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A comparative study of Buddhist version of the "Epic of Gesar
of Ling". (Volumes I and II)

Kornman, Robin Brooks, Ph.D.

Princeton University, 1995

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A BUDDHIST VERSION OF THE *EPIC OF
GESAR OF LING*

Volume 1 of 2

Robin Kornman

A DISSERTATION
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY
OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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BY THE DEPARTMENT OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

January 1995

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A Comparative Study of a Buddhist Version of the *Epic of Gesar
of Ling*

Abstract

The *Gesar of Ling Epic* is the major secular narrative of Buddhist Central Asia. It probably originated in Tibet, but versions exist in many other languages, including Mongol and Chinese. It tells the story of a divine warrior/sorcerer hero who is born in Tibet to defeat demon kings who have taken over all the great empires and countries of Asia. Gesar has magical weapons, a flying horse, all the powers of a Buddha, and the aid of a vast pantheon of Buddhist and local deities. The epic is still sung today by Tibetan bards in numerous dialects, and strangely, it continues to grow in size. It is accompanied by a panoply of religious practices, some based on the native religion of Tibet and others adapted from Buddhist Tantric rituals which have assimilated Gesar into the pantheon of enlightened guardian spirits.

The *Gesar Epic* is still in its period of flourishing and composition. More than a hundred volumes of composed or transcribed materials have been discovered and more than 2100 hours of oral performances have been recorded. The *Gesar Corpus* is without a doubt the largest body of epic literature in existence.

Anthropological studies of the *Gesar* have been done, particularly in Paris where R.A. Stein established a tradition of Gesar study and where his students continue his work. This dissertation, on the other hand, approaches the *Gesar* as a literary

piece, looking at its plot structures and divine machinery. We examine in particular one of the more literary versions of the epic, the version of the *Gesar* edited in the 19th century by the great scholar, Mipham Gyatso. Large sections of this version are translated along with related materials and receive a detailed linguistic and literary commentary.

With these materials available, we then compare the *Gesar* with the *Iliad*. The critical tradition of Aristotle's *Poetics* and of Horace is evoked and the Tibetan epic is examined using these traditional Western tools of analysis from the Western tradition of literary criticism. This includes a detailed study of the cosmology of the Mipham *Gesar*.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	vi
Preface	1
Chapter I- Introduction	22
Notes	99
Chapter II- Is There a "Complete" Gesar	114
Notes	164
Chapter III- The Celestial Machinery of <i>The Epic of Gesar of Ling</i>	167
Notes	260
Chapter IV- Translation of Chapter I of <i>Lha Ling</i>	270
Notes	303
Chapter V- The History of the Goloks	341
Notes	384
Chapter VI- Conclusion	394
Notes	412
Bibliography	413

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Preface

This dissertation will be a preliminary study of the Mipham edition of the great Tibetan oral and written and printed narrative, *The Epic of Gesar of Ling* (Tibetan: *gLing*).¹ It will include a translation for illustrative purposes of the first chapter of the first book of the epic. This monograph is a first step towards completion of that larger project. A translation of this entire version of the epic, in four volumes, would amount to some 1600 pages in English, including commentary. When my translation and my commentary of the entire *Gesar* are done, Western literary scholars will have the materials they need to evaluate this Buddhist heroic narrative and compare it with the other great epic traditions of the world. For the first time they will be able to examine the language, structure, and meaning of a full version of the epic using Western critical terms

The aim of this dissertation, then, is to begin this process of bringing the Tibetan *Gesar Epic* into the realm of Western literary criticism and the domain of literary theory. This work has already been done to bring Aristotelian literary criticism and several other schools of academic thought to bear on the great Indian epics. There is the comparative work of Gregory Nagy, which is philological and linguistic in its orientation.² There is the French school of mythic analysis founded by Dumézil³ and continued by Biardeau and Hildebeitel. There is the work of van Buitenen and Victor Turner of

the Chicago school of History of Religion studies. And behind all of these thinkers is the over-arching influence of Mircea Eliade with his search for religious universalisms common to all humanity and commonly underlying every legendary and epic text.

The work of Alf Hiltebeitel actually represents a mediation of theory and method between these different schools of thought---taking elements of Dumézil's approach, which seeks a pre-existing substratum of *mythoi* as the basis for every epic, and elements of the more textually based approach of Biardeau, who makes text of the epic a cause in itself. Thus, Wendy Doniger describes Hiltebeitel's balanced approach as a "both text and epic" approach.⁴ These are some of the principal realms of Western methodology which have dealt with Indian epic.

I would like to use treatments like theirs on the vast corpus of materials related to the sagas of the Central Asian hero, Gesar of Ling, but with one major difference. My study will be literary whereas theirs is, let us say, anthropological.

The home bases for most of the above mentioned scholars are disciplines in the social sciences such as religious studies, anthropology, and ethnology, folklore, linguistics, etc. None of them are using methods of study native to the field of literary criticism or comparative literature. My theoretical basis, on the other hand, is the world of approaches to text which have descended from Horace and Aristotle's *Poetics*.

One cannot properly evaluate the *Gesar* epic without exploring

in detail the relationship between Tibetan religious observance and the text. So far as that issue is concerned, Dumézil and those influenced by him are quite helpful. Comparisons with the *Gesar* suggested by their studies of Indian epic should be fruitful of new ideas about Tibetan epic. But their interpretation of their texts relies too exclusively on studies of religion. I feel that in the study of epic there should also be a stable ground of literary phenomena to observe and appreciate and enjoy--- the verse, the figures of speech, the unities and disunities of plot, the vivid characterizations, the sense of dream and reverie and fulfillment of dreams in fictional evocation, the play of narrative voice, the play of humour, the literary arousal of literary emotions such as catharsis, irony, and delight in the grotesque. One should study the particular kinds of literary pleasure the text creates, influence of previous literary texts, the tribal dynamic of memorized verse accounts, the regional affiliations with the epic which develop as it is written and sung. These are primary features of epic text and are phenomena best studied by literary criticism and comparative literature. My interpretation of one edition of the *Gesar Epic* as literature is an innovation in the domain of *Gesar* studies simply because it will be based on this kind of literary reading.

There is, however, already a richly elaborated Western tradition of reading the Tibetan version of the *Gesar Epic* ---a tradition developed in Paris by Roif A. Stein and his students. It is founded on structuralist ethnographic principles of analysis

developed in Paris contemporaneously with Levi Strauss. But it is not actually based on Levi Strauss's work. It is, rather, a different school of anthropological structuralism--- an expression of Stein's own scholarly vision.

R.A. Stein began his career as a sinologist. In the 50s, he was doing research on the Tibetan marches of China, in what was then called Ta-chien-lu and is now K'ang-ting hsien in the region in Sz Ch'üan. This is an area where Tibetan and Chinese merchants have met for centuries on the road between Lhasa and the Chinese capital. There he discovered a woodblock print of the Tibetan epic and, recognizing its peculiar value, transcribed it using the Pelliot romanization. With the help of an informant who knew Tibetan and could communicate with him in Chinese, Stein produced a partial translation of the first three books of this text.⁵

From this point onwards Stein's researches expanded vastly into Central Asia. He acquired Tibetan and the use of other Central Asian languages. He produced a significant corpus of works on or related to the *Epic*.⁶ This corpus expresses a distinct critical agenda in epic studies, an agenda based on Stein's experience in Asian realms of thought and the scientific concerns of his particular school of anthropology. My undertaking to translate all volumes of the xylograph which he found in the border regions of Eastern Tibet is a continuation of his work and the scholarly agendas he and his students established in Paris over the last forty years.

My debt to Stein especially shows in the matrix of texts I

have chosen to translate in this thesis. One of the great accomplishments of Stein and his successors has been to produce bibliographies of other Tibetan literary and religious works related to his edition of the *Gesar*. They suggested a hermeneutic--- a specific fashion in which these texts were connected with each other to form a distinct method of understanding and an interpretation native to the Eastern Tibetan oral tradition. This affiliation of stories, oral accounts, Buddhist and native liturgies, and Tibetan scriptures is particularly evident in Stein's glossaries. In his abbreviated translation of the *Gesar* text Stein presented a 48 page reasoned glossary of epic terms and colloquialisms. The glossary was divided into several categories: *vocabulaire général*, *vocabulaire religieux*, *épithètes*, and *mots descriptifs*.⁷ To this he added an index of proper names (Stein '56. pp. 141-166) which finds the epic characters not simply in the *Gesar*, but also in the other literary and religious texts in his bibliography. Following in Stein's footsteps several Parisian scholars have continued to explore in their glossaries, commentaries, and analyses of vocabulary the previous texts of the *Gesar*, thereby showing further the shape of the tradition.⁸ To identify this tradition was no mean feat, considering the immense size of the *Gesar* corpus within which it is nested.

My interviews with Tibetan Buddhist lamas in Nepal and in the West confirm the connections Stein noticed in the texts. There does indeed seem to be a 19th century tradition of specific written and

semi-oral writings which surround Stein's version of the *Gesar* and which evoke it constantly. They are read and studied and sung and chanted by a group of Tibetan lamas whom I have interviewed in the last decade. Most of these informants reported that their families were related to people living in the vicinity of the Eastern Tibetan area of Dergê and areas near the Magyal Pomra mountain range. These people were all either directly or indirectly students of the great Eastern Tibetan poet, scholar and master of meditation, Dilgo Khyentse (mKhyen rtse) Rinpoche. Together they project a single cultural identity which is connected with the corpus of texts Stein identified. To read his *Gesar* without looking at this corpus, this hermeneutic retinue to the *Gesar*, is to miss much of the import of the text.

Therefore in order to give the shape of the whole Eastern Tibetan sub-tradition, I present in this dissertation translations not just of the epic, but of selections from this related literature. First there is a translation of the first chapter of what I call "the Mipham *Gesar*" --- Stein's xylograph. This translation will be accompanied by a lengthy introduction and an elaborate linguistic and folkloric commentary. Then there will be a translation of a tribal history connected with the epic, the "History of the Goloks," as I call it. Afterwards, there are also translations and literary analyses of a series of liturgical practices dedicated to *Gesar* himself written by Mipham.

The presence of the *Gesar* religious chanting texts requires

some explanation. We have already discussed studies of the religious affiliations of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Ramāyāna*. Connected with these two works is a vast tradition of religious practice dating from the Indian middle ages and founded in part on the medieval scriptures known as *Purāṇas* and in part on the ancient scriptures known as *Vedas*.⁹ Studies abound which relate the literary characterizations of the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* to the practices which worship them in their hero deity cults. This is easily done, because we can still observe the vast religious activity which surrounds the Indian epics.

The same is true for the *Gesar Epic*. Associated with the popular oral narratives which recount the exploits of Gesar and his companions are a world of chanting practices which worship and supplicate these heroes as gods. Some of the editions of the epic are explicitly related to particular traditions of religious praxis. For example, the liturgies whose partial translations are in Chapter III are written by the famous 19th century lama, Mipham Gyatso. One could say that he was the supervising editor of the edition of the *Gesar* used by Stein, for the edition was produced by one of his disciples at his command and under his close supervision. His liturgies are meant to accompany that version. This was assumed by Stein, who cross-referenced expressions in the Mipham liturgies with expressions in the Mipham *Gesar*.

This brings up a very interesting point in comparative literature. If we step back and look at the vast activity of the

Indian and Tibetan epic traditions, one thing is obvious--- how different this is from the field of activity of the Homeric epics. The *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* precede any other records of Greek religion. Plato remarked on this point in the *Republic*, saying that what we know of the gods comes from Homer and the poets.¹⁰ Reconstructions of ancient Greek rites and customs are based on close examinations of the language of Homer, his hymns, Hesiod, and a very few other works regarded as relics of the Mycenaean age.¹¹ It is as if Homer himself were one source of Greek religious ideas.

Some classicists in their speculations about Greek religion in pre-Homeric times imagine a remarkable, exceptional relation between myth and formal religion in which narrative texts retell myths and seem to both precede and originate elements of formal religion. Take, for example, Helene Foley's speculations on the theology of the mysteries--- speculations which accompany her translation of the *Hymn to Demeter*. She begins by saying, "Greek religion had no formal theology, no priestly class of interpreters of an authoritative divine scripture. Greeks experienced religion through ritual and myth, and the myths (and, though sometimes more slowly, the rituals) were endlessly changed and reimagined for every generation by its artists and poets."¹² She goes on to explain that there is no Greek equivalent to the "powerful exegetical tradition" of Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. In other words, there is no single, orthodox institutionalized religion or fixed scriptural basis for the epic narratives, the Homeric poems, or for the rituals

to which they refer. The reader, in order to understand Greek epic, must bring together a floating world of meanings and mythos from the ocean of poetic writings: "...myth such as that told in the *Hymn to Demeter* derived their meaning from the narrative itself, from their relation to ritual, and from their similarity to closely related myths. The reader or hearer of the narrative is left to fill in what we experience as the gaps and to explain the religious significance of the story in the context of his/her knowledge of other and sometimes conflicting narratives about gods, humans, and the relation between the two." (p.85)

Whether this is true or not, it certainly marks a fundamental difference between the Greek narratives and Asian epics. Nobody would ever think of saying such a thing for Asian epics. The *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Gesar* are not originary so far as their religious elements are concerned. They are much later developments than the scriptures of their respective religions, and those scriptures are around for us to examine. The reader of Asian epics has a sense that there is a stable basis for interpretation in the surrounding institutionalized religion--- these long-standing religions with their fully elaborated canons are the cosmological and mythological ground of the narratives.

This is so different from the situation for Greek religion and epic. Perhaps the classicists like Foley are correct--- that the epics are indeed originary, are indeed one source of Greek religion. If they are not, then the real source of Greek religion, the truly

primary texts, beliefs, and ritual structures are hidden from us and must be unearthed and reconstructed through archeological research and speculation. But for Asian literature everything is either fully documented or present and observable. We can see the Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese scriptures from which the religion of the Asian epics evolved. We can see the origins of the verse forms in earlier poetry. We can document more than a thousand years of observance preceding the religion of the epics. And most importantly, we can observe the cults of the epics in contemporary society, for the religions of the *Mahābhārata*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and the *Gesar* are still practiced, almost as widely as ever in their history.

And so, in this sense the Homeric epics appear to be absolutely unique. Does this make a real difference in the textuality or reception of the epics? Do we read Homer differently from *Gesar* because Homer has no pre-text? This is a question which can be answered experientially by reading carefully the commentary I have provided to the translation of Book I, Chapter I of the Mipham *Gesar*.

My personal feeling (and this is not meant as a complete answer) is that there is a great difference in reception, but in a way it is only a matter the confidence a scholar might feel in his or her knowledge. In many places where Homeric commentaries are based on speculation and reconstruction---the commentary on the *Gesar* is based on fieldwork and positive evidence and unquestionably correct identifications of previous texts. Where we must be speculative about the religious meaning of elements of the *Iliad* we

can be certain about the Mipham *Gesar* --- for priests in Mipham's tradition can be interviewed and give authoritative replies. Their answers can be checked by observation of ceremonies and bardic performances. It will be seen, for example, that some of the religious conundrums that arose in the translation of Book I were answered by asking a single Tibetan lama and then cross-checked by interviewing two or three others on the same subject. The result is a sense of confidence in our knowledge of the context and the reading experience of the epic.

This is not to say that the fieldwork we can do on the Mipham *Gesar* tells us authoritatively about ancient religious or literary history. It tells us the relationship between text and tradition, between performance and reader reception in the modern period--- the period which coincides with the flourishing of this version of the epic. That is the knowledge which cannot be had for the *Iliad*.¹³

There is another important way in which the Greek epics seem to differ from all the Asian grand epic traditions. We can observe the variety of versions of the epic sagas that exist in Asia. There is a much greater diversity of narratives. For example, we have more than a hundred volumes of written down *Gesar* epics in Tibetan. There are more than 2100 hours of recordings of *Gesar* performances archived in Lhasa and Peking. Beyond that there are an as yet uncounted numbers of liturgies which concern *Gesar* and his retinue as cult objects. And collateral versions of the *Gesar* fan out across Central Asia and the Far East.

The same goes for the Indian epics. It is, of course, a matter of controversy in the case of the *Mahābhārata*. Van Buitenen's English translation relies on the so-called Northern Recension and peripheralizes a great number of variant editions. Stories which appear in these other versions are seen as "interpolations" in the epic. The assumption is that the Northern version is earlier than the others. There are numerous problems with this view; Hildebeitel and Biardeau speak for the more inclusive canon. And there is much recent work which embraces this diversity.¹⁴ In this sense the observable activity surrounding these epics is much greater than the activity surrounding the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and Hesiod. The diversity of the *Gesar* manifestations contrasts starkly with the singleness of Homer.

To me this suggests that at one time Homer was surrounded by an equally vast array of competing tellings of the story of Troy.

This point will be considered again later in this monograph, after we have considered in some detail the diversity of manifestation of just one province's version of the *Gesar*. We will resort then to conclusions suggested by recent studies of Indian epic in contemporary life, particularly a collection of essays edited by Paul Richman entitled *Many Rāmāyaṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*.¹⁵

In this context it should be pointed out that this study of an Eastern Tibetan version is narrow compared with the vastness of the total *Gesar* corpus. The epic differs greatly from version to version

and it is impossible at this point to evaluate in detail its full range. In 1959 Stein attempted to do this by giving a richly annotated bibliography of the epic in every language. He included charts which compared the contents of versions he had listed. Stein's effort to survey the entire corpus failed for the simple reason that a great many more editions and bardic performances were discovered in the next three decades. In fact, the work of bardic composition itself still continues. Even if in certain senses, with the invasion of Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora, the epic has begun its decline, still in another sense the epic has not yet reached its full growth.

My approach has been to deal with the massiveness of the *Gesar* by concentrating on one version--- a version whose retinue of associated texts has been particularly well defined by Stein and his Parisian establishment.

Even that version is too lengthy to consider in one study. It will take a decade simply to read carefully and translate correctly the full four or six volumes. Therefore, what I have done here is to take one event from the epic, one saga, one episode or *locus*, and compare it across several different editions. Thus, in this study, which focuses on the first book of the *Gesar*, we can look at and compare a number of different beginnings to the epic. It appears that the styles of beginning have something to do with both religious and geographic affiliations of the authors or audience or readership. And it seems that several Buddhist versions of the *Gesar* assume the same story as background, but decide to tell different portions

of it.

In this context some consideration will be given to Tibetan and Chinese scholarly treatments of the *Gesar*. These go back several centuries, actually. For example, since the beginning of the Ch'ing Dynasty the Chinese have dealt in a systematic way with the epic as an element in the formation of Tibetan political identity. Editions of the *Gesar* have been used to further Chinese Central Asian diplomatic policy. There is room for field work in regard to this issue. Therefore, in this essay further lines of research both into historical Chinese uses of the *Gesar* and the current policy of the People's Republic of China towards it will be suggested.

Outline of the Dissertation

We will begin (Chapter I) with a general survey of the *Gesar Epic* as a literary work. Actually, from this point of view there is no such thing as a *Gesar Epic*. The huge corpus of transcripts, manuscripts, printed chapters, liturgies, folktales, and paintings is too large and diverse to consider as a single work with variations. One is not tempted to emulate Dumézil and van Buitenen in looking for a primordial text.

But we can submit the great, varied body of *Gesar* textual materials to an analysis according to plot motives and we can extract from the hundred plus volumes by different authors or sung by diverse bards an outline of a complete epic.

The outline would give us an image of a putative complete epic and each putative chapter in the epic would exist in many different editions and versions. For example, there are at least three versions of the epic which begin with a book devoted to the machinations of deities who bring about the birth of Gesar in human form. These deities meet in a divine council.

Now the story of the divine council is present in one way or another in most retellings of the *Gesar*, but not every version of the epic devotes a whole book to this event. In some versions this beginning story is not narrated at all. In others it is simply a few sentences. In others, such as the Mipham version, it constitutes the entire first book of the Epic.

On the other hand, there are not, as far as I know, bards who only sing this saga. That honor is reserved for the portions of the epic which are considered "core chapters" or "kernels." For example, the story of Gesar's conquest of the Demon of the North occurs on its own in some cases--- unconnected with any explicit full recounting of the adventures of Gesar. And most collections of Gesar stories which are thought to be "complete" include this chapter. So *The Conquest of the Demon (bdud gling)* is considered by a number of scholars to be one of the kernel chapters in the epic.

Picking out the essential plot elements in this way, we can construct a hypothetical complete *Gesar*. This has been done by several scholars who have done speculative studies of the entire corpus. In the introduction we will tell the whole story of the *Gesar*

using the matrices developed by these scholars. Along the way, as we build up the complete story, we will look at a number of issues in comparative literature which are raised by this examination. We will compare the *Gesar* with the two great Indian epics, with the Homeric epic tradition, and, in order to consider a theological question, with *The Divine Comedy*. The questions and issues raised in this section cannot, of course, be dealt with in detail in this dissertation. But they could be treated in depth in future literary studies of the *Gesar*.

Having surveyed in a sense the plot of the entire corpus, we will then begin to focus in on more manageable subjects. First we will consider the Mipham version of the epic, describing some of its peculiarities and arguing for why it should be translated before other versions. Then we will concentrate on the first book of the Mipham *Gesar*. The first chapter of this book is translated in this dissertation. It is concerned chiefly with the religious aspects of the *Gesar* story---the affairs and plans of the gods who rule in an Olympian manner over the unfolding plot. Like the beginnings of so many epics, these opening chapters are deeply concerned with divine teleology.¹⁶ Our introductory study, therefore, while proposing numerous areas of literary research which could illuminate the Tibetan epic, will nevertheless concentrate on a literary examination of two points: the beginnings of the story and the cosmology of the *Gesar*--- the two subjects for which the accompanying translations provide the reader with direct evidence.

We will not look at cosmology in the fashion of religious studies, but rather as critics of epic literature do. That is, we will look at the divine figures who appear in the opening chapters of the *Gesar* as the *divine machinery* of the plot. The use of such machinery in a traditional Tibetan narrative context will be illustrated by a lengthy translation of the fabulous "History of the Goloks"--- the mythic story of the founding of a tribe of Tibetans associated genealogically with Gesar of Ling. In fact, the *Golok History* will provide in narrative form a sort of guide through the components of indigenous Tibetan religion as it relates to Gesar. In that particular translation we will see the gods not as figures in liturgies and philosophical texts, but as actual *personae* with personal interests and intentions. We will see the gods uniting with the race of men to produce divine lineages of Tibetan kings. We will see the Buddhist and non-Buddhist gods descending to interfere politically with human affairs, and we will see human beings reciprocally involving themselves in "Olympian" politics.

Continuing our study of the cosmology and divine machinery of the *Gesar* we will move to a discussion of the Gesar liturgies written by Mipham. In those church services and chanting practices we will see these gods transformed from characters in a story into abstract divine principles. In this way, by comparing the same figures as they appear in the epic, in Tibetan folktales, and in Mipham's liturgies we will be able to document in great detail the relationships between the epic's dramatic figures and the

surrounding religious context.

Chapter II will ask the question "Is there a complete *Gesar Epic*?" The sense of this question is simply to wonder whether there is a single account which might underlie the diverse chapters and performances which have been accumulated across the centuries and across Central Asia. R.A. Stein attempted to answer that question through a structuralist analysis of the plot elements in all extant versions. Samten Karmay, in a paper circulated at the *Centres d'Études Tibétaines* in Paris¹⁷ argued for a primordial story of *Gesar* based on the book of the *Gesar* entitled, "Taming the Demon of the North." Their arguments use anthropological data, exposing plot motives such as are catalogued in the Aarne-Thompson Motive Index.¹⁸

The same question can be answered using a technique from the tradition of Aristotelian criticism--- an analysis of the beginning of the epic to project the middle and end.¹⁹ Just as the plot of the *Iliad* could be seen as a fulfillment of the "ends of Zeus" as announced in the *proem*, so the opening lines of the Mipham *Gesar* suggest an outline of the structure of the entire epic based on the ends announced by the Buddhist gods in Book I, Chapter I.

Chapter III will be a comparatist study of the cosmology of the Mipham *Gesar*. Without a description of the pantheons used in the epic, the translations that follow would be meaningless except to a few Tibetanist anthropologists. And the gods of *Gesar* are interesting in themselves as well, for, as one might expect of a

work written in proximity to the Silk Route, the *machinery* of the epic is incredibly heterogenous. In Chapter III, I have tried to indicate the diverse pantheons employed in the *Gesar* and to identify them according to their national origins. Thus, the Chinese deities and divine forces will be distinguished from the Native Tibetan and Indian deities and their several and distinct literary functions will be discussed.

This anatomy of the divine machinery will invite a final comparative study at the end of Chapter III: the author of the Mipham *Gesar* was a Tibetan Buddhist. Like his Christian counterparts, he used colorful non-Buddhist deities to enrich the imagery and make the argument pleasantly more intricate. There are actually many similarities between the Christian epics which use pagan machinery and the Buddhist epics which assimilate all sorts of non-Buddhist deities. We will observe a few of these similarities and suggest a future study in comparative literature which could look at the phenomenon of celestial assimilation in more detail.

This portion of the dissertation will be based on the studies and thinking of Thomas Greene in particular, but also in a more diffuse way on the approaches of Francis Yates and Jane Harrison on the presence of religious elements in Classical Western narratives and criticism.

One last point of introduction about the cosmology chapter: the cosmology of the Mipham *Gesar* will be documented by Mipham's own religious compositions--- practices he wrote for the performances

of services of worship of Gesar. Mipham was one of the most extraordinary theologians in the history of Buddhism and one of its greatest metaphysical thinkers. For him to be responsible for an epic would be like giving Thomas Aquinas oversight of writing the *Divine Comedy*. Taking traditional elements of the cult of Gesar, Mipham virtually designed a new religious sect. He then had his student, a certain 'Thub bstan 'Gyur med, edit/compose an epic to go with it. It is as if the Bible had been composed to fit with Jewish ritual and theology instead of the reverse.

This makes the Mipham *Gesar* as fascinating as it is, perhaps unrepresentative of the entire *Gesar Corpus*. It is worth translating because it is magnificent, profound, and beautiful. But its present popularity in China and Tibet is an accident of religious politics and the vagaries of Asian publishers. My translation will prove this by clearly pointing out the non-oral elements and liturgical citations lifted from classical Buddhist literature and inserted in this edition--- translations of Sanskrit texts, passages of *kāvya* (Sanskrit Court Poetry), and learned religious sermons which an illiterate bard could never have mastered. I have tried in the shorter translations to give a sense of how different this edition is from some of the others which are perhaps of a more oral provenance. But only time and further study will show us in what degree it is representative and in what degree it is unique.

All of the works I employ as points of comparison are from Tibetan woodblock prints and therefore even when they appear to be

texts which are relics of ancient days, such as the Ladakhi *Gesar* discovered by Francke, are still fundamentally artifacts of written culture. A study of truly and undeniably oral *Gesar* materials must wait for another season of scholarship and for the time we all hope will come when the Chinese and Tibetan scholars in the People's Republic will be able to collaborate at length and in depth with Western scholars.

Chapter IV will be a translation with elaborate commentary of the first chapter of the epic. The commentary will address literary issues primarily, but it will also discuss any linguistic peculiarities in the language. The commentary is based on several years of work with a variety of native informants.

Chapter V will be an explanation and translation of a narrative written by another famous lama in the tradition of Mipham, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje. In his autobiography he wrote a brief history, some twenty folios long, of the Golok tribe---a loose confederation of warriors living in Eastern Tibet and Amdo, near the Amnye Machen. These people are heavily implicated in the *Gesar* epic and their history will tell us much about the religion and cosmology of the epic. It is included as an additional documentation to the comments and generalizations I present in Chapter III, the Cosmology Chapter.

Chapter I – Introduction

The *Gesar of Ling Epic* is the Central Asian equivalent of the complete Indian epics, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*.²⁰ If the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* had been a complete recital of the story of the Trojan war, then the *Gesar* would have been equivalent to them as well. As it is, one chapter of the Mipham edition of *Gesar* is approximately the length of the *Iliad*. And so we must say that the *Gesar Epic* is really comparable only to the hypothetically greater "epic cycle," the multi-authored series of Greek epics telling the full tale of the Trojan War.²¹

Although, the *Gesar* is an oral epic, the versions studied here will be ones which already have been committed to writing. Although they have been written down, they are still sung, somewhat in the style of bards who give oral performances.²² These versions of the *Gesar* are prosimetric. That is, they are composed in verses which alternate with prose narrative passages. In this they are somewhat like the Chinese *pien-wen* discovered at Tun-huang and treated by Victor Mair.²³ The verses are ballads sung to epic tunes quite similar in style and usage to the melodies found in Western oral heroic song cycles such as the Russian *byliny*.²⁴ The melodies are also like those observed by Lord in Serbian oral

epics,²⁵ that is, they are highly repetitive and do not involve melodic originality; the melodies are conventional tunes sung in numerous contexts. They are not especially related to the content, but simply function as an epic melodic vehicle for the verse.²⁶ I would say, however, that they are lovely melodies--- a fact which strikingly distinguishes them from most Tibetan Buddhist religious music.

The *Gesar* is sung in numerous dialects of Tibetan and in several other languages as well, particularly dialects of Mongolian. But, like the Greek and Indian epics, the *Gesar* has unalterably departed the world of purely oral phenomena and entered the realm of *belles lettres*. It has entered into print and now has editions in numerous manuscripts, in woodblock printings,²⁷ and in type-set forms. This process of transformation into literature began at least as early as the 17th century, when the Manchu emperor of China, K'ang Hsi, sponsored the publication of a Mongolian edition of *Gesar*.

The Chinese interest has continued since that time and is particularly strong today. The People's Republic of China has taken great interest in the *Gesar* and Mandarin translations of chapters from several editions have appeared in a popular, readable form. The translations are directed towards an interested Han reading public, a public for whom the *Gesar*, like Tibetan culture at large, seems to represent the element of the exotic,²⁸ a sort of Chinese version of *orientalism*.²⁹ The Chinese translations are picturesque, enjoyable,

and of quite variable accuracy. Along with these translations there has been considerable Chinese scholarly activity both in Peking and in the regions which boast large Tibetan populations, such as Kansu, Sz-ch'üan and the city of Chendu.

There have recently even been government sponsored pro-Gesar propaganda campaigns that highlight the ancient relations between Tibet and China.³⁰ Part of the epic records the story of how Gesar married a Chinese princess. The son of this match is himself a hero and certain episodes are devoted totally to his adventures. These episodes emphasizing the Chinese son of Gesar are now touted by the Chinese government and posters of the son can be found across Tibet. The story echoes an historical event important in the construction of the Tibetan national identity, the marriage of King Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sGam po) to a T'ang princess. Songtsen Gampo was the founder of the eighth century Tibetan empire. Although, obviously, a layman, he is considered to be a Buddhist saint who continues to reincarnate among the Tibetans as a religious leader. The currents of typological reference here are fascinating, for the Chinese son represents warm relations with the Han people while at the same time making of Gesar a type of Songtsen Gampo and thus exciting Tibetan ethnic pride.³¹

This Janus-faced strategy, facing simultaneously towards a subject people and towards the imperially favored racial groups, is a tried and true method for the Chinese imperium. The same sort of agenda was undoubtedly present in the K'ang Hsi Mongolian edition of

Gesar. For, during this period it was Manchu policy to unite the Tibetans, Mongolians, and Manchu bannermen through common religious cults. The propagation of the cult of Gesar and his unification with the Chinese god of war was part of this overall plan.

That does not mean that the Mongolian edition was the first written version of *Gesar*. We actually have no strong proof that this epic ever existed in an exclusively oral form. To say that it is oral at this point simply means that most of the written texts we have discovered also existed at one time or another in an oral form as chapters memorized by Tibetan singers. It is, as a matter of fact, quite difficult to tell whether specific chapters of the *Gesar* were originally oral or originally written. As we will see when we look at the publishing history of the Mipham edition, experiences of inspiration and divine grace can give Tibetan editors a tremendous sense of authority--- authority so great that they feel competent to rewrite the *Gesar Epic* or even, as the chapters written by modern Tibetan lamas prove, augment the epic with lengthy verse accounts of new adventures.

Furthermore, there is a kind of cult of the written word among the Tibetans which muddies the scholar's vision of textual origins. Many *Gesar* bards proudly use handwritten prompt texts. As one would expect from Lord and Parry's theories of orality and memorization, these prompt texts are never precisely what the bards actually sing, and the uttered text changes from performance

to performance. Nevertheless, like almost any written materials in Buddhist culture, the texts are objects of sacred regard. Even illiterate bards sometimes pretend that in performances they are actually reading aloud from the texts sitting in their laps.³² Thus, it is difficult to prove that any text is of oral provenance.

On the other hand, cases of there being a written provenance to oral texts have been quite well documented. Alexander Macdonald, for example, recorded more than a hundred hours performed by an illiterate Tibetan bard in India. The performances showed all the formulaic characteristics of oral verse narrative---- numerous repetitions, false starts, formulaic epithets, and complex formulaic elements used interchangeably. Macdonald originally took the bard's performances to be a large, genuinely oral Gesar. Portions of the performance, however, turned out to have had a written background. Texts the singer had heard monks read aloud were imported into the recital, transformed into additional stories added to the epic. Some of these stories were strange indeed. In one the ancient Tibetan king Srong-btsan sGam-po met with the Dalai Lama, an historically impossible incident and one that would not be found in any one written text the monk had heard. Macdonald had originally thought to publish a transcription of the performance, but decided not to, because it included so much material of written provenance. He remarked that the way the bard included extraneous stories in the narrative reminded him of other story-teller traditions such as the *ro-sgrung* stories, which he had translated earlier. [Macdonald,

1990] 33

The religious background of the epic is also a matter of controversy. Francke, one of the earliest Western scholars of the *Gesar Epic*,³⁴ believed that the legend itself was pre-Buddhist and he attempted to demonstrate this by publishing a Ladakhi edition which happened to be very different from the usual popular Tibetan *Gesar*. The Ladakhi edition had some Buddhist elements, but seemed to foreground native Tibetan religion much more than the Buddha Dharma, so that one is almost tempted to call it a "Bön Gesar."³⁵

From the point of view of literary structure, the Ladakhi *Gesar* is even less Buddhist, for it does not reflect a Buddhist agenda in the plot argument laid out in its first chapter. That is to say, unlike for example the Mipham version, it does not describe the birth of Gesar as the result of a complicity of Buddhist deities who, lead by Padmasambhava, help Gesar fulfill the divine plan of overcoming a plague of anti-Dharmic demons.

Although Francke's theories are not broadly held today, he is certainly right about one thing--- there certainly are a great number of plot motives and legends deriving from non-Buddhist myths and epics both East and West of Tibet. Whether any of these cultic elements and non-Buddhist stories are ultimately native to Tibet depends on whether one thinks that the popular religion of Tibet originated in that country. We will see in Chapter II that there are legends in the Ladakhi *Gesar* which have found their way across Tibet to the Northeast and become part of the origin tales of the

Golok tribesmen. Now, the Goloks claim that their founder came from Upper Tsari, which seems to be located near Ladakh, in the West. So it is possible to imagine that this non-Buddhist version of Gesar partakes at least in degree of some pre-existing reservoir of tales and foundation myths from West of Tibet. Whether Francke's Ladakhi *Gesar* is the primordial version or not, it gives an authentic picture of important Bön and native Tibetan thematics which are integral to the *Gesar* corpus.

As far as literary influences are concerned, the *Gesar* is an extremely heterogeneous work. Portions of the *Rāmāyana* seem to be present and there are even stories from the Byzantine *Romance of Alexander* which seem to have found their way into the *Gesar*.³⁶ In fact, with the help of the *Tun-huang* Tibetan and Mongolian manuscripts, we can even trace the progress by which some of these legends moved from the West to the East. This point will be discussed in Chapter III when we examine the influence of Central Asian shamanism and Chinese Taoist religious movements on the *Gesar*. Stein '59 devotes several chapters to the subject.

The Plot of the *Gesar*

The broad outline of the plot is given in Alexandra David-Neel's 1931 prose summary, *La Vie Surhumaine de Guésar de Ling*.³⁷ The outline of the epic she gives in her introduction to that book is also excellent. A detailed summary and comparative analysis of the plot

thematics is given by R.A. Stein, 1959. Geoffrey Samuels, relying on a detailed Chinese bibliography by Wang Yiyuan,³⁸ gives an even denser summary. Both Wang's and Samuels's summaries purposefully leave out many famous episodes. But they have the advantage of closely following the Eastern Tibetan (Kham) versions from which the Mipham edition derives. So let us survey now this version of the plot of *Gesar*.

The Eastern Tibetan (*Khams*) version of *Gesar*

The story begins with a saga whose title I would translate as *The Land of Ling*, a *Genesis*-like description of the creation of the country of Ling, which is taken to be the same as the modern province of *gLing tshang* in Eastern Tibet. A few words should be said about this locality, which is discussed so much in Stein, '59.³⁹ The principal town in modern Ling before the Chinese invasion was Dergê, once and now again a great publishing center. When it was known as *gLing tsang* it had a king and this King of Ling was personally involved in the production of the Mipham *Gesar*, providing texts of the epic which were considered part of the patrimony of the ancestral land of the hero.⁴⁰ In the 19th century a group of lamas associated with this district developed a philosophical movement relevant to the cosmology of the *Gesar*. Many of these lamas were, in fact, related to the aristocratic clans of that principality. As we shall see, the descendants of these teachers, both their disciples

and their reincarnations, have been active in modern times in popularizing the cult of Gesar in Tibetan refugee communities. The precise location of Ling, therefore, is an important issue when considering the *Gesar Epic* in the 19th and 20th centuries. Wang, however, being Chinese, is not personally involved in the religious agenda of Tibetan emigrés and does not include this episode in his list.

This chapter is called in Tibetan the *Srid gling* or *Srid pa'i le'u*. The name itself is interesting, because the word *srid* means both "society," in the sense of a political entity, and "world" or "cosmos." Ambiguity between these two concepts of universe and socio-political reality is systematic in the spiritual philosophies which associate themselves with the epic.⁴¹ The same ambiguity figures even in the non-Buddhist versions of the epic. In Francke's Ladakhi edition of the *Gesar* there is a description of the creation of the world. This creation lists the creatures and things which come into being first---- the elements essential to the construction of human kind and human society. In the more elaborate Buddhist versions of the epic, this list has become a list of the characters and things which Gesar acquires in order to succeed and to enrich the land of Ling. The list includes various magical helpers who must incarnate along with him and a series of magical weapons and miraculous devices which will be hidden in Mount Magyal Pomra against the time of his coming. Thus, what was primordial in the Ladakhi version, things involved in a description of the creation of

the universe, have become historical facts in the Buddhist version. It is, of course, for this reason that Francke believes the more primordial version, the earlier version, is the Ladakhi edition. For it describes, not the creation of a specific society, but the creation of the entire human world.

Francke's belief that his Ladakhi version is earlier is based in part on the philological assumption that a primordialist account is naturally earlier in time than a more sophisticated or elaborated account. And accounts which have no reference to documented, materialist historiography are naturally earlier than "historical" accounts. This is a prejudice and it is not true enough to be a general rule. For example, the description of the creation of the world composed by the modern Tibetan lama Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, does not pretend to be an earlier composition. And yet, it is utterly primordialist in its tone. It is a new composition meant to complement works on modern political consciousness and studies of modern spiritual problematics in a Western industrial environment. And yet, if we did not know the author, we might think, from the language and subject matter, that it was a piece of early Tibetan, perhaps even pre-Buddhist literature.⁴² Actually, however, it is an intentional literary anachronism, like Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The language of the Buddhist Tantras is often primordialist in tone. But few Western scholars take them to be early compositions.

It is true that the Ladakhi dialect preserves an earlier

pronunciation of Tibetan, because silent letters in modern Tibetan are still sounded in Ladakhi. This can make works of even recent Ladakhi composition sound antique.

We should explain at this point that translation of Tibetan epic chapter titles into English is extremely difficult. Every chapter of the Eastern Tibetan *Gesar* is called ".....*gLing*." There are several ways this word could be translated as a title. It could be short for "..... of Gesar of Ling." In that case, *Srid gling* would mean "The Saga of the Gesar of Ling Epic on the World." This is exactly the kind of title a creation narrative might have. On the other hand, *gling* could just mean "the land of Ling"⁴³ and then every chapter of the *Gesar Epic* would translate, "..... of the land of Ling." Both translations are probably correct. Geoffrey Samuels's translation of the *Srid gling* as "The Origins of Ling" is therefore perfectly acceptable and accurate.

One final remark on the *Srid Ling*: being the chapter on the cosmic dimension of the epic, it is roughly equivalent to the familiar opening chapters of *Purāṇas* and it reads very much like them. As such, its presence in a list of *Gesar* sagas gives the entire epic a certain religious sense that fits well with the liturgical agenda I will discover in the course of this monograph on the Mipham edition. The story of the creation of the land of Ling is given from the creation of the world to approximately the 8th century, the time of the flourishing of the great Tibetan kings. We have not found, however, a Mipham version of the *Srid gLing*.

The human action of the heroic tale, however, truly begins with the *Lha gLing*. The word *lha* is simply the generic Tibetan term for gods. I have translated this title as "The Divine Assembly." Literally it means simply "god (or gods) Ling." This could be translated "The Chapter of the *Gesar Epic* on the Gods." Or it could be translated "The Gods and Ling." In any case, the plot is that evil demons have reincarnated as kings of great empires and powerful nations in Central Asia. In particular there are four great demon kings surrounding Ling at the four cardinal points of the compass. Royal demons also infest the countries of the intermediate directions. As a result of their perverted goals or, to use a more technical term, "perverted aspirations," the country of Tibet is threatened with political and social chaos and the entire world, in fact, is in danger.⁴⁴

Here at the beginning of action we should discuss the broad logic and dynamics of this epic plot. "Perverting aspirations" (*log pa'i smon lam*) is the operative word in the argument of this Buddhist version of the *Gesar*. It reflects a key point in Mahāyāna dogmatics--- the idea that, as far as religious convictions are concerned, the fundamental difference between individuals is not a difference in nature, but a difference in general intention. I would like to use this as a point of comparison with Catholic heroic narratives, but first let us examine the Buddhist concept of evil as aspirations which are *log pa*, which are literally "turned" or perverted.

Aspiration is the factor which distinguishes the different sorts of beings on the path to Enlightenment. There are those with common aspirations or intentions (seeking material welfare and success), those with noble (*arya*) intentions (seeking enlightenment for the benefit of others), and those with perverted intentions. Ordinary beings (skt: *pudgala jana*) have vague intentions related to self-aggrandizement, self-defense, and the continual need to confirm the existence of ego. Bodhisattvas, literally, "enlightenment beings," have, on the other hand, a special intention. They are specifically devoted to the attainment of enlightenment for the benefit of others. They have therefore given birth to a special thought or intentional act called *bodhicitta*, "the thought (or mind) of enlightenment." I have translated this poetically as "the awakened heart," following the literal Sanskrit meaning of *bodhi* as "awakening" and the general tendency of Asian languages to use "heart" and "mind" interchangeably. Bodhisattvas are beings who have "generated the awakened heart" (skt: *bodhicitta utpadaya*; tib: *byang chubs sems dpa' skyes*): they have abandoned their own self-benefit in favor of the benefit of others, indeed, of all sentient beings.

The bodhisattva therefore performs repeatedly a certain famous ceremony in which he or she repeats *mönlam* (tib: *smon lam*, skt: *pranidhāna*), aspiration prayers--- prayers which state clearly the goal of liberating all sentient beings. This is the *aspiration* which distinguishes a bodhisattva and all the principle heroes of the

Gesar from ordinary beings.

These beings of highest aspirations are systematically opposed by a world of villains who, in effect, constitute a third sort of individual---beings with demonic or perverted aspirations. These are creatures who have actually taken vows and performed aspiration prayers expressing an intention opposite to the bodhisattva vow. They have sworn to oppose Buddhism and its spread in order to cause harm to sentient beings. It is an infestation of such creatures, taking over rulership of the empires of Asia, which stimulates the action of a heaven full of Buddhist gods. These gods have correct intentions: have "given rise to the mind of enlightenment." That is, they have taken the bodhisattva vow to work for the benefit of beings.

The existence of such creatures, demons and bodhisattvas, with their conflicting intentions, is the first or earliest cause of the action of the epic. The bodhisattvas have had these intentions for thousands of years. The extended (*vaipulya*) Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Lotus Sūtra* memorialize the first moment when a disciple takes this vow and becomes a bodhisattva. It provides in some ways a model for the action of the *Gesar*. The second division of the first *chüan* of the Chinese version of the *Lotus* has the conventional title "*Upāya*" or "skillful means." There the Buddha reveals to Śāriputra, the representative of the Hīnayāna teachings, that his previous teachings on the Lesser Vehicle have been taught as an act of skillful means and are not the absolute truth. He is

about to reveal the existence of bodhisattvas with their more lofty, more altruistic intentions. Later in the fifth *chüan* we will see revealed millions of bodhisattvas who have been studying the Mahāyāna in secret for myriad years. They have been living "under the earth" and now "well up out of the ground" and present themselves to the assembly.

But here in the chapter on skillful means the Buddha appears to hesitate. He tells Śāriputra that he does not dare to reveal this more subtle, more radical, more powerful dharma--- this "lotus of the true law" (as opposed to the expedient law). This is a reflection of the scene from his life story in which Brahmā must ask him to begin to teach sentient beings. The Buddha at that point resisted, saying that his enlightenment is too subtle to teach. He does this again:

Cease, cease! No need to speak.
My dharma is subtle and hard to imagine.
Those of overweening pride,
If they hear it, shall surely neither revere it nor
believe in it.⁴⁵

Śāriputra, just like Brahmā before him, requests again the teachings and the Buddha relents and gives them, exposing the altruistic path of the Greater Vehicle. Then disciples full of pride abandon his assembly:

While he was speaking these words, in the assembly
bhiksus, bhiksunis, upāsakas, and upāsikās to the number of

five thousand straightway rose from their seats and, doing obeisance to the Buddha, withdrew. For what reason? This group had deep and grave roots of sin and overweening pride, imagining themselves to have attained and to have borne witness to what in fact they had not. Having such faults as these, therefore they did not stay. The World-Honored One, silent, did not restrain them.

These prideful disciples refuse to develop the selfless intentions of the bodhisattvas and so abandon Buddhism. In the *Gesar* it is such disciples who become the enemies of the Dharma, develop perverted aspirations and through their perverted vows are reborn as Demon kings. The moment of their revolt is the actual earliest cause of the action of the plot. This moment is not represented in the Mipham *Lha gLing*, but it is part of the greater legend. There are several versions of it. Alexander David-Neel gives one in her paraphrase/summary of the *Gesar*. In her version there is an argument between a faithful mother and a rebellious daughter. The mother goes off to seek the Buddha and is finally blessed into heaven by Amitābha. The daughter rebels, suffers ill fortune, and starves to death cursing the Buddha. She and her sons become the four demon kings.⁴⁶

Perhaps the most important previous text for the story of this rebellion is the literature describing the revolt of Matram Rudra. The stories of prideful disciples' rebellion against the teachings of

the Lesser and Greater Vehicles is paralleled by the story of the Tantric disciple's revolt against the Vajrayāna. This is one of the most important motives in Tibetan Buddhist literature. Rudra, of course, is an important wrathful aspect of the Hindu god of destruction, Śiva. In one version of the story it is also the name of a tantric disciple who kills his own guru and is sent to Vajra Hell--- the indestructible permanent hell reserved for violators of tantric vows.⁴⁷

In another version of the story Rudra is actually the god Śiva. He has been converted to Buddhism and is known as Maheśvara, "the Great Lord." He is considered by the Buddhists to be the god of all lower demons--- *piśacas*, *apasmaras*, etc. --- the monsters who dwell in charnel grounds and feed on human beings. Maheśvara rebels against the tantric teachings and must be tamed by the quintessential god of tantra, Vajrasattva. Finally, after much battling, he is converted to Buddhism and made a *dharmapāla*, a protector of the teachings--- in fact, the most famous among this class of deities, the great black protector Mahākāla. This story is in the *Tathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*, the second chapter, the section entitled "Triloka-vijaya" (Victory on the Tree Worlds).⁴⁸

Another important version of the Rudra story is also mentioned in the *Padma Thang Yig*, the myth in which Rudra is tamed by the supreme tantric deities Hayagrīva and Vajrayoginī. These two deities are important characters in the Mipham *Gesar*. They are parents of Gesar's previous incarnation and active interceders in his

adventures. Hayagrīva, in some versions of the story, actually reincarnates as Gesar's Uncle Trotung.

It fits with the non-dualism of Buddhist metaphysics that the enemies in the epic should be merely perverted as opposed to fundamentally evil. In fact, this offers an interesting comparison with other carefully composed religious epics. Like Catholicism, Mahāyāna Buddhism does not recognize the existence of evil as a distinct substance or essence. There are many philosophical presentations of this point, but if we take, for example, the *Tathāgatagarbha* School of Mahāyāna philosophy as reflected, let us say in the *Mahāyanottaratantra śāstra* ⁴⁹, then it is clear that a demon cannot have a separate, evil motivation for his negative actions. His behavior must be a result of a perverted attempt to express the basic goodness of his buddha nature, his *tathāgatagarbha*, for all beings possess by nature the *gotra* (Tib: *rigs*) or family of the Buddha. Thus, the demon kings who oppose Gesar, Ling, and the Buddhist religion are explained to be actually descended from tantric Buddhist practitioners who became perverted in their understanding of the path and thus by degrees became enemies of man.

This story is found throughout the narratives of Tibetan Tantra. There is a good example in the *Padma Thang Yig*.⁵⁰ A tantric master has two disciples. They debate their understanding of the doctrine of transmutation and fight as a result of their disagreement. One of the disciples becomes a saint as a result of

his correct understanding. The other, relying on a perverted understanding, becomes a power-hungry monster and is reborn in numerous incarnations as a demon and enemy of religion.

The Mipham *Gesar* presents these demons as former tantric practitioners who have violated their vows through a misunderstanding of the teachings and who thus produce perverted aspirations.⁵¹

On the other hand, many non-Buddhist versions of these legends are much more dualistic. In the "History of the Goloks" we will see a tribal vision of enemies in which those who oppose the hero do so by virtue of mere accidents of birth and allegiance or else because they are different species of beings. The Golok story begins with a battle between the black demons (*bdud*, skt: *māra*), who are causes of sickness and death and by nature antithetical to man, and the white gods (*lha*), who are by nature always available for friendship with man. In the Ladakhi version of the *Gesar*, which is taken to be an especially non-Buddhist edition, a white and a black divine beast fight, representing again the white and black deities.

This color opposition is present throughout the language of indigenous Tibetan religion and is also present in the non-Buddhist Bön religion of Tibet. Many Western scholars, speaking of the success of Manichaeism in Central Asia, have actually taken this motif in its many forms to represent an Iranian influence on Tibetan mythology. They study not only stories of black and white gods in eternal opposition, but also the Bön creation myths which seem to

reflect a Manichaean perspective. So convinced are some scholars of this connection that Per Kvaerne has actually written a survey of Western scholarly thought on the possibility of Iranian influence on Tibet.⁵²

The non-dualism involved in the *Gesar's* characterization of demons and enemies is also an important factor in the special philosophical school of Mipham. Mipham Gyatso, along with Jamgön Kongtrül the Great, and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, was one of the chief exponents of the Eclectic school of Tibetan Buddhist philosophy. We will have occasion to discuss this school in more depth later in this thesis. Its non-dualism was of a special nature. All Mahāyāna sects state that every sentient being possesses buddha nature, the innate potentiality to gain complete enlightenment. The Sanskrit word for this is *tathāgatagarbha*, which literally means, "the essence or womb of the Tathāgatas, the Buddhas. "

The teaching that all people possess buddha nature is an important part of instructions in the highest Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna meditation practices. For if one believes that the nature of enlightenment exists as an innate potential within one, then it is easier to have the confidence necessary to practice the very relaxed approaches of Buddhist meditation known as mahāmudrā and ati.

But when it came to expressing an ontology to back up the concept of an innately perfect potential such as this, most Tibetan philosophers expressed reservations--- hesitating to posit buddha nature as an existent thing. It was the custom, particularly among

pandits of the predominant Gelugpa sect, to hold the buddha nature teachings as not ultimately true, but merely expediently true. Thus in the complex Buddhist hermeneutics that developed, the tathāgatagarbha sūtras were considered to be of merely "interpretable meaning" (*drang don*) and not ultimately true, that is, of "definitive meaning" (*nges don*).⁵³

But Mipham's school supported the contents of these sutras as largely of definitive meaning. Thus, they at times proposed the existence of an ultimate, indwelling essence, a truly existent buddha nature. This perfect nature and potential of man was described in the classical Indian text, the *Uttaratantra* and supported polemically by Mipham in two short works of madhyamikan agonistics. The most important to our discussion is *The Lion's Roar: The Great Essential Exposition of Sugatagarbha*⁵⁴ and *The Lion's Roar of Other*.⁵⁵ These works argue that the buddha essence is substantially existent. These essays are remarkably fresh and original and they show forth a new approach to Buddhist meditation which inspired a century of philosophical, literary, and scholarly production some have called "the Tibetan Renaissance." The repercussions of this ontological revolution were vast, but the one relevant to our present discussion can be summed up in Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche's aphorism, "From this [nature] one breaks the law. From it one keeps the law."⁵⁶ The point is that all acts of evil and sin are as much a result of the perfect nature of man, as are all virtuous acts. Evil does not have a separately established existence.

Furthermore, those who have made this perfect potential, this buddha nature, manifest exhibit the magical powers of a buddha and his countless special qualities. They are like heroes such as *Gesar* --- vast, magically powerful beings of inscrutable and inconceivable wisdom. The heroes and demons in the Mipham *Gesar* body forth this absolutist and immanist philosophy.

The philosophical point of the difference between a dualistic approach to evil and a non-dualistic one has been discussed in the Western field of literary criticism as well. Perhaps the scholars Kvaerne discusses are influenced, for example, by the discussions of a non-dualistic view of the nature of evil in Christian epics such as *The Divine Comedy*. There Dante must represent evil so that it is clearly not a separate substance. For to do otherwise would be to fall into Manichaen heresies that were well understood during the XIIIth Century. Thus, evil in the *Comedy* must be represented as powerless and essenceless in itself, incapable of originating action, incapable of imagination or creativity---only capable, in fact, of expressing itself through a parody of goodness.⁵⁷ This is rather like the villains in the *Gesar Epic*. They seem powerful to the ordinary man, but actually they are lifeless puppets in the hands of the ever-manipulating *Gesar*.

Like the Buddhist *Gesar*, *The Divine Comedy* must carefully represent evil so that is clearly not a separate substance. This is done through the representation of the damned as parodies of the good rather than as distinctly evil. So, in the world of the *Comedy*,

as one recedes from the good, one withdraws from existence itself, because evil is not separately established--- nothing in itself, but only a certain sort of distancing from the good. Thus the final pit of Hell is frozen and Satan is locked helpless and inactive in the ice.

To put it another way, evil can only be defined as a lack, as an absence of some good thing. Thus, following Aristotle's definition of truth as the good of the intellect, in Canto III of *Inferno*, Virgil speaks of the damned as possessing intellect, but not "the good of the intellect." Canto III, the entrance to Hell, is a particularly good point to examine the consequences of this philosophy of the essenceless of evil. The inscription on the gateway says not only that Justice, Power, and Wisdom participated in the creation of Hell, but also "Love Supernal." Dorothy Sayers, in her commentary on this section, elaborates the doctrine of God's gift to man of free will and the power of choice.⁵⁸

The point is further elaborated in *Purgatorio*, where its consequences to salvation are presented. Sin is a matter of choice. Choosing to turn away from God and the good is the essence of sin. Choosing the good is the essence of bliss. In *Purgatorio* the dead souls suffer the same punishments as the damned, but suffer them joyfully, because they have chosen the good and hope for eventual expiation of their sins. To use Buddhist terminology, you could say that the fundamental difference between the purgatorials and the damned is that they do not possess perverted aspirations and have not made a choice which turned them from the good. ⁵⁹

The interesting point is that this same approach could be used to explain the behavior of the warrior bodhisattvas who figure in the epic. They compassionate all sentient beings and at the same time compassionately oppose the so-called evil demon kings. Their greatest enemies are actually former Buddhist practitioners. Figures of reversal of the poles of good and evil abound throughout the epic. One of the principal villains, for example, Uncle Trotung, is actually considered by some to be an incarnation of a tantric buddha, Hayagrīva..

The Dantean explanation of the nature of evil, informed as it is by a medieval scholastic concern to avoid Manichaeian heresies, could as easily explain the "perverted aspirations." These aspirations which define the Buddhist enemies could as well serve to define the damned who suffer in the *Divine Comedy*. For choice is the defining and constitutive feature in their demonhood

Here I am relying on the approach to the *Divine Comedy* of the Inklings. Of course, to rely on the interpretations of Sayers, Williams, and C.S. Lewis is to ignore several worlds of academic criticism which have other complex views of Catholic theology. The Inklings wrote as modern Catholics attempting to explain the relevance of Dante to modern audiences. They did not, therefore, spend much time trying to distinguish precisely the Thomist influences on his work from the Averroist interpretations--- interpretations which some say one must consider because Dante placed a supposedly Averroist philosopher, Siger de Brabant, in

Paradise.⁶⁰ Sayers, ignoring these fine points, presents a single coherent version of the synthesis of the humanist and Catholic principles Dante effected in his map of ethical reality.

But, of course, the situation is not simple---- there are controversies at every turn as one defines the Aristotelian and Neoplatonist contributions to Dante and distinguishes them from Christian views and then further asks whether they entered Dante's work via the constructions of the Thomist Schoolmen or the Averroists or via a less definite academic philosophical formulation. Since the details of Dante's education are not well documented, these matters are controversies which fill the literature.

But, avoiding these complexities, in this essay I will rely simply on the view of one school because it is clear, accessible to the non-specialist such as myself, and involved with a distinct literary agenda which parallels in an interesting sense that of Mipham.

Sayer's presentation of Dante's non-dualism as correct Catholic doctrine is pressed in her discussion of modern motivational psychology, pp. 31- 44. She is writing here against a Freudian interpretation of the symbolism of Beatrice using the writings of Maud Bodkin as a terrible example.⁶¹ The Freudian view of modern symbolism as founded on a typology of neuroses is rejected on metaphysical grounds: "But what the opposite party [i.e. Bodkin] is in danger of forgetting is the doctrine, well known to the

Schoolmen, that it is evil which is a parasite upon the good, and not the other way round. Only good can originate anything: evil can only deform and corrupt the good already existing. The error lies in accepting the perversion as the norm..." [Sayers, *Purgatorio*, p. 31]

This point has a certain Buddhist ring to it. A follower of Mipham's school could easily have expressed the same sentiment--- that error does not lie in allegiance to an evil power, but in a fundamental misunderstanding about the nature of the self-existing norm, the Dharma or the Tao. The *locus classicus* for this Buddhist position would be the *Mahāyanottaratantra śāstra*, which asserts that Buddha nature is the only positively, truly existing, truly established substance--- an eternal, self-existing identity, innately free from suffering, and productive of the countless qualities and powers of a Buddha.⁶²

There is an interesting difference, however, between the Catholic view of choice and responsibility based on human free will and the Buddhist view of morality based on non-perversed aspirations. Will and aspiration are not precisely equivalent psychological constructs. Will implies the singularity and utter unity of human identity and intellect. "Aspiration" in the Buddhist sense does not. Christianity, as Sayers insists again and again, is based on the historical singularity of Jesus as the only incarnation of the absolute into "the series of time." And Sayers must insist with equal force on the unity and individuality of the human soul. Mahāyāna Buddhism is founded on a belief that there is no single and

unchanging soul and that there are numerous incarnations, some historical and some utterly beyond questions of history and conventional time.

And so, I believe Sayers is correct in insisting that Catholic motivational strategies should be kept distinct from the "mystical" Christian schools popular, for example, with followers of what Jacob Needleman called "the New Age Religions."⁶³ For example, again arguing against the Freudians, she says: "...it is seen to be especially relevant that Christianity, which very notoriously makes use of the Parental Image, is insistent to deny that God's love is "possessive" in the sense complained of. God does not, in the manner of the Gnostic's Absolute Being, desire the absorption of the many in the One; His love is anxiously directed to confirm each individual soul in his own identity, so that, the nearer it draws to Him, the more truly it becomes its unique and personal self." [p. 37]

She goes on a paragraph later to discuss Dante's use of the figure of Beatrice, which she characterizes as an incarnation of God in the particular figure of a woman. She sees this as an example of Dante's profound understanding of the Christian revelation as a thing that happens between individual and eternally distinct souls:

This character, which has also been called the "scandal", of particularity, stamped upon Christianity, is of its very essence, and governs all the imagery of its poets. Because of it, Dante's encounter with an individual living woman can be

made the image of the soul's encounter with a personal living God. The Infinite came once into the finite as a single and particular Person; the company of His elect is made up of single and particular persons, each having single and particular relationships with Himself, and with each other. If we try to efface from the Christian revelation the brand of singularity, then what we shall have left is not Christianity at all. The symbolism of the *Commedia* will be unintelligible to us unless we remember this basic principle, which at every level runs counter to contemporary notions of what a religious revelation should be.

This "scandal of particularity" is handled in Buddhist texts quite differently because of the fundamental Buddhist belief that the self is compounded and fragmentary. The buddha nature, on the other hand, is not fragmentary. But then, it is not the self either. And in most Mahāyāna philosophies it would be wrong to say that buddha nature is an individual. In other words, it is not one and it is not many. It is often taken by modern thinkers to be akin to a certain contemporary popular understanding of Gnostic mysticism and to the Upanishadic conception of an Over-Soul into which individual selves dissolve or of which they were always fundamentally a part. This is closer to the truth, but still not correct. As we will see in the chapter on cosmology in this dissertation, there is no Buddhist notion of a true self either

identical with or different from any particular absolute.

Therefore the Buddhist notion of incarnation as represented in consciously scholastic Buddhist fiction such as the *Lha Ling*, is structured like the Catholic Trinity, but is ontologically at variance with it. And so there are multiple incarnations, where the Christians have, as Sayers insists, but one.

Mipham's precise view as to the unitariness of buddha nature is subtle. The buddha nature possessed by an individual is not itself a being who could produce acts of will. It can, however, be the primary cause of a moment of aspiration. Its nature thus falls between the extremes of solid, unfragmentary existence and the nihilism implied in the concept of the fragmentary consciousness. Here is the relevant quote from the first page of *The Lion's Roar of Sugatagarbha*:

The essence of the speech of all the victorious ones who exist in the three times, the center of their realization mind, the one main point of all the teachings of the sūtras and the tantras, is only this: all-pervasive sugatagarbha [another word for buddha nature]. Because this approach is very profound, it is said that even the great lords of the ten bhūmis have difficulty in completely understanding this approach of sugatagarbha. Like trying to see a form in the darkness of night.....

Moreover, sometimes when the Teacher, the Sugata,

spoke, he elucidated the essence of sugatagarbha by means of teaching emptiness. Sometimes he elucidated the nature of sugatagarbha by means of teaching that it is primordially endowed with the qualities of a Buddha----- the powers and the rest.[However] some people ...take up the view of eternalism in which sugatagarbha is not essentially empty. Some people cling to just emptiness alone and then dwell in the view of nihilism, the side of denial, which can not establish sugatagarbha as primordially inseparable from the qualities of the Buddha...

It turns out that the buddha nature, although different from the self, is directly responsible for every activity which is ordinarily attributed to self. And it is from this essential nature that acts of choice originate. Positive choices are direct expressions of the nature. Negative or sinful choices are thwarted, twisted attempts to enact this nature--- attempts based on a misunderstanding of the nature of human consciousness---- a misapprehension of the source of human motivational states.

All this discussion is simply to indicate that there is not a perfect similarity between the Dantesque view of will and choice and the Buddhist one of aspiration and commitment. Both systems are non-dualistic with respect to the notions of good and evil and so both systems represent sin as a matter of free choice and fundamental desire. But Buddhist aspirations are not acts of will,

because there is no self which could be a basis for the willing.

One of the simplest and most direct statements of this principle of choice I have found is actually in yet another Christian heroic narrative of epic proportions, the thirteenth century French novel, *Lancelot du Lac*. This, of course, is the novel Francesca di Rimini refers to in the Vth Canto of the *Comedy* when explaining her fall into Hell. It is a work which distinguishes itself from other French romances of the period by its good structure and by the realism of its representations of war and the politics of war in medieval society. If we are to believe its current editors, it also reflects, like Dante, a sensitivity to medieval Scholastic philosophy. In his introduction to a recent edition and parallel translation Francois Mosés summarizes the *Lancelot's* attitude towards evil with these words: "...ce Dieu, partout présent dans ce bas monde, qui est la préfiguration de l'autre, y a placé l'homme, un homme dont il a tant aimé la liberté qu'il ne l'a créé ni bon ni méchant, mais libre d'être l'un ou l'autre. Il dépend de lui-même, au prix d'un effort sans relâche de s'amender.' Le mal est l'effet, non de l'ignorance, de la misère ou de l'oppression, mais d'une volonté désordonnée."⁶⁴

If there were such a thing as *volonté* in Buddhist psychology, then *volonté désordonnée* would be an almost perfect explanation of the psychology of *Gesar's* demons, the reverse bodhisattvas. The above formula aims to describe the psychology of malefactors in theologicially informed Christian chivairic narratives. Substitute "buddha nature" for *Dieu* and "intention" (*sems, citta* or *sems*

skyes, cittotpada) for "*volonté*." and the statement would be valid for Mahāyāna Buddhism of the school we are considering.

This is particularly true for the causal consequences of *volonté* and "intention." A perverse intention, like a *volonté désordonnée*, leads to rebirth in lower realms, usually in the colorful Buddhist hells. A proper intention leads to rebirth in the realm of the gods. A perfect intention leads to the sainthood of a bodhisattva.

It is especially appropriate to discuss this matter in a summary of the plot of the *Lha Ling*, because the aspirations uttered in the Divine Assembly are the structuring principle of the plot of the rest of the epic. The gods and buddhas who meet in this assembly must plan the remedial actions to be instituted on the Earth. Their intentions are uttered as promises and become "aspirations." In Buddhist narratives the word "aspiration" (*mönlam*) does not usually mean merely a desire or ambition. It also is a prayer uttered in order to bring the fulfillment of this desire. In fact, *mönlam* (sanskrit: *prañidhana*) is probably better translated not as aspiration, but as aspiration prayer. Aspiration prayers have the force of vows and, like vows in Vedic and Indian narratives, they always have efficacy--- it is one of the so-called "laws" of karmic cause and effect. Aspiration prayers uttered by enlightened beings always lead to consequences in keeping with the intentions uttered in the prayer. This is such an important fact that "The Path of Cause and Effect" (*rgyu 'bras lam*) is one of the often used similes for the

Mahāyāna path.

To understand the forces at work in the structuring of the plot with its non-dualistic oppositions between saints and demons, we must describe one more sort of vow--- a vow unique to Tantric Buddhism, the *samaya vow* (*dam tshig*). Whereas the bodhisattvas have uttered aspirations to help sentient beings, their tantric equivalents have taken *samaya vows*, "vows of commitment," to the same effect. The *samaya* vows are sealed with powerful oaths. The oaths are administered by tantric masters in truly intimidating ceremonies. The vow-taker must drink blessed water out of a skullcup fashioned from a human head. Violations of such vows would lead to fearful, disastrous consequences. In the second book of the *Gesar Epic* the followers of Gesar cement their oaths of fealty to him with the drinking of oath water, sealing together ruler and ruled with the terrible force of *samaya*. The terms of the ceremony specify that if the oath-takers violate the *samaya*, the water of oath will begin to turn into lead. If the transgression is not purified through rituals of reconciliation, the violator will be destroyed from the inside out-- just the way Rudra was destroyed by the horse-headed tutelary deity Hayagrīva, who burst through his skin from the inside out.

The demons who plague the world were once faithful Buddhist practitioners. In an attempt to gain enlightenment quickly, they entered into special tantric relationships with their teachers and engaged in *samaya* vows that bound them even more tightly to both

guru and the religion itself. These tantric practitioners then violated or "corrupted" their samayas-- their tantric vows. Misunderstanding the symbolic teachings of tantra, they committed sins. They enacted figures of speech, taking symbolic instructions literally.

When they were criticized by their gurus, they turned away from the Buddha Dharma altogether. That turning away produced several powerful results. First of all, because of the magical power invested in the samaya vows, they were reborn in their next lifetimes as powerful, difficult to kill monsters or evil kings. In that second lifetime their aspirations were still perverted and they acted as enemies of the Dharma. If the laws of karma were allowed to proceed with no intervention from divine figures, these demon kings and monsters would automatically in the next life, be reborn in Hell. But like the enemies of Krsna in the Indian epics, their destruction by Gesar may bring them so close to religious purity that they are actually saved from hell even as they are destroyed by the saintly warrior.

We will see that in the indigenous religion associated with the *Gesar* (In Chapter IV) these violations of samaya have become dualized into ritual impurity which is palpable and can even be transmitted by touch. This transformation of the concept of perverted aspiration into actual evil could be regarded as an assimilation of Buddhism into local religion or it could be seen, as we will present it in Chapter III simply as the heterogeneity of the religious context of the epic.

Let us now speak of the bodhisattvas, the ones with positive intentions, who participate in the epic. There are three gods who especially preside in the Tibetan tradition over the compassionate action of the buddhas. These are Amitābha, the buddha who presides over a pure land or paradise in the West, Avalokiteśvara, the great bodhisattva who instantiates the virtue of compassion, and Padmasambhava, the supernatural tantric yogin who supposedly brought Esoteric Buddhism to Tibet. The first two figures are, of course, connected together in the Pure Land sects of Northern Asia. In the esotericism of the Tibetan Nyingma tradition they are often united with Padmasambhava to make a kind of trinity--- three expressions, or perhaps levels of manifestation of the compassion of enlightened mind. In the Mipham version of the epic their esoteric identity with each other is expressed by their complicity in a plot to save the world from demons. They join together and in typical epic fashion hold a series of divine assemblies. They decide in council to send a hero to earth in order to defeat the anti-buddhist demons. We will see that in the philosophical texts of Mipham and in his church liturgies Gesar, Padmasambhava, Avalokiteśvara, and Amitābha are not actually regarded as distinct individuals, but multiple emanations of one being. This unity will be dramatized literally in the first chapter of the translation when Avalokiteśvara literally dissolves into Padmasambhava, who then emanates rays of light which become after several intermediate transformations Gesar.

This hero is himself a Buddhist sage/deity. His divine

parentage is given--- which gods are his father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, and then the circumstances of his future incarnation as Gesar are explained. The section which presents the lineage of Gesar is central to the *Lha Ling*, because it is the point which attracts the greatest weight of Buddhist dogmatics. It is here that Gesar's relationship with general and abstract principles of metaphysics and cosmology are most clearly expressed. This point, the metaphysics of Gesar's birth, will be explored in detail in Chapter III. We will examine in that chapter the ritual agenda reflected in the *Lha ling* and echoed in the religious ceremonies which surround this epic, ceremonies written by Mipham himself. We will identify a distinct agenda for native Tibetan religion also clearly present in this chapter and fascinatingly echoed in the non-Buddhist versions of the *Lha Ling*.

In the *Lha Ling, The Divine Assembly*, Gesar appears as a celestial bodhisattva living in a Buddhist heaven. There his name is not Gesar, but Joyful to Hear (Tib: *thos pa dga ba*, pronounced Thöpa Gawa). Intimations of his coming incarnation occur to leaders of the land of Ling as dreams and mystic visions. These visions are discussed in detail and a sage, Thangtong Gyalpo, an advisor to the chiefs of Ling, is invited to consider the omens.

Meanwhile in heaven, the Buddhist god, Thöpa Ga (Joyful to Hear),⁶⁵ addresses the assembled deities and agrees that he will take on flesh to oppose the evil which threatens the world. Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the assembly vow to help him and they

themselves become involved in rebirth as fleshly beings. The future Gesar lists the magical weapons and special attributes he must have as a human being. These include such things as a magical horse, divine armor, and a feminine consort of unparalleled beauty. The list is reminiscent of the traditional eight treasures of a Universal Monarch (skt: *cakravartin*; tib: *'khor lo 'gyur pa'i rgyal po'i*).

Guru Padmasambhava, the Lotus Born Guru, is the most active deity in the epic. In Tibetan culture he is regarded as the founder of Buddhist Tantra in Tibet. He is the Indic yogin who tamed the demons of Tibet so that they would abandon their national opposition to the importation of the Indian Buddhist teachings.⁶⁶ In the Mipham edition it is explained that Lotus Born's failure to completely tame all opposing native powers is the reason that Gesar must be called up. Thus, from his magical palace on the Copper Colored Mountain on the continent of Cāmara (*rnga yab*), Padmasambhava supervises the action of the epic. His methods are sneaky and full of indirection, like those of Gesar himself--- illustrating an approach to the Buddhist principle of skillful means (*upāya*) found throughout popular Buddhist narratives, particularly the *āvanas* and *jātaka* tales.⁶⁷

Lotus Born prepares the way for the birth of Gesar by traveling to Jambudvīpa, the "Rose-Apple" continent inhabited by humans. There he dives into the ocean and travels to the underwater kingdom of the *nāgas*---dragons--- mythical, magical, shape-changing, treasure guarding serpents found throughout the Indian and

Chinese traditions . Through trickery he convinces the *nāgas* to surrender to him their princess, Dzeden (*mdze Idan*, "Beauty" or "Beautiful"). She will become the mother of Gesar.

At least in this regard the logic of incarnation seems to be a transcultural phenomenon. Like other incarnations of perfection, Gesar must have a mother who is an especially pure vessel. One special twist in Tibetan epic narratives is that the mother is not a human at all, but actually a spirit from the local religion. Dzeden, for example, is a *nāgini*, a female serpent spirit. The *nāgas* with their vast underwater kingdom are a commonplace of Indian Buddhist narratives. But the Tibetan word for *nāga* is *klu* (pronounced *lu*). Now the *lu* are native pre-Buddhist spirits. They are shape-shifters, have vast wealth, and are feared for their ability to cause all sorts of "water diseases" such as leprosy. They are thought to inhabit every site whose topography suggests water, even the least bit of moisture, or any suggestion of the serpentine. Padmasambhava's choice of such a being as the hero's mother in effect allies Gesar with the forces of nature and the powers of pre-Buddhist religion in Tibet. At the same time it fulfills the requirements of ritual purity which, although not a part of classical Buddhist philosophy, are an absolute necessity in the world of tantric ritual.

When we speak of incarnation or avatar in the Tibetan context we are dealing with the unique Tibetan doctrine of *sprul sku* (pronounced *tulku*), "incarnations of higher beings." Literally *tulku* is the translation for the Sanskrit term *nirmāṇakāya* , the

emanation body of the Buddha, part of the doctrine of the three bodies or *kāya* of the Buddha. Ordinarily the theory of the three *kāyas* is taught in order to explain the ontological status of the various manifestations of buddhahood which could occur in the human realm. The buddha who is an historical personage is an "emanation body" or *tulku* of the principle of absolute buddhahood, the mind of the Buddha, which is beyond time and space.

In Tibet, however, the possibilities of such "emanations" were explored in a practical way and developed into the remarkable system of "reincarnations" who were the basis for the Tibetan theocratic state. The claim was made that the great teachers and political leaders of Tibet systematically incarnated again and again as themselves in order to continue to lead their monasteries, or in the case of the Dalai Lama, to lead the Tibetan federal government. I have not yet found a classical narrative or scholarly text which explains in detail the dynamics of such incarnations as they are commonly understood in Tibet. However, there is a vast oral lore about *tulkus*. It involves specific warnings about what wombs would be appropriate vessels for the enlightened consciousness which must enter the world of flesh. Some of this lore is related in the *Gesar Epic* itself. For example, we will see in the translation of Chapter 1 of the *Lha Ling* a detailed description of the alchemical phases in the creation of an emanation into the spirit realm. We will see Padmasambhava emanate rays of light which represent an aspect of his divine activity. These rays of light will interact with

a variety of deities and in several stages give birth to a new deity called "Joyful to Hear." Joyful to Hear will in a later book reincarnate as Gesar. The description of this esoteric declension of absolute principles into phenomenal manifestations is unusual, perhaps unparalleled in Tibetan narrative literature. And it gives an unusually explicit glimpse of the forces at work in the process of "emanation."

In "The History of the Goloks" we will read more about the science of emanation. The plot there is that the great bodhisattva Jigmê Lingpa, in order to be incarnated in human form, must have a mother who is a reincarnated spirit--- in this case, the powerful Flesh-Eating Dākinī. The narrative emphasizes the importance of ritual purity in the rebirth of this saint and my commentary on this section, drawn from interviews with Tibetan scholars, will delve deeply into the reasoning behind the ritual necessity that the mother be an especially "pure vessel." I have said that the journey of Padmasambhava in *The Birth of Gesar* to the Kingdom of the Nāgas is a sign of his mastery over the world of local spirits. It is also a sign that Gesar is a union of local and classical Indian figures, a master of both Bön and Buddhist principles.

This dual mastery is essential to the special notion of *upāya* emphasized in Tibetan Buddhism. It is compounded of trickery and the possession of sorcerous powers. In the *Gesar Epic* trickery and indirection are employed even in the actions of the great bodhisattvas. Avalokiteśvara, when he goes to alert Lotus Born

(Padmasambhava) to the urgent problem of Jambudvīpa's demonic infestation, travels disguised as a small child. Padmasambhava, when he arrives in the realm of the nāgas hides his purposes and engages in complex machinations to force the serpent kingdom into his service. Later Gesar himself, an emanation of these two deities, Padmasambhava and Avalokiteśvara, will change his form and travel in disguise whenever he wishes to conquer an enemy.

This special mode of action of buddhas and bodhisattvas, a product of their insight into the true nature of reality and their unique understanding of the dynamics of the relative world, is also especially prized in Buddhist Tantra. There the Buddhist concept of skillful means (*upāya*) is expanded beyond the machinations and forevisions of Mahāyāna deities and becomes the ability to practice all sorts of magic.⁶⁸ The skillful means of Gesar is even more special. It extends to the ability to perform all sorts of shamanistic feats and ceremonies from Central Asian religion. At times he uses the magical rites of Vajrayāna or Tantra, at times the practices of local Tibetan religion. With these sorts of magic he achieves goals that heroes of Western epics can achieve only through bravery and great strength. I think this is one of the hardest things to understand about Gesar. His virtues have nothing to do with the epic virtues that occur in Western narratives. He is not honest, noble, or, in effect, brave. He does not, particularly in the early chapters, show the *ἀρετή* we expect from, for example, Achilles. He is not brave to accept his fate, choosing death over dishonor. In fact, he

never seems to face difficult moral choices at all. This is because fundamentally he is a god and a deathless being. It would be literally unnatural for him to know defeat in any form.

There is something almost criminal about Gesar's tricks. In his transformations he shows a certain arrogance and irreverence even towards the popular religion--- an irreverence which must at times discomfort the Tibetan reader. For example, at times the actions of Gesar seem designed to disabuse people of their faith in the local gods. One of his favorite methods of destroying an enemy is to take the form of the enemy's patron deity and then deliver false prophecies in visionary dreams. He pollutes and destroys the sacred spots of other religions, alternately frightening his enemies with the ill omens as he desecrates their shrines while consoling them in their dreams with specious predictions of future victories. The result is that through faith in their inherited religion his enemies ludicrously celebrate in the face of impending disaster. He does the same thing at times with faithful Buddhists, appearing to them in the form of their tutelary deity--- uttering falsehoods even when he has assumed the *persona* of a buddha.

We have suggested that the sneakiness and consistent dishonesty of the bodhisattvas in the *Gesar* is fundamentally an expression of the Tantric interpretation of the Buddhist concept of skillful means. But the *trickster* is also a popular motif in the mythology of nomadic and herding people across the world and an important element in certain classical religions. See, for example,

the figure of Coyote in the legends of the Plains Ameri-Indians or, in another modality, the epic figure of Kṛṣṇa in the *Purāṇas*. The domination of this theme in the Ladakhi version supports this alternative, non-Buddhist reading. Either way, whether it is an extension of the Buddhist motif of skillful means or an influence from shamanistic religion, trickery and deception are essential to the plot of all the chapters of the epic.

