Spring 1-1-2017

Entering ‘The Unified Maṇḍala of All the Siddhas:’ the Sādhana of Mahāmudrā and the Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects

Eben Matthew Yonnetti

University of Colorado at Boulder, eben.yonnetti@colorado.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/rlst_gradetds

Part of the Asian Studies Commons, History of Religion Commons, and the Religion Commons

Recommended Citation

Yonnetti, Eben Matthew, "Entering 'The Unified Maṇḍala of All the Siddhas:’ the Sādhana of Mahāmudrā and the Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects" (2017). Religious Studies Graduate Theses & Dissertations. 44.
https://scholar.colorado.edu/rlst_gradetds/44

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Religious Studies at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies Graduate Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu.
Entering ‘the Unified Maṇḍala of All the Siddhas:’
The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā and the
Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects

By
Eben Matthew Yonnetti
B.A., Siena College, 2012

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado Boulder in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Religious Studies
2017
This thesis entitled:
Entering ‘the Unified Maṇḍala of All the Siddhas:’
The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā and the Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects
written by Eben Matthew Yonnetti
has been approved for the Department of Religious Studies

__________________________________________
(Dr. Holly Gayley, Committee Chair)

__________________________________________
(Dr. Jules Levinson, Committee Member)

__________________________________________
(Dr. Greg Johnson, Committee Member)

__________________________________________
(Dr. Amelia Hall, Committee Member)

__________________________________________
(date)

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
Abstract:

Yonnetti, Eben Matthew (M.A., Religious Studies)

Entering ‘the Unified Maṇḍala of All the Siddhas:’ The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā and the Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Holly Gayley

This thesis examines the role of translation and the formation of Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects in religious transmission through an analysis of the tantric Buddhist ritual practice, the Sādhana of Mahāmudrā (SOM). Reported to be revealed as a Mind treasure (ཞིང་ས་ག’ང་) by the Tibetan reincarnate teacher Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (Tsoknyi Rinpoche, 1940-1987) while on retreat in Bhutan in 1968, and subsequently translated into English by Trungpa Rinpoche and his student Richard Arthure (1940–), the SOM played an important role in the early process of the transnational transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism to the ‘West.’ Nevertheless, after more than fifty years of practice by individuals and communities around the globe, the role of the SOM in this process has yet to be studied. Moreover, scholarship on the role of Vajrayāna rituals in contemporary religious transmission is also in its nascency. In this thesis, I aim to address this lacuna through a study of the revelation of this text, its strategic translation, and its role in the making of Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects. Given that the SOM emerged at a pivotal moment as Trungpa Rinpoche re-evaluated how to best teach the buddhadharma in the ‘West,’ I argue that its partially domesticating translation was a strategic means of inducting ‘Western’ students into a foreign ritual world. As such, I argue that the SOM was a skillful method to introduce ‘Western,’ non-Buddhist students to the Vajrayāna through an iterative process of ritual enactment and training in a subjectivity both described and prescribed within the text. As such, in this thesis I analyze the important role that the SOM played in the early formation of Vajrayāna subjectivities as Vajrayāna Buddhism came to North America and in preparing the ground for the later teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche would introduce to his students. This thesis informs my broader research question: how are new subjectivities created in the process of religious transmission across radically different cultural contexts? More generally, it contributes to emergent conversations around performativity in Buddhist ritual practice and will also prove relevant to those working on the intersection of ritual practice and religious transmission in other traditions.
Acknowledgements

Coming to the culmination of my studies at the University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder), this thesis has only been possible through the support, generosity, and input of numerous individuals over the past several years. While space does not permit me to mention all of those who have contributed to the success of this work, I would like to thank the CU Boulder School of Arts and Sciences, the Department of Religious Studies, the Center for Asian Studies, the University Libraries, and the Graduate School at the CU Boulder for financially supporting my studies in the US and abroad.

I would particularly like to thank my colleague and friend Sonam Nyenda, who was always happy to share his experience and knowledge, and whose modesty with what he knew was always overstated. My thanks also go to Sherab Wangmo, Noel Smith, Greg Mileski, Caitlyn Brandt, Tyler Lehrer, Joshua Shelton, Scott Brown, and other members of my graduate cohort in the CU Boulder Department of Religious Studies who have all been engaging conversation partners and good friends during our studies together. Thanks also to participants in the Tibet Himalayan Study Group at CU Boulder creating a robust and interactive interdisciplinary environment for the study of Tibetan and Himalayan cultures.

I also wish to thank Executive Director of the Nālanda Translation Committee, Larry Mermelstein, who granted permission and supported my work on the Śādṭhana of Maḥāmudrā, as well as to Kunga Dawa (Richard Arthur), Frank Berliner, Barry Boyce, and Derek Kolleeny for sharing their experience and knowledge of this ritual practice. Moreover, thanks go to Walter and Joanne Fordham and to Carolyn Gimian whose work on the Chronicles Project and the Chögyam Trungpa Legacy Project has preserved and made accessible to the public Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s teachings in a wide variety of formats.

I would also be remiss if I did not thank Hubert Decler, Isabelle Onians, and Nazneen Zafar who first ignited my interest in the Tibetan and Himalayan region as an undergraduate studying abroad in Nepal, and who have served as sources of wisdom and inspiration ever since. At the CU Boulder and Naropa University, I would like to thank Jules Levinson, Amelia Hall, Sarah Harding, Phil Stanley, and Lhoppon Rechung for nurturing and supporting my studies of Tibetan language and Vajrayāna Buddhism. Moreover, I would like to thank Greg Johnson, Lorilai Biernacki, Terry Kleeman, Lucas Carmichael, and faculty in CU Boulder’s Religious Studies Department whose courses and conversations helped me to grow as a scholar.

Deep thanks also go to my advisor, Holly Gayley, who has supported my work and professional development throughout my graduate studies and pushed me to develop as a critical thinker and close reader of texts. She is an inspiration for the type of scholar I hope to become.

Thanks to my family who have supported me in ways too numerous to mention throughout my years of study and travel in places near and far. Finally, I wish to thank my wife, Sierra Gladfelter, whose profound insight, kindness, and patience have helped tremendously in many drafts of this thesis, as well as every other piece that I have written. It is truly a blessing to share my life with such a supportive partner.
Table of Contents

I. Introduction 1

II. Transformation: Trungpa Rinpoche and the Treasure Tradition in the ‘West’ 16

III. Translation: The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā, Treasure Texts, and Domestication 37

IV. Transmission: The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā and the Formation of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects 61
   A. Disciplinary Practices, Speech-Acts, and Vajrayāna Subject-Making 64
   B. The Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects in the Sādhana of Mahamudra 74

V. Conclusion: Taming Subjects and Opening the Gates for the Ocean of Dharma 90

VI. Bibliography 98

VII. Appendices 107
I. Introduction

This is the darkest hour of the dark ages. Disease, famine and warfare are raging like the fierce north wind. The Buddha’s teaching has waned in strength. The various schools of the saṅgha are fighting amongst themselves with sectarian bitterness; and although the Buddha’s teachings were perfectly expounded and there have been many reliable teachings since then from other great gurus, yet they pursue intellectual speculations. [...] As a result, the blessings of spiritual energy are being lost. Even those with great devotion are beginning to lose heart. If the buddhas of the three times and the great teachers were to comment, they would surely express their disappointment. So to enable individuals to ask for their help and to renew spiritual strength, I have written this sādhana of the embodiment of all the siddhas.

Thus begins the Sādhana of Mahāmudrā Which Quells the Mighty Warring of the Three Lords of Materialism and Brings Realization of the Ocean of Siddhas of the Practice Lineage (ནང་གསང་བ). According to its opening lines, the mundane world is in an awful state, full of suffering, and even formerly-dedicated religious practitioners have abandoned their soteriological pursuits in favor of exploiting the buddhadharma for the sake of material gain. Due to this wretched state of the world and the degeneration of the Buddhist community, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche wrote down this liturgical text as a means of correcting the deterioration of spiritual practices and to renew the strength of the Vajrayāna Buddhist teachings in the contemporary world. In doing so Trungpa Rinpoche hoped this practice would spread and cause, “the chariot of the new perfected [age] to be ushered in.” What makes this text unique, however, is not its claim to renew the Buddhist teachings, but rather its role as a ritual practice in English that played a

---

2 zur mang drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba’i kla klo’i gyul chen po bzlaṅ jing don bgyud kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mngon du sgrub pa’i cho ga phyaṅ rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhugs so (Halifax, NS and Boulder, CO: Nālandā Translation Committee, 1988, 2011), 24A.
significant role in the early transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism to the Euro-North American context and the formation of ‘Western’ Vajrayāna Buddhist (སྐྱིད་སྒྲིགས་པ་) subjects.

The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā (SOM) is reported to be a Mind Treasure (ཐོབ་མོས་) revealed by Surmang Trungpa Chökyi Gyatso (ཐོབ་མོས་བོ་མེད་པ་; 1939/40–1987), more commonly known as Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche (ཆོས་འགྲམ་ཀུན་མerguson) while on retreat at the famed Bhutanese monastery of Paro Taktsang (ཕྲ་ལོ་རྩག་) in 1968. Translated and introduced by Trungpa Rinpoche to his students immediately upon his return to the United Kingdom (UK), the SOM was one of the first tantric liturgical texts (Skt: sādhana; Tib: སྐྱིད་ཞེས་) practiced in English in the Euro-American context and was a foundational element of the Vajrayāna teachings and practices that Trungpa Rinpoche later taught.

Today, the SOM continues to be practiced globally in Shambhala Centers, associated Buddhist groups, online practice communities, and by individual tantric practitioners (Skt. tāntrika/ māntrika; Tib. རྒྱལ་མཆོག)
As a widely disseminated ritual practice that has not hitherto been studied at length, the SOM is an important practice to examine to better understand how religious traditions move across space and time through their translation and ritual enactment.

In this thesis, I approach religion and specific religious practices not as static entities, but as dynamic processes of ongoing negotiation, evolution, and meaning-making that continue to be formed in dialogue with the contemporary world. To use Thomas Tweed’s cartographic metaphor, religions involve not only the establishment of roots and distinct identities, but also the crossing of boundaries and movements through space and time. The religious, he writes, “are migrants as much as settlers, and religions make sense of the nomadic as well as the sedentary in human life.”

To study religious transmission, therefore, is to investigate the numerous ways in which traditions, rituals, and knowledge move across space and time and how these practices re-root themselves in novel contexts and form new subjectivities among their populations. In examining the transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism, I pay attention not only to how the SOM crosses geographical and cultural boundaries, but also to the ways it is localized and takes root in new contexts.

Practitioners of the SOM generate and enter what Richard Davis calls the ritual universe of the text, visualizing and positioning themselves within the realm of the wrathful central deity (Skt. iṣṭadevatā; Tib. ངོན་དབང་), Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi (རྡོ་རྗེ་དབྱུང་གཞི་). Like other Buddhist sādhanas, the SOM begins with the practices of going for refuge (བདེ་ལེགས་བཞི་) to the Three Jewels (དབུན་པ་དོན་པ་) and taking

---

9 These are Skt. *buddha dharma saṅgha*; Tib. བདེ་ལེགས་པ་བདུན་པ་.
the Bodhisattva vow (ཐོང་པོ་བཞི་ཕན་པ་རིགས་པའི་མཐོང་པ་), followed by a brief period of sitting meditation before launching into the visualization practice. As practitioners generate and enter into the ritual universe of the SOM, they begin with the outer environment and move to the innermost elements of the universe occupied by the figure of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi. This universe is filled with figures of the Kagyü (བཀའ་ལེགས་), Nyingma (ཕྱིན་མར) and combined Ka-Nying (བཀའ་དང་ཕྱིན་མར) schools of Vajrayāna Buddhism, including various protector deities (Skt. dharmapāla; Tib. འས་མང་), members of the Kagyü lineage, and the central figure of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi himself. As practitioners step into the Ka-Nying Vajrayāna universe of the SOM, they establish themselves in a deferential relationship to the figures and forces contained therein. In visualizing these various figures and professing their devotion to them, practitioners train themselves to become subjects disillusioned with the degraded state of the mundane world who supplicate Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and other figures for help in overcoming material and psychological obscurations.

Revealed at a pivotal time, shortly after the onset of the Cultural Revolution (Chin. 文化大革命; Tib. བཤེགས་དཔལ་ལྟར་བཞི།) in the People’s Republic of China, the SOM is an important ritual practice for understanding the transnational transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism. Most notably, the SOM is an example of a contemporary Treasure text (གཏོགས་མ་) that is explicitly transnational in orientation, having been revealed as a result of Trungpa Rinpoche’s supplications to Padmasambhava and his lineage teachers guidance in how to transmit Vajrayāna Buddhism into a geography where it had not hitherto
been established, to historically non-Buddhist peoples, and in the English language. According to his wife, Diana Mukpo, while Trungpa Rinpoche had previously revealed Treasures in Tibet, the SOM was the first Treasure that he revealed after fleeing Tibet in 1959. Moreover, the SOM emerged at a critical juncture when Trungpa Rinpoche was especially concerned with how teach the buddhadharma to students in the ‘West’ and was one of the earliest sādhana-s that he introduced to his Euro-American Buddhist students. Consequently, the SOM became the text through which many students were first introduced to Vajrayāna Buddhist practice. As Trungpa Rinpoche’s organization, Vajradhatu International, expanded and new Dharmadhatu centers were founded across the UK and the United States (US), the SOM became a foundational practice among practitioners in many of these locales.

The SOM is also a notable example of a Ka-Nying sādhana that seamlessly interweaves the distinct mahāmudrā teachings of the Kagyū school with the mahāāti teachings of the Nyingma. The union of these two traditions is most uniquely embodied in the central deity of the SOM who combines the two figures of the wrathful manifestation of Padmasambhava (Tib. བདེ་བསྟན་པ་), Dorje Drolö (ཉེ་མ་པ་) and the Second Karmapa (ཀྲམ་པ་), Karma Pakshi (ཀྲམ་པ་; 1204-1283). As practitioners enact the creation stage (Skt: utpattikrama Tib: བཞི་པ་) of the SOM and enter the ritual universe of

---


12 The original name for Trungpa Rinpoche’s organization was Vajradhatu International and its various centers were each titled Dharmadhatus. While there was a gradual change in names, it was not until 2000 that Trungpa Rinpoche’s son, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche (ཨོི་ཡུལ་དབང་ཕམ་; b. 1962), officially changed the name of the overall organization to Shambhala International and to the individual centers as Shambhala Centers.

13 While the literal translation of Padmasambhava in Tibetan is བདེ་བསྟན་པ་, he is also commonly referred to across Tibet and the Himalayas by the epithet ‘Guru Rinpoche’ (དྲེ་བསྟན་པ་), meaning ‘Precious teacher.’
the sādhana, they simultaneously enter a realm where the distinction between these two Buddhist schools and their teachings overlap and augment one another. Thus, the SOM not only inducts practitioners into the Ka-Nying ritual universe of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, but more broadly into the Ka-Nying Vajrayāna Buddhism that Trungpa Rinpoche inherited and presented.

In addition, the SOM is distinctive within the context of Vajrayāna Buddhism’s transnational transmission in that although originally written in Tibetan, it has been almost exclusively practiced in English since its revelation. Indeed, the SOM is one of, if not the earliest Vajrayāna Buddhist practice to have been widely propagated and practiced in English. Even when some of Trungpa Rinpoche’s students were later competent enough in Tibetan to probe the completeness of the initial translation by Trungpa Rinpoche and his non-Tibetan speaking secretary Kunga Dawa (Richard Arthure; b. 1940), Trungpa Rinpoche refused to allow major revisions of the English practice version due to the special ‘termalike’ quality of the translation.14 Indeed, the unique quality of the English practice text has been recognized by several other Tibetan teachers, one of whom referred to it as the “absolute best translation” because it completely transferred the meaning of the original into a new language and context.15

Thus, the SOM stands as an important multilingual Treasure text that played a significant role in the initial and subsequent transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism to Europe and North America. Nevertheless, prior to this project, the SOM’s role in the transmission process has not been the subject of any detailed academic inquiry. Consequently, this thesis aims to address this lacuna through a critical

---

15 Ringu Tulku, personal communication with the author, November 11, 2015.
examination of this text and its translation, historical context, author, and role in the early transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism. I argue that the selectively-domesticating translation of the SOM served as a strategic means of conveying key Vajrayāna ontological, hierarchical, and soteriological truth-claims in language that connected with a counter-cultural subset of Euro-North American society and which enabled them to enact and through enacting become subjects of the Vajrayāna universe of the text. Following ritual theorists such as William Sax who discusses ritual as an “especially powerful means for creating (and sometimes undermining) selves, relationships and communities,” I analyze how the iterative performance of the SOM and the process of generating and entering its ritual universe serves as a technology of inducting and disciplining Vajrayāna subjectivities, I process I refer to as ‘Vajrayāna subject-making.’

Through the process of enacting, a verb that Ronald Grimes employs to set ritual action apart from mere ‘playing’ or ‘acting,’ practitioners generate the ritual universe of a liturgical text like the SOM and are simultaneously inducted as subjects of it. As Glenn Wallis writes in his study of the Mañjuśrīmūla-kalpa, Vajrayāna liturgical practices not only present “a vision of a transformed person,” but also serve as guides for individuals to undertake the transformation into said literary subject. As such, through the iterative enactment of a prescribed subjectivity embedded within a ritual text, practitioners train themselves to embody the ontological and soteriological truth-claims of that universe. In other words, through enacting Vajrayāna rituals, such as the SOM, individuals come to

---

connect with the wretchedness of their current state and develop devotion toward the lineage, the
Three Jewels, and the Three Roots (་བ་གmམ་).20 Above all, practitioners train themselves to view the
Vajrayāna teacher (Skt. guru; Tib. རྒྱ་མཚོ) as the source of teachings, blessings, and realization. Thus,
through the “apt performance” of Vajrayāna rituals, to use the language of anthropologist of religion
Talal Asad,21 I argue that ritual performance is a means to discipline practitioners to embody and master
a Vajrayāna subjectivity. Thus, I examine the SOM as a translation of words and worlds, the enactment of
which led to the making of some of the ‘West’s’ earliest Vajrayāna subjects.

Questions pursued in this thesis are: (1) What does the ritual universe created in the SOM look
like and how does this practice serve as a technology of religious transmission? and (2) What type of
Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects are formed through the enactment of the SOM create? More broadly, I ask
(3) How does the strategic translation of words and worlds facilitate the transmission of Vajrayāna
Buddhism? and (4) What role does ritual enactment play in the broader process of religious
transmission? By examining these questions, I aim to contribute to conversations on the topic of
translation and transmission that have inspired the 2014 and 2017 Tsadra Translation and Transmission
Conferences. Moreover, through a close examination of ritual practice as a technology of subject-

20 In the Nyingma school the Three Roots are comprised of the Teacher (Skt. guru; Tib. རྒྱ་མཚོ), the Tutelary Deity, and the Sky-
Goers (Skt. ḍākinī; Tib. རྒྱུ་ད་མ།). The Outer Refuge is Buddha, Dharma, Sangha. In the Nyingma, these there is also the Secret
refuge of the channels (Skt. nādi; Tib. ཕྱིན་), wind (Skt. prāna; Tib. ཚེ་), and drops (Skt. bindu; Tib. སྟེགས་), and the ultimate refuge
which are manifestations of the Three Kayās (་བ་གmམ་), dharmakāya (་བ་), sambhogakāya (་མཆེན་), and nirmanakāya (་བོམ་བོད་).  
21 Talal Asad, Geneologies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins
making and the transmission of Vajrayāna traditions, I hope to contribute to an emergent body of literature on the contemporary, global transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism.²²

From an emic perspective, especially within the Nyingma school, the Treasure tradition (གཏར་གས) is one technology of religious transmission, an important method for the movement of the buddhadharma into new spaces and times in ways that are uniquely pertinent for them while still being firmly rooted in the past.²³ Treasures, such as the SOM, are understood to have been hidden at various places, both physical and immaterial in the mindstream of Treasure revealers (གཏར་ཐོབ), by Padmasambhava so that they could later be revealed at appropriate times to benefit beings in a specific

---


context. As Tulku Thondup writes, “it is beneficial for various types of Terma [Treasures] to be
discovered at different periods to suit the mental desires, needs, and capacities of people born in these
times.” In this way, Treasures are unique types of translations, not merely in the colloquial sense of the
term, expressing the sense of a text or speech from one language in another, but in the etymological
sense of the Latin word *trans-ferre*, meaning to *carry* or to *bring across*. Such translations contribute to the
broader process of transmission or the *sending across* (Latin: *trans-mittere*) of ontological, soteriological,
and cosmological understandings.

