

## A Richness of Detail: Sangs rgyas gling pa and the *Padma bka' thang*

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**T**he importance of Padmasambhava in Tibet can hardly be overstated. His popularity crosses both sectarian and cultural boundaries, and generations of Tibetans revere him as “the second Buddha” (*sangs rgyas gnyis pa*). He is held to have converted Tibet to Buddhism in the eighth century. His religious biography has thus exerted a huge influence in Tibetan cultural areas. The earliest example of this important genre is the *Zangs gling ma* (henceforth *ZL*) by Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192). This biography has been fundamental to many Tibetans' sense of geographical identity, since it ties Tibet closely to the Indian sub-continent where Buddhism was born and where Padmasambhava manifested, became the adopted son of the king of Uḍḍiyāna and subsequently carried out tantric practices before being invited to Tibet. *ZL* thus offers significant insights into the history of Tibetan depictions of South Asia.

Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's works gained extraordinary popularity, and their shared narratives provided the archetypes for later Tibetan historians writing on Tibet's place in the world and its predestined relationship to Buddhism. Tibetan historians drew on these narratives in the fourteenth century, following the fall of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368), and again in the seventeenth century the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) deployed the same fundamental myths in his formation of the pre-modern Tibetan state. In this sense, Nyang ral may be seen as forging together the earlier Tibetan ideas of Indic lands to the south as part of an enduring and influential narrative, one that was expanded and redacted by successive generations of Tibetan scholars to suit the changing requirements of its readership.

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<sup>1</sup> This article was completed with funding from the European Research Council while employed by the project “Beyond Boundaries: Religion, Region, Language and the State,” ERC Synergy Project 609823 ASIA. I would like to thank Michael Balk and the staff of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin for granting me access to their microfilms, and the two anonymous reviewers and Franz-Karl Ehrhard for their helpful comments on a penultimate draft of this article.

The narratives focused on here were not filled out with citations, as in other phases of this historiographical tradition, but with poetic descriptions seemingly intended to fix a vivid reimagining of a bygone age in the minds of their audiences—an increasing “richness of detail.”<sup>2</sup>

This article is a text-critical prolegomenon to an analysis of the fourteenth-century transformation of the image of Padmasambhava in the *bka' thang* (“testament”) genre of his biography. This genre consists of narrative accounts that are traditionally held to have been compiled in the eighth century and buried in some form, as “treasure” (*gter*), to be revealed during a later age. This article will address the problem of the acknowledged redaction of the *Padma bka'(i) thang (yig)*, also known as the *bKa' thang Shel brag ma* (henceforth *PKT*), said to have been revealed by the famed treasure revealer (*gter ston*) named O rgyan gling pa (b. 1323).<sup>3</sup> As a partial solution to this problem, it proposes recourse to a recently discovered exemplar of *PKT* differing from the most popular recension, and three other early examples of the *bka' thang* genre predating the changes wrought on *PKT* in the sixteenth century. These works are attributed to the famed treasure revealers Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405?)<sup>4</sup> and Padma gling pa (1450–1521). The main focus of this article is the *bKa' thang gSer phreng* (henceforth *SP*) attributed to Sangs rgyas gling pa.<sup>5</sup> It discusses the exemplars of this work so far published, as well as those microfilmed between 1982 and 1997 by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project and catalogued by the Nepal-German Manuscript Cataloguing Project (henceforth *NGMCP*). It then compares how these *SP* exemplars set the scene for Padmasambhava’s emanation in Uḍḍiyāna with the narrative given in *PKT*, the accounts attributed to rDo rje gling pa and Padma gling pa and the different recensions of *ZL*. This should show:

### 1. The general homogeneity of the *SP* tradition, despite minor

<sup>2</sup> sPrul sku O rgyan rin po che (1920–1996), quoted in Kunsang 1999: 223. These historiographical values warrant comparison with the concept of *enargeia* or *evidentia in narratione* in the Western tradition (see Ginzberg 2012 [2006]: 1–24).

<sup>3</sup> Dan Martin (1997: 56, no. 87) dates the *Padma bka' thang*, based on its colophon, to 1352. Among the many exemplars of this work’s most popular recension, I shall use the 1987 book edition (W17320) and a xylograph from the 1755 Beijing edition (W1KG16912). References to W-prefixed resource IDs in this article correspond to those allocated by the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC), [www.tbrc.org](http://www.tbrc.org).

<sup>4</sup> Dates according to Samten Karmay 2000.

<sup>5</sup> Also known as the (*s*)*Pu ri'i/ru'irings kyi bka' thang*. My thanks to Samten Karmay for background information on this work. Martin (1997: 55, no. 84) dates the *gSer phreng* to the late 1300’s.

- transmissional or redactional affiliations among its exemplars;
2. The benefits and limitations of using other works as indirect witnesses to the “original” fourteenth-century *PKT*;
  3. The light that all of these traditions may in the future shed on the transformations that Padmasambhava’s image underwent between the twelfth and sixteenth century.

### 1. Witnesses to the “Original” Padma bka' thang?

We can be sure that *ZL* was incorporated in some form into the two fourteenth-century biographies of Padmasambhava, *PKT* and *SP*.<sup>6</sup> Yet all extant editions of *PKT* appear to stem from a text that Za hor Mi dbang bSod nams stobs rgyal (16<sup>th</sup> century) redacted in line with some version of *ZL*.<sup>7</sup> He himself acknowledges such alteration in his printing colophon.<sup>8</sup> It is clear that the *Padma bka' thang* caused problems at the time of its creation, and its final form is still quite unlike *ZL*. Nonetheless, we do not know exactly what was changed during the sixteenth century, prior to the Fifth Dalai Lama’s printing of the work in 1676, in the 1730s at sDe dge or in the 1755 “corrected” print of *daguoshi* lCang skya Khutugtu Rol pa’i rdo rje (1717–1786).<sup>9</sup> The popularity of the dGa’ ldan phun tshogs gling and sDe dge editions seemingly made all earlier, “mixed-quality” versions of *PKT* scarce.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the influence of *ZL* on these two *bka' thangs*, see Doney 2014: 33–38. Of the three *ZL* recensions identified in that work, *ZL3* is followed in *PKT*, though with many omissions, alterations and additions, and *SP* follows *ZL1* as well as something akin to O rgyan gling pa’s narrative. My labelling of *ZL* exemplars used in this article as *ZLa*, *ZLf* and *ZLh* is based on that 2014 work.

<sup>7</sup> On bSod nams stobs rgyal’s life and patronage of other printing projects, such as rDzogs chen treatises attributed to Klong chen pa (1308–1364) and Prajñāpāramita texts, and the ruler’s relationship with Phreng po gter ston Shes rab ’od zer (Prajñāraśmi; 1518–1584), see Deroche 2013: 81–89.

<sup>8</sup> See Ehrhard 2000: 16 and 16–17, n. 13; Kapstein 2015: 180–81. *Idem*: 180–86 contains a translation of the colophon of the *PKT* Beijing edition.

<sup>9</sup> These dates are given in Kapstein 2015: 170–172. Leonard van der Kuijp (2010: 138, n. 1) states that the sDe dge blocks for the xylograph “were prepared by Kun dga’ ’phrin las rgya mtsho’i sde at the behest of Dpal ldan chos skyong (1710–1769). It [the xylograph] is a “corrected” edition of the earlier Dga’ ldan phun tshogs gling xylograph from the 1675 printing blocks.”

<sup>10</sup> While van der Kuijp (2010: 139) suggests that manuscript copies may still exist in private collections around the Tibetan Buddhist world, he also notes that numerous Tibetan intellectuals, including dPa’ bo gTsug lag phreng ba (1504–1566), cast doubt on scribal faithfulness of works of the *bka' thang* genre (*ibid*: 139, n. 1 and 143, n. 1)—though whether they noticed actual scribal errors or mistook *PKT*’s idiosyncratic style for such remains to be investigated on the basis of the discussion below. Van der Kuijp later records that the Fifth Dalai Lama

I consulted a handful of editions of this work, with and without printing colophons, and they all seem to tell the same narrative; perhaps they are all ultimately based on the same sixteenth-century print. I have not begun to thoroughly study the *PKT* exemplars in the NGMCP collection, but Robert Mayer has kindly shared a very interesting manuscript exemplar with me (henceforth *PKT* 2013).<sup>11</sup> It differs from the published and Beijing editions in a way that suggests another recension of *PKT* has survived.<sup>12</sup> When I speak simply of “*PKT*” below, I am referring to the shared traits, style and content of all these exemplars.

In addition to *PKT* itself, we are fortunate to possess the witness of Rig 'dzin Sangs rgyas gling pa's fourteenth-century prose and poetry *SP*. I shall discuss the exemplars below, but the scholarly consensus is that, to quote Anne-Marie Blondeau, “[t]he *gSer-phreng*...often seems to be an interpretative gloss on the *Shel-brag-ma* [i.e. *PKT*], from which it nevertheless differs on a number of points.”<sup>13</sup> One of

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mentioned a *PKT* circulating with glosses attached (*gter ma'i thang yig tshig sna ring ba*; *ibid.*: 143).

<sup>11</sup> According to Robert Mayer (personal communications, July 1 2015), Ngawang Tsepag of the Audio Visual Unit, Śāntaraksīta Library, Central University for Tibetan Studies, photographed this *PKT* exemplar in the village of Sangs rgyas gling, Tawang, Arunachal Pradesh, in the summer of 2013. It was photographed as part of a University of Oxford digitisation program titled *The Ancient Tantra Collection from Sangyeling* (*Sangs rgyas gling rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*), directed by Cathy Cantwell and Robert Mayer (with an award from the John Fell OUP Research Fund). Ngawang Tsepag found this *PKT* exemplar among the volumes of the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* (which follows the Bhutanese 46-volume recension) and fortunately decided to photograph it also.

