The Siddha Who Tamed Tibet: A Genealogy of Padmasambhava's Tantric Masculinity in Two Early Namthar

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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 discipline of Religious Studies

Abstract

Shelton, Joshua Brallier (M.A., Religious Studies)

The Siddha Who Tamed Tibet: A Genealogy of Padmasambhava's Tantric Masculinity in Two Early Namthar

Thesis advised by Associate Professor Holly Gayley.

The eighth-century Indian tantric master Padmasambhava, famed *siddha* (སྒྲུབ་ཐོབ།) of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, has been the subject of decades of Western scholarship seeking to understand his place in the matrix of Tibetan history, culture, religion, and literature. This thesis contributes to that body of work by thematizing Padmasambhava's gender as a key component in the development of his early myth in two formative narratives: Nyangrel Nyima Öser's *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava* and Orgyen Lingpa's *The Testament of Padmasambhava*. I draw upon Raewyn Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity to trace Padmasambhava's gendered positionality in these early texts vis-à-vis his interactions and contestations with kings. This analysis proceeds by way of an intertextual accounting of Abhayadatta's *The Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas*, a contemporaneous collection of narratives about siddhas, to draw out the tantric tropes of violent subjugation, antinomianism, and magic in tales of siddhas and their interactions with kings. This casts Padmasambhava's position as a siddha in high relief, showcasing his heightened violence against demons and humiliations of kings as decidedly tantric dimensions of his masculinity. I argue that these tantric activities are technologies of hegemony that empower him to situate himself at the top of the social hierarchy. This preliminary accounting of Padmasambhava's masculinity helps to unearth and thematize male gender as a key component to the mythological development of a major male religious figure, helping to denaturalize androcentric dominance in scholarship on male religious figures.

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This thesis represents the culmination of seven years of graduate studies across two universities: four at Naropa University, and three at the University of Colorado Boulder. The long journey to producing this work has been shaped and molded by my teachers whose minds are as sharp as their hearts are open: Judith Simmer-Brown, Sarah Harding, Lama Tenpa Gyaltsen, Amelia Hall, Andrew Schelling, Lee Worley, Jason Hayes, and L. S. Summer. I have deep appreciation and respect for all of these insightful and compassionate leaders, who have helped sharpen my intellect and soften my heart.

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Introduction: Uncovering Padmasambhava's Tantric Masculinity

Few figures command as elevated a status in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition as the demon-tamer Padmasambhava, the Second Buddha (སངས་རྒྱས་གཉིས་པ།) of Tibet. With over fifty different accounts of his life written across nearly eight centuries,[1] the proliferation of materials about this extraordinary siddha ("accomplished one," Skt. *siddha*, Tib. གྲུབ་ཐོབ།) illustrates Padmasambhava's importance as a seminal tantric figure for Tibetans up to the present day. More than simply a central figure of the Nyingma (རྙིང་མ།, or "ancient") sect of Tibetan Buddhism, the eighth-century Indian adept Padmasambhava is credited with taming the demonic forces of the Tibetan landscape in order to establish Buddhism there. His life expanded across geographic borders to become a central fixture in pan-Tibetan and Himālayan mythology.[2] To Tibetans, he is *Guru Rinpoché* (གུ་རུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།), their Precious Guru, who helped establish Buddhism in their land and continues to play a vibrant role in Tibetan ritual, art, and literature to this day.

The earliest sources on Padmasambhava in Tibetan literature depict him as a demon-tamer, and the violent subjugation of demonic forces in Tibet becomes central to his character throughout all subsequent iterations of his story. So too is his status as an exceptional being: born magically from a lotus, adopted by King Indrabodhi and installed as heir to the throne of Uḍḍiyāna, Padmasambhava's life story parallels the Buddha's, yet with distinct tantric twists.

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[1] A. M. Blondeau, "Analysis of the Biographies of Padmasambhava According to Tibetan Tradition: Classification of Sources," in *Tibetan Studies in Honor of Hugh Richardson*, ed. Michael Aris and Aung San Suu Kyi. (Warminster: Aris & Phillips Ltd, 1980): 44.

[2] Padmasambhava's lore spread from central Tibet throughout eastern and southern Tibet to eventually permeate every region of the Tibetan cultural world. Tertöns across the Himalayan region have revealed texts central to Padmasambhava across a variety of genres. The incorporation of such texts into the current analysis exceeds the scope of the project but is an exciting avenue to continue at the doctoral level.

Whereas the Buddha renounces the luxuries of royal life to wander on his quest for enlightenment, Padmasambhava orchestrates his own exile through more unconventional and violent means. He engages in the tantric practice of *tülzhuk chöpa* (བདུད་ཞུགས་སྤྱོད་པ) on the roof of the royal palace, wielding a vajra and *khaṭvāṅga*. In the midst of this practice he kills a minister's son in order to be exiled from the kingdom, whereupon he roams charnel grounds and obtains initiations from *ḍākinīs*, launching his career as a siddha, an accomplished tantric master.

According to these narratives, his renown spreads as he subdues demons and humiliates kings, eventually reaching central Tibet, where the emperor Tri Songdétsen (ཁྲི་སོང་ལྡེའུ་བཙན།) hears of his magical, demon-taming prowess and invites the siddha to aide in the construction of the first Buddhist monastery, Samyé (བསམ་ཡས།). Padmasambhava then carves his way through the Tibetan landscape, subjugating the demonic forces opposing Buddhism and binding them under oath to protect the Buddha's doctrine. Thus, by subjugating the land deities of Tibet, in the implicit logic of these narratives, he makes possible the conversion of the land and its people to Buddhism.[3] He then aides Tri Songdétsen and the Indian scholar-translator Śāntarakṣita in completing Samyé and implanting Buddhism within the Tibetan geographic, cultural, and historical landscape. Before departing from Tibet to tame more demons in other lands, Padmasambhava is shown burying treasures in the Tibetan landscape and the minds of his disciples, to be revealed in future times when the dharma begins to wane in order to revitalize the Buddhist tradition in Tibet.

[3] The dynamic between subversion and conversion, expressed by the same word in Tibetan (*dülwa*, གདུལ་བ) is of crucial importance to Padmasambhava's story: subjugation and conversion are understood to be complimentary, perhaps even indistinguishable, in a Tibetan context. Thus, Padmasambhava's capacity for violence is deeply tied to his missionary activity and, indeed, entire identity.

As a founding figure of the Nyingma lineage, credited with a key role in establishing Buddhism in the "Land of Snows," Padmasambhava has been the subject of decades of Western scholarship seeking to understand his place in the matrix of Tibetan history, culture, religion, and literature.[4] These studies have explored the historicity of Padmasambhava, his relationship to myth-making about Tibet's imperial period, and a central role of subjugation and violence in Tibetan ritual and myth. Building on this body of scholarship, this thesis takes as its starting point that scholars have yet to unearth and thematize how gender factors into Padmasambhava's literary persona as a supreme tantric hero. This thesis argues for the importance of a gendered analysis in widening our understanding of Padmasambhava as a central figure in the founding mythos of Buddhism in Tibet.

As one of the most important tantric siddhas for Tibetans, Padmasambhava, in early narratives of his life, provides a model for the emergence of gender ideals in Tibetan Buddhism. This thesis focus on his representation in early textual sources, two of his *namthar* (རྣམ་ཐར།), religious narratives of his life: Nyangrel Nyima Öser's (ཉང་རལ་ཉི་མ་འོད་ཟེར། 1124-92 C.E.) *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava* (སློབ་དཔོན་པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་ཟངས་གླིང་མ།) and Orgyen Lingpa's (ཨོ་རྒྱན་གླིང་པ། b. 1323 C.E.) *Testament of Padmasambhava* (པདྨ་བཀའ་ཐང་ཡིག), due to their significant role in crafting the mythology of this foundational figure.[5] Namthar, or "stories of complete liberation," are principal sources for mythmaking in Tibetan literature and for portraying an ideal religious life. This thesis is a preliminary study of gender in narratives of

[4] E.g. Bischoff & Hartman (1971), Blondeau (1980), Kapstein (2000), Dalton (2004, 2011), Hirshberg (2016), Doney (2014, 2016, 2018).

[5] Often abbreviated, the full title of the text is: ཨོ་རྒྱན་གུ་རུ་པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་རབས་རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ་རྒྱས་པར་བཀོད་པ་པདྨ་བཀའི་ཐང་ཡིག་ཅེས་བྱ་བ་བཞུགས་སོ།

Padmasambhava, introducing and theorizing what I will call his "tantric masculinity." However, it is not an attempt to interpret that gendered expression as a manifestation of a larger socio-historical context (or a reflection of the actual experience of real people).

Masculinity theorists have highlighted the importance of power antagonisms between men as a central site for establishing what Raewyn Connell calls "hegemonic masculinity." Hegemonic masculinity describes (a) the culturally elevated, socially idealized formulation of male gender practices that sits at the zenith of the social hierarchy in a patriarchal system and (b) the power accrued by the men who convincingly perform that ideal.[6] This thesis builds on Connell's assertion that masculinity is marked by contestations—both subtle and overt—for power and ascendancy in the social order, and that these contestations are a continually adaptive process witnessed in the dynamic interactions between men and women.[7] The concept of hegemonic masculinity provides a lens to analyze the power dynamics that lead one man (or model of manhood) to claim the highest position in the social hierarchy, a position that structures the rest of the men (and women) beneath him. Heeding Connell's injunction that masculinity is simultaneously constructed and witnessed in interpersonal exchanges (rather than simply manifested via 'natural,' i.e. biological, imperatives), I draw her sociological model into the domain of Buddhist studies by identifying the interactions between characters in Tibetan literature as rich sites for gendered analysis.

In this thesis I focus on three key moments of contestation between Padmasambhava and kings in order to explore and theorize his masculinity. Specifically, I do a series of close readings of these episodes in the original Tibetan source material from his two earliest namthar:

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[6] Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (2nd Ed.) (Berkeley: University of California Press: 2005): 77.
[7] Ibid.

Nyangrel's *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava* and Orgyen *The Testament of Padmasambhava* (chapter 2). I contextualize those readings within previous scholarship on Padmasambhava and contemporaneous Tibetan narratives of the Indian mahāsiddhas (chapter 1). I look specifically at Padmasambhava's contestations with kings as a pivotal site for unpacking and analyzing the hegemonic male order due to their relative positionality as supreme in their respective religious and secular spheres and the enduring presence of siddhas and kings in Buddhist tantric literature.

In developing my argument, I employ the term "tantric masculinity" to examine the specifically tantric features of the siddha's gendered position that emerges out of siddha-king interactions. In chapter one I turn to Abhayadatta's *Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas* to illustrate the variety of relations between siddhas in kings in Buddhist tantric literature as well as the types of behaviors these siddhas engage in. On that basis, in chapter two I draw out the gendered aspects of Padmasambhava, highlighting three key features that he exhibits and embodies: antinomianism, violence, and magic. I argue that violent subjugation is a key method, showcased by Nyangrel and Orgyen, in establishing Padmasambhava's legacy—and thereby a model of the siddha more generally—as the hegemonic masculine ideal that structures the rest of the social hierarchy.

This study, on the formative moments in the literary representation of tantric masculinity, makes a significant contribution to scholarship given the enduring appeal of siddhas in the Tibetan literary imagination, the centrality of "masculine alliances" (to borrow Charlene Makley's term) between religious and political leaders in Tibetan history, and the thaumaturgical role that Nyingma masters historically played (and continue to play) in Tibetan society.

Methodological Considerations

I am acutely aware of the danger in bringing a contemporary gender studies perspective to bear on classical Tibetan texts, as this has the possibility of simply reading contemporary Western conceptualizations of gender and sexuality into a literary culture that rarely, if ever, has asked the same questions. In this regard, I take my cue from José Cabezón, whose philological precision and depth of analysis provide an important example for the Western scholar approaching classical Buddhist texts with a gender studies methodology. I take seriously his charge to be alert to the possibility of reading Tibetan literary formations of gender as reinforcing—or even expressing—our own contemporary gender constructs. Rather, I am interested in lifting out what expressions of gender we find expressed within the Tibetan literary tradition by paying close attention to the twofold work of the textualist that Cabezón advocates: philology, or the *literal* features of a text, and criticism, or the *literary* dimensions of a text. While I analyze literal features through paying close attention to grammar in my close readings, this thesis engages primarily with the literary dimensions of the early narratives of Padmasambhava, following Cabezon's injunction to engage in "sustained interrogation that, unsatisfied with merely re/presenting the text's literal or denotative meaning, searches for deeper and broader insights." [8]

Taking José Cabezón's approach to textual study in Buddhist sources seriously, I engage in a literary analysis of Nyangrel and Orgyen's texts to explore formative moments in the evolution of the siddha ideal using the lens of gender. Here I find Dominique LaCapra's distinction between the "documentary" and "work-like" dimensions of a text to be theoretically beneficial. According to LaCapra, all texts have two dimensions: (1) the documentary, meaning that all texts

[8] José Cabezón, *Sexuality in Classical South Asian Buddhism* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2017), 8.

contain retrievable historical data, hence the need to situate them in their appropriate contexts in order to interpret and understand them; and (2) the "work-like," those rhetorical aspects of a text that "deconstruct and reconstruct the given, in a sense repeating it but also bringing into the world something that did not exist before in that significant variation, alteration, or transformation."[9] LaCapra's distinction between the two parallel functions of a text helps us appreciate the need to incorporate gender into literary analysis. I suggest that gender is a dimension of the "work-like" function in a text: it deconstructs the given—social ideals.

Patrick Geary has convincingly argued that hagiography—narrative portrayals of saints, or revered religious figures—is an important site for harvesting a society's ideals and values when read across collections of texts—regardless of their historical value in LaCapra's "documentary" sense.[10] This project thus takes a cue from Richard Geary (and Andrew Quintman who followed him)[11] in recognizing the importance of intertexuality in the formation and presentation of idealized representations of religious figures—here the early formulations of the siddha ideal in Tibetan literature. This approach provides key insight into the siddhas' gendered configuration vis-à-vis their interactions with kings.

Bringing this model to the texts of this study, I set Nyangrel and Orgyen's early narratives of Padmasambhava's life into conversation with models of the siddha inherited from India, as found in the contemporaneous *Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas* (གྲུབ་ཐོབ་བརྒྱད་ཅུ་རྩ་བཞིའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས།). The siddha ideal as expressed in this source is an important locus for the migration of the siddha ideal from India to Tibet—perhaps even a joint creation between an Indian and a Tibetan.

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[9] Dominique LaCapra, *Rethinking Intellectual History: Texts, Contexts, and Language* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983): 30.
[10] Patrick Geary, *"Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal*," in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*, Sandro Sticca ed. (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1996).
[11] Andrew Quintman, *The Yogin and the Madman: Reading the Biographical Corpus of Tibet's Great Saint* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 23.

According to the Tibetan tradition, as stated in the colophon, the tales were narrated by the Indian *paṇḍita* (learned one) Abhayadatta Śrī (ཆོས་དཔལ་མཉེས་པ་དབལ།) to the Tibetan monk Möndrup Sherap (དགེ་སློང་སྨོན་ལྡན་འབྱུང་ཤེས་རབ།), who "perfectly translated them into Tibetan" (ལེགས་པར་བསྒྱུར་བརྗོད།). In a philological analysis of range of manuscripts, Kurtis Schaeffer notes that they were first written down, and perhaps even initially composed, in Tibet; nonetheless, there may have been an Indo-Tibetan oral tradition preceding its composition.[12]

Scholars generally place Möndup Sherb in the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries and Abhayadatta Śrī in the eleventh century,[13] so this collection of siddha tales corresponds with the early emergence and flourishing of Padmasambhava's legend in Tibet but predates the emergence of his two substantial early biographies. Given Geary and Quintman's injunction of intertexual analysis to fully understand a major religious figure's representation, an analysis of the *Life Stories* helpfully draws out important tropes of the siddha as a stock character in early tantric narrative. Such tropes cast in high relief certain key shifts in the narrative portrait of Padmasambhava as a major figure in the ongoing development of the siddha ideal and its gendered import in Tibet.

This approach is key to situating Padmasambhava's two earliest namthar in their literary millieu, illuminating the contemporaneous concerns of their revealers, and providing various templates and narratives structures to siddha-king interactions with which to compare representations of Padmasambhava. The focus of this thesis is a close reading of the original Tibetan, unearthing the literary qualities of the original source material. I unpack, analyze, and

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[12] Kurtis Schaeffer, *Dreaming the Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005): 13.
[13] Matthew Kapstein, "An Inexhaustible Treasury of Verse: The Literary Legacy of the Mahāsiddhas," in *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas*, edited by Rob Linrothe (New York & Chicago: Rubin Museum of Art & Serindia Publications, 2006): 25.

interpret the texts, developing a rich sense of their rhetorical dimensions—specifically their gendered construction of Padmasambhava. In the close reading I chart the masculinities at play in *Copper Island* and the *Testament of Padmasambhava*, drawing on the insights of queer theory and masculinity studies to study the masculine dynamics at play between Padmasambhava and kings.

In a project dedicated to unearthing and tracing Padmasambhava's tantric masculinity, witnessed in his violent subjugation of demons and consistent humiliation of kings, a provisional caveat explaining why I focus on male characters necessary, given that: most research on gender in Tibetan Buddhism explores the important topic of women and the feminine in Tibetan literature, art, and ritual practice. This work has been undeniably important in the ongoing efforts to: destabilize and undermine the pernicious, global legacy of patriarchy; recover women's voices from the historical record; reassert the contributions of ordinary and extraordinary Tibetan women; articulate and name the fault lines of patriarchal and androcentric power; and trace the misogynistic and sexist technologies contributing to women's oppression.[14]

Just as the broader field of Gender Studies has moved from a primary focus on women and sexuality to include the study of men and masculinity in the past twenty years, Buddhist Studies scholars are just beginning to take up the issue of masculinity. Male gender configurations are less visible in Tibetan sources because, while authors call attention to the femaleness of their subject when writing about women's lives, the maleness of the dominant group remains unmarked and therefore normative. Since men are the primary subjects and authors of religious writings, there is no perceived need to signal their maleness given the androcentric bent of

[14] I.e. Rita Gross (1993 & 2018), Anne Klein (1996), Janet Gyatso (1999 & 2006), Judith Simmer-Brown (2001), Sarah Jacoby (2014), and Holly Gayley (2016).

patriarchal systems. Yet just because references to the maleness of characters does not appear in the "literal and denotative" expression of a text does not mean that "deeper and broader insights" about masculinity cannot be discovered through sustained interrogation. In light of this, I hope that my project serves two functions: (1) to begin a recovery project of the equally (and entirely) gendered position of men in Buddhist literature in Tibet and (2) to provide a starting point for a genealogy of masculinity with respect to the ideal of the Buddhist tantric siddha as elaborated in Tibetan sources.[15]

Queer Hermeneutic

The gendered analysis I develop here adopts a queer hermeneutic in order to interrogate the gendered positionality of Padmasambhava in his interactions with (predominately) kings and demons. I am interested in these two elite male figures as gravitational centers of masculine gender in tantric narrative literature. A bit of explanation is necessary here, in order to define "queer hermeneutic" and "gendered positionality," and to elucidate why I think interpersonal interactions—not just between humans, but also the demons Padmasambhava subjugates—are the most efficacious route to exploring the expressions of tantric masculinity in early narratives of Padmasambhava. A queer hermeneutic takes as its point of departure the necessarily unstable link between biological sex, socially constructed gender ideology, objects of desire, and the actions undertaken by (necessarily) gendered subjects.

In a heteronormative frame, sex and gender are linked via the tacit ideology that biological sex indexes nearly every aspect of one's life, notably gender expression (including clothing, behavior, language, affect, intelligence, interests, and desires) and the behaviors (and sexual

[15] While this work undoubtedly involves women and female characters (for example, consorts and demonesses), analysis of those gendered interactions lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

desires) that are assumed to follow from such an expression. Thus, as articulated by queer studies champion Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, according to the logic of heterosexuality, "normatively...it should be possible to deduce anybody's entire set of specs [personality, clothing, interests, hobbies, etc.] from the initial datum of biological sex alone."[16] Thus, biological sex is (implicitly) 'understood' (it is far more pernicious and incipient than active cognition) to determine every dimension of one's life. Current trends in queer theory have emphasized the importance of understanding the intersectionality of heteronormativity—that heteronormativity adapts to specific contexts according to class, race, ethnicity, and ability status.[17]

Queer theory intentionally disrupts this conceptualization, unflinchingly insisting on the gaps and fissures that exist in every facet of one's life; rather than championing the imagined consistencies that unify one's gendered identity into a cohesive whole, queer theory glorifies the (often unnoticed) discrepancies in one's behavior, or in a text's presentation of a character. When understood in such a way, queer theory draws our attention to the ways that gendered identity, ideology, and social structures can emerge, stabilize, and become normative over time. A queer hermeneutic therefore directs one's attention to three primary aspects of a text: (1) the gendered, sexed, and behavioral structures that are left implicit, unquestioned, or unthematized, (2) the relationships between differently gendered characters (here noting whether there is a stable identification of 'men' and 'women' as distinct, legible entities, their inherent 'difference,' and the modes of their interaction), and (3) the various contexts in which these relationships (both intrapersonal and interpersonal) either undermine or reinforce the overarching gendered ideology suffusing the text. Queer theory thus surfaces the technologies of heteronormativity that have so

[16] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," in *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993): 8.
[17] I.e. Roderick Ferguson (2004).

effectively and for so long obscured the artifices and scaffolding that enable heterosexual ideology to appear 'normal,' and, even more perniciously, 'natural.'

Such a hermeneutic is tremendously helpful in mining literary works for their unexamined assumptions regarding the triad of sex, gender, and behavior—revealing the fact that agency itself is deeply gendered. Using a queer hermeneutic, we can begin to unearth the unthematized, tactic sexed and gendered dynamics in a text, surfacing them in order to analyze the dynamics of power afforded to various configurations of masculinity and femininity. It also directs our attention to the minutiae that we subconsciously draw together in order to perform (often rather convincingly) a unified, predictable gendered subject. I agree with Lee Edelman that a focus in developing such an analysis is the interpersonal—whether in situated encounters or interactions—in a text.[18] Such a reading will help draw out the various facets of masculinity; namely, close attention to Padmasambhava's various interactions with kings will reveal how his masculinity is constructed through acts of magic and subjugation. This thesis will be the first work to date bringing queer theory to bear significantly on Buddhist literature in Tibet.[19]

It is my contention that the study of masculinity in Buddhist sources needs to utilize the insights of queer theory in order to stave off the tendency of further essentializing, or even glorifying, particular masculine configurations. I say this in response to one of the first Buddhist

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[18] Lee Edelman, *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

[19] Few scholars have deployed queer theory in the realm of Tibetan Buddhist thought, but in her 2012 article "Queering Buddhism or Buddhist De-Queering?" Ann Gleig has provided an important ethnographic analysis of the ways that contemporary Buddhist lay sanghas in the California Bay Area have grappled with their queer positions in a Buddhist network, suggesting that contemporary Buddhists can either support their queerness via key doctrines (most notably emptiness and interdependence), or use those very doctrines to elide their queerness as trivial or unimportant. Roger Coreless (2004) has made some vague gesutres at queer theory's resonance with the Buddhist doctrines referenced above, but it's provisional and betrays his lack of familiarity with the theory. Jeffrey Hopkins also gestures to the possibility in the introduction to his book *Sex, Orgasm, and the Mind of Clear Light* (1998), but his statements are provisional and similarly reveal a lack of familiarity with the literature. Of the few scholars who have raised questions of queer theory in non-Tibetan Buddhist traditions, they focus on Theravadan Buddhism in Thailand and Burma, and their methods are exclusively ethnographic (e.g. Arinka Fuhrmann 2016, Peter Jackson 2004).

Studies scholar to bring masculinities analysis to bear significantly on Buddhist literature: John Powers. In *A Bull of a Man*, Powers interrogates classical Indian Buddhist sources on the Buddha and his sangha to argue that the contemporary Western vision of the Buddha as peaceful and unassuming stands at odds to the virile, physically dominating Buddha of the Indian scriptures. In crafting his argument, Powers paints a picture of the Buddha that reifies a particular configuration of masculinity centered on sexual virility and physical strength (hence the title of his book).

While the evidence Powers advances is an important corrective to Orientalist emasculation of the Buddha evidenced in Western impressions, he does not develop this evidence in conversation with masculinities theorists who emphasize a broader understanding of the multiplicities, fluidities, and strategic adaptations of masculinity (in particular), or even gender (more broadly). Rather, Powers inadvertently champions a masculine ideal without sufficiently criticizing its social implications. In failing to engage Connell beyond a paragraph—or masculinities studies more broadly—Powers perpetuates the heteronormative misconception of gender as a monolithic entity, a prescribed set of traits producing predictable, reliable social configurations. This calls to mind Charlene Makley's important reminder that gendered symbolism and legibility is deeply and inextricably woven within its discursive, performative, geographic, and cultural contexts; to take our own assumptions about gendered representation and map them onto another culture, time period, or text would perpetuate the Orientalist and imperialistic lineage of white scholarship. As stated above, in order to avoid this tendency in my own work, I utilize the insights of queer theory while engaging the broader insights of the field of critical masculinity studies.

Masculinity, Hegemony, and Hegemonic Masculinity

In drawing the insights of masculinities theorists to bear on a study of Padmasambhava's gendered position in narrative literature, I begin with Raewyn Connell, who, as noted above, is largely credited with founding the discipline of masculinity studies. Her massively influential articulation of hegemonic masculinities continues to be the standard measure against which subsequent thinkers have shaped their contributions. The concept of hegemonic masculinity holds that in any patriarchal society at any given time, one form of masculinity will be "culturally exalted" over the others, granting the men who convincingly perform that hegemonic masculinity the power to organize hierarchically all other people below them.[20] Hegemony is adaptive over time and across contexts, not stable and unchanging. This means that over the course of history different configurations of gendered praxis will reign supreme over others, but their capacity to assume hegemonic status pivots as socio-historical contexts evolve. Importantly, a culturally exalted form of masculinity will only attain hegemonic status if there is a correspondent relationship between the "cultural ideal" (the "best" way to be a man) and "institutional power, collective if not individual" (the "best" men receive the most social recognition, better pay, greater deference, and more freedom).[21] Thus, Padmasambhava is able to command individual power over the institution of kingship by virtue of his extraordinary capacity for subjugation and humiliation. Yet, as we see when he meets the Tibetan king Tri Songdétsen, his power, when acknowledge in its proper place at the top of the social hierarchy, can also help craft strategic alliances to form reciprocal relationships of support.

[20] Connell (2005): 77.
[21] Ibid.

Violence is a crucial component to the creation, operation, and adaptation of hegemonic masculinities. Connell notes that violence establishes, sustains, contests, and is supported by dominance.[22] It also serves a function in "gender politics" between men, drawing boundaries and making exclusions—who has the legitimate authority to use violence (and get away with it), those who are immune to violence, the type of violence used against those who are not immune, and the extent, type, and duration of violence, all speak to the various positions men hold in the hierarchy and how those positions might shift. As noted by other theorists of hegemony,[23] Connell suggests that the greater the violence, the less stable the social order; violence is a tool for establishing new hegemonic systems, maintaining those systems when threatened, or overthrowing those systems. Hegemony much more effective and enduring (belying its greater hold over the social order) when it operates through consent, suggestion, and persuasion; through the *threat* of violence instead of actual violence. This theorization of violence in hegemony bears significantly on our exploration of Padmasambhava due to the centrality of subjugation in early narratives of his life.

Hegemonic masculinity is a powerful theoretical tool for unearthing the dynamics and vicissitudes of masculinity, clarifying the relationship between 'men' and 'masculinity,' recognizing a proliferation of masculinities rather than a generic masculinity, and identifying the contestation for power (either implicit or explicit) as a key aspect of masculinities that serves to organize men hierarchically within structures of social power. According to Connell, those conforming to the hegemonic order are offered "patriarchal dividends":[24] social benefits (greater resources, privilege, respect, deference, mobility) awarded, via institutional power, to one's

[22] Connell (2005): 83.
[23] E.g., Yamamoto (2012),
[24] Connell (2005): 74.

position in the hierarchy (the higher up, the more dividends). Importantly, Connell points out, those dividends come with a cost: higher expectations of performance and conquest (winning in any competitive setting, including colonizing), harsher sanctions for violating the dictates of the hegemonic order (i.e. when gay men are murdered for being gay), and strict conformity to social obligations.

