. Unfortunately, this dating poses a problem for my interest in the "early history" of Ganden Monastery. Of course, early is a relative term. The simplest explanation I can give is that Lhodrak Drubchen is indeed the earliest influential figure in Ganden's history. And these pilgrimage guides are also the earliest available sources regarding Ganden as a pilgrimage site. However, my study of these works will also invoke some aspects of the historical context in which they were composed.

In terms of genre, these works include a "catalog" of Ganden (*dkar chag*), an abridged pilgrimage guidebook (*gnas yig mdor bsdus pa*), as well as pilgrimage guide-like literature found in broader "religious histories" and "annals." These works contain information on a cluster of understudied aspects of Ganden, from its importance as a pilgrimage site, to the charismatic nature of the beings and blessed objects located at the site, to its importance as a site of devotional activity for both monks and laity. As a result, these two chapters continue my interest in charismatic tantric figures and extends it to also incorporate blessed and powerful objects. And, in doing so I argue that facile attempts to explain the rise of the Geluk tradition solely via Weber's theories of rationality and bureaucracy are incomplete and unsatisfactory. Rather than the "routinization of charisma," the main purpose of this literature is to foreground for pilgrims the continuing presence and agency of these charismatic and blessed phenomena at Ganden.

In chapter four, I focus on the charismatic and powerful nature of the divine beings (such as Tsongkhapa, other Geluk lamas, and supernatural beings) and material objects associated with Ganden. The main function of the pilgrimage guide literature is to argue for the powerful, blessed, and charismatic nature of the figures (both human and supernatural) and

material objects (both built and spontaneously arisen) present at Ganden. This is done via literary practices such as narrative framing, associations with previous masters, and descriptions of supernatural beings. I also suggest that Ganden Monastery functioned as a prototypical Gelukpa pilgrimage site.

In chapter five, I focus on the description of Ganden as a numinous place. This is done via typical descriptions of pilgrimage sites, with descriptions of Ganden in terms of an outer, inner, and secret framework; its flora and fauna; describing a mountain as a mandala; geomancy; and its spontaneously arisen phenomena. In doing so, I argue that Ganden's popularization as a pilgrimage site played a key role in the growth of the Tsongkhapa devotional cult and thus to the growth of the Geluk tradition.

Chapter One:

A Reevaluation of the Early Patronage of the Gelukpa

Introduction

After founding Ganden Monastery in 1409, Tsongkhapa made it his chief residence for the rest of his life. For a decade, he worked to expand his tradition by composing texts, offering teachings to disciples, and maintaining links with patrons. After he passed away in 1419, however, his nascent tradition faced numerous challenges, chief among them how to maintain support from patrons and attract students without the leadership of their charismatic founder. The first consequential decision by his disciples was to inter their master's body undisturbed in a reliquary *stūpa* at Ganden (and not to cremate it), as it would have "great benefit for the continuity of the teachings."[89] This decision transformed Ganden into a site of devotion and pilgrimage for hundreds of years, enlivened by Tsongkhapa's abiding presence. More than five hundred years later, Tsongkhapa's remains were finally disturbed, when his *stūpa* was broken open during the Cultural Revolution and his remains were forcibly cremated. Since that time, narratives have circulated among devotees that Tsongkhapa's body had remained perfectly preserved, with his hair and fingernails continuing to grow.[90]

[89] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 136.

[90] One detailed account is found within the recent memoir of Arjia Rinpoche, whose reincarnation lineage is considered that of Tsongkhapa's father. As he writes, "When [the Red Guards and positivist monks] pried open the golden stupa where the body of Lama Tsong Khapa was enshrined, they saw the Master's gray hair draped to the floor. His hands were crossed in the dharmawheel mudra and his fingernails had grown so much that they were wrapped around his shoulders. Awestruck by the scene, even the revolutionary rebels dared not touch anything." Arjia Rinpoche, *Surviving the Dragon: A Tibetan Lama's Account of 40 Years Under Chinese Rule* (New York: Rodale Press, Inc., 2010), 155.

These narratives indicate the enduring power that Tsongkhapa was believed to possess, a power that is not merely that of a virtuous and erudite monk; it is the power of a *mahāsiddha*, an accomplished yogin or "great adept" of Buddhist Tantra.

Much like Tsongkhapa's remains inside of his reliquary *stūpa*, his identity as a *mahāsiddha* has remained hidden in the recesses of scholarly discourse on the Geluk tradition, coloring the way the early history of the Geluk tradition has been understood. Coming to the main subject of this paper, a major topic requiring reevaluation is the question of why Tsongkhapa's patrons—chief among them the ruler of the Pakmodrupa dynasty, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen (Phag mo gru pa Gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1374-1432, r. 1385-1432) and his governors (*rdzong dpon*)[91]—chose to support him in establishing these two seminal projects (the founding of the Great Prayer Festival and Ganden Monastery).[92] As I will argue, it was Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha*—a status mediated by the endorsement of the *mahāsiddha* Lhodrak Drubchen Namkha Gyeltsen—that played a central role in his being accorded this level of support. In particular, I argue that this status was cemented during a period of bitter conflict in central Tibet at the end of the fourteenth century, when the Pakmodrupa ruler of central Tibet, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen, was in dire need of a *mahāsiddha* who could aid him in this conflict. At its core, I argue that the

[91] The founder of the Pakmodru Dynasty, Tai Situ Jangchub Gyeltsen (Ta'i si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan, 1302-1364) established thirteen districts centered around forts (*rdzong*), which were headed by thirteen governors.

[92] Pakmodru nobles were also responsible for supporting the establishment of a number of other Geluk monasteries in central Tibet, chief among them Drepung ('Bras spungs) and Sera (Se ra). For one detailed description of this patronage, see Wylie, "Monastic Patronage in Fifteenth-Century Tibet," 266-77. Pakmodru support for Tsongkhapa's nascent sect also continued after his passing, with Pakmodrupa figures sponsoring annual funerary offerings for Tsongkhapa, further investments in existing monasteries, as well as the printing of Tsongkhapa's works. On these funerary offerings, see Olaf Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet: The Rlangs Clan and the Political and Religious History of the Ruling House of Phag Mo Gru Pa With a Study of the Monastic Art of Gdan Sa Mthil*, vol. I (Wien: Österreichische Akademie Der Wissenschaften, 2013), 215.

relationship between Tsongkhapa and the Gongma was based upon the Gongma's desire to extend his own life and to preserve the rule of his family and of those loyal to his branch of the Pakmodrupa. Thus, I re-envision Tsongkhapa as one in a long history of Buddhist saints and tantric figures who have relied on the perception of magical efficacy to gain the support of political rulers. As a corollary, recognizing Tsongkhapa's dual status—as both a virtuous and learned monk *and* a tantric *mahāsiddha*—indicates the limitations of dichotomies in understanding religious phenomena in Tibet, as well as the way in which modernist conceptions of the Geluk tradition have distorted our understanding of its history.

Tsongkhapa as a *Mahāsiddha*

In the fifteenth century, the religious marketplace in Tibet "was characterized by diversity and competition among schools and sects," complicating efforts by Tsongkhapa's successors to carry on their master's tradition.[93] One of these was the third Ganden Tripa, Khedrubjé Gelek Pelsang (r. 1431-1438), who is celebrated by the tradition as one of Tsongkhapa's two chief spiritual heirs. According to Khedrubjé's biography, he frequently felt bereft by the loss of his teacher and overwhelmed by the task of carrying on his tradition. Most pressingly, the beginning of Khedrubjé's tenure had witnessed the death of Tsongkhapa's chosen successor, the second Ganden Tripa Gyeltsab Jé Darma Rinchen (r. 1419-1431), as well as the demise of the tradition's most powerful patron, the ruler of the Pakmodrupa dynasty which held sway over central Tibet, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen. Following the Gongma's demise, an internal dispute over succession to the throne led to conflict among Pakmodrupa factions, a

[93] McCleary and van der Kuijp, "The Market Approach," 159-60.

conflict which resulted in a loss of stability and control that has been termed "the year of the internal collapse of the Pakmodrupa" by Tibetan historians.[94] (Czaja 2013, 220). In the aftermath, the Geluk tradition's position was tenuous, with the new ruler refusing to hear teachings from Khedrubjé on an occasion of state.[95] In the face of these challenges, Khedrubjé is said to have made a series of heartfelt and urgent appeals to Tsongkhapa in which he wished to see his master again, to receive teachings, and to ask him questions. At other times, he was moved to tears by recalling the kindness of his master, or out of frustration at the recalcitrance of sentient beings, who were abandoning his master's teachings despite his best efforts.[96]

In response, Tsongkhapa is said to have appeared to his disciple in a series of five visions, known as the "five visions of the Lord [Tsongkhapa]."[97] Tsongkhapa is perhaps best known for his virtue and erudition as a monk-scholar, and in four of the visions he is depicted

[94] Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*, 220.

[95] According to Ahmad's translation of a political history composed by the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682): "After that, when the [new Gongma] came to inspect his estates in Dbus, Khedrub Chöjé Gelek Pelsang; the two Chöjés of Gsang phu Ne'u thog; the Drung chen; the Ācārya and others came to meet him at Sne'u rdzong. When they were about to discourse on the sacred texts, Khedrub Chöjé and the great ones of Gsang phu hoped that they would (be allowed to) explain their texts, individually. Nevertheless, because the translator from 'Gos, Gzhon nu dpal ba, was in the service of the [Gongma], he (rather than the others) is said to have spoken on the disciplinary rules of Rtses thang." Ṅag-dBaṅ Blo-bZaṅ rGya-mTSHo, *A History of Tibet by the Fifth Dalai Lama of Tibet*, trans. Zahiruddin Ahmad (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1995), 151-52. Cf.Giuseppe Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma: Tibetan Chronicles by Bsod Nams Grags Pa* (Roma: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1971), 219-20.

[96] Descriptions of these encounters are found in two biographies of Khedrubjé composed by Chöden Rapjor (Chos ldan rab 'byor, fourteenth-fifteenth century) and Sera Jetsun Chöki Gyeltsen (Se ra rje btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1469-1544). English translations can be found in Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 107-49. The encounters are described on 114-119 and 143-148.

[97] In Tibetan, *rje gzigs pa lnga ldan*. Painted depictions can be found on the Himalayan Art Resources website. Jeff Watt, "Teacher: Tsongkapa, Five Forms," Himalayan Art Resources, 2019, https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=1334.

variously as a monk, wearing the yellow-colored hat of a *paṇḍiṭa*, or as the bodhisattva of wisdom Mañjuśrī himself.[98] Such depictions of Tsongkhapa accord with the predominant image of the Geluk as a predominantly monastic and scholastic tradition. Accordingly, in these encounters Tsongkhapa appears to Khedrubjé in order to give him religious teachings, to encourage him to continue to spread Tsongkhapa's tradition, and to advise him that he should rely on the two philosophical treatises that constitute Tsongkhapa's "testament" and "proxy:" his influential *Lamrim Chenmo* and *Ngakrim Chenmo*.[99]

This textual narrative of the "five visions of the Lord [Tsongkhapa]" has also been depicted in Tibetan paintings for hundreds of years, either as a set of five paintings or as one painting containing all five forms.[100] Notably, when the five forms are combined in a single

[98] For an account of the origin of the use of *paṇḍiṭa* hats in Tibet, see Tsering "The Role of Texts," 6, n.2. According to one of Tsongkhapa's influential biographers, Chahar Geshé Losang Tsultrim (Cha har dge bshes blo bzang tshul khrims, 1740–1810), Tsongkhapa began wearing a yellow hat during his lengthy retreat in Ölka ('Ol kha) with his eightfold retinue from 1392-1395. The color yellow was chosen to distinguish the group from the red hats worn by other lamas; therefore, Chahar Geshé marks this time as the beginning of Tsongkhapa's independent tradition. See Blo-bzaṅ-tshul-khrims and Kaschewsky, *Das Leben Des Lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa Blo-Bzan-Grags-Pa (1357-1419), Dargestelt Und Erläutert Anhand Seiner Vita: Quellort Allen Glückes*, 95. Numerous figures in Tibet have been considered to be emanations of particular buddhas and bodhisattvas. Those who are best known for their erudition are often considered emanations of Mañjuśrī, the *bodhisattva* of wisdom.

[99] The *Lam rim chen mo* or *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path* is perhaps Tsongkhapa's most influential work, and one of the most influential works in the entire Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Consisting of three volumes in its English translation, it is a comprehensive and detailed treatise on the stages of the path to enlightenment. For an English translation, see Tsong-kha-pa 2000. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, 3 vols., ed. Joshua W. C. Cutler and Guy Newland, trans. The Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2000). The *Sngags rim chen mo* or *Great Treatise on the Stages of Mantra* is a parallel work on the classes and stages of Buddhist Tantra. Portions of this work have been translated by Jeffrey Hopkins and Thomas F. Yarnall. See: (1) Tsong kha pa, *Tantra in Tibet: The Great Exposition of Secret Mantra*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1977); (2) Tsong kha pa, *Deity Yoga: In Action and Performance Tantra* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1987); (3) D̄zong-ka-b̄a, *Yoga Tantra: Paths to Magical Feats*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Boulder, CO: Snow Lion Publications, 2005); and (4) Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa, *Great Treatise on the Stages of Mantra: Chapters XIXII (The Creation Stage)*, trans. Thomas F. Yarnall. (New York, NY: American Institute for Buddhist Studies, 2013.

[100] See Watt, "Teacher: Tsongkapa, Five Forms," 2019 for a number of images. Although many of the images are undated, some date from as early as the seventeenth century and are drawn from both Tibet and Mongolia.

painting—and belying the dominant conception of the Geluk tradition—there is another form that is generally given the central position: his form as a *mahāsiddha* (Tibetan: *grub chen*), an accomplished yogin or "great adept" of Buddhist Tantra. This image of Tsongkhapa incorporates several iconographic elements of the *mahāsiddha*: he is red in color, wears the loincloth of a yogi, is adorned with bone-ornaments, and holds a skull-cup filled with nectar.[101] Riding a tiger and depicted with bulging eyes, this form of Tsongkhapa evinces the power of a tantric adept, an enlightened being with the power to perform magical feats. The central position of this form in Tibetan paintings is suggestive, as it places a fierce *mahāsiddha* at the center and locates peaceful forms of Tsongkhapa on the periphery. In doing so, the composition suggests that Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha* is a central—or perhaps preeminent—aspect of his religious identity for followers of his Geluk tradition.[102] However, most scholarly accounts of Tsongkhapa and the Geluk tradition tend to omit this aspect of his identity.

Existing Accounts of the Early Patronage of the Gelukpa

The inaugural Great Prayer Festival and the founding of Ganden Monastery both required an extraordinary amount of wealth and manpower. The Great Prayer Festival involved renovations and additions to several temples in Lhasa, with artisans hired to restore sculptures and artwork. Along with fresh layers of gold leaf and silk robes, ornate and

[101] For English descriptions of this encounter, see Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 117-18 and 146.
[102] It is difficult to come to broad conclusions regarding the popularity of these images, or the social contexts in which they were produced and displayed. According to (Ngawang Sonam, email to author, April 5, 2022), these images are common in Geluk monasteries, there are multiple sets of these images at Ganden Monastery, and several are exhibited in the main temple during the rainy-season retreat (*dbyar gnas*).

jeweled crowns of gold and silver were offered to the main icons of the Jokhang temple. Liturgical texts were prepared and many butter lamps, prayer flags, *tormas*, and water bowls were offered.[103] The foundation of Ganden also required the construction of a main temple, an assembly-hall, a residence for Tsongkhapa, and some seventy monks' cells (as well as the foundations for one hundred more), all in a location chosen for its relative remoteness. Additional buildings were added in the following years, with Yangpachen Temple (Yangs pa can gtsug lag khang) completed in 1417, and a temple to house the *stūpa* containing Tsongkhapa's remains in 1420. These buildings contained numerous images, statues, and *stūpas* built of gold, silver, bronze, and copper, many of which were also ornamented with silk and various jewels. As the ruler of central Tibet and the chief patron of these projects, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen's largesse played an essential role in the birth of the Geluk tradition. As a result, the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617-1682) characterized their relationship in this way: "the two—the Pakmodru [ruler] and the teachings of the Conqueror Tsongkhapa—share one life force."[104]

Although it was the Gongma and his governors that were responsible for much of this expenditure, a number of influential Tibetan works completely omit any mention of Tsongkhapa's patrons for these two major projects, giving the impression that Tsongkhapa and his disciples accomplished them on their own. These include the earliest "secret

[103] These details are gleaned from Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 237–49; see the related notes for information on his numerous Tibetan sources. A *torma* (*gtor ma*) is an offering of food to propitiate a deity, often made from barley flour and butter in Tibet.

[104] The Tibetan phrase *phag mo gru pa'i sde srid dang rgyal ba btsong kha pa'i bstan pa gnyis srog gcig lta bur 'dug* is cited in Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 43.

biographies" (*gsang ba'i rnam thar*)[105] of Tsongkhapa, as well as many of the most influential "religious histories" of the Geluk tradition.[106] In large part, this omission is a matter of genre, as these types of work tend to focus on religious matters, and not on worldly details such as patronage.[107] This omission is also a result of the majority of these accounts being composed by Gelukpa disciples, whose approach to history is similar to the "Great Man" theory of history put forth by Thomas Carlysle.[108] These authors appear to take Tsongkhapa's greatness—and thus his ability to establish major projects—for granted. Mirroring these Tibetan works, a number of English language accounts—whether biographies of Tsongkhapa or broader historical accounts—echo this silence.[109] Some of

[105] For one Tibetan account, see Dge legs dpal bzang, "Tsong kha pa'i gsang ba'i rnam thar rgya mtsho lta bu las cha shas nyung ngu zhig yongs su brjod pa'i gtam rin po che'i snye ma" (hereafter *Cluster of Precious Tales*), in *The Collected Works (Gsung 'bum) of the Incomparable Lord Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa*, Zhol, vol. Ka (New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Guru Deva, 1978), 186.

[106] See the following: (1) George N. Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, vol. I&II (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949), 1077.; (2) Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *Bka' gdams chos 'byung gsal ba'i sgron me* (hereafter Lechen's *Kadam History*) (Lha sa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2003), 697–700.; (3) Mkhar nag lo tsA ba dpal 'byor rgya mtsho, *Mkhar nag chos 'byung* (hereafter *Kharnak History*) (Lha sa: Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang, 2016), 19.; (4) Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Dga' ldan chos 'byung bai ḍūr ya ser po* (hereafter *Baiḍūrya Serpo*), (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 1998), 67.; (5) Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 5–7.; (6) Ye shes rgyal mtshan, *Lam rim bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 1990), 309, 364. However, elsewhere Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Baiḍūrya Serpo*, 66 does mention the governor of Né-u (Sne'u) being instructed by Tsongkhapa to "make preparations" for the Great Prayer Festival.

[107] As described by Ary, the purpose of secret biographies "is to recount the most intimate details of the hero's spiritual life: the aspects he would have kept secret (dreams, premonitions, meditative and visionary experiences, spiritual attainments, and so on) from all save his closest teachers and associates." Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 2. Religious histories in Tibet tend to be structured as biographies of religious figures arranged in lineages of descent (such as lineages of the abbots of institutions, of particular practices or teachings, or of teacher-disciple relationships). For more on Tibetan biographies and historiography, see van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Historiography," and Marta Sernesi, "Biography and Hagiography: Tibet," in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume I: Literature and Languages*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 734–43.

[108] As has been observed by Jinpa: "In interpreting Tsongkhapa's life and legacy, the traditional Tibetan biographies tend to adopt what Thomas Carlyle called the Great Man theory, which emphasizes a focus on the individual heroic leader. This view is summed up by Carlyle's famous statement, 'The history of the world is but the biography of great men.'" Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 14.

[109] These biographies include: (a) Alexander Berzin and Tsenzhab Serkong Rinpoche II, "The Life of Tsongkhapa," Study Buddhism, n.d., https://studybuddhism.com/en/tibetan-buddhism/spiritual-

these accounts are explicitly written for an audience of devotees. Others are based upon statements by Gelukpa texts or the oral teachings of Geluk teachers; as a result, they mimic the interest of these Gelukpa works and teachers by focusing on the "great deeds" of Tsongkhapa. In either case, these sources shed little light on the matter.

There are also a number of Tibetan and English-language accounts that provide the patrons nominal acknowledgement, albeit without providing much rationale for their support. These include a pair of important biographies of Tsongkhapa by his disciples Khedrubjé and Tokden Jampel Gyatso (Rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho, 1356-1428), a pair of influential political histories by the prominent later Gelukpa figures Panchen Sönam Drakpa (Paṇ chen bsod nams grags pa, 1478-1554) and the fifth Dalai Lama, and a religious history also composed by Panchen Sönam Drakpa. Within these works, the following figures are named as patrons for the establishment of the Great Prayer Festival and/or Ganden Monastery: (1) Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen; (2) the governor of the district of Né-u, Drungchen/Pön Namkha Sangpo (Drung chen/Dpon Nam mkha' bzang po, r. ca. 1400-1430); (3) the governor of Dragkar (Brag dkar) Drungchen Rinchen Pel (Drung chen rin chen dpal, dates unknown); and (4) the assemblies of great men, patrons, and son-like disciples from monasteries such as

teachers/tsongkhapa/the-life-of-tsongkhapa; (b) Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 28-29; (c) Joona Repo, "Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa," The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Tibet, Inner Asia and the Himalayan Region, 2011, https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Tsongkhapa-Lobzang-Drakpa/8986; and (d) Geshe Sonam Rinchen, "Lama Tsongkhapa," Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive, accessed April 20, 2021, https://www.lamayeshe.com/teacher/lama-tsongkhapa. (Sonam Rinchen 2010). Broader historical accounts include: (a) Thomas Laird, *The Story of Tibet: Conversations with the Dalai Lama* (New York: Grove Press, 2006), 125; and (b) John Powers, *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism*, Revised (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 473-74.

Drikung, Reting (Rwa sgreng), and Ölka/the people of Drikung and Lhasa, as well as many faithful and fortunate [lay]people from the regions of Ü, Amdo, and Kham.[110]

Although these works name Tsongkhapa's patrons, they tend to offer terse and generic explanations for their patronage (when any explanation is given at all). These modes of explanation include a desire to create positive karma,[111] a general feeling of faith in Tsongkhapa (on the part of laypeople from wide swathes of Tibet,[112] or the existence of a personal student-teacher relationship with Tsongkhapa.[113] However, these works do not explicate precisely what precipitated this faith or student-teacher relationship. As before,

[110] According to Khedrubjé, Pön Namkha Sangpowa (and his nephew) prepared for the Great Prayer Festival by renovating buildings in Lhasa and preparing the required offerings for the festival. He also sent envoys to travel around and call for faith-offerings from the "assemblies of great men, patrons, and son-like disciples" (*mi chen yon bdag bu slob kyi tshogs*) from monasteries such as Drikung, Reting, and Ölka. Gongma or (Mi dbang) Drakpa Gyeltsen was also given instructions by Tsongkhapa and generated limitless faith-offerings. Lastly, Tsongkhapa himself and his disciples began to save up whatever donations came into their hands and dedicated the majority for the Great Prayer Festival. As for the founding of Ganden, it is credited to "individual governors, patrons, and son-like disciples" (*sde ba* (=*sde pa*) *dang yon bdag bu slob so so*). Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 85-86, 91, 95-96) According to Tokden Jampel Gyatso, Drungchen Namkha Sangpo (under the epithet Sne'u pa) provided many necessities for the Great Prayer Festival. Credit is also given to laypeople in the regions of Ü, Amdo, and Kham, as well as a group of people termed *'bri ldan rnams*. Rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho, "Rje btsun tsong kha pa'i rnam thar chen mo'i zur 'debs rnam thar legs bshad kun 'dus" (hereafter *Supplementary Biography*) in *The Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of the Incomparable Lord Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, vol. Ka (New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Guru Deva, 1978), 163. This phrase is difficult to interpret. In general, Tibetan historians take it as a reference to two different places. I tentatively take it as a reference to people of Drikung ('Bri gung) Monastery and Lhasa (also known as Lha ldan). Alternatively, Jinpa (Jinpa 2019: 457, n. 636) opines that Ldan may refer to the Pakmodru monastery of Densatil (Gdan sa mthil). Jinpa, Tsongkhapa, 457, n. 636. Panchen Sönam Drakpa gives credit to both Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen and Drungchen Namkha Sangpo for patronizing the Great Prayer Festival. PaN chen bsod nams grags pa, *Bka' gdams chos 'byung* (hereafter *History of the Old and New Kadam Tradition*) (Lha sa: Ser gtsug nang bstan dpe rnying 'tshol bsdu phyogs sgrig khang, n.d.), 73. Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*, 216. The Fifth Dalai Lama credits the Gongma and governor Namkha Sangpo for patronizing the Great Prayer Festival, whereas the governor of Dragkar is described as the "most important patron" of Tsongkhapa, one who "got together all the necessities" for the founding of Ganden. Ṅag-dBaṅ Blo-bZaṅ rGya-mTSHo, *A History of Tibet*, 148, 173, 175-76) Notably, neither Tokden Jampel Gyatso nor Panchen Sönam Drakpa name any patrons behind the founding of Ganden.

[111] Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*, 216.

[112] Rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho, *Supplementary Biography*, 163.

[113] Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*, 240-41. Ṅag-dBaṅ Blo-bZaṅ rGya-mTSHo, *A History of Tibet*, 175-6.

several English language accounts mirror these Tibetan sources, offering descriptive accounts of patronage that offer terse analyses (at best). For instance, McCleary and van der Kuijp state that "the relationship between the Phagmodru ruler, the secular political authority, and Tsongkapa, the religious teacher, was a personal one between preceptor and donor."[114] Czaja attributes the patronage (in part) to faith in Tsongkhapa's "charismatic personality."[115] Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle describe Tsongkhapa and his students as "astute organizers who used lay patronage to establish both important public rituals and major monastic colleges."[116] These accounts lack explanatory power and specificity, as they do not provide specific evidence for why the Gongma (or his governors) developed this faith or personal relationship with Tsongkhapa, nor why so many laypeople chose to open their purses (regardless of the skill of Geluk monks in organization).[117] Similarly terse accounts are also found in a number of historical accounts.[118] As a whole, these English and Tibetan language accounts fail to offer specific and detailed explanations for Pakmodru patronage of Tsongkhapa's major works.

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[114] McCleary and van der Kuijp, "The Market Approach," 160.

[115] Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*, 218.

[116] Schaeffer, Kapstein, and Tuttle, *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, 523.

[117] One author that does offer an explanation is Jinpa, who argues that the relationship between Tsongkhapa and the Gongma was "sealed" by shared affection for the deceased Pakmodru ruler Drakpa Jangchub (Grags pa byang chub, 1356-1386, r. 1374-1381), whose official poetic biography was composed by Tsongkhapa at the request of the Gongma. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 65-66. Although insightful, in my view this explanation does not capture the full nature of their relationship.

[118] These works include: (a) Sam van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 104; (b) John Powers and David Templeman, *Historical Dictionary of Tibet*, 2nd ed (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020), 505; (c) Tsepon W. D. Shakabpa, *Tibet: A Political History* (New York: Potala Publications, 1984), 85; (d) Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons: An Advanced Political History of Tibet*, trans. Derek F. Maher, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 246-47, 268-69; and (e) Wylie, "Monastic Patronage."

As one attempt to fill this void, a number of influential European or American scholars have proffered social and political modes of explanation that tend to focus on two themes: (1) the confluence of common interests and shared geography between Pakmodrupa patrons and the Gelukpa, and (2) the positive Pakmodrupa view of Tsongkhapa's emphasis on ethics (in particular, the monastic code of the *vinaya*) and scholastic education. In terms of the first, the relationship between the Gelukpa and Pakmodrupa has been construed as one in a series of pragmatic alliances between noble families and monastic centers;[119] as the result of Gelukpa neutrality in existing animosities;[120] as reflecting an Ü-based alliance against Tsang-based polities and religious groups;[121] as a joint attempt to assert control over Lhasa and its Jokhang Temple;[122] and as a source of social unity among Pakmodru nobles.[123]

[119] David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson have argued that "throughout this whole period there was continual interplay of alliances between the lay successors of the once powerful noble families and the prelates of the growing network of Buddhist monastic centres. Each used the other as an ally for its own ends." David L. Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet* (Bangkok: Orchid Press, 2003), 154.

[120] Snellgrove and Richardson argue that Lhasa-area nobility and laypeople supported Tsongkhapa because he represented a neutral space (both geographically and politically); just as Lhasa represented a "sort of border zone between the old religious rivals, 'Bri-khung and Sa-skya," Tsongkhapa's nascent tradition "was as yet taking no part in the political rivalries of the day." Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History*, 181.

[121] R. A. Stein has argued that "the fact that [the] chief monasteries [of the Gelukpa] were situated in Ü reinforced this closeness [with the Pakmodrupas] through the territorial opposition between the forces of Ü and Tsang [such as the Sakyapa]." R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, trans. J.E. Stapleton Driver (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1972), 80-81. Tucci echoes this point: "[Pakmodru] princes had favoured the new school since its beginnings, and little by little they had become its patrons, probably owing to the monastery's proximity to their castle and to the pressure of common interests." Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 44.

[122] Emphasizing the symbolic importance of Lhasa's Jokhang temple, DiValerio has argued that supporting a new sect based around Lhasa allowed the Pakmodru regime to "promote unity and make a symbolic assertion of its hegemony" over the region. DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen*, 124-25.

[123] As Czaja argues, "the support of the then most promising religious movement whose foundation was laid by Tsong kha pa was surely influenced by faith in this charismatic personality, but at the same time it was a way to enter the religio-political landscape of Lha sa. Additionally, it was a bond tying his officers, whose noble houses were formerly, during the time of the *ta'i si tu* Byang chub rgyal mtshan, assessed on their loyalty on the basis of military success and career (and later by the right of appointment), by a new link, namely the shared support for one religious leader." Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 218.

Although insightful to a large degree, these modes of explanation leave some questions unanswered. For instance, if the main goal of the Pakmodru nobles was to strengthen their alliances and bolster their control over the Lhasa region, why did they not simply establish new monasteries belonging to their own Pakmodru religious tradition?[124] If their goal was to support institutions that promote monastic ethics and social morality, why did they not do so at their own existing monasteries (such as Densatil and Tsetang [Rtsed thang]), or at existing monasteries in central Tibet with specialties in those areas?[125] Why incur the sizable expense of supporting Tsongkhapa and founding new institutions at all? This last question points to a broader issue with this mode of explanation, which is that it overlooks the testimony of Tibetan historical sources, which we have seen emphasize the importance of faith and the personal relationship between Tsongkhapa and the nobles of the Pakmodrupa. Lastly, as I will argue below, the suggestion that Tsongkhapa was a neutral and passive observer of political events is inaccurate; rather, it was his active support of Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen that was a central factor in earning the latter's support.

A second mode of explanation focuses on the positive Pakmodrupa view of Tsongkhapa's emphasis on ethics and scholastic education. For instance, Stein has suggested: "It was [the Geluk tradition's] reforming side, its insistence on discipline, that set the

[124] Along with being a political dynasty founded by Tai Situ Jangchub Gyeltsen in 1354, Pakmodru also refers to a branch of the Kagyu (Bka' rgyud) school of Tibetan Buddhism, established by Pakmodrupa Dorjé Gyelpo (Phag mo gru pa rdo rje rgyal po, 1110-1170), who founded Densatil (Gdan sa mthil) Monastery in 1158.

[125] For instance, Per Sørensen and Sonam Dolma describe Sangpu (Gsang phu ne'u thog), Dewachen (Bde ba can), Chökor Ling (Chos 'khor gling), Zulpu (Zul phu), Kyormolung (Skyor mo lung), and Gawadong (Dga' ba gdong) as "the true centres of erudition and scholasticism in Tibet" ca. 1400 CE. Among these, Kyormolung was especially known as a center for *vinaya* study. Per K. Sørensen and Sonam Dolma, *Rare Texts from Tibet: Seven Sources for the Ecclesiastic History of Medieval Tibet* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2007), 24.

movement's tone and political direction.[126] Its affinity with the early [Kadampas, Bka' gdams pa] drew it towards the [Pakmodrupas]." In a similar vein, Snellgrove and Richardson surmise that the Gelukpa insistence on "the observance of strict monastic discipline, may well have appealed to many who were critical of the apparent worldliness of the older established orders."[127] Extending this argument to an exaggerated degree, Tucci asserts that the older sects had become rich, lazy, and self-satisfied, leading to their downfall.[128] Incorporating the importance of education, Suzanne Bessenger has argued that Tsongkhapa and the Pakmodrupas "may have shared many goals, such as emphases on instituting formal education systems for monastics and on reforming monastic (and, relatedly, social) morality."[129]

Both of these modes of explanation—the confluence of common interests and the importance of ethics and education—have been given fullest expression by Matthew Kapstein:

> The Pakmodrupa regime was strongly concerned to promote clerical education and is famed for having established the first dialectical colleges within the Kagyüpa orders. Tsongkhapa's passion for Buddhist learning, with which he inspired countless followers, was therefore shared by the political leadership. The Pakmodrupa were also interested in law, and like most

[126] Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, 80-81.

[127] Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History*, 181.

[128] As Tucci writes, "In every clime the people are fascinated by new ideas; the Tibetans saw with joy that the stolid formalism of the sects and the corrupt monkish life, were being shaken by a surge of new life, a healthy spirit; in their hopeful credulity they therefore listened to the miracles of the Ye šes mgon po, the yi dam of the dGe lugs pa, who protected the sect and Tibet together." Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 42. Although exaggerated in tone, one major strength of Tucci's argument is that it acknowledges the religious factors—here, the faith of the Tibetan people in the magical efficacy of Geluk deities—that were and remain hugely important within Tibetan religious culture.

[129] Suzanne M. Bessenger, *Echoes of Enlightenment: The Life and Legacy of the Tibetan Saint Sönam Peldren* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 20.

> Tibetan Buddhists they believed that the law's ideal basis was Buddhist morality. The emphasis in Tsongkhapa's teaching on strict adherence to monastic regulations and to the ethical guidelines of the Mahayana comported well with their desire to reinforce clerical and public mores. In short, Tsongkhapa was a living exemplar of the very values the Pakmodrupa regime sought to uphold.[130]

According to this analysis, it was Tsongkhapa's shared passions—for learning and for strict adherence to Buddhist morality—that led to his support by the Pakmodrupa regime. This analysis has been cited favorably by David DiValerio and Brenton Sullivan.[131] This influential mode of explanation is also one in which the aforementioned one-sided characterization of the Geluk tradition (i.e., as clerical) is readily apparent.

Rather than the result of a pragmatic political alliance, the Tibetan sources explain Pakmodru patronage of Tsongkhapa as the result of personal religious faith, or relatedly, to the existence of a student-teacher relationship. Tokden Jampel Gyatso uses the phrase "faith offering" (*dad 'bul*) to refer to the fundraising performed prior to the Great Prayer Festival by laypeople from Ü, Amdo, and Kham.[132] Khedrubjé's biography of Tsongkhapa uses the similar phrase "faith collection" (*dad bslangs*) to refer to the fundraising performed by

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[130] Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetans* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 120-21.

[131] According to DiValerio: "The Pakmodru regime took a shine to Tsongkhapa and played a decisive role as patron of the overachieving monk and his disciples, effectively bringing a new sect to life. As has been widely observed, there seems to have been a strategic intent behind this relationship. Tsongkhapa's conservative religious system appealed to the Pakmodrupas as a means to promote a rule of law based on Buddhist morality." DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen*, 122. The phrases "took a shine" and "widely observed" epitomize the lack of specificity and repetitive nature of this mode of explanation. Sullivan also cites Kapstein approvingly, prefacing it by saying: "the conservative and rule- and procedure-oriented Geluk school may have appealed to the Mongol leaders who patronized the Geluk school in much the same way that the teachings of the founder of the Geluk school in the fourteenth century appealed to the most important political power in Central Tibet from that time." Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire*, 13. As I argue in this paper, this assertion overlooks the importance of Gelukpa magical efficacy in appealing to both Pakmodru and Mongol leaders.

[132] Rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho, *Supplementary Biography*, 163.

regional patrons (such as the governor of Dragkar) and the neighboring communities of monks and laity for the founding of Ganden.[133] In line with prior modes of explanation, it is certainly true that this faith resulted in part from admiration for Tsongkhapa's erudition and virtue, qualities that the Pakmodrupa wished to promote in both monastic communities and Tibetan society at large. It is also true that the location of the major Geluk monasteries around Lhasa came to play a large role in Gelukpa and Pakmodru influence in the region, in opposition to Tsang-based polities and religious groups. However, I believe a central part of the picture is still missing. For instance, according to Panchen Sönam Drakpa, when Tsongkhapa was planning to perform the inaugural Great Prayer Festival, "he gave the instruction that it was a *mandatory* faith offering (*dad 'bul dgos pa'i zhal ta gnang*) to his patrons, who were led by the two: the lord Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen and his minister Drungchen Namkha Sangpo."[134] What was the nature of their faith in him, that Tsongkhapa did not request, but could *demand* their patronage for his major works? As I will argue, it was Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha*—a status mediated by his relationship with Lhodrak Drubchen—that played a central role in his being accorded this level of fealty.

Patronage and the Perception of Magical Efficacy

Religious institutions cannot flourish in the absence of social and economic support. In virtually every Buddhist culture, one key strategy for garnering this support has been the

[133] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 96. The full expression is *phyogs kyi yon bdag dang nye skor gyi ban skya'i sde ba thams cad kyis dad bslangs sogs tshad med pa dga' spro dang bcas pas bsgrubs*. The precise meaning of *dad blangs sogs* ("faith collection and so forth") is unclear, particularly what *sogs* ("and so forth") indicates in this context.

[134] Paṇ chen bsod nams grags pa, *History of the Old and New Kadam Tradition*, 73. Italics added for emphasis.

display of magical powers, a display which has the ability to engender faith in all manner of beings, from laypeople, to political rulers, to the gods themselves.[135] Although the precise terminology and descriptions of the exact types of powers vary, in general the possession of magical powers in Buddhist contexts is considered a mark of sanctity and the result of successful religious practice.[136] Over the centuries, numerous Buddhist figures—from the Buddha and his disciples in Mainstream Buddhism, to the *bodhisattvas* of the early Mahāyāna, to the *mahāsiddhas* of the Vajrayāna—have been depicted as adepts in magical feats, which they use to win over devotees, demonstrate the superiority of the Buddhist tradition, or accomplish various goals (both worldly and soteriological).[137] Indicating the importance of magical powers to winning patronage, there are numerous accounts in which Buddhists have competed with representatives of other traditions in competitions of magical

[135] For an in-depth study of Buddhist magic, see Sam van Schaik, *Buddhist Magic: Divination, Healing, and Enchantment through the Ages* (Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications, 2020). For various accounts of the display of magical powers (to humans, kings, and even the gods), see Phyllis Granoff, "The Ambiguity of Miracles: Buddhist Understandings of Supernatural Power," *East and West* 46, no. 1/2 (June 1996): 79–96. For the purposes of this chapter, I am reading descriptions of magical powers in Tibetan historical sources as straightforward descriptions of the perspectives of Buddhist authors. I am not interested in "demythologizing" these descriptions in an attempt to recover a historicist account. I am also not attempting to "remythologize" these accounts to see how they "work" on the imagination of readers. Without denying that accounts of magical powers can perform work on readers or be read fruitfully as the output of the historical concerns of their authors, I think this way of thinking about descriptions of magic misses a fundamental point: some people believe in magic, some people engage in magic, and some people write about it for these reasons alone.

[136] Sanskrit terms that have been used for magical abilities in Buddhist sources over time include *abhijñā*, *ṛddhi*, *prātihārya*, *vidyā*, and *siddhi*. Various terms have been used to translate such abilities, such as miracle, magic, supranormal, superhuman, supramundane, superknowlege, etc. For an overview of these powers in Buddhist accounts, see: (1) David V. Fiordalis, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature" (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 2008). In a Buddhist context, Phyllis Granoff has described the way in which the Buddha is said to share certain magic powers with the gods (*devas*) and various rival ascetics, stating that "it was believed that any religious practitioner who had reached a certain state of cultivation possessed supernatural powers or *iddhi*." See Granoff, "The Ambiguity of Miracles," 81.

[137] For accounts in early Indian Buddhism, see David V. Fiordalis, "Miracles in Indian Buddhist Narratives and Doctrine," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 33, no. 1–2 (2011 2010): 381–408 and Granoff, "The Ambiguity of Miracles,"1996. For a Mahāyāna account, see Fiordalis, "Miracles in Indian Buddhist Narratives," 390, n.22.

efficacy, in which the winner received patronage and devotion from onlookers. By showing that one could perform magical feats, one was also showing that one had the power to effect (or to hinder) the goals of one's patrons, in particular those of the wealthy and powerful. As a result, Buddhist figures have used these powers to gain patronage since the earliest days of the tradition.

It is also important to note that magical power is only one among a constellation of qualities possessed by the Buddhist saint that gives him or her the ability to inspire faith and win patronage. Within one early and influential source, the *Kevaṭṭasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, the Buddha declares that there are three kinds of miracles (Pāli: *pāṭihāriya*): (1) the miracle of magical powers (*iddhi-pāṭihāriya*), (2) the miracle of telepathy (*ādesanā-pāṭihāriya*), and (3) the miracle of instructing [others in the Dharma] (*anusāsanī-pāṭihāriya*).[138] It is noteworthy that here, magical powers—such as flying through the air—are placed alongside rational activities—such as teaching Buddhist doctrine—as kinds of miracle. One way this has been understood by influential Buddhist exegetes, such as Vasubandhu (fl. ca. fourth or fifth centuries CE), is that teaching the Dharma properly "is the best form of miracle, because it provides evidence of true sainthood, being based on knowledge of the true nature of reality."[139] Specifically, this means that the miraculous ability to teach the Dharma is an outworking of the magical powers one acquires during the course of becoming enlightened, such as remembering one's past and future lives, gaining insight into the destinies of all

[138] Fiordalis, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature," 386.

[139] Fiordalis, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers in South Asian Buddhist Literature," 389.

beings, and gaining the knowledge that one has put an end to one's defilements and achieved liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

Thus, for the Buddhist saint, the possession of magical powers is often coextensive with other important qualities such as virtue (exemplified by the morality of the Buddhist monk) and erudition (exemplified by the ability to teach the dharma). And, though erudition and virtue have been used to describe Tsongkhapa's winning of patronage, the importance of his magical power has been omitted in existing historical analyses. However, this emphasis on Tsongkhapa's magical power is not meant to deny the importance of these other qualities; rather, these various qualities are better understood as being linked and complementary, rather than being categorically distinct.[140] Within the Buddhist worldview, virtue, erudition, and magical power are all qualities that can be unlocked as the Buddhist saint progresses along the Buddhist path, resulting in the influx of devotion and patronage.

However, one unique benefit to having the power to perform magical feats is the ability to effect the goals of one's patrons. Starting in the latter centuries of the first millennium of the common era in India, this power was the hallmark of tantric religious

[140] For instance, in terms of the link between virtue and patronage, the Tibetan historian Tāranātha (1575-1634) states that the famed Buddhist poet Mātṛceṭa (first century CE) was so "exceedingly virtuous" that the donations he received from the laity during his alms-rounds enabled him to support five hundred monks. Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, ed., *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, trans. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990), 134. Here, it is the perception of virtue itself that leads to patronage. However, virtue can also be a source of magical power, for instance, when a virtuous person uses the power of an "act of truth" (*satyavacana*) to perform a magical feat. According to the Milindapañha, King Sibi was able to use an act of truth to regain his sight after giving away his eyes, a power that was the result of his cultivation (*bhāvanā*) of Buddhist virtues. For the narrative itself, see Granoff, "The Ambiguity of Miracles," 84. For Nāgasena's explanation, see Fiordalis, "Miracles and Superhuman Powers," 103. In terms of the link between erudition, magical power, and patronage, Tāranātha states that the famed monk-scholar Asaṅga (fl. fifth century CE) is said to have impressed a king with both his clairvoyance and knowledge of doctrine; the king then established a number of Buddhist Mahāyāna communities. Chattopadhyaya, *Tāranātha's History*, 162-64.

figures. In particular, the religion of Śaivism had great success in becoming "the principal faith of the elites in large parts of the Indian subcontinent and in both mainland and insular Southeast Asia."[141] According to Alexis Sanderson's analysis, the greatest factor in their success was their ability to forge "close links with the institution of kingship and thereby with the principal source of patronage," which was accomplished in part by "the provision of a repertoire of protective, therapeutic, and aggressive rites for the benefit of the monarch and his kingdom."[142] In Sanderson's analysis, it was because tantric Śaiva officiants were viewed as the most able to effect the goals of rulers that they were able to win patronage, at the expense of both Brahmanical and Buddhist figures.[143] The inability to compete with Śaiva officiants for patronage from militaristic rulers was thus a major impetus for the development of Buddhist Tantra.[144]

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[141] Alexis Sanderson, "Religion and the State: Śaiva Officiants in the Territory of the King's Brahmanical Chaplain," *Indo-Iranian Journal,* 47, no. 3 (2004): 231.

[142] Sanderson describes this as one of four elements leading to their success. The full list is: "(1) the occupying by Śaiva officiants of the office of Royal Preceptor (*rājaguruḥ*) and in this position their giving Śaiva initiation (*dīkṣā*) to the monarch followed by a specially modified version of the Śaiva consecration ritual (*abhiṣekaḥ*) as an empowerment to rule beyond that conferred by the conventional brahmanical royal consecration (*rājyābhiṣekaḥ*); (2) the promoting by Śaiva officiants of the practice of displaying and legitimating a dynasty's power by their officiating in the founding of Śaiva temples in which the new Śivas that they enshrined bore as the individuating first half of their names that of the royal founder or, where complexes of royal Śiva temples were established, those of the founder and any kin that he might designate for this purpose; (3) the provision of a repertoire of protective, therapeutic and aggressive rites for the benefit of the monarch and his kingdom; and (4) the development of Śaiva rituals and their applications to enable a specialized class of Śaiva officiants to encroach on the territory of the Rājapurohita, the brahmanical expert in the rites of the Atharvaveda who served as the personal priest of the king, warding off all manner of ills from him through apotropaic rites, using sorcery to attack his enemies, fulfilling the manifold duties of regular and occasional worship on his behalf, and performing the funerary and other postmortuary rites when he or other members of the royal family died." Sanderson, "Religion and the State," 232-33.

[143] For instance, Ronald Davidson has observed that "from the seventh century on, wherever there is Śaiva patronage, Buddhist institutions withered, especially in the Deccan and in the Kṛṣṇa and Godāvarī River valleys. Between the Chāḷukyas, the Pallavas, the Gaṅgas, and the Rāṣṭrakūṭas, the entire range of area between Mukhaliṅgam, Kāñcī, and Vātāpi were largely dominated by aggressively Śaiva monarchs." Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism,* 90.

