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## The Ritual Evolution of the Nechung Protector Deities

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# The Ritual Evolution of the Nechung Protector Deities

Christopher Bell

Stetson University

## 1. Introduction

The classic monographs on Tibetan ritual are, arguably, Stephan Beyer's *The Cult of Tara*, Yael Bentor's *Consecration of Images and Stūpas in Indo-Tibetan Tantric Buddhism*, and Richard Kohn's *Lord of the Dance*.<sup>1</sup> These works are important because they were the first to provide outsiders with detailed outlines of Tibetan Buddhist ritual programs. However, they are also predominantly focused on ritual action, leaving the historical contexts in which their subjects arose as a secondary concern at best, or unexplored at worst. This is understandable, since what is ritual if not a performance? Nonetheless, ritual documents are historical texts as well, and such works can shed light on beliefs and practices that may not be found in biographies or histories. In particular, examining rituals can diachronically illuminate previously unknown aspects of how protector deity cults have changed, expanded, or shifted in institutional significance.

Using a comparative exegetical approach, this article will discuss the institutional evolution of the central Nechung protector deities through the lens of Nechung Monastery's ritual corpus, a collection called the *Nechung Liturgy* (*Gnas-chung chos-spyod*). Nearly all of the texts in the *Nechung Liturgy* concern the monastery's main protector deities, the Five Sovereign Spirits (*rgyal-po sku-linga*), who are led by Pehar (Pe-har), the traditional guardian of Samyé (Bsam-yas) Monastery's treasury. Pehar transferred to the region of Tshal southeast of Lhasa sometime after his installment at Samyé. The deity then migrated to Nechung in the sixteenth century before the monastery was greatly expanded and renovated in 1682 under the auspices of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) and his final regent Sangyé Gyatso (Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, 1653-1705). Nechung has continued to grow since the late seventeenth century as has its ritual corpus, which is illustrated by the *Nechung Liturgy*.

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<sup>1</sup> See Beyer 1973, Bentor 1996, and Kohn 2001, respectively.

The present article will outline and explore the contents of this liturgical collection before looking specifically at the intertextuality exhibited by three ritual texts. These rituals are entitled the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*, the *Offerings and Praises*, and the *Adamantine Melody*. The first and last of these texts are the core rites of the *Nechung Liturgy*, while the second text is a series of propitiations to protector deities composed by the Second Dalai Lama. Each of these works and the connections between them tell us about how rituals can be used and reused, how deities can change institutional affiliation, and how deity cults can become nested within greater cosmologies. The article concludes with a discussion of Dorjé Drakden, who became the central deity of Nechung Monastery. It is not entirely clear when or why this deity was promoted to the status of Nechung's principal protector over and above the Five Sovereign Spirits, but the process appears to have begun around the turn of the eighteenth century. What is known is that this shift in status was dependent on the Nechung Oracle's historical engagement and growing importance, as well as the gradual accretion of the monastery's ritual collection. These various textual and performative activities illustrate the kinds of mechanisms at work when the identities of sacred sites like Nechung change over time.

## 2. Liturgical Accretion

The full title of the *Nechung Liturgy* is *A Marvelous Garland of Jewels that Adorns the Neck of the Fortunate Youth: A Collected Series of Prayers and Mending Rituals for the Palace of Adamantine Melody, Exalted in the Three Realms*.<sup>2</sup> This collection was compiled in 1845 at the request of the Nechung medium of that period, Kelzang Tsültrim (Bskal-bzang tshul-khrims).<sup>3</sup> It is approximately ninety folios long and consists of forty-two texts. Most of the texts in the *Nechung Liturgy* are the liturgical manuals used in ritual recitations and performances conducted at Nechung Monastery. However, the collection also includes deity iconographies, reincarnation lists, and prophecies by the Nechung Oracle.

Among the texts in the *Nechung Liturgy*, the Fifth Dalai Lama composed the most, with ten works by his hand. The Seventh Dalai Lama Kelzang Gyatso (Skal-

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<sup>2</sup> Tib. *Sa-gsum na mngon-par mtho-ba rdo-rje sgra-dbyangs gling gi zhal-'don bskang-gso'i rim-pa phyogs-gcig-tu bsgrigs-pa'i ngo-mtshar nor-bu'i 'phreng-ba skal-bzang gzhon-nu'i mgul-rgyan*; see Bskal-bzang rin-chen 1983. This collection is part of a larger three-volume compilation, with the additional texts likely added to Nechung's liturgical corpus during the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

<sup>3</sup> This figure served as the medium of the Nechung Oracle from 1837-1856; see Thub-bstan phun-tshogs 2007: 138.

bzang rgya-mtsho, 1708-1757) is the second most prevalent author in the collection, with nine texts to his name. In third place is the Nechung Oracle, with different mediums of the oracle composing five texts over the course of two centuries, either in or out of trance. A few works are an expansion of the Second Dalai Lama's writings, and the remaining works consist of one or two texts by individual authors. For instance, Sangyé Gyatso as well as the sixteenth-century treasure-revealer (*gter-ston*) Ngari Pañchen Padma Wangyel (Mnga'-ris pañ-chen Padma dbang-rgyal, 1487-1542) both contributed two works. Other authors have only one text present in the collection, such as the Fourth Pañchen Lama Lobzang Chökyi Gyentsen (Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan, 1570-1662), Terdak Lingpa Gyurmé Dorjé (Gter-bdag gling-pa 'Gyur-med rdo-rje, 1646-1714), and Lelung Jedrung Zhepé Dorjé (Sle-lung rje-drung Bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje, 1697-1740). The famous twelfth-century treasure-revealer Ngadak Nyangrel Nyima Özer (Mnga'-bdag nyang-ral Nyi-ma 'od-zer, 1124-1192) also has only one text present; however, it happens to be one of the most important works in the collection and will be discussed below.

With twenty-two texts composed by a Dalai Lama, more than half of the collection, it appears that this monolithic figure dominates the *Nechung Liturgy*. However, a closer examination of this work's contents, especially the colophons of its texts, reveals an equally significant figure underlying its compilation. Many of the texts composed by the Dalai Lamas were either prophetically solicited or encouraged by the Nechung Oracle. Six of the Fifth Dalai Lama's texts were requested by the oracle. Three of the Seventh Dalai Lama's texts were likewise requested, while another one of his texts was requested by someone who was inspired by the Nechung Oracle in trance. Moreover, upon the death of the Seventh Dalai Lama, his regent Demo Ngawang Jampel Delek Gyatso (De-mo Ngag-dbang 'jam-dpal bde-legs rgya-mtsho, d.1777) was asked by the Nechung Oracle to compose a ritual. Finally, the last text of the *Nechung Liturgy* was written as an extensive colophon for the entire collection, compiled as it was at the behest of the Nechung Oracle in 1845. The result is that seventeen texts—more than any individual Dalai Lama—were either composed or requested by the Nechung Oracle. Along with the Dalai Lama, the Nechung Oracle had an equally strong hand and consistent involvement in the *Nechung Liturgy*.