Nevertheless, as Jay Garfield points out, *to translate* is inextricable from its etymological relative
to *transform* (Latin: *transformare*), meaning to change in shape or form, and every translation is in many
ways a transformation of the original text. As translators go about their work, they must interpret and
replace terms in the original language with other phrases in the target language, make clear some
ambiguous terms and introduce new ambiguities, offer interpretations based upon their own
experiences, understandings, and fidelities, and shift the context in which a text is read. Thus, Garfield
rightly concludes, “no text survives this transformation unscathed,” in that every translation is
essentially a re-interpretation of a text by an individual or team of translators. Similarly, I would
argue, Treasure revealers, such as Trungpa Rinpoche, serve as translators who actively carry the
 teachings, practices, and ontological outlook of the *buddhadharma* across spaces and times, transforming

24 While Padmasambhava is named the most common source of Treasures, he is by no means the only figure understood to have locked teachings away to be revealed later. See Gytso, “The Logic of Legitimation in the Tibetan Treasure Tradition,” 98.
27 Ibid., 94.
the content in ways that enable its transmission into new circumstances. As Garfield further notes, any project of textual translation is deeply implicated in the broader process of religious transmission once it becomes a part of individuals’ religious practices.²⁸

In this thesis, I closely examine a translator, Trungpa Rinpoche, and a translation of a Treasure text, the SOM, to illustrate the transformation of Vajrayāna Buddhism within the broader process of the transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism into 'Western' contexts. Since that the SOM emerged at a pivotal moment for Trungpa Rinpoche as he re-evaluated how to best teach the buddhadharma in the 'West,'²⁹ I argue that his translation is representative of Trungpa Rinpoche’s approach of connecting Buddhist teachings and practices to the context in which they were presented. In creating a partially domesticated translation of the SOM for practice among his students in the 'West,' Trungpa Rinpoche strategically localized aspects of the SOM and presents a Vajrayāna universe in a language that 'Western' students can relate to. In doing so, however, the SOM does not compromise the Vajrayāna to ‘fit’ the ‘Western’ context but demands students enter the foreign Vajrayāna ritual universe prescribed within the text. As such, I argue that the SOM was a skillful method to introduce and induct 'Western,’ largely North Ameican, non-Buddhist students into the Vajrayāna through an iterative process of ritual enactment and training in a subjectivity depicted in the ritual universe of the text. As such, I conclude that the SOM prepared the ground for the later teachings that Trungpa Rinpoche would introduce to his students.

In the first section of this paper, “Transformation,” I examine Trungpa Rinpoche as a translator,

²⁸ Ibid., 93.
²⁹ Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 253-254. More will be said on the revelation of the SOM in the second section.
a Buddhist teacher who carried his knowledge, writings, and practice across into a new context and conveyed them in a unique and contextualized way to his students. I present a brief overview of Trungpa Rinpoche’s religious and secular education and training in Tibet as well as in India and the UK to highlight the context he came from as well as his role as a translator of the Vajrayāna. I stress here Trungpa Rinpoche’s Ka-Nying training, studies at Oxford, and early immersion in ‘Western’ culture and teaching Buddhism in the UK. In doing so, I highlight Trungpa Rinpoche’s autobiography,\footnote{First published in 1966 only three years after Trungpa Rinpoche arrived in the UK, this book was his first work in English. Although largely written by Esmé Cramer Roberts based upon Trungpa Rinpoche’s recollections, it was one of the first biographical works in English that included detailed accounts of the life and training of a Vajrayāna reincarnate teacher.} \textit{Born in Tibet}, which depicts his early attempts to introduce the \textit{buddhadharma} into the ‘Western’ context and his desire to find a method to translate the Buddhist teachings in ways that befit this setting to underscore the circumstances of the SOM’s genesis.

Further, I discuss the revelation and translation of the SOM while Trungpa Rinpoche was on retreat in Bhutan in order to contextualize its revelation and place in Trungpa Rinpoche’s presentation of the \textit{buddhadharma}. Following Lopez’ work on the biography of the \textit{Tibetan Book of the Dead},\footnote{Donald Lopez Jr., \textit{The Tibetan Book of the Dead: A Biography} (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011).} I examine the textual-biography of SOM to illustrate how it is presented as a timely revelation, uniquely suited to the context for which it was revealed, potent with the energy of spiritual renewal and the blessings of Padmasambhava. To do this, I utilize three accounts from Trungpa Rinpoche as well as personal communications with close students of Trungpa Rinpoche, practice instructions, as well as written and video testimony that detail the revelation and translation of the SOM.\footnote{These sources include Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{Born in Tibet}; Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{Devotion & Crazy Wisdom: Teachings on the Sadhana of Mahamudra} (Halifax, NS: Vajradhatu Publications, 2015); Jeremy Hayward, \textit{Warrior King of Shambhala: Remembering Chögyam Trungpa}, (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2008); Jim Lowrey, \textit{Taming Untameable Beings: Early Stories of}
revelation and initial translation of the SOM resulted in an English language practice text that localized Vajrayāna within specific concerns of the ‘Western,’ and especially American counter-culture, like materialism, but which also drew practitioners in as subjects of the foreign, Ka-Nying universe of the text.

In the second section, “Translation,” I examine through a close study of Tibetan and English versions of the SOM, how the text works to translate both words and worlds. As mentioned above, the Treasure tradition is understood, within the Nyingma school especially, as a technology through which transmission or the sending of teachings and practices across space and time, occurs. Although such teachings are firmly grounded in what Buddhist studies scholar Holly Gayley has called an ‘ontology of the past,’ whereby an idealized past continues to manifest and have an enduring presence in the present through Treasure revelation, Treasures are also conceived of as being uniquely situated for the contexts they are uncovered within. This is true for the SOM, which was revealed and translated especially for its use in the English-speaking, Euro-North American context. The translation of the SOM also raises issues made in translation studies by Friedrich Schleiermacher and Lawrence Venuti, who describe the act of translation as either serving to bring readers to a text (foreignization) or a text to its readers (domestication). Here, I argue that the SOM functions as a partially-domesticating translation, as

---

Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche with the Pygmies and Other Hippies (San Bernardino, CA: Blue Horse Publications, 2015); Mukpo and. Gimian, Dragon Thunder; Vajravairochana Translation Committee, trans. and ed. The Śādhana of Mahāmudrā: Resources for Study, (Halifax, NS: Vajravairochana Translation Committee, 2012; as well as personal communications with Frank Berliner, Barry Boyce, Kunga Dawa, and Derek Kolleeny.


it adapts certain aspects of the Tibetan text to the intended context of its use. By closely examining Trungpa Rinpoche’s textual translation of the SOM, I illustrate several key changes in words at the textual level, such as incorporating the idea of materialism and the psychologization of physical forces, to reveal how these choices evoke the ritual universe of the SOM in language resonant with Euro-American practitioners in the counter-cultural era.

Buddhologist Peter Della Santina argues that the translation of Buddhist texts is, “essentially and generally [a] reinterpretation of terms and concepts within a new cultural milieu.” While I agree that Trungpa Rinpoche translated diverse ontological understandings into new contexts in ways that were resonant with their intended audiences, I also challenge Della Santana’s unidirectional view of translation. Indeed, as Garfield has pointed out, the transmission of Buddhism is, “very much a two-way street” that involves not only teachers presenting practices and teachings uniquely suited for specific contexts, but also demanding that their students accept certain ontological truth-claims of the source tradition. In this way, I argue that the strategic domestication of the SOM’s translation is a way of skillfully drawing ‘Western’ practitioners into the foreign ritual universe of the SOM.

The final section of this paper, “Transmission,” examines the foreign aspects of the ritual universe of the SOM in the context of Vajrayāna subject-making. Here, I discuss Vajrayāna subject-making through the creation stage of tantric visualization practice and argue that by entering the ritual universe invoked in the SOM, individuals are simultaneously trained to embody certain cosmological,

---


37 Garfield, ”Translation as Transmission and Transformation,” 90.
ontological, and soteriological truth-claims of its ritual universe. Although selectively-domesticated on a textual level, I argue ultimately that the SOM demands that practitioners enter a prescribed foreign space and set of relations within the ritual universe of the SOM. This, I claim, is especially the case as it pertains to Vajrayāṇa understandings of hierarchy, devotion, and the role of the teacher and the lineage (Skt. paramparā; Tib. བཔོ་པར་). Through examining the ritual universe that practitioners invoke, embody, and inhabit during the creation stage and the devotional supplication of the SOM, I argue that practitioners induct and train themselves in a subjectivity prescribed within the text through an iterative process of enacting that subjectivity. Moreover, I argue that practitioners train themselves to become subjects not only of the Vajrayāṇa universe embedded within the text but of the social world outside of the text as well. In this way, by training in the hierarchy of the ritual universe of the SOM, practitioners also develop an understanding of hierarchy and of the centrality of the Vajrayāṇa teacher in their broader religious community outside of ritual. This served as a key foundation in the emergence of Vajrayāṇa communities in North American during the early 1970s.
II. Transformation: Trungpa Rinpoche and the Treasure tradition in the 'West'

When Trungpa Rinpoche arrived in the UK in 1963, he was one of only a small number of Tibetan religious teachers who had left Asia and established Buddhist study and practice centers in the 'West.' Even among these, Trungpa Rinpoche was the first who taught the buddhadharma in English and took an active role in translating Vajrayāna terms and practices into English. In this section, I discuss Trungpa Rinpoche’s Ka-Nying religious training in Tibet, as well as his early encounter with the 'West' to contextualize the revelation of the SOM within Trungpa Rinpoche’s background and efforts to find a method to transmit the buddhadharma in a new context.

Moreover, I discuss the importance of Trungpa Rinpoche’s meetings with two of his teachers, the Sixteenth Karmapa, Rangjung Rigpé Dorje (རང་རིག་པ་དེ་རོ་; 1924-1981) and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (ཟིལ་གཞི་རིང་པོ་ཆེ་; 1910-1991) during his return to India in 1968 and how these figures influenced the revelation of the SOM. To do so, I draw upon Trungpa Rinpoche’s recollections in his autobiography, Born in Tibet, as well a December 1975 seminar given by Trungpa Rinpoche, which was later published in the work The Mishap Lineage. Finally, for discussions on the historical circumstances of the SOM’s revelation, I draw upon two accounts given by Trungpa Rinpoche in seminars in 1975, later

---

38 At the time of Trungpa Rinpoche’s subsequent arrival in 1970 in the US, there were few established Vajrayāna centers. Most notable among these were that of the Kalmyk Geshe Ngawang Wangyal (ངག་དབང་དབང་; 1901-1983) who set up a monastery in Washington, NJ in 1958, Dezhung Rinpoche (དཔལ་མེད་; 1906-1987) who had emigrated to Seattle, WA in 1960, and Tartang Tulku (ཙུང་ཙུང་; b. 1934) who established a center in Berkeley, CA in 1969. For more information on early Vajrayāna Buddhist groups in North America, see Rick Fields, How the Swans Came to the Lake, 273-303.

39 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 23-29.

republished in the volume *Devotion & Crazy Wisdom*, as well as several accounts from Trungpa Rinpoche’s student and then-secretary, Kunga Dawa, who accompanied him during this journey.

Trungpa Rinpoche was born in 1939/1940 in a small village in the then-kingdom of Nangchen (ནང་) in the eastern Tibetan region of Kham (ཁམས་), in the south of present-day Qinghai province (青海省). Following the death of the Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche, Karma Chökyi Nyinche (ཀར་མཆོག་སྐྱེན་; 1879-1939), the leader of the Karma Kagyu (ཀར་མཆོག་པད་) sub-school of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism, the Sixteenth Karmapa, revealed to students of the Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche the location and family of his reincarnation in two prediction letters. Following these instructions, a group of monks from the Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche’s monastery, Surmang Dütsi Til (ནུ་ར་མང་བད་), located the suspected reincarnation of their teacher. After a series of confirmation tests, identifying objects belonging to his predecessor, the identity of the Eleventh Trungpa Rinpoche was confirmed. He was enthroned at thirteen months of age by the Sixteenth Karmapa at the monastery of Surmang Namgyal-tse (ནུ་ར་མང་ལ་). 

During his youth, Trungpa Rinpoche underwent rigorous training in ritual practice, philosophy, the arts, and meditation pertaining to his status as a reincarnate teacher (དྲེན་པོ་). While I will not repeat what Trungpa Rinpoche has already said about his education in Tibet, it is important to stress here his training in both the Kagyü and Nyingma schools of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism. Although himself a Kagyü

---

41 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Devotion & Crazy Wisdom*.
42 As Trungpa Rinpoche’s long-time editor, Carolyn Rose Gimian, notes in the introduction to the first volume of his collected works, there is some confusion over Trungpa Rinpoche’s precise date of birth. *Born in Tibet* lists his birthdate as the full moon of the first month of the Earth Hare year (1939), whereas other sources suggest that he was born in the year of the Iron Dragon (1940). For more discussion, see: Carolyn Rose Gimian, “Introduction,” in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa: Volume One*, ed. Carolyn Rose Gimian (Boston and London: Shambhala Publications, 2003). xxi.
44 For more details on Trungpa Rinpoche’s education and early life in Tibet, see *Born in Tibet*, particularly chapters 1 through 10.
reincarnate teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche had profound respect for his root teachers (Tib. རྡོ་དབང་), Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen (བསྐོལ་བྲིས་བཟང་) (1901-c. 1960), whom Trungpa Rinpoche called his “spiritual father,” and Khenpo Gangshar (བསྐོལ་བྲིས་བཟང་) (1925-?), both of whom were Nyingma teachers. Among Trungpa Rinpoche’s other teachers were the Surmang Kagyü monks Asang Lama (བསྐོལ་བྲིས་) and Rölpé Dorje Rinpoche (བསྐོལ་བྲིས་), as well as other Nyingma and Kagyü masters, such as Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung (བསྐོལ་བྲིས་) (1904-1952), Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, and the Sixteenth Karmapa. Studying with these teachers, Trungpa Rinpoche mastered multiple approaches to practicing the Vajrayāna, including the Nyingma dzogchen (Skt. mahāsaṃdhi/atiyoga; Tib. བསྐོལ་བྲིས་) and Kagyü mahāmudrā (Tib. བསྐོལ་བྲིས་) teachings. He would later incorporate and interweave these approaches in his presentation of Buddhism in the ‘West.’

Some, including Trungpa Rinpoche’s own organization, Shambhala International, and the recently formed Ri-mé Society, often identify Trungpa Rinpoche’s approach with the so-called ‘non-sectarian’ or ‘ri-mé’ (རི་མེད) outlook, grounded in the work of the nineteenth century masters

---

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (1820-1892) and Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thaye (1813-1900). These groups describe non-sectarianism as a movement which founded a new ecumenical presentation of Vajrayāna Buddhism that transcended sectarian divisions and presented teachings equally from across all schools of Vajrayāna Buddhism. The Ri-mé Society, for example, specifically dubs Trungpa Rinpoche “a consummate Ri-mé master of the Buddhist teachings” due to his skillful manner of “presenting the core of Buddhism” through a variety of methods. Elsewhere, Shambhala International describes Trungpa Rinpoche as an adherent of non-sectarianism, who “aspired to bring together and make available all the valuable teachings of the different schools, free of sectarian rivalry.” No doubt Trungpa Rinpoche was profoundly inspired and impacted by the legacies of by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamgön Kongtrül as many of his region and generation were, yet in the SOM text what comes to the fore is more of a Ka-Nying orientation, i.e. the synthesis of the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions.

As Ringu Tulku (b. 1952) describes, Jamgön Kongtrül and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo did not form a break-off group that advocated a synthetic approach to the buddhadharma by merging previous teachings. Rather, they were primarily concerned that many Vajrayāna teachings and lineages were in danger of disappearing and so attempted to gather, compile, publish, and transmit teachings from across the Eight Practice Lineages (བ་བདེ་བོད་དཔལ་བཞིན་) in a way that provided an

---

50 “Introduction to Ri-mé Society-Celebrating the Living Dharma.”
51 “Chögyam Trungpa.”
53 The Eight Practice Lineages refer to the eight principal traditions of Vajrayāna study and practice that are understood to have been transmitted from India to Tibet during the periods of old and new periods of transmission (དབུན་པོ་དོན་) from the seventh
“appreciation of their differences and an acknowledgement of the importance of variety to benefit practitioners of different needs.” From this point of view, non-sectarianism was not so much about creating a novel syncretic approach to Vajrayāna practice or a grab-bag of each tradition’s ‘greatest hits,’ as it was about gathering and preserving the Vajrayāna’s diverse practice traditions. When seen in this light, non-sectarianism reveals itself not to be an original idea or movement as much as a sensibility that appreciates the richness of diverse Vajrayāna traditions.

Trungpa Rinpoche’s monastic training was profoundly impacted by followers of Jamgön Kongtrül and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo’s non-sectarian approach to study and practice. His predecessor, the Tenth Trungpa Rinpoche, was a direct student of Jamgön Kongtrül and later went on to be a teacher of many of Trungpa Rinpoche’s own teachers, including his root teacher Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen, Jamgön Kongtrül of Palpung, and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Indeed, these three figures were themselves direct reincarnations of Jamgön Kongtrül and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, and so Trungpa Rinpoche was trained by direct spiritual descendants of these nineteenth century non-sectarian masters. Trungpa Rinpoche described how his root teacher, Jamgön Kongtrül of Shechen advocated a non-sectarian outlook, noting that he often told Trungpa Rinpoche “that we must make great efforts to overcome any divisions among the followers of Buddhism and how very important this was at the present time, if we hoped to protect ourselves from the destructive influence of materialism through the fourteen centuries CE. These practice lineages are: Nyingma (ཞིང་མ་), Kadampa (བཀའ་གདམས་པ་), Lamdré (ལམ་འõས་), Marpa Kagyū (ཐར་པ་བཀའ་བPད་), Shangpa Kagyū (ཤངས་པ་བཀའ་བPད་), Shijé/Chö (ཤིཇེ/ཆོ), The Six Branches of Union (†ར་Wག་), and the Approach and Accomplishment of the Three Vajras (ཐ་:ན་བ°ན་བPད་). For an overview of the Eight Practice Lineages, see: Ringu Tulku, The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgön Kongtrul the Great, 97-192.

54 Ringu Tulku, The Ri-me Philosophy of Jamgön Kongtrul the Great, 3
55 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Mishap Lineage, 54-55.
Referring such lines, some maintain that Trungpa Rinpoche inherited this mantle and was himself a consummate non-sectarian teacher.

Nevertheless, with respect to the SOM, I would suggest that it is more accurate to characterize Trungpa Rinpoche as manifesting a Ka-Nying orientation rather than a non-sectarian one. Trungpa Rinpoche’s principal teachers were from the Kagyü and Nyingma schools and he spoke of his lineage primarily in terms of Kagyü antecedents. Moreover, in some texts, we see lines that disparage other traditions. For example, the opening lines of the SOM depict the Bön (པོན) tradition in a pejorative light, as mainly aiming to corrupt the Vajrayāna. In other sources, there is also little homage paid to teachings from other schools of Tibetan Buddhism (e.g. Sakya/ས་, Gelug/དྲན་ལྡན་, Jonang/ཇོ་ནང་, etc.). Thus, although Trungpa Rinpoche crossed some sectarian divides, he certainly did not openly flaunt all of them. Trungpa Rinpoche’s Ka-Nying training in Tibet, however, clearly had a profound impact upon him and manifests throughout his corpus of teachings. This, as we shall see below, was first manifest in the ‘West’ embedded within the SOM.

After the invasion of Kham by the People’s Liberation Army in the early 1950s and increasing conflict around his home monastery, Trungpa Rinpoche fled Tibet for India on April 23rd, 1959. After a harrowing journey of more than six months on foot, he arrived on January 17th, 1960 with only a few dozen members of his original party of several hundred. For an autobiographical account of Trungpa Rinpoche’s escape from Tibet to India, see Born in Tibet chapters 10-19. For an account written more than half a century after Trungpa Rinpoche’s escape, see Grant MacLean’s book From Lion’s Jaws: Chögyam Trungpa’s Escape to the West (Mountain: 2016). For high quality maps, interactive simulations, and an accompanying film entitled Touch and Go (2011), see also the accompanying website: www.fromlionsjaws.ca, accessed 17 March 2017.

56 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 118.
57 Commonly called the ‘pre-Buddhist’ religion of Tibet, Bön is often used pejoratively as a rhetorical scapegoat in Vajrayāna texts to describe things ‘non-Buddhist,’ and therefore heretical, invalid, and/or harmful.
58 For an autobiographical account of Trungpa Rinpoche’s escape from Tibet to India, see Born in Tibet chapters 10-19. For an account written more than half a century after Trungpa Rinpoche’s escape, also see Grant MacLean’s book From Lion’s Jaws: Chögyam Trungpa’s Escape to the West (Mountain: 2016). For high quality maps, interactive simulations, and an accompanying film entitled Touch and Go (2011), see also the accompanying website: www.fromlionsjaws.ca, accessed 17 March 2017.
stayed in India as a principal of the Young Lama’s Home School in Dalhousie alongside his fellow Kagyü teacher, Akong Rinpoche (ཕྲན་དགོན་, 1939-2013), who served as the school’s administrator. In 1963, however, after a sectarian power-struggle between the two Kagyü Rinpoches and the Gelug-dominated Central Tibetan Administration, Trungpa Rinpoche and Akong Rinpoche were removed from their positions at the school in favor of Gelug monks.\(^5^9\) Shortly thereafter, with the help of sympathetic British and American backers, Trungpa Rinpoche secured a Spaulding Fellowship to study comparative religion at Oxford University. Leaving India with Akong Rinpoche in February of 1963, it was a time of both intense excitement and anticipation for Trungpa Rinpoche and the last time he would be in Asia for five years.

At Oxford, Trungpa Rinpoche studied comparative religion, fine arts, philosophy, and psychology, and reports to have immensely enjoyed his studies despite initial struggles with the English language.\(^6^0\) In addition to his exposure to European philosophy and Christianity, Trungpa Rinpoche recalls how he developed a deeper understanding and appreciation of Euro-North American history and culture while immersed in a ‘Western’ context. “Arriving at Oxford was a moving experience,” he notes, “coming from Tibet and India, one’s perception of the West was of a stark modern realm, but it turned out to have its own dignified culture, which I began to appreciate while living and studying at Oxford.”\(^6^1\) These formative years studying English and trying to understand of ‘Western’ culture were, in many ways, the basis for Trungpa Rinpoche’s ability to connect with his students during his later work.

\(^{59}\) MacLean, From Lion’s Jaws, 286-287; Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Mishap Lineage, 61-63.
\(^{60}\) Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 190.
\(^{61}\) Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 252.
Nevertheless, Trungpa Rinpoche was also plagued with a feeling of restless frustration with his role as a Buddhist teacher and his capacity to reach his students. “There was also a sense of dissatisfaction,” he wrote in the 1976 afterword to the third edition of *Born in Tibet*, because “my ambition was to teach and spread the Dharma.”