<sup>12</sup> This is a work of poetry like other *PKT* exemplars. Yet it comprises 122 rather than 108 chapters, omitting other exemplars' chapter fifteen (as do the other works discussed below) but including much of Padmasambhava's final advice on leaving Tibet as found in *ZL* (most closely resembling recension *ZL3* with its lack of opening requests; see Doney 2014: 53–56). It presently consists of 281 folios, though the foliation is rather confused and we lack perhaps 20 folios of Padmasambhava's final advice, including chapters 104–114. The *recto* of the final folio first describes the treasure text as written in “Sanskrit,” then Ur rgyan (*sic*) gling pa discovering it in “Yar lungs Shel gyi brag phug.” This ordering of the account contrasts with the above editions of *PKT*; its importance will be discussed below. The very short colophon on the *verso* suggests it was distributed by U rgyan phun thshogs Monastery, perhaps the one in Nyag rong rdzong founded in 1491 (TBRC place G1632): *mchos med prad po ur rgyan phun tsho'i bri mgon pa rgram* (*sic*).

<sup>13</sup> Blondeau 1980: 49. A. I. Vostrikov seems to have put an end to the debate concerning the primacy of *PKT* over *SP* by agreeing with Emil Schlagintweit (1899: 420–421) against Berthold Laufer (1911: 246–248), “that *Thang-yig-gser-phreng* indeed is a prose rendering of the versified *Padma-bka'-thang*” (Vostrikov 1994 [1936]: 48). Vostrikov evidently compared the works in some detail, so we have reason to trust his conclusion. However, his argument against Laufer's for dating *SP* earlier than *PKT*, namely that the former (e.g. *SP* 2007: 362) mentions O

the main differences between *SP* and *PKT* is the inclusion of narratives from the longer, interpolated *ZL* recension, *ZL1*, in the former, which are missing from the latter (see footnote 6 above). Another is that it comprises 117 chapters.<sup>14</sup> The posited foundation of *SP* upon *PKT* and *ZL1* stands in contrast to the approach employed in another Padmasambhava biography attributed to Sangs rgyas gling pa, found in his famous *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* cycle.<sup>15</sup> This work condenses *ZL3*, including some of its telltale details and none of the extra detail included in either *ZL1* or the much larger *PKT*, before moving on to its own narrative.<sup>16</sup> So, if we are to continue to attribute both works to Sangs rgyas gling pa,<sup>17</sup> it seems we could hypothesise that *ZL1* and *PKT* were not available to him at the time of compiling the biography in the *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, and/or he did not feel the need to be consistent across his oeuvre of Padma-vitas.

We also have access to two works, attributed to later treasure revealers, that resemble *PKT* and are likewise written solely in verse. The first is the *Lo tsha'i 'gyur byang rnam thar* attributed to gTer chen Rig 'dzin rDo rje gling pa (henceforth *LTGB*). This treasure biography of Padmasambhava, preserved at O rgyan chos gling in Bumthang,

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rgyan gling pa while the latter does not mention Sangs rgyas gling pa, is not strictly sound. This is because *SP* (2007: 382) also mentions O rgyan Padma gling pa who, if our dates are correct, was not born until fifty years after Sangs rgyas gling pa died. This raises the further problem of later interpolations into *SP*, which cannot be properly addressed here.

<sup>14</sup> Guisepppe Tucci (1949: 110–15) already noted the different number of chapters in *PKT* and *SP*, but also suggested the existence of a longer *PKT* (*ibid.*: 114).

<sup>15</sup> This work is titled the *Yid ches shing khungs btsun pa'i lo rgyus shel gyi me long gsal ba*, found among other places in the *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* published in 1972 (W18978), vol. 4 (*nga*), 683–763, which I cite below. Erik Pema Kunsang (1999: 229) identifies it as a Padma-vita, though without noting this work's debt to *ZL*.

<sup>16</sup> Kunsang (1999: 96; 219, n. 33; 246) coincidentally gives one indication of this dependence on *ZL3* in the description of the *Sems smad bco brgyad* or "Eighteen Marvels of Mind" attributed to Master Vairocana (*Bla ma dgongs 'dus* vol 4, 726.2; see also Doney 2014: 24–25, n. 13; 49, n. 58). Another clear sign is the placement of Uḍḍiyāna to/in the south of India rather than the west (*Bla ma dgongs 'dus* vol 4, 687.4), corresponding to *inter alia* *ZLh* of the *ZL3* recension that I quote in section 3 of this article, below (see also Doney 2014: 29 and 72). Sangs rgyas gling pa begins to diverge from *ZL3* at about page 732, when recounting Padmasambhava's advice and prophecies to the court and Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

<sup>17</sup> There seems no reason to doubt this biography's link to Sangs rgyas gling pa. It is found in his most famous work, attributes it to him as treasure revealer in the colophon (*Bla ma dgongs 'dus* vol 4, 763.1), and contains Padmasambhava's prophecy to Sangs rgyas gling pa's claimed pre-incarnation Dam 'dzin (Mu rug btsan po). This prophecy states that he will be reborn in a city named "Kong" (*ibid.*: 152.6), i.e. Kong po where Sangs rgyas gling pa was born (see Dargyay 1979: 133).

Bhutan, follows *PKT verbatim* in the majority of its narrative.<sup>18</sup> The work comprises only 100 chapters, but ends with a brief interment formula and treasure revealer's colophon in keeping with other works of the *bka' thang* genre.<sup>19</sup> rDo rje gling pa appears to have been a slightly younger contemporary of Sangs rgyas gling pa, also born in dBus and active in the Lhasa area; he is famed as one of the five great treasure revealer-kings (*gter rgyal*) and a discoverer of Bon treasure.<sup>20</sup> rDo rje gling pa visited Bhutan and discovered much treasure there; today O rgyan chos gling in Bumthang (where this manuscript was preserved) is still the main seat of his descendants.<sup>21</sup>

Another work, attributed to the even later gTer rgyal Rig 'dzin O rgyan Padma gling pa,<sup>22</sup> very closely resembles *LTGB*. This is the *Sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung mun sel sgron me* (henceforth *MSGM*), comprising 105 or 106 chapters.<sup>23</sup> *MSGM* is more widely known than *LTGB* among Tibetologists and has often been compared to *PKT*, yet I shall show below that it more closely resembles *LTGB*.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> On the 21-volume series of rDo rje gling pa's works, of which this forms the first volume, and on other rare texts held at the O rgyan chos gling Monastery, see Karmay 2003. This publication is catalogued in Karmay 2003: 138, entry A.343–1.

<sup>19</sup> *LTGB*: 191a2–6 reads: *dbyangs can sprul pa ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis / mi brjed gzungs thob ma 'ongs phyi rabs don / pad ma bka'i thang yig zhes kyang bya rnam thar skyes rabs rgyas pa zhes kyang bya / khri srong sde (=lde) btsan bka' chems zhes kyang bya / lo pan skar (=dkar) chag chos kyi 'gyur byang 'di / yi ger stab (=btav) nas rin chen gter du sbas / skal ldan las 'phro can dang 'phrad par shog / sa ma ya / rgya rgya rgya / / gter rgya / sbas rgya / gsang rgya / zab rgya gtad rgya'o / rgya rgya rgya* (then, in smaller letters: *rin po che rdo rje gling pas gnam lcags srin phug pa nas gdan drangs so'o /*

<sup>20</sup> See Dargyay 1979: 139–43 for a potted emic account of his life. He was also known as Bon zhig g.Yung drung gling pa, and considered a reincarnation of the Bon-Buddhist Master Vairocana (see Karmay 1988: 36 and 216 ff.).

<sup>21</sup> On rDo rje gling pa's journeys in Bhutan and reincarnations and descendants there, see Ehrhard 2008. Further references to secondary literature on rDo rje gling pa are found at *ibid.*: 62, n. 2. O rgyan chos gling today is the subject of contributions by Françoise Pommaret and Kunzang Choden in Ardussi and Pommaret (eds.) 2007.

<sup>22</sup> See first and foremost Aris 1979, esp. 160–65, and 1989: 1–105. On the influence of rDo rje gling pa on Padma gling pa and his disciple, Rig 'dzin mChog ldan mgon po (1497–1531), whom Padma gling pa considered to be rDo rje gling pa's reincarnation, see *ibid.*: 31 and 34–35 and Ehrhard 2008. Ehrhard's impressive contribution updates Aris's pioneering effort in this regard, especially in its details of these figures' movements over the IHo brag-Bhutan border.

<sup>23</sup> Martin (1997: 86, no. 162) lists four exemplars of this work published in 1976, 1977, 1978 and 1981. See the bibliography below for more information.

<sup>24</sup> See the comparison of these two sources in section 3, below. Anne-Marie Blondeau (1980: 49) states that “in 1513 at bSam-yas according to the colophon, Padma gling-pa discovered his *bka'-thang* which also sticks closely to the *Shel-brag-ma* [i.e. *PKT*].” In the context of the attribution of various names to Master Vairocana, including Ye shes sde, Karmay (1988: 30, n. 41) notes: “The same account is also given in *bKa' thang gser phreng* (or *Pu ru'i bka' thang*), but further exaggerated by Padma gling-pa (1450–1521) in his [*MSGM* 1978], Vol. II, f. 4.”

If the attributions of these two works and the dates of their attributed authors are correct, then most likely *LTGB* influenced *MSGM*. Yet, until we can text-critically confirm dependence of one upon the other, the direction of influence between the pair *LTGB-MSGM* will have to remain open. I have yet to find either work within the NGMCP collection.