The *Nechung Liturgy* illustrates a lucid historical accretion. The collection is dated to the mid-nineteenth century, but the slow addition of texts prior to this time is clearly visible. There is a noticeable ebb and flow to the corpus, with the greatest

activity centering on the Fifth and Seventh Dalai Lamas. These works are then surrounded by oracular prophecies from their respective eras as well as texts by contemporaries with occasional intrusions by more ancient works. The text is broadly chronological in arrangement but there are non-contemporary texts spread throughout, suggesting a thematic orientation. This is a work rooted in the hundred years between the mid-seventeenth and mid-eighteenth century, with some notable forays into the following century. In this compilation, the Dalai Lama and the Nechung Oracle have the strongest presence. These two monolithic figures molded the *Nechung Liturgy*, revealing their constant engagement in the evolution of Nechung Monastery's fundamental ritual programs. This presence, and the relationship it embodies, is most explicit in the two primary ritual manuals of Nechung Monastery—the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and the *Adamantine Melody*.

### 3. The Central Nechung Rituals and Their Evolution

Of all the texts in the *Nechung Liturgy*, the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and the *Adamantine Melody* are the most important. These two texts are also the longest works in the collection by far. The vast majority of the other texts are less than three folios long and some are only a few lines in length. These two ritual manuals are the only ones we know with certainty were practiced at Nechung Monastery around the time of its late seventeenth-century renovation. Even today these rites are practiced at least once a month, as well as during important occasions, at both the historical Nechung Monastery outside Lhasa and the Nechung Monastery established in Dharamsala, India. If the *Nechung Liturgy* represents the core of all ritual activity at Nechung, then these two works represent the core of the liturgy.

The *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and the *Adamantine Melody* are treated as two separate texts, but in fact they represent a ritual and mental continuum spanning five hundred years. The full title of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* is the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana: A Supplication Offering to the Five Great Sovereign Spirits*.<sup>4</sup> Four extant editions of this text of varying sizes are available, though the *Nechung Liturgy* edition is more than eleven folios long.<sup>5</sup> This work is a treasure text (*gter-ma*) that was rediscovered by Ngadak Nyangrel Nyima Özer, who is believed to be a reincarnation of both Padmasambhava and King Trisong Deutsen (Khri-srong lde'u-

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<sup>4</sup> Tib. *Rgyal-po chen-po sku-nga'i gsol-mchod 'phrin-las don-bcu-ma*. *Sādhana* ('*phrin-las*) is the Sanskrit term for a type of propitiatory ritual manual.

<sup>5</sup> See Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1976, 1983, 1994, and n.d.

btsan).<sup>6</sup> The text itself explains in its colophon that it was originally composed by Padmasambhava, and according to the Fifth Dalai Lama it originated from the primordial Buddha himself, Samantabhadra.<sup>7</sup> The *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* is the earliest known ritual document to describe the Five Sovereign Spirits.

The structure of the text is given in the title itself—it consists of ten chapters.<sup>8</sup> Three of the work's extant editions have a lengthy prepatory or introductory segment, which will be examined below, but the heart of the text is clearly comprised of ten chapters. The content of these chapters is not drastically different from most rituals dedicated to protector deities and its outline is as follows: (1) requesting the deities to manifest; (2) inviting the deities; (3) requesting the deities to reside; (4) making prostrations to the deities; (5) integrating one's *samaya* vow with the deity's; (6) presenting offerings of the medicinal nectar of immortality to the tantric scholars and deities; (7) presenting body, speech, and mind offerings to the deities; (8) praising the deities; (9) reasserting the deities' oath and entrusting them with protective activities; and (10) compelling the deities to act on the activities entrusted to them.

The full title of the *Adamantine Melody* is the *Unceasing Adamantine Melody: A Sādhana for Presenting Prayers and Offerings to the Five Great Sovereign Spirits*.<sup>9</sup> At about twenty folios long, this is the longest text in the *Nechung Liturgy*. This work was composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama sometime around 1650, having been requested by his regent and encouraged by the Nechung Oracle.<sup>10</sup> For the 1682 renovation of Nechung, the monastery was given the grander name Nechung Dorjé Drayang Ling,<sup>11</sup> which was drawn from the title of this ritual text. Nechung was not only expanded, it became the central locus for this rite.

The *Adamantine Melody* is about twice as long as the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and is much more extensive in content. Its basic structure is based on the latter text, but

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<sup>6</sup> See Sañs-rGyas rGya-mTSHo 1999: viii.

<sup>7</sup> See Dalai Lama 5 1991-95, vol.2: 615.4.

<sup>8</sup> Tib. *don-bcu*; lit. "ten topics."

<sup>9</sup> Tib. *Rgyal-po chen-po sde-lnga la gsol-mchod 'bul-tshul 'phrin-las 'gags-med rdo-rje'i sgra-dbyangs*; see Dalai Lama 5 1983.

<sup>10</sup> The colophon of this ritual explains that it was requested by the Fifth Dalai Lama's regent Sönam Raptan (Bsod-nams rab-brtan, 1595-1658), who served as regent from 1642 until his death in 1658. The ritual was further encouraged by the Nechung Oracle, suggesting that the Great Fifth did not procrastinate in composing the text once it had been requested. Given the lack of an exact date in the colophon, I am splitting the difference of the two decades Sönam Raptan acted as regent and suggesting that the text was composed around 1650; see Dalai Lama 5 1983: 49.

<sup>11</sup> Tib. *Gnas-chung Rdo-rje sgra-dbyangs gling*; lit. "The Small Abode—Palace of the Adamantine Melody."

additional material has warped its arrangement, which is not so easily numbered. For the sake of simplicity, here is a preliminary outline: (1) a preface of panegyric verses to Padmasambhava and the Fives Sovereign Spirits; (2) preparations and *mantras*; (3) the foundational principal practice (*dnegos-gzhi.*); (4) the invitation, request to reside, and offerings and praises for the deities, drawn from the Second Dalai Lama; (5) invocations and iconography for visualizing the deities; (6) more rites of invitation and requesting to reside, as well as praises and the integration of the oaths, drawn from Ngadak Nyangrel Nyima Özer; (7) bestowing offerings on the deities; (8) praises and entrusting of the activities, drawn from the Second Dalai Lama; (9) confession of faults; (10) blessing the offerings, inviting higher deities, and serving them the offerings; (11) amending and restoring rites; (12) more praises for the deities; (13) entrusting activities to the deities; (14) final invocations, offerings, and covenant; (15) a visualized ritual dance; (16) the enthronment of the deities in their office; and (17) the benediction. It is worth noting that there is some redundancy in the ritual content of this text regarding praises, invitations, and requests for the deities to reside, which is indicative of its multiple influences. Furthermore, this numerical scheme is linear but otherwise arbitrary; many of these segments have multiple rituals within them. Nonetheless, my goal is to provide a basic outline of the key rites within the larger text.