For Connell, the hegemonic masculine position sitting atop the social hierarchy organizes the other masculinities below it according to three primary strategies. (1) *Subordination* refers to those material and ideological practices that exclude, oppress, and elide non-conforming masculine positions, frequently with violence, with the result of either situating such masculinities at the bottom of the gender hierarchy or "expelling [such men] from the circle of legitimacy."[25] (2) *Complicity* acknowledges that most men indeed fail to embody the hegemonic ideal, and therefore craft alliances with the hegemonic masculine position in order to continue reaping patriarchal dividends "without the tension or risks of being the frontline."[26] (3) *Marginalization* accounts for the other social factors (class, race, ability status) that contribute to men's placement within the social order, and that while some men may embody aspects the hegemonic ideal in practice, they do not command the social status necessary to rise up the hierarchy. Marginalization is thus "always relative" to *authorization*, when the dominant hegemonic group grants dividends to particular members of marginalized groups in order to appease them from vying for higher status.[27]

Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity has been critiqued on the grounds that it

[25] Connell (2005): 79.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Connell (2005): 81.

fabricates a dualism between hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities,[28] adheres to an outmoded structuralist notion of power as something to be possessed and wielded,[29] fails to adequately account for female contributions to hegemonic structure,[30] and fails to take seriously the phenomenon of "hybrid masculinities."[31] Recently, in a Buddhist Studies context, Ward Keeler has critiqued Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity as allowing only a single idealized version of masculinity to rank at the top of the social order, pointing to Burmese constructions of lay and monastic masculinity as reciprocally hegemonic.[32]

Rather than displacing hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework, these critiques have enriched the conversation and advanced a more nuanced and sophisticated understanding of what I call the *technologies of masculine hegemony*, or the ways masculinity strategically adapts to meet the variations of specific contexts and contests. This helps us move toward a more robust understanding of masculinities that acknowledges how difficult gender (and gendered power structures) can be to pin down. It also helps us understand how early narratives of Padmasambhava portray him as able to continually reassert dominance in the hegemonic order—especially in contestations with kings, who would otherwise occupy the highest place in the social hierarchy. By strategically adapting to each context by demonstrating his flexible mastery, Padmasambhava is nearly an embodiment of hegemony itself.

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[28] D.Z. Demetriou, "Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique," *Theory and Society*, 30 no. 3 (2001): 337-361.
[29] Chris Beasley, "Problematizing Contemporary Men/Masculinities Theorizing: The Contribution of Raewyn Connell and Conceptual-Terminological Tensions Today," *The British Journal of Sociology* 63 no (2012): 747-65.
[30] Mimi Schipprs, "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony," *Theory and Society* 36 no. 1 (2007): 85-102.
[31] Tristan Bridges, "A Very 'Gay' Straight? Hybrid Masculinities, Sexual Aesthetics, and the Changing Relationship Between Masculinity and Homophobia." *Gender & Society*, 28 no. 1 (2014): 58-82.
[32] Ward Keeler, *The Traffic in Hierarchy: Masculinity and Its Others in Buddhist Burma* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017): 212-14. As a preliminary study of masculinity in a Buddhist Studies context, Keeler helpfully engages Connell's work, but fails to account adequately for the robust dialogue that has expanded upon and nuanced Connell's initial formulation of hegemony.

I hope this close attention to the nuance and potency of masculinities theorizing can begin to sift through and untangle the complex web of gendered associations in *Copper Island* and the *Testament of Padmasambhava*, offering insight into Padmasambhava's particular masculine acts, but also the overarching picture of his gendered positionality. Of course, Padmasambhava's namthar cannot be analyzed for documentary evidence about the structure and operation of gender orders in medieval Tibet as they were lived on the ground by real people. Here I agree with José Cabezón's injunction not to assume that a text's portrayal of a character can tell us much about the lived realities of actual peoples. What can be mined from these texts, however, is the development of ideals and tropes in the Nyingma imaginaire about gender and sexuality and their portrayal of "ideal pictures of what life *should* be like."[33] Key gender theorists, instrumental in articulating and expanding queer theory, similarly recognize the need to interrogate texts—all manner of text, broadly conceived—to lift out and thematize their unstated, often intimated ideations of gender.[34] This is evident in the relationships they forge and dismantle, the activities in which they engage, the level of deference afforded them by other characters in the text, their relative ease of occupying or moving through various spaces, and how they treat other men and women.[35]

This helps to surface and render visible what had been previously invisible—because of the unmarked nature of the male, the dynamics of masculinity often operate without recognition. It also importantly tracks the various degrees of power afforded to privileged and marginalized gender positions. This is especially salient in the namthar literature, for a key component of the

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[33] José Cabezón, *Sexuality in Classical South Asian Buddhism* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2017): 12.
[34] E.g., Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), Lee Edelman (1994), Michael Warner (2000).
[35] Especially salient in this regard is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (University of California Press, 1990) and Lee Edelman's edited volume *Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

genre is its intended effect to inspire the reader towards greater devotion in the subject.[36] Thus, attuning to the gendered dynamics within Tibetan namthar begins to reveal important—and previously invisible—forces that shape the normative ideals of the social hierarchy.

In the context of Padmasambhava, such a picture must account for the violence of this demon-taming siddha, as it features so prominently in his narratives and ongoing portrayal in the Nyingma imaginaire. Padmasambhava is famous for his capacity to subjugate and convert the indigenous spirits of Tibet opposing the introduction of Buddhsim into their homeland. As noted above in footnote four, there is an intimate dynamic between subjugation and conversion in Tibetan tantric Buddhism, evidenced by the same word, *dülwa* (གདུལ་བ།), carrying both semantic valences. That subjugating/converting activity frequently adopts violence as a necessary method to instill Buddhism in the minds (and land) of those who oppose it: the young Padmasambhava deliberately kills a minister's son so that he can be banished from the kingdom and pursue tantric practice. Later, during his missionary activity in India, he "liberates" (*drilwa*, བསྒྲལ་བ - a tantric euphemism for killing) the greedy king Norbu Öden for combating Buddhism. On his way to Tibet he boils a demoness in a lake until her skin peels off because she tries to prevent him from spreading Buddhism to her homeland.

In *The Taming of the Demons*, Jacob Dalton lucidly theorizes the phenomenon of violence in tantric ritual and myth by situating it in its historical context. Dalton importantly notes that the Buddhist tradition has a long history of engaging with the "extraordinary ethical complexities surrounding violence, moral convolutions that require interminable struggle and may remain

[36] E.g., Janet Gyatso (1998): 102-03.

irresolvable even when ethical clarity is absolutely demanded."[37] From early works in the *Abhidharma* and *Vinaya*, to the compassionate killing of bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna, teachings on violence have a long and complex history in the tradition. Dalton argues that what distinguishes the tantras in particular is their introduction of "a whole new ethos of extreme behavior and transgressive violence" that locates its genesis in the necessarily violent subjugation of the demon Rudra. Thus, to Dalton, beginning with tantra's origin myth of the violent subjugation of Rudra, through the development of its technologies of violence in ritual exorcism, the history of tantra tied intimately with violence.

When we set this into conversation with Connell's insights into the role of violence as a central technique in challenging an old hegemonic order to institute a new one, it becomes clear that Padmasambhava's violent demon subjugations, and milder violence towards kings, is a crucial component of his *tantric* masculinity—violence and subjugation set Padmasambhava's masculinity in decidedly tantric terms. The tantras, rooted in the myth of a cosmic order requiring Buddhist violence to stop demonic threats against the flourishing of all sentient beings, champion the use of provocative methods—antinomianism, violence, magic—to subjugate the enemies of Buddhism and convert them. But those methods are only available to those qualified to engage them: the siddhas, and Padmasambhava is a siddha *par excellence*. Thus, when viewed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, Padmasambhava's tantric activity (antinomianism, magic, violent subjugation/conversion) becomes a vivid mark of his masculinity—a gendered position that is conspicuously *unmarked* in the texts, produced as they were in a patriarchal context.

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[37] Jacob Dalton, *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 10.

The mobilization of violence in tantric masculinity is a core interest to this thesis. I argue that Padmasambhava's use of violence—or strategic opting out of overt violence in favor of non-violent, magical methods to convince kings of his authority—is a central technique in the crafting of his masculinity as hegemonic. I proceed in this analysis by taking narrative literature as a key site for myth making, and in a Tibetan context we witness this quite readily in the genre of *namthar*.[38]

Padmasambhava the Tantric Hero: Myth-Making and Tibetan Biography (རྣམ་ཐར།)

Padmasambhava's myth is constructed and elaborated by the twelfth and fourteenth-century narratives of this study, *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava*, that are the subject of this study. Many scholars have described the Tibetan genre of *namthar* (རྣམ་ཐར། or the complete རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ།), literally "complete liberation,"[39] as a primary site for myth-making in Tibetan religion and a major source for the life stories of Buddhist masters. Translations of the term have abounded in Tibetological scholarship.[40] In this

[38] Of course, the myth of the tantric siddha is not conveyed (or even contained) exclusively by narrative literature. Roger Jackson (2004) traces the substantial importance of songs, performances, and oral histories to the emergence, development, and perpetuation of the siddha figure. Daniel Hirshberg (2016) and Andrew Quintman (2013) have also noted the importance of bard songs and local performances in the development of major Tibetan figures (Padmasambhava and Milarepa, respectively). For more general comments and insight into the nuanced relationship between textuality and orality, see: Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[39] Namthar is the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit word *vimokṣa*, or the Buddhist idea of total liberation from cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*). For a detailed discussion on the gloss of *vimokṣa* as it relates to རྣམ་ཐར། see: Peter Alan Roberts, *The Biographies o Rechungpa: The Evolution of Tibetan Hagiography* (New York: Routledge, 2007): 4-6, and Andrew Quintman (2013): 7.

[40] For a detailed list see Quintman (2013): 7. Some scholars (e.g. Roberts, 2007) advance "hagiography" as an accurate translation, while others question the accuracy of employing hagiography, an English term rooted in Christian history, to describe a Tibetan genre with different conventions (e.g. Willis (1985)). Various decisions to render the term along the spectrum of 'hagiography' and 'biography' have, historically, been driven by an interest in sifting through the "religious aspects" of a subject's depiction from the historically verifiable data contained within it (cf Tobdan (1989)). Janice Willis (1987) and Ketsun Zangpo (1994) interrogate namthar in similar terms, wondering how to sift the text for historical data.

study I adopt the view that this genre is central to a myth-making process of Buddhism's origin in Tibet during the imperial period.[41] As religious biographies narrated in the third person they, for the most part, have hagiographic elements—miraculous birth, feats of magic, and other fantastical elements. I thus render namthar as "religious biography," hagiography, but most often simply keep it "namthar."[42]

Tibetan Studies scholars have drawn from insights in the study of hagiography to encourage a move in Tibetan Studies away from "positivist concerns of separating historical truth from pious fiction," to borrow Andrew Quintman's phrasing.[43] Instead, they turn our attention to the processes by which religious figures—and the narrative depictions of them—emerge, expand, and proliferate, gaining social traction over time.[44] Namthar is thus the uniquely Tibetan development to a long practice of Buddhist storytelling, spanning from the *Jātaka* tales of Śākyamuni Buddha's past lives to the seemingly limitless (re)tellings of his biography. Scholars have noted the many parallels that the namthar of individual Tibetan Buddhist masters draw to the Buddha's life story, invoking similar tropes from the Buddha's life.[45]

This is poignantly witnessed in the life story of Milarepa, as charted by Andrew Quintman in his sophisticated monograph *The Yogin and the Madman: Reading the Biographical Corpus of Tibet's Great Saint*. Quintman offers a helpful rubric for assessing the biographical (and

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[41] See Kapstein (2000).
[42] The decision not to translate namthar is motivated in large part by Lama Jabb (Oxford University), who delivered the keynote address to the Lotsawa Translation Workshop at the University of Colorado Boulder in October 2018. In his talk, Lama Jabb encouraged English translators to retain an element of the foreign in their translations, as not to erase the Tibetanness of the material. Given English's unique ability to adapt and incorporate words from other languages, I find it particularly fitting to keep namthar in its original Tibetan.
[43] Andrew Quintman, "Life Writing as Literary Relic: Image, Inscription, and Consecration in Tibetan Biography," *Material Religion* 9, no. 4 (2013): 468-504. See also Schaeffer (2005).
[44] E.g., Amy Holmes-Tagchungdarpa, *The Social Life of Tibetan Biography: Textuality, Community, and Authority in the Lineage of Tokden Shakya Shri* (Lantham: Lexington Books, 2014). See also Schaeffer (2004), Quintman (2012, 2013), Larsson (2012), Yamamoto (2012), and Dalton (2013).
[45] I.e. Holmes- Tagchungdarpa (2014), Ramble (2010), Yamamoto (2012), and Larsson (2012).

iconographical) development of a major Tibetan religious figure from the initial, skeletal outline of an ideal religious life to the fully fleshed out narrative that becomes compelling for all Tibetans across time. He calls this the "metaphorical anatomy of biography," in which the revered religious figure's narrative portraiture begins as a skeleton, which becomes embellished over time with subsequent (re)tellings that gradually add flesh, blood, and warmth to the figure, making them more appealing and inspiring. [46] In Tsangnyön Heruka's famed (re)telling of Milarepa's story, he accomplishes this by paralleling Milrepa's life with the twelve deeds of the Buddha, but by casting Milarepa in a remarkably sympathetic role—a hungry, abused child, grown into a young man goaded by his mother to seek revenge, straining to correct the evil of his retribution, striving to gain the dharma and win over his guru—thus, Milarepa becomes a sympathetic, relatable, Tibetan Buddha.

The trajectory of Padmasambhava's narratives follows as similar path—from the skeletal traces of his earliest story in three Dunhuang manuscripts to the subsequent versions that gained traction over time. In *Copper Island* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava*, Padmasambhava becomes re-cast in as a tantric Buddha, an emanation of Amitābha, whose life story also parallels the Buddha's (miraculous birth, precocious childhood, renunciation of worldly life, attaining accomplishment, benefiting beings with his teachings), but with distinctly tantric twists (tantric practice, violence, charnel ground initiations and teachings from *ḍākinīs*, consort practice, humiliating kings, and subjugating demons). Quintman's metaphor of the anatomy of a biography alerts us to the importance of tracking the evolution of a literary figure over time, attuning to the shifts and adaptations in a character's story that make a figure compelling in a particular social context. Kurtis Schaeffer engages in a similar project for the siddha Saraha,

[46] Quintman (2013), chapters 4 &5.

identifying Saraha not as a distant figure relegated to the Indian past, but as a living figure in the Tibetan tradition, continually revitalized by retellings and brought to life by his ongoing evolution in literature and ritual.[47]

Augmenting Quintman and Schaeffer, in this thesis I wish to surface the importance of thematizing gender—specifically, Padmasambhava's tantric masculinity—as a key component in the anatomical flesh of a biography. Recently, Sarah Jacoby and Holly Gayley have discovered the importance of understanding namthar as an important site for locating Tibetan gender ideals and expectations, crafting a horizon of meaning in which gendered identity and action becomes legible and interpretable.[48] Sarah Jacoby has shown how Sera Khandro, in her autobiography (རང་རྣམ།), presented a multivocality that drew upon patriarchal, androcentric discourse on women and the encouragement of female tantric deities (Skt. *ḍākinīs* Tib. མཁའ་འགྲོ་མ།) in order to position herself as a credible voice in a male-dominated world. Holly Gayley reveals the importance of gendered analysis in understanding how Khandro Tāre Lhamo garnered religious authority in a male-dominated religious milieu through her family connections to established religious figures, prophecies during youth about her status as an emanation of tantric deities and Yeshé Tsogayl (ཡེ་ཤེས་མཚོ་རྒྱལ།), and her hagiographic portrait featuring her illustrious past lives and magical power.[49] Taken together, these two works reveal the importance of thematizing, unpacking, and understanding the role that gender plays in a religious figure's legitimation strategies by or on

[47] Kurtis Schaeffer, *Dreaming the Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Great Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[48] Sarah Jacoby, *Love and Liberation: Autobiographical Writings of the Tibetan Buddhist Visionary Sera Khandro* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), and Holly Gayley, *Love Letters from Golok: A Tantric Couple in Modern Tibet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016).
[49] Holly Gayley, *Love Letters from Golok: A Tantric Couple in Modern Tibet* (New York: Columbia, 2016)

behalf of female religious leaders; in a patriarchal system female religious leaders must innovate strategies for legitimating themselves.

Where gender is highly marked, self-reflexive, and overtly thematized (Sera Khandro consistently laments her inferior female body) in the namthar of women, by contrast, gender is completely unmarked in narratives focused on men—the authors of male-focused namthars never think to call attention to the gender of their protagonist. This does not mean that masculinity is absent as a component in the figuration, legitimation, and authority of these men; rather, it reflects the dominance of androcentrism in a patriarchal system; simply because masculinity is unmarked does not mean it is not there. Thus, drawing out the gendered dimensions of Pamdasmabhava's narrative portrayal helps surface the tacit operations of gendered power that are masked by androcentrism and begins to bring a more robust view of gender as it operates in Tibetan tantric literature.

When thinking about deploying gender analysis in a Tibetan context, Charlene Makley's insightful analysis of gender at Labrang Monastery and surrounding areas in Amdo (Qinghai Province) draws our attention away from strictly performative and identitarian conceptualizations of gender[50] towards an understanding that prioritizes "the intersubjectivity of recognition (*not* 'identification') as the core of gender dynamics."[51] Makley surfaces this conceptualization via an analysis of the strategic alliances that lamas and tribal leaders have forged in Labrang, showcasing how shifting political and religious interests (for Makley, the need to unify against encroaching Chinese hegemony) forge new gendered positions,

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[50] "Identitarian conceptualizations of gender" refers to the widespread belief that gender performane is an expression of one's internal, natural, "authentic" identity. Such views place a concomitant emphasis on the primacy of the individual subject in the formation of gender positions.

[51] Consequently, there is "no direct and universal relationship between any instance of a representation and its particular effects or meanings." Charlene Makley, *The Violence of Liberation: Gender and Tibetan Buddhist Revival in Post-Mao China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 11 (emphasis added).

negotiations, and adaptations. This provides us with two crucial insights in our project of uncovering Padmasambhava's masculinity in Tibetan narrative: (1) gender is an intersubjective endeavor, formed, reflected, and contested in interpersonal encounters, and (2) an inescapable element of any gendered phenomenon is *legibility*; in order to read 'male,' 'female,' 'both,' or 'neither,' the categories, positions, discourses, and performances that index a given gender are effective only via "recognition or mutual interpretation."[52]

Thus, context becomes absolutely crucial in determining the gendered import of any signifier. Bringing Makley's ethnographic and anthropological insights into conversation with Connell's articulation of hegemonic masculinity and gender theory, we see both emphasizing the significance of interpersonal contact as the site for the enactment, perpetuation, and adaptation of gender performance. This echoes Irving Goffman's symbolic interactionist theory of dramaturgy, holding that human subjectivity (of which gender is a key component) is shaped by and within interpersonal contact in which one person presents herself to another; the presentation of the self is the construction of the self; the presentation of gender is the construction of gender.[53] In all of these interactions, context is a crucial factor in determining gendered legibility—what reads 'male' and 'female' is always determined by (and mutually influential upon) context.

I seek to draw these insights from Anthropology and Sociology into the domain of literature. Both José Cabezón and Sarah Jacoby have preceded me in this type of analysis, with Cabezón's analysis of relational practices in classical South Asian Buddhism and Jacoby's insight into the relational self in Tibetan auto/biography. Building upon their insights, heeding Connell and Makley's injunction to attune to interpersonal contact and the importance of context, two things

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Irving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

become clear to me in my attempt to understand literary tropes in gendered terms: (a) gender is discernable in interactions between characters, as this is where we see interpersonal contact and expression happening in a text, and (b) those gendered representations must be interpreted in light of the larger literary corpus in which they are deployed, for this provides necessary context for legibility. This echoes hagiography scholar Patrick Geary, who emphasizes the need to broaden our inquiry to consider how saints embody the ideals and values of the social worlds that produce them, which contributes to our understanding those social values at a given moment in history and across a wide body of literature.[54]

Geary, and Quintman following him, both emphasize the importance of intertexuality in studies of hagiography. To fully understand a saint and her place in history, we must read not only the entire corpus of texts dedicated to that figure, we must also understand the representations of saints from an entire historical period and across literary collections.[55] This helps to generate a broader sense of the social context that both produces and circulate that saint's representation.[56, 57] In the case of Padmasambhava's major biographies, this intertextuality takes on added importance, as Padmasambhava's first biographer, Nyangrel Nyima Öser was a seminal figure in the establishment of the treasure tradition—the particular form of namthar composition he and Orgyen employed, to be discussed later. Nyangrel paved the

[54] Quintman (2013) explicitly adopts Geary's framework in advocating for the need to interpret Milarepa in light of the entirety of his literary corpus and contemporaneous works from which Milarepa's biographers drew.
[55] Schaeffer (2005) and Quintman (2013) have encouraged us to broaden our understanding of intertexuality to include the study of ritual manuals, ritual performance, and materiality.
[56] Patrick Geary, *"Saints, Scholars, and Society: The Elusive Goal*," in *Saints: Studies in Hagiography*, Sandro Sticca ed. (Binghamton: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1996).
[57] Adopting an intertextual approach to the study of Padmasambhava would thus also encourage us to look at the shifting portrayal of Padmasambhava through the centuries and across literary genres. Due to constraints on space and scope for the current project, this will be an avenue for the development of this thesis into a PhD dissertation.

way for subsequent texts to adapt, recast, and embellish on the literary style and narrative approach he innovated.[58]

Recognizing the value of intertextual analysis in appreciating the nuance and depth of Padmasambhava's narrative portrayal, it becomes clear that we must read Padmasambhava's narrative portrayals in light of the larger arch of literary developments (and discursive productions) of similar figures, namely tantric siddhas—heroes of antinomianism, magical aptitude, and profound spiritual insight who reject worldly conventions, the dictates of normative ethics and social norms, and the ultimate invalidity of distinctions between pure and impure. The siddha is a notoriously mercurial figure, the subject of serious scholarly debate and extended analysis.[59] Here I am less concerned with the historical facticity of the siddha, but rather the siddha as a literary figure around which tropes of tantric masculinity crystalize and refract.[60]

Padmasambhava embodies the migration of the *siddha* figure from India to Tibet—quite literally, from the namthars' point of view—becoming a seminal figure in the instantiation and dissemination of the *siddha* trope into the Tibetan religious landscape. Thus, in order to properly appreciate the depth and complexity of his masculine position, we must attune to other contemporaneous sources for the siddha tradition and the gendered ideals present therein. *The*

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[58] On treasure and treasure revelation, see Gyatso "Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury: The *gTer ma* Literature," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, José Ignacio Cabezón and Roger Jackson, ed. (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1996): 147-69. Gyatso notes that གཏེར་མ། cannot be "properly characterized as representing a genre of Tibetan literature" (147), but rather, the range of genre evident within terma "almost repeats that of Tibetan literature as a whole." Thus, terma should not be considered equivalent to namthar. For another insightful analysis of terma literature, see Robert Mayer (2015). For a detailed investigation of Nyangrel Nyima Öser and his role in the origin of terma revelation, see Hirshberg (2016).

[59] E.g., Davidson (2003), Wedemeyer (2013), White (1996), Jackson (2004), Robinson (1996), and Chakravarti (1999) who all read against one another and offer markedly different interpretations of the siddha: whereas Davidson and Robinson offer a literalist interpretation asserting their historical veracity and marginal status, Wedemeyer and White see the siddha as a less literal figure, dubious in historical veracity, and emulating celestial (and high political) ideals. I follow Geary's lead, encouraging us to .

[60] In this regard I follow in the footsteps of Cabezón (2017), Gyatso (1998), and Wedemeyer (2013), and against Robinson (1996) and Davidson (2003), who argue that a text's philosophical stance can be extrapolated to discern evidence of historical truths.

Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas are an excellent place to turn for this intertextual analysis, as they were composed in the early part of the twelfth century and are thus contemporaneous with Nyangrel's *Copper Island*. As Padmasambhava is *the* supreme siddha of Tibet, understanding his mythology as an extension and elaboration of the siddha lore is an important step in the excavation of his masculine position.

An examination of the ways that Padmasambhava's narrative expands upon and embellishes the tropes found within *The Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* will help us track the shifts in masculine framework we find in Padmasambhava's religious biography, giving important clues into the hegemonic authority of this supreme demon tamer. In Chapter One I chart the development of Padmasambhava's myth from its earliest stages to its flourishing in *Copper Island* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava*, situating it within historical context. What emerges from this investigation is a picture of a hegemonic ideal that locates its power in remarkable adaptability and strategic humiliation, a demon-taming siddha unafraid to assail even the most powerful worldly forces to assert his supreme mastery and unequivocal might. In Chapter Two I engage in a close reading of key episodes wherein Padmasambhava encounters kings and engages in power contestations with them in order to track the shifts in the figuration of Padmasambhava as a siddha. This highlights violent demon subjugation and the humiliation of kings as key aspects of his tantric masculinity.

Chapter 1

Padmasambhava in Context: Crafting the Myth of a Tantric Hero

Padmasambhava in Historical Context: Early Developments of the Padmasambhava Legend

The evolution of Padmasambhava in Tibetan religious literature is remarkable: beginning with fragments found in early Dunhuang materials, his myth grew to become one of the most famous and influential stories in the history of Tibetan Buddhism.[61] While scholars have different views regarding Padmasambhava's historicity,[62] here I am interested in Padmasambhava primarily as a literary figure within the Nyingma imaginaire, even as I understand the importance of his role in art, ritual, and esoteric institutions. All scholars agree on

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[61] From the point of the view of the Tibetan tradition, Padmasambhava hailed from Uḍḍiyāna, a region whose geographic location continues to be debated by scholars. A larger consensus now places it in the contemporary Swat region of Pakistan. For a detailed archeological argument situating Uḍḍiyāna in Swat, see Luca Maria Oliveri (2016). For a tripartite argument drawing on historiography, linguistics, and archeology to counter that Uḍḍīyana is in Odisha, see Bimalendu Mohanty and Varish Panigrahi (2016).

[62] Matthew Kapstein notes that the scanty historical evidence leads some scholars to consider Padmasambhava a "rather late Tibetan invention," *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 155. Kapstein reasserts this view in his 2005 entry on Padmasambhava in the Second Edition of the Encyclopedia of Religion (694). Per K Sørensen also adopts this stance in his introduction to Hildegard Diemberger and Pasang Wangdu's annotated version of the *Testament of Ba*: *dBa bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlad der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000): XI. This position was picked up and championed by Grey Tuttle at the Rubin Museum's "Perspectives on Padmasambhava" conference in New York City from October 13th-15th, 2018. Daniel Hirshberg adopts a different approach in *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2016). In his entry on Padmasambhava for the "Treasury of Lives" website, Jacob Dalton asserts that "scholars generally agree that a renowned Indian tantric master by that name did visit and teach in Tibetan in the late eighth century." "Padmasambhava," The Treasury of Lives Incorporated, Published June 2014, updated July 2015. https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Padmasambhava/7442, accessed on March 23, 2019. Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer do not make claims about Padmasambhava's historicity, but are more interested in philological study of his earliest materials in "Representations of Padmasambhava in early post-imperial Tibet," in *Tibet after Empire: Culture, Society and Religion Between 850*, ed. Christopher Coopers et. al. (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2013): 19-50. Lews Doney, "Revelation and Re-evaluation: The Flourishing of Padmasambhava Biography after Yuan Mongol Decline," *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 52 (2018): 47-71. Bejamin Bogin, "Guru of the Three Times," in *The Second Buddha: Master of Time*, ed. Elena Pakhoutova (New York: Prestel, 2018): 119-35.

the importance of tracing the continuing evolution of Padmasambhava's representations in literature and art to understand their shifting significance across the Tibetan plateau.[63] Here I will study two early sources and later in future research expand my scope to consider a larger corpus of narrative literature and other genres in which his presence is prominent.