In the future, “triangulating” between these three sources, with the help of *PKT* 2013, could shed light on the fourteenth-century *PKT*. Their divergences from *PKT* may also allow us to see the variety and possible areas of tension within the fourteenth to sixteenth-century tradition of Padmasambhava *vita*. Given that *SP* appears to borrow and quote from a different recension of *ZL* (*ZL1*) from the rest (*ZL3*), further investigation could then lead to insights into the redaction of that first full-length biography of Padmasambhava.

## 2. Exemplars of the gSer phreng

In my previous work, I consulted the *SP* 2007 book edition as a representative and easily available version of Sangs rgyas gling pa's narrative. Leonard van der Kuijp has recently identified this edition, by means of the printing colophon it reproduces, as stemming from Bhutanese Punakha (sPung thang) blocks via a printery in Ngo mtshar lhun grub zil gnon rje 'bum temple.<sup>25</sup> Franz-Karl Ehrhard and Marta Sernesi have been able to supply me with a likely site for this temple, in the Blo gsal gling college of 'Bras spungs Monastery near Lhasa.<sup>26</sup> The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) also holds an undated *SP* xylograph (W1PD89340) taken from Lhasa blocks, which were in turn based on the Punakha blocks.<sup>27</sup> The Lhasa blocks also

<sup>25</sup> Van der Kuijp (2010: 138, n. 3) describes the Lhasa xylograph, as typeset in *SP* 2007, in these terms:

Not very informative, the original printer's colophon relates, on pp. 485–488, that the original printing blocks were based on the xylograph edition from the Bhutanese Spung thang pa blocks. The Dga' ldan pho brang in Lhasa had these new printing blocks prepared and these were, or perhaps still are, housed in Ngo mtshar lhun grub zil gnon rje 'bum, a temple (*lha khang*) that I am unable to identify.

See *SP* 2007: 486.5–7 on the Bhutanese provenance. See *ibid.*: 488.15, the final line of the colophon, on the Ngo mtshar lhun grub zil gnon rje 'bum temple.

<sup>26</sup> Ehrhard (personal communications after consulting with Marta Sernesi, June 18 2015) suggests that this temple housed further blocks of a work concerning scholars of Blo gsal gling (see the TBRC entry on W23345; compare also W2CZ8096). Ehrhard (2013: 151, n. 16) also notes that the *Mani bka' 'bum* was realized in the Blo gsal gling college.

<sup>27</sup> This Lhasa edition's final folio is numbered “365,” but two folios are numbered “7,” *bdun gong* and *bdun 'og*, and folios 91–95 are missing. Another exemplar of

formed the basis for the *SP* edition published by His Holiness bDud 'joms 'jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (1904–1987) in 1970, in Kalimpong (*SP* 1970).<sup>28</sup> Lastly, a copy published in 1985 by the National Library of Bhutan (henceforth *SP* 1985a) is also “[r]eproduced from a clear print from the early 17th century (*sic*) blocks from Punakha (sPungs-thang).”<sup>29</sup> Therefore all of these exemplars form a group dating from seventeenth-century blocks, which I shall call *SP1*.

More recently, Dan Hirshberg generously shared with me copies of *SP* exemplars that he acquired from the National Archives in Kathmandu, microfilmed in 1982, 1988, 1990, and 1992. Franz-Karl Ehrhard then made me aware of another exemplar, on which he had previously published based on his own photographs. I subsequently found another copy of that same exemplar, photographed in 1983, among the NGMCP microfilms held in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, and discovered there five more exemplars of *SP*, one complete and four in partial form.

Of these, *SP* 1982 and 1992 are also descended from the Punakha blocks, with only minor differences. *SP* 1982 is identical to the undated Lhasa xylograph—including the two folios numbered *bdun gong* and *bdun 'og* and the missing folios 91–95.<sup>30</sup> *SP* 1992 is almost identical to the Bhutanese edition *SP* 1985a. Yet it diverges in a few minor but interesting ways.<sup>31</sup> Therefore both belong to the group *SP1*.

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the Lhasa edition, said to consist of 365 folios, exists in the Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente (IsIAO; see de Rossi Filibeck 2003: 336, no. 673), though it remains to be seen whether it is missing folios 91–95.

<sup>28</sup> This edition displays the same layout, wording and accompanying images as the Lhasa edition. In his preface to this text, John Reynolds states (*SP* 1970: 4, col. 1): “The original of the text is in the possession of H. H. Dudjom Rinpoche and His Holiness has graciously arranged for new blocks to be made at Varanasi for the printing of this edition.”

<sup>29</sup> This is according to the descriptor on the boards (*SP* 1985a: i). Though the colophon does not mention sPungs thang directly, the names of the compiler (rNam rgyal 'brug pa) and overseer of the printing (Ngag gi dbang po; 1580–1639) accord with those of other works clearly stated to have been produced at sPung thang.

<sup>30</sup> The doubled folio number 7 and the five missing folios are noted in the card catalogue entry for *SP* 1982. For this reason, the work is described there as consisting of 361 folios. The only difference between these two exemplars is that the microfilm copy of *SP* 1982 omits folios 3b–4a.

<sup>31</sup> Two stand out: First, *SP* 1992 has a different title page from the Bhutanese edition *SP* 1985a, but the same title: *U rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi rnam thar rgyas pa gser gyi phreng ba thar lam gsal byed*. Second, though *SP* 1992 is then identical to *SP* 1985a up to folio 394a, its folio 394b appears to repeat exactly the same text as *SP* 1985a 394b but condensed onto five of the six lines (whereas the Bhutan edition spreads this text over the whole six lines). The sixth and final line of *SP* 1992, i.e. 394b6, is the beginning of the secondary colophon covering 394b6–97a4. This colophon is also recorded in *SP* 1985a: 395a1–97a4, but it is quite different to the printing colophons above. Because of the misalignment on folio 394b, the two



SP 1988 and SP 1990a are more interesting. SP 1988 is a microfilm of an illustrated xylograph from Drumba in Jomsom, in the possession of a mTshams pa Ngag dbang. The work originally consisted of 282 folios but at the time of microfilming had lost 54 folios, reducing its usefulness for comparison with other exemplars.<sup>32</sup> This xylograph is written with “treasure punctuation” (*gter shad*) throughout and illustrated with twelve images, eight opening the work and four closing it. The copy that was microfilmed has been heavily damaged, especially its opening folios. The treasure revealer’s colophon ends by describing the work as originally a scroll written in “Sanskrit,” then stating that Sangs rgyas gling pa retrieved it from the great Pu ri cave (perhaps on the border of Assam).<sup>33</sup> In contrast, all of the above exemplars stemming ultimately from the Punakha blocks relate the scroll’s discovery first, before stating that it was written in Sanskrit. This order is in agreement with the published and Beijing editions of *PKT*. So, it is perhaps interesting to note that *PKT* 2013 also reverses the order of its account of its own revelation in the same way as SP 1988 (see footnote 12, above). The final folios of SP 1988 are damaged and also misprinted, but contain a unique secondary colophon that would reward further study. The final line of this colophon states: “this Biography Catalogue, Clarifying the Path to Liberation, was composed by Shākya’i btsun pa dBang phyug rgyal mtshan, at gSang sngags rNying ma’i dgon chen chos lung.”<sup>34</sup>

The next exemplar, SP 1990a, was photographed in Dzaden, Helambu. It is a manuscript rather than a xylograph and contains no secondary colophon. It includes only one image and lacks treasure punctuation throughout.<sup>35</sup> Interestingly, SP 1988 and SP 1990a both

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versions do not match line-for-line until folio 396a1 *nas ma ’ongs lnga brgya par / ...* after which the shared colophon mentions the Punakha editor rNam rgyal ’brug pa (396b2).

<sup>32</sup> The largest of these gaps appears after SP 1988: 161a. The narrative corresponding to SP 2007: 280.2–372.16 (most of chapter 70, all of chapters 71–107 and half of chapter 108) is then missing. Oddly, folio 161b begins in the middle of chapter 108 and the next folio is numbered 214a.

<sup>33</sup> SP 1988: 276b6–7 (corresponding to e.g. SP 2007: 485.12–14) is rather difficult to read (uncertain readings are given in brackets), but appears to run: *rgya rgya rgya / sh[og] hril gi cig yod / yi ge sang kri ta’i yi ger ’dug / ma dag pa tshig gcig kyang med par bsgyur yod / pu ri [ph]ug [mo] che shel [gy]i brag phug nas / [gu] ru sangs rgyas gling pas gter nas bton pa’o / e bam / [ornamentation] /*.

<sup>34</sup> The final line (282a7) appears to read: *snam (=rnam) thar gyi kar chags (=d)kar chag) thar lam gsal byed ’di nyid / shākya’i btsun pa dBang phyug rgyal mtshan gyis gsang sngags rnying ma’i dgon chen chos lung du sbyar ba’o / / e bam / manghalaṃ bha rba ntu (?) /*.

<sup>35</sup> Folios 162 and 163 are misplaced in the manuscript as it was photographed for the NGMCP microfilm. These folios are found between folios 62 and 63, perhaps

omit the Uḍḍiyāna script included at the end of chapters in the SP1 exemplars above (though they both give the Uḍḍiyāna language title on folio 1b1). This binds these two exemplars closer together against the Punakha group.<sup>36</sup> The treasure revealer's colophon of SP 1990a also agrees with SP 1988 against the SP1 exemplars, in first describing the work as a scroll written in "Sanskrit," then describing its recovery by Sangs rgyas gling pa from Pu ri cave.<sup>37</sup>

As will become clear below, these two versions also agree with each other against the SP1 versions in many readings within the main body of the work, and so I designate them SP2 for now. The testimony of these two versions confirms the general faithfulness of the Punakha blockprint group SP1, while highlighting some of its divergences where SP 1988 and 1990a agree against the Punakha group.