[144] In this vein, Davidson has argued that "overall, Buddhist institutions could not effectively compete for patronage from militaristic princes, who increasingly found that they were best represented by Śaiva values and

According to Ronald Davidson, the development of Buddhist Tantra was also a direct response to the feudalization of Indian society in the post-Gupta era (i.e., after the late sixth century CE). This was a period of decentralization and continual conflict, with a culture of military adventurism leading to the coalescence of fiefdoms, as well as the destabilization of the merchant guilds that had long been essential supporters of Buddhism.[145] This period also witnessed numerous instances of interreligious violence and religious persecution.[146] In response, Indian Buddhists developed a system of tantric ritual, myth, and practice that would both suit the violent tenor of the times, and appeal to militaristic political rulers. This system sacralized both the Buddhist tantric practitioner and the king as overlords of a *mandala* of vessels, a system in which violence and subjugation are legitimated.[147] The appeal of this system for political rulers is apparent in its influence and spread across Asia, from the Pāla Dynasty of Northeast India, to the court of the Tangut Empire, to the consecration ceremony of the emperor in Japan.[148]

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rhetoric. Śaiva systems made allowance for forms of behavior that Buddhist syntheses could not support, since even the most syncretic Buddhist systems were not as open to negotiation about issues of violence, power, and self-aggrandizement as were the medieval Śaiva representatives." Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 86. For more on Śaiva influence on the development of Buddhist tantra, see Alexis Sanderson, "Vajrayāna: Origin and Function," in *Buddhism into the Year 2000* (Bangkok: Dhammakāya Foundation, 1995), 89–102.

[145] Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 77.

[146] Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 192.

[147] For Davidson, one of the most significant aspects of Buddhist Tantra is the tantric practitioner being construed as an "overlord" (*rājādhirāja*), with the tantric *maṇḍala* emulating the form of the "predatory feudal system" of isolated segmentary kingdoms, while subverting its goals (towards religious, rather than political ends. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 114, 132. Davidson also underscores the significance of the language of violence, subjugating, and conquering in the foundational tantric myth of Maheśvara, as well as the fact that one Buddhist Tantra explicitly states that the vajra is given "to tame those insufferable beings harming the Dharma and to kill those afflicted with anger." Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 152, 126.

[148] One Tibetan source (*Sba bzhed*) indicates that a special *caitya* was set up in front of a Pāla king's palace, in order to pacify the enemies of the king. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 111. The role of Tiśrī Repa in the Tangut court will be discussed below. In Japan, tantric rituals were involved in what has been described as the "buddhisization of the emperorship" in Japan, as envisaged by Kūkai (774-835), the founder of the Shingon

In this tantric world, the *mahāsiddha* is the ideal Buddhist figure. Found across Indian tantric religious traditions, the *siddha* has a long and rich history. Literally meaning an "accomplished one," a *siddha* is a tantric adept who has accomplished the *siddhis* or "attainments" of tantric practice. Within Buddhist sources, these attainments are generally divided into "common attainments" (*sādhāraṇa*) and the "uncommon" (*asādhāraṇa*) or "supreme" attainment (*uttama siddhi*) of Buddhahood.[149] The common attainments are those that are shared by both Buddhist and non-Buddhist practitioners, and include various magical powers such as the ability to fly, walk through walls, and find buried treasure.[150] The supreme attainment of Buddhahood is uncommon in that it can only be achieved by Buddhists via the Buddhist path.

As the ideal figures of Buddhist tantra, the *mahāsiddhas* possess both types of *siddhi* and thus are regarded as both enlightened beings and as possessing various magical powers. Due to their power, they inspire faith and devotion (if not fear and respect) from all levels of society. It is this power that makes the tantric practitioner a powerbroker, who has the power to bolster—or to undermine—the sovereignty of political rulers. Indicating the appeal of this new system to political rulers, Davidson has observed that "there appears no exception to the

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school of esoteric Buddhism. In return for receiving secret *mantras* and *mudrās* during his coronation (*abhiṣeka*), the emperor was transformed into a *cakravartin*, "the ideal virtuous ruler and the exemplary lay Buddhist patron of the Saṅgha." Ryūichi Abé, *The Weaving of Mantra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 360-62.

[149] Also called "mundane" (*laukika*) and "supramundane" (*lokottara*).

[150] According to the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, there are two "mundane" *siddhi*: invisibility and clairvoyance, along with the "supramundane" *siddhi* comprising "the ascension to the stages of the *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva*, and Buddha." Glenn Wallis, *Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the* Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 17. Later are described "exalted (*uttiṣṭha*), intermediate (*madhyama*), and minor (*kanyasa*) *siddhi*…however, [it] nowhere provides a clear systematization of these classes of attainment. There is constant overlap and intermixing throughout the text." Wallis, *Mediating the Power of Buddhas*, 24. The same lack of systematization appears to hold true in different tantric Buddhist sources.

rule that, when the Mantrayāna [i.e. Tantric Buddhism] becomes culturally important outside India, it is principally through the agency of official patronage, either aristocratic or imperial."[151]

The Gongma and the *Mahāsiddhas*

In many respects, the political context in Tibet resembled that of the post-Gupta era in India, in which a volatile political climate led to shifting alliances, military opportunism, marital alliances, and, above all else, a world where political elites resorted to religious figures to protect themselves and their kingdoms. In 1385, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen was enthroned as ruler at the age of twelve, following an internal revolt which had "dramatically destabilized the uneasy status quo" among factions in central Tibet, and resulted in the forced abdication of the former ruler.[152] Little more than a figurehead in his youth, the real power was exercised by the Gongma's first minister Drakpa Rinchen (Grags pa rin chen, d. 1399). This revolt had likely resulted from the first minister's unsuccessful war of aggression against another region of Tibet.[153] Perhaps due to these unmitigated ambitions, he was assassinated in 1399, sparking another revolt by a "group of ten" officials who were those loyal to him.[154]

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[151] Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, 115.

[152] Leonard W. J. van der Kuijp, "On the Fifteenth Century Lho Rong Chos 'byung by Rta Tshag Tshe Dbang Rgyal and Its Religious Importance for Tibetan Political and Religious History," *Rlung Rta Aspects of Tibetan Buddhism* 14 (2001): 66.

[153] According to Panchen Sönam Drakpa: "Once, rDzong spyi Grags (pa) rin (chen) led a great army of Phag mo gru (against Byang), but in spite of that, he was unable to cause great trouble. Especially during the time of the two brothers, rNam rgyal grags pa and dKon mchog legs pa, since the gzhi kha pa and Byang were in agreement, except that some territory of the Lho pa was taken back, there was no reason for great disturbances, on either side." See Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*, 192 and Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*, 201.

[154] His murder is described by Panchen Sönam Drakpa in this way: "Grags pa rin chen assumed the power of first minister (*blon chen dbang 'dzin*). On a certain occasion, the lay officers (*drung 'khor rnams*), unable to endure him, calumniated him to the [Gongma] and the [first minister] was murdered; immediately ten lay

The ensuing conflict has been described as one of the "main difficulties" faced by the Gongma during the first half of his life.[155] Fighting broke out nearly everywhere in central Tibet, with several factions involved. [156] Emblematic of the tensions, one source reports that the period of strife lasted for three years, and that the situation was so dire the young Gongma would often sleep in his armor.[157]

In his time of need, the Gongma reached out to a famed *mahāsiddha*, Lhodrak Drubchen Namkha Gyeltsen. This figure was renowned as a *drubchen* (or *mahāsiddha*) from the region of Lhodrak in southern Tibet.[158] As such, he was considered to have the ability to communicate directly with the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, or even to be an emanation of Vajrapāṇi himself. Lhodrak Drubchen reports receiving the following petition from the Gongma in 1399, along with numerous gifts:

> Supplicate your tutelary deity! [I request you to tell me] a method to destroy the troops which are fighting for the other side during this period of conflict; what favorable supportive rites (*rim gro rten 'brel*) I should perform; what growth I will see in retinue, wealth, or subjects; what my lifespan will be; and

officers (*dpon skya*) of Yar klungs caused trouble; it was called 'the group of ten.' Greater troubles were expected to come." Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*, 215.

[155] As stated by Czaja: "In the *Rgya bod yig tshang*, it is briefly noted that, in the first half of the life of the *dbang* Grags pa rgyal mtshan, the struggle with the official maternal uncle (*dpon zhang gi mkhan ['khon] rtsod*) belonged to the main difficulties he had to face." Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 202, n. 301.
[156] For a description of the conflict and parties involved, see Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 204, n.303. This conflict is also briefly referenced in *The Blue Annals*; Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, 641.

[157] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 405, n. 106.

[158] The sectarian affiliation of this figure is contested. According to Roger Jackson 2021: 132-133 and n. 44), he is claimed by members of the Nyingma (Rnying ma) tradition as unambiguously one of their own. Alternatively, various Geluk authors either depict his tradition as one that combines Nyingma and Kadam elements or assert that he is best classified as a Kadam master. Jackson, Mind Seeing Mind, 132-33 and n. 44. Also, see n. 60 for what appears to be an important and hitherto unknown Bön aspect to his religious life.

> what supportive rites to avert [adverse] circumstances would be suitable [for me to have performed].[159]

Elsewhere, Lhodrak Drubchen reports that the Gongma formally requested him to become his personal guru at this time.[160] In this petition, the relationship between the Gongma and Lhodrak Drubchen evinces the same pattern described by Sanderson, in which a political ruler seeks out a tantric adept to provide him ritual services to augment his prosperity and rule. In response, Lhodrak Drubchen provided him with rituals designed to bring about the desired effects.[161]

Unfortunately, the biography of the Gongma is not extant so it is unclear what he did with this instruction. But, given his desperation, it is likely that he followed the *mahāsiddha's* instructions. According to the later account of Panchen Sönam Drakpa (ca. 1530s), this conflict was resolved by two actions: (1) Lhodrak Drubchen *and* Tsongkhapa pronounced that "the fortunes of the Buddhist teaching in Ü and Tsang depended on the [Pakmodru Gongma]," and performed a rite of protection, and (2) the wealthy abbot of Taklung (Stag lung) Monastery, Tashi Peltsekpa (Bkra shis dpal brtsegs pa, 1359-1424)

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[159] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Rje btsun sgrol dkar yid bzhin 'khor lo'i tshe sgrub khyad par can," in *Lho brag nam mkha' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 1 (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 298.

[160] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 146.

[161] According to one text, Lhodrak Drubchen relayed the deity White Tārā's message that the Gongma should practice a longevity rite of Cintāmaṇicakra Tārā, a practice that will take away his fear of untimely death, pacify a range of ills, and grant a range of benefits. He also gave him a practice of Shinjé Charka (Gshin rje 'char kha) to render the opposing military leaders powerless. Shinjé Charka is a deity practice that appears to be part of the Nyingma Northern Treasure tradition (*byang gter*). Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Rje btsun sgrol dkar yid bzhin 'khor lo'i tshe sgrub khyad par can," 300-04.

made generous material donations in order to reach a peace agreement.[162] By linking Tsongkhapa with Lhodrak Drubchen in performing these rites, Panchen Sönam Drakpa is making the implicit claim that Tsongkhapa's stature at the time equaled that of Lhodrak Drubchen, both as a *mahāsiddha* and as a religious figure revered by the Gongma as a guru. Regardless of how it came about, in the end this "was the first major challenge for [the Gongma] and he fully mastered it, thus establishing himself as the undisputed ruler of the [Pakmodrupa]."[163]

If it is true that Tsongkhapa joined Lhodrak Drubchen in performing rituals of protection during this conflict, then it follows that whatever faith or gratitude the Gongma had for Lhodrak Drubchen would have held double for Tsongkhapa. This itself would be sufficient to explain the extensive patronage offered by the Gongma and his circle to Tsongkhapa's nascent tradition, as it would have led the Gongma to also view Tsongkhapa as a *mahāsiddha* and his guru. This assertion also contradicts earlier suggestions that Tsongkhapa's nascent tradition earned patronage due to their perceived neutrality. This decision to side with the Gongma was also not one that was necessarily beyond doubt, as Tsongkhapa had earlier resided at a monastery for months under the patronage of the ill-fated Drakpa Rinchen in 1388 or 1389.[164] However, the validity of Panchen Sönam Drakpa's account is difficult to assess. It is a terse description from a single source, one written over a

[162] Tucci, *Deb t'er dmar po gsar ma*, 215. Literally, the Tibetan states that they "continuously engaged in a profound meditative practice" (*thugs dam zab mo'i 'khor yug tu bcug*). However, Tucci avers that *thugs dam* is equivalent to *srung 'khor*, a "ceremony intended to ensure protection" where the "meditation is on the *thugs dam*."

[163] Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 19.

[164] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 72-76.

hundred years after the fact and by an author within Tsongkhapa's own Gelukpa tradition, who may have wished to exaggerate the role Tsongkhapa played in resolving this conflict. Lhodrak Drubchen's own writings have no mention of Tsongkhapa during this affair, and influential biographies of Tsongkhapa and other histories of the Geluk tradition are also silent on the issue.

Although this lack of corroboration leaves the argument on somewhat tenuous ground, there is a secondary aspect to my argument, the evidence for which is found in Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*. This work also relates the petition received from the Gongma, and places it in the context of the importance of the Pakmodru regime for the future of the Buddhist teachings in central Tibet. In a statement that prefigures the one made by Panchen Sönam Drakpa, Lhodrak Drubchen states that "the [religious] teachings and [secular] laws (*bstan khrims*) in the region of Ü rely on the teachings and laws of the Pakmodrupas."[165] It is for this reason that Lhodrak Drubchen decides to provide the aforementioned practices to aid the Gongma. He goes on to indicate the sanctity of the Gongma's siblings Sönam Gyeltsen (Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, 1386-1434) and Jangchub Dorjé (Byang chub rdo rje, 1377-1428), two figures who would go on to hold powerful positions in the Pakmodru sphere, with Sönam Gyeltsen becoming abbot of Densatil, and Jangchub Dorjé abbot of Tsetang.[166] Dispensing with any topos of modesty, Lhodrak Drubchen also extols his own greatness in this work, stating that he is "the most crucial

[165] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 146. Panchen Sönam Drakpa's statement is an exact copy, but for the addition of Tsongkhapa.

[166] Lhodrak Drubchen indicates that Sönam Gyeltsen, has a connection with him from a past life in India, and will be born in his next life in the pure land of Sukhāvatī. Jangchub Dorjé is linked to Chenrezig, and also destined for rebirth in Sukhāvatī, after which he will attain Buddhahood. See Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 146.

person in the entire kingdom," as well as the importance of his Shüpu (Shud phu) family lineage.[167] Given both the turbulent social context in which he was writing and Lhodrak Drubchen's identity as a *mahāsiddha*, it is perhaps unsurprising that Lhodrak Drubchen would choose to extol his own power, the greatness of his family lineage, and the greatness of the ruling political family in this autobiographical work.

What is surprising is that Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* also contains numerous facets related solely to Tsongkhapa. The work is structured as responses given by Vajrapāṇi to six questions, and the last two questions relate solely to Tsongkhapa and have no connection to Lhodrak Drubchen.[168] Along with this unusual structure, Lhodrak Drubchen also holds Tsongkhapa in special esteem in this work, telling him "you are the source of the teachings in Ü," a statement that echoes the one he had made about the Pakmodru

[167] In keeping with the theme of this paper, Lhodrak Drubchen ties his preeminence to his status as a *mahāsiddha*, stating that the reason he is the most crucial person in the entire kingdom is that he made a great offering of *tormas* to the Queen of Existence (*srid pa'i rgyal mo*) Mu kha le la, and recited her heart mantra. As a result, she carries out his "activities of pacifying illnesses and negative influences for all sentient beings, and the activities which give rise to happiness and goodness;" she also "cherishes this preceptor lineage of Shud phu ba." See Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 150. This Queen of Existence has been described by Alexander Smith as "one of the primary protectresses of the Bon tradition and the analogue in many respects of the Buddhist figure dPal ldan lha mo." Alexander K. Smith, *Divination in Exile: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Ritual Prognostication in the Tibetan Bon Tradition* (Boston: Brill, 2021), 74. This passage thus appears to hint towards the hitherto unexamined importance of Bön in Namkha Gyeltsen's religious life.

[168] The six questions are: (1) how Lekyi Dorjé (Las kyi rdo rje, i.e. Lhodrak Drubchen) had produced bodhicitta in the beginning; (2) in the interim, the way he showed enormous magical powers (*rlabs che ba'i rdzu 'phrul*) for the sake of beings; (3) how he had produced realizations; (4) requests for some prophecies for the future; (5) information on how Tsongkhapa could multiply benefits for beings and the continuum of the teachings; and (6) information about where it would be good [for Tsongkhapa] to establish a monastery (*dgon gnas*) [i.e. Ganden]." See Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan 2004a: 135. Curiously, (Jinpa 2019: 149) conflates all six of the questions as pertaining to Tsongkhapa. On the surface, it would be highly unusual for Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* to be completely devoted to Tsongkhapa. The contents of the secret biography also bear no relation to any of Tsongkhapa's biographical narratives found in other works. It is unclear whether this represents a mere oversight on Jinpa's part, or perhaps a mature Gelukpa interpretation of this work that represents an ongoing process to minimize Lhodrak Drubchen's influence on Tsongkhapa and the Geluk tradition.

nobility."[169] In a similar vein, Lhodrak Drubchen relates a prophecy he received from Vajrapāṇi, which states that "[Tsongkhapa] Losang Drakpa is beyond all rivals."[170] This prophecy mirrors another that he reportedly received from Vajrapāṇi a few years earlier:

> [Lhodrak Drubchen] is the supreme lama,
>
> [Tsongkhapa] is the supreme disciple,
>
> *Supreme Medicinal Nectar* (*Bdud rtsi sman mchog*) is the supreme dharma,
>
> [The Land of] Great Bliss is the supreme buddha-field.[171]

The function of prophecy in Tibet and other cultures as a form of religious legitimation is well attested.[172] More than a mere description of a state of affairs, this prophecy evinces what Dominick LaCapra has described as a "work-like" mode that has the function of endorsing Tsongkhapa as Lhodrak Drubchen's "supreme disciple," effectively making him his spiritual heir.[173] It appears that a significant function of Lhodrak Drubchen's own biographical writing

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[169] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 146.

[170] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 141.

[171] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Tsongkhapa's *Garland*, 130.

[172] For instance, see Per K. Sørensen, "In His Name: The Fake Royal Biography—Fabricated Prophecy and Literary Imposture," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 52 (October 2019): 284–335.

[173] As stated by Kate Hartmann: "LaCapra argued against historians who assumed that documents like tax rolls were legitimate historical sources because they straightforwardly documented the past and that literary works such as novels were illegitimate historical sources because they deal with emotions and aesthetics. Instead, LaCapra suggested that all texts had documentary and work-like aspects. The documentary, he wrote, 'situates the text in terms of factual or literal dimensions involving reference to empirical reality and conveying information about it,' and the work-like 'supplements empirical reality by adding to and subtracting from it… bringing into the world something that did not exist before.' Cited in Catherine Anne Hartmann, "To See a Mountain: Writing, Place, and Vision in Tibetan Pilgrimage Literature" (PhD Diss., Harvard University, 2020), 37. In a similar vein, Sørensen has described the legitimating function of prophecy as a "prophetic certificate." Sørensen, "In His Name," 319.

was to bolster the status of Tsongkhapa as his chief disciple and as the most important religious figure in central Tibet.

Why was Lhodrak Drubchen so concerned with endorsing Tsongkhapa in this way? His stated motivation for composing his *Secret Biography* is a concern for the future of Buddhism in central Tibet, a concern that was likely due in part to his advanced age.[174] However, it appears this endorsement was also one that was actively sought by Tsongkhapa himself, at a time when Tsongkhapa's preeminent status was far from assured. In an epistle he sent to Lhodrak Drubchen requesting him to compose this work, Tsongkhapa states that his reason for making the request is that "these days, the Sage's teachings are close to disappearing."[175] Moreover, he bemoans the fact that contemporary teachers and practitioners of Buddhism are "bound by the fetters of gain and honor; even if there were a few secretly holy persons, their mind's eye would be obscured by the great darkness of envy and pride, and it would be extremely difficult for those persons to become visible [to them]."[176] As a result, he requests Lhodrak Drubchen to "eliminate all doubts" about this state of affairs, as he has the power to communicate directly with the Buddha.[177] In so many words, this letter communicates an oblique request for Lhodrak Drubchen's endorsement, at a time when Tsongkhapa considered himself one of the "few secretly holy persons" who had yet to be

[174] In the colophon, he states he composed it as "an auspicious circumstance for the propagation of the Buddhist teachings." See Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 153. At the time of writing, Lhodrak Drubchen was in his seventies.

[175] Blo bzang grags pa, Tsongkhapa's *Letter* to Lhodrak Drubchen, 304.The reason this letter is a "response" (*zhu lan*) is that it also contains an acknowledgement of Tsongkhapa having received a written copy of the *Garland of Supreme Medicinal Nectar* from Lhodrak Drubchen.

[176] Blo bzang grags pa, Tsongkhapa's *Letter* to Lhodrak Drubchen, 304.

[177] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 305–6.

suitably acknowledged by his contemporaries (who were more concerned with their own wealth and status). In response, Lhodrak Drubchen composed his *Secret Biography* that asserts the fundamental importance of not only Lhodrak Drubchen and the Pakmodru dynasty to the Buddhist teachings in central Tibet, but Tsongkhapa himself.[178] It is likely that such assertions held great weight with the Pakmodru nobility.

The importance of Lhodrak Drubchen to the growth of Tsongkhapa's stature and to the development of the early Geluk tradition is also reflected in the number of textual links between the two figures. For instance, an account of their first meeting is found in the Collected Works of both figures, a narrative that became a major aspect of the Geluk tradition's presentation of Tsongkhapa's sanctity.[179] It was disciples of Tsongkhapa that requested Lhodrak Drubchen to compose this influential account of their first meeting.[180] Within his *Secret Biography* as well as Tsongkhapa's *Garland,* Lhodrak Drubchen also communicates a number of prophecies about Tsongkhapa that played a formative role in central aspects of the early Geluk tradition, describing Tsongkhapa's past and future lives, giving an enumeration of Tsongkhapa's most important disciples, providing the name and

[178] This "work-like" function of the *Secret Biography* is also suggested by its subtitle: *Dispelling the Darkness of Misconceptions*. Lhodrak Drubchen's dedication is also suggestive: "By this record of good and wondrous secret stories, may beings be liberated from the *māras* of negative thoughts." Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's Secret Biography," 153. This appears to echo Tsongkhapa's request in his epistle, where he asked Lhodrak Drubchen to "clarify" who the "secretly holy persons" are in Tibet for those more concerned with their own wealth and status (i.e., the *māras* of negative thoughts).

[179] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa, 153-57. Blo bzang grags pa'i dpal, "Lho brag grub chen dang mjal tshul/ mkhas grub rje la tshems gnang skor," in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, vol. Ka (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 163-68. For instance, this text contains a well-known report of their first meeting, in which Tsongkhapa appeared to Lhodrak Drubchen as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, whereas Lhodrak Drubchen appeared to Tsongkhapa as the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi.

[180] For a description of this request, see Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 149.

location of Ganden Monastery, and listing certain factors influencing the choice of the first Ganden Tripas.[181]

On the surface, it is curious that Lhodrak Drubchen had so much influence on the early Geluk tradition. Although he is an important source of Kadam teachings, Tsongkhapa only spent seven months with him, and he is not considered one of Tsongkhapa's most important teachers by Gelukpa historians.[182] He also passed away in 1401, eight years before Ganden Monastery was established, and decades before other Ganden Tripas would be chosen. In my view, Lhodrak Drubchen's outsized influence on the early Geluk tradition is best understood in light of the Gongma's reverence for Lhodrak Drubchen as a guru and *mahāsiddha*. It is this reverence that Lhodrak Drubchen worked to pass on to Tsongkhapa, dedicating space within his own biographies to extol Tsongkhapa as his greatest disciple and the most important religious figure in central Tibet. Then, after Lhodrak Drubchen passed away in 1401, Tsongkhapa inherited his status as the Gongma's preferred guru and lifeline. By incorporating Lhodrak Drubchen into the fabric of their tradition, early Geluk hierarchs sought to perpetuate this lineal thread as a way to encourage continued patronage from the Pakmodru nobility. Along with the influence of the aforementioned prophecies, this effort is

[181] For more, see chapter two of this dissertation.

[182] For a description of Kadam teachings given to Tsongkhapa by Lhodrak Drubchen, see Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 140-41. More significant teachers in Tsongkhapa's life include his childhood guru Döndrub Rinchen (Don grub rin chen, b. 1309), his most influential teacher of philosophy Rendawa Shönu Lodrö (Red mda ba gzhon nu blo gros, 1349-1412), and the mystic Umapa Pawo Dorjé (Dbu ma pa dpa' bo rdo rje, d. u.), who acted as Tsongkhapa's medium in communicating with Mañjuśrī. However, Roger Jackson notes an opposing Nyingma perspective, in which Lhodrak Drubchen played a formative role in Tsongkhapa's training. Roger R. Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as Dzokchenpa: Nyingma Discourses and Geluk Sources," *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 21 (2021): 123-24.

emblematized by a Gelukpa account that Lhodrak Drubchen personally performed the consecration of Ganden, an event which postdated his death by nearly a decade.[183]

Although it is not stated explicitly in Tibetan sources that the Gongma relied on Tsongkhapa as a *mahāsiddha*, there is a range of circumstantial evidence to support this assertion. In general, Tsongkhapa's ability to perform magical feats is well attested. One public episode took place at the inaugural Great Prayer Festival, when Tsongkhapa entered into a meditation to snuff out a giant butter lamp that had burst into flame, threatening to become a conflagration.[184] In 1413, Tsongkhapa demonstrated his ability to remove karmic obstacles and prolong people's lives by using ritual means to avert an illness that threatened his life.[185] Lastly, there are numerous accounts of his magical feats at Ganden, such as causing a fountain to spontaneously flow from the rockface, subduing a local spirit via a shower of boulders from the sky, or leaving impressions in the mountain from his speech and prostrations.[186] And in later years, Daniel Berounsky has documented the use of Tsongkhapa's *Migtsema* (*dmigs brtse ma*) prayer to accomplish various magical rituals by

[183] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gdan sa chen po dga' ldan rnam par rgyal ba'i gling gi gnas yig mdor bsdus pa = Gandan si jian zhi* (hereafter, *Abridged Guidebook*), trans. Kezhuqunpei (Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 2012), 30.

[184] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 92; cf. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 246-47.

[185] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 97-99; cf. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 279-80.

[186] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, "Dga' ldan shar rtse nor gling grwa tshang gi chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan mdzes par byed pa'i legs bshad dpyad gsum rnam dag nor bu'i phra tshom" (hereafter *Shartsé History II*), in *Dga' ldan shar rtse'i chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan* (Mundgod, Karnataka: Dga' ldan shar rtse slob grwa, 2010), 172, 170.

followers of the Geluk tradition, found in ritual works composed by disciples in the fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.[187]

This relationship between Tsongkhapa and the Gongma also reflects a broader cultural phenomenon in pre-modern Tibet, one in which patronage relationships between political elites and religious figures came about due to the perception of magical efficacy. In the twelfth century, the infamous Kagyu Lama Zhang (1122-1193) had numerous patrons in the eastern Tibetan region of Kham fighting over him to become their guru due to his "reputation as an adept of powerful magical rituals."[188] In the thirteenth century, the influential Sakya cleric and scholar Sakya Paṇḍiṭa (Sa skya paṇḍiṭa, 1182-1251) won the favor of the Mongolian Goden Khan by curing him of leprosy and passing a test of his magical powers.[189] Within the Nyingma tradition in the early sixteenth century, Tenyi Lingpa (Bstan gnyis gling pa, 1480-1537) "served at the court of Mangyul Gungthang in western Tibet," and was sponsored by the king of Gungthang for his ritual efforts to magically repel Mongol armies from central Tibet.[190] And within the Geluk tradition in the fifteenth century, the fourth Ganden Tripa Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen (Zhwa lu legs pa rgyal mtshan, 1375-1450) was able to win patronage from a noble lord due to performing rituals that helped him bear

[187] Berounsky suggests various explanations for this use, including Tsongkhapa's deep understanding of *madhyamaka* philosophy, his identification with the deity Mañjuśrī, or as fulfilling the function of a "worldly protector, whose functions dissolve into [Tsongkhapa]." In my view, Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha* is an important aspect of this phenomenon. Berounsky, "Tibetan 'Magical Rituals,'" 107-8.

[188] Carl S. Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence: Lama Zhang and the Politics of Charisma in Twelfth-Century Tibet* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 56.

[189] Shakabpa, *One Hundred Thousand Moons*, 212-13.

[190] Cuevas, "The Politics of Magical Warfare," 177.

his first son and heir.[191] Drawn from multiple time periods, regions, and religious traditions in Tibet, these cases indicate the pervasiveness of this phenomenon in Tibetan culture.

However, two narratives from Tsongkhapa's life are deserving of special mention. The first took place in 1405, when Khedrubjé reports that some "especially grim portents of obstacles" (*bar chad kyi ltas shin tu rtsub pa*) arose and resulted in the death of a few learned monks.[192] Unfortunately, the nature of these obstacles is not detailed. According to Khedrubjé, they were easily overcome by the community performing rites associated with Vajrabhairava, one of the primary deities of the Geluk tradition. However, Tsongkhapa's later biographer Chahar Geshé provides the additional detail that Tsongkhapa also composed a work of praise to the deity Vajravidāraṇa at this time, along with a supplication to pacify harms.[193] As a wrathful form of Vajrapāṇi, the rites of Vajravidāraṇa were transmitted to Tsongkhapa by Lhodrak Drubchen. It is tempting to associate these "obstacles" in 1405 to a military conflict (*sde gzar*) that was occurring in central Tibet in about 1404 or 1405, and that also posed a threat to the Gongma's rule.[194] It is certainly plausible that Tsongkhapa supplicated this form of Vajrapāṇi due to a request from the Gongma to quell these "obstacles." However, Tibetan religious works often refer elliptically to political conflicts (when they are not omitted altogether), so it is difficult to come to a firm conclusion on the

[191] Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 228, n. 70).

[192] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 82.

[193] Blo-bzaṅ-tshul-khrims and Kaschewsky, *Das Leben*, 146.

[194] Unfortunately, little is known about this conflict, and it has not been reliably dated. According to Czaja, there was "turmoil (*sde gzar*) in the regions of E and Gnyal which took probably place during the first decade of the 15th century," and posed another threat to the Gongma's rule. He goes on to surmise that it involved an attempt by the 'Bri gung pa to take back control of E and Gynal, and that it involved a conflict between the 'Bri gung pa and Rong po. Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 207, n. 1.

matter. If nothing else, the evidence indicates that Tsongkhapa was willing to use ritual practices received from Lhodrak Drubchen to pacify adverse events, which would surely have endeared him to those with faith in Lhodrak Drubchen. The occurrence of further conflicts also indicates that the Gongma's need for a *mahāsiddha* to bolster his rule did not end after Lhodrak Drubchen passed away in 1401. And who better than Tsongkhapa to fulfill this role, the most influential Buddhist figure in central Tibet and later recipient of the Gongma's extensive patronage?

The second important narrative is found within a recently unearthed biography of the Gongma's younger brother Sönam Gyeltsen, one of the siblings who had been valorized by Lhodrak Drubchen. This biography does not mince words, stating plainly that Tsongkhapa could read others' minds. During a famed gathering at Tashi Dokha (Bkra shis rdo kha) in 1415—attended by a veritable "who's who" of the wealthy and powerful in central Tibet—it relates an episode where Tsongkhapa read the mind of one monk present, leaving him flabbergasted. The monk cried out to the figure sitting beside him that Tsongkhapa had read his mind. Nonplussed, that figure replied: "What, you didn't know that until now? I've known that all along. So, during this time I've spent in [Tsongkhapa's] presence, I've felt more joy and more fear in equal measure."[195] Written by a sibling of the Gongma, this narrative offers a window into the contemporary perception of Tsongkhapa's magical power. According to this account, that perception was both widespread and taken for granted, a source of both joy and fear at Tsongkhapa's magical abilities. The denouement of this episode is that the monk asks Tsongkhapa for teachings.

[195] Sørensen and Sonam Dolma, *Rare Texts*, 123. Translation my own.

Indeed, a mixture of joy and fear is a fitting emblem for the early patronage of the Geluk tradition. Those who found joy in Tsongkhapa's erudition and virtue laid the groundwork for Ganden Monastery, named after the "Joyous Heaven" of Tuṣita. However, especially after his passing, Geluk figures sought to cultivate a suitable fear in patrons, a fear of forsaking Tsongkhapa's tradition and losing the support of this powerful *mahāsiddha*. It is for this reason that Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha* was popularized in the biographies of Khedrubjé, some twenty years after Tsongkhapa's passing and at a time when the new ruler of the Pakmodrupa seemed to have little interest in receiving teachings from the current head of the Geluk tradition. One function of this narrative would have been to remind scions of the Pakmodrupa—who did not witness Tsongkhapa's magical feats in person—of Tsongkhapa's awesome power. Another was to buttress Tsongkhapa's magical bonafides in the face of the rising popularity of the "holy madmen" (*smyon pa*) in the fifteenth century, whose tantric personas were constructed in opposition to the caricature of a Gelukpa scholar-monk.[196] Not for nothing, Khedrubjé's direct successor as Ganden Tripa, Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen is a figure who is variously described as a tantric adept who "subjugated unruly and contentious enemies, as well as hindrances," but was "not renowned as the most knowledgeable."[197] Khedrubjé himself is also said to have engaged in magical rites against opponents from the Sakya tradition, revealing "the important role that sorcery played in the

[196] In his study of the holy madmen of Tibet, DiValerio notes several explicit and implicit points of contention between them and the Gelukpa, arguing that the Geluk monk is the "sanity" against which the "insanity" of the holy madmen was defined. DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen*, 110.

[197] The former citation is from Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Baiḍūrya Serpo*, 76; here, his miraculous feats include producing an illusion that looked like an army, making a pool of water miraculously emerge, and using a ritual to produce a male heir for the house of Chongyé ('Phyongs rgyas). The latter citation is found in *PaN chen bsod nams grags pa, History of the Old and New Kadam Tradition*, 112.

dispute [between them]."[198] This was a time period in which the Gelukpa sought to reinforce their position in Tibetan culture by recourse to their magical ability, not their virtue or erudition.

In the time of the Tangut Empire, the Tibetan adept Tiśrī Repa was credited with using his power to invoke the Buddhist deity Mahākāla to turn back a Mongol army that was laying siege to the Tangut capital city Zhongxing.[199] As a result, he was awarded the Chinese title of *dishi* or "imperial preceptor," and received lavish patronage from the Tangut court.[200] Notably, this perception of magical efficacy outlasted his own death, as well as the entire Tangut empire, as the Mongol emperor Qubilai (r. 1260-1294) granted lands to Tiśrī Repa's disciple and successor Repa Karpo (Ras pa dkar po, 1198-1262) to provide financial support for Tiśrī Repa's reliquary *stūpa* and associated *vihāra*.[201] His doing so is "indicative of a continuing awareness of and, one might add, respect for the role of the 'Ba'-rom-pa in

[198] Heimbel, "The Dispute," 276.

[199] Elliot Sperling, "Further Remarks Apropos of the 'Ba'-Rom-Pa and the Tanguts," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 57, no. 1 (2004): 20.

[200] According to a modern history of the 'Ba'-rom-pa by Ma-ti ratna: "For a short time Mongol troops surrounded the Xia citadel; they diverted the rivers, and were about the scale the walls. Therefore, [Tiśrī Repa] did a great *gtor*[-*ma*] of Mahākāla to turn back the troops and when he flung it, all the while intoning exhortations of the cemetery of Bsil-tshal, he had a vision then of the four-armed Mahākāla surrounded by three Karma Mahākālas. He thereupon saw the Mongol troops scattering. The water was turned back, leaving the Mongol troops defeated and [the Tanguts] unharmed. The king Rgyal-rgod believed very much and requested initiation. He presented unimaginable presentations, such as the position of *dishi* 帝師, which in Tibetan means 'the lama who initiates the king from the crown of the head,' a crystal image of 'Ba'-rom, and a *vaidūrya* volume." Tiśrī Repa then gave extensive teachings for the king, queen, ministers and citizens, with the material necessities provided by patrons. Sperling, "Further Remarks," 10-11.

[201] Sperling, "Further Remarks," 22-23.

harnessing the esoteric power inherent in the cult of Mahākāla to political and imperial enterprises."[202]

In a similar vein, even after his passing Tsongkhapa was perceived as having the power to affect history, impelling his Pakmodru patrons to continue to support his tradition for their own benefit. This motivation is evident in the colophons of several "Old Ganden edition" (*Dga' ldan par rnying*) works. Largely funded by Tsongkhapa's Pakmodru patrons, these editions comprise the earliest xylographic productions of Tsongkhapa's works and were manufactured in the decades following Tsongkhapa's passing.[203] Within these colophons, the motivation behind the printing of the work is indicated by how the merit is dedicated. One representative dedication from a Vajrasattva *sādhana* states the following:

> Whatever good things emerge from this virtuous act
> Are for the sake of fulfilling the intention of the Glorious Lama [Tsongkhapa],
> For the Buddha's teachings to remain for a long time,
> And to expand the lifespan and dominion of the patron of the teachings [Governor Namkha Sangpo], uncle and nephew.[204]

This colophon echoes Lhodrak Drubchen's writings decades before, in which religious goals—such as fulfilling Tsongkhapa's intention (by printing and disseminating his teachings) and having the teachings perdure—were seen as complementary to political goals

[202] Sperling, "Further Remarks," 23.

[203] They also comprise "the earliest Central-Tibetan xylograph productions from a master's literary heritage." See Fermer, "Once More," 269. For other studies of these editions, see David P. Jackson, "The Earliest Printings," and "More on the Old."

[204] Jackson, "The Earliest Printings," 112. Translation my own. The colophon is from a Vajrasattva sādhana according to Ārya Nāgārjuna's tradition of Guhyasamāja, entitled *Khyab bdag rdo rje sems dpa' bsnyen bsgrub bzhi'i sbyor bas mnyes par byed pa'i 'dus pa'i sgrub thabs rnal 'byor dag pa'i rim pa*.

(such as expanding the lifespan and dominion of Pakmodru political elites).[205] In a similar vein, an edition of *Ngakrim Chenmo* is dedicated to fulfilling Tsongkhapa's intention, to stabilizing the Gongma's rule, and to the accomplishment of the governor of Gongkar's spiritual and temporal goals.[206] And, Tsongkhapa's extensive commentary to the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra* states that it is dedicated for the "swelling of the ocean of Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen's activities, and for his lifespan to be as firm as Mt. Meru," as well as for the general Buddhist teachings (and the Vajrayāna teachings in particular) to flourish in all ways, in every region, and to endure for a long time.[207] These dedications echo and shed further light on the aforementioned perspective of the fifth Dalai Lama, that "the two—the Pakmodru [ruler] and the teachings of the Conqueror Tsongkhapa—share one life force." Not only did the patronage of the ruler give life to Tsongkhapa's nascent tradition; conversely, it was understood that supporting Tsongkhapa—and preserving his teachings, lineages, and institutions—would help Pakmodru nobles live longer and increase their dominion. This twin destiny is what impelled the children of governor Namkha Sangpo to continue to print

[205] It also appears that there is a tendency for Old Ganden edition works printed at Ganden Monastery to possess dedications that are solely religious in nature, whereas those printed at noble fiefdoms tend to include political dedications. For instance, the colophon of a Vajrabhairava sādhana (*Dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed lha bcu gsum ma'i sgrub pa'i thabs*) printed at Ganden is dedicated for "the benefit of all beings," "supreme enlightenment," and for the Buddhist teachings to spread and endure for a long time. Jackson, "More on the Old," 111). Similarly, a Cakrasaṃvara *maṇḍala* rite (*Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa mi bskyod rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga dbang gi don gyi de nyid rab tu gsal ba*) was also produced at Ganden and is dedicated to "fulfilling the mind of the Supreme Lama [Tsongkhapa]" and towards the "lifespan and activities of the holy Gyeltsab" Jackson, "More on the Old," 113. However, those editions produced in the districts of noble families tend to possess dual dedications, both religious and political.

[206] Fermer, "Once More," 277.

[207] Blo bzang grags pa, *Dpal 'khor lo sdom par brjod pa bde mchog bsdus pa'i rgyud kyi rgya cher bshad pa sbas don kun gsal ba* ('Ol kha: Stag rtse rnam par rgyal ba'i khang bzang, n.d.), 166-67. Cf. Fermer, "Once More," 278-79.

Tsongkhapa's works after the death of their father.[208] Although ostensibly a purely intellectual activity, a current of fear undergirded this endeavor, as a uniquely Tibetan illustration of the aphorism "publish or perish."

Conclusion

In this paper, I argue for a reevaluation of the patronage of the Gelukpa in Tibet in the fifteenth century. In my view, existing accounts of this patronage have been distorted by various factors. On the one hand, overtly traditionalist depictions of the tradition have glossed over the matter of patronage. On the other, scholarly accounts that assert social and political modes of explanation have failed to take seriously the testimony of Tibetan sources regarding the importance of religious faith. Both of these approaches have led to distortions in our understanding of the tradition's early history. As a corrective, I argue it was Tsongkhapa's status as a *mahāsiddha*—one mediated by the endorsement of the *mahāsiddha* Lhodrak Namkha Gyeltsen—that was a primary factor in the early Geluk tradition receiving patronage from the nobles of the Pakmodru Dynasty. This status was both current during Tsongkhapa's life and popularized in Gelukpa biographical works and iconography after his passing, prompting continuing support from later devotees of the tradition. However, rather than refuting existing modes of explanation that emphasize the importance of Tsongkhapa's virtue and erudition, this reevaluation suggests that being a learned and virtuous monk does

[208] According to Fermer: "Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that the sNe'u family, after the death of Drung chen Nam mkha' bzang po, continued to produce printed editions of Tsong kha pa's works, as well as those of his disciples." Fermer, "Once More," 268.

not disqualify one from engaging in magic or being a tantric *mahāsiddha*; in fact, these qualities are often said to be coextensive within the Buddhist saint.[209]

One strength of this reevaluation is that it attends to the specific historical context of the early fifteenth century in Tibet, a time in which the ruler of central Tibet sought the ritual support of the *mahāsiddha* Lhodrak Drubchen to bolster his sovereignty. Nearing the end of his life and prompted by Tsongkhapa himself, Lhodrak Drubchen chose to designate Tsongkhapa as his spiritual heir, at a time when Tsongkhapa's preeminent status was far from assured. This lineal thread accounts for the ruler's extensive patronage of Tsongkhapa, as well as the importance of Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies to the later Geluk tradition. In addition, this reevaluation locates the early patronage of the Gelukpa within a broader cross-cultural phenomenon: the importance of the perception of magical efficacy to gaining patronage from political rulers in Buddhist and tantric religious contexts across Asia. In doing so, it resists a tendency within Tibetan Studies for Tibetan religious phenomena to be studied in isolation.

This distortion also appears to have resulted from modernist biases and an overreliance on dichotomies within existing presentations of the Geluk tradition. Thus, this reevaluation also suggests the need for caution in relying on Western theorists (such as Max

[209] In this regard, Samuel states that "major figures such as [Tsongkhapa] or [Longchen Rabjampa] might appear to be dominantly clerical or shamanic in their orientation but they generally operated in both modes, seeing them as complementary rather than opposed. Consequently it is not always easy, or even appropriate, for an external observer to assign specific events, people, or movements in Tibetan history exclusively to one category or the other. What took place was more in the nature of a series of syntheses between the two aspects." Samuel, *Civilized Shamans*, 23.

Weber) to understand the history of the Geluk tradition (i.e., solely via the lens of bureaucracy).

A final distorting aspect of dichotomies is that they are often derived from elite figures and forms of practice, which are ways of thinking about the tradition that tend to erase the lived experiences and practices of many everyday Buddhists. Should there not be a place in our understanding of the Geluk tradition for monks who work in a kitchen or for laypeople who drink beer and perform rituals for their individual benefit? Rather than monastic virtue or erudition, there is a humbler characteristic that is more representative of devotees of the Geluk tradition, whether learned scholars, kitchen cooks, or political rulers: having faith in Tsongkhapa, and believing that studying his works, reciting his prayer, or making a pilgrimage to Ganden will confer some benefit due to the awesome power of Tsongkhapa's erudition, virtue, and abiding presence as a *mahāsiddha*.

Chapter Two:

The Role of Lhodrak Drubchen's Prophecies

The influence of prophecy on the development of the early Geluk tradition has yet to receive sustained attention. The most comprehensive descriptive study is by Jinpa, who provides a detailed overview of the contents and textual sources of prophecies related to Tsongkhapa, which he links to a wider movement to canonize Tsongkhapa after his death via a process of myth-making.[210] As he notes, the earliest prophecies include those received via spirit-mediumship by Lama Umapa (Dbu ma pa, fl. late fourteenth century) and Tokden Jampel Gyatso (from Mañjuśrī) and those received by Lhodrak Drubchen (from Vajrapāṇi).[211] Over the centuries, further prophecies would be identified in Indian canonical sources and Tibetan Treasure texts, a move "probably motivated in part by the wish to ground the canonization of Tsongkhapa in authorities more widely revered" in Tibet.[212]

Given Jinpa's recent work, there is no need to describe these prophecies. Instead, I plan to focus exclusively on the prophecies of Lhodrak Drubchen, as they offer a compelling point of entry for understanding the early history of the Geluk tradition. First of all, his biographies were composed shortly before his death in 1401, making them the earliest textual sources of prophecy for the tradition. Second, these prophecies played a formative role for the early Geluk tradition, communicating details that influenced the name and location of

[210] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 329-47.

[211] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 335.

[212] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 341.

Ganden Monastery, as well as enumerations of Tsongkhapa's most important disciples and details about his past and future lives. Third, as these prophecies are located in Lhodrak Drubchen's biographical works, a study of the context surrounding the composition of these texts is revealing of some of the important social dynamics accompanying the birth of the Geluk tradition. Fourth, the oracular nature of these prophecies foregrounds again Mills' observation that religious authority in the Geluk tradition is not solely clerical. Lastly, the fate of these prophecies is instructive. Early Geluk hierarchs were loath to accept Lhodrak Drubchen's pronouncements in toto, as they came into conflict with competing visions for the tradition. As a result, Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies came to be minimized in Geluk historiography, as Gelukpa hierarchs exercised agency in how they deployed and interpreted these prophecies in the construction of their tradition.

My primary method in this chapter is historical. I present both a synchronic analysis of the social context surrounding the composition of these prophecies as well as a diachronic analysis of the deployment of these prophesies in Gelukpa historiographical works, one that highlights the way the importance of these prophecies diminished over time. In terms of structure, I will proceed thematically, covering topics such as the name and location of Ganden, enumerations of his disciples, and Tsongkhapa's past and future lives.

Prophecy in Tibet

Prophecy (*lung bstan*) in Tibetan religion is a heterogeneous and hybrid category.[213] Within Tibetan Buddhism, prophecies are articulated in a wide range of cultural contexts, address a wide range of topics, and have a wide range of functions.

In general, there are two ways Tibetan prophecy has been treated in the academic literature. One of these is under the wider umbrella of divination (*mo*).[214] As a working definition of divination, Wim van Binsbergen has offered the following: "within any cultural domain more or less demarcated in time and space, and endowed with meaning within that domain, divination might be defined as the entire set of procedures intended to acquire knowledge which is of a supernatural nature or which is otherwise not available through everyday means such as are based upon direct sensory perception."[215] As a means to acquire a kind of special knowledge that is not available via everyday means, this form of prophecy in Tibet overlaps with other related categories, such as divination (*mo*), astrology (*rtsis*), geomancy (*sa dpyad*), mediumship (*lha bab*), prophetic dream (*rmi lam*), and omens (*ltas*). For instance, one major form of prophecy is the case where one asks questions to a deity via

[213] Although the focus of my study in this section is Tibetan Buddhism, prophecies were not limited to Buddhist contexts. For one study of prophecy in an early Bön work, see Per Kværne, "A Case of Prophecy in Post Imperial Tibet," *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination: Past and Present, Volume 2 Prognostication in History,* ed. Chang et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 1-10.