The earliest textual evidence of the tantric master paints a comparatively obscure picture of the figure who centuries later came to occupy the most exalted status of any figure in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. This transformation is all the more remarkable for the fact that while early sources have little to say about him, in time Padmasambhava comes to be the subject of more artwork across the Tibetan cultural world than even Śākyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism.[64] Given the importance of Padmasambhava in Tibetan Buddhism, scholars agree that the dearth of early historical materials evidencing his activity in Tibet requires interpretation.[65] In his recent monograph, Daniel Hirshberg grapples with the curiosity of why this most central figure is entirely absent from the earliest sources describing Emperor Tri Songdétsen's (ཁྲི་སྲོང་ལྡེའུ་བཙན། c. 742-800 CE.)[66] construction of Samyé monastery, the *Edict* and *Authoritative Exposition of Samyé Monastery* (བསམ་ཡས་བཀའ་གཏེར་གསལ། and བསམ་ཡས་བཀའ་མཆེད།), the unsuccessful construction of which ostensibly provided the very reason that Padmasambhava was invited to Tibet in later mythology.[67]

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[63] E.g., Lewis Doney, "A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the *Padma bka' thang*," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* no. 37 (Dec. 2016): 66-97.
[64] Elena Pakhoutova, "Padmasambhava in Visual Culture," in *The Second Buddha: Master of Time*, ed. Elena Pakhoutova (New York: Prestel, 2018): 17.
[65] For a sophisticated analysis on the importance of distinguishing historiographic from interpretive scholarship in the Buddhist tradition, see Cabezón (2018).
[66] Various English renderings of this famous emperor's name exist in the literature, from the older Trisong Detsen to the more current Tri Songdétsen. I follow the more current convention of Tri Songdétsen, in line with Doney (2015), Pakhoutova (2018), due to the emerging uniformity of this spelling.
[67] Daniel A. Hirshberg, *Remembering the Lotus-Born: Padmasambhava in the History of Tibet's Golden Age* (Somerville: Wisdom Publications, 2016): 6.

According to Cantwell and Mayer, the earliest available evidence of Padmasambhava's activity in Tibet is found in three Dunhuang manuscripts: (1) Pelliot Tibétain (PT) 307, circa tenth to eleventh centuries,[68] in which Padmasambhava tames the goddesses later known as *tenma* (བཏན་མ།). (2) PT 44, circa ninth to tenth centuries,[69] the best-known and most-studied of the Dunhuang texts on Padmasambhava,[70] describes an important ritual practice for the wrathful tantric deity Vajrakīla (རྡོ་རྗེ་ཕུར་པ།) and relating an episode in which Padmasambhava tames the *sé* (བསེ།) goddesses with a *phurbu* (ཕུར་བུ།).[71] (3) IOLTibJ321, circa tenth century,[72] references Padmasambhava's ritual activity. Jacob Dalton relies on his expertise with the Dunhuang manuscripts to posit PT307 as the earliest documentation of Padmasambhava's demon-taming activities in Tibet, dating it to the late tenth or early eleventh century, almost a century and a half after Padmasambhava arrived in Tibet according to later legends.[73] Dalton and Sam van Shaik argue that IOLTibJ321 evidences "one of the few surviving works [authored by] Padmasambava,"[74] while Cantwell and Mayer insist that it is "clear and unambiguous that these

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[68] Dalton (2004).

[69] Kapstein (2000, pg. 158 & 265) notes that the manuscript is difficult to date with precision. He notes that it does reference a "tiger year" in its colophon, but that it is impossible to determine which tiger year during the ninth and tenth centuries.

[70] Cantwell & Mayer (2009: 301) provide a brief yet comprehensive chronological sketch of the eight scholars looking at this text in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

[71] Dalton (2004), Cantwell and Mayer (2008 & 2013), and Kapstein (2000) agree on the importance of the ritual but draw different conclusions about the manuscript's significant. Dalton argues that the manuscript is evidence of Padmasambhava's marginal and insignificant status, whereas Cantwell and Mayer, emphasizing the importance of his inclusion in an initiation ritual, read it as evidence of Padmasambhava's "already mythologised [status], already integrated into several ritual structures" (32).

[72] Robert Mayer, "*gTer ston* and Tradent: Innovation and Conservation in Tibetan Literature," in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 26/27 (2015): 229.

[73] Jacob Dalton, "The Early Development of the Padmasambhava Legend in Tibet: A Study of IOL Tib J 644 and Pelliot tibétain 307," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 124 no. 4 (2004):765. He reiterates this claim in *The Taming of the Demons: Violence and Liberation in Tibetan Buddhism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 68. Lewis Doney (2018) lends support to this dating in the recently published volume on Padmasambhava corresponding to the Rubin Museum's exhibition on the tantric master: The Second Buddha.

[74] Jacob Dalton and Sam van Schaik, *Tibetan Tantric Manuscripts from Dunhuang: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Stein Collection at the British Library* (Leiden: Brill Publishing, 2006): 51.

are references to an exceptional, mythologized being, and not to an ordinary human teacher,"[75] proving therefore the implausibility that Padmasambhava was the author of the text.

While it is not in my purview to contribute to this debate, what I find interesting is that regardless of interpretation, the scanty evidence of Padmasambhava in these texts speaks to the remarkable flourishing and expansion of his legend from the tenth or eleventh centuries, when the Dunhuang texts are dated, to the massively influential biographical accounts that emerge in the twelfth and fourteenth centuries, two of which I study here. Furthermore, these Dunhuang texts all reference his extraordinary magical feats, emphasizing his capacity to subjugate demons with wrathful means for the propagation of Buddhist teachings. Thus, from the very earliest documents available on the tantric guru, we find an emphasis on his extraordinary power and willingness to engage in violent acts of subjugation to effectuate his goals.

Alongside the Dunhuang manuscripts but surpassing them in length and in historical recognition is the *Testimony of Ba* (དཔའ་བཞེད།).[76] Hildegard Diemberger and Pasang Wangdu have offered the most extensive treatment of this text,[77] wondering openly why the *Testamony of Ba* does not afford Padmasambhava a more glorified status in line with his subsequent presentations. While Per K. Sørensen highlights that Tibetan consider the *Testimony of Ba* as an authoritative historical document,[78] Kapstein encourages us to read the *Testimony* not as an accurate reflection of historical truth, but "as a work of historical fiction, which must be used

[75] Cantwell & Mayer (2013): 25.
[76] On the challenge of dating the *Testimony of Ba*, see Diemberger & Wangdu (2000) and Doney (2013). Michael Willis (2013, quoted in Doney 2013) suggests a date range of the eleventh century for the core of the narrative, and Diemberger & Wangdu work with the first complete draft of the text, which they date to the fourteenth century.
[77] Hildegard Diemberger and Pasang Wangdu, *dBa bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Wien : Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000).
[78] Per K. Sørensen, "Preface," in *dBa bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* edited by Hildegard Diemberger and Pasang Wangdu (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000): X.

very cautiously whenever it is precise factual information that is at issue."[79] Hirshberg notes that the earliest fragments of this text recovered in Dunhuang do not mention Padmasambhava, but that "subsequent recensions flesh out the narrative" to include him.[80,81]

The *Testimony* presents Padmasambhava as a siddha with magical powers, subjugating the gods and demons of Tibet in order to establish Buddhism there. Whereas in *Testimony* Padmasambhava's magical prowess intimidates the king, who then runs Padmasambhava out of town from fear that he might aspire to political power, in *Copper Island* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava*, it is that very power that leads Tri Songdétsen to invite him to Tibet. Diemberger and Wangdu suggest one potential reading for this disparity in accounts: Padmasambhava posed a political threat to the king and so the king, in his royal edict, decided to efface Padmasambhava's presence in history.[82]

Here we witness the early traces of three interrelated themes that become remarkably amplified over time. The first is the perceived need for violent subjugation—what Kapstein identifies as the tantric ideology necessitating the use of "occult power" to advance Buddhism.[83] The second is the ascendancy of Padmasambhava as a supreme demon-taming *siddha*, or as Dalton articulates, "the demon tamer *par excellence*."[84] The third, particularly relevant to our gendered investigation, is the competition for power between two archetypes of Tibetan masculinity, evidenced in the tension between the king as center of political authority and the

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[79] Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism: Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000): 25.
[80] Hirshberg (2016), 11.
[81] The fact that the *Testimony of Ba* was finished centuries later could also be read as a strategic move from the Nyingma school in light of competing sectarian interests that gained traction during the influx of new Indian Buddhist ideas, materials, and figures in the twelfth century. Thus, the Nyingma ("old" school) was in competition with the Sarma ("new") school of Buddhism.
[82] Diembergerg and Wangdu (2000): 14.
[83] Kapstein (2000), 155.
[84] Dalton (2004), 769.

siddha as locus of religious authority capable of wielding magical power. I hazard that these three thematic tropes may have become compelling to Tibetans in the wake of the collapse of the Tibetan empire in approximately 842 C.E. and the advent of its "age of fragmentation" (རིལ་བུའི་དུས།), commonly referred to as Tibet's "dark age," (མུན་པའི་བསྐལ་པ།) between the ninth and tenth centuries.

Tibetans came to understand this time in their history as a type of degenerate age of splintered religion and politics. Despite this fractionalization, recent scholarship urges us to recognize the age of fragmentation as a time of enormous creativity and religious ferment.[85] In the dissolution of imperial decrees forbidding tantric technologies of ritual and practice, esoteric Buddhism took firm hold among local lineages, wherein "charismatic teachers could form new tantric communities and teach as they liked."[86] This was possible, argues Dalton, because of the enduring impact that the legacy violence and upheaval left upon Tibetan culture.[87] Founded upon the myth of Rudra's violent subjugation,[88] tantric Buddhism offered efficacious tools for conceptualizing the age of fragmentation (and the role of religion within it) by providing an ethical framework that could account for violence as a necessary strategy in overcoming challenging obstacles.

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[85] While Dalton brilliantly expounds this idea in his book, it was first advanced by Sampten Karmay's 1998 book *The Arrow and the Spindle*, and then picked up and advanced by Kapstein (2000), Sørensen (2000), Cantwell & Mayer (2013), and Hirshberg (2016). Cantwell & Mayer (2013) go so far as to propose re-naming the Age of Fragmentation as the "Intermediate Period of the propagation" of Buddhist (and particularly tantric) teachings in Tibet, between the early dissemination (བསྟན་པ་ཐ་དད།) and later dissemination (ཕྱི་དར།) of Buddhist doctrine (289-90).

[86] Dalton (2011), 54.

[87] Dalton (2011), 129.

[88] The Rudra subjugation myth is a rich body of literature with remarkably vast implications that have been illuminated by decades on scholarship on Vajrayāna Buddhism. It contains fascinating masculinity dynamics—notably the sodomy against Rudra—that would undoubtedly enrich and expand this paper in ways that would quickly make it become unmanageable in its current trajectory.

Dalton finds evidence for this assertion in the writings of tenth-century Tibetan masters who invoke the tantras "for salvation" in the midst of "political and religious strife."[89] I quote Dalton in full: "Here…we have direct evidence of violent ritual being called upon in an attempt to reassert order during a period of political fragmentation and religious chaos…with their emphasis on violence, demon taming, and political order, the tantras provided a range of powerful strategies to the Tibetans of the late ninth and tenth centuries."[90] Thus, in Dalton's view, violence and demonic subjugation became hallmark traits of the tantric Buddhism that developed in India and then was transported to the Tibetan plateau and embraced in Tibetan myth and ritual. Ronald Davidson supports this position, arguing that the emphasis on hierarchy, power, utility, and "ritual drama" in tantric Buddhism gave it a unique appeal to Tibetans in the wake of the collapse of their empire and the rise of local lineages, fueling its ascendancy in Tibetan Buddhism in subsequent centuries.[91]

And yet, violence could not be the only factor contributing to the emergence and flourishing of a figure like Padmasambhava, for while his namthar depict him engaged in violent subjugation (ranging from mild to intense), they also show him as a child, a consort, and a teacher. In the *Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, Matthew Kapstein offers an understanding of myth that can help us move closer to understanding the enduring impact of Padmasambhava's legend. Kapstein argues that a myth gains traction "whenever it functions in the discourse of a community to ground action that is itself felt to bring about the success of that community, or of its individual members. …The truth of myth, then, is essentially tied to a community's history."[92]

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[89] Dalton (2011): 55.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ronald Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 23.
[92] Kapstein (2002), 143.

Kurtis Schaeffer advances a similar approach to understanding the myths of major religious figures—notably Saraha, the tantric guru—as serving a cultural function; bits of culture that themselves convey the aspirations, ideations, and concerns of the culture.[93] This understanding of myth provides a helpful link between Dalton's historiography of ritual violence in Tibetan Buddhism and the cultural concerns at the heart of Padmasambhava's mythology. Given the socio-political upheaval of the age of fragmentation, we could view the emergence of Padmasambhava's hagiographical corpus as both reflecting and shaping wider cultural concerns of their historic moment—concerns over fragmented political order and religious chaos—which in turn invigorated enduring literary tropes legitimating the central role of the tantric master in the mythos of the golden age of Tibetan empire.

Lewis Doney supports this position through his careful and precise philological study tracing the numerous recensions and redactions of Padmasambhava's two most impactful biographies, Nyangrel Nyima Öser's *Copper Island Biography of Padmasambhava*, and Orgyen Lingpa's *The Testament of Padmasambhava*. By revealing the historically embedded process by which subsequent redactors shift, adapt, and recast the narrative, Doney highlights the power of Padmasambhava's narratives to "convince others of their particular vision of the past…by fixing a vivid reimagining of a lost world in the minds of their audiences."[94] According to Doney, Nyangrel and Orgyen employed "poetic descriptions seemingly intended to fix a vivid reimagining of a bygone age in the minds of their audiences."[95] Nyangrel and Orgyen were acutely attuned to the "changing requirements of their readership," and were consequently able

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[93] Kurtis Schaeffer, *Dreaming the Great Brahmin: Tibetan Traditions of the Great Buddhist Poet-Saint Saraha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005): 4.
[94] Lewis Doney, "Revelation and Re-evaluation: The Flourishing of Padmasambhava Biography after Yuan Mongol Decline," *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 52 (2018): 48.
[95] Lewis Doney, "A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the *Padma bka' thang*," *Reveue d'Etudes Tibétaines* no. 37 (Dec. 2016): 70.

to convey narratives that were convincing and persuasive to the vicissitudes of their individual historical contexts.[96] Nyangrel sought to establish Padmasambhava's legitimacy as a Nyingma figure inherited from India in light of competition from the Sarma schools that grounded their emerging traditions in the later dissemination (སྒྲུབ་དར།) of tantric materials from India to Tibet.[97] By contrast, Orgyen presented Padmasambhava part of a trikāya emanation (including Amithābha as the primordial buddha and Avalokiteśvara as the bodhisattva) and thus a powerful Tibetan ally during a period of Mongol encroachment.

As the first architect of Padmasambhava's myth, Nyangrel left an enduring mark on representations of Padmasambhava through history. Through a nuanced historiographic analysis, Hirshberg presents evidence to suggest that Nyangrel synthesized *Copper Island* from local bard songs and oral stories passed among small Padmasambhava cults practicing an early form of tantra, and—even more central to Hirshberg's argument—Nyangrel's own memory as the self-identified reincarnation of Trisong Detsen. Positing that he composed *Copper Island* as a "counter-narrative" to the earlier accounts portraying Padmsambhava negatively (notably the *Testament of Ba*, which, as mentioned above, casts Padmasambhava as a politically threatening sorcerer driven out of Tibet), Hirshberg highlights the political dimensions of the text's production.[98] Remembering Quintman's concept of the metaphorical anatomy, we see here how the skeleton of Padmasambhava's story (a powerful tantric adept subjugating demons, with ambigious moral standing—is he a good guy or bad guy?) becomes fleshed out by the inclusion of contextual elements from Nyangrel's time: political, sectarian interests.

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[96] Doney (2016), 69.
[97] See footnote 85.
[98] Hirshberg also claims that Nyangrel developed a specifically Nyingma (*rnying ma*, the "old" school) frame to legitimize the Nyingma tradition in the face of a fresh influx of Buddhist materials from India and the emergence of competing Buddhist schools; the text could therefore be read as an attempt to center the Nyingma school in an era of heightened sectarian competition (Hirshberg, 197).

Nyangrel positioning himself as a reincarnation of Tri Songdétsen carries important ramifications for both the narrative and its mode of production. Both Nyangrel and Orgyen's texts are *terma* (གཏེར་མ།), "treasure" texts, understood within the Nyingma tradition to be hidden in the Tibetan landscape by Padmasambhava at the end of his teaching career in Tibet to be discovered by future reincarnations of his disciples to invigorate Buddhism in Tibet.[99] Thus, treasure revealers (གཏེར་སྟོན།) are not considered authors of the text, but conveyers of it. As mentioned in the introduction, Nyangrel is considered to be one of the chief architects of the treasure tradition, and so his claim to be a reincarnation of Tri Songdétsen is a crucial legitimating factor for the text; Nyangrel composed from his "first-hand" experience in a previous life, validating the text as recovering a lost (or hidden) past.[100]

This legitimating move served an important sectarian interest for the Nyingma, as these revelations reinforced the authority of the Nyingma, or "old school" (སྔོན་མ།) in the era of the Tibetan renaissance occurring after the age of fragmentation.[101] New tantric materials were spreading from the Indian subcontinent in the "later dissemination" (ཕྱི་དར།), giving rise to "new schools," or Sarma traditions, of Tibetan Buddhism (Sakya ས་སྐྱ།, Kadam བཀའ་གདམས།,[102] and Kagyu བཀའ་བརྒྱུད།). The Nyingma formed out of the prior, "early dissemination" (སྔ་དར།) of tantra from India to Tibet, in the ninth century. With the emergence of new tantric material from India

[99] For more on terma see footnote 58.
[100] Nyangrel's self-identification also carries interesting implications for masculinity analysis, as Tri Songdétsen is ultimately humiliated in front of his entire court by Padmasambhava. When viewed in light of Nyangrel's claim to reincarnation, this becomes an episode of self-parody. This will be picked up again in chapter 2.
[101] For a reasoned and careful analysis of dating the Tibetan renaissance, and indeed whether the terms "medieval," and "renaissance" are even appropriate appellations for Tibetan history, see Brian Cuevas's 2006 essay "Some Relfections on the Periodization of Tibetan History" in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*. Ronald Davidson has treated this subject extensively in his 2005 study *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).
[102] The Kadam sect was later claimed (and subsumed) by the better-known Gelukpa (དགེ་ལུགས།).

and its spread through Tibet in the late tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, the newer schools began to challenge the early translations upon which the Nyingma school was founded.[103] Thus, treasure revelation—with its emphasis on reclaiming the past and legitimating contemporaneous compositions as recollections from last lives, thereby reinvisioning the present in light of a constructed past—became a central technology in the Nyingma's repertoire of religious legitimation and relevance.[104] Given the challenges to legitimacy posed by the newer schools (that the Nyingma was not "authentically" Buddhist), Padmasambhava's status as an Indian tantric siddha is paramount, his Indianness signals him as a lineage holder of the authentic Buddhist teachings.

Padmasambhava's other substantial biography under consideration here was also revealed as a treasure text, a move to (re)imagine the past in order to (re)construct the present. Writing roughly two centuries after Nyangrel, Orgyen Lingpa's text has historically been mobilized within and across Tibet's borders.[105] Directly modeled after *Copper Island*[106] (significantly expanding some episodes while diminishing others) but composed under notably different political conditions, the *Testament of Padmasambhava* similarly reflects the concerns of its era. The Tibetan government had recently been unified under Changchup Gyaltsen (ཇའང་ཆུབ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།), who moved the capital back to central Tibet and initiated a period of time when Tibet was no longer "a mere borderland" filled with factional violence and social disorder, but a "major

[103] Cf. E. Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts: History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*, edited by Kurtis R. Schaeffer (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2001).
[104] Cf. Gyatso (1993), Hirshberg (2016): 197.
[105] Kapstein (2015) outlines the political contestations animating the cross-migration of the *Testament of Padmasambhava* to the imperial court in Beijing, emphasizing the political gestures motivating the texts many redactions over time.
[106] Although *Copper Island* and the *Testament of Padmasambhava* are composed nearly two centuries apart, rooted in specific historical contexts, their similarities are striking. Lewis Doney (2016) has suggested quite convincingly that Orgyen's text was modeled upon the scaffolding of the third recension of Nyangrel's *Copper Island*.

center in the Buddhist world."[107] The demonic threat to be tamed was no longer *within* Tibet's borders, but *along* them: the Mongols, Tibet's "barbaric neighbors."[108] Hence the text's many prophecies—attributed to Padmasambhava—of the serious threat posed by the Mongols, whom Orgyen perceived to be "unraveling the work of Padmasambhava and Tibet's other tamers and threatening to return the land to its original state of darkness."[109] Importantly, the Nyingma tradition also considers Orgyen to be a reincarnation of Tri Songdétsen.[110]

Both Nyangrel and Orgyen's texts are watershed moments in the creation and perpetuation of Padmasambhava's lore as a demon-taming siddha, an Indian hero who subjugated the unseen beings of the Tibetan landscape and first established Buddhism on the Tibetan plateau. They bend the relationship between past and present in order to revitalize the Nyingma tradition, offering visions of Padmasambhava that endure through the centuries as a key element of the Nyingma imaginaire and a pan-Tibetan mythos of the imperial period. In a discussion of the role of individual and collective memory, Daniel Hirshberg argues that the Padmasambhava myth gradually became Tibet's "origin narrative," an expression of their history that now "unites them as a collective, a single people by virtue of a shared past that sets Tibetans apart from all others."[111] Nyagnrel and Orgyen, through their revelations, construct a past towards which Tibetan longing for the golden age of their empire can be directed in order to legitimate their own new textual productions, framed as recovered or revealed texts.

In his study of Buddhist monastic ideals in medieval Chinese hagiography, John Kieschnick tracks a similar phenomenon in the composition of hagiography. Kieschnick surfaces two

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[107] Dalton (2011), 129.
[108] Dalton (2011), 129.
[109] Dalton (2011), 129.
[110] Jakob Leschly, "Orgyen Lingpa," *Treasury of Lives*, August 2007, accessed February 13, 2019. https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Orgyan-Lingpa/7429.
[111] Hirshberg (2016), 199.

functions that thamaturigcal elements play in hagiographic portrayals: (1) "an attempt to reshape or shape the imagination" of the reader—the use of magic and spells, coupled with subversive or antinomian behavior (drinking liquor, having sex, eating meat) makes a "good story," and thus presents compelling tales to the reader that position subversive (or ambivalent) monks into exalted religious positions, and (2) reflections of "very real struggles for adherents and resources" at the time of their production. In light of competition from local cults and rival sects, one of the quickest methods to secure allegiance to your religious figure is to grant him extraordinary magical power.[112]

Kieschnick's insight into Buddhist hagiography in a medievail Chinese context brings Hirshberg and Doney's contributions into clear relief: when seen in light of the age of fragmentation and its impact on the Tibetan cultural imagination, it becomes clear how Padmasambhava's biographical corpus might be read as an expression of longing to return to what was, while simultaneously asserting the possibility of revitalizing a lost past, thus authorizing a new vision of the future by framing its innovations as revelations. By employing the (re)imagined past according to the contextual demands of their contemporaneous moments, the authors of Padmasambhava's biographies were able to create the formative foundation myth in Nyingma lore to position Padmasambhava as a Second Buddha and crucial legitimation of their own teachings and lineages that are traced to the imperial period and its figures. That project was made all the more compelling by Padmasambhava's extraordinary capacity for thaumaturgical action and antinomian behavior, often punctuated with force by his penchant for violent subjugation, which as Kieschnick shows makes for a good story. Furthermore, by

[112] John Kieschnick, *The Eminent Monk: Buddhist Ideals in Medieval Chinese Hagiography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 1997): 108.

claiming identities whose past lives are traceable to Padmasambhava's so-called "twenty-five original disciples," Tri Songdétsen among them, Nyangrel and Orgyen were able to craft a Padmasambhava with a hegemonic masculinity that established a gender order to which they were direct heirs, and of whom they were direct agents, enjoying the patriarchal dividends (fame, recognition, legitimation) of the very hegemonic order they helped to establish.

From the skeleton of ritual manuals (from Dunhuang), bard songs (from local sects), and narratives (like the *Testament of Ba*), Nyangrel and Orgyen fleshed out Padmasambhava's narratives—from the borders of recognition to the center of Tibetan Buddhism. Padmasambhava became a full-bown demon-taming figure. In the process, these treasure revealers were able to construct their central figure, one who expanded across the Tibetan cultural sphere to eventually occupy the most exalted status of any siddha in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. To fully appreciate this remarkable status, we must unpack what exactly it means to be a siddha, and what tropes and themes Nyangrel and Orgyen drew upon to craft a compelling tantric master.

Padmasambhava in Literary Context: The Siddhas, Origins of Tantric Masculinity

As a siddha *par excellence*, Padmasambhava both evokes and advances the paradigm of the tantric siddha, transplanting this paradigm from India and mapping it onto the Tibetan plateau. Thus, mining for the masculinities that animate Padmasambhava's literary corpus must begin with a reckoning of the siddhas as literary figures both preceding and surrounding him.[113] At the outset, it is important to note that the earliest written collection of these great siddha tales does

[113] The actual dating of the tales of the 84 Mahāsiddhas is complex. According to the Tibetan tradition, as stated in the colophon to the text, the stories were passed from the Indian *paṇḍita* (learned one) Abhayadatta Śrī to the Tibetan monk Mondup Sherab. Scholars generally place Mondup Sherb in the late eleventh to early twelfth centuries and Abhayadatta Śrī in the eleventh century (Kapstein 2006), so concurrent with the early emergence and flourishing of Padmasambhava's legend in Tibet, but predating the emergence of his two substantial biographies engaged in this study.

recount a scanty four *siddhā*s, or female siddhas, among eighty male siddhas. This reflects the overwhelmingly male constituency and model of the tantric siddha. Though scholars have hotly debated numerous aspects of the siddha in Buddhist tantric literature, from their historicity to their antinomianism—beliefs and practices that undermine social convention and traditional morality, such as low-caste cavorting (in and Indian caste context) or eating human flesh—they generally agree that the siddhas, and the smaller group of even more impressive "great siddhas" (Skt. *mahāsiddha*, Tib. གྲུབ་ཐོབ་ཆེན།), defy easy classification, presenting as they do a proliferation of activities, social positions, ideological stances, and magical aptitudes.

As Roger Jackson notes, the illusive nature of the siddhas is curiously confounded by their significant influence on the development of Buddhist tantra and tantric literary motifs in Tibet. Indeed, Jackson goes so far as to suggest that siddhas may simply be "literary inventions, no more reliably 'historical' than stock characters in epics and folktales the world around."[114] James Robinson disagrees, asserting that historical people answering to the names of the most famous siddhas "likely" existed.[115] Here I adopt Kurtis Schaeffer's approach regarding the impact of an Indian literary figure on the tantric imagination of Tibet, namely Saraha. Schaeffer encourages us to attune to the shifting portrayals of this tantric figure as an expression of his living status within the Tibetan tradition, rather than questions about his historicity. In his study on monastic Buddhist ideals in medieval Chinese hagiography, John Kieschnick likewise advances an approach aimed not at uncovering historical facts about what venerated figures actually did, but

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[114] Roger Jackson, *Tantric Treasures: Three Collections of Mystical Verse from Buddhist India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004): 6.

[115] James Burnell Robinson, "The Lives of Indian Buddhist Saints: Biography, Hagiography, and Myth," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, José Ignacio Cabezón & Roger R. Jackson, ed. (Ithaca: Snow Lion Press, 1996): 63. Robinson's suggestion that recurrent motifs "probably are quite accurate in mirroring the conditions of the time" (62) is a stance akin to Davidson's, mentioned below. As noted above, many scholars have come to question the efficacy of tying literary conventions to historical fact.

rather tracing "the representations of the image of the monk, of what monks were *supposed* to be."[116]

These scholars point us in an important direction: regardless of evidence regarding their existence as historical figures, the siddha is an important stock character in the Buddhist tantric literary imagination.[117] Bernard Faure similarly draws our attention to the ossification of the siddha's antinomianism as a literary device, encouraging us to read their subversive, trickster tendencies as a behavioral trope (and not a historical reality).[118] Christian Wedemeyer has also offered an interpretation of siddha antinomianism as a tantric metaphor and circumscribed ritual practice, to be understood in tightly prescribed, metaphoric terms, the (linguistic) domain of an educated elite and not a literal (historically verifiable) expression of tribal, low caste, or subversive behavior. Rather than a marginal, fringe, or tribal trend, argues Wedemeyer, we are to situate tantric antinomiansim within broader trends in mainstream Indian Buddhism. Arguing that the literal meaning of tantric ritual is "close to irrelevant"[119] because of the technique (offered up by institutionalized, monastic tantrism) to use visualization and ritual substitutes for the offending substance or techniques, Wedemeyer encourages us to think of tantric antinomianism as a push by Buddhist elites to invert the Brahmanical structures of their religious and cultural rivals in a time when royal patronage (and thus the livelihood of religious seekers) was acutely scarce. Thus, according to Wedemeyer, we should read such antinomian rituals,

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[116] Kieschnick (1997): 1.
[117] Dowman (1985): 2.
[118] Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 104.
[119] Christian Wedemeyer, *Making Sense of Tantric Buddhism: History, Semiology, and Transgression in Indian Traditions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013): 125.

tendencies, and literatures as ironic rather than subversive—they were intended to mock, not destroy.[120]

Wedemeyer roots him claim in a postcolonial rejection of Western academic historiography,[121] showing that Western scholarship has perpetuated a misunderstanding of tantra that disproportionately emphasizes its marginal and radical dimensions. In this respect, Wedemeyer offers a helpful corrective to Ronald Davidson's emphasis on the siddha as a necessarily fringe character. Yet both agree that the siddhas' relationship with royalty is of central importance to understanding their development in tantric literature. For Wedemeyer, siddhas positioned themselves as uniquely powerful in order to magnetize royal patronage in a moment of its decline, and for Davidson, siddhas modeled their authority on kings to position themselves as strategic allies, unthreatening to the political order because they sought spiritual, not temporal conquest.