Franz-Karl Ehrhard has already discussed another printing of the *gSer phreng*, completed in 1535 at the Byams pa sprin lha khang, or Royal Temple (because of its associations with Srong btsan sgam po), in Mang yul Gung thang.<sup>38</sup> Ehrhard points out that the apparently earliest printing of both SP and PKT (that I discussed above) took place around the same time, and suggests that the choice to go to all the expense of cutting blocks of SP "may indicate that this tradition of the life-story of the 'Precious One from O-rgyan' was the one prevalent in Mang-yul Gung-thang."<sup>39</sup> Ehrhard was able to photograph the colophon of a 378-folio manuscript copy of the sixteenth-century blockprint SP, held in a private collection.<sup>40</sup> I have since identified a 1983 microfilm of that manuscript, and find it generally similar to the SP1 exemplars derived from the Punakha

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because the *brgya*, written in red ink, has become faded and so was not noticed by whoever re-ordered the folios.

<sup>36</sup> SP 2007 does not reproduce this script at the end of chapters either, but perhaps this is an editorial decision due to the difficulty of reproducing the script.

<sup>37</sup> SP 1990a: 526a6–27a1 reads: *rgya rgya rgya / shog hril gcig yod / yi ge sang kri ta'i yi ger 'dug / ma dag pa tshig gcig kyang med par brgyur (=bsgyur) yod / bu ri phug mo che shel gyi brag phug phrag nas / gu ru sangs rgyas gling pas gter nas bton pa'o / ē bam / [ornamentation] /*.

<sup>38</sup> Ehrhard 2000: 16. See also Ehrhard *forthcoming*: Section 5 and Appendix, where he transliterates and translates the printing colophon.

<sup>39</sup> Ehrhard 2000: 16. Note that the *Mañi bka' 'bum* Royal Print was made not much earlier, in 1521 (see Ehrhard 2013). Ehrhard (2004: 91) also reports that a further edition of SP was also printed in 1789 by Brag dkar rta so sPrul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837) and his brother, Kun bzang 'Phrin las dbang phyug (1772–1812), after the demise of their teacher, Rig 'dzin 'Phrin las bdud 'joms (1726–1789).

<sup>40</sup> Ehrhard 2000: 16, n. 12.

blockprints.<sup>41</sup> However, some minor divergences agree with *SP* 1988 and *SP* 1990a, as will be evident from the transliteration of the description of Uḍḍiyāna in section 3, below. The early date of the creation of the blockprint on which this manuscript purports to rely suggests it should be categorised for the time being within its own group, *SP*3.

The last of the complete exemplars available to me is *SP* 1997, a 313-folio manuscript from Thamé in Solokhumbu. It is a beautiful production, its opening folios covered in silk and replete with silver (?) ink on dark paper as well as images of celestial deities and Padmasambhava together with his consorts. This exemplar shares the use of Uḍḍiyāna language after chapter colophons and the order of phrases in its colophon with *SP*1 and *SP*3 against *SP*2.<sup>42</sup> Between these two, *SP* 1997 most resembles the Royal manuscript *SP* 1983 (*SP*3), as can also be seen in the short excerpt quoted below. However, I hesitate to definitively assign it to *SP*3 just yet.

Since the next section of this article focuses on the earlier chapters of *SP*, there are four partial exemplars of *SP* that, though important, can only be mentioned here. The most noteworthy of these, *SP* 1990b, is an *dbu can* manuscript of the second volume of *SP*.<sup>43</sup> This volume contains images, including of Sangs rgyas gling pa and Legs Idan on folio 296. Most importantly for any future research, its treasure revealer's colophon resembles that of group *SP*2.<sup>44</sup> Parts of *SP* were

<sup>41</sup> The Uḍḍiyāna language is used in the opening folios for the title and after each chapter colophon of the manuscript based on the Royal Temple print (henceforth Royal manuscript or *SP* 1983), as in the *SP*1 exemplars discussed above. Much of the wording of the Royal manuscript is identical too, yet it does at other times agree with *SP*2. In its treasure revealer's colophon, *SP* 1983 follows *SP*1 in its ordering of the phrases on the discovery and on the Sanskrit nature of the work. So, unless this is a hypercorrection in the Royal manuscript or its exemplar, *SP* 1983 differs from *SP* 1988 and 1990a. *SP* 1983: 376b5–6 reads: *rgya rgya rgya / pu ri phug mo che shel gyi brag phug nas ghu ru sangs rgyas gling pas gter nas bton pa'o / shog dril gcig sang skri ta'i yig ger 'dug / ma dag pa tshig cig kyang med par bsgyur yodo.*

<sup>42</sup> *SP* 1997: 312a2–3 reads: *rgya rgya rgya / pu ri phug mo che shel gyi brag phug nas ghu ru sangs rgyas gling pas gter nas bton pa'o / shog dril gcig yig ges samkra (=samskri) ta'i yi ger 'dug / ma dag pa tshig gcig kyang med par bsgyur yod do... .* The rest of the colophon is worthy of further investigation, but omitted for lack of space here.

<sup>43</sup> See the bibliography. Another manuscript held in the ISIAO is also marked *kha* throughout and attributed to Sangs rgyas gling pa (de Rossi Filibeck 2003: 337, no. 687). It is titled *Urgyan padma 'byung nas (=gnas) [rnam] thar smad cha* and thus apparently the second part (*smad cha*) of a Padmasambhava biography. This is an *dbu can* manuscript in 291 folios (37 x 9 cm), and may reward future study.

<sup>44</sup> *SP* 1990b: 295b6–96a5 reads: *rgya / rgya / rgya / shog dril gcig yod / yi ge sang tri ta'i yi ger 'dug / ma ngag (=dag) pa tshig gcig kyang med par sgyur yod / pu ri phug mo che shel gyi brag phug nas / gu ru sangs rgyas gling pas gter nas ston (=bton) pa'o ithi / lhag chad nyes pa'i tshogs rnam bzod par gsol / bkra shis par gyur cig ye dharma he tu pra*

also evidently popular and distributed as independent texts at some unspecified time, at least in southern Tibet. Two manuscripts held in Nepal contain the same excerpt from *SP*'s chapter 104, detailing the benefits of reciting *om maṇi padme hūṃ*. The first was microfilmed in 1985 (*SP* 1985b) and is titled "The benefits of the [*om*] *ma ṇi [padme hūṃ mantra]*, from the *gSer phreng* extensive [Padmasambhava biography]" (*rGyas pa gser phreng las ma ṇi phan yon*). It also contains Padmasambhava's advice about Mahākāruṇika Avalokiteśvara.<sup>45</sup> The second manuscript was published in 1991 and is slightly shorter.<sup>46</sup> The existence of these two exemplars is important, since Anne-Marie Blondeau believed that fourteenth-century *bka' thangs* omit *ZL*'s speeches on this *mantra* and its benefits.<sup>47</sup> Not only is this claim contradicted by the inclusion of such a speech in *SP* (and *PKT* 2013, see again footnote 12), these stand-alone works suggest the popularity of this portion of the work as an independently circulating text. Finally, another stand-alone text was microfilmed in 1996, this

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*bha wa / he tun te śān ta thā ga to / hya ba dad te shā ṅtsa yo ni ro dha e baṃ bha ti ma hā shrā ma ṇa / om sarba bidyā svāhā / om su pra tiṣṭhā badzra ye svāhā / shu bham // / zhus dgo.*

<sup>45</sup> This section corresponds to *SP* 2007: 453.21–57.8. *SP* 1985b contains an adapted chapter colophon from *SP*'s chapter 104, used perhaps to indicate its provenance (*SP* 1985b: 6b5–6 reads: *orgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas pa gser phreng ba zhal chems bzhag pa'i le'u te brgya dad (=dang) bzhi pa'o // sarba manga lam // //*). The chapter colophon at the end of *SP*'s chapter 104 (*SP* 2007: 458.15–17) reads: *o rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas pa bkod pa las / bod kyi rgyal po dang btsun mo rnams la zhal chems bzhags pa'i le'u ste brgya dang bzhi pa'o //*). *SP* 1985b's manuscript follows this work with another text on Padmasambhava's *mantra* (folio 7a1–20b6), which is titled: "The benefits of the *vajra guru [mantra]* together with its results" (7a1: / *badzra gu ru'i phan yon 'bras bu 'brel*). According to the online NGMCP catalogue, this work was held in Baudhnath by a Tashi Dorje.

<sup>46</sup> This shorter manuscript, *SP* 1991, is also held in Kathmandu (this time by the National Archives of Nepal). It contains no title page or adapted chapter colophon, but an indication of the excerpt's provenance is appended above folio 1a1, which reads: / *bka' thang gser phreng las //*. This manuscript only consists of five folios, and includes slightly less of *SP* than *SP* 1985b does (its text corresponds to *SP* 2007: 453.21–57.6). This work also omits the "benefits of the *vajra guru mantra*" part after the *SP* excerpt, suggesting that this part is not integral to the independent *SP* quotation circulating around the Himalayas at some unknown time.

<sup>47</sup> Blondeau (1977-1978: 85) states:

l'insertion dans le *Zangs-gling-ma* de commentaires sur la formule et d'enseignements sur Avalokiteśvara mis dans la bouche de Padmasambhava, absents des *bKa'-thang* ultérieurs, illustre le propos de dPa'o gtsug-lag phreng-ba : Nyang-ral a réuni dans sa personne les enseignements sur Avalokiteśvara selon les systèmes de Srong-btsan et de Padmasambhava, qu'il a transmis ensuite à son fils.

time containing a narrative on Mandāra that it claims is excerpted from *SP*.<sup>48</sup> Ehrhard's above-quoted remarks on the popularity of *SP* in Mang yul Gung thang in the sixteenth century are perhaps important in this regard. Despite the influence of *PKT* throughout Tibet, it seems that *SP* was not without its own following, evidence of which remains from the Himalayan region and Nepal today.