While Trungpa Rinpoche did teach in several Buddhist and pro-Tibet groups during his studies, such as the London Buddhist Society and Tibet Society, and published his first book in 1966, an autobiography entitled *Born in Tibet*, nevertheless, he was deeply dissatisfied with his inability to successfully translate the Buddhist teachings to his British students and within the settings in which he taught. There was, as he later wrote, “no situation in which I could begin to make a full and proper presentation of the teachings of Buddhism.”

At the London Buddhist Society, for example, Trungpa recalls teaching a rather stuffy crowd, utterly disinterested in engaging in practice. As a result, Trungpa Rinpoche left feeling that the group was “more concerned with its form than with its function as Buddhists.” In other words, he felt the students were more interested in the structure of their meetings than in engaging in actual meditation. Trungpa Rinpoche felt as if he was more of a decoration to these groups, rather than someone they were genuinely engaged in studying and practicing with. One of Trungpa Rinpoche’s senior American students, Barry Boyce, later described the situation, noting that “Wearing monk’s robes in this adopted home, he [Trungpa Rinpoche] often felt he was being treated like a piece of Asian statuary, uprooted from its sacred context and set on display in the British Museum.”

---

62 Ibid., 252.
63 Ibid., 252.
64 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Devotion & Crazy Wisdom*, 193.
In 1967, this situation began to change after Trungpa Rinpoche was invited by Canadian-British monk Ananda Bodhi (1931-2003) to take charge of Johnston House Contemplative Community in Dumfries, Scotland. Along with Akong Rinpoche, Trungpa Rinpoche moved into Johnson House, which the two rechristened Samye Ling (བསམ་ཡས་ཞེང་), after the first Tibetan monastery founded in the 8th century by Padmasambhava. Trungpa Rinpoche thought that teaching at his own center would prove more fruitful, however, this did not turn out to be so. As he wrote later, “the scale of activity was small, and people who did come to participate seemed to be slightly missing the point.” Even though he could teach a group of dedicated students at his own center, Trungpa Rinpoche found that the traditional style of offering exegeses on canonical texts did not prove terribly effective to his students in this new context. Something was being lost in translation and Trungpa Rinpoche was uncertain how best to transmit Buddhism in this setting. As he later recalled, “There was as yet no situation in which I could begin to make a full and proper presentation of the teachings of Buddhism.”

Moreover, Trungpa Rinpoche found the atmosphere of Samye Ling not only frustrating, but increasingly hostile as his relationship with Akong Rinpoche began to deteriorate. By this time, it was clear that the two had divergent views on how best to present the Vajrayāna in this new context. As Trungpa Rinpoche later described, Akong Rinpoche believed that Buddhism should be presented in the ‘West’ “as a kind of conmanship” and “advocated deception, which he thought created an air of inscrutability with which to win people over.” Convinced that translating Buddhism into English

---

67 Ibid., 252-253.
68 Ibid., 252.
69 Ibid., 255.
would result in its degeneration, Akong Rinpoche insisted that Samye Ling’s practices be conducted in Tibetan, and that no transformations were necessary in a new setting. For Akong Rinpoche, at least in these early years of exile, an important part of being ‘Tibetan Buddhist’ was being a Tibetan. Trungpa Rinpoche, on the other hand, did not accept that the buddhadharma was tied to any one national or ethnic identity and struggled with how to most effectively translate the Vajrayāna teachings to this new audience in ways that fit their own context and were in their own language. In doing so, however, he was severely criticized by his friend for becoming ‘Westernized’ and a “disgrace to Tibet.”

In a letter written in 1969, Trungpa Rinpoche confessed that he did not privilege his ethnic identity in his role as a Buddhist teacher, but rather viewed himself as needing to connect and ground the buddhadharma in whichever context he found himself in. “My role is a far deeper one than a mere cultural mission, a representative of the East in the West,” he wrote. “I am not Tibetan but Human and my mission is to teach others as effectively as I can in the world in which I find myself. Therefore, I refuse to be bound by any ‘national’ considerations whatsoever.” From this perspective, it was increasingly clear that Trungpa Rinpoche was taking a radically different approach to translating Buddhism than his colleague and that he would have “no one to join with in presenting the true Dharma.” This frustration with the situation in Samye Ling and determination to find a more effective means to translate Vajrayāna Buddhism into a new context seem to have been instrumental in precipitating Trungpa Rinpoche’s decision to return to Asia in 1968.

---

70 Chögyam Trungpa as quoted in Mukpo and Gimian, *Dragon Thunder*, 29–30.
71 Ibid., 30.
72 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Born in Tibet*, 255.
In late June or early July of 1968, Trungpa Rinpoche set off on his first return journey to Asia after five years in the UK. Having tutored then-Bhutanese Crown Prince, Jigme Singye Wangchuk (རྨྲ་ཐང་དཔའི་སྲིད་དབང་ཕུན་ཚུ惩戒; b. 1955) at Heatherdown Preparatory School in England, Trungpa Rinpoche was invited by the devout Buddhist Queen of Bhutan, Ashi Kesang Choden (ཨླི་ཚ་བཟང་བཟང་མགོན་; b. 1930) to visit the country as her personal guest and teacher. Accompanied by his then-secretary and student Kunga Dawa, Trungpa Rinpoche also availed himself of the opportunity during this trip to meet with two of his former teachers, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche and the Sixteenth Karmapa.

First traveling over-land from Bhutan to the Karmapa’s monastery in Rumtek, Sikkim, Trungpa Rinpoche and Kunga Dawa spent some time there as guests. During this time, Kunga Dawa recalls that Trungpa Rinpoche requested and received an empowerment for a Karma Pakshi practice from the Karmapa. Subsequently, the two started to translate the text of this practice, thereby beginning their collaborative work as translators which they would later continue with the SOM. After returning to Bhutan, Trungpa Rinpoche and Kunga Dawa stayed with Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at his residence in Kyichu (རྭེ་ཆུ), outside of Paro. During this time Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche bestowed a Dorje Drolö empowerment upon Trungpa Rinpoche and Kunga Dawa and gave careful practice instructions. Both

---

76 It is not clear what specific Dorje Drolö and Karma Pakshi empowerments or practices were given by the Karmapa and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. While Carolyn Gimian writes that Trungpa Rinpoche “undoubtedly would have received these abhishekas [empowerments] earlier,” in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa: Volume Five*, xxv, she does not mention what the empowerments were. Based upon the iconography of the SOM scroll painting by Sherab Palden Beru (ཞེས་རབ་པདྨན་ཤེ་; 1911-2012), composed in consultation with Trungpa Rinpoche, I contend that the Dorje Drolö empowerment was likely for a text revealed by Dudjom Rinpoche (དུ་དོམ་ནི་པོ་ཆོས་; 1904-1987), *The Profound Vital Essence Sādhana of the Destroyer of Māra-s, Padma Heruka*. This, however, is a topic for another paper.
the Dorje Drolö and Karma Pakshi empowerments played extremely important roles during the subsequent weeks that Trungpa Rinpoche spent on retreat at Taktsang.

Subsequently, Trungpa Rinpoche embarked on a retreat at the fabled, cliff-side monastery of Paro Taktsang. This is the most famous of the thirteen different places called Taktsang where Padmasambhava is said to have manifested as Dorje Drolö. In this form, Padmasambhava and his consort, Yeshe Tsogyal (Yeshe Tsogyal), multiplied the Treasures that they had hidden throughout the Tibetan and Himalayan landscape and bound local spirits under oaths to protect the Vajrayāna teachings. The contemporary Nyingma teacher, Khenpo Palden Sherab (Khenpo Palden Sherab; 1942-2010), describes Dorje Drolö’s wrathful and violent manner as important “to preserve the practice of the Dharma in Tibet, and secure the commitment of the local spirits to extend their protection across generations.” Thus, this wrathful form of Padmasambhava is invoked primarily for the purpose of subjugating (Nła, laś) and taming (A>lo) obstructive forces and eliminating obstacles for the Vajrayāna teachings. This wrathful subjugation is especially important as Dorje Drolö forces beings into a Vajrayāna cosmology, thereby forming them into Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects.

---


78 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 253.


80 Ibid.
Trungpa Rinpoche recalls his deep concern at that time with returning to the ‘West’ to teach. “Taktsang was just a resting place for me,” he notes, “I knew I would have to go back to the West and present the vajrayana teachings to the rest of the world, so to speak. That concern was always intensely on my mind.”

It was during this retreat that Trungpa Rinpoche recalls, “I was able to reflect on my life, and particularly on how to propagate the Dharma in the West. I invoked Guru Rinpoche and the Kagyü forefathers to provide a vision for the future.”

Undertaking a retreat at Taktsang along with several of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche’s students and Kunga Dawa, Trungpa Rinpoche devoted himself to practicing the Dorje Drolö sādhana he received from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche. Deeply connected to Dorje Drolö and Karma Pakshi through the empowerments he received, it is perhaps no wonder that Trungpa Rinpoche’s supplications were eventually answered in a form that combined these two figures.

Trungpa Rinpoche found Taktsang to be “spacious and awe-inspiring,” noting that the presence of Padmasambhava was palpable in the shrines and caves. Nevertheless, he also recalls feeling a dull anticipation and even worry as his supplications initially went unanswered. He later wrote that his first days were full of disappointment and angst: “What is this place? I wondered. It’s supposed to be great; what’s happening here? Maybe this is the wrong place; maybe there is another Taktsang, somewhere else, the real Taktsang.”

---

81 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 10.
82 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 253.
83 The precise length that Trungpa Rinpoche was on retreat at Taktsang is somewhat unclear. Although in the 1976 afterward he penned for the third edition of Born in Tibet (253) said he was on retreat for 10 days, at an earlier seminar Trungpa Rinpoche gave in 1975 at Karmé Chöling, VT, then called Tail of the Tiger, Trungpa Rinpoche said that he was on retreat at Taktsang for three weeks. See Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 11.
84 It is unclear if Trungpa Rinpoche also engaged in Karma Pakshi sādhana practice or if this was only Kunga Dawa.
85 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 253.
86 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 193.
Padmasambhava, “This place seemed to be an anticlimax. Nothing was happening.”

Awaiting an answer to his entreaties for how to translate the Vajrayāna teachings in a meaningful and effective way once he returned to the UK, Trungpa Rinpoche’s initial time at Taktsang was marked by frustration and apprehension. As the resident monks prodded him daily with questions of whether he had had any auspicious dreams or revelations, Trungpa Rinpoche was vexed: “What are you going to do after this if you don’t get something out of this fantastic, historic, blessed, highly sacred and powerful place?”

This overcast feeling was so intense, in fact, that Trungpa Rinpoche fell into a depression. Due to his increasing frustration, Trungpa Rinpoche reports drinking quite heavily as his retreat continued, until he reached an important breaking point. One evening while he was heavily inebriated and alone in his room, Trungpa Rinpoche recalls that his exasperation reached such a climax that he let out a massive scream. “I was not yelling for help or for mommy and daddy,” he describes, “it was an internal yell,” a shout much more visceral than fearful. It was precisely at that moment that something seems to have shifted. “It created some kind of breakthrough,” he recalls, “There came a jolting experience of the need to develop more openness and greater energy. At the same time, there arose a feeling of deep devotion to Karma Pakshi, the Second Karmapa, and to Guru Rinpoche. I realized that in fact these two were one in the unified tradition of Mahamudra and Ati.”

It was at this moment that the title of the SOM flashed into Trungpa Rinpoche’s head and the figure of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi emerged.

---

87 Ibid., 9.
88 Ibid., 11.
89 Ibid., 12.
90 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 253-254.
Waking up the next day, clear-headed and without any traces of his previous depression, Trungpa Rinpoche furiously began to write down the text of the SOM. Although accounts differ on the duration, it appears to have taken about six hours to pen the practice text, with a few more hours over the next several days devoted to light editing of the text and composing the colophon.⁹¹ “I didn’t have to think about what I was doing, the whole thing came out very fresh,” Trungpa Rinpoche recalls.⁹² “During the writing of the sadhana, I didn’t particularly have to think of the next line or what to say about the whole thing; everything just came through very simply and very naturally. I felt as if I had already memorized the whole thing.”⁹³ Following the completion of the main text of the sādhana, Trungpa Rinpoche wrote a colophon as a panegyric, expressing his thanks and appreciation to Padmasambhava and his lineage teachers. [See Appendix I]

Following the revelation of the SOM, Trungpa Rinpoche and Kunga Dawa began to translate the text together into English almost immediately. Recalling the translation process, which he notes happened not at Taktsang but rather in a guesthouse outside of the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu, Kunga Dawa describes it as a stumbling, slow process, made all the more so because he could not read or speak Tibetan. Trungpa Rinpoche, who Kunga Dawa describes as having an immense grasp of English vocabulary but a rather limited ability to combine words into grammatically correct sentences at that time, went through the text line by line, translating words or short phrases. In reply, Kunga Dawa would

---

⁹¹ At two seminars given in 1975, Trungpa Rinpoche recounts the SOM taking between five and six hours to write the day after the title emerged in his mind. Elsewhere Kunga Dawa and Trungpa Rinpoche recall the composition taking two days, with some polishing over the next several days. For these differing accounts, see Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Born in Tibet, 253-254; Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 13, 194; Kunga Dawa in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Collected Works of Chögyam Trungpa: Volume Five, xxiv.

⁹² Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 13-14.

⁹³ Ibid., 194.
attempt to articulate Trungpa Rinpoche’s staccato words in English and suggest possible combinations. These were largely met with Trungpa Rinpoche shaking his head no, until finally one of Kunga Dawa’s suggestions would be met with enthusiastic approval as Trungpa Rinpoche exclaimed ‘Yes, that’s it!’

In this way, their translation progressed rather slowly and there was even discussion of completing it after their return to the UK. This, however, appears as another important moment in the story of the SOM’s origins as their departure was obstructed due to special circumstances. Kunga Dawa writes that while he and Trungpa Rinpoche were translating, tremendous rainstorms caused floods and landslides that destroyed roads and bridges making it temporarily impossible for pair to leave.

According to Kunda Dawa, Trungpa Rinpoche commented that “this is the action of the Dakinis making sure we don’t leave until the translation is finished.” Subsequently, the pair completed the translation before leaving Bhutan and making their way back to the UK. This celestial intervention is retold today with a sense of admiration not only by Kunga Dawa, but also within communities of practitioners as a sign of the special ‘termalike’ nature of the original translation.

After Trungpa Rinpoche’s return to the UK, the SOM was introduced to the community of practitioners at Samye Ling to be practiced in English. At first, there were no printed versions of the text, only mimeographed copies, nor did Trungpa Rinpoche give extensive instructions on how to practice the text. When Trungpa Rinpoche later moved to the US, he brought the SOM with him and gave it to his students at his first American center, Karmê Chöling, then called Tail of the Tiger, where it

---

94 Kunga Dawa, personal communication with author, 18 May 2016.
95 Kunga Dawa in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Collected Works Volume 5, xxv.
96 This is retold by Larry Mermelstein in the 2012 publication Vajravairochana Translation Committee, trans. and ed., Śādhaṇa of Mahāmudrā: Resources for Study, x.
97 Mukpo and Gimian, Dragon Thunder, 10.
was practiced on full and new moons. Early on, Trungpa Rinpoche did not give extensive instructions on how to practice the SOM. Students would mostly be invited or even stumble into a practice session and join in. \(^{98}\) Indeed, the SOM did not require students to receive an empowerment\(^{99}\) prior to enacting the SOM or to have any background on Buddhism. In this way, Larry Mermelstein recalls that, “For many, this became among their early experiences of the Buddhist tradition—a particularly vivid and colorful introduction indeed”\(^{100}\) Until recently, the SOM remained central to the liturgical calendars of Shambhala Centers and practice groups around the world.

As with many other Treasure revealers, Trungpa Rinpoche never explicitly claimed that the SOM was a Treasure text. Rather, this was a claim later made by many of his students. The SOM does not fit into any of the early Treasure cycles (གསར་རྩོམ་) that Trungpa Rinpoche revealed before fleeing Tibet,\(^{101}\) nor into the later Shambhala Treasures he revealed in the US. Moreover, although Trungpa Rinpoche discussed at some length the Treasure tradition in two seminars given on the SOM in 1975, Trungpa Rinpoche never named the SOM to be a Treasure. Finally, the existent Tibetan version of the SOM, re-written by Trungpa Rinpoche’s Tibetan student Lama Ugyen Shenpen (ལམ་འདེན་བཞན་པེན་; d. 1994) and

---

\(^{98}\) Frank Berliner, personal communication with author, 14 November 2014.

\(^{99}\) In the Vajrayāna context, practitioners must normally undergo a three-part process of receiving an empowerment (Skt: abhiseka, Tib. ཐབས་སེམས་; abhiseka), reading authorization (Skt: ågama, Tib. རྩོམ་; agama), and secret instructions (Skt: niyate, Tib. ཉོན་; niyate) prior to engaging in a sādhana practice. Even today, anyone can practice the SOM within a group setting, the empowerment is only required for individuals to practice the SOM privately.


published by the Nālanda Translation Committee, also does not include the most visible textual punctuation markers (གའི་རྒྱལ་ཆོས) included in Treasure texts.¹⁰²

Nevertheless, as with other transempirical phenomenon, I would suggest that it is more useful to examine how the SOM functions within communities of practitioners. After all, as comparative religions scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith argues, what is or is not regarded as ‘authentic’ scripture is not so dependent upon external, objective factors as it is upon the understandings of a community that regards a text as such. People, he writes, “make a text into scripture, or keep it a scripture: by treating it in certain way. I suggest: scripture is a human activity.”¹⁰⁴ In a similar vein, I would argue that the community of practitioners have made the SOM into a Treasure text through the ways in which they regard, enact, and portray it.

Although it was long suspected by some of Trungpa Rinpoche’s students that the SOM was a Treasure text, Mermelstein recalls that it was only in 1984 that Trungpa Rinpoche agreed and told members of the Nālanda Translation Committee that the SOM could be considered a Mind Treasure. Trungpa Rinpoche even called the English translation he wrote with Kunga Dawa ‘termalike,’ due to the special circumstances under which it occurred, and the English practice text has been published with Treasure punctuation marks ever since.¹⁰⁵ Thus, although there do not seem to be public recordings or writings where Trungpa Rinpoche explicitly names the SOM a Treasure text or mentions anything about the special nature of the English translation, it continues to be named as one by practitioners and

¹⁰² zur mang drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba’i klu klo’i gyul chen po bzhog jing don bnya kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mngon du sgrub pa’i cho ga phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhugs so.
communities today. Indeed, when the SOM is going to be practiced at centers run by Trungpa Rinpoche’s students, the word “terma” (Treasure) is frequently found in the program description.106

Since the the Treasure tradition originated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Treasures have played an important role in the literature of the Nyingma, Kagyü and Bön traditions. Although distinct in each of these traditions, Andreas Doctor notes that what makes Treasure revelation unique in the Nyingma school especially is both its frequency, as well as its institutionalization.107 Indeed, the Nyingma school accepts an additional canon to the standard Kanyur (བཀའ་རིག་པ།) and Tengyur (བྱིན་པ།), called the Collected Tantras of the Ancients (ང་མ་སྐད་བྱེད་), which as David Germano points out is largely composed of Treasure texts.108 The revelation of Treasures has, however, by no means gone uncontested and indeed, the legitimation of Treasure texts has been questioned by numerous scholars from a variety of sources both within and outside of the Treasure traditions since their first appearances down to the present.109 Rather than repeating what has been written elsewhere in the rich body of literature on the Treasure tradition,110 here I will briefly review the function of Treasures, according to their proponents.

106 See program descriptions for SOM practices at the Los Angeles Shambhala Center (https://la.shambhala.org/program-details/?id=115755), Boston Shambhala Center (https://boston.shambhala.org/program-details/?id=292144), Philadelphia Shambhala Center (https://philadelphia.shambhala.org/program-details/?id=295457), as well as a class on the SOM at the Boulder Shambhala Center (https://boulder.shambhala.org/program-details/?id=309950), accessed March 29 2017.


Since the SOM is presented and understood as a Treasure text within communities that enact it, it is worth noting the special function of Treasure literature within the Nyingma school of Vajrayāna Buddhism. According to the eighteenth-century Nyingma master and renowned Treasure Revealer, Jigme Lingpa (འཇིགས་དཔལ་; 1729-1798), Treasures are revealed for four principle reasons. These are: (1) so that the Buddhist teachings will not disappear, (2) so that the Buddhist teachings will not be corrupted or adulterated, (3) so that the blessings of the Buddhist teachings will not fade, and (4) so that the lineage of transmission is shortened.\footnote{Tulku Thondup, Hidden Teachings of Tibet, 62.} Treasures are revealed, in other words, to make the buddhadharma available to new generations of practitioners, and to prevent it from disappearing. Moreover, in emic terms, Treasures can correct any corruptions that have crept into the teachings over the time they have been transmitted, maintain the potency of these teachings, and reassert their authenticity. As revelations given to the Treasure Revealers (mostly) by Padmasambhava, Treasures are considered especially efficacious and powerful.

Diana Mukpo describes the SOM as a “time bomb” in the sense that it reveals, “a new understanding or wisdom, at the appropriate time.”\footnote{Mukpo and Gimian, Dragon Thunder, 9.} In this way, she describes it as, “one of the most powerful practices we have, because of how it directly addresses human issues and problems of human life.”\footnote{Mukpo in Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, xii.} Elsewhere, Boyce describes, the SOM was “essential for opening up the teachings that Chögyam Cleansing:” ROBERT MAYER, "gTer ston and Tradent: Innovation and Conservation in Tibetan Treasure Literature," \textit{Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies} 36/37, no 2013/2014 (2015): 227-242; ROBERT MAYER, "Scriptural Revelation in India and Tibet: Indian Precursors of the gTer-ma Tradition," in \textit{Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 6th Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies}, ed. PER KVÆRNE, 533-544 (Oslo: The Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, 1994); TULBU THONDUP RINPOCHE, \textit{Hidden Teachings of Tibet}.
Trungpa Rinpoche has brought.”" By providing a direct line to past enlightened teachers through Trungpa Rinpoche, the SOM is presented as containing profound teachings tailored to the historical context of its revelation that are replete with the blessings of Padmasambhava. In this way, the SOM is regarded as a Treasure text within its communities of practice as a text that reveals the buddhadharma in a manner suited to the ‘Western’ context.