Davidson has offered one of the most comprehensive overviews of these enigmatic characters in his study *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*.[122] Though Davidson situates his argument in historical claims about the period, a move that some question,[123] he helpfully charts key aspects of the siddhas' presence in literature. Davidson is not unique in his observations that the siddha is a character of the fringe and margins, with a fondness for antinomian behavior bucking normative ethics and social convention, provocative appearance (sometimes ornamented with human remains), charnel ground practices, magical powers (*siddhi*), violent subjugation, and

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[120] Ibid., 177.
[121] An argument that he first articulated with vehement force in an article published in the February 2001 issue of *History of Religions*: "Tropes, Typologies, and Turnarounds: A Brief Genealogy of the Historiography of Tantric Buddhism."
[122] David Gordon White also offers an impressive overview of the siddhas, yet in a Hindu context focused primarily on medical practices involving mercury, in his significant tome *The Alchemical Body* (1996).
[123] E.g., Robert Linrothe, *Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas* (New York: Serindia Publications, 2006). Daniel Anderson Arnold offers a similar critique in his review of Davidson's work in the January 2004 edition of *The Journal of Religion*.

opaque uses of vernacular language, all the while championing the soteriological efficacy of sexuality.[124] Indeed, it can be noted that none of the aforementioned scholars disagree that these are foundational aspects of the siddha's repertoire of tantric traits; rather, they debate the historicity of these practices, the genesis of their evolution, and the degree to which we should interpret them as literal or metaphorical. Setting those debates aside to focus on the siddha as a literary figure, Davidson offers an interpretation of the siddha that proves especially helpful for situating Padmasambhava as a figure in the ongoing development and deployment of the siddha as a stock character in tantric literature migrating from India to Tibet.

Davidson reads the siddha as a political figure, one whose "primary goal [is] the acquisition of supernatural powers (*siddhi*)" with a specific objective: to achieve dominion over "sorcerers (*vidyādhara*) and the gods." [125] Instead of seeking authority over the worldly realm (the goal of institutional, monastic scholasticism, according to Davidson), siddhas set their sights on an even loftier goal: conquest over "the Vidyādharas, and the gods themselves, the divinities by whose authority the overlord rules."[126] Davidson therefore draws our attention to the important tropes of conquest and power in siddha literature, with particular emphasis on siddhas' relationships with kings in the Buddhist tantric literary imagination, as these two figures are significant stock characters in tantric literature.[127] Remember that Wedemeyer's reading of siddha's behavior also

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[124] E.g., Dowman (1985), Robinson (1979 & 1997), White (1996), Jackson (2004), Schaeffer (2005), Linrothe (2006), Larsson (2012), DiValerio (2015).

[125] Ronald M. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002): 233. Davidson's reading seems primarily devoted to the male siddhas, and not taking into account Lakṣmīnkarā, the most famous of the female siddhās—and totally uninterested in political rule.

[126] Ibid., 332.

[127] Interestingly, Davidson finds the siddhas' relationships with kings to be uncontested: tracing the earliest signs of siddhas in tantric literature, Davidson identifies them as magically potent spies "employed [by kings]…in the destabilization of neighboring states." (242). He also argues that siddhas utilized kings as allies in their quest to attain a higher, more divine authority, "using their aid to subjugate various kinds of nonhuman beings" (233). This strikes me as a reading that supports Davidson's own argument foregrounding the siddha's cosmic aspiration, effectively side-stepping literary evidence that siddhas could be kings themselves, or highly antagonistic, even coercive, to worldly kings.

foregrounds the importance of their relationship with the royalty in tantric literature. It is therefore fitting that a masculinities analysis should proceed from this relationship and how it is enacted in tantric narrative literature.

It should be noted, though, that Davidson and other scholars looking at tantric antinomianism have not considered masculinity (or gender more broadly) as an element of the siddha ideal.[128] When we draw Davidson's (and others') work on siddhas into conversation with gender theory generally, and masculinity theory specifically, we find a point of contact between Charlene Makley's theory outlined above with Raewyn Connell's influential articulation of hegemonic masculinity: both insist on interpersonal contact as the space in which gender is enacted, contested, emphasized, parodied, or subverted, and both emphasize the need to situate those gendered interactions in their wider context. As noted in the introduction, whereas Makley and Connell wrote in the context of ethnography, I draw their insights to the domain of literary studies, following in Geary's supposition that hagiography is a rich site for mining information about a society's ideals and values.[129] Connell's hegemonic masculinity draws our attention to the adaptive negotiations of power that structure hierarchies of authority between men (and also

[128] As I briefly stated above, while siddhas are not all male, the majority who have been historically preserved in literature are. Of the 84 Mahāsiddhas popularized by *The Lives of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas*, only four are female: Lakṣminkarā, Manibhadrā, and the sisters Kanakhalā and Mekhalā. A gendered analysis of these female siddhas—and their coherence to or departure from their male counterparts—is another avenue for this research but unfortunately lies beyond the scope of the current investigation.

[129] See footnote 10.

women),[130] often either preverbally or without explicit recognition.[131] I agree with Connell that masculinities are always necessarily marked by power antagonisms, what I am identifying here as *masculine contests*, whether subtle or overt, and also with subsequent masculinities theorists who emphasize the intersectional lines (sex, race, class, gender, sexuality, ability status) along which those antagonisms flow.

The narrative literature of Indian siddhas depicted in early Tibetan sources is rife with episodes of siddha-king encounters, and as such provides a rich site for unpacking the gendered dimensions of these interactions in moments of interpersonal contact between characters. Here too I take lead from Geary, who has emphasized the need to engage in intertextual analysis to mine hagiographic material—and especially collections of texts—for the implicit and explicit encoding of a society's beliefs and values, which, following Edelman and Sedgwick, we know to be deeply gendered. By unpacking the masculinity dynamics between siddhas and kings as presented in hagiographic texts composed in the same general time frame, we can begin to see patterns in the siddha ideal against which to cast Padmasambhava in high relief. This, in turns, leads us to appreciate how Padmasambhava's mythology expands upon the siddha as a stock figure in Tibetan tantric literature.

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[130] Mimi Schippers (2007) and Jill Heinrich (2013) have both drawn our attention to the role of women in systems of hegemonic masculinity, and how that role has been elided. Schippers (2007) argues that prevailing conceptualizations of hegemonic masculinity—and their counterpart, emphasized femininity—fail to account adequately for the deliberate role that women can play in the enactment and reification of hegemonic systems. She makes a compelling case for the existence of hegemonic femininity, which upholds practices that constitute one was womanly and that reify the dominant position of men above women. Heinrich (2013) suggests that women have the capacity to reward hegemonic masculinity with attention and praise, thus contributing to its ongoing reinscription in the social order. While these insights are crucial, I wonder whether we want to promote ideology that invests women with even more responsibility in dismantling patriarchy, adding yet another task for women to adopt in the seemingly endless saga of cleaning up after the mess that men have made and then refuse to acknowledge.

[131] Connell (2005).

While there are a number of hagiographic accounts of the siddhas in varying length in Tibetan,[132] one of the most enduring sets of narratives is *The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* (གྲུབ་ཐོབ་བརྒྱད་ཅུ་རྩ་བཞིའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས།), found in the Tengyur (བསྟན་འགྱུར།) and translated (from the Peking edition) as *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* by James Robinson in 1979.[133] According to the colophon, the Tibetan text is itself an early-twelfth-century translation of the Sanskrit text *Caturaśīti-siddha-pravṛtti*, originally composed by Abhayadatta.[134] However, as previously discussed, it may well have been a collaboration between an Indian oral informant and Tibetan translator.

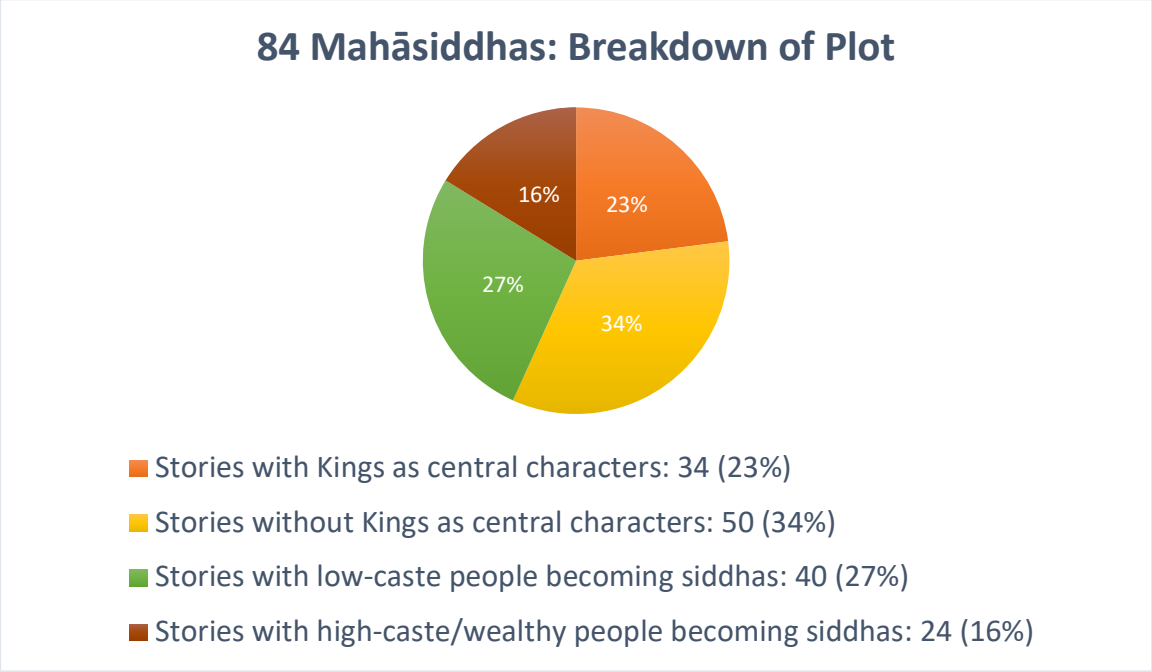

Figure 1

[132] Such as illustrious Tibetan scholar Tāranātha's *The Seven Instruction Lineages* (བཀའ་བབས་བདུན་ལྡན།), translated into English by David Templeman (Dharamsala, HP: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1983).
[133] Abhayadatta, *Buddha's Lions: The Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*, trans. James B. Robinson (Berkeley: Dharma Publishing, 1979). Given the scope and focus of this thesis, here I rely on Robinson's translation of this work.
[134] Robinson (1979): 311. The colophon states that Abhayadatta composed the text, which was then perfectly translated by Möndup Sherab. Also see footnote 12 on Kurtis Schaeffer's suggestion that the tales might have been oral and then written down in Tibetan.

A survey of the eighty-four narratives reveals that thirty-four of the tales, or forty percent of them, center on dynamics between siddhas and kings (Figure 1). The plots of the other fifty stories are substantively similar: an ordinary person (either low-caste or wealthy) is engaged in some kind of mundane pursuit: making shoes, catching fish, weaving baskets, selling goods, raising a family. Then there is a turn in one of two directions: in one variant, the subject becomes desperate—perhaps a spouse or family member dies, they lose their wealth, or their family rejects them—and departs to a "lonely place," a "quiet place," or a "charnel ground," where they meet their siddha-guru, who in turn gives them instruction to focus on the very trauma that led to their encounter as the nature of mind. In each case, the protagonist practices for twelve years (or much less frequently, for six years) with the guru's instruction, attains *siddhi*, benefits innumerable beings with their dharma activity, and then travels to the realm of the "ḍākas." In the second variant, the soon-to-be siddha is simply engaged in the course of their ordinary life when a yogin-guru happens upon them, asks if they would like to learn how to escape suffering and death (the invariable answer, "yes"), and then instructs the subject in meditation, initiates them into a deity cycle, and departs. The subject practices for twelve years, attains siddhi, benefits innumerable beings, and travels to the realm of the ḍākas.

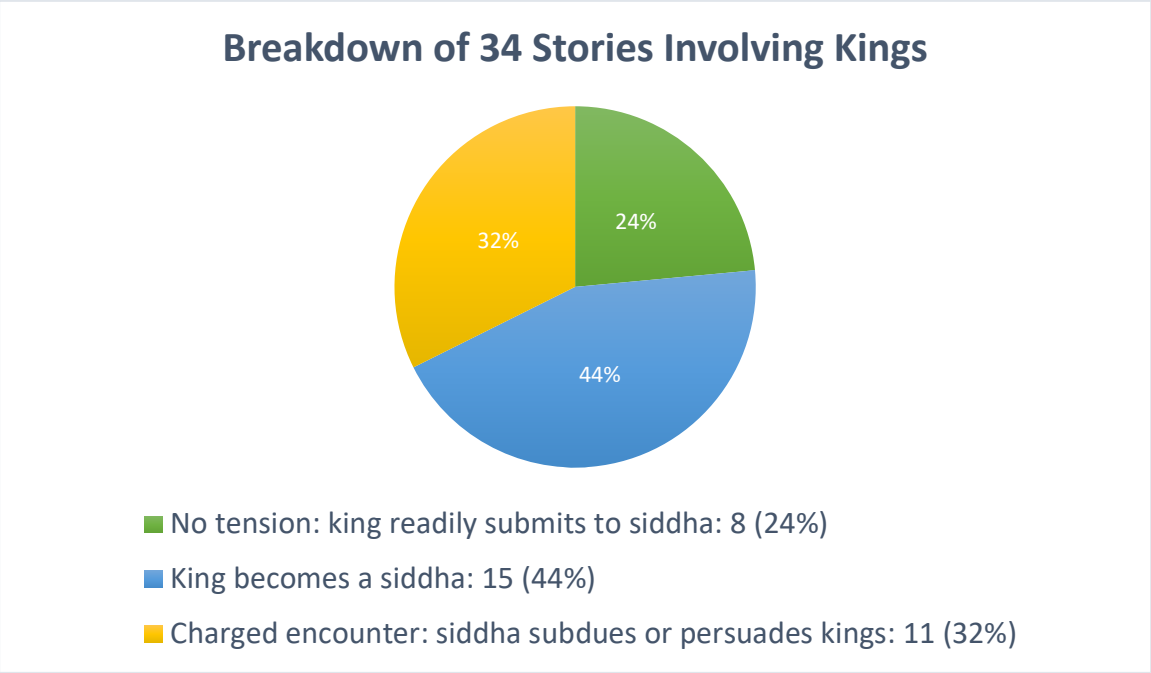

Figure 2

The plotlines of the stories with kings stand apart from those without kings and can be categorized into three distinct types of interaction (Figure 2): (1) no tension with kings, (2) a charged encounter with a king, or (3) a king becomes a siddha. In each of these stories within the first variant, the royal figure encounters a guru—sometimes when the king has already abdicated his throne out of revulsion for saṃsāra, opting instead to pursue a spiritual life of renunciation; other times the guru wanders into the king's garden or palace and points out the ultimate inefficacy of pursuing worldly life in light of the inescapability of death. Sometimes the guru (who, notably, is already a siddha) rebukes the king for his pride or indulgence in worldly pleasures, sparking the king's motivation to practice. Other times the king is simply overwhelmed by the presence of the siddha and supplicates him for teachings. For Śantipa, who immediately recognizes the siddha's supremacy, bows to him, and makes offerings, his entire

kingdom is immediately benefitted by the siddha's grace. In all of these cases (again, within the first variant), the power of the guru is predetermined and unquestioned; while the royal figure might initially question the guru's way of life (such as Dārika, who meets Lūyipa and is initially repulsed by his eating fish guts, but nonetheless offers his body as his initiation fee), the king always extends the first homage, and the guru always reveals their supremacy—either through feats of magic or incisive dharma-based critiques of the king's way of life—and initiates the king.

As seen in Figure 2, fifteen of the thirty-four stories involving siddhas and kings are stories in which a king (or prince/ss)[135] is the principle character. In line with the first variant, in all of these stories of kings who turn into siddhas (the third variant, or forty-four percent), the central king character always submits to the siddha-guru's authority without contest, obtains initiation, practices for twelve years, attains realization, benefits innumerable beings, and enters the realm of the ḍākas. Furthermore, of the fifteen kings who become siddhas, ten of them abdicate the throne and devote themselves entirely to spiritual practice, whereas only five continue to sit on the throne; though, notably, their activities always shift from the maintenance of worldly affairs to teaching the dharma to their subjects.

The second variation of interaction between siddhas and kings in the *Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*, witnessed in Figure 2, contains no conflict between them. Rather, the king immediately recognizes the superiority of the siddha, makes offerings to him, and supplicates teachings. This is dramatically enacted in the story of Tilopa, who is introduced as "the object of the king's devotion and worship."[136] In both Līlapa's and Śantipa's narratives, the king pays immediately

[135] I counted the story of Lakṣmīnkarā as among the royalty-turned-siddhā tales. Yet, as mentioned in the preceding section, the scope of this project is such that I do not have the space to explore this very interesting and important feminine aspect of the siddha tales.
[136] Robinson (1979): 98.

pays homage to the siddha, supplicating teachings, and this allows them to better serve their kingdoms. Ṭeṅgipa, the king's minister, travels with the king and both of them offer their bodies as initiation fees to their guru upon meeting him. Campaka, lounging in his garden with a guru-siddha arrives, immediately "washed the yogin's feet, brought him a seat, and made him comfortable…and made him an object of reverence."[137]

This is in contrast to the second largest variant (thirty-two percent), the eleven stories in which siddhas are the principle characters and have antagonistic or charged encounters with kings, in which they either subdue or persuade the king of their supremacy with magical aptitude, compelling the king to work or rule in their favor. The confrontations take a number of different forms; often, the siddha is engaging in some form of antinomian or subversive behavior: Virūpa racks up a bar tab for "a million glasses of wine,"[138] and when asked to pay the tab, he stabs the sun in place for two days until the king is forced to pay the bill. Later in his story, when he stumbles upon a statue of Śiva the local king commands that he bow to it. Virūpa replies: "In no system does the older brother do reverence to the younger brother."[139] The king presses him, saying that if Virūpa does not bow, he will kill him. Virūpa continues to protest, saying it would be a "sin" (Robin's word) to bow to the statue. The king still presses Virūpa to bow, and when Virūpa "brought his hands together and bowed down, the great staute of Śiva split in half."[140] The king, humiliated, converts to Buddhism.

Ḍombipa is a king who takes a low-caste girl as his consort and is thus banished from the kingdom. When the court tries to burn him and his consort for their transgression, Ḍombipa and

[137] Robinson (1979): 197.
[138] Robinson (1979): 29. I rely on Robinson's superb translation of the Tibetan original.
[139] Robinson (1979): 29.
[140] Robinson (1979): 30.

the consort manifest as Hevajra and his consort Nairātmyā, "shining like dew."[141] The court relents, and converts to Buddhism. Saraha is a brahmin caught drinking, but when the other brahmins urge the king to discipline him, he continually uses magic to influence the various tests of his virtue against the other brahmins, until the king declares "If anyone who has powers like these drinks wine, then let him drink."[142] Bhusuku, associated with the eighth-century Mahāyāna scholar Śāntideva, is caught "killing wild animals by his magic power…[and] eating their flesh." This is reported to the king, who brings "his court" to question Bhusuku, wondering how a being of such high realization could harm sentient beings and take their life. Bhusuku replies that he hasn't killed anything, and when he gestures to the fields, all of the animals are restored to life.

The story of Gaṇḍhapa similarly showcases a charged encounter with a king: the king hears of a powerful ascetic in the forest and tries repeatedly to recruit him to his court; Gaṇḍhapa summarily refuses, "for the kingdom of a king is an evil thing."[143] This enrages the king, who hires a prostitute to send her "beguiling" daughter to seduce Gaṇḍhapa. Eventually, "by the power of being so close, the two joined bodies together,"[144] and the young woman bears a son. The king, hearing of the news, sends a party to interrogate Gaṇḍhapa for contravening his dharmic conduct, and Gaṇḍhapa takes his consort, their child, and a bottle of wine, preparing to leave town. The king encounters them, accuses Gaṇḍhapa of being a sinner (སྡིག་ངན), whereupon Gaṇḍhapa throws the baby and bottle to the ground, which then turn into a vajra and bell. Gaṇḍhapa and his consort appear in the sky as Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhī in tantric union, holding the vajra and bell. The king, humiliated and almost killed by a flood that springs up

[141] Robinson (1979): 35.
[142] Robinson (1979): 43.
[143] Robinson (1979): 176.
[144] Robinson (1979): 177.

when Gaṇḍhapa threw the baby and wine to the ground, fervently apologizes to the siddha and "takes faith" in him, whereby "numberless living beings were set on the path."[145]

In each of these cases, we witness a siddha engaging in deliberately provocative behavior that comes to the attention of a king, who in turn demands conformity to the dictates of normative ethics. The siddha responds with a demonstration of his unassailable magical power, a moment of subversion, flipping the king's expectations upside down and proving his spiritual attainment. Each time, the king (ineffectually) attempts to enforce the rule of law upon the siddha—the tacit point being that the king has the authority to enforce the laws of the land by virtue of his place atop the hegemonic order; as the supposed head of the political system, the king has the authority to organize all of the men below him into their appropriate, normative roles. This reminds us of Connell's insight that hegemonic masculinity can only attain hegemonic status when backed by institutional power.

But the siddha transcends that order in each interaction with the king, proving, by virtue of his magical prowess and willingness to engage in antinomianism, his superior power: the siddha, by breaking the rules and then using magic to show they were never truly broken—and thus, by extension, never applicable to him in the first place—reveals that he was in fact never bound by social conventions and political laws. Their antinomianism—and the magical reversal of its consequences—becomes a crucial trope in the enactment of tantric masculinity, as its serves as proof of their attainment and, as a corollary, effect changes in the (gendered) social structure.[146] One takeaway from this variant of siddha-king interaction is that antinomianism coupled with

[145] Robinson (1979): 179.
[146] This reading of tantric antinomianism is in alignment with Wedmeyer (2013) and DiValerio (2015), who insist that antinomian behavior serves as the mark of their accomplishment. In contrast, Davidson (2004) argues that a siddha's antinomian behavior is the practice that *leads to* their accomplishment.

magic plays a key role in dramatic enactments involving masculine contestations and power antagonisms.

In Buddhist tantric literature the siddha thus enacts a radical shift in masculine dynamics through antinomian acts of subversion. The male siddha reshapes the rules to suite his needs by using magic, showcasing his status as one who *transcends* the dictates of normative ethics. By extension, then, the male siddha leaves the rules intact for everyone else; only he has the power to transcend them, the rest of the men (and women) are left staunchly encased within those dictates. When analyzed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, we see the siddha oust the king from the hegemonic position via *subjugation* and then reinstating him as *complicit*—still receiving patriarchal dividends, the king is able to rule, but is no longer at the pinnacle of the male hierarchy. This recalls Davidson's insight that siddhas and kings could work in tandem with one another, forming in Charlene Makley's terms "masculine alliances," akin to what her ethnographic work points to between charismatic lamas and local leaders. Viewed in this light, we see tales negotiating the relative status and subsequent cooperation between the siddha and king as a compelling literary precursor to the "patron-priest" (མཆོད་ཡོན།) relationship so central to Tibetan Buddhist history.[147]

The contrast between antagonistic confrontations and amicable interactions is striking: the obdurate king, insisting on adherence to conventional standards and refusing to submit to the siddha, is invariably made a fool, knocked from his perch on the top of the hegemonic order and restructured below the siddha, whose extraordinary and miraculous power derived from his spiritual accomplishment trumps the worldly power of the king. In the amicable interactions

[147] See, e.g. Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa. 1967. *Tibet, a Political History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

wherein the king immediately submits to the siddha, recognizing his authority and spiritual superiority, his immediate submission allows for a more rapid advancement along the spiritual path and, subsequently, greater benefit to him and his subjects.

In all instances of contact between siddha and king, we witness two stock masculine characters negotiating the power between them: while the king either voluntarily submits or refuses to submit and is forcibly (and invariably) taken down a notch in the hegemonic order, the siddha's power is never in question, only his ethics—that is, until the hoodwinking moment when he reveals normative ethics do not apply to him. Furthermore, all instances of siddha-king contact (either antagonistic or amicable) result in the formation of a new masculine alliance, with the siddha offering spiritual reinforcement to the king's worldly power (evidenced in the form of robust crop harvests and happy subjects), emphasizing the compatibility of siddhas and kings when the proper hierarchy is in place. While we cannot make a direct correlation to these tales of Indian siddhas and the patron-priest relationship between Sakya hierarchs and their Mongol overlords in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, it does present a striking literary precedent for such relations.

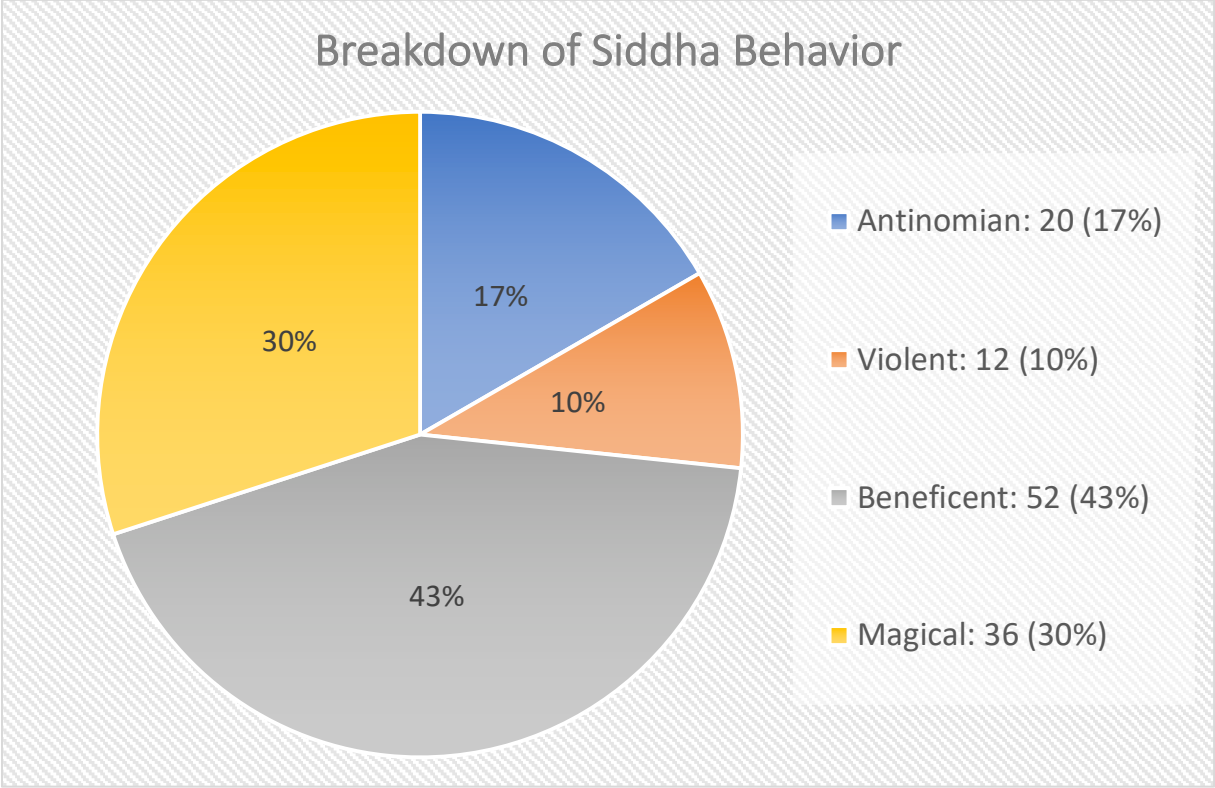

Figure 3

The types of activities that the siddhas engage in to demonstrate their superior power also vary from story to story. Figure 3 categories their behavior according to the method they use to assert authority and teach the dharma. Some of the more embellished, lengthier stories (like Virūpa, Saraha, Bhusuku, and Gaṇḍhapa) contain multiple elements, while the simpler, shorter ones often only contain one. What is noticeable here is the significant majority of cases wherein a siddha acts beneficently, without any kind of antagonism, violence, or magic. This is by far the most common plot and activity line in the *Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas*: the protagonist is engaged in the course of their daily life, meets a siddha in some sort of liminal space (charnel ground, "lonely place," "quiet place," garden), and the siddha reveals that the mundane aspects

of their life (grieving a death, weaving baskets, making shoes, catching fish) are actually the source of insight into the ultimate nature of reality.