### 3. A Comparison of Descriptions of Uḍḍiyāna

The opening section of *ZL* follows a short prologue, both paying homage to the three *kāyas*—Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara and Padmasambhava—and also promising to tell the life-story of the latter while detailing his qualities. *ZL* chapter one and the main narrative begins this task by setting the scene surrounding King Indrabodhi (or Indrabhūti; the former seems more common below) of Uḍḍiyāna, who lacks a son. Recension *ZL1* (exemplars *ZLa*–*e*) reads:

As for that [life-story: in/to] the west of India, [in] the country named “ŚrīUḍḍiyāna,” in the city named “Blazing Jewel,” there was a palace named “Beryl” (*baidūrya*), ornamented with all sorts of jewels. Inside that [palace], on top of a great throne blazing with jewels, sat the Dharma-protecting king named Indrabodhi, ruling over the land of Uḍḍiyāna surrounded by 108 queens, outer ministers, inner ministers, intermediate ministers and an innumerable retinue. [The king] had no son [to be] prince... .<sup>49</sup>

So begins the narrative of how the king comes to adopt Padmasambhava. Recension *ZL2* and *ZL3* (exemplars *ZLf*–*g* and *ZLh*–*l*) give a somewhat different description (here I shall quote from *ZLh*, with *ZLf* in angle brackets>):

<sup>48</sup> The colophon attributes the source, from which nine chapters are excerpted to form this work, as the *Extensive Life-Story Biography* (a title found in a number of *bka' thangs*) discovered by Sangs rgyas gling pa in Shel brag (rather than Pu ri) cave, in Yar lung (*SP* 1996: 39a5: *gter ston sangs rgyas gling pa'i yar lung shel brag nas spyang drangs pa'i* / <inserted below the text: *gu ru padma'i> rnam thar skye rabs rgyas par bkod pa nas khol du phyung pa'o* /). This requires further study.

<sup>49</sup> Here I quote from *ZLa* (1b5–2a3), but the same text is given in the other exemplars as well: *de yang rgya gar yul gyi nub phyogs / dpal u rgyan zhes bya ba'i yul rin po che 'bar ba zhes bya ba'i grong khyer na / baidūrya bya ba'i pho brang rin po che sna tshogs kyis brgyan ba zhig yod do / de'i nang na rin po che 'bar ba'i khri chen po'i steng na / chos skyong ba'i rgyal po indra bo dhi zhes bya ba'i btsun mo brgya rtsa brgyad dang / phyi blon dang / nang blon dang / bar blon dang / 'khor dpag tu med pa dang bcas pa / u rgyan gyi khams la mnga' mdzad cing bzhugs pa la / sras rgyal ba (=bu) mi mnga' nas / ... .*

As for that [life-story]: first of all, [in/to] the south <west> of India, [in] the country named “Śrī Uḍḍiyāna,” in the city of “Blazing Jewel,” [lived] <the son of King Dza,> named “King Indrabodhi” The <that> dharma-protecting king ruled the kingdom of Uḍḍiyāna. Inside the so-named “Palace of Beryl” that blazed with the light of jewels and was <not> obscured without inside or outside, resided <there was> an innumerable retinue, including 108 queens and outer, inner and intermediate ministers. Since [the king] had no son [to be] prince...<sup>50</sup>

For lack of space, I shall focus on the same scene set in the sources outlined above, *PKT*, *LTGB*, *MSGM* and finally *SP*, attributed to O rgyan gling pa, rDo rje gling pa, Padma gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa respectively. My reason for dealing with *SP* last is that *LTGB* and *MSGM* corroborate *PKT* 2013 and so should directly follow its unique witness. *SP* then confirms the early existence of a *PKT* chapter *not* included in either *LTGB* and *MSGM*.

The prologue from *ZL* is neither used at the outset nor integrated into the narrative of any of these *bka' thangs*. They all also add around eleven chapters of preceding narrative before turning to King Indrabodhi. Yet *ZL*'s opening narrative on the king's search for a son can be found, though greatly expanded, in most versions of *PKT* from chapter twelve to eighteen, *PKT* 2013 from towards the end of chapter eleven to the end of chapter seventeen, and *LTGB*, *MSGM* and *SP* from towards the end of chapter eleven to the end of chapter fifteen. Most *PKTs*' chapter eleven ends with this aphorism:

Many different forms of dharma do not arise and  
[Dharma] is not connected with a lot of self-aggrandizement or  
famous names (*snyan ming*).  
This is the eleventh chapter...<sup>51</sup>

*PKT* 2013 instead continues and ends its eleventh chapter with a description of Uḍḍiyāna and King Indrabodhi. It states:

<sup>50</sup> *ZLh*: 2a2–2b2 (with variants from *ZLf*: 14a2–4 in parentheses) reads: *de yang (dang po) rgya gar yul gyi lho (nub) phyogs / dpal dbu (u) brgyan ces (zhes) bya ba'i yul / rin po che 'bar ba'i grong khyer na / (yab rgyal po dza zhes bya ba'i sras) rgyal po in tra bo dhe ces (indra bo de zhes) bya ba chos skyong ba'i rgyal po (rgyal po de) urgyan gyi (gyis) rgyal khams la mnga' mdzad pa (do) / baidūrya'i (baidurya'i) pho brang zhes bya ba na (omits: na) rin po che 'od 'bar ba phyi nang med par <ZLh: deleted ma> (ma) bsgribs pa'i (pa'i) nang na / btsun mo brgya rtsa brgyad dang / phyi blon nang blon bar blon las sogs pa (la sogs pa'i) 'khor dpag tu med pa bzhugs pa la (yod kyang) / sras rgyal bu mi mnga' bas (med nas) / ...*

<sup>51</sup> *PKT* Beijing edition: 56b2–4 (with *PKT* book edition: 92.1–5 in parentheses) reads: *chos lugs mi 'dra mang po mi 'byung zhing / bzang 'dod snyan ming mang po mi 'dogs so / u (o) rgyan gu ru padma 'byung gnas kyi skyes rabs rnam par thar pa rgyas par bkod pa las / rgya gar chos khungs btsun par bstan pa'i le'u ste bcu gcig pa'o /*

Many different forms of dharma do not arise and  
 [Dharma] is not connected with a lot of self-aggrandizement or  
 famous men (*snyan mi*; or perhaps *snyan ming* intended, as above).  
 At this time, [in] the western country, Uḍḍiyāna,  
 There was a precious/bejewelled nine-turreted palace.<sup>52</sup>  
 In [that palace], blazing with light rays of beryl,<sup>53</sup>  
 [The king] who was empowered over all the lands of Uḍḍiyāna,  
 Was named “King Blind Rich,”  
 Also named “Dharmarāja Prajñākīrti,”  
 Also named “Mahārāja Gauḷaśa (?),”  
 Also named “King Dhanapāla,”  
 Also named “King Indrabhoti (*sic*).”  
 This is the eleventh chapter...<sup>54</sup>

All versions of *PKT* then provide a twelfth chapter describing  
 Uḍḍiyāna in detail. The chapter (with divergences of *PKT* 2013  
 given in braces) begins:

At this time, [regarding] the western country, Uḍḍiyāna,  
 {inserts: As for an explanation of the background (lit. “lineage”) of the  
 country of Uḍḍiyāna:}  
 To Uḍḍiyāna belonged two-thirds of the continent,  
 It gave the appearance of a pair of face-down {gem-coated} cymbals,  
 [It contained] five great regions and twenty-one “island” regions,  
 270,000,000 {290,000,000} great districts,<sup>55</sup>  
 [And] 96 great cities.  
 In the centre of the great region, Dhanakośa,  
 There were twenty-two great cities {twenty-one great palaces};

<sup>52</sup> Or “palace [named] ‘Nine-Turreted’”—see *LTGB* and *MSGM*, below. Here and below, I have chosen to distinguish between (*l*)*cog*, translated as “turret” (since *SP* places them at the corners of the palace), and *thor* (*l*)*cog*(s), “tower” (which *SP* may use in describing either the city or the palace). However, they may mean the same thing, as is suggested by the use of both “Nine-Towered” and nine-turreted/“Nine-Turreted” in *PKT* (see below).

<sup>53</sup> Or: “In [that palace named] ‘Blazing with the Light Rays of Beryl.’”

<sup>54</sup> *PKT* 2013: 39b6–40a3 reads: *chos lugs mi 'dra mang po mi 'byung zhing / bzang 'dog (= 'dod?) snyan mi (=ming?) mang po mi 'dogs so / 'di' i dus na nub phyogs u rgyan yul / rin cen pho brang lcog dgu ldan pa yin / be durya'i 'od zer 'bar ba na / u rgyan yul khams dag la dbang bskur zhing / rgyal po spyen med 'byor ldan zhes kyang bya / chos rgyal prajña gir ti zhes kyang bya / rgyal po ga'u la sha zhes bya / rgyal po dha na pa la zhes kyang bya / rgyal po indra bho ti zhes kyang bya / u rgyan ghu ru padma 'byung gnas kyis (=kyi) / skyes rabs rnam (=rnam) thar pa rgyas par bkod pa las / chos khungs btsun par bstan pa'i le'u ste bcu gcig pa'o /*

<sup>55</sup> Unless we take the *dgu* in *yul gru chen po bye ba bco brgyad dgu* as meaning “i.e. many,” we are left with a number of options, of which the two most likely are (10,000,000×18)+(10,000,000×9)=270,000,000 and 10,000,000×18×9=1,620,000,000. *SP* (below) specifies only 180,000,000 cities (*grong khyer bye ba bco brgyad*).