[214] For instance, Alexander K. Smith subsumes prophesies received via spirit-mediumship under the umbrella of divination, stating that "the prophecies given by semi-divine or divine beings in quasi-historical narratives…represent inspirational forms of divination." Smith distinguishes "inspirational" forms of divination from "mechanical" ones, with inspirational forms defined as "divination practices that depend wholly upon a relationship expressed between the diviner and some form of supernatural or divine agency, typically involving a form of possession as the medium through which revelation is expressed…Conversely, mechanical divination refers to forms of divination that utilize mechanistic apparatuses external to the operator that, if correctly interpreted, serve as a medium through which truths may be articulated or supernatural agency may be divined." See Smith, *Divination in Exile: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Ritual Prognostication in the Tibetan Bon Tradition,* 5–6. The fact that this definition of mechanical divination also appears to depend upon supernatural agency indicates the overlapping nature of these categories in Tibet.

[215] Wim van Binsbergen, "Four-Tablet Divination as Trans-Regional Medical Technology in Southern Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, no. 25 (1995): 114. In speaking of a "set of procedures," this definition of divination invites comparison to ritual studies. However, this is beyond the scope of this chapter.

a medium, incorporating both categories of prophecy and mediumship. Indeed, special knowledge about the past, present, and future can be obtained via all these categories; as a result, it is difficult to disambiguate prophecy from these and related categories. Nonetheless, as sources of a kind of special or privileged knowledge, all of these categories can be understood on a functional level as forms of information-gathering that are used to assist in decision-making.[216]

The second major form of prophecy in Tibet is literary. Per Sørensen describes this form of prophecy as a "literary and rhetorical tool" that was widely used in different cultures as a "tactical and political device" used as a form of legitimation.[217] The main function of this form of prophecy is the legitimation of religious phenomena, such as teachers, teachings, and institutions. As a ubiquitous form of legitimation, these types of prophecy have been described as a kind of "prophetic certificate," a form of historiographical providentialism that serves to bolster the social prestige or spiritual capital of prophesied figures.[218] Indeed, their use is so common that they have been described as "a phenomenon of trite occurrence in

[216] For instance, Christopher Bell describes divination, dream portents, and astrology as methods for coming "to an informed decision." See Christopher Bell, "Divination, Prophecy, and Oracles in Tibetan Buddhism," in *Prophecy in the New Millennium: When Prophecies Persist*, ed. Sarah Harvey and Suzanne Newcombe (New York: Routledge, 2016), 125. Elsewhere, Brandon Dotson has described the use of dice divination to reach legal decisions, remarking that from a functionalist perspective, "there is little difference whether one attributes the agency in such a procedure to the gods or to random chance. In either case, it is a mechanism through which figures of authority legitimate their decisions by means of placing agency outside of themselves." See Brandon Dotson, "Divination and Law in the Tibetan Empire: The Role of Dice in the Legislation of Loans, Interest, Marital Law and Troop Concription," in *Contributions to the Cultural History of Early Tibet*, ed. Matthew T. Kapstein and Brandon Dotson (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 31–32.

[217] Per K. Sørensen, "In His Name: The Fake Royal Biography," 310.

[218] Per K. Sørensen, "In His Name: The Fake Royal Biography," 319.

Tibetan ecclesiastic and historical literature."[219] It is this type of prophecy that scholars have in mind when voicing sentiments such as "Tibetan history was written by prophecy."[220]

In general, these two types of prophecy have been treated in a siloed fashion in studies of Tibetan religion. The first has been studied by anthropologists, who are not concerned with literary forms of prophecy. The second has been studied by textualists, who are not concerned with non-textual modes of prophecy.[221] As a result, one influential mode of analysis has explained these two types of prophecy via a popular/elite dichotomy. According to this model, forms of prophecy qua divination are largely demanded by the laity, whereas literary forms of prophecy are utilized by elites as forms of legitimation.[222] For instance, this contrast between "popular" and "elite" ways of thinking is operative within studies of dream in Tibet, where it has been argued that the "elite" views of "literate scholar-monastics" differs from the "popular" views of "the laity and non-literate monastics," with the elites

[219] Sørensen, "In His Name: The Fake Royal Biography—Fabricated Prophecy and Literary Imposture," 318.

[220] Bell, "Divination, Prophecy, and Oracles in Tibetan Buddhism," 122. Per K. Sørensen expresses a similar sentiment, writing: "It is not much amiss to maintain that Tibetan history (and indeed Buddhist history) over long stretches often was formed and accompanied by prophecy-laden narratives (at least as they are deployed and recounted in historical and religious literature), since as a rhetoric tool their repercussions were conducive to impact and alter the resultant course of action." Sørensen, "In His Name: The Fake Royal Biography," 319.

[221] Alexander K. Smith argues that the study of Tibetan divination has privileged "high" Buddhism (at the expense of the study of daily ritual practice) as a result of both orientalist presumptions and a focus on working with monastic informants. See Smith, *Divination in Exile*, 3.

[222] For instance, Christopher Bell writes: "Divination may be performed by monks and lamas in many instances, but the contempt that religious specialists sometimes show for its practice suggests that they supply these services primarily because of the demands of the laity. Conversely, though the laity are familiar with recorded prophecies, especially those maintained by oral traditions, it is the monastic community that relies on them most to legitimate their lineages, institutions and the spiritual masters who founded them. If we consider the above practices on a spectrum, with divination leaning toward the laity on one side, and recorded prophecies leaning toward monastics on the other, then oracles span the length in between." See Bell, "Divination, Prophecy, and Oracles in Tibetan Buddhism," 129-30.

tending to espouse a more negative view of dream as illusory and deceptive.[223] According to this model, monastic elites provide divination as a service to the laity "to support hegemonic secular and monastic institutions," with these institutions receiving economic support in return in the form of private donations.[224] It is this model of divination as a service provided to the laity by Buddhist monastics that is also operative in Mainstream Buddhist criticisms of divination as a form of "wrong livelihood."[225]

However, in her study of the shamanic activity of dreaming, Angela Sumegi is one scholar who has argued against the validity of this popular/elite dichotomy in Tibet, observing that "the spiritual elite…are in fact more likely to be interested in the practical use of dream signs than ordinary lay people are."[226] This is also evident in my research. In the early days of the Geluk tradition, Tsongkhapa and other important figures utilized dreams, omens, and spirit-mediumship as a key method in decision-making. And although literary forms of prophecy would come to dominate later Gelukpa historiography, they were nearly non-existent in the earliest sources.

In general, this distinction is also reminiscent of Samuels' categories of the clerical and the shamanic. However, rather than resorting to that categorization, and rather than arguing for a popular-elite dichotomy, it seems to me that there are a number of

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[223] Serinity Young, *Dreaming in the Lotus: Buddhist Dream Narrative, Imagery, & Practice* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 16.

[224] Graham E. Clarke, "Ideas of Merit (*Bsod-nams*), Virtue (*Dge-ba*), Blessing (*byin-rlabs*) and Material Prosperity (*rten-'brel*) in Highland Nepal," *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21, no. 2 (1990), cited in Smith, *Divination in Exile*, 21.

[225] David V. Fiordalis, "On Buddhism, Divination and the Worldly Arts: Textual Evidence from the Theravāda Tradition," *The Indian International Journal of Buddhist Studies* 15 (2014): 79–108.

[226] Angela Sumegi, *Dreamworlds of Shamanism and Tibetan Buddhism: The Third Place* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), 4.

characteristics that are shared between all forms of prophecy in Tibet. I advance a few of these as the beginnings of an attempt to understand prophecy in Tibet in a unitary fashion. One feature that should not be overlooked is that many of the texts that contain literary prophecy possess narratives of a supernatural origin. These include Indian canonical sources, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, as well as the numerous quasi-canonical Tibetan sources that are sources of prophecy, such as Kachem Kakhölma, Maṇi Kabum, and various Treasure texts. All of these texts are said to have been retrieved or discovered in some way that is outside of "everyday experience." As a result, this rhetorical dimension should not be explained away as simply providing the "nimbus or aura of authorial or scriptural authenticity" for a literary forgery, one absent of any supernatural intervention.[227] If an oracular prophecy derives authority from its divine source, the same is true for literary prophecy as well.

Another important feature of Tibetan prophecy is the agency of the presiding figure. In general, divination has been described as a proactive approach to prophecy, in that it involves specific rituals performed to answer specific questions.[228] Scholars have also noted that the *lama* presiding over a ritual can adjust the ritual on the fly, such as by changing the rules of a dice divination to favor the patron.[229] In a similar vein, if a geomantic reading indicates that one's house is facing the wrong direction, the ritualist could instruct that person to perform a simple remedy by using a colored flag to change the direction of the house

[227] Sørensen, "In His Name: The Fake Royal Biography," 285.

[228] Bell, "Divination, Prophecy, and Oracles in Tibetan Buddhism," 124.

[229] Charles Ramble, "Playing Dice with the Devil: Two Bonpo Soul-Retrieval Texts and Their Interpretation in Mustang, Nepal," *East and West* 59, no. 1 (December 2009): 219.

symbolically.[230] This quality of divination demonstrates that those presiding over a divination exercise a great deal of agency when performing rituals, even those that are seemingly the most "mechanical" or "objective" in nature (such as throwing dice).[231]

The authority to receive and interpret prophecies is also grounded in the personal qualities of the presiding figure. According to one traditional perspective, it is the *lama*'s "intuitive insight" into emptiness that "is the basis of the art of divination."[232] Fleshing this out further, Rolf Scheuermann reports that "prophecies are considered to have sprung forth from a direct perception of reality of a religious adept who is considered to be a person of authority (*tshad ma'i skyes bu*), such as the Buddha, a wisdom deity or certain revered masters. Constituting a means of valid cognition in themselves, they are hence deemed to possess a supreme type of foreknowledge."[233] Similarly, it has been argued that the ability to interpret a significant dream is itself revealing of the interpreter's sainthood.[234]

Understanding that the presiding figure exercises agency in interpreting prophecies points to another important aspect of prophecy: its ambiguity. In the broadest sense, it has

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[230] Maurer writes: "These rituals could help create a site suitable for construction or clear the negative calculated influences on an already constructed house. One simple procedure—I was told by the present oracle of Nechung (gnas chung)—is the use of a flag to change directions. South is connected with fire and the related color red. So if a building faces in the wrong direction, say north, one could place a red flag to the north and, together with certain prayers, change north into south." See Maurer, *Landscaping Time, Timing Landscapes*, 111.

[231] Robert B. Ekvall, "Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society," *Ethnology* 2, no. 1 (January 1963): 36.

[232] Lama Chime Radha Rinpoche, "Tibet," in *Divination and Oracles*, ed. Michael Loewe and Carmen Blacker (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), 25.

[233] Rolf Scheuermann, "Vibhūticandra's Svapnohana and the Examination of Dreams," in *Glimpses of Tibetan Divination: Past and Present*, ed. Petra Maurer, Donatella Rossi, and Rolf Scheuermann (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 162.

[234] Young, *Dreaming in the Lotus: Buddhist Dream Narrative, Imagery, & Practice*, 13.

been observed that virtually any phenomenon in Tibet—animate or inanimate—could be construed as an omen.[235] More narrowly, it has been observed that communications from spirit-mediums can be ambiguous, obscure, and reinterpreted in light of future events.[236] Dreams are also considered unreliable, as it is believed in Tibet that various entities, both divine and demonic, can produce them.[237] This ambiguity is what makes the agency and sanctity of the presiding figure so central in making sense of these disparate forms of divination.

In my view, these qualities of prophecy also apply to literary forms of prophecy. Although literary prophecies may appear to be determinate qua printed word, they possess a number of ambiguous elements. First, there can be disagreement over whether a text is authoritative.[238] Second, the wording of the same prophecy can vary in different accounts. Lastly, the interpretation of a literary prophecy can be ambiguous or contested; it is not the case that a prophecy is cited once and then remains closed to contestation or further interpretation.

For this reason, a historian citing literary prophecy is much like a tantric *lama* presiding over a divination or interpreting a prophetic dream, in that they exercise agency in choosing how to interpret or cite ambiguous literary prophecies that often have a supernatural

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[235] Ekvall, "Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society," 35.

[236] Bell, "Divination, Prophecy, and Oracles in Tibetan Buddhism," 132.

[237] Rene De Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities* (Delhi: Rashtra Rachna Printers, 1996), cited in Alex Wayman, "Significance of Dreams in India and Tibet," *History of Religions* 7, no. 1 (August 1967): 3–4.

[238] For instance, there were disagreements over whether Gelukpa historians should cite prophecies found in Nyingma Treasure texts or quasi-canonical and apocryphal Tibetan sūtras that are not found in the Kangyur. See Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 345.

origin. Although the method of Tibetan historians has been construed as "scissors-and-paste," there are also times when a new interpretation is offered, a new text is cited, or an old view is rejected.[239] And as has been observed with regard to Indian Buddhist prophecies of the decline of the dharma, these changes were ex post facto ones that were meant to communicate something important to these later writers.[240]

In sum, I argue that prophecy in Tibet is best theorized as a unitary category that encompasses both oral and literary aspects. On a smaller scale, prophecy informs individual decision-making. On a broad scale, prophecy can legitimate the lives of religious saints and the sanctity of entire religious traditions. In both cases, social and economic benefits can accrue to the one who is able to perform this task successfully. However, even the grandest literary prophecies are grounded in the choices made by historians. Just as "the diviner is an agent of change in Tibetan society," the same could be said for the Tibetan historian.[241]

The Prophecies of Lhodrak Drubchen

These prophecies are found in numerous texts in the Collected Works of Lhodrak Drubchen, most notably in biographical works requested by Tsongkhapa or communicated for Tsongkhapa's benefit. However, given that Tsongkhapa only spent seven months in Lhodrak Drubchen's presence and he's not considered one of Tsongkhapa's main teachers, the question arises: why did Tsongkhapa and his disciples decide to ask Lhodrak Drubchen to

[239] van der Kuijp, "Tibetan Historiography," 44–45.

[240] Jan Nattier, *Once Upon a Future Time: Studies in a Buddhist Prophecy of Decline* (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1991), 39.

[241] Ekvall, "Some Aspects of Divination in Tibetan Society," 38.

make these prophecies? Why did they give Lhodrak Drubchen so much influence over their early tradition? And how and why did his prophecies come to be minimized in later years by the tradition?

As described in chapter one, one factor is that Lhodrak Drubchen was viewed as a charismatic *mahāsiddha* in the late fourteenth century in central Tibet. Lhodrak Drubchen himself describes this charisma in a particularly evocative and straightforward way in his *Secret Biography*:

> When I travel to all sorts of places and stay in communities of different calibers (? *sde yas man*), then merely by seeing me, [people] obtain [meditative] experiences and realizations, illnesses and evil spirits are pacified, and they experience heartfelt joy. By merely hearing the sound [of my voice], obstacles are dispelled and suffering is purified. By merely obtaining my blessing, their illnesses such as leprosy, blisters, and so forth are restored, like a snake shedding its skin. Such inconceivable things take place. Beings who see, hear, touch, or remember me come to possess [at least] one *siddhi*. And when even the earth-lords of the region see me, they become afraid and the fountains boil (? *khol yong ba*), all the plants tremble, and they offer homage, make offerings, and flatter me (mdong gsol).[242]

In this passage, Lhodrak Drubchen states plainly that he is a person with various magical powers. Bringing to mind Mills' characterization of religious authority within the Geluk tradition as a balance between the monastic scholar, the tantric lama, and the oracle, Lhodrak Drubchen appears to have provided the religious authority of a tantric lama and oracle for the early Geluk tradition.[243]

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[242] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 142-43. Seeing, hearing, touching, and remembering are four of the "six liberations." For more, see Holly Gayley, "Soteriology of the Senses in Tibetan Buddhism," *Numen* 54 (2007b): 459–499.

[243] Interestingly, when Lhodrak Drubchen requests "clear prophecies" from Vajrapāṇi in his *Secret Biography* about how many of his disciples will perfect their practice, Vajrapāṇi says that Lhodrak Drubchen himself is capable of knowing the answer but goes on to answer anyway. This indicates one way the power of the tantric

As I have argued, another motivating factor for Tsongkhapa's request was the fact that the powerful ruler of central Tibet, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen, revered Lhodrak Drubchen as a guru. If prophesied by Lhodrak Drubchen, then the founding of Tsongkhapa's monastery—and in effect, the founding of his tradition—would have gained legitimacy by virtue of this connection with Lhodrak Drubchen. In fact, Lhodrak Drubchen states explicitly in his *Secret Biography* that he expects those hearing his prophecies to provide them directly to the Gongma and in an unmodified fashion.[244] And he even admits that giving prophecies for the multitudes who had requested them was a reason that these people came to have faith in him.[245] One might surmise that since it was Tsongkhapa who acted as middle-man by requesting Lhodrak Drubchen to write the biographies that contained these prophecies that this likely resulted in some indirect admiration going his way as well.

The prophecies given by Lhodrak Drubchen to Tsongkhapa also appear to have resulted from their close relationship. They appear to have had great mutual respect, as evidenced by Lhodrak Drubchen's famous statement that when they first met, they appeared

lama is rhetorically likened to that of enlightened deities. Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 141.

[244] "When these words are offered to the hands of Wang (Dbang) Drakpa Gyeltsenpa, they should be exactly [as I have spoken them] (*zhib par yod*)." Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 148. It should be noted the context is one where Lhodrak Drubchen was answering questions specifically requested by the Gongma. However, it is likely those with faith in Lhodrak Drubchen would respect his prophecies concerning other topics as well.

[245] "Furthermore, in response to the prophecy requested by Stod byang pa in Gtsang, [the one] requested by the lay Buddhist official of Yar rgyab (*dpon chen dge bsnyen*), those requested by some chieftains (*sde dpon*) and so forth of the region of Ü, and furthermore, in response to requests by the many people who had gathered to meet with me from all regions, such as Mnga' ris, Ü, Tsang, [Densa] Thel pa, Drikungpa, Rgya ma, Mdo Khams stod smad, Rtsong kha, and so forth, Mon, Myang po, Lho, Gnyal, and so forth, and by some with faith from Lhodrak, inconceivable prophecies manifested as manifold actions for all those who had a need. faith arose in those people." Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *Gsang ba'i rnam thar*, 148.

to one another as bodhisattvas incarnate.[246] Lhodrak Drubchen also reports that he wrote down Tsongkhapa's *Garland* and sent him a copy "in order to delight the mind of Losang Drakpa."[247] And Tsongkhapa also appeared to have great respect for Lhodrak Drubchen, stating that it would be a "great kindness" for him to share his life story, details about his visions, the manner of his religious teachings, and his activities in past and future lives.[248]

However, one aspect that has thus far been overlooked is the importance of the wider socio-religious context. Specifically, the fact that Tsongkhapa and Lhodrak Drubchen shared a number of respected disciples who were also involved in requesting these biographies (and their related prophecies) be written.[249] Although it was Tsongkhapa who requested Lhodrak Drubchen to compose his *Inner Biography* and *Secret Biography*, this request was actually delivered via letter by a number of Tsongkhapa's disciples. In a similar vein, *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa* was also requested by some of Tsongkhapa's disciples. In fact, Lhodrak Drubchen reports that these disciples visited him specifically to request stories about any "marvelous visions" or "auspicious signs" that arose when Lhodrak Drubchen met Tsongkhapa.[250] This indicates that the composition of this work was explicitly one where

[246] "I saw [Tsongkhapa] as the coming of Jetsun Mañjughoṣa, adorned by a lattice of light. He saw me directly as Vajrapāṇi." Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa, 154.

[247] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *Lhodrak Drubchen's Inner Biography*, 130.

[248] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *Lhodrak Drubchen's Inner Biography*, 130.

[249] For instance, Neringpa reports that "the majority of Lhodrakpa's great sons also became disciples of the Lord [Tsongkhapa]." See Zangs zangs ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas, "Ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas kyis mdzad pa'i rnam thar gser gyi mchod sdong," in *Rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1 (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2015), 557.

[250] "They said, "Whenever our holy lama, the great Tsongkhapa, would mention your name, he would make marvelous praises, using phrases like 'the unrivaled Namkha Gyaltsen' and 'the most revered Lhodrak Yogi of Vajrapāṇi would say such and such and has been so kind [to me].' When you met with Jé Tsongkhapa, can you

Tsongkhapa's disciples were seeking corroboration of Tsongkhapa's religious charisma from Lhodrak Drubchen himself.

To orient the topic, here is a chart of relevant works placed in (estimated) chronological order, along with information on who the texts were requested by, their date of composition, and any other relevant comments:

	Requested by:	Date of Composition:	Comments:
A Garland of Supreme Medicinal Nectar	Tsongkhapa himself, delivered as an oral communication from Vajrapāṇi with Lhodrak Drubchen as medium.[251]	The "instruction of the Mouse year" (*byi ba'i gdams pa*), placing its oral transmission within the first month of the Fire Mouse year (1396), as this was the last month Tsongkhapa spent with Lhodrak Drubchen in person.[252]	A written copy was later delivered to Tsongkhapa on behalf of Lhodrak Drubchen.
Lhodrak Drubchen's *Outer Biography*	Namkha Lhungyel (Nam mkha' lhun rgyal, d.u.), a disciple of Lhodrak Drubchen.[253]	Completed on the fifteenth day of the first month (likely 1396).	Completed simultaneously with a work described as "a work of direct advice for practice called *Garland of Nectar* (*Bdud rtsi phreng ba zhes bya ba'i bsgrub pa'i zhal bskos*) seemingly referring to *A Garland of*

kindly tell us of any marvelous visions you had as well as what auspicious signs you observed?" Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*, 154.

[251] Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 200.

[252] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *How I met with Jé Tsongkhapa*,156. "Then, since I had asked the *yidam* about the essential points of the view, he replied: 'Having given him the 'instruction of the Mouse [year]' (*byi ba'i gdams pa*) called *[Garland of] Supreme Medicinal Nectar*, this will dispel the doubts of Matibhatra.'"

[253] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Outer Biography*, 76.

			Supreme Medicinal Nectar.[254]
Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*	Geshé Jamkarba ('Jam dkar ba, b. 14th century) arrived on the 25th day of the month of Losar with thirteen dharma brothers, with a letter requesting composition from Tsongkhapa.[255]	According to the colophon, it was accomplished at Lho brag Bla bo dgon pa on the eighth day of the first month of the Mouse year (1396). And it was composed "in response to the requests by the three disciples who possess karmic fortune."[256] But earlier, it states: "Since both Geshé Jamkarwa and Namkha Lhungyel were [Lhodrak Drubchen's] disciples who had connections via the remnants of good karma in past lives, in the face of the coming together of prayers and dependent-arisings, it has been set in writing."[257]	However, text-internal evidence suggests that (parts of the text) must date from at least 1397.[258] In another text, author states that this work was composed as a result of requests from Tsongkhapa and fortunate disciples, as well as the actions of "influential persons."[259]

[254] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Outer Biography*, 76.

[255] "They had a letter from Chöjé Kashipa [Chos rje dka' bzhi pa, i.e., Tsongkhapa], which said: "Your biography, with the manner of your visions of the yidam deities, the manner of your dharma teachings, and your activities in past and future lives will be set in writing. If these were found in one [work], it would be a great kindness!" Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*, 129-30.

[256] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*, 132. The identity of these three disciples is unclear.

[257] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*, 130.

[258] This text appears to be a composite work, as evidenced by the title. (Nang ting nge 'dzin gyi nyams snang rnam thar du bkod pa snyan brgyud kyi lde mig skye ba bcu drug ma phran dang bcas pa). Thus, different parts of the text may have been composed at different times, which were then combined at a later date. One piece of text-internal evidence is that the aforementioned prophecy calling Tsongkhapa Lhodrak Drubchen's supreme disciple is said to have emerged on the third day of the third month (*ngang <nag> pa*; words within chevrons indicate modern corrections). Since this prophecy must date to after Tsongkhapa met Lhodrak Drubchen, this would indicate the year 1397.

[259] My translation is tentative: *Chos rje blo bzang grags pa'i bka' nan che ba la rten zhing ngo chen mdzad pa dang | de la rten nas slob ma skal ldan rnams kyis yang yang zhus pa'i ngor*. This information is actually found in another text. Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Bka' stod lung bstan," in Lho brag nam mkha' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum, vol. 1, 2 vols. (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 158-65.

Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*	According to the opening, a letter from Tsongkhapa, was delivered to Lhodrak Drubchen by the Tsetangpa Geshé and Kashi Dzinpa Jamyang Khaché (Rtse thang pa'i dge bshes bka' bzhi 'dzin pa 'Jam dbyangs kha che, active early 15th century) and the Kachu Dzinpa Drakpa Lodrö (Bka' bcu 'dzin pa Grags pa blo gros, active late fourteenth-early fifteenth century) leading a group of fifteen *geshés* and *pönlobs*.[260]	As it mentions an event that happened in 1399, Czaja dates its composition sometime between the tenth month of Hare year (1399) and Lhodrak Drubchen's death in 1401.[261]	The work was offered back by Lhodrak Drubchen to Tsongkhapa and the "details were expressed in the words of the fifteen *geshés* and *pönlobs* [who delivered it]."[262]
How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa	Many *geshés* who were students of Tsongkhapa, with the spiritual friend Kunga Sangpo (Bshes gnyen Kun dga' bzang po, 1366-1444) and the disciple prophesied by the *yidam*,	None.	According to Sonam Tsering, of all the biographies of Tsongkhapa, this work is considered the oldest, ostensibly written between 1398 and 1401.[264]

[260] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 135.

[261] Czaja, *Medieval Rule*, 202, n. 302.

[262] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 153. It seems like the *Secret Biography* was communicated orally by Lhodrak Drubchen and then delivered to Tsongkhapa orally via the recollection of the fifteen disciples who heard it.

[264] Sonam Tsering, *The Role of Texts*, 74.

	Domé Serdenpa Dhvajabhadra.[263]		

It is apparent that this period from about 1396 to 1401 witnessed a flurry of activity between Tsongkhapa, Lhodrak Drubchen, and a number of their disciples. It is also apparent that the requesting of these works became progressively more social and formalized. The *Outer Biography* was requested solely by one Namkha Lhungyel, a disciple of Lhodrak Drubchen about whom little is known. However, afterwards the requests for the composition of the *Inner Biography*, *Secret Biography*, and *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa* were all group affairs led by senior disciples, accompanied by gifts, and likely would have involved a level of formality and decorum. [265] So, who were some of those important enough to be named as requesters?

There is a clear pattern in that each request names at least one influential disciple of Tsongkhapa and one disciple of Lhodrak Drubchen. For the *Inner Biography*, it is Lama Jamkarwa and Namkha Lhungyel. For the *Secret Biography*, it is Jamyang Khaché and Drakpa Lodrö. For *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*, it is Kunga Sangpo and Gyeltsen Sangpo. Significantly, in two cases figures are known to be disciples of *both* Tsongkhapa and Lhodrak Drubchen. This is the case for Drakpa Lodrö as well as Kunga Sangpo.[266]

[263] Mdo smad gser ldan pa Dhvajabhadra (=Gyeltsen Sangpo [Rgyal mtshan bzang po, d.u.]). Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*, 153.

[265] For instance, along with the letter requesting he compose his Inner Biography, "the [requesters] gave to [Lhodrak Drubchen] a bolt of cloth of magnificent fine yellow-orange silk, saying they were ordered to offer it for him to make his own robes." Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*, 130.

[266] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 741.

So, who were these figures? Little is known about Namkha Lhungyel but he was Lhodrak Drubchen's disciple and may also have been his nephew.[267] Geshé Jamkarwa (or Jampel Chösang ['Jam dpal chos bzang], late fourteenth-early fifteenth century) is an important figure. According to Lechen's *Kadam History*, he was first a *geshé* and *vinayadhāra* at the monastery of Kyormolung, an influential monastery and center for *vinaya* studies in central Tibet.[268] Prophesied by Lama Umapa, he was one of the "eightfold pure retinue" who accompanied Tsongkhapa on a long retreat in Ölka. According to the biography of Tokden Jampel Gyatso, during the retreat "everyone offered appeals to both Jé Rinpoché (i.e., Tsongkhapa) and Lama Jamkarwa," indicating Jamkarwa's senior status among Tsongkhapa's disciples.[269] Later on, he also gave teachings to Khedrubjé.[270] And Lhodrak Drubchen also had great request for him, describing him as a "marvelous being."[271] In sum, the request to compose Lhodrak Drubchen's Inner Biography was performed by Lama Jamkarwa (a disciple of Tsongkhapa who was learned, well-respected, and connected to the influential monastery of Kyormolung) and Namkha Lhungyel, a close disciple of Lhodrak Drubchen.

The request to compose the *Secret Biography* was delivered by Jamyang Khaché Sönam Pel (Bsod nams dpal or Puṇyaśrī). This figure was associated with the wealthy and

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[267] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Introduction," in *Collected Writings of Lho-brag Grub-chen Nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Tshering Dargye, 1972).

[268] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 709.

[269] Blo gros rgyal mtshan, "Rje btsun 'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i rnam thar dad pa'i chu rgyun," in *Rnam thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed sogs/* (s.l.: s.n., n.d.), 8.

[270] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 732.

[271] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*, 156.

powerful monastery of Densatil, acting as "dharma director" (*chos sgo ba*).[272] He was also a senior disciple of Tsongkhapa, described as one of the "leaders of [Tsongkhapa's' disciples] (mi chen gyi zhal slob).[273] Also indicative of his stature, in a famous narrative concerning Tsongkhapa's miraculous tooth Jamyang Khaché receives a golden relic that appears from the tooth, a form of gift only extended to luminaries such as Lama Umapa, Gyeltsabjé, and Duldzin Drakpa Gyeltsen (Dul 'dzin grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1374-1434).[274] Jamyang Khaché is perhaps most famous for composing the work *Eighty Tsongkhapas*, a celebrated eulogy to Tsongkhapa.[275]

The second named requester was Drakpa Lodrö, a scholar (Dka' bcu 'dzin pa) from Kham. He is described as one of Tsongkhapa's oldest disciples (dating from before his retreat in Ölka in 1392).[276] He is also described as one of Lhodrak Drubchen's eight chief disciples, a "great being prophesied by Guhyapati."[277] The source for this phrase may be the fact that a prophecy for him appears in the Secret Biography right after that for Tsongkhapa, indicating a certain level of prestige itself.[278] Notably, Jinpa has surmised that the close relationship between Tsongkhapa and Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen was sealed by shared

[272] PaN chen bsod nams grags pa, *History of the Old and New Kadam Tradition*, 283.

[273] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 708.

[274] Blo bzang grags pa'i dpal, "Lho brag grub chen dang mjal tshul/ Mkhas grub rje la tshems gnang skor," 168.

[275] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 323-25.

[276] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 706.

[277] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 710.

[278] "Drakpa Lodrö's qualities are marvelous. His mind-stream is ripened and liberated and he will guide beings to the Mahāyāna. He will see the face of his *yidam* deity. He will augment your activities in Mos ldan yul." Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 141.

affection for the deceased Pakmodru ruler Drakpa Jangchub, whose official poetic biography was composed by Tsongkhapa at the request of the Gongma.[279] If true, it is noteworthy that Drakpa Lodrö is listed as scribe for that work in the colophon.[280]

Lastly, *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa* was requested by Kunga Sangpo and Gyeltsen Sangpo. Little is known of Gyeltsen Sangpo. There is no record of a disciple of Tsongkhapa who is a Serdenpa from Amdo named Dhvajabhadra (=Gyeltsen Sangpo). There is also no record of him as a disciple of Lhodrak Drubchen. Perhaps for this reason, Jinpa corrects the name to Vajrabhadra= Dorjé Sangpo (Rdo rje bzang po). There is a text in one version Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works that is a work of instruction offered to one Dorjé Sangpo.[281]

Kunga Sangpo was a member of the prominent Lce clan in Tibet, as well as a prominent scholar who both trained and taught at the influential monastery of Tsetang. He is also described as a disciple of Lhodrak Drubchen before he met Tsongkhapa. [282] Becoming one of Tsongkhapa's disciples, he also taught numerous notable figures, including Jamyang Chöjé, Gendun Drub, and Gö Lotsāwa. The latter praised Kunga Sangpo, saying: "The Lord [Tsongkhapa's] disciples combine all three qualities of being noble, learned, and virtuous, and are any lacking in this great being? How could such a person not receive an invitation to the throne of Ganden; it could be because he is from Tsethang!"[283] This indicates both the

[279] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 65-66.

[280] This is in the Zhol edition.

[281] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Rdo rje rgyal mtshan la gdams pa," in *Collected Writings of Lho-brag Grub-chen Nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Tshering Dargye, 1972), 237-41.

[282] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 741.

[283] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 743.

esteem with which Kunga Sangpo was held, as well as the politicized nature of this period in central Tibet, in which one's monastic affiliation affected one's career prospects.[284]

In sum, the codification of Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies in a number of texts was not merely the result of one great man (Tsongkhapa) asking another great man (Lhodrak Drubchen) to write about his greatness. In part, it resulted from Lhodrak Drubchen's own disciples making this request. In part, it resulted from other senior and respected monks making this request, some of whom were affiliated with powerful monastic institutions (Kyormolung, Tsetang) or powerful clans (Lce). And two of these figures were disciples of both Lhodrak Drubchen and Tsongkhapa. Thus, the composition of these prophecies should be seen as the result of an entire groundswell of support in central Tibet for a proverbial passing of the torch from the elderly Lhodrak Drubchen to his newly prophesied "supreme disciple" Tsongkhapa.

Lhodrak Drubchen's Prophecies

The Name and Location of Ganden

A common truism in historical writing on the Geluk tradition is that Tsongkhapa named Ganden Monastery himself.[285] However, this is inaccurate. The original source for the name and location of Ganden Monastery was a prophecy by Lhodrak Drubchen, communicated

[284] Alternatively, this statement may reflect the influence of one of Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies, more on this below.
[285] For instance, see Snellgrove and Richardson, A Cultural History of Tibet, 44 and Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 28. Curiously, Jinpa credits a prophecy of Lhodrak Drubchen for providing the location but fails to give the same credit for the name, instead crediting Tsongkhapa. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 250.

roughly a decade before the monastery's founding. As I will argue, negotiating (or minimizing) Lhodrak Drubchen's stature and importance is one of the recurring features of Geluk historiography.

According to Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, one of the questions Tsongkhapa asked him to answer (via his tutelary deity) was where he should establish a monastery. The response was the following prophecy:

> On the slope of Wangkur Ri (Dbang bskur ri)
> In the direction of the Queen's Plateau (Btsun mo sdings)
> Countless monks will congregate.
> What mountain this is will be explained by Mañjuśrī.
> [It will be] a holy object of veneration and a basis for gathering the accumulations
> For the regions of Ü, Tsang, Do, Kham and China.
> All regions such as Ngari and the northern regions will go to it for refuge.
> [From it] monasteries (*sde dgon*) will flourish in the ten directions.[286]

Unprompted, Lhodrak Drubchen then provided a fuller account of his own (*zhib rgyas*). In doing so, he demonstrates that his own charismatic status is equivalent to the tutelary deity in making prophetic statements:

> Does the name of the monastery have an auspicious meaning? After this life, you will come before Maitreya in Tuṣita and reside there. Therefore, if the name of the monastery also signifies this outcome in Tuṣita, there will be an auspicious sign akin to you yourself [continuing to] reside. In Tuṣita, you will be called the bodhisattva Jampel Nyingpo ('Jam dpal snying po). At that time, I too will be known as the bodhisattva Drimé Öser (Dri med 'od zer). We will enjoy the nectar of the holy dharma together.[287]

[286] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak *Drubchen's Secret Biography*, 145. For Jinpa's translation, see Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 250. The reference to an explanation of the mountain by Mañjuśrī is hard to decipher. As far as I know, no prophecies communicated by Tokden Jampel Gyatso or Lama Umapa contain relevant information. It may be construed as a reference to Tsongkhapa doing his own tests to confirm the information, described below.

[287] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak *Drubchen's Secret Biography*, 145.

This prophecy would have a massive influence on the later Geluk tradition. Given that Ganden is the Tibetan translation of Tuṣita, this prophecy is the original source for the name of the monastery (and the tradition itself). The notion that Tsongkhapa should continue to reside at Ganden may also have influenced the decision made by his disciples to inter him as a whole-body relic in a reliquary *stūpa* at Ganden.[288] This decision resulted in Tsongkhapa's stūpa becoming the main devotional object for Ganden as a major pilgrimage site. Lastly, Lhodrak Drubchen ties the name Ganden to a prophecy he gives for Tsongkhapa's next life, in which he will be born as a bodhisattva in Tuṣita together with Lhodrak Drubchen in his next incarnation.

Unpacking these two prophecies, the prophesied site is Coronation Mountain (Wangkur Ri), so-named because it is said to be the site where Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po, 617-650) was coronated as King.[289] According to Sørensen, Hazod, and Gyalbo, the site "bears numerous traces of [Songtsen Gampo's] vita," including Tsongkhapa's purported discovery of Songtsen Gampo's horse-headed silver seal (*dngul dam rta mgo can*) in the area.[290]

Interestingly, Tsongkhapa did not accept this prophecy without reservation. Khedrubhé reports that when it finally became time to establish his new monastery (some ten

[288] Described further in chapter four of this dissertation.

[289] "In the south, in accord with a vision that arose to the Chögyel Songtsen himself, there is the throne on which he was consecrated to the position of King. So, it is Wangkur Ri." *Dga' ldan dgon pa dang brag yer pa'i lo rgyus* (hereafter *Annals of Ganden*) (Lha sa: Grong khyer lha sa'i khul, 1994), 4.

[290] Per K. Sørensen, Guntram Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo, *Thundering Falcon : An Inquiry into the History and Cult of Khra-'brug, Tibet's First Buddhist Temple* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2005), 235.

years later), Tsongkhapa himself performed numerous divinations to verify the choice: "Since they made many entreaties [for Tsongkhapa to settle in a monastery], [in order to check] which of those would be good, [Tsongkhapa] offered prayers in the presence of the Jowo Rinpoché and examined butter-lamps, dreams, and other omens. As a result, among all of them it came out that Drok Riwoché would be good."

Here, Tsongkhapa takes the place of the deceased Lhodrak Drubchen and performs his own rituals as a tantric lama and perform butter-lamp divinations, examines his dreams, and examines other omens. And instead of Wangkur Ri, Tsongkhapa's investigation results in the name Drok Riwoché, which as mentioned was adopted as part of Ganden's full name, Drok Riwoché Ganden Nampar Gyelwéling. However, it refers to the same site, as Drok Ri is located on the northwestern spur of the broader Wangkur Mountain ridge.[291]

An alternative account of this event is offered by one Lekpa Sangpo (legs pa bzang po, d.u.), a longtime attendant of Tsongkhapa who also composed two biographies of the master. In this account, Lekpa Sangpo also reports that Tsongkhapa investigated the matter via a number of divinations (adding dough-ball divination to the list). However, rather than Drok Ri, Leksang reports that "it came out Geden was the finest."[292] In my view, this terse statement provides the earliest and best piece of evidence for why Tsongkhapa chose to refer

[291] Sørensen, Hazod, and Gyalbo, *Thundering Falcon*, 235. Per K. Sørensen, Guntram Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain: Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet: A Study of Tshal Gung-Thang*, vol. 1 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007), 290, n. 837.

[292] Paṇ chen blo gros legs bzang, "Rje rin po che'i rnam thar rab gsang rmad byung gtam gyi dga' ston byin rlobs kyi char rgyun dngos grub kyi gter 'byed rin po che'i 'phreng ba," in *Rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1 (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2015), 500. Tsongkhapa's attendant Lekpa Sangpo has been misidentified by the compilers of this modern anthology as Paṇ chen blo gros legs bzang (the 9th abbot of the major Gelukpa monastery of Bkra shis lhun po).

to his monastery as both Ganden and Geden in his writings. My interpretation of this choice is that it was the first of many actions taken by Geluk hierarchs to minimize the influence of Lhodrak Drubchen on their tradition. Rather than following the prophecy blindly to Wangkur Ri and the monastery of Ganden, Tsongkhapa performed his own divinations and determined that he should locate his monastery of Geden on Drok Ri. In absolute terms, the difference is relatively inconsequential. But even in the most minor of ways, Tsongkhapa appears to have decided to free his nascent Geluk tradition from the influence of Lhodrak Drubchen.

This effort is also emblematized by Khedrubjé failing to cite Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecy in his account of the founding of Ganden in his authoritative biography of Tsongkhapa, *Gateway to Faith*. Mentioning only the divinations performed by Tsongkhapa, this is one reason that English-language accounts give credit solely to Tsongkhapa for choosing the name of Ganden. Khedrubjé only refer to Lhodrak Drubchen's numerous prophecies on two occasions. One is an oblique reference to Tsongkhapa realizing that it had been foretold that there would be hindrances to his lifespan and then performing practices to reverse them.[293] And even in this instance, it is striking that Khedrubjé chooses not to name or reference Lhodrak Drubchen in any way. The second occasion will be described shortly.

Tsongkhapa's Past and Future Lives

Another aspect of the aforementioned prophecy is the statement that Tsongkhapa would be born in Tuṣita in his next life as the bodhisattva Jampel Nyingpo. Over time, accounts of Tsongkhapa's fate after he passed away would become a major point of contention within the

[293] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 97-98.

tradition, with a number of variant narratives. Notably, there are variant accounts found even within the prophecies of Lhodrak Drubchen! In Tsongkhapa's *Garland*, Lhodrak Drubchen states that Tsongkhapa will travel to Maitreya's heaven of Tuṣita in his next life as the bodhisattva Jampel Nyingpo. Following this life, he would then become a Dharma-King in another universe of human beings, before returning to this universe as the pandit Jñānaśrī in the Licchavi community of Eastern India.[294] Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* appears to contradict this narrative, stating that Tsongkhapa will quickly become enlightened as Jampel Nyingpo (and presumably foregoing the rebirths as a Dharma-King and the pandit Jñānaśrī). What could explain this seeming contradiction in the works of a single author in the span of a few short years? In my view, this resonates with the argument I made in chapter one, that a major purpose of Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* was to endorse Tsongkhapa as his spiritual heir and the most important religious figure in central Tibet. In the span of a few years, a narrative that Tsongkhapa was an ordinary person who was destined for future ordinary rebirths was no longer suitable. This account of Tsongkhapa's future incarnation in Tuṣita was influential, most notably for providing the narrative foundation for the major Gelukpa practice called the *Hundred Deities of Tuṣita* (or *Ganden Lhagyama*).

According to Jamyang Chöjé and Tsongkhapa's long-time attendant Lekpa Sangpo, this account that Tsongkhapa's next birth would be in Tuṣita accorded with one given to Umapa by Mañjuśrī.[295] However, there is an important alternative narrative that was received

[294] Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 212-13.

[295] See Jamyang Chöjé Tashi Palden, "Song of the Mystic Experiences of Lama Jé Rinpoche: rJe rin po che'i gsang ba'i rnam thar," in *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 50 and Paṇ chen blo gros legs bzang, "Kun gyis thun mong du ma gyur pa'i gsang ba'i rnam thar bzhugs pas bla ma la yid ches 'byung ba," in *Rje btsun*

by Tokden Jampel Gyatso from Mañjuśrī. According to this account, Tsongkhapa received a prophecy from the Buddha Indraketu long ago that he would become enlightened in the future as the Buddha Sengé Ngaro (*Seng ge'i nga ro*) in the buddha field Adorned with Various Arrays of Amazing Wonders (*Ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i bkod pa sna tshogs pas mdzes pa*).[296] Most notably, this prophecy undergirds an influential description of Ganden as the home of Tsongkhapa's enlightened activities.[297] However, there is again ambiguity to this account. Tokden Jampel Gyatso's own biography reports that Tsongkhapa "has sported in the world with countless emanations," and became a Buddha with the alternate name of Yeshé Wangpo (Ye shes dbang po). As rationalization for this, Tokden's biographer states: "Since each respective Buddha has many names and fields, the Lord also appears to have as many names as a Buddha."[298]

As a third option, Khedrubjé's authoritative biography of Tsongkhapa states that he obtained enlightenment in the *bardo* after passing away, obviating any need for discussion of

tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs, vol. 1 (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2015), 519.

[296] 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho, "Tsong kha pa'i rnam thar shin tu gsang ba ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i gtam," in *The Collected Works (Gsung 'Bum) of the Incomparable Lord Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa*, vol. Ka (New Delhi, India: Mongolian Lama Guru Deva, 1978), 212. According to J. S. Negi's Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary, *seng ge'i nga ro* renders the Sanskrit *Siṃhanāda*. However, Jinpa renders it Siṃhasvāra. One interesting function of this Sengé Ngaro narrative is its resemblance to pure land practices. Tokden Jampel Gyatso relates that "Those with best faculties who have no regard for profits or honor, understand how to abandon [the faults] of an unsuitable vessel, and are diligent and faithful should practice in accord with the explanations contained in the Sang Ngak Lamrim. Also, if they teach it to others, they will be born in that field."

[297] For more on this, see chapter four.

[298] Blo gros rgyal mtshan, "Rje btsun 'jam dpal rgya mtsho'i rnam thar dad pa'i chu rgyun," in *Rnam thar dad pa'i sgo 'byed sogs* (s.l.: s.n., n.d.), 47.

his future birth, whether in Tuṣita, his own buddha field, or anywhere else. However, Khedrub Jé explicitly addresses the variant accounts, stating that:

> Now, if one wonders if accepting the prophesy that he would become the bodhisattva named Jampel Nyingpo in Tuṣita [contradicts my saying he became enlightened in the *bardo*], it is said *ārya* Nāgārjuna obtained the First Stage and departed for Sukhāvatī. It is also said that he manifested the state of great Vajradhara. Likewise, these two statements are without contradiction, as these are ways *nirmāṇakāyas* manifest.[299]

It is noteworthy that here Khedrubjé only sees fit to address Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecy in order to negotiate a solution to the problem posed by its variant account. Khedrubjé's way to negotiate this seeming contradiction relies both on classical Buddhist doctrine and Tibetan tradition. He appears to be claiming that Tsongkhapa was a *nirmāṇakāya*, one of many emanations of an enlightened being, so there is no contradiction in there being multiple narratives about his future, as all of the details of their lives are mere illusory displays. This argument mirrors that made by Tokden Jampel Gyatso's biographer, who argued that buddhas can have multiple names and fields of activity. By invoking Nāgārjuna, Khedrub also suggests that such apparent contradictions are neither new nor problematic, as they have occurred before in the tradition.[300]

It appears that one function of the elevation of Tsongkhapa to the status of a Buddha was to provide an elegant solution to the existence of these variant prophetic narratives concerning his fate after his passing. The need for a solution is poignantly (and shrewdly) expressed in Khedrubjé's biography, when he cries out in sorrow, "where is my precious

[299] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 130.

[300] Incidentally, Nāgārjuna was later claimed as a prior incarnation of Tsongkhapa. Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 347.

master now?"[301] And the strategy of harmonizing these divergent narratives became one of the preferred ones for the early tradition. One consequence of this strategy was a proliferation of possible fates for Tsongkhapa after his passing. Chöden Rapjor's biography of Khedrubjé, Tsongkhapa states that he has emanations in many places, such as "the celestial realms, Tuṣita, and Jambudvīpa. Right now, however, I am on Mount Wutai in China."[302] Paṇchen Sönam Drakpa's adds another possibility, stating that Khecara is the location where Atiśa and Tsongkhapa are both located.[303] And Desi Sangyé Gyatso says that Tsongkhapa departed for a pure land such as Tuṣita, Sukhāvatī, Abhirati, and so forth, manifested the *saṃbhogakāya* body in the *bardo*, and his incarnated *nirmāṇakāya* went to Tuṣita as the Buddha Jampel Nyingpo.[304] In doing so, Desi seeks to harmonize all existing prophetic narratives in a coherent way.