Chronologically nestled between these two texts is a third work that is not found in the *Nechung Liturgy*, but which is integral to its evolution. This work is entitled the *Offerings and Praises to such [Deities] as the Great Dharma Kings, the Five Long-Life Sisters, Dorjé Drakmogyel, Dorjé Yudrönma, Chölha, Kongtsün Demo, and Odé Gungyel—from the Miscellaneous Writings of the Venerable Omniscient One's Collected Works*.<sup>12</sup> For the sake of simplicity, I will refer to this work as the *Offerings and Praises*. This text is twenty-three folios long and was composed by the Second Dalai Lama (1476-1542). While we can safely assign the text to the first half of the sixteenth century, there is no single date of composition. Like the *Nechung Liturgy*, the *Offerings and Praises* is not one text but a collection of several texts composed over time. As the title indicates, this compilation contains propitiatory texts dedicated to several deities, though it is the rites concerned with the Five Sovereign Spirits—referred to in the title as the Great Dharma Kings—that are important for the present study. There are six rituals in this work that focus on the Five Sovereign Spirits,

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<sup>12</sup> Tib. *Rje-btsun thams-cad mkhyen-pa'i gsung-'bum thor-bu las chos-rgyal chen-po tshe-ring mched-linga rdo-rje grags-mo-rgyal rdo-rje g.yu-sgron-ma 'phyos-lha kong-btsun de-mo 'o-de gung-rgyal sogs kyi gsol-kha bstod-pa dang-bcas-pa rnam;* see Dalai Lama 2 2006.

making up nine folios total, or forty percent of the entire work. None of these texts has a title but they do have colophons with varying degrees of detail.

Structurally, most of the works in the *Offerings and Praises* dedicated to the Five Sovereign Spirits are so short that they only consist of offerings and/or praises. Some include rudimentary iconographic visualizations and the entrustment of activities. The first and longest text is a lengthy cake (*gtor-ma*) offering rite and has the following outline: (1) preparations and *mantras*; (2) a panegyric description of Padmasambhava and the Five Sovereign Spirits; (3) iconography of the deities drawn from Ngadak Nyangrel Nyima Özer and further expanded; (4) detailed visualized offerings for the deities; (5) exaltations to the deities; (6) reasserting the *samaya* vow of the deities; and (7) entrusting activities to the deities.

### 3.1 The *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*

The *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*, the *Adamantine Melody*, and the relevant texts in the *Offerings and Praises* are deeply interconnected despite the centuries that separate their compositions. To illustrate this, I will discuss their relationship in the process of providing an exegetical assessment of each work chronologically. The *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* will receive our closest attention because of the rich information provided by the discrepancies visible between the four extant editions we have of the text. I have labeled these editions BPLC,<sup>13</sup> BCPC,<sup>14</sup> GRSD,<sup>15</sup> and RGC62<sup>16</sup> for convenience and ease of reference. The two oldest editions, BPLC and BCPC, stem from the seventeenth century and have clear ties to the Northern Treasures tradition (*byang-gter*) of the Nyingma sect. The third edition, GRSD, is found in the *Nechung Liturgy*, dated to 1845. Finally, the fourth edition, RGC62, is within the *Great Treasury of Precious Termas*,<sup>17</sup> placed in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Comparing the four editions of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* has yielded some notable findings. First, RGC62 is the latest edition and also the shortest. While the other three editions have an elaborate introduction preceding the first chapter, RGC62 lacks such a segment. Moreover, each of the three other editions has a distinct introductory section despite the general similarity found in the ten chapters

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<sup>13</sup> Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1994.

<sup>14</sup> Nyi-ma 'od-zer n.d.

<sup>15</sup> Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1983.

<sup>16</sup> Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1976.

<sup>17</sup> Tib. *Rin-chen gter-mdzod chen-mo*.



themselves across all four editions. The introduction in the BPLC and GRSD editions are the most similar, but they nonetheless have a few differences peppered throughout their content (Fig. 1). The BPLC edition also adds material not found in the other editions. As for the BCPC edition, it has an introductory section completely distinct from the BPLC or GRSD editions. It echoes many of the basic ideas but is not as detailed, and it even has some contradictory information (Fig. 2). These differences indicate that only the ten chapters themselves make up the original text of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*. It is clear that the unique introductions of each edition were added later under the institutional authority of Dorjé Drak Monastery—the center of the Northern Treasures tradition (BPLC and BCPC)—and Nechung Monastery (GRSD).

ཅུ་འདྲེན། ]<sup>193</sup>ལུ་མཚོན། རྗེས་སྐྱུལ། ]<sup>194</sup>སྐྱོ་[སངས་]195། གཤོས། རྒྱ་]196སྐྱུལ། ]<sup>197</sup>འཛིན་པ། རྗེས་]198པ།  
 བཀའ་སློན། བྱན་[གཤོས།]199 ]<sup>200</sup>སྐྱུལ་པ་ཡང་སྐྱུལ་བས་མ་གྱིས་མི་ལྷུབ་པ་དང་བཅས་[པ་]201བདག་གི་བཀའ་ཉན་  
 [པར་བསམ་སྟོ]202,203

**GRSD:**

ཉོན་ལྷན་གྱི་མ་ཚོན་དབུ་པ་གཅིག་ལ། ལྷག་པས་གཞིག་པས། གཡག་  
 ར་དག་པོ་དར་ཐབས་ཀྱིས་བརྒྱན་པ་རྟོན་ཏུ་འཛིགས། དེ་ནས་མཚོན་པ་  
 རྩིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབ་པ་མིེ་ ལྷ་སྐྱུ་མེས་རྣོད་པར་རྒྱུངས་པའི་དབང་ལས།

ལྷགས་ཀའི་ས་པོན་ལས་རྗེ་ཡི་ལུ་ཞེས་བརྟན་པས། རྗེ་ལས་  
 མི་ལྷུང་བས་མཚོན་ཇས་མ་དག་པའི་དེད་ས་པོ་ཐམས་  
 ཅད་བཤེགས་ཏེ་ ཡི་ལས་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་བས་གཏོར་ཏེ་

ལི་ལས་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུད་བས་དཀྱིས་པར་བས་མཚུ་  
 རྗེ་སྐྱུ་རྗེ་ལུ་རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་ཞེས་པས་

གཏོར་རྣོད་ནམ་མའི་མཐའ་དུང་མཉམ་པར་བསམ། བདག་གི་དམ་ཏུ་  
 གསལ་བའི་ལྷགས་ཀ་ནས་མི་ལྷུང་གྱི་ལྷན་མཚོན་པས་གཅོད་ཞིང་  
 ཡིད་ཏུ་འོང་བ་དང་ལྷག་ཏུ་མེད་པར་སྐྱེ་ འཛིན་ལས་རྟོན་བརྩ་མའི་  
 གཞུང་ཚོགས་པར་བྱས་ཞིང་ མི་ལོ་སྐྱེ་ཏུ་དམིགས་པ་གསལ་བར་སྐྱེ་  
 སེལ་མི་རྒྱ་སྐྱེ་ ར་དབྱེ་ ཏུང་འབྲུག་ གཏུང་པའི་བུ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་  
 ལྷ་པོ་རྒྱན་དུངས་པར་བྱེད།

ལྷ་པོ་འཛིན་ལས་རྟོན་བརྩ་སྐྱེ་ བཞིན་ཏུ་གསོལ་བུ་ ལྷན་དུངས་པུ་  
 འབྲུག་ལྷ་གསོལ་བུ་ ལྷག་འཚོལ་བུ་ དམ་པུའི་བུ་ ལྷན་མཚོན་  
 འབྲུག་པུ་ [GRSD:58]མཚོན་པ་འབྲུག་བུ་ བརྟན་པ་ལྷེ་བུ་  
 འཛིན་ལས་བཅས་བུ་ ལས་ལ་བརྒྱལ་བའི་བུ་ དབྱུག་དང་ལྷགས་པའི་  
 རས་སྐྱེ་གཏུང་ལྷགས་ཡོན་ཏུན་འཛིན་ལས། ཡེ་བུ་མ་འཛོལ་དང་  
 བཅས་པ་གསལ་བདེ་བུ་