The great[est] city/capital (?) was named "Beautiful."<sup>56</sup>  
 In the centre of that was "Nine-Towered,"  
 [And/i.e.] the precious/bejewelled palace, "Beryl,"<sup>57</sup>  
 Majestic with blazing light, on the four corners golden turrets  
 [And] turquoise beam-ends endowed with hangings.  
 That [palace] had a courtyard and four gates,  
 Surrounded by a rampart and beautiful parapet.  
 Inside sat King Indrabodhi {In tra bho ti},  
 Surrounded by 100 inner ministers and 1,000 outer ministers, {PKT  
 2013: *vacat*}  
 Married to Queen 'Od 'chang ma {'Od chang ma}.  
 {inserts: Many beings/phenomena spontaneously appeared without  
 being born.}  
 In the centre of "Nine-Towered" was a self-arisen  
 Temple that was the *stūpa* of a *heruka* / Cakrasaṃvara.  
 [It was] made from all sorts of precious ornaments,  
 [and] radiated many waves of light rays in the four directions.<sup>58</sup>

This continues for the rest of chapter twelve, almost two folios worth of text in the Beijing edition. As we shall see below, *SP*, *LTGB* and

<sup>56</sup> The published and Beijing exemplars of *PKT* give *grong khyer chen po* twice, meaning that the text could be read as either stating that the name for the twenty-two cities was "Beautiful Great Cit[ies]" or that the greatest city, i.e. the capital, was named "Beautiful." *PKT* 2013 avoids this problem by giving *pho brang* for *grong khyer* in the first instance, thus only allowing for the second interpretation.

<sup>57</sup> Whereas *PKT* specifies that the palace is within the great city of "Beautiful," *SP* gives "Nine-Towered" (*thor cog dgu ldan*; also possibly "Endowed with Nine Topknots/Tufts") as an alternative name of the city (see below). "Nine-Towered" appears to be another name for the palace, as it is described at the end of *PKT* 2013's chapter eleven and at the start of the other *PKT* exemplars' chapter thirteen (see below). In naming the king's palace, other (exemplars of) works within the *bka' thang* genre also include the terms "Precious/Bejewelled Palace" (*pho brang rin cen/rin po che*) and/or "Blazing with Light (Rays)" ('od (zer) 'bar ba).

<sup>58</sup> *PKT* Beijing edition: 56b5–57a6 (*PKT* book edition: 93.1–94.1 in parentheses and *PKT* 2013: 40a3–40b3 in braces) reads: 'di yi {'di'i} dus na nub phyogs u rgyan {urgyan} yul / {inserts: urgyan yul gyi yul rabs shad pa ni /} u rgyan {urgyan} yul la 'dzam gling sum gnyis {nyid} yod / yul gyi chags {cha} lugs cha lang kha sbub {spug} 'dra / yul chen lnga dang yul gling nyi shu gcig / yul gru {grong} chen po bye {byed} ba bco brgyad {nyi shu} dgu / grong khyer chen po dgu bcu rtsa drug yod / yul chen dha na ko sha dbus na yod / grong khyer {pho brang} chen po nyi shu rtsa gnyis {cig} yod / grong khyer chen po mdzes ldan zhes bya ba {ba'i} / de yi {de'i} dbus na thor cog dgu {dgu} ldan yod / baidūrya yi {bedurya'i} pho brang rin po che / 'od 'bar byin che {chen} gru bzhir {bzhi} {grub zhi} gser gyi lcog / g.yu yi {g.yu'i} kha bad dra ba dra phyed {gra ba gra phyed} ldan / de la khyams dang sgo khyud bzhi dang bcas / lcags ri dang ni mda' {dha na 3?} yab mdzes pas bskor / nang na rgyal po indra bo dhi {in tra bho ti} bzhugs / nang blon brgya dang phyi blon stong gis bskor / {omits: nang blon brgya dang phyi blon stong gis bskor /} btsun mo 'od 'chang {chang} ma ni khab tu bzhes {du zhes} / {inserts: skyes pa mang la skyes med cing rdzus skyes /} thor cog {lcogs} dgu ldan dbus {dkyil} na rang 'byung gi {ni} / mchod rten he ru ka yi {ka'i} lha khang yod / rgyu ni rin cen sna tshogs las grub pa {pa'i} / 'od zer dra ba mang po {dra ba'i pos} phyogs bcur 'phro /.



*MSGM* omit this chapter; yet *SP* retains some phrases similar to it at the end of its chapter eleven.

*PKT* 2013 then diverges from all other *PKT* exemplars again. The latter begin their thirteenth chapter with the description that ends the eleventh chapter of *PKT* 2013, and then continue with a stark contrast between the king's possessions and lack:

In the precious/bejewelled, nine-turreted palace blazing with light rays of beryl,<sup>59</sup>

[The king] who ruled over all the lands of Uḍḍiyāna,

Was named "King Blind Rich,"

Also named "Dharmarāja Prajñākīrti,"

Also named (/broadened to) "Mahārāja Gauśa (?),"

Also named "King Dhanapāla,"

Also named "King Indrabodhi."

Then that king, "Blind Rich"

[Gained] great power and riches, but his two eyes were blind.

He lacked a son. All his royal ministers were dispirited.<sup>60</sup>

The first part ("... 'Indrabodhi'") was quoted above from the end of chapter eleven in *PKT* 2013. The last part ("Then that king...") corresponds almost identically to the beginning of *PKT* 2013's chapter fourteen.<sup>61</sup> Chapter thirteen of *PKT* 2013, describing Dhanakośa Lake, is chapter fourteen in the other exemplars of *PKT*. Since this chapter is not narrative and so does not "fit" anywhere necessarily, and because *SP*, *LTGB* and *MSGM* all lack the corresponding chapter, it is not possible to adjudicate between the two chapter orders at this point. Putting this small matter aside though, it is obvious that whereas *PKT* 2013 places its description of Uḍḍiyāna's king just before its detailed chapter on Uḍḍiyana, the other *PKT* exemplars place it straight after that chapter. Which has the greater claim to be the "original" place of this description in *PKT*?

Interestingly, both *LTGB* attributed to rDo rje gling pa and *MSGM* attributed to Padma gling pa agree with *PKT* 2013 (as does, to a lesser

<sup>59</sup> Or: "[named] 'Blazing with the Light Rays of Beryl,' A.K.A. 'Nine-Turreted'" as noted for *PKT* 2013 above. See also *LTGB* and *MSGM*, below.

<sup>60</sup> *PKT* Beijing edition: 59a4–59b2 (*PKT* book edition: 97.1–8, in parentheses) reads: *rin cen pho brang lcoḡ dḡu ldan pa yi / bai dūrya yi 'od zer 'bar ba na / u rgyan yul khams dag la dbang sgyur (bsgyur) ba'i / rgyal po spyān med 'byor ldan zhes kyang bya / chos rgyal prajñā (pra jñā) kīrti zhes kyang bya / rgyal po chen po ga'u sha zhes (rgyas) bya / rgyal po dha na pā la zhes kyang bya / rgyal po indra bo dhi zhes kyang bya / de nas rgyal po spyān med 'byor ldan de / mnga' thang 'byor pa che de mig gnyis long / sras med rgyal blon thams cad yid la bcags /*

<sup>61</sup> *PKT* 2013: 43a3–4 reads: *de yang rgyal po spyān med sbyor ldan de / mnga' thang 'byor pa che ste mig gnyis long / sras med rgyas (=rgyal) blon thams cad yid la cags /*

extent, *SP*) against the other exemplars here. To quote from the end of the eleventh and beginning of the twelfth chapter in *LTGB*:

Many different forms of dharma do not arise, and  
A lot of self-aggrandizement [and] famous names (*snyan ming*) are not  
necessary.

At this time, [in] the western country, Uḍḍiyāna,  
In a precious/bejewelled, nine-turreted palace  
Blazing with light rays of beryl,  
[Sat] one who held dominion over the regions of Uḍḍiyāna,  
Named “King Blind Rich,”

Also named “[King] Prajñākīrti,”

Also named “Ghaudeśa” (? *gha’u dhe sha*),<sup>62</sup>

Also named “King Dharmapāla,”

Also named “Uḍḍiyāna Indrabodhi.”

This is the eleventh chapter...[chapter colophon].

Then that king, “Blind Rich”

[Gained] great power and riches, but his two eyes were blind.

He lacked a son. All his royal ministers were dispirited.<sup>63</sup>

*LTGB* here agrees in its wording with *PKT*, especially *PKT* 2013 in retaining the foot (*rkang pa*) “At this time, [in] the western country, Uḍḍiyāna.” *MSGM* concurs, except in a few minor details.<sup>64</sup> Most

<sup>62</sup> *MSGM* instead gives *go’u/gho’u/ghi’u dhe sha* (see below).