Rather than engaging in the evaluation of emic understandings, it is more interesting to study how the SOM does the work of a Treasure text within existing communities of practitioners, by taking the teachings of the buddhadharma and translates them into a new context in a manner that is uniquely suited to them. This involved bringing the teachings of the Vajrayāna to the contemporary ‘Western’ world, in the medium of the English language, and which addressed the unique issues that they faced. As a result, Trungpa Rinpoche committed to a process of textual and cultural translation that enabled him to transmit the Vajrayāna teachings to a new context in a way that was uniquely suited it.

In the next section, I will look closer at the Tibetan and English versions of the SOM to illustrate how this process of translation played out in the text itself. I examine the ‘termalike’ English practice text alongside the original Tibetan text to illustrate some of the strategic choices made in the revelation and translation process that allowed the SOM to be tailored to the contemporary context. In doing so, I analyze how the SOM answered Trungpa Rinpoche’s supplications to his lineage figures and Padmasambhava for a method to translate the buddhadharma in a manner that effectively conveyed the Vajrayāna to his ‘Western’ students.

---

114 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 22 October 2015.
III. Translation: The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā, Treasure texts, and Domestication

The SOM emerged at a time when much of Europe and North America were undergoing profound social and cultural changes. By the mid-1960s, the American Beat Generation of the 1950s had given way to the widespread Hippie movement and for many the era of ‘Free Love’ was a time not only of societal rebellion, but also of spiritual exploration. A variety of Asian religious and cultural traditions played an especially prominent role in this movement and various babas, roshis, gurus, lamas, senseis, and swamis attracted large followings. A commonality amidst this diversity, however, was that these various movements and teachers were involved in both the translation and transformation of traditions as they were being transmitted into ‘Western’ contexts. Moreover, in the process of taking root in a new cultural milieu, each was confronted with and had to relate to ‘Western’ norms, histories, and mindsets.

As scholar of Vajrayāna Buddhism José Cabezón has argued, the Vajrayāna transmission to the ‘West’ is complex in that these teachings and practices do not appear upon a tabula rasa, but rather encounter peoples drenched with the influence of several thousand years of ‘Western’ thought and cultural history. As with the historical movement of Buddhism to new and diverse contexts, such as when it entered Tibet in the 7th century, as Buddhism enters the ‘West,’ Cabezón argues, “it becomes understood in the light of a pre-existing nexus of intellectual and philosophical concepts that have long histories” in these locales. As such, when Buddhism moves into the ‘West,’ it encounters a cultural sphere deeply impacted by thinkers from Aristotle to Kant, with an ontological framework first formed during the Enlightenment. As Garfield similarly argues, Buddhist teachings are “adapted as much as

---

they are adopted” when they move into new contexts in that “host cultural forms and ideologies function as a matrix that determines the nature of these transformations and selections.”

Trungpa Rinpoche found it crucial to understand the social, cultural, and political context in which he was teaching to be able to effectively transmit the buddhadharma to his students. By connecting with local histories, language, and thought, the process of transmission becomes far from a unidirectional process of sending teachings across time and space, but rather one of interaction and exchange. Neither those transmitting a religion nor those receiving these teachings and practices are left unchanged in the process. In this section, I examine the SOM’s textual translation by comparing the English practice text and the Tibetan original to uncover some strategic choices that transform this practice and enable it to be effectively translated into a new cultural context. In doing so, I illustrate how the SOM strategically transmitted the buddhadharma through a type of partially-domesticating translation that transformed certain terms and figures for a counter-cultural audience in the ‘West.’

I discuss several shifts that occur in the translation, such as the translation ‘materialism’ for the Tibetan term ‘barbarian’ (པར་པོ), and the removal of various spirits linked to emotional states, to illustrate how the SOM connects with the situatedness of its intended audience. I also examine examples of Buddhist scholar David McMahan’s concept of psychologization in the text of the SOM to discuss how the translation of the SOM illustrates this important shift that occurs in the translation of Buddhism into the ‘West.’ In doing so, I compare the English practice text with my own, more literal translation, thereby gaining insight and the ability to assess certain areas where distinctive choices were made to

---

transform the Tibetan text. I discuss how the SOM specifically can be understood as a selectively-
domesticated translation that moved certain elements away from their original contexts and
transformed into idioms that were familiar to specific practitioners. Nevertheless, I maintain that these
choices were strategic in that they ultimately served to effectively enlist students into the very
foreignizing ritual universe of the text, thereby actually serving as a technology for the training of
Vajrayāna subjects. This is a topic I will explore more fully in the following chapter.

Della Santina argues that when translation is not only temporal and intracultural, but is spatial
and intercultural as well, the process of reinterpretation inherent to any translation is only
accentuated. The reinterpretation of texts for a foreign cultural milieu is a topic of great debate
among translators and translation theorists. In his work, After Babel, George Steiner consolidates
hundreds of years of ideas about translation and initiates a discussion of translation as a field of study.
In doing so, Steiner follows Ronald Knox (1957) in summarizing discussions of translation in the
following two questions: (1) should priority be given to literary or literal translations? and, (2) how
much freedom do translators have to express the original text in their own style and idiom?

Elsewhere, Steiner summarizes these key questions, asking “in what ways can or ought fidelity
be achieved?” and “what is the optimal correlation between the A text in the source language and the B
text in the receptor language?” For Steiner and many subsequent translation theorists, including
Tibetan scholars, the two primary questions of translation are concerned with the spectrum of literal

---

119 Ibid., 251.
120 Ibid., 275.
(i.e. word for word) versus meaning (i.e. paraphrasing) translations and the literary style for translations. What Steiner and others often elide by focusing on the content, however, is the important relationship between the translator, the audience, the original text, and the translator’s intentions in the complex process of translation.

Nevertheless, other translation theorists have been more concerned with the mode through which intercultural translation is performed and translators’ intentions as an ethical question. For these individuals, this question boils down to a choice for the translator: does a translator have fidelity toward the original author or toward the intended audience? This dichotomy was expressed succinctly in 1813 by theologian and philosopher Friedrich Schleiermacher, who stated that he translator has two choices, “Either the translator leaves the author as much in peace as possible and moves the reader toward her/him, or s/he leaves the reader as much in peace as possible and moves the writer toward her/him.”

He continues that the differences between these two methods are clear. On the one hand, the translator must make an effort through her/his work to replace in the reader an understanding of the original language, which s/he does not know - the very image, the same impression that s/he gains through the knowledge s/he has won of the original language of the work, s/he seeks to share with the reader and bring them to her/his own position, which is actually a foreign one.

On the other hand, the translator can “thrust the author” directly into the world of the readers, thereby changing the author into one of them. In the latter, Schleiermacher points to the example of Roman and Greek philosophers becoming ‘Germanized’ as their works were translated to read as if they were originally written in German. Thus, Schleiermacher coins two positions, subsequently dubbed

---

121 Schleiermacher, “Über die verschiedenen Methoden des Übersetzers,” 47. Author’s translation.
122 Ibid., 47-48. Author’s translation.
‘domesticating’ and ‘foreignizing’ translations. While Schleiermacher, and later von Humboldt and Venuti, view these as nearly exclusive categories, I would contend that translators rarely create works that are entirely one or the other, but rather work to create texts that contain elements of both.

When seen in light of these categories, the SOM appears as a type of selectively-domesticating translation that brings the buddhadharma toward the context of a practitioner. As Gayley has noted, Treasure Revealers, like Trungpa Rinpoche, reach back to a transcendent authority and an idealized past in order to bring these teachings to the present circumstances. In this way, tracing Treasures to the distant past is important as a source of establishing the revealers’ authority in the present. Therefore, she argues, Treasures can serve as a “mechanism used to bridge time and space in order to introduce ritual systems, scriptures, images, or relics into a new context.”

Thus, through the process of revealing the SOM, Trungpa Rinpoche is understood to embody the authority of Padmasambhava and to bring forward past teachings into the contemporary world. Moreover, this process of bringing texts to intended audiences is taken a step further as the text is translated into English for use by a specific counter-cultural subset of the ‘Western,’ and especially American populace.

The SOM can be understood as a selectively-domesticated translation that strategically translated certain terms and while being uncompromising with the translation of others. As described

---


126 For an alternative theorization of Treasure texts based upon extensive study with Vajrakīlaya (ཞིིབཀྲ་ིྱི་ལྷ་) practices, see Robert Mayer, “gTer ston and Tradent Innovation and Conservation in Tibetan Treasure Literature.” Mayer argues that Treasure revealers should be seen as tradents, or as individuals who do not invent new doctrines or practices, but rather mainly synthesize and combine already established ones. An in-depth study of intertextuality in the SOM has yet to be undertaken, but remains outside of the scope of this thesis.
above, the SOM emerged when Trungpa Rinpoche felt his attempts to translate the buddhadharma to students in the ‘West’ had been ineffective and was seeking a different method of teaching appropriate in this context. As Trungpa Rinpoche describes, even having his own center in Scotland was “not entirely satisfying”\(^\text{127}\) and the atmosphere was “somewhat stagnant and stuffy.”\(^\text{128}\) Even as students participated in sitting meditation, chanting liturgies Tibetan, and listening to expositions on texts, they still seemed to be missing the point. In this way, Trungpa Rinpoche found that presenting commentaries or having students recite prayers and practices in Tibetan was largely ineffective in that it presented religious teachings in a way that was too foreignizing for his students at that time. As such, Trungpa Rinpoche sought to find a way of translating Buddhism into a language that made more sense to his students, while still maintaining a fidelity to the truth-claims of the Vajrayāna tradition.

Additionally, the translation of the SOM for practice has been commended for its poetic and affective qualities. Mermelstein recalls that he and other students of Trungpa Rinpoche had “often marveled at the beauty of the original translation.” Although the Nālānda Translation Committee composed a more literal translation on the SOM in the early 1980s, largely in consultation with Lama Ugyen Shenpen, their translation was restricted for study purposes rather than practice.\(^\text{129}\) The unique qualities and poetic force of the initial English practice translation were, according to Mermelstein, Trungpa Rinpoche’s “unique brilliance in presenting this dharma” as both a Treasure revealer and translator.\(^\text{130}\) Thus, Trungpa Rinpoche’s translation of the SOM and the literary qualities in the English

---

\(^{127}\) Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Born in Tibet*, 252.

\(^{128}\) Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, *Devotion & Crazy Wisdom*, 192.


\(^{130}\) Ibid., xiv.
translation were also composed in such a way that it resonated within a specific counter-cultural group of practitioners, especially in the US.

Like other spiritual teachers at the time, Trungpa Rinpoche attracted students from across the counter-cultural spectrum. Following Timothy Leary’s maxim to “Turn on, tune in, drop out,” this counter-culture, particularly in North America, was not interested in the material wealth or economic security that dominated their parent’s generation. Their parents’ painful experiences during the Great Depression and the Second World War combined with the post-war global ascension of Allied nations, and America in particular, led to an explosion in material wealth and obsession with consumerism in the ‘West’ during the 1950s. An office job, a ranch-style home, a car, a washing-machine, a television, a vacuum cleaner, and so forth were all parts of ‘the good life’ that was stifling to the counter-culture. Of the societal norms they flouted, the counter-culture largely eschewed concern for material possessions and their parent’s religious beliefs. Instead, they sought meaning in other traditions and forms of spirituality. “Our parents and religious leaders had lied about drugs and sex and the war, so how could they be trusted on any other topic?” writes early student, Jim Lowrey. “We were seeking new philosophies and explanations that fit with what we were learning about our lives and our minds.”

Similarly, Clarke Warren describes the atmosphere in Boulder, Colorado at the time of Trungpa Rinpoche’s arrival to the US. Then a student at the University of Colorado (CU) Boulder, Warren recalls several CU professors, including John Visvader and Karl Usow, inviting Trungpa Rinpoche to Boulder while he was still in the UK. When they later received word that Trungpa Rinpoche would arrive in

---

Boulder, they called a meeting of interested parties, which included an eclectic mix of CU faculty and students, members of a local Zen group, and “a variety of American Hindus, Macrobiotic practitioners, Pygmies, and a few others.” This was the counter-cultural context into which the SOM was presented.

When examining the English practice text of the SOM alongside the original Tibetan, there are several key elements that stand out as domestications of the Tibetan text for Trungpa Rinpoche’s ‘Western’ students. The difference in the Tibetan and English titles, for example, is quite striking:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English practice text:</th>
<th>Tibetan Text:</th>
<th>My translation from Tibetan text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā which Quells the Mighty Warring of the Three Lords of Materialism and Brings Realization of the Ocean of Siddhas of the Practice Lineage</td>
<td>བི་དགུན་བཟོད་པའི་འགོད་གཉིས་གནོད་ཀྱི་ཨིང་དེ་དུས་པ་ཡིན་པོ་བཞིན་གྱི་སྒུར་བ་དངས་བཞི་ཡིན་པོ་བཞིན་གྱི་སྒྲུབ་བཞི་ཡིན་པོ་བཞི་ཡིན་པོ་བཞི།</td>
<td>Herein dwells that which is called the Mahāmudrā Sādhana that brings about the realization of the Ultimate Lineage of the ocean of accomplished ones and wards off the great war of the Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One initially notices is that “Herein dwells that which is called...” (་ནང་གསང་བ) is missing. This standard formula in the titles of many Tibetan texts sometimes indicates their status as supports in rituals that enact the ritual universe of a deity. While its omission here is not surprising as it is often regarded simply as a perfunctory component of Tibetan literary style, its absence signals that elements of traditional Tibetan literary style would not be carried over in the SOM’s translation into English. This is also seen with the omission of the initial prostration in the first line of the SOM text, as well as the colophon at the conclusion of the text.

---

133 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā, 1.
134 zur mang drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba’i klu klo’i gyal chen po bzlog jing don bygyad kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mgon du sgrub pa’i cho ga phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhugs so, 1A.
Most intriguing here is the translation of “Three Lords of Materialism” for the Tibetan “Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians” (ཁྲིད་དཔེན་པར་པ་དང་པོ་). The term ‘barbarian’ in Tibetan can have multiple references. It might, for example, correspond to the ‘barbarians’ referenced in the second chapter of the Kālacakratantra (ཀླ་ླ་བླ་བརློང་). These are often identified as Muslim peoples in the west of Tibet and the victory of the Buddhist forces of the kingdom of Shambhala (ཤྭོ་ནག) over the barbarians is said to inaugurate a new golden age of virtue and spiritual practice. To support this position, one could point to the connection between Trungpa Rinpoche and the Kingdom of Shambhala. In addition to receiving a number of Treasures both prior to fleeing Tibet and after arriving in the US related to Shambhala, Trungpa Rinpoche is reported to have had direct contact with the kingdom and Kings of Shambhala (ཤྭོ་ནག). While an interesting connection to ponder, this does not shed light upon the question of the relationship between the Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians and the Three Lords of Materialism are.

Another, perhaps more likely possibility, is that the ‘barbarians’ are meant in a somewhat more conventional sense as non-Buddhists. The Great Tibetan-Chinese Dictionary (གཤེགས་ཐོས་བོད་ངས་མིག་སོགས་) defines the

---


137 Former Canadian High Commissioner James George, for example, recalls that on Trungpa Rinpoche’s return from Taktsang in 1968, Trungpa Rinpoche met with him at his home in Delhi. After inquiring about the Kingdom of Shambhala, George recalls that Trungpa Rinpoche said that although he had never been there, he could see it in a mirror whenever he went into deep meditation. George describes how Trungpa Rinpoche “produced a small circular metal mirror of the Chinese type and after looking into it intently for some time began to describe what he saw... It sounded ‘out of this world.’ But there was Trungpa in our study describing what he saw as if he were looking out of the window.” James George, “Searching for Shambhala,” The Chronicles of Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, accessed 17 March 2017, https://chronicleproject.com/stories_288.html.
term ‘barbarian’ as those born in outlying countries or as a foolish region wherein people do not know to adopt what is wholesome and discard what is not. Similarly, the Great Dungkar Dictionary defines ‘barbarians’ as all those who do not accept 1) past and future lives, 2) the law of cause and fruition, 3) the Three Jewels, and 4) the kindness of one’s parents, or alternatively as one following any religion that teaches to do harm to others. What emerges from these definitions is an image of barbarian as a shifting signifier, a term applied to various non-Buddhists, defined not so much by nationality affiliation as their anti-Buddhist and often pro-violent disposition.

Materialism, on the other hand, is a word that was uniquely situated within the context of the ‘Western’ practitioners of the SOM’s English practice text. As mentioned above, the counter-cultural movement had strong anti-materialist tendencies and strongly held up materialism as a hollow shell, a shiny exterior that was devoid of meaning. The thirst for increasingly shiny and new gadgets and gizmos and the exhortation to spend was seen by many as the poisonous influence of a capitalist system that attempted to hypnotize its citizens with the allures of consumerism. In this way, the search for spirituality among many in this generation was a struggle against this consumerist materialism, which they saw as antithetical and even hostile to true spirituality, whatever that meant. Thus, although drastically different words, the term materialism seems to do similar work in the ‘Western’ context as ‘barbarian’ does in Tibet; both signal those forces that are opposed to the development of spirituality.

Trungpa Rinpoche used the term ‘materialism’ often in the years following the revelation of the SOM. Most notably, this term was central to a series of talks in the fall of 1970 and spring of 1971 in

---

138 bod rgya thig mdzod chen mo (Lhasa: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1984), 40.
139 dung dkar tshig mdzod chen po (Beijing: krung go’i bod rigs dpe skrun khang, 2002), 113.
Boulder, Colorado that were later published into the volume *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*. In these lectures, Trungpa Rinpoche introduces the Three Lords of Materialism, which he describes as a metaphor used in “Tibetan Buddhism to describe the functioning of the ego,” and focuses especially on the pernicious force of spiritual materialism. Without going into too much detail here, Trungpa Rinpoche defines these Three Lords as (1) the Lord of Form, which references the mind’s neurotic pursuit of physical comfort, pleasure, and security, or physical objects in general, (2) the Lord of Speech, which refers to the mind’s use of concepts and categories to filter, sort, and manage the phenomenal world, and (3) the Lord of Mind, which refers to the effort of consciousness to maintain an awareness of itself. This is closely linked to spiritual materialism or the efforts of the ego to enhance itself through spiritual practices. For Trungpa Rinpoche’s students, the resistance to physical materialism was a familiar trope, but the idea of spiritual materialism was Trungpa Rinpoche’s novel contribution that built upon this idea.

The Lord of the Mind, for Trungpa Rinpoche, is the most dangerous on the spiritual path because of its tendency to subvert spiritual practices and teachings for the sake of preserving the notion of a ‘self.’ This process, wherein “we can deceive ourselves into thinking we are developing spiritually when instead we are strengthening out egocentricity through spiritual techniques” is spiritual materialism. This was a particular problem that Trungpa Rinpoche diagnosed in the ‘West’ regarding his students’ relationships to the buddhadharma. In *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*, he writes,

---

142 Ibid., 6-7
143 Ibid., 3.
Whenever teachings come to a country from abroad, the problem of spiritual materialism is intensified. At the moment America is, without any doubt, fertile ground ready for the teachings. And because America is so fertile, seeking spirituality, it is possible for America to inspire charlatans... Because America is looking so hard for spirituality, religion becomes an easy way to make money and achieve fame... I think America at this particular time is a very interesting ground.\textsuperscript{144}

In the SOM, Trungpa Rinpoche writes how its primary purpose was to exorcize “the materialism which seemed to pervade spiritual disciplines in the modern world.”\textsuperscript{145} Thus, in connecting what he presented as potential pitfalls to the genuine transmission of Buddhism with the anti-materialist rhetoric of the counter-culture, Trungpa Rinpoche grounded the Tibetan idea of the ‘barbarian’ in a uniquely ‘Western’ idiom, while simultaneously challenging the exoticization of the Vajrayāna as merely another source of spiritual techniques to collect. Moreover, Trungpa Rinpoche also further nuanced the ‘Western’ idea of materialism by pointing out how various wisdom traditions and spiritual teachings can become material objects that are fetishized and co-opted for personal gain. This was a critical danger in the ‘Western’ context that, Trungpa Rinpoche notes, the SOM was especially concerned with.\textsuperscript{146}

This translation of ‘materialism’ for ‘barbarian’ is not only found in the title, but is repeated several times throughout the SOM. At the end of the refuge section of the text, for example, it states:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{ l l l }
\textbf{English practice text:} & \textbf{Tibetan text:} & \textbf{My translation from Tibetan text:} \\
In order to free those who suffer at the hands of the three lords of materialism\$ and are afraid of external phenomenon, which are their own projections, \& & \texttt{ཉེར་བན་དེ་བུ་མ་དམ་པོ་} & In order to release transmigrants of the Five Degenerations, [who are] tormented by the Three Divisions of Barbarians from having chased after apparent objects as a result of [having] minds which mistake whatever appears to be an enemy, [I] \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{145} Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{Born in Tibet}, 254.
\textsuperscript{146} Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{Devotion \& Crazy Wisdom}, 54.
I take this vow in meditation\textsuperscript{147} and again in lines repeated eight times\textsuperscript{150} in text’s supplication section:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English practice text:</th>
<th>Tibetan text:</th>
<th>My translation from Tibetan text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Although I live in the slime and muck of the dark age,\textsuperscript{§} I still aspire to see your face,\textsuperscript{§} Although I stumble in the thick, black fog of materialism,\textsuperscript{§} I still aspire to see your face.\textsuperscript{§}</td>
<td>ངོ་སྐྱེས་བཤེས་སྟེགས་པ་རྒྱ་འཕྲོལ་བཙོ་བོ་བྱུང་དོན་བསྟན་པོ་གྲོབ་ཐོབ་བརྒྱ་མཚོ་མངོན་དུ་སྣེས་པའི་བསག་བྱ་གྱི་ལུས་བྱ་བ ལབ་གཉིས་དབུང་ ངེས་པའི་བསག་བྱ་གྱི་ལུས་བྱ་བ ལབ་གཉིས་དབུང་\textsuperscript{151}</td>
<td>Although I dwell in the mire and swamp of the degenerate [age, it is] my heart-desire to meet [this] place. Even though I am tormented by the dark poison of the barbarians, [it is] my heart-desire to meet [this] place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In both sections, we see the term ‘barbarian’ again replaced by ‘materialism.’ In the first example, although the practice text describes the Lords of Materialism in a psychologized manner as making individuals suffer for being afraid of their own mental projections and the Tibetan text mentions having minds that mistake appearances, the Three Divisions of Barbarians and the Three Lords of Materialism both perform the same function of harassing and obstructing individuals. Similarly, in the second example, both Barbarians and materialism are presented as deluding and obstructive forces. These forces are so pervasive, in fact, that the subject expresses being surrounded and unable to escape them.