To return to our summary of the epic, in the Mipham version, Padmasambhava, having employed an elaborate and destructive ruse to gain control of the nāga princess, Dzedden, brings her to Earth so that she may eventually give birth to Gesar. Dzedden wanders into the land of Ling and becomes a chattel of Senglön (*Sengblon*), a leader of the tribes of Ling. These events occur in the third major chapter of the *Gesar Epic, The Birth of Gesar* (*mKhrungs gling*). She is visited by a sort of epic deity, infused with the embryo of Gesar, and gives birth to him. The birth is accompanied by the usual miraculous signs, visionary dreams, and prophecies. But not just that. Even in his mother's womb Gesar begins to manifest as a jokester and a trickster. In a parody of the birth of the Buddha, from within her womb he asks his mother through which passage he shall emerge, frightening her badly. Once again I would like to suggest comparing this story with the Golok tale of the birth of Jigmê Lingpa. There too the birth of a magical emanation, a *tulku*, is accompanied by mysterious signs and threatening events that put a tremendous pressure on the mother. But in the Golok story the

reasons why the mother is bound to be confused and to suffer are made clear. She is ignorant of the meaning of the magical events in which she is involved because they are part of a larger scheme initiated by deities who reign over the invisible world of spirits--- a world vaster and possessed of a more complete perspective on the significance of events.

In both cases, the story of the birth of Gesar and that of Jigmê Lingpa, human beings are ludicrously confused by divine signs. They seem to be the but of cosmic jokes. The Golok story makes sense out of this. It is because they do not and cannot see how they are part of a larger picture. To understand their own place in cosmic events and the politics of heaven would be synonymous with the attainment of Buddhahood. And then they would no longer be humans, but themselves divine beings. To understand the larger picture they would have to be able to remember events from their previous lifetimes; they would have to be able to behold directly the world of spirits and they would have to be able to journey to the land of spirits invisible to humans, what one Tibetan lama once called "the other side": the realm and society of demons and gods.

On a broader level the mother's fear has a traditional religious and metaphysical interpretation. In the *Mahāyanottaratantra śāstra* twenty symbols for buddha nature are given. One is that buddha nature is like the embryo of a king growing in the womb of a poor woman. If she knew that her son would become a great king when he grew up, she would not be afraid of poverty and the hard times

which lie before her. She would realize that, although she may be poor and without resources right now, her salvation is growing inside her. As it is, however, the sensation of pregnancy is just one more burden in addition to her poverty. She cannot guess that her salvation is in her womb and imagines, rather, that the child will be just another unbearable responsibility. Just so intimations of buddhahood frighten beginning meditators, but if they understood the significance of these feelings of dissatisfaction and openness, they would welcome them as signs of a future enlightenment.

After being born, Gesar instantly manifests as a miraculous child, displaying magical powers and the intelligence of an adult. Trothung (*khro thung*), an uncle of Gesar, jealously attempts to destroy the child, but fails. Trothung will continue throughout the epic as a competitor, opposing Gesar within his own kingdom.

Trothung is a major figure. Like so much of the *Gesar* epic, his character and role are constantly involved in moral ambiguity. Although he is the hero's enemy, Trothung is himself a doughty warrior and an important fighter on the side of the good. His perennial jealousy of Gesar is doomed to frustration and his many attempts to destroy Gesar are foredoomed to failure. For in the Divine Council he was assigned duties in the furthering of Gesar's cause. He is, as a matter of fact, an incarnation of the *yidam* or tutelary deity, Hayagrīva. Hayagrīva is the horse-headed tantric buddha whose specialty is the taming of demons. And so, knowing his destiny, we do not receive Trothung as a fundamental threat to

Gesar. Instead, we enjoy the comic relief offered by his hapless attempts to overthrow the invulnerable super-hero.

Throughout his childhood Gesar lives essentially in disguise, his divine features hidden by an ugly exterior. He and his mother live in exile in the savage land of rMa and he appears to the world as Joru or Josê, a sort of hunchbacked jester. When the time comes, Gesar's appearance will transform and he will manifest as an effulgent Buddhist warrior. These events occur in the fourth kernel saga of the epic, *The Horse Race (rta rgyugs)*.

The chapter begins with Gesar's nāga mother demanding that he finally assume his true form. Joru must become Gesar, take control of the Kingdom of Ling, take possession of his divine horse and destined beautiful consort, find and distribute a cache of magical weapons and armor hidden by the gods in Mount Magyei Pomra (*rma rgyal spom ra*) at the time of his incarnation. All these attributes, the treasures of Gesar, were listed by the god Joyful to Hear at the Council in Heaven as prerequisites to his incarnation.

In order to take possession of these treasures Gesar convinces Trothung to hold a horse race to decide the succession to the rulership of Ling. The winner of the race will receive the magical weapons, become king, and marry the beautiful daughter of another chieftain, the lovely Drugmo (*'brug mo*), or "dragoness." This is one of the most popular chapters in the epic. Mireille Helffer has translated the songs in "The Horse Race" into French from the prosimetric Mipham version. Her transcription and translation are

accompanied by an excellent musicological study of the bardic singing style.⁶⁹

By the end of *The Horse Race*, Gesar has assumed his true form and united the people of Ling under his leadership. He then proceeds to conquer the aforementioned demon kings. The wars of Gesar of Ling have elaborated into tens of chapters. But Samuels mentions in his list the most popular and, in theory at least, the oldest battles in the Eastern Tibetan version. The first in the list is entitled *The Demon and Ling* (*bdud gLing*). This reminds us of the standard expression *bdud 'dul* (taming demons) in Buddhist literature and represents an activity performed by all tantric lamas in the course of their life stories. At a certain point, when a yogin has attained enlightenment, he begins to show his magical powers by competing with demons, heretics, and magicians, defeating them, and then binding them to the service of the Buddha Dharma. In this case the demon happens to be Lutsen (*klu btsan*), the wicked king of a land to the north of Tibet. Samuels therefore aptly translates the title, Dödül (*bdud 'dul*) as *Taming the Demon-King of the North*.

Lutsen is actually the proper name of one of the original native deities to oppose the coming of Padmasambhava to Tibet. In some accounts⁷⁰ there were ten great tenma (*bstan ma*), powerful local gods who opposed the bringing of Buddhism to Tibet. Padmasambhava converted these demons to the Dharma, but gradually over time they abandoned their oaths and had to be tamed again by other yogins. For example, there is the famous tale of the

retaming of the demoness Tseringma by Milarepa.⁷¹ The meditation Lotus Born originally performed in order to be able to tame these creatures was, as a matter of fact, a practice of visualization based on the tamer of obstacles, Hayagrīva.

Lutsen is also the name or designation of a class of deities. They are half *nāgas* and half *tsen*. *Nāga* is the Sanskrit term for the serpent class of deities. The Tibetan word *lu* (*klu*), however, while used as a translation of *nāga*, is really the designation a native spirit associated with bodies of water. In this sense the word *lutsen* evokes local Tibetan snake spirits rather than the classical serpents of the Hindu epics.

We have explained *lu*, but what are *tsen*? *Tsen* are grotesque monsters from native Tibetan religion. They are usually malevolent deities inhabiting the red rock sides of mountains. The King named Lutsen is the best known of these creatures. His full name is *byang bdud klu btsan*, Lutsen, the Demon of the North. Nebesky-Wojkowitz finds texts in which he is described as possessing "nine horns of copper and iron, nine eyes, and nine long arms..." (Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 309).

The story of Gesar's conquest of this northern demon resonates with plot motifs from the *Odyssey*, with its thematization of a hero's distant travels, the ravishment of his consort, the possession of the homeland by enemies, and the imprisonment of the hero by a sorceress. The story begins when

Lutsen kidnaps one of Gesar's consorts, Meza Bumkyi (*me bza' 'bum skyid*) Queen Myriad Joys⁷². Gesar destroys the demon king with the help of Meza and the complicity of one of Lutsen's consorts, Atag Lhamo (*a stag lha mo*), Primordial Tiger Goddess. But having dealt with the familiar epic ravishment of the hero's wife, Gesar then must deal with a Circean interlude. Meza Bumkyid drugs and hypnotizes Gesar into forgetting the Kingdom of Ling and his general mission to defeat the other demons. Instead of returning to his duties he remains her love slave in the Northern Demon Realm until later awakened and rescued.

From the literary point of view this is a very interesting passage, because we see an apparently invulnerable hero experiencing human weaknesses. As we will discuss in Chapter III, there is a theory that the epic genre should be subdivided in order to distinguish human epics from divine or shamanistic epics. This approach proposes that there are "modern" epics, so to speak, such as the *Iliad*, in which the hero experiences human difficulties because he is possessed of essentially human weaknesses and limitations. There is, on the other hand, according to this theory, an earlier, in a sense less advanced kind of heroic tale in which the hero is completely divine--- a kind of shaman/warrior with magical powers and a destiny compounded of one inevitable victory after another.⁷³ In general Gesar appears to be such a shamanistic hero. But the episode in which he is enslaved by a royal witch represents him in a state of weakness and makes him at least a candidate for

being the more Homeric, hellenistic and human kind of hero--- a figure whose saga and problematic occur on a more human scale.⁷⁴

For some literary critics this qualification, that the tale carry a moral comprehensible within the framework of human limitations, is necessary if they are to consider it in any sense an epic. It must show both the highs and lows of the central character. C.M. Bowra originally put forth this thesis in 1952.⁷⁵ It was later taken up by Thomas Greene in his study of the development of Western epic in the Renaissance.⁷⁶

Structurally *The Demon and Ling* is a central book. In Chapter II we will discuss Samten Karmay's proposal that thematically there is a core to the Gesar cycle--- the story of the Demon Kings of the Four Orient. The four chapters in which Gesar defeats these four kings would thus be the center of the epic and the earliest part of it. The *Dü Ling* is the prototype and model of these separate war narratives and the center of these four chapters on the defeat of the main demons.

If Karmay is right, then we could speculate that originally the epic was just the story of a King fighting these four kings. This would be the kernel of the Gesar legend--- a kernel from which the chapters representing later and earlier periods of his life would have grown. For example all the chapters we have discussed so far would be just a build-up to this first great battle with the Demon of the North, Lutsen. They would have been composed after the fact to provide a basis for this *Dü Ling*.

One fact makes Karmay's scenario particularly believable. There are a great many versions of the *Dü Ling*--- more than most other chapters. As far as war stories are concerned, it is the *sine qua non* of the epic *histoire*. Because of its centrality, Yönten Gyatso of the École Française d'Étreme Orient is doing a comparative study of all the extant editions of this chapter. Today the battles Gesar fights with distant and surrounding nations have multiplied into the dozens. But if they had a single prototype, this chapter, the most numerous of the Gesar conquest stories, might well be the prototype.

Karmay's arguments are anthropological in nature, but in Bowra's concept of what constitutes a true epic we have a sort of literary argument for the centrality and primordialness of the *Dü Ling*. It is the chapter of the *Gesar* which has the plot structure of an Aristotelian complete narrative: it has a clear beginning with a quest of the hero, reversals and an exposure of the hero's weakness and a final resolution which involves a transformation of the main characters as they work with their humanness.

Tibetanists have been quick to compare the *Gesar* with the classical tradition of Western heroic poems.⁷⁷ Their observations, however, tend, in the style of anthropological and folkloric studies, to note resonances on the level of story motives. They have little to do with questions of genre as they arise in modern criticism and comparative literature. Gesar the warrior may be similar to Achilles, but that does not mean that the *Gesar Epic* is the same

sort of literary work as the *Odyssey*. In this regard, the *Demon and Ling* chapter is quite significant, because, as far as contemporary genre theory is concerned, it really does present a plot structure more in keeping with the European epic.

The next saga which Samuels and Wang pick as part of the epic kernel is *The War Between Hor and Ling* (*hor gling g.yul 'gyed*). Hor is another Central Asian country. Some people identify it with the Uighurs, but this is very uncertain.⁷⁸ Led by the demon king Gurkar (*gur dkar*), White Tent, they take advantage of Gesar's absence to invade Ling and abduct Drugmo, his principal wife. Drugmo is raped by White Tent and has a child. Gesar is finally brought back to Ling. He kills White Tent, regains Drugmo, and conquers Hor.

Two more important episodes continue the thematic of conquering all the kingdoms of Asia: *The War between Jang and Ling* (*'jang gling g.yul 'gyed*) and *The War between Mön and Ling* (*mon gling g.yul 'gyed*). Jang are thought to be the Naxi, a minority people living in Yunan. The Naxi are themselves an interesting people, engaged according to J.F. Rock in a shamanistic religion very much like that of Tibet.⁷⁹ They still exist today and are known among orientologists for their peculiar pictographic writing system used almost exclusively for the preservation of thousands of shamanistic liturgies. The Mön are supposedly a Himalayan ethnic group inhabiting the region of modern day Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan.⁸⁰ Their demon leaders, Satham (*sa tham*) and Shingtri (*shing khri*), are destroyed by Gesar and, like Hor, Jang and Mön become part of

the Ling confederation.

Other chapters are not especially part of the war motif, but are still considered integral to the plot of the *Gesar*. Wang naturally picks for his list of central tales *The China Episode* (*nag po rgya gling kyi le'u*). In this saga Gesar visits China and is given the hand of a Chinese princess in marriage. In each of the sagas Gesar does not merely destroy an evil influence and gain an ally for Ling. He also, in typical Central Asian fashion, steals for the benefit of his tribe some national treasure of culture or science/lore or wealth. For example, the possession of a Chinese princess is a treasure. The Tibetan chroniclers regard the Chinese wife of Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sGam po) as a great patroness of Buddhist culture. She is famous for having brought to Lhasa the statue at Jowo Kang, one of the most famous shrines in Tibet. She is, in essence, a cultural aggrandizement for the Tibetan Empire.

Reminiscent of the internationally and transhistorically popular tale of the arhat saving his mother from hell ⁸¹ is the *Gesar in Hell* saga (*dmyal gling*), literally *Hell and Ling*. Gesar actually visits hell and saves his mother, in some versions his wife, from the tortures of that region. In some versions this is his last adventure, bringing, in theory, an end to the epic and returning Gesar to Heaven.

The Hell episode is considered quite interesting by Buddhist lamas of the Nyingma (*rnying ma*) lineage because it supposedly includes sophisticated symbolic teachings about the nature of the highest practices of meditation, the Great Perfection (*rdzog chen*)

practices. The religious element in the plot comes about when Gesar, searching out his mother in hell, attempts to free hell beings from their torments. His weapons pass through the bodies of the demons who torture them. And when he topples over a vat in which punished humans are being boiled, the pot is naturally returned to its standing position and the people agreeably climb back in. It turns out that all the agents and implements of torture are unreal--- merely the mental projections of the people undergoing punishment. Hell is a fantasy existing in the minds of deluded beings. It cannot be conquered like other kingdoms and so Gesar must teach the hell beings, principally his mother, to practice the highest form of Buddhist meditation: the Great Perfection. This is a practice in which you free yourself from your own projections, realizing that the phenomenal world is merely a projection of your mind. It is through this realization that the hell beings are finally liberated, by seeing hell as an imaginary nature and as mere imputation.

This and the Horse Race chapter have been the object of elaborate religious commentaries. In any case, despite the fact that there are additional chapters occurring in historically later times and even sagas of contemporary composition, Wang and Samuels agree on making the *Gesar in Hell* saga the last in their list of core Gesar tales.

This dissertation introduces a larger project, the translation and comparatist study of the Central Asian *Epic of Gesar of Ling*. The total undertaking will involve some thousand pages of English translation of a literary, that is non-oral, edition of the *Gesar Epic*. It will provide a general running commentary and also, where appropriate, a line-by-line commentary. The commentary will provide cultural and religious background where necessary, indicate previous texts and their significance, note Tibetan literary conventions, and make points of literary criticism. It will include a linguistic commentary as well.

The linguistic commentary will be quite extensive and is meant mainly for Tibetan translators who would like to undertake the rendering of other chapters in the *Gesar* corpus. In it will be found a host of grammatical and lexicographical observations on the language of the *Gesar of Ling Epic*. Outside of Mireille Helffer's brief remarks on epic language in an appendix to her musicological study, there is no work in any language on the dialect in which this epic is written. This language appears in fact to be the dialect of Tibetan spoken in Kham or Eastern Tibet in the 19th century when Mipham was alive. Many other versions of *Gesar* appear to be written in the same dialect. That at least is the opinion of a number of Tibetan informants.

A number of French scholars have collected materials which contribute to an understanding of this dialect, particularly R.A. Stein, who provided a glossary of epic expressions in his edition of

the Mipham *Gesar*.⁸² Alexander Macdonald of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique has provided excellent linguistic materials on a colloquial style of story telling which relates to this dialect.⁸³ Stein, Macdonald, and Helffer together provide a kind of introduction to the dialect. But a vaster treatment coming from the same French community of Gesarists is still in manuscript form and journeying steadily towards publication. It is a translation of a less Buddhistic *Gesar* text which exists in manuscript at the *Centres d'Études Tibétaines*. This work, accompanied by the extensive commentary and linguistic remarks with which it is presently being equipped may be the most important contribution of all to a Western understanding of the dialect in which the *Gesar* texts of Eastern Tibet are composed. This text, however, suffers from the same problem as the Mipham version---that is, we cannot tell at this point how representative it might be of the larger corpus. It is a relatively short version--- one brought to Paris by Alexandra David-Neel and thus valued as forming part of the patrimony of the venerable Parisian Tibetanist establishment. Translation of this edition is supervised by Anne-Marie Blondeau, a director of studies in the CNRS. Work is done by a committee which includes several Tibetan informants, scholars in both Eastern and Western traditions, including Samten Karmay and Yonten Gyatso.

Until it and my translation are published, there will be no complete reading or unraveling of any Tibetan *Gesar* text in a

Western language. And, whereas Tibetans from Khams usually claim that the Mipham *Gesar* is easy to read, I have never met a Western scholar who could actually understand all of it.⁸⁴ The need for a complete, sentence by sentence interpretation of the text is therefore great. Until we have that, it will be difficult if not impossible to read and translate other volumes of *Gesar*.

The translation of the first chapter, therefore, will include extensive notes on the dialect itself. These notes are drawn from several sources: Khenpo Palden Sherap, Rinpoche is a Nyingma pandit and former professor at Varanasi Sanskrit University. He is a specialist in the works of Mipham. His brother, Khenpo Tsewang, Rinpoche is also a pandit and in addition a Tibetan-English interpreter. The remarks of these two brothers have been especially helpful in the early part of the first chapter and in my collateral reading of Mipham's *Gesar* rituals.

There is also extensive commentary contributed by the already mentioned researchers at the *Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* in Paris. Samten Karmay, has been particularly active in advising me on specific translations and correcting my mistakes. He did not, however, examine every line and all mistakes that do occur in this translation are my fault alone. Dr. Karmay's qualifications extend beyond native fluency in Tibetan. He is the author of an important study on the Tibetan system of meditation known as *rdzog chen*, the Great Perfection, several works on the Bön religion, numerous articles, and an impressive

piece of visual archiving with commentary.⁸⁵ He is himself a Bönpo practitioner, a trained anthropologist and a specialist in the native religion of Tibet. Although he has a knowledge of the Khams dialect, he does not come from Eastern Tibet, but from the neighboring province of Amdo.

Lama Tendzin Samphel, Rinpoche is a graduate of the monastic college in Katmandu founded by His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche. He is also a specialist in the writings of Mipham Gyatso and an active practitioner of the cult of Gesar. He has a thorough knowledge of Mipham's ritual literature, of the religious manuals and cult practices Mipham composed, as well as Mipham's philosophical works. This religious education often guided him in his interpretation of the text and made his reading different from that of most other native informants. As one would expect, however, he was often in agreement with the readings of Sherap Palden, Rinpoche, who is also a specialist in Mipham's teachings.

I personally agree with this view of the text. The Gesar liturgies written by Mipham should indeed be used as a guide in our understanding of Mipham's edition of the epic. The Mipham version possesses a distinct liturgical agenda. This will be evident in the commentary I have written on the translation of the first chapter.

Another important informant was Lama Ugyen Shenphen, now deceased. He was a Tibetan scholar-practitioner from the region of Dergê in the province of Khams (Eastern Tibet). I have worked with him for twenty years translating and annotating Tibetan religious

texts. Besides being a master of Tibetan grammar and religious philosophy, Lama Urgyen was also a particular expert on the rituals and hagiographical writings of Tantric Buddhism, both of the Nyingma and the Kagyü lineages. His death this year is a loss to Buddhist scholarship across the world. Although he was a humble man, his meticulous work has made possible the translation and publication of at least forty Tibetan works into English. As Dilgo Khyentse's personal secretary he worked actively on the acquisition, editing, and printing of literally hundreds of volumes in the great PL480 corpus of Tibetan texts. The U.S. Congressional Act PL480, under the direction of Gene Smith of the Library of Congress, brought to America and made available to university libraries a huge collection of religious, philosophical, and literary texts from South and Central Asia.

Vajracarya the Ven. Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche is often cited in the commentary and in other parts of the dissertation. I studied the traditions of Mipham and the great Khampa teachers of the 19th century with him for more than fifteen years. He did not live to see a single line of this translation, but his explanations of the Gesar tradition and of the tribal teachings of the Mukpo clan influence every aspect of this dissertation. And more importantly, as one of the great teachers of Tibetan Tantra in the West, his view of tantric philosophy pervades the religious explanations present in the footnotes and the body of this dissertation.

Given that I have used all of these informants, one note of

warning is called for. As will be evident from the linguistic commentary, no two Tibetans read this text exactly alike. The divergence in interpretation of even simple passages has been remarkable. It seems that, whereas many Tibetans, both learned and unlettered, feel they can easily understand the language of the Mipham *Gesar*, none of them understand it in precisely the same way. Like Classical Chinese verse, the almost monosyllabic language of the poetry is highly ambiguous. Is this a special quality of the Tibetan epic or would we discover the same phenomena if we consulted with five native speakers of English on the translation of a single English text? We will discuss the question in more detail in the chapter on the religion of the *Gesar*, for my own feeling is that one's familiarity and sense of relationship with the religious agenda is the most important variable in the native interpretations of the text.

This translation will also be accompanied by a systematic critical treatment of the *Gesar*, a treatment which aims to bring the study of Tibetan epic literature into line with our venerable Western tradition of epic criticism. This tradition, as I conceive it, starts with Plato and Aristotle and has continued with small interruption until the present day. It was altered by medieval moral criticism, resurrected and reinterpreted by renaissance criticism, and challenged scientifically by the higher criticism that emerged in the the 18th century under the hands of scholars such as F.A. Wolf, who were inspired by new critical studies of the Bible.

After Wolf came archeological and linguistic research which eventually gave birth to analytical movements seemingly in opposition to Aristotelian criticism. Specifically, Aristotle's treatment of Homer involved the presupposition that Homer was a single individual and that the two poems he wrote were whole and discrete works. His intention to make the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* literary unities gave them beginnings, middles, ends and a certain integrality of plot structure. Whether this integrality was true of Homer or not, it was the rule in the imitations of Greek epic, in the long heroic narratives written by succeeding generations. The analytical "higher criticism" that follows after Wolf challenges, however, the unity of the Homeric epics, turning away from the presuppositions of completeness and closure and unitarianism assumed in Aristotle's treatment of epic in the *Poetics*.

Further challenges occurred when studies of orality, such as those of Lord and Parry, put into question the concept of single authorship in the Greek epics. At the same time as these studies of orality, there have been sophisticated works based on a combination of modern principles of literary criticism and the state-of-the-art in philology and literary archeology. These theorists of epic, people such as G.S. Kirk and C.M. Bowra, take a middle path between the analytical and unitarian readings of Homer, producing broad, synthetic, scientific analyses which also show subtle and refined literary taste.

Originally I had intended to extend the comparative portions

of this study to the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana*, the great Indian literary epics. There is a critical tradition in the West which has been brought to bear on them producing interesting insights which touch upon the nature of epic across the world. A good recent example of this work is Alf Hiltebeitel's critical study, *The Ritual of Battle, Krishna in the Mahābhārata*. Hiltebeitel's examination is based on a sociological approach to epic scholarship founded on a French school of Indological research. The chief thinkers he represents in this area are George Dumézil, Madeleine Biardeau, and J.A.B. van Buitenen, who translated the *Mahābhārata* into English. He also continues the vast approaches of comparative mythology represented by Victor Turner and Mircea Eliade.⁸⁶ Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty summarizes these schools in her preface to Hiltebeitel and there the differences in the approaches of these various scholars are clearly presented. All of them are alike, however, in their search for underlying mythologies that will reveal something about an ancient Indo-European culture. They seek to generalize about the nature of Western religion in epic narratives and their attention is to plot motives as evidence of broad religious tendencies. They seem, in this sense, to be a continuation of the romantic impetus of the philological movement in the 19th century.

Although I respect this approach and find it interesting, I have chosen in the critical chapters of this dissertation to concentrate on Aristotelian criticism at the expense of the schools of religious studies and comparative mythology represented by these social

scientists. The reason is simple. Dumézil and his successors are more concerned with oral epics and epics which are of oral provenance, than they are with *belles lettres* and epics composed in writing. But as chapters Chapters II and III will argue, close and detailed textual studies of the Mipham *Gesar* show that even though Tibetans today sing it to each other, it is not an especially oral work. Everywhere in the text one sees the constructive influence not of tradition, but of one man, the Tibetan Buddhist theologian, Mipham Gyatso.

The *Gesar Corpus* at large may deserve a place in the attentions of the Dumézil/ Biardeau axis and representatives of the University of Chicago school of Religious Studies. But not the Mipham version--- it is too far from oral culture to stand as a good representative of the beliefs and mythic systems of ancient civilizations. It belongs much more with Dante, Milton, Spenser, and Joyce. And it belongs with Homer as Virgil read him and as Bowra reconstructs him to be the single author of the *Iliad*.

Originally I had thought to examine the orality of the *Gesar* by doing a close study of the formulaic language in the Mipham version. The more of it I translated, however, the more I was convinced that this was a carefully crafted work of *belles lettres* and not a transcription of a bardic performance. It expresses a vast metaphysical vision. The author or editor learnedly quotes scriptures to which only the extremely literate might have access.

Nevertheless, the Mipham *Gesar* is meant for the delection of

a vast public. And, reading from the published text, Tibetan singers often entertain their audiences with performances of it. But the fact that the language is colloquial and easy to understand does not mean that it is of oral provenance, but rather that it involves a clever use of the vernacular. Many songs are undoubtedly relics of bardic performances. But there are other sorts of poems which are careful lamaistic compositions--- some in the colloquial dialect, some in Classical Tibetan.

Perhaps the later volumes will be more bardic. Helfer's translation of *The Horse Race* contains mainly oral material. But then, it is not a transcription and translation of the entire epic, but only of the epic songs within it. Until the other volumes have been translated in their entirety and the text of them carefully analyzed, we must assume that this is not a work of ancient composition, but a 19th century reworking of the epic by scholars.

Aristotelian criticism is thus well designed to deal with such an immense narrative and the non-oral imitations of Homer are proper comparisons. If Bowra is correct that the *Iliad* is more the work of a single author than a natural, self-existing production of tradition, then the *Iliad* is also an appropriate comparison--- but within the tradition and discipline of literary criticism rather than as an object of attention of the social sciences. And so the dissertation will keep to Aristotelian criticism and avoid the vaster, anthropologically oriented Dumezilian perspectives. It may be appropriate for the *Gesar Corpus* at large, but it does not fit the

Mipham version very well.

At the same time, to repeat a point made earlier, we will not abandon the use of Stein's ethnographic, anthropological, and mythological observations, for without them we would not be able to identify the collection of writings which are treated here as a single corpus.

Critical Perspectives on the Corpus at Large

I would not like, however, to abandon entirely Hitlbeitel or Blardeau or O'Flaherty. The entire corpus of Tibetan epic materials does indeed invite the use of a Dumézilian approach. The *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyana* are, respectively, oral and written in their origins. But they are accompanied by a vast, multi-national, multi-linguistic culture of legends, pictorial, musical, and dramatic art. As quasi-scriptures, they are one of the mainstays of a popularistic religion still practiced across Asia. They are in this way similar to the *Gesar Corpus*. For it too is not just a single work of literature, but a vast multi-lingual collection of Central Asia stories, performances, cult activities, and works of art organized around a single heroic subject and narrative. Comparatists in the West have experienced success in applying methods of analysis from the discipline of history of religion to Indian epics. Now we can bring to this Western discipline that new corpus as a vast new store of data.

However, speaking on this level of the Gesar corpus at large, there is one interesting difference between the Tibetan literary object and all other epics. The Gesar materials are much more numerous and extensive than those available for other epics. For example, whereas textually we have nothing more than a few versions of two chapters from the story of the Achaean siege of Troy, for the *Gesar Epic* there are huge numbers of radically variant texts and at least 18 different sagas, each approximately the length of the *Iliad*. Actually, although Tibetan bards believe in its existence, there is at least physically no such thing as a single *Gesar Epic*. Rather, there is a vast collection of diverse materials ---mostly lengthy prosimetric narratives. All tell portions of the same story. Thus the *Gesar of Ling* is the largest body of primary materials representing an oral narrative in the world. It is many times larger than the very largest epics previously studied. There are edited and unedited transcriptions, original literary compositions based on transcriptions, courtly written compositions, large collections of discontinuous ballads, collections of illustrations, plays, ritual texts, and commentaries.⁸⁷

The mere fact of its unprecedented extensiveness requires an explanatory effort--- why is there so much more of the *Gesar* than of any other epic in human history? The answer may be that more of the oral materials were available for philological scholarship than has ever been the case before. The *Gesar* materials were discovered by the West during the period of the *Gesar's* flourishing and not, as

was probably the case with the Homeric epics, in later centuries after it had diminished and become a treasured antique. Chapters of the *Gesar*, on the other hand, epic are still sung today by Tibetan bards. The religion of Gesar is still widely practiced and in fact is growing and continuing to be propagated. In this religion, he and the other characters from the epic are Buddhas, protective gods, and family genii. The Indian epics still thrive in religious practice and in this way compete with the extensiveness of the Gesar cult. But the central epic corpus no longer undergoes growth and addition.⁸⁸ Chapters of the epic are still being composed by Tibetan lamas and erudites. These additional chapters are passed around among the authors' disciples and eventually published for popular consumption.

In recent decades numerous recordings have been made of oral *Gesar* by Chinese, Russian, French, German, Scandinavian, and English scholars. The practice of collecting and publishing versions of chapters from the epic, however, actually goes back to a period before European academia became interested in it. The earliest published version is in the time of the Manchu emperor K'ang Hsi in the 17th century.

The practice of writing down the epic may go back even further than this, but not in the sense of producing editions for a reading public. Rather, it has been the custom among many of the bards to have a kind of hand-written prompt book, a manuscript, which is itself, in effect, an edition of a single chapter.

Recently there have been carefully edited versions of the epic

published for a Tibetan reading public. But this is a new phenomenon--- part, one might say, of the destruction of the oral tradition as it begins to move through manuscript into printed culture.

The Problem of Beginnings

The unprecedented extensiveness poses a special problem and produces special insights because of this huge epic's heterogeneity. For example, my translation when completed in six volumes will be the first translation into English of one version of the epic. That in itself is a problem, because the decision to begin with the Mipham version of the *Gesar* is from the point of view of canon descriptions almost an arbitrary decision. And yet, if the translation ever is completed and published, scholars will rely on it as if it were the center of the *Gesar* corpus. Its accessibility in English will tend to eclipse scholarly interest in the many other quite probably older versions.

The Mipham *Gesar*, as we will see, is a very particular form of the story. It is Buddhicized to the nth degree--- to such an extent that it may be a poor representative of oral versions from the nineteenth century or earlier, because it includes so much non-oral material and quotes from esoteric Buddhist scriptures. We will see when we look at Alexander Macdonald's fieldwork in Tibetan story telling, that *sgrung mkhan*, bards, do incorporate written material

into their recitations. But not, as far as I know, quotes from tantras and Buddhist philosophical texts.

Until we have established critical editions and datings for a large number of oral and written *Gesars*, it will be impossible to confidently place the Mipham *Gesar* in its proper context. By the same reasoning, we must be careful not to evaluate hastily the vast corpus from data we find in this one edition alone. The same warning must be made when we evaluate the language of the Mipham *Gesar*. When the entire translation is finished, there will be a vast amount of data about the sub-dialects of the two versions translated by Stein's and his students (the Mipham *Gesar* and the David-Neel version). That is still not sufficient to generalize about the oral nature of the *Gesar* and the oral dimension of its language. We do not as a scholarly community possess at present a confident knowledge of the dialects of the oral *Gesars* recorded by Macdonald and the 2000 plus hours of singing archived in China.

Anne-Marie Blondeau, who has been directing the translation into French of the shorter and less Buddhistic David-Neel manuscript *Gesar*, recently pointed out that a complete translation of the Mipham text could become a sort of "Vulgate *Gesar*," used by scholars in comparative literature to the disadvantage of the untranslated greater mass of material. This would be extremely undesirable.

It is in the end, a problem of beginnings. One must begin somewhere and this edition, despite the fact that it may be

unrepresentative of the oral materials, recommended itself for several reasons. To begin with, it has been published several times in the 20th century and is currently popular among Buddhist Tibetans. It was published in both Ssu ch'üan and Kansu in editions under the direction of Thubten Nyima, Rinpoche, a Tibetan encyclopedist of the Nyingma lineage and a recognized specialist on Gesar.⁸⁹ This lama's edition has been quite popular and certain chapters of it were translated into Chinese as well.

At the same time, as we will see in Chapter III, the Mipham liturgical practices have become popular among Tibetan refugee communities and, strangely, in the West as well among American Buddhists.⁹⁰

In addition, it is artistically accomplished---- well written and vastly conceived, with many levels of meaning and a sophisticated structure and intent. A more authentically oral edition might not be as artistically stunning. Like modern novels, the Mipham *Gesar* is especially heterogenous and embraces an extensive domain of expressive possibilities. It includes the whole range of Tibetan literary genres--- all except drama.⁹¹ It expresses, in short, the depth and vision of its author/editor and supervisor--- being of unusual erudition and creativity. These are the main reasons this Buddhistic version should be translated into English--- because it is lovely, interesting in itself, and popular.

But this is not the text which will render us the most important ethnographical information. If we knew the corpus better,

there are quite likely several oral versions containing more historical and scientific treasures--- versions which, in the service of growth in our scientific understanding would have been studied first, had we only known the entire terrain before we undertook its crossing.

The *Lha Ling* as the beginning of the epic

In a way it is too bad that a translation of the *Gesar* must begin with the first chapter. For the beginning is not much like the rest of the book and in this edition, the beginning is quite long--- a complete composition in itself. It suffers, in fact, from a problem that many epic beginnings have, which is that it moves slowly and is distant from what people love most about the *Gesar*, the battle chapters. Here we encounter the problem of how to begin an epic and where it should begin and what beginnings mean.

The Story of Troy is an excellent example of this problem: Lattimore in his translation of the *Iliad* entitles it *The Anger of Achilles*⁹². This title emphasizes the fact that Homer did not attempt to narrate the entire war, but merely ten days of its action, the days in which the fates of Achilles and Hector and therefore by extension those of the entire Achaean fleet and Troy itself were decided. Lattimore in the introduction to his translation attempts to describe the greater epic of which Homer's contribution would have been but two chapters. Like most commentators he holds that

most of the other chapters were written after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. We have seen that the same sort of argument is used for the central chapters of the *Gesar*.

Critics from Aristotle forward did not spend much energy imagining the larger corpus. Until the 17th century and Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum*⁹³ the analytical approach to Homer was not seriously considered. Critical examinations regarded each of his two works as a unity (or as a hopeless farrago), but always ignored their possible place in a larger opus or a more extensive, perhaps more amorphous corpus. The conception is that the previous "text" for Homer was only a collection of legends or historical facts. From these Homer composed two complete and self-sufficient works with clear beginnings, middles, and ends. He chose to begin *in medias res* and this style of beginning was considered as a compositional technique in itself.⁹⁴

Horace, describing the art of these presumptively ordinary poets prescribed that an epic should begin in the middle of things as if there were no actual written beginning. His advice is to modern poets that they be as wise as Homer, the primal poet. The one who composes the first account--- even he should begin in the middle of things: "*semper ad eventum festinat et in medias res/ non secus ac notas auditorem rapit, et quae/ desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit,...*" [lines 147-148] The advice here is to "hasten to the crisis" and not to treat a topic so large that the effect on the reader is not impressive. To tell the entire story from beginning to end

would be to "fetch smoke from a flash" rather than "light from smoke." "*non fumum ex fulgore, sed ex fumo dare lucem.*" And by beginning the account with the most striking and essential action of the plot, we have a harmony of beginning, middle, and end--- a harmony which is considered good narrative structure: "...*primo ne medium, me dio ne discrepet imum.*"⁹⁵

But looking at the measurelessness of the *Gesar* corpus we begin to realize that *in medias res* may be rather a necessity than a writerly decision. If the epic is truly vast, it may be nearly impossible to find its beginning. And if one does indeed discover a causal initiation to the chain of events that lead to the epic action, it may be a beginning so distant in time and space from the central occurrences of the epic--- the important battle scenes, the great deaths, the final destruction and disposition of the the principle characters--- that the introduction may bear little resemblance in tone, quality or subject matter to the rest of the story.

Or to put it another way, it is only the two chapters of the *Epic of Troy*, viz. the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that begin *in medias res*. In order to imagine a multi-chaptered greater work that recites the whole story, we must posit an introduction that places us not in the midst of things, but at the actual beginning.⁹⁶

This non-Horatian comprehensiveness is a characteristic found in the other great oral epics which we possess in "complete" editions. The *Mahābhārata* begins, for example, with the story of the enmity between the divine bird Garuda and the snakes or *nāgas*.

Thematically this legend is seemingly present just to explain the ritual gathering at which the *Mahābhārata* is first recited to King Janamegaya, a descendant of the single survivor of the battle of Kurukṣetra ---a battle in which the moral universe of ancient India is destroyed. Thus this first chapter, the *Ādiparvan*, the "primordial chapter," is nothing but a frame narrative for the central action. It justifies the recital of the epic as the telling of an origin tale for the royal listener, the king of Bhārat or India. It has no other obvious connection until a third of the way through the *parvan*. Effectively the frame narrative is a distinct literary piece and could have been a chapter in itself. It is different in theme, content, characters, and style from the rest of the epic, as has been noted by scholars who suggest that the entire *parvan* is actually a later addition.⁹⁷

But when we discuss the *Ādiparvan*, the so-called "primordial chapter," we are actually only considering one interpretation of the corpus of Mahābhārata materials. As we have already noted, there is significant disagreement about the composition of the canonical texts of this epic. There is the so-called "Northern recension," which includes materials in closely related Indo-European languages such as Nepālī, Bengali, and Sanskrit. The so-called "Southern recension" includes materials in languages of a wholly different linguistic group such as Telugu and Malayālam. When we think of the greater vastness and diversity of materials beyond even what is included in these two multi-lingual bodies of texts: legends, epic

lays, composed chapters, court poetry, and religious hymns, then we begin to wonder if there can be a true and definitive beginning.

In a sense the *Iliad* has the same problem. We do not possess a larger work which contains the Homeric epics. But if we did, where would it begin? Richmond Lattimore cites the outline provided by Proclus and summarized by Photius; he speculates on the existence of a series of epics beginning with the *Cypria*, a poem that takes the action from "the decision of the gods to cause the Trojan war" to the point where the *Iliad* begins (Lattimore, p. 27).

Lattimore believes, however, that the real beginning of the story should be with the judgement of Paris where a quarrel between three goddesses leads to Paris' kidnapping of Helen. But why stop there? Some think that the true causal origination of the events which lead to the plot of the *Iliad* should be the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, to which the poem indeed refers . At that union of a mortal king and an immortal sea nymph the apple of discord was thrown among the guests. This initiated the confusion which lead to the Judgement of Paris and finally to the Trojan war. The Apple of Discord was thrown at the very same time that Achilles, the man whose prowess will destroy Troy, was conceived. Perhaps here is the true beginning of the *histoire*.

But *Cypria* itself may also allow us to place the beginning of the action of the epic back even further. Paul Mazon in his French edition and translation of the *Iliad* ⁹⁸ takes the expression "the designs of Zeus" from *Iliad* 1.6 to refer to Zeus' plan to depopulate

the over-burdened earth by causing a series of disastrous wars.

Then again, there is another possible reading which would seek the relevant origins in yet another quarter. James Redfield, in *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*⁹⁹, conceives the story of the war from the point of view of the Trojans, and uses the Aristotelian generic interpretation to identify the hero of the tragedy as Hector, not Achilles. If we then think of the *Aeneid* as the imitative continuation of Homer's works, the true origins of the story would be in the birth of the Trojan state--a subject heavily thematized in Virgil, and less so in Homer. Here the causal origins change depending on whose story one thinks the Trojan war is: the story of Paris and Helen, the tragedy of the half-divine warrior, Achilles, or the tragedy of the brave man doomed to defeat, Hector.

It is interesting to compare these approaches to explaining the boundaries of the Greek epic with Asian epics. The *Purānas*, for example, are defined as beginning with the creation of the world. Not all of them actually do, but the reason for making the point is clear. These epic collections of tales and dialogues are theogonies like Hesiod and must begin with the origin of all things because they tell the stories of the gods of all things. But the Ladakhi version of the *Gesar* epic also begins with the creation of the world, based on that more or less scientific attitude of Buddhism that causality stories must go back to the literal original cause, which is the efficient cause of all existent things.

In all of these epic cycles the beginning of the cycle is quite

distant from the central events and, although linked in very obvious ways, quite different in style and content from what it introduces.

In this dissertation I will translate and comment upon the first chapter of the *Mipham* version of the *Gesar Epic*. In this version the introductory chapter describes the council in heaven in which it is decided that there will be a hero named Gesar who will incarnate to save the world from a plague of evil demons. The divine origins of the god who later incarnates as Gesar are described and omens are delivered to the tribal state of Ling (*gLing*) warning this warlike people that a great hero will be born amongst them.

Padmasambhava, "the Lotus Born," the founder of Tantric Buddhist culture in Tibet, travels throughout the universe using his spiritual powers and sly stratagems of skillful means to bring together the elements needed to produce the incarnation of a god as a hero. All of these events form an exceptional narrative entitled *Lha gLing*, the *Divine (Assembly) of Ling*.

Now, in order to do a study of Mipham's very popular and important version of the entire *Gesar Epic*, we must start with the *Lha gLing*. It is, however, a chapter most untypical of other editions and collections of the epic. Of the many versions discovered and edited, only two include such a chapter. There is good reason for the reservations that Stein and Francke express about the material in this chapter--- that it is especially religious and feels like a late, ecclesiastical augmentation of the original story. It is an extremely theological book--- its subject matter is meetings of

gods, spontaneous tantric rituals in heaven, and magical events totally devoid of warfare or any sense of heroic oppositions. We will pursue this point in more detail later in this monograph. But at this point I would like to address the question comparatively. The *Lha gLing* pursues the origins of the epic to one of their logical starting points, going back not only in time by tracing the causal chain, but receding metaphysically as well---- receding to the ontological origins of the nature and being of Gesar. It is another example of the literary principle that the introductory chapters of the total narrative of a Great Matter tend to be fundamentally unlike the main chapters of the story.

For this reason, an introduction to the Mipham *Gesar* which begins with an explanation of its first chapter must be unlike the treatment of the rest of the epic. Such will be the case indeed in this dissertation. While describing broadly the *Gesar* narrative materials, the main subject of examination will be the matter treated most insistently the *Lha gLing*, which is the nature of gods, the divine machinery and theogony associated with *Gesar*.

1 Three editions are used for the translation: R.A. Stein's transcription of the *Lha gLing*: R.A. Stein, *L'épopée tibétaine de Gesar dans sa version lamaïque de Ling*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), pp. 167-215; *Lha gLing gab tse dgu skor Ge sar*, reproduced from the the 1980 Szechuan People's Publishing House edition, (Gangtok: Sherap Gyaltzen Palace Monestery Gantok-Sikkim, 1983). This is a pirated edition of the Chinese publication; and *Lha gLing gab tse dgu skor*, ed. by 'Thub stan Nyi ma, Rinpoche, (Gansu: Gan su'u mi yigs dpe skrun khang, 1982). These three editions show many variations, but rarely are they significant. I have done a critical edition based on the Gantok edition. When there were variations, I accepted the advice and decisions of Lama Tendzin Samphel, Rinpoche. There is a Bhutanese edition as well, but the circumstances of its preparation are so doubtful that I was

advised not to consult it at all.

The Stein '56 edition is a printing of a transcription he did by hand while living in Kalimpong for a short period. It contains many orthographic errors, as Professor Stein is the first to admit. It should be pointed out that Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs often contain numerous errors. Stein corrected in his transcription some errors he believed were the in woodblock print, which was his basis. These corrections are the result of advice from Chinese speaking native informants in Kalimpong. Stein included a very useful Tibetan-French glossary with his transcription.

The original Tibetan woodblock prints from which he worked, known as the *Xylographs of gLing* have not been found yet.

2 See for example, Gregory Nagy, *Comparative studies in Greek and Indic meter*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974) Gregory Nagy, *Comparative studies in Greek and Indic meter*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974) which despite its title is a work comparing Greek and Indic mythology in the epic tradition.

3 Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1968)

4 A good example of these studies are two works by Alf Hiltebeitel, *The ritual of battle : Krishna in the Mahabharata* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990) and *The cult of Draupadi* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1988) *The Ritual of Battle* begins with an introduction by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty which gives an excellent outline of the modern schools of sociological and literary studies of Indian Epic most popular in the United States and Europe. Wendy Doniger's introduction to the English version of *Dictionnaire des mythologies et des religions* is even more encompassing: in its map of Asian epic studies it actually includes an analysis of R.A. Stein's structuralist approach to the *Gesar Epic*. See *Mythologies*, compiled by Yves Bonnefoy, (Chicago: University Press, 1991).

I characterize Biardeau as "more textually based" in the sense that she accepts a much broader textual base for the epic. Dumézil and Van Buitenen supported a critical edition of the *Mahābhārata* which removes from active consideration a great diversity of other *Mahābhārata* texts. If you credit those texts and work from this larger, more diffuse evidential base it is possible to illuminate challenging passages by intertextual reference and one is not always called upon to reduce every explanation to a pre-existing religious foundation. See Wendy Doniger in *The Ritual of Battle*, pp. 14-18

5 Stein told me in a conversation at his home in 1992 that there still existed two or three volumes of this version which had never been found. He had never seen them and they have never been republished. But he had heard reports. He urged me to go to Lanchou and search for those xylographs. It is not certain they exist or have ever existed. If they exist, then the translation I am undertaking would be perhaps a thousand pages longer in the end.

6 The three principal works in this corpus are: R.A. Stein, *L'épopée tibétaine de Gesar dans sa version lamaïque de Ling*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), *Recherches sur l'épopée et l'barde au Tibet*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), and *Les tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961).

His theory of ethnographic structuralism is most clearly presented in Rolf A. Stein, *Le monde en petit : jardins en miniature et habitations, dans la pensée religieuse d'Extrême-Orient* (Paris : Flammarion, 1987). The English translation is *The World in Miniature: Container Gardens and Dwellings in Far Eastern Religious Thought* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

7 Stein, '56: pp. 351-399.

8 I am particularly thinking of the vocabulary notes provided by Mireille Helffer in her translation of songs from the second book of the *Gesar* and Alexander Macdonald's vocabulary notes to a collection of Tibetan folktales. See Mireille Helffer, *Les Chants dans l'épopée tibétaine de ge-sar d'après le livre de la course de cheval*, (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1977) and A.W. Macdonald, *Matériaux Pour L'Étude de la Littérature Populaire Tibétaine* Vols. I and II, (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 1990).

9 Vast beyond consideration are the religious tracts in Hindi and all the languages of India connecting the Indian epics with Indian religion. The much tinier body of Western scholarly studies is still quite extensive. See, for example, *Mahabharata : myth and reality : differing views*, editors, S. P. Gupta, K. S. Ramachandran; foreword by Niharranjan Ray, (Delhi: Agam Prakashan, 1976), Ruth Cecily Katz, *Arjuna in the Mahabharata : where Krishna is, there is victory* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), Jacques Scheuer, *Siva dans le Mahabharata*, (Paris : Presses universitaires de France, 1982), and James William Laine, *Visions of God : narratives of theophany in the Mahabharata* (Vienna : Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1989).

10 Glaucon is discussing with Socrates the origin of Greek religion. "And even if there are gods, and they do care about us, yet we know of them only from tradition and the genealogies of the poets..." *Republic*, Book II. *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), p. 314. See also Herodotus, *Herodotus*, Greek with an English translation by A. D. Godley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), Book 2, chapter 53.

11 See, for example, Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1903) or Helene P. Foley (ed.) *The Homeric Hymn to Demeter: translation, commentary, and interpretive essays*, (Princeton: University Press, 1993).

12 Foley, *opus cit.* p. 84.

13 In fact, we may speak historically with more confidence as well for a very interesting, albeit controversial reason. The lineages of generation-to-generation transmission of lore do not appear to have been interrupted in the East as they have in the West. This is a controversial issue, but the argument is plausible. In both the Buddhist and the *Gesar* traditions it is the case that there is better documentation of the activity of handing on a text from one generation to the next. The customs of reading involve scrupulous recording of the situation in which the previous edition was conferred on the present editor. Even the handing over of a text from one reader to another is often accompanied by a ceremony of "textual transmission" (*lung*) And so, in some cases it is easier to reconstruct the history of a text in Eastern religion than

In Western.

14 Paul Richman (ed.), *Many Rāmāyṇas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

15 *Ibid.*

16 Of course, this does not appear to be literally true. For example, The *Iliad* does not actually begin with the Council of the Gods scene. But then, in the model of the epic which we will be discussing, the *Iliad* would not be considered the beginning of the Greek epic cycle of Troy. At the same time, as we will remark, its first words refer to the "designs of Zeus" and point, according to many interpretations, to the first events in the matter of Troy--events which give the *telos* of the entire epic cycle.

17 Samten G. Karmay, "The Four Adversaries of Gesar: a Theoretical Basis of the Tibetan Epic (with reference to a "chronological order" of the various episodes in the Gesar Epic)"--a paper privately circulated at the Centre d'Études Tibétaine in Paris.

18 Antti Aarne, *The types of the folktale: a classification and bibliography*, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson, 2d revision (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1973).

19 My analysis here is heavily influenced by Peter Brooks, *Reading for the plot: design and intention in narrative*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1984).

20 A. H. Francke, the Moravian missionary who first published in the West translations of complete versions of the Gesar epic did short comparative studies of the *Gesar* with the Indian epics, and the *Purāṇas*. Francke's approach was heavily influenced by the 19th century philological movement and the romanticism of orientalist of that period. A summary by R.A. Stein of Francke's theories along with his principal articles has been published in the multi-volumed Bhutanese edition of the *Gesar* materials: See *The Epic of Gesar*, Vol. XXIX, (Thimbu, Bhutan: 1981), particularly pages xvi-xviii.

21 This thesis is put forward and discussed in *The Iliad of Homer*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore, (Chicago, University Press, 1951), pp. 24- 33.

22 This strange fact has already been recorded by Mireille Helfer, who easily succeeded in getting a Tibetan singer to perform an entire written manuscript from the second volume of the Mipham *Gesar*. Lama Tendzin Samphei informed me that his family and the equivalent of his village in the Tibetan refugee community of Orissa had him sing aloud portions of the Mipham *Gesar* on a yearly basis.

23 For a list of Mair's work on *pien-wen*, see bibliography and later citations in this work.

24 For a general introduction to Russian heroic oral poetry see Yuri Matveevich Sokolov, *Russian Folklore*, (Hatboro, Pennsylvania, Folklore Associates: 1966), trans. by Catherine Ruth Smith with intro. and bibliography of Felix Oinas; Nora K. Chadwick, *Russian Heroic Poetry*, by Nora K. Chadwick, (Cambridge, University Press: 1932); Felix J. Oinas, *Essays on Russian Folklore and Mythology*, (Columbus: University Press, 1985); Isabel Florence Hapgood, *The Epic Songs of Russia*, (New York: Scribner, 1916).

25 Albert Bates Lord, *Epic singers and oral tradition*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,

1991) and *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1960).

26 For an ethnomusicological discussion of the melodies in the *Gesar Epic*, a discussion which proceeds based on Lord and Parry's original analyses of Western oral epic, see Mireille Helffer, *Les Chants dans l'épopée tibétaine de ge-sar d'après le livre de la course de cheval*, (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1977). Helffer's study of melody in Tibetan oral epic did discover one referential element: each character had a particular melody attached to his or her persona. So, for example, whenever Gesar sang, it was always with the same tune. His enemy Trotung sang his songs in another tune, but always the same tune. Interestingly, Helffer reports that the Tibetan bards did not seem to be particularly aware of this fact about their own singing.

27 There are several major studies of the editions of the *Gesar*. In this monograph I will rely principally on the magisterial, founding study by R.A. Stein and a series of more recent articles by Geoffrey Samuel, along with some recent Chinese research by Wang Yinuan.

R.A. Stein, *L'épopée tibétaine de Gesar dans sa version lamaïque de Ling*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956), *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959).

Some of Samuels' studies: Geoffrey Samuel, "Gesar of Ling: the Origins and Meaning of the East Tibetan Epic." In *Proceedings of the 5th International Seminar on Tibetan Studies*, Narita, Japan, 1989 ; "Music and Shamanic Power in the Gesar Epic." in *Metaphor: A Musical Dimension*. Ed. by Jamie Kassler, (Sydney: Currency Press); "Gesar of Ling: Shamanic Power and Popular Religion." In *Tantra and Everyday Religion*. Ed. by Geoffrey Samuels, (New Delhi: Aditya Prakashan). Wang Yinuan, "Incomplete Statistics of Sections and Lines in the Tibetan King Gesar," (Sichuan...) In *Gesar Yanjiu* 1:184-211.

Samten Karmay delivered a paper at the International Gesar of Ling Conference in Lhasa, August 1991, which surveyed the various editions of the epic in a new way--- thematically, listing each version according to its content, gathering constellations of texts and editions around specific episodes and heroes. The definitive edition of this bibliography is still in progress. This bibliography of *Gesar* editions will be quite interesting for literary theorists, because it is based on the assumption of Tibetan bards that there really is a single, complete *Gesar Epic*, with a plot, a beginning, middle, and end. We will discuss Karmay's article more fully in Chapter II.

28 A good example of the Chinese fascination with the "magic and mystery of Tibet" would be Shih lun *Ge Sa Er Wang Zhuan* qan sheng de bei zhang nai qing xiang' by Jing Hua, in *Hsi Tsang Yan Chiu*, 1990 .1, pp. 130-139. (Lhasa: Hsi tsang yen chiu pien chi bu, 1990).

29 I use this term in the sense developed by Edward Said in *Orientalism*,. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York : Vintage Books, 1979).

I have often observed in conversations with scholars from the People's Republic that many of them regard Tibetan culture as an exciting and mysterious place, as the embodiment of a pleasing alterity and some kind of promise of magic and a magical society, beyond what was dreamt of in Marxist materialism and the determinism of Social Darwinism.

30 I am indebted to several scholars at the *Centre d'Études Tibétaines* in Paris for information about current Chinese activities with respect to the *Gesar* epic. At Christmas time in 1990–91 the People's Republic of China sponsored an international gathering of *Gesar* specialists in Lhasa. Reports from this conference were delivered to Tibetanists in Paris during Dr. Anne Marie Blondeau's Tibetan studies seminar at the Sorbonne in Spring of '92. I am particularly beholden to her, Dr. Heather Stoddard-Karmay, and Dr. Samten Karmay for their intelligences in this regard. The general conclusions I present in the above paragraph, however, are my own.

31 In the late 50s there was an anti-*Gesar* campaign, when *Gesar* was conceived, as Alexander Macdonald puts it, "as the Satan of Chinese marxism." Personal communication from Alexander Macdonald.

32 Alexandra David-Neel and Lama Yongden, *The Superhuman Life of Gesar of Ling*, (New York: Claude Kendall Publisher, 1934), pp. 8–9. The particular bard mentioned in this section presented himself as a poet/shaman. He considered himself a reincarnation of Dikchen, one of the accessory heroes of the epic and he claimed that he periodically visited the court of *Gesar*, which continues to exist in a magical land. When this singer performed, he would sit with a blank sheet of paper in his lap, claiming that the written characters of the epic appeared on the page--- as David-Neel says, "a rather strange assertion on his part, considering he did not know how to read." This passage in David-Neel adequately illustrates the widely attested Buddhist textual bias--- a bias so strongly in favor of written texts that some Tibetans might tend to deny oral provenance, even were it the case.

33 The whole story of Macdonald's informant is not relevant to this chapter, but it is worth telling for its color and the sense of background it gives. Before the invasion of Tibet, the regent to the present Dalai Lama was the chief lama of Reting Monastery. He was a controversial figure and the politics of church factionalism and theocratic intrigue finally saw his assassination by a particularly cruel method. During his heyday, however, the Reting Regent was a great *amateur* of the *Gesar Epic* and used to hold contests between bards in his court. It was there that this young monk heard and memorized performances of the epic. Later he was forced to flee Tibet because of crimes he had committed, including, allegedly, murder. He met Alexander Macdonald in Kalimpong, who recorded many hours of *Gesar* performance from him.

34 Stein '59 (p. 5) indicates three versions of the epic as the earliest known in the West: Benjamin Bergmann's report on a Mongolian version in 1804, Bergmann, *Nomadische Streifereien unter den Kalmüken in den Jahren 1802 und 1803*, vol. III (Riga: 1804), I.J. Schmidt's study of another Mongolian version, I.J. Schmidt, *Die Thaten des Vertilgers der Zehn Uebel in den zehn Gegenden, des verdienstvollen Helden Bodga Gesser Chan; eine mongolische Heldensage, nach einen in Peking gedruckten Exemplare aufs neue abgedruckt*, mongolian text and translation published in 1836 and 1839 in St. Petersburg; new edition (Berlin: Auriga Verlag, 1925), and the Francke edition and translation cited below, the first Western notice of a Tibetan version.

35 A.H. Francke, *A Lower Ladakhi Version of the Kesar Saga*, in *Biblioteca Indica*, n. 1543,

(Calcutta, 1904). For a bibliography of Francke's work on Gesar, see R.A. Stein, *Recherches sur L'épopée et le barde au Tibet*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1959), pp. 12-14. 36 *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. 22, 1959, "Francis Woodman Cleaves, "An Early Mongolian Version of the Alexander Romance." (Cambridge: Harvard Yenching Institute, 1959)pp. 1-99. The existence of this Mongolian text and its connection with Near Eastern and Central Asian versions in other languages leaves little doubt that the Turkic, Persian, and Greek collections of marvelous tales about the adventures of Alexander the Great found their way to Tibet in one form or another.

Stein argues, particularly pp. 280-282 of *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet*, that this lineage of texts traveling from the Byzantine Empire eastward along the Silk Route to Mongolia and Tibet constitutes a source for key stories in the *Gesar Epic*. His argument is two-fold. 1) In certain versions of the *Gesar*, Gesar is identified as the King of Rhom or From-- Persian and Turkic expressions for Alexandria. This means that the concept of his being emperor of Rome must have come from the geographical locus of the Byzantine Empire and not from any Chinese or North Asian source and not from knowledge of the Italian Rome. Other evidence makes this extremely likely. 2) There are homologies in the legendary descriptions of Kaniska, Aśoka, and Alexander that lead us to connect all three of them in legend to the master-myth of the *cakravartin*, the "wheel-turning monarch" or "universal monarch." The similarities go so far as to include a common legend about demon enemies in the Four Quadrants or Directions with especial reference to the especially difficult Demon of the North.

My own feeling is that the arguments Stein uses and the evidence he deploys are inconclusive. The legends of the Indian King Aśoka are so widespread that they could have traveled from East to West and penetrated the *Romance of Alexander*. Cleaves, in fact, speculates that the Turkish version of this legend may be the earliest among the four groups of texts (Greek, Persian, Mongolian, and Turkish) he examines. If this is so, then elements of the stories found in the *Romance* could have come from India or one of the great Central Asian Buddhist kingdoms such as Khotan or Kucha for the geographic flow of influence is westward from the orient in this case.

This scenario becomes more plausible as our knowledge of the history of Central Asia improves. With the growth of studies in Late Antiquity and studies of the medieval kingdoms of the Silk Route, we are becoming increasingly aware of a cosmopolitan cultural and political world whose center was East of Byzantium and West of China--- between the traditional space of the Persian Empire and the space of the Chinese imperium at its greatest extension. It is difficult to see the history of this area clearly, because it is swamped in the 7th and 8th century by the the Arab Caliphate in the West and the T'ang in the East. At the end of the 8th century the Tibetan Empire itself occupies this imperial space, taking the "Four Garrisons" from China between 751 and 790. By then Tibet has dominated numerous Central Asian Kingdoms: Nepai, Khotan, Kucha, Kashgar, and faces on its Western frontier north of Baltistan, north of Kashmir, the Caliphate. See Christopher I. Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia: A History of the Struggle for Great Power among Tibetans, Turks, Arabs, and Chinese*

during the Early Middle Ages , (Princeton: University Press, 1987).

37 Alexandra David-Neel et le lama Yongden, *La Vie Surhumaine de Guésar de Ling*, (Paris: Éditions Adyar, 1931).

38 Geoffrey Samuel, a privately circulated article not yet published.

39 Stein, 1959: pp. 183-241 is a detailed discussion of "le cadre géographique" of the *Gesar Epic*.

40 Alexander Macdonald met the descendant of this King of Ling in Kalimpong in 1959.

41 See for example, the poem which introduces the first chapter of *Shambhala, the Way of the Warrior*, by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, (Boston: Shambhala Press), where *srid pa'i me long* is translated as "cosmic mirror." The entire passage, however, describes not the creation of the world, but the creation of human society. *Srid* when it means "existence" is at times a poetic term for *samsāra*, or cyclic existence, the realm of illusion. This usage is time-honored in native Tibetan texts. It probably comes from the translation of *srid pa* as Skt. *bhava*, becoming, and then the use of *bhava* in compounds such as *bhava-sukha*, "existence and bliss" or "samsāra and nirvāna." See Jeffrey Hopkins (ed.), *Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Dictionary Pa-A*, (Free Union, Virginia: published at Kinkos, 1985), p.1222. Here the source is the *Index to the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, by Gadjin Nagao (Tokyo: Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkokai, 1958). The reference there is actually not the conjunctive "becoming and bliss," but "the bliss of becoming."

Srid is also the term appearing in modern compounds which contain the idea of "political." Melvyn C. Goldstein (ed.), *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan*, (Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar, 1975), pp.1181-1183.

42 Ven. Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, *Gong ma rigs ldan gyi thang yig las lha lung gser gyi thig pa* (*The Epic of the Golden Dot: drawn from the Chronicles of the Divine Rigdens*)--- Tibetan unpublished manuscript.

43 *gLing* is also the Tibetan translation for the Sanskrit *dvīpa*, which means literally "island or land."

44 Stein, 1959. Stein deals with the theme of the Kings of the Four Directions throughout his work, but particularly beginning on page 249 and then recurrently thereafter. On pages 254 to 261 he gives a chart comparing the geographic basis for this motif across a great range of Asian texts, chronicals, and epigraphs.

45 *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, trans. from the Chinese of Kumārajīva by Leon Hurvitz, (New York: Columbia University, 1976), p. 28.

46 Alexandra David-Neel et Lama Yongden, *La Vie surhumaine de Guésar de Ling*, (Paris: Éditions Adyar, 1931), pp. 1-11, the Prologue.

47 This story is told in *Meditation in Action*, by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, (Boston: Shambhala Pub, 1970), p. 25.

48 I am indebted to Nobumi Iyanaga for this information and for the following references: R. A. Stein, *Annuaire du College de France, Resume des cours de 1971- 1972*, p. 504-505 et

sq., p. 508 ; *ibid.*, *Resume des cours de 1972- 1973*, p. 466, etc. Gustave-Charles Toussain, tran., *Le Grand Guru Padmasambhava: Histoire de ses existences*, (Paris: Michel Allard Éditions Orientales, 1979) pp. 24-42. Ronald M. Davidson, "Reflections on the Maheśvara Subjugation Myth--Indic Materials, Sa-skyapa Apologetics, and the Birth of Heruka" in *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol. 14, Number 2, 1991, p. 197-235. N. Iyanaga, "Recits de la soumission de Maheśvara par Trailokyavijaya", in Michel Strickmann, ed., *Tantric and Taoist Studies in honour of R. A. Stein*, III, (Bruzelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1985), p. 633-745. See also "Hindu-isation, Buddha-isation, then Lama-isation or : What Happened at La-phyi? in T. Skorupski (ed.), *Indo-Tibetan Studies* (Tring: 1990).

49 Maitreya/ Aryasangha, *Ratnagotravibhaga Mahāyanottaratantraśāstra: The sublime science of the great vehicle : being a manual of Buddhist monism*, trans. by E. Obermiller. (Shanghai: Reprint ed., 1940).

50 *Le Grand Guru Padmasambhava: histoire de ses existences (Padma Than Ying)* [sic.], translated from the Tibetan by Gustave-Charles Toussaint, (Paris: Éditions Orientales, 1979), pp. 24-36. A previous edition of this translation was entitled *Le Dicton de Padma*.

51 Tibetan native religion has a typically dualistic view of these samaya or vow violators as well. It is well represented in "The History of the Goloks" in Chapter V of this dissertation. Even minor vow violators are considered monstrous to a degree. Their very touch is a ritual taboo, bringing about states of miasma in even virtuous people--- states of ritual uncleanness with serious repercussions for the sagas of heroes and heroines who come in the slightest physical contact with such beings of "perverted aspirations."

52 Per Kvaerne, "Dualism in Tibetan Cosmogonic Myths and the Question of Iranian Influence," in *Silver on Lapis*, ed. by Christopher I. Beckwith (Bloomington: The Tibet Society, 1987), pp. 163-174.

53 *Buddhist Hermeneutics*, edited by Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, c1988).

54 Mipham Gyatso, *bde bshegs snying po'i stong thun seng ge'i nga ro*, Volume Pa or IV of the collected edition, *sde ge dgon chen spar ma 'jam mgon mi pham rgya mtsho (sDe-dge dgon-chen Prints of the Writings of 'Jam-mgon 'ji Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho)*.

55 Mipham Gyatso, *gzhan stong seng ge nga ro.*, (Volume Pa of the collection edition).

56 *Letter of the Black Ashe*, by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, privately published and distributed.

57 Dorothy Sayers, introduction to *The Divine Comedy 2: Purgatory*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 31. Dorothy Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1970) Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, (New York: Noonday Press, 1961).

My understanding of this point of Catholic doctrine is almost entirely a result of readings in the works of the "Inklings": C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and their student Dorothy Sayers. My understanding is tied up with a particular ideological world heavily

involved in the controversies of the period when the Inklings were writing. I understand that the philosophy of C.S. Lewis, which has sometimes been characterized as "Aristocratic Radicalism," is not in every point identical with ecclesiastical doctrine.

Further, the reading this group gives of Dante is meant to serve their religious convictions in the modern context. These considerations, which make the approach of Sayers and Co. of interest to me at the same time distance them from the mainstream of academic studies in Dante--- studies which are not conducted with such an explicit apologist agenda.

58 Sayers, *The Divine Comedy I*, p. 89.

59 Dante's *inventio* in limiting the consciousness of the damned reminds me of a Buddhist debate about the universality of buddha nature. There are schools of Buddhist thought which disagree with the Mahāyāna position on the universality of *tathāgatagarbha*. In those systems there are human beings who are fundamentally corrupt and lack the possibility of ever gaining enlightenment. Their turning away from the Buddha is choiceless and they are said to be not members of the family of the Buddha, but members of the "cut off" family.

The assertion of the *tathāgathagabha* school is that buddha nature is inseparable from consciousness and therefore there can be no such thing as a "cut-off family." Thus, there could be no permanent hell, for the good of the intellect would always be present as a seed--- eventually to manifest as a sense of openness and perspective--- even in hell beings. This point is made in the last book of the epic when Gesar harrows hell to free his mother from damnation.

60 This debate is discussed in detail in Étienne Gilson, *Dante et la Philosophie*, (Paris: J. Vrin, 1986). The chapter which particularly discusses Dante's philosophical underpinnings for the *Comedy* is Chapter IV, pp. 225-279. His work in turn aims to answer a Thomist presentation of Dante by P. Mandonnet, *Dante le Théologien. Introduction à l'intelligence de la vie, des oeuvres de l'art de Dante Alighieri*, (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1935). He feels that Mandonnet's interpretation relies too much on a single philosophical system.

61 Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal patterns in poetry: psychological studies of imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, Geoffrey Cumberlege, 1948).

62 I have already listed several works by Mipham which address this philosophy in the context of the 19th century Tibetan Renaissance. To this list must be added Mipham's commentary on the *Uttaratantra* and one more all important text, Jamgön Kongtrül the Great's commentary on the same text. If these works were translated, then the philosophical background of the Mipham *Gesar* could be documented in detail and presented to the West in detail. This work is already underway. I have been working for the last decade with members of the Nalanda Translation Committee and three Tibetan pandits, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso and Khenpo Trangu, Rinpoche, and Khenpo Palden Sherap on the foundation texts of this particular Buddha nature school of thought in its Tibetan incarnation. Several first draft translations have been completed along with their commentaries and detailed studies have been completed of more than half of these works. We anticipate presenting these translations to the public in the next decade with the aim of completely exposing the Eclectic School's tenet system at least with

respect to the philosophy of *tathāgatagarbha* .

63 Needleman, Jacob, *The new religions* (New York : E.P. Dutton, 1977).

64 *Lancelot du Lac*, edited, translated, and annotated by Francois Mosès, (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1991).

65 *thos pa dga ba*, as Alexander Macdonald points out, most literally this would mean "when heard provokes joy"? I have translated it Joyful to Hear on the general principle that we should try to translate short names by short names in English, since these names must appear in verse at some point.

66 See *Le Grand Guru Padmasambhava: histoire de ses existences (Padma Than Ying)* [sic.], translated from the Tibetan by Gustave-Charles Toussaint, (Paris: Éditions Orientales, 1979). A previous edition of this translation was entitled *Le Dicton de Padma*. This hagiography which gives the previous lives of Padmasambhava is a vast source of plot motifs and characters for the *Gesar Epic*. There have been several other translations and attempts at translations of biographies of this saint. But all of them since Toussaint's have had serious problems. Indeed, *Le Dicton* itself is full of flaws and mistranslations--- excusable considering the state of knowledge when that translation was undertaken. Still, French scholars are attached to this version because of the beauty of the language and because many of them had their interest in Tibetan Buddhism first excited by this work. Erick Pema Kunzang (Erik Schmidt) has produced a well-informed and readable translation based on a greater knowledge of previous and associated texts. It is recommended as a good entrance to the difficult biographies of Padmasambhava, which are written in the strange symbolic language of the best medieval Tibetan hagiographies. Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava*, trans. by Erik Pema Kunsang (Eric Schmidt), (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993).

67 In the Mahāyāna sutras a *locus classicus* for the image of skillful means as methods of teaching which use indirection is *The Lotus Sutra*. See *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, trans. by Leon Hurvitz, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976) and Michael Pye, *Skillful Means: A concept in Mahayana Buddhism* (Duckworth Press, 1976).

68 This is not to say that magic is not a part of Mahāyāna upāya as well. In justice to Mahāyāna it must be said that Chinese novels such as *Hsi Yu Chi* also make Kuan Yin a performer of sorcerous feats as well as the usual miracles. She uses magical implements--- wands, potions, etc. and the aid of magical creatures.

69 Mireille Helffer, *Les Chants dans l'épopée tibétaine de ge-sar d'après le livre de la course de cheval*, (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1977).

70 René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, (Graz: Akademische Druck-u. Verlagsanstalt), p. 171.

71 Garma C. C. Chang, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, (Boulder: Shambhala Pub.).

72 I am uncertain of this translation.

73 It should be noted that this contemporary reading of classical epic is at variance with the weight of Western literary tradition. 17th and 18th century moral readings of Homer followed Aristotle's precept that epic poetry represented the higher man: "good men and noble actions" (*The Poetics*, IV:8). In the same period the over-idealization of homeric heroes was a complaint of the *moderns* in the long-standing *querelle entre des anciens et des modernes* (see Boileau, *Art poétique*). In the 19th century it became a point of attack by the romantics classicist idealization (see, for example, Victor Hugo's manifesto of romantic theater in his introduction to *Cromwell: Cromwell*, (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, pp. 1-1xvii).

So Bowra's notion that Homer represented heroes more realistically, complete with their weaknesses and human failings, is a departure from a critical tradition which saw in serious classical literature larger than life representations of the ideal.

74 This position is expressed by Bowra, but most notably by Seth L. Schein in *The Mortal Hero: An Introduction to Homer's Iliad*, (Berkeley: University of California Press). For example: "The overwhelming fact of life for the heroes of the *Iliad* is their mortality, which stands in contrast to the immortality of the gods. We see the central hero of the poem, Achilles, move toward disillusionment and death to reach a new clarity about human existence in the wider context of the eventual destruction of Troy and in an environment consisting almost entirely of war and death."

75 C.M. Bowra, *Heroic poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1952).

76 Thomas Greene, *The Descent From Heaven, A Study in Epic Continuity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 12-13.

77 S.K. Chatterji, in his 1941 introduction to *The Epic of Gesar*, translated by Francke, reprinted in Thimbu, Bhutan, 1981: "[Gesar] has become *the* National Hero of the Tibetans: in him have become incarnate as it were the Tibeian conception of the Ideal Man, Ideal Warrior and Ideal King. He is a National Hero of the type of Rāma and Arjuna of India, Rustam of Persia, Gilgamesh of the Assyrio-Babylonians, David of the Jews, Herakles and Akhilleus of ancient Greece..." (page xviii).

78 Stein patiently traces the various references to the Hor and finds this name used for several localities: the Uighurs, certain tribes in the region of Kan-chou, and a group living in the Ma-chu mountain range in Eastern Tibet. Stein, 1959, pp. 188-190.

Shakapa, the modern Tibetan historian, on the other hand, takes this chapter to be the one which has some historical foundation, demonstrating from accounts of the progress of Phags pa across Tibet that there indeed was a king named Gesar who fought a country named Hor.

79 There is some controversy about the authenticity of Rock's studies of the Naxi language. Rock claimed that he had discovered a rich collection of Naxi ritual texts. Alexander Macdonald, however, believes that Rock paid his informants to produce these texts. There is a chapter on Rock's work in See Chatwin, Bruce, *What am I doing here?* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1989).

80 Sarat Chandra Das, *A Tibetan-English Dictionary*, (Calcutta: Gaurav, 1902) p.976.

81 See, for example, Victor H. Mair, *Tun-huang Popular Narratives*, (Cambridge: University Press, 1983), the *pien-wen* or picture/performance tale "on Mahāmaudgayāyana Rescuing His Mother from the Underworld...", pp. 87-122.

It is also, of course, reminiscent of the vast number of Chinese adaptations of the visit to hell theme. See, for example, *Hsi You Chi*, chapter 10-12: *The Journey to the West*, trans. and edited by Anthony C. Yu, (Chicago: University Press, 1977), pp. 214-281.

82 The glossary in Stein 1956 does not, unfortunately, represent the most advanced level to which that scholar's knowledge of the Gesar epic language progressed. At the time that he undertook his pioneering partial translation and summary of the first three chapters of the Mipham Gesar he could not speak the Khams dialect and he communicated with his native informant in Chinese. That is the reason that the glossary contains so many Mandarin expressions.

Since then his students, working with other Tibetan informants and in particular the scholar Yonten Gyatso and the anthropologist Samten Karmay, have advanced his original work considerably. Their glossary exists at the Centre d'Études Tibétaine as a very large collection of file cards which combine ethnographic and linguistic data. I have kept my computerised lexical database of terms drawn from interviews with informants in the course of the translation of the Mipham version. Ultimately this data should be combined and made available at one place on Internet.

There are additional lexical databases being developed for the Amdo province and portions of Khams by Charlene Markley of the University of Michigan and Dr. Goldstein, already famous for his dictionary of modern Tibetan. Ms. Markley will be going to Amdo for a year and a half of linguistically oriented fieldwork in September of 1994. All of this data will materially advance the projects of translating Tibetan oral literature a few of are undertaking in the 90s.

83 A.W. Macdonald, *Matériaux Pour L'Étude de la Littérature Populaire Tibétaine* Vols. I and II, (Nanterre: Société d'ethnologie, 1990).

84 Stein's previously referred to translation is incomplete. If he could have correctly understood the passages he left out, I would say that he were the first Western scholar to read and comprehend a full, long Gesar text. But as conversations with him confirm, he was mystified by much of the language and summarized many challenging sections.

85 Samten Karmay, *The treasury of good sayings (Legs bsad mdzod)* by BKra-sis-rgyal-mtshan (London: Oxford University Press, 1972); *Secret visions of the fifth Dalai Lama: the Gold Manuscript in the Fournier Collection*, by Nag-dban-blo-bzan-rgya-mtsho, Dalai Lama V, (London: Serindia, 1988); *The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen): a philosophical and meditative teaching of Tibetan Buddhism* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).

86 Alf Hiltebeitel, *The Ritual of Battle, Krishna in the Mahābhārata*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990).

87 The first and still most extensive bibliographic study of the Gesar texts is Stein, 1959.

Alexander Macdonald and Samten Karmay of the CNRS in Paris, have been updating that list in recent years, but are far from the moment of publication. They report more than a hundred volumes of chapters from the Gesar, some of recent composition, some collected in the last two decades as recordings, some republications of old manuscripts.

88 Of course, the Indonesian shadow plays, the *Wayang*, do constitute regular additions and extensions to the *Rāmāyana* and *Mahābhārata*. And the fabulous world of Indonesian and Indian comic books featuring heroes from these epics also continuously extend the narrative. But these extensions do not enter the central body of stories and do not enter into the canon. They are more in the nature of extemporaneous variations.

Many Rāmāyanas, a collection of essays edited by Paula Richman (*opus cit.*) presents a multicultural view of the modern elaborations of the epic of Rāma. The point is that the modern versions in Tamil and other India languages vary from the classical telling of the epic. In fact, they often strongly disagree with the events in the canonical Sanskrit version by Vālmiki. On page 4 Richman quotes Romila Thapar who summarizes this view of the nature of *Rāmāyana* spinoffs: "The appropriation of the story by a multiplicity of groups meant a multiplicity of versions through which the social aspirations and ideological concerns of each group were articulated. The story in these versions included significant variations which changed the conceptualization of character, event and meaning."

89 *Lha gLing Gab tse dGu skor*, (Szechuan People's Publishing House, 1980)

90 There are probably two reasons why the Gesar liturgies are spreading in the West. The first is simply that Tibetan lamas from Eastern Tibet have been very successful in finding Western students. They bring with them an unembarrassed interest in the epic as part of their sense of regional identity. The other reason for the success of the *Gesar Chos* in America may simply be in the romantic character of Westerners. In 1992 Peter Liebersen and Douglas Pernick's opera *Gesar* had a very successful premier in Munich. Since then it has had equally successful and well-received performances at Tanglewood in the United States, and in several smaller companies in Holland. The proud figure of a martial Buddha may simply appeal to the Western sensibility.

91 We must be careful, however, to distinguish it from the so-called "Tibetan art novel," a genre developed in imitation of Indian models. See "*The Tale of the Incomparable Prince: a Study and Translation of the Tibetan Novel 'gzhon nu zla med kyī gtam rgyud'*" by mDo mkhar Zhabs drung Tshe ring dBang rgyal (1697-1763), a doctoral dissertation by Beth Solomon. (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1987).

92 Richmond Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*, (Chicago: University Press, 1951).

93 F.A. Wolf, *Prolegomena to Homer, 1795*, trans. with intro. and notes by Anthony Grafton, G.W. Most, and James Zetzel, (Princeton: U. Press, 1985).

94 Horace, *Horace on the Art of Poetry: Latin Text, English Prose Translation, Introduction and Notes, together with Ben Johnson's English Verse Rendering...*, trans. and edited by Edward Henry Blakeney, (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1970 (first

published 1928)), p.27-28.

95 This is like Aristotle, *Poetics*, vii 11, 1451a 29-35. Loeb edition, pp.30-33. I am indebted to Andrew Ford for pointing out that this is probably the previous text for the Horace quoted above. The passage is summarized with its last sentence: "To give a simple definition: the magnitude which admits of a change from bad fortune to good or from good fortune to bad, in a sequence of events which follow one another either inevitably or according to probability, that is the proper limit."

96 Andrew Ford points out that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* seems an exception to this rule, since it begins with creation and extends to the present. But this is an exception in the sense that it is meant as "a deliberate affront to August aesthetics."

97 Margaret and James Stutley, *Harper's Dictionary of Hinduism*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 169-170. This opinion is attributed to E.W. Hopkins in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 325 and his *Epic Mythology* (Varanasi: reprint), p1.

98 Homère, *Iliade, Tome I*, text établi et traduit par Paul Mazon, (Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres", 1987).

99 James Redfield, *Nature and Culture in the Iliad: The Tragedy of Hector*, (Chicago: University Press, 1975).

Chapter II

Is There a "Complete" Gesar?