<sup>63</sup> *LTGB*: 28b8–29a4 reads: *chos lugs mi ’dra’ mang po mi ’byung zhing / bzang ’dod snyan ming mang po mi dgos so / ’di’i dus na nub phyogs orgyan yul / rin chen pho brang lcoḡ dḡu ldan pa na (=yi) / baiḍūrya yi ’od zer ’bar ba na / orgyan yul khamḡ dag la dbang sgyur ba / rgyal po spyān med ’byor ldan zhes kyang bya / pradzñā ghir? ti zhes kyang bya / rgyal po gha ’u dhe sha zhes kyang bya / rgyal po dharma pa ma (=la) zhes kyang bya / rgyal po indra bo de zhes kyang bya / argyan (sic) padma ’byung gnas gyi kye (=kyi skyes) rabs lo tsha’i ’gyur byang las / rgya gar chos khungs btsun pa’i bstan pa’i le’u ste / bcu gcig pa’o / / [Uḍḍiyāna script] / de nas rgyal po spyān med ’byor ldan de / mnga’ thang ’byor pa che te miḡ gnyis long / sras med rgyal blon thams cad yid la cags /*

<sup>64</sup> *MSGM* reads *snyan grags*, “fame” (like *SP*), instead of *snyan ming*, “famous name” (like *LTGB* and *PKT*); includes the unique line: “The dharma-king himself was famous throughout all the world(s)” at the end of chapter eleven; and gives *longs spyod*, “wealth,” instead of *mnga’ thang*, “power,” at the beginning of chapter twelve. *MSGM* 1978: 45a4–45b3 (with *MSGM* 1976: 42a5–42b3, *MSGM* 1977: 54b2–55a2 and *MSGM* 1981: 42b5–43a3 in parentheses) reads: *chos lugs mi ’dra mang po mi ’byung zhing / bzang ’dod snyan grags mang po mi dgos so / de’i* (1977: *de yi*) *dus na nub phyogs urgyan* (1976, 1977: *u rgyan*) *yul / rin chen pho brang lcoḡ dḡu ldan pa yi* (1976, 1977, 1981: *yi*) / *baiḍūrya yi* (1976, 1977: *baiḍūrya’i*; 1981: *baiḍūrya’i*) *’od zer ’bar ba na / urgyan* (1976, 1977: *u rgyan*) *yul khamḡ dag la dbang bsgyur pa’i* (1976, 1977, 1981: *ba’i*) / *chos rgyal spyān med ’byor ldan zhes kyang bya / rgyal po pradzñā* (1976: *pradzñā*; 1977: *prad gnya’*) *gi rdi* (1976, 1977: *gi rti*; 1981: *ghi rti*) *zhes kyang bya / rgyal po go ’u* (1976: *ghi’u*; 1977: *go’u*; 1981: *gho ’u*) *dhe sha zhes*

importantly, they place the description of Uḍḍiyāna and Indrabodhi's names at the end of their chapter eleven, like *PKT* 2013 but in contrast to the other *PKT* exemplars.

However, *PKT*'s chapter twelve is missing in both *LTGB* and *MSGM*. Could it be an interpolation into *PKT*? The witness of *SP* here becomes important, since it suggests that Sangs rgyas gling pa was aware of the content of this chapter and incorporated it into his prose description of Uḍḍiyāna.

*SP* also ends its eleventh chapter with a description of Uḍḍiyāna and King Indrabodhi, but a longer one than that found in *PKT* 2013, *LTGB* and *MSGM*. *SP*'s description of Dhanakośa, its great city and the king's palace and names closely resemble the end of *PKT* 2013's chapter eleven and the first lines of *PKT*'s shared chapter twelve, albeit in a somewhat different order and with divergences. In this passage I translate the Lhasa xylograph *SP*, which agrees almost entirely with the Bhutanese edition *SP* 1985a and *SP* 2007, also from the *SP1* group. I show divergences in *SP2* in angle brackets and *SP3* in braces. Correspondences with passages in *PKT* are underlined:

Many different forms of Dharma also do not arise, and the Dharma and two types of superior being have not arisen for the sake of false profundity, self-aggrandizement <self-aggrandizement, false profundity> or the desire for fame (*snyan grags*). [The dharma] is endowed with virtues as great as that [told above] and become the source of all dharma.

To the west of Bodhgaya (rDo rje gdan) in India, in the middle of that famous country named Uddiyāna, in the great land named Dhanakośa, in the middle of a great city named "Beautiful,"<sup>65</sup> "Nine-Towered" and also "Blazing Jewel," there was a palace [named] "Blazing Light of Beryl." And it was adorned with all sorts of precious substances such as four corners and four gates made from seven sorts of precious ornaments, golden turrets and turquoise <omits "turquoise"> beam-ends endowed with hangings.

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*kyang bya / rgyal po dharma* (1977: dharmā) *pa la zhes kyang bya / urgyan* (1976: *u rgyan*; 1977: *rgyal po*) *indra* (1976: *intra*; 1977: *inṭa*) *bo* (1981: *bho*) *dhi zhes kyang bya / chos rgyal de nyid 'jig rten kun tu grags / urgyan* (1976: *u rgyan*; 1977: *u rgyan ghu ru*) *padma 'byung gnas kyi / skyes rabs rnam thar rgyas par bkod* (1977: *dkod*) *pa las /* (1977: / *chos*) *khungs btsun par bstan pa'i le'u ste / bcu gcig pa'o /* [ornamentation and Uḍḍiyāna script (1976: only Uḍḍiyāna script)] / *de nas rgyal po spyan med* (1976: *mig*) *'byor ldan de / longs spyod 'byor pa che ste mig gnyis long / sras med rgyal blon thams cad yid la bcags* (1976: *brtags*; 1977: *gcag*; 1981: *rtags*) /.

<sup>65</sup> The phrase *grong khyer chen po* is repeated after its names are given in all exemplars, which suggests that the first term "great city" may be part of the first name, i.e. "Beautiful Great City."

Furthermore, {from} inside the four gateways to the courtyard, which was surrounded by ramparts <{a rampart}>, sat a great dharma-king who held dominion over all the regions of Uddiyāna <{from}> on the top of a big piled-up throne blazing with jewels. He was named “Dharma-protecting King Indrabhūti <{Indrabodhi}>,” “King with Nine-Topknots/Towers,” “King Blind Rich,” “King Prajñākīrti,” “King Ga’u sha na” and also “King Dharmapāla” (a reprise of his first epithet). From [where he sat], surrounded by 500 queens, 100 inner ministers, 1,000 outer ministers, and 1,000,000,000 subject-ministers <governing ministers>, [the dharma-king] exercised power over the 180,000,000 cities. This is the eleventh chapter...<sup>66</sup>

Within group SP1, the Lhasa edition and Bhutanese SP 1985a are almost identical. The book edition SP 2007 differs only in that it contains some obvious mistakes (*btsan* for *btsun*) and editorial

<sup>66</sup> Below is a diplomatic edition of the SP Lhasa edition (identical with SP 1982): 39a4–39b4, here A, with references in parentheses to divergences in the Bhutanese SP 1985a (=SP 1992): 44a4–44b6 (here B), SP 2007: 51.16–52.9 (here C; all from group SP1), SP 1988: 30b1–7 (here D), SP 1990a: 60b4–61a8 (here E; both NGMCP texts from group SP2), SP 1997: 34b5–35a4 (F), SP 1983: 42b1–43a1 (G; the Royal manuscript from group SP3): *chos lugs mi 'dra ba mang po yang mi 'byung zhing* (D: the part of the text corresponding to *chos lugs mi 'dra ba mang po yang mi 'byung zhing* is illegible) / *zab mdog dang / bzang 'dod dang* (DE: *bzang 'dod dang / zab mdog dang* /) *snyan grags 'dod pa'i ched* (F: *tshad du chos dang gang zag gnyis ka mi 'byung ba yin no / de lta bu'i che ba'i yon tan du ma dang ldan zhing chos thams cad kyi 'byung gnas su gyur pa rgya gar rdo rje gdan gyi* (E: *gi*) *nub phyogs dpal u* (C: o) (D: text *rje gdan gyi nub phyogs dpal u* illegible) *rgyan zhes bya bar grags pa'i yul / de'i dbus su yul chen po dha na ko sha bya ba na / grong khyer chen po mazes ldan zhes kyang bya / thor cog* (FG: *thor chog*) *dgu ldan zhes kyang bya / rin chen 'bar ba zhes bya ba'i grong khyer chen po zhig yod pa'i dbus na / rgyal po'i pho brang baidūrya'i* (E: *bai' du rya'i*; FG: *baidūrya'i*) *'od 'bar ba zhig* (D: text *baidūrya'i 'od 'bar ba zhig* illegible) *yod de / de yang rgyu rin po che sna bdun las grub pa gru bzhi sgo bzhi* (G: text *sgo bzhi vacat*) *gser gyi cog* (B: *lcog*; F: *tsog*) *dang g.yu'i* (DE: omits *g.yu'i*) *kha bad / dra ba dra phyed dang* (E: *dang /*) *ldan pa'i rin po che sna tshogs kyis brgyan pa / de yang khyams sgo khyud bzhi lcags ris bskor ba* (DE: *bskor ba cig*; F: *bskor ba gcig*; G: *skor ba gcig*) *yod pa'i nang na* (FG: *nas*) / *rin po che 'bar ba'i khri chen po brtsegs* (EFG: *rtsegs*) *pa'i steng* (E: *stengs*) (D: text *brtsegs pa'i steng* illegible) *du* (DEFG: *nas*) / *u* (C: o) *rgyan gyi yul khams thams cad la dbang bsgyur ba'i chos skyong rgyal po indra bhū ti* (DE: *intra bho ti*; F: *intra bho dhi* G: *inṭa bho dhi*) *zhes kyang bya / rgyal po thor tshugs* (B: *thog tsugs*; F: *thor tsug*; G: *thor cog*) *dgu pa* (G: *dgu ldan*) *zhes kyang bya / rgyal po spyān med 'byor ldan zhes kyang bya / rgyal po pradzñā girti* (C: *pradzñā kīrti*; DE: *prañdza gir ti*; FG: *prañdza gir rti*) *zhes kyang bya / rgyal po ga'u sha na zhes kyang bya / rgyal po dharma* (E: *dha na*) *pha la* (D: text *po dharma pha la* illegible) *zhes kyang bya ba'i chos kyi* (E: *kyis*) *rgyal po chen po zhig* (DFG: *cig*; E: *gcig*) *bzhugs pa las / btsun mo liga brgya / nang blon brgya / phyi blon stong / 'bangs* (DE: *dbang*; FG: *'bang*) *blon khri 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor* (FG: *skor*) *nas / grong khyer bye ba bco* (F: *bcwo*) *brgyad la mnga' mdzad cing bzhugs so / u* (C: o) *rgyan gu* (F: *ghu*) *ru padma* (E: *pad ma*) *'byung gnas kyi* (FG: *kyis*) *skyes rabs rnam thar* (D: text *skyes rabs rnam thar* illegible) *rgyas par bkod pa las / khungs btsun* (C: *btsan*) *par bstan pa'i le'u ste bcu gcig pa'o /*

alterations (*o rgyan* for *u rgyan*), some of which may have already existed in its exemplar. These are uncovered by the witness of *SP* Lhasa edition where it agrees with the *SP2* group. This latter group's exemplars, *SP* 1988 and 1990a, agree in some spellings, ordering of phrases (*bzang 'dod dang / zab mdog dang / for zab mdog dang / bzang 'dod dang /*) and semantic divergences (*dbang blon* for *'bangs blon*) against *SP1*. Finally, the Royal manuscript *SP* 1983 and *SP* 1997 agree most often with each other, and then are fairly well split between agreeing with *SP1* and *SP2*. It may be then that both these exemplars belong to their own group, *SP3*.