In this way, a swamp of non-Buddhist barbarians in the Tibetan text is translated into the sticky muck of materialism in the English. Both, however, convey a feeling of despair with the surrounding world and an aspiration to seek refuge in teachings and teachers to be freed from these obstacles.

\textsuperscript{147} Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{The Sādhanā of Mahāmudrā}, 6.
\textsuperscript{148} drung pa’i cho’ ga’ phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhus so, 3A
\textsuperscript{150} The first two times “see it,” rather than “see your face” is used. The Tibetan text, however, does not change.
\textsuperscript{151} Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{The Sādhanā of Mahāmudrā}, 14.
\textsuperscript{152} drung pa’i cho’ ga’ phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhus so, 13B.
Thus, regardless of whether barbarian or materialism, it is clear that Trungpa Rinpoche saw this as a force harmful to the spread of the *buddhadharma*. While it is not possible to know precisely why and with what rationale Trungpa Rinpoche made this translation choice, we can say that this transformation brings the Tibetan text of the *SOM* closer to his students in the ‘West’ by connecting those forces in opposition to the teaching of Buddhism with the anti-materialist sentiments present within the counter-culture at that time. In doing so, he grounds the *SOM* firmly within a major issue that his students were already grappling with in this setting.

Ringu Tulku remarked that choosing to translate ‘barbarian’ as ‘materialism’ was a brilliant translation choice because if the term were translated literally into English, he stated, it would likely only confuse practitioners. People in the ‘West,’ he said, often associate barbarians with individuals with big beards and horns who live far away, and do not understand the connotations of the Tibetan term. Thus, a literal translation would not be appropriate to convey the intention of the Tibetan. The term ‘Lords of Materialism,’ however, connects the ‘Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians’ in that both terms signify those forces which stand in opposition or hostility to spirituality, and particularly to the *buddhadharma*. Thus, while not a literal translation, this domesticating translation choice successfully grounds the non-Buddhist connotations of the Tibetan term ‘barbarian’ within the anti-materialist rhetoric of the ‘Western’ counter-culture. In doing so, I would argue, this domestication was a strategic choice that recruited ‘Western’ practitioners into the otherwise foreign ritual universe of the *SOM*.

---

154 Ringu Tulku, personal communication with the author, November 11, 2015.
The selective process of domestication occurs further in the choice to psychologize specific beings that appear in the Tibetan text of the *SOM*. McMahan describes the concept of psychologization as part of the trend toward the demythologization of Buddhism as it is transmitted to the ‘West.’ In this way, McMahan argues, Buddhist teachings are presented as internalizing “what in traditional accounts are ontological realities,” wherein deities are turned into archetypes, demons are transformed into various energies, and Buddhism is re-dubbed a ‘science of the mind’ or even a ‘way of life.’ These transformations, McMahan continues are a far cry from the realities of most traditional *Vajrayāna* Buddhists for whom the world around them “is alive not only with awakened beings, but also countless ghosts, spirits, demons, and protector deities. These beings are prayed to and propitiated in daily rituals and cyclical festivals, and they figure into one’s everyday life in very concrete ways.”

Although, McMahan notes, such forces can also be associated with mental phenomenon in more traditional settings, the fact of their existence as beings of other realms of existence is often elided in *Vajrayāna* in the ‘West,’ wherein such forces are transformed into purely psychological or mental states.

McMahan situates Trungpa Rinpoche’s psychologizing of the Tibetan pantheon within a lineage of ‘Western’ interpretations of Buddhism that began with the British scholar Thomas Rhys Davids (1843-1922). Rhys Davids, as scholar of *Theravāda* Buddhism Charles Hallisey notes, adopted somewhat of an ‘elective affinity’ in how he interpreted aspects of the *Theravādan* Buddhist tradition in conversation with certain forces in the Sri Lankan monastic establishment. Hallisey argues that Rhys Davids’

---

156 Ibid., 55.
interlocutors purposely emphasized philosophical texts in their presentation of Buddhism, conscious that such ideas would fit well with European and American scholars, and also with their own scholastic orientation. They did not discuss, for example, ritual or the role of non-human forces in their descriptions of Buddhism and thereby made it appear that a type of Protestant rationalism was inherent within Buddhism. In a similar ‘elective affinity’ then, Trungpa Rinpoche omits certain non-human forces in the translation of the SOM to partially portray the text in a more resonant ‘Western’ paradigm as dealing with psychological forces.

While McMahan views this process of psychologizing as a form of modernizing, I look at it from a slightly different angle. In light of the above discussion of translation, I argue that such choices to psychologize in translation are also processes of domestication. As McMahan notes, the “internalization of the gods was the passkey that granted Tibetan Buddhism entry into the modern West, whose monotheism and modernity could not abide a gaggle of gods inhabiting the real world.” Thus, to effectively translate the buddhadharma into a ‘Western’ context, soaked with rationalism, translations had to reflect the settings into which they were moving into. As such, in the SOM, many deities and demons were excluded and transformed into mental concepts for a context skeptical of their existence.

This domesticating process of psychologization is seen in the examples of the ogress (Ωན་ö་) and king-demon (:ལ་འTང་) that appear in the SOM. These two common figures in Tibetan demonologies appear in the Tibetan SOM already associated with certain emotional states: the ogress is associated

---


159 McMahan, The Making of Buddhist Modernism, 54.
with desire and attachment (འད་ཆགས) and the king-demons with pride (ང་ལ་). In the English translation, however, while their forms are elided their emotional associations remain. In addition to being a legendary progenitor of the Tibetan people, the ogress is often described as a demon who enjoys eating human flesh. The king-demon is another type of afflictive demon that can take numerous forms. The Tibetan text of the SOM contains several lines in which both beings are destroyed by the central deity of the SOM, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi. The practice text, on the other hand, makes no reference to these beings, but maintains the emotional states which they are directly correlated with in the Tibetan.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English practice text:</th>
<th>Tibetan text:</th>
<th>My translation from Tibetan text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In his [Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi] right hand, raised to the heavens, he holds a nine-pointed dorje of meteoric iron, emitting a storm of red sparks, each in the form of the letter HŪM. Thus he subdues spiritual pride. In his left hand he holds a phurba, also of meteoric iron, emitting a shower of sparks in the form of thousands of mahākālas. The phurba pierces through the heart of seductive passion.</td>
<td>བག་གཡས་པས་ང་ལ་:ལ་ལན་ལས་འལ་པ་:ལ་འྲང་4ན་∂ི་*་+་འུལ་པ།</td>
<td>[His] right hand tames pride, the king-demon who constructs non-dharma as dharma, the ultimate barbarian, by raising to the higher realms a nine-pointed vajra, made of meteoric iron, fiery red HŪM are dispatched like a swirling blizzard. [His] left hand [holding] a dagger of meteoric iron, strikes downward and rolls. [It] cuts through the root of the veins of the heart of the ogress of deception and attachment and sends out a host of oath-[holding ones], adamantine protectors, to act.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

160 dung dkar tshig mdzod chen po, 2071.
161 bod rgya thig mdzod chen mo, 550
163 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Śādhanā of Mahāmārājara, 10.
164 drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba'i bla klo'i gyul chen po bzлог jing don bgyud kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mngon du sgrub pa'i cho qa phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhugs so, 9A-9B.
While deities in the *Vajrayāna* are often correlated with emotional states, such as seen in the above lines where the ogress is associated with deception and attachment, and the king-demon with pride and delusion, this does not mean that these beings are merely imaginary or metaphorical. Indeed, as McMahan notes, to Tibetan Himalayan peoples, “buddhas, bodhisattvas, and protector deities are not merely symbols of psychological forces but real beings... who can have actual effects in the world, both benevolent and malevolent.”

No *Vajrayāna* Buddhist would assert that such forces have inherent existence (انيا�ིན་ས་), but neither would they assert that practitioners do either. Thus, deities and demons are understood to be at least as real as anything else can be said to be.

The ogress and king-demon appear along with the barbarians again later in the *SOM*, and are once again elided in translation. In the final stanzas of the supplication section of the text, it states:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English practice text:</th>
<th>Tibetan text:</th>
<th>My translation from Tibetan text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The tradition of meditation is waning†</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tibetan text" /></td>
<td>With reference to the way the teachings of the Practice Lineage have degenerated, with reference to the way all the dharma-practitioners’ minds have exhausted, with reference to the way the transient world has become filled with non-dharma, with reference to the way the king-demons of pride have appeared, with reference to the way the ogresses of desire have deceived, with reference to the way the excellent doctrine has [been used to] guard political machinations, with reference to the way the barbarians of external reality have wandered about,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And intellectual arguments predominate.‡</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tibetan text" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We are drunk with spiritual pride‡</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tibetan text" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And seduced by passion.‡</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tibetan text" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dharma is used for personal gain‡</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tibetan text" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the river of materialism has burst its banks‡</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Tibetan text" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The materialistic outlook dominates everywhere.
And the mind is intoxicated with worldly concerns.
Under such circumstances, how can you abandon us?
The time has come when your child needs you.
No material offering will please you
So the only offering I can make
Is to follow your example. 167

with reference to the way the barbarians of inner view have pervaded,
with reference to the way the barbarians of secret mind have deceived,
Father – how can your compassion dare to forsake?
The time has arisen when I, the son, have need.
Even though you will not be pleased by any wholesome offerings, [I] offer the manḍala of accomplishment [and] practice.

In this passage, beings active in the surrounding world and causing negative impacts are transformed into their psychologized impacts. The ogress and king-demon are again dropped and only their emotional correlates, spiritual pride and seductive passion, remain in translation. Moreover, the Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians are translated as a materialistic outlook and concern for the mundane world. In both cases, associations made elsewhere in the text are maintained: external demonic forces are erased from the English translation and barbarians are translated as various forces of materialism.

Psychologization is also seen with Trungpa Rinpoche’s presentation of the Six Realms of Existence (གནས་ལམ་) as mental states rather than as ontologically existent realms. Indeed, in The Myth of Freedom, Trungpa Rinpoche describes the Six Realms as “emotional attitudes toward ourselves and our surroundings – reinforced by conceptualizations and rationalizations. As human beings we may, during the course of a day, experience the emotions of all the realms, from the pride of the god realm to

168 drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba’i kla klo’i gyul chen po bzlog jing don bgyud kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mnyon du sgrub pa’i cho ga phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhugs so, 15B
the hatred and paranoia of the hell realm." Similarly, sections of the practice text of the SOM that refer to other realms or to beings as transmigrators are translated in such a way as to remain within this, human world. For example, the supplication section also contains the following lines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English practice text:</th>
<th>Tibetan text:</th>
<th>My translation from Tibetan text:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Living, as I do, in the dark age</td>
<td>་དང་ས་མ།་འོ་བ་ས་འ¢ད་</td>
<td>I, a person transmigrating in the Degenerate Age, call out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am calling upon you, because I am trapped</td>
<td>ནི་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td>[I] have been imprisoned in a prison without refuge, without protector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this prison without refuge or protector</td>
<td>ཞི་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td>The age of the Three Poisons, disease, and warfare abounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The age of the three poisons has dawned</td>
<td>ཆུ་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td>Tormented by the Three: the Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians, [it is] the time when the bad transmigrators have burst forth upon the earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And the three lords of materialism have seized power</td>
<td>བཅོམ་ག་གི་ཏི་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is the time of hell on earth</td>
<td>ཞི་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td>Think after [me], an exhausted transmigrator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>…</td>
<td>ཞི་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td>[With] a sorrowful mind and the strength of faith in [the truth of] suffering, with a mind bursting to tears, [I] make supplications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think of us poor, miserable wretches</td>
<td>ཚུག་གི་ཞུམ་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With deep devotion and intense longing</td>
<td>རང་རིན་ཞུམ་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I supplicate you</td>
<td>རང་རིན་ཞུམ་ལེགས་ལ་གཉིས་འོ་བ་དང་་</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, in addition to the repeated trope of the Three Lords of Materialism for the Outer, Inner, and Secret Barbarians, one catches a glimpse of the androcentric ontology presented to students. While the term སྒྲུབ, for example, can be understood as a synonym for the term ‘sentient being’ (ཉེན་མོར་བ), here I have rendered it as ‘transmigrator’ due to its connotations and context. Regarding its connotations,

---

172 drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, *phi nang gsang ba'i kla kho'i gyul chen po bzlog jing don bgyud kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mngon du sgrub pa'i cho ga phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzugs so*, 14B-15A.
the term is also the verb meaning 'to go' or 'to move,' conjuring an image of motion. Moreover, the context in which the term appears suggests the movement of a being. In the first usage, it can describe how a person moves in the Degenerate Age (ང་∑གས་མ). This connotation is missing, however, in the practice text where the term describes living in a dark age.

A second place in this section this choice is made is with the translation of ‘hell’ for the Tibetan term འདོད་བས. Rather than ‘hell,’ (དམ་བ་) which is only one of the six realms of existence, this term, which I have translated as ‘bad transmigrations,’ literally means ‘those who have gone badly/evilly’ (ངན་>་Fང་བ་) and refers to beings of the three lower realms of existence (animals, hungry ghosts, and hell realms; ཆ་འོད་རོ་སགས་དུལ་བ་). While the line in the practice text ‘This is the time of hell on earth’ is poetically evocative and can be understood metaphorically, to say the bad transmigrants have ‘burst forth upon the earth’ evokes an apocalyptic scenario wherein the divisions between the human and lower realms has broken down and those of lower births walk atop the earth with humans. In avoiding this latter meaning, I would argue that the practice text internalizes the six realms in the English context.

Recalling Ringu Tulku’s statement that such translations are the most effective because they are done with the intention of being relevant to the receiving audiences’ context, I would argue that such psychologizations are forms of domestication. In omitting explicit reference to external forces and focusing on psychological states, the SOM is brought toward Trungpa Rinpoche’s students in the ‘West.’ In doing so, Trungpa Rinpoche transformed this practice through a process of selective-domestication to correspond with a ‘Western’ counter-cultural context.
Whereas Schleiermacher and Venuti understand domesticating translation to be an inherently violent and ethnocentric process, I argue that the translation of the SOM challenges this assertion by revealing that domestication can be selective and done with the purpose of recruiting an audience into a foreign space. Following Schleiermacher, Venuti argues that domesticating translation is essentially the “forcible replacement of the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text with a text that is intelligible to the translating-language reader” in a way that inevitably enacts a degree of ethnocentric violence upon a text. In attempting to offer a reconstruction of the foreign text, he argues, the translator considers only the values, beliefs, and representations that preexist within the target language and culture. While Venuti’s argument is persuasive in the context of the ethnocentric, neoliberal, American press, his theory presumes that translators be outsiders to the material they are working on, co-opting material from another cultural context.

Not only is the revealer of the SOM an integral part of the translation process, something that Venuti does not account for, but the SOM, I argue, was ultimately translated precisely with a foreignizing intention. Far from leaving its practitioners unchanged, the translation of the SOM employs strategic domestications of key words and concepts, such as materialism, that resonate with practitioners in order to bring them into a foreign ritual world. As Garfield writes, “the transformation through transnational transmission is part and parcel of maintaining the longevity of the continuum, not despite, but because of its constant change and adaptation.” When seen from this angle, the practice translation of the SOM appears more as a calculated domestication of specific words to more

---

174 Venuti, The Translator’s Invisibility, 14.
175 Garfield, “Translation as Transmission and Transformation,” 100.
effectively recruit 'Western' subjects into an otherwise foreign Vajrayāna world rather than a violent translation.

If any violence is enacted through this text and its translation, it comes not from a translator compromising its content for the intended audience, but rather from the wildly undomesticated visage of Dorje Drolō Karma Pakshi to which new audiences are introduced. Practitioners of the SOM call forth this wrathful manifestation not only to grant blessings, but also to eliminate obstacles and for the task of subjugation. Entering the ritual universe of the SOM as beings to be tamed, practitioners train themselves to give up their egos as an offering to this enlightened being. Thus, far from the feel-good messages of many other spiritual teachers in the counter-culture, Trungpa Rinpoche presents Dorje Drolō Karma Pakshi as a clearly wrathful and foreign force. In domesticating specific elements of the text and positioning Dorje Drolō Karma Pakshi as a destroyer of the counter-culture’s nemesis materialism, Trungpa Rinpoche simultaneously recruits practitioners into a ritual universe where they train to give themselves up to Dorje Drolō Karma Pakshi and the Ka-Nying lineage he represents.

In the context of the SOM, while certain elements of the Tibetan text are erased to better fit the ‘Western’ counter-cultural context, as described above, other elements from the Tibetan text are not erased and are carried across forcibly in in the English practice translation. Most notably in this are the various Kagyü and Nyingma lineage figures, dharma protectors, and the central deity of the SOM, which correspond to the Three Roots in Vajrayāna Buddhism. Although, as shown above, two facets of the text were transformed and domesticated in the process of translation, namely the term barbarian being rendered as materialism and demons and ogresses associated with emotional states removed, the figures of the Three Roots appear neither negotiable nor adaptable.
The deference, devotion, and surrender shown to these figures and to Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi in the liturgy’s recitation is the central aspect of the SOM that does not get domesticated in translation. In fact, far from being domesticated, students are made to step into the very foreign ritual universe of the SOM and in doing so, to refashion themselves as subjects of that universe, abiding by certain non-negotiable conditions. In the next section, I illustrate the importance of these figures, and particularly of the Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, in the process of Vajrayāna subject making. As practitioners generate and enter into the foreign ritual universe enacted in the SOM, they submit themselves as subjects to be tamed by Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and train to embody the Vajrayāna subjectivity prescribed within the text.
IV. Transmission: The Śādhanā of Mahāmudrā and the Formation of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects

As one of the first practices that Trungpa Rinpoche gave to his students, the SOM served as an important means for the early transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism to the ‘West.’ In doing so, it was a method for training students in how to orient themselves within a Vajrayāna Buddhist universe, and thereby in how to become Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects. Trungpa Rinpoche’s selectively-domesticated translation of the SOM, as discussed in the previous section, provided a text that stressed several key ideas resonant with his students who were both shaped by and rebelling against the materialistic context of the ‘West’ in the 1950s and 60s. At the same time, its structure and prescriptive depiction of the ritual universe of the text, laid forth a distinctively foreign Ka-Nying ritual universe that students were called to enact. By generating and taking their place in this universe through an iterative process of ritual enactment, students trained themselves to become subjects of a Vajrayāna world and thereby in how to become Vajrayāna Buddhists.

In this way, as practitioners chant the words of the text and visualize the ritual universe described within the SOM, they invoke a disgust with the circumstances of the mundane world and enter deferentially and devotionally into a ritual universe filled with Ka-Nying protectors, Kagyū lineage figures, and the central deity Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi. Through this enactment, the SOM induct and instills in practitioners a subjectivity prescribed within the text that is disabused with the material world and reliant upon these Ka-Nying figures for help to quell the forces of materialism and to tame the unruly forces and obscurations within the practitioners themselves.
Like other religious traditions of South Asian origin, Vajrayāna Buddhism employs the practice of bhāvanā (བོད་ཕན་), which has been translated as “imaginative recreation,”“generative imagination,” “cultivation,” and commonly as “meditation,” as a primary method of practice. This is a process whereby Vajrayāna Buddhist practitioners attempt to visualize and inhabit a fully enlightened ritual universe as a means of realizing the underlying enlightened nature of reality. En route to this lofty and final goal, practitioners seek the blessings and benefits of those dwelling within these universes to assist them in the process of overcoming obscurations and developing wisdom. Following Shulman’s use of the term ‘generative imagination,’ this section will examine this practice in the SOM and the specific ways in which it creates Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects through repeated ritual practice.

As noted above, the SOM is a liturgical text enacted bi-monthly primarily in group settings. The text of the SOM is recited aloud with differing cadences depending upon the affect invoked. The initial visualization section, for example, is spoken rapidly, “with no pauses between sentences, paragraphs or stanzas” to invoke a flood of images that roll over practitioners “like an amazing river” that does not allow them to stop and latch onto any one of them. As long-time student of Trungpa Rinpoche Frank Berliner notes, this rapid recitation is part of the beauty and power of the SOM. There is no place for practitioners to stop and think, no perch to land upon. Rather, they can only go be carried along by the

---

177 Davis, Worshiping Siva in Medieval India, ix.
180 I use ‘imagination’ here not in the sense of conjuring up what is not real in the mind, but rather in the etymological sense of the Latin word imaginare, meaning to ‘form an image.’
182 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 5 November 2015.
torrent of energy of the practice. The offering and devotional sections that follow, on the other hand, are recited “more slowly and with feeling” to invoke the longing and respect that practitioners feel for the central deity, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, and the other lineage figures in the SOM’s ritual universe. Visualizing the central deity of the SOM above and in front of them, the SOM is a type of guruyoga (བུད་རིགས་བོད་རྒྱུས་) practice whereby practitioners supplicate and make offerings to the central deity and lineage figures of the SOM to bestow their blessings to overcome obstacles on the path toward attainment. In this process, practitioners chant the mantra (༄༅།) of the triple HŪM (ॐ) as their minds unite with that of the deity and the visualization dissolves into a mixture of vibrant colors as the blessings of the deity shower down upon the practitioners.