The corpus of oral and written chapters in the *Gesar Epic* has grown through the recent activity of collection to more than a hundred volumes. It is difficult to say to what extent these are different versions of the same chapters. For example, there are to my knowledge four manuscript versions of the *The Divine Assembly* (*lha gling*). But none of them is in any sense the same text. In addition there are four versions of this chapter which exist only as recordings of the performances of bards in The People's Republic of China. But no individual has listened to these tapes, comparing their texts, much less transcribing them. We may, therefore, have eight different works with one title--- eight chapters in the epic, each dealing with the same period in the life of Gesar (his previous incarnation as a god), each reflecting in its title generally the same subject matter (*lha gling*), but each telling, as a matter of fact different stories in different words. ¹⁰⁰ To use the language of French narratology, we might say that until we have compared the various versions of the text, we cannot tell whether each version of *The Divine Assembly* is the same *histoire* or not. And we already know from a cursory examination of the texts that each version is a different *récit*. ¹⁰⁰

The Divine Assembly, is in theory the approximate beginning of the epic cycle. It must be a relatively unpopular

saga for in the vast *Gesar* corpus there are few versions. The middle chapters exist in many more editions, with the *Dü Ling* (*bdud gling*), *The Demon and Ling*, being far the most plentiful version of the sagas in the corpus. For this reason, the Tibetan scholar Yönten Gyatso, assisted by a group of scholars in Paris at the Centre d'Études Tibétaines of the École Française d'Extrême Orient, is presently doing an analytical study of the plot, linguistic composition, dating, provenance, etc. of all written versions of *The Demon and Ling*. The results of this study will provide us with a model for the essential bibliographic work which must be done on the other titles in the corpus. Until this kind of work is completed, our attempts to speak competently of the *Gesar Epic* at large will always risk large scale error. Specialists live in uncertainty until this essential bibliographic work, the cataloguing and bibliographical analysis of all the extant versions of chapters of the epic, is completed. We cannot know, for example, if there is an essential *Gesar* to which other chapters were later added. We cannot really know if in any sense there is a complete *Gesar*.

There are however, several weakly substantiated, but interesting theories that set out a list of core chapters, chapters numbering somewhere between nine and twelve. And these lists pretend to describe an essential and complete epic cycle. The introduction to this dissertation summarized the work of Geoffrey Samuels and Wang Yiyuan to establish one such list of twelve consecutive titles. Samuels's view does not reflect a pervasive knowledge of the corpus, but rather, an

understanding of the approach to the story possessed by some Eastern Tibetan bards and native informants.

Samten Karmay of the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique has produced another picture of the the hypothetical core *Gesar*. His approach is very interesting, because it is based mainly on evidence found outside of the epic--- Central Asian historical texts and non-epic Tibetan literature. He finds what he believes is a thematic core--- a series of plot motives which may have been part of the *Gesar* legend before it became an epic and which even proceed the notion of *Gesar* as a hero.

In this chapter I would like to discuss his solution to the difficulty of considering the entire *Gesar* corpus and then I would like to propose an alternative view based on the approach Western Aristotelian criticism has sometimes employed to deal with the Homeric corpus.

Karmay's Theory of the Enemies of the Four Directions

Samten Karmay's task is to find an essential *Gesar* story--- a series of plot elements, of actions, whose description would make up an early and complete version of the story. In order to do this, he begins by using the work of a contemporary Tibetan scholar, gCod pa Don 'grub, to order and organize all the possible *histoires* which could be recited.¹⁰¹ The work of gCod pa is essentially a list of all the titles in the corpus listed in "chronological order" according to a hypothetical life story of *Gesar*. Each year of his life we can list the actions he was

supposed to have performed, which countries he conquered, which consorts he won through contest or policy, which wars he fought, etc. Titles of epic *recits* which presumably recount the actions in each of those years are thus listed in an order and Karmay remarks: ¹⁰²

The 'chronological order' according to which the successive campaigns are presented shows that the Gear epic is not recounted just like any other story told in a disorderly manner. The whole sequence of the epic is primarily related to the four major episodes, known as the "four adversaires of the four quarters" (*phyogs-bzhi dgra-bzhi*). These four then lead on to the military expeditions against the eighteen countries or tribes (*rdzongs-chen bco-brgyad*), i.e. between the ages of 40 and 69. These are considered as minor actions in comparison with the four major episodes. The majority of the eighteen tribes are situated in Tibet whereas the four major campaigns are against what are treated as foreign countries.

In other words, the Epic of Gesar is really the story of a Tibetan hero's wars against four Demon Kings. It is preceded by stories of his birth, childhood, and accession to the throne of the Kingdom of Ling. It is followed by stories of adventures performed after the conquests of the Four Enemies, and it is ornamented by accounts of numerous other non-essential sagas, including the stories of battles his lieutenant warriors fought.

The data Karmay uses to establish this pattern come from

Stein's monograph on Gesar (Stein, 56: pp 254-261) and an article by Ariane Macdonald.¹⁰³ Karmay adds his own discoveries in Tibetan historical literature and the three treatments together--- Stein's, Ariane Macdonald's and Karmay's prove exactly this--- that the idea of the Four Kings was at large throughout Central Asian culture and has been associated with the figure of Gesar by Asian chroniclers and historians as well as poets writing other genres of literature.

Karmay then analyzes the presence and organizing influence of this thematic in a number of versions of the epic randomly selected from the vast corpus. Although this kind of evidence cannot give a final proof, it suggests strongly that the theme of the enemies of the four directions was present in Central Asian culture before the epic was written and that it is generative of the plot of the central chapters of the epic.

And so, Karmay's order of generation of the epic would be legend first, then myth, cult, and epic. The plot elements in the epic would trace back to these primary, supra-national, almost universalistic legends. This contrasts with the approach of the Dumézil school of epic analysis, which begins with religious universals---myths about the gods and a world of cultic practices. Characters and plot elements of the epic would derive from these. Hildebeitel has commented on this perspective of his teachers, saying this, for example, of the Dumézilian analysis of the *Mahābhārata*: "...the leading heroes of the epic..."transpose" into human or heroic terms a mythic, apparently Indo-European, theologem."¹⁰⁴

Like Samuels, Karmay lists the chapters which would be minimally present to constitute a "complete" epic. But the source of his view is not literary data, but rather textual evidence of systems of beliefs and conceptions common throughout Central Asian civilization which refer to the four kings of the four orientals.

Samuels and Karmay are alike in their partial reliance on reception data, the belief systems of Tibetan bards. Any given *sgrung mkhan*, story-teller, will admit to belief that the chapters of the epic he or she sings are part of a greater whole which is complete with a first chapter, usually the Divine Assembly (*lha gling*) and a final chapter, perhaps Gesar in Hell (*dmyal gling*). This use of anthropological data is unproblematic, but it leaves one question still unasked. From the point of view of literary criticism, is there a complete *Gesar*? This is a different question, for it relies not on ethnographic studies, but on an examination of the text. Even Stein's structuralist studies do not do this, although they appear to. His lists in tabular form giving the language and conditions of publication of every extant edition of *Gesar* is not truly a critical study, for it examines in most cases the titles and the colophons of each text.¹⁰⁵

This is not to say that Stein read only the beginning and the end of each book. His reports on various editions show that he examined the body of the texts as well. But he could not have read every volume and that is what is necessary if one is to give a treatment according to the principles of literary criticism.

His quite considerable work is enough to begin to answer the questions of social scientists, who are concerned with the place of the *Gesar* corpus in a larger social and historical context. But it does not provide us with a basis for considering portions of the *Gesar* as examples of the epic genre, for these would be questions of literary design, "which are more than just a matter of mere arrangement of plot motives.

For example, C.M. Bowra in *Tradition and Design in the Iliad* ¹⁰⁶ asks the question "is the *Iliad* in the editions we presently possess a well-crafted work by a single individual?" His conclusion is that "Out of the traditional material a whole was made, and it can only have been the work of a single creating poet....In Aristotelian language the *Iliad* has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and it achieves its emotional effect as well as any great poem ever written. It presents us with a world full of events and characters, but this medley is so shaped that it all leads to a great emotional climax in the results of the wrath of Achilles." [Bowra, 1930, p.9]

This is an important conclusion because these questions of design and esthetic wholeness have controlled the structure of a whole tradition of epics written as imitations of the *Iliad*. If the *Iliad* is a traditional patchwork of diverse and loosely organized elements, it is not comparable or commensurable with the entire history of narrative literature which attempted to follow after it.

Of course, Bowra, when he posed this problem of tradition versus individual genius in the design of the *Iliad* was dealing

with a much simpler corpus than Tibetan scholars. Could I actually write a book entitled *Tradition and Design in the Lha Ling*? No, the corpus is too large to ask this question in this simple manner. One could ask "What do you mean by the *Lha Ling*? Do you mean Mipham's edition? Do you mean Bard Dragpa's edition? Do you mean one of the oral versions recorded in Peking? They are not different versions of the same text. And what about the world of recountings which have not been presented in a sustained narrative: the individual songs and epic lays on this subject? the accounts of the divine council which occur in the chanting of liturgies? the picture tableaux and the story-tellers who use them as props? The traditions of reception of the *Lha Ling* have not found among the many versions a Homer which we could select out and ask what is the role in his work of tradition and personal creativity. And the various editions extant do not combine to create such a work.

The *Gesar Epic* still flourishes, is still under production. We have a plethora of textual data on it and it will not allow us to come to the same simple conclusions which have been used on Western and South Asian epics.

Nor could I ask, as Lattimore does of the Trojan War, whether there was ever a complete Epic of Gesar? His answer was simple: Yes, there was a complete Epic Cycle, but it was written after the fact to fill in the gaps left by Homer. It is, in the end, almost a trivial question, for we possess practically nothing but Homer and relatively few editions of him. But for the *Gesar* the opposite is true. We have many chapters and no

creative or literary center. Karmay's central chapters will not do. They describe the legends that produce the epic, but no single literary work--- no real text. Actually they are not chapters at all, but the plot material which would be used in a chapter.

An Aristotelian and Comparatist Approach

The question I ask here is not, therefore, whether people regard a certain collection of chapters as a complete epic, but whether the prescriptions of Aristotelian literary criticism could find in the entire corpus any given collection of *Gesar* chapters that would form a *literarily* complete work. This is the question Bowra asks for one chapter of the Greek epic and this is the question Lattimore asks for the entire Cycle of the Trojan War. Is there some definable subset of *Gesar* editions which could be seen as esthetically complete?

Bowra begins from Aristotle, who defines both tragedy and the epic in the same way, as "a representation of an action that is heroic and complete and of a certain magnitude..." ¹⁰⁷ In the section which follows he defines "representation" (μίμησις), "action" (πρᾶξις), and "complete" (τελείας) carefully enough to provide the basis for a tradition of plot analysis which continues in the West into the twentieth century. Out of the Aristotelian approach to completeness have developed views of the integrity of a narrative which, first having been used to treat Homer, are then applied prescriptively to later epics and with very limited success to the novel.

Aristotle focuses on the plot or *πρᾶξις*, the action of the epic, for he defines these narrative poems as imitations or representations of actions. In this he is already at odds with the anthropological approach of Karmay, for he carefully defines what he means by an action, distinguishing action from character. Thus, the detailed biography of an individual does not automatically constitute a complete action, even if it is an exhaustive description of a person's life. Listing the elements which makeup a tragedy he says that "The most important of these is the arrangement of the incidents (*πραγμάτων σύστασις*) for tragedy is not a representation of men but of a piece of action (*πράξεως*) of life, of happiness and unhappiness, which come under the head of action, and the end aimed at is the representation not of qualities of character but of some action; and while character makes men what they are, it is their actions and experiences that make them happy or the opposite." [Poetics, vi, 12]

A little later he remarks that "A plot (*μῦθος*) does not have unity, as some people think, simply because it deals with a single hero. Many and indeed innumerable things happen to an individual, some of which do not go to make up any unity, and similarly an individual is concerned in many actions which do not combine into a single piece of action." [viii, 1] His example of this principle is the *Odyssey*, which selects its actions in order to narrate the return of Ulysses, not the life of Ulysses.

We can already see that Bowra and Aristotle are dealing with a concept of unity different from that of the French *Gesar* specialists. Aristotle is interested in plot construction, in the

construction of the *μῦθος* from arrangements of incidents which he calls "actions."

And Aristotle observes what is left out of the *recit* as well as the story actually told. He does this when he observes as above that telling everything which happens to a single character does not give the plot a sense of unity. But a little further on the same point is made more precise when he discusses the *magnitude* of the recital:

Moreover, in everything that is beautiful, whether it be a living creature or any organism composed of parts, these parts must not only be orderly arranged but must also have a certain magnitude of their own; for beauty consists in magnitude and ordered arrangement. [Poetics vii, 8-9]

One more critical principle must be mentioned before we will have the tools to comparatively deal with the unity and completeness of the *Gesar Corpus*. In Aristotle's view of the arrangement of incidents, there must be a certain compelling connection between events--- strong relations of consequence or inevitability and necessity to unite the stories into a single organic whole:

We have laid it down that tragedy is a representation of an action that is whole and complete (τελείας καὶ ὅλης)....A whole is what has a beginning and a middle and an end (ὅλον δέ ἐστιν τὸ ἔχον ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσον καὶ τελευτήν). A beginning is that which is

not a necessary consequent of anything else but after which something else exists or happens as a natural result. An end, on the contrary, is that which is inevitably or, as a rule, the natural result of something else but from which nothing else follows; a middle follows something else and something follows from it. Well constructed plots must not therefore begin and end at random, but must embody the formulae we have stated. [vii, 2-8]

Looking now at the sense of coherence Karmay and company have brought to the Gesar corpus, we can see that it is not of the literary sort Aristotle attributes to well-constructed plots. Karmay has shown that epic accounts of Gesar always include wars against four enemies who surround the Kingdom of Ling. But he has not shown that this is the organizing principle behind the plot of the epic, if plot is a series of actions connected by relations of causal necessity. He has not shown that the various actions lead from one to another in a fashion which compels a denouement and gives us an end. He has not shown in fact that there is an end in the Aristotelian sense. He has shown an arrangement of plot motives, but not an arch of causally connected actions moving from beginning to end.

But the word "end" in all its senses is fundamental to our understanding of Aristotelian criticism. For example, the word for "complete" in this moment of Aristotle's criticism is not ὅλης, which means "whole" or "entire," but rather *τελείας*, which means to be completed, that is, to include all necessary parts, to have an end,

that is, to lack no necessary part. The action must be both a whole and be completed. And this sense of end is the end of the action not just in the sense of being the last occurrence in the *recit*, but in the greater sense of being the purpose, the achievement towards which the movements of the plot have tended. Thus, the τέλος, the end of the plot, is in a large sense the factor which creates coherence out of events otherwise ill-ordered or with no particular meaning to their order.

We should take into account the use of the term in the *Physics* when trying to understand the Aristotelian concept of τέλος. In the *Physics* four so-called "causes" (αἰτίαι) are given. They are causes for change or movement, both being correct translations of the term *kinesis*. The explanation is given in many places, principally in Book II, Chapter 3 of the *Physics*. There he says: "...men do not think they know a thing until they have grasped the 'why' (τὸ διὰ τί) of it (which is to grasp its primary cause)." ¹⁰⁸

Now the causes which he gives next are four: 1) the so-called "material" cause. This is usually called the ὕλη, the material, but here it is called "that from which something comes to be" (τὸ ἐξ οὗ γίνεται τι ἐνυπάρχοντος), 2) the formal (εἶδος), which is sort of the definition or essential characteristics of the thing, 3) the so-called "efficient cause," which the Greek calls "that which initiates the process of change and rest," (ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς μεταβολῆς ἢ πρώτη ἢ τῆς ἡρεμῆσεως), and 4) the "final cause" (ὁ τέλος)--- "that for the sake of which" (τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα) the process is initiated.

The final cause is the most remarkable, because it seems almost to involve some sense of purpose. Later in the *Physics*

Aristotle will give examples of the four causes for man-made things such as tools and the final cause will be the intended function or purpose of the tool. And so, the τέλος of a thing which exists or occurs or comes to rest is "that for the sake of which it exists, etc." As the *Physics* proceeds, it turns out that this sense of purpose or goal or end is an essential part of all being and change in the physical universe. Planetary motion itself is a matter of final causes, as well as proper arrangement, and magnitudes occurring according to strict proportions.

Such a universe is governed by principles in utter harmony with those Aristotle gives prescriptively as the ordering principles of a well-wrought narrative.

It is especially appropriate then that the Homeric epics and their imitators begin with the scene in which a divine assembly is convoked in order to express a plan or providential end towards which the events of the epic will tend. For it is hard to formulate causes for actions unless ends and goals are specified.

The first example of this is, of course, the assembly in which Zeus expresses his will as to the fate of Achilles in chapter I of the *Iliad*. Thetis, the sea-goddess mother of Achilles requests that Zeus give victory to the Trojans and defeat to the Achaians until they have restored to Achilles the booty and honour taken from him by Agamemnon. Zeus agrees, nodding his head:

'See then I will bend my head that you may believe me.

For this among the immortal gods is the mightiest witness

I can give, and nothing I do shall be vain nor revocable

nor a thing unfulfilled when I bend my head in assent to it.'
 He spoke, the son of Kronos, and nodded his head with the dark
 brows,
 and the immortally anointed hair of the great god
 swept from his divine head, and all Olympos was shaken. [*Iliad*
 , I, 523-530; Lattimore, 73]

The point of this passage is simply that Zeus has acceded to a plan, to a course of events. And the arrangement of *πράξις* in the *recit* of the *Iliad* will now accord with his intention, plot structure matching the intention of the character who represents divine providence.

The linking of these two causal elements is imitated in the epics which follow after the *Iliad*, but it is not just in the Graeco-Roman tradition that this sort of plot structure occurs. *Job*, which is praised as a chapter of the Bible showing good plot structure, has the same sort of Divine Assembly and the same dramatization of divine intentionality--- a decision uttered in council and then carried out in the series of seemingly accidental events on the human plane.

And, as we will observe in more detail later in this chapter, the same pattern holds for the Mipham *Gesar*.

We have observed so far that the sense of an end, of a *τέλος*, in Aristotelian criticism is rather like the sense of *τέλος* in his *Physics*. We have said, in other words, that in this system of thought the sense of completion at the end of a narrative is an end in at least two senses: as the achievement of the termination

of an action and as the achievement of a purpose or aim. This sense of *τέλος* as almost purpose or goal is a part of Aristotle's four-fold description of causality, but it is also there in the sense of the purpose of a designing deity principle--- for example, the ends or goals of Zeus.

This sense of an end is tied up with a particular view of beginnings. Aristotle said that the beginning may be without a special cause, but the middle and end must follow necessarily from it, be compelled by it. The beginning of the *Iliad* is carefully given by Homer so that it will compel the succeeding events, unite them into a unity, and also parallel the will of Zeus. It is literal in the first verses:

Sing, goddess, the anger of Peleus' son of Achileus
and its devastation, which put pains thousandfold upon the
Achaians,
hurled in their multitudes to the house of Hades strong souls
of heroes, but gave their bodies to be the delicate feasting]
of dogs, of all birds, and the will of Zeus was
accomplished...[Lattimore, 59]

The Greek indicates clearly that in the beginning is the ending, for what Lattimore translates as "the will of Zeus" is not will at all, but the "ends of the plans of Zeus." (*Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή*) the term *τελείω* coming again with the same multiple meanings. What the aims of Zeus were in this case are a matter of controversy, for other versions of the epic legend exist in which the aim of providence in creating the Trojan war is part of

a cosmic depopulation plan by Zeus, as noted above in the *Cypria*

.109

Bowra devotes the first chapter of his book on the structure of the *Iliad* to an examination of these first lines in order to demonstrate that the rest of the *recit* corresponds to this outline of the plot given by Homer in his invocation to the Muses. Bowra's point is a typically Aristotelian one. He means to show that we have a coherent plot with a beginning, middle, and end and the proper and necessary relations between them.

A close examination of Bowra's argument shows that it has gone further than the original Aristotelian prescription. Bowra examines the first lines of the epic in order to show that Homer intended that the plot have a certain structure [p. 10] His point is authorial intention, not the inevitability of relations between occurrences. He argues that Homer had a plan in mind and announced the essential points of his plan in the first seven lines. It is an appropriate argument, because he is opposing the synthesist view that there is an accidental and formulaic, bardic principle of generation which gives the *Iliad* a haphazard shape. He is, in short, speaking for the unitarians who believe in a single authorship for the Homeric works. And so he concludes after a string of arguments designed to answer synthesist objections: "So in these first five lines we get a just account of what is going to happen." [p.15]

The question of the presence of a single author as opposed to tradition as author dominates his concerns and he does not really argue the causal integrity of the plot. When Bowra does

look to the structure, it is not in the causal sense of Aristotle. He is rather almost structuralist or New Critical in his approach. He points to the symmetries in the events in the epic:

Such then is the theme, the wrath of Achilles and its consequences. But such a theme is not in itself enough to make a work of art. It must be put into shape and organized into a whole. And this Homer has done. The poem is built on a plan at once simple and majestic. The *crescendo* of the opening is paralleled by the *diminuendo* of the closing books. In A we hear of the outburst of Achilles' anger and the prayer of Thetis to Zeus that her son may win glory through the defeat of the Achaeans. In Ω we hear how Thetis at the request of Zeus persuades her son to forgo his anger and to give back the body of Hector for burial. The poem begins with an uncontrolled scene of wrath and it ends with the appeasing of wrath in reconciliation. In the second book, B, one by one the Achaean heroes are shown as they hold council of war: we see them in their martial temper, each with his own individuality and idiosyncrasies. In the penultimate book, Ψ, we see them clear of war during a truce, when their more peaceful characteristics are revealed in the sports held at Patroclus' funeral. In the third book.... [pp.15-16]

Bowra continues with this analysis, observing symmetries and resonances and formal structures in plot. But he is not attending to the causal dynamics, the *argument*, of the *Iliad*.

He seems to be appreciating Homer's fulfilment of Aristotle's requirement of proportion and proper magnitude quoted above. But Bowra's harmony with Aristotle's prescriptions is only apparent. As we read on in the *Poetics* we find no appreciation of formal symmetries and elements of proportion. Magnitude simply means that a story should not be so large as to be uncognizable or so quick as to be unnoticeable. When he does discuss proportion, it is with relationship to the length of the proportion of a tragedy. The arrangement of the parts and their relations to each other have nothing to do with structuralist repetitions and esthetic echoings. Rather, they refer to dynamic relations of causal dependance:

As then in the other arts of representation a single representation means a representation of a single object, so too the plot being a representation of a piece of action (πραξέως μίμησις), and the whole of it; and the component incidents must be so arranged that if one of them be transposed or removed, the unity of the whole is dislocated and destroyed. For if the presence or absence of a thing makes no visible difference, then it is not an integral part of the whole. [*Poetics*, viii.4]

The sense of integral (μόριον) is key to our understanding of the difference in approach to plot which has occurred as the critical tradition developed across the centuries and emerged in the modern reading of Bowra. In the translation I am using, Fyfe translates a Greek word which simply means "single" as

"integral" from a knowledge of the rest of the text. His interpretation is supported by the causal relations which must hold between the parts.

Now, the Greek tragedies often appear to possess this dynamic integrality, this causal integrality in a high degree. Given the character of the protagonist and the opening premises of *Oedipus the King*, for example, one could argue that the end is indeed, fate aside, causally predetermined and nearly inevitable. More importantly, each event, as any actor can testify, is well motivated by the previous one. But I would observe that the other sense of completeness and ending as the *τέλος* of a god is equally powerful in the *Oedipus* and in fact in a great number of tragedies. These two alternative views seem to cooperate in these models for perfect plot craftsmanship--- the moment to moment causal framework and the teleological framework. Oedipus is destroyed on the one hand by the logic of the working out of the naked facts of his situation, his critical intelligence, and his "tragic flaw." On the other hand at the same time his destruction is predestined by the gods.

The distinction between these two types of causality tends to be more important to modern critics than to the ancients. How often have modern critics complained that a plot is weakened by the intervention of a god in the outcome! All too often we consider the integrity of the efficient and material causes to be a sign of good plot construction and the sense of providential end to be a weakness, perhaps even a sign of superstition. This attitude is in part a consequence of cartesian

dualism. We wish to separate intention from physical and serial psychological causality.

But this was not necessarily the case in the religions which reigned over world view at the time of the composition of our greatest epics--- the attempt to disentangle the two concepts of "ending" and result has been the work of centuries and one of the achievements of the the period called the Enlightenment.

Previously, descriptions of the causal functioning of the phenomenal world were integrally linked to divine plan and the notion of providence. The effort to link them is manifest in the care Dante takes to unite Ptolemeian physics with the map of heaven--- making the crystal spheres that hold the planets part of the inevitable and perfect moral ordering of the universe according to God's plan.

Then in the Enlightenment we see the reverse effort--- the effort to clearly separate these elements.

For example, if one were to examine the articles on causation in Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopedie* , one would find a strained and extended effort to distinguish the nature of providence and *fatalité* from physical causation. Now *fatalité* refers to inevitable results--- results which are predestined and compelled beyond possible opposition from human will. The *Encyclopedie* attempts to represent the tradition of Catholic thinking while placing it within the greater context of a contemporary opposing "rationalism" and a radical interest in technology. The *philosophes* had to present their Enlightenment radicalism while avoiding the entire censure of the Church and

the *ancien regime*. And so, the articles on causation in this encyclopedia carefully link the definition of *fatalité* to the concept of providence. Then we are faced with two competing views of over-arching, inevitable causal forces--- on one hand the force of providence or God's will worked out on the material plane and on the other hand the force of the unopposable scientific law which provides a cause for every effect, a material determinism.

The distinction that holds between determinism and providence also holds between *fatalité* and determinism. So let us look at the definition of *fatalité*:

...c'est la cause cachée des événements imprévus, relatifs au bien ou au mal des êtres sensibles. L'événement fatale est imprévu; ainsi on n'attribue point à la fatalité les phénomènes réguliers de la nature, lors même que les causes en sont cachées, la mort qui suit une maladie chronique & inconnue.

L'événement fatal tient à des causes cachées, ou est considéré dans ses rapports avec celles d'entre ses causes qui nous sont inconnues. Si dans la disposition d'une bataille je vois un homme placé vis-à-vis de la bouche d'un canon prêt à tirer, sa situation étant donnée, & l'action du canon étant prévûe, je ne regarderai plus sa mort comme fatale par rapport à ces deux causes que je connois; mais je retrouverai la fatalité dans cette multitude de causes éloignes, cachées & compliquées, qui ont fait qu'entre une infinité d'autres parties de l'espace qu'il pouvoit occuper également, il occupât

précisément celle qui est dans la direction du canon. 110

This definition technically excludes ordinarily observable chains of causality from the notion of *fatalité*. The observable causes are all analyzed by scientific causality and they are materially explicable. When the canon ball strikes the body of the man foolishly standing in front of it, the cause of his death is known and was even foreseen by us. But what brought him to ridiculously stand in that dangerous spot---that is the order of providence and divine will. Of course, to the modern mind it would be odd to make an artificial partition between one set of events which observably lead to a certain effect and other events differing only in that they are unobserved. But this is exactly Diderot's definition of *destin* and *fatalité*-- *la cause caché*.

This distinction is elementary to the thinking of modern readers, but is not implied in the *Poetics*. There Aristotle uses neutral terms for inevitability and result and the dynamic which can hold between two actions in a plot. For example, we know that he would consider a story plausible even if its events were opposed to common expectations in everyday life. Events may be plausible simply because they tell stories people take to be history. [*Poetics*, ix. 6-9] Thus, for Aristotle divine providence would not be a bad causal explanation for the relationship between a beginning and the middle and the end of an action.

In fact, it is a characteristic of many of the works whose causal structure he approves. He approves of numerous works in which providence is the principle which orders the succession of

events, provided it did not contradict the laws of probability or necessity. An example of such a work is *Oedipus the King*. The entire action of the play is dictated by providence and predicted in detail by Tiresias. One can see the material causality which leads to Oedipus' downfall in the form of his inquisitiveness and arrogance. But the divine necessity of events is equally great. And I wonder which causal explanation would satisfy the Greek audiences of the period more? If one would ask them why the destruction of Oedipus in the play was inevitable, would they dwell upon the causes present in his personality or on the decrees of the gods?

Until the modern period this was true for most Western epics.¹¹¹ The Divine Council is a commonplace of this kind of narrative. In those councils Zeus or his equivalent fashions the plot of the work as his intention--- as his plan for the end.

Causality in Buddhist Narratives

The same principle holds in the case in Buddhist narratives as well. They are always the stories of the working out of destinies produced by previous acts of intention--- what we have been calling "aspiration prayers." Indeed, the Chinese translation for *avaḍāna* or Buddhist tales is *yin yūan*, or "causality stories." For they are, like the *jataka* tales, fundamentally the stories of how vows made in one life time and evil or good deeds committed in one lifetime lead to specific results in a future life. In the same way, the structuring

element in the plot of a Buddhist epic is the intentions, the aspirations uttered at the beginning of the narrative.

There is no Zeus to nod his head and consent to a plot, because there is no central deity in an atheistic religion. But there are bodhisattvas and buddhas. Their aspirations and vows, arrived at in Council in Heaven, fashion the plot by stating the τέλη, the ends they have in mind. After that, the efficient force of events is the power of those vows--- they are the engine which moves the plot forward. Even the evil demons who oppose the hero are, as we have noted for the *Gesar Epic*, fundamentally products of evil vows and perverted aspiration prayers.

The end is defined by the beginning. When the vows of the buddhas have been fulfilled and the evil karmic results of the corruptions of their vows by the demons have been punished, then we know the story is over. The *Lha Ling* as an introduction to the *Gesar* epic provides exactly this element--- the mechanism of intentions, of plans, of τέλη which will give us the shaping of the plot.

What term in the Buddhist text translates τέλος and what expression performs the function of Διὸς δ' ἐτελείετο βουλή ? The word is *artha*, along with *dharma*, probably the most multi-valent terms in Sanskrit. *Artha* as a Vedic term has as its root meaning "wealth" or "possessions." From this it comes to mean "benefit" and from thence to the concept of "goal" or "aim" or "intention." Still, there are many other terms that better translate the term "intention," because of the multiplicity of words of mind and mental activities in Sanskrit. For example,

the word for mind, *citta* is also translated at times as intention. Finally, *artha* has come to have a metaphysical significance and means "the real thing," "reality" (as opposed to appearance), and it means "the meaning" as in "the meaning of a word." The Tibetan translation for *artha* is *dön* (don) and it has exactly the same range of meanings.

The term occurs in the opening verses of homage to Gesar:

Within Dharmatā, your unobstructed compassion gave rise to
The impartial awakened mind (*bodhicitta*) which benefits
beings.

Never abandoning that, you took the vajra-like oath
To perform the Four-fold spontaneous Activity, the Hundred
Points.¹¹²

The expression "which benefits beings" is '*gro ba'i don*, the *dön* (*artha*) or benefit of beings.¹¹³

The authors of this *Gesar* are very conscious of the range of means of *dön* and play with it constantly. For example, when Avalokiteśvara arrives in the land of demons in order to see Padmasambhava and incite him to protective action, he must talk his way past a demon minister. The minister asks him what his purpose (*dön*) is in coming to this dangerous place:

LU A LA LU, the song is sung; in case you do not understand,
THA LA, this is the melody of the song.
Surrounding this land of Cāmara, the country of the demons,
are

The place of the impure Rākṣasas and devil spirits
 And the Field of the pure Vidyādharas and Ḍākinīs.
 This morning, young child, you landed here.
 From what place and from what direction do you come?

Then, before the bodhisattva can answer the demon launches
 into a discourse on "great aims" or *dön chen po*:

What aims (*dön*) can you have which are such great matters
 (*dön*)?

If you do not have in mind great matters (*dön*),
 Then it is meaningless to pursue ends (*dön*) of no great
 importance.

If you are not seized by the *döns* (demons) of great suffering.
 What is the point in drowning yourself in the river?
 If you have not become involved in a great quarrel,
 There is no great cause (*dön*) for you to bring to court.¹¹⁴

There is an interesting pun on the word *dön*, because a *gdon*
 (spelled differently, but pronounced the same) is a kind of demon
 who sometimes possesses people and drives them to their deaths
 by, for example, running them off the edge of a cliff. The *dön*
 (*gdon*) spirits are symbols for sudden, hidden compulsions that
 arise to the surface and unexpectedly dominate a person's
 behavior.¹¹⁵

The song is full of ironies. The reason (*dön*) Avalokiteśvara
 seeks an interview with Padmasambhava is the reason for the
 entire unfolding of the plot--- that the evil demon kings must be

defeated by the creation of the hero Gesar. But the demon sees only a small child and asks what personal psychological reason the child could have for risking his life in such a terrible place. Only a man possessed by demons (*dön*) would commit suicide and only a person with a very serious quarrel or case (*dön*) would take it to court. Just so only a great aim (*dön*) would bring a small boy to a terrible place.

The conversations continue as Padmasambhava, the minister, and Avalokiteśvara discuss the importance of his aims. The length of this section would be odd if it were not for the general context of Buddhist philosophy in which vows, aims, intentions, and plans are the constructive principles around which all action and fruition rotate--- the constructive principle of the moral universe.

And so, page after page the subject is *dön* or purpose. For example, there is great purpose in his words. His words are as important as the movement of the heavenly bodies---which have as their purpose the cycles of weather:

If the Earth in early Spring is not first fed with water, then the Southern Turquoise Dragon and the venomous Serpent will be silent. In the sky Mount Meru is circled by the Sun and the Moon. If they do not benefit the plains of the Four Continents, then Meru is of no benefit or harm. Then the Sun and the Moon are just a distraction for the spinning heads of brainless dupes.¹¹⁶ Then there would be no gratitude for the good done by the Sun and Moon. It is impossible that things

should be that way.

And similarly there is reason (*dön*) in what he is doing:

My import (*dön*) is not small, it is of great importance.

Of great import (*dön*) is the welfare of all beings.

If it were meaningless (*dön med pa*), why would I explain to
you why I have come?

Avalokiteśvara expounds on the nature of meaningless (*don med pa, dön less*) behavior. There are people who travel unnecessarily, and people who become depressed and kill themselves pointlessly and the wealthy who collect wealth unnecessarily and the powerful who are pointlessly involved with their own political machinations:

Those who pointlessly travel around in distant lands

Purchase for themselves thirst and famine.

Those who without suffering throw themselves into deep
gorges,

Let their life force be carried away by demons.

The wealthy who bear the burden of material goods,

Will be carried away by profit and loss.

The powerful with their many evil reports

Will cast themselves down in self-humiliation.

All of these arguments focus on Avalokiteśvara's need for

an audience with Padmasambhava--- the importance of that council. The discussions of the meaningfulness, the purposefulness of the requests continues on and on, lapsing into the familiar language of Mahāyāna Buddhist sermons--- sermons where the motivation or cause (Skt:*hetu*) of the path are the first subject of discussion and the essential point in the training.

Measuring the Completeness of the *Mipham Gesar*

We have discussed the expositions of divine intention and *τέλος* which initiate Buddhist narratives, looking in specific at the initiating purpose-consciousnesses of the *Gesar*. Based on this conception of beginnings, using a careful reading of the Aristotelian definition of completeness, we can now have a test of the literary completeness of the story, even if we do not know every detail. A complete *Gesar* epic would be one in which the first chapter gave the intentional acts we have mentioned and in which the subsequent chapters lead to a fulfillment of those intentions. And if the last chapter sees the exhaustion of all intentions, then the narrative is properly over. The integrality of beginning, middle, and end has been achieved.

The *Lha Ling* is written to provide this sense of clear aim and *τέλος* for the rest of the *Mipham Gesar*. The remaining chapters of the epic will fall into place organized around the motive impulsion developed in this first chapter. For example, In the *Horse Race Chapter* (*rTa rGyug*), the celestial mother of

Gesar attempts to arouse him from his pastoral existence. He has been in hiding during his youth, disguised as an ugly hunchback. He must finally let fall his disguise and become the shining prince who will lead Ling to defeat the demons:

Now Joru, son of a god,
 Listen to your maternal aunt, listen!
 In the checkered fields of the protected valley
 The little blue flowers have suddenly appeared.

If they are not ornamented with the excellent fruits
 In time of drought how will the black-headed Tibetans live?
 These blue flowers may be good feed for cattle,
 But piling up masses of them won't feed the people.

in the blue tent of the firmament
 Are masses of twinkling stars.
 If they are never ornamented by the full moon.
 Who can lead you at night on the dark paths?
 The constellations seem like a guide in the darkness,
 But no matter how numerous, they are useless without the
 moon.

In the many-colored land of Ling
 Joru may have numerous magical transformations.
 But if he doesn't seize the throne of White Ling,
 When will he ever effect the benefit (*dön*) of beings?¹¹⁷

The song is still singing of motivation and still using the same sorts of extended metaphors about the sky and heavenly objects. But now it is approaching a more familiar epic context. Manene, the divine mother, is encouraging Gesar to enter into contention with his Uncle Trotung. In later chapters songs will be sung to encourage Gesar's entrance into battle and to arouse his warrior spirit. And as the word "purpose" travels down the temporal line of the sequence of actions which make up the *mythos* of this epic, it will keep the original impetus imparted to it by the highly religious interpretation of purpose given in the first chapter. Manene, a goddess, communicates to Gesar the divine plan, as before the messenger was Avalokiteśvara. The celestial machinery continuing its supervisory role, continuing to communicate the decisions made in divine council, continuing to structure the plot so that the "intentionns of Zeus may be accomplished."

Manene becomes, in fact, like Athena for the Achaean heroes and Aphrodite for Aeneas of Thetis for Achilles. The Tibetans have developed an interesting and extremely profound philosophy about why mothers and female consorts should be the divine messengers in these situations. There is a large, rich poetic and philosophical literature on the subject. We do not have time here to examine this point, but it should be addressed in a future study: the Central Asian Buddhist view of the nature of the Feminine as a messenger principle.

In any case, we now have a way of evaluating the completeness of the Mipham version from a literary point of

view. If the later chapters on Gesar's war with the Demon Kings of the Four Directions are truly part of this edition, then one can say in a preliminary sort of way that the Mipham corpus is indeed complete and whole. This is a question that will be fully answered in coming years as we carefully read these later volumes.

The same test can be used on the individual books or volumes in this series. At this point I can only speak confidently for the first volume. But there is no question that it possesses the causal unities and Aristotelian sense of beginning and ending described above.

Now, as we have discussed before, the Mipham *Gesar* has been comprehensively assimilated to fairly sophisticated Buddhist doctrine. There are other versions which exist as collections of Gesar stories and which are not as religious in their tone or intent, not as assimilated. Let us look at one of these to see if they could answer the same test of unity.

A.H. Francke, a Christian missionary, collected in 1900 a version of the epic much shorter than the one by Mipham and written in relatively simple, straightforward verse. It does not seem to contain passages in the style of *kāvya*, of Sanskrit Court Poetry, and it is written in the Ladakhi dialect of Tibetan. Francke believed that it was a "Bönpo Gesar," an earlier version of the epic expressing the principles of the Tibetan institutionalized religion known as Bön. It showed, according to him, the kernel of the epic before its veneer of Buddhist stories was added. Stein '59 treats the Francke versions on pp. 56-59

and 183 particularly. But from pages 164 to 169 he demolishes the possibility of its being purely non-Buddhist and purely in the Ladakhi dialect. He points out references which must be to Nyingma Buddhist lamas and he mentions numerous formulae which he takes to be sure signs of the influence of classical Tibetan--- particularly certain verbal complements and the classical redoubled sentence final--- "o." And so, the primordialness of the Ladakhi text and its orality are out of the question.

Nevertheless, there are structural elements which separate it from the Buddhist versions: the beginning has no aspiration prayers. There is no Buddhist religious frame narrative, no Mahāyāna religious agenda. For the structuring of the rest of the plot this is an essential difference. In fact, no agenda is expressed in the beginning at all. ¹¹⁸

The first chapter actually seems to be a *Srid gLing*, a *Creation of Ling* narrative. Its title is *gLing gi dpa bo bco brgyad kyi skye rabs sgrungs yin*, which literally means "This is the chronicle of the birth of the eighteen warriors of Ling." It is the story of the primordial origins of the country of Ling. A magical child is born to a farming family. This boy kills a nine-headed ogre whose body is broken up into pieces to form the land of Ling. Other magical events occur. The son magically impregnates eighteen maidens, producing the eighteen warriors. There are treasures which are the patrimony of Ling, including the first examples of several kind of cattle, the first goat, the first sheep, the ass, a special pot, an axe, the first horse, etc. One

among the warriors is the man of greatest virtue and prowess---
Agu dPalle.

The next chapter is the birth of Gesar. In this story dPalle observes a white bird and a black bird fighting. Later he observes a black and white yak fighting and kills the black one. The white yak becomes the Lord Indra (*dbang po rgya bzhin*) and promises him a boon on behalf of the white gods of heaven, over whom he is king. In particular, he will send one of his sons to be the king of Ling. The story continues with journeys to the land of the *nāgas* and to the realm of the gods and contests between the sons of Indra--- contests in which a certain individual named Full of Benefit (*dön Idan*) is always victorious. Eventually Full of Benefit dies and is reborn as Gesar.

The later chapters continue with plot motifs which are important in the longer versions of the epic. We see the sneakiness and coyote-like tricksterism of Gesar as a youth. We see him in later chapters conquer the Northern Kingdom of Lutsen and the Kingdom of the Hor. We see him journey to China to gain a Chinese bride.

The central motives of the Gesar legend are there, but there is no overarching plot. Nor does any single chapter seem to possess any literary structure to speak of. On the other hand, the structure of the first chapters is rather similar to that of the "History of the Goloks," which will be translated in Chapter V of this dissertation. This is significant. We know the structuring principle behind that History--- it is to chronicle of the generations of Goloks from their divine creation to the point

where a Golok gives birth to the great Nyingma master Jigmê Lingpa. This is not an epic, it is a tribal chronicle. It has a genealogical intention which precedes the dramatic imperatives to telling a good story. Thus, it possesses no *μῦθος* or well-organized plot, no intentional agenda. There is no quest made explicit at the beginning and no need solved or resolved at the end. Instead, there is a listing of the events that distinguish the history of the land of Ling from the time of its forefather through successive generations until Gesar.

Or we could say, as easily, that it is simply a collection of "epic lays," as Bowra would call them, which were placed in this order hypothetically by either the bard or Francke, the editor. Whether they are a chronicle or an all-but-arbitrary ordering of distinct performances, if there is no structural element which makes one follow from the other, then they do not form a single work in any literary sense. If the only thing which unites them is the character of Gesar or the subject of Ling, then, from the point of view of Aristotelian literary criticism, little indeed unites them at all.

The Genealogy of a verse complete epic

The literary nature of the Ladakhi version casts light on a question asked by Western scholars as they examine the possible scenarios for the development of the *Iliad*. Bowra in his chapter on "the origins of the epic" speculates that the *Iliad* descended from epic lays, songs which treated single topics, single stories

in the legend of Troy. [Bowra, *opus cit.* pp. 27-37]. These are the stories, for example, which were sung by Demodocus and Phemius, professional bards represented in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: Bowra quotes Penelope, who remarks that the bards sing songs of "the deeds of men and gods":

The songs of men are mostly from the Trojan Cycle. Demodocus sings of the Wood Horse (Θ 499-501) and the Quarrel of Odysseus and Achilles (Θ 73-78), while Phemius sings of the Return of the Achaeans (α 325-7). The bard's business is to tell of the latest news, and the newest song (as Telemachus tells his mother) is the best and most honoured (α 351-2). The stories are regarded as strictly historical, and Odysseus compliments Demodocus on telling his tale *λίην κατα κόσμον* (Θ 489) --as it should be told. These songs are separate entities and sung separately. Demodocus and Phemius sing what they are asked to sing, and they can start at any point. But their songs nearly all concern Troy and deal with a coherent set of stories. That some sort of continuity existed is shown by the poet's words when Demodocus, after being pressed by Odysseus, sings of the Wood Horse....."He, stirred by the god, began, and made his song, starting at that point how they on their well-benched ships, etc.'...(Θ 499-500) This seems to mean that there was a set order for the story and that the bard took it up at a definite point. [Bowra, p.28]

Bowra would have the Homeric epics evolve out of these

lays as the art of narrative itself evolves. Obviously, Homer adds an artifice and power of ornamentation superior to the few examples we have of such short works. He improves immensely on the tradition as he smoothly edits, in effect, these short performances into a single long, elaborate, and well-structured work.

Now, Tibetan epics are made up of ballads connected by prose passages. This is interesting, because Bowra distinguishes the heroic lay from the heroic song. This form, the heroic song, actually combines song and dance, and is well attested in ancient Greek poetry. E. Bethe¹¹⁹ argues that these songs were united into connected narratives and became lays which then became epics. He gives complex and interesting arguments about the song form--- the abruptness of its narration, its strophic quality originating from the manner in which song lyrics were performed by chorus and leader. And he finds moments in the *Iliad* which distinctly betray this lyric style.¹²⁰

But Bowra is not convinced, because in the end, most examples of Greek lyric are not truly concerned with narration at all, but simply mention stories people already know. [Bowra, p.34] Bethe, on the other hand, thinks that the Serbian heroic lyrics which are still sung on the coasts of Yugoslavia, in Herzegovina and greater Serbia are indeed examples of epics in song style. We can see from the stringing together of Serbian lyric oral poetry how epic narratives could have developed out of songs.

But Bowra adduces examples from other cultures where the

same sort of songs exist but did not give birth to epics. In these cultures we can indeed trace the development of the longer narratives from shorter forms, but not from songs. The examples he gives---Turkish, German, and Anglo-Saxon narrative verse---do not derive from the strophic songs of these cultures, but from linear poetic forms which have no stanzaic organization. He sees the lyric and narrative forms splitting and continuing to develop separately.

The argument between Bethe and Bowra provides us with useful questions we can ask in examining the *Gesar* corpus. Are the *Gesar* songs comparable to either the lyric song Bethe believes are a source of epic narrative or are they like the non-strophic, more linear narrative verse of the heroic lays Bowra thinks preceded Homer?

Are, for example, the short and relatively unconnected chapters of the Ladakhi *Gesar* like the epic lays which were dynamically connected to make a Homeric recounting? In that case, you could even say that the "History of the Golok" and the Mipham *Gesar* are both examples of a later and more literary development of the form--- either a lengthening of songs into narrative or a connecting of lays by a single consciousness into a single work. Understanding the stages in this development would contribute greatly to our comprehension of the nature of the integralities before us in the *Gesar* corpus.

The interesting thing is that both scenarios discussed by Bowra and Bethe are impossible for the *Gesar* corpus-- impossible and out of the question. None of the epics Bowra

discusses are commensurable with *Gesar* for none of the versions of the *Gesar* we have discussed and few if any in the entire corpus are a smooth and continuous line of verse. All are prosimetric--- alternating song and prose narration.

The songs, as Helfer points out, are attached to melodies which are the musical insignia of the persona who sing the songs. In other words, the verse is always uttered by a character in the epic, for the verse is almost always a song and the songs are speech acts, part of the *πρᾶξις* of the epic. They are not descriptions of battle scenes, they are not recountings of action, they are hardly concerned with narration at all--- they are, as a matter of fact, advisory lyrics--- words uttered by one character in order to convince some other character to take a certain action.

The narration of actions themselves takes place almost entirely in the prose interstices. Looking at the songs themselves now, we must ask if any of them could ever have stood on its own as a narrative lyric? The answer, as you will see in the passages we have translated, is simply "No." In order to sing one of these songs, one must pretend to be one of the characters in the epic. The omniscient narrator speaks almost nothing but prose.¹²¹

Bowra would like to know what primordial event was the occasion for the atomic origins of Homeric epic. Bethe suggests that lyric songs performed by a chorus and accompanied by music and dancing grew into these long, linear verse accounts. If that were true, then the origins of epic would be in ritual

performances, for these are the classical occasions for such songs. Bowra seeks other occasions where such performances occurred and lists, besides rituals of offering and thanksgiving, the rituals that accompany games, and the threnodies that accompany funerals. Speaking of such non-ritual lyric performances, he distinguishes them from the epic lays:

The songs are different from the lays of κλέα ἀνδρῶν sung by Achilles or professional bards. They are sung not by one man but by many. Or if not by many, at least many accompany them or take some part in them. *And they are combined with some sort of action.* (my italics). They are examples of the μολπή, the song accompanied by dance, and associated with definite occasions, harvest, rejoicing, and death. They are quite different from the lays of Demodocus, which are accompanied by no action, are sung only by the bard himself, have no connexion with any special occasion, and are intended only to beguile the leisure of princes and nobles at the feasts held in their halls.¹²²

So much for Greek lyric songs. Their further development leads in many directions, among them into the lyric performances which occur in tragedies. But Bowra does not see how they could have led to the smooth, endless sequences of hexameters which is epic verse.

If Bowra were to ask the same question of the epic ballads in the *Gesar*, how would we answer him? Because of the deictic

element in them, the fact that they are always sung by a particular character on behalf of his or her own interests, they cannot derive from ritual ceremonies, even though they borrow some language from ritual texts in the Mipham version.

Furthermore, the dramatic persona who sing them are usually making arguments. If there were such a thing as versified legal prosecutions and defenses, that would be a possible origin of these songs. They are songs of argument and counseling.

As a matter of fact, Tibetans do speak of spontaneous verse conversations, but it is in a very different context. They occur, says traditional sentiment, when warriors are about to battle each other. One warrior stands before the other and sings insults and challenges and brags in verse. The other answers in like tone; they become brave and angry, and finally, when suitably enraged, fight.

The songs of Milarepa are supposed to be spontaneous verse sermons. These could be another source of the kind of epic songs we are considering. But there is no particular evidence in that direction at this point.

A final possibility would be simply an early form of drama in which one speaker represents different characters by speaking each one's part in turn. But this scenario is tautologous, for that is exactly what occurs in the singing of the *Gesar Epic*. In this sense you could actually consider the *Gesar* not to be an epic as we know it, but more of a sort of story-telling theater. The bard describes the action, singing the speeches of each persona.

Thomas Greene and Varieties of Metaphor in the Epic

The fact that these songs are not comparable with Western lyrics and linear epic verse explains the peculiarity of the extended metaphor in the *Gesar*. It is actually not a metaphor at all, but an argument by analogy. The Tibetan character who sings a song in the *Gesar* is usually attempting to convince his listener to do something. If he wishes to give a warning, he says "Do not do X, for that would be like doing Y and Y is sheer madness." This is the case in the demon minister's warnings to Avalokiteśvara to leave the terrible precincts of the palace of Padmasambhava. In effect he says, "Leave now! To stay would be like a man committing suicide for no reason... to stay would be like a person taking his case to court when it is of no importance, to stay would be like..."

Sometimes the argument by analogy is positive, as when Avalokiteśvara answers the demon, saying: "I serve a great purpose in being here---like the Sun and Moon, which bring light to the world by circling in the sky." At the beginning of *The Horse Race* we see Manene singing to Gesar. She must convince him to assume the aspect of a warrior. Her extended metaphors are not descriptions of things. They are arguments by analogy: "If you do not manifest as Gesar, there is no point in your having magical powers of transformation---- like a field which is full of animal fodder and grows no fruits--- it feeds no people---- like the stars in the sky, which are pretty, but useless for finding your way home if there is no moon."

This is terribly different from the Homeric extended similes. They engage the rhetoric of description by observing relations of physical similitude in descriptive contexts. For example, there is the famous wound to Menelaus in Book Four of the *Iliad*. It is interesting to note how different it is from the Tibetan extended figure, while keeping one point in common: The occasion is during a truce between the Trojans and the Achaeans. An archer violates the truce by attempting to shoot Menelaus from afar with an arrow. The arrow strikes:

[l. 134]The bitter arrow was driven against the joining of the
 war belt
 and passed clean through the war belt elaborately woven;
 into the elaborately wrought corselet the shaft was driven
 and the guard which he wore to protect his skin and keep the
 spears off,
 which guarded him best, yet the arrow plunged even through
 this also
 and with the very tip of its point it grazed the man's skin
 and straightway from the cut there gushed a cloud of dark
 blood.[Lattimore, pp. 116-117]

And now the simile:

As when some Maionian woman or Karian with purple
 colours ivory, to make it a cheek piece for horses;
 it lies away in an inner room, and many a rider

longs to have it, but it is laid up to be a king's treasure,
 two things, to be the beauty of the horse, the pride of the
 horseman:
 so, Menelaos, your shapely thighs were stained with the
 colour
 of blood, and your legs also and the ankles beneath them.

This is often cited as a good example of Homer's art because of the beautiful effect of the simile. The object of the extended simile is to describe the colour of the blood on the thigh of the injured king. It serves no other purpose than that in the narrative. It does not participate in the action. If it were excised from the text, the representation of events would not have substantially changed. In fact, this is an important point for Bowra. He holds that the examples of isolated heroic lays lacked these extended ornamentations and that such elaborate ornamentations were the contribution of the poets such as Homer in the later development.

The semantics of the effect is interesting, because it is not really the similarity which makes it a good figure, but the difference. The blood on Menelaus' thigh is not really like Tyrian dye on ivory equestrian cheek pieces. The metaphor removes us from the immediate action of the text and sends us to a domestic world beyond war.

Greene in his recent work on the semantics of metaphors in the epic tradition observes this similarity-in-difference relationship and considers it essential to the structure of this

type of figure of speech.¹²³ Many others have made the same observation, but Greene's point is more expansive, because he asks the question whether other sorts of epic might not have other sorts of semantics at play in their figures of speech. He proposes, for example, that there may have been a shamanic epic such as Bowra proposed in *Heroic Poetry*.¹²⁴ Greene wonders whether the semantics for figures in these hypothetical works might be quite different, because they occur in a reality whose physical relations are governed differently. If one believes in sympathetic magic, then relations of similarity become profound and important and *effective* relations. Greene speculates that the metaphors which occur in liturgical texts may function this way. He is discussing what anthropologists used to call "sympathetic magic." There, one is not observing in the simile a difference-in-similarity, but an underlying, secret similarity in difference. The two different things which are associated with each other are united by a recondite, magical resonance so that acting on one effects action on the other.

This approach to meaning is unquestionably the case in the semantics of tantric Buddhist rituals. And these rituals do, indeed, surround the Mipham *Gesar*, governing meanings in much of its poetry. In Tibetan Tantra this system of metaphysical resonances which govern ritual are called "the *maṇḍala* principle," for the symmetries and resonances involved in the magical relationships are focused on the repeating patterns of correspondances represented in the *maṇḍalas* of tantric ritual.

Greene, however, is not an orientalist. For him the most

obvious *locus* of this kind of thinking is the Hermetic tradition in the West and he evokes the work of Francis Yates on the development of visual figures, the grotesque, and neo-platonic metaphysical symetries out of the Greek art of memory. ¹²⁵ Yates traces this tradition through the alchemical and cabalistic transformatons of it in the Renaissance with figures such as Ficino and Pico di Mirandola. She traces forward in time the development of the Hermetic tradition as far as the Rosicrucian movement. Her work identifies this line of development and Greene appeals to it as an example of Western metaphorical systems based on a neo-platonic and magical view of inherent relations.

When this alternate semantics of metaphor occurs in the Mipham *Gesar* is a complicated question, because the text is so heterogenous. In my commentary on the first chapter of the *Lha gLing* I will note passages which evoke a tantric semantics and others which are based on more conventional approaches to simile. For example, the persona in the first chapter are all deities who belong to a special system of resonances in the special *Maṇḍala* of the Primordial Buddhas. The Western portion of this *maṇḍala* represents the so-called "Family of the Lotus." The Lotus represents compassion and the compassionate intervention of enlightened beings. It also represents all other kinds of human warmth, such as love, affection, lust, and the desire to attract.

Since all the major deities in this chapter of the *Gesar* are of the Lotus Family, there is a network of interconnecting

metaphors which play on the idea of the lotus and the qualities associated with it. We will see that these figures of speech are drawn from tantric rituals. They should therefore represent the kind of "magical" semantics Greene mentions in connection with metaphor and simile in the Hermetic tradition.

But the same passages that draw on tantric rituals as previous texts are also related to a wholly different sort of poetic connected with the Indian tradition of *kāvya*, Sanskrit Court Poetry. In *kāvya* the concept of *alamkara*, or "the art of ornamentation," is the ruling esthetic basis for figures of speech¹²⁶--- an approach not so different from that exemplified in the figure of the wounded Menelaus. When the *Gesar* poet is writing in the style of classical secular Sanskrit poetics, whatever the philosophical views of the poet might be, he or she is imitating poetry from a system which is very similar to Homeric poetics.

In discussing the figural semantics of magic and metonymy, we are dealing with the lyric poems and poetic prose in the Mipham *Gesar*. But, the epic ballads there do not use either of these sorts of similes very much. The dominant relation of similitude used in the ballads seems to be logical analogy. It is not the religious allegory of ritual or scripture, it is not the esthetic, descriptive similes of Homer, it is not tantric magical verse. It is the kind of figure used in a debate.

The points of similitude are in the logical structure of the two situations: "The Sun and Moon are useful to the world and *Gesar* would be useful to Ling." or "Demons drive men to suicide

and great causes drive men to brave actions." It is the four-legged relationship of analogy: "a is to b, as c is to d." But there is a strange argumentative twist:

- "a has X relation to b."

- "If it did not, nothing would be meaningful."

- "In the same way, if y does not have X relationship to z, nothing will be meaningful."

- "Therefore why don't you make y be X to z!"

This argument form occupies in the epic balladry the same place as an extended simile in Homeric epic verse. The reader who is not ready for this figure, will have trouble assimilating the text, for the song's analogical similes are logically quite complex.

I have often observed that learned Tibetan readers enjoy Mipham's *Gesar* and find delight in his extended figures. But they also find them challenging. They are like puzzles and the *ratio* of them is often not immediately evident. In this we find, I would say, the real similarity between Homeric and Tibetan epic metaphors. The Homeric metaphors are founded on the irony of the similarity between two things so fundamentally different. The reader must think twice, must reconsider the figure, for its aptness is elusive. The Tibetan figures, which are arguments by analogy in the form of two and three line proverbial expressions, are the same way. They seem to pass beneath the eye easily and gracefully. But then the mind stops to wonder if the two

situations posed are really commensurable or not. The aptness is discovered, but only after consideration. The second look is the irony and the moment of poetic magic and the common point which unites all these sorts of figures of speech.

This irony which encourages doubling back is quite tricky in an oral performance. Even when written down, it is still a provocation to the reader.

Inspired by Greene's analysis of figures of speech in epic we have tried to find a characteristic style of extended simile in the *Gesar*. The search produced complicated results. There are at least three wholly distinct kinds of simile in the Mipham version. It suggests to me, as I have said above, that Mipham's version of the epic is a mixed form--- much less homogenous than Homer and his successors appear to be.

Has this discussion of epic metaphor clarified our original question of the completeness of the *Gesar*? Perhaps. Bowra's discussion of his and Bethe's scenarios for the evolution of epic aimed to show how larger and larger unities developed from pieces of verse that became sequenced as time went on into longer recitations. It is a genetic argument for the organic unity of a Homeric epic. Epic lays were sewn together to make a longer work.

The same cannot be true of the *Gesar*, for it is not smooth, even, and connected like Western epics. It is prosimetric, alternating prose with both classical verse, ritual verse, and balladry. The diverse semantics of its metaphors reflects the same patchwork quality. Perhaps the simplest thing is to say

that from the point of view of verse structure and metaphor, the *Gesar* is not an epic at all, but something formally different which performs the same social functions as epic.

From the point of view of plot, some of the *Gesar* editions are integral works--- others lack that causal and sequential structure of action. In fact, I would go even further and say that the versions of the epic which are complete in the Aristotelian sense will all have introductions like the Divine Council of Zeus-- the formal commitment of divine machinery to the realizing of a certain plot. Collections of narratives which lack the declaration of an initial intention will probably be more loosely organized.

This leads to the last major topic in our introduction to a literary analysis of the Mipham *Gesar*. I have argued that the announcement of a plan, intention, purpose, or τέλος by a divine figure provides the motive force behind the movement of the rest of the plot in this kind of epic. This is the principle function of the divine machinery in the opening of the epic. Now let us look in detail at this machinery as it appears in the Mipham version. The next chapter will examine the cosmology of the *Gesar* as literary machinery. In the course of this literary treatment of religious elements in the epic, we will look to the actual rituals written by Mipham for documentation of our particular understanding of the gods and their functions. Then, having studied the cosmology and examined the rituals, we will read the actual words of the epic in Chapter IV.

100 The distinction of *histoire* versus *recit* is also made in English discourse, see Seymour

Chapman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978). It is related to a distinction developed by the Russian formalists, particularly Vladimir Propp.

101 "Gling ge sar rgyal po'i skyes rabs lo rgyus rags tsam brjod pa" by gCod pa Don 'grub in *gLing ge sar rgyal po'i shul rten gyi gnag rgyun ngo mtshar me tog phreng mdzes* (Ziling, 1989), pp. 1-17.

102 Samten G. Karmay, "The Four Adversaires of Gesar: a Theoretical Basis of the Tibetan Epic (with reference to a "chronological order" of the various episodes in the Gesar Epic," a paper presented at the 2nd International Symposium of the Epic of King Gesar, organized by the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences in Lhasa 7-13 August 1991.

103 Ariane Macdonald, "Note sur le diffusion de la 'théorie des Quatre Fils du Ciel' au Tibet," *Journal Asiatique*, CCL (1962), pp. 531-548.

104 Hildebeitel, *opus cit.*, p. 27.

105 Stein, 56, pp.43-95 .

106 C.M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930).

107 Aristotle, *Poetics*, vi. 2-4, Greek quotations and English translations are from the Loeb Edition. *Aristotle XXII, The Poetics*, ed. and trans. by W. Hamilton Fyfe, (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 19 1982).

108 Ed. Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, (New York: Random House, 1941). All translations of the Physics are from this edition, pp. 218-397. The translators are R. P. Hardie and R.K. Gaye.

109 Homère, *Iliade, Tome I*, text établi et traduit par Paul Mazon, (*Paris: Société d'édition "Les Belles Lettres"*, 1987), pp. 2-3.

110 D'Alembert and Diderot, eds., *Compact Edition: L'Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, photographically reduced reprint of 1772 edition (Paris: Pergamon Press, no date), Tome VI, p. 422.

111 It is still true in conversational narrations. Charlotte Linde, in her studies of verbal autobiographies has found *fatalité* to be an integral part of an ordinary person's recitation of their own life story. For example, when she asked a subject to describe how he or she chose their profession, one of the typical responses is "It was a result of a series of accidents.... And yet in a sense it was fated." This study of the construction of causality in biographical narrations is a fascinating example of conversation analysis and linguistics applied to an ancient literary question of plausible plot construction. Particularly relevant is the chapter entitled, "Coherence Principles: Causality and Continuity." Charlotte Linde, *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*, (Oxford: University Press, 1993), pp. 127-162.

112 *Lha gLing*, *opus cit.* All Tibetan quotes from the *Lha gLing* are from the Gantok edition. Gantok: p.1-- *chos nyid nang las ma 'gag snying rje yis/ ris med 'gro ba'i don du byang chub sems// gtong min rdo rje Ita bu'i dam tshig gi/ rang mdangs pring las rnam bzhi'i rtse brgya bas...*

113 Andrew Ford suggests the contrast between the βουλή of Zeus and the *dön* of the buddhas. It affords a very interesting comparison. My own feeling is that when the ends of Zeus are discussed, we are engaged in explaining the apparently arbitrary destruction of human life and happiness which seems to be the rule in the phenomenal world. When we explain the

ends of the buddhas, we are presenting an Intention which is consciously opposed to the natural order of things. The ordinary world of material causality is seen to be without *τέλος* and therefore full of arbitrary pain and endless suffering. Only enlightened beings possess the freedom to have clear intentions and to impose them upon the chaos of a world without a highest good deity.

114 Gantok: p.5 - *don chen po'i gtad sgo ci 'dra yod/ don chen zhe la ma brnag na/ gal chen mtha' bsnnyegs don med// sdug chen gdon gyis ma zin na/ gtsang chen chu la lceb don med.*

115 Oral commentary of the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpche, a Kagyü lama.

116 *mgo 'khor-* "spinning head" is an expression which refers to people being fooled and distracted by a con artist.

117 Helffer, *opus cit.*, 10-11. I have translated the Tibetan according to Helffer's transcription and following her French translation.

118 Alexander Macdonald makes an interesting remark about this point. Although the Ladakhi edition does not contain aspiration prayers at its beginning, a bard would perform such prayers before beginning to recite the story. Should this be considered part of the text?

119 E. Bethe, *Homer*, i, pp. 57-68.

120 *opus cit.* i, p. 24.

121 It is difficult to be sure about this point. We must examine more epics before we can decide finally. Also, there is the question about whether parallel prose lines, such as often occur in Classical Chinese narrative texts and in Tibetan Classical Prose, should be considered poetry. If they are verse, then they are not, in any case, related to song, dance, or chanted lays. They are related to the form of discourse from which they arose---- expository prose.

122 C.M. Bowra, *Tradition and Design in the Iliad*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), pp 38-39.

123 Thomas Greene, *Poesie et magie*, (Paris: Julliard, 1991). Greene's analyses of epic figures of speech is found throughout his work. But his recent conclusions on the special nature of magical similes which evoke a neo-platonic sense of universal resonances and a hermetic sense of natural homologies is particularly found here.

124 C.M. Bowra, *Heroic poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1952).

125 Frances Amelia Yates, *The Art of Memory*, (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1966.), *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic tradition* (London : Routledge & K. Paul, 1964), and *The Rosicrucian enlightenment*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972). These three works provide a survey of Frances Yates's work on the history of the Hermetic tradition in the arts.

126 For a brief history of the development of Tibetan poetry in art narratives, see Beth Solomon, *opus cit.* . pp. 1-38.

Chapter III

The Celestial Machinery of *The Epic of Gesar of Ling*

The Mipham *Gesar*, despite its Buddhist religious commitment, is essentially a literary work and not scripture. It is, however, accompanied by a widespread, varied, and fervent sacred tradition which worships Gesar as a hero and a god. Looking at the relationship between the narrative literature of the *Gesar Epic* and the regular observances of the cult of Gesar can teach us a great deal, both about the nature of epic and the cults of heroes. In this chapter I would like to examine the religious beliefs and deities involved in these cults of Gesar using the scriptures and rituals of this tradition as documentation.

This will be a study, therefore, of the Gesar cosmology. But using the terminology of Aristotelian criticism we could also call it a study of the *machinery* of the epic. The difference between these two terms, "cosmology" and "machinery" points to an important distinction in scholarly methodology. When we look at the divine machinery of the *Gesar*, we are examining the gods and religious elements as they participate in the functioning of the plot and in the special nature of various supernatural persona. *Deus ex machina* is a term from literary criticism.

But "cosmology" is a term used more often by scholars in Religious Studies. It may be that our earliest source of knowledge about the Greek gods as a pantheon comes from Homeric epics and

hymns. But in the East, as we have already pointed out, there is a vast previous literature of cosmological texts such as the Hindu *Purāṇas* and the Buddhist Tantras. The *Purāṇas* are very like Hesiod, but there are many more of them and they are quite multifarious. Every Asian tradition shows a disorganized multifariousness of pantheons and studies of Asian mythology are vastly more complicated than their Western equivalents, because there is not a canonical center quite equivalent to what we feel we have in the West in Homer and Hesiod.

And so, both the machinery and the cosmology of *Gesar* are extremely complicated subjects. On the level of theory studies of cosmology and pantheons have become especially difficult in Central Asia because of a recent revolution in perspective created by the challenge of so-called "post-colonialist" discourse and the view often termed "Cultural Studies." There is the thought that our anthropological and religious terms of analysis are Eurocentric and reflect an intellectual hang-over from the period when European powers invaded the Orient, conquered large regions of it physically and commercially, and began to reorganize the language Asians used to evaluate their own civilizations.¹²⁷ For example, although we would like to use these terms in the presentation of the Central Asian elements of the *Gesar* cult, "shamanism" and "animism" are considered by many scholars to be linguistic agents of a condescending anthropological view, a view which sees the so-called minority cultures of Central Asia as primitive and "underdeveloped."¹²⁸ I do not believe that this will be a real problem in this chapter on the religion of *Gesar*, because the source

texts will be almost entirely native Tibetan, Chinese, and Indian documents. And the view represented in this section aims to be in keeping with that of Tibetan scholars themselves. We have already taken some trouble to establish a theoretical distance from anthropological schools of thought such as that of Dumézil, Eliade, Biardeau, etc. Stein, Francke, and the other European Gesarists will be discussed in some detail. But there the aim will be to evaluate the perspective and frames of reference they impose on the indigenous materials we are considering.

Still, we will indeed use terms such as shamanism and animism and when these terms occur, no cultural condescension is meant or implied. By "shamanism" we will mean religious practices and cultures of religious practice formally reminiscent of those of the Siberian Shamans--- with their emphasis on certain totemic beasts, priestly states of trance, and spirit travel to spirit realms. "Animism" will simply be used to refer to a genus of religious beliefs which sees inanimate objects such as trees and mountains as invested with conscious spirits.

Most of the Tibetan scholars I interviewed believed there was indeed a nearly distinct religion associated with Gesar of Ling. But most of them also regarded it as a sort of sub-cult of Buddhism or Bön, just the way, one may say, there were many local cults in ancient Greek religion--- cults worshipping deities who were single members of the Homeric pantheon, but had their own priests and system of services at a given site.

Francke in the works already cited on the Ladakhi *Gesar* expressed his belief that there is a *Gesar Chos*, a Gesar Dharma, a

religion of Gesar. Stein doubts this, but in his usual broad-ranging fashion, presents an encyclopedic survey of the religious elements associated with various versions of the epic and with performances of the epic. Particularly interesting is Part III of Stein, '59 where he describes such things as the religious character of the bard, the seasonal festivals at which *Gesar* performances are given and countless other points of data which could contribute to an overview of the religious dimension of the epic. Pages 317-553 contain these observations scattered amongst other relevant data.

The aim of this chapter is modest compared with Stein. Here we will look at one collection of religious data which Stein noted in the bibliographic portion of his monograph--- the *Gesar* rituals actually written by Mipham. Stein lists these rituals and describes their colophons and the nature of the authorship to the extent it can be known from direct reports within these texts.¹²⁹ He also has obviously read many of the liturgies carefully and with some guidance from a native informant, for the glossary he provides with Stein, 56 includes many citations of terms as they occur in Mipham's liturgies.

There are some interesting literary studies in other cultural areas which connect a ritual corpus with an epic text and closely examine the relationship between the two textual bodies. A superb example would be Mary Ann Radzinowicz's *Milton's Epics and the Book of Psalms*.¹³⁰ This monograph looks at three orders of literature: epic, scriptural, and doctrinal. The epic level is *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, two epic poems by Milton which consciously use the plot structure of *Luke* and *Job* and the poetic

structure and thematics of the *Psalms*. The scriptural order is just the versions of those books of the Christian Bible which Milton studied. The doctrinal order is given quite simply by Milton's theological works and his agonistic pamphlets, in particular his *Christian Doctrine*.

It has been a thesis of anthropologists influenced by the Romantic movement that ritual originally generated the kind of poetry which lead eventually to the epic.¹³¹ Here we see a writer consciously and systematically adapting the language of ritual to epic expression and discussing the process as he carries it along through successive experiments.

Radzinowicz's discussion does not suffer from cross-cultural problems of terminology because, in the style of literary historians, she simply uses the language of the people she is studying--- in this case, the language of Christian theology and classical rhetoric. Thus, there is an admirable compactness about her comparative work. She does not have to survey a vast and diverse literature in order to find an evidential base for her conclusions. We know exactly what Milton held or followed in all three realms of discourse.

This study hopes to emulate her compactness. Instead of comparing a vast range of Gesar texts with a vast and as yet undifferentiated field of Gesar liturgies and religious beliefs, we will look simply at the Gesar materials produced by Mipham Gyatso and his disciples. The epic his disciple edited will provide the machinery. The rituals he himself wrote will be represent the pantheon of the religious involved with Gesar. And the world of

religious beliefs from which we will draw our cosmology will be those attested to by the Nyingma schools of tantric practice with which Mipham was associated in the well defined corpus of Tantras and commentaries of that tradition.

The modesty of this effort should not be overlooked. But perhaps this kind of limited study is necessary at this point when we have not yet charted the vast oceans of Gesar discourse. It is like the old *rudders* used by Portuguese sailors when they journeyed to Asia. The *rudder* was a log that described the color and depth of the water and the dispositions of the stars along the way from Portugal to, for example, Japan. From it you could not get a picture of the oceans they were crossing. But you could at least find your way to Japan and hope for a safe journey home.

The Gesar Liturgies of Mipham

As we have noted before, Mipham Rinpoche was not the actual editor of what I have been calling "the Mipham *Gesar*." In point of fact, he was the guru of Thubten Gyurmê ('Thub bstan 'Gyur med), a Tibetan yogin who under his direction produced the edition we are translating. Nevertheless, the philosophical, religious, and cosmological view, as we will demonstrate with specific examples in this chapter, is entirely Mipham's.

Mipham was an interesting thinker. He is famous for his scholarly commentaries on the Indian Buddhist philosophical tradition and it was this tradition which seemed to provide his

principal subject of study. As a scholar his main task in life was to produce fresh commentaries on the famous Indian *śāstras* used by Tibetan pandits. In these commentaries he developed a fresh interpretation of Mahāyāna metaphysics and epistemology---- an interpretation that would serve the Tibetan Eclectic (*ris.med*) movement as it created a sort of tantric meditator's renaissance in the 19th century. ¹³²

It is odd to think that one of Tibet's greatest analytical metaphysicians devoted so much time and effort to the production of a non-philosophical *literary* text about a warlike hero. Mipham was a stern practitioner, a dialectician, and a brilliant, highly analytical philosopher. Why then should he indulge in a work of entertainment-- a work written in a colloquial dialect of Eastern Tibet and specifically designed, as two Nyingma experts on Mipham have said,¹³³ for the pleasing distraction of the ordinary man?

Part of the answer can be found in the texts of the *lha bsang* (pronounced *lha. sang*), smoke offerings Mipham wrote. A *lha sang* is a Tibetan ritual in which juniper leaves are burned to produce a column of smoke as an offering to certain kinds of local deities. Although *lha sang* involve burning substances as a divine sacrifice, they have little to do with the Indic tradition of fire worship, the *agni hotra*, *agni cayana*, or any fire ceremony originating in the Sub-continent. *Sang* are part of Tibetan folk religion¹³⁴. Like native American ceremonies, the smoke is used mainly for purification purposes and as a celestial highway down which deities travel in order to contact their worshipers. When the cord of smoke is established between heaven and earth, divine power travels down it

and enters into objects which have been brought to the ceremony to be blessed. Warriors bless their weapons; artisans the tools they use in their trades. More abstract entities may be blessed by this ceremony, such as a kingdom, a provincial government, or, to use a term we will explain in a few pages, the *auspicious coincidence* of an individual.

An examination of the *Iha sang* rituals composed by Mipham shows that his interest in the *Gesar Epic* was not merely literary, but also cultic. For the smoke offering ceremonies present the characters from the epic not just as heroes and literary personae, but also as the deities and divine principles of a sort of Gesar religion. So far as these ceremonies are concerned, there is no distinct *Gesar chos*, no discrete Gesar Dharma as such. The religion of the Mipham *Gesar* is fundamentally none other than Tibetan Tantric Buddhism of the Nyingma lineage (*rnying ma*). Examining Mipham's *Iha sangs*, however, we can see that he had in mind, if not a separate religion, then at least a coherent cosmology. This cosmology is complex, quite specific and it is evoked in the Mipham epic.

Most interestingly, it combines in a conscious and systematic way deities from several distinct national religions: Chinese, Tibetan, and Indian. Reading the epic literature, one has a sense of haphazardness, as if the deities of the epic were drawn from Buddhism and local practices with no particular system in mind.¹³⁵ It is only when the machinery becomes liturgy that we can be sure of its underlying structure and intentionality.

In this regard the *Gesar Epic* is comparable to the Chinese

novel, *The Journey to the West (Hsi-yu Chi)*. This immense popular narrative appears to be an unsystematic, humorous combination of every possible Chinese deity. There are, however, traditional commentaries which suggest that the machinery of the novel actually presents the author's vision of a coherent theological system--- one in which three distinct cosmologies are combined: Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist.¹³⁶ The method of combination was called during the Ming and Qing Dynasties "The Unification of the Three Schools (*san chiao kuei-i*)."¹³⁷ Whether this was truly the author's intension is questionable. It is beyond question, however, in the case of the Mipham *Gesar*, for his corpus of *Gesar* ceremonies systematically exposes a well-ordered pantheon whose structure is based on a specific set of philosophical premises.

The Cosmology of the *Gesar Lha Sangs*

As I said above, one of the main objects of the performance of a *lha sang* is to produce a certain degree of good fortune or *auspicious coincidence* in the karmic stream of the practitioner. Let us explain now this term *auspicious coincidence* as it occurs in the religion of the Mipham *Gesar*, for it is key to understanding the efficacy of *lha sang* and numerous other religious practices which figure in the epic. It is also key to the notion of causality which constructs the plot of the epic.

The word in Tibetan is *tendrel (rten 'brel)*. It literally means "basis" (*rten*) for connection (*'brel*). " *Tendrel* is a translation of

the Sanskrit term *pratityasamutpāda*,¹³⁸ which is often translated "co-dependant origination." In this scholastic context it is a technical term for the sort of causality that operates because of one's previous karma.¹³⁹ *Tendrel* as karma is precisely described in a classical list of links in the chain of causation of the life of a confused individual in cyclic existence. These links are the twelve *nidānas* and they describe an ordinary person's progress through cyclic existence from the arising of ignorance, through birth and the development of habitual patterns all the way to the last *nidāna* which is called "old-age and death."

This abhidharmic usage of *tendrel*, however, has little to do with the term as it occurs in the *Gesar Epic*. There it is usually short for *tashi tendrel* (*bkra bshis rten 'brel*), which is translated as "auspicious coincidence." The term "coincidence" is a good translation for *tendrel*, because technically it is a type of causation which does not involve necessary connections. One moment of occurrence arises in dependance on and conditioned by the previous one and thus only occurs after the ceasing of the previous moment.¹⁴⁰ There being no actual connection or truly existent bridge between the two moments, their causal linkage is well described as "coincidence." When the chain of causation leads to desirable ends, such as wealth, health, an abundance of the provisions necessary for practicing religion, etc. then it is considered a beneficent linkage and is called "auspicious coincidence." If the karmic chain, on the other hand, leads to undesirable ends such as poverty, ill-health, rebirth in lower realms, etc. then it is *ta-mi-shi tendrel* (*bkra mi bshis rten 'brel*)-

- "inauspicious coincidence."

A buddha, of course, is one who is free from all karma and so no sort of *tendrel* occurs for him. But disciples and ordinary persons on the path must hope and work to have auspicious *tendrel*, auspicious coincidence or causal linkage.

One more point about the metaphysics of this kind of causal link. The problem of necessary relations in causality and indeed in the assignment of qualities to substances arises throughout Western philosophy. It is one of the many conundrums which suffers from the paradox of the "third man." The Buddhist approach avoids this problem by simply denying that any one moment is actually connected to the next. This does not actually get rid of the challenge to systematic metaphysics and much of the philosophical elaboration of Mahāyāna Buddhism involves proposing various replacement explanations to provide a way that a previous event might influence a future event without being connected to it.

Whether the Buddhist philosophical strategies in this regard are convincing or not, the approach of denying an actual link is phenomenologically brilliant. No meditator ever actually beheld in his or her contemplative practice an existent link connecting a past moment with a present or future moment. This is because in Buddhist meditation one only sees the present. Only presently existing objects can be objects of the basic Buddhist practice known as *śamatha-vipaśyana* ("tranquility-insight"). Each moment occurs as the present, occurs as a distinct moment and when the next moment occurs, the old moment is now past and thus not directly observable. And so, the lack of a connection and the sense of

constant coincidence is a powerful experiential feature of Buddhist meditation. Understanding this can clarify the intension of a great deal of Buddhist poetry.

We have traced the meaning of *tendrel* thus far from the technical Buddhist concept of causal linkage to the specific karmic notion of auspicious coincidence. In Tibet, by extension from this, we get a meaning for *tendrel* as "good omens." If a person is practicing meditation and contemplative exercises correctly, they are generating positive karma in great amounts. This is called "the collecting of merit" and there should be some indications of it. This is particularly so in tantric meditation practices. The tantric practitioner constantly hopes for special signs to occur which would be indications that the practice is going well. In the narrative literature these signs are usually miracles and visionary experiences. These experiences, these signs are *tendrel* as good omens. For example, if a meditator dreams of a great bodhisattva, a luminous being, visiting him in a dream and conferring initiations on him, this is a *tendrel*, a good omen for his meditation practice. It promises positive results. In the Book I, Chapter 2 of the Mipham *Gesar* Chipön has a dream vision in which Padmasambhava appears to him and predicts the birth of Gesar in the land of Ling. This dream is called a good omen, a *tendrel* for the entire kingdom of Ling. By further extension, the word *tendrel* can mean not just the sign or omen itself, but the condition of positive karma of which the dream is a sign. Thus one can say, as King Chipön does, that "there is definitely a *tendrel* ... for Ling." There is definitely good fortune in store for Ling.