The differences between the exemplars of *SP* are generally transmissional though, and relatively minor when compared to the larger divergences of *SP* from *PKT*, including *PKT* 2013. It appears that *SP* expands in prose the short description of Uḍḍiyāna and King Indrabodhi from *PKT* at the end of its chapter eleven (like *PKT* 2013). It incorporates parts of *PKT*'s shared chapter twelve in this description but does not include the chapter itself. Instead, *SP* simply moves on to its own chapter twelve, which opens with a description of the king's wealth and blindness roughly mirroring the beginning of *PKT* 2013's chapter fourteen and obviously lacking the description opening chapter thirteen of the other *PKT* exemplars.<sup>67</sup>

*SP*, in addition to incorporating details from *PKT*'s chapter twelve at the end of chapter eleven, also includes all of the information quoted above from *ZL1*, and in the latter's order. The only exceptions are an increase in the number of queens from 108 to 500, and a lack of *ZL1*'s specification that the king's retinue is innumerable. Of course, a great deal is added around this core description, but the contrast with the different ordering of the description in *ZL2* and *ZL3* is noteworthy.

What do these excerpts tell us about *PKT*? *SP* agrees with *PKT* 2013 against the published and Beijing exemplars of *PKT* in the way that it structures its ending of chapter eleven and beginning of chapter twelve. However, *PKT* 2013 agrees with other exemplars of *PKT* against *SP* in its exact wording at the end of chapter eleven (found at the beginning of chapter thirteen in all other exemplars of *PKT*), as well as in including a chapter twelve not present in *SP* but

<sup>67</sup> *SP* exemplar A (*SP* Lhasa edition=*SP* 1982): 39b4–5, with parenthetical divergences in B (Bhutanese *SP* 1985a=*SP* 1992): 44b6–45a1 and C (*SP* 2007): 52.11–13, all from *SP1*, D (*SP* 1988): 30b7–31b1, E (*SP* 1990a): 61a8–61b1, F (*SP* 1997): 35a5 and G (*SP* 1983): 43a1–2, reads: *de lta bu'i dpal 'byor dang ldan pa'i rgyal po* (F: *bo<deleted d>*) *de nyid* (DEFG: *yang*) *de lta bu'i yon tan dang ldan* (G: *ldan pa*) *yang spyang gnyis kyang long / gdung* (E: *gdud?*) *brgyud* (FG: *rgyud*) *'dzin pa'i sras gcig* (FG: *cig*) *kyang med de / rgyal blon btsun mo 'bangs dang bcas pa thug mug* (B: *thugs mug*; E: *thugs mu*) *ste* (B: *te*; FG: *te /*) ... .

seemingly roughly borrowed from some version of *PKT* at the end of its eleventh chapter. If *SP* does base its description on *PKT* here, in its details it agrees less with *PKT* 2013 than with other *PKT* exemplars. For instance, it omits the *rkang pa* "As for an explanation of the background of the country of Uḍḍiyāna" and includes information on Indrabodhi's ministers that *PKT* 2013 lacks (though perhaps only by scribal error).

*LTGB* and *MSGM* shine another light on both *SP* and *PKT*. They omit some of *SP*'s odder unique elements, such as naming the king and his palace almost the same (here footnote 13's caveat concerning possible interpolations into *SP* should be borne in mind). They also concur with *PKT* 2013 in their phrasing and placement of the short description at the end of chapter eleven. Overall, *LTGB*, *MSGM* and *SP* appear to corroborate the testimony of *PKT* 2013 against the Beijing and published exemplars of this work. *PKT* 2013 agrees more with *SP*, *LTGB* and *MSGM* in ending its chapter eleven with a short description of Uḍḍiyāna (now appearing after chapter twelve in other *PKT* exemplars), and agrees with all other *PKT* versions in containing a twelfth chapter on Uḍḍiyāna (now missing from *LTGB* and *MSGM* but partially precised in *SP*). This *may* reflect the "original" form of *PKT*, on which these other *bka' thangs* are based.

### *Preliminary Conclusions*

It is time now to return to the three intentions set out at the beginning of this article, regarding *SP*, *PKT*, and the Padma-*vita* tradition. First, I can tentatively affirm the general homogeneity of the *SP* tradition, while categorising the affiliations of its exemplars into three groups based upon transmissional divergences: *SP*1 (including the Lhasa edition and Bhutanese *SP* 1985a), *SP*2 (the two NGMCP manuscripts *SP* 1988 and 1990a) and *SP*3 (including the Royal manuscript *SP* 1983). However, there is no evidence yet to suggest which of these groups lies closer to the other *bka' thangs* under discussion here.

Second, comparing all these works sheds interesting light on *PKT*. Combined, *LTGB* and *MSGM* resemble *SP* in that they omit *PKT*'s chapter twelve and thus a long description of Uḍḍiyāna. This chapter is also found in *PKT* 2013 though, and its opening appears to be precised in *SP* chapter eleven. So the evidence indicates that *LTGB* and *MSGM* simply reflect a different editorial decision in their creation than *SP* does. However, *PKT* 2013 agrees with *LTGB*, *MSGM* and *SP* against other exemplars of *PKT* in placing the short description of Uḍḍiyāna at the end of chapter eleven. This suggests

that an ancestor of the other *PKT* exemplars has been edited in order to place that description after chapter twelve.

It could be argued that, instead, *PKT* 2013 was the result of *later* editing of *PKT*, perhaps in order to bring it into line with *LTGB* or *MSGM* (though not with *SP*, which is in prose). However, then one would have to find the source for the poetic chapters of Padmasambhava's advice, which are not found in *LTGB* or *MSGM* and are differently phrased in *SP*. The simplest solution at present is to say that *PKT* 2013 reflects another, perhaps earlier, recension of *PKT* that has survived the growth in popularity of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-century editions.

Could we explain the divergence of the other *PKT* exemplars from *PKT* 2013 as due to the redaction to Za hor Mi dbang bSod nam stobs rgyal, or even to an earlier editor of *PKT*? The absence, in *PKT* exemplars other than *PKT* 2013, of such large blocks of text as Padmasambhava's chapters of advice is almost certainly not due to the sixteenth-century alteration to which bSod nam stobs rgyal refers in his colophon. This is because these are also found in *ZL*, which bSod nam stobs rgyal claims to be following (as well as clearing up some minor incoherencies). So it is unlikely that he would remove parts of *PKT* that are also in *ZL*, as part of his explicit aim of bringing the former in line with the latter. Nor does it seem credible that he carried out such editing without acknowledging it, though this possibility cannot be absolutely ruled out. Perhaps in future though, *PKT* 2013 (if its recension is genuinely old) could help to assess what bSod nam stobs rgyal and others *have* altered.

The entry of *ZL* into these discussions bring us to the third theme of this article: the expansion of Padmasambhava's *vita* between the twelfth and sixteenth century. The earliest stratum of narrative is almost certainly the shorter *ZL3* rather than the longer *ZL1* or *ZL2*. *SP* is still the only work that incorporates *ZL1* into its narrative, whereas *PKT* 2013 contains no extra *ZL1* narratives that could have been removed by bSod nam stobs rgyal. Even its many chapters relating Padmasambhava's advice on leaving Tibet, not included in *LTGB*, *MSGM* or other exemplars of *PKT*, resemble *ZL3* rather than *ZL1* (see footnote 12 above)—whereas in *SP* they resemble *ZL1*.

For now, it seems clear that large portions of the *ZL3* prose narrative were expanded and rendered into poetry to finally become included in *PKT*, *LTGB* and later *MSGM*. Then at some point, this poetry was re-rendered into prose and had elements of *ZL1* added to ultimately form *SP*. Assessing such transformations of prose into poetry and vice versa requires a more detailed investigation of the *bka' thang* genre, which would be rewarding not only for the Tibetan linguistic data that it may throw up but also for the insights it would

provide into the constantly changing image of Padmasambhava created in these works. Nevertheless, these sources are already acting as valuable reminders to question the assumption that the published and Beijing editions of *PKT* fully represent the *bka' thang* that O rgyan gling pa wrote and that *SP*, *LTGB* and *MSGM* are easily described by assessing to what extent each is an “interpretative gloss on” or “sticks closely to” those *PKT* exemplars.

These sources have yet to be properly disentangled. It may be that a more wide-angle approach that identifies the text included and omitted over the whole narrative arc of the works in question may uncover connections between them not identifiable by the above kind of micro-analysis. Here, I have at least set the scene, and pointed out some of the “richness of detail,” and attendant challenges, awaiting any future analysis of these important biographies. Moreover, if a strikingly different exemplar of any of the above *bka' thangs* appears in the meantime, it can be quickly compared to the others, by means of the descriptions above, in order to assess the importance of its witness. In this way, we may work towards a better representation of the rich, complex and changing tradition of depicting Padmasambhava in Tibet.

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