**BPLC:**

མི་སྐྱུ་མི་བུ་རྒྱུ་ མཐོ་རྒྱུ་སྐྱུ་མི་སྐྱུ་ཉེ་ཏེ་ ལྷོད་པ་ཉིད་  
 དུ་རྒྱུར་ ལྷོད་པའི་དང་ལས། མི་ལས་སོན་པོ་ཆེ་ལས་ལུབ་  
 པའི་རྩོད་ཡངས་ཤིང་རྒྱ་ཆེ་བ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ནང་དུ་ མི་སྐྱེ་ལྷ་  
 འོད་ཏུ་ལུབ་ལས་ལྷུང་བའི་རྩ་རྣམས་ལས་ལུབ་པའི་མཚོན་  
 ཡིན། ཞབས་བསེལ། མེ་རོག་ །བདུག་སྐྱོས། ལྷོད་གསལ།  
 རྗེ་ཆའ། ཞལ་ཐས། སོལ་མོ་རྣམས་དུངས་ཤིང་མོགས་པ་  
 མད་པར་གནམ་ས་བར་རྒྱང་ཐམས་ཅད་ལྷུབ་པར་འབྲེགས་  
 པ་ཀུན་ཏུ་བབང་པའི་རྣམ་པར་ཐབ་པ་ལས་ལྷུང་བའི་  
 མཚོན་པའི་རྩིན་ལུང་བསམ་གྱིས་མི་ལྷུབ་པ་ནམ་མཁའ་དང་  
 མཉམ་པར་ལུར། མི་ལྷོ་དུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་སྐྱེ་ པ་ཏུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་  
 ལྷོ་ ལྷོ་[BPLC:218]དུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་སྐྱེ་ ལྷོ་དུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་  
 ལེ་སྐྱེ་ མ་ལོ་གོ་དུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་སྐྱེ་ ལྷོ་དུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་སྐྱེ་  
 ལེ་ལོ་ཏུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་སྐྱེ་ བུ་དུ་ཤི་རྒྱུ་ལེ་སྐྱེ་ གནོད་རྒྱུན་  
 འཕོར་བཅས་དུང་པོ་དུག་གི་རྩོད་ལུལ་དུ་རྒྱས་པར་ལུར་  
 ཅོག། མི་སྐྱེ་ཤིང་རྒྱར་རྒྱར་མ་ཡང་རྒྱ་ཡེ་མ་ཡང་རྒྱ་ཡེ་ཉེ་  
 བརྗེས་པ་ར་ན་ལམ་སྐྱེ་ཏེ་

ལྷན་འཛིན་བརྒྱུ་པ་མི། །རང་ཉིད་རྒྱན་པོ་གོ་སྐྱེ་མ་དང་པོ་  
 དམ་ཏུ་གསལ་བའི་ལྷགས་ལའི་སྐྱེ་ལས་འོད་ཟེར་ཞུགས་པ་  
 དང་ལྷགས་ལུ་རྒྱ་ལུ་འཛིན། རང་བཞིན་ལྷོ་གནས། ལྷོ་གས་

Figure 1. Sample of textual similarities and differences between the GRSD and BPLC editions of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*.

BPLC:	BCPC:
<p>འདྲམས་སྤྱི་བླ་བ་དམར་པོ་ལས་བྱས་པའི་གཞུང་ཡས་ལང་།  ཤར་དྭགས་པོ་ལྷན་ལས་བྱས་པའི་གཞུང་ཡས་ལང་།  ཚྭ་མེན་མེན་གསེར་ལས་བྱས་པའི་གཞུང་ཡས་ལང་།  རྩལ་པོ་དམར་གསེར་བྱས་པའི་གཞུང་ཡས་ལང་།  མཛེན་པོ་གཡུ་ལས་བྱས་པའི་གཞུང་ཡས་ལང་།</p>	<p>ཤར་དྭགས་པོ་ལྷན་ལས་བྱས་པ།  ཚྭ་མེན་པོ་གསེར་ལས་བྱས་པ།  རྩལ་དམར་པོ་པོ་དམར་གསེར་བྱས་པ།  མཛེན་པོ་གཡུ་ལས་བྱས་པ།  འདྲམས་མཚོན་གཡུ་ལས་བྱས་པའི་གཞུང་མཛེན་ལང་།</p>
<p>In the Center [there is] a divine mansion made of red coral.  In the East [there is] a divine mansion made of white conch shell.  In the South [there is] a divine mansion made of precious gold.  In the West [there is] a divine mansion made of lotus[-like] rubies.  In the North [there is] a divine mansion made of blue turquoise.</p>	<p>In the East [there is] a divine mansion made of white crystal.  In the South [there is] a divine mansion made of yellow gold.  In the West [there is] a divine mansion made of red lotus[-like] rubies.  In the North [there is] a divine mansion made of green sapphire.  In the Center [there is] a divine mansion made of blue cymophane.</p>

Figure 2. Textual contradictions between the BPLC and BCPC editions of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*.

While these trends and divergences require a close reading of the editions, other changes are much more obvious. The BPLC edition in particular has two additional folios in its text, which are noticeable not only because their content is missing from the other editions, but because the folios actually disrupt the content of the surrounding text. These extraneous folios break into the folio pagination of the work with their own singular numbering of *gcig-pu'o*, meaning ‘one’ (Fig. 3).<sup>18</sup>

Perhaps the most striking addition, however, is the deity Tsiu Marpo (Rtsi'u dmar po), the other major Dharma protector of Samyé Monastery (Fig. 4). His name and iconography appear in only two of the editions of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*—the BPLC and BCPC—those produced by the Northern Treasures tradition. This connection itself is not very surprising; it was Ngari Pañchen Padma Wangyel who revealed Tsiu Marpo’s root treasure texts, and who subsequently propagated the deity’s cult in the sixteenth century with his younger brother, the Second Dorjé Drak Rikzin Lekden Dorjé (Rdo-rje-brag rig-'dzin 2 Legs-ldan rdo-rje, 1512-1625?).<sup>19</sup> That the other two editions of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* lack any information on Tsiu Marpo indicates that he was interpolated into the text by the early seventeenth century. Indeed, one of the two extraneous folios in the BPLC edition exclusively

<sup>18</sup> For the abrupt change in folio pagination, see Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1994: 235-237.

<sup>19</sup> See Bell 2006 for an extensive study of this root treasure text and other texts concerned with Tsiu Marpo. See also Macdonald 1978a and 1978b for a detailed discussion of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century politics surrounding Pehar and Tsiu Marpo at Samyé Monastery.

concerns Tsiu Marpo's iconography, referring to him by his epithet Yangleber.<sup>20</sup> This extra folio in BPLC actually cuts into the content of chapter 9 in the core text. The other extra folio does the same in chapter 10. Yet another description of Tsiu Marpo is provided earlier in the BPLC edition, interrupting the iconography of one of the Five Sovereign Spirits.<sup>21</sup> The BCPC edition mentions this deity as well, but only once.<sup>22</sup> This may be the historical point in which Tsiu Marpo's cult merged with Pehar's, and it was through the interpolation of seventeenth-century material within the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* via the Northern Treasures tradition. The two deities have been inseparable every since. Such textual interpolation is a vivid example of how ritual emendation can combine deity cults, forever altering the significance of their rituals and impacting their future use.