It is terribly difficult to translate this usage of *tendrel* although it is the one most attested in the epic. It is the condition of possessing good fortune, of possessing the good karma which will soon ripen into positive and fortunate events.

This use of *tendrel* is an important aspect of the popular religion which Mipham evokes in his liturgies and presents in the songs of the epic. Although it is quite far from the original sūtric meaning of *tendrel*, there is still an explanation which links this notion of good fortune to traditional Buddhist causality. It is the notion of the accumulation of positive karma, which is known as *punya* in Sanskrit and *sönam* (*bsod nams*) in Tibetan. This word has always been translated by the term "merit" in English. Merit is the collection of positive karma which leads either to positive relative conditions in cyclic existence ("relative merit") or ultimate realization and escape from cyclic existence ("ultimate merit"). The later sort of merit is rarely mentioned in the epic, of course, for the attainment of enlightenment is not an important part of the plot dynamic.

It should be noted that *sönam* in many texts and certainly in the *Gesar* is almost always synonymous with the term *gewa* (*dge ba*), which means "virtue." A man may be virtuous in the ethical sense, but just like the Latin connotations, virtue and *gewa* also mean "power" and "efficacy." A person who engages in virtuous activities (*dge ba'i las*) accumulates merit or virtue as positive karma. And what virtuous activities are recommended most often? --- the performance of ceremonies of offering, ritual observances of worship and praise, and acts of generosity (Skt: *dāna*).

Rationalistic presentations of the Buddhist path give little attention to the importance of this element and emphasize instead the merit which is accumulated through the development of wisdom and detachment. Zen Buddhism and the most sophisticated levels of North Asian Buddhist philosophical teachings observe this emphasis. This lofty philosophical prejudice is misleading, however. For in the Tibetan tradition practical spiritual instructions, as given on occasions of teachings and exhortative lectures, repeat again and again the importance of gathering relative merit through the performance of rituals and offerings and through gifting the monastic community. Only in the austere protestantism of Western academia is the performance of ritual considered a minor issue in Buddhist philosophy and religion.

In its practical approach to ritual and good fortune Buddhism is rather like ancient Vedic religion. In the *Gesar* epic this point of view is taken for granted, for it is a central fact of Tibetan culture, the economic foundation for the existence of the vast monastic community. Everybody knows the virtue of ceremonial observance and everybody, from the most sophisticated philosophical debater to the most ignorant peasant, agrees that the more ritual acts of worship one performs, the more positive *tendrel* one will have. Within the context of Tibetan tantra there are special ceremonies which particularly build up merit. The most famous are the *ganacakra* (Skt), the religious feasts. These are ceremonials of ritual sacrifice in which food is offered to the deities of some particular tantric mandala. Giving gifts to monks and religious practitioners is, of course, another act that increases auspicious

coincidence.

And then, in the epic there are special ceremonies which are not at all Buddhist in their origins, but are considered to be especially efficacious in producing positive karma. In the Mipham epic and in his liturgical literature, the *lha sang* is the most important of these rites, but in the second chapter one can find a long list of other ceremonies which Padmasambhava orders Chipön to perform in order to increase the power, virtue, and charisma of the Kingdom of Ling.

One most fascinating point about the sense of *tendrel* used in the epic is that it related in some way to traditional Tibetan notions of astrology. When Chipön explains to the rich men and warlords of Ling that he has had an auspicious sign, a *tendrel* in the form of a visionary dream, he explains to them that the situation is astrologically right for the kingdom to suddenly increase its power, sovereignty and prestige. A "glorious gate" (*dpal gyi sgo*) has opened for Ling. Through the gateway may move power and good fortune, a flow of positive merit for the entire country. The gateway is a moment in time when, if the people take advantage of the opportunity, they may increase their good fortune. It is not simply that the disposition of constellations and planets is proper.¹⁴¹ When a Tibetan speaks of astrology he is often referring to a system based on the Roots and Branches of Chinese astrology, a calendrical system of telling time and a system by which moments of fortunate or unfortunate action may be predicted. The nine-squared divination board, mentioned in the title of the Mipham *Lha Ling* is a method of divination which uses the roots and branches in

a Tibetan form, matching them with the five elements, among other things, to predict moments of *tendrel*.

We will discuss this notion of a "glorious gateway" in more detail in the commentary on the translation of Chapter 1, for there they mention a previous moment of good fortune, a glorious gateway, which was missed through the political machinations of the Tibetan aristocracy. When Padmasambhava first came to Tibet, he tamed and bound by oath the native demons of the country. It was a moment astrologically correct to turn all of Tibet into a single Buddhist Empire. However, because of the opposition of aristocratic power figures in the Tibetan court, *blon* or "ministers" as they are called in English translation, the magician Padma was not allowed to bind each demon three times. If he had been able to perform the oath ceremony with them thrice, they would have never been able to revolt on the spiritual plane and the King of Tibet, Lang Darma, would never have been assassinated. Unfortunately, Padma failed to seal permanently the oaths of the demons and the glorious gateway was missed, creating ultimately political ruin. More of this in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

We should carefully note at this point that Tibetan literature, since it is based on both Chinese and Indian previous texts, mentions at least two totally different systems of alchemical elements. Tibetan astrology and medicine usually deal with the "five phases" (*wu hsing*) of Chinese astrology: wood, fire, metal, water, and earth. They are not the Indian system of elements called the four *mahābhūtāni* ¹⁴²: earth, water, fire, and air. (sometimes five with the addition of space). I will argue further on that the presence of

the Chinese elements at certain places in the text indicates that we are at those moments in an iconographical realm distinct from the Indic context of Buddhist Tantra.

When a glorious gateway is opened, the individuals involved must move quickly to profit from the opportunity. They must perform ceremonies to increase their merit and thus create further positive *tendrel*. These ceremonies will have a multiplied effect during these times of heightened auspicious coincidence. That is to say, the good karma generated by the acts of worship, charity, and magical invocation will be multiplied fifty-fold or a hundred-fold or a thousand-fold.

The *lha sang* is the native Tibetan rite *par excellence* for the increasing of *tendrel*, good fortune.¹⁴³ If there are offerings in a *lha sang*, even in the Buddhist lamaist versions of the *sang* rites, they are offerings in a decidedly non-Buddhist style. For example, in this chapter I will be describing one of several *lha sangs* actually written by Mipham to go along with the *Gesar epic*. If the ceremonies were Buddhist, then they would involve presenting mandalas of rice and precious substances to the deities. They would likely involve the seven offerings of the desirable sense objects (*'dod pa'i yon btan*): perfumed water, flowers, incense, bathing water, lights, food, and musical instruments. There might be specific offerings to the protective deities as well, such as a bowl of tea.

The characteristic offerings in *lha sangs*, however, are cut-up pieces of brocade, preparations of a variety of barley products ("the three barleys"), a variety of milk products ("the three whites"), and a

variety of sugar products ("the three sweets")---- all reminiscent of Bön ceremonies and practices of native Tibetan animism. Tea and liquor might be offered as well, but they are referred to differently and serve a different purpose.

For example, in Chapter II of the *Lha Ling* there is a long description and praise of a "drink offering" (*skyem*). This is a special offering in the style of the local non-Indic rituals and is not at all like the tea offerings to Buddhist protectors or the various kinds of waters (*argham*, *gandham*, *pādyam*) that are offered to Buddhas in tantric practices.

The waters offered in Buddhist Tantra hearken back to the cultural practices of the tropical civilizations of the Indian sub-continent. All three waters are involved in bathing and physical purification. *Argham* is a saffron water one drinks to purify the mouth. *Gandham* is water perfumed with flower essences and then sprinkled about the bodies of bathers. *Pādyam* is literally "foot water"-- water offered to a wayfarer to wash his feet before entering a home or temple precincts. I have seen these amenities ritually offered to visitors at Hindu ashrams in the middle of a jungle--- a place where daily bathing and elaborate hygiene is not merely for ritual cleanliness, but a matter of immediate survival.

But the lavish application of such liquids to the body has little practicality in The Land of Snow, as Tibet is called--- a Himalayan culture where bathing is a rare luxury and in many seasons considered medically ill advised. When they are offered, it reminds the North Asian of the paradisaical tropic lands where Buddhism was founded.

The three waters are delicately perfumed, clear, light, and elegant. The "golden drink" of native ritual, on the other hand, is described as rich and buttery and full of nourishment---hearty, glistening with oil and perhaps rock-sugar. When the word "clear" is ascribed to such an offering, it means not transparent, but bright and sparkling with butter. Like Tibetan tea, which is mixed with butter and boiled for strength of flavor, such a drink is suited to the Himalayan climate and famously unsuited to life at lower altitudes and higher average temperatures.

And so, there is a rich cultural context which surrounds even the smallest details of the ritual text. To one steeped in the literature and history of the region the signs of origin are clear. And they are an important signal in the poetic of the liturgies.¹⁴⁴ The Indic offerings evoke the rich, luxurious, sensuous, learned, hyper-aesthetic, so-called "aryan" (*'phags pa*) civilization of the Buddha's homeland. It is a place where kings, princes, and their lovely consorts have the leisure to compose elegant, multi-layered, allusive *kāvya* and enjoy the delicious pleasures of the flesh---pleasures the more austere North loves to imagine and projects into the lives of their gods. It is a cultural region where love poetry thrives, where food is plentiful, where palaces enclose vast spaces in open courtyards, the walls ornamented with precious gems and elaborate grotesqueries such as *bas reliefs* of crocodiles holding strings of pearls in their teeth, fabulous sea monsters shaped like waves, and lush flowering tropical plants. The music of the sub-continent's ancient culture is considered subtle and sophisticated, played by the many instruments mentioned in Tibet rituals. But

since the destruction of Buddhism in India these instruments are unknown in Tibet, except for their mention in chants which evoke the richness of the Buddha's world.

It is, in short, the culture described in the tantric visualization texts brought from India to Tibet between the 6th and 11th centuries. In those texts the palaces of Indian kings have become mandalas; their food, music, and other physical amenities have become the offerings. Their sensuous, cryptic court poetry has become liturgical utterance. Even the tantric deities, if they were brought to Tibet from India, wear the scanty, colorful silken dress of ancient Indian kings--- their midriffs bare, their upper garments diaphanous, their crowns elegant semi-abstract circlets of gold and jewels.

The native Tibetan offerings, on the other hand, evoke the hardy warrior and nomadic cultures that thrived in the mountains and planes of the Eastern portion of the Silk Route. A tough people recently (as far as their own discourse of self-identity is concerned) introduced to literate culture, still given to banditry and terribly effective in warfare--- not the noble warfare of chariots and warrior castes--- but the warfare of terrifying mounted Central Asian archers, who can ride and fire at the same time. Eluding capture on their horses, independant, devastating, cruel, always one step away from banditry, fierce in their tribal loyalties---- these are the people whose culture is evoked by the indigneous offerings amd chants in the *lha sangs*. In one of these chants Gesar is actually called "that best of raiders."

These are people for whom wealth is measured in flocks of

sheep for wool and cattle for milk and meat. The milk becoming a great variety of curds and butters--- which, along with barley, are their dietary staple on the higher altitudes.

Whether these descriptions of the two cultures are fair or accurate is not the question. These are the focal points for the discourse of self and alterity in Tibetan literature. "The History of the Goloks" will evoke images of this Himalayan culture and document the above description. There we will see a self-consciously Central Asian system of imagery tied explicitly to the cosmology involved in Mipham's Gesar rituals.

Continuing to explore the imagery of the Mipham *Iha sangs* let us look at the meaning of incense. Incense is a key part of the Indic Buddhist religious service. It represents a fragrant gift to the gods-- some of whom are so refined that they live on smells alone. But in these Tibetan *Iha sangs* the offerings of elegant Indian-style incense take second place to the much more important smoke offering that rises from the burning of juniper. This juniper smoke is the *sang*, literally "the fumigation." Like Native American sage fumigations it is used to drive away non-tribal spirits. That is to say, spirits who are not associated with the clan or kinship group or with the individual performing the ceremony are driven away by the juniper smoke.

It also recalls the ancient stories of the founding of the lineage of Tibetan kings. In Tibetan mythology the founding kings were not truly human beings, but a species of god. They descended from heaven, lowered to earth by cords attached to the top of their heads. They maintained a literal connection to heaven through this

"*mu cord*" (*mu thags*) which went from the top of their heads up into the sky. If the *mu cord* remained intact, then at the end of their reigns they could ascend the cord and return to their original homes. ¹⁴⁵

The juniper-smoke is specifically homologized to this cord. Down the cord of smoke pass the spirits invoked by the ceremony. And up it travel offerings. When objects are passed through the smoke, it is the deities in the smoke who purify the objects by driving out alien *tendrel*. All of this is described extensively in Tucci's *The Religions of Tibet*, particularly in the chapters on Tibetan Popular Religion and Bön. ¹⁴⁶

The *Iha sangs* Tucci reports are mainly non-Buddhist. The ones we examine here, however are written by the Buddhist philosopher, Mipham 'Jam.dpal dbyes.pa'i rdo.rje and focus on Gesar of Ling as the main deity invoked by the juniper incense smoke. It is specifically Gesar who receives the strange, native offerings and confers on the celebrants worldly and super-mundane blessings as a result.

A large part of Volume Na of Mipham's *bka' 'bum* (collected works) in the Dergê edition of his collected works is devoted to such rituals. ¹⁴⁷ Mipham, as is apparent in the colophons to his Gesar rituals, had had numerous visionary experiences of Gesar---- and not only Gesar, but other strange deities whose names and descriptions recall indigenous Tibetan pantheons, pantheons whose fullest and most systematic descriptions are in scriptures and manuals from the institutionalized native Tibetan religion, Bön. ¹⁴⁸

Let us look at a representative Gesar *Iha sang* written by Mipham. Its title is strikingly non-Buddhist: *The Warrior Song of the*

*War Gods: the long Werma Lhasang.*¹⁴⁹ The war gods or *dra lha* (*dgra bla*),¹⁵⁰ like the *werma*, are native Tibetan deities, part of the rich pantheon of invisible spirits who cause harm or can be invoked for protection in *sang* ceremonies. These particular native monsters are martial spirits, represented wearing armour. They are particularly involved with success in battle and the physical integrity of the warrior's body. The war gods, for example, join a collection of spirits who actually perch on the body and armour of a Tibetan warrior. If they can be driven away, the fighter is vulnerable to attack. If they stick, he is hard to defeat. Tibetan martial narratives are full of mention of the war gods. For example, in Alexandra David-Neel's summary of the Gesar epic. It is said that if a warrior has his war gods intact, even if someone takes aim at him with a bow and arrow or a gun, he is seen as small in his enemy's sights. The arrow or bullet will miss. If he is without his war gods, he is easy to hit.¹⁵¹

The chant begins with Tibetan martial exclamations "ki" and "so" (*ki*, *bsvo*) sung to a tune as if they were mantra: "Kye!/ Lha ki ki ki and so so so" (*Kye/ Lha ki ki ki la bsvo bsvo bsvo*). The chant asks Gesar to take action when the kingdom is oppressed by enemies with the familiar expression: *ma g.yel ma g.yel*, "don't be idle, don't be idle." War-like ejaculations abound in the opening section of the chant:

A tsi tsi your hosts of troops are awesome,

A li li they are youthful wearing splendid accoutrements,

A ya ya the great men are very mighty,

The powerful father warriors are on the right..."

As I understand it, "Ki Ki So So" (*Ki.ki bsvo.bsvo*) is a yell of victory, as in the slogan chanted when a Tibetan climber reaches the top of a peak: *Ki ki bsvo bsvo lha.rgyal.lo*, "Ki Ki So So Divine Victory!" In the "History of the Goloks" which will be translated in Chapter V of this monograph, this is the victory yell the good white *lha* give when they have defeated the "black devils" (*bdud*).

The retinue of Gesar in this chant is also typical of the *parivaras* or retinues of native deities: Gesar is surrounded by *pho lha* or "father deities" in armour and *men dzema* (*sman mdzes ma*), "lovely medicine women." He is also surrounded by the three levels of beings according to native religion: the *bla*, or celestial beings, above, the world of men in the middle, and the realm of the serpents, the *lu* (*klu*) below. In the epic this triad--- *lha, mi, lu* (gods,men, and serpents)--- is constantly mentioned in songs. Sometimes it is not *lha, mi, and lu*, but *lha, nyen, and lu* (*lha, gnyan, and klu*): the gods, *nyen* (deities of mountain sides and highlands), and *lu* (dragons, serpents, or *nāgas*). In this chant, the *nyen* spirits are not mentioned, but the three levels are still observed, with men replacing *nyen* to indicate the level of earth.

The *lu* or *nāgas*, of course, may dwell either in the heavens among clouds or in rivers, lakes, and underground streams. Poetically they are usually represented in Tibetan accounts as inhabiting an undersea kingdom. For example, in some versions of the Gesar epic and in David-Neel's summary, Padmasambhava journeys to the undersea kingdom of the *nāgas* in order to find a

mother for Gesar. A trip to the "lower kingdom of the Nāgas" is found in the Ladakhi version of the *Gesar Epic* as well as in the *Birth of Gesar (mKhrungs gling)* chapter.¹⁵² There the same three-fold division will be seen as Agu dPalle, the earthly ancestor of Gesar, travels between the three realms seeking a king for Ling and receiving magical gifts. (Francke, p.67)

At a point in the middle of the text during the chanting, a fire of juniper is lit and offerings are made into the fire causing white smoke to billow upwards. The ritual calls this line of smoke "the mu-cord" and asks the deities to descend down it in the style of the original Tibetan kings who came down from heaven, connected still to the realm of the *la (bla)* by this cord.

At this moment other divine figures are invoked--- not figures from native Tibetan religion so much as characters from the *Gesar Epic*. There is a long passage, for example, invoking the great minister and state advisor from the epic, Denma, (*'dan.ma sbyang.khra*).¹⁵³ There is also a lengthy invocation of Gesar's magical horse. Both of these characters are invoked at length and praised as if they were tantric deities representing divine principles. As the prayer continues, a connection is carefully made between these epic heroes and the Buddhist canon. Gesar has, for example, a three-fold nature:

"Outwardly, he is the mighty general Norbu Dradul.
Inwardly, he is Avalokiteśvara,
His unchanging mind is Lord Padmasambhava..."

This Buddhist trinity of Gesar, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmākara is an important element in Mipham's version of the epic: it is referred to in the opening pages of the *Lha Ling*.¹⁵⁴ The magical horse is the *yidam*, or Buddhist tutelary deity, Hayagrīva. Denma (*Dan.ma*), on the other hand, appears from the style of invocation to be identified with Tibetan shamanistic divine principles such as the *werma*, gods of arrow-based warfare. For example, he is "the guide of arrows." He is "the renowned turquoise dragon in the sky,...the *lha* victorious in all directions." In particular, I would say that references to turquoise dragons in the sky are allusions to Chinese cosmological systems. But speaking of him as the god who is victorious in all directions strikes more of a Central Asian and a South Asian note. Tibetan gods, like the Buddhas themselves, show their prowess most typically by defeating others in battle.

Thus, like all the deities in this chanting practice, Denma performs a two-fold action. On one hand he acts as a traditional dharmapāla, protecting the meditation practice of Buddhist disciples: "He cherishes dearly the child who holds to samaya." "Child" here (*bu*) is a typical self-styling of meditators, who should be innocent and childlike, their minds open to the instruction of their gurus and who should be "orphaned" and alone, relying not on family or friends, but only on retreat and the contemplative life.

On the other hand, Denma serves the worldly purposes of ancient Tibetan semi-nomadic warrior civilization: "I offer to Denma who brings long life into our home,/ I offer to Denma who provides a good journey while traveling..., who accomplishes our goals in commerce..., who is a good raider in disputes..." Denma is a

fierce warrior and "his arrow pierces the heart and lungs of the vindictive enemies." 155

As you can see, *The Warrior Song of the War Gods* is an odd combination of divine figures from several different sources. There are deities who originate as characters in the Gesar epics and legends. There are the great classical tutelary deities, bodhisattvas, and gurus of Indo/Tibetan Buddhism. There are also the colorful, exotic, diverse and picturesque local deities of native Tibetan culture.

And there is a strange combination of ritual agendas as well. There are requests for the usual gifts of Buddhist realization and auspicious coincidence on the path, replete with the altruism and absolutism of classical Indian Buddhism. Then on the other hand, there are frank requests for the grossest sort of worldly success, reflecting in the style of the requests the Central Asian world-view and cultural milieu.

In *lha sang* texts there is a tribal element as well, although it is not that evident in *The Long Werma Lha Sang*. Denma is not only the name of Gesar's famous minister; it also designates a region of Tibet in Khams, near Jyekundo----a region northwest of Ling and often tributary to it.¹⁵⁶ Stein in his study of the tribes of Tibet attempts to relate the country of the minister Denma (lDan ma) to the epic and finds that he is eponymous to localities implicated in two of the great tribes of Tibet, the Ga and the Dru (sGa or iGa and 'Bru). In fact, the name Jyekundo is taken in the *rGyud sde kun btus*, a collection of Nyingma tantric scriptures, to be sGa-stod sKye rgu, in the province of upper sGa (Stein, *Tribes*, p. 46). In 1247 'Phags pa,

the first theocratic king of Tibet, passed through this region on his way to visit the emperor Godan in China.

This historical observation is taken very seriously by the Tibetan historians of the last century such as Shakapa, who believe the itinerary of this trip identifies the time and location of both Gesar and his ministers. The tribes Ga and Dru figure importantly in the second chapter of the *Mipham Gesar*. There on folio 31 of the Stein copy we see a gathering of the clans and classes of society who lead Ling. They are presented abstractly in the first chapter. There a series of songs present society as ordered into several functional groups or orders. There are gurus (*blama*), kings (*dbang po*), ministers (*blon po*), mighty ones (*btsan po*), richmen (*phyug po*), and the people (*sde*). Sometimes there are also the young braves, the warriors full of athletic prowess called, figuratively, "tigers in their prime" (*stag gzhon nu*) and the order of matrons called "medicine women" (*mo dman*) or "lovely medicine women" (*mdzes dman*). These different groups receive detailed moral injunctions in numerous songs of admonition.

In the second chapter these groups are represented in Ling, each lead by a character from the epic. For example, certain councils and ceremonies are held in which we see the *rich men* and the *mighty ones* lined up as two ranks of society. They are respectively members of the clan of Ga (the rich) and Dru (the war lords, the mighty) and are lead by Chökyong Bernak (*Chos skyong Bernag*) and Tönpa Gyaltzen of Kyalo (*sTon pa rGyal mtshan*), respectively. Their cultic significance we have noted in our commentary on the translation.¹⁵⁷

But what significance do they have to those who chant the epic? For we now see a specific relationship between the minister Denma, a region called Den, and two extended clan groups which live there, the Ga and the Dru. We further see that these clans have a specific role in the epic through characters such as Tönpa Gya!tsen of Kyalo who represent the clans in assemblies. The answer is simply that among the listeners to the recital of the epic are people from the province of Den who hold themselves still to be members of the Ga and Dru tribes. The minister Den is a hero from the chronicles of their tribe and region. There is even a dedication by Mipham to the people of Kyalo at the end of a collection of *lha sangs* headed by the *Long Werma*: *The Long Werma Lha Sang* was written in 1877. Three years before that he wrote a shorter practice whose colophon says "written by Mipham at the moment of the expansion of the good fortune of the master of the house of Kyalo." [Stein, 59, p. 73] Obviously, the occasions on which he wrote these supplications and the immediate community relations, pervaded the context of the chants.

The Rimê lamas who presided over these editions of practices and epics were linked to each other by the same sort of tribal connections. Most of them, including Jamyang Kyentse Wangpo, Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayê, and Mipham thought of themselves as members of the tribe of Mukpo Dong (*smug po ldong*), which is the ruling tribe in the land of Ling. This particular chant mentions Den rather than other tribal groups, but there are numerous *lha sang* which mention the gods and heroes of Dong with the same emphasis.¹⁵⁸

I would like to speculate with respect to this tribal and genealogical element: *Lha sangs* tend to mention great strings of deities: they mention the famous and transcendent Buddhist deities of enlightenment and compassion; they mention local deities; and then they often mention the genii of specific families. The idea seems to be to chant the entire text, knowing that the particular family gods to which one is related, the gods of the region from which one comes, and the particular Buddhist tutelary deities to whom one is committed will come up at some point in the text. Some *lha sangs* have, thus, sections which simply list possible tribal deities, saying, for example, "To the wargods of bGa.bdan, to the wargods of Muk.po, etc.", listing the five or seven clans of Tibet and various genealogically distinguished geographical divisions. The *Long Werma Lha sang* by Mipham has no such section, but it must be noted that the ruling and general overarching metaphor of the text is that the virtuous practitioner is a member of a white and pure tribe which must resist the attacks of barbarian black "vindictive enemies." In other words, when one performs this liturgy, one is allegorized via one's tribal relations to a character in the epic, a subject in the Kingdom of Ling at the time of Gesar.

Furthermore, the practitioners of the *lha sang* must identify themselves with one of the classes or orders of society mentioned as well. The classes are not given only in the epic. If we look closely at the *lha sang* will see elements from the same lists of ranks occurring. The first verses present ranks of figures arranged geometrically around a king. Let us look at one stanza again:

A tsi tsi your hosts of troops are awesome,
A li li they are youthful wearing splendid accoutrements,
A ya ya the great men are very mighty,
 The powerful father warriors are on the right..."

This refers to the "youthful tigers" (the young braves) and the "mighty ones". These masculine principles are on the right. Then on the left we have similarly two generations of female figures in hierarchical order:

The beautiful maidens, so lovely and perfumed...
 The lovely mother warriors are on the left.

And then vertically we have the three levels of gods:

Above, the white clouds of the lha domain...
 In the middle, the stone houses of the human domain...
 Below, the mist of the lu domain rises...

Gesar is asked to take his place in the middle of this mandala of epic characters:

In the midst of this, O king, please take your seat of joy,
 In this white country, the lha valley,
 You are the lord of plentiful land and wealth--
 King Gesar of Ling...

These arrangements of deities vertically and orders of society horizontally around the King of Ling occur often in Mipham's works and I have seen more extensive listings which include fuller

descriptions of the ranks of society in other texts of this tradition.

The rest of the *lha sang* continues in a similar fashion. After the opening section where Gesar is described as a king surrounded by his retinue, there is a lengthy passage describing Gesar himself and his armour:

Lord Gesar of Jambudvipa

Appears at this time in the form of a general subjugating the
enemy

With pennants on his helmet fluttering in the sky.

With swirling sparks of dharmapalas and protectors--

Their pennants flapping with a cracking sound,

Mother *dākinīs* dancing in time with them.

His white helmet flashes forth rays of life.

He bites his lower lip in *drala* fashion...

The lace of his armor of a Hundred Thousand Flames¹⁵⁹ is
impressive...

There follow the verses identifying Gesar as both a native deity and a Buddhist deity.

If there is a warrior *drala*, it is Gesar

If there is a *werma*, it is Gesar

If there is a guru for the next life, it is Gesar...

Outward, he is ... the general Norbu Dradul.

Inwardly, he is Avalokiteśvara,

And his unchanging mind is Lord Padmasambhava.

The Gesar section ends with supplications for his help and blessings and the familiar expression used with protector deities:

"...don't be idle, don't be idle."

Gesar's horse is mentioned next in a lengthy description which identifies him with Hayagrīva, the horse-headed tutelary deity, and then as well in the following passage with native Tibetan animistic deity principles--- wargods or dralha with various names:

He is elegant, with a rainbow swirling about,
 He has the treasure of the Gait of the Swift Wind
 And the strength of the wings of birds.
 He possesses the glorious strength of a snow lion.
 His vajra mane flowing right and left
 Magnetizes the drala White Conch Garuda...
 His forelegs of wheels of wind
 Magnetize the drala Lord of Life.
 The four hooves of the steed
 Magnetize the drala Swift Wind.
 On the tip of each hair, lha reside.

And the horse is supplicated to grant blessings: "...Acompish my desires,/ Arouse the activity of windhorse...¹⁶⁰"

Then his minister Denma is treated at similar length in a section which praises him and treats him as a if he were a dharmapāla, a deputized Protector of Religion:

The minister is the leader of the activity of Great Lion,

He is the guide of arrows,

He is the renowned turquoise dragon in the sky,

He is the lha victorious in all directions....

I offer to Denma who brings long life into our home,

I offer to Denma who provides a good journey while traveling...

I offer to Denma who accomplishes whatever mind desires.

And it ends similarly with requests for blessings and assistance in the traditional Nyingma vocabulary of guru supplications: "Be affectionate to this longing child."

There is a closing section where the entire assembly, King Gesar, his horse, his minister and their respective retinues of dralas, wermas, troops, representatives of the human orders of society, and Buddhist deities are all asked to perform Buddha Activity:

Don't be idle, don't be idle, perform these activities.

Bury the black enemies upside down,

Glorify the white nyen....

Don't be idle....

Show the signs and marks right now

Accomplish whatever mind desires

And grant me the supreme and ordinary siddhis.

Note the alternation of Buddhist and indigenous requests. "Bury the black enemies upside down" is a very non-Indic thing to say, not only counter to the spirit of harmlessness in Buddhism, but different from the way Buddhist texts conventionally express

violence, as well.. Of course, Buddhist protectors' chants involve gory supplications to do such things as "cut the aorta of those who violate their vows." But "the black enemy" is a characteristic Tibetan epithet as is "the white nyen." And burying enemies upside down is a thing one does to destroy the spirits associated with their warrior auras. On the other hand, "the signs and marks" is an Indian expression. They are traditional experiences in meditation that are signs of success in spiritual practice. In fact, the last three lines of the above quote are commonplace closing lines for many Buddhist chants.

The *Long Werma Lha Sang* presents us with a system of hierarchical patterns which give cultic coherence to the welter of gods and men found in the epic. The Buddhist and non-Buddhist deities are described in a hierarchical arrangement. The heroes are systematically identified with Buddhist divine principles but are given native identifications as well. Mipham makes sure that the Buddhist and non-Buddhist invocations are absolutely parallel. The closing section of every passage invokes the chief figure both as a Buddhist guru or protector and as a friend of the wargods and werma.

Everything is well-ordered in this *lha sang*: the various social groups in the epic are organized according to an order of precedence by generation and by tribe and by the hierarchy of gurus, mighty men, rich men, young warriors, etc.

The overall structure of the *lha sang* reflects a Buddhist agenda. The opening passage presents a sort of royal mandala of the Court of Gesar the King. He receives the first supplication for blessings. The second is the horse and the third is the minister.

Lama Tendzin Samphel suggests that we have here a version of the Nyingma tantric division of visualization practice into three roots, four or six roots. The four roots are usually guru, yidam, dākinī, and protector. The six-fold division would be Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, Guru, yidam, and protector. The four-fold division is most often found in cycles of visualization practices in which there are four distinct maṇḍalas and four distinct phases of practice: that of the guru--- for example Padmasambhava; the yidam--- for example Hayagrīva; the dākinī,---Yeshe Tsogyal (Padmasambhava's famous yogic consort), and the protector---perhaps the Four Armed Mahākāla. In this *Iha sang* the four root system would have the guru as Gesar, the yidam as his horse, Hayagrīva, and the protector principle is the minister, Denma. The dākinī root is not mentioned at length--- but would be his Queen.

The structure we have identified in this particular ritual is generally true for Mipham's other Gesar practices. It suggests an underlying structuring principle for the Mipham *Gesar* in which the same deities occur as characters, but retain not very far below the surface the structuring matrix of their ritual relations.

Practitioners who performed these rituals would have a special religious way of reading the epic. They would also probably have a tribal connection. Both relations involve certain allegiances and commitments. In theory epic and personal religion are connected in this way throughout epic literature, not just in Tibet. Bowra makes this point when discussing the role the lists of ships in the *Iliad* played in the consciousness of Greek listeners, emphasizing the genealogical connection. Speaking of the *Catalogue*

of the Ships he describes the social obligation Homer had to include it in his poem: "He took steps to incorporate it by devising a reorganization of the Achaean forces before it. He meant it to be here. He felt that he owed it to his patrons. Even in post-Homeric Greece the *Catalogue* was the 'golden book', and appeals to it were made over disputed territories. ...In earlier days such authority would have been greater still, and this accounts for its inclusion. Homer's audience perhaps knew of the *Catalogue* and expected it in any poem dealing with the Trojan War. They revered it as an authentic account of the men who fought, and were doubtless able to claim ancestors among them."¹⁶¹

Bowra is speculating, of course. Since most epics are relics of bygone civilizations, it has never been possible to confirm the "tales of the tribe" element with direct testimony. In this case, however, it is indeed possible. Every Tibetan Buddhist practitioner is defined by a matrix of *samayas* or commitments. There are the commitments to his family lineage, invoked in the *Iha sangs* and mentioned in the epic, as we have noted. There are the commitments to his tutelary deities, also mentioned one after another in the *Iha sangs* and again, figuring as characters in the epic. And finally there are the political and regional affiliations---- present in the eponymous heroes of the epic and in the hierarchical system of kings, rich men, etc. constantly mentioned in the songs. R.A. Stein in *Les Tribus Anciennes des Marches Sino-Tibétaines*, his study of the tribal divisions of Tibet and their relationship to geographical divisions, has attempted to locate these references on the map using Chinese and Central Asian chronicles. This is complemented by

similar studies in Stein, 59. Studies along these lines are proceeding in China at this very time.¹⁶² And this is one direction in which anthropological research could go forward quite interestingly.

Returning to our consideration of the relationship between liturgy and literature, it can be said that the entire literature of Mipham chanting practices is like the one we have just examined. The same careful, slightly incongruous juxtaposition of divergent cultures and agendas--- the same one might almost say ambivalence between aiming for vulgar material success and spiritual transcendence, the same combination of a tribal and genealogical agenda with a universalist ethical agenda characterizes all of his Gesar liturgies.

Of course, such a religious *mélange* could not have been all that strange to Mipham or else he would not have written these chanting texts. As Stein's catalogue of Mipham prayers shows, this elegant, philosophical lama had numerous visions in which *werma* and other native-styled deities appeared to him. He had direct visions of Gesar as well. And so, in his mind there was no implausibility in the melding I have noted, because *there was no element of invention*. As far as Mipham was concerned, the rituals addressed real beings whom he had beheld, subsistent deities who had actually appeared to him. And yet, at the same time portions of this *Long Werma Lhasang* involve persona that are arguably drawn from the epic rather than previous ritual text. Of course, it is ultimately impossible to prove which is prior, epic or ritual. But the moments of over-lapping of the literary and the cultic are highly suggestive, particularly when we look at the well documented story

of the production of the Mipham edition of the epic.

Stein in the introduction to his edition of Mipham's *Gesar* describes the process by which several editions of the *Gesar* were collated and written down. It is utterly typical for a character from the epic to appear to the editor, Thubten Gyurmê, in a dream and confer a kind of empowerment or transmission. The stories of these visionary experiences are reported in the colophons to the editions, for reporting his visions is part of the editor's argument for the legitimacy of his collation. Because of the dream vision, the editor feels the confidence to produce a new edition, to accept and reject lines from previous versions, to authoritatively add, perhaps, his own lines of poetry and prose. This dream vision makes the writing down of that version both possible and valid in terms of sacred outlook.

But as so often is the case, the vision itself is not uncaused-- - it has its own textual background--- its own pre-text. The colophons to Gyurmê's chapters of the epic are in some cases quite precise. They indicate which of Mipham's commentaries on *Gesar* Mipham gave to his student to help him understand how the new editions should give forth its levels of meaning. They indicate which *Gesar* liturgies Mipham prescribed to Gyurmê so that he would be visited with the necessary inspiration. Mipham himself wrote these liturgies after he had received his own visions of *Gesar* and the epic gods. And these earlier visions themselves have as their pre-texts the oral and written versions of the epic which Mipham enjoyed in his childhood. Those texts from his childhood, the Ling versions of *Gesar*, in their turn contain colophons mentioning

visions that their editors had had--- visions which validated their writing and editing just as would happen later with Mipham and Thubten. And thus a line of serial concatenations of influence stretches back, alternating epic, vision, liturgy, vision, and epic again.

The documentation for this causal string is exceptional. We have the colophons to Mipham's liturgies, the colophons to his student's editions of the epic, and in some cases we even have colophons for the texts which Mipham gave Gyurmê as earlier editions of the *Gesar*. This evidence leaves us no room to interpret the Tibetan concept of muse and inspiraton as a figure of speech. In that regard, it is interesting to note that these particular visitations by the muse do not happen, as in the Hellenistic models, at the moment of performance, but as empowerments that precede the whole project of composition and editing. The muse does not in these cases "sing again" or tell the story, but rather simply confers authority to tell the story on an individual.

Other cases there are in which the report is of divine beings who animate the singer or provide a word-by-word text. The Tibetans have numerous technical terms for such receptions--- *dagnang* (*dag snang*, "pure appearance") and *gongter* (*sgong gter*, "mind treasure texts") for example. Shakapa describes some *Gesar* texts as '*babs sgrung*, "possession texts"--- works in which a figure from the *Gesar* epic animates the singer who then produces the text. Such immediate possessions by the "muse" abound. But the editions in question here are not an example of that.

As I understand it, the situation was thus: Gyurmê Thubten

Jamyang Dragpa ('Gyur.med Thub.bstan 'Jam.dbyangs grags.pa), when he was assigned by his guru the job of producing an edition of the *Gesar* did not feel he was up to the task. It was beyond his abilities. He was faced with numerous textual sources, but no way of knowing which narrative materials and poetry to select and which to leave out. Mipham gave him, in addition, esoteric commentaries on sections of the *Gesar* ---commentaries which were meant to make portions of the epic into a "religious history," a *chos.'byung*.

Thus, what I call "the Mipham *Gesar*" is an epic with a double parentage: on one hand the popular legendary and narrative materials of the epic--- the literary parent---and on the other hand, the prayers and practices of the *Gesar* cult written by Mipham, the religious parent.

This makes it quite similar to a host of religious epics written in the West---- works that developed from an imitation of Homer and Virgil, but changed to incorporate the hymns and theology of Christianity. Dante's *Divine Comedy*, is of course, the most obvious example. In the *Divine Comedy* Dante is shown the world as seen from the point of view of God: the poet witnesses the hierarchy of being, good, and evil, punishment and reward. He sees the invisible world of spirits and the inaccessible realms of the after-life. He sees directly, in the flesh, so to speak, the working of God's plan.

In the Mipham *Gesar*, particularly in the first book, we see the equivalent theological vision, the dynamics of good and evil, or theological hierarchy, and the invisible world of spirits and enlightened energies---- we see these forces determining the more familiar action of the rest of the epic. The liturgies actually

describe the arrangement of these divine figures in physical space, set out in ranks, one above the other or in a circle around a central figure. Even as they are set out in ranks in the liturgies, so they are arranged in hierarchical order in the epic narrative.

Dante's epic is in part based on liturgies of the Catholic Church. This is particularly so in the *Purgatorio*, where sections of the mass and specific hymns are borrowed and form not only the inspiration, but at times the warp and weft of Italian text. This same relation of liturgy to epic holds for Milton's *Paradise Lost*, for Tasso, and even, to journey into modern times, for James Joyce's *Ulysses*.¹⁶³

The Transmission of the Mipham *Gesar*

Part of the cosmology of the epic is, as we have shown, strangely, the method by which it is transmitted as a text from generation to generation. The text itself has a magical dimension-- a set of religious beliefs about the nature of its existence. This set of beliefs is connected with the system of gods who make up the machinery of the epic and therefore we must now discuss in some detail the magical nature of the transmission of the Mipham edition.

The discussion so far has examined the theological dimension of the Mipham *Gesar* epic by comparing it with liturgical texts composed by Mipham. Each of these liturgies has a colophon which describes its date of composition and the occasion upon which it was composed. The colophons describe a consistent methodology of transmission which involves visionary experiences, initiative

dreams, and a recurrent special mystical relationship between the editor and the gods in the epic.

Perhaps, in this idiosyncratic method of passing textual and religious authority down the generations we finally do indeed have a demonstration of the existence of an independent *Gesar chos*, Gesar religion, or at least a definable Gesar sub-sect. For a distinct lineage transmission is a sect.

And yet, it is important to point that, despite the sacralization of its transmission, the *Gesar of Ling Epic* is primarily a literary work. It possesses the excellencies of a literary work---the kind of structure and integrity and poetic depth, sense of drama and sense of delight which make *belles lettres*. And, as we will now show, it is received by Tibetans as literature rather than as scripture.

It is received not as a work written fundamentally for religious instruction or as a religious revelation, but as a work of entertainment. Even though the *Gesar* was made into a "religious epic" by the Eclectic School lamas, it is nevertheless designed and read primarily and fundamentally for enjoyment.

This is one of the reasons it is so difficult to translate Gesar materials; they are not written in the classical dialect of Buddhist scriptures and commentaries, the formal Tibetan of philosophical treatises, hagiographies and Tantric liturgies, or even in the more accessible narrative language of *avādanas*. They are written, rather, in the colloquial dialect of Eastern Tibet.

The noted Nyingmapa expert in the works of Mipham, Khenpo Palden Sherab (dPa.lldan Shes.rab) calls the language of the *Gesar Epic* "*drung yig*" (*sgrung.yig*), "narrative or epic language." *Drung yig*

is easy for a Tibetan to understand and is no respecter of class, education, or wealth in this regard.¹⁶⁴ Conversely "narrative language" is often quite difficult for the Western scholar, who, particularly in North America, is trained in classical Tibetan rather than the written version of colloquial involved in popular narratives. This is ironic, because the Tibetan language taught, for example, in American universities is inaccessible to all but the most educated Tibetan savants and yogins.¹⁶⁵ That is one of the reasons that the translations and apparatus of R.A. Stein's rendering of the Mipham *Gesar*, Helffer's translation and transcription of *Gesar* ballads, and Macdonald's treatment of Tibetan popular tales have been so helpful-- because they provide vocabulary and grammar for this special language and literary dialect of the people.¹⁶⁶ This also explains in part why the Communist Chinese are such large supporters of *Gesar* studies, like the Russians giving anything they can think of as folk art their special approbation.

The two Nyingma Khenpos¹⁶⁷ in question even went so far as to suggest that since we were dealing with popular literature, it was not necessary to be overly precise in the English translation. The important point, according to them, was to be entertaining and accessible in English. It is odd to hear Tibetan pandits say this. In English translations of philosophical and liturgical texts, the important point had always been that an educated English-speaking Buddhist should not mis-read the text. That would develop a wrong or "perverted" view (*log.pa'i Ita.ba*). For to misunderstand the *tawa* (*Ita ba*), the *darśana*, the view, is a terribly serious matter with grave redemptive consequences.

Khenpo Palden, however, actually insisted on the loose translation. Speaking of the appropriate style of translation for the Mipham *Gesar* ¹⁶⁸: "Do not try to translate *Gesar* too accurately. If you are as literal with *drung yig*, narrative language, as you are with *mādhyamika*, it will not be pleasant to read. But it *must* be pleasant and easy. If this were a *sūtra* or a *śāstra*, it would be very important to translate it literally. But this is *drung yig*. It is really the spoken dialect of Eastern Tibet. It is meant to go in the ear easily and to give pleasure to the common man. Ordinary people cannot understand the language in texts on *mādhyamika*, but anybody can understand the *Gesar Epic* when it is sung. "

He went on to explain that the language of the *Gesar* was colloquial, lovely, easy to sing and uncomplicated. Of course, he admitted that, like all Buddhist literature, it has religious aims. But it must be fun to hear. The English should be pleasant and the American reader should enjoy the reading. The Khenpos would countenance broad approximations if they made the *Gesar* a pleasure to read in English.

The response of these two learned Tibetans is vital and revealing. In effect, they are giving the same advice Western translators of Western epics give to themselves. For example, the famous 17th century translations of Homer by Chapman and later by Pope, and Dryden were all translated with tremendous latitude. They would quote Horace's *Ars Poetica* ¹⁶⁹ as specifically approving interpretive translations and disapproving word-by-word treatment of the original. They were more insistent in that period on this principle than we are today, but still in modern times quite sensibly

the broad translations of epics by poets are valued highly--- valued often above those done by philologists and dry classicists.¹⁷⁰ In Dryden's day to be a poet was considered the *sine qua non* of translations of verse.

In one very important way these Western translators were not at all like our Tibetan informants, however. They did not write in colloquial language, but in a formal tongue. It matched the courtly standards of decorum of their time and also indicates their sense that they were translating classical language .

This attitude marks the special regard Western readers hold for *belles lettres*-- -the regard that distinguishes these works, even when they are on religious subjects, from sacred letters. I believe we find the same attitude among the Tibetans with regard to the *Gesar*. Even though there is a sacred dimension to the performance of the epic, even though the bard may wear the accouterments of a shaman and report that he or she enters a trance for the recitation, still this does not excuse the *Gesar* from the literary analysis we reserve in the West for secular works, nor does it place the *Gesar* in the same class as ritual practices. A powerful relationship with ritual practice and strong assertions of divine inspiration, even of divine intervention in the composition, do not seem to effect this principle of belletristic latitude.

The translation offered here fails in this respect. It should be freer and less literal. It should labor with a sense of courage and abandonment to capture the spirit of the original. But the epic dialect, as easy as it is for a native of Eastern Tibet, is practically opaque to Western scholars. And so, in order that an understanding

of the colloquialism might not be lost while we still have sound informants, I made the translation more literal and less poetic. My fear has been that without this literal translation later generations would not understand the text correctly and would start their poetic flights from a false place.

The Machinery of the Epic

"Machinery," in this case, is a technical term from literary criticism. When a literary critic speaks of gods in epics, he or she is thinking less of religious practice than of a special kind of literary character or personage--- a character who, being divine, possesses almost limitless powers, almost limitless knowledge, and a severely diminished capacity for suffering. The introduction of such superhuman characters into a story can have devastating consequences for the plot structure and for the credibility of the fiction. For this reason, we have always had a special term for the presence of the supernatural in epic and tragic literature----- divine machinery, *deus ex machina*. This is the Latin translation for what was originally a Greek term, *θεός από μηχανής*.¹⁷¹

Clear through the 18th century, *machine* referred in theatrical contexts to the actual physical contrivance through which angels and deities or heroes were lowered onto the stage at the end of performances, especially to resolve (too easily) a plot in an impasse. From that usage as "a contrivance for the production of stage-effects,"¹⁷² the reference of the word *machinery* "was expanded to include all narrative poetry at large." And so, the word "machine"

came to mean "a contrivance for the sake of effect; a supernatural agency or personage introduced into a poem; the interposition of these." ¹⁷³ And, just as it was a matter of discussion among the Greeks as to when *dei ex machina* were appropriate, so, the use of divine machinery in poetic fiction has always been a matter of critical interest, often a matter of controversy as well.

Considering the epic machinery of the *Gesar*, we can say that there are at least four, perhaps even six, distinct religious pantheons which contribute divine machinery in the Mipham's version. There are these separate systems of deities. Textually it is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish one pantheon from another--- the plethora of gods and magical devices occur with little, if any explanation---- all instantly assumed as part of the fictional world the epic describes. But a highly educated and discriminating Tibetan reader can know that these gods have their origins in the cosmologies of four distinct religions. And a Tibetan peasant is sensitively aware of the varying cultural contexts each pantheon evokes. The ability to evoke one of a number of pantheons is integral to the poetics of the epic. The Western scholar, speaking philologically, could say that the gods of the *Gesar* "come" from at least four distinct religious canons.

This complex cultic element has an effect Bowra and Green would have found interesting for the action takes place in a world made-up almost entirely of gods, demons, and magical performance--a world where action and plot movement are purely in terms of ritual and sorcery, rather than martial heroism and politics. Bowra's arguments concern the plot of epics. The figures of speech

and the imagery form a tightly woven texture of references to diverse pantheons, theogonies, and ritual gestures.¹⁷⁴

Let us look at this in the beginning pages of the epic where one can see a display of the various pantheons from which the machinery is drawn. The following analysis will rely on material from the opening ten pages. After we have considered one by one the cosmological systems reflected there, I will give a translation of another Mipham liturgy called *Spontaneous Buddha Activity: A Supplication and offering practice to the Great Lion Gesar Norbu*. This practice appears to be based primarily on the opening pages of the Mipham version of the epic and provides further documentation for my thesis that diverse national pantheons are consciously combined in the *Gesar* epic machinery.

The Indian Mahāyāna Pantheon

Let us look first at what must be the central machinery in a Buddhist epic, the Indic pantheon of Mahāyāna Buddhism. This machinery consists of all the deities and divine forces found in the sūtras: buddhas, great bodhisattvas, arhats, and the various fantastic beings that abound in the *āgamas* as supernatural servants and interlocutors for the Buddha. The sūtras, of course, are religious treatises and their central function is to report the discourses in which the Buddha delivered his teachings. But the sūtras' frame narratives are descriptions of the occasions upon which the Buddha spoke. They describe the characters who attended the lectures and the occurrences which elicited the lecture--- these

elements constitute story narrations. Major characters in these sūtric frame narratives are the Indian gods of popular Hindu culture during the fifth century B.C., Brāhma, Indra, etc. These figures and the Buddhist gods constitute the Indic machinery in the epic.

Two figures from this system of deities figure prominently in the opening of the epic: Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara, the buddha and the bodhisattva of compassion. These, of course, are the central figures in the Pure Land Sects that occurred across Asia--- sects based on the sūtras of a popular devotional nature: *The Lotus Sūtra*, *The Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra*, and the *Sukhāvati-vyūha sūtra*. One interesting point about these scriptures is that they not only evolve the doctrines of the devotional worship of Amitābha, Amitāyus, and Avalokiteśvara, but they also describe in careful detail visualization practices for these deities, so that, although these figures are fundamentally Mahāyāna in character, the practice of their cults emphasizes the visualization of maṇḍala-like systems of gods and fits well with the characteristic contemplations of the tantric meditational deities, the *yidams*.¹⁷⁵

It is no surprise that Avalokiteśvara initiates the action of the epic. He is active in legends about the origins of the human species in Tibet. In numerous forms, including the Dalai Lama, his emanations intervene in the history of the country. His six syllable mantra is the common prayer of all Tibetan Buddhists--- said so often that it has become a pious ejaculation for all occasions. In New Year's Day performances of the Mipham *Gesar* at Orissa chanting of the six-syllable mantra by the assembled audience precedes the performance.¹⁷⁶

But there is another agenda which Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara serve when they appear so centrally in the Mipham edition. These Buddhist deities belong to the highest level of reality and the highest level of realization. They are '*jig.rten las mdas.pa'i lha* --- deities from beyond the world or transcendent deities. They represent, that is, abstract principles of pure enlightenment. As transcendent deities they are an instance in the Mahāyāna and tantric systems of the three stage manifestation of enlightened mind, the Three Bodies of the Buddha or the Three Kāyas. In this hierarchy, Amitābha is the highest level of pure Buddha Mind and from him evolve in stages, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmasambhava.

Thus, through the machinery of the familiar Tibetan Buddhist trinity of Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmasambhava, there is an evolution of the actions of Gesar out of the dharmakāya, out of the transworldly plane, into the material plane. This sort of chain of being is an aspect of the underlying metaphysics of the epic, the level of interpretation given by Mipham's liturgies and philosophical commentaries. It explains the ontological dimension of Buddhist philosophy of action. We see another version of this metaphysical triplex in *The Long Werma Lhasang* where Padmasambhava is the dharmakāya, and Avalokiteśvara and Gesar are respectively the two Form kāyas. The same pattern is again the case in *Spontaneous Buddha Activity* where it will describe Gesar as an emanation of the compassion of Padma, who is the absolute nature:

From the Palace of the vidyādhara and dākinīs,
O wisdom kāya, the equality of samsāra and nirāvana,

Embodiment of all the universal Victorious Ones, O Lake Born
 One,
 Your compassion has manifested as the Form of Illusory
 Wisdom Play....
 Great Lion Jewel Kāya.

This trinity indicates an important division within the Indic Buddhist pantheon. The deities who were originally Vedic gods, such as Brahmā and Indra, do not evolve out of the three *kāyas* because they are not "trans-worldly." They are classified as worldly deities (*'jig rten pa'i lha*). There will be an interesting example of this distinction in a related narrative which I translate in chapter V, the "History of the Goloks." The history begins by introducing us to the god Nyenchen Thanglha, a *nyen* who rules over a portion of the original territory of the Golok tribes. Nyenchen Thanglha is described as "a bodhisattva of the 10th Bhumi." This means that, although he is practically completely enlightened, he is actually a worldly deity who gained his realization from the practice of Dharma. He has gradually raised his level of understanding to the Tenth Bhumi and will eventually experience the Vajralike Samadhi, becoming thereby a Buddha of the 11th Bhumi. But he has a history and a personal existence. He does not evolve timelessly out of the dharmakāya. This, it will turn out, is important to the narrative, because in the "History of the Goloks" there are practically no trans-worldly creatures--- no anthropomorphized absolute principles from the Buddhist scholastic cosmology.

In contrast to the Golok History, we have the utterly

transcendent and absolutist trinity of three ultimate and practically infallible beings: Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Padma. Their presence has a specific meaning in terms of the mechanics of plot. It is necessary to the religious agenda of the work that the action be initiated by a metaphysically absolute machinery, by trans-worldly deities. It is the Great Compassionate Lord, the god Avalokiteśvara, who initiates the action of the epic based on his view of the developing troubles on the planet. In this way the story of the descent of Gesar to Ling is a story with the same sort of significance as *The Gospel According to St. John*, which assures us with the words "In the beginning was the Word" that Christ is an emanation of the godhead and not simply a Jewish cultural hero. In the same way, we are assured that Gesar is not simply a tribal founder, as he appears to be in the Ladakhi *Gesar*, but a universal principle of Buddha Activity.

This dual level of interpretation, which associates the Mipham *Gesar* with religious epics such as the Gospels and the Purānas, distinguishes it, I believe, from Western heroic epics such as the *Iliad*. The level of plot mechanics is no different, of course. The action and argument of the Homeric epics originates at the level of heavenly beings and is played out in the human realm with the same sense of the human battles being a mere reflex of a drama whose main characters are deities. Virgil makes special note of this during his depiction of the sack of Troy in Book II of the *Aeneid*. The *Aeneid* is the first great imitation and continuation in a lineage of Western epics. In effect, this passage is Virgil's commentary on the nature of the action in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: Aeneas has just beheld the

slaughter of Priam and the royal family of Troy by the invading Achaeans. He resolves to die avenging them in battle against the foe. But Venus, his immortal mother, interferes and explains to him the true nature of the situation:

Know that it is not the hated face of the Laconian woman, daughter of Tyndareus (Helen); it is not Paris that is to blame; but the gods, the relentless gods, overturn this wealth and make Troy topple from her pinnacle. Behold---for all the cloud, which now, drawn over thy sight, dulls thy mortal vision and with dark pall enshrouds thee, I will tear away; fear thou no commands of thy mother nor refuse to obey her counsels--- here, where thou seest shattered piles and rocks torn from rocks, and smoke eddying up mixed with dust, Neptune shakes the walls and foundations that his mighty trident hath upheaved, and uproots all the city from her base. Here Juno, fiercest of all, is foremost to hold the Scaean gates and, girt with steel, furiously calls from the ships her allied band. Now on the highest towards---turn and see-- Tritonian Pallas is planted, gleaming with storm-cloud and grim Gorgon. The Sire himself (Zeus) gives the Greeks courage and auspicious strength; he himself stirs up the gods against the Dardan (Trojan) arms. ¹⁷⁷

This passage expresses the classic reception of the importance to the plot of the divine assembly in the Western epic tradition, which is that the gods initiate the plot and, but for the

words of the poet, invisibly carry it through to its conclusion. The *Gesar* is no different as far as this point is concerned. The core of the epic may describe battles fought by humans and semi-divine heroes. But there is a hidden reality which is the true situation--- that the heroes are reincarnations of demons and Buddhist gods, fighting out their divine battles according to a destiny decided at a level hidden from human perception and according to plans made before the main action of the book begins.

When the Mipham version of the *Gesar* gives these hidden causes of action a metaphysical significance, it employs an approach to the evolution of the chain of being which originates in the Tantras and liturgical texts of Mipham's Nyingma tradition. These texts are mainly recent revelations---the special "hidden treasure" or *gter.ma* practices which he and his colleagues discovered and propagated. In one particularly important *gter.ma* Amitāyus, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmasambhava form a Buddhist trinity, each standing for one of the Three Kāyas or Three Bodies of the Buddha: Amitāyus is the *dharmakāya*, Avalokiteśvara is his emanation as the *sambhogakāya*, and Padmasambhava, as the earthly manifestation of this principle is the *nirmāṇakāya*. This particular triad is a feature of the cycle of deity practices known as the *bla.ma'i thugs.sgrub bar.chad kun.sel*, *The Guru's Heart Practice, Dispeller of All Obstacles*. This cycle of *terma* teachings was discovered by Chokgyur Lingpa (*mchog.gyur gling.pa*) (1829-1870) and Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (*'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po*) (1820-1892). These two men were the immediate predecessors of Mipham. Along with Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayê (*'jam.mgon kong.sprul blo.gros mtha.yas*) they formed

the Eclectic School of Tibetan Buddhism.

Thus, in the case of the Indic Buddhist pantheon, its use as machinery serves the purposes of plot development while simultaneously fitting into the ritual and soteriological agenda of the editor.

The Vedic Pantheon

A traditional part of the Indic Buddhist pantheon is a series of Vedic deities who actually could be considered as a second pantheon---- "Hindu" deities, if you will, representing the presumptively dominant Indian caste society of 6th century Northern India.¹⁷⁸ In the *āgamas* these gods support the Buddha, demonstrating his victory over Vedic society and religion. And so we find them in the *Lalitavistara*, the *Buddhacarita*, and throughout āgamic literature, leaders of the Hindu pantheon respectfully approaching the Buddha and encouraging him on his path to complete enlightenment. They encourage him to teach and they piously attend his discourses. Chief among these is Brahmā, the creator of the world, and Indra, the ancient āryan war god, god of thunder, and, particularly during the Vedic period, King of the gods.

Brahmā is a tremendously important figure in Buddhist discourse. His name is used metaphorically in appellations which refer to the higher realms and to virtuous practice. The four *brahmāviharas* are four moral practices which lead to rebirth in the god realms, which are often called in the Buddhist cosmologies simply the *Brahmālokas*. Beautiful tunes are called "the melodies of

Brāhma."

Then again, Brahmā is also a sort of displacement of the idea of origins out of ordinary Buddhist Mahāyāna metaphysics and into the more comprehensible and ordinary and less technical realm of traditional Indian cyclic time. Buddhist philosophy proposes various timeless absolutes such as the *dharmakāya* and the *dharmadhatu* as the true source of the phenomenal world and all experience. Even time has its source in these tremendous abstractions. The notion of such timeless absolutes underlying the foundations of reality is far from the Vedic idea of a creator god. Nevertheless, Brahmā is still respected as a symbol for physical creation and origins within time.

I have also noticed that there is a certain fondness towards Brahmā on the part of the learned Nyingmas I interviewed in researching the *Gesar*. Several times I have been told the cute, irreverent story of how Brahmā developed four heads. It seems that one of his creations was a woman of such supernal beauty that he could not take his eyes off her. Finally, in order not to embarrass himself before the other gods by always turning in her direction, he developed four heads, facing in the four directions. In that way, he could follow her movements at all times without seeming to do so.

His creator role expresses itself in the whiteness of the Tibetan iconography of Brahmā. He is usually white and radiates white light. He wears white ornaments such as a conch shell on his head. Whiteness in native Tibetan religion is especially associated with goodness, the primordial, and the positive. There are numerous non-specific epic deities in the *Gesar* who have this not especially Buddhist whiteness--- for example, *lha.chen od.lan dkar*, the Great

God, White Luminosity, the divine grandfather of the god who would reincarnate as Gesar. White is the color of the *lha* who are opposed to the black *māras* (*bdud*)¹⁷⁹ As is said in the *Long Werma Sadhana*, "Above, the white clouds of the lha domain are brilliant..." This use of white is found very often in Bönpo legends and liturgies. Here are some rather mysterious lines from *The Long Werma* which contain this sense of white as primordality:

Show your smiling face of deathless amṛta
 O great White Light of A of the womb of space,
 You soar on top of the great three worlds,
 You play joyfully on a small seat of grass.

The white Brahmā is worshiped in Tibetan tantra and Tibetan indigenous religion as a local deity and protector. He is identified in many contexts with the colorful, Central Asian deity Pehar, who was kidnapped by Tibetans and made a protector at Samyé.¹⁸⁰

In Medieval Hindu epic literature a new pantheon developed in which the order of precedence of the Vedic gods and spirits changed to reflect the departure of Brahmānical religion from the precise cosmology of the Rg Vedic and Upanisadic systems. This evolution of the Hindu cosmology was synchronous with the development of a medieval devotionalism supported by non-dualist philosophies such as Śankarācārya's Advaita Shaivism. And from this we have the modern devotional cults of Vaishnavism and Shaivism with Kṛṣṇa and Rāma as avatars, as fleshly incarnations of the Word. And we have from this medieval tradition the cosmology which holds Viṣṇu and Śiva as deities of the Absolute.

It is important, thus, to distinguish between this pantheon and the one appropriated by the Buddha. When, for example, the Purāṇic world view gained ascendancy in India, Trimūrti ruled with its "three manifestations of the Supreme Being: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva."¹⁸¹ Brahmā's significance in this hierarchy waned as the devotional cults of Viṣṇu and Śiva grew in significance and popularity. Today there are almost no temples to Brahmā in India, for prayer to him is not regarded as of any special efficacy. Although he is the creator of the worlds at the beginning of each cosmic cycle, he does not stand for a principle of Absolute Being the way his two divine colleagues do. And until the eon is over, he will not be of much use, since his function is only to evolve the new universe when the last one has been destroyed by Śiva.

But the Brahmā who befriended the Buddha is another matter. His cult continued to expand and develop in Tibet, where his role as a supporter of the Dharma made him a dharmapāla--- a protector of the Dharma, (Tib: *chos.skyong*). Many dharmapālas had originally been local deities who were "bound by oath" and converted to the way of the Buddha. Brahmā was treated as a dharmapāla and, as Nebesky-Wojkowitz showed in his extensive study of Tibetan ritual texts¹⁸², the cult of Brahmā was united to that of various spirits of local origin--- particularly the cult of Peḥar, a silk-route deity actually stolen by Tibetans during a raid to the West.¹⁸³ On the way to this new position Brahmā developed the multi-valency we observed in the beginning of this section.

Effectively, the figure of Brahmā branched in the 6th century when his mythology was appropriated by Buddhist discourse. After

that, he lived on in two distinct systems of narratives and legends. There continued to be a Vedic Brahmā who would evolve into the figure of the Creator, an inferior role in the Hindu trinity of Trimūrti. But the Buddhist Brahmā continued unaffected by the Pūraṇic diminishment, a Buddhist god. Brahmā became *Tsang.pa*, the Tibetan tantric and native Tibetan deity, with a new and enriched retinue, with new powers, and a new set of legends.

Brahmā is a good example of the worldly deities (*'jig.rten.las.mdas.pa'i*) who abound in epic discourse. He has had a varied career in his progress through Buddhist narrative. By the time he reaches Tibet, as a literary figure he is a multi-layered phenomenon. Literary allusions to Tsang pa can thus mean many things, but principally he seems to be used in the epic for color and literary imagery.

So far as epic machinery is concerned, Brahmā enters from several directions. For example, we see him in the introductory section as one of the deities mentioned in the scary description of the demon-ridden environs of Padmasambhava on the copper-colored mountain. Here he is called a *sokdak* (*srog bdag*), a life-lord, which identifies him with Pehar.¹⁸⁴ As I have suggested, this being is similar to the divine grandfather of Gesar, the Great God, White Luminosity (*lha.chen od.ldan dkar*). The Tibetan reception of this name White Luminosity (*od.ldan dkar*) seems to be that it is simply the name of some epic deity and nobody in particular. Nevertheless, at least two pandits have admitted that, although they had not thought so at first, White Luminosity could indeed be Brahmā. It would make sense, they said, because Brahmā is quite an important

god and not just because of his relationship with the Buddha in the scriptures. He also represents broad principles of creation and original purity. For example, Khenpo Palden Sherap said this about the acts of creation attributed to Brahmā: "He did not simply create the world at one time. He is symbolically responsible for the constant recreation of things, such as the four seasons, which constantly return."

Brahmā also figures actively in the Tibetan version of the *Rāmāyāna*. He is father and grandfather to great heroes who are born to free the world from evil demons.¹⁸⁵ It may be that this grandfather of Gesar is an influence from the Tibetan version of this medieval Hindu epic.

What unites all these different aspects of Tshang pa in *The Gesar* is the concept of epic imagery. Brahmā as a divine figure does not determine action in the epic. He does not initiate activity like Avalokiteśvara or cause important turnings in the argument. His function as celestial machinery is more to embellish the color and imagery of the text. He is an evocation of Vedic gods and the āgamas, or Hindu epic, or local deities of the white and the good, depending on the direction the text slants the allusion.

Thomas Greene in his study of epic machinery, *The Descent from Heaven*¹⁸⁶, discusses divine imagery, making an interesting point about its assimilation in Christian epics. He notes that when, at the beginning of the Renaissance, authors attempted to write Christian heroic poems, some of them felt that as Christians they could not allude to pagan deities. The result, says Greene, were epics which seemed faded and washed-out. They lacked the richness

of imagery that alien mythology brings. It seems that when one is restricted to just a handful of gods and divine figures, the work lacks color. That is what is lost when alien gods and magical devices are outlawed from the account and disallowed to the imagination.¹⁸⁷

Buddhist narratives, because of the religion's readiness to assimilate gods and magical devices from other cultures have no such imagery problem. This is particularly so for tantric pantheons, which, in the name of principles of metaphysical continuity and alchemical transmutation make a specialty of absorbing local deities and alien pantheons. Among tantric schools the Eclectics, the *Rimê* school of Mipham, et. al. is particularly good at assimilation. Their aim, in fact, was to find a philosophical and methodological common ground which could unite the teachings of the major lineages of Tibetan Buddhism.

One of the expressions of the Rimê's eclecticism then was the writing of *sādhanas*, ritual practices, which combined iconography from various lineages. There are contemplative practices in this school in which the disciple visualizes a virtual smorgasbord of gurus from different lineages. Sometimes the figures are literally superimposed upon one another, representing in the most direct way possible the integration of their diverse philosophies and approaches to contemplative praxis. There are mandalas in which the deities in some directions stand for Kagyü protectors and in other directions for Nyingma protectors, expressing the unity of the meditation practices of the two lineages.

It is in this spirit that Mipham's practices would include

deities from different pantheons, consciously using the imagery of their appearances to evoke the multiple heritages he claims and wishes to combine.

The Native Tibetan Pantheon

As we can see from Mipham's Gesar liturgies, the Rimê authors of these practices were virtuoso writers of tantric ritual. They were iconographical painters who used ritual maṇḍalas as their canvases and the gods and gurus of various sects, including Bön, as their paints. *The Gesar Epic*, then, is a perfect medium for literary efforts in this style--- for in it the epic gods and magical devices from diverse pantheons are woven tightly together into fabrics of iconographical and magical allusions.

Take, for example, this passage in which magical machinery is used, not to advance the plot, but merely for richness of imagery and richer expressiveness:

...the impressive and dignified city of the rāksasas:

Even if you were a death-god, (Sanskrit: *yama*, *gshin rje*), you
would dread this place.

Even if you were the Lord of Life (*srog bdag*), Brahmā, you
would fall back and avoid this place.

Even if you were a vināyaka, you would be forced to circle
around and shun this place.

If you were an ordinary man, you could not bear hear of, much
less look upon this place.

This passage shows an interesting phenomenon which constitutes yet a third major system of machinery in the *Gesar*. The deities mentioned above were given Sanskrit names in my translation. But the names of Indian deities were originally translated into Tibetan using words for already pre-existing native gods. Thus, in indigenous Tibetan religion there are creatures called *shinjê* (*gshin. rje*) who have their own descriptions as harmful and death-bringing natural forces. But "*shinjê*" is also the conventional translation for the Vedic god of Death, Yama.

The same ambiguity exists with the basic, shape-shifting, fanged, malevolent Indian monster, the *rākṣasa*, *sinpo* (*srin po*) in Tibetan.¹⁸⁸ Raksasas figure heavily in the Sanskrit epic tradition and in that tradition an interesting reversal takes place. Rāvaṇa, the king of the *rākṣasas*, and king of the city of Lanka on the island of Ceylon, ravishes away Rāma's wife. He and his demons are enemies of the Dharma. But in the *Lankāvataraśūtra* this same demon welcomes the Buddha into Lanka and requests him to teach. Padmasambhava's island home is the city of the *rākṣasas* among whom he lives as a being who can tame them and keep them from harming others. In fact, in the Mipham *Gesar* it appears that the *rākṣasas* on Cāmara have never fully realized that Padmasambhava is a Buddhist. He simply destroyed and replaced their own king.

But if *sinpo* is not being used as a translation of *rākṣasa*, then the *sinpos* are specific native deities, wrathful, harmful, man-destroying creatures. In this context they have their own iconography and character. To complicate the translation process further, the word *sinpo* is also used as a sort of generic name for

demons at large.¹⁸⁹

A similar tripartite interplay with Indian pantheons exists for the creatures called *vināyaka*. *Vināyaka* is the Sanskrit name for the lord of the obstructing spirits (tib. *bgegs*, skt. *vighnā*) who creates obstacles to meditation practice or the successful accomplishment of one's plans. *Vināyaka* is also an epithet of *Gaṇeśa* (Lord of Hosts), the Hindu elephant-headed god, who is himself a destroyer of obstacles. But *Bi.na.ya.ka* (Tib. transliteration of *vināyaka*) is also the name of a native Tibetan spirit, sometimes represented as a black figure with black accoutrements, riding a black horse. He is accompanied in some manifestations by *Śumbha* and *Niṣumbha*, chiefs among the obstructing spirits (Tucci I, 3.) (N-B 285). It is a complicated piece of machinery, because the black figure is an indigenous description, but *Śumbha* and *Niṣumbha* are ancient Indian figures originating in Indian Tantras.

Thus, in a passage like this we are faced with a native pantheon which could be considered a Hindu or Indian Mahāyāna pantheon as well. The allusion of the demon's Tibetan name can go in any one of those three directions or in all three directions at once. I would suggest that sensitivity to the ambivalence of allusion and cultural background in these local deities constitutes an important element in their literary richness. Sometimes, for example, the epic highlights the Indic allusions involved in the name of a deity and sometimes it foregrounds the colorful, grotesque, magical, and shamanistic local allusions.¹⁹⁰

For example, in the first few pages of the *Mipham Gesar*, there are times when the text insists on the Indian linkage by actually

spelling in Tibetan transliteration the Sanskrit word *rākṣasa*. When we see Padmasambhava's castle it is surrounded by these Indian deities. Their Sanskrit names are used and we are thus reminded that this tantric magician studied originally in India---- that he came from an exotic place to tame the native deities of Tibet--- that he is a symbol of the power of tantric Buddhism as a foreign and exotic religion.

At other places in the same text Padma is surrounded by the "sinpo" (*srin po*). Of course, they are exactly the same creatures, but the associations are now with the terrifying figures of native Tibetan religion. We are reminded then that Padma came from the Central Asia country of Uddiyana and from India to tame the vicious local deities.

We are reminded of this fact a few minutes later by the comic speech of the seven-headed demon minister when he warns Avalokiteśvara away from Cāmara. He describes Padmasambhava and the lineage of demon kings who preceded him as if they were all *sinpo*. The kings of Cāmara themselves have been wild, irascible, precipitate beings who destroy even their dearest subjects in fits of passion and unpredictable anger. Such were the *sinpo* kings of Cāmara:

Even people like me, the interior minister, when we stand before such kings are ready to be punished, and we haven't done anything wrong. They are ready to kick us out for no reason or arrest us for no real cause. They are ready to gobble up the flesh of a living man and guip down the blood of a

live horse. In this lineage there have been such men.

Since Padmasambhava took over as king the leaders of Cāmara have been different:

In recent generations, however, their guts seem to have somewhat broadened and their minds, which are emptiness and mercy, unite all three temperaments: peaceful, wrathful, and relaxed.

The Pantheon of Vajrayāna in *Gesar*

This fourth pantheon, the Vajrayāna pantheon is highly organized and hierarchized, its system of deities gathered into maṇḍalas--- literally, "societies" of cosmic forces. The chief deity in each maṇḍala is a special kind of tantric buddha called a *yidam* (Sanskrit: *iṣṭadevata*) or tutelary deity. These *yidams* are accompanied by their own retinue of gurus, goddesses, protectors, ministers, generals, etc. Technically the *yidams* are *sambhogakāya* buddhas. That is, unlike the very abstract *dharmakāya* buddhas, who represent the enlightened mind and have very spare representations, these *sambhogakāya* buddhas represent the principle of enlightened communication and manifest in rich symbolic form. In the iconography they have elaborate, colorful manifestations which occur in one of three moods: wrathful, peaceful, and semi-wrathful. They appear to disciples in visions. Their numerous ornaments have

symbolic values.

It is within the cosmology of Tantra that the distinction is made between the the worldly deities (Tib: *'jig.rten.pa'i lha*, Skt: *laukika*)¹⁹¹ and those who are beyond the world (*'jig.rten las 'das.pa'i*, *lokottara*). This is a vital distinction without which there would be no way of distinguishing Buddhist Tantra from polytheistic religions. The *yidams* are lords and lady chiefs of the maṇḍalas. Their retinues are worldly and unworldly deities--- representing different aspects of enlightened manifestation.

The worldly deities are ordinary spirits and as far as an ordinary Tibetan is concerned they have the same sort of existence as human beings. That is, they are confused and still live within the realm of illusion and cyclic existence. They are invisible beings, but from the point of view of relative truth they exist, have previous karma, memory, and can exercise intentions, make plans, and act purposefully in the world.

The deities who are "beyond the world," on the other hand, are pure principles of enlightenment. Most theories of tantric metaphysics do not take them to exist as beings with personalities. Rather, they are "emanations" (*sprul.pa*) of the absolute--- projections of the *dharmakāya*, forms of the essence of the practitioner's own mind. We will see extensive use of the concept of "emanation" in the opening lines of *Spontaneous Buddha Acitivity* where Gesar is regarded as a *sprul pa* of Padmasambhava, who in turn is a projection of the minds of the buddhas.

The metaphysics which underlies the existence of the deities beyond the world is extremely subtle and complex. But it serves to

distinguish them ontologically from the worldly deities. For example, if a sophisticated tantric practitioner were to summon a worldly protector, he or she would understand that the being had come to the place of practice from afar. It might be a mountain god and reside on its eponymous mountain. Then it would come from that mountain to the practitioner when he or she performed the invocation. Or, as we will see in the "History of the Goloks"--- it might come from a sort of divine terminal, a portal between this and the other world.

But for the tantric deities who are beyond the world the thought that they actually might travel and change place would be a fundamental misunderstanding of their nature, for they are, as the saying goes, "beyond near and far." In Buddhist metaphysics the operating notion here is the nature of manifestation. Beings who wander in samsāra, cyclic existence, are reborn within one of the Six Realms. They transmigrate from realm to realm. A mountain god might be a human being who through the accumulation of great merit was reborn as a god. Then that god might meet an enlightened being and study the Holy Dharma. Making progress along the path, the god might become a buddha. This would be, as Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche put it, "a being coming up from below."

But then there are pure avatars of primordial enlightened mind such as the yidams Vajrayoginī and Hayagrīva. These figures were never individuals and have no personal history. They are manifestations of the dharmakāya. In a sense they are not beings at all, but manifestations of the disciple's own buddha nature. That is why they are called "the commitment of the disciple's mind"--- the

literal meaning of the word *yidam*. They would be roughly equivalent to the hindu avatars of Viṣṇu. For Viṣṇu as well is a primordial being with no history, inseparable from all matter and mind.

However, he too in the Puraṇas manifests as beings who appear in a certain shape to humans. The mystery of incarnation is a complex metaphysical issue in every religion. But in any case, Chögyam Trunpga Rinpoche would say that these are beings who "manifest down from dharmakāya." ¹⁹²

As a result, their individuality and individuation are extremely slippery matters. Properly speaking, the two notions do not apply to the trans-worldly deities, for they are not beings inhabiting the realm of illusion, cyclic existence. This makes it possible for tantric gods such as *yidams* and divine gurus to be emanations of each other, as have we have observed in the *Long Werma*. And it means that their action in epics is not strictly comparable to the action of an individual. It is more as if the Godhead were a character in a narrative, if such a thing is possible or imaginable.

In this regard, let us look once more at the opening lines of *Spontaneous Buddha Activity*:

From the Palace of the vidyādhara and dākinīs,
 O wisdom kāya, the equality of samsāra and nirvāṇa,
 Embodiment of all the universal Victorious Ones, O Lake Born
 One,
 Your compassion has manifested as the Form of Illusory
 Wisdom Play, ¹⁹³

Accompanied by his assembly of male and female yogins and practitioners.

This passage says literally that Padmasambhava (Lake Born One) is the embodiment of the Buddhas. His compassion manifested as Gesar, who is the play of his wisdom in human form (the Form of Illusory Wisdom Play). Thus the Buddhas, Padmasambhava, and Gesar are identical beings. This kind of absolute identity between deities with different names, aspects, and attributes is a characteristic of the *yidams*, the tutelary deities, for they are deities beyond-the-world. The practitioner chants supplications such as this one in order to "bring down the blessings of the divine *yidam*." But it is understood among the pandits and the most sophisticated practitioners of tantra that the blessings occur because the practitioner himself is also identical with the *yidam*. *Yidam* is, as we have pointed out, short for *yid kyi dam tshig*--- "the commitment (*samaya*) of the disciple's mind."¹⁹⁴ The *yidam* is thus in a very definite sense a manifestation of the disciple's own devotion and innate buddha nature.

But from the literary point of view is there any sense to the distinction between the two kinds of deities? The special tantric gods with their initiations, emanations, and transmudane nature are particularly susceptible to allegorical interpretation. But in the action of the epic itself, do they behave differently because they are "beyond the world?" In a sense the answer is no, because within the fiction of a literary work, every deity is equally a character, equally a participant. *'Jig.rten.ias mdas.pa'i* gods do not appear more

illusory or transparent because of their special nature as trans-worldly beings. On the other hand, you could interpret Avalokiteśvara's strange behavior when he visits Padmasambhava in Chapter I as a manifestation of his beyond-the-worldness. He changes into a sort of god child and visits the Copper Colored Mountain of Padma. There he talks with a demon minister and then turns into a huge lotus. The lotus then transforms into rays of light which enter Padma's heart. Later the rays of light leave the top of Padma's head and enter into various other deities giving birth in time to Gesar. The interesting point is not simply the shape-shifting he does. Worldly deities can do that as well. But when he transforms into rays of light and dissolves into other beings, he behaves more like a metaphysical principle than like an individual character. And it is interesting to note that after he has disappeared into Padma's heart, he continues to sing songs as if he were ubiquitous. When I questioned Tendzin SampheI about this point, asking how was it possible for Avalokiteśvara to be in one place singing songs while at the same time becoming a ray of light that dissolves into another deity, he explained that the god child must have been originally an *emanation* of Avalokiteśvara and that he still dwelt in his own heaven, the Potala, at the same time.

So, in the extremely theological Mipham version of the first book of the *Gesar* there is indeed a difference in the transcendent gods as machinery. They act in ways that even Homeric gods could not. They are ubiquitous, they blend with other deities, they produce emanations, and they are all omniscient.

At one point they actually behave in the manner of deities in a

ritual practice. This passage occurs on folio 8 of Stein's woodblock print. Avalokiteśvara requests that Padmasambhava confer on Joyful to Hear the initiation or abhiṣeka of the five Victorious Ones and other blessings so that he may save the world from the evil demons of the four directions. Padmasambhava travels to the paradise of Avalokiteśvara and from there performs the actions described in a typical tantric sādhana or maṇḍala visualization practice.