The liminal space in which the protagonist meets the guru-siddha and receives initiation draws our attention to the importance of liminality as a dimension in siddha tales. This has already been noted by many scholars looking at the figure of the siddha,[148] but has yet to be analyzed in light of its gendered significance. Davidson argues that the liminality of the siddha significantly contributes to their literary appeal: "Buddhist siddhas represented a new social prototype that provided regional centers and disenfranchised groups with a model of autonomous power outside the artifice of caste Hinduism."[149] Setting aside the historically optimistic tone of Davidson's socio-historical argument here, he draws our attention to an important element of the siddha's liminality as a literary trope: the potential to subvert central political authority from a peripheral position, the solitary siddha, encountered in a liminal space. If the siddha is not immediately recognized for who he is and honored as such, the threat of subversion looms.

From the point of view of the text, antinomianism serves a soteriological purpose: Bhadrapa, a young brahmin, is visited by a siddha while alone at home in the bath. The siddha brings him pork and wine, and when Bhadrapa insists that such things are "polluted" and of low caste, the guru responds that Bhadrapa needs to worry more about the pollution of his mind, which is caught up in the frivolity of the world. Bhadrapa, compelled by the teaching, brings wine and pork to his guru at night in a charnel ground, where they eat it together before he is initiated, thereafter practicing for six years and attaining realization. Virūpa eats pigeons while living in a monastery, is caught by some other monks, and banished for it. When leaving the monastery, he

[148] I.e. Davidson (2004), Anthony Tribe (2004), Yamamoto (2012), Wedemeyer (2013), DiValerio (2015).
[149] Davidson (2004), 234.

snaps his fingers, and the feathers and bones "became pigeons again, which flew off bigger and better than before."[150,151] But when viewed through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, antinomianism is a subversive tool to undercut the authority of the men who assert the dictates of conventional social order.

The presence of violence in the narratives is striking for the fact that in the twelve stories of siddhas engaging in some form of violence, nine of them are those involving kings.[152] This underscores the significance of violent action in establishing a hegemonic order—the siddhas use violence strategically, either to position themselves in places of power and demonstrate their supremacy, or as a performative moment to catch the attention of the king (and his subjects) and inspire reverence and devotion. Significantly, the ethical dimension of violence is often downplayed or undercut by some magical inversion: Gaṇḍhapa's murdered child turns into a vajra, Bhusuku's slaughtered animals return to life, Ḍombipa does not die but transforms into Hevajra, Virūpa's pigeons come back to life. Where the violence is not reversed is when it is used to subjugate nonhuman beings: Virūpa uses a "fearful laugh" to "knock dead" the "witches" (*tramèn ma*, ཟྭ་མེན་མ།)[153] ravaging a nearby kingdom, then binds them with oaths to protect Buddhists, lest their throats be sliced open; Kambala subjugates the witches who steal his cloak so that they can no longer harm the populace, Sakara binds the Nāgas of his former kingdom

[150] Robinson (1979): 29.
[151] This can be understood as a gesture at the siddha's power to "liberate" (སྒྲོལ་བ།) beings into a better karmic reincarnation through killing them, emphasizing the power they derive from tantric ritual methods.
[152] The unbelievably striking exceptions of this are related to women: (1) the story of the two female siddhās Mekhalā and Kanakhalā, who cut off their own heads at the request of their guru, who demanded them as offerings, and (2) Kāṇḥapa, who curses a young girl for teasing him, whereupon "blood dropped from all the girl's limbs, and she fell to the ground" (84). In Kāṇḥapa's story, the villagers grow furious at him, and he repents, withdrawing the curse.
[153] Robinson (1979), 347 (found in the Tibetan péchas copied in the "Tibetan Text" appendix). The Tibetan definition for ཟྭ་མེན་མ། (found in the ཚིག་མཛོད་ཆེན་མོ།) is "a female demon disguised as a human" (མིར་བརྫུས་པའི་འདྲེ་མོ།). Thus, rather than using Robinson's translation of "witch," I choose to render the term as "enchantress."

(which he bequeathed to his brother so he could pursue religious life) to practice Buddhism and allow water to flow to Buddhist populations.

Though magic is often coupled with the performance of violence, it does not have to be. Akin to the strategic use of thaumaturgy to craft a compelling character evidenced in Kieschnick's work on Chinese Buddhist hagiography, sometimes siddhas use magic as a means to persuade without the use of violence: Udheli witnesses a siddha flying and develops the aspiration to attain siddhi so that he too can fly; Putali magically transposes images of Buddhist deities onto the thangkas of a non-Buddhist king, inspiring him to bow to the siddha and then convert; Tantipa transforms his elderly body into that of a sixteen year-old youth to inspire his community to abandon worldly concerns and turn towards the Buddhism. Whether the magic supports the violence or reverses it, what we witness is the use of magic and violence as specifically *tantric* methods of conversion and authority.

Shifting Power and Tantric Tropes: Siddhas and Hybrid Masculinity

In seeking to unpack the gendered dimensions of such activity, the work of masculinities scholar Tristan Bridges provides a useful framework. Bridges advances Connell's model of hegemonic masculinity by revealing the phenomenon of hybrid masculinities, whereby men adopt aspects of fringe, marginal, or queer masculinities in order to rhetorically distance themselves from the perceived taint of hegemonic masculinity (think: "the kingdom of a king is an ugly thing") without challenging the ideological or ethical structures that continued to grant them access to male privilege and power (the siddha does not undermine the hegemonic order itself, merely advances his place within it—the king and his subjects continue to be just as tightly

bound by the rules as they were before the siddha entered).[154] Furthermore, males who perform hybrid masculinities appropriate or adapt aspects of liminality found in marginalized communities (for Bridges's study, straight men who identify as "a little gay") as leverage to position themselves as superior to or better than other men who are more readily identified as normative. As outlined above (Figure 2), we see this in the *Lives of the Eighty-Four Siddhas* in the siddha-king encounters marked by contestation: Ḍombipa is a king who relinquishes his position to take a low-caste consort; Saraha, a brahmin, drinks wine; Bhusuku hunts and consumes animals; Udheli learns to fly.

By aligning themselves in such a way, argues Bridges, such men are able to maintain hegemonic power through a savvy process of erasing their straightforward connection to the gender hierarchy: their appropriation of traits from a marginalized "other" is a patriarchal technology allowing them to claim a superior status to other men vis-à-vis their unique combination of traits that are not legibly 'masculine' within the prevailing gender order. The former brahmin Saraha abandons his caste standing, ostensibly falling into a lower caste, only to return with an unrecognizable power that positions him at the top of the hierarchy; the siddha king Sakara renounces his throne, but that renunciation leads to his capacity to be the sole savior of the kingdom from a deadly drought, repositioning him as the most powerful man in the land, and yet still outside of the hegemonic structure. Such men thus evade straightforward identification with the overt operations of power that perpetuate the very patriarchal order they reinforce. In such a way, argues Bridges, hegemonic masculinity is able to continually reassert and adapt itself to new contexts.[155] Thus, rather than dismantling or disrupting the hold of

[154] Tristan Bridges, "A very 'gay' straight? Hybrid masculinities, sexual aesthetics, and the changing relationship between masculinity and homophobia," in *Gender & Society*, 28 no, 1 (2014): 58-82.
[155] Tristan Bridges and Cheri Pascoe, "Hybrid Masculinities: New Directions in the Sociology of Men and Masculinities," in *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 3 (2014): 246-258.

hegemonic power, these strategic adaptations actually reify the hierarchical structure of hegemonic power in flexible and dynamic ways, blurring the essentialist boundaries between different types of men.

We see this operating in the *Lives of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas* when siddhas subvert the authority of kings and when kings themselves become siddhas. The siddha and the king (though they might appear to be unifiable, as when kings become siddhas) are essentially different: while kings can become siddhas, they are then siddha-kings, with their siddha identity superseding and overruling their kingly one—especially in cases where they renounce the throne.[156] Importantly, Bridges notes that this masculine adaptability does not actually challenge the hegemonic structure in place (i.e., it does not a priori undercut patriarchal authority, rather it simply restructures the relative stature of those within it). In fact, Bridges emphasizes the fact that the ability to siphon the creativity produced by marginalized communities and then deploy it in order to craft a hybrid masculinity is only available to those who already wield a significant amount of male privilege.[157] This privilege allows them to restructure the hegemonic order, inserting themselves at its apex, while also reinforcing the relevance of that order for everyone else.

Thus, by drawing Bridges's contributions into the realm of tantric literary studies, we see how the adaptability of the siddha—emerging from and dissolving back into the liminal, restructuring the hierarchy of male authority in the process—may itself be an expression of tantric male privilege. Saraha is a brahmin, afforded the privileged position of his caste, and then

[156] On the relationship between siddha's authority and kingly authority, Davidson (2004) notes that the siddha model, reigning over a maṇḍala as the emanation of a tantric deity, replicates the model of kingship, with a king reigning over their polity. He reinforces this reading (that siddhas replicate and then extend kingship from the worldly to the divine sphere) by noting the striking similarities between the tantric initiatory ritual of *abhiṣeka* with the coronation ritual for kings, suggesting that the political model was "in many ways determinative of the implicit political model of the Mantrayāna" (123).
[157] Bridges and Pascoe (2014).

deliberately rejects that position by drinking liquor. Yet paradoxically, by abandoning his position of social privilege, he leverages an even greater spiritual privilege that grants him exception to the dictates of social order without challenging the applicability of that social order to other men. Likewise with Lūyipa, the first siddha in the collection, who renounces his throne in order to engage in spiritual life. He advances quickly in his practice, until a ḍākinī in disguise notices that he still has a "pea-sized impurity: his opinion of his social status."[158] The ḍākinī offers him a bowl of fish guts to eat, which he inititally rejects, but then acquiesces to after being chastised by the ḍākinī that he failed to realize the ultimate nondistinction between pure and impure. Once he completely abandoned his elevated social status, he was then able to wander as a siddha, initiating ministers and kings (Ṭeṅgipa and Indrapāla) and then selling them into slavery. Only an extraordinary figure, with an extraordinary amount of power, would be able to invert the gendered hierarchy in which kings reign supreme to such an extent that they would then be able to sell that king into slavery.[159] Bridges's contribution of hybrid masculinity thus provides a helpful theoretical tool for understanding how such a switch might take place.

Padmasambhava, Ultimate Siddha: Intertextuality and Its Implications

This preliminary investigation into the siddha as a stock character in tantric narrative literature offers several touchstones for our investigation into Padmasambhava as a permutation of the siddha in the Nyingma imaginaire or better, the founding myth of Buddhism in Tibet. First, it shows that interactions with kings are a key site for the negotiation of power in tantric narratives, a power that is intimately bound up in the hegemonic structure. Like the mahāsiddhas

[158] Robinson (1979): 23.
[159] From the story's emic point of view, Lūyipa does this so that as a soteriological method to promote the former king's spiritual advancement.

in Abhayadatta's collection, all of Padmasambhava's interactions with kings ultimately end in the formation of an alliance wherein Padmasambhava lends his magical potency to the support of the king's administration of his duties.[160] But unlike the mahāsiddhas, who display a range of types of interactions with kings, Padmasambhava's narrative emphasizes violence and subjugation—in relation to the gods and demons of Tibet which he is summoned to tame and also the various kings with whom he interacts in his life—from his adopted father Indrabodhi to Ārṣadhara, the father of his Indian consort Mandārava, up to the Tibetan emperor himself Tri Songdétsen.

Second, while violence is the least common activity for the eighty-four mahāsiddhas, it is the most common for Padmasambhava. This punctuates Jacob Dalton's emphasis on the centrality of violence in tantric literature, which to reiterate finds its genesis in the myth of Rudra's violent subjugation.[161] Recall Connell's insight that violence betrays instability in a hegemonic system, signaling either its initial genesis or its impending doom (to give way to a new hegemonic order). Understood in this way, the violence of the mahāsiddhas can be seen as both a technology of tantric hegemony and also a powerful conversion tool to render a land and its people Buddhist—if you can overcome the king and the native spirits of the land, you conquer an entire population in one fell swoop.

Yet when looking to the violence in Padmasambhava's narrative, we notice an important distinction: whereas the violence of the eight-four Mahāsiddhas is a part of a magical reversal whereby the effects of that violence can be reversed, Padmasambhava's is often irreparable—when he kills Samten Karmay's son, the boy is dead forever; there is no reversal moment when

[160] Or, as with Ārṣadhara or Norbu Öden, when Padmasambhava rules in their stead before turning the kingdom back over to them (or their heir), so that he can continue on his journey of subjugation.
[161] The myth of Rudra's subjugation would be a fascinating site for masculinities analysis, as Rudra is ultimately subdued via the wrathful *heruka* buddha Mahābhairava's anus.

the boy turns into a vajra. I suggest that it is for this reason that Padmasambhava's violence is all the more effectual—his capacity to enact tantric violence is so persuasive that it does not require a hoodwinking moment, like Gaṇḍhapa's child becoming a vajra, Busuku's slaughtered animals springing back to life, or Virūpa's eaten pigeons taking flight.

While we see the siddhas variously engaged in different types of activities—antinomianism, magic, and violence when their rank is questioned, beneficence when readily acknowledged (with the more popular siddhas afforded multiple types of activities, but not all of them)—Padmasambhava deploys all of them. He also embodies all three categories of interactions with kings: he is a king-turned-siddha, a siddha that interfaces with a king (when meeting Indrabodhi), and a siddha that antagonistically confronts kings and overpowers them through magical means.

Despite his capacity to engage in all of these variations in behavior and relationship, Padmasambhava is nonetheless primarily a demon-tamer and subjugator, and his beneficence manifests only after that violent activity is completed: only after he overcomes the massively formidable mountain-sized form of Yarlha Shampo (ཡར་ལྷ་ཤམ་པོ།) can he proceed to central Tibet, where me must first humiliate Tri Songdétsen for refusing to acquiesce to his authority before he can help erect Samyé, the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. Few kings meet Padmasambhava and readily assent to him; only his adopted father Indrabodhi (and only after a moment of frenzied inquiry) and king Śrīkumāra of Siṃhala, who receives just a few sentences in the narrative. Yet when they do, Padmasambhava powerfully advances the welfare of their kingdoms for hundreds of years.

Yet notably, while the eighty-four mahāsiddhas' plot-advancing activities are predominately beneficent, Padmasambhava's plot-advancing activities are primarily antagonistic and violent. This is witnessed not only in his violent taming of Tibet's native gods and demons, but also in

his humiliation of king Ārṣadhara (which as we shall see was less violent but no less provocative or compelling), and in his rendering Tri Songdétsen naked before his entire court. Violence and humiliation are dramatic manifestations of the power antagonisms that mark masculinity in general and tantric masculinity in particular, witnessed in the founding myth of tantra itself, wherein the power antagonism between Rudra and the tantric buddhas becomes cosmic in scale.

Seen in this light, violence is crucial in the role that Padmasambhava plays as a tantric master in the founding mythology of Buddhism in Tibet, portrayed in his namthar as the only one capable of taming its gods and demons. The violent demon subjugation and frequent humiliation of kings witnessed in Padmasambhava's narratives effectively cement violence and subjugation as key components to Padmasambhava's hegemonic authority as a tantric male figure and capacity to convert the hithero barbarian land and people of Tibet (according to their own self-representation) into an enduring Buddhist civilization.

Armed with these comparative insights into Padmasambhava's position as an Indian siddha migrating to Tibet, we are primed to see him in relief as the ultimate siddha: commanding impressive magical power, unconcerned with social moors, keen on subjugating demons and kings, capable of enacting violence (sometimes exceeding normative ethics), securing ultimate authority by destabilizing (and then re-stabilizing) the entrenched hierarchies that preceded him. From an emic point of view, Padmasambhava is the ultimate siddha, a tantric lord of all, able to convert the Tibetan people, indeed even landscape, through subjugation, and then establish a maṇḍalaic power structure with the tantric master honored as above the king (but ultimately protecting his interests).

Conclusions

This chapter charted the earliest emergence of Padmasambhava's narrative from the Dunhuang documents, in which Padmasambhava is identified as a demon-taming tantrika, through its iteration in the *Testimony of Ba*, when we find him expressed as a tantric sorcerer run out of town for threatening the king, to its flourishing in Nyangrel and Orgyen's literary masterpieces *Copper Island* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava*, when he becomes the Second Buddha of Tibet. Using Andrew Quintman's ideation of the metaphorical anatomy of a biography, we see how the initial skeleton of Padmasambhava—a magic-wielding, demon-taming maveric—was given flesh, a pulse, and affect through Nyangrel and Orgyen's revelations, which were deeply tied to their historical context: legitimating the Nyingma tradition in the wake of sectarian competition from newer tantric schools in the midst of the second dissemination of Buddhist teachings from India to Tibet, and presenting a vision of a religious master capable of overcoming angry overlords bent on obstructing Buddhism. By constructing the memory of the imperial era as a Tibetan golden age in tandem with their living memory of the age of fragmentation, Nyangrel and Orgyen were able to reconstruct an imagined past to advance a vision of Padmasambhava that would authorize their innovations and cement the Nyingma's continued relevance in Tibetan Buddhism.

Taking Geary's intertextual injunction to consider a larger corpus of texts in order to understand how religious figures express a society's ideas and values, in this chapter I set the historical context of the emergence of Padmasambhava's myth into conversation with a major model of siddha narratives, *The Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas*, to uncover features of the siddha as a stock character in tantric narrative. My emphasis on the interactions between characters as a key site for gendered analysis revealed the recurrent motifs of violence, magic,

and antinomianism—that crystallize in the single figure of Padmasambhava. These traits were already well-known in the domain of tantric studies but have yet to be analyzed for their gendered significance. Our investigation revealed the operation of a sophisticated type of power negotiation operating in the interactions with (and power antagonisms between) siddhas and kings, wherein the siddha was able to assert hegemonic authority without disrupting the relevance of the social hierarchy for everyone else. Tristan Bridges's theory of hybrid masculinities provided an important framework for theorizing how exactly the siddhas were able to accomplish such a feat.

Armed with this important context, we can now turn our attention to an interrogation of Orgyen and Nyangrel's watershed texts in order to trace the fault lines along which Padmasambhava's narrative proceeds, from his birth, through his youth, banishment, and initiation, his career as a tantric master in India, up to his journey to Tibet and installment of Buddhism in its landscape and people. Through a close reading of relevant passages in which Padmasambhava interacts with kings and subjugates demons, we will track exactly how his tantric masculinity is developed, deployed, and adapted to meet the situational demands of each encounter by drawing upon magic, violence, and antinomianism. This will hopefully bring us closer to understanding the gendered dynamics operating beneath one of the most influential and mercurial figures in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

Chapter 2

Fault Lines of Power: Padmasambhava's Tantric Masculinity in *Copper Island* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava*

In chapter one we traced the historical and literary contexts of Padmasambhava's two most substantial early namthar alongside representations of siddhas in the *Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas* in order to highlight the recurrent tropes of siddha behavior that mark them as distinctly tantric: violent subjugation and forcible conversion, antinomian behavior, and magical aptitude. This context laid the groundwork for understanding Padmasmabhava's masculinity (expressed in his early namthar) in tantric terms; whereas masculinity generally organizes itself hegemonically, the strategic use of violent subjugation, antinomianism, and magic mark Padmasambhava's masculinity as distinctly tantric. While we saw the majority of siddhas in the *Life Stories* engaged in beneficient behavior, benevolently teaching their disciples, that benficience finds a radical reduction in Padmasambhava's early stories. In contrast, we find a dramatic expansion of his violence as a demon-taming king-subduer. This raises interesting questions for understanding the evolution of Padmasambhava's representations in literature, the development of the metaphorical anatomy of his biography: what does this emphasis in violence indicate about the texts' moments of production, the concerns of their authors, or the gendered impact of increasing violence paired with an emphasis on his extraordinary realization?

In the chapter that follows, we turn our attention to a close reading of key sections in Nyangrel's *Copper Island* and Orgyen's *The Testament of Padmasambhava* to probe these questions. I explore the three most prominent, embellished encounters with kings across both texts: Padmasambhava's adopted father King Indrabodhi, his Indian consort princess

Mandārava's father King Ārṣadhara, and the Tibetan emperor Tri Songdétsen. I draw upon Bridges's theory of hybridity to showcase how Padmasambhava strategically adapts to the situational nuance of each encounter by way of his magical aptitude and capacity to employ violence. Through careful attention to the original Tibetan, I suggest the need to understand Padmasambhava's masculinity as a tantric hegemonic technology—a technology of power that utilizes tantric means for establishing a new hegemonic order.

From Lotus to Palace: Miraculous Birth and Adoption by King Indrabodhi

It is fitting that our masculinities analysis should begin by investigating the relationship between Padmasambhava and his adopted father Indrabodhi, the king of Uḍḍiyāna, for it is their first encounter that introduces Padmasambhava to the narrative in both *Copper Island* and the *Testament of Padmasambhava*. Unsurprisingly, the earlier account in *Copper Island* is far more concise than the *Testament*, taking two pages to advance the plot to the same point requiring nearly fifty in the *Testament*. Both stories chart the same action leading up to their initial encounter. Since Indrabodhi lacks a son (རྒྱལ་པོ་ལ་སྲས་མི་མངའ་བས),[162] he devotes enormous resources and time to activities aimed at generating the merit necessary for acquiring a son: ritual intervention, astrological investigations, and almsgiving, all for the purpose of securing a male

[162] གཏེར་ཆེན་ཨུ་རྒྱན་གླིང་པ།, ཨོ་རྒྱན་གུ་རུ་པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེས་རབས་རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ་རྒྱས་པར་བཀོད་པ་པདྨ་བཀའི་ཐང་ཡིག, 2nd ed. (ཁྲིང་ཏུའུ: སི་ཁྲོན་མི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།, 2014, hereafter cited as *Testament*). I note the Tibetan here as a counter-reading to the translation offered in *The Life and Liberation of Padmasambhava*. The chapter (ལེའུ) heading for the section introducing Indrabodhi is: རྒྱལ་པོ་ཨིནྡྲ་བོ་དྷིའི་རྣམ་ཐར། The *Life and Liberation* has this translated as "the Background of Indrabhūti's [sic] Failure to Have a Son" (88). This strikes me as a significant mistranslation, for the Tibetan is actually rather innocuous in its presentation of the heteronormative assumption that the king, by not producing an heir, is "failing." Though I am not attempting to argue that the Tibetan tradition is immune from this kind of heteronormative prejudice, I maintain that it is nonetheless important not to translate it into the text where it is lacking. Of course, being a translation from the French into English, and not from the original Tibetan, this text is rife with examples of such translation choices, that strike the reader of Tibetan as rather distant from the original.

heir. In his frenzy, he ultimately bankrupts the kingdom. This drives him to seek out a magical wish-fulfilling jewel (ཡིད་བཞིན་གྱི་ནོར་བུ།) guarded by a *nāga* (Tib. ཀླུ།) princess far across the sea. He gathers a crew and a skilled captain and sets off to secure this wish-fulfilling gem, bent on restoring his kingdom and acquiring an heir. Ultimately successful in his quest, he begins the journey home, jewel in hand.

At this point in the story, both narratives share the same language: "the king and his retinue set off in the direction of [their] land."[163] While the fact that the syntax and word choice parallel each other is unsurprising given Lewis Doney's evidence that the *Testament* was modeled off of the third recension of *Copper Island*,[164] here it is particularly striking because immediately after this sentence, the accounts depart widely in their presentation of the moments leading up to Indrabodhi's encounter with Padmasambhava—not only in content, but also in syntax and vocabulary. *Copper Island*'s account of Indrabodhi's encounter with the child Padmasambhava is rather brief and does not follow a strict verse, whereas the *Testament*'s version of the story is more embellished, adhering to a highly stylized meter reminiscent of the *neygnak* (སྙན་ངག), or "poetic" tradition analyzed by Roger Jackson and others.[165] Thus, the striking similarity of the initial line in both texts, followed immediately by a wide departure, highlights the importance of the moment—Orgyen preserved it exactly.

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[163] In the *Testament*: རྒྱལ་པོ་འཁོར་བཅས་ཡུལ་སྐྱེགས་འདོངས་པ་དང་། and in *Copper Island*: རྒྱལ་པོ་འཁོར་དང་བཅས་ནས་ཡུལ་སྐྱེགས་སུ་སོང་བ་དང་། Again, the translation in the *Life and Liberation* departs woefully from the Tibetan original, claiming that the king "returned to his country" (94). Thus, in this translation, only after the king has returned does he meet Padmasambhava—setting up a confusing sequence of events: how is the king to meet Padmasambhava on an island if he's already returned to his land? Contrastingly, Eric Pema Kusang's translation of *Copper Island* notes that "the king and his retinue set out in the direction of the land," (33) adding no temporal tension to the narrative.

[164] See footnote: 95 in chapter 1.

[165] Roger Jackson, "'Poetry' in Tibet: *Glu*, *mGur*, *sNyan ngag* and 'Songs of Experience,'" in *Tibetan Literature, Studies in Genre*, ed. José Ignacio Cabezón & Roger Jacskon (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996): 368-92.

The actual encounter with Padmasambhava plays out with variations between *Copper Island* and the *Testament*. In *Copper Island*, immediately after Indrabodhi begins the journey home, an island in the ocean suddenly appears in the text, upon which we discover Padmasambhava perched atop a multicolored lotus, adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha and bearing a vajra and lotus in his hands.[166] In the *Testament*, a much longer account precedes the arrival of the wondrous child: while the king and his retinue are en route home, Trikna Dzin (ཇིག་ན་འཛིན།), one of Indrabodhi's minsters, arrives in a skiff to alert the king to the presence of a "miraculous child perched upon the center of a lotus" (པདྨའི་ཚལ་དབུས་ནཱ། ཟུངཏུ་ཆུང་ཡ་མཛོན་ཅན་ཞིག་བཞུགས་ནས་འདུག) in the midst of a lake on a nearby island populated by an extraordinary number of water-dwelling birds (ངུར་པ་ཁྱང་ཁྱང་ལ་སོགས་ཆུ་བྱའི་རིགས). The king and the minister set off together to investigate and discover a child of "about eight years old, pleasing to the eye, with a superior countenance" (ཟུངཏུ་ལོ་བརྒྱད་ཙམྪ། བལྟ་ན་སྡུག་པ་བྱད་བཞིན་ལེགས་པ་ཞིག) perched atop a lotus.

Despite the differences between texts, both draw our gaze to his body, and in the *Copper Island* account, the reader is immediately clued in to Padmasambhava's status as a *mahāpuruṣa* (a "great being") adorned with the major and minor marks (དཔེ་བྱད་ཀྱིས་བརྒྱན་པ) characteristic of such; in the *Testament*, his superior countenance and remarkable beauty are additionally emphasized. John Powers notes that these marks, understood in their historical context, indicate "superiority to all other beings" and evidence Padmasambhava's "extraordinary beauty" to

[166] Nyangrel Nyima Öser (ཉང་རལ་ཉི་མ་འོད་ཟེར།), བ་དཔོན་པདྨ་འབྱུང་གནས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་ཐར་ཟབ་གསལ་མ། (ཁྲིད་ཀུཊྚཱ་ སི་ཏྲོན་ནི་རིགས་དཔེ་སྐྲུན་ཁང་།, 1989. Hereafter cited as *Copper Island*.) རྒྱ་མཚོའི་གླིང་ཞིག་ཏུ། པདྨའི་སྟོང་པོ་ཁ་དོག་སྣ་ཚོགས་དང་ཐུན་པ་ཞིག་ཏུ་སྐེས་པའི་སྟེང་ནཱ། ལེའུ་ཆུང་ལོ་བརྒྱད་ལོན་པའི་ན་ཚོད་ཙམྪ། བལྟ་ན་སྡུག་པ་མཚན་དང་དཔེ་བྱད་ཀྱིས་བརྒྱན་པཿ ཕྱག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ་དང་པདྨ་འཛིན་པ་གཅིག་འདུག་ནས།
I am grateful to the Buddhist Digital Resource Center for making this scan available for free access online. BDRC#: W7956.

readers within the tradition.[167] Despite Powers's androcentric veneration of this ideal (in which he tacitly praises a vision of heteronormative strength) we recognize the value of his historical analysis: the fact that Padmasambhava bears the major and minor marks is an invocation of an Indian ideal painted onto the young hero.