ལྷ་གྲོག་གཡང་གཞིས་]778བརྒྱན་པའི་གཡམ་[བ་ལྷ་བྱིས་]779དག་པོའི་མགོ་ལྷན་གཞོག་པའི་གཡམ་[བ་]780[བདུང་  
 གྲི་]781]782ཞགས་[པས་]783དག་...

**BPLC:784**

[BPLC:236B]ནོམ་དགུ་ལྷའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་གནོད་ལྷུན་ལོག་  
 བདག་ཡང་ལེ་བེར་ལྷ་མདོག་དམར་པོ་བསོ་ལྷབ་དང་བསོ་  
 མོག་གསོལ་བ། གཡམ་མདུང་དམར་དང་གཡམ་བཙན་  
 ཞགས་དགུ་ལ་འཕེན་པ། ལྷུན་ནས་མའི་དཀར་མདའ་  
 འཇུག་པ། ཞལ་ནས་ལྷག་གི་སེར་ཚེན་འབབས་པ། ལྷན་  
 རས་དུག་ལྷལ་ནག་པོ་འབྱུང་པ། ཞབས་ལ་བསོག་ལྷམ་ལྷ་བོ་  
 གསོལ་ཞིང་། ར་ཁྱི་ལྷུང་གི་སེལ་དུ་ལྷིང་པ། སི་བྱ་པོ་རོག་  
 ལྷང་ལ་ལྷོང་བ། ཚེབས་ལྷ་བའི་ལྷ་བ་ནག་ཚེབས་པ། །བཙན་  
 མོད་འཇུག་ལྷའི་འཕོར་གྱིས་བསྐོར་བ་ལ་གསོལ་ལ། བཙོལ་  
 བའི་ལྷན་ལས་མཚོན་ཅིག །ལྷན་ལས་མཚོན་དུ་མཚོན་ཅིག །  
 ལྷལ་བའི་ཉ་གས་ལྷངས་ཤིག །[BPLC:236C]785

[BPLC:237]...ལ་འབབས་པའི་[དཔྱེད་]786[ལྷང་]787མགོས་ལྷ་སྲིན་དབང་དུ་  
 [བསྐྱུང་]788པའི་རོལ་དུ་སྲིད་པའི་གཡལ་འབྲུག་[GRSD:69][འབྲིང་]789པའི་མོ་ཉར་[བྱ་ལྷ་སྲིབ་]790གཏོང་བ་ལ་གསོལ་  
 མོའི་]791 བཙོལ་བའི་[x]792 [འབྲིན་]793ལས་[x]794 ལྷལ་བའི་[x]795

Figure 3. Transcription of the extraneous folio in the BPLC edition of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*.

<sup>20</sup> Tib. Yang le ber; see fig. 3. See also Bell 2006: 147-149.  
<sup>21</sup> See Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1994: 213.4-214.1.  
<sup>22</sup> See Nyi-ma 'od-zer n.d.: 409.3.



Figure 4. Statues of Pehar and Tsiu Marpo at Pehar Kordzöling (*pe-har dkor-mdzod gling*), Samyé Monastery. (Photo: Cecilia Haynes, 2011)

One final observation about the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* is that throughout these multiple editions, *mantras* are added and subtracted, and their spelling and pronunciations change. If the proper recitation of *mantras* is important to the successful completion of a ritual,<sup>23</sup> then these differences carry certain implications about the nature of error within Tibetan ritual architecture. Regardless, the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* is representative of how treasure texts are not static texts but are always evolving in usage, significance, and even content well after they have been rediscovered.

### 3.2 The Offerings and Praises

As previously stated, the Second Dalai Lama's *Offerings and Praises* is a collection of rituals dedicated to multiple deities. The Five Sovereign Spirits are just one group of deities among others in this work, although they receive the most attention. The first text is about six folios long—the longest in the collection<sup>24</sup>—and is followed by three other rites to the Five Sovereign Spirits; the other two rites are

<sup>23</sup> For instance, many extensive ritual performances conclude with a prayer begging for the deity's tolerance for any mistakes made in the course of the rite; see Beyer 1973: 223.

<sup>24</sup> Indeed, this first text is twice as long as the next largest rite in the collection, a three-folio work dedicated to Dorjé Drakmogyel; see Dalai Lama 2 2006: 184.2-189.4.



### 3.3 The *Adamantine Melody*

In composing the *Adamantine Melody*, the Fifth Dalai Lama drew extensively from the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and the Five Sovereign Spirits material within the *Offerings and Praises*.<sup>25</sup> He further summarized elements from the *Assembly of the Quintessential Mind Attainment* (*Thugs-sgrub yang-snying 'dus-pa*),<sup>26</sup> an important cycle of treasure texts rediscovered by the fifteenth-century treasure-revealer Ratna Lingpa (Ratna gling-pa, 1403-1479). The result is a dynamic ritual accretion (Fig. 6). Starting with the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*, most of its chapter 2 and a portion of chapter 3 made its way into the Second Dalai Lama's *Offerings and Praises*. Then the whole of both chapters, as well as chapter 4, most of chapter 5, and the concluding *mantras* of chapter 7, became the foundation for the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Adamantine Melody*. It is immediately clear that the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* was a more significant source to the Fifth Dalai Lama than it was to the Second. Around this core the Great Fifth built a grander ritual program, inserting additional panegyric segments written by the Second Dalai Lama in his *Offerings and Praises*. Finally, the Fifth Dalai Lama based the principal practice of the ritual on Ratna Lingpa's *Assembly of the Quintessential Mind Attainment*. He adorned the composition with generation phase instructions and *mantras*, and filled in the rest with his own material, though the colophon suggests other sources were used as well.

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<sup>25</sup> Specifically, the Fifth Dalai Lama copied from three of the six rites in the *Offerings and Praises* dedicated to the Five Sovereign Spirits.

<sup>26</sup> The colophon of the *Adamantine Melody* specifically has *Bla-ma'i las-byang thugs-bsgrubs yang-snying 'dus-pa*, which refers to the *Precious Garland Practice Manual* (*Las-byang rin-chen phreng-ba*); see Dalai Lama 5 1983: 15-16, 49, and Ratna gling pa 1976: 129-133.