He emanates green rays of light from the top of his head which dissolve into the heart center of Samantabhadra, the primordial Buddha. He is the timeless source of all the Nyingma teachings---- the iconographic representation of the inward, self-existing purity of mind. Samantabhadra emanates from his head center a blue five-pointed sceptre which enters the heart-center or mind of White Supreme Bliss (*bde.mchog dkar.po*).¹⁹⁵ White Supreme Bliss then gives birth to the *yidam* or tutelary deity, the horse-headed Hayagrīva. In a later volume Hayagrīva will incarnate as Gesar's magical horse. A similar process, initiated once again in rays emanated by Padma, produces from the divine grandmother of Gesar a red lotus, which becomes the popular female yidam Vajrayoginī. These male and female buddha, representing, as do the vajra and lotus, skillful means and compassion, unite, that is, they copulate.

The sound of this union of bliss and emptiness ¹⁹⁶ invites the Buddhas of the Five Families of the mandala who send out rays of light in answer to this call. The rays of light that are sent out by the buddhas perform a complex exercise which actually describes in detail the process by which a god is created or born in heaven. And

so Joyful to Hear, the deity who will reincarnate as Gesar, is born. He receives the empowerment of the Five Buddha Families, the five directions of the maṇḍala and the other blessings involved in the traditional tantric ceremony of abhiseka.

To any tantric practitioner this process is quite familiar. It is precisely what occurs in the visualization of a maṇḍala when the meditator is performing the developing stage (*skye.rim*) of Vajrayāna contemplation. The interesting point is that this essentially liturgical description is imported whole cloth into the narrative and the sending out of lights from yogic centers on the cosmic body becomes epic action. It is a description of how gods copulate and produce through miraculous birth deity children (*lha.phug*). We will see in the commentary to the translation that this passage includes quotations lifted word-for-word from Buddhist tantras.

There is, however, one technical point in which this is a decidedly atypical "developing stage" visualization practice. In a typical practice the light emanating from Padma, which is green to represent the Action Family among the Five Buddhas, would have directly produced the male and female *yidams*. But there is an extra step. The rays of light enter native deities associated, according to Khenpo Palden Sherap, with the language of the epic tradition. Presumably these native deities are gods who inhabit the heaven of the Thirty-Three--- the special place where worldly deities who are favorable to Buddhism live and receive teachings from great bodhisattvas.

These local gods will be active in the epic in their native form

and not as Vajrayognī or Hayagrīva. The religious meaning of this passage is quite clear. Gesar will be not simply a magical hero; he will be the embodiment of all the various principles of enlightenment described in the Tantras. More than that, he will simultaneously be a Tibetan national symbol, embodying local deities and Indic Buddhist absolutist principles at the same time.

But does this deserve to be called epic machinery at all? Is it really narrated action or just an artificial insertion of religious ceremony where it does not belong? In Western epic there are examples of this same phenomena and such examples have been accepted by Western literary critics as particularly brilliant examples of surprisingly modern expressionistic poetry.

The most famous example is the action occurring in Dante's *Paradiso*. Dante was faced with an interesting problem when he had to describe his journey to Heaven. Paradise, after all, transcends history and temporal/spatial experience. There, all beings live forever in the presence of God beholding the ultimate principle. Only through nearly hallucinogenic metaphorical display could Dante represent this ultimate experience as a narrative. And so he shows, for example, lights which dissolve into syllables which dissolve and reform into heraldic animals, expressing in esoteric theological displacement the timeless relations between elements in God's creation and aspects of God's nature. These sections of the *Paradiso* which are most esoteric and symbolic read very much like tantric sādhanas. In both kinds of text the landscape and inhabitants of heaven have been allegorized into pure religious symbolism. There is no longer, in effect, a presupposed literal level of event. Action

occurs in purely symbolic imagery.

One Western reader of the *Lha Ling* remarked that it was not satisfying as epic, because there was no action. Missing the battle scenes of the *Iliad* he remarked that "there were as yet no splitting of helmets on the field of battle." This level of event will occur later in the central chapters of the epic. But here we can say that if the actions represented in the *Paradiso*, which are pure symbol, pure allegory, are considered event, then there is event in the first chapter of the Mipham *Gesar*.

In the Heaven of the Thirty-Three where divine copulation produces Joyful to Hear as an emanation of Padmasambhava, all action is by *yidams* and enlightened beings. When these deities move to other pure realms, they continue to function according to their metaphysical position in the pantheons. When Avalokiteśvara wanders in Cāmara, he continues to change shape in the fashion of tantric buddhas. The seven-headed demon minister, belonging to another pantheon, is restricted in his action and his understanding. And so, the behavior of the different orders of celestial machinery follow in the epic action their nature in the cosmologies from which they arise.

There is one interesting problem with the Vajrayāna machinery which may simply be a weakness in the construction of this religious epic. Being transcendent entities, the transcendent machinery are completely enlightened. If a *yidam* is a being, then one could not have a *yidam* who was not a realized being. Therefore, it does not make sense to represent them as suffering defeat, for it is not in the nature of Buddhas; they are the *jinas*, the victorious

ones. And yet, without striving and resistance and the threat of defeat, there can be no action or plot. Plot conceived in the Aristotelian sense involves the trajectory of a protagonist from a condition of problem to a condition of resolution or finality.¹⁹⁷ There must be a need, a quest, a difficulty to be overcome, a lack to be sensed and responded to with a search or quest. And yet, in some ways the quest is illusory, because the end is not in doubt. The hero in *Gesar* is a transcendent deity and he cannot but meet with ultimate success.

It is evident that *Gesar* and his immediate retinue are this special kind of machinery. They are not just gods, they are in the nature of avatars--- instantiations of absolute principles. This interpretation, evident in Mipham's liturgies, should, I believe, influence our reading and reception of the epic machinery of *Gesar*, his horse, Hayagrīva, etc. Fundamentally the suffering they experience in the epic is a display for the benefit of beings ("the Illusory Wisdom Play") rather than the true adventures of beings in cyclic existence. They are the *līla*, the play of *Gesar*.

Perhaps this is another confirmation of the appropriateness of Bowra's notion of a shamanistic epic. The shamanistic epic differed from the "mature" Greek epic in that the hero was not truly human and could not truly suffer defeat. *Gesar* is not Achilles or Aeneas or long suffering Odysseus and we cannot identify with his problems the way we would with these so very human Greek heroes, who suffer limitation and frustration. Instead, we wait for *Gesar* to perform his destined actions, to manifest himself as a hero, to win the horse-race, to gain the treasures which await him buried in

Magyal Pomra (Ma rgyal sPom ra) Mountain, to see him victorious over the demons in the four directions, etc.

The Sino/Tibetan Pantheon

Some of the native Tibetan gods should be partitioned off into a fifth pantheon which I would like to call the Sino/Tibetan machinery of the *Gesar epic*. In this category I would put the world of magical beliefs which reflect an ancient Central Asian and Far Eastern cosmology. The earliest texts on these deities are Chinese. To this group belong the four heraldic beasts: the Tiger, Lion, Garuda, and Dragon, as well as the pervasive Tibetan symbol of dignity or spiritual energy-- the *rlung.rta* (Chinese: *lung ma*) or "windhorse."

There are also the special gods of human physical integrity and personal success-- the *dra-lha* (*dgra.lha*), the wargods. These magical entities literally perch on the human body. They have technical names such as *pho.lha*, father gods, *lus.lha*, body gods, and in some cases even *'khyung*, garudas. If they can be frightened or otherwise driven from the warrior's body, then he is vulnerable to attack, having lost his fundamental dignity, numinousness, and integrity.¹⁹⁸

The term *dra-lha* can also be translated "enemy gods," because *dra* (*dgra*) means "enemy" and their main purpose is to protect the warrior from enemies. They do not merely protect the body, they also serve as objects of worship in the domestic environment as hearth gods, and the genii of a family's sacred environment. Similar cults worshiped in very similar ways are found throughout China and Inner Asia, particularly among the Mongolians, who were religiously

colonized by the Tibetans.¹⁹⁹

Elements of this Sino/Tibetan cosmology can be found in ancient Chinese "Taoist" texts such as the *Pao P'u Tzu* of Ko Hung.²⁰⁰ This fourth century Chinese manual collects alchemical lore from a belief system which the author believes was not originally Chinese at all, but a system of beliefs and practices flourishing in the mysterious South of China.²⁰¹ It participates in a series of religious movements, sometimes speculative, sometimes revelational which were richly elaborated during the T'ang dynasty in revelational schools such as the Mao Shan Tao and the T'ien Shih Tao, not to mention the Ling Pao.

These movements involve an etherialization of the figure of Lao Tzu, who becomes an alchemist working at his oven, converting lead into gold. They involve in some schools hosts of gods and magical forces which dwell in and on the human body. They involve a further foregrounding of the concept of the *hsien jen*, the so-called "immortal" or sage, and the *chen jen*, the "True Man," another word for sage as a kind of spiritual hero who gains a Taoist enlightenment framed in a shamanistic metaphorical language. The immortal flies and visits other realms and lives forever. The immortal controls the same sort of forces that Gesar controls and there is much common imagery between the epic and the works in the *Tao Tsang* that characterize these various strands of ancient Chinese thought.²⁰²

In fact, there is even a common style of imagery. Livia Kohn discussed in her recent article in *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*²⁰³ to what extent the concept of immortality in Taoism was metaphorical and to what extent practitioners of Taoist

yogas had as their aim a literal physical indestructibility. Did texts such as the *Ting Kuan Ching* lead practitioners to a literal or a metaphorical immortality? Did they really confer vast physical powers and the ability to travel to literally existent spirit realms, or was the message more philosophical, albeit clothed in shamanistic language?

Kohn's careful survey of Taoist commentators shows that there is an ambivalence in the tradition about this question. Sometimes the Chinese interpreters take the immortality metaphorically as a philosophical indifference to life and death. Sometimes they mix the two interpretations or immerse their interpretation in a fog of careful ambiguities.

The reason I discuss this ambivalence in Taoist readings of the seemingly shamanist machinery of revelational Taoism is because there is evidence that Tibetans have engaged in the same strange pattern of systematic allegorization and obfuscation with respect to the Sino/Tibetan machinery in the *Gesar*. A notable work in English which does this is a book by the Kagyü and *ris.med* lama, Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, former abbot of the Surmang group of monasteries: *Shambhala: the Way of the Warrior*.²⁰⁴ This series of lectures involves a systematic sublimation of the Sino/Tibetan machinery of the *Gesar*, displacing the literal meaning of the four heraldic beasts, windhorse, and even the wargods, the *dra lha*, with psychological interpretations. Under his reading, the Sino/Tibetan cosmological apparatus in the *Gesar* symbolizes the personal battle of the individual to attain a sense of spiritual wholeness and confidence in his own self-nature. Every element of this cosmology

is given an allegorical reading, the literal meaning being generated from an understanding of the action in heroic narrative. In Trungpa Rinpoche's system even the demon kings of the four directions are given an allegorical significance in the disciples' individual spiritual path as personal psychological obscurations which must be personally overcome.

I believe a close examination of the liturgies of Mipham would reveal an invitation to the same allegorization. Such a reading is implied in his use of the same deities to attain for the disciple both relative gifts and ultimate attainment and in the dual identification of the gods supplicated in the *lha sang* as both characters in epic narrative and absolute principles of Buddhist philosophy.

In any case, the ambiguity itself is an integral part of the poetic of this epic literature and its associated cults. It is almost a distinct style of writing: to mention and promise vulgar, unphilosophical gifts of power and victory over enemies while at the same time seemingly intending the supermundane egoless gifts of transcendence of self and attainment of emptiness.

The structure of this characteristically North Asian machinery and its coherence as a sub-system within the broader range of native Tibetan belief should be explored. I believe what I have called the Sino/Tibetan pantheon is indeed a discrete complex of forces, deities and magical figures and does not simply disappear in the welter of other native Tibetan deities and spirits.

The functioning of this system is a key to much of the action in the Gesar legend--- for the *dra-lha*, windhorse, and the four beasts are all involved in the epic definition of a warrior's integrity

and conquering charisma. Understanding the dynamic of these forces thus gives us an important insight into the nature of Tibetan shamanistic warriorship within epic legend and literature. For example, when Gesar battles a magician, in some versions of the legend the magician first tries to frighten his *dra-lha*, *pho.lha*, and *'khyung* off of his body.

Conclusion

I have listed five major systems of deities, spirits and magical devices which occur in the *Gesar*. I have looked at them as elements in the literary nature of the epic and also as elements in the complex, compounded world of religious beliefs which underly the religion of the *Gesar Epic*. Many of the positions I took in this paper are obviously still in the realm of speculation. The relationship between the so-called Sino/Tibetan pantheon in Gesar and actual Chinese schools of alchemical Taoism, is, for example, highly speculative and I hope to be able to explore it in more detail in coming years.

The Mipham Gesar liturgies need to be translated into a Western language for the same reasons. In this regard, the work of Geoffrey Samuels in collecting this and related liturgical materials is quite important. Stein's work in analyzing the colophons to these practices needs to be carried further. When all of this is done, then it will be possible to confidently describe the dynamic relationship between the *Gesar* literature and the Gesar practices, at least for the Eclectic School of Tibetan Buddhism.

Spontaneous Buddha Activity--- a Gesar Liturgy

The *Long Werma Lha Sang* was written in 1877. Three years later Mipham wrote this brief supplication ritual.²⁰⁵ Since it involves the cosmologies evoked in the first chapter of the *Lha Ling*, it is translated here with two commentaries, one in footnotes by Tendzin Samphel and the other by myself after the translation.

Spontaneous Buddha Activity:
A supplication and offering practice to the Great Lion Gesar
Norbu

From the Glorious Mountain, the fearful City of the Rākṣasas,
Which is the Buddhafield of the Three Kāyas, Blazing Lotus
Light,
The tumultuous and terrifying ground, blazing with dark red
bonfires,
Which is inwardly the *citta* (mind) within the Vajra body---

From the Palace of the vidyādhara and dākinīs,
O wisdom kāya, the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
Embodiment of all the universal Victorious Ones, O Lake Born
One,
Your compassion has manifested as the Form of Illusory
Wisdom Play, Gesar.²⁰⁶
Accompanied by your assembly of male and female yogins and
practitioners,
In order to bless this devoted child,
Performing the vajra dance of yogic discipline, come down the
sky path;
Arise in the body of the wargod werma who tames māras.

Great Vidyādhara, Supreme Ornament of Jambudvīpa Tsal,²⁰⁷
Armed with your magical devices, the sword, bow, and arrow

of prajñā,
 Great Mighty One, you defeat the troops of enemies in the
 phenomenal world.
 Supreme Being, Great Lion Jewel Kāya (Sengchen Norbu)²⁰⁸
 surrounded by your hordes,
 Accompanied by your entire retinue, every single one,
 Thundering forth the warrior cries of Ki and So,
 Unfurling in space the banner of your virtuous fame,
 The dancing and singing you do astride your vajra steed,
 Pulverizes obstacles. It scatters and disperses the life and
 heart of Damsri.²⁰⁹
 Your blessings pile up in clouds and bring down a rain of
 siddhis.
 If I, a worthy disciple, make offerings and enthrone you,
 Through the penetrating power of your compassion come here:
 Accept this warrior drink of amṛta and this select offering.
 Accept this offering of the nutritious tormā which conforms
 to your wishes.²¹⁰
 Accept this offering of blood, liquor, and intoxicating
 argham.
 Accept this bright and fragrant smoke offering.
 Accept these offerings of various silks, banners, and music.
 Accept the secret offering of the experience of the equality of
 Bliss and Emptiness.
 Accept the offering of this Dö flag²¹¹, built on the ground of
 Phenomenal Appearance.
 Accept this offering of the wisdom of the equality of all
 things.

 Great Lion Jewel, consider us with compassion.
 Nirmānakāya of the Three Families²¹², keep your promise,
 don't be idle.
 From today onwards until I attain enlightenment
 Protect and bless me and accomplish Buddha Activity.²¹³
 You are the self-nature of supreme compassion.
 You hold all the great weapons of Great Compassion.
 You are supreme among the tamers of the hords of māras.
 You dispel all fear of the Four Māras.
 Manifesting from the mind space of great learning,
 Bring down your great blessings into the heart center of this

worthy disciple.

Transmute into wisdom my channels, winds, mind, and
elements.

Transform whatever happens into the Path of Enlightenment.

Let your splendor blaze from the terrifying mantra which
tames the māras

And transform the yearnings of the many beings into Dharma
By correcting them. Then accept them as disciples and,
Empowering them in Buddha Activity, grant them the siddhis
of power, talent, and ability.

From the secret treasury of the knot of eternity in your heart
Open the gate to the jewel mine of memory, daring, and
intellect.

With Buddha Activity like the sky, benefiting self and other,
Please act to accomplish the two benefits according to their
wishes.

By the action of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra
Remain in the supreme profound Vajrayāna.

Widely propagating the complete realization of the Paths and
the Bhumis,

Speedily liberate us, Lord of all the Buddhas.

*This was written in the Iron Dragon Year on the 24th day of the
6th month by Mipham, who wrote down whatever arose in his mind.
May it be virtuous.*

* ** ** ** ** ** ** *

And now a section-by-section commentary:

*From the Glorious Mountain, the fearful City of the Rākṣasas,
Which is the Buddhafield of the Three Kāyas, Blazing Lotus
Light,
The tumultuous and terrifying ground, blazing with dark red
bonfires,
Which is inwardly the citta (mind) within the Vajra body---*

*From the Palace of the vidyādhara and dākinīs,
O wisdom kāya, the equality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,
Embodiment of all the universal Victorious Ones, O Lake Born*

One,
 Your compassion has manifested as the Form of Illusory
 Wisdom Play, Gesar.

Accompanied by your assembly of male and female yogins and
 practitioners,
 In order to bless this devoted child,
 Performing the vajra dance of yogic discipline, come down the
 sky path;
 Arise in the body of the wargod werma who tames m̄aras.

From the Glorious Mountain, the fearful City of the
 Rākṣasas.....The supplication begins with an invitation to Gesar to
 approach the practitioner. The expression "From....." (.....nas or
 ...las) is short for "I ask you to come to me from the realm of....."
 Padmasambhava lives on the island of Cāmara in a Palace called
 Blazing Lotus Light. But this is only the superficial meaning of his
 home. Actually, as the next verse says, it is the three bodies of the
 Buddha. The Palace of Blazing Lotus Light is surrounded by the
 terrifying land of the rākṣasas as described in the first chapter of
 the epic. But this burning ground is actually (*inwardly the citta*
within the Vajra body) just the mind of a realized person.

After supplicating Padma to come from his home, Gesar is
 supplicated to come from the "Palace of the *vidyādhara*s and
dākinīs." Vidyādhara refers to the enlightened human masters and
dākinīs to their consorts. But actually, Gesar is the "Form of
 Illusory Wisdom Play"--- that is, a playful manifestation of the
 activity of Padmasambhava. And this playful manifestation comes
 not from a palace but, as the text says, from the compassion of
 Padma.

This Gesar, the Wisdom Play, is accompanied by a retinue of yogins and meditators. They approach the practitioner, "this devoted child." And then, after this suitably Buddhist invocation the stanza continues in the style of native Tibetan liturgies, asking Gesar to descend the mu-cord (*come down the sky path*) in the armoured aspect of a *dra lha/werma* to defeat the usual enemies of Gesar, the demons (*māras*) of the Four Directions.

The division into four-line stanzas is not in the Tibetan, but it makes sense. The first stanza invokes Padma from his Palace on Cāmara. The second invokes Gesar to arise from Padmasambhava. The third invites him to descend and bless the practitioner.

*Great Vidyādhara, Supreme Ornament of Jambudvīpa Tsal,
Armed with your magical devices, the sword, bow, and arrow
of prajñā,
Great Mighty One, you defeat the troops of enemies in the
phenomenal world.
Supreme Being, Great Lion Jewel Kāya (Sengchen Norbu)
surrounded by your hordes,
Accompanied by your entire retinue, every single one,
Thundering forth the warrior cries of Ki and So,
Unfurling in space the banner of your virtuous fame,
The dancing and singing you do astride your vajra steed,
Pulverizes obstacles. It scatters and disperses the life and
heart of Damsri.*

This section describes Gesar now that he has figuratively arrived. He is hailed by three epithets: "Great Vidyādhara (Wisdom Holder)," "Great Mighty One," and "Great Lion Jewel Kāya (*Sengchen Norbu*). The first is a Buddhist title, the second military, and the third is one of the most standard ways he is addressed in Mipham's liturgies. The rest of the section describes his attributes in this,

his military aspect. He is shown riding on a magical horse who dances, that is, prances in a Tibetan equivalent of *dressage*. The horse's hooves crush demons who are samaya (vow) corruptors.

*Your blessings pile up in clouds and bring down a rain of
siddhis.*

*If I, a worthy disciple, make offerings and enthrone you,
Through the penetrating power of your compassion come here:
Accept this warrior drink of amṛta and this select offering.
Accept this offering of the nutritious tormas which conforms
to your wishes.*

*Accept this offering of blood, liquor, and intoxicating
arḡham.*

*Accept this bright and fragrant smoke offering.
Accept these offerings of various silks, banners, and music.
Accept the secret offering of the experience of the equality of
Bliss and Emptiness.*

*Accept the offering of this Dö flag, built on the ground of
Phenomenal Appearance.*

*Accept this offering of the wisdom of the equality of all
things.*

The offering section encodes an analysis of the various aspects of Gesar, once again carefully melding the Buddhist and the native aspects. As a native Tibetan deity of the local Tibetan pantheon, he receives the special non-Buddhist offering of a warrior "drink" (*skyem*) and a Buddhist offering to a *yidam* known as the "select offering." In Book I, chapter 2 Chipön, the chief of Ling, and his servants will make this same offering in the most elaborate manner when receiving the spiritual master of the Mukpo Dong Tribe, Thangtong Gyalpo. Here Gesar also receives the Buddhist offering of tormas or religious cakes. This is an offering made to Buddhist deities of the highest class. He receives the offerings of blood and

liquor, which are made to wrathful dharmapālas (protective deities). He receives drinking water (*argham*), which is mentioned in Sanskrit to emphasize that it is a Buddhist offering on the standard Buddhist shrine.

Silks, banners, and music occur in all sorts of liturgies, but they are specifically offerings in *lha sangs* where the silks are placed on the shrine as a gift to the gods and the banners are waved as a gesture of invitation. The Dö offering is typical of the native Tibetan rituals, but it is allegorized to Buddhist metaphysics by being placed not on ordinary earth, but on the ground of absolute being.

We have already seen this intentional inter-mixing of ritual materials from Buddhist and non-Buddhist praxis. All of Mipham's liturgies do this as does the epic which he supervised. This is the conscious and purposeful element of heterodox imagery which Mipham's school evoked when they dealt with Tibetan folk narrative. In the Chapter V of this dissertation we will see it carried to its ultimate point when Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje, a descendant of the original Rimê lamas, describes the birth of his previous incarnation as being heralded by an assembly of Gesar bards and shamanistic magicians who replace the usual Buddhist figures. In this way he asserts his ethnic identity in contrast to the Indic tradition with its imported pantheon.

The last section lists the activities which the celebrant requests Gesar to perform. It begins with four lines which more or less summarize the rest of the chant:

Great Lion Jewel, consider us with compassion.

*Nirmāṇakāya of the Three Families, keep your promise, don't
be idle.*

From today onwards until I attain enlightenment

Protect and bless me and accomplish Buddha Activity.

It begins by clearly invoking him using his most familiar name, Sengchen Norbu, Great Lion Jewel. Gesar is the avatar, the *nirmāṇakāya*, the fleshly incarnation of the Buddha Mind. He has been bound by a vow of compassion and his duty is to perform Buddha Activity.

You are the self-nature of supreme compassion.

You hold all the great weapons of Great Compassion.

You are supreme among the tamers of the hords of māras.

You dispel all fear of the Four Māras.

Gesar manifests warlike compassion to defeat the Demons of the Four Directions. The amazingly paradoxical expression *the great weapons of Great Compassion* summarizes the basic message of the Buddhist Gesar. As we will see, this idea is explained in the opening verses of the Mipham version--- that Gesar's warlike behavior is actually compassion, because it teaches the nature of cause and effect.

Further it says:

Manifesting from the mind space of great learning,

Bring down your great blessings into the heart center of this

worthy disciple.

*Transmute into wisdom my channels, winds, mind, and
elements.*

Transform whatever happens into the Path of Enlightenment.

In other words, he is also a Buddhist teacher who teaches the general yogas of meditation and the inner yogas of control of the psychic energies and the general tantric approach of transmutation. Here his manifestation, his attributes change and instead of performing his martial functions as a general, he performs the functions of a preceptor who teaches the various yogic practices.

Then his Tantric Buddhist aspect evolves into something more wrathful:

*Let your splendor blaze from the terrifying mantra which
tames the māras*

*And transform the yearnings of the many beings into Dharma
By correcting them. Then accept them as disciples and,
Empowering them in Buddha Activity, grant them the siddhis
of power, talent, and ability.*

In other words, he confers tantric initiation on his disciples as a tantric guru. The "splendor" (*gzi brjid*) is literally the charisma that radiates from his head and shoulders as a manifestation of his warrior's psycho-physical power. The job of this power is to tame his enemies by overawing them. Then he corrects his enemies, educates them, gives them initiation as a tantric guru, and teaches them the special skillful means known as Buddha Activity. The

interesting thing about these lines is that they could refer to his enemies as easily as his devoted disciples. Here the martial and priestly aspects of Gesar are blended.

But then quite suddenly the text takes a scholastic turn:

*From the secret treasury of the knot of eternity in your heart
Open the gate to the jewel mine of memory, daring, and
intellect.*

*With Buddha Activity like the sky, benefiting self and other,
Please act to accomplish the two benefits according to their
wishes.*

The knot of eternity is usually a symbol for the practice of meditation ---the first step and basis for the contemplative path in Buddhism. This leads to the mental achievements of a Buddhist (*memory, daring, and intellect*) and the physical achievements --- *Buddha Activity* which ...*accomplish[es]* the two benefits of *self and other*. The last line is a traditional statement of aspiration, identifying these last verses as the obligatory aspiration prayer (mönlam) that ends most chants. It has the scholarly air of the dedications of merit that close formal Buddhist teaching sessions and liturgical chanting sessions.

The most interesting thing about these last few sections is that they leave behind by and large the epic context. The last eleven lines of the chant end on a purely Buddhist Vajrayāna note, all other pantheons falling away as we leave off any reference to the relativity and contingency of epic action.

Mipham wrote his liturgies over a stretch of years during the

earlier period of his life. They seem, however, to fit together into a coherent corpus. The chant just analyzed is a *rgyun 'khyer* (a daily practice). The idea is that a follower of the Gesar sect might when there is time do one of the longer chants or offering procedures. But there would also be a short daily practice which could be done in a few minutes just to renew one's connection with the basic principle. That is the *rgyun 'khyer*, which literally means "carrying to the path."

Now, in all the collections of Mipham's Gesar liturgies there is an even shorter version of this practice called *Ge sar gsol bsdus*, *The Abbreviated Gesar Supplication*.. Each of the sections I have analyzed in this chapter receives one line in this chant. It closes, however, with the kind of offering mantra repeated when one is supplicating *dharmapālas*. (....*saparivāra idam balim te khāhi*) It is interesting to see across this range of chanting practices, this range of deity aspects. The practices directed to Gesar in Mipham's collection mention him at one time or another as being every order of iconographical being from the highest level of *yidam* and guru down to the relatively low level of protector. The whole range is there. However, often the shortest practice in a cycle shows the essence. And so specialists in Mipham with whom I have discussed these texts seem to consider his practices as mainly in the nature of dharma protector chants. This quality is seen in the *Ge sar gsol bsdus*, which is indeed literally just a protector chant.

Now that we have a view of the cosmology of the Mipham *Gesar* it is time to examine this divine machinery in action. The next two chapters will do that, providing two good examples of Tibetan

Buddhist narrative literature: the first chapter of the *Mipham Gesar* and then a short epic of tribal origins.

127 *The Journal of Asian Studies* has an excellent study of this general topic in a symposium it sponsored and then published in its February 1994 edition. The symposium was entitled "Dimensions of Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism in Asia." In it six scholars in Asian social studies did detailed studies of the hypothesis that Colonialism was an intellectual movement which dominated and transformed the discourse of pre-colonial national and ethnic cultural entities. The study looked at specific issues in self-identity discourse for Sri Lanka, India, China and Japan. *JAS*, Vol. 53, n. 1, February 1994, pp. 1-133.

A good broad study of the approach of scholars in multicultural studies would be "Cultural Studies: An Introduction" by Cary Nelson, Paula A. Treichler, and Lawrence Grossberg in *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Grossberg, Nelson, and Treichler with Linda Baghman and John Macgregor Wise, (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.1-23.

128 See, for example, Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, colonialism, and the wild man: a study in terror and healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986)

129 Stein, 56, pp. 71-75.

130 Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Milton's Epics and the Book of Psalms*, (Princeton: University Press, 1989).

131 See *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Alex Preminger, (Princeton, University Press: 1974). The article on *Myth*, p. 539 includes a discussion of Jane Harrison, A. B. Cook, and others and their theories of the relationship between ritual and myth.

132 For a detailed description of the constitution of the *ris med* school see Gene Smith's Introduction to the *Encyclopedia of Tibetan Buddhism* by Ken-sprul Blo-gros-mtha-yas, edited by Lokesh Chandra. (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1970).

133 Comments by Khenpo Palden Sherap and Khenpo Tsewang in the course of conversations about the introduction to the *Lha Ling*. The literariness of the *Mipham Gesar* will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter and treated in detail in the commentary to the translation in Chapter IV.

134 Guisepe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, trans. by Geoffrey Samuel (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1980), pp. 199-202. The material on the *agni cayana* can be found in many works, but the most useful for my study has been Fritz Staal's anthropological study of a modern South Indian performance of the Vedic *agni hotra*. A close examination of the details of this ceremony will show that it is similar in any way to the *lha sang*.

There is a Tibetan Buddhist cult of *agni* which is a conscious imitation and borrowing from the Indian tradition. Its ceremonies likewise are in every way different from the indigenous rituals of *lha sang*.

135 Of course, I have not yet read the entire *Mipham Gesar*. It is possible that there will be a later passage in which the gods describe their own pantheon and divine order in the way that Homer does when he discusses the original division of the world into the three realms of Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. At this point, however, I have not found an epic text which does more than assume a pantheon asserted elsewhere.

136 David L. Roylston, editor, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, (Princeton: Princeton Library of Asian Translations, 1990).

137 *The Journey to the West*, Vol. I, transl. and edited by Anthony C. Yu, (Chicago: U. of

Chicago Press, 1977). See Anthony Yu's introduction, particularly page 38 on "the unification of the three schools."

138 *Tibetan-Sanskrit English Dictionary*, Formulator and Editor, Jeffrey Hopkins, a project of the Tibetan Studies Institute, Free Union, Virginia and the University of Virginia Tibetan Studies Program, (Free Union: Kinko's, 1989). *The Tibetan-Sanskrit English Dictionary* is a good authority for Sanskrit translations of Tibetan expressions, because it gives the origin and *locus classicus* of each translation, citing ancient Tibetan dictionaries and scholarly studies of the language of the sūtras.

139 For a technical definition of this term see Louis de La Vallée Poussin, *L'Abhidharmakosha de Vasubandhu*, Tome II, pp.78-81. The footnotes give the *loci* in Buddhist scriptures for various uses of *pratītyasamutpāda* and the controversies that ensued over this notion of causality in the Mahāyāna.

140 *Abhidharmakosha*, Vol. II, pp.81-86.

141 This explanation of the notion of "glorious gate" derives from oral commentary on the first chapter of the *Lha Ling* by Tendzin Samphel.

142 Hopkins, II, p.828: *'byung ba chen po bzhi po dag*.

143 I use the term "native Tibetan rite" advisedly, since the tradition of the institutionalized Tibetan religion known as Bön asserts not without reason a non-Tibetan source for the entire body of teachings and practices it represents. *Lha sangs* are a component of this corpus of practices and possibly of foreign provenance.

144 My reading of these texts takes a position in an important modern debate among Buddhist Tantric practitioners. There are many who would like to rewrite the rituals so that they would not allude to an "alien" culture--- that of ancient India. Their argument is that the Buddhist message is universal and should not be couched in the terms of specific culture.

My argument is that the Buddhist scriptures make "The Land of the Aryas," as they call it, a figure for an enlightened culture and ideally sophisticated society. This figure, used alike by Chinese, Tibetans, and every other tradition of non-Indic Buddhism, is inseparable from the poetic of Buddhist expression. Every Buddhist civilization must have a mythologized relationship with a mythologized India. Without this sense of place, this poetry of place, most Buddhist verse loses half its comprehensibility. Only people who dream of divorcing poetry from philosophy would want to purify Buddhist writing of its carefully constructed projections of cultural context and, in their process of purification, they would leave behind not only the multi-leveled allusory power of its poetry, but the religion itself.

145 This account can be found in any of the introductory works on Tibetan culture, such as R.A. Stein's *Tibetan Civilization*, translated by J Driver, (Stanford: University Press, 1972). There is nearing completion, however, a translation of the famous Sakyapa Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaitzen's *rGyal rabs gSal ba'i Me long* (*The Clear Mirror of the Royal Lineages*). It is provisionally entitled *The Clear Mirror* and will be published in a popular edition for non-Tibetanists. This is an historiographical *locus classicus* of the history of Tibet from the Tibetan point of view. It has been translated by a Tibetan scholar, Lama Chödrak Yutok and an Australian writer, McComas Taylor.

As Taylor and Yutok say in a joint letter to the Buddha-L Listserv on Internet (August 9, 1994): "The Clear Mirror is a history of Tibet from the instant the physical universe coalesced from the swirling winds in primeval void, up until....about the year 1368. It is a

rich tapestry woven around the lives of the miraculous Dharma-kings of the dynastic period, their wise ministers, beautiful and devout queens, etc. Myth, legend, history, philosophical discourse, song and poetry combine to present a vivid picture of early Tibet. The key events in Tibetan folk-history are all described: the birth of Avalokiteshvara, the descent of the Tibetan race from the Monkey and Rock-ogress, the coming of the Dharma, Songtsen Gampo's marriage to the Nepalese and Chinese princesses, the construction of the Jokhang and Samye, and so on."

146 Giuseppe Tucci, *The Religions of Tibet*, trans. by Geoffrey Samuel, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 163-249.

147 *sde dge dgon chen spar ma/ 'jam mgon mi pham rgya mtsho/ Na --- sDe-dge dGon-chen Prints of the Writings of 'Jam-mgon 'Ju Mi-pham-rgya-mtsho Vol. 5*, (Kathmandu: sNa-sgyur rNying-ma 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-rtse). These same works are listed in Stein, '59, pp. 71-79). There the pagination is different, because he is referring to an earlier Degé edition in xylographic form which was in his possession and is now in the Pelliot Collection in Paris.

148 Stein, 59, pp. 71-75.

149 Mipham 'Jam.dpal dGyes.pa'i rDo.rje, *Wer.ma'i lha.bsang ring.mo dgra' lha dpa' glu*. Stein's text of the collected Gesar prayers of Mipham has this as folio 31 b-34 a. It is part of a collection of prayers entitled *Rig.pa'i 'gyur.med ye.shes kyi skyes.bu chen.po'i bla.ma'i rnal.'byor, byin.rlabs myur.'jug*.

150 *dgra lha* literally means "enemy god." The idea is that they protect against enemies. It is translated, however, by the Nalanda Translation Committee and some other non-academic translation groups as "wargod," because of the martial aspect of the deities in their iconography.

151 Tales of the use and abuse of *dgra lha* were told to me by the Kagyu lama Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche. In one conversation he recounted an element of Tibetan lore which said that kings, if they had their war gods intact, were almost impossible to assassinate. Thus, if an evil minister wished to assassinate his lord, he must first humiliate him, degrade him, and thus drive the war gods away from his body. Only then will the assassination attempt be successful. I asked what would be a typical way of corrupting and degrading a man to this end. I was referred to the strategies Gesar used in his battles with the Enemies of the Four Directions. Lacking magical methods of reducing an enemy, one efficacious method of driving the war gods from a person's body would be to bury him in the ground up to his shoulders. The war gods having departed in disgust, assassination would then be much easier.

152 This is a motif which is also found in *The Romance of Alexander* previously cited. In it Alexander the Great descends to the bottom of the ocean in a gigantic bell-jar. There he collects treasure and is threatened by the inhabitants of that realm. Actually, Alexander has adventures in all three realms---the sky, earth, and sea. They do not bear such a resemblance in detail to the Gesar stories to make the similarities a sure sign of influence.

153 Stein identifies *'dan.ma byang.khra* as Gesar's minister on page 152 of Stein, '56, locating several spots in the epic where he is called this.

154 Stein, 59, pp. 508-510 explains the relationship between Gesar and esoteric buddhism. His generalizations, however, are too broad for this study and, although interesting, do not apply to this kind of literary analysis. He draws his examples of epic machinery from unrelated editions as if the entire *Gesar Corpus* were a single work. His sources for Kagyü

and Nyingma pantheons are likewise heterogeneous. This study, however, seeks specific previous texts for the lines we find in the epic and specific lines of influence which can be documented in historical time. Thus, we observe two Buddhist trinities which are parallel to the evolution of Gesar in the Mipham *Lha Ling* because they are specifically attested in the corpus of liturgies Mipham wrote or practiced.

The problem in Stein is most serious when he speaks (Stein, 59, p. 510) of this particularly trinity: Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmasambhava: "*Le lien avec la filiation précédente résulte de la lignée normale des rNying ma pa (Le'u-bdun-ma, 14b-15a...*" The previous text is a useful citation, but Nyingma tantric *sādhana*s, chanting and visualization practices vary widely in what deities they choose for the three kāyas. There is no *lignée normale*.

Further down the page he identifies Supreme Bliss Good Nature, Demchog Ngangyak (bDe mchog ngang yag), the divine father of Thöpa Ga, with the Buddhist yidam Cakrasaṃvara. His argument is that in the *Padma Thang yig* (16 a-b) when Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī unite, Vārāhī receives the epithet Ngang phag, "Noble Nature." The word *ngang* is, however, not attached to Cakrasaṃvara, but to his consort. In addition, Khenpo PS and Tsewang vigorously deny this connection, despite their knowledge of the previous texts Stein has mentioned. They argue that *ngang yag*, good nature, is a term from the indigenous tradition of *sgrung yig*, narrative language and should not be understood as a translation of Sanskrit at all. To speak frankly, I have received from equally authoritative sources yet other divergent translations of this name.

155 The analysis of Denma which follows is the best I have been able to learn. It does not, however, really satisfactorily answer the question of why this general of Gesar participates in so many diverse and seemingly unconnected Kagyü and Nyingma rituals. For example, he is supplicated by Mikyö Dorje, the Eighth Karmapa Hierarch, in his famous *Guru Yoga of the Four Sessions*: "In order that all sentient beings may easily attain the buddhahood/ Of the yogin-siddha Denma, lord of the buddhas,/ I dedicate all the virtue accumulated...." (Mi skyö rDo rje, *The Guru Yoga of the Four Sessions*, translated and published privately by the Nalanda Translation Committee.) Why he should be suddenly mentioned in this scholastic text is a mystery.

156 For a territorial identification of the province of lDan see R.A. Stein, *Le Tribus Anciennes des Marches Sino-Tibétaines*, (Paris, 1956), pp. 78-79, 49, and 53. Also Stein, 59, pp. 183-184.

157 Stein identifies Tönpa Gyaltsen (sTon pa rGyal mtshan) with a character from the Ladakhi epic named Tenpa (bsTan pa or Than pa) and makes some very interesting tribal connections. We will discuss these in Chapter IV when we look further at the Ga tribe in the History of the Goloks.

158 As a matter of fact, I must admit that the informants upon which I relied most for production of the following translation were all members of the Mukpo tribe. It was by demonstrating my years of relationship with teachers from this ethnic group that I was able to purchase with interest and intention so much of their time.

159 "Hundred Thousand Flames" is the proper name of his armour.

160 "windhorse"--- this Sino-Tibetan energy principle (Chinese = *lung ma*) is quite ancient. It has documented occurrences as early as Ko Hung. There will be more discussion of it later in

this chapter.

161 Bowra, *Tradition*, 70-71.

162 Personal communication from Samten Karmay.

163 For a commentary on *The Divine Comedy* which emphasizes the Catholic theological dimension, see Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, The Florentine*, translated with commentary by Dorothy L. Sayers, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1955).

For treatments of Milton's Epics in this manner, see Mary Ann Radzinowicz, *Milton's epics and the Book of Psalms*, (Princeton: University Press, 1989); Judith A. Kates, *Tasso and Milton, the problem of Christian epic*, (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1983); Timothy O'Keefe, *Milton and the Pauline tradition: a study of theme and symbolism*, (Washington, D.C: University Press of America, 1982).

164 Their insistence on the ease and entertaining quality of the epic is at times in contradiction with learned Tibetan informants at the Centre d'Études Tibétaines in Paris. March 20, 1992 a seminar occurred there in which this subject was discussed at some length. Present were three Tibetan informants from Amdo and one who was raised in a refugee community in which the Khams dialect was spoken. One of the Amdo informants remarked that the *Dü Ling* was "not what I would call bed time reading." The others agreed, but on further questioning, we found that the Kham speaker had an easier time with the same material. The group agreed that the difficulty the others were having in reading the Kham dialect was at times serious enough to make the difference between a relaxing pastime and what they would consider work.

I have observed four Tibetan readers who really enjoyed the Mipham *Lha Ling* as they read it and would stop often to spontaneously to express delight. All four spoke the Kham dialect, three with accents which guaranteed that this was their first language. But all four had another factor in common as well: all had memorized through constant chanting a major portion of the Mipham Gesar liturgical practices. This suggests a disturbing possibility which, although it contradicts Khenpo PS and Tsewang's characterization of the Mipham *Gesar* as easy, popular literature, cannot be rejected out of hand: Those for whom this edition of the *Gesar* is easy and pleasant may be no more than fans of the literature of a particular Tibetan author. It should also be noted that among the Amdo informants I did not find people who recognized the expression *drung yig* (*sgrung yig*) as it was used repeatedly by the Khampa informants.

165 The same sort of relationship may exist between the language of Taoist ritual practice in the folk culture (*she hui*) and Chinese ambient popular balladry. See Schipper's study of folk religion and liturgical practice in Taiwan: Kristofer Schipper, "Vernacular and Classical Ritual in Taoism," in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol XLV, Number 1, Nov. 1985.

166 R. A. Stein, *L'Épopée tibétaine de Gesar dans sa version Lamaïque de Ling*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1956. Alexander-William Macdonald, *Matériaux pour l'étude de la littérature populaire tibétaine*, Vol. I and II, (Paris: Annales du Musée Guimet, 1967). Mireille Helffer, *Les chants dans l'épopée tibétaine de Ge-sar d'après le livre de la course de cheval*, (Paris: Librairie Droz), 1977.

There are numerous Chinese studies and translations of chapters of the *Gesar*, see in particular studies in the two journals, *Chung Kuo Ts'ang Hsüeh* (*khung go'i bod kyi shes rig*) and *Hsi Ts'ang Yan Chiu*, which regularly publish articles on the *Gesar Epic* and numerous monographs from the People's Republic of China such as *Ts'ang tsu ku tien wen hsüeh*, by Tung

Chin-hua chu (Shih Yun chu pien), a modern Chinese survey of Tibetan literature. The Chinese have also been active in publishing and republishing editions of transcriptions of the *Gesar Epic*, usually out of the Szch'üan People's Publishing House (Ssu-chuan min tsu chu pan she). Now the Chinese Institute for the Study of Ethnic Minorities in Beijing is also active in Gesar Research, publishing under the name Min tsu tu shu kuan, the library of ethnic minorities.

167 Khenpo is a Tibetan academic degree equivalent to our doctorate. There is a higher degree offered only by seminaries of the Gelugpa sect called a Geshe (*dge shes*) degree.

168 His comments were given in broken English. I have removed repetitions and grammatical embarrassments.

169 Horace, *Ars Poetica*, line 133: "*nec verbo verbum curabis reddere fidus/interpres, nec desilies imitator in argum...*," if you do not, an all too faithful translator, essay to render your author word for word..." (translation, Ben Jonson in *Horace on the Art of Poetry, latin text, english prose translation, introduction and notes...*, ed. by Edward Henry Blakeney, (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1928), p. 46.

Dryden quotes this passage in his 1680 introduction to a translation of Ovid's *Epistles*. There Dryden somewhat misreads Horace's *nec verbum..* as a censuring of too literal translators. It was a misinterpretation already honored by past literary critics. In fact, Dryden in this same article quotes a translation of *Pastor Fido* by Fanshawe, the translator of the Portuguese epic about the exploration of the Far East, *Os Lusíadas*: "That servile path thou nobly doest decline,/ Of tracing word by word, and line by line:/ A new and nobler way thou dost pursue,/ To make translations and translators too:/ They but preserve the ashes, thou the flame,/ True to his sense, but truer to his fame."

For more on 18th century theory of translation see R.P. Dowl, *The Theory of Poetry in England*, (London: Macmillan and Co, 1914), p. 114-115; Judith Sloman, *Dryden: The Poetics of Translation, arranged for publication by Anne McWhir* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1985); and Alexander Fraser Tytler, Lord Woodhouselee, *Essay on the Principles of Translation*, (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable and Co, 1813).

170 As a personal remark, if there is any problem with Van Buitenen's now famous translation of the *Mahābhārata* it is precisely this: that it is a dry and scholarly translation, not communicating the sensuality and flamboyance of the original verse.

171 *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon founded upon the Seventh Edition of Lidell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p 512. One *locus classicus* for this usage is Aristotle, *Poetics*, xv 10, 1454b1: "Clearly therefore the "dénouement" of each play should also be the result of the plot itself and not produced mechanically as in the *Medea* and the incident of the embarkation in the *Iliad*. The "god in the car: should only be used to explain what lies outside the play..." (ἀλλὰ μηχανῇ χρηστέον ἐπὶ τὰ ἔξω τοῦ δράματος).

172 *The Oxford English Dictionary*, (Oxford: University Press, 1971), Vol. VI, pp. 7-8.

173 *Ibid.*

174 We should point out an alternative reading which competes with the Bowra-Greene concept of the shamanistic epic, namely the contemporary literary criticism which examines oral composition taking the Bible as its starting point. The Hebrew Pentateuch is itself largely oral composition, full of alternating prose and verse and fulfilling many of the functions traditionally assigned to epic. But no one would hazard to call it a "shamanistic epic."

In this regard Everett Fox's commentary on Genesis is relevant: "On the surface this

parallels much of ancient literature and folklore. All peoples are interested in their own beginnings, picturing them in a way which validates their present existence. Genesis, however, is different in that, like the rest of the Torah, it downplays the heroic element of the people's origins and in its place stresses God's role in them." *Genesis and Exodus: A New English Rendition with commentary and Notes*, by Everett Fox, (New York: Schocken Books, 1983), p.3.

Fox, in thus characterizing Genesis is speaking for the respected school of biblical interpretation founded by Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. His comments on the Bible as an oral epic are a serious challenge, I believe, to the genre specification "shamanistic epic" suggested by Bowra. Both the Shamanistic epic and the biblical epic are distinguished from the heroic epic by their extraordinary focus on the element of divine intervention at the expense of the possibility of human identification with the hero.

175 A good study of the scriptural basis for Pure Land visualization practice is given in Birnbaum, Raoul, *The Healing Buddha* (Boulder: Shambhala, 1987).

176 Communication by TS.

177 *Aeneid*, II: 601-617. Translation by H.R. Fairclough in *Virgil: Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, 1-6*, (Cambridge: Harvard U. Press, 1935), p. 335.

178 "Presumptively dominant" because as a matter of fact, the so-called Aryan culture may indeed have not been dominant in the foothills of the Himalayas where the Shakyan tribe had its republic. The Buddha's rejection of Vedic ritual may not have been revolutionary at all. It could have been the conservative reaction of a non-Vedic religion seeing the importation of Aryan religion into his region. I am indebted to Professor Richard Hayes of McGill University, Montréal, for this perspective, communicated in public correspondance on the Buddha-L Listserve of Internet.

179 See "The History of the Goloks" in Chapter V.

180 Nebesky-Wojkowitz devotes an entire chapter to the Tibetan Brahmā: pp. 145-154.

181 Margaret and James Stutley, *Harper's Dictionary of Hinduism*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977).

182 René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz, *Gracies and Demons of Tibet: the cult and iconography of the Tibetan Protective Deities*, (Graz: Akademische Druk, 1975).

183 There is no space here to develop a full picture of Peihar. He is an important figure in the development of Tibet into a national state and for a period of time an empire. He became the protector of Samyé, the first great royally subsidized monastery in Tibet.

184 Nebesky-Wojkowitz, p. 96.

185 See J.W. de Jong, *The Story of Rāma in Tibet: Text and Translation of the Tun-huang Manuscripts*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989), pp.9-12.

186 Thomas Greene, *The descent from heaven, a study in epic continuity*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963).

187 Speaking of Maffeo Vegio's epic Christian poem in the early Renaissance, *Antonios*, written 1437, he says that a certain section is: "...bare of any kind of imagery, as is a good deal of the poem. I think that this bareness is typical of early Christian Humanism because each tradition (Christianity and Humanism) tended to cancel out, for poetic purposes, the abundant iconography of the other. Christian imagery must have seemed indecorously unbecoming to the

high style, and classical pagan imagery must have seemed in great part impious. The sensibilities of later Christian Humanists were to be less fastidious." *ibid*, p. 11.

188 I have translated this term with the Sanskrit when the text uses the Sanskrit term. When it uses the Tibetan term, unless the context dictates otherwise, I have translated it by the more general term "demon."

189 See, for example the demoness in Macdonald's translation of the Tibetan Cinderella story, Macdonald, Alexander, "Cendrillion au Tibet" in *Tibet civilisation et société: colloque organisé par la Fondation Singer-Polignac à Paris, les 27, 28, 29 avril 1987* (Paris: Éditions de la Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1990, pp. 143-150).

190 See *Civilized Shamans: Buddhism in Tibetan Societies*, by Geoffrey Samuel, (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993). Samuel's analysis of the origins of styles of practice in Eastern Tibet has convinced him that Buddhist religion there, despite its Indic origins, should indeed be called shamanistic. It is enough like the Tunguz shamans found in Russia to merit this change in view. Many have spoken against his position. See, for example, Reginald Ray, "Gone Beyond Lhasa"--- a review of Samuel in *Shambhala Sun*, Vol III, n. 1, pp. 62-67. My remarks here on the multi-focality of Buddhist machinery in the *Gesar* supports Samuels' thesis, for it shows specific instances in the literature where an Indic god has been assimilated to a native deity. And as well will see, the native deities are indeed treated in a shamanistic style. In the "History of the Goloks" we will see a divinely inspired priestess travel to their god realms in the style of a Tungusic shamanka.

191 For the translation of Tibetan terms into Sanskrit see Gadjin Nagao, *Index to the Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, (Tokyo: Nippon Gakujutsu Shinko-kai, 1958).

192 This entire explanation is present in commentaries on Buddhist *abhidharma* literature. My source, however, is a personal conversation with the lama Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche.

193 TS: In other words, Gesar Seng Chen Norbu, Gesar, the Great Lion Jewel, is a manifestation of Padmasambhava, the Lake Born One, who is the embodiment of all the Buddhas in the universe.

194 *yid* mean's "disciple's mind." If it were the mind of the guru, the honorific *thugs* would be used. So thus, the expression *yid thugs dbyer med* literally means "the inseparability of mind and mind" but is properly translated "the inseparability of the disciple's and master's minds." This rule of translation cannot be applied rigorously.

195 White Supreme Bliss. Stein translates *bde.mchog dkar.po* as White Samvara. If this is indeed a form of the *vidam* Cakrasamvara, this is a correct translation. But my informants deny the Buddhist character of this personage. My translation reflects their reception.

196 Union here means sexual union. Every visualization text has expressions like this one: "the sound of the union of..." I have never had the presence of mind to ask a Tibetan monk what this sound is or what exactly this expression could mean.

197 For a summary of the criticism that deals with this view of plot see Peter Brooks, *Reading for Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*, (New York: Knopf, 1987).

198 Nebesky-Wojkowitz discusses these gods in detail p 318-340.

199 Walther Heissig, *The Religions of Mongolia*, trans. by Geoffrey Samuel, (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1980), pp. 84-101.

200 Ko Hung, *Alchemy, medicine, religion in the China of A.D. 320: The Nei pien of Ko Hung (Pao-pu tzu)*, translated by James R. Ware (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967).

201 For a presentation of the Chinese view of the south as an alien and exotic land in the antique period see Schafer, Edward H., *The golden peaches of Samarkand; a study of Tang exotics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963).

202 The founding research in this area was done by a collection of scholars in Paris lead by people such as Kristoffer Schipper, H. Maspero, Anna Seidel, who worked on the *Hobogirin* in Japan, Isabelle Robinet, and Michel Strickmann. These scholars explored the revelational schools of Taoism and Isabelle Robinet wrote a history of this literature in 1991: Isabelle Robinet, *Histoire du taoïsme des origines au XVIème siècle*, (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1991). This book is not really a history of the entire range of Taoist texts and practices, but focuses on Ko Hung, the Shang Ch'ing Tao, the Ling Pao revelations, and the fortunes of these schools during the T'ang dynasty. Another very important text by her is *La Révélation du Shangqing dans l'histoire du taoïsme*, Vol I and II, (Paris: École française d'extrême-orient, 1984), which includes a text by text analysis of the Shang Ch'ing texts.

Schipper published the earliest extensive studies of the Pao P'u Tzu in 1975 and then continued with works on Taoist ritual and the revelational sects. His studies of Ko Hung begin with *Concordance du Houang-t'ing king, nei-king et wai-king* (Paris: Ecole française d'Extreme-Orient, 1975) and continue through a series of monographs. His *Concordance du Tao-Tsang: titres des ouvrages* done with the collaboration of Li Mei-kin, tCh'en Min-tchou, and Tch'eng Yu-tchao (Paris: Ecole française d'Extreme-Orient, 1975) marks the beginning of an international project to do a detailed analysis of the entire Taoist canon. Today he leads a school of students who explore this area in Paris. In English Livia Kohn has produced a large body of studies on revelational Taoism and the schools of mystical Taoism that seem to relate to the Gesar tradition. For example, *Early Chinese mysticism: philosophy and soteriology in the Taoist tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) and *Taoist Mystical Philosophy: the Scripture of Western Ascension*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, c1991).

203 Livia Kohn, "Eternal Life in Taoist Mysticism," in *The Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 110, Number 4, October-December 1990

204 Trungpa, Chogyam, *Shambhala: the Sacred Path of the Warrior*, edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian, (Boulder: Shambhala, 1984).

205 Datings of Gesar liturgies based on Samuel's "List of works on Gesar by 'Ju Mi pham rnam rgyal (1846-1914)," a privately distributed tabular list of Mipham liturgies.

206 From this point on the verses are directed towards Gesar, who is the "wisdom play" of Padmasambhava, the Lotus Born One.

207 This is actually a name of Gesar, The Great Vidyādhara Zamling Gyenchoḡ Tsai ('dzam gling rGyan mchog rTsal). rTsal is the last syllable of the name of various forms of Padmasambhava, for example, Padma Thöthreng Tsai (Padma thod 'phreng rtsal), and Rākṣa Thöthreng Tsai). If one had to translate Tsai, it would mean something like "manifestation of" or "...the Powerful."

208 Sengchen Norbu is a name for Gesar. His most usual name is Norbu Dradül (*norbu dgra 'dul*), Jewel Tamer of Enemies, or Dorje Dradül, Vajra Tamer of Enemies.

209 Damsi (dam srī) are samaya violating demons.

210 TS: *yid bzhin* (lit. "according to mind") here means that the tormā takes whatever

form Gesar wishes and is thus automatically pleasing to him.

211 Dö (mdos) is an arrangement of cross-threads attached to a stick and used in native ransom ceremonies and ceremonies to deflect demonic forces. It is sometimes one of the objects arranged for the shrine in this Gesar ceremony.

212 The Three main bodhisattvas: Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, and Vajrapāṇi.

213 *'phrin las* - Buddha Activity is an expression for the the Four Karmas, the four enlightened activities of a Buddha--- pacifying, taming, enriching, and destroying.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF A BUDDHIST VERSION OF THE *EPIC OF
GESAR OF LING*

Volume 2 of 2

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Chapter IV

This is a translation of the first chapter of the first book of the Mipham *Gesar*. The title which appears in the beginning is the title of the entire book, the *Lha Ling*. Every Tibetan book has a short and a long title. *Lha Ling (The Divine Land of Ling)* is the short title. *The Nine-Squared Divination Board....* is the long title. Following that is the title of the entire multi-volumed epic: *The Epic of the King of the Wargods, Gesar Norbu....*

The actual title of the chapter comes at the end of the chapter in a colophon and we have respected this Tibetan ordering by not giving the chapter title.

In the footnotes we have indicated the remarks of various Tibetan informants by their initials:

SK: Samten Karmay

TS: Tendzin Samphel

KP: Khenpo Palden Sherab

Works by Stein are referred to so often that we have indicated the major ones by their dates, his translation transcription and translation of the epic being Stein '56 and his immense monograph on the epic being Stein '59.

The commentary, as was said in introduction to this dissertation, combines the comments of native informants with linguistic notes from myself as translator, and a literary

commentary directed towards the system of cosmological and poetic allusions and the metric structure of the text. The philosophical commentary, when it comes from one of the above Tibetan scholars is indicated by their initials or else there is a specific footnote. Any other religious commentary is my own and any errors in it should not be attributed to any of the learned Asian informants.

It should be noted, however, that when a person who is learned in Tibetan Tantra states even the most common points about the nature of this path, he or she is reflecting the view of a particular lineage. Having been trained in the lineage of the Karma Kagyü and the Nyingma tradition, my own commentary reflects this specific view of the structure of the path. There are important doctrinal differences which show up in the Tibetan reform lineages known as the Gelugpa and the Sakyapa. The views of these lineages as to the nature of visualization practice and the Three Bodies of the Buddha and a host of other esoteric points of Buddhist theology are often different and there is no intention in this translation to speak for their view.

If one were to seek a single work which summarized the view of practice and theology of the lineages which have informed my personal commentary in this translation it would be the *Kunzang Lama'i Shelung*, *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, a compendium and graded introduction by Patrul Rinpoche. This work has been superbly translated by the Padmakara Translation Group into both French and English. The English version recently appeared in Harper San Francisco's excellent "Sacred Literature Series."²¹⁴ If one wished to read a good, scholarly, detailed introduction to the Buddhism of

Eastern Tibet for the non-specialist, there would be no better work than this.

All translations into English, unless otherwise indicated, are my own.

The Divine Land of Ling²¹⁵
 the Nine-Squared Divination Board:²¹⁶
 The Epic of the King of the Wargods, Gesar Norbu,
 Tamer of Enemies²¹⁷

[Gantok 1] Om svāsti²¹⁸

Within Dharmatā, your unobstructed compassion gave rise to
 The impartial awakened mind (*bodhicitta*) which benefits
 beings.²¹⁹

Never abandoning that, you took the vajra-like oath
 To perform the Four-fold spontaneous Activity,²²⁰ the Hundred
 Points.²²¹

Once when perverted ambitions piled high the mountain of
 evil merit

And pride rose up to a rocky peak of haughty arrogance,
 To show the teaching of Cause and Effect you crushed it with
 this vajra.

Greatest of heroes, Supreme being, Jewel Tamer of Enemies ,
 may you be victorious.²²²

Chapter I

The Noble Supreme Compassionate One's moonlight
 Dissolves into the heart center of the One Whose
 Splendor Tames the Phenomenal World.
 The Five Families of the Blessed Victorious Ones
 Grant empowerment to Joyful to Hear.²²³

Now in this time when the five corruptions are spreading and increasing, it is difficult to liberate from evil karma these savage sentient beings through the Causal Path of Characteristics²²⁴ alone. It is even difficult to ripen them through the Fruition Path of the Secret Mantra. For their minds are hard as rock and stone: if you do not carve its hard surface with a chisel, even if you soak it in a stream, it will not give way. Even if you rub it with butter and oil, it will not become flexible. They are too stiff to be bent by the teachings on this life and the next. They will not submit to the restraint of the temporal and spiritual laws.

Formerly, during the lives of the Three Dharma Kings,²²⁵ the Ancestor and his Descendants, when the Land of Tibet passed from Bön to Buddhism, in order to naturally pacify the temperamental demons of Tibet, Lotus Skull garland,²²⁶ the Mantra Holder, bound them by oath. If he had managed to make them swear their oaths of fealty to the Buddha Dharma three times, then the Dharma Kings would have been long-lived.

But even though the sovereign and subjects shared bliss and happiness, devilish ministers, noblemen and warlords²²⁷ turned the

subjects from the commands of their lord king. And Padmasambhava's failure to bind the spirits of Tibet more than twice led to disordered conditions in the state and the auspicious coincidence of the Glorious Gateway²²⁸ was missed. [Gantok 2:2]. As a result there was turmoil of weaponry in the four directions. The borderland demons wandered into Central Tibet. And the dynasty of the Dharma kings fell down to the level of commoners.

In general the whole world (*Jambudvīpa*) and in particular, the land of Tibet, indeed all lands became oppressed by suffering. The Noble Excellent Great Compassionate One (Avalokiteśvara) gazing on all this with unbearable²²⁹ compassion, supplicated the Lord of Sukhāvātī, Amitāyus:²³⁰

"Om maṇi padme hum²³¹

I pay homage to the refuge, the lord of countless realms
Unchanging Light, lord of Sukhāvātī in the West.

Even though your compassion is truly unbiased
Look down on the world of impure cyclic existence (*samsāra*).
In the vast whirlpool ocean of suffering
You are skilled in killing the crocodiles of evil deeds.
Have compassion for sentient beings in endless cyclic
existence.

Surrounded by ocean waves of the five poisons (*kleśas*),
The mirror of their minds is blinded by the obscurations
(*āvaraṇa*).

Circling endlessly in cyclic existence, they are truly to be
pitied.

Out of compassion please show supreme skillful means.
(*upāya*)"

[With these words he reverently supplicated. The Blessed One
Amitābha answered] ²³²with these words .

Good, good, O son of noble family.
For sentient beings ignorant and confused,

If they are not fortunate enough to be tamed, it is difficult to
draw them out [of the ocean where they drown].

Thus, if beings near and far

Have no iron ring of faith,

Even the teacher who draws out the three worlds

Has no way of catching them with the iron hook of
compassion.

Nevertheless, in the divine Buddhafield of the Thirty-Three

The Father, the Great God, Lord White Luminosity²³³

And the Supreme Mother Mandā Divine Beauty

Had a son, Supreme Bliss Good Nature.

He and the Divine Princess Illusory Beauty²³⁴

United as E and VAM²³⁵ and gave miraculous birth²³⁶

Through the radiance of their unwavering compassion

To the magical child whose blessings accomplish all purposes.

He is joyful to hear and delightful to see.

If he were to transfer into a human body in Jambudvīpa

That heroic bodhisattva would tame the difficult to tame.

Sentient beings in the land of Tibet would experience bliss
and happiness.

There is no doubt they would be free from birth in the Lower
Realms.

Therefore go to the continent of Cāmara.

And request Padmasambhava Skullgarland Power for this.

Strive for the benefit of beings, supreme warrior of the mind.

Remember this, E MA HO!

He praised and complimented Avalokiteśvara with these words
of prophecy and confirmation. [Gantok 4:12]

Then, in a single instant, the greatly compassionate lord went
to the blissful, spontaneously arisen Limitless Palace of Lotus
Light²³⁷ on the sub-continent of Cāmara. Around it was the city of
the terrifying *rākṣasas*²³⁸ (cannibal demons; T: *srin po*), his
subjects--- a place so horrible that it frightens even the death gods
(S: *yamas*; T: *gshin rje*) and makes the Lord of Life, Brahmā (T: *tsang
pa*) withdraw --- a land so terrible that even the Vināyakas

(obstructing spirits) shun it, not to mention ordinary men, who cannot even stand the sight of Lotus Light Palace.²³⁹ In this place, in order to effect the measureless benefit for beings, Avalokiteśvara manifested as a cannibal-demon child, his head surrounded by oysters and enveloped in a halo²⁴⁰ of glimmering white light. He went to the eastern Gate of All-Pervading Mercy (*maitri*). There he met a demon minister *rākṣasa* with seven heads who said:

"Wondrous indeed, your inner reality and outward appearance.
I would say you are a god, but you look like a demon cub.
I would say you are a demon, but for your aura of light.
Within the walls of this Blazing Lotus Land
We sentient beings, confused by ignorance,
Have never seen, would be lucky even to hear,
Of the coming of such a unique individual."

With this speech he asked Avalokiteśvara for what great purpose ²⁴¹he had come. Then he sang to the Lord this miraculous song:

"LU A LA LU,²⁴² the song is sung; in case you do not
understand,
THA LA, this is the melody of the song.
Surrounding this land of Cāmara, the country of the demons
are
The place of the impure Rākṣasa and demons (*'dre*)²⁴³
And the Field of the pure Wisdom Holders (*vidyādharas*) and
dākinīs.

This morning, young child, you landed here.
From what place and from what direction do you come?
What aims can you have which are such **great** matters?²⁴⁴
If you do not have in mind **great** matters,
Then it is meaningless to pursue ends of no **great** importance.
If you are not seized by the dōns (evil spirits) of **great**
suffering,
What is the point in drowning yourself in the river?

If you have not become involved in a great quarrel,
There is no **great** cause for you to bring to court.

In Cāmara's Blood Lake of Sin

[Gtk 5:1] The food of the cannibal demons is hotter than fire.
The reach of the cannibal demonesses is longer than a river.
The *tramens* ²⁴⁵ seek you out faster than the wind.

Why have you come to this place?

Who are your father and mother, their race and religion?

Keep back no secrets; be straight in your speech.

In the monastery our commerce is all straightforward
speech.²⁴⁶

Straight arrows strike the target yonder.

If your path is straight, the roads to Ü and China are not long.

If you understand, you are a superior man: a single sign is
enough.

If you don't, you are an aging ox and only understand the stick.

If that's what you need, then look to your red-blooded life.²⁴⁷

If you understand, this is the explanation of the words.

If not, I'm not going to sing this song again."²⁴⁸

Thus he sang and the Lord answered: "Oh yes, I understand,
Sir."²⁴⁹

The secret meaning of the essence of speech like yours must
be clarified ²⁵⁰

Or else the profound and secret meaning of the words will be
silenced.

If the meaning of the words does not place the fruition in your
hands,

Then all those words are just bubbles of spit.

If the Earth in early Spring is not first fed with water,

Then the Southern Turquoise Dragon and the venomous Serpent
will be silent.

In the sky Mount Meru is circled by the Sun and the Moon.

If they do not benefit the plains of the Four Continents,

Then Meru is of no benefit or harm.

Then the Sun and the Moon would just be distractions for the
spinning heads of brainless dupes.²⁵¹

Then there would be no gratitude for the good done by the Sun
and Moon.

It is impossible that things should be that way.
 For the black earth is thick with settlements.
 And the measureless white clouds float freely above.
 If my cause is great, China and Tibet are circled by the
 heavenly bodies each day.
 If my cause is important, then these words carry great
 weight.

I realize that most cases are brought by petitioners to the Court of the Chief, the majestic Lotus Skullgarland, and heard by the Great Ministers in the Imperial Assembly Hall. But just as it is pointless to plant seed anywhere else but in a plowed field, so the nature of my discourse is too great to explain before the Plenary Council and I must see Lotus Skullgarland himself.²⁵² The tale I must tell is like this," and he sang this song:

[Stein 3b] [Gk 7:6] Om Maṇi Padme Hūm Hrīh
 I supplicate the Dharma of the Six Perfections.²⁵³
 Just keep to your own place, ultimate emptiness.²⁵⁴
 In case you do not recognize me,
 I am known as the All-Benefiting, Compassionate, Beloved
 Child.
 My father is Bodhicitta Sovereign Lord .
 My mother is Emptiness Dharma Torch.
 This morning I came from the Field of Great Bliss.
 The benefit I seek is the benefit of both self and other.
 My goal is the Isle of Cāmara, that goal.
 My supplication is to supplicate the Master Skullgarland.²⁵⁵
 Thus, the ancient proverb says²⁵⁶
 If you travel back and forth, a merchant, between China and
 Tibet
 It is not that there is nothing of value in one's own
 Tibetan valley:²⁵⁷
 This is the mental relationship of trust that unifies China and
 Tibet.
 Between master and disciple empowerments and teachings
 travel and are handed down,
 It is not that the profound teachings are not precious,²⁵⁸

But that these teachings are a connection between
 aspirations and commitments (skt: *samaya*).
 Between the people and the ruler the great minister travels
 back and forth.

It is not that without him there is no way of conducting
 government.

He connects the two ranks of the law-giver and the monks.²⁵⁹

These words of information I offer to you.

Please intercede on behalf of my humble self,

And tell the master the essence of my message.²⁶⁰

Initiate the all-pervading activity of your compassion.²⁶¹

My import is not small,²⁶² it is of great importance.

Of great import is the welfare of all beings.

If it were meaningless, why would I explain to you why I have
 come?

Those who pointlessly travel around in distant lands
 Purchase for themselves thirst and famine.

Those who suffer not, yet throw themselves into deep gorges,
 Have let their life force be carried away by demons.²⁶³

The wealthy who bear the burden of material goods,
 Will be carried away by profit and loss.

The powerful with their many evil reports
 Will cast themselves down in self-humiliation.

The poor who utter proud words
 Will bind themselves to false friends.²⁶⁴

Things such as these are indeed without point.

But into the entrance hall of Lord Raksha Skullgarland
 I have had no choice but to enter.

Please let it be that I am seized by his compassion.

Taking the form of a nāga I make this offering.

Please let my words enter your heart and hearing.

Thus he requested and the demon minister answered, "Hey,
 you!²⁶⁵ [GT 8: 16] According to ancient history, our demon king Raksa
 Skullgarland's royal lineage is terribly strict. In court they strike
 with the accuracy of lightning bolts.²⁶⁶ Their sovereignty²⁶⁷ is
 vaster than the blue sky. Their clout²⁶⁸ is mightier than Rāhu.²⁶⁹

What can a little gypsy kid like you hope for? Even people like me, the interior minister, when we stand before such kings are ready to be punished,²⁷⁰ and we haven't done anything wrong. [Gantok p. 9 :2] They are ready to kick us out for no reason²⁷¹ or arrest us for no real cause.²⁷² They are ready to gobble up the flesh of a living man and gulp down the blood of a live horse. In this lineage there have been such men. In recent generations²⁷³, however, their guts seem to have somewhat broadened²⁷⁴ and their minds, which are emptiness and mercy, unite all three temperaments: peaceful, wrathful, and relaxed.

In recent generations they have all been the same that way, like sleeves all cut from the same pattern or beads all chosen from the same rosary. In the strictness of our monastic law, we don't let anything be swept under the carpet.²⁷⁵

We must formally request that you be allowed the kindness of entering.²⁷⁶ Otherwise we two will be just like an old ox leaping into the river when it is thirsty. Or an old cow heading for grass. Or an old donkey driven by rain [and wind.]

No one has ever dared to break in upon him like that. ²⁷⁷ Generally when you visit a temple, you offer the guru there a white scarf. So what do you have as a presentation offering (*phyag rte*) to give to the ruler."

[GT 9:14] "I have the thirty varieties of formal presentation offerings. If you want to count them they are: as Dharma the six syllable Mani mantra, as path, the Six Pāramitās, as the six objects of outer appearance, the six consciousnesses of inner knowing, and the six gates of the sense faculties which lie between these.²⁷⁸ Are

these suitable presentation offerings?"

When he said this, the minister answered, "I can't really say they will be okay:²⁷⁹ The more the poor man values food, the more the rich man tightens his stomach for him. The more the rich man values a horse, the more stubborn-headed the merchant is on his selling price. [Gantok 10:1] If you don't have one, then a Dzo (female yak) is like a horse. But for a great band of robbers, it is nothing but a quick snack on the road. The jackal who usually eats horses sometimes wonders "perhaps this sheep's body would do?²⁸⁰

At the same time I cannot say that these presentation offerings would not do: the sacred symbol, the souvenir of a pilgrimage to Tsari Mountain, is really nothing but a nine-node bamboo stick.²⁸¹ To harvest Chao Hsi Mountain's tea, you must find your way across hill and dale. But anybody with money can have it if they want.²⁸²

Generally speaking, you can say that these things are both rich and abundant and tiny and insignificant. ²⁸³ Indeed, they are not great, for these precious qualities of being free and well-favored²⁸⁴ all fit within the two spans and four cubits of the human body.²⁸⁵ Again, they are not tiny, because if you possess analysis, they are the inexhaustible provisions for this life and the next, the materials which fulfill all wishes in the cycle of existence, the wish-fulfilling gem, so difficult to acquire. ²⁸⁶

But if you do not possess an analytical mind,²⁸⁷ then these things are the anchor of the three poisons in the ocean of cyclic existence; the stick which drives us with happiness and sadness;²⁸⁸ a sack full of impure substances.

Well now, whoever you are, I will go and request for you permission to enter into the Presence. Wait here for a moment," he said and [Gantok 10: 9] entered the palace.

There on top of a wrathful seat of corpses,²⁸⁹ [Gantok 10:12, Stein 5B] on a dazzlingly beautiful throne of gold sat Lotus Rākṣa Skullgarland himself, his mind resting in meditation on the great nature of phenomena (*dharmata*). Even though he already understood that Avalokiteśvara was outside, he pretended ignorance and said to the great rākṣa minister with seven heads:

"Hey you. This morning you were singing pointless songs, chanting unlovely melodies with imbecilic words? Who was that who sang in response to you? What great purpose does he aim to attain? In whom does his mind trust? In what person does his body take refuge?"²⁹⁰

The minister thought to himself, " He seems to be sitting here on his lordly throne,²⁹¹ but his fine bright eyes²⁹² see the bridge outside. His sight must be like the proverbial royal parasol of the sun traveling across the sky, its light pervading the world (Jambudvīpa), or the southern clouds²⁹³ piled high in the mid heavens, raining all across the dense earth. " He uttered these sayings thinking that Padmasambhava in his chamber had probably seen everything that had just happened outside.²⁹⁴

He said to Padmasambhava, "Oh precious crest jewel, In the varicolored demon village,²⁹⁵ Hundred Thousand Great Blissess, at the second gate in the iron mountain wall, the Eastern gate named Great Garden of Mercy (skt: *maitri*; tib. *byams pa*), a little boy who is not a human and not a demon, who is not a god, but has an aura of white

light says that he would have a matter of pith and importance to impart. He says this with words clear, bright, concise, and lovely to the ear. Don't be distracted,²⁹⁶ listen carefully. " With these words he prostrated three times and then sang this song:

"A la la sing the song this way.
 Above in the Palace of Padma Rāga,
 Amitābha of Uddiyana, know me!
 May I and all sentient beings filling space
 Attain the deathless state of a Wisdom Holder
 (skt: *vidyādhara*; tib: *rig 'dzin*)
 On a peaceful and wrathful jeweled corpse throne
 On a blazing Lotus
 Leader in this life, dear lord and chief, listen.
 Guide in the next life, o guru, listen.

Today at the moment when the golden rays of the royal
 parasol²⁹⁷
 Struck the peak of the Glorious Mountain
 At the Eastern Gate of the Garden of Great Mercy
 In the middle of the Plain of All-Pervading Great Bliss
 Appeared a little boy made from beautiful rays of light,
 [Gantok: 12] Wrapped in garlands of lightrays and rainbows.
 His name is Compassion Benefiting All.
 His great aim, the limitless benefit of others.
 He says: 'there is an urgent need to see you.
 There is no time to spare.'

Whether you condescendingly praise your gift as 'alms' ²⁹⁸
 Or elegantly call it 'offerings,'
 It still goes to the erudite guru who has mastered the ten
 sciences.

It may be to purify one' sins,
 Or else the extortion exacted by a minister.
 Either way it is a fine, the punishment meted by the mighty
 chiefton.

Clouds in the sky may be a storm front coming in
 Or else the gaping mouths of the eight classes of demons.²⁹⁹
 Either way the rain will help to ripen the eight fruits.

A beggar's prayers for your good health, may be altruistic
 aspiration prayers
 Or else he calls you friend just to get some food.
 Either way, his stomach's hunger is pure as a white silk scarf.
 I couldn't grasp him, but I said that I would ask the favor.
 Please grant whatever he requests with his long white scarf.
 Do not make a minister such as myself wander back and forth
 about the monastery³⁰⁰
 Please let him make his request personally before your golden
 throne.
 These rock-like words of a stupid, prideful person
 You have heard. He should not just wander in before your
 golden throne in the monastery.
 However, if the affair is important, it is your honor's
 business.³⁰¹

If you listen to my song, it is an offering up to you.
 Then please give your reply to what he has requested."

[Gantok:13] Then the magnificent Skullgarland Lotus answered:
 "Oh, Excellent! These sayings are good. As for what you give the guru
 who is a guide and a teacher, he is more pleased by the abandonment
 of sin (tib: *sdig pa*) than by a hundred offerings. As for what you
 give to the chief whose sovereignty is vast, he is more pleased by
 the straight truth than by a hundred offering gifts.³⁰² When you
 begin to practice Dharma and accumulate merit, he is more pleased
 by one auspicious sign of success in meditation than by a hundred
 measures of provisions for travel.

Today, in the Fire Monkey year, the eighth day of the first
 moon, on the glorious Mount of Auspicious Coincidence, whatever of
 the eight orders of beings he is, whether god, nyen, serpent, or man,
 let him now enter the audience hall and stand before me."³⁰³

The minister went out to the gate but [Stein 7a] the little boy
 had disappeared without the least trace. Like the trace left by a bird

in the sky when it makes its way in the paths of the winds, just so were the traces of the little boy on the ground--- nothing, not even an indentation in the soil. But straight ahead there was a golden lotus with eight petals and a white Hrīh on the anthers. On the petals were Om Maṇi Padme Hūm Hrīh Āh.³⁰⁴ These eight syllables were repeating their own sounds. He thought, "How strange? What shall I to declare to the chief? How will I explain this to the ministers? What will I say to the servants? What will I proclaim to the people?"

Then he began to strategize. In his mind he went through his strategy twelve times, he worked out twenty-five tricks and tactics.³⁰⁵ Finally he thought, "[I must decide.] Since the mind, being by nature empty, is inexhaustible, the intellect of a superior man ³⁰⁶ is inexhaustible as well. If you do not clamp down on your little tongue, ³⁰⁷ there is no end to the speech of a learned man. If you do not control the measure of your little step, the long white strip of road will stretch out endlessly before you. If you do not touch it with blue water, what will control the red fire? "

Then he had the thought, "This thing [might be meaningless], like relic pills from the grave of a pig, which have no blessings.³⁰⁸ [Gantok: 14] But what can I say in answer to Padma's command? Like the mute trying to explain the taste of brown sugar, I have no words of reply to him. But even though it may be pointless to try to describe this with my mouth, maybe I can carry it in my hands.

I guess that person I saw this morning must have been some kind of transformation. So it seems that this flower here is the child's magical transformation. If that's so, then why not carry the

flower in and place it before the King? [It's a sign of something and signs are necessary]--- like the auspicious signs that are so necessary to the practitioner collecting merit.³⁰⁹ And after all, the king gave me orders, saying: 'whether it is a god or a demon, bring it in.' This thing is not solid; it is a form like that of a rainbow. Maybe it is a magician's trick.³¹⁰ Or perhaps it is a wonder-worker's basis for transformation.³¹¹ Whatever it is, I am certain that it is a miraculous thing.

On top of that, whatever this thing is, I cannot talk to it. But since it is all I have to show for this morning's events, I will carry it in and just present it." ³¹² Just as white snow is pleasing to the mind [Stein 7b] and colored ornaments are lovely to the eyes, so this is probably an auspicious sign. "

Then he picked up the lotus and carried it to the door of Lotus Self-luminosity's living room. The flower in his hand turned into a white light the size of the moon and dissolved into the heart center of the demon king Rākṣa Skullgarland. At that moment the Noble Supreme Greatly Compassionate One told Lotus Born to invoke and call forth from the Self-luminous Thought Lineage the mind [of Gesar].³¹³ His words were poured into a song so that they were easy to understand. ³¹⁴

[Gantok: 14:14] "Om mani padme hūm hrīh
From the Pure Land of the Flaming Lotus
Blessed One (Bhagavat) Amitābha, know us.
And you who are supreme in the Lotus Family, omniscient
treasury.³¹⁵
Miraculous king, I ask you to think.³¹⁶

It is difficult to tame the wilderness of Tibet.