The image of Padmasambhava as an eight year-old child holding a vajra and lotus, adorned with the major and minor marks, presents a set of interlocking symbols: the marks of a buddha, along with their beauty and strength, situate Padmasambhava unmistakably as a male in the lineage of the Buddha Gautama, and the dual symbols of vajra and lotus add a tantric dimension. His revered, miraculous status is underlined by his perch atop a lotus—born from a pure lotus and not an "impure" one (i.e. a womb), Padmasambhava adopts the seat akin to that of a tantric deity or bodhisattva, who are always pictured (or visualized) on lotus seats.

The narrative gaze then draws away from Padmasambhava's body to return to Indrabodhi. The king, "utterly astonished" (ཤིན་ཏུ་ངོ་མཚར་སྐྱེས་ནས།), makes contact with the lotus-perched child and initiates a dialogue with him. Here again we witness a striking parallelism between the two texts, evidence of Doney's claim that the *Testament* is directly modeled upon *Copper Island*; both use the same word to describe Indrabodhi's emotional state upon encountering Padmasambhava, "astonishment" (ངོ་མཚར་སྐྱེས།), and the dialogue is substantially similar despite minor variations in syntax and grammatical markers (which, by my reading, can be accounted for by the *Testament*'s strict adherence to meter).[168] Indrabodhi, seemingly overcome by curiosity

[167] John Powers, *A Bull of a Man*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 9-13. He displays a rather curious fascination with the genitalia of the Buddha (and, concurrently, other 'great men' (*mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa*)), as can be witnessed by the over 27 references to it in his book. This fascination stands in contrast to his claim that such people would indeed "appear as a freak" to "most contemporary Westerners" (10)..

[168] For example, whereas each of Indrabodhi's questions are marked by the interrogative particle ཨེ། in *Copper Island*, the *Testament* deploys the indefinite pronoun གང་། to form the king's questions. In *Copper Island*, each question is afforded its own sentence: ཁ་ནི་གང་ཡིན། ཚ་ནི་གང་ཡིན། རིགས་ནི་གང་ཡིན། ཡུལ་ནི་གང་ཡིན། ཟས་ནི་ཅི་ལ་བཏེན། In the *Testament*,

and wonder, strives to understand who Padmasambhava is. He asks a series of rapid-fire questions aimed at ascertaining the nature of this miraculous being: who are your parents, to what caste do you belong,[169] what country are you from, what kind of food do you eat, and what are you doing here?

These questions are aimed at situating Padmasambhava within a legible, knowable context. The king, encountering this miraculous being, seeks to know how to relate to him. This evidences Padmasambhava's undetermined position—faced with a stunningly beautiful humanoid being, Indrabodhi grapples with how to understand him and where to place him within the social hierarchy. Here Connell's articulation of hegemonic masculinity is particularly illuminating when we contemplate why these questions immediately spring forth for Indrabodhi. By inquiring first into Padmasambhava's parents, then caste,[170] then homeland, then food, then finally purpose, Indrabodhi reveals a concern with the situational, contextual elements that define the power between them and thus determine their relative positions within the social hierarchy; only once the hierarchy has been established, when king Indrabodhi knows how to relate to this young male being, can the plot advance.[171]

This is a central insight of Connell's theory: any interaction between men automatically and necessarily mandates the negotiation of a hierarchy of power between them. Only once that

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the questions are compacted to fit within the meter: ཡབ་ནི་གང་ཡིན་ཡུམ་ནི་གང་ཡིན་པ་ཁྱེ ཡུལ་ནི་གང་ཡིན་རིགས་ནི་གང་དུ་གྱོགས་ཤ ཟས་སུ་ཅི་གསོལ་འདི་ཏ་ཅི་མཛད་གསྲངས་ཤ.

[169] In *Copper Island*: རིགས་ནི་གང་ཡིན། In the *Testament*: རིགས་ནི་གང་དུ་གྱོགས།.

[170] I struggle to find an appropriate rendering for རིགས། here. Both translations of the *Testament* and *Copper Island* translate it as "caste," which I suppose is probably the most accurate in the context of Indian society. For that reason I've used it here, but there's a part of me that wonders if "clan" or even "ethnic group" would be appropriate.

[171] Interestingly, whereas the *Testament* uses the honorifc ཡབ་ཡུམ། when Indrabodhi asks about Padmasambhavas parents, *Copper Island* uses the informal ཁ་ཅི། Thus, in the *Testament*, the later and much longer of the two, Padmasambhava's elevated status is a foregone conclusion to Indrabodhi: use of the honorific indicates a level of respect signaling the recognition of at least an equal, possibly a superior. In *Copper Island*, Indrabodhi is yet unsure of Padmasambhava's status, and so uses the informal register.

hierarchy is settled can the rest of one's business proceed. Often that negotiation occurs almost immediately, cut along the fault lines of power ascribed to various statuses and roles within a particular context: for example, a king will always sit on top of the hierarchy of power within his kingdom.

Indrabodhi's questions provide useful information for outlining the factors that determine one's relative position of power within the social structure of the time. When thinking across the questions, and contemplating the order in which they're posed, we see them falling into two distinct categories: the first, and largest, set of questions relate to Padmasambhava's position within social institutions, and the second is concerned with his motivations. The first four questions map a gradual expansion from the most intimate relationship (parents), to one's placement within the larger social context in which one's parents are situated (caste), to the geographic space containing all of those relationships—a space that determines, in turn, one's language, culture, politics (in the sense of who is the ruling authority) and allegiance (whom is one likely to follow), one's homeland. By asking about the kind of food Padmasambhava consumes, Indrabodhi punctuates his concern about Padmasambhava's caste status and his spiritual purity (a vegetarian diet would indicate Padmasambhava is a brahmin).

The final question cuts to the heart of the matter at hand: what is your purpose here? By this, he may tacitly be asking: are you a threat to me and my kingdom, or are you here benevolently? This question also aims at sussing out power relations and trying again to situate Padmasambhava within a legible context: are you here of your own accord, or have you been dispensed by a higher authority according to their bidding? Are you human or divine?

Padmasambhava's extraordinary reply quickly reveals that he is no mundane eight year-old, but a miraculous being of divine pedigree:

My father is the primordial wisdom of spontaneous awareness.

My mother is Samantabhadrī, the vast expanse of phenomena.

I belong to the caste of inseparable space|awareness.

I embrace the unborn expanse of phenomena as my homeland.

I feed on the concepts of duality.

I am here to ensure the eradication of afflicted mental states.[172]

Padamsambhava thus situates himself within the most expansive, supreme, awe-inspiring terms possible: his mother and father are Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī, the heterosexually configured, gendered expressions of enlightenment in the Nyingma tradition. His caste is transcendent space and luminous awareness, his homeland is the ultimate expanse of the universe, and his food is the concept that keeps all beings bound in an endless cycle of suffering (Skt. *saṃsāra*, Tib. འཁོར་བ།). His purpose is to end all suffering.

Indrabodhi cannot help but marvel at the profundity of Padmasambhava's response, coming from a boy of "about eight years old" (ལོ་བརྒྱད་ལོན་པའི་ན་ཚོད་ཙམ།), perched atop a lotus. It is a self-identification invoking an expression of spiritual realization in the highest possible terms. Here we witness Padmasambhava articulating his identity in transcendent terms: the infinitely vast, centerless, nondual, unarisen space of reality. The extraordinary boy cannot be contained by the conventions of the world, by categories as contracted and small as biological parents, social

[172] བདག་གི་ཕ་ནི་རང་རིག་པའི་ཡེ་ཤེས་ཡིན་ནོ། མ་ནི་ཚོས་དབྱིངས་ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་མོ་ཡིན་ནོ། རིགས་ནི་དབྱིངས་དང་རིག་པ་གཉིས་སུ་མེད་པར་གཏོགས་སོ། ཡུལ་ནི་ཚོས་དབྱིངས་སྐྱེ་བ་མེད་པར་བཟུང་ངོ། ཟས་སྣང་ནི་གཉིས་སྣང་གི་རྟོག་པ་ཟའོ། འདིར་ནི་ཉོན་མོངས་པ་གསོད་པའི་སྒྲུབ་པ་བྱེད་དོ། *Copper Island*, 9. There are fascinating, if minor, variations between the two texts, but I chose the *Copper Island* version because of its gradually expanding quality; there's a sense in which it amps up as Padmasambhava continues answering the questions, accentuated by the presence of the completion particles after each reply. This sense is lost in the adherence to meter in the *Testament*. To speak to my translation choices: I chose "embrace" (rather than the "take" of Eric Pema Kusang's *Copper Island* translation) for བཟུང་བ། because "take" struck me as denoting a kind of imperialism and colonization. I chose "ensure the destruction of" for གསོད་པའི་སྒྲུབ་པ་བྱེད། because I read the བྱེད་པ། as a causative marker, rather than a duplication of the "act of doing" something.

order, geographic space, material food, or worldly concerns. Rather, he defies any categorization within the legible parameters of worldly power.

Indrabodhi takes immediate action upon hearing Padmasambhava's reply: thinking that Padmasambhava must be a divine emanation (འདི་ནི་སྨྲ་བའི་སྐུ་ཞིག་ཏུ་འདུག་སྙམ་ནས།),[173] Indrabodhi decides to name Padmasambhava his heir *and* his object of spiritual veneration (ངའི་བུ་སྐལ་དང་མཆོད་གནས་བྱའོ་གསུངས).[174] Upon making this decision, Indrabodhi "takes" (བླངས།) Padmasambhava, places him upon a silk cloth (ཕྲག་དར་གྱིས་ཐྲིགས།), cuts the lotus stalk (པདྨའི་སྟོང་པ་དེ་ཡང་བཅད།), and brings (ཁྱེར) both back to his country. Importantly, in the *Copper Island* account, Indrabodhi receives the instrumental suffix ས་ for the transitive verbs take, cut, and carry (བླངས། བཅད། and ཁྱེར།), while Padmasambhava is the passive recipient, the direct object of the king's transitive action. This presents a more nuanced, complex picture of the power operating between Indrabodhi and Padmasambhava than a straightforward hierarchy: despite the power claimed by Padmasamabhava with his answer, the king's agency is still operative. Padmasambhava is the passive object of the king's action, another bounty in his journey to obtain an heir. Indrabodhi does not ask Padmasambhava if he would like to be brought back to the kingdom and installed on the throne, he simply does it, and he takes along Padmasambhava's lotus seat to boot.

Here we witness a complex operation of power within the story—one in which power is not simply a thing to be possessed and wielded (by either the king or the siddha),[175] but operates

[173] *Copper Island*, 9. The sentence in the *Testament* is nearly identical, excepting after སྐུ་ཞིག་, the *Testament* reads ཡིན་སྙམ་ནས། instead of ཏུ་འདུག་སྙམ་ནས།, again ostensibly to fit within the verse.

[174] *Copper Island,* 9. In the *Testament*: ང་ཡི་བུ་སྐལ་མཆོད་གནས་བྱའོ་སྙམ། (95)

[175] Demetriou (2001) has persuasively critiqued Connell's initial (and subsequent) articulations of hegemonic power (i.e. Connell 2005) for relying upon structuralist notion of power as something that is possessed and wielded by a particular agent.

within a nuanced network of fluid negotiations, adapting to specific relational contexts and variable from moment to moment; rather than a *thing*, power is a *dynamic*. Indrabodhi recognizes the immense spiritual power Padmasambhava emanates, thus mandating that he be made an object of veneration (མཆོད་གནས།), and yet Indrabodhi is nevertheless a king, with social pressures and traditional dictates mandating the procurement of an heir. Indrabodhi's nexus of power, flowing from his masculine position as king, allows him an enormous amount of human agency, such that he can simply pick up Padmasambhava, cut down his lotus throne, and bring them back to his country to be made heir apparent. He is also a fully grown man with the help of a crew of skilled sailors, and thus their physicality, when set against an eight year-old boy—regardless of his beauty, radiance, and divine marks—marks an aspect of mundane masculine power.

The Evolution of a Siddha: Padmasambhava Kills Minister Kamalaté's Son

From the moment Indrabodhi plucks Padmsambhava from his lotus seat and brings him home, the two narratives diverge rather widely. *Copper Island* is predictably the shorter of the two, accomplishing in the span of four pages what takes the *Testament* four chapters to chart. The *Testament* devotes much more time to drawing analogies between Padamasambhava's life and Gautama Buddha's, arguably in an attempt to reinforce his status as the Second Buddha. He encounters signs of birth, old age, sickness, and death, causing him to give rise to the mental state of renunciation; he tries to tell his father that he has no interest in ruling the kingdom, but instead seeks a religious life; Indrabodhi resists the request, insisting that happiness is to be found in the palace (ཡོངས་ཤིང་དུ་བདེ་བར་འདུག).[176] Thereafter follows an extended search for a bride

[176] *Testament*, 108.

for Padmasambhava, hoping that a queen might settle his "youthful desire" (ལང་ཚོ་དར་བབ་ཡིད་སྐྱབས་འཚེལ). A suitable queen is found,[177] but does not manage to settle Padmasambhava into worldly life, despite the sensual pleasures they enjoy (མཐའ་མཐུར་སྤྱོད).

These are provocative parallels to the sotry of the Buddha: he is given access to all the wealth, sensual enjoyment, and political power possible in the world, and yet none of it satisfies him. This also has interesting bearing on his masculine positionality, for it suggests a particular type of masculine potency: all of the things that would typically satisfy ordinary men (fame, sex, power) do not appeal to the youth, as with the young Siddhārtha, setting him apart as a man fundamentally unlike other men. This is particularly evident in the *Testament*, wherein Indrabodhi's ministers huddle together to ponder why the beauty of the palace, with its abundant physical comforts and political power, and the most beautiful queen in the world all prove ineffectual in convincing Padmasambhava to remain in the palace and rule the kingdom. It is that ambiguous place, that undetermined and undeterminable quality—presented early in the narrative—that begins to gesture at Padmasambhava's distance from ordinary men and interest in religious pursuits.

It is at this point that the two stories again converge. Here we witness striking syntactical parallelism as both works grant the reader access to Padmasambhava's interior discourse (དགོངས་བ), wherein he contemplates: "By taking [reign] of the kingdom, I will not benefit beings."[178]

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[177] In fact, Bhāsadharā, the young woman eventually taken as Padmasambhava's bride, had been previously betrothed to the prince of Dhanahat, a neighboring kingdom. Rather surreptitiously, Bhāsadharā is magically snatched from her wedding procession (moments before being married off to the other prince), and King Indrabodhi uses the wish-fulfilling Gem to magically transport her to Uḍḍiyāna, where Padmasambhava takes her as his bride. This presents very interesting moments for analysis of the masculine power dynamics between Padmasambhava, Indrabodhi, and competing kings, but this unfortunately lies beyond the scope of the current inquiry.

[178] In *Copper Island*: "རྒྱལ་སྲིད་བཟུང་བས་འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་མི་བྱེད་བར་ཐུགས།" (11) and the *Testament*: "རྒྱལ་ས་བཟུང་བས་འགྲོ་བའི་དོན་མི་འགྲུབ།" (118).

The *Testament* expands the thought across two additional stanzas, adding: "Many sentient beings will fall into the abyss of the lower realms / I must find a way to abandon the kingdom."[179] In *Copper Island*, the kingdom in its entirety is not emphasized, but rather the men who are in charge: "In order to disabuse the king and his minsters of their fondness [for me], I must practice *tülzhuk*."[180] At this moment, when Padmasambhava resolves to practice *tülzhuk* (བརྩལ་ཞུགས་སྦྱོང་བ།), the reader knows definitely that Padmasambhava is a tantrika—*tülzhuk* is their trademark practice, evidence of their success in spiritual attainment.[181] This part of his ambiguity resolves, as he has now claimed status as an advanced tantric practitioner.

Setting aside the significance of the reference to *tülzhuk* momentarily, it is worth noting that Padmasambhava organizes the obstacles to his aspiration to benefit beings around the men who command political power; thus, he sets himself in direct opposition to the worldly domain of the king and his ministers, identifying the machinations of the hegemonic order as the primary hurdle to overcome in his desire to pursue a religious life and benefit beings.

Though the arc of the plot is substantively the same, the *Testament* adds an episode absent in *Copper Island*, one that has particular significance for our investigation of Padmasambhava's gendered position. After resolving to abandon the kingdom, Padmasambhava identifies two of his relatives (རུ་ལག) from previous lives who have incarnated as a honeybee (སྦྲང་མ) and the other as a young boy with "auspicious marks" (མཚན་མ་བཟང་ཡོ).[182] Somehow, oddly, though "he did not see with even the slightest amount of sunlight," (འཕགས་ཞལ་ཉི་ཞྭ་ཙམ་ཡང་མི་མཐོང་སྟེ།),

[179] སེམས་ཅན་མང་ཡོ་ངན་འཇིའི་གཡང་ལ་མཆོངས། རྒྱལ་སྲིད་སྤང་བའི་ཐབས་ཤེག་བྱ་དགོས་བསམས། (*Testament*, 118).

[180] རྒྱལ་བློན་རྣམས་ཞེན་པ་བཟློག་པའི་ཕྱིར། བརྩལ་ཞུགས་ཀྱི་སྦྱོང་པ་མངོད། (11).

[181] Cf Divalerio (2015), Wedemeyer (2014), Quintman (2014), and Larsson (2012) all argue that *tülzhuk* practice served the emic function of proving tantric practitioners's accomplishment. Davidson (2004) disagrees, arguing that emically, such practice is understood to be their avenue to such attainment.

[182] The Douglas and Bays translation of the *Testament* identifies མཚན་མ་བཟང་ཡོ། as an epithet for "Bhadralakṣana."

Padmasambhava cognizes that within a week they will take rebirth in a hell realm (དུས་སྟེ་ཞག་བདུན་ཤི་ནས་དམྱལ་བར་འགྲོ). Seeing this with compassion (ཐུགས་རྗེས་གཟིགས་ནས), Padmasambhava determines that he must engage in a negative deed (ལས་ངན) in order to direct them instead to a pure land. As a bonus, this deed would cause the king and his ministers to banish him (རྒྱལ་པོ་དང་ཞི་བློན་པོས་སྐྱེན་འདོན་ཕྱིར).

Even before Padmasambhava engages in this negative deed, we witness a nuanced operation of power in these three stanzas. Padmasambhava's clairvoyance is signaled via his precognition that his former relatives will take rebirth in hell, alongside the presentation of an ambiguous ethical stance: in order to benefit beings, Padmasambhava "sees" (compassionately) the need to engage in a karmically negative deed (ལས་ངན), one that will force the king and his ministers to exile him. This moment signals to the reader, so early in the text, that Padamsambhava, like eighty-four mahāsiddhas, transcends the moral order in which all other ordinary beings operate. His superior insight, his miraculous precognition, exempts him from the rules, granting him a spiritually privileged position. It further grants him the capacity to see what he must do that will in turn force the action of the king and his ministers—the ruling class, the hegemonic order.

This operation of Padmasambhava's agency is mediated interestingly in the Tibetan: Padmasambhava decides he must act (འཛོད་པ) in order to (ཕྱིར) compel the king and his ministers to expel him—thus, in grammatical terms, Padmasambhava is the causative agent of the king and ministers' transitive action, (expelling, སྐྱེན་འདོན). The king and his ministers are still the actors via the instrumental suffix -ས, but their agency is subsumed by Padmasambhava; it is not the king who determines ultimately what will happen, who sets the plot in motion, but

Padmasambhava, the siddha-to-be. Thus, before the activity is even engaged, we see the text configuring the agency of the siddha above and beyond that of the king.

Padmasambhava uses his prescience to prevent two beings (the bee and the child) from taking birth in the hell realm. He lays the young boy down to sleep in a cool, shaded place (ཉ་ཆུང་བཞིལ་གྱིབ་བསྟལ།) and then throws a rock at a bee swirling by his head. The bee stings the boy in the forehead and kills him (སྨྲང་མ་ཉ་ཆུང་གླད་པའི་དཀྱིལ་དེམ་ཤེ།). "Everyone in the kingdom is astonished by the cruelty of Padmasambhava's action" (ཐམས་ཅད་མི་རིགས་མི་འཚམ་ཏ་ལས་ནས།),[183] and Padmasambhava is called to task for what he did. His father king Indrabodhi questions him, declaring: "The king's laws are meant to bring happiness to all people / have you not broken them?...In killing the son of a minister, you went above the law."[184] Indrabodhi is attempting to hold Padmasambhava to task, asking him to account for the fact that he murdered an innocent boy.

Padmasambhava gives a reply typical of the Buddha, found throughout the jātaka literature, in which he accounts for his deed as the fruition of the karma created by the bee and the boy in a past life—a past life in which Padmasambhava himself was born as "Gautama" (གཽ་ཏ་མ་ཞེས་བྱར་སྐྱེ་བ་བླངས།)[185]—during which the two committed sexual misdeeds and murder. Explaining that all of life flows according to karmic causality (ལས་ཀྱི་སྟོག་ལན་དེ་ལྟར་ཚགས་པ་ཡིན།), Padmasambhava implores the king to understand that the king's law was in effect not broken (རྒྱལ་བོས་མཁྱེན་མཛོད་ཁྱིམས་ནི་མ་བཤིག་

[183] Ibid.

[184] སེམས་ཅན་བདེ་བར་ཟེད་པ་རྒྱལ་བོའི་ཁྱིམས།ཁ གཞོན་ནུས་རྒྱལ་ཁྱིམས་བཤིགས་པ་མིན་ནམ་ཅི། ... ཁམས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་ཐུན་བུ་བསད་ཁྱིམས་ལ་མཆོངས། (118).

[185] Ibid.

གསུངས།).[186] The king repents, pays the fee for manslaughter (རྒྱལ་པོས་བུ་ཆུང་ཤི་སྦྱོང་བྱིན།) and "invites" Padmasambhava back to the palace (རྒྱལ་སྲས་ཕོ་བྲང་ནང་དུ་སྤྱན་དྲངས།). Thus, in contextualizing his deed as the operation of karma, Padmasambhava positions himself as answerable to a higher law than the laws of the land. His exceptional status is further punctuated by his claim to being born as Gautama in a past life—a rather provocative claim to make in a Buddhist context, deliberately paralleling himself to Gautama Buddha.

This episode is the first dramatic shift of action in the plot, in which Padmasambhava—the beloved son, the supreme prince (རྒྱལ་སྲས་མཆོག)—murders an innocent boy and gets away with it. Indrabodhi, in his role as both father and king, attempts to hold Padmasambhava to the dictate of the law, insisting that Padmasambhava must account for violating the ethics of worldly conduct. This is an attempt by a man who sits at the top of the hegemonic order to enforce the norms of that order, but the fact that he even asks Padmasambhava for an explanation draws attention, for it gestures at Padmasambhava's exceptional nature: just as Indrabodhi paused when he first met Padmasambhava to inquire into his positionality, here too the king acknowledges the power of the siddha-to-be by pausing and asking for an explanation. If Padmasambhava had been an ordinary boy, simply another member of the cast of characters, and not the heir-apparent, the king in all likelihood would act swiftly, not pausing to ask for an explanation.

Thus, at this early moment in the narrative, we witness the intertwining of male privilege with spiritual privilege—Padmasambhava's clairvoyance grants him the capacity to justify unethical behavior (at least, within the boundaries of the text). Padmasambhava is a prince, and so is afforded a much higher degree of deference and respect as an aristocratic male—but also,

[186] Ibid., 119.

notably, more responsibility. We witness this in the people's response to his murderous action: "rulers do not commit evil in their lands."[187] This calls to mind Connell's observation of the constraints that attend "patriarchal dividends."[188] While men are afforded more power and privilege in the patriarchal order, those benefits come with certain costs to their wellbeing: men are sent to war, work more demanding and physically dangerous jobs, and are expected to provide economic security for their families. The constraint of Padmasambhava's male privilege is that he is responsible to his citizens. Thus, in acknowledging his position in the hegemonic order, Indrabodhi signals the importance of his adherence to the rules due to the expectations to which he must be held accountable.

And yet, Padmasambhava manages to escape the situation without any accountability—in fact, Indrabodhi absorbs the cost of the fine for manslaughter. Padmasambhava enjoys the patriarchal dividend of being excused for murder, while the king bears the constraint that should have befallen his adopted son. The young siddha also continues to be identified as the "supreme prince" (རྒྱལ་སྲས་མཆོག)—not by any character in the text, but by the narrator—situating him beyond of the boundaries of conventional morality. This transcendence from the dictates of the social order is further reinforced by his speech to Indrabodhi, explaining that his action was merely the result of karmic causation, and that the rules were in fact never violated.

And yet, remember that Padmasambhava's intention is to force the king's hand, to compel the king to banish him from the land so that he may devote himself to religious life in order to benefit beings. Remember too that this episode does not exist in *Copper Island*, so we can read the addition of it in the *Testament* as a further fleshing out of Padmasambhava's metaphorical

[187] འགོད་ལོས་སྨྲོད་བའི་རྒྱལ་ཡོས་ཡུལ་གཅོད་མེད། (118)
[188] Connell (2005): 67-81.

anatomy: adding layers of violence to the boy born from a lotus, it underscores the centrality of violence and its soteriological effects (sending the boy and bee to a pure realm instead letting them take rebirth in hell). In the *Testament*, the murder of an innocent boy of no social status is not enough to prompt his expulsion; a greater act of violence is necessary. This is where *Copper Island* and the *Testament* again converge, with killing a minister's son—a boy of much higher rank in the social hierarchy.

In both accounts of this narrative—the first killing in *Copper Island*, the second in the *Testament*—Padmasambhava determines that in order to (སྒྲིམ) force the hand of the king and his ministers, he must practice *tülzhuk chöpa* (བདུད་ཞུགས་སྤྱོད་པ). Padmasambhava's agency is again inscribed within Tibetan grammar: Padmasambhava acts intentionally (མངོད་པ) in order to (སྒྲིམ) compel the transitive action of another male character. Padmasambhava's agency is marked not only by clairvoyance—the capacity to precognize the results of his actions—but also by the ability to compel other men to act transitively.

The importance of Padmasambhava's decision to engage in tülzhuk chöpa (often abbreviated to simply tülzhuk) to effectuate his goal cannot be overstated. As noted briefly above, his decision in engage in tülzhuk casts him distinctively in the role of tantrika (tülzhuk is the practice of siddhas). Scholars disagree over the extent to which these practices were understood to be literal or figurative.[189] David DiValerio has produced the most in-depth study of the term and its connotations, deciding to translate tülzhuk chöpa as the "Practice of the Observance."[190] DiValerio calls our attention to the provocative, antinomian nature of these practices, interpreting

[189] See footnote 181 above. DiValerio calls our attention to the siddha "wannabes" who attempted to practice *tülzhuk* and were either killed or driven out of town; such men were unable to engage in these practices convincingly.
[190] DiValerio (2015), 41. DiValerio offers a comprehensive investigation of the gloss offered by Tibetan exegets of the term, along with a thorough accounting of the various treatments it has been accorded by scholars of Tibetan tantra. Larsson (2012) provides a shorter investigation.

them as performative gestures intended to provoke disciples' (and ordinary people's) recognition of their accomplishments as great tantric masters.

Importantly for our investigation, DiValerio highlights the context for these ritual practices—meant to be undertaken only by "those already well accomplished in tantra," and in "isolated, impure, and liminal spaces…[such as] in the home of a low-caste person, in a charnel ground, and so on."[191] Thus, the fact that Padmasambhava practices tülzhuk as a young man—prior to any of the lengthy sojourns he makes in charnel grounds, gaining empowerments, attaining *siddhi*s ("accomplishments"), and advancing his realization—foregrounds his unique status as a supreme *tantrika*, or practitioner of tantra; he is able to engage in tülzhuk well before he receives any teaching or training on the subject.

Furthermore, Padmasambhava decides to engage in tülzhuk on the roof of the king's palace (ཕོ་བྲང་གི་རྩེ་ལ།), well in the view of numerous spectators (བཟླ་བའི་དམངས་ཐལ་མང་པོ།). By transposing a transgressive practice usually confined to liminal places (and used by tantric masters) into a public space, Padmasambhava reinforces his tantric capacity to usurp convention. Again, as both a prince and a siddha-to-be, Padmasambhava has the male privilege granting him access to royal spaces (the roof of the palace), and the spiritual power to engage in a subversive practice in public view. He adorns his naked body with human bones (རྐུ་གཅེར་བུ་རུས་པའི་རྒྱན་གསོལ), wielding the *khaṭvāṅga* (ཁ་ཊྭཱ་ཀ, a three-pronged dagger, an implement of tantric practice with symbolic significance that comes to be identified largely with Padmasambhava and his famous capacity to

[191] DiValerio (2015), 42.

subjugate demons),[192] and, depending on the account, a *damaru* (ཌཱ་མ་རུ།) drum (in *Copper Island*), or *vajra* and bell (རྡོ་རྗེ་དྲིལ།) (in the *Testament*)—all implements of tantric ritual.