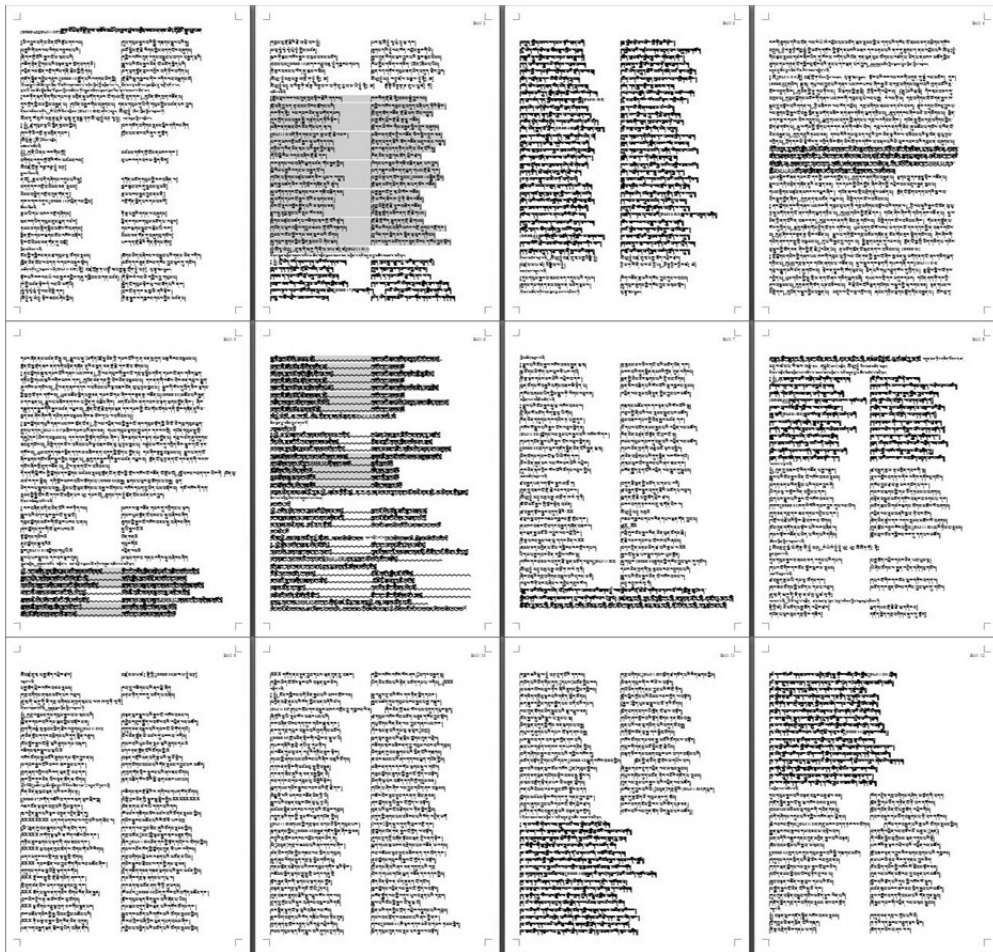


Figure 6. A partial bird's-eye view of the *Adamantine Melody* ritual text with copied material highlighted: (1) bold, underlined, and shaded lines represent material from the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* copied into the *Offerings and Praises* and the *Adamantine Melody*; (2) bold and underlined lines represent material from the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* only copied into the *Adamantine Melody*; (3) bold lines represent material copied from the *Offerings and Praises*; and (4) shaded lines represent material drawn from Ratna Lingpa's *Assembly of the Quintessential Mind Attainment*.

The principal practice drawn from Ratna Lingpa's treasure text is unique because it is not copied verbatim like the verses taken from the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* or the *Offerings and Praises*. Instead, the Great Fifth presents the details and hierarchy it illustrates in his own words. While the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and the *Offerings and Praises* only mention the tutelary deity Hayagrīva once or twice, and very briefly at that, here he and his consort Vajravārāhī are described in great detail. Moreover, these lines provide a broader *maṇḍalic* cosmology in which the Five Sovereign Spirits are now included. This is the *maṇḍala* of Hayagrīva embracing Vajravārāhī, who are then transmuted into Lama Vajradhara and his consort, the Ḍākinī Tsogyé.<sup>27</sup> Surrounding them, on lotus petals in the four cardinal directions, are emanations of Padmasambhava. Then, on lotus petals further out, there are eight more of Padmasambhava's emanations. Ḍākinīs and Dharma protectors then fill the *maṇḍala*'s surrounding courtyard. Thus, through the Fifth Dalai Lama, the Five Sovereign Spirits have come to be nested within a larger and more detailed Buddhist universe, one where Padmasambhava reigns supreme.

The *Adamantine Melody*'s evolution also returns us to Tsiu Marpo. We examined above how Tsiu Marpo was inserted into the retinue of the Five Sovereign Spirits within the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* through a seventeenth-century emendation. Furthermore, we know that the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* came to the Fifth Dalai Lama via the Northern Treasures tradition.<sup>28</sup> While it appears that he used an edition of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* different from any of the extant editions we have today, it seems closest to the BPLC edition. The Great Fifth includes Tsiu Marpo in his *Adamantine Melody* and uses an iconographic description of the deity only found in this edition.<sup>29</sup> This is an example of how a deity can be retroactively inserted into one ritual text (the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*), and then standardized by another (the *Adamantine Melody*), thus showing one mechanism for how deity cults merge.

The edition of the *Adamantine Melody* used in this study also has a number of extra folios not found in the other editions. As with the BPLC edition of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*, these folios were clearly added. The text's content and pagination

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<sup>27</sup> This is the famous spiritual consort of Padmasambhava. It is worth noting that Tsogyel's iconography in this work matches that of the ultimate Buddha Vajradhara's consort, Prajñāpāramitā; see Getty 1962: 2-5.

<sup>28</sup> The Great Fifth's *Record of Received Teachings (gsan-yig)* explains that he received the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* from Zur Chöying Rangdröl (Zur Chos-dbyings rang-grol, 1604-1669), who transmitted other texts of the Northern Treasures tradition to the Fifth Dalai Lama; see Dalai Lama 5 1991-95, vol.2: 615.6.

<sup>29</sup> Compare Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1994: 213-214, and Dalai Lama 5 1983: 22-23.



are interrupted, and moreover the actual writing style is distinct from that of the surrounding text. The second of these extra folios is particularly telling; it continues the trend of making offerings to past lineage holders, including not only the Fifth Dalai Lama himself but masters that came after him.<sup>30</sup> As yet another example of ritual accretion, the contents of this text and the ritual performance it directs was updated at a later time, perhaps during the era of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The ritual has continued to evolve along with the institution.

One final observation is that the edition of the *Adamantine Melody* found in the *Nechung Liturgy* has three short rites appended to it that are not found in other editions of the text.<sup>31</sup> All three rites are dedicated to the Five Sovereign Spirits; however, they are drawn from other sources. The first was composed by the Great Fifth and was part of a larger ritual for Penden Lhamo (Dpal-ldan lha-mo). The second text was composed by the Fourth Pañchen Lama, Lobzang Chökyi Gyentsen (Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan, 1570-1662); it states explicitly that it was taken from a *sādhana* dedicated to Penden Lhamo Makzor Gyelmo (Dpal-ldan lha-mo Dmag-zor rgyal-mo) and changed into a rite for the Five Sovereign Spirits. As the other major institutional protector alongside Nechung, Makzor Gyelmo's importance to the Dalai Lamas and to the Tibetan government cannot be overstated. Her presence in this text—as well as elsewhere in the *Nechung Liturgy*—speaks to her presence at Nechung Monastery, and to the relationship between the two deities overall. The final text is a generic thanksgiving offering (*gtang-rag mchod-pa*) that focuses on the Five Sovereign Spirits. Once more we see other texts being adapted and adopted into larger ritual structures. Through a close exegetical reading, each of these three grand works—the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana*, the *Offerings and Praises*, and the *Adamantine Melody*—reveals how rituals can be used, reused, and amended, how deities like Tsiu Marpo and Makzor Gyelmo can change institutional affiliation, and how deity cults, like that of the Five Sovereign Spirits, can become nested within greater cosmologies.

#### 4. Dorjé Drakden

In the course of examining these core ritual texts that are so central to Nechung Monastery, one figure stands out for being surprisingly absent. This is Dorjé Drakden (Rdo-rje grags-ldan), the protector who has come to be synonymous with

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<sup>30</sup> See Dalai Lama 5 1983: 31-32.