When they passed away in the Snowy Kingdom,
 Nine oath-breaking demons³¹⁷ (*damsi*) uttered perverted
 aspirations.³¹⁸

And so were reborn as the Nine kings and Ministers:

The Eastern Devil³¹⁹ (Māra of the East) Lhotri Tiger Eye (*lho
 khri stag mig*)

The Southern Devil, Sadam Poison Tree (*sa dam dug gi sdong*)

The Western Devil, Lutsen (Nāga Might) of Clan Mu (*dmu*),

The Northern Devil, White Tent (*gur dkar*, pronounced "gurkar")
 The'u Rang Cub.³²⁰

Turquoise Peak (*g.yu rtse*, pronounced "Yutsê") Luminous
 Child,³²¹

Earth Lord King Nyenrawa (*snyan raba*),³²²

The Lion Devil Ase Khyilpa (*A bse 'khi l pa*)

The Borderland Devil King Shingtri (*shing khri* --wooden
 throne),

And the general demons of the World such as Black Bear, etc.
 (*srid pa'i dmangs 'dre dom nag sogs*)

Each one of them is surrounded by an innumerable retinue---
 The enemies who have form and the obstructions without
 form.

They lead the Land of Tibet into suffering.

They treat the teachings of cause and effect, the Rare and
 Precious Three Jewels with contempt

[Stein 8a] They guide all sentient beings on the path to the
 Lower Realms.

They plant deep the seed of birth in hell.³²³

Oh pity the ignorant in Cyclic Existence (*samsāra*).

You are the Great Powerful One who defeats the difficult to
 tame---

Great Being, god child, Joyful to Hear,

Primordially pure, All Good, self-liberate them.³²⁴

And grant them the Empowerments of the Five Families of the
 Victorious One.

Grant them the blessings of the Three Protectors.

The time has come to fulfill your sacred vow³²⁵

And evoke the Nirmānakāya to tame the vicious.³²⁶

Therefore, don't be idle, protector of beings. "

Thus he supplicated. And then He Who Overpowers the Phenomenal World with His Brilliance smiled brilliantly, his heart glad, he said, "Good," and sang these words in a sweet melody:

"Kye Ho, Good, Supreme Bodhisattva;
Your striving for the benefit of beings is good.
In the limitless sky of your awakened heart (bodhicitta)³²⁷
The White Luminous One³²⁸ is your compassion which benefits
others.

The innumerable constellations are your aspiration prayers.
Your kindness eliminates the darkness of ignorance.³²⁹

Like the moon shining in the midst of the moving stars
Are you, child³³⁰ who will master the phenomenal world.
A Great Bodhisattva, hearing you rejoices and liberates
sentient beings.
You are the lord who embodies the activity of all the Buddhas.

For all the buddhas are one in the space of wisdom.
The buddha nature pervades all sentient beings.
Beings in cyclic existence, not understanding this,
Must be liberated. Thus the Sugatas
Never abandon their vows to benefit beings.
[Stein:8b] Protector, whatever thoughts you have for the
benefit of others
Will come true for all sentient beings.
So may your practice of the Perfection of Aspiration be
perfected."³³¹

This was his utterance of an aspiration prayer which confirmed the invocation of the mind samaya of all the tathāgatas³³² of the ten directions. Through it and the wondrous liberation through seeing, that demon minister of the Sambhogakāya Buddha field of disciples was established in bliss. Then the Greatly Compassionate One returned to Potala Mountain.

Later, on the holy day³³³ when the dakas and the dakinis especially gather, the tenth day of the month, deathless Lotus

Skullgarland himself was surrounded by a vast assembly performing a tantric feast (skt: *ga.nacakra*). At that time he was dwelling in the Samādhi of the All-Pervading Dharmakāya. From the top of his head he emitted a green ray of light which invoked the mind stream of the dharmadhātu Samantabhadra. Then from the heart center of the Dharmadhātu Samantabhadra emanated a five-pointed blue vajra marked in the center with the syllable HŪM. It flew to the Garden of the Heaven of the Thirty Three³³⁴ and entered the top of the head of the god ³³⁵ White Supreme Bliss (*bde mchog dkar po*). He experienced inexpressible bliss and his appearance transformed into that of the Daka Hayagrīva.

From the heart center of the Supreme Mother Opulent Goddess of the Space Element³³⁶ emanated a red lotus with sixteen petals, the anthers marked with the syllable ĀH. It entered into the top of the head of the goddess Illusory Bliss Beauty (*sgyu ma bde mdzes*). An indescribable meditation experience blazed within her and her appearance transformed into that of Vajravarāhī. Horse and Pig joined in passionless union.³³⁷

The sound of their union of bliss and emptiness invited the mind streams of the Sugatas of the ten directions. From the heart centers of the blessed Ones, the Victorious ones of the Five Families, various colored lights emanated in the ten directions, cleansing the obscurations of the five poisons of all sentient beings. The lights gathered back here and transformed into a crossed double vajra, the essence of the activity of all the Tathāgathas of the Ten Directions.

That vajra entered into the top of the head of White Supreme

Bliss³³⁸ where it was melted by the fire of great bliss, flowed through his body and entered into the space of Illusory Divine Beauty [Gantok p 18] as wisdom *prāṇa*. This wisdom *prāṇa* was blessed into the *nirmāṇakāya*. A little while after that it miraculously appeared in her lap as a god child blazing with such a magnificent splendor³³⁹ that to see him would bring illumination and to hear him would bring joy. As soon as he was born he began to produce the sound of the hundred syllable mantra.

He was floating in the air in vajra posture the height of an arrow-length above an eight-petaled golden lotus. He raised up this song which teaches the meaning of cause and fruition.³⁴⁰

"Om Maṇi Padme Hūm Hrīh
 From the Buddhafield of the Akanīṣṭha Dharmadhātu
 Blessed Ones of the Five Families of the Victorious Ones,
 know me.
 For I and all sentient beings like space
 Please naturally pacify discursive thoughts of the five
 poisons.
 May we meet the Five Wisdoms of the Five Kāyas.³⁴¹

The single bindu Dharmakāya³⁴²---
 If you see it, buddhahood is delivered in the palm of the hand.
 Nevertheless, for ignorant sentient beings
 Even if you explain it, it is difficult to understand.

According to the Interpretable meaning,³⁴³ gods and men
 Are protected from fear of cyclic existence
 By seeking refuge in the Three Rare and Supreme Ones.
 Suffering is naturally pacified
 By giving birth to the awakened heart (*bodhicitta*) which holds
 others dearer than self.
 Beings of the lower realms, border tribes, and erring gods,
 Those of perverted views, inhabitants of buddhaless lands,
 and the mute:
 When you are free from the faults of these eight states of
 being³⁴⁴

And when you are born in the Central Land, with sense organs
 whole,³⁴⁵ with faith,
 [Gantok:19] Be free from evil actions, inclined to virtue.
 If you don't practice the Holy Dharma in the present,
 [What will happen when he comes,] the one known as Yama,³⁴⁶
 the sharp and swift?
 He comes to friend and foe alike, to good and bad.

The high ones famed as the "sun" and the "moon"
 May seem to pervade the four continents with their rays.
 But there is no way they can overcome the planet Rāhu with
 their light.
 Even so are the high kings; think on them.

The distant red rock cliffs are high and strong.
 Only the vulture can make his way to them.
 And yet there is no way they can beat their rival, the lightning
 meteoric iron.³⁴⁷
 Even so are the mighty unrivaled ones; think on them.

In the third month of summer, tiny creatures emerge above
 ground.
 At harvest time one speck of frost alone will destroy their
 precious lives.³⁴⁸
 The poor and weak are humble and weak; think on them.

Generally, at first you are born in the mother's lap.
 You are fed with soft food, the delicious three sweets.³⁴⁹
 You are dressed in soft clothes, Chinese silk.
 In the middle, you wander in worldly activities.
 You turn the wheel of friends and enemies, passion and
 aggression.
 If you are high up, not satisfied with your station in life, you
 suffer fear of falling low.
 If you are low, you suffer from taxes, war, and corvée labor.
 The strong suffer worrying about how to avoid an evil end.
 If they lose out, then they suffer fear of others' contempt.
 [Gantok 20:1] If you are rich, you suffer because you can't
 manage to keep up your livelihood.³⁵⁰
 If poor, you can't feed your face or clothe your back. ³⁵¹

The suffering of human life is endless, suffering is
 inexhaustible.³⁵²

The four hundred diseases are stirred by sickness as the wind.
 [Stein 10a] Many will die because of sudden obstacles.
 When you are old, you can't bear up against sickness.³⁵³
 An old body is like dry sticks on the river bank.
 Few are those who listen to the words of old speech.
 When the mind is old it gathers all the suffering in the
 kingdom.
 Then you catch a long fatal illness³⁵⁴.
 The nine sweets and the ten delicious flavors nauseate
 you.³⁵⁵
 Your soft and warm bed becomes harder than stone.
 You are fed-up with taking beneficial medicines.
 The sleep guardian³⁵⁶ gets you angry.
 Your grunts and groans are inexhaustible.³⁵⁷
 A day and a night takes forever to pass.³⁵⁸
 The divinations mislead, the incantations no longer work.³⁵⁹
 This short life, so dear to you,³⁶⁰
 Is now without pure dharmas; it is too late for virtuous
 roots;³⁶¹
 For the avaricious who held back generosity,
 It is too late to hope for help in the forty-nine days. ³⁶²

 [Gantok 20:13]On the day when death has come
 Examining the patient is like poking a stone.³⁶³
 On the day when you are facing Yama,
 Averting ceremonies are like a lamp with water for fuel.³⁶⁴
 Your aura of merit goes down and³⁶⁵
 The more you try the worse it gets. ³⁶⁶
 Your field of power (authentic presence) and windhorse are
 expelled and
 Your strength is like a water bubble.
 [Gantok 21:1]The castle of the wargods is turned away.³⁶⁷

 Now your fortress against enemies threatens your own life.³⁶⁸
 All your heroic champion's brave accomplishments³⁶⁹
 Are just a mound of earth piled on top of you.
 The rich man's avaricious inner stores³⁷⁰
 Are just the wooden stake of attachment driven into the
 ground.³⁷¹
 You wasted your life on food and clothes.³⁷²
 When you die you are naked with empty [Stein 10b] hands.
 Even the high king on his golden throne
 Must pillow his head on cold earth.

And the queen with silken robes on her back
 Now burns in an oven, clothed in red flames.
 Even, the youthful tigers in their prime, with the six
 attributes of a warrior³⁷³
 Are dragged around by the King of Birds, the vulture.
 And the mothers and aunts with their six accomplishments
 Are bound tightly hand and foot by the black rope.
 In the red Charnal Ground of Stupifying Fear³⁷⁴
 On the day when the corpse is cut to pieces, showing the round
 white marrow,
 It's all over--- too late for regret.

The hot and cold of hell is unbearable.
 The hungry ghosts are starving and parched.
 The animals are bound and stupid.
 The jealous gods struggle and die by the knife.

And we of the higher realms:
 Even if we avoid sickness and old age, are carried away by
 distractions.³⁷⁵
 Seven days before death the portents arise:³⁷⁶
 [Gantok 22:]The brightness of their lovely palaces fades.
 Their dear wives withdraw far away.
 The sweet-smelling garlands of flowers wither.
 The body starts to stink, rhinoceros skinned, its light
 obscured.
 The negative force of cause and effect blazes up in terrible
 suffering and
 Regret is just a cause of further suffering.³⁷⁷

All you thoughtless and crazy beings of the six realms
 Don't wander, turn your mind within.
 Lord gurus, resolve us about the nature of mind.
 Imperial rulers, do not mistake cause and effect.
 Mighty ones, do not disturb the king's political plans.³⁷⁸

[Gantok 22:]Rich men, offer and give most generously.³⁷⁹
 Ordinary people, do prostrations, circumambulations, and
 Manis.³⁸⁰
 If you do not fail to gain the state of being Free and Well-
 favored,
 The more exertion and mindfulness you practice,
 The more you will not fail to be free and well-favored.

I am the Great Vajrasattva
 The primordially pure Dharmadhatu Samantabhadra.
 O beings pervaded by impure illusions,
 Listen to this song's words and put their sense into practice.
 Carefully guard that understanding, the gem of great price.
 If you don't understand the song, I won't repeat it anyway."³⁸¹

Thus he proclaimed this dharma in a great voice which was heard by all sentient beings, either moving or unmoving, each in their own language and each according to his or her own capacity.

Then, knowing that the time had come to grant empowerment (abhiṣeka)³⁸², from the Glorious Copper Colored Mountain on Cāmara, the Master, Lotus Skullgarland called forth the mindstream of the Buddhas. From his forehead white rays of light invoked the mindstream of the Buddha Vairocana in the Akanīṣṭha Buddhafield. From Padma's heart center blue rays of light invoked the mindstream of Akṣobhya in Abhirati. From his navel yellow rays of light evoked the mindstream of Ratnasambhava in the Buddha field of Glorious Beauty. From his throat center red rays of light invoked the mindstream of Amitābha of Sukhāvati. From his secret center green rays of light invoked Amoghasiddhi of Supreme Action Buddha Field.

Then he raised this song in order to supplicate for the fruition of the truth. ³⁸³

"OM³⁸⁴ The Five Poisons purified are the Wisdoms of the Five Buddhas.³⁸⁵

I invoke the the mind stream of the Buddhas from unborn space.

The Five Elements purified are the Five Goddesses.³⁸⁶

From unceasing space³⁸⁷ arise for the benefit of beings.

From within the union of supreme skillful means and

dharmata, which is emptiness
 Appears the self-existing form of wisdom and compassion.³⁸⁸
 To the nirmāṇakāya who will rescue beings from the flood,
 Grant empowerment so that he may conquer the hosts of Māra.
 This is the meaningful song of self-luminosity.³⁸⁹

According to the traditional worldly analogies,
 It is a poor guru who has neither empowerment nor textual
 transmission.
 It is a poor student who has not taken the sacred vows of
 samaya;
 It is a poor ruler who has no supporters to honor and magnify
 him,
 And poor lower classes who have no respect.

Weapons which are neither sharp nor tempered,
 Even if they have both handle and sheath, cannot handle the
 enemy.
 If you have the Main Six Herbal Ingredients, but not the
 Additives,
 Even if the medicine is fragrant, shining, and wholesome, it
 will not heal.³⁹⁰ [Gantok 24:1]
 Finally, a field which has not been fertilized,³⁹¹
 Even if it sprouts, will not ripen to the six fruits.

So therefore enthrone him, praise, and compliment him.
 For the weapon of compassion cuts off the lives of enemies.
 The medicine of blessings heals the Six Realms.
 And Buddha Activity makes the field of disciples flourish.

Fulfilling the aspiration to liberate all beings,
 May the auspiciousness of complete fulfillment of goals be
 present."

Thus he invoked the compassionate mind streams of the five
 Buddhas and their consorts with these words.³⁹²

Then from Akanistha Vairocana's forehead light rays streamed
 out in the ten directions.³⁹³ They purified the obscurations of

ignorance³⁹⁴ of all sentient beings and gathered back here in the form of a syllable OM, the embodiment of the body blessings³⁹⁵ of the Sugatas of the ten directions. This became a white wheel with eight spokes.³⁹⁶ The wheel traveled in the realm of the mid-heavens and hovered before the divine child. From it came the self-proclaiming sound resounding with these words:

"OM From the self-existing Wisdom of Dharmadhātu³⁹⁷
 Lord of beings, you were just born.
 You are the king who possesses various magical
 transformations.³⁹⁸ [Gantok 24:1]
 You dispel delusions from deluded minds.³⁹⁹
 It is sad to see the unhappiness of sentient beings.⁴⁰⁰
 The border tribes, because of doubt and delusion,
 Mental obscuration and ignorance---
 If they have free time, still wander in the activities of cyclic
 existence.
 Even though they are well-favored, they are too lazy for the
 Dharma.

When the time for death finally arrives,
 Though the Dharmaleless guru has a big golden hat,
 Though he radiates majesty and seems quite high.
 He will have trouble showing the path to the next life.

The ruler who has no gentle mind,
 Looks great when he wrathfully executes the law.⁴⁰¹
 Throws his karma in the air, like a child throws a stone.⁴⁰²

The disciple who has taken no sacred vow of samaya
 Even though he is learned and seems widely read,⁴⁰³
 His explanations are like a mist of spit.⁴⁰⁴

The ungenerous rich man,
 Even though he has collected bribes through avarice,
 At the time of death will be naked and empty-handed.
 These are the philosophers of cyclic existence.

On this learned child is bestowed

The name "Joyful to Hear." (Thöpa Gawa).
 Because he is full of blessings, this buddha
 Is joyful to hear and exhausts sin.
 This ruler who is sovereign of a vast area,
 If he remains will make the kingdom happy.⁴⁰⁵
 May his body defeat the Enemies of the Four Directions.
 May everyone who has relations with him be free from rebirth
 in the lower realms.
 May everybody who sees him be purified into the Buddha Land.
 BUDDHA ABHIŚINYCA OM"

After the Wheel had uttered these words, it dissolved into the child's forehead. From this day on he was known as Joyful to Hear.

⁴⁰⁶At dawn the next day from the Pure Land of Abhirati, from the heart center of Aksobhya light rays streamed out in the ten directions. They purified the obscurations of aggression of all sentient beings [Stein 12b] and gathered back here in the form of a blue five-pointed vajra, the embodiment of the mind blessings of the Victorious Ones of the ten directions and dissolved into the heart center of the divine child. As a result he mastered the treasury of the Meditative Absorptions (*samādhi*). Then he was offered a bath by the entire assembly of the Five Families of Deities, who bathed him with nectar (amṛta) poured from a precious vase and this song was sung:

"HŪM From the great vajra space of emptiness
 Flows forth the nectar (amṛta) of mirror-like wisdom.
 May the weapons of vajra aggression
 Conquer the hosts of enemies, the poisons (*kīeṣas*).

The ignorant angry sentient beings of cyclic existence:
 The guru who has no compassion,
 Even though he exerts himself in mantra recitation and
 retreat practice,

He will still not become a buddha.
 The ruler who has no gentle mind (*maitri*)
 May be strict in the law, but his people will leave the country.
 The hero who has no restraint,
 May be both hearty and brave, yet he will die by the sword.
 Therefore, in the savage minds of sentient beings
 May no sinister thoughts of aggression arise.⁴⁰⁷

Supreme being, divine child, Joyful to Hear (Thöpa Gawa),
 Even though you are not obscured by the three poisons,
 I grant you the abhiṣeka of the completely pure Three Kāyas.
 May you spontaneously accomplishment the Buddha Activity of
 Pacifying.⁴⁰⁸
 VAJRA ABHIŚINYCA HŪM"

[Gantok: 27] Thus they bathed him with nectar.

Again, from the Beautiful Pure Land, from the naval of
 Ratnasambhava⁴⁰⁹ light rays streamed out, purifying the
 obscurations of pride of all sentient beings. They gathered back here
 as all the qualities and merit of the Victorious Ones of the ten
 directions in the form of a blazing jewel and dissolved into the
 naval of the divine child. He was then adorned by the bodhisattvas of
 ten levels⁴¹⁰ with priceless precious ornaments: jeweled crest
 ornaments, throat, shoulder, hand, leg and ear ornaments, rings, the
 long and short necklaces of crystal, the divine clothes of Panycalika
 silk and so forth, ornaments worthy of a Mahāsattva--- with all of
 these he was clothed and enthroned. And then this auspicious song
 was raised:

"TRAM The precious Wisdom of Equanimity,
 The Noble Jewel who completely purifies pride,
 The Meritorious one, the accumulator of all merit
 And the great source of Jewel Wisdom, Ratnasambhava.⁴¹¹

In order to tame those difficult to tame,⁴¹² you are granted
empowerment,
So that your compassion may achieve the benefit of beings.

In the sky of your merciful compassion
May the auspiciousness of unbiasedness be present.
For disciples who are like constellations,
May the auspiciousness of your limitless and fast Buddha
Activity be present.
For your life span which is like a vajra,
May the auspiciousness of indestructibility and deathlessness
be present.
For the swastika of your vows to benefit beings,
May the auspiciousness of unchanging spontaneity be present.
[Gantok 28: i] By these beautiful ornaments, the Precious Jewel
Crown,
May the auspiciousness of exalted majesty be present.⁴¹³
By these earrings and rich golden necklaces,
May the auspiciousness of the sweet sound of your fame
pervade space.
By these silken, soft, and broad vestments,
May the auspiciousness of conquering the hosts of Māra be
present.

Great Being, precious Joyful to Hear,
Although you are not attached to conventional ornaments,
You are granted the empowerment of these five precious
qualities.
May your vast Buddha Activity be spontaneously accomplished.
RATNA ABHIŚINYCA TRAM."

Thus he was enthroned with auspiciousness.

Again, from the Pure Land of Sukhāvati, from the throat center
of Amitābha light rays streamed out, purifying the obscurations of
passion of all sentient beings. They gathered back here as the
embodiment of the blessings of the speech of all the Sugatas in the
form of a red lotus and dissolved into the throat center of the divine

child. He was then empowered with the Sixty Limbs of Speech and Singing.⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, the symbol and support of the sacred vows of all the Sugatas, a golden five-pointed vajra fell from the sky into his hand:

"HRĪH ⁴¹⁵ From the space of passion purified as Discriminating
 Awareness Wisdom
 Great desire, great bliss,⁴¹⁶
 Lord of dispassionate Padma Speech,⁴¹⁷
 You are the supreme skillful means of coemergent wisdom.
 [Gantok 29:1] This vajra is the symbol for your sacred vows
 Until the ocean of cyclic existence is emptied,
 You will free the ocean of sentient beings.
 Having realized the ocean of wisdoms,
 May you fulfill the ocean of aspiration prayers.

Receive the empowerments of the gods above.
 Remind the *nyen* in the middle of their previous vows.
 And below open the treasury of the *nāgas*.
 From Ling, the Country of Desire,⁴¹⁸ look after the benefit of
 beings.
 The Black Māras and the Golden Hor,⁴¹⁹
 Those with form and those without--- bind them all by oath.

Although The Bodhisattva who looks after the benefit of
 beings
 Needs no encouragement to keep these vows,
 Nevertheless we ask: please take care to pull them out of the
 ocean of cyclic existence.
 May you spontaneously accomplish the activity of
 magnetizing.⁴²⁰
 PADMA ABHIŚINYCA HRĪH."

This song was heard, pronounced in the mid-heavens.

Again, from the Pure Land of Completely Accomplished Action,
 from the secret center of the Blessed One Amoghasiddhi light rays
 streamed out, purifying the obscurations of jealousy of all sentient

beings. They dissolved into the secret center⁴²¹ in the form of a green double vajra, the essence of the Activity of all the Sugatas. He received empowerment in all the vast [Stein 14a] Buddha Activities. Furthermore, a silver bell fell into his left hand: it represented the spontaneously accomplished Four Karmas of all the Sugatas.⁴²²

[Gantok30:1] "ĀH Jealousy is purified into Amoghasiddhi,
The completely pure Wisdom of All-Accomplishing Action.⁴²³
The greater voice of the Great Wrathful One⁴²⁴
Overpowers the self-proclamation of the Five Poisons,
Tames the five dark ages, subjugates them with its skillful
means.

The Great Powerful One, the Tamer of all others,
Conquers the great mountain of the Phenomenal world.⁴²⁵
You who have perfected all Buddha Activity,
From great billowing clouds of your peaceful compassion
Flash out the terrible thunderbolts
Which conquer the rock mountain of the pride of great sinners.

The guru who is full of attachment to rich offerings⁴²⁶
If he is not converted by the philosophical systems of the
learned,
Then his torso is filled with nothing but words.⁴²⁷

The ruler who is full of pride,
If karma does not strike him in the face,⁴²⁸
Then it will ripen as agony for the kingdom and people.

Like the callow youth, full of himself, the Tiger of the
East,⁴²⁹
If a real warrior doesn't knock him out ⁴³⁰
Then his hollow bragging will be like the roaring of a Dragon.
Like a stuck-up young girl, full of pride,⁴³¹
If famine does not exhaust her arrogance,⁴³²
Then her brash self-centeredness will be high as the sky.
Therefore in this time of the dark age
The tough guys full of black thoughts, ⁴³³
Have disrespect for cause and effect and pile-up perverted
aspirations.

Let not your compassion abandon them; liberate them into the
pure lands.

Strike down the aggregates (*skandhas*) with the vajra
weapon.⁴³⁴

Dissolve their consciousnesses into this vajra of
Dharmadhātu.

[Gantok 33:1]Your warriorship is the embodiment of
compassion.

Even though you do not hesitate to apply your [Stein 14a]
Buddha Activity,

May your wrathful Buddha Activity be spontaneously
accomplished.

KARMA ABHIŚINYCA ĀH."

Thus he received abhiseka.

All the assemblies of great, supreme wrathful deities
enthroned him completely with the four empowerments.⁴³⁵ Then the
divine child, Joyful to Hear himself was full of learning, good
qualities, splendor and dignity unrivaled in the world.

This was the Chapter on the Abhiseka and the Chapter on the
Birth by Magical Transformation, known as "Blessings Flaming
Continuously Like a Stream."⁴³⁶ It has been composed in ordinary
language, easy to understand.

214 *The Words of My Perfect Teacher*, by the Padmakra Translation Group, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994).

215 *lha gling gab tse dgu skor - lha gling* literally means "the divine Ling." This is the short title of the first book of the epic. For a full explanation of the meaning of this title, see the introduction to this dissertation.

216 *gab tse dgu skor* - The subtitle is *gab tse dgu skor*, the nine-squared divination board. Every informant I questioned about this title gave a different explanation, usually with some specific supporting documentation as well.

For example, the *gab tse* was identified by one scholar as a diagram used in Chinese

and Tibetan divination practices based on the theory of the five elements (Chinese: *wu xing*). The Chinese equivalent of the *gab tse* appears to be the *Chiu Ku*, the Nine Palaces. It is used extensively in Tibetan medicine. See *Tibetan Medical Paintings: Illustrations to The Blue Beryl Treatise of Sangye Gyamtso*, ed. by Parfionovitch, Meyer, and Gyurme Dorje. For a color photo of a *gab tse dgu skor* see *Tarap: Une vallée dans l'Himalaya*, text and photos of Corneille Jest, postface by Andre Leroi-Gourhan (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1974), p. 22.

The nine-squared divination board also exists in native Tibetan religions such as Bön, where it is called *rdel drug* or *lde'u 'phrul*. Counting with a forty-two bead crystal mala (or rosary) and sets of black and white stones, a diagram is generated with nine squares, each representing a deity, demon, or beast with symbolic significance. For a detailed description see Namkhai Norbu, *Drung Deu Bon: The Narrations, the cult of the enigma and the magico-religious traditions* (unpublished manuscript).

The reference here is somewhat obscure. Usually subtitles are metonymies for the main title of the text. Thus, this book of the epic is like a *dgu skor*, a divination board, because it is magical, well-ordered, and based on principals of Sino-Tibetan astrology. Astrological calculations of the appropriate moment for great accomplishments, the "glorious gateway," constitute one of the principal themes in the *Lha gLing*. In this book Gesar appears as an incarnation of buddha activity. As such, he unites the absolute realm of heaven with the actual realm of earth, just as a divination board can be used to uncover the relations between the patterns of heaven expressed as elemental cycles as the patterns of earth, expressed as historical events.

The nine *skor* (squares) could also refer to several Mongolian and Tibetan versions of the *Gesar* which are organized into nine "limbs," each describing a major episode in the story of Gesar's life and his victories over the Enemies of the Four Directions.

Lama Tendzin Samphel, however, finds an even more detailed explanation of the term in another version of the *Lha gLing* which was recently published in China. This is a prose version of the epic transcribed in the 80's from oral performances of a bard named Dragpa (Tib: Grags pa). The performance was from memory and did not use a text. According to Bard Dragpa's version, *gab rtse* indeed is a kind of divination, but *dgu skor*, rather than "nine squares (or circles)," means "nine times." See Drung mkhan Grags pa (Grags pa, the bard), *gLing ge sar rgyal po'i sgrung: Lha gling gab rtse dgu skor*, transcribed by members of the Society for the Swift Preservation of the Ling Epic of the Ge-Ö Tibetan College (*bod l'jong dge os slop gra chen mo'i gling sgrung mgur skyob tsho chung*) in 1982. (Peking: *Mi rigs dpe'i skrun khang* (Ethnic Publishing House) 1984).

The Buddhist gods meet in a divine assembly and decide to send a god named Joyful to Hear to the land of men. But Joyful to Hear refuses to cooperate. He takes the form of a divine child and escapes from the assembly. He is then hunted by Padmasambhava and Avalokiteśvara using the *gab rtse* divination, which must be used nine times, as he takes successively nine different forms. Here is an example from the beginning of Chapter II of Dragpa's version:

"Then in a moment he (Joyful to Hear) went to Mount Kailash, the Realm of the Buddha Lord Aksobhya, and there he hid himself. The gods, not knowing where the divine child had gone, decided to do the first of their divinations (*gab rtse*). But they did not manage to find him that way. So Lord Amitābha and Jetsün (Noble and

Venerable) White Tārā looked for him with their special Eyes of Wisdom. They saw that the divine child was on Mt. Kailash in the realm of Lord Aksobhya, picking many red and white flowers.

Then Master Padmasambhava took on the magical transformation of an eight-year old boy and went to the place where the divine child was picking flowers. He asked him, "What are you doing here?" The divine child answered, "I abide here, living on the food of inexhaustible meditative concentration (samādhi). The other child said, "On Mt. Kailash is a spectacle like none other. Why don't we two brothers go there together; it will be most amusing." The divine child was in agreement and they went to the peak of Kailash. There they saw two white lions with turquoise manes, roaring and leaping back and forth here and there. [page 12]

When the divine child saw this, he turned and looked carefully at his friend and saw that he was really the Precious Master. Like the wind the divine child flew to the Palace of Dharma in India. He landed on the right hand slope of Vulture Peak Mountain in the place known as Supreme Steed Mahābala. There he transformed into a colt unlike any other horse in the world. He was surrounded by rainbow lights in the five colors. He abided surrounded by many horses who cavorted about, running back and forth, and leaping here and there.

The Precious Master's emanation as a young boy transformed into the semblance of the Supreme Steed Wisdom and herded the colt back towards home. On the way back, they passed the Palace of the Five Peaked Mountain (Wu T'ai Shan) in Eastern China. This was the Chinese realm of Mañjuśrī. The colt ran into a maṇḍala of red rays of light which were emanated by the heart center of Mañjuśrī. The divine child thought, "If I could hide myself here, it would be fun." So he said to Mañjuśrī, "The gods, nyen, and serpents (*lha*, *snyen*, and *klu*) say that I must go into the world, all the way down to the land of men. But I'm not quite ready to do that at this time. Mañjuśrī, will you give me a hiding place here?" So Mañjuśrī secreted the divine child inside his begging bowl and there he stayed."

Khenpo Palden Sherap agreed with this interpretation, saying that the nine *skor* refer to a series of playful magical emanations of the god who would become Gesar. In the epic Gesar himself, as a human being, will also assume various *sgyu sprul*, magical transformations, Proteus-like changes in form and aspect.

217 *Ge sar nor bu dgra' 'dul* - "Gesar, the Jewel, the Tamer of Enemies," the most frequent of Gesar's epithets.

218 This introductory poem is probably written by the editor, for it is a composition in Classical Tibetan in the compact, many-layered, allusive style of *snyan ngag* (Skt: *kāvya*), Sanskrit court poetry.

219 Khenpo Palden Sherap's commentary: "Pride, which is a fault of mind, gives rise to haughtiness, which is pride on the level of speech and mind. This leads finally to arrogance, which is the highest point or "rocky peak" of the mountain of evil merit from perverted aspirations.

220 "Four-fold Activity" refers to the Four Karmas or four activities (Tib: *phrin las nram bzhi*; Skt: *catvāri samudacāra*) of a Buddha: pacifying, magnetizing (or subduing), enriching, and destroying. Once a being has attained complete Buddhahood, then a special ability to benefit

the unenlightened occurs as four natural activities which effortlessly and constantly unfold.

221 The one who can perform the four karmas possesses ultimate skillful means (Skt: *upāya*). These are symbolized by the vajra, the adamantine lamaic sceptre. "Hundred points" is a classical epithet for the vajra. It refers to the notion that the original vajra was a weapon with a hundred sharpened points which could destroy an enemy. The vajras used in Tantric rituals only have three, five, or nine points.

222 Khenpo Palden Sherap gives the following commentary: this stanza or *śloka* goes to the heart of the *Gesar Epic*. Although the Buddhas usually teach sentient beings gently and in stages, Gesar shows immediately and forcefully the key point which must be understood in order to escape suffering, the law of cause and effect. His manner of teaching is forceful and intense. That is why it manifests as the destructive action of a warrior. Thus the epic with its violence and warfare is considered a special *upāya* or skillful means. Through its stories, in which symbols of passion, aggression, and ignorance are actually killed by the warrior Gesar, the teachings are given in a way which can make an impression on the dull and warlike Tibetans.

Thus, even warfare and seeming wrath can be an expression of compassion. The operant word here is *snyl*, "destroy." Gesar's principal activity is to destroy the enemies of the Kingdom of Ling, symbolizing the ability of enlightened mind to destroy all mental obstacles to awakening. In this way, it is possible for Buddhist teachers to justify the production of a martial epic.

Alexander Macdonald, in his studies of a famous collection of Tibetan stories, finds the same sort of lamaistic agenda. Here putatively oral folk takes are deployed to teach essential points in the Buddhist path. See in particular "Cendrillon au Tibet" in *Tibet Civilisation et Société, Colloque organisé par la Fondation Singer-Polignac à Paris, les 27, 28, 29 avril 1987* (Paris: Éditions de la Fondation Singer-Polignac, 1990, pp. 143-150).

223 This four-line verse is not in the Tibetan text of Stein. It is probably an addition introduced originally in the Sichuan People's Publishing edition, following the Chinese custom of adding verse introductions to chapters of novels. Khenpo Palden Sherap agrees. It was probably composed by a Tibetan Nyingma lama, however, because it reflects the structure of Mipham's Gesar liturgies. Gesar is a *nirmānakāya* (Tib: *sprul sku*) or emanation of Avalokiteśvara (T: *spyān ras gzig dbang phyug*), the bodhisattva of compassion and patron of Tibet. Avalokiteśvara, "the Noble, Supreme Compassionate One," is the *sambhogakāya* or Speech manifestation of Padmasambhava, who is the ultimate form of the Buddha, the *dharmakāya*. Thus Gesar is the body, the Bodhisattva is the speech, and Padmasambhava is the mind of the Buddha.

Here the first chapter of the *Lha gLing* is summarized as if it were a tantric visualization practice: Avalokiteśvara dissolves into Padmasambhava and the combination of the two principals, compassion and skillful means grant *abhiseka* or empowerment to the god Joyful to Hear (*thos pa dga' ba*) who will incarnate in Book II of the epic as Gesar.

224 *rgyu mtshan* - short for *rgyu mtshan lam*, the Path of Causal Characteristics or the Mahāyāna. Distinguished from the Fruition Path of the Secret Mantra, Vajrayāna or Tantra.

225 The three kings who ruled during Tibet's imperial period, they are credited with bringing Buddhism to Tibet: Songtsen Gampo (*srong btsan sgam po*, 569-650 or 617-650), Trisong Deutsen (*khri srong de'u b tsan*, 790-844), and Raipachen (*ral pa can*, 815-841 or 866-901).

- 226 *Padma thod phreng* - epithet for Padmasambhava.
- 227 *blon dbang btsan* - This passage could be read "Devil ministers, through their power (*dbang*) and might (*btsan*) turned the subjects from the command of their lord." I have translated this passage as if it were a Tibetan trisyllabic list: thus *dbang* is noblemen (short for *mi dbang*) and *btsan* is warlord (short for *btsan po*). In Chapter II of Book I the epic uses these terms in this way, deploying them to distinguish distinct social categories in Tibetan society. The lists usually proceed hierarchically, starting with the *rgyal po* (king) and *blon po* (ministers) and working down to the common man. This hierarchy is clearly set forth in Chapter II of the *Lha gLing*, when the political and social structure of Ling is described in detail. For a full explanation of Mipham's political theory and his hierarchical view of society see Mipham's excursus on the Nitiśāstras: *rGyal po lugs kyi bstan bcos sa gzhi skyong ba'i rgyan* (Commentary on the Art of Ruling, the Ornament of the Earth Protector), in Vol. I (Volume Om) of the sDe ge Monastery edition of the collected writings of Mipham, pp.1- 79.
- 228 *rten bral dpal kha* - the glorious gateway of auspiciousness. Tendzin Samphel explains that this is a term from Tibetan astrology. When the planets, asterisms and formations of heavenly bodies are in the right position then there is a *rten 'brel*, literally, a connection--- a moment of good fortune. The *dpal kha*--- the "glorious opening," is the special opportunity that obtains when the patterns of heaven are in this disposition. At this moment the Tibetan state could have experienced wealth and success if the proper actions had been taken and the proper ceremonies had been performed.
- In particular, this was the moment when the power of the Tibetan Imperium and the dynasty of Songtsen Gampo could have been stabilized. Then the Buddhist religion would have remained unchallenged in Tibet instead of undergoing a period of suppression under King Lang Darma. But through the opposition of an anti-Buddhist faction in Tibetan government, Padmasambhava was prevented from completing his ritual taming of the nation. As a result, the precious astrological opportunity was missed and the gateway to good fortune was mistaken and missed.
- 229 "gazing with unbearable compassion - In Stein's edition there is merely the word *mthong*, "to see" or "gaze." The Sichuan edition changes this to *bzod*, which means "to accept," probably in error for *ma bzod*, "unbearable." According to Khenpo Palden, both versions mean the same thing and should be translated "gaze upon them with unbearable..." This gazing down from above is typical of Avalokiteśvara, whose name is interpreted in traditional etymologies as "the lord who gazes down upon the suffering of sentient beings."
- 230 Amitāyus, the Buddha of Limitless Life, and Amitābha, the Buddha of Limitless Light, also figure regularly in Mipham's Gesar rituals. In this case, the order of emanation of divine principles will be from Amitābha as dharmakāya, through Avalokiteśvara as sambhogakāya, down to Gesar as *nirmānakāya*. One more variation we will see involves a wrathful form of Amitābha as Hayagrīva.
- 231 The following two poems are also in Classical Tibetan. They are based on a commonplace extended metaphor. Cyclic existence (*samsāra*) is a whirlpool in which unenlightened sentient beings are drowning. The buddhas and bodhisattvas pull them from the flood with long poles. At the tip of each pole is the iron hook of compassion. But sentient beings must possess the iron ring of faith and devotion or else there is nothing for the hook to grasp.
- 232 The section in brackets is not in Stein's edition.

233 the Great God White Luminosity: (*lha chen od idan dkar*) The Tibetan reception of this name seems to be that it is simply the name of some epic deity. No Tibetan source identifies *lha chen od idan dkar* as anybody in particular. Nevertheless, *'od idan dkar* is similar to some of the epithets of the Indian god Brahmā, who figures so richly in legends of the life of the Buddha. When asked if White Luminosity might not be this deity, Khenpo Palden admitted it would make great sense, for Brahmā is worshipped extensively as a local protector in Tibetan Buddhist Tantra and he is identified with important local deities such as Pehar.

Brahmā also figures actively in the Tibetan version of the Rāmāyana. He is father and grandfather to great heroes who are born to free the world from evil demons. See J.W. de Jong, *The Story of Rāma in Tibet: Text and Translation of the Tun-huang Manuscripts*, (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1989), pp.9-12. It may be that the appearance of this grandfather of Gesar is an influence from a Tibetan version of this medieval Hindu epic.

234 None of the above names -- Great God White Luminosity (*lha chen od idan dkar*), Supreme Mother Mandā Divine Beauty (*yum mchog man dā lha mdzes*), Supreme Bliss Good Nature (or possibly, Good Mane)(*bde mchog ngang yag*), and Divine Princess Illusory Beauty (*lha lcam sgyu ma mdzes*) -- are identifiable deities. But all of these names have the sound of typical epic deities, that is, native Tibetan gods as opposed to figures of Indian origin.

235 EVAM – Sanskrit for "Thus," the first word of any Buddhist sutra, "Thus have I heard..." But in Tantric Buddhism EVAM is a code symbol for the unification of male and female principles, of wisdom and skillful means, wisdom and compassion, etc.

236 Miraculous birth (Skt. *upapādhuka*, Tib. *rdzus te skyes*): sentient beings in Buddhist cosmology are distinguished by their methods of birth into four categories (Skt. *catvāri-yanaya*, Tib. *skye gnas bzhi*): womb-born, egg-born, born from heat and moisture, and spontaneously or miraculously born. See *Abhidharmakośa* III, c-d, Louis de la Vallée Poussin, II, 26-28. Later in this chapter we will see an extraordinary, detailed description of the stages in the birth of a heavenly deity, the stages in a "miraculous birth."

237 Palace of Lotus Light...: (T:*Padma 'Od*) The passage describing this locality is a set piece of entertaining grotesquerie in parallel prose. It is reminiscent of liturgical descriptions of charnal grounds and other horrific localities in tantric visualization texts. Padmasambhava, The Lotus Born, lives in a magical palace surrounded by four terrifying demons of the complex pantheon of native Tibetan religion.

Tuiku Ugyen in *Dakini Teachings: Padmasambhava's Oral Instructions to Lady Tsogyal*, trans! by Erik Pema Kunsang, (Boston: Shambhala, 1990) gives a modern description:

According to the story, Padmasambhava descended to Bodhgaya and stayed there for some time. He then went on to his pure land, which is known as Sangdok Palri, the Glorious Copper-Colored Mountain. Physically it is a large island, a kind of subcontinent, situated in the ocean to the southwest of Bodhgaya. The island has several levels. The lower levels are inhabited by rāksas. According to the predictions of Buddha Shakyamuni, these cannibal spirits would invade the known world in a later historical period when the average life span of human beings would approach twenty years. Posing a great danger, the rāksas would subdue and destroy all human beings. The Buddha also predicted that Guru Rinpoche should go to their continent and conquer these rāksas....

The main mountain on this copper-colored island descends deep below the ocean into the nāga realm. At the peak the summit pierces the skies even to the level of the Brahmā world in the Realm of Form. On the very tip of this mountain there is a miraculously manifested buddha realm with three levels. Uppermost is the dharmakāya emanation of Guru Rinpoche, as Buddha Amitāyus; in the middle level is Guru Rinpoche's sambhogakāya form, Avalokiteśvara, and on the ground level is the nirmanakāya form, Guru Rinpoche himself, surrounded by the eight manifestations.

238 *rāksasa* - In general, we will translate the term *srinpo* by cannibal demon, rather than giving the Sanskrit *rāksasa*. However, in this instance the Tibetan text actually transliterates the Sanskrit, reinforcing the sense of Padmasambhava as an Indic figure. Vināyaka is also given in Sanskrit.

239 The classes of deities mentioned in this passage have two kinds of names. One is the Tibetan name that pre-existed the Buddhist conquest of Tibet. As such, they are characters from a Central Asian animistic or shamanistic cosmology. But the Tibetan name is also used as a translation of the names of certain Indian deities and thus every Tibetan name of a deity or fantastic monster can be read in two ways--- as a name for an Indian deity in a Buddhist narrative or as a name for a Tibetan local deity in an indigenous narrative.

These deities, of course, are also often referred to by phonetic transliterations of their Sanskrit names. In this case, the bifocality is not as strong.

So, for example, Yama is the proper name of the Indian god of death, a character from ancient Vedic religion. Yama is also the name for a type of man-killing Tibetan local demon who was originally called a *shinjê* (*bshin.rje* = death-lord). And so, *Shinjê* has become a translation for the god of death, Yama, and remains the name both of that supernatural individual and of that class of demons.

Apparently, as Buddhism dominated local religions, the descriptions of these local demons absorbed elements of Buddhist iconography. Thus, the *shinjê* who abound in non-Buddhist contexts are probably imagined in Buddhist form with bulls' horns and riding oxen, like the Indian god of death. Of course, the Sanskrit name, *ya ma*, could be used as well.

240 *phub* - literally, a hump of white light.

241 Here begins the first epic song of the *Lha gLing*. It is impossible to translate the humour in this song, because it is based on a single pun repeated again and again. The word for purpose, aim, end, matter, cause, meaning, and court case is *don* (pronounced *dön*). A word for evil spirit (*gdon*) is also pronounced *dön*. *Döns* are special spirits who torture individuals causing sudden bursts of emotion or even madness. So it is a commonplace that a person can be beset by *döns* to the point that he actually commits suicide to escape their attacks.

242 LU A LA LU: Tibetan epic ballads begin with a half-line of alliterative nonsense syllables which give the tune of the song. A literal rendering would be "A LA, the song is sung with this tune..." THA LA are the same sort of musical sounds, like "tra-la" in English.

243 The epic opens with Avalokiteśvara's mission to Cāmara, an island continent inhabited entirely by cannibal demons. This topos exists throughout Indic literature. In the *Rāmāyana* and the *Lankāvatara Sūtra* there is the island of Lankā, ruled by a demon king and full of *rāksasa*. Tibetan Buddhist sermon literature uses this figure as a symbol for cyclic existence in the Dark Age. For example, Patrul Rinpoche in *The Heart Treasure of the Enlightened Ones* (*thog mtha' bar gsum du dge ba'i gtam ita sgom spyod gsum nyams len dam pa'i snying nor*):

Alas! How depressing to see the beings of this degenerate age!
 Alas! Can anyone trust what anyone says?
 It is like living in a land of vicious man-eating demons---
 Think about it, and do yourself a big favor [by practicing religion].

There is no doubt that the editors of this edition of the *Gesar* had read this poem by Patrul, the common guru of the group of great scholars with whom Mipham was associated in the Eclectic Movement. And here is Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche's commentary on these lines: "If you were to find yourself in a land of man-eating demons, you would find it hard to feel relaxed, knowing that however friendly and polite they pretended to be, they might attack and eat you up at anytime. In the same way, however agreeable ordinary people may seem, you are sure to end up in trouble if you listen to the advice they give you...." *opus cit.* translated by the Padmākara Translation Group, (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), p. 25.

244 What aims can you have which are such great matters?---The structure of this song is typical of many epic ballads. It is basically an argument full of analogies designed to prove a single point. The analogies appear as a series of two-line extended metaphors. The basic argument goes like this: "You had better leave this dangerous place, because you should not be here unless you have a desperate reason. It is like a person who has no reason to kill himself jumping in a river or a person taking his cause to court for a trivial gain." The analogies are given in two-line gnomic expressions such as "If you are not seized by the *döns* (evil spirits) of great suffering./ What is the point in drowning yourself in the river?"

245 *tramens* - wrathful, animal-headed, naked women who serve as protectors of mandalas. They usually carry conventional weapons and stab their enemies to death.

246 *gtam drang po grva sa'i gzhung na 'grim* - (Tendzin Samphel) '*grim* indicates movement which passes from person to person. Here it is the movement of news and straightforward speech. One oddity is that the palace of Padmasambhava is called here a *grva sa*, a monastery.

247 *de e dgos srog gi dmar thang itos* - Obscure passage. Literally, "is this necessary (meaning the stick which teaches the stupid ox)? If so, then look to the red field of your life." Tibetan informants could not understand this either. This sense is probably that the little boy, if he does not understand the demon's threats, will suffer violent punishment.

248 This song shows one of the typical structures of a *Gesar* epic song. Several kinds of internal repetition hold the piece together. First there is a tremendous amount of rhythmical alliteration and internal rhyme, most of the rhymes being word repetitions or nearly complete homonyms. For example, lines 25 through 29 rhyme on the words for understand and necessary: *go na.../ma go na.../de e gö (dgos) na.../ go na.../ma go na...* ("If you understand... if you do not understand...etc.") Most of this song is structured with that sound pattern.

At the same time specific words are repeated in play to unite collections of aphoristic expressions. The first six lines have no special internal structure. But then lines 8 to 14 are all plays on the word "great" (*chen po*) and the word for matters and ends and cases (*don*). All the words underlined in 8 to 14 sound alike in Tibetan. Lines 21 to 24 are plays on the word "straight" (*drang po*). And 25 to 29 are based on repetitions of the words "understand" and

"need" (*go* and *gō*).

1. "LU A LA LU, the song is sung; in case you do not understand,
2. THA LA, this is the melody of the song.
3. Surrounding this land of Cāmara, the country of the demons are
4. The place of the impure Rāksasa and demons, ('*dre*)
5. And the Field of the pure Wisdom Holders (*vidyādhara*s) and dākinīs.
6. This morning, young child, you landed here.
7. From what place and from what direction do you come?

8. What aims can you have which are such great matters?
9. If you do not have in mind great matters,
10. Then it is meaningless to pursue ends of no great importance.
11. If you are not seized by the (*dōn*) evil spirits of great suffering.
12. What is the point in drowning yourself in the river?
13. If you have not become involved in a great quarrel,
14. There is no great cause for you to bring to court.

15. In Cāmara's Blood Lake of Sin
16. [Gtk 5:1] The food of the cannibal demons is hotter than fire.
17. The reach of the cannibal demonesses is longer than a river.
18. The *tramens* seek you out faster than the wind.
19. Why have you come to this place?
20. Who are your father and mother, their race and religion?

21. Keep back no secrets; be straight in your speech.
22. In the monastery our commerce is all straightforward speech.
23. Straight arrows strike the target yonder.
24. If your path is straight, the roads to Ū and China are not long.

25. If you understand, you are a superior man: a single sign is enough.
26. If you don't, you are an aging ox and only understand the stick.
27. If that's what you need, then look to your life.
28. If you understand, this is the explanation of the words.
29. If not, I'm not going to sing this song again."

249 The modern reprintings of the Ling Xylograph fail to notice that this passage is poetry. Indeed, it is missing the usual "LU A LA LU" which begins every epic ballad. Nevertheless, it is an epic ballad, for it is in the same dialect, the same verse form, and occurs in the same couplet structure. The language is similar to the demon minister's-- rough and humorous.

250 "Oh yes, I understand, Sir. The secret meaning of the essence of speech like yours must be clarified": Avalokiteśvara's speech is indeed difficult to understand and Tibetan informants have to give some thought in order to interpret this passage. It has a bifurcate ring structure. First there is a prefatory poem in formal Tibetan with some idiom. Then there is an epic song that ends by returning to the original question, "Do you understand?"

The poem that opens Avalokiteśvara's speech is a preface to his declaration of his identity and his intentions in epic song. The prefatory poem is an extended analogy designed to prove that the essence of an explanation must be understood or else it will help no one. This is

in answer to the demon minister's question at the end of his song: "If you understand, this is the explanation of the words. If not, I'm not going to sing this song again." This question, "Do you understand my song," is a formulaic end to almost any epic song. But here Avalokiteśvara takes it seriously and responds with his verse meditation on the importance of comprehending the essence of a speech: If you do not understand the underlying meaning of a speech, the speech is useless. In the same way, the warmth and light of the Sun and Moon are useless to the Earth, if there is not rain to first soften it.

The total image is from Buddhist cosmology. Dragons (nāgas) are in charge of the activity of all waters. The earth is made up of a huge ocean containing four continents the size of worlds and eight "islands." These twelve land bodies surround the four-sided Mount Meru, which is itself circled by the Sun and the Moon.

251 *mgo 'khor* - "spinning head" is an expression which refers to people being fooled and distracted by a con artist. The extended metaphor is taken from a mixture of Indian and Far Eastern cosmology. Mount Meru is the mythical mountain at the center of the world. The heavenly bodies all rotate around it creating the seasons and all cycles of nature. Thus rain and sun are brought to the fields and crops can grow. If this benefit did not occur, there would be no point in the ceaseless, ever-repeated rotation of heavenly bodies. They would serve no purpose but to confuse people who regard their useless spinning. "Spinning head" is also slang for being duped or conned or hoodwinked.

It is the same with speeches which hide a point in symbols and figures of speech. If the meaning is not understood, then the speeches serve no purpose---are mere distractions for brainless dupes.

252 This section is extremely obscure and the translation of the previous six lines is still seriously at question. However, one thing seems clear. The magical child, Avalokiteśvara, does not want to deliver his petition to the demon ministers, but only to Padmasambhava. This is quite logical. It is unlikely that cannibal demons would be disturbed by a report that an infection of their kind had taken over Central Asia.

253 "Dharma of the Perfections": (*chos pha rol phyin*) - the dharma of pāramitās, in other words, the Mahāyāna, the path of the six perfections or pāramitās (tib: pha rol tu phyin pa). This supplication introduces a verse sermon on the mahāyāna path of compassion. Avalokiteśvara, being the bodhisattva of compassion, could be considered almost the patron saint of the Mahāyāna path.

254 "Just keep to your own place..." - *Rang sa zin* "keep to your own place" is an expression for the natural relaxation of mahāmudrā practice, a special tantric approach to basic meditation practice. By combining the expression "ultimate emptiness" from classical mahāyāna with this tantric term, Avalokiteśvara invokes the special version of mahāyāna practiced by tantrikas, the so-called mantrayāna.

255 Avalokiteśvara's self-description in this song is a formula from mythic tantric biographies. The same exchange occurs in Padma dkar po's biography of Tilopa and the biography of Padmasambhava as well. For example, this from the Padmasambhava biography: Yeshe Tsogyal, *The Lotus-Born: The Life Story of Padmasambhava*, trans. by Erik Pema Kunsang (Eric Schmidt), (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993) p. 34.

...the king asked the little boy:

"Little boy child, who is your father and who is your mother?
 What is your caste and what is your country?
 What food do you live on and what is your purpose here?"

In reply to these questions the boy said:

"My father is the wisdom of spontaneous awareness.

My mother is the Ever-Excellent Lady, the space of all things.

I belong to the caste of indivisible space and awareness.

I have taken the unborn dharmadhatu as my homeland.

I sustain myself by consuming the concepts of duality.

My purpose is the act of killing disturbing emotions."

256 "If you travel back and forth, a merchant, between China and Tibet:" It is difficult to translate this section because the verb *'grim* means to travel or move between two places, stopping along the way many times between the two points. (TS) For example, if you serve wine to people at a dinner table, the verb of motion is *'grim*, to move around between two places. The wine moves between two points stopping at several along the way.

Avalokiteśvara is arguing facetiously that the minister should be an intermediary to introduce him to Padmasambhava. Actually, such an intermediary is unnecessary between two omniscient beings, but this point must be lost on the minister, who does not truly understand the nature of either the king or the suppliant.

Three examples of connections are given to support the request for an intermediary: 1) The merchant buys articles in China and sells them along the way to Tibet. The fact that he sells them does not mean they are valueless to him. Rather, it means that there is a mental connection (*sems thag*) between the two nations. 2) The guru and his disciples in the lineage pass on the teachings from generation to generation. But they do not give the teachings away because they hold them valueless. It is simply an expression of the vows (aspirations) made by the disciples in previous lifetimes to continue their connection (skt: *samaya*) in this one. 3) Likewise, the minister (*blon*) connects the people (*sde*- literally, "the divisions" or "degrees") with the ruler (*sbon*). But this is not because the minister is necessary to the running of the government, that is, the techniques (*thabs chags*) of its operation. Rather he is there in order to connect the law-giver with his subjects.

This is actually, therefore, a sort of verse essay on the Tibetan concept of the *bar-mi*, the mediator or the intercessor--- a functionary who serves in numerous formal, legal, or social relationships. (Macdonald)

257 *so rong* - (Macdonald) "one's own valley." Here the word for Tibet is Ü, or Central Tibet.

258 (TS) The fact that we give these teachings are given and passed on to others does not mean they are not precious to the givers.

259 the law-giver and the monks: *'khrims khrva sa*, (TS) *'khrims* here refers to the manuals of behavior and government for a monastery, *'khrims yig*. *khrva sa* actually means in this context the monks who are bound by these laws. Apparently the government of Padmasambhava on Cāmara is actually modeled on that of a monastic institution.

260 *don gyi nyams rtsa dpon la zhu* - Literally, tell (*zhu*) the master the essence of my meaning." This line brings us around to the beginning of the passage, in which Avalokiteśvara said, "The secret meaning of the essence of speech like yours must be clarified." Note that this speech by Avalokiteśvara begins with a prefatory poem about the importance and subtlety of the message. And then he answers the ministers questions, which were put in the form of an epic song, with another song.

261 *snying rjes ci khyab las khyis phye* - Obscure passage. Literally this seems to say, "Open or clear the action to the extent (*ci khyab*) of your compassion." But this is not a clear sentence in Tibetan.

262 "My import is not small...": From here on the text is full of word-play on the term *dön* (Skt: artha), which means "meaning," "importance," "aim," "wealth," and "ultimate." Avalokiteśvara responds to the demon's question about what must be his great aim (*dön*) in taking the risk of coming to Cāmara. Avalokiteśvara responds that it is the benefit (*dön*) of sentient beings, which is of great import (*dön*). One must understand the meaning (*dön*) of these words. One should indeed have important reasons (*dön*) for taking action: One should not pointlessly (*dön med*) wander in foreign lands. That would be like a person who pointlessly throws himself off a mountain. as if his "life force has been carried away by demons (*gdön*, pro. *dön*)."

263 "...life force has been carried away by demons": (*rang srog 'dre yis khyer le yin*) (TS) Demons may temporarily possess a person and drive that person off the edge of a cliff. Or they may suddenly sweep the person from a mountain side. Or they might temporarily drive a person mad and drive him to his destruction. This particularly happens when a person's "life force" (*srog*) has left his body temporarily and so, the body is suddenly vulnerable to demonic attack or possession. TS: "When a person loses his *srog*, his life, he is no longer himself. A demon has taken his life and so he just jumps off a cliff."

The notion here is that when people pointlessly commit suicide, it must be because they had been suddenly possessed by a demon. If a person is experiencing terrible suffering, it might make sense for him or her to commit suicide. But if one is free from suffering, the only logical explanation is demonic possession.

264 *grog kha* - false friends (TS).

265 "Thus he requested and the demon minister answered, 'Hey, you!': The comic encounter between an ironic Avalokiteśvara and a blustering demon functionary continues with the demon's grotesque speech on the terrors of the court of Padmasambhava. The minister's speech is thick with colloquialism and clever folkish puzzles. His language would be absurd and incongruous in any other situation. But we must remember that this man-eating demon does not necessarily realize that a Buddha in wrathful aspect has taken over the government of his country. He still believes the ancient lineage of demon kings rules, for Padmasambhava appears in his Lotus Skullgariand Power form, which is indeed the physical shape of a *raksasa* or cannibal demon.

266 "...in court they strike with the accuracy of lightning bolts": (*khriṃs kha thog zer bas tsha*) - TS: Literally, "the court's verdicts are hotter than lightning." "Hot," however, (*tsha po*) means in this context accuracy, as in the accuracy of a sharp-shooter. The idea is that the king when he decides a case, cannot be fooled by pretenses or bribed. The penetrating power

and accuracy of his verdict cannot be deflected. It strikes the malefactor like lightning strikes the earth, penetrating, devastating, irresistible, and instantaneous. Tendzin Samphel gives the example that in a corrupt country, you might kill somebody and bribe the judge to escape punishment. But here that cannot happen. The punishment is unavoidable, if deserved.

267 "their sovereignty" (*kheb rgya*) – Literally, "vast cover." It is used to indicate the amount of territory over which a king has sovereignty.

268 "clout" – (*sku dbang*) – lit. their *kāya*-power. Their aura of power. Macdonald suggests "clout" as proper translation, particularly happy considering the metaphor which follows, in which the king's personal political clout is compared to the power of the planet Rāhu to strike one down. According to TS in this case *sku-dbang* means his charisma, his personal field of power, as in *dbang thang* (field of power or "authentic presence"). *sku* here is just the honorific for *lus*, body.

269 Rāhu (*gza' rgod*) – The planet Rāhula. (TS) There is an expression, *gza' rgod kha rlang dug gi spu khri*: "The hair-sharpness of the poisonous breath of Rāhu." Rāhula is a planet with a body like a thread. It is nearly invisible, but periodically it eats the sun or the moon, causing an eclipse. It also has an influence on the earth. When it passes overhead, sometimes its breath strikes an individual who falls under its terrestrial influence. The person cut down by Rāhu's breath falls to earth in an epileptic fit. It is considered quite dangerous. (TS) "Even on auspicious days, such as Padmasambhava's feast day, you might see a person suddenly have an epileptic attack. Tibetans would say that '*gza' rgod phob pa*': 'Rāhu struck him down.' Or they will say that he was cut down by the razor sharp (lit. "hair-sharp"--- sharp enough to split a hair) poisonous breath of Rāhu."

As a metaphor it means this: the force of these demon kings' charisma is so powerful that you respond to his commands in a split-second, as if struck down by the poisonous breath of Rāhu. There are numerous metaphors for the personal power of a king. Sometimes his command is likened to the sting of a scorpion: "if he gives the command, you will surely obey, even as the sting of a scorpion will surely bring death."

270 "...are ready to be punished..." (*chad pas gcod la khad*). *gCod la khad* means "on the verge of..." Literally this passage says, "I, the inner minister and others, when we stand before him, although faultless, are about to be punished." My more colloquial translation aims to communicate the idiomatic quality of the minister's speech at this point. *khyod bu chung mtha' khyams zhig mi dgos dang* ... This section means literally, "you a young child who wanders to the ends of the earth are not needed"--- but "not needed" (*mi dgos dang*) seems to have a concessive sense here of "much less you."---- "Even I, a minister, have trouble here, much less a child like you..."

271 "kick us out for no reason..." (*hab la 'phen la khad*) – obscure passage. We are not sure what *hab* means. There is an expression, *hab thob lgyab pa*. In a Tibetan village a grown-up man could throw a piece of chocolate to a bunch of kids and say, "*hab thob lgyab pa*"---"jump for it."

272 *dnos med sbar* – difficult passage.

273 *thsun chas gzugs* – in recent generations.

274 "guts seem to have broadened...": (*lhu drug gi sku khog rgyas zhan 'dra*) – (TS) Literally, "the organs in their bodies of six limbs have widened"--- extremely colloquial and humorous expression for "they have become more open-hearted."

275 "swept under the carpet": (*rtsva bsre shing bsre*) - TS: Literally, "clear away roots and sticks." (or possibly, "separate roots from sticks") Literally, "to separate the roots and the sticks." It means to have your case brushed aside because you have bribed the officials involved.

276 "We must formally request...": (*khyod e tshud bka' 'dri' zhu chog*) - Literally, "It is permitted to request the kindness of your being allowed to enter." There follow exaggerated warnings of what occurs to the hapless individual who enters without giving fair warning and receiving permission.

277 "break in on him like that": (*har re 'dzul 'gro ye mi phod*) - Lit., "Never has one dared to go ('gro) entering ('dzul) suddenly breaking in (*har re*).

278 Lists like this are found in many *dohas*, spontaneous religious songs. There is a conventional extended figure which is used in these *dohas* and is almost a hallmark of oral religious composition. One takes a conventional enumeration from some classical Buddhist list of teachings and weaves the song around the list, making the literal referent of the song figurative for one of the members of the list. So, for example, if the singer had a staff with four rings on it, each ring might be matched with one of the Four Noble Truths. If he were attacked by a bandit with five weapons, each weapon might be one of the Five Aggregates. Since the Buddha organized most of his teachings into numerical lists of points, it becomes very easy to write a spontaneous song by employing one of these pedagogical lists. This style is not found very much in epic songs, but it is absolutely characteristic of *doha*.

In theory *dohas* are a form of symbolic song descended from the Bengali and Aprabhramsa poetry of the Mahāsiddhas. See Per Kvaerne, *An anthology of Buddhist tantric songs: a study of the Caryagiti*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). But a better model are the songs of Milarepa. See Garma C.C. Chang, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa, Vol I and II* (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1962). An even more accurate translation is the recent French translation, Marie-Jose Lamothe, *Milarepa: les cent mille chants, Vol. I -III* (Paris: Fayard, 1986). See also my essay on the *doha*--- the Afterward to *The Rain of Wisdom: The Vajra Songs of the Kagyü Gurus*, transl. by the Nalanda Translation Committee, (Boulder: Shambhala, 1980), pp.293-332.

The Mani mantra is Om Mani Padme Hūm, the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, the mantra of compassion. The Six Perfections are the virtues practiced by the Mahāyānists. The last eighteen offerings represent the entire world as it is divided into categories by Buddhist psychology: six sense objects--- color, sound, smell, taste, touch, and objects of mind, the six sense consciousnesses---eye consciousness, ear consciousness, etc. nose, tongue, body, and mind, and the six sense organs or faculties which have those consciousnesses--- eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Since color, sound, smell, etc. comprehend the entire material world, and the other twelve include every mental factor in the conscious life of a being, these offerings are in effect every material object in the universe and the mind which cognizes them. So there can be no doubt that Avalokiteśvara's presentation offerings are sufficient and he has a right to the slight tone of sarcasm in the last sentence, "Are these suitable presentation offerings?"

279 "I can't really say they will be okay...": These argumentative aphorisms by the demon minister are very tricky and entertaining to the Tibetan listener. They are slightly cryptic, but fun to figure out, especially to Tibetan readers from the region where this dialect is spoken.

Tibetans from other regions enjoy them too when asked to give them a more careful reading. The joke is that the minister is giving the suppliant a hard time, delaying his entry with cute, complicated sophistries.

The overall argument is that the minister is not sure the thirty presentation offerings of Avalokiteśvara will be enough. He cannot say they are enough, because, after all, there are many situations where a person in need thinks something is valuable which the other party thinks is not. For example, a poor man thinks food is important. But the rich man is not worried about food. In fact he can make the poor man pay more and more for food, he can "tighten-up on his (the poor man's) stomach." The rich man may value a certain horse, but if the merchant has the horse, he can hold out for the highest price. And a lamb may seem like a lot of food to a hungry jackal, but actually the jackal usually eats horses. Maybe the lamb won't do! Just so, this precious human body which possesses thirty excellent characteristics may be prized by Avalokiteśvara, but perhaps Rākṣa Skullgarland will find it of negligible value.

On the other hand, many very valuable things, such as the holy souvenirs of a pilgrimage to Mount Tsari, are valuable as relics and yet they are actually just little bamboo sticks.

The language is saucy and colloquial, as in, for example, stubborn-headed: (*mgo rtsa je mkhregs*) - literally, the "harder his head-root." It is the Tibetan expression for a person who refuses to listen to others, but sticks stubbornly to his own way. In this case, a merchant who refuses to be argued down on his price.

280 "Perhaps this sheep would do": (*sphyang ku rta zan lug ros e brgyag na ste*) - literally, "would the taste of this sheep meat satisfy me like horse meat usually does?" The wolf is used to eating horse, but, seeing a sheep, wonders whether it would do or not. *brgyag na ste* = *brgyag na 'grig gi red ste*.

281 bamboo stick: (*sba smyug tsigs dgu*) - *sba smyug* is a particularly high quality bamboo. *tsigs dgu* just means that it is eight lengths on--- that is, nine nodes. The idea is that it may be the symbol of one's visit to the holy mountain of Tsari in Western Tibet, but it is really just a piece of bamboo.

282 *ja'u zi'i ri lung ded le de / dngul rin chen rta mig kha sprod yin* -- obscure, but decipherable. What is Jauzi Mountain Tea? What does it mean to see that you find yourself meeting the horse's eye of precious silver? It turns out that there was indeed a silver coin which, influenced by Western models, has the figure of a horse's head stamped on one face. And so, "to look right at the horse's silver eye" is to touch money. The transliteration of *Ja'u zi* as a Chinese proper name is pure guess.

283 (TS) "*nom pa chen po*" is the same as to say "*gyu nom pa*" = "rich and abundant."

284 "free and well-favored" (*dal 'byor*)--- Fixed expression from a standard Tibetan contemplation on the advantages of being born as a human being. We should practice the Dharma strenuously right now, because it is difficult to be reborn as a human being, possessing the qualities of being free to practice Buddhism and rich (well-favored) in the physical circumstances which make this possible. See, for example, *The Torch of Certainty*, by Jamgön Kongtrül Lodrö Thayê, translated by Judith Hanson, (Boulder: Shambhala, 1977).

285 "two spans and four cubits": (*'dom gang gru bzhi la*) - a *'dom* is just the length between two outstretched arms. A *gru* is the length from fingers to elbows.

- 286 *lon med* - (TS) literally, "not gotten," but here "difficult, all but impossible to get."
- 287 "if you do not possess an analytical mind": *'dpyad zhes* vs. *dpyad ma zhes* - a distinction made in the scholastic tradition between two kinds of people, those who have developed the critical mind of *prajñā*, of analytical intelligence, and those who have not. These terms usually occur in philosophical texts, sometimes, as above, in the simple expression, "if you possess analysis." The idea here is that it is difficult to obtain rebirth in a human body. If you possess critical intelligence, that body can be used to gain worldly success and trans-worldly enlightenment. But if you do not possess critical intelligence, analytical intelligence, then the body becomes involved in grasping and fixation and you sink into the whirlpool of cyclic existence.
- 288 *yo ge* - is obscure. TS thinks it means stick, but this nearly makes nonsense of the passage. It could be that happiness and sadness are yoked together or we are yoked to the two -- an equally unlikely translation, since it would require that *yo ge* be a Tibetan attempt at a Sanskrit word.
- 289 "There on top of a wrathful seat of corpses": In tantric iconography tutelary deities (*vidams*) appear standing on special platforms that reflect the mood of the figure. A wrathful deity symbolizes the destruction of ego by decisive actions such as cutting thoughts. Such a deity stands on a "wrathful seat" formed by the corpses of evil doers. Contemplation of wrathful deities is supposed to cut through conditioned psychological patterns and deluded thoughts. The corpses represent the thoughts and conditioned patterns which contemplation on this meditational deity in his angry mood has cut through.
- 290 "In what person does his body take refuge?": SK: *zhe blo sgo su la gtod mi red/ lus thod pa su la gtod mi red* / Literally, his mind/head trusts in whom? His body/skull trusts in whom?" The mention of the skull (*thod*) here refers the act of bowing in homage when a disciple's head touches the feet of his or her head to the teacher's feet. In tantric discipleship the student commits himself to absolute physical obedience to the guru. Therefore they say that he "entrusts his body" to the guru. So the sense is something like "to whom does he bow in homage, entrusting his body to whom?"
- 291 *rje rgyal po khri la 'khod zhan 'dra* - SK: strange spelling for *'khod*, meaning uncertain.
- 292 "He seems to be sitting here...": A sudden spate of epic epithets: "fine bright eyes," (*khra chung*) - "petit bariolé" (according to Stein '59, p.390), heroic epithet for eyes. Samten Karmay would translate it as "his varicolored little eyes." But Tendzin Samphel feels its meaning is "small and bright eyes." He points to the fact that in iconography the Buddha's eyes are usually small and his eyelids are half-opened, whereas demons are round-eyed and wide-opened. "Royal parasol of the sun": (*khri 'dugs*) - heroic epithet for "sun," literally, "throne parasol" --- the canopy over an ancient Indian royal throne. "Southern clouds," (*lho sprin*).
- 293 *lho sprin* - southern clouds. (SK) In Tibet clouds coming from the South always bring rain, while clouds from the North bring snow, if anything. So southern clouds are auspicious.
- 294 *zer ba'i dpe khong gis gzigs song tshod red snyams* - Literally, [He, the minister] uttered these sayings thinking that He, [Padmasambhava] probably saw (*gzigs song tshod red*) etc."
- 295 "In the varicolored demon village".... (TS) Like tantric Buddhist mandalas, the city of Padmasambhava on Cāmara on the Copper-Colored Mountain is surrounded by an iron mountain

wall. Actually, there are two encircling walls and this is the inner one. So this is the second gate, the Eastern gate in the inner encircling wall.

296 "Don't be distracted, listen carefully"....: *ma gyengs* means "do not wander." It is the first of a series of rather oddly insulting remarks to Padmasambhava made by the demon minister and then Avalokiteśvara. Tibetan language uses honorifics and it is necessary to address people above one's station in elegant and polite terms. What then is the explanation this rude address?

One explanation is that there is a religious agenda which borrows the powerful language of tantric liturgies. Expressions such as "do not wander" and "don't be idle" (*thugs ma gyel*) occur in litanies written by Mipham when he is addressing Gesar as a god and requesting his interference in worldly activities. See *Wer ma'i lha bsang ring mo dpa' glu bzhugs so*, by Mipham, *Collected Works*, Vol. Na, p. 47a.

According to TS the abruptness of the language is explained by the ritual nature of the command. It is same with the mode of address employed in the next song. That song is a supplication calling Padmasambhava to action, asking him to interpose himself in temporal events. It begins by calling on the ultimate buddha principle from which Padmasambhava originally emanated saying, "Amitābha of Uddiyana, know me!" "Know me (*mkhyen no*) has a special meaning in tantric invocations. It is used in guru yoga practices to request the blessings of the cosmic teachers, as in "*Karmapa mkhyen no*"--- "Karmapa know me" or "Karmapa look upon me" or "think upon me." Now, the tradition is that this request is given abruptly, because, although it is a request from below to above, it is based on the vow of compassion the guru has already taken. By that vow of compassion all buddhas, bodhisattvas, and gurus are required not to abandon them but to remain with and save sentient beings trapped in time and space. And so it is almost more of a reminder than a request---a reminder to "those who move from joy to joy" to consider again "those who move from suffering to suffering." "Don't wander" and "don't be idle" are requests of the same nature and so share the air of abruptness.

297 "...when the golden rays of the royal parasol/ Struck the peak of the Glorious Mountain..." (SK) *ri'i rtse la phog* is a conventional figure for the dawn, because in Tibet, with its huge mountain ranges, when the sun dawns, its light always strikes the mountain peaks in the West before the globe of the sun is seen itself

298 "Whether you condescendingly praise your gift as 'alms'...": This begins a set of three-line arguments by analogy all used to suggest that it is inevitable that Padmasambhava will receive Avalokiteśvara.

sbyin pa'i zhing gi che brjod te/ mchod pa'i kha thabs ma yin na/ bla ma bka' bcu rab 'byams red. The structure of this three-limbed argument is literally this: "A...de/ B...ma yin na/ C....red." "It is A, unless (ma yin na) it is B, but either way it is always C."

In this first triad, A = *sbyin pa*, the non-honorific word for gifts given to people lower than oneself; B = *mchod pa*, the honorific term for offerings given to those higher than oneself. And *bla ma etc.*, the guru who is... is the object of those offerings. *che brjod* means literally "praise" and is meant somewhat ironically here, as if to say, "In all your pride you may praise those alms you condescended to give, nevertheless..." In the same way *kha thabs* is a diplomatic term for eloquent and round-about speech, used here in a similarly ironic tone.

These arguments by analogy employed in the song of Avalokiteśvara are clever, sophisticated, elegant, and ironic. The idea is that Lotus Born, Padmasambhava, may consider

Avalokiteśvara however he wants, he still must see him. Just like a learned lama, he can regard gifts as alms, if he is humble, or offerings, if he is proud. It doesn't really matter, he will still accept them anyway.

Comment by Samten Karmay: *bla ma bka' bcu rab 'byams* -- "the guru who has mastered the ten sciences" is a technical term for a monk who has attained the most advanced degree in the Tibetan academic establishment. It is used, however, by Sakyapas and Gelugpas, not Nyingmapas. For the Nyingmas do not place much emphasis on academic degrees. It is therefore strange that Mipham, a nyingma, uses this term for a guru. Perhaps it is meant ironically, making fun of the greed of supposedly advanced philosophical erudites.

299 "the eight classes of demons" - *sde brgyad za kha* - (SK) The eight classes of demons can cause misfortune supernaturally, eating the life force of sentient beings or bringing spiritual pollution and ill-health. Dark clouds piling up in the sky are sometimes seen as a sign of this inauspicious occurrence, an attack by angry demons.

300 *nyams rtsa* - (SK) *nyams khi rtsa ba* - lit. "the root of his wishes." Samten Karmay's interesting remark on epic language is that the bards often include expressions from local dialects, in this case Khams or Amdo. But they also simply make up words. According to SK, this is an example of a word invented by the author. It is difficult to say what it means.

301 A difficult passage. The translation is uncertain.

302 *bden drang* - this could be short for *drang don gi 'bden pa* (skt: *neyārtha*), the interpretable or expedient truth, as opposed to *nges don gi bden pa* (skt: *nītārtha*), the ultimate or definitive truth.

303 "whether god, nyen, serpent, or man": *lha, gnyan, klu, mi* - gods, nyen, nāgas, and men--- a traditional division of beings into four orders. They are roughly equivalent to four levels--- the gods (*lha*) dwelling above in the sky, the nyen on mountain tops and the sides of mountains, the men on the earth, and the nāgas in the ocean and in streams.

304 This, of course, is a version of the mantra of Avalokiteśvara. If the minister had known that the magical child was the bodhisattva of compassion, he would have recognized the mantra as a quintessential form of him. But as it is, the mantra is a mystery to him.

305 In his mind he went through his strategy twelve times - *yang bsam blo skor brdzogs bcu gnyis/ blo rtse nyi shu rtsa lna btang nas*- literally, "He thought it twelve, he thought it twenty-five and still..." a colloquial expression for doing lots of thinking according to Samten Karmay.

According to TS this is a version of the expression *bsam blo mi 'khor dgu 'khor/ drug gsum bco brgyad 'khor songs*. Which means literally "he made many plans (*bsam blo* are plans or a long series of thoughts planning out a strategy) and went around eighteen times (*drug gsum bco brgyad* means "three times six makes eighteen.") *blo rtse* are tricks, machinations, little tactical moves that one plans. So when one makes a *blo skhor*, a plan, there are in it numerous *blo rtse*, numerous tactics or tricks.

TS says this phrase, with its twelve and twenty-five, is an unusual variation on the expression "eighteen plans," which is often given in colloquial Tibetan simply as the brief expression "*drug gsum bco brgyad*", "three times six is eighteen."

In any case, the demon minister believes he has a serious problem. He is trapped in a dangerous dilemma. On one hand, if he escorts an unsuitable person into the presence of the great and wrathful demon king, Rākṣa Skullgarland, he will be terribly punished. On the other

hand, if he fails to show in the small boy, he will have disobeyed Lotus Skuligarland's command to bring in whomever was outside the gate, whether they were demon or man. We have heard already how harshly the demon kings of Cāmara deal with the slightest infractions of the law and so can understand why the minister would "think twelve times" before he disobeyed even the slightest command. To make matters worse, the minister cannot literally obey Padmasambhava's orders, since the boy has disappeared, leaving only a lotus made of light. The demon's plans and strategies are all designed to get him out of this dilemma. But although he makes twelve different plans with twenty-five stratagems, he can find no good solution.

306 *pho rab* - SK: a superior man, in keeping with a three-fold division of *pho rab*, *pho dring*, and *pho mtha' ma*: superior, middle, and lower man.

307 *lche chung* - (TS) literally "small tongue," meaning to watch your speech. "*lche chung so rdab ma phog na*" - "If you don't pinch your little tongue with your teeth," "if you don't control your speech..."

308 "like relic pills from the grave of a pig" (*phag gi ring bsrel*)- (TS) When the remains of an enlightened being, such as the Buddha, are buried in a stupa, the stupa exudes, after a period of time, a red substance. This substance, known as *ring bsrel*, "relic pills" is collected as a relic of the buried saint. It is prized as if it were indeed a piece of the body of the saint. New stupas can be created around this magical stuff. It conveys blessings and has healing powers.

Lama Urgyen Shenphen once told me that many people believe the *ring bsrel* is indestructible. If you want to divide a piece of it between two reliquaries, you must first supplicate the relic material, requesting it to divide for the benefit of sentient beings. Then it will divide, if you also hit it with a hammer.

Of course, the grave of a pig would not produce spontaneous relic material. But if it were to, there would still be no point in collecting the relic pills of a pig, for no blessings could come from an unenlightened creature such as a pig.

309 "Signs" here refers to the visionary experiences and experiences of sudden insight that a meditation practitioner has when his or her practice is successful. "Accumulatng merit" means doing religious practices. Every disciple waits, in theory, for the marks of advancement towards enlightenment which occur from time to time. If such signs do not occur, it may be an indication that the practice instructions are not being carried out correctly and one might seek fresh instruction or counsel.

310 *sgyu ma mkhan* - an illusionist.

311 "a wonder-worker's basis for transformation"- (TS) *sPrul gzhi* is "basis for transformation." There is a certain kind of traditional Asian illusionist who uses mantras to fool people into believing that an ordinary object is something extraordinary. The mantras exercise their power over the eyes of the spectators and they may see, for example, what is actually a shoe as the Potala Palace. The shoe is the *sprul gzhi*, the basis for the illusion or transformation, the *sprul pa*. There is a story that once a *rdzu 'phrul can*, an illusionist, or literally, a wonder-worker, used the power of his mantras to make an entire audience think that he had attached a rope to the Potala Palace in Lhasa and was pulling it into the lake. One man, however, arrived late and, since the mantra had not been pronounced when he was there, his eyes were unclouded. He says the *sprul gzhi*, the basis for transformation, as it truly was. He saw, in other words, an illusionist pulling a shoe into the lake with a rope.