In this survey of Geluk historical accounts, a clear trend is apparent. Early on, the prophecies of Lhodrak Drubchen were decisive concerning Tsongkhapa's next life, leading to the naming of Ganden and various works to state that Tsongkhapa went to Tuṣita as the bodhisattva Jampel Nyingpo. But over time, this prophecy became reduced in stature, eventually becoming only one of many of Tsongkhapa's incarnations.

Enumerations of Tsongkhapa's Most Important Disciples

[301] Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 115.

[302] Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 118.

[303] Paṇ chen bsod nams grags pa, *History of the Old and New Kadam Traditions*, 308.

[304] Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Baiḍūrya Serpo*, 70.

Today, the *jeyabsé* is the orthodox and influential categorization of Tsongkhaa's disciples. enumeration, However, Elijah Ary has noted that this phrase is not present in the early days of the tradition, occurring only at the end of the fifteenth century.[305] In addition, references to Tsongkhapa's "chief sons" (*sras kyi thu bo*) refer not to Khedrub, but to Gyeltsab Jé and Duldzin.[306] This indicates the fluid nature of enumerations of Tsongkhapa's most important disciples.

There are two significant enumerations that were prophesied by Lhodrak Drubchen. In Tsongkhapa's *Garland*, Vajrapāṇi states that "within his retinue, there will be three superior ones."[307] From then on, the identification of these three became an important task for Gelukpa historians, one that reveals the shifting status of different figures within the tradition. As observed earlier, Khedrubjé's authoritative biography of Tsongkhapa does not mention this category at all, demonstrating again Khedrubjé's minimization of Lhodrak Drubchen. However, the two earliest histories of the tradition (by Lechen and Paṇchen Sönam Drakpa) both report that the three are Gyeltsab Jé, Duldzin, and Lama Jamkarwa.[308]

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[305] Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 49.

[306] Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 51.

[307] *'Khor khyad par du 'phags pa gsum 'byung*. Tsong kha pa, "Zhu lan sman mchog bdud rtsi'i phreng ba," in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, vol. Ka (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 238. Ary was unaware of the provenance and significance of this category; Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 61-62, n. 183-84.

[308] "With regards to the two renowned as primary spiritual sons (*sras kyi thu bo gnyis*), they are the Lord of Scholars, Gyeltsab Darma Rinchen and the great bodhisattva, Dulwa Dzinpa Drakpa Gyeltsen. According to the prophecy of Guhyapati, 'There will arise three superior ones in the retinue.' To this point, according to my own lama [Gendun Drub], these are the two primary spiritual sons and Lama Jamkarwa." Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 706. PSD states, "Gyeltsab and Duldzin are the two chief spiritual sons. These two plus Jamkarwa are the three superior ones who were attendants prophesied by Guhyapati. Khedrub Chöjé is the sole innermost heart-son." PaN chen bsod nams grags pa, *History of the Old and New Kadam Traditions*, 82.

This echoes my prior argument that Lama Jamkarwa was a significant figure in this early period.

However, the status of Lama Jamkarwa would soon diminish. This shift is most evident in the work of Paṇchen Sönam Drakpa. Although this author had earlier included Lama Jamkarwa as one of the three prophesied superior disciples, he is inconsistent in this identification. Later in the same work, he replaces him with Khedrubjé![309] Later authors in the tradition would continue this trend of elevating Khedrubjé and minimizing Lama Jamkarwa. The *Secret Biography* of Khedrubjé authored by Jetsun Chöki Gyeltsen (Rje btsun chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1469-1544/6) identifies Gyeltsab, Duldzin, and Khedrub as the three.[310] By the seventeenth century, the category of the "three superior ones" was no longer significant and goes completely unmentioned in the Kharnak *History* and *Baiḍūrya Serpo*.

This category of three can be contrasted to an alternative category of seven of Tsongkhapa's disciples that was prophesied by Mañjuśrī. According to Khedrubjé's *Secret Biography* of Tsongkhapa, *Cluster of Precious Tales*, it was prophesied that "special realizations of the path would be produced for seven fortunate disciples" (*slob ma skal ldan bdun*).[311] A later history identifies these as "seven heart-sons" (*thugs sras bdun*): the three *rinpochés* Gyeltsabjé, Duldzin, and Khedrubjé; the two [who founded] Jangtsé and Shartsé colleges: Jangtsé Chöjé Namkha Pelsang (Byang rtse chos rje nam mkha' dpal bzang, 1373-1447) and Shartsé Chöjé Rinchen Gyeltsen (Shar rtse rin chen rgyal mtshan, b. fourteenth

[309] PaN chen bsod nams grags pa, *History of the Old and New Kadam Traditions*, 99.

[310] Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 125.

[311] Dge legs dpal bzang, *Cluster of Precious Tales*, 193.

century); and the two Tokdens: Tokden Jampel Gyatso, and Tokden Namkha Shogrel (Nam mkha' shog ral, d.u.).[312] This list is identical to a list found in Zangzang Neringpa Chimé Rabgye's (Zang zang ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas, fl. fifteenth century) biographical work on Tsongkhapa's disciples, where they are called "seven heart-sons and great sons who are in that pure prophecy" and the "seven heart-sons devoid of rivals."[313]

Two things are noteworthy about this list. The first is that Neringpa makes no linkage between the "three *rinpochés*" and Lhodrak Drubchen's category of "three superior ones."[314] The second is that with the exception of Tokden Namkha Shogrel, all of the other six figures played a major role in the development of the tradition after the founding of Ganden, comprising the "two chief sons" Gyeltsab and Duldzin, the first two Ganden Tripas (Gyeltsabjé and Khedrubjé), the founders of Ganden Jangtsé and Shartsé colleges, and one of Tsongkhapa's seniormost disciples (Tokden Jampel Gyatso). Also noteworthy is that Lama Jamkarwa is absent in this list of seven composed in 1470. In the span of sixty years, he had become fairly irrelevant, passed over in favor of those who had been actively involved in the important institution building that took place at Gelukpa monasteries after his passing. By this time, both Lhodrak Drubchen and Lama Jamkarwa's memory and influence were on the wane.

[312] Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartsé History I*, 28-29.

[313] Zangs zangs ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas, "Ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas kyis mdzad pa'i rnam thar gser gyi mchod sdong" (hereafter Neringpa's *Golden Offering-Tree*) in *Rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1 (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2015), 542.

[314] Neringpa was also aware of Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies, citing one of them later in the text. Zangs zangs ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas, Neringpa's *Golden Offering-Tree*, 544.

A similar fate befell the last category of Tsongkhapa's disciples prophesied by Lhodrak Drubchen in his *Secret Biography*. This is an alternative list of seven, described as follows: "As regents who uphold your teachings, there will arise many *geshés* who attain learning and realization and satisfy your mind. In particular, seven will arise from Tsang and gather large retinues of *āryas*."[315] In later historiography, this group became known as the "lineage of seven Tsangpa Mañjughoṣas," with this prophecy being interpreted as a prophecy for the first seven Ganden Tripas, all of whom hailed from Tsang.[316]

Early on, there is some evidence that this category was an important one for the tradition. The first and most obvious is that the prophecy appears to have been followed, with the first seven Ganden Tripas all hailing from Tsang. Also, their reliquary *stūpas* were given pride of place next to Tsongkhapa's *stūpa*.[317] A second piece of evidence is that when Tsongkhapa performed a retreat at Ganden due to experiencing obstacles to his health in 1413, Lekpa Sangpo reports that the spirits that were harming Tsongkhapa were made to swear an oath that they would not harm: (a) the body or retinue of Tsongkhapa, (b) the two *lobpöns* (presumably Gyeltsabjé and Duldzin), (c) the seven ritualists engaged in healing rites for Tsongkhapa, (d) Lekpa Sangpo himself, and (e) the succession of the first thirteen *lamas* at the seat of Ganden.[318] It makes sense that the early Ganden Tripas would be viewed as foundational figures for the tradition, given that other monasteries such as Drepung and

[315] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 145.

[316] "In terms of the throne-holders [of Ganden], it is calculated after [Tsongkhapa] and these seven limbs are known as the 'lineage of seven Tsangpa Mañjughoṣas.'" Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Baiḍūrya Serpo*, 79.

[317] See chapter four of this dissertation.

[318] Paṇ chen blo gros legs bzang, "Rje rin po che'i rnam thar rab gsang rmad byung gtam gyi dga' ston byin rlobs kyi char rgyun dngos grub kyi gter 'byed rin po che'i 'phreng ba," 503.

Sera had not yet been established. The sanctity of these figures is also evident in the fact that "part of the nails and other things" [of these seven] were housed at the monastery of Dzingchi (Rdzing phyi).[319]

However, Neringpa again minimizes this prophesied category of Lhodrak Drubchen. He subsumes the "lineage of seven Tsangpas" under the wider category of the first eight Ganden Tripas, "the eight scholar-adepts who augmented the two traditions at the densa."[320] In fact, Neringpa even goes so far as to equate Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecy to his own list of seven (the three rinpochés, etc.).[321]

Conclusion

Two functions of prophecy function are decision-making and legitimation. Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies played a major role in decision-making for the early Geluk tradition, influencing the name and location of Ganden, enumerations of Tsongkhapa's disciples, and narratives that influenced the myth-making process of Tsongkhapa's future lives. The authority of these prophecies was grounded in Lhodrak Drubchen's charismatic personhood and ability to communicate with an enlightened deity.

These prophecies were also codified in biographies whose composition was requested not only by Tsongkhapa, but also by Lhodrak Drubchen's disciples and numerous other influential religious figures, suggesting that the birth of the Geluk tradition was not the work

[319] For more on this, see chapter four of this dissertation.

[320] Neringpa simply adds the ninth Ganden Tripa to make up his list of eight. Zangs zangs ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas, Neringpa's *Golden Offering-Tree*, 543-44.

[321] Zangs zangs ne ring pa 'chi med rab rgyas, Neringpa's *Golden Offering-Tree*, 542.

of just one great man but the burgeoning of a wider movement. However, given that a tradition changes over time, the importance of these prophecies did as well. Although Lhodrak Drubchen was never completely forgotten, some lesser prophesied figures such as Lama Jamkarwa came to be minimized, as Geluk authors exercised agency in how they deployed and interpreted these prophecies. Instead, other prophecies, figures, and categories became important to the tradition. In particular, Neringpa emphasizes those figures that played a role in the early institution-building at Ganden.

I have also argued in this chapter for a unitary approach to prophecy in Tibet. One reason for this is that I encountered in these sources a kind of creative appropriation of Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies. Although their original source was the enlightened deity Vajrapāṇi, over the centuries these prophecies began to be treated as literary prophecies. As a result, they were edited and manipulated as their authors saw fit, even when in direct opposition to the original prophetic statement. This indicates that the authority of these prophecies was grounded in Lhodrak Drubchen's charismatic personhood, and this authority could be invoked even when his actual words were no longer cited faithfully.

There are three examples of this. One is a prophecy in Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography* that stated "the Pakmodrupa Protector of Beings ('Gro mgon Phag mo gru pa [Rdo rje rgyal po], 1110-1170) (the founder of the Pakmodru Kagyu tradition) guided sentient beings by emanating in the form of an ordinary bodhisattva; most certainly, he was a Buddha."[322] However, less than a century later, Lechen adopts this prophecy and inserts

[322] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Secret Biography*, 146.

Tsongkhapa in its place, stating that "it is most certain he is an enlightened one."[323] Lechen did this because Lhodrak Drubchen's original prophecy that Tsongkhapa was a person who had accumulated the two accumulations was apparently not clear enough about Tsongkhapa's enlightened status.

A second instance is relates to Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecy concerning Tsongkhapa's lifespan. In response to a question about the length of Tsongkhapa's lifespan, Vajrapāṇi answers that "his accomplishment of the aims of beings will increase if he does not stay in one place."[324] This message is kept consistent by Lechen.[325] However, there is an obvious contradiction here, as Tsongkhapa did indeed reside at Ganden for the bulk of the last decade of his life. By the twentieth century, this tension was resolved by one author with the addition of a single negative particle. In *Shartsé History II*, it states "if the Lord [Tsongkhapa] does not stay at a single place, the benefits of beings will *not* increase."[326]

The third instance is from the preface of *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*. According to Lhodrak Drubchen, he received a prophecy from a white maiden (*bu mo dkar mo*) stating the following: "[Tsongkhapa] is a person blessed by Maitreya and non-dual from Mañjuśrī, a wondrous person whose knowledge has been bestowed by the goddess Sarasvatī and who has had a connection [with you] for fifteen prior lifetimes. Since you will have a mutual master/master relationship, hence [you] should give him teachings without engaging

[323] Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's *Kadam History*, 698.

[324] Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 212.

[325] "If he does not reside in only one abode, [his lifespan] will increase." Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, Lechen's Kadam History, 699.

[326] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 146. Italics added for emphasis.

in stinginess!"[327] The phrase "mutual master-master relationship" (*phan tshun dpon dpon 'brel ba*) is unusual, as most relationships are between a master and a disciple. However, in an earlier version of this work, the phrase is instead "you will come to have a mutual master-disciple relationship" (*phan tshun dpon slob tu 'brel ba cig yong ba yod*).[328] Although it is unclear when this change was made, it is clear that suggesting Tsongkhapa had a subordinate relationship to Lhodrak Drubchen in any capacity was no longer preferrable.

In sum, these modifications show that historiographers and editors took agency in constructing their shared tradition. Rather than simply following the charismatic prophecies given by the tantric lama and oracle Lhodrak Drubchen, they co-opted his authority and molded it towards their own purposes, such as by removing inconvenient facts and providing a seamless version of Tsongkhapa's life that served the legitimation of their tradition and the growth of the Tsongkhapa cult.

[327] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa*, 154.

[328] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Gsang ba'i rnam thar log rtog mun sel," in *Collected Writings of Lho-brag Grub-chen Nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan*, vol. 1 (New Delhi: Tshering Dargye, 1972), 190. A version of *How I Met with Lord Tsongkhapa* is informally amended to the end of the *Secret Biography*.

Chapter Three:

A Case Study in the Construction of Gelukpa Orthodoxy

One of the defining features of the Geluk tradition is its orthodoxy, one that affirms Tsongkhapa's preeminent status as the "sole inheritor of Indian Buddhism," and upholds doctrinal correctness as its principal rhetorical strategy.[329] From this perspective, authoritative Gelukpa thinkers such as Tsongkhapa and his disciples have already formulated a flawless doctrinal system.[330] As a result, the ideal-typical goal of a Geluk student is simply to retrieve and appropriate this understanding by studying their works.[331] This attitude is emblematized by this statement from one of Georges Dreyfus' monastic teachers: "When his students would ask why he did not write down his ideas, Gen Nyi-ma would reply that there was no need for him to do so. [Tsongkhapa] and his disciples had said it all. What could he add?"[332]

As a social and historical process, Gregory Schopen has observed that if orthodoxy or uniformity is ever achieved, it is over long periods of time "through a complex process of mutual influence, borrowing, and sometimes violent leveling that works on originally discrete and competing groups and voices."[333] One way of understanding this process in the

[329] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping: The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk*, 321.

[330] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 27.

[331] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 123.

[332] Drefyus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 123.

[333] Gregory Schopen, *Bones, Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archaeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 80.

Geluk tradition has been via the perspective of literary genres. For instance, José Cabezón has described the role that polemical philosophical works play as the "parent" of sectarian identity-formation, which undergirds the development of orthodoxy by articulating core principles of allegiance.[334] Elsewhere, Elijah Ary has argued that Jetsunpa used the genre of biography to legitimate Khedrub Jé as one of Tsongkhapa's preeminent disciples, as part of a wider effort to obviate ambiguities in early Geluk interpretations of Tsongkhapa's works.[335] Lastly, Brenton Sullivan has argued that the genre of "monastic constitutions" evince "a common concern among Geluk hierarchs for maintaining orthodoxy and orthopraxy along institutional lines."[336]

Another way of looking at this process is via the perspective of Gelukpa scholastic practices. In terms of pedagogy, Drefyus has described the curriculum of Tibetan monastic scholasticism as a commentarial hierarchy of three layers. The first layer consists of canonical Indian works composed by authoritative figures such as Nāgārjuna, the second layer consists of Tibetan commentarial works authored by a sect's authoritative figures (such as Tsongkhapa), and the third layer consists of college textbooks.[337] Providing "easily digestible summaries" of the material contained in the other layers, textbooks function in such a way that their interpretations are "read back into the root text, which is assumed to

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[334] José Ignacio Cabezón and Lobsang Dargyay, *Freedom From Extremes: Gorampa's "Distinguishing the Views" and the Polemics of Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2007), 6.

[335] Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 93-97.

[336] Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire*, 110.

[337] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 106-108. In a similar vein, Ary has described the three layers of text in Geluk education centers as concentric rings, with the outermost ring composed of Indian works, the middling ring composed of authoritative Geluk commentaries by Tsongkhapa as well as his chief disciples, and the third ring composed of textbooks. See Ary, *Authorized Lives*, 7-8.

implicitly contain them."[338] Implicit in this strategy is the marginalization of the viewpoints of other sects, whose alternative interpretations of the root texts are either omitted, or merely presented in order to be refuted. Since the main motivation of textbook authors was to "confirm the fundamental coherence of Tsongkhapa's system," the education of Geluk scholastics is mediated by their textbooks in such a way that alternative viewpoints are marginalized, and one "ends up believing what [one] is supposed to [believe]."[339] In this way, textbooks provided a means for the institutionalized and wide-scale indoctrination of orthodox Geluk teachings, shaping Geluk education for hundreds of years.

As another contribution to our understanding of this process, the focus of this chapter is another scholastic technique in Tibet: the selection of textual variants as an authorial strategy. In his study of Tibetan translations and citations of Sanskrit Buddhist works, Christian Wedemeyer has observed that numerous influential Tibetan thinkers would choose to cite variant translations of Indian Buddhist works that would support their individual philosophical projects. For Wedemeyer, "such citations reveal a practice distinctive of Tibetan scholasticism between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries."[340] As a result, he concludes that variant texts are not historically neutral and constitute "one vehicle of discursive struggle in Tibetan religious culture."[341] Notably, Wedemeyer demonstrates that

[338] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 109.
[339] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 208, 323.

[340] Wedemeyer, "Tantalising Traces of the Labours of the Lotsāwas: Alternative Translations of Sanskrit Sources in the Writings of Rje Tsong Kha Pa," in *Proceedings of the Tenth Seminar of the IATS, 2003. Volume 4: Tibetan Buddhist Literature and Praxis* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23.

[341] Wedemeyer, "Tantalising Traces," 22.

Tsongkhapa himself employed alternative translations of authoritative texts to suit his own interpretations.[342]

Another way variant texts appear to have functioned as a site of discursive struggle in Tibet is via the *creation* of a variant edition of a text. To this point, Paul Harrison has drawn a fruitful distinction between "recensional variants" and "transmissional variants." Recensional variants are those that reveal "extensive and deliberate editorial changes to the text," whereas transmissional variants are generally trivial and result from scribal lapses or casual attempts to improve the text.[343] The focus of this chapter is a variant edition of a text found in Tsongkhapa's Collected Works. This text contains both kinds of variant, but an examination of its recensional variants is well-suited for understanding the development of Gelukpa orthodoxy, as they are revealing of the motivations of the editor(s), as they decided how to edit the original text in such a way that it became more suitable for a Geluk audience. The end product of this work is that it became a new text altogether.

A Case Study: *A Garland of Supreme Medicinal Nectar*

In the first two chapters, I described two major roles played by Lhodrak Drubchen in the early history of the Geluk tradition: (1) inspiring patronage from Pakmodru nobles (by designating Tsongkhapa as his supreme disciple), and (2) communicating important prophetic narratives. Some of these prophecies are found in the last section of *Questions*

[342] Wedemeyer, "Tantalising Traces," 23.
[343] Paul Harrison, *Druma-Kinnara-Rāja-Paripṛcchā-Sūtra: A Critical Edition of the Tibetan Text (Recension A) Based on Eight Editions of the Kanjur and the Dunhuang Manuscript Fragment* (Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1992), xxv.

Answered: A Garland of Supreme Medicinal Nectar (*Zhu lan sman mchog bdud rtsi'i phreng ba*, hereafter *Tsongkhapa's Garland*), a text transmitted from Vajrapāṇi to Tsongkhapa with Lhodrak Drubchen acting as medium. This text is found within the Collected Works of both figures.[344] Notably, the important prophecy that had designated Tsongkhapa as Lhodrak Drubchen's "supreme disciple" also states that this *Garland* is the "supreme dharma," indicating that Lhodrak Drubchen esteemed this teaching highly.[345]

The focus of this chapter is a close analysis of the first section of the text, which contains teachings on Buddhist doctrine and advice for practice.[346] As summarized by Roger Jackson, the text is motivated by Tsongkhapa's request for Vajrapāṇi to "clarify his doubts and help him attain realization."[347] As such, it is structured as a series of questions posed by Lhodrak Drubchen (on behalf of Tsongkhapa) to the deity Vajrapāṇi. In particular, it contains a series of teachings on the clear light nature of mind, a description of pitfalls one may encounter when meditating on clear light, how to avoid these pitfalls, as well as how to avoid pitfalls in terms of the categories of view, meditation, and conduct.[348]

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[344] Tsong kha pa, Tsongkhapa's Garland, in *Rje tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, vol. Ka (Zi ling: Mtsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999), 222–40 and Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Zhu lan sman mchog bdud rtsi'i 'phreng ba," in *Lho brag nam mkha' rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, vol. 2, 2 vols. (Lha sa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2004), 899–921. This chapter is based primarily on a modern edition of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works; a cursory comparison with the Lhodrak edition appeared equivalent.

[345] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Lhodrak Drubchen's *Inner Biography*, 130.

[346] As observed by Ehrhard, the first section of the text appears to be a "self-contained unit" that is separate from the second section, which contains the prophecies as well as an intriguing statement on Dzogchen. See Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-chen," 52. As will be discussed below, the section on prophecies is completely different in the two texts.

[347] Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as Dzokchenpa: Nyingma Discourses and Geluk Sources," 133.

[348] Tsong kha pa, Tsongkhapa's *Garland*, 223. Cf. Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 200-210.

There are two existing studies that utilize this text (by Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Roger Jackson), as well as an English translation by Robert Thurman. Ehrhard's is a study of the "view" (*lta ba*) of Dzogchen and Tsongkhapa's relation to the Nyingma school. Jackson's is a study that interrogates the text from a doctrinal perspective in order to determine its philosophical views, again with an eye to determining Tsongkhapa's relation to the Nyingma tradition of Dzogchen. As Jackson has observed, the status of this text is contested along sectarian lines in Tibet. Nyingma authors frequently cite it to emphasize Tsongkhapa's indebtedness to Dzogchen and to the Nyingma lama Lhodrak Drubchen for finding the correct view.[349] Alternatively, Geluk authors pay little heed to this text in favor of Tsongkhapa's more "standard" philosophical works.[350]

A Doppelgänger: *A Golden Garland of Nectar*

Another reason *Tsongkhapa's Garland* has become a source of controversy is that (as both Ehrhard and Dudjom Rinpoche Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje have noted) it is nearly identical to a text found within the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs (Mkha' 'gro snying thig) cycle of teachings within the Nyingma tradition of Dzogchen.[351] The Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs is a set of

[349] Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as Dzokchenpa," 120.

[350] Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as a Dzokchenpa," 135.

[351] In fact, Ehrhard asserts that the text *is* completely identical, writing: "Our text appears in a slightly different light when compared with a work from the mKha' 'gro snying thig. In this gter-ma cycle originating from Padma Las-'brel-rtsal (1291-1316) is found a text, in fact, which upon closer inspection might be taken for a copy of the letter from IHo-brag Grub-chen. The only difference is the introductory part and the section with the prophecies at the end; the main section, however, the account of the 'sources of error' (*gol sa*), agrees word for word with 'The Best Nectar Medicine.'" See Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-chen," 53. However, Ehrhard failed to note the important variants that exist between them. The similarity between the two texts is also noted by Dudjom Rinpoche Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje, who writes: "Above and beyond that, Je Guru [Tsongkhapa himself], Tokden Jampel Gyamtso and others have explained that, except in the course of his presentations of the Madhyamaka and logical philosophies, the venerable Tsongkhapa conformed to the experiential cultivation of the Great Seal and Great Perfection. This, in fact, can be learned by studying the *Supreme Nectar-Elixir*

treasure texts that focus on the role of the *ḍākinī*, at once a female Buddha, a vengeful demoness, or a human female practitioner and/or sexual consort.[352] In its focus on the *ḍākinī*, it emphasizes the role of women in both consort practice and as ephiphanies of the *ḍākinīs*, as well as the role of *ḍākinīs* in redacting, concealing, and guarding texts.[353]

According to traditional accounts, this system was transmitted by Padmasambhava to his consort Yeshé Tsogyel and the daughter of Tri Songdetsen, Pemasel (Padma gsal). When this girl died at the age of eight, Padmasambhava prophesied that she would be reborn in a later life as Pema Ledreltsel (Padma las 'brel rtsal), a treasure revealer who would reveal this cycle of Dzogchen teachings. An obscure Tibetan figure named Tsultrim Dorjé (Tshul khrims rdo rje, 1291-1315/7) claimed to be Pema Ledreltsel, revealing the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs in two volumes. This cycle was then compiled by Longchenpa (Klong chen pa dri med 'od zer, 1308-1364), also considered a reincarnation of Pemasel/Pema Ledreltsel, as one of four collections of revealed treasure called the "four heart essences" (*snying thig ya bzhi*). It is Longchenpa's corpus of writings on the topic that are considered "the definitive expression" of Dzogchen.[354] According to Tulku Thondup, the cycle of the Heart-Essence of

Dialogue, whereby his doubts on the view were resolved [when he queried] the great accomplished master [Lhodrak Drubchen]. This *Dialogue* by and large merits comparison with the *Golden Rosary Dialogue* from the *Innermost Spirituality of the Ḍākinī*." Dudjom Rinpoche Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol. one (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), 925.

[352] David Germano and Janet Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession of the Dakinis," in *Tantra in Practice*, ed. David Gordon White (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 243.

[353] Germano and Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession," 243–45.

[354] David Germano, "Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of the Great Perfection (Rdzogs Chen)," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17, no. 2 (Winter 1994): 301.

the Ḍākinīs is also canonically located within the Most Secret (*yang gsang*) sub-section of the Instruction Class (*man ngag sde*) of Atiyoga, or the vehicle of teachings on Dzogchen.[355]

Found within Longchenpa's Collected Works, the relevant text is titled *Questions Answered: A Golden Garland of Nectar* (*Zhus len bdud rtsi gser 'phreng*, hereafter Tsogyel's *Garland*).[356] In this text, it is Yeshé Tsogyel (and not Lhodrak Drubchen) who is the questioner, and Padmasambhava (and not Vajrapāṇi) who provides the answers. As noted, the instructional portion of the text is largely identical to Tsongkhapa's *Garland*; however, the final section on prophecies differs in content. As one might expect, the prophecies in Tsongkhapa's *Garland* are largely focused on Tsongkhapa, whereas the prophecies in Tsogyel's *Garland* bear on Yeshe Tsogyel and the fate of the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs cycle of teachings. However, as Ehrhard notes, the prophecies in both texts have a similar function: legitimating the founding of a new tradition, whether Tsongkhapa's in central Tibet or Longchenpa's in Bhutan.[357]

The role of both *Garlands* in legitimating a new tradition indicates the dynamic nature of religious culture in Tibet at the time. The Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs was quite popular in the fourteenth century, eventually coming to be seen as the apex of the Nine

[355] Longchen Rabjam, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, ed. Harold Talbott, trans. Tulku Thondup, 2nd ed. (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 32–35.

[356] Dri med 'od zer, Tsogyel's Garland, in *Gsung 'bum/ Dri Med 'Od Zer/ (Dpal brtsegs/ mes po'i shul bzhag)*, vol. 5, 26 vols. (Pe cin: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009), 349–68. Within Longchenpa's corpus, the term *phreng ba* (or garland) is used to indicate a summary. The same sense may be true of this brief text, which appears to be a summary of various aspects of Dzogchen theory and practice. See Longchen Rabjam, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, 156.

[357] Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-chen," 56.

Vehicles of the Nyingma tradition and the premier form of Dzogchen.[358] At a time when Tsongkhapa had yet to "find the view," Lhodrak Drubchen transmitted to him this teaching belonging to the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs, indicating that he considered it the "supreme dharma," or the preeminent religious system at the time.[359] As the primary commentator to the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs, one of Longchenpa's goals was to bring Dzogchen into more explicit dialogue with "the types of concerns characterizing the Buddhism of the normative academic institutions beginning to take shape in Tibet."[360] However, Tsongkhapa ended up rejecting this formulation in favor of his own "normative" philosophical system based on classical Indian texts, leaving *Tsongkhapa's Garland* to become vestigial in the Geluk tradition.

This case study will also shed light on the historical development of Dzogchen in Tibet. Germano has suggested that the best way to understand the Dzogchen tradition is to trace its developments along the "shifting boundary line that delineates the Great Perfection" from its broader religious context in Tibet.[361] Tsongkhapa's Garland indicates one offshoot of Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs literature in the Geluk tradition, albeit one "for which [Longchenpa's] work was not the final say."[362] Germano has also described Dzogchen as a heterogenous tradition with distinct sources and agendas, indicating that its "texts…were

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[358] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 273-275.

[359] Although the exact timeline is sketchy, Tsongkhapa's "breakthrough" in terms of the view took place after he left Lhodrak Drubchen's monastery, and thus after he received Tsongkhapa's *Garland* as an oral instruction.

[360] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 209. For instance, by including normative tantric techniques such as *tummo* (gtum mo) within the practice of Dzogchen; see Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 256.

[361] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 210.

[362] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 303.

often sites of continuing creative development that in some cases lasted over several centuries or more."[363] And although Germano has suggested that Longchenpa "closed" the system of Dzogchen, making it a "received tradition," Tsongkhapa's Garland demonstrates that portions of it were still subject to appropriation and revision.[364]

However, my interest in these two *Garlands* is not their philosophical import, but what they tell us about the historical context of the time and what early Gelukpas understood as the boundaries of their tradition. As such, it is a contribution to our understanding of the construction of Geluk orthodoxy. The success of early Gelukpa figures in editing and sanitizing this text is inadvertently demonstrated by Jackson describing the bulk of the contents of Tsongkhapa's Garland as "standard" and "less colored by Dzokchen" than the opening of the work, without being cognizant of how it was *standardized* or edited in a certain way to remove important references to Dzogchen terminology and practices.[365]

Locating the Two Texts Historically

In terms of chronology and authorship, Padmasambhava is considered the original source of Tsogyel's *Garland,* as it records his answers to questions asked by Yeshé Tsogyel; she then put these answers into writing.[366] The version used in this study is that included within

[363] Germano, "Architecture and Absence, 218, 270."

[364] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 297.

[365] Jackson, "Tsongkhapa as Dzokchenpa," 134.

[366] Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-chen," 54-55, n. 15.

Longchenpa's Collected Works, as Longchenpa's writings on the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs are considered authoritative for the tradition.

The authorship of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is difficult to assess, even for a culture where authorship is often collective, collaborative, and diffuse.[367] *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is considered an oral teaching, with the Buddha Vajrapāṇi answering questions posed by Lhodrak Drubchen on behalf of Tsongkhapa. The work was then kept secret for a period and then a written text was delivered by Lhodrak Drubchen to Tsongkhapa himself, likely in 1399. There are witnesses of the work included in both Lhodrak Drubchen and Tsongkhapa's Collected Works, and these witnesses appear to be identical. However, they lack a colophon indicating anything about the compilation or publication of the work, whether by Lhodrak Drubchen, Tsongkhapa, or anyone else.

Lastly, it bears noting that the difference in names between *Tsogyel's Garland* and *Tsongkhapa's Garland* indicates that they constitute two different texts. Tsongkhapa's *Garland* is named *A Garland of Supreme Medicinal Nectar* as opposed to Tsogyel's *Garland*, which had the secondary title *A Golden Garland of Nectar*. As Ulrike Roesler has noted, naming a work in Tibet was an important issue and was done with "a certain degree of reflection."[368] The addition of the word "supreme" may reflect Lhodrak Drubchen's claim that these instructions are the "supreme dharma." It may also reflect an implicit rhetorical

[367] José Ignacio Cabezón, "Authorship and Literary Production in Classical Buddhist Tibet," in *Changing Minds: Contributions to the Study of Buddhism and Tibet in Honor of Jeffrey Hopkins*, ed. Guy Newland (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2001), 233–63.

[368] Ulrike Roesler, "Classifying Literature or Organizing Knowledge? Some Considerations on Genre Classiijications in Tibetan Literature," in *Tibetan Literary Genres, Texts, and Text Types: From Genre Classiijication to Transformation*, ed. Jim Rheingans (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 45.

claim to the superiority of *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, a superiority that—one might speculate—is rooted in the removal or adaptation of Dzogchen terminology and practices for whoever created this variant edition of the work.

An Analysis of the Two *Garlands*

The opening section of both *Garlands* is an homage to the divine figure who is the source of the teaching. *Tsogyel's Garland* begins with a short homage to "the great master Padmajungné," who is described as an "emanation of all the buddhas of the three times, the omniscient one, the great *vidyādhara* who is like a vajra."[369] In contrast, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* opens with a far lengthier encomium to Vajrapāṇi. However, the first line of this encomium is nearly identical, except here Vajrapāṇi is described as "*the essence of the mind* of all buddhas of the three times," rather than their emanation.[370] The replacement of Padmasambhava with Vajrapāṇi reflects one of the main and recurring differences between the two texts. Within *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, all references to Padmasambhava have been changed to Vajrapāṇi, and all references to Yeshé Tsogyel have been changed to Lhodrak Drubchen.[371] In addition, *Tsogyel's Garland* is structured as a back-and-forth between

[369] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 349.

[370] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 222. Italics added for emphasis.

[371] There are over two dozen of these formulaic edits. Yeshé Tsogyel is referred to by either her name Mtsho rgyal or her title of Queen or *Jo mo*, whereas Padmasambhava is referred to as either Slob dpon or the Sanskrit term Guru. Lhodrak Drubchen is referred to by his secret name, Léki Dorjé (Las kyi rdo rje), whereas Vajrapāṇi is referred to as Guhyapati (Gsang ba'i bdag po). When Tsongkhapa is referred to in this text, he is generally named Matibhadraśrī, which Vajrapāṇi informs us was Tsongkhapa's name in his immediately prior lifetime as an Indian pandit in Kashmir.

Padmasambhava and Tsogyel, whereas *Tsongkhapa's Garland* features Vajrapāṇi referring to both Lhodrak Drubchen and Tsongkhapa in his answers.

I will also briefly note in passing that there are a number of transmissional variants that don't appear to change the meaning of the text in any significant way. Some of these are commonplace in different Tibetan witnesses of any text, such as variant tenses of verbs (such as *bcings* rather than *'ching*) and alternative forms of particles (*ste* rather than *de*). *Tsongkhapa's Garland* also contains numerous deletions (such as removing the suffix -pa, removing grammatical particles like *kyang* or *dang*, and removing phrases like *la sogs*). Lastly, there are a number of more substantive variants that don't seem to change the meaning in a significant way. Such changes include the use of synonyms (such as *nyog* versus *bying*) or similar verbal phrases (*lam du bslang* versus *nyams su blangs*).

Tsogyel's Garland is, in its middle section, a Dzogchen text, as we have mentioned. This is clear both from its inclusion in the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinīs cycle, but also from its content. And although much of this content is present in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* as well, the Dzogchen flavor of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is also evident from some gestures at the beginning and end of the teaching. At the outset, Lhodrak Drubchen requests Vajrapāṇi to offer a teaching that is the "pinnacle of vehicles" (*theg pa'i yang rtse*), a phrase that is used in the Nyingma tradition to refer to the status of Dzogchen qua Atiyoga, the pinnacle of the nine vehicles of the tradition.[372] Soon afterwards, the Buddha Vajrapāṇi describes this

[372] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 222. Cf. Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 199. According to one source, the meaning of *theg pa'i yang rtse* refers to the fact that if the Nine Vehicles of the Nyingma tradition "are conceived in a pyramidal hierarchy, then the…apex of the pyramid is Dzogchen." See Keith Dowman, trans., *The Flight of the Garuda: The Dzogchen Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism*, Revised (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2003), 194, n. 114.

teaching as "the intention of Father Samantabhadra, the heart-advice of Mother Samantabhadrī."[373] This statement echoes a Nyingma view on these two deities that Father Samantabhadra represents "the appearances of phenomenal existence," whereas Mother Samantabhadrī represents their emptiness.[374] These two statements are absent in *Tsogyel's Garland*, suggesting that this kind of Nyingma contextualization was only necessary for *Tsongkhapa's Garland*. And in a similar vein, the teaching ends with Vajrapāṇi characterizing it as "the heart-advice of the *ḍākinīs*" (*mkha' 'gro'i snying gtam*). [375] This phrase resembles characterizations in *Tsogyel's Garland*, where the teaching is described as "this teaching of my (i.e. Padmasambhava's) heart-essence" (*bdag gi snying thig 'di'i bstan pa*), "instructions of the heart-essence" (*snying thig man ngag*), or "pith advice" (*gdams pa'i snying khu*).[376] However, the shift from "heart essence" to "heart advice" seems intentional, and is fitting for a work that originates within the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī cycle but was transformed in the process.

In a similar vein, *Tsogyel's Garland* divides its teaching—what it calls "all the essential points of the Secret Heart-Essence" (*gsang sngags snying thig gi gnad thams cad*)—into the three categories of essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*), and compassion

[373] *Yab kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa yum kun tu bzang mo'i snying gtam*. Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 223.

[374] This view is attributed to Mipham. See Longchen Rabjam, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, 39.

[375] *Nga'i gsang tshig gi chos 'di rnams mkha' 'gro'i snying gtam yin*. Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 235.

[376] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 366, 367.

(*thugs rje*).[377] This framework mirrors the threefold definition of the "primordial basis" (*gdod ma'i gzhi*) in the Instruction Class of Dzogchen.[378] This basis is "endowed with 'Three Gnoses' (*ye shes gsum ldan*): the Essence which is empty (*ngo bo stong pa*), the Nature which is clear (*rang bzhin gsal ba*) and the Compassion which is unobstructed or all-pervading (*thugs rje ma 'gags pa* / *kun khyab*).[379] It is the realization of the primordial indivisibility of these three gnoses that is the goal of Dzogchen practice. As a result, invoking this categorization is a clear sign of the Dzogchen subject matter of *Tsogyel's Garland*.

Notably, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* also invokes this threefold categorization. However, instead of being a teaching on "all the essential points of the Secret Heart-Essence," in this work the three are subsumed under the category of "clear light mind itself" (*sems nyid 'od gsal*).[380] Although this phrase does appear in Dzogchen contexts to refer to the luminous nature of mind, here "mind itself" can be read in apposition to "clear light": "the clear light that is mind itself."[381] This reading puts the emphasis on the doctrine of clear light, which has

[377] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 349. Later in the same passage, the similar phrase "the entire meaning of the Very Secret Heart-Essence" (*yang gsang snying thig gi don thams cad*) is also used with reference to these three categories.

[378] Longchen Rabjam, *The Practice of Dzogchen*, 46.

[379] Marc-Henri Deroche and Akinori Yasuda, "The rDzogs Chen Doctrine of the Three Gnoses (*ye shes gsum*): An Analysis of Klong Chen Pa's Exegesis and His Sources," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 33 (2015): 187.

[380] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 223. Thurman translates this phrase as follows: "To achieve the great supreme medicine, the uttermost pinnacle of all vehicles, seek out the clear light of the mind itself!" And it continues, "The clear light (is explained by) three: actuality, nature, and compassion." Thurman, *The Life and Teachings*, 200.

[381] For two works that reference *sems nyid 'od gsal* in a Dzogchen context, see: 1) David Higgins, "On the rDzogs Chen Distinction between Mind (*sems*) and Primordial Knowing (*ye shes*)," *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy* 2 (2016): 23–54; and 2) Casey Kemp, "Merging Ignorance and Luminosity in Early Bka' Brgyud Bsre Ba Literature," *Zentralasiatische Studien* 44 (2015): 35–50. Thurman's translation of this phrase as "clear light of the mind itself" suggests a reading in which *sems nyid* and *'od gsal* are in apposition. Thurman, *The Life and Teaching of Tsongkhapa*, 200.

longstanding roots in Indian tantric sources like Nāgārjuna's *Pañcakrama*, so central to Tsongkhapa's tantric teachings.

On the one hand, it appears the editor or editors of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* were attempting to mitigate the Dzogchen material by shifting the topic of the teaching from its explicit Heart-Essence context to a doctrinal context (clear light mind) favored by the Sarma (Gsar ma, or "new") schools.[382] In doing so, they employed a strategy we will see repeated throughout the text: the use of recensional variants. However, in a stronger sense their efforts may reflect a creative attempt to *incorporate* these Dzogchen ideas into the Sarma framework of the theory of clear light.[383] This echoes the notion that Longchenpa's primary intellectual context was that of a conflict between Tantric corpora, "between the mainstream canonical Tantric texts…and those introduced through the more unconventional modes of the Treasure tradition."[384] But whereas Longchenpa was responding to the ideas of the Sarma Schools, here we see Sarma figures responding to Longchenpa's presentation in creative ways.

Another feature of both *Garlands* is a lengthy discussion of potential pitfalls (*gol sa*). The discussion of pitfalls appears to be another common component of Dzogchen writing; for instance, Longchenpa's *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle* (*Theg mchog mdzod*), a

[382] The Sarma schools are those that were newly established during the second dissemination of Buddhism to Tibet, in opposition to the Nyingma or "Old School" which traces its tradition to the first dissemination.

[383] Conversely, Germano has argued that Nyingma thinkers were doing the same thing from their own perspective: "Ideologically, the many tantric systems based on "radiant light" (*'od gsal*) definitely had an impact as well as the Anuttarayoga emphasis on the body, and one can well imagine Great Perfection advocates experimenting with the significance and practice of such doctrines to see how they could fit in their own tradition." See Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 288.

[384] Germano and Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession of the Dakinis," 241.

commentary on the Seventeen Tantras of the Instruction Class of Dzogchen, includes a chapter on the "ways one goes astray" (*gol lugs*). The purpose of this discussion on pitfalls appears to be both pragmatic and polemical. On a practical level, it provides advice for practitioners so they can course-correct if they are going astray. These include the signs that one's philosophical understanding has gone astray, such as abandoning fundamental Buddhist practices such as purification and taking refuge.[385] It also includes practical advice on meditation, such as avoiding mental dullness (*bying ba*) by meditating in a high and clear place, rather than a forest or valley.[386] And it suggests that one should avoid associating with negative people who will increase one's mental afflictions and cause one to focus only on the mundane concerns of this life.[387]

Although this section is largely identical between the two *Garlands*, one noteworthy aspect of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is the use of recensional variants to remove references to Dzogchen terminology or teachings. The first significant change is in the context of the discussion in *Tsogyel's Garland* on the four pitfalls pertaining to the category of essence: (1) the ways one goes astray (*gol lugs*), (2) the signs of going astray (*gol rtags*), (3) the faults [that accrue when one goes astray] (*nyes skyon*), and (4) the effects of going astray (*gol ba'i 'bras bu*).[388] These four categories are identical in *Tsongkhapa's Garland*. However, there is one significant change in the description of the first category.

[385] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 224. Cf. Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 200.

[386] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 229. Cf. Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 205.

[387] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 226. Cf. Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 202.

[388] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 349. Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 223.

In *Tsogyel's Garland*, Padmasambhava teaches the first pitfall to occur when someone clings to emptiness when they meditate upon it, a pitfall described as "sterile emptiness," or *stong pa phyang chad*.[389] Within this system, the three categories (essence, nature, compassion) comprise a primordial unity; so, to cling only to one category (the empty nature of essence) is to fall into error because one is not cognizant of the quality of luminosity which is characteristic of the category of nature (*rang bzhin gsal ba*). However, in *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, the phrase *phyang chad* has been replaced by the nonsensical phrase *byang chang* in the modern edition of Tsongkhapa's Collected Works. This appears to be an error qua transmissional variant of *byang chad*, which is what is found in the Old Tashi Lhunpo, Kumbum, Labrang, Derge, and Pedurma editions of Tsongkhapa's Collected Works, as well as in the Lhodrak and Bhutan editions of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works.[390] The phrase *stong pa byang chad* is also unusual and has been translated by Thurman using the curious phrase "cutting off enlightenment at emptiness."[391]

In my view, *byang chad* is not merely a transmissional variant but a consciously chosen recensional one. What was at stake in this editorial choice? Two existing studies of Nyingma thinkers shed some light on this. In the context of his discussion of the *ālaya*

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[389] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 349-350. "In general, that which is termed 'essence' is the mode of abiding of one's own awareness qua being empty of everything, which is present as luminosity; it is just that knower (*shes pa*) which is devoid of contrivance primordially and to the present moment. Not being [aware] of this, a person who meditates on emptiness, and as a result, is not free of a mind clinging to emptiness, thereby [is defined] as the one who has [fallen victim to] the pitfall called 'sterile emptiness.'" Literally, *stong pa phyang chad* means "definitive emptiness," and has been translated variously as "ascertained emptiness," "inert void," "lopsided/fragmented emptiness," and "sterile nothingness."

[390] Incidentally, belying the lack of variants attested in the Pedurma edition, the Zhol edition contains the variant verbal phrase *rgyang chad*, meaning "distant and cut off." This appears to reflect a particularly nihilist reading, as in the phrase *rgyang phan pa'i chad lta*.

[391] Robert A.F. Thurman, ed., *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, trans. Sherpa Tulku et al. (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2018), 200.

vijñāna (the foundational consciousness of the Yogacāra philosophical school), the Dzogchen scholar Tselé Natsok Rangdröl (Rtse le sna tshogs rang grol, b. 1608) asserts that the foundational consciousness is *not* a "sterile emptiness of everything. It is a self-luminous cognizer which manifests unceasingly and is called 'foundation consciousness,' like a mirror and its limpidity."[392] Elsewhere, the influential Nyingma thinker Mipam (Mi pham, 1846-1912) rejects non-implicative negation (*med par dgag pa*) as an instance of the "sterile emptiness" espoused by the Proponents of Self-Emptiness (*rang stong pa*).[393] For Mipam, it is because ultimate reality is conceived as a union in Dzogchen that it cannot be described in a mistaken one-sided fashion, rejecting both the "sterile emptiness" of the Proponents of Self-Emptiness and the positive qualities posited by the Proponents of Other-Emptiness (*gzhan stong pa*). In another work, Mipam also criticizes "sterile emptiness" qua "emptiness of true existence" as a mistaken doctrinal system.[394]

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[392] *kun gzhi de nyid kyang cir yang med pa'i stong pa phyang chad ma yin pa ni rang gsal gyi shes pa 'gags med 'char rung du yod pa de la kun gzhi'i rnam shes bya ste me long dang de'i dangs cha lta bu'o*. For this citation and an alternate translation, see Marco Walther, "Traces of Yogācāra in the Chapter on Reality (*artha*) Within a Work on the Paths and Stages by Gling-Ras-Pa Padma Rdo-Rje (1128–1188)," *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 46 (2018): 384, n. 22.

[393] Dorji Wangchuk, "Where Buddhas and Siddhas Meet: Mipam's Yuganaddhavāda Philosophy," in *The Other Emptiness: Rethinking the Zhentong Buddhist Discourse in Tibet*, ed. Michael R. Sheehy and Klaus-Dieter Mathes (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019), 281.