In this section, I analyze the ritual performance of the SOM to illustrate how Vajrayāna subjects are inducted and trained through enactment of the SOM English practice text, discussed in the previous section. In doing so, I follow Talal Asad and Catherine Bell in analyzing rituals not as metaphorical acts or as processes primarily meant to be understood, but rather as performances that do things. While Vajrayāna rituals, like the SOM, do have meanings that require decoding, explanation, and commentary, I argue that they function mainly as disciplinary actions meant to induct and train practitioners through an iterative process of generating and entering into what Wallis describes as a specific discursive or rhetorical subjectivity laid forth in the ritual text. By visualizing and entering the ritual

---

183 Frank Berliner, personal communication with author, 15 November 2014.
185 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 5 November 2015
186 Wallis, Mediating the Power of Buddhas, 167.
universe of a text, *Vajrayāna* subjects not only enact new disposition prescribed within the ritual text, they also train themselves to embody that very subjectivity and set of relations outside of the ritual context.

In this way, the recitation and enactment of liturgical texts, such as the *SOM*, is performative in several ways. First, by generating the ritual universe in vivid detail as it is described within the text, practitioners perform a rhetorical subjectivity that is prescribed within the text. Second, through the recitation of the triple HŪṂ, practitioners enact a performative utterance in the Austinian sense of declaring themselves blessed by the figures within the *SOM*’s ritual universe. Additionally, by visualizing a *Vajrayāna* ritual universe, practitioners train themselves to embody a subjectivity and set of relations that, to use Tambiah’s word, is indexically linked with the world outside of the ritual universe. By forming a subjectivity within the ontological, hierarchical, and soteriological truths of the *SOM*’s ritual universe, practitioners also form themselves in relation to parallel truths in the world outside of it. This is especially true as the central deity, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, is indexically linked to the *Vajrayāna* teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche.

**A. Disciplinary Practices, Speech-Acts, and Vajrayāna Subject-Making**

In analyzing the *SOM* as a practice of subject-making, it is important to recall Asad’s distinction of rituals as disciplinary practices rather than symbolic actions. Rituals, Asad notes, have come to be understood in the ‘West’ through a Protestant lens as “a type of routine behavior that symbolizes or expresses something” in relation with individual consciousness and societal organization, but that does
not inherently ‘do’ anything in the Austinian sense.\(^{187}\) In contrast to the ‘Western’ understanding of rituals as strictly representational behavior, Asad posits an alternate understanding of rituals as “apt performances.”\(^{188}\) By this, Asad refers to ritual enactment as a type of disciplining or regulative process, one in which “we can assume that there exists a requirement to master the proper performance of these services.” Such an understanding posits rituals not as symbols to be interpreted, “but abilities to be acquired according to rules that are sanctioned by those in authority; it presupposes no obscure meanings, but rather the formation of physical and linguistic skills.”\(^{189}\) In this way, the iterative process of ritual enactment is a disciplinary process of world and subject-making.

Asad’s discussion of ritual enactment as apt performances draws upon Catherine Bells’ description of ritual action as not only expressing inner states, but primarily acting to “restructure bodies and subjectivities through ritual enactment.”\(^{190}\) In writing about ritual enactment, Bell notes how ritualized bodies are produced “through the interaction of the body with a structured and structuring environment.”\(^{191}\) In other words, by enacting a ritual, practitioners mold themselves in accordance with the ritual’s prescriptions in the very act of enacting it. Hence, she concludes, “required kneeling does not merely communicate subordination to the kneeler. For all intents and purposes, kneeling produces a subordinated kneeler in and through the act itself.”\(^{192}\) This process of subject-making through the enactment of a ritual also resonates with theorizations both by academics and Buddhist cleric-scholars.

\(^{187}\) Asad, Genealogies of Religion, 57.  
\(^{188}\) Ibid., 62.  
\(^{189}\) Ibid., 62.  
\(^{190}\) Catherine Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice. 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 100.  
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 99.  
\(^{192}\) Ibid., 100.
of the role of Vajrayāna rituals to gradually train and tame subjects. Indeed, the Tibetan term for
generative imagination, ཨཿ, although commonly translated as ‘meditation,’ literally means to
familiarize, cultivate, or “to bring to memory again and again in the mind.” Furthermore, I argue that
this process occurs through an iterative practice of calling forth and entering ritual universes. Thus, in
enacting such practices at the SOM, individuals are iteratively performing a certain subjectivity and at
the same time instilling that same subjectivity within themselves.

In thinking about Vajrayāna ritual enactment as a process of disciplining, it is important to
understand language and speech in the Austinian sense as performative utterances, as language that
does things. In the mid-twentieth century, philosopher J. L. Austin articulated how words and language
can be used not only to describe or make assertions about the world, but to also do things within it. In
this latter sense, words can act as what Austin calls ‘performative utterances’ or ‘illocutionary acts.’
When they are spoken in a certain context, by a specific person, words can function to perform
actions. In the proclamation ‘I now pronounce you...,’ for example, an officiant’s words actually unite
a couple in matrimony. Austin thus argues that certain words or phrases when uttered under specific
circumstances, by particular individuals, and often accompanied by certain actions can be efficacious
(or to use his language, felicitous) in a sense of doing something rather than merely describing it.

This argument was later taken up by Tambiah, who draws upon Austin to describe how rituals
achieve their efficacy through the medium of performance. Rather than judging rituals as true or false,
Tambiah proposes a more relevant question is whether a ritual was enacted under the appropriate conditions. In this sense, Tambiah asserts that performative utterances can be considered efficacious or felicitous, to use Austin’s term, in a ritual context only if they are uttered in the appropriate circumstances. In this way, Tambiah states, ritual acts must be “subject to normative judgements of felicity or legitimacy and not to rational tests of truth and falsity.” Thus, the legitimacy of enacting the SOM can be said to hinge upon practitioners’ inculcation into the Vajrayāna universe of the SOM. In emic terms, the efficacy of reciting the triple HŪM near the end of the SOM, then, depends upon them having first created the requisite conditions through generating and stepping into the prescribed subjectivity of ritual universe of the text.

The term ‘ritual universe’ I have been using was coined by Richard Davis. Although writing about Śaiva contexts, many of Davis’ remarks are applicable to Vajrayāna visualization. Davis writes that,

Ritual discloses knowledge through action, in a condensed, reiterative, and compelling way. The ritual world is a synecdoche by which one may be able to perceive more immediately, with less interference, the fuller state of things... The worshipper is called upon to focus, over and over, day after day, on the primary principles of the Śaiva world as he acts with and through them in ritual. What he sees, directly, as they animate his own actions, are the multiple projections of the cosmological and theological foundations of the single world, Śiva’s world.

Thus, Davis points out how Śaiva practitioners call forth and enter a ritual universe that is understood to be more real than the normal world of delusory appearances (Skt. Māyā). More importantly for the topic of subject-making, Davis describes how practitioners seek to familiarize themselves with a ritual universe through an iterative process to more fully embody and realize its cosmological and ontological

---


197 Davis, Worshiping Siva in Medieval India, 73-74.
truths, with the aim to achieve release or liberation (Skt. mokṣa). In doing so, I would add, practitioners engage in a process of re-forming their own subjectivities in light of and in line with those expressed in the ritual text. Although Buddhists do not accept the experience of the non-dual, omnipresent essence of Śiva as the achievement of liberation, the practice of enacting and entering ritual universes is still practiced with parallel cosmological constructions, as well as mundane and soteriological goals.

Wallis draws on Davis to describe how a Vajrayāna Buddhist ritual universe is understood as “a particularized world, permeated by the cosmological and metaphysical assumptions operating in the text.” In this way, he continues, “the rituals, grounded in these assumptions, constitute the actions by which these [assumptions] are, in turn, realized.”\(^\text{198}\) In the Vajrayāna ritual context, practitioners follow texts, such as the SOM, to generate ritual universes in which they seek to enter not as their normal selves, but rather as discursive or rhetorical subjects prescribed within a text. As Wallis writes, for practitioners the success of enacting the ritual “rests on the practitioner’s ability to become the type of person described in the text.”\(^\text{199}\) Similar to Bell’s arguments,\(^\text{200}\) such rituals universes and subjectivities are not only already formed, as in they already described within ritual texts, they are also formative, as practitioners train themselves to become the discursive subjects prescribed within a text. As such, the efficacy of such a ritual comes through the repeated enactment of a ritual, during which practitioners seek to discipline themselves to embody the subjectivities prescribed in a text and in doing so strive to

\(^{198}\) Wallis, Mediating the Power of Buddhas, 1-2.

\(^{199}\) Ibid., 167.

\(^{200}\) Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice, 98.
realize that subjectivity. Thus, Vajrayāna ritual practice, Wallis writes, becomes a space for mediating the actual and the ideal states of practitioners.\footnote{Wallis, Mediating the Power of Buddhas, 167.}

While this may first appear to echo J.Z. Smith’s claim that rituals are arenas for consciously acting out what ought to be rather than what is,\footnote{Jonathan Z. Smith, Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 63.} I would caution against such a connection. For, whereas Smith sees the idealized state enacted in ritual as distinctive from reality and one that remains forever unattainable, Vajrayāna generative imagination practices understand ritual enactment as a means of realizing the ontological claims laid forth in ritual texts. Through an iterative process of gradual familiarization, practitioners are understood to be able to actually achieve the state of the ideal, rhetorical practitioners laid forth in a text, and thereby to exchange the practitioner’s “present dim-witted, limited, and corrupt personality for the crystalline, spacious, and altruistic state of supreme enlightenment.”\footnote{Daniel Cozort, “Śādhanā (sGrub thabs): Means of Achievement for Deity Yoga,” in Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger Jackson (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 1996), 338.} In this way, practices like the SOM, serve not as free or meaningless performances,\footnote{On the meaninglessness of ritual, see Frits Staal’s provocative article “The Meaninglessness of Ritual,” Numen 26, 1 (1979): 2-22.} but as disciplined, apt performances, the repeated enactment of which leads to the induction and development of Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects, individuals training to become the idealized subjects described within the text. Thus, rituals like the SOM are spaces to mediate actual and ideal practitioners, as guides to undertaking the transformation of subjects from one to the other.\footnote{Wallis, Mediating the Power of Buddhas, 167.} This, I would argue, is a second way in which the ritual enactment of the SOM can be understood as performative. By reciting
and enacting the text, practitioners not only generate a ritual universe, they also enact a gradually process of training whereby they strive to become the rhetorical subjects of the text.

In the Vajrayāna context, the creation stage\textsuperscript{206} is one of the primary components of generative imagination practices.\textsuperscript{207} Creation stage encompasses a wide variety of meanings, but is generally described as “the practice of a sādhana of a particular deity with the aim of generating or transforming the body, environment, enjoyments, and activities of the practitioner into the body, environment, enjoyments and activities of a Buddha.”\textsuperscript{208} In this context, practitioners generate a constructed universe or mandala (དམེན་པ།) of a specific deity. In Tibetan, the term དམེན་པ། is composed of two words meaning ‘center’ (དུ་) and ‘surroundings’ (བུད་), which refer to the central deity and the circumjacent retinue and environment. Thus, the creation stage involves the practice of universe making, the transportation of practitioners and their surroundings into enlightened sights, sounds, and thoughts through the ritual construction of an enlightened universe. While practitioners are not initially expected to generate such a complex universe vividly and flawlessly, with repetition practitioners it is said they will become more

\textsuperscript{206} བྲེ་འབྲོ་འཕྲུལ་ or utpattikrama has also been translated as ‘generation stage,’ ‘development stage,’ and ‘production stage.’


stable. As Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche states, “the dharma is something we [practitioners] have to become accustomed to repeatedly.”\(^{209}\) Practicing for a long time checking one’s concentration and awareness, Dilgo Khyentse states, “one’s practice will become stabilized.”\(^{210}\)

In the SOM, practitioners generate a ritual universe that, as described above, Trungpa Rinpoche revealed and translated in Bhutan to be introduced in a ‘Western’ context. Visualizing this ritual universe, practitioners generate the manḍala of the charnel ground (Skt. śmāśāna; Tib. ར་དབང་) of the wrathful deity Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi. Far from the beautiful celestial realms of benevolent deities, practitioners call forth Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi in a blazing charnel ground, littered with corpses and cremation pyres, wherein all manner of wrathful deities, monstrous trees, beasts, and other forces dwell. The charnel ground imagery is common in a tantric context, especially in practices like the SOM that serve, as the Nyingma teacher Getse Mahāpanḍita Tsegaw Chokdrup (གཟེ་འབྲས་བཞི་བཅོང་ཕྱུག་; 1761-1829) describes to “tame those of a more intractable nature” untamable by any other means.\(^{211}\) In this way, enacting the SOM generates a charnel ground wherein Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi tames those who need to be tamed: non-Buddhist barbarians, Lords of Materialism, and the practitioners themselves.

Similarly, Gyatrul Rinpoche (གྱི་གྲུལ་; b. 1924) describes figures such as Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi not as wrathful in the conventional sense of being uncontrollably angry and violent, but rather as figures who have adopted rough and tumble manifestations to overcome the negative aspects of human dispositions. Just as parents sometimes find it necessary to harshly scold their children, so too

\(^{210}\) Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, *Pure Appearance*, 87.
\(^{211}\) Getse Mahāpanḍita Tsegaw Chokdrup, *Deity, Mantra, and Wisdom*, 116.
must the afflictions of sentient beings sometimes be tamed with wrathful and powerful methods. In this way, the wrathful deity’s scary disposition is necessary so that “wild sentient beings might be tamed.”

Noting that many sentient beings are difficult to tame with peaceful methods, wrathful deities manifest not as expressions of anger but rather as “an intense expression of the ultimate compassion that has manifested in coarse, illusory form to tame sentient beings impossible to tame otherwise.”

In this way, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi is invoked to tame individuals who are untamable by any other, more compassionate means. He is invoked for the purpose of taming, a process that geographer Emily Yeh notes is central to Tibetan notions of the environment and the self. As a manifestation of Padmasambhava, Dorje Drolö is seen as a heroic and ruthless being who tamed obstructive forces of the land to clear a pathway for the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet. This, as we shall see, is important when considering the role of the SOM in making Vajrayāna subjectivities. As practitioners repeatedly enact the generation of the ritual universe of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, they are simultaneously engaging in a process of positioning themselves within his realm as subjects to be tamed.

At the same time, practitioners of the SOM do more than enact a ritual universe and their position within it through the creation stage, they also train their subjectivity both within and outside of the ritual practice setting. As performative acts, Tambiah argues that ritual enactments are also powerful methods for inscribing in subjects a set of social relations within a broader cosmological paradigm. A powerful impulse for the enactment of ritual, he writes, comes from the fact of “ritual’s

---

212 Gyatral Rinpoche, *Generating the Deity*, 55.
213 Ibid., 50.
duplex existence, as an entity that symbolically and/or iconically represents the cosmos and at the same time indexically legitimates and realizes social hierarchies.” In this way, ritual enactment exhibits a form of disciplining or subject-making that links cosmological and ontological truth-claims in the ritual world with social relations outside of it through the medium of performance.

Tambiah uses the term indexical symbols to describe how objects or aspects within a ritual context point to social truths outside of the ritual context and have “an existential and pragmatic relation with the objects they represent.” In this way, not only do forces within a ritual point to aspects of the social context outside of the ritual, but the way they are presented within a ritual also carries over to the qualities of the entities they are linked to outside of it. In the SOM, practitioners generate figures and hierarchical relations within the ritual universe of the text, which are indexically linked to dispositions demanded of Vajrayāna subjects outside of the ritual context. This is seen, most notably in the connection between the authority and power of the central deity and retinue and the practitioner’s Vajrayāna teacher and lineage. In the SOM, this is manifest in the connection between Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and Trungpa Rinpoche. Thus, practitioners of the SOM train as subjects of the hierarchical, ontological, and soteriological claims of the text’s ritual universe, and in doing so also train as subjects of the hierarchies and truth-claims in the world outside of the ritual.

Thus, the ritual universe generated in a Vajrayāna practice, such as the SOM, can be understood as a space to enact and rehearse a set of relations and understandings of hierarchical, ontological, and soteriological truths. In this iterative, disciplinary process, practitioners invoke a ritual universe and

216 Ibid., 154.
train themselves to embody a subjectivity that is laid out within it. In doing so, practitioners are not only inducting and developing themselves as subjects of one specific Vajrayāna ritual universe, but are disciplining themselves as Vajrayāna subjects in the world more broadly. As such, the SOM introduces students not only to Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and other members of the Ka-Nying pantheon and lineage, but also inducts them as Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects of the Ka-Nying school and its teachers, especially as students of Trungpa Rinpoche.

B. The Making of Vajrayāna Buddhist Subjects in the Sādhana of Mahamudra

The text of the SOM begins with a telling description that not only surveys the circumstances of practitioners, but also positions them for enacting the remainder of the ritual. The opening lines state:

This is the darkest hour of the dark ages. Disease, famine and warfare are raging like the fierce north wind. The Buddha’s teaching has waned in strength. The various schools of the saṅgha are fighting amongst themselves with sectarian bitterness; and although the Buddha’s teachings were perfectly expounded and there have been many reliable teachings since then from other great gurus, yet they pursue intellectual speculations. The sacred mantra has strayed into Pōn, and the yogis of tantra are losing the insight of meditation. They spend their whole time going through villages and performing little ceremonies for material gain.

... The jewellike teaching of insight is fading day by day. The Buddha’s teaching is used merely for political purposes and to draw people together socially. As a result, the blessings of spiritual energy are being lost. Even those with great devotion are beginning to lose heart. If the buddhas of the three times and the great teachers were to comment, they would surely express their disappointment. So to enable individuals to ask for their help and to renew spiritual strength, I have written this sādhana of the embodiment of all the siddhas.

Before even beginning to recite the liturgical text, practitioners read silently or listen as a chant leader

---

217 This is a reference to Bön.
(དང་ནིི་) describes the wretched state of the world. Thus, practitioners begin the SOM already having positioned themselves as lost in a sea of materialistic horror, crying out to the Buddhas and Buddhist teachers for help. As discussed above, this type of anti-materialist language had a lot of currency among many of those who the SOM was introduced to in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

This connection, nonetheless, is rhetorically linked to a specific Vajrayāna universe of the SOM that practitioners are then called to enact, enter into, and in the process, become subjects of. By beginning the SOM in this way, practitioners rehearse their initial disposition as remorseful and fed up with the anguish of worldly existence, the corrupt state of current spirituality, and the importance of Buddhist authorities as possessing knowledge of a way out of this whole mess. In other words, practitioners invoke the dejected state of the world and position themselves as beneficiaries of the Buddhas and Vajrayāna teachers, aspiring for their blessings to remedy this situation.

As with most other sādhana-s, during the generative imagination of the SOM, practitioners move from the outermost to the innermost elements of the ritual universe. Beginning with the environment, practitioners imagine the palace and retinue of the deity. The charnel ground, a symbol of the ruinous nature of worldly existence and attachments and the first noble truth of suffering, 219 is filled with all manner of gruesome and scary phenomena, which are described as “the raw and rugged experience of our life, as it is.” 220 These include the Three Poisons (མགུ་མ་) transmuted into the Three Wisdoms (སྐད་མེད་ཐུན་མ་), which are “the vajra anger, the flame of death,” which “burns fiercely and consumes the fabric of

219 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 130-131.
dualistic thoughts,” “the black river of death, the vajra passion” which “destroys the raft of conceptualization,” and the “great poisonous wind of the vajra ignorance” which “sweeps away all thoughts of possessiveness and self like a pile of dust.” Additionally, there are all manner of fearsome beasts, including vultures, ravens, hawks, tigers, bears, and jackals who roam about, flaunting their strength, craving meat and blood. Reciting these lines, practitioners enter into the universe of the charnel grounds of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi. The imagery is overwhelming, but that, according to one of Trungpa Rinpoche’s senior students, Derek Kolleeny, is the nature of its power over practitioners.

In enacting the SOM, practitioners generate and enter a Ka-Nying Vajrayāna universe, thereby establishing themselves in deference to and reliance upon Ka-Nying protectors, deities, and lineage figures, the embodiments of the Three Roots of Vajrayāna practice. In doing so, practitioners are themselves becoming ‘refugees,’ so to speak, subjects who revere the Three Roots as a source of blessings and realization. Along with the outer environment of the SOM, practitioners invoke one of the Three Roots, the protector deities that connect them to Trungpa Rinpoche’s Ka-Nying lineage of Buddhism. These are described in the practice text as the protecting mahākālis. Rather than an association with the Hindu deity, Kāli or Mahākāli, this term is Trungpa Rinpoche’s translation for the Tibetan term ma-mo (མ་མེད), a class of goddesses that are said to have been tamed by Padmasambhava upon his arrival in Tibet. They can bring both disaster, disease, and misfortune, but can also act as

222 Ibid., 9.
223 Derek Kolleeny, personal communication with author, 12 November 2017.
dharma protectors. These include the goddesses Rangjung Gyalmo (Skt. Svayambhūdevī; Tib. རང་སྤྲུན་རྒྱལ་མོ་), Dorje Sogdrubma (Tib. འཇིགས་སྤྲུལ་མ་), Tüsölma (Skt. Dhūmavatī; Tib. སྒྲུབ་མ་), and Ekajaṭī (Skt. एकास्ती). Of particular interest here are these figures connections to Padmasambhava and Dorje Drönö as well as to the Karma Kagyü lineage. Tüsölma, for example, is often associated as a personal protector for Marpa Lotsawa (1012-1097/9), one of the founders of the Kagyü lineage. Ekajaṭī, in addition to being a protector deity in the Karma Kagyü, is also considered one of the primary protectors of the Treasure tradition among the Nyingma. This Ka-Nying connection can be seen further in the protector deities at the bottom of the Sādhana of Mahāmudrā scroll painting (Skt. pāta; Tib. བསྡེབས་) [See Appendix II], painted under Trungpa Rinpoche’ guidance by Sherab Palden Beru. On the bottom left and center are the figures Rangjung Gyalmo and two-armed Mahākāla (ཐ་བོ་བྲིས་ཀྱི་མགྲི་བསྐྲལ), protectors of the Karmapas and the Karma Kagyü lineage. Although two-armed Mahākāla (ཐ་བོ་བྲིས་ཀྱི་མགྲི་བསྐྲལ) is not mentioned in the SOM text, this Kagyü protector’s inclusion in the thangka seems purposeful as two-armed Mahākāla was originally a protector of the Nyingma Treasure tradition but was brought into the Kagyü by the Second Karmapa. The Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi is half of the central deity of the SOM, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi.