312 Uncertain translation.

313 "to invoke and call forth from the self-luminous thought lineage the mind [of Gesar]." (TS) The song that follows is an invocation designed to call forth a deity who will become Gesar of Ling. The deity is an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, who himself is an emanation of the Buddha of the Lotus Family, Amitābha.

Therefore the text says that the song *thugs rgyud bskul* --- "calls forth or invokes the mind-stream" (skt: *santāna*). Mind-stream (*thugs rgyud*) is a technical term in Buddhist psychology for the mind of an individual, the mind which produces and receives impressions from the phenomenal world. For this reason some translators merely translate *rgyud* as "mind," ignoring the sense of continuity mixed with momentariness which is the almost Heraclitian view of Buddhist phenomenology. It is called a "stream" or "continuity" (*rgyud*) because from the point of view of meditation practice it is not seen as an entity or individual, but as a succession of momentary experiences called "dharma." Some of the experiences are thoughts, some are sense impressions, some are feelings. All of them are momentary and they flow forward as a succession of experiences from lifetime to lifetime. When the mind-stream is evoked from the breast of Padmasambhava, it will arise as the mind of Thöpa Ga, Joyful to Hear, a deity who will later be reborn as Gesar. Strictly speaking, this continuity is simply one transformation after another of Avalokiteśvara. He undergoes one transformation after another, each dissolving into the next in the characteristic style of tantric visualization practices.

The calling forth (*bskul ba*) is also an important aspect of the technology of tantric ritual. The idea is that by singing this song Avalokiteśvara can provoke, excite, stimulate, and arouse Lotus Skullgarland to action, arousing him to generate Thöpa Ga/ Gesar. TS likened the action to that of a subject or minister who tells a king his realm is threatened and that he must rouse himself and take action immediately. The specific action he must take is to in his turn evoke or call forth Gesar from the ultimate buddha mind known as the Thought Lineage of the Victorious Ones.

Thus we have a complex series of emanations. First Amitābha confers authorization on his emanation, bodhisattva emanation, Avalokiteśvara. Avalokiteśvara transforms himself into a magical demon-child. The demon-child becomes a lotus, the symbol of compassion and the Mahāyāna. The lotus becomes rays of light which dissolve into the heart center of Padmasambhava. Now, Avalokiteśvara, even though he has evolved into rays of light, still exists in an absolute sense outside of this series of transformations. Thus his voice can sing the following invocation which asks Padmasambhava to call forth Gesar.

314 The song is *go bde glu tshig la* --- "in words easy to understand." This is a typical comment and could be merely conventional. Tendzin Samphel, however, gives some added interpretation here, saying that the words of the song are easy to understand for Padmasambhava, for they explain to him how the invoking of Thöpa Ga/Gesar will occur. *bde* here is translated as "easy," but its general meaning is "blissful" or "v =ll."

315 "And you who are supreme in the Lotus Family": Padmasambhava. In tantric iconography there are five "families" of Buddhas occupying the four directions and the center of each mandala. The specific names of buddhas in a mandala changes from liturgy to liturgy, but all the buddhas in one direction share certain characteristics in common. In fact, the five families of buddhas represent the five styles in which wisdom can occur. These wisdoms exist

in potential form in the egoistic individual as five personality types. For example, a person whose governing emotion is passion, has the potential for developing into the Buddha of the Lotus Family. This is Amitābha. In the Mandala of the Five Buddhas he occupies the southern section and he symbolizes the transformation of passion into compassion and confused desire into unconfused wisdom. Avalokiteśvara, as an emanation of Amitābha, also belongs to the Lotus family, as does Padmasambhava, the Lotus Born. Thus he can be called "supreme among all the beings who belong to the Lotus family of Buddhas."

316 It is interesting to note the difference in interpretation of scholars with different religious commitments. Samten Karmay, a famous scholar of the Bön religion, gives this section a conventional reading. Tendzin Samphel, however, is a committed lama in the Buddhist tradition and, although his knowledge of Buddhist doctrine is not superior to Samten Karmay's, he gives a reading with a very different tone. First, the passage in Tibetan:

*Padma 'bar ba'i zhing khams nas
bcom ldan snang ba mtha' yas mkhyen
padma'i rigs mchog kun mhyen mdzod
sgyu 'phrul rgyal po dgongs su gsol*

Tendzin Samphel's reading:

From the Pure Land of the Flaming Lotus
The Blessed One (Bhagavat) Amitābha, know us.
And you who are supreme in the Lotus Family, omniscient treasury.
Miraculous king, I ask you to think.

Samten Karmay's reading differs in the last line: "Miraculous king, please think of me." Grammatically this is utterly correct and the most usual understanding of the line. Although the "of me" is not in the text, it is understood, for this is a standard supplication a disciple makes to the guru, on his or her own behalf as student. Tendzin Samphel, however, because of his commitment to the Buddhist religious agenda of the epic, insists that Avalokiteśvara must be speaking to Padmasambhava in an abrupt, almost rough manner--- commanding him to start thinking--- that is, to consider the entire situation. Ordinarily saying *dgongs su gsol* is just the way a suppliant requests attention and compassionate condescension from a higher being. But according to TS, it is improper and indeed out of the question to think of Avalokiteśvara, the enlightened bodhisattva of compassion, as a suppliant. He is equal to Padmasambhava and, being enlightened, could not possibly experience any personal problems. He could not be personally asking for help. Therefore, we must read this line, which Avalokiteśvara utters, as "start thinking" rather than "think of me."

Although this is an unusual translation, it is not inconsistent with the psychology of invocation. The idea of a Buddhist supplication chant is usually to remind a divine figure of the vow of compassion or the specific commitments which that being has already made. Presumably, when Padmasambhava began his path as a Buddhist, he vowed to help and serve all sentient beings. It is therefore appropriate to mention this vow to him and demand that he

observe it. For example, there are these lines addressed to Padmasambhava in a poem by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche: "O Guru Senge Dradrok, / Just as at Hepo Hill at glorious Samye / You bound by oath devas and rāksasas, / So utterly destroy these obstacles of māras. / Consider well your former vow of compassion." (from "Supplication to Padmasambhava," by Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche. Privately published)

Samten Karmay, on the other hand, was not sensitive to this distinction. He easily placed Avalokiteśvara in the role of suppliant, even though devoted Buddhists might be loath to regard his level as below that of any enlightened being. And so he read the words *dgongs su gsol*, which literally mean "I ask to think" as "I ask you to think of me," as if the bodhisattva of compassion had personal need of Padmasambhava's blessings.

Neither interpretation is incorrect, since both of them quite properly infer words deleted for the sake of meter. And in an interesting sense it is not quite accurate to say that these are two different "interpretations," for there is no second thought involved in the reader's reception of these words. They simply mean a different thing to the two scholars depending on the differing respect that they have for the speaker.

317 "oath-breaking demons" (pronounced *damsi*, spelled *dam sri*)— TS: Glossed as *dam tsig nyams pa*, "corruptors of samaya vows," *damsi* are a particular type of demon who has violated tantric vows. They figure extensively in the Tibetan Buddhist oral literature I have seen. And they seem to function roughly in the same way demons do in Christian heroic narratives. That is to say, *damsi* are not simply another style of demon in the cosmology. They are the demons who play the role of villain in Tibetan Buddhist narratives. As far as their role in plot construction is concerned, the *damsi* remind me of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*. The same question therefore arises: how can evil demons have any power if the wages of sin are death?

In this context I asked Tendzin Samphel why *damsi* are so powerful. Would not the karma of corrupting samaya vows be death and rebirth in hell rather than deification as a powerful demon?

His answer was quite interesting and represents, I believe, a Buddhist scholastic interpretation of the wages of sin. These creatures, *damsi*, in their previous lives were tantric practitioners. They took the terrible vows and solemn oaths of tantra called *samaya* (tib. *dam tsig*) and then broke their oaths, either by abusing their powers or by committing some terrible sin such as attempting to harm their teachers. In the next life, because of the magical power of their tantric practice, they were reborn as powerful and exalted beings, kings and sorcerers. But because of their evil karma, they used their power to commit further sins and to harm the dharma. This created the karma of being reborn in hell realms. And so, in the second or third life after they have broken their samaya vows, *damsi* fall into the especially dreadful hells reserved for tantric vow violators.

The interesting point in TS's explanation is that the particular crimes which are the proximate cause of their final punishment are the evil deeds they visibly commit in the second lifetime after their samaya violations. But it was inevitable that they would commit such sins, because that sinning is the karmic result of having broken vows. So, for example, a certain tantric disciple might develop an evil temperament and before his death utter a "twisted" aspiration prayer. He might pray to be reborn as a powerful demon-king who would destroy the Buddha Dharma. This perverted aspiration prayer is itself a violation of the samaya vow and

its result will be rebirth in hell, but not immediately. Due to the power of the evil disciple's tantric practice and due to his ability to concentrate his attention, which he learned as he practiced Buddhist meditation for lifetimes, his aspiration prayer will certainly be fulfilled. He will have one lifetime of power and glory before just punishment catches up with him. Just as the word of a *ṛṣi* always comes true in Hindu epics, so the word of a powerful practitioner, whether for good or evil, comes true in Buddhist epics.

Tenzin Samphei's comments on the dynamics of this karma were most interesting and quite lyrical. He said that violators of the oaths of Mahāyāna simply go to hell when they die. But the tantric practitioners have received *abhiṣeka* or empowerment using the mandalas of tantric deities. They are therefore invested with tremendous power. This power can manifest either positively or negatively, but it must manifest. So, if a practitioner who has received empowerments dies, if he has violated vows, his negative karma is too great for him to be simply reborn as an average person. In order to fulfill his karma he must be reborn as a powerful individual capable of performing immense misdeeds which will then ripen in extraordinary hells: "They break something which is very very precious and very high. So their karma is very big. So they have to fulfill their negative karma. So they have to take birth in a strong life so that they can fulfill their negative karma. Then through that karma they are born next in hell realms and then they suffer more than ordinary beings."

318 These nine are the greater enemies of the four cardinal points and the other demons of the intermediate points, some are *blon*, ministers, rather than kings.

319 Māra (Devil): *bdud* - (skt: *Māra*), devil- Originally Māra was the name of the demon who tried to tempt the historical Buddha to give up his quest for enlightenment. *bdud*, however, is also a native Tibetan term for a lower order life-threatening, disease causing demon. The term being available at the time when the Buddhist scriptures were translated, it was used as the translation for *māra*. The *bdud* in this story, however, are mostly human beings who have taken up the negative aspirations of Māra and oppose the Buddha Dharma.

320 Lhotri Tiger Eye: (*lho khri stag mig*) TS: This is actually a place name, as if this were "Tiger Eye From Lhotri." Sa Dam is also a place name. White Tent The'u rang: *gur dkar the'u rang bu* - TS: White Tent (Gurkar) is called "the child of the *the'u rang*. This implies that he is a gambler, because the one-legged the'u rang demons are the devils gamblers supplicate in order to win at cards or dice.

321 Turquoise Peak.: Here begin the demons of the intermediate directions. *gyu rtse 'od kyi bu* - *gyu rtse* is actually the name of a mountain near the Kokonor region, which is considered in the North, so far as epic geography is concerned. This region figures in "The History of the Goloks," a text in the style of oral narrative translated in the next chapter of this monograph. In theory this is a region which borders the tribal lands of the Kingdom of Ling.

322 Earth Lord: *sa bdag* - earth-lord, a class of local deities associated with the earth. Earth lords are often the "proprietors" of a region (*bdag po*) See Nebesky Wojkowitz, pp. 291-299. Nyen Rawa: *snyan ra ba* - could mean an enclosure where lovely (*snyan*) music is played. Possible misspelling: If it were *gnyan*, it could be the "horns of a *nyen* deity."

323 *gting re zab* --- *re* here is more of a verse filler than anything else. *gting re zab* literally means "deep and profound."

324 "Great Being, god child, Joyful to Hear, / Primordially pure, All Good, self-liberate them": Notice that at this point Avalokiteśvara directly addresses Joyful to Hear (Thöpa

Gawa), who still exists as a potentiality in the breast of Padmasambhava. This is the "calling forth" of Gesar from the thought-lineage level, from the mind of Padmasambhava. The universality of the principle which becomes Gesar is stressed here. He is called All-good (*kun bzang*), that is, Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha of the dharmakāya level in the Nyingma tradition. The Three Protectors (*rigs gsum mgon po*) are the three main bodhisattvas in Mahāyāna and Tantric iconography: Manjusri, Vajrapāni, and Avalokiteśvara.

325 "The time has come to fulfill your sacred vow": This is a standard expression in any Buddhist supplication, but within the context of the epic narrative it has a specific reference. In effect, Padmasambhava has already taken a sacred vow, a *samaya*, to produce a manifestation on the earthly plane, a *nirmāṅkāya*, who will complete the taming of the demons threatening Tibet. This promise is implied in Padma's original failure to complete the taming of the demons when he first arrived in Tibet. Since he did not bind them three times, he still is bound by his vow to see to their permanent enslavement. Thus there is a pre-existing *samaya* within Padmasambhava which Avalokiteśvara can "call forth" when he calls forth Gesar from within Padmasambhava.

326 This chant follows the iconography of numerous Nyingma litanies: Amitābha, the Buddha of Compassion, is the *dharmakāya*. Avalokiteśvara is the *sambhogakāya*, and Padmasambhava is the *nirmāṅkāya*. Padmasambhava takes numerous forms and has numerous emanations. Joyful to Hear is one of them, evoked by Avalokiteśvara for this occasion. Joyful to Hear will reincarnate to be Gesar, still regarded as another aspect of Padmasambhava as far as tantric metaphysics is concerned.

Mipham Gyatso reflects this iconographic agenda in the religious practices addressed to Gesar which he composed. He wrote, for example a daily supplication practice to Gesar (*rgyun 'khyer*) entitled *Spontaneous Buddha Activity: A Supplication and Offering Practice to the Great Lion Gesar Norbu*. Its opening stanzas invoke Gesar as an emanation of Padmasambhava:

From the Glorious Mountain, the fear City of the Rāksasas,
Which is the Buddhafield of the Three Kāyas, Blazing Lotus Light,

The tumultuous and terrifying ground, blazing with dark red bonfires,
Which is inwardly the citta within the Vajra Body---

From the Palace of the wisdom holders and dākinis,
O wisdom kāya, the equality of samsāra and nirvāna,
Embodiment of all the universal Victorious Ones, O Lake Born One,
Your compassion has manifested as the form of illusory wisdom play.

Notice that the word "Gesar" never actually occurs in this chant, only his epithets. The first actual direct reference to him is the line "Your compassion has manifested as the form of illusory wisdom play." In other words, he is like a magical illusion conjured up by Padmasambhava as part of his playful activity.

The same idea of Gesar's three-fold nature occurs in Mipham's *Long Werma Lhasang*, "Outwardly, he is the mighty general Norbu Dradul, / Inwardly, he is Avalokiteśvara, / His unchanging mind is Lord Padmasambhava." (*The Long Werma Lhasang Called :The Warrior Song*

of *Drala*, transl by the Nalanda Translation Committee. (Boulder: private publication, 1979.))

The wording of this liturgy is very much like the epic. For example: "Father Gesar the king, Iha of war,/ At the time when enemies fill the kingdom,/ Lord Dradul, don't be idle, don't be idle,/ I put my hope in no other protector but you."

327 *gzhan don snying rje*... The next five lines are not found in Stein's transcription of the Ling Woodblock Print, the original publication of the text by Mipham. But they are in the Chinese and Sikimese editions, which generally seem to be more reliable.

328 White Luminous one (*'od ldan dkar*), epithet for the moon.

329 "In the limitless sky of your bodhicitta...": This stanza shows the most frequently used extended figure in epic language. "In the sky are stars, constellations, the sun, and the moon, each of these different kinds of lights, according to its nature, a metaphor for a particular religious principle. When it speaks of the moon surrounded by the moving stars the idea is that the moon is brighter when it is surrounded by all these other lights.

330 There is a subtle shift here in the being who is the object of this praise. The first stanza certainly addresses Avalokiteśvara, with the words the Buddha typically used for encouragement, "Good, good, Oh son of noble family. (T: *legs so legs so*, S: *sadhu sadhu*) But the second stanza addresses a child who is like the moon surrounded by planets and constellations. That probably refers to Gesar, for he, as a deity in heaven, will be named Joyful to Hear and this child is addressed with these words: "...hearing you rejoices and liberates sentient beings." So it seems that the song, in its second stanza turns to address Joyful to Hear/Gesar. However, since this being is an emanation of Avalokiteśvara, they are practically the same anyway and can logically be addressed as one person in two.

331 "*smon lam pha rol phin*" - Skt: *pranidhāna pāramitā*. This is the perfection practiced at the 8th level or *bhumi* of the bodhisattva path. It is a measure of Avalokiteśvara's degree of enlightenment, for complete buddhahood is attained just after the bodhisattva passes beyond the 10th level.

332 "the mind samaya of all the tathāgatas": *thugs gi dam tshig*, the heart or mind samaya, as in the samayas or vows of body, speech, and mind. Samayas are commitments one makes as a part of tantric practice. The essence of all tantric commitments is to respect the teacher and see the world as beyond pure and impure, inherently sacred. Samayas of body are commitments to do or not do specific physical things--- for example, the commitment to keep one's tantric liturgies secret from the uninitiated. Samayas of speech have to do with psychological attitudes and things that one says. Samayas of mind are commitments to cognize the world according to the wisdom of meditation. Thus, in a sense the "mind samayas of all the tathāgatas" is a state of mind or a connection with the state of mind of all the buddhas. This is a thing one would do preparatory to requesting empowerment or abhiseka of the buddhas of the ten directions.

333 "Later, on the holy day..." Here begins the section in which Padmasambhava initiates the process by which Thöpa Gawa is miraculously born (*rdzus skyes*) as a deity in heaven. Miraculous birth is a technical term for the method by which gods come into being. Just as humans and animals are born from wombs, eggs, etc. so gods are "miraculously born." The entire process of emanating and gathering lights, sounds, and tantric symbols which is depicted in this passage could be regarded as a technical description of the birth of a deity.

If you think of it that way, it is quite remarkable for its detail. In this case, however,

it is a very special deity--- a deity who is not just a long-lived intelligent creature living in an immaterial realm, but a being who is a manifestation of ultimate truth and will become in his next incarnation an avatar of such. It is this evolution or devolution, if you will, from Reality to Appearance which is represented by the birth of Thöpa Ga.

334 "Heaven of the Thirty-Three": *rtsa gsum* - short for *sum cu rtsa gsum pa*, skt: *trāyastriṃśa*, "The Heaven of the Thirty-three," one of the heavens inhabited by worldly deities of the Desire Realm, the *Kāmaloka*. Cosmologically the text is quite precise and based on the fact that the "father" of Thöpa Ga (Joyful to Hear), that is, the father of Gesar in heaven, is a worldly deity.

Joyful to Hear is thus literally a combination of absolute principles and worldly deities. His origins are Amitābha and the mind of Padmasambhava. But these absolute principles of emptiness, compassion, and Buddha Activity enter into the divine corpus of a worldly deity in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. And by this route Joyful to Hear becomes both a principle of enlightenment and a manifestation of the worldly deities of Tibetan polytheistic religion. These worldly deities are transformed in the process into tantric tutelary deities (*yiḍam*), Cakrasamvara and Vajrayogini.

335 "*Iha yī sras*" - literally, "son of a god," but this is just the sūtric term for a being in the god realms, in sanskrit a *devaputra*.

336 "Opulent Goddess of the Space Element": *nam mkha'i dbyings phyug ma* - the goddess of the element of space. The goddesses of the five elements are the five consorts of the five primordial buddhas of the Five Buddha Families of the Five Directions.

337 "Horse and Pig join in passionless union...": This is not meant to be funny. The two worldly deities have now been transformed by the energy of Padmasambhava into manifestations of the male and female Buddhist tutelary deities (*yiḍams*), *Hayagrīva*, the Horse-Headed One, and *Vajravarāhi*, the Vajra Sow. The horse-headed buddha represents the transformation or transmutation of aggression into enlightenment. It is a form of the buddha particularly used in the taming of demons. The Vajra Sow represents the transformation of passion into enlightenment.

338 "That vajra entered into the top of the head of White Supreme Bliss...": This paragraph is a technical description in esoteric terminology of the birth of a god. "...entered into the space." Space here is *mkha' dbyings*--- literally, space-*dhātu*, a code term for the private parts of the goddess, the *gsangs ba'i gnas*, the secret place of the goddess. wisdom *prāna*: *ye shes ri lung* - (skt: *jñāna-prāna*), wisdom wind. In tantric anatomy, wisdom *prāna* is involved in the complex movement of psychic and biologic energies involved in the production of a living embryo from the act of coition. "...the hundred syllable mantra." The process of his birth is completed with the utterance of the one hundred syllables of the Vajrasattva mantra, a tantric purification practice. By uttering this mantra Joyful to Hear is declaring that his birth is free of any worldly stain.

339 *gzi brjid* (splendor). This term is often translated as dignity, confidence, or even majesty. It is a kind of charisma, almost a light, which supposedly radiates from a being whose energies are uplifted through spiritual practice. Kings and beings of immense moral force or great personal power project forth this splendor and it makes them effective in the world, for it makes other people see them as imposing and glorious.

340 "He raised up this song which teaches the meaning of cause and fruition..." This song

by Joyful to Hear/ Gesar presents the *Lha Ling's* first complete picture of the political theory of Mipham. Like many thinkers of the *Ris med* or Eclectic School of Tibetan Buddhism, Mipham was fascinated by political theories which were in effect fresh ideas for Tibetan culture in the 19th century.

In this song we see the details of his theory of monarchy as the ideal political system. Society is constructed of classes or orders of men. Sometimes Mipham presents five orders: *rgyal po* or kings, *blon po* or ministers, *btsan po* or "mighty ones," *phyug po*, the rich, and *sde*, the commoners, the people. Technically the *blon* are advisors to the King, but actually they are often powerful heads of clans, provincial leaders in their own right whose accord the king must attain for his major decisions to become actions. *dBang po* are people who have power because of the possession of lands, wealth, and principally arms. According to Tendzin Samphel, they are considered to be people whose power rests on their use of force as much as their political connections. *bTsan po* and *dbang po* can in certain contexts be considered as equivalent, in which case "the mighty ones" are in effect the aristocracy. Their wishes also must be taken into account when the King makes important decisions. The *phyug po* are rich men. They are considered to have a special nature because of their wealth. Their wealth is a sign that they possess an extraordinary accumulation of good karma from actions in previous lifetimes. Chapter II of the epic describes this ideal hierarchical order as it presents in detail the social strata of Ling.

The song begins with a traditional sermon on the Four Thoughts which Turn the Mind. (See Jamgön Kontrül, *The Torch of Certainty*, by Judith Hanson, (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1977). This contemplation ordinarily is used to motivate the disciple to practice meditation with greater diligence. However, in this case, it is given a special twist and becomes the basis for a political message. The Four Thoughts aim to develop motivation.

Here, on the other hand, the motivational force is directed towards the classes of society. If a king understands the force of karma, the certainty of death, the difficulty of finding a precious human rebirth, then, understanding cause and effect, he will rule virtuously and wisely. And the same for the other classes of society--- who will fulfill their duties properly if they have a correct perspective on karmic causality.

The horrors of sickness, old-age, and death, the last stages of the twelve *niḍanas* or causal links, are graphically described. Realizing the impermanence of ordinary human life and the certainty of suffering should motivate the proper detachment in the high, the middle, and the low orders of society. Detached from materialistic goals in that way, they will perform the duties of their station properly and will thus create an enlightened society.

341 "The Five Wisdoms of the Five Kāyas": *sku lnga* - The five kāyas. (TS) The well-known list of three kāyas is sometimes expanded to four and even five in certain tantric systems. In the *Dri med bshags rgyud*, *The Tantra of Immaculate Confession*, for example, the two additional kāyas are the *abhisambhodhikāya* and the *vajrakāya*. In other cases they are the *svabhāvikakāya* and the *jñānadharmakāya*.

342 "The single bindu Dharmakāya": *thig le* - (skt: *bindu*). Literally bindu means something like "dot" or "drop." This becomes the idea of essence, as if a substance has been reduced to a single drop which is its essence or nature. Bindu also means semen, for this is a drop of essence of a being. In this case, according to TS, it means a dot of light, representing the fact that the dharmakāya is not a thing. It is pure light, not solid matter and it is a dot and does not

occupy space. This is a typical meaning of bindu in Nyingma visualization practices.

343 *drang don* (Skt: *neyartha*) Buddhist hermeneutics divides the sūtras into those of interpretable meaning (*neyartha*) and true meaning (*nges don*, Skt: *nitārtha*). Those sūtras which state the ultimate truth directly without need of special acts of interpretation by the readers are of "true meaning." Other sūtras literally express an expedient meaning or useful message, but are not absolutely true. And so, the reader must interpret the meaning in order not to be deceived by a view which has limitations and flaws. The literal meaning of *drang don* is "pointing meaning." The idea is that these texts, although not ultimately perfectly true, point to the final experience of the absolute truth or lead to that experience through practice along the path.

Thus, relative teachings about the relative world are not absolutely true, because the phenomenal world does not ultimately exist. But since moral teachings about conduct in the phenomenal world lead to self-purification and ultimately enlightenment, they are good "leading teachings" and they express the "leading" or interpretable truth.

By identifying this song as an instance of interpretable meaning, Joyful to Hear is defining the nature of the message Gesar will communicate to sentient beings and he is defining the level at which the discourse of the epic will be conducted.

That is to say, Gesar will be different from the Buddha in his main message. Where the Buddha of the Mahāyāna Sūtras concentrates on teaching the unworldly message of the emptiness of the phenomenal world, the ultimate truth, Gesar's message will be about the proper ordering of society and national politics in an enlightened context, a sort of relative truth.

As the introductory verses of the chapter say, this is a teaching which is appropriate for a lesser grade of disciple, the common man--- people who cannot see "the space bindu of Dharmakāya," the ultimate buddha who is the nature of mind. As the verse says, "if you see it (the Dharmakāya), buddhahood is delivered in the palm of the hand." But if one were to explain this to "ignorant sentient beings," it would be difficult for them to understand. And so we must give them the more phenomenally oriented interpretable meaning, which gives an enlightened view of the phenomenal world.

344 "eight states of being": Continuing the traditional sermon on motivation, Gesar speaks of the obstacles to practice, which are two-fold: not being free (*dal ba*) and well-favored (*'byor pa*). The eight states of being mentioned here are the opposite of the eight freedoms or leisures (*dal ba*)--- the eight conditions of life in which one has an opportunity to hear and practice the Buddha's teachings: tib: *dal ba brgyad*) see Tsepak Rigzin, *Tibetan-English Dictionary of Buddhist Terminology*, (Darjeeling: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1986), p. 190.

345 "And when you are born in the Central Land, with sense organs whole, with faith,/ Free from evil actions, inclined to virtue": These are five of the ten endowments with which one is well-favored--- the ten positive qualities or prerequisites which one must possess in order to be able to seek enlightenment. The list of ten are called the *'byor ba bcu*, the ten endowments. And so, altogether there are eighteen elements "the precious eight leisures and ten endowments" with which one is "free and well-favored."

346 "Yama": *chi bdag* - (skt: Yama) the death lord, the god of death. In North Asian Buddhist mythology he rules over an under world as a judge who tries newly deceased souls based on the

record of their previous karma.

- 347 meteoric iron - Tibetans traditionally believed that lightning was actually the yellow path described in the sky as a meteor fell to earth. The fused metal found on the ground where lightning has struck is the meteor itself, which is sky iron fallen to earth.
- 348 *srog dmar* - (TS) literally "red life force" - but in Khams po language *dmar po* (red) tends to mean "good" or "useful."
- 349 *mngar gsum* - white suger, brown suger, and honey. (TS) Actually *kha 'jam*, which means literally "soft to the mouth," is here just a synonym for *zhim po* or delicious. But in order to preserve the parallelism with the next line, I have translated it as "soft."
- 350 This passage is full of Eastern Tibetan colloquialisms. *'Tsho skyong*- (TS) Literally, protecting your life. Here it does not actually mean protecting your life, but rather, protecting your prosperity. *ring du 'tso ba* means a long life, but we also have the question about your condition which is *'skyed rang gi 'tso ba gang 'dra yod red?* ---"how's your life?" Translated here as "livelihood." Actually, according to TS *'tsho ba* is food: *'tso ba ngan ngan / gos lhags skyob*: (advice given to yogins about the proper way of living)---"humble food and clothes that protect from the wind." *ngan ngan* means simple food that is just enough to keep you alive. *lhags pa* is wind. So *'tso ba* is used for food.
- 351 *kha rgyab mi sos* - (TS) There is an expression, "*kha la sas, rgyab la gos*": "feed your face and clothe your back."
- 352 We have just finished a general treatment of the suffering which comes from attachment to your position in society. Now a long, remarkable sermon on the suffering which comes from different kinds of illness in this life. Of course, the underlying argument, as ever, is that ordinary human life without enlightenment, is so painful that it is not worth living. Thus, one should contemplate, for example, the terrible suffering guaranteed us by the inevitability of sickness, and contemplating this, abandon worldly attachments.
- 353 *khyog* in Gantok edition; *chags* in Stein, *khyag* in the Gansu Edition. TS chooses *khyog*.
- 354 "long fatal illness": *gcong chen nad* - (TS) There are two kinds of fatal illnesses. The first is *chi ba'i nad*, a sickness unto death. In that case, you get sick and die quickly. But then there is *gcong chen nad*, a great fatal illness, that is, a long fatal illness. They come because people have evil karma to fulfill from a previous lifetime and cannot die until it is brought to fruition in suffering before dying. The long illnesses produce bedsores, one becomes hypersensitive, the body is weak, and the mind depressed. Tibetans often pray to avoid this kind of illness: *chi ka nad gcong 'dug nal mi myong ba / chi tsha ngan song gi sdug ngal mi myong ba*. "In this life to avoid the suffering of a long fatal illness and after death to avoid the suffering of the lower realms."
- 355 *khyug re bro* - (TS): *khyug* is to vomit and ---*re bro* is to be on the point of vomiting.
- 356 "The sleep guardian": *gnyid srung grogs* --- (TS) Tibetans believe that it is unhealthy to sleep during the day if you are ill. Sleeping in the day causes fever. And so people take turns sitting by the sick person keeping him awake. They even fashion little devices to keep the sick person awake by prodding him.
- 357 A *tsha* - sound a person makes when they are burned. *Ana*, short for *Ana Ana* - sound one makes when hurt or wounded.
- 358 Literally, "the time of a day and a night does not pass."--- Time moves so slowly that

It seems to take forever for one day to pass.

359 "The divinations mislead, the incantations no longer work": The divinations are false--- lit. (*rten 'brel log pa*) "the signs are reversed." (TS) This means that the omens created by a divination become untrustworthy. The theory is that a person has a certain amount of karma for life. When that karma is exhausted, the person will die, no matter what magical interventions are employed. Furthermore, the signs are no longer reliable when you have no more karma to live. The passage mentions *mo* and *phyva*. *Mo* are divinations using signs or omens. *Phyva* are ceremonies related to one's luck and success. But there are also *phyva* which are ceremonies to reverse a tendency, for example, to call back one's departed life force or to avert sickness. When one's karma of good health is exhausted, the reversal ceremonies do not work and the signs of divinations are unreliable.

Most treatments of *phyva* in Western languages deal with the term *phyva* as a referring to articles and deities involved in these ceremonies. For example, R.A. Stein, *Tibetan Civilization*, trans. by J.E. Driver, (Stanford, University Press: 1972), pp. 211 and 221. For this kind of usage see Nebesky Wojkowitz p. 212.

360 Obscure sentence. *rib ma te*, which means literally, "this fence" does not seem to fit with the meaning.

361 "it is too late for virtuous roots": (TS) "Virtuous roots" means here the positive karma created by doing good deeds and performing religious ceremonies. The treasury of good karma generated this way is an exhaustible resource. If you have already begun to die, it is too late to hope that you can generate any further good merit or positive karma to keep you from dying. It is too late to plant further virtuous roots that will improve your lot. The same is true for religious practices others might perform on your behalf at this time.

362 "help in the forty-nine days": *zhe dgu'i re ba* - literally, "hope for the forty-nine." "Forty-nine" refers to the length of time an individual spends in the intermediate state (*bardo*) between death and rebirth. Tibetan Buddhists believe that if relatives and loved ones pray and make offerings to the Three Jewels during the forty-nine days of the *bardo* then the departed's rebirth will be improved.

363 "Examining the patient is like poking a stone": (TS) A Tibetan medical examination is performed by feeling the patient's body, but on the day of death you might as well be rubbing a stone.

364 "Averting ceremonies": *gto bcos* - Averting ceremonies, a class of ceremonies of native Tibetan religion which aim to prevent death. Includes *gto* - a ceremony to protect against evil forces, *mdos* - an offering ceremony in which barley flour representations of animals are made to appease spirits, *glud* - ransom ceremonies in which representations of the person under attack are presented to malevolent spirits as replacements for the person, and *gyas*, another kind of offering ceremony. See Tucci, 1970 pp. 176-177.

365 "aura of merit": *bsod nams dpal* - (TS) like *dbang thang* and *rlung rta*, this means a kind of aura of energy which is developed around and through the healthy body/mind complex of an individual. When you are sick or weak, the *bsod nams dpal* lessens (literally "faces down": *bsod nams dpal kha thur*.) TS remarks that, like *rlung rta* or "windhorse," this concept is related to astrology. When your horoscope indicates the presence of negative forces, it lowers your aura of merit, corrupts your windhorse: "*bsod nams dpal kha thur, rlung rta chags pa*"--- "your aura of merit turns down, your windhorse is corrupted."

TS remarks further that, although divinations not working, astrological signs showing negative influences, loss of personal energy, etc. are separate signs, at the time of death they are all considered by Buddhists as based on a common phenomenon--- the exhaustion of good merit, which is the basis for death. He compares the merit to a house used as collateral for a bank loan. Without the house, you may go to the bank, but since there is no collateral the bank officers will not give you the loan.

366 Extremely obscure passage. In Stein the first two words are erased: "... .. *khags rog red*."---- there is no more food. Other additions were corrected to *so nam ser kha gas rogs red*, which makes no sense neither. *Kha gas rogs* is probably a misreading for *khags rog*.

367 "The castle of the wargods is turned away": *dgra lha bse mkhar phyir log* - the temple of the wargods is turned away. Wargods, pronounced *dralha*, are, among other things, tiny energetic beings who perch on the body of the warrior and make him strong. Wargod castles or temples are tiny shrines to the *dralha* (*dgra bla* or *lha*) or wargods. There are visualization practices in which places on the body which the wargods are to bless are pictured as little castles inhabited by wargods. The expression "the castle of the wargods is turned away" thus means that your wargods have deserted your body/mind complex and left you unblessed, vulnerable.

This happens at the time of death, when all the positive energies organized around the body depart, including the protecting wargods. For the warrior there are practices which serve to increase one's windhorse, raise one's field of power, and attract the wargods. A person completely invested with these elements would be completely healthy. And so, at death these all are scattered and drain away.

368 *dgra rdzong rang srog mnar rdzas red* - obscure. It may mean that at the time of death, the fortress of wargods you have created in your body to protect against the attacks of negative forces turns against you and becomes a threat to your life. But this is a strange idea. (TS)

We now have a remarkable description of the different ways that people are buried in Tibet. Some are placed in graves, some are bound tightly in sheets and then buried, others are burned, others are thrown on barren rocks, cut up into pieces, and fed to vultures. Alexander Macdonald points out that it leaves out one method of burial: being thrown into rivers.

369 *pho rgod dpa' snying 'dzoms le de . le de* is missing from Stein edition. Literally, "the gathered [qualities] of the brave heart of the champion."

370 "inner stores": *phug zas* - (TS) inner stores, long-term provisions. In Khampa dialect the most inward room where long term storage of food stuff (*zas*) is kept is the *phug ma*, the most inward room, the furthest room. When food is stored for the winter, there is always an emergency store in the furthest room. It is held for a last resort, the last stores to be eaten. By extension *phug zas* are anything stored away and the object of the greatest attachment, such as gold and precious gems--- things with which the stingy would never part.

371 "the wooden stake of attachment driven into the ground": *zhe chags 'khri sa'i rtod phur red* - Literally, "attachment, the stake driven into the ground." (TS) attachment to the things of this life interrupts the process of rebirth and, like a stake driven into the ground, the deceased person, instead of journeying on to the next rebirth, remains as a ghost.

372 *mi tshe 'khrul pa'i zas gos de* - Literally, "the food and clothes that confuse human life."

373 the six attributes of a warrior and the six accomplishments of the mother's and aunts: *dpa' drug* - Six attributes of a warrior (TS: arrow, sword, spear, etc.). *stag zhar* - lit. "tiger in its prime"---expression for brave, vigorous youths.

(TS) The perfect man and woman in the epic period possessed six qualities---for the men, perfection in the six attributes of a warrior, for the women perfection in the six knowledges(*zhes 'drug*) or accomplishments: how to look after yaks, how to make butter, cooking, hospitality, etc.

374 *skyi 'dong* - obscure. (TS) Perhaps means "charnal ground so scary that the skin becomes numb."

375 Here Joyful to Hear speaks as a god, a *deva*, a *lha*, an inhabitant of the sixth of the Six Realms, the Realm of the Gods. Their weakness is self-indulgence in pure pleasure and comfort. They are so unfettered and free from physical problems, that they have trouble concentrating their minds.

376 There follows a traditional list of the signs that occur to gods when they are about to die and reenter the round of rebirth. The self-existing luminosity of their bodies fades, they become uncomfortable on their thrones, develop bad odour, and their garlands wither. The other gods, not able to stand the thought of the end of such a long-lived being, shrink away. The agony of a god when he or she dies is terrible.

377 "Regret is just a cause for further suffering": (TS) For ordinary people the force of regret leads to confession of sins. This act of confession leads to actions which favor religion and so to the eventual lessening of suffering as one becomes free of negative karma. Thus, for ordinary people regret ordinarily leads to a lessening of suffering.

But when the gods die, their regret does not improve their karma. By regret they simply increase their own suffering. They have led a dissolute life of self-indulgence in Heaven and failed all that time to practice religion. Now it is too late to regret their laziness.

378 *chus ma dkrug* - (TS) *chus* (water) in this case means something like "planning." Literally this says something like, "do not stir up the waters."

379 "Rich men, offer and give most generously": *phyug pos mchod dang sbyin gtong gyis* - Interesting use of the honorific. *mchod* is the word "offering" and is used to indicate generosity directed towards those of a higher station, such as the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. *sbyin* means generosity and indicates charity to those of lower station. So there is the expression, "*yar mchod mar sbyin*" --- "offer to the higher, give to the lower."

380 "Ordinary people, do prostrations, circumambulations, and Manis": Three devotional practices traditionally recommended to Tibetan lay people: prostrations to the Three Jewels, Circumambulations of sacred sites such as stupas and holy mountains, and repetitions of the mantra of Avalokiteśvara, *Om Mani Padme Hūm*.

381 "If you don't understand the song, I won't repeat it anyway": *ma go glu la 'brel ba med* - Standard last line of a song. Literally, "if you don't understand, there's no connection between us." But Tendzin Samphe! says that this implies that the connection is broken and I won't sing it again just because you didn't understand it the first time. There is an expression *blu la gdab 'byor*: repeat the song. If there is a relation, you can ask the song to be repeated, but if there is none, you may not.

This closing line is a sign that this is a song from an oral epic. The song is actually, however, a sort of hybrid, combining the style of epic song and the style of a formal sermon.

382 "Then, knowing that the time had come to grant empowerment (abhiseka)...": It is very unlikely that this portion of the text is of oral provenance. It reflects a detailed and sophisticated knowledge of Tantric liturgies of initiation. The language of the empowerment songs which follow is simple and fairly easy to understand. But it implies some knowledge of these ceremonies and is probably not comprehensible except in the most general way to the average Tibetan peasant.

The songs also include citations from Indian tantras and sūtras, marking a literary and non-oral source for some of the epic. In particular, there is systematic reference to the *Manjuśrī Nāma Samgīti*, probably the most important single scripture participating in the hermeneutics of tantric liturgical composition. (For a translation and commentary see *Chanting the Names of Manjuśrī: The Manjuśrī Nāma-Samgīti*, translated and annotated by Alex Wayman, (Boston: Shambhala, 1985) The language is not *sgrung yig*, epic language, but classical Tibetan. As we see in the Cosmology Chapter, the presence of this previous text invites a consideration of the commentaries on the *Manjuśrī Nāma*, which reflect a special metaphysical agenda underlying this hyperliterate version of the epic.

The first eight lines of the song are particularly complex and carefully phrased. They represent a request to the Three Kāyas of the Five Buddha Families to grant empowerment to the specific *nirmāṇakāya* who will be Gesar, so that he may perform salvational activities on the Earth.

383 "fruition of the truth": TS's interpretation: *bden 'bras* - the fruition of truth. The aim of this song is to supplicate the spirit of Gesar to begin the process of manifesting. He is supplicated from the ultimate truth, namely the principle of Buddhahood, the Buddhas of the five directions. He develops gradually from this ultimate principle to a manifestation of the truth in the relative plane as a deity and then as a human. Thus, he is the fruition of the truth.

384 There is a typographical convention among some Tibetan translators that mantras chanted in liturgies are given in all caps. This convention will be followed in the rest of the chapter, which I interpret as a bardic narration of a single lengthy liturgical performance.

385 Each of the Five Buddhas represents the transmutation of one of the Five poisons into one of the Five Wisdoms. These poisons and wisdoms will be mentioned in the text as each of the buddha families gives initiation.

386 The five female buddhas, consorts of the Buddhas of the Five Families. The Five male buddhas represent the Five Wisdoms, the subject pole of cognition. The Five female buddhas, since they represent the Five Elements, are the phenomenal world, or the object pole of the cognitive act. When they are represented embracing in the famous *yab yum* posture, this represents the union of the inner mind with the outer objects.

'chung ba Inga - the five elements: *'byung ba yum Inga*--- the mothers of the five elements: Sky is *Kun tu bzang mo*, earth into *Sangs rgyas che ma*, water into *Mamaki*, fire is *Na bza' dkar mo*, and wind is *Dam tshig 'grol ma*.

387 "I invoke the the mind stream of the Buddhas from unborn space. The Five Elements purified are the Five Goddesses.

From unceasing space arise for the benefit of beings."

The epithets "unborn" and "unceasing" are significant in Tantric liturgical poetry. They are two of the traditional three qualities of the ultimate nature: unborn, non-dwelling, and unceasing--- the opposites of arising, dwelling and cessation--- the three moments of

phenomenal becoming.

(TS) In this schema "unborn" represents absolute emptiness and "unceasing" represents its manifestation. The unborn Five Buddhas are the dharmakāya level of Buddhahood and the unceasing or unobstructed Five Goddesses, female Buddhas, are here the sambhogakāya level.

Beings on these two levels of reality join with lower beings to form the Nyingma concept of The Three Lineages. The dharmakāya Buddhas dwell on the highest level. When they communicate to the next level of manifestation, they are called the "thought lineage" or "mind stream" (*dgongs rgyud*). This lineage exists when the dharmakāya Buddhas transmit the teaching in an inconceivable manner to the sambhogakāya Buddhas, who can be seen in their glorious form only by 10th Bhumi bodhisattvas. In the Nyingma schema of the Three Lineages, it is the 10th Bhumi Bodhisattvas, dwelling on the intermediate plane of the Sign Lineage (*brda' rgyud*) who receive the teachings and pass them on to beings in the human realm, who initiate the third lineage, the Hearing Lineage (*snyan brgyud*). So this opening section of the verses which accompany the empowerment already indicate the descent of the absolute into form.

388 "Appears the self-existing form of wisdom and compassion": In other words, Gesar, who is the union of emptiness and compassion, or the union of the ultimate Buddha Mind with its manifestation in Buddha Activity. He is the manifestation of Buddha intentionality in Buddha Activity.

(TS) As is signaled in the next verse, this is the *nirmānakāya* level, completing the devolution of the principle which will become Gesar through the Three Kāyas.

389 *de ni rang gsal don gyi glu* - Two possible meanings: the meaningful song of self-luminosity, that is the self-appearance of Gesar or the song of the meaning of self-luminosity, that is, the nature of self-existing buddhahood, the three kāyas.

390 "Even if the medicine is fragrant, shining, and wholesome": *dri mdangs bzang* - the ways Tibetan medicine is judged is by its odor, its color, and its taste. The pills often shine with reflective bits that are sprinkled onto the surface.

391 Obscure passage. In Stein's edition this line had so many blurs and lacunae as to be almost entirely unreadable. Later editors restored it to *so nam med pa'i zhing sa la*. Samten Karmay reads this as *so nam med pa-* an unprepared field. If a field is not periodically allowed to lay fallow for a year, it will cease to produce.

392 Gantok edition has *nams*, all others *nas*, which is unquestionably correct.

393 Here begins the Vase (*bum*) portion of a traditional empowerment ceremony. Technically, an abhiseka is a coronation ceremony used to turn an ordinary man into a king. It has been adapted to the tantric function of ceremonially turning an ordinary person into a buddha. In order to perform the sophisticated tantric ritual practices called *sādhana*s one must receive an abhiseka that empowers one to do practices devoted to the particular buddha mentioned in the ritual. Usually *sādhana*s are devoted to the iconographically flamboyant tutelary deities such as Vajrasattva, Vajrayoginī, or Hayagrīva. This empowerment, however, is a sort of generic abhiseka, turning Joyful to Hear into the five primordial buddhas of the Five Buddha families. It thus completes the formation of the two-natured buddhist/native Tibetan deity Joyful to Hear, who will become Gesar of Ling when he takes incarnation as a human being.

394 Vairocana represents the transmutation of ignorance into wisdom.

395 "the body blessings of the Sugatas": In empowerment ceremonies a student may receive five basic blessings from the Buddhas and the guru: the blessings of body, speech, mind, quality, and action.

396 The Eight-spoked Wheel in tantra is the symbol of Vairocana's family in the Five Families. Each family has a name and direction. The direction of Vairocana's family is Center in the Mahāmudrā tantras and East in the tantras of the Old School. It is called the "Buddha Family." Here the Wheel as a "vessel" or "support" (*rten*) for Vairocana, sings this song preparatory to confirming on Joyful to Hear empowerment with the wisdom of Vairocana.

397 Ignorance is transmuted into the Wisdom of Dharmadhātu--- the Wisdom of All-encompassing Space.

398 "You are the king who possesses various magical transformations": *sgyu 'phrul* - magical transformations, the ability to assume a number of different appearances. Also a famous characteristic of Padmasambhava, who possesses eight special aspects which are "transformations."

(TS) These verses are borrowed from the *Arya Manjuśrī nāma samgīta* (*phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod*). (In *Kha ton gces btus*, p. 44) Dudjom Rinpoche in his oral commentaries on his *History of the Dharma*, when he lectured about the predictions that Padmasambhava would arise and come to Tibet, quoted these verses as a prediction in the *Manjuśrī Tantra* that Guru Rinpoche would come to Tibet: *dpal ldan sangs rgyas padma skyes/ kun mkhyen ye shes mdzod 'dzin pa/ rgyal po sgyu 'phrul na tshogs 'chang* : "You will be born a lotus of the glorious Buddha./ You will hold the treasury of omniscient wisdom./ You will be the king who holds various magical transformations." Now these verses are being used to prophesy the coming of Gesar.

399 "You dispel delusions from deluded minds": From another section of *'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par 'brjod pa* (p. 18): "*mchod pa chen po gti mug che/ gti mug blo ste gti mug sel*." This is the first of a series of quotations from the offering section of the *Manjuśrī Nāma*. These lines are often used in the empowerment liturgies--- in my experience usually in the section in which the Vajra Master is supplicated to grant empowerment.

400 *mi bsal bgyad 'phrul mi smra skyo* - This translation is just a guess. The Tibetan sentence seems to make no sense.

401 "Looks great when he wrathfully executes the law": *rgyal khrims btsan drag che zhan 'dra* - literally, "Seems to be great when he is mighty and terrible in the temporal law"--- the meaning being that he is rigorous and harsh in his courts of justice, punishing criminals harshly, inflicting fierce penalties at will.

402 "Throws his karma in the air, like a child throws a stone": (TS) *rgyu 'bras gnam la rdo 'phen 'dra* - Literally, "his cause and effect are like flinging stones in the air." The idea is that, since he does not have *maitri*, or loving kindness, this ruler has no respect for the laws of cause and effect. Therefore, even though he is harsh in the administration of justice, he plants for himself unwholesome karmic seeds that will ripen in unhappiness. His actions seem righteous and systematic, but from the point of view of the science of cause and effect, they are aimless actions, like throwing a stone in the air.

403 "Even though he is learned and seems widely read": *mthong rgya* - Literally, "vast seeing," meaning that in the discipline of the three learnings, hearing, contemplating, and meditating (*thos, bsam, sgom*), he has seen many books.

404 "His explanations are like a mist of spit": *mchil ma'i rlangs po* - "the vapor of spit."
 (TS) Since the student has no religious commitments, his explanations are senseless. There are numerous expressions for the senselessness of worldly existence that use expressions like this: *'khor ba 'chil ma'i thal ba bzhin phor ba* - "Abandon cyclic existence like the dust of spit in the air," or *rgyal srid mchil ba'i thal ba bzhin phor nas*, "having abandoned his royal realm like the dust of spit."

405 *bde ba la bkod pa* - (TS) Literally, establish in bliss, but actually just an expression for being happy.

406 Strangely, we now begin the empowerment of the Vajra Family of the Five Families of the Buddhas. We should have had next the Lotus Family, the family which would represent the empowerment of speech. But this is skipped in all texts and moved to the end, perhaps because Amitābha is the Lord Buddha who initiated the Gesar project and Gesar is in a sense an emanation of him and his Buddha Family, the Lotus Family.

407 The sermon emphasizes aggression among the five poisons of passion, aggression, ignorance, pride, and jealousy. In the abhiseka of the Vajra Family disease aggression is transformed into the wisdom of Aksobhya Buddha, which is the wisdom of discrimination.

408 One of the four buddha activities of an enlightened being: pacifying, taming, enriching, and destroying. As the activity manifestation of the buddha principle, Gesar should be particularly invested with these four qualities.

409 Ratnasambhava literally means "Born from a Jewel." This is the Buddha of the Ratna or Jewel Family. It represents the enlightened side of the notion of wealth. Thus, in this portion of the empowerment the disciple is dressed in precious jewels and the gorgeous raiment of an Indian king. This same outfit is precisely what the "great being" (Mahasattva) bodhisattvas wear--- the silks and jewels of a king.

410 "...adorned by the bodhisattvas..."---TS insists that although there is no instrumental marker on the word bodhisattva, nevertheless, this is the meaning of this passage. The Gansu edition has *phyogs* (direction) for *sa* (level), in the expression *sa bcu'i byang chub sems dpa'*. This would give the reading "bodhisattvas of the ten directions," instead of "bodhisattvas of the ten levels." TS argues the Stein text must be right (in saying "directions"), because only bodhisattvas on the ten bhūmis would be elevated enough to witness the god realm where this particular abhiseka is being given. "Bodhisattvas of the ten directions" is thus too inclusive, mentioning as it does bodhisattvas who have not yet attained the stages of the bhūmis or levels.

411 "And the great source of Jewel Wisdom, Ratnasambhava": *rin chen 'bhyung gnas* - untranslatable pun for the name Ratnasambhava, which means "Born from a Jewel."

This passage can be interpreted in many different ways, since it is grammatically just a string of nouns in apposition. TS interprets it so that the accumulation of merit is the source of the Wisdom of this Buddha family. Indeed the concept of accumulation is central to the notion of the Jewel Family in general, since this is the family of the Buddha which emphasizes an enlightened approach to wealth and the gathering of wealth.

412 Taming, another of the four Buddha Activities.

413 "May the auspiciousness of.... be present"--- this formula usually occurs at the end of a practice and is a ceremonial celebration of the merit and good fortune that must have been created by the practice session. Since it is a celebration, it is associated with a sense of richness and fits in the Jewel Family portion of the empowerment.

- 414 "the Sixty Limbs of Speech and Singing": Among the major and minor marks of a Buddha, the qualities of his speech.
- 415 Stein has HRIUH, a non-existent mantra. He speculates that this may be HŪM HRĪ. If this were HŪM HRĪH, it might be the mantras of male and female protectors. But TS argues it is just a misspelling of HRĪH. In the Tantras of the Old School the seed syllables of the five Buddha families are OM ĀH HŪM SVĀ HA. In the Old Translation School the seed syllables are OM HŪM TRAM HRĪH and AH.
- 416 Another quote from the *Manjuśrī Nāma*. Chapter V, verse 6, Wayman pp. 68-69.
- 417 *gsung gi dbang* - Reading the Manjuśrī Nāma, TS explains as "*gsung gi dbang phyug*" - not the abhiseka of Speech, but the Lord of Speech.
- 418 "From Ling, the Country of Desire": *mthong smon gling* - (TS) Literally, "seeing-one-wishes Ling." Ling is so lovely that if a person but once sees this country, he will immediately wish or aspire to be reborn there.
- 419 "The Black Māras and the Golden Hor": (TS): In the epic there are two groups of Horpas which must be subjugated by Gesar: the White Tent Horpas (*gur dkar hor*) and the Gold Tent Horpas (*gur gser hor*). These are merely examples of the many nations who need to be tamed.
- 420 *dbang gi phrin las* - short for *dbang bdus gi phrin las*, magnetizing, another of the four Buddha Activities or Four Karmas.
- 421 "secret center" - euphemism for the area of the genitals of the deity.
- 422 Since the buddha family of the Karma Family is the lord of all activity, all the four Buddha Activities fall to him.
- 423 The Buddha Family of Amoghasiddhi (All-Accomplishing) is the family of action or the Karma Family.
- 424 "The greater voice of the Great Wrathful One": *kho ba chen po sgra che ba* - *Manjuśrī Nāma samgiti*: *mchod pa chen po khro ba che/ kho ba chen po dgra che ba*, "great offering, Great Wrathful One,/ The voice of the Great Wrathful One, the Great Enemy." Note the homonyms *dgra* and *sgra*, "enemy" and "voice." The *Manjuśrī Nāma* says "great enemy." This becomes in the epic "great voice." Chapter V, line 4, Wayman p.69.
- 425 "Conquers (or destroys) the great mountain of the Phenomenal world": *stobs chen pha rol gnon pa po/ srid pa'i ri bo chen po 'joms* -quotation from *Manjuśrī Nāma samgiti*, Chapter V, verse 12, p. 72.
- 426 "The gurus who is full of attachment to rich offerings": *dkor* - often refers to the food and wealth offered to the Three Jewels by the faithful. It is considered a typical fault of priests who desire to collect these offerings as personal wealth.
- 427 *tha snad tshig* - Literally "conventional words," but here the sense is of words with no deep sense, just consensual meaning. In other words, just words, no meaning---all talk and no personal realization or trace of spiritual accomplishment.
- 428 "If karma does not strike him in the face,/ Then it will ripen as agony for the kingdom and people": (TS) *rgyu 'gras rang thog ma babs na* - Literally, "If cause and effect do not land directly on his own head..." The idea is that if the ruler is evil, the results of his evil actions will cause him harm. If this harm does not remove him from power or convert him to the good, then nothing will stop him and he can continue to cause harm to his subjects.

429 "Like the callow youth, full of himself, the Tiger of the East" :*stag shar* - TS: Tiger of the East, an expression for a healthy young man in his athletic prime. A young brave, proud of his physical prowess and courage in battle, always ready to fight to prove himself. I suggested to TS the translation "young punk." He said, "something like that." Goes with *dman shar* or *sman shar*, proud young woman, "young princess."

430 *sna ma bcag* - Literally, hit his nose. But the idea is to knock him out in a fight.

431 *rang snang* - TS: *snang ba mgo po* - proud, stuck-up.

432 *mu ges blo rgyag ma byung ba* - uncertain translation. What does *blo rgyag* mean? Macdonald suggests "depressed." In which case this line would be literally, "if her mind is not depressed by famine,..."

433 *nags sems* - TS: The colloquial connotations are of somebody who is crude, rude, rough, and tough---- not just a person with an obscured mind, but with an uncultivated, untrained, savage mind.

434 The five aggregates are form, feeling, perception, concept, and consciousness. These are the five psycho-physical constituents of ego. Each of the five Vase Abhisekas purifies one of the five aggregates, transforming it into one of the five wisdoms. Therefore this verse is a summary of the effects of the empowerment, for by destroying the five aggregates one destroys ego-clinging, and brings out the five wisdoms.

435 Actually, the five empowerments just depicted were only five aspects of the first of the four empowerments in a full coronation ceremony. They make up the five-fold Vase abhiseka. The other three empowerments were not represented here, although this sentence may mean that the Buddhas of the Five Families continued and performed the full ceremony.

436 This is the typical colophon which ends any book or chapter---"Chapter on the Abhiseka and the Chapter on the Birth by Magical Transformation, known as 'Blessings Flaming Continuously Like a Stream.'" The actual title of the chapter is "Blessings Flaming Continuously Like a Stream." The rest of the words are a description of the chapter. So in Western printing conventions, this colophon would be given this way: *Blessings Flaming Continuously Like a Stream: the abhiseka and the birth by magical transformation.*

Chapter V

The History of the Goloks-- a study in East Tibetan Narrative Machinery

The following translation is a story told in the (*mGo log*) Golok dialect and inserted by a great 19th century master of meditation, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje (mDo mKhyen brtse Ye shes rDo rje), into his autobiography. In theory it is a history of the family lineage of Do Khyentse, who is a reincarnation of the great Ati teacher, poet, philosopher, and librarian Jigmê Lingpa (*Jigs med gLing pa*). But actually, it is the fabulous story of the development of his tribe, the Golok, from their magical origins to the birth of Do Khyentse.

In this introduction to the translation I will argue that, although it is written in a dialect of Tibetan and pretends to be a mere tribal chronicle, it is actually a part of the textual tradition of the Mipham *Gesar*. I have included it in this monograph in order to illustrate the dimensions of the epic involved with folk religion and tribal narrative traditions. One of Do Khyentse's points in telling The History of the Golok is to show the natural relationship which exists between the origins of the Golok tribe and religious world of the *Gesar Epic*. In this story we will see divine characters from the Mipham *Gesar* acting out historical events in the putatively non-fictional world and the sacred dimension of the epic will be seen

just as the normal religion of the ethnic minorities of Eastern Tibet.

We begin with the story of a temporary marriage between the daughter of the god Nyenchen Thanglha (*gnyan chen thang lha*)⁴³⁷ and a particularly bungling human being, the first Golok. The narrative style is pithy, fluent, and extremely humorous. The chronicle continues through his descendants until we reach the parents of Jigmê-Lingpa, a previous incarnation of Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje.

This history was drawn to my attention by Tendzin Samphel because of its great similarity to several non-Buddhistic, or perhaps I should say less-Buddhistic, versions of the beginning of the *Gesar Epic*. It seems that all versions of *Gesar* begin with the presentation of some kind of divine war between Padmasambhava and a group of demon kings. In the Buddhist versions I have read, the story of this war evokes the motif of the "enemies of the four directions" and Buddhist tantric tales of the taming of Hindu demons. This plot motif has already been discussed.

The versions of the epic which are not as literally involved with a Buddhist theocratic agenda often begin with another kind of story---- the story of a war between the black demons and the white gods. For example, there is Francke's Ladakhi version of the *Gesar*, discussed in the introduction to this dissertation. That Ladakhi *Gesar* begins with a cosmic battle between a giant white yak and a giant black yak. The white yak is actually Indra, the king of the gods. The black yak is none other than the king of the *bdud*, the *māras*, or devils. The human hero of the story intervenes in the battle between these two forces of good and evil on the side of the white. He kills the representative of the demons and is rewarded.

Part of his reward is that his tribe is introduced to a god. This god promises to take birth as a human among the people of the tribe and he will come to be the king of Ling. From this point on we enter the traditional story of the birth of Gesar.

The same story is found in the beginning of a hand-written *Gesar* epic brought back from Tibet by Alexandra David-Neel. This text resides in the at the Centres D'Études Tibétaines. The Parisian scholars chose the David-Neel version partly because this is a version of *Gesar* which seems relatively non-Buddhistic. Although they are not being completely accurate to say this, some Tibetans would call this version, as well as Francke's Ladakhi one, "Bönpo *Gesars*." Western scholars who theorize a "pre-Buddhist" source of the *Gesar*, treasure these versions, hoping that they show the core of the epic without its "Buddhist veneer." Francke, as I have said, was one of the founders of this theory. He saw the Ladakhi *Gesar* as a possible model for later versions. You could say, using the current terminology of cultural studies, that Buddhism when it came to Tibet "colonized the discourse" of native Tibetan religion and transformed the epic itself so that it now projected a Buddhist sense of cultural identity.⁴³⁸ "The History of the Golok," as I am calling it, shows the difficulty with this theory, for it is obviously of the type of the so-called Bönpo *Gesars*, but it is written by an important Buddhist lama--- a lama, in fact, who both doctrinally and by lineage is closely associated with Mipham Gyatso.

This history and the less Buddhistic *Gesars* mentioned above seem in language, imagery, epic machinery, tribal affiliations, and in their special sense of magic to be part a single narrative tradition--

- a tradition which Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje seems to be consciously evoking by his purposeful use of all sorts of folkisms.

At the same time, even though it evokes the non-Buddhist Gesar narrative tradition, the portion of the Golok history devoted to the actual birth of Khyentse is very similar to the Buddhist version of the birth of *Gesar*, found in the second book of the Mipham version, *The Birth of Gesar* ('*Khrungs gLing*). And it is also similar to Alexandra David-Neel's *La Vie Surhumaine de Gesar de Ling*. That French version of the epic is not a translation of the text she brought back to Paris. It is, rather, a paraphrase of several Buddhistic versions which she encountered in Tibet.

Furthermore, the particular deities mentioned in the Golok History are principal characters in the Buddhist *Gesars*. This is interesting. The gods with whom the Golok people must become involved in order to thrive are the local deities who appear in the Buddhist *Gesar*. The History shows them to us in peculiar detail. We see, in effect, the daily life of the local gods and we see a practical illustration of the religion of the people who heard the Buddhist epic. My feeling is that Do Khyentse meant this story to be a sort of bridge between two worlds. It was to be a bridge between what he saw as an earthy native tradition and the high-flown, exalted Buddhist tradition.

The use of gods and magical religion in the Golok's story is fascinating. As Stein observed throughout *Les Tribus Anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines*, the gods are responsible for the origins and creation of every great tribal entity in Tibet. Like the Homeric heroes, the founders of tribal states are generally sons or daughters

of local gods. Khyentse takes advantage of this fact to retell a story which refurbishes his Buddhist birth mythology in non-Buddhist ethnic particulars.

Khyentse's ethnicity is expressed in four domains. The gods are local rather than Indic Buddhist. The efficacy of religious practice is based on the dynamic of the native Tibetan rituals rather than Buddhist contemplative practice. The ancestors are favored by providence not because of their dharmic virtue, but because of specific compacts with local deities. And finally, the liturgical performances reported come not from the Buddhist religion, but from the rituals and songs of *Gesar* epic bards.

There is, of course, a veneration of Buddhist iconography which explains that the various divine couplings are part of Padmasambhava's overall plan. Jigmê Lingpa's magical rebirth is part of Padma's program to continually return his original disciples to Tibet as incarnations. These incarnations propagate Nyingma Buddhist religion in Eastern Tibet, following the ages-long plan of Padma. But even a committed and observant lama such as Tendzin Samphel remarks that the Golok tribes represented in this passage are shown to be relatively unfamiliar with Buddhism and he feels that this text seems to reflect, to use his words, "a kind of primitive level of Tibetan religion where Buddhism isn't known that well." 439

The Goloks are a tribe genealogically implicated in the *Epic of Gesar*. Their territory is relatively uninhabited and they are mainly bandits themselves. The mountain Magyal Pomra (rMa rgyal sPom ra) is located in the center of the territory they control. It is often

indicated on maps by its Chinese name Amnye Machen. Magyal Pomra is only second to Nyenchen Thanglha in power and importance. And he acquires special significance, because the magical weapons of Gesar and the marvelous war implements destined for the warriors of Ling are all buried in the valleys between his peaks. Gesar is said to have left his miraculous sword behind and it is still buried in Magyal Pomra, a source of power for the Golok.

When J.F. Rock wrote his monograph on the Amnye Machen range, he explored as much of the Golok region as he could safely visit. Stein sent him a letter giving a summary of the history of the Goloks which is included in Rock's book. According to Samten Karmay, this summary originates in a version of the Golok history very similar, perhaps identical with the passage translated below.

440

Rock, in trying to characterize this fascinating group of people tells stories that one hears quite often when discussing the Golok with Tibetans:

Although murder was said to be outlawed within the sanctuary of the Amnye Ma-chen the Go-log attack anyone approaching the region west of the Yellow River. They acknowledge no one's authority except that of their chiefs, and as the Shing-bzah incarnation told us their word could not be trusted. They enjoy attacking anyone, especially foreigners who penetrate their mountain fastness. They have always been thus, and will probably remain so.... Their life is spent on horseback, always ready for battle and even among themselves they squabble to the point of combat.

....I quote a speech made by a Go-log: 'You cannot compare us go-log with other people. You obey the laws of strangers, the laws of the Dalai Lama, of China, and of any of your petty chiefs. You are afraid of everyone; to escape punishment you obey everyone. And the result is that you are afraid of everything. And not only you, but your fathers and grandfathers were the same. We go-log, on the other hand, have from time immemorial obeyed none but our own laws, none but our own convictions. A go-log is born with the knowledge of his freedom, and with his mother's milk imbibes some acquaintance with his laws. They have never been altered. Almost in his mother's womb he learns to handle arms. His forebears

were warriors--- were brave fearless men, even as we today are their worthy descendants. To the advice of a stranger we will not hearken, nor will we obey ought but the voice of our conscience with which each go-log enters the world. This is why we have ever been free as now, and are the slaves of none--- neither of Bogdokhan nor of the Dalai Lama. Our tribe is the most respected and mighty in Tibet, and we rightly look down with contempt on both Chinaman and Tibetan."

The reader may be interested to know that even today, under the rule of the People's Republic of China, the area around Machen Pomra is still considered a dangerous place to travel and the Golok are still a marauding presence.⁴⁴¹

The picture we have from this account is of a thinly populated, mountainous district which is only gradually being settled by human beings. When the humans first arrive, they discover that the territory has been inhabited since time immemorial by a society of deities with their own politics and their own characteristics connected with the physical structure of the area. Each district, in effect, is owned by a lord or proprietor, *bdag po*, who is the god of that land. These deities are called *sa bdag*, earth lords, *gzhi bdag*, ground lords, *gnas bdag*, place lords, or sometimes just "the lord," *bdag po*. They are of various "races" (*rig pa*), meaning types of beings. For example, Nyenchen Thanglha is said to be of the "race" of the *rākṣasas* (*gnod sbyin*). Of course, here there is very little of the Indian epic connotations of *rākṣasas*. Despite our convention of translation, the Tibetan term is probably original and means "harm causer."

Each earth lord is thought to have a natural sovereignty over a certain amount of territory extending out from a center where he dwells when he is in the ordinary world or human realm. This center is called his "gateway" (*sgo*).⁴⁴² It leads to another realm where

the god truly dwells. Buddhist and Bön liturgies refer to these realms as palaces. In this account we actually see the interior of one of these palaces, when the future mother of Jalü Dorje (that is, Do Khyentse) is kidnapped by gods. We see that the true home of the gods is a separate realm where time moves differently and where spatial and temporal relationships are profoundly altered. Most of the gods in this account are "wrathful." This means they appear in an angry, martial aspect, with fierce features, long fangs, talons, and wearing ornaments of bone and human skin. In Buddhist language wrathful (*krodha*) is a technical term. It indicates that the gods appear in angry aspect, as opposed to the other two iconographic categories of peaceful and semi-wrathful. Ordinarily the aspect would be taken as having some philosophical significance. In this text, however, we see the jargon of Tantric Buddhism used in colloquial language to tell a story. The technical vocabulary takes on a new and more direct, less alchemical meaning. To be honest to the intention of the text I would say, for example, that the gods are wrathful in the simple and conventional sense of the word---- that is, they are irascible and easily angered. They tend to regard human beings almost as invaders in their territory and are easily infuriated by what we would consider to be ritual pollution. For example, at one point the father of Jigmê Lingpa considers moving to Yutse. He decides not to because it is a sensitive and reactive land. (*phug thog shor ba*). A person could all too easily make a mistake: urinating in the wrong place or inadvertently moving a stone which is the power spot of a *nāga* or polluting the atmosphere by cooking rotten meat and sending out unfragrant, unclean smoke. Any such actions might

infuriate the local deities and attract catastrophe, illness, and death.

Similarly, if the deities should appear to the characters in this story in pacific form, it is not because they are manifesting the fundamental peaceful nature of enlightenment, but because they "have made friends" with the humans and have "promised to be friendly."

Direction words in this text are a bit confusing. At one point, for example, the father and mother of Khyentse go on a pilgrimage to visit Lhasa. When people head upwards, they are not going north, but towards mountain highlands. And so the journey from Khams to Lhasa is upwards and the return direction is "downwards."

On this trip from Eastern Tibet southward and westward to Central Tibet we are given a picture of the religion of the people who live around Magyal Pomra. The description is not without humor for we see the superstitions of the villagers and their quarrelsomeness as they ignorantly respond to every miraculous foreshadowing of the coming birth of the great saint. The reader is informed by the narrating voice and knows what gods and divine phenomena truly obtain. The false beliefs of the villagers then appear as gullible superstition. At the same time, there are always seers who can glimpse the true situation by seeing the invisible world of spirits and by having symbolic visions.

The pilgrims have two aims on their visit--- to increase their merit by paying homage to the famous shrines in Lhasa and to increase their good fortune by receiving the blessings of famous lamas. The lamas may be Buddhist celebrates, but within the

framework of this narrative their powers are really little different from those of village shamans. For example, there is an interview with the Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Jampel Gyatso. His wisdom and kindness is not represented. All we know of him is that he can see the true nature of Jigmê's mother---that she is a reincarnation of a goddess. He identifies her in a crowd of what must be thousands of respectful peasants and gives her a magical statue made of herbs. His aim is to create a "connection," *drel pa* ('*bre*l pa), so that he may have the good fortune, *tendrel* (*rten* '*bre*l), to be reborn in her womb in his next incarnation.

This word for "connection" is an important idea in the religion of the people. Like *tendrel*, it has a technical meaning within Buddhist philosophy and psychology and indicates the presence of a karmic link. But, again like *tendrel*, it takes on in this text a meaning, related to ritual purity and taboo and thus more in keeping with the principles of animistic religions than with the careful formulations of Buddhist *abhidharma*.

Thus, the mother being originally a goddess, is a pure vessel into which the incarnation may be born. If she were an ordinary person then she would not be able to "sustain" (*theg pa*, literally "hold up.") his merit and the child would die. She must be kept clean. If she touches *drel* ('*bre*l) a person who has suffered pollution, she will become ill because of her own purity and that of the child within her. If she "has a connection with" anything touched by the hand or mouth of an impure person, she will suffer.

The Buddhist viewpoint prevents the text from using the words "clean" and "unclean." Instead, impurity would be "obscuration"

drib-pa (*sgrib pa* or *grip pa*) coming from the violation or corruption of tantric vows, *samayas*. *Drip* (*sgrib*) is the translation of the sanskrit term *varaṇa*, meaning literally "veil."⁴⁴³ It originally applied simply to the two veils of emotions and knowing, which we study in the *abhidharma*. But here in the world where tantra and local religion have mixed, *sgrib* has become ritual pollution and it can be transmitted by touch. So when the Dalai Lama gives the lady his little statue, her *touching* of it should create the *connection*. But inadvertently it is passed from hand to hand and so is touched by a "great sinner" *dikchen* (*sdig chen*). It thus becomes *obscured* (*sgrib*) and so the connection is broken and the lama loses the *tendrel*, *auspicious coincidence*, but really "good fortune." to be reborn in her womb.⁴⁴⁴

The assimilation of these Buddhist terms to a native context is a sign of the overall force of the text and perhaps of the entire narrative tradition in which it participates. Here we see not the assimilation of local tales to Buddhist philosophy, but the reverse assimilation of Buddhist teachings into an indigenous religion. Notice, for example, that the prevalent ceremonies are smoke purifications (*lha sangs*) and nāga offerings. The prevalent deities are mountain gods and nāga women. And most interestingly, the actual birth of the tertön Jigmê Lingpa is heralded not by Buddhist gods and bodhisattvas, but by troops of invisible bards chanting epics and wearing their special Gesar hats. The practice of Buddhist religion is almost never separate from the worship or propitiation of local deities. But here the text is restructured to foreground the local gods.

For example, at the time of the birth an invisible shrine is constructed on which offerings are made to the retinue of gods who attend the birth. It is not a Buddhist altar, however, but the special furnace used for Bön offerings and the performance of *lha sangs*. The deities are dressed in armour and blue silks like Chinese and Central Asian deities and the characteristic Tibetan martial spirits called "wargods" (*dgra lha*). Like the war gods, they sing not of the six perfections of the bodhisattva path, but of the excellence of weapons and horses. And the ceremonies performed for positive effect are non-Indic ceremonies of ritual purification such as the *lha sang*. The offerings are chemar, etc.--- the offerings of local religion. The child is bathed just as the Buddha was bathed at his birth, but not in sanctified water. He is bathed in a mixture of milk and water--- one of the ritual materials offered in *lha sangs*.

The story is not only parallel to the birth stories of Gesar. It makes explicit mention of Gesar. Its deities, as I have argued, are nearly stripped of their Buddhist iconography, and have become the native machinery of the Gesar epic.

All of this is of course subordinate in theory to the central plot which is that the birth of Do Khyentse is an aspect of the ancient machinations of Padmasambhava. But the imagery which surrounds his birth and the long story of the development of his tribe, the Goloks, makes this Buddhist saint into a cultural hero of the clan living in the vicinity of the two mountain ranges which figure constantly in the epic as well as the history of the tribe. This may be a story of the further spread of Nyingma Buddhism. But it is told as if it were the story of the spread of the clans to which

the lamas in this movement belonged.

Sacred Geography

Another interesting connection between this History and the *Gesar epic* is that the Golok History involves many of the principal locations in the sacred geography of the epic. Magyal Pomra is of course the site where Gesar's treasures, the patrimony of the warriors of Ling, is buried. As a deity he is active in the epic and is often invoked in the corpus of Mipham's prayers to Gesar. (Stein, '56, p.124).

rMa is the land where Gesar was banished when he was a child after being driven from Ling by his evil uncle Trothung (*khro thung*) (Stein, 125) and it is associated with the mother of Gesar a great deal. Through it passes the rMa Chu, the Ma River (*Huang Ho*) (Stein, ft. 34, p.209).

Nyenchen Thanglha and Magyal Pomra are the two most important local deities of largest importance. The warfare and at times love affairs between Nyenchen Thanglha and Magyal Pomra are central to the festivals of Gesar practiced in the autumn when *lha sang* (T: *lha bsangs*) are performed on the various sacred mountains of Amdo and Eastern Tibet. Stein deals with these practices at length pp. 452-455.

As a deity rather than a mountain, Nyenchen Thanglha is related to another figure in this History of the Goloks--- a figure who also has associations with sacred spots in Minyag, places holy to the gods Pehar and the Great Bodhisattva Manjushri. In the middle

of the story we learn that the father of the great yogin Jalü Dorje is a deity who lives in a magical court in a sort of wrathful fairy land. A Golok woman of the tribe of Achung is kidnapped to heaven and there impregnated by the god in order to bring Jalü into the human realm. The deity introduces himself by saying "I am the son of Zurphü ngapa (zur phud lagna pa)--- the divine child widely known as Lhabu Dung Thodcan (lha bu dung thod can---the divine child wearing a conch turban).

In fact according to Nebesky-Wojkowitz (pp. 100, 129-130, 206-208), Zurphü Ngapa himself is also considered a form of Nyenchen Thanglha. A number of his epithets refer to the fact that he wears a white conch headpiece and Nyenchen Thanglha is often described as wearing such a hat, being dressed in white silks, and riding a white horse. Nevertheless, contradicting the Nyingma sadhanas upon which Nebesky-Wojkowitz bases his identification, the History of the Goloks is clear in saying that this great being, Zurphü Ngapa, is not the god himself, but the son of Nyenchen Thanglha.

There has always been some mystery about the identity of this figure. Nebesky-Wojkowitz relies solely on liturgical texts and institutional commentaries. He aims to give a basis for understanding the cognitive structures that would actually obtain in the field. In other words, when Nebesky-Wojkowitz identifies a certain deity as being related to another one or to a certain family, he is reflecting the possible opinion of some Tibetan.

Stein, on the other hand, pursuing his anthropological studies, searches far beyond the corpus of texts a single Tibetan scholar

might have read when he tries to identify Zurphü Ngapa. He seeks broader structures of discourse that necessarily transcend the consciousness of any single Buddhist or Bön adherent.

Thus, although no single holder of a textual tradition may be aware of the connection, Stein associates Zurphü Ngapa (Stein '59, p.28–287) with the Four Celestial Kings who guard the four directions and with the Central Asian deity Pehar. Similarities in the origin stories for these gods suggest some historical relation in the development of their myths. He goes further and points out that *zur phud Ina pa* is *Pancashikha*, "Five topknots," in Sanskrit, an epithet associated with the mythical white lion, but also with Manjushrī. As Manjushrī's epithet, it would be, according to Stein, *Pancacīra*, which means "Five Curls of Hair."

This deity, *Pancacīra*, is mentioned in the *Padma Thang Yig*, Toussaint, *Le Diction de Padma* or *Le Grand Guru Padma...*, pp. 246 and in the *Manjushrīmulakalpa*.⁴⁴⁵ But Stein analyzes his conceptual relationships with a fascinating breadth of mythical figures from numerous Central Asian cultures---- all gods of wealth, all involved in a transfer of culture via the Silk Route from Khotan to China and Tibet, and all connected with the iconography of the Gesar epic and the image of the snow lion. The matrix of associations when filtered through Tibetan chronicles and epic narratives end up associating this deity with Minyag and the northern reaches of Eastern Tibet. The implications of Stein's research are that this conch shell adorned local deity with his splendid court, the rich appointment of his presence chamber, his wondrous demonic consorts, and his important political associations, is a major player

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from the mountain Yutse.

The region of Yutse is important to the history of Buddhist religion in Tibet. For example, the mother of the founder of the Gelugpa sect is said to come from there and the monk Palgyi Dorje (dpal gyi rdo rje), who assassinated gLang Darma, the last of the great Tibetan kings, took refuge there. And the name Achung in numerous variants is associated with sites there.

It is also an area associated according to Stein with the Ladakhi and Mipham versions. Stein's argumentation is extremely involved, but it works to this effect: one of Achung's sons was the teacher and a distant relative of Kyalo (*skya lo*), a member of the tribe of Ga (*sGa*) and the quintessential rich man in the Mipham *Gesar* ----Kyalo Thönpa (*skya lo ston pa rgyal mtshan*). The home region of this tribe of Ga is identified as Jyekundo, at the source of the Yellow River and the place names we encounter in the Mipham epic are associated with his brothers.

But his name also occurs in the Ladakhi epic, for it is a man named Tenpa (*bsTanpa* or *Than pa*) who gives Gesar the rare objects he needs for his trip to China, which occurs in a late chapter. The name Tenpa becomes Tönpa Gyaltzen in the Mipham, but in both cases it is the same person--- a rich man of the clan of Ga who has important connections with the gDong tribe, is related to Achung, the founder of a Golok tribe and connected with a region associated with Yutse.

The structuralist and philological arguments Stein uses are as intimidatingly complex as the tribal relations themselves. And they are made more difficult to follow by the phenomenon of geographic

displacement: When a clan entity changes location, it tends to keep the same names for places and the same directional names. Thus, if an area was once northeast of the tribe, they continue to call it "northeast" even after they have moved so that it is now literally to their south.

Personally I find his arguments convincing despite the speculative element in them, because they account for the intriguing fact that all the place names that occur in the Golok story are found in the epic as well in slightly different spellings.

In conclusion, Yutse is a location that figures in the epic through tribal descents and as a sacred spot for the clans of major characters. It is sacred to the lineage which descends from A Kyong and is implicated not only in the story we read, but in the lineages of the lamas who participated in the production of the edition.

History of the Goloks from the Auto-biography of Do
khyentse Yeshe Dorje (mDo mKhyen rtse Ye shes rDo rje)

[6:3] As for the great Wisdom Holder (*vidyādhara*) Jigmê Lingpa ('Jigs.med gLings.pa), he is in the lineage of the Lord of Secrets Garab Dorje (Ga.rab rDo.rje) and he is an emanation and manifestation of Manjushri and an aspect of the play of the Dharma King Trisong Deutsen (Khri.srong lDe'u btsan), who manifested in every lifetime only as a Treasure Finder (tertön), the last of the thirteen prophesied in the *dGongs 'dus lung bston bka' rgya ma*.