[394] This criticism is contained in the work *The Lion's Roar Proclaiming Extrinsic Emptiness* (*Gzhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro*). As Mipam writes: "You maintain an ascertained (*phyang chad*) emptiness, which is the emptiness of true existence, with respect to a basis of emptiness, which is truthlessness *as* absolute negation; and [you maintain] an ascertained deceptive appearance, which is not empty from its own side, but is empty of an extrinsic (*yan gar ba*) true existence. [Thus, in your system] appearance and emptiness, as bases of emptiness, are never mixed together, and the equality of existence and peace is utterly impossible in either of the two levels of truth. Therefore, please look into the important details of this point." See John W. Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 421.

Although these are not studies of Longchenpa's own system, they are revealing of the important doctrinal concerns at play. To this point, John Pettit has observed:

> If, as Tsongkhapa maintains, the teaching of emptiness is the only definitive teaching, then maintaining that gnosis (*jñāna*, *ye shes*) is part and parcel of the ultimate reality, as [Longchenpa], [Mipam], and the [Proponents of Other-Emptiness] do, is incorrect. Thus, the philosophical debates between the Gelugpas and [Mipam] stem in large part from the different definitions of ultimate reality they accept.[395]

As Pettit notes, a major issue at play in these two versions of the *Garland* is the definition of ultimate reality. And in my view, the repeated use of the term *phyang chad* or "sterile emptiness" as a criticism by Nyingma thinkers indicates that the editorial change of the term *phyang chad* to *byang chad* was an intentional (albeit clumsy) one, one designed to mitigate this kind of criticism of Gelukpas as holding to a vision of ultimate reality qua "sterile emptiness."

In a similar vein, there are numerous other instances where Dzogchen terminology has been edited out of *Tsongkhapa's Garland*. Within the description of the four types of pitfalls related to the category of nature, *Tsogyel's Garland* states the following with regards to the faults that accrue when one goes astray: "With a mind thinking of appearances as substantial things, one's mind has not entered into the doctrine of the Mind Series. With this kind of mouthing off of tenets, one becomes separated from the grounds and paths of omniscience. Due to persistently materializing appearances, there is no cause of liberation [to be found]."[396]

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[395] Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 103.

[396] Gol ba'i nyes skyon ni snang ba dngos po can du 'dug snyam pa'i blos / sems phyogs kyi chos la blo mi 'jug / grub mtha'i kha zin che bas thams cad mkhyen pa'i sa lam dang bral / snang ba la a 'thas pas grol rgyu med pa yin. Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 351.

One significant edit has been made to this passage in *Tsongkhapa's Garland*: the word *chos* has been added into the middle of the phrase Mind Series (*sems phyogs*), resulting in the unusual phrase *sems chos phyogs kyi chos la blo mi 'jug*.[397] Earlier, the phrase meant simply that "one's mind has not entered into the doctrine of the Mind Series." With this addition, a translation would be something like "one's mind has not mentally engaged with dharmic qualities," which is a clunky and unusual turn of phrase.[398] The most straightforward interpretation of this passage is that the editors of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* wished to alter the reference to the Mind Series of Dzogchen, and did so by adding the word *chos* in the middle to break it up.

The next significant change comes within a discussion of how the pitfalls relating to all three categories (essence, nature, and compassion) can be eliminated. *Tsogyel's Garland* states that one should know the threefold categories of essence, nature, and compassion as a "great indivisible union" (*dbyer med zung 'jug chen po*) and that one will then attain enlightenment as the three inseparable bodies of a Buddha (*sku gsum dbyer med du sangs rgya ba yin*).[399] This is a reference to an important Dzogchen doctrine that has been described by Deroche and Yasuda:

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[397] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 351. Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 224.

[398] Thurman renders this phrase in the bolded terms: "The fault of this error is that **the mind that thinks** 'universal illumination is substantial' **does not aspire to engage in any Dharma practice** and, being too extreme in verbal adherence to theories, it departs from the path of omniscience. There is no way this person will become liberated, since his illumination has become fixated." See Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 201. However, *chos phyogs kyi chos* as a term for Dharma practice is highly unusual.

[399] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 352.

The correlation of the Three Gnoses with the Three Buddha-Bodies exposes the very principle of *rDzogs chen* stating that the Base contains in itself all the enlightened qualities, and that its sole contemplation forms the path to obtain the state of a complete Buddha, with the three dimensions of the *trikāya*. Essence is associated to the Body of Reality (*chos sku*: *dharmakāya*), Nature to the Body of Enjoyment (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*: *saṃbhogakāya*), and Compassion to the Body of Emanation (*sprul sku*: *nirmāṇakāya*).[400]

In Dzogchen thought, just as essence, nature, and compassion are aspects of the primordial basis, the three Buddha bodies are also correlated to these three categories. However, within *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, the phrase "three bodies" has been removed, thereby disrupting this reference to an important Dzogchen doctrine. Although the difference may be minor, the effect for a would-be reader would be to disrupt the coherence of this Dzogchen presentation.

After completing the discussion of the pitfalls related to the threefold categories of essence, nature, and compassion, both versions of the *Garland* move to a discussion of pitfalls within the broader categories of view, meditation, and conduct. The fifth pitfall related to the view is the pitfall of partiality. This pitfall is described in a nearly identical way in both *Garlands*. In sum, they state that people who have a "provisional view" make the mistake of being partisan to the tenets of one's own tradition, dividing scriptures into one's own and those of others, or ranking them into higher and lower or good and bad ones.[401]

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[400] Deroche and Yasuda, "The rDzogs Chen Doctrine of the Three Gnoses (*ye shes gsum*): An Analysis of Klong Chen Pa's Exegesis and His Sources," 200.

[401] "All persons who have the provisional view, having strayed only to the view of the tenets of one's own texts, and having divided the refuge of scripture (*lung skyabs*) into one's own and those of others, higher and lower, factions, good and bad; these persons take just a handful of their own estimation as the Buddha's view, the great

However, where they differ greatly is in the way that the final advice is presented. *Tsogyel's Garland* states that if one does not wish to err in this way, one should know the "great view of the vast *expanse*, free from extremes" (*lta ba mtha' grol klong yangs chen po*). This is a reference to the Dzogchen concept of the "vast expanse," a synonym for the "primordial basis" qua Awareness (*rig pa*) qua "great indivisible union" of the three categories/gnoses. Conversely, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* adapts this phrase to omit this Dzogchen term. Instead, it states that one should know "the great view of vast *emptiness*, free from extremes" (*lta ba mtha' bral stong yangs chen po*). Mirroring the same pattern seen throughout the text, this change serves to sanitize the text of Dzogchen terminology and replace it with language deemed more suitable for a Gelukpa context, in this case "emptiness" rather than "expanse." But indicating the awkward and contrived nature of this change, "vast emptiness" is not a term used in any other Geluk contexts to describe the philosophical view.

Approaches to Consort Practice in the Two *Garlands*

The last major edits in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* relate to sexual consorts. In general, the use of a *karma mudrā* (or "action seal") is a tantric Buddhist method for manipulating one's subtle physiology and cultivating the experience of bliss through sex. Specifically, for a male practitioner it involves union with a female counterpart. When this female counterpart is embodied, she is known as a *karma mudrā* and the practice involves sexual intercourse. When the female counterpart is visualized, she is known as a *jñāna mudrā* (or "wisdom

freedom from extremes, and this is the root of the pitfall." Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 227. *Tsogyel's Garland* does not have any meaningful differences in this passage.

seal"). Practice with a *karma mudrā* is categorized either as a distinct Completion Stage yoga or as an extension of the practice of Heat (*gtum mo*).[402]

Broadly speaking, Sam van Schaik has observed that an early characterization of Dzogchen is that it is rooted in the experience of bliss through sexual union.[403] And within the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī tradition proper, a great emphasis was placed on integrating meditative practices with sexual yoga.[404] Within this system, "sexual praxis is necessary and beneficial for numerous reasons including health, to train through a desire to go beyond desire, namely by recognizing desire as gnosis itself, and even for companionship."[405] This focus on sexual practice also reflects the wider social context of Dzogchen, with the Nyingma Treasure traditions seen as offering an "alternative to the large monastic institutions of central Tibet."[406] For instance, Longchenpa's inaugural offering of initiation into the

[402] "Generally speaking, Karmamudrā practice is either categorized as a distinct but allied Completion Stage yoga of its own or is represented as an extension of the practice of Inner Heat or Tummo (gtum mo). Tummo Yoga's procedures for working with the channels, winds, and drops of the subtle body and for generating 'blissful-heat' (bde drod) are foundational to Completion Stage practices and can be understood as a form of solo sexual yoga that uses the practitioner's own body as a "means" or basis of practice (rang lus thabs ldan). Having gained mastery in inner heat, yogis and yoginis can go on to practice the other yogas without engaging in partnered sexual yoga or can move on to training in Tummo with 'another's body' (gzhan lus thabs ldan), which is to say, to practice sexual yoga with a Karmamudrā or physical, human partner." Ben P. Joffe, "White Robes, Matted Hair: Tibetan Tantric Householders, Moral Sexuality, and the Ambiguities of Esoteric Buddhist Expertise in Exile" (PhD Diss., University of Colorado, 2019), 255.

[403] Sam van Schaik, "The Early Days of the Great Perfection," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27, no. 1 (2004): 171.

[404] Germano and Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession of the Dakinis," 243.

[405] Kali Cape, "Anatomy of a *Ḍākinī*: Female Consort Discourse in a Case of Fourteenth-Century Tibetan Buddhist Literature," *Journal of Dharma Studies* 3 (2020): 351.

[406] Germano and Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession of the Dakinis," 241.

Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī system was to a group of eight male and eight female lay yogins.[407]

Female figures also play a number of crucial roles in Longchenpa's tradition. According to the traditional narrative it was Yeshé Tsogyel and the daughter of Tri Songdetsen who received its initial transmission from Padmasambhava. Female yogins were also key members of Longchenpa's circle. The eponymous *ḍākinīs* qua female spirits or deities of this tradition would frequently possess these human women and communicate with Longchenpa through them. These human women also likely served as sexual consorts for Longchenpa so that he could access "the necessary [blissful] states of mind for Treasure revelation and decoding."[408]

As a result, there are texts within the tradition dedicated to the topic of finding a suitable sexual consort. Kali Cape has examined one such text, *Ḍākki's Path and Fruit* (*dakki lam 'bras skor*), which "contains a taxonomy of seventeen types of female consorts and three hundred and fifty-two variables by which to identify them."[409] These consorts comprise human, semi-divine, and demonic beings, and are classified by traits such as physical features, mental characteristics, personality, and soteriological potential. Both versions of the *Garland* contain an abbreviated account of this subject matter.

Within *Tsogyel's Garland*, the relevant discussion begins in the section on "pitfalls that are faults in meditation" (*sgom skyon gyi gol sa*), one of five pitfalls in the context of

[407] Germano and Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession of the Dakinis," 245.

[408] Germano and Gyatso, "Longchenpa and the Possession of the Dakinis," 243–45.

[409] Cape, "Anatomy of a *Ḍākinī*," 351.

meditation.[410] Here, there are three pitfalls of faults in meditation: laxity (*bying ba*), excitement (*rgod pa*), and distraction (*'byams pa*). Six causes for laxity are then described: (1) abode (*gnas*), (2) companions (*grogs*), (3) season (*dus*), (4) food (*zas*), (5) posture (*'dug stangs*), and (6) meditation (*sgom*). The topic of sexuality is broached within the discussion of laxity caused by one's companions. According to this text:

> Due to staying with defiled people (*mi grib can*) or [using] female consorts of impure lineage (*phyag rgya ma rgyud ma dag pa*) or engaging in the action of fornication (*g.yem pa'i las byas*), one is contaminated. Apply yourself to compensatory rituals (*bskang bshags*) and ablutions for this. Protect yourself from people who violate their oaths (*mi dam nyams*) and the defiled. Seek out and offer empowerment to a qualified female consort (*phyag rgya ma mtshan dang ldan pa*). Do not engage in thoughtless fornication (*g.yem shor du mi gzhug*). By doing this, [this cause of laxity] is dispelled.[411]

According to this text, the cause of laxity from one's companions is not the action of sex itself; rather, it is engaging in sexual practice with an improper consort or fornicating mindlessly. The solution is to find and offer empowerment to a qualified female consort with which to perform sexual consort practice.

However, in its treatment of this section, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* sidesteps the issue entirely, with every direct reference to sexual activity or consorts removed. According to the greatly abbreviated discussion found in this text: "Due to staying with defiled people, there is

[410] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 357.

[411] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 357.

laxity from one's companions. Confess and perform ablutions. Protect yourself from people who violate their oaths and the defiled. Thereby, [this cause of laxity] is dispelled."[412]

This excision reflects a wider Gelukpa attitude toward sexual practices. In general, the Geluk tradition is geared to monastics and lacks a strong tradition of organized lay tantric practice. One reason for this is the existence of Geluk critiques of lay tantric groups. According to Khedrubjé's authoritative biography of Tsongkhapa *Gateway to Faith*, some renunciants in his day considered the monastic code of the *vinaya* an obstacle to intense meditative training.[413] As a result, such persons would engage in sexual activities, thinking that "sexual activity for followers of *mantra* is not a fault."[414] In contrast to these tantric practitioners who abandon correct ethics, the Gelukpa are characterized by Khedrubjé as those who "have abandoned for a long time those 'dharma-systems of villagers,'" a euphemism for sexual activity.[415]

An even more striking variant occurs in one of the latter sections of the teaching. In both versions of the *Garland*, the question is posed: "what is the biggest obstacle to practicing the path?" And in both texts, the initial answer is identical: "When you first enter the path, the obstacle is whatever circumstance leads your mind in the wrong way. In

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[412] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 229.

[413] "Then, anyone who has gone to a remote mountain hermitage and resorts to a solitary-abode and wishes to devote themselves to concentration might say the following: 'Teachings from the *vinaya* that say things about giving up intoxicating drinks, food in the afternoon, and so forth are in the context of *śrāvakas*. This is the Lower Vehicle. It was treated with respect to the lower. But in the context of the Higher Vehicle and practices such as recognizing the face of one's own mind, they would handcuff the practitioner. Therefore, they are without virtue." Dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 110–11.

[414] Dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 110.

[415] Dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 134.

particular, for a man, women are most demonic. For a woman, men are the most demonic. For both, food and clothing are very demonic."[416]

However, the follow-up to this differs greatly. In *Tsogyel's Garland*, Yeshé Tsogyel then asks Padmasambhava: "is that not the path of enhancement of *karma mudrā*?"[417] For Yeshe Tsogyel, the issue is clarifying how one can use sexual consorts to enhance one's practice of the path of Dzogchen if persons of the opposite gender are also considered the "most demonic" for beginning practitioners, or contrary to the Buddhist path.

In response, Padmasambhava acknowledges that "the consort who produces enhancements to the path is more precious than gold!"[418] However, he then goes on a lengthy and vehement critique of lustful people, saying that most people are "ruined by these lower body illusions" that lead them to act badly in a multitude of ways, such as idealizing and objectivizing their sexual partner, being overcome by lust, succumbing to jealousy and avarice, and the degeneration of their *samaya* that results from [having ordinary sex?].[419] As

[416] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 363. Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 233. Translation taken from Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 208.

[417] *Las kyi phyag rgya lam gyi bogs 'don ma lags sam*. Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 363. A *karma mudrā* is another term for a sexual consort.

[418] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 363.

[419] "You show devotion to women with lowly actions as a seducer. You engage in pure vision as a lover. You offer [her your] accumulated merit as a seducer. You bear hardships in family life. You treat compassion like the child of your enemy! You show revulsion for the divine dharma! You meditate on lust as the tutelary deity! You invite dirty talk to your heart! You perform (lewd?) hand gestures as a way to pay homage. You perform circumambulations for the sake of your own pleasure. You elicit fortitude for your [objects of] attachment. You are ruined by these lower body illusions. You engage in fornication with a joyful mind. You strive to show gratitude to attachment and cultivate it within yourself. You tell stories of attachment from first-hand experience. If afflicted [with attachment], you would even engage in such conduct with a dog! You engage in your innermost aspiration for the conduct of attachment without regret. Right now, you would choose satisfying your conduct of attachment one time over becoming enlightened. You profess devotion from your lips [but] [pure] devotion is eliminated from your heart. Your avarice and jealousy are large [but] the power of your faith and generosity are small. Your wrong views and doubts are large [but] your compassion and wisdom are small. Your boasting and self-regard are large [but] your devotion and fortitude are small. You are skillful in returning

a result, Padmasambhava concludes that "a woman who does not properly protect her *samaya* is a demon for dharma practitioners."[420]

In contrast, as indicated by this table, the follow-up question in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is quite different:

Tsogyel's Garland[421]	*Tsongkhapa's Garland*[422]
Question: ***Las kyi*** *phyag rgya* ***lam gyi*** *bogs* ***'don ma*** *lags* ***sam***	Question: ***Da lta'i gsang sngags pa phal cig*** *phyag rgya* ***ma bsten pa*** *bogs* ***che zer ba gda' ba de / ji ltar*** *lags*
"Is that not the path of enhancement of *karma mudrā*?"	"There are lots of *mantrins* today who say that there is great benefit to relying on a female consort. How is it in fact?"

answers and returning reasons [but] your pure appearance, intellect, and heart are small. You are incapable of samaya. You are unable to offer service. Not producing the heroic assistance which [causes one] to move upward, you engage in the hook that pulls one downwards. Not producing the enhancement of bliss, you engage in the weariness of attachment, aversion, and suffering. Having hoped with attachment [that consort practice would serve] as [a cause for] liberation, it becomes a cause which increases your jealousy and affliction. Since you hoped [consort practice] would serve to improve your constitution, it has become a bundle of [samaya] degeneration and defilement. A woman who does not properly protect her samaya is a demon for dharma practitioners." *khyed bud med las ngan pas mos gus byi pho la byed / dag snang snying sdug la byed / tshogs gsog byi pho la 'bul / sdug sgur khyim thabs la byed / snying rje dgra phrug la byed / zhen log lha chos la byed / yi dam du chags pa bsgom / snying por btsog gtam 'dren / lha phyag tu lag brda' byed / bskor ba rang dga' ba'i phyogs su bskor / snying rus chags pa'i phyogs su 'don / 'khrul ba ro smad nas 'jig / zhe brod nyal po la byed / drin lan chags pa su rem la blan / nyams myong du chags pa'i gtam 'chad / nyen na khyi la yang spyod du 'jug / mi 'gyod pa'i 'dun phugs chags pa spyod pa la byed / da lta sangs rgya ba las chags pa lan cig spyod pa la gdam / dad pa kha nas skye / mos gus snying nas ldog / ser sna dang mig ser che / dad pa dang sbyin shugs chung / log lta dang the tshom che / snying rje dang shes rab chung / kha tsho dang rang rtsis che / mos gus dang snying rus chung / lan log dang phyir log mkhas / dag snang dang blo snying chung / dam tshig mi thub / zhabs tog mi nus / yar 'gro'i dpa rogs mi yong bar mar 'then gyi lcags kyu byed / bde ba'i bogs 'don mi yong bar chags sdang dang sdug bsngal gyi sna sun byed / chags pas grol du re nas brten pas mig ser dang nyon mongs pa 'phel ba'i rgyur song / khams rgyas pa'i rten du re tsa na nyams grib kyi thum por song / dam tshig tshul bzhin du mi srung ba'i bud med chos pa'i bdud yin gsung*. Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 363-64.

[420] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 364.

[421] Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 363.

[422] Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 234.

Answer: *Lam gyi bogs 'don* ***yong ba****'i phyag rgya ma* ***de*** *gser las dkon* "The consort who produces enhancements to the path is more precious than gold!"	Answer: *Lam gyi bogs 'don* ***pa****'i phyag rgya ma gser las dkon* "The consort who enhances the path is more precious than gold!"

Variant terms have been bolded in this table. As is evident, the questions are quite different. Rather than an attempt to clarify a confusing point of doctrine, the question in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is a leading one that evinces skepticism about the utility of female consorts. Most strikingly, the answer in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* contains a phrase (*lam gyi bogs 'don*), that is not used in the question; however, it *is* a phrase used in the question in *Tsogyel's Garland*! This is a clear instance where the editor's hand is visible.

As mentioned, *Tsogyel's Garland* follows up this question with a long and vehement critique of lustful activity. In contrast, the response in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is shorter, perhaps due to its already dimmer view of consort practice.[423] In any event, *Tsogyel's*

[423] "[You] show devotion to lowly women as a seducer. You engage in pure appearance as a lover. You offer [her your] accumulated merit as a seducer. You show revulsion to the divine dharma. If able, you would indulge with a dog! Faith is produced from [your] mouth but when you chew, it is eliminated from your heart. Your miserliness and jealousy are great. Not accumulating the actions which go up, you effect the hook that pulls down. Not producing enhancements that increase dharma, you welcome attachment, aversion, and various sufferings. Hoping for liberation via passion, you rely on it, but it becomes the cause of increasing the afflictions. Hoping it will become a support for improving your constitution, you are carried away by a bundle of degeneration-defilement. A woman who does not protect samaya is a harlot and demoness!" *Bud med ngan pa mos gus byi pho la byed / dag snang snying sdug la byed / tshogs gsog byi pho la 'bul / zhen log lha chos la byed / nyan na khyi la yang spyod / dad pa kha nas skye / ldeg na snying nas ldog / ser sna mig ser che / yar 'gro ba'i las mi gsog par / mar 'dren pa'i lcags kyu byed / chos 'phel ba'i bogs 'don pa mi yong bar chags sdang dang sdug bsngal gyi sna bsu byed / chags pas grol du re nas bsten par gda' ste / nyon mongs 'phel ba'i rgyur song / khams rgyas pa'i rten yong du re tsa na / nyams grib kyi thum po khyer yong / dam tshig mi bsrung ba'i bud med 'phyon ma bdud mo yin*. Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 234.

Garland ends this section by claiming that a woman who doesn't keep samaya is a "demon for dharma practitioners" (*chos pa'i bdud*) whereas *Tsongkhapa's Garland* describes her as both a harlot and demoness (*'phyon ma bdud mo*).

Returning to *Tsogyel's Garland,* Yeshé Tsogyel then asks another follow-up question: "well then, what is a [consort] possessing favorable signs like?"[424] Padmasambhava answers:

> In general, they are those who avoid the aforementioned faults. In particular, they are inclined towards the dharma. They are good-natured in their great mind. They have great faith and compassion. The six perfections are complete in their continuum. They do not break the lama's command. They have respect for practitioners. They protect the *samaya* of *mantra* like their own eyeball. They do not lose themselves to fornication outside of the context of empowerment. If there were one who abides in cleanliness, they would serve as a companion on the path. Such a one is rare in Tibet. It would be one like Princess Mandharava.[425]

The description of a consort that is "suitable to rely upon" in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is largely identical.[426] However, it ends with a unique postscript: "such a [consort] is an object

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[424] *'O na mtshan dang ldan pa de gang lags*. Dri med 'od zer, Tsogyel's Garland, 364.

[425] *Spyir gong gi skyon de rnams las ldog pa cig yin / khyad par du chos la mos pa / blo che la ngang rgyud ring ba / dad pa dang snying rje che ba / pha rol tu phyin pa drug rgyud la tshang ba / bla ma'i bka' mi gcog pa / sgrub pa po la gus pa / gsang sngags kyi dam tshig mig 'bras ltar bsrung ba / dbang gi dus ma yin par g.yem mi shor ba / gtsang sbra la gnas pa cig byung na lam gyi grogs su 'gro / bod na de lta bu dkon / lha lcam mandha ra ba lta bu zhig yin pa la gsungs*. Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 364.

[426] "She is one who has neutralized the aforementioned faults. In particular, she is inclined to the dharma. Her intellect is great. She is good-natured. Her faith and compassion are great. The six perfections are complete in her continuum. She doesn't break the lama's commands. She has devotion for practitioners. She protects the samaya of mantra like her own eyeball. She is not lost to fornication at what are not times of empowerment. If there were one residing in purity, they could serve as a companion on the path; however, since such a one is extremely rare, such a one is a goal which pulls in the lascivious. It is the dharma-allotment of those with highest faculties. Ordinary people follow their afflictions carelessly, therefore, one must turn away from that. Having entered the doorway of mantra, if you do not protect *samaya*, you certainly could not entertain any hopes for enlightenment." *Gong gi skyon de rnams las log pa zhig yin / khyad par du chos la mos pa / blo che ba / ngang rgyud ring ba / dad pa dang snying rje che ba / pha rol tu phyin pa drug rgyud la tshang ba / bla ma'I bka' stsal mi gcog pa / sgrub pa po la gus pa / sngags kyi dam tshig mig ''bras bzhin du bsrung ba / dbang gi dus min par g.yem mi 'chor ba / gtsang sbra la gnas pa zhig byung na lam gyi grogs su 'gro ste / de lta bu*

which pulls in the lascivious. [Only] those with highest faculties have religious entitlement to her. Since ordinary people follow their afflictions carelessly, they need to desist from this—[from using a consort]."[427] Although the responses in both *Garlands* agree that a proper consort is rare, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* goes further in considering consort practice itself as a treacherous one that ordinary people should avoid. This reflects the broader Gelukpa attitude towards sexual practices.

In line with this attitude, at this juncture the discussion of consort practice in *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is concluded; there is nothing more to say on the subject. In contrast, *Tsogyel's Garland* has Yeshé Tsogyel ask a final pragmatic follow-up question for the sake of practitioners who are pious but fallible: "if one loses themselves to fornication at what are not times of empowerment, how big is the fault?" Padmasambhava answers with a long discourse giving strict guidelines concerning when and with whom one can engage in sexual consort practice.[428]

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shin tu dkon pas / de lta bu yang chags pa can drangs pa'i don yin cing / dbang po rab kyi chos skal yin / tha mal pa rnams la nyon mongs pa rang dgar 'gro bas de las ldog dgos sngags kyi sgor zhugs nas dam tshig ma bsrung na / sangs rgyas ba la re ba ma byed ang." Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 234.

[427] "*De lta bu shin tu dkon pas / de lta bu yang chags pa can drangs pa'i don yin cing / dbang po rab kyi chos skal yin / tha mal pa rnams la nyon mongs pa rang dgar 'gro bas de las ldog dgos*." Tsong kha pa, *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, 234. Alternatively, Thurman translates it in this way: "As such (a consort) is extremely rare, and as such (a consort) has the purpose of developing a desirous person, it is the special fortune in Dharma of the keenest practitioner. Ordinary persons, since their passions go their own way, must abandon any (such ideas)." Thurman, *The Life and Teachings of Tsongkhapa*, 209. In my view, Thurman's translation misses the significance of the phrase *chags pa can drangs pa'i don*. It doesn't make sense to say a consort has the purpose of developing a desirous person and then to say it is the special fortune only of the keenest practitioner, as there are many desirous persons who are not keenest practitioners. In addition, this is a context where being a "desirous person" is considered a negative.

[428] "Even at times of empowerment, it is unsuitable as a practice if it is not permitted by one's guru. Practitioners themselves, having taken ownership [of a consort] aside from [one given by] the lama giving empowerment, should not indulge in [fornication] whatsoever with their [vajra] brothers and sisters or someone in their own [vajra] family. If they do indulge, having broken their *samaya* in this life, they will be punished by the *ḍākki*. As a result, they [will accrue] non-virtuous [karma] and their lifespan will be short. The oath-bound protectors disperse, they will not obtain *siddhi*, and various hindrances will arise. Moreover, having

In sum, there are both similarities and differences to the discussion of sexual consort practice in the two *Garlands*. Both texts agree that people of the opposite gender are "demonic" for beginning practitioners, as they lead people's minds in the wrong direction (i.e., towards desire). Both are also severely critical of recreational sex on the part of men and women. In addition, both texts describe a female consort that either "possesses favorable signs" or is "suitable" for consort practice. However, only *Tsongkhapa's Garland* advises that looking for a suitable consort is something to be avoided, as it is a dangerous game that leads ordinary, lustful people to ruin. In contrast, *Tsogyel's Garland* seeks to couch its critique of lustful activity within a broader context in which *karma mudrā* is described as an important and beneficial "path of enhancement." For this reason, only *Tsogyel's Garland* contains a final section clarifying when it is that sexual consort practice is acceptable, who can practice it, and who the consorts should be. This reflects Tsongkhapa's broader perspective on *karma mudrā*, which is that it is very rare for both the male and female

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transmigrated from this life, the woman is reborn in the hell called "Experiencing Hot Desire." Therefore, the woman must guard against losing themselves to fornication. A man too, if he takes ownership of the *mudrās* who are the common property of the *gnyis ldan* or *gsum ldan vajrācaryas* and has sex with them, or if he has sex with those sisters, or with those who have the same samaya, it will be impossible for him not to be born in the hell called "Pouring Poison in the Basket." It is a very great fault if the man takes ownership [of those *mudrās*] and enjoys them, but if he has sex with the mother and sister at the time of empowerment, there is no fault. If you protect samaya in that way, you will quickly obtain all the *siddhi* of *mantra*. Tsogyel, alas! Having entered the door of *mantra*, if you do not protect *samaya*, there is no hope at all of becoming enlightened! Even [if] I looked all over the land of Tibet, I could indeed not find one who protects *samaya* better than you." *Dbang gi dus su yang bla mas gnang ba min pa la spyad du mi rung / rang sgrub pa pos bdag tu bzung nas dbang bskur ba'i bla ma min pa mched lcam dang rus gcig pa gang la yang mi spyad / spyad na tshe 'dir dam sel zhugs nas DAkki'i chad pas mi dge zhing tshe thung / dam can gyes nas grub pa mi thob ste bar chad sna tshogs 'ong / bud med de yang tshe 'phos nas 'dod chags tsha myong zhes bya ba'i dmyal bar skye / des na bud med kyis g.yem ma shor bar bsrung dgos / skyes pas kyang rdo rje slob dpon gnyis ldan dang sum ldan gyi phyag rgya bdag tu bzung ba la spyad dam lcam sring dam tshig gcig pa rnams la spyad na za ma tog tu dug bshos pa zhes bya ste / dmyal bar mi skye mi srid do / skye bos bdag tu bzung ba la spyad na yang nyes pa shin tu che'o / dbang bskur ba'i dus su yum dang lcam sring la nyes pa med / de ltar dam tshig bsrungs na gsang sngags kyi dngos grub thams cad myur du thob / mtho rgyal sngags kyi sgor zhugs nas dam tshig ma bsrungs na sangs rgya ba la re ba med ang / ngas bod yul kun tu btsal kyang dam tshig srung ba la khyod las ma rnyed pa yin mod*. Dri med 'od zer, *Tsogyel's Garland*, 364.

practitioner to be qualified, and that one can get most of the same results from using a visualized consort.[429]

Conclusion

Existing studies of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* have focused on the philosophical view of Dzogchen or on the question of whether Tsongkhapa was a Dzogchenpa. However, in doing so they have overlooked the importance of this text as a social and historical document, one that contains a unique and creative Gelukpa interpretation and appropriation of a Dzogchen instruction. This text originated within the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī tradition, was transmitted by Lhodrak Drubchen to Tsongkhapa in the late fourteenth century, and was then edited to make it more suitable for a Geluk context. These edits constitute a series of recensional variants whose primary function is to elide Dzogchen terminology and unsuitable practices using sexual consorts. As a result, much like David Germano has observed in the history of the Great Perfection itself, the orthodoxy of the Geluk tradition consists (in part) of the absence of what has been deliberately excluded.[430]

Throughout the teaching portion of the text, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* elides numerous aspects of the Dzogchen tradition. For instance, rather than a teaching on "all the essential points of the Secret Heart-Essence," the main subject matter is characterized as a teaching on "clear light mind itself," an attempt to shift the context from Dzogchen to the "clear light" mind emphasized within the Sarma tantric systems of the second dissemination. A reference

[429] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 273-74.
[430] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 209.

to “sterile emptiness” is altered to elide a term that has been employed to criticize the philosophical positions of the Gelukpa. Reflecting this focus on emptiness, the goal of the practitioner in *Tsongkhapa’s Garland* is cognizing “the great view of vast *emptiness*,” rather than the Dzogchen category of the “great view of the vast *expanse*.” Lastly, references in *Tsogyel’s Garland* to the Mind Series of Dzogchen teachings and to the mapping of the three categories (of essence, nature, and compassion) onto the three bodies of a Buddha are expunged in *Tsongkhapa’s Garland*.

The presence of these recensional variants underscores the importance and function of variant texts as a site of discursive struggle in Tibet. As such, this chapter contributes to our understanding of Tibetan religious literature “as a real literary tradition, as full of borrowing, stealing, argument, and patchwork—in short, as fluid and open—as literatures elsewhere long have been acknowledged to be.”[431] The fluidity and openness of literature also invites attention to the potential danger posed by alterity and the need for censorship. What would have been the danger in allowing these Dzogchen doctrines to remain in a Gelukpa work? In the context of Dzogchen, Germano has argued that “a Mind Series practice-focused cycle was a way to disseminate the Great Perfection intellectually and contemplatively across sects, but also transformed the Mind Series into a springboard for committed disciples to leap into the more quirky and unique world of the Esoteric Precepts series.”[432] In its own way, the presence of Dzogchen terms and ideas in this text could have

[431] Roger R. Jackson, “Borrowed Texts, Fluid Genres, and Performative Licence: Reflections on a dGe Lugs Pa Offering Ritual,” in *Tibetan Literary Genres, Texts, and Text Types*, ed. Jim Rheingans (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 105.

[432] Germano, "Architecture and Absence," 243.

functioned similarly as a "springboard" for curious Gelukpa students to leap into the ocean of the Heart-Essence of the Ḍākinī, a proverbial gateway to a world of sex, alcohol, and competing doctrines.

In his study of the Geluk educational system, Georges Dreyfus has criticized the strict orthodoxy characteristic of the Geluk tradition, arguing that the failure to engage with other thinkers has been harmful to the rigor of the tradition and has been motivated by political concerns.[433] However, this case study indicates that this orthodoxy was also part of the earliest stratum of the tradition, one motivated largely by religious concerns and not merely political ones. Unfortunately, since "piety requires no critical apparatus," this also means it is difficult to determine who might have edited this text."[434]

To this point, there are a number of "Old Ganden edition" (*dga' ldan par rnying*) texts that date from the fifteenth century; however, *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is not one of the surviving witnesses.[435] *Tsongkhapa's Garland* is also present in the collected works of both Tsongkhapa and Lhodrak Drubchen. Thupten Jinpa has compiled various accounts of the compilation of Tsongkhapa's Collected Works. One early collection was commissioned in

[433] Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands*, 322.

[434] Paul Harrison, "A Brief History of the Tibetan Bka' 'gyur," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 84.

[435] For studies of these works, see: (1) David P. Jackson, "More on the Old DGa'-Ldan and Gong-Dkar-Ba Xylographic Editions.," *Studies in Central and East Asian Religions*, no. 2 (1989): 1–18; (2) David P. Jackson, "The Earliest Printings of Tsong-Kha-Pa's Works: The Old Dga'-Ldan Editions," in *Reflections on Tibetan Culture: Essays in Memory of Turrell V. Wylie*, ed. Lawrence Epstein and Richard F. Sherburne (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1990), 107–16; and (3) Mathias Fermer, "Once More on the So-Called Old dGa' Ldan Editions of Tsong Kha Pa's Works," in *Gateways to Tibetan Studies: A Collection of Essays in Honour of David P. Jackson on the Occasion of His 70th Birthday*, ed. Volker Caumanns et al., vol. one, Indian and Tibetan Studies; 12.1-2 (Hamburg: Department. of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Universitat Hamburg, 2021), 253–99.

1405.[436] Another was commissioned by the Pakmodrupa hierarch Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen himself.[437] Lastly, a relatively unknown disciple named Namkha Wöser (Nam mkha 'od zer, fl. fifteenth century) is said to have produced "the entire collected works of Butön as well as of the great Tsongkhapa, and half of Rendawa's writings."[438] Unfortunately, none of these collections are extant so it is unknown how large they were or what texts they contained and in what forms.

Fortunately, we are in a somewhat better position with regard to Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works. According to the registry (*them yig chos skyong gi bka' rgya can*) of a rare manuscript witness of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works found at Orgyen Chöling Monastery (O rgyan chos gling) in Bhutan, it was produced in the Female Fire-Rabbit year (1447) by two fully ordained followers of Lhodrak Drubchen and members of his Shüpu family: Namkha Lodrö (Nam mkha' blo gros, fl. fifteenth century) and Namkha Wöser.[439] According to this work, there were several versions of his collected works (*bka' 'bum*) circulating, but they often had missing texts, such that it was difficult to find an authoritative prototype (*ma phyi*). The compilers located one partial collection organized in a single volume and then made editorial corrections to the grammar and orthography.[440]

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[436] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 330 and 453, n. 612.

[437] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 330 and 453-54, n. 613.

[438] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 453, n. 612.

[439] Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Them yig chos skyong gi bka' rgya can," in *The collected works (gsung 'bum) of lho-brag grub-chen nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan (1326-1401)*, vol. 1 (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunsang tobgeyl, 1985), 679–84.

[440] Franz-Karl Ehrhard suggests that this partial collection refers to the Lhodrak edition, although that is not specified in the work itself. See Franz-Karl Ehrhard, "The 'Vision' of rDzogs-Chen: A Text and Its Histories," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies*, ed. Ihara Shōren and Yamaguchi Zuihō, vol. 1: Buddhist Philosophy and Literature (Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji,

Little is known about Namkha Lodrö. Namkha Wöser, however, is an intriguing figure who reportedly followed Lhodrak Drubchen as the abbot of the monastery of Lhodrak Drowa Gön.[441] This figure was clearly adept at producing Collected Works, producing Lhodrak Drubchen's in 1447, as well as the aforementioned Collected Works of Tsongkhapa. It is also noteworthy that Namkha Wöser worked in an environment where there were multiple versions of Lhodrak Drubchen's works circulating, and that they took it upon themselves to organize and make editorial corrections. As evidenced by Sherab Sengé serving as proofreader for the edition of Tsongkhapa's Collected Works commissioned by Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen, it is likely that there were multiple versions of Tsongkhapa's works floating around as well; thus, it is possible Namkha Wöser would have organized and made editorial corrections to Tsongkhapa's works before producing the collection.

Thus, Namkha Wöser appears as a likely candidate for producing the edition of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* which has been preserved and come down to us. His oversight would explain the identical nature of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* in both Lhodrak Drubchen and Tsongkhapa's Collected Works. The dating of the rare Bhutan edition of Lhodrak Drubchen's collected works to 1447 offers this year as a *terminus ante quem* by which *Tsongkhapa's Garland* was finalized. This dating definitively marks this case study as one that sheds light on the early construction of Geluk orthodoxy. Of course, this is not to say that Namkha Wöser was himself responsible for all of the edits or a Geluk devotee. It

1989), 49. However, differences in texts included and in organization suggests the Bhutan edition could also have been based on one of the other collections that were circulating at that time.

[441] Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Baiḍūrya Serpo*, 213. Incidentally, on p. 212 we learn that it got the name Bgro dgon because it was the monastery (*dgon*) where Lhodrak Drubchen decided (*bgro pa*) to give Tsongkhapa the dharma-cycles of the Kadam and Vajrapāṇi. This is likely a later explanation, as the monastery was existent as early as the 12th century figure Shud phu Nam mkha' seng+ge.

remains unclear who made the significant editorial changes that drastically changed the work. In other words, the recension of the Garland published by Namkha Wöser may not have been the autograph, but rather a version of the text that had already been edited to conform to Geluk doctrinal norms.

In sum, the editing of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* demonstrates the knotty social context surrounding its transmission. On the one hand, Lhodrak Drubchen was central to the Geluk tradition, playing a major role in its earning patronage from Pakmodru elites and communicating important prophecies, including some communicated in the second half of *Tsongkhapa's Garland* itself. For this reason, the text as a whole could not simply be excluded from the tradition and from Tsongkhapa's Collected Works. On the other hand, Geluk figures wished to distance themselves from the teachings of Dzogchen contained within it. One way to do this was to make the editorial changes described in this chapter.

However, early compilers of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works also took this one step further, extracting the prophecies contained in Tsongkhapa's Garland and producing a novel work, *Answers to Tsongkhapa's Questions*, which allowed readers to access the prophecies without being exposed to unorthodox teachings.[442] This redundant text is only

[442] For the two versions, see: (1) Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Rje tsong kha pa'i zhu len," in *Collected writings of lho-brag grub-chen nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan*, vol. 1, 2 vols. (New Delhi: Tshering dargye, 1972), 195–98; and (2) Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Rje tsong kha pa'i zhu lan," in *The collected works (gsung 'bum) of lho-brag grub-chen nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan (1326-1401)*, vol. 1, 1 vols. (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunsang tobgeyl, 1985), 701–4. Interestingly, this text is found *twice* in nearly identical witnesses in the Bhutan edition of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works. The second work is given the working title *[Vajrapāṇi's] Responses to Queries, such as "What Accumulations has [Tsongkhapa] Collected, When will he become Enlightened," and so forth* (*Blo bzang grag pas tshogs gang bsags dang sangs nam rgya sogs zhus pa'i lan*). This "title" is simply the first words of the questions posed by Lhodrak Drubchen to Vajrapāṇi that introduce the prophecy section of *Tsongkhapa's Garland*. This appears to represent a "rough first draft" of the work that would become *Answers to Tsongkhapa's Questions*, as it contains extraneous information not related to Tsongkhapa, lacks an initial passage found in the "final version," and is not found in any other editions. The fact that Namkha Lodrö and Namkha Wöser included this redundant work in the collection suggests that they may not have been the ones to perform the extensive editorial changes found in *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, as they sought to preserve this

found in the two older and rare witnesses of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works. It is not found in Tsongkhapa's Collected Works, nor in the modern edition of Lhodrak Drubchen's Collected Works, as it is redundant in the face of *Tsongkhapa's Garland*. However, the creation of this work indicates another method editors used to distance themselves from *Tsogyel's Garland* while preserving the prophecies that were important to the tradition. In doing so, this demonstrates again that the minimizing of Lhodrak Drubchen's influence on the early Geluk tradition was an important part of the construction of the tradition.

redundant work in the collection rather than exercise agency by leaving it out. In my view, this indicates a certain humbleness towards the source materials. See Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, "Blo bzang grag pas tshogs gang bsags dang sangs nam rgya sogs zhus pa'i lan," in *The collected works (gsung 'bum) of lho-brag grub-chen nam-mkha'-rgyal-mtshan (1326-1401)*, vol. 1 (Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunsang tobgeyl, 1985), 593–97.

Chapter Four

The Construction of Ganden Monastery as a Pilgrimage Site:

Charismatic Beings and Power Objects

> *Ganden is surrounded by spontaneously arisen forms, Drepung is surrounded by protectors, and Sera is surrounded by hermitages.*[443]

The focus of these last two chapters is Ganden Monastery as a pilgrimage site. This is a shift away from my focus on Lhodrak Drubchen, but a continuation of my interest in the charisma of the tantric lama. However, rather than Lhodrak Drubchen, in the popularization of Ganden Monastery as a pilgrimage site it is the charismatic status of beings associated with the Geluk tradition that is primary.

As mentioned in the introduction, Ganden is a major Tibetan pilgrimage site. The emic perception of Ganden as a pilgrimage site is also emblematized by the epigraph opening this chapter, as "spontaneously arisen forms" (*rang byon*) are both a common feature of pilgrimage sites in Tibet and one of Ganden's most well-known features.[444] However, the significance of Ganden as an important Gelukpa pilgrimage site has thus far been overlooked. Thus, the primary goal of the next two chapters is to describe Ganden Monastery as a pilgrimage site. This account is based primarily upon the accounts of pilgrimage guide literature and supplemented by the accounts of travelers to the site. I focus on the charismatic

[443] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 167.

[444] These forms will be described in a later section.

and powerful nature of the divine beings (such as Tsongkhapa, other Geluk lamas, and supernatural beings) and material objects associated with Ganden. In the next chapter, I focus on the description of Ganden as a numinous place. In doing so, I argue that Ganden's popularization as a pilgrimage site played a key role in the growth of the Tsongkhapa devotional cult and thus to the growth of the Geluk tradition.

Pilgrimage and Power Objects in Tibet

Pilgrimage is nearly a universal Tibetan religious practice.[445] As a general definition, Alex McKay asserts that it is "a journey to a sanctified place undertaken in the expectation of future spiritual and/or worldly benefit."[446] In emic terms, the spiritual benefit is articulated via several overlapping logics drawn from both Tibetan and Indian traditions.[447] The term "pilgrimage" is most often used to translate *gnas skor*, or "circumambulating an abode." For Toni Huber, "abode" in this context indicates the abode of a deity/deities.[448] It is because pilgrimage sites are the abodes of deities that pilgrims perform a popular triumvirate of practices consisting of "prostrations, offerings, and circumambulations."[449] By these and other practices, pilgrims are able to cleanse themselves of defilements (*sgrib*) or sins (*sdig*

[445] Matthew Kapstein, "The Guide to the Crystal Peak," in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 103.

[446] Alex McKay, ed., *Pilgrimage in Tibet* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), 1.

[447] Hartmann, "To See a Mountain: Writing, Place, and Vision in Tibetan Pilgrimage Literature," 76.

[448] Toni Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain: Popular Pilgrimage and Visionary Landscape in Southeast Tibet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13–14. Huber also states that *gnas* and *rten* or "support" are largely interchangeable in the context of pilgrimage, as both indicate the presence of the divine.

[449] The Tibetan phrase is *phyag mchod dang skor ba byed pa*. See Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 232, n. 3.

pa), becoming purified (*dag pa*) in the process. In the end, pilgrims receive the blessings (*byin rlabs*) that saturate the abode and make auspicious connections (*rten 'brel*) with the divine beings present.[450]

The spiritual efficacy of a site is also indicated by "its special natural and physical attributes."[451] On a broad scale, sacred mountains are believed to possess an "innate, natural power or [blessing] from which it gains its high status."[452] On a smaller scale, the spontaneously arisen phenomena often found at pilgrimage sites also attest to the "miraculous…bubbling-up of the site's power."[453] The site's special qualities are also attested by the natural beauty of its flora and fauna, and by the geomantic analysis of its physical features. These are all material indications of the special attributes that makes up pilgrimage sites, a quality further demonstrated by the common ritual practice of taking mouthfuls of water, parts of plants, pinches of earth, or stones from the site to procure its blessings.[454] This special nature of pilgrimage sites is captured by Keith Dowman's coining of the phrase "power places."[455]

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[450] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 15–17.

[451] Victor Chan, *Tibet Handbook: A Pilgrimage Guide* (Chico, California: Moon Publications, 1994), 36.

[452] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 61.

[453] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 298. Hartmann goes on to suggest that "self-arisen objects, by contrast, recall the self-arisen or intrinsic wisdom (*rang byung ye shes*) valorized in tantric philosophy, and indicate a place where the non-conceptual and ever-creative ground underlying reality has made itself visible in the world of ordinary perception."

[454] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 15.

[455] Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide*. As Huber notes, this power can be both beneficial and harmful, as Tsāri is considered both fierce and dangerous for pilgrims. See Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 109. In a similar vein, Hartmann describes the site of Gyangme as a liminal one marked by both the dharma and demonic forces. See Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 247.

On a cultural and historical level, one of the most influential theories in studies of Tibetan pilgrimage is Katia Buffetrille's on the process of "Buddhicisation."[456] According to this theory, mountains in Tibet were originally worshipped and propitiated by local lay communities as capricious "territorial gods" (*yul lha*), a practice Rolf Stein might describe as part of the "nameless religion" of Tibet.[457] However, over time these mountains were transformed into translocal Buddhist sacred mountains and transmundane deities, who became objects of Buddhist forms of ritual such as circumambulation. According to Buffetrille, this marked a shift from an exchange relationship to one of veneration.