The third dharma protector in the painting, Garwa Nagpo (Tib. གར་འདས་བཀོད་པ་), also presents a joining of Kagyü and Nyingma iconographies. An emanation of the primarily Nyingma Treasure

---

225 For more on རང་སྤྲུན་རྒྱལ་མོ་, see Réne de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, Oracles and Demons of Tibet: The Cult and Iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 269-273.
protector Dorje Legpa (Skt. Vajrasādhu; Tib. རྡོ་རྗེ་ལེགས་པ།), in the scroll painting, their forms overlap. In the Kagyū Garwa Nagpo is normally depicted with a blue body. In the SOM scroll painting, however, his body is red, marking, a combination of the Kagyū Garwa Nagpo with the Nyingma Dorje Legpa, who normally is red. This figure, along with the other protectors in the SOM text and scroll painting, stresses the combination of Kagyū and Nyingma teachings in the SOM. By invoking these figures, SOM practitioners not only generate and enter into the charnel ground as beings disgusted with the nature of worldly existence, they also enter a universe where they are both protected by guardians of both the Kagyū and Nyingma schools. In doing so, practitioners train themselves in a deferential relationship to these figures who have the power to manifest as either friendly goddesses or harmful demons.

The SOM then describes the central deity of this wrathful maṇḍala, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, “the personification of the body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas.” He emerges from the seed syllable (Skt. bija; Tib. བཱ་ི) HŪM and stands in the heruka (ཧཱུ་ྲྀ) posture atop a pregnant tigress, a manifestation of his consort, Yeshe Tsögyal. Each aspect of his figure is described in detail with its own meaning. His body which is a dark red color symbolizes the oneness of emptiness and compassion and he wears the three monastic robes, which symbolize the three higher trainings (Skt. triśikṣa; Tib. ཨག་པ་བོ་པ་གཤམ་). His right hand holds a nine-pointed vajra (རྡོ་ིྱ) and his left hand holds a three-pointed kīla.

229 While space does not permit a nuanced discussion of this topic here, the subject of the union of Kagyū and Nyingma teachings in the SOM, and particularly the interrelation between the Kagyū mahāmudrā teachings and the mahāati (མཁྱེན་པོ་/ན་0་) is a subject that warrants its own exploration.
230 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā, 10.
231 Other accounts describe the tigress as a manifestation of another of Padmasambhava’s consorts, Tashi Chidren (བུ་བསྟི་བཞི་རིན་). See, for example, Khenpo Palden Sherab, “The Eight Manifestations of Guru Padmasambhava”; Keith Dowman, Sky Dancer: The Secret Life and Songs of the Lady Yeshe Tsogyel (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 270.
Dorje Drolö is overlaid with the Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi, seen especially through Karma Pakshi’s black goatee and the black crown (ཐོ་མོང་) of the Karmapa lineage. Karma Pakshi is depicted in guruyoga, form, holding a vajra and kīla, thus making him a central part of the tutelary deity.²³² The text further emphasizes Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi’s demeanor and wrathful nature, noting that “He is inseparable from peacefulness and yet he acts whenever action is required. He subdues what needs to be subdued, he destroys what needs to be destroyed and he cares for whatever needs his care.”²³³

Having accepted the dejected state of the world, practitioners invoke the need for themselves and the surrounding world to be tamed and cleared of obstructions. Accordingly, practitioners train themselves to call forth Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi to enact the wrathful activities of subjugation and destruction at the center of the SOM’s ritual universe.

Both Dorje Drolö and Karma Pakshi are particularly powerful figures who are described as devastating forces that oppose the buddhadharma. Dorje Drolö, as previous mentioned, is a wrathful emanation of Padmasambhava, and is especially associated with taming demons and spirits. Trungpa Rinpoche describes Dorje Drolö as representing “the aspect of crazy wisdom”²³⁴ that doesn’t relate with

---

²³² There is an interesting connection here with the origin story of Karma Pakshi as a tutelary deity, appearing first in a vision to the famous Nyingma Treasure Revealer Yongge Mingyur Dorje (1628/41-1708). This is particularly intriguing as the story relates that the protector deities that appeared to Yonge Mingyur Dorje were the same as painted in the SOM scroll painting (Two-Armed Mahākāla, Rangjung Gyalmo, and Garwa Nakpo). A fuller exploration of this connection, however, is outside the scope of this project. For more information see: Jeff Watt, “Teacher: Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (Guruyoga), Himalayan Art Resources, accessed 19 March 2017, http://www.himalayanart.org/search/set.cfm?setID=2216.

²³³ Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā, 10.

²³⁴ This is an interesting term that Trungpa Rinpoche says corresponds to the Tibetan word འཇིགས་ལའང་ and to a whole class of rather extraordinary and controversial religious teachers in Tibet and the Himalayas. David DiValerio, however, makes an interesting case that Trungpa Rinpoche likely invented this term himself and notes that the term འཇིགས་ལའང་ does not exist in traditional hagiographies or other sources. The term does, however, roughly map onto the ‘madman’ (ཐོ་བོ་) phenomenon in Tibetan literature, which was long used to describe unconventional figures such as Drukpa Kunleg (འདོད་པ་ཀུན་ལྡེ; 1455-1529) or
gentleness in order to tame somebody.”

Rather, he is “an enlightened samurai, a savage person, a crazy-wisdom person,” who tames forces, both external and internal to the practitioner, obstructive to the buddhadharma. Karma Pakshi, on the other hand, was famous for teaching at the Mongol court and for supposedly surviving numerous forms of torture and attempted assassination. His ferocity and unpredictability match well with those of Dorje Drolö and together the two form a rather powerful force at the center of the charnel grounds of the SOM. For practitioners, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi is supplicated to not only grant blessings but also to eliminate obstructive forces. These include not only those external, but also those within the mind of the practitioner, thereby positioning the practitioner as a subject to be freed from obstacles and tamed by Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi’s wrathful means. These obscurations are not worked through gradually, but are rather pierced through directly and severed.

The SOM continues to describe three Karma Kagyü lineage figures at the forehead (དིལ་བ་), throat (མན་པ་), and heart (འགས་ཀ་) of Karma Pakshi Dorje Drolö. The first figure is the First Karmapa Tüsum Khyenpa (༡༡༡༠-༡༡༩༣), in the form of the Buddha Vairochana (བོད་ལྡན་འབྲོད་པ་). The second is the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorje (༡༥༠༧-༡༥༥༤) in the form of the Buddha Amitābha (མཐའ་ཡས་). Revered as a great meditator, scholar, and grammarian, he holds the sword of wisdom, which cuts through conceptions of a permanent self. Finally, the third figure is the Third Karmapa, Rangjung

---

235 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 113.
236 Ibid., 113.
238 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 12 November 2015.
Dorje (རྒྱ་མཚོ་; 1284-1339) in the form of the Buddha Vajrasattva (ཤེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་). He is depicted as the primordial (Skt. adibuddha; Tib. རོལ་བརུག་) Buddha of the Nyingma school, Samantabhadra (ཤེས་རྒྱ་མཚོ་), although he wears the black crown of the Karmapas. In positioning these figures as the body, speech, and mind of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, practitioners relate to them as manifestations of enlightened form, enlightened speech, and enlightened mind, as well as realized lineage figures in the Kagyü school. Thus, by enacting their exalted place within the ritual universe, practitioners position and train themselves as disciples of this lineage, reliant upon them as the source of blessings and realization.

For Trungpa Rinpoche, these lineage figures were not merely historical antecedents to be respected, but were rather forces that transcended temporal boundaries. They are not figures limited to the past, but are present today, most especially as they are embodied in those who carry their tradition. To practice with a Vajrayāna teacher, Trungpa Rinpoche states, is “like studying with somebody who is fully soaked in his or her own tradition,” with someone who is “the spokesperson for your lineage.”

In this way, Kolleeny describes Trungpa Rinpoche as an embodiment of thousands of years of teachers and teachings brought to life. Understood in this way, Trungpa Rinpoche himself becomes an embodiment of these lineage figures in the universe outside of the SOM, and by connecting with them, practitioners relate with Trungpa Rinpoche as an embodiment of their realization and power. As such, in generating these figures, practitioners train themselves in a relationship to Trungpa Rinpoche as a Vajrayāna teacher, as the source of the teachings and wisdom of the Ka-Nying lineages.

239 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 118.
241 Derek Kolleeny, personal communication with author, October 29 2015.
Taken together, the protectors, tutelary deity, and lineage figures embody the Three Roots of Vajrayāna practice. In generating and paying homage to them, practitioners not only place themselves within a specific Vajrayāna universe, they also enter into relation with these three groups of figures in a very specific way. Trungpa Rinpoche described the practice of taking refuge as definite commitment, like stepping onto a “train without reverse and without breaks.”\textsuperscript{242} It is the moment when one receives transmission and becomes a “full-fledged follower of the buddhadharma” and a follower of one’s lineage.\textsuperscript{243} Key to the action of taking refuge is the practitioner’s surrender and devotion to the Three Jewels, which in the Vajrayāna context are the Three Roots. Similarly, Trungpa Rinpoche describes devotion as the basis for the SOM, noting that the practice cannot be properly understood without “appreciating the sense of hierarchy... in the relationship of the teacher and the student.”\textsuperscript{244} As such, the objects of refuge and sources of blessing are preserved in the English practice text and deemed non-negotiable conditions for its enactment. Thus, in enacting, paying homage, and expressing reliance upon these figures for blessings, protection, and attainment, practitioners of the SOM train themselves as Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects who go for refuge in the Three Roots as the source of teachings and realization.\textsuperscript{245} What is more, they become ‘refugees’ of a very distinctive Ka-Nying inflection.

Following the generation of the ritual universe of the SOM, practitioners further establish their place amidst the forces within it, as mentioned above. In this section of supplication, practitioners

\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{244} Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{Devotion & Crazy Wisdom}, 85-86.
\textsuperscript{245} Of the Three Roots, the Teacher is the source of blessings (Skt. \textit{adhīṣṭhāna}; Tib. བླ་སྟོན་ཐོབས་), the central deity is the source of accomplishment (Skt. \textit{siddhi}; Tib. རྡོ་རྗེ་བསྟོད་), and the protectors or Sky-Goers are the source of activity (Skt. \textit{karman}; Tib. ལྡོག་པ་).
invoke a sense of deference and humility, relating with their own delusions and with the brilliance of the figures within the SOM. As Trungpa Rinpoche states, this is where practitioners try to relate with the glorious condition of the deities. “Our own condition is highly wretched. So we are trying to link together wretchedness and gloriousness.” This is done not particularly by turning Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi into a divine savior, but rather through a process of transmutation. Like much of tantric practice, in the SOM, practitioners enact the transmutation of afflictions to productive use on the spiritual path. This is seen in lines, such as “On seeing your face I am overjoyed. Now pain and pleasure alike have become Ornaments which it is pleasant to wear.” While in hinayāna (_greater charade_) practice, one is exhorted to abandon these and cultivate their antidotes, in the Vajrayāna the afflictions and their remedies are alchemically transmuted and considered of the one taste (Skt. samarāsa/ekarāsa; Tib. རྣ་མཚན/རྣ་ཅིག). Practitioners make supplications then, not to beseech a higher power to enlighten them, but rather to assist them in ultimately realizing their own innate enlightened nature (Skt. tathāgatagarbha/ sugatagarbha; Tib. བཞིན་གྱི་ལམ་ཤེས་བས་ཀྱིས་ངོ་བབ་ལམ་ཤེད་བས་ཀྱིས་ངོ་བབ་). Trungpa Rinpoche asserts that practitioners should develop devotion and admiration towards the figures in the SOM to cultivate an outlook that does not express an expectation of deliverance, but is devoid of self-centered ideas altogether. Such devotion (ལོག་བཞེང་), he notes, is characterized by the qualities of longing and an absence of arrogance. This attitude, he points out, “can only exist when you have no personal investment in the ‘cause’...You

246 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 47.
247 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Śūdhāna of Mahāmudrā, 18.
248 Here, I am not referring to the three vehicles (Skt. triyāna; Tib. རྣ་མཚན) as historical developments, but rather echoing Vajrayāna formulations of the three vehicles as three different modes of practice (e.g. practicing for one’s self, practicing for the benefit of others, practicing based upon cultivating pure perception).
are no longer expecting a certain cut of the deal.” Elsewhere he notes that practitioners “have to give in on the spot,” and there can be no holding back to any notion of selfhood.

Subsequently, after practitioners have opened and offered their ‘selves’ up, they make offerings and request for the blessings of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and the lineage. The SOM text states:

Whatever arises is merely the play of the mind.§
All this I offer, filling the whole universe.§
I offer knowing that giver and receiver are one;§
I offer without expecting anything in return and without hope of gaining merit;§
I make these offerings with transcendental generosity in the mahāmudrā.§
Now that I have made these offerings, please grant your blessings so that my mind may be one with the dharma.§
Grant your blessings so that dharma may progress along the path.§
Grant your blessings so that the path may clarify confusion.§
Grant your blessings so that confusion may dawn as wisdom.§

In this way, practitioners offer up all of their surroundings and mental activities in what amounts to a complete surrender to Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and the Vajrayāna teacher. Trungpa Rinpoche notes that, “You can’t actually receive blessings unless you are open to the guru, and the guru is open to you. That is the basic point.” With openness there can be a transference, not only of blessings, but also of the essence of the buddhadharma itself. As Trungpa Rinpoche explains, this latter point is what one is striving to enact in the SOM, “We are appreciating a particular aspect of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, and

---

§ Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 152.
§ These are, of course, the Four Dharmas of Gampopa, a traditional and concise formulation of the entire Buddhist path, which has been the focus of a great deal of attention with the Kagyū tradition in particular. For Trungpa Rinpoche’s thoughts see the transcripts of a series of talks gave in 1975 at Karmê Chöling, VT republished in Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Four Dharmas of Gampopa (Halifax, NS and Boulder, CO: Vajradhatu Publications, 2007).
§ Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 19 November 2015.
§ Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 159.
we are appreciating that particular aspect coming to us." In this way, practitioners of the SOM enact the giving away of their ‘selfhood,’ thereby positing a subject devoid of notions of self as the empty vessel for the blessings and the mind of the teacher to be poured into. As Boyce states, the Vajrayāna teachers and lineage figures are the fullness that practitioners seek to be filled with. This is the final preparation in the SOM before practitioners enact the meeting of their mind with the mind of the teacher. Practitioners train themselves to offer attachments to sensory objects and the self-clinging ego to receive the blessings of the central deity and the Vajrayāna teacher. In doing this, practitioners enact the loosen the strings of their attachments to the material world and to themselves.

Finally, at the apex of the SOM text, practitioners enact the meeting of their mind with those of the teacher and lineage through the recitation of the triple HŪM mantra. Trungpa Rinpoche describes this mantra as the point in the liturgy when “the boundary between you and your guru becomes vague, and you are uncertain whether or not a boundary exists at all. At that point, there is a possibility of being one with your guru.” Having created the proper conditions through the generation and entrance into the subjectivity prescribed within the SOM text, at the moment practitioners enact the performative utterance of the mantra recitation they are understood to receive the empowerment from the teacher. Barry Boyce describes the mantra recitation as a proclamation that links the practitioner with the deity and the teacher, as moment as akin to electricity running from the teacher to the student. In a very Austinian sense, the recitation of the triple HŪM delivers what Trungpa calls this

---

254 Ibid., 160.
255 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 19 November 2015.
256 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 177.
257 Ibid., 73.
258 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 19 November 2015.
the “final ati stamp of approval,” a sign that “real things have taken place in the proper way.”259 In this way, having first generated the proper environment and devotional attitude in the previous sections of the SOM, the recitation of the mantra serves as a proclamation that inaugurates practitioners as Vajrayāna subjects and as students of the Vajrayāna teacher.

What becomes apparent in the way the SOM is discussed and the language of the text is that there is a great deal of slippage between Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and the figure of the teacher. Indeed, this is because although not explicitly stated in the SOM text or the two seminars that Trungpa Rinpoche gave on the practice in 1975, in the Vajrayāna practitioners’ tutelary deity is understood to be their teacher and vice-versa.260 As Trungpa Rinpoche says while explaining the Vajrayāna path,

since the guru gave you your yidam, the guru is the yidam, and the yidam is your guru. The yidam might be regarded as something transcendental and extraordinary, in the realm of the gods, but your guru's activities can be seen in the ordinary world. The guru is an actual physical, corporeal being who you can relate with as an expression of your yidam.261

The energy, power, and wisdom of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi is indexically linked to that of Trungpa Rinpoche. Thus, in enacting the ritual universe of the SOM, practitioners not only position themselves as subjects to be tamed by Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, but also by Trungpa Rinpoche himself. Here, it is important to note that this language of taming and of students submitting themselves to a teacher is fraught with complexities. Indeed, tantric practice more broadly accords the spiritual teacher an incredibly charged role, as the source of all blessings and realization with tremendous authority over

259 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Devotion & Crazy Wisdom, 74.
260 Indeed, a more precise classification for the SOM rather that the general term for generative imaginaries (ཉོན་མོང་) is the term guru yoga (གུརུ་ཡོག), which is the practice of visualizing the guru, requesting her/his blessings, receiving those blessings, and ultimately merging one’s mind with that of the teacher.
261 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, The Profound Treasury of The Ocean of Dharma Volume Three, 370.
her or his students. Numerous sources both within and external to various tantric practice traditions issue both cautionary tales against the potential for abuse in this relationship, as well as stories that honor the figure of the spiritual teacher as the key to spiritual realization.\textsuperscript{262} While Trungpa Rinpoche does not question the importance of this relationship, indeed he celebrates it, he also cautions students to not only develop openness and devotion toward their teacher, but to also be cynical. In discussing the SOM, he says that the two, devotion and cynicism are synchronized together. “It shouldn’t be a purely kill-or-cure situation. You think that you have to be very naïve or terribly cynical to the point of being ready to drop the whole thing.” Rather, somehow “those two attitudes have to work together.”\textsuperscript{263} Thus, in enacting the SOM, Trungpa Rinpoche exhorts practitioners not to view Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi or the figure of the teacher as a savior, but rather as beings with the “ways and means to create situations in according with our own receptivity.”\textsuperscript{264}

Although in a more traditional course of Vajrayāna study and practice, practitioners would be

\textsuperscript{262} For academic discussions of the complexity of the student-teacher relationship in tantra, see: Hugh Urban, \textit{The Power of Tantra: Religion Sexuality and the Politics of South Asian Studies} (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010); Hugh Urban, \textit{Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). In the Tibetan tradition, the student-teacher relationship is explored at length in numerous volumes, many of which have been translated into English, such as Jamgön Kongtrul, \textit{The Student Teacher Relationship}, trans., Ron Garry (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1999); Patrul Rinpoche, \textit{Words of my Perfect Teacher}, trans., Padmakara Translation Group (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1998). Additionally, this topic is commonly explored in hagiographies, such as those of Milarepa, Marpa, and Tilopa in the Kagyü school. See: Mar-pa chos-kyi bLo-gros, \textit{The Life of the Mahāsiddha Tilopa}, trans., Fabrizio Torricelli and Āchārya Sangye T. Naga, ed., Vyvyan Cayley (Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1995); Tsangnyön Heruka, \textit{The Life of Marpa The Translator: Seeing Accomplishes All}, trans., Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and the Nālānda Translation Committee (Boulder: Prajñā Press, 1982); Tsangnyön Heruka, \textit{The Life of Milarepa}, trans., Andrew Quintman (New York: Penguin Books, 2010). In the context of Vajrayāna in the West, the German monk Tenzin Peljor, has put collected and published a series of resources and critical essays from both scholars and practitioners, such as the 14th Dalai Lama, Alexander Berzin, Jetsuma Tenzin Palmo, Rob Preece, Jamgön Kongtrul, Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, John Snelling, and others on the topic of the student-teacher relationship in the Vajrayāna. See his website: Tenzin Peljor, ed., \textit{Tibetan Buddhism in the West: Problems of Adoption & Cross-Cultural Confusion}, accessed 22 April 2017, \url{http://www.info-buddhism.com}.

\textsuperscript{263} Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, \textit{Devotion & Crazy Wisdom}, 101.

\textsuperscript{264} Ibid., 98.
introduced to a similar practice through a ritual empowerment by their Vajrayāna teacher, during which they would be given a meditative deity, in the case of the SOM, this situation is inverted. In the SOM, practitioners become introduced to Trungpa Rinpoche as a Vajrayāna teacher through the generation of and devotion expressed towards Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and the lineage figures in the Ka-Nying the charnel ground of the SOM. As such, these figures serve as indexical symbols linked to Trungpa Rinpoche and thus, the deferential and devotional positionality practitioners enact in relation to them is transferred to how they relate with Trungpa Rinpoche and vice-versa.