Tantric implements in hand, practicing tülzhuk on the roof of the palace with a full crowd gathered below watching him,[193] Padmasambhava deliberately orchestrates an "accident" that kills minister Kamalaté's (ཀ་མ་ལ་ཏེ།) son with the khaṭvāṅga dagger. The *Copper Island* account contains an interesting rhetorical distancing from the act: Padmasambhava "*caused* the khaṭvāṅga to fall" (ཁ་ཊྭཾ་གა་ལགā་ལས་ཤོར་བསྒྲུབ་བྱས།), whereby Kamalaté literally "*became* murdered because it hits him in the head" (བྱའི་མགོ་ལ་བརྒྱབ་པས། སྐྱེས་བོའི་བུ་མཀྲམས་པར་གྱུར་ཏོ།).[194] The *Testament* account lacks any such rhetorical distance: Padmasambhava "struck the boy directly in the head. The vajra penetrated to the center of his brain, and he died."[195] Again we witness the *Testament* adding more flesh to Padmasambhava's metaphorical anatomy emphasizing his use of violent force above and beyond what we witness in *Copper Island*. The *Testament* account further punctuates this with an additional murder: not only does Pamdasambhava kill the minster's son, but also his wife: "after he strikes [Katama, the minister's wife] in the heart with the khaṭvāṅga, she [too] dies."[196]

This deliberate act of violence—the second in the *Testament*—proves to be too much for the kingdom to endure. In both accounts, Indrabodhi's ministers demand that Padmasambhava be punished in kind for his actions: the prince must suffer impalement on a stake (ཤིང་གི་རྩེ་ལ་བསྐྱོན་པ།).

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[192] Larrson (2012): 133-58.
[193] *Copper Island*: ལྷ་ཐའི་མི་མང་དོ་འཚོགས་པ་ལ། (11), *Testament*: ལྷད་མོ་བལྷ་བའི་དམངས་ཐག་མང་དོ་ཚོགས། (123)
[194] *Copper Island*, 12 (emphasis added).
[195] བྱའི་མགོ་དཀྱིལ་ཐོགཿ རྡོ་རྗེ་ཀློད་པའི་དཀྱིལ་དུ་ཤོང་ནས་གྱེའོ། (123)
[196] ཁ་ཊྭཾ་གা་མ་ཡི་སྙིང་ལ་ཐོག་ནས་ཤི། (123)

Yet Padmasambhava's unique status again absolves him of the consequences other men would face in similar circumstances: Indrabodhi, unsure if Padmasambhava is the son of a non-human being or an emanation of a divine being, resolves that it would be improper to kill him; he should instead be banished.[197] Thus, Padmasambhava escapes the rule of law by virtue of his indeterminable identity. Padmasambhava's power as an undetermined—but undoubtedly extraordinary—figure sets him apart from the rest of the men: the implication is that were Padmasambhava not an extraordinary, super-normal being, he would befall the stake.

If the reader had any doubt that Padmasambhava is an extraordinary tantrika capable of violence and antinomianism, the narrative quickly disabuses it. Padmasambhava's banishment launches him on his tantric career: he immediately heads to the "great charnel ground known as Cool Grove" (དྲུར་ཁྲོད་ཆེན་པོ་བསིལ་བའི་ཚུལ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ།), where he launches his career as a wild yogin, displaying extraordinary aptitude in both tantric practice and mastering the traditional five sciences (རིག་བའི་གནས་ལྔ་ལ་མཁས་པར་སྣང་བ།). He travels through dozens of cemeteries, gathering initiations from ḍākinīs (as well as teaching them) while corpses make maṇḍala offerings to him. He accomplishes greater and greater degrees of realization with increasing speed, accelerating his attainments while spreading Buddhism throughout the Indian subcontinent with magic (manifesting miraculously in the sky, performing water miracles, ending famine etc.), and antinomianism (at one point, in the "distant reaches of India," "in order to convert evil people," Padmasambhava cuts off his own flesh and eats it").[198]

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[197] *Coppper Island*: རྒྱལ་བྱ་འདི་མི་མ་ཡིན་གྱི་བྱ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ནམངྟ སྨྲས་པའི་སྐུ་ཞིག་ཡིན་མ་ཤེས་པས། བསད་པས་མི་ལེགས་སྨྲགས་ལ་བཏང་ངོ། (12), *Testament*: འདི་ནི་མི་མ་ཡིན་གྱི་བུའམ་ཅིའྟ སྨྲས་པའི་སྐུ་ཞིག་ཡིན་ནམ་མི་ཤེས་པས། བསད་པས་མི་འོང་མཐའ་ལ་སྨྲགས་ཀྱིས་གསུངས། (123)

[198] *Testament*, རྒྱ་གར་ཡུལ་གྱི་ཕར་མཐའ་ནྟ / རིགས་ངན་གདུལ་བའི་ཕྱིར། / རང་ཤ་བཅད་ནས་ཟོས། (190)

All of this activity relates Padmasambhava's maturation as a tantric master. No doubt remains: Padmasambhava is now definitively a siddha. By the time he reaches Zahor, he is a mighty and formidable tantric master initiated by ḍākinīs. Before casting his gaze upon Mandārava, he contemplates to himself: "Though I am not a buddha by name, I am a buddha who has attained the four fruits of ascetic practice."[199] This all sets the stage for Padmasambhava's encounter with the next significant king in the story: Ārṣadhara, king of Zahor (ཟ་ཧོར།), the father of Padmasambhava's Indian consort princess Mandārava. The narrative presages the inevitable contestation of their meeting in the title for the canto: "Seeing the region to be converted" (འདུལ་བྱའི་ཞིང་ལམས་གཟིགས་པ།). Thus, before Padmasambhava even meets the king, we know that he will subjugate and convert him. The exact manner by which the tantric master accomplishes this task will shed light on our investigation into his masculinity.

"I Succeed You and Become King!": Padmasambhava Meets Ārṣadhara

The plot is substantively the same across the two narratives (with the expected embellishments in the *Testament*): Princess Mandārava renounces the world (and her many suitors) in order to practice dharma, much to the chagrin of her parents, the king and queen of Zahor. Padmasambhava then enters the scene and begins instructing Mandārava, involving consort practice—a tantric ritual practice of sexual union. This incurs the wrath of her father King Ārṣadhara, who tries to burn him on a pyre of sesame oil. Rather than burning, Padmasambhava turns the oil into a lake and perches on the top of a blossomed lotus flower in

[199] *Testament*: ང་ནི་མིང་གི་སངས་རྒྱས་མ་ཡིན་ཏེ། དགེ་སློང་འབྲས་བུ་བཞི་ཐོབ་སངས་རྒྱས་ཡིན། (193).

the center of it. Ārṣadhara, recognizing the magnitude of his error, repents, and installs Padmasambhava on the throne in his place.

In *Copper Island*, the earliest narrative, we find the shortest account of the scene with the least developed sense of personality or human depth: Mandārava is only named once, at her introduction, and then simply becomes Padmasambhava's "consort" (རིག་མ།), all within the span of a few sentences. King Ārṣadhara is never named, and we never hear his voice, rather the voices of "the king and ministers" (རྒྱལ་བློན་རྣམས།), with a paltry seven lines praising Padmasambhava and asking him to guide their country.[200] Their supplication to Padmasambhava, begging for his forgiveness, is enough to cause the flames to cool, after which "everything became even more beautiful and pleasant than before."[201]

The scene contains no dialogue and no tension. Here we recall Charles Ramble's exploration of namthar, which, according to Ramble, follow a predictably "sterile" form, concerned primarily with the "perfection" of the protagonist to such a degree that it sacrifices narrative tension in favor of reifying the subject.[202] The "heroes" of namtar, then, "are not fully rounded [characters], just slightly curved."[203] Ramble identifies this as "the outstanding deficiency of namtar as biography. To find truly three-dimensional characters we must look outside the genre."[204] This "deficiency," so provocatively designated, might help explain why Padmasambhava's subversion appears to be a straightforward shot to the king, who cannot manage even to have his own voice. As a corrective to Ramble's disparagement of the genre, we

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[200] *Copper Island*, 23.
[201] *Copper Island*: ཅེས་གསོལ་བ་བཏབ་པས༔ གྲོང་ཁྱེར་གྱི་མེ་ཞི་སྟེ་སྔར་ལས་མཛེས་ཤིང་ཉམས་དགའ་བར་གྱུར་ཏོ༔ (23)
[202]Charles Ramble, "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: The Circumscription of Saintly Evil in Tibetan Biography," In *Lives Lived, Lives Imagined: Biography in the Buddhist Traditions*, edited by Linda Covill, Ulrika Roesler, and Sarah Shaw (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2010) :305.
[203] Ramble (2010), 322.
[204] Ramble (2010), 322.

can adopt Quintman's model of the metaphorical anatomy of a religious figure, understanding that over time narratives become fleshed out and embellished, developing more lifelike and three-dimensional characters.

While Ramble's argument might explain the relative lack of nuance or depth in this first brief and early account, such a reductive view of a significant, diverse literary tradition quickly disintegrates when we turn to the more fleshed out account of *The Testament*. Composed nearly two hundred years after *Copper Island*, we find a much more robust version of the encounter between king and siddha in Orgyen Lingpa's text. Enraged by the rumors of the townsfolk that Mandārava was cavorting with Padmasambhava, the king dispatches his noblemen to apprehend the tantric master, tie him up, and set him on fire. And yet, once the fire is set and the noblemen, curiously, return home, "the gods of space, unable to bear it even mentally…having heard that [Padmasambhava] *was not resisting [his] oppression*, came to help."[205] Ḍākinīs swoop down to put out the fire and untie him, after which he manifests as "a child of eight" (བྱིས་པོ་བརྒྱད་པ།) perched atop a massive lotus in the middle of a wide lake (the sesame oil miraculously transformed into water) surrounded in the sky by hundreds of celestial beings and wonders marvelous to behold.

In this scene, Padmasambhava's accomplishment is so potent that no action is required: there is no need to resist, because supernatural beings come to his aide. The king, curious why the smoke of the pyre endures for seven full days (seven days in which Padmasambhava is attended to by the gods and ḍākinīs), comes to see what could be going on. He finds Padamsambhava seated miraculously on a lotus throne, "his body fresh and cool"[206] and manifesting as an eight

[205] *Testament*: ནམ་མཁའི་ཕྱོ་རྣམས་སེམས་ཀྱིས་མ་བཟོད་དེ། … འཕབ་བལ་མནོ་ཚོད་ཐོས་ནས་མངར་འོངས། 215.
[206] *Testament*: སྐུ་ནི་གྲང་གྲང་བསིལ་བསིལ་ཕྱར་དུ་འདུག། (216).

year-old child. The child-guru berates Ārṣadhara for failing utterly as king: not only did he try to "burn alive a buddha of the three times, the unsurpassed essence," he "established senseless rules," ignored the happiness of his kingdom, and clung to ignorance.[207] This rebuke within the dazzling scene compels the king to the ground, where he "violently strikes his chest" (ལག་གཉེས་བྱང་ལ་དྲག་ཏུ་བསྣུན་བྱེད་ཅིང་།) and laments his error before "collapsing, weeping [like] a fettered toddler, and beating his body on the earth" where he "offered numberless prostrations."[208]

King Ārṣadhara, recognizing the extreme consequence of his arrogance—wrongly assuming his would be the last word in the situation—repents. He begs Padmasambhava for forgiveness, even while recognizing that such repentance and forgiveness will not expiate him of the evil of assuming that he had authority over such an exceptional being. Whereas Ārṣadhara can command his noblemen with the blunt force of coercion (imprisoning them when they fail initially to deliver the tantric master), Padmasambhava's power is so compelling that it does not even need to act in order to inspire supernatural beings—gods and ḍākinīs—to rectify the situation in his favor. There is thus no real competition for power between these men, because of Padamsambhava's obvious superiority.

Ārṣadhara belittles himself in front of an enormous crowd composed of people from over a hundred thousand leagues and many countries (བརྒྱ་སྟོང་མང་པོའི་ཡུལ) who could not help but come and witness the spectacle themselves. Only after he offers Padmasambhava his kingdom (རྒྱལ་པོའི་རྒྱལ་སྲིད་འབུལ་བས་བཞེས་སུ་གསོལ།) does the tantric deign to speak: "Mighty King Ārṣadhara" says the

[207] *Testament*: དྲས་གསུམ་སངས་རྒྱས་ངོ་བོ་བླ་མ་ལ། གསོན་སྐོགས་བྱེད་པ … དོན་མེད་ཁྲིམས་འཛུག … མ་རིག་རྩ་བ་ཉོན་མོངས་དུག་ལྡ་ལ། འཕྲལ་ཕུགས་གནས་པའི་སྡིག་རྒྱལ … འདུན་མའི་རྩ་བ་སེམས་ཅན་མགུ་བྱེད་ལ། མི་དགེས་རྒྱགས་པའི་རྒྱལ (216)

[208] *Testament*: དེ་ནས་རྒྱལ་པོ་འཇིལ་ནས་བྱ་ཅིང་བྱས། ལུས་པོ་སར་རྡེབ་ཕྱག་ནི་གྱང་མེད་བཙལ། (217).

child-cum-tantric master, "I succeed you and become king!"[209] With this dramatic speech act, Padmasambhava announces his superiority to all of Zahor. The mighty siddha has always been at the top of the hierarchy, and Ārṣadhara's renouncing of the throne properly aligns the social order with the cosmic order. This (re)alignment of the social with the cosmic is reinforced when Indra alights from heaven to lead the thousands of spectators in a song praising the greatness of the mighty siddha.

Padmasambhava replies that "since" his intention is to "lead numerous beings on the path to buddhahood," he will "deliver, not diminish, the royal orders."[210] To cement the unquestionable superiority of his masculine might, Padmasambhava "emanates eleven million" images of himself, which then beckons the narrator to ask: "But who will pull the chariot?" (ཤེང་རྟའི་ཐག་པ་སྐས་ཀྱང་འདྲུད་དབང་མེད།)[211] None other than King Ārṣadhara, whose haughty arrogance has forced him to humiliate himself by taking off his clothes, biting to the bridle of a horse, tying a rope around his neck, and drawing Padmasambhava to the palace, where the tantric master seats himself upon the throne to rule.

Thus we find Padmasambhava donning the mantle of supreme siddha in order to reign over all beings, celestial and mundane. This powerfully reinforces Davidson's characterization of the siddha as a figure seeking the ultimate domain of heavenly power, for Padmasambhava is a figure from transcendent space and thus uniquely suited to rule transcending boundaries of worldly and divine. He has no family, but is born from a lotus, connected to no locality and wandering freely, emanating from the dharmakāya, beyond any notion of border or belonging.

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[209] *Testament*: རྒྱལ་པོའི་དབང་པོ་གཙུག་ལག་འཛིན་པ་ནི། ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་རྗེས་སུ་འཇུག་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཐྲུབ། (217).

[210] *Testament*: སངས་རྒྱས་ལམ་ལ་སྐྱེ་རྣ་འཛོམ་པའི་ཕྱིར། རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཞལ་མཆིད་མི་བསྒྱུར་དག་མཆིའོ། 262.

[211] *Testament*: རྒྱལ་པོ་ཉིད་ཀྱིས་ལུས་ཀྱི་གོས་ལྷུད་ནས། ཤེང་རྟའི་ཐག་པ་མགུལ་ལ་དཀྱིས་ནས་འདྲུད། (219)

From this position he is able to display enormous magical power, miraculously transforming a pyre into a lake as deities descend from the sky to rescue him. Through the force of his magical aptitude and spiritual authority, he comes to occupy a commanding seat: king of all Zahor.

In the rest of the narrative before Padmasambhava leaves for Tibet, we witness a breadth of siddha-king interactions, which nuance our understanding of the hegemonic technologies available to Padmasambhava. Predictably, as the earlier and more skeletal account, *Copper Island* contains far fewer episodes than the *Testament*. In *Copper Island*, most of these activities occur in the fourth canto: "The story of [Padmasambhava] beneficently spreading the Buddha's teachings by subjugating/converting the heretics."[212] The Padmasambhava we find in *Copper Island* utilizes notably less violence than his iteration in the *Testament*. Employing Quintman's concept of the metaphorical biography and its development, we again see the centrality of violence further emphasized as Padmasambhava gains more life in his narrative literature—perhaps Orgyen accentuates the violence of the tantric master in relief to the encroaching Mongol threat. Setting aside conjectures of authorial intent, what is undeniable is the significant expansion of Padmasambhava's violent activities alongside a blossoming of episodes in which Padmasambhava utilizes various methods for subjugating and converting (གདུལ་བ།) the non-Buddhists of India.

Of the dozens more episodes in the *Testament* compared to *Copper Island*, six of them involve interactions with kings, and only one is peaceful. That king is Śrīkumāra of Siṃhala (སེངྒེ་འབྲི་ཚུལ།), who automatically recognizes Padmasambhava's superiority, allowing for a seamless

[212] Predictably, as the earlier and more skeletal account, *Copper Island* contains far fewer episodes than the *Testament*. In *Copper Island*, most of these activities occur in the fourth canto: "The story of [Padmasambhava] beneficently spreading the Buddha's teachings by subjugating/converting the heretics" (རྒྱ་སྒེགས་པ་བདུལ་ནས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་བསྟན་པ་ལ་བཀའ་དྲིན་ཆེ་བའི་ལོ་རྒྱུས) (21).

alliance with the siddha that benefits his kingdom for two hundred years.[213] Of the antagonistic siddha-king encounters, we witness Padmasambhava employ a breadth of strategies for subjugation-conversions, some utilizing magic to subvert and humiliate the king, others violence.

When Mandārava and Padmasambhava together leave Zahor, they happen upon King Aśoka (ཨ་ཤོ་ཀ), who tries to burn Padmasambhava alive.[214] As in Zahor, a lotus rises out of the fire and Padmasambhava appears unharmed, causing Aśoka to repent and resolve to establish Buddhism throughout his kingdom. In Baiddha (བཻདྡྷ), Padmasambhava teaches the king's younger son how to win against the elder son in debate, ousting the heir-apparent in order to reign as a Buddhist king instructed (and initiated) by the tantric guru. In Bengal they encounter the Mahāraja Norbu Öden (རྒྱ་རྦྱི་ཆེན་པོ་ནོར་བུ་འོད་ལྡན་ཞེས་ཏེ), a greedy king opposed to Buddhism who neglected his people and "led them to suffering, poverty, and exhaustion."[215] Accordantly, "Padmasambhava saw this as an area to be subjugated and converted."[216] Padmasambhava sieges his castle, kills all his soldiers, and "ravages the sensuous women" (འདོད་ཡོན་བུ་མོ་ལྷ་ཐོགས།).[217] Padmasambhava's wrathful entourage shows up to lead while Padmasambhava manifests as Samantabhadra and liberates (kills) Norbu Öden, sending him to a pure realm. Padmadambhava then takes the king's place and "protects the kingdom with the dharma."[218]

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[213] *Testament*, 242.
[214] *Testament*, 234.
[215] *Testament*: ནེམས་ཅན་དབུལ་ཕོངས་དུབ་ཅིང་སྡུག་བསྔལ་འཐུགཿ (244)
[216] *Testament*: དེ་ནི་ཡང་འཇྱུང་གདུལ་བྱའི་ཞིང་དུ་གཟེགས་ཏེ (244)
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.: ཁོ་བཙུས་རྒྱལ་པོ་བགོད་པ་སྐུན་གྱིས་གྲིབ་ཏེ། པདྨ་ཀུན་ཏུ་འཛིང་གི་སྐུ་ཏུ་བཞེངས་ཏེ། རྒྱལ་པོ་འོག་མིན་གནས་སུ་བསྐྱལ་བར་ཐུགས་ཏེ། རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཤུལ་བཟུང་ཆོས་ཀྱིས་རྒྱལ་སྲིད་བསྐྱངས་ཏེ། This episode in the English translation presents a fascinating quandary: Douglas and Bays have translated from Toussaint's French version to arrive at: "Holding the king who in a single moment had been cast in melted bronze, / Padma assumed the guise of Samantadhara. The king was transported to the Unsurpassed Heaven / and, in place of the king, the Dharma ruled the kingdom." The possibilities to account for this discrepancy—in my version of the Tibetan original, cited as being from the same 1839 Peking edition as that translated by Touissant, nowhere is "molten copper" to be found. The presence of the "ten wrathful ones," who are

After ruling over the usurped and assassinated king's lands for a time, Padmasambhava then casts his gaze about at "whatever else remained to be converted."[219] Here we find Padmasambhava manifesting as the tantric héruka (ཁྲོ་བོ་ཀཱ) deity Ḍombipa (ཌོམ་བྷི་པ), going to a bar and drinking "all the beer they have" (ཁྱོད་ལ་ཆང་ནི་ཅམ་ཡོད་བྱས་པས།),[220] pinning the sun in the sky with his dagger, and eventually forcing the king to pay his bar tab because of the harm caused by the sun never setting. While it is difficult to tell if this is a reference to the Virūpa legend from the *Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas* composed two hundred years prior, the resemblance is striking, and effectively emphasizes the antinomian (drinking liquor) practice reinforced by magic (holding the sun in place) that forces the king to accede to the siddha's demands (pay my beer tab).

Padmasambhava then goes on to subjugate-convert (གདུལ་བ) everyone in his adopted homeland Uḍḍiyāna. Again they try to burn him for his past crimes, again their attempt fails, again Padmasambhava rises upon a lotus, and then converts everyone. Next is king Namké Shugchen (ནམ་མཁའི་ཤུགས་ཆེན) of Serling ("The Land of Gold," གསེར་གླིང་), who tries to kill Padmasambhava (again by fire) for spreading Buddhism through his land. Padmasambhava turns

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marked by the -ས་ indicating their agency of the transitive verb ཐིབ།, is lost in this translation, ostensibly either interpreted as molten bronze. Another possibility is that Touissant was working off a different edition of the text than mine, or perhaps was following an oral instruction from one of the lamas residing at Lithang Monastery where he was translating in 1911. Regardless of how this came to be, it marks a fascinating moment in the transformations and transmigrations of texts, emphasizing their dynamic quality. To me, this is evidence of Quintman's and Schaeffer's urge to recognize the living dimensions of texts, rather than regarding them as monolithic, ahistorical, or unchanging relics of the past. In the case at hand, what we see in the English translation is the continuing expansion of Padmasambhava's violence—the Padmsambhava of the *Testament* is more violent than the Padmsambhava of *Copper Island*, and the Padmasambhava of *Life and Liberation* is more violent still.

[219] *Testament*: དེ་ནས་གདུལ་བྱར་ཐུར་ཡ་གང་འདུག་གཟེགས།། (246)

[220] *Testament*: 249.

the fire into a golden stūpa (གསེར་གྱི་མཆོད་རྟེན།), which causes the king to "repent and have faith [in Padmasambhava], thus entering the [Buddhist] dharma."[221]

Finally, the last king Padmasambhava subdues before leaving India for Tibet is Nāgaviṣṇu (རྒྱལ་པོ་སྐྱེའི་ཁྱབ་འཇུག), who attacks Bodhgaya (རྡོ་རྗེ་གདན།) and "eradicates all the excellent Buddhist customs" there.[222] Padasambhava, contemplating the correct manner for subjugating and converting this king, cognizes that the only method available would be to impregnate a young girl in a dream. He does so, and the prodigious youth grows up, heads to Nāgaviṣṇu's palace, disguises himself as a servant, and burns the palace—with the king and his court—to the ground. He is then installed on the throne and spreads Buddhism as a righteous king.

As we track Padmasambhava's movement across the Indian subcontinent we find him engaged in each of the siddha activities we find in the *Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas*: magic, antinomianism, and violent subjugation. Whereas the *Life Stories* portray the siddhas engaging in primarily one, sometimes two, but rarely ever three (and never all) of these behaviors, we see Padmasambhava capable of deploying each of them according to the contextual demands of the situation. Whereas the individual accounts of each mahāsiddha typically showcase one of these interactions in a given story, Padmasambhava engages in each of them, reinforcing his adaptability as a technique for establishing hegemonic authority.

And yet, despite this unification of siddha tropes, when we read the *Testament* in tandem with its two-hundred year antecedent *Copper Island* we find an escalation of Padmasambhava's subjugating-converting activities via violent means. Keeping in mind Quintman's concept of the metaphorical anatomy, we can begin to understand the centrality of violence and subjugation at

[221] *Testament*: རྒྱལ་པོ་འགྱོད་ཅིང་དད་ནས་ཆོས་ལ་ཚུད།། (260)

[222] *Testament*: ནང་ངས་སངས་རྒྱས་ཆོས་ལུགས་ཐམས་ཅད་བསྐྲདས།། (261)

the heart of this extraordinary siddha's life in Tibetan tantric literature. This, in turn, further punctuates the decidedly *tantric* dimension of Padmasambhava's masculinity. The continued contestations and power antagonisms between Padmasambhava and kings punctuates Connell's insight that masculinities are simultaneously forged and witnessed in moments of interpersonal contact, marked by struggle for dominance. Recalling Connell's insight that violence indicates the establishment (or challenging) of a hegemonic order, we might then read Nyangrel's initial portrayal and Orgyen's embellishment of Padmasambhava's violent activities as another legitimating move for the founding figure of the Nyingma school: *Copper Island* and the *Testament* are (re)forging the mythology of a founding figure in tantric Buddhism at a time of heightened sectarian competition from other emerging tantric sects. Thus, by first positioning and then stressing Padmasambhava's capacity for magical potency coupled with violent subjugation, Padmasambhava comes to life as a powerful figure, capable of converting Indian and Tibetan kingdoms alike to Buddhism through unconventional means.

These themes become picked up and expanded rather dramatically after Padmasambhava receives the invitation from the Tibetan Tri Songdétsen to come to Tibet to help assist in the construction of Samyé (བསམ་ཡས།), the first Buddhist monastery in Tibet. It is here that we now turn to see Padmasambhava's tantric crescendo in these early narratives: his subjugation of the gods and demons of Tibet and humiliation of one of its most famous rulers in history.

Flogging Demons, Humbling Kings: Padmasambhava Arrives in Tibet

After Padmasambhava has tamed India and converted it to Buddhism, the narrative gaze shifts to Tibet, where the Tibetan emperor Tri Songdétsen (ཁྲི་སྲོང་ལྡེའུ་བཙན།) has recently resolved to bring Buddhism to Tibet and construct the first Buddhist monastery. Though the arc of the

plot is the same in both narratives, the account in *Copper Island* is predictably much shorter. Trisong Detsen sets out to establish a Buddhist monastery and hears of an Indian master Śāntarakṣita (མཁན་པོ་ཤི་ཏཱ་ར་ཀྵི།), whom he invites to "tame the earth" (ས་གཞི་གདུལ་བའི་ཕྱིར།)[223] for the construction site, so that building will proceed smoothly. The relationship is one of equals: Trisong Detsen provides an escort for Śāntarakṣita to the court, where they exchange respect for one another and proceed to the land. Notably, in the *Testament*, Trisong Detsen first sets out to erect Samyé without assistance and fails. Recognizing the need for help in the midst of his failure, he dispatches messengers to invite Śāntarakṣita, whom he has heard is "famous for preaching the uncontentious Dharma" (ཟ་ཧོར་ཡུལ་ན་རྩོད་མེད་ཆོས་སྒྲོག་གཏམ།).[224]

In both accounts, Śāntarakṣita's orientation towards peaceful methods for taming the construction site is made explicit, along with his need to be escorted to the imperial court. Śāntarakṣita is undeniably a Mahāyāna figure: he is explicitly named a bodhisattva (བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའ།), not a siddha. His peaceful Mahāyana methods, relative to the siddha's tantric ones, are less potent. This is underlined when he acknowledges "Since the gods and demons of Tibet are inhumane and savage, and because I subdue with bodhicitta, I am unsure I will succeed."[225] The play on the dual meaning of གདུལ་བ། as both subversion and conversion is strong here, and Śāntarakṣita's ambivalence towards his own success foreshadows the need for a more potent means of subjugating/converting, a more powerful method of *dülwa* (གདུལ་བ།). Ultimately, of course, Śāntarakṣita recognizes that "he has trained in perfecting the mind of bodhicitta. We

[223] *Copper Island*, 36.
[224] *Testament*, 285.
[225] *Copper Island*: "བོད་ཀྱི་ཕྱི་འདྲེ་མི་མ་ཡིན་པ་རྣམས་མོར་འདུག་པས། ངས་བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས་ཀྱིས་གདུལ་བ་ཡིན་པས། ཐུག་ཤམ་མི་ཐུལ་མི་ཤེས་པས།" (36).

cannot subdue with gentleness; we must subjugate with force."[226] Despite the reciprocal relationship of mutual respect between Śāntarakṣita and Trisong Detsen, in which both recognize the complementarity between them, their peaceful partnership is unsuccessful in taming the malevolent spirits surrounding them; this masculine alliance is ultimately ineffectual in installing Buddhism in Tibet.