Over time, the process of Buddhicisation in Tibet also resulted in many pilgrimage sites being described in particularly tantric Buddhist terms. According to Huber, the "great Tibetan *néri* [or cult mountain] tradition" starts from about the twelfth to fifteenth centuries and centers on tantric lamas who "opened the doors" of pilgrimage sites by going there to practice, subdue autochthonous forces, and take control of the site.[458] According to Huber, a process of "mandalization" took place in which the "ordering principle of the maṇḍala was…projected onto and embodied within the specific topography of the new category of cult mountains," leading to a state of affairs in which mountains became sites for tantric practice, for worship of dharma-protectors, and for local cults simultaneously.[459] The centrality of the Tantric lama resulted in Per Kvaerne identifying mountain cults as

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[456] Katia Buffetrille, "Reflections on Pilgrimages to Sacred Mountains, Lakes and Caves," in *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, ed. Alex McKay (Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998), 21–23.

[457] As cited in Kapstein, *The Tibetans*, 46. These consist of the "wide range of beliefs and practices" that span Buddhism and Bön and "sometimes seem to exist independently of them."

[458] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 25-26.

[459] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 26-29.

"Lamaist" rather than specifically Buddhist, "due to the common centrality of the Tantric lama as ritual specialist in the development and cult of both Buddhist and Bonpo neri sites."[460]

These findings point to several important aspects of Ganden. The first is simply that it functioned as a pilgrimage site, meaning it is considered the abode of deities and viewed as a sacred, blessed, and powerful place. In particular, thinking of Ganden as the abode of deities and as the site of a "Lamaist" cult points to Tsongkhapa's central importance at Ganden, as both central deity and presiding lama. As I argue below, Huber's theory of "mandalization" is also operative at Ganden, as the monastery itself was construed as a mandala, marking it as a site for both tantric practice and the worship of protectors.[461]

However, one major drawback of Buffetrille's theory of "Buddhicisation" is that it assumes that all pilgrimage sites are natural environmental sites such as caves, mountains, or lakes.[462] A similar assumption is made by Huber, who contrasts monasteries ("centers of scholasticism and…sites of articulation with patronage and political power") with the

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[460] Kvaerne 1987: 498. "Tibetan Religions." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*., edited by M. Eliade. Vol. 14. New York, Macmillan. Pp. 497-504. As cited in Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 22.

[461] In keeping with the final element of Huber's theory, it's unclear to what degree local cults were incorporated into protector worship at Ganden. However, Sørensen, Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo describe one intriguing but fragmentary local account which describes Damchen Chögyel as a local wrathful deity who was the servant of a powerful noble lady of Dragkar (Brag dkar). Sent to purchase meat, he was late in arriving one day and scolded by the lady, leading him to destroy the fortress. Later, this deity was tamed by Tsongkhapa, who made him "his personal protector and protector of his religions seat," meaning Ganden. See Sørensen, Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, p. 209, n. 13. The origin of Tsongkhapa's relationship with this protector is uncertain, with Jinpa describing it as a "long-standing, mysterious relationship." Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 305.

[462] For instance, Buffetrille writes that "the purpose of this guide, like all Tibetan Buddhism pilgrimage guides, is to tame and Buddhicise the landscape." This generalization overlooks the existence of pilgrimage guide literature for monasteries such as Ganden. Katia Buffetrille, "The Great Pilgrimage of A-Myes Rma-Chen: Written Tradition, Living Realities," in *Mandala and Landscape*, ed. A.W. Macdonald (Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 1997), 111.

mountains that are frequented by yogins and hermits and became important sites of pilgrimage and cult worship.[463] In part, this likely reflects the state of affairs in Tibet in the 1980s, when the opening of tourism allowed for fieldwork to take place at a time when the majority of monastic centers in Tibet (such as Ganden) had been destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. That said, the importance of Ganden as a pilgrimage site complicates this facile bifurcation between monastery sites and mountain sites. In my view, our understanding of pilgrimage in Tibet is incomplete without the inclusion of important monastic sites such as Ganden. In addition, our understanding of the Geluk tradition is incomplete without understanding the important role of pilgrimage in its development.

In a broader sense, the popularization of Ganden as a pilgrimage site appears to have mirrored wider historical and cultural trends taking place in Tibet. Historians have noted a cultural shift towards the dominance of monastic figures and institutions, as evidenced in the concentration of social, religious, political, and economic power within religious institutions rather than aristocratic families.[464] Another manifestation of this shift was the Ganden Podrang's institutionalization of protector rituals in large Gelukpa monasteries in the seventeenth century, thus housing control over supernatural forces in Geluk institutions.[465] In

[463] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 25.

[464] Tucci locates this shift in the rise of the Gelukpa and their competition with the Kagyupa. For instance, Tucci describes the nobility becoming pawns of the religious schools, writing: "Tibetan history is moulded by them. In this struggle the nobility is weakened and exhausted, it rules itself out, and the monks of all sects profit by its ruin; they gradually occupy the deserted castles; the strongholds, once loud with the noise of arms and the turmoil of passions, now turned into hermitages and chapels, echoing with the priests' psalmodies." Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, 30.

[465] As Huber writes, "Tsari was a place the Gelukpa state had become increasingly bound up with over the recent centuries, and its deities were recognized as being extremely potent and potentially determinative of the religiopolitical fortunes of the regime and its followers. This same concern informed part of the Lhasa state's involvement in a host of other regular ritual practices and institutions concerning its relationship to the forces of the nonhuman world, although most of these were monastically based in large Gelukpa monasteries or focused on Lhasa itself as the seat of government." Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 194.

a similar vein, in what one might term the "monasticization" of pilgrimage in Tibet, large Geluk monasteries such as Ganden were popularized as sites of pilgrimage, protector worship, and tantric practice, in a process akin to Huber's theorization of the "mandalization" of cult mountains.[466] The making of Ganden into an important pilgrimage site thus extends Brenton Sullivan's observation that "what the Gelukpa did exceptionally well was to make the *monastery* the essence of Buddhism."[467]

As a popular pilgrimage site, Ganden reaped the economic benefits that accrue to such sites, such as receiving donations from pilgrims and selling offering materials, consecrated substances, or souvenirs.[468] Moreover, Ganden was not a site where the Gelukpa were in competition with other sects, such as the Kagyu schools who "largely controlled monasteries around [existing] prominent pilgrimage routes."[469] As a result, there was no danger of potential conflict, as would sometimes occur at contested sites.[470] In effect, the Gelukpa had a monopoly over the site. An ancillary benefit would have been drawing away pilgrims from Kagyu-controlled pilgrimage sites to Gelukpa monasteries.[471] Notably, this

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[466] In some sense, this parallels what happened to pre-Buddhist mountains. S. G. Karmay has described how the mountain of Lha ri gyang to, which played a central role as a holy mountain for the earliest Tibetan kings, was eclipsed by "Buddhisized" mountains such as Kailash and Tsari in prominence. Samten G. Karmay, "A Pilgrimage to Kongpo Bon-Ri," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (Narita 1989)*, ed. Shōren Ihara and Zuihō Yamaguchi, vol. 2: Language, History, and Culture (Narita: Naritasan Shinshoji, 1992), 533.

[467] Sullivan, *Building a Religious Empire*, 4.

[468] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 82-83. One popular souvenir would have been the famous Ganden Khenpa incense, detailed in chapter five.

[469] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 170.

[470] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 70.

[471] Catherine Hartmann notes that the Kagyu, especially the Drukpa and Drikung, largely controlled monasteries around prominent pilgrimage routes such as Kailash and Tsari.Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 170.

was a strategy developed by the Ganden Podrang under Desi Sangyé Gyatso, who took control over Kagyu pilgrimage sites found at mountains in western Tibet and then reduced their patronage, leading to their sharp decline in the eighteenth century.[472]

Ganden's popularization is also best understood as part of what McKay terms "systemization," whereby religious and political authorities "encourage the closer integration of a pilgrimage into the religious tradition[s] of the dominant culture and lead to deliberate strategies designed to stimulate its growth."[473] What this means is the popularization of Ganden as a pilgrimage site was also part of the growth of the Tsongkhapa devotional cult, as pilgrims visited to receive Tsongkhapa's blessings and also learned narratives about the divine beings and power objects present at the site. This process went hand-in-hand with narratives concerning Tsongkhapa's magical powers and status as either a *mahāsiddha* or enlightened being. It also seemingly was stimulated by the leadership of the Ganden Podrang government, an authority that McKay deems necessary for the growth of a pilgrimage site from a local one to a universal one.[474]

However, one key difference between monasteries and natural sites such as mountains is that a monastery would not necessarily have had a preexisting cult associated with it before it was built. With a nod to Kevin Costner, Geluk figures first had to build

[472] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 157.

[473] McKay, *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, 2.

[474] As McKay writes: ""The expansion and growth of a pilgrimage place beyond the merely local, for example, depends upon it being drawn into a dominant model of sacred landscape imposed by a universal religion, a model which doubles as a landscape of control - a sphere of authority, ordered, taxed, and made subject." McKay, *Pilgrimage in Tibet*, 15.

Ganden into a proverbial field of dreams before the pilgrims would come.[475] As a result, pilgrimage guide literature plays a key role in the construction of place that imbues the site with "both a symbolic *meaning* and an auspicious…*effect*."[476] As Hartmann writes, "scholars studying the anthropology and phenomenology of place have explored the ways in our experiences of any particular place are always already rich with meaning. That is, when we encounter a place, we encounter the stories, historical events, social identities, and modes of comportment associated with the place."[477] The meaning of visiting Ganden is articulated within the pilgrimage guide literature, a type of work that is "more often prescriptive than descriptive."[478]

In general, Hartmann has described the later synthetic style of longer Tibetan pilgrimage guidebooks as one containing a "pastiche of prayer, polemic, cosmology, esoteric geography, anecdote, narrative history, and more."[479] As a pastiche, it is often difficult to know how much of the work was composed by the author and how much was drawn from earlier textual sources or oral traditions. In any event, this material would shape what Huber terms a fluid map to the site—one that was both "narrative" and "oral/textual"—that pilgrims

[475] This is a reference to the oft-quoted line from the movie *Field of Dreams*, "if you build it, they will come." Apart from the linkage to Songtsen Gampo, I have found no evidence for an existing mountain cult at Wangkur Ri/Drok Ri before the construction of Ganden.

[476] Ulrike Roesler, "A Palace for Those Who Have Eyes to See: Preliminary Remarks on the Symbolic Geography of Reting (Rwa-Sgreng)," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 8, no. 1 (2007): 1, 4.

[477] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 32.

[478] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 271.

[479] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, p. 282 n. 452.

would use "to navigate and interpret" pilgrimage sites.[480] And these maps would inform the experience of pilgrims to the site. As Catherine Hartmann puts it, "in encountering a holy mountain, then, Tibetan pilgrims are not simply encountering a pile of rocks and stones, but experiencing the stories told about that place, the events that happened there, and the cultural meaning of that place.[481]

In the context of mountains, Huber suggests that there is a transfer of power from enlightened bodies to spots in the physical environment, and that narratives function to imprint historical events in the physical features of the landscape, thereby generating "a whole collection of significant toponyms."[482] For a monastery, much the same is true but the significance extends beyond geographic features, comprising too the material objects present. This leads us to the second major theoretical underpinning for these two chapters, the materiality of Ganden as a pilgrimage site. For a monastery, asserting the blessed nature of the material objects present is one of the primary functions of its pilgrimage guide literature. As such, one of the main theoretical foundations of this and the following chapter is James Gentry's analysis of "power objects" in Tibet. For Gentry, power objects are those objects that possess a "transformational potency [which] poises them to variously act upon persons, places, and things, forging bonds and creating other effects between them in unpredictable

[480] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 60. In a similar vein, Buffetrille reports that people who met along the pilgrimage routes would share knowledge amongst themselves. Buffetrille, "Reflections on Pilgrimages to Sacred Mountains, Lakes and Caves, 21-22.

[481] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 33. Huber makes much the same point, when he observes that guidebooks are often compilations of different material and imply that what happened in the past remains evident and active there. Toni Huber, "Guidebook to Lapchi," in *Religions of Tibet in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez Jr. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 120-21.

[482] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 61.

ways."[483] Such objects include objects claimed to liberate beings through sensory contact alone, objects used to control the surrounding environment of living beings and the environment (such as by repelling enemy armies and quelling natural disasters), objects that are used in tantric rituals (*dam rdzas*), as well as objects that are considered receptacles (*rten*) of blessing (*byin brlabs*) and power (*mthu*).[484]

For Gentry, power objects in Tibet are best understood as hybrid phenomena that are both animate and inanimate, material and discursive, and human and non-human. It is because power objects are receptacles of blessings and power that they possess a kind of agency that enables them to act on persons, places, and things.[485] This agency is often co-extensive with a kind of animation, with objects at Ganden either spontaneously arising of their own accord, having the ability to move or speak, or emitting lights and fragrant odors.[486] However the agency and animate nature of these objects is itself often grounded in the charisma of Buddhist actors, whether Tibetan lamas or Buddhist divine or semi-divine agents.

Weber's foundational definition of charisma focused on charismatic persons, viz. "an extraordinary quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged, or presumed."[487] However, he was criticized in turn by Tambiah for ignoring the importance of

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[483] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 11-12.

[484] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 8-13.

[485] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 13.

[486] Within the context of Treasure substances, Gentry notes the following types of animation described: multiplying, boiling, wafting fragrant odors, emitting lights, flying, producing dreams and visionary encounters with deities, masters, and buddhas, and other outcomes that typically amaze, astound, and inspire audiences and participants." Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 48.

[487] As cited in Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 7.

objects.[488] Following Tambiah, Gentry seeks to demonstrate how material objects enable "efficacious power" to transition "between the personal and the material spheres," or "between the personal and institutional spheres in large part through certain materials that mediate power and agency."[489] In large part, the capacity for material objects to mediate power and agency results from their being what Burno Latour terms "human/non-human hybrids," or "quasi-subjects" and "quasi-objects:" "items formed from combinations of objective materials and subjective meanings, which often act like—or are treated as though they possess—the agentive properties that we would usually reserve for persons."[490] It is this hybrid nature that makes objects "sources of charismatic power and authority in their own right."[491]

In particular, these objects are invested as charismatic objects via narratives that "infuse these materials with the presence of the persons with whom they were once incorporated."[492] Taking a broad definition of personhood, these power objects are invested with the presence of either charismatic lamas or divine/semi-divine Buddhist figures. In this regard, Gentry invokes the anthropologist Alfred Gell's theory of "distributed personhood," or "the dynamic by which a person's sense of being, or agency is regarded to extend beyond

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[488] "The charisma is concretized and sedimented in objects; these objects are repositories of power" (Tambiah 1984:335) As cited in Dan S. Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China: Charisma, Money, Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2012), 35.

[489] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 292, 371.

[490] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 17.

[491] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 21.

[492] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 303.

the body boundaries to animate other objects, places, or persons."[493] At Ganden, it is chiefly Tsongkhapa's charismatic personhood that is distributed across its objects and places. And since this investiture with charisma is largely suggested in the pilgrimage guide literature, the material objects at Ganden are best understood as both material and discursive objects, consisting as they do of materiality mediated by narrative descriptions of the "the persons, places, deities, and things with which it comes into contact" or from which it derives.[494]

However, this charisma is not merely one belonging to Tsongkhapa or attributed to the objects at Ganden. It is also social and collective, and "always contingent upon a shared belief on the part of both leader and followers in the genuineness of the leader's charismatic possession."[495] Put another way, its not Weber's model of charisma in which the routinization of charisma results in "the charismatic message inevitably becoming dogma, doctrine, theory, law or petrified tradition."[496] Rather, "institutional involvement can be seen here as a mechanism to preserve charisma's initial vigor," as it is the investing of Ganden's material objects with charisma that keeps them alive in the imagination of devotees, both in the sense of remembering and in the sense of being animate. And moreover, it is the fluidity of this charismatic authority—one that flows between persons, objects, places, and times—that is the hallmark of Gentry's analysis of power objects.[497]

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[493] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 300.

[494] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 332.

[495] Dan S. Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China: Charisma, Money, Enlightenment* (London: Routledge, 2012), 35.

[496] Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 38.

[497] Gentry, *Power Objects in Tibetan Buddhism*, 88.

The Structure and Function of Ganden's Pilgrimage Guide Literature

The popularization of Ganden as a pilgrimage site may have been in response to economic pressures facing Ganden in this period. For instance, Purchok's *Garland* reports that in the early part of the eighteenth century, Lhasang Khan (Lha bzang khan, d. 1717) returned estates to Ganden that had been confiscated (for reasons unknown).[498] A few decades later, the ruler Pholhané (Pho lha nas, 1689-1747) filled in a ravine underneath the monastery when it was in danger of collapsing.[499] And lastly, the *Annals of Ganden* reports that the important annual festival known as the Ganden/Taktsé Drubchö Chenmo (Dga' ldan/Stag rtse sgrub mchod chen mo)—a festival started by Tsongkhapa that constitutes the fourth of his great deeds—had its continuity of performance broken twice during this period, suggesting that there was not enough support—whether social, economic, or institutional—for its continued existence.[500] Taken as a whole, this evidence suggests that popularizing Ganden as a pilgrimage site in this period may have also been driven by economic pressures.

For Hartmann, the existence of a genre of pilgrimage guide literature in Tibet is based on shared "elements of content, style, and organization that suggest that they are participating

[498] "In particular, Chökyi Gyelpo Lhasang Khan returned [to Ganden] the monastic estates that had been confiscated earlier, and made offering of it to the governing council (*spyi*) along with the income from Bde chen rdzong [the seat of the Kyishö Depa]." Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 26.

[499] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 26.

[500] "Further, from the fourth day of the second Tibetan month until the fourteenth day, there is the gathering of the masses from all directions called the 'Taktsé Drubchö.'" This is a festival in which the assembled pilgrims perform prostrations. This is one of the great Jé Tsongkhapa's four deeds which is called 'Ganden Drubchö.' Namely, in the Fire-Bird year (1417) of the 7th *rapjung* cycle, the great Tsongkhapa created the Sang Ngaki Drubchö Khang or Yangpachen Temple (*gsang sngags kyi sgrub mchod khang*, *yangs pa can gtsug lag khang*). In addition, he introduced the Ganden Drubchö Chemo. It was extant up until one time [the continuity] became broken. Then, Taktsé Miwang Lhagyel Rabten provided the necessary conditions and restored it. However, after not long had passed, it declined again. After that, while Wang Gyurmé Namgyel was holding political power, he restored it to its original form along with providing requisite conditions. Then up to the present day, it has been known as the 'Taktsé Drubchö.'" *Annals of Ganden*, 42-43.

in a common discourse about place and pilgrimage, and as such might profitably be read with one another."[501] Such elements include praising and inviting audiences to visit a particular holy place (*gnas*), having an intended audience of ordinary people (rather than religious specialists), and sharing features typical of pilgrimage guide literature. However, there is no single term used for the genre, and there are potential cases of overlap, a state of affairs mirroring that of genre itself in Tibet.[502]

Ganden's pilgrimage guides mimic the later synthetic style of longer Tibetan pilgrimage guidebooks. For instance, Tibetan pilgrimage guides often begin with a narrative of the "opening of the doors" of a site by a tantric master, a process which makes the inner holiness of the site accessible to pilgrims, such as by subduing hostile spirits.[503] One way of proving that the master is the proverbial chosen one who has the sole destiny (*skal*) or karmic connections (*rten 'brel*) to do so is via prophecy.[504] The style is similar but different in the case of Ganden. For Ganden, it was Tsongkhapa who identified the site (via divination) and then subdued spirits there. But there is no explicit "opening of the doors."

Every one of these works begin by enumerating prophecies that describe either Tsongkhapa's sanctity or the destined nature of his founding of Ganden Monastery. As

[501] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 273.

[502] Hartmann notes some common terms include *gnas yig* (place guide or pilgrimage guide), *gnas bshad* (explanation of a holy place), *gnas bstod* (holy place praise) or *sa bstod* (praise of the place), *lam yig* (itinerary), *dkar chag* (inventory), or *lo rgyus* (history). Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 275. On the topics of "literature" and "genre" in Tibet, see José I. Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson, "Editor's Introduction," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, eds. José I. Cabezón and Roger R. Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1996). For a study of *lam* yig, see John Newman, "Itineraries to Sambhala," in *Tibetan Literature*, eds. Cabezón and Jackson, 485-499. For a study of *dkar* chag, see Dan Martin, "Tables of Contents (*dKar* chag)," in *Tibetan Literature*, eds. Cabezón and Jackson, 500-14).

[503] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 237-38.

[504] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 238.

described by Jinpa, these prophecies function to legitimate Tsongkhapa as a holy being and the foundation of Ganden as a preordained event, one linked to the historical Buddha.[505] For instance, Jamyang Shepa's *Catalog* enumerates numerous prophecies before moving onto a description of Ganden's spontaneously arisen forms and a concise description of its receptacles. In a similar vein, Purchok's *Garland* begins its description of the founding of Ganden with an account of relevant prophecies before providing a historical account of the establishment of Ganden and its colleges, and then concluding with a detailed description of its buildings and receptacles. *Shartsé History II* takes a unique perspective on this structure by including Ganden's prophecies as part of the section on "the element of the support, the environment" (*brten pa snod kyi khams*) as opposed to the section on "the element of animate beings" (*g.yo ba bcud kyi khams*) which describes the biographies of holy beings at Ganden.[506]

As works composed in the last few decades, the *Annals of Ganden* and the *Abridged Guidebook* contain some modern literary features, such as a formal division into chapters (and in the case of the *Annals of Ganden,* a bibliography). This makes the structure of these pilgrimage guides explicit and clear. The relevant chapter titles are the following:

	Chapter One	Chapter Two	Chapter Three	Chapter Four

[505] Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 338-47.

[506] "Second, the topic of the actual extensive explanation has two parts: (1) the element of the supported vessel where it is taught how this very amazing abode was prophesied in many *sūtras*, *tantras*, and treatises, and (2) the element of animate beings, where the way holy beings—who uphold the teachings of both learning and practice at Shartsé Norbu Ling *dratsang*—arose is described." Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Dga' ldan shar rtse nor gling grwa tshang gi chos 'byung 'jam dpal snying po'i dgongs rgyan mdzes par byed pa'i legs bshad dpyad gsum rnam dag nor bu'i phra tshom*, 137.

Annals of Ganden	Concerning how this seat was prophesied by the Teacher, the Buddha	Concerning the topography (*sa dbyibs*) and special features of the monastery's location	An abridged biography of Jé Tsongkhapa	Concerning the material constructions and the three types of receptacles
Abridged Guidebook	A concise narration of the biography of the divine guru, the founder of this great seat	Explanation of its outward features [in two parts]: (1) the way this great seat was prophesied in *sūtras*, *tantras*, and authentic treatises, and (2) the explanation of the special features of the land on which the seat is located	Explanation of the qualities of its internal temples and receptacles of the three [body, speech, and mind]	

As evident, the subject matter is largely identical, dealing in no particular order with: (1) a brief biography of Tsongkhapa (including narration of the founding and other events at Ganden), (2) enumeration of important prophecies, (3) explanation of the site's special topographic features, and (4) description of Ganden's buildings and receptacles. To some degree, this structure has impacted the structure of this dissertation, with prophecy the focus of chapter three, Ganden's buildings and receptacles a focus of this chapter, and Ganden's topography the focus of chapter five.

The standardized nature of these presentations appears to reflect the style of pilgrimage guide literature, a genre which has been described as "formulaic."[507] This is most evident when one applies Hartmann's enumeration of recurring features of pilgrimage guide literature in Tibet to the case of Ganden. Put simply, Ganden's pilgrimage guide literature appears to check off the proverbial boxes for what pilgrims would expect to find described at such a site. Hartmann's enumeration contains numerous recurring features or common tropes used to describe holy sites in pilgrimage guide literature in Tibet. [508] The most relevant for this chapter include: a) supernatural beings, b) associations with previous masters and advanced practitioners, and c) narrative framing.

Narrative Framing, Associations with Previous Masters, and Supernatural Beings

One of the most important features of pilgrimage guides to Ganden is what Hartmann calls "narrative framing," the telling of "stories about the pilgrimage place, the things that have happened there, and the people…who have been there."[509] A narrative frame "[gives] life and dynamism to the features of the pilgrimage site, stirring emotions and encouraging pilgrims to imagine these things taking place in the setting around them…shaping pilgrims'

[507] Charles Ramble, "The Complexity of Tibetan Pilgrimage," in *Searching for the Dharma, Finding Salvation, Buddhist Pilgrimage in Time and Space: Proceedings of the Workshop "Buddhist Pilgrimage in History and Present Times" at the Lumbini International Research Institute (LIRI), Lumbini, 11-13 January 2010*. LIRI Seminar Proceedings Series; v. 5, eds. Christoph Cueppers and Max Deeg (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2014), 194, quoted in Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 280. Elsewhere, Buffetrille makes much the same point, stating that "most pilgrimage guides follow the same plan." Buffetrille, "The Great Pilgrimage of A-myes rma-chen," 89.

[508] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 290-322.

[509] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 308.

experiences."[510] Notably, narrative framing is not a feature found in every pilgrimage guide.[511] However, narrative framing is particularly important for a monastery such as Ganden because a monastery—as opposed to a natural site such as a mountain—is made a worthy site of pilgrimage by virtue of its discursive construction. Rather than being a site well-known for its pre-existing numinous power, it was largely Ganden's association with Tsongkhapa—an association popularized via narrative framing—that made the site what it is.

According to Hartmann, there are two broad categories of narrative: 1) stories that are unique to the site, and 2) retellings of well-known stories.[512] In the case of Ganden, it is stories unique to the site that are primary. Unlike many other pilgrimage sites in Tibet, which are popularized as sites visited by Padmasambhava, Ganden is chiefly associated with the deeds and charismatic presence of prominent Geluk figures such as Tsongkhapa, his senior disciples, and the Ganden Tripas.[513]

Along with the charismatic presence of Geluk figures, Ganden is also the site of supernatural beings. Pilgrimage sites in Tibet are understood as liminal places where the distinction between the ordinary and divine worlds breaks down, and where supernatural

[510] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 312.

[511] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 308.

[512] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 308.

[513] As Hartmann writes: "Each site, no matter how seemingly insignificant, seems to have been visited by Padmasambhava, to be beautiful and surrounded by self-arisen phenomena, and to be 'equivalent to Tsari and Kailash.'" The latter two are true for Ganden, but there is no explicit connection with Padmasambhava to the site. Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 280. 305- Pilgrimage guides often take particular care to note the yogis or masters who have practiced at that site. Said practice serves as both recognition of the site's already-existing good qualities and that it also augments the site's qualities, leaving blessings in which future pilgrims can partake. The place, then, becomes a point to access the powers of the place in a way that the absent master did, materially visible via handprints, footprints, or body prints in the rock.

beings are present, either to partake of the site's blessings or as formerly harmful autochthonous forces that have been subdued.[514] In particular, it is both Geluk lamas and the class of protector deities at Ganden that are considered to have the power to subdue these harmful spirits. Thus, one major benefit of visiting Ganden is receiving the blessings of Geluk lamas such as Tsongkhapa, as well as to propitiate these protector deities.

Ganden Monastery as a Pilgrimage Site

According to the *Annals of Ganden*, "the primary buildings [at Ganden] are: 1) the Great Assembly Hall (*tshogs chen*),[515] 2) the Golden Stūpa House (*gser gdung khang*), 3) Yangpachen (*yangs pa can*) [Temple], 4) the Tripa House (*khri thog khang*), 5) Ngamchö Khang (*lnga mchod khang*),[516] 6) the Jangtsé Hermitage (*byang rtse ri khrod*),[517] 7) the two colleges (*grwa tshang gnyis*), 8) the twenty-three *khangtsen* (*khang tshan*), and 9) the two tantric temples (*rgyud khang*).[518] To these, several sources such as the *Abridged Guidebook* add Tsongkhapa's practice hut (*sgrub khang*), a printing house (*par khang*), a debate

[514] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 247, 301-2.

[515] This building was constructed during the reign of Miwang Pholhawa, and "earlier was the location of a garden where [Tsongkhapa] gave dharma teachings." Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 163.

[516] This was the old assembly hall prior to the construction of the great assembly hall. Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 162. According to Purchok, this building used to house Tsongkhapa's "light-emitting tooth" (tshems 'od zer ma), which would produce many ringsel and forms of Mañjuśrī spontaneously. Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 24.

[517] Also called the Jangtsé Apartment (byang rtse'i gzim khang) by Purchok. Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 24. According to the *Annals of Ganden*, this was Khedrubjé's apartment and stands at the border of Jangtsé and Shartsé at the highest elevation of the monastery. *Annals of Ganden*, 23.

[518] *Dga' ldan dgon pa dang brag yer pa'i lo rgyus*, 16.

courtyard, and enumerations of the *khangtsen* and *mitsen*.[519] In addition, the Great Assembly Hall contains the Golden Throne Room (*gser khri khang*), which contains Tsongkhapa's throne, originally made from earth and then later covered with gilded copper.[520] Yangpachen Temple is Ganden's main temple and contains numerous important chapels. One of these, the central chapel (*gtsang khang*), contains an important statue of the Buddha Marajit, also known as Thubwang Tsultrima (*thub dbang tshul khrims ma*) because Tsongkhapa's consecration led it to propagate the proverbial scent of ethics (*tshul khrims*); more on this statue below.[521] Another important one is the Protector Room (*mgon khang*).[522] To these can be added the Three Dimensional Mandala Shrine (*blo bslang lha khang*), the Bronze Shrine (*li ma lha khang*), the New Shrine (*gsar ma lha khang*), the Lama Shrine (*bla ma lha khang*), the Sugata Shrine (*bde gshegs lha khang*), the Upper Lama Shrine (*steng gi bla ma lha khang*), and the Maitreya Room (*byams khang*). A study of all of these structures and their contents is far beyond the scope of this chapter. Instead, I'll proceed through some of the major narratives, supernatural beings, power objects, and associations with previous masters that are important for pilgrims at Ganden.

[519] For information on what these are and how they came about, see Cabezón and Dorjee, *Sera Monastery*, 197-204.

[520] *Dga' ldan dgon pa dang brag yer pa'i lo rgyus*, 17.

[521] *Annals of Ganden*, 20. On the scent of ethics, see 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 31. Incidentally, Purchok also asserts that Tsongkhapa generated as the yidam-deity after being installed in his reliquary stūpa, and that "the scent of [pure] ethics spread out for many *yojanas*." Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 9.

[522] Purchok also names it the Black [Room] (*gnag*), the [Room of] Great Majesty and Splendor (*brjid pa zil che*), or the [Room for] Trials for Goodness (? *bzang por dka' ba*). Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 18. Alternatively, it is called the Chögyel Khang (chos rgyal mkhang) after Damchen Chögyel, for instance in *Annals of Ganden*, 20.

Given that one of the main draws of a Tibetan pilgrimage site is for visitors "to share in the blessing that resides in that site or object," Ganden Monastery's primary attraction is that it is the site of Tsongkhapa's magical activities and charismatic presence.[523] Put simply, if a pilgrimage site is best understood as the abode of a deity, then Tsongkhapa is that deity for Ganden.[524] And as attested by multiple sources, the main attraction for pilgrims at Ganden is Tsongkhapa's golden *stūpa*, housed in the Golden Stūpa House and containing Tsongkhapa's material remains.[525] To summarize, his disciples decided to inter Tsongkhapa's entire body in a reliquary *stūpa* at Ganden (and not to cremate it), as it would have "great benefit for the continuity of the teachings."[526] Unfortunately, the specifics of how this body was treated so as to remain "undisturbed" are unclear.[527] But the later Geluk author

[523] Yamamoto, *Vision and Violence: Lama Zhang and the Politics of Charisma in Twelfth-Century Tibet*, 108.

[524] Toni Huber defines pilgrimage as translations of the Tibetan phrases *gnas skor* (going around an abode [of a deity]) and *gnas mjal* (meeting an abode [of a deity]. Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 13.

[525] According to Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo ('Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 1820-1892), "[at Ganden] there are countless symbols of the planes, foremost among which the globe-shaped relics of rJe Rin po che." MK'yen brtse, Alfonsa Ferrari, and Luciano Petech, *MK'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet* (Roma: Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), 43. According to L. A. Waddell, "the chief object of veneration [at Ganden] is the grand tomb of [Tsongkhapa]," within which "are the embalmed remains of the great reformer, disposed in sitting attitude." L. Austine Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism* (London: W. H. Allen & Co., Limited, 1895), 268. According to Giuseppe Tucci, "[Ganden] is held in high esteem on account of its strictness in keeping the rules, and chiefly because Tsongkhapa died there and his mortal remains are kept in the convent." Tucci, *To Lhasa and Beyond*, 140. And according to Charles Bell: "[Tsongkhapa's tomb is in his own Gan-den Monastery, and the fact that he lived there and is entombed there gives Gan-den…an added sanctity which even its great brothers Se-ra and Dre-pung cannot claim." Bell, *The Religion of Tibet*, 99.

[526] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 136.

[527] Thupten Jinpa refers to it simply as an "embalmed body." Jinpa, *Tsongkhapa*, 327. In a broader study of the use of embalming salt and mummification in the Geluk tradition, Kurtis Schaeffer also views the treatment of Tsongkhapa's remains as an instance of mummification and a precursor to the practice in the case of the fifth Dalai Lama and first Panchen Lama. Kurtis R. Schaeffer, "Salt and the Sovereignty of the Dalai Lama," in *Images, Relics, and Legends: The Formation and Transformation of Buddhist Sacred Sites*, ed. James Benn, Jinhua Chen, and James Robson (Oakville: Mosaic Press, 2012), 298–322. However, if Tsongkhapa's body was mummified in a traditional way (for instance, by using embalming methods such as salt and the removal of his internal organs), it's curious why there is no historical record of any embalming methods or products, which would presumably have been preserved as types of relic themselves.

Desi Sangyé Gyatso describes it as a way of preserving a corpse as a "whole body" (*sku gdung ril po*).[528] And as Shaeffer writes, "the beneficial results of preserving Tsongkhapa's body at the monastery for which the new movement came to be known are, according to Sangyé Gyatso, obvious: one simply has to look at the success of the Gandenpa in the intervening centuries."[529]

For hundreds of years, Tsongkhapa's remains were sealed away from prying eyes.[530] However, during the ferment of the Cultural Revolution, Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* was forced open and his remains cremated.[531] Ever since, narratives have circulated among devotees that Tsongkhapa's body had remained perfectly preserved for over five hundred years, with his hair and fingernails continuing to grow.[532] Along with this quality of animation, Khedrub Jé writes that Tsongkhapa's disciples had requested Tsongkhapa to "remain without decay," suggesting that Tsongkhapa's body possessed a level of agency in choosing to remain in a

[528] Desi cites passages from the *Bhadrakalpika*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, and *Ekottarakarmaśataka* in defence of this practice. Apparently this was a matter of controversy, as Taktsang Lotsāwa offered a criticism of the practice that led some to believe that placing a master's body—or his relics—within a stūpa could prove harmful to that master. Schaeffer, "Salt and the Sovereignty of the Dalai Lama," 302-303.

[529] Schaeffer, "Salt and the Sovereignty of the Dalai Lama," 304.

[530] According to Snellgrove and Richardson, curiosity about the status of Tsongkhapa's body was shared by the thirteenth Dalai Lama: "The tomb at dGa'-ldan (Ganden) containing [Tsongkhapa's] embalmed body is one of the treasures of his order and is guarded so scrupulously by the Abbot of dGa'-ldan that even the thirteenth Dalai Lama was not allowed to look inside it, although he sought an opportunity on the pretext of regilding the tomb." Snellgrove and Richardson, *A Cultural History of Tibet*, 182. My thanks to Julia Hirsch for bringing this reference to my attention.

[531] For one brief account of this event, see Arjia Rinpoche, *Surviving the Dragon: A Tibetan Lama's Account of 40 Years Under Chinese Rule* (New York: Rodale Press, Inc., 2010), *155*.

[532] According to Arjia Rinpoche "When [the Red Guards and positivist monks] pried open the golden stupa where the body of Lama Tsong Khapa was enshrined, they saw the Master's gray hair draped to the floor. His hands were crossed in the dharmawheel mudra and his fingernails had grown so much that they were wrapped around his shoulders. Awestruck by the scene, even the revolutionary rebels dared not touch anything." Arjia Rinpoche, Surviving the Dragon, *155*. A brief reference is also found in Thurman 2018: 33.

perfectly preserved fashion.[533] Both of these qualities point to the nature of Tsongkhapa's body as both the preeminent power object for the Geluk tradition and the primary pilgrimage attraction at Ganden.

The narrative framing of Tsongkhapa's passing plays a major role in the portrayal of Tsongkhapa's remains as a charismatic object. These events are described for pilgrims within brief biographical accounts of Tsongkhapa's enlightenment that are found in the pilgrimage guide literature. Although there are slight variations in detail, here is a synthetic account of what they describe:

a) *Abridged Guidebook*: on the morning of the 25th day of the 10th month of the Earth Pig year (1419), Tsongkhapa set his feet in the vajra posture, brought his two hands together, and meditated single-pointedly on his tutelary deity. Having done so, just after sunrise the [first] three empties dissolved sequentially, and then the all-empty, the clear light, the ultimate truth manifested;[534]

b) *Abridged Guidebook*: at this time, the movement of the gross winds within his nostrils dissolved inside [the central channel] and his complexion became duller;[535]

c) *Shartsé History II*: at that time, his son-like disciples made supplications with anguished tones, [and the words] "I am here" arose spontaneously; an image of [Tsongkhapa]—about the size of a person—resides in the apartment and is known as a "talking image" (*gsung byon ma*);[536]

d) *Abridged Guidebook*: suddenly, Tsongkhapa's body became luminous, with his flesh dissolving and becoming congealed, becoming a luminous aggregate that was unbearable to look at…with the divine body of Youthful Mañjuśrī;[537] in addition, according to Purchok's *Garland*: at this time Tsongkhapa arose "as a *jñānakāya* adorned with the major and minor marks.;"[538]

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[533] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 136.

[534] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 15.

[535] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 15.

[536] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 155.

[537] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 15-16.

[538] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 8.

e) *Purchok's Garland*: wondrous and inconceivable omens arose, such as a shower of flowers, a rainbow, the resounding of divine cymbals, and so forth;[539]

f) *Purchok's Garland*: arising from his clear-light [meditation], he remains as a whole body for the benefit of the teachings and of transmigrators;[540]

g) *Shartsé History II*: Tsongkhapa's disciples conferred over whether his bodily remains should be cremated or left to remain without deteriorating; they decided to request for the bodily remains to reside without deteriorating as it would have enormous benefits for the continuity of the teachings;[541]

h) *Purchok's Garland*: within the bulb of a "*stūpa* of victory" made from eighteen large *bre* of silver and adorned with marvelous inlaid jewels, the precious remains were installed in a sandalwood casket dressed in a lower robe (*snam sbyar*); not deteriorating whatsoever, it resides as an excellent field of merit for all gods and men.[542]

As I will describe further in the next chapter, this narrative framing is what undergirds the claim that Ganden Monastery's secret aspect is as the site of Tsongkhapa's enlightenment or his pure land. According to these accounts, we learn that Tsongkhapa attained enlightenment at the time of his passing, that a magical speaking image arose at this time, that supernatural omens arose, that Tsongkhapa chose to remain in a state of meditation in order to be of benefit, that his disciples requested him to remain without deteriorating, and that his imperishable remains were interred as a field of merit for all beings. The takeaway is that Tsongkhapa is an enlightened being whose charismatic power is *still present* at Ganden, most

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[539] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 8.

[540] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 9. Reading *sku ril por bzhugs pa* for *sku ril bur bzhugs pa*. Alternatively, Purchok may be making a poetic allusion to Tsongkhapa's body as a kind of "medicinal pill" (*ril bu*) in its own right due to its salvific effects.

[541] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 156.

[542] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 9.

notably in his reliquary *stūpa* but also in other forms, such as the talking image in his apartment. Notably, Jamyang Shepa states that this image is also known as Öserma (*'od zer ma*) because light rays would emanate from it on auspicious dates or when former Dalai and Panchen Lamas would visit. In fact, light rays would emanate from both this image and Tsongkhapa's *stūpa*, thus indicating that "their blessings are akin to [Tsongkhapa] himself!"[543] In a similar vein, Purchok writes that "having [Tsongkhapa's body] remain intact would not be different at all from having [Tsongkhapa] himself residing."[544] For those in the know, this statement invokes Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecy that the monastery should be named Ganden as an auspicious sign akin to Tsongkhapa himself residing. This narrative framing—incorporating Tsongkhapa's biography, Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecy, and the materiality of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa*—all played a key role in how Tsongkhapa's reliquary *stūpa* became the most important pilgrimage attraction at Ganden. As Jamyang Shepa puts it, "since [Tsongkhapa] became enlightened [here]…it is a supreme abode worshipped by gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, men, *gandharvas*, and so forth as a Great Vajrāsana of the Land of Snow."[545] As the site of Tsongkhapa's enlightenment, Ganden is equivalent to Bodh Gāyā itself, and visiting Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* confers equal blessings to seeing Tsongkhapa himself.

In keeping with this status, the pilgrimage guides take pains to describe the large amounts of devotional attention paid to Tsongkhapa's body and *stūpa* over the years. It was first placed in a casket made of sandalwood and installed in a reliquary *stūpa* made of silver

[543] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 34. Jamyang Shepa also describes this image as a likeness (*'dra sku*) of Tsongkhapa.

[544] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 14.

[545] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 30.

and inlaid with various jewels.[546] It was consecrated by the remaining seven of the "eightfold pure retinue," who Jamyang Shepa describes as having produced extraordinary realizations and were thus able to perform "an amazing consecration" that led to the *stūpa* becoming known as the "silver *stūpa*, meaningful to see."[547] For this reason, Jamyang Shepa poetically describes it as a "jewel for all beings, whose name, form, and abode carry blessings."[548]

In addition, "a very large and elegant temple was newly erected" to house the *stūpa* and when Tsongkhapa's remains were installed in the temple, the gods themselves made offerings as "the sky was filled with a rainbow and the heavens were filled by a shower of flowers."[549] Originally known as the "precious silver reliquary *stūpa*" (*dngul gdung rin po che*) in the "Silver Stūpa House" (*dngul gdung khang*), it was later covered with gold by the fiftieth Ganden Tripa (r. 1715-1722), with the building then becoming known as the "Golden Stūpa House" (*gser gdung khang*) housing the "precious golden reliquary *stūpa*" (*gser gdung rin po che*).[550] The first Panchen Lama Losang Chöki Gyeltsen (Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1570-1662) had a gilded copper Chinese pagoda roof built "as a crown", and the

[546] "A large funerary *stūpa* was erected. It was made from about eighteen large *bre* of silver (offered with faith by individuals), and it was adorned with various fine jewels inlaid on it. The remains were dressed well with lower robes (*snam sbyar*), placed into a casket made solely of sandalwood, and installed within the *stūpa's* bulb." Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith,* 136.

[547] *Dngul gdung mthong ba don ldan*. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 32-33.

[548] *Ming don gnas kyi byin rlabs kyi skye dgu'i nor bu*. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 33.

[549] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 136-37.

[550] *Annals of Ganden*, 18-19. For more details on this, see Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 157-58.

thirteenth Dalai Lama had a gate-house built and performed restorations.[551] Tsongkhapa's disciples offered a Chinese tent made of yellow silk (*gos ser ma*) received from the ruler of the Ming Dynasty.[552] Lastly, Lhasang Khan established an endowment which offered "weekly offerings of lamps and wicks in front of the precious silver *stūpa* for as long as the night lasts."[553]

Although there are no standardized accounts for how a typical pilgrim would interact with the *stūpa*, it is likely that the standard Buddhist devotional program of prostrations, offerings, and circumambulations was operative at Ganden.[554] For instance, the author of *Shartsé History I* reports that it was precisely "when [he] was moved to make offerings to the precious golden *stūpa*" that his teacher requested him to write that history.[555] Similarly, *Purchok's Garland* reports that the political ruler Pholhané Sönam Topgyé made physical offerings and an offering of practice to Tsongkhapa's *stūpa*, and as a result, a miraculous shower of flowers fell and the ruler experienced a "stream of nectar." This led the ruler to gain conviction in the Gelukpa and to offer both an endowment to support summer retreatants and a golden pagoda roof to the building housing Tsongkhapa's throne.[556] In a

[551] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 37. Alternatively, Yeshé Gyeltsen credits Khedrubjé with offering the golden pagoda roof. Ye shes rgyal mtshan, *Lam rim bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, 431.

[552] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 158-59.

[553] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 26.

[554] For instance, Purchok writes: "If one accomplishes all prosperity and well-being for this life and the next / By merely seeing, hearing, or remembering this abode, /[Then,] by abiding here and prostrating, offering, and circumambulating / It is certain one will effortlessly accomplish the twin benefits." Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 26.

[555] Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartsé History I*, 124.

[556] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 24. The offering of practice was "generation of the spirit [of awakening]" (*sems skyed*). The conviction gained was (T: *shes nas dad pa*, S: *avetya-prasāda*), a kind of

similar vein, the fourteenth Dalai Lama reports that when he made prostrations to Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* in 1958, he was moved nearly to tears.[557] These narratives indicate not only the importance of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* as an object of devotion, but that it was perceived as having the ability to have real-world effects (such as miraculous showers of flowers), and that interacting with it had the ability to elicit faith and material offerings.

When devotees would visit the Golden Stūpa House, they would also encounter a number of other objects. Some of these were mundane objects from Tsongkhapa's life, such as his alms bowl and teacup. Such items were likely considered forms of "contact relic," a type of Buddhist relic that consists of "objects that the Buddha owned or used or with which he was closely associated."[558] Others were miraculous objects in Tsongkhapa's possession, such as the horn of a *dzo* (a cross-breed of a male yak and a female cow) on which the Twenty-One Tārās spontaneously manifested at Tsongkhapa's request.[559] Another miraculous object is Tsongkhapa's tooth, which is housed in a *stūpa* and spontaneously transformed into an image of Mañjuśrī when Tsongkhapa attained "mother clear light" while he was passing away.[560] All of these objects invoke Tsongkhapa's charismatic presence for

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conviction that is more than faith and born from understanding or experience. Tsongkhapa's throne will be described further below.

[557] "One day [in 1958] I was in front of Lama Tsongkhapa's tomb in Ganden, during my free time…I was alone and I made some prostrations in front of his tomb. I felt so moved, I felt like crying. It was some sort of very special feeling." Laird, *The Story of Tibet*, 126.

[558] John S. Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 8.

[559] An image and the following caption are found in the front matter of Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*. The caption reads: *rje bla ma'i gsol mdzo ma'i dbu rwar sgrol ma nyer gcig gi rang byon 'khrungs pa*. My translation is tentative and further details about this object are unknown to me.

[560] Incidentally, one function of the narrative of Tsongkhapa's tooth appears to have been to allow for the production of relics from Tsongkhapa's body, a function that was precluded by the installation of Tsongkhapa's whole body in a *stūpa*. According to Cabezón, the tooth is still visible today and monks take little bits of barley

pilgrims, whether through objects he used or owned in his own life, or his own miraculous body part.