<sup>31</sup> See Dalai Lama 5 1983: 49.5-53.1.

Nechung. Today Dorjé Drakden is the deity that most often takes possession of the Nechung Oracle. Despite this, the name Dorjé Drakden appears only a few times in the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* and the *Adamantine Melody*. In the iconography of the Five Sovereign Spirits, their descriptions are followed by that of their consorts, ministers, and emanations. We are told that the western sovereign spirit of speech, Kyechik Marpo (Skyes-gcig dmar-po), has a minister named Dorjé Drakden, who wears monastic robes, brandishes a mendicant's staff, and rides a camel (Fig. 7).<sup>32</sup> Other than this minor appearance, there is no attention given to this deity. This is a far cry from the Dorjé Drakden we see today (Fig. 8).<sup>33</sup>

The great enemy-defeating god is the capricious spirit Dorjé Drakden! His body is intensely red, like a Mount Meru-sized heap of lotus rubies bathed in [the light] of ten million suns. He has one head and two arms. His right hand raises to the sky a leather military standard with which he crushes the horde of obstructing spirits. His left hand makes the *tarjanī mudrā* and holds the red lasso of the imperial spirits; with this he captures the maleficent enemies who violate the *samaya* vow. His mouth is gaping and his tongue flashes like lightning. He bares his four sharp fangs and [his face] is clenched into a wrathful grimace. His beard and eyebrows blaze like fire. He wears leather armor and a leather helmet. He is adorned with jewelry and bone ornaments, and wears leather boots

<sup>32</sup> See Nyi-ma 'od-zer 1994: 216.

<sup>33</sup> This work immediately follows after the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* in the *Nechung Liturgy*. Bskal-bzang rin-chen 1983: 75.4-76.5: *dgra-lha chen-po gnod-sbyin rdo-rje grags-ldan sku-mdog padma rā-ga'i lhun-po la nyi-ma bye-bas 'khyud-pa lta-bu rab-tu dmar-ba/ zhal-gcig phyag-gnyis-pa/ phyag-g.yas bse'i ru-mtshon namkha' la 'phyar-bas bgegs-dpung thal-bar rlog cing / g.yon sdigs-mdzub kyis btsan-zhags dmar-po bzung-bas gnod-byed dam-nyams dgra-bo 'gugs-par mdzad-pa/ zhal-gdangs shing ljags-klog ltar 'khyug-pa/ mche-ba rnon-po bzhi-gtsigs shing khro-gnyer shin-tu bsdus-pa/ sma-ra dang smin-ma me-ltar 'bar zhing / bse-khrab dang bse-rmog gyon-pa/ rin-po-che dang rus-pa'i rgyan gyis brgyan-pa/ zhabs la sag-lham gsol zhing / g.yas-bskum g.yon-brkyang gis bskal-pa'i med-pung 'bar-ba'i klong-dkyil na gar-dgu'i nyams kyis bzhuks-pa'i rol-du phar-spyang bya-'ug dgyed [sic: 'gyed]-pa/ pho-nyar gnam-lcags thog dang rlung-nag 'tshub-ma 'khrid-pa/ sprul-pa rab-tu byung-ba'i cha-byad can/ chos-gos ngur-smrig dang dar-zhu ser-po gsol-ba/ g.yas beng-dbyug dang g.yon lcags-kyi 'phreng-bas dgra-bo rtsis la 'debs-pa/ dor-stabs kyi phag-nag steng na 'gying-ba/ yum gzi-brjid chen-mo dkar la dmar-mdangs chags-pa mdzes shing yid-du 'ong-ba/ rtse-ber nyis-brtsegs gsol zhing me-tog gi thod-bcings dang rin-po-ches spung-ba g.yas rtse-gsum dang g.yon thod-pa bdud-rtsis gang-ba 'dzin-pa/ blon-po bdud-nag mi-sdug-pa'i gzugs-can ral-pa brdzes-pa/ g.yas dar-mdung dang g.yon rgyu-zhags bsnam-pa/ dar-dmar gyi ber gyon zhing / snang-srid lha-srin sde-brgyad sogs 'khor-du dam-can rgya-mtsho'i dmag-tshogs dpag-tu med-pas bskor-ba'o//. A second iconography of Dorjé Drakden makes up the remainder of the text, though it does not appear to be drastically different.*

on his feet. With his right leg bent and his left extended,<sup>34</sup> he resides amid the roiling blaze of apocalyptic fire, performing the nine dance modes.<sup>35</sup> He is accompanied by wild dogs and owls, and dispatches thunderbolts and black blizzards as heralds.

Dorjé Drakden's emanation takes on the guise of an ordained monk. He wears saffron-colored monastic robes and a silk yellow hat. He [holds] a large club in his right hand and an iron rosary in his left, with which he keeps account [of all] the enemies. He assumes a strident posture atop a black boar. Dorjé Drakden's consort is a great majestic woman. She is beautiful, with a lovely white complexion and a tinge of red. She wears two layers of monastic cloaks as well as a turban of flowers stacked with jewels. She holds in her right hand a trident, and in her left a skull cup filled with the nectar of immortality. Dorjé Drakden's minister appears in the form of a repulsive black hindering spirit [with] his long hair streaming upward. He brandishes a spear with a silk flag in his right hand and a lasso of intestines in his left, and wears a red silk cloak. Regarding the retinue, they are surrounded by the immeasurable army of the ocean of oath-bound protectors, such as the eight classes of gods and spirits of the phenomenal world.

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<sup>34</sup> Tib. *g.yas-bskum g.yon-brkyang*; Skt. *pratyāliḍha*. This refers to an aggressive posture commonly found in the iconography of wrathful deities.

<sup>35</sup> Tib. *gar-dgu'i nyams*. These are the nine modes wrathful deities express through ritual dance; they are (1) erotic (*sgeg-pa*), (2) heroic (*dpa'-ba*), (3) repulsive (*mi-sdug-pa*), (4) humorous (*dgod-pa*), (5) furious (*drag-shul*), (6) terrifying (*jigs-su rung-ba*), (7) compassionate (*snying-rje*), (8) magnificent (*rngam-pa*), and (9) tranquil (*zhi-ba*).



Figure 7. Mural of Dorjé Drakden as minister of Pehar's emanation, Kyechik Marpo; Meru Nyingpa (Rme-ru snying-pa) Assembly Hall, Lhasa. (Photo: Cecilia Haynes, 2011)



Figure 8. Mural of Dorjé Drakden with his own consort, minister, and emanation; Meru Nyingpa Assembly Hall, Lhasa. (Photo: Cecilia Haynes, 2011)

This is the earliest known description of Dorjé Drakden, and it is from another text available in the *Nechung Liturgy* that was composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama's own student, the treasure-revealer Terdak Lingpa (Gter-bdag gling-pa 'Gyur-med

rdo-rje, 1646-1714).<sup>36</sup> Nothing else beyond this fierce iconography is provided in his short work, so there is no textual reconciliation offered for this conflict in the two descriptions. While at the Nechung Monastery established in Dharamsala, I asked one monk why Dorjé Drakden has two appearances, one as Kyechik Marpo's minister and the other as the fierce red Nechung protector. He said they were actually different deities, just with the same name—one was Minister Dorjé Drakden (*blon-po* Rdo-rje grags-ldan) and the other was Nechung Dorjé Drakden (Gnas-chung Rdo-rje grags-ldan).<sup>37</sup> However, no other monk could confirm this interpretation, nor do any historical documents. The most common interpretation I have heard is that the minister form of Dorjé Drakden is his peaceful guise while the red form is his wrathful guise; this too does not have textual backing.