Now what in this life was his race, his tribe, his maternal lineage, and so on? He was from the place known as Golok. It is the practice place of the Tathāgatas of the Eight Great Heruka Sādhanas, the Practices of the Eight Logoi, a place blessed by Vajravārāhī. The great Master (*acārya*), Padmasambhava, practiced there six months and came there seven times. The lord of that place always maintained a powerful black wrathful form. His name was Nyenchen Thöpa Tsal (gNyan.chen Thod.pa rTsal).⁴⁴⁶ He was a great being (*mahasattva*) of the 10th Level (*bhumi*). He is accompanied by his Great Consort, [7:1] a goddess, a serpentess (Skt: *nāgī*, Tib. *klu*), and a lady nyen⁴⁴⁷, these four, as well as his retinue of sons, his emanations, and the emanations of his emanations--- a numberless retinue.

In that place there are eight great outer lakes. Among them are the Upper and Lower Blue Lakes, one known as the Lake of the

Gods (*Iha*) and one known as the Lake of the Devils (*māra, bdud*). Near the Upper Lake there is a white boulder shaped like a crouching Tiger. This is the Great Gateway of the *zodor* spirit. ⁴⁴⁸

Once a man unsurpassed in his skill at archery came up to the place of that nyen spirit and stayed there. His name was Longchen Thar (Great Space Freedom). One day while he was living there he saw two water buffaloes come out of the Upper and Lower Lakes and start fighting with each other. They fought and fought. They did nothing but fight.

That evening the man slept next to that white boulder. He dreamed that a white man riding a white horse came up to him and said, "Where do you come from?" ⁴⁴⁹

[7:4] "I come from Upper Ngari," he said.

"What is your name?"

"Lhongchen Thar."

"What abilities do you have?"

"I am an archer of great power and ability," he said.

"Well then, listen. Tomorrow two bull yaks will leave the Upper and Lower Lakes and will fight each other. The Upper one is the life substance of the gods. ⁴⁵⁰ The one who comes out of the Lower Lake is none other than the life substance of the devils (*bdud, māra*). If you pierce him and cut off his life, we gods will win and those devils will be defeated. [8:1] You and I will become close friends and we, the gods, will completely fulfill all your desires." With these words the god gave his promise.

But when the two oxen emerged from the lakes and fought, their shapes were so similar that the man could not figure out which

ox to slay. He stayed there all day, but could not shoot his arrow.

[8:2] That evening the man on a white horse came and said "Why was it you didn't shoot the arrow?"

He answered, "I couldn't tell one ox from the other, they were so much alike."

"Well then, tomorrow there will be a mark on my life substance so that you can recognize it. Be alert! We will fulfill your every desire," he said and then left. [8:4]

The next morning once again the oxen fought. This time, however, looking very carefully, he saw that one of them had hanging among its nape hairs a brightly shining mirror. He aimed straight at the heart of the one who had no mirror and pierced him with an arrow. That ox jumped into the Lower Lake and disappeared. The water of the Lake was stained with red blood and the hills, rocks, lake, and trees from the Upper part of the valley all cried out "Ki ki so so, the gods are victorious." (*ki ki bsvo bsvo lha rgyal lo*) The sound of the victory cries was great enough to shake the earth. But everything in the lower part was full of groans and awful sounds.

That evening the same man came and said, "Now the white gods are victorious and the black devils are defeated. Our wishes have been fulfilled. We will repay your kindness. Tomorrow morning at the foot of this boulder some kind of frightening animal will appear. [You must touch it] The best would be with your hand. [9:2] The middle would be to stroke it with the feathers of your arrow. The last and least way would be to throw two handfuls of sand on its body." He said this and left.

The next morning when the sun rose, from the top of the

boulder came a divine white yak--- frightening, with its mouth open and its tongue sticking out into space and moving about. Steam issued from its mouth and piled up in clouds of mist. Its hooves pounded the boulder to rubble. The man was so frightened he could not even look at the creature and remained frozen that way until finally it disappeared in the lake.

[9:4] That evening the friendly deity came just as before: "You weren't much of a man, were you.⁴⁵¹ Now, tomorrow another creature will come. You need not fear; all you need do is to act as I told you last time." He said this and left.

The next morning at dawn from the top of the boulder appeared a fearful tigress, her mouth open, her eyes bulging, her fangs clenched. Her claws reduced the stones to rubble. She appeared crouching, about to leap fiercely. The man was petrified with fear and remained that way, not daring to move until the beast finally disappeared in the lake.

That evening the friendly deity came just as before. "You're the kind of blunderer who has exhausted his merit. [10:1] Where is there another man like you who can't get anything done. It's really hard for us on our end to help you."

The man said, "Now you're not going to keep your promise."

"I am not breaking my promise. It's you who can't perform. The divine yak which came the day before yesterday (*khar nyin*) was my younger daughter, the goddess (Od ldan dpal mo) Öden Palmo-- Luminous Glorious Lady. Others have begged her hand in marriage⁴⁵², but all have failed. She is superior to all others and therefore, if you had gained her, your family lineage would have

gained great merit in the Dharma and would have certainly produced an uncorrupted line of Wisdom Holders (*vidyādhara*s) in a family style line of descent.⁴⁵³ They would have subdued India and Tibet [10:4]. Their greatness and fame would have spread across India and Tibet. But you missed your chance for this good fortune.

The tiger who appeared today was of the race of the nyen, Merit GLorious Treasure (Sod nams dpal ster, pronounced Sönam Palter) She is my middle daughter. There have been suitors and I have given her hand in marriage. If you had attained her, the religious rite which confers empowerment⁴⁵⁴ on your human lineage would [10:5] have taken place [or] you would have attained prosperity, might, glory and the respect of all. But you missed your chance for that good fortune.

Now there is my oldest daughter, Brilliant Superb Victorious Over Enemies (gZi 'do sgra rgyal, pro. Zido Dragyal). Although I have her, it has been decided to give her in marriage to Magyal Pomra (rma rgyal spom ra).⁴⁵⁵ Nevertheless, I will allow her to be given to you once.⁴⁵⁶[11:1]

We've been trying to help you for some time, but it is hard. When you win her, this is what you will receive. Your family lineage will always thirst for sin. Their work will be war and all sorts of thievery. They will make their living off the wealth and prosperity of others and only that way. They will kill living creatures and diligently strip the carcasses, taking the meat and red blood. As long as your human lineage lasts, you will never be dominated by others. Your heads will never be lowered.⁴⁵⁷ This is the last good fortune I can grant to you. [11:2]

However [11:2] if tomorrow morning you cannot show your courage, there is nothing more I can do for you. In that case, leave this place in peace and find another country. I will give you as much wealth⁴⁵⁸ as you can take with you," He said this and then left.

Next morning [11:4] at sunrise once again from the top of the boulder came a fearful crocodile, its mouth open, its eyes bulging, its tongue sticking out. The man was not brave enough to rub it with his hand or the arrow feathers, but he managed to throw a handful of sand toward the creature's tail. In a moment it became a lovely and charming woman dressed in silken clothes and precious jewels who offered her help and friendship.

Three days later [11:6] the girl said, "Go today to the upper part of the valley. There is a little lake there. By its shores is my dowery, some of my herds. Drive the sheep down here." [12:2]

So he left and, herding about a hundred head of sheep with different colors of wool, he came back down the valley. By the time he had arrived on the banks of Sky Lake it was already night. He found a fine yak hair tent set up and in it were all the property and accoutrements of a home. All the property and excellent wealth had been set up and arranged [12:2]

He asked, "Where did we get all this stuff?"⁴⁵⁹

"My brother brought it," she said.

"Is your brother the same as my friend from yesterday," he asked.

"It's possible," she said.

From then on those two prospered together in comfort and happiness and sported together all the time. They had a male child.

When he was a year old the wife said, "Now we have been friends for three years. All that time our life has been full of comfort and joy. Our son is one year old and we have never had a birthday celebration. Three days from tomorrow, let's have a big party and we can present a huge offering for the family of his maternal uncle."

The husband thought this was an excellent idea.

The woman said, "Sleep comfortably this evening. I will make all the preparations." [12:5] In the middle of the night many people and all sorts of animals assembled there and were bustling around, performing *lha sang*,⁴⁶⁰ making offerings of tormas⁴⁶¹ [13:1] and butchering animals for food offerings, stripping away the meat and draining the blood. Inconceivably vast offerings of hundreds of thousands of offerings of serpent tormas and offerings to various deities were set out. From moment to moment countless troops of gos, nyen, and serpents such as had never been seen before enjoyed the offerings. After all of them had gone back to their own places, there remained the white man on his white horse. [13:2]:

"Hey, friend. Your wife, as I explained to you before, is the greater daughter of the King of the nyen and she was given to Magyal Pomra. Three days from now he is coming in all his power to take her back. At that time, do not look over at your son, your cattle or any of your wealth. Just hold onto this girl with your left hand and hold this sword aloft in space with your right hand and say these words: 'I am Great Space Freedom Victory Banner (Long chen tharpa rgyal mtsan). The name of this sword is Resistless Blazing Blade ('bar ba lan med). No one will take from me the woman whom I have found on this ground.' Say this, expand your bravery, and remain that

way. They will not take your woman. You will once again be surrounded by everything--- your son and your wealth." He said this and disappeared.

Three days later [13:6] a black cloud came moving in from the North, sending forth a terrible screaming sound. [14:1] Terrible bolts of red lightning and stones rained down and there were various frightful manifestatons. The wife said, "The troops of Magyal Pomra are coming. Now whatever happens today depends on you."

He seized his wife and held on to her tightly, just the way his friend had told him. [14:2] He gripped his sword pommel and stood his ground. The tent, his possessions, his flocks--- all were carried away by a mist and a wind. Nevertheless, fearlessly he held his ground. For a moment his son was also lifted by the wind. Then the man's heart was tortured by an unbearable sense of poverty. He left his wife and ran quickly to grab his little boy. The moment he seized him, howling and roaring the great red wind and the fog mixed together, enwrapped the wife and carried her away. Father, son, sword--- only these three were left.

For three days they remained there in a misery unlike that anybody else has ever experienced.

Finally, he went back to the foot of the boulder and dwelled there. Eventually two came. One was riding a supreme steed Turquoise Mane (Ngag pa g.yu rngog). He was a warrior of indescribable splendour (*gzi brjid*)⁴⁶² The other was the white man on the white horse. He said, "Souless being, your spinning head⁴⁶³ is distracted and deceived. When you do not heed the commands I utter, your action and activities will be carried away by the wind just this

way.[14:6] I have come here to have a look at my nephew. You just do what ever you like." [15:1]

Since he now had neither wife, substance, nor cattle, he thought they had come to steal away his son as well. He cowered there in fear. Then out of the lake came a woman with turquoise locks of hair. She took the child in her arms. She poured out for it a small cup of milk and said, "I pity the poor motherless little boy. I must give him a tiny portion of my wealth." Then she leapt back into the lake.

[15:3] The rāksasa⁴⁶⁴ said "Little child, not only do you have no luck (merit) in Dharma or in wealth, but since you are motherless, you also lack the good merit of a comfortable and happy life. May you be brave, skillful, and penetrating in your actions. Until the end of your family lineage, may your personal power and independence be great and may your head never be lower than others." Saying this he stroked his head.⁴⁶⁵

To the father he said, "Even though you are a blundering idiot, since I have become your friend, I have no choice but to remain your boon friend. Therefore I have no choice but to take revenge on Pomra for what he has done to you." [15:5] He took back the sword and thrust it into the sheath at his waist. Mounting the horse, he disappeared. The friend from before remained there before him. The man asked, 'Who was that splendid man who was just here?

"That was the Rāksa Thöpa Tsal."

"Are you his son?"

"No. How could that be? You mustn't talk like that. I am the inner minister Lhabu Nyur Khyog.⁴⁶⁶ Now, you go back to your own

bed and stay there. The child's portion of the wealth will arrive then."

That evening he slept at home. The next morning when he awoke from his dream there was the little tent with all his things in it--- the domestic utensils and provisions and fifty head of sheep.

Then they went up and lived three years between the two lakes. One day, when the boy was five years old, he was playing around the Upper Lake. Out of the lake came the blue woman who had appeared before. "Little boy, your horses are in the village over yonder. I confer on you the name Patsei Bum (Brave Power Myriads, dPa' rtsal 'bum)

The child said, "Did you say Pathar Bum?" (Brave Freedom Myriads, dpa' thar 'bum)

"No and since you mispronounced your name, your merit will be small and your wealth non-existent. Although your descendants will be brave (Pa, dpa'), if you always run away, you will be free (thar) from harm. Give them exactly the same name as yourself." She said this and disappeared in the lake.

[16:4] The little boy went back down and said, "Father, I was wandering around that lake over there and met the blue lady again. She conferred on me the name Pa-thar Bum. And my portion of horses is over in that village."

His old father answered "The day before yesterday when the troops of [17:1] Magyal Pomra came, I was as brave as a man need be. If you are brave enough you will be called brave; if you are free enough you will be called free."⁴⁶⁷

Then father and son went down into the village to see what

was there. Near the white stone was a small blue horse adorned with a saddle, blanket, etc. And there was the sword and panoply of a warrior. The old father [17:2] began to do sacred dances (*'cham*) crying out "Oh Great. O Great, my young boy, all your wishes have been fulfilled." Since that day that valley has been called "O Great" (O bZang) There at Oh Great Valley the father and son lived for several years and the son became even braver and more penetrating in his skill.

There was a woman from the region around Nyag Rong named Iron Lady Cagmo⁴⁶⁸ (ICags mo, pro. Chagmo). She had been stolen away and taken off by the power of an Earth Lord.⁴⁶⁹ Now she had come to that place where the young man lived. The two met and by the power of karma through the desire connection they fell in love. They became man and wife and settled in Upper Ma Thama. A boy was born, pleasing his grandfather who said, 'The land here is pleasing and with my grand son I am even more pleased. Therefore I name this land Happy Valley (*dga' mdo*).

When the little boy grew older, first he settled in a place called The Valley of Mar (sMar mDo)⁴⁷⁰. The mountain valleys there were all under the control of All Glorious Shul (Kun dpal Shul). So the couple became subjects of Glorious Shul. After a while, however, all the tribes and people in the highlands there began to gradually be brought under the control of the young man. [Finally] even Glorious Shul could not hold his own seat and had to flee to Kha Khog. Since the one who bowed his head became himself the head, the son of Iron Lady was given the name Golok, which means "Switch Heads."

He had three sons. The oldest was Great Power Myriads (dBang chen 'Bum, Wang chen Bum). The middle one was Lotus Myriads (Padma 'bum). The youngest one was named A kyong Myriads (A sKyong Bum).⁴⁷¹ They settled respectively in Upper, Middle and Lower Mar Valley (sMar Khog). Their descendants spent all their time in war, banditry, stealing, and so on--- only unvirtuous activities. This was all they did. [18a]

The Vidyādhara Dūdul Dorje (bdud 'dul rdo rje)⁴⁷², Kunzang Sherap of Palyul (kun bzang shes rab of dpal yul)⁴⁷³, and the Great Widom Holder Kah Thog Rig dzin Chen po (kah thog Rig 'dzin chen po), these three gurus visited this region once. All the Dharma lineages [of the Golok] spread from these three.

From A Kyong's lineage came White Heart King (sNying dkar rgyal, pro. Nyingkar Gyal). In his generation there was contention among the brothers and cousins and so he went down to the lower region.⁴⁷⁴ Extending out from the ground of the Earth Lord Nyenpo Yutse (gnan po g.yu rtse)⁴⁷⁵ was a region called Gawar (ga var). He settled there. Near White Valley Lake (Lung dkar, lung dkar) he found two handfuls of gold. With this he printed a gold *Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*. He changed his name to Dharma Wealth King (Chos phyugs rgyal, Chöchug rgyal) His descendants were all called Dharma Wheel (Chos skor, pro. Chökor).

In the Fifth generation [19:1] the father was Dharma Wheel Merit Benefit (Chös skor bsod nams 'phan) Now, there was once a woman named Arrow of Praise (sTod kyi mda', Tökyi Da) who was famous for having descended from a Tsen spirit (btsan).⁴⁷⁶ Her youngest daughter, Garza (mgar za) was different from other women:

during her menstrual period (*rakta'i tsams*) milk flowed out instead of blood. She had all sorts of different visions and dreams. Her daughter was named Life Power Maid (Tshe dbang sman, Tsewang Men)⁴⁷⁷ [and Life Power Maid married Dharma Wheel Merit. [19:3]

Once they went to Lhasa for a visit and to do prostrations.⁴⁷⁸ One day while they were there they went up to the statue of the One Mother Glorious Goddess (Ma gcig dpal lha, Machig Pal-lha). Out of the statue came two women who grabbed Life Power Maid from the large crowd there. A door appeared on the right side of the statue of Glorious Goddess. It opened and she was actually taken through it. Her perceptions became intoxicated and confused. She felt⁴⁷⁹ as if she traveled down a long road and finally came to the door of a miraculous palace. She was held between the two women and taken inside. They climbed a crystal staircase [19:6]. Inside there was a great vast court filled with many beings--- some humans, others human-bodied but with various non-human heads.⁴⁸⁰

Some were dancing [20:1]. Some when they saw her, turned their faces away. Some of them withdrew far away. Some hid to the side.

She asked the two ladies what these people were. The two women answered, "These are the retinue of the Great King. [20:2] They are of the race of the gods and they are playing and sporting. Some are of the race of nyen and some are serpents (Tib: *klu*, Skt: *nāgas*). Most of them are poisonous and you could be harmed by their poison, either by seeing them or touching them or through the poisonous vapor of their breath. So, out of fear that they might harm you, they went into a corner."

They continued on and came to a little door on the side. It opened and they told her "You go in there and stay there."

When she went in, two little boys led her upwards. [20:4] There she found a handsome, effulgent, youthful Prince sitting on brocade cushions on a jeweled throne. He was clothed in brocade clothes and wore a silken skullcap or tophet. He was adorned with many jewel ornaments. He said, "[20:4] "You are the Medicine Wife (*skye dman*),
⁴⁸¹come up. You are not tired are you?

You used to live here and you were one of my lovers. Once, for certain reasons, you had to be reborn in Eastern Tibet (Khams). There is a reason that we have now met again."

He had her seated before him and offered her food and drink. In her visionary experience it seemed that they spent a whole night together in joy and pleasure. ⁴⁸² [21:1] The next day that Great Being placed an excellent silk scarf on her neck: "I am the son of Zurphü ngapa (*zur phud lga pa*)--- the divine child widely known as Godling Conchshell Topknot (Lha bu dung thod can, Lhabu Dung Thöcan).⁴⁸³ You and I have a karmic connection from a previous life. In this life, through the play of Padmasambhava's buddha activity, you have entered into a womb. But actually, I am the son of a nyen of the race of gods and you are a woman of the race of flesh-eating *dākinīs*."

When they were sporting in Great Bliss, the union of essence drops (*bdud thig le*) of the red and white elements,⁴⁸⁴ Rainbow Body Vajra ('Ja' lus rdo rje, Jalü)⁴⁸⁵ took birth in a body of flesh and blood. [21:3]

"In the future may he blaze above the hosts of demons and

dominate them," he said. Then the two women from before came in and said, "Now you go back home." That Great Being even escorted her for three steps and took her before the door to the hall: [He said], "In the future, when your time in the land of humans is finished and come to an end, return here."

She herself did not want to go for she was quite attached to him. But there was nothing she could do and so she went out. There a blue woman arose and said [addressing the child in her belly]:

"I am the mother of all your cycles of lives.

Child, in the space of the wisdom of mind⁴⁸⁶

You have been playing in complete enjoyment of great
bliss.⁴⁸⁷

That the time has come for you to benefit beings

Has been signaled by the sign of the space *dākinīs*.⁴⁸⁸

I will [22:1] always help you."

She placed a white scarf around the woman's neck. Above Life Power Maid a little window opened [in the wall] and out of it leaned a man full of splendor. He looked down on her and strew flowers on her, saying:

"Once Lord Padma confirmed him

As the Lord of the Life Force of the whole world (of
Jambudvīpa):

In the future at the end of the Kalpa

He would take birth in a womb to perform benefit through

various skillful means.

At that time I proclaimed and promised that I function as his servant.⁴⁸⁹

Now the time has finally come: it is marvelous, wondrous indeed.

Even if he does not offer to me, I will not be idle to protect him.

And even if he does not command me, I will still act for him.

I proclaim this: I will not break my promise. *samaya* ⁴⁹⁰

May the garden of the teachings flourish in Lower Do Kham (mDo khams smad)⁴⁹¹

It is in the region of Rong where he will benefit beings, his disciples.

And ultimately he will be active in the field of disciples of Maha China.⁴⁹²

May his life and activities be completely fulfilled."

He said this and closed the little window.

A woman with a dark brown body and full of splendor placed a white scarf around her neck, said, "A la la ho! Om Svasti," and smiling, went inside.

Then the two women took her between them and went outside. Next to the door was a frightening *Bhante* ⁴⁹³ with a long braid that coiled on the ground. [23:1] He said,

"Oh, this is the Blood Drinking Heruka.

Great and wondrous that he takes birth among humans.
 The girl is the flesh-eating *dākinī*.
 The self-existing lord, emanation of the Sovereign,⁴⁹⁴
 Once again comes to the land of Tibet.
 You are the woman who will give birth to him."

When she looked over at him her body became numb and she felt as if she was going to fall to the ground. The two girls lifted her by her right and left arms and stayed there for a while waiting for her to come to. [23:3] Then again they descended the staircase and went out by the great door. A wave of unsteadiness passed over her, like a person in a coracle boat, and then in an instant she found herself before the door. She went through it and found herself again before the statue of the One Mother Glorious Goddess. Then she came out of the real door.

Her husband, Merit Further Benefit (Sönam Phenyang), had also come there. The two women said, "Here is your medicine wife (skyes dman) back." She herself cowered there in shock and fear.

The husband said, "Three days have gone by since I lost you. I lost track of you when you were in front of the statue of Glorious Goddess. After a day of looking for you, I finally thought maybe you had fallen into the well over there on the left. But I didn't see any hint of the body of my wife there.

[I almost gave up], but I was ashamed and embarrassed. [24:1] I thought, "I will never be able to return to my own country without my wife. ⁴⁹⁵ It's really great that you're back. Where have you been. Who gave you all these scarves?"

She said, "There were these two ladies took me away. There were women and many beings and they gave me food and scarves and all sorts of things." She told him vaguely and confusedly how she had been given things, but could not explain in detail.

From that day on she was not the same. Her body was light and her intelligence was greater. She had clear dreams and saw various visions from time to time. And she would be possessed at times by a god-like being. At those times, she would tell about things that were hidden from people's knowledge and it would turn out to be the truth. ⁴⁹⁶

The other people who were companions the on pilgrimage said, "This girl has either been seized by a demon or else has gone mad. She's not going to be a help to you anymore."⁴⁹⁷

They went to have an audience with the Sovereign Gyalwa Jampal Gyamtso (rgyal ba 'jam dpal rgya mtsho)⁴⁹⁸ There were many people who went together to the audience. When they were all there, he said, "That Medicine Wife over there, have her come here."

He bestowed on her a medicine statue and a *man dzi* ⁴⁹⁹ protection cord. When they arrived at the hostel that evening, the whole circle of companions passed the statue from hand to hand to look at it. Unfortunately, that way it fell into the hands of a man who was a great sinner. This was a mistake and because of it the Gyalwa himself, who had wished to be reborn in her womb, missed his opportunity for that good fortune. [25:1]

Then gradually the pilgrimage moved ahead to its end. When they had returned back to their their home in Eastern Tibet⁵⁰⁰, to the region called Dungbu Tra (g'dung bu bra), they were surrounded by

rainbows and snow clusters in the shape of flowers snowed down on them. The lady had a vision in which she saw thirteen horsemen riding across the land. Not only she, but her traveling companions as well saw the thirteen horsemen ride around her three times and then speed off into the high country. This was Nyenchen Thanglha's way of seeing her off from his country. And then in gradual stages they traveled the way to their own home and arrived there easily.

Then it came to pass that the Only Mother, the Protectress of Mantra, Ekajati,⁵⁰¹ suddenly descended on her, possessed her [25:4] and said: " In this land demons and devils (*'dre bdud*) are propagating. People with perverted views, corruptors of vows (samaya corruptors), and people with perverted aspirations are gathering here. This land cannot support the birth of the little child.⁵⁰² You two as a couple are just a hotel that has been rented for a while. In reality he is just like me, a child of the gods." She said that and showed many signs.

Then some people in the village said that she had been taken by the Great King of the Döns.⁵⁰³ Some said that he was a magical emanation and they thought that maybe Gesar would be born to her. [26:1] Someone said that a devil was going to be born and he would bring about the degeneration of the country of Khams (Eastern Tibet). And everybody quarreled with each other.

In that village there was a seer who said that he saw from time to time visions near the house of the father and the mother. He said that on top of their house and in the field to the right of the house and other places as well there were sometimes many people wearing the bard's sacred hat. ⁵⁰⁴ And they had pitched tents and

were invoking the gods and performing supplications to them, but only through the chanting of the melodies of epics. They would sing of horses and they would sing of weapons⁵⁰⁵ and the seer saw that that was all they did. So he thought that they might be the cause of the mother's sicknesses.⁵⁰⁶

The father's attitude, however, was neither positive or negative. He just listened and obeyed whatever the god possessing the mother said. So he asked the god: "Now to which country do we have to go?"

"Go upwards (Southwest) and then it will be clear," it said. So they did not listen to the others and one night just went off. They went up to the family of the maternal uncle. That turned out not to be a suitable place for them to stay either and so they kept on going upwards further and further.

Then they came to the place called Dothog (mdo thog). The mother was possessed by a god again and she sang in the melodies of epics:

"Ki Ki So So Imperial god,
 Protector inseparable from the divine Rare and
 Precious Three Jewels.
 And the Three Roots of guru, yidam, and dākinī.
 Stay always inseparable as my crest ornament.

Lord Uddiyāna Padma look on me with compassion.

Lords of the Five Families of the Victorious Ones, sing the
 accompaniment.[27:1]

The song is led by the mother dākinī.

It is sure that I will not stay in this place.

It is caught between the devils and rāksasas.

It is the running ground of the tsen and the demonnesses.

Here you will touch with hand and mouth samaya
corruptors.⁵⁰⁷

Otherwise, go to Yutse Ja (gyu rtse'i rJa).

On the other side of lake Yutsho Chugmo (g.Yu mtsho phyug
mo),

In a pond in the right corner called Dark Red Rakta (dmar nag
Rakta)

There is a boulder that looks like a white tent.

In this place Mother you can give birth to your little boy.

Or else, go to the Country of Ma (rMa) in Khams.⁵⁰⁸

This is the place where the richness of the Indian Dharma
gathers.

This is the place where the richness of the laws of China
gather.

This is the place where the rich herds of the Yellow Mongols
gather.

This is the place where the good fortune of the land of Tibet
gathers.

Ma Yang Chug Mo, the land of Ling,

Fulfills the aspiration prayers of the gurus of the oral
lineages⁵⁰⁹.

This is the place where the siddhis of the the Yidam Deities
enter.

All the auspicious coincidence (*rten 'brel*) of the Mothers and
Dākinīs will arise here.

The Protectors and Protectresses of the Dharma perform their
buddha activity here.

The Eight Orders of Demons will help and protect here.

If the young child is born in this land,

He will be the jewel on the crest of the black-headed humans."

Then the father thought, [28:1] "I don't even know where the land of Yutse is. If she had another divine possession, maybe we could find out? The local spirits of the land are so wrathful and powerful that if the child were born there, we might accidentally irritate them one day and excite their wrath and punishment, a thing not to be desired.⁵¹⁰ So maybe the place of Murra Go Do (Mu ra sgo mdo) in Ma Khog (rMa khog) is better. There are a few divisions of people living there.⁵¹¹ I think it would be advisable to go and stay there."

So they went there and stayed a few days. But because of some really subtle negative conditions the mother became gravely ill. They did the practical rituals⁵¹² to cure her, but they had no effect.

Now, in that village there lived a divine who was a medium for the samaya-bound deity Vajrasadhu (dam can rdo rje legs pa)⁵¹³. In a trance he said: "I am the lord of half the sky and land of this world (Jambudvīpa). I am the protector of the child who is in this woman's box. The many acts you have committed while living among these many divisions have caused this reaction. Do not stay here. Go to a

place where you will not touch with mouth or hand anything touched by other women.⁵¹⁴ Go down now towards sMad. Tomorrow morning when the moon of the fifteenth day arises, a little circular light will arise. Near there are grasslands. On them you will find five-colored rainbows in a circle. Go there. Stay there and it is certain that your aims will spontaneously be fulfilled. "

So they decided to do that and early next morning they left. [29:1]They arrived at the top of the mountain at night. When they looked down they saw clearly manifesting all the signs the Samaya-bound had told them would be there. They went there and just near to that place they rented a small tent. The father, mother, a sister-in-law on the father's side and two servants lived in that tent. All the others turned back to their own country and the mother lived there touching nothing with hand or mouth touched by anybody else.

Then on the eight day of the month which is in the Pleiades, the third lunar mansion, the mother was possessed by a god:

"The Sixth Buddha, the Dharmakāya Vajradhara,
Full of the blessings of the Buddhas of the Five families,
Tara Goddess, long-life goddess,
Please grant this child the supreme *abhiṣeka*.

If you don't know this place,⁵¹⁵

On the right side is the waterfall of the Ma River (rma chu).

On the left side is the waterfall of the Kong River (gong chu).

In front is the waterfall of the Golden River (gser chu).

It is called Kong Ser Trashi Kha Do (Kong Golden Auspicious
mkha mdo).

On the throne of the Wish-fulfilling Gem
 If you don't know what woman I am,
 Among the high rank of the imperial gods
 I am Queen of Practice ('Grub pa'i rgyal mo), the life-holding
 Mother.⁵¹⁶

I have come to grant long-life empowerment to this baby.
 A mist of blessings piles layer on layer.
 A rain of siddhis falls tinklingly.
 A sheath of light rays of compassion flashes out.
 May your indestructible body be clothed in Vajra armour.[30:1]
 May your unchanging speech magnetize the three realms.
 May your indestructible mind hold the treasury of Dharma
 Of the Wisdom Holder Padmākara
 May you be the ruler over the profound termas⁵¹⁷.
 May you hold the teachings of the Buddha. [30:2]
 And may it come to pass that you defeat the troops of Māra.
 May you unite the eight tribes of Ling and
 May your power and ability for the White side be great.
 May you establish sentient beings in bliss
 And may you take their aspirations to the ultimate end.
 May you unite the Three Realms
 And subdue with your light the three aspects of the
 phenomenal world.
 May the auspicious sun of dharma dawn
 And may you completely enjoy bliss, happiness and glory."

When she had sung this, then from inside the mother's stomach a voice said, "Noble Lady (*A Che*), it is good!" Everybody heard it.

Then on the tenth day of the month, a god possessed the mother: "Today the time has come for the child to be born. [30:4]" After a little while the god said, "O, the *dākinīs* still have not arrived! The planets and constellations have not come together in the appropriate pattern yet. The time has not yet come." And the god disappeared.

Again, on the fourteenth day, in the early morning the father had a dream in which he saw that before their little tent many tents had been put up. Many great beings and women gathered and set up a large ritual stove⁵¹⁸ in the middle. They arranged on that a feast with all sorts of foods. [31:1]

Above that on a great throne a great being wearing the sacred hat of a bard invoked the gods with the melodies of epic songs. Some others sang songs. Some did sacred dances on the dancing grounds. Some others were racing horses. Some were shooting arrows. Again, on top of the ritual oven, seated on a throne was a woman adorned in many ornaments and full of splendor. She said, "This birthday celebration must go on for three days."

Others there were of the race of men; they seemed to speak all sorts of different languages. They wore all sorts of different ornaments and numberless different styles of clothes. In his dream vision it seemed that the place was completely filled with all these beings.

Then on the fifteenth day at day break, the mother was possessed by an extremely wrathful deity. He said "Hey you, set out

a cushion quickly! Make offerings of chemar, ⁵¹⁹ drink, and the select offering. The time has come for the child to be born."

The father, however, was used to taking orders from his wife. But he was afraid of the god who possessed his wife and he put out the white wool cushion. He made offerings and sent up juniper smoke. He sent the servants out of the tent. Then the father also left.

When the sun struck the pinnacle of the tent, that god shouted out "ha ha, you the man, come in here and if you do not serve this little boy I ⁵²⁰ will indeed immediately destroy your life [32:1] for I do not care much about the actions and behavior of those who have a human form."⁵²¹

The man was terrified and quickly went into the dwelling. The birth of the child had been accomplished and he was sitting there in the Vajra Posture. Rays of light came through a slit in the tent and the son held them in his hand as he said "a ā i ī etc.⁵²² as he sat there. The god spoke various different languages and gazed up into the middle heavens. The father himself cut the umbilical cord of the baby and performed the other womanly duties.

He handed the child into the arms of the mother. The mother said, "Bring soft milk and water and wash his whole body carefully. Man, you come from the race of rāksasas. We were connected by previous karma. Even then you were a mediocre servant. This time be a good servant to this child.⁵²³ If you and the world have the merit to support this being, then it will be enough [to benefit beings]." Then the god disappeared. And then it was morning.

437 Nyenchen Thanglha - This is a mountain range which extends Southeast of Kokonor

around the 36th parallel and south of that. It is also the name of the god of this mountain, one of the most important deities in Tibet and often considered the chief of the mountain gods. It seems that in some legends he is a lake in this region as well as the mountain. (Nebesky-Woykowitz 205-210 discusses his iconography. The story of his submission to Padmasambhava is told in the *Padma Kha Thang*, see *Le Dict de Padma* or *Le Grand Guru Padmasambhava* (*opus cit.*) p. 245. He is usually shown mounted on a white horse and his retinue are usually large numbers of horsemen.

438 For a detailed treatment of the notion of cultural studies and post-colonialist discourse, see *Cultural Studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paul Treichler, (New York: Routledge, 1992), particularly the opening essay, pp. 1-16 and Homi K. Bhabha, "Postcolonial Authority and Postmodern Guilt," pp. 56-65. For a good recent discussion of the notion of orientalism and post-colonial discourse, see *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol 53, number 1, Feb. 1994, "Dimensions of Ethnic and Cultural Nationalism in Asia---A Symposium," pp. 3-123. In this issue of the JOAS John D. Rogers's examination of post-colonial discourse in Sri Lanka is particularly interesting, as it shows the complexity of the problem using a great variety of documentation. (John D. Rogers, "Post-Orientalism and the Interpretation of Premodern and Modern Political Identities: The Case of Sri Lanka," pp. 10-23.) I believe his ambivalent conclusions are like what I have found to be the case for a Tibetan sense of pre-Buddhist identity. Cultural colonization by Indian Buddhism has clearly taken place and domination of categories of discourse by the colonizing culture has clearly occurred. Nevertheless, this does not mean that there was a definite Tibetan pre-Buddhist identity. The essentialist position that a discrete native Tibetan religion called Bön pre-existed the period of Buddhist domination is still questionable and may itself be a colonial period point of view. As Rogers puts it for the category of "caste" in Sri Lanka, "There was clearly no precolonial *status quo* waiting to be transformed by colonial discourse."

439 it is possible that Tendzin Samphel's remark reflects Western influence. But this does not mean that the observation that the Goloks are religiously primitive and of a more primal era is solely a result of Western colonialist discourse. The History itself presents this idea as well. In this sense it is an invaluable document offering a striking counter-example "orientalism" or "post-colonialist discourse" argument that fascination with shamanism and early religion is solely a result of Western imperialist condescension. For the argument of those who oppose "orientalism" as a colonialist strategy of domination of discourse see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York : Vintage Books, 1979).

440 J.F. Rock, *The Amnye Ma-Chhen Range and Adjacent Regions*, (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente, 1956), pp. 123-131.

441 Despite this fact, Katia Buffetrille, a French ethnologist recently traveled, a single woman on foot, with pilgrimage caravans to Machen Pomra---her aim, to study pilgrimage texts of the area. See "Le Grand Pèlerinage de L'A-mnyes rma-chen au Tibét: tradition écrite, réalités vivantes" by Katia Buffetrille. Unpublished article available from author, Centre d'Études Tibétaines, Ave. Pres. Wilson, Paris.

442 The concept of *mgo* or "portal" (fr: *seuil*) is treated by Stein at some length in his studies of early Tibetan divination poetry and Tun Huang records. See R. A. Stein, *Annuaire du Collège de France, Résumé des cours de 1971- 1972*, p. 504-505 et sq., p. 508 ; *ibid.*, *Resumé*

des cours de 1972- 1973, p. 447. In exploring this notion Stein discusses practices and usages of Chinese Taoism, Chinese Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan native religion, and the customs of certain other Central Asian groups. His frame of references is extremely broad and comparative.

443 Anne-Marie Blondeau points out an additional complexity in this analysis of the Tibetan concept of miasma. It is possible, in fact, likely that the term *grib*, "obstructed" or "polluted" had a meaning in this semantic family before it became the translation for *varaṇa*. Now the Sanskrit term definitely means "veil" and communicates the sense of obstruction. But is that a meaning contributed to an original Tibetan concept of pollution in *grib* or was that the original meaning of *grib*? It is possible that *grib* or *sgrib* originally meant some kind of Tibetan miasma and gained the additional sense of veil or blockage when it became associated with the Indian tradition.

444 The word *obscured* is not present in the text. I have used it in order to supply the rest of the explanatory apparatus in the Buddhist description of the events. My sanction is the complex of other terms which accompany *grib* and are present in the explanations in the text. And then the final scene in which the child is born, like Gesar in the Mipham version, chanting a purification mantra. The philosophy of obscuration as ritual impurity as I have presented it here is drawn from the explanations that accompany Tantric Buddhist purification rituals such as the Vajrasattva practice.

445 The *Manjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* is in theory a vaipulya sūtra, part of the *Avatamsaka*. In it Shakyamuni Buddha gives numerous instructions to Manjuśrī, some of them of a tantric nature. For a French translation of one small part see Ariane Macdonald, *Le mandala du manjuśrīmūlakalpa* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1962).

446 This is a name of gNyan chen Thang lha. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp. 100, 130, 258. He is literally the owner of the land (*gnas bdag*)--- that is, the deity who rules over that territory. "He always maintains..." means that he always appears in wrathful aspect.

447 nyen - (*gnyan*) a class of deity usually associated with mountains, mountain ranges, and the sides of mountains.

448 zo dor - "A local deity who protects the locality and is the chief of the earth lords there or a most wrathful deity." (*Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, p. 2471.)

That the white boulder is his gateway means that when the zodor leaves to go somewhere else, he leaves from that place. When he returns, he returns to that rock. He enters the world via that boulder.

449 This could be Nyenchen Thanglha, who is described this way in some manifestations. Nebesky-Wojkowitz pp. 100, 130, 258. But as the story unfolds we find out that this is a minister of Nyenchen Thanglha.

450 *lha'i bla zog - bla* or *lha* (pronounced "la") is a kind of soul which all people possess. When it leaves the body, soon after the person must die, for it is responsible for the life principle. As in Slavic folklore, it can be hidden in an object away from the body. This is a motif very similar to the Russian folktale by the name "Koshchei Bezsmertny ("Koshchei the Deathless")."

451 *khyod gyi pa ma byas song* -- According to lama Tendzin Samphel, this expression means "you did not succeed."

- 452 The language of this passage is a obscure.
- 453 Many Tibetan lineages are lead by reincarnations of the sectarian leader. But the Shakyapas, for example, use a method of descent through family to ensure the continuity of their religious leadership.
- 454 Obscure.
- 455 Magyal Pomra is another nyen and the god of a mountain range in the Golok region. He is a very important deity and figures as a major character in the Tibetan *Gesar of Ling Epic*.
- 456 "... given to you once." This is a strange expression. At this point in the story it means little. But as the story goes on, the sinister meaning of the expression "once" will become clear.
- 457 "Your heads will never be lowered." – a pun on the name Golok, which literally means "switch heads" as in to change leaders by placing another person at the head or in charge.
- 458 "Wealth" (*nor*) This expression, which usually is translated as wealth or jewels, in the Golok dialect and in many other dialects as well, usually means sheep, livestock, and horses. The friend god is here offering the golok a small herd as a consolation prize if he lacks the hardihood to touch the third daughter.
- 459 The speech here is thick with colloquialisms and humorous Golok dialect.
- 460 The famous offerings of juniper smoke that are a hallmark of native Tibetan religion.
- 461 Ritual cakes.
- 462 The word "splendor" (*gzi brjid*) has a special meaning in these texts. Literally it means majesty or splendor. But it only occurs in people who have great personal dignity and confidence. And so, it has become a word for kingly confidence as well. Thus, charisma would be a good translation as well, particularly if one considers the use of this term in Byzantine Orthodox Christianity.
- 463 "Spinning head" is a Tibetan expression for a person who is distracted by a deceiver and then robbed while his head is turned.
- 464 The Raksasa – This unquestionably is Nyenchen Thanglha, the 10th Bhumī Bodhisattva *zodor* and *sa bdag* or "proprietor" mentioned in the beginning. There is another possible translation of the term raksasa. We have taken it in this translation to refer to the wrathful, demonic form the *zodor* takes when he appears in the human realm. Macdonald points out, however, that the word also means "protector" and could refer to his benevolent activity for human friends and followers of the Buddhist religion.
- 465 Again puns on the name Go-iog.
- 466 Lhabu – *devaputra*, the generic term for the luminous spirits who live in the god realms. Literally it means "son of a god."
- 467 Obscure passage--- puns on the meaning of father and son' names.
- 468 Nyag Rong – A region along the Nyag chu river (chinese name Yarlung River), longitude 100, between 32 and 30 latitude. This is an area south of Golok territory about two hundred kilometers West of Chengdu. ICag mo is a name often associated with the Goloks.
- 469 Earth Lord – *sa bdag*, a kind of local spirit attached to a specific locality. Tendzin Samphel: Such spirits often steal human women, who are taken away to distant mountain tops and lonely places and later found there. After having been kidnapped by spirits for a certain time, they are returned and re-enter human society. Of course, Nyenchen Thanglha was the *sa*

bdag, proprietor of his region. So it was probably he who ravished Iron Lady.

470 *sMar mDo* is probably located in the Northwestern portion of Golok territory along the *rMa chu* river. But the name *rMa* and *sMar* are associated through an ancient tradition of variant spellings and localizing this place is extremely difficult. Stein in *Les Tribus* (50-53) associates it with several important tribes of the name *Ma* and admits its involvement with the *Gesar epic*, sometimes a name for a portion of the land of *Ling*.

471 A *Kyong* - After this the story will branch and treat of the *Archung* or *Achung* branch of the *Goloks*. Stein provides close philological work to show a relationship between the stories that involve descendants of this family in the Eastern Tibetan versions of *Gesar* and interesting details of the *Ladakhi Gesar*. See the section on *Yutse* in the introduction to this translation.

472 *Vidyādhara Dūdul Dorje - rig 'dzin bdud 'dul rdo rje*. See Stein, '59, p.70. This could be the Sixteenth Karmapa, born in 1733. But there is no record that indicates his activities in this territory.

473 *Palyul* is a famous *Nyingma* monestary south of *Dergē*. Today the teachings of the *Palyul* school thrive in a community of American Buddhist disciples living around *Poolesville*, *Maryland*. Curiously, the various esoteric schools of Buddhist and folk religious practice that thrived in the *Golok* area are now well represented by a number of diverse meditation groups in the *Delmarva* and *New Jersey* areas of the *United States*.

474 In other words, he went northwards. As we see in Stein's complex arguments on the tribal, geographic, and ethnic associations of *Yutse*, it appears that *Achung* traveled northwards towards *Jyekundo* and the region around the source of the *rMa Chu*, the *Yellow River*. There one finds names of families and terrestrial eminences which are like the place names in this *History of the Golok*.

475 *Nyenpo Yutse - gnan po g.yu rtse* - Another holy mountain sacred to the *Goloks*. The deity is a *nyen*, sometimes called "the divine child (*Ihabu*) of *Magyal Pomra*. In *The Horse Race Book* of the *Mipham* version of the *Gesar of Ling Epic*, *Gesar* goes to this mountain to find his magical mount, which he calls a "wind horse" (*rlung rta*). The place is associated with the royal family of *Minyag*. There is a study of it in Stein '59, pp. 191-193. It also figures centrally in the *Book of the Epic* devoted to *Gesar's* adventures in the land of *Minyag*. Stein p.192: this place is particularly associated with the descendants of the *A Kyong* branch of the *Golok*.

476 *btsan* - *Tsen* - gods who inhabit the sides of mountains, are often the gods of impressive boulders, usually red in color.

477 *Life Power Maid - Tshe dbang sman* - Literally this means *Longevity Empowerment Herb*. The word *sman* is short for *sman mo*, which means literally "herbal lady" or "medicine lady." It is a standard epic and folk term for a housewife.

Her name, *Longevity Empowerment*, is extremely auspicious. The *Longevity Empowerment* is a very important ceremony which is meant to confer long-life on the recipient. It is often given to gurus at the request of their disciples. The most popular deity involved with this empowerment is *Amitābha*, whose name is taken to mean "limitless life." There is also, however, a very important local Tibetan deity, one of the twelve (*stanma*) *Tenma*, who is named *Long Life Lady* (*Tseringmo*). She was a vicious demonness tamed first by *Padmasambhava* and then later again by *Milarepa*. *Life Power Maid* is a reincarnation of the

Flesh-eating Dakini and I wonder if this might not mean that she is related in a way to the cult of Tseringma. Practices invoking Tseringma still flourish. I once observed a mirror divination that invoked her. It was performed by a lama with connections of kinship to Nyingma lamas involved in the Golok region.

478 Knowing the great distance between Lhasa and the Magyal Pomra region, this sentence clearly indicates to the reader that they set off in a large on an extended pilgrimage.

479 The ravishment of Life Power Maid is told from the point of view of her intoxicated perceptions. The Tibetan, both grammatically and lexically, definitely brackets the question of the actuality of these events as reported. Something magical happened involving some sort of magical beings, but further than that we cannot know. We only know that this is how the deity ravished housewife experienced it all. The language here is precise and yet dreamy and fantastic--- a stark contrast to the matter-of-fact reporting of the encounter between the first Golok and the gods at Sky Lake.

480 I thought of these as a collection of local deities. But Tendzin Samphel responded to them as Buddhist iconographic deities, saying that they were like the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities of the Bardo Instructions. See *The Tibetan book of the dead: the great liberation through hearing in the Bardo*, by Guru Rinpoche according to Karma Lingpa; translated with commentary by Francesca Fremantle & Chogyam Trungpa, (Boston: Shambhala, 1987).

481 Medicine Wife (*skye sman*) Another village expression for a beautiful woman.

482 In her visionary experience - The tibetan qualifies all her experiences from the moment of her kidnapping as *nyams*, meditation experiences. In other words, she is half-intoxicated or confused, as if she were in a dream. Later she will only vaguely remember this time. TS remarks that time seems to move differently in the human and the god realm. For what is one night to Life Power Maid is many days to her husband in the terrestrial world of Lhasa.

483 According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz (*Oracles and Demons of Tibet*) this is a form of Nyenchen Thangla. But see the introduction to this translation for the associations with sacred geography.

484 "the union of essence drops of the red and white elements." In the Indo-Tibetan system both men and women are conceived of as having semen. The male semen is the white drop and the female is the red drop. When these two combine, conception occurs.

485 'Ja' lus rDo rje - name for 'Jigs med gLing pa. In other words, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje is an incarnation of Jigmê Lingpa, who, through the machinations of Padmasambhava, has once again been reborn in Tibet.

486 *rig pa'i ye shes* - literally, the *vidyājñāna*, the knowledge wisdom. But in ati texts *rigpa*, which usually means wisdom, is often better translated simply as mind.

487 *longs su spyod* - there is a word play on the word *Sambhoga* of *Sambhogakāya*. The literal meaning of *longs spyod* or *Sambhoga* (Skt.) in Tibetan is enjoyment. *Sambhoga* means "complete enjoyment." But this is also the name for the level of Buddha who is represented richly ornamented in iconography and who appears in visions to advanced disciples. In other words, 'Ja' lus rDo rje has been dwelling in Pure Lands as a glorious buddha during the period before his rebirth as a human.

488 space *dākinis* - These are the *dākinis* who dwell in space. They are thus not the worldly *dākinis*, but the *dākinis* from beyond the world or more precisely *jñānadākinis*, wisdom

dākinīs. The sign of the *dākinīs*, *brda las 'byung*, is a symbolic appearance of one of these divine women to deliver a message. For example, (TS) when a great spiritual master's time of activity for the benefit of beings in the human realm is about to end, a *dākinī* may appear to him to deliver the message that soon he will be called back to a higher realm. This is known as the invitation of the *dākinī* (*bson ma*).

489 "be his servant" - *zhabs tog bsgrubs pa*.

490 "samaya" - a Sanskrit word meaning "seal" or "promise" or "commitment." Here it is used like a mantra and means something like "Let my oath be sealed."

491 This is the region known today as Amdo, north of Eastern Tibet.

492 Maha China - The Tibetan expression includes the Sanskrit term "Maha".

493 *Bhante* - an Indic term of address used usually for monks and meaning something like "venerable one."

494 *mnga. bdag* - The Sovereign, meaning Trisong Deu Tsan, one of the kings of Tibet who sponsored the introduction of Buddhism to Tibet.

495 TS: *rar yul* should be *rang yul*.

496 *lkog gyur* means things that people didn't know. For example, she could tell about future events. And then it would turn out that they were true. This would happen while she was being possessed by this deity.

497 "She won't be a help to you anymore." In other words, "she will not perform her wifely duties now and you should abandon her."

498 This is probably the Dalai Lama, holding court in Lhasa and giving blessings to great crowds of pilgrims.

499 A protection cord is a red string which with a knot in it. It is blessed by a guru and then tied around a disciple's neck as a symbol of the connection between teacher and disciple. It is considered to protect the disciple against mishaps. I do not know what precisely a *mar dzi* protection cord is.

500 *mar rang yul* - You go "up" to Lhasa and "down" when you head Northeast to Khams. These directional statements depend on where one starts from.

501 Ekajati is the protectress of the Ati teachings, the ultimate and highest instructions in meditation practice. She has one eye, one turquoise lock of hair, one breast, and one fang.

502 This land cannot support the birth of the little child - *de yi bu chung btsas pa'i gnas sa yis mi theg*. TS: This means that the land would not be suitable or conducive to the upbringing of such an enlightened being. The baby would die if he were raised in such an impure environment. RBK: This message will be brought to the parents several times. It is a general belief of Tibetan Buddhists that tulkus (*sprul sku*), reincarnations of great lamas, must have very special families or else they will suffer irreversible mental and physical injuries in their childhoods. If they are not placed in an environment suitable for the study and practice of religion, they may go mad or die. In that case you would say that the country could not hold up (*mi theg*) or support such an incarnation.

503 Dön - *gdon*, invisible spirits who create illness, obstructions, and sudden eruptions of negative emotions, as well as accidents, and major and minor mishaps. Döns move quickly and invisibly, suddenly landing on a person when that person loses his or her upliftedness for a moment and falls from alertness. Döns are also famous for suddenly possessing a person and

while in control of the body causing that person to commit suicide---- usually by jumping in a river or leaping off of a cliff. If somebody kills him or herself unexpectedly, it said that they were "seized by a *dön*."

504 See introduction about the priestly functions of the epic bards and the connection of Gesar of Ling with native religion.

505 *rta bshad dang go mtshon gyi bshad pa* - literally, they explained horses and they explained weapons. TS: In other words, they would sing songs in praise of the excellent qualities of horses and in praise of famous weapons.

506 cause of sickness - literally it says that he thought they were *nad bdag*, sickness lords attacking the mother. These would be spirits who cause illness. There are many different kinds of invisible spirits that could *benad bdag*.

507 *kha lag 'brei par gda'* -TS: In other words, you will have to touch things they touched with your hands and eat the same things they eat with your mouth. You will be connected to samaya corruptors through eating and through touch. RBK: The effect of corrupting samaya is that one is obstructed, *grib pa*. In a sense this obstruction has the same place in Tantric buddhism as ritual pollution in other religions. That is to say, those who violate their vows are considered to be full of *grib pa*, - obstructions. The metaphorical language which is used to describe these obstructions or "obscurations" presents them as a substance which must be cleansed or else one will suffer harm. The harm will occur as ill luck striking one in body (illness, poverty, death), speech (misunderstanding the dharma), or mind (failure to have meditation experiences and the visions which are signs (*rten 'brei*) of success. More research on this question would be in order. An interesting method would be to ignore the metaphysical explanations of the pandits as regards key terms like *grib pa* and analyze the intent of the metaphorical language in narrative literature. This would give us a clearer view of the non-scholastic understanding of many Buddhist teachings.

508 the Country of rMa - This is the region around Mount Ma rGyal sPom ra.

509 *bka' brgyud bla ma* - TS: This refers to the gurus of the *snyan rgyud*, the hearing or ear-whispered lineage, among the three lineages of the Nyingma system. See footnote 384.

510 irritable - *phog thug shor* - TS: Tibet has many places which are uninhabited and when you enter one of those places, it is very easy to irritate the local deities, to excite their wrath and punishment. For example, if you urinate in a sacred stream or cook rotten meat, it can excite the irascible local deities and they will harm you.

511 *ru dud* - division is originally a military classification of troops, but has come to be used to indicate tribes of a certain size. But it still has its military connotation. Stein in *Le Tribus*, p. 68, relying on Chinese texts reconstructs the development of communities of brigands, descended from disbanded groups of slaves and troops who were stationed in North Eastern Tibet in the ninth century. Particularly in Yarmo thang these groups were organized originally in "divisions" and kept this military name for the groupings within the tribe.

512 practical rituals - *rim gro phran bu* Tucci defines these as rituals which aim at practical attainments in the relative world, such as curing sickness. They are also called *sku rim*. *The Religions of Tibet*, p. 115.

513 Another important protector of religion, *dharmapāla*, like all the other deities mentioned in this text, he was subdued by Padmasambhava and "bound by oath" or "bound by

samaya. Thus he is of the class of the *dam can*, the "samaya-bound." Nebesky-Wojkowitz devotes a chapter to his iconography and theogonies. pp.154-159. He is believed to be on the verge of enlightenment and about to pass from the order of the worldly deities to that of the transcendent deities. He is associated with mountains and boulders and in fact carries a *belows*, telling us that he was once the god of black-smiths.

514 TS gives further examples here of being contaminated by touch and mouth. She might have eaten food touched by other women or worn clothes they had worn. Macdonald remarks that Tendzin Samphel's explanation is controversial. TS's interpretation of the text reflects the attitude discussed above which reads *grib pa*, in effect, as miasma.

515 Macdonald remarks that this exact expression often occurs when a possession takes place.

516 In other words, she is a goddess of longevity.

517 *terma* - (*gter ma*) "Found teachings." When Padmasambhava taught in Tibet he had his disciples bury the principal texts and religious artifacts of his tradition. Then those disciples undertook to be reborn again and again in Tibet to rediscover these teachings and make them freshly available to later generations. Jigmê Lingpa and one of his reincarnations, Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje were famous *tertöns* or finders of these texts.

518 This ritual stove is a special kind of fire altar used to make smoke offerings in the tradition of native Tibetan religion. When one is going to make really large and numerous offerings to the local deities or in the tradition of the *Gesar of Ling Epic* then such a stove is put to use. It is also used extensively in the non-Buddhist Tibetan religion called Bön. The stoves I've seen have a flat top, stand about three feet off the ground on three legs and have a large opening in front. Juniper branches can be placed in the stove and lit to make an extensive *lha bsangs* offering. There is sometimes room on top of the stove for further offerings to be placed. When the fire is well lit and the column of smoke is well established, then pieces of brocade, *chemar*, and other offerings can be placed in the fire through the hole in the top of the stove from which the smoke escapes.

519 *chemar*- *phye mar* - Macdonald: A mixture of barley flour grilled with butter. Used as an offering substance in native Tibetan ceremonies. "Drink" here refers to the *skye m* the typical non-Buddhist offering of a delicious liquor. The "select offering" refers to a special tantric offering made to a god. When a divine feast is held, the main feast substance is divided into two sections. One is offered to the god and the other distributed to the practitioners. The one offered to the god is called "the select offering." The language here is not lovely or gracious, but abrupt and rude. I have translated it in the same tone of voice in English.

I speculate that this rude command from the god is make-work to keep the husband occupied while his wife gives birth. Gathering the necessary substances for the *chemar*, formulating the drink offering, and producing the select offering should take even a man who is prepared to perform those activities perhaps thirty minutes.

520 TS corrects 32:1, *da lta nyid ba khyod* to *da lta jyid du khyod*.

521 Literally he says, "I don't know much about...." The idea is that the deity who is possessing temporarily the body of the mother does not care about the human custom in which the man does not serve, but is served. He insists that the father take a woman's traditional role and that he take a subservient role to his son. It should be noted that this is a particularly

wrathful deity.

522 a ā i l... The Buddhist mantra which is composed of all the letters of the Sanskrit alphabet--- used in purification practices.

523 It is still the god possessing the woman who speaks.

Chapter VI

Conclusion

This has been a study of the cosmology of a portion of the Gesar Epic and the operation of that cosmology as literary machinery. It is the literary agenda which organized the diverse approaches to research and analysis combined in this dissertation and in this conclusion I would like to summarize what such a literary agenda can contribute to Gesar studies and how it changes Gesar studies.

If we look at Western approaches to the epic genre in general, we will see the same odd combination of approaches to the subject matter. First there is an analysis of plot. As a narrative with a plot structure, the epic can be the object of formalist studies which examine it as a purely literary phenomenon. This is what Aristotle did in his *Poetics* when he attempted to define what a well-proportioned and plausible plot would be. Modern thinkers, particularly since the New Criticism school have thought that in looking at the plot this way we are seeking out the "literariness" of the work. And works that show art in their plot structure are thought to deserve the term *belles lettres*, to be especially literary artifacts.

The *Iliad* is such a work. It has a pleasing story structure. Its plot satisfies the aesthetic principles enunciated by such as Aristotle and Horace. We have looked at Bowra's and Greene's updated Aristotelian treatments of the *Iliad* and seen that after centuries of such criticism, Homer's epics still stand up to the

analysis. Despite changing fashions in literary studies and a world of new data, the concept of the *Iliad* as a well-wrought and single work of art still holds water.

And yet, at the same time, this aesthetic treatment of the *Iliad* has never been enough for literary scholars. They cannot help but also treat the socio-political component of the epic. For example, thinkers fascinated by the *Iliad* cannot ignore the tremendous educational role it played in ancient Greek society. The comments of Plato's characters in his dialogues document its central role in the construction of Greek religion and identity. And so, the structuralists who delight in examining the pure fashioning of plot are the same scholars who examine the socio-political role of the epic as the "tales of the tribe"--- the text which informs its readers on the essentials of their own cultural and national identity.

These two sorts of studies-- one of the plot and the other of the political framework typically go hand-in-hand, although they are methodologically quite different from one another.

There is a third element which usually is studied in parallel with these two. The orality of the *Iliad* makes it a performance text. This immediately brings into the mix of scholarly concerns the study of ritual, which is taken to be the primal instance of performance. For example, none of the Homer scholars to whom we have referred in this dissertation left out an analysis of the relationship between the epic genre and liturgical practices. Andrew Ford examined the Proem to the *Iliad* and found it to be a genuine instance of a religious supplication or hymn. Bowra looked at the origins of the epic genre in choral hymns. Greene developed his

ideas of the difference between the semantic of ritual poetry and secular poetry and speculated on the nature of different epics from that point of view.

And so, it seems that the Western tradition of Homeric studies has always combined at least three disciplines of analysis, three kinds of studies: a study of plot structure as in the *Poetics*, a study of religion and cosmology, and a more or less political study of the social or tribal relations involved in the performance and reception of the epic. This three-fold study is, I would say, typical of Western customs of literary criticism.

I have contrasted in this dissertation such a literary approach with the prevalent anthropological or ethnological practices Western scholars use in examining Asian epics. We have mentioned scholars such as Dumézil, Wendy Doniger, Biardeau, Van Buitenen, and Hildebeitel. These are thinkers trained in the discipline we call today "Religious Studies" or in sociology, or history of religions, or anthropology--- various branches of the social sciences. They have used epics such as the *Mahābhārata* to pursue questions about the nature and origins of religious thought and about the possible existence of universal motives underlying all world religions. 524

Without prejudice against their work, I have simply labored to expose how different it is from that of a scholar such as myself-- a person with a primarily literary agenda. To a person with an anthropological agenda, the organization of the five chapters in this dissertation might seem odd and thrown together. But these chapters pursue a literary question which cannot easily be asked in any other way or dealt with in an order much different from the one

I have employed.

Let me explain why this is so. In order to deal with a text from a literary point of view, one must first define or identify its unity--- the boundaries of the text. One must try to find in the mass of editions and variations a single literary work with a beginning, middle, and end. Without that prior determination, our Aristotelian critical studies of *belles lettres* could not proceed. Without an at least preliminary definition of a single work, we could not ask the questions involved in the *Poetics* any more than a biologist could perform dissections without already being in possession of whole organisms.

Of course, the denial of such unities is precisely the basis of Derrida's deconstructionist approach to literature. But this is an approach explicitly opposed to the entire Western tradition of criticism, which he calls *logocentric*. I have not hesitated to ignore a philosophical world which denies the possibility of my beginning to perform the functions of my profession--- to elucidate literary works for a reader.

Of course, as Stein and his successors have shown, this is a vexed issue in Gesar studies, for the range and variety of versions of this epic is much vaster than anything encountered in the annals of Western literary criticism.

Now, since we must first have a unity if we are to examine text from a literary point of view, this dissertation, after a broad introduction, considered the question of whether or not there is a "complete Gesar." And since the concept of completeness here must fit the unitary literary object for an Aristotelian study, we used

Aristotle's definition of plot. In that way we were able to find a new definition of a whole and complete *Gesar Epic*--- a definition based on principles of poetics. We examined, at the same time, other approaches to wholeness such as those of Samuels, Yiyuan, and Karmay. They were found to be interesting and helpful, but designed for anthropological studies of the geographical movement of plot motives rather than for the specific purposes of literary criticism.

We defined a complete epic therefore as a long narrative having a beginning which projected a definitive conclusion--- a conclusion which fulfilled the quest or need or command indicated in the beginning. In this we followed Brook's *Reading for Plot*, an updating of the Aristotelian definition of plot. We also made reference to Propp's work on plot and the approaches of Russian Formalism. All point to the same sense of a beginning as a declaration of plan and intention and the end as the completion of that intention in action.

This analysis of the Aristotelian approach to examining plot involved a close reading of Aristotle's and Homer's language in their treatments of beginnings. Our aim was to elucidate their concept of an epic beginning and then compare it with that illustrated in the first chapter of the Mipham *Gesar*. This East-West comparative study aimed to clarify a common point in epic literature world wide. For the West we took Homer's opening to the *Iliad* as an instance of epic beginnings and we took Aristotle's *Poetics* as a general theory of the nature of beginnings. We had at hand the same pairing of philosopher and poet in the Mipham *Gesar*, since Mipham, like Aristotle, wrote exhaustively on every aspect of Tibetan science and

philosophy as well as literature. We noted that the epics under consideration, both Eastern and Western, begin with a deity uttering a plan which turns out to be the plot of the entire work. This, I asserted, is an essential feature of epics.

Now, both the *Iliad* and the *Gesar* begin with a divine council which sets out a divine plan. There follows in both cases a string of incidents which are linked in a causal chain until the plan is fulfilled. Since both Aristotle and Mipham were quite explicit about their theories of causality, we then examined the concept of causal relation in the epics before us. We found their epic notions of causality to be at odds with modern notions of physical causality and causal necessity.

Simply put, the difference is that divine providence, the will of God or the Buddha or Zeus, is seen by these traditions as the most proper causal principle for an epic. Events simply occur as they are fated to occur--- the product of divine machination. This might go against modern theories of materialist causality, but it is perfectly in keeping with the Buddhist philosophy of causality as a combination of karma, aspiration, and mind's projection of an illusory world.

And so, at this point in the dissertation we went deeply into the cosmology of the Mipham *Gesar* in order to be able to examine this divine machinery closely. Such a treatment is quite traditional in Western literary criticism. In fact, every high school course in Homer involves this exact combination of studies. The students are asked to understand and learn the plot structure of Homer's works at the same time that they study and learn Greek and Roman mythology.

It is good pedagogy, but it is also a literary necessity. The two studies, epic and myth or cosmology, are inseparable for the reason that literary treatments do not make sense unless these two things are combined in them. The epics serve to give us a grand and complete schema of the pantheon of a people's religion. And at the same time such a pantheon must be clearly understood in order to appreciate and follow the plot of the epic.

There are many reasons this combination is necessary, but one, I hope, stands out particularly in the present comparative treatment of the *Gesar* and the *Iliad*. The plots of the kinds of epics we are considering do not make sense causally unless we know the cosmology/machinery very well. Aristotle wrote that the *mythos*, the plot, the story must be plausible. And he asserted that the series of events recounted by a poet should be connected in a string by causal necessity. His notion of causal necessity turns out to contain a strong element of intention, of purpose, of *τέλος*. Thus, the plot in the epic genre is best structured when its denouement is indeed a matter of fate and divine ordainment. Thus we must know the cosmology of an epic in order to do an intelligent study of the plot structure of the epic. In the epic world events are not caused by physical encounters, either material or efficient, but by the intentions of gods and demons.

My translation of the first chapter of the *Gesar* illustrates this principle in great detail. That chapter begins by telling us the story of how Padmasambhava failed "to pacify the temperamental demons of Tibet," failing to bind them by oath the necessary three times. This set in motion the karmic pattern which lead to the

downfall of the Tibetan Imperium: "...the coincidence of the Glorious Gateway was missed. As a result there was turmoil of weaponry in the four directions. The borderland demons wandered into Central Tibet. And the dynasty of the Dharma kings fell down to the level of commoners."

This terrible situation, demons conquering the Tibetan government, oppressing the people and threatening the boundaries of the country, is based on the key concept of the *damsi*, the samaya-violating demons. To understand the fatal causality which structures the plot, we must understand this aspect of Tibetan epic cosmology very well. Just as ordinary beings are created by passion and ignorance and buddhas are created by wisdom, so *damsi* are created by violation of taboos. Indeed, all fated incident in the *Gesar* is related to the logic of taboo and ritual purity. The *damsi* are devils who can prevent an entire society from thriving. Their nature is that they are "obscured" (full of *sgrib*) and very powerful. Our commentary on the so-called "History of the Goloks" by Do Khyentse Yeshe Dorje made this clear and explored this notion of taboo and its relation to plot activity in some detail, relying on the commentary of various learned Tibetan informants.

The commentary on the opening sections of the *Gesar* translation made the same point. Samaya violators are practitioners who took powerful oaths and received great empowerments. Then they turned against their oaths, corrupted their vows, produced perverted aspirations and were reborn as demons. Their previous religious practice made them powerful. Their violations make them evil, harmful, and hell-bound.

Their beings, their karmic streams are *sgrib can*, full of obscurations. This ritually stained condition makes contact with them destructive. We saw this in the Golok chapter when the future mother of Jigmê Lingpa had to flee from region to region, escaping the polluted environment of the stained samaya-violators. She, at the same time, had to remain perfectly pure, free of any karmic or ritual stain. The pure birth of Jigmê Lingpa is described in some detail. The *Gesar Epic* also describes a pure birth, the creation of an immaculate being, Joyful to Hear, in heaven. He is born of ritually pure gods, is born pronouncing the mantra of purity, the hundred syllable Vajrasattva Mantra, and he then he is purified and empowered by the Five Buddhas.

All of this mysterious epic action is designed to show him to be the unstained being who may oppose successfully the stained demons of Tibet. As the epic unfolds in further chapters it will be seen that he is the embodied auspicious *rten 'brel*, the good fortune, the auspicious coincidence of the Kingdom of Ling. He is their "glorious gateway"-- the object of their ritual supplications that a hero be born and the subsequent secret of their success. My commentary on the first chapter explores this point as well. We look at the astrological and karmic nature of a "glorious gateway"-- the way such a portal of causality must be exploited through the performance of timely rituals, and the way that their auspicious coincidence must not be destroyed by violating taboo and bringing about the opposite of good coincidence, miasma.

And so, this is the underlying dynamic of the plot structure of the Mipham *Gesar* as it may be understood from his first chapter and

a good knowledge of epic cosmology.

The divine machinery, as I have said before, is not purely Buddhist, but is actually a hybrid of the belief systems of several cultural milieus. This fact is clearly reflected in what I have called the "two-fold nature" of Gesar--- that he is both a Buddhist deity and a manifestation of the forces and beliefs of native Tibetan religions. Some versions of the epic emphasize his Buddhist side and others his native side. The David-Neel version translated by Blondeau's group in Paris is clearly light on the Buddhist affiliations. The Ladakhi version of Francke, although it certainly does have Buddhist elements, seems likewise to reflect mainly the lore and beliefs of indigenous systems. I have argued that these non-Buddhist belief systems are not purely Tibetan, but have other Central Asian elements in them and often contain a hefty component of Chinese alchemical Taoism.

It is evident from Mipham's liturgies and Do Khyentse's "history" that the lamas of the *ris med* tradition understood and appreciated the religious multi-faceted quality of Gesar. They obviously enjoyed combining Buddhist and Bön elements. They enjoyed shifting the allusions of their poetry between Indic, Chinese, and native Tibetan traditions. In one line Mipham alludes to the *Names of Mañjuśrī*, a Buddhist tantra. A few lines later he evokes Bönpo ritual texts. The ebb and flow of multi-cultural references to previous texts is an essential part of Tibetan Buddhist poetics.

It is not an accident that lamas like Mipham Gyatso and Do Khyentse Rinpoche were committed to these philosophically hybrid

narratives. For the reasoned combination of native, Indic, and Chinese elements is characteristic of their Eclectic School. This is not the place to explore in detail the philosophical connections which link Jigmê Lingpa to the Khyentse incarnations and the development of the Eclectics. But what should be noted here is that there is indeed in the *ris med* school a rational and systematic fusion of folkish lore with high science. This fusion is most clearly seen in the *Gesar Epic* and the liturgies that accompany it.

We explored this notion of the fusion of folklore and scholastic religious science in detail when we examined the term *rten 'brel* in the cosmology chapter. We began with the Buddhist philosophical abhidharmic definition of it as momentary causality (coincidence). And then we noted how this concept seems to have evolved step-by-step into the Tibetan indigenous notion of "good fortune." Behind the evolution of this term from philosophy to the lore of the common man there is a rational agenda made explicit in other *ris med* works such as Jamgön Kongtrül's *Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture*.⁵²⁵ It is a sophisticated metaphysical and theological view which can accommodate the Buddhist philosophy of emptiness as ultimate truth and native religion as precise relative truth. At the absolute level it can state that all beings are beyond purity and impurity. At the relative level it can explain exactly why one must not anger local deities by polluting their sacred precincts--- not simply why this is impractical, but why it is ethically wrong.

The synthesis of these two levels of reality was carefully worked out by the Eclectics and is shown forth in the works I have translated in this dissertation. We see the synthesis being carefully

fashioned as the national Buddhist deities of Tibet fashion Gesar out of their own substance and that of local deities. We see it in the "History of the Goloks" when Jigmê Lingpa, the great Buddhist author and finder of treasure texts, is begotten by the union of the Flesh-Eating Dākinī and a Tibetan mountain god in a divine palace inhabited by local monsters, Buddhist saints, and *dharmapalas*.

In short, the epic shows forth a system of thought which embraced shamanistic causality and sophisticated notions of causality in one system--- the union in narrative of Buddhist scholasticism and native religion.

This brings us to our last point R.A. Stein when he discovered this version of the *Gesar Epic* recognized its value both as an example of the genre and as an ethnological documentation of tribal life in that region of Central Asia. Much of his later Gesar research was devoted to exploring the ethnic dimension of the epic and it extended to his treatment of the tribes of the Tibetan marches.⁵²⁶ The vision of this work has informed my treatment of the *Gesar* throughout. Starting from the critical proposition that oral epic as performance is "the tales of the tribe," it became necessary to identify to which tribes the Mipham *Gesar* was actually directed. Stein elucidates these connections in his magisterial work on the Gesar epic and in *Les Tribus*. I have tested his hypotheses in fieldwork, questioning Tibetans who claimed they understood and enjoyed this version of the epic. I questioned them as to their sense of personal tribal identity. Their projection of self-identity confirms Stein's analysis. They see themselves as members of the Mukpo tribe and understand the other affiliations of Ga, Bru, and

Denma much as Stein said they would.

This does not mean that these are truly existent clan affiliations and networks of kinship. We are dealing here with individuals' imaginations of their identities as expressed in the texts to which they are committed--- texts which they are competent to read and have been raised to read and enjoy. As recent theory and research in multiculturalism have emphasized, ethnic and class identity is as much a function of modes of discourse as it is a function of substantive genealogical connections.

What I attempted to identify in this monograph is not a truly existent network of kinship relations, but a matrix of interlocking texts based on the notion of such an institutional network. The matrix of texts include homely stories such as Khyentse's "history of the Goloks," simple liturgies such as Mipham's Gesar rites, the philosophical works and tantras of a certain branch of the Nyingma sect, and the Mipham *Gesar*, which was based on the Xylograph of Ling.

Let us take Tendzin SampheI as an example. He was a particularly valuable informant for the Mipham epic because he spoke a dialect close to if not identical with that in which the Ling Xylographs were written. I observed that he understood many more idioms in the text than the Amdo informants. But it cannot be said that lama Tendzin is a native of Khams. His childhood was spent in Tibetan refugee communities--- the most important of which seems to have been in Orissa. When I asked him what his native dialect was, he said that in the refugee communities many dialects were spoken.

When we began to read Do Khyentse's autobiographical account of the history of the Goloks, Tendzin Samphel exclaimed with delight, "Why, this is in Golok language!" And I discovered, to my delight, that this dialect he also knew. His excitement in reading the text was heightened by his intense sense of affiliation with the characters in the story.

But what is the origin of that connection? Is it that his family has been involved with Mukpos and Goloks for generations? Perhaps. But his educational background explains the sense of self-identity just as well. Lama Tendzin became while in India a disciple of the highest lama of the Nyingma sect, Dudjom Rinpoche. He was educated in part at Dudjom's seminary in Katmandu and trained by a very specific group of lamas. After the death of Dudjom Rinpoche, he entered into study with scholars working under the auspices of Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.

Now, all of these people are committed to the doctrines and writings of Mipham Gyatso and all of them seem to admit to the tribal affiliations mentioned in the epic. They all performed Mipham's Gesar practices when they were young, chanting the liturgies I discussed in the chapter on cosmology. Their construction of their own identity as Mukpos and people genealogically related to Gesar, and furthermore as visionary holders of the *Gesar* cult practices could be the source of Tendzin Samphel's sense of affiliation, even if his family had not come from that section of Tibet at all. And his ability to understand the dialect and enjoy it, while probably a function of being brought up by people speaking it natively, could also have been received textually, since

he was heavily trained in Mipham's texts.

This is a perennial conundrum in literary studies of epics. The same problem occurs in the *Iliad*. If it is the tales of any tribe, the *Iliad* is the story of the Greek-speaking peoples of ancient Minoan civilization. The Ionian Greeks who probably composed the epic songs of Troy were looking back on a vanished civilization. The Attic Greeks who appropriated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as their national epics somewhere around the sixth century B.C. were even more distant and disconnected from the cultural source.

Since that time numerous genealogically unrelated cultures have laid claim to the same epic story, identifying at times with the Trojans, at times with the Achaeans. The *Aeneid* proposes that the Romans were descended from Trojans who escaped the destruction of their city by the Greeks. There are epics and romances in which the inhabitants of the British isles make the same claim. You could say, in this sense, that identification with the epic is based on commitments to fields of discourse.

And so it could be with the *Gesar*. The Mipham version is based on the assumption that the 19th c. Tibetan province of Ling was the actual site of the original epic Ling. Stein explores numerous *traits* as he calls them--- physical sites which contain relics or physical formations attributed to the reality of the epic characters. But the *Gesar* story is told across Central Asia and not always with the same geographical associations. The *Ris med* lamas of the Kagyü and Nyingma lineages who claim they are Mukpos and who celebrate the Mipham *Gesar* are a league of East Tibetan savants who have been working together in a loosely organized

religious establishment throughout the 19th century. Their monasteries are in the vicinity of Dergê, Surmang, and the region of Magyal Pomra. There are times when I think that their tribal culture and sense of ethnic identity is as much a projection of their literary and religious associations as it is of their actual kinship structures.

This has become an important issue in a British and American school of thought called "Cultural Studies." There the tendency is to see the constitution of communities through discourse as a negative thing. Multiculturalists speak of "colonial domination" of discourse. Their idea is that there must be a physically existent community whose existence and boundaries was suppressed by the imposition of false racial and class oriented discourse. So, for example, there must have been a true Indian status quo that preceded British domination of discourse. And thus, the Vedic and English canons of classical works could be seen as a vicious imposition.

I personally see involvement with a well-defined classical literary canon as a positive thing. It involves in many cases the joyful acceptance of the sense of identity projected by a matrix of systematically interrelated documents. That has been my personal experience in studying the Western Graeco-Roman classics and the Buddhist classics as well. In undertaking to master these textual traditions, I am laboring to fashion my own identity in a positive state of free choice.

Such, I believe, is the attitude with which emigré Tibetans embrace and refurbish the Gesar tradition of texts--- republishing in numerous editions Mipham's *Gesar* far beyond the confines of its original readership. The epic, as Mipham presents it, is about the

fall and refurbishment of the Tibetan state through taming its demons. And his epic is used in the same way to refurbish the Tibetan sense of identity in diaspora.

There is much exploration to be done in this area. And there is much anthropological fieldwork which must be done to prove or disprove these hypotheses of literary theory. Stein's studies were based on an exhaustive examination of literary sources. His successors are anthropologists or ethnologists, if you will, who have as their main object of study oral and written documents.

My work deals with the same documents, but from the point of view of a literary critic and a translator. Interestingly enough, to be a translator of Tibetan texts one must also be a sort of part-time anthropologist. One must do a special kind of fieldwork in the checking of one's translation. This is because each distinct genre of document is written, for all practical purposes, in a different dialect of Tibetan. And each genre of document assumes a different cultural milieu. All Tibetan translators, therefore, rely on line-by-line checking or control by native informants. For the *Gesar Epic* this is particularly important. Each version of the epic, no matter how it comes to be employed in publication, is composed in a dialect directed towards the specific audience it is meant to entertain and to inform.

Let us end by looking at the future of studies such as the one embodied in this dissertation. After four years of work on the Mipham version of this epic, I have managed to focus on the geographical and linguistic locus of this document. It is now clear

that without informants qualified in the lore and language of this region of Eastern Tibet, a quality translation, a comprehensive translation cannot move forward.

Working closely with such informants, recording sessions with them and noting down their remarks is the proper way for a person like myself to continue R.A. Stein's work. More than 40 years ago he began a project to translate this version of the epic and bring it to the scholarly public. His translation and glossary were in a sense incomplete, but they represented the furthest advances scholarly knowledge of that period could make. Since then the flood of Tibetan refugees into the West has made it possible for us to advance his work to completion.

The completed project would involve a translation and commentary as detailed as that which appears in this dissertation. This means hundreds of hours of interviews with Eastern Tibetan erudites such as Tendzin Samphel and Khenpo Palden Sherap. And it means the scrupulous logging of all the lore they relate as they are asked to judge and comment on the translation.

It also means a comprehensive translation and analysis of Mipham's Gesar liturgies. Stein realized the vital importance of these religious texts and compared their language with that of the epic in the glossary to his translation. I have explored in some detail a few of the interconnections between epic and ritual to which he pointed in his work.

The culmination of his work as I envisage it would be a complete translation of all the Mipham Gesar texts. This translation should be of literary quality so that this Asian epic can be given to

the consideration of a vaster academic community--- one that goes beyond the asianist social sciences and considers the *Gesar* on the vaster stage of world epic literature. Such a work cannot be done without a tremendously serious investment in ethnographical research. But the outcome should be for the benefit of literary scholars and the literary public. People who read Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Dante because of their interest in the epic should also read the Mipham *Gesar*.

524 I do not mention Stein at this point, because I have indeed relied extensively on his approach to Asian epic. Although he too belongs in the social sciences rather than in the scholarly world of literary criticism, his treatments have been a basis for my own investigations rather than an alternate path.

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