At this early point in the story we are already primed for the disappointing failure of the peaceful methods available to the monastic scholar and benevolent king in controlling unruly and destructive forces, and the need for a masculine figure willing to engage with force and "wrathful means" (དྲག་ངོ།) to emerge on the scene.[227] Thus we find the introduction of Padmasambhava, the tantric master, into Tibetan awareness made by a Mahāyāna bodhisattva, who despite his high degree of wisdom and compassion, cannot manage to match the power of the demonic forces of the land. Violence and wrath as skillful means are not available to the peaceful bodhisattva, only to the tantric master. And yet, the bodhisattva plays a significant role as precursor to the tantric adept, humbly acknowledging his limitation, and then later teaming up with Padmasambhava to translate Indian Buddhist texts and teach the young monks at Samyé.

When the narrative gaze shifts to Padmasambhava, we find the great master already aware of the impending invitation, resting confidently in his capacity to succeed where the king and bodhisattva failed. In accepting the invitation by Tri Songdétsen but sending the messengers

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[226] *Testament*: བདག་ནི་བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་བློ་འབྱོངས་པར་སྣང་ངེས། ཞི་བས་མི་ཕྱལ་དུག་ཡོས་འདུལ་དགོས་འདུག། (361). Interesting to note the intensification of the verb from "subdue" (ཕྱལ་བ།) to "subjugate" (གདུལ་བ།), marking the shift from the peaceful means (ཞི་བས) of the Bodhisattva to the wrathful (དྲག་ངོས)means of the siddha. This also speaks to the four tantric ritual actions (ལས་བཞི།) in tantric Buddhism: pacifying (ཞི), enriching (རྒྱས།), magnetizing (དབང་།), and subjugating (དྲག).

[227] This evokes the centuries-long archetypal struggle in Tibetan literature between the wild and magical siddha and the reasoned, disciplined monk, a struggle long articulated by scholars of Tibetan literature but yet to be analyzed from gender studies perspective. (See, e.g., DiValerio 2015.) Due to the limits on scope and focus in the current project, this is an avenue for future research.

ahead of him, Padmasambhava's ascendancy is subtly underlined: the tantric master requires no escort; he can singlehandedly overcome the rough terrain and malevolent forces he is clairvoyantly aware are awaiting him. As he begins the journey from Nepal to Tibet, both *Copper Island* and the *Testament* identify specific features of the Tibetan landscape and name the baleful spirits residing within them, forces opposing the dharma with violence and intimidation.

And yet, where the equanimous balance between the king and bodhisattva fails to meet such threats, the remarkable agility and might of Padmasambhava prevails. At each point of demonic resistance, Padmasambhava displays a different magical aptitude—often with force, but not always—that renders each demonic spirit totally helpless and often humiliated. Each of these situated encounters surfaces and expands Padmasambhava's adaptable potency, and each one can be seen to advance a unique set of masculine attributes. At moments, it is merely "by his blessings" that each of the goddesses' thunderbolts disperses and their strength evaporates.[228] Other times, he is far more forceful, a penchant for violence coming to the fore.

Interestingly, both *Copper Island* and the *Testament* portray the same degree of violence in Padmasambhava's encounters with demons, emphasizing the relevance of magical tantric abilities in subduing non-human evil forces. We witness this when Pamdasambhava encounters the massively formidable super-yak form of Yarlha Shampo (ཡར་ལྷ་ཤམ་པོ།).[229] He employs *mudrā* (ཕྱག་རྒྱ།), or tantric gestures, to bind (བཟུང་།), shackle (བཅིངས།) the deity before "flogging his body and mind" (in the *Testament*) or "beating and hacking him" (in *Copper Island*).[230]

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[228] *Testament*: སོལ་དུམ་རེར་ཐྲུར་སྐྱོབས་ཟད་ཅིན་ཅིས་བརླབས། (297).

[229] *Copper Island*: 43. *Testament*: 298.

[230] *Testament*: དེལ་བྱའི་ཕྱག་རྒྱས་ལུས་སེམས་བཚོགས་པ་ཡིས། (298). *Copper Island*: དེལ་བྱའི་ཕྱག་རྒྱས་གཡག་དེ་བཙོག་སྐྱེ་བརྡུངས་པས། (43). This deity is a significant figure in indigenous Tibetan traditions, the name of a mountain (and the deity residing

Padmasambhava only stops when the demon "offers the heart of his life" (སྲོག་སྙིང་ཕུལ་ནས) and then "turn[s] into a young boy with white silken braids,"[231] subdued and sworn by oath to protect the dharma, emasculated and domesticated by the unparalleled magical power of the male siddha.

Each of the encounters showcases Padmasambhava's seemingly limitless ability to conquer even the most ferocious and terrifying enemies with a wide range of powers—both mundane and magical—at his disposal. As he nears the court, the pace of his taming activities accelerates in both texts, subduing ever-greater numbers (and varieties) of spirits with a single *mudra*, effectively condensing his remarkable power by concentrating the taming of a single demon in one paragraph to leagues of spirits in a single sentence. In the process we witness the dynamic and spontaneous (and perhaps a bit frenzied) emergence of as many methods as are required to meet any given threat. The effect is a gradually crystallized vision of idealized violent methods cohered in a single gendered subject, the siddha, characterized by a total absence of vulnerability and capable of endless variation in overcoming any obstacle.

This supreme masculinity, impervious to threat and limitlessly adaptable, becomes even more explicit when Padmasambhava meets Tri Songdétsen. The encounter is recorded in both *Copper Island* and the *Testament*, though the *Copper Island* account is much shorter. The Tibetan king initially resists paying homage to Padmasambhava, mistakenly assuming that in their first encounter, he is hierarchically higher (i.e. that he expects Padmasambhava to bow to him first).[232] Padmasambhava quickly disabuses the king of his misconception, spontaneously

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there) where the first king of Tibet, Nyatri Tsenpo (གཉའ་ཁྲི་བཙན་པོ།), descended to earth to rule. This opens up intriguing questions about Padmasambhava as an Indian colonizing force and the imperialist pursuit of bringing Buddhism to Tibet—questions that, while important, lie beyond the scope of this paper.

[231] *Copper Island*, ཁྱེའུ་ཆུང་དར་དཀར་གྱི་རལ་བ་ཅན་ཞིག་ཏུ་སྒྱུར་ཏེ༔ (63).

[232] "The king thought, 'I am the ruler of the black-headed Tibetans, the lord of every animal. What's more, I am a king who protects the dharma, so the master should bow to me!" *rgyal po'i thugs dgongs la nega bod mgo nag gi spyi rje dud 'gro rdog chags kyi bdag po yin chos skyongs ba'i rgyal po yang yin pas slob dpon gyis nag la phyag*

relating a song (མགྲུར།) in which he identifies himself immediately as a siddha,[233] a master of the five sciences of classical Indian Buddhism (language, art, medicine, logic, and philosophy), an immortal *vidyādhara* (འཆི་མད་རིག་འཛིན།), a chief (གཙོ་བོ།), a hero (དཔའ་བོ།), and a sorcerer (མཐུ་སྟོབས།). The king, in contrast, is cast as a "red-faced demon," (གདོང་དམར་སྲིན་པོ།) full of pride, infatuated (སྐྱོ་བ་དགའ།) with his great dominion (མང་ཐག་ཆེ་བ།).[234] Padmasambhava concludes his song with the jab: "I will not prostrate to the king of Tibet, but I will pay homage to the clothing you wear," whereupon he raises his palm, emits "rays of light" (འོད་ཟེར།) and burns off the king's clothing.[235] The king, humbled by his arrogance and accepting Padmasambhava's supremacy, fervently prostrates to him and then installs the tantrika upon a golden throne. Reading this scene through the lens of hegemonic masculinity cues us importantly to the power antagonism we anticipate when siddha and king meet. Here it has been resolved decidedly in favor of the supreme siddha, capable of sending fire from his hand to burn off the king's clothing, humiliating him before his entire court.

This supreme masculinity, impervious to threat and limitlessly adaptable, becomes even more explicit when Padmasambhava meets Tri Songdétsen in the *Testament*. The Tibetan syntax and language reinforce Padmasambhava's ascendancy over the king before the two even exchange any words: although Tri Songdétsen invited him, it is Padmasambhava who actually orchestrates the encounter—literally, the Tibetan states: "Padmasambhava made a meeting with

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byed 'ong snyam mo." Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer, *Zang gling ma*, (Khreng tu'u: si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1989): (45).

[233] *Copper Island*: ང་གྱུད་པ་ཐོབ་པའི་རྣལ་འབྱོར་པ། (45).

[234] *Copper Island*, 47.

[235] *Copper Island*, ངས་བོད་ཀྱི་རྗེ་ལ་ཕྱག་མི་འཚལ། རྒྱལ་པོའི་ན་བཟའ་བཞེས་ཕྱག་འཚལ། (47).

the ruling king."[236] The verb *dzépa* (མཛད་པ།) is a basic action verb: "to do," but seen here in its honorific form, underlining Padmasambhava's revered status. Thus, although the king invited the siddha to Tibet, it was actually by the power of the siddha that the meeting was even able to take place.

Whereas *Copper Island* portrays the king as initially arrogant, the *Testament* nearly mocks him, relating: "The king of Tibet was surrounded by his ministers, giving the impression of a glittering brood of pigeons."[237] Padmasambhava pauses here, and we're given insight into his interior dialogue (ཐུགས་དགོངས་ལྟུ), in which he contemplates his superiority to the king. This monologue begins with ང་ནི།, which is very notable in Tibetan, given the tremendously infrequent use of the first person pronoun in what is commonly a humilific register. He goes on to list various criteria that establish his authority as clearly and unequivocally superior to the king's, adopting the honorific form of verbs for himself—another notably uncommon practice in the Tibetan language. Taken together, Padmasambhava determines that, though the king will be unhappy about it (མ་བཏབ་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡིན་པས་མི་དགའ་ཡོང་), and though he is a great king, (རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེ་ཡང་།) the mighty siddha is in fact *incapable* of bowing first (ངའི་ཕྱག་མི་ཕྱབ་སྟམ།).[238] Rather, Tri Songdétsen should extend the first sign of respect and acknowledge the proper hegemonic hierarchy.

Meanwhile, Trisong Detsen is balking at the thought of bowing to the siddha, noting the awkwardness of the stalled encounter (ཕྱག་ལ་མ་འཚམ་ཚོམ་མེ་ཚོམ་མེར་ལུས།) reflecting that as Śāntarakṣita has already offered the king a prostration, so too should Padmasambhava.[239] He is the emperor

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[236] *Testament*: མངའ་བདག་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཉིད་དང་མཉམ་ཐད་མཛད་མཚོ།། (302).

[237] *Testament*: བོད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཞི་སྐྱེས་ཡོངས་ཀྱིས་བསྐོར་ཏེ། ཕྱག་རོན་ལྟུ་བཞིན་དཀར་ཁིགས་ཅེམ་ཅེམ་བྱུང་། (302).

[238] *Testament*, 303.

[239] *Testament*: མཁན་པོ་བོ་ཏི་ས་ཀྱས་ཇོན་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ཏེ། དེ་བཞིན་སྨོད་དཔོན་ན་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་སྟམ། (303).

after all! And it was customary that kings should always receive the first prostration as a way of acknowledging the social hierarchy.

Padmasambhava quickly disabuses the king of this notion with the "I Am Great and Mighty" song, charting a wide breadth of supreme mastery: in addition to being an immortal master of the five sciences, Padmasambhava also declares he is the supreme manifestation of nearly every conceivable social role—from *bhikṣu* monk (ཀྲ་བ།) to *geshé* scholar (དགེ་ཤེས།), doctor to astrologer, sorcerer to king, queen to hero, old man to old woman, young woman to child, infant to one who cannot become sick, Padmasambhava's mastery is bound by no category—significantly, not even traditional categories of gender.

The song is composed in beautiful verse with a tight meter, and again we witness Padmasambhava's use of the first person pronoun with rather punctuated force. The song is composed in quatrain form, and the first two lines of the quatrain are seven syllables each, following either a 2-2-2-1 stressed unstressed, stressed unstressed, stressed unstressed, stressed pattern, or a 3-2-3 stressed unstressed stressed, unstressed stressed, stressed unstressed stressed one. The third line of the quatrain disrupts this form with the introduction of ངྱ།, "I," followed by the same pattern of stress, increasing the syllabic count to eight. The last line increases to nine syllables, and sets the "ངྱ།" in apposition to ཆོས།, "dharma," shifting the stress pattern to stressed, stressed unstressed, stressed unstressed, stressed, unstressed, unstressed, unstressed.

The insertion of ངྱ།, "I," into the meter, altering the cadence and rhythm of the song, dramatically underscores Padmasambhava's significance and positionality—shifting through the gamut of conceivable social positions, Padmasambhava lays individual claim to mastery in all categories, and this is reinforced through the expansion of the meter in the fourth line of the

quatrain, which details what qualifications are granted by each one of these positions. The implication is clear: Padmasambhava unifies this remarkable diversity of mastery into a cohered subject, understood to be infinitely adaptable and equally powerful.

In stark contrast is Tri Songdétsen. At the end of the siddha's "I Am Great and Mighty" song, he turns on the king, saying: "[Yet] *you* are king of this meager borderland country known as Tibet, a king to a country with no virtue."[240] Jabbing at the king's foolish arrogance, disdaining the ruler who is bloated on his pride, Padmasambhava resolves: "I will not bow to a king like you."[241] The contrast of the *nga* (ང་) "I" and *khyöd* (ཁྱོད), "you" is immense: how dare the king think that he is the highest in status when a siddha as dynamic and powerful as Padmasambhava was in his presence. Padmasambhava concludes his evisceration of the king by scorching off his clothing with a "miraculous flame," shooting forth from his fingers,[242] laying bare the king's foolish arrogance for all to see. The king and his entire assembly simply "cannot bear" the weight of Padmasambhava's power (རྒྱལ་བློང་འཛོར་བཅས་ཀུན་གྱིས་མ་བཟོད་ནས།) and throw themselves into fervent prostrations (ཕག་ནི་གུག་རིལ་གྱང་འགྱེལ་བཞིན་དུ་བཙལ།).

What *Copper Island* suggests, the *Testament* makes explicit: Padmasambhava's masculinity is a supremely adaptable matrix of superiority. The plot of the narrative is stalled by this collision and contest between the siddha and king and is only able to advance once it is resolved in favor of the tantric master. This is a crucial moment in the development of Padmasambhava's gender in the mythology of the golden age of empire, casting him to the level of unrivaled and unquestionable superiority in relationship to the arrogant (but good-natured) king and peaceful

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[240] *Testament*: མཐའ་འཛོར་བོད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཁྱོད་ཨེ། མི་དགེའི་ཆོས་གི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ལཱ། (307, emphasis added).

[241] *Testament*: ང་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཁྱོད་ལ་ཕྱག་མི་འཚལཱ། (307).

[242] *Testament*: ཕྱག་སོར་ལས། རྩྭ་འཕྱལ་མེ་འབར་རྒྱལ་པོའི་ན་བཟའ་ཚོགཱ། (307).

bodhisattva scholar. This is due to his remarkable tantric power to tame violent demons and subdue even the most powerful kings with violence and magic.

Significantly, in both accounts, Śāntarakṣita recedes to the background of the narrative, making no appearance until Padmasambhava has overseen the successful completion of Samyé, at which point the bodhisattva reemerges as a teacher and translator alongside the tantric master. The implication is clear: the restrained and peaceful monastic masculinity of the Mahāyāna bodhisattva can only effectively function in a socio-political matrix that has been stabilized and tamed by the violent subjugation of the tantric master.[243] Similarly, the king cannot realize the successful completion of his aspiration to install Buddhism in Tibet until he too surrenders to Padmasambhava's uncontestable tantric prowess. Upon establishing the appropriate hierarchy between them, these three men are then able to forge a powerful masculine alliance to establish Buddhism within the Tibetan land and among its people.

Conclusions

In this chapter I concentrated my analysis on the three most substantial episodes in *Copper Island* and *The Testament of Padmasambhava* in which Padmasambhava interacts with kings. This illuminated a dialectical process whereby Padmasambhava's supremacy in all spheres, encapsulated by his violence and magic, is the source of his power to reshape hierarchy and

[243] This conclusion presents fascinating implications for David DiValerio's 2015 *The Holy Madmen of Tibet*, particularly his analysis of the far-reaching historical tension between competing soteriological methods in Tibetan Buddhism encapsulated by the monastic scholar *geshé* on the one hand, and world-renouncing *yogin* on the other. I engaged this in a paper I presented at the 2017 Rocky Mountain Regional AAR conference entitled "The Fists of My Perfect Teacher: A Queer Analysis of Male *Siddha* Violence." This paper analyzed, via close reading, an encounter between the wild yogin Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (མདོ་མཁྱེན་བརྩེ་ཡེ་ཤེས་རྡོ་རྗེ།) and Dza Patrul Rinpoche (རྫ་དཔལ་སྤྲུལ་ཨོ་རྒྱན་འཇིགས་མེད་ཆོས་ཀྱི་དབང་པོ།), in which Do Khyentse gives Patrul Rinpoche a drunken beating. While the current investigation has stimulated thoughts on new directions for that work, exploring this topic further lies beyond the scope of this paper.

claim hegemonic status in any situation. While this is undeniably hegemonic, the power by which it is accomplished illuminates Chris Beasley's critique of Connell's model, namely: that power is not something to be possessed and wielded, but something more disperse, adaptable, and interpersonal.[244]

Recall here Bridge's theory of hybridity that provided a theoretical lens for understanding how the tantric masculinity of the siddha was able to reshape itself and continually reassert its own supremacy in diverse contexts. That adaptability allowed the siddha to maintain the hegemonic position in the social hierarchy and insulate himself from conventional ethics while simultaneously reinforcing the relevance of that social order for all other men. In Nyangrel and Orgyen's narratives of Padmasambhava, we see this playing out to an even greater degree: his capacity to employ magic, antinomianism, or violent subjugation is fluidly adaptable; he can draw effortlessly from the entire repertoire of siddha behavior to meet the contextual demands of any situation. With ease Padmasambhava is capable of overcoming any obstacle with whatever means necessary. This is the vision of masculinity produced by Nyangrel in his glorified reimagining of the golden age of Tibetan empire the wake of a tumultuous time one that was both compelling and convincing enough to be successfully employed and expanded by Orgyen two hundred years later, and then written through the Tibetan literary tradition in subsequent generations.[245]

[244] Beasley (2012).
[245] I suggest this interpretation of Padmasambhava's tantric masculinity with the caveat that tracing Padmasambhava narratives across time and through different genres of literature would help flesh out the dynamics by which his figure adapts to the contextual demands in which he is deployed.

Conclusion

Hegemonic Masculinity and Tantric Male Privilege

I began this thesis with a call to incorporate gender analysis into the body of scholarship on one of Tibet's most famous and mercurial religious figures, Padmasambhava, siddha extraordinaire, the Second Buddha of Tibet. That call is motivated by my stance that gender analysis of major male religious figures is important to begin marking, tracing, and thematizing what has gone unmarked, untraced, and unthematized for so long: masculinity, the nexus of gender performances, practices, and ideologies that shape and cast a character as convincingly and reliably male in any given milieu. Masculinity has remained masked and invisible through the androcentric dominance that permeates all patriarchal structures. Revealing masculinity (and its construction) is therefore an integral part of the process whereby that androcentric dominance can be denaturalized and, possibly, re-envisioned. It also helps reveal the fault lines along which power flows between, through, and across men. This, in turn, begins to flesh out an understanding of the role gender plays in the mythological development of major religious figures, and how the dynamics of contestation, subversion, and humiliation can be harnessed to challenge instantiated male power.

Following Patrick Geary and Andrew Quintman, I proposed religious narrative literature—specifically Tibetan namthar—as a key site for such analysis to proceed, as it contains valuable information regarding a society's beliefs and values and is a major locus for the development of myth in a Tibetan context. In this regard I also drew from José Cabezón to support the position that these beliefs and values, when represented in literature, have the effect of crystalizing ideal formulations of gender praxis in discrete characters. This led me to Padmasambhava's two earliest and most substantial namthar, Nyangrel Nyima Öser's *Copper Island Biography of*

Padmasambava and Orgyen Lingpa's *The Testament of Padmasambhava*, as the primary objects of this study.

In developing my approach I drew upon the insights of prominent queer theorists in the field of Literary Studies, who have encouraged tracking the major tropes of significant stock characters in a literary corpus in order to unveil the gendered dynamics by which texts construct legible and enduring gender ideology and practice. In order to interrogate Padmasambhava's masculinity specifically, I made substantial use of Raewyn Connell's watershed theory of hegemonic masculinities to frame my investigation, which emphasizes the power antagonisms and contestations for authority that mark masculinity in a patriarchal structure, brining me in turn to the enduring trope of siddha-king contestations and power antagonisms in tantric narrative literature. I brought Connell into conversation with Charlene Makley's gender analysis to show that both emphasize moments of interpersonal contact as the primary site in which gender is simultaneously constructed and enacted. Applying this insight to the domain of literary analysis, I again drew from the insights of queer literary theorists to suggest moments of interaction between characters in a text as the most efficacious site for charting the emergence and deployment of gender (in general) and masculinity (in particular). This reinforced the importance of investigating how Padmasambhava's masculinity was constructed and deployed in his contact with other characters in the text.

In order to bring contemporary gender theory to bear responsibly on early Tibetan materials, I again heeded Cabezón's injunction to situate a text within its appropriate historical context in order to analyze and interpret it. As the two earliest complete namthar of the tantric master, Nyangrel's *Copper Island* and Orgyen's *Testament* are formative texts in shaping and expanding Padmsambhava's mythology, forming an enduring impact upon his status in the Nyingma

imaginaire. Nyangrel and Orgyen were able to craft a vision of Padmasambhava that was compelling to their respective audiences and attuned to the vicissitudes of their era. Nyangrel claimed a reincarnation status that could legitimate his innovations as "first-hand" memories of a previous life. This both authorized his account while legitimating Padmasambhava as a major founding figure in the Nyingma school in wake of sectarian competition of the Sarma schools. Orgyen significantly expanded upon Nyangrel's account, dramatically emphasizing Padmasambhava's extraordinary capacity for violence and thusly crafting a tantric hero who could stand against the encroachment of powerful, malevolent forces threatening the security of Buddhism in Tibet. Both treasure revealers were able to reimagine Tibet's imperial period as a golden era, an extraordinary moment in Tibetan history starring Padmasambhava as the adaptable, miraculous tantric hero bringing Buddhism to an untamed land.

In surfacing the masculinity dynamics at play in these two narratives, I heeded Geary's charge to consider the need to read narratives of revered religious figures intertextually. I looked to one of the most famous accounts of other major siddha figures, Abhayadatta's *The Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas*, which emerged[246] in close historical proximity to Nyangrel's *Copper Island*. Looking broadly at the figuration of the siddha in this collection of tales importantly surfaced central tropes, motifs, and themes in the migration of the male siddha as a stock character in tantric literature from India to Tibet: antinomianism, violence, and magic. These three characteristics mark the siddha's masculinity as distinctly *tantric*. Antinomianism—and the magical reversal of its consequences—becomes a crucial trope in the enactment of tantric masculinity, as its serves as proof of the siddha's attainment and concomitant power to effect

[246] See footnote 12 and the discussion in the introduction on the complex and historically murky manner in which the Tibetan version of this text came about.

changes in the social structure. They are central technologies of the siddha's masculine ascendancy, whereby he is able to claim hegemonic authority in the social hierarchy, a move that simultaneously subverts its relevance for him while reifying it for all others.

Though we also witness the siddha engaging in beneficent activity similar to the more benevolent bodhisattva or monastic scholar (i.e. Śāntarakṣita), that manifestation of the siddha only occurs whenever his authority as a tantric master is immediately acknowledged, granting him his proper place in the hierarchy; if he is not immediately appeased, the threat of subversion looms. This is perhaps most vividly witnessed in the siddhas' interactions with kings—the other most frequent stock character in the tales, second only to the siddha-guru who initiates each protagonist. This underscored Wedemeyer and Davidson's insights into the centrality of kings and their relationship to the siddha in tantric literature. It further emphasized the relevance of these interactions in the construction and deployment of the siddha's tantric masculinity. When considering each of the episodes involving kings, we witnessed three primary variations on the story: kings who become siddhas, kings who readily submit to siddhas, and kings who are subdued by siddhas.

These tropes and themes of tantric masculinity found in *The Life Stories of the Eighty-Four Mahāsiddhas* provided important intertextual context for the task of tracing Padmasambhava's tantric masculinity. When read alongside the mahāsiddhas of the *Life Stories*, Padmasambhava's supremacy as a violent demon-tamer and king-subduer comes into stark relief. Padmasambhava, as a single figure, has the power to draw upon the entire reservoir of siddha behavior, deploying every type of violent, magical, and antinomian act witnessed across many different characters in the *Life Stories*. And yet, where the violence and antinomianism of the siddha tales is magically reversed, Padmasambhava's magical aptitude does not reverse his violent or antinomian deeds.

In fact, it often amplifies them. The extent and scale of Padmasambhava's violence also far exceeds what we find with the mahāsiddhas. In theorizing this shift, this thesis made significant use of Andrew Quintman's concept of the metaphorical anatomy of a biography to convey the notable expansion of episodes of violent subjugation (in addition to the relative degree of that violence) from Nyangrel's *Copper Island* to Orgyen's *Testament*.

In both stories we witness Padmasambhava's character continually adapting to assert his supremacy. I suggest that Padmasambhava's fluid adaptability to situational nuance marks his tantric masculinity as a uniquely adaptable and unequivocally violent hegemonic ideal that ousts kings from the peak of the gendered power. The dynamic quality of Padmasambhava's tantric masculinity subverts the relevance of the social order for himself even as it instantiates it for all others—the ontology of the order is never questioned, merely the siddha's place within it. Once the siddha is properly situated at the top of the social hierarchy, he can then become a strategic ally to the king in the administration of worldly affairs. Padmasambhava is among tantric masters in claiming superior status rather than simply complimenting the kings he encounters; he is structuring an enduring paradigm in Tibetan literature.

The importance of male hierarchies and masculine alliances has far-ranging implications for the study of Tibetan Buddhist traditions: the patron-priest relationship (མཆོད་ཡོན།) is a central aspect of Tibetan political and religious history that endured for centuries, as with the Sakya hierarchs and their Mongol patrons in the thirteenth century. Beyond that, numerous other aspects of Tibetan religious life can be enriched by scholarly attunement to masculinity dynamics: the layout of temples, who gets to walk first in a procession, the seating arrangements at a ritual ceremony, the dynamics of scholarly debate in the monastic courtyard, the relationship

between tantric master and initiated disciple, the abuses of wayward teachers against their students.

It would be interesting to trace the continuing development of Padmasambhava's figure across time periods and through diverse genres of Tibetan literature to see what aspects of his tantric masculinity are deployed in various contexts. Tracing where (and how) narratives of Pamdamsambhava are invoked, and the literary genre in which they are placed, would help surface the various tropes different authors find compelling in their own contexts. This might, theoretically, illuminate Padmasambhava's adaptability as a religious figure, capable of being drawn into diverse contexts and deployed to suite the needs of authors within their socio-historical contexts. Viewed in this perspective, Padmasambhava's representational fluidity might come into relief: the largesse of the tantric master and the large body of tantric literature in which he is situated provides the tantric Buddhist author with a large repertoire of traits, characteristics, behaviors, and themes from which to draw in order to craft a character compelling to their particular audience(s). Such a view of Padmasambhava would further insulate him from the tendency to reify a particular configuration or literary presentation as *the* "authentic" or "genuine" picture of him, and allows for a larger, more fluid picture of the tantric master.

Such is my aspiration for the next incarnation of this study. I imagine that such a project would reveal an even greater degree of adaptability available to the tantric master, as various authors, poets, treasure revealers, and devotees employ him to grapple with the demands of their particular contexts. Perhaps his violence becomes less central and his beneficence emphasized, since the hegemonic structure has been established. Or perhaps his capacity for violent subjugation will always be his hallmark, ready to overcome even the fiercest enemy. Whatever

we might find, it will only serve to increase our appreciation of the tantric masculinity of one of Tibet's greatest siddhas.

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