Another major concern in the Golden Stūpa House is with lineage. As discussed in the first three chapters, Lhodrak Drubchen was a towering figure in the history of the early Geluk tradition. This lineage is invoked in this house by the presence of a five-spoked vajra offered to Tsongkhapa by Lhodrak Drubchen, a symbol for the proverbial passing of the torch between these two *lamas* in central Tibet. And with regard to all these objects (such as Tsongkhapa's tooth, the horn of the *dzo*, or the vajra) the *Abridged Guidebook* asserts that "if one contacts the blessings of these objects, it is taught that one will not be harmed by the malevolent influence of men or [spirits]."[561] Thus, these power objects are described as both possessing blessings and as having the power to exercise a kind of agency that prevents one from being harmed by men and spirits. In a similar vein, the lineage of the *jéyabsé* is invoked by the presence of three life-size images of the *jéyabsé*, made from medicinal herbs/grass and mud by the fifth Ganden Tripa.[562] And on the walls of the interior are written the names of the lineage of lamas of the *lamrim* tradition.[563] Such images and invocations of names would have helped popularize these lineages for devotees visiting Tsongkhapa's *stūpa*.

Along with these objects, the most important items housed in the Golden Stūpa House are reliquary *stūpas* for the seven Ganden Tripas following Tsongkhapa. In general, there is a

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dough, press it onto the tooth, and distribute these to pilgrims, who value them a great deal. Cabezón, email to author, February 25, 2022.

[561] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 38.

[562] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 37.

[563] *Annals of Ganden*, 19.

tradition of housing the reliquary *stūpas* for all of the Ganden Tripas at Ganden.[564] And next to Tsongkhapa, pride of place was given to the first seven Ganden Tripas after him, who are also known as the "lineage of seven Tsangpa Mañjughoṣas" in line with the prophecy of Lhodrak Drubchen.[565]

Although today the Ganden Tripas have been eclipsed in stature by other Geluk lineages such as the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, the early Ganden Tripas were important charismatic figures in their own right. For instance, the pilgrimage guide for the central Tibetan monastery of Ölka Dzingchi includes "part of the nails and other things of the ['seven Tsangpa Mañjughoṣas']" among its list of bodily relics installed within statues.[566] Notably, this list also includes bodily relics of notable Indian masters such as Śāntarakṣita, as well as charismatic Tibetan figures such as the second Dalai Lama, Lhodrak Drubchen, and

[564] When those who have acted as Ganden Tripa pass away, there is a tradition of erecting silver reliquary *stūpas* at Ganden Monastery for each of them. Some Tripas who are from the monasteries of [Sera] and [Drepung] do not just have silver *stūpas* at Ganden. A silver *stūpa* could also be erected at their college at [Sera] or [Drepung] or in their respective Great Assembly Halls." *Annals of Ganden*, 56. In general, Hartmann describes Buddhist pilgrimage as a practice involving pilgrimage both to a site where important Buddhist events have occurred and where memorial *stūpas* (containing relics) are present; Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 54. Although Hartmann is referring specifically to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* and to important events in the historical Buddha's life and the historical Buddha's reliquary *stūpas*, she concludes that these are two general features of Buddhist pilgrimage practice.

[565] On Tsongkhapa's right are *stūpas* for the second Ganden Tripa Gyeltsab Jé, the fourth Ganden Tripa Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen, the fifth Ganden Tripa Lodrö Chökyong (Blo gros chos skyong, 1389-1463), the sixth Ganden Tripa Baso Chöki Gyeltsen (Ba so chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1402-1473), and the eighth Ganden Tripa Mönlam Pelwa (Smon lam dpal ba). On Tsongkhapa's left are stūpas for the third Ganden Tripa Khedrub Jé and the seventh Ganden Tripa Lodrö Tenpa (Blo gros brtan pa, 1402-1476). Among others, also present is a *stūpa* for Hortön Namkha Pelwa (Hor ston nam mkha' dpal ba, 1373-1447), the founder of Ganden Jangtsé college. Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 37-38.

[566] Bodily relics (*sku gdung gi ring bsrel*) are one of the major types of relic found in various relic classificatory schemes. For more, see Yael Bentor, "Tibetan Relic Classifications," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Fagernes, 1992.* (Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1992), 16–30.

Tsongkhapa himself.[567] For this reason, these figures are lionized in the pilgrimage guide literature. For instance, Jamyang Shepa describes Gyeltsab Jé and Khedrub Jé as the Kālacakra Rigden Puṇḍarīka and Mañjuśrīkīrti respectively.[568] He praises the fourth Ganden Tripa Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen as "a mighty lord (*mthu stobs dbang phyug*), a counteragent to every misfortune (*ma rung ba mtha' dag gi gnyen po*), one who is no different from Śrī Guhyapati and Vajrabhairava."[569] The sixth Ganden Tripa Basö Chöki Gyeltsen is also described as "having produced the profound *samādhi* of bliss-emptiness."[570]

The charismatic status of the Seven Tsangpa Mañjughoṣas is also indicated by material objects connected to them at Ganden. Some of these include personal religious objects used by them. For instance, Jamyang Shepa's *Catalog* reports that the Golden Stūpa House also houses personal practice items (*thugs dam gyi rten*) belonging to the *jeyabsé.* According to Jamyang Shepa, Tsongkhapa's is a statue of Mañjughoṣa Riding a Lion (*'jam dbyangs seng zhon ma*) "which is marvelously ornamented and most distinctive." There are also two statues of Cakrasaṃvara (*bde mchog dpung sku*) that belonged to Gyeltsabjé and Khedrubjé known as "the Indian one" (rgya gar ma) and "the Chinese one" (rgya nag ma) respectively. [571]

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[567] Federica Venturi, *Guide to the Rdzing Phyi Monastery* (Roma: Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente, 2002), 71-72.

[568] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 34. A Rigden (rigs ldan) is ruler of Śambhala according to the Kālacakra Tantra.

[569] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 35.

[570] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 35.

[571] The meaning of *dpung* in this context and the provenance of these statues is uncertain. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 34.

Their *stūpas* also contain bodily relics from their cremations. For instance, Jamyang Shepa reports that Gyeltsabjé's *stūpa* contains numerous crystal-like *ringsel* (*ring bsrel shel lta bu*) that appeared when he was cremated.[572] Arising during Khedrubjé's cremation, his *stūpa* contains both numerous five-colored *ringsel* and a statue of Cakrasaṃvara (according to Ghaṇṭāpa's tradition) that "one would never tire of viewing."[573] Similarly, the cremation of the fourth Ganden Tripa Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen resulted in a statue of Vajrabhairava, complete with face and hands, that arose from the crystallization (*zhun thigs*) of his brain (*dbu klad*)![574] The presence of these objects and relics in the Golden Stūpa House, and their descriptions in the pilgrimage guide literature, emphasize for pilgrims the charismatic presence of Tsongkhapa's most important disciples at his side and make the temple a place saturated with their charismatic presence.

The charisma of the Ganden Tripas is also indicated by narrative descriptions contained in the pilgrimage guide literature. For instance, another way of understanding the importance of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* is via narratives where enemies of the tradition targeted it for aggression.[575] One of the most dramatic events during the early history of Ganden were a series of incursions by the forces of Tsang into Ü in the latter decades of the fifteenth century. The first such incursion took place in 1480, at which time the statue of Damchen

[572] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 34.

[573] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 35.

[574] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 35.

[575] According to Tucci, a Tsang force also set out to destroy Ganden in 1537. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, vol. one, 44. In the seventeenth century, the Bön ruler Beri Dönyö sought to destroy all three seats: Ganden, Sera, and Drepung. The Association of Geluk Masters, The Geluk International Foundation, and The Association for the Preservation of Geluk Monasticism, *Understanding the Case Against Shukden: The History of a Contested Tibetan Practice*, trans. Gavin Kilty (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2019), 28.

Chögyel—the chief protector of the Geluk tradition whose statue is situated in the Protector House in Ganden's Yangpachen Temple—is said to have uttered a roar at this time.[576] The narrative continues that "its tongue cracked during an episode related to the Dépa of Ne'u," likely a reference to the capitulation of the long-time patrons of the Gelukpa—the lords of Ne'u—to the forces of Tsang at this time.[577] According to Jamyang Shepa, one of these took place when the leader of the Yargyab noble house (Yar rgyab pa) engaged in three military offensives to take the Chinese silk awning that had been offered to Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* by Jamchen Chöjé.[578] In this time of desperation, abandoned by their longtime political allies, the eighth Ganden Tripa Mönlam Pelwa is said to have countered these offensives using the magical rites, or great torma, of the Protector Six-Armed Mahākāla, forcing the army to turn back on two occasions.[579] According to the author of *Shartsé History I*, this event also led to the eventual decline of the authority of the Rinpungpa.[580]

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[576] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 162. He is also the protector of the great scope individual in the lamrim tradition and is one of the major protectors of the tantric colleges.

[577] As Sørensen, Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo write: "[The success of chos rgyal Don yod rdo rje] in lHa-sa itself no least was the outcome of the shift in allegiance on the side of the sNe'u-pa at lHa-sa – and opportunely of the Brag-dkar-pa too – who, once defeated or coerced, proved willing to comply with the wishes of the new strong force in Tibet. Aside from marking a turning-point in the narrow network of local secular rule in the lHa-sa area, to the dGe-lugs-pa this volte face of their traditional allies and long-time patrons was regarded as an act of betrayal." Sørensen, Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 500-02 and n. 167.

[578] This is the same Chinese tent made of yellow silk (*gos ser ma*) mentioned earlier and received from the ruler of the Ming Dynasty. For a description of these events, see Czaja, *Medieval Rule in Tibet*, 235-37.

[579] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 36. A work by the fifth Dalai Lama also describes this event as follows: "(However), because the learned master of tantric achievement (*siddheśvara*), the All-Knowing sMon-Lam dPal, performed the *Karma-yoga* of the six-armed Mahākāla, with large sacrificial offerings, the army, for some reason or other, had to retreat twice from the great seat of [Ganden]." Ṅag-dBaṅ Blo-bZaṅ rGya-mTSHo, *A History of Tibet*, 163.

[580] Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartsé History I*, 42.

Notably, this narrative argues for the magical power of a power object (possessing agency and animation), an enlightened protector, and a Geluk lama working in unison. As such, along with describing the charisma of Geluk figures, these pilgrimage guides are also interested in describing the supernatural beings at the site. Among these, one of the most important categories of which are the protectors, who act to pacify inimical forces, defeat enemies and spirits, and bring prosperity.[581] In his description of the Protector Room at Ganden, Purchok writes: "since the *yidam*-deities and the mundane and supramundane attendant-deities are always circling, varieties of miracles actually arise here. It resembles the great charnel-ground of Śītavana."[582] Just as Jamyang Shepa had linked Ganden to Bodh Gayā, here Purchok likens the Protector Room to śītavana, located near Bodh Gayā and one of the "eight great charnel grounds" that are the favored haunts of supernatural beings. In doing so, both authors seek to bolster Ganden's status as a sacred place by linking it with sacred places in India.

One of the main protectors of the Geluk tradition is Damchen Chögyel, considered a wrathful form of Mañjuśrī.[583] As a result, descriptions of his miraculous activities at Ganden are common in the pilgrimage guide literature. During the lifetime of Tsongkhapa, Damchen Chögyel is reputed to have taken the form of a man and been present in Tsongkhapa's

[581] Christopher Bell, "Nechung: The Ritual History and Institutionalization of a Tibetan Buddhist Protector Deity" (PhD Diss., University of Virginia, 2013), 315.

[582] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 18.

[583] However, a local narrative in Brag dkar also describes a local wrathful deity named Damchen (with horns on his head) who was later tamed by Tsongkhapa and made the protector of Ganden. Per K. Sørensen, Guntram Hazod, and Tsering Gyalbo, *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, 209, n. 13.

retinue, carrying out Tsongkhapa's commands like his servant.[584] However, Damchen Chögyel is also said to have the ability to enter and leave his statue in the Protector House at Ganden. Like many other phenomena at Ganden, this statue is said to have arisen in a spontaneous fashion.[585] It is also said to have been animate, with the author of *Shartsé History* II reporting that "within our own recollections, sometimes the statue would move to the rear, the front, the right or the left. In terms of how it appeared to the eye, it would change again and again. It is an actual and 'moving *jñānasattva'* (*'gro ba'i ye shes pa*) that resides [there]."[586] These anecdotes indicate that Damchen Chögyel—qua enlightened protector of the Gelukpa—was considered an active and ongoing presence at Ganden. It is for this reason that this statue was described by Waddell as a major object of veneration for every visitor to Ganden.[587]

Objects become holy for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they have come into contact with a holy person or even their bodily fluids. Within the Protector House, there is a mask of Six-Armed Mahākāla which was shaped by Khedrubjé's own hands from the dung of a *dzomo* that was requested by Tsongkhapa.[588] There is also a painted *tangka* of this

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[584] According to *Shartse History II*: "According to the oral tradition from our elders, Damchen Chögyel resided in the form of a man in the retinue of Jé Lama and he actually dissolved into that very image and was commanded to protect the teachings." Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas and Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartse History II*, 151. According to Khedrub Jé's *Secret Biography* of Tsongkhapa, "Both Yama Dharmarāja [i.e. Damchen] and the *yakṣa-kṣetrapālas* carried out Tsongkhapa's commands like servants." Dge legs dpal bzang, *Cluster of Precious Tales,* 193.

[585] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook,* 41.

[586] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 162.

[587] "A very old statue of Shinje, the lord of Death, is much reverenced here; every visitor presenting gifts and doing it infinite obeisance." Waddell, *The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism,* 268.

[588] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 164. It's unclear whether it was the *dzomo*, the dung, or the statue that was requested by Tsongkhapa.

protector's face that was painted with blood from Khedrubjé's nose.[589] The throne (*khri*) on which a golden statue of the Buddha Siṃhanāda sits in Yangpachen's central chapel is similarly holy. Erected and consecrated by the sixth Ganden Tripa Baso Chöki Gyeltsen, this statue's blessings are "equivalent to Conqueror Siṃhanāda's" himself. Notably, this throne is the same as that used by Tsongkhapa when he was performing his clear light meditation while he was passing away.[590] This indicates again the way in which the charisma of a Geluk lama can be transferred by contact, raising the charismatic appeal of a religious icon. However, just as this Buddha sits on a foundation blessed by its contact with Tsongkhapa, Purchok roots all of the various enlightened protectors at Ganden in Tsongkhapa's own extended personhood, writing "The Lord of Wisdom and Compassion Losang Drakpé Pel / Appears in the form of the various *yidam*-dharma-protectors."[591] Although all the charismatic beings and receptacles Ganden are powerful, and although the enlightened dharma-protectors possess awesome power, for Purchok their power is stems from Tsongkhapa's charismatic personhood.

Likewise, several deities and power objects at Ganden have their charisma and power grounded in a personal relationship to Tsongkhapa. As mentioned, the protector Damchen Chögyel carried out Tsongkhapa's commands like a servant. The protector Six-Armed Mahākāla also would communicate with Tsongkhapa, being the one who told Tsongkhapa to offer a crown to the Lhasa Jowo Rinpoché.[592] In a similar vein, the main icon of

[589] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 164. The image of Khedrubjé using his own blood to paint an image of the protector points to one potential meaning of the opaque term "Trials for the Good" as an epithet for the Protector Room.
[590] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 32.

[591] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 20.

[592] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartse History II*, 162-63.

Yangpachen's chapel is a gilded copper icon of the Buddha in his Marajit form (Thub pa bdud 'dul), also known as Thubpa Tsultrima, which "made prophecies to [Tsongkhapa] of everything, good or bad, which was going to happen."[593] Also, the important Geluk liturgy, *The Song of the Spring Queen*, arose when, after establishing Yangpachen Temple and its famous architectonic mandalas, Tsongkhapa had a vision of Cakrasaṃvara while performing *sādhana*, and "a group of ḍākinīs made offerings of songs of praise, and hearing this, the Lord himself committed [the song] to memory."[594] In one stroke, this narrative framing indicates the sanctity of the receptacles at Ganden, reminds pilgrims of Tsongkhapa's charismatic power to attract deities, and grounds this popular liturgy in Tsongkhapa's charisma.

In a similar vein, two of the holy objects at Ganden are said to have actually traveled there of their own accord! The first is the main support of the Maitreya Room, a "Maitreya whose Sight Grants Liberation" (*byams pa mthong grol ma*) made from gilded copper and said to have magically flown itself from India to Ganden.[595] The second is a speaking statue of Vajrayoginī which reportedly told the Drikung Chenga Chökyi Gyelpo, "I am going to be [Tsongkhapa's] personal support (*rten skal*)," leaving Drikung Monastery for Ganden.[596] Not

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[593] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 17.

[594] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 12-13.

[595] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 45. Further details about the provenance of this statue or about its trip from India are not elucidated. An image of this statue can be found in the front matter. According to *Shartsé History I*: "[During the reign of the Eighth Ganden Tripa,] there was an offering of the *yi dam* support of Gar mi yon tan g.yung drung from Yer ba sgrom, a statue of Maitreya—one of the four Maitreya brothers—indicated by [the iconography?] of the "blessings of its blazing rays of splendor" (*byin rlabs kyi gzi 'od 'bar ba*). There was also a grand Maitreya house made for it." Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartsé History I*, 42. For an alternative account and more details, see Federica Venturi, "Dzingchi," Tibet Heritage Fund, accessed February 25, 2023, https://www.tibetheritagefund.org/page/?r=88.

[596] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 25.

only does this narrative impress upon pilgrims the sanctity and power of the holy objects of Ganden—possessing both the venerable provenance of India or Drikung as well as the magical ability to fly or speak of their own volition—it also indicates Tsongkhapa's supremacy as the heir of the six yogas of Nāropa and Ganden as the successor of both Indian Buddhism and of the monastery of Drikung."

Another way of impressing upon pilgrims the charismatic power of Geluk figures is via narratives concerning non-enlightened supernatural beings. Some of these are benign narratives of offerings made by supernatural beings. For instance, the Nāga King Anavatapta is said to have offered the white conch that was prophesied to have been buried at the site of Ganden by the Buddha's disciple Maudgalaputra, and then discovered by Tsongkhapa himself.[597] In a similar vein, the *Annals of Ganden* reports that there were 108 springs in the upper part of the valley in which Ganden is situated that "were offered in the manner of a water-offering to [Tsongkhapa] himself by the Nāga King."[598] Intriguingly, Hazod has tentatively linked the mountain on which Ganden is situated with the home of the Nāga King Anavatapta, a site that was identified by Kongjo as the site of "hostile forces" (*sa dgra*) which should be pacified by a right-turning conch.[599] And in a similar vein, Tsongkhapa's golden throne is described as being covered by "an umbrella whose handle was made from

[597] Incidentally, Purchok reports that this white conch became one of the main objects of worship at Drepung after it was given by Tsongkhapa to Jamyang Chöjé Tashi Pelden, the founder of Drepung. "It being prophesied that [Geluks would] 'come to prefer the son to the mother monastery,' (*dgon ma las bu dga' ba 'ong bar*) due to the auspicious condition of [possessing] this prophesied and extraordinary dharma-conch, all the scholar-adepts of Jambudvīpa and all Buddhists and resources gathered at this [monastery] like rivers into a great ocean." Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 43.

[598] *Annals of Ganden*, 3.

[599] Hazod, "The Ruins of lDan," 26.

the sandalwood 'snake essence' *(sbrul gyi snying po*) that was offered by a *nāga*."[600] Indicating again Tsongkhapa's magical power, the silk fringe of this umbrella was not tarnished by stains, filth, or dust even after the passing of many years.[601] In one stroke, such narratives indicate Tsongkhapa's power over autochthonous forces, the magical nature of objects at Ganden, and intriguingly, Tsongkhapa's flirtation with Treasure-finding activity, the preeminent deed of the Nyingma saint.

However, other narratives concerning supernatural beings are far from benign. These are narratives in which harmful spirits are violently subdued, proving that Geluk lamas and protectors have power over supernatural beings. One of the most important of these was an extensive retreat performed at Ganden to pacify hindrances to Tsongkhapa's lifespan. This event is described in brief by Purchok's *Catalog* and *Shartsé History I* as a time when Tsongkhapa had a vision of the Buddha Marajit and many yidam dharma-protectors and received an oath from *nāgas*, *grahas*, and *gyelgong* (*rgyal 'gong*) not to harm Tsongkhapa's retinue or successors, as well as receiving an offering of their life-essence.[602] However, the version in Khedrub Jé's *Secret Biography* of Tsongkhapa is more explicit, with some of the harmful spirits having their heads cut off and being thrown inside of a pit.[603] There are two material reminders of this power that Geluk lamas and protectors have over harmful spirits. The first are two *stūpas* below Yangpachen that have the function of suppressing pernicious

[600] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 163. In addition, the *Annals of Ganden* reports that the golden brocade umbrella was offered by Brahmā as an ornament for Tsongkhapa's head." *Annals of Ganden*, 17.

[601] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 163.

[602] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 7. Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartsé History I*, 27.

[603] Dge legs dpal bzang, *Cluster of Precious Tales*, 192.

spirits.[604] The second is a statue of the Buddha Marajit that is available for pilgrims to visit. Purchok asserts that "by merely seeing, hearing, remembering, or touching this statue /One is certain to obtain victory over the four classes of *māras*." However, Purchok again grounds this statue's power in Tsongkhapa's charismatic personhood, stating that the statue's body is actually a manifestation of Tsongkhapa's bliss-emptiness-gnosis.[605] In a single stroke, Geluk authors assert the miraculous power of this statue, link it to a narrative in which Tsongkhapa proved his power over spirits, and then promise the ability for the statue to achieve the same for pilgrims to Ganden.

Rather than relying on deities, there are also straight forward narratives Tsongkhapa subdued local spirits. One took place when Tsongkhapa was challenged by the local spirit (*gzhi bdag*) Machen Pomra, who lifted up a large boulder from underneath Tsongkhapa's practice hut while Tsongkhapa was inside it. In response, Tsongkhapa lifted up and brought down a shower of boulders, and there are imprints of both the spirit's two hands and knees, as well as imprints of Tsongkhapa's own hands in the earth.[606] In visiting Tsongkhapa's practice hut then, Tsongkhapa's magical powers would be made salient for pilgrims in both narrative form and in the topography of the earth itself.

On another occasion Tsongkhapa was circumambulating Ganden and encountered demons who brought down a shower of iron hailstones. In response, Tsongkhapa smashed them with a large boulder and they are said to still reside under that boulder.[607] Thus, even

[604] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland,* 25.

[605] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland,* 18.

[606] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 170.

[607] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 167-68.

the boulders on the circumambulation route remind pilgrims of Tsongkhapa's magical power via this narrative framing. Interestingly, an alternate version of this narrative in one of Tsongkhapa's biographies has no mention of boulders; instead, Tsongkhapa simply subdued the danger by pointing his finger.[608] More than fun stories, these narratives are grounded in the topography surrounding Ganden for pilgrims, making Tsongkhapa's magical power salient at every turn.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that Ganden Monastery functioned as a major Tibetan Buddhist, and in particular, a Gelukpa pilgrimage site. As a monastery, Ganden needed to be discursively constructed as a sacred place due to lacking the charisma of a natural environmental site. Therefore, the main function of the pilgrimage guide literature is to argue for the powerful, blessed, and charismatic nature of the figures (both human and supernatural) and material objects (both built and spontaneously arisen) present at Ganden. This is why these works are so concerned with impressing upon readers the impressive qualities of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa*, other objects owned and blessed by Tsongkhapa and other Geluk figures, the *stūpas* of Tsongkhapa's other major disciples, the receptacles and power objects at Ganden, the power that images and protectors at Ganden have over harmful spirits, the miraculous offerings received from devout semi-divine beings, etc. etc. In so doing, Ganden Monastery "became

[608] "Moreover, large boulders crashed down from that steep and rugged hill above the monastery. The monks were frightened, and a high wind arose from all directions as big as if it filled the space between heaven and earth. But as soon as [Tsongkhapa] fixed his index fingers at both phenomena, they were neutralized." Rtogs ldan 'jam dpal rgya mtsho, *Supplementary Biography*, 166.

the physical expression of the constructive imagination of human beings in their creation of Buddhist sacred landscape."[609]

In my view, Ganden Monastery also functioned as a *prototypical* Gelukpa pilgrimage site. I suggest three defining characteristics of a Gelukpa pilgrimage site: 1) Ganden is associated with the activities of major *Geluk* figures (and not those associated with other traditions), 2) Ganden is a *monastery* (rather than a natural site such as a mountain or lake), and 3) Ganden is a pilgrimage site *monopolized* by the Gelukpa. Taking Ganden as a prototype, I suggest that Geluk pilgrimage sites in general also tend to possess these three characteristics.[610]

In general, Hartmann has observed that nearly every pilgrimage site in Tibet, "no matter how seemingly insignificant, seems to have been visited by Padmasambhava."[611] The exception to this rule appears to be Gelukpa pilgrimage sites, which appear to be predominantly linked with Geluk figures, such as Tsongkhapa, the Dalai Lamas, the Panchen Lamas, and other important Geluk figures. There is no reference to Padmasambhava in relation to the site of Ganden. Secondly, in contrast to all the pilgrimage guides at mountains

[609] McKay, *Pilgrimage in Tibet,* 40.

[610] A tentative list of important Geluk pilgrimage sites includes a) the three seats of Ganden, Sera, and Drepung, b) sites associated with the Dalai and Panchen Lamas such as Tashi Lhunpo and the Potala palace, c) sites associated with Tsongkhapa's activities such as the caves of ölka and the site of Dzingchi (where Tsongkhapa performed his third great deed, the refurbishment of a statue of Maitreya). While noting these are tendencies, not every characteristic is necessarily present at each site; for instance, the caves of Ölka are one Gelukpa pilgrimage site that is not located at a monastery, however, it is the site of Tsongkhapa's activity and it is a site unique to the Gelukpa. However, I suggest that these are three characteristics that tend to define Geluk pilgrimage sites.

[611] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 280.

and lakes, Geluk pilgrimage sites tend to be located in monasteries, for reasons I've already mentioned.

Lastly, from an economics of religion perspective, I suggest that as Ganden's main attraction, Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* functioned as a type of "fixed capital," a form of capital that was fixed on the land in a physical form and made Ganden more attractive to traders and pilgrims.[612] Thus, although "nearly all of the trade routes between Tibet and other parts of Asia have been established, cut off, and reestablished over the centuries as a result of wars or economic necessity," it was the fixed nature of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* that helped make it a mandatory stop for travelers enroute to Lhasa.[613]

The fixed nature of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* at Ganden points to my argument that Ganden Monastery was a prototypical Gelukpa pilgrimage site: Geluk pilgrimage sites tend to be monopolized by the Gelukpa. Unlike other major pilgrimage sites in Tibet based at sacred mountains—which tended to be contested by various groups—Ganden was a singular place with a singular form of fixed capital that faced no competition from rival groups; although there can be eight different sites identified as Devīkoṭa in Tibet, there is only one place where Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* can be found.[614] This finding extends and complements the

[612] According to David Harvey, "fixed capital is a physical—but not necessarily immobile—form of capital (such as caravan mules, a train, or an airport), which is 'literally fixed in and on the land in some physical form for a relatively long period of time." David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2003), 115. As cited in Tina Harris, *Geographical Diversions: Tibetan Trade, Global Transactions* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2013), 6.

[613] Harris, *Geographical Diversions,* 7-8.

[614] "Geographical re-mapping of tantric sacred geography onto Tibet only accelerated over time. This was supported by tantric texts themselves, which treated the pīthas as being particular locations in South Asia, but also suggested that the sacred geography of pīthas was a moveable map that could exist anywhere. As such, all twenty-four sacred places could exist in Tibet, or indeed inside a single city. Following this, Tibetans re-mapped tantric sacred geography onto the Tibetan landscape multiple times, to the point that there were at one point at least eight different Devikotas in Tibet." Hartmann, *To See a Mountain,* 73.

economics of religion approach of McCleary and van der Kuijp, who have argued that the rise of the Geluk school to a monopoly was largely the result of its technological innovations and willingness to resort to violence.[615] In addition, I argue that the monopolistic nature of Gelukpa pilgrimage sites played a major role in the rise of the Gelukpa. The fixed location of Ganden also motivated rivals to a target for destruction, as it was both a major site of Gelukpa power/authority, and not one that could be controlled or co-opted by other groups.

According to the notes accompanying the English language translation of the Italian Jesuit priest Ippolito Desideri's (1684-1733) account of his journey to Tibet in the early eighteenth century, "[Tsongkhapa] is no less worshipped and venerated and has no fewer statues and shrines in the temples than Urgyen [i. e., Padmasambhava] himself."[616] In a similar vein, Charles Bell reports that "in Lhasa and the districts around I found [Tsongkhapa's] image everywhere."[617] In my view, it was Ganden's popularization as a pilgrimage site—and its accompanying popularization of narratives and power objects exhibiting Tsongkhapa's charisma—that likely played a role in the growth of the Tsongkhapa devotional cult, and the predominance of Tsongkhapa images reported by Desideri and Bell. Given the lack of data, it is difficult to make firm statements about when and how this took place. But this is an important part of the rise of the Geluk tradition that has been completely omitted in existing analyses.

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[615] McCleary and van der Kuijp, "The Market Approach, 163.

[616] Ippolito Desideri, *An Account of Tibet: The Travels of Ippolito Desideri of Pistoia, S.J., 1712-1727*, ed. Filippo De Filippi, revised edition (London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1937), 417, n. 14.

[617] Bell, *The Religion of Tibet*, 99.

As a final word, observers of the Geluk tradition have long noted the use of the name Ganden for multiple Gelukpa monasteries, in particular those that have been converted from other traditions. Given that the reason for this name was to be an auspicious sign akin to Tsongkhapa himself continuing to reside, I suggest my own hypothesis for why other monasteries were also branded with the name Ganden; rather than merely a form of branding or marketing, this name was chosen as a way to promote the charismatic presence of Tsongkhapa at monasteries all over Inner Asia, a charismatic presence that was fixed at Ganden but then spread throughout the Tibetan cultural sphere.

Chapter Five:

The Construction of Ganden as a Sacred Place

This chapter is focused on the construction of Ganden Monastery as a sacred and numinous place. As mentioned in the last chapter, one way this has been described is as "the element of the support, the environment" (*brten pa snod kyi khams*) as opposed to the section on "the element of animate beings" (*g.yo ba bcud kyi khams*) which describes the biographies of holy beings at Ganden.[618] In truth, these categories are inextricably linked, as "landscape, in the Tibetan context, is the total earthly space inclusive of not only humans, animals, and plants, but more critically also of the spirit world embedded within it."[619] As such, charisma in this context "pertains not merely to the spiritual-religious power of the concerned personality, but even more crucially to the power of the natural environment and the eco-religious system of the charismatic personality and his community."[620]

As such, much of the theoretical basis for the last chapter is also operative here, including the importance of narrative framing in the discursive construction of Ganden as a numinous place, and the importance of Tsongkhapa's charisma and extended personhood to this discursive construction. But whereas the last chapter focused more on powerful beings and power objects, this chapter is focused on Ganden as a "power place," a quality that grants Ganden "both a symbolic meaning and an auspicious…effect."[621] Structurally, this chapter

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[618] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 137.

[619] Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 51.

[620] Yü, *The Spread of Tibetan Buddhism in China*, 52.

[621] Roesler, "A palace for those who have eyes to see," 126.

uses Hartmann's enumeration of typical features of pilgrimage sites as a way to organize the material: a) a framework of outer, inner, and secret, b) flora and fauna, c) mountain as mandala, d) geomancy, and e) spontaneously arisen phenomena.

Outer, Inner, and Secret

According to Hartmann, the framework of outer, inner, and secret in the context of pilgrimage describes "how [the site] exists in relation to various types of perception. Those with coarse perception will see the outer aspect, those with more refined perception will see the inner aspect, and those with perfected perception will see the secret aspect of the pilgrimage site."[622] There are three pilgrimage texts that refer to Ganden in this way:

	Shartsé History II[623]	*Annals of Ganden*[624]	*Abridged Guidebook*[625]
Outer Aspect	In its outer aspect, it is a secluded place (*dben pa'i gnas*).	In its outer aspect, it is a secluded hermitage (*dben pa'i ri khrod*).	In its outer aspect, it is the best of pleasant secluded places (*nyams dga' ba'i dben pa'i gnas mchog*).
Inner Aspect	In its inner aspect, it is the palace of Guhyasamāja.	In its inner aspect, it is the palace of Śrī Guhyasamāja.	In its inner aspect, it is the *mandala* of Guhyasamāja.
Secret Aspect	In its secret aspect, it is none other than the pure realm Arrays of Amazing Wonders	In its secret aspect, it is the site of Jé Lama's complete enlightenment.	In its secret aspect, it is the special pure realm (Arrays of Amazing Wonders) of the completely and perfectly enlightened Great

[622] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 300.

[623] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 143.

[624] *Annals of Ganden*, 3.

[625] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 26.

			Sovereign Lord [Tsongkhapa].

With slight variations, all three texts assert that in its outer aspect, Ganden is a secluded place that is pleasant and suitable for the religious life. This description echoes the request of Tsongkhapa's disciples to arrange a "secluded monastery" (*dben dgon*) for him, which triggered the establishment of Ganden.[626] I will return to this use of the description "pleasant" below in the section on flora and fauna.

All three texts assert that in its inner aspect, Ganden is the palace or mandala of Guhyasamāja. On the one hand, this description corresponds to the privileged place of the Guhyasamāja Tantra within the Geluk tradition. For instance, commissioned by Tsongkhapa, the xylographs of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and its commentary by Candrakīrti (the *Pradīpoddyotana*) are considered the first xylographic prints ever made in Tibet.[627] For the Gelukpa, this Tantra's preeminence is also indicated by using teachings contained within the Guhyasamāja to interpret other tantric systems.[628] For this reason, Ganden Monastery prides itself as a "Guhyasamāja college" (*grwa tshang*).[629] In addition, the description of Ganden as

[626] Mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang, *Gateway to Faith*, 95.

[627] Sonam Tsering, *The Role of Texts*, 3. Cf. David P. Jackson, "The Earliest Printings of Tsong-kha-pa's Works," 107.

[628] For instance, Roger R. Jackson has observed that the Gelukpa interpret virtually every completion stage practice via the five stage yoga of the Guhyasamāja. Roger R. Jackson, *Mind Seeing Mind*, 350. In the *guru pūja* practice of Lama Chöpa (*bla ma mchod pa*), the visualization of body mandala deities on the guru's body are explained according to Guhyasamāja; The Dalai Lama, *The Union of Bliss and Emptiness: Teachings on the Practice of Guru Yoga*, trans. Thupten Jinpa (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 2009), 11. And in an influential Gelukpa commentary on the Kālacakra Tantra, Khedrub Norsang Gyatso explains the six-branched yoga of the Kālacakra according to the Guhyasamāja Tantra; Khedrup Norsang Gyatso, *Ornament of Stainless Light: An Exposition of the Kālacakra Tantra*, trans. Gavin Kilty (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 68.

[629] Ngawang Sonam, personal communication to the author, June 2022.

a mandala or palace of Guhyasamāja also invites comparison with Hartmann's category of the "mountain as mandala," the celestial palace of a tantric deity. I'll return to this point below.

Lastly, as I emphasized in the last chapter, Ganden is best understood as a site with Tsongkhapa as the central deity. For this reason, the "secret aspect" of Ganden is described as either the site of Tsongkhapa's enlightenment, or as Tsongkhapa's pure land Arrays of Amazing Wonders. As noted earlier, this is the name of the Tsongkapa's prophesied pure land within Tokden Jampel Gyatso's *Very Secret Biography of Tsongkhapa*.[630] For these pilgrimage guide authors, it is this aspect of Ganden—and not its aspect as the mandala of Guhyasamāja—that is the most profound. This is in keeping with the status of Tsongkhapa's *stūpa* as the most important material object at Ganden due to the presence of Tsongkhapa's blessed remains. But instead, here we see Ganden itself elevated due to its connection to Tsongkhapa as the site of Tsongkhapa's enlightenment, a status which makes Ganden "equivalent to Vajrāsana," the site of the historical Buddha's enlightenment.[631]

Flora and Fauna

The use of the adjective "pleasant" to describe Ganden merits the invocation of Hartmann's category of "flora and fauna," in which Tibetan pilgrimage sites are often described as places of "natural beauty," a beauty that is connected to the "spiritual potency" of the site as a place

[630] 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho, *Tsong kha pa'i rnam thar shin tu gsang ba ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i gtam*, 211-12.

[631] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 28. The source for this claim is the *Emanated Volume*.

"ripe for spiritual practice."[632] For instance, Jamyang Shepa's *Catalog* cites one source that asserts that Ganden "appears clear and bright from every angle."[633] In this regard, the *Abridged Guidebook* states:

All around the seat, the sweet fragrance of the fields of grass, various flowers, and "Ganden Khenpa" (*dga' ldan 'khan pa*)—the source of a shrub [used in] smoke-offerings which is renowned for being produced from the scattered hairs of the Great Lord himself—spreads in all directions. [The site] is completely covered with thick forests consisting of various types of trees. The *lha bya gong mo* [bird] and other varieties of birds, large and small, clearly call out their pleasant songs, which proclaim the flawless special qualities of this lovely place.[634]

This passage asserts that the natural beauty of the site is evident in the flourishing of thick forests, sweet-smelling plants, and the pleasant songs of birds. It also ties the origin of Ganden's famous incense, "Ganden Khenpa," to the magical powers of Tsongkhapa. According to Tsem Rinpoche's account, Tsongkhapa cut his hair and scattered it on the ground around Ganden Monastery during a chickenpox epidemic. The hair grew into a type of grass that was burned as incense to purify the air. It was distributed to every household, containing the epidemic. After this, Ganden Khenpa became popularized and widely used to

[632] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 303. This category also shows that studies of natural sites have dominated the study of pilgrimage in Tibet.

[633] 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*, 28. The cited source is the *Emanated Volume*.

[634] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 25-26.

cure various illnesses and purify air pollution, as the grass possesses blessings and special virtues due to "[originally growing from] the consecrated ground" of Ganden.[635]

This passage appears to serve several functions. In one stroke, it: a) asserts the natural beauty of Ganden, b) advertises Ganden Khenpa as a commercial product, c) grounds its efficacy in the magical power of Tsongkhapa, d) grounds its efficacy in the "consecrated ground" of Ganden, and e) suggests that Ganden's environment is pervaded by the blessed materiality of Tsongkhapa's own body qua hairs. As I argued in the last chapter, the use of Ganden in the naming of this product again serves to invoke Tsongkhapa's charismatic presence.

A similar process is found in the famous story of Tsongkhapa and the cuckoo birds at Ganden. According to *Shartsé History II*:

> When Jé Lama was sitting [outside of Ganden] one time, [he heard] the call of a cuckoo, the harbinger of Spring (*dpyid kyi pho nya*). As a result, he was reminded of his mother [who he had not seen for many years]. Sorrowfully, he called out her name [Shingsa Achö]. When he did so, the letter "A" [from her name] came as a spontaneously arisen form [in the cliff face]. And by the command of Jé Lama, the speech of the cuckoo was barred. As a result, cuckoos do not utter their calls at the seat of Ganden and this remains so to the present day.[636]

[635] H.E. Tsem Rinpoche, "Amazing Ganden Khenpa," Tsemrinpoche.com, October 11, 2022, https://www.tsemrinpoche.com/tsem-tulku-rinpoche/etc/amazing-ganden-khempa.html. I was unable to locate any scholarly accounts of this incense. However, there are numerous commercial websites advertising this incense for sale or as part of travel packages to Ganden in Tibet. One recent account that indicates the ongoing use of this incense is Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan's description of Lama Zopa Rinpoche's list of practices performed in response to the SARS epidemic, in which "breathing Ganden Khenpa incense from Ganden in Tibet" is one of them. Ivette Vargas-O'Bryan, "Disease, the demons and the Buddhas: A study of Tibetan conceptions of disease and religious practice," in *Health and Religious Rituals in South Asia: Disease, Possession and Healing*, ed. Fabrizio Ferrari (New York: Routledge, 2011), 95.

[636] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 169.

This narrative is found within the enumeration of the spontaneously arisen forms at Ganden, one of which is the letter "A" found in the cliff face.[637] However, here the invocation of the cuckoo bird is not meant to extol the natural beauty of the site. Instead, it is to again emphasize Tsongkhapa's magical powers, powers that—like the prohibition on the speech of the cuckoo—remain in effect to this day. For pilgrims to Ganden, this narrative both emphasizes Tsongkhapa's magical abilities, and humanizes him for pilgrims who may be able to relate to the experience of traveling far away from home and missing one's family. This emotional reaction is emblematized by a modern female Tibetan poet's use of this narrative, in which the poet recounts visiting Ganden for the first time and reflects upon the pain felt by Tsongkhapa's mother at their separation, a pain experienced by all mothers who share "the same joys and sorrows."[638]

Although not explicitly a form of flora or fauna, a final narrative bears mentioning here. In the vicinity of Tsongkhapa's Practice Hut is white *sa*[*tsi*] powder (*sa dkar gyi phye ma*) which is described as beneficial as a medicine for those who are suffering from the fact that a particular place or its water does not agree with them (*sa chu ma 'phrod pa*). This white powder is considered the remnant of medicine offered to Tsongkhapa by the gods Indra, Brahmā, and so forth when he was ill and facing obstacles to his lifespan.[639] Here even the earth of Ganden itself is said to possess beneficial properties. And again in one stroke, the

[637] An image can be found among the series of images that are the front matter to Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*.

[638] Chime, "Poem: 'The Lama Tsongkhapa Who Missed his Mother atop Ganden Mountain,'" trans. Lowell Cook, High Peaks Pure Earth, October 11, 2022, https://highpeakspureearth.com/poem-the-lama-tsongkhapa-who-missed-his-mother-atop-ganden-mountain-by-chime/.

[639] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 171.

beneficial nature of the earth is popularized in the pilgrimage guide literature, granted legitimacy via narrative framing from an event during Tsongkhapa's life, and speaks to Tsongkhapa's charismatic status as an object of offering by the gods themselves. And all this is again grounded in the materiality, the white powder, present at the site for pilgrims to see for themselves.

Mountain as Mandala

According to Hartmann's analysis, not only does this feature of pilgrimage guide literature underscore the sanctity of the site, it also echoes the outer/inner distinction, "whereby the mountain outwardly looks like a heap of rocks and snow, but inwardly, it is really a marvelous palace centered around a tantric deity continuously teaching the dharma."[640] A direct instance of this type of analogy between mountain and mandala is found in Jamyang Shepa's *Catalog*. In it, he states that it is because the renown of Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena spread in every direction that the great omniscient Paṇchen said of Ganden's mountain that "the heap of spontaneously arisen [images] is in/exists as the palace of Cakrasaṃvara."[641] Jamyang Shepa concludes that "like he said, since that's how [those spontaneously arisen things] are, [their nature] is inexpressible!"

This passage is difficult to understand. First, Jamyang Shepa appears to be equating the mountain on which Ganden is located with the "heap of spontaneously arisen [images]"

[640] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 314.

[641] *Ri 'di yang paṇ chen thams cad mkhyen pa chen pos rang byon gyi phung po 'khor lo sdom pa'i pho brang du 'dug gsungs pa ltar don la gnas pas brjod kyis mi langs*. 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje, *Jamyang Shepa's Catalog*," 30. The great omniscient Paṇchen appears to be a reference to Paṇchen Losang Chöki Gyeltsen, however it's unclear what work is being cited.

for which it is famous, and citing Paṇchen Losang Chöki Gyeltsen as an authoritative source who viewed it the same way. Secondly, he claims that the heap of spontaneously arisen [images] either is located in, or exists as, the palace of Cakrasaṃvara. In doing so, he appears to be making the claim that the entire mountain on which Ganden is located—and its most prominent miraculous features, the spontaneously arisen [forms] that have bubbled up from it—are both either present in the palace of Cakrasaṃvara, or exist as the palace of Cakrasaṃvara. However, he seems uncomfortable with the topic, concluding that since this is their nature, this topic is inexpressible—meaning not suitable for logical analysis—and also seemingly not something he appears to wish to discuss further, as he changes topics immediately afterwards.

Jamyang Shepa's discomfort appears to reflect the imperfect fit of Ganden's mountain as an instance of this category. This mountain is not otherwise considered sacred, as most mountains in this category are. For this reason, Jamyang Shepa had to jump through the aforementioned hoops to describe it as a mandala. And, it is noteworthy that within the aforementioned description of Ganden's inner aspect, in later pilgrimage guides a shift has taken place. Now, it is the monastery of Ganden itself that is described as a mandala, rather than its humble mountain. This appears to have been a conscious choice made by the authors of the later Gelukpa pilgrimage guide literature, one of the best instances where we can see the authors working in their proverbial workshop and exercising agency in the construction of Ganden as a sacred place. It is also another explicit instance of what I have referred to as the "monasticiziation" of pilgrimage.

Along with this shift, another takes place in which the authors of this pilgrimage guide literature make other kinds of allusions to sacred mountains, but in a scholastic fashion

in line with their own suppositions. For instance, Purchok describes the way in which Tsongkhapa's disciples impressed and were revered by followers in the "central and border regions." In doing so, Purchok states that "the sons took up the work started by the father and enacted Jé's teachings on theory and practice, [a corpus] akin to Mount Meru" (*ri rgyal lhun po*).[642] Here, Purchok explicitly parallels Tsongkhapa's vast collection of teachings to Mount Meru, suggesting they are comparable in terms of both size and majesty.

In a similar vein, the author of *Sharté History II* ends this section of his work by making a parallel claim within a broader tribute to Ganden:

> Thus, with regard to this [place] which is completely adorned with amazing features that transcend the bounds of ordinary conceptions; the sole mother-monastery of all Riwo Gedenpa monasteries in all regions of India, Tibet, China, Nepal, Mongolia, and so forth; [a place] equivalent to the Mt. Kailash of Tibet from whence many myriads of rivers descend; this concludes the brief exposition of the great attributes of this abode, the great Drok Riwo Ganden Nampar Gyelwé Ling.[643]

Here, we see a Geluk author again explicitly stating that Ganden is equivalent to Mt. Kailash. However, rather than a claim on the numinous status of Mt. Kailash, here the suggestion seems to be that Ganden's equivalence is metaphorical or analogical: due to the fact that all Geluk monasteries have been born from the "mother monastery" of Ganden, which have then spread to other regions just as the myriads of rivers descend from Mt. Kailash. In both these cases, we are far from both the "mountain as mandala" and the "monastery as mandala" topoi; instead, we see Geluk authors adopting the mountain theme in creative ways that

[642] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 11-12.

[643] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 172.

accentuate partisan Gelukpa interests in valorizing Tsongkhapa's teachings and the successful expansion of their own tradition.

Geomantic Elements

The geomantic suitability of Ganden's location was verified by Tsongkhapa before it was founded. According to Petra Maurer, the geomantic method is a two-part process: first is "the examination of the land, its identification and the interpretation of its topographical characteristics in order to find a suitable site for construction"; then, the site is considered either suitable or unsuitable for construction.[644] As Purchok writes, "when Tsongkhapa visited the site, all the examinations of the earth and sky (*sa dpyad gnam dpyad*) came out well for the flourishing of teaching, practice, and resources."[645] However, a fuller description of Ganden's geomantic features is not found in textual sources until the recent publication of the *Annals of Ganden* in 1994. Chapter Two of this work is dedicated to the topography (*sa dbyibs*) of the site and its special features (*khyad chos*) and contains a citation from a catalog of Ganden that I have been unable to locate.[646] The description of its geomantic features is worth citing in full:

[644] Petra Maurer, "When the Tiger Meets Yul 'khor Srung, or How to Protect a Construction Site," *Études Mongoles et Sibériennes, Centrasiatiques et Tibétaines* 50 (2019): 2.