By enacting and positioning themselves as beings to be tamed within the context of the SOM’s ritual universe, practitioners are actively participating in their induction into a Ka-Nying Vajrayāna cosmology that imparts a Vajrayāna ontology with the teacher as the revered source of teachings, blessings, and realization. In doing so, they train themselves gradually to become the rhetorical Vajrayāna subjects envisioned in the SOM: confused and deluded beings, who offer up attachments to themselves in need of the blessings, protections, teachings, and taming not only by Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi and other Ka-Nying figures, but also by their Vajrayāna teacher, Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche.

Thus, it is through repeated enactments of the SOM that practitioners seek to train in and embody this specific subjectivity, which is itself laid out in the SOM. It is in this sense that the enactment of the SOM functions in Asad’s sense as an ‘apt performance,’ as a disciplined set of actions aimed at mastering a subjectivity that is itself described within the ritual text.

265 An initiation text for the SOM was penned at the request of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche by Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche in 1988. In 1993, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche used this text for the first time to confer the empowerment for the first time within the Shambhala community. See Larry Mermelstein, “Introduction,” in Vajravairochana Translation Committee, trans. and ed., The Śādhana of Mahāmudrā: Resources for Study, xiii.
Tambiah observes that in the context of religious transmission, although transmitters of a text or practice may act to change or violate particular traditional norms to transform said ritual for a new context, the innovator might not be attempting “to upset the over-all framework of customs.” Rather, in transforming certain aspects of the ritual, the innovator may actually expand the sphere of influence and felicity of the practice.266 Similarly, I would argue that Trungpa Rinpoche strategically translated the SOM, domesticating certain words of the text to resonate with his ‘Western’ students in order to recruit them as subjects of the foreign Vajrayāna world of the text. Rather than abandoning his Ka-Nying Vajrayāna training, Trungpa Rinpoche employed a strategic domestication to bring students out of their cultural context and into the foreign universe of the SOM, firmly grounded in reverence for the Three Roots and the figure of the Vajrayāna teacher. In this way, I would argue that the SOM represents an important example of a transnational and transcultural Treasure text, that translates Vajrayāna worlds in a way that expands the technology of Vajrayāna subject-making into a novel context. In doing so, the SOM serves as an early means of transmitting the Vajrayāna to the ‘West.’

V. Conclusion: Taming Subjects and Opening the Gates for the Ocean of Dharma

The story of the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet is largely tied to Padmasambhava’s taming of numerous obstructive forces of the Tibetan and Himalayan landscape. As described in The Lotus Born, Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet after the Tibetan King Trisong Deutsen (742-800) and Indian Abbot Śāntarakṣita (725-788) were unable to construct the monastery of Samyé.

According to the story, despite the pair’s best efforts, whatever work was laid down during the day was torn asunder during the night by all manner of malicious deities, spirits, demons, and other forces of the land. In response, Śāntarakṣita finally proclaimed,

> These malicious gods and demons of Tibet must be tamed by wrathful means. In the cave of Yangleshö in Nepal stays a siddha, who became the son of the king of Uddiyana. He is the incarnated Padmasambhava, who possesses great spiritual strength and overwhelming power... If you invite him, he will fulfill your aspiration and subjugate the local spirits.

Subsequently, Padmasambhava was requested to come to Tibet and subjugate forces in the surrounding landscape as he traveled. Once he subdued the obstructing forces, the construction of Samyé could be completed. In the end, no matter the altruistic intentions of the King or Śāntarakṣita, only after Padmasambhava subjugated and tamed these forces that opposed the buddhadharma, could the buddhadharma enter Tibet.

Just over one thousand years later, this history was localized for many of Trungpa Rinpoche’s ‘Western’ students in the way that Trungpa Rinpoche related it to their own circumstances. In a series
of talks given in Jackson Hole, Wyoming in 1972, for example, Trungpa Rinpoche brings Padmasambhava and the entrance of Buddhism to Tibet and the Himalayas into an analogous situation with the then-present situation of the Vajrayāna entering the 'West.' Trungpa Rinpoche states,

The students he [Padmasambhava] had to deal with were Tibetans, who were extraordinarily savage and uncultured. He was invited to come to Tibet, but the Tibetans showed very little understanding of how to receive and welcome a great guru from another part of the world. They were very stubborn and very matter-of-fact—very earthy. They presented all kinds of obstacles to Padmasambhava's activity in Tibet. However, the obstacles did not come from the Tibetan people alone, but also from differences in climate, landscape, and the social situation as a whole. In some ways, Padmasambhava's situation was very similar to our situation here. Americans are hospitable, but on the other hand there is a very savage and rugged side to American culture. Spiritually, American culture is not conducive to just bringing out the brilliant light and expecting it to be accepted. So there is an analogy here. In terms of that analogy, the Tibetans are the Americans and Padmasambhava is himself.270

What emerges from this statement is a connection between Tibet before the introduction of Buddhism and the non-Buddhist US of the early 1970s. In both contexts, Trungpa Rinpoche notes that although many individuals are well intentioned, there are all manner of physical and psychological opposing forces that prevented the entrance of the buddhadharma. What is necessary in both cases before the Buddhist teachings can be established, he suggests, is for Dorje Drolö to enter and tame these obstructing forces. As Boyce notes, in the same way that Padmasambhava manifested as Dorje Drolö to deal with the wilds of Tibet, Trungpa Rinpoche repeated that manifestation as Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi to bring Buddhism to the 'West.'271 However, if the 'West' was not full of demons and evil spirits, then what were the obstructions that Dorje Drolö was being called upon to overcome?

271 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 22 October 2015.
As I have illustrated above, for Trungpa Rinpoche the most pernicious force preventing the establishment of the buddhadharma during his early years of teaching was that of spiritual materialism. This tendency for individuals to use spiritual practices to build up their own egos and notions of a definitive ‘self,’ evidenced in the spiritual supermarket of the 1960s and 1970s, firmly undercut the establishment of the Vajrayāna. As longtime student and current Shambhala senior teacher, Acharya Jeremy Hayward notes, taming and cutting through 'spiritual materialism' was for Trungpa Rinpoche “the key to laying the ground so that Buddhism could be presented properly in the West, and so that the true dharma could actually be heard by Western students.” 272 In other words, before the buddhadharma could be successfully transmitted to the ‘West,’ the obstructive forces of spiritual materialism had to be subdued and tamed.

Although Trungpa Rinpoche could speak of the need to cut through spiritual materialism in general, Vajrayāna Buddhism understands that until individuals realize teachings like this through their own meditation practice, such theoretical knowledge is useless. In a famous verse, the 17th century Ka-Nying teacher Karma Chagmé (ཀརྩ་ཆགས་དཔེར་; 1613-1678) says, “Even though you know much, if you do not practice, it will be the same as dying of thirst at the shore of a vast lake. It's possible that you'll become an ordinary corpse on a scholar's bed.” 273 Without experience and realization through practice, there can be no speaking of the efficacy of the Buddhist teachings. Thus, in the case of the SOM, until

---

272 Hayward, Warrior King of Shambhala, 6.

273 My thanks to Hubert Decleer for bringing this citation to my attention. The original Tibetan lines read: རྨ་ཆོས་དཔེར་ ཞེ་སུ་ཇ་ལེགས་ཀྱི་དཔེར་གྲོན་བུ་ཆེན་སྤྱོད་ཐུབ་ རྒྱུད་ཐུབ་ཆེར་རྒྱལ་ཚོ། The original Tibetan lines read: རྨ་ཆོས་དཔེར་ ཞེ་སུ་ཇ་ལེགས་ཀྱི་དཔེར་གྲོན་བུ་ཆེན་སྤྱོད་ཐུབ་ རྒྱུད་ཐུབ་ཆེར་རྒྱལ་ཚོ།
practitioners enact the ritual universe of the SOM and embody the subjectivity of individuals who need to be tamed through the activity of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, speculations of cutting through spiritual materialism remain just that, whimsical wishes.

Thus, although Trungpa Rinpoche spoke of cutting through spiritual materialism in numerous talks and publications, the SOM provides an embodied means to train in this process. Far from being strictly a historical figure, Padmasambhava is, as Trungpa Rinpoche notes, “alive and well” actively acting across the American landscape.274 Thus, I would argue that by inducting practitioners as subjects in the charnel grounds of the wrathful form of Padmasambhava, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi, the SOM is a technology through which practitioners train to become subjects who submit themselves to Padmasambhava to be tamed and who also understand the 'West' more broadly as a place in need of taming. As practitioners enter the ritual universe of the SOM, they train themselves to undermine spiritual materialism through cutting their attachment to a 'self' and then offering this self and all other afflictive emotions up as an offering for Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi. By repeatedly enacting the subjectivity prescribed within the SOM, practitioners also discipline themselves to embody a set of ontological, hierarchical, and soteriological claims laid out in the text. The mundane world is swirling in a sea of suffering and the only way out is to seek the blessings of the protectors, lineage figures, deity, and the teacher. By humbly offering one’s ‘self’ and striving to follow their example, practitioners aspire to slowly extract themselves from the 'slime and muck of the dark age.'

As Treasure texts are understood to do, the SOM manifested in a form that was particularly

274 Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Crazy Wisdom, 4.
fitting to the circumstances of its revelation. Thus, the SOM emerged at a pivotal moment not only in Trungpa Rinpoche’s life but also in the transmission of Buddhism to the ‘West’ and is frequently referenced as,\(^{275}\) opening the doors, so to speak, for his other methods of teaching the buddhadharma. His son and current head of Shambhala International, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, writes that “The Sādhanā of Mahāmudrā came to the Vidhyādhara [Trungpa Rinpoche’s title] at a unique point in his life. Within it lies not only the confluence of ati and mahāmudrā, but also of East and West, past and future.”\(^{276}\)

Similarly, Trungpa Rinpoche’s student and long-time editor Carolyn Gimian notes that, “The Sādhanā of Mahāmudrā had such a huge impact on Trungpa Rinpoche’s development as a teacher and on the whole thrust of his teaching in the West. In a sense, the most articulate presentation of spiritual materialism and the most profound understanding of how to vanquish it are presented in this sadhana.”\(^{277}\) In this way, many students of Trungpa Rinpoche view the SOM as a Treasure text, revealed to him by Padmasambhava at a critical point in Trungpa Rinpoche’s teaching in the ‘West.’ Moreover, some even credit the SOM with making possible the teachings and practices which would follow over the next seventeen years Trungpa Rinpoche was active teaching in the ‘West.’ When seen in this light, the SOM appears to have been successful in inducting many early practitioners into the Vajrayāna

---


universe and training them as Vajrayāna subjects. Later, after having been tamed and trained to cut through spiritual materialism, such practitioners served as appropriate vessels for Trungpa Rinpoche to pour the Vajrayāna teachings into. In this way, one could say that the work of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi was a success. A wrathful manifestation of Padmasambhava, a vanguard to clear a path for the Buddhist teachings, Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi subdued obstacles and made way for the buddhadharma to enter the ‘West.’ It is in this sense that Boyce calls the SOM the “Magna Carta of Trungpa’s lineage.”

As I have argued above, this understanding is echoed in Trungpa Rinpoche’s descriptions of the SOM’s revelation at Taktsang in 1968. It came at a critical juncture, when he was uncertain how to present the buddhadharma in the ‘West,’ having vehement disagreements with his childhood friend and co-teacher, Akong Rinpoche, and when he was devoutly supplicating his lineage teachers and Padmasambhava to convey the best means to teach Buddhism in a new context. It was only with his return trip in 1968 from the UK to India, visits with his teachers, and time spent on retreat at Taktsang, Trungpa Rinpoche writes in the SOM’s colophon, that, “Together with many, diverse omens, suddenly the youthful sun of the excellent dharma is clear and shining, unsoiled by sins, joining together excellent aspirations and activity as a chariot and driver.” In this way, the youthful sun of the ‘excellent dharma’ shone through with the revelation of the SOM; Trungpa Rinpoche’s supplications on how to best convey the buddhadharma in the ‘West’ were answered with the revelation of the charnel ground of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi.

---

278 Barry Boyce, personal communication with author, 19 November 2017.
279 zur mang drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba’i kla kho’i gyul chen po bzlog jing don byayud kyi grub thob rgya mtsho mgon du sgrub pa’i cho ga phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzhus so, 23A.
In this thesis, I have argued that the SOM is a unique translation both in terms of translating words and worlds, that carries the meaning of the Tibetan text across into the context of the ‘West’ in the late 1960s. It was revealed at an important moment, not only in Trungpa Rinpoche’s life but in the inchoate stages of the transmission of Vajrayāna Buddhism to the ‘West.’ The text of the SOM was not only in English, but in an idiom that resonated with the largely North American counter-cultural movement that Trungpa Rinpoche largely taught within. Using prevalent terms and concepts, such as being directed against materialism, and omitting descriptions of beings foreign to the ‘Western’ landscape in favor of psychological descriptions, the SOM presents a Vajrayāna universe in a language that ‘Western’ students can relate to. In doing so, however, the SOM does not compromise the Vajrayāna to ‘fit’ the ‘Western’ context. Rather, it brings those students into the cosmology and hierarchy of a Vajrayāna ritual universe, namely the Ka-Nying charnel grounds of Dorje Drolö Karma Pakshi.

Although Buddhist pedagogy understands different individuals to require various teachings in accordance with their own dispositions, predilections, and aversions and it is the teacher’s role, after considering these, to assess what the most practice suitable practice for a student is, the SOM stands out as something of a blanket prescription for the ‘West.’ In a maze of individuals drowning in materialism, the SOM was introduced as a means for practitioners to learn to whom they should look for guidance in order to find their way out. Thus, the SOM is a Treasure text that brings a method of taming and inducting students into a Vajrayāna universe to a new place of Buddhist study and practice.

As long-time student and Acharya Marty Janowitz wrote shortly after Trungpa Rinpoche passed away, it was only after many years of studying and practicing that he realized “what an orthodox vajra
master he [Trungpa Rinpoche] truly was." Emerging in an environment of spiritual curiosity and exploration, Trungpa Rinpoche had to relate and convey to his students how to ‘be Buddhist’ before he could introduce the buddhadharma in this non-Buddhist context. In other words, to teach Vajrayāna Buddhism, Trungpa Rinpoche had to first have students who had developed an understanding of Vajrayāna Buddhist ontology and hierarchy and who related properly with the various lineage figures, protectors, meditational deities, and most of all, to the Vajrayāna teacher.

In this way, the SOM was revealed and domesticated in a way that effectively translated the Vajrayāna world into an idiom of the ‘Western’ counter-culture. By effectively connecting to this group of practitioners, it also drew early practitioners in the ‘West’ into the Vajrayāna world of the text and introduced them to the figures in Trungpa Rinpoche’s Ka-Nying tradition. In doing so, the SOM conveyed to early practitioners what a Vajrayāna subject should be and, through an iterative process of disciplined enactment, increasingly inducted and trained them to embody the discursive Vajrayāna subjectivity prescribed within the text. Once students were inducted and trained into their proper relati onality and devotion to these figures as the source of blessings, teachings, and realization, the ground was prepared for the students to become Buddhist subjects and enter the Vajrayāna. In this way, the SOM played a pivotal role in establishing the ground for Trungpa Rinpoche’s later manifold means of teaching Vajrayāna Buddhism, as well as an important role in the early formation of Vajrayāna Buddhist subjects as the Vajrayāna expanded into the Euro-North American context more broadly.

---

280 Marty Janowitz in Fabrice Midal, Chögyam Trungpa, 366.
Bibliography

Tibetan sources

European Language Sources


MacLean, Grant. *From Lion’s Jaws: Chögyam Trungpa’s Epic Escape to the West*. Mountain, 2016.


105


Appendix I

At the conclusion of the SOM, Trungpa Rinpoche wrote a colophon that contains both a panegyric in verse and a poetic reflection on the SOM’s revelation. While a translation of the poem and some details on the composition and translation appear in the English practice text, these are greatly abridged from the Tibetan colophon. Below is the colophon as it appears in the English practice text, and the complete version in the original Tibetan and my own translation.

Colophon in the English practice text:

In the copper-mountain cave of Taktsang
The maṇḍala created by the guru,
Padma’s blessing entered in my heart.
I am the happy young man from Tibet!
I see the dawn of mahāmudrā
And awaken into true devotion:
The guru’s smiling face is ever-present.
On the pregnant dākinī-tigress
Takes place the crazy wisdom dance
Of Karma Pakshi Padmākara,
Uttering the sacred sound of HŪṂ.
His flow of thunder-energy is impressive.
The dorje and phurba are weapons of self-liberation:
With penetrating accuracy they pierce
Through the heart of spiritual pride.
One’s faults are so skillfully exposed
That no mask can hide the ego
And can no longer be conceal
The antidharma which pretends to be dharma.
Through all of my lives may I continue
To be the messenger of dharma
And listen to the song of the king of yānas.
May I lead the life of a bodhisattva.

This sādhana was written in 1968 by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche at Taktsang in Bhutan, where, about eleven hundred years ago, Guru Rinpoche meditated and manifested the wrathful form known as Dorje Trolö.

The sādhana was completed on the auspicious full-moon day of September 6, 1968. It was translated into English at Thimphu by Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche and Kunga Dawa.281

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tibetan text</th>
<th>Authors' translation²⁸²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Due to the blessings of Padma, the deity, having entered the center of [my] heart, the fortunate, the small son of Tibet, [in my] mind appears every happiness. The teachers of the Kagyü, the ultimate lineage, the effortless golden garland, the ultimate lama without appearance, by abiding eternally and pervasively, he is light appearance of the pristine knowledge of the primordial, the array of apparent signs [and] phenomena. The dawn of devotion, the Great Seal, [I] meet this. From atop the pregnant Indian tigress, the great bliss dāki, Padmasambhava Karma Pakshi enacts the disarrayed practice joined with the roar of the spontaneous song of noumenon HŪM. This awesome splendor which is the thunderbolt of awareness energy descends, how wondrous! The all piercing vajra and kīla, the weapons that liberate upon arising, from time never-stopping, strike the King Demon. The mask of non-dharma masquerading as dharma is no longer found. The skillful means that strip naked ones’ faults is amazing. Throughout the garland of my continuum of lives, [may I] hold the teachings which teach effortless omniscience. Like listening to the distant song of the king of the vehicles, joyous experience. [I] pray for a new perfect age of peace and bliss to dawn. The offering of accomplishment which guards the good [enlightened] activity, encouraged by the faith that takes delight from only this one, this speech of promise without reverse, written in [my] heart’s blood. When [I] offer the adamantine oath of good activity as whatever is liked, only the Father, the ocean of Accomplished Ones, should come to the spectacle.  

On the other side of the salt ocean, the on island that is guarded by the demons who are the sons of deities, in the continent that is covered with the thick |

darkness of the age, [I] have relied on the light of only the lamp of the Teacher’s and deities’ blessings. Happy and sad companions, Teachers and students, I have made for myself. For a long time, as a result of [such] solitary modes of conduct, [I] have lived this life of joy and suffering, sadness and amazement. Together with many, diverse omens, suddenly the youthful sun of the excellent dharma is clear and shining, unsoiled by sins, joining together excellent aspirations and activity as a chariot and driver. When causing many varieties of foreign peoples to enter the doors of common and uncommon dharma, [I was] urged on by the blessings and activity of [my] Teachers [and] was caused to go to India, land of the noble ones. In front of many thoroughly qualified Teachers, [I] engaged in dharma discussions endowed with meaning and the had the good fortune of meeting again many [of my] vajra, spiritual friends. Surpassing that, in the land [of] virtuous prosperity, winds that clean awareness, in the great palace where the maṇḍala of Guru Dorje Drolö abides, in Taktsang Senge Samdrup, [I] had the opportunity to stay in retreat to practice approach and accomplishment. [I] achieved the empowerment of great, supreme, pristine knowledge of the primordial in the maṇḍala of Karma Pakshi Dorje Drolö. Encouraged by these conducive conditions of meeting the adamantine speech of the highest lamas of the Ultimate Lineage, like wish-fulfilling jewels, in the very great place of emanations, the glorious Taktsang [I] the one called Karma Ngawang Jigme Chökyi Gyatso Kunga Sangpo Pal Drime Öser, a dull and deluded kusulu [a yogi who does nothing but eat, sleep, and defecate] whose own continuum is filled with many unsuitable dharma-s, wrote this completely. Nevertheless, by this may the precious teachings which are the origin of prosperity and bliss, spread and cause the chariot of the new perfected age to be ushered in.

zur mang drung pa chos kyi rgya mtsho, phi nang gsang ba'i klu klo'i gyal chen po bzlog jing don bya'i grub theb rgya mtsho mgon du sgrub pa'i cho ga phyag rgya chen po zhes bya ba bzugs so, 22A-24A.
**Image 2.** A close-up of Garwa Nagpo (མགར་བ་ནག་0་), albeit with a red body like Dorje Legpa (་རིིབཞིབུབོ). Photo by author.

**Image 3.** A close-up of Two-Armed Mahākāla (ཤེས་པ་བོ). Photo by author.
Image 4. A close-up of Rangjung Gyalmo (Skt. Svayambhūdevī; Tib རང་གྲུང་ལོག་པར་). Photo by author.

Image 5. A close-up of Rangjung Dorje (རང་གྲུང་རྗེ), the Third Karmapa in the form of Samantabhadra (ཞམ་ཐབ་བདེན་པ). Photo by author.
Image 6. A close-up of Mikyö Dorje, the Eighth Karmapa in the form of Amitābha. Photo by author.

Image 7. A close-up of the Tüsum Khyenpa, the First Karmapa in the form of Vairochana. Photo by author.
Image 8. The Sādhana of Mahāmudrā scroll painting hanging in the main shrine room of the Boulder Shambhala Center (Karma Dzong). Photo by author.
Image 9. A contemporary rendition of the Sādhana of Mahāmudrā scroll painting by artist Greg Smith. All the deities are the same as the original Sādhana of Mahāmudrā scroll painting, with the exception of the addition of the protectress Ekajati (ཐོ་བོ་རྤེས་). Photo by author.