Amy Heller suggests that the fierce description of Dorjé Drakden was perhaps influenced by Begtse (Beg-tse), an equally important protector deity for the Dalai Lamas and one with an older history.<sup>38</sup> It is also possible, as Heller implies,<sup>39</sup> that Dorjé Drakden's wrathful appearance was inspired by the Nechung Oracle's demeanor while in trance. As she first observed, there is in the *Nechung Liturgy* a short panegyric composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1651 at the behest of the Nechung Oracle, which describes the oracle in a trance. He wears armor and a helmet, holds a lasso, lance, sword, and other weapons, and has a fierce comportment.<sup>40</sup> In many of the relevant ritual colophons within the *Nechung Liturgy*, the oracle and the deity are conflated, since both are referred to as the Great Dharma Protector (*chos-skyong chen-po*), the Great Sovereign Spirit (*rgyal-po chen-po*), or the Great Dharma King (*chos-rgyal chen-po*). The name Dorjé Drakden itself appears in a few of the text colophons of the *Nechung Liturgy*, particularly those pertaining to the Seventh Dalai Lama, and specifically in the context of possessing the oracle. It seems from at least the early eighteenth century Dorjé Drakden and the oracle were considered one and the same. Moreover, many murals and statues visible today depict the Nechung Oracle possessed by Dorjé Drakden.<sup>41</sup> Regardless of the specifics, whether through treasure text revelation, iconographic borrowing, or oracular inspiration, Dorjé Drakden has taken on a different appearance than the one he possesses in the *Ten-Chapter*

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<sup>36</sup> See Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, vol.1: 825-834.

<sup>37</sup> Personal communication, February 20, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> See Heller 1992.

<sup>39</sup> See *ibid.*: 487-488.

<sup>40</sup> See Bskal-bzang rin-chen 1983: 79.5-6.

<sup>41</sup> For instance, there are murals of past Nechung Oracles possessed by Dorjé Drakden located near the assembly hall entrances of both Nechung Monastery and the Deyang College (Bde-yangs grwa-tshang) of Drepung Monastery ('Bras-spungs dgon-pa).

*Sādhana* and the *Adamantine Melody*. He has even come to be viewed as the central deity of Nechung Monastery over and above the Five Sovereign Spirits from which he sprang. A brief return to the full content of the *Nechung Liturgy* may reveal why this is the case.

As discussed earlier, while the Nechung Oracle penned very few of the rituals contained in the *Nechung Liturgy*, he was nonetheless responsible for more texts being composed than any other figure, mostly through requesting them. A Nechung Oracle was likewise responsible for the liturgy's compilation in 1845. The Dalai Lama, when considered as a unity across multiple lifetimes, may have composed more texts in this collection than anyone else, but he was motivated by the deity's constant encouragement via the Nechung Oracle. With these details in mind, I suggest that Nechung Monastery was originally the abode of the Five Sovereign Spirits, while the Nechung Oracle was the "abode" of Dorjé Drakden. The core rituals of Nechung hardly mention Dorjé Drakden while giving prominence to the Five Sovereign Spirits. Before and up to its 1682 renovation, Nechung Monastery was meant to be the special palace of the Five Sovereign Spirits led by Pehar. However, it was also the home of the Nechung Oracle, who—as the embodiment of the Five Sovereign Spirit's emanation, Dorjé Drakden—became more important over the centuries following his promotion to state oracle. This deity was active in history in a fairly consistent manner and he continues to be so today.

We can observe through the colophons of the *Nechung Liturgy* that the institution of the Nechung Oracle reshaped the cosmology of Nechung Monastery. The Five Sovereign Spirits are still an essential part of the Nechung hierarchy, but rather than one of them being at its center—such as Pehar—there is instead Dorjé Drakden (Fig. 9). Even the deity's origins have been retroactively reformed. On numerous occasions monks of both Lhasa and Dharamsala Nechung Monasteries have told me that Dorjé Drakden is the combined emanation of the Five Sovereign Spirits. Some monks have even said the Five Sovereign Spirits actually emanate from Dorjé Drakden, challenging Pehar's emanational primacy. This illustrates a divine social mobility, where deities can rise up from obscurity and become dominant, while the dominance of other deities can be challenged or even wane, all through ritual evolution.



Figure 9. Life-size statue of the Nechung Oracle possessed by Dorjé Drakden, central statue of Nechung Monastery, Lhasa. This is said to be an image of Śākya Yarpel (Shākya yar-'phel), who acted as the medium of the Nechung Oracle from 1856-1900; see Thub-bstan phun-tshogs 2007: 138. (Photo: Christopher Bell, 2007)

## 5. Conclusion

Ritual accretion works on multiple levels, from one text to a lineage of texts and even within an entire corpus. Multiple editions of the *Ten-Chapter Sādhana* illustrate important details on how a twelfth-century treasure text can take on new institutional significance in the seventeenth century. This text, as well as several rites composed by the Second Dalai Lama, were then reinvigorated within a larger ritual program and cosmology systematized by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Given that the Great Fifth is considered a reincarnation of both Ngadak Nyangrel Nyima Özer and the Second Dalai Lama,<sup>42</sup> this can be seen as an act of amendment performed by the same author—across reincarnated lifetimes—over the course of five centuries. The full collection of the *Nechung Liturgy* is a more obvious example of accretion, with rituals and prayers being added to the core texts over two centuries. Examining these ritual layers has yielded significant historical information on how deity cults evolve. Deities can be added to other pantheons through interpolation (e.g., Tsiu Marpo), couched within greater cosmologies through ritual expansion (e.g., the Five Sovereign Spirits), and promoted in status through institutional clout (e.g., Dorjé Drakden).

Jonathan Z. Smith offers a distinct understanding of ritual in his seminal work, *To Take Place*.<sup>43</sup> For Smith, the place in which a ritual is performed is just as important as the ritual itself, if not more so. All of the rituals discussed above are viewed as tools for imbuing a specific sacred site with the presence of the deity to varying degrees and for diverse ends. Still, this is not to suggest that a particular ritual is limited to a specific place; as Smith explains, “place is not best conceived as a particular location with an idiosyncratic physiognomy or as a uniquely individualistic node of sentiment, but rather as a social position within a hierarchical system.”<sup>44</sup> Wherever a ritual is conducted, the site is important for the position it holds within a grander scheme. In terms of hierarchy, we observed above how deities like Tsiu Marpo and Makzor Gyelmo shifted in affiliation through rituals that came to define Nechung, how the Five Sovereign Spirits themselves were newly situated within a larger cosmology, and how a deity like Dorjé Drakden advanced in status—all through the rituals that have been emplaced at Nechung Monastery as well as related sacred centers. By analyzing ritual texts as historical documents, we

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<sup>42</sup> Sañs-rGyas rGya-mTSHo 1999: viii-ix.

<sup>43</sup> See Smith 1987.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid: 45.



uncover more of the factors involved when Tibetan monastic institutions harness ritual programs and the deities they concern for their own advancement over the course of centuries.

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