[645] Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland*, 6. A similar statement is found in Grags pa mkhas grub, *Shartsé History I*, 26. Earlier biographies and historical works lack reference to geomantic investigation, excepting Desi Sangyé Gyatso's brief note that Tsongkhapa "performed the investigation of the grounds and so forth for Drok Ganden Nampar Gyelwé Ling in accord with the topics of the vinaya and the sciences (*gtsug lag*)." See Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *Baiḍūrya Serpo*, 67.

[646] The source of this passage is a work titled *Dpal mnyam med ri bo dga' ldan gyi dkar chag snang gsal sgron me*. This work it unknown to me and I have been unable to locate it or find any other information. Within the *Bod kyi lo rgyus dpe tho*, there is a work titled *Ri bo dga' ldan gyi dkar chag* by one Legs pa'i gling; this may represent the cited work but I have yet to check the *Annals'* citation against this work.

> In the sky [above] that marvelous abode is an eight-spoked wheel. On the earth is an eight-petalled lotus. On the sides (*logs*) are the eight auspicious symbols. The upper slope of the valley (*lung pa phu*) is small. The arrow (*mda'*) is large. The shape (*dbyibs*) is like a blossoming eight-petalled lotus. The mountain behind (*rgyab ri*) is a curtain of white silk (*dar dkar gyi yol ba*). The mountain in front (*mdun ri*) is requesting the dharma (*chos zhu ba*). The mountain on its right (*g.yas ri*) is a *ḍāka* seated on cushions (*dpa' bo gdan la bzhugs pa*). The mountain on the left (*g.yon ri*) is a dancing *ḍākinī* (*mkha 'gro gar byed pa*)…Drok Riwoché Ganden Nampar Gyelwé Ling [sits] at the center of [a site] whose surroundings are filled by virtuous and wondrous signs [revealed by] the examination of the earth of this marvelous isolated place… Like this, [concerning] the whitish tiger to the east [of Ganden], there is a forest and a large path. In part of the upslope, there are 108 springs which were offered in the manner of the Nāga King's water-offering to Jé Lama himself. Nearby, the two queens of Chögyel Songtsen Gampo would reside and there is a spring for drinking water in Tsunmo Ding (Btsun mo sding). In the southeast direction, concerning the turquoise thunder-dragon, it is the aspect of water flowing downwards which continually flows from the mountain pass of Ganden... in the northwest, concerning the red [bird], it is the red rock in the rear of Dog ra *khangtsen* which is like a *garuḍa*. Concerning the northern golden tortoise, there is an arrangement of boulders in the rear of Mount Gogpa ('Gog pa ri) which is like a tortoise.[647]

According to Desi Sangyé Gyatso's authoritative treatise on astrology and astronomy, places that are shaped like a Buddhist symbol are considered favorable.[648] Ganden is therefore a favorable site insofar as the sky above it has the shape of an eight-spoked wheel, the earth an eight-petalled lotus, and on the sides are found the eight auspicious symbols. In addition, the shape of the terrain is also said to be "like a blossoming eight-petalled lotus." Furthermore, the references to the "arrow" being large and the mountain behind being like "a curtain of white silk" also appear to invoke what Desi Sangyé Gyatso calls "the nineteen protecting

[647] *Annals of Ganden*, 3-4.

[648] As cited in Petra Maurer, "Sa Dpyad and the Concept of Bla Ri," in *This World and the Next: Contributions on Tibetan Religion, Science and Society: PIATS 2006: Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Eleventh Seminar of the International Association for Tibetian Studies, Königswinter 2006*, ed. Charles Ramble and Jill Sudbury (Andiast: IITBS, International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH, 2012), 71.

areas" of a site.[649] It is likely that Desi Sangyé Gyatso's treatise impacted the discursive construction of Ganden as a pilgrimage site, given both its authoritative status in Tibetan culture and his stature as a major Gelukpa figure.

This passage also invokes the important category of the "four animals" in geomantic prognostication. Drawing upon Chinese concepts of *qi* and *yin*/*yang*, the location of these four animals impacts the positive or negative effects of the landscape.[650] And although different Tibetan authors locate the animals in different configurations, the placement of the animals at Ganden mirrors Desi Sangyé Gyatso's presentation. As he writes: "If at all the sites… the four deities of the directions are complete, this is good. That is to say: the path in the east is the whitish tiger, the water in the south is the dragon, the forest and marsh area in the west is the red bird. The rock face and marsh area (or meadow) in the north is the turtle." Mirroring this to a large degree, at Ganden the whitish tiger to the east is a forest and large path, the turquoise thunder-dragon in the southeast is flowing water, there is a red rock in the northwest like a *garuḍa*, and an arrangement of boulders in the north which is like a tortoise.

On a broader level, Guntram Hazod has suggested that the locations of Ganden, Drepung, and Sera were likely chosen to circumscribe the "Lhasa Maṇḍala," or "the geomantic classification of the Lhasa valley ascribed to the Chinese consort of Srong btsan sgam po, in which several toponyms in the vicinity of four mountains mark the outer

[649] As Maurer writes, "A feather stuck on the upper end of an arrow (*mda' sgro gyen bskyon 'dra ba*), a flag raised high (*ba dan legs par 'phyar 'dra*), large numbers of shields heaped up (*khrab chen mang po spungs 'dra*) or terrain looking like a stretched curtain of white silk (*dar dkar yol ba bres 'dra*) belong to the nineteen protecting areas (*bskyab pa'i sa bzang bcu dgu*)." However, further information on this category is not given. See Maurer, "*Sa dpyad* and the concept of *bla ri*," 71.

[650] Maurer, "When the Tiger Meets Yul 'khor Srung, or How to Protect a Construction Site," 6.

boundary of a protective zone around the central shrine of Ra sa'i 'phrul snang."[651] In particular, Hazod argues that the eastern toponym of the Lhasa Maṇḍala, Ba lam Grum pa ri (var. Grog po ri), may be a variant of Ganden's Drok Ri ('Brog ri).[652]

It may be notable that right in the middle of the geomantic description of the four animals that surround Ganden, the *Annals of Ganden* reports that "in the south, in accord with a vision that arose to the Chögyel Songtsen himself, there is the throne on which he was consecrated to the position of King. So, it is Mount Consecration or Wangkur Ri (Dbang skur ri)."[653] In a similar vein, Sørensen, Hazod, and Gyalbo have noted that "the significance of the site as a royal residence place is not least indicated by the location of Srong-btsan sgam-po's horse-headed silver seal (*dngul dam rta mgo can*) which Tsong-kha-pa is said to have discovered in this area."[654] However, there is no explicit reference to the Lhasa Maṇḍala in the relevant pilgrimage guide literature. Curiously, there is also no mention of this seal (nor Tsongkhapa's finding of it). In sum, the reference to Songtsen Gampo in this geomantic context is meager evidence of any explicit connection to be drawn between Ganden Monastery and the Lhasa Maṇḍala. In addition, no explicit reference to the Lhasa Maṇḍala is made in the Geluk pilgrimage guide literature.

Hazod also points to two specific sites near Ganden that were revived in accord with a vision of the fifth Dalai Lama as part of a strategy—called the "means for restoring key

[651] Hazod, "The Ruins of lDan," 25. As he writes: "The position of these monasteries, probably not accidentally, is reminiscent of the geography of the Lhasa Mandala: with 'Bras spungs in the west (near the ancient Shun), Se ra in the north (in the area of the ancient lHa sa rgyab ri of Dog te) and dGa' ldan in the east (i.e. the key site Ba lam Grum pa ri?)." See Hazod, "Ruins of lDan," 32.

[652] Hazod, "Ruins of lDan," 26.

[653] *Annals of Ganden*, 4.

[654] Sørensen, Hazod, and Gyalbo, *Thundering falcon*, 235.

sites in the country" (*sa gnad gso ba thabs*)—that involved distributing particular statues or *stūpas* across Ü and Tsang for the well-being of the country.[655] Hazod suggests that these two sites likely "formed orientation points for later religious institutions" such as Ganden.[656] The first is a "*stūpa* for the subjugation of *māras*" (*bdud 'dul mchod rten*) at Tagyé (Mtha' rgyas).[657] The second is the site of a statue of Mahākāruṇikā on the mountain in back of Ganden in Kyishö (sKyid shod dGa' ldan rgyab ri), which he links to the mountain on which Ganden is located, Drok Ri ('Brog ri).[658]

However, once again, neither of these items are given explicit mention in the pilgrimage guide literature. Hazod's contentions notwithstanding, it appears that the popularization of Ganden as a pilgrimage site did not make explicit use of the Lhasa Maṇḍala conceptual apparatus. This may reflect the fact that all of the extant pilgrimage guide material dates from the early eighteenth century onward, a time in which the fifth Dalai Lama's efforts to unify the country under his rule were no longer as urgent. Of course, it should be noted that Lhasa Maṇḍala or not, the locations of Ganden, Drepung, and Sera in geographic proximity to Lhasa did leave these monasteries "strategically positioned to gain aristocratic patrons and resources."[659]

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[655] Hazod, "The Ruins of lDan," 28.

[656] Hazod, "The Ruins of lDan," 28.

[657] Hazod locates this in Kyishö (skyid shod) "situated at the border between Upper and Lower dBu ru" (i.e. the present-day district centre of Dar rgyas xiang close to dGa' ldan)." Hazod, "The Ruins of lDan," 28.

[658] Hazod, "The Ruins of lDan," 28.

[659] McCleary and van der Kuijp, "The Market Approach to the Rise of the Geluk School, 1419-1642," 161.

That said, there is also circumstantial evidence supporting a portion of Hazod's argument that geomantic understandings played a role in the choice of the location of Ganden Monastery. As I mentioned in the last chapter, the first hint is the fact that the mountain on which Ganden is situated is considered the home of the Nāga King Anavatapta, a site that was identified as the site of "hostile forces" (*sa dgra*) which should be pacified by a right-turning conch. As a reminder, this is a reference to a foundational prophecy and power object at Ganden, the white conch that was offered to the historical Buddha by Anavatapta, placed at the site by Maudgalyāyana, and discovered there by Tsongkhapa. At this time, the Buddha also prophesied that the conch would be protected by a treasure guardian (*gter bdag*), Gaṇapati (tshogs bdag) in the form of a monkey. The identity and significance of this monkey is perplexing. Although a monkey is often depicted alongside images of Gaṇapati—either as a peripheral figure making offerings or as consort—it is much less common for a monkey to be considered an independent form of Gaṇapati in his own right.[660] More to the point, why was this rare form of Gaṇapati included in this foundational myth at all?

One potential clue is offered by a work composed by Karma Chakmé (Karma chags med, 1613-1678) containing geomantic advice. In it, a fifth animal is added to the standard system of four (tiger, turquise dragon, red bird, and turtle): a golden monkey in the center, the inclusion of which makes the four protectors of the house complete.[661] In attempting to

[660] "Only in one instance is a monkey presented as a principal or central deity. This depiction can be found at the Kumbum temple in Gyantse, Tibet. The monkey deity is brown in colour, with one face and two hands, seated in a crouching posture. He holds what appears to be a treasure bowl upraised in front with both hands. Surrounding him are eight Jambhala/Yaksha King-like figures." Jeff Watt, "Subject: Monkey Imagery Page," *Himalayan Art Resources*, updated April 2021, https://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=3316. Also see this source for further discussion of monkey imagery and images of monkeys in Gaṇapati iconographic depictions.

[661] Maurer, "When the Tiger Meets Yul 'khor Srung," 13.

make sense of this monkey, Petra Maurer shares my consternation at this unexpected monkey business, but notes that all five animals appear to be presented as "lords of the ground" (*sa bdag*).[662] Although circumstantial, the linkage between: a) Ganden's mountain, Anavatapta, and a white conch, and b) the (admittedly conjectural) identification of a monkey as a fifth lord of the ground and geomantic animal, are suggestive for the importance of geomantic understandings to the choice of Ganden's location and the emergence of this founding myth and prophecy for Ganden. The choice of a monkey qua Gaṇapati would also be in keeping with Janet Gyatso's observation that protectors of Treasure (*gter srung*) tend to be indigenous Tibetan deities.[663]

Earlier, the site of Tagyé was cited as one of the sites chosen for restoring the well-being of the country via the erection of a "*stūpa* for the subjugation of *māras*". Although a bit out of left field, this allows for a digression into a final unique form of investigation performed by Tsongkhapa in choosing the location, one into "the signs of the place names being good or bad" (*sa bkra'i ming gi mtshan ma*). This type of investigation appears little studied by scholars. A cursory examination only led to a single reference. According to Elisabeth Stutchbury, the term *satalegpa* (*sa bkra legs pa*) or "land which is auspicious and good" is an aspect of the geomantic decision making process that goes into selecting a site for habitation.[664] In this context, "land which is auspicious and good" is viewed as such

[662] Maurer, "When the Tiger Meets Yul 'khor Srung,"13.

[663] Janet Gyatso, "The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition," *History of Religions* 33, no. 2 (1993): 118.

[664] As Stutchbury writes: "Of course, the movement of the sun and the extent to which a site is comfortable, warm in winter and cool in summer, is important when selecting a site for meditation, or indeed for any human habitation. So it is ideal if a house can be built on an east - west axis, facing the east, for such a position not only optimises the benefits of the sun, but is said to provide the basis of satalegpa (*sa bkra legs pa*), 'land which is auspicious and good,' and conducive to a balance of energy between a person and the surrounding

because it is "conducive to a balance of energy between a person and the surrounding environment," for instance by having adequate access to sunlight.[665] However, in Tsongkhapa's case, his investigation appears distinct. Rather than assessing the land itself, Tsongkhapa instead interprets the symbolic import of the *names* of the village settlements (*yul grong*) surrounding Ganden.

As the author of *Shartsé History II* relates:

> [Tsongkhapa] wished to perform an investigation of the signs of the place names being good or bad (*sa bkra'i ming gi mtshan ma*) and when he inquired after the name of the [first] village settlement (*yul grong*), he was told: "It is called Lhé (Lhas, "by the gods")." And he replied: "My monastery arises in agreement with the prophesies by the gods!" Then, when he inquired after the name of the second village settlement, he was told: "This is Tagyé (Mtha' rgyas, "expand to the limit")." And he replied: "This is an excellent and auspicious circumstance that my teachings will spread to the ends of the earth!" And, when he asked for the name of the third village settlement, he was told: "It is Tsang Tok" (Gtsang thog, "epitome of purity"). So, he replied: "This is an extremely excellent and auspicious circumstance for the arising of [practitioners with] outer and inner purity as a result of my teaching: externally, maintain the conduct of a *śrāvaka*. Internally, engage in the path of the Secret Mantra Vajrayāna."[666]

It is noteworthy that this statement only appears in one of the pilgrimage guides studied, and that its style is evocative of a later tradition, given its neat framing and ex post facto knowledge of the wide spread of Tsongkhapa's tradition. If I am correct that this is a product of the later Gelukpa tradition, this is an interesting case where geomancy itself has been adapted in line with a scholastic sensibility. Rather than geomancy dealing with the

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environment." Elisabeth Stutchbury, "Perceptions of Landscape in Karzha: 'Sacred' Geography and the Tibetan System of 'Geomancy,'" *The Tibet Journal*, Powerful Places and Spaces in Tibetan Religious Culture, 19, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 69.

[665] Stutchbury, "Perceptions of Landscape in Karzha," 69.

[666] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 144-45.

materiality of the land itself, this interpretive process is one playing word games with the names of village settlements, names that are themselves symbolic rather than material. Just as Tsongkhapa's teachings were described as akin to Mount Kailash, here again we see Geluk pilgrimage guide authors choosing to privilege the written word over the materiality of the land or mountain.

Spontaneously Arisen Phenomena (*rang byon*)

According to the modern travelogue by Victor Chan, Ganden's hour-long circumambulation route is "simply the most spectacular of Central Tibet's monastery circuits."[667] As evidenced by the epigraph opening the last chapter, it is also one of Ganden's defining features, as it is along this circumambulation route that one encounters its famous spontaneously arisen phenomena.[668] According to the *Abridged* Guidebook, "this route is called 'Ganden's Spontaneously Arisen Circumambulation Route' (*Dga' ldan rang byon skor*) because it has extraordinary spontaneously-arisen images that manifested spontaneously and in an unfabricated fashion (*ma bcos lhun gyis grub pa'i rang byon thun mong ma yin pa*) as a circumambulation route for this seat."[669] Generally, the spontaneously arisen phenomena are found on the cliff faces along the circumambulation route.[670] However, not every phenomenon found on the circumambulation route is spontaneously arisen; for instance,

[667] Chan, *Tibet Handbook: A Pilgrimage Guide*, 143.

[668] "This hour-long circumambulatory route around the entire complex is replete wich the mystical side-shows in rock that engage and Support the pilgrim's faith." Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet: The Pilgrim's Guide,* 100.

[669] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook,* 31.

[670] "Also, on all the cliff faces were countless spontaneously arisen bodily forms, seed-syllables, and *mudrās*." Ngag dbang byams pa, *Purchok's Garland,* 6.

some were drawn by Geluk figures own hands. But, whether by spontaneous formation or contact with Geluk figures, each is considered a charismatic object suitable for description in guidebooks.

In general, Hartmann describes "self-arisen" phenomena as those that "are miraculous and worthy of the pilgrim's attention because they are not the product of human fabrication and are instead a natural bubbling-up of the site's power."[671] For Hartmann, these objects "recall the self-arisen or intrinsic wisdom (*rang byung ye shes*) valorized in tantric philosophy, and indicate a place where the non-conceptual and ever-creative ground underlying reality has made itself visible in the world of ordinary perception." Elsewhere, in the context of mountains Huber has suggested it is because a mountain is "self-produced" (*rangchung* [*rang byung*]) and "spontaneous" (*lhungidrup* [*lhun gyis grub*]) that it is perceived as "possessing an innate, natural power or 'empowerment' (*chinlab*) from which it gains its high status."[672] In my view, the parallel terminology used to describe mountains and spontaneously arisen phenomena is striking and likely intentional, a way to invoke the "innate, natural power" of mountains in the context of spontaneously arisen phenomena. For instance, Keith Dowman's modern pilgrimage guide contrasts the "reconstructed buildings at Ganden [in 1986]" that "had not yet gained the sanctity with which use would endow them," with the sanctity and appeal of the spontaneously arisen phenomena on the circumambulation route, which "today as always…amply rewards the pilgrim's energy."[673] Unlike Ganden's reconstructed buildings, the sanctity and innate power of its spontaneously arisen forms

[671] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain*, 298.

[672] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 61.

[673] Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, 100.

could not be lessened by neglect or destruction, enduring "today as always" like the mountains themselves.

However, there is an inherent ambiguity at the heart of spontaneously arisen phenomena. On the one hand, they are described as spontaneous and unfabricated, yet on the other hand, some of them are said to have arisen at specific times and in relation to specific figures. In fact, a major purpose of these spontaneously arisen phenomena—just as it was for the receptacles and other power objects described in the last chapter—is to provide focal points for narrating or recollecting stories of some of Ganden's important charismatic figures.[674] In the context of mountains, Huber describes this process as one of exchange between mountains and enlightened bodies, in which "historical events become physically incorporated as landscape features, or existing features are stamped or shaped and a whole collection of significant toponyms are generated."[675] In a similar vein, some spontaneously arisen phenomena are physical manifestations that invoke specific figures and events in the history of Ganden or its landscape.

In the eyes of Ganden Ngawang Tenjung (the author of the *Abridged Guidebook*), the historically contingent nature of some of these spontaneously arisen phenomena left them open to criticism of two kinds: (1) were these phenomena actually created by humans, and (2) did they only come into existence after Ganden did (again casting aspersions on their origin or primordial nature)? In terms of the first, he responds that "from the time of the

[674] For instance, Keith Dowman relates that while walking the circumambulation route, "the devotee is edified by the legends of Tsongkhapa related by his guide that are associated with many spots on the *korra* [*skor ba*]." Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, 100.

[675] Huber, *The Cult of Pure Crystal Mountain*, 61.

ancestors, there was a powerful prohibition against people resorting to their own efforts to carve and otherwise construct *maṇi* stones along circumambulation routes. Therefore, there has never been a tradition of construction."[676] In terms of the second, he asserts that, taking the case of Chapa Chöki Sengé (*Phywa pa chos kyi seng ge,* 1109-1169) it is incorrect to assert that the spontaneously arisen phenomena associated with him at Ganden postdate the monastery's founding, as Chapa passed away hundreds of years beforehand.[677] Instead, those phenomena associated with figures that predate Ganden's founding—such as Maudgalyāyana's letters or his walking-stick—must have arisen as spontaneously arisen phenomena before Ganden's founding, with the implication being that they were simply waiting to be found and incorporated in Ganden's circumambulation route.[678]

However, this neat solution belies some of the other ambiguities present in studying spontaneously arisen phenomena. One of these is a wide variability in the enumerations of Ganden's spontaneously arisen forms. On the one hand, Hartmann has stated that pilgrimage guides tend to overwhelm pilgrims with the sheer number of spontaneously arisen phenomena.[679] This is certainly true of two of Ganden's modern pilgrimage guides, with *Shartsé History II* enumerating an abundant list of sixty-five and the *Abridged Guidebook*

[676] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook,* 31. It's unclear what longstanding prohibition against carving and constructing *maṇi* stones is being referenced.

[677] For more on these, see below.

[678] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook,* 31-32. The narrative referenced is that of Maudgalyāyana burying the white conch at Ganden. When he did so, he is said to have left spontaneously arisen phenomena in the form of letters spelling his name, as well as a spontaneously arisen form of his walking-stick. Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gdan sa chen po dga' ldan rnam par rgyal ba' i gling gi gnas yig mdor bsdus pa*, 28. For an image of the letter "bu" (part of the Tibetan spelling of his name, Mo'u 'gal bu), see the frontmatter to this work.

[679] Hartmann, *To See a Mountain,* 298.

sixty-four, by my count. However, the other three sources available enumerate far fewer, with Jamyang Shepa enumerating three and leaving off with "etc.," Purchok enumerating eight "etc.," and the *Annals of Ganden* only nine.

It's unclear why the authors of these three works chose to enumerate so few of these items. It is certainly possible that lists of such items were composed or standardized at a later date. Jamyang Shepa's *Catalog* and Purchok's works are the earliest extant works, both dating to the eighteenth century, whereas the other three works date from the late twentieth or early twenty-first. It's also plausible that the authors didn't feel the need to waste ink describing something that was already well-known as one of Ganden's main features. Or perhaps describing Ganden's spontaneously arisen forms was a largely oral tradition, again not requiring extensive written description. Frankly, it's difficult to come to any conclusions.

As one tentative form of explanation, Katia Buffetrille has noted the existence of disparities between the information contained in pilgrimage guides and the information provided by informants at the site.[680] Buffetrille notes that her pilgrimage guidebook author "excludes from his text everything which does not belong to normative Buddhist ideology. Not a word, therefore, about all the juniper fumigations or leaving hairs from horses' manes."[681] By "juniper fumigations or leaving hairs from horses' manes," Buffetrille refers to popular rituals performed at pilgrimage sites that pilgrims seem universally aware of but that are neither noted in written accounts, nor representative of the kind of "normative" Buddhist

[680] Buffetrille, "The Great Pilgrimage of A-myes rma-chen," 97. Buffetrille wonders whether this may have resulted from Chinese repression of pilgrimage for many years and the resulting loss of collective memory; conversely, perhaps some of the pilgrimage sites are recent creations instead.

[681] Buffetrille, "The Great Pilgrimage of A-myes rma-chen," 112.

ideology, such as considering the site a Buddhist *mandala*. Notably, modern travelers to Ganden have noted the same type of popular rituals at Ganden, rituals that are again largely absent from the pilgrimage guide literature.

As Buffetrille notes, one of these is the common ritual practice called "white and black sins" (*sdig pa dkar nag*), "which generally take the form of a narrow opening between two rocks, where anyone who has committed too many sins gets stuck if he tries to slip through."[682] In a similar vein, Chan notes that pilgrims use a "Vision Rock" at Ganden to induce supernatural visions, roll around on the ground at a sky-burial site to remove bad karma and simulate death and rebirth, and purge themselves by spitting noisily or even vomiting over a black "Sickness-withdrawing Rock."[683] The existence of these practices at Ganden—as well as their absence within pilgrimage guides—suggests one potential reason for some authors also neglecting to enumerate Ganden's spontaneously arisen forms: they represent a popular form of practice that was unworthy of written description in the eyes of scholastically trained authors.

Just as different authors have different enumerations of spontaneously arisen phenomena, there are also changes in how a single item is described over time. One involves the previously mentioned Chapa Chöki Sengé narrative.[684] According to the *Shartsé History*

[682] Buffetrille, "The Great Pilgrimage of A-myes rma-chen," 99-100. Buffetrille notes these rocks are found "everywhere in Tibet," including at Ganden, at other places in Central Tibet, and at Mt. Kailash. The practice at Ganden is noted by both Dowman and Chan. Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, 102. Chan, *Tibet Handbook*, 143.

[683] Chan, *Tibet Handbook*, 143-44.

[684] On Chapa, his reputation as a scholar, and his role at Sangpu, see Cabezon and Dorjee, *Sera Monastery*, 130-133.

II, there are four spontaneously arisen phenomena associated with Chapa at Ganden: (1) his small footprints, (2) an imprint from when his mother was carrying him in a basket on her back and set it down, (3) his footprints again, and (4) a split in the rockface, when Chapa poured out some tea in order to show his mother the faults of wealth.[685] Three of these relate to when he was young and two relate to his mother, indicating that Chapa had his childhood in the region.[686] In terms of lineage, Chapa is also an important member of the Kadam lineage at the monastery of Sangpu (Gsang phu), where among other things he is credited with instituting formal debate and establishing the genre of the "collected topics" literature.

However, it is striking that these narratives have nothing to do with Chapa's life and work as a monk and respected teacher. They appear to represent oral traditions that manifested in Ganden's spontaneously arisen topography. This may have been out of a fondness for Chapa in the region as a local celebrity; or, from a desire by Geluk authors to accentuate Chapa's presence as part of their own Neo-Kadam tradition. However, by the time of Dowman's visit, this narrative elides Chapa altogether. Instead, it is related as "the place where Tsongkhapa's mother died after the master had shown her the rotten nature of material illusion."[687] This shift suggests that Chapa's status—whether as a cherished local figure or as a forerunner for the Geluk tradition—was no longer salient for pilgrims in the late twentieth

[685] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 167, 168, 173, 169.

[686] Regarding Chapa's birth, Cabezón writes: "Phywa pa or Cha pa chos kyi seng ge was born in the region of Phywa (or Cha), located in the Rtag rtse district of central Tibet, the same district where Ganden is located. So it is possible that this might have been an actual oral tradition associated with Chapa. The source regarding his birth is Karma bde legs, *Bka' gdams gsung 'bum sgrig thengs dang po'i dkar chag* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995), 57." José Cabezón, written communication to author, February 26, 2023.

[687] Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, 102.

century. It also foregrounds again that spontaneously arisen phenomena are both material and discursive phenomena.

In any event, for these reasons a comparative analysis of the different presentations of these spontaneously arisen phenomena is beyond the scope of this paper, as is a diachronic study of how they have changed over time. This brief aside is merely meant to indicate that the descriptions of spontaneously arisen phenomena appear fairly arbitrary and evince a large degree of variability. Given this state of affairs, I have chosen to rely on a single description found in the *Abridged Guidebook* for the rest of my analysis. This text was chosen as it contains both an exhaustive enumeration, as well as other interesting pieces of information (such as the aforementioned apologies for the validity of Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena). It's front matter also contains images of several items.

Ganden's Circumambulation Route according to the *Abridged Guidebook*

As a modern work, the sixty-four items in the description are helpfully given formal enumeration. The count begins from "the beginning of the route from Nyenrong Lhaka (Nyan rong lha kha)."[688] However, I'll treat them thematically rather than taking them in walking order. In general, my analysis of Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena suggest there are the following categories: (a) miscellaneous sacred phenomena, (b) other sacred sites, (c) Geluk-specific phenomena, and (d) Ganden-specific phenomena.

[688] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 26. Cf. Dowman, *The Power-Places of Central Tibet*, 100 and Chan, *Tibet Handbook*, 143.

Miscellaneous Sacred Phenomena

There are a number of terse allusions to spontaneously arisen phenomena which have no narrative content and appear to represent miscellaneous sacred phenomena that would be familiar to any Tibetan Buddhist devotee. These objects lack specificity or narrative content. They include spontaneously arisen images of the following: the Twenty-One Tārās, Milarepa with his yak horn, *maṇi* mantras in the Lañca script, Thousand-Armed Chenrezig, the sixteen Arhats and Four Great Kings, the Lords of the Three Families, more *maṇi* mantras, the eight auspicious symbols, the four good companions and six longevity symbols, the syllables *oṃ āḥ hūṃ*, and a speaking image of Four-Armed Chenrezig.[689] These miscellaneous phenomena include some of the most cherished Tibetan Buddhist deities (Chenrezig, Tārā, the Lords of the Three Families), most beloved saints (Milarepa), most important mantras, and most auspicious symbols. However, there is nothing linking them to Ganden in an explicit fashion.

Other Sacred Sites

A number of spontaneously arisen phenomena also invoke other sacred sites. These include: the charnel ground of Śītavana along with its vultures, Mt. Kailash, a cairn from Ḍāka Lake, a ladder which was traversed [by the Buddha] from Tuṣita, and the three *stūpas* of Nepal.[690] These invoke other sacred locations within Ganden's blessed grounds. Mt. Kailash and a cairn from Ḍāka Lake are both invocations of sacred natural sites, with a cairn seemingly

[689] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 26-31.

[690] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Gdan sa chen po dga' ldan rnam par rgyal ba' i gling gi gnas yig mdor bsdus pa*, 26-31. The three *stūpas* of Nepal are the three holiest Buddhist *stūpas* of the Kathmandu Valley: Boudhanāth, Namo Buddha, and Svayaṃbhūnāth.

representing a clever way to invoke a lake upon a mountain. The three *stūpas* of Nepal and the charnel ground of Śītavana invoke holy sites from Nepal and India.[691] Lastly, the invocation of a ladder traversed by the Buddha on his descent from Tuṣita suggests the historical Buddha's presence at Ganden by way of an object contacted by him.

Geluk-specific Phenomena

A number of spontaneously arisen phenomena are Geluk-specific but not specific to Ganden. These would have been most salient for Geluk devotees visiting the site. These include: a mask of Damchen Chögyel, the footprint of Palden Lhamo's mule, and images of the *jéyabsé*.[692] It's unsurprising to see mentioned here a mask of Damchen Chögyel, one of the most important Geluk protectors, or images of the *jéyabsé*, the founders of the tradition. Here we can also see the protectress Pelden Lhamo invoked via her mule's footprint. This was a way to invoke her presence for pilgrims as one of the Geluk tradition's main protectors, despite her not being considered one of Tsongkhapa's main three protectors.

Ganden-specific Phenomena

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the lengthiest descriptions of Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena are of those items specific to Ganden. One of these legitimates the circumambulation route itself: "at that spot, a very strong wind carried away [Tsongkhapa's]

[691] Interestingly, separate mention is also made of an actual "special charnel-ground which is not distinct from or essentially identical to the Indian charnel ground of Śītavana." Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 29. This may represent the "sky-burial site" or *durtrö* (*dur khrod*) referenced by Chan, *Tibet Handbook*, 143.

[692] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 26-31.

belongings [one day] and they were scattered on top of various rocks; so it is said that the path where his bear-fur hat, mala, and cushion went comprises the inner circumambulation route, and where his hat and pandit's hat went is the outer one."[693] This narrative grounds the two main routes in an event experienced by Tsongkhapa, although the scattering of Tsongkhapa's items by the wind leaves some ambiguity whether this was an auspicious accident, Tsongkhapa's own volition, or the work of supernatural beings. Incidentally, this narrative is also used as an emic explanation and apology for Ganden's relative lack of stature with regards to Drepung and Sera: "this [event] also became an omen (*rten 'brel*) for the majority of Genden Tripas coming from other seats."[694]

Another class of spontaneously arisen phenomena are related to Ganden but in a miscellaneous fashion. These are Ganden-specific items that are invoked tersely and with little narrative content. These include phenomena representing: the oven for the great assembly (whose [constituent earth] is from the Nāga realm), the golden throne of Ganden, Tsongkhapa's staff and pot, and the three syllable mantra which Tsongkhapa wrote in a stone.[695] These function to highlight the charismatic nature of Tsongkhapa and of the holy objects present at Ganden. However, they do so in an interesting "doubling-down" of charisma. For instance, not merely is the golden throne of Ganden blessed by Tsongkhapa's presence, it is also so powerful as a charismatic object that its presence spontaneously manifested for a second time on the circumambulation route. Not only are Tsongkhapa's staff

[693] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 27.

[694] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 27.

[695] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 26-31. No details are specified, so it is unclear whether this is an image of an oven, a stone that looks like an oven, etc.

and pot blessed by contact with his body during his life time, but they spontaneously manifested again out of Ganden's earth itself. Not only was Ganden's oven offered from the Nāga-realm (indicating both its divine providence and Tsongkhapa's power over spirits), it has manifested again on the circumambulation route to remind pilgrims of its power. The effect is akin to that of an advertising jingle that pummels you into submission via constant repetition. In contrast, Tsongkhapa's writing of the three-syllable mantra into the mountain's cliff-face almost pales in comparison as a single standalone miracle.

In a similar vein, some of Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena serve to reinforce the geomantic significance of Ganden for pilgrims. For instance, the four gates of the Guhysamāja mandala (southern, western, northern, and eastern) are all enumerated separately as items. Also enumerated are: "a spontaneously arisen red bird in the west," "an inscription of the form of the royal tortoise," and "in the east a spontaneously arisen mottled tiger." These correspond to auspicious signs mentioned in Desi Sangyé Gyatso's aforementioned work: a tiger in the east, a red bird in the west, and a tortoise (in the north). In the *Shartsé History II*, this geomantic presentation is again grounded in Tsongkhapa's own experience, as one of the forms enumerated there is the "imprint of prostrations by [Tsongkhapa] to the eastern door of the Guhyasamāja mandala." [696] In doing so, it legitimates the presence of these doors—and Ganden's status as the Guhyasamāja mandala—through an action of Tsongkhapa himself.

Another concern of pilgrimage guidebooks is to convey a sense that the local spirits have been tamed, and this is also true of Ganden's circumambulation route. One of these

[696] Blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin yar rgyas, *Shartsé History II*, 171.

narratives was mentioned in the last chapter, the time that Tsongkhapa encountered harmful spirits and subdued them with a "rain of iron hailstones."[697] Rather than spontaneously arisen forms, these boulders—and the spirits they imprison—are still to be found on the route. Another narrative invokes the charismatic power of the fourth Ganden Tripa Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen. Present at the site are spontaneously arisen "*drug cu ma* stone [*tormas*?] Zhalu Lekpa Gyeltsen launched at harmful spirits, along with the symmetrical mountains of fire of the *drug cu ma*."[698] This is a reference to a torma ritual used to avert negative influences of any kind. One such text composed by Shalu Lekpa Gyeltsen and this ritual has a long history of use in the Geluk tradition.[699] The main purpose of this phenomenon is to emphasize the charismatic power of the fourth Ganden Tripa and his ability to subdue harmful forces.

In a similar vein, some phenomena at the site are concerned with legitimating Ganden's charismatic lineage, past and present. Befitting the importance of Lhodrak Drubchen, one of the spontaneously arisen forms is related to the following narrative: "the Lhodrak Drubchen…performed consecration at Ganden, and the [grain?] scattered from his hand is renowned for being the size of the 'universal seed' (? *bskal pa'i 'bru*)."[700] This narrative invokes Lhodrak Drubchen's presence and blessing at Ganden. However, given that it's unclear what exactly he consecrated, and that Ganden's founding postdated Lhodrak Drubchen's passing by nearly a decade, it is clear that the primary function of this narrative

[697] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 27.

[698] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 26.

[699] For more on this ritual, see Bryan J. Cuevas, "Sorcerer of the Iron Castle: The Life of Blo bzang bstan pa rab rgyas, the First Brag Dkar sngags rams pa of A mdo (c. 1647-1726)," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* 39 (April 2017): 5–59.

[700] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 30.

is merely to invoke his lineal presence. Given the size of the grains scattered from his hand, his presence looms large over the early history of Ganden.

Performing a similar function are narratives related to the thirteenth Dalai Lama on the circumambulation route. This figure left his mark in the form of spontaneously arisen *maṇi* mantras that manifested after he spoke some mantras.[701] In addition, there is a broader narrative where he had a vision of the protector Damchen Chögyel entering into the rooftop of Tsongkhapa's Practice Hut. Inspired by this vision, he found nearby in a treasure-deposit Tsongkhapa's robes, water-vase, and hat, which were then placed as receptacles in Yangpachen Temple. This narrative functions to indicate both the thirteenth Dalai Lama's charismatic power, the continued presence of Damchen Chögyel at Ganden, and the re-emergence of Tsongkhapa in the twentieth century by newly found objects that have miraculously been found and newly installed as sacred objects.

The finding of these objects in a treasure-deposit echoes one of the central Ganden narratives, Tsongkhapa's finding of the white conch. As is related at length in the *Abridged Guidebook*:

> Under that cliff, [Tsongkhapa found] the white conch which had been left behind in the deposit. Above that was the dwelling of a sleeping monkey who was Treasure Lord and a form of Gaṇapati. There are spontaneously arisen tracks of that monkey all around, as well as spontaneously arisen letters spelling Maudgalaputra and his spontaneously arisen walking-stick. Previously, this religious conch was offered to the Conqueror Shākyamuni by the Nāga King Anavatapta 2600 years ago. Our guide, the unexcelled teacher, the Lord of Sages then gave it to Ārya Maudgalaputra, foremost in miraculous powers, saying: "Hide this on Gokpa Ri! In the future, this bhikṣu Padmé Ngangden will take it from its deposit and it will become his "community conch" (*tshogs dung*). The guarding of the treasure will be done by the monkey." Thus, it was prophesied, and that bhikṣu Padmé Ngangden and the

[701] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 30.

> Great Lord [Tsongkhapa] are of the same mental continuum. At the age of fifty-three in the Female Earth Ox year (1409), the Lord [Tsongkhapa] surreptitiously took out two things from the deposit: 1) the white dharma conch (*chos dung*) and 2) a mask (*zhal 'bag*) of [Damchen] Chögyel. Later, on the occasion of the establishing of the great central monastery, the glorious Drepung, by [Tsongkhapa's] son-like disciple Jamyang Tashi Pelden, [Tsongkhapa] gave it to him as its community conch.[702]

Befitting its importance, this description is by far the longest in the section on Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena and covers the entire swath of Ganden's imagined past and present. Here is a timeline:

a) 2600 years ago, Tsongkhapa was one of the historical Buddha's monk disciples, and the Buddha prophesied the founding of Ganden and sent Maudgalyāyana to deposit the conch on Ganden's mountain of Gokpa Ri, with a monkey form of Gaṇapati acting as Treasure Lord;

b) in 1409, this conch was taken from its deposit by Tsongkhapa and used as his dharma conch, with the spontaneously arisen traces of the monkey sleeping, the letters Mo'u 'gal gyi bu, and Maudgalyāyana's walking stick present;

c) ca. 1416, Tsongkhapa gave the conch to his disciple on the occasion of the founding of Drepung and it was kept there as a receptacle for hundreds of years;

d) as of the writing of the *Abridged Guidebook* in 2012, the spontaneously arisen phenomena remain.

[702] Dga' ldan ngag dbang bstan 'byung, *Abridged Guidebook*, 28-29.

As discussed in chapter two and four, it is via prophecy that the work of legitimation begins, as Ganden is said to have been prophesied 2600 years ago by the Buddha himself. At this time, Tsongkhapa was one of the Buddha's monk disciples, providing a lineal connection between the two. In addition, this narrative also echoes Ulrike Roesler's insight into the construction of place that took place in literary descriptions of the birthplace of the Kadam tradition, Reting (Rwa sgreng) Monastery. As she writes, the legitimation of the site involves temporal links working in both directions, "from the past into the present, and from the present into the past."[703]

However, more than a narrative, this relationship is grounded in the materiality of the conch found by Tsongkhapa himself. Just as the treasure tradition demonstrates authenticity by "placing the cycle's origin within the parameters of traditions already established as authoritative," here Tsongkhapa's finding of this treasure is grounded in the authenticity of the historical Buddha.[704]

However, what happens when religious figures and treasure objects are lost? The proverbial show must go on. This demonstrates a key role played by the spontaneously arisen phenomena at Ganden; religious figures come and go, buildings come and go, charismatic objects come and go, but spontaneously arisen phenomena—like the mountains and the earth itself—endure.

Conclusion

[703] Roesler, "A palace for those who have eyes to see," 127.

[704] Gyatso, "The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition," 111.

In this chapter, I have described the construction of Ganden Monastery as a sacred place. Within the pilgrimage guide literature, this took place via descriptions of typical features of pilgrimage sites, such as a framework of outer, inner, and secret, depicting the mountain monastery as a mandala, geomancy, flora and fauna, and spontaneously arisen phenomena. In doing so, I argue that Geluk authors of pilgrimage guide literature appear to have consciously adopted and adapted pilgrimage guide genre expectations for their own purposes. Unsurprisingly, one such case involves adapting the category of the mountain for a monastery, or reconceptualizing Tsongkhapa's corpus of teachings as a mountain. One seemingly novel manifestation of this was a seemingly little known practice of investigating "the signs of the names on the map," rather than investigating the ground itself.

On the one hand, this construction of place may have been part of a broader conception of the region as a "Lhasa Maṇḍala." However, the most important aspect of the construction of Ganden as a sacred place was the discursive construction of the site as the home of Tsongkhapa's charismatic presence, and the presence of other Geluk or Ganden-specific phenomena. In particular, the most important of Ganden's spontaneously arisen phenomena appear to function as a way to ground Ganden-specific narratives in a material fashion for pilgrims, stimulating them to view the site as a sacred place and to reinforce Geluk narratives as they walk the site.

In particular, the spontaneously arisen phenomena play a special role as an immutable kind of artifact that have survived the vagaries of Tibetan history. Their ongoing presence foregrounds the importance of the construction of Ganden as a sacred place, as many of the buildings and religious objects described in the last chapter were lost or destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. It is not accidental that the recently published dual-language Tibetan-

Chinese *Abridged Guidebook* opens with images of many of these spontaneously arisen phenomena. On the other hand, the differences apparent between pilgrimage guide literature and recent travelers' accounts indicate that even the perceptions of immutable phenomena can shift, as the understandings and needs of pilgrims do.

In many respects, the fate of Ganden appears to mirror that of Reting Monastery as the home of the Kadam tradition. As Ulrike Roesler has noted, much like Ganden Reting was not chosen as a site due to its preexisting sanctity.[705] Similarly, she notes that the construction of Reting as a sacred site was "closely linked with the construction of the identity of the [Kadampa] school."[706] And much like Ganden, Reting came to be eclipsed by the later Kadam monasteries of Sangpu and Nartang as prominent centers of scholarship and learning, being perceived instead "as a sacred site with auspicious features charged with high symbolic significance and transformative power."[707] Similarly, Ganden's construction as a sacred place likely played a role in its being eclipsed by the monasteries of Drepung and Sera. But for Geluk writers, such a development was not unexpected; it was foretold by Tsongkhapa's handing over of the conch to his disciple, or by the wind itself, as it carried away Tsongkhapa's effects one day as he walked the path around Ganden.

[705] Roesler, "A palace for those who have eyes to see," 125.

[706] Roesler, "A palace for those who have eyes to see," 125.

[707] Roesler, "A palace for those who have eyes to see," 126.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I argue that the predominant characterization of the Geluk tradition (as clerical, as rational, as bureaucratic, as scholastic) has distorted our understanding of its early history. Given Ganden's importance as the first monastery of the Geluk tradition, a broad study of its early history has also been a desideratum. As a corrective, I have engaged in a diverse study of the early history of Ganden Monastery in Tibet and the ways in which that history impacted the construction of the Geluk tradition. In particular, I have emphasized elements that have been neglected due to the dominant characterization of the tradition.

The first three chapters focused on the influence of Lhodrak Drubchen, an important early figure whose importance has been minimized in Gelukpa historical accounts. As a charismatic tantric lama and oracle, his status was cemented at a time when the ruler of central Tibet, Gongma Drakpa Gyeltsen, sought the aid of a charismatic *mahāsiddha* in a time of conflict. Lhodrak Drubchen then endorsed Tsongkhapa as his spiritual heir, stimulating patronage for Tsongkhapa's works. The importance of this charismatic status is evidenced by Tsongkhapa then being described as a *mahāsiddha* in later sources.

Due to his status as an oracle, Lhodrak Drubchen also communicated numerous important prophecies that influenced the early Geluk tradition. These prophecies are found in biographical works that were composed by Lhodrak Drubchen and requested by Tsongkhapa. Thus, in one sense they resulted from the close personal relationship between the two masters. However, in another sense, these biographies were also the result of a groundswell of support for Tsongkhapa, a wider network of important religious figures who were either disciples of Lhodrak Drubchen, Tsongkhapa, or both. However, the reception and treatment

of Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies varied over time as Geluk writers sought to minimize, reinterpret, and even modify them in later years in accord with their own perspectives.

It is clear that some early Geluk figures disapproved of Lhodrak Drubchen's heterodox leanings. This is apparent in the case of *Tsongkhapa's Garland*, a text found within Tsongkhapa's Collected Works but edited to remove references to Dzogchen terminology and practices. A more extreme form of censorship occurred when the prophecy section of this work was excised to create a new work (*Answers to Tsongkhapa's Questions*) that excluded the Dzogchen-inflected instruction altogether. This case study demonstrates that the construction of Geluk orthodoxy was not solely a philosophical project but a bibliographical one involving the compilation and printing of Tsogkhapa's Collected Works. And that one important strategy in the development of Geluk orthodoxy was the intentional exclusion of Dzogchen elements.

In chapters four and five, the focus on charisma extended to a study of Ganden as a pilgrimage site. Contrary to popular explanations that describe the rise of the Gelukpa solely in terms of rational activities, I argue it was the popularization of Ganden as a pilgrimage site that played a major role in the growth of the tradition and the Tsongkhapa devotional cult. This popularization also may have been part of a broader Ganden Podrang strategy to center Geluk monasteries as sites of charismatic authority. In their writing, authors of Gelukpa pilgrimage guide literature also appear to have consiciously adopted and adapted pilgrimage guide genre expectations in how they described the site.

One goal of my focus on the construction of the Geluk tradition has been restoring agency to historical figures.[708] In this study, numerous moments of agency have been highlighted such as Lhodrak Drubchen's decision to endorse Tsongkhapa as his spiritual heir; the way that multiple historians treated Lhodrak Drubchen's prophecies in their writing; the editing of Tsongkhapa's *Garland*; and the description of Ganden as a pilgrimage site by authors who are cognizant of pilgrimage guide genre expectations.

In the future, I hope this work also inspires others to continue studying the history of the Geluk tradition. Further studies could include deeper examinations of Lhodrak Drubchen's life and works, diachronic studies of Gelukpa prophecy, and studies of other Geluk pilgrimage sites and pilgrimage literature. In doing so, our understanding of the Geluk tradition would expand beyond the narrow focus exhibited thus far.

[708] This is in contrast to authors like DiValerio, who deemphasize agency by stating that "the religious system formulated by Tsongkhapa was easily institutionalizable and inherently institutionalizing," with doctrines, texts, and curriculums well-suited to be "scaled-up" and disseminated, giving "the Pakmodru administration a means to expand its reach, both literally and symbolically, across the whole of Tibet." DiValerio, *The Holy Madmen of Tibet